



## CROSS COUNTRY RACE: - AN OVERVIEW

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### Abstract

The IAAF recommend for international competitions that there is a main course loop of between 1750m and 2000m with natural obstacles used where possible, and the likes of deep ditches, dangerous ascents and descents as well as thick undergrowth should be avoided. Cross country running is a sport in which teams and individuals run a race on open-air courses over natural terrain such as dirt or grass. How to conduct cross country. first we explain **course** design, cross-country races distances, start, drinking / sponging and refreshment stations, disqualified, strategy, finish, and scoring. The course shall be clearly marked with tape on both sides. It is recommended that all along one side of the course a 1m wide corridor, heavily fenced from the outside of the course, shall be installed for the use of organization officials and media only. The races shall be started by the firing of a gun. The commands for races longer than 400m shall be used. In races which include a large number of athletes, five-minute, three-minute and one-minute warnings should be given. Water and other suitable refreshments shall be available at the start and finish of all races. For all events, a drinking / sponging station shall be provided every lap. The finish area shall be wide enough to enable several runners to sprint side by side and long enough to separate them at the finish. Unless a Transponder Timing System is being used together with a backup system (such as a video recording) to check finishing orders, finish lanes ("funnels") should be set up some 8 to 10 meters after the finish line with a maximum width of 0.70-0.80m. Once in the funnels. Scores are determined by summing the top four or five individual finishing places on each team. In international competition, a team typically consists of six runners, with the top four scoring. In the United States, the most common scoring system is seven runners, with the top four scoring. above all the point should be kept in mind when you organized cross country.

**Keywords:**-race course, start, finish, distance, scoring.



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## INTRODUCTION

As a competitive sport, cross-country running began in England with a game called "hare and hounds" or "the paper chase" in the early 19th century. In this game, a runner or group of runners laid a trail by dropping pieces of paper or other markers while following a random course, and a second set of runners then set out in pursuit, trying to follow the paper trail. The first formal competition was the Crick Run, first held at Rugby School in 1837. Many other public schools soon established similar events, followed by Oxford and Cambridge

Universities. Although hare and hounds continued to be popular at schools, in important competition the game became a cross-country race along a course laid out in advance over open country.

The English national cross-country championship was established in 1876. Two years later, William C. Vosburgh of New York introduced the sport to the United States. In 1887, the National Cross-Country Association was founded, and the association held its first championship event. The Amateur Athletic Association began conducting the national championship in 1880.

Also in 1880, cross-country running was introduced at Harvard as an autumn training event for track and field distance runners, and other colleges quickly followed Harvard's example.

The first international cross country race was staged in 1898 at Ville d'Avray, France. The first International Cross Country Championships (the forerunner to the IAAF World Cross Country Championships) was held five years later at Hamilton Park Racecourse in Scotland. The inaugural IAAF World Cross Country Championships took place on 17 March 1973 in the Belgian town of Waregem. Men's cross country races have also taken place at three summer Olympics, in 1912, 1920 and 1924.

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Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele has won 16 gold medals at the IAAF World Cross Country Championships, 12 individual and four team wins. He achieved five consecutive double victories between 2002 and 2006 in both the long course and now-discontinued short course races. In addition, he got an unprecedented sixth senior men's long course victory in 2008 and won the 2001 junior title.

Cross country running is a sport in which teams and individuals run a race on open-air courses over natural terrain such as dirt or grass. Sometimes the runners are referred to as *harriers* (dogs).<sup>[1]</sup> The course, typically 4–12 kilometres (2.5–7.5 mi) long, may include surfaces of grass, and earth, pass through woodlands and open country, and include hills, flat ground and sometimes gravel road. It is both an individual and a team sport; runners are judged on individual times and teams by a points-scoring method. Both men and women of all ages compete in cross country, which usually takes place during autumn and winter, and can include weather conditions of rain, sleet, snow or hail, and a wide range of temperatures.

