

Real Winners Don't Always Medal

by Bud Legg, Iowa High School Athletic Association

How many young men would ditch an opportunity to medal in the State Cross Country Meet for the third consecutive year?

Mount Vernon-Lisbon's outstanding distance ace senior Chris Legore was faced with that question on November 2 at the State Cross Country Championships, and how he answered affirms our belief in today's youth and the values that one derives from athletic competition.

Legore is a talented runner. As a freshman he was 23rd, then seventh as a sophomore, and in 2001 he was runner-up in Class 2-A. By any assessment of this year's 2-A championship field that assembled at Lakeside Golf Course in Fort Dodge, he was projected in the top ten.

But his name is not among those in the meet's results. However, in the unprinted "Final Results" he is a champion.

With less than 200 yards left in the race, when it is to won or lost, he was faced with a huge decision. Teammate Conrad Lichty, a sophomore, was running second and Chris was in eighth and moving up. A possible state team title was within reach if they could hit the finish line in something close to that order.

Then Lichty began to falter. One hundred yards from the finish line, he collapsed as Legore watched from behind.

"I saw that Conrad was faltering," Legore told Cedar Rapids Gazette sportswriter Jeff Linder, "His balance was gone. When I got to him, he went down."

Legore, an easy sprint from the finish line, could have carted off his third straight top-ten finish, but he chose to stay with Lichty and help him to his feet. They continued a few yards before Lichty went down again. And again Legore picked him up. They finished together, arms locked in 15th and 16th place.

According to the rules, physically aiding a runner is illegal and Legore and Lichty both were disqualified. Their points, which would have lifted the team from seventh in the final results to first were erased.

"I did not know you couldn't assist a teammate," Legore said, "but it wouldn't have changed what I did."

"My mom (Diane) told me that's the proudest she has ever been of me. It's hard to be disappointed with yourself after you hear that."

Lichty received immediate medical attention and recovered at Lakeside.

"I couldn't even talk for a few minutes," he told Linder. "The first thing I said was to tell Chris thanks. There was no way I was going to get to the finish line without him."

A State Championship is nice; no denying that. But it is largely a memory for those who win it. Being a State Champion human being is enduring and pervasive. It provides an important lesson that will stay in the memory of the thousands of spectators and athletes who witnessed Legore's values at work.

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Athlete of the Year: Ashley Miller

Tipton Ashley Miller left her mark all over Eastern Iowa, and not just because of the gastrointestinal issues that followed her to every track meet.

The daughter of a former small-town sportswriter, she began to follow high school sports at a very young age. She worshipped her local heroes, then surpassed them all.

A four-sport star and a 17-time state champion, Miller was an easy choice as The Gazette's 2007 Female Athlete of the Year.

In fact, the Tipton High School graduate and University of Nebraska recruit was a unanimous choice. Miller joins Robin Threatt, a 1988 graduate of Cedar Rapids Jefferson, as the only female athletes to sweep the sports staffers' votes.

"People from this town have no idea what they've had in Ashley Miller," said Tipton cross country coach Jenny King. "Nor do they know what they're losing when she leaves."

Miller departs for Lincoln next week. She leaves a trail of accomplishments as long as Nebraska is flat:

- Fifteen state individual and relay championships in track, with no defeats in state competition.
- Three Drake Relays titles in her specialty, the 800 meters.
- State cross country crowns in 2004 and 2006, along with a runner-up finish in 2003 and a fifth-place performance in 2005.
- Eight team championships - four in cross country, four in track.
- First-team all-state in basketball last winter after averaging 22.7 points per game. Two trips to the state basketball tournament, and 1,654 career points.

"It's been a great ride," said Darren Miller, Ashley's father. "It's going to be different around here without her, that's for sure. But I'm happy for her. It will be a big step, but I think she's ready for it."

Ashley knows she's ready.

"I want to be the best I can be," she said. "And I'm going to the place that's going to help me get there."

"I think I can do anything if I want it bad enough. Someday, I'd like to be an all-American. And it's a dream of mine to represent my country someday."

Others share that vision, including a high school boy who was the first to request an autograph from Miller two years ago.

