

Preparing for the Unpredictable: Developing Your Athlete's Race Day Toolbox



Introduction

- Delaware > Elizabethtown College - Lancaster, PA
- Volunteer Coach -> Assistant Coach
- Quit teaching -> Associate Head Coach
- Relocated to Vacaville, CA > Helped at Davis High
- San Francisco State University
- UC Davis



Why I coach?

- Give back to the sport and community
- What running teaches young adults



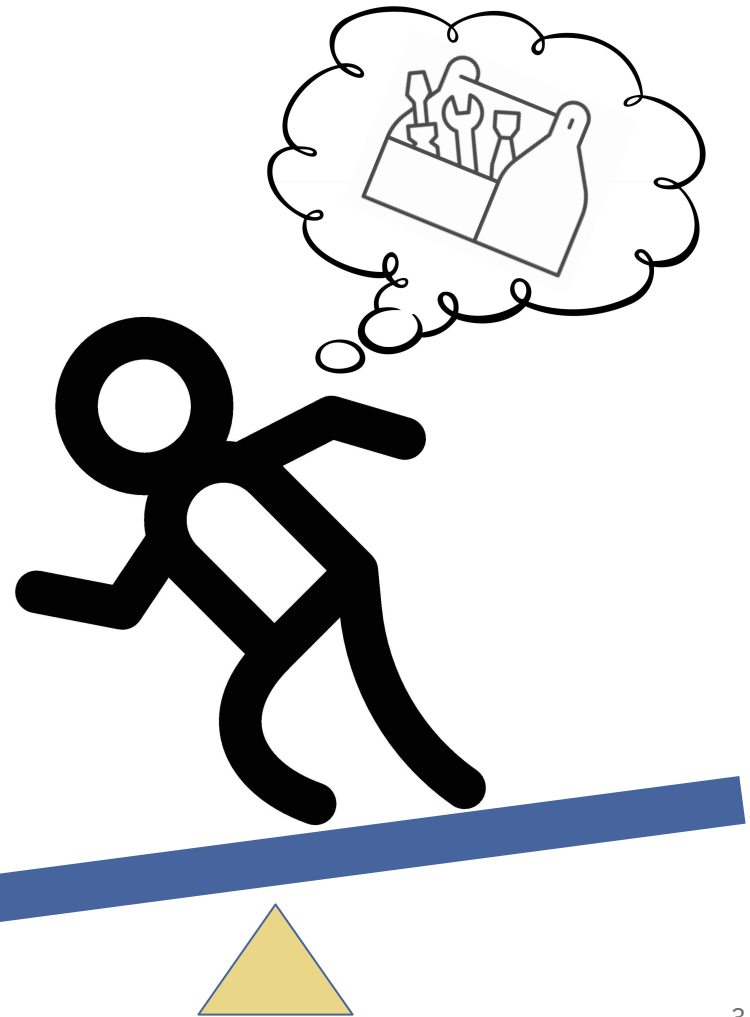
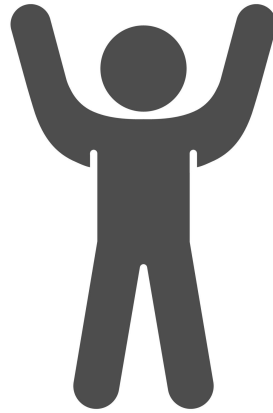
Outline

▶ Coaching Strategy

▶ The Toolbox

▶ The Athlete

▶ The Balance



Coaching Strategy

➤ **Your Why**

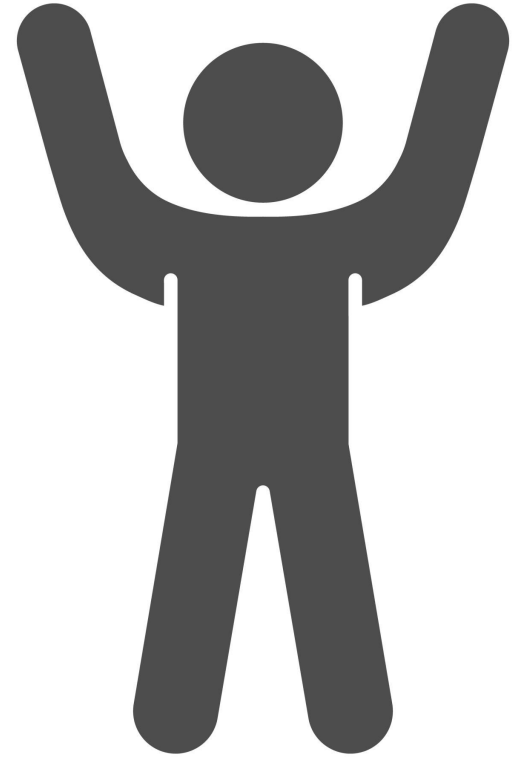
- Where did you come from? What do you know?
- What makes you the coach that you are today?

