

# 2024 Legends Cross Country Meet

Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at Trumbull County Fairgrounds - Cortland, Ohio

Presented By: Maplewood High School Running Rockets – [www.gopherarun.com/legendsmeet](http://www.gopherarun.com/legendsmeet)

*The goal of the Legends Meet is to inspire young runners by meeting Legends of the sport of distance running.*

## Past Legends:

2007 - Ann Henderson, Mark Croghan

2008 - Patty Metzler, Alan Scharsu

2009 - Rachel Sauder Kinsman, Scott Fry

2010 - Maggie Infeld, Ricky Pittman

2011 - Bob Schul, Harrison Dillard, Briana Shook, Bernice Holland

2012 - Marc Hunter, Harrison Dillard and Bernice Holland

2013 - Bridget Franek, Bob Lunn

2014 - Bob Mau, Julie Dias Taylor, Joanna Dias Ripple

2015 – John Zishka, Katie Sabino Dugan

2016 – Dave Wottle, Kate Radkewich Burkowski

2017 - Clayton Murphy, Kate Radkewich Burkowski

2018 - Michelle Sikes, Sid Sink, Les Nagy, Sam Bair, Paul Talkington

2019 – Connie Jo Robinson Earls and the Caldwell XC Program

2020 – Meet Canceled due to Covid

2021 – Sunni Olding Lomnicki and Jack Hazen

2022 – Bill Rodgers and Susan Nash Sugar

2023 – Frank Shorter and Jessica Beard

## 2024 Male Legend



**George Nicholas** - One of the top runners during a golden age of Ohio high school distance running, George Nicholas is arguably the finest distance prep to come out of southwestern Ohio. A 1981 graduate of Dayton Meadowdale, Nicholas never lost a high school cross country race, establishing records at every course he raced in high school.

During the 51<sup>st</sup> OHSAA XC finale in 1978, Nicholas as a sophomore broke fellow Legend Alan Scharsu's year-old record on the famed Ohio State University golf course, covering the 2.5-mile layout in 11:45.2 and beating two other Legends in the process. Two years later, he lowered the state meet standard again at OSU's North Facility, gapping the field by almost 30 seconds in claiming his third Class AAA state title.

He also excelled on the track as a prep, finishing third in the mile in 1979 to Legend John Zishka, who then was arguably one of the nation's best at that distance. Nicholas also was one of a handful of Ohio boys to break 9 minutes in the 3,200/2 mile before 2000.

On four occasions, Nicholas was a member of the U.S. team in the world cross country championships, twice as a junior and twice in the senior men's race. In the junior men's 7.25-kilometer race in 1981, Nicholas was fourth as the Americans finished with a mere 23 points to top the team standings in Madrid, Spain. The following year in Rome, Nicholas helped the U.S. team claim the bronze as its No. 3 finisher.

In 1987 and '88, Nicholas teamed with the likes of American distance greats Pat Porter, Craig Virgin and Ed Eyestone as a member of those senior U.S. teams.

In between those two international stints, Nicholas was a record-breaker at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In the 1985 NCAA XC championship race in Wisconsin, Nicholas finished 12<sup>th</sup>, capturing All-American honors and leading the Tar Heels to their highest finish ever as a team in the national final and one of only three times in the top 10. Nicholas also was the ACC champ in 1985, leading UNC to its most recent conference title before the current team won last fall.

On the track, Nicholas finished fourth in the NCAA 5,000 final in 1986 and was the ACC 10,000 champ that same spring.

An attorney, Nicholas is a member of the Ohio Association of Track and Cross Country Coaches Hall of Fame.

## 2024 Female Legend



**Abby Nichols** - Thus far in her brief career as a runner (her first competitive season was outdoor track as a high school sophomore), Abby Nichols has exhibited a special knack to be able to rise to the expectations and challenges of the next level and, in many cases, exceed them.

