



NIKE TEAM NATIONALS

Presented by *Eastbay*

The NTN Dream is in full fruition in its fourth year - every teammate counts!

Time to Get Your Dirt On!

by Rich Gonzalez from Portland

Fueled by a marriage between unprecedented levels of running talent and previously unperfected race technologies, a new era of cross-country running was spawned with the advent of the inaugural Nike Team Nationals extravaganza in 2004. Twenty-one boys teams and twenty girls squads from across the country converged on the Portland Meadows racing facility on that day three years ago, immersing themselves into a lung-searing, lactate-burning, mud-sloshing quest to finally answer the question: "Who is Number One?"

Course-side drummers rhythmically pounded away ... arctic crisp winds howled ... shoelace-affixed timing chips computed runner positions ... teams scores flashed in real time on jumbotron screens ... all as top runners from across the land scampered across mud, muck, and those now famous Whoop-Dee-Doo hills in search of excellence.

2004 - "The NTN Dream" was born in 2004 - Elmhurst IL boys, Saratoga NY girls confirm their legendary status as #1 in the US

Utilizing the event mantra of "Every Teammate Counts" as its backdrop, the nation witnessed as the two most revered programs in the nation -- the girls from Kinetic Racing Club (Saratoga Springs, NY) and the boys representing Kroy XC Club (Elmhurst, IL) -- affirmed their superiority in contrasting fashions.

2005 - Saratoga boys take their turn as Saratoga girls fall to Hilton NY

The 2005 edition of NTN returned to Portland Meadows and also saw the return of the Saratoga Streaks (formerly Kinetic Racing Club) to the winner's circles -- but this time, from the boys' side of the club program! Saratoga pulled off the upset in toppling Kroy for the title (111-134) while the girls from Hilton XC Club of New York were inspired by the courageous efforts of Amanda Griggs to cap an 85-112 decision over the in-state rival Saratoga Streaks in thrilling fashion!

2006 - Kenyans add international flavor

The third installment of NTN proved to be another landmark event with eye-popping international flavor as a powerful contingent from Kenya, the renowned international hotbed of distance running, headlined a new jewel in the NTN series. Our international visitors provided a true cultural exchange for all participants while being showcased in the inaugural "Open" races (which they dominated), contested minutes prior to the official NTN Championship. The first-year Open races saw more than 60 teams fly in from across the country by their own volition to share in the excitement, pageantry, and superb competition that comprise NTN weekend.

The actual NTN race proved to be another classic, with Bridgetown XC Club (Bridgetown, PA) quieting all skeptics as the "mudders" from the Northeast excelled under tough course conditions resulting from record rainfalls leading up to the event. On the girls' side, New York once again put on a clinic with Manlius (Manlius, NY) besting defending champion Hilton to earn top honors. Adding an extra special twist to the event was a live webcast of the race-day festivities that saw more than 80,000 computers log in and a few hundred thousand fans follow all the action!

Exhibiting a surprisingly vast reach across the United States in a short period of time under the original by-committee-selection format, an amazing 34 states have now participated in this ultimate year-end running event. Club teams from the state of New York have proven to be the most capable across hill-and-dale (plus mud and hay bales) thus far, capturing four (girls all three times, boys once) of the six team titles awarded! In addition, three club teams have achieved "NTN legacy" status by participating in each of the three annual editions of NTN thus far: Kroy boys (Elmhurst, IL); Carroll girls (Southlake TX); and Yankton girls (Yankton, SD).

2007 - But Nike Team Nationals IV reaches an entirely new stratosphere of competition this weekend with the creation of the NTN Regional Championships! Runners have crossed state lines to be here in joining the festive party, with All-Region recognition afforded to top regional varsity squads and the junior varsity and freshmen levels as well.

Oh yes. Also on the line: berths to the Nike Team Nationals! For the first time ever... no rankings... no controversy... no excuses. Will your club team continue its NTN legacy today? Will your team create one? It's time to find out. It's time to race! It's time to "Get Your Dirt On!"