

Catching Up With ... Steve Charron

As an official, his numbers are staggering: 43 years as a cross country and track and field official; 30 years as head starter for the state cross country meet; 28 years as starter for the state track and field meet; 13 years as head official for one of the largest meets in the country, the Nike Heartland Regional cross country meet, and one of the most amazing numbers of all, he has officiated over 1600 track and field meets in his decorated career! Steve Charron's love for the sports of Cross Country and Track and Field started in high school and has never wavered.

The Seneca, SD native attended Faulkton high school and participated in football, wrestling, track and field and Legion baseball. He credits his track coach, Cliff Bridge for instilling a love for running. Charron participated in two state track meets.

After graduating high school, Steve attended Northern State University for three years. Then an opportunity to join a group called Teacher Corp led him to Black Hills State



Steve Charron gives final instructions to runners at the Nike Heartland Regional in Sioux Falls.

University.

Charron was assigned to the Rosebud Indian Reservation and eventually coached at Todd County and Winner. Soon a career change called and was he was offered a position with the publisher of Reader's Digest



Steve Charron

magazine, beginning a career that would span 30 years. After being named Reader's Digest National Salesman of the Year, Charron was offered a management position.

Eventually his family moved to Huron where the opportunity to become an official presented itself. Steve had been starting junior high meets for Huron athletic director Bob Miller when Sunshine Bible's AD Marlow Petersen asked him to start their invitational. "I told SBA I would work the meet and my fee would be \$75.00. I never dreamed they would have 40 schools in attendance, and we would be on the track for over ten hours. The cost for my shells alone was \$80.00!"

Eventually Steve earned the opportunity to work his first State Track Meet. "My first race was the Class B boys' hurdles. I had a false start. I almost cried." 28 State Meets later, he is still at it.

So many athletes Charron has encountered have made a lasting impression on him. "How can one forget Rod DeHaven setting state records and later becoming an Olympian." Of Chad Greenway, Steve recalls "He always had a big smile and would say 'good morning, sir, how are you?' He would then go to the starting line and shake every other competitor's hand and wish them well. When the gun went off, he was all business and rarely, if ever, lost. What a wonderful attitude and person."

Through the years, Charron has started meets at 36 venues, including the Sanford-Jackrabbit Athletic Complex at SDSU. The annual SDSU Classic held in February stands out. "One year we started 52 heats of the 200." In addition, Steve has been head starter for Summit League and North Star college championships.

To be sure, Steve Charron has been one of the greatest promoters of the sports of Cross Country and Track and Field. He was one of the co-founders of the SD Track and Field/Cross Country Officials Association and he actively recruits new officials, guiding them through the process of earning their



Steve Charron visits with Aberdeen's Gene Brownell at a recent state track and field meet.

certification. He served on the Track and Field/Cross Country advisory committee and is currently representing Track and Field and Cross Country on the SDHSAA All-Sports Council. He is also a long-time member of USATF.



Steve Charron (in white jacket in background) supervises the finish of the Nike Heartland Regional cross country meet in Sioux Falls.

All of Steve's dedication has not gone unnoticed. He was the 1994 NFIOA Boys and Girls SD Outstanding Official for Track and Field, and the recipient of the SDHSAA Distinguished Service Award, and the 2014 ESD Conference Award of Merit.

In July of 2022, Steve and his wife Sheila celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have three children and eight grandchildren. One of his grandchildren, Emery Larson of Chester, won the Class B state cross country meet this past fall.

His involvement extends beyond the track as he has coached youth wrestling for 20 years in Huron, served as President of the Huron Chamber of Commerce and currently serves as President of the Huron Business Improvement District that recruits events to Huron.