

Incompetence ruled at NCS meet

THE CHAOS WAS SURPASSED only by the utter helplessness of those attempting to rectify the fast deteriorating situation. Of all events, I did not expect the Northern California Cross Country Championships to be in such a state of disarray.

Surely the best runners and teams in this section of the state deserved better. The site, Crystal Springs, though one of the best in the country for cross country, will not hold fond memories for some Bay Area coaches and journalists.

As the afternoon of competition drew to a close, those in charge of the meet either had left or begged ignorance as to why a controversy over the official boys' champion was brewing. The sad thing was that there was no real way of confirming or denying the coaches' and runners' claims.

The girls' race went smoothly, but as the boys completed their 2.93 miles, I could tell there was going to be confusion later. In two previous meets, the North Coast Section 2-A and 4-A races in Concord and the Meet of Champions at Tilden Park in Berkeley, I had seen flaws, but those at the NorCals were much worse.

The big problem at Crystal Springs was at the finish line. All runners had been given the usual sticker, which was affixed to their uniforms. They surrendered them upon completing the race.

But instead of typing the names and giving different colored stickers like at the Meet of Champions, the NorCal officials instead allowed the runners to scribble their own names, some of which were illegible.

Most big races will have a large poster board with numbers from 1 to 100 or more. But not here. They had apparently ripped a cardboard box into small strips, seven in all, with no numbers. Tags were supposed to be put in two columns of 10 each, but this wasn't always followed. Sometimes it was eight, others nine and 10. It took a painstaking effort to figure out in which place a runner finished.

But the biggest problem came as the runners went through the chutes which directed them to the scorers' table. Because of the close proximity of most of the runners, two chutes were used. Ideally, when one was filled, it was closed and the second used. But those in control failed to have runners filter past the scorers' table in an orderly fashion. There was some question whether the chutes were properly controlled.



**Blaise
Castren**

Mission San Jose High Coach Jack Marden figured his number four and five runners, Bruce Mulcahy and Mike Rivers, were somewhere in the neighborhood of 50th and 55th place. Later he learned they had been put in 75th and 80th.

When Mulcahy passed through the chute, an official failed to remove his tag. Long after he was past the table, Marden spotted this and had to run back and turn in the tag. No one knows if it was placed in the correct spot.

The reason was because there was no backup system. Not only did this miff Marden, but also Monta Vista of Cupertino Coach Leroy Bumbaca.

"I would like to write a complaint about this and it won't be nice," moaned Bumbaca after his team finished an unofficial third behind Los Gatos and Bella Vista. "The Central Coast Section meet always has backup tags, but we had nothing here."

For a meet of this stature, which attracts runners from Monterey to the Oregon border, there should have been as many as two backup means to confirm the actual placings.

In addition to the stickers, runners should have been given tags as they crossed the finish line, telling them and their coaches in which place they finished. This was used at the Meet of Champions. Also, a camera should have been rolling as the runners completed the race. This would have used about five minutes of film for each race, nothing to break the CIF's coffers.

But instead, coaches and journalists had to cram into a small shack while meet officials pleaded ignorance as to what was transpiring. The man in charge of scoring, Vern Thornburg, one of three CCS officials delegated to run the meet, left immediately for the Big Game. Good man. In addition, those in charge of herding runners through the chutes left well before results were posted.

That left two men by the names of Plato Yanicks and Don Dooley to tell us what was going on. They might as well have been on Pluto for all the good they were.

"We really don't know," was their stock answer to most questions.

Without any backups, there wasn't much hope for Marden or Bumbaca to successfully plead their cases. Yanicks invited them over to his house Saturday night to iron things out, but what could be done?

"We double-checked times and they seemed to work out," said Marden. "But it was impossible in my mind. I just don't see how we could be sure."

The Central Coast Section isn't the only one which made the end of the cross country season less than pleasant for some. For it was the North Coast Section which was to blame for the monumental blunder of three major races in the span of eight days.

The division meets were slated for Nov. 15 and the Meet of Champions one week later on Nov. 22. This is the usual spacing for such meets. But what the NCS failed to realize until it was too late was that the NorCals were scheduled for Nov. 22.

This meant the Meet of Champions would have to be moved. The only available day was Tuesday, Nov. 18. This meant runners had just two and three days rest between meets. Not very ideal.

For the most it didn't make a great deal of difference. For example, Mission's Jay Marden was just as dominating even with the short intervals. The competitor it may have hurt the most, though, was Warrior Bruce Mulcahy.

Mulcahy was inactive over the last three weeks of the regular season because of a hip injury. His first race was the NCS 4-A meet in which he ran well and finished eighth. But he needed more work.

Just two days off proved devastating. He short circuited at the Meet of Champions and was the last runner to finish. Mulcahy improved a little for the NorCals with three days rest, but MSJ needed him higher than 75th. When healthy, he usually was close to No. 2 man Steve Wogsland (25th at the NorCals).

"I could have used some really hard workouts," he admitted after the race. "I was tired, really tired. The really big hill just killed me."