

A History  
Around the Course and Down the Track with “Doc”  
A conversation with  
Adam Kedge – Albuquerque Academy- Hall of Famer  
And  
Curtis Williams – Gallup – Hall of Famer  
PERSONAL INSIGHTS and a HISTORY of HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY  
In “THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT”

**CURTIS:** *Preface:* While I volunteered to this per the request of David “Doc” Helm, I was very apprehensive. I would like to apologize if I have omitted mentioning well-deserving athletes and coaches; or if I have included any erroneous information. Not all of us will ever agree on what individuals were the best. When answering the question about top runners and coaches, I did not prioritize or rank any particular order.

**CURTIS:** *Acknowledgement:* I will admit that I used the internet to do my research. As we all know, some sites are not always accurate or up to date. I would like to thank Doc for allowing me to relive the past.

**DOC: WHAT PRECEPTS DO YOU FOLLOW TO CREATE YOUR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS AND ATHLETES?**

**ADAM:** ALL SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS MUST START WITH SOME BASIC FUNDAMENTALS, OURS AT ALBUQUERQUE ACADEMY BEING:

- Balance – the program must fit into a person’s life with a healthy balance between family, health, academics, and athletics – in that order.

Team First – placing team and teammates first never takes away from all that an individual can accomplish.

Hard Work – there is no substitute for daily effort that builds from day to day, season to season, into a successful career.

The Marriage of Success and Failure – running, with all of its beauty, is a cruel and revealing sport. Everyone experiences failure and setback. How one deals with those setbacks and how they persevere is at the root of the beauty of our sport. It is okay to fail.

Much of my philosophy of cross country and coaching can be viewed in the below outline of “building a successful program” that I wrote a few years back for national coaching guru, Jay Johnson. See link:

<http://www.coachingjayjohnson.com/2011/09/advice-from-adam-kedge/>

**CURTIS:** The first thing I would do is provide a handbook with rules for eligibility, NMAA, school drug and alcohol policy, criminal offense, misdemeanors, injuries/illness’, practice, trips/meets, equipment, lettering, fundraising, etc. All of these rules would have consequences even to the point of dismissal from the team. Also, in the handbook, I would include the importance of scientific evidence of warm-ups, stretches, cool down, nutrition, treatment of injuries, proper shoes, lightning alerts, and precompetitive anxiety. One section of the handbook would be devoted to race strategies. Another section would be addressing parents and their role. The final section would be motivation such as poems, stories, etc. I would invite my coaches and athletes to contribute to this section.

ONCE YOU HAVE YOUR GUIDELINES AND RULES IN PLACE, THEN EVERYONE KNOWS THEIR ROLE AND EXPECTATIONS.  
FINALLY – RECRUIT! RECRUIT! RECRUIT! ANYONE THAT LOOKS LIKE A RUNNER. STRENGTH COMES IN NUMBERS.

THE FOLLOWING THE COACHING CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESS I USED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE THEM GREAT:

- FIRST IS TO CARE ABOUT ALL OF YOUR RUNNERS; NOT JUST THE FASTEST SUPERSTAR.

SHOW YOUR ENTHUSIASM EVERY DAY.  
COMMUNICATE GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS WEEKLY.  
CHART ALL ATHLETES' PRACTICES AND MEET PERFORMANCES.  
REWARD AND PRAISE CONSTANTLY.  
DON'T BE AFRAID TO LOWER THE HAMMER WHEN NECESSARY.  
ALLOW INTERACTION AND ATHLETE INPUT IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS, I.E., TEAM RULES, FAVORITE WORKOUTS, ETC.  
MAKE SURE ATHLETES HAVE A READINESS TO COMPETE AT THEIR LEVEL TO BE SUCCESSFUL.  
DESIGN WORKOUTS THAT SERVE YOUR OBJECTIVES, BUT TRY TO MAKE THEM FUN.  
ADJUST YOUR WORKOUTS; FOLLOW THE HARD/EASY PRINCIPLE AND THE PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD.  
GROUP YOUR ATHLETES BY TALENT, BUT STILL HAVE EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL GROUPS.  
BE THERE FOR THEM! BE MORE THAN JUST A COACH!

**DOC: WHAT WAS YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY OF CROSS COUNTRY AND WHO WERE YOUR MENTORS AS AN ATHLETE AND AS A COACH AND WHY?**

**ADAM: Memories:** Although I started running at age 9 or 10 after being a cast away from other organized sports where I did not find success, my first real memories of high school cross country happened when I was a freshman in high school.

In 1979 (I think the year is correct) my older brother and I went to view the NM State Cross Country Championships being held in Santa Fe. It was during the era of the great Santa Fe High teams. I remember Peter Graham (current SFHS coach) racing through the arroyos near Ft. Marcy Park, just burying the rest of the field. I recall the intensity of Peter, the other competitors, but mostly the intensity of Pete's coach, John Alerie, pushing Peter to his limit despite a huge lead.

My next fond and defining memory was one that took place the following summer. In the summer of 1980 my older brother left for two months to live with relatives in California. Prior to that, we were training partners and fairly even ability. I remember, like yesterday, my brother slugging me (hard) on the arm and telling me, "you better run." For two months, I ran, our normal trail, 5 ½ miles from our house to the windmill and back through the hills outside of Espanola. I ran in New Mexico, he ran in California, and when we got back together two months later things changed. We were still brothers, runners, and training partners, but the old cow trails of northern New Mexico cannot be matched by any of the draws of California.

