

TAPPING OUR TOP 50

FEBRUARY 2025

Jorn Jensen in January notched his first Short Six in the 55-59 age group, posting a scintillating 35:33. That's an 83% age-grade, or national class. For his efforts, in the WVJS rankings for that age group, Jorn placed ... No. 4 all time.

Another WVJS stalwart, Missy Sudan, also that day ran her first Short Six in this age group, notching a 43:20 and a strong 78% age-grade ... and ended a minute-plus from the age-group's top rank.

And in November, Bob Kemp ran his first Farwell-Horseshoe in the 70-74 bracket at a blazing 36:29. That earned him an age-grade of 88! ... and No. 4 in the rankings.

Hmmm. You might have two thoughts: A. great job, Bob, Missy and Jorn and B. who in the heck ranks ahead of them?

Hopefully, all WVJSers know they can find the answers on our website, under the All-Time Top 50 List link. But since you're busy putting in your miles, let's take a brief tour, pat a few folks on the back, hear from a couple of WVJSers, and dig into the lists a tad.

MEN OVERALL TOP-50

June 29, 2024, might have seemed like your average All-Courses Saturday workout. Not so. With little fanfare, WVJS history was made that day when Kyle Berman scorched a 26:31 on Triangle, with a 78% age-grade. All age-grades come via the WAVA (World Association of Veteran Athletes) calculator on our website, under the Performance Calculator link. That gave Kyle, then age 26, a No. 36 ranking on our All-Time Top 50 for Triangle.

Nice you say? Better than nice. Kyle became the first new entrant on *any* of our All-Time Top 50s in 13 years, over our six courses. (It's a bit difficult to research, but it appears the previous newest entrant on an All-Time Top 50 dates to Aug. 2001. Then, Robert Pickens blazed the Short Six in 31:52, No. 21 on the All-Time List.)

For a Club that began during the LBJ Administration – and with Top 50 times dating to at least 1978 – it's really hard to post a men's All-Time Top 50 time. (There are many reasons for this, but note that our Club skews older of late and many earlier Club members were fast young men who ran in college and/or H.S.)

In fact, only two of our currently active members can be found among all six Top 50s. Can you guess who? (don't look ahead; in the meantime, here are our other active members who are in All-Time Top 50s: Scott Bang is missing only Farwell; Jorn ranks on Farwell-Horseshoe and Tri; Jim Bordoni ranks on Farwell.) ... Now done stalling, the immortal duo are Danny Moon and Robert Pickens. Ta daaaa.

"I think the Top 50 lists gives everyone motivation," says Danny. "Before a Saturday run my typical routine is to check Cum Sat times and then check the Top lists and see if I can find a target time to shoot for."

Bob Herndon is No. 1 on four of the courses. He's a former Lockheed employee, as are many WVJSers. He ran with the Club a few years in the mid-80s and at last word resided in Washington state. Mike Holst and Greg Szanto, who each ran just a couple times with the Club in 1993 and '85, respectively, are tops in Farwell and Triangle, respectively.

Then there's Bob Ebert, who ranks no worse than No. 4 on any course. He's No. 2 for Farwell-Herriman/Horseshoe and Triangle, with age-grades of 85% and 86%. He set those marks in 1992 and '93, shortly after joining the Club. Bad knees forced his exit around 2000, but he says he's since returned to running on trails. And he says he might pop in one of these Saturdays to see how he'd do as a 70-year-old.

Ebert was a CCS 2-mile champ at Willow Glen H.S. His junior year XC team ranked No. 2 in the nation. He also ran for San Jose State U, with a mile PR of 4:08. He was known for pulling up to West Valley College mere minutes before the start of a run. "I never liked to warm up," says the Scotts Valley area resident.

Active with WVJS the early '90s, Ebert remembers Ray Russell as one of the top guys then. Russell, who now lives in Avila Beach and has visited WVJS over the years, says back in his day, every Sat. run was a real battle. "Some tremendous runners," Russell said. He recalls posting a 4:32 on a WVJS track mile, when he was 39 (an 86% age-grade).

