

The Value of a Coaching Philosophy

**Preparing athletes mentally and emotionally for competition with a philosophy that
is effective for the athlete**

Presented by

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Philosophy of Coaching
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I. Introduction

I am excited to talk with you about Philosophy of Coaching. It is a subject close to my heart and I hope you might agree with me that “we need to be reminded more often than we need to be informed”. This may keep you from rolling your eyes while we coach you on coaching.

II. Content

- A. I want to begin by seeing how we may feel about or use the word “philosophical”. Some interpretations of being philosophical might include:
1. Don’t let anything get you down
 2. If you’re philosophical about something does it mean you are really positive or maybe you just don’t give a hoot or it just doesn’t matter???
 3. Think about this a minute, do you have a philosophy of coaching?
- B. I see a philosophy as a guideline for sharing one’s values. I may have a philosophy of life and also a more specific philosophy of coaching which might help you along toward a larger goal.
- C. To perhaps over-simplify for a moment, I want to use four words to represent how to approach the topic of building a personal philosophy.
1. Persistence
 2. Encouragement
 3. Consistency
 4. Passion
- D. To put a little meat on the bones of these words, let me share some tidbits

1. Persistence: Albert Einstein once said “It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer”. So it’s not just talent; it’s what you do with that talent.

We do young people a great disservice with excessive praise. I believe this has had a negative effect on the willingness of young people to persist in the face of obstacles. So I would like to stress to you this morning about this aspect of a philosophy, if you would agree that Persistence is the ‘Key to Greatness’. Whether you agree or not, please listen closely to this: **Persistence is more than just conscious perseverance.** It is also driven by an unconscious response circuit in the brain. This circuit is in a part of the brain called the “orbital and medial pre-frontal cortex” or pleasure center of the brain. With constant praise for the sake of supposedly developing self esteem, we seem to be

developing a generation of “praise junkies”. What I mean by this is that we set up kid’s brains for an actual chemical need for constant reward. Rewards to be effective must be earned not given. Hollow praise does not build up but rather encourages mediocrity.

2. Encouragement

Coaching is a highly critical profession and coaches are always picking out faults and correcting. But I think it’s essential that coaches work hard to balance this with encouragement. By balance I mean ten words of encouragement for every critical word. If I can do this I will achieve the kind of success which will last a lifetime because I am teaching young people to be self evaluative while also encouraging them that they can do better.

3. Consistency

To me, consistency is one of the landmarks of an effective philosophy. Personal conviction creates consistency and it provides something for the athlete to count on in an inconsistent world. This is a trait which is needed in parenting and coaching. The old adage still holds true, say what you mean and mean what you say. We all recognize the knowledge and technical aspects of our sports change over the years. Even as techniques change and knowledge increases, the individual must continue to stick with his convictions. I think that this is critically important.

4. Passion

Having a belief that what you’re doing will be beneficial to those about you is motivating. This includes a passion for the sport and or the event of your responsibility. You show your passion by your behavior and dedication to helping others succeed and feel good about themselves and what they are doing.

To finish up a start to our presentation – let me share with you something I picked up several years ago which help me in filling in the gaps of the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments by which I’ve tried to live my life. They are called the Four Agreements which come from an ancient Toltec culture in Mexico. Talk about tough rules to live by:

1. Be impeccable in your word
2. Always do your best
3. Don’t make assumptions
4. Don’t take it personally.

Which one would be toughest for you to adhere to?

A couple of things I’d like to end with. I believe it is important to have “oversight” on our work. Being accountable to a mentor or trusted individual in one’s life is critical for avoiding self deception. Having a personal relationship as well as long term friendships allows one to be questioned about their approach and even their motives which helps to give depth and critical thinking to the development of a philosophy. No one can go it alone, so have the courage to seek out an older and wiser mentor to whom you can ask vexing questions and whose judgment you trust.

I have always admired Kipling's haunting and challenging poem "If". I have drawn considerable inspiration in reading and reciting the words of this poem. I hope it might have a similar effect on each of you.

IF..... by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
' Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

The Value of a Coaching Philosophy

Russell C. Smelley

When Ashton Eaton stood at the starting line of the decathlon 1500 meters at the 2012 USA Olympic Trials in Eugene, Oregon, it was made quite clear to him and everyone in attendance what he needed to do in order to break the World Record. Frank Zarnowski, the American voice of the decathlon, intoned the numbers required lap by lap for Eaton to gain the distinction of a world record. The Hayward Field crowd was passionate about their homegrown hero and eager for the record performance. The field of decathletes realized the magnitude of the moment and wanted in on the outcome. As Eaton strode to the starting line with the announcer explaining the opportunity for a world record, the supercharged emotional atmosphere of the hometown crowd was set to energize his every move.

