

Farrell the star turn as Galway athletes deliver at Irish finals

GALWAY athletes have been busy of late as the summer track & field season gets in to full swing. Pride of place goes to Cathriona Farrell of Craughwell AC and Athenry VS who secured selection for the Irish team to compete at the European Youth Olympics later this summer.

The Irish Schools Track & Field Championships are one of the flagship events on the Irish athletics calendar with an exceptionally high standard of competition and excellent organisation. This year's edition, held in Tuallamore recently was one of the most exciting championships in recent years with no fewer than 14 championship records. It also proved to be a highly successful championship from a Galway perspective with no fewer than 11 medals won by Galway athletes, the highest total in many years.

Farrell of Athenry VS was the star of the show winning the senior girls high jump in what turned out to be a jump-off with Mary Kate Lannigan of Loreto Kilkenny for the single place available on the Irish team at this summer's European Youth Olympics. Prior to this competition, both athletes had cleared 1.73 in outdoor competition this season, but in Tuallamore Cathriona equalled her personal best with a 1.75 metre clearance to Mary Kate's 1.70m to secure her place on the plane to Finland for these championships which run from July 20th to 26th.

Leona McGuire of Taylor's Hill claimed the bronze medal in the Intermediate girls 200m in 26.12, beaten only by two of Ireland's brightest young sprints prospects in Sarah Lavin and Joan Healy. Leona also led Taylor's Hill to a rare gold medal in the 4x100m. Laura Shaughnessy of Loughrea Vocational School claimed a bronze in the senior girls 3000m in 10.23.06.

Sarah Ni Loinsigh of Carraroe CS won the bronze medal in the senior girls discus in 31.51. Maeve Curley of Seamount Kinvara claimed the bronze medal in the inter girls 2000m walk in a time of 9.24.31 behind a championship record performance from Kate Veale of St. Augustine's.

Despite being hampered by a hamstring injury, Eanna O'Cathain of Carraroe Comprehensive was another Galway athlete to stand out. He grabbed a gold medal in the discus with a 43.39 performance, alongside a bronze medal in the shot putt with 12.96.

Osaze Osagie of St. Mary's Galway has made a big impression on the sport in his first season of competition, and in Tuallamore he bagged two medals in an impressive debut at this level. He clocked 23.79 when taking the silver medal in the junior boys 200m, with a championship record by Carlow's Marcus Lawler required to relegate Osaze to second place. He also claimed the bronze medal in the 100m in 11.69.

Evan McGuire of 'The Bish'

threw 38.39 in the intermediate boy's javelin to claim a bronze medal. Thomas Keehan of Gort Community School shared the bronze medal in the senior boys high jump with a personal best 1.75m.

The West Region Team Championships for U9's to U11's took place on Saturday, 13th June, in Athlone IT in atrocious weather conditions. In the U-9 boys, Shane Jennings and Oisín McCormack of Balli-

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nasloe won the gold medal in both the 60m and 300m. Jack and Aubrey O'Brien of Athenry claimed gold in the long jump. Niall Hanahoe and Ryan Oates of GCH combined to win the ball throw.

In the U10 girls, Lisha Woods and Niamh Hannon of Athenry won the 60m while Niamh Hannon combined with Aoibhinn Carr to win the 500m. Laura Cunningham and Caoimhe O'Donoghue of Craughwell won the long jump while GCH duo Saoirse Flynn and Clodagh Gaffney combined to win the ball throw. Athenry's Killian Lawless and Brandon McMenamin took the U10 boys ball throw.

In the U11 girls, Sarah McDonnell and Roisin Flynn of GCH won the 600m while

Liam Costello and Luke Shaughnessy, also of GCH, captured the U11 boys 60m, while Costello combined with Bronson Kelly to win the 600m. Nathan Lynskey and Dylan Finn of Craughwell took the U11 boys long jump, while GCH's Adam Healy and Daniel Johnson won the ball throw.

Galway clubs dominated the relays winning all six Connacht titles on offer. Craughwell picked up gold medals in the U9 girls and U10 boys 4x100m, Ballinasloe won the U9 boys relay, Athenry took the U10 girls relay, while GCH won the U11 boys and girls titles. The top three teams in each event have qualified for the All-Ireland competition to be held in Templemore on June 27th.

The West Region Championships for U12's through to U15's took place on Saturday June 13th in Athlone, but full results are not yet available. The U16's to U19's, junior and senior championship take place on June 20th, also in Athlone.

The Galway Senior Track & Field Series for 2009 got underway on Thursday, June 4th, in Dangan with a couple of close fought races on the track and a high quality field in the shot putt. Paul Fallon of GCH was the first across the finish line on the evening, taking gold in the Masters Men 800m in 2:19. Caroline Clancy of Loughrea took the ladies title in the same race clocking 2:25 for the two

lap event.

Jack Fallon of GCH won the senior men's 800m title after winning a four way tussle down the home straight. He crossed the line in 2:03 from Joe O'Donnell, Cormac McDonnell and Keith Fallon. The 100m races also saw tight finishes with Patrick O'Malley and Ronan Coyle, both GCH, inseparable at the line. They shared gold in a time of 11.4. Kevin McGlone of Sligo won the masters race in an impressive 13.5 while Leona McGuire of GCH claimed the ladies title in 14.0.

In the field events, the reigning National senior Champion Sean Breathnach was below his best but still managed one of the longest throws in the country this year with a 14.27 effort. Peter Healy was the top master in his first event in some time with an impressive 10.11 throw. Sarah Finnegan claimed the ladies title with 7.10 while Patricia Monaghan took the Masters Gold in 5.21.

Elsewhere, Galway's senior Track & Field teams travelled to Cork to compete in the first round of the national league. The men's team were competing in the premier division for the first time after gaining promotion last year and struggled in the absence of many of their senior stalwarts. The ladies team fared better competing in the first division. Both squads will compete in the second round in Athlone on July 5th with qualification for the National League final at stake.