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RUN HARD

QUOTES OF THE WEEK:

MONDAY:

"Run hard after what matters most. What matters most is not talent, but character." Coach Mackey

TUESDAY:

"Your character defines who you are by the actions you take." Catherine Pulsifer

WEDNESDAY:

"The best index to a person's character is how he treats people who can't do him any good, and how he treats people who can't fight back." Abigail Van Buren

THURSDAY:

"Better to be a man of character than a man of means." Irish Proverb

FRIDAY:

"Our character is a composite of people we have watched, experiences we have had, but completely relies on the decisions that we make." Scott Schwab

**COACHES**

Focus on winning athletes' character.

**CAPTAINS**

Pair great character with your talent.

**ATHLETES**

Improve character a little at a time.

**FAMILY**

Praise character development.

**RUN HARD**

When you want something really bad, you're willing to run hard to get it. Running hard may look like actual running in practice, or it might look like studying when you'd rather play video games. Running hard means pursuing what matters in your life. Run hard after your passions. Run hard after your talent. But run hardest after what matters most: your character.

Character matters more than talent because character is a talent amplifier. Whatever talent you have is either boosted or lowered by your character. Think about the character traits of hard work and integrity. When you work hard and you do what you say you will do, then you will put in the work required to increase your talent and skill. Your character determines how you perform in practice, which determines how you perform in the game.

Clemson University Head Football Coach Dabo Swinney says, "Better people make better Tigers." Or you might rephrase it, "Championship people win championships." You become a championship person in the same way that you prepare to win a championship game. You take it one rep at a time.

Character reps can be little things like setting an alarm for a certain time and getting up when it goes off instead of hitting the snooze button. Or, they can be big things like telling your friends you don't want to party on the weekend. No matter how big or small, each rep helps to build the character muscle.

Make no mistake: Talent matters. You should run hard for your talent. You should spend time in the weight room and working on technique. Run hard for your talent, so that you can be as talented as you are capable of becoming. But as you run hard after your talent, run even harder after your character.

WEEK 19

RUN HARD FOR COACHES



RUN HARD: FOR COACHES

At Clemson University's famous football program, Head Coach Dabo Swinney says, "Better people make better Tigers." Or you might rephrase it, "Better people make better champions." A champion is someone who not only plays well, but also lives well. And as we've said before, championship people win championships.

But it's important to understand that winning championships is a byproduct of focusing on developing character, not the other way around. Athletics should serve the purpose of instilling strong character; strong character shouldn't just be used to serve the purpose of athletics. It's a subtle shift in priorities that makes a huge difference for the team.

Let's look at two ways that coaches can work to put character first.

Hold everyone to the same standard. If there's a different consequence for the varsity quarterback than there is for a J.V. lineman when they mess up, that shows that the team's talent has outrun its character. But if everyone has to answer to the same standards and faces the same consequences for failing to meet those standards, then that shows that character matters more than winning games.

Teach character explicitly. The weekly 2Words lessons are a great place to start teaching what upstanding character looks like and how student-athletes can develop their character. Character development doesn't just happen as a byproduct of playing a sport. Sports are a vehicle for teaching character, but the teaching part is still important. Have regular discussions with athletes about character and why it matters.

Champions don't just play well, they also live well. If we focus on running hard after character for our team, the championships will take care of themselves.

THIS WEEK, BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR:

- 1. Opportunities to PRIORITIZE character development.** When our priorities are in order, we can better pursue what matters most to us. Take time to consider the priorities of the team and why those priorities are in the order that they are. How are those priorities reflected in your athletic program?
- 2. Opportunities to REFLECT on why character matters.** Think about examples of people you know or have heard of. What makes their character great? What character traits do they represent for you? What does their character allow them to do or be that they couldn't without character? Thinking through these questions helps to solidify the purpose of character development in your sport.
- 3. Opportunities to CHECK IN with athletes.** Discuss character and character reps with athletes often. For example, you might use the worksheet in the more resources section to help students track their intentional character reps for the week. Have small group discussions about why those character reps were chosen and how they help to develop strong character.

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C RUN HARD: FOR CAPTAINS

As a team leader, you're probably one of the more talented members of the team. But talent doesn't immediately make you a great leader. To make a real impact, that talent needs to be paired with even better character.

Talent is easier to measure because you can just look at someone's stats and see how good they are at the game. But character takes a little more effort to measure. We don't generally think about stats for encouragement or service or hard work. Even though those aren't measurements that are built into the game, you can still develop ways to track them. After all, what gets tracked gets improved.

Let's look at three examples of character stats that you can track to make sure your character is as strong as your talent.

Encouragement. Encouraging others is a huge part of being a good leader and good teammate. To turn it into a stat, think about both quantity and quality. For quantity, you might track how many people you encouraged this week. For quality, you could give each name a rating of 1-7 for how your relationship is with that person.

Service. Service is at the heart of servant leadership. Some questions to think about for this character stat are: How much time or resources have you invested in others? How many different ways have you found to serve? How many people have you served this week?