He had already performed magnificently in the jumps and sprints while holding his own in the throws. He was poised on the verge of the decathlon world record with an adoring crowd on hand in his home stadium. Was he prepared to perform in this emotionally supercharged moment? Did he need a pep talk just now to make sure he understood the situation and the opportunity that lay before him?

Let's leave this story for a while and consider some of the aspects leading up to such a dynamic and wonderful opportunity for Ashton Eaton. Most coaches would like to have an athlete of Ashton Eaton's ability and to be able to guide that talent to a world record level of success. What are the elements that lead to preparing an athlete for their top performance at any level? Will you be prepared when that opportunity presents itself?

I believe a coaching philosophy is vital for long term success to meet the challenges of preparing athletes to do their best. I want to present some perspective on developing a personal coaching philosophy. My friend, Dr. Jim Crakes, provides the perspective for this paper with a Samuel Johnson quote. "People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed." A thoughtful coach knows deep down there are things to keep figuring out about the coaching craft. I am offering some reminders.

A philosophy of coaching states what a coach believes is important and how he will approach his craft. The philosophy needs to become a written document and this document becomes a standard by which he evaluates himself and has accountability for his methods and results. I think a viable philosophy needs to evolve over time as a coach gains experience and wisdom in their trade. There needs to be a long term vision of what can be accomplished as a coach. There is a need for an open ended commitment to personal growth, both professionally and in understanding one's self, in order to provide wise guidance to athletes. As a coach you need to be yourself and it helps to have a philosophy as a guide.

A philosophy needs to encompass a vision of what the coach can become and what they hope to achieve. It must provide energy and focus for that vision. And no one should

develop their philosophy in isolation. Friendship with other coaches, reading great books, appreciating the beauty of a sunset and other personal pursuits open the door to an expanded view of life and a clearer approach to working with athletes. Coaches need other forums than the competitive arena for honest assessment and critique. Taking the time to review one's coaching perspective each year provides greater depth to a coaching philosophy. Our behavior reflects our philosophy, so self reflection provides growth toward consistency between what we say and what we do. I think that Geoff Ogilvy, a British professional golfer, captured this need for growth when he said, "We're not working on our game, we're working on ourselves."

When a coach is willing to commit to a written philosophy, then a standard is established by which the coach can evaluate their work and seek for improvement. The coach then also establishes their own professional bearing for how they interact with their sport and the officials, coaches, and athletes involved. Their philosophy becomes a reflection of who they are becoming and they provide themselves a sense of perspective that is not rooted in the trappings of winning and losing or the approval of others. The movie version of Rob Roy makes this point for me when he states, "Honor is a gift you give to yourself." A sense of personal honor is what a burnished and tested philosophy can provide for a coach.

The Baron de Coubertin, as a proponent of the modern Olympics, borrowed a quote from an American bishop to create the Olympic creed. That creed espouses participation to the best of one's ability more than winning. Baron de Coubertin set the stage for modern athletics with the Olympic creed and it may be that present day athletics has strayed too far from these basics.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES IS NOT TO WIN BUT TO TAKE PART, JUST AS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE IS NOT THE TRIUMPH BUT THE STRUGGLE. THE ESSENTIAL THING IS NOT TO HAVE CONQUERED BUT TO HAVE FOUGHT WELL.

TRUST

A basic philosophical premise which I believe and promote is that athletics is a safe and valuable crucible for distilling life lessons. Athletics is not an end unto itself. A coaching philosophy provides a basis for a life perspective and provides consistency in the athletic arena. It becomes a contract between the coach and athlete, and it holds the coach accountable to the standards that have been set out in writing.

One concern of the coach is to assess the mental state of readiness of the athlete and to understand the anxiety level of the athlete prior to the contest. The coach must have a personal involvement in teaching and assisting the athlete to be ready for competition. The coach must prepare the athlete for what it takes for them to reach the emotional plateau needed to aid their performance by learning what drives each athlete to seek success. This requires a personal relationship of trust between the coach and athlete.

How does the coach develop the necessary trust with the athlete that allows the athlete to perform to the best of their ability, especially when it is most needed?

