



Alumni Spotlight: Colin Gordon '10 **Striving for Something Bigger**

by Paul Q. Fisher, M. Ed.

No Coventry Christian athlete has ever earned a trophy or medaled in a PIAA district competition. No Coventry Christian athlete, that is, except Colin Gordon ('10). No CCS student nor alumni can truly claim to have single-handedly started a new sport at CCS. That is, no one but Colin Gordon. The sport? Cross country. No CCS sport can claim victories over public schools. No sport except cross country. No sport in CCS history has produced more college athletes than cross country. In preparing for catching up with Colin in order to write this article, I searched my email account for any pieces of Colin history that might be stored there. I found a gem of an email that speaks to Colin's commitment to his sport.

It was May of his junior year. After its inaugural season, the cross country team that he had persuaded me to start and to coach consisted of only two committed runners and a rag tag bunch of tenacious and spirited soccer players who wanted very much to give Colin a cross country team. We would schedule the cross country meets for Wednesdays, the only day that the soccer team had off, so that the soccer guys could don cross country uniforms and run with Colin's team. His email outlined what I needed to

do: call a special meeting during the school day, sell the sport, put together a summer group run schedule to help everyone follow through on summer workouts, put together a training program for beginners, make a sales pitch in chapel, and prove to the students that cross country is a sport that can put CCS on the map. He even offered to create the training program—with my help, of course. He closed with a little jab at my casual approach to the team, “Having a serious and organized mentality will most definitely convey the message that XC is for real and will help grow the program.” In the fall of his senior year, CCS took the high school boys’ cross country team to the district championships at Lehigh University, where Colin medaled with a top 20 finish.

Colin proceeded to quietly inspire those around him to higher levels of commitment and performance. His passion motivated others to run simply because they wanted his passion to be satisfied. The team had a “run for Colin” attitude. It wasn’t just Colin’s love for the sport that spurred on the only CCS team that ever competed for an entire season against much larger public and private schools. It was a shared desire to put CCS on the sports map in our area.

Thanks in no small part to his leadership, the cross country team scored victories over much larger schools like Pottstown and Reading high schools. Soccer players who didn't train during the summer or running season turned in fast, gutsy times because Colin's commitment was inspiring. They all ran hard. The entire team enjoyed being the dark horse at meets and invitationals. No one expected anything from the team, and that was part of the joy of running with "Coventry Christian" on their chests. Every man left the field, chest held high, having earned respect for his little Christian school. Colin recalls, "Winning a few meets, particularly in track—winning the two mile several times at Pottsgrove—that felt really good because I'd show up in my Coventry Christian singlet and keep my mouth shut and warm up, win, keep my mouth shut and cool down. The Coventry Christian singlet connoted 'this is a joke' to other people. It was good to have us taken seriously."

After high school, Colin spent his freshman year at Hampden Sydney College in Virginia. Wanting to relocate and go to school closer to home, he transferred to Eastern University in St. Davids, PA, where his coach, Mike Wilson, says that he was "one of the hardest working athletes ever to wear a XC jersey at Eastern." Just as he did at CCS, he set the bar high by quiet example more than by dynamic leadership, doggedly logging 100 mile weeks during the summer. Wilson says Colin, a three-time MVP, truly set the tone for Eastern's team, serving as a catalyst for the success of the men's program over the last three seasons. He owns three of the top 15 times in Eastern XC history, including the third best in school history for the 8k. In a recent tribute to Colin, Wilson wrote, "The foundation that you have helped to lay will be built on for years to come, and the culture that you have helped to put into place will be instrumental to the team's success moving forward." Colin is humbled but deeply satisfied by his coach's assessment, recognizing the power of a quiet example, "They watch me and next thing you know they're eating oatmeal and almonds and working out twice a day. They say they owe their improvement



to me, and it's hard to believe. I'm not Ryan Hall. I'm not Jason Bull. But to be what Jason Bull was to me and is to me—the people that I look up to as those big brother figures in running—is awesome."

Now a senior at Eastern, Colin is shifting from earning respect for his school through standout performances to training and coaching other students to carry the torch where he has blazed the trail. His college running career now complete, Colin is going to be coaching the Eastern University cross country teams and hopes to some day coach at CCS. He still has a dream for cross country and track at CCS. It's a dream for bigger and more competitive teams, but it's also a dream to share the gifts that God has given him through running. "It [running] gets us away from distractions and opens us up to hear God speak because everything else is silenced. It's like pressing the reset button when life gets too noisy or overwhelming. It provides brotherhood and companionship with those joining you on the journey, and it invigorates the body God has given me so that it can be more useful to God."

A true runner, Colin's running pursuits are just getting underway. Unlike many sports, distance running provides its athletes with tremendous opportunities to complete and develop after college. Colin plans to keep training after college. "I have some unsettled goals with certain distances," he explains. "5k—I think I can break 16 minutes. I'd like to improve my half marathon time to 1:18. After that we'll see. Maybe do ultramarathoning when I lose my speed."

Christian Olympian, Eric Liddell, famously said, "I believe God made me for a purpose. But he also made me fast, and when I run, I feel his pleasure." I asked Colin if he was that keenly conscious of running as a spiritual expression. He explains, "Worship happens when I run, but that's just it. I don't think of the act itself as worship. My body is the vessel through which God uses me in this world. If I need to run to be at my best for him in the rest of life, that's what I'll do. It's a gift to be enjoyed, but it's always about something bigger."