"It was after a (track) meet at Williamsburg and we were eating at McDonald's," she said. "It was some guy from West Liberty. He said, 'You're going to be in the Olympics someday. Can I have an autograph?'"

It was the first of many that Miller has signed. Many have been young girls. She always accommodates; after all, it wasn't that long ago she was the starstruck little girl.

She followed girls her father covered, such as Christie Vogelgesang of Tipton, Susan Koering of Lincoln Community and Paige Stamp of Lisbon. As time went by, she was drawn more to runners such as Michelle Lilienthal of Iowa City High and Jeni Frudden of Iowa City West.

Meanwhile, Miller was developing her own skills. Her parents played on a competitive co-ed slow-pitch softball team. Ashley always took her glove, and frequently wiggled her way into the line for ground balls.

"She absolutely loved it," said her mother, Ann. "She always had great hand-eye coordination. She'd go to games that Darren would cover, and she'd be so interested."

Then, there was her running.

Darren was a semi-serious runner in the early 1990s. As he returned from his workouts, 3-year-old Ashley invariably was sitting on the front step of their home.

"I was trying to finish up my workout, and she'd be there waiting to run my cool-down with me," Darren said. "She wanted to splash around in the puddles. She just loved it."

It wasn't long until Ashley was running road races on her own, and running well. And by the time she arrived in high school, she was itching to compete with those she idolized.

"Her freshman year, she kept asking me when she was going to get to run against Ellen Ries (13-time state track champ from North-Linn and 2005 Gazette Female Athlete of the Year)," said Dave Fetterman, Miller's track coach. "I kept telling her that it would happen when the time was right."

At the 2004 Tigarette Relays, the time was right. And it became one of Miller's favorite races.

Miller and Ries chased each other around the track twice before Miller finally prevailed at the wire. Both broke 2:13 in the 800.

"Ashley had another level she could find," Fetterman said. "I was so amazed. I learned that day that this girl was going to be something else."

The rest of the state soon learned the same thing. Miller outdueled Ries in the Drake Relays 800, then returned to Drake Stadium three weeks later and won three events at the state meet.

That was the start of a four-year run of perfection. Fifteen times, Miller toed the line or took the baton at a state track meet. Fifteen times, she crossed the finish line a champion.

Some of the races were easy. Some of them, she had to come from behind.

And once, in the 2006 3,200-meter relay, she needed a 2:09 anchor split to do it.

"That one ranks right up there with (the 2007 Drake 800)," Miller said.

That was a race of redemption. After winning the Drake 800 in 2004 and 2005, Miller was beaten by Brooke Dinsdale of North Tama in 2006.

In the rematch in April, Miller passed both Dinsdale twins down the home stretch, winning it in 2:10.10.

"I really wanted that race. I really wanted to redeem myself," Miller said.

Excellence means sacrifice. For Miller, it meant a lot of lonely runs through the streets of Tipton. A heat index of 90-plus on a humid August evening. Snow crunching under her feet on a five-miler - after a basketball game - in February. Miller cruised the streets of the Cedar County seat more by foot than most of her peers did by car.

Sacrifice also included physical misery.

As has been well-documented, Miller owned a queasy stomach. After the first race at every track meet, whatever had previously gone down violently came back up.

She lived with it.

"I think it was just a combination of nerves and pushing myself pretty hard," Miller said. "It wasn't fun, but I was able to get through it."

Running has defined Miller's life thus far, but it hasn't consumed it.

She probably could have been a Division-I basketball player. She was a career .390 hitter in softball and would have finished with close to 300 stolen bases had she gone out this summer.

A soprano, Miller "has a lovely voice," according to Fetterman, one that landed her in the Bill Riley Talent Show at the Iowa State Fair a few years ago.

She is a first-chair trumpet player. She shows Suffolk sheep at the county and state fairs. She was a 4.0 student and the class valedictorian.

"She is a girl who is driven to excel," said Dick Grimoskas, Tipton superintendent. "She's got the talent, and she's got the determination to succeed."

"I would take a building full of Ashley Millers."

In a few days, Miller will pack and travel west. She plans to major in nutritional health and exercise science.

She'll specialize in track only, in which she is projected to run 400 to 1,500 meters. She wants to be an all-American.

