Fielding your Division I Track & Field TEAM? Is there such a thing?

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Program Management:

- **INTRODUCTION**
  - Different models in managing/fielding your Track & Field/Cross Country Teams
  - Variance in models within sport
    - Factors driving the models
    - Effects on our sport
  - History & Perspective
  - Interviews
  - Why do we care? Questions to ask?
  - Create discussion on how we can move our sport forward.
What is a track and field team? How we “play track” ...

- Team scores compiled by awarding points to top finishers in each event
- Team with the highest score wins, not all meets scored
- No minimum or maximum number of team members at most competitions (including NCAA Championships)
- Single-day or multi-day
- Individual contests in a variety of disciplines
  - 10 Track Events
  - 8 Field Events
  - 2 Relay Events
  - 1 Multi-Event
What is a track and field team? How we “play track” ...

- Lack of definition of a “team” in Indoor and Outdoor Track & Field
  - Could be all distance, all throwers, all sprinters, etc.
  - Could be one athlete or over 30
  - Teams that also sponsor Cross Country can devote 0 or up to the maximum grant-in-aid equivalencies to student-athletes who compete in Cross Country

- Lack of consistency and thus variance in models

- Lack of team identity
Team Models:

- Event-centric
- Combination
- Team-centric
Models:

- Team-Centric Model Benefits:
  - Increased productivity in performance
  - Team environment
  - Emotional / Psychological Benefits
    - Fulfillment
    - Fun, exciting, exhilarating
    - Sense of belonging / investment
    - Less pressure
    - Family away from family
    - Attain identity
  - The student-athlete experience- The Human Element
  - Promotion and Marketing of sport
  - Participation in scored meets
    - Everyone counts
    - Common goals bind
    - Purpose
    - Team culture
    - Team identify
Models con’t:

- We see numerous examples and research regarding the benefits of a team experience,… from the Ryder Cup golfers to our very own Olympic teams. … how much the experience changes for the better when they join others in a team effort. The “STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE”.

- Event-Centric Model Benefits:
  - Development of specialties and experts
  - Meet budget limitations / cost containment
  - Attain identity
  - Bring more recognition to university
  - Create team of one specialty less difficult than 4 event groups
  - Meet requirements / directive of AD
  - Do what you know best and have success with
Factors influencing Management Models:

- Number of Scholarships
- NCAA
- Gender Equity
- AD Directive/evaluation criteria
- Personal philosophy
- History/prior experience
- Location/Region
- University admissions requirements
- Conference focus / NCAA focus
- Operating Budget
- Staffing
- Equipment and facilities
- State’s recruiting talent pool
2012 NCAA DI Outdoor T&F: Statistics

TEAM PARTICIPATION-
337 institutions had at least one mark (either gender) entered into TFRRS in 2012 outdoor season.
- 307 men’s teams reported at least one mark
- 335 women’s teams reported at least one mark (2 missing: Longwood, Evansville)
- 305 institutions had at least one mark reported for both genders

FULL “21” SQUADS-
Twenty-one (21) events for both genders were in the 2012 NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championship
- **MEN:** 81 of 307 (26%) men’s teams reported marks to TFRRS in all 21 events throughout the season.
- Most teams by conference with “full-21” squads – Mid-American (6), Big Ten (6), Patriot (5), Big West (5), Big Sky (4), Pac-12 (4), Mountain West (4)
- 13/31 teams that participated at the 2012 NCAA Cross Country Championships had “full-21”squads in the 2012 outdoor track & field season.
2012 NCAA DI Outdoor T&F: Statistics

- **WOMEN:** 90 of 335 (27%) women’s teams reported marks to TFRRS in all 21 events throughout the season.

- Most teams by conference with “full-21” squads – Mid-American (6), Big Ten (6), Pac-12 (6), Southland (5), Patriot (5), Big West (5), Colonial (5), Ivy (5), Atlantic 10 (4), American East (4).

