

# Man of the year 1980

## Padraig Griffin Ballinamore



IT IS impossible to compress Padraig Griffin into the confines of a page. Of necessity, then, we will touch on the tips only of the activities and achievements of this remarkable man from Charlestown and Ballinamore.

What else can we do when a fully fleshed list of his involvements would fall off the page. He is a second level teacher and an A.S.T.I. official. A local, national and international athletics coach, a county and national Community Games official, a Community Information Service organizer, Festival PRO, County Athletics PRO, Community Council Business Secretary, Red Cross organizer, photographer, editor of the athletics magazine 'Marathon' — and a married man.

His first love is athletics — this is the area of his greatest dedication. When he was a young student in U.C.G. in 1961 there were only two athletes from the university to enter competitions of any importance. He became secretary of the university athletic club, and in the later sixties the club won the Irish Universities Cross Country Championship four years in a row (for men), and three years in a row (for women).

Padraig came to Leitrim in 1964, joining the staff of St. Feim's College, Ballinamore. This was the year of the Olympic Games in Tokyo, the first Olympics to be screened by RTE. He qualified as an athletics coach; then, within eleven years, in the Ballinamore area which had no tradition in athletics, he produced four athletes of national and international class — the Leddy brothers, P. J. and Eddie, Patricia Quinn (now Mrs. Griffin), and the latest and youngest, Gregory Smith. Their fields are quite distinct. P. J. Leddy, now a teacher in St. Clare's Comprehensive School, Manorhamilton, competed in the international Cross Country team in Tunisia in 1968. Eddie, his brother, represented his country at two Olympic Games and will almost certainly be in Moscow in 1980. He held three national records at one time in 1976, in 5,000m, 10,000m, and 3,000m steeplechase — the latter, recorded in 1972, still stands. Patricia Quinn's greatest achievement was to be 1978 Senior 800m Ladies National Champion. Gregory Smith is a walker, and has been selected for the 1979 Irish team for the Youths Cup Competition in France.

They are the stars. In their shadow there are countless hours of coaching, of travel, of organization, of publicity, of diplomacy. Let's take a typical 'Athletic Week' in Padraig's life. Training takes up four nights, one night is for meetings, local, county, provincial or national. Saturday is for training, often far from home, or for travels abroad. Sunday is always a day of competitions. Added to all that are the hours of paper



*Padraig Griffin with his wife, Patricia*

work involved in being PRO and editor of 'Marathon'. And his other non-athletic commitments. Well, he finds time, even to photograph for the 'Leitrim Guardian' and for the 'G.A.A. Yearbook'.

Pressed to name a highpoint in his life, he says it was his choice as Irish Athletic Coach for the 1972 Olympics at Munich. And, of course, his marriage to Patricia Quinn of Aughawillan. She has just as much commitment to the community as has Padraig. Apart from her own twice daily training stints (involving runs of up to fifteen miles), Patricia organises keep-fit classes and takes part in training sessions.

So much for the man of activity. What of the man himself? His image is a man of total integrity, of fair play. Athletics is part of education; there are rules; Padraig insists that they be obeyed. This does not always apply in other sports, he claims.

What reward does Padraig reap for his endeavours? There is absolutely no personal gain. Neither does he want any. But he looks back with complete satisfaction to the many honours he has been responsible for bringing to Leitrim.

He has too much to do. Too many "do not stand their round" in community activity, he says. Maybe it's because too many are standing their round.

The 'Leitrim Guardian' is delighted to honour Padraig Griffin as Man of the Year, 1980.