

How to score a high school cross country meet

Cross country meets usually have four or more teams running the course at the same time. If you ask your runner “who won” the meet, the answer will be something like, “we won two and lost one.”

How does that work?

Let’s look at an example meet with four schools: RJ, Midlakes, Marion and Newark. In this four-team meet, each team competes against three other schools. We will have the following races to score:

- RJ vs Midlakes
- RJ vs Marion
- RJ vs Newark
- Midlakes vs Marion
- Midlakes vs Newark
- Newark vs Marion

As each runner crosses the finish line, the times are recorded in a form like this one:

| Place | Time | Athlete | Grade | School | Newark | Marion | Newark | RJ |
|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| 1 | 17:15 | Jason Bourne | 10 | RJ | | | | |
| 2 | 18:04 | Jack Sparrow | 11 | Newark | | | | |
| 3 | 18:05 | Ethan Hunt | 12 | Newark | | | | |
| 4 | 18:12 | Indiana Jones | 9 | Marion | | | | |
| 5 | 18:13 | James Bond | 11 | RJ | | | | |
| 6 | 18:18 | Han Solo | 11 | RJ | | | | |
| 7 | 18:42 | James Kirk | 10 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 8 | 18:44 | Tony Stark | 10 | Newark | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 18:55 | John Hancock | 9 | Marion | | | | |
| 10 | 19:06 | Inigo Montoya | 11 | RJ | Newark | Midlakes | Marion | RJ |
| 11 | 19:08 | Napoleon Solo | 12 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 12 | 19:09 | Illya Kuryakin | 9 | RJ | | | | |
| 13 | 19:29 | Will Turner | 12 | RJ | | | | |
| 14 | 19:32 | Dead Pool | 11 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 15 | 19:03 | John McClane | 11 | Newark | | | | |
| 16 | 19:47 | Russell Casse | 9 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 17 | 19:58 | Steven Hiller | 10 | RJ | | | | |
| 18 | 20:05 | Bruce Banner | 10 | Marion | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 19 | 20:11 | Nick Fury | 12 | Marion | | | | |
| 20 | 20:12 | Dylan Rhodes | 10 | Marion | RJ | Midlakes | Marion | Midlakes |
| 21 | 20:23 | Jack Reacher | 11 | Marion | | | | |
| 22 | 20:27 | Cameron Poe | 12 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 23 | 20:28 | Sherlock Holmes | 9 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 24 | 20:30 | John Connor | 11 | Newark | | | | |
| 25 | 20:32 | Jack Traven | 11 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 26 | 20:43 | Roger Murtaugh | 10 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 27 | 20:57 | Mark Watney | 10 | RJ | | | | |
| 28 | 21:00 | Clark Kent | 9 | RJ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 29 | 21:03 | Bruce Wayne | 11 | Marion | | | | |
| 30 | 21:06 | Dirk Pitt | 12 | RJ | | | | |
| 31 | 21:14 | Conan Barbarian | 9 | RJ | | | | |
| 32 | 21:19 | John Carter | 12 | RJ | | | | |
| 33 | 21:36 | Jack Ryan | 11 | RJ | | | | |
| 34 | 21:40 | Roy Miller | 11 | Newark | | | | |
| 35 | 21:51 | Cody Banks | 9 | Newark | | | | |
| 36 | 22:09 | Austin Powers | 10 | RJ | | | | |
| 37 | 22:12 | Frank Moses | 10 | Midlakes | | | | |
| 38 | 22:22 | Jeff Blue | 12 | Newark | | | | |

Assigning points

For each race, we look at **one pair of schools**. We start assigning points. In high school varsity races, the first five runners from each team score points for their team.

- The first runner gets 1 point
- The second runner gets 2 points
- The third runner gets 3 points
- The fourth runner gets 4 points
- The fifth runner gets 5 points
- And so on

The sixth and seventh runner from each team can also earn points. However, these points are not added to their team’s score. Instead, these runners can contribute to their team by “displacing” finishers from the other team, causing the other team to receive more points. (Remember, low scores are better).

Let’s start by scoring Newark vs. Marion.

