

About Coach Bob Bradley

After moving from Jersey City, New Jersey to Rochester in 1960 to take a teaching position at McQuaid, Coach Robert J. “Bob” Bradley began coaching cross country at McQuaid in 1962. His predecessor, Terry Foley had suggested a few times that Coach Bradley start a replacement for the recently defunct Brighton Invitational and run an event at McQuaid. The ultimate catalyst, though, for starting the meet in 1965 was star runner Eric Kendrick. Bradley was intent on helping showcase Kendrick’s talents and increase his visibility in hopes of helping him earn a college scholarship. In addition to winning that first McQuaid Invitational, Kendrick went on to win the individual Penn Relays Mile in the spring of 1966 and won a track scholarship at Maryland State (now University of Maryland Eastern Shore.) Coach Bradley had said many times, “If there had been no Eric, there probably would have been no McQuaid Invitational.” The coach and athlete remained friends for over 50 years through Coach Bradley’s passing in December, 2019. Eric Kendrick passed away just 10 months after his coach in October, 2020 after a long and courageous battle against multiple cancers.

After its humble start, with just 10 complete teams in that first 1965 varsity race, Coach Bradley continued to grow the Invitational as its director until 2001. The next 18 years he remained active as an assistant meet director and served as the meet’s announcer through his final invitational, in 2019, while fighting terminal cancer. As announcer, his deep, resonating voice with that trace of a New Jersey accent had been a hallmark of the meet for its first 55 years. Many have observed how appropriate it was that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Invitational was forced to take, in effect, ‘a year of silence’ in 2020 – the first year in its history that its founder would not be deeply involved in the meet.

Personally, Coach Bradley was best known for his easy laugh and his warm, encouraging, and friendly manner. Yet he also generated a sense of excitement and meaning for any project he was involved in, creating what many called an “almost magic” quality about the man. This especially applies to his passion project, the McQuaid Invitational. He always approached it with a pure joy and love for the sport, yet with the vigor and discipline of a Marine. For that reason, the meet has attracted a loyal following of key volunteers, many with multiple decades of service to the meet. Bradley, though, was always humble and quick to credit the McQuaid Alumni parent volunteers who keep coming back (though many have sons who graduated long ago in the last 30 years) along with McQuaid staff, especially current meet director Todd Stewart (since 2010) and assistant director Dave Yendrzski for the events ongoing success.

Despite his nature to deflect credit, Coach Bradley amassed an outstanding coaching record over 44 years as head cross country coach at McQuaid (1962-2005), 30 seasons as Outdoor Track and Field coach and 17 seasons as Indoor Track & Field Coach. After retiring from McQuaid, Coach Bradley volunteered to run a middle school cross country program at nearby Siena Catholic academy and coached another 8 seasons there, bringing him to 99 total seasons coached. In addition to founding the McQuaid Invitational (as of 2019 it was the largest high school cross country event in the United States) other career highlights include:

- 10 Section V Cross Country Team Champions, Coached 4 Individual Section V winners.
- 2 New York State Cross Country Championship teams in 1984 and 1992. *(New York State records also count Bradley’s 1981 team as State Champion, which Coach Bradley & McQuaid do not recognize as it resulted from a ‘technical & irrelevant-to-the-outcome’ disqualification. McQuaid gave the 1981 State Championship plaque to Corcoran of Syracuse.)*

- 6 Section V Track Team Champions
- 4 New York State Track Event or Relay Champions
- 3 Section V Indoor Track Team Champions
- 2 New York State Indoor Individual or Relay Champions
- 2 National Championship Relays - Indoor Track (4 x 800, '88, '89)
- 1 Outdoor Track National Champion (Brad Sumner, 800m, 1989)
- Totals: 19 Section V Team Championships, 8 New York State Team or Individual Championships, 3 National Champion Teams or Individual.

Coach Bradley always consider the McQuaid Invitational to represent the “glory of the sport” at it’s finest. It is a highlight of the season and an always special and amazing day. As a devout Catholic and man of faith throughout his life, it is fitting to close our review of Coach Bradley’s career by sharing his favorite poem. It’s one we think about and remember him fondly by, most especially on the day of the McQuaid Invitational:

i thank You God for most this amazing

by. E.E. Cummings

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun’s birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

Thank you for taking the time to read about his life, career and how the McQuaid Invitational started.