

# 26.2 miles in her shoes



St. Monica cross-country coach and athletic director brings her world-record achievements to the track every day

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**T**he pendant around Jacqueline Hansen's neck reads "Coach." It should. She has certainly earned the title.

St. Monica High School's athletic director and cross-country coach has a different experience than most of her colleagues and has taken leading by example to the extreme. She's coaching a sport she helped to shape.

The No. 1-ranked marathoner in the world from 1974-77, she has won 12 of the 18 marathons she has competed in and set four world records. She was the first woman to run a marathon under 2 hours and 40 minutes and is a two-time National AAU All-American Track & Field Champion.

"I think that it is really nice to have a coach who brings with them their own experience as a world-class athlete," said St. Monica varsity cross-country team member Lucas Jones.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Hansen's first world record in the marathon, set at the Western Hemisphere Marathon in Culver City in 1974 with a time of 2:43:54.

There is just one thing missing from her trophy case: an Olympic medal. This might seem ironic considering Hansen was one of the movers and shakers behind the movement to make long-distance running competitions Olympic events for women.

Hansen never got the opportunity to compete on that stage because International Olympic Committee officials thought for a long time that women's events were boring and wouldn't sell tickets.

When the committee finally agreed to add the women's marathon to the 1984 games in Los Angeles, she was sidelined by injury.

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A high school physical education teacher



RYAN MILLER / OUR TIMES

**St. Monica's cross country coach and athletic director Jacqueline Hansen is celebrating her 25th anniversary of breaking the world record in the marathon.**

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A high school physical education teacher encouraged the Granada Hills High School senior to run.

"She taught me to question, 'why don't women run,' and now here I am, a P.E. teacher and a track coach," Hansen said. "I feel like I've come full circle."

When she first started to compete at Granada Hills, women were limited to races of 400 meters or less.

"I wasn't particularly fast," she said. "My coach didn't even take me to the city meet, but she said she always knew I wasn't a sprinter."

Luckily for Hansen, progress was made in women's long distance running and the distances

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# COACH

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women were allowed to compete in were slowly increased from 400 meters to the marathon. With every increase in distance, Hansen appeared more and more comfortable competing, eventually becoming the national collegiate mile champion while a student at San Fernando State, now Cal State Northridge.

What made Hansen a

marathoner was seeing Sheryl Bridges grab a world record by becoming the first woman to run the marathon in under 2 hours and 50 minutes, a record Hansen herself would later shatter by more than 10 minutes.

Hansen entered and won her first marathon, Western Hemisphere, in 1972 without any specific preparation.

She would go on to destroy her own marathon world record with her 2:38:19 performance at the Nike-OTC Marathon in Eugene, Ore. in 1975.

"A friend of mine and I used

to daydream about what would be better, a world record or an Olympic medal," Hansen said. "We decided the best thing would be to win an Olympic medal while setting a world record. It would have been nice to have been able to try."

Because of Hansen's efforts, the girls at St. Monica's can compete without a second thought.

"I just tell them not to take anything for granted," Hansen said. "Just remember all of the women runners who worked so hard for you."