

2. Build Your Attention Span for Hard Work

Whether or not you're the most talented athlete on your team, you want to have an exceptional experience running in high school. To do this, you need to build your attention span for hard work.

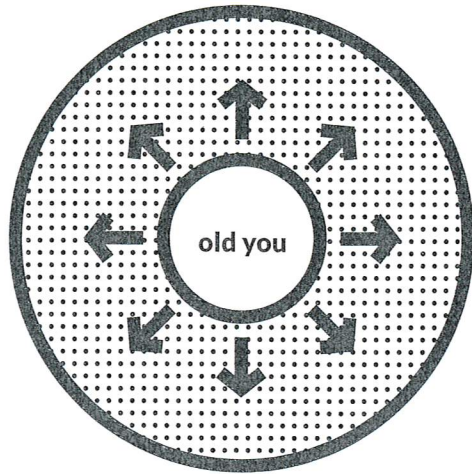
Consider the term "long run." This is the most time you'll spend on your feet each week, and it will last much longer than a race. Staying engaged mentally, making sure you're running with great posture from start to finish, and making sure the pace doesn't slow down toward the end—these all build your attention span for hard work. After you have a few long runs under your belt, you can either increase the distance or increase the pace of the run. (Later on, I'll explain why increasing the pace is often a better choice.)

As a high school athlete, you're obviously going to train fewer minutes or miles per week than professional athletes, yet the non-running work you need to be doing after each run or workout might be as challenging and lengthy as theirs. It's not uncommon for a determined high school athlete to do 20 minutes of non-running work following every run, and as much as 30 minutes a couple of times a week on the harder days. Strength and mobility exercises

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can be simple, but they're not easy. A determined athlete can hold a plank for 10 seconds, regardless of how hard he or she ran during a workout. And a 10-second plank can soon become a 15-second one, which is a great indicator that you're slowly getting stronger, even if you're unable to run more minutes or miles. You just have to build the attention span to improve your planks.

Here's the deal: You can't change who your parents are. You can't change the genetic talent you were born with. But you can change your capacity for hard work. Staying engaged mentally on a long run, making the last 10 to 20 minutes the best minutes of the run, or doing challenging non-running work following a challenging workout are all examples. My favorite quote for runners is from the iconic jazz pianist Thelonious Monk: "Simple ain't easy." I'm not saying running hard long runs and doing 15, 20, or even 30 minutes of non-running work is going to be easy, but it's definitely not complex. If Thelonious Monk had been a runner, he might have said, "Running is simple, but it's not easy."



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***You can change
your capacity for
hard work.***