

AVON LAKE CROSS COUNTRY'S

"Meet Cheat Sheet"

Earlybird
Saturday 8.31.13

WINNING IS NOT NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS WHO YOU WIN WITH

This is one of my favorite sports quotes. The old adage, "It's the journey, not the destination," also applies to this. Winning is extremely important, one of our goals, and something we will focus on this season. But it never replaces the people you work with to get to this point. Another way of looking at it is this: it is very hard to win with a group of people that you don't work well with. It is very hard to win when a group of people are just a group of people. Winning takes a group of people who learn to become a team. And the best teams are those that support each other, make each other better, and believe in each other.

Last week you ran your first race. You ran that race as a group of individuals. That was okay because it was your first race and you don't all know each other yet—you don't really know who to run with or what each person is capable of. You don't even know what you are capable of yet! That's normal. But now that we have our first race under our belt, we are beginning to see what our team is going to look like.

It starts with running together as a group. It starts with people cheering each other on during practice. It starts with runners supporting other runners who are having a hard time finishing a workout. It starts with runners challenging other runners to run harder during intervals. It starts with the positive words of encouragement and the positive way we are beginning to challenge each other. You guys (and girls!) are already starting to do this.

Last week was about learning who we are as individuals as we start competing. This week is about seeing what kind of team we think we can be.

As we do this, remember: ***winning is not as important as WHO you win with.*** Because without each other, you cannot win anything.

“Team Racing Goals”

1. Run Together!

Make sure you seek out those runners we’ve grouped you with. Run with them! Stay with them! The group needs to be shoulder-to-shoulder with each other. The group needs to encourage the others in it that they can hang with the group. We have a HUGE team: our strength is in our numbers so let’s use those numbers to our advantage! Running together is a huge motivator for each other. Before we can concentrate on running AGAINST our opponents, we need to first learn to run TOGETHER as a team.

2. At some point, you will need to leave the pack.

At our marker that we set out for you, you need to go. The pack that you’re running with is now focused on finishing the race with all that it has, and so should you! When you see Coach Rocco you’ll know it’s time to go.

3. Finish with nothing left.

We talked a little about this last week, but this is one of the hardest things to do in sports. You need to start thinking about finishing a race with absolutely no energy left. This is hard to do. Most runners won’t do it because they fear the pain. But once you experience the exhilaration of doing your best at a race, your desire to get back to that feeling far exceeds the pain you have to go through to get to that point! Start attacking that fear at the end of the race! It’s a powerful feeling of accomplishment! You need to get to that point, and you need your teammates to get to that point!

“Reminders From Last Week”

The night before...

- ✓ Eat a healthy dinner! Parents will most likely be cooking pasta & providing bread, which is high in carbohydrates, which provide stores of energy. Load up on this! Your body will convert it to glycogen, which will provide your muscles with energy the day of the race. Food = Fuel!
- ✓ Limit the amount of sweets! Get it down to one serving (1 cookie, 1 brownie, etc., but just one!) at a time. Don’t get rid of it completely, just lower the amount each day. It’s good to have a little chocolate, for example.
- ✓ Avoid sugary drinks. Replace soda/fruit juice with water. It’s a small change that makes a huge difference. Complex sugars really have no useful function.
- ✓ Stay hydrated. Not too hydrated! But sipping water throughout Friday afternoon/evening helps.
- ✓ Get a good night’s sleep! Optimal sleep for a middle schooler is 9 hours, 15 minutes a night. This may or may not be the amount of sleep you get the night before your first meet (especially with nerves!), and there will be meets where you will want to attend the Friday night football game the night before, but by the time the championship rolls around, you should have plenty of time to stock up on rest! Your body needs to recover from the week of school, studying, and working out! Rest is crucial for this to occur.

- ✓ Relax! Remember that running is like life. There are good days, there are bad days, but, the more you do it the more you will have more GOOD days than bad. So one of your goals is to improve from your first race to your last race. You gotta start somewhere! Saturday is when we start. It's that simple. Saturday's race is the most important race you will ever run...until next Saturday's race. And then until the race after that. So, keep things in perspective! You may be starting a sport that could last you the rest of your lives. Don't get too caught up in the importance of one race!

The morning before...

- ✓ If you can eat breakfast at about 5:30 a.m. Saturday, that would be great. That gives your body enough time to process the calories, which should come from carbohydrates (carbs).
- ✓ Examples of good breakfasts: healthy cereal with milk, toast with jelly, pancakes or waffles with syrup. Butter and bacon are okay, but don't overdo it! Bananas are also a great idea.
- ✓ Avoid: large amounts of milk, orange juice, eggs, and a lot of fruit juice (a little is okay, but there's a lot of sugar there so don't overdo it).
- ✓ Bring a healthy snack with you! You will want to eat something afterward.
- ✓ Sports drinks should be extremely limited. 1 bottle of Gatorade, for example, should be your post-race drink. That should be the amount of sports drinks you should drink in a week. Other than that, stick to water. You will want to replace glycogen with your snack, and electrolytes with your sports drink. Drinking too many sports drinks actually has a negative effect as it's just too much sugar.

