

Racine Lutheran High School Cross Country For Parents/Guardians

What is Cross Country?

Endurance sports, including running, cycling, and swimming, are some of the most popular lifelong sports participated in worldwide. Cross Country has one of the highest percentages of NCAA participation for men and the highest for women. Involvement in Cross Country instills values of lifelong health and fitness and promotes a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Running helps relieve stress, create friendships, and builds confidence and character.

Running itself dates back many years, with some notable accomplishments. This includes the first marathon run in Greece, the start of the Olympics, Roger Bannister's first sub-4-minute mile, and most recently the Nike Breaking 2 attempt. Running is all about breaking barriers, dedication, and perseverance; striving to be the best individual you can be to provide the best contribution to your team. Every athlete brings a different set of skills which benefit the team.

The coaches work with each athlete as an individual and as part of the team to help maximize their potential and foster a lifelong love for running. There are no cuts and no bench to sit on and watch while others compete! Communication about health and motivation is vital to the coaching and athletic training staff so the right decisions can be made to help each athlete's growth. We would much rather modify workouts, working with the athletic trainer, to return an athlete back to full competition readiness, than have them sit out due to an unreported injury. Summer Running Club and Track and Field are great ways to get in and stay in shape for any sport and are strongly encouraged for all Cross Country athletes.

Meet Snacks/Beverages: You are encouraged to sign up to bring muffins/bagels/granola bars or Gatorade to at least one meet during the season. This provides the athletes with something good to eat and drink after their races. The number of athletes will be emailed to you after the first week of practice. A signup sheet is at the front of the room.

Pasta Dinner:

- Nutrition is very important for endurance athletes. Healthy carbohydrates and well-balanced meals help sustain energy levels for competition.
- Signup for pasta dinner - Thursday before Conference Meet on Thursday, October 11th - in cafeteria: Pasta Dishes, Salad, Fruit, Dessert (muffins, oatmeal cookies, etc.).
- If you would like to host an additional dinner, please speak with one of the coaches to arrange a date and time.

Banquet - Potluck (Wednesday October 24th @ 5:30 p.m. in RLHS Cafeteria):

- Signup information will be sent out late September. All athletes and their families are invited.

Practices:

Practices will be Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 5 p.m. Some Monday practices will begin at 2:45 p.m. Athletes are expected to change into practice gear immediately after school

and report to Coach Tuskowski's room with homework to work on. If they need to see a teacher, this is also their time to do that, but then report to Coach's room. Because of the nature of Cross Country practices, athletes must communicate with a coach before practice begins if they have an academic commitment that will cause them to arrive to practice late. A few practices throughout the season will take place away from the high school. Athletes will be informed of these ahead of time so they can plan ahead for rides. Saturdays without meets will also have practice from 9:00 a.m. until approximately 10:30 a.m.

How Cross Country is Scored:

Teams consist of five or more runners who race together at the same time with other teams. The top five finishers from each team are scored, and their finishing places are added up for the team score. The lowest score wins. For example, a team scoring 25 points places ahead of a team scoring 30 points, as follows:

Racine Lutheran	St. Catherine's
1	2
3	4
5	7
6	8
10 Score 25	9 Score 30

A team's 6th and 7th place finishers can also figure into the scoring if they place ahead of the other teams' top five finishers. In that case, they become "pushers" by pushing up their opponents' scores. The 6th runner is also a tie breaker. Every runner makes an impact!!! Individual hard work and dedication are expected and vital to team success.

What it Takes to be Successful:

Success in Cross Country takes dedication and time to learn, train, sleep, rest, and recover. With the academic responsibilities of a high school student, most student athletes are busy all the time. Athletes must balance their school, home, and athletic responsibilities. Positive academic achievement is expected in and out of season.

Athletes must have a commitment to the team. Attending team practices on time every day is expected. We strive to develop team loyalty, individual responsibility, and accountability. High school sports contribute to one's personal growth and character development. We hope to have parents/guardians support us in attaining these goals.

