

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AN ATHLETE

1. **SPIRIT OF COMPETITION.** Are you persistent and consistent? Can you say that competition fires you up to do your best every time? We remember athletes of the past by their determination and desires to be the best they could.
2. **COACHABILITY.** Can you take criticism and not always be looking for an alibi? Are you a "know-it-all" or are you doing your best to improve? Does the coach run the program, or do you do your own thing within the structure of the practice?
3. **WILLINGNESS TO PRACTICE.** Do you want to improve? Are you willing to put in long, hard hours of practice necessary to improve? Are you willing to practice year round to be a champion?
4. **WILLINGNESS TO MAKE THE NECESSARY SACRIFICES.** This means conditioning, and conditioning is not fun. If there is no pain, there is no gain. When two runners of equal ability meet, the winning runner will have conditioning to thank for the victory.
5. **ABILITY TO THINK UNDER FIRE.** Can you exclude from your mind everything except the work to be done at the moment? This requires concentration, and concentration requires practice.
6. **ABILITY.** We do not all have it to the same extent but we can make up for a lack of it in some of the above-mentioned areas.

The above-mentioned areas do not come easy and do not come all at once to most of us. They can, however, be developed through the cooperation of runner and coach. These areas make for "individual attitude" and "general squad morale."

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER

1. It takes more than showing up for practice. It takes a sense and a spirit of competition at ALL TIMES. Great runners run tough even in practice. Never be satisfied with your time or place in a meet; work to improve.
2. Are you always looking for an excuse when you don't do well? How about saying, "I need to work harder to do a better job." Training is a very important part of cross country. Can you or will you make sacrifices for the team's good as well as your own? This means regular hours, no smoking, no drinking, and no unnecessary strain on your body and its condition.
3. Can you function when the going gets tough? How about the last 400 or 900 in a race? Do you fight for every place you can get, or do you stop running the last 100 meters and lose three or four places to other runners?
4. Can you think about race pace and the task at hand even when others are not? Concentration can make you a better runner.
5. Beat your opponents every time you run against them. Build a mental picture of success and not failure in your mind. Win fairly and give everything you've got in every race. Condition yourself to a fine edge; then hold that edge with hard work and determination in every phase of cross country.

CROSS COUNTRY CREED

A. TEAM VICTORIES

1. You must approach every day in a positive manner.
2. Personal sacrifice rather than individual glory.
3. Think what you can contribute to the team.
4. An all-out desire to win as a team.

B. DEVELOP THE WINNING EDGE

1. Beat every runner you can in every race.
2. Don't stop running until you're in the chute.
3. Be mentally tough when you start to tire - tiredness is a state of mind.
4. Develop the desire to excel - push yourself.
5. Give 100% of yourself to the program and its goals - be a leader.
6. Never back down from the pain barrier - run through it.
7. See yourself as a winner and work toward that end.

C. COMPLETE CONDITIONING - PHYSICAL AND MENTAL

1. Be in better physical shape than your opponents through hard work.
2. Work on your strength, weight training, and extra mileage before and during the season.
3. Keep a mental consistency whether winning or losing. Personal improvement is important.

D. MENTAL CONTROL

1. Know your opponents - best runner to seventh man.
2. Know your pace - maintain a steady flow of energy, not one fast mile and die. The winner of the race is the individual who carried the fastest pace and died the least at the end.
3. Know you've given 100% during the race and not held back anything. An all-out effort does not allow 100 meter speed in the last sprint for the chute.
4. Know your teammates - their strengths and weaknesses. Try to help them perform better by encouragement.
5. Lead by example. See yourself as a winner - not #1 man or individual winner but as a team member willing to do whatever you can to bring success to the team as a whole.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE COACH

The coach is an important part of every team. Plan on the coach having favorites. Favorites are good team members who feel that the overall success of the team is more important than individual success. Favorites give 100% all the time. Coaches have many ways to show their approval of your efforts. Some put an arm around you and pat you on the back while others may praise your progress. Your coach wants you to do your best and not fail in your endeavors.

A coach's ability is not shown by being outspoken or overaggressive. A coach that drives you harder than you expect, criticizes your running, and demands the most out of you thinks you can do a better job and wants to help you. The coach that works you and drives you wants you to run well in the meets, but is looking for a team member willing to give 100% to the program rather than an individual champion.

Don't wait for the coach to teach hustle - **"YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS!"** Coaches can develop runners but not leaders. Be aggressive in practice, encourage your teammates, make the extra effort time and time again. Talk to the gripers - **YOU MAY BE A LEADER.**

Your coach is in charge of the program and his position should not be made more difficult by your behavior. Treat him the way you would want to be treated if your positions were reversed.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR TEAMMATES

Be in condition. Conditioning is probably the most dreaded aspect of distance running. A runner must be willing to suffer a certain amount of pain every day in order to increase his physical condition. Remember - **"NO PAIN = NO GAIN."** When two runners of equal ability compete, the runner with the higher endurance level will win. Excellent conditioning allows the runner to perform at a steady rate for the entire run.

Rejoice in the success of your fellow runners. Share with them their joys and sorrows. Take an active interest in their running career with a few words of encouragement in good times and bad times. It is inspiring to know that someone else is interested in your success.

Refrain from any activity that will distract you or detract from the program. Training rules are not just there to read and joke about. In order to succeed, you must be mentally and physically tough!

