



TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT
ATHLETIC ORGANIZATIONS
(TAIAO)

SUBCHAPTER P
Cross Country Athletic Plan
August 1, 2024

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Except to the extent otherwise provided, the Cross Country Plan is governed by and subject to the General Rules of TAI AO.

PART A – Rosters, Tryouts, & Club Participation

Section 600 – Official Team Roster

- A. Teams participating in TAI AO postseason play must submit an Official Team Roster through the TAI AO website and to the TAI AO Cross Country Committee by **September 15th**. The Official Team Roster must comply with TAI AO Eligibility guidelines as stated in the General Rules (see Subchapter G, Section 236)
- B. The High School Official Team Roster must include all expected cross country players who will participate at the High School level during the current Year of Participation. All varsity and junior varsity players must be included on the Official Team Roster.
- C. The Middle School Official Team Roster must include all expected cross country players who will participate at the Middle School level during the current Year of Participation.
- D. The Official Team Roster must include the link to the team page in MaxPreps (high school level only) and the following information for each player:
 - player first and last name
 - age
 - grade level
 - date of birth
 - number of seasons of club cross country experience
- E. The Official Team Roster is the final roster for the remainder of the season. This roster will be used to determine Region and Division assignments for postseason play. Players who are temporarily ineligible for academic or other reasons must be included on the Official Team Roster.
- F. High School level teams participating in TAI AO postseason play must also post a roster in MaxPreps (*see Part E, Section 626*).

Section 601 – Tryouts

- A. Member organizations are prohibited from holding tryouts in which players are cut from the team or roster.
- B. Teams must accept registered players and not close registration early in an attempt to prevent athletes from participating, provided that teams may set a registration deadline or a maximum number of athlete participants so long as athletes are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- C. Member organizations may hold “position tryouts” to determine player positions and/or to determine which players will play at the Varsity level and which players will play at the Junior Varsity level. Position tryouts may not be used to cut players from the team or roster.

Section 602 – Club/Select and School Team Participation

- A. A Club/Select team is defined as a cross country team which requires tryouts and is not sponsored by a member organization. No more than 8 athletes from any one team of a member organization may play together on a club/select team.
- B. A School team is defined as a member organization sponsored cross country team.
- C. Players may participate on Club/Select teams during the Off Season and Summer. At no time may players participate on a School team outside of the Regular Season and Spring Training.

Section 603 – Compliance

- A. TAIIO expects each Member Organization to abide by the TAIIO rules, policies, procedures, and guidelines. Each Member Organization is expected to act with integrity and to self-regulate in accordance with the TAIIO General Rules, policies, and procedures.
- B. Failure to submit rosters by the stated deadline will result in disciplinary action up to and including non-qualification for postseason player honors including Regional and State Meet participation.
- C. Violations of TAIIO policies regarding tryouts, club participation, and school team participation will result in disciplinary action up to and including non-qualification for postseason player honors including Regional and State Meet participation.
- D. Cross Country follows TAIIO compliance guidelines as stated in the General Rules (*Subchapter I – Discipline, Protests & Appeals, sections 246-247*).

Section 604 to 609 is reserved for expansion.

PART B – Region & Division Assignment

The Rules in Subchapter J “Classifications” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part B.

Section 610 – Region & Division Assignment

- A. Region and Division assignment will be determined by the Cross Country Committee following the **September 15th** deadline for Official Team Roster submission.
- B. Region assignment will be determined by the member organization’s geographic location.
- C. Division assignment will be determined by the Official Team Roster.
 - **Division 1:** A roster count of $X+1$ players or more, or 7+ seasons combined player experience in club play.
 - **Division 2:** A roster count of X players or fewer.
 - **JV Division:** All Junior Varsity teams will play in the JV Division.
- D. Division assignment for a member organization’s inaugural season of a cross country team will be Division 2 regardless of the roster count (assuming fewer than 7 seasons of combined player experience in Club play). This exception is made only for the first year of the organization’s cross country program.
- E. The Cross Country Committee shall have discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to allow teams to compete in the JV Division only where the athletes are all freshman or sophomore athletes (assuming fewer than 7 seasons of combined player experience in Club play).

The roster count for division assignments will change from year to year. Each year the committee will determine the value of X based on roster submissions. For example, if $X = 12$, then D1 is 13 or more players and D2 is 12 or fewer players.

Section 611 – New Member Organizations

- A. Upon admission to TAI AO, each new member organization will be assigned to a region and division by the Cross Country Committee.
- B. Roster Data for any organization applying for membership in TAI AO must be submitted with its league application.

Section 612 is reserved for expansion.

PART C – Off Season, Spring Training, & Summer

The Rules in Subchapter K – “General Plan” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part C.

