

Responsibilities of a Successful Cross Country Coach

Taken from an article entitled “The Safe Route” written by Carl Sniffen for Technique Magazine. Technique Magazine is printed by the United States Track and Field Cross Country Coaches Association. Some of his ideas come from a book entitled “Successful Coaching” written by Rainer Martens.

The duty of care owed by coaches to their athletes:

1. Duty to properly plan the activity.
2. Duty to provide proper instruction.
3. Duty to provide a safe physical environment.
4. Duty to provide adequate and proper equipment.
5. Duty to match athletes competitively.
6. Duty to evaluate athletes for injury or incapacity.
7. Duty to supervise the activity carefully.
8. Duty to warn athletes of inherent risks.
9. Duty to provide appropriate emergency assistance.

Some ideas on how insure you are performing your duties and preventing claims and avoiding liability.

1. Your daily plan should clearly indicate which athletes are doing what workout and that the athletes will do that workout in the assigned area.
2. All routes should be specified in advance to your team.
3. Be familiar with the route yourself and the issues related to traffic and animals.
4. Consider using a bicycle or automobile to intercept athletes at one of more places along their routes.
5. Don't assume the athletes know the route or area you are running in.
6. Develop a plan if the athletes get lost.
7. Make certain your athletes understand each day's workout and where you or an assistant can be found during the workout.
8. If athlete does not return have a plan in place to locate them
9. Use printed handouts to help athletes understand the nature and seriousness of the risk of the sport.
10. Be flexible. So many things can interfere with your original plans.
11. Use local experts such as healthcare providers to educate your athletes about issues on diet and injury prevention.
12. Think of insurance as a baseball backstop. If all else fails, insurance can avert a financial disaster.
13. Put your plans in writing.

“Ten Pledges for Cross Country Coaches to Make” by Rod O’Donnell Hudson High School Ohio

1. I will run at least one home meet each fall.
2. I will run a full schedule and not abbreviate meets to save days to train and will score all contests.
3. I will constantly defend my sport when absurd perceptions—like cross country runners are not real athletes—arise.
4. I will call my local newspaper with results after every meet, regardless of where my team finishes or if the newspaper is not accommodating. I will follow up if they are not printed with the sports editor.
5. I will do something every day to make my sport well known.
6. I will constantly educate myself by attending professional clinics and brain picking with other coaches.
7. I will keep updated on my sport by reading at least one article per week about cross country and track.
8. I will help young coaches by encouraging them and sharing ideas.
9. I will remind athletes to enjoy the journey of the season and provide activities to promote fun in the sport.
10. At the end of the season I WILL evaluate my program and make adjustments to improve myself and my team for the next year.

Cross Country Athletes Safety Rules

1. I will always be aware of my own safety especially when running on the roads.
2. I will know the course we will practice on and pay attention to coaches instructions.
3. I will stay on the course the coach asked me to run on and not make up my own course.
4. I will always run facing the traffic and keep my eyes up and diligently looking for any approaching vehicles.
5. I will always run single file and stay to the left hand side of the road as possible.
6. I will yield to traffic even if I have the right away.
7. I will make eye contact with the driver of approaching vehicles. If you see their eyes they most likely will see you.
8. I will let the coach know when I have finished the workout run.
9. I will make sure I am properly hydrated.
10. I will make sure I am in eye sight of another team mate during the run.