



March 22, 2017 Wyandotte Distinguished Graduate Inductee



Alphonse Paul Ruffner Class of 1967

Alphonse Ruffner distinguished himself as an outstanding athlete, a dedicated Track & Field coach and a role model in encouraging and inspiring children and his colleagues throughout the state of Michigan.

Al graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1967. At Roosevelt, he was an outstanding athlete in Track & Field events. He was recognized five times as an All State in Cross Country & Track, MHSAA State Champion Division I in 1965 and runner-up in 1966 in Cross Country. Al is also the school record holder for the two mile run – a record that still stands 50 years later.

Though Al was a special athlete, he considered himself to be a very average student. Two teachers, Mrs. Wojtowicz and Mr. Bunnell, made a professional influence on Al. They demanded he also do well in his academic subjects, while taking a special interest in his athletic events. Both teachers attended every home meet that Al participated in for years – even beyond high school and his college years.

Al earned his Bachelor of Science Degree at Eastern Michigan University in 1971 with a major in History. While earning his degree, he was recognized as a three-time All American in Track & Field and was a member of two Eastern Michigan University Cross Country National Championship teams. Al honed his coaching and officiating skills while at Eastern Michigan University.

After college, Al served as the high school coach at Wyandotte, Cabrini and Divine Child for over ten years. In 1986, Al was honored as the first inductee to the Wyandotte Sports Hall of Fame. In 1987, with his first year coaching experience at Wyandotte, the girls Track team won the Downriver News Herald Championship. This was the first Wyandotte girl's championship trophy in any sport. It is no surprise that Al Ruffner was named the Track Coach of the Year.

Perhaps one of Al's greatest honors was received in 2016 when he was officially recognized for his 45 years of officiating by the Michigan High School Athletic Association.

Al has been an ambassador for sports of Cross County and Track & Field. He does so much beyond the call of officiating. His sincere work with children and his colleagues has also made Al a favorite guest speaker at middle and high school banquets. Al is proud that a special Roosevelt High School Ruffner Award is presented each year to the outstanding boy and girl Track member.

Al has also been a downriver drivers training instructor for over 30 years. He worked for the Detroit Pistons for 13 years taking care of their plane, "Roundball One" and received a championship ring in 2004 after the Pistons won the title.

When not busy substitute teaching at Roosevelt High School, Al is still involved with driver's education and officiating track and cross country meets. Al and his wife, Lucy, are involved in community theater, both as actors and behind the scenes working where needed. Al also spends his free time making hospital visits to church members and fellow cancer survivors.

Alphonse Ruffner and his wife, Lucy, make their home in nearby Taylor and enjoy their sons, Matthew and Steven, and their families, especially their seven grandchildren.