

# GENESIS

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**GOING THE DISTANCE**

## Veteran Peninsula coaches praised for their long run of service

When Terry Ward '63 starts singing the praises of two veteran coaches, it's time to take notice.

One of the most celebrated track and cross country coaches at SI and Bellarmine, Ward believes that two SI grads deserve even higher praise: Walt Van Zant '57 and Bill Daskarolis '56 who have coached for a combined 77 years.

"As Jesuit products, we all talk a good game, but these men have centered their lives around helping others," said Ward, who serves as Bellarmine's athletic director emeritus and track coach for Bellarmine, Presentation High School and Notre Dame (San Jose) in the weight events. "With all of the coaching changes that occur each year in public schools, it is good to see the two of them continue to work with young people, and I count them as two of my good friends."

Daskarolis has served at Aragon High School since 1963 coaching cross country and track and serving as athletic director. He is the meet director every other year for the Central Coast Section championships as well as a member of the timing/results crew for the state track and cross country championships.

The California Interscholastic Federation named him Coach of the Year in 1987 for his section, and he received the CCS Coaches' Honor Award for cross country in 1993 and was named CCS/CIF Coach of the Year in 1996. He also received the CIF Model Coach Award for the 2011-12 season in cross country last November. His other awards are too numerous to name and reveal the respect that coaches throughout the Bay Area have for him.

Daskarolis ran cross country and track at SI. He continued those sports at SFSU along with Van Zant and, after returning to school from a stint in the armed forces, with Ward as well, while majoring in physical and health education.

Even though he stepped down from the classroom at Aragon after 34 years and retired from athletic director duties after 24 years, he is still coaching track and cross country, something he has done for nearly a half century.

"I love seeing kids grow into fine athletes over four years. Many of the students I coached are still running thanks to the program at Aragon."

Runners, according to Daskarolis, "tend to do well in school as they have good work habits and motivation." He also praised his



From left, Walt Van Zant '57 and Bill Daskarolis '56.

assistants who have helped him over the years. "I'm proud to be associated with them."

Van Zant, now in his 29<sup>th</sup> year at Wilcox High School in Santa Clara, has had his own successful career, earning CCS Honor Coach recognition in cross country in 1996 and in track in 2008 and helping his students earn several league championships. He also serves as president of the West Valley Joggers and Striders in Saratoga and runs regularly with Ward, who is also a member.

He also ran at SI and SFSU, where he majored in business. He later became a certified public accountant and began a career with the IRS first as an Internal Revenue agent; he retired from the IRS 15 years ago as an associate chief in the Appeals Division but continues to coach at Wilcox.

He and Daskarolis meet regularly, as both attend meetings of the Central Coast Section representing their schools. They don't compete against each other, as their schools are in different leagues.

The CCS relies on Van Zant to name the all-CCS athletes for both cross country and track, and he relies on advice from Daskarolis in his selections. "Walt is amazing," added Daskarolis. "He supplies stats for all boys and girls who run in the CCS, and he keeps his web site current. He does a great job."

Van Zant, in turn, asks Daskarolis' advice whenever problems arise. "Bill is a former athletic director, and his experience and wisdom are invaluable."

Both also have a wonderful working relationship with Ward, said Van Zant. "Terry is honest, dedicated to everything he does and excels as a teacher and coach. He approaches sensitive matters in mature and delicate ways."

Daskarolis also praised Van Zant for resurrecting the cross country program at Wilcox. "When he took it over, it had been a dead duck. His team has gone from 10 to 100 athletes."

Van Zant loves the way Daskarolis "gets along with people. He's easy-going and not as strict as some coaches. It's hard to measure the intangibles that make a great coach, but Bill has them."

Both men, now in their 70s, have no plans to retire. "We're taking it year by year," said Daskarolis.

"The only downside is the administrative work," said Van Zant. "The paperwork gets worse each year. And the older I get, the more my memory slips. I would hate to embarrass myself by forgetting names of kids." ∞