

REFLECTIONS ON COACH DUANE RAFFIN

When I ran for Raff from 1975-1977, he would tell us that it takes 128 muscles to frown and only 11 to smile. That's 117 wasted muscle contractions. So smile. And he would smile. And as we ran, we would smile.

Today's job is very difficult – to say goodbye to the husband, father, teacher and coach that we loved. To remember and celebrate the life of an extraordinary man, in the space of a few minutes. To do justice in these reflections to him, his life and his contributions to this community. So I spent time over the last few days reading your comments and speaking to teammates about Raff and how to capture his essence. We came up with this:

Raff taught us more than how to run -- he taught us how to live.

I could share a few stories with you about Raff and the glory days, but that is not what defined him. What defined Raff and made him extraordinary were his wisdom, his world view, and his ability to treat everyone in a manner that let them know that they were important. Raff was not only a great coach. He was also a great teacher. He was also a great mentor. And his fondest memories in his long and accomplished career in coaching were not of championships won or great Holly teams: In 1999 following his retirement, coach said: *The best ones are the day-to-day things that happen with the kids, the improvement you see over the years, those kinds of things. I think of all the good things that happened.*"

So today, let's smile and remember Raff for the lessons he imparted not about track or cross country but about life. For the positive lessons we have applied in our academic and professional lives. For the positive lessons we now teach our children and grandchildren. For Raff's Rules of Life -- "Raffisms" we called them:

1. *Leave the World a Better Place Than You Found It.* Raff told me: "*Buck, your job in life is to leave the world a better place than you found it.*" Today, I try to live up to that job in life -- on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis.
2. *Give and demand something extra.* Nothing Coach Raff did related to running was at less than a full 110%. Not 100%. Raff gave and demanded something extra. When I asked him how you could get 110% out of a total of 100%, he said "*Buck. It's like faith. You gotta believe.*" Raff reached out to people, made the first effort, and they responded to him. Many coaches of his stature would have sat back on their accomplishments. That was not what it was about for Raff. It was about the kids, our development, and the positive impact he could have on our lives. That is what made Raff special. That is what made him extraordinary. And that is what allowed him to make his teams so successful.
3. *Preparation, perseverance, and PMA -- Positive Mental Attitude.* We ran 120 miles at summer camp; we ran 5 miles at 5 a.m. every morning after meets; we ran 2 mile warm-ups and 2 mile cool-downs to frame our daily work outs. And Raff would remind us that we worked harder than any other team we ran against. We persevered. Raff's rules of injury were -- if it isn't bleeding, swelling, or broken (which Raff defined as a bone

sticking through the skin) -- work through it. We maintained PMA -- and we smiled as we ran past other runners who were busy exhausting those 117 extra muscles.

4. *If you take care of your business, you can avoid the problems of not doing so.* Raff's response to a hurdler who complained to Raff that he had been elbowed in the league meet: "If you were ahead of him at the first hurdle like you were supposed to be, you would have been elbowing him." At the regional meet the next week, it was the other runner who was complaining.
5. *Find a way to contribute.* I spent my summer before my senior year training and expecting to join the top seven in the varsity cross country races as a senior. It did not work out that way. In a private conversation with me he said "Buck, I don't know whether you are good enough to be in the top seven or whether you think you are good enough. But if you aren't good enough, you had better find a way to contribute to this team." It was a lesson that served me well then. It is a lesson that continues to serve me well today: Find a way to contribute, find a role to help the team, and play it well.
6. *Hard work, discipline and mental toughness lead to positive results.* Jeff Lewis wanted to play football, but he knew that to be his best in track, he had to run cross country. As Jeff says now:

Although Raff never told me what to do, he skillfully armed me with the facts that eventually lead me to make the very difficult decision to quit football and run cross country as a junior. This was fateful. By my senior year, I still thought everybody else was better, but he had convinced me that I worked harder and was mentally tougher than the competition. This was my mental advantage that resulted in a high level of success. I believe every kid that ran for Raff left Holly convinced hard work, discipline and mental toughness lead to positive results.

