

A History

Around the Course and Down the Track with “Doc”

A Conversation with

Jim Ciccarello - La Cueva High School - Age 76 - Hall of Famer

and

Allan Lockridge - Pojoaque High School - Age 74 - Hall of Famer

“Legendary Coaches Ciccarello and Lockridge: A Discussion of Coaching, Aging, and
Success in Cross Country and Track and Field”

Jim: This is a question and answer process that should be looked at as a total summary of all good things about athletics in New Mexico. Since I arrived in New Mexico in 1958 from New Jersey and attended Valley High School, I have been in love with high school athletic programs in New Mexico. By answering my good friend Doc Helm’s questions, I hope to relive some of the great experiences of the past. Winning is great, but the journey is even more important. I hope to clarify that shortly.

Doc: What is your total for district titles? Top 3 state finishes? State titles? After age sixty, what are the totals?

Jim: Nine state titles, thirty district titles, and twenty-eight Top 3 state finishes (The latest state title - number nine - was in 2018.). After age sixty (birthday in 2002), we were fortunate to have great teams and athletes at La Cueva High School. Six state titles, five second place finishes, five third place finishes, and sixteen district titles.

Allan: I have coached the Pojoaque Cross Country program to eighteen district titles - eleven for boys and seven for girls, plus twenty-eight Top 3 state finishes. Eight state titles - three for girls and five for boys.

**POJOAQUE CROSS COUNTRY
- A RUNNING TRADITION:**

1994 Boys 3rd Place
1995 Girls 3rd Place
1996 Girls 3rd Place
1997 Girls 2nd Place
1998 Girls State Champs
2000 Girls State Champs
2000 Boys State Champs
2001 Girls 2nd Place
2001 Boys 3rd Place
2002 Girls State Champs
2002 Boys State Champs
2003 Girls 3rd Place
2003 Boys State Champs
2005 Girls 2nd Place
2006 Girls 2nd Place
2007 Girls 3rd Place
2009 Boys 2nd Place
2010 Boys 3rd Place

2011 Boys State Champs
2012 Boys State Champs
2013 Boys 3rd Place
2015 Girls 3rd Place
2017 Boys 2nd Place

INDIVIDUAL STATE CHAMPION:

1994 Ronald Roybal
1997 Jacquelyne Gallegos
1999 Jacquelyne Gallegos
2000 Stephen Martinez
2000 Jacquelyne Gallegos
2001 Kelly Sanchez
2002 Stephen Martinez
2003 Darren Calvert
2007 Sophia Torres
2012 Jereme Santistevan
2013 Jereme Santistevan

Doc: How many years have you coached and which sports?

Jim: I am celebrating fifty years in coaching; of which, thirty-four are at the New Mexico high school level and sixteen are at the club level. La Cueva High School, Manzano High School, Highland High School, and Sandia High School were my New Mexico high school stops. Most of these years have been spent coaching track and field. Sixteen years were coaching cross country with the Duke City Dashers and the Albuquerque Track Club. I taught elementary physical education for forty-five years. Jump rope was a very big part of our PE program. We took our jump rope program all over New Mexico including - Clovis, Santa Fe, Rio Rancho, many Native American reservations, Bernalillo, Los Lunas, and Los Alamos.

Allan: I have coached track as an assistant and head coach for twenty-eight years, cross country for thirty years, soccer for one year, and cheerleading for three years.

Doc: What was your first coaching job, and what was the most important thing that you learned to be successful as a coach?

Jim: When I talk about coaching, please bear in mind that I consider teaching physical education as a coaching stop. In 1968, I did my secondary level student teaching at Jefferson

Junior High School and then went to Cortez Elementary for student teaching with first through sixth graders. I worked with Harold Cheves at Jefferson (a great mentor to me) and Dale Shelby at Cortez who was also a helping mentor. In 1969, I took a job with Albuquerque Public Schools at Lowell Elementary and Riverview Elementary, and started track programs at those schools.

