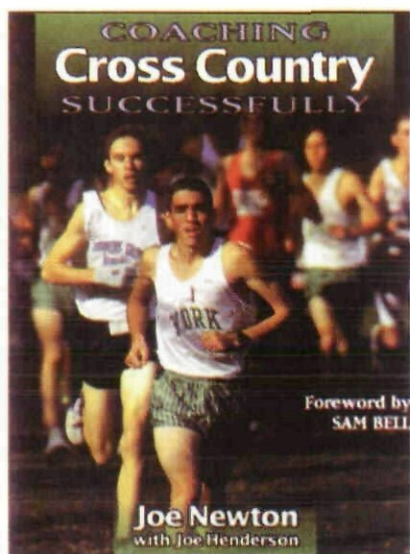


Coaching Cross Country Successfully

by Joe Newton with Joe Henderson



Joe Newton has long been recognized in the United States as an outstanding High School cross country coach. Since 1957 he has built a running dynasty at York High School in Elmhurst, Illinois. His boy's cross country teams have won 10 national championships, 19 state championships, and 113 conference titles. Newton was named National High school cross country Coach of the Year by the National High School Coaches Association in 1975 and by the National Federation of High School Administrators in 1994. In 1988, he was chosen as one of the coaches of the U.S. men's track and field Olympic team in Seoul, South Korea.

This book is primarily written for coaches, but athletes can certainly benefit from it, too.

Although Newton concentrates on high school cross country, much of what he says also translates to the track racing that American cross country runners are likely to do between cross country seasons. Newton's book deals exclusively with the cross country situation in the United States, where cross country is a school based sport, ranking fifth in participation among sports offered at the high school level for boys and girls.

The book is divided into five parts. **Part I** is concerned with coaching foundation and includes four chapters. The opening *chapter 1* deals with ways of developing interest, a training programme, coaching excellence, philosophical aspects, motivation and, last but not least, the creation of better human beings through athletics. *Chapter 2* is about communication – how to sell one's cross country programme. It shows how to communicate with athletes, the team, parents, alumni, assistants, the school, the media and other coaches. In *chapter 3* Newton summarizes the motivational techniques that have proven effective with his team. *Chapter 4* deals almost entirely with recruiting and starts from the idea that the team should be thought of as a pyramid: The wider its base in terms of numbers, the higher its peak will reach in terms of quality.

Part II of the book looks at planning and training. In *chapter 5* overall seasonal patterns are discussed, while *chapter 6* deals with specific workouts. *Chapter 6* also includes "Newton's 12 Weeks of Training", a very detailed week by week training plan, which may be of great help to coaches and athletes, no matter whether they are competing in the US high school system or elsewhere.

Part III features teaching techniques and tactics. *Chapter 7* tells the reader how to teach ideal and individual running form, problem correction, relaxation, cross country form, hill running, breathing and pace changing. The essential skill taught in *chapter 8* is pace. This chapter includes sections on improving race pacing, pace judgement, pace plans, mid-race pace and the finishing kick. While *chapter 8* deals mainly with individuals

and how they can run at their own best pace, *chapter 9* is about running together as a team. It includes the development of individual tactics, pack running, start tactics, mid-race strategy, race plans, and team goals.

Part IV of the book deals with coaching for competition. *Chapter 10* is about the mental and logistical preparation for competition. Although the tips offered here can be used for any cross country race, the emphasis is on the biggest race of the season. The headlines are: Preparing for Peaking, Preparing for the Big One, Preparing by Psyching, Preparing to Travel, and Preparing to Race. *Chapter 11* focuses on coaching at competitions. Coaches are given advice on how to coach on the course, how to give comments to their athletes and how to deal with them after the race.

The last part of the book, **Part V**, covers coaching evaluation. In *chapter 12* Newton explains how to evaluate runners' performances, or, in other words, how to maximize, measure and reward individual improvement. Finally, *chapter 13* shows how to evaluate the whole programme, i.e. how to assess the past season and to start rebuilding for the next year.

Coaching Cross Country Successfully is a source of valuable information for athletes and coaches alike, in so far as it reveals why York High School has been so successful. The main cause of this success, apart from hard training, seems to be the motivation instilled by an enthusiastic coach. Joe Newton's enthusiasm and dedication can be felt on almost every page. However, the fact that the book deals solely with the American situation reduces its value for coaches from other continents. In Europe, for example, most runners regard cross country running as a supplementary competition activity helping them to prepare for the summer track season. Certainly no serious runner would sacrifice the track season to prepare for the winter cross country season.

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