

Cross Country Racing Tips

by Coach Mike Reif

- **Think of each race as an opportunity to move toward your goal for the season** and to see where you are at fitness wise as a result of your training. In most cases a race will serve as an opportunity to work on a specific aspect of your training for future races.
- **Remind yourself that you've done the work.** ... the pace the miles ... the intervals ... the speed work in practice sessions. This is not much different. Now you're just going to put some of these things together and just do the best you can. You're going to give it a good effort to accomplish a personal goal for the day. That may or may not be a personal best but you should have a clear goal and purpose.
- **Warm-up well.** Get the body hot and stretched out without exerting too much energy. Do some strides for quick turn over. Do a tempo run for 1/4 - 1/2 mile like we usually do before intervals or repetitions to be real ready.
- **Know the course.** Visually run thru it once or twice before the race - ask questions if you're unsure of a turn or where a particular mile mark is.
- **Try to run as even a pace as possible.** The tendency is to start fast with the crowd and hang on. A better plan is to get out comfortably according to your goal pace, settle in and relax - maintain your pace and work your way up - assuming you're not in the lead. Push hard the last mile.
- **When and if the going gets tough, focus on your form and leg turn over.** Maintain a fast turn over -even if it means reducing stride length. You should average 90-100 strides per leg per minute. Lower leg turn over generally means you're over striding.
- **Be aggressive on varying terrain.** The ups and downs, turns are always a challenge. Don't be timid. **Attack!**
- **Vary stride length and arm swing action according to the terrain. Use quick feet** going up hills and around corners. Pump the arms with quick short burst to drive up hills. Drop the arms some going up, you may want to roll them when coming down hills.
- **Pick up speed before going up a hill!** Let the momentum carry you up with quick leg turn over.
- **Accelerate just before the top of hills and for a short while once over the top!** Let the momentum push you down the hill. It will also discourage your competitors.
- Run the **tangents!** Run the shortest distance between points!
- **Pass Aggressively!** No time to talk. Zip past competitors for a few yards and settle back into your pace.
- **Have an extended kick. Don't** hold back for the last 100 meters.
- **Relax and have a good time!** That's what this is all about. Congratulate your team mates, competitors and yourself for a good effort.
- **Think positive.** A positive attitude goes a long way to help you and your teammates. Use the positive aspects of your training and your race to your advantage. Focus on what you do or did well. Develop a plan on what you need to work on. **Believe in yourself**