Cross country running is one of the disciplines under the umbrella sport of athletics, and is a natural terrain version of long-distance track and road running. Although open-air running

competitions are pre-historic, the rules and traditions of cross country racing emerged in Britain. The English championship became the first national competition in 1876 and the International Cross Country Championships was held for the first time in 1903. Since 1973 the foremost elite competition has been the IAAF World Cross Country Championships. International cross-country racing also began in 1898 with competition between England and France. An annual championship meet involving England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales started in 1903 and became a true international event in 1907, when France sent a team to compete. Other European countries followed during the 1920s. Cross-country was on the Olympic program in 1912, 1920, and 1924, but it was dropped after that because it was considered unsuitable for summer competition.

The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF), which governs track and field worldwide, took over jurisdiction of cross-country in 1962, establishing rules for both men and women. The first women's world championship meet was held in 1967, a year after the AAU established a national championship for women.

## **HOW TO CONDUCT CROSS COUNTRY**

### **COURSE DESIGN**

Cross country courses are laid out on an open or woodland area. The IAAF recommends that courses be grass-covered, and have rolling terrain with frequent but smooth turns. Courses consist of one or more loops, with a long straight at the start and another leading to the finish line.

For Championships and international events and, wherever possible, for other competitions:

- (a) A loop course must be designed, with the loop measuring between 1500m and 2000m. If necessary, a small loop .in which cases the small loop must be run in the early stages of the event. It is recommended that each long loop should have a total ascent of at least 10m. c)
- (b) The crossing of roads or any kind of macadamised surfaces shall be avoided or at least kept to a minimum. When it is impossible to avoid such conditions in one or two areas of the course, the areas must be covered by grass, earth or mats.
- (c) Existing natural obstacles shall be used if possible. However, very high obstacles should be avoided, as should deep ditches, dangerous ascents / descents, thick undergrowth and, in general, any obstacle which would constitute a difficulty beyond the aim of the competition. It is preferable that artificial obstacles should not be used but if such use is unavoidable, they

should be made to simulate natural obstacles met within open country. In races where there are large numbers of athletes, narrow gaps or other hindrances which would deny the athletes an unhampered run shall be avoided for the first 1500m.

- (d) (a) The course shall be clearly marked with tape on both sides. It is recommended that all along one side of the course a 1m wide corridor, heavily fenced from the outside of the course, shall be installed for the use of organization officials and media only (obligatory for Championship events). Crucial areas must be heavily fenced; in particular the start area (including the Warm-up Area and the Call Room) and finish area (including any mixed zone). Only accredited people will be allowed access to these areas.
- (e) (b) The general public should only be allowed to cross the course in the early stages of a race at well organised cross-over points, marshalled by stewards.
- (f) (c) It is recommended that, apart from the start and finish areas, the course be a width of 5 metres, including the obstacle areas.

Terrain can vary from open fields to forest hills and even across rivers. It also includes running down and up hills. Because of variations in conditions, international standardization of cross country courses is impossible, and not necessarily desirable. Part of cross country running's appeal is the distinct characteristics of each venue's terrain and weather, as in other outdoor sports like motor racing, cycling and golf.

According to the IAAF, an ideal cross country course has a loop of 1,750 to 2,000 metres (1,910 to 2,190 yd) laid out on an open or wooded land. It should be covered by grass, as much as possible, and include rolling hills "with smooth curves and short straights". While it is perfectly acceptable for local conditions to make dirt or snow the primary surface, courses should minimize running on roads or other macadamized paths. Parks and golf courses often provide suitable locations.

While a course may include natural or artificial obstacles, cross country courses support continuous running, and do not require climbing over high barriers, through deep ditches, or fighting through the underbrush, as do military-style assault courses.

