



The Bulldog Bark

The Voice of Alhambra Cross Country
"Where Lunacy Has Permanent Residence"

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Enthusiasm High

Week 1 In The Books

We've been at this new version of summer running now for over a week. Athletes have been very consistent about making the workouts. And they're still coming back for more.

This is good

Good is not a relative term here. It is an absolute objective verifiable phenomenon. Having lots of kids make the effort to arrive on time each morning at 8:00 a.m. to endure prolonged discomfort in order to improve is always a good thing

Hmmm . . . kids willing to get out of bed early?

Perhaps one of the many contradictions of teenage psychology is that they respond well to structure, even though they pretend to resist it. Our brave little bunch of runners are unabashedly happy to be in a group that has several layers of restrictions and requirements, and apparently relieved that finally they have a function within a larger group.

When does the bloom come off the lily?

There will always be dips and lulls in enthusiasm, and the alarm in the morning may not always be the best moment in a kid's life, but we are currently on a very positive roll.

Numbers Good

Large is Good For Teams

We have currently over 30 names on paper as members of our summer group. 26 of them have been regular attenders and the rest are out of town, out of state, or otherwise not able to attend right now.

Positive Team Size Indicator

Final team sizes tend to be about 50% bigger than the summer running crowd. At this rate, we will may end up with one of the biggest cross country teams in Alhambra history come fall. And we haven't even started to recruit the incoming freshmen at all.

Adjusting to the new protocols

Boy, does the weird get weird or what?

As with all things currently, high school sports are in a time of constant flux. Just getting the green light to start summer

running was in doubt up to the last minute. And exactly how to do it? That was never clearly laid out.

The landscape shifts almost daily

As the social pressures to resume more community and social activities continue to mount, so do the infection and transmission rates of Covid-19. Schools are caught in the cross hairs of both considerations, and are always going to veer towards the more careful and more cautious paths.



Responsible social distancing during core work.

Under scrutiny

We as a running program are simultaneously the least likely to involve contact and transmission as a part of our training, but we also in a literal sense cover more distance than any other sport and therefore are much more visible to the community as we do our runs.

This means as a team we have to be exceptionally careful about masking and social distancing in everything we do from warmups, drills, and core work, to being considerate and careful on our longer runs on trails and streets.

Coach Angela on the Prowl

It doesn't take much to shut down our school activity if we are not careful about observing the protocols. So the coaches are on constant vigilance about monitoring athlete behaviors both on the track and on the streets and trails. The reminders are daily about not trifling with these requirements we must observe.

Coach Angela has already undertaken several tweaks in procedures to make this even more of a responsible summer running program. We are sitting further apart in the bleachers, we stay further apart on drills, the runners are monitored even more closely for distance while socializing, et cetera.



Coach Angela patrols the core drills. Masks on !

Diplomacy On The Track

Community Interaction

Wow. Some people are so nice and understanding, and other get nettled, bristly, and downright confrontational on a single track issue.

Masks

As a team, our fragile permission even to have team workouts depends on strict and required ameliorations to avoid contact with, and spread of, Covid-19. The first and foremost issue is athletes and coaches wearing masks. The next stage is ask all members of the public who also want to use the track to 1) avoid us altogether and go away or 2) use the other side of the track and stay away from us or 3) wear a mask as you come with 10 yards of us . . . and we'll even give you a mask.

Most members of the general public understand, and either go away, or stay away. Some even welcome the mask. But there just has to be that one individual or group that exhibits hostility at the very thought of having their whims compromised by concern for others' safety.

Coach Brewer on the prowl, too

The face of cautionary communication with the public is now Coach Brewer, who has volunteered to be the choke-point 'splainer. So far no fisticuffs.

Getting A Feel For The Team So Far

It is so early in the process that there is no real way to tell how the end of the season will work out. But early assessments do point towards a general trend.

So, What Does The Season Look Like?

- Numbers are up . . . good
- Returning veteran boys are running. . . but some of them are out of shape, some are out of town, and we don't have a clear picture yet.
- Girl veterans are all here, and are improved over last year at this point. Early workouts show significant gains.
- Almost no underclass runners - - strong need to eventually make a push to recruit 9th and 10th graders.
- And it's all too early to really tell

Overall

We are on a strong roll to have an excellent season. Many veterans, early strong training enthusiasm, solid improvement . . . great indicators of a competitive season ahead.

Quiz - - brother-sister acts

Hopefully all of you all know everyone else on the team. In case you don't know, we now have three separate sets of brother-sister pairs on the team. Can you name all three pairs?

Hint: in each case the sister is a freshman this year.

Hamlet revisited

The Season To Be (or Not To Be)

Q: *What Will We Know?*

A: *We have no idea*

Q: *When Will We Know It?*

A: *July 20th*

This is the next big question that arises for high school sports, and as far as we are concerned, cross country in specific. The state body that governs championship sports (California Interscholastic Federation) has been trying to wade through this shifting landscape of possibilities and concerns. They have given themselves a deadline of July 20 to issue their next set of recommendations. That's when we will know the latest.

What that latest will be is still a very hot topic among California high school running coaches. And at this point it is all speculation, and it takes a careful ear to the ground to ferret out the shifting viewpoints that are circulating. Perhaps the largest concern is if there will be a competitive season at all, and if so, what inevitable restrictions will be in place?

We await the next two weeks to find out. Holding our breath.

July 20th

Due Date For State Guidelines; Start of Freshman Recruiting

We wait for direction from the State for the actual framework of the coming season, but we also have another objective to undertake in a few weeks.

Freshman and other new runners

We are blessed with a very solid core of returning runners, and we currently only have three seniors on the roster. By all accounts we look set for this year and the next.

But . . . the future is always before us, and new runners are always that future. And in time we will be making a push to attract a few more runners to the team.

Hopefully as the larger discussion about opening or not opening schools continues, the topic of school sports is also part of that discussion. Administrators, teachers, and parents are already in spirited talks about the details.

Murky Future

The actual details of this goal are still in the infancy of planning. About all we have to go on right now is word of mouth. Spread the good word about summer running, and we'll go from there.

Blasts From the Past

Returning Alums Help Out

We are exceptionally privileged to have three of our alumni runners choose to spend their summer running with our team to help out. As former Bulldogs with extensive varsity experience, these young adults are familiar with all of the drills and traditional runs of the program.

It is great to have these young people help out with the warmups, the drills, and pacing the younger runners on the workouts. This is especially helpful as our current restrictions dictate small groups of athletes so we do need more oversight.

This evidence of extended community has done wonders to establish a sense of continuity of Alhambra running that goes beyond just the 4 years of high school. And it certainly lightens the loads on the coaches to have such qualified assistants.



Carson Edwards, UCLA. ALH class of 2010.



Nicole Tria, Cal Poly SLO. ALH Class of 2019



Erica Cardinale, UC Davis. ALH class of 2017.