➤ **Your Goals**

- Driven by coaching philosophy
- Driven by outside influence (program, admin, etc.)

➤ **Who are you coaching?**

- Who they are, why they're here



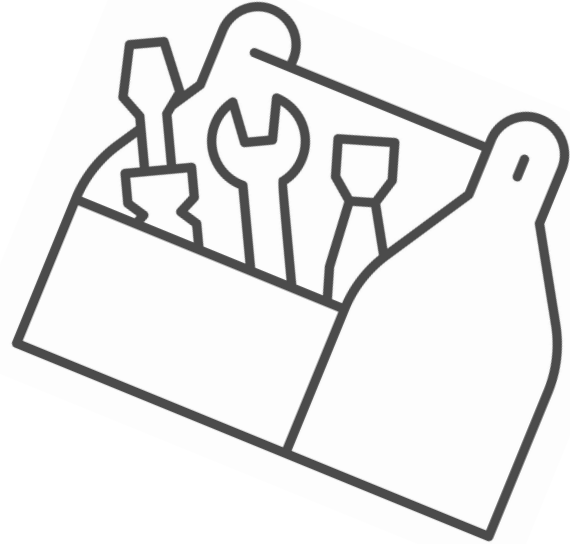
The Toolbox

➤ **How do we build this toolbox?**

- Your time as an athlete
- Other coaches you've learned from
- Clinics, conferences, conversations

➤ **How do we share it?**

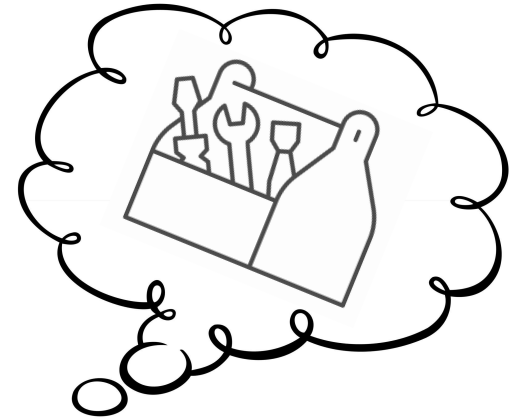
- Practice early and often, plan it out
- Don't throw strategies at athletes on the line



The Toolbox

➤ “Pre-Race” Strategies

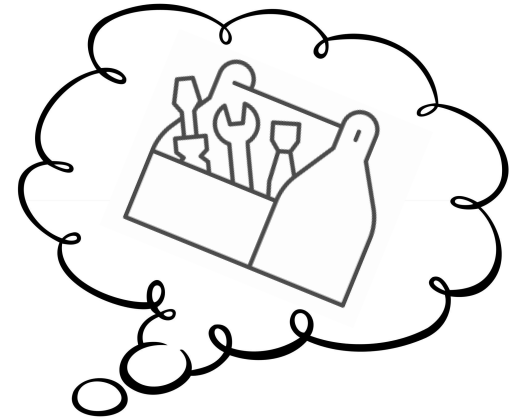
- **Goal Setting:** SMART goals, process and progress
 - Time goals for XC...
- **Course Visualization:** write a great narrative
 - Great for repeat courses, championships, integrating leadership in older runners
- **Hill Training:** 5 hard strides at the top
 - Give them the opportunity to feel how to confidently crest a hill



The Toolbox

➤ “Race” Strategies

- **Get rid of the watch:** especially XC season
 - Strava comparison and racing the clock
- **Pace-changing workouts:** turn the knob vs rev the engine
 - 1 mile continuous: 200 float, 200 mile
 - 1k-1200m: tempo, kick / 800: moderate 400, float 200, kick 200
- **Pack Running:** use their training groups to their strengths



The Toolbox

➤ “Race” Strategies

● Looking past:

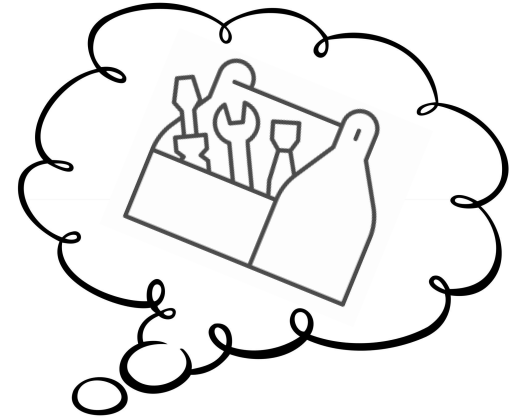
- the person in front of the person in front of you