**Mentors:** Cross Country in the state of New Mexico has been shaped profoundly by two men: Curtis Williams and Matt Henry.

THE FIRST TRUE INNOVATOR OF CROSS COUNTRY IN OUR STATE WAS CURTIS WILLIAMS OF GALLUP. CURTIS' SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM WAS SECOND TO HOW HE AND STAFF RAN THEIR TEAMS. MANY PROGRAMS PRIOR TO THE GREAT GALLUP PROGRAMS LACKED STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION. FROM THE OUTSIDE, CURTIS RAN HIS TEAMS LIKE A GENERAL AND HIS ARMY, FULL OF DISCIPLINE, NEVER GIVING IN OR SURRENDERING. THE TOUGHNESS OF THE WHOLE TEAM, FROM HIS #1 DOWN TO HIS LAST MAN, WAS A SIGHT TO SEE. IF EEL CURTIS CHANGED CROSS COUNTRY IN NEW MEXICO FOR WHAT MANY CONSIDERED A SPORT FOR FOOTBALL REJECTS OR FOR PRE-SEASON BASKETBALL CONDITIONING INTO A REAL SPORT.

THE SECOND MAN, AND SECOND SET OF SECRET INGREDIENTS TO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL CROSS COUNTRY PROGRAM WAS ON DISPLAY FOR YEARS BY THE ADORED, MATT HENRY. HIS FORMULA OF TREATING KIDS WITH KINDNESS, BUILDING A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE, ONE WHERE ALL ARE VALUED AND RESPECTED CAN BE SEEN TODAY IN EVERY SUCCESSFUL CROSS COUNTRY PROGRAM IN THE STATE. COACH HENRY'S OLD WEST MESA TEAMS WERE GOOD; BUT WHEN HE TOOK HIS FORMULA TO LA CUEVA HIGH SCHOOL, THE LANDSCAPE OF NEW MEXICO CROSS COUNTRY CHANGED FOREVER. A TEAM, NO MATTER HOW MUCH TALENT AND HARD WORK, COULD NOT MATCH THE TIDAL WAVE OF 100+ SMILING, FUN-LOVING RUNNERS, AND THEIR SUPPORTIVE FAMILY MEMBERS. DON'T BE MISTAKEN BY MATT'S PLEASANT DEMEANOR AND THE APPARENT JOY EXUDED BY HIS TEAMS. HE WAS A HARD-NOSED COMPETITOR, BOTH AS A RUNNER AND AS A COACH, AND THE PERFORMANCES OF HIS TEAMS MIRRORED HIS QUIET INTENSITY.

MATT'S IMPACT ON MY PROGRAM CAN BE SEEN IN MY OPENING REMARKS AND MY PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT. I SEE A TOUCH OF COACH HENRY IN EVERY GOOD NEW MEXICO PROGRAM. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I SEE THE INFLUENCE OF COACH CURTIS WILLIAMS AND COACH MATT HENRY IN FAR MORE ATHLETES AND INDIVIDUALS THAN THOSE THAT HAD A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO RUN ON THEIR TEAMS.

**CURTIS:** IT WAS THE SUMMER OF 1972 WHEN I WAS HIRED TO COACH JUNIOR HIGH BASKETBALL AND TRACK AT TOHATCHI HIGH SCHOOL. ON MY FIRST DAY ON THE JOB, THE PRINCIPAL CALLED ME INTO HIS OFFICE AND INFORMED THAT I WOULD BE THE VARSITY CROSS COUNTRY, BASKETBALL, AND JUNIOR HIGH TRACK COACH WITH A FULL TEACHING LOAD.

I was excited and apprehensive at the same time. I knew nothing about cross country and had very little experience with the other two sports. I went looking for books on coaching distance runners; you guessed it, not much was being published. So began my trial and error approach to cross country. I have to share my first hosting of a meet. Is set up a course around Chuska Lake. The junior varsity went off without a hitch. During the race, a rain cloud appeared over Chuska Mountain, yet no rain on the race. We started the varsity race and still no rain. A beautiful day, but wait, run off water started coming off the mountain. The runners were on one side of the water and the finish line was on the other. The first 10 or so runners splashed through the water, but it kept rising. What to do? I crossed the water which was now knee-deep to the other side. Our football coach, yes, a football coach, was helping at the meet. He went to the middle, and other volunteers and coaches formed a line; and we literally passed each runner across this wall of water that was now waist-high. As the race neared the end, the water receded back to ankle-deep with the last few runners crossing like the first 10. This was a very scary ordeal that I will never forget. I could just see the headlines, "Athletes drown – Coach Fired."

The coaching profession had not risen to the status of today. Coaches were teachers first. They knew little about their sports. There was no coaching association or clinics to attend. They did do one thing: they allowed us to have fun. They enjoyed the thrill of victory; and for losses, there was no dwelling on why they occurred. They taught the fundamentals and expected us to perform them; but yet, be creative to the application of the fundamentals. They had a no-nonsense approach. They were firm, but fair to all. I guess my coaches established my foundation in becoming a coach.