"The Club was a real sanctuary for me," said Russell, who's No. 2 all-time on Douglass, No. 5 on the Triangle, and No. 6 on Valley Vista, Farwell and Short Six.

Of course, while the Top 50 giveth, it also taketh. When Kyle entered the Triangle's All-Time Top 50, falling off the list was former No. 50 Al Murray. But Al is NOT lost to history. He ranks highly on some of our age group Top 50s. Before we get there ...

WOMEN OVERALL TOP 50

The women's All-Time Top 50 rankings are a whole 'nother story from the men, dominated by three runners still active with the club: Becki Kriege, Kristina Park and Missy Sudan.

In addition, changes among the All-Time Top 50s are happening as we speak, with the ascent of Fatima Machado and Lin Sun. When Lin last May ran 19:23 time, she hit No. 49 on the list for Douglass.

Fatima and Lin also recently entered the Valle Vista All-Time Top 50, at Nos. 42 and 48, respectively; the Farwell-Horseshoe at Nos. 37 and 33; and the Short Six at Nos. 44 and 35.

Many active WVJSers figure prominently in the women's All-Time Top 50s, but Becki, Kristina and Missy are the standard-bearers. Kristina is a 1998 inductee into the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Hall of Fame, for track and XC. Becki ran for UC-Irvine, Foothill College and, of course, for coach Walt at Wilcox H.S. (as did a few other WVJSers). Missy ran track in H.S. in Massachusetts.

These three are in the top seven in all the courses. Becki is No. 1 in five of the six, tied with Kristina on Valle Vista (and each with 81% age-grades.) Becki's records were set between late 1988 and mid-'92. Kristina's Vista record dates to 1997. Kristina ranks No. 2 on Short Six and Missy No. 2 on Farwell. Becki is No. 2 on Douglass to Christine Kennedy, whose record dates to 1995. Christine ran with us for two short stints, and at one time was No. 2 in the U.S. marathon rankings for her age; No. 1 was ... Joan Benoit Samuelson. Ahem.

Women currently active with the Club who rank in the Top 50 for multiple courses include: Marian Richard, Carol Bednar, Heather Rohrer, Helen Wong and Madelyn Moon.

MEN/WOMEN 40-44

Joseph AuBuchon continues to wreak a little havoc with these rankings. His 15:33 in 2022 on Douglass tied Todd Hayes for No. 26 on this list. He's also reached No. 46 on both Farwell and S. Six. Last Aug., his 28:08 put him on Triangle at No. 40 and knocked poor Al Murray off the list. (Sorry Al.) Now No. 50 on Triangle is Geoff Bradley, whose 28:43 gives Travis Koh and others something to shoot for. (Just sayin'.)

The men's course leaders in this age group include late longtime Club member Jake White, who set the Douglass record of 14:04 in 1983. Most of the top times date to the '80s and '90s. Robert Pickens in No. 3 on F-H with a 25:10 that he ran in 2004, the most recent top-three time in this age group.

As for the women, Becki is No. 1 on all the courses except Douglass, where Christine again is No. 1 and Becki No. 2. The top 40-44 times on Douglass and Short Six double as top times overall. Kristina and Missy rank no lower than No. 7 on any course in this age group. And the list has a lot of our current and recent WVJSers because at this point none of the women's rankings have 50 recorded times -- yet. For now, Fatima ranks No. 13 on both V. Vista and F-H and likely by the time anyone reads this will rank highly for some other courses.

MEN/WOMAN 45-49

On the men's side, the big news in this group is Norry McAllister clinging to his No. 50 ranking on Valle Vista. And it's the last Norry mention on any of the 45-49 lists. (Sorry Norry, couldn't resist.) Since we all know Norry to be an age-group phenom, his near absence from 45-49 lists is a quirk. For one, given when Norry joined the Club, he had few runs before hitting age 5-0. Also, Norry got faster as he aged. Where 18:36 is his top Valle Vista time before 50, he set his PR in 2010, with a 17:33. That ranks No. 13 on the 50-54 list.

