

Coach Al Halper has been coaching adult runners regularly for a variety of race distances, including the Marathon, for over 20 years. Al worked with runners at Assumption College training for the Boston Marathon as “Rena’s Run” and trained runners associated with the National Stroke Association who were running a marathon to fundraise for the organization. An accomplished runner and former XC/trackman at Rutgers University, originally from Middletown, NY, Al draws his knowledge from personal experience and 42 years of coaching along with being a student of the sport, continually staying atop of what is current within the sport.

He has been the head coach for CMS since 2006 organizing group runs and speed workouts during the year. He has developed for CMS, specific training programs at a variety of distances. A respected lecturer at camps and clinics, Halper, known for his expertise, provides a wealth of knowledge regarding training programs, functional training, speed, speed endurance training, strength training, and form analysis. Halper has also done graduate work in sports medicine giving him a background in injury prevention and rehab including an expertise in hydro-training and therapy.

Coach Halper began his career on the scholastic level in New Jersey before arriving at Holy Cross in 1976 to initiate the start of the Holy Cross women’s cross country/track and field programs. Halper remained at Holy Cross from the program’s inception in 1976 until June 1999 when Holy Cross decided to make the position full time. Unable to accept the position due to previous teaching obligations, Halper moved across town to join the staff at Worcester State.

Halper’s squads have long been recognized and respected among their competitors. In his twenty-three years at Holy Cross, he had helped to make the Crusader cross country and track programs among the strongest and most successful in the East. His cross-country teams have made four national championship appearances, finishing second on two occasions. His track and field program produced several nationally ranked relays and a number of top ten All New England Championship finishes both indoor and outdoor including a second place finish in the 1984 Outdoor season.

His experience and knowledge brought to Worcester State the impetus which was needed to raise the level of the program to new heights and successes. In recent years, the men’s program has regularly been among the top ten D3 New England teams as well as gaining several high rankings both regionally and nationally including finishing 20th in the country in 2017. In addition, the team has produced several conference titles, a number of MASCAC champions and scorers as well as 13 All-Americans between his time at Holy Cross and Worcester State .

Halper, over the years, has earned several individual honors as well. While at Holy Cross, he was twice named the NCAA Division II Northeast Region Coach of the Year. At Worcester State, he earned MASCAC Cross Country Coach of the Year accolades . He was also one of the founders and has served as the first commissioner of the New England Women's Intercollegiate Cross-Country and Track and Field Association. In addition, he has served as a member of NCAA, ECAC and EIAIW cross country and track committees and the Massachusetts Track Officials Association.

Halper's philosophy of coaching is based on his teaching / coaching background in which the principles of consistency, adaptability and specificity help mold each athlete toward development, improvement and success. He considers himself an educator first and prides himself on a program that promotes, for his collegiate athletes, above all, the athletes' dedication for success in the classroom leading toward a timely graduation and a viable career after college while enjoying their participation in the lifelong sports of cross country and track & field.

For the club runners, the philosophy is basically the same as he encourages all those he coaches to become students of the sport. According to Halper, " My role is to provide each runner with a rewarding, fun athletic opportunity that will greatly enhance their overall life experience. I want to provide them with information and training from which they can gain and improve. It is hoped that the principles associated with participation in CMS programs are geared to the individual goals of those in the club while providing a positive environment for all runners in our club to meet their goals whether they be an adult runner or younger emerging runner."