If you teach elementary PE, you will learn how a kid learns and develops their physical skills. You also see the mental and emotional developments as they age. Any teacher of young age group kids will learn about child development; and then when they move on to teach athletes at the teenage years, the earlier developmental years will have been a most valuable resource. ppMy first high school job was at Manzano High School in 1976. As a young “puppy dog” everything was new to me; and I was learning and growing with the students. In fact, some of those sixth graders are now in their sixties! Some still keep in touch after all these years. They never forget “play day” which was an Olympic track and field day with ribbons for the kids.

When you ask me what is the most important thing as a coach to help young people and be successful, my answer is simple - to be positive! Recognize kids when they do well. This can be done in many different ways. We ask kids to do physical activities in which they feel some discomfort so it behooves us to reward kids when they respond. The number one way to reward is to verbally tell an athlete immediately after they accomplish a physical task. Look at them and let them and others nearby know that they did well - this can be in practice or in a meet. All athletes want someone to appreciate their efforts. If a kid runs a repeat hard and is in discomfort, you praise them...they will do it again! The same effort on your part goes for a kid in a track meet - recognize their effort immediately! I would say that is the most important thing in coaching.

Pass the accolades on to their friends and parents. Build a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Make public their efforts in letters and in news interviews. Recognize athletes at banquets. Do not ignore effort on their part. Personal bests are important. As little ones, athletes like ribbons and then medals as they get older. For many years now on a Monday following a track meet, I have a ceremony at the beginning of practice in which I reward “Tootsie Roll Pops” to New Mexico state qualifiers. Heck, athletes love the pops more than the medals! Their peers are watching and they also want the tootsie pops the following week. It is contagious. I learned this trick from Ken Medley who has over thirty years coaching in New Mexico.

BEING POSITIVE AND RECOGNIZING YOUR ATHLETES EXCELLENT EFFORTS IS BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF SUCCESSFUL COACHING!

Allan: I was an assistant track coach at Maxwell. Coach Leroy Chavez taught me to “touch every athlete every day with a word.” It gets more difficult with large teams, but you have to be with everyone before practice and be the last to leave - this is always a good time to talk with the kids.

Doc: Who are the coaches who taught you the most about building successful programs over the years?

Jim: The above mentioned Harold Cheves and Dale Shelby were helpful in so many ways. They showed a young student like me how to speak in front of large groups and how to motivate kids. When we first start out, we are sometimes shy and talk over the kids. With experience, we take charge and that is when we can help students. Henry Sanchez, the track coach at Highland High School in the 1960s, was an exceptional mentor. He was intelligent in track matters, easy-going, positive, and very successful. Barry Rodrique (Roswell High School, Sandia High School, and the Albuquerque Track Club) was a fantastic technique coach in timing and giving splits to athletes. Matt Henry (along with his twin brother Mark) developed programs at West Mesa and La Cueva High School, and were exceptional at recruiting and introducing new kids to track and field. Both of the Henrys were positive mentors to kids and myself. From afar, I watched Marilyn Sepulveda at Alamogordo as she developed her athletes year after year. I also watched the Hipwoods at Los Alamos and Darryl Ray at Clovis High School. My friend Doc Helm at Alamogordo (by way of the state of Colorado) has always been an inspiration. Spencer Sielschott and Curtis Williams were quite the team in Gallup and showed how a coaching staff needs to work together to be successful. I watch coaches from all over New Mexico, and I’m always looking to improve by watching successful coaches. Even the young, new coaches have traits that can help an “old dog” learn new tricks. We are a total product of all our experiences in watching others. Keep your eyes and ears open...always.

Allan: Leroy Chavez at Maxwell was the best. Mario Martinez was great to work with at Pojoaque, as was Matt Martinez.

Doc: What were your feelings when your team won your first state title (what year) compared to your most recent title (what year)?

Jim: In 1977 at Manzano High School, we won our first state title. At that time, Title 9 had just kicked in; and females were just competing for state titles (early 1970s). The previous year in 1976 we had finished third at State. Now, I'm here to tell you that finishing first is huge as compared to finishing second, third, or whatever. Yet, in the long run if you compete and are in the mix, you have done well. When we finished third the year before (with the great Val Boyer who scored all the points by herself), we set a goal to come back and move up to the top of the podium.

