

Cross Country for High School Coaches as I see it.

Forrest Jamieson Palo Alto (California) High

Foreword

A lot of us coaches are as naive as can be about this matter of getting information from books by "authorities", advice from experts, or simply conversation with someone who has been successful. We expect to get just about the same degree of fulfillment from such contacts as a person expects to get when he confidently hands his druggist the doctor's prescription for medicine. Successfulness, I suggest, cannot be stated in words by one person to be read by another with the expectation of a 100% translation as in the doctor and druggists case. The variables, obvious in coaching persons and not events, defy such simplification, yet many coaches believe that such blueprints are to be found. With this in mind allow me to state that what follows is most certainly not such a blueprint nor is it even remotely intended to be such. This paper is intended to serve as an "idea man" and it is hoped that what I have written will make the reader so dissatisfied with the content that he will attempt to explore the subject deeper and at a wiser source.

I have organized the material as I thought it might interest a high school coach who knew little about cross country but who might like to give it a try. I am dogmatic in much of what I offer as opinion and I willingly admit that there are points that are debatable but this is not a doctoral thesis wherein I would give all sides to the question. The title is not an accident, although the paper could be; I would emphasize the "as I see it" portion. I sincerely hope that you get something from this, if nothing else, at least an argument for me to answer.

CROSS COUNTRY FROM AN ADMINISTRATION VIEW

A sport should not be introduced into the framework of any educational institution unless its purpose can be justified to the satisfaction of administrators, coaches, and participants. We shall divide our statements into two parts; one expressing the purpose of cross country as it might interest an administrator and the other expressing the purpose of cross country as it might interest a coach. For the sake of clarity the question-answer device will be used to present the ideas.

Question: "As an administrator I am interested in knowing exactly what educational values such a sport has for the boy?"

Answer: Cross country is not a "glory-sport". It would be unusual if more than a few score spectators were to witness a meet. The appeal of the sport has to be sold on a basis other than acclaim or popularity from the spectator point of view. We believe that this is important from an educational point of view.

C Cross country is a sport where slow, careful building and faithful abherence to training rules are accented. The boy under proper leadership soon learns that he is not "doing the coach a favor" when he gives up smoking, late hours, etc. He learns that he is often his own worst enemy. He learns to resist the desire to quit. He learns to respect WORK. This is all to say that the training program of such a sport can teach the participant the meaning of self-discipline.

Cross country teaches self-confidence, with self-discipline and a respect for work background servants. The participant learns that he is slowly but surely building himself. He realizes that there is nothing sensational about this growth, only that it is predicated on faithful adherence to daily training. We will risk making the statement that this sport is usually the only sport on the prep calendar that places more importance on consistent daily training than on that usual common denominator of athletic success, natural ability. The confidence that comes from this kind of experience is far different from that where circumstance or "luck" in a contest enhances self-confidence.

To summarize this briefly then; cross country teaches a respect for work, self-discipline, and self-confidence in an atmosphere more nearly resembling life. In education we attempt to teach those things and activities that have the greatest carry over values. Not many of our charges will compete before a group resembling an athletic spectator crowd in later life, but a good many will strive to do their best at some comparatively unheralded task and will need to call upon the lessons of respect for work, self-discipline, and self-confidence.

Question: Is this an expensive sport from the budget point of view?

Answer: The greatest cost involved is the cost of transportation. Cross country has the lowest per-capita cost of any sport on the athletic calendar. The boys buy their own shoes and use the track team's equipment.

Question: How can I best go about getting my principal to allow me to have a cross country team?

Answer: High school administrators are a reasonable lot on the whole, but whenever I think asking something of them I am reminded of a former commanding officer that I had in the Navy. The minute that I stepped through the hatch leading into

his cabin he would shout "NO!" and then in a soft growl would follow with, "Yes, Jamieson, what was it that you wanted?". Very few of us drop in on the boss to pass the time of day, we usually want something and there are a lot of excellent school administrators that follow this philosophy--the answer is "NO!" unless they can be convinced otherwise. What I am saying is that a good many administrators are going to say that big NO just about the moment that you walk through the door with a suggestion that cross country be added to the school's schedule of sports. You had better be prepared to convince the boss that the answer should be something besides a no. To do this you had better know something about this sport : and something besides practical techniques; you had better know why you want this sport in the program and why from the standpoint of a educator, not just from a track coach's viewpoint. The boss can be sold, you know, even after he has said no!

Question: What are some of the arguments that you would use in attempting to sell a reluctant or skeptical administrator the idea of adding cross country to the school sports program?