- 12/31 teams that participated at the 2012 NCAA Cross Country Championships had “full-21” squads in the 2012 outdoor track & field season.

- **BOTH genders:** 47 of 305 institutions (15%) had both men’s and women’s squads participate in all 21 events during the 2012 season.

- Among conferences, leaders in the category having both squads with “full-21” participation:
  - **Patriot (5):** Army, Bucknell, Lafayette, Lehigh, Navy
  - **Big Ten (4):** Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin
  - **Big West (4):** Cal Poly, Long Beach State, UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara
  - **Pac-12 (4):** Arizona, Oregon, Stanford, UCLA
2012 NCAA DI Outdoor T&F: Statistics

ALL BUT COMBINED EVENTS (ABCE)

There were 23 men’s teams and 22 women’s teams that participated in all NCAA championship events, but not combined events in 2012

- **MEN:** 104 of 307 (34%) men’s teams reported marks to TFRRS in ABCE or all 21 events throughout the season.
- 14 teams that participated at the 2012 NCAA Cross Country Championships are included

- **WOMEN:** 112 of 338 (33%) women’s teams reported marks to TFRRS in ABCE or all 21 events throughout the season.
- 14 teams that participated at the 2012 NCAA Cross Country are included

- **BOTH genders:** 68 of 305 (22%) institutions reported to TFRRS in ABCE or all 21 events for both genders throughout the season
FOUR CATEGORY PARTICIPATION (FCP)

In this metric, squads have been considered to have Four Category Participation (FCP) for the 2012 season if they had AT LEAST one participant in EACH of the four-event categories: Spr/Hur/Relays, Dist, Jumps, Throws.

**MEN:** 252 of 307 (82%) men’s teams reported marks to TFRRS to satisfy the FCP metric.

29 of 31 teams that participated at the 2012 NCAA Cross Country Championships satisfied the FCP metric.

**WOMEN:** 296 of 338 (88%) women’s teams reported marks to TFRRS to satisfy the FCP metric.

30 of 31 teams that participated at the NCAA Cross Country Championships satisfied the FCP metric.

**BOTH genders:** 246 of 305 (81%) institutions reported marks to TFRRS to satisfy the FCP metric for both genders.
HISTORY OF SPORT & PERSPECTIVE:
Mark Lewis “we need to check with the past”

* 1st NCAA Men’s Championship held in 1921 (Illinois)
  - No $ scholarship limits
  - No Qualifying stds (reimbursement scenario)
  - Had up to 2,000 participants
  - Scored meets prevalent
  - “Full teams”, regardless of scholarships
  - 50,000 + fans attended the biggest dual meets
  - First NCAA meet in history of championships
HISTORY OF SPORT & PERSPECTIVE:

1st NCAA Women’s Championship held in 1982 (UCLA)

* AIAW and NCAA merge
  - Qualifying stds
  - Limited participation at NCAAs
  - 1st Combined M&W championship
  - 1st NCAA championship in any sport = XC
Outdoor Track & Field Timeline

1921
1st Championship

1970s
Qualifying standards est.

1982
1st Women’s Championship

1992
Cap on field size est.

2003
Regional qualifying est.

2010
Preliminary Championships Competition est.
Indoor Track & Field Timeline

1965
First Championship

1983
First Women’s Championship

1989
Men’s field size cap established

1992
Women’s field size cap established
HISTORY OF SPORT & PERSPECTIVE:

- Teamcentric
  - (early history)

Eventcentric
HISTORY OF SPORT & PERSPECTIVE:

- Teamcentric
  (early history)
  
  What happened here?

- Eventcentric

- Teamcentric
HISTORY OF SPORT & PERSPECTIVE:

What Happened?

* Expansion of NCAA sports and a division of resources
* A shift in core values
* Gender equity/one NCAA umbrella for men and women
* Regulation of sport / limiting scholarships
* Money driven
* Directors Cup / Capitol One Cup
* Limit on number of athletes participating at nationals
* Funding structure to nationals
* Combining men and women programs $ savings
* Non-scored meets / Invitationals / chasing stds
* Qualifying Standards
* Decrease in overall attendance, support and media attention
Why we care?

