



2016 WINNERS

Female Youth Athlete of the Year: Jenna Lang – Pacer Track Club

The Perfect Attitude

It's hard to characterize anything in sports as perfect. As athletes and coaches we always find something to improve. Whether it's an athlete's fitness, the weather conditions or the facilities or course, you'll rarely hear the term "perfect."

Jenna Lang of the Pacer Track club seems to defy the odds when considering the use of the word. She had a perfect 2016 cross country season winning all the races in her age division for the Youth Cross Country Challenge. But, what is most impressive is her perfect attitude about the sport. Her approach, her appreciation and her simple desire to be better. When asked about her progress from the 2015 to 2016 season, Lang explains "I just tried to do my best and push myself against the boys. I knew I could do better!" Lang not only pushed herself against the boys, she beat several of them as well!



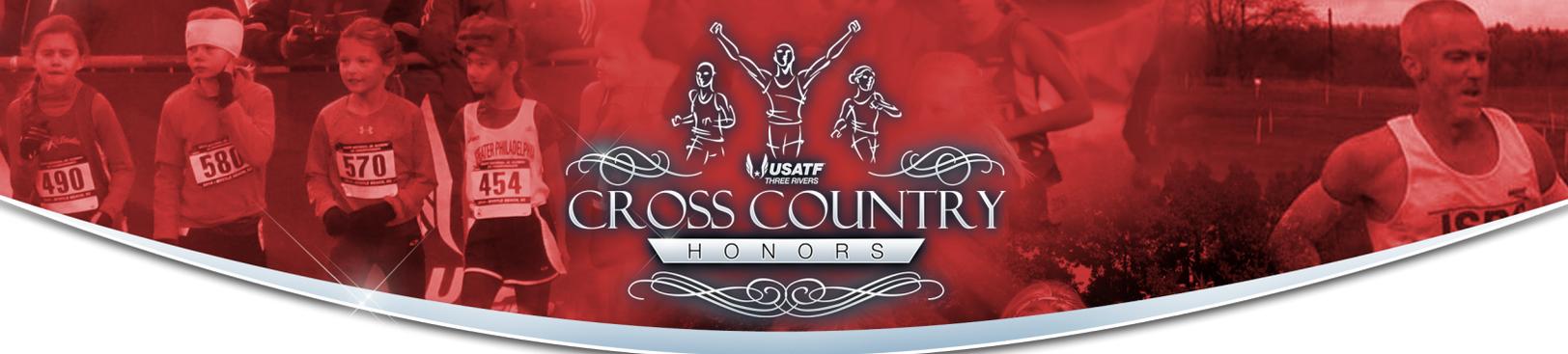
Jenna attends Neil Armstrong Middle School in Bethel Park, PA. She started running at 3 years old in a mile fun run with her Dad. Her time was an impressive 9:54! In addition to running cross country, Lang participates in track & field running the 800m and 1500m races. This year, Jenna will move up to the 3000m on the track.

When she isn't in a pair of running shoes, Lang participates in the yearbook and literacy magazine clubs for her school; she wants to eventually become a writer.

When asked what she thought about being named the female youth athlete of the year for cross country, Lang was very appreciative. "It makes me feel good about myself. I feel accomplished and excited. I just really enjoy running" Lang said. "I also want to thank my friends especially Sawyer Weinmann. He really pushes me!

What a perfect answer.





Male Youth Athlete of the Year: Renz (Sawyer) Weinmann – Pacer Track Club

Hard Work Pays Off



In just three short years, Renz (Sawyer) Weinmann has gone from simply participating in cross country and track & field at the suggestion of his father, to becoming one of the top young distance runners in the Three Rivers Association. Sawyer's dad ran cross country in high school so with his father's encouragement and his mom locating the Pacer Track Club, his athletic career began.

Sawyer won the 2016 Youth Cross Country Challenge in the 9-10 boys age division. This is an improvement on the 2015 season where he placed 3rd overall. He started the 2016 season believing that if he worked hard, he could improve upon his 2015 ranking.

Sawyer placed 2nd in the first race of the season at Mingo Creek Park which was a surprise. Once the first race was under his belt, there was no stopping him. He persevered through tough races including the Penn Hills course. "At the Penn Hills meet, there is a huge hill called "Megatron" says Sawyer. It is a very steep and long hill and painful! That was the most difficult race of the year for sure."

When Sawyer isn't traversing rough cross country courses, he is attending Boyce Middle School in Upper St. Clair, PA as a 5th grader. He recently joined Boy Scouts of America and really enjoys the cooking competitions. Sawyer also started playing the saxophone and has lofty goals to obtain his pilot license to join the search and rescue team with the Civil Air Patrol.

Sawyer's goal for the track & field season is to compete in the 3000m. This is a jump from his normal 800m and 1500m races. He doesn't mind the challenge and actually prefers longer distance races. Sawyer's goal for the upcoming season is to "do better." Specifically, in cross country, he would like to improve upon his 45th place performance (of 341) at the 2016 USATF National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships.





Open Athlete of the Year: Caleb Muller – Steel City Track Club

Running Journey

Caleb Muller’s running journey started halfway across the world in his native Australia. Unlike the American club system, Caleb relied mostly on schools to venture into the sport. Fast forward to 2004, Muller would find himself living stateside, in Columbus, OH and running for his high school. That HS career led to a collegiate career at Marietta College running cross country and indoor and outdoor track & field. Muller ran everything from the 10k to the 4x400m.