Answer: I doubt that any high school coach could find a better opening argument than the one that came out of Washington within this past year. I refer to the special White House Conference dealing with the status of our national peacetime physical fitness. The grave concern of our Chief Executive for the apparent trend of our young people to become spectators instead of active participants is common knowledge to all of us in education. Those of us that are in public education at the secondary level are in the best position to answer this call to duty. Just what is our duty? It seems to me that we ought to be searching for more ways and means to offer wholesome, challenging athletic program; programs that will extend athletic opportunity to new areas as well as extend the numbers of participants involved. It is my humble suggestion that certain sports, such as football, basketball, and baseball have reached a near-saturation point beyond which any appreciable amount of numerical expansion is impractical. I say this because I have witnessed athletic programs where mere school administration has placed a limit on the number of teams (varsity-junior varsity-freshman-sophomore) and the number of games that could be played. The nature of the other sports, baseball and basketball places natural limits on the number of participants, etc. What we need is to offer new sports that will be attractive to young people. Such a sport is cross country. Its special appeal is that it extends opportunity to an entirely different type of youngster (This type of youngster defies being classified but by and large it can be said that he isn't the kind that is interested in football, either because of temperment or body structure, or both. Usually this lad is one that is neglected in the usual high school athletic program. The first three lads across the finish line in the California State Meet mile run (Larrieu, 4.20.1; Neal 4.20.4, and Monqingo 4.20.8) all weighed less than 135 pounds!

Question: Who will coach cross country if the track coach has to coach football?

Answer: The most important part of the cross country program is the leadership that is assigned to the sport. Usually the track coach is the one who will do the best job of coaching the sport because it will benefit his program and he will be able to translate the carryover from cross country to track the following spring. If the track coach just simply cannot handle the team because of other fall sports commitment, and if there is a former distance runner on the faculty who would do the task all may go well. If the track coach isn't particularly excited about cross country it would be just as well to forget about instituting the sport in you school. We say this reluctantly because there is always the chance that once the coach gets into the sport he will gain some insight into what is involved, but this is

questionable. As much as we like cross country and would like to see it spread about, it has been our experience that it is best not to have a program at all unless the coach sees the purpose for such a program and knows how to interpret it in terms of young high school students. It is not a sport to be assigned just anyone merely because he happens to be available for a coaching period at a certain hour, etc. The program dies a quick death under such leadership.

Question: What would be wrong with coaching football and cross country at the same time?

Answer: The above statement has suggested what our answer might be to this question, but because there are so many coaches in small schools that have no other choice but that handling both sports at one time, a comment should be made concerning such a possibility. Our reaction is that the sport needs someone who give all of his time to this kind of coaching. Regardless of what others may think coaching this sport involves leadership more than any other element. Leadership cannot be effected when the leader is absent. Of course, you can tell your men to do certain tasks and then walk off and leave them. Also, it is true that any amount of running is going to be more constructive than none at all. But the important thing is that you do not know your man and what his peculiarities are unless you watch him over a reasonable period of time. This is an individual sport and it involves a coach knowing each participant as well as he can. The short answer to the above is, yes, you can coach both sports, but do not expect too much from your cross country team, or better yet, don't expect to build much interest in your sport because cross country will flourish only with personal coaching attention. It is too demanding a taskmaster to expect youngsters who are taking an initial interest in the sport to discipline themselves without careful, on the spot observant leadership. Yet, some running in the fall is better than none at all, so if you can't manage it any other way, you have no choice but to hope that one of the participants will offer the leadership.

Question: Won't all this training, two months in the fall, and then almost three months in the spring cause the participant to become stale?

Answer: The answer to this question is one that holds the key to the whole matter of cross country and how practical it is for the high school program. There are a good many people in the coaching profession that claim to be concerned about over-working youngsters. They place age limits, time limits, weight limits, and in general by their application of these limitations suggest that it is necessary to keep an ever-careful eye out for that demon coach who will "exploit" his charges and undermine their health by asking them to do tasks that are too far above their capabilities, etc. This amounts to a negative philosophy in that such restrictions are legislated to take care of the boy who is in poor health. It is a philosophy of leaning over backward so as to be careful not harm anyone and in so doing this harms the great number of youngsters who need a positive, yes, even aggressive type of program for their physical development. Now this doesn't mean that we are the "rugged individualist school" that suggests "throw them in the water and let them sink or 'swim'". We do believe that youngsters today need to be more active in their athletic lives because they are not engaged in anything approaching physical labor in their home lives. For us to further this condition by over protecting them amounts to a national crime on the parts of many of us who claim to be "physical education experts". The fact that we now have more boys today in this country setting marks in running events than were ever thought possible in the days before the automobile became so much a part of a high school boy's life is evidence that young people readily accept the challenge of hard training and that there are coaches ready to preach the philosophy of work.

We believe that a youngster must be brought about slowly to realize that work is the answer to much of his probable success. We usually tell our newcomers about the man who lifted a new-born calf at birth and thereafter each day until some months later he was amazed to note that he was able to lift a weight much greater than he thought he was capable of lifting. So it is with cross country. We start slowly and build a little at a time. After even two weeks the participant is surprised to look back upon his first workouts which once seemed "hard", etc. What has this to do with going stale? Simply this. If a careful base is built underneath a participant it is the best insurance against him going stale that we know of, assuming that "stale" means to go considerably beneath a certain established level of achievement. The more time that is put into training lessons the possibility of a boy becoming a victim of "staleness" which after all may be called a plateau of mental and physical achievement. Mental attitude is extremely important to the participant of cross country. He, the participant, must feel that he is achieving a growth of a personal nature. Read the question on weight-lifting for a better illustration of this point.