- 98 Men’s Indoor Track & Field teams dropped since 1989 = Largest number of any Division I men’s sport

- Men’s Outdoor Track & Field/Cross Country 8th and 9th most-dropped

- 42 Women’s Indoor Track & Field teams dropped since 1988-89 = Second-largest of any Division I women’s sport

- Women’s Outdoor Track & Field and Cross Country 6th and 12th most-dropped
CURRENT STATE COLLEGIATE TRACK & FIELD:

- Limited scholarships (cannot fund all starting positions)
- Variance like no other NCAA sport in how “sport is played”
- Fragmented teams / one dimensional teams
- No commonality across nation on what a track team is
- Few scored meets / Very few Win-Loss records
- Men’s track program being dropped
- Lack of support
- Sport not easily understood, too complicated
- Lack of media support, fan base, spectatorship, etc..
- Decline in TV coverage
- Low level support in tiered system within athletic departments
- Stagnation of our NCAA sport as opposed to other sports - i.e. Lacrosse
- Attendance at NCAAs varies with different sites, but in 2012, avg daily attendance was 6,436 and total of 20,048 over 4 days.
- Yet it has the #1 participation numbers from high school
Participation Opportunities

- Outdoor Track & Field, Indoor Track & Field, and Cross Country rank #1, #2, and #4 in Women’s Division I participation in 2010-11

- Women’s Outdoor T& F: 12,467 participants
- Women’s Indoor T& F: 12,183 participants
- Women’s Cross Country: 6,079 participants

- Nearly 40% of NCAA’s 78,000 Division I women’s participation opportunities
Participation Opportunities, Cont.

- Outdoor Track & Field, Indoor Track & Field, and Cross Country rank #2, #4, and #7 in Men’s Division I participation in 2010-11

- Men’s Outdoor T& F: 10,994 participants
- Men’s Indoor T& F: 9,792 participants
- Men’s Cross Country: 4,844 participants

- Over 28% of NCAA’s 91,000 Division I men’s participation opportunities
INTERVIEWS:

- Some Questions Asked-
  - What is your philosophy on how you field your team/what is your management model? Why?
  - What is your Athletic Director’s directive for you (their primary goal for your team)?
  - How are you evaluated? Bonuses attached? Conference focus? NCAA focus?
  - How do you build a team?
  - What model do you feel is best for our sport? Why?
  - What is your philosophy on scored meets?
  - What is your opinion of the current state of our sport?
  - What in your opinion is the best route for positive change in our sport?
INTERVIEWS,....

“A COLLECTION OF VOICES”

Over 25 Division I coaches representing all regions of the country, 14 conferences, and all sizes of institutions
Responses:
Management Model Used? Why?

- “Where you’re at and what assets you have helps you decide and determine your direction,….. i.e. weather, facilities, scholarships, recruiting base, etc.”
- “You must play the hand you’re dealt with scholarships, conference, region, and facilities, etc. and figure out where you can be most successful and attract athletes based on past successes”.
- “One needs to identify where you can be good first because of the unique nature of our limited scholarships. You need to know what is viable within the confines of your program.
- “It’s not a matter of philosophy,… it’s a matter of circumstances.”
- “Trying to field a full men’s team is always the goal, but it’s tough with limited scholarships and gender equity roster limitations.”
- “Well balanced teams across the board because of an emphasis on the conference and scored meets, as well as a personal philosophy and upbringing in the sport.”
- “Teamcentric because it is best for the student-athlete experience, to be a part of a college team, and to be able to participate in scored
Responses:

meets where everyone counts and everyone matters is core to my philosophy and we have a responsibility to create an environment to teach life lessons and teamwork to our athletes.”