Ignoring all the other schools for now, we go down the list and start assigning points to Newark and Marion runners in the order they finished.

| Wayne-Finger Lakes Cross Country Results | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|--------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| Place | Time | Athlete | Grade | School | points | Newark | Marion | Newark | RJ |
| 1 | 17:15 | Jason Bourne | 10 | RJ | | | | | |
| 2 | 18:04 | Jack Sparrow | 11 | Newark | 1 | | | | |
| 3 | 18:05 | Ethan Hunt | 12 | Newark | 2 | | | | |
| 4 | 18:12 | Indiana Jones | 9 | Marion | 3 | | | | |
| 5 | 18:13 | James Bond | 11 | RJ | | | | | |
| 6 | 18:18 | Han Solo | 11 | RJ | | | | | |
| 7 | 18:42 | James Kirk | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 8 | 18:44 | Tony Stark | 10 | Newark | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 18:55 | John Hancock | 9 | Marion | 5 | | | | |
| 10 | 19:06 | Inigo Montoya | 11 | RJ | | Newark | Midlakes | Marion | RJ |
| 11 | 19:08 | Napoleon Solo | 12 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 12 | 19:09 | Illya Kuryakin | 9 | RJ | | | | | |
| 13 | 19:29 | Will Turner | 12 | RJ | | | | | |
| 14 | 19:32 | Dead Pool | 11 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 15 | 19:03 | John McClane | 11 | Newark | 6 | | | | |
| 16 | 19:47 | Russell Casse | 9 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 17 | 19:58 | Steven Hiller | 10 | RJ | | | | | |
| 18 | 20:05 | Bruce Banner | 10 | Marion | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 19 | 20:11 | Nick Fury | 12 | Marion | 8 | | | | |
| 20 | 20:12 | Dylan Rhodes | 10 | Marion | 9 | RJ | Midlakes | Marion | Midlakes |
| 21 | 20:23 | Jack Reacher | 11 | Marion | 10 | | | | |
| 22 | 20:27 | Cameron Poe | 12 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 23 | 20:28 | Sherlock Holmes | 9 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 24 | 20:30 | John Connor | 11 | Newark | 11 | | | | |
| 25 | 20:32 | Jack Traven | 11 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 26 | 20:43 | Roger Murtaugh | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 27 | 20:57 | Mark Watney | 10 | RJ | | | | | |
| 28 | 21:00 | Clark Kent | 9 | RJ | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 29 | 21:03 | Bruce Wayne | 11 | Marion | 12 | | | | |
| 30 | 21:06 | Dirk Pitt | 12 | RJ | | | | | |
| 31 | 21:14 | Conan Barbarian | 9 | RJ | | | | | |
| 32 | 21:19 | John Carter | 12 | RJ | | | | | |
| 33 | 21:36 | Jack Ryan | 11 | RJ | | | | | |
| 34 | 21:40 | Roy Miller | 11 | Newark | 13 | | | | |
| 35 | 21:51 | Cody Banks | 9 | Newark | 14 | | | | |
| 36 | 22:09 | Austin Powers | 10 | RJ | | | | | |
| 37 | 22:12 | Frank Moses | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 38 | 22:22 | Jeff Blue | 12 | Newark | | | | | |
| 39 | 22:38 | John Smith | 9 | Marion | 15 | | | | |

Scoring a race: Newark vs. Marion

Now we put the points into the scoring table. Each runner’s points go into the column for his team.

| Wayne-Finger Lakes Cross Country Results | | | | | points | Newark | Marion | Newark | RJ |
|--|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|--------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| Place | Time | Athlete | Grade | School | | | | | |
| 1 | 17:15 | Jason Bourne | 10 | RJ | | 1 | 3 | | |
| 2 | 18:04 | Jack Sparrow | 11 | Newark | 1 | 2 | 5 | | |
| 3 | 18:05 | Ethan Hunt | 12 | Newark | 2 | 4 | 7 | | |
| 4 | 18:12 | Indiana Jones | 9 | Marion | 3 | 6 | 8 | | |
| 5 | 18:13 | James Bond | 11 | RJ | | 11 | 9 | | |
| 6 | 18:18 | Han Solo | 11 | RJ | | | 10 | | |
| 7 | 18:42 | James Kirk | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 8 | 18:44 | Tony Stark | 10 | Newark | 4 | 24 | 32 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 18:55 | John Hancock | 9 | Marion | 5 | | | | |
| 10 | 19:06 | Inigo Montoya | 11 | RJ | | Newark | Midlakes | Marion | RJ |
| 11 | 19:08 | Napoleon Solo | 12 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 12 | 19:09 | Illya Kuryakin | 9 | RJ | | | | | |
| 13 | 19:29 | Will Turner | 12 | RJ | | | | | |
| 14 | 19:32 | Dead Pool | 11 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 15 | 19:03 | John McClane | 11 | Newark | 6 | | | | |
| 16 | 19:47 | Russell Casse | 9 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 17 | 19:58 | Steven Hiller | 10 | RJ | | | | | |
| 18 | 20:05 | Bruce Banner | 10 | Marion | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 19 | 20:11 | Nick Fury | 12 | Marion | 8 | | | | |
| 20 | 20:12 | Dylan Rhodes | 10 | Marion | 9 | RJ | Midlakes | Marion | Midlakes |
| 21 | 20:23 | Jack Reacher | 11 | Marion | 10 | | | | |
| 22 | 20:27 | Cameron Poe | 12 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 23 | 20:28 | Sherlock Holmes | 9 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 24 | 20:30 | John Connor | 11 | Newark | 11 | | | | |
| 25 | 20:32 | Jack Traven | 11 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 26 | 20:43 | Roger Murtaugh | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | |
| 27 | 20:57 | Mark Watney | 10 | RJ | | | | | |
| 28 | 21:00 | Clark Kent | 9 | RJ | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 29 | 21:03 | Bruce Wayne | 11 | Marion | 12 | | | | |
| 30 | 21:06 | Dirk Pitt | 12 | RJ | | | | | |

