Drew Wasmund hired as Clackamas Community College associate head cross country coach

The Wilsonville grad's mistakes as a runner give him a unique coaching perspective.

2006 Wilsonville High graduate Drew Wasmund was days away from packing his bags and heading to Iowa to serve as a graduate assistant for the St. Ambrose University cross country program. However, days ago, Wasmund received an offer to be the associate head coach of the Clackamas Community College, a position far exceeding the job he'd accepted.

“The whole point of being a graduate assistant is to eventually get a job like this,” he said.

So he accepted the offer and told St. Ambrose the bad news.

Wasmund feels terrible for leaving the St. Ambrose coaching staff without enough time to hire a new graduate assistant before fall, but didn’t want to waste years of his life hoping to get a coaching job some day.

“I feel bad about not going there but I now have the opportunity to coach at a school where I grew up and have many connections. I’d say it was the first selfish decision I’ve made in my life,” he said.

In high school, Wasmund was a cog in Wilsonville’s surprising 2005 state championship winning cross country team. Wasmund remembers the team ran so poorly at districts, they almost failed to qualify for the state meet.

However, after making it by the skin of their teeth, head coach David Barkley instilled confidence in his group of runners that they could perform much better at state.

“To Barkley’s credit, he told us that we were going to be running in those conditions and why we’re suited for it. He instilled confidence in us,” Wasmund said.

No Wilsonville runner finished in the top 10 and Ryan Clark led the way, finishing fourteenth in the meet featuring downpour and slippery mud. However, it was the foursome of Brad Peterson, Dean Willmert, Sean O’Brien and Wasmund that came in successively from 41st to 45th that sealed the victory.

“We won the meet by one point in the worst weather conditions ever,” Wasmund said.

In making his collegiate choice, Wasmund wanted to give himself the best chance to top his state championship by winning a collegiate national championship.

“Coming out of high school I was solely focused on running. Winning a state title was so cool I wanted to feel that again,” he said.

Initially, he ran at Lane Community College. But later, he transferred to Western State University, a renowned Division 2 cross country school in Colorado.

Wasmund’s focus was narrow and his work ethic was tireless. However, he struggled to live up to his own expectations and stay healthy.

Wasmund says he suffered a laundry list of injuries, but the worst were a torn meniscus, stress fracture and stomach virus.

“The goals I had were loftier than the talent I had in my body. The right thing to do is to train smart and I did dumb things to get the respect of the coaches,” Wasmund said.

Plus, because he focused so intently on running, he didn’t have much to fall back on when he struggled.
“If running is your sole focus and you aren’t doing well, you are going to be very unhappy,” he said.

By the end of college, Wasmund hated running.

However, slowly, he got back into the sport.

In 2010, Barkley enlisted him to be the assistant coach for Wilsonville High. Wasmund also wrote for Youth Running Magazine, where he compiled rankings of the best runners in Oregon.

At the same time, Wasmund began to develop a love of learning and global politics. He even studied Arabic for two years at Portland State University in hopes of becoming a military analyst.

In 2012, he decided to quit assisting under Barkley. At the time, he was torn by his two main areas of interest.

However, he immediately regretted quitting coaching. But his withdrawal from the sport made him realize how much he still loved it, and that he wanted to make cross country a lifetime occupation.

He thought he would take his next step in Iowa, but luckily, he was able to skip a step on the career ladder.

“I’m really grateful for the opportunity to try my hand at collegiate coaching and am super thankful to the coaching staff at Wilsonville. Without my experience at Wilsonville, I don’t think anyone would be interested in hiring me as a head coach,” he said.

From Barkley, who he deems one of the best running minds at any level of the sport, Wasmund says he learned that coaches couldn’t manufacture motivation. It has to come from within each runner.

Wasmund said he learned: “As a coach you can’t want it more than the kids. As much as you want kids to chase titles, those goals have to come to the kids. You can’t twist their arms, but you can help them develop passion and embrace their sport. To go out there and run 10-12 miles everyday is really hard. You have to take a step back as a coach to some degree.”

But above all, Wasmund wants his runners to learn from his mistakes.

"We want our runners to be good students, be happy and have hobbies. We don’t want running to be a life or death thing,” he said.
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