



Winter 2009 Newsletter

Happy New Year! I hope that the holiday season was a relaxing and enjoyable season for all. I wanted to take a bit of your time with an update from you coaches association, along with some thoughts, plans, hopes, and upcoming events for 2009.

The 2009 Season

As I look back on the past season, there were a lot of things to share, from dual meets to the state meet. I'm sure all of you have some interesting stories to share and I would love to get some for inclusion in a future newsletter. This year my own team had a couple of firsts. In a meet with Bonney Lake, the hosts had to change their meet site after teams had arrived at the original off campus site. While the teams were waiting, word came down that the venue could not be used due to "insurance" issues. The coaching staff quickly threw together a course on school grounds and the teams hopped back on the busses, went to the school, and ran the meet. Credit goes not only to the Bonney Lake staff, but also to all coaches involved who took it in stride, got their athletes ready, and competed. It's hard to imagine some of the other sports dealing with something like this. No finger pointing or complaints just move on and race. That does bring up a different issue though, and that is the increasing role of risk management with our sport. For some reason, some risk management folks are not fully informed with our sport, and create unnecessary hurdles that aren't there with other sports. Some of this seems to come from venues not being on school campuses. This is something that we may see an increase of in the future. The WSCCCA will be keeping a knowledge base to help coaches with these situations as they arise. You can help by giving us any information as to how your district handles things. This is particularly helpful with invitational meets and off-site events. Certainly share any challenges or obstacles you have faced as well.

While on the topic of meets, it is important to reiterate a couple of important guidelines. First, all meets, whether a dual or an invite should be treated as any other high school competition. That means following all of the uniform, eligibility, and other rules. There has always been a school of thought that invitationals are different. However, we are coaching young men and women, not adults. It is our responsibility to prepare them for success. If we don't worry about the details we are setting them up for problems later. I know it's a challenge. I understand that some uniform rules are real "head scratchers" too. All too often they are not enforced at meets, whether they are duals, invites, or even qualifying events. Still, if it helps our athletes to develop a routine and avoid a potential problem when it really matters, then it is worth it. Early season invites are a particular challenge with the open races. Please use some common sense in those situations. An ineligible athlete should not be competing as a representative of their school. If there is a community run and they register as any other citizen, with appropriate waivers, entry fees etc but then line up with their school uniform on...guess what, they are still representing their school. It is hard for us as an association to defend that one to the WIAA.

The culminating events for our sport, the district and state meets seemed to go fairly well this year, based on the feedback we received. Certainly there were some specific issues, but they are best left to

those parties directly involved. We were very pleased with the WIAA's efforts to ensure course accuracy as well as the addition of sanikans at the start area. Overall, the state meet went well with some excellent racing. There were some specific praises (course length, organization) and also concerns (finish line mechanics, spectator access) that membership shared with us. We have shared those with Teresa Fisher at the WIAA for next year. Based on the response from this past year, we are confident that they will be considered.

There have been questions about the location of the state meet for the future. The WIAA awards the meet at their spring meeting for upcoming years. Pasco has held the meet for quite some time, and there haven't been any bids for an alternate site for some time. It does appear that there may be some other sites interested in bidding for the meet in the future however. The WSCCCA executive board has taken a position that we will be available assist with facilitating for any group seeking advice or contacts. However, we will not take an active role as a proponent of one site over another as we represent the entire state. Our goal is to work towards the best possible state meet for everyone, competitors, fans, meet management, and coaches. We will work towards improving what is already one of the best state meets in the nation in whatever way we can. We are there for you, and will follow your lead.

WIAA

I suppose that is a nice lead-in to the WIAA. We will be working with the WIAA this summer to clarify a few concerns on the rules. Our sport is a bit tough to define. Some leagues count dual meets, others don't. Some have separate races for sub-varsity, others don't. That can make for a lot of questions. Hopefully we can address some of them this summer. With that said, I cannot stress enough the importance for each coach (head, assistant, volunteer) to read their rules book, read the WIAA handbook, and read your meet syllabus. As a meet director, games and jury of appeals member, and association president it has been my experience that there are often times when an unfortunate result could have been avoided if the parties involved had a better understanding of the rules or specific meet procedures. Of course, we will always work with you in any way we can, and seek clarification from the WIAA whenever necessary. But please, take the first step and become as knowledgeable as possible in all aspects of our sport.

