

Health & Fitness Journal of Canada

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Volume 13

September 30, 2020

Number 3

COMMENTARY

Dr. Jack and Cheryl Taunton. The Whole Is Greater Than the Sum of the Accomplishments

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Abstract

Jack and Cheryl Taunton are widely known for their leadership and contributions to sport and to medicine within BC, Canada, and the world. Despite their busy and often hectic lifestyle, they have been equally committed to the many long-term friendships forged in their youth. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2020;13(3):9-11.**

<https://doi.org/10.14288/hfjc.v13i3.319>

Keywords: Sport Medicine, Friendship, Track and Field, Dedication

Introduction

When I received this request to write about the life, contributions, and friendship of Jack and Cheryl, I was both honored and intimidated.

Jack's contributions to sport and sports medicine are so far reaching it is almost impossible to summarize them - and for every step along his path, Cheryl has contributed mightily. Unquestionably they are a team extraordinaire!

I am neither a former Olympian or a Sports Medicine Specialist. My wife, Wendy and I have however been honored to be close friends of Jack and Cheryl since our university days. We have witnessed not only the achievements but also the sacrifices and hard work they have put forth throughout their careers. While Jack is very much the public face of this incredible team, as close friends, we are aware that Cheryl is the fuel that keeps this team operating. Her dedication to family

and her organizational work, often behind the scenes, have been vital to their success!

Jack and Cheryl are five years older than Wendy and me. As we age, this is insignificant but in our 20s, that was a large gap. I must admit, like most others, I was a bit awed by Jack's work habits in those days - and of Cheryl's support. Some of my earliest memories include Jack climbing into the passenger seat of their Datsun 510 so that Cheryl could drive him wherever he was going while he read, studied, and prepared himself to become Dr. Jack Taunton. Honestly, at that point in my life I thought - who does that?!! Who studies at every opportunity - this man must be driven! Until then I had drifted along getting by on whatever talent or good luck delivered. Honestly Jack was the first person I met who truly put his entire being into whatever task he attempted. It was a good lesson in understanding that success is something one must earn!

Clearly Jack is a clever man – one could not accomplish all that he has done without great intelligence. For me though, there are a few things that make Jack special.

His ability to outwork and outlast just about anyone or anything that he tackles is amazing. Jack's running career is a good example of his tenacity. Admittedly not blessed with blazing speed, Jack recognized that his success on the track was going to be limited. He also knew that success in the marathon required hard work and Jack was one of the hardest workers I knew. Until his back failed him, despite his schedule Jack always found time to put in a long run – either with friends or alone if need be. I was one of those lucky enough to benefit from Jack's consistency. I often wonder how many times would I have let my training slip if it had not been for Jack! What success I had, was at least partially due to Jack's friendship, combined with some of his persistence and work ethic rubbing off on me. For Jack, these traits made him one of the most recognized marathoners in the province. Jack ran a total of 62 marathons and a personal best of 2:25. While he never had the notoriety of an Olympic marathon performance, Jack is recognized and respected by everyone who has ever lined-up at a starting line in Vancouver. He has been a founding organizer of every major running event that has occurred in Vancouver over the past 40 years.

I know and appreciate how proud Jack has been to serve Canada as a doctor on so many international teams. His contributions to things such as the National Field Hockey team and the 2010 Olympic Games have been enormous. Still he jokes that he would have given it all up to have made a national team as a marathoner. We are all fortunate this trade was never made. Jack has done so much more than just run quickly. He is in fact synonymous with

running in Vancouver! His career has benefited thousands of both casual and international athletes. As a marathoner, he is likely remembered by more people than many of those who went on to actually make those national teams we coveted. His enthusiasm and support for other runners has been unparalleled.

Jack and Cheryl are friends who make others better. From 1975 – 1987, Wendy and I lived in very close proximity to Jack and Cheryl. First in a townhouse development in Steveston and then in houses less than one kilometer apart. If you know Jack, then you know that he was largely responsible for convincing me that I needed to put in the work if I wanted to succeed – in running, in life, or at work. Our daily runs along the dykes in Richmond are one of my fondest memories of that time of our life.

For many years, our lives were tightly intertwined. We ran together, socialized together, and even had children and expanded our families in very similar time frames. In 1978, Wendy gave birth to our first child. Sadly, everything that could go wrong during the birth did go wrong. I remember the horror of that day and the incredible support I felt when Jack, having learned of the difficulties, returned immediately from the Commonwealth Games Medical Conference in Edmonton to be by my side during those difficult days. Without strong familial support, Jack and Cheryl were two of the people on whom I leaned. His and Cheryl's support and ability to help me understand all that was happening during those weeks was something for which I will ever be grateful and something which I know we will all remember forever.

In addition to being a loyal friend, Jack is a wonderful cheerleader. I cannot recall the number of times that Jack has praised my

abilities or my achievements. Jack's tendency to exaggerate about the abilities and accomplishments of others is incredible when you think of all he has done! Measured against his accomplishments most of us pale in comparison. Still, when introduced by Jack or when he is telling a story, I always know that I am going to come out faster, smarter, and more successful than reality. A little bit of exaggeration from a fellow like Jack can give one a reason to perform up to the level he expects!

Jack and Cheryl visited Wendy and me during our three years working in Syria. Not many were willing to make that journey in 2003. You had to be a good friend to be willing to come to Aleppo post 9-11! It required an adventurous spirit to believe that Syria and Aleppo could make a great vacation but Jack and Cheryl had faith! It was wonderful to have such close friends experience and understand the life we were living at that time. Now, living in Kelowna, we no longer have the daily contact we once enjoyed and that is certainly something I miss. The bond remains, however, and we feel fortunate to have been a part of their lives.

I am certain that others will chronicle the many contributions that Jack and Cheryl have made to athletics and Sports Medicine in Vancouver, Canada, and around the world. It never ceases to amaze me how much they accomplish and how Jack can always fit in one more request. He remains a speaker and consultant for events happening around the world. His mammoth effort during the 2010 games is now considered a model for future international events and I know he is often called on to consult with organizing committees.

To me though, Jack and Cheryl are so much more than their academic or career

accomplishments. They are parents to two wonderful young women and grandparents to six. Their two girls have continued the Taunton tradition of achievement. Kristin, formerly an international field hockey player, followed in Jack's footsteps as an orthopedic surgeon while Carla is a professor of Art History and Contemporary Studies who is active in promoting Indigenous rights. The Taunton tradition of helping others lives on.

For me, the Taunton achievements are awesome in both breadth and depth but most importantly, I have been proud over these past 45 years to have Jack and Cheryl as friends. Despite the fact that we no longer live next door to each other, we will always count them amongst our very closest and dearest friends. Cheers!

Author's Qualifications

The author's qualifications are as follows: James Scorgie BGS, MA.