

Monroe County Modified Cross Country Coaches' Handbook

By Todd Putnam
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[Seeing the need for a modified cross country handbook when serving as County Chairman, Todd Putnam (Webster modified coach) undertook in 1992 to adapt the varsity handbook to modified needs. I have updated Todd's handbook to reflect changes made in recent years and have made a few additions where I thought I might be able to improve upon Todd's work. This present edition of the Modified Handbook for 2023 includes new material now applicable since modified and varsity meets are held separately and is designed to be applicable without alteration for several years. *CL.*]

Introduction

This handbook has been developed to standardize many of the procedures at cross country meets. Cross Country has long enjoyed the reputation of being a sport with few conflicts or problems. Our intention is to maintain that reputation through a coordinated approach to running our meets. This handbook is available on the Monroe County cross country website. The Varsity handbook is also available at this website and is another excellent resource for coaches.

It is the responsibility of the host schools to organize and run their designated meets. It is suggested that coaches use assistants or managers to run the meets as efficiently as possible. **PLANNING AHEAD** will help tremendously. If problems do arise, however, visiting coaches should see the host coach immediately. If problems should continue (poor organization, starting, scoring, rule enforcement, etc.), or are not handled in accordance with this handbook, coaches should contact their league chairperson for further action.

The Modified Cross Country Chairperson is:

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During the season, each school is responsible for hosting at least one league meet. Each season's schedule will denote the host school for league meets. Responsibilities of the host school are outlined in this handbook.

A. ENFORCEMENT OF RULES:

1. The host school's coach is responsible for enforcing all general rules of Cross Country as applicable in League, State and Federation rule books. Some of those that seem to cause the most frequent problems are listed below:

- a. Any uncalled-for roughness of any kind shall lead to the disqualification of the runner(s) involved.
- b. Any language that is abusive or obscene shall lead to the disqualification of the runner(s) using such language.

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2. It is the responsibility of the coaches to inform their athletes of proper etiquette and sportsmanship.

3. All infractions of rules must be observed by a coach or admitted to by the athlete(s) when confronted with the issue.

B. STARTING TIMES AND ORDER OF RACES:

1. In general, starting times for all meets shall be 5:00 P.M. However, whenever possible, teams should be given sufficient time (a minimum of 20 minutes) to warm up. Modified races are intended to begin around 5:00 P.M.

2. If a team has not arrived by 4:45 P.M., the start of the meet can be delayed slightly. Coaches who find that they will arrive late should make every effort to contact host school coaches.

3. The order of races is as follows:

a. Modified Boys or Girls

b. Modified Girls or Boys

Race order should follow the practice of Varsity for a given year. In odd-numbered years, boys run first and girls run second for the first half of the season; this is reversed for the second half of the season. In even-numbered years, the reverse of this is used.

C. UNIFORMS

1. Each member of each team should wear a team uniform in competition, **except** when team uniforms are not provided by the school district.

2. The rule regarding the need for identical equipment (for example, if one runner wears a gray tee shirt under a racing top, then all must wear a gray shirt) is waived.

3. Follow varsity rules for watches (cannot use watches with a geographic capability).

D. COURSES

1. Copies of updated course maps are available on the Monroe County cross country website.

2. The host coach is responsible for sufficiently marking the course and explaining the markings to all runners and coaches sometime before the start of each race. The following color codes shall be used:

a. Red flag means left turn.

b. Yellow flag means right turn.

c. Blue flag means go straight ahead.

d. A white line means start or finish.

e. If one pole is used for two or more different moves, the flags are stacked in order of use from the top down, with the upper flag indicating the turn when first encountering that pole.

3. All coaches should agree upon any course changes or alterations (because of weather, course repairs, etc.) before the start of the race. Any alterations must be reported to cross country chairpersons.

