

## Georgia TFXC Coaching Collective Interview with Jerry Arnold

Jerry Arnold is a Member of the Georgia Track and Field/Cross Country Hall of Fame, the Gwinnett County Track and Field/Cross Country Hall of Fame, and the Carrollton Track and Field/Cross Country Hall of Fame. His teams have won 14 State Championships in Track and Cross Country, and he has coached numerous individual State Champions. His career took him from Carrollton High School to Brookwood and then finally to Mill Creek.

What made you want to get into Coaching?

Coach Arnold: I started running in the spring of my 9th grade year in Rome Georgia and continued at West Georgia University in Carrollton, graduating in 1974. I like to think that I knew what I wanted to do all my life but, like most kids going into college, goals change. I received my degree in physical education and middle school science. I began my coaching career at Carrollton High School and became the head cross country coach and assistant track coach. Coaching became my passion.

What were some of the lessons you learned early on in your coaching career?

Coach Arnold: When I was a graduate coach at West Georgia I worked for Bill Webb. We would sit and watch video of Olympic competitors in all venues. Coach Webb would tell me to watch how tall the vaulter was at the plant and how to make that transition running down the runway. He'd describe how the discus thrower's elbow would lead the throw and how wide his arms were. It was fun to soak up all of that knowledge in detail. Coach Webb went on to coach at University of Tennessee where he won several NCAA Track and Field championships.

I believed I was knowledgeable when I started high school coaching. I thought I knew a lot, but working with Vernon Wilkes at Carrollton was an eye opening experience. I ran distance races in high school and college. You started the race and finished the race, what else was there? Vernon was meticulous about the amount of work we did getting the track ready for meets at Carrollton; turning the jump pits so they were soft and

level, hurdles were all set out in rows, shot put and discus areas were raked, sectors and distances were marked with chalk, high jump and pole Vault pits were aligned, and bars were arranged so workers would have everything they needed. We spent many hours preparing for the meet Friday afternoon after practice and then we headed into the office to do the heat sheets. Coaches mailed their heat sheets in and we looked at each school's entries. We sorted the entries in order of time/distance. We then wrote the entries onto carbon paper for each heat. The next day we gave the heat sheets to the clerk and hand timers, and stapled them on the meet board so the athletes would know their heat number. We stapled results onto the board after the timer noted the times. We kept team scores on a poster board as the meet progressed. I am amazed at how easy coaches have it now turning the timing over to a company that downloads the data from all the schools. They time the meet and upload the results to the web as they happen.

Coach Arnold: Who are some of the coaches you coached against that you always respected and admired?

This list could get ridiculously long. Following are just some of the outstanding coaches who were instrumental in my development.

Emory Fears, Headland HS - Coach Fears taught me how to develop a cross country team.

Lawrence Graves, Bass HS - Coach Graves taught me to be humble. I told him about a runner who refused to do the workouts. I told the runner to leave the track. Coach Bass told me to not allow my pride to get in the way when the runner came back to ask to be back onto the team. Coach Graves advised me to hold him out of upcoming meets for the two weeks. This particular runner finished the season as the MVP in the state meet, and we won the first of four straight track and field state championships.

Max Mayo, Cedar Shoals HS - When I transferred to Brookwood High School in Gwinnett County, I talked with Coach Mayo about how he got his cross country kids to come together and believe that they could win. He told me about taking his teams to Myrtle Beach for a week to bond and set goals for the year. I followed his example during my tenure at Brookwood.

Karl Bostic, Parkview HS - The day I was introduced at Brookwood, I told the team that we were going to win state. One of the boys told me that we could not win state because Parkview always won. Karl did a great job of motivating his runners every year and I followed his example.

The following coaches were outstanding at hosting meets and sharing their knowledge with other coaches:

Vernon Wilkes, Carrollton HS  
Jack Keen, Jefferson HS  
Bill Thorn, Headland and Landmark Christian HS,  
Isaiah Berry Winder Barrow HS  
Napoleon Cobb SW Dekalb HS  
Lee Gower, Walton HS  
Bill Sheskey, Pope HS  
Tom Williams, Lassiter/Walton  
Ed Hutcherson, Lassiter HS  
Roscoe Google, Marietta HS  
Cook Holliday, Winder Barrow HS  
Brady Sigler, Elbert County HS  
Scott Starr, Cairo HS, Fitzgerald HS, Worth County HS  
Rik Moore, Franklin County HS  
Tomy Sitton Brookwood/East Jackson HS  
Paul Koshewa, Westminster HS  
Matt Henson, Parkview HS  
Dave Machovec Dacula HS  
Brad Kinser, Greater Atlanta Christian HS  
Craig Musselwhite, Carrollton HS  
Joe Carter Brookwood HS  
Lynn Walter Calhoun HS  
Mark Cutbirth Westminster HS

What were some your favorite things about coaching?

Coach Arnold: I loved it when a young athlete started to believe in himself and the results showed in his performance. I also took pride in organizing and managing large meets so the athletes could shine.

What were some of the areas that you think you improved in later in your career?

Coach Arnold: Delegating responsibility!!!

What do you think about the state of track and field/cross country now compared to when you started coaching?

Coach Arnold: 've watched many athletes advance to the state meet who would not have had the opportunity when only the top two athletes advanced out of region. Track and XC rules have merged so that they are in line with the National Federation, making them easier to understand for coaches and athletes. I am sad to see there are now four state meet sites because I always enjoyed watching all the classifications at their best. I think technology has made it easier to coach with video lessons and phones allowing you to video your performances to see areas that need improvement.

Now that you are retired what comes to mind when you look back on your career?

Coach Arnold: I am so proud of all the schools (Carrollton, Brookwood, Mill Creek) that continued the success that I put into the track and cross country programs.

Any advice for Track and Field/Cross Country Coaches who are early in their careers?

Coach Arnold: Get out of your comfort zone and learn how to coach a new event. Talk with coaches outside of your event. They will be willing to share their knowledge. Go to state and national coaching conventions to expand your knowledge. I met many famous high school coaches from around the nation when I was at national conventions and presenting the state coaches track clinic early in my career. Never miss an opportunity to talk to coaches you respect. Always look for the meet host and tell them that you appreciate all the hard work that went into the meet. Take your athletes out of state if you have the opportunity so they can see that they are capable of competing anywhere.