



ROCK THE CREEK RELAY

RUNNERS' HANDBOOK

Welcome to the third annual Rock the Creek Relay! From beautiful Lake Needwood Park south through Rock Creek Park to just shy of East West Highway in Chevy Chase and then back again. A gorgeous run in early fall. Can you think of a better way to spend a Sunday morning?

Here are some things to know and remember to make your day even more enjoyable.

LOGISTICS

Plan to get to the start **30-45 minutes** before your first runner is due to leave. There is plenty of parking at Lake Needwood, but you may have to walk for 5-10 minutes from your car to the start. Allow for the time to do this, just in case parking is tighter than expected. We don't know exactly how the traffic will flow, when the lot closest to the start will fill up, etc. We can't promise that you will have perfectly smooth sailing if you get to the start three minutes before your team is set to start. What happens if you get to the starting line late? Well, this is not a chip race, so we will just disqualify you and not let you run. Just kidding! You will start with the next group, and we will likely embarrass you in front of the other teams. (We may even make you do pushups or burpees!) In any event, you must start the relay by 8:30 AM. If you mess up and get to the start after 8:30 AM, you may be asked to skip a leg and pick up the relay at leg two or three.

We have put together some very specific directions for you to drive from one transition to the next. Please follow them! **Please do not drive on Beach Drive in Rock Creek Park.** Our vans and the cyclists who use Beach Drive will not co-exist well. Let's be respectful of them so they don't try to prohibit the Rock the Creek Relay in future years. Our runners don't need support in this relay. None of the legs are that demanding.

TIMING

If you have a runner who can run seven minute miles, then get your butts in your vehicle and get to the next transition! A seven minute miler will finish leg one in roughly 30 minutes. We've driven from the start to transition one a number of times, and it takes us about 13 minutes (obeying all posted speed limits and traffic signs of course!). We're guessing Sunday morning will be reasonably decent from a traffic perspective, but you just never know. So, get in your vehicle reasonably quickly after your runner leaves the transition and get to the next transition so you are in place to receive the slap band. Relay runners get cranky when they come into a transition and their teammates are nowhere to be found!

Speaking of timing. . . we don't use chips, but we do keep track of times, and we do offer some small awards for division winners. It's pretty simple. We know when you leave and we know when you return. We take the difference and that's your team's time. Rocket science!

Now, you may have figured out from the above that if your last runner is fast you will have to move from transition five to the end rather quickly. Don't speed! But, don't dally around either. If you get to the finish and the close lot is full don't start to negotiate with the volunteers to try to park there. There are more than 150 spots along the side of the road. Go take one of them. If you think your

teammate may be coming in very soon, then drop your other teammates off to wait for that runner. Better to have one driver miss the finish than to have all of you miss it.

Things happen. One of you will miss your final runner finishing. We can almost guarantee it. You will not make it back in time or you will not get parked. Something will happen. When that occurs, please don't let it ruin your day. We will address it with you in the days following the race and determine if we messed up. If we did, we will own it, we promise!

RUNNER DIRECTIONS/GETTING LOST

There are really only one or two places you could get lost on this course, and we're doing all we can to make sure you do. Er, don't!

- Runners one and six are on the bike path or in Lake Needwood Park the entire way.
- Runners two and five come out of the park for .1 and runners three and four come out for .4. Should make it pretty easy to follow.

For those of you who have never participated in a relay before, it's a different sort of event. You will start with about 10-15 others. But, you can't assume you will always be in sight of those others and that you can simply follow them. Also, the bike path is not closed to other runners/walkers/cyclists. So, you are responsible for finding your own way.

We will put up signs along the course to help direct you. Our experience is that many of these signs will remain intact and will help you, but all of them will not remain as placed. Crazy as it may seem some people think our signs look good in their living rooms so some signs get stolen. Eco-terrorists get cranky and yank them out of the ground and dispose of them. Pranksters turn them around. You getting the picture yet? That's why we have a sign budget every year even though our course stays roughly the same!

We are recruiting volunteers, and we hope to have sufficient numbers to place them at the intersections that you might find confusing in addition to placing them at each transition and the start/finish. So, that's another source of directions.

And, we've put together detailed runner directions that are included in this handbook. You can either print them out and carry them with you or you can look at them on your phone.

