





Marshall Moyer

More than a Sport: How High School Athletics Has Impacted My Life

There are many ways to measure the influence and impact that high school athletics has had on my life. A simple way would be to rattle off statistics, such as the 682 miles I ran during the summer of 2010, the 7 minutes per mile I averaged during daily runs, or the number of "Run Forrest Run!" calls I heard from cars passing by. Another way would be to tout my achievements, be it the 2009 State Cross Country Title, or placing 43rd at the 2010 Nike Cross National Meet. I could even emphasize the importance of time management, school involvement, or staying fit and healthy. These methods would all convey a piece of what sports have done for me; however, I feel athletics means much more than times, body fat percentage, and trophies. As a Grayhound at BHS, I have made unforgettable memories, forged fantastic friendships, learned from great coaching, and developed a host of life skills that students often miss out on. Hoisting a state trophy was great, and I certainly cherish that opportunity, but the sense of accomplishment and the look of joy on my coach's face was infinitely more valuable than any piece of hardware that collects dust. I am eternally grateful to God for the undeniable blessings I have received from running.



It is hard to find a place to start when describing what I have learned from competing in high school. Many of the lessons are obvious, such as the importance of persistence, patience, and determination. Call it grit, guts, or "intestinal fortitude", it takes heart to overcome pain and push your body to its limits. In the words of our assistant coach 'Augie' Escobedo, you can accomplish more than you can imagine if you "Do, Dare, and Dream". It may sound cliché, but coming from a man who grew up dirt poor in Mexico, I believe every word. Perhaps the most overlooked aspect of sports is the mentality that accompanies that "dreaming". Jesse Owens summed up this point by saying, "We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort." As grueling as it is, running is more than a test of endurance and strength; it also requires adaptive thinking and strategy. It is important to maintain a realistic view of your goals, but also to have a proper amount of confidence in your abilities. The work ethic, the mental focus, and the honing of talent that cross country teaches are valuable not only in the finishing kick of a 5k, but also in everyday life.



As a captain on the team, it was my responsibility to lead by example, to encourage others to do their best, and yet still keep it fun and worthwhile. Because of the commitment and sacrifice it takes to be a distance runner, I emphasized everyone's importance to the team whether they were varsity or not. Through the close bond we had as Grayhound runners, I made many good friends and was able to teach and inspire many runners. Even more important, I was able to learn and gain inspiration in return. Although everyone competed on a uniquely different level, I was still able to learn from the work ethic and intensity of others. After all, athletics is not just about winning, it's about friendship, respect for others, pushing yourself to the limit, and gaining experience that spills over into every challenge you face in life. To sum it up, good training makes better athletes, but good sportsmanship makes better people.