After missing OHSAA gold in the 1,600 meters by 0.2 of a second as a junior, Nichols closed out her prep career at Kettering Alter by winning the Division II XC title and then sweeping the 1,600 and 3,200 runs in the spring of 2016. Nichols then literally hit the ground running in her first outdoor track season at Ohio State in 2018, narrowly missing a spot in the NCAA 5,000 final after running a then PR in the East Preliminary Round. Before she would conclude her time in the Scarlet and Gray, Nichols became the first Ohio State runner to win a Big Ten title in the 5,000 as a junior in 2019. Weeks later, she grabbed All-American honors in the 5,000 before missing All-American honors by one place and 1.7 seconds in cross country in the fall of 2019.

As the COVID-19 pandemic brought the competitive running world to a halt in the spring of 2020, Nichols completed her bachelor's degree in Columbus and decided to take her remaining seasons of NCAA eligibility to the distance mecca of Boulder and the University of Colorado. Her first season as a graduate transfer in the Rocky Mountains – the 2020 COVID XC campaign in the spring of 2021 – resulted in All-American honors for Nichols as the new Buffalo finished 18<sup>th</sup>.

A series of PRs later that spring in the 5,000 led to another All-American finish at that distance as Nichols also advanced to the national championship meet in the 10,000. In her final year at Colorado, Nichols made history as she had done earlier at OSU, finishing 8<sup>th</sup> in the NCAA XC final before becoming the first-ever Colorado athlete to be named Pac-12 Track Athlete of the Year after her 5,000/10,000 conference sweep in record-setting fashion. She concluded her collegiate career with a regional title in the 5,000 and then another All-American finish in that event.

Nichols then took the next step in her running career in the summer of 2022, joining HOKA NAZ Elite based in Flagstaff, Ariz. In her first full track season as a pro in 2023, Nichols claimed 1,500/mile wins in the U.S. and Canada both indoors and out and ran in her first Diamond League event in China. In January of this year, Nichols finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the senior women's 10K race at the USATF national XC champs, earning a spot on the U.S. team for the 2024 world championships in Belgrade, Serbia. She finished third for the U.S. team and 33<sup>rd</sup> overall in the 88-runner field.

## 2024 Veteran Legend



**Elmore Banton** - A cold, snowy and windy day in November 1964 at venerable Forest Akers East Golf Course in East Lansing, Mich., cemented Elmore Banton's standing as an Ohio running Legend long before his decorated career as a collegiate coach.

It was the 1964 NCAA Div I Cross Country Championships, and Banton, a 5'-10" junior from Akron, bolted into the lead and continued to grow his advantage in the 4-mile race over a field of 180 of the top collegiate harriers. With a 75-yard lead at 2 miles, the OU standout continued to push the pace. Banton never relinquished the lead. At the line, he was more than 50 yards ahead of the No. 2 finisher in what then Ohio U and future U.S. Olympic coach Stan Huntsman said was "the most amazing feat I've ever seen."

Banton's victory in 20:07.5 was the first by an African-American runner, first XC title by an Ohio U runner and the second overall NCAA championship by a Bobcat athlete. With Banton leading the way, the Bobcats finished third in the team standings behind Mid-American Conference rival Western Michigan and Oregon.

The following year, with the race distance pushed up to 6 miles, Banton led OU once again, claiming All-American honors with his 7<sup>th</sup> place effort. He also was MAC champion his senior year after finishing second as a junior and OU Athlete of the Year for 1964-65. In 1980, Banton returned to his alma mater as the first African-American head coach of any sport at the Athens school. He went on to coach the Ohio U cross country and track teams for 23 years, earning 20 Coach of the Year honors and guiding the Bobcats to 10 MAC titles, 14 All-Ohio championships and six Central Collegiate crowns.

A veteran of the U.S. Army and a member of the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame, Banton began his coaching career at the University of Akron before ending it at John Carroll University, where he coached from 2003 to 2015. He was inducted into the Ohio Association of Track and Cross-Country Coaches Hall of Fame in 2023.