Communication between athletes and coaches is vital. If your athlete becomes ill at school or if a legitimate conflict arises causing your athlete to miss a practice or a meet, they are expected to tell Coach Tuskowski in person in advance. This does not mean relaying a message through a teammate or friend. Issues related to attendance or other concerns are avoided when athletes communicate beforehand, just as they do in the classroom or later in the workplace.

Finally, all athletes and spectators must remember we represent the Cross Country team, Racine Lutheran High School, and our Christian faith when we are out in the community during

practices and meets. Words and actions must reflect this, and respect must be shown to one's self, teammates, coaches, officials, and spectators at all times.

How can you help your son or daughter before the season starts?

I strongly encourage our athletes to follow a training regiment during the summer and keep track of their mileage. Pre-season summer training is essential to build an aerobic base for intensive workouts and races during the season. When beginning to train, a normal consequence is muscle soreness, which will soon go away. Athletes who have not participated in sports recently may experience this for a few weeks. They should communicate this to Coach Tuskowski so their training can be adjusted.

Any athlete engaged in intensive training and competition can be subject to injury. Most injuries are preventable when athletes tell us about their aches and pains before they become disabling so they can be treated by our licensed athletic trainer. Additionally, athletes should avoid completing extra workouts not assigned by their coaches. This extra work can lead to overuse injuries. Workouts are designed so individual energy systems have time to recover in between practices. This recovery time is also affected by additional outside workouts.

A nutritious, well-balanced diet is essential for any athlete; especially on race days. Fatty, fried, high fiber foods, and carbonated or acidic drinks should be avoided. Small portions of easily digested food eaten at least three hours before competition are best. Hydration is always important before and after competition, and water is the best beverage. Sleep is vital to performance and recovery, most importantly going to sleep at approximately the same time every night. Athletes should have a goal to wake up a minimum of three to four hours before competing to allow their nervous system to be fully awake.

What your athlete needs:

All Cross Country athletes need a good pair of training shoes for practices and meets. I recommend going to Performance Running Outfitters where they will perform a gait analysis and fit your feet with proper shoes. They also provide discounts for high school runners and special deals right before the season begins. Competition spikes are recommended and will be used for competition only. In addition to shoes, athletes should have a wide range of clothing from shorts and light t-shirts to athletic pants, light jackets, headbands, and gloves. We run outside in pretty much any weather. Athletes also need a reusable water bottle for practice and meets. In addition, all athletes need some sort of timing device to help record their own pace during practice. This timing device can range from a simple watch with a stopwatch to a more fancy fitness tracking watch. If you have questions about watches and fitness devices, please speak with one of the coaches.

Cross Country Vocabulary:

-Invitational Meet: a multi-team meet

-Course: the marked and measured route of the race, usually 5 kilometers/3.1 miles

- Starting Box: designated area a team is assigned on the starting line
- False Start: leaving the starting line before the gun sounds
- Finish Chute: a rope-bordered funnel past the finish line that moves runners into a single file order of finish
- Pace: running speed over a particular distance
- Surge: a tactical increase in pace during the race
- Kick: a burst of speed at the finish of the race
- Pack: a group of runners in close proximity
- Personal Record (PR): athlete's fastest finishing time on a course
- Racing Flats/Spikes: special lightweight shoes designed for racing, not daily training
- Training Flats/Trainers: running shoes designed for daily training
- Warm-up: a running/stretching routine that gradually warms up the body for intense running
- Cool down: a jogging/dynamic stretching routine that allows the muscles to purge themselves of lactates and to gradually lower the body to its normal temperature
- Workout: a daily training session
- Negative Splits - running progressively faster mile times during practice or a race

Preparing to watch your first Cross Country meet:

Athletes are required to arrive for meets no later than one hour before the first race begins to warm up on the course. A thorough warmup is expected and is a vital part to an injury free season. Understanding the course before racing begins is also an important part for success. Some meets require a small spectator entry fee which goes towards running the meet. Additionally, meet shirts may be available for purchase, usually for cash. Meet information will be emailed to you in advance. When you arrive at the meet, reference the course map to locate the start, finish, and scout central points where you can see as much of the race with as little moving around as possible. During the race, you can move from point to point along the course to cheer the athletes as they pass. Be careful, however, and aware of your surroundings, staying off the course. Rules forbid running alongside a competitor to pace or encourage them. Doing so will disqualify an athlete.

