

# Leitrim Personality of the Year

## Frances Cryan and Aidan Nangle

(Oarswoman and Coach)

**FOR THE FIRST TIME** The Leitrim Guardian Personality of the Year Award is shared by two people, Frances Cryan and Aidan Nangle. They are a team.

Frances is from Carrick-on-Shannon. Last July, in Moscow, she became the first woman to row for Ireland in the Olympic Games and to embellish this distinction she came seventh in the overall classification table for the Single Sculls event. She travelled to Moscow as five times Irish Ladies Single Sculls Champion, having won the title every year since its inaugural year in 1976. She has made her dent also in international competitions in Britain, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Yugoslavia etc. In 1977 she won the Home Countries Ladies title and followed this with gold medal victories in Nottingham and Denmark. Frances is a talented, dedicated oarswoman, but such talent and dedication might well have counted for nought if she had lacked the proper coaching techniques necessary to harness such assets.

Aidan Nangle has filled the role of the coach superbly. He is from Jamestown, "a sports fanatic, once a natural footballer but with no brains for football". He has brains as a rowing coach. His 'track' record is an index to his coaching ability: A schoolgirl crew of four who were unbeaten in Irish waters against adult competition in



1969-1970, Mary Reynolds—Ireland's top single sculler in the early '70s, another successful four girl crew who remained unbeaten nationally or internationally in 1975, and now Frances Cryan.

Frances' training schedule comprises rowing, running, cycling and weights. She averages thirty hours a week training. Before Moscow, a day's training frequently consisted of twentyfive miles rowing, five miles road-running or cycling and weight training.

Aidan coaches Frances for about sixteen hours weekly. But he spends many more hours doing the "backroom" jobs; arranging the logistics of competing in regattas, programming training schedules, keeping a check on her health and fitness.

The combined efforts of athlete and coach achieved a highly acclaimed seventh place in Moscow despite the pre-Olympic scepticism of some media-people who doubted the wisdom of sending Frances to compete against the vaunted East Europeans. Her performance was the best of the Irish rowing squad.

The experts say that rowers peak at 25 or 26 years of age. Frances is 21, almost 22 years old. Given her graph of progress so far, she should have a handsome chance in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Aidan is cautious about her prospects. Four years is a long time in sport, a long time in which to sustain interest and dedication, to maintain the competitive edge. We wish them well for the future, and congratulate them on the honour they have brought to their county and country.