

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MCQUAID INVITATIONAL

**I**t was September, 1965, and McQuaid English teacher Bob Bradley, in his third year as cross-country coach, was looking for a local showcase for his outstanding senior runner, Eric Kendrick. Bradley's predecessor at McQuaid, then-Penfield coach Terry Foley, suggested starting a new invitational, since there wasn't one in the Rochester area. So on October 12th, twelve teams lined up on McQuaid's soccer field and awaited Foley's starting command. Off they went, onto Clinton Ave., following a Brighton police car through local streets and finally back to the McQuaid track where Bradley had thrown together a primitive chute for the occasion. Kendrick won the 2.5-mile race in 12:56, and Brooklyn Prep, a Jesuit visitor, took the team championship.

The McQuaid Invitational outgrew the campus in just three years, moving to the new R.I.T. layout in Henrietta with a field of over 50 schools. By 1973, it had grown to over 100 schools, and its new home was Genesee Valley Park. "I think our location had a lot to do with our growth," says Bradley. "Rochester was a short drive for teams from Buffalo, Syracuse, and the Southern Tier, and also from Northern Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Canada. And I think that coaches liked the fact that we had unseeded races for their developing squads to compete in and enjoy some success. And, of course, the strong teams got all the competition they could handle. We had something for everybody."

With the move to GVP came the first girls race, at a distance of 1.8 miles., deemed by certain misguided males as a sufficient challenge to the young ladies. How wrong they were! By 1979, the girls had miraculously become strong enough to handle the same course as their male counterparts, and Notre Dame, Elmira's Molly Huddle set the present record at 17:05 in 2001.

In 1975, the New York state 2.5 limit for high school runners was increased to 3 miles, and McQuaid has kept that distance to this day, not switching to 5k (3.1 miles) when high school distances went metric around 1980. The GVP course, relatively flat but as Bradley says, "deceptively difficult," proved to be a tough one to break

15:00 on, until Randy Haas of Blue Mt., Pa. did it in 1979. Since then, only a handful achieve that level each year, and the 14:35 record set by St. Michael's, Toronto runner Stephane Hetherington in 2002 is a formidable one indeed. On the girls side, sub-18:00 is the mark of excellence, achieved by only two girls last year.

As the meet continued to push towards and beyond the 200-school mark in the '90's, a national flavor has been added by schools from Ohio, Nebraska, California, Kentucky, and Georgia, along with almost every state in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic areas. The Canadian contribution to the meet's competitive mix has been enormous. Each year many of Ontario's top scholastic runners come to GVP for the short (for them) racing distance of three miles over a fast course.

In 2001, after 37 Invitationals, Bradley asked Peter Glavin, one of McQuaid's all-time best distance men, to take over as Meet Director. Today's meet is Pete's third in that capacity, and he hasn't missed a beat. Reflecting on the McQuaid Invitational from the perspective of forty years, Bradley is quick to give credit to all the runners, McQuaid alumni, and parents who have embraced the meet as their special event and been part of its annual excitement. "Thanks to all their encouragement and help, I've always felt that the meet could get better each year. It's been a labor of love for me, but it's more than worth it to hear runners and coaches from all over say how much the meet means to them."

Today, at the 40th Annual, he'll be at the microphone enjoying another of his special moments. "Every year, around noon, I look around the glen and see the all the people and all the runners and think, "Wow! This is really something!."