Question: What about an age limit concerning participation in cross country?

Answer: We would no more place an age limitation on participation in cross country than we would on basketball, swimming, or regular track events. The emphasis should be upon the leadership (coaches) not to ask a boy to run in a competition that will discourage the boy. The boy just won't be able to keep up with a mature lad if he is immature. The damage that will be greatest will be the psychological damage and not any physiological harm. The young lad just stops running when he gets tired. We attempt to keep novice runners competing in their own class to answer this.

CROSS COUNTRY FROM A COACHING VIEW

Question: How do you go about getting a team started if the sport is new to your school?

Answer: In the first place don't expect miracles in the way of results the first year that you institute the sport. A lot of groundwork has been already done for you in that the mile run is the favorite track and field event of the American public (I'll wager that more has been written in American sport pages about the mile run and mile runners than about the four next most popular track events and their record-holders).

A lot depends on what kind of opportunity one has to introduce the subject of cross country. What we need is a short, documentary film on the history of the mile run. Such a film could be shown before an entire student body and could be followed up with a film on the importance of cross country training and relating it to success in the distance and middle-distance events. Without this, however, any kind of meeting is essential to spread this word. I have talked with junior high students just prior to their entering our senior high school (They all know about Landy, Bannister, and now Bailey). My talk is usually very general and not technical at all; it is intended to inspire some youngster to accept the challenge of running and to begin that challenge by going out for cross country in the fall of the year. We must be salesmen! We must be proud of the product that we are selling. Youngsters are waiting to be sold; they have been in contact with indifference or with the attitude of mild interest that borders on indifference, enough to know that or sense that it usually spells mediocrity. They want to work with someone that has enthusiasm and who wants to help them do something for themselves. Our youngsters are not the automobile-mad group that they are so often presented to be in caricature. They are, by and large, ready and willing to work and to achieve but they need someone that has confidence in what he is doing and confidence in the ideal that young people are worth believing in, etc. I had a splendid group of young men to work with this past year; they worked as I doubt any other group of high school lads ever worked before, yet, if anyone were to ask what they had in common, I would be forced to admit that they were such individuals that the only thing that they had in common was that each one had his own personal automobile! I cannot be convinced that the automobile routine that we hear so much need be a negative problem for our young people.

The above brings us to the point--just what are we trying to sell as salesmen? Are we trying to sell cross country because it is a necessary aid to building faster milers, or are we trying to sell the sport because the President recently reminded us that as leaders of young people we owe an obligation to our national welfare that may be answered by offering the sport as a check against a growing tendency for our young population to become less interested in athletic competition? I would not refute the fact that either of the two above reasons are important within certain narrow, restricted viewpoints, but I prefer to believe that I am a salesman of SELF-CONFIDENCE, SELF-DISCIPLINE, AND RESPECT FOR HARD WORK to young people who need these commodities very desperately in this highly competitive society of ours.

Oh, yes, what are the specific ways to get men out? Posters, talk to youngsters in P. E. classes. One year I waited at the bicycle rack in the morning and asked each lad how long he had been riding his bike. I am not sure that there is any great correlation between bicycle riding and cross country success but by asking some of the boys and telling them that I was looking for lads that were active I came up with a few ideas.

The bicycle idea is almost a desperation method, I admit, but someone starting out may find it useful. It is strictly a first year measure as far as I am concerned.

Now that I am in the regular physical education department I have better opportunities to watch out for potential candidates. Another item, and one that I had nothing to do with starting, has to do with a practice that we have in our physical education classes. We have a pre-conditioning period of some two weeks for all of our classes. After a doctor's check-up the first week of school we start all of our lads through a certain basic program of conditioning and classifying them. One of the things that we require is for them to do some running because it is obvious that any physical activity is predicated on a running base. We have a short period of calisthenics and then we have them run around a certain area (in our case a 540 yard practice field) and ask them to run for two minutes without stopping, if they can. In this way we do not insist upon a certain distance, but merely blow the whistle at the start of the two-minute period and blow the whistle again at the end of the period. We very purposely refrain from setting any limits or minimum requirements in these "warm-up" runs. The idea is to be as permissive as possible because you will have some lads in the class (the very stout lads, etc.) that will not take to running because of a traditional dislike for running as such. We have discovered that about ten percent of the class will be conscientious and will put everything into they are asked to do. These boys will compete at every opportunity and these are the boys that you should be on the lookout for in such a P. E. activity. We usually increase the time limit from two-minutes up to three and then by the end of the pre-conditioning period a four minute period of continuous running. The boys that don't care too much about competing may still be walking and running at the initial two minute rate at this time. I have discovered some very talented youngsters with this kind of set-up, but not 100% recruiting. I usually mention cross country to these lads that do well, but the very name "cross country" frightens them and I know that there is a lot of talent that we are not utilizing. If you have such a program it will be very productive in its selectivity by and large.