I had no real mentors while I was coaching – just coaches I admired and emulated. Coaches tend to be closed-mouthed about what they are doing that brought about their success. I did develop closeness with a legend in my early years. His name was Adrian Gardner, a long time consistent winner at Laguna-Acoma and Belen.

**DOC: *WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR LEGACY AS A COACH WILL BE?***

**ADAM:** Legacy is a daunting word. My hopes and dreams are simple; that my wife, my daughter, and my two sons are proud of me and proud to be a Kedge. Anything more than their blessings and love would be "small potatoes." I have no dreams of grandeur larger than that.

If I was to have a legacy relative to track and cross country, I would like to be remembered for being involved with our beloved sport for far too long. One day soon I'm sure we'll overhear, "Coach Kedge is still at it. I can't believe that he's still out there. The sport passed him by years ago. I'm afraid he's going to die out here one day."

**CURTIS:** I would hope that all my former athletes knew where I stood for discipline and fairness for all. All runners were treated that same. Rules of discipline were outline din our handbook and everyone was expected to abide by them or suffer the consequences.

THERE WERE TIMES THAT VARSITY RUNNERS WERE DISMISSED FROM THE TEAM. YET, THESE SAME RUNNERS WOULD COME

BACK THE NEXT SEASON AND BE STRONG TEAM LEADERS. AT TIMES, RUNNERS AND THEIR FAMILIES WOULD TURN TO ME TO HELP THEM WITH ISSUES WITHIN THEIR FAMILIES. THEY KNEW WHAT I WOULD BE THERE FOR THEM. I HAVE ATTENDED THEIR WEDDINGS, COLLEGE GRADUATIONS, AND EVEN FUNERALS.

***DOC: WHO DO YOU CONSIDER THE GODFATHER/GODMOTHER OF CROSS COUNTRY? DISCUSS YOUR TOP MALE AND FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY COACHES IN NEW MEXICO.***

**ADAM:** The two gentlemen I outlined above are certainly at the forefront of our sport. No historical outline of our sport would be complete without the mention of the first New Mexico State Champion, and only five time winner, Gerry Garcia of El Rito High School as well as the first ever girls champion Sandy Beach (Warfield).

ROB AND KATHY HIPWOOD OF #1 – UNQUESTIONABLY, THE BEST COACHES IN THE STATE, RIGHT NOW, AND FOR EVERMORE. LOS ALAMOS IS SO VERY GOOD, YEAR-IN AND YEAR-OUT, BECAUSE OF THE GUIDANCE AND LEADERSHIP OF ROB AND KATHY.

I DON'T FEEL LIKE WE'VE RECOGNIZED BOB JACKSON AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS ENOUGH. BOB HAS BEEN A LONGSTANDING SUCCESSFUL COACH AT A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT SCHOOLS FOR YEARS.

THE THIRD SET OF COACHES I THINK I NEED TO RECOGNIZE ARE THOSE FROM OUR GREAT STATE THAT DON'T HAVE A LONG LINE OF BLUE TROPHIES, HAVE NOT LEAD NATIONAL CALIBER TEAMS OR RUNNERS TO PROMINENCE, OR THAT POP INTO OUR MINDS WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE "LEGENDS OF THE FALL." THE COACH THAT HAS DEDICATED ONE SEASON, TOUCHED ONE HEART, AND WORN A SMILE WHILE DOING IT, IS TOPS IN SOME FORMER ATHLETE'S MIND. WINNERS ARE NOT JUST THOSE 1<sup>ST</sup> ACROSS THE FINISH LINE OR CARRYING THE BIG BLUE TROPHY. ONE THAT TOUCHED ME WAS MY JR. HIGH AND 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR HIGH SCHOOL COACH, DEL VALDEZ. I'M SURE THAT ALL OF US THAT HAVE EVER BEEN A PART OF THIS SPORT HAS A COACH VALDEZ.

**CURTIS:** I KNOW THAT ANSWERING THIS QUESTION IS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT AND WILL PROBABLY BE MET WITH DISAGREEMENT. THROUGH THE TIMES, I HAVE SEEN THEIR REIGN OF PRESTIGE CHANGE. MY FIRST PICK FOR GODFATHER WOULD HAVE TO BE ADRIAN GARDNER OF LAGUNA-ACOMA. I REFERRED TO HIM EARLIER AS A MENTOR. HIS TEAMS DOMINATED ALL CLASSES IN THE 1970'S. HE AND HIS TEAMS WERE ALWAYS HUMBLE IN THEIR VICTORIES. HE ALWAYS STRIVED FOR PERFECTION. ONE TIME HIS TEAM HAD WON AN INVITATIONAL, BUT HE WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE EFFORTS, SO HE HAD THEM RUN THE COURSE AGAIN DURING THE AWARDS CEREMONIAL. THEY RAN IT FASTER THE SECOND TIME! TOO BAD THAT THE FOOTLOCKER AND NIKE CHAMPIONSHIPS WERE NOT AROUND DURING HIS REIGN.

My other picks for godfather are Adam Kedge of Albuquerque Academy and Robbie Hipwood of Los Alamos. Sorry Kathy, but you are the wrong gender for this title, but I will discuss you later. I will never forget Adam's triumph over my team at the Bernalillo meet in 1995. I knew at the time he was the real deal. It doesn't seem possible that he has been coaching for 20+ years. I still remember him running at Espanola Valley and he still looks so young. As far as Robbie's years of coaching, I don't remember when there was a change in the NMAA classification and when he took the reins at Los Alamos. I believe it to be around 2000. Los Alamos had always been AAAA. They had to compete against the likes of Santa Fe, Grants, and Gallup as strong contenders and just never got the breaks to win a state championship. Now they have to compete against Albuquerque Academy: what a heart breaker. This doesn't bother the Hipwoods. Since 2000, it has been a battle between those two teams. Both coaches are very humble and very professional.

