Coaching the Millennial Track and Field Athlete

Ralph Vernacchia, Ph.D.
THE NEXT STEP

Helping athletes make the psychological transitions to college life will improve their performance both on and off the field.

Techniques, November 2007 (pp. 29-32)
ACADEMIC SKILLS

- Test-taking skills & strategies
- Use of internet resources
- Registration and class scheduling
- Knowledge of NCAA/NAIA eligibility rules
- Academic ethics & plagiarism
- Note-taking
- Study skills
- Research skills
- Writing skills
- Library skills
- Selecting a major
ATHLETIC-ORIENTED MENTAL SKILLS

- Responding to injury & illness
- Visualization
- Concentration (mindfulness, focusing)
- Communication with coaches
- Positive self-talk & affirmations
- Goal setting & attainment strategies
- Understanding & thriving on achievement motivation
- Composure & emotion management skills
- Mental preparation
- Engaging in quality practice sessions
- Preparing for life after sport
LIFE SKILLS

- Time management
- Social skills and relationships
- Managing finances
- Anger management
- Communication
- Assertiveness training including refusal skills
- Self-care skills (sleep, relaxation, restoration)
- Leadership skills & team-building activities
- Dating and sexual responsibility
- Dangers of gambling
- Substance abuse
CORNERSTONES OF COACHING

Knowledge of Sport

Communication

Anticipation & Preparation

Dedication
GENERATIONAL GUIDELINES

- The Greatest Generation: 1914-1927
- Silent Generation: 1928-1945 (73-90)
- Baby Boomers: 1946-1964 (54-72)
- Generation X: 1965-1980 (38-53)
- Post-Millennials: 1997-Present (0-21)
Jean M. Twenge (2017)
“iGen…and what that means for the rest of us”
1995-Present (0-23)
iGen

- **INTERNET**—Growing up connected
- **IN NO HURRY**—Growing up slowly (fears of “adulting”)
- **IN PERSON NO MORE**—In person social interaction declining
- **INSULATED BUT NOT INTRINSIC**—Interested in safety but decline in civic involvement
- **INSECURE**—Sharp rise in mental health issues
PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

DEVELOP YOUR SUPPORT TEAM

- Team Physician(s)
- Nutritionist
- Athletic Trainers
- Massage Therapist
- Podiatrist
- Sport Psychology and Counseling Services
- Strength Training and Conditioning
- Chiropractor
- Academic Counselors
- Tutors
- Sports Information
- Meet Officials
- Grounds & Maintenance Personnel
- Fund Raising Support
- Life Skills Coordinator
- Technology & Social Media
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How To Integrate and Apply Sport Psychology Into A Cross Country and Track and Field Program

Brian Zuleger, Ph.D.
Techniques, August 2018
PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

¢ OWNERSHIP:
¢ Program philosophy, vision, values, mission and theme

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY TRACK AND FIELD

“Our love of the sport drives us to be purposeful, accountable, and confident in order to support ourselves and our team. By reflecting on our successes and failures, excellence will be an outcome on and off the track/field. We are Viking track & field!”

PROCESS, UNITY, EXCELLENCE, REPEAT.
COMMUNITY SERVICE
ADVICE

- **Process of guided self-discovery**
  - “They (team members) are resistant to being told what to do”
  - “Partner with your athletes”
  - “Be a part of the team culture”

- **Code of conduct**—Identify who you would like to be and how you would like to act” (demonstrate accountability)

- **Values provide purpose**
  - “Purpose is a requirement of effort”

- **Importance of evaluation and feedback** for athletes and coaches to provide the “how and why” of training and performance effectiveness

- **Go beyond your sport to make a difference**

- **Importance of mindset**
PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

- Provide opportunities for social interaction
- Decision-making opportunity to develop self-responsibility and self-confidence
- Develop consistency in the recruiting process
- What is your program “mindset”?
"You have a choice. Mindsets are just beliefs. They’re powerful beliefs, but they’re just something in your mind, and you can change your mind."

Carol Dweck
Mindset
“The Growth Mindset”

- Embrace constructive evaluation
- View weaknesses as challenges
- Be effort-conscious
- Value accomplishment through hard work, patience, and persistence
- Confidence based on preparation
- Stress internal factors that compliment talent—determination, will, and commitment
COACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Distraction control strategies
  - Monitor sleep patterns
  - Keep parents informed
- Provide instruction & feedback in small chunks
  - Feedforward
  - Patience
CONTACT INFO

- ralphvermacchia@msn.com
- Twitter: @ralphvermacchia
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