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Hopkinton welcomes Marathon flame

By Peter Reuell/Daily News staff

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HOPKINTON — With the start of the 112th Boston Marathon less than 48 hours away, dozens of spectators, runners and local officials took to Hopkinton Town Common yesterday to soak up some pre-race atmosphere.

By yesterday afternoon, the common was already crowded with tents, local officials had erected many barriers along the route, bleachers were in place and the race's sound-system was prepped.

Most people, though, just wanted to talk about the weather.

Following the cold and rainy weather which nearly canceled the race last year because of a threat of snow, yesterday's temperatures rose into the low 70s, giving the pre-race events the feel of a summer fair.

"This is a dream," said Dorothy Ferriter, chairwoman of the Hopkinton Marathon Committee. "Last year, we were all hunkered down, and we all had ponchos. This year it looks like the weather is going to work out in our favor."

Aside from a few last-minute items, like erecting the corrals for runners, Ferriter said the race is "really all systems go."

"Everything is in place," she said. "Everything is going smooth. We're ready!"

Among the events yesterday was a ceremony to light the Marathon Torch.

The torch, lit in November in Marathon, Greece, commemorates the Grecian soldiers killed in a battle against Persian forces in Marathon, Greece, in 490 B.C. According to legend, a Grecian warrior ran to Athens to deliver news of the victory, providing the inspiration for modern marathons.

The flame traveled from Greece to Boston, then along the marathon route to the Hopkinton starting line, where a cauldron was lit which will burn for the duration of Monday's race.

On hand to witness the lighting of the cauldron was Marathon Mayor Spyridon Zagaris.

"It is not a coincidence that this flame's home is here, the flame of peace and love and brotherhood, next to the stones (commemorating) fallen warriors of various wars," he said, through an interpreter. "Marathoning is a special event, because it...demands courage, strength and tremendous will."

Hopkinton selectmen Chairwoman Muriel Kramer was also on hand, and said the town is a "grateful and humble recipient" of the flame.

"It is a tangible reminder of both the rich history and the bright future (of the marathon)," she said.

Among those who wandered the common yesterday was the Wilson family, who made the trip to Hopkinton from Nebraska to root on their son, Dylan.

Though Monday's race will be his fifth marathon, it will be his first time running Boston, and the family yesterday was eager to revel in the spectacle that is the Boston Marathon.

"Right now, we're just trying to get a feel for things," Dylan's father, Doug Wilson, said. "We're just trying to learn and have fun. Everybody's been really helpful and really friendly. We're having a blast. This is my vacation this year, so we're having fun!"

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