

## **Middle School Cross Country**

### **Spice up the Routine**

#### **Things to keep in mind:**

- After a distance run, get everyone together and have them run barefoot strides on grass. It's good for your feet and it feels nice
- Get a watermelon and cut it up after the workout or orange slices
- Give everyone all a piece of gum
- Get some popsicles and give them one after they have finished

#### **Fun Fridays – Dress Up**

- School Spirit/Red and White
- Wacky Day (hair, clothes, crazy socks, etc)
- Neon Day
- Superhero Day
- {insert Certain} Color Day (i.e. blue day)

#### **Let it Go – Letting Go of Lies**

Need enough sharpies/markers and red balloons for each team member. Get your team together and talk to them about negative thoughts that may have crept into their minds before/during the season. Talk to them and encourage them to take a few minutes on their own and write those lies on the balloon. Talk to them about how negativity can ruin how they feel about themselves in all aspects of life. Allow students to share if they wish. Get group together and let it go...let the balloon take off.

#### **Best Hand**

When the high school is at Pine Street doing their laps, bring a deck or two of cards (different colored decks to make life easier). Every time a middle school athlete completes a lap, they get a card. Best hand wins. \*probably peek at the card to give faster runners lower numbers so they have to complete more laps to win.

Create best hand by adding cards together and highest hand wins or whoever has the most red-cards win, only add together the red-cards...other variations to the game so not necessarily the person with the most cards will win??

## **Level Up**

Materials: None

Preparation: Give each athlete their goal

Location: Hill and Bale (cut it a bit shorter) or Cemetery (starting point could be at the high school, or end point could be by the high school...) or another area

Teams: Split into appropriate level goal

Directions: For a long run, I will do the following for a 30 minute run session:

Level 1's: Complete the xc course (1.6 miles, goal might be to complete w/o walking or a little faster than normal)

Level 2's: run 800m and then the XC course

Level 3's: 2x around the XC course

Level 4's: Run 2.5x around the course (trying for 3x)

The kids feel like they are accomplishing something when they finish. They like to work hard and advance to the next level.

## **Spoons**

Materials: Plastic spoon for each runner, whistle

Preparation: None

Location: Cemetery, Hill and Bale, Pine Street, somewhere in which every athlete can hear a whistle, not necessarily a looped area

Teams: None

Directions: Each athlete has a spoon and you run for a **designated amount of time (how long of a time?)**, and where you end you drop your spoon. Recovery is time it takes to jog back to starting. Repeat. The goal is to get farther than the spoon each time.

## **Friday Practice/End of Practice/After Easy Day**

### **Splitting into Teams/Option for getting middle runners to win in a relay**

Keep an excel sheet of athletes and their race times to easily organize equally matched teams

Pair the #1 runner with last runner, 2nd runner with 2nd to last and so on...

### **Fox and the Hound**

Select one or two people to be the "hound" and everyone else is a "fox." When a "fox" gets tagged by a "hound" then the fox becomes a Hound and can tag other foxes. All foxes and hounds must be running at all times to play. The last fox or two wins and gets to become a hound for the next round. Create boundary to keep all athletes together.

### **Rock, Paper, Scissors**

Materials: Start-line and "Challenge-line" markers

Preparation: Creating the start lines and challenge lines.

Location: Pine Street Park, Hill and Bale location, FFA gravel road by High School, Middle School Obstacle course track, around the high school

Teams: Athletes should compete against someone at the level; two groups

Directions: Form two groups. Define two starting lines approximately 50 to 100 meters apart and finish line (Challenge Spot). Runners line up in two single file lines with one group at each starting line. The lead runner in each line sprints toward the end (the challenge spot). When the two lead runners meet each other at the challenge spot, they give each other a high five, turn around and walk two steps forward, spin back around to face their partner and throw down their choice. The winner of the challenge receives two points. In the case of a tie, each team gets one point. Runners are responsible for keeping track of their own points (or coach is at the finish line/challenge spot). After the challenge, runners should jog back to the end of their line. Continue for a designated time

period. The next runner in line may start running toward the challenge spot when the runner ahead of them is halfway to the challenge spot.

## Continuous Relay Race



Materials: Banana or Baton of some sort or allow low-fives

Preparation: Set up cones for baton passing

Location: Split up Hill and Bale area, Pine Street, around Fremont Lake Park. Need looped area big enough for possibly three hand-offs.

