

Building an XC Program: Coach Dennis Normand/ Email: norm4012@gmail.com

I knew I would have some very experienced coaches in the audience.

If you walk away with one idea that will work for you. Success!!!

Round table: Discussion Format: Used in conferences to encourage equal participation. To share everyone's ideas. I have asked a few coaches to give me ideas before today. This is our goal today.

I hope people are willing to share their experience and knowledge with the group.

Listen to the following audio
Greg Warren Stand-up comedian.
All-American college wrestler.

What is Team Culture=Team culture is defined as the **collective personality of a team**, shaped by shared values, behaviors, goals, and working practices that influence collaboration, decision-making, and performance

Key Elements of Team Culture/ New term for us older coaches

- Shared Values & Goals: Alignment on the team's purpose and mission. **Set goals? Both individual and team goals. I make my team goal very clear on day one.**
- Trust & Psychological Safety: **A secure environment** where members can take risks, share ideas, and admit mistakes without fear. **I visit, talk with the team everyday during warmup.**
- Collaboration & Communication:
Open communication channels and effective, inclusive **teamwork**.

I use SportsYou app/ Remind/ Typed handout plan and schedule for the week every week, given out to each athlete.

Recognition & Appreciation: Regularly celebrating successes and valuing individual contributions. Runner of the week shirts. Positive during the week.

Negative : [Google fact]

Around 70% of kids quit organized sports by age 13, primarily because it stops being fun.

To understand why kids quit sports, consider these common reasons:

- Not making connections with kids.
- Loss of enjoyment or interest in the sport.
- Poor coaching
- It's physically hard
- Pressure from parents or coaches to perform.
- Injuries or fear of getting hurt.
- Poor team dynamics or negative experiences with teammates.
- Desire for more social or recreational activities instead.
- Fear of failure
- Pressure to win.
- Kids often quit if they rarely play in games or feel excluded by teammates or coaches. They don't get playing time, 90% of children would rather PLAY on a losing team then SIT THE BENCH on a winning team.??

No bench in XC/Everyone runs: **No-Cut Policy**:everyone plays, nobody sits on a bench, and everyone improves.

- ***Balancing sports with schoolwork, social activities, and other interests can also be challenging. Kids have a lot on their plates.....I believe this has greatly increased. Coaches forget this.
- The Problem with Early Specialization
- We push kids into competitive play early, hoping they'll get a scholarship or turn pro, but the data doesn't support that model.
- Only ~6% of high school athletes will play in college.
- Only 1–2% will receive any form of athletic scholarship.

What can you do to recruit into your XC programs?

Some of the following ideas I have used. Some ideas are from a few successful Coaches in Montana. A few ideas came from research.

- Make it fun!
- Make connections with kids.
- Make sure to have a good relationship with the school secretary. Best recruiter in the school! 😊
- Have team Rules/Expectations and go over them at the start of the season with kids & parents. They need to know what you expect. Letter system, how do you choose the State runners? Eligibility?
- Start a middle school program. Low miles. Keep it fun with a good coach.
- Vary your runs. Run on dirt or gravel roads. Bus or use Vans to get out to run.
- Don't over work your kids, word will spread quickly.
- **Value Every Runner:** Celebrate personal records (PRs) and hard work across the entire roster, not just the top finishers. Have a weekly chart showing each runner's times throughout the season (Athletic.net)
- Keep drama down?
- Have athletes bring a middle school runner to one practice.
- Pitch cross country to coaches/athletes that are cut from soccer, volleyball, or football.
- Start Early to have kids sign up, Spring sign up for XC.
- Talk to kids of the advantages of running in fall for other winter sports.
- On your summer runs, open your summer runs to everyone. Non XC kids.
- Attend other sports your athletes are involved in during the off season.
- Invite kids to come out. Written invite? Cards?
- High-quality t-shirts, hoodies, and gear that kids want to wear around school.
- ****End of the season dinner**, talk about each athlete, honor seniors. Develop a sense of community. Have parents involved in setting up dinners. Do end of the year dinner away from the school. Make it a special event. Invite families to attend. Handout letters, individual awards. All-State, All Conference given out. A good time to discuss your goals for the next season
- Fostering a **large**, positive team culture.
- Have a Strong Online Presence. Follow school policy in this area. Limit posting by others. Race photos?

- Consistent aerobic base training. Year around conditioning. Weight room twice a week.
- Increasing mileage gradually to prevent burnout. High mileage vs Medium distance. (Speed and Hill work)
- Key strategies include implementing structured summer training. Short season
- Team bonding activities to boost retention.
- Recruit Across Sports: Look for wrestling, basketball, or swimming athletes who need fall off-season training. Visit with your P.E. teachers for kids they feel would enjoy XC.
- **Engage with the Community** / School Community/Be involved in other sports/Track
- Improve your knowledge, read, attend clinics. Talk to successful coaches.
- Emphasize Team Unity.
- Gradual Mileage Increase: Avoid burnout and injury by increasing mileage gradually. Proper footwear is essential. Know your athletes!!
- Run on gravel or dirt as much as you can. Avoid pavement. Use a mix of long runs, fartleks, progression runs, tempo runs, and race pace work.
- Attend post season meets. Nike Cross...Road Runs. Out of State meets.
- Attend meets around theme parks.....hotsprings.....National Park.
- Start Strides Early: Implement strides on the first day to safely increase speed and improve neuromuscular coordination.
- Weekly Structure: A typical week includes easy runs, a weekly long run, workouts (intervals/tempo), and a rest day.
- Consistency Over Intensity: Emphasize that consistency in summer training leads to better results than intense, early-season workouts.
- Goal Setting: Conduct weekly check-ins with runners to discuss individual goals
- Develop Traditions: Keep it Fun: Even serious runners need to enjoy the experience to stay committed, so balance hard work with fun, engaging activities.
- Run with your kids or bike.
- **Empower Student Leaders:** Identify upperclassmen who embody your values and task them with leading summer runs or mentoring younger athletes.
- Have kids help you recruitment ...discuss with them what to use as selling points
- Encourage Team splits between top 7.

- **Plan in "Pencil"**: Stay flexible. Outline your plan week-by-week and be ready to adjust based on how athletes are responding to the load. Have a reason for every workout and tell the kids the goal for the day.
- Bulletin boards, tons of pictures in the halls and given to families, Facebook. Give a hard copy photo to kids at the end of season.
- Be successful.....Best way to get kids out.



If time permits at the end, I will be asking the coaches to share their favorite XC workout? Write down a few that would work for you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

9. _____

10. _____