At the finish of the race, the athletes file through the finish chute. It is okay to greet them, but they may have to turn a place card or timing chip in to their coach so scores can be tabulated. After the race, athletes are expected to cool down as a team and actively support their teammates who have yet to race. Some athletes are more spent than others after a race. Typical symptoms of their effort are fatigue, breathlessness, general weakness, rubbery legs, glassy eyes, and sometimes nausea. Please do not take your athlete away if they are experiencing these symptoms. The coaches and athletic trainers are experienced in dealing with these symptoms, trained in first-aid, and responsible for their care. To aid recovery, water is the best thing to drink immediately after a race, followed by an electrolyte replacement drink.

Once a meet is over, if your athlete came on the bus or other school-provided transportation, please do not take them home with you without checking them out with Coach Stephenson or one of the managers. We are legally bound for athletes' safe transport to and from the meet.

Transportation will be provided for all weekday meets outside Racine County. If you are able to help drive for our first meet at Badger High School on Thursday, August 23rd or drive athletes up on Friday, August 31st before the Concordia Wisconsin meet in Mequon, please speak with Coach Tuskowski after the meeting.

Parent/Guardian Involvement:

We have a number of areas that need parents/guardians help in order to maintain a level of success, such as helping with team dinners, fundraisers, bringing meet snacks/beverages, driving to practices/meets, and supporting the efforts of the team and the individual athletes. We want our athletes, parents/guardians, and coaches working together, in and out of season! These are young student athletes with many things to juggle. Please be supportive and encourage their efforts and their individual abilities and goals.

Supporting the training program and coaching philosophy is a very important step in supporting your athlete and their success. If you have questions or concerns about training, please contact Coach Tuskowski. This sport is a lot of fun to be around. Please take the time to be with our team and make yourself known to the athletes, coaches, and other parents/guardians. Parental/guardian support is an important contribution to a successful season!

RLHS XC Meet Sheet

Date	Event	Location	Time (Bus)
Thurs. Aug. 23rd	Badger Invite	Lake Geneva Badger High School	4:00 p.m.
Sat. Aug. 25th	County Meet	TBD	TBD
Sat. Sept. 1st	CUW Invitational	Concordia University Mequon	TBD
Sat. Sept. 8th	Rocket Invitational	Grant Park Golf Course	10:50 a.m.
Sat. Sept. 15th	Angel Invite	UW-Parkside XC Course	9:00 a.m.
Fri. Sept. 21st	Home Meet	TBD	TBD
Thurs. Sept. 27th	Prairie Invite	Armstrong Park	4:15 p.m.
Thurs. Oct. 4th	Wisco Invitational	McCarty Park	4:25 p.m.
Sat. Oct. 13th	Metro Classic Conference	UW-Parkside XC Course	10:00 a.m.
Sat. Oct. 20th	DIII Sectionals	Lake Country Lutheran	TBD
Sat. Oct. 27th	DIII State	Wisconsin Rapids	TBD

IMPORTANT!!! While you may feel you are helping your athlete out, athletes, parents, and coaches are not permitted to run or walk the Sectional or State course during the season. Failure to abide by this rule will disqualify the entire team from advancement to the State Meet.

Go Crusader Cross Country!!!

Head Coach:

Paul Tuskowski (414) 469-5931 ptuskowski@racinelutheran.org

Assistant Coach:

Samantha Stephenson (262) 989-8509 sstephenson@racinelutheran.org

1 Corinthians 9:24-25a - “do you not know that in a race all runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you might obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.”

Hebrews 12:1b - “let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Eliud Kipchoge (World Class Marathoner, Olympic Gold Medalist, Nike Breaking 2 Participant) - “Passion is a choice. You need to choose to be great. It’s not a chance, it’s a choice.”

Tom Fleming (2-Time New York Marathon Winner) - “Somewhere someone is training when you are not. When you race them, they will win.”

2 Samuel 22: 34a - “[God] made my feet like the feet of a deer”