

Gene Jones (Metamora High School)

For 52 years (1970 to 2021), Gene Jones prowled Illinois cross country courses for Metamora High School, leading the Runnin' Red to state prominence and inspiring generations of students to set goals, push themselves and have a great time doing it. His boys' teams won 32 conference titles, eight regionals, four sectionals and made 16 state-meet appearances, finishing in the Top 10 eight times. Eighteen boys earned All-State honors, including 1987 champion Mark Scheirer.



Jones started the girls' program in 1976 and won 19 conference titles, 13 regionals, three sectionals and qualified for 14 state meets. He coached 12 All-State girls. Combined, Jones's teams posted a dual-meet record of 697-144. He was named the Illinois Coach of the Year for girls in 2005 and for the boys in 2013, and he was one of eight finalists for National Coach of the Year in 2006.