Now for the godmother of cross country. While there has not been many women coaches, I will mention the well-deserved ladies, not just because they are women, but because they have earned it. The first lady has to be Marilyn Sepulveda of Alamogordo. She coached both boys and girls. Her teams were always competitive. They usually were the top teams to come out of the south. She was not afraid of competing against the northern teams. They would travel several times to the north to

compete. She is best remembered for her leadership in developing our NMTCCCA. She was our first president that led us into the great organization that we have today.

The next lady is Kathy Hipwood of Los Alamos. Even though she shares her accomplishments with her husband Robbie, we know that it takes a woman's touch. Behind every successful man is successful woman. Her teams have dominated for 15 years – I believe with 12 state champions, the most of any school. She and Robbie have been very active in our organization.

While I answered this question, many great coaches have come to mind that should be mentioned as the godfather/godmother. They are Alan Lockridge of Pojoaque; John Alier or Santa Fe; Steve Gachupin and Daniel Chinara of Jemez Valley; Dan Otero of Laguna-Acoma; and Alice Kinlichee of Shiprock.

**DOC: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE EARLY CROSS COUNTRY HARRIER?**

**ADAM:** I'm not a big proponent of the "kids aren't what they used to be" saying. Cross country kids of today are not much different from those of old. A good cross country runner is:

- Hard Working
- Sportsmanlike
- a Loyal Friend
- Kind Hearted
- a Good Student
- and a Planner & Dreamer

**CURTIS:** I would describe them as mentally & physically tough with a strong sense of team cohesiveness. These athletes were in the times when there were no athletic trainers to treat their blisters, shin splints, etc. Training and racing shoes were basically non-existent. I remember athletes that wore shoes that were ill-fitted, with no arch support, etc. Their feet sometimes looked like raw hamburger. Yet, these athletes would continue to train and race.

I HAD ATHLETES THAT WOULD RIDE A BICYCLE, HITCH HIKE, OR EVEN RUN JUST TO GET TO PRACTICE. THEY RARELY MISSED A PRACTICE. NO EXCUSES, JUST RESULTS. THESE ATHLETES LAVISHED THE IDEA OF RUNNING THE MOST GRUELING COURSES OF PRACTICES. THEY HATED GOLF COURSES!

THEY ACCEPTED THEIR ROLES WITHIN THE TEAM. THERE WAS NO COMPLAINING ABOUT WHICH TEAM (VARSITY, JUNIOR VARSITY, OR C-TEAM) THEY WOULD BE RACING AT A PARTICULAR MEET. THERE WAS NO PECKING ORDER WITHIN THE TEAMS. AN EXAMPLE WOULD BE IF MY NUMBER THREE RUNNER BEAT THE NUMBER ONE OR TWO; THERE WERE NO JEALOUS MOMENTS. IT MEANT THAT THE TWO BEATEN RUNNERS DIDN'T HAVE A GOOD RACE; AND THE NEXT WEEK, THEY WOULD WORK HARDER TO GET THEIR POSITIONS BACK. THEY KNEW THAT THE WEEK'S PREPARATION WOULD BE MUCH HARDER THAN ANY RACE; AND THEIR COMPETITION AMONG THEIR TEAMMATES, JUST TO MAKE THE TRAVEL SQUAD, WOULD BE EVEN HARDER THAN THE UPCOMING MEET.

MY BIGGEST RECRUITMENT CAME FROM THE TEAM MEMBERS. THEY WOULD ASK THEIR CLASSMATES, FRIENDS, AND RELATIVES TO JOIN. THEY DID NOT CARE THAT ANY OF THESE POTENTIAL RECRUITS MIGHT DISPLACE THEM. THEY KNEW THAT STRENGTH CAME IN NUMBERS.

**DOC: DISCUSS THE TOP 5 MALE/FEMALE CROSS COUNTRY RUNNERS OF ALL TIME.**

**ADAM:** I'm not sure if the below mentioned names are the top-five or the five fastest, but I certainly feel like there are a number of great runners that have had a major influence on our sports of cross country and distance running.

**MALE:**

- Gerry Garcia of El Rito High School for his long standing dominance in the 1960's.
- There are three men that need to be recognized for their contributions as high school runners, college runners, all the way into their professional careers: Dr. Chuck Aragon of Los Lunas High School, Dr. Tony Sandoval and Ric Rojas, both of Los Alamos High School.
- Brandon Leslie, of Gallup, for his outstanding high school performances and his efforts in college and as a pro. Brandon was incredible and took part of one of the most amazing duals I've ever seen in New Mexico cross country history. The race was, Brandon Leslie vs. David Krumanacker at the state meet, through the hills and park around Milne Stadium in the early 1990's.
- Shardack Kiptoo, of La Cueva, despite being placed in the center of a lot of controversy, always acted mature, humble, and with a warm heart. He was thrust into the national cross country scene for controversial reasons; and while all adults around him had opinions of his part in our sport, he always represented his school and state with dignity.
- The extended Martinez family of Grants; Andy, Galen, Franklin and others of the family were part of outstanding dominate teams for years.

