

SPORTS

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View from the lane: the value of the team

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In the previous "View from the lane," I mentioned how people would tell me they wished they could enjoy running too. In a nutshell, my response was that it is not always so enjoyable or easy.

That still holds true. There are hard parts and there are easy parts, just like with everything else.

Track sounds like something stressful to other people from an individual standpoint. I told you about getting ready for races, which can be a little psycho. But as a team sport, track is cake. It is so much fun.

At our Old Dominion Athletic Conference meet this year, which is our biggest meet, I walked between the softball field where athletes were standing, watching or playing on the field, and back to my team's tent.

The softball team might have been jealous.

We had a big tent set up with flaps around the edge for shade and protection from the wind. Teammates sprawled out under the shelter, some taking naps, listening to music, making flash cards or writing cover letters and joking with one another. If you added an ocean and sand, it would have been a perfect beach scene.

This scenario constitutes the time you spend away from race preparation. It is the majority of the meet. Excluding racing and race preparation, you may spend your time on activities such as Frisbee throwing, strolling, eating,

card playing, vigorously finishing articles for The Guilfordian, yoga or anything else imaginable to kill time.

Besides the camaraderie track teams share under their tent, there is a unique dynamic of team sportsmanship at play that is especially vibrant at the conference meet.

At this meet, you are not just counting on yourself to finish well but on all of your teammates to do their best. If everyone places well, your team scores more points. In the end, it is not whether or not you finished first place, it is whether your team did a good job

picking up as many place finishes as possible, and that includes fourth-, fifth- and sixth-place spots.

Because of this, important meets like conference ones are amazing to watch. When your teammates fly past another person and claim a spot and run or throw their best that season, your whole team goes wild. It does not feel like everyone is watching and pressuring this team member to move harder. Instead, we all feel carried along with them, particularly if the race is exciting. The energy they exude while racing is contagious and the whole team catches it.

I remember this week, between writing, relaxing and racing, watching some of the men's and women's races on our teams. Like my body began to give out after the strain of a race, my voice started to crack from the strain of cheering for my fellow teammates.

I watched one of my teammates sprint a lap to finish his 10,000 meter race.

And then, upon crossing the finish line, he only sped on further, for another lap. And then another one and another one. After seeing our teammate sprint a mile after 5 miles of racing his heart out, we got such a jolt of energy and chattered

excitedly to each other about it. Oh, and our teammate finished second in that race.

This is one example of the amazing efforts your teammates do for you. Sometimes, at conference meets, people find a new gear, flying faster and higher than they ever had before. Records are broken, confidence is boosted, friendship strengthens and energy skyrockets. It is all so exciting, rewarding and fun to do with your teammates.

With such wonderful people to love and support you all weekend, how could you not run your heart out for them?

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