To be effective, the coach must develop a trustworthy relationship with each athlete. This bond of trust between the athlete and coach helps them to grow in their personal confidence as they give themselves over emotionally to the coach in this athletic test of their personhood. There is no long term progress without a sense of trust between the athlete and coach. Trust is developed over the course of time and is measured by consistent behavior in the coach. The athlete needs to know that they are cared about more as an individual than for the results they can produce. This level of trust requires a personal connection that allows for vulnerability between athlete and coach which reinforces the value of the individual.

The relationship between athlete and coach will have a ripple effect throughout the athlete's life that surpasses obvious athletic outcomes of winning and losing, medals and championships. The coach must take responsibility for providing the athlete a stable living and training environment that lessens the athlete's fear of failure and the need to please others, especially the coach. Motivation needs to be internal to the athlete with external inspiration from the coach. **Essentially, an athlete must learn to believe in the coach so that they can learn to believe in themselves.**

“The relationship between stress and sports performance is an extremely complex one and involves the interaction between the nature of the stressor, the cognitive demands of the task being performed and the psychological characteristics of the individuals performing the task.” (Stress and cognitive functions in sport, Jones, 1989) An emphasis on winning as the primary objective in athletics, from children's leagues to the Olympics, has altered the focus and purpose of athletics from development of the individual to the achievement of athletic glory which is assessed by winning. One must then ask, what is the purpose of athletics? I believe athletics should inform about life and is not to be the aim of life itself. A coach with a sound life coaching philosophy stands in the breach to offer a competitive but healthy perspective for the athlete. I want to prepare the athlete to achieve to the height of their athletic potential while incorporating a life perspective that makes them a more balanced and productive individual in their life after athletic competition. The quote below emphasizes for me the healthy perspective I want to offer.

The person who is only an athlete is too crude, too vulgar, too much a savage. The person who is a scholar only is too soft, too effeminate. The ideal citizen is the scholar athlete, the person of thought and a person of action. -- Plato

From my perspective, Lord Sebastian Coe serves as an example of athletic achievement with a life perspective. As an athlete achieving to the highest level with two Olympic gold medals in the 1500 meters, he felt all the pressure to succeed and win and was prepared enough to respond positively to that pressure. In the crucible of the Olympics he experienced shattering loss and redeeming victory. His maturation through the process of achieving Olympic stature seems to have produced an individual capable of

putting on a full London Olympics and all its consuming pressures. The influence of his coach, who was also his father, pushed him to athletic heights while keeping him grounded in his perspective of sport separate from his sense of self. .

The athlete is best prepared for competition when they have practiced the necessities of what they need to do to be not only physically ready, but emotionally and mentally prepared for competition. This requires self-awareness through experience and maturity. When the coach has developed a deep sense of trust with the athlete he will be able to challenge the athlete to develop a greater sense of personal responsibility and maturity. A coach needs to be sensitive to the individual athlete's needs and interact in a manner that teaches, cajoles and spurs the athlete toward reaching their God given athletic potential. Athletics is largely about relationships and trust is the critical element that the coach must promote in the relationship with an athlete. A bond of trust between the athlete and coach is the critical element necessary in the dynamics of athletic training and competition for long term and lasting success.

CONFIDENCE

What does a coach need to do to prepare the athlete emotionally, spiritually and socially to perform to the best of their ability? Let's look at some of the elements involved in the dynamic relationship between coach and athlete.

Preparation for training and competition involves the development of positive self-esteem in the athlete. Is the athlete confident or do they lack confidence? In what or who do they place their confidence? Do they have traits of being obsessive-compulsive? What drives their ego? Is the athlete driven or hampered by fear of failure or fear of success? Is the athlete driven by a desire to succeed and a desire for mastery over their event? The coach must help the athlete to discern their source of drive and how best to adjust, promote or diminish the negative aspects of that drive which might interfere with competition. Self-image is learned. It is molded by parents, peers and important others like teachers and coaches. The self-image affects the athlete's motivation, learning of skills, competition performance, and personal relationships. The coach has a responsibility to positively influence the athlete's maturation by promoting a positive self image, how they perceive themselves, not only for competition, but for a healthy personal self-esteem or how they feel about themselves.