HEADPHONES

Yes, they are permitted given that the course is mostly on the bike path. But, that doesn't mean you should indiscriminately blast your music as you barrel down the path! Please understand that the bike path is open for public use. So, while we aren't all that concerned about a car hitting you as you run, we are very concerned about you having a negative encounter with a cyclist. Please keep your headphones low enough for you to hear approaching cyclists so you can move over accordingly. And, you can use your phone's mapping app if you need to!

RULES OF THE ROAD

We, the race organizers, do a ton of running in Rock Creek Park. We have learned some valuable lessons in our years on the bike path, so please learn from our mistakes and our experiences. Please do not run several across to the extent that you are blocking others from passing, whether runners or

cyclists. Please stay over to the right side of the bike path. Cyclists should pass you on the left. Many of the cyclists will be polite and respectful and will call out to let you know they are coming. A few will be aggressive and angry. They will not like the fact that we are on the path. Please don't engage with them in a negative way. Don't get down in the dirt with them. And, most of all, don't let them ruin your day!

Keep in mind that you will cross a number of intersections. Some will have police. Some will have volunteers. Some will be unmanned. At all of them you must wait at red and go on green, just like if you were out running on your own. We do not stop traffic along the route. It's simply not feasible. So, yes, you might have to wait up to a minute to cross Randolph Road or Jones Mill Road. It's part of the relay experience! Embrace it. Enjoy it. You're out for a fun Sunday morning. Don't risk injury by darting across a crowded, traffic filled road. Every team will face the same potential issues. They are simply a part of the event, so roll with them.

RULES OF THE EVENT

For teams of six, every runner must run one full leg if you want to qualify for division awards. For teams of three you may run back to back legs or you may run in order twice through the rotation. Your call. If a runner twists an ankle or otherwise doesn't feel up to finishing his/her leg, the next runner in the rotation should jump in and finish that leg and then run his/her leg in order to keep your team eligible for division prizes. If you don't care about such piddly things then have any runner or any group of runners pick up the lost mileage.

TOILETS

There is a full service rest room at Picnic Area Two, where the Rock the Creek Relay starts and finishes. In addition, we will have portable toilets as follows:

1. Transitions one and five: In the parking area next to the one that the park service provides
2. Transitions two and four: In the lower parking lot along the side
3. Transition three: On the far side of the parking lot as you enter it from the street.

FOOD, WATER AND OTHER PROVISIONS

We will have a very nice post race party with food and water for all runners and volunteers. You will have a ticket on your runner's number that will enable you to obtain this food and water. We will get tickets to all volunteers as well. Please bring your runner's number with you if you change shirts after your leg. This is the only way we can keep track of the food/drink at the finish.

There is a water fountain at the start/finish as well. And, there is one at transitions one and five. There is no water at transitions two, three and four. Please bring your own water in the van. Please also carry a first aid kit and some ice in case of minor injuries or scrapes. Speaking of which. . . .

EMERGENCIES/INJURIES

We will have an EMT on site at the start/finish line. If you have an injured runner or an emergency, please come to the start/finish line arch and we will direct the EMT to your injured runner. If you

have an emergency with a runner along the course you will need to use your judgment concerning how serious it is. Err on the side of caution. Call 911 and report the injury and work with them if it's serious enough to warrant that. If it's less serious then take the runner in the van with you. Apply ice if necessary Be reasonably compassionate. Once you determine it's not that serious, start to tease them!

POLICE AND VOLUNTEERS

We have hired a number of US Park Police to help us at dangerous intersections by slowing traffic. We do not expect our police or volunteers to stop traffic. Ever. Rather, we ask them to stop you, the runner. With single runners passing through intersections over a seven hour time frame, it's simply not feasible to ask our police and volunteers to stop traffic every time a runner approaches. That means you must stop for the traffic. Or the red lights.

Please thank our volunteers and police as you run by. They are there for the sole purpose of trying to keep you safe!

CHARITIES

Like our sister race, the American Odyssey Relay, we support Team Red, White and Blue (www.teamrwb.org), a veterans service organization, Hope Connections for Cancer Support (www.hopeconnectionsforcancer.org) and the Yellow Ribbon Fund, delivering hands-on support to veterans and their families (www.yellowribbonfund.org). We also support Seed Programs International (www.seedprograms.org) A portion of every registration fee is paid to these organizations, and we also make contributions based on the number of volunteers they provide and the number of teams they field.

SPONSORS

Our sponsors help our charities, you and us! Their very generous sponsorships enable us to make larger contributions to our charities and to keep our prices down, which benefits all of us. Please be sure to thank our sponsors and to patronize them.

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