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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
(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.