PEOPLE have a need to feel worthy. They are motivated to fulfill their needs. Athletes tend to believe that their self-worth depends on their ability to achieve. Athletes, in the human sense of insecurity, believe winning is success and that losing is failure. Coaches must mature past the primal level of outcome based self-worth to focus the energy of their egos on coaching as a process of maturing an athlete. A coach trains the athlete to reach their athletic potential while coaching them to a sense of self-worth based on things other than winning or losing. A coach's goal is to find the ways that each athlete can experience success in the athletic environment where actual "winners" are few and "losers" are many. The performance outcome cannot be the bottom line for the athlete or the coach. There can seemingly be a need to win in the athlete's persona, but at the

core it is more a need to feel worthy. The coach needs to help the athlete develop confidence in themselves, so that win or lose, they feel worthy as an individual. The athlete and the coach will feel the sense of loss and disappointment in not achieving athletic goals, but it is not at the cost of personal self-worth or shattering to their self esteem.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT needs to be a coaching constant, yet typically, surveys indicate that a coach offers positive reinforcement to athletes only 1% to 2% of the time or basically, hardly at all. A typical coach talks with individual athletes only 5% to 10% of the time they spend together. On the other hand, coaches tend to be good at *talking at* athletes more of the time, while being poor at *listening to athletes* and picking up on non-verbal and emotional cues about how the athlete is doing. Coaches need to encourage individually while demanding the necessary physical effort for training. There is a need for a balanced interaction between the coach and athlete that allows the athlete to be willing to be pushed because they are confident that the coach has their best interests at heart.

Following are some observations I gleaned from a literature review at the Australian Institute of Sport library in Canberra during a sabbatical in 2000. I think these help to encourage the development of self-confidence in athletes.

1. Coaches need to be instructional, positively reinforcing, and democratic, while making the final decisions to help reduce the anxiety of the athlete.
2. During competition, deal with the symptoms of anxiety rather than the source of anxiety.
3. Reducing anxiety will not always improve performance. The nature of the sport and the maturity of the athletes are important variables.
4. Positive self-talk seems to be helpful for performance. The presence of negative thoughts needs to be counteracted with positive thoughts. (Coaching priority)
5. Reinforcement used positively coupled with good informational feedback raises the confidence level of athletes. **Encouragement needs to be specific to performance rather than general and 'feel good' statements.** Note: Jim Crakes stated in his opening comments that the current generation of youth have been raised as 'praise junkies'. They are in constant need of being told they are wonderful and that they did a 'good job', even if they only worked hard with a mediocre result. Their emotional needs seem to go beyond encouragement to emotional hand holding. This is a limiting factor in their development and their willingness to be pushed for excellence in performance.
6. (Rushall, 1979)...coaches tend to treat all athletes in a similar fashion...it is only when an individual's strengths are maximized and weaknesses minimized that an athlete has a chance of achieving the true potential of a performance.
7. **Listening skills of coaches need to be emphasized.** Coaches need to listen more intently to what the athlete is saying to them, directly and indirectly. Coaches need to develop and hone the skill of reading between the lines and asking leading questions as well as risking asking the incisive questions that get to the heart of the matter with an athlete.

COACHES MATTER MORE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATHLETE'S CONFIDENCE THAN FOR ANY SPECIAL WORKOUT PLAN.

Self-confidence is critical to successful performance in any undertaking. The coach helps set the tone of the athlete's approach to competition. Preparing an athlete mentally and emotionally for competition may involve the true heart of coaching more than physical preparation. A long term relationship between the coach and athlete that has an unbreakable trust can allow an athlete to achieve closer to their ability level. Ultimately, the coach can assist athletes in developing the personal self-confidence to trust in themselves to do what they want to do when they need to do it.

CHARACTER

“A life without a cause is a life without effect.” - Paulo Coelho, author

Coaches need to train their athletes to succeed to the best of their ability while concurrently coaching and developing a person of high character. This is a worthy coaching cause which surpasses the pursuit of training for the singular outcome of winning. The transitory nature of athletic success demands a broader life perspective for when the contest is over, the cheers have died down and the accolades are gathering dust. Metaphorically, “Success is a little like wrestling a gorilla. You don't quit when you get tired - you quit when the gorilla gets tired.” – Robert Strauss. Challenging the 'gorilla' of success needs to be a cause with a full life perspective or the coach and the athlete may fall prey to unfulfilled expectations and stopping short of their goals.

Since the goal of being the best in the world by obtaining the Olympic gold medal is often sought after by world class people who are desperate and obsessive, possibly bordering on the neurotic, the coach needs to be the calm reassurance of normality. The coach needs to be a person of high character and clear conviction who possesses a balanced coaching philosophy in order to manage the athlete's unbalanced life perspective. Not all athletes are emotionally desperate, but any athlete seeking to do their best will be living on the edge of abnormality compared to the general population and clearly unbalanced in their life style toward achieving high level athletic performances.