Back in the 1970s, the only way to qualify for the New Mexico state track meet was to finish first or second at the district meet. So that year, we were disqualified at the district meet in our 4x1 relay for not having matching identical uniforms at District. We were a new team and had t-shirts and athletes wore their own shorts at the time. No team uniforms as such. Val had a different color pair of shorts on and we were disqualified, which was a huge blow as we could not run the fastest 4x1 at the New Mexico state meet. It cost us a chance at the top of the podium.

So this Manzano High School team was on a mission the following year. We had "spiffy" new uniforms in 1977 and our mindset was to reach the top of the podium. With Val leading the way, we scored over a hundred points and dominated the 1977 New Mexico state meet. Sally Marquez was a huge factor on that team. Back then, everything was in yards; and we had set several state records which had been sifted out with the advent of meters in the 1980s.

The excitement of winning your first New Mexico state meet cannot be matched ever. Each title is of course different. Some people never get to be part of a team that gets to the top of the podium. Even some of New Mexico's greatest athletes were not part of a team effort to win it all. I've always maintained that there is nothing as exciting as winning a New Mexico state team championship. Individual events are great, but I've watched the athletes over the years and the most excitement generated is when the whole team steps up on that podium. Everyone contributes and everyone was in the daily workouts all year. They shared the good and the bad together as the year progressed. When they take the photo at the end-every athlete jumps in the picture and celebrates with the team. The entire coaching staff, athletes, administrators, parents, and track fans celebrate! Myself, as a high school athlete, never experienced that feeling of a team title. As a coach, it has been special; and I will never forget that first one. In fact after you win the first state title, it serves as a motivator for future success. You will want to repeat it!

Now many years later and a few other stops along the way, I had a great team at La Cueva High School in 2013. We were engaged with Cleveland High School (the new kid on the block with a great program). Tim Flores, a young coach with some great talent, had been a challenge for our team. We battled right down to the last event; and we were fortunate enough to pull out another title. These athletes were of course as excited to win as any athlete would be. Myself, I've mellowed a bit. To me if you are in the mix (meaning a chance to win), you have done well. The feelings you ask about are still euphoric; but as we age, we temper it a bit. Over the years, you realize that longevity is even more special. The new group of athletes of course are in a special mode of celebration. It would be fantastic if every athlete and coach who stepped on a New Mexico track would have that feeling of being on top of the podium. In reality, that does not happen. The goal is to excel at the highest level of competition. When you reach the top...the feelings are fantastic!

**Writer's note: Jim and his coaches and athletes won their ninth state title this Spring 2018. Excel they did!*

Allan: First state championship was 1998 and latest was 2012. My feelings were virtually the same; I was so very happy for the joy of the athletes in surprising themselves with their win.

Doc: What is the difference in your mental approach now as compared to when you began coaching?

Jim: As you age, your mental approach changes as you change physically. Your energy level is different. You have ongoing physical limitations, which affects your mental approach. If you are self-motivated, you overcome the physical and rise above your uncomfortable physical limitations. Coaches must always adapt each and every year to a new challenge. You are not the same person in 1976 that you are in 2018. Because of your day job and your family considerations, many things creep into your mental approach.

It behooves all coaches to make a commitment to kids and your program every year. I would never just go through the motions. Coaches need to prepare for each year just like classroom teachers do. Your mental approach will show in your preparation. Athletes will feel and recognize your mental state and feed off of it. If you are strong and firm, the athletes will pick up on it, which will be reflected in their dedication to your program.

In the off-season, all coaches must look at long range goals and changes they need to make for the upcoming season. Personally, I go over things in my mind over and over as I

prepare. When I was young, my memory system was better because it was easy to remember names of athletes, event schedules, deadlines, workouts, and to adjust to new situations. Now as I age, I have to study and repeat more. Yes, memory repeats are important just like repeats on the track are important to athletes. I double and triple check myself all the time. All coaches that stay in this coaching business for a long time will have “senior moments” in which they forget stuff. The key is to limit that and to use your experience over the long haul to keep yourself current with these young athletes. We are a total sum of all these years of coaching.

