



The Bulldog Bark

The Voice of Alhambra Cross Country



Friday, November 13, 2020

Plans Are Afoot State and NCS and DAL Set To Unveil Protocols For High School Sports

Finally! The long-awaited guidelines for high school sports in California is about to be released. There have been rumblings about this for some time, but this week there have been articles and press releases in several media outlets that a comprehensive set of protocols for all sports is all set to go.

Lots of legwork

Many agencies had to get together to make this happen. The prime mover, apparently, was the State CIF (the high school sports championship authority), which spent the last few months coming up with sets of guidelines. Then they had to sit down with the state health department and the governor's office to hammer out further details.

At this time, given the nature of the news coverage - - print, online, radio, social media - - it seems as if we will get this all within just a few days.

Questions remain

Still, there are a lot of variables left in play. The biggest question is still the Covid. If the rates of infection, hospitalization, and death rise or all, those factors weigh heavily on essential decisions on whether to have sports at all.

Another big question is the differing nature of one sport as opposed to any other sport, and the risks involved. Clearly, some are much more separated than others. Tennis and golf pose nowhere near the risk as wrestling and football do. Will some sports be allowed, but not others?

Spectators are also factor. It is one thing to have small units of athletes to mitigate the possible spread of the virus, but to having hordes of roving parents and families milling about is quite another.

And the particulars

Just how do we have actual competitions on cross country, if close contact is to be avoided? Are outdoor sports less risky than indoor sports? What about all those states who have gone ahead and had high school sports? What has been their experience?

Wait and see

It still remains a situation in flux, but at least we can anticipate the various authorities in charge have been doing something. That's a definite change from the prolonged uncertainty we've had for too long.



Cross Country Homework Club Starts

Starting Monday, November 16

With semester finals coming up, as well as the start of the regular cross country season on December 7th, it is important to keep our focus on the academics. After all, school is about learning.

We will be having daily homework and tutoring time available at the track for the cross country team. Assistant Coach Peter Brewer, who is a retired teacher credentialed in English and Social Studies, will be supervising these sessions.

This is open to all cross country runners who need some time for homework, or want a bit of a boost in a given subject, or just need that extra hour during the day for structured study.

Wanted: Peer tutors

Many of our runners have experience and expertise in several subjects, especially the troublesome areas of math and science. We would like these athletes to also participate in this Homework Club, to assist their fellow runners in those areas.

Mark your calendars:

2:00 -- 3:00 p.m.

Monday -- Thursday each week
on the track

WiFi available !

Official Season Starts Dec 7

- Do you have your physical exam taken care of?
- Are you keeping your grades up?
- Do you have new shoes?

Brrr !! Chill !!

Cold Weather Is Here

Yes, it is getting colder. And the days are getting shorter. And yes, it most likely will get wetter. Welcome to winters in Northern California.

Need to adjust

And so, as an outdoor sport, cross country needs to adjust to this difference in the weather. We need to be extra careful to maintain our precautions.

- sweats every day - - in order to avoid muscle pulls and strains, sweats every day is a team requirement.

- diligence during drills and exercises - - we need to keep our bodies active and loose.

Running is year-round

For the serious runner, running goes on all the time. And when the summers are warm and the days are long, and the hot weather stretches long into autumn, it is easy to forget just how chilly it can get, and how quickly.

And here it is, the first few weeks of our California version of fall, and heading into winter.

Ache and pains

These never really go away while training, but during cold weather it is important to assess these twinges to make sure we are not encouraging unnecessary injury. Be extra careful to make sure all the warmups are thorough and complete.

More Bodies !!!

Team Size Increases

It may not seem like much, but we are up to 21 athletes currently training, and 20 of them were in attendance yesterday. This is a good sign, as we are still in the "optional" part of our pre-season training

Team size is always a goal. Even with the Covid restrictions on our groupings (no more than 12 per kennel), we have room for a few more runners. Of course, with more than that, we will need an additional coach (volunteer assistants?).

We are still on the lookout for more runners, especially younger runners, and more girls. Tell all your friends how much fun you're having.

New Home Course !



