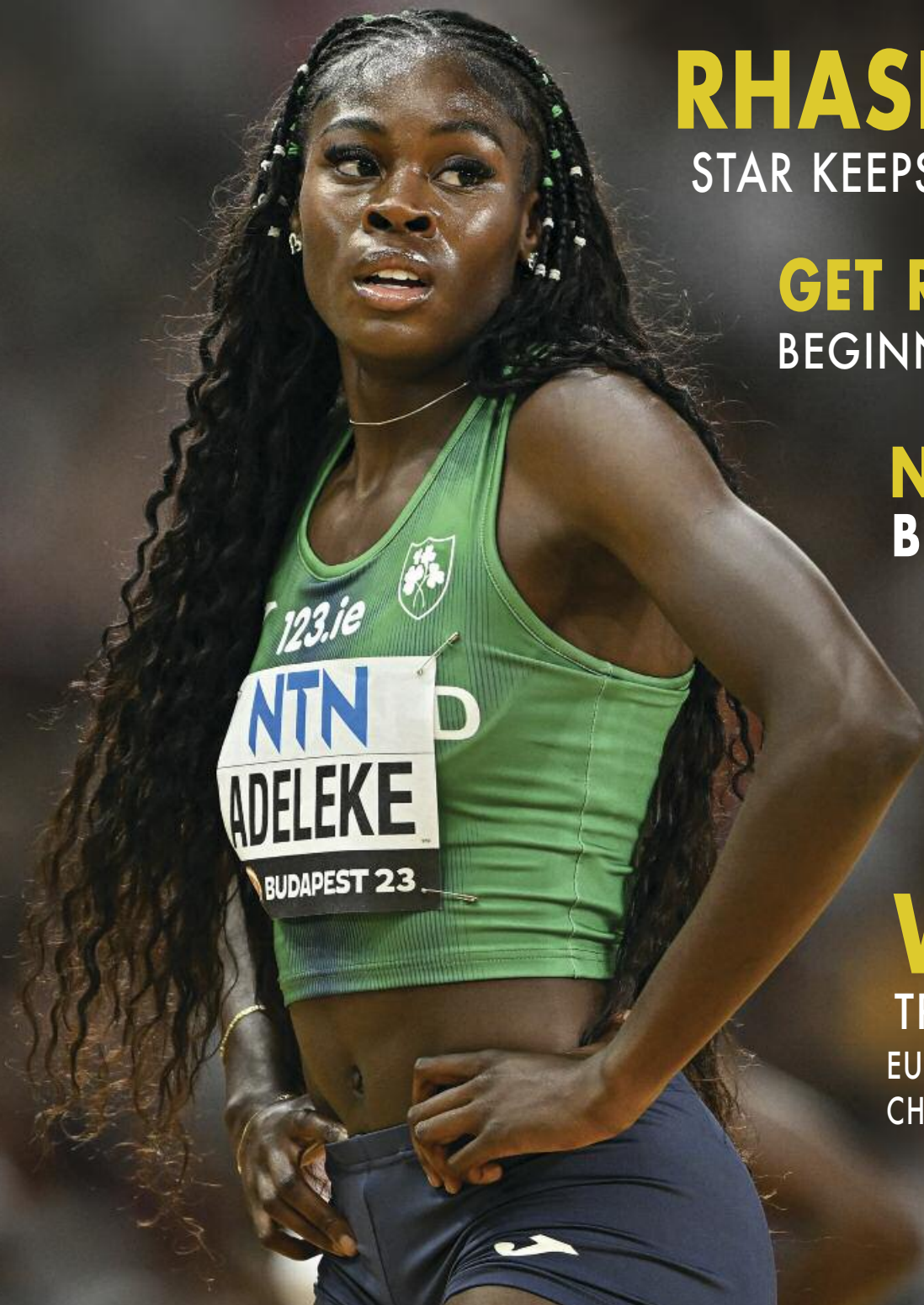


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FOREWORD

An exciting new dawn for Irish Runner is beginning to unfold as the magazine, on behalf of Athletics Ireland, is now published by Select Media Ltd, a company with an impressive track record in publishing.

We want to welcome on board Robert Heuston and team who have played such a pivotal role in getting this Irish Runner Yearbook on the newsagents' shelves nationwide.

It is also a great honour for me to be sitting in the Editor's chair of Irish Runner - the magazine founded in 1981 by Frank Greally. Irish Runner has been part of so many runners' lives throughout the years, and I feel sure that that will continue to be the case in the years ahead.

I am privileged to be working with Frank Greally, who in his role as Consultant Editor has provided invaluable advice and guidance to me over the past several months.

I wish to extend a special thanks to all those who have supported me - in particular my family, friends, colleagues in Athletics Ireland and of course my own club Kilmore AC in Wexford, whose athletes and coaches can take credit for helping to foster and encourage my love for our great sport from a young age.

2023 was a memorable one for athletics and this is reported on throughout this Yearbook. For our cover story, Cliona Foley profiles the extraordinary Rhasidat Adeleke who finished fourth in the World 400m final in Budapest. Another athlete who was within a whisker of winning a medal in Hungary was Ciara Mageean, and acclaimed RTE broadcaster Greg Allen profiles the ups and downs of Ciara's career for Irish Runner.

Elizabeth Ndudi made national headlines in August when she won European U20 Long Jump gold in Jerusalem. Elizabeth features in our Yearbook - speaking with us from her new base in Illinois.

We also look ahead to what we expect will be an exciting 2024 and the Paris Olympic Games. Irish Runner readers also have a chance to win a trip to Rome for the European Athletics Championships in June.

Hannah Nolan's inspiring story as told by Frank Greally is sure to resonate with many readers and will be inspirational. On the topic of motivation, we have an extensive New Year, Better You section which will serve to inspire readers as we head into 2024. We also feature some of the best running shoes and accessories available on the Irish retail market in association with Intersport Elverys.

I hope that you, the reader, will enjoy the Irish Runner Yearbook as much as we have enjoyed putting it together. I look forward to seeing you all at races and wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas and a great running year in 2024.

Rory Cassidy
Editor



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Irish Runner Magazine have teamed up with Intersport Elverys, Ireland's leading sports store, for a series of Running Shoe and Apparel Tests for 2024.

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FIND YOUR OWN RUNNING BALANCE

Running legend CATHERINA MCKIERNAN offers some expert and encouraging advice to help you achieve your running goals in 2024.

Running has become very popular and competitive and many runners are looking for that extra edge. Achieving your running best is a holistic endeavour that requires a combination of physical, mental and strategic efforts. It's important to find a balance that works for you and supports your overall well-being. Regardless of what level people are running at, they mostly want to get the most out of themselves. A good starting point is to know what you want - recognise where you are at now as regards your level of fitness and know what it takes, and commit to achieving your goals.

First and foremost you need regular and consistent training. This is crucial for conditioning your body and for long term improvement and peak performance. Set yourself realistic achievable short term and long term goals so that you can measure your progress. This helps you to stay focused and motivated. No plan is cast in stone and you should work on a weekly basis. You may have to change things around depending on how you are responding to the training load and also other factors like work and family commitments.

It is important to get adequate recovery and plenty of sleep. We all have busy lifestyles and are trying to juggle many things, but realise how important your recovery is, so that you can build your training program and continue to get fitter and stronger. Eat a well-balanced diet that provides the necessary nutrients.

Work on your weaknesses, and target areas where you can improve, whether it is speed endurance, strength or technique. One thing that some runners fall short on is the psychological strength for both training and competition.

Running is very much an individual sport and you need to get into a positive mindset so that you can be enthusiastic and look forward to training and racing. There came a point in my career where I just got tired of it all. For a good many years it was a novelty, flying all around the world running races, but there came a time where the thought of going to the airport for another flight was far from

appealing. So, it's important to allow the body to recover and rejuvenate.

Success brings its challenges. I put a lot of pressure on myself, and as a result running became less enjoyable. I remember my father telling me to relax and "smell the roses"; I think it is good to listen to the older generation. They have lived life and picked up valuable experience on the journey.

In all walks of life, if we are coming from a place of freedom, joy and relaxation, we are going to perform well and get the most out of ourselves in whatever we do. So regardless of what level you are at, it is

“**Running is very much an individual sport and you need to get into a positive mindset so that you can be enthusiastic and look forward to training and racing**”

important to ask yourself the question: why did you start running in the first place? And be thankful that you have the health, ability and talent to see what you can achieve.

Fear is what holds us back and thinking too much about the race beforehand. Instead of focusing on the outcome, it is best to put your energy and concentration into the everyday training. It may sound counter-intuitive caring a little less about the result. You can gain self-belief by consciously pushing your goals and the worries that surround them out of your mind and stay focused on the task of the moment throughout the training process that leads up to the next race.

The process of 'head down and just do the work' cultivates great confidence and

self-belief. Self-belief cannot be gained through obsessive thinking towards one's goals. Instead, it comes from an empty, quiet mind and total focus and trust on the process.

With social media there are so many distractions and it's not healthy or productive to compare yourself to others. You do what you can, to the best of your ability, and pass no remarks on anyone else. Fearing failure makes us anxious and can use up vital energy that we need for performing.

There are times in training and racing when the negative thoughts come into our mind. This is natural but it is important to catch them in the early stages and change them to encouraging, helpful and positive thoughts. You cannot stop thinking, but you can exercise some control over your thoughts. You need to stop having negative thoughts if you are to build self-confidence. If you allow the thoughts to linger, they will take from your performance. Negative self-talk is a habit. Like everything worthwhile in life, this takes practice and gradually it will become part of your routine.

Observe that inner chatter. It doesn't mean negative thoughts will disappear entirely; even though they will come and go, you are not letting them control you and learn to push them aside. Change the negative thoughts with positive ones. For example, some of the negative thoughts that we experience are: "I have to stop"... instead say "I have prepared and will get through this".

"This is difficult" - change to "thrive on this challenge". "I don't feel good" - change to "the body is getting ready to perform". You need to practise these mindset changes until they become second nature. Of course to get fitter you have to train physically, but to get the very best out of yourself, you have to train mentally also.

After you have put a lot of time and energy into achieving your goal, give yourself time out to let it all sink in and refresh and get the appetite back to work on your next goal.

Smile and enjoy the journey.

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WELL LEARNED RUNNING LESSONS

Olympian DAVID MATTHEWS recalls lessons learned from his coach, Noel Carroll.

**“You either ran today
or you didn’t”
– Noel Carroll (RIP)**

A simple statement from a man whose philosophy in running was always given free, never imposed and certainly ahead of his time. For those who didn't know the late Noel Carroll, Noel was a double Olympian, an Irish record holder and multiple European medallist. He was also one of the founders of the Dublin Marathon, established the UCD Athletics Scholarship Programme and was coach, father figure and mentor to many, including myself.

I had the pleasure of being mentored and coached by Noel from 1992 until his sudden and untimely passing in 1998. At the time Noel was out in UCD doing what he loved best; running and dispensing laser-sharp advice when he passed.

A creature of habit; training always followed the same pattern; a slow 15-minute shuffle around the grass pitches in UCD opposite the Sports Centre, we (the track team) listened while Noel delivered an unsolicited daily homily. The subject would start with something topical within the morning news but would somehow meander its way through the facts; finally as we approached the end of the lap, delivering a subtle nugget of advice for one of the team who may or may not have needed it.

I was very often the central theme of these homilies. Once, I recall I had been out burning the midnight oil and Noel through his intelligence sources got wind of it. The next day I got the curly finger from Noel.

“
**Luckily for us in Ireland,
our pipeline of athletes
journeying through the
age groups has never
been healthier**”



The late Noel Carroll

Photos : Sportsfile/Connolly Collection

“David, Ahh Come on and join me for a lap....” I knew, he knew, and I was expecting the hairdryer treatment, even though it preceded the infamous Alex Ferguson outburst by nearly ten years.

We started the lap; I knew that if I picked up the pace it would limit his opportunity to talk (putting him under pressure) and with the added bonus of getting us around the lap in the quickest possible time. Two birds with one stone.

Noel started to tell me about a famous band (he never named them) with a lead singer whose voice was a real showstopper. He added that the lead singer lost a little bit of focus, started to party, was late for rehearsals and with that his voice suffered. As a result, the band floundered, never reached their true potential and subsequently didn't have any more hits! I remember the story went on but finished quite abruptly as we finished the lap faster than he had anticipated.

I knew it was a completely made-up story, but it was all leading to a final denouement.

As we turned the final bend on the grass pitches with 100m left before we rejoined the group, I was waiting for the hairdryer to come flying. It didn't happen because that wasn't Noel's style. He just quipped as we rejoined the group and once within earshot of the team, said:

“If you're going to hoot with the owls at night, you better be ready to soar with the eagles in the morning.... Now, David, we've 12 x 300m in 43 seconds off 45 seconds recovery....”

That was 1995; I was just turning 21 years old. I had already run four Senior Indoor & Outdoor Major Championships, qualified for the Olympics and had lowered the national record again to 1:44.82. Noel's advice was paradoxically to the point - but in a roundabout way.

Fast forward 25 years or so and the number of championships on the crowded athletics calendar continues to grow. In 2024 we have six track championships alone, albeit not everyone can run in them, but navigating them has become an ever-increasing challenge for our emerging track & field stars and their coaches.

The challenge coaches have is charting their way through the championship pathway. Ensuring that the aims for the athletes are pitched perfectly to ensure they are progressing along the development journey; aspirational, without being a pipedream.

In a perfect world, an athlete would progress like steps of stairs through the championships; U18 European/World, U20 European/World, U23 European/Worlds. The Senior Championships and the big stage are open to anyone if they are good enough to compete. That prompts the questions to me time and time again:

- Should athletes forgo the opportunity at underage events to establish themselves at senior level?

- Should athletes focus solely on their own event to the detriment of a teams position (In the case of relays)?

Luckily for us in Ireland, our pipeline of athletes journeying through the age groups has never been healthier and it is a credit to the athletes, coaches, and the support structure. But success at underage level does not guarantee success or graduation to senior level.

There's no one-size-fits-all in athletics. Every athlete's progress does not follow a line with bumps and obstacles along the way. It is the coaches who shoulder much of the responsibility to react and readjust at a moment's notice; an unforgiving role in a fast-moving sport.

I often think about Noel, and what would he say or do if he was coaching one of our current crop of athletes. Does the homily still have a place in the modern coaching ethos?

I don't envy the job of our coaches, it's an extremely arduous role; their protégés are judged on hits. Not social media hits, but successes and hits on the oval stage. The coach's role is to ensure that the athlete is ready to perform - hit after hit after hit! And for some, even when they have finished the set, they are once again called upon for the encore that's called the Relay. It's a tough business.

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A NEW YEAR ACTION PLAN

AIDAN LOUGHNANE is passionate about his running and he shares some of the lessons that have helped him to achieve his goals in the past year.

The 2023 running year is coming to an end and it has been filled with exceptional displays of running, including world records for the marathon in both male and female categories. Although the majority of us will never compete on the world stage, that doesn't mean that we can't make 2024 our special year of running.

I've compiled a list of actions that have delivered success for me in 2023 and can, I hope, help you too in 2024.

1. BE REALISTIC, MAKE A PLAN FOR YOUR YEAR AND EXECUTE

'A goal without a plan is just a wish'. We all want to race a marathon every weekend or enter at our local parkrun to nail down a 5km personal best time, but the reality of it is we simply can't do that. Therefore, I suggest you plan. Pick your two major goals, one for each half of the year and build around that. If you pick a half-marathon in April and a full marathon in October - there is no reason why you cannot achieve a personal best time at 5km and 10km along the way.

2. TALK TO LOCAL RUNNERS

Trust me when I suggest this. If you are not a member of a running club or a local running group, you are missing out. I always ran alone and didn't mix with local runners, but since joining a training group running has become a very much welcome social event for me. Surrounding yourself with other like-minded people really makes you enjoy the sport more, plus your family are probably sick of you talking about your new carbon plate trainers or your personal best times. Non-runners don't get us.

3. SLOW DOWN!

It really is one of those things you hear time and time again, and it's true. You're running too fast! Strava doesn't lie, and let me tell you, a heart rate of 160 is not an 'easy pace'. So slow down. I am a past offender here and when I found the discipline to run slow on the easy days - the speed sessions got faster, and the race results kept getting better. A marathon time of 4:06 lowered to 3:36 in four months speaks for itself.

4. INVEST IN A COACH

A running coach isn't just for the elites. I know what you're thinking: 'expensive'. But let's break it down. A personal running coach can be an expensive luxury but no more expensive than a coffee from Starbucks each day. Also, there are many alternative options like online running apps. I have personally used **RUNNA**, an app designed to give you a plan and paces based on your personal best times or estimated race finishing times. I have been using this app for the Irish Life Dublin Marathon and I can confirm it is the real deal. For €20 a month you can have a tailored plan without breaking the bank. **I've managed to get a two-week free trial for YOU to try out using AIDAN as a referral code.**

5. WEIGHTS MATTER

There is, I feel, an outdated false perception around running that you shouldn't lift weights. It's simple to include as part of your overall training plan. The 1500 metres powerhouse Jake Wightman documents his training on YouTube where he displays an impressive lifting plan, showing an incredible strength to weight ratio. And if you're still not

convinced, try speaking to your local physiotherapist and learn more about the benefits of weights and strength training.

6. LISTEN TO YOUR BODY!

Every runner's worst nightmare is when that minor niggle you've been ignoring progresses into a full-blown injury. I've learned from this mistake. If there are two little pieces of advice I can give you before you end up in the physio's office, it is the following:

6.1 DON'T FEAR A DAY OFF

The training plan says you are running a tempo-session tomorrow. You want to hit it, but the body will have a way of telling us it may need a break, so listen to it. The quality of your session is more important than simply 'doing' the session. The best advice I would give is to speak to your coach; or if you're doing the session yourself, simply move around your days, change the tempo session for an easy run and complete it later in the week.

6.2 FUEL UP!

Running is not a game of counting calories when you're preparing for a long distance race. Many of us get into running to lose some weight or just to feel better about our bodies. This often comes with dietary restrictions on calorie intake. I suggest you tread this line with caution. Under-fuelling can massively impair performance and lead to a breakdown in the body and further injury. These tips can help you make 2024 your year - and a great year of running. Remember - train hard, race easy and enjoy it, because that's what running is really all about.

I hope these tips can help make 2024 a great running year for you. They are framed from my personal training and racing experience.

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ENDURANCE LEAD ROLE FOR MARK KENNEALLY



Mark Kenneally

Photo : Sportsfile/Brendan Moran

Mark Kenneally is looking forward to his new role within Athletics Ireland, writes Rory Cassidy.

Mark Kenneally was appointed to the role of Athletics Ireland Performance Endurance Lead at the end of September.

The London 2012 Olympian in the marathon now has overall responsibility for driving the further development of the middle and long-distance event groups in Ireland at performance level.

The 42-year-old Kenneally had a successful career that included running at seven European Cross Country Championships and four World Cross Country Championships. Kenneally has also worked in physiotherapy roles with Scarlets Rugby Club and Leinster Rugby - as well as being former Head of Performance with League of Ireland Premier Division side St. Patrick's Athletic.

"I'm really looking forward to the role. I've been out of athletics in a formal capacity for a number of years since I retired from running," he said. "It's interesting and exciting to be back in the fold and looking at things from a slightly different perspective.

"I'm hoping to add some extra value to the role. It's been a whirlwind few weeks, there's a lot of things going on. I've been prioritising trying to meet athletes and getting to know coaches."

Coming from a marathon background, Kenneally is still extremely passionate about the event where world standards have moved on rapidly, especially in the last couple of years.

He is optimistic that the marathon will see a resurgence at elite level in Ireland on his watch. "We had an encouraging marathon revival at elite level maybe ten or twelve years ago, we had people qualifying again for championships and the times had got faster. The world has moved on a little bit, shoes have improved and some of the times have gone crazy.

"We've still got athletes that can perform really well, but we might need to take a look at resetting expectations and thinking about how we can get people to move up again to the marathon. We've done it before and we can do it again."

Mark Kenneally took over the Performance Endurance Lead role from Matt Lockett, who had previously held the position since August 2018.

BRIGHT DIAMONDS SHINING

It was a season to remember for so many of Ireland's top track and field stars, which culminated with a successful World Athletics Championships in Budapest, Hungary in late August.

Throughout the season, several Irish athletes competed with distinction in many corners of the world, producing noteworthy performances on a near daily basis. The stand-out set of meets is without question the Diamond League, which visits all corners of the globe from May through to its conclusion in mid-September.

In total, eight Irish athletes competed in the Diamond League in 2023, a number not seen before and evidence of the progress that is being made by our top talent.

Mark English, Thomas Barr and Sarah Lavin all made their season debuts in Doha, Qatar at the start of May on the first leg of the circuit, while Ciara Mageean and Brian Fay competed at the prestigious final in Eugene, Oregon some four months later.

Andrew Coscoran, Rhasidat Adeleke and Michelle Finn also made appearances at Diamond League meets during the busy summer months.

Coscoran and Mageean set new Irish records at the meets. Coscoran lowered his own Irish 1500m record to 3.30.42 to finish fourth at the Silesia meeting in Chorzow, Poland, while Mageean obliterated the Irish mile record (4.14.58) to finish second behind a new world record from Faith Kipyegon on the Monaco leg of the tour, before breaking her own 1500m record (3.55.87) towards the end of her season in Brussels. It was great to see our track stars shining so brightly.

TRACKS ABOUND

Facilities are considered to be one of the key pillars to success in sport. Throughout the years, Ireland has been blessed with some excellent tracks up and down the country where some of our top athletic talent has been nurtured.

With Athletics Ireland's membership reaching record levels year after year - 60,000 plus - it was clear that new facilities were needed to cater for the growing demand.

Several clubs have opened new tracks in 2023. Amongst the recent developments are tracks in Limerick, Westmeath and Carlow.

In September the Limerick Regional Sports Hub was opened in Newcastle West by An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. The development cost €4.2 million and will be used by many clubs in the county and further afield.

In the same month, Mullingar Harriers also held the opening of their new track, which was performed by Athletics Ireland President, John Cronin. The club will use the track as a 'regional training hub' allowing members from clubs in surrounding areas to take advantage of the facilities, particularly the throws and jumps amenities.

Down in Carlow, St. Laurence O'Toole AC have opened their fantastic new Mondo track in the heart of the town. The club believes it will be of fantastic benefit for all the community.

Also in a significant development to Morton Stadium in Santry, which is now operated by Dublin City University, the new Mondo surface was laid, with the track re-opening in late June. Works have also been carried out to the High Performance gym with more to come.

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COMMUNITY REACH AT IVEAGH GROUNDS

The new Community Athletics Hub at Iveagh Sports Grounds is having a transformative impact on the area, writes Rory Cassidy.

Athletics Ireland and Trinity College Dublin officially launched a new Community Athletics Hub at the Iveagh Sports Grounds back in July.

The goal of the community athletics hub is to increase athletics participation including recreational walking, jogging and running, as well as physical activity across all ages within the local community and among the student and staff population at Trinity College.

The community athletics hub is situated in Crumlin - an ideal location especially because of the lack of an athletics club in that general area.

The closest athletic clubs are Donore Harriers, Crusaders AC and Tallaght AC but all are a bit away from the Iveagh Sports Grounds.

With the creation of the community hub, the lack of athletics opportunities within the area can now be addressed.

Cameron Molloy Moules was appointed by Athletics Ireland to the role of Community Athletics Hub Coordinator during the summer and he is playing a pivotal role in overseeing the planning and development of participation-based interventions and programmes that have taken place to date on site.

Molloy Moules previously worked with Sport Ireland as Cross Collaboration Project Co-ordinator and is delighted to be appointed to his new role.

"It is a real honour to become the co-ordinator of this brand-new Community Athletics Hub at the historic Iveagh Sports Grounds," he said. "I believe this hub is perfectly located in a wonderful, vibrant community, with whom we hope to build meaningful connections through sport and physical activity."

"This project represents another important step in the continuous efforts to create opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds, ages and abilities to get active, to explore athletics, to socialise and to feel part of a community."

The establishment of the hub has also benefitted local schools as Athletics Ireland participation programmes such as The Daily Mile, Try Track and Field and iRunForFun have been introduced.

The hub has also hosted a Spooky Dash at Halloween, a mid-term camp and multiple coach education courses. During the festive season a Reindeer Run will also take place.

Athletics Ireland, Iveagh Grounds



GREAT SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

In the digital era the use of social media continues to grow all the time with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok developing and updating constantly as the demands of their target market evolve.

Athletics Ireland, like all national sporting governing bodies in the country, has moved with the times and is constantly striving for success on social media.

The follower numbers and engagement statistics make for impressive reading for our sport's national governing body, largely thanks to the members of the hardworking Marketing Department, who are always trying to innovate and raise standards.

Athletics Ireland currently boasts 72,000 followers on Facebook, 43,000 on X (formerly known as Twitter), 17,000 on Instagram, 7,000 on LinkedIn and just over 6,000 on TikTok.

These figures increased massively during peak times such as the World Athletics Championships where hundreds of thousands of people engaged with Athletics Ireland's posts.

Athletics Ireland also continues to live stream championships on YouTube with the videos regularly receiving over 15,000 views.

Athletics Ireland has also impressed in the Irish Sport on Social Media monthly report provided for Sport for Business, regularly topping the engagement per 1,000 follower's metric.

Sharlene Mawdsley (Newport AC) and Stephen Scullion (Clonliffe Harriers AC) are Ireland's most followed female and male athlete respectively on Instagram.

Mawdsley has amassed a following of 106,000, while Scullion has 104,000 followers.

Rhasidat Adeleke currently has 41,000 followers, while Ciara Mageean has over 25,000.

An athlete's social media profile can certainly play an instrumental role in building the profile of the sport.

DINA JOINS RHASIDAT IN TEXAS

News in is that the 2019 200m world champion Dina Asher-Smith of Great Britain is to join Rhasidat Adeleke's training group in Texas.

The 27-year-old took to social media in October to announce that she was parting ways with John Blackie who had coached her for an amazing 19 years.

"My life changed by meeting John and I will forever be grateful to him," she said. "His intellect, patience and dedication has taken me from an energetic eight-year-old to a world champion with over 20 international medals and many Olympics, World, Commonwealth and European finals."

"John and I will, of course, remain close friends. Thank you to John and thank you to all my team in London whose talents and hard work have helped me realise so many dreams to date."

Asher-Smith will now train alongside Adeleke in Austin as part of Edrick Floréal's group which also contains fellow 100m and 200m world finalist Julien Alfred from Saint Lucia.

"I'm very excited to join his talented training group as we head to Paris 2024," she said.

Floréal had previously ruled out coaching professional athletes in the future but with Adeleke and Alfred both foregoing their final year of NCAA eligibility to sign lucrative deals with Nike and Puma respectively, it seems he had a change of heart.

All three will be looking to have successful 2024 seasons having made finals in their respective events at the World Track & Field Championships in Budapest back in August.

21-year-old Adeleke finished fourth in the 400m final, clocking a time of 50.13 seconds, just over half a second off a podium place.

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LETTERKENNY AC FUNDRAISER

Letterkenny AC have raised vital funds for a worthy charity, writes Rory Cassidy.

Letterkenny Athletics Club in Donegal took on a great initiative during the October Bank Holiday weekend to raise vital funds for the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association.

Sixteen of the club's members took part in the Irish Life Dublin Marathon on Sunday October 29th, while on the same day in the German city of Frankfurt, four members completed the 26.2 mile course there.

Among those to take part in one of the two marathons was club chairman Raymond Birch who made the journey to Germany.

Birch explained why the club opted to raise funds for the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association. "We know a number of people closely connected with Letterkenny AC who are living with Motor Neurone Disease, and this is our way of helping them and the work of the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association," he said.

"Last year, we also selected the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association as our benefitting charity and raised €3,245 through the participation of ten of our members in Dublin. People were extremely generous and as a club in the community, we feel it's important that we do our bit to help those less fortunate and most in need."

Birch was also keen to stress that his club have instigated several fundraising drives throughout the years and are always looking to give back.

"Down the years Letterkenny AC has helped raise funds for local families, community groups, voluntary organisations and charities. Raising awareness is another thing we try to help with," he said.

According to the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association, there are 22 people living in Donegal with the condition, while it is estimated that around 400 people suffer with the debilitating disease nationwide.

The club set up a GoFundMe page to raise funds and were blown away by the support they received raising over €8000.

The Letterkenny AC runners who competed in the Irish Life Dublin City Marathon were national marathon champion Ann-Marie McGlynn, Paddy Friel, Kevin Ferry, Adrian Callaghan, Stevie Shields, Gary Kearns, Mark McFadden, Derek Campbell, Chris McMenamin, Pat Brady, Caroline Brady, Odhrán McGowan, Garrett Doherty, Martin O'Donnell, Noreen McGettigan and Ciaran O'Donnell, while Ciaran McGonagle, Raymond Birch, Kevin McGee and Eamon O'Boyle travelled to Frankfurt.



Photo : Sportfile/Sam Barnes

Ann-Marie McGlynn, Letterkenny AC

A RECORD-BREAKING YEAR

2023 saw Irish track and field records being broken on 90 occasions, writes Rory Cassidy

By any measure 2023 was an extraordinary year for Irish athletics. But when it comes to one metric of success in particular – records – it is clear that our athletes soared to new heights in the year gone by.

In total - ninety records were broken up to the end of October, an impressive feat that will be hard to match or beat in the years to come.

The first record of the year came on January 8th as the youthful Ratoath AC team of Niamh Murphy, Laura Kelly, Aisling Stratford and Aimee Doherty broke both the U23 and senior club 4x400m relay indoor records, clocking 3.55.99 at the opening round of the National League in Abbotstown.

Among the senior indoor records to fall during the winter and spring months were

the Men's 200m (Mark Smyth – 20.64), Men's 60m (Israel Olatunde – 6.57), Men's 5000m Walk (David Kenny – 18.42.38), Women's Pentathlon (Kate O'Connor – 4396 points) and Men's Shot Put (Eric Favors – 20.16m).

Favors would go on to break the outdoor record at the European Throwing Cup (20.66m) in March.

Nicola Tuthill also secured throwing records during the summer breaking the U23 Women's Hammer Throw best on several occasions, a 67.85m effort at the European Team Championships in June being her best.

Also to the fore in the throws was Anna Gavigan (Lambay Sports Academy), who broke the Women's U20 Discus record in July with a 49.32m effort.

Adam Nolan took a sizeable chunk of the U20 110m Hurdles record throughout the

season, most memorably clocking a blistering 13.70 seconds to win the Senior Boys title at the All-Ireland Schools Championships in June.

At the European U23 Championships in Espoo, Finland both the Men's 4x100m (Gabriel Kehinde, Runo Ayavoro, Colin Doyle, Israel Olatunde – 39.51) and 4x400m (Andrew Egan, Callum Baird, Aaron Keane, Jack Raftery – 3.06.34) national records fell in style.

In September, Leevale's Reece Ademola continued his progress in the Long Jump breaking the national U23 record with a huge leap of 7.97m in Italy, having previously broken it to take his first national senior title in Santry in July.

A full list of all the records broken this year can be found on our website irishrunner.ie

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CLONLIFFE WOMEN'S SPECIAL CELEBRATION

Members of Clonliffe Harriers A.C joined together for a special celebration dinner on Saturday night, September 30th to mark the 60th anniversary of women's participation in the club, writes Cillian Sheeran.

To commemorate this historic milestone, Jenny Johnston, the senior women's captain, brought together a dedicated team to organise the celebration dinner.

Throughout the evening, the guests were taken on a video journey that traced the start of women joining the club all the way to the

current outstanding crop of Clonliffe female athletes

One founding member said: "At first it was considered immoral, unladylike and immodest for women to be seen in shorts and many spoke out about it, but we had the support of each other and overcame prejudice."

Master of Ceremonies, Liam Moggan, introduced the special guests and speakers: the Mayor of Fingal, Cllr. Adrian Henchy and Clonliffe Harriers President, Michael Kearney. Other special guests who attended on the night were Athletics Ireland President, John Cronin, Sport Ireland board representative, Michelle Tanner - as well as the pioneering women - the founding members of the Clonliffe Harriers women's team.

Jenny Johnston congratulated the founding members and thanked all the current and past coaches and volunteers over the years. "I hope our founding members are as proud of our success as we are grateful for the path they made for us," she said.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank all the coaches and volunteers, both our current crop and all those who contributed over the last 60 years, without you none of this would be possible".

It was a lovely night where lots of stories were shared, friendships renewed and dancing went on until late in the night - a fitting celebration for 60 years of Clonliffe Harriers Women's Athletics.

Billy Morton, Noel Henry, Ann, Ursula, Nuala and Antoinette O'Brien, Felicia and Nuala Farrelly and teammates in 1968



RITA CASEY A RUNNING INSPIRATION

Among the many heart-warming stories to emerge from the Irish Life Dublin Marathon this year was that of Rita Casey, who was a worthy recipient of the Lord Mayor's Medal.

Rita, who is a member of An Garda Síochána, is currently battling stage four brain and lung cancer, but she was determined to complete her fifth marathon.

Originally from Donegal, Rita now lives in Charlestown, Mayo with her husband John (former Mayo footballer) and three children.

A dedicated runner, Rita previously raised funds for the Irish Cancer Society and this year opted to set up a GoFundMe page for the Mayo-Roscommon Hospice, which at the time of writing had raised over €17,500.

Rita had initially cancelled her entry to the race as she didn't believe she would be able to run the marathon in 2023, but soon after cancelling she believed that she had made a wrong decision. She applied to go back into the lottery and was successful. However, she didn't tell John that she was running until about two months before the race.

Admiring her courageous approach, forty friends nominated Rita for the Lord Mayor's Medal.

The prestigious Lord Mayor's medal was presented to Rita before the race start by Dublin Lord Mayor - Cllr. Daithí de Róiste, with husband John surprising Rita by attending, having originally agreed to stay at home to look after their family's chocolate Labrador 'Cooper'.

Having targeting running a sub 4:30 marathon, Rita, who represents East Mayo AC, finished in a time of four hours, four minutes and forty-four seconds - a wonderful display of strength, courage, inspiration and gratitude.

MARATHON MISSION FOR SANCTUARY RUNNERS

A large contingent of twenty-five Sanctuary Runners from Croatia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ireland, Bolivia, Ghana, Togo, Gibraltar and South Africa completed this year's Irish Life Dublin Marathon on October Bank Holiday weekend.

The group, which was founded by CEO Graham Clifford and Clare Keogh in 2018, aims to bring together asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and all Irish residents.

Typically, the group does weekly 5k Parkruns the length and breadth of the country, but some members like to push themselves that bit further, so they have opted to run the marathon.

All of the Sanctuary Runners wore their distinctive blue t-shirts meaning they were noticed along the streets of Dublin. The group also had a cheering squad in place outside the RDS and others supporting at Terenure and Mount Street Bridge.

Also in October, the group held the Permanent TSB Sanctuary Run at the Sport Ireland Campus in Abbotsstown. The 5k event attracted nearly one thousand participants and was attended by Olympians including Eimear Lambe, Kellie Harrington, Kenneth Egan and Emily Hegarty.

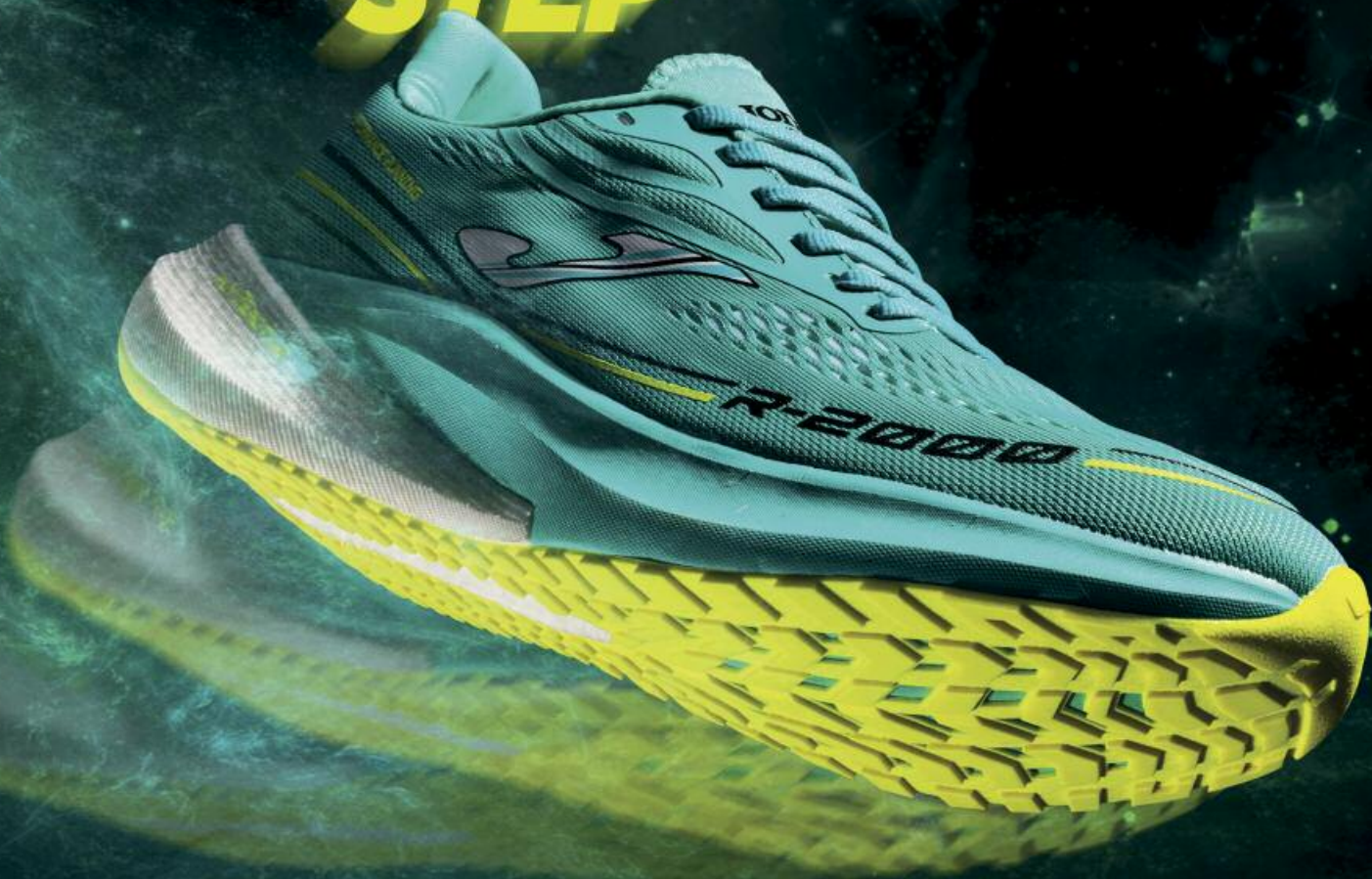
The event was supported by the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Athletics Ireland.