4. Course Sites:

a. There are alternate course sites in case of poor conditions. The host coach is responsible for contacting county chairpersons and the other schools in the meet concerning changes because of site problems. All coaches involved should receive a 24-hour notice of changes. After that deadline, the meet may need to be postponed.

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- b. The following course sites have been used in recent years, each having a 1.5-mile and 2-mile course:
- 1) Mendon Ponds Park, East Course
 - 2) Mendon Ponds Park, West Course
 - 3) Webster Park
 - 4) Shadow Pines (Penfield)
 - 5) Black Creek Park
 - 6) Parma Park
 - 7) Northampton Park
 - 8) Harris-Whalen Park
 - 9) Center Park
 - 10) Basil A. Marella (formerly English Road) Park
 - 11) FLCC (Canandaigua)
 - 12) Parma Park Championship Course (2.0-mile)
- Other courses may be developed from time to time.

E. STARTING LINE PROCEDURES:

1. Order on the line:
 - a. Runners will line up by teams with the order determined by the pick of the draw (numbers, straws, etc.). The first five runners from each team will take a place on the line, with the remaining runners taking places directly behind their team's top five.
 - b. Note that separate races, one for boys and another for girls, shall be run.
2. Starting command procedure:
 - a. Use a one-command start (no "take your mark" or "set"). Tell the runners what will be used as the start command, call for them to step up to (but not onto or over) the starting line and, when everyone is motionless, give the start command.
 - b. Use a gun, whistle or horn for the start command.
 - c. For an unfair start, recall the runners by re-sounding the start command.
3. Other start responsibilities:
 - a. The host school shall provide an AED at the start and finish area(s).
 - b. The host coach will give adequate warning of the start of each race (*for example*, first call: ten minutes before the race; second call: five minutes before the race). If a team does not appear at the start line, the host coach will make every effort to ensure that team is at the start line for the beginning of the race.
 - c. The host coach will call runners to the line and answer any questions about the course.
 - d. The host coach will direct line-up order, explain finish procedures (cards, chutes, etc.) and check to see that timers and all officials are ready prior to the start of the race. There should be at least two timers, one as the official timer and another as a backup.
4. The host school may use certified officials, but the host coach remains responsible for the managing the meet and ensuring sufficient help is available. In general, certified officials will perform duties such as starting the races, being out on the course, being the finish judge and being a timer.

F. FINISH LINE PROCEDURES

1. Chutes: The host coach shall provide a finish area including the necessary chute. A funnel shaped area is provided a sufficient length in advance of the finish line to adequately direct

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runners to the line and to keep spectators off the course. Runners enter the wide end of the chute, and the finish is at the neck of the funnel. The chute is continued, as is the stem of a funnel, with a width of about 3 feet such that runners can touch both ropes simultaneously, for a distance of at least 30 feet, at which point cards are distributed. A single chute is used since league meet modified races are held on separate days from varsity races.

2. Cards:

- a. Cards should be clearly labeled BOYS MODIFIED or GIRLS MODIFIED. You may also use different colored cards. Index cards measuring 3" by 5" are often used as finish cards in cross country.
- b. Have enough cards to handle the maximum number of runners in each race. Keep extra cards handy just in case.
- c. Coaches should mark each of their cards with school name and the name of the runner on the same side of the card as the number. Coaches then turn in all race cards to the host coach as soon as practical after the conclusion of the race. Host coaches should make sure they have responsible individuals handing out the cards, as some finishes can get congested and confusing. Pre-printed stick-on labels are real time-savers during busy meets.

