

Earl Engman

Head Coach – Track & Field

1957-1974

Earl Engman worked as the Track & Field coach at Santa Ana High School from 1957-1974. For nearly 38 years he worked in the Santa Ana Unified School District as a teacher, coach, administrator, and some say most importantly, a mentor. Many described Engman--a former pro-football player and Olympic athlete in track and field during the 1940s--as a "larger-than-life" figure.

Prior to his teaching and coaching at Santa Ana High, Engman competed in football, track & field, and basketball at UC Santa Barbara where he was later inducted into their Athletic Hall of Fame. As a football player, he was selected to compete in both the Senior Bowl & East-West Shrine Game. He was named all-league and Second Team Little All-American in 1947. After graduating from UCSB, he went on to play professional football with the San Francisco 49ers from 1949-1950 and 1952. In track & field, he held the UCSB Triple Jump record at 44'7.25", as well as the UCSB Long Jump record at 23'6". He also placed at the 1948 NCAA Championships and Olympic Tryouts.

Yet it was his time as track coach at Santa Ana High for which we remember and honor him today. He had a tremendous impact on athletic programs throughout Orange County, the CIF Southern Section, and the CIF State organization through his service not only as a coach, but as an official, a referee, and a manager of countless track meets. As Santa Ana High coach, he won 2 CIF Southern Section Track and Field Championships. A master of running track meets, he created what became known as "Earl's Army," a group of volunteers who helped run the meets locally and at the CIF State Track and Field Championships, as well.

Engman's athletes remember him as "kind, caring, and famous for his smile and great bear hugs – referred to as "Earl Hugs." Another former athlete commented that "all the kids just revered him; he was the epitome of what a good role model was. . . Earl was Santa Ana Unified."

To honor Engman, former athletic director and track coach Frank Alvarado named his annual track invitational the “Earl Engman Relays,” and seven years ago the Santa Ana High School track was named in his honor.