



# The Bulldog Bark

The Voice of Alhambra Cross Country

Tuesday, February 8, 2021



## YES ! ! ! WE ARE BACK

It has been two full months since we last were permitted to have team workouts, and it took a remarkable shift in Covid-19 numbers to allow us to make a return. And here we are.

### Good to go

We are meeting every weekday afternoon at 3:45 - 5:45 on the Alhambra track. There will still be the masking and social distancing protocols in place. We are, however, now allowed larger groupings so we don't have to micromanage small "pods."

### We Even Have Races !

This last gap in training has allowed the Valley Division coaches of the DAL to plot together in case we had time to have a season. We now have a season, and now 4 of the 6 teams in the Valley Division will do a three meet series, with a Valley Division championship at stake

Ygnacio Valley will host the first meet 2/13; Concord will host 2/27; and we will host the season finale 3/13.

### "Put the Band Back Together Again"

Our diehard runners have impressively continued their running during this last dead period, so we have a core of 6-7 athletes who have put in some time on the trails and roads.

We would still like to get as many as possible of our veterans (and even newcomers!) back out just to get in some more running. The teams we are racing are all in the same boat - - not everyone is in top shape, nor perhaps not even in any shape. That's not the point this season. Putting on a uniform and representing Alhambra is the goal.

### 5 week season

Yes, we have a severely condensed season. Some feel that 5 weeks is far too short to have a real competitive effort. That may be, but here's a bit of perspective:

If this were a "normal" season, 5 weeks from the start of the official season would put us right between the RAM Invitational and the Artichoke Invitational. And how many of our veterans had good races at those two meets, at about the 1/3 mark of a regular season.

5 weeks is plenty to show improvement, as long as the athlete gets the full 5 weeks in.

### Expectations?

This is where we have to make the full concession to the new reality. Right now, giving young people the framework to have a physical activity with teammates is the most important goal a coach can have. Structure, purpose, community . . . these are the primary objectives now.

Of course, we want to have the kids training hard, getting better, and doing some racing. That is the regular stuff, which we will also emphasize.

But since we have had all the disruptions, and two large time gaps in training consistency, we will focus on participation. Effort and improvement will come as it will.

### Transition Right Into Track

With the shortened season, and the new season schedules, the distance athlete will be more than ready for track when that season starts 3/15, right after cross country ends 3/13.

### Meet protocols

We will have to deal with time limits, no spectators, no direct face-to-face racing, and all the rest of the Covid protocols as we engage in a racing structure.

This is to be expected. Still, we have to rely on parent transportation to get kids to the meets, and then we have to kick the parents to the curb and then not let them be physically present at races. Doesn't seem fair, does it?

### Viewing workarounds?

At this point, spectators are not allowed at competitions. However, parent volunteers are often needed. That's one opportunity.

Another option, already utilized in other states, is to have a single person do a live streaming video (via Facebook, or some other app) and families can watch the races in real time on their devices. This arrangement is sadly beyond the limited technical capabilities of this geriatric coach, but is an option that may have some possibilities.

### How Are We Looking Right Now?

Really good, actually. Alhambra is traditionally a small team, but our top boys have put in the time and the miles. And early indications are showing some seriously "fit" Bulldogs.

The top boys are leading the brigade on training intensity, and so far we have seen no drop off of our top 5 boys from where they were in December.

Renae Searls has been putting in the miles too, to lead the girls' squadron.

### Coach Carson

### Keeping the Team Spirit

Most of the boys' team training in the Covid gaps is the result of Carson Edwards, our new assistant coach. He has arranged and enabled a consistent training environment for the interested Bulldogs to do the lonely distance workouts in a time of remarkable uncertainty.

If there were to be an early team MVP, it would be Carson for his unrelenting upbeat enthusiasm for running and for Alhambra cross country.