

### 3D Institute Inside/Out Coaching Course Coach Interview

Coach Interviewed:

Bart Mueller

head girls track coach and middle school cross country coach  
ADM High School, Iowa

Date: Monday, September 19, 2022

Bart has been coaching girls track and field at ADM for twelve years. During this time he had coached several elite athletes and state champions, but full team success at a state level had remained out of reach. I joined Bart's staff as an assistant coach in 2019 and have had the opportunity to serve in a growing program for three seasons. In 2022, Bart's ADM track team achieved an unprecedented success with a state runner-up finish while winning several relays and placing in many events. The ADM team is an early favorite to win a state title in 2023. This special season raises the question: What facilitated this special season? After so many seasons, were there any changes in the program that led to a sudden spike in the overall team success at the state level?

During my seasons and interview with Coach Mueller, it has been evident that he genuinely cares about his athletes. He deeply cares about building a winning team, but also genuinely cares about each of the young athletes on his team. When I joined his program, he was very focused on trying to get the girls to 'buy in' to a specific year-round training program. He was trying to convince girls that off-season training was the key, but battling against apathy and a culture of mediocrity that inspired very few athletes to train in the off-season. This led to poorly prepared athletes who struggled to catch up in fitness throughout the season, and many injuries as out of shape athletes tried to compete during the season.

A new athletic director was hired in 2019. In his first season he started an all-sports year-round strength and conditioning program. In his second season, he began to host monthly meetings of all coaches in all sports to discuss coaching best practices. During these meetings he began to lead the coaching staff through a book study of InsideOut Coaching. Our track coaching staff began to work together to implement a more holistic approach to coaching focused on team culture and building connections with and between athletes. The results have been rapid and transformational.

During my interview with Coach Mueller, I can still hear much of his focus on coaching level one. He is still looking for the magical training program that will maximize the potential of the athletes in his program. He is studying training programs of well-known coaches and programs, and is very focused on making sure daily practices reflect the best of what he has learned in his research. He talked about new ideas for teaching hurdle techniques and high jump approaches.

But there is also something new. He also talked about the priority of making sure the coaching staff was unified and working together with great synergy. He wants coaches working together with a focus on doing what is best for the development of each athlete beyond their athletic performance. Coach Mueller talked about building emotional resilience and mental toughness and teaching athletes how to manage stress and anxiety as a life lesson. He mentioned a goal of using track and field to teach these things in a way that will carry into their lives outside of the athletic season.

From my interview I feel that Coach Mueller is moving his coaching staff, including myself, on the right path toward level two and three coaching. His focus is increasing on teaching servant leadership among the team, and increasing the culture of making each athlete feel valued and part of the team. He is taking the time to teach life values and encouraging his staff to connect with athletes on a deeper level. This is what is different from his previous season attempts to inspire girls to be their best, and the results are very evident. There is more work to be done, but the focus on helping each athlete find their purpose and acting on that purpose with passion is the direction I see in Coach Mueller's program. The girls are responding and the culture is taking off in a very positive way. Girls are showing up to off-season training sessions and are excited about the team in a way that was lacking before these changes were made.

I would and have suggested to Coach Mueller that he continue to shift his focus to level 2 and 3 as a head coach. Our weekly meetings are often still focused on level one practice planning with only a little time for level two planning. But he is bringing the coaching staff together and giving us a new synergy that lays the foundation for deeper meaning in our coaching. I am very optimistic that we are on the right path and that we are building a very positive culture where young girls will be able to connect and grow in a positive way. Coach Mueller is beginning to focus on the development of young athletes with their future lives in mind above and beyond their track success. This is the correct purpose of coaching and I am excited to be a part of this transformational program at ADM.