After the race...

- ✓ Get some water at the finish line or at camp, then drink your sports drink. Again, you'll want to bring both water and a sports drink & snack.
- ✓ Get your team together and do a 5-minute jog. Then do your static stretches at camp.
- ✓ Help take down our camp, get your gear together, and then we'll head back to Avon Lake!
- ✓ Stretch again at home!
- ✓ Post-race meals should contain carbohydrates (much like the Friday Night Dinner meals), and protein (which will rebuild your damaged muscles from the race).
- ✓ Post-race meals should be within 2 hours of the race. So...make your high-carb, high-protein meal your lunch on Saturday!
- ✓ After a week of healthy eating, you can splurge a little Saturday night. But make sure the week is filled with healthy meals before you treat yourself!

“Rocco’s Goals for the 2013 Avon Lake Cross Country Team”

We will be going over our weekly team goals, individual goals, and our goals for beating competing schools throughout the season. But really, all these goals pale in comparison to the bigger picture of you as an athlete and Avon Lake Cross Country team as a whole. Here are my goals for you this season:

#1

Promote a healthy lifestyle

Cross Country is not just a middle school sport, it’s a sport for life. You can always do it, and just about anyone can do it. Healthy eating, getting a good night’s sleep, pushing yourself at practice and at meets...these are all things that help discipline you, give you a sense of accomplishment, and make you feel better about yourself and gives you a boost in other areas of your life. Cross country runners also make good lifestyle choices. Kinda hard to run a 2-mile race if you take up smoking, right? Research shows runners tend to make better lifestyle choices (diet, rest, abstaining from drugs and alcohol) than others because poor health choices get in the way of the healthy life they’ve already created for themselves. People ask me all the time, “How can you run? How can you think something like that is *fun*?” I always agree with them: “You’re right, running isn’t fun.” Then I add, “But, it is *rejuvenating*.” Think about it: no one really **LIKES** repeat 800’s on the track. But you have to admit, you feel a lot better after doing them, don’t you? And you’re in better shape. And you’ve got a better sense of accomplishment. A healthy lifestyle is a big goal that goes beyond our season or even your athletic career. It can last your whole life.

#2

Ownership

Whatever we have, let’s take care of it. Our team is the biggest example of this. Our team needs to take care of itself. My next goal for you is take ownership of this team by taking responsibility of **1) yourself, 2) your teammates, and 3) allowing your teammates to take care of you when you need them to**. This is now your team, and you need to take care of the people in it. To take care of someone else, you must first take care of yourself. So you need to be individually responsible so you can be there for your teammates. You need to support your teammates **AT ALL TIMES!** So...no negative talk is allowed at any time.

Let me say that again: negative talk is not allowed at any time, to anyone, on any team.

This starts with you! No negative self-talk allowed! It also extends to your teammates. You can be tough on your teammates when you need to be, but at no point can you be negative to them. There’s a difference! Setting high expectations for yourself and your teammates is different than yelling at them and being mean! You can be tough and still be positive. Sometimes the team will need to be pushed to get better. And, sometimes **you** will need to be pushed by your teammates! And, when your teammate is going through a hard time and needs help, you need to help them. And when you are going through a hard time, you need to allow

your teammate to help *you*. This goes for races, practices, or even if you had a bad day at school.

As a team, it is your job to take care of each other!

#3

Collective Responsibility

Once you take ownership of your team—and that starts at practice, during races, even with setting up/breaking down camp—you can start *thinking* like a team. The best teams, when they work the right way, start operating like a family.

Collective Responsibility simply means that we win or lose together. We are all individually responsible for ourselves, and we need to be. We wouldn't be here if we didn't sign up for this. But now we need to start thinking about the team collectively, as a whole. This is important!

I will ask you throughout the season:

Are two better than one?

Kids usually respond:

Yes.

The answer I give:

Well...sometimes.

Two are only better than one when two can ACT as one.

Two dysfunctional people are definitely NOT better than one really efficient person. The same goes for a team. It's not always the best team that wins.

It's the team that ***works the best together*** that wins.

Once you take ownership, begin to trust your teammates, and your teammates begin to trust you, you are allowing the team to take some of the responsibility off your shoulders. You aren't shouldering the load all by yourself—you're sharing it. This is a huge relief! Collective Responsibility allows you to win or lose together...everyone shares in the victories and everyone shoulders the losses...your strength comes not just from yourself but from one another.

Let's see what kind of a team we've got!

GO SHOREMEN & SHOREGALS!