



Jerry Johnson Class of 2018

Jerry came to Oroville High School (OHS) in 1973 and enjoyed a highly successful 36-year teaching and coaching career until his retirement in 2009. Jerry wore lots of hats at OHS, including physical education and driver training teacher, head track and field and cross-country coach, assistant varsity baseball coach, and assistant freshman, JV, and varsity football coach. He also served as the Block O Advisor.

Jerry's track and field squads were known as the "Team of the 80's" going undefeated in dual meets seven times between 1981 and 1989, and again undefeated in 1990. The eighties also saw his teams win six Eastern Athletic League Championships and five Northern Section Championships. From 1984-1990, his OHS varsity teams were undefeated in dual meet competition, March 3, 1984 through March 23, 1989, for an overall dual meet record of 70 wins and one loss.

For many years, the Oroville Relays was one of the mainstay relay team events in the Northern Section, requiring four athletes be entered in each event. Jerry was responsible for renaming the event The Herm Stauss Relays, in honor of long time OHS teacher and coach Herm Stauss, who was a charter member of the OUHSD Hall of Fame, being inducted in 2009. During its peak years, the event drew as many as 45 teams, but as time went on and participation in the sport dwindled and the meet was dropped.

Jerry established the Verdell Mills Outstanding Senior Track Athlete of the Year award in honor of one of his athletes who tragically drowned in the Feather River. Jerry stated, "*Verdell made enough of an impact on me as a person and competitor that I said after he died, it was an opportunity to continue on with his memory.*" He also established the OHS Tiger Track and Field Hall of Fame. Several of Jerry's outstanding athletes went on to compete in the CIF State Championships with Garry Martin being the highest ever OHS medal winner, earning 5th place in the 800 meters. Garry continued his track career at UCLA.

Throughout his career, Jerry was honored with numerous awards and commendations, one of which occurred in 2011, when his former track and field athletes hosted Jerry Johnson Night at Harrison Stadium during halftime of the OHS/Anderson football game. Jerry was honored with a plaque that is on display at the stadium. In 1988, he was recognized by the OUHSD trustees, in 1991 was named Northern Section Track and Field Honor Coach and in 2008 inducted into the Northern California Sports Association Hall of Fame.

In his spare time, Jerry was an avid duck hunter and at the end of every track season, hosted a party for his team members, meet officials and helpers in the backyard of his home. Aside from hamburgers and hot dogs, duck was a main item on the menu, and all drinks, side dishes and salads were compliments of Jerry. Those were memorable times for Jerry and his athletes, who were always welcome in his home.

Jerry also experienced great success as assistant football coach at OHS, with teams going to section playoffs nine times, the finals four times, winning three league championships and crowned section champions in 1999.

As a physical education teacher, Jerry has been quoted saying, "*I didn't really emphasize the physical and athletic ability so much as I tried to teach real life skills that they would need - sportsmanship, comradery and that kind of thing. I didn't worry too much about winning in activities.*" He was also known to say to his students, "*Don't thank me now, thank me later.*"

Jerry's service was not confined to OHS as he was a volunteer coach in the Thermalito Little League for 16 years, winning a District 47 senior major division championship in 1990 and a District major division title in 1993. After his retirement from OHS, he volunteered as baseball coach in the Palermo Little League for three years. The local youth football program also benefited from Jerry's expertise as he coached the Oroville Rhinos for five years.

In addition to coaching, Jerry offered behind the wheel driver training instruction to countless numbers of students from 1997-2018.

Jerry's son, Jay, OHS alum and head baseball coach at University of Arizona, was inducted in 2017, making them the first father and son to be inducted into the OUHSD Hall of Fame.

Jerry continues to make his home in Oroville.