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A sneak peak into cross country training camp

The men's and women's cross country team left the Hilltop this year during preseason to spend five days at camp in Pointe Reyes. Two newcomers to the cross country squad — Jana Stolting and Derek DeSantiago — kept a journal of their first USF training camp experience.



POINT REYES — When we left for team camp at Point Reyes, we weren't quite sure what was in store for us. After a couple hours of driving through the winding roads of Marin, we arrived at our home for the next four days: the Point Reyes Hostel. The breathtaking beauty of the rolling coastline provided the perfect backdrop for some serious distance training and serious team bonding.

Our first run of the trip was the infamous "run to Arch Rock", which ended with only one person on the team actually finding Arch Rock. The following day we took on the steep slopes of Bear Valley for some hill repeats. Friday's run required a dangerous drive through some sketchy sections of unmaintained roads, but it was well worth it. We ran out to the tip of Point Reyes, where a herd of Elk kept us company. On Saturday, we rejoined our teammates at Muir Beach for a long run, which, for some people, turned out to be much longer than originally anticipated. But no one can really complain about getting in some extra miles when the surroundings are so beautiful.

Apart from the runs, the trip was made more memorable by the interesting team activities. The entire team shared the daily task of cooking large meals that included lasagna, Mexican food, and brinner (breakfast for dinner). Everyone had a chance to show off their cooking skills because of the alternating shifts between the men's and women's teams. We had great conversations around the dinner table and during our free time, which allowed us to get to know our team members on a more personal level outside of running.

One of the most exciting days of the trip was a day at the beach. After a grueling hill workout, we arrived at the beach to take a dip in the freezing ocean water to substitute for an ice bath. Only a few of us were courageous enough to jump right in, while most of the team stood knee deep at the shore. Luckily, it was also one of the warmest days of the trip and we enjoyed lying out on the beach and playing an intense game of ultimate frisbee.

After our ocean ice baths, we competed in tests of strength and wit as we were randomly divided into four teams of five people for group challenges which included: creating an eco-friendly track jacket with random materials off the beach and a brown paper bag, tug-of-war and crab walking races. Although the competition was very heated, in the end, no one victor emerged with coaches declaring a four-way tie.

Perhaps the most entertaining and highly anticipated event of the week was the Friday night finale: the dance-off. What began as an air-band competition between five-person teams quickly became a battle between the boys and girls. The guys put together quite a show, complete with lip syncing and chest bumping, but it fell just a little short of the girls' effort. With their "sexy plyos", set to the beat of "Toxic" by Britney Spears, the girls overcame the boys by scoring a perfect ten in the third category of judgment: the x-factor. It was a fitting end to a week full of surprises. A week of running, sunning and fun-ing. The first of many weeks of USF cross country.