Among the Sanctuary Runners staff is former national 100m record holder Ailís McSweeney. McSweeney coordinates the Sanctuary Runners groups across Ireland and works with their regional development officers to support and develop their community integration approach. Ailís also manages the Sanctuary Runners national event calendar.

It is great to see this successful athlete continuing to have an inspirational impact on running in Ireland.

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THE DAILY MILE BUILDS FITNESS FOUNDATION

By Cillian Sheeran

The Daily Mile - the Walk or Run, 15 minutes a day programme promoted countrywide to primary schools by Athletics Ireland, continues to grow in popularity and there are now well over 1,200 primary schools making The Daily Mile part of their school day.

Professor Niall Moyna, Professor of Clinical Exercise Physiology in the School of Health and Human Performance at DCU, who has long been an advocate for The Daily Mile, has some words of encouragement as well as a warning for principals, teachers, parents and children.

"There's no doubt about it, if children take part - walk or run - in The Daily Mile regularly during their primary school years, they will rank in the top five to 10% of Europeans for cardiovascular fitness when they leave primary school," he said. "The impact that will have on their future health will be immense. In fact, it's incalculable. It's about prevention and it's about primary prevention. In this country we tend to be very reactive. You get sick and then you access what I call our disease care system.



Photo: Adam Kaczmarek

"It's not a healthcare system. You have to get sick to access it. I want to stop the current generation of children from falling into the trap that other generations have fallen into.

"If you look at all our tertiary hospitals - our big hospitals - they were all designed for acute illness. You enter a hospital with a major health issue and they solve it in a week or two and you go home.

"With chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, obesity, you don't fix those in a week in the hospital. They are lifestyle diseases. So, the key is to stop children developing these lifestyle-mediated conditions by inculcating good health behaviours at a

young age. The Daily Mile is a wonderful and effective way to do that."

One of the highlights of The Daily Mile year was a special celebration event that took place at the Connacht GAA AirDome in Mayo. Seven primary schools took part in that event - a combination of The Daily Mile and the Try Track and Field programme delivered by David Matthews.

"We received a wonderful welcome from John Prenty, Kurt Reinhardt and the staff at the Mayo GAA AirDome," said Frank Greally, Athletics Ireland Ambassador for The Daily Mile.

Primary Schools can sign up for The Daily Mile at thedailymile.ie

MAWDSLEY SHOWS CLASS AND COURAGE

The courageous spirit of Sharlene Mawdsley both on and off the track in 2023 deserves the height of praise. The 25-year-old, who represents Newport AC in Tipperary, had the track season of her life, producing scintillating performances over 400 metres throughout the summer.

At the World Athletics Championships in Budapest in August, she showed that she is a fantastic team player competing on six occasions in just over a week in the Irish singlet.

Mawdsley helped the Mixed 4x400m Relay team make the final on day one of the championships, before advancing to semi-finals of the individual event less than twelve hours later, recording a new personal best in the process. She didn't advance to the final, but after a few days rest she was back in action and played a pivotal role as the Women's 4x400m Relay Team made their final against the odds and in stunning fashion.

In that final, which took place on the last evening of a memorable championships, Mawdsley ran a sub-50 second split as the Irish team finished a credible eighth.

In early September, Mawdsley ran another new personal best (51.09 seconds) in Croatia to end her season on a high note and edge ever closer to qualifying for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Off the track in October, Mawdsley along with 300 other volunteers teamed up with Mexican food chain Zambrero for World Hunger Day to help them pack 80,000 meals that were donated to people in need.

A lovely, warm-hearted gesture from one of the stars of Irish athletics.

GREG ALLEN HONOURED FOR SERVICE

The World Athletics Championships in Budapest in August saw Ireland's top track and field stars in action on the biggest stage as they represented their country with great distinction.

In total the Irish team produced a record twelve top 24 performances, an increase of three from the previous World Championships in Eugene, Oregon.

Hundreds of Irish supporters descended on the Hungarian capital and made their presence felt with the cheers that echoed around the stadium for our athletes. A sizeable contingent of Irish media were also in Budapest keeping those at home up to date with proceedings. A number of Irish print media outlets had journalists present: Virgin Media showed the championships live and recorded fantastic viewing figures, while RTÉ Radio, TV and online also featured plenty of athletics related content.

One journalist who was largely based in the sweltering hot mixed zone for the duration of the championships was RTÉ's Greg Allen.

Budapest marked the tenth World Athletics Championships that Greg had covered- an impressive record that has seen him travel the world to report on Ireland's best athletes.

It was therefore fitting that Greg was honoured for hitting this significant milestone by the International Sports Press Association of which he is a member. Greg was presented with a certificate to mark the achievement.

"Long gone are the days I'd be busy sweating bricks running the media race instead of attending canapé events like this," he said afterwards.

Here's to many more Championships and Olympic Games, Greg!



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A STAR STILL RISING

CLIONA FOLEY brings into focus the challenges of the Olympic year ahead for Rhasidat Adeleke.



ANATION wasn't just holding its breath and glued to its screens on the evening of August 23rd last, it was collectively roaring on a fast-rising superstar from Tallaght AC.

As she came off the final bend in the World 400 metre final, Rhasidat Adeleke moved into the bronze medal position and started to close on the Dutch athlete immediately on her right.

But just as she overtook The Netherlands' Lieke Klaver, Poland's Natalia Kaczmarek, in lane six, also came storming through and passed her. As Rhasidat began to struggle over the final 30 metres, Sada Williams of The Bahamas, in lane eight, got up to claim the bronze medal - only three strides and half a second ahead of her.

Fourth in a world final six days before her 21st birthday and 10 weeks after the end of a spectacular NCAA season in America, it felt like Adeleke's date with destiny was not denied but delayed.

"Next season I'm going to be able to gear my experience towards the Olympics as I'm not going to have such a long season," Rhasidat says. "I'm just going to continue to give it my all. The main goal is to stay healthy and continue to enjoy it. It's not often you get into a World Final, and I wanted to be able to take it in my stride."

Afterwards, in a private moment with her coach Edrick Floreal she said: "I feel like I had the entire country pushing me forward, I didn't want to let anybody down."

"I don't think she expected that the whole country would get behind her like that," her coach said. "It was an epiphany, and very cool."

Many of her new fans don't even realise that Adeleke was only one place off making the World final in 2022 when she was only 19 and still a rookie at running the tactically testing 400 metres.

Since then she's kept blazing her trail; clocking a sensational 49.20 while becoming the first Irish US collegiate sprint champion, signing a lucrative deal with Nike and waiving the last year of her college eligibility to go pro so she can concentrate all her energy and race schedule on peaking for the Paris Olympics.

Few people in Ireland understood the magnitude of her becoming the first Irish woman to break 50 seconds in April and then almost breaking 49 seconds in June - more than the woman who previously held the Irish 400 metre record.

Joanne Cuddihy's (Kilkenny City Harriers) 50.73 seconds mark, from the semi-finals of the 2007 World Championships, stood for fifteen years until Adeleke clocked 50.70 seconds in April 2022 in her outdoor debut over the distance.

Winning a European U18 sprint title at the age of 15 marked Rhasidat as a 'generational talent'. Budapest confirmed it and if Rhasidat's head was easily turned it would now be constantly swivelling. Her social media is filled with messages of

adulation and predictions that she will medal in Paris 2024. Yet, everything that happens next comes with a health warning.

World sprint standards keep improving, injury is always a threat and the 400m in Budapest had some conspicuous absentees. Shauna Miller-Uibo, the reigning two-in-a-row Olympic champion, whom she hero-worships, was there but just four months after having a baby.

Joanne Cuddihy, who was truly world-class at 400 metres, is a salutary lesson in the potential pitfalls. A World Junior finalist in 2002 and European junior silver medallist in 2003, she improved from a 51.09 second PB in 2006 to her breakthrough sub-51 seconds in Osaka yet was never able to realise her full potential. Joanne's work-load was arguably heavier than Rhasidat's as she was combining training with medical studies and her PB came after she took a year off study in 2007 to train in Canada/America.

She moved to train in Loughborough before the Beijing Olympics but got injured just a few months out and limped through

“
Next season I'm going to gear my experience towards the Olympics as I'm not going to have such a long season
”

her heat. Her back injury was so bad she took almost a full year off racing while moving to Australia to train and study until London 2012. Finishing fourth in an Olympic semi-final was a huge achievement yet Cuddihy, now a GP and mother of four in her native Kilkenny, feels she could have gone faster if not constantly stymied by injuries, some of them positively freakish.

She was back flying when she hit her head in a swimming pool training session Down Under. "Then, in Turin, I went for a walk to clear my head before a race and turned my ankle on cobblestones. Luck has to go with you as well as doing everything right," she sagely observes.

Few outside herself and David Gillick - sixth in a seriously stacked 2009 World 400m final - better understand the challenges of Adeleke's event.

"You could see her hips dropping and the head rocking at World Championships; that's a real sign of exhaustion at the end of a long season but she is young, her base



Photo : Sportsfile/Ramsey Cardy



speed is so good, she will only get better," Joanne Cuddihy says.

Gillick feels the priority now should be to "shave a couple of tenths off her 200m, maybe get close to 22 (seconds) dead or under, which would help her even further over 400m. I honestly don't think there's a whole lot to change from what I saw in the NCAAAs," he says. "The talent is there. Rhasidat has speed, and speed endurance, in spades. It's just about finding the 400m race craft that works for her and that will come from more racing." Finishing fourth, so early in her senior career, will only fuel her fire, he believes.

As her coaches and family will confirm, Adeleke absolutely detests losing and sometimes sinks into a temporary dip after her rare losses. Winning medals and titles is what drives her on.

Johnny Fox, her first coach, helped nurture her great competitiveness at Tallaght AC. "When I joined Tallaght, I was 12 and Johnny Fox had me doing everything: cross-country, javelin, every single event," Rhasidat recalls fondly. "I feel like that really set me up, made me very competitive. Even if I was doing the shot put, I wanted to win. I was so scrawny and tiny, but I always wanted to win!

"Johnny was a really good coach, and I won my European Junior and EYOF (Youth Olympic titles) under him. Then I had a year with Coach Daniel Kilgallon who taught me to improve my technique before I went to America. Then Coach Flo (Edrick Floreal, at the University of Texas) took my former coaches' groundwork and polished it to bring me to where I am now."

Rhasidat is staying with Floreal for the Olympic year. Mixing student athletes and professionals who have very different

seasons offers them both a new challenge, but she is not alone.

Fellow Longhorn Julien Alfred, the reigning NCAA 100/200m champion from St Lucia, who made the 100m/200m finals in Budapest (fourth at 200m) has also turned pro and should be a valuable training partner.

Joanne Cuddihy feels that Rhasidat's decision to stay with her college coach is a wise one. "There's always a period of adjustment when you move into a new training group. To change things up, the year of an Olympics, like I did, is not a good idea.

"My training for the 400 metres at Loughborough came from a completely different angle than I was used to. Our group in Dublin was very much 100/200/400m runners, very sprint and speed-based whereas in Loughborough they could all run a good 800m. There was a lot more winter slogging and I was absolutely rubbish when I started there."

Yet turning pro comes with caveats.

As Floreal told Ian O'Riordan of the Irish Times, you have to train even harder in the paid ranks because there is little time to experiment or develop your form.

"Sponsors aren't giving you a whole lot of money so you can take your time," Rhasidat's coach observed. "You don't have the freedom to use those small college meets to build progression, that goes when you turn pro. It's exciting, sure, but you're also going into rough water," he said. "Every time you line up to compete, the expectation from your sponsor is an awful lot higher and there's less camouflage and protection from your coach and your school."

Another unknown is how well Adeleke now deals with the explosion of public interest in her though, so far, as Cuddihy observes, "she doesn't seem to get fazed by anything. I don't know her at all but from a distance she seems to be the full package."

"She's training in the States which, years ago, could have protected you from the hype but not anymore," David Gillick observes. "The world's a lot smaller, she's from the social media/TikTok generation so she's very accessible and a lot privier to what's going on at home. That needs to be managed."

He says Rhasidat needs to quickly establish a tight and trusted team to buffer her from the inevitable pre-Olympic expectations and sycophancy. "She was in the mixed zone for 50 minutes after her 400 metre heat in Budapest, that drains your energy. That's something she has to learn to manage but she's only turned 21 and will adapt.

"Managing the effect on your body is another big thing if you're relatively new to 400 metres," he adds. "But I think she can go 48 (seconds), I really do, and that is where the women's 400 metres is going next."



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CIARA MAGEEAN

COMES SMILING THROUGH

GREG ALLEN (RTE Radio) charts the brilliant career of Ciara Mageean and the challenges she had to overcome along the way.

In a career spanning fifteen seasons of World and European Championship medal winning performances, punctuated by form slumps, a near career-ending injury and the death of an influential former coach and friend, Ciara Mageean does not lack for perspective.

Most of it she'd prefer not to have accumulated, but within minutes of finishing one place off the podium in arguably the

deepest race in women's World Championship 1500 metre history in Budapest last August, she was already drawing from it and offering more light than shade to cope with the disappointment.

"Many years ago I wouldn't have dreamt of fourth in the world and yet here I am, feeling so positive that I'm disappointed," she said, in the mixed zone beneath the stadium shortly afterwards, breaking into a

smile at the apparent contradiction in her statement. But everyone around her understood what she meant.

In a near foot-perfect performance, she had moved into third place at the bell but with 200 metres to go she was passed by the mercurial Sifan Hassan, the reigning Olympic 5000m and 10000m champion, who finished with the same colour of medal in the event as she did in the 1500 metres at the Tokyo Games two years earlier.

Mageean had got her tactics right and ran an Irish record, but what was in her legs and lungs was just not quite enough. It had still been the race of her life – one though agonisingly without a tangible reward.

"You dream of moments like this, but you always dream of the medal," she said.

"If I could wish for more, I'd just ask for a bit extra in the home straight, but I have to walk away with my head held high because I gave it absolutely everything that I could throw at it.

"I got myself in there just behind Faith (Kipyegon) and didn't let anyone bully me out of it."

To see and witness Mageean's reaction in the aftermath of a championship race, be it in triumph or disappointment, is a unique experience, but this was different to anything we had seen or heard from her before because she was no longer an athlete aspiring to be among the elite.

She was already there, having fully paid her dues with significantly elevated performances over the previous 18 months.

Behind Mageean by some distance was the rest of a world class field including Great Britain's Laura Muir, who had defeated the Irishwoman by one place in both the European and Commonwealth finals a year earlier.

Finishing so far ahead of the Olympic silver medalist in Budapest was, of itself, a benchmark achievement.

At 31, Mageean would go on two weeks later to further endorse her credentials by improving her Irish record to 3.55.87 in the Brussels Diamond League.

That was her fourth Irish senior record of a year which also included the fifth fastest women's mile in world athletics history in



Photo : Sportsfile/ Sam Barnes

Monaco in July, where she had shattered another of Sonia O'Sullivan's Irish marks by clocking 4.14.58, only one place behind the runaway world record of Kipyegon.

This is the kind of company she had now become accustomed to running alongside at the top end of the sport.

To trace the latent blossoming of Mageean's athletic talent requires quite a step back in time and follows a path of both heartbreak and triumph, not to mention extraordinary resolve, patience and resilience.

After winning an Irish senior indoor title at 15 in February 2008, she came to prominent national attention in athletics in 2009 when, as a 17-year-old, she removed Sonia O'Sullivan's name from the record books by claiming the Irish Junior 800 metre mark.

Later that summer she would endorse the class of that performance by finishing second over 800m at the World Youth Championships in Brixen in Italy, but it was her 1500 metre silver medal in 2010 at the World Juniors at Moncton in Canada that really marked her down as an emerging international talent.

Heading into those championships, she had clocked a new Irish Junior 1500 metre record of 4.15.46. It was a good time, although hardly the form of a potential medal winner, but Mageean put everything on the line in that final by closely tracking the African-dominated lead group before moving into position at the bell.

Of all Mageean's audacious runs over the years, there's an argument to be made that this was the bravest of all as she gave proper chase to Ethiopia's Tigita Bogale for the gold medal on the final lap, eventually taking the



Photo : Sportsfile/ Sam Barnes

silver without being challenged from behind while also breaking her own Irish record by almost six seconds in 4.09.46.

"I'm so bloody happy, I'm so proud. I just wanted to do it for everyone back home," she said afterwards in what has since become her customary candid way with words.

The report of the race on the IAAF website at the time focused as much on Mageean's breakthrough as it did on Bogale's victory, labelling the County Down teenager as "an unrated Irish athlete".

That status would change forever from there on.

Two months later in the Indian capital of New Delhi, Mageean reached her first senior championship final at 18 years and 7 months, finishing tenth in the Commonwealth Games, two places behind

“
If I could wish for more, I'd just ask for a bit extra in the home straight, but I have to walk away with my head held high because I gave it absolutely everything that I could throw at it
”



Photo : Sportsfile/ Sam Barnes

England's Helen Clitheroe who would, over a decade later, become her coach.

The following year in 2011, she further endorsed her credentials with a European Junior silver medal and also came within a second of securing the 2012 Olympic A standard in the 1500 metres.

But the niggle of an injury which would take two years out of her progression was already showing up in her left ankle.

At first it was a case of managing what turned out to be a bursitis problem, but her performance level deteriorated as it continued to inhibit her and so she opted for surgery in 2013, shortly after linking up with Jerry Kiernan in Dublin.

As rehabilitation from the injury progressed slowly and painfully, Kiernan was there as a reassuring presence, coach, philosopher and friend. In many respects they were kindred spirits and he was the right person to guide her at that point of her career.



Photo : Sportsfile/Ben McShane

A bit like Mageean's audacious breakthrough in the World Junior final in 2010, Kiernan had experienced his own moment of career emergence when he joined the lead group in the 1984 Olympic Marathon deep into the race, eventually finishing ninth in a similarly unheralded performance.

Though more than a generation apart, they had much in common both as athletes and intelligent observers of a sport that fires more slings and arrows of misfortune than triumphs.

The coach-athlete bond that they formed would help forge the nucleus of the resilient competitor who would subsequently re-emerge.

"Jerry would come to watch me training when I was only able to jog for about five minutes, but he would make it his business to be there," she recalled in a BBC interview.

Through 2013 and into 2014, the progress she made was indeed slow and then one day she came back from a training session and for once felt no pain in her left ankle. It was a simple, quiet moment of joyous clarity that the injury was no more.

One of the marking performances of Mageean's return and emergence as a senior athlete of significance happened in September 2014 in New York where she

finished third in the Fifth Avenue Mile. The time of 4.21.2, while quite encouraging and impressive, was only part of the reason she could smile again and think of the future with optimism - something she had struggled to do for the previous two years.

Just fifteen metres ahead of her were two reigning world middle distance silver medalists, Jen Simpson and Brenda Martinez, while behind her was 2014 Commonwealth Games silver medalist Laura Weightman and 2011 world silver medalist Hannah England.

In keeping that kind of company, albeit in a road mile, she could believe it was time to think about building towards an elite senior international career and medals of her own.

That would happen two years later when she won bronze, within touching distance of Sifan Hassan, in the 2016 European Championship 1500m final in Amsterdam.

There followed though a sequence of further setbacks including a disappointing Olympic semi-final in Rio a few weeks later and a loss of form in 2017, which led to her dropping out of the heats at the European Indoors that March in Belgrade.

Those circumstances prompted a re-think on her part and she made a difficult decision to split from Kiernan and move to the full-time professional set-up of the New Balance 'house' in Manchester where Steve Vernon assumed the role of her new coach.

The following year, her fourth place finish just behind Weightman in the European final in Berlin in August 2018 was a disappointment, although it was still progress which she built upon to win European Indoor Bronze in March 2019 and reach the World Championship final in Doha later that year.

But challenges were never far away and she looked set for a fine Olympic campaign in Tokyo in 2021 only to tear a calf muscle in training a few weeks beforehand and she was eliminated in the heats.

Handling those reversals of fortune has been one of the keys to Mageean's longevity. She appears to live by the Samuel Beckett maxim and has quoted it on occasion: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

Utilising some of that mental resolve, she fought her way out of another negative cycle to re-emerge in 2022 at the age of 30 under new coach and former rival competitor, Helen Clitheroe, as a different level of athlete both physically and mentally.

In the same way as she ran an unheralded race in that World Junior final more than a decade earlier, she adopted similar aggressive tactics in both the 2022 Commonwealth and European finals to be rewarded by finishing as a charging silver medalist on each occasion behind Laura Muir.

The Brussels Diamond League victory a few weeks later with Muir and some of the rest of the world's best behind her was arguably her breakthrough of breakthroughs, which presaged a level of confidence in her ability which we saw from Mageean so clearly in Budapest last August.

It all adds up to progress towards a goal that has long sustained her motivation - the Paris Olympics next year - and she recognises that in spite of her near miss at the World Championships, there is much cause for optimism.

"Of course I am disappointed not to get a medal and see the tricolour raised here, but that dream lives on and I've got races to go and try to achieve that," she said after the world final.

"I just know that I have it. I know that it's there and I've got another year to the Olympics. I've put myself among the best 1500 metre runners in the world here. It's where I belong."

Then her determined look softened to a forming smile as strong emotion gave way to acceptance of what she had just achieved and she concluded:

"Fourth in the world though is still pretty good for a wee girl from Portaferry."

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ATHLETICS YEAR CELEBRATED AT NATIONAL AWARDS

A memorable year for Irish athletics was marked in style at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Santry in November, writes RORY CASSIDY. **Photos : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes**

Ciara Mageean (City of Lisburn AC) and Rhasidat Adeleke (Tallaght AC) were joint recipients of the prestigious Athlete of the Year award at the 123.ie National Athletics Awards on November 22nd.

Mageean, who was also presented with the Track Athlete of the Year award, had a memorable 2023 season finishing fourth in the 1500m final at the World Athletics Championships in August.

The 31-year-old from Portaferry in Down also set national records across three distances: 800m (1.59.27), 1500m (3.55.87) and One Mile (4.14.58).

Adeleke, who only turned 21 after the World Athletics Championships, had yet another breakthrough year, becoming the first Irish woman to break fifty seconds

in the 400m-along with winning the NCAA title in the event in a national record of 49.20 seconds. She also received the U23 Athlete of the Year Award.

Mark Carroll (Leevale AC) was a hugely popular inductee into the Hall of Fame. The Cork native enjoyed a glittering career winning a European Junior title over 5000m in 1991.

He went onto win a bronze medal over the same distance at the 1998 European Athletics Championships in Budapest, before fulfilling a long-held dream of winning a European Indoor title over 3000m in 2000 in Ghent.

The 51-year-old received a standing ovation from attendees at the Awards Dinner.

There was also a warm reception for Matt Lynch (Kilkenny City Harriers) who picked up the Lifetime Services to Athletics Award - well due recognition for many years of dedicated service to Irish athletics.

Brian Fay (Raheny Shamrock AC) saw off stiff competition to claim the Endurance Athlete of the Year, while the inaugural Field Athlete of the Year award went to clubmate Eric Favors, for his impressive performances in the Shot Put circle during 2023.

Elizabeth Ndudi (Dundrum South Dublin AC) catapulted herself into the public consciousness in August when she won gold in the Long Jump at the European U20 Championships in Jerusalem. The young student was therefore a deserving winner of the U20 Athlete of the Year award.

The awards committee found it difficult to pick a winner in the Team of the Year category - but ultimately opted for the Irish 4x400m Mixed Relay team of Jack Raftery, Sophie Becker, Chris O'Donnell, Sharlene Mawdsley, Callum Baird and Roisin Harrison, who finished sixth in the world final, the highest ever finish by an Irish squad in the event at a global championships.



Athlete of the Year: Adewumi Ademola, mother of Joint Athlete of the Year Rhasidat Adeleke, left, and Athletics Ireland Operations Team Manager Teresa McDaid, representing joint Athlete of the Year winner Ciara Mageean



Hall of Fame: Mark Carroll

ATHLETICS IRELAND AWARDS



Lifetime Services to Athletics: Matt Lynch



Endurance Athlete of the Year: Brian Fay



U20 Athlete of the Year: The award for U20 Athlete of the Year Elizabeth Ndudi is collected by coaches Terri Carthy and Damian Moran



U23 Athlete of the Year: Rhasidat Adeleke collected on her behalf by her mother Adewumi Ademola and brother Abdullahi Adeleke



Performance Club of the Year: Leevale AC



Field Athlete of the Year: Raheny Shamrocks AC Chairperson Mick Martin with the Field Athlete of the Year Award on behalf of Eric Favors

ATHLETICS IRELAND AWARDS



Team of the Year: Coach Drew Harrison with the Team of the Year Award on behalf of the Budapest 4x400m mixed relay team



Inspirational Performance of the Year on Irish soil: Israel Olatunde (6.57 60m NR – National Senior Indoor Championships)



Special recognition award:
Susan Smith Walsh



Special recognition award:
Abina Beecher with the Special Recognition Award on behalf of her brother John Hartnett



Services to Coaching: John Sheehan



Official of the Year: Martin Wilkinson



Development Club of the Year: Representatives from Ratoath AC, Meath, with Minister of State for Sport and Physical Education, Thomas Byrne TD, right, after winning the Development Club of the Year Award



Mountain Runner of the Year: Becky Quinn



Master Athlete of the Year: Annette Quaid



Ultra Runner of the Year: Ciaran McConagle



Schools Athlete of the Year: Adam Nolan



University Athlete of the Year: Nicola Tuthill



SARAH SHINES BRIGHTLY

Sarah Lavin tells RORY CASSIDY about her remarkable 2023 season, her relationship with coach Noelle Morrissey, her mission to inspire the younger generation and her aims for the year ahead.



Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

When Sarah Lavin reflects on her 2023 season, she does so with her customary smile on her face, beaming with delight as she recalls what she achieved.

The 29-year-old re-wrote the Irish athletics record books twice this season when breaking the national 100m Hurdles and 100 metres marks in the space of less than a month.

While some had predicted that Sarah would break Derval O'Rourke's hurdles record since she was a teenager, the path to achieving that was far from straightforward.

The Limerick athlete had to contend with many years of injury struggles and the difficulties that arise all so commonly for many athletes who attempt to balance training, working part-time and their studies.

Sarah has learned to be patient and this summer she was rewarded for her

unwavering persistence on the track as the jigsaw pieces began to finally fit together.

"It's just been a pathway of gradual progress since the last Olympics, there's just been this continuous progression," she told Irish Runner. "Noelle [Morrissey, coach] and I are constantly building and trying to progress that little bit more. I probably improved no more this year than I did in 2022. Time wise, it's more or less the exact same increment."

But for Sarah to finally break the record Derval had held since 2010 felt like a seismic step forward to all who had followed her career.

Her performance in Budapest saw her finish joint tenth in the world, clocking a time of 12.62 seconds, 0.03 faster than O'Rourke's best. She narrowly missed out on making it to the final.

"That genuinely was something I dreamt of since I was a kid," she said.

"When I ran 12.69 seconds in the heat I knew there was a good one in me. The semi-final wasn't the perfect race, but it was a very good race.

"To run 12.62 seconds is fantastic but the ballpark keeps moving. You're looking at it and thinking can I get into the 12.5's and once I get into the 12.5's, can I get into the 12.4's? Having run 12.6s three times is really promising, but the hope is that I can go a little bit faster."

Sarah can certainly have further optimism that swifter times are coming from the fact that she broke the national 100 metres flat record in Bellinzona, Switzerland in September. Her time of 11.27 seconds knocked one hundredth off the previous record that had been held by Bandon's Phil Healy for five years.

"I had a feeling from the times I was putting out at training that I could get close to it," Sarah explained. "I was a little bit scared just because I didn't want to be greedy or risk injury. I was wondering if everything would hold up.

“

I think that Noelle's care for people is second to none. When she cares about somebody, she will go to the end of the earth for them

”

"It was nice to get it. I'm a bit more precious about the hurdles one; I hope that will last for a long time, but I'd like to see the 100m record swapping hands a couple of times. That will be a bit of craic for the next couple of years."

Sarah is also the national champion in both events following a hugely successful weekend in Santry at the end of July which saw her win double gold.

She spent a considerable amount of time after both finals signing autographs for young fans at Morton Stadium. "It's so important to show kids that you're just like them and to give them time because your time is the most important gift you can give anybody in life."



Photo : Sportfile/Sam Barnes

Sarah Lavin with coach Noelle Morrissey



Photo : Sportsfile/Harry Murphy

"I still see myself as the kid hanging over the fence trying to get an autograph from another athlete," she laughed.

While she experienced so many highs in her sporting career in 2023, including winning a European Games bronze medal in the 100m Hurdles, Sarah was plunged into a pool of grief in April with the sudden passing of her partner Craig Breen, himself an accomplished sportsperson, who had won car rallying titles worldwide.

She showed remarkable strength to return to the track, which she describes as her "safe space of peace", her resilience shining through in everything that she continues to do.

The support of her family, friends and the athletics community meant so much during the most difficult times as did the support from her coach Noelle Morrissey. Sarah has been coached by Noelle since she was just seven years of age and when asked to describe her mentor in just one word simply replied "loving".

"I think that her care for people is second to none. When she cares about

somebody, she will go to the end of the earth for them.

"I would also describe Noelle as determined; she knows what she wants to achieve. She's amazing at finding a way through difficult things. She has such determination to keep finding ways to overcome different life hurdles, pardon the pun," Sarah added.

"Her kindness and care for others is phenomenal. I've been fortunate enough to experience it since I was seven. She has an amazing way of making people feel happy."

Sarah says that Noelle is almost like a "big sister" to her.

"At the track Noelle is definitely the boss. That's the way it should be. That's the way it has to be.

"Noelle can be a bit bossy but she really does care. She cares about everyone on and off the track, and being one of her athletes is just one part of your relationship with her. I think it extends far beyond that. She's a people's person."

Noelle, who operates the Eason franchise in Nenagh, fell into coaching

almost by accident having been coaxed in by fellow Emerald AC members. She hasn't looked back since.

She took Sarah under her wing, viewing her as a daughter figure and has been with her through the highs and the lows as the years have gone by. "I've almost treated her like a child," Noelle said.

"We always joke in the family that I have three children and two surrogates [Sarah and Ciara Neville]. I coach other people but those two girls were almost part of the family before I started coaching them properly. Whatever I'd say to my own children, I'd say to them.

"I remember years ago somebody asking me in UL if Sarah would make the Olympics and without appreciating what I was saying myself I said, 'of course she will'. I wasn't acknowledging at the time that I'd play a part in getting her there. I didn't realise how much is needed to get anyone to that level."

But ultimately the duo did get there when in 2021 Sarah competed at her first Olympics in Tokyo, Japan.

While she was disappointed by her performance there, she will get another crack at performing as she pleases on the biggest stage of them all in Paris next summer.

Before that there are also the small matters of a World Indoor Championships and European Outdoor Championships to target.

Sarah is looking forward to a busy year ahead and feels that there are some areas that she can still improve on as she looks to lower her own Irish record over the barriers.

"I want to make my first hurdle one of the best in the world," she said. "Consistency is going to be key. That acceleration into that first hurdle sets up a lot of the race."

Ultimately she knows what she wants to achieve in the future and feels that if her start gets better so much more is possible.

"I want that feeling of getting a medal and running around with the Irish flag on my shoulders.

"Also, only one or two Europeans probably will make the Olympic final and I'd love to be one of them. It's a very, very difficult task, but I see it as an opportunity that I could run a time that I'd never thought was possible."

The sky very much appears to be the limit for Sarah.

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PARIS ON HIS MIND

NICK GRIGGS

Nick Griggs talks to RORY CASSIDY about making his first Irish senior team at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest this summer and his hopes for the Olympic Year of 2024.

Rory: You had described your prospects of making the World Championships as a 'pipe dream'. When you finally received the news that you had made it were you surprised?

Nick: I didn't know until after it was announced on Instagram. It was up for 20 minutes, and I didn't know because I wasn't on my phone. It was a weird one, but it was the best way it could have happened. It was an unbelievable feeling to be selected for my first senior team.

Rory: Had you completely ruled it out?

Nick: Yes, in my head I had 99% ruled it out. Mark was telling me I had more of a chance than I thought but I just wanted to forget about it. I told myself not to worry about it because I knew I had a job to do in Jerusalem. I was really, really shocked that I did make it, but it was a pleasant surprise.

Rory: You had just over a week between Jerusalem and Budapest. Was that a big challenge?

Nick: No, it was quite nice actually. I had to go home a day early from European U20's which was kind of frustrating because you want to stay with your team the entire time and experience the whole atmosphere. The week at home I just re-set and relaxed. I did two training sessions, and I felt the best I've probably ever felt. I thought I could run 3.34 and maybe make the semi-finals if everything went well. Unfortunately I picked up a bit of an illness. The week was perfect at home.

Rory: You looked so relaxed on the start line in Budapest. Were you just trying to soak it all in?

Nick: One hundred percent. I was trying to make sure that the experience didn't pass me by because who knows what will happen in your

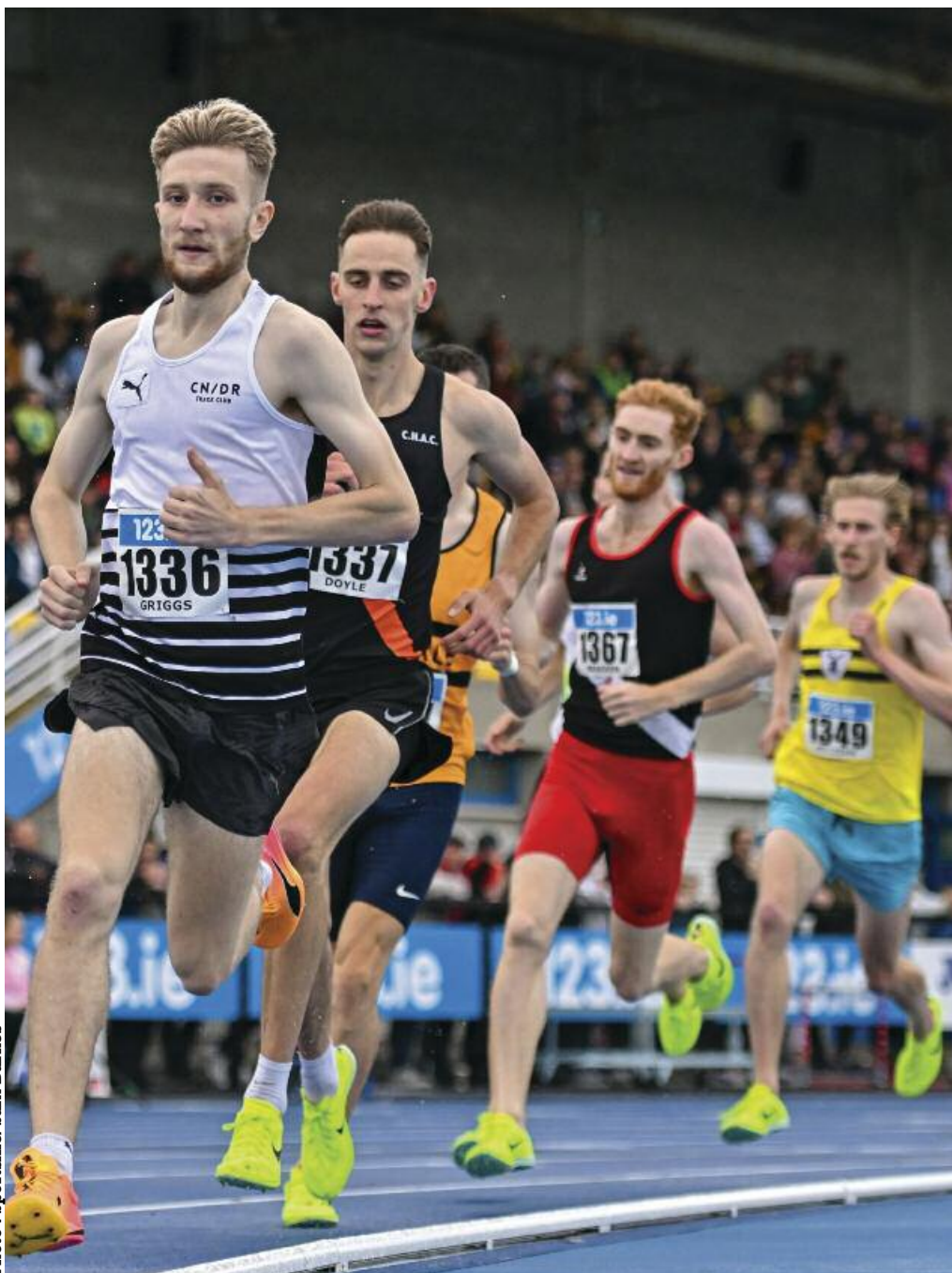


Photo: Sportfile/Sam Barnes

career. I might never be in that situation again. Hopefully that won't be the case. I was just trying to soak in the whole atmosphere. The stadium was pretty packed, the noise was unbelievable, and I was striding out beside the Olympic champion. A lot of my calmness on the start line came

from the fact that I knew I was sick. I knew I had nothing to lose.