• “At the end of the day, I am a college coach, and I should provide an opportunity for these S-A’s to be a part of a college team. It’s not right to not give these athletes a team experience and wear the jersey and count. The kids will not learn the life lessons that are most important, unless they have a team experience.”

• “Teamcentric because a multidimensional team is not boring,… you can’t win a meet without the other events contributing,….. It is competitive and it is fun.”

• “It is harder to put together a conference championship team than it is to get top 10 in NCAA,….. We can be 5th at the conference, yet be 4th in NCAAs,….. I don’t look at those kids who represented at the NCAAs as a team.”

• “Not fielding a full team represents the shortage of scholarships in our sport and the shortage of coaching positions, which causes a narrowing focus.”
Responses:

- “It would be crazy to field a football team with all quarterbacks, or a wrestling team will all heavyweights, yet in our sport, we are allowed to have one dimensional teams…. It hurts our sport dramatically that there are so many options on fielding a track team…. Its frustrating to have no commonality in our sport,…We are allowed to be fragmented and have no consistency .”

- “Having a well balanced team,… to be able to create a culture of team and value, and also teaching life lessons, such as accountability and responsibility to team…. This enhances the overall student-athlete experience.  Not having enough scholarship dollars is a cop out to not fielding a full team and an excuse for not being passionate about our sport of collegiate track and field.”

- “Its all about the student-athlete experience as I know that being a part of a college team is what makes it special and providing the avenue as head coaches to create an environment where everyone counts and a sense of common vision and common goal, working together towards one end,… A team title.  It’s more difficult to create that sense of team when you cannot even field a full team and have a shot at a title.”
Responses:

- “I look at how I can win the NCAA, and research tells me that the team that can score in at least 2 event areas, one being the spr/hur/relays… will win and the goal is to win relays and win NCAAs….. The other aspect is to look at support system in place with staffing and what risk are you willing to take with at risk academic students,… APR/Grad rates must be managed also because if we’re not careful,… we’ll lose our jobs.

- “Well balanced team, as team always comes first,… you need all event areas to be a whole team,…you also don’t have a chance at winning conference meet with just 1-2 event areas.”

- “I want to be the TEAM that wins, not the sprint squad or distance team that wins”

- “In our sport, we don’t know what a track team is”

- “No one scores meets,… we just don’t do it. Track is an individual sport an performance driven and qualifying for next meet.”

- “Track is a collection of individual events that we call sport and it’s not related to each other at all!”

- “21 event schedule doesn’t make sense and W-L records opens up abuse of our athletes.”
Responses:

What is your AD’s directive to you?

- “It is rare for an AD to understand our sport”
- “Our AD wants to make noise on the national stage and not worry about the conference.”
- “We must generate revenue and be a winning team.”
- “My AD didn’t really care about philosophy as long as I win, … he’s okay with building my team with just a few event groups.”
- “Error on the side of athletes, do not exploit athletes, do right by athletes and try to win and have national presence.”
- “To win conference titles, student-athlete welfare, compliance, etc.”
- “Produce a healthy, competitive, and academic environment, doing it the right way with integrity and being highly competitive.”
- “Win-loss records do not matter”
- “Integrity, the student-athlete experience, compliance, and competitiveness”
- “My AD just wants the kids to have a good S-A experience”
Responses:

What is your AD’s directive to you?

- “The bonus structure includes both the conference championships and NCAA finishes and/or participation…. So both are important.”
- “There exists either an administrative meddling or a no contact with administration within our sport. My AD knows every recruit and we talk frequently. He wants to win ultimately, but also wants a S-A welfare.”
- “The Capitol One Cup points means $ in my AD’s pocket and he likes that,… but in general its graduation, follow rules, and be competitive.”
- “He wouldn’t care how we win, just that we win…. A win is a win.”
- “I hardly get to meet 1 on 1 with my AD, so I don’t think he cares.”
RESPONSES:

- How can we move our sport forward in the NCAA? What is best route?
  - “We are still very healthy,… the sport that people think about first when the Olympics come around is Track & Field. However, when it comes to NCAA, we’re in trouble…. especially men’s track & field. How we count our numbers for equity and programs being dropped, cost containment, etc… Leadership need to look at minority representation and fight the battle and get our ducks in a row”.

