



Musings and Observations from the Chief Cook and Bottlewasher
January 16, 2011

Dairy of a Madman

These are excerpts from a small journal I was making as I "chaperoned" Frontier, Pioneer, Springville track & field student-athletes to the Dartmouth Relays the weekend of January 7-9 2011.

Friday, January 7, 2011

5:30am - Climbing into a D&F Transit motor coach with seven other adults and approximately 45 high school students for a 7-8 hour bus trip to Hanover, NH, home to Dartmouth College and the 2011 Dartmouth Relays...maybe I should have gone to work instead?

7:45am – The first pit stop at the Port Byron rest stop just west of Syracuse. Man, this driver is moving a good clip! Frontier coach Jim Zubler breaks out the breakfast goodies for the kids as we stay for about 20-25 minutes. Iroquois bus pulls up...a school bus to Dartmouth, yikes!

8:25am – Steady snow showers, slushy roads outside Syracuse. Disney's "Sorcerer's Apprentice" playing on the DVD player on the bus' video system. This feels like more of a ski club trip to Whiteface than a track & field trip.

10:00am – Somewhere near Cooperstown, snow has let up and another video gets popped into the DVD...too many previews...just get to the darn movie!

10:30am – Albany, there's an orange ball in the sky emitting heat and warmth, what is that?

11:15am – Stopping for lunch in Lee MA...good to get out and stretch the legs and grab some Mickey D sustenance, and socialize a bit. Kids who are competing this afternoon (around 4pm) are urged to get their uniforms out of the bus' storage below deck. They had 45 minutes to do this...guess what?

Noon – Back on the road and I can't wait to hear the first, "I gotta go to the bathroom" right after eating...come to think of it, I could. Pioneer coach Mary Doud "quietly explains" to the kids who forgot to get their uniforms and spikes out of the bus storage that they had time to do this and they'll just have to wait until we get to Dartmouth so they can compete in ice cold uniforms. Meanwhile poor Pioneer assistant coach Andy Slocum is getting bombarded by text messages from the kids on the bus saying "hello."

2:30pm – Finally, the quaint college town of Hanover, NH...typical New England winter scene with light snow falling in a village complete with a steeple church in the middle of town. This town is definitely built around a college campus or is it the other way around? Any way, both are really integrated with one another.

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Friday, January 7, 2011 – cont'd

A slew of busses are lining up outside Leverone Field House discharging the hordes of kids who have been cooped up on a bus for countless hours and must now compete. Beautiful facility, wish WNY had one like it. Very well laid out but seems a little short for spectator seating. Then again, it's more of universal facility for the college rather than an entertainment venue.

3:30pm – nice collection of teams from New England, NYS, NJ and even Quebec. I'm told tomorrow's is even more densely packed with competitors and spectators...oh boy, can't wait!

4:00pm – The unseeded events are the focus for today and Springville's Chad Maloy is the first to compete at Dartmouth in the unseeded men's mile. Chad runs a strong race and finishes third overall...nice start to the day's competition. Dave Olsen and Tom Fitzgerald run the second heat and do pretty well.

NOTE: Chad Maloy and Dave Olsen get the "*Patience is a Virtue*" award as both only competed in this event for the entire weekend and spent most of their time reading, eating or just watching the other events over the remainder of Friday and all day Saturday.

5:25pm – Frontier, Pioneer, Springville, Lancaster, Iroquois and Section 5's Pembroke are all here to compete. Overall competition is high and some good performances by our teams judging by coach's reactions and the kids. Some PRs established but also see disappointment in some kid's eyes. Fortunately, most are competing tomorrow to make amends.

8:00pm – First day's competition is over with a quite frankly, I am bushed. However, we get to the motel, check in, freshen up and get back on the bus to go to Chili's for a 9pm reservation. Oh Lord, I will not be sleeping tonight.

9:15pm – I love the look on the faces of restaurant managers when a motor coach pulls up and some 50 people pile out! Also the patrons who are in there already and suddenly wolfing down their meals to get out of there before the carnage begins. Those folks who pull up behind us just get out of their cars and begin swearing to themselves before getting back in and look for another establishment. Yes, it must be Dartmouth Relays weekend!

9:30pm – Yes, I will say it...I had my first piece of "cake" with dinner! I'm tired, I'm thirsty,...I mean hungry and it was consumed in a covert manner. No, I wasn't sitting with any of the kids nor in direct view of their "innocent eyes." In fact, my fellow chaperone consumed some as well.

10:15pm – GREAT SERVICE! These folks had all of us out of there by 10:15pm and some of us even had dessert, albeit take out. Back on the bus for good night's rest...or so I thought!

11:00pm – Curfew, everyone in their rooms, lights out and quiet...yeah right! Who's holding who hostage here? There's eight adults patrolling the halls whispering and listening for noise out of the rooms. All I can visualize is the kids peering through the spy holes looking for one of us to go by and tell the others in their room to quiet down.

Aha! Noises emitting from where else, my son's room where the four of them are giggling like school girls. Coach Zubler goes outside to peer into their room (yes, we were on the first floor) to see what's going on. As soon as he gets to the window, one of the guys opens the drapes to see what the noise is outside (Coach Zubler must have been laughing to himself). The site of Coach Zubler scares him enough that he falls backwards on to the floor. The remaining adults in the hallway suddenly hear loud hysterical laughter coming from the room. In from the cold comes Coach Zubler laughing hysterically himself. The kids open their door to tell us what happened. Coach Doud scolds Coach Zubler and calls him an immature adolescent.

Everything calms down by 12:15 and time to retire to our rooms. Tomorrow's first bus is at 7:45am.

