

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E

Released to: Georgia Mile Split & Kentucky MileSplit  
Collins High School, Shelbyville, KY  
[Cross Country 8-22-17](#)

## **Sanderlin Heads North after 8 Years at North Atlanta**

George Sanderlin, who was a Community Coach for both track and field and cross country for North Atlanta High School has left to become the Director of Track and Cross Country for both Collins High School and West Middle School in Shelbyville, KY. Sanderlin is a USATF Level II (endurance and jumps) coach and official. He has officiated both the Georgia and Kentucky High School State Track and Field Championships. Georgia Mile Split asked Coach Sanderlin to reflect on his eight years as a Georgia coach.

**GA Mile Split** – It seems that you did several innovative things at North Atlanta like the team trophies for the Buckhead Invitational. Can you tell us what other unique things you did at North Atlanta?

**Coach Sanderlin** – Yes we had both a doe (girls' team champion) buck head (boys' team champion) trophies for our Buckhead Invitational. The athletes really loved them. Chamblee was twice the girls' champion and they nicknamed their doe head trophy "Bamblee." We also had many other firsts in Georgia, like the first to have cheerleaders and a band at a cross country race. We even teamed up with the robotics team at North Atlanta to have a "Discbot" retrieve the discus at our track meets. We took it as our mission to help put the "Oomph" back into track and cross country.

**GA Mile Split** – What do you think was your program's biggest accomplishment over the last eight years?

**Coach Sanderlin** – I was fortunate in that the athletes bought into the program and responded. We were able to have 51 school record holders during my tenure. That was a school record for any sport. However, more importantly, we had athletes who were very good academically. This placed us as one of the top sports program (any sport), academically speaking, of any public school in the Southeastern US. For instance, for two consecutive years we had captains of the girls cross country team who were school valedictorians. That is highly unusual. We only had a handful of seniors every year, but managed to have athletes at Harvard (2), Stanford (2), Princeton, Rice, Brandeis, Mercer and Oglethorpe, just to name a few.

**GA Mile Split** – What could Georgia do to improve cross country and track?

**Coach Sanderlin** – I think that combining the boys and girls State Track Meets was a plus. This combined with having USATF officials for the State Meet made it very successful in my mind. It made it tough on the hard core fan who wanted to see multiple classifications at one location. However, it made it easier on the coaches and athletes.

One thing that the GHSA should address is the requirement that head coaches must be teachers. There are 47 states that do not have this requirement. Personally, I am retired and devote 30-40 hours per week to

coaching. It would be very difficult for someone with a full time job to devote that kind of time to coaching. My middle school coaches in Kentucky are retired and put in those kind of hours coaching and it works out very well. Georgia will continue to lose qualified coaches to other states until this requirement is changed.

**GA Mile Split** – What else can be done to promote the sport in Georgia?

**Coach Sanderlin** – We did a couple of other things that were unique that other schools can do. We had the first inter school district track meet in state history. It was labeled the “Border Battle” which pitted the DeKalb County public school system against the Atlanta Public Schools as Druid Hills and Lakeside (DeKalb Co.) teamed up to do battle with North Atlanta and Carver (APS). It was a very successful meet where we even combined the boys and girls scores to have an overall champion. Track is one of the few sports where we can combine boys and girls scores because the events are the same.

We also teamed up with the Atlanta Track Club’s Kilometer Kids Program to have one of their Kilometer Kids races in Grant Park immediately before one of the weekly APS high school cross country races. That way, the youngsters stayed around and watched what the next level (high school) of running is all about. It was also exciting for the high schoolers as they cheered on the younger children.

**KY Mile Split** – What are your plans for the Collins program in Kentucky?

**Coach Sanderlin** – We plan to do many of the same things that brought excitement to the fans, athletes, and coaches in Georgia. For instance, we may do a Border Battle or come up with a Discbot. One thing that I would like to do is have both the North and Collins programs be cross country (literally several states away) “frivals” or friendly rivals. To accomplish this we may have a joint trip to the Nike Smokey Mountain Running Camp in Asheville next summer. We may even have a “pre” and “post” camp so that the athletes from each school can see the training environment of their “frivals’.” We have more tricks up our sleeve to keep the sport exciting, so stay tuned.



*Sanderlin talks to athletes at the “Bring Back the Mile” time trial at North Atlanta H.S. in August of 2014.*

**Contact:**

George Sanderlin  
Director of Track and Cross Country  
Collins High School  
404-312-0945  
[georgesand@aol.com](mailto:georgesand@aol.com)