- “We need to create a sport that people can understand…. Simplify it. Indoor track is still way too complicated and confusing. We need to market our sport better by simplifying it first.”

- Track coaches have made a living making the best of our circumstances, but we have to ask for more from our AD’s and the NCAA. We aren’t aggressive enough in the ask and we must sell a better product and get people excited about it.”
RESPONSES:

- “I like scored meets and well balanced teams. We can create team and meaning for all involved. For the kids, the public, the media, the administration... we can return our sport to a position of eminence within non-revenue sports.”

- “We need to tighten up time schedule.... Shorten the meets”.

- “The devil is always in the details of a plan/proposal to get passed within the sport committees to move sport forward and track coaches cannot agree so there has been no change or movement forward.”

- “We shoot ourselves in the foot because we cannot agree on a concept to move sport forward,.... everyone is too worried about their own situation and does not see the big picture”
RESPONSES:

- How can we move our sport forward in the NCAA? What is best route?
  - “We must shorten up our schedule and number of events and get done within 2 hours. There is positive value in scored meets.”
  - “We belly ache about lack of support, fans, funding, etc… but we’re not unique if you look at all the other non-revenue sports/Olympic sports,… They are hurting too.”
  - “We have to compete with other sports and other forms of an overwhelming glut of entertainment.”
  - “College track and field will not fit into a business model,… we’re not going to make money,… its not going to happen… we’re not football and basketball. The value in college athletics isn’t in the money,… it’s in the student-athlete experience and being part of a college team.”
  - “I like scored meets, I’ve instituted participation in all scored meets except for 2 invites,… putting my money where my mouth is. Scored meets tell a story,… it brings the best out of our athletes…. Their competitive nature is honed and forged through scored meets where everyone matters and counts,… it brings in the team element. It makes the meet mean something and gets the crowd engaged and having an announcer to tell the story is exciting.”
  - “I strongly believe that scoring competitions is right for our sport…. I’ve seen a 3rd place guy help the team win and this guy becomes a “hero” on our team and in turn it changes his whole competitive career because of it. He’s come back completely motivated, confident, and is competing at a higher level,… just because of a dual meet.”
How can we move our sport forward in the NCAA? What is best route?

“We need a leader or commissioner to say,… this is the game and this is how we play the game. We need leadership to crack the whip and say this is what’s got to happen or we aren't going no where…. If NCAA mandates it, then it will get done.”

“We need to reduce the number of open meets and create more scored meets. The premier teams must be brought back together in scored meets… to be pushed, promoted, and supported above invitational. We must be the flag bearers and be the flagship programs to promote and lead change for our sport.”

“It's not about winning,… it’s about competing. People are afraid to lose a scored meet….. We send a wrong message to our athletes by not participating in scored meets.”

“How about we ask/poll the athletes about what they think about scored meets? I bet they would say that they love it!”

“We must get more scholarships for track and field…. Enough to cover starting positions. The fact that we cannot field starting positions is criminal and the greatest injustice in NCAA sports,… especially in men’s track with only 12.6….. This is what holds track and field back more than anything else….. If we had adequate number of scholarships, our sport will be changed dramatically. Years ago, resources started going to softball, lacrosse, soccer, etc… Track and field has stagnated and all other NCAA sports have passed us by…..

“We had limitations placed on us and we’ve spent too much time creating rules around
RESPONSES:

- How can we move our sport forward in the NCAA? What is best route?
  - The limitations we’ve had (i.e. qualifying stds) and worrying about these things,… no one gets the bigger picture because we keep squabbling about the details of the rules of the game and keep trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. We need to set up the shape and the way we play track and field and then set the rules of the game. People need to think creatively and get leaders going… it’s got to come from the presidents who know and value our sport and allow leadership to work for big change and overhaul our sport. We’ve been stagnant for too long.

