

# Adaptive Cross Country – Michigan

## Rules:

All NHSF and MHSAA Rules that are currently being followed by Middle Schools and High Schools throughout Michigan.

## Best Practices for Adaptive Athletes –

- Races need to have accessible bathrooms. Your site might provide multiple Port-a-Potty's yet how many are wheelchair accessible? This could be an issue for both athletes as well as spectators.
- Course design - Keep in mind, what you define as a hill for the able-bodied runner is likely a 'mountain' to the hand cycle (HC) athletes in a chair.
- If a course has a water crossing or large obstacle, create an alternate route or way over the water / obstacle for the HC athletes.
- Turns - "hairpin" turns around trees can be tough for a hand cycle, causing them to use a wider turn radius or risk getting stuck. Gradual turns and extra space are needed. Even a 90-degree turn can present difficulties for staying on the course.
- Meet Management can have volunteers on the course in these possible obstacle areas to assist the HC athlete and On Course Guide.
- Have race volunteers positioned in areas on a course that might be difficult for a hand cycle - such as a steep hill, turn around a tree, muddy area, or transition from dirt/gravel to grass. These volunteers can assist the HC athletes and the On Course Guides.
- Finish line chutes need to be at least 6 feet wide to accommodate a hand cycle and other runners coming in. A chute that is meant for runners to line up single file will not support a hand cycle.

## Rules for Adaptive Cross Country Michigan

### 2 Classes of Adaptive Athletes: C90 & C91

**Hand cycles – C90** -This class is for any wheelchair athlete.

**Ambulatory – C91** - including: Visually Impaired, Mobility Assisted (use of Crutches, Cane, Hiking Sticks, Bladerunners); the key is to keep the athlete safe and stable during their race.

# Hand cycles – C90

## Starting -

- **Starting box** - put the wheeled racers in a starting box next to their team. The support the kids give each other matters. When the starting gun goes off, the able-bodied kids take off and the HCs will trail behind.
- The On Course Guides will follow each HC.
  - **Things to avoid...**
    - Giving them a 5-minute head start. Runners catch them by 1/2-mile mark and have to deal with passing him. Starting them along with everyone else works the best.
    - Giving them a separate starting box at one end of the line could make them feel isolated or singled out. Put them in a box next to their team. (Regular Season)
- Front wheel axle up to the starting line (like in track)
- High visibility bike flag on the back of the bike.
  - Important should you have a course that loops, so runners will see the HC and be able to avoid any issues when passing.

## Bib Numbers -

- As most contain the transmitter tags, they should be attached on the frame close to the front of the handcycle, on the side that the timing company requests. Actual placement is at the direction of the timing company.

**Helmets are required for wheelchair athletes in all track and road race events (and in cross country races)** - Yes, hand cycles are stable and have a low risk of flipping, but with various cross country courses and environmental conditions, there is a random possibility of “anything can go wrong”, it is better to have a helmet on and not need it than the alternative.

## Course Set-up –

**Races** – For most cross country meets, there is not a need to run a separate race for HC athletes. Cross country is a team sport, putting the kids with their teammates makes more sense.

**Regionals & Finals** - as well as really large meets may require them to compete in a separate race. If this occurs, race all of the adaptive athletes together.

**Paved portions of a course** - If a course is run parallel to a sidewalk, if the athlete will not gain an advantage, they can hop onto the sidewalk to catch their breath a bit and pick up some speed.

- An option for the host is to actually plan a modification to the course for the adaptive athletes.
- Be aware that a course that goes through long grass can present problems for wheelchair/hand-cycle athletes, and should be avoided.

## Hand cycle – On Course Guide Runner -

This is a Guide Runner for HC athletes. As the race is clearly off-road, there may be some obstacle or conditions that can cause issues for the HC athlete.

- The On Course Guide Runner can provide minimal assistance by providing a push for a couple of feet to clear the obstacle or assist on a difficult turn.
- It is not intended to provide constant assistance throughout the course.
- The Course Guide Runner would run along behind the HC.

There are no restrictions on any On Course Guide Runner for providing assistance to an athlete from another team should they have difficulty with an obstacle on the course.

Just like track, the On Course Guide Runner will need to be wearing a bright colored vest with Guide on both the front and back.

The On Course Guide Runner will have to finish behind the HC.

The On Course Guide Runner cannot push the HC athlete through the finish.