The best method of getting youngsters out takes place after you have established the sport and this involves the members of the cross country team doing the recruiting for you. They usually are in a much better position to know all elements of cross country requirements after a year on the team and they also know their peers better than you do and can fairly accurately judge whether a lad can do the physical work required and whether he has the proper mental potential. Of all systems of selectivity I consider this most effective. The only thing that the coach need do is to constantly be after the members on the team to get new members. I will be starting out again to build again this year (Five out of my first seven cross country men were seniors) and I am thinking seriously of setting up a special award for the member of the team that can bring in the most recruits, etc.

Question: Where do you work out if you do not have park nearby?

Answer: The best answer to this depends on a lot of things. First, if it is possible, you should attempt to find a place that will afford your runners a soft running cushion underfoot. This will be explored in another question but suffice to say that it is desirable if you can obtain it. If you can't have it, then try the next best thing, of course. We use the outside perimeter of a large football practice field. We don't get in the way of the football players, nor they in ours

because we use only the outside area---the grassiest area outside. If you have no other place the inside of your football field will be sufficient although it would be ideal if you could use a park where there is a long stretch of grass or a meadow and gently rolling terrain, etc., but only one high school in a hundred is located so fortunately. One thing is certain, a coach that is determined to have cross country will have the sport no matter what discouraging obstacles appear on the surface, and on the other hand, the indifferent coach will allow the best facilities to go-awasting!

Training for cross country is one thing, you can train during the week on the high school football practice field, but where are you to hold your cross country runs. If you hold them on the school grounds proper the chances are that you will have keep circling a lot to prevent the course from crossing paved streets, etc. Some coaches tell me that the only way to make cross country attractive is to hold the meets on the school grounds proper and have them start and finish before and during the halves of the home football games. This, they argue, allows more persons to witness the spectacle and enhances interest in the sport. I violently disagree with such reasoning, personally, and for the following reasons. I feel that by having cross country offered at half-time to a football game you are placing cross country in the position of being a poor man's sport, another form of entertainment to compete with the song-leaders and pom pon girls for attention. In offering the sport within such a framework you place an importance upon the spectator value of the sport. Cross country is not intended to be a spectator sport--that is one of the items that dignifies the sport as being something different and apart from such sports as football and basketball. Cross country deserves its own special atmosphere and that special atmosphere is not necessarily built around spectators or the lack of them. In this section of California we have instituted what we call "cross country centers". A cross country center is a special locale that is especially adapted to the aims of cross country running. It offers a changing scenery, run over a grassy surface, with only slight, rolling hills, etc. We have asked various golf courses to allow us to hold a cross country center once a year (Stanford University offers their facilities to Northern California high schools on four different occasions), usually on a Thursday. We have as many as twelve to fifteen schools attend these centers and have the competition broken into different categories (Varsity-junior varsity, and Freshman-Sophomore) and into different heats. By scheduling different centers in different geographical areas we are able to have as many as 700 participants viewing on a single Thursday afternoon. By not asking any one golf course to put up with the kind of organized chaos that such an affair entails we can usually expect to find a fair number of locales brave enough to chance us on such an infrequent basis. We feel that having a cross country meet on such courses and with such an atmosphere of interest (In some cases, almost two hundred cross country runners at one center) the cross country athlete feels a pride in his sport and a feeling of dignity that could not be had if he were part of a second-hand spectacle such a he would be running during the half of a football game.

Question: How do you get them started once you get them out?

Answer: As we mentioned before a principal object in cross country coaching is to get young people to gain insight into what their own real capabilities are, i.e., self-confidence. We start out with an easy program. We usually ask these lads to run a 4-4-4 arrangement with light weight lifting interspersed in the first rest period and rope-climbing in the second rest period. By 4-4-4, I mean that we ask them to run four minutes without stopping. No special pace and no special distance to cover, yet you should put them over a measured course instead of letting them to run about aimlessly any old direction. After the first four minute period you have a 20-25 minute rest period before attempting the second four minute period of continuous running. The same 20-25 rest period between the second and third (or last)

four minute session is recommended to start with. As stated before, we have them push weights during the first rest period and climb the rope during the second rest period. What weights do we ask them to lift? We ask them to lift the bar bells with 45-55 pounds as many times as they can before they start to strain or use their legs to "kick" up the weight. Then they stop, pass the weight on to another mate (I have three sets of bar bells and plan to get more) who does likewise. Each person should press these weights in sets of three and with the number of repetitions determined by his first non-straining effort (first set). The weight should be pressed from a standing position and from chest to directly overhead with the elbows completely locking and unlocking with each repetition. We do not want the lad to strain in doing these because we are interested only in building muscle tone and not in building the size of the muscle. By doing them fast and without strain he should achieve muscle tone. Even without an attempt at doing these repetitions with an straining effort the lad will naturally build up his repetition-count over a period of days.

The rope climb is another item that we believe in because it also builds two sided strengths (Being right-handed or left-handed is fine for football, basketball, or baseball players, but in running one uses the left side of his upper body as much as the right side and fatigue will creep in wherever the body is weakest) and thus shores up the part of the body that most runners neglect.