Covid certainly has changed things. If we do have a cross country season, there are still the concerns of having large groups of athletes in one place. And our traditional DAL Center Meets have 450 - 500 runners, plus coaches and parents, all milling around at the same time.

Possible return to dual meets

This might not fly under health regulations (and we still don't have any definitive guidelines yet). However, other possibilities include the idea of going back to dual meets, where one school races against another school. This would reduce crowd size, shrink the risk factors, and still allow for races.

This would also mean that each school needs a home course. Alhambra HS is blessed with lots of adjacent terrain, so designing a home course had lots of options.

Taking advantage of our hills

Your loving coaches spent a day or two wandering around with a measuring wheel, and some screen time with geophysical mapping programs, and came up with this basic course.

Loops

We came up with a 2 mile JV/FS course, and a 3 mile varsity course.

JV/FS:

- Start at the pole vault pads;
- two clockwise laps;
- up the hill to the 1st level, 2 loops;
- finish around disc cage onto grass

Varsity:

- Start at the pole vault pads;
- two clockwise laps;
- up the hill to the 1st level, 3 loops; (add around the JV softball field)
- finish around disc cage onto grass

Looks tough

And like all good cross country courses, this one appears to be difficult one - - hills,, trails, grass, minimum pavement. We'll see.

Official Season Starts Dec 7

- Do you have your physical exam taken care of?
- Are you keeping your grades up?
- Do you have new shoes?

No time to relax

Covid Restrictions Stil In Place

If nothing else, the past 9 months have taught us about the swings and surges in Covid infection rates. And it all seems to hinge on personal behavior.

Masks work

Health experts have told us again and again that masks are the single biggest help in avoiding the continual spread of this virus. As a team we require masks not only of coaches and athletes, but also the visitors to the track.

Distancing

Staying apart is also crucial, since the effective range of infection contact appears to be that magic 6 feet distance. Double arm length if you have trouble eyeballing 6 feet.

Congregate Events

Crowds are the areas where Covid surges seem to start. And indoor crowds are worse than outdoor crowds.

Staying Alert

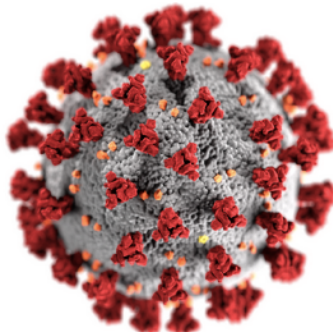
Perhaps the biggest reason for the continual surges and upticks in infection rates has been social attitudes getting lax and causal about masks and contacts. When this happens, and folks get sloppy, infection rates climb and takes weeks and months to go back down.

Sports depend on low inection rates

State, country, city, and school district administrators issue guidelines based on infection rates of any given area. And high school sports are just now coming out of the shadows. It would be a shame if we were all put on hold for even longer because of too-casual social behavior.

Do your part

Please, help by being a great example of masking and distancing, and let's make sure we have the best chance to have a season.



A glance back so far

Excellent Progress Despite All The Impediments

We started out by having the track season canceled after only having one meet. All spring sports were kaput. Things looked dismal.

A short history of delay

Sports activities picked up in late May in many places, and Alhambra HS got on board in July. We had three weeks before getting shut down again. A few ZOOM calls, workouts posted on-line, a few runners still doing some work, but . . .

We got the green light again 5 weeks ago, and fired right up. Attendance has been solid (even in this voluntary pre-season phase). And the coaches were able to go right to the regular season workouts.

The lights come back on

It turns out that a large chunk of our runners had been working out on their own regularly, and that independent work paid off. With the regular season still 4 weeks away, our runners are already getting close to what would normally be mid-season form.

So . . . we are in pretty good conditioning form as a team right now, and if all good things come to pass, by the end of the season in March we certainly be better than we are now, and definitely better than could have been predicted back in July.

We're looking pretty good

The boys' team, with almost all the varsity returning, has coalesced well. And our JV's are deeper than last year as well. The girls' team is still small, but much improved over last year.

We want races !

All we need now are meets so we can show off our conditioning, and test ourselves against other programs. Fingers crossed.

Official Season Starts Dec 7

- Do you have your physical exam taken care of?
- Are you keeping your grades up?
- Do you have new shoes?