In many ways, she already is.

"Ashley Miller is what you would want your child to become," Fetterman said. "She's what you'd want in a girl next door."

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U2: Together at the Top

As they circle the globe on their 360° Tour, U2 have grounds to boast. The Irish rock band has sold nearly 150 millions albums, has won 22 Grammy awards, and has been inducted into The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Yet, for all of their accolades perhaps the most impressive achievement is that U2 have done it all together.

Avoiding the Stereotypical Rock Band Split

How many times have we seen this cycle play out?

1. Rock band achieves fame
2. Fame generates egotism
3. Egotism leads to infighting
4. Infighting provokes an acrimonious split

Countless music groups shatter under the pressures of stardom. As their fame grows, individuals in the band assert their personal agendas more forcefully, and unity erodes. Mix in a little substance abuse, and you get the spectacular implosions common to rock-and-roll bands.

U2 have avoided the stereotypical rock band split by working as a team. Let's dissect a few of the qualities that have bound the band together since its formation in 1976.

Commitment Based on Mutual Respect

The bedrock of any team is the relationships between its individual members, and U2 are no exception. Certainly, the four self-assured showmen have had their artistic squabbles and personal conflicts. Yet, the mutual respect shared by the members of U2 has enabled the band to remain intact after 30 years of making music together.

Ask U2 about the band's internal dynamics, and they'll invariably point to the metaphor of marriage. In the words U2's guitarist and keyboardist, Edge "I'm so close to the other three guys in this group that sometimes it feels like a marriage."¹ Drummer Larry Mullen Jr. agrees, "We don't always like each other but we respect each other, and we love each other. Marriages don't last this long."² While U2 may have their rocky moments, at the end of the day any disagreements between them pale in light of their committed friendships.

Inclusion of All Members

Producer Brian Eno notes another quality binding U2 together: inclusion.

U2's chemistry relies on their empathy and respect for each other, but also on something intrinsic to Irish society-the attempt to keep everyone included...if somebody starts to feel they're not part of the process they are quickly brought back in. U2 have that tribal attitude: if you get ill it's not just your problem, it's the problem of the entire tribe.³

A prime example of the group's 'all for one, one for all' mentality can be seen through the personal crisis of bassist, Adam Clayton. At a concert in Sydney, Australia in 1993 Clayton simply failed to show up. His struggles with alcohol had rendered him incapable of performing. Such an inexcusable absence could have torn apart a less established group. But, as Bono puts it, "No matter what scandal was happening, no one cared about the band in those moments. Everyone just cared about (Adam)."⁴ As Clayton grappled with alcoholism, his fellow bandmates rallied around him. In the long run, U2 emerged from the incident stronger than ever.

We before Me

The staying power of U2 has much to do with each individual's decision to place group interests above personal agendas. As Bono explains, "Individual egos, as big as they may appear—and they may not be as big as they appear—are certainly subsumed to the band ego. That's the real thing."⁵ The performers comprising U2 recognize that they're better together than alone, an idea articulated by Adam Clayton, "Instead of thinking that the band is limiting we feel it is very free. (Together) we can do things that we can't do as individuals."⁶ Edge concurs, "To be perfectly honest, I'm not a solo artist. I need to find collaborators...I make a lot of music on my own but no one ever hears. It just gets better when I'm working on it with Adam, Larry and Bono."⁷

Refusal to Settle for Past Success

The reason so many bands get trapped in an era is that they find a style that works and stop growing. U2's relevance has spanned three decades because they push themselves to evolve. They don't rest on past success. As Chris Blackwell observed, "That's the thing about U2. The band always feels like it's coming, never that it's arrived."⁸ Whenever they feel their sound is becoming too recognizable or too comfortable, U2 forces themselves to change, to find new ways of blending their talents.

