Edinboro “Old School” XC Philosophy & Training

I find it difficult to “outline” the specifics of my two USTFCCCA 2016 Convention presentations without the accompaniment of the stories, personal experiences and the passion that reinforced the teaching objectives. Hence, this short narrative.

The best single observation may be that the value of the presentations, the most audience engaging components, were not the “nuts and bolts” of the Edinboro “Old School” philosophy, administration, training system or techniques. No, the more lasting “facts” of the program centered upon the “Spirit” of the Edinboro distance running program.

The primary underpinnings of everything involved in Edinboro “Old School” running was one of educational function. It followed that if the primary objective of the program was to enhance the educational mission of the institution, then the leader (Coach) must make decisions that promote the student-athletes ability to earn his/her degree, and develop a more valued and contributable function in society.

It was professed in the lectures that an excellent method for the Coach to achieve this educational goal was to create an environment where the well-being of the athlete (in **all** phases of their life) was **more important** than athletic performance, and where personal responsibility was primary and inherent in individual and team success.

\*Note: This principle was followed in the lectures by stories, personal experiences, and bad jokes that supported it, and showed how the programs administration worked well in the Edinboro particulars such as practice schedules, unstructured and non-mandatory morning and off days runs, dress, hair, recruiting, “risk” acceptance and, especially, the enormous effort to personal avail myself to interact with student-athletes concerning any life situations.

The first day’s lecture concluded with a “reenactment” of a women’s cross country meet team huddle that integrated a basic belief that once women commit to the running program, they may be better than the men in their totality of that commitment. Of course, it also artfully intertwined Edinboro racing tactics, self-determination for success, and developed a confidence into the theme of “CINDERELLA WAS A LOSER.”

The second day training offerings enlarged upon the first day’s theme and revolved around an examination of how a hurt, pain, and agony philosophy emerged (in historical and social context, geography local weather, lack of talent, financial support, facilities, and tradition).

In sum, the synthesis of an Arthur Lydiard training system with a Percy Cerutty mentality and spirit did not reveal any new training ideas. Instead, the outlined 10-day training cycle might be better appreciated in what the wholeness of the program did to create a positive, confident, tough-minded, loyal, and enthusiastic runner.

Edinboro meet innovations such as the Rag Relays (Men 4x1500; women 3x1500 (or mile); 3 person teams), Tour de Scots (4 different distances raced in cumulative results), and training ideas such as the Percy Cerutty workout (a repetition type practice but with distances to be covered, terrain to be utilized, and rest intervals not revealed to the athletes until the moment of execution), and 700 yarders (a recovery day session that seemed to enhance recovery yet maintain developmental goals).

Also, as an astute young coach commented following the recital of the poem Chicken Hill: “It contained at least a dozen (20 if you push it) Edinboro Cross Country distance running principles, attitudes, physiological and psychological foundations.” Certainly, the poem ends up with the most basic component of the Edinboro “Old School” program. I have included it here for you to discern the lessons it might convey.

And, finally, what can I say about the 7 ½ minute video shown to the audience in an attempt to display how much fun I had in coaching.

Let’s leave it that the NCAA/International joke, my dancing prowess, and the fact that those who saw the video will never listen to the Beach Boys “California Girls” the same – ever again.

Respectfully,

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