Notice how Jack Reacher, the sixth finisher for Marion, “displaced” John Connor of Newark in the scoring table? Jack’s 10 points do NOT get added to Marion’s score. But by “displacing” John Connor, he causes Newark to score more points: 11 instead of 10.

Once each team has at least five scores in its column, we can stop entering points. The team’s final score is the sum of its first five runner’s points. Newark wins this one (low score wins).

Let’s look at the next race: Newark vs. RJ

(see next page)

Scoring a race: Newark vs. RJ

| Wayne-Finger Lakes Cross Country Results | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|----|--------|----------|--|--------|----------|
| Place | Time | Athlete | Grade | School | | Newark | Marion | | Newark | RJ |
| 1 | 17:15 | Jason Bourne | 10 | RJ | 1 | 1 | 3 | | 2 | 1 |
| 2 | 18:04 | Jack Sparrow | 11 | Newark | 2 | 2 | 5 | | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | 18:05 | Ethan Hunt | 12 | Newark | 3 | 4 | 7 | | 6 | 5 |
| 4 | 18:12 | Indiana Jones | 9 | Marion | | 6 | 8 | | 11 | 7 |
| 5 | 18:13 | James Bond | 11 | RJ | 4 | 11 | 9 | | 12 | 8 |
| 6 | 18:18 | Han Solo | 11 | RJ | 5 | | 10 | | | 9 |
| 7 | 18:42 | James Kirk | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | | 10 |
| 8 | 18:44 | Tony Stark | 10 | Newark | 6 | 24 | 32 | | 34 | 25 |
| 9 | 18:55 | John Hancock | 9 | Marion | | | | | | |
| 10 | 19:06 | Inigo Montoya | 11 | RJ | 7 | Newark | Midlakes | | Marion | RJ |
| 11 | 19:08 | Napoleon Solo | 12 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 12 | 19:09 | Illya Kuryakin | 9 | RJ | 8 | | | | | |
| 13 | 19:29 | Will Turner | 12 | RJ | 9 | | | | | |
| 14 | 19:32 | Dead Pool | 11 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 15 | 19:03 | John McClane | 11 | Newark | | | | | | |
| 16 | 19:47 | Russell Casse | 9 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 17 | 19:58 | Steven Hiller | 10 | RJ | 10 | | | | | |
| 18 | 20:05 | Bruce Banner | 10 | Marion | | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| 19 | 20:11 | Nick Fury | 12 | Marion | | | | | | |
| 20 | 20:12 | Dylan Rhodes | 10 | Marion | | RJ | Midlakes | | Marion | Midlakes |
| 21 | 20:23 | Jack Reacher | 11 | Marion | | | | | | |
| 22 | 20:27 | Cameron Poe | 12 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 23 | 20:28 | Sherlock Holmes | 9 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 24 | 20:30 | John Connor | 11 | Newark | 11 | | | | | |
| 25 | 20:32 | Jack Traven | 11 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 26 | 20:43 | Roger Murtaugh | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 27 | 20:57 | Mark Watney | 10 | RJ | -- | | | | | |
| 28 | 21:00 | Clark Kent | 9 | RJ | -- | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| 29 | 21:03 | Bruce Wayne | 11 | Marion | | | | | | |
| 30 | 21:06 | Dirk Pitt | 12 | RJ | -- | | | | | |
| 31 | 21:14 | Conan Barbarian | 9 | RJ | -- | | | | | |
| 32 | 21:19 | John Carter | 12 | RJ | -- | | | | | |
| 33 | 21:36 | Jack Ryan | 11 | RJ | -- | | | | | |
| 34 | 21:40 | Roy Miller | 11 | Newark | 12 | | | | | |
| 35 | 21:51 | Cody Banks | 9 | Newark | | | | | | |
| 36 | 22:09 | Austin Powers | 10 | RJ | | | | | | |
| 37 | 22:12 | Frank Moses | 10 | Midlakes | | | | | | |
| 38 | 22:22 | Jeff Blue | 12 | Newark | | | | | | |

RJ's Will Turner and Steven Hiller finish 9th and 10th, displacing Newark's John Connor, who scores 11 points.