**FEMALE:**

- SANDY BEACH, NEW MEXICO'S FIRST EVER STATE CROSS COUNTRY CHAMP.
- FELICIA GULIFORD OF GALLUP, DOMINATED BEYOND WHAT ALL COULD IMAGINE. SHE DOMINATED IN THE STATE IN BOTH TRACK AND CROSS COUNTRY AND CONSISTENTLY GREAT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL.
- THE TOP-5 VARSITY GIRLS THAT MADE UP THE UNITED STATES #1 RANKED CROSS COUNTRY TEAM FROM LOS ALAMOS WERE AMAZINGLY DOMINANT. FOUR OF THEIR NAMES STICK IN MY HEAD RIGHT NOW, SO I WON'T MENTION THEM BY NAME KNOWING THAT I'D HAVE TO LOOK UP THE ONLY ONE I AM FORGETTING.

**CURTIS:** There is no way that I could limit my answer to just five top runners. I chose the following runners for their consistent accomplishments in high school, college, and the U.S.:

**MALE**

- Gerry Garcia won five individual cross country titles from 1961-1965. He ran for El Rito. He also ran for Eastern University in Portales earning NAIA All-American honors during his two years.
- AL WAQUE WON ONLY ONE HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY STATE CHAMPIONSHIP FROM JEMEZ VALLEY IN 1968. HE MADE HIS MARK BY WINNING EIGHT STRAIGHT VICTORIES ON THE LA LUZ (1977-1985). HE WON THE PIKES PEAK MARATHON IN 1981 AND 1982. HE ALSO WON SIX STRAIGHT TITLES IN THE EMPIRE STATE STAIR CLIMB IN THE 1980's.
- RIC ROJAS OF LOS ALAMOS WON FOUR STATE TITLES IN CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK IN 1968-1969. HE WAS RANKED IN THE TOP TEN UNITED STATES HIGH SCHOOL MILERS. HE STILL HOLDS THE NEW MEXICO MILE RECORD OF 4:12.6. HE GRADUATED FROM HARVARD IN 1974 WITH A BA AND IN 1983 RECEIVED HIS MBA FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER. HE WAS RANKED IN THE TOP 10 OF US ROAD RACERS FROM 1977-1981. IN 1976, HE WON THE USATF NATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP. HE PRESENTLY HAS HIS OWN BUSINESS; RIC ROJAS RUNNING IN BROOMFIELD, CO.
- DR. TONY SANDOVAL WON TWO CROSS COUNTRY TITLES IN 1970 AND 1971. HE EARNED A SCHOLARSHIP TO STANFORD. IN 1976, HE WON THE PAC \* CONFERENCE TITLE IN THE 10,000 METERS OVER THREE

KENYANS FROM WASHINGTON STATE. ONE OF THE KENYANS WAS SAMSON KIMOBWA, WHO SET THE WORLD RECORD IN THE 10,000 THE FOLLOWING YEAR. 1980 WAS MET WITH BOTH EXCITEMENT AND DISAPPOINTMENT. HE WON THE US OLYMPIC TRIALS WITH A 2:10.19 FOR THE MARATHON, BUT THE 1980 MOSCOW OLYMPICS WAS BOYCOTTED BY THE U.S.