Character consists of those traits, good or bad, that define how a person tends to live their life. A healthy, good character is gaining the wisdom to know how to make healthy life choices in relation to others and in pursuit of one's life goals. It is having a higher goal than just seeking one's own satisfaction or achievements.

What then constitutes a healthy character? There is a sense of self differentiation in the individual that they know who they are and can be comfortable in their own skin. This is a learned aspect of life that comes through many mistakes, self reflection and learning about what drives an individual, in both a good and unhealthy manner. The individual gains a life perspective by understanding what is right and how to choose to do what is right. They are able to practice delayed gratification in knowing there are no shortcuts to their goals. It helps to have a sense of humor and some healthy self deprecation from

time to time. The ability to respond well under pressure is partly a trait of personality but it can be positively influenced by the coach with some instructional tactics.

The healthy individual is able to deal with loss and adversity, not by ignoring them but by absorbing the sense of personal loss as a motivation for future achievement. Adversity is a great teacher when its lessons are noted and remedies are considered. At the end of a championship contest, when the television camera pans over the faces of the members on a losing side, I often watch for the steely eyes of the athlete who is clearly feeling the pain of the loss but exhibits the desire to earn the right to be celebrating instead. One can see in their gaze that they are fully feeling the loss but figuring out how to not have to go through this feeling the next time they are in this situation. It is not so much a plan they are concocting but that they are absorbing the emotional lessons needed to respond better to the challenges of a championship opportunity.

I believe a coach can encourage the character development of the athlete to achieve a more consistent level of performance. There is a quote that I have kept to remind me of an important perspective to me in my teaching and coaching at Westmont College.

“What is as important as knowledge”, said the mind? “Seeing and caring with the heart,” said the soul. – Flavius I parallel this quote with my own rendition for athletics: “What is as important as winning”, said the coach? “Whether or not I mattered to you”, said the athlete.

In that vein, I offer the following suggestions toward a philosophy of coaching that encourages the development of individual character.

Help athletes learn to be self-reflective by discussing what matters to them in contrast to what they need to learn.

Help athletes learn to constructively evaluate their actions and performance in all areas of their lives.

Help athletes learn to become better competitors by tapping into their internal drive to succeed while letting go of external distractions that take away from their energy.

Help athletes to become self-sufficient and resilient, not dependent on the coach, but being able to trust their coach as a support and collaborator for their success.

Help the athlete to not be bound by winning and losing, but to have a drive to achieve to the best of their ability. The coach gets to help define the vision of what is the best of their ability while the athlete comes to embrace that goal.

Help the athlete to have high aspirations, moderate expectations and small needs. This will help them know how to keep focused on their athletic tasks and goals.

Help the athlete to understand that personal growth is a process that takes time and patience.

Coaching is not simply a matter of training the human organism to perform at a higher level of athletic performance. Coaching is about knowing the individual and taking the opportunity to elevate the individual to a higher level of character than where they began. In short, the coach is helping the athlete learn to live a better, more informed life.

So, back to Ashton Eaton and that pressure packed decathlon 1500 meters and being prepared for the moment that the record could be achieved. So many of the elements I have shared were present leading up to the decathlon world record for Eaton. His coach knows him well. His coach's persona is laid back and laughs easily. His coach is approachable. His coach is serious and plans well. Coach and athlete have a tight bond of trust and mutual admiration. The athlete has a loving bond with his mother and a deep reservoir of support that lets him know he is cared for regardless of the outcome. He loves competing at the University of Oregon's Hayward Field. He wanted to be there on the line because he had trained for setting the world record. He had an outstanding camaraderie with his fellow competitors that made them want him to succeed. He had the confidence of his coach and he was confident in his training from his coach. Harry Marra had done his job as coach and now the athlete needed to do his work.

When the gun sounded Eaton did not give in to the emotions of the moment and dash off too quickly. He stayed right on pace even as the crowd clapped and cheered and his running splits were announced to the crowd regularly. He was focused and resolute on what he had to do so that when he was at 400 meters to go he instinctively picked up the pace just a little. With 300 meters to go he finally let down his guard, responded to the crowd and let the emotion of the moment drive him into an increasing tempo that culminated in a 4 second personal best and garnered the points necessary to have earned the world record. Everyone present got to share in the thrill and emotion of the moment. The coach and athlete had aspired and prepared for this moment over and over so that it was expected and able to occur. Ashton Eaton went on to win the London Olympic gold medal in the decathlon, in the most challenging of athletic venues, because he was able to focus all his preparation toward that goal. Not that this is the only outcome which would have made him successful, but because he had the ability to make it happen.

