

Dartmouth Cross Country/ Track and Field Team Traditions



Collected by: Abigail Brazil, Alexander Printsev, Anna Brause, Chloe Taylor, Jonah Kahl, Madyson Buchalski, and Robert Lopez

Project Basics



- **Folk Group:** Dartmouth Track and Field and Cross Country Teams
- **Number of people interviewed:** 30
 - Current and past student-athletes and coaches
 - Class of 1977-present
 - Men's and women's athletes
 - Cross country and track and field teams
- **Amount of Material collected:** 30 traditions or superstitions
 - Focus: Pre-Meet
- **Forms of Folklore Collected:** Customary and Material

Highlighted Interview: Track Team Cheer

- Last meal at Foco before HEPS, the team tries to all sit at same table
- When everyone is finished eating, they do the team cheer in Foco
- Bonding ritual that fosters team spirit

Significance:

“HEPS is when the team is the closest. Everyone’s bonded, there is a lot more team spirit instead of being in individual event groups...We very rarely do the team cheer, so it’s a special event.” -- MS ‘22



Highlighted Interview: Crossing the Finish Line

- Occurs the day before a cross country race
- Superstition in the form “If I do A, then B will happen” (where B is a bad thing)
- Dartmouth men’s cross country team tradition (but shared by many other teams)



Significance:

“I would say that it kind of goes back to the idea that **the important thing is the day of the race**, not the day before the race. So hopefully it makes people think about, “I really want to focus on crossing the finish line when it counts”, which is on race day” --BH

Highlighted Interview: Share a Story

- Happens during an athlete's first HEPS
- Stand in front of the whole team at the hotel the night before the meet and tell an embarrassing story
- Coaches aren't there → just for the team
- Acts as an "initiation rite" of sorts

Significance:

"For everyone's first HEPS, you stand in front of the whole team and tell your most embarrassing story. It helps everyone get a sense of who you are, gets you a little vulnerable, and helps bring the team together"

-- MS '22



Other Interview Topics

- Wearing hair bows
- Captains giving notes the day before Ivy League Championships (HEPS)
- “Heps-oween run”
- Cross country team cheers
- Visualization before races
- “Lucky” clothing items
- Specific pre-race meals
- Music choices
- Runway rituals
- Relay baton can’t touch the ground
- Doing makeup before a meet

Analysis and Observations



- **Changes in traditions over time**
 - Things aren't the same as when 21s were freshman
 - Traditions not just lost, some are morphed over time
- **Upperclassmen pass on traditions to freshmen**
 - Some are "Rites of passage"
- **Can't control what others do in a race**
 - Want to go into the race controlling everything you can
 - Evidenced in superstitions/traditions for appearance, playlists, food, etc.
- **Many traditions/superstitions designed for team-building**
 - Dichotomy between individual and team sport in Track and Field

Thank you!!!

Any Questions?