

NORTHWEST EXPRESS TRACK AND FIELD CLASSIC

Annual event brings out smiles for competitors

BY BILL VAN SMITH

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The Northwest Express Track and Field Classic annually attracts more than 2,000 athletes.

Those competitors come from around the world — various states in the U.S., many of the Caribbean islands, even a large contingent from Angola, making the meet a melding of diversity.

The age of the contestants is as varied as the countries they come from — age 4 to several competitors in their 80s.

However, it's the youngest of the athletes that steal the show and steal the hearts of the onlookers.

The youngest of the youngsters competing, those who have not reached double digits in age, are the best at showing their unabashed happiness. Just running for the fun of running is pretty much their main

offers much for many.

Even though small kids abound scurrying here, there and everywhere, the Northwest Express Classic has many world-class athletes in the field, some who have gone on to compete and win in the Olympics.

Many years, an Olympian who has benefited from track and field in general — and this meet in particular — will make sure to pay a visit to this event.

In the past, some have returned with an Olympic gold medal in hand and they hang their medal around the neck of any 6-year-old or thereabouts they can find. That's when those kids' smiles turn to a look of awe.

In return, bringing a smile to the Olympic athlete who is showing off his or her gold medal is when one of those kids asks, "Can I keep it?"

The Northwest Express meet is in its



Many medals will be

concern, so they almost

always end up with a smile, a grin and even laughter after they catch their breath when the race is over.

Hand out winning medals and you really have some happy kids.

All this will be on display when the Northwest Express meet is off and running Friday through Sunday at Ansin Sports Complex in Miramar.

"They bring smiles to their races," meet director Alan Holt said of the youngest competitors. "They don't complain.

They brush off defeat with a smile. They just enjoy what they are doing. They haven't yet learned to act otherwise.

"The small kids are still in their formative stage, and this meet is what they need, and that's what we try to give them."

Don't get the wrong idea, though. This meet

44th year.

The massive event was founded and run by Jesse Holt, always with the help of his family. Then in 2016, Jesse Holt passed away.

What would become of the track meet?

That question was answered very quickly.

"There was no thought of it going away," Alan Holt said. Alan and the Holt extended family, which is considerable, knew exactly the best way to honor Jesse: keep the meet alive.

Since Jesse Holt's death, the motto of the meet has become, "The Legacy Continues."

"This meet was all about him," Alan Holt said of his father.

"The Legacy Continues is on the trophy.

"The Legacy Continues is on the banners.

"And The Legacy Continues is in our hearts."

The Legacy Continues

What: 44th Northwest Track & Field Classic.

When: Friday through Sunday

Where: Ansin Sports Complex, 10801 Miramar Blvd., Miramar.

Meet Schedule: **Friday** — 5 p.m. start for both track events and field events; **Saturday** — 8 a.m. start for javelin, followed by other field events; track events begin at 10 a.m. **Sunday** — Events begin at 10 a.m.

Competitors: 2,300 track and field athletes from around the world.