

## Redondo Nike Festival 2017

### Thank You From Coach Bob Leetch

The results are in and the 7th edition of the Redondo Nike Track Festival was our greatest meet yet. We had the most competitors, over 2,700 athletes in over 6,500 events, by far the largest meet in the United States. It also generated the highest quality meet in terms of caliber of performances. [Prepcaltrack.com](http://Prepcaltrack.com) creates a yearly gauge on the quality of a particular mark, the Prepcaltrack Elite mark. The most our meet achieved in the past was 129 Elite marks. That year our meet led the nation until the famous Arcadia Invitational in April. This year the athletes totaled 159 Elite marks, a staggering number considering that seven meets occurred in Southern California that same weekend, and the highest total among them was 48 Elite marks.

What is most extraordinary is that this elite meet is not put together by paid professional sports event teams with dedicated meet directors. We put it on: coaches, parents, neighbors, teammates and friends of friends. Ten years ago when our facilities were being upgraded this meet was a vision of mine. Not just to create the best high school track meet in the country, but to have a meet that would bring excitement to the entire state of California. My dream was to grow the sport of track and field by creating such a fun meet kids would be pumped up just to be here. Excited to be a part of the greatest sport in the country. We have done that. Our meet is unique in not just its scale and quality but the energetic atmosphere. We have a DJ playing music throughout the meet, even during the races. No one does that! We have the track dressed up everywhere you look. All the races are videotaped, with video boards on every field. You never have to miss the action from where you are. And we have exciting activities throughout the meet once the athlete's competitions are over.

Coaches attending the meet often comment and appreciate how well run it is for such a huge event and how all the volunteers stay so friendly no matter what happens. This is very satisfying to hear the compliments pouring in about all the things done perfectly. A text from Lalo Diaz, coach at powerhouse Loyola, said, "Thank you for a wonderful meet. Thank you for even considering us into the meet." My former track coach and mentor Dave Shannon who helped run the staging area told me he could not believe that we could run such a first-rate meet simply with parent and former parent volunteers. He has been to many meets in his day and feels this is the best run meet he has ever seen. "Better than the Mt. Sac Relays," was the phrase that stuck with me. I could go for pages with the compliments I get, but an email from the top female athlete of the meet sums it up perfectly. Jurmele Woodward came down from Vacaville and won both hurdle races in state leading times. **"I wanted to thank you for having us (Jurnee and Jaxin Woodward-Vacaville) attend the Redondo Invitational this weekend. As always, the meet was exceptional and we thoroughly enjoyed our time in town. We have returned safely to Northern California and although I (Jurnee) will attend LSU in the fall, my mom and sister (Jaxin) look forward to returning next year. Again, thank you and congratulations on another successful Redondo Invitational!!"** Such a nice compliment and worthy of sharing to all that worked so hard.

There is no way our staff could put on such an amazing event without the help of our volunteers. I would like to thank all the time and energy Laurie Baker puts into making this come together. Along with her countless hours as an executive on the Boosters Club, she rounds up the volunteers and gets the crews together. She is one of the key pieces that we could not do without, everything was clearly laid out for everyone thanks to the signs that were created and donated by Mona Dill. All money related matters were carefully and discretely handled by Sharon Douglas, Jodi Stevens and Celia Price. Julie Heiden was patient and terrific at the team check-in. One of the most problematic areas can be the athlete check-in, but it ran very smoothly thanks to Meredith and Russell Tait.

Another massive job are the concessions, which Elizabeth Corman ensured ran well and with a profit. Joining her was my former college teammate our very own Carlos Caracoza, pre-hip replacement, manning the grills. Doug Boswell and Brian Gore controlled the entire finish area and helped lug hurdles around. One of my former high school track teammates, and Booster Club President, Nedra Yost

coordinated the entire awards area: trophies, medals, the podium, and anxious kids. Susan Ward assisted Dave Dill and Tony Bantula in the pole vault area. Manning the jump pits are never easy but Bryan Wynn and Justin Ladabush did a first rate job of running the pits and dealing with the not always agreeable coaches as well. Greg Hough did a great job announcing Friday during the Distance Carnival, and, once again, Kevin Ryan was the Voice of the Redondo Track Festival and announced all the Saturday action with his usual charisma and informed take on the action. His wife, Susan Ryan, did her usual terrific job staging the athletes right before they were escorted onto the track. Jacob Weintraub ran the discus, even while coaching his own throwers. Julie Ferron coordinated the student athlete volunteers, which meant tracking them down all day long and getting them to their posts. She did a great job coordinating the entire team before and during the meet to assist the parent volunteers, while coaching. Behind the scenes in supporting the meet in a huge way was our Athletic Director Andy Saltzman. From arranging all district staff and facilities to literally lining the discus area. A big part of the great atmosphere was provided by parent volunteer Frank Sandoval of Coastal DeeJay. My former coach and mentor Dave Shannon and good friend Nick Carr ran the staging tent. My buddy Nick was a former teammate in college and the best man at my wedding. He drives down from the Bay area and back every year to make this event run on time, perfectly. Brian Lindquist and Dave Dill began the set up Friday morning around 7:00am and were with me at 7:00pm Saturday night breaking down the last of the set-ups. Another great big thank you to Julia Victor and the Nike West team. Their continued support from the very beginning has always been fantastic. When I first dreamed up this meet and discussed it with them, their response was, "We are all in. How can we make this the great meet you want?" Nothing has changed since that first meeting. Clearly Nike is one of the top global brands in the world, and we love being associated with that. But Nike does not sell anything at our meet. All they want to do is support us and help grow the sport. A lastly, the one who ties it all together is my wonderful wife Kirsten. She begins creating the outline for each years meet in December. By the time the meet draws near she pours in a great number of hours to make this meet run smoothly. During the meet she is seemingly everywhere, putting out fires, assisting lead volunteers and getting me my morning Caramel Macchiato. She has been critical to the success of each year's event. And to all the many parents who donated their time and patience that helped out, great job and congratulations on making this meet the best.

Our small community of team members and parents are part of a larger family of graduates. This season celebrates 103 years of Redondo Track and Field. We are also a significant part of the City of Redondo and the greater community. We hear from community leaders and residents continually congratulating us on another great meet. People notice what we are doing and the positive effects we have on the community. It all adds up, and the Redondo Nike Track Festival is a shining moment that highlights all that we have done, are doing, and will continue to do in the future. Congratulations and thank you for all you do for our community, high school and most of all, our amazing student athletes.

Got Seahawks,

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Meet Director  
Redondo Track Festival

Coach  
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