My mental approach is to embrace the new, but use the “old” to make our program better. Old dogs can “learn new tricks,” but they also can use past memories to help young athletes excel going into the future. The mental approach is to be professional. Work out yourself and try to be physically fit. Stay on top of new ideas and techniques. Prepare for the new season. Keep focused on the task at hand. Forgive yourself when you make a mistake. Try to do better each time out. Enjoy your time with your athletes. One of my favorite quotes is, “the future is now.” My mental approach is to embrace the future.

Allan: I think I still realize I don’t know everything, and I must always adjust to the differences in athletes every year and work harder because of my more limited physical abilities and always be more and better prepared for every practice and every meet.

Doc: Are the athletes of today different than when you started coaching, and in what ways do they make coaching more of a challenge?

Jim: Back in the day (fifty years ago), athletes had a different mindset as society was different. Respect was demanded from everyone (parents-coaches-administrators). We lived in a society in which adults took the lead and kids were expected to follow and obey. Over the years as a society, we have allowed (and encouraged) children to question the state of affairs around them. As coaches, we give athletes much more input into their chosen activity than ever before. When we lead our athletes, they want to know the “why” of what we are doing. As a track coach if you are asking athletes to run ten hills, they want to know why they run hills while the track competition is on the track.

When I first started, kids would do whatever I asked without question. Now, I have to get athletes to “buy into our workout program.” So I explain the endurance, sprint speed, skill development, and how to reach the highest point of excellence. Today, athletes go online and get information every day; and they challenge you when you are different than some coach in

another state or country. This is a challenge as “the grass look greener” always from afar. You must convince athletes that your program will bring them rewards. If they see an easy way to accomplish their goals online or in a book, they gravitate toward that approach. Easy is not always better.

In the last twenty years, there has been an abundance of personal fitness trainers and age group clubs that have sprung up. Parents want their kids in activities when they are young growing up. They find these extra instruction groups and they will pay to have their kids get a jump start. The athletes bond to these programs and sometimes are more committed to those programs than ours.

The public schools at one time were the main avenue to athletics for kids. Now age group programs have dominated the scene, sometimes to the detriment of the kids (if the values of athletics are not taught properly). We are an education-based activity, and we do more than just compete. School issues come into play and both students and athletes alike must adhere to the educational approach to activities. Club programs do not have principals, athletic directors, board of education, and other educational administrators. They have a different type of organization. Athletes can get caught between the two. Many of these age group programs do not let athletes go when they reach high school age. Kids are then torn between two or more programs. Some of these programs go year round. The days of the three sport athlete in high school is about over.

If you want a kid to participate on your high school track team and they are in club soccer at the same time, how do you work the practice time and the competition time out? Club teams travel to out of state competitions and the parents love to take vacations at the same time their kids are competing. If you ask the athlete to make a hard choice, they usually choose the club level. This is maybe the number one challenge that high school track coaches face today.

Athletes are also in many other activities. They will miss practice and competitions because of outside commitments. There is so much in our society to do, kids can be overwhelmed with dedication to any one activity. It is a challenge on our part to let kids be part of our team, even as they miss quality time because of other activities.

The day of “my way or the highway” is effectively over. Kids will do other activities and their parents back it completely. In today’s world, I’ve seen kids who quit a team when a coach disciplined them for missing practice. This has made coaching more of a challenge. Coaching high school athletes is a profession in which adults help kids for very little monetary rewards.

Most coaches make their living in other areas like teaching. We coach because we love the sport; and if we have kids that don't love the sport like we do, it is a big challenge. Not all kids love the sport and are in fact out there for social reasons. When you have a kid just out for interpersonal contact with friends, you will have a challenge to get them to work hard to excel. Today's athletes are different just as our society is different. The challenge is for us to adjust.

Allan: One of the changes is more of my athletes have other "interests," such as, jobs and other clubs, that demand they be shared, and I must accommodate that they have these other important interests.

Doc: What are the traits a coach needs to maintain a successful program through the years?

Jim: Longevity and success is huge. Over the years, all coaches face adversity and many get out of coaching. If you want to have success (and all coaches do), you need to toughen up. You must have a plan. Follow that plan and adjust as needed. Pick good assistant coaches who agree with your philosophy. Use your own personality to help motivate athletes and assistant coaches. This has to be positive and done in a way that gives all a chance to contribute.

