

# ENGAGING COACHES

## *A Case Study*



Krystyna Smith, athletic director at Somersworth High School (SHS), announced to all her coaches that the NHIAA would be bringing Life of an Athlete (LoA) program developer John Underwood to conduct LoA training. The main focus of the training would be to improve athletic and academic performance by focusing on the impact of lifestyle choices on athletic performance when addressing student athletes.

Steve Hodsdon, volleyball and track and field coach at SHS jumped at the opportunity. “I was amazed by the information presented by John Underwood,” Hodsdon said. “This is the exact program that we need in our school for our athletes to become more educated. We went “all in” at Somersworth on LoA after this presentation.”

After the training, Krystyna and her team of coaches approached the school board with the information, and they immediately approved a motion to begin implementing LoA at SHS and in their community.

That fall, Coach Hodsdon began implementing LoA with his girls volleyball team. Coach Hodsdon struggled to find time to talk to his athletes about LoA, because he was only with them for about two hours a day. He figured out the best way to begin providing information to his athletes was to give them each a copy of the Powerback Diet Plan. The athletes were able to read this nutrition guide at home and begin making healthy choices immediately. Once the athletes read through this short guide they immediately bought into LoA and began holding themselves accountable for their lifestyle choices related to sleep, nutrition, alcohol and other drugs. They learned about how the amount of food and liquid to put in their bodies, how much sleep they got and their commitment to remain drug-free allowed them to perform at optimal levels. They also learned about the importance of recovery techniques on their muscle repair.

After reading the Powerback Diet Plan the team decided that they would no longer stop for fast food after away games. Instead they would pack nutritious snacks for before and after the games according to the Powerback Diet Plan. “The girls often let me know they are eating and staying hydrated according to LoA recommendations by showing me their chocolate milk. Who knew that chocolate milk had so many benefits! This has made a big difference in preparing our athletes for the games and helping them recover after the games,” says Hodsdon. “A parent came up to me and asked if I could go over the Powerback Diet Plan with their daughter to help her make healthy choices. They had read through the booklet and knew how important it was.”

After establishing excitement for LoA by using the Powerback Diet booklet, Coach Hodsdon immediately started using LoA’s “5 Cs of an Effective Leader” to evaluate and pick team captains. As captains, student athletes must demonstrate character, civility, competence, chemical health, and citizenship. By evaluating team captains based on these different characteristics, Coach Hodsdon was able to pick the most effective leaders of his teams.

Coach Hodsdon now meets with his assistant coaches and current captains at the end of each season to use this document to evaluate captains for the upcoming year. After seeing the benefits and building excitement for LoA with his student athletes, Coach Hodsdon makes sure to incorporate messaging on healthy lifestyles into team meetings. On Friday afternoons, whether it is before or after a game or practice, he gives the captains time to talk to their teammates to make sure everyone is on the same page and making healthy choices going into the weekend. They all hold each other accountable, leading to success on and off the court.