● Counting Steps:

- see if you’re making up or losing ground

● Internal vs. External Cues:

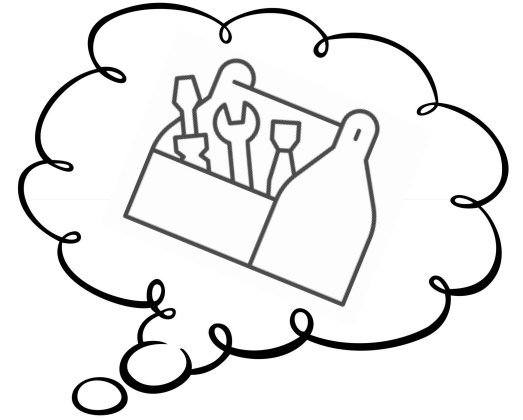
- Drive your knees vs Knees to the sky
- Drive your knees vs Strike the ground harder



The Toolbox

➤ **Toolbox for the unexpected**

- Help them learn that we can only control what WE can control
- Not the terrain, weather, other runners
- Adaptability and confidence = race knowledge



The Athlete

➤ Who are we coaching?

- **New athletes:**

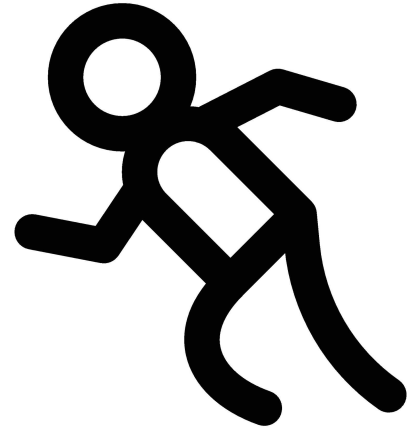
- “Coach told me to run fast so I ran fast”

- **When that doesn't work ...**

- Comparisons, regressions, loss of confidence

- **Do not “Throw it at the wall and see what sticks”**

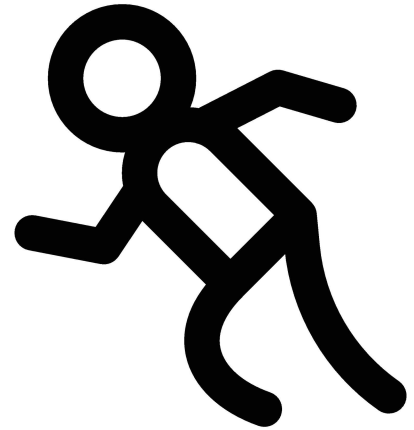
- Race knowledge is developmental - wide range
- Cater to what works for them (and teach them it's okay if it doesn't)



The Athlete

➤ Team Culture

- **Team-oriented intrinsic motivation:**
 - “Coach wants this out of me” vs “Let’s accomplish this team goal together”
 - Ego running / Workout warriors
- **Large Team Dynamics:**
 - Varsity group - developed, specific; leadership opportunities
 - Training groups - specific goals to support specific types of athletes

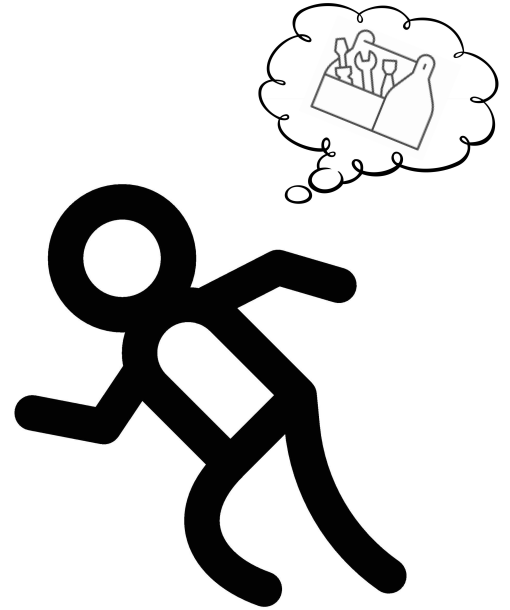


The Balance

➤ How do we coach this?