As a rock band, U2 always have an element of creative dissatisfaction, and in many ways, this shared hunger is vital to the group's cohesion. U2 see no reason to cut ties with one another because, in their minds, they still haven't reached their potential. Larry Mullen Jr. sums up this quality:

We're never satisfied. We never feel like we've made our greatest record. We always feel we can do better, we can be better, and that's constant. After every record, we sit down and go, "OK, what was wrong with that? What was right with it?" And next time around, we fix it. We constantly do that, and that's why U2 survives. ⁹

Bono describes U2's demeanor as, "hungry in a way that can't be fed," ¹⁰ and he speaks often of the relentlessness and passion that pushes the band to excel. This drive and sense of unreachd potential propels U2 forward while simultaneously linking each musician together.

SUMMARY

In an industry where bands combust regularly, U2 have stuck by one another to achieve unrivaled success. Mutual respect has laid the foundation for their longstanding musical partnership, and personal friendships have carried them through tough times. Each band member's willingness to elevate the U2 brand above their own popularity has kept the group unified. Meanwhile, a refusal to be content with prior accomplishments has compelled U2 to pursue change and push the boundaries of their artistry.

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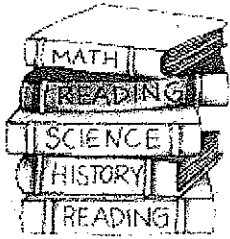
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21 Critical Life Lessons You Didn't Learn in School



If someone doesn't take us aside and teach us a few things (assuming we'd listen) before we graduate high school, we are doomed to learn life's hardest lessons in the real world beyond the classroom.

With that in mind, here are 21 non-academic lessons every person should know before he or she graduates high school; if you graduated long ago (as I did), this list represents all the things you wish you had been taught, yet had to learn (or are still learning) on your own.

Love and Relationships

- 1. Choosing a Mate:** Your ability to select a suitable spouse will greatly influence your financial and emotional wellbeing, yet parents and teachers seldom mention it. A few common sense guidelines: pick someone who's a joy to be around and who makes you happy; know the person well; ensure compatibility beyond the physical because beauty and youth are fleeting, while the mind and heart endure.
- 2. Evaluating Relationships:** Given the tremendous importance of relationships, it's surprising we receive so little instruction on how to evaluate, prune, and nurture them. Start by asking yourself whether each of your relationships drags you down or lifts you up. Surrounding yourself with positive relationships is half the battle.
- 3. Conversation:** Successful relationships require solid communication: use body language, appropriate tone of voice, and eye contact; be friendly and considerate of alternative viewpoints; persuade gently; listen, listen, listen.
- 4. Handling Difficult People:** An essential life skill, handling difficult people can be taught, but seldom is. I've written about this before, and there are several good books on the subject, including Robert Bramson's *Coping with Difficult People*.
- 5. Networking:** Ask for business cards, maintain a Rolodex (electronic or otherwise), and stay in touch with people who respect you. Association breeds opportunity, personally and professionally.
- 6. Compassion:** We are born egocentric, but by the time we graduate high school, we should be capable of understanding, appreciating, and sympathizing with others. Compassion helps us understand our place in the world and ensures we are emotionally well rounded.
- 7. Teamwork:** Work environments have gravitated toward small teams. Sports, team projects, and group goals are great ways to learn teamwork, but are seldom adequate. Evaluate interpersonal skills regularly; correct as needed.
- 8. Giving:** As a child, I always thought the expression "it's better to give than to receive" was trite and silly. As an adult, I recognize the expression's value. Having the capacity to give means you possess; having the will to give means you want to make a difference; having the desire to give means you care.

Money Management

- 9. The Material Myth:** Pursuing happiness by acquiring material things (granite countertops, plasma televisions, designer clothing) is like jogging to the grocery store on your treadmill: it's not going to happen.
- 10. Saving:** Keep 3 to 6 months salary in an emergency fund, in case you lose your job; use online calculators to determine the proper amount to save for retirement; keep money on hand for unexpected expenses, such as car and home repair.
- 11. Debt:** Financial gurus suggest that total debt, excluding first mortgage, should not exceed 20% of take-home pay. This includes car payments, home equity loans, second mortgages, credit card debt, and so forth. Upper income consumers may be able to handle higher debt loads due to greater expendable income, while lower income consumers may be wise to carry less. And my number one rule of debt: credit cards should never be used as supplemental income.

12. Frugality: Live below your means. Look for bargains. Shop at discount stores. Clearly delineate needs (transportation) from wants (a big SUV). Feel free to indulge occasionally, but mind the consequences.