Robert Pickens proved a top WVJS runner in this age group. The Pick is No. 1 for Farwell and Short Six. His 18:50 on Farwell is an 87% age-grade, and his 32:35 on Short Six is an 84%.

The only recent moves in this age group rankings come courtesy of Antoine Manens. His 35:31 for the Short Six in Jan. '23 placed him at No. 26 ... and knocked Geoff off the list (sorry Geoff). In March '23, Antoine sped to a 16:06 on Douglass, making him No. 36. No other changes in this age-group rankings of late, but is it OK to note that Norry currently is No. 50 on V. Vista and Ken Camet No. 50 on F-H? Hope it's OK.

As for the women, Kristina tops four of the six courses, Becki leads Tri and Sue Francis F-H, with no recent changes among the top spots.

MEN/WOMEN 50-54

Let's just call this the Geoff Bradley era. The only changes to the course Top 50 in at least the past five years consisted of Calvin Do joining the Douglass list with a 16:33 in 2022 ... and Geoff joining the list for all six courses. As recently as June, Geoff hit No. 40 on F-H with 29:38. Getting knocked off the list was former No. 50 runner Dino Delyani. (Geoff actually knocked Dino off this list in early 2022, but Geoff continued to set age-group PRs.)

Not that Dino would particularly care to have this mentioned (sorry Dino), but Geoff also bumped Dino off of the Douglass and Triangle rankings. Dino is hanging on to No. 50 on Short Six, his last toehold on any of the 50-54 lists. But don't cry for Dino, whose placements are much safer in older age groups.

Course leadership for this group is dominated by some amazing age-group runners: Dwight Cornwell, Tim Rostege and Bill Meinhardt, who ran with us mostly in the '80s and '90s. For example, Dwight's Douglass-leading 15:01, set in 1999, equates to an 88% age-grade, and Tim's 25:50 on Farwell-Herriman/Horseshoe is an 87%. Among our current active members, Jorn leads, ranking between Nos. 5 and 11 on the six courses.

Many other active members figure in the rankings, a bit too many to name here.

Among women, Christine Kennedy is No. 1 for Douglass, V. Vista, F-H and Tri with times that would've been tops in the 45-49 age group. Kristina is tops for the other two courses.

Since we're already highlighted Christine, Kristina, Missy and Becki, let's note the sterling times by Sue Francis. Sue and her husband, Cecil Baumgartner, ran with the Club mostly in the '90s and early aughts, before relocating to Ojai. Before then, in May '92 Sue set the women's All-Time course record for S. Six, and still ranks No. 10. And in the 50-54 age group, Sue shined. She ranks third in the S. Six and fourth on all the other courses. Her age-group rankings are consistently an exemplary 80%.

But that 80 has turned to about 83% age grades in her current age group of 70-74. Sue and Cecil have journeyed north at times for a visit and a taste of some of our Saturday runs.

"Those lists definitely provide incentive, especially now when I'm a little older," Sue said. "Great to get that little extra motivation."

Sue didn't run in college or H.S. because ... well, there weren't many girls or women's teams then. Title IX wasn't signed until 1972. When a college roommate took up jogging for a P.E. requirement, Sue joined her on some runs and was hooked. She says Carol Stroud and the other women runners were inspiring, and that she's inspired by seeing more women join the WVJS lists. Sue, who not only runs but also trains horses in the Ojai area, is scheduled for an Achilles operation soon after suffering an injury. But she plans to resume running and making it back to WVJS on occasion.

MEN 55-59

Now here's an age group with lots of current action. In answer to a question posed at the top of this article, Jorn – after his great S. Six in Jan. – ranks behind Ken Napier, Tim Rostege and No. 3 Gary Waggoner. Gary was deep into this age group when he blistered the S. Six in 35:28 in Oct. '22, an 85.5 age grade.