A few years back, I wrote a book called Coach, Coach, Look at Me. The main theme was to look at kids and give immediate feedback when athletes do well. As a coach/teacher, you must feel good and get excited when an athlete excels. One of the best traits to have as a teacher is to feel good yourself when your student reaches a goal. By giving immediate feedback to that student, you have done a great service in motivating that athlete to do even better. You must also be forgiving. Not all athletes will do well all the time. Try and correct kids and get them to change for the better. Be easy-going and firm at the same time. Don't be grumpy. Ask kids to do something; and if they do it, verbally reward them. If they come up short; be firm and ask for a repeat. Treat all kids fairly and give all athletes opportunity. If you just favor the more talented athlete, the other kids will see that and will not respond to you. Realize you will have a bad day. Ya... sometimes no matter what you do, it does not work.

Just recently, I had a terrible day motivating athletes to run fast. I went home discouraged. Two days later, they had the best work out of the year. Go figure! So bounce back and move forward. Of course, take the good with the bad. Some years, your athletes just don't have it. Give them your time in spite of talent level. Everything goes in cycles, and your time will come around again. Stop and enjoy your team's success. Try and correct the ones that you

are not happy with. Always plan on bouncing back! One of my favorite sayings, “My best kid is the next one... the one I haven’t met yet!”

Take courses and attend clinics. Keep updating and talking to other coaches to gain new insights and knowledge. Use the internet and read books on your subject area. Do not be afraid to try something new. If you approach each season with a positive plan and make a commitment, no matter what, you will have a successful program going forward. Be positive, toughen up, have a plan, surround yourself with good assistant coaches, treat everyone fairly, and accept the bad days as well as the good ones. On a personal note, keep yourself fit and get involved in other activities. If you are well-rounded, you will relate to athletes on a higher level; and they will do the same back to you.

Allan: I think a coach must change to meet all differences in kids today. A coach must readily change to meet situations of personal problems with each individual that arises. In cross country, the problems of weather and training sites must also be faced and dealt with without interfering with progress in training.

Another important trait is picking good assistant coaches. I have been fortunate to have selected outstanding individuals to be my assistant coaches. Faculty members are not anxious to coach sports after school because they realize the effort and long hours an assistant coach job entails. I try to find individuals who share my love of coaching young people and the work ethic that it demands. Keeping in mind that individuals have family decisions to make and school choices put upon them. All in all, I have been extremely pleased with choices made for staff. It’s all about our young people. The following are my specific thoughts on the “many hats” an assistant coach must wear:

- A. The assistant coaches you have are who you once were.
- B. These coaches have to know your program, and believe in what you do.
- C. Trust your assistants to be able to handle whatever the practice is on any day.
- D. Trust your assistants to give advice on workouts and on individual runners.
- E. Assistants must know that they need to be at all practices and competitions. The athletes will not trust them if they are occasional participants in practices.
- F. To all head coaches and assistant coaches: The team practice is the time for these athletes to prepare and is not the time for coaches to use for their own practice. Concentrate on the athletes.

Doc: As a coach gets older, what is their biggest challenge to maintain success?

Jim: Without a doubt, the number one thing a coach should do is stay healthy and fit. It takes so much energy to work with young people that if you're not fit yourself, you will have problems. Standing on your feet as you age is harder. The sun will drain you and knock you down. The wind will beat on you. Cold weather will make your joints ache. Outside natural elements will work against you as you age. Give the same advice that you give to athletes...to yourself. Get in the best shape you can and stay fit! Then you can help others. If you don't feel good, it will be hard to motivate and help others. For all young folks reading this, wear a hat, put sunscreen on, get off your feet when you can, wear good shoes, and dress warmly!

Sixty is not twenty (years of age). Your body will change as you age; and even though you may have good track knowledge, if you feel bad, it will be hard to get your points across. Your hearing will lessen, which affects how kids relate to you as they may not communicate things correctly. If kids see you in excellent fitness shape, they will respect you and follow your lead in a positive way. At sixty to seventy, you cannot hurdle and high jump anymore so don't demonstrate yourself. Have a kid demonstrate your technique points.

