

Charlie Capozzoli      June 19, 1931 – January 22, 2013

Charlie Capozzoli, a Georgetown University track and field and cross country star and 1952 Olympian at 5,000 meters, died Tuesday after a brief illness according to his son-in-law, Greg Bayme. The 81 year old retired salesman resided for many years in Dana Point, California.



Capozzoli, a College Point, New York native, set a U.S. record in the three-mile. He also won the 1952 NCAA Championship in cross-country and was runner up in the NCAA 2-mile in 1951 and 5,000 meters in 1952. He represented the United States at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland after finishing in third place in the 5,000 meters in the 1952 U.S. Olympic Trials.

After finishing seventh in his heat at the Olympics, two weeks later Capozzoli beat England's outstanding distance runner, Gordon Pirie, when he set his 3-mile American Record to win the British Empire Games. The following year 'Cappy' defeated 1952 Olympic Steeplechase Gold medalist, Horace Ashenfelter, indoors at the Boston Garden in a Collegiate Record 8:55.2. Coincidentally, today is Ashenfelter's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Recalling their duel in a recent interview, Capozzoli said, 'It was 22 laps for the two miles so with about six laps to go I figured that if I wanted to win I had to start then. I picked up my speed and was feeling terrific. When I passed him I kept going and hit the finish about 60 yards ahead which is almost half a lap at the Garden and of course the fans went crazy. They dimmed the lights and had a spotlight follow me around the track. I was asked to come to the back office and thought they were going to offer me some under-the-table money for my performance. I said to them that I thought I knew what they were talking about and that I couldn't accept it, but they could go to the nearest Catholic Church and put it in the poor box and I'd appreciate if that is what they would do. It was a great night and it all boiled down to run to win – love and sacrifice.'



Appropriately, the title of Capozzoli's Biography is 'Run to Win – Love and Sacrifice.' The book is the story of the son of Italians, born in the United States, who respected America as a land of opportunity. He wrote the book for his family to have a remembrance of his life. Charlie Capozzoli was preceded in death by his wife of 46 years, Donna, in 2001 and his son, John, in 2005. He is survived by his children Donna Marie, Janine and Joseph, 18 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

When asked what advice he gives to those who wish to succeed in running, other sports or in life, his answer is, 'Whether you want to be a great attorney or politician or athlete or whatever it may be, you have to work at it and you have to work hard. That is the sign of a true champion.' May God bless a true champion in running and in life, Charlie Capozzoli.

*Note – Charlie Capozzoli was very kind to spend over one and a half hours on the telephone on January 3, 2013 for an interview at <http://www.garycohenrunning.com/Interviews/Capozzoli.aspx> which was his most extensive interview in decades. He was in great spirits, but evidently became ill a few days later and did not recover.*