We keep pushing up the total minute count up little by little. We do not set up an unrelenting schedule of progression because we may find that a certain day is too humid for a tough workout and we will relent from our goal of ever-increasing running requirements for a day or even two or three days. We wouldn't have all the boys moving at a lock-step pace either. Some boys might be on a pattern of 8-8-6, while some of the slower developers would be at 6-6-4, etc. We have stated often enough that we believe in work, yet we hasten to add at this point that the amount of work done must always be a matter of judgement on the coach's part. That is why a coach must always be on hand--so that he may be able to observe and by experienced observation gain insight into the capabilities of his boys. The more that he is around them the more he learns about their potential and limitations, etc. Last year we had what I honestly consider to be the best high school cross country unit ever to represent a secondary school in the history of our country. We were running 14-12-14 sets in December. I should explain that as time goes on and you progress from the original 4-4-4 plan you begin to "put the screws on" little by little. You ask that they cover a certain distance, you add more minutes to their elapsed running total time, you cut down or compress the rest-period intervals. Mainly you are interested in the amount of mileage that cover along with the amount of total elapsed time. You want them to near the end of the cross country season to cover at least five miles of distance in at least 30 minutes of running. Add to this the little game of modified touch tackle that we play after each workout and you have somewhat of an idea of what we do in the fall.

Question: Just how important is a grass surface for training as compared with training on a running track?

Answer: The idea of running on the grass for training and for cross country is certainly not a new one; not even a modern one, but the Swedish athletes were the first to use a system (Fartlek) that made an issue of this point. Other training programs have endorsed this principle and I am certain that there isn't a worthwhile training program that doesn't insist upon grass or soft surface as a must in its basic tenets. I first read about Fartlek in Track and Field News in 1949 and ever since that time I have a great subscriber to this practice. We do not run ANY kind of practice on the running track anymore. I mean exactly that--none! The only

time that our boys run on a track is the day of a meet. I usually attempt to put over this idea to the boys by pulling out a rubber band and calling their attention to it. I'll say:

"See this rubber band? (Stretch rubber band until it becomes quite taut). How long do you suppose that this band will last if I keep this tension on it? Fairly long, eh? Well, how much longer would it last if I were to do this to it (Loosen the rubber until it becomes slack and then tighten it again, repeating the process of tightening and loosening it while talking)? It will last many more times as long if I give it even brief opportunities to recover its elasticity, won't it? So it is with your leg muscles. You must give the muscles a chance to recover in about the same manner. Running on a softer, more resilient surface will allow the muscle a better chance to recover than if required to work constantly over a harder surface."

It has been my experience with young boys that leg troubles are a main factor in impeding progress--what I mean is that the younger the runner the more important is this factor of leg trouble, etc. I have noticed less leg troubles and a greater ability to absorb more work assignments; hence a noticeable gain in strenght over an even shorter period of time than when I trained them over harder running surfaces. I discovered that the muscle could take a much greater percentage of work depending on when the last time the grassy practice field was watered. When it dried out just a little the boys would start to complain. Now we welcome the day that the maintenance man waters the football field with adjoining track or the practice field. We used to worry about him getting the running track too wet with a runaway sprinkler, etc., now he can't get the grassy area too wet--well, not quite, anyhow.

A young man from a small high school north of here just ran a 1.53.8 half-mile in our recent State Meet. This is a remarkable time for any lad but some of the coaches thought it was all the more exceptional because the lad's high school didn't have a running track! I claim that it was the best thing that ever happened to that young man. He was forced to run over a fairly good growth of grassy surface for his daily training program. I don't know where the lad will attend college or university but it wouldn't surprise me to learn that he will come up with his first leg troubles when he attends some well-equipped school!

Another thing that I have observed is that running barefooted is not such a bad idea if you have a surface that will allow it. I can't tell you why I believe that this is a good training device, but four of my top five distance runners seemed to get some value from it. It could be that the canvas and rubber type warm-up shoes create too many blisters or atleast tire the feet in someway. This year we did a lot of running and it was a rare workout that involved less than five miles of work-out. This added work probably made their feet tougher? Anyhow I know that they seemed to enjoy running barefooted than with the traditional type footwear. Of course you must realize that we do run over a very well grassed area that is free of glass; it is nothing like crossing a wheat stubble field barefooted but after three months or so of this running the feet do get rather callous.

Question: Just how practical is all talk about weight-lifting for distance runners; in other words, is this just another "fad" or is there really something to it?

Answers: We believe that there are tremendous training possibilities to be found in weight-lifting for training distance men. However, it isn't a subject that can be covered without a considerable background.

One has to be acquainted with the effect of the European training psychology that started with Fartlek and is being reinforced by Stampfl. We cannot condense all of the important principles of distance training into a few sentences. It has taken over a decade for some of them to be tried and tested and in attempting to describe these ideas by simplifying them causes a lot to be lost in the translation, if what follows could be called a translation. We should say, however, that the greatest change in training distance men took place when the emphasis on coaching changed from one coach telling a participant everything about his training schedule to one where the coach became almost a manager and the participant became his own coach in many respects. The coach became an advisor and not "the know it all" and the participant became more self-sufficient and dependent upon his own intellect, etc. Fartlek, was a beginning of the self-discipline type of training that the Swedes startled the world with their Gunder Haag, etc. The English have mass-produced a kind of training that has borrowed some from Fartlek and added some new principles. All of these European training devices or training schemes have this in common. The participant believes in the value of careful building. He believes in himself rather than in a coach or "expert." He builds up a feeling of self confidence at the same time that he is building himself physically. The strongest point in the European system of distance training has to do with this idea of the runners attitude.

