

Mario Festival

I got my start in running in high school and have been a competitive runner ever since. I have tried many other sports over the years, some at a competitive level, but have always returned to my first love. A lifetime of being involved in running has given me the opportunity to embrace many roles including coach, race director, running club leader and general advocate for the sport.

I took competitive running very seriously in my twenties. Living in the small city of Sault Ste. Marie did not give me access to personal coaching. Being self-coached, I studied the science and psychology of competitive running and experimented with many training approaches. This led not only to improvements in my performance but also a passion to teach others what I had learned (and continue to learn).

At first, my coaching experience was with adults. I led training clinics for running clubs and running stores and did personal coaching. Later I coached for summer based track clubs - Sault Athletics and city sponsored track programs.

My wife Kathy and I moved to Calgary in 2006 and I quickly got involved in the local running community leading training programs for Calgary Roadrunners Club and The Running Room. I also continued my involvement in personal coaching.

In January 2013, I started with Calgary Warriors as the middle distance coach under the leadership of Jan Lips. I quickly realized I enjoyed coaching young athletes the most. I am pleased to note the past few years with Calgary Warriors has been my most rewarding coaching experience.

Discovering the sport of running in high school was a transforming experience for me and influenced many aspects of my life including strong academic improvements. This led to an academic scholarship for the University of Waterloo and a successful career specializing in computer and information security. The discipline of hard work and perseverance are important life lessons and I was fortunate to have been exposed to those lessons when I did.

My philosophy and strategy as a coach can be summed by the following progressive goals:

1. Instill the love of running such that it is adopted as a lifetime activity for fitness and wellbeing.
2. Influence athletes to adopt the sport of running as a life long competitive or social athlete.
3. Produce high caliber athletes that achieve excellence at the national and international level.
4. Produce athletes that not only achieve some of the above, but also become leaders and/or coaches and positively influence the sport at the local, national or international level.