



Coach Patrylak, Tyler Pence Show Once Again What Being A Coach Is All About

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ST. CHARLES, MO. - Teachers and coaches leave such an impact on the lives of their athletes across the U.S. and globe.

Sunday at St. Charles, Mo., 26.2-Mile Cowbell Marathon, Edwardsville High School head girls, and boys cross country coach George Patrylak and University of Illinois-Springfield head men's and women's cross country coach Tyler Pence, didn't forget their athletes who are now going on to stardom in post-college events.

One of the more touching parts of the marathon for two area women - Julianna Determan and Savannah Brannan - was the attendance of the two coaches and George's wife, Roxanne, who cheered them at multiple spots along the way. Coach Pence drove from Springfield, IL., to watch the entire 26.2-mile race. Pence recently posted an incredible time of 2 hours, 15 minutes, 6 seconds, to win the 26.2-mile TBK Bank Quad Cities Marathon. He has become a national/world-class runner since he became the head coach at UIS and competed at the 2021 U.S. Olympic Trials in the marathon. A marathon is a long race for any athlete, and this one took 3-plus hours for both women, but the coaches were there from start to finish.

Julianna won the female marathon Sunday in St. Charles, Mo., in 3 hours, 8 minutes, and 32 seconds, while Savannah was third overall in the female division with a time of 3 hours, 20 minutes, and 58 seconds. Both qualified for the Boston Marathon in their first attempt at only age 22.

Coach Pence is considered one the top coaches in the country at a Division II level with how he has built the University of Illinois-Springfield cross country and track and field program to one recognized on a national scope.

Julianna and Savannah and their families were greatly moved that George and Roxanne and Coach Pence took the time out from their busy schedules to spend the day cheering on the two women.

Julianna said as far as Coach Patrylak and Roxanne being there, it shows how dedicated they are to their cross country family.

"I graduated in 2017 and they are still coming and supporting me all throughout one of the hardest races of my life," she added.

"It meant a lot to me to have them there supporting me just as they did throughout my high school and college career," Savannah said. "They're the people who got me to where I am today and are the reason I was able to finish the marathon. Coach Pence actually wrote my marathon training, and it helped me so much to prepare both mentally and physically. Throughout my college years, I had the pleasure to watch him compete in many marathons, always giving everything he had in his races, sometimes to the point where he couldn't finish. That mentality along with his work ethic allowed him to make the Olympic Trials.

"It was so cool watching my coach (Tyler Pence) run with the front runners in that race knowing all the work he had put in it to get here. It really inspired me to want to race marathons one day."

Savannah was seeded high in her final conference outdoor track and field meet in the 5K and 10K as a UIS senior. However, she tested positive for COVID-19 a few days before the conference meet and was not allowed to participate. Coach Pence also performed one of his most heartfelt acts of her entire running career when she no longer had COVID. The coach asked the men and women on the UIS cross country teams to join him on a Springfield track to cheer her on as he paced her in a final 10K race.

Roxanne is known as the greatest all-time cheerleader for all the EHS cross country and track athletes, constantly running around the track and cross country venues, encouraging them at meets. Time after time, Coach Patrylak and Coach Pence go well

above and beyond to continue the development of their athletes. Coach Patrylak and Coach Pence show how deeply coaches can influence their athletes both while they are directly under them and even in their post-high school and college careers.

Coach Patrylak had an interesting comment on why he and the other coaches make these types of efforts with their graduates.

“I always say that our runners are family and always will be family,” he said. “Most of them let us know what is going on with their careers in college and after and we always try to support them in their endeavors.”