

So, you think you might wanna run Cross Country?



When it comes to running Cross Country at Assumption, we usually get lots of questions. This handout will hopefully answer those questions, as well as convey a sense of what our team is all about. Questions can also be directed to the Assumption Athletic Dept or Coach Barry Haworth.

Suppose I did want to try out for Cross Country, how does that work?

Cross Country is a no-cut sport, so there are no tryouts. Girls join by showing up and regularly attending practice, starting on July 15. If a girl has a conflict which prevents her from attending that first, or any other practice (e.g. due to vacation), then she should contact Coach Haworth. All information about joining the team is posted at crosscountry.ahsdistance.org.

Participation on any Assumption sports team requires the submission of a completed physical and parent permission form, which may be brought to the Athletics Office or a girl's first practice. These forms are available through the Athletics link at the school's website (www.ahsrockets.org) and from the Athletics office. This form must be turned in before a girl can attend practice.

But wait, isn't Cross Country like umm, hard?

Interesting question. Let's answer it this way ... whether Cross Country is hard or not-so-hard, a large number girls love being a part of our team. We're a very close group that runs but definitely also has lots of fun. Our goal for every girl on the team is that she sees Cross Country as one of her greatest HS experiences. We care about and encourage every girl, and with our team, it's possible to meet many cool, exciting people – which, depending on the year, could involve meeting over 10% of the Assumption student body before the first day of school.

And yes, while running is not an easy sport, we fit the running to the girl and not vice versa, because we get a wide variety of girls, from girls who've been running already for several years to girls with almost literally no athletic background at all. We are not a one-size-fits-all team, every girl on our team is trained on the basis of her ability, age, experience and interest level.

Intriguing, so how do your practices work?

Practice begins on July 15. After mid-August, we transition from our Summer schedule to a Fall schedule. During our Summer practice schedule, the entire team practices together. In late July, we assign girls to one of our two training groups. These groups ultimately determine each girl's Fall practice schedule. We have a more general (JV-like) training group with girls who run 4 days/week (Group B), and a more competitive-minded (Varsity level) training group with girls who run up to 6 days/week (Group A). Girls interested in Group B are free to join that group, but girls can only join Group A if they are assigned to Group A. Any remaining girls are placed in Group B. If we have girls who are interested in eventually transitioning into Group A, then we will work with those girls and discuss what they would need to do in order to make that transition.

Summer practices rotate between Seneca Park, Iroquois Park, E.P. Tom Sawyer Park and Pope Lick Park. When our Fall practice schedule begins, the team typically practices on weekdays at Seneca Park. Monday through Thursday practices for girls in Group A practices start at 3:30 on weekdays (Sat at 9:30am, and 5pm on Sun at EP Tom Sawyer), and Group B practices are 6:00-7:15pm. The girls arrange their own rides to practice (we help facilitate this process as we're able).

Ok, talk to me about Cross Country races.

Everyone on our team runs in no less than 3-4 meets per season, but the meets where anyone will compete is based on her experience and ability. We want our girls to gain competitive experience without necessarily being thrown into the fire, and not only gain experience, but also confidence in their running along with an appreciation for the sport and fitness in general.

All of our Group B girls and some Group A girls compete in low key events that include other developing runners from a small number of schools. This 3 meet series has races which range in distance from 2 to 2.5 miles, and provide a wonderful opportunity for girls with little to no running experience and girls who would rather not compete in a more competitive event.

Many of our Group A girls are interested in and capable of competing in more competitive meets, and so we provide opportunities for these girls to not only participate in more local meets, but also some regional and national class events as well. We always reserve spots in at least one of our out-of-town meets for some of our more promising freshman runners to ensure that they have an opportunity to participate in big events without feeling rushed during their first weeks of training.

Over the years, our girls have competed at meets from Oregon and California on the west coast to North Carolina and New York on the east coast. We compete each year in the Palatine Invitational (Chicago, IL) and Great American Cross Country Festival (Cary, NC), although our schedule won't allow a trip to the Great American race this year. Every several years, the team also competes in New York and California. When the season ends, we provide further training and racing opportunities for girls in what we call our (postseason) Elite Group. Girls in this group will train through late November, early December and can purchase exclusive Elite Group spiritwear. We typically have 25-30 girls from this group compete in the Nike Southeast Regional Championship in Cary, NC, as well, where they attempt to qualify for the Nike Cross Country National Championship in Portland, OR.

Ok, I'm definitely interested, but what do I bring to the first practice?

We recommend that each girl start her season with a new pair of running shoes, something she should use just for training and not for walking around school, the Mall, etc. Running can ultimately be very stressful on the joints and lower legs, and although we will show our girls a variety of stretching and injury prevention routines, a good pair of running shoes can greatly reduce the risk of any problems. Although we leave it up to each family to purchase running shoes on their own, we do encourage our families to consider buying their running shoes at stores that specialize in such shoes, stores like Swags, Fleet Feet, Ken Combs, etc. We also ask each girl to wear a watch and bring her own water bottle to practice as well. There are other things, but these will definitely get you started on the right foot (no pun intended of course ☺).

Our aim is to make the Assumption Cross Country experience as enjoyable as possible for every girl on the team. We have girls with many different abilities and goals, who also tend to be some of the nicest, smartest, happiest, most fun girls around. We're one of the biggest teams in the State, but we strive to be the most competitive and fun team too.

You can learn more about us by visiting our team website at crosscountry.ahsdistance.org or our team twitter account at @AHS_Distance

If we have your contact info on the Fall Sports Interest form, then we'll send you information about Summer practices and everything else.

You can contact Coach Haworth via email at bmhaworth@louisville.edu