Rory: Has the experience made you hungry for more?

Nick: Definitely. There's such a gap between being a European class junior and competing at a world senior

championships and doing well. As much as I was buzzing to be there in Budapest it has given me that extra motivation and understanding of what I need to do to improve so I can come back next year for the Olympics, hopefully qualify, and this time maybe not just be there but try and make it out of the heats and do a bit better.

Rory: Is Paris now to the forefront of your mind?

Nick: Yeah, Paris is the main one that we've talked about for next year. Every athlete wants to be an Olympian; everyone wants to have that to their name and get the Olympic rings tattooed on them somewhere. I'm focused on taking the next steps this year - going to altitude camps, upping the training mileage. There's only so much you can do when you're in school!

Rory: How important has the support of your coach and family been to you?

Nick: It's so important. You can't do this sport and be successful without an incredible team behind you. I was lucky to have parents who would take me to training and drive me to races in places like Waterford for the Irish Schools Cross Country. My coach Mark

“
The stadium was pretty packed, the noise was unbelievable, and I was striding out beside the Olympic champion
 ”

Kirk makes my life and job as an athlete easy. I listen to him, do what he tells me, look at my planner and run when I'm supposed to. That's it. We've been seeing results and hopefully that will continue in the future. Also the Athletics Ireland Performance Pathway programme has been pivotal in helping me transition from winning junior medals into representing Ireland at senior level.

Rory: Where do you get your self-belief from?

Nick: That's a difficult one. Sometimes I doubt myself. Obviously, when I see someone like Niels Laros who is younger than me and running the times that he is - I'm like - 'flip, I'm really not that good'. You just have to stay confident in yourself and trust the process. When you have those self-doubts sometimes you have to remind yourself that you've done this and done that. As much as I can take confidence from some of the times I've run and some of the medals I've won, I can't get too complacent. It's difficult to balance having the correct amount of confidence but also ensuring that you are not over-confident.



Photo : Sportsfile/Ben McShane

Quick-Fire Questions

Favourite artist? Zach Bryan

Favourite song? Iris by the Goo Goo Dolls

Favourite holiday destination? Colombia

How do you relax? Sleeping, spending time on my phone and watching TikTok

Hardest session? Either 4x200m, 4x400m and 4x200m before indoors and outdoors or 10 minutes tempo, 10x one minute hills, 10 minutes tempo in autumn and winter

Favourite spikes? Puma Nitro Elite

Irish athletics hero? Darragh McElhinney – I probably wouldn't tell him that, he'd probably think it was a bit weird

Global athletics hero? Usain Bolt – I'd love to meet him one day



A CLEAR JUMP TO GOLD

Ireland's European U20 Long Jump champion talks to RORY CASSIDY about her magnificent gold medal success in Jerusalem.



Photo : Sportsfile/Stephen McCarthy

It was a magical moment in the Irish athletics year. In the glistening early morning Jerusalem sunshine Elizabeth Ndudi leaped to victory in the Women's Long Jump at the European U20 Championships, winning Ireland's first ever field event gold at that level.

There were jubilant scenes when Elizabeth's victory was confirmed as she celebrated with the tricolour draped around her shoulders.

Elizabeth's best jump of 6.56 metres was not only a massive personal best, but also a national U20 record. It is good enough to place her second on the Irish All-Time list for the event behind the Ferrybank AC athlete Kelly Proper.

Elizabeth, who proudly represents Dundrum South Dublin AC, couldn't quite believe what she had achieved then, and even now several months on it hasn't fully sunk in. "I still haven't processed it fully," she told Irish Runner Magazine. "When I got back home, I had people coming up to me, talking about it so I was like, 'oh, I am European champion'. It's such a big thing.

"Two years ago I wouldn't have thought it would have been possible. Sometimes I think about it and I'm like, 'Wow, I did do that.' It's amazing."

It was the perfect ending to a season that hadn't exactly gone the way that Elizabeth, who has lived in Nantes, France for the past seven years, had planned.

"At the National Seniors I didn't get the result I wanted, and I knew then that the European

Championships was going to be my last chance to get a PB and really perform technically the way I needed to," she said. "When I did get my performance technically right, it made it so much better because I was able to fulfil several different goals that I had set for myself for the season - including winning the gold medal."

With so much riding on the European final some athletes in Elizabeth's position might have cracked under the pressure. Instead, she gallantly rose to the occasion. Knowing she needed a massive performance helped to spur her on. "I knew that the final was going to be my one shot to do the jump I needed to do so it motivated me. I was hungry to win because it was my last big chance," she said.

As soon as Elizabeth realised that she had won, her emotions instantly took over. She raced straight over to her Irish teammates and support staff, warmly embracing Athletics Ireland Performance Pathways Manager Jacqui Freyne, as she grabbed the Irish flag.

It was an unbelievably proud moment for Elizabeth, a culmination of her efforts and application in training finally being rewarded on the big stage.

“

There was just so much love and appreciation.

It felt great

”

Messages of congratulations poured in from all across the country - including from An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, while the national newspapers also featured the young jumper on their front pages.

It left Elizabeth rather amazed. "I didn't think it would be that big," she said. "I had friends texting me saying they had seen me on TV and even at the airport I had people come up to me and congratulate me. There was just so much love and appreciation. It felt great."

Just five days after arriving back home from Israel, Elizabeth was back on a flight to begin a new chapter in her already fledgling career.

She is now based at the University of Illinois where she is studying for a Business degree. She is being coached by Petros Kyprianou from Cyprus who has guided several athletes to the Olympic Games.

Elizabeth has taken the often difficult transition to collegiate athletics life in her stride admitting that she has already established a good routine Stateside.

"It's a really great environment," she said. "Everyone on the team is really open and fun to be around. Petros is a great coach. I like how we train and how he coaches as well."

Elizabeth's group does six training sessions a week; two in the gym, one active recovery, two jumps orientated sessions and one sprint session. While there is a notable difference in intensity to what she was doing previously, she is relishing the new challenge.

"The level is definitely different; I'm working harder but it's nice. I know that it's going to bring me to where I want to be," she said.

The 18-year-old feels that she can work on her speed and strength to get her off the board harder and she also believes there is room for improvement in her landing technique as she strives to go to even further heights in 2024.

Next year promises to be special for the teenager with the World U20 Championships taking place in Lima, Peru, and an outside chance that she can qualify for the Olympic Games in Paris.

Having watched the success of the Irish senior team at the World Championships in Budapest during the summer, Elizabeth feels she is within touching distance of joining them at the top table.

Watching from afar she was impressed with the performances of the entire team, but the exploits of fellow US based athlete Rhasidat Adeleke, who finished fourth in the Women's 400 metres, particularly stood out. "If she can do it, it's definitely something I can do," she said. "I'm very ambitious. If I just keep putting in the same work and progressing, then I can make a senior team very soon."



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SARAH AND SOPHIE ON THE RECORD

The year 2023 has been another breakthrough year for several Irish athletes. Sarah Healy and Sophie O'Sullivan have been part of the group leading the way on the international stage and taking home medals, WILL DALTON (Virgin Media Sport) chats with the two young track stars.

Sophie O'Sullivan & Sarah Healy



Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

Will: What was the magic moment for you in 2023?

Sarah: I think it was definitely the World Championships. I'd say the magic moment was just finishing and then seeing the time come up on the screen. Obviously, I knew I wasn't going through to the final, but all the way up the home straight I kind of knew I was really close. Even in the last 10m, I was just looking at the clock.

When I finished and was waiting for the time to come up on the screen, it was just a bit surreal, because I think for so long running under four (minutes) was a thing other people did or people I watched and looked up to, but never did I think I would do that.

Sophie: I think it's got to be winning the European U23 1500m which I know some people think doesn't matter that much, but I needed to win, and I really wanted to win. I was really excited to get the gold medal. I feel like the other team members really got behind me and they were very excited. I think that was pretty good.

Will: The World Championships in Budapest had people at home glued to their TV screens night after night. How did you find the competition?

Sophie: You think you are going to get there and be really worried, but I got on the start line and it was kind of cool. I

should have been more stressed, but it was just so funny to be there and to be able to look around and smile was something really special. It was nice to be able to enjoy it and not be stressed. I had nothing to lose. I was one of the lowest ranked in the race - bottom of the list. I felt that if I was to beat anyone - it was going to be a win for me.

Will: Next year - 2024 - is Olympic year. It's every athlete's dream to be on the biggest stage of all. Has it sunk in that you will be going to Paris as part of Team Ireland?

Sarah: When I went to Tokyo, I didn't start thinking about it until a couple months before when I realised I had a chance of qualifying. I suppose this year is quite different because I have higher expectations. I'm already expecting to be there, but I think it's really important to focus, it's still a while away, and there's a lot to do before I get there. I need to stay injury free and healthy. It's obviously on my mind though. I really want to perform well there. At the same time I think I need to keep doing what I've been doing and not let it consume me because I think it would probably just drive me crazy. It would be amazing to get there and have my family able to come this time.

“ You always want to go a step further. I don't think it will feel quite real until it happens as it seems so far away. As the Olympics gets closer, I will get a better sense of how I can do ”

Sophie: Yeah, I want to be there, and I want to try and make sure that I do better than in Budapest, getting out of the heats would be ideal. You always want to go a step further. I don't think it will feel quite real until it happens as it seems so far away. As the Olympics gets closer, I will get a better sense of how I can do.

Will: Where did athletics start for you? Tell me your earliest memory.

Sarah: I started in Blackrock Athletics Club, which is very close to home. My mum thought it would be a good sport to get my elder sister involved in. They let me join in. My first memory of racing was going to a national cross country race. It was an under 11 race. I was a couple of years younger, but I was just thrown into it. I remember being completely overwhelmed. It felt like there were hundreds of kids. I think I fell over, and I finished somewhere in the middle. Afterwards, I remember I saw girls with the tinfoil capes, but I thought they were capes for the winners. So I said to myself next year I will get one of them. Then the following year I went and I was in my actual age group. I ended up winning it, but I didn't get a cape! (laughs).

Will: Have you a good luck charm?

Sophie: I think that would be socks. I always like to have a good pair of socks. If I run bad and I'm wearing a pair of socks - I'll be like - 'It was the socks! It couldn't be me. It must be the socks.' I wore the same socks all summer this year.

Sarah: I used to have loads of mad things, but I've been trying to cut back as I travel so much. I'm trying to get rid of all those things bit by bit because you just can't keep it consistent. I wear the same pair of



Sarah Healy

Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

socks, well just for the summer. I listen to the same playlist so maybe that's a lucky charm.

Will: Who do you look up to?

Sarah: In the last two years what Ciara Mageean has been achieving is huge. Her performances are just so impressive. I think I've been inspired by the fact that it hasn't necessarily been a completely smooth trajectory for her. Even though she's had ups and downs, everyone always knew she is so talented. I shared a room with her at last year's European Championships and from the moment she arrived, she was so lovely. I just knew she was going to win a medal. She seemed so happy and confident, and I thought 'she's got it figured out.' I think Ciara is evidence that talent doesn't go away no matter what injuries you have. I think what she's doing is really impressive. It's amazing to see an

Irish athlete like her come fourth in the world.

Will: It can't be all training and competing. What do you like to do when you're not running?

Sophie: Lately I've been trying to learn, unsuccessfully, to crochet. I can knit a little bit, but crochet is something I've never been able to quite get. I love a good coffee shop, I'm a big coffee fan. I like shopping too, especially finding nice things in a vintage shop.

Will: What's your training/pre-race playlist?

Sophie: At the moment it's *Doses and Mimosas* by the Cheerups. That's my go-to song and Macklemore is always on there.

Sarah: There's a lot of different things going on there; I don't like to listen to really intense rap music before a race. I like listening to happy pop music, beforehand.

One song that I was always listening to this year was *Shower* by Becky G which is kind of embarrassing to admit. It just puts me in a good mood. It was the first song I would listen to when I was warming up. It came on in the car the other day and I was like 'no turn it off'. I can't listen to it unless I'm racing.

Will: A final question. Tell us something about you that we don't know?

Sarah: I love my Moka Pot for coffee and it comes everywhere with me. I'm also scared of baked beans and have never tried them!

Sophie: I've never been stung by a bee and I can lick my elbow!



Sophie O'Sullivan

Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes



RECORDS ON THE DOUBLE FOR COSCORAN AND FAY

Andrew Coscoran and Brian Fay broke prestigious Irish records for 1500m and 5000m respectively in 2023. They talk about their experiences to CONOR GLEESON.

As the saying goes – “rising tides lift all boats”. Few would find a better aphorism to describe the impact of the Dublin Track Club on Irish athletics in the last number of years under the tutelage of Feidhlim Kelly.

In 2023, the performances of two of their own, Star of the Sea AC's Andrew Coscoran and Raheny Shamrock AC's Brian Fay, lit up the track - both producing the performances of their careers to date to re-write two of the most prestigious and long-standing records in Irish athletics over 1500m and 5000m respectively.

Before there was time to draw breath at the beginning of the indoor season, **Coscoran** had taken down one of the longest standing records in Irish athletics, his 3:33.49 clocking for 1500m indoors in Birmingham - bettering Ray Flynn's 3:33.5 set in the Dream Mile in Oslo in 1982. While the national record was very much on his radar for the season after a solid winter block of training, Coscoran admits to being surprised at how the race unfolded in Birmingham.

“In January we were looking to do something big,” he said. “I got into Birmingham at the last minute and I took the opportunity. I knew I was in good shape, but I wasn't planning to run that fast indoors,” he said.

In a World Championship year, there was no better start. The only potential obstacle standing in the way of the Balbriggan man would be maintaining that form through the summer, something which he made light work of as he went on to better Ray Flynn's best time three times before the year was out.

“I knew I was in shape to run that same time outdoors, but it did bring extra pressure knowing I had to back it up, but once you know you are in that kind of shape and how you got there, you just need to follow the steps,” he said.



In June, Coscoran was in Nice, where he officially broke the national outdoor record in a time of 3:32.68, becoming the first Irish man to run sub 3:33. In the meantime, a record that had been scarcely threatened since the days of Frank O'Mara, Marcus O'Sullivan and Ciarán Ó Lionáird, was bettered by Coscoran twice more in the summer, a 3:30.42 on the 16th of July in Silesia - the latest benchmark set by the Balbriggan man. A performance which again came as somewhat of a surprise.

“As soon as I crossed the line, I looked across at the clock, I was in shock. It took me a couple of weeks for it to sink in,” he said.

As is the nature of elite sport, Coscoran's career has not been without its challenges. After a scholarship spell in America which ended six years ago when he was 21, he returned home to Ireland, hoping to reignite his career while working part time to self-fund training camps. While he felt at the time

he was fully committed to his running, he was lacking the structure he required to get to that next level, something which he's found with the Dublin Track Club.

“The most important thing for me has been the people around me,” Coscoran said. “Feidhlim Kelly and the Dublin Track Club and the support that has come alongside that has been great. Now I feel I have that structure around me and I'm doing things so much better than I was back then.”

With 2024 on the horizon, Coscoran needs no telling of how significant a year it will be in his career. Having already secured European and Olympic qualification and now an Irish record holder, he will approach the season with a strong belief that he can go one step further and make an Olympic 1500m final in Paris.

“I know the training that needs to be done and my aim is definitely to take a shot at a medal,” he said. “I'm going to

Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

be 28 for this Olympics and hopefully in my prime. If ever there's going to be a time to take a shot at a medal for me in an Olympic Games, this is going to be the one."

A mere 24 hours before Coscoran lowered his own national record in Silesia in July, **Brian Fay** was running the race of his life in Belgium on the way to breaking Alistair Cragg's 14-year-old 5000m record by two seconds, registering 13:01.40 on his first outing as a Nike sponsored athlete.

After a solid altitude training camp in Hoyos, Spain alongside some of his Dublin and Melbourne Track Club colleagues, Fay returned to sea level to take a substantial chunk off his previous best of 13:16 and write his name into the record books, securing a qualifying standard for both the World Championships and Paris Olympics.

"With a lap to run, I looked at the clock and saw 12:06. I just thought, if I can close in sub 60 here, I'll run a national record," Fay said. "I didn't think about World or Olympic qualifying standards

at all. I was so taken aback. Feidhlim was jumping up and down and I was ripping off my number. Both of us were celebrating."

After the dust had settled on his record-breaking run in Belgium, there was the small matter of a National Championships 5000m held on a cold July day in Santry. Aware that he was very much the target on the day, Fay admits that he struggled with nerves in the lead-up before eventually getting the better of Mullingar Harriers athlete Cormac Dalton in a tactical affair, ultimately unleashing his trademark closing speed to secure his first national title.

"I came into Nationals with a point to prove," he said. "It was a cold wet day. I got physically sick before my race, I was that nervous. I just wanted to get the job done."

In August, luck was to evade Fay when the heats were announced for the World Championships 5000m in Budapest when he landed eventual gold and silver medallists Jakob Ingebrigtsen and Mo Katir in his side of the draw.

“

Before there was time to draw breath at the beginning of the indoor season, Coscoran had taken down one of the longest standing records in Irish athletics”

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While Fay was disappointed not to have had a better crack at making a final at his first World Championships, he refused to dwell on that disappointment, going on to run in his first Diamond League in Zurich at the end of August while also collecting PBs over both 1500m and 3000m before the season was out.

"Sometimes you just have bad races, and you move on," he said. "I just didn't have a good race. I wasn't good enough really."

Before attention turns to the summer of 2024 and a European Championships and Olympic Games, Fay will potentially look to a winter on the cross country circuit. If he feels he is in good shape, he will set his sights on bettering his previous result in the European Cross Country which came in Abbotstown in 2021 when battling through the field for a famous 10th place finish in front of a home crowd.

"I'm not a fan of taking a singlet for the sake of it," he said. "If I'm going to Euro-Cross, I'm going to try to finish in the top 10 there."

Fay has settled back into home life in Raheny and training with the Dublin Track Club since his return from America, following completion of his scholarship at the University of Washington in the early part of the year.

He echoes the same sentiments as Andrew Coscoran when paying tribute to the training group. With the upward trajectory of the group and continuing momentum, there is a feeling that the ink may not be dry in the record books for long before more additions are made.

"I'm a big believer that you can't train on your own, you need good lads around you who will push you on," Fay said. "I'm lucky I have that around me."

Brian Fay





RISING STARS

BRIGHTLY SHINING

Some of Ireland's top up-and-coming track and field talents speak to RORY CASSIDY about their successes to date and exciting futures ahead.

Oisín Joyce



Photo : Sportsfile/Ben McShane

2023 saw Ireland's High Performance athletes excel on the big stage at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest. This year also saw a European Youth Olympic Festival in Slovenia and a European U20 Championships in Israel. The future of Irish athletics is certainly in a bright place. I had the privilege recently of speaking to five of our rising stars.

Name: Oisín Joyce
DOB: 29.01.2005
Club: Lake District AC
Coach: Padraic Joyce

It was a summer to remember for Mayo athlete Oisín Joyce who excelled at both National and European level in the Javelin Throw.

Joyce won gold in the senior category of the event at the 123.ie All Ireland Schools Track and Field Championships in June, before winning his first national senior title

at the 123.ie National Senior Track and Field Championships at the end of July.

In August he represented Ireland at the European U20 Championships in Jerusalem, finishing an impressive sixth, just missing out on a podium place by a couple of metres.

Joyce's winning throw at Nationals was the first time he had ever broken 70m and it puts him in good stead as he looks ahead to the future.

"It was a great feeling and definitely a moment I'll remember for a long time," he said. "I always felt like the 70m barrier was just a mental barrier. I was knocking on the door but could never seem to find it, so finally breaking it has given me confidence."

The last couple of years have seen the 18-year-old who hadn't won a national title prior to summer 2022 - embark on a meteoric rise. Before then he was uncertain as to whether he'd stay in the sport. This has

given him the platform to provide solid advice for younger athletes who aspire to one day potentially reach his level.

"At around 16 I was on the verge of giving up athletics because things weren't going well for me," he explains. "When things aren't going well, you just have to trust what you're doing, and the results will come. Look at the bigger picture of where you want to go and what you want to achieve."

When he returned from the European U20 Championships, Joyce admits that he had the World Athletics Championships in Budapest on a "constant loop" on the TV at home as he followed the fortunes of Irish athletes.

In the field events Ireland was represented by Eric Favours in the Men's Shot Put and as a fellow thrower, it has given Joyce motivation that he may one day be able to reach those lofty heights, competing on the biggest stage of them all.

"It's great to have role models like Eric, they are the standard that I need to get to. It's nice to have Irish athletes to look up to, especially in throwing events."

Joyce is grateful for the support he has received from his family, friends, club, training partners and the Athletics Ireland Performance Pathways programme as he continues on his journey in the sport.

Still a junior athlete, 2024 will see him target the World U20 Championships in Lima, Peru where he will be looking for another strong performance should he make it to South America.

“Oisín Joyce - “It's nice to have Irish athletes to look up to especially in throwing events”

Cian Crampton



Photo: Sportsfile/Tyler Miller

“I’ve sat down with my coach (his dad Padraic) this year and set out a few goals for 2024 and Peru is definitely one of them. All going well I will get the qualifying standard and compete the best I can out there,” he adds. “For me as an athlete I’m very much in my development phase, so working on all the 1%’s will help me develop and hopefully progress into a competitive senior athlete on the big stage.”

Name: Cian Crampton
DOB: 17.01.2007
Club: Edenderry AC
Coach: Peter Collins

Cian Crampton received well deserved plaudits when he produced his best ever performance to win bronze at the European Youth Olympic Festival in the Discus Throw in July. The young Offaly man threw a personal best of 59.32m in the penultimate round of the final to snatch his medal, having fallen from second to fourth during the competition.

Going into the week Crampton had a personal best of 56.90m which he improved on three occasions in the Slovenian city of Maribor where the event was held.

“I had prepared very well in the approach to the competition and me and my coach Peter knew when to peak and what to do to be able to perform at my best for that particular time,” he told Irish Runner. “I was delighted to have improved by so much

when it mattered the most. Winning the bronze medal was very special as I had put so much work in and had so many people behind me in the build up to the competition.”

The medal winning performance came on the final day of the Festival and was Ireland’s only athletics medal, despite several other athletes getting extremely close to the podium.

It was Crampton’s second European Youth Olympic Festival having competed in Slovakia the year before, but this year he was given the honour of being one of two Team Ireland flag bearers at the opening ceremony making it extra special.

“When my mam rang me to tell me that I had been chosen to represent Team Ireland as a flag bearer I was ecstatic,” he said. “Not many people can say they have done that for their country.”

The support Crampton receives from those around him has been critical to his success to date. He acknowledges that without those who are in his corner he wouldn’t have made it to the level he is currently at.

“The support I have from my family and friends is massive, it certainly drives me on to be the best that I can. Edenderry Athletics Club have been there for me since I was 10 and encouraged me to try every sport until I found the one that suited me the most,” he adds. “Likewise the Athletics Ireland Performance Pathway programme has also been a great tool to have for preparations

throughout the season with so much knowledge and expertise on hand.”

2024 will be a big year for the teenager who will be targeting the European U18 Championships in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia. Having finished fifth at the European Youth Olympics in the same venue in 2022, Crampton will be looking to go one step further as he eyes a spot on the podium.

“My coach and I have already started working on preparations for next year in order to reach my peak for those championships and do the best I can. I can’t wait to see how the year unfolds, especially as this is my main year in my age group for the European U18s. Who knows what I might bring home...”

Name: Niamh Murray
DOB: 18.12.2005
Club: Bray Runners
Coach: Aine Murray and Joe Ryan

2023 will be an athletics year that Niamh Murray won’t forget in a hurry. The young Bray athlete made a significant step forward in her fledging career making the Irish 4x400m senior relay squads for both the European Indoor Championships in Istanbul in March and the World Athletics Championships in Budapest in August.

It catapulted her onto the big stage, mixing with seasoned performers including both Olympic and World finalists on the Irish team.

Impressively - it came only two years after she turned to the 400 metres after being encouraged to give it a shot by her mother Aine (also her coach) when competition resumed following Covid-19.

Murray was in Jerusalem at the European U20 Championships when she received word that she had been called into the squad for Budapest following the withdrawal of Cliodhna Manning.

“I was over the moon when I got the news that I had been selected...It was unbelievable,” she said. “I still had to keep my focus on the U20 4x400m relay that I was competing in the next day at the same championship, so I put it out of my head until I got back to Ireland. Then it all began to sink in.”

At those championships in Jerusalem, Murray clocked an impressive personal best of 54.75 seconds to advance to the individual semi-final of the 400m, however was disappointed ultimately not to go faster again the following day.

Niamh Murray



Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

She played a pivotal role in guiding her team to the relay final where they finished seventh. "Making that final was a very special moment. It was a great experience," she says. "Racing four 400m in four days was a new experience for me and a great way to finish the championships."

Being part of the Irish senior team has given Murray extra motivation that she can get there on a regular basis in the future.

Having mixed with and learned from athletes such as Sophie Becker and Sharlene Mawdsley who have raced on the biggest stage, she would love to one day get her chance to take to the track at a major global championships.

"Istanbul and Budapest were amazing experiences; I was there as a sub on both occasions, and I would absolutely love to get the opportunity to run at a senior championship.

"It was so motivating to be surrounded by world class athletes and the Irish squad were all so inspiring," she adds. "I hope one day I can be like them. The girls on the squad made me feel very welcome from the first squad day this year to the World Championships.

"There was a great sense of friendship within the team and that was reflected by the world class performances on the track."

For Murray now her immediate priority is the Leaving Cert after which she is hoping to combine study with sport.

She is aiming for a successful 2024 both on and off the track.

"My goals for next season would be to stay well and healthy, run a PB, perform well at National Championships and qualify for the World U20 Championships in Lima at the end of August."

Name: Cormac Dixon

DOB: 18.01.2006

Club: Tallaght AC

Coaches: Cecil Johnston and Shirley Murray

For Cormac Dixon, breaking a record set by an athlete he has looked up to was always a dream.

In January that dream became a reality when the young Dubliner, who initially came from athletics from GAA under the invitation of coach Cecil Johnston, broke Darragh McElhinney's national U18 record for the 3000m at the AAI Games in Athlone.

Dixon ran brilliantly that day to finish fifth in a time of 8.15.48, destroying his own personal best time and knocking over three seconds off the previous record set by McElhinney in 2017.

It was a big leap forward for the Tallaght AC man, but he felt going into the race that he was capable of doing something special.

"Breaking that record was honestly such a good feeling," he said. "I knew going into that race that I was in sub 8.20 shape, but to then go out and prove myself was an amazing feeling.

"I've always looked up to Darragh McElhinney - especially since his performance at the European Cross Country Championships in Dublin. He's the kind of athlete I want to be, so seeing that I was able to break his record made it even more special."

Dixon will finish in secondary school at the end of May before he heads to America where he will study and train in Providence College. He admits that the Irish links to the college played their part when it came to swaying him to make the move.

"It's (the move) the only thing that's on my mind at the moment," he says. "Knowing that John Treacy and Mark Carroll went there and seeing what they achieved inspired me to make the decision. Even the current Irish lads there now, especially Abdel Laadjel, who assisted me with the process, helped me decide."

Cormac Dixon



Photo : Sportsfile/Eoin Noonan

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Clodagh Gill



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Like so many around the country, Dixon was glued to the World Athletics Championships in Budapest. It was made all the more intriguing by the fact that his own club had representation in Hungary, as Rhasidat Adeleke finished fourth in the Women's 400 metres.

"Seeing the performances from the Irish team out there was very inspiring, especially Rhasidat. Being able to see that someone from the same club as me is able to compete at the highest level of this sport makes me confident that I can make it to the level she has," he adds.

“**Niamh Murray - “It was so motivating to be surrounded by world class athletes and the Irish squad were all so inspiring”**”

Dixon has big ambitions for 2024 as he hopes to make the World U20 Championships in Lima, Peru in August. He will also still be a junior athlete in 2025 where he will have a European Championships in that category.

He has wise words of advice for young athletes who would one day hope to hit the heights he has. "Never give up on your dreams, work as hard as you can to achieve them and don't let anyone tell you what you can or can't do. If I always listened to what people said, then I wouldn't be where I am today."

Name: Clodagh Gill
DOB: 30.04.2007
Club: Moy Valley AC
Coach: Philip Finnerty

It's not every 15-year-old that gets to warm-up alongside a global athletics star.

However that is exactly what happened to young Mayo athlete Clodagh Gill who did her pre-race drills, stretches and strides beside world champion 400m hurdler Femke Bol from The Netherlands at the New Balance Grand Prix in Boston back in early February.

Gill had been invited to compete in the Junior Girls International Mile at the prestigious event which was a World Indoor Tour Gold meet and performed admirably, finishing eighth in a time of 5:04.01.

"It was a fantastic experience," she tells Irish Runner. "I don't think she (Bol) knew she was warming up with me.

"I learned from the race itself that sometimes you need to be prepared for anything. The pace that we all expected turned out to be a little different during the race, so it caught me by surprise."

Gill travelled back to Ireland, undoubtedly inspired by what she had achieved and went on to break the championship record in the Girls U17 1500m at the 123.ie National Juvenile Indoor Championships in April, running a blistering 4:36.70.

The following month she secured qualification for the European Youth Olympic Festival in Maribor, Slovenia by clocking a big 3000m personal best of 9.31.86 at the Irish Milers Club meet in Belfast, the ninth fastest over the distance by an Irishwoman all year.

Gill describes Maribor as a "massive learning experience" as she finished seventh in her final. She soaked up every second of it.

"Nothing can surpass being selected to represent your country at a major championships," she says. "The atmosphere everyday was electric and we all supported each other in good and bad times. You get to see athletes from other countries, other sports, and the preparation they put in for each event they are competing in, it's eye-opening."

Gill's coach Philip Finnerty and family were in Maribor to cheer her on. She has been working with Finnerty at Ballina's Moy Valley AC since she was nine and is extremely grateful for the support she has received to date from so many people.

"He (Finnerty) puts so much time into our training group and I most certainly wouldn't be where I am today without him. Moy Valley have supported and helped me since I was young. They have guided my career so far and have always had my best interests as their priority," she adds.

"My parents are also incredibly supportive and get me to races and training, even when they have to take time off work."

Gill feels that "patience" and "enjoyment" are the two things young athletes striving to achieve should have when it comes to the sport. She admits that she didn't start to excel until she was 14 and just over three years on will target making the European U18 Championships in Slovakia next year.

"I always loved to race though and didn't mind where I finished. While we train hard, we know there will always be some element of fun even now. Don't overtrain or think one bad race means you're not any good. I've had lots of races where it didn't go to plan, but you just have to move onto the next."

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A WOMAN TWICE REBORN

Hannah Nolan was shocked into taking action about her weight which was once a ballooning 16 stone. In this inspirational story, Hannah tells FRANK GREALLY how she reclaimed her life coming from desperation to the elation of winning races and also becoming a valuable scoring member of her Slí Cualann AC team. She also talks about her struggle with Lyme Disease and her return to running.

By her own admission, Hannah Nolan was close to rock bottom in September 2008, when she decided to tackle a weight problem that had seen her balloon to 16 stone.

Fast forward to July this year and Hannah is celebrating with her Slí Cualann club teammates Catherine O'Connor, Sarah Baragya and Donna Quinn after the team has won the gold medals in the Masters Over 35 category in the National Half Marathon in Tullamore, where Hannah posted a time of 1:33:15.

"I could not, even in my wildest dreams have imagined that I would have made a success of running both as an individual competitor and a scoring team member achieving national success," Hannah said.

"In 2022 I won the individual Over 35 age group gold medal in the National 10 Mile Road Race in the Phoenix Park and that put a whole lot in perspective for me, as well as giving an intense feeling of gratitude for what running has done for me."

Hannah got a huge shock when she looked in the mirror one day in 2008 and saw a reflection of a woman she hardly knew any more. "When I look now at the picture of me and William, I can see how grey and depressed I looked," Hannah said. "I was 26 years of age, 16 stone and feeling every pound of it."

Hannah's pathway to fitness and weight loss began when her husband Gerry bought her an early Christmas present of a cross-trainer in 2008. "Gerry could see how unhappy I had become because of my condition and he bought me the ideal present, which helped me get started in the right direction," she said. "It was a painfully slow process as I could do very little to begin with; five minutes of exercise at most."

Hannah also started monitoring her daily calorie intake and she found a programme on the internet; the Nutracheck Online Diary - that she followed diligently, in tandem with her new exercise regime. "There are no great secrets involved in weight loss," Hannah said. "It's about having the courage to begin with and to think of it as not just a diet but a new way of life."

Nine weeks after her son was born, Hannah had shed one and a half stone. "It was hard

Hannah with son William aged six weeks in 2008



going with the exercise and calorie counting but I had great support from Gerry along the way," she said.

Shortly after her daughter Chloe was born in December 2009, Hannah extended her exercise regime to include long walks, pushing a twin buggy along the way. She eventually progressed to running in March 2011 and ran her first race in May of that year; a 10K in Rosslare, where she finished in an impressive beginner's time of 48 minutes.

"I had only been running eight weeks and I was delighted with myself," she said. "I had hit my goal weight of eight stone in February and I cried all day when I achieved that target."

Hannah's running also gave her the confidence to begin another phase of her life, returning to college and qualifying as a personal trainer. Her original Bachelor and Master degrees were in music and when she returned to UCD in 2011 she completed an Exercise and Fitness degree and graduated with first-class honours. She followed that by

going on to study nutrition at the Open University and more recently qualified as a Health and Wellness Coach.

She also launched her own online diet and fitness business; Why Weight Ireland, using the same food and exercise diary that she had used herself to shed eight stone. She still runs her Why Weight Ireland business at her Fitness Studio, works online with individual clients and gives corporate talks on motivation, fitness and nutrition; she is currently coaching 15 runners of varying abilities.

It had been a hard road up to the point when she started out on her road to fitness, hard on the family too. Hannah had been made redundant from her job with Halifax Bank and a debilitating back injury that required many surgeries made it impossible for Gerry to work.

Shortly after Hannah's first race experience in Rosslare, Gerry Nolan heard an advertisement on the radio about SPAR recruiting a SPARTAN Team

to train for that year's Dublin Marathon. One runner from each county would be chosen for the project and each would be given a 16-week training plan set by trainer Karl Henry and nutritionist Paula Mee.

Once accepted as the Wicklow runner for the project, Hannah stuck to the training schedule laid down by Karl Henry. Week One involved four training runs: 3 miles, 4 miles, 4 miles and 7 miles. By Week Seven she was running eight and nine-mile sessions; by Week 12 she had progressed to a 20-mile training run.

"I gradually built up the training mileage in small increments and that worked very well for me," Hannah said. "I found too that I had a

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When I look now at
the picture of me and
William, I can see
how grey and
depressed I looked
”

very competitive streak and my motivation to complete the marathon was high."

Hannah ran 3:38 in the Dublin Marathon and improved on that time to post 3:24 in May 2012. She also won the women's Wicklow Novice and Intermediate cross-country titles that same year.

Hannah's best marathon time to date was set in Kildare in May 2013, when she ran 3:19 and she felt that her running transformation was on a steady and progressive course.

After that marathon her body recovered quickly - a sign of how far she had come - and she was back out easy running two days later. And then a bolt from the blue changed everything.

Two weeks after Kildare, Hannah was running through Avondale Forest and was bitten on the ankle by what turned out to be a tick. "I felt nothing," Hannah said. "And why would I? These ticks anaesthetise the skin before they bite you, so you are not meant to feel anything."

That was a Sunday and it wasn't until the next day that Hannah noticed the bite, but she didn't think much of it, in fact, that Wednesday she went on her normal six-mile run. However, it was during this run that the first debilitating symptoms began to kick in.

"I finished my run near my doctor's surgery and I decided to pop in," she said. "When I pulled my sock down, the swelling was shocking. You couldn't even distinguish the bone; the swelling was so bad."

And then came the long, tortuous road to diagnosis and eventual treatment. Lyme

Disease is not what you would call your 'common or garden' presentation in a GP surgery. And because of this, the diagnosis can be a bit hit and miss. The danger lies in the fact that the longer you do nothing, the more chronic the damage. The GP Hannah visited prescribed antibiotics and she thought no more about it at the time.

However, ten days after the bite was when the real damage began to show - and a wave of tiredness washed over Hannah like a small tsunami.

"I couldn't shake the tiredness," she said. "It was overwhelming. I thought it might be my iron levels, but my blood tests came back normal."

Hannah's body was beginning to shut down on itself. She was still running but her times were getting slower; nine-minute miles on legs that felt like they belonged to someone else and breathing that was extremely laboured.

All in all, Hannah saw four doctors in hospital and two GPs, but none could figure out what was going on. And then headaches started to wash over Hannah, resulting in all-day pain.

"I honestly thought I had a brain tumour," Hannah said. "The pain was so bad that I went back to my original GP, but a locum was on that day. It turned out to be the break I needed."

