



# Mary Banks

## Coach Cross Country & Track

In 1996 Mary Banks told the Newark Star-Ledger: "I'm a better coach than I was a runner." Looking at Mary's career as a runner, that statement would be hard to accept...until you look at her career as a coach.

Running for Raritan High School in the 1970s Mary was a three-time Monmouth County and Shore Conference cross country champion, and twice ran second at the Meet of Champions. She was also a two-time State Group 4 champion, an Eastern States Champion, and twice was a member of the AAU National Cross Country Team. On the track, Mary was a four-time Shore Conference and Monmouth County two mile champ and won the same race at the Meet of Champions three consecutive years. In 1997 the Asbury Park Press described her as "...one of the best distance runners in Shore Conference history." In 2000 the Newark Star-Ledger named Mary as one of the top ten runners in New Jersey in the decade of the 1970s.

Mary went on to run at Florida State where as a freshman she won the three mile race at the Alabama Invitational. In her sophomore year she won the 5000 meter race at the Troy Invitational and had five other top five finishes in distances ranging from 1500 meters to 10,000 meters. Unfortunately, Mary's collegiate career was cut short by bone spurs.

After graduating from Florida State with a degree in education, Mary taught elementary school physical education and health in Freehold Township and from 1984-89 was an assistant track coach at Raritan, Manasquan, Manalapan and Red Bank Catholic high schools. In 1990 Mary became the head coach of the RBC girls cross country and indoor and outdoor track teams, and the boys indoor track team, beginning what would be a legendary career.

In 18 years of coaching, Mary's teams had an incredible 111-3 record in dual meets. Her cross-country teams won the prestigious Meet of Champions three consecutive years from 1994-96 and in those years were ranked as the No. 1 girls cross country team in New Jersey by the Star-Ledger. Mary's teams qualified for the Meet of Champions every year coaching career. At the State level her teams had a combined 12 team titles between the N.J. Catholic Track Conference and the N.J. State Interscholastic Athletic Association ("NJSIAA") sectional championships, plus 10 Group titles. Under Mary's coaching Casey teams won 10 Monmouth Country championships and 8 Shore Conference championships.

Mary was named the Star-Ledger Girls Cross Country Coach of the Year in 1991, 1996 and 2007. In 1999 the NJSIAA recognized her for her coaching achievements. In 2001 Mary was inducted into the Jersey Shore Sports Hall of Fame. In 2014 she was a member of the inaugural hall of fame class in the Shore Track Coaches Association Hall of Fame, inducted for her achievements both as a runner and as a coach. So, it seems that Mary Banks was equally outstanding as a runner and a coach.