GATFXCCA Cross Country Course Measurement Guidelines

Goal: To help coaches measure accurate lengths for meets they are hosting, for whatever length their race is.

National Federation Guidelines pertaining to measurement

- Courses can be 2,500-5,000m in length, as determined by the meet director or games committee (could be changed due to weather/conditions)
- Measurement shall be along the shortest possible route a runner may take

GATFXCCA clarification on "shortest possible route a runner may take"

- Meet directors should make try to mimic the shortest possible route a runner may take that would allow them to stay on the race course with both feet. Meet directors should not follow the inside line too closely, as that would not mimic what route runners would actually take. Generally, 6-8 inches to the right of the inside line/boundary marker is a safe distance to measure from. Meet directors should not measure too close (less than 6 inches) from painted lines, poles, flags, caution tape, or any other boundary markers as their boundary to measure from, as the wheel will be too close to the boundary to accurately measure the shortest path a runner could actually run, and will yield a short measurement.

GATFXCCA recommendations

Before you measure your course

- Coaches need a measuring wheel. If it is a Metric wheel, no conversion is necessary. If it is an English wheel, make sure to use the proper conversion. 5280 feet = 1 mile. 3280.84 feet = 1 kilometer.
- Calibrate your wheel by using it on your school's track, to see if it measures one lap as 400m. Walk in lane one, with the wheel 6-8 inches off of the inside line. If the wheel does not measure lane 1 as 400 meters, then note how far it is off. Note: 1 meter = 3.2808399 feet. Keep in mind how many meters/feet your wheel is off, so you can accurately measure your race course. For example, if your wheel only measured a lap as 390 meters, then it would measure an accurate 5k course as being 120.5 meters short, so you would have to mark the finish line at the 5,120.5 meter mark for your wheel.
- Do not use GPS as a way to measure a course. There is a margin of error with GPS, as satellites are not always accurately updated, and the accuracy can drop even more due to weather conditions, tree coverage, etc.
- Also do not use a bike or any other mode of transportation to measure the course.

Measuring the course

- Start in the middle of the starting line (arc or curve the starting line if necessary, so that all runners have the same distance to run until the first turn)
- Follow all tangents on the course, so that you follow the shortest route possible for runners to take (see clarification at the top of this document).
- Make sure that the wheel is in contact with the ground at all times.

- Walk at a moderate pace, and slow down for any difficult terrain like rocks, roots, or other loose footing.
- Keep the wheel in a straight line, so that it is not weaving as you walk, and possibly adding extra distance. Also make sure it is not coming off the ground and spinning in the air, as that too could add extra distance.

After you measure your course

- Measure it multiple times and/or also have someone else measure it, to compare results.
- If your course is short of 5k, publish the exact distance it is, so that attending coaches/athletes are informed.