

John Anderson

B. 7/14/1953



In July 1980, legendary Empire Runner Mort Gray noticed John running in Annadel. Mort was having a hard time catching up to John and when he finally did catch up he asked him if he would like to join the Empire Runners Club. John joined that year and has been a major contributor for the club ever since. John has been the race director of the Last 10K and Final 2 mile for 32 years and the race director for the 10K Twosome Race that was held back in the 80's. He has been the club president for 3 two year terms. John was the insurance czar for 10 years and co-founded the Summer Track Series. He helped Bob Shor set up the finish chute for the Kenwood Footrace for many years and he was the only club member who knew how to work and run the mysterious Time Machine.

From 1981-1986, John coached cross country and track at Analy High School. He coached Eric Bohn (who later became a national-class ultra marathoner) and was responsible for getting the Bohn family to join the club. In 1986, John moved to Rancho Cotati High School where he has taught history and coached cross country and track for over 30 years now. Many of his students became great runners in college like Erika Ruiz (Metropolitan State College in Denver), Cory Nelson who ran for the SRJC, Boise State and earned the All-American gold medal as a member of the 1600-meter relay team at the World Championships. Other students have become coaches such as Mike Wortman (SRJC), Matt Blanchard (Healdsburg H.S.), Lisette Limos (Rancho Cotati and then at a middle school in Cotati). For many years John has included the special education students onto his track and cross country teams and is an honorary special education teacher in the history department. John often brings many of his high school students (team members and classroom students) up to Santa Rosa to help out with course monitoring the Empire Runners races.

John has also been a great friend. If someone needs help with something, he will be there to offer assistance. His neighbors are indebted to all the help he has done for them. John has also encouraged and helped many adults with running by pacing, encouraging and running with them so that they can be better runners.

When John was asked what has inspired him to coach and promote running, he said, "I love to work with kids and to expose them to the special qualities that running and training on a team instills in runners. I especially love track because it is one of the few sports where your efforts count and you are recognized by your achievements and not by who you know. There is no cutting people off the team. Everyone is inclusive and if you put in the work then you are rewarded by the end result." Youth sports has not changed much. John feels kids are still the same and running is still the same sport it has always been. What has changed are the dynamics of the schools. The advent of charter schools has presented a challenge to the traditional public schools in building sports teams. Yet John still enjoys coaching those students that have the focus needed to join cross country and track and "stick to" the sport.

John said that it is very fulfilling and inspiring to introduce the joys and benefits of running to non-runners or beginning runners. New blood is what keeps our sport and club growing and seeing how much our club has contributed to Sonoma County over the years is very satisfying. "You are missing out on a lot of fun and fulfillment if you don't actively participate in many of the activities that the club has to offer."

John's favorite place to run is Trione-Annadel State Park. His favorite races were the Napa Marathon where he broke 3 hours, Old Resolution Run (10K) at Strawberry Elementary School with a 35:20 and the Russian River half and full marathon with a 1:20 on the 13.1-mile course.

Thank you John for your years of service to Empire Runners and for your decades of assistance to younger runners as they mature into emotionally and physically fit adults.