With Steven Hiller we have entered points for seven RJ runners, so we stop counting the rest of the RJ runners for scoring purposes. The fifth finisher for Newark, Roy Miller, gets 12 points.

(see next page)

Team win-loss results

And here is the completed score sheet.

| Wayne-Finger Lakes Cross Country Results | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------------|-------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| Place | Time | Athlete | Grade | School | Newark | Marion | Newark | RJ |
| 1 | 17:15 | Jason Bourne | 10 | RJ | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2 | 18:04 | Jack Sparrow | 11 | Newark | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | 18:05 | Ethan Hunt | 12 | Newark | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| 4 | 18:12 | Indiana Jones | 9 | Marion | 6 | 8 | 11 | 7 |
| 5 | 18:13 | James Bond | 11 | RJ | 11 | 9 | 12 | 8 |
| 6 | 18:18 | Han Solo | 11 | RJ | | 10 | | 9 |
| 7 | 18:42 | James Kirk | 10 | Midlakes | | | | 10 |
| 8 | 18:44 | Tony Stark | 10 | Newark | 24 | 32 | 34 | 25 |
| 9 | 18:55 | John Hancock | 9 | Marion | | | | |
| 10 | 19:06 | Inigo Montoya | 11 | RJ | Newark | Midlakes | Marion | RJ |
| 11 | 19:08 | Napoleon Solo | 12 | Midlakes | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | 19:09 | Iliya Kuryakin | 9 | RJ | 2 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| 13 | 19:29 | Will Turner | 12 | RJ | 4 | 6 | 10 | 4 |
| 14 | 19:32 | Dead Pool | 11 | Midlakes | 7 | 8 | 11 | 6 |
| 15 | 19:03 | John McClane | 11 | Newark | 11 | 9 | 12 | 7 |
| 16 | 19:47 | Russell Casse | 9 | Midlakes | | 10 | | 8 |
| 17 | 19:58 | Steven Hiller | 10 | RJ | | | | 9 |
| 18 | 20:05 | Bruce Banner | 10 | Marion | 25 | 31 | 40 | 21 |
| 19 | 20:11 | Nick Fury | 12 | Marion | | | | |
| 20 | 20:12 | Dylan Rhodes | 10 | Marion | RJ | Midlakes | Marion | Midlakes |
| 21 | 20:23 | Jack Reacher | 11 | Marion | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| 22 | 20:27 | Cameron Poe | 12 | Midlakes | 2 | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| 23 | 20:28 | Sherlock Holmes | 9 | Midlakes | 3 | 9 | 7 | 5 |
| 24 | 20:30 | John Connor | 11 | Newark | 5 | 10 | 8 | 6 |
| 25 | 20:32 | Jack Traven | 11 | Midlakes | 7 | 12 | 9 | 11 |
| 26 | 20:43 | Roger Murtaugh | 10 | Midlakes | 8 | | 10 | |
| 27 | 20:57 | Mark Watney | 10 | RJ | 11 | | | |
| 28 | 21:00 | Clark Kent | 9 | RJ | 18 | 41 | 28 | 28 |

Breaking the tie

Marion and Midlakes seem to have tied. In the event of a tie, the team with the best 6th place finisher wins. Marion’s 6th place finisher is Jack Reacher with a time of 20:23, faster than the Midlakes 6th place finisher Sherlock Holmes with a time of 20:28. Marion wins. (If neither team has a 6th place finisher, only the top four runners from each team will be scored.)

So for this meet, we have win-loss results as follows:

- Newark 2-1 wins vs Marion and Midlakes, loss to RJ
- Marion 1-2 win vs. Midlakes, loss to Newark and RJ
- Midlakes 0-3 loss to Newark, RJ and Marion
- RJ 3-0 wins vs. Newark, Marion and Midlakes

Incomplete teams can compete

But they can’t win. If a team has fewer than five finishers, the score will be 15-50 (the complete team gets 1+2+3+4+5=15 and the incomplete team gets 8+ 9+10+ 11+12=50). If two incomplete teams run against each other, their race is not scored. No teams, no race, no score.

What about mods?

Mod scoring works the same way, but with (yes) a modification: the first **three** finishers score, and **two** finishers can displace. Boys and girls are scored separately, even though they may run the course at the same time.