Myself, I am seventy-six years old (how in the heck did that happen?); and I still work with kids. I work out every day at the gym. It may not be as good as it used to be, but it keeps me fit. The athletes you are working with know when you are fit. They respect that. You do not have to compete against them yourself to get their respect.

You need to hire great assistant coaches, and it is important that you delegate them responsibilities and give them room to grow. They have more energy and can help you big time. I have found the best coaches to help you are former athletes. They know your system, and they want to be part of your program. The only issue here is they have to set up their own lives so they sometimes leave early to go into other things (like family and relocation for school or a job).

Older coaches must deal with new ideas and ever-changing situations. The rules for everything are constantly changing. What was good twenty years ago may not work now. I used to do all entries by written entry blanks. I have had to learn computer skills to enter athletes. If you miss a deadline, your athletes may not get to run. An older coach must learn the "new ways" and go with the flow. The old systems are constantly changing. Now when I tell kids about the upcoming schedule for this week's meet, they come over with their cell phones and take a photo of the event schedule times.

Equipment is changing. Heck, I used to use a three faced hand timer. I even had a split timer. These are unheard of today. Young coaches have never even seen them. Fully automatic timing (FAT) is in now. They now have starting guns without blanks that emit a loud noise to start a race. Starting blocks are huge with a big face. I remember wooden starting blocks. No, I did not coach with the “shovel and digging starting blocks holes in the dirt!” LOL. Hurdles come in many different sizes. As a coach gets older, they must adapt to all the new techniques. The modern all-weather tracks, equipment, and video support has changed track and field just as society has changed how we do things. Our challenge is to learn the new “stuff!”

One of the biggest challenges is how to deal with the present day athletes and all their different activities. Kids come to us with a great expectation of competing in track and field. They want to have fun and try something new. They may be in soccer, DECA, debate, volleyball, golf, etc. Back in the day, coaches worked with athletes one hundred percent of the time. Now these athletes are so involved they miss practice and even track meets. Not all are completely dedicated to your track program. It is a challenge to keep them in the track routine as they navigate all these other outside activities.

Now parents want their kids to be in many activities. They support their kids to spread out and embrace a full schedule of ongoing extra activities. If you make an athlete choose, you may chase them away from the one activity you are embracing...track and field. Each coach must decide what is best for their program. Come up with a plan and be ready to adjust as necessary. Older coaches have a harder time with this concept than the younger generation.

Speaking of parents...it is a challenge to deal with modern day parents who are more involved and vocal about their children. More information is available to them so they want what is best for their children. The challenge here is to win the parent over to your long-range plan for the athlete. Another challenge for coaches is the advent of personal fitness trainers and youth club coaches. Kids come to us with a history of others working with them as they were growing up. Sometimes, these youth leaders do not let go when the athlete comes to your program. Who knows what the future holds. Right now, coaches will be challenged by all the above...and more!

Allan: Physical limitations after sixty and even more so after seventy face every coach. I have had to adapt my personal methods of “keeping up” with the runners as they do workouts, and this involves not being able to actually run with the kids.

Doc: What is your advice to younger coaches? Do you recommend coaching into your seventies? Why?

Jim: Young coaches need to go into working with athletes for the right reasons. The love of their chosen sport and the passing of information to young people should be number one! When I first started as a young “puppy dog” of elementary kids in Albuquerque’s South Valley and the Southeast Heights, I worked with low-income kids. I was super excited to teach these kids athletic activities and see them improve. There were no New Mexico state championships for them. They just wanted to compete on the playground and challenge themselves. Have fun! I was super excited to see them engage and compete. I learned as they learned. You need to enjoy the kids and feel excited as they improve. If you recognize their improvement and verbalize it to them, they will try harder.

The biggest thing you have going for you is your youth because kids love young teachers who are just a bit older, but willing to help them. They look up to you and want to model you. You are their biggest athletic role model. They will copycat you. Have a positive attitude and treat kids with respect and love. Teach them to love the game. Educate them and forgive them when they mess up. Give second chances.

