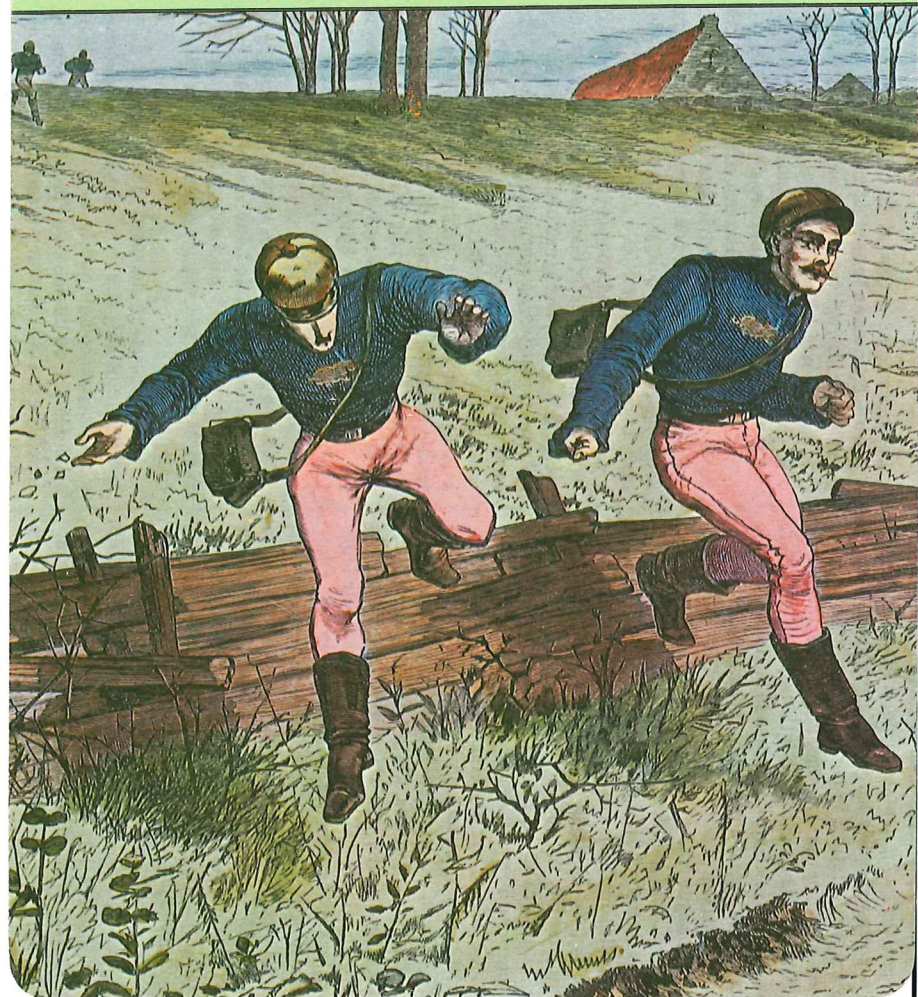


# Track and Field



## *Cross-Country*



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## Cross-Country

### *A Hundred Years Ago ...*

Running through woods and fields is such a simple, natural activity that no-one would pretend that the sport of cross-country running was "invented". It developed in England and can be traced back to such early cross-country pursuits as "hare and hounds" and the paper-chase. Cross-country running as such probably began at Rugby, England's famous public school (a 4½-mile race took place there in 1827), although the Thames Rowing Club at Putney is more generally credited with having introduced the sport in 1867 as a means of keeping fit out of the rowing season. Other establishments followed suite, including the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which vie with each other for the cross-country trophy to this day. Famous names such as Chris Chataway and Roger Bannister appear on the roll of honor.

From being a purely regional pursuit, cross-country running became a national pastime. The English Cross-Country Union, formed on 19 May 1883 to supervise the sport in England, was the pattern for similar bodies in Scotland (1885), Wales (1896), Northern Ireland (1924) and Eire (1937).

The first English championship race took place in 1876, but all 32 runners went off course and the race was declared void. The first international race, England versus France, took place in France on 20 March 1898 between Ville d'Avray and Versailles (11.8 km), to the great discomfiture of the French—the first eight places being taken by Englishmen. The first international championship was organized in 1903, the year in which the International Cross-Country Union was formed, in Glasgow and still takes place annually in March. Cross-country running was scratched from the Olympic programme after 1924, but a cross-country race is included in the modern Olympic pentathlon schedule.

Cross-country running takes place over a course as varied as possible. The distances involved are now between 7 and 9 miles (formerly 10 mi) which can be run in 40 to 50 minutes. There are usually two competing teams and a team as well as an individual prize, which means that slightly slower runners feel that they are contributing to their team's success.