13. Debtor Responsibility: I believe every person who borrows money has a social, moral, and ethical responsibility to make payments on time and in the correct amount for the duration of the contract. Generally speaking, the credit bureaus agree.

Career

14. Passion: School sharpens skills, but seldom taps into your most powerful reserve of all: Passion. If you want to be happy at the top of Maslow's pyramid, find a job you love.

15. Practicality: While you're chasing self-actualization, paying bills remains important. Independent research using the Occupational Outlook Handbook or other resources can help you figure out how to make a living in whatever industry inspires you.

16. Politics of Advancement: Advancement in the working world often depends as much upon interpersonal skills as it does upon job skills. Persuasion, argument, and expectation setting are crucial.

17. Entrepreneurial: Unless you're related to business owners or have learned about business ownership on your own, there's a good chance that owning a business seems puzzling, daunting, and overwhelming. The fact that young people in a capitalistic society aren't given the basic tools of ownership is unfortunate. Find a mentor. Attend a workshop. Read.

Personal Success

18. Positive Thinking: Attitude determines altitude. If you believe you can do it, most of the time, you really can.

19. Personal Accountability: Most success boils down to perseverance, determination, tenacity, and other products of personal accountability.

20. Setting and Achieving Goals: Goal setting, research, planing, commitment, and hard work are all required to reach any big, life-altering objective. In other words, all the schooling in the world won't help you reach your dreams if you don't take time to determine what you want and how to obtain it.

21. Health: Throughout my life, I've noticed that no single thing does as much to improve my outlook as getting healthy. Eat nutritious meals in proper portions. Drink plenty of water. Try to get 30 minutes of aerobic exercise daily (or at least every other day). Get plenty of sleep. High school health classes teach these concepts, but seldom make the connection between health and the rest of life; the connection is real. And it's huge.

So there you have it: 21 lessons you can't (or generally don't) learn in school.

These lessons are not intended to insult teachers or schools, or to suggest curriculum. They are merely thought starters; something to think about regarding lessons learned through painful experience.

Life is an exploration, and maybe certain lessons must be experienced to be understood. Yet I wonder how much pain we could prevent if we taught life's important lessons to our young people instead of relying on the real world to teach them for us.

Source: <http://johnplaceonline.com/achieve-balance/21-critical-life-lessons-you-didnt-learn-in-school/>

How To Be A Better Person

Be the change you want to see occur in the world around you. We can't make other people be more considerate, helpful, honest, etc., but if everyone were to work on themselves and develop these attributes, our world would be a better place.

Don't be judgmental.

Look for and recognize the good in yourself and in others. We are all capable of so-called "good" and "bad" behaviors and we all have our "good" and "off" days. We are all unique and it is wonderful that we are different and not all the same - in our appearance, our thoughts, our opinions, our likes and dislikes. Being different is not threatening, it is not "bad", it is just "different". Embrace the differences and be happy for the variety. Likewise, forget the concepts of "right" and "wrong". People are not good or bad or right or wrong; they just are. If you were in "their shoes" maybe you would act differently, or maybe not. Being judgmental wastes time and cuts you off from opportunities and meaningful relationships - because you are not perfect either, and your judgment might be worse than the person's you are judging!

Respect.

Don't make the mistake of thinking your rights are the only ones that count. Don't ignore the other person's rights. Our fundamental right is to be respected. Being wealthy does not make a person more deserving of respect and neither does a high-flying career with a fancy title. Respect is not about material issues or where one sits on the social ladder. Respect is acknowledging another human being's dignity and treating them how you wish to be treated yourself. We all came on to this earth equal and we're all checking out as equals. What happens in between is just a series of different life experiences. The poor man who lives in a slum, who cares for strangers, volunteers assistance without expecting anything in return and lives a clean, honest life is more deserving of respect than a wealthy businessman who dresses in fine clothes, lives in a huge mansion, and treats everyone like pond amoeba, cheats on his wife, swindles his shareholders and has forgotten how to tell the truth.

Be a Good Listener.