Teams: Teams of 4 or 3, bigger teams mean more hand-off points

Directions: Split your runners into two or more fairly matched teams. Give each team one baton (banana? Or low-fives) and designate baton handoff locations on the running loop. Since this is XC, runner cannot take off until they have possession of baton. Place one runner from each team at each handoff location except for the starting position, which should have two runners from each team. Designate which of the two runners will run first for each team. The first runners run to the first baton handoff location and pass off their batons to their teammates. While the first runners stay and rest until the baton comes around again, their teammates run to the next handoff location and so on. The

first team to have all runners return to their starting positions wins. Losing team has to eat the bananas? Or winners get the bananas?

### Performance Points:

The number of handoff locations depends upon the number of runners. There should be at least one more runner per team than there are handoff locations and at least three runners per team.

The distance between relay stations will depend on your athletes' fitness and your training objectives. As a general guideline, relay legs might range between 50 and 200 meters.

The main goals are fun and fitness, but along the way you can also give your runners pointers on their form and technique. For runners that compete in relays, use this opportunity to work on baton passing technique.

## **Obstacle Medley**

Materials: 3+ Cones, possibly whiteboards with name of activity at each post

Preparation: Decide on activities and length of each and # of cones needed

Location: Hill and Bale, somewhere with flat ground, around high school to end with sprinting up and down the hill?

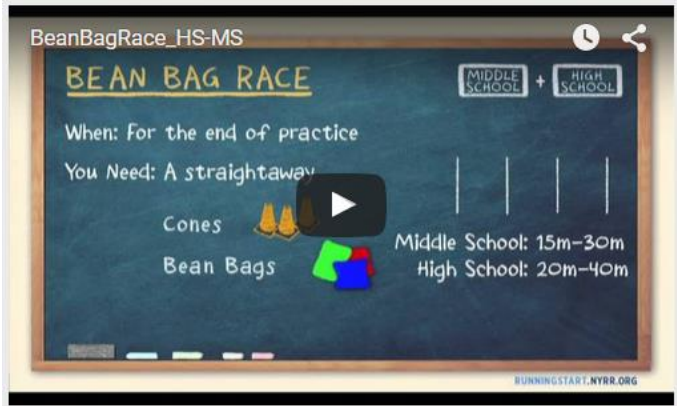
Teams: Split into two equally matched teams.

Directions: Create a course that incorporates a series of obstacles (e.g. crab walk to the first cone, zigzag around cones, run sideways to another cone, high skips, frog jumps, bear crawl, jump on one foot, jumping jacks, sprint back to the line). At high school: start in grass area, crab walk to paved path/cone, skip to telephone pole, 10 jumping jacks, run sideways or grapevine to next cone, frog jump to next cone, sprint up hill to give the next teammate a high-five)

On your command, the first runner from each team starts. As they finish, the next runner on their team starts, and so on, until all runners have gone.

The first team to have all runners complete the course wins.

## Bean Bag Race Relay



Materials: Cones. Bean bags OR gallon bag filled with small amount of smarties or starbursts. Each team gets three bags.

Preparation: Prepare the candy bags. Set up the cones to make three lines to divide straightaway into three segments.

Location: Flat area: Hill and Bale, High School, Pine Street

Teams: Probably split the team in half, but could have more teams.

Direction: Have competitors line up at the start of the course. On your command, they sprint to the first marker, drop off a beanbag, and return to the start. Then they pick up another beanbag, sprint to the second marker, drop it off, and again return to the start, and so on until they complete the course.

On the repeat run, have them pick up the beanbags from the markers and return them all to the start one at a time.

*For a more intense workout, have them immediately repeat the course after dropping off all the beanbags.*

When done as a relay, the first runner of each team drops the beanbags off at the markers and tags the second runner who then picks the bean bags up and returns them to the start one at a time, and so on, until all runners have gone.

Performance Points:

Don't throw the beanbags; bend down to place them on the ground to improve agility and anaerobic fitness.

## **Team Hill Run**

Materials: Stopwatch

Preparation: I would make the faster kids start first to help motivate the slower kids to pass others and then the faster kids compete against each other.

Location: Branstrom Park (after every kid knows where it is located) or any route that every athlete knows well

Teams: Boys vs Girls

Directions: Each team will line-up. We start with one person from each team. Every minute a pair will take off. Score by beating the runner on the opposite team that you took off with and any runners of the opposite team that started in front of you.

