



**Mark Simmonds** Mark graduated from Albert Lea High School in 1976, where he participated in football, basketball and track.

While Mark has many memories of his years as a Tiger in three sports, one particular sport stands out for him.

“I was voted the Outstanding Track Performer Award three years in a row at the Rochester Mayo Invitational Track and Field Meet in 1974, 1975 and 1976,” he said.

“It was a great honor to have the head track coaches from across the Minnesota AA class recognize my abilities and accomplishments by voting me for this award, not just once, but three times.”

Mark lists his head coach, Jerry Kaphers, as being the most influential person in his track career.

“As a ninth grader in 1973, Coach Kaphers gave me the chance and opportunity to run as a sprinter on the ‘A’ squad. I went on as a member of the sprint medley relay team, running the 440-yard leg, and we won the relay at the state track meet with a time of 3:33.8, helping the Tigers to place eighth in the state meet as a team with 10 points. He said he can still hear Kaphers’ voice bringing him down the backstretch and around the final turn with “Lift your knees. Lean forward.”

Now retired and living in Lino Lakes, Mark and his wife, Erin, also have a family cabin near Detroit Lakes where he loves to sail.

“Some of the best years of my life were spent on the water, sailing my catamaran with family and friends,” he said.

His advice for young athletes is to select the sports you want to participate in. Have focus, set goals and work hard to attain them and just have fun.