- “We are in gigantic trouble and we need to change the way we do business. We must stay focused on the big picture and do some serious laser work on sport committees, our association, AD’s, presidents, etc… The committee must focus on overall objective on how to move sport forward and not get bogged down in our championships… our sport needs a complete overhaul!”

- “I believe we can get track and field back to the prominence it once was and the purest of all sports,… track and field has the greatest story to tell… and we can do this through getting those scored meets back.”

- “Lack of scored meets is a symptom,… not the cause….We need more scholarships.”

- “Its scary that so many coaches reality comes from letsrun.com…. Its terrible for out sport”
RESPONSES:

- “The win of our sport became more important than the why we have sport and it has resulted in the bastardization of Track & Field. A shift in core values in AD’s going after the directors cup and how we score our national championships are factors in what has happened in the fragmentation in our sport. If you could get athletes to NCAAs and score with just a small group of distance runners, or throwers, or just a few athletes, it’s what has driven things. No one saw this coming and the missed the big picture…. Now everyone is just chasing qualifying standards and trying to get to NCAAs.”

- “Other NCAA sports all play one way,…including sports similar to us, like golf, gymnastics, swimming, … yet we are so very different… no one is remotely similar to us.”

- “Divide Division I into a two tiered system similar to football. It’s impossible to move our sport forward because of the variance in resources out there,… when the top tier programs move forward, then the rest of the others will move forward too.”
RESPONSES:

- “The things we’ve done well, we need to keep doing well… i.e. Penn Relays and maybe not change so much and perhaps bring things back that are familiar to the older track generation who are holding the donation dollars (i.e. 1500 back to the mile).”

- “Use of internet to market and promote our sport and get us on TV,… have NCAAs at a permanent site.”

- “We need to make T&F a head count sport. We count for 6 NCAA sports and we aren’t a headcount sport?…. That’s crazy“

- “Team is the magnet that draws people and not much is better than team scoring to secure the magnetic effect”

- “We’ve spent too much time creating rules around the limitations we’ve had (i.e. qualifying) and worrying about these things, instead of looking at overhauling scholarships and how we play track”
Summary of Change for Sport- Options:

- Increase Scholarships and fund starting positions.
- Policy Change in NCAA
- Conference level change i.e. Mid-American
- Mandatory participation in scored meets
- Limit number of entries per event
- Condensed meet schedule for scored meets
- Overhaul of sport and SIMPLIFY
- Ask the athletes about what they want
- Change the way we score or conduct our national championships (scored deeper i.e. swimming)
- Team championship and individual championship
- Qualifying marks only accepted from scored meets and approved invitationals
Summary of Change for Sport - Options:

- Develop a consistent identity that can be branded and marketed - Example:
  - Consideration for the development of a consistent format for competitions in Cross Country, Indoor Track & Field, Outdoor Track & Field (currently, minimum requirements but no consistent format)
  
- Consideration for the development of results-oriented competitions that would require team scores to be kept (currently, no requirement to keep team scores at competitions)

- Use of dual meet rankings
Direction, Trends, and Conclusions:

- We are in trouble because we have not progressed,… only stagnated. Our sport needs positive change for the future.
- We have not been able to agree within the coaching body and therefore not been able to produce concrete change.
- The good news is that the # of scored meets is going up… being revived with 53 scored meets scheduled for indoor track and 70 scored meets for outdoor track in 2013, NOT including conference champs.
- If we changed how we play track and field, then set the rules of the sport, we can move forward.
- Leadership at the highest level needs to continue to do the hard work to get things moving in the right direction.
- Do not get bogged down in the details,… lets agree on a concept first.
- We are in the greatest and purest sport in the world and we are college track coaches,… we have a responsibility to work together for positive change and move our sport of track and field forward and think globally.
THANK YOU!