After college, Muller landed his first job in Pittsburgh and ultimately started training and competing with the Steel City Track Club. In the fall of 2016, he earned several first place performances in varying race conditions.

“I ran with the lead pack for a good portion of the race and then just broke away,” Muller says when describing his 1st place finish at the Carnegie Mellon University XC Invitational. “It was muddy and rainy and the times were not fast. We ran through a park and I ended up with blisters!” Muller would win this 8k race in 26:37.9.

For the Pittsburgh Great Race 5K, Muller seemed to be much more pleased with the performance. “The race was very competitive for a non-prize race. Based on time, I was aiming at a top 5 finish. I went out with the leader, battled it out, and end up with the win. This event had ideal race conditions which resulted in a road race PR for me.”



Muller had plans to run the Pittsburgh 10 miler the same season but got injured. One of his first events after recovery will be the 10K at the Jesse Owens Half Marathon.

Caleb loves to compete and has channeled that passion into a TRA Board Member position. He serves as the Active Athlete Rep and attends the National USATF Annual Meeting each year in December. Muller wanted to give special recognition to his girlfriend, Liz Williams, who travels to most of his races and is extremely supportive of him and his career.





Masters Athlete of the Year: Dominic Wyzomirski – Steel City Track Club

For Love of the Game

It is great to see athletes who have a true affinity for their sport. They participate because it brings them peace, challenges them, or even teaches them that can be used in other aspects of their lives.

Dominic Wyzomirski's love of the game (or running in the case) has taken him through many competitions. He has been running for over 30 years competing in college at both Penn State and Slippery Rock University.

Due to on and off injuries this year, Wyzomirski only competed in a couple of 5K road races. His 2016 season was highlighted by the 2016 TRA Cross Country Championships where he earned a 1st placed finish for masters men and 5th place overall in a time of 19:40.



When he is not competing in traditional cross country and road races, Wyzomirski can be found running trail races. These competitions are distinctly different from cross country. The courses are generally in the woods where the footing is not ideal, the courses are narrower, the trails have sharp turns, and you may even spot a few animals! Wyzomirski admits that trail racing is his favorite because of the challenge.

Wyzomirski's true love of the game allows him to watch his son participate in the sport and be genuinely proud of his accomplishments. His son participates in track & field in the 400m and 800m, "I just love watching my son participate. It is great to see him and his friends enjoy themselves"





Coach of the Year: Steve Meddings – Pacer Track Club

It Takes a Village

Steve Meddings is no stranger to coaching and working with kids. He is a chemistry and physics teacher at Taylor Allderdice High School in Pittsburgh, PA. He also served as assistant cross country and head girls track & field coach for the school.

For the last several years, Meddings has been coaching for the Pacer Track Club. He has seen the club go through ups and downs. In the 70's and 80's the club boasted a consistent roster of 150 – 200 athletes. The club went through a dry spell and over the last 3-5 years, Meddings and the rest of the Pacer coaching staff have slowly been rebuilding the program. They now average 70 athletes for cross country and 100 athletes for track & field.

Coach Meddings credits the renewed interest and participation to parents, coaches, and athletes, “It takes a village and it’s a true team effort. Without them, this does not work!” Meddings describes the kids as being competitive and enthusiastic which draws interest and retention. He also acknowledges other coaches and advocates of the sport, like Coach Rob Williams, who played a huge role in the development of the Youth Cross Country Challenge. The Pacer Track Club earned the 1st Place Club prize for the 2016 Youth Cross Country Challenge by almost 3,000 points. Five of their athletes were also individual champions for the season.

Meddings has goals for the club to develop over the next several years. “I want to continue to grow the program by getting more kids involved and see them participate in national competitions.





Official of the Year: Tom Erny

Runners on your mark!

If you attend a TRA Youth developmental meet, there's a good chance you'll see the smiling face of Tom Erny. Whether at the starting line or setting up timing equipment, Tom enjoys volunteering and giving athletes of all ages and abilities the opportunity to compete. He started attending track meets in 1993 as a parent of his 3 children who ran for the Pacer Track Club. Two years later, he found himself volunteering when a meet was short staffed. The volunteer roll morphed into light officiating duties, then timing, and eventually starting races.



Tom credits his development to several long time TRA Members and various officials including Norm Crawford, Len Johnson, Nick Pecraro and Bill Phelps. He is a national level official and spends most of his time starting both track & field and cross country competitions. In addition to TRA events, he also starts for the Pennsylvania Special Olympics Summer Games and times for the Pittsburgh Marathon and Pittsburgh Great Race. Tom also sneaks in a few high school and collegiate meets when time permits.

When asked why he officiates and remains involved, it's because he delights in others' success and happiness. "It always amazes me when I see little kids run and never give up. Year after year I watch them improve and gain confidence in themselves. Every meet has its special moments. It's always great when I talk to kids at the starting line and they smile and say 'hey, I remember.'" Tom was surprised that he was chosen for the award and explained that it's not the recognition that keeps him coming meet after meet and year after year. "I feel honored to receive this award. It's the clubs, runners, participants, and other volunteers that make USATF so much fun!"

