

Bearcats' Dooley coach of the year

By MARK FOYER
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SAN MATEO — In his 24 years of coaching, San Mateo High cross country mentor Don Dooley never gave any thought to awards.

His rewards had always come from the success of his teams — both on and off the course.

"We always got along with each other real well," Dooley said. "Maybe that's why we have done so well. We just plain liked each other."

In that time, Dooley has received the respect and admiration of his peers.

Friday, Dooley will be honored at a dinner in Walnut Creek as U.S. Cross Country Coach of the Year.

Wednesday, during a lunchtime rally at San Mateo High, Dooley was presented with a jacket from the student body signifying the occasion.

"I found out about the honor during finals week," Dooley said. "I had to call back to make sure it was true."

In his 24 years at San Mateo, 21 as head coach, Dooley has seen his share of great runners.

They included Matt Giusto, who won the national high school cross country championship; Kim Schnurpfeil, who went on to become the first woman to win the 5,000 and 10,000 meters at both the NCAA and TAC meets in the same year; Gretchen Nelson, who was an all-Northern California runner; and Craig



Don Dooley

Corey, also an all-Northern California runner.

"I was excited with the success of all the runners," Dooley said. "Gretchen was a hard worker. She weighed about 95 pounds

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with about 90 being of pure heart."

Giusto, who went on to attend the University of Arizona, was the only male to win the Central Coast Section meet in back-to-back years. He was the only runner to win the mile and two-mile at the same CCS meet.

"It was a lot of fun to watch Matt's progress," Dooley said. "On the day of the national meet, I told Matt I thought he could win. Everything we did that day worked."

Dooley, himself, excelled in cross country when he attended Waukesha, High in Wisconsin. He finished 10th in the state meet in his junior year.

He then led his team to a state championship the following year. Dooley won the individual title.

"The previous time a team from Waukesha High won a state title was in 1927," Dooley said.

He continued his success at the University of Wisconsin, where he was captain of both the cross

country and track teams in both his junior and senior year.

He participated in two NCAA meets, and also ran in an AAU meet.

Dooley's greatest thrill came in a meet in 1965 when he ran in a six-mile race in which both Billy Mills (a gold medalist in the 10,000 meters at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics) and Jerry Lingdren ran in world record time.

Dooley overcame a bout with melanoma skin cancer in 1976. Visits from members of his teams aided in his recovery.

"Those teams were influential in helping me to hang on," Dooley said. "It goes back to those good relationships that we had."

Dooley began his career at San Mateo as both the C basketball coach and assistant track and cross country coach. Bob Rush was the head track coach. When Rush moved to the College of San Mateo, Dooley took over.

Rush will be at the dinner Friday partially to help Dooley celebrate his honor.

Also, Rush will be honored as the California Community College Women's Track and Field coach of the Year.