WHY HAVE A COACHING PHILOSOPHY?

The coach commits to a philosophy on paper to provide for consistency and growth in their life as an individual and in their occupation of coaching. A coaching philosophy contributes to the development of character when it lays out priorities, provides a life perspective and serves as a baseline for what is appropriate. It allows for the following aspects of the coaching journey that balances athletic aspiration with the growth of the athlete as an individual.

TRUST develops between the coach and athlete as the athlete begins to believe that the coach has their best interests at heart. The coaching philosophy provides a basis for trust demonstrated by the coach's consistency, accountability and willingness to review with the athlete. It sets a standard of conduct that the athlete can depend upon.

CONFIDENCE expands in the athlete as the athlete begins to believe in themselves because their coach believes in them first. The coaching philosophy provides consistency by knowing the individual and believing in the capability of the individual.

CHARACTER of the athlete is enhanced as they begin to believe in themselves apart from the coach, especially when the coach is no longer in the picture. The coaching philosophy combines the development of trust, confidence and character into an approach

that leads to mutual respect. The coach is not emotionally tied up in the athlete's outcomes and the athlete is not tied up in pleasing the coach. A true collaborative effort is born in the coach and athlete consulting with one another. The coach takes responsibility for what the coach needs to do and lessens pressure on the athlete. The athlete takes responsibility for their outcomes with the reassurance of the coach's support and gratitude for their contribution to their success.

RESPECT becomes the working relationship between coach and athlete which reflects the coaching philosophy. Each has a mutual admiration for the other's contribution to the relationship and to the athlete's success in the athletic arena. There is a healthy mutual respect in which both the athlete and coach feel fulfilled.

I have included my own coaching philosophy at the end of this paper as my contribution to this discussion and as an example to be considered. I have also included a goal setting document that I find effective with the athletes I coach. Since 1979, I have taught and coached at Westmont College, a private, liberal arts, Christian college in Santa Barbara, California. My philosophy is a tribute to the athletic rivalry I enjoyed with Jim Crakes, PhD who retired in 1994 as faculty member and Cross Country and Track & Field coach at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, Ca. More than a coaching rival, he became a mentor and my long time friend. I was also highly influenced by my coaches at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia during my undergraduate studies in English and Physical Education and graduate studies in Education. Head Coach Fred Hardy shaped my athletic experience by his persistent demand for excellence in performance. Volunteer assistant coach Bill Jordan, who was also my academic advisor and professor, shaped my life by his positive and calm life perspective, his irrepressible spirit and our long term friendship. Chris Milner, my colleague and friend in the Westmont Kinesiology Department, has been a valuable source of professional and life insights and a patient listener since we first began to work together in 1979. I pay tribute to all four of these dynamic people, different in personality and approach, but each of whom took an interest in my development and was willing to provide their insights.

Finally, I would dedicate this writing to my father, A. Carleton 'Bud' Smelley, who exhibited the highest qualities of good character, a competitive spirit to do his best and by whom I define the word integrity. His passing in August 2000 crystallized the impact and importance of his influence in my life.

Thank you for being willing to be coached a bit on coaching. If you have any critique, feedback, or suggestions or just want to discuss coaching philosophy, please contact me.

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Attachments: Leadership Admonitions, Philosophy of Coaching, a Process for Individual Goal Setting, Suggested Reading List

Leadership Admonitions to my Cross Country and Track & Field Senior Leadership Teams

Having heard from all of you about your vision for the team leadership role you are undertaking, I want to present some thoughts on leadership and what I expect of each of you.

I do want assertive and active leadership and not benign oversight or personal agendas. Your roles as team leaders are critical to team attitude and cohesiveness and any success the team can have. What each team member sees in you by what you say and how you act will determine your leadership effectiveness more than any group activity, eating meals together or inspirational talk. Being a leader is not a pass or entitlement but the opportunity to step to the front and guide the aspirations of your team. Do note that often the best leadership is in the form of being a servant to the needs of others. This is a skill to be learned and applied with humility.