3. Timing (is EVERYTHING!)

- a. A time must be recorded for every finisher of each race. There should be at least two watches operating for every race. Coaches must make sure they have RESPONSIBLE individuals in charge of timing.
- b. Two types of timing crews are commonly used for each chute:
 - 1) Times can be recorded automatically with a printout.
 - 2) Times can be called audibly from a stopwatch and manually recorded on the score sheet.
- c. For modified races, the following officials are needed at the finish area:
 - 1) Finish judge, normally in the chute near the finish line. This official ensures that each runner receives a proper card for their finish.
 - 2) Timer, normally located at the finish line. This person either makes a tape of all times or reads off the times to the recorder.
 - 3) Recorder, normally standing next to the timer. This person records the times as they are read off.
 - 4) Card Distributor, normally located at the end of the narrow section of the chute. This person hands out cards in a sequential order, taking care not to drop the stack of numbered cards.
- d. If a shortage of responsible individuals arises, coaches from "away" teams should fill in as needed.

G. SCORE SHEETS

1. The host coach is responsible for providing score sheets for use at league meets.
2. Five-copy score sheets will be provided to each modified coach for meets they host.
3. Score sheets are completed with place, name, school and time for each runner. Team scores are *not* computed at the meet site, but all information needed to fully score the meet *must* be on the score sheet before it is distributed to the coaches. See also item H.2 below.
4. Score sheets should be completed, with at least race place, time and school (and preferably with runner's name) as soon as possible after the conclusion of race(s).

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5. Away team coaches should offer to fill in their runner's names and school so that the score sheet can be completed as quickly as possible.

6. The score sheets have carbon copy capability, with enough copies being made so each team can have a copy of the race results. Use a pen, press hard and print clearly so that all copies of the score sheet are legible. Don't scribble or print too lightly.

7. The host coach is responsible for distributing results to all coaches as soon as possible before the schools leave.

H. TEAM SCORING PROCEDURES

1. Dual meet scoring is used for all league meets. When computing a dual meet score in a race where three or more teams are present, the finishes from all teams except the two for which the score is being determined are discounted.

2. For modified cross country, scoring of league meets shall be performed by coaches after the meet.

3. Rules for cross country dual meet scoring:

a. Scoring shall be as shown in the following table:

First place.....	1 point
Second place	2 points
Third place	3 points
Fourth place	4 points
Fifth place	5 points
Sixth place.....	6 points
Nth place	N points

b. All competitors who finish shall be ranked and tallied in accordance with the above table. The team score shall then be determined by totaling the points scored by the first five finishers of each team. The team with the fewest points is the winner.

c. If fewer than five competitors (or other number specified by the Games Committee) of a team finish, the places of all members of that team shall be disregarded and the team scores re-ranked. A dual meet score in this case is recorded as 15 to 50.

d. Ties in team scoring shall be resolved by comparing the 6th place finishers from the tying teams. The team with the best 6th place finisher is the winner. If one team does not have a 6th place finisher, the team with the 6th place finisher is the winner.

e. If only five competitors from tying teams finish, the team scoring shall be resolved by totaling the scores of the first four finishers from tying teams.

4. Displacement must be computed before a final score is determined. On each team, runners finishing 8th and up are not figured in the scoring, and the 1st through 7th runners are adjusted accordingly. Displacement is figured because although 8 or more runners may compete, only the first 7 on each team count overall.

5. Tournament-style scoring is used for the Monroe County Coaches' Invitational and, generally, for all invitational meets. Runners after the top seven on each team are deleted, as are runners from incomplete teams of less than five runners. Scores are then computed by adding the scores for the first 5 runners, with the 6th runner breaking any ties as noted above.

I. MODIFIED CROSS COUNTRY

1. The race distance for modified cross country is 1.5 miles for the first half of the season, as determined by the schedule of league meets, and no more than 2 miles for the second half of the season. The date on which the distance is moved from 1.5 miles to 2 miles occurs on the day after the first half of the league schedule of meets is completed. If an odd number of league meets is scheduled, the changeover date occurs on the day *after* the middle meet.

2. Spikes may be worn in modified competition. Spikes can be attached or removed from the sole of a shoe and protrude beyond the sole.

3. Only students from grades 7 and 8, and ages 12, 13 and 14 may participate in the modified program. If an athlete is 14 years old on the starting date, he or she may continue in the modified program for the remainder of the season and is not required to move to a higher level if he or she turns 15 during the season.