- CHUCK ARAGON WON TRACK AND CROSS COUNTRY TITLES IN 1975 AND 1976 WHILE AT LOS LUNAS HIGH SCHOOL. WHILE RUNNING AT NOTRE DAME, HE WAS THE FIRST RUNNER IN SCHOOL HISTORY TO BREAK A 4-MINUTE MILE WITH A 3:59.92. HE STILL HOLDS NOTRE DAME'S 1500 METER RECORD OF 3:38.40. HE MADE THE 1984 OLYMPIC TEAM IN THE 1500 METER AS AN ALTERNATE. HE WAS BEATEN BY SYDNEE MAREE AT THE TRIALS FOR THE 3<sup>RD</sup> POSITION. MAREE PULLED OUT OF THE 1500 A WEEK BEFORE THE GAMES DUE TO INJURY. IT WAS TOO LATE FOR CHUCK TO TRAIN AND COMPETE. CHUCK IS PRESENTLY IN BILLINGS, MT AT ST. VINCENT HEALTHCARE WORKING AS AN ANESTHESIOLOGIST.
- GEORGE YOUNG WAS PROBABLY THE BEST RUNNER OF ALL NEW MEXICO. HE RAN TRACK AND CROSS COUNTRY FOR WESTERN HIGH SCHOOL IN SILVER CITY BACK IN THE 1950'S WHEN THERE WAS NO NMAA CHAMPIONSHIPS. HE ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA AND LETTERED IN BOTH SPORTS. HE WAS THE FIRST AMERICAN TO RUN IN FOUR OLYMPIADS – 1960, 1964, 1968, AND 1972. HE SET NATIONAL RECORDS TWICE IN THE STEEPLECHASE 8:31 IN 1961 AND 8:30 IN 1968. HE ALSO SET A NATIONAL RECORD IN THE 2 MILE 8:22 AND 5000 METERS 13:32. GEORGE SET INDOOR WORLD RECORDS IN THE 2 AND 3 MILE. HE RACED AGAINST THE LIKES OF RYUN, MILLS, SCHUL, AND PREFONTAINE. HIS BEST FINISH WAS IN THE 1968 MEXICO GAMES WINNING THE BRONZE MEDAL.
- LUIS MARTINEZ WAS FROM CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL AND AN 8-TIME STATE CHAMPION: THREE IN CROSS COUNTRY, THREE IN THE 3200 METER, AND TWO IN THE 1600 METER. HE SET THE STATE 5A 1600 METER AT 4:11.56. PRESENTLY, HE RUNS FOR OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY.
- SHANE GARCIA WAS A 3-TIME CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPION FROM LAGUNA-ACOMA IN 1988, 1989, AND 1990. HE RAN FOR NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY.
- PHILLIP CASTILLO, OF GRANTS, WAS A 2-TIME CHAMPION IN CROSS COUNTRY IN 1988 AND 1989. HE PLACED 8<sup>TH</sup> AT THE KINNEY CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP. HE RAN FOR ADAMS STATE COLLEGE IN ALAMOSA, CO WHERE HE WAS AND NCAA DII ALL-AMERICAN IN 1991, 1992, AND 1993. HE WAS THE FIRST NATIVE AMERICAN TO WIN AN NCAA CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP ON A TEAM WITH A PERFECT SCORE. HE GRADUATED WITH A MASTER OF SCIENCE. HE JOINED THE ARMY AND COMPETED ON THE U.S. ARMY WORLD CLASS ATHLETE PROGRAM. HE RAN IN THE 2000 OLYMPIC TRIALS FOR THE MARATHON.
- BRANDON LESLIE OF GALLUP WAS A 2-TIME CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK CHAMPION IN 1993 AND 1994 AND FINISHED 3<sup>RD</sup> IN THE FOOTLOCKER NATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP. HIGHLY RECRUITED, HE CHOSE NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY BUT HAD PERSONAL ISSUES AND DROPPED OUT. IN 1997, HE WON THE NATIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE CHAMPIONSHIP. IN 1999, HE ACCEPTED SCHOLARSHIP AT ADAMS STATE. SPRING OF 2000, HE WON THE DIVISION II NCAA 10,000 METER AT MT. SAC EARNING HIM OLYMPIC TRIALS B STANDARD. HE HAD A DISAPPOINTING PERFORMANCE AT THE OLYMPIC TRIALS IN SACRAMENTO. LATER THAT SUMMER, HE QUALIFIED AGAIN IN CHICAGO AND RAN THE U.S. TRIALS IN NEW YORK IN NOVEMBER. HE IS PRESENTLY THE HEAD CROSS COUNTRY & TRACK COACH AT NAVAJO PINE HIGH SCHOOL. AT A FIRST YEAR HEAD COACH, HE WON A CROSS COUNTRY STATE CHAMPIONSHIP IN 2014.
- BEN ORTEGA OF TAOS HIGH SCHOOL WAS A 2-TIME CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK CHAMPION IN 1998 AND 1999. HE CHOSE UNM WHERE HE WON MOUNTAIN WEST CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS IN THE 5000 AND 10,000 METERS. HE HAS A PRIVATE LAW PRACTICE WITH OFFICES IN ALBUQUERQUE AND TAOS, N.M.
- MATT TEBO OF EL DORADO HIGH SCHOOL WAS A 2-TIME CROSS COUNTRY AND 3-TIME TRACK CHAMPION IN 2004 AND 2005. IN 2007, HE RAN IN THE WORLD CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP IN KENYA; HE EARNED

THIS TRIP BY FINISHING 3<sup>RD</sup> AT THE U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP. HE WON THE 2006 FOOTLOCKER WEST REGIONAL AND PLACED 5<sup>TH</sup> AT THE NATIONAL MEET. AS A JUNIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL, HE RAN THE 3200 METERS AT THE NIKE OUTDOOR NATIONALS WITH AN 8:47, PLACING 2<sup>ND</sup>. HE HOLDS THE N.M. HIGH SCHOOL RECORD IN 3200 METERS WITH A 9:07. HE RAN FOR COLORADO UNIVERSITY AND GRADUATED WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN STUDIO ART IN 2011.