The question above has to do with weight-lifting and how practical it is or is not to high school lads. This is how it fits in with the European principles. Most young boys have already determined their running potential by the amount of activity that they have known in the first thirteen or fourteen years of their lives. This is true only up to a certain point, of course. If a youngster has been sickly and therefore relatively inactive as regards to normal playground activities, etc, the chances of his being able to withstand the physical or psychological demands of a hard-work program are slight. If the youngster has been at least normally active during his infant, early childhood, grade-school days there is every reason to believe that a careful building program will prove challenging while at the same time effective and beneficial. Each youngster is different, as we all know, and some may achieve more "naturally" than others. Some lads differ not only in physical equipment but also in their own awareness of their potential. It is the coach's task to not only build the physical powers of his charges but also to help his charges become aware of their, you might say, "hidden" strengths. This cannot be achieved by assigning all of the members of your group the same kind of work, day after day. All that this does is to allow the coach to observe who has the best physical powers by the mere use of a stop watch and that is something that even a sophomore manager could do as well. What the coach wants to do is to get the various individuals to become aware of some of their strengths. Many of them have abilities that they never dreamed of. Weight-lifting is a useful device to get some of the youngsters to realize this insight or self-confidence. Let us explain how we use weight-lifting in our cross country training. We first start the boys out by having them cover a lot of territory by alternating walking and running. The next day we hope that they will report that they are a little sore so that we may tell them, "Good, that's what we like to hear, now we know that it's doing some good, etc".

We don't want them to be too sore, just enough to satisfy them that they have done something. We always try from the beginning to laugh off the complainer and the whimperer so that the men soon get the idea that complaining is not in keeping with the group spirit. We have found that it is always wise to have a little game of "touch" football before giving up the day. It is something that most of them will look forward to and it has its own method of madness too. We play a kind of game which requires a lot of running. We choose sides and have what amounts to a game of man-to-man touch football. We do not allow the passer to be rushed and this allows him to wait until someone is in the clear before he throws the ball. Sometimes the passer will wait five minutes or more before he sees someone clear enough to throw to. Because we do not want any physical contact we do not allow any blocking and a "one-hand-touch" anywhere on the body keeps down the possibility of injury. This game is used in the middle of the season when the boys have covered three or five miles of workouts. It is enlightening to see these boys really run pell-mell who only ten minutes or so before complained about the routine workout. The moment that THEY become aware that they are doing this after a difficult workout is the moment that they begin to realize confidence in themselves. We have weights out for the boys and tell them weight-lifting is essential to running because we run with our entire body not just our legs. Tiredness in the shoulders can make a runner stop a lot sooner than tiredness in the legs, etc. We keep a chart on the number of times that he (the participant) does each weight-lifting operation. We point out to him that most of us are stronger in the legs than we are in the trunk and for this reason we want to work on the part of body that fatigue will attack first. Naturally each boy will be able to do certain things at a certain rate. We are not concerned with the figure other than to point out to the individual that as each day passes he is getting stronger and stronger. We know that he will gradually improve with the weights and because it is a tangible and measureable thing it is something that a youngster can understand and interpret. He will also progress with his ability to run further each day at an increasingly faster rate. With the careful supervision of the coach the participant that is just starting out will begin to have confidence in himself. It is not that the weight-lifting and running have done so much for him physically as it is that psychologically he is now beginning to become aware of his own strength. You as a coach could talk to him all day about how strong you think he is, etc, but it will never have the impact that the self-knowledge would give. So, in a few words, weight-lifting, as we use it, has its greatest value in that it unleashes the doubt and lack of confidence that so many of lads have. You do not give them a special "trick", you merely place in THEIR hands the key that should unlock their real abilities. The pathetic thing about many of the boys that we have is that they have this strength, have had for a time, are not aware of it, would not believe anyone who might by pure luck suspect that they have it and told them about it, etc. Weight-lifting, rope-climbing, push-ups, pull-ups, leg-lifts, all of these things can be used by the coach to realize the important ingredient of SELF-CONFIDENCE which is the most important factor in each cross country participant's degree of success.

Question: What do you recommend in the way of teaching style to either cross country or distance men?

