

Philosophy:

I believe that running is a journey that should be shared and enjoyed along each step of the way. By coaching, I create a partnership with each individual athlete in which we get to know the individual's needs and ways in which we can find the most success in helping the athlete achieve his or her goal(s) through training. We cannot be successful without building trust in one another, and that begins with our daily honest communications as to how the athlete is performing in running and how daily life may be affecting their run for the day, week, or beyond. I believe in a comprehensive approach to training in which we have to consider the athlete's history with training (successes & failures), strengths & weaknesses in training and how we can capitalize on the strengths and strengthen the weaknesses and keep a long-term view for the athlete's longevity and health in the sport. My goal for each athlete is to keep them healthy and enjoying the sport in route to helping them build stamina & endurance, while getting faster & stronger.

Why coach?

Running has provided so much to me. I've learned so much over the past 34 years. It's my turn to give back and share that knowledge. While running can be a selfish endeavor, I want to be selfless and be a part of other runners' journeys. I always hear, you should do what you love, and I love both running and coaching. It fulfills me and makes me feel alive. With running comes both success and failure unfortunately. While I revel in an athlete's success, I also wallow in their failures. However, it is in those failures that I take the opportunity to assess and learn what could I have done better to help this athlete succeed in the future. Learning never stops, as our sport continues to change, I have chosen to continue to evolve as a coach. To learn how technology, physiology, and training methods are changing and enhancing our sport. My interests lie helping my athlete's achieve their fullest potential. No two athlete's are the same. Thus, no two individuals should be trained in the same manner. While two people may train for the same event (and eventually have similar results), the training to get them there will look similar and different at the same time. That's a confusing statement, but as with most things in life, the secret lies in the details. While mileage/volume may look similar, it's how one completes the runs and what workouts the individual does, how these workouts are analyzed, and where the individual goes from there. Do they continue to build? Do they need to recover? Do they need a new stimulus? These are the questions I must communicate with the athlete. And therein lies the key; communication.

Communication:

My parents taught me from an early age that honesty is the best policy, and some have mistaken this for me being direct. While I may not sugar coat my analysis or provide constant positive feedback, my words are valuable to my athletes. I have to be honest in

what I see in order for the runner to reach their goals. If my feedback seems direct, it's because I mean to make a point and give the athlete an important takeaway to learn and develop their skills and understanding of training. While my communication is important, it is a two-way street. One in which the individual's feedback and comments are vital for a successful outcome in the goal. I need the runner to be completely honest in their comments. To tell me exactly how they feel, and any reasons why they believe they had that outcome. I need the bigger picture. What is going on outside of the activity? How are their stress levels, how are they sleeping, eating, & hydrating? The more details they can provide, the easier it is to coach. I believe communication should be consistent and often. I check in on my athlete's on a daily basis and make sure no changes are needed and provide feedback on their runs. Which brings me to the topic of analysis.

Analysis:

While technology continues to change our world, our ability to use it to better help the people we work with has gotten exponentially better. When I first started coaching 24 years ago, it was very difficult to track an athlete's performance and metrics from their activity. Assessing a run was very subjective and based mostly if not entirely on the athlete's comments. As mentioned, communication is vital to a coach-athlete relationship, so that feedback continues to be a huge part of analysis. What has come into play is the ability to view an athlete's metric for each activity and receive other feedback from the platform of the coach's choice. For example, I use an online tool called TrainingPeaks. TrainingPeaks has its own tools to help analyze a run and allows me to provide deeper feedback that will permit the athlete to train more in line with the programming. There are so many tools that coaches can use, and I believe not using them and providing honest analysis and feedback to the athlete is doing the individual a disservice. As when used properly, the analysis and feedback (on both ends) will help with better programming & scheduling.

Programming & Scheduling:

Not to be understated, these two pieces of coaching are obviously a major portion of coaching. I left it till now to show that coaching is not solely about writing a schedule and leaving an individual to their own devices. I won't say that's not coaching. What I will say is that I would not feel fulfilled as a coach if that's all I did. Forgive me if it's cliché, but creating a schedule should be an art. Each day in the schedule should have intention and purpose. There is no such thing as junk miles. Each second provides the body with some sort of stimulus or adaptation that will help the athlete grow and improve. It's my job to explain that intention to the runners. I do this through pre & post activity comments, phone calls, emails, and Zoom Calls (both individual & as a collective team). I am a student and a teacher of this sport. While I continue to learn, I

also continue to teach what I've learned. This comes through in my programming. I believe we cannot fully grasp concepts without either experiencing it for ourselves or teaching it to others. While trying things in my own running, I can provide details to my runners as to what to expect both during and after an activity. I don't like to give my athletes tasks that I myself have not experienced. While I cannot experience everything, I try to find others (coaches or athletes) that have. This allows me to discuss with them their experiences and gain knowledge from them. We call this growth.

Growth:

This podcast has been an activity in my own growth. At the end of each year, I have phone calls with each of my athletes. I send them a year end evaluation form to fill out and return that shapes our discussion. I want to hear from them how they viewed their year and their experience with me. How did I do? I always tell my athletes that I try to hold them accountable, but they need to hold me accountable as well. Make sure that I'm doing my part and meeting their expectations as a coach. It can be hard to hear about weaknesses, flaws, and failures. However, in facing them, acknowledging them, and working on improving, I find growth. This year alone has changed my views on many training principles. Perhaps more than any other year. As I continue to read articles, listen to podcasts, attend seminars, and gain continuing education certifications, I grow and implement these changes all while communicating these to my athletes and how I hope to benefit the runner. I like to revisit the aforementioned philosophy each year as well. To make sure it is still inline with my values and principles. As in running, I strive for improvement in coaching. I measure those improvements by the successes and failures of my runners.

What does the future of my coaching look like?

I will treat each runner as equally important in my eyes. To program each runner individually and with the same care and deliberate intention of seeing them improve. My job will be to recognize where they can make the most gains and growth from building on the past year. To recognize mistakes I made in training and making the corrections that will build them up in both fitness and confidence. Recognizing that physical fitness is only a piece of the training process. Preparing an athlete mentally is just as important. We talk about the mental aspects of running and racing, but I need to be more consistent with this and check in with my athletes over the course of the training block. Nutrition and hydration is also evolving. While not my area of expertise, we (the runner and I) need to make sure we're trying to practice this area with new guidelines and intention of making sure we do what's best on race day.

I look forward to the year ahead! To take myself out of my comfort zone with what has worked in the past and put in the extra work to ramp up my coaching for the betterment

of the runners success. To be open to new ideas and recognizing that if they don't work, that's not necessarily a failure, but a way to grow and evolve. May you also continue to grow and find success in your own lives and in running!

-Coach Saft