6:45am – Wake up call, are you kidding me, on a Saturday!? Oh yeah, I placed the call. Have to get ready to jump on the first bus to Leverone. Early events begin promptly at 9am and I would like to grab a bite of breakfast at the Holiday Inn Express across the way. Also have to get "Squatter's Rights" to a small set of bleachers that have apparently become Section 6's area over the years.

8:30am – I need a bottle of that 5 Hour Energy drink, I am just exhausted. This is going to be a very long day, I can feel it already!

9:00am – Bang! First gun and today's events are underway with the 55m hurdles. Apologies to Frontier's Katie B, I don't move that fast in the morning and I missed your heat.

10:00am – Definitely more competitors and spectators today...going to be a little tough to get around get position for photos and to find when the Section 6 kids are running. Maybe I should have bought a program?

10:35am – Loving the new camera I bought a week ago, Nikon D7000. Faster auto focus in low light, faster burst rate, higher resolution and same controls as the D80. Downside is there are going to be a lot more photos to post-process!

11:15am – Seeded mile, big hype, expecting boys times in the higher teens...winning time is 4:21..fast but doesn't live up to the hype IMHO.

Finding the toughest part of the day is waiting for the Section 6 kids to compete and trying to figure out which heats they are in. The electronic scoreboard makes it easier but I'm trying to pick them out visually, sometimes too late to photograph. Yeah, I should have bought a program!

Noon – Took a break to go into town with Frontier trainer, Tim Williams and some of the kids including my son, Jake. My son takes us through a maze of campus buildings to get to town. I question his memory and the strategy but his memory is far better than mine as he got us where we needed to go.

And of course, that was a Subway so they all could eat. I just wanted to stop in a campus store and pick up a Dartmouth shot glass so I left them in Tim's capable hands. I had a job at a software company that created admissions web sites for colleges and universities. While visiting these campuses, I wanted a souvenir but one can only have so many t-shirts or sweat shirts before you get sick of them. I wanted something unique and to maybe display. Shot glasses seemed to be common at all campus bookstores and they are unique in that each school has a distinct logo. I found what I needed and went back to the meet.

2:00pm – Still a lot of events left in the day and I'm beginning to wonder if it will ever end.

Found Lancer Timing's equivalent to WNY Official and electronic timing guru, John Montalbo. The Lancer Timing guy made John look like a pussycat when someone walked in front of the cameras. I think that guy has anger management issues!

Great planning by Dartmouth officials to put Frontier, Iroquois and Lancaster girl's 4x200m relay teams in the same heat. I'd take credit for making the request but I don't think I have that much pull.

6:00pm - Fast forward to the end of the meet...the infield is cleared out and many of the teams are getting team photos under the huge Dartmouth Relays banner. Frontier chooses to do theirs as an informal photo standing on the rolled up turf rug. Lancaster chooses to move a small set of bleachers underneath the banner.

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Although the bleachers were on wheels, they were not easy to move. I guess Lancaster Throws coach George Rak used this as sort of weight training for his throwers as those who moved the bleachers.

7:30pm – Boarded the bus and now headed straight to Applebee's for dinner. I couldn't talk anyone in to letting me off at the motel to let me die in my room from exhaustion. Man, my back and knees killing me even after taking some Aleve.

8:00pm – Crammed into Applebee's waiting area with 49 other people as the restaurant staff takes us 4—6 at a time to tables. Again the panicked look of the restaurant staff is true amusement. Everyone is seated in about 15-20 minutes and the coaches and chaperones are in a larger booth. I get to play "daddy" by sitting at the head of the table. The adults were well behaved.

8:50pm – Oh no, a birthday celebration by the Applebee's staff is heading our way. They appear confused as they start to sing but really don't know who they should be singing to as this was a set up by the Pioneer kids for Coach Slocum. Of course it was no one's birthday. Unfortunately, the surprise backfires as they must think I am Coach Slocum and they direct their best efforts to me. Who says age doesn't have privilege?

9:45pm – We get back to the motel and I head for the motel office to use their public computer to try and upload photos to Secton6Runs. Unfortunately, the computer is as incapable for working well with image files as the laptop I brought along. Time to invest in some 21st century technology.

10:15pm - Back to the room...curfew set for midnight although all doors to rooms must remain open. My eyes were opened on this evening:

- Some of the Frontier girls have made up their faces in sort of a war paint style using mascara. Really scary as I don't know what their intentions were. Frontier coaches Zubler, Tubbs, Militello and Williams take it all in stride. Something you all should be telling me?
- Chad Maloy takes on all comers in a WWF wrestling competition until a loud thud of someone or something hits the glass patio door. The nice man with the camera comes in and yells "Knock it off!"...they don't listen. Chad declared champion.
- My son Jake come's into my room to examine my TV. It has inputs for gaming, theirs does not. "Dad, can we swap TVs?" he asks. I'm too tired to respond to such a ridiculous question and answer by facial expression only. He leaves my room saying that "I'm mean."
- "Nutball"...I don't need to say more.
- Coach Tubbs decides to turn the TV volume down and ad lib the dialogue to the movie they are all watching. Quite funny actually.

11:30pm – I'm in bed despite the incessant noise coming from the room next to me where I think all of the kids have gathered for who knows what reason.

Midnight – silence, kids must have gone to sleep or the coaches loaded them on the bus and sent them away. Either way, I'm out!

Sunday, January 9, 2011

8:00am – board the bus, kids get settled in and we're off for home. Nothing much to add to the journal at this point and everyone is pretty low keyed. Coach Slocum still getting text messages from the kids, estimated to be about 50 per hour. Movies are popped into the DVD system but I don't think too many are watching.

Home around 4:30pm.