

INTRODUCTION

("The wise profit from the experiences of others." Anon.)
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For years, coaches of other track-minded nations of the world looked to the coaches of the United States for advice in the matter of developing the potential ability of their athletes. Also, they encouraged visits by American coaches and American star athletes in order to further increase their coaching knowledge. In addition, noted American coaches, among them the late Boyd Comstock, were engaged to accept positions as coaches in overseas countries.

NOW, as added proof that brain potential is not the exclusive property of residents of any one nation, the tide has begun to turn and some American athletes are receiving instructions from overseas coaches.

Among the great track coaches of overseas countries are: Woldemar Gerschler (Germany); Percy Cerruty (Australia); and Franz Stampf (Austria). Among the champions developed by Gerschler were Rudolf Harbig (Germany) and Josef Barthel (Luxemburg). After 16 years of effort by the best middle-distance runners of the world, Harbig's time of 1m 46.6s is still the world record for 800-meters. Barthel won the greatest 1500-meters race in the history of the modern Olympic Games with a time of 3m 45.2s at Helsinki in 1952.

Percy Cerruty, after regaining his own health through long-distance running, took a young discouraged Australian named James M. Landy and helped him to evolve from a 4m 43.8s miler to the present holder of the world mile record with a time of 3m 58.0s. Also, Landy is the present holder of the 1500-meters world record with 3m 41.8s; made while on the way to his world mile record. In addition, he ran the two-miles in 8m 42.4s. Landy's improvement is without a parallel in the 90-year history of modern track and field.

Up to five months before he became the first to run the mile under four minutes, Roger G. Bannister of Great Britain had never had a coach. BUT, when he decided to prepare himself for the great test, he decided to seek the assistance of a coach and eventually engaged an Austrian -- Franz Stampf. So sound was Stampf's coaching program, that Bannister was able to rest from training for five days before his attempt and on May 6, 1954, he won an imperishable place in track history by running the mile in 3m 59.4s.

Other outstanding achievements by overseas coaches included the transforming of Chris J. Chataway (Great Britain) from a star 3-mile and 5,000-meters runner into a 3m 59.8s miler and thus destroying the idea that over-distance running was not advisable for a mile runner. Another notable overseas coaching achievement was the transforming of Ken Wood, a 4m 04.8s miler, into a 8m 34.8s two-miler.

Progressive coaches the world over are studying the coaching methods taught by Gerschler, Cerruty and Stampf and are thus keeping an ever open mind to new coaching ideas no matter where they come from. WORLD SPORTS (London); ATHLETICS WORLD (London), and TRACK AND FIELD NEWS (Los Altos, California) have published articles by one or the other of those three coaches. As we quoted at the top of this page:

"THE WISE PROFIT FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS."

TRACK COACHING METHODS

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MENTAL ATTITUDE LECTURE

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL ATTITUDE IN TRACK?

I find I am old-fashioned in my methods. My downfall lies in the fact that I am a believer in good old pep talks before, during, and after any and all athletic events.

1. If sport of checkers was on our list of varsity activities, I am prone to believe I would feel the urge to inject a little fire into those participants representing our colors. I firmly believe that locker room "pep talks" and "bull sessions" between coach and athlete have a place in the lives of our high school and college athletes. Through this source of communicationwe can teach many good things which will carry far and beyond any information derived elsewhere.
2. In locker room sessions lasting only a few minutes emotion and spirit can and should be aroused not by derision and heckling but by a united effort on the part of the team and coach. Knute Rockne and Dean Cromwell both users of this method .
3. No team fulfills a given schedule for schedule's sake alone, but also for the opportunity of competing earnestly as a representative of schoolmates, faculty, parents, and the community of which it is a part. Boys need frequent reminders of this because the pleasant taste of success and publicity can often dull desirable attitudes. Our little talks together should have a combination of WHAT to do and How to do it with the SPIRIT with which to do it as the ultimate goal. A born competitor is a godsend, but it is part of our job to instill in those less fortunate athletes that aspect of competition that lies not in the muscle and brain, but IN THE HEART.

Lecture of noted psychiatrist, Abraham Myerson, presents an appropriate thinking for our discussion on "Mental Attitudes" in athletics.

1. His story--When I was a young psychiatrist, and father of one child, I loftily developed a lecture entitled no less: "A Decalogue for Parents." Like a new Moses I enunciated ten commandments based on a successful rearing of son number one.
2. Along came son number two, a nonconformist, who shattered my feelings of certainty. I changed the title of the lecture to "Ten Hints for Parents". With this modification of authoritarianism I got along well enough until the third child, a girl, came along; then I gave up the lecture entirely.
3. So it is in athletics-- just about when we feel we have the answer we find in reality we know very little after all. I am reminded of a small clipping we keep posted on our track bulletin board that says: "It's what you learn after you know everything that counts."

Emotional problems and psychiatric implications in athletics present common team problems that the coach and athlete must face and understand. The manner in which we harness these problems influences, to a great degree, the success of our teams.

1. Fear and worry (closely allied) includes insecurity, injury and inadequacy..... must be met with measures of compensation (action of contest usually solves this), private chat and preparation, clear objectives and relaxation by environment.