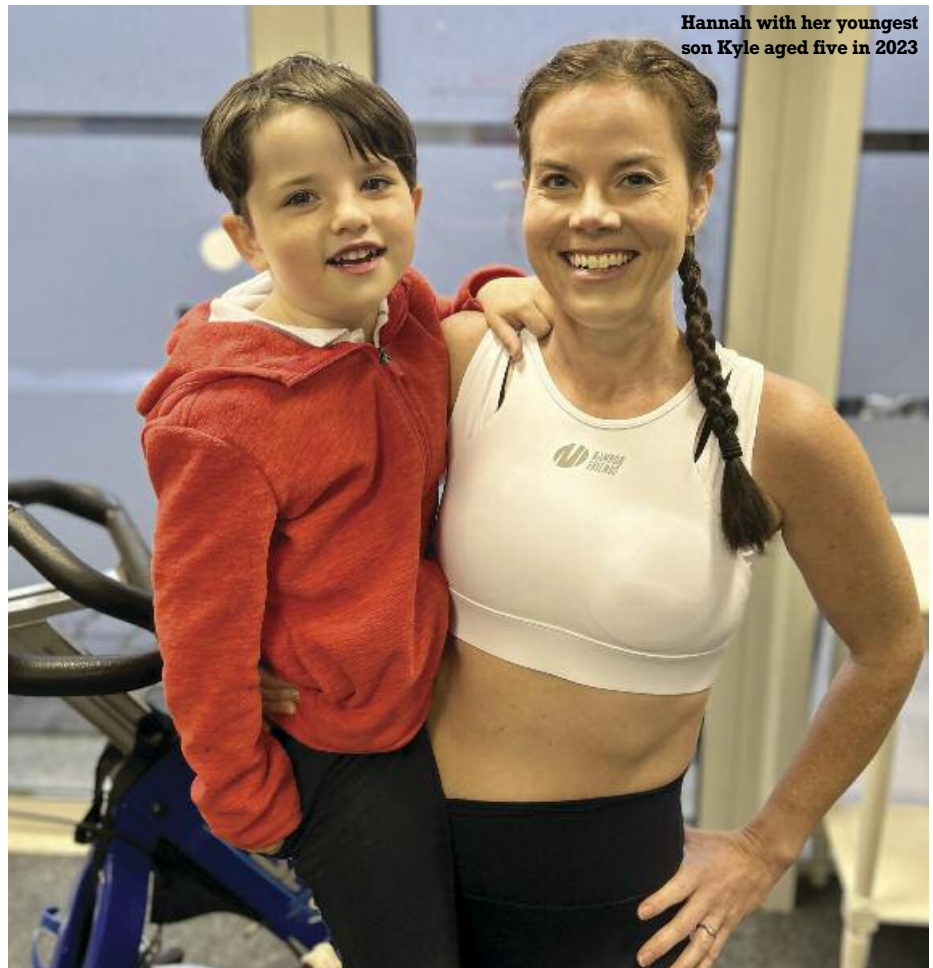
The locum put all the pieces together and diagnosed Lyme Disease. Hannah was referred to an infectious disease specialist in

Dublin and a course of Doxycycline was prescribed. Within five days the headaches, the dizziness and hand tremors had disappeared.

It took Hannah three full years before she began to feel anything even close to her normal self again. "The problem was that for a long time I'd get good days and then I'd get days when I'd think that I'd never emerge from this thing," she said. "Looking back now, I believe it actually took me seven years in total before I was again feeling anything close to normal."

But Hannah is now back in full stride; a busy mother of three: William (15), Chloe, (14) and Kyle (5) and operating her own successful Fitness and Personal Training Studio in Tinahely. "It's a pure delight to be able to run and compete again and I'm grateful for every day now that I get to run," she said.

"My goal going into this year's Irish Life Dublin Marathon is to get near to or better than my personal best time of 3:19. I'm in close form to all my personal best times but not quite beating them yet. After the marathon I'll be concentrating on beating my best road times; from 5K to the half-marathon. It's only when you get a setback like I did with Lyme Disease, that you fully appreciate the privilege and the joy of daily running. It's pure misery when that is taken away from you, but you fully appreciate it when you are able to once again stride out free and healthy."



Hannah with her youngest son Kyle aged five in 2023



STEPS TOWARDS SUCCESS IN 2024

It's time to think about the road ahead and getting you stepping towards success in 2024 with our top tips from HANNAH NOLAN.



Treat your body like your bank account and your training like your employment!

Sometimes in life it is easy to prioritise what we perceive to be “more important” and allow the more personal goals to slide to the side. For most of us, however, we actually CAN have it all with a little change of mindset and clearer organisation.

Treat your body like your bank account – Here I am talking about nutrition and balance. Whether you are looking to lose a few pounds, stay the same or just make healthier choices to leave you in the best possible health, making the right choices is so important. With our wages, we get paid and we know we have to allocate a certain amount towards big bills and then the rest may be split between smaller bills and food etc. With our nutritional habits we don't often pay as close attention, so applying the same principle to your food as you do to your money can be a great way to ensure we have that all important balance and do not “overspend”. If you are looking to lose weight this may mean more mindful tracking of your food intake or for those maintaining weight ensuring they are getting the right balance of nutrients to stay in tip top shape.

Treat your training like your job – Similarly to our food, our training habits can sometimes fall to the wayside because we haven't mentally programmed them into our routine fully. With our employment we KNOW we have to get up and go to work certain days and at certain times. There will be times when you are cold, tired, unhappy or simply can't be bothered – but we have to continue to show up in order to 1) keep your job and 2) continue to progress higher up in your profession. Training is no different, and with the right re-jigging and being a little stricter on times, and more importantly making time for your training by treating it no differently to a job that needs to be done, your fitness and training can progress to a much higher level.

Top Tips for success!

Reflection

Reflect back on last year. What worked? What did not work so well? Recognise your success and downfalls to create a stronger sense of direction for the year ahead.

Plan ahead

Decide on both short term goals and longer term goals and most importantly actually write down your plan on paper! When you have a concrete plan to follow you are much more likely to stick to it. Lack of progression and motivation tends to happen when we are somewhat "winging it" and just casually approaching a training plan rather than making plans set in stone with purpose and direction.

Purpose and variety

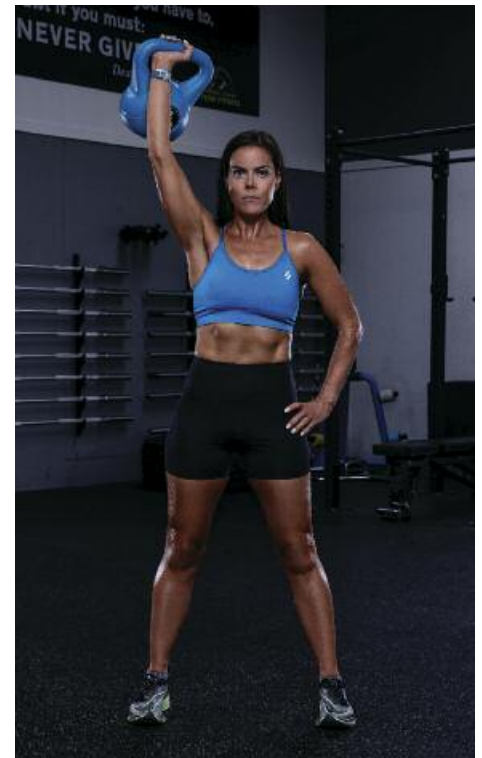
Every training session should have a purpose. Building our cardiovascular fitness with easy runs is important, but if you are looking to improve your pace then we also need to add speed sessions, longer runs and plenty of variety to keep the body guessing and progressing!

Be realistic

Whilst it is great to feel that amazing motivation at the start of your "new me" campaign, remember to also remain realistic about your goals and what you can achieve. If you've had any time off or are starting on one level looking to progress, remember that it is better to build slowly than hurling out of the gates with everything you've got in the initial weeks. Often this can lead to burn out later down the line – so slow and steady with both the goals and any increases in mileage and training as the weeks progress.

Rest and recover

Although it's a great feeling to be active and hitting those goals, rest and recovery are so important to your overall health and performance. Rest days and recovery in terms of adequate nutrition and hydration is key. Listen to your body, if it is fatigued and slow it is trying to tell you something! My general rule of thumb when I head out if I'm feeling a little sluggish is giving myself 10 minutes. If after 10 minutes I'm starting to feel a bit better (or at least no worse!) then I will continue on. If I'm starting to feel even more fatigued and dropping the pace doesn't help, then my body is trying to tell me something and I turn back around.



Need for Speed and training jargon!

If you are new to running or not long at it then sometimes the running jargon or questions about different types of sessions can be confusing, here are a few definitions to help you crack the code and add some variety to your sessions!

Easy Runs = an "easy" run doesn't necessarily feel easy, especially if you are running on tired legs or new to running, however by definition it is a pace that you can hold for an extended period of time whilst being able to hold a conversation. For anyone only starting their running journey this can seem like an impossible task but don't worry, it WILL get easier!

Interval training = A great way to increase your pace and challenge your cardiovascular fitness is by adding interval training. If you have ever done a couch to 5k programme or started running from a basic level of fitness you will have started with intervals of jogging and walking. Once you are running continually you can improve your pace by adding interval training. One example would be warming up for a km or so (depending on your mileage/fitness) and then adding in 1 minute bursts of speed with 1 minute recoveries. Pushing your heart rate and your pace up higher for one minute allows you to travel faster than you usually would and improves your fitness. There are a variety of different interval sessions with varying lengths of running vs jogging/walking but the 1 minute or 2 minute reps are great for both beginners and longer term runners alike. Starting with as little as 6-8 repetitions and adding more as you progress.

Tempo runs = A tempo run is a longer / endurance based speed session. I describe it as a "sandwich". A warm up and a cooldown are your slice of bread and the filling in the middle is the "tempo" section which is a faster midsection closer to the pace and intensity that you would be racing at. So "comfortably hard". Hard enough that you are wondering if you can keep it going – but not too hard that you cannot!

Hill reps = Hill reps are intervals that are run uphill. As with all speed sessions a warm up first and then jog to the bottom of your nearest hill to throw yourself up it at speed! Walk back down for your recovery and repeat it again for 6 or more repetitions. For beginners start at 30 seconds, for more advanced I like to mix up 30 seconds at a hard pace with jog down recoveries and a 60 or 75 second effort with walk down recoveries.

Long runs = exactly as it suggests the long run is a longer run than all of your other runs. The long run is important to build endurance fitness. You are able to run for longer whilst running at a slower pace with your heart rate running at a slightly lower rate. When you slowly increase the distance of your longer run, you will get the added benefit of your race distances and shorter training runs feeling much easier to manage because you are already confident you can run further and longer.

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Similarly to our food, our training habits can sometimes fall to the wayside because we haven't mentally programmed them into our routine fully

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FUEL FOR RECOVERY

Good nutrition after a workout can significantly boost the speed and extent of your recovery, writes Performance Nutritionist SHARON MADIGAN.



Recovery is a challenge for runners undertaking two or more sessions each day, training every day or training for prolonged periods. Between sessions, the body needs to adapt to the stress. You may have to go to work, school or college. You may have no appetite, which is a very real side effect of intense exercise, or you may also want to reduce body fat/weight, so the temptation is don't eat!

However, with correct planning and recovery time, adaptation allows the body to become fitter, stronger and faster. Recovery encompasses a complex range of processes including:

- * replenishing the muscles with fuel
- * replacing the fluid and salts (electrolytes) lost in sweat
- * allowing the immune system to handle the damage and challenges caused by exercise
- * manufacturing new muscle protein and red blood cells as part of the repair process

The importance of each of these goals varies according to the workout – for example:

- * How much fuel was used?
- * Was muscle damage caused?
- * Did you lose much sweat?
- * Was recovery adequate before this session?

A proactive recovery means providing the body with all the nutrients it needs in a speedy and practical manner.

Re-stock the stores

Muscle can restore its fuel (glycogen) levels by about five per cent per hour, provided that enough carbohydrate is eaten. Depending on how much fuel was used during the training schedule and the need to fuel up to race, a serious athlete may need to consume 6-10g of carbohydrate per kg of body weight each day (300-700g per day).

If the time between prolonged training sessions is less than 8hrs, it makes sense to use all of this period for effective refuelling. To kick-start this process, an intake of at least 1g/kg of carbohydrate - 50-70g for most athletes —is needed. This has led to the advice that athletes should consume carbohydrate —either their next meal, or at least a snack (some examples below) – as soon as possible after an exhausting workout to prepare for the next session.

Rehydration

Athletes often finish training or competition sessions with some level of fluid deficit. In hot conditions this can be particularly large and require a focused effort to rehydrate after the workout. In this

case, comparing pre- and post-session measurements of body weight can provide an approximation of the overall fluid deficit. Athletes may need to replace 150 per cent of the fluid losses - for example, if you are 2kg lighter (2 litres lighter) at the end of the session, you will need to drink 3 litres of fluid over the next hours to fully replace the existing and ongoing fluid losses. Athletes can use fluids to address a number of tasks: fluid, carbohydrate and protein replenishment. It has been shown that milk is an effective sports drinks in rehydration and flavoured milks offer athletes a cheap and effective alternative to commercial recovery drinks.

Immunity

In general, the immune system is suppressed by intensive training, with many parts of the system being reduced or disturbed during the hours following a work-out. This is why many athletes are at risk of picking up infectious illness during this time. Many nutrients or dietary factors have been proposed as an aid to the immune system — for example, vitamins C and E, glutamine and zinc —but none of these have been proved to provide universal protection.

There is evidence identifying carbohydrate as a promising nutritional immune protector.

Consuming carbohydrate during and/or after a prolonged or high-intensity work-out has been shown to reduce the disturbance to immune system markers. Carbohydrate intake may be beneficial for a number of reasons. For example, it reduces the stress hormone response to exercise, thus minimising its effect on the immune system. It also supplies glucose to fuel the activity of many of the immune system white cells and will replenish stores of fuel to get you ready for the next training session. Two birds, one stone!

Muscle repair

Prolonged and high-intensity exercise causes a substantial breakdown of muscle protein. During the recovery phase there is a reduction in catabolic (breakdown) processes and a gradual increase in anabolic (building) processes. Recent research has shown that early intake of essential amino acids from good quality protein foods helps to promote the increase in protein rebuilding. In fact, protein



Milk is an effective sports drink in rehydration and flavoured milk offers athletes a cheap and effective alternative to commercial recovery drinks.



consumed immediately after or, in the case of resistance training work-outs, immediately before the session, is taken up more effectively by the muscle into rebuilding processes than protein consumed in the hours afterwards. However, the protein needs to be consumed with carbohydrate foods to maximise this effect. Carbohydrate intake stimulates an insulin response, which improves the increase in protein uptake and rebuilding.

How does recovery eating fit into the big picture of nutrition goals?

For the athlete undertaking two or more training sessions each day, eating for recovery plays a substantial role in the daily food schedule and in total nutrient uptake. Either meals (which generally supply all the

nutrients needed for recovery) must be planned so that they can be eaten straight after the work-out, or special recovery snacks/drinks must be consumed to cover nutrient needs until the next meal can be eaten. These recovery snacks then need to be counted towards total daily intake.

For athletes who have high energy needs, these snacks make a useful contribution to the day's total calorie requirement. Snacks that can supply special needs for calcium, iron or other nutrients may double up as recovery snacks and make good overall choices.

What are the practical considerations for recovery eating?

Sometimes it is difficult to eat or have access to food and fluid after training and competition. Athletes must be mindful of this and have a plan of action that has been practised before. This often means that athletes need to prepare by bringing food/drinks with them to all sessions. Situations change from day to day, between training venues and between athletes, so recovery snacks need to be carefully chosen to meet individual needs. Some athletes find that intense exercise affects their appetite so they need to be more mindful of this recovery time. Remember that some of these choices (see panels) can be high in refined sugars, which is fine to be consumed as part of a recovery strategy but not so good for dental health. Just be mindful of this and keep cleaning and flossing the teeth!

Sharon Madigan, RD, PhD, Performance Nutritionist, Sport Ireland Institute

Some carbohydrate-rich recovery snacks (50g CHO portions)

- * 2 slices toast/bread with jam or honey or banana topping
- * 1 cereal bar and small pot low-fat yoghurt
- * 1 cup thick vegetable soup + large bread roll
- * 300g creamed rice
- * 300g (large) baked potato with chicken and salsa filling
- * 100g pancakes (2 stack) +30g syrup / honey
- * 700-800ml sports drink
- * 2 sports gels (depends on size and brand)
- * 500ml fruit juice or soft drink
- * 300ml carbohydrate drink
- * 60-70 packet jelly sweets (good for carbs, nothing else)
- * 300mls super milk and banana

Some carbohydrate-protein recovery snacks (contain 50g CHO + valuable source of protein and micronutrients)

- * ½ tin of baked beans on 2 slices of toast
- * 1 bread roll with meat filling + large banana
- * 300g (bowl) fruit salad with 200g fruit-flavoured yoghurt
- * 300g (large) baked potato + cottage cheese filling + glass of milk
- * 200g (1/3-1/4 pizza) with chicken/meat and vegetables
- * ½ pint (300ml) liquid meal supplement
- * ½ pint (300ml) milk shake or fruit smoothie
- * 1-2 sports bars (check labels for carbohydrate and protein content)
- * 1 large bowl (2 cups) breakfast cereal with milk
- * 1 large or 2 small cereal bars + 200g carton fruit-flavoured yoghurt





THE FITNESS PARADOX

A longstanding misconception held by athletes, whether they be runners, cyclists or swimmers, is that since they are fit, they are automatically healthy. They confuse performance with prevention, writes the late GEORGE SHEEHAN.

Performance is the ability to do work, and depends upon the development of speed, strength and stamina. Performance is essentially a physical rehabilitation resulting from training various muscle functions.

Prevention is the reduction of unnecessary illness and premature death. Prevention entails the changes in exercise, diet and lifestyle needed to lower the risk factors for heart disease and cancer.

We use a treadmill test to establish a person's functional age. But we should remember what the great Sir William Osler said, "A man is as old as his arteries."

A fit person can do extremely well on a treadmill and still have extensive coronary disease. The National Heart Institute reported on a runner who died suddenly with extensive coronary disease despite having run close to 40 marathons. The Institute noted that he had a cholesterol level close to 400mgm, putting him at enormous risk for coronary artery disease.

Jim Fixx, the best-selling author who was the inspiration for the 1970s running boom in the US, was a clear-cut instance of a person who was fit and not healthy. He was extremely fit, fit enough to be running 50 miles a week. But at the same time he was unhealthy, unhealthy enough to have a fatal heart attack shortly after his daily run.

Although Fixx could perform much better than other men his age, his arteries were those of a man 20 years older. And unfortunately his is not an isolated case. Many regular exercisers have progressive coronary disease without being aware of it.

“**Sir William Osler said, "A man is as old as his arteries." A fit person can do extremely well on a treadmill and still have extensive coronary disease**”



Fat is the enemy. Its access to the body should be limited to 10% of the dietary calorie intake. Exercise must be used to burn off the excess. When the aim is prevention, the more exercise the better.

Other harmful elements of lifestyle must also be addressed. One set of rules for successful living is the Alameda Seven. This list came from observation of a large number of long-lived, healthy people in Alameda County in California.

They are:

- Exercise regularly
- Eat a good breakfast
- Don't eat between meals
- Maintain weight (of age 20-25)
- Don't smoke
- Drink moderately
- Get a good night's sleep

A study done on a group of South Carolina runners by exercise physiologist Russell Plate showed that a significant number of them did not follow several of these rules. Add those with abnormalities of fat metabolism, and it is easy to see why we read or hear about regular exercisers developing vascular disease.

Nathan Pritikin proved that a proper combination of diet and exercise can significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease in a very short time. The problem is that swimmers, cyclists and runners often develop a biological arrogance. They see no

need to alter their lifestyle. They assume they are healthier than the general public. As a group they undoubtedly are, but many are not.

People usually pick their sport to conform with their body composition. Some body types are more susceptible to coronary disease than others. Runners who are lean, small boned and weigh about two pounds to the inch are at low risk. But ex-athletes who are heavy boned and gain weight readily have a high rate of heart disease.

When heart attacks and even sudden deaths occur with exercise, there are usually three characteristic features:

- Bad family history
- Coronary risk factors
- A warning

The last feature is particularly important. Pain or pressure in the middle of the chest brought on by effort and relieved almost immediately by rest is a red light signalling subsequent disaster. Profound fatigue unrelieved by rest frequently precedes an attack as well.

The great scientist TE Huxley wrote: "Nature never overlooks a mistake, nor makes the slightest allowance for ignorance." Runners who focus on increasing their speed, strength and stamina should be equally concerned about the status of their arteries.

Exercise, like charity, covers a lot of sins, but it is better not to count on it.



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RUNNER'S CLINIC

NIAMH MURPHY tackles the big questions about running and wellbeing.

Does running a marathon, or other strenuous event, leave you more susceptible to getting a cold or flu?

A 'factoid' is a generally held belief that is reported and repeated so often that it becomes accepted as fact. One such factoid is a general belief that strenuous endurance events cause a brief dip in our immunity levels, post-event.

One major source is a 1990 study of 2,300 Los Angeles marathoners which showed that race participants were six times more likely to get a cold, flu or sore throat in the week after the race than those who trained for, but did not run the race. However, we now know that a strenuous exercise bout will not, in itself, increase the likelihood of catching an infection.

Many other factors associated with a big race might increase your chances of infection e.g. large groups of people at the race or on public transport, air travel, getting cold, psychological stress, inadequate sleep or disruptions in eating patterns. General exercise boosts the immune system - this is the indisputable fact.

Is it ok to keep running with a cold or flu?

Opinion varies as to whether exercise should cease when a cold comes on. Most athletes are naturally unwilling to sacrifice training for every sniffle - there is an old saying that a cold takes seven days to go away with medication and a week without! However, uncared for colds can all too readily develop into serious infection and should always be treated with respect.

There is probably no need to stop running altogether, but the intensity of sessions could be reduced.

Flu is more serious, as it is often accompanied by fever and the possibility of 'myocarditis', or inflammation of the heart muscle. Exercise should never be attempted if myocarditis exists, because it can do permanent damage to the heart.

Infection is an occupational hazard for runners at this time of year. The usual good sense guidelines of adequate rest, good nutrition, and suitable clothing can't be beaten.

Back when this article was originally written, trackers and wearable devices were not mainstream, as they are now. Now, it's much easier to track body temperature, sleep and heart rate to ascertain whether there is an infection in the body.



Does fast running burn more fat than slow running?

Athletes expend a lot of energy, measured in kilocalories (more commonly called 'calories') when they exercise. Even after a vigorous exercise session has ceased, the energy which the body uses to maintain its normal functions (the basal metabolic rate) remains high for up to 25 hours, which means that for the rest of the day an athlete may use

10% more calories than a sedentary person who is performing the same work.

The amount of calories expended depends upon how long the exercise lasts (duration), how hard it is (intensity) and how often it takes place (frequency). In general, it takes more energy and effort for a person to run fast than to run slowly, so 30 minutes running at five-minute mile pace uses more energy than 30 minutes at six-minute mile pace.

Vigorous exercise burns carbohydrate as fuel, and, because there are only limited stores of carbohydrate in the body, intense exercise can only be kept up for a short time. A long, easy run burns mainly fat as fuel, and because the body has plenty of fat, low intensity exercise can be maintained for a long time.

Very fit people are more efficient at using fat than unfit ones, and this allows them to exercise for longer, and so burn more calories. Heavy people use more energy to move than light people so, at any given pace a 30 minute session for a heavy person uses more calories than it does for the light one.

On the whole, if weight loss is the desired outcome from running, it is better to run slowly for a long time rather than run quickly for a short time, using fat rather than carbohydrate as fuel.

How important is iron in the diet?

Many reports suggest that endurance athletes, especially runners, are prone to iron deficiency. Haemoglobin is the molecule in the blood which carries oxygen, and iron is an essential component of haemoglobin. Even small decreases in haemoglobin have been shown to impair performance, so runners do not have to be severely lacking in haemoglobin - anaemic - before they begin to feel tired and lethargic.

Runners, especially menstruating women, may be at risk because of:

- inadequate dietary iron (the RDA is 18mg)
- decreased iron absorption with high fibre diets
- faster clearance of food through the intestines
- increased iron loss in sweat
- the destruction of red blood cells caused by the impact of running

It is important that runners keep a check on haemoglobin levels, and it is also useful to check serum ferritin levels, or the iron stores, when having a blood test. Increased iron intake from food or iron supplements may be advisable. A Vitamin C supplement can also help with iron absorption.

“ On the whole, if weight loss is the desired outcome from running, it is better to run slowly for a long time rather than run quickly for a short time ”



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About Hannah Nolan

Hannah started her journey after losing almost 8 stone in weight and discovering a passion for fitness. After returning to college to study fitness and nutrition she set up her business Why Weight Ireland where she coached both those looking to lose weight and general fitness clients. Having discovered her love for running back in 2011, she began coaching runners at a local level and this progressed to online coaching. Having started from “zero” herself with running and then progressing to win both Novice and Intermediate cross country titles at County level and also winning both individual age group and many team titles at County, Leinster and National level, Hannah has grown through her own training and experience to apply this to her coaching.

What the Clients Say

“I wasn’t really feeling the love for running like I used to and was just going through the motions. I bit the bullet and decided to get a coach and literally over the 12 week block the transformation has been night and day. From running DCM in 2022 with 4hours 10 to finishing today’s 2023 DCM in 3hours 39. Hannah walks the walk in her own running and had more belief in me than I did myself” **Ciaran**

“I started online training with Hannah last year after seeing a post she had done online. I wasn’t seeing any progress as my training times are limited, I live in Portugal, so the online aspect worked perfectly for me. Having a specific plan really helped me to get the most out of my limited sessions and I’ve now improved my 5km time from 34 minutes to 23 minutes and I couldn’t be more delighted.” **Ana**

Get in touch with Hannah today!

Mobile / WhatsApp: 087 2908700 Email: Hannah@whyweightireland.ie



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CHASING

A SUB-THREE-HOUR MARATHON DREAM

CATHERINA MCKIERNAN writes about her coaching experience with David Conachy, who came agonisingly close to achieving his sub-three-hour target in the Berlin Marathon.

One morning last March my phone rang. It was David Conachy on the other end of the line. "I want to run a sub-3-hour marathon and I want you to help me," he said. So I listened and after a chat and some questions, I agreed to his request. He had already run 13 marathons, so he was well tuned-in and knew what was involved.

My job was to put a little structure into his training; to support, guide him and hold him back from overdoing it. That can be the most difficult part with ambitious runners! David was turning 50 in July, so I needed to be careful and get the balance right, to avoid injury or illness. When I was training and competing, I ran by heart rate. I had three zones that I worked from; long runs/recovery runs, threshold runs and intervals. So the heart rates were different for all these different runs.

I feel training by heart rate ensures that you run easy on the days you are supposed to, so that you recover and you are able to run fast on the days you have hard sessions. In this way, you get the progression required to improve your fitness and perform to your capabilities.

For me to be comfortable with the training I was doing with David, I had him tested on the treadmill with Bernard Donne at the Trinity College Department of Physiology. Bernard completed those same tests with me when I was competing and I loved his straightforward, no-nonsense approach. Now that we had the heart rate zones, we put a plan in place to work towards the Berlin Marathon on 24th September.

This gave us plenty of time to prepare and David was already relatively fit going into the block of marathon training. He was used to doing a lot of races, anything from 5K to marathon distance. But with the marathon training build-up, I feel you have

David Conachy



Photo : Sportsfile/Ray McManus

to minimise races and just get into the flow of training week-in, week-out. In the 16-week block of training, David raced a half-marathon six weeks before Berlin and a 10K three weeks beforehand. These races were more just to break up the training routine.

We met in the Phoenix Park every Tuesday and Friday at 8.30am. David

worked hard and he is one of the most committed, determined, focused and positive people I have come across.

With my perfectionist personality, I wanted to make sure I was doing the correct work with David. So I touched base with my former coach Joe Doonan on numerous occasions. It was like life coming full circle. It was great to talk with Joe in a very different

way than when I was training. He is very knowledgeable, and I asked him many questions that I would not have asked when he was advising me. I would not have questioned him on the training plans.

Perhaps the reason for this was that I trusted him and just got on with it. Now that

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I was helping David, I felt a responsibility to get the plan right and structure it properly. Also, it is important to seek out other opinions. “No man is an island unto himself.” I also bounced some ideas off Gerry Carr and David Carrie. I realised that advising someone is very different to running as I can’t feel what the training feels like. I felt this to be a bit of a challenge, something I had to adapt to.

That is another reason why I am comfortable with heart rate training as it is a great guide for finding out and seeing how an athlete is coping with the training and how they are recovering, which is very important. The training build-up went really well and as the weeks passed, we got more engrossed in the process. David gradually built up the threshold run, intervals and long run. There is a fine line between doing too little and too much and knowing when to do more training and when to pull back.

Everyone is different in this regard as some people can take more of a workload than others. That’s why it is important not to compare ourselves to others as it is a very individual thing. There is no “one size fits all” when it comes to long distance running and training. As it turned out the Race Director of the Berlin Marathon had contacted me a couple of months previously, inviting me over to be

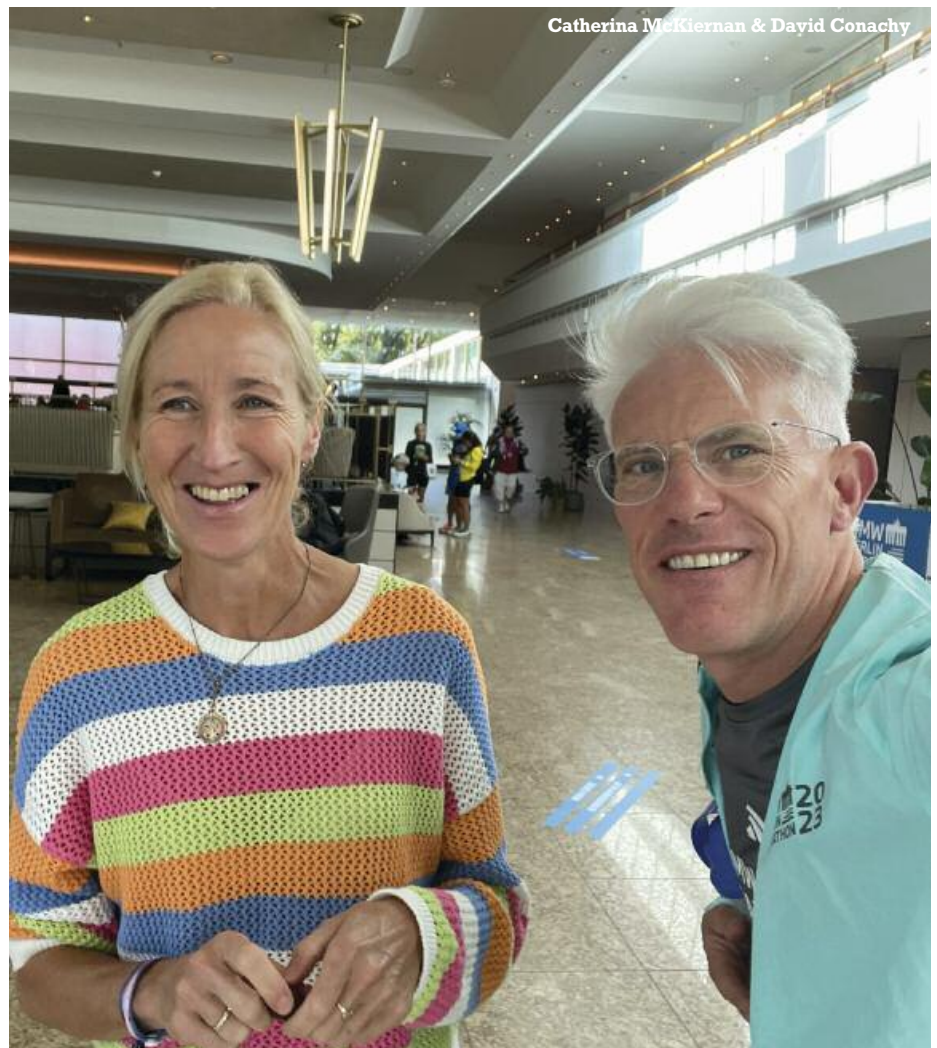
inducted into the Hall of Fame as a past winner. I went over on Thursday and the awards ceremony took place on Friday evening. It was a wonderful and enjoyable occasion, and many Irish people who were over for the marathon came to the outdoor ceremony. This made it even more special, and I hope it gave them a lift ahead of their race.

There are so many variables when running a marathon; getting the pace right, taking on enough fuel and hydrating properly - to name but a few. The day of reckoning had arrived, and David was in great form and the final few days had gone smoothly. It was a long three hours, waiting and wondering how he was getting on. For me, the shoe was on the other foot, wondering how he was getting on and not being in control out on the course.

In Berlin it’s not that easy to get to different points of the course and I didn’t want to track him. Although I was a little anxious for him, I didn’t want the anticipation to end, which may sound a little strange. During the race I thought of my parents and family and what they had to endure when I was racing. To

make a long story short, David came in at three hours and four seconds. We kind of looked at each other, not knowing what to say. We walked away from the finish over to a grass area where we sat down in the beautiful sunshine. He felt great running and everything had gone to plan. With a few kilometres to go, he knew he was inside the three-hour mark, but he was also aware that he hadn’t much to spare.

To be honest, we were disappointed initially but after a half-hour chatting, we had a good laugh and let it go, albeit the slugging continues about the .04. Everyone lining up for a race has their own personal goals. David wouldn’t have been the only one to just miss out on his target by a whisker. He is keen and determined to break the three-hour barrier; it has been a most enjoyable journey so far, with plenty of laughs, loads learned along the way and lots more yet to learn. Please God, he will achieve his goal and it will be all the sweeter when he does. I heard a quote a while back: “There are more Good Fridays than Easter Sundays in sport”. So be sure to enjoy those “Easter Sundays”.



Catherina McKiernan & David Conachy



ARE YOU OVERTRAINING?

One of Ireland's leading Fitness Experts JEN FEIGHERY provides advice.



As an Irish Runner reader I know you take training seriously and commit to most of your training runs and gym sessions. But have you ever felt yourself placing unreasonable demands on your body, to the point of pure exhaustion?

Overtraining syndrome is a collapse in performance that occurs when your body gets pushed beyond its capacity to recover. It's not only elite runners who are exposed to this condition - all runners can be vulnerable to overtraining, simply because it's not due to too much training - it's often a problem of too little rest. You don't become a better athlete through running monotonous miles, you become a better athlete when you eat right, sleep and recover after your training.

If your body doesn't get the opportunity to repair itself, your hard-earned miles can eventually backfire and cause an array of physical and psychological problems that could leave you baffled as to what is wrong with your body and performance. It is crucial to listen to your body and know the signs of overtraining. Here are five of the most common signs and symptoms to look out for:

Altered Resting Heart Rate

A running watch that monitors your heart rate is a fantastic device to wear during your training runs. It provides valuable information

on what your resting heart rate (HR) is before your run and what heart rate zone you are training in during your run. Altered resting heart rate is the result of your metabolic rate increasing to meet the imposed demand of training. If your resting heart rate is much higher or a lot lower than usual, you may be overtraining and not getting sufficient rest/recovery time.

Unquenchable Thirst

When your body starts to consume its own muscle for protein it goes into what is known as a 'catabolic state'. If you find yours coincides with a period of increased training time and mileage there is a possibility that

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Overtraining syndrome is a collapse in performance that occurs when your body gets pushed beyond its capacity to recover
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you are overtraining. Being in a catabolic state automatically causes dehydration and thirst. The solution to this is simple: drink plenty of water before, during and after your run, particularly if it is a hot summer's day.

Extended Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (D.O.M.S)

It's completely normal to have sore muscles for a day or two after your training. However, if you are still struggling to walk or bend your legs past the 72-hour mark, be sure to include a day of rest, because having muscle soreness for more than three or four days is a sign that your body is not recovering efficiently - which automatically has an impact on your muscle-building efforts.

Insomnia

If you find yourself unable to sleep even though you are wiping yourself out in training, it's most likely the result of a combination of nervous system and/ or hormonal system overload. I always advise my clients to focus on getting in 10pm-2am sleep because it's at this stage of your sleep cycle that physical restoration occurs. Your body grows while resting, NOT while running.

Increased Injury

If you are getting injured more often, or find old injuries starting to creep back in, you may be overtraining. When your body doesn't get enough time to recuperate in between runs, at some point you will be running in a weakened state. For example, running 10 miles on tight quadriceps or trying to run through sharp iliotibial band pain will increase your chances of serious injury.

To prevent this from happening, it is important to introduce forced rest periods into your training schedule, change up your running intensities for a few of your runs and schedule a foam rolling /flexibility session into your plan.

It's very important to listen to your body and know what it's trying to tell you. There's a very fine line between training and overtraining.

Jack Raglin is a professor of Kinesiology at Indiana University in Bloomington, and he developed a clever questionnaire to prevent overtraining. I use this a lot with my clients training for half and full marathons. I recommend you take this quiz once a week during periods of hard training:

Are You Overtraining?

1) How is your mood today?

Very, very good	(-2 points)
Very good	(-1 point)
Good	(0 points)
Average	(1 point)
Bad	(3 points)
Very bad	(5 points)
Very, very Bad	(7 points)

2) How many hours did you sleep last night?

More than nine	(-1 point)
Eight or nine	(0 points)
Seven	(1 point)
Five to six	(3 points)
Less than five	(5 points)

3) Last night I slept:

Same as normal	(0 points)
One hour more than normal	(1 point)
Two or more hours more than normal	(3 points)
One hour less than normal	(1 point)
Two hours less than normal	(3 points)
Three or more hours less than normal	(5 points)

4) Have you been sick the past week?

Yes	(5 points)
No	(0 points)

5) How would you rate yesterday's workout?

Very, very easy	(-3 points)
Very easy	(-1 point)
Easy	(0 points)
Average	(1 point)
Hard	(3 points)
Very hard	(5 points)
Very, very hard	(7 points)

6) How do your muscles feel?

Very, very good	(-3 points)
Very good	(-1 point)
Good	(0 points)
Tender, but not sore	(1 point)
Sore	(3 points)
Very sore	(5 points)
Very, very sore	(7 points)

7) Do your legs feel "heavy"?

No	(0 points)
A little	(1 point)
Somewhat	(3 points)
Very	(7 points)

How Did You Score?

A score of 40 or more means you should rest more and run less.

A score of 15 or less suggests you're balancing your training and recovery well.

A score that falls in the middle isn't of immediate concern, but should be monitored.

Just look for rapid changes in your score and that will help you figure out if you're overtraining.

