

Welcome Athletes, Coaches, Parents, and Fans:

It may seem a bit odd to read a welcome message from someone who has never been to the Dublin Distance Fiesta. This will, in deed, be my first time attending the DDF; however, I cannot express to you how much I have been looking forward to this experience for quite some time.

I have watched with great interest over the past decade as this meet has grown into what it has now become—one of the great high school track invitationals in the country.

One glance at the results--seeing the names and schools that have appeared in recent years--you see state champions, Footlocker All-Americans, and Nike Cross National Finalists. It has truly become a meet that now attracts many of the finest runners in the nation.

However, what I have also heard from coach after coach and runner after runner is how great the meet is for EVERY runner—not just the elites.

Every race is not just a final—it is so much more than that! All year, many of the athletes who will be competing on Saturday have raced in dual meets or invitationals where they may have not only found themselves several meters behind the leaders in the very first lap of the race but may also even have experienced being lapped.

Not at this meet. The very same girls who on Thursday in a league meet were 200 yards behind the winner when the race finished, will find themselves Saturday in the lead pack with 400 meters to go; and they will find themselves with 15 other girls experiencing the exact same emotion and opportunity to enjoy their moment in the sun.

This opportunity not only results in huge improvements and lifetime best marks but it also produces moments that will last a lifetime! And not just moments for the athletes but also for their parents who have supported their sons or daughters for so many years. This meet may be more about their joy than the athletes; although that medal at the end is pretty cool.

So, I'm going to be just like you folks on Saturday. I'm going to get a good seat, put on my sombrero, have some of that famous bar-be-que, and enjoy moment after thrilling moment of memories being made and athletes being celebrated. All the way leading up to watching the country's best high school distance runners at the end of the night.

Finally, where else would an Irishman rather be than in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day.

Best Wishes,

Tim O'Rourke
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