7. *There are no shortcuts and no excuses.* Not even the stars got any quarter from Raff compared to the rest of us. In that 1977 Cross Country season, Jeff was leading the pack with two opposing runners in hot pursuit in a critical dual meet at Ainsworth. The course was not clearly marked and Jeff missed a turn. He heard the yells but could not stop until running 30 yards down the wrong path. With a half mile to go and 60 yards lost as the other runners continued in a different direction, Jeff feared the wrath of Raff; he stormed the last half mile in under 2:00, won the race, and may have tied the school record for three miles at 15:20. Raff declined to give him the record. "Short course," he said with a wry smile. There were no shortcuts and no short courses with Coach Raff. Raff also had a list of prohibited excuses, he provided them to us. The list was exhaustive. The message was clear. There were no acceptable excuses.
8. *Set goals and work toward achieving them.* At the start of the season, every single person documented their goals and was expected to work toward those goals. Perhaps the best example was the way Raff dealt with Mark Corliss. Mark had significant physical limitations, thought he could not run, but wanted to be team manager. Raff told Mark that before he could be team manager, he had to compete to understand what it meant to run

at Holly. Mark was a distant last place in every race. And Raff would chase him down the back stretch yelling at him to run faster – just like he treated everyone else. Mark improved dramatically, met the goals he set, and inspired everyone on the team. More important than gaining the respect of the team, however, was that Mark learned something about himself and his abilities. He became a successful teacher and highly respected track coach, just like his mentor, Coach Raffin. Raff helped Mark see his talents in a way that helped Mark develop the confidence and toughness to succeed. He would not let Mark limit himself. And everyone watched and learned.

9. *Include Everyone.* Raff gave us booklets at the beginning of every year reciting the history and tradition of Holly Cross Country and Track; a roster of best times and achievements of Holly Harriers; a list of each runner on the team and their personal achievements and best times. Raff made it clear that we were part of something bigger than ourselves; we should aspire to be like the great Holly runners of the past; and that we must commit to the tradition of Holly track and cross country. With that tradition came high expectations. Raff's required us to set our own personal goals for the year. Raff prepared weekly reports to monitor our progress. The report listed the score of the meet, every runner's time, including splits for distance races. Asterisks denoted runners' personal best times, letting the team know of each runner's achievements, and Raff's famous quotations sprinkled in the report as a reminder of accomplishments and goals for the future. "Good job;" "gutsy performance" and everyone's favorite "personal best -- proud of you." Everyone was included. From the fastest to the slowest -- accomplishments were equally celebrated. Because each individual's achievement reminded everyone on the team that achievement was not only possible, it was attainable.

10. *Let us hope we have gained, in 3 months, a lifetime of knowledge about ourselves.* Raff wrote this to us after the 1977 State Championship Cross Country Season. More important than the awards and honors and even the memories, were the life lessons we learned through our efforts about ourselves.

We live by these rules now without thinking because they have become second nature. Raff did not just teach us, he molded us. And in molding us he shaped our future and prepared us for success in life.

Coach Raff's legacy will live on in these lessons that we now share with our children and grandchildren. Running for Raff, and learning from him, was one of the finest things that ever happened to us. On behalf of all the Holly runners, thanks Coach, and thanks to his loving wife Jeanne, and his loving children Christina, Diann, Paul, and Michael for sharing him with us.

Raff is now gone physically, but he lives on in spirit, in each of us. Preparation, determination, expectation. Positive Mental Attitude. If there's a will, there's a way. Find a way to contribute. Through us, he lives, in a way that humbles the undertakings of most men. I hope we did you justice Coach. It was a team effort.

John Buckley, Larry Davidson, Jeff Lewis, Tom Flanigan
April 2, 2010