**Hill Running**

 The best way to become a good hill runner is to run them—often. It is even better if you can run the same hill you are going to race on over and over. The person who is a good hill runner is not the person who is able to speed up them, but the person who slows down the least and continues to push the effort up and over the top of the hill.

A hill can be broken up into parts: the bottom, the middle and the top.

**Bottom**- The first third of the hill is very easy to run up fast and it is often this part of the hill that makes the top so difficult to manage. When a runner starts climbing a hill, he or she should just try to maintain the same pace and rhythm as on the flats. Too many people attack the bottom of the hill and go into oxygen debt and slow down at the top and get passed by everyone they passed at the bottom. KEEP YOUR SAME RHYTHM.

**Middle**- The middle third of the hill is where you begin to lose your momentum and gravity starts exerting its force on your body. It is important to keep your form and run as efficiently as possible. Always think about staying tall, shortening your stride, lifting your knees and pushing off your toes. Lean a little into the hill to keep your momentum going but do not hunch over. You will start to gain on people who went to hard at the beginning of the hill. LIFT YOUR KNEES.

**Top-** This in the most important part of the hill. Remember, the goal is not to pass people on the hills, but to keep them behind you at the top and beyond during a race. When you reach the top, you should be lifting your knees and pumping your arms. Your arms will keep your momentum going. DO NOT STOP YOUR EFFORT AT THE TOP OF THE HILL. It is important to keep working hard up and OVER the hill. One trick is you can try is to count to ten and continue running hard for those 10 seconds once you reach the crest of the hill. This is the easiest place to put an opponent away for good or at least get a big lead. Everyone is tired, but it will not hurt any more than it already does to run over the top of the hill and you will put some distance between yourself and your competitors. DRIVE YOUR ARMS UP AND OVER THE HILL.

 **Down Hills**

If the course starts and finishes at the same point you will have as many up hills as down hills. Down hills are part of the course, so do not rest on them. A downhill usually comes after an uphill and you will have an elevated heart rate. Focus on keeping your torso upright and running efficiently as possible. Gravity will do a lot of the work, but learn to go with the hill and not fight it. Keep your arms as straight as possible and lower them so they don’t swing side to side. This will also help keep your balance. Keep lifting your knees and land on the balls of your feet, not your heels. Think of the balls of your feet like the gas pedal and your heels as your breaks. Try to place your feet gently and don’t let them slap the ground. Your heart rate will go down as you descend the hill so take advantage of it. Use the entire hill to beat your opponents and have courage. Hill can be fun if you run them correctly.