

# A Recipe for Achieving Success

*Presented by Head XC-T&F Coach Ron Knapp, Conard HS, at The Running Academy Cross Country Camp, August 20, 2021*

One of the most frequent questions I have been asked by coaches as well as athletes over the past several seasons is what makes one runner better than another runner. Most frequently, this has been in reference to Gavin Sherry but more recently it is about his brother Callum, who has risen to be one of the best in the state and region. My answer usually starts with *“it is easier to answer than to accomplish”* and ends with *“do you have a few minutes while I explain my recipe?”*

Like any good chef preparing for an event, the keys to a satisfying and tasty meal are to trust the recipe. But like any experienced chef, the savvy coach will alter the recipe to account for the differences in the athletes, the opposition and the general environment for training and competition.

One of the several things I’ve learned is that every athlete has brought their own ingredients providing me with a learning experience that has made me a more successful coach.

The analogy of chef and coach ends with the premise that there is no ideal mixture of ingredients as well as no precise amount of how much is needed for you to succeed. You’ll just have to start and smartly find your own recipe through trial and error.

My recipe developed over a few decades and refined the past few years contains the following ingredients that can help you overcome obstacles so that you can achieve success.

# **R-E-C-I-P-E for a Successful XC Season**

## **Risk Of Finding Your Limits**

Your fear of failure is linked directly to risking running outside your comfort zone. The fear of finding out if you can run faster is correlated to finding your new limit, whether it is simply measured in time or distance.

One of the largest impediments to achieving success is your brain always telling you that enough is enough, just stop because it hurts too much, you've reached your limit.

All it takes to push yourself faster than last time is to train yourself to be as strong mentally as you are physically, that the distance and speed only can be overcome with the risk of finding your next limit, first in practice and then in your next race.

## **Effort To Communicate**

One of the most difficult aspects of coaching is dispelling the notion that a coach is a mind-reader. One of your largest responsibilities as an athlete is to make the effort to communicate (not complain) to your coach about your daily status. By providing your coach with helpful feedback you are building a bond of trust that allows both of you to succeed.

Your effort is also needed to openly communicate with your teammates to provide encouragement, feedback and/or sharing of the daily experience. You will gain from that strength in numbers since you are not alone in your season.

## **Commitment To Your Goals**

Another of those intangibles that contributes to your success is having the heart to commit to your goals, whether it is in practice, competition, or life in general. One of the unique opportunities that cross country offers you is to make a commitment as an individual as well as a teammate.

Your goals will need your full attention required to perform tasks and deal with situations that are unique to our sport. You should vow to continue to improve each day as an individual as well as a teammate.

You will need to find a balance since you have a finite amount of energy to use each day. Your success is dependent on keeping a balance of managing your energy for activities at school, athletics, and home. A balance required for your mental health is just as important to avoid stress that affects you physically.

## Identify Obstacles To Success

Quite often the path to success is littered by obstacles of one type or another that must first be identified before they can be removed.

One of the techniques is to clearly define the result not being achieved by asking “Why aren’t you making the progress that you really want to make?”

Resolving the answer to the question includes identifying the obstacles by asking “What is getting in the way making my progress?” You can also prioritize those obstacles by determining which ones you have control over, and which ones are most important. The final steps include answering what you can do to solve it that includes actions you can take.

## Patience To Achieve Improvements

One of the many obstacles seen in athletes is a lack of patience in making perceived progress toward their goals. After asking why you aren’t making the perceived progress that you really want to make you should look to your personal log where your levels of improvement can be more noticeable in your recorded training and race results log. Logging can also include eating and sleep habits that provide valuable insight over the longer term.

Successful athletes have learned to realize that the sport of long-distance running is a physiological cumulation of effort over a period where the gains are not immediately seen like a skill sport. They also recognize that long-distance running is a life-time sport that has long term benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

## Enjoying The Journey

The final ingredient may be the most critical in terms of success in that whatever your reasons are for running one of them should be for your personal enjoyment. The most successful athletes are those who truly enjoy being on a journey that running and competing provides them.

Your training and competition should provide you with a sense of fun, whether it’s fun to compete, to train, to be with others on a team with similar goals. You will perform better if you enjoy yourself, your running should not be work or having to do it for the sake of doing it.

# Group Exercise:

## Lifting The Athlete's Accountability

*A group exercise to help athletes define how to make progress in achieving their goals.*

*Works in smaller groups of 6-10 but can be modified for larger groups.*

### **1. Asking everyone in general to define why they have not reached their result/goal by**

- **FIRST:** sharing their result/goal
- **SECOND:** what is one of the reasons why you are making progress you want to make?

### **2. Coach (LIFT) them to determine a path to resolve their questions:**

- **Listen to their Obstacles:**  
What else is getting in the way of you making progress?
- **Identify Obstacles they can influence:**  
Which of these obstacles do your MOST need to overcome and why?
- **Facilitate with the solve it question:**  
What can you start to do to resolve it?
- **Test for movement:**  
What action(s) are you going to take?