For more details on the writer www.jenfeighery.ie





PERFORMANCE YOGA FOR ATHLETES

Yoga improves flexibility, balance, coordination and lung function. It can also help athletes effectively manage stress, recovery and performance, writes SINA THEIL.



Apparel : BAMBOO FRIENDS LEGGINGS

Introduction

But I'm a runner... why yoga? A justified question that's easy to answer - because of its many benefits. For one, yoga is a great conditioning workout. Ask anyone who's been to a good flow class pouring sweat onto their mat! It's also amazing for stretching and increasing flexibility and therefore providing range of motion, preventing injuries and de-stressing muscles. Lastly, yoga will do wonders for the mind. Learning to tune in with the body, setting positive intentions and learning to park the ego being some of them. So what are you waiting for? Time to unlace the shoes! Namaste.



It's also amazing for stretching & increasing flexibility and therefore providing range of motion, preventing injuries and de-stressing muscles



About the Apparel

I've been wearing Bamboo Friends apparel for a few years now and can only describe them as the essence of comfort. No matter what I'm doing - yoga, running, high intensity training, ... it always looks and feels the part. It adapts like second skin, especially the "one size fits all" leggings and has retained its quality even after many washes. No matter if I'm lounging or training hard - with this apparel I'm in it to win it! For more www.bamboofriends.ie

About the Writer

Sina Theil is an Irish based singer-songwriter, psychologist, fitness enthusiast and winner of several Irish and international music awards. In 2015 in an act of blind faith she moved to Ireland by herself to pursue her lifelong dream of building a successful music career.

Disclaimer

In case of injury, please always consult your physician first before engaging in any of the here mentioned poses. It is strongly recommended to seek out in-person yoga classes in order to receive personal feedback, therefore avoiding incorrect postures and possible injury. Sensations such as pain and high discomfort should be taken very seriously and never overlooked. Listen to your body, park the ego and never compromise good posture for reaching the floor.

Photos : KATE NOLAN



1

Plank Pose

Starting with both wrists situated in a vertical line underneath the shoulders. Fingers spread wide, index fingers pointing forward. Shoulder blades are slightly drawn towards each other, ribcage closed and head and neck in a neutral position. Elbows face back, creating an arrow shape. Heels point up, legs are hips width apart. The whole body is active; legs and spine form a straight line.

Common Mistakes

- * Elbows spread out in a cross like shape (instead of an arrow).
- * Lower back is arched upwards or downwards (instead of in a straight line).
- * Full weight is dumped onto the shoulders (instead of engaging the core and lower body).
- * Joints are hyper-extended (instead of keeping a slight bend).
- * All weight is loaded onto one part of the hand (instead of all four corners of both hands evenly).



2

Downward Facing Dog

Starting with bent knees and heels lifted off the floor. Fingers spread wide, index fingers pointing straight forward. Shoulders are rolled back, opening the chest and ears sit between the biceps. Buttocks push back and up, creating a gentle curve, while the knees are bent as much as necessary to create a straight spine. The whole body muscle chain is engaged and active. Once a good posture has been achieved, the legs can be straightened and finally heels sent to the floor (if possible).

Common Mistakes

- * Head is flexed towards the chest (instead of relaxed between the biceps).
- * Legs are forced straight (instead of keeping a healthy bend if needed).
- * Heels are on the floor from the start (instead of setting them down last if possible without compromising the posture).
- * Back is rounded and chest closed (instead of in a straight spine and open chest).
- * Joints are hyper-extended (instead of keeping a slight bend).



3

Pyramid Pose

Starting with a stance similar to Warrior 1 pose or slightly shorter, heel to heel lined up, back foot at an approximately 30 to 45 degree angle. Legs, hips and core muscles are engaged with a soft bend in the knees. Hands rest on a block, shin or the floor depending on flexibility. Shoulders are rolled back, opening the chest. Hips are levelled and squared forward. All four corners of both feet press evenly into the ground.

Common Mistakes

- * Hyper-extending the knees (instead of keeping a slight bend).
- * Back rounded (instead of in a straight line, lengthening the spine).
- * Back heel lifting off the floor (instead of pushing both feet into the ground).
- * Uneven hips (instead of keeping the hips levelled and squared forward).
- * Shoulders collapse forward (instead of opening the chest).



4

Twisted Lizard Pose

Starting in a lunge like position, the front foot is moved to the outer edge of the mat, rolling towards the outside and lifting the toes off the mat. The supporting hand is positioned right underneath the shoulder. The back foot is caught with the opposite hand or pulled in with a strap. The lifted foot presses into the hand, creating a lift in the chest. Shoulders are rolled back, opening the chest, creating a gentle curve in the upper back. Hips press forward and down. The head gazes up to the sky. Option: padding the knee on the mat in order to avoid discomfort.

Common Mistakes

- * Lower back hyper-extended (instead of lifting through the chest).
- * One side of the body collapsed (instead of keeping an elongated, straight line).
- * Shoulders rounded forward (instead of opening the chest away from the ears).
- * Collapsed posture (instead of using a strap to pull in the back foot if needed).
- * Supporting arm hyper-extended (instead of keeping a soft bend).



5

Half Pigeon Pose

Starting in Twisted Lizard pose, the back leg is released onto the mat. The front foot toe-heels to the opposite side of the mat, coming to rest next to the opposite wrist. Shoulders are rolled back and squared to the front, opening the chest, lengthening through the crown of the head. Hips are levelled and squared to the front, core is engaged. Back leg and back foot face down and the outer side of the front shin faces the floor. The breath is directed deep into the hips. If possible, the upper body reaches and leans forward, resting on the forearms, block, hands or floor if possible. Option: padding the knee on the mat in order to avoid discomfort.

Common Mistakes

- * Rear leg is rotated (instead of facing down).
- * Hips are not square (instead of evenly facing the front).
- * Chest is rotated to one side, shoulders are uneven (instead of being levelled and facing the front).
- * Shoulders round and upper body collapses (instead of opening the chest and keeping a straight spine).
- * Back knee is supporting too much weight (instead of pressing the back foot into the ground and engaging the core).



6

Reclined Twist Pose

Starting by lying on the floor, both shoulders touch the floor, arms spread out in a cross shape, spine long. Palms face up. Planting both feet on the floor at hips width, one knee crosses the other. Depending on flexibility, knees tilt to one side towards the floor, block, folded blanket or pillow, maintaining a long spine. Head is tilted, facing away from the bent knees. Breathing deep into the twist, relaxing the whole body.

Common Mistakes

- * Shoulders lift off the floor (instead of keeping contact with the ground).
- * Body is rounded and collapsed (instead of elongating the spine).
- * Lower back feels uncomfortable or painful (instead of resting the knees on a pillow or block for a more gentle twist).
- * Breath is held (instead of breathing slowly and deeply to relax the body).
- * Lower back is hyper-extended (instead of keeping a straight, long spine).



AT HOME IN THE MOUNTAINS

Sarah McCormack, one of Ireland's greatest mountain runners, is encouraging more people to give the discipline a go, writes RORY CASSIDY.



The legendary sportswriter Con Houlihan once described renowned mountain runner and fellow Kerry man John Lenihan as “of all our unsung heroes, just about the most unsung”.

The farmer blazed a trail for those to follow in his footsteps, achieving greatness along the way, the highlight of which was becoming Ireland's first and only ever world mountain running champion in 1991.

A generation have tried and came up short in their bids to reach those lofty heights, however the discipline continues to grow and Irish athletes, who like Lenihan did before them, still go relatively unsung, continue to strive for glory.

Sarah McCormack is one such runner who boasts a decorated CV, despite going under the radar in terms of public consciousness.

The 37-year-old has represented Ireland on the European and World stage on several occasions and continues to mix it with the globe's best.

Earlier this year she finished just outside the top 20 (21st) in the Uphill only race at the

World Mountain and Trail Running Championships in Innsbruck, Austria.

The gruelling, exhausting and some could argue sadistic 7.1km course featured more than 1000m of elevation gain and a torturous

40% gradient in the last half mile, certainly not for the faint hearted.

Despite the very mention of that undoubtedly turning so many runners off in a heartbeat, McCormack relished the challenge.



Sarah McCormack with Aine Gosling

Photo : John O'Regan

"It was really interesting," she says of the course. "Once we left the town where the race start was, it got quiet through the woods. Despite the narrowness of the course there it didn't feel like a super-aggressive race. There wasn't a huge number of people trying to shoulder you off the path or anything. It almost felt like we were working together to get up to the top."

The arduous last half mile involved running up a ski slope. "That really was a setting to do justice to the World Championships," McCormack says. "In most races in general you don't really get to see people for very long; they're often just zooming past you, but we were moving at about a twenty minute mile pace in a massive open area so you could really see the race playing out."

Cheered on by her fellow Irish teammates and supporters, McCormack dug deep and found some much needed strength and extra resolve to help her to the finish line.

Despite rising to the occasion she admits that it was challenging from a mental perspective.

"It definitely was because we were kind of just looking at the slope, we didn't have a chance to recce it because we didn't want to exhaust ourselves before the race.

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We were moving at about a twenty minute mile pace in a massive open area so you could really see the race playing out

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"You're trying to gauge how long it's going to take you and how much you can push from the start of the very steep section.

"It's tempting to push a bit too hard at the start of a really steep climb like that, but you have to gauge it and also not get too carried away with the boosts that you get from the spectators. You definitely notice a bit of a benefit from having people literally screaming into your face. It was very challenging but also really good because the quality of the field was such that there was always someone breathing down your neck and always someone just there to try and catch. You're really motivated to keep pushing and keep trying to get one more place."

McCormack took up the discipline in 2008 when she moved to the UK for her Masters



Sarah McCormack with Zak Hanna

Photo : John O'Regan

but with her mother hailing from the Lake District, an area where there is a "real culture" of mountain running, it seemed almost inevitable that the once European Cross Country team medallist and track runner would make the switch to the slopes.

That leap into somewhat the unknown is one in which McCormack is eager to see more of, encouraging people to give mountain running a go regardless of their preconceptions.

"Within mountain running in particular there are a lot of races that are really fast, gradual climbs and quite firm smooth trails," she says.

"Cross Country runners can jump into those races and excel without a whole pile of extra hill training.

"There's such a great variety of races that you can really choose ones that suit your targets. If you're still primarily targeting Cross Country and road, you can do a season of mountain running without losing your speed."

Amongst the highlights of McCormack's career was winning the famous Yorkshire Three Peaks race in 2022 and medalling as part of the Irish team at World Championships in 2013.

With more people than ever before turning to mountain running and the event growing in popularity year-on-year in Ireland, McCormack will face increased competition to pick up Irish vests, but that hasn't stopped her mapping out goals ahead of what will be a busy 2024.

"I'd love to do the Yorkshire Three Peaks again and then turn my focus to the European Mountain Running Championships which will be in France. I might try and go up to the longer 40k distance for that one since that will be not too much of an extension on something like Three Peaks which is 38k.

"I've come top ten a few times in the past, so I suppose in the back of my mind that's always there as the gold standard."

The Irish Mountain Running Association

Irish Mountain Running Association (IMRA) was founded in 1980. Since then, this entirely voluntary led organisation has grown significantly. Current membership, over 3,000, is located across the country. IMRA organises a wide range of low-cost races on mountain and forest trails, with over 120 race events listed on the 2023 calendar. Annual membership is €10 and most of the races cost only €7 to enter. Juniors and OAPs pay €5 for race entry.

The races are on marked routes, suitable to all levels of running ability, or on unmarked routes, which require navigational skills as well as running skills. Many of the race events also offer junior or short routes. Races vary in length from mid-week races of 8km to 10km to ultra length of 50k to 80km held on various weekends across the year.

IMRA is an active and inclusive running community with a strong environmental and sustainability focus. Races are organised in cooperation and agreement with NPWS, Coillte and private landowners. IMRA also collaborates with Northern Ireland Mountain Running Association (NIMRA), on their race calendars to ensure the members of both organisations can enjoy the benefits of racing across the island of Ireland.

There are country wide leagues in Leinster, Southeast Leinster, Munster, and the newly developed Northwest League. The Irish Championships, covering 5 of the major peaks in Ireland are a key feature of the calendar, attracting the best of the mountain runners in Ireland.

IMRA is affiliated through Athletics Ireland to the World Mountain Running Association for the purposes of competing in International Events. Along with race events, regular workshops on High Performance and Junior Development, first aid, key volunteer roles and mountain running techniques are also organised.

Full details of all IMRA events and races can be found on www.imra.ie

Five Racing Highlights of the IMRA 2024 Calendar

1. Moonlight Challenge, Ballyhoura, Co. Tipperary – January.
2. The Irish Championships, five races on five major peaks - summer months.
3. Regional League races – weekends during the winter and spring months and mid-week during the summer months.
4. Irish Ultra Championships, distances between 50k (Maurice Mullins Ultra) and 170k (Beara Ultra) - spring and summer months.
5. Navigational challenges, open mountain races - summer and autumn months.



FORERUNNERS LEAD THE WAY

The Athletics Ireland Forerunners programme is a new and exciting initiative for women across a broad spectrum, writes LILLY-ANN O'HORA.



Established in 2020, *Forerunners* was created to provide a pathway for aspiring women to become leaders at a local, regional, and national level. From 2020-2024, the programme has brought a fresh cast of leaders, armed with a new vision that will differentiate how we deliver the sport.

Forerunners participants had the opportunity to be connected with like-minded women across the Athletics Ireland membership ranging from administrators, officials, coaches, and leaders, all who emphasised the benefits of accessing a network to offer support to one another and enable shared learning. The network is particularly helpful for some of the emerging leaders in enabling them to build and develop positive relationships with others who have key experience and expertise.

The programme's success speaks for itself in developing and supporting a robust pipeline of women in leadership roles. However, what it has created, are great leaders who aren't afraid to take action and seize opportunities - they recognise that growth and self-development is an ongoing

process that requires continuous investment. The great thing is, as leaders, these women have created a ripple effect that has inspired positive and proactive change in everything they set their minds to. We look at some of the most exciting leaders initiating change for the benefits of our members, the athletes, and the sport.

Jackie Mulhall has been a member of the Technical Committee with Athletics Ireland for several years, however after returning from work in the UK was eager to reestablish her network on a national level. "Women officials, in all sports, have few role models to look up to and very few women to connect with and form networks either professional or supportive. Athletics is no different. For me, *Forerunners* provided a reflective space, space that allowed my confidence to grow, and with confidence to feel empowered and ready to step into leadership roles where I can affect the change... the whole experience highlighted to me that I was not lacking in the expertise to officiate at any level of competition, but that I didn't have the confidence or skills in

sports leadership or governance to step up to leadership roles within the sport."

Since her participation in the programme, Jackie has very quickly become one of the leading technical officials in Ireland, passing the *World Silver Referee* exams and has also just recently been appointed Chair of the Technical Committee, the first ever woman to hold the position! By utilising her new *Forerunners* network, Jackie was instrumental in delivering the Dublin Graded Leagues and the planning of educational training for the National T&F officials. She continues to link in with her mentor from the programme, Brid Golden and is quick to highlight that she is grateful for the support and encouragement she's had throughout her time in athletics. "The men who are advocates for women, the women officials and administrators who forged a path that I can follow."

Irene Clarke hails from West Waterford AC, a club that has had inclusivity and diversity at its core since its foundation. Irene acts as mentor for *Forerunners* participants having gained "a wealth of

knowledge and skills in various areas such as strategic planning, effective communication, and decision-making. The programme has not only enhanced my confidence in my abilities but has also equipped me with practical tools and strategies to navigate the challenges faced by women in leadership positions within the sports industry."

She is now one of the most sought-after Menopause education and wellbeing specialists in Ireland after quickly recognising that 30% of women become less active during the menopause years. Since *Forerunners*, through her own workshop/webinars she has impacted more than 3500 women with the goal of providing active women, at all levels from participation to performance, with the practical tools and proven solutions to remain active and enjoy their sport.

Olivia Scully Hahne is now working as Regional Development Officer for the Southwest. Olivia was a volunteer coach when she began the *Forerunners* programme in 2021 and felt "the opportunity to connect with others was always going to gift the opportunity for further growth. I gained support, feeling part of a team, supported by other women. Listening to others and seeing the path many inspirational women had and were travelling. How each learnt to own their own voice and unique skills... it was like an answered prayer to have the opportunity to connect with fellow female athletics enthusiasts."

Being a successful junior high jumper herself, she began collaborating with the greats of High Jumping, Antoine Burke, Javier Sotomayor (WR), Stefan Holm, Irish stars Deirdre Ryan and Adrian O'Dwyer, launching the network for coaches and athletes *Hangout with High Jumpers*. With

over 320 members, the group now has successfully received funding through the Erasmus+ Sports Grant, which will enable Irish High Jump Coaches the opportunity to shadow watch European High Jump coaches and hopefully help build a network of knowledge and expertise. More than ever before, she looks forward to working with the clubs within the Southwest and is committed to supporting those who are passionate about athletics, recognising the instrumental and generous work by the Athletics Ireland members.

Sarah Ledwith of Fr Murphy AC has been instrumental in the rejuvenation of the club's coaching, activities, and facility development. Sarah competed in athletics as a child and had taken some time away from the sport working at sea until she returned to Ireland as a Marine Pilot. Upon her return, she registered for *Forerunners* as she felt a new era of athletics had begun. "There seemed to be a lot more help and assistance towards clubs and developing grassroot athletics. I wanted to get as much research and help as I could. The massive encouragement from the *Forerunners* network across the country at events and courses was a fantastic boost as it helped us figure out where we were going."

Since *Forerunners* in 2021, the club membership has quadrupled, going from less than 80 members to 350 and in 2022 were Meath's fastest growing club. With the help of Tony Ennis, Paddy Hanily, David Rock and Mark Hayes, they identified juvenile development as a key pillar for growth, recognising "how inclusive athletics can be for every ability, age, gender and culture". The club now caters for 25 schools, an over 18 group, men/women's league teams, para-athletes, all young and old! They have officially

opened their new 400m tartan track, with two long jumps and throwing areas and a future high jump area on the horizon, which Sarah says "is an incredible honour to be part of. The future is bright".

Majella McGrath, like most of us in athletics, wanted to give something back when she first got involved with Celbridge AC. When her two boys joined the club, very quickly she appreciated the value sport could play in personal and professional development. For Majella, officiating was the most logical route to be involved, and throughout the years as an official, administrator and volunteer, she believes she has "met some of the most dedicated and selfless people who give freely of their time and knowledge in order to provide the best possible competition experience for athletes". Officiating for many is a calling, a vocation if you will, and Majella's passion for athletics burns bright because of the many officials who have supported her every step of the way like Mary Dwyer, Andrew Lynam, Brid Golden, Catriona Duffy and David Denieffe amongst others.



The programme's success speaks for itself in developing and supporting a robust pipeline of women in leadership roles



Through *Forerunners*, Majella has translated vision into reality, becoming more involved at a provincial and national level. She is now the Leinster Treasurer and acts as the Leinster rep on the National Competitions Committee. She has completed the Starters Course, the National Technical Officials course which is the practical training required to officiate up to international competitions and has even applied to be a volunteer for Paris 2024. Commenting on her *Forerunners* journey, she said: "I got to meet so many inspiring women... the fabulous bunch of ladies who were on the course with me - some of whom I regularly meet at competition. I learnt not to dismiss or undervalue my abilities and contribution. When asked to tell people about myself I will never again start with 'I'm just a mother' but rather 'A mother who....'"





MID-LIFE MENOPAUSE CHALLENGES

Athletics Ireland is the first National Governing Body to recognise the impact that menopause has on women, writes IRENE CLARKE.



Menopause is a natural process that occurs when a woman's menstrual cycle comes to an end. It typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, with the average age being 51. Menopause comes with a variety of challenges for women, including physiological and psychological symptoms that can affect your overall health and wellbeing. If you are a runner experiencing menopause, you may find that some of the symptoms can impact your ability to run effectively and menopause may feel far from natural. However, with a holistic approach, you

can minimise the challenges of menopause and continue to thrive as an active woman.

Athletics Ireland was the first national governing body to recognise the impact that menopause has on women and their participation and enjoyment of sports. A pilot program put the science to the test to find practical solutions and sustainable ways for women to continue to participate and perform at their level. This has now been developed into a workshop, *How to Train in Midlife*, that is being delivered to clubs across the country.

One of the main challenges of menopause for runners is the fluctuation of hormones, particularly estrogen. As estrogen levels decrease, this can lead to a reduction in bone density of up to 20% in the menopausal years and a drop in muscle mass of up to 8% per decade up to our mid-sixties and as high as 15% per decade thereafter. This contributes to making runners more prone to injuries and when we get injured, we tend to stay injured for longer. It is essential to strengthen your bones and muscles through resistance training to help counteract these effects not just for our performance but also for our future fitness. What we do now will determine what we can do in our 70s and beyond as the process of rebuilding bone takes 2+ years.

Running is primarily an aerobic sport if you are not a track athlete. We aim to build mitochondria that develops aerobic fitness. This process is driven by estrogen and when our estrogen levels drop, we need to provide a different stimulus to the body to maintain and drive fitness. What can happen to many women is that they continue to train in the way they always have and find that running becomes a real struggle and it's no surprise that 30% of us become less active during this time. What was your easy pace suddenly becomes 5k race pace. This is particularly evident over longer distances. In last year's Dublin Marathon, 23% of participants in the menopausal age group were women and 46% were men.

Running can also affect the quality of sleep for menopausal women. Sweating and hot flushes, especially at night, may disturb your sleep patterns and leave you feeling tired during the day, affecting your workout routine and overall performance. We all know that sleep is our greatest weapon in recovery and when we don't get enough it's very difficult to recover properly. It is recommended to practice good sleep hygiene, such as limiting caffeine, alcohol, and large meals before bedtime. Creating a comfortable, cool environment for sleeping, such as using a fan or air

conditioning, can also help alleviate night sweats.

Vaginal dryness is another symptom of menopause that can affect the running experience for female athletes. This symptom can lead to discomfort, itching, and inflammation in the vaginal area, making running more uncomfortable. Wearing moisture-wicking underwear and bottoms can alleviate symptoms and prevent chafing and irritation.

Mental and emotional health is another critical factor that can impact a runner experiencing menopause. The hormonal changes during menopause can cause mood swings, anxiety, and depression, which can affect motivation and performance levels. Hormonal changes can negatively affect the level of brain chemicals that regulate mood, such as serotonin and dopamine. Many women now experience race anxiety especially post covid when we had to normalise racing once again.

Finally, urinary incontinence is another common symptom of menopause that can affect running performance. If you are experiencing leaking, urge incontinence, or other pelvic symptoms please consult your pelvic floor physiotherapist. This is not something that you have to 'put up with' and they will have you back on the road enjoying running again.

Despite these challenges, you can navigate menopause and continue running by looking at the **five** parts that make up the menopause jigsaw:

Hormonal Health - Hormones are chemical messengers and are directly affected by what we do externally – how we exercise, how we eat, and how we recover and manage lifestyle stresses. This impacts what goes on internally – our general health, our menopause symptoms, and our performance. HRT is not a magic pill and whilst it can be a game changer it only works on symptoms. We need to look at all lifestyle factors for a positive impact on longevity and health.



What can happen to many women is that they continue to train in the way they always have and find that running becomes a real struggle

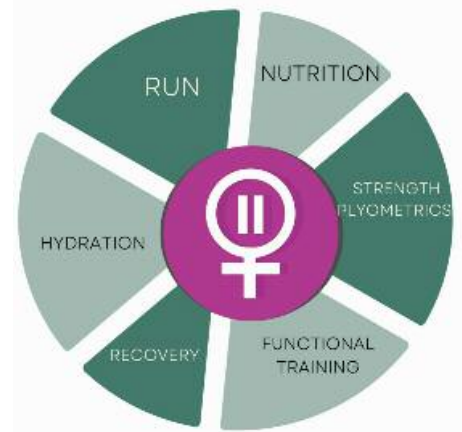


Training – Tweaking our training to work with our new physiology is key. Just running will not make us a better runner. Lifting heavy weights, plyometrics, and sprint interval training balanced with truly easy running will get us back to feeling like runners again.

Nutrition - Our nutritional needs also change as we age. In the past, we may have looked at nutrition from the perspective of weight management or sports performance. We also need to think about it from a bone health perspective. When you are training hard it's very easy to unintentionally fall into low energy availability where we are not eating enough calories overall. When this happens your body will take what it needs from your bones, and they will break down further. Menopause itself does a good job of breaking down bone, and up to 40% of post-menopausal women will experience a bone break, without us adding to it. The three areas to look at are enough calories, enough protein, and enough carbohydrates. All nutrients are important, but these are the three areas that women tend to struggle most with.

Rest and Recovery - Adequate rest is critical for runners, and menopausal women will need more recovery time due to hormonal fluctuations and other symptoms. It's worth remembering that we get fitter, faster, and stronger in the recovery period not the exercise period so if your rest days are not true rest days and you don't have enough step-back weeks you won't benefit from your training. We can only train as hard as we can recover.

Stress Management - This is a period of our lives that can feel like a perfect storm. We may be supporting children, ageing



parents, and trying to hold down busy jobs. That's before we add in menopause symptoms and training stress. Too much stress will impact how you build aerobic fitness so it's worth controlling what you can here and minimising stress where possible. You will reap the rewards in your general health and performance.

How we put this jigsaw together and join those dots will be individual to every woman. This is what we cover in depth in the *How to Train in Midlife Workshops*. Over 3500 women have attended to date.

Menopause is a life-changing process, both physically and mentally. Incorporating a holistic approach can help alleviate symptoms and make running more comfortable and enjoyable. While menopause presents challenges, taking time to care for yourself, eating a balanced diet, strength training, prioritizing rest, and recovery, and engaging in self-care activities can support all women experiencing menopause in continuing to enjoy running. We can thrive and not just survive.

**More info Instagram @
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MAKE THE MILE YOUR MEASURE

The magic of the mile is there to be grasped by any runner with a true sense of adventure, writes FRANK GREALLY.

You have tried the 5K, 10K and even the marathon, so why not the mile? The mile is, after all, shorter, quicker, easier to measure and it's a more immediate challenge. The classic nature of the mile run has all the glamour a runner could ask for. So why not make 2024 'the year of the mile'.

Why don't runners run the mile more often? I can understand why marathons and long distance races have become

more popular. For one thing they are easier to organise when it comes to large numbers and it is also easier for the runner to get lost in the crowd. On the other hand, the mile is usually run on a standard running track in a stadium with a more charged atmosphere - more intimidating, so to speak.

Furthermore, Athletics Ireland probably wouldn't take all that kindly to getting thousands of entries for a championship mile.

The mile therefore seems somewhat out of reach. But is it really? I'm not suggesting every runner in the country should enter for the national mile or the 1500m championship. However, there is nothing preventing every runner in the country from running a mile.

Even if there is no regular running track near at hand, it is relatively easy to step out 1,760 yards on a road, in a park or around a playing pitch. Furthermore, unlike a long hard endurance race, you can give the mile a lash quite regularly and see what you can do, see how you improve or even see how much better you are than others who might outrun you over a much longer distance.

The interesting thing also is that when you find your mile time improving you will find your times improving over much



MILE TRAINING BASICS

Very sophisticated training schedules are available for those runners who wish to pursue the mile seriously, but a few broad guidelines are all the beginner needs.

- One session of 6, 8 or 10 x 400m per week could be introduced. Running a series of 400m at a 'demanding pace' is excellent mile training.

- Keep the pace steady. Steady does not mean too easy or too slow. It means setting a pace which will see you through the workout and leave you quite tired at the finish.

- Good warm-up and good stretching are part of the requirements for faster running. So get warm and loose before you tackle a strenuous pace.

- Above all, don't go charging into new or different training with too much vigour. Nothing can be gained by too energetic a start. Miling can be a new, exciting and invigorating aspect of running. Take it on enthusiastically, but not mindlessly.

longer distances as well. Survey after survey proves that the very best marathon runners are also better at distances like 1500m and 5K than marathon runners of similar stature. If you are good enough to beat somebody over a marathon you should be good enough to beat them over a mile.

The mile provides a base from which to build a new structure of performances over a variety of distances. A faster mile could well lead to a faster 10K, a fast half marathon or a fast marathon. For one thing, it will bring a freshness to your approach, an added variety to your training and an added boost to your tempo.

So how do we start this mile business? No revolution is called for - just the effort to get yourself a mile to run. Measure the distance, get a few of your training mates to join you on a Saturday or Sunday morning and time yourselves for the race.

You don't have to change your training, just try the journey. Have a go at your mile, then try again for the following three or four weeks, about once a week. This will establish just how good a miler you are. More often than not the first one or two tries will be approached too fast or too slow, so you need a settling phase to get it about right - i.e. as even paced and as fast as you can.



The problem with giving this kind of advice to your average runner is that they are hooked into a pattern of training or racing and they feel this new adventure will upset their routine. Of course it will upset the routine and that is precisely what it is intended to do. People take up running out of a sense of adventure. Once they get into a habitual way of behaving they find it traumatic to change the routine. In fact, some runners would probably find it easier to give up running than to make dramatic changes in their training programmes.

However, this is not about traumas or dramatics. It's just about runners rediscovering

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Why not set yourself a new challenge in 2024: a good mile, the best mile you can run, the fastest mile you can run

”

the freshness of running. It's about coming at it from a new angle and establishing a new yardstick of measurement.

The exciting thing about the mile is that it can be talked about with the same awe as the marathon. It offers ample targets and barriers to tackle, whether it's the 7-minute mile or the 5-minute mile.

The mile run is just sitting there waiting to be conquered by all of us who run. Dare I say it, the challenge is sticking out a mile! It is a most logical step in the world of everyman's and everywoman's athletics. It is no big deal, yet is capable of giving us all the returns, all the run rewards, all the satisfaction and all the fulfilment of triathlons, biathlons or ultra marathons.

Every runner should have to produce a best mile time as part of their athletic CV. So as we approach 2024, why not set yourself a new challenge: a good mile, the best mile you can run, the fastest mile you can run.

The magic of the mile is there to be grasped. Once you decide you want to do it and exert yourself with a bit of fast training, the world of the mile is at your feet.

IT'S SHOE TIME

Get off to a good footing in 2024 by choosing the right running shoe for you, writes CONOR O'HAGAN.

A good pair of specialised running shoes is the one truly essential pieces of kit involved in the sport - the only thing between you and the road, in more ways than one. There are significant differences between one pair of feet and another, not only in size and shape, but also in the way they operate.

The most important area of difference between one running action and another is in the action known as pronation. Pronation is actually the normal rolling movement of the foot from the outside of the heel as it strikes the ground to the ball of the foot as the heel lifts and your body moves forward. That motion is central to the absorption of shock, and when, in some runners, it is over-emphasised or under-emphasised, it can lead to a range of injuries, particularly in the lower leg and knee. Detecting any tendency to over-pronate or under-pronate is crucial to choosing the right shoe. The easiest way to check your feet is with the wet footprint test.

GAIT SORTED

Selecting the right running shoe may also require some gait analysis work at your local specialist running store. Gait analysis measures what happens while your body is in motion. It identifies the posture of your joints and structure of your feet and this information provides a guide for your stability, cushioning and structure requirements. Your choice of running shoe will ultimately depend on your foot type. Most of us fall into the 'normal', 'flat' or 'high arch' bracket.

NORMAL

Take a look at the shape your wet foot leaves on a wooden floor. The normal foot shows heel and forefoot connected by a broad band indicating a moderately pronating (inward rolling) action after heelstrike. This foot type requires a shoe

with only moderate stability and motion control to counter overpronation.

FLAT FOOT

The combination of low arch and almost the entire sole being in contact with the ground means that flat-footed people are likely to overpronate between heel-strike and toe-off. The consequences often include ankle and knee injuries. Flat-footed people require full-motion control shoes with straight last, medial post and relatively rigid, supportive feel.

HIGH ARCH

This foot print displays little or no connecting strip between heel and forefoot. High arched feet can lead to under-pronation - a lack of natural movement during the gait cycle. This foot type requires plenty of cushioning and maximum flexibility on a curved last.

“ Detecting any tendency to over-pronate or under-pronate is crucial to choosing the right shoe ”



INTERSPORT
Elverys
THE HEART OF SPORT

These may be 'difficult times', but in the **running shoe marketplace** the one thing that gets more difficult is choosing which shoe to wear, as new models and even brands appear with increasing frequency.

Are running shoes better than they used to be?

Some gnarly veterans swear by the shoes they trained in 20 years ago, apparently convinced that two decades of development, name changes, cosmetic enhancement and new materials amount to nothing more than window dressing. But by any objective standard they're wrong; today's shoes offer more of just about anything you want more of, and less of what you don't - including price.

Standards of cushioning and stability, the two core competences of any running shoe, have been raised incrementally year on year since the dawn of the original running boom back in the 1970s and early '80s.

Perhaps the most noticeable recent trend in running shoes has been comfort - a tendency for uppers to become more breathable, liners more slipper-like and fit just a little more relaxed without any loss of security or stability. The following is a layman's guide to running shoe terminology.

What is a 'cushioning' shoe?

Simply, a shoe designed for neutral runners, not over-pronators. Though all shoes have stability features, neutral shoes assume that the wearer is not in need of special correction.

What does biomechanical mean?

The way your body works; in the context of running, the way you run, the parts of you involved in the process and the forces at work in that process.

What are flex grooves for?

Basically, to control (or at least influence) the extent and direction of bending in the sole. The most obvious location is under the ball of your foot, which is its natural 'hinge'. But elsewhere, flex grooves can play a part in stabilising and guiding your gait cycle. Cosmetically, the grooves are flagged on the outsole, but may also be present, invisibly, within the midsole.

What is 'instability'?

It could mean almost anything (a tendency to disintegrate, for instance), but in shoe parlance it refers specifically to a tendency to over-rotate.

Stability shoe

No less cushioning than a neutral shoe, but with the addition of features designed to guide the gait cycle and reduce over-pronation. The most common of these is a medial post - an element of stiffer material on the medial

(inner) side of the shoe making it harder for the foot to roll inwards or pronate.

What does the midsole do?

A lot. The midsole, which is the layer between the outsole and your foot, is the main cushioning element of a shoe. It also houses most proprietary cushioning and stability elements such as Air, Gel, Plate or Grid. The trick - which most modern shoes accomplish very well - is to do all this while retaining 'feel'.

What is pronation?

Pronation is the natural rolling movement of the foot following heelstrike. First contact with the ground is usually on the outer edge of the heel. The foot then rolls inwards as the forefoot and inside of the foot land. In some runners this rolling motion can be excessive.

What's the difference between stability and motion control shoes?

It's mainly a difference of degree. Motion control shoes have a level of stability that most runners don't need, and which can make them feel relatively rigid. Because it's often heavier runners who are most prone to severe over-pronation, they tend to be very well cushioned.



INTERSPORT ELVERYS : 3D FOOT SCANNER

SINA THEIL reviews for Irish Runner Magazine after a recent visit to Intersport Elverys in Dundrum, Dublin.

Like most of us, at some stage in my life I used to pick out running shoes based on which colour I fancied the most, which brand was the trendiest or which model was recommended by the sales assistant available in store at that time.

Little did I know that these criteria were not only getting me worse performance results but also possibly causing me damage and injuries over time. As someone whose legs have different lengths, who presents a slight inward rotation on the right leg, has somewhat different sized feet and played sports for many years on probably the wrong footwear, I've come to realise that shoes play a key role in our overall health.

But... how do you choose something as crucial as the perfect running shoe?

Luckily, I found out the answer to that question during my recent visit at Intersport Elverys's Dundrum (Dublin). Here I got to test the revolutionary Safesize 3D Foot Scanning technology, a service that is currently being

offered to customers at this location for free! Within seconds, this amazing machine provides a detailed analysis of the foot anatomy in order to reconstruct the exact foot shape and detect detailed foot dimensions including length, width, height and girth.

Under the guidance of one of the knowledgeable Sports Advisors, I stepped onto the Safesize 3D Foot Scanning surface and introduced a few necessary details such as height and weight, swiftly obtaining my own personal 3D foot passport.

Amazed, I looked at how fast and accurately I had not just obtained important data regarding the exact measurements of my feet but also my arch type. I even instantly received my results via email, in order to consult them in the future. Once the Sports Advisor had talked me through my results, I was set up for the quick dynamic analysis process where, using a pressure plate to detect my walking patterns and pronation type, I was one step closer to going home with the perfect running shoes.

Once completed, during the final stage of the process I swiftly established my sports profile with information about my habits, preferences and discomforts. Marvelling at how quick and easy this process had been so far, I was now presented with personalised 3D fitting advice and shoe recommendations from the Intersport Elverys's virtual shoe wall, based on my personal profile and the vast database of functional shoe characteristics.

I left the store impressed with the Safesize 3D Foot Scanning technology - within minutes I had been paired with my ideal running shoes at no extra cost! Now I was ready to hit the road.

INTERSPORT
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TRIED AND TESTED

Irish Runner Magazine have teamed up with Intersport Elverys, Ireland's leading Sports Store to review a selection of recommended running shoes and apparel for 2024.

Adidas Supernova 3 GTX

I chose a size 8 in the wide model, which would be my usual size for running shoes. The shoe weight is 267gr.



(309gr. for men's). My first impression upon slipping my feet into these runners was that of support (enhanced by the rather rigid upper material) and comfort. Although nicely snug, the shoe catered well for my wider foot and was spacious enough in the toe box.

The rubber Continental™ WinterGrip™ outsole seemed promising regarding traction. The tongue of the shoe attached to the upper on both sides, helping to keep dirt out and the tongue centred. I also liked how cushioned the heel collar felt. I was also excited to test out the hybrid "Boost and Bounce" midsole which was designed to combine both comfort and energy.

However, what I was maybe most excited about was testing the GORE-TEX membrane. Could this be my new trusted companion during wet weather conditions?