Jim Mattson (alum '88) was one of the best team captains I can remember. I had expected his teammate and co-captain Jim Knox to be the team leader based on his positive personality and that he was well liked on the team. I had reservations about Jim's leadership ability because of his sometimes reclusive behavior and seeming sour disposition. I got it wrong. Mattson was the thinker and doer. He demanded that the freshmen work hard like had been demanded of him by his captain, though in an unfair manner. Jim was demanding, but fair. He expected a lot and he gave a lot. Given the leadership role, he took on the challenge to do things right and to be the best he could be and he expected the same from the team. He paid attention to everyone and he challenged anything he thought would keep the team from doing its best. An undisciplined group of runners became a team that won a second consecutive district title and earned a trip to compete at NAIA Nationals, back at a time when only the winners advanced and there were no at-large qualifying berths. The seemingly negative guy became a positive force of leadership because he had observed the previous leadership and decided what he would do if given the opportunity to lead. Every team member benefited from Mattson putting his beliefs and observations into practice.

Leadership is not a popularity contest. It is putting beliefs into action and placing one's self in a position to promote those beliefs. What are your beliefs? What are your goals as a team leader? What are your goals for the team? When leadership becomes more concerned with being nice and being popular, the team attitude dwindles and team performance suffers. When expectations are set high and action is taken to achieve those expectations, people may grumble occasionally under the burden of the challenge. Still, they know where they are going because leadership has made this clear and the fact is that people want to be led to reach their goals. They will follow someone who knows where he is going. Where are you going?

Regards, Coach Smelley

PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING – Russell C. Smelley – Westmont College (renewed 7/21/12)
Professor of Kinesiology and Head Coach Cross Country and Track & Field: Fall 1979 to present

Athletics is an opportunity for training and developing character in the unfolding story of an individual's life. The will to train and compete reveals personal strengths and weaknesses that a coach can use to challenge young people to develop their character and their ability to compete. Athletics should be a stimulus in the process of the athlete's personal growth. A coach should challenge young people to look more deeply into their lives and to consider tough questions about their personal needs and the issues that can hamper their personal growth. A growth area to develop is resilience of spirit to give them a greater ability to persevere and recover when adversity strikes. They can learn valuable lessons about the quality of their character in the safe crucible of training and competition, in winning and losing. The competitive nature of the individual is fed by the challenges of physical and mental training. Competition offers the opportunity to fulfill an innate human desire to learn whether one can be depended upon to perform to the best of one's ability in the pressure of competition. This is Athletics at its finest.

As a professor and coach, I seek to live with integrity by the example of the saving grace of Jesus Christ and his call to be a servant to others. I am committed to knowing each athlete as an individual with the hope of encouraging a personal and energized faith in Christ. A mentoring relationship between the coach and athletes is critical for their growth in maturity and wisdom. Coaching as mentoring helps foster necessary life traits of self-respect, confidence, discipline, self differentiation and a sense of hope. I believe this makes Athletics an integral part of a liberal arts education as it adds breadth and depth of personal experiences that reveal personal character. I want to challenge students to think deeply about how to live a life of integrity and personal responsibility that is practiced in their training, competition, and team relationships. I want to encourage them to achieve high goals for their lives that reflect their talents, hopes and dreams. I want them to learn to be able to relax and recover from the hard exertions of life through Sabbath.

Any student can participate on my teams, regardless of previous experience or ability. Since training requires commitment, discipline and diligence, I am committed to giving an honest assessment of individual performance. I want team members to be knowledgeable about their sport and what it takes to succeed. I want them to feel supported and encouraged in their individual efforts. Training to win as a team is best reflected in each team member learning how to compete to the best of their ability. The process of training and competing will help team members discover their talents, gain insights to their character, learn from disappointments, have the pleasure of short lived successes and become more cognizant of living lives that have meaning beyond their daily accomplishments. If God is to be glorified in athletic efforts, then it is not in the winning and losing but in an individual's recognition of living a life story that reflects Christ growing in them.

Personal Qualities of Character

Integrity: living an honorable and principled life of educated values reflecting the love of Christ.

Commitment and Responsibility: choosing the course of one's life without excuses

Persistence: the willingness to keep working when results are fleeting and life is challenging

Resilience: the ability to live with hope and to healthfully adapt to the vicissitudes of life.

A Servant's Heart: learning to healthfully care for the needs of others in the name of Christ.