● **Self-Determination Theory:**

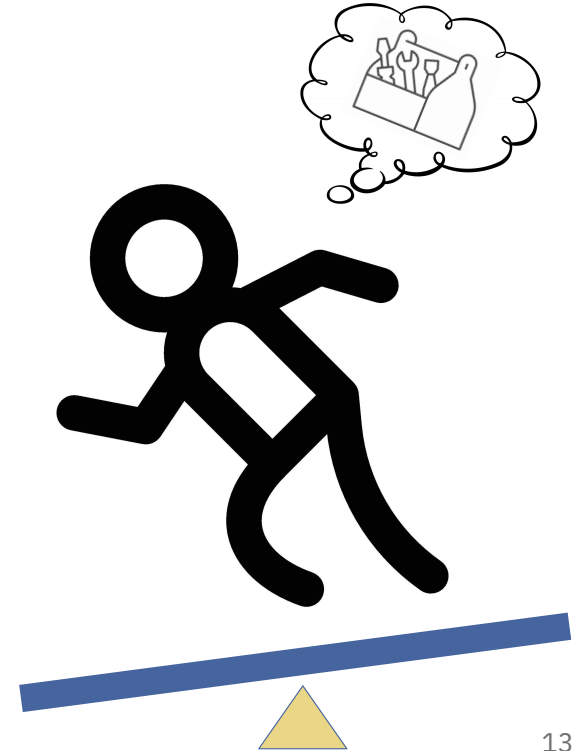
- autonomy, competence, relatedness
- Develop autonomy, authority, and confidence that they are working WITH you, not running FOR you
- Ask questions, tell stories
- Race plans are conversations, not answers or commands



The Balance

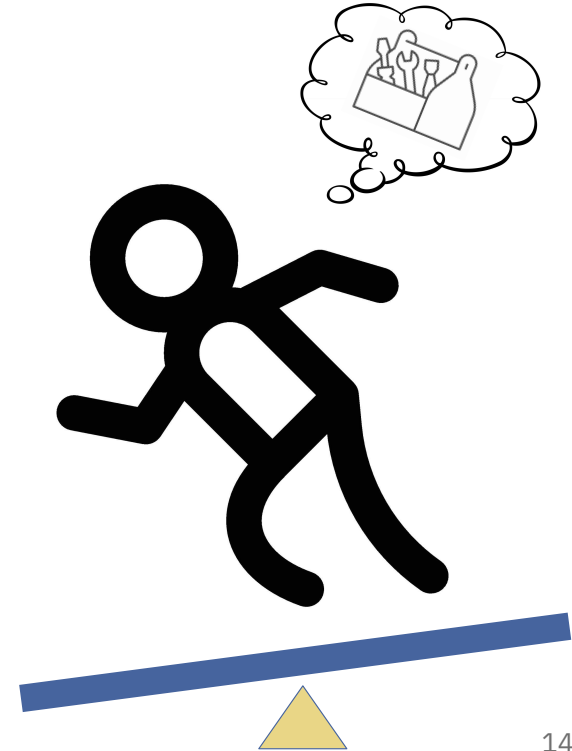
➤ How do we coach this?

- **Internal vs. External Cues and Strategies:**
 - Use and rely on both
 - Excess external focus: lose internal cues, comparison with competitors, loss of control
 - Excess internal focus: “what did I do right or wrong,” loss of confidence in self
- **Find a win in everything**



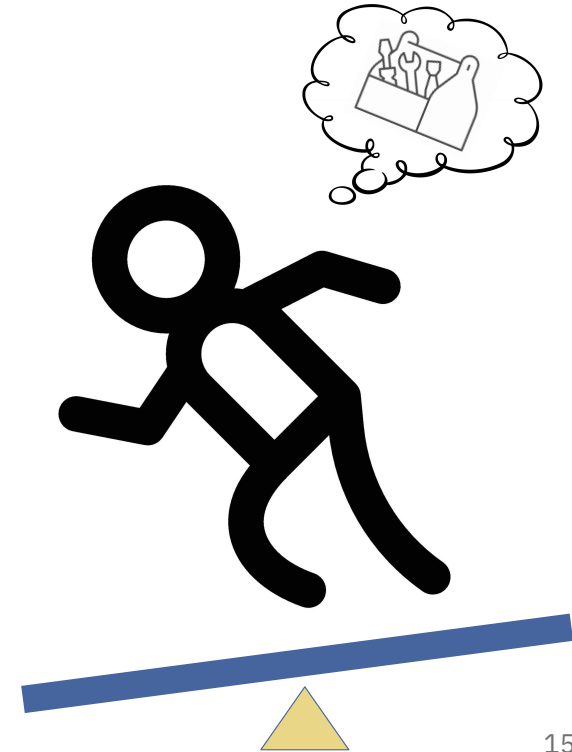
The Balance

- **Our athlete is more than the sport**
 - High pressure, outside stressors
 - Individual sport = greater inward focus relating to feelings about self related to sport
 - Achievement and drive in healthy ways, competitive skills without comparison



The Balance

- **Reflect on yourself as a coach**
 - Our philosophies, goals, and egos impact the way we communicate and the values we teach
 - Challenge them, encourage them, set them up for success for the next step



→ Questions?



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