Once I laced up and hit the road, the Adidas Supernova 3 GTX did not disappoint. I enjoyed the little less cushioning and hence stronger contact feeling with the ground. I also loved the

great grip and traction sensation that the Continental™ WinterGrip™ outsole provided. My feet felt very stable and secure even when running on grass, wet pavement or leaves. My favourite feature was the GORE-TEX membrane though! Even in wet conditions my feet stayed dry and warm, which was fantastic. I also found this shoe to have a nice snug fit, less of a bounce and comfortable room for my toes to naturally splay. I also really liked the fact that the upper shoe is made out of at least 50% recycled materials.

My favourite features: the GORE-TEX membrane and Continental™ WinterGrip™ definitely stood out for me! I loved how water resistant this shoe was and how much of a gripping sensation it provided on all sorts of surfaces - making it a good choice for wet weather conditions.

Reviewer : Sina Theil

Brand : Adidas Supernova 3 GTX

Retail Price : €130

Asics GT-2000 12

I chose a size 8 which would be my usual size for running shoes. The shoe weight is 235gr. (270gr. for men's). My first impression was a very supported, cushioned and comfortable feeling.

This shoe felt nicely snug around the mid-foot while, however, still catering for my wide foot and providing plenty of room in the toe box without any feeling of constriction. It was an instant secure fit.

As someone who has quite a strong heel impact, I was particularly excited to see how the 3D GUIDANCE SYSTEM™ technology (provides extra support by guiding the foot in a natural way during the run), the New PureGEL™ technology (improves softness and shock absorption to reduce the impact on the joints) and FF

BLAST™ PLUS foam (delivers softer landing and extra cushioning to keep a comfortable feeling on harder surfaces) would act to provide extra stability and comfort.

Overall, it seemed like this would be a stable, comfortable, cushioned, soft, bouncy ride with a nice toe-off.

Once on the road, the GT-2000 12 also did my expectations justice. I had a nice cushioned sensation with the foot feeling very stable, an energising toe-off and soft, protected impact upon landing. It seemed like the aforementioned features were doing what they promised!

The stability was noticeable without being intrusive and each step seemed light, cushioned and bouncy. This made the ride feel more effortless to me than the Adidas Supernova 3 GTX. Once more, the upper shoe is made out of at least 50% recycled materials and the carbon footprint was reduced to 9.9 kg/CO₂e - 21% less than the industry average.

My favourite features: the 3D GUIDANCE SYSTEM, New PureGEL™ technology and



FF BLAST™ PLUS foam provided a cushioned, comfortable and stable experience with a secure fit that I really enjoyed.

Reviewer : Sina Theil

Brand : Asics GT-2000 12

Retail Price : €160

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Brooks Ghost

After testing the Brooks Ghost running shoe from Intersport Elverys, I was very impressed by them. Having worn Brooks on previous occasions this was my first trial of the Brooks ghost model. I am a long-distance runner so the durability of a good running shoe is very important to me.

Not only did I find them to be very durable, they were also extremely comfortable especially over the longer distances. They are very light but also have great cushioning which gave me an extra bounce in my stride which in turn helped me to run faster without too much effort.

They are a very breathable shoe with the air mesh on the upper part of them preventing my feet from overheating & sweating. As an athlete who is prone to blisters from certain runners, thankfully this was not the case with the Brooks Ghost model. They have a wider fit with a spacious toe box which along with the air mesh on the upper part of the shoe helps to make them so comfortable when

running especially over longer distances where blisters can become a problem. As an athlete currently training over marathon distances, I like to use a runner that will withstand many miles which the Brooks Ghost have done without losing their cushioning.

I also used them over the shorter distances which I found made my faster paced runs more comfortable. Brooks ghost is a natural shoe but as an athlete who overpronates whilst running they did not give me any issues with my feet as they were very stable & comfortable to run in.

I would highly recommend the Brooks ghost runners to runners and also walkers who may be on their feet for many hours a day. They are reasonably priced for the quality provided and I will definitely be wearing them again.

Reviewer : Catherine O' Connor

Brand : Brooks Ghost

Retail Price : €150



Puma Deviate Nitro 2

Despite having a wide foot myself I definitely found the fit to be generous so sized down and went with the 38.5 size and it was still plenty wide enough.

On my scales at home these weigh in at 221g per shoe. My first impression of the shoe is that they have a similar feel to the Nike Pegasus but I found them more responsive and faster. They definitely would be suited to a speed session as the shape of the sole really propels you forward and they feel light and fast.

After wearing them for several runs, the legs always felt fresh throughout and couldn't really feel any fatigue kicking in, so a good all-around shoe. They do feel very light so I am unsure as to how these would wear over a longer period of time; for me I would use these for shorter runs and speed sessions purely because I have a foot injury and found towards the end of longer runs that perhaps the support

and cushion wasn't quite enough to support my injury over longer distances.

On the side by side comparison run these were noticeably faster than the Nike and the Hoka - the average easy pace run was 5.08 per km (compared to Hoka 5.17 and Nike 5.13).

Overall a really nice shoe. Light and fast! Would be great for speed sessions and races. Another positive is that they do have plenty of room in the toe box so they felt very comfortable from the outside with no needing to break them in so would also suit someone with a wide foot.

Reviewer : Hannah Nolan

Brand : Puma Deviate Nitro 2

Retail Price : €170

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Nike Structure 25

Nike is the usual brand that I run in and I would go with a size 39 but upon trying these in my usual size I did feel they were slightly snug across my toes, so the 40 felt more comfortable.

Immediately the foot felt very supported with plenty of cushioning both in the sole itself and also around the heel area. Having had issues previously with heel blistering from lack of padding, these definitely did not disappoint, and on the first run felt they were good to go, comfortable and wouldn't need much or any breaking in.

The shoe weighed in at 269g so a little heavier than the Puma. Compared to my other Nike models this is also a little heavier (Pegasus 39: 236g, invincible 2: 244g, invincible 3: 249g). This is definitely more of a stability shoe, however they do feel responsive, so despite being heavier they also have a good amount of cushion and bounce which

enables you to still move through the gears and move quickly enough.

They feel sturdy and like they would last the distance for longer training runs and longer weekly mileage. Again, whilst I can't say how they would be after a long period of time they certainly feel like they would be more durable than perhaps the Puma.

On the side by side comparison run these came in the middle at 5.13 per km (compared to Puma 5.08 and Hoka 5.16). Overall this is probably my favourite of the three. Despite being the heaviest of the three, they are responsive and the legs do not feel fatigue over longer distance. They would suit for general day to day training and longer mileage or someone looking for a more supportive shoe.

Reviewer : Hannah Nolan

Brand : Nike Structure 25

Retail Price : €130

Hoka Clifton 9

I have never tried a Hoka shoe so I was really curious to see how these felt. They are similar width to the Nike shoes so with having a wide foot I needed to go with the 6 rather than the 5.5.

The one thing that struck me when putting them on is that I actually couldn't compare them to anything I have worn before. I'm not sure how to describe it but the fit is just different to other runners I have had. The sole is thick and bouncy - my initial thought is that they feel like I've got clouds on my feet and I feel bouncy and light in them.

Weight wise these weighed in as the same as the Puma at 221g and felt like they would also be a quick running shoe. Heading out on my first run in them they did not disappoint. They do feel so comfortable and bouncy I felt like I was floating down the road. After a few kilometres I did notice that my legs were feeling slightly more fatigued than they had done in the Puma or the Nike.

Obviously with every day being slightly different in the body with energy levels I wasn't sure if this was a "shoe thing" or a "body thing" so I did reserve judgement on this at this stage but on the initial run I did feel like my legs were working slightly harder and slightly more fatigued at the tail end of the run than the Puma and Nike.

Like the Nike shoe these are lovely and cushioned on the inside of the shoe and heel area so are a 10/10 for comfort. They are also a good solid shoe, so again I feel like these would go for miles and miles and wear really well.

On the side by side comparison these did come in the slowest at 5.17 per km (compared to Puma 5.08 and Nike 5.13). Even though these are the same weight as the Puma and lighter than the Nike I feel the Hoka are definitely more of a training shoe and less for speed as they don't feel quite as responsive, however I will definitely be continuing to use these for training as I feel they will be very hard wearing and also very supportive especially for my foot injury.

For someone looking for a structured and comfortable shoe for long miles, I feel these would definitely fit the bill!



Reviewer : Hannah Nolan

Brand : Hoka Clifton 9

Retail Price : €150 - €170

INTERSPORT
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THE HEART OF SPORT



Adidas SolarGlide 6

From the off, in colours of black, teal blue & luminous green and with the three Adidas stripes, this shoe is very eye-catching. First fitting of the SolarGlide felt OK; the toe box is wider than my other runners, so good for athletes with a wider forefoot. Circular knitting means no overlays - your upper is one unified piece.

Adidas Boost foam technology cushioning does offer some support, durability and flexibility, but on a recent 10-miler, I felt the SolarGlide 6 was out of puff at the 5K mark. Not a great road shoe for fast runs, the SolarGlide 6 had very little bounce and no energy return that I could feel.

This shoe is best for relatively easy running miles - it's comfortable with a lot of cushioning and good grip, even in the wet. But it's not built for speed, or track work, and has only moderate stability, so it's not for heavy pronators either.

Essentially, the SolarGlide 6 is a neutral daily trainer ideal for easy mileage. It's highly cushioned with basic stability features. Breathable and moderately rainproof, it will fit the bill for most winter training needs.

Overall, the SolarGlide, I feel, would be best suited as a cross-trainer, for trail running, parks or cross training and treadmill miles.

Reviewer : Shane Healy

Brand : Adidas SolarGlide 6

Retail Price : €150

Asics Gel-Nimbus Nimbus 25

As autumn sets in, I'm just about to go out for a 10-miler. Before I go, I'm opening up an Asics shoe box to christen a pair of Gel-Nimbus 25. From first glance, what hits me is the stunning colour scheme: blue, black and lemon cascading into each other. These are imposing shoes.



The Gel-Nimbus to the touch feels very light - especially for a flagship cushioning model with serious comfort built in and a big heel depth which runs right up to the toe box.

It's a very well-built running shoe, but on my feet was a very snug fit in the toe box, and probably wouldn't suit wider feet, so if that's you, take extra care with sizing.

The FF Blast+ Eco midsole is noticeably thicker than in previous Nimbus iterations, while the all-new upper has sufficient stretch to conform to the foot with a nice, smooth feel.

The extra height on the tongue is a bonus, adding better protection to your metatarsals. On a 10 miler, Gel-Nimbus gave a smoother and softer running experience, though with limited feel - as you'd expect.

There's very good traction with its AHAR rubber outsole, and a breathable soft knit upper wraps fit comfortably around your foot, adding to the already superlative comfort that is a Nimbus hallmark.

Overall the Asics Gel-Nimbus 25 is a wonderful road training shoe, packed with technology and quality. Stable, well-cushioned and durable, it's a worthy heir to a long-standing reputation.

Reviewer : Shane Healy

Brand : Asics Gel-Nimbus Nimbus 25

Retail Price : €200

INTERSPORT
Elverys
THE HEART OF SPORT

Nike React Infinity 4

As I power up the mountain trail in Ravensdale, Nike Infinity 4's ReactX midsole foam adds unexpected bounce to my step. ReactX foam is definitely giving the 13% more energy that Nike claims.

The waffle outsole has no issues on the mountain gravel trail, keeping my traction very firm. I notice when going through puddles that my feet don't get as wet as usual, thanks to Nike's water-resistant liner mainly keeping my toes dry.

The React Infinity 4 is no lightweight contender but a heavyweight in the easy miles category; plush, secure-feeling and almost bouncy – with the mass to go with those characteristics. In terms of fit, it's noticeably 'snug', bordering on tight-fitting at my usual size, so possibly worth stepping up a half-size in.

It's supportive and stable, but broadly neutral rather than being a stability shoe as such; the footbed has a slightly cupped profile to guide your foot on impact, which gives an added feeling of security in use. The new outsole is thick and looks very durable.

The entire outsole now has thick, waffle rubber coverage so the midsole foam doesn't get scuffed anymore. This is where the majority of the ounce of extra weight comes from.

There's very little outsole wear showing on my pair and I think the InfinityRN 4's outsole can rival the Pegasus 40 in terms of durability. Traction is better than the previous versions because the lugs are raised and the outsole is no longer completely flat.

It's also a great-looking shoe in my estimation. Definitely not for sessions or tempo runs, more for everyday training, trails, parks and hills.

Overall the Nike React Infinity 4 is a lovely, snug-fitting shoe – reminding me of the Nike Air Huarache from the 1990s. A significant upgrade on its predecessor, albeit at a fairly hefty price.

Reviewer : Shane Healy

Brand : Nike React Infinity 4

Retail Price : €170 - €190



Brooks Glycerin 20

It felt nice to be back in a Brooks training shoe - the Brooks Glycerin 20 - there was a time when the famous Brooks Beast was my favourite running shoe and it felt nice to be re-acquainted with the brand after a lengthy separation.

My regular size 8 UK (42) proved a perfect and comfortable fit, which isn't always the case when I change models. I found this model from Brooks to be very supportive. A little heavy at 9oz - but ideal for this runner, who is only getting back to running fitness after a long layoff.

A midsole infused with nitrogen bubbles creates a shoe with good cushioning. I found the mesh upper to be lightweight and breathable and what's referred to by the manufacturers as nitrogen-infused DNA LOFTv3 cushioning proves an immediate winner when it comes to stability and comfort.

I thought the Brooks Glycerin 20 to be a little light on traction but the snug fit more than made up for that.

The Glycerin 20 is the newest version of the shoe that's been Brooks' flagship neutral shoe for over 20 years. It's an everyman design, regardless of weight and speed. I'd recommend it as a training shoe. It ticks a lot of boxes for me as a neutral runner. I can also recommend the Foot Test machine at Elverys; it's important that you get to choose the shoe best suited to your individual running style.

Reviewer : Frank

Grealley

Brand : Brooks

Glycerin 20

Retail Price : €180



INTERSPORT
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Puma Deviate Nitro 2

I usually take a size 8 UK or 42 in a running shoe but I found that size to be a little bit tight for me when I tried them on in Elverys store in Dundrum Shopping Centre where I also had my feet scanned to confirm that what I needed was a Neutral shoe.

I was a little hesitant at trying a size 9UK (43) of the Deviate Nitro 2 - but it seemed straight away to be a perfect match for me and I found the pair to be a nicely snug fit with ample room in the toe box for a little bit of toe wiggling. The shoes were a comfortable fit and the tongue and lacing system added to the comfortable feeling.

The big test was to come when I took the shoes for a training run - a short run because I was just making a return to running after a couple of years when my main exercise activity was Fitness Walking.

A pair of Puma Nitro 2 running shoes became my springboard back to at least half-stride to begin with.

For the technically minded, the new Puma Deviate Nitro 2 comes with a full layer of NITRO Elite foam for improved responsiveness, a reworked collar to reduce heel slip and a lighter asymmetrical base that I find works well for me. More subjectively, I found that the shoes have great bounce. The stretch in the upper also adds to the comfortable fit and there is excellent grip on all surfaces I have run on to date. They should be ideal for a few parkruns.

Reviewer : Frank Greally

Brand : Puma Deviate Nitro 2

Retail Price : €170



Asics Black Leggings & Brooks Long-Sleeved top

I have recently trialled running apparel for Intersport Elverys, the Asics black leggings and the Brooks long-sleeved top. I found them both very comfortable to wear whilst running and doing other activities like yoga and Pilates along with strength & conditioning workouts.

The black leggings whilst designed to keep you warm in the colder conditions, they are also soft and breathable and not too warm whilst training. As an athlete who does not like to overheat while running or doing workouts, I found the

Asics leggings to be the perfect balance for keeping me warm without overdoing it.

There is a soft stretch in them with an adjustable fit so that they are comfortable while running without becoming too loose and uncomfortable on me, which can become irritating while exercising so the drawstring is extremely helpful. There is also a useful internal back pocket for carrying keys, gels etc. I found them very comfortable overall whilst exercising and also day to day wear.

The Brooks half zip long-sleeved top provided everything I needed on my

run. With the weather conditions becoming cooler this top was just perfect for layering up. The half zip gave me the option to cool down when needed and provided great ventilation. The top also comes with an adjustable hood with a button to tightly to secure the hood when not needed. It also comes with thumb holes and most impressively for me was the fold over mittens incorporated into the sleeves. This is a genius idea for the cold weather cooler early mornings.

This top for me had it all with it being suitable for all weathers as it's light and breathable whilst also catering for the colder environment. A perfect top also for warming up and cooling down with all the accessories needed in one top. Both these products are very versatile and I will definitely be using them again.

Reviewer : Catherine O' Connor

Brands: Asics Black Leggings & Brooks Long-Sleeved top

Retail Prices : Varies



INTERSPORT
Elverys

THE HEART OF SPORT

Energetics Clothing Women

Cusca Womens Half Zip Top

After trying on the clothing I did decide to size up to a Medium in this top. The body was perfect and form fitting on the small, but I just felt a little more comfortable in the medium as I found the small size slightly too high underneath my armpits and personally prefer a looser fit. It is really lightweight and I also love that it has the thumb holes at the end of the sleeve to keep everything in place and stop any annoying riding up or down.

Portia full length black leggings

I found these true to size so stayed with the small in these. They have a nice soft material with a slight sheen / silky feel to them. They also have a rear zip pocket which is big enough to hold my mobile phone which is always a plus!

There is a nice mesh panel detail that wraps around the legging from the inner thigh crossing over the back of the knee to the calf. This helps give more flexible movement when running as well as ventilation for when the body is warmed up a little more!

The waist I would class as medium – high (i.e. covering the belly button and mummy tummy!) but not too high that it feels restrictive.

Semenya Full Zip Running Jacket

This is definitely the favourite piece I tried. Firstly, I love the colour which is always a help but in general the jacket is comfortable and functional at the same time. It has a large zip pocket on the top left at the front and also has gripper tape at the bottom of the jacket similar to what would be used on cycling or triathlon gear to stop it riding up.

The thumb holes keep it in place on the arms with the added bonus of an extra slit on the left wrist to be able to view your watch without having to remove the thumb and roll up the sleeve which is something that has always frustrated me in the past with winter running clothes!

The side panels are also made of breathable fabric, so not only look nice, they also keep the jacket breathable! Again true to size on this one and took my usual size. I tend not to overly layer even in winter, so my usual size was perfect, but I also tried with an extra jumper underneath for testing purposes and it still fit perfectly.

Reviewer : Hannah Nolan

Brands: Energetics Clothing Women

Retail Prices : Varies



Nike Winter Apparel

Nike Pro Training Dri-FIT Tights

Made from stretchy poly, these slim-fit tights are made using Nike's Dri-FIT technology which wicks away sweat. They feel like a second skin, are very stretchy and light weight. The flat lock seams prevent chafing and add to the comfortable wear.

The thick supportive waistband features eye-catching Nike Pro branding and does an excellent job at keeping the tights in place. Mesh panels to the calf boost breathability. The Swoosh logo is printed to the thigh, adding a nice visual feature. The Nike Pro Training Dri-FIT Tights are very comfortable not just while training but also as day-long wear. I found them to be true to size; hence I chose a size M.

Nike Womens Swoosh T-Shirt

This comfortable training t-shirt features Nike Dri-FIT technology which moves sweat away from the skin for quicker evaporation, creating a fast-drying and comfortable experience.



The material feels cooling while sweating and very light weight. While the t-shirt is snug at the shoulders, side vents create extra give that allow for freedom of movement. Also great is the longer, curved back hem which helps keep a cover throughout the full stride. I found it to be true to size; hence I chose a size S.

Women's Swoosh Half Zip Pacer Top

The 1/4-zip design makes changing in and out of this pacer top easy, while ensuring a great look and fit. The neck zips up snugly all the way to the top, keeping the neck nicely warm if desired. The Nike Dri-FIT technology moves sweat away from the skin for quicker evaporation, creating a quick drying, comfortable and cooling experience. The thumbholes help hold the sleeves in place while in movement, adding more comfort and warmth. The overall feel of the top is snug; very light weight, cooling, slick and fast drying. I found it to be true to size; hence I chose a size S.

Reviewer : Sina Theil

Brands: Nike Winter Apparel

Retail Prices : Varies

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Energetics Clothing Men

I play it safe with clothing these days and opt for XL for comfort. I went straight for this size in a T Energetics DRYPLUS T short-sleeved T-shirt, an Energetics Full Zip running jacket and a pair of Energetics Leggings.

I was delighted with the positive and encouraging responses I received from family members and a few friends when they saw me kitted out and ready to run again. I was told that I was looking trim and that was enough to start me back on the road to fitness.

The Energetics T-shirt is a comfortable nice fit and breathable, too. On a few of the bright autumn days that we had in October the T-shirt and leggings were all I needed for short training runs.

It had been a while since I dressed up fully for a run and when I headed out the door fully kitted out for my training session I felt that I was already dressed for success.

The Energetics full-length black leggings were a comfortable fit and the XL size was exactly what I needed. The zipped pocket in the rear is ideal for keeping car or house keys safe while on the run. The mesh that stretches all the way down each leg adds to the smart look. You feel much better about yourself when you know that you look



well and being kitted out the Energetics leggings and an accompanying Energetics DRYPLUS Rain Jacket greatly helped to add a new pep to my stride.

The Energetics Full Zip Running Jacket is a nice snug- slim fit- light and stylish with a hood to help offset light showers. The side panels are made from a breathable fabric and they help to give the garment a stylish finish.

I have been wearing the Energetics Jacket and Leggings on regular training days and I find that dressing up to run helps a lot with motivation and determination to keep going.

I'm looking forward to Christmas now when I peel off my jacket after a training run and confirm to those present that I am indeed beginning to have again the appearance of a fit runner again. I have not yet tested the Energetics apparel in heavy rain conditions, but the jacket and leggings have provided excellent shelter during light rain showers.

Reviewer : Frank Greally
Brands: Energetics Clothing
Retail Prices : Varies

Energetics Dry Plus Ventmax

Off out the door for a 21km run with my Energetics Dry Plus Ventmax lightweight softshell material, which Energetics says is windproof and a breathable material.

During my run, the wind and rain picked up, and I was delighted Energetics Dry Plus Ventmax had a hood on it as well as elasticated cuffs to keep your head protected from the elements.

Another nice touch was there is a small opening on the left elasticated sleeve for your watch face to fit through – it really is handy, so you don't have to go digging for your splits/times when your hands are in the cuffs.

I was pleasantly surprised how well Ventmax held up to the elements; my body heat was not lost on the run. Ventmax kept me warm and snug. Dry Plus Eco Technology really did its

work on the moisture elements, therefore regulating your body temperature so you always stay dry. Only gripe I had with Energetics Dry Plus was that the elasticated cuffs material tends to hold a lot of sweat water contents.

Other than this, Ventmax Jacket is a wonderful companion and I highly recommend Energetics Dry Plus Ventmax.

On the upper left, there is a key zipped pocket. I had the matching pair Energetics Leggings/Tights, which were well made with soft, elasticated material which fitted really well and were snug below the waistline.

Energetics Dry Plus did its job in the rain; I didn't feel cold or damp during the run. The compression on these Dry Plus leggings is impressive, therefore keeping you in one piece on your run.

Reviewer : Shane Healy
Brands: Energetics Dry Plus Ventmax
Retail Prices : Varies

Available in selected Intersport Elverys stores and online
www.elverys.ie



Thanks to our reviewers Hannah Nolan, Sina Theil, Catherine O' Connor, Frank Greally and Shane Healy. Photography : Paul Reardon & Gerry Nolan. For further details on Intersport Elverys and stores throughout Ireland <https://www.elverys.ie/>

INTERSPORT
Elverys

THE HEART OF SPORT



ST. ABBAN'S FIT4LIFE STRIDE ON

A thriving Fit4Life programme has helped further develop St. Abban's AC, writes RORY CASSIDY.



St. Abban's A.C. in Laois has for some time now provided one of the best Fit4Life programmes in the country – a programme that was introduced to clubs over a decade ago by Athletics Ireland.

Established seventeen years ago in September 2006 by Ben Brennan and Noeleen Condrón, the programme has continued to go from strength to strength attracting new members to the club and most importantly enhancing the sense of community within the tight-knit rural area.

The group was founded to provide an outlet for people to get fit and have fun in a social environment, a shift from the club's ethos which up to then had predominately just focused on the competitive aspect of the sport.

The main target group for the club initially was women with the aim of encouraging them to follow a healthier lifestyle by walking, running, and developing friendships through fitness.

Two years into the programme in 2008, with things going so well, Ben and Noeleen along with the rest of the club, decided to take the next step forward by setting up the M3 (Monavea Mini Marathon) with the support of the Laois Sports Partnership.

It turned out to be a massively fruitful endeavour.

Little did Ben and Noeleen know that two hundred people would descend on the Laois village that day from all corners of the country, with Ann Haugh from Midleton AC in Cork taking the inaugural title.

The M3 continued for the next five years before it was discontinued in 2013 but all the

while the Fit4Life group remained a hive of activity.

St. Abban's Fit4Life League was also setup in 2008 providing members with competitive races in a number of locations close to the club's base in the Midlands county.

Starting out as a members only league in four different locations, the event has grown steadily to the point where it now boasts over 150 participants from all over Ireland.

This year it marked another milestone incorporating chip timing for the first time with the help of PopUpRaces and the local sports partnership.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the league went virtual with people from around the country submitting their runs into St. Abban's allowing members to stay connected while they were forced to stay apart.

One of the things the club feels most pride about is how they have adapted to fit and suit the needs of their local community since the group was setup.

Despite being less than two decades ago, a lot has changed since September 2006, and

“

Many a new friendship has been forged on a wet winter or a balmy summer evening in Monavea

”

the group has always been mindful to move with the times.

“Originally it was setup to encourage women to get active, but in recent years, the focus has changed,” Adrienne Kelly, one of the club's current Fit4Life coordinators says.

“We now encourage everyone to get involved and have members from all walks of life. Our group caters for old, young, men, women and people with additional needs in the hope of getting everyone active.

“We have introduced the track and fitness to many people who would have felt intimidated about taking part or using the facilities.”

One of the things Adrienne and her fellow club committee members have been keen to develop is the social element of the group and this has had a hugely positive effect.

“Our group now participates in regular trips to complete walks, nights at the dogs and travel to many Parkruns all over the country,” she says.

“We have also brought new activities on board for our members. Last year we participated in dancing classes and really enjoyed the experience. This also helped to bring other people from within the community on board.”

Nutritional information talks have also been provided to members of Fit4Life at St. Abban's, and following this the realisation of just how important resistance training was for healthy bodies saw the group introduce a range of strength training exercises into their training routine.

The club now have a core group of fifty involved with their Fit4Life group which grows during peak times such as January and September.

“Particularly in winter people enjoy coming to use our facilities because it is well lit and safe which is hugely beneficial in a rural area,” Adrienne adds.

When Ben and Noeleen got things underway in 2006 they could hardly have anticipated it would still be going strong heading into 2024, with both still involved in the group's success to this day.

Adrienne is eager to get a key message across about those who have joined the group down the years. “Many a new friendship has been forged on a wet winter or a balmy summer evening in Monavea,” she says.

All at St. Abban's are keen to see that continue as the group strides into the future.

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RECORDS KEEP TUMBLING

DAVID O'DWYER puts the record breaking exploits of a new wave of young, talented, Irish, middle-distance athletes in focus and gives good reason for optimism for the Olympic year ahead.



Mark English

Middle distance athletics of the late 1970's and early 1980's has long been considered to be a "golden era". And that's not being nostalgic. The emergence of a number of athletes from a host of countries - Ireland, Britain, New Zealand and the USA who were more than willing to race against each other meant only one thing - fast times that would inevitably lead to national and world records.

From an Irish perspective we had plenty of athletes who were willing and able to achieve fast times. Names that easily spring to mind include Eamon Coghlan, John Treacy, Ray Flynn, Marcus O'Sullivan and Frank O'Mara. Great races and fast times were a hallmark of the era. Don't just take my word for it. Do a search on YouTube for "great middle-distance races" and you'll be spoilt for choice. One of the best of these, in an Irish context is the Bislett Games mile race from 1982. Steve Scott from the USA won the race, just missing out on a new world record, but he set a new US national record, John Walker was second also setting a national record and Ireland's Ray Flynn was third - setting a still standing national record of 3:49:77. In the same race he set a national record of 3:33:5 for the 1,500m which was broken this year by Andrew Coscoran.

Much has been written in the intervening years about the dearth of Irish middle-distance running from those heady days of the 1980's when the likes of Flynn et al, mixed it with the best in the world. The consistency of Flynn and O'Sullivan was

Besides Coscoran and Griggs, there are quite a few young athletes showing significant promise and who have impressive mile times to their names. 11 Irish men broke four minutes for the mile this year and their best times are recorded in the table below.

Name	Time	Location	Date
Luke McCann	3:53:55i	New York	11Feb23
Andrew Coscoran	3:53:64i	Massachusetts	4Feb23
Ronan McMahon-Staggs	3:54:93i	Fayetteville	17Feb23
Conor Murphy	3:55.24i	Boston	11Feb23
Nick Griggs	3:55:73 NU20R and NU23R	Santry	14July23
Cathal Doyle	3:56:05	Santry	14July23
Charlie O'Donovan	3:56:08i	Pennsylvania	27Jan23
Shane Bracken	3:58:01i	Fayetteville	28Jan23
Brian Fay	3:58:50i	Boston	26Feb23
Micheal Power	3:58:76i	Fayetteville	13Jan23
Oisín O'Gailín	3:59:07i	Boston	27Jan23

staggering. Flynn recording 89 sub four minute miles and O'Sullivan 101. Such feats are unlikely to be matched today.

For a number of years since that "golden era" Ireland's top middle-distance athletes struggled to reach these heights. Mark Carroll and Alistair Cragg kept the flame burning and maintained the high standards. They were the standout athletes of the 1990's and 2000's respectively.

There are multiple reasons for why Ireland has not continued to produce a handful of world class milers in the generations since Flynn and others. But that's for another feature... All is not lost, however. Let's look at the facts.

In June of 2023 Coscoran from Balbriggan in Dublin ran 3:32:68 for 1500m in Nice. In doing so he set a new national record for the distance, bettering the previous best time of

“There is every reason to expect that further improvements can be made before the end of the decade - plenty of time for maybe some of those long-standing records to be improved”

3:33:5 set by Flynn in that famous race in 1982. The 27-year-old bettered that time again in July of this year when he recorded 3:30:42 in a race in Poland. Flynn's mile record still stands but it is surely at risk now.

With a bit of luck, Coscoran will soon be joined by a few more athletes in challenging that long standing mile record. The exciting prospect of Nick Griggs who is already recording superb times from 800m to 5,000m will surely push Coscoran on and perhaps even pass him out. Nick Griggs is still just a teenager, and he has already a mile best time of 3:55:73.

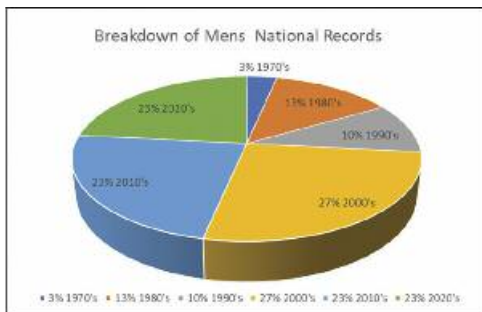
Brian Fay has not just recorded a sub four minute mile this year. He has also set a new 5,000m national record of 13:01:40 in Heusden, Belgium. In doing so, he knocked two seconds off of the previous record that was held by Alistair Cragg since 2011. In a broader context, the men's national record table (next page) is looking pretty healthy in terms of recent updates.



Cathal Doyle

Photo : Sportsfile/Stephen Marken

73% of the national records have been updated since 2000, with 23% of the records (seven) shown in the table set since 2020. There is every reason to expect that further improvements can be made before the end of the decade - plenty of time for maybe some of those long-standing records to be improved.



3%	1970's
13%	1980's
10%	1990's
27%	2000's
23%	2010's
23%	2020's

Taking a more analytical look at when the records were set offers plenty of scope for optimism.

And that's just the men. The story when it comes to the women is even more promising and not just in the middle-distance events where Ciara Mageean continues to lead the way. The summer of 2023 has seen Mageean improve on her national record for the 1,500m when finishing second to Britain's Laura Muir at the Diamond League meeting in Brussels in September in 3:55:87.

That performance in Brussels followed on from her impressive performances in the World Championships in Budapest in August where she finished 4th - just missing out on a medal. In advance of those World Championships, Mageean set national records for 800m of 1:59:27 in May and for the mile with 4:14:48 in Manchester and Monaco respectively.

Mageean's career has been on an upward trajectory in the past couple of years. This has included silver medal performances in the Commonwealth Games and European Championships in 2022. Mageean has shown the durability and resilience needed to compete at the top level and is clearly

loving her time in the sport at the moment having endured some tough times in the past.

There are other athletes who are chasing down Mageean and it's great to see that Sophie O'Sullivan and Sarah Healy have been running some great races and recording great times all summer.

They claimed gold and silver respectively in the European U23 Championships in Finland in July. Both competed in the World Championships the following month where O'Sullivan improved her PB to 4:02:15 in her heat. She failed to progress to the semi-final, but this disappointment was tempered by the fact that her time was inside the qualification standard for the Paris Olympics in 2024. Healy set a new U23 national record in the semi-final.

O'Sullivan went on to set a new U23 3,000m national record of 8:44:72 on September 6th and just two days later ran a new PB for 800m of 2:01:43.

These impressive performances have somewhat been overshadowed by the breakthrough season of Rhasidat Adeleke

Distance	Time	Name	Venue	Date
100m	10:17	Israel Olatunde	Munich	16-Aug-22
200m	20:27	Leon Reid	Birmingham	01-Jul-18
400m	44:77	David Gillick	Madrid	04-Jul-09
800m	1:44:71	Mark English	Castellón	29-Jun-21
1000m	2:16:40	Luke McCann	Monaco	10-Aug-22
1500m	3:30:42	Andrew Coscoran	Chorzow	16-Jul-23
One Mile	3.49.77	Ray Flynn	Oslo	07-Jul-82
3000m	7.30.36	Mark Carroll	Monaco	04-Aug-99
5,000m	13:01:40	Brian Fay	Heusden, Belgium	15-Jul-23
10,000m	27:39:55	Alistair Cragg	Stanford CA	29-Apr-07
Marathon	02:09:49	Stephen Scullion	London	04-Oct-20
3,000m S/C	8.24.09	Brendan Quinn	Brussels	30-Aug-85
110mH	13:30	Peter Coghlan	Hechtel	07-Aug-99
400mH	47.97	Thomas Barr	Rio	18-Aug-16
4x100m Relay	39.26	John McAdorey, Gary Ryan, Tom Comyns and Paul Brizzel	Sydney	29-Sep-00
4x400m Relay	03:01:26	Brian Gregan, Brian Murphy, Thomas Barr and Mark English	Beijing	29-Aug-15
High Jump	2.30	Adrian O'Dwyer	Alger	24-Jun-04
Long Jump	8.07	Ciaran McDonagh	La Chaux-de-Fonds	21-Aug-05
Pole Vault	5.36	Brian McGovern	Tempe AZ	23-Mar-13
Triple Jump	16.27i	Colm Cronin	Detroit	10-Mar-78
Shot Put	20.66	Eric Favors	Leiria	12-Mar-23
Discus Throw	67.89	Nick Sweeney	Helsingborg	04-Sep-98
Hammer Throw	77.80	Declan Hegarty	Walnut, CA	28-Apr-85
Javelin Throw	82.75	Terry McHugh	London	05-Aug-00
Decathlon	7,882	Carlos O'Connell	Emmitsburg, MD	05-Jun-88
3,000m Walk	10:58:47	Alex Wright	Cork	08-Jul-14
5,000m Walk	18.42.38i	David Kenny	Nenagh	12-Feb-23
10k Walk	38:27:57	Rob Heffernan	Dublin	20-Jul-08
20K Walk	1:19:22	Rob Heffernan	Cheboksary	10-May-08
50K Walk	3:37:54	Rob Heffernan	London	11-Aug-12

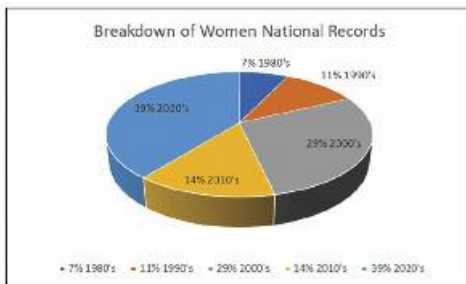
in the 400m. Adeleke announced herself on the world stage this summer with the type of performance that leaves track fans all dreaming of what's to come in the years ahead. She set new national records in the 200m and 400m for indoors and outdoors earlier in the season while still in college in the US. She also became the first Irish athlete to win a NCAA sprint title when winning the 400m.

Sarah Lavin has added further to the fact that you can reach world class standard and still stay based in Ireland – Sarah set new national records in the 100m Hurdles and 100m this summer.



Luke McCann

Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes



7%	1980's
11%	1990's
29%	2000's
14%	2010's
39%	2020's

A closer look at the breakdown of the Women's National Records shows that 82% have been updated since 2000 and an impressive 39% since 2020. There is every reason for optimism heading into an Olympic year. Has Irish athletics ever been in such a healthy state?

