

'You Can't Ever Say Love You Enough:' Coach Landon Reflects on Heartbreaking Death of Standout Runner

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JERSEYVILLE - “Heartbreaking,” was the way Jersey head cross country coach Harold Landon described the sudden death of 19-year-old Christian Cazier, a former star for his squad.

Christian Cazier died from injuries suffered in a fatal car accident on U.S. Route 67 on Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2020. Landon said students, faculty and the community were struggling to comprehend the death of such a vibrant young man at only 19 years old. Landon’s classroom is next to Christian’s mother, Tiffany, who is a math instructor at Jersey Community High School.

For Landon and most coaches, the student-athletes become much like their children because of the time spent with one another. Landon and the other faculty and administration also had a difficult time Tuesday with their memories of Tiffany and her commitment with her husband to their family. Speaking for her colleagues, Landon said, “We all feel for her. Everyone here will be supportive of Tiffany and the family.”

Landon said the Cazier family is very “tight-knit.”

“When Christian would run in cross country and track, his entire family would show up,” Landon said. “He would have not only his parents and other immediate family members but grandparents. He always had a huge entourage following him.”

Christian was a varsity cross country and track runner his entire high school career, starting as a freshman. Landon said former cross country star Ben Flowers, now a Wichita State University standout, took Christian under his wing and that Christian sincerely “looked up to Ben as a role model,” trying to emulate Ben on the track and cross country turf.

“Christian was a very quiet kid, but he really grew with the cross country and track teams,” Landon said. “Christian was part of one of our best cross country teams that finished four points away at the sectional from going to state. He was only a freshman on that team.”

Christian had to have a special diet, so the cross country team adapted to him when they traveled and always looked after him, Landon said. “They made sure Christian was ordering right.”

Cross country is a sport where there is a lot of travel and summer work. Of the two sports Landon coaches, he said the cross country runners always become “very close.”

He said on group chats on social media after his death on Tuesday night and Wednesday, the cross country runners were sharing their favorite memories of Christian and supported one another on that remorseful day. On Wednesday, Landon said every hour of the day, student-athletes were stopping by to converse about Christian, also sharing their favorite memories of the Jersey youth.

Christian recorded some strong times in his Jersey distance career, posting a 5:04.54 indoors in the 1,600 meters in 2018, and 10:38.74 in the 3,200 meters outdoors in 2016. He ran a 5:12.13 p.r. outdoors in 2016. Landon said he believed the last time he had spent time with Christian was at the Jersey 2019 graduation.

Christian was a student at Lewis and Clark Community College and Landon said he believed had an interest in pursuing work with computers. Landon said Christian would have had a very bright future and was simply “a good young man.”

Landon had some small words of wisdom for each family out there after this terrible tragedy.

“We don’t say we appreciate you enough or love you enough,” he said. “When something like this happens to a kid that young it is hard to accept and I don’t know if we ever here will get the answer for that.”

