



Jack Morgan's face says it all as he finishes a long distance race. Assistant coach is leaning over, clock in hand.

"Quitter" is usually a no-no word, not only in sports but anywhere. However, that's not exactly the case of Jack Morgan.

Being a "quitter" was undoubtedly the difference in Morgan being an also ran and a Class AA state champion in the 3200 meters for Clarion High School in 1980.

His dad, Don Morgan, contacted me after the story appeared in this newspaper commemorating the Bobcats' runner-up finish in the team standings in the state track meet. Jack Morgan was one of two state champs for Clarion, the other being Marshall Germany in the high jump.

The elder Morgan, who still lives in Clarion, said his son was a starter in basketball as a sophomore, but a not-yet accomplished distance runner for the track team. He did qualify for the state meet, but after a disappointing showing there, made a big decision.

And that was to quit basketball and concentrate on what he loved: running.

Don Morgan is writing a book to be published by the International Association of Life Coaches. In an excerpt from a chapter called "Quit and Grit," he writes, "(Clarion) Coach Bob Bowersox gave (Jack) a weekly training plan. In the winter, it was brutal. Running in freezing cold weather in wet, muddy and often icy woods, trails and fields requires grit.

"Playing basketball in the gym would have been fun and also brought a certain degree of success," he added. "In the early spring, when he came back onto the track and did speed and endurance sessions, he willingly endured the pain. It was all part of the process. He knew that to get to a winning level, he needed to put in the work."

The younger Morgan took second in the state cross country meet as a senior. That winter, he won the state indoor two-mile title, both in his school's classification and overall. In the spring, he set the school record in the 800 before winning the state championship in the 3200.

Morgan received a scholarship to the University of North Carolina and ran the steeplechase for the Tar Heels, leading the Atlantic Coast Conference in that event.

Now a resident of Pittsboro, North Carolina, Jack Morgan was successful as a track and cross country coach at Chapel Hill (N.C.) High School.

"Both quit and grit paid off for Jack," Don Morgan wrote. "He would have enjoyed success playing high school basketball, but he would have missed out in the greatness he achieved."