

Dr. Rodney Peterson

Track/Running

When most youth begin running, they jump right in and run. Not Rodney Peterson. As a young boy, Peterson studied the technical side of running — especially when watching his future college coach compete on television.

His career from middle school through college proved Rodney was a quick study. He began his championship “run” in middle school at Snowden Junior High. Later, at Central High School, he dominated the 800 meters in Tennessee. For more than two years, he won every 800-meter race he competed in. Included in that were three straight TSSAA 800-meter titles in 1992, 1993 and 1994, becoming the first three-time champion in the event in TSSAA history. As a sophomore in 1992, Rodney ran the third-fastest 800-meter time for a high school sophomore in U.S. history. What made his track feats in 1992 and 1993 even more impressive was the fact that he had to do so while dividing his time between track and spring football practices.

In 1994, his efforts helped Central High School win the TSSAA Class 3A state championship. He was also a member of the Warriors 4x800-meter relay team that claimed gold at the state meet.

After his highly decorated prep career, Rodney signed to run at Arkansas, a national power on the college track scene. He also connected with the runner he studied as a youngster, Stanley Redwine, who was an assistant coach for the Razorbacks. In 1995, Rodney played a role in Arkansas winning NCAA titles in both indoor and outdoor track and field.

After one year in Fayetteville, Rodney followed his mentor, Redwine, to Tulsa, where Redwine took over as head coach. Rodney excelled under Redwine’s tutelage. He earned All-Missouri Valley Conference honors four times and All-Western Athletic Conference distinction while running in the 600 and 800 meters indoors and 800 meters outdoors.

Soon after competing, Rodney got the coaching bug and began his career as a graduate assistant at Tulsa. After that, Rodney returned to his hometown to mold future track and field stars in the city. Rodney took over at Melrose High School in 2001 and quickly turned the Golden Wildcats into one of the top track and field programs in the state.

Rodney led Melrose to a state runner-up finish in 2002, and a year later, he guided the Golden Wildcats to the top of the mountain, claiming the school’s first state track and field title since 1965. For his efforts, Rodney was named the 2003 TSSAA Track and Field Coach of the Year.

Over the last 25 years, Rodney has also made an impact on the youth in Memphis as an educator. He is currently the principal at Colonial Middle School Creative & Performing Arts.

Please welcome to the Hall of Fame, for track/running — Dr. Rodney Peterson.