Answer: I am not a devotee of "form" running. (At least not for high school athletes.) I have listened to coaches yell at their men to do one thing or another with their arms, body lean, etc, but I am personally convinced that they are harming their charges instead of helping them. I have a lot of faith in the ability of the human body to compensate if it is given enough time to. Whenever I have a sophomore quarter-miler or a distance man that appears to be violating some precious tenet of what we as coaches consider to be "correct" form or orthodoxy I try very hard to keep my mouth shut for the time being. I usually wait until the cross country season following that track season before I expect to get result concerning the best "form" from such obvious violators. It is my opinion that if you have a boy run enough miles he will come up with an economical style

of running -- economical to him. How many of you remember Gil Dodds and his threshing machine style? They tell me that Zatopek is another that defies the believers in orthodoxy. If a boy does enough running, and if the boy has normal powers of adjustment he will learn of himself to use his equipment with an efficiency adjustment ability that defies such absurdities as coaches "teaching" style. I believe that if you have a boy run enough miles over a period of time and under enough conditions wherein he will have had sufficient opportunities to test his adaptive powers he will come up with the best and only style suitable for him. Style is something that we as coaches ought not to fool with as much as we do. If we were to get our charges to work more and put in more time on the event the matter of style would absolve itself in many cases. I know that the purists of form will insist that an error has to be corrected as soon as possible and the "right" form instilled thereafter. These people underestimate the capacity of the human body to compensate. I say forget about style in running, just get them out there and keep them running, running, running!

Question: Just what kind of training do you use during the early months of spring just before the season starts, etc?

Answer: We start the boys all over again with the same kind of work that they originally started the cross country season with in the early fall. The only difference is that we don't go as far back as 4-4-4. We probably will be doing a 10-12-10 after they have had a week of just running about getting adjusted from a four to six week lay-off over the end of cross country and the start of the spring season. The same theories are followed; all of the work on grass; absolutely no work on speed as such. We institute a kind of modified Fartlek-type exercise that we run on the inside of our quarter-mile track. This is possible for us because we have a level infield of grass inside the curb of our track. Thus we "make" another track on this inside curb by setting off about six feet in from the curb all around the oval and setting off the area with hurdle and use it in the same fashion as the "inside" track of sawdust and soil that you see here at Edwards Field. It is around this inside "grass" track that we run our modified Fartlek-type exercise. This exercise consists of eight minutes of continuous running. We start them off with a whistle and have them run two minutes at a certain set, moderate pace; at two minutes I blow the whistle and they are to sprint at top or near-top speed for about fifty yards, after which they are to return to their own previous pace of before the sprint; they do this again at four minutes, that is sprint for 50 yards, then return to pace; again at six minutes for the third and last sprint and back to normal pace until eight minutes at which time they have completed their exercise. We used to think it was unusual for a boy to cover six laps in eight minutes and because of this the boys on their own formed a "white cap" club. To become a member of this club a runner had to be able to do six-laps in eight minutes in the manner described; once a member the runner had the right to wear a white cap to practice. The six-lap or "white-cap club" has become so cluttered with new members that the boys are now talking of making it a $6\frac{1}{2}$ lap requirement for membership. This year our top six cross country boys covered over $6\frac{1}{2}$ laps and we had 12 members in the white-cap club altogether.

We also use a golfmeter (a pedometer designed to measure the distance of golfers drives on the golf course in terms of yards). We place one of these on a boy and (place it on his hip after making a standard adjustment over a 440 track at his approximate cross country stride) encourages him to see how much yardage he can roll up in 10, 15, or 20 minutes. We are going to get a number of these and see if we can't get up some kind of game involving sides or team competition using these instruments as a stimulus, etc. Anything that can be made into a challenging and interesting games helps to sell the training program.

I am whole heartedly a believer in over-distance type of training as opposed to the under-distance type of training. I would have the milers running two miles for time before timing them in a mile run, if that is their event. I would have a half-miler run a mile before going down to the half, etc. We do not work on speed as such and yet we have never noticed that speed was missing from our performances in actual competition. In early March of this year we had Ron Larrieu (State C. I. F. mile champ at 4.20.1) run a 5,000 meter race in 15.24.0. He passed the 3-mile mark in 14.59 and would up with considerable speed as the time differential for the 188 yards indicates. That Friday we put him in a 440 event and had him run 220's. His quarter time was 50.7 and his 220 a 22.5. A week later between running two-mile races in 9.39.3 and 9.39.0. Larrieu ran 440's in our regular dual meet engagements in 50.1 and 50.4. (He ran a 22.3 furlong, also). This lad's fastest time the year before was over 52.0 and 23.8 for 220. We didn't give him anything but over-distance, no speed work of any kind; he would run these short races in the dual meets and train over long hauls only. This was essentially the same experience for four of our other top lads. Tom Cathcart (4.25.2 mile, 1.57.2-880--9.56.0 2-mile) ran a 52.0 440 not many days after his 9.56.0 two-mile stint. John Morrison (4.28.3 mile, 2.00.9- half-mile, 9.51.8 2-mile) was the shortest one on speed with a 53.2 quarter but he ran that when we were running over-distance just before starting into interval running in April. I have an idea that John would have been under 52 if we'd tried him just before the State Meet. Dean Satterlee (4.40-1.59.2) ran his fastest 440 (50.9) soon after training over long-distance. Satterlee wasn't with us until January in as much as he transferred to us from another school mid-way in his senior year. We started him on our over distance diet in January and he responded very well to it. Bill Whitson (4.36.8-2.01.5) was the only junior in the group and the only one that didn't really run a 440 time that his distance times would promise (53.4) but his is still growing and I have to remember that Larrieu's time at Bill's age was a 56.0 440, etc. We had two other lads in school that ran miles in 4.45.0 or over, and a 14 year-old lad who ran a 3.22.8 1320 yard race. They all seemed to flourish under the long-distance approach.