Section 613 – Calendar

The TAI AO calendar for Cross Country outside of the Regular Season is as follows:

- **Off Season:** From the conclusion of the Regular Season through July 31st.
- **Spring Training:** Beginning February 1st and ending May 31st.
- **Summer:** Beginning June 1st and ending July 31st.

Section 614 – Off Season (*See Section 264 of the General Rules*)

- A. Off Season workouts can be held anytime other than Spring Training or the Regular Season.
- B. Off Season workouts may include individual cross country skills, strength training, and conditioning.
- C. Workouts may be conducted starting no earlier than 6:00 AM and concluding no later than 9:00 PM. Off Season workouts shall not exceed a total of 300 minutes per week.
- D. Coaches should explain to players that participation in Off Season activities is strictly voluntary and never required. Participation must not be a prerequisite for participation or position on a cross country team.

Section 615 – Member Organization Facilities Use (Off Season) (*See Section 262 of the General Rules*)

Section 616 – Spring Training

- A. Spring Cross Country Workouts (“Spring Training”) must be an optional activity.
- B. Organized practices may include team and individual instruction in sport specific skills.
- C. A team is permitted:
 - No more than 32 total practice days
 - Only one practice session per day
 - No practice which exceeds 3 hours
 - A maximum of 12 hours per week
- D. No contests (matches or scrimmages) with other schools are allowed.
- E. No Sunday activities unless authorized by TAI AO.
- F. Coaches should explain to players that participation in Spring Training is strictly voluntary and never required. Participation must not be a prerequisite for participation or position on a cross country team.

Section 617 – Summer Activities (*See Section 265 of the General Rules*)

- A. Summer activities must be optional.
- B. Summer activities may include individual cross country skills, strength training, and conditioning.
- C. Summer activities may be conducted starting no earlier than 6:00 AM and concluding no later than 9:00 PM. Summer activities must not exceed 2 hours per day and a total of 8 hours per week.

D. Coaches should explain to players that participation in Summer activities is strictly voluntary and never required. Participation must not be a prerequisite for participation or position on a cross country team.

Section 618 – Member Organization Facility Use (Summer) (*See Section 262 of the General Rules*)

Sections 619 to 620 are reserved for expansion.

PART D – Regular Season

Section 621 – Calendar

- A. Organized Practices may begin the **1st Monday in August**.
- B. Regular Season matches may begin as early as the first Monday of August.
- C. No meets will be scheduled on Sunday.

Section 622 – Organized Practice Definition & Schedule

- A. Beginning the **1st Monday in August** and continuing until **August 15th**, a member organization may schedule up to two organized practices per day. From **August 15th** until the end of Postseason play, only one organized practice per day may be scheduled.
- B. The maximum length of an organized practice cannot exceed 3 hours.
- C. Except for player participation on Club/Select teams, organized practices are only allowed during Spring Training and the Regular Season (to include postseason playoffs).
- D. Cross Country organized practice is defined as team and individual instruction in sport specific skills.

The following are typical “practice activities” included in organized practices:

- Actual course practice
- Sport specific skill instruction
- Mandatory conditioning

The following are not considered “practice activities”:

- Meetings
- Injury treatment
- Weight training
- Water breaks / Rest breaks
- Film study
- Voluntary conditioning (may not be coach directed)

Section 623 – Pre-Season Meets

- A. No member organization shall participate in more than 3 pre-season meets.
- B. No pre-season meets are allowed after the 1st official meet has been played.

Section 624 – Meet & Event Participation Limits

- A. **Number of Meets:** No student representing a member school shall participate in more than 10 meets during the regular season. Meets which are limited to three or fewer schools do not count as a meet for participants, provided there is no loss of school time.
- B. Each meet a school enters counts as one meet for each participating individual.
- C. **Event Limits:**
 - Athletes shall not be allowed to compete in more than one event at each cross country meet
- D. **Weekly Limits:** No student representing a member school shall participate in more than one meet per school week.

PART E – Meet Administration

The Rules in Subchapter K – “General Plan” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part E.

Section 625 - Meet Rules

- A. All cross country meets are governed by the National Federation of High Schools Cross Country Rules.
- B. Regulation Play will follow UIL Rules (<https://www.uil texas.org/policy/constitution/athletics/cross-country>).

Section 626 – Meet Entries and Scoring

- A. **Number of Runners:** A minimum of 5 participants shall constitute a team. If a school enters fewer than 5 athletes, it cannot compete for the team title.
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- B. **Team Score:** The place of the first 5 finishers on each team will count for the total team score. The team score shall be determined by adding the points attributed to the top 5 runners. A runner’s score shall be determined by assigning a point value equivalent to the place a runner finishes (i.e., the first place runner gets one point, the second place runner gets two points, etc.). The lowest team score wins first place, the second lowest team score wins second place, and so on.
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- C. **Tie-Breakers:** If teams are tied after calculation of placements for the first five runners, the placement of the sixth runner shall determine final team standings. If one team does not have a sixth runner the team with the sixth runner shall be ranked higher.