## **Handcycles -**

**Gears** – This is a question that many have asked.

- Gears help hand cyclists to start and go faster.
  - Equivalent to an able-body athlete can sprinting at the start and to the finish.
- On an uphill, gears allow hand cyclists to shift down to get the best push.
  - Equivalent to an able-body athlete changing their stride length and rhythm to go up a hill,

## **Ambulatory Athletes - C91 -**

The second category of athletes are ambulatory.

- **Mobility Impaired** – Can walk with the aid of crutches, hiking sticks, etc.
- **Bladerunners or amputees**
- **Blind Athletes**
  - Guide Runner\*
- **Cognitive Impaired Athletes**
  - Guide Runner\*

*\*Blind and Cognitive athletes do not have to use a Guide Runner, but the rules are set to allow them should they chose or need to have one.*

Ambulatory athlete competes the same as able-body athletes.

## **Starting -**

- **Starting box** - put the ambulatory racers in the same starting box with their team. The support the kids give each other matters. When the starting gun goes off, the able-bodied kids take off and the ambulatory athletes will trail behind.
  - **Things to avoid...**
    - Giving them a 5-minute head start. Runners catch them by 1/2-mile mark and have to deal with passing them. Starting them along with everyone else works out the best.
    - Giving them a separate starting box at one end of the line could make them feel isolated or singled out. (Regular Season)

## **Bib Numbers -**

- As most contain the transmitter tags, they should in the front of their bib.
- Actual placement is at the direction of the timing company.

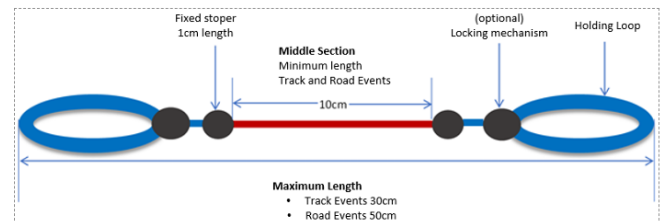
## Guide Runners -

Guide Runners can and should be physically able to stay with the athlete as they progress through the course. When a cross country course is over 3000m, a second guide runner can be used. Local meet management will need to establish an exchange area for the changeover of Guide Runners.

- **Visually impaired runners can** run with able-body athletes and other adaptive athletes in the same race.
  - **Guide Runner –**
    - Must have a bright colored vest with GUIDE printed on both front and back.
    - The use of a tether is required.
    - Can have up to 2 guide runners in races over 3000m.
    - Guide runner hand-offs take place in a designated area of the course.
  - **Finishing**
    - The guide runner –
      - Must finish behind the runner. **If not, the runner would be DQd.**
      - Cannot push or throw the runner ahead to finish. **Runner would be DQd.**
      - The tether cannot be released at any point in the race. **Runner would be DQd.** (Except to switch guide runners in races over 3000m)

## Tether -

- 50cm max length, a 30cm length can be used.
- Has handles on each end.
- Cannot be stretched.
- If the tether breaks during competition the athlete is disqualified.
- Sources to purchase tether -
  - <https://handilifesport.com/product/running-tether/>



Google “visually impaired running tether” and you will get several sources to purchase tethers.

## State Regionals and Finals –

- **Qualifying for Regional** – This will have to be held as an exhibition event for at least 2 years to establish a qualifying time for both ambulatory and HC athletes.
- **Regionals** – The number of adaptive athletes will be the determining factor in the decision about whether they will race with their teammates or in a separate race. If there are less than 4 or 5 boys or girls in one race, keep them with their teams.
- **Finals, 2 Options –**
  - **Option 1 - 1 Race, all Division, Boys and Girls Together**
    - Bring all 4 Divisions of Adaptive Athletes in to one race. Meet management will determine when that race will be held. Suggestion: between the Div 3 – 4 and Div 1 -2, as the race time will be 25 -35 minutes.
    - Doing this has advantage and disadvantages –
      - Disadvantages –
        - If their teammates were racing, they would not be racing with them.
        - Each race could take longer and throw off the schedule for the following races.
      - Advantages
        - All of the adaptive athletes will be racing together.
        - If they were the only athlete to qualify from their school, they would not be alone as most of them know each other and do support each other.
  - **Option 2 – Up to 8 races, In each Division and in the Boys and Girls Races**
    - Have those Adaptive Athletes compete alongside their teammates in their division.
      - Disadvantages –
        - Each race could take longer and throw off the schedule for the following races.
        - If they were the only athlete to qualify from their school, they would be racing alone.
      - Advantages –
        - If their teammates were racing, they would be encouraging them at the start.

No deviation from the official MIS course, as the course is a purpose built, milled surface by MIS.