### **CROSS-COUNTRY RACES DISTANCES**

1. distances at IAAF World Cross-Country Championships should be approximately:

- (a)- Men 10km Women 10km U20 Men 8km U20 Women 6km The distances recommended for U18 competitions should be approximately:

(b)-U18 Boys 6km U18 Girls 4km It is recommended that similar distances be used for other International and National competitions. Course Courses for international competitions consist of a loop between 1750 and 2000 meters. Athletes complete three to six loops, depending on the race. Senior men compete on a 12-kilometre course. Senior women and junior men compete on an 8-kilometre course. Junior women compete on a 6-kilometre course.

## **START**

The races shall be started by the firing of a gun. The commands for races longer than 400m shall be used .In races which include a large number of athletes, five-minute, three-minute and one-minute warnings should be given. departure boxes shall be provided for teams races and the members of each team shall be lined up behind each other at the start of the race. In other races, the athletes shall be lined up in the manner determined by the organizers. On the command “On your marks”, the starter shall ensure that no athlete has his foot (or any part of his body) touching the start line or the ground in front of it, and shall then start the race.



Start of a typical cross country race as official fires a gun to signal start.

## **DRINKING / SPONGING AND REFRESHMENT STATIONS**

1- Organizers of Cross-Country Races shall ensure the safety of athletes and officials.  
Drinking / Sponging and Refreshment Stations

2- Water and other suitable refreshments shall be available at the start and finish of all races. For all events, a drinking / sponging station shall be provided every lap, if weather conditions warrant such provision. Note: Where conditions warrant, taking into account the nature of the event, the weather conditions and the state of fitness of the majority of the competitors, water and sponges may be placed at more regular intervals along the route.

## **DISQUALIFIED**

If the Referee is satisfied on the report of a Judge or Umpire or otherwise that an athlete has left the marked course thereby shortening the distance to be covered, he shall be disqualified.

## **STRATEGY**

Because of differences between courses in running surface, frequency and tightness of turns, and amount of up and downhill, cross country strategy does not necessarily simplify to running a steady pace from start to finish. Coaches and cross country runners debate the relative merits of fast starts to get clear of the field, versus steady pacing to maximize physiological efficiency. Some teams emphasize running in a group in order to provide encouragement to others on the team, while others hold that every individual should run his or her own race. In addition, whether you run ahead 'of the pack' or behind it and pull ahead in the end is important, but can vary according to the runner's individual skill, endurance, and the length of the race. Runners should also account for food intake prior to the race. Most important, however, is the training beforehand.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Cross country running involves very little specialized equipment. Most races are run in shorts and vests or singlets, usually in club or school colours. In particularly cold conditions, long-sleeved shirts and tights can be worn to retain warmth without losing mobility. The most common footwear are cross country spikes, lightweight racing shoes with a rubber sole and five or more metal spikes screwed into the forefoot part of the sole. Spike length depends on race conditions, with a muddy course appropriate for spikes as long as 25 millimetres (0.98 in). If a course has a harder surface, spikes as short as 6 millimetres (0.24 in) may be most effective. While spikes are suitable for grassy, muddy, or other slippery conditions, runners may choose to wear racing flats, rubber-soled racing shoes without spikes, if the course includes significant portions of paved surfaces or dirt road

## **FINISH**

The finish area shall be wide enough to enable several runners to sprint side by side and long enough to separate them at the finish. Unless a Transponder Timing System is being used together with a backup system (such as a video recording) to check finishing orders, finish lanes ("funnels") should be set up some 8 to 10 metres after the finish line with a maximum width of 0.70-0.80m. Once in the funnels, the athletes must not be able to overtake one another. The funnels should be 35-40m long into which the athletes will be directed as they cross the finish line. At the end of each funnel, officials will note the athletes' numbers/names and if applicable recover their transponder timing chips. The funnels should

have moveable ropes at the end at which the athletes enter, so that when one lane is full, the next rope can be drawn across behind the last athlete, to enable the next finisher to enter the new finish lane, and so on. Judges and Timekeepers will additionally be placed on either side of the finish line and it is recommended that, in order to follow up any appeal relative to the finishing order, an official with video recording equipment (if possible with a timing clock in sight) shall be assigned and placed a few metres after the finish line in order to record the order in which the athletes cross the line.

