

Distance Culture and Dynamics: How We Do It



Georgia Track and Field Clinic 2019

“When you put yourself on the line in a race and expose yourself to the unknown, you learn things about yourself and your teammates that are very exciting.”

Doris Brown Heritage

5 time World Cross-Country Champion

Outline of Georgia Team Dynamics Presentation

- Introduction
- The Coach as Leader
- Team Dynamics
- Training Groups
- Conclusion



Why Worry About Team Culture?

- Team sport based on independent individual performances.
- The objective is to create stars on the distance team while keeping the others happy and contributing.
- Create racing opportunities for all.
- Many animals find strength in groups.
- Positive culture builds tremendous trust among athletes.

Setting up Team Dynamics

- Strengths and weakness of your team.
- Determine reasonable goals for individuals and team.
- Athletes are not afraid to fail.
- Athletes have positive attitudes.
- Message → Look at our workouts!

You are a Well-Rounded Coach

- You have passionate outside interests.
- You have outside responsibilities with others.
- Know your generational differences.
- Expand your knowledge base outside your comfort zone.
- Become a better communicator in spoken word, written word, and body language.
- Identify your professional friends and germinate the relationships in a sincere way.

Your Personal Coaching Goals

- Every goal must be realistic and challenging.
- Every goal must be quantifiable.
- Every goal must be within your personal control.
- Every goal must be adaptable to the needs of your athletes.

Coaching Reminder

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, then you are a leader.”

John Quincy Adams
Politician

All Cultures Follow Rules

All rules in life must have penalties.

- Not About Running Rule.
- Performance, not Personality Rule.
- Effort, not Talent Rule.
- Success, not Winning Rule.
- Dollar Rule.
- Midnight Rule.
- Machine Rule.
- Beach Bucket Rule.

Team Culture

- Give them ownership.
- Allow autonomy. Let them lead activities.
- Seek leadership, not captains.
- Encourage active problem solving.
- Very structured system including studies.
- Hyper-focused on self-improvement.
- Intrinsic, not extrinsic.

Coaching Staff's Role in Team Culture

- Give them individual identity.
- Give them opportunity.
- Give them excitement.
- Give them satisfaction.
- Find experts for them.

Coaching Administrative Role in Team Culture

- Do what is asked of you. Touch emails/texts once.
- Over-communicate.
- Mine resources.
- Accentuate what your resources are good at, not what you lack.
- Continue to involve everybody, build your base.
- Be grateful.
- Identify and nurture your advocate.

The Community Culture's Role in Team Culture

- Alumni
- Financial supporters
- Creating fans
- Media support
- Social Media support (blogs)

Go Watch Alumni



Personal Culture in Team Culture

- Wife and family.
- Friends.
- Team calendar → I am good at.
- Personal calendar → I am bad at.
- Realize the facts and traits and seek help.

Performances and Team Culture

- All athletes want to deliver on the big day, but few seldom do.

2015 IAAF World Outdoor Track and Field Meet

- U.S. best professional track and field athletes.
- Most important meet of the year.
- 67 open event opportunities for U.S. men.
- 4 U.S. male athletes recorded career bests.

Team Culture Identity

- Sell some clothing to anybody.
- Award distinctive clothing.
- Distance backpacks and shoe bags.
- Year round training diaries.
- Luggage tags.
- Banners, flags, tents. “The Machine”.
- Do not overdo corny slogans.

Building a Culture

- Success has a covenant.
- Coaches reinforce every athlete.
- Positive behavior is recognized.
- Be optimistic and never give up.
- Be realistic, but positive.
- Never end a compliment with a “but”.
- Recognize the need to have fun.
- Sell the cost of success is responsibility.

Team Culture has History

- Stories of past teams.
- Stories of friend's teams.
- Connect to other great teams
- Convince the younger members they want this.
- Always be truthful. Do not make up stories.

Team Culture has Unique Traditions



The Culture of Winning

- Do not apologize for wanting to win.
- Periodize winning through training.
- Act like you have won before.
- Act like you have lost before.
- Never say “but” when accepting congratulations.
- Be consistent.
- Make an unforgettable and positive impression.

We All Want a Positive Team Culture (what everybody does)

- Team pasta dinners.
- Team pre-season meeting.
- Team post-season banquet.
- Current year team t-shirt.
- Team yearbook and records.
- Interesting competition schedule.
- Media and school announcements.

We All Want a Positive Team Culture (what not everybody does)

- Overnight trip to a meet.
- Social media and website.
- Post race videos.
- Parent parties.
- Organize local summer road race competition.
- Start of season TT and parent night.
- Team handbook.
- Junior high running day.
- Attend their concerts, winter sports, etc.