Hard Work. Without hard work, talent is wasted. To track how hard you work, you might start with recording workouts, both time spent and what was done. Think outside of sports, though. How much time or effort do you spend on homework or studying? How do you contribute to your family and home life?

Character stats can help you become a better leader, just like player stats can help you become a better athlete.

/// CAPTAINS' LOG ///**"LEADERS ALWAYS LEAD"**

What are three character traits that you would want to track with stats?

How can you use those statistics to help you become a better leader?

How can improving your character make your talent better?

Why does character matter more than talent?

Think of a leader you admire. What is their character like?

**RUN HARD: FOR ATHLETES**

Often the smallest things make the biggest impact. If you're going to run hard after your character, you've got to focus on the little things. Integrity, perseverance, and caring for others are big monumental things, but they are built over time with little steps.

Let's look at three examples of small character reps that make a big difference over time.

Wake up with one alarm. This character rep helps build integrity, which means doing what you say you will do. It also builds perseverance, which means never giving up until you get it right. This sounds easy, but if you're not used to it, waking up early with just one alarm is really hard. If waking up with one alarm is easy for you, then try an alternate exercise, like going to bed at a certain time that isn't normal for you. Pick something that is difficult and that will benefit your life if you can do it consistently.

Do ten push-ups per day. This is small in comparison to all the other things that you're doing as a student-athlete. But ten push-ups per day is an extra 3,650 push-ups per year. Does that still sound like a small number? If it does, please drop and do that many push-ups now.

Read one page per day. The average book has about 365 pages. Okay, it's actually a range of 200-400 pages. But the point is, you can read one book per year if you read just one page per day. Pick a book that you'll enjoy or that will teach you something. You'll probably find that you read more than one page at a time. But the character development comes from sticking with the daily, consistent action of opening the book and reading at least one page.

Little things matter. As you run hard after character, pay attention to your small actions.

ATHLETE'S EXERCISE:

1. What is something small you want to do that's really difficult for you?
2. How can doing that thing consistently help you to build your character?
3. What are some other examples of character reps that you can do daily or weekly?
4. What is your character like now? What would you like it to be like?
5. What character reps can help you get from where you are to where you want to be?



RUN HARD: FOR FAMILY

When we celebrate character first and talent second, great things happen. Take Clemson University under Head Coach Dabo Swinney. According to Coach Swinney, if a player's character doesn't match up to his talent, that player doesn't get an offer to Clemson. It's easy to see that Clemson football has found success with this mindset.

But developing character is not just about winning games. It's about winning the future. The character of today's teens is going to be incredibly important over the next eighty years. They are going to have an impact on the world, and their character will determine what kind of impact that is.

Let's look at two examples of ways that we can run hard after character as a family.

Watch for character. When we watch our kids play, we want to look for not just great scores, but also great demonstrations of sportsmanship and being a good teammate. It's important to say "I love you. I'm proud of you. I love watching you play." after a game. But how many of us can help going into more detail about what they did well after that? Praise is important, but lead with the praise that marks what you saw of their character during the game.

Make practice matter. What we say after a game is important, but it also matters what we say about practice. Athletes spend a majority of their time practicing and only a small amount of time actually playing in games. How our kids treat their practice can tell us more about their developing character than how they perform in games. Adults are the role models for what strong character looks like.

What we focus on as a family is what our kids will take with them into the future. Sports are a great vehicle for character development, but it only works if we put the character development part first.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

What type of character do you want your family to be known for?

What actions does each member of the family need to take to reach that character goal?

How have you demonstrated strong character this week?

What are some examples of strong character that you have seen in games?

Character amplifies talent. How does your character make your talent better as a sibling, parent, employee, or student?

Captains Worksheet:

Use the worksheet below to track your chosen character stats. For example, if the first character stat is "Number of People Encouraged," you would use tally marks to show how many people you encouraged each week. If the character stat is "Time devoted to service," you would write out the number of minutes or hours served for each week.

CHARACTER STAT	WEEK ONE	WEEK TWO	WEEK THREE

Athletes Worksheet:

Use the worksheet below to track planned and completed character reps for a week. The first row provides an example.

1. Character Trait. Think about 1-3 traits that you want to work on, such as integrity, hard work, grit, or service.
2. Planned Character Rep. For each trait, come up with 1-2 actions that you can take this week to intentionally work on each trait.
3. Date Completed. Write down when you have finished the actions you planned.
4. Notes. Use this space to jot down any thoughts about the character reps. You can use the questions below to help you get started.
 - Was anything particularly difficult about that character rep?
 - What did you learn from it?
 - Is there something you can do to make it easier in the future?
 - How do you feel about your progress?

CHARACTER STAT	Planned Character Rep	Date completed	Notes
Grit, integrity	Getting up at 6am with only one alarm	02/14/23	This was a lot harder than I thought it would be, so it took a couple of tries.