The course ends at a finish line located at the beginning of a *funnel* or *chute* (a long walkway marked with flags) that keeps athletes single-file in order of finish and facilitates accurate scoring.

Depending on the timing and scoring system, finish officials may collect a small slip from each runner's bib, to keep track of finishing positions. Chip timing has grown in popularity to increase accuracy and decrease the number of officials required at the finish line. Each runner attaches a transponder with RFID to his or her shoe. When the runner crosses the finish line, an electronic pad records the chip number and matches the runner to a database. Chip timing allows officials to use checkpoint mats throughout the race to calculate split times, and to ensure runners cover the entire course. This is by far the most efficient method, although it is also the most expensive. The drawback to chip timing is its inability to separate a close finish properly. Chips times the feet, when the rule books say it is the torso that counts. It is technically possible for an athlete to fall across the finish line, legally crossing the finish line, but with their feet too far away from the sensor to have their finish recorded.

Contemporary races have now started to use fully automatic timing systems for photo finish accuracy to their results. This has dramatically improved the timing mechanisms of Cross Country over the last few years.



## **FUNNEL**

### **SCORING**

Scores are determined by summing the top four individual finishing places on each team. In international competition, a team typically consists of six runners, with the top four scoring. In the United States, the most common scoring system is seven runners, with the top four scoring. Points are awarded to the individual runners of eligible teams, equal to the position in which they cross the finish line (first place gets 1 point, second place gets 2 points, etc.). The points for these runners are summed, and the lowest score wins. Individual athletes, and athletes from incomplete teams (teams consisting of less than 4 athletes or teams) and individuals who have been disqualified are excluded from scoring. Ties are usually broken by the position of each team's sixth runner.

The lowest possible score in a four -to-score match is 13 (1+3+4+5), achieved by a team's runners finishing in each of the top four positions. If there is a single opposing team then they would have a score of 32 (6+7+9+10), which can be considered a "sweep" for the winning team. In some competitions a team's fifth and sixth runner are scored in the overall field and are known as "pushers" or "displacers" as their place can count ahead of other runners, giving other teams more points. In the above match, if there are two non-scoring runners and they came 6th and 7th overall, the opponent's score would be 40 (8+9+11+12). Accordingly, the official score of a forfeited dual meet is 13–40.

### **Notable athletes**

#### ***Men***

- Kenenisa Bekele won both short and long World Cross Country course titles in the same year five times (2002–2006), after a junior men victory and senior long course silver in 2001. The IAAF calls him the "greatest ever male cross country runner to have graced the sport."<sup>[17]</sup>
- Carlos Lopes – first man to win World Cross Country title three times.
- John Ngugi – first man to win five World Cross Country titles, including four consecutively in the late 1980s.
- Paavo Nurmi was a four-time Olympic gold medalist and undefeated throughout his 19-year career in cross country running
- Gaston Roelants – four-time champion at the International Cross Country Championship between 1962 and 1972.
- Paul Tergat – long course champion five years in a row (1995–1999), plus a bronze medal finish in 2000.



### **Women**

- Doris Brown – won the International Cross Country Championship for five consecutive years (1967–1971).
- Zola Budd – young prodigy who twice won women's World championship (1985–1986), known for running barefooted.
- Tirunesh Dibaba – won three times at the World long course and once at the short.
- Lynn Jennings – won World title three times.
- Edith Masai – won the World short race three times.
- Derartu Tulu – won World titles three times in six years (1995, 1997, 2000).
- Grete Waitz – first athlete to win five IAAF World Cross Country titles.
- Gete Wami – won twice at the World long course and once at the short.

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