

About Eric V. Kendrick, McQuaid Class of 1966

Eric Kendrick and his Coach Bob Bradley both had big things in store for them starting in 1962. It was Bradley's first year as Varsity Cross Country Coach at McQuaid and Eric's Freshman year. Eric was known for being soft spoken, friendly with a great sense of humor, yet that friendly nature covered a deep competitive fire. In the early to mid-1960's McQuaid, as a Catholic School, did not compete in Section V but Kendrick ruled most all the competition he came by. Eric was the only athlete in Rochester to be a 3-time champion at the Diocesan Cross Country Meet and remains the only athlete to win the Jesuit Schools Championship 3 times, winning both meets his Sophomore through Senior years.

In addition to being McQuaid's #1 man in cross country, he was prodigious on the track. According to school annals – though he rarely competed in sprints - Kendrick was considered McQuaid's fastest track athlete in every event from the 100 yards to the 2-mile. He graduated in 1966 holding Section V records in both the 880-yard run (1:54:2, equivalent to about a 1:53:8 800 meters today) and the mile. By his Senior year, Eric could compete nationally at any race from the 440 up to the 2-mile. Because of his remarkable range, some have called Eric Section V's most versatile runner of all time.

His best-known performance was winning the scholastic mile at the Penn Relays in 1966, the only Rochester area runner to this day that has ever done so. Coach Bradley recalled "One of my top memories was Eric winning (the Penn Relays mile) on that muddy track in Philadelphia. It was his first crack at big competition, and he really showed what a great runner he was." His time of 4:20.3 (4:18.8, 1600m) was on a cinder track that had been soaked by two days of rain. The newspaper article on 'McQuaid's miracle miler' described Kendrick running a smart tactical race and taking a lead with 300 yards left over Don Rowe of Christian Brothers Academy, Lincroft, NJ. The two battled down the stretch with Kendrick matching Rowe's last spurt with one of his own to win a tingling finish by a yard in front of a crowd of 5,000.

Of course, Eric will also be remembered as the athlete who won the first McQuaid Invitational (Dan Lesser in 1993 is the only other McQuaid runner to match the feat.) The Times Union local newspaper article that previewed the first Invitational described the diminutive Kendrick as the "class runner in the varsity field, a 5-8, 150-pound sawed-off shotgun." Many may *not* know, though, that "shotgun" was also one of the primary reasons the meet got started in the first place. By 1965 Coach Bradley and Kendrick had forged a special relationship over their 3 years together. Both had grown up in households of humble means. Eric's father had also passed away during his Sophomore year, his first season running on Bradley's Varsity squad. As Coach Bradley's first premier runner, he was intent on giving Eric every chance to succeed beyond McQuaid. While Coach Bradley had finally decided for McQuaid to start a meet of its own, his particular goal in 1965 was to bolster Kendrick's status as a national college scholarship prospect by "inviting-in" and hosting elite teams such as Brooklyn Prep, the meet's first team champion. Coach Bradley had said many times, "If there had been no Eric, there probably would have been no McQuaid Invitational." Eric received recruiting interest from the University of Tennessee, Syracuse, Providence College and Kansas. He ultimately, though, received a scholarship and ran track at Maryland State (now University of Maryland Eastern Shore.)

Eric and his coach maintained their friendship for over 55 years. When informed of his coach's passing, in December of 2019, Kendrick drove from a family wedding in Mississippi to serve as one of Coach Bradley's pall bearers. In October of 2020, after a long, courageous (but always cheerful) fight against multiple cancers, Eric passed away. It is the honor of the McQuaid Invitational to commemorate Eric's running legacy and connection to the meet's founding with the 2021 inauguration of the Eric Kendrick All-Star Team.