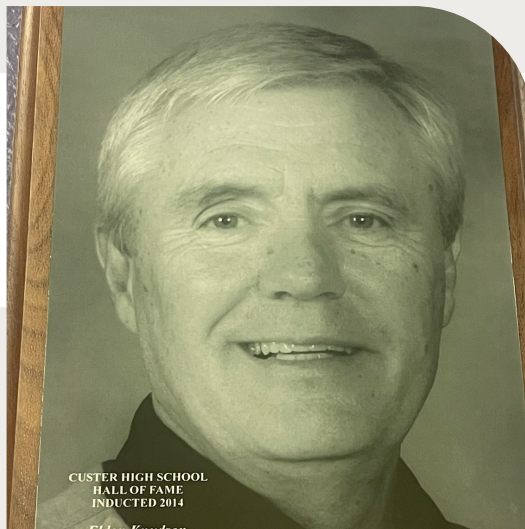


# Eldon Knudson

Coach and Teacher



Eldon Knudson is regarded as the “father” of the Custer High School cross country program, having founded it in the 1970s. Knudson also served as a long-time head track coach and coached football and basketball at various times in his career. The cross country team originated when a few students, not involved in football, expressed interest in attending cross country meets. Knudson created a training regimen for them, having them run around the track while he coached football, so he could still supervise their workouts. From this humble beginning, the program flourished, with the girls and boys teams combining for 12 conference championships and a state championship in 1979 under his guidance.

Knudson continued coaching cross country until his retirement as an educator in the spring of 2007, and the school’s annual cross country meet is now named in his honor. As a track coach, Knudson led the team from 1983 to 2002, achieving two conference titles. His accomplishments include a boys state track championship in 1981, a girls track coach of the year award in 1984, 36 state track champions (individual and relay), 33 state runners-up, and 112 conference individual champions.

In the late 1970s, Knudson, who had been at Custer High School since 1971, took over both the boys and girls track programs when the girls' track coach resigned. He grew up on a farm near Centerville, South Dakota, where he worked extensively with his father. A graduate of Centerville High School, Knudson earned all-conference honors in football his senior year and was part of a track team that won all its meets, including the state championship. He ran the 200, 400, and 800 and continued running track in college at Black Hills State College (now University), where he earned a degree in biology.

Now 67, Knudson splits his time between Custer and Arizona with his wife, Gail. Reflecting on his career, Knudson said he was honored by his induction, noting, “I’m very honored. There have been some great coaches before I got here. I’m very honored and very blessed to have had great kids.”