Learn how young kids develop. Study them. Don’t be in a hurry to get to the top of your profession. It’s best to learn at a lower level and then move up the ladder. Watch experienced successful coaches and copycat them. Pick their brains. Go to conferences and meet with professionals. Keep learning new stuff. If you love your sport and give respect to it, your athletes, fellow coaches, and administrators of the sport, you will have a great career. Take the good with the bad. (Yes, there will be bad) Be a good loser as well as a good winner. Remember...there is always a new game next week.

If you do the above, there is a good chance you will stay in your chosen field for a long time. Now for those of us in our seventies, my answer is “yes,” keep on coaching. It takes many years to learn a profession. Too many people get out when they are on top of their game. We have been constantly learning and adjusting over the years. We have so much to offer. When we were young (we did not admit it), we made many mistakes. Time and opportunities have taught us how to teach athletes and develop kids to their potential.

Why then, when we have all this knowledge learned over the years, would we get out when we are at the top of our game. This is when we can help athletes the most. I think health

reasons and work environment problems dictate that. So toughen up and give back all that we have learned. None of us are coaching for the money. Heck, that is what the pros do at another level. We are high school coaches helping young people to realize their born talent. Help them take it to the highest level. I have seen elementary, middle school, and high school coaches of all ages help American school kids rise to a high level of excellence.

Being seventy-six, I still have a desire to see kids improve. Athletes will respect your learned knowledge as you try to help them. Just this week, I was teaching relay zone exchanges to ninth graders and I had their undivided attention. The younger coaches could not get the point across. I was on it! The athletes listened and ran it to perfection. They were so appreciative. They even said, "Thanks, Coach." Myself, I felt great as they accomplished the task. I can't wait to see the handoffs this weekend.

So by all means, if your health allows and your home life is flexible to your coaching responsibilities, go for it! Too many folks get out at the wrong time. When you have a lot to offer, go a bit longer and share your knowledge to the new generation. Pay it forward into your seventies and beyond. Old dogs can teach young dogs new tricks... lots of them!

Allan: To younger coaches:

- A. Be first and last at practice and try to touch each athlete often with a positive word.
- B. Don't hang around with the gossiping parents.
- C. Talk to parents only about their own child.
- D. Don't fear changing workout schedules, especially near the end of the season; if the kids get too comfortable with routine, they may become lax, so you still must challenge them.
- E. If you are nervous, don't let anyone else know.
- F. You are in charge always.

High school athletics - I feel the very same excitement now (and still with some trepidation) as I did so long ago.

Doc: What do you hope your legacy in coaching will be?

Jim: To me, legacy means longevity. Someone that was here for a long time and helped many people comes to mind. To be able to reach out to many students over a long period of time, enduring all the ups and downs that life has to offer, and still giving back to the younger generations of New Mexico's student athletes is paramount looking back. I am proud of all of them and their accomplishments. To think I was part of their lifetime journey is very special.

Myself, I never had my own family (probably should have) yet, I have an adopted family of New Mexico kids. I have seen them grow and raise their own families. Many times, I have coached both athlete, mom, and yes, even grandma. This is a special story in how I look back at my life in New Mexico.

I have met many athletes, coaches, administrators, fans, and supporters of student athletics; and I'm blessed to have known them and been part of their lives (as they have mine). If I listed all the names of the New Mexico folks who have been part of my coaching life here in New Mexico, I could fill the page easily. But I fear I would miss someone. I loved them all.

To Doc Helm and the New Mexico Track and Cross Country Coaches Association members, I send out a thank you for what you do for all track people in New Mexico. Thank you for sending me some very interesting questions to answer for future coaching generations to ponder. Hasta luego!

Allan:

- A. To leave athletes with a memory of many successes and great times with many friends.
- B. To leave these athletes with having no fear to have tried and won and knowing they have given their best.
- C. To never have fear at challenging themselves with something new and different and maybe a bit "scary."

We give a big "Thank You" to Jim and Allan for the years of iconic coaching to the young athletes of "The Land of Enchantment" and their "pearls of wisdom" to all of us.

Dr. David "Doc" Helm

President-emeritus

Historian - NMTCCCA

Alamogordo

Hall of Famer