East/West All Star Meet & Scholarships

The All State team will be published shortly on WATFXC.com. Additionally, seniors will be getting invitations through their coaches to take part in this years All Star race. The race has been supported by Super Jock n Jill and Brooks. They provide the athletes with Uniforms and T-shirts, and a few other perks. The Cross Country Coaches Association covers the other aspects of the race. This year's event will be held at Lower Woodland Park on July 25. We really encourage coaches to pass the information along. Our field has been growing and the race becomes more competitive each year. Still, it is difficult to get many representatives from the East and Southwest. We are working on possibilities such as "home stays" with Westside athletes to help. We have also taken a different approach to the race this year. The summer is a busy time, and it is difficult for coaches to take on any major projects. Therefore, instead of getting 1-2 coaches to take on the entire race management, we are asking coaches to commit to helping out in a smaller, less time consuming way. A few of ways you can help out are:

- Working the finish at the Run of the Mill (a major scholarship donor)
- Timing at the All Star Race
- Flipping Burgers for the post race athlete BBQ.
- Taking race and scholarship pictures.
- Working the finish chute.
- Helping with athlete check in.

The entire event is just a few hours, and there is just one race so it's not too difficult. Please consider helping out this year.

The scholarships are another part of the equation. Over the past few years, our scholarships have continued to grow. Over the past five years we have added \$2000 in scholarships. We have at least one more \$500 dollar scholarship coming in this year to honor of those South Puget Sound coaches and athletes who are no longer with us. Still, we want to do more. There are numerous businesses and potential supporters out there with ties to Washington State Cross Country. They may be former runners, industry members (running stores, awards companies, etc). Often they know nothing about our program, and simply have to be asked. We are not asking coaches to donate, you do enough already. But we are asking you to tap into those in your own community who may want to help out. At the risk of offending coaches, I'll be blunt. Our scholarships have gone to athletes from all parts of the state. However, our donations have come almost exclusively from a few sources in the Puget Sound area. We know that many of you cannot make the trek over for the race. But you can still help support the fund from your own community. Please consider asking any contacts in your own community for an annual pledge to support the program. Donations are tax deductible. Please contact any one of the executive board members if you have questions.

We would also like more athletes to apply for the scholarships. Coaches, please spread the word to your seniors. *Any senior who ran cross country can apply.* More information can be found on the website at www.watfxc.com

Coaches Association

If you are reading this, chances are you're a member of our association. You probably remember the "not so gentle" reminder to join the association last fall. Thank you for stepping forward. We had over 300 members who listed cross country as one of their sports. That helps us in several ways. First is the money we get back from the association. That money is used to help with the East/West All Star race, pay for our Coach of the Year honorees, our Hall of fame Honorees and other awards. This year the Association also gave us a significant grant to fund Hall of Fame plaques to be placed in the WIAA headquarters. They also gave an additional grant to us to help with our All Star Race. Without your support, it is unlikely that we would have enjoyed such support. There are several sports with almost no representation at all, so thank you...and don't forget to renew in August. For those who may not have joined yet, you can get all the information you need at <http://www.washcoach.org/index.php> Your membership also gives you free entry to all WIAA state athletic events, and all district events (with the current exception of district 7), and \$1,000,000 in liability insurance.

And last but not least, let us know what we can do for you. Do you have questions, concerns, or just something to share? Let us know. We really do want to hear from you. We just posted our beginning coaches handbook on line at www.watfxc.com. Let us know if there are things that should be added. Feel free to share it. Like you, we're a bunch of coaches having fun with the best sport in the world. Have an enjoyable winter.

Joe Clark
President

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