

“The First Call”

By “First Call”, I am referring to the call to an event – such as track and field. Being that track is one of the first sports that I played, it will be my contribution to the Bio-Athlete – which can be any dad who does anything remotely athletic from acrobatics to yoga...and everything in between.

Athletes come in all sizes and shapes: gymnasts tend to be small in size whereas basketball players can be virtual giants; long distance runners are lean whereas the short-distant runners are stocky; and so on and so forth. But for all the amateurs and the professionals alike, the common role of Bio-dad shows little partiality or profiling to size and shape – or even to physically conditioning in general. The Bio-Athlete must train himself but the Bio-dad must (or should) train his child or children.

In my recent bicycle rides I will see the apparent father helping one of his children train in running. Choosing a dirt road with hills, she seems to be under his direction and oversight; thus he is being both Bio-dad that, potentially, was or is somewhat of an athlete himself. If he were teaching her math skills or helping her with homework, he would still qualify as a Bio-dad; but it just so happens, that he is helping her with track-related training.

Many years ago, I ran track too; and to a degree was inspired by my dad’s running routine and emphasis on such things. Yes, there were other inspirations or motivations, but my dad happen to one of the more important or memorable. In one of the few track events that he attended, I happen to run my best time winning the district in one event and placing second in another. It was a banner day

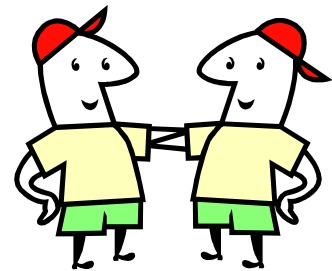


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and an experience I'll never forget. I was glad he was there that day, and I consider his presence to be truly the difference in the last leg of the mile – when a kick could mean the difference!

Looking back further in time, I never really had any sport's heroes or icons; I never really looked to one athlete as my object for inspiration. Oh, I liked some of the movies about them – or portrayals of them; but the athletes were not my heroes. Perhaps most admiring is that occasional confession that, besides sports, being a dad or parent was the greatest job or role they had or have. Potentially is that some of these professional actually do a lot to help disadvantaged children or others through their in-sport and after-sport activity – and it is probably good for some to hold these accomplished athletes in such high esteem.

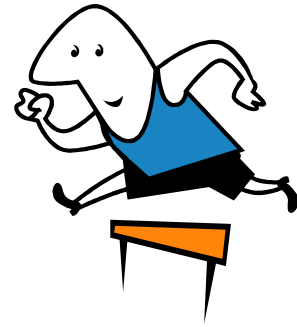
Ironically, many athletes suffer (or suffered) through their early lives without Bio-dads being around – or being there to potentially help them. Perhaps the absence of a dad somewhat fueled their desire to succeed or excel – and maybe inspired them to try to help others faced with the same disadvantages. When a Bio-athlete can be a Bio-dad, it is a good thing; and when a Bio-dad can reach to children without Bio-dad's around, it is a better thing. Children need a hero – but more than that, they need a dad...or someone like him.



In track and field, "the first call" is the first public announcement of an upcoming event; for example, the announcement might be: "First call for the men's mile". For those participating, the announcement is the obvious order to go to the track, to warm-up and otherwise prepare for the event. Another "call" or two will be the only other order given; so if you happen to miss "the first call", there's

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always the second or third. Besides responding to the call is the event itself. Some running events are hampered by the weather or other conditions and, ideally, the runner should be prepared for them. For the hurdler or the steeple-chase, obstacles are just part of the event – as indicative of life and its hurdles or obstacles. For some, these “hurdles” or obstacles are much more frequent – even daunting! As described above, children that do not have their Bio-dads there to help are among the children that have such obstacles in life; but, enough biographies have shown that such children can (and have) strived and done well just the same.



Unlike hurdling, where the obstacles are visible and staged evenly, life is not so predictable or calculated; it is not that orderly or systematic. Random occurrences of obstacles – that cannot always be predicated or prepared for – is just part of life; and unlike a race that is relatively quick and final, the race of life is not. We pass from one event to another and, sometimes seem to *go around in circles* to face seemingly the same obstacles again; and though track has a few circular events, the finish-line is known...and seen except for the marathon.

In the Bible or *The Message*, Paul speaks of running the race as an analogy to the *race or life* of the Christian or believer; in 2 Timothy, he says:

This is the only race worth running. I’ve run hard right to the finish, believed all the way. All that’s left now is the shouting—God’s applause! Depend on it, he’s an honest judge. He’ll do right not only by me, but by everyone eager for his coming.

What a wonderful finish to the race of life – when “all that’s left now is the shouting.” A Bio-dad, whether an athlete or any other profession,

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must finish the race that God has placed before him; and what's more, he must help his children as God has called him to do. Being responsive to "the first call", he cannot simply pass the baton to another expecting that his participation and involvement is over; no, he must finish the race of life such that when he does face the one and true judge – his Lord and Savior – he can do so with the confidence that comes in Christ alone.