

Dear PCA Coach of the Year Nominating Committee,

I believe my cross country coach, Thomas Martin (Marty), should be considered for the PCA Coach of the Year Awards Program because of the way he uniquely challenges and encourages his team both as runners and as people.

I hadn't been coached by Marty for long when we competed at the toughest course in the state of Maryland. I stood in the pre-race huddle as a timid freshman when he came over to the team and said, "I know this is a challenging course. Look to your left, then look to your right, and say 'I am doing this for you.'"

This instance is just one example of the way Marty emphasizes the importance of the team over the importance of an individual, which is a fundamental idea when running 3.1 miles as fast as possible. Now years later as a current senior, Marty has taught me countless lessons about working hard, the meaning of commitment, and the importance of lifelong relationships. Just during my time on the team, I have seen him coach two state championship wins and one second place finish at states.

This past season Marty has focused on instilling in us the concept of the pain of commitment versus the pain of regret. He acknowledges that the workouts that he has us do are not always easy, but he knows that if we put in the effort, it will make us better. Rather than simply pressuring us to work for our goals, he gives us the choice to put in the work to make us stronger athletes. He highlights that this is something that cannot only be applied to high school cross country, but also something we will take with us long after graduating.

Another notion he has been reminding us of this season is what he likes to call "zen running." Marty has taught us that zen running is an opportunity for us to visualize success while staying relaxed and focused. He is aware of the mental toll of racing, and instead of ignoring it, he teaches his runners to embrace it.

Over the past 29 seasons, Marty has built Walter Johnson's cross country program into the recognized success that it is today. He welcomes everyone who is willing to run and treats them as equally valuable members of the team. I can't imagine that me or any of my teammates would be half the runners we are today without the guidance of Marty, and I can confidently say that I feel like the luckiest high school athlete in the world to have had Marty as my coach throughout my running career at Walter Johnson.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth