

Tom Cross

Tom Cross was born in 1928 in a farmhouse located in Sumner County Kansas-the oldest of four children. He attended a one-room school during his elementary school years. Tom graduated from Belle Plaine High School in 1946 although he credits most of the early education he received to growing up on a farm with no electricity, no indoor plumbing, and lots of animals to raise and take care of! He was also always interested in sports and constructed himself an interesting contraption on which he could practice the high jump! He also played on the school's high school football team.

He attended Oklahoma Panhandle A&M College and played on the school's football team. He graduated in May 1951, earning a bachelor's degree in American History. The following month, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and did his infantry basic training at Fort Riley in Kansas and went through the Airborne Jump School in Fort Benning, Georgia. This experience greatly influenced young Tom's life, and he has been quoted as saying, "When you do the little things right, there are no big things!" He served in the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg in North Carolina with maneuvers to Fort Hood, Texas and Camp Drum in New York. He considers his military experiences to have significantly contributed to his preparation for a career in coaching.

In 1953 he began coaching football, basketball, and track at a junior high school in Phillipsburg, Kansas. The following year he married his sweetheart, June Berry, who has been a true encourager of Tom in all his endeavors for over 58 years! In 1955 he moved to the local high school as the head football coach and an assistant basketball and track coach where all his teams were quite successful.

In 1958 Tom received his Master's Degree in Physical Education from Fort Hayes State. He continued his coaching career the following year as the head football coach for Colby High School, entering his first playoff season with a 9-0 record. He then moved to Dodge City Junior College as Head Football Coach and Head Track Coach and Assistant Basketball Coach, continuing to enjoy winning seasons. During this time, Tom became a basketball official-an activity at which he was extremely good and which he continued until age 62. It was also during this time that the Cross family doubled in size, with a son, Kurt, born in 1958, and a daughter, Shari, born in 1961. In 1965 he returned to his alma mater Panhandle A&M as an Assistant Football and Head Track Coach, along with intramural director and physical education teacher. Other coaching stints included Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph High School, and Hays High School. Coach Cross coached some great players and enjoyed some great seasons. One of his former quarterbacks is currently the Athletic Director at the University of Kansas. In 1985, he was asked to be an assistant coach for the west in the Kansas Shrine Bowl Game.

In 1989, Tom made an important career decision and switched from coaching football to strength and conditioning. He made a visit to Lincoln, Nebraska and talked with Boyd Epley who gave him some sound advice. He was also fortunate to have had great mentors in the field-John Stucky and Doc Kreis. Others in the field who were extremely helpful to him were Mike Clark, Mike Stone, and Johnny Parker.

His first job in the strength and conditioning field was at Tulsa University as a volunteer in 1990. The following year he became Head Strength and Conditioning Coach, and the football team became the Freedom Bowl Champions in 1991. In 1994 the University's basketball team made the Sweet Sixteen. That same year Coach Cross was selected as Strength and Conditioning Coach of the Year in the College and Professional Division at the National Strength and Conditioning Association's annual national conference in New Orleans.

Both Tom and his wife, June, were selected by the USA Weightlifting Committee as volunteer workers for the 1996 Olympic Games. Tom worked as a supervisor in the training room where the best lifters from around the globe trained. This provided Tom with a great educational opportunity. That same year, Tom was offered a job as the strength and conditioning coach at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, Kansas. There, Coach Cross was able to establish a program that has been an example for many strength and conditioning coaches to follow, which was based upon the following principles:

-Train on your own two feet-no bench



Tom Cross
Phillipsburg
1955-1957

- Utilize total body exercises-no curls
- Utilize free weight-overhead squats
- Explode the triple extension (hips, knees, ankles)
- Eliminate gassers in football
- No distance running in basketball
- Train the metabolic system that the sport demands-short, explosive bursts

The results of Coach Cross' program speak for themselves:

- The football team has won 80% of its games
- The University's basketball program has played in 11 consecutive NAIA tournaments
- The softball team has played in two NAIA Post-Season Tournaments and has a record of 220 wins/118 losses over the past seven years
- Many of Tom's athletes successfully compete in the USA Weightlifting National Championships each year-nine teams have received the top three trophies.

Many organizations and individuals have recognized the significant contributions Coach Cross has made:

- Named the 2002 Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) Coach of the Year for the Kansas City area-received the Vince Lombardi Award
- Recognized as a Master Strength and Conditioning Coach by the CSCCa in 2004
- Recognized in 2006 by MidAmerica Nazarene University for 50+ years of coaching and establishment of a \$1,000 scholarship to be awarded annually to a worthy athlete at the University in Tom Cross' name
- Inducted in 2008 into the USA Strength & Conditioning Coaches Hall of Fame
- Inducted in 2010 into the MidAmerica Nazarene Hall of Fame

Tom and June have two children, and although Coach Cross claims to be "retired," he continues to teach high school weight lifting classes and conduct USA weightlifting clinics. He is widely respected for his vast knowledge of Olympic-style weightlifting. He began distance running in 1965 and has competed in two marathons and over 100 5K and 10K runs and half marathons. He had to give up running in 2007 after he had to undergo a knee replacement and now does extensive KettleBell training instead. He enjoys traveling in his motor home and watching his four grandsons play football-two on the high school level and two on the collegiate level.

Coaching has literally been Tom Cross' life for over 58 years! He knows the difference that a coach can make in the life of a young athlete, and the following has always been his motto:

*I hope that where I travel
They will say of me one day
That it somehow made a difference
That I passed along this way.*

In addition, Coach Cross has mentored many young individuals in the field of strength and conditioning coaching who are now successful strength and conditioning coaches in their own right! Tom Cross-a true Legend in the Field of Strength and Conditioning-has undoubtedly made a difference and made the soil

In addition, Coach Cross has mentored many young individuals in the field of strength and conditioning coaching who are now successful strength and conditioning coaches in their own right! Tom Cross-a true Legend in the Field of Strength and Conditioning-has undoubtedly made a difference and made the soil much richer for all of us!