## The 2024 Legends Cross Country Meet Information

### Date and Location

Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - The Legends Meet will be held at the Trumbull County Fairgrounds (4181 Hoagland Blackstub Rd. Cortland, OH). The Fairgrounds offer an excellent facility for cross-country meets. Ample parking, sheltered seating and restrooms are available to complement a fast, spectator-friendly course. Maplewood High School will be the host school for The Legends Meet.

### Awards

The top four teams in the high school races and the top three teams in the middle school races will receive team picture plaque awards. The top seven members of the winning high school teams and the coach will receive individual awards. The top 25 individuals in team races and the top 10 in open races will receive individual awards. Individual champions in each race will receive picture plaques. Individual awards are presented on the stage by The Legends immediately after the finish of each race. Team awards will be presented by The Legends on the stage in front of the grandstands shortly after the completion of the race.

### Entry

Any school may enter the meet through MileSplit beginning August 1st

### Fees

- \$110 HS Boys (unlimited entries; \$10 per individual if 10 runners or less)
- \$110 HS Girls (unlimited entries; \$10 per individual if 10 runners or less)
- \$80 MS Boys (unlimited entries; \$10 per individual if less than 7 runners)
- \$80 MS Girls (unlimited entries; \$10 per individual if less than 7 runners)
- A "B Team" can be entered in a varsity race for a \$25 fee if enough starting boxes are available.

\* Each coach submitting a full team into any one of the team races will receive a coach's gift.

\* **IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE** - Entry fee checks **MUST** be made payable to: **Maplewood Running Rockets (NOT Maplewood HS)** and be mailed to: **Legends Meet – c/o Maplewood Running Rockets - 312 Golf Drive - Cortland, OH 44410**

## Schedule of Events

- 9:30 Middle School Boys and Girls Open Race - 2 Mile
- 10:00 Middle School Girls Team Race - 2 Mile (Limited to 9 runners per team)
- 10:30 Middle School Boys Team Race - 2 Mile (Limited to 9 runners per team)
- 11:00 \*Small Division High School Girls Team Race - 5K (Limited to 9 runners per team)
- 11:30 \*Small Division High School Boys Team Race - 5K (Limited to 9 runners per team)
- 12:00 National Anthem / Presentation of The Legends
- 12:15 Elementary Kids Grades 3 and Under - 1/2 Mile - Individual awards given to the top 10 boys and top 10 girls
- 12:25 Elementary Kids Grades 4 through 6 - 1 Mile - Individual awards given to the top 10 boys and top 10 girls
- 12:40 \*Large Division High School Girls Team Race - 5K (Limited to 9 runners per team)
- 1:15 \*Large Division High School Boys Team Race - 5K (Limited to 9 runners per team)
- 1:45 Open High School Girls Race - 5K
- 2:15 Open High School Boys Race - 5K

**\*Divisions** - For varsity high school races, two divisions will be used; large and small based upon school enrollment figures. If a school has 220 or less students in grades 9-11 for the given sex, they are considered small school. Schools with 221 or more are large schools. The large school race will be the more competitive race, but small schools may enter that division if they wish to compete in the more competitive race. Large schools may not choose to run the small school race, however.

- **Chip timing** will be used with a chip that is attached to the runner's shoe. Coaches will be responsible for collecting the timing chips and returning the chips for those athletes at the registration area. Schools will be charged \$10 for each missing chip.
- **Digital Clocks** will be available at the 1 and 2 mile marks for each race.
- **Live Results** will be available at MileSplit
- **Concessions** and other vendors will be available beneath the grandstands.
- **Legends Meet T-shirts** will be sold at the registration area.
- **Restrooms** are available under the grandstands and in adjacent buildings.
- **Parking** - There will be a \$5 parking fee per non-team vehicle that will be charged in accordance with fairground policy.
- **Coaches** are asked to please cooperate in advance by:
  - Submitting rosters online at MileSplit by the midnight deadline on the Sunday before the meet.
  - Ensuring correct chips are securely placed on runner's shoes.
  - Returning all chips to the registration area after the race.