- BEN JOHNSON OF ALBUQUERQUE ACADEMY WAS A 2-TIME CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPION IN 2006 AND 2007. HE RAN FOR STANFORD- A 2-TIME ALL-AMERICAN IN THE 3000 METER STEEPLECHASE. HIS SENIOR YEAR AT STANFORD, HE WAS THE NUMBER ONE FOR THE TEAM IN BOTH CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK. IN 2006, HE WAS THE TOP JUNIOR IN THE FOOTLOCKER NATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP WITH A 6<sup>TH</sup> PLACE FINISH AND RAN 3<sup>RD</sup> IN THE NIKE TEAM NATIONALS.
- KYLE PITTMAN OF LOS ALAMOS WAS A 2-TIME CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPION IN 2008 AND 2009. HE FINISHED 4<sup>TH</sup> INDIVIDUALLY AT THE NIKE SOUTHWEST REGIONALS. HE LED HIS TEAM TO A 1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE TIE AND A 2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE FINISH AT THE NIKE NATIONALS. HE RAN FOR UNM AND STILL HAD THE FASTEST TIME ON THE RIO RANCHO COURSE WITH A 14:59.
- SIMON GUTIERREZ OF DEL NORTE WAS A STATE CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPION IN 1983. EVEN THOUGH HE WON ONLY ONE STATE TITLE, HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED HIMSELF AS A MOUNTAIN RUNNER. HE HAS WON THREE PIKES PEAK ASCENTS, 4-TIME WINNER OF LA LUZ, WAS TOP U.S. FINISHER AT THE WORLD MOUNTAIN CHAMPIONSHIP ITALY IN 2004, AND MEMBER OF THE TEVA U.S. MOUNTAIN RUNNING TEAM. HE WAS AN OLYMPIC TRIALS QUALIFIER IN THE MARATHON. HE WAS ON THE U.S. NATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY TEAM 3 TIMES IN 1984 AND 1985 JUNIOR DIVISION, AND 1987 SENIOR DIVISION. HE FINISHED 3<sup>RD</sup> AT THE KINNEY CROSS COUNTRY NATIONALS. HIS INSPIRATION IS TO BECOME A PRIVATE COACH OR TO COACH NCAA ATHLETES.

#### FEMALE

- Felicia Guliford of Gallup High school ran cross country for five years. As an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, she finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state championships; but went on to win four straight cross country titles in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. During her four years, she racked up 18 titles in cross country and track. She was a four time Gatorade New Mexico Track & Cross Country Athlete of the Year and was undefeated in all three distance races for four years at the Great Southwest. She ran three cross country races in the Footlocker Nationals. Her worst finish was 6<sup>th</sup> place. She still holds 6A state records in the 1600 and 3200. Felicia ran four years for the University of Tennessee. Her senior year in 2007, she was named to the SEC Track and Field Community Service Team for volunteering work and charities in the Knoxville area and even in the country of Chile. She spent some time teaching and coaching cross country and track at Miyamura High School in Gallup. She graduated from the University of New Mexico - School of Medicine with a Doctor's degree in 2015.
- Jacquelyne Gallegos of Pojoaque High School was a 3 time cross country state champion in 1997, 1999, and 2000. She ran for UNM for 5 years (she was granted 5 years of eligibility due to a car accident her sophomore year). She was a 3 time Mountain West Conference All Conference runner. She holds the UNM indoor 300 meter record and held the Academic All Mountain West Conference honors each season of cross country and track. Presently, she is married to Nick Martinez, head cross country coach at La Cueva; and she is employed with the NMAA.
- Amy Swier of Aztec High School was a 4 time cross country state champion in 1993, 1994,



1995, and 1996. She hold the New Mexico 1600 meter record for 4:51.68 and the 3200 meter record of 10:32.79. Amy ran for Northern Arizona University. Her junior year at NAU, she ran in the NCAA-D1 Cross Country Championship and finished 47<sup>th</sup>. In 1999, she set a Northridge Track and Field Complex record in the 10,000 meters of 35:19.9. Her personal best was 34:17.9. She was plagued with injuries her senior year.

- Julia Foster of Albuquerque Academy was a cross country champion is 2006, 2009, and 2010. She won seven titles in track and holds the 5A state records in 1600 and 3200. In 2011, she competed for Team USA at the North American, Central American, and Caribbean Championships. In 2012, she was the number 6 runner for the Stanford Cardinals cross country team that finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at the NCAA D1 National Championship. She still has the fastest cross country time at the Rio Rancho – NMAA Championship with 18:35.8.
- Kate Norskog was St. Michael's in Santa Fe was a 4 time cross country champion is 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2010. She was also a 5 time track state champion in the 1600 and 3200 meters. She ran for Syracuse in 2011. I don't know what happened to her after 2011; even though she ran class AAA, she still has one the top 3 times on the tough Rio Rancho NMAA Championship course.
- Kristen Hemphill of Los Alamos was a 3 times cross country champion in 2002, 2003, and 2004. She ran for 3 years at Colorado State University. In 2008, she did not compete due to a medical hardship waiver. She set the CSU 3000 Steeplechase record of 10:08 and earned All-Mountain West Conference honors all 3 years – both athletic and academic.
- Verna Woody (Montjoy) of Gallup was a 2 time cross country state champion in 1982 and 1984. She was the first of many Gallup individuals who were state cross country champions. She was the first girl to run under 18:00 for the NMAA State Championship held at Milne Stadium. Also, the first girl to qualify out of the Kinney/Footlocker Western Regionals by placing 4<sup>th</sup> with a time well under 18:00. At nationals, she was number 5 on the west team with a 20<sup>th</sup> place and a time of 18:07. She won the 3000 meters three times setting a New Mexico state record of 10:13.2. She ran for Phoenix Community College. In her first year, she claimed a runner-up position at the National Junior College Athletic Association, leading her team to the National Championship. She still runs 10k's, ½ and full marathons and is employed as a dental hygienist.