Life Values and Priorities

Spiritual Growth - developing a dynamic and personal relationship with God

Family relationships – growing toward a healthy self-identity through self differentiation

Academic pursuits – growing in knowledge and wisdom by seeking and discerning truth

Athletic pursuits – enjoying hard work and competing to the best of one's ability

Social pursuits - friendship, service, laughter, adventure, variety, relaxation, Sabbath

A Process for Individual Goal Setting

Russell C. Smelley, Westmont College Cross Country/Track & Field

1. Focus and commitment, while avoiding distractions, paves the way toward achieving your goals.
2. Have a clear, concise dream list of what it is that you want to accomplish.
3. Establish realistic goals, but challenge your perceived limits!
4. Choose goals that benefit others as well as yourself.
5. Set long term objectives (this helps with frustrations of daily or short-term failures)
6. Break your goals down into daily plans of action (how long, how hard, how much)
7. Establish checkpoints, as well as a deadline, toward reaching your goals.
8. Write down your goals and place them in obvious places where you will see them daily.
9. Do not compromise your goals. Work toward what you want to achieve and believe it will happen.
10. The mind will follow the direction of its current most dominant thought. **MAKE IT A POSITIVE THOUGHT!**

It is important that you take your dreams seriously. You are the one who has to believe in yourself and your dreams. There are ample skeptics and negative people in the world to tell you that your dreams and goals are unrealistic and that you are less than capable of achieving them. So surround yourself with positive people. You will need this support because you are challenging yourself to achieve something that is difficult and has significance for you.

There are three categories of goals: **outcome goals** that focus on the result of an event (e.g. winning a game), **performance goals** that aim to achieve a standard of performance usually higher than previously achieved (e.g. achieving a personal best), and **process goals** which are geared toward the execution of an action necessary to perform well (i.e. how to perform). The type of goal developed is dependent on what works best for the athlete or the circumstances. Goals can be long or short term; if a goal is long term, it is best to break it up into several short-term goals. The analogy of a ladder works well: the rungs of the ladder are the short-term goals and the top of the ladder is the long-term goal.

Develop your ability to respond to negative thoughts and anxiety by stating positive assertions in response. Often we rehearse defeat by seeing all the things that can go wrong. Instead, acknowledge your doubts, and then focus on what you want to have happen. Envision competing with confidence and rising to the challenge of the competition. A positive mental mindset and visualizing success is a choice that comes from practice. A positive attitude enhances personal confidence, reduces anxiety and becomes a subtle difference that uses the nervousness of competition as an ally rather than seeing the competition as a threat.

Life is made up of goals and choices. Goal setting can be applied toward sports, academics, health and relationships. "Goals direct action and provide focus" (Baltzell, 2009). An individual may have a goal but if it is not properly formed with personal commitment there is a greater risk for not obtaining it. The best goals are set using the principals of SMARTS (Specific, Measurable, Adjustable, Realistic, Timely, Self-determined). A goal must be specific so the direction is clear and there is no ambiguity about what is to be accomplished. It is important to be able to measure goals so one can know the goal has been achieved. Adjustability gives the individual an opportunity to tweak a goal to obtain success if it is more difficult or easier than originally planned. All goals must be challenging but still within the realm of possibility. A timeline is necessary to give definition to the goal. The participant must be personally invested in the goals and have a leading part in determining their goals.

In any walk of life, disappointments often precede success. It is imperative that you take risks if you want to be successful. This should produce a sense of resilience, the ability to bounce back from temporary setbacks with a plan and having hope for a better result. By embracing risk, you will accomplish more than you ever thought you could. A sign of a successful person is that they learn from mistakes, especially since the mistakes are often the result of taking risks. Everyone makes mistakes or fails in trying to reach a goal on occasion. In the process, you will transform your life into an exciting adventure that will constantly challenge, reward, and rejuvenate you.

Reference: Kevin McDonnell, Speed Dynamics, USATF Level II Sprint Coaching School

READING LIST

I would suggest the following books as foundational reading toward developing a personal coaching philosophy. There are many such books to choose from, so look for those that expand your perspective on life and balance your athletic perspective.

A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix by Edwin H. Friedman, Seabury Books, 1999, 2007

Starting at the Finish Line: Coach Al Buehler's Timeless Wisdom by Amy E. Unell, Penguin Books Ltd., 2012

The Road Less Travelled by M. Scott Peck, Simon and Schuster, 1988, 2003

integrity: the courage to meet the demands of reality by Dr. Henry Cloud, Harper Collins Books, 2006

The Shaping of an Effective Leader: Eight Formative Principles of Leadership by Dr. Gayle D. Beebe, Intervarsity Press, 2011

Winning Attitudes: Sport's messages for achievement in life edited by Hardie Grant Books 12 Claremont Street South Yarra, Australia 3141 in association with the Australian Olympic Committee, 2000 (introduction by Herb Elliott)

Principled-Centered Leadership by Stephen R. Covey. Simon & Schuster, 1992

(integrity) by Stephen L. Carter, BasicBooks, 1996

Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ by Dallas Willard, NavPress, 2002