Distance	Time	Name	Venue	Date
100m	11.27	Sarah Lavin	Bellinzona	04-Sep-23
200m	22.34	Rhasidat Adeleke	Gainesville, Florida	14-Apr-23
400m	49.20	Rhasidat Adeleke	Austin, Texas	10-Jun-23
800m	01:59:27	Ciara Mageean	Manchester	27-May-23
1000m	02:31:06	Ciara Mageean	Monaco	14-Aug-20
1500m	03:55:87	Ciara Mageean	Brussels	08-Sep-23
One Mile	04:14:58	Ciara Mageean	Monaco	21-Jul-23
3000m	08:21:64	Sonia O'Sullivan	London	15-Jul-94
5,000m	14:41:02	Sonia O'Sullivan	Sydney	25-Sep-00
10,000m	30:47:59	Sonia O'Sullivan	Munich	06-Aug-02
Marathon	02:22:23	Catherina McKiernan	Amsterdam	01-Nov-98
3,000m S/C	09:28:29	Roisin McGettigan	Heusden	28-Jul-07
100mH	12.62	Sarah Lavin	Budapest	23-Aug-23
400mH	54.31	Susan Smith-Walsh	Zurich	12-Aug-98
4x100m Relay	43:80	Joan Healy, Phil Healy, Ciara Neville and Gina Akpe-Moses	Berlin	12-Aug-18
4x400m Relay	3:26:06	Sophie Becker, Phil Healy, Rhasidat Adeleke and Sharlene Mawdsley	Munich	19-Aug-22
High Jump	1.95	Deirdre Ryan	Daegu	01-Sep-11
Long Jump	6.62i	Kelly Proper	Wien	23-Jan-10
Pole Vault	4.60	Tori Pena	California	06-Jun-13
Triple Jump	13.62	Taneisha Scanlon	Bratislava	07-Jun-05
Shot Put	17.06i	Marita Lanigan	New York	26-Feb-82
Discus Throw	57.60	Patricia Walsh	Dublin	07-Jul-84
Hammer Throw	73.21	Eileen O'Keeffe	Dublin	21-Jul-07
Javelin Throw	54.92	Anita White	Dublin	27-Jul-13
Heptathlon	6,297	Kate O'Connor	Lana	25-Apr-21
5,000m Walk	20:02:60	Gillian O'Sullivan	Dublin	14-Jul-02
10k Walk	43:22	Olive Loughnane	Saransk	19-Sep-09
20k Walk	1:27:22	Gillian O'Sullivan	Sesto San Giovanni	01-May-03



YOUR ULTIMATE TRAINING GUIDE FOR 2024

HANNAH NOLAN, owner of Why Weight Ireland, an award-winning Weight Loss and Fitness business provides the advice.

INTRODUCTION

Check out our Couch-to-5k plan and two 10k plans! Whether you are a complete novice, moving towards the longer 10k distance or a more experienced runner looking for a speed injection to bring on your pace, we have a plan to suit you.

Be sure to check out the next Irish Runner magazine edition for your Half-

marathon plan and more top tips to keep your running going in 2024.

COUCH-TO-5K

Our beginners Couch-to-5k plan is perfect for anyone completely new to running or starting back after a lengthy absence needing to rebuild again. With just 3 runs per week over 8 weeks this is a manageable way to be on your way to 5k. With a little variety as

the weeks build, this will help improve your fitness quickly and keep it interesting.

Top tip: Keep it in the day! Don't look too far ahead on the plan - towards the end of the plan you will be able to make much bigger leaps in progress as your hard work pays off, but at the beginning this can seem quite daunting, so just remain in the moment.



Top beginners tip: “if you can walk, you can run”. This is one thing I will always say to my beginner clients or clients who think they will never be able to run. The truth is, most people try running and simply start too fast – so the heart rate spikes, lactic acid builds up quickly and it results in you just feeling plain awful. So instead 1) start at walking pace for your warm-up 2) increase the pace to a brisk walk 3) remain at the SAME brisk walking pace but pick your feet up into a jog rather than a walk. It may feel strangely slow at first but stick with it as you will be able to maintain your jog sections for longer without any undue stress and before you know it, you can start to tweak it and build on your pace. Slow and steady wins the race!



Our beginners Couch-to-5k plan is perfect for anyone completely new to running or starting back after a lengthy absence



	Run 1	Run 2	Run 3
Week 1	25 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 30 seconds Walk: 60 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	25 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 30 seconds Walk: 60 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	25 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 30 seconds Walk: 60 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins
Week 2	25 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 45 seconds Walk: 45 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	25 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 45 seconds Walk: 45 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 60 seconds Walk: 60 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins
Week 3	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 60 seconds Walk: 60 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 60 seconds Walk: 60 seconds Jog: 2 mins Walk: 3 mins (repeat x 3) Cool-down walk: 4 mins	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 60 seconds Walk: 60 seconds (repeat x 10) Cool-down walk: 5 mins
Week 4	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 60 seconds Walk: 60 seconds Jog: 2 mins Walk: 3 mins (repeat x 3) Cool-down walk: 4 mins	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 90 secs Walk: 90 secs (repeat x 7) Cool-down walk: 4 mins	34 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 2 mins Walk: 1 min (repeat x 8) Cool-down walk: 5 mins
Week 5	36 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 3 mins Walk: 2 mins Jog: 1 min Walk: 1 min (repeat x 4) Cool-down walk: 3 mins	34 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 4 mins Walk: 2 mins (repeat x 4) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	40 mins Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 7 mins Walk: 3 mins (repeat x 3) Cool-down walk: 5 mins
Week 6	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 8 mins Walk: 2 mins (repeat x 2) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	34 mins Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 10 mins Walk: 2 mins (repeat x 2) Cool-down walk: 5 mins	35 mins Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 10 mins Walk: 2 mins Jog: 15 mins Cool-down walk: 3 mins
Week 7	30 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog 20 mins Cool-down walk: 5 mins	35 minutes Warm-up Walk 5 mins Jog: 25 mins Cool-down walk: 5 mins	38 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 28 mins Cool-down walk: 5 mins
Week 8	35 minutes Warm-up walk: 5 mins Jog: 30 mins Cool-down walk: 5 mins	15 mins easy / pre-race shake-out Walk 5 mins Jog 5 mins Walk 5 mins	RUN 5K

10K / PACE IMPROVER

Our 8 week 10k and pace improver plans are perfect for those who want to build it up to the next level and increase the distance and also for more established runners who are perhaps looking to improve on their pace and try a variety of

different speed sessions. Follow option A to continue to build your current 5k fitness towards 10k and introduction to speed work and follow option B for the more advanced pace improvement (option B assumes you are a more established runner who is already at the 10k distance and looking to improve their pace).

Top Tip: The same speed sessions can suit a variety of levels. For runners who have longer weekly mileage simply add an extra km for warm-up and cool-down and extend the number of reps in the midsection if needed, likewise you can also reduce the midsection reps and cool-down if you want to try the pace improver plan but are finding it slightly beyond your current mileage. Regardless of your speed, the main aim of the speed session is to challenge your threshold limit and ultimately increase your pace. Whether a "fast" or a "slow" runner, the goal is to push yourself outside of your comfort zone to see improvements in fitness and pace.

Top Tip: Pacing can be quite difficult but try to base off your perceived exertion. For shorter intervals such as 1 minute reps you will be pushing hard and fast, the final 10-15 seconds should feel tough waiting for that clock to finish but not completely impossible. For longer 2 or 3 minutes start off in a more "comfortably hard" zone and reassess your pace at the halfway point - if you feel good push the pace a little more, if not maintain where you are! For "Tempo" runs and longer endurance speed work you will be close to a 5k or 10k race pace depending on the length of the set. These are great times to practise holding back the pace and keeping it just about hard enough but not too hard, which is great training for future races.



RUN
WITH CATHERINA



Run with Catherina

Since her retirement from competitive running, Catherina has devoted herself to teaching a new generation of runners as a fitness trainer and an expert on the mechanics of safe, injury-free running. She is also a sought-after motivational speaker

"I teach people good mechanics for running so they learn to run with less impact on their body, reduce injuries, improve their performance and create a more energetic running experience. I do group and individual sessions." - Catherina McKiernan

Find out more at www.runwithcatherina.ie
Email catherinachirunning@gmail.com
Phone 0872100013

Common Client Question: The distance I am training for is 10k, why is my longest run distance longer than the intended distance? Answer: For distances such as 5k and 10k (even up to Half-marathon) it is common to build the distance beyond your goal if you are aiming to improve your time. Once you train your body to go further in distance you are able to manage the race day distance much easier and likely be able to push the pace faster with the extra miles in the legs. Longer distances such as the marathon (or beginner Half-marathon plans) you will not build up to the race distance due to the undue stress and strain it puts on the body which is not necessary completing the distance.

Common Client Question: Is there a set order I need to complete the plan in? Answer: You can certainly shuffle the runs around to suit your schedule, however bear in mind that any kind of speed session or long run should have either an easy run day or rest day before and afterwards to allow the body to recover. So as long as you have rest or active recovery each side of those more demanding runs and not running them back to back, you are good!

“
Once you train your body to go further in distance you are able to manage the race day distance much easier”

	Run 1	Run 2	Run 3	Run 4	Run 5 / long run
Week 1	A – 5k easy	A – 40 mins speed session. 20 mins easy run warm-up. 6 x 1 min speed intervals with 1 min recoveries. Cool-down easy jog to 40 mins.	A – Rest	A – 5k easy	A – 6k
	B – 6k easy	B – 50 mins Speed. 15 mins easy warm-up. 10 x 1 min speed intervals with 1 min recoveries. 15 mins Cool-down jog	B – 6k easy with 4 x 20 second strides to finish	B – Tempo run 3k Warm-up 3k tempo 2k Cool-down	B – 10k
Week 2	A – 5k easy	A – 2k Warm-up, 5x400m with 200m walk recoveries, 2k Cool-down.	A – Rest	A – 6k easy with 4 x 20 sec strides to finish	A – 7k
	B – 7k easy	B – 2-3k Warm-up, 10x400m with 200m recoveries, 2-3k Cool-down	B – 8k Easy	B – 8k out and back (4k out at steady pace, 4k back at quicker tempo pace)	B – 11k
Week 3	A – 5k Easy	A – 2k Warm-up, HILLS: 40 seconds hard uphill with jog or walk down recoveries. Repeat x 6, 2k Cool-down.	A - Rest	A – 6k easy pace	A – 8k
	B – 8k easy	B – 2-3k Warm-up, HILLS: 30 sec hard uphill with jog down recoveries immediately into 60 seconds medium hard uphill with walk down recoveries. Repeat x 8, 2-3k Cool-down	B – 8k easy with 4 x 20 sec strides to finish	B – 8k. Progressive tempo run. Start first 2 km at easy pace for Warm-up and speed up by 10 seconds per km for the remaining 6 km. (E.g. if starting at 5.50 per km for the Warm-up the next will be @5.40 pace and so on until you finish on 4.40 per km)	B – 12k
Week 4	A – 6k easy	A – 2k Warm-up, 5 x 2 mins with 90 sec recoveries, 2k Cool-down	A – Rest or 30 mins Cross train / active recovery	A – 6k easy pace	A – 9k
	B – 8k easy	B- 2-3k Warm-up, 8x2 mins with 70 sec recoveries, 2-3k Cool-down	B – 8k Easy	B – 2k Warm-up, 4k alternating tempo (alternating between 5k pace and 10k pace – change every km), 2k Cool-down	B – 13k
Week 5	A – 6k easy	A – 2k Warm-up, 8 x 1 mins with 1 min recoveries, 2k Cool-down.	A – 4k easy / cross train / active recovery or rest	A – 6k fast finish. 4k easy pace and final 2k at 5k race pace.	A – 10k
	B – 9k easy	B – 2-3k Warm-up, 12 x 1 mins, 2-3k Cool-down	B – 8k easy	B – 8k fast finish. First 5k at easy pace, final 3k at 5k race pace.	B – 14k
Week 6	A – 6k easy	A – 2k Warm-up, pyramid set: 1 minute with 30 seconds recovery, 2 mins with 1 min recovery, 3 mins with 1.5 mins recovery then repeat in reverse starting back with the 3 mins, then 2 mins and 1 min. 2k recovery	A - 4k easy / cross train / active recovery or rest	A – 6k tempo (2k Warm-up, 2k tempo, 2k Cool-down)	A – 11k
	B – 10k easy	B – 2-3k Warm-up, advanced pyramid set: 1 min with 30 sec recovery, 3 mins with 1.5 mins recovery, 5 mins with 2.5 mins recovery. As with option A repeat in reverse (5 mins/3 mins/1 min) 2-3k Cool-down	B – 8k easy	B – 3k Warm-up, 5k tempo, 2k Cool-down	B – 15k
Week 7	A – 6k easy	A – 2k Warm-up, 3 x 3+2 (3 mins with 1.5 mins recovery, then 2 mins with 1 min recovery repeat x 3) 2k Cool-down.	A - 4k easy / cross train / active recovery or rest	A – 6k easy with 4 x 20 sec strides	A – 8k
	B – 8k easy	B – 2-3k Warm-up, 5 x 3 +2 (as per option A), 2-3k Cool-down	B – 8k easy	B – 8k out and back (as per week 2)	B – 12k
Week 8	A – 5k easy	A – 2k Warm-up, 6 x 1 mins with 1 min recoveries, 2k Cool-down.	A - Rest	A – 3k easy shake-out with 4 x 20 sec strides	A – 10k event
	B – 6k easy	B – 2k Warm-up, 10 x 1 mins with 1 min recoveries, 2k Cool-down	B – 6k easy	B – 3k easy shake-out with 4x 20 sec strides to finish	B – 10k event



MARATHON DAY OF HIGH EMOTION

CLIONA FOLEY reports on the Irish Life Dublin Marathon run through streets broad and narrow.



Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

Kemal Husen

For once the weather gods did not smile on the Irish Life Dublin Marathon yet the 2023 edition still produced a sensational men's winner, a few significant plot twists and some particularly emotional reactions in the winners' tent.

Its newly acquired 'gold label' status - the second most prestigious quality mark from World Athletics which entails assembling a very high quality elite field - certainly paid off.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of his win in Dublin, Olympic silver medallist John Treacy was the official starter and, despite the rain and cold, the elite men set out with a plan to break the existing course record of 2:08.06 (from 2019) by a minute.

Kemal Husen, a 20-year-old Ethiopian who had a 2:08.09 PB from Dubai this year, totally dominated the race from tape to tape in only his second marathon.

Husen came home four minutes clear to set the new course record of 2:06.52. He was leading by a minute even before he reached the half-way point in less than 63

minutes (62:58).

There was an early ripple among the 11-man lead group half-way up the Phoenix Park after defending champion Taoufik Allam (Morocco) pulled up clutching his hamstring just five miles in.

Husen also benefitted from the superb pace-making of Kenyan Aggrey Kiprotich, who metronomically towed him to 30km in 1:29:34 before bowing out.

At that point the young athlete looked on course to break 2:06 but, despite slowing marginally (1:59.44 at 40km), he was still delighted with the win and what he said was an unexpected personal best.

Uganda's Geoffrey Kusoro (2:10.45) took second and Stephen Scullion (65:38 at half-way) impressively picked his way through the elite field to outsprint Kenyan Kimal Brimin Kipruto for third overall and a second Irish title in his second fastest time ever (2:11.51).

The Clonliffe Harriers Olympian was second in 2019 and holds the Irish record (2:09:49 from London 2020) but, given his

mental health struggles since, this clearly meant just as much, if not more, to him.

Leevale's Ryan Creech (31), who'd overcome his challenging injury history to run a 2:13 debut in Seville in February, was a little disappointed to finish two minutes adrift of Scullion.

"I'm a bit emotional now but happy to grind it out and finish 7th overall," Creech said. "I wanted that title. Today showed me what I need to work on to get to Stephen Scullion's level, I hope it's coming soon. This will keep the light burning for a while anyway."

Seattle-based Ryan Forsyth (27), who has run Euro Cross Country for Ireland and competes for Newcastle and District in his mother's native Co Down, broke down in tears after finishing eighth overall and the third Irish man.

Forsyth works two jobs - he's an engineer who designs boats and is also a charter boat captain who takes people sailing - yet he made a 2:24.43 debut and national bronze, saying: "I'm beyond working 'fulltime' sometimes with 13-hour days, so this is very emotional for me."

Sorome Negash, runner-up in Stockholm this year, won the women's title in a 2:26:22 personal best ahead of Kenya's Joan Kipyatich (2:27.04) and fellow Ethiopian Genet Abdurkadir (2:27:49 PB).

Ann-Marie McGlynn, who finished fifth overall in 2:34.13, was an extremely popular and emotional winner of her first Irish title after two previous runner-up spots.

The 43-year-old, originally from Tullamore but now living in Strabane and competing for Letterkenny AC, first raced internationally at just 14, but gave up running for seven years until she was prompted back after one of her two children recovered from serious illness as an infant.

McGlynn was unlucky to miss Olympic qualification in 2021 by just four seconds but, after winning the Belfast Half Marathon in 74:53, finally won her long-coveted Irish marathon title.

North Belfast's Gladys Ganiel (46), a sociology lecturer at Queens, won national silver in her second fastest time ever (2:37:08) which also broke her own O45 national record.

"If you told me 10 years ago that I'd have done this I'd have said 'no way'," Ganiel



Sorome Negash

Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

said. “My S&C coach is in his ‘20s and asked me a few months ago ‘how do you keep motivated?’ I said ‘it doesn’t even cross my mind. It’s just a habit’, but you wouldn’t do it if you didn’t love it. I run to work every day for my commute. It’s only three miles so you’ve got to do extra.”

Rounding out the Irish women’s podium in 2:45:31 was Donore’s Sorcha Loughnane, a 46-year-old and mother of two, originally from Ballinskelligs, who’d been fifth in 2022.

Coached by Gary O’Hanlon (who was 18th overall in the men’s race), the civil servant was thrilled to make the Irish top three. “I still don’t think I’m decent at this,” she said. “I ran 2:45 in Dublin and Cork last year and was desperate to break it this year. I’m still thrilled to make the national podium with that time.”

Courtney Maguire, the Clonmel AC youngster who made such a fairytale debut to finish third overall in 2022 at the age of 23 with the seventh fastest marathon time ever by an Irish woman (2:32.50) was an 11th hour withdrawal.

Seeing three over-40s make the national podium underlines women’s endurance capacity and longevity but does raise questions about the absence of younger

“**Black bags and woolly hats may have been needed pre-race but they were soon cast aside as runners benefitted from the legendary warmth of Dublin’s famously friendly supporters**”

domestic challengers over this distance, though Belfast Roadrunners’ Caitlyn Harvey (24) was noticeably just 27 seconds off a medal and 10th overall in her sub-2:46 debut.

Kildare’s Patrick Monahan won his seventh wheelchair title in 1:41:04 but raced cautiously in the wet because he was competing again in New York a week later.

As always the field of over 22,000 entrants bore repeated testament to the inspiring resilience and supportive nature of the human spirit.

Eleven runners who have taken part in every ‘Dublin’ since 1980 kept their incredible record going. That included the only woman - Mary Nolan Hickey – who finished in 5:03.46 and the eldest of Dublin’s legendary OGs, Athenry AC’s Peadar Nugent, who, aged 80, completed it in 5.44.

Thousands of the participants raised money for wonderful charities, including former Irish 400m World Indoor champion David Gillick who ran 2:58.59 in his second marathon.

Especially awe-inspiring was Rita Casey, whose remarkable heroism was acknowledged with the prestigious 2023 Lord Mayor’s medal.

A member of the Gardai in Ballymote, Sligo and married to former Mayo footballer John Casey who surprised her by appearing at the presentation on the start-line, Rita ran Dublin for the fifth time despite being in the throes of chemotherapy for brain and lung cancer and raised over €10,000 for the Mayo-Roscommon Hospice.

Running’s potential as a vehicle to also support and integrate newcomers to this country was demonstrated by 40 participants from ‘Sanctuary Runners’, the Irish not-for-profit group which offers solidarity to those living in the Direct Provision system.

Black bags and woolly hats may have been needed pre-race but they were soon cast aside as runners benefitted from the legendary warmth of Dublin’s famously friendly supporters.

Trevor Spillane, a member of Kilkenny Triathlon Club and a sports journalist with the Kilkenny People who is well acquainted with major sporting events, said: “there’s absolutely nothing to compare to Dublin!”

Just three weeks after finishing the Amsterdam Marathon in 3:22 he completed it in 3:27 and enthused: “There’s stages where you’re absolutely struggling and next minute someone yells your name and you’re half-way down the road before you know it because you’re just buzzing from it. The support you get here is unique and absolutely brilliant.”

STEPHEN SCULLION SWEEPS TO VICTORY

Mercurial Stephen Scullion reflects on winning his national title at the Irish Life Dublin Marathon, writes RORY CASSIDY.



Stephen Scullion



Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

my happiness and my wellbeing. I really struggle and I don't think people get it," he added.

"I think people watch my career and wonder why I'm like this, what's going on? I learned about six or seven weeks ago that none of this was about running. This was about me fulfilling a prophecy. If this journey takes me to the Olympics and if I can for once maybe run well in an f-ing Irish vest, which I bloody never seem to be able to do, that would mean a lot to me.

"I think what means more to me though, and this is going to sound ridiculous, but three years ago if I'd have died, one hundred people might have cared, but if I died now, the amount of people that I've been able to reach means a lot more to me than running."

In his post-race interview - that was at times similar to a monologue - Scullion quoted from the 1999 film *The Matrix* as well as referencing British heavyweight boxer Tyson Fury on several occasions.

"Everyone gives me a hard time sometimes that I pull out of races and I don't do this or that, but I know how hard this is. I often thought that I may as well just retire and go and enjoy races in the park," he said.

"I don't get the luxury of that anymore. When you've run 2.09 there's an expectation. I don't get to just stand on start lines and get a free run.

"I've probably emailed Jim [Aughney] a hundred times asking to be pencilled in, saying I'm going to go win Dublin. Two weeks later I'm like 'why did I say that - I don't want to do Dublin'.

"If you ever watch the Tyson Fury documentary, that's me. In the morning I'm entering Dublin and I'm going to win and in the afternoon I'm like 'oh my god I can't believe I just did that'. This [running] is easy for me, life's tough for me."

As the marathon continues to evolve with times getting progressively faster, Scullion is content as to where he is at, admitting that this year's Irish Life Dublin Marathon was the first race he had enjoyed in two or three years.

"Sometimes you just have to accept that this is your platform, this is your stage. It's just sh*t that my stage is 26.2 miles, raining and cold, with uphill and downhill. I wish it was Wembley but this is what I've been born to do. I was really supported well on the course and that means a lot to me."

Despite doubting himself "15 times" during the Irish Life Dublin Marathon, Belfast man Stephen Scullion (Clonliffe Harriers AC) managed to produce a gutsy performance to win the national title in style and finish third overall.

In doing so Scullion ran the fastest marathon by an Irishman ever in this country, his time of two hours, eleven minutes and fifty-one seconds being ten seconds faster than what he ran on the same course in 2019 when he finished second behind Morocco's Othmane El Gourmi.

Since that epic performance four years ago, the 34-year-old set a national record

(2:09:49) in 2020 but then failed to finish at the Tokyo Olympics the following year. In recent years, Scullion has often been well short of his best.

Throughout that time Scullion has been open and honest about his mental health struggles, regularly sharing updates on his social media accounts and on his podcast.

When he crossed the line Scullion became emotional but also arguably vindicated that he had trusted the process and once again delivered another solid marathon performance.

"That was a really good days work," he said afterwards.

"I messaged Jim Aughney [Marathon Race Director] five days ago to say first of all that I'd be here, because I've withdrawn so many times, and secondly that I thought I could make the podium. It's not an arrogance, but I think when you've put in the work and trained hard you know that as it gets tough, it will be ok."

Scullion's winning time, along with the ranking points he will amass from taking the national marathon title, will now put him into contention for a place at a second Olympics in Paris next summer, although it is not something he has given much consideration to at this point.

"This is not to be rude or say anything against the Olympics, but this was for me,

“This is not to be rude or say anything against the Olympics, but this was for me, my happiness and my wellbeing”

NO TO RACISM

#NOPLACEINOURSPO



McGLYNN'S MAGICAL MOMENT

Having had near misses in the past - Ann-Marie McGlynn showed her class to win the national women's title at the Irish Life Dublin Marathon, writes RORY CASSIDY.



Ann-Marie McGlynn

Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

For Letterkenny AC's Ann-Marie McGlynn, the 2023 Irish Life Dublin Marathon was very much a case of third time lucky.

Having narrowly missed out on taking the national women's title in 2019 and 2022, the 43-year-old who is originally from Tullamore, showed her class to take gold in a time of two hours, thirty-four minutes and thirteen seconds.

McGlynn went into the race as heavy favourite to take national honours in the absence of last year's champion Courtney McGuire (Clonmel AC), but despite this admitted afterwards that it wasn't all plain-sailing throughout the 26.2 miles.

"You can only beat who's there on the day. It's 26.2 miles, I had to finish to get this title", she said. "I had to cross that line. That's what worried me a bit because anything can happen.

"When the live stream cameras were on me I fell apart a little bit because I got anxious and I knew people were watching. Your legs are tired, it's normal. When they [the cameras] went away, I relaxed a bit, and then when they came the second time, I was ready to embrace the experience.

It's thirty years now since McGlynn won her first national title as an U14 and while she has won many more since, including an indoor 800m national victory in 2008, this one was particularly emotional.

Along with her targeted splits she had the words 'today is my day' and 'Noel Carroll' inscribed on her left hand to keep her motivated when the going got tough.

“**I pumped my fist up to the spirit of Noel Carroll. Noel was my coach there for a couple of months. I have his name here on my hand and I was honestly praying to him to bring me home**”

"I'm getting over the other side of the hill now," she said. "It was a good day today. I had written on my hand - 'today is my day' and I believed it all the way around the course.

"Emmet [Dunleavy, coach] and I had a plan and it never changed from fourteen weeks ago up to now. We did it. I'm so happy."

McGlynn's connection to Dublin Marathon founder Noel Carroll goes back to her early days in UCD where she was coached by the two-time Olympian for two months until his untimely and sudden death in October 1998 at the age of just 56.

Carroll was in her mind as she ran past her Alma Mater.

"I went past Clonskeagh and UCD, I remembered when I went to university there," she said. "I pumped my fist up to the spirit of Noel Carroll. Noel was my coach there for a couple of months. I have his name here on my hand and I was honestly praying to him to bring me home."

There were joyful scenes as McGlynn, who now lives in Strabane, Co. Tyrone where she works part-time as a sports massage therapist, embraced with her husband Trevor, himself a former international sprinter.

The couple are parents to Lexie and Alfie. When Alfie was born in 2012, Ann-Marie's athletics career seemed almost to be a distant memory as at just three weeks old, the newborn spent time in intensive care at Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast with a severe strain of bronchiolitis.

It proved to be the motivation for McGlynn to get back into running, going for a walk/jog three or four times a week for the duration of her son's stay in hospital.

When Alfie returned home and the family were all reunited again, McGlynn kept going - winning a silver medal at the National Indoor Championships in 2013 on her son's first birthday.

Now aged eleven and thirteen, both her children are thriving, but McGlynn didn't take them to Dublin to watch her latest success for reasons she explains.

"This is my office. I don't bring them there," she said. "They're mummy mad. It's 'mummy, mummy, mummy' and I have to take that time away from them to concentrate," she added. "They understand now. They are at home watching the livestream with their granny McGlynn and they'll be happy."

There was hardly a dry eye in the mixed zone as McGlynn paid tribute to her former club, coaches and all who have passed on.

"This is for everybody. I'll celebrate it last, but I will celebrate."



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MANAGING OLYMPIC EXPECTATIONS

Athletics Ireland's qualification standards for PARIS 2024 will be liberal and athlete-friendly, writes CLIONA FOLEY.

Women's 4x400m Relay Team



Photo: Sportfile/Sam Barnes

LIFE IN high performance sport never stands still. Today's battle for "marginal gains" through science and technology is the greatest ever arms race in sport, making it a hugely demanding business and not just one confined to athletes and coaches.

As soon as the World Athletics Championships finished, the French Minister for Sport summoned his country's top athletics officials to ask why France had won only one medal in Budapest from 78 athletes, their biggest team at 'Worlds' since hosting them in Paris 20 years ago.

France also only won a single medal last year in Oregon too from decathlete Kevin Mayer.

Their twice world champion was forced to withdraw injured in Budapest after just two events and the medal they won – the men's 4x400m relay silver in a national record – was actually unexpected.

Yet, that context was ignored.

"Zut Alors!" was the reaction from France's political masters because Paris is hosting the Summer Olympics in less than a year's time.

Context has often been similarly lost here in the wake of global championships and Olympic Games, yet this time Athletics Ireland (AAI) was lauded by many.

Only five Irish athletes have ever won medals at World Championships and only two – Sonia O'Sullivan and Eamonn Coghlan – won them on the track.

Fourth places from Ciara Mageean and Rhasidat Adeleke, two more finalists in relays, several national records and 12 top 24 finishers was deemed a success. For once the context was understood.

Yet resting on his laurels is not something in which AAI's Director of High Performance, Paul McNamara indulges.

Like a lot of High Performance Directors, his main barometer is hard facts and data, so multiple spread-sheets are his immediate reference points.

"The performance level was a continuation of a trend that we saw in Munich (European Championships) last year and in other relevant championships like U23s. We know we are getting better depth now but we're still a long way from where we want to be," he said.

"You win some, you lose some but, on average, we were ahead of predictions, especially in terms of depth. We used 'top 24' as a benchmark, the equivalent of a track semi-final. To have 12 top 24s from 20 starts – 18 individuals and two relays, is a very positive place to be."

Athletics Ireland has clearly defined championship pathways and performance markers all the way from European Youths to European U20s to World U20s and U23s through to European Seniors, but McNamara acknowledges that "the global championships a year out from the Big Dance, so to speak, is obviously the most relevant benchmark of where we are in the world."

He also highlights the quality of some who were missing from Budapest and should be back in the running for Paris 2024, including Fionnuala McCormack (marathon), Tom Barr (400 metre hurdles) and Phil Healy (400m and relays).

"Then you've emerging athletes, like Israel Olatunde and Reece Ademola and you also have athletes like Darragh McElhinney, Efrem Gidey and Hiko Tonosa in the wings as well," he said. "There was a whole cohort of athletes that weren't in Budapest who can add real value at the top end next year."

Olympic standards are the next bridge for many to cross and Paris 2024 follows the new World Athletics formula of 50% of any field qualifying by meeting a set standard while the other 50% will qualify through world standings.

McNamara says there's "a lot of merit in this paradigm shift in qualification pathways since 2021," but also feels the world ranking element of it is "somewhat anomalous".

"The objective for World Athletics is to pick up X number of individuals, for example 48, in a given event, but for every nation that declines a place the rankings roll back a bit further.

"We will use the World Athletics standards as our **A standards** but have our own **B standards** which are intended to give a bit of leeway. A lot of thought has gone into the standards, and I think they are sufficiently

athlete-friendly that, if you are within or just on (the qualification) bubble you will be inside our standard. We have a pretty liberal attitude to selection policy," he said.

Athletics Ireland's selection marks are intended to include athletes who can seriously compete at the Olympics without over demanding semi-finalists or finalists. That attitude, McNamara feels, encourages, not impedes, a growth mindset.

Those who already had the Olympic A standards going into Budapest were Ciara Mageean (1500m), Rhasidat Adeleke (200m & 400m), Sarah Lavin (100m Hurdles), Andrew Coscoran (1500m) and Brian Fay (5000m). Lifetime bests from young 1500m runners Sarah Healy and Sophie O'Sullivan means they've now joined that rank.

Those who had Athletics Ireland's B standards beforehand were Louise Shanahan (800m), Eric Favors (shot put), Kate O'Connor (Heptathlon), Nick Griggs (1500m) and Michelle Finn (3000m Steeplechase). Sharlene Mawdsley's stellar 400m performances in Budapest has seen her join that group.

The Olympic A marathon standards are 2:08 (men) and 2:26:50 (women), but Athletics Ireland have set B standards of 2:12:30 and 2:31 respectively.

Fourteen of the 16 available places in each Olympic relay will be decided from the world's top 32 at the World Relays in Nassau on May 4-5, 2024. Ireland's women's and mixed 4x400m relay squad are already in that hat and there's a hope the men's 4x400m relay team will also qualify.

"Athletics Ireland will not require relay runners to have the B standard because they've committed to the relay programme and passed up individual qualification opportunities," Paul McNamara said.

One intriguing innovation for Paris is the introduction of a repechage in some individual track events.

Athletes who do not make it from round one heats from 200m to 1500m (including hurdles) will have a second chance to qualify for the semi-finals by participating in these new repechage heats.

McNamara feels there're pros and cons to this but points out that it will only add to the work-load of some athletes involved in relays.

The emergence of Rhasidat Adeleke as a serious medal contender, and her decision to make an accelerated transition into the paid-ranks in an Olympic year has been one of this year's talking points.

Bagging such a major sponsor (Nike) and being a professional based in America challenges how Athletics Ireland can continue to support her to flourish.

"It's been a surprising talking point to me because pretty much all our athletes are already professional," Paul McNamara said. "We'll have athletes not qualifying for the Games who have sponsors and agents and shoe contracts and who are on bonuses. There is nothing new in that regard.

"It's not so much that Rhasidat is going pro, it's that she is going from a strict institutionalised setting in the US NCAA collegiate system and is also exceptionally good, so everyone wants a piece of her. But our position always is that we're here to support athletes in whatever environment they're in. We're always looking to support and form a relationship with their coach and set-ups."

Home-based athletes receive Physio, Strength and Conditioning, Medical, Nutrition and Psychological support through the Institute of Sport. Their coaches are often in daily contact with Athletics Ireland's Endurance or Sprints leaders.

"Athletes based further afield, if they don't have access to our medical set-up, it can be more difficult to add that value, but that's a challenge that we have embraced again and again," McNamara stressed.

With Paris 2024 so close the often hidden work of Athletics Ireland's High Performance staff continues at pace, and they've already selected the venue for their pre-Games holding camp.

Fontainebleau is 90 minutes from central Paris. It has a historic Versailles-like palace but, most importantly, is a small town surrounded by a huge forest and endless running trails and training surfaces.

"One fact people don't seem to have given much thought to yet is that these are an Eco-friendly Games," McNamara points out. "That means there will be no air-conditioning in the Athletes' Village, so athletes need to be accustomed to living in those conditions. Heat acclimatisation is a priority for us.

"We have a hotel adjacent to a track and we are the only team with that specific location though I understand some other countries are looking at a military base in the same town," he said.

"We're very adaptable and support coach/athlete plans. We're not going to dictate to any athlete what they can or cannot

“One fact people don't seem to have given much thought to yet is that these are an eco-friendly Games”

do, but our normal modus operandi for any holding camp, particularly where heat is an issue, is drop in a maximum 15 days beforehand for acclimatisation and then go into the Athletes' Village three days out from your event."

Ireland's best talent, he hopes, will get a bounce from the 2023 World Championships in terms of their personal confidence and ambitions but also public support.

"Oregon (2022) was a moderately successful World Championship for us but nobody at home noticed it because of the time difference; it didn't get the same TV exposure.

"The GAA finishing early has really given us extra media spotlight we wouldn't otherwise have. Munich was similar. I live in a small town in rural Ireland and every second person I've met recently has stopped me to tell me how much they enjoyed watching track and field over the last while.

"That wasn't the norm so we are in a good place at the moment, and I expect that upward curve will continue."



Louise Shanahan

Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes



IN A CLASS OF HIS OWN

At age 70, Waterford native Joe Gough is still competing and winning gold medals at European and World Masters Championships. SEAN MCGOLDRICK profiles the exceptionally talented master runner who has no intention of hanging up his spikes anytime soon.

Patience and perseverance are the defining hallmarks of Joe Gough's phenomenally successful career in masters' athletics.

Voted World Masters Middle Distance Athlete of the year in 2018 - the first Irish athlete to receive the accolade - he has won an astonishing ten World Masters Championship Gold Medals, the latest pair coming in March at the World indoors in Torun, Poland where he secured a 800m/1500m double in the M70 category.

But Joe served a long apprenticeship before winning medals - even at national level. "I think it was a good thing because if success had come too quickly, I might have assumed it was easy," he said.

A native of Dungarvan, Joe Gough started running at the age of eleven before drifting away from the sport in his late teens and opting to try rugby and boxing. He didn't resume his athletics career until he was 35.

He had won an under-age provincial silver medal and his primary ambition when he

returned as a master athlete was to see if he could secure a gold medal in Munster in his favourite 800 metre event.

By then he was back working in his native county and living in Carrick-on-Suir. After a brief career in the Garda Síochána, he worked as a Youth Officer in Dublin before becoming the first ever Youth Officer in Waterford City, a position he held until his retirement five years ago.

It took Joe three years to win his first gold medal in Munster. A member of West Waterford AC, he was in his forties before he claimed his first All-Ireland masters' title.

He credits Leevale AC's Hugh Parnell for fostering his love of running, while his current coach Dick Murphy has played a key role in his career to date.

A quirky coincidence gave him his initial taste of international competition. The Irish Masters' Athletics Association were invited by their Russian counterparts to send a team to Moscow to compete in the Russian Masters' Indoor Championships along with a team from Taiwan.

As a newly crowned Irish champion, Joe travelled along with 20 other Irish athletes to Moscow for a trip that also included a week-long stay in Saint Petersburg and the opportunity to watch a live performance of the Bolshoi Ballet.

But it was another experience in Russia that left an indelible impression. "Before the athletics competition there was a parade led by a group of elderly participants who all carried plastic bags. When the parade stopped, they reached into the bags; took out gold medals and put them around their necks," Joe said.

"It turned out they were all Olympic champions - but if you saw them on the street, you would probably offer to give them some money. We were completely taken aback when we learned who they were. It was a real eye-opener as to how people were living in Russia at the end of the 1980s."

Joe had his first breakthrough internationally when he won a silver medal in the M45 category at the British Championships. "The British and German athletes were then dominating at European level so being able to compete against them meant I was close to a European standard," he said.

Joe Gough



Photo: Sportsfile/Piaras Ó Midheach

He had to again bide his time. It wasn't until he turned fifty that he won his first European title taking gold in the 800m at the indoor championships in San Sebastian, Spain in 2003.

