Track Parents and Student-Athletes
How to make the Transition from High School to College Successfully
• How many Footlocker national champions have ever been NCAA Champions in CC?
• How many high school All-Americans become college All-Americans?
• How many walk-ons/small scholarship kids become All-Americans?

• WHY????????
OVERVIEW

• What are the issues in the transition to college that make it challenging for parents and student-athletes?

• Why do talented kids fail at the college level?

• Why do “average” high school kids succeed?

• Solutions/Ideas

• Practical Applications
What are the Issues?

“LIFE... Is what happens when you have other things planned.”
What are the Issues?

“HYPE”

• Nike Nationals, Footlocker, New Balance
• Year Round Training/Specialization
• LetsRun, MileSplit, FloTrack, Twitter, Facebook
• SPITTERS! 😊
• “Full Scholarships”
What are the Issues?

• EXPECTATIONS

• Parent’s Expectations
  • Many want “Guarantees” (If my kid runs for you they will for sure be an All-American etc.)

• H.S. Coaches Expectations/perceptions

• Student-Athlete’s Expectations
  • Constantly comparing to who they used to be
  • Constantly using the term “I should be….”
  • Constantly comparing to others “In high school I ran faster than her, so now if she’s beating me I must be a failure…”
  • “FOCUS ON YOUR OWN MAT”
What are the Issues?

• “ENTITLEMENT”
  • “I deserve a full scholarship because I won 4 state titles”
  • “I deserve to travel to meets because I PR’d in my last race”
  • “My child should travel because she is a senior and she works really hard”
What are the Issues?

• Reality of “Levels”
  • Conference differences
  • Understanding why some schools will offer a full and some schools will ask you to walk-on

• Reality of Track/CC vs. other sports
  • Head count sports vs. Equivalency Sports
What are the Issues?

- Parent’s want a guaranteed contract, not for their kids to have to earn it!
- Helicopter Parents
- Kids start college without ever having learned to fail and pick themselves back up
- See Articles “A Nation of Wimps” and “Allow your Child to Fail if you want them to Succeed”
Why do Talented Kids Fail?

- Hometown/state pressures (especially when they stay in-state)
- Perceived/actual pressure from home.
- They “Love to Win” Don’t “Hate to Lose” or “Love to Run”
- Managing constant chatter from “spitters”
- Too sheltered in High School, then college is too many adjustments
- Not prepared or able to handle life away from their “routine”
Success

What people think it looks like...

Success

What it REALLY looks like...

Where people usually give up!
Why do Talented Kids Fail?

- Never had to race in a “Pack”, always dictated races.
- Reality of starting over in college.
- “If I’m 20th at the Wisconsin Invite I’m a failure because I didn’t win...”
- They think they are a failure when they have one bad race.
- High School was EASY for 95% of workouts and races!
They don’t expect themselves to come in and be the best right away.

- They didn’t win all the time in high school, so they don’t expect it in college.
- They are used to running in a pack with others dictating the race.
- Laura Docherty “I was never 9th in the state and now I am 9th in the Big Ten CC!”
- Middle of the totem pole is comfortable, just in a bigger totem pole.
Why do Average Kids Succeed?

• They really love to run and compete or they would have quit a long time ago!
• No perceived or actual pressure of a “full ride” or even a small scholarship. Everything they accomplish is a “bonus”.
• Usually, have fewer “outsiders” invested in them (Ann)
• Have failed before and know how to pick themselves back up!
“Solutions”

• EDUCATING EVERYONE INVOLVED ALL THE TIME!
  • During the recruiting process...managing expectations.
  • During freshman year especially...they are all FRESHMEN even the really good ones!
  • What you did in high school was GREAT, but now you are in college...no good can come from looking in the rearview mirror!
  • What you did to be successful in high school may not be the same as what you need to do to be successful in college!

• Constant Communication with athletes AND parents.
• Showing them the reality...you are getting better, you are just comparing yourself to the best of the best every day.
“Solutions”

• Teaching athletes how to have open dialogues with their parents about their wants/needs/goals and their NEW lives!

• Diane and Marty “You expect me to…”
• Tracey and Mardi “My goals are different than your goals for me…”

• Some kids have to be empowered to express their opinions when they differ from their parents.

• Learning how to handle a parent that is a bully
“Solutions”

• Coaches, Parents and Athletes REALLY understanding all the transitions that are taking place...
  • School
  • Dorm Life
  • Nutrition
  • Sleep
  • Walking Around a big campus
  • Going from no freedom to LOTS of freedom!
  • Social life...parties, drinking, opposite sex etc.

BASICALLY EVERY ELEMENT OF DAILY LIFE!
Practical Applications

• Setting the Tone early with athletes and parents
• Parent Handbook (Scott Christensen, Stillwater HS)
• Training Diary
• Policy Sheet
• What are “YOUR” goals and what do “YOU” want to get out of this experience and WHY??
• Zone of Discipline
• Handouts to Parents
• E-mails to Parents (Ships on the Shore)
• “We will treat your daughter/son like our child”
Practical Applications

• Start in the recruiting process:
  • Agent Parents
  • Kids that don’t love to run
  • Too many in the “entourage”

“We are educators, but you cannot undo 18 years of bad parenting!!”