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**TRUTHS AND TEAM  
BUILDING  
for Track & Field and CC**

**ILLINOIS Track Coaches Clinic 2012**

FROM STUDENT, TO TEACHER, TO MENTOR

*My path has been much like  
yours.*

Finding the knowledge is  
easy; it's out there.  
clinics, books, contacts

**WISDOM Vs KNOWLEDGE**

- Knowledge will get you a long way, but not all the way.
- Knowledge is about knowing what has happened before us. It is about the past.
- Wisdom is about using the past to shape our path. It is about the future.

**HERE ARE SOME TRUTHS  
THAT I HAVE LEARNED  
FROM A LIFETIME OF BEING  
AN ATHLETE, TEACHER AND  
COACH**

**Truth #1**

**WE ACCEPT  
MEDIOCRITY  
BECAUSE IT IS  
SAFE**

**MEDIOCRITY IS COMFORTABLE**

- The middle of the bell-shaped curve, where it is most comfortable for folks.
- Fear of failing: Ending up on the low end of the curve.
- Fear of Success: Ending up on the top end of the curve.
- When we leave our comfort zone, we are uncomfortable.

**ARE WE WILLING TO BE  
UNCOMFORTABLE?**

- To be successful, an athlete must want to be uncomfortable. They will face pain, discomfort, failure and fear on a regular basis. These things must be practiced to be overcome.
- Our job is to help the athlete see that this is part of the adaptation process.
- We grow stronger when we test ourselves.

**BEING UNCOMFORTABLE IS  
ABOUT RISKING**

- Champion athletes risk being out of their comfort zone.
- We grow stronger when we have the courage to take a risk. Remember: courage is learned.
- President Kennedy's lesson to us

Truth #2

**AT TIMES,  
LIFE CAN BE HELL**

**Yes it can, but it's temporary!**

- Get over it! Learn from it! Move on!
- The waves of life are full of highs and lows.
- Smoothing out the highs and lows, staying close to homeostasis.
- The lows, not the highs, are what provide the greatest potential for growth.

Truth #3

**WE SHOULDN'T  
FEAR  
COMPETITION!**

**Where does that fear come from?**

- Social comparison. Our society is set up for external control and social comparison.
- Flawed or unrealistic expectations
- Competition can be healthy when used to help each other to a higher level of performance.
- It can also be debilitating.
- Athletes and coaches need to understand that we do not control 50% of sport. We only control what we do. Athletes need to focus on what they can control.
- We have choice in our lives. We can choose to define ourselves or we can choose to have others define us. I believe our biggest challenge is to help our young take charge of their lives...to define themselves. Winning is a goal, not the only goal.

Truth #4

**IT IS NOT THE EVENT  
THAT CREATES  
PRESSURE AND  
TENSION**

**IT'S THE PERCEPTION!**

- Albert Ellis and RET therapy.
- How runners see a race differently.
- It is a race, not a WAR!
- What is the worst that can happen?

Truth #5

**THE ATHLETE'S  
THOUGHTS WILL  
DRIVE THEIR  
BEHAVIOR**

**What we think about matters!**

- I know these two things are true:
  - We think about only one thing at a time
  - We have choice in what we think
- The subconscious brain as a computer hard drive
- What we input is what we come to believe about ourselves.
- The most important messages taken in are our own!
- We have choice on what we input, negative or positive.

**Truth # 6**

**THE GREATEST GIFT  
EACH ATHLETE WILL  
OFFER THE PROGRAM  
IS HIS/HER  
UNIQUENESS**

**The world we live in tries to make  
us alike**

- Almost 9 billion people...and every one unique!
- Balancing the individual and team
- The great coaches know how to balance the individual with the team
- Individualizing training

**Truth # 7**

**PEOPLE FEED OFF  
OTHER PEOPLE'S  
ENERGY**

**It can be good or bad!**

- Jimmy Carnes, a great role model for enthusiasm
- Positive energy catches on. Spread it!
- So does negative! Misery loves company.
- What energy do we send out each day?
- We need to give off positive energy to our charges.

### Truth # 8

**THOSE WHO  
SUCCEED,  
EXPECT TO.**

### It's not a whole lot more complicated than that!

- Champion athletes:
  - Choose to be positive
  - Have a functional, progressive training plan
  - Visualize success
- Coaches need to know 2 things before starting:
  - Where the athlete is starting from, and
  - Where the athlete hopes to go (the goal)
- When an athlete is progressing, and they know it, you do not have a problem athlete.
- Confidence comes from self-belief and improvement.

### Truth #9

**BALANCE IS THE KEY  
TO CONSISTENT  
SUCCESS**

### Wellness is about balance.

One thing out of balance affects the others.

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| ● Training  | ● The coach/athlete relationship |
| ● Recovery  | ● The team environment           |
| ● Academics   | ● Work                           |
| ● Nutrition   | ● Family                         |
| ● Social life   |                                  |
| ● The physical environment<br>(location, weather, facilities) |                                  |

**Truth #10**

**INTEGRITY IN THE  
PROCESS IS  
CRUCIAL**

**What is integrity and why it is  
important?**

- Doing the right thing for the right reasons.
- Only the athlete truly knows if training is done with integrity.
- Doing the little things well is what builds confidence.
- All athletes at the top are talented and fit. What separates them?
- It is the athlete, not the coach, who will make the final judgment of their effort.

**Truth # 11**

**RELATIONSHIPS  
ARE WHAT THE  
ATHLETES WILL  
REMEMBER MOST**

**Are *Track* and *CC* team sports or  
individual sports?**

- Yes, they are!
- Challenge your athletes to find their role.
- My reunion at UF this past spring at SEC meet
- It is the people that make the experience special.
- Do everything you can to develop the team aspect. It is amazing what people will step up and do for those they care about.

**Truth #12**

**IT IS THE ATHLETE  
WHO MUST DRIVE  
THE CAR**

**We have to give up control at  
some point**

- Coaching is like raising kids
- Teaching dependence to independence
- What is mentoring, anyway?
- It takes courage to give up control, but nothing is more empowering

**Truth #13**

**Champions  
attribute both  
success and failure  
internally**

**We are human, right?**

- Normal folks attribute failure to external reasons.
- Normal folks attribute success to internal reasons.
- It is a self-protection mechanism.
- Champions do things differently. They take responsibility for all results.
- This is a sign of maturity...and of leadership

**Truth #14****OUR BIGGEST  
ADVOCATE MUST  
BE OURSELVES****What we say to ourselves  
matters! Remember?**

- Remember that we have choice in what we say to ourselves.
- Remember the subconscious brain analogy of a hard drive? Remember that it simply files what we input.
- What others say to us is important. What we say to ourselves is much more important!

**SO, HOW DO WE FIND SUCCESS?**

- Real success will only begin when the person decides they want to succeed.
- The athlete-centered model has worked wonders for our programs. The athletes are the prime movers.
- Do our programs build dependence?
- I hope we are getting wiser at what we do. The path to greatness is one where the coach and athlete must work together to make it happen.

**TEAM-BUILDING  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Find your leaders...and give them responsibility first!
- Give the athletes responsibility in the process as they are ready.
- Have weekly meetings to gauge progress and plan. Also let the team meet alone at the end of the meetings.
- Design team gear and activities together.
- Team members must look after each other...wellness dynamics.