Count Gary among the WVJSers who embraces the power of the Top 50 lists. "For me, the lists make a huge difference," Gary said. "I'm really glad we maintain these lists because they're so motivational, and it's an honor to be listed"

Jorn says he's happy with his No. 4 all-time S. Six run in Jan. "I don't research the lists the first time I run a course in an age group," Jorn said. "Then I'll see the next time if I can move up. Some of those times, though, are just out of reach. But you never know, you could be feeling good, have better weather and just everything can click."

There's been lots of movement in this age group in recent years, so let's keep it simple and focus only on Douglass.

In March '23, Gary's 16:20 gave him another age-grade of 85.5%. That doesn't tell the story. The 16:20 tied for his best Douglass time since ... 2015. And he was 59, an age where you're not supposed to be setting 55-59 PRs.

Impressive. But let's also shine a light on Dwayne Spencer. He ran his first Dougie in 2017. Last August, he set his all-time PR on the course. At age 58. Whoa. His 17:01 moved him up to No. 19 in the ranking, from No. 22. (In January, at age 59, Dwayne set another PR, with a 22:12 on Farwell and an age grade near 83%. The six-second improvement will bump him to No. 17 from No. 20 once the lists are updated.)

Three others have joined the Douglass Top 50 in recent years: Ray Rodriguez at No. 9, Roberto Palos at No. 21 and John Huang at No. 36.

Brian Davis, a longtime WVJS regular in the USATF events and an occasional Saturday visitor, leads Douglass in this age group with a 15:57 (an 84.5% age-grade).

We'll give the other courses short shrift just to get on with it. But let's note the Tri leader, Dennis Kurtis. His 27:57 in 2009 equates to an 86% age-grade. More than that, he's No. 1 by a full 30 seconds. Dennis and his brother Doug are two of five people who have run the Boston Marathon under 3 hours in five different decades. Five.

Dennis also sits No. 1 on Farwell. He relocated to Florida a dozen or so years ago and still runs well.

Women 55-59

We started this article noting Missy's sterling 43:20 on S. Six in January, which gave her No. 2 in 55-59. But No. 1 Jutta McCormick is way ahead still with her 42:02 in 1997.

Missy in December recorded a 22:12 on V. Vista to rank No. 3, behind Jutta and Becki. No doubt by the time you're reading this Missy ranks highly on the other courses. Kristina hasn't hit this age group. Becki ranks highly on most of the course despite fighting injuries.

As for the late Ms. McCormick, besides the Six she leads on Dougie and V. Vista and is near the top on the other courses. Danny says Jutta for a time decades ago trained with a master's group led by legendary Stanford coach Payton Jordan (look him up).

Missy is the newest high-ranking entrant to this age group, but note that Catherine Frye ranks no worse than No. 6 on the six courses. And Carol Bednar ranks as high as No. 11 on V. Vista.

MEN 60-64

Here's another hot group for WVJS in recent years – led by a phenom named Ray Rodriguez. Running for WVJS for years mostly in the USATF events, Ray traveled quite a distance to attend Saturday workouts to see what he could do on our courses. And all he did is set all-time records by more than a minute on the four longer courses, and by large chunks on the two shorter courses.

Let's take the Tri. In Feb. '24 Gary Waggoner zipped the course in 29:49. That would have easily been an age group all-timer ... except that in May '23 Ray ran 28:26. That's an 83-second

record, in a very competitive age group. That's also an 89.5% age-grade for Ray, a rare runner who has hit the 90s in some runs. And 90%, it should be noted, is World Class. That Tri time would have made Ray No. 2 in the 55-59 age group. And that's not a blip. Ray's 60-64 S. Six record time is 1 second *faster* than the 55-59 record time.

While Ray and Gary are the top newcomers, this age group has welcomed a handful of new names in recent years. Only one of our active members has fallen off these lists, Alvin Jackson, but for the heck of it let's point out that Walt, as of mid-Feb. '25, clung to the No. 50 spot on F-H.

WOMEN 60-64/65-69/70+

Our numbers are rising but we're still well short of 50 runners in these age groups. Among active WVJS members, Catherine Frye has had the 60-64 S. Six record of 48:41 for three years now. Chris Blue and Kat Powell rank highly on multiple courses for a couple of these age groups.