Section 627 – Pre- and Post-Meet Prayer

- A. At each contest between TAI AO member organizations, pre-meet and post-meet prayer is encouraged (not required).
- B. When a TAI AO member organization is playing a non-TAI AO opponent, the TAI AO member organization is encouraged to offer to pray before or after the meet with the non-TAI AO opponent.

Section 628 – Tickets & Admissions – Regular Season Meets (*See Section 267D of the General Rules*)

Sections 629 – 640 are reserved for expansion

PART F – Uniforms & Equipment

Section 641 – Player Uniform Requirements

A. General Uniform Requirements

B. Uniform Top

C. Uniform Bottom

D. Undergarments

Section 642 - Equipment

A. Additional Gear

B. Cross Country

Sections 643 - 644 are reserved for expansion.

PART G – Postseason Play

Section 645 – Postseason Playoff Schedule & Seeding

- A. The TAIIO Postseason schedule will be determined by the Cross Country Committee on an annual basis.
- B. The Cross Country Committee is responsible for determining the member organization teams participating in the playoffs for each Division.
- C. The Cross Country Committee is responsible for determining whether a regional meet will be held for Middle School, Junior Varsity, and Varsity teams. If the Regional Meet is held, Middle School and Junior Varsity teams will compete in the Regional Meet for a regional title but will not compete in the State Meet, and Varsity teams will compete at the Division 1 and Division 2 levels of the Regional Meet, and qualifying participants will advance to the State Meet.

Section 646 – Middle School, JV, and Varsity Participation

- A. If a Regional Meet is held for Middle School, Junior Varsity, and Varsity teams, only the qualifying athletes in the Division 1 and Division 2 levels of Varsity teams shall advance to the State Meet.
- B. In each Varsity division at the Regional Meet, the top 5 teams (which will include the top 7 runners on that team) and the top 15 individual athletes (including those who are already on the advancing teams) will advance to the State Meet.

Section 647 – Regional Meets

- A. The format of the TAIIO Regional Meets will be determined annually by the Cross Country Committee.
- B. The running distance for the Middle School Regional Meet will be approximately two miles. The running distance for the girls' Junior Varsity and Varsity (Division 1 and Division 2) Regional Meet will be approximately two miles. The running distance for the boys' Junior Varsity and Varsity (Division 1 and Division 2) Regional Meet will be approximately 5,000 meters.
- C. The Regional Meets will be played at locations designated by TAIIO.
- D. TAIIO will manage all meet activities.
- E. The TAIIO Steering Committee must make every effort to choose meet locations that can accommodate the expected crowd.
- F. The TAIIO Steering Committee will determine a reasonable ticket price for the Regional Meets. The Committee will consider the venue, the expense of the event, the impact on expected spectator population, and the overall TAIIO organizational welfare in determining admission. This policy is consistent with those procedures used by like organizations and is the guidance that will be applicable to all TAIIO activities.
- G. Coaches, players, team trainer, team manager (one per team) and officials are exempt from paying admission. The Cross Country Committee may not exceed the number of free admissions granted in the General Rules. For clarification, a "team" shall mean each team entered for competition at the Regional Meet and shall not be interpreted to mean a member organization (i.e., a member organization can enter multiple teams in different divisions in the Regional Meet). Any cap on free admissions shall apply to each team individually.
- H. All match and season passes issued by any member organization are suspended for the Regional Meets.

Section 648 - State Meet

- A. The format of the TAI AO State Meet will be determined annually by the Cross Country Committee.
- B. The running distance for the Middle School State Meet will be approximately two miles. The running distance for the girls' Junior Varsity and Varsity (Division 1 and Division 2) State Meet will be approximately two miles. The running distance for the boys' Junior Varsity and Varsity (Division 1 and Division 2) State Meet will be approximately 5,000 meters.
- C. The State Meet will be played at a central location designated by TAI AO.
- D. TAI AO will manage all meet day activities.
- E. The TAI AO Steering Committee will make every effort to choose playoff locations that can accommodate the expected crowd.
- F. The TAI AO Steering Committee will determine a reasonable ticket price for the State Meet. The Committee will consider the venue, the expense of the event, the impact on expected spectator population, and the overall TAI AO organizational welfare in determining admission. This policy is consistent with those procedures used by like organizations and is the guidance that will be applicable to all TAI AO activities.
- G. Coaches, players, team trainer, team manager (one per team) and officials are exempt from paying admission. The Cross Country Committee may not exceed the number of free admissions granted in the General Rules. For clarification, a "team" shall mean each team entered for competition at the State Meet and shall not be interpreted to mean a member organization (i.e., a member organization may have multiple teams in different divisions at the State Meet). Any cap on free admissions shall apply to each team individually.
- H. All match and season passes issued by any member organization are suspended for the State Meet.

