

### PERSPECTIVES ON BEING COACHED

Dear Tim,

I appreciate receiving your newsletters. They are very informative and uplifting. Thanks for inviting me to share some of my perspectives on being coached.

As an Paralympic silver medalist in the long jump in Sydney, Australia; three time all American track and field athlete, two time Olympic Trials qualifier and nine time gold medal winner in the Armed Forces Track and Field competitions, I have learned a few things about how coaches have influenced my life and inspired me.

#### THE VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

John McDonnell, head track coach at University of Arkansas, who has won a combination of 37 national titles, helped me understand the value of each individual in the success of a team.

When I enrolled at the University of Arkansas, I was a hurdler/long jumper. My previous high school track team was like most teams I had seen up to this point — very fragmented. Long jumpers stayed with long jumpers, sprinters with sprinters, throwers with throwers, etc.

Coach McDonnell, a distance coach, recognized that in order to win a national championship, a track team needed more than distance runners hanging out with distance runners.

I remember one summer an alumnus donated some land for the Arkansas track and field team to use. The land, which had some horse paths on it, would be great for the distance runners to work out. However, the trails were very narrow, maybe three feet wide at best.

Coach McDonnell had a brilliant idea to widen the trails to 8 to 10 feet across and put wood chips down for extra padding. I thought this would be a wonderful project for the distance guys since they

were going to use the trails. Coach McDonnell had other plans. He made the entire team go up on those trails with hack saws, chain saws, tractors, hoes and other landscaping equipment. Long jumpers worked beside 5000 meter runners who worked beside pole-vaulters, who worked beside throwers. The work was hard but we accomplished it in four weekends.

*Doing all that work together created strong bonds to reinforce what was already growing.*

At the national championships in Austin, Texas later that year, I noticed that all the other teams were fragmented; we weren't.

When the 10,000 meter race began, I don't think I could find a rival long jumper anywhere in the crowd, but my teammates were all there together. We decided we would encircle the track every 100m and cheer on our guys. Can you imagine having someone yell encouraging words to you every 100m?

#### SUCCESSFUL TEAMS + SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUALS

I believe our success was directly related to John McDonnell's vision of unifying his team and turning it into a true family. He was effective in obtaining the desired results — successful teams of successful individuals.

What I learned from him and other coaches, I have transferred over into my business life. It is now my job to ensure that each member of my team is empowered to do his or her best. Thanks, Tim, for coaching me.

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