We All Want a Positive Team Culture (what hardly nobody does)

- Consistent summer practice.
- Unique runner logbook.
- Summer elementary track and field camp.
- Exotic summer training trip.
- Local summer camping trip.
- Multiple seasonal overnight trips to meets.
- Emphasize and organize post-season meets.
- Parent directory.

We All Want a Positive Team Culture (what only I do)

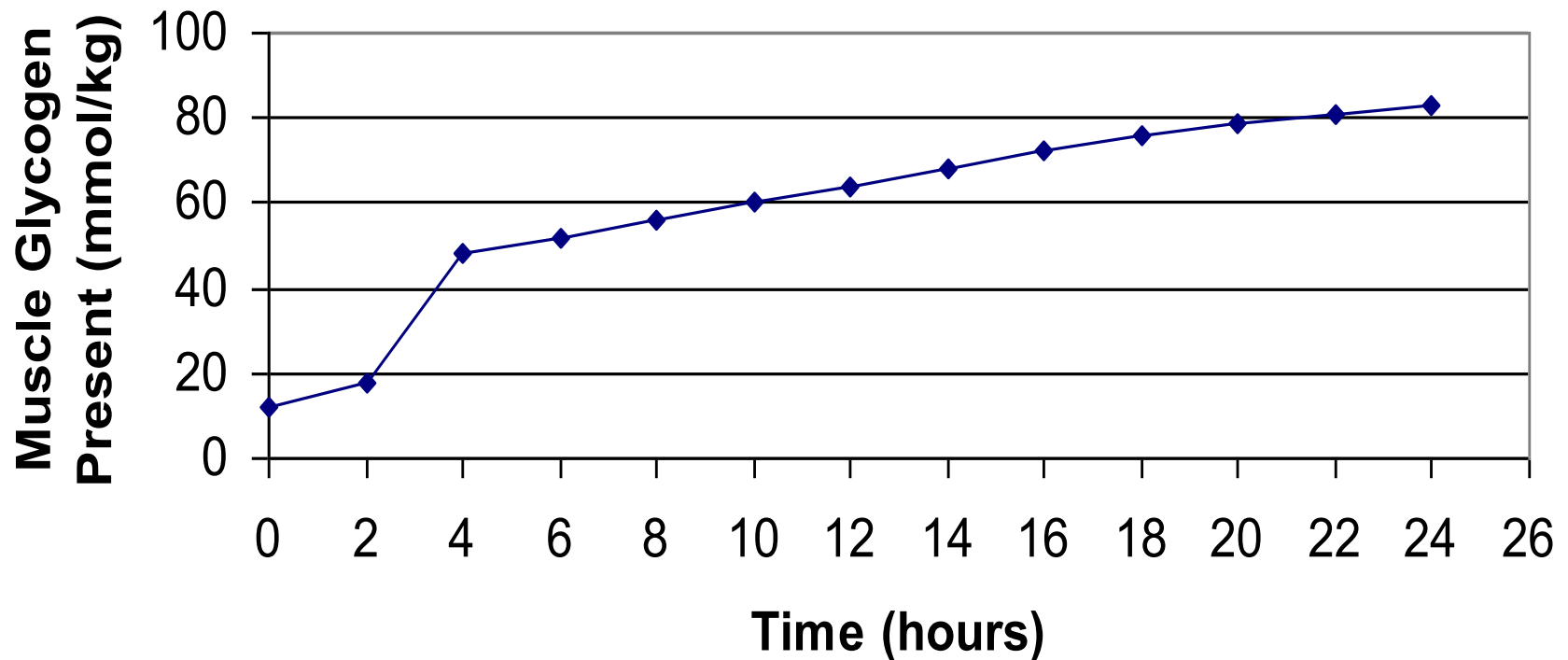
- Take guys fly fishing.
- Take guys kayaking.
- Take guys rock-climbing.
- Attend big-time track, XC, marathon events.
- Special nights
 - Special guest speakers
 - Cooking class
 - Running shop night

Competition & Post-Competition

- Create a theme for each meet.
- Get each competitor to have a skin in the game.
- Athletes cheer and support each other.
- Include team warm-ups and cool-downs as part of the unique culture.
- Do not be in a hurry to get home. Linger.
- Eat together following competitions and during travel if appropriate.

Plan Your Trip Home

Glycogen Replenishment During Regeneration



Conclusion

- Distance running is a unique TEAM sport.
- The coach is the multi-dimensional leader of the team.
- Be always consistent and mostly predictable.
- Copy but also innovate.
- Culture is what makes a team a team. Like all historic cultures, some are short-lived while others endure the test of time.