4. Separate modified boys and girls races are provided.

5. A runner in the modified cross country program shall have at least 6 practices before the first scrimmage or meet. Runners with fewer than the required number of practices shall not run in scheduled league scrimmages or meets, or invitational meet competitions, in any capacity. At least two nights must elapse between meets. A modified runner may not run in more than 10 meets in one season. Refer to the state handbook for further details.

6. If a runner competes at the modified level in half or more of the scheduled meets on the modified schedule, he or she must stay with the modified team for the remainder of the season. He or she may be moved up to a higher level of competition prior to competing in that meet which marks the halfway point of his or her season.

J. CROSS COUNTRY COACHES' ETIQUETTE:

1. All coaches should provide a model of good behavior for their athletes and should exemplify good professional conduct. Any departure from good professional conduct could result in a letter from the County Chairperson to the athletic director and coach.

2. Remember that we are introducing our modified athletes to the sport of cross country, and there are no official won-loss records or championships. Coaches should be flexible and allow for a positive learning experience for our athletes.

K. MONROE COUNTY COACHES' INVITATIONAL

1. Enter your runners' names and other required information for Counties on YenTiming.com by the specified deadline. Refer to the Monroe County Cross Country web site for details.

2. On the day of the meet, each runner shall wear the proper bib number as prescribed in a listing handed out to the coach with the bib numbers since team scoring is automated.

3. Meet duties for modified coaches will be the same as those assigned to their varsity teams.

4. A modified coaches meeting will be held near the finish line, 30 minutes before the start of the first modified race. This will also be the modified post-season meeting.

5. For races times, see the race schedule which will be posted on the Monroe County Cross Country website.

6. Modified awards will at most consist of a finish ribbon (or similar) to be awarded at the chute. Special individual or team awards are not made.

L. A FEW TIPS FOR MODIFIED COACHES AT MEETS

1. Have two decks of finish cards and two score sheets, even as an "away" coach.

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2. Start your watch whenever a modified race starts, even as an “away” coach.
3. Make sure your team goes through the proper course *before* the race. Ask other coaches if you are not sure of where the course goes. Carry a course map on the day of the meet.
4. If you are an “away” coach arriving at the meet, find the “home” coach and offer to help.
5. If you are a “home” modified coach, have your helpers lined up in advance.
6. If you are particularly familiar with the course, offer your help to coaches unfamiliar with the course.
7. If you are a “host” coach, arrange time to mark your course in advance of the meet. Take responsibility for the course markings.
8. Have fun with your time at the meet; it will rub off in a positive way on the athletes.

M. MONROE COUNTY LEAGUE MEET SCHEDULE

1. The official schedule is listed on-line. To reach our league schedule, go to the current on-line schedule. You may need to ask your Athletic Director for assistance in this. You may also find this on the Monroe County Cross Country website. You can see your team’s schedule by highlighting your school name in the box at right. You can then refine your search further on the next page.

2. Host schools for each meet are listed as the “home” team. It is your professional responsibility to know if your team is the “home” team. If you are the “home” team, you are responsible for providing all which is necessary for running the meet.

5. The Monroe County Coaches’ Invitational is held on the 2.0- mile-long championship course at Parma Park.

N. COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN COACHES: Use e-mail and other electronic forms of communication to ensure good communication between coaches.

O. AND FINALLY: If you are a new cross country coach, please do not hesitate to contact your county chairperson, your varsity coaches, and other modified coaches for any information you may need. Also, make sure you review the varsity handbook, which is available at the Monroe County Cross Country website.

Good luck on your seasons, everyone, and feel free to contact me if there is anything I can do to make your season the best it can possibly be.

Charlie Lowe, Fairport Modified Cross Country Coach and
Monroe County League Modified Cross Country Chairperson