How often do you really listen to other people? How often do you plan what you are going to say next while they are talking, or allow your mind to drift off onto something else instead of concentrating on their every word? It takes practice to be a good listener, but in being one, you are showing respect and in a position to better comprehend the real message being given to you. You avoid misunderstandings and missed instructions. Furthermore, the other person will appreciate your attention and return the courtesy.

Be interested - not interesting.

This goes hand in hand with being a good listener. People love to talk about themselves and will delight in the opportunity to do so, so ensure you ask questions and take an interest in what they are telling you. Don't worry about them hogging the limelight - you can have your turn during the conversation. Have you ever met someone who only talks about themselves? Count the number of times you use "I" in your conversations. Judging, arguing points, interrupting the conversation, and using "I" a lot are sure signs you need to review your communication skills.

Respond from Your Heart.

We tend to respond to others using our head, not our heart. We formulate stories about us, we defend our ego, or we judge other people or what they have said. If we respond from our heart, we can respond with understanding and a sense of connection. Find something good to say about people and to people. Build people "up" - don't knock them down. Go with your gut instincts.

Be truthful.

There is a good reason for the saying "honesty is the best policy." Nothing good ever comes from lies, and there is a difference between being diplomatic and telling an outright lie. Nobody trusts a liar. If you've made a

mistake, well, welcome to the human race! You don't have to lie to cover it up. You don't have to tell your truth "brutally", there are gentle and tactful ways of delivering truths and you should think carefully before you speak. But don't try to be deceitful because it has a habit of coming back to haunt you, and in those situations you are worse off than if you had just come clean in the first place, as uncomfortable as that may seem at the time.

Be helpful.

When you need a helping hand, don't you just love the person who comes up and offers that to you? Wouldn't you love the opportunity to repay them? You can be that person that others look to respectfully with gratitude in their hearts, who will, one day, repay the gesture. What comes around, goes around. If you want people to be helpful to you, you must be helpful to others. It doesn't matter whether this is assisting your boss with a special project you can see he needs help with, or a co-worker who is struggling with a large workload, or an elderly neighbor struggling up the stairs with her arms full. People do remember kindness.

Maintain Your Integrity and Your Dignity.

People with their integrity intact are easier to deal with in work or personal situations. They know where they stand and you know where you stand with them. You will feel better about yourself when you set your standards and stand by them and you will attract those who respect your standards and who have standards of their own. Being a doormat is disrespectful to yourself and to the person 'walking all over you'. It does not allow them to grow and learn to do something for themselves. Learn to say no gracefully. You have as much right as everyone else on the planet to have your own opinion and your own way of doing things, and reminding you of point (1) above, nobody has the right to make you feel 'bad' if you think, feel or dress differently. Remember, "to thine own self be true."

Go the Extra Mile.

I mean this in a couple of ways. First, whether you are either asked to do something, or you are offering to do something, remember that if something is worth doing in the first place, then it is worth doing well. And while you are at it, what little touches can you offer to improve it? For example, who would you rather go to for your shoeshine... Mr. A does a wonderful buff and polish and is timely and not too expensive. Mr. B also does a wonderful buff and polish, he is also timely and not expensive, but he is also cheerful and interested in you and whistles while he works, so after your polish, you go on your way feeling on top of the world! Mr. B just went the extra mile for you. He didn't just polish your shoes, he lifted your spirits and made you feel good. If you are offering a co-worker assistance with copying some documents, go the extra mile and ask if she needs a hand stapling them or collating them. Going the extra mile need not involve a large expense of time, energy or money, but its value to the recipient is often priceless, and one day, it will be reciprocated.

Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say.

Neither beat around the bush being evasive, nor make promises you can't keep. On the other hand, if you say you are going to do something, do it. Be known as a reliable person. Honor your promises and agreements wherever possible - this stems back to integrity. Prepare to be flexible if need be, but know that you don't have to bend over so far backwards that your back snaps. Being assertive and being aggressive are two entirely different things, and you do not need aggression to be assertive. In fact, you are better off without the aggression! If you are wishy-washy and allow people or circumstances to be unconcerned for your position, you will develop that reputation and find more and more people willing to walk all over you and more situations in which it occurs. Being like this does not prove you are valuable to anybody - it just means you are a 'pushover'.