Sections 649 to 659 are reserved for expansion.

PART H – Postseason Honors

Section 660 – Player Eligibility and Statistics

- A. The purpose of awarding Postseason Honors is to recognize exceptional talent and performance of an individual player as consistently demonstrated throughout the season.
- B. A player must have competed in at least 3 regular season meets in order to qualify for this recognition.
- C. Statistics for the individual athletes must be official, electronically timed results. Individual player statistics should be kept current and as accurate as possible, as player stats are helpful when assessing all-star selections.
- D. No JV player may be considered for All Star nominations.

Section 661 – All-Star Honors

- A. TAIAC Cross Country Honors will recognize All-Star honors for Division 1 and Division 2.
- B. The player selection process will be determined by the Cross Country Committee.

Sections 662 to 664 are reserved for expansion.

PART I – Removal from Contest

The Rules in Subchapter I – “Discipline, Protests & Appeals” also apply to this Subchapter N, Part I.

A.

Section 665 - Standard of Behavior

- A. Coaches, athletes, parents, and volunteers shall at all times comply with the standards of behavior and respect reflected in the General Rules.
- B. A coach or athlete who deliberately comes into physical contact with or threatens to harm another coach, volunteer, or the individuals running, organizing, or timing the meet will receive a minimum five (5) meet suspension.
- C. A coach or athlete who fails to comply with the standards of behavior and respect required by the General Rules or yells at another coach, volunteer, or the individuals running, organizing, or timing the meet will receive a minimum three (3) meet suspension.

Sections 666 to 680 are reserved for expansion.

PART J – Coach Training & Concussions

Section 681 - Coach Training & Certification (*See Section 272 of the General Rules*)

Section 682 - Concussions

- A. In addition to required training, every TAI AO head cross country coach will follow the UIL mandated protocol related to any student who shows signs, symptoms, or behaviors associated with a concussion.
- B. UIL Concussion Protocol mandates:
 - 1. Player is immediately removed from the contest or practice.
 - 2. Player may not return to play on the same day.
 - 3. Player may not return until cleared to play by an appropriate health-care professional.
- C. Return to Play protocol must, at a minimum, include the following:
 - Day 1** – 24 hours symptom free
 - Day 2** – Light aerobic exercise (5-10 minutes of light workout)
 - Day 3** – Moderate aerobic exercise (15-20 minutes of running at moderate intensity)
 - Day 4** – Non-contact training drills, weight training, resistance training
 - Day 5** – Full contact practice and training
 - Day 6** – Eligible for meet play

PART K – Videotaping & Filming

Section 683 – Media, Videotaping, and Filming (*See Section 275 of the General Rules*)

PART L – Middle School Cross Country

Rules in Sections 600-604, 613-618, 621-624, 641-642, 645-648, 665-666, 681-683 also apply to Middle School Cross Country.

Section 684 - Season Calendar

- A. Organized Practices may begin the first Monday in August.
- B. Regular Season matches may begin as early as the first Monday of August.
- C. No meets will be scheduled on Sunday.

Section 685 - Eligibility

- A. Participation in TAI AO Middle School cross country is open to students who:
 - 1. Will reach their 10th birthday no later than September 1st of the calendar year of participation.
 - 2. Will not reach their 14th birthday prior to May 31st of the calendar year of participation.
- B. Players may have up to four consecutive years of eligibility at the Middle School level (5th through 8th grade).
- C. Players who turn 14 between June 1st and September 1st have the option to play Middle School or High School cross country. If the member organization and family agree to advance the student to High School play, this is acceptable, but will begin the student's four years of High School participation.
- D. A member organization may adopt eligibility rules related to Middle School participation that are more stringent than TAI AO rules for eligibility (including academic eligibility).

Section 686 - Meets

- A. **Number of Meets:** No student representing a member school shall participate in more than 10 meets during the regular season. Meets which are limited to three or fewer schools do not count as a meet for participants, provided there is no loss of school time.
- B. Each meet a school enters counts as one meet for each participating individual.
- C. **Event Limits:**
 - Athletes shall not be allowed to compete in more than one event at each cross country meet.
- D. **Weekly Limits:** No student representing a member school shall participate in more than one meet per school week.

Section 687 - Postseason

- A. The format of the Postseason will be determined annually by the Cross Country Committee.
- B. Seeding for the postseason meet will be done by the Cross Country Committee.