2. Pessimism and Depression (closely akin - affect morale) includes environment; injury or disgruntled player (like measles, are contagious), lowered vitality and overwork.....must be met with good training and locker room facilities, fair treatment to all, liquidate 5th column gripers, good trainer or doctor's care, well-coached team trained to limit of capacities, and for slump give a couple of days rest.
3. Superstition found among most all athletes in such ways as knocking on wood, want certain number, lucky charms, etc....usually makes little difference and won't hurt, but if and when time comes where it interferes with the welfare of the team the coach must not hesitate to step in and let the team pressure solve the issue or use sterner, more old-fashioned methods.

Confidence Wins - given certain physical qualifications you are as good as you think you are.

Dean Cromwell gave advice during my first season under his coaching that I've always remembered: -- "If you go into the meet with the idea that you're going to get first place, you have a good chance of doing it."

1. Mental attitude can do more to make a champion or break a potential world record holder than any other factor. You must want to be a champion.

Without it, our attention to training, diet, techniques, and natural ability will not be enough for success.

We think ourselves into a championship -- examples of this all around us:

- A. Johnny Barnes - a 2:03.4 half miler in high school...a very sick boy in his senior year. His best marks to date have been 1:50.1 in the 880, fastest in the world in 1951 and a 1:49.6 800 meters for a new record in '52 N.C.A.A. Oxy's '51 - '52 N.C.A.A. champion and 1952 Olympic team member.
- B. Dick Shivers -- started the '51 season All Conference Relays at 11' 6" and won the All Conference title with a 14' 1-3/4"...
- C. Bill Parker -- class B. 660 boy in high school. Ran 49.0 as Oxy frosh and as a senior hit 46.9 to defeat world record holder Herb McKenley and establish the fastest time for an American in 1950.
- D. Walt McKibben - 9.9, 21.7 and 50.5 in Junior College made times of 9.8, 20.6 and 47.8 two years later...his time of 20.6 in the 220 ranked fastest in world for 1951.
- E. Bob McMillen - 4:24.0 in high school and 4:21.0 in J.C., lowered his mark to 4:07.8 in 1950 and hit 4:09.0 in 1951 to defeat Willy Slykhuis of Holland, European Champion. Bob set a new 1500 meter mark of 3:50.7 to win the 1952 N.C.A.A. title and placed second in the Olympic 1500 meters for a new record of 3:45.2....his time being equivalent to a 4:02.7 mile, the fastest ever by an American.
- F. Oxy mile relay squad of 1950 -- proved conclusively the importance of "Mental Attitude" by defeating a great Morgan State team in the Coliseum Relays before 45,000 stunned track fans. McKibben 48.1, Ruprecht 48.4, Barnes 47.1, and Parker 46.5 for a time of 3:10.1, the second fastest in track history.
- G. World record distance medley relay team -- timed in 9:57.7 after several tries finally put together the right mixture of determination and running ability to set an outstanding mark at the Fresno Relays in 1952. The Oxy times: Miller - 47.8, Butler - 1:54.5, Barnes - 3:01.5, and McMillen - 4:13.9. These boys were just average prospects, BUT -- THERE WAS ONE THING ABOUT EACH ONE OF THEM -- EACH WANTED TO BE A CHAMPION!

2. Champions are not made overnight. The history of track and field sport is rich with examples of championships won through faith, hard work, and overcoming physical handicaps. Glenn Cunningham (Kansas) stands as one of American's greatest distance runners and has a best mile mark of 4:04.4, fastest ever by an American....LUCK? No--Cunningham was a made champion!
- When eight years old, his legs were so badly burned the doctor said he would never walk again.
 - Little Glenn didn't agree- he said he was not only going to walk, but run.
 - From that time on he worked at building his legs...refused to ride bus to and from school and ran and walked each way. Showed signs of greatness in high school.
 - Sheer determination and iron will power made him a great and inspirational champion.

There can be no doubt but that mental attitudes in athletics must include such factors as morale, "will to win", and of courage, personal relationship between coach and his men, athletic ideals and traditions.

Cornelius "Dutch" Warmerdam--world's greatest pole vaulter, 43 times over 15 feet. World record holder-- Indoor, 15' 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and outdoor 15' 7-3/4" is fine example of mental aspect in sports.

- As high school freshman at Hanford High in 1929 he barely scrambled over 9' 0", made 10 feet in 1930, 10' 11" in 1931 and 12'3" in 1932 as a senior. 9'0" made at Ratcliffe Stadium, Fresno.
- His 12' 3" was not school record and certainly indicated he was not a "born athlete", but that he was willing to give his time to the development of skill in the mental as well as in the physical capacities.
- Eleven years later at Ratcliffe Stadium, the scene of his 9' 0" as a high school frosh, he returned under entirely different circumstances....officials had to be sure the standards would accomodate a mark over 15 feet.
- Warmerdam has high ideals and great sincerity and in his fame he has always shown humility...the mark of a real champion.

3. Dividing line between success and failure is a narrow one...one in which "mental attitude" plays a most important part. Of two combatants equally strong, that one will win who has the strongest will. Athlete ought to be wholly consumed in game he is playing.

- Can't expect boy who has just come to end of a bad case of puppy-love to give much of his mind to game.
- Person playing to grandstand can't keep mind on performance.
- Boy concerned with eligibility usually falls short of best marks.
- Coaches agree that man who stands high in scholarship is often best athlete not only because he has more brains to use, but because he can enter contest with free mind.
- Best playing a man is capable of comes only when the man immerses himself in the game he is playing.

Coach must convince boy he can be a champion. Sell your athletes on themselves and they can become successful beyond their fondest dreams....for success in any line is largely a matter of "mental attitude".