

Hal Bateman

Mrs. Gerow Follows Husband's Footsteps



The Gerow household in Delta Township has been beset by conflicts all fall. Conflicts that probably no other household in the nation has to encounter.

This sounds like a piece of neighborhood gossip but there's nothing wrong with the Gerows domestic harmony. It's simply that both are cross-country coaches and their meets seem to fall on the same day.

It's unusual to find two cross-country coaches in one household and even rarer to find a husband and wife who coach the harrier sport. It's a unique situation, one that may not be duplicated anywhere else in the nation.

How many households are there with husband and wife cross-country coaches? For that matter, how many housewives coach cross-country?

You could probably count them on one hand but Jerry Gerow is Waverly High School's cross-country coach while his wife, Vonda, coaches the Lansing Lightningettes, a girl's track and cross country team.

Considering the Gerows also have two young boys, Randy, 4, and Teddy, 3, it is a busy schedule and one that can lead to problems.

Just last weekend Jerry's Waverly team was competing in the Class B regional meet at Groesbeck Golf Course while Vonda's team was running in a Michigan AAU women's meet in Utica. Despite the apparent conflict the Gerows didn't have any problems.

"It works out pretty well," said Jerry. "If there's a conflict we get a baby sitter. Once in a while it's pretty hectic."

Fortunately It's Only . . .

. . . a recent problem. Women's cross-country started in Michigan this year although it has been run nationally for several years. Prior to cross-country, Vonda coached the Lightningettes track team during the spring and summer, making her one of the few women track coaches in the country. Most women's teams are coached by men.

"I try to help Vonda," said Jerry, "and sometimes she gives me help."

"We try to be interested in the other's team," said Vonda, who graduated from Everett High School in 1932 and Michigan State in 1936.

There are other benefits, such as trophies on the mantelpiece.

"We've added a trophy in the house every weekend for the past four weeks," said Jerry, a Sexton and a Michigan State graduate.

Both coaches have been successful this fall. Jerry's Waverly team finished second at the Albion and Napoleon Invationals and qualified for the state Class B meet with a second place in the regional at Groesbeck. The Warriors were seventh in the state meet. Vonda's team has taken second in two out of three meets.

Jerry, who also is the Warriors' tennis coach, coached at Eaton Rapids three years before moving to Waverly.



JERRY, VONDA GEROW

Like Jerry, Vonda also coached in the Capital Circuit, but in girl's basketball at Holt High School. She quit teaching two years ago but developed her interest in track while at Holt.

"I founded the Lightningettes three years ago with one athlete, Sue Phelps," Vonda said. "We now have seven girls and one, Gloria Ewing, is now at Tennessee State competing in track."

Vonda Has Spent . . .

. . . plenty of time and money on the track club, as her gasoline bill will attest.

"Every year we make at least one trip to Ohio," she said, "and most of our meets are in the Detroit area. We travel about 3,500 miles a year. Lately, club dues and donors have helped offset the expenses."

When they don't have conflicts in the fall, what do they do? Go to a cross-country meet, naturally.

Saturday, Vonda's team didn't have a meet so she took the boys to Ypsilanti to cheer for Jerry's team in the state meet. This Saturday, Jerry's team doesn't have a meet so he'll take the boys to Detroit where Vonda's team will be in action in the women's state meet.

It sounds like Randy and Teddy will turn out to be cross-country runners when they get older, but don't bet on it.

"Right now they're torn between track and tennis," Jerry said.

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jeffhollobaugh
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