Kat dominates with every course record in the 65-69 age group. Chris Blue has the only 75+ times but could soon have company.

Sue Francis, meanwhile, has set super competitive times to lead the two courses she's run so far in the 70-74 age group, both times, as we mentioned earlier, notching exceptional 83% age-grades.

MEN 65-69/70-74/75+

The men don't quite have a full 50 times in the age groups starting 65-69, but they have plenty of good times. Ralph Poole, another ex-Lockheeder, "had a fantastic couple of years in this age group," said Dick Chimenti. Poole ran with WVJS '98 through '01 and is No. 1 in this age group on all the courses except Farwell.

Ralph's S. Six time of 38:00 equates to an age-grade of 85.5%, assuming he was 65 at the time. Bill Dunn, who had most of the 60-64 course records before Gary and Ray came along, leads in Farwell in 65-69. Bill moved to Colorado about 10 years ago.

The 65-69 cohort also features Norry, at No. 2 on four of the courses and No. 3 on the other two. His Douglass time of 17:58 is an 82.5 age grade.

When you're talking 70-74, you're talking Carl Petersen. He recorded the top times in four courses and is No. 2 on the other two, with age grades typically over 80%. Carl joined WVJS in his late 60s, when he relocated from San Diego, where ran with the San Diego Track Club.

"I think all runners have extra incentive when they hit a new age group, and I was doing well at 70," said Carl, who lives in the area but hasn't run for the past 10 years. "With Dave Norlander, Bill Dodson and some others, we had a pretty good older group. A highlight was always placing high as a USATF team at CIM."

Carl is No. 8 on the all-time California International Marathon times for 70-74. (Bill Dodson is No. 4 for 75-79 and No. 2 for 80+; while former WVJS treasurer Joe Hurtado is No. 5 for 65-69.)

Bob Lord, who still runs with us here and there in a bid to record times on all six courses for the vaunted 85+ group, holds all the 75-79 course records. Carl's 2, 3 or 4 on all the courses.

Then, in 80-84, comes Bill Dodson. No longer running, Bill kept chugging for years. Along the way came many older age-group awards, especially in ultras, and a New York Times photo-feature story in 2015. He holds Club records in this mature age group for every course except V. Vista.

Dick Chimenti is Vista king, and glad of it. "I kept moving up in each group and dang if I didn't finally get a top spot," said Dick, who lives near Sonora but still makes a Club run or two or three every year.

"I joined the Club in 1988, at age 45, and was really motivated to try to catch some of those fast older guys. Ken Napier was 11 years older and I never did catch him. I finally got Jake White once on Valley Vista and was very happy. That's the beauty of the age groups and keeping the records, if you want to, there's always something to shoot for."

And we'll leave our Top 50 tour on that note, except for ...

LOGISTICS

In about 200 years, after a cyber war has knocked out all digital records, future civilizations will know a bit about the Bay Area running world thanks to the paper records kept by a certain running club's lifelong president. Indeed, Walt Van Zant heroically kept tons of Club stats (and H.S. track/XC stats) by hand for decades.

Ten years ago, former Club member Dave Piazza, who had just relocated to Monterey Bay, followed up on his promise to Walt and took over maintaining the Top 50 lists.

How? It's involved, but through cut-and-paste and a couple of programs and databases, the ex-Oracle employee has gotten this info automated. Nowadays, he gets the weekly write-ups, feeds it into his Perl software programs, and voila, updated lists. There are plenty of complexities. Remember, the records must account for new members, people hitting new five-year age groups, dealing with those pesky All-Courses days, etc. (Dave is no fan of All-Courses.)

Gary, who maintains the Club's Racer of the Year stats, hopes to automate the records to the point where it will be easier to maintain Top 50, Racer of the Year, Cum Sat, etc. Nothing's imminent, however.

Anyway, Dave imports his data into an Excel file that he emails to webmaster Dick Chimenti, who updates the Top 50 roughly every quarter. So, no doubt some info in this story is already outdated, or will be soon, but life runs on.

Mike Krey