

Building Championship Teams through Leadership and Team Unity

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Background

- Started at Union High School in 2005
 - Head Cross Country
 - Head Track
 - Middle School Basketball
 - Drivers Ed, Yearbook, & Newspaper
- The programs needed a change and new direction
- I looked for the 'answers' from people that were willing to help

How this starts

- Learn from others
 - Take notes from other coaches – the sport does not matter
- Read
 - Leaders are readers
- Evaluate your people
 - The best managers know the strengths of their people
- Ask questions

1 HUGE POINT

No one cares how great of a runner you are, have been, or will be. They care about how you can relate to people?

What works?

- Know your athletes
- Know your parent group
- Know your community
- Work with other coaches and/or directors
- Know your purpose as a program
- Be realistic
- HAVE FUN

Mission Statement

- Union Cross Country Mission Statement
 - The mission of the Union XC Program is to develop young people into competitors in races, games, and life. It is our goal to develop positive leaders within every athlete, build a team everyone can be proud of, and develop solid citizens in the school and in the community.

Expectations

- Always put the positive image of the school and XC program before your own self-interests.
- Do your best – everyday. Expect to compete at Fort Dodge.
- Do what is right – even when no one is looking.
- Treat others like you would want to be treated.
- Look like a team, act like a team, and compete like a team.

Leadership Team

- The head coach sets the tone for leadership on the team
 - If the coach makes all of the decisions it really isn't a team
 - But, the coach must know what decisions are up for debate
 - Control the team, but be open to ideas

Leadership Team

- Captains
 - All 'interested' Seniors are captains
 - This was a change for us
 - They help establish internal policies, discipline, and team activities
 - We have not had a senior opt out of this role
 - They are given the expectations of a leader before the season starts
 - Seniors are also responsible for leading warm-ups each day

Handouts

- Provide your athletes alternate material
 - Your voice may get old!
 - See the following attachments
 - 21 Critical Life Lessons You Didn't Learn in School
 - How to Be A Better Person
 - U2: Together at the Top
 - Athlete of the Year: Ashley Miller
 - Real Winners Don't Always Medal
 - And many other books and resources are available

Leadership Team

- Note the name – Leadership TEAM
 - Everything we do is done together
- Don't be afraid to have others speak to the team
 - Other coaches
 - Other teachers
 - Former runners
 - Alum's want to stay connected and will do anything to help
 - Do it via telephone, Skype, in person

Team Unity

- Explain your expectations for the team
 - The coach impacts team unity more than they realize
 - Set the tone early and often
- At least 1 activity as a team each week in practice
 - Kids love having fun – give them the opportunity to have fun

Team Unity

- Create traditions
 - Surviving a tough practice that becomes an annual event
 - Have treats
 - Kids like food
 - Traditions before certain meets
 - Your leaders can help you with this
 - Music
 - Captains have music for the bus ride
 - Be prepared for the karaoke

Team Unity

- Have a team shirt
 - A \$10 shirt goes a long way for making everyone feel like they belong
 - We have had seasons where we have sold 3 different t-shirts
- Uniforms
 - Take care of uniforms and have your kids wear them with pride
 - Your team will perform as they look and feel

Talk Success

- Success is not the same as winning
 - Some kids will never win, but they can improve
- We never discuss championships, meet titles, etc.
 - Goals are set at the start of the year
 - Individual goals are set each week
- Let the leaders have a say in 'success'
 - They usually get close to reality

Awards

- Be cautious with recognition, but don't hesitate to give it out
 - Individual awards do erode team chemistry
 - But outstanding accomplishments do need to be recognized
 - Sometimes it helps to have the team recognize certain accomplishments

Season Ending Activities

- Team Meals
 - Parents are willing to help IF they are asked
- Kids Speak to Team
 - At state, our kids each speak to their teammates
 - This often gets very emotional
- Post-Season Evaluations
 - Give your kids an opportunity to speak
- Banquet
 - Make your banquet special/important

Other Notes

- Have a 'do what it takes' attitude as a coach
- Take care of your people
- Set your expectations early
- "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care". – John Maxwell
- Resource – www.athleticcoacheducation.com