Nearly another decade passed before Joe finally hit the jackpot on the world stage - winning the 800m at the 2014 World Masters Indoor Championships in Budapest in the M60 category. He previously won a silver medal in the M50 category in the event at the outdoor championships in Porto Rico in 2003.

After an apprenticeship lasting a quarter of a century Gough hit the jackpot in his sixties both in the M60 and M65 categories setting new world records for the 800m of 2 minutes and 14 seconds (M60) and 2.16 (M65). So far this personal best for the 800m in the M70 category is 2.23.33, a European record which he set in March at a Leinster Masters Indoor meeting.

As well as the 800m gold medal at the 2014 World Masters Indoor championships, he also won the outdoor 800m title at the 2015 World Masters outdoor championships in Lyon, France and the indoor title for a second time in the M60 category in Daegu, South Korea in 2017.

Joe had even more success once he moved into the M65 category winning double gold in the 800m and 1500m at the World Masters outdoor championships in Malaga in 2018 and the indoor event in Torun, Poland in 2019.

In September 2022 in one of his final international events before celebrating his seventieth birthday in January he returned to his roots in Waterford and featured on the Irish M65 team that won the gold medal in the World Masters Mountain Running championships staged in the Comeragh mountains.

Joe celebrated graduating to the M70 category by winning the 800m/1500m gold medal double at the World Masters indoors championships in Torun, Poland in March of this year. At the European outdoor Masters championships in Pescara, Italy, in September he won two more continental titles in the 800m and 1500m respectively.

At the World Championships in Torun, Ireland finished seventh in the ranking list securing 75 medals (28 gold, 23 silver and 24 bronze) while the squad was ninth at the European event in Pescara winning 53 medals (17 gold, 24 silver and 12 bronze).

All the master athletes cover their own expenses although they are representing Ireland. "We pay for everything including gear, flights and accommodation and these costs are rising all the time," Joe said. We are raising the profile of Athletics Ireland all over the world. Finishing among the top ten countries is a fantastic achievement for a small country like Ireland."

Standards continues to rise across all the age categories. "There are no easy categories. People who have competed in other sports are now taking part in Master athletics, and standards are rising all the time which is why the records continue to be broken."

Joe trains virtually all the year around. "I know I have to rest both mentally and physically and I usually take a short break after the outdoor season - but not for long," he said. "If I took a month off, I feel that it might take me three or four months to get back to where I was."

"There are three things you lose as you get older. I refer to them as the three S's - speed, strength and size. You must work on all three. We shrink in size as we age. We have to offset that by doing all the physical things we should be doing."

Athletics is not Joe Gough's only passion. He loves gardening and when he's not training or competing, he tends to a three-acre plot around his home. He grows a lot of his own vegetables and the beehive he looks after provides him with honey.

Joe trains six times a week. He doesn't use supplements and avoids running on the road as much as possible. Participating in the World Masters' Mountain Running championship has given him a taste for trail running. He does his speed session on the track in Waterford and also runs on Tramore beach.

Joe's wife Ellis has been very supportive throughout his career - travelling with him to

“ I want to keep going. Every season is different, every race is different. You are always experiencing something new ”

major championships. "It is very important that Ellis accompanies me because athletics can be a lonely sport," he said. "It's great to have company rather than waiting alone for a race in an apartment or hotel room."

The couple have two daughters, Siobhan and Sarah and three grand-daughters, Rose (5), Aziza (2) and Liv (8 months). Joe has no plans to hang up his spikes.

"At this stage it is a lifestyle, and I don't want to stop," he said. "I want to keep going. Every season is different, every race is different. You are always experiencing something new. I love it and it is great when you are winning, but I enjoy the whole venture. There are new people coming into the sport that I haven't met before and who are probably better than me which means I can focus on trying to improve."

In the words of the poet Robert Frost, Joe Gough still has 'miles to go before I sleep'.

FACT FILE

Name: Joe Gough
 Age: 70
 Club: West Waterford AC
 Racing shoes: Nike Zoom
 Most memorable performance: Winning first world title in Budapest in 2014
 Favourite distance: 800m
 Favourite training session: 6 x 300m - with a four minute recovery
 Favourite book: Today We Die A Little! The Inimitable Emil Zatopek- the Greatest Olympic Runner of All Time
 Favourite film: Taxi Driver
 Favourite holiday destination: Barbados

World Masters Gold Medals:

2014 World Indoors, Budapest: M60 800m
 2015 World Outdoors, Lyon: M60 800m
 2017 World Indoors, Daegu, South Korea: M60 800m
 2018 World Outdoors, Malaga: M65 800m and 1500m
 2019 World Indoor, Torun, Poland: M65 800m and 1500m
 2022 World Mountain Running Championships: Ireland M65 Team Gold
 2023 World Indoor, Torun, Poland: M70 800m and 1500m

Joe Gough



Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes



MASTERS ON TOP OF THE WORLD

SEAN McGOLDRICK reports on an outstanding year of international success for Irish Master athletes across a range of age groups

An interesting statistic confirms that a third of all athletes currently registered with Athletics Ireland are Master Athletes. This cohort of over 35s are delivering many exceptional performances at national and international level.

Indeed, this is a boom era for Irish Masters – a record 135 competed at the 9th World Indoor Masters championships in Torun, Poland last March, where they posted a best-

ever overall performance, securing a 75-medal haul consisting of 28 gold, 23 silver and 24 bronze.

Team Ireland finished seventh overall in the Medal Table, ahead of 81 other countries. It was the highest ever position Team Ireland have achieved at the World Masters Championships.

In September, a 110-strong team competed in the European Masters Outdoor Championships in Pescara, Italy. They

brought home a haul of 53 medals; 17 gold, 24 silver and 12 bronze, enabling them to finish ninth overall out of 34 nations.

Away from the track, Team Ireland won the Five Nations Cross-Country for the first time ever this year. In addition to the main award, they also won the Men's and Women's awards.

However, the highlight of the season was the performances at the World indoors, where Irish athletes ranging in age from 35 to 84 competed.

Eoin Everard



Photo : Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

Some of the more notable achievements were:

Pauline Moran W65 (Mayo AC) secured four gold and two silver medals. She won individual and team gold in the 6km cross-country with her other gold medals coming in the 3,000m and 10,000m. She secured individual and team in the half marathon and a couple of hours later she stepped out of her comfortable zone by running a leg of the 4x200m sprint relay.

Raheny Shamrock's **Zoe Quinn W45** won individual and team gold in the 8km cross-country and the 10,000m while **Annette Quaid W45** (Leevale AC) – took gold in the 400m and 800m and silver in the 200m.

Joe Gough M70 (West Waterford) – completed double gold in the 800m and 1500m as did **Rachel Akers Griffin W35** (Ennis Track) in the hammer and weight throw.

The oldest member of the team, 84-year-old **Ann Woodlock W80** (Donore Harriers) won the 3,000m and was second in the 1500m. Ann is already looking forward to moving up an age category shortly and competing at the next championships.

Edel Maguire W60 (Clonliffe Harriers) took gold in the high jump, silver in the 400m and bronze in the 4x200m relay. She dropped down an age category to compete with the W55 team.

Avril Dillon W40 (DSD) won gold in the 60m and was unlucky not to do likewise in her favoured event the 60m hurdles, where she was the favourite. Unfortunately, Avril picked up an injury in her warm-up.

At the European Indoor event, the Irish athletes ranged in age from 35 to 77 and competed in the full range of track and field events in addition to cross-country, 10K Road and half-marathon. There were many excellent performances including:

Double gold for both **Annette Kealy** W55 (Raheny Shamrock AC) in the 10K road race and half marathon and **Joe Gough** M70 (West Waterford AC) at 800m and 1500m. Annette also added a team gold in the W55 Half-Marathon - along with **Donna Evans** and **Irene Clements** - and team silver in 10K Road Race.

Geraldine Finegan W55 (North East Runners) secured a remarkable eight medals, while **Edel Maguire** W60 (Clonliffe Harriers) won seven medals.

Annette Quaid W45 (Leevale AC) won gold in 400m and added two relay golds in the W45 4x400m (along with **Bronwen McDonald**, **Leanne Wellings** and **Maria Dunne**) and Mixed 45 4x400 (along with **Leanne Wellings**, **Ger Cremin** and **Carlton Haddock**). The Mixed 45 4x400 time achieved of 3:49.52 appears to be a new European Record (subject to ratification).

Carlton Haddock M50 (Leevale AC) won gold in the 400m and also added two relays in M45 4x400m (along with Ger Cremin, Kevin Lynch and Jim Phelan) and Mixed 45 4x400, as listed above.

Michelle Kenny W40 (Leevale AC) won gold in the 8km Cross-country and silver in 10K Road Race in addition to team gold in the 8km Cross Country (along with **Eimear Purdue** and **Zoe Quinn**).

Not to be outdone, Michelle's mother **Eileen Kenny** W70 (Athlone) won silver in both the 10K Road Race and the 5,000m Track. Eileen dropped down three age categories to add team silver in the 10k Road Race (along with **Carmel Crowley** and **Annette Kealy**).

The evergreen **Sean McMullin** (M75) Mullingar) won double silver in the 10km and 20km Road Walk and Bronze in the 5,000m track race.



THE FULL LIST OF IRISH MEDAL WINNERS AT THE 2023 WORLD INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS:

GOLD (28)

W40 60m Avril Dillon (DSD AC)
 W45 400m Annette Quaid (Leevale AC)
 W45 800m Annette Quaid (Leevale AC)
 W45 1500m Mary Leech (Drogheda & District)
 W80 3000m Ann Woodlock (Donore)
 W65 3000m Pauline Moran (Mayo AC)
 W60 High Jump Edel Maguire (Clonliffe Harriers)
 W35 Weight Throw Rachel Akers (Ennis Track)
 W35 Hammer Rachel Akers (Ennis Track)
 W65 6km Cross-Country Pauline Moran (Mayo AC)
 W60 6km Cross-Country Kay Byrne (Finn Valley)
 W55 8km Cross-Country Annette Kealy (Raheny Shamrock AC)
 W45 8km Cross-Country Zoe Quinn (Raheny Shamrock AC)
 W60 6km Cross-Country Team (Pauline Moran, Kay Byrne, Nuala Reilly)
 W80 8km Cross-Country Team (Annette Kealy, Yasmin Canning, Mari Johnston)
 W45 8k Cross-Country Team (Zoe Quinn, Catherine O'Connor, Annemarie Kenny)
 W40 8km Cross-Country Team (Fiona Gettings, Michelle Kenny, Michelle Cox)
 W45 10km Zoe Quinn (Raheny Shamrock AC)
 W65 10km Pauline Moran (Mayo AC)
 W80 Half Marathon Cathy McCourt (North Belfast)
 W60 Half Marathon Mary Slocum (Ward Park)
 M35 800m Joe Warne (Doheny AC)
 M70 800m Joe Gough (West Waterford AC)
 M70 1500m Joe Gough (West Waterford AC)
 M35 3000m Eoin Everard (Kilkenny City Harriers)
 M65 8m Cross Country Team (Tommy Payne, Eugene Moynihan, William Tyrell)
 M50 10km Declan Toal
 W45 Half Marathon Team (Cathy McCourt, Breda Gaffney, Catherine O'Connor)

Silver (23)

W45 200m Annette Quaid (Leevale AC)
 W60 400m Edel Maguire (Clonliffe Harriers)
 W45 800m Maria Dunne (St Laurence O'Tooles)
 W55 3000m Annette Kealy (Raheny Shamrock AC)
 W55 8km Cross-Country Mari Johnston (Sligo AC)
 W45 8km Cross-Country Catherine O'Connor (Wicklow)
 W40 8km Cross-Country Fiona Gettings (Longford AC)
 W35 8km Cross-Country Edel Gaffney (Trim AC)
 W65 6k Cross Country Team (Pauline Moran, Noreen Bonner, Nuala Reilly)
 W65 Half Marathon (Pauline Moran, Noreen Bonner, Nuala Reilly)
 W50 10km Cathy McCourt (North Belfast)
 W60 10km Mary Slocum (Ward Park)
 W45 Half Marathon Catherine O'Connor (Wicklow)
 W60 Half Marathon Irene Clements (Clones AC)
 W65 Half Marathon Pauline Moran (Mayo AC)
 W50 10k Race Walk Sinead McConnell (Finn Valley)
 M35 Hammer John Dwyer (Templemore)
 M75 3km Walk Sean McMullin (Mullingar Harriers)
 M65 8km Cross-Country Tommy Payne (Tinryland AC)
 M60 8km Cross-Country Team (Pat O'Grady, Philip O'Doherty, Tom O'Connor)
 M55 8k Cross-Country Team (Pat Malone, Francis Marsh, Dominic Horan)
 M60 Half Marathon Patrick O'Grady (Drogheda & District)
 X55 4x200m (David Hayde, Shane Sheridan, Moira Groome, Carol Kearney) 1:50.62

Bronze (24)

W80 Ann Woodlock 1500m
 W55 400m Carol Kearney (Lucan Harriers)
 W45 1500m Caitriona Devine (Finn Valley)
 W50 3000m Michelle Lannon (Carrick AC)
 W45 3000m Mary Leech (Drogheda & District)
 W50 3000m Walk Sinead McConnell (Finn Valley)
 W50 10k Race Walk - Team (Sinead McConnell, Maggie Helen O'Connor and Susanne O'Beirne)
 W40 4x200m (Snezana Bechtina, Kathryn McDevitt, Bernadette Spillane, Sinead O'Regan)
 W55 4x200m (Edel Maguire, Finola Moore, Moira Groome and Carol Kearney)
 W40 8km Cross-Country Michelle Kenny (Leevale)
 W50 8km Cross-Country Yasmin Canning (Drogheda & District)
 W65 8km Cross-Country Nuala Reilly (Drogheda & District)
 W70 6km Cross-Country Eileen Kenny (Athlone)
 W35 10km Edel Gaffney (Trim AC)
 W60 10km Irene Clements (Clones AC)
 M35 Hammer John Dwyer
 M75 6km Cross-Country Richard Mullins (St Abbans)
 M45 8k Cross-Country Team (Paul Smith, Niall Sheil, Ray Kenny)
 M65 10km Tommy Payne (Tinryland AC)
 W50 Half Marathon Breda Gaffney
 M45 Half Marathon Paul Smith (Drogheda & District)
 M50 Half Marathon Team (Pat O'Grady, Stephen Rice, Ian Egan)
 M45 Half Marathon Team (Paul Smith, Ronan Donohue, Sean McDermott)
 Mixed 45 4x200m Relay (Brian Boyce, Carlton Haddock, Leanne Wellings, Clare Quinn)

EUROPEAN MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS

A strong team of 110 Irish Masters Athletes travelled to Pescara, Italy to take part in these championships, writes RONAN GATELY.



World Masters Championships, Torun Poland : Ann Woodlock, 3000m Gold & 1500m Silver, Tommy Payne 8k Cross Country M65 Team Gold & Individual Silver medal. Eugene Moynihan M65 Team Gold and Mary Payne



Left to right, Ken Higgs, Mick Priest, Joe Gough, Matt Slattery World Championships Torun, Poland M70 4x200m relay

It was another outstanding event for Team Ireland who brought home a huge medal haul of 53 medals: 17 gold, 24 silver and 12 bronze.

This saw Ireland finish an impressive ninth overall on the medal table out of 34 nations.

The athletes ranged in age from 35 to 77 and competed in the full range of track and field events in addition to cross-country, 10K road and half-marathon.

THERE WERE MANY EXCELLENT PERFORMANCES INCLUDING:

Double gold for both Annette Kealy (W55 - Raheny, in the 10K Road Race and Half Marathon) and Joe Gough (M70 - West Waterford, in 800m and 1500m). Annette also added a Team gold in W55 Half-Marathon (along with **Donna Evans and Irene Clements**) and Team silver in the 10K road race.

A massive haul of eight medals for Geraldine Finegan (W55 - North East Runners) and seven medals for **Edel Maguire** (W60 - Clonliffe).

Annette Quaid (W45 - Leevale) won Gold in 400m and added 2 relay golds in W45 4x400m (along with **Bronwen McDonald, Leanne Wellings and Maria Dunne**) and Mixed 45 4x400 (along with **Leanne Wellings, Ger Cremin and Carlton Haddock**).

Carlton Haddock (M50 - Leevale) won Gold in 400m and also added two relay golds in M45 4x400m (along with **Ger Cremin, Kevin Lynch and Jim Phelan**) and Mixed 45 4x400.

Michelle Kenny (W40 - Leevale) won gold in the 8km Cross-Country and Silver in 10k Road Race in addition to Team gold in 8k Cross Country (along with **Eimear Purdue and Zoe Quinn**).

Shorts by Sean McGoldrick

Joe Gough (West Waterford AC, M70) set a new European Record in the 800m of 2.23.33 at the Leinster Masters Indoor meet on 11th March 2023. Joe has previously set European and World Records in various age categories and won World Masters Middle Distance Athlete of the Year in 2018.

Anne Gilshinan (Slaney Olympic, W55) was named 2022 European Masters Overall Best Female Athlete as well as winning the Middle Distance Athlete of the Year - which she also won in 2019).

Originally from Virginia in Cavan, Anne won double gold in the 800m and 1500m at the World Masters championships in Tampere, Finland in July 2022 as well as triple gold in the 800m, 1500m and 3,000m at the European Indoor Masters in Braga, Portugal in February 2022. She currently holds six World Records in W55 category in 800m, 1500m and 1 mile both Indoors and Outdoors.

Avril Dillon (DSD, W40) set a new World Record (subject to ratification) of 8.68 secs in the 60m Hurdles at Leinster Masters on 11th March 2023. She also took down the longest standing Irish Masters Record running a scorching 25.66 secs in 200m on the same day -the previous record had been held by the great Maeve Kyle since 1970!

Tommy Hughes (Strive Racing, M60) a 1992 Olympian, currently holds the M60 World Marathon record; he has run 2 hours 30 minutes 2 seconds or less for the marathon in five separate decades as well as breaking the marathon world record for combined time (4:59:22) for father and son with his son Eoin in 2018.

Shane Healy (MSB, M50), a 1996 Olympian, set Masters World Records for 1500m and 1 mile Road in 2019 and 5k Road in 2020.



Relay team Ireland W45
4x400m gold European
Outdoor Championships
left to right, Leanne
Wellings, Anette Quaid,
Bronwen McDonald,
Maria Dunne

Not to be outdone Michelle's mother **Eileen Kenny** (W70 - Athlone) won silver in both the 10K Road Race and the 5,000m Track. Eileen dropped down three age categories to add Team Silver in the 10k Road Race (along with **Carmel Crowley** and **Annette Kealy**).

The evergreen **Sean McMullin** (M75 - Mullingar) won double silver in the 10km and 20km Road Walk and bronze in the 5,000m Track race. If metal is ever in short supply just give Sean a shout as he must have a shed full of National, European and World medals at this stage!

Great to see a number of throwers competing for Ireland ably supported/encouraged by **John Dwyer** (M40 - Templemore) who himself won silver in Weight Throw and bronze in Hammer.

Fantastic to see more athletes competing for their first time including **Catherine O'Connor** (W35) who won gold in the 8km Cross-Country. Catherine's sister **Claire Quinn** (W40) won silver in the W35 4x100 Relay (with teammates **Leanne Wellings**, **Mary Scanlon** and **Gemma Thompson**).



Sean McMullin
Double European
Championship
outdoors Silver 10k
& 20k Race walk.



150th ANNIVERSARY CHAMPIONSHIPS CELEBRATION

The 150th anniversary edition of the National Track & Field Championships at the Morton Stadium in Santry was a memorable occasion, writes RORY CASSIDY.

Israel Olatunde



retained his national title in the 100 metres title - celebrating in style after crossing the line.

History was made on the Saturday evening when the first ever women's Weight for Height competition took place at the championships. The event can be traced back to around 2000 BC and to see it finally on the program for female competitors in Ireland marked a huge step forward. Doneen AC's Olga Nedvede was crowned the inaugural national champion, with a winning throw of the 28 pound weight 4.30 metres over the bar.

Nedvede also set a championship record in the women's Weight for Distance. Over the course of the weekend, Eric Favors and Reece Ademola also set new records. Favors set a new championship record in the Men's Shot Put with a best throw of 19.91 metres, while the towering six-foot-nine figure of Ademola, broke the national U23 record in the Long Jump, with a best of 7.96 metres - to take his first senior championships honours.

With RTÉ viewing figures for the Sunday evening session peaking at nearly 250,000, it is clear that the appeal of athletics is reaching a rapidly increasing and wide audience. The longest running consecutive National Senior Track and Field Championships in the world shows no signs of losing its unique appeal.

Sportsfile/Sam Barnes

The 123.ie National Senior Track & Field Championships delivered two days of thrilling action at Morton Stadium. The top-drawer performances of Sarah Lavin, Israel Olatunde, Reece Ademola, Nicola Tuthill, Sarah Healy, Eric Favors and many others delighted the sizeable crowd of supporters in Santry during what were sometimes challenging weather conditions.

The appreciative spectators received good value at what was a fitting celebration to mark the 150th anniversary edition of the championships, which were first held on July 7th 1883 in College Park, Dublin.

The enticing head-to-head between Sarah Healy and Sophie O'Sullivan in the Women's 1500m garnered a lot of media attention in the build-up to the championships.

Healy, who had to settle for the silver medal in the 1500 metres at the European U23 Championships in Finland behind O'Sullivan who claimed the gold, controlled what developed into another tactical affair between the two talented athletes. It was the Blackrock AC woman who succeeded in holding off the stern challenge mounted by the Australian born Cobh AC athlete, when sprinting clear to victory.

Emerald AC's Sarah Lavin won an impressive double gold in the 100m Hurdles and the 100 metres. The 28-year-old received a standing ovation when she was presented with her European Games bronze medal. Sarah devoted considerable time after both races to engage with young athletics fans - to their obvious great delight.

Another favourite with young fans was Israel Olatunde from UCD AC who

“ Another favourite with young fans was Israel Olatunde from UCD AC who retained his national title in the 100 metres ”

Men's

100m: 1. Israel Olatunde (UCD A.C.) – 10.49
2. Bori Akinola (UCD A.C.) – 10.58 3. Gabriel Kehinde (Ennis Track A.C.) 10.69

200m: 1. Mark Smyth (Raheny Shamrocks A.C.) – 20.87 2. Colin Doyle (Leevale A.C.) – 21.17 3. Andrew Egan (Galway City Harriers A.C.) – 21.51

400m: 1. Christopher O'Donnell (North Sligo A.C.) – 45.97 2. Callum Baird (Ballymena and Antrim A.C.) – 46.88 3. Brian Gregan (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) 46.96

800m: 1. John Fitzsimons (Kildare A.C.) – 1.47.13 2. Harry Purcell (Trim A.C.) – 1.48.04 3. Mark Milner (UCD A.C.) – 1.48.49

1500m: 1. Cathal Doyle (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) – 3.40.11 2. Nick Griggs (CNDR Track Club) – 3.40.64 3. Shane Bracken (Swinford A.C.) – 3.42.05

5000m: 1. Brian Fay (Raheny Shamrocks A.C.) – 13.39.20 2. Cormac Dalton (Mullingar Harriers A.C.) – 13.44.43 3. Efreim Gidey (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) – 13.55.10

3000m Steeplechase: 1. Finley Daly (Sligo A.C.) – 8.56.66 2. Oisín Spillane (Ennis Track A.C.) – 9.07.45 3. Liam Harris (Togher A.C.) – 9.09.73

110m Hurdles: 1. James Ezeonu (Leevale A.C.) – 14.28 2. Gerard O'Donnell (Carrick-on-Shannon A.C.) – 14.29 3. Matthew Behan (Crusaders A.C.) – 14.95

400m Hurdles: 1. Thomas Barr (Ferrybank A.C.) – 49.83 2. Thomas Anthony Pitkin (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) – 52.96 3. Ciaran Nugent (Carraig-na-BhFear A.C.) – 54.00

High Jump: 1. David Cussen (Old Abbey A.C.) – 2.15m 2. Jack Forde (St. Killian's A.C.) – 1.90m 3. Emmanuel Osas (Ratoath A.C.) – 1.85m

Pole Vault: 1. Michael Bowler (Enniscorthy A.C.) – 4.60m 2. Rolus Olusa (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) – 4.40m 3. Matthew Callinan-Keenan (St. Laurence O'Toole A.C.) – 4.30m

Long Jump: 1. Reece Ademola (Leevale A.C.) – 7.96m NU23R 2. Sam Healy (Leevale A.C.) – 7.61m 3. Shane Howard (Bandon A.C.) – 7.46m

Triple Jump: 1. Michael Alajiki (Dundealgan A.C.) – 14.74m 2. Conall Mahon (Tir Chonaill A.C.) – 14.69m 3. Jai Benson (Lagan Valley A.C.) – 14.68m

Shot Put: 1. Eric Favors (Raheny Shamrocks A.C.) – 19.91m CR 2. James Kelly (Finn Valley A.C.) – 16.79m 3. Gavin McLaughlin (Finn Valley A.C.) – 16.04m

Discus Throw: 1. Eoin Sheridan (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) 54.23m 2. Michael Healy (Leevale A.C.) – 49.90m 3. Padraig Hore (D.M.P.A.C.) – 46.05m

Weight for Height: 1. John Dwyer (Templemore A.C.) – 4.00m 2. Sean Maher (Brow Rangers A.C.) – 3.80m 3. Stephen Fee (Lusk A.C.) – 3.50m.

Weight for Distance: 1. Michael Healy (Leevale A.C.) – 8.86m 2. John Dwyer (Templemore A.C.) – 7.24m 3. Stephen Fee (Lusk A.C.) – 6.05m

Hammer Throw: 1. Sean Mockler (Moycarkey Coolcree A.C.) – 64.49m 2. Simon Galligan (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) – 63.86m 3. John Dwyer (Templemore A.C.) 50.40m

Javelin Throw: 1. Oisín Joyce (Lake District A.C.) – 70.56m 2. Gareth Crawford (Lifford

Strabane A.C.) – 65.69m 3. Michael Jordan (Naas A.C.) – 53.55m

10,000m Race Walk: 1. David Kenny (Farranfere Maine Valley A.C.) – 40.20.63 2. Brendan Boyce (Finn Valley A.C.) – 41.49.10 3. Oisín Lane (Mullingar Harriers A.C.) – 41.53.45

4x100m Relay: 1. Tallaght A.C. – 41.81 2. Clonliffe Harriers A.C. – 41.93 3. Tullamore Harriers A.C. – 42.10

4x400m Relay: 1. Dundrum South Dublin A.C. – 3.23.00 2. Ratoath A.C. – 3.25.51 3. Clonliffe Harriers A.C. – 3.36.08

Women's

100m: 1. Sarah Lavin (Emerald A.C.) – 11.53 2. Lucy May Sleeman (Leevale A.C.) – 11.85 3. Mollie O'Reilly (Dundrum South Dublin A.C.) – 11.86

200m: 1. Katie Bergin (Moyno A.C.) – 24.60 2. Laura Nally (Galway City Harriers A.C.) – 25.18 3. Janine Boyle (Finn Valley A.C.) – 25.21

400m: 1. Sharlene Mawdsley (Newport A.C.) – 51.94 2. Sophie Becker (Raheny Shamrocks A.C.) – 53.10 3. Roisin Harrison (Emerald A.C.) – 53.93

800m: 1. Louise Shanahan (Leevale A.C.) – 2.03.12 2. Jenna Bromell (Emerald A.C.) – 2.05.16 3. Georgie Hartigan (Dundrum South Dublin A.C.) – 2.08.98

1500m: 1. Sarah Healy (UCD A.C.) – 4.11.39 2. Sophie O'Sullivan (Ballymore Cobh A.C.) – 4.12.00 3. Ellie Hartnett (UCD A.C.) – 4.30.58

5000m: 1. Ide Nic Dhomhnaill (West Limerick A.C.) – 15.44.81 2. Roisin Flanagan (Finn Valley A.C.) – 15.45.94 3. Shona Heaslip (An Ríocht A.C.) – 15.46.68

3000m Steeplechase: 1. Michelle Finn (Leevale A.C.) – 10.00.04 2. Eleanor Foot (Bray Runners A.C.) – 11.17.20 3. Clare Barrett (DMP A.C.) – 11.26.39

100m Hurdles: 1. Sarah Lavin (Emerald A.C.) – 13.13 2. Kate O'Connor (Dundalk St. Gerald's A.C.) – 14.14 3. Lilly-Ann O'Hora (Doneen A.C.) – 14.29

400m Hurdles: 1. Jessica Tappin (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) – 57.20 2. Kelly McGrory (Tir Chonaill A.C.) – 57.47 3. Deirdre Murray (Na Fianna A.C.) – 59.57

High Jump: 1. Sommer Lecky (Finn Valley A.C.) – 1.80m 2. Daena Kealy (St. Abban's A.C.) – 1.75m 3. Philippa Rogan (Slí Cualann A.C.) – 1.75m

Pole Vault: 1. Ellen McCartney (City of Lisburn A.C.) – 4.31m 2. Una Brice (Leevale A.C.) – 3.10m

Long Jump: 1. Elizabeth Ndudi (Dundrum South Dublin A.C.) – 6.00m 2. Saragh Buggy (St. Abban's A.C.) – 5.94m 3. Kate O'Connor (Dundalk St. Gerald's A.C.) – 5.82m

Triple Jump: 1. Saragh Buggy (St. Abban's A.C.) – 13.03m 2. Caoimhe McDonagh (South Sligo A.C.) – 11.32m 3. Grace Fitzgerald (Tipperary Town A.C.) – 11.25m

Shot Put: 1. Michaela Walsh (Swinford A.C.) – 15.17m 2. Ciara Sheehy (Emerald A.C.) – 13.04m 3. Aoibhín McMahon (Blackrock A.C.) – 12.12m

Discus Throw: 1. Niamh Fogarty (Raheny Shamrocks A.C.) – 49.77m 2. Anna Gavigan (LSA) – 47.08m 3. Ciara Sheehy (Emerald A.C.) – 42.15m

Weight for Height: 1. Olga Nedvede (Doneen A.C.) – 4.30m CR 2. Rachel Akers (Ennis Track A.C.) – 3.80m 3. Ebony Hogan (Birr A.C.) – 3.60m

Weight for Distance: 1. Olga Nedvede (Doneen A.C.) – 7.21m CR 2. Ebony Hogan (Birr A.C.) – 6.82m 3. Michaela Walsh (Swinford A.C.) – 6.60m

Hammer Throw: 1. Nicola Tuthill (UCD A.C.) – 67.67m 2. Margaret Hayden (Tallaght A.C.) – 61.63m 3. Adrienne Gallen (Lifford Strabane A.C.) – 56.05m

Javelin Throw: 1. Grace Casey (Clonliffe Harriers A.C.) – 41.83m 2. Aoibhín McMahon (Blackrock A.C.) – 41.16m 3. Katie Moynihan (Leevale A.C.) – 39.90m

5,000m Race Walk: Kate Veale (West Waterford A.C.) – 22.01.18 2. Sinead Maher (South Galway A.C.) – 27.08.78 3. Ciara Wilson Bowen (Dundrum South Dublin A.C.) – 27.14.98

4x100m Relay: 1. Dundrum South Dublin A.C. – 50.65 2. Mayo A.C. – 1.05.17

4x400m Relay: 1. Dundrum South Dublin A.C. – 3.51.22 2. Ratoath A.C. – 3.51.79 3. Rathfarnham WSAF A.C. – 3.58.74



Sharlene Mawdsley



REMEMBERING THE BOYS OF SUMMER

FRANK GREALLY reflects on the life and times of one of his great heroes and friends Mick Molloy as well as some others he ran with.

1966: Tom O'Riordan, Donore Harriers, right, in conversation with Mick Molloy, Oughterard A.C., after the race. Amateur Athletic Union & N.A.C.A. Championships, Gormanstown, Dublin

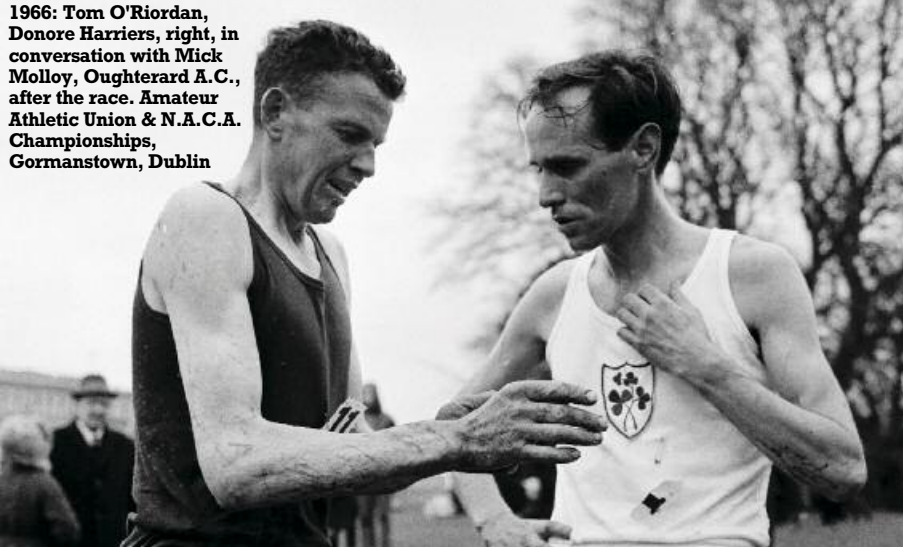


Photo: Sportsfile/Connolly Collection

The passing of Olympic marathon runner Mick Molloy in October prompted many memories of my early running experiences in Ballyhaunis, County Mayo back in the late 1960s.

Mick Molloy was one of my running heroes back then and I still remember the day he won the famous Hollymount Road Race - an event that I am delighted to see is still going strong,

Mick was one of the giants of Irish distance running, like Noel Henry, Tom O'Riordan, Jim McNamara, Eddie Spillane, Donie Walsh, Danny McDaid, Seán O'Sullivan, Mattie Murphy, Jim Timoney, John Buckley, Fr Paddy Coyle and other greats whose mighty deeds on road, track and cross-country were pure inspiration for us youngsters in the West of Ireland.

We first met our heroes through the pages of the *Irish Independent*, where the late Tom O'Riordan's weekly Athletics Roundup was essential reading.

Pádraig Griffin's fledgling *Marathon Magazine* and a few books (by Arthur Lydiard), Percy Cerutti and Roger Bannister) were our other mines of inspiration.

Enthralled, we would read about the training methods and racing exploits of those demigods of our youth. And then came the day when we met those heroes in the flesh.

Mick was warming up for the annual Hollymount Race, and sure enough he was just like the photo we had seen in the *Independent* - tall and stringy with a face hewn out of Connemara stone.

If memory serves, that day in Hollymount, Mick Molloy had already qualified for the

1968 Olympics in Mexico. And the word was that he had upped his training to 180 miles a week.

He was friendly toward us as we warmed up - yet distant in a shy kind of way.

And even as we warmed up there in Hollymount, the word flew from mouth to mouth - Molloy had already logged 20 miles in training around Oughterard that morning.

We marvelled at this mysterious man - and marvelled more when on the out-and-back course between Hollymount and Roundfort we met our hero half a mile from the finish and he with the race won, having started out on a warm-down lap at a lively pace.

We never did verify if Mick had run those 20 miles in Oughterard. We believed in the legend and that was enough.

Months later, the legend was further embellished when the man from Connemara finished the Olympic marathon in his bare feet. After suffering blisters at about 14 miles Mick took off his shoes and found some comfort in barefoot mode as he strode on to finish in the Olympic Stadium.

Mick's passing brought many memories flooding back, of runners with whom I was privileged to compete during my all-too-short racing career. I have celebrated their lives and our friendship in some verses of this little ballad that I call *The Boys Of Summer*. Ewan MacColl nailed it well in his song *The Joy Of Living* when he wrote:

Years pass by and they're gone with the speed of birds in flight/ Our lives like the verse of a song heard in the mountains/

Here's to - *The Boys Of Summer* - my forever friends.

The Boys Of Summer by Frank Grealley

*I clipped their heels and they clipped mine
The Boys Of Summer in their prime
We ran on road and field and track
Going forward - never looking back*

*I ran Jim McNamara to the line
Dick Hodgins too another time
Eddie Spillane I shadowed too
Those Boys Of Summer that I knew*

*Noel Henry taught me about pace
Another friend who has run his race
Willie Morris helped me too
Shared running wisdom that he knew.*

*Pat Cribbin from Lecarrow came
He got me into the running game
I think of Pat my faithful friend
An accident caused his sad young end*

*From the Claddagh Ray McBride came
A tear forms when I speak his name
We ran in the hills of Tennessee
Two young dreamers-Ray and me*

*Pádraig Keane was a good friend
A friend in deed right to the end
We ran the roads and fields as boys
We logged the miles-we shared the joys*

*John Flannery for Moore AC
Was always a good friend to me
Fleet of foot with determined stride
He ran with Pádraig Keane by his side*

*Three stalwarts from Tuam AC I knew
Tom Lardner, Roger Rushe-Mickey Kelly too
With those three I shared lots of joy
When I travelled with them as a boy*

*Tom O'Riordan said I'd make my mark
As we ran around the Phoenix Park
I chased Tom up Knockmaroon Hill
I saw him then - I see him still*

*Those training nights in sweet Donore
I remember them for ever-more
Bertie Messitt, Mick Connolly, Tommy Redican too
Were three great Donore runners that I knew*

*From Oughterard came Mick Molloy
My running hero when a boy
When Mick ran the Olympic Marathon in bare feet
His Legend status was complete*

*I clipped their heels and they clipped mine
Those Boys Of Summer in their prime
We ran on road and field and track
Going forward- never looking back*



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Corkagh Park

**Sunday 9th
June**

Fingal 10k

Swords

**Sunday 14th
July**

Frank Duffy

10 Mile

Phoenix Park
**Saturday 17th
August**

Dublin

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Phoenix Park
**Saturday 21st
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Entries opening **March 2024**



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