

Byrne goes nationwide recently in high school cross country finals

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Capping off a 5th place finish by his North Harrison cross country team at the IHSAA State Meet in Terre Haute in early November, North Harrison senior runner Tyler Byrne has been testing his skills recently in some national high school cross country meets.

On December 5, Byrne competed in the Nike Cross Country Nationals held in Portland, Oregon. There he was 19th out of 199 runners. His time in the race was 15:37.

On December 12, Byrne competed in the Foot Locker Cross Country Nationals in San Diego, California. At this meet he finished 7th out of 40 runners, with a time of 15:34.

Byrne did experience a little bit of jet lag, but he said that it wasn't too big of a problem. While in Portland he said he was a little tired the first night out there, but he said he didn't have any troubles with it during the race.

And helping out in the situation was having North Harrison coach Tim Martin present there. Byrne said that helped give him a certain degree of familiarity.

"It helped to have a coach there," Byrne said. "It was nice to be able to talk to him a little bit before and after the race."

Immediately after the IHSAA State Meet, Byrne said that he picked up the intensity of his running workouts, with longer runs. He and his North Harrison team mates had been tapering off in the length of their running workouts prior to the State Meet, but he said he knew he needed to start ramping it up.

And once he got closer to the two runs on the west coast, "I backed off the distance."

At the race in Portland, Byrne found the course to his liking, wet, muddy, and all around sloppy. It reminded him of some of the courses he and his North Harrison team mates had competed on this past season.

And as opposed to the San Diego race, at Portland, "there were more people there, but the competition wasn't as high. I didn't finish as high as I was hoping there, but it wasn't too bad a finish, I guess."

Out in San Diego a week later, Byrne said that "it went really well."

Here, he was happier with his finish.

"It was a neat experience," Byrne said. "Coach Jerry Love was there."

The talent level of the other runners was also higher than the race in Portland, according to Byrne.

"It was definitely a different 5K (5,000 meters) race," he explained. "There are so many other runners at the same level. It was a lot different from anything I've been in before."

The race itself was at what Byrne described as a park, and was harder packed than the running surface in Portland.

"It had good footing everywhere."

Plus, Byrne said he flew out to the meet on that Thursday, and they had plenty of time to adjust to the time change, where the west coast is three hours behind us.

The weather was in the 60s in San Diego when Byrne got there, and he enjoyed the warmer weather, even though it rained after the race started.

There was also a familiar face in the race in San Diego, too. Carmel runner Chris Waldron competed in the race alongside Byrne.

As for the travel arrangements, Byrne said that both Nike and Foot locker paid for his expenses, and his parents (Gary and Angie Byrne) traveled with him too.

What was Byrne's motivation for competing in meets so far from home?

"Knowing that those were my last high school races, and national races kept me wanting to train and see how good I could be," he explained.