

"Helping Track and Field Athletes Achieve with *Performance Goals*"

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If there is one thing I learned by accident, it's that kids today are great at writing goals, but the goals they write, are **not** the ones that will help them truly achieve. Ask any trackster where they plan to be in 15 years and you'll get an answer. Ask them how they **plan** to get there and you probably get a "deer in headlights look." "You can have the will to be great, but you must have the will to **prepare** to be great."



Kids are great **outcome goal** writers. They can outcome goals all day. For example, "I will run 21.8 and win the state championship." Unfortunately, we have no control over outcome goals. Outcome goals not achieved can cause undue stress and doubt on the behalf of the athlete. We **can't** control the weather, sickness, and competition. We can however control the daily and weekly items that will help the athlete achieve the 21.8 and be set up to win or be personally successful, by focusing on **Performance Goals**.

Performance Goals are the building blocks for success. Well crafted Performance goals, help the athlete build real, positive self-image. If there was one variable I see in the many great

athletes I've worked with, it's that these athletes are great at focusing on performance goals. These are the daily and weekly steps to achieving the outcome goal. Unfortunately kids can get lost with the outcome goal alone and never look at the performance goals as the real key to success. Performance goals help the athlete set appropriate/attainable goals for each meet as well as practices. If they have a certain time they hope to run and the weather goes haywire, they always have the performance goals to focus on. Performance goal driven athletes talk about their mechanics, sleep, nutrition, mental focus as compared to outcome driven athletes who are fixated on a time, height or distance. When athletes fail to hit outcome goals they set, they begin to question themselves and the coach. A spiraling down of self-doubt begins and the athlete and coach relationship could potentially breakdown. This happens far less when athletes focus on performance goals.

PERFORMANCE GOALS

Athletes and coaches should make sure that the goals written, most especially the outcome goals, are shared only with the inner circle of the athlete, those who are supportive and close to the athlete. Sharing with others outside their inner circle could sabotage or negatively impact the athlete's pursuits and will likely be counterproductive to the athlete's success. These folks can cause undue stress to the athlete.

It's also very important that the **coach** establish performance goals for him or herself. This will aid in the prevention of coaching burnout that we are witnessing more and more of. Coaching burnout and fatigue are becoming more and more common as parental expectations rise, year around coaching expectations, the illusive college scholarships that every kid supposedly deserves, and many expectations completely unrealistic for both the coach and the athlete to achieve. Well thought out performance goals will help the coach protect themselves with continual self-evaluation.

So what are some of the performance goals the student/athlete can monitor.

1. What was the workout time? It's important to see the time devoted to practice. Kids who choose to also get a job need to realize that they could be eating up all of the down time when they also work. Every successful person needs downtime.
2. What is the athlete taking in nutritionally? Do they put the same quality of fuel into their body that they put into their car's.

3. Are they taking in the proper amount of fluid? 1/2 your body weight in ounces of water is needed each day to function properly, then you stress/sweat the body with training so more is needed.



4. Do they monitor and chart their sleep patterns? Is the sleep consistent? 8 to 9 hours is needed. Is the get up time and go to bed time with 30 minutes each day?

5. Are they aware of a proper warm-up and warm-down? Many athletes warm up but fail to warm down. The body needs a shut down mechanism so rest and recovery can begin.

6. What was the quality of their workout? Practice only makes champions when one practices like a champion. This includes working on proper mechanics in all the events they participate in. When the athlete begins to focus more on technique than outcome, you are on your way to developing a champion.

7. When do they engage their mind in practice and meets? Is it when they arrive for meets and practices or are they mentally preparing well ahead of time? With some many distractions today, it critical the athlete learn when to engage their mind and when to turn it off for rest.

8. There are 5 major areas of performance monitoring that must be addressed. They are vision, focus, discipline, persistence and commitment. These 5 areas are essential characteristics of a track and field champion.

*Do they have **vision** to see and plan ahead and see the connection between today and tomorrow.

*Are they **focused**. Focused on the track and in the classroom. This is the one area, that really separates out a champion from the rest. With schools now hit with multiple schedules, (advisory schedule, assembly schedule, HSPE prep or the latest name for the WASL, regular schedule, late start and early release) there is never a more important time to work on focusing. This area will require a daily effort. The world is only becoming more fast paced.

*Do they have **self-discipline**. "Discipline yourself so others don't have to."

*Are they **persistent** and have that "don't give up" or "give in attitude."

*Are they **committed**. Committed to team, school, community, family.

9. Meet performance with an emphasis on performance over outcome.

10. Meet readiness. Were you prepared for all aspects of the meet. Warm-up, hydration, uniform, spikes, meet snack, plan for the unexpected, etc...

A great tool to help athletes set performance goals are daily monitor logs. Whether it be charting time spent or grading themselves A, B, C, D, or F, this tool is quite helpful in guiding them toward outcome success. Coaches can insert whatever performance goal they want the athlete to focus on. Here is an example of one Daily Monitor Chart I specifically designed for one elite athlete I'm working with.

DAILY MONITOR CHART: ATHLETICS							
WEEK OF: _____							
	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WORKOUT (TIME) (Time you began and time you ended)							
QUALITY OF DIET FOR THE DAY (A-F)							
FLUID INTAKE FOR THE DAY (A-F) (Did you bring fluid to practice?) Y/N							
NUMBER OF MEALS CONSUMED (#)							
TIME TO BED/TIME UP							
HOURS OF SLEEP							
QUALITY OF SLEEP (A-F)							
NAP (YES OR NO)							
TIME SPENT WARMING UP							
TIME SPENT WARMING DOWN							
QUALITY OF WORKOUT (A-F)							
CONCENTRATION LEVEL (A-F)							
MOTIVATION TO TRAIN (A-F)							
TIME YOU BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT PRACTICE?							

LONG RANGE VISION (A-F)							
DISCIPLINE FOR THE DAY (A-F)							
COMMITMENT FOR THE DAY (A-F)							
FOCUS FOR THE DAY (A-F)							
PERSISTENCE FOR THE DAY (A-F) (Did you finish strong on everything?)							
MEET PERFORMANCE (A-F)							
MEET READINESS (A-F)							

Setting athletes on a path to success requires some well thought out goal setting. With the right performance goal setting, your athletes will be on the right path to success, achieving those outcome goals.