

How to score a Cross Country Meet

How to score a meet-Scoring

Low Score Wins: As in golf, the object in cross country is to compete for the lowest score possible. In other words, a team that scores 35 points places ahead of a team that scores 40 points. This means that when two or more teams are competing, the first place team has the lowest score, the second place team has the second lowest score, and the third place team has the third lowest score and so on.

Scores Are Based on the Top Five Finishers -- Although seven to twelve athletes from each team compete at the varsity level and as many athletes as a team has compete at lower levels--e.g., girls junior varsity, boys junior varsity-- only the first five finishers are counted in determining a team's score. For instance, let's say EHS's first five finishers place 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8 in a meet against **Brea**. **Brea's** first five finishers, in turn, place 2, 6, 7, 9, 11. This will illustrate 2 points:

(A) low score wins, and (B) what is called displacement. Let's take a look.

A. Low Score Wins:

EHS	Brea
1	2
3	6
4	7
5	9
8	11
21	35

EHS Wins!

B. Displacement -- In looking at the scoring above, it may have occurred to you that the 10th finisher does not show up in the scoring. What happened to him? First, it is clear that he was a EHS runner because if he ran for **Brea**, he would have been their 5th finisher and earned them 10 points instead of 11. Second, it logically follows that although he does not figure directly in the scoring, he does figure indirectly in that he caused **Brea** to lose 1 point more than it would have without him, i.e., he has displaced a **Brea** runner. Obviously, in close meets displacing can make the difference between winning and losing; hence the 6th and 7th athletes on the same team are just as important as the 1st. While it is exciting and helpful to have a star or two on a cross country team, cross country is still a team sport.

A Lock, Or 3 in the Box -- If you think about it, you probably recognize that as runners are crossing the finish line in a cross country meet between two schools (not in an invitational), there is a point at which one team will clearly win if it has a number of its runners across the finish line before the other school's runners have finished.

The magic number is 3. In any dual (or double dual) meet, a team that takes the first three places (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) has a lock on winning the race because even if its 4th and 5th finishers are, at the very worst, 11th and 12th (remember, each team has seven runners who can score or displace) in the race, the opposing team cannot possibly score lower. Take a look:

EHS	Brea
1	4
2	5
3	6
11	7
12	8
29	30

EHS wins by 1 point!

Coaches Note: As you can see this score was close. In the event a race ends in a tie the winner is determined by the position of the #6 runner from both teams. The team with the highest sixth place runner is declared the winner.

But Lower Division Races Have More Than One Team?

Up to this point we have given examples of the scoring of varsity races in which only the top twelve runners on each team in a competition compete. In other words, a varsity dual meet has a maximum of 24 runners, a triangular meet has 36 runners. What happens at the lower levels--like junior varsity races in which any number of runners can compete?

Scoring is essentially the same as at the varsity level. Low score wins and the first five finishers are counted in the score while the 6th and 7th runners may displace. In fact, the only difference at the lower levels is that once the 7th runner from a given team crosses the finish line, no more runners from that team may displace runners from the opposing team(s) and thereby affect the score of the opposing team. Let's try another example with Brea.

Let's say that the EHS junior varsity takes the first 11 places in the race. **Brea** takes 12, 13, and 14. EHS 15 and 16. Brea takes 17 and 18. (Remember, once five runners from each team have finished, the scoring is completed.) On the first inspection, it would appear that **Brea's** score is 74: the sum of 12, 13, 14, 17, 18. But once EHS's 7th runner crosses the finish line, no more EHS finishers can displace **Brea** runners. In short, so long as **Brea** has a minimum of 5 runners, each of those runners is automatically awarded the next five places after the 7th EHS runner. This is called a sweep, in this case for EHS and, in terms of scoring can occur at the varsity level as well as at lower levels. The actual scoring in this instance is shown in the example below.

EHS	Brea
1	8
2	9
3	10
4	11
5	12
15	35

EHS wins by the lowest cross country score possible and Brea loses by the highest cross country possible.

What About Invitationals? -- In an invitational and similar cross country competitions--e.g., CIF finals--a great many teams run against each other in a given race. Once again, however, it's still low score that wins, and only the first five finishers for a given team count in the scoring. Further, at the varsity level, each team may still enter only its top seven runners in a varsity race. Therefore, at the varsity level, scoring in an invitational is exactly like scoring in a dual or triangular meet. Some invitationals run their races on a grade level format--seniors vs. seniors, juniors vs. juniors, etc.

Results--Race results take time to compile. Meet officials receive place cards and use them to calculate team scores and individual times. These results are made available as soon as possible after each race.

Awards--No awards are given at dual meets, only invitationals. At invitational meets awards are usually given for individuals and team performance's. Individual awards may be given in a finish chute, after each race is completed, or at the end of the meet.

Who We Compete Against:

CIF Section – Southern Section

League – Century Conference (Crestview League)

Schools in the Crestview League

Esperanza
Canyon

Brea
Foothill

Schools in the North Hills League

El Dorado
Villa Park

El Modena
Yorba Linda