

## Welcome and Opening Remarks

- I. Good evening. It is great to see that so many people came tonight to honor Coach Raffin and re-connect with old friends and teammates.

My name is Tom Flanigan and I am a graduate of the Class of 1977.

As you can see from the program, we are going to start out with Reflections on Raff through the years with a few words from me and then comments from other former athletes starting with the late 1960's era.

- II. I spent a lot of time around Coach Raffin because I ran cross-country for four years and ran track for four years as well. I know from talking to others who also had Raff as a coach that I am part of a large group of people who consider Raff to be someone who not only influenced their lives, but who did so in a big way.

Some of you have heard me say that, other than my parents, Coach Raffin has made the greatest impact on my life. And, as the years go on, the more I fully appreciate that.

The reason Raff was so influential in my life is because I learned values, in the context of sports that have helped me achieve goals that I have set for myself. The achievement of these goals has brought me a sense of accomplishment, fulfillment and additional happiness.

The values I learned from Raff included:

- The value of hard work.
- The value of perseverance.
- And, the value of maintaining a positive mental attitude.

At first blush, these may sound trite or like they are not really important because we hear about them frequently.

But, when I think of my life experiences, I realize how important these values have been to me.

I also have learned that these values benefited me during both challenging times and successful times. In times of success, these values took me to the next plateau and allowed me to continue to achieve at a higher level.

III. I was fortunate to have spent a few hours visiting Raff just two days before he passed away. I told Mrs. Raffin afterward that, despite being 50 years old now, I felt like Raff and I took on our roles of coach and student-athlete again.

And because of that, I wanted to continue to learn from him. So, during that visit, I asked Raff, "What were the keys to your success?"

His answer surprised me. He simply said, "I believed in people."

The reason I was surprised was because I thought he would say something like this, "My success was a result of:

- My work hard and had strong work ethic; or
- my passion for what I did along with my dedication and willingness to go the extra mile (so to speak) and doing things others did not do; or
- the willingness to take the time to prepare; or
- my ability to motivate people, and to the fact that I cared about everyone on the team, not just the stars and the talented ones.

Of course, we all know those qualities were true of Raff and were keys to his success.

But, in his mind, the biggest key was that he believed in people.

And, as I have thought more about it, I realize how powerful this is.

Most of us often need someone who we respect to tell us they believe in us before we can believe in ourselves and develop our confidence. And, I think that is even more true of kids who are 14-18 years old, during their formative years.

I have read that kids that age (or should I say, young adults) are looking for role models and mentors. And even though parents play a major part as role models for their kids, teenagers often are looking for others as well—it can be a teacher, a coach, an aunt or an uncle, a friend of a parent, or a neighbor.

For me, it was Coach Raffin. He was a role model for me and I am very grateful for the values I learned from him.

- IV. What great reflections on Raff through the years. Our next speaker is someone who did not have Raff as a coach, but as an English teacher and he worked with him at the Holly Herald newspaper. I think of Raff as a coach, but I have to be reminded that he had a day job, too. He taught high school English—Greek Mythology and English Literature. In response to invitations to the event tonight, we received a lot of emails from people who expressed their regrets for not being able to make it tonight, and they included comments about Raff. I would like to share two of these comments with you. One was Mr. Elmer Rose, who taught with Raff for about 20 years. Mr. Rose wrote, “Because Raff was such a great coach, people tend not to focus on what a great classroom teacher he was, too. He taught English courses that were required courses that were needed in order to graduate. And he did an excellent job teaching these important courses.” Tom Darnton, class of 1965, who is a lawyer living in Ann Arbor, wrote, “Of all the teachers I had in high school, Coach Raffin is the one whose guidance most shaped my adult life, both in the classroom and on the track. It was in his 11<sup>th</sup> grade English class that I first learned to read a passage, and then write thoughtfully about what I read. I am currently working on a writing project and this project is a direct extension of what I learned from him and I’m still doing it 45 years later.”

V. Closing Remarks and the Coach Raffin Scholarship Fund –

I have a gift I would like to give to each speaker. It is a book entitled Winning Combinations by Pat Williams, GM of the Orlando Magic. He collected advice from over 1,500 coaches and then compiled their keys to success. Twenty-one keys emerged over and over and he writes about them. I know that Raff would have liked this book and would be happy for each of you to read it.

In closing, I would like to say a few words about Duane Raffin’s wife, Jeanne Raffin.

I recently read Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell. It is a book about success. One of the premises of the book is that “no one achieves success alone—no one does it alone”.

Raff did not do it alone either. I recently heard Mr. Raffin’s daughter, Chris, say this about her mother, “My Mom was such a quiet strength behind my dad.”

As we have honored Duane tonight, we are honoring Jeanne, too. Thank you Mrs. Raffin.

In closing, I will share some information with you about the Coach Raffin Scholarship Fund.

Raff put much emphasis on having the letters “PR” next to your name on the result sheets he prepared for every meet. "PR" stood for personal record. That means you did better than you ever had before. You improved.

The concept of continually improving is why we established the Coach Raffin Scholarship Fund. We wanted to honor Coach Raffin and the values that he taught us. This scholarship will help students improve themselves by continuing their education.

- The scholarship fund is an endowed fund established through the Community Foundation of Greater Flint. Because it is an endowed fund, it will be awarded annually forever.

- The recipient must be a graduating senior of Holly High School who was a member of the cross-country or track and field team for at least one year;
- must have been accepted to a college, university, or technical school;
- and embody the values instilled by Coach Raffin—hard work, perseverance, and maintaining a positive mental attitude.
- Our goal is to award the first scholarship next year in the minimum amount of \$1,000.
- In order to meet that goal, the endowment fund must be increased to \$50,000.
- Where are we now? The fund was started in 2008 by five establishing donors—John Buckley, Roger Coleman, Jeff Lewis, Bill Ballard and me-- who contributed a total of \$10,000.
- Shortly after that, a donor made a very generous donation of \$5,000 in the name of the 1978 boys' state championship cross-country team.
- The fund has recently grown to about \$23,000 due largely to the memorial donations made in the last two months. As a testament to Coach Raffin, this is the largest amount in memorial gifts ever received by the Community Foundation.
- There are many donors in attendance tonight and we thank you for your donations.
- But we still have a ways to go to reach our goal. Any gift, no matter what size, will help us get there.
- One former athlete has pledged a particular amount to be charged to his credit card every month for two years.
- To me, one of the most exciting things about this scholarship fund is that it is an endowed fund. It will go on forever. Which means that every single year,

students who want to apply for the scholarship will strive throughout their high school years to embody the values that we learned from Raff. And through those students, and the people that they influence, the lessons learned from Raff will go on forever.

- Here are two questions for each of you. Did Raff have a positive influence in your life, or in the life of someone you know? Would you like to honor Raff's legacy and help future Holy High School student-athletes, improve themselves through continuing their education? If you would, we encourage you to make a contribution.

Two final notes:

1. Consider doing what the donor did for the 1978 cross-country state championship team, and make a pledge on behalf of your team and get your teammates to join in with you.
2. We have a matching gift donor who will match dollar for dollar every pledge made tonight up to \$5,000. So let's make this donor pay. By receiving \$5,000 of pledges tonight, we can raise \$10,000 and get closer to our goal.

Two Community Foundation of Greater Flint representatives, Mary Jo Herbig and Sandra Murphy, will have a table set up in the Commons area during the coffee and dessert portion of the program, which is in about 2 minutes, and you will be able to give online with a credit card or you can donate with checks or cash.

Thanks for coming tonight and it is now time to go into the Commons and have dessert and coffee and if you would like to do so, make your pledges and donations.

Thank You.