

## **The Birth of True Team Track & Field in Minnesota**

Before the start of the present day True Team Track & Field, there were coaches through out the state that believed there must be a better way to determine the best TEAM in the state. For a few years Ron Beachy, at Staples, had teams that would defeat other teams during the year in area meets. At the State Meet, however, his team's depth would not be enough to over take a team with a few outstanding individuals. Yet his team would be much stronger in a dual meet setting. At the same time other coaches like Bud Bjornaraa at Apple Valley shared those feelings. From an article in the Star and Tribune titled, "Bjornaraa's gripe worth looking into", Bud had felt that while having extremely solid teams, when entered in the State Individual Meet those teams could not get enough points to over take a team with a few outstanding athletes. There were many years that a few or just one athlete would score enough points to place high at the MSHSL State Track Meet. **Something needed to be done!!!!**

When asked to run for Vice President by then President Mark Embretson, Ron Beachy said he would and he would like to work on the concept of a team track meet that he had been working on, dreaming of, and brainstorming about with other coaches. Mark said "Run with it". Ron approached Bob McCullough who was the vice president of the Girls' Track Coaches Association and explained the True Team Concept. Bob thought it was a great idea and became part of the team. At the 1984-5 winter Track clinic Ron and Bob asked for any coaches interested in working on a True Team planning committee to find a better method to determine the Team Champion for the State Track Meet. Several coaches stepped up to the challenge and a committee was formed. The members all brought their own strengths to the group and all agreed something was needed to make the State Championship Team a real **TEAM** event. The group consisted of Ron and Bob along with Bud Bjornaraa, Ed Babcock, Ron Sass, Joe Samuelson, Dean Houdek, Jack Wieber, Carl Malm, Denny Ranta, and Bob Bonk. There were other coaches and people that were involved at different levels and degrees but today we are recognizing these eleven coaches that were members of the first group placed in the Hall of Fame of True Team Track and Field. We truly thank all the contributors that helped to start Minnesota True Team Track and Field.

After the State Coaches Association Clinic that year, the committee started having meetings at area high schools but mainly Apple Valley High School. Ideas flew: What was the philosophy behind the concept? How would we organize the meet? How would the events be scored? How would awards be handled? And how would the event be financed? During two years of planning everyone contributed and everyone played a big part in the starting of the True Team. Ron called the National Federation on the rules of scoring and entries for a track meet. He found that we could create any method that we wanted to use. The scoring challenge was solved when Bud Bjornaraa, asked a Lakeville gymnastic and Swim coach to come to the meeting and share the scoring method they used in Europe for their club competitions. After much discussion we were leaning toward Dual Team scoring for a 9 team meet, all 8 teams dualing with each other. We took the entire meet results of a normal Meet and scored each team with all the others (28 duals to score). A computer nightmare. We then scored the same meet out with our present scoring system; the results were almost exactly the same. After more discussion

and debate, we decided to use this expanded form of dual team scoring that we use today. Jack Wieber then adapted the scoring system using his computer technology. The first year last place did not score which was quickly corrected by the second year. Once scoring was decided upon, we were confronted with class structuring; how many? how to divide them? how many schools in each class? We discussed how the High School League had 3 classes for a few years; and how they (MSHSL) went back to 2 classes after the girls track program was added. After long debate and brainstorming, we went with 4 classes, dividing the MSHSL's AA & A, in an attempt to consider size and what size of schools would be able to compete number-wise with others. We also thought with 4 classes the schools of similar sizes would be able to compete with rivals they may have established with the MSHSL's system. Once the classes were established, it became a challenge to figure out the sections throughout the State. As a result, a great deal of time was spent studying maps and using multi-colored stick pins. Trying to keep natural rivals together, keep travel down, and keep in mind where or which schools may host the section meet, the sections were then set. We had very little technology in those days. Everything was done by hand. Today's technology would have made the whole thing easier. ONE MAJOR THING WE LEARNED was how to work together and solve the challenges.

Then came the question of how would we finance the concept? At the beginning we went to the MSHSL and explained the great interest in the True Team Concept to see if they would be part of it. About ten years later we tried again but both times they said the concept is **excellent** but for them to be part of it, the meet would have to be during the same end of the year meet. A workable solution to running an individual meet and the True Team Meet over the same weekend was unable to be set up. So the True Team Committee continues to enjoy running this meet. We cover the cost of the program by having each school pay an entry fee, T-shirts are sold, and the attendance fee for people coming to the meets. For a few years we had a sponsor that helped with the cost. At this time we have cut back and are still looking for another sponsor to help cover costs.

Even the name of the meet was up for discussion. True Team Track & Field Champion won over Dual Team Champion, Team Champion, and others.

The first A & AA meets were run at St. Cloud Apollo with Ron Beachy & Roger Twigg along with Ron's team, coaches and parents doing the work. The first 3A & 4A State meets were run at Park High School run by Dean Houdek and Bob McCollough. Things went quit well and the first True Team State Meet was history.

Over the years some things have changed, but the main idea has never changed. The best way to determine a team champion for track and field is by using the method that was used in the True Team System that was organized by these coaches.

Thanks to the leadership, hard work, energy, creativity, team work, imagination, love of track and field and the joy of working with young athletes, shared by these coaches, we now have an excellent way to determine the best **TEAM** each year.

## **25<sup>th</sup> YEAR OF MINNESOTA TRUE TEAM TRACK AND FIELD**