*These ladies should also be included:*

- STEPHANIE MILAN OF BLOOMFIELD HIGH SCHOOL (1990, 1991, & 1992)
- MICHELLE MONTOYA OF TUCUMCARI HIGH SCHOOL (1982, 1983, & 1984)
- RACHEL FLEDDERMAN OF SANDIA PREP HIGH SCHOOL (2011, 2012, & 2013)
- CAROLINE KAUFMAN OF EAST MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL (2008, 2009, 2010, & 2011)
- MELISSA LUCERO OF LAGUNA-ACOMA HIGH SCHOOL (1988, 1990, & 1991)

#### **DOC: WHICH STATE MEET STANDS OUT AND WHY?**

**ADAM:** I recall the 1<sup>st</sup> one I ran in 1981 at Milne Stadium. It did not turn out well for me. The “run from the front” racing style only works if you are far better than everyone else – I was not. Even though I finished 19<sup>th</sup> and implemented a poor race plan, I look back on that day with fondness. There is nothing like being a part of high school sports; I remember dreaming that one day I was going to run in the Olympics.

SIDE NOTE ON MY 1<sup>ST</sup> STATE CROSS COUNTRY EXPERIENCE – I HAVE PLENTY OF STORIES OF THE COACHING STAFF THAT SOMEHOW GREW FROM TWO COACHES AT ESPANOLA VALLEY TO FIVE OR SIX WHEN IT WAS TIME TO GO TO THE BIG CITY OF

ALBUQUERQUE; AND THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY A WEEKEND ON THE DISTRICT'S CHECKBOOK. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THEIR FOCUS THE EVENING BEFORE THE RACE WAS NOT ON HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY.

THE 2<sup>ND</sup> FOND MEMORY I HAVE IS OF GUIDING A GROUP OF SEVEN BOYS FROM ALBUQUERQUE ACADEMY TO A STATE TITLE IN 1998, MY 1<sup>ST</sup> AS A HEAD COACH. WE HAD A STRONG TEAM, BUT WERE UNKNOWN TO THE SCENE AND CLEAR UNDERDOGS. TO WIN A TITLE AT RED ROCK STATE PARK, A WONDERFUL VENUE, WITH NOBODY FINISHING IN THE TOP TEN, WAS A SPECIAL MOMENT. I REMEMBER THINKING, "I JUST WANT TO PROVE TO EVERYONE WE COULD DO IT!" AND THEN WAKING UP THE NEXT SUNDAY MORNING THINKING, "OH MY, NOW WE HAVE TO PROVE IT NEXT YEAR THAT IT WAS NO FLUKE!"

**CURTIS:** I HAVE TWO MEETS THAT TRULY STAND OUT. THE FIRST WAS IN 1983, GALLUP'S FIRST STATE TITLE. AT THE DISTRICT MEET HOSTED BY LOS ALAMOS, WE WERE FAVORED OVER DEL NORTE, THE DEFENDING STATE CHAMPIONS. WE HAD TO TRAVEL FROM GALLUP TO LOS ALAMOS. THE BUS LEFT AT 4:00 A.M. ONE OF OUR CONSISTENT SCORERS MISSED THE BUS. WE CAME IN 2<sup>ND</sup> TO DEL NORTE. DEL NORTE WAS LET BY SIMON GUTIERREZ AND GLENN MORGAN, BOTH OF WHICH WOULD GO ON TO WINNING INDIVIDUAL TITLES. WE ONLY BEAT LOS ALAMOS BY ONE POINT. AT THE TIME, ONLY THE TOP 2 TEAMS QUALIFIED FOR STATE. WE WERE ABLE TO STAY POSITIVE, REGROUP, AND GO ON TO WIN THE TITLE BY BEATING DEL NORTE 52-70. BY THE WAY, THE RUNNER THAT MISSED THE BUS WAS DISMISSED DUE TO THE TEAM RULES BEING VIOLATED TWICE.

The other meet that stand out in my mind was the last year I coached at Gallup. The year was 2002. We were not blessed with stellar front runners, but we had runners that understood the importance of pack running. We had no runners in the top 10, but we managed to have 7 runners in the next 10; just proving that cross country is a great team sport.

*The first cross country meet and the first state cross country championship:*

First of all, I am not that old since that first state meet for boys was in 1960; and even if I were, I probably would have forgotten. I do know that for 10 years (1960-1970) runners only ran 2 miles and started with only 2 classes – large and small schools (A & B). There was no qualifying to state. I believe after the first two years that changed.

I KNOW THAT ROSWELL HOSTED SEVERAL OF THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS; AND THEN, SANTA FE TOOK THEIR TURN. APS FOLLOWED UNTIL 1993 WHEN GALLUP TOOK THE REINS AND FINALLY RIO RANCHO FROM 2006 TO THE PRESENT.

NOW FOR THE GIRLS, THEIR FIRST OFFICIAL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP WAS IN 1979. GIRLS HAD BEEN RUNNING COMPETITIVELY FOR YEARS IN INVITATIONAL MEETS. THANKS THE TITLE IX, THEY FINALLY GOT THEIR SHOT.

*SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:*

For several years when Gallup hosted the state championships at Red Rock State Park, there was a person that elevated cross country to a new level by mean of the radio. His name was Sammy Chioda, simply known as Sammy C. He and his staff did pre-race interviews with coaches, covered all live races, and did post-race interviews. I would love to see NMAA take the state championship one step higher: Live TV coverage just like other N.M. state championships! If Kinney, Footlocker, and Nike can do it, why not New Mexico?

**WE THANK ADAM AND CURTIS FOR THEIR INSIGHTS.**

DR. DAVID "DOC" HELM  
President-emeritus  
Historian/South  
Alamogordo  
Hall of Famer