Question: What are some other considerations that have an especially important part to play in high school cross country training?

Answer: I don't know of any single item more important than work unless it is rest after that work! Remember, we are now talking about cross country for high school lads that are in the process of growing. They must understand that sleep and rest are not like a bank where they deposit and draw out hours of sleep as if it were like a checking account. High school boys in the United States lead very active social and academic lives and a trying athletic life added to these two makes getting enough rest a problem. The fact is that they can get rest but it is an item that cannot be overlooked in an discussion of training boys in our country. The coach should make an effort to look into the rest habits of each of his men--he will forestall a lot of future illness if he does this. This illness will invariably show up in the form of some kind of respiratory ailment. Another item that I insist on is that all of the boys get to bed early the night of the afternoon that they compete. I repeat, the night of the day that they run--not the night before the race. Boys that are tired and who stay up late when they are tired are placing their physical fitness in jeopardy. I constantly hammer on two items, WORK and REST.

Question: How do you account for the fact that some schools and coaches get little continuity out of cross country programs for spring track use?

Answer: This means that a man did well in cross country but never accomplished as much in track as his work in cross country indicated he might, right? Well, there are a number of things to consider. Let us take examples of whole teams rather than of individuals if we want to give one reason. Sometimes the cross country coach in

fall is not the same person who has them in the spring. A lot of coaching insight is lost with this lack of coaching continuity. How about a special case of a boy not doing well in the spring after doing well in the fall? In almost every such instance you will find that such a lad is one that is lacking in speed ability. You will find the opposite true in more cases than this one just mentioned--a lad becomes good in spring track after a not-so-hot cross country season. This last year the best in four important C. I. F. sections met on one course so that times and efforts could be compared. I have listed the top ten and their best mile and/or 880 times, and then for comparison I have listed ten lads outside the first ten who did very well in spring track. These marks involve Northern California lads only, and I am certain that a check of Southern California records would closely duplicate these listed above.

Cross Country			Mile/ or 880		Cross Country		
Rank	Name	Time			Rank	Name	Time Mile
1.	Larrieu	10:12	4.20.1/1.57		13.	Spillman	10:28 4.24.5
2.	Jent (Jr)	10:16	3.15.5 (3/4)		26.	Lee (Jr)	10:43 3.16.9
3.	Chavez (Jr)	10:17	4.32.0		28.	Woods	10:45 1.58.5
4.	Beardall	10:17	4.34.0		33.	Wallace (Jr)	10:50 4.25.2
5.	Eisenman	10:17	4.28.7		36.	Brown	10:50 1.54.4
6.	Belcher (Jr.)	10:21	1.56.6		37.	Dorsey	10:51 47.3
7.	Cloe	10:21	4.22.8		43.	Ray	10:55 1.58.3
8.	Hammond (Jr.)	10:21	4.23.8		53.	Wood	11:01 1.54.6
9.	Cathcart	10:21	4.25.2/1.57.2				
10.	Morrison	10:22	4.28.3				

Question: What practical things can we do to achieve an optimum in high school coaching?

Answer: We can do one thing that is very important in my opinion. We can stop being our athletes worst enemy! We had better stop talking about a 4.20.0 mile like it was something to boast about. It isn't! English lad of 18 can do much better than our boys because they have really put a different approach to running into effect. Ron Clarke of Australia ran a mile in 4.06.0 and a 8.56.0 2-mile while an 18 year old lad. Let's stop talking about the two-mile as if it were a form of social disease. Let's have a few of these races during our season (track season). A two mile run for high school lads is the next logical step in our development. We know that it is the only race for certain younger runners that don't have speed. We have to resist the people who claim that a long race is tougher on a young lad than a shorter more intense distance. This is not the truth and we all know it.

We need to have more and more distance relay marks activated into the framework of interscholastic recognition. If we are to make distance running attractive we should have several relay events offered up for national recognition that involve at least a mile as one of the distances. I suggest that we offer more relays such as the distance medley (440-880-1320-mile) and the four-mile relay as events in our relay meets. At the present time the two-mile relay is the longest distance event that the National Federation recognizes formally--we can hardly build distance interest without providing for our high school milers in some relay event, can we?

We need to provide our youngsters with opportunities to learn about the sport in other ways than by our contact with them. I have found that Track and Field News is a terrific motivator of interest. The lads pick up the language of track and field in no time after reading this track man's monthly bible. The contests that Track and Field News puts on has caused about 20 lads on my squad to buy this paper and I am certain that about 15 to 20 of my squad will be up here to watch the meet Saturday because of Track and Field News build-up of the meet over the past 3 issues. A high school coach would do well to introduce this little paper into his sports library as a professional tool.