HIGHLIGHTS OF ATHLETICS YEAR

FOUR LEITRIM ATHLETES SHARE TEN NATIONAL TITLES

Padraig Griffin

The highlights of the past year in Leitrim athletics were: some outstanding International performances by Colin Griffin—now fully recovered from a serious injury which affected him for the two previous seasons—the inclusion of young Mohill athlete, Laura Reynolds in the Irish Sports Council list of carded athletes, and a number of national titles. It was also a year in which Leitrim made a major contribution to the reorganisation of the National Governing Body (AAI) and had motions relating to increased financial help for sportspersons from the Irish Sports Council and more focussed preparation for the upcoming Beijing and London Olympic Games passed unanimously at the April Congress.

The pre Christmas cross country season saw the Ballinamore Under-12 Girls win the Connacht team title while Ronan Ellis and Noel Plunkett won the Under-12 and Under-13 individual Championships. At the All Ireland Championships in Sligo Laura O'Dowd, Ronan Ellis and Noel Plunkett won five medals between them.

Ballinamore A C retained the O'Beirne Trophy for the Leitrim Road League while both Laura Reynolds and Gerard O'Donnell were among the young athletes from every County in Ireland honoured by the Athletics Association of Ireland at their annual Awards Function for Young Athletes. Leitrim athletes who won Connacht Indoor titles in Nenagh included Laura Reynolds, Sinead Tighe, Ciara O Dowd, Gerard Crossan, Cait McWeeney, Niamh O Dowd, Gerard O Donnell, Laura O Dowd and Peter Lavin.

The All Ireland Indoor Championships in Nenagh saw Laura Reynolds and Sinead Tighe both take gold in the Under 18 and Under 17 Walks. Ciara O Dowd took silver in the Under 14 event and there were also silver medals for Niamh O Dowd in the 200m and Sinead McWeeney in the high jump. Niamh O Dowd also took bronze in the 60m hurdles.

The Kit Kat Connacht Schools Athletics Finals were held on a very wet day in Galway. Connacht Schools titles were won by Sinead Tighe, Niamh O Dowd, Noel Plunkett, Paul McElhone, Fergal Ellis and John Feeley. In the All Ireland Schools held in Tullamore Laura Reynolds won the senior 3000m Walk title.

The younger age groups in the Connacht AAI Championships were held on the Sligo track while the older age group events took place in Galway. Leitrim title winners were Laura O Dowd, Niamh Tighe, Ciara O Dowd, Noel Plunkett, Aine Tighe, Fergal Ellis, Sinead Tighe, Gerard Crossan, Gerard O Donnell and Emma Cleary. The All Ireland gold medals were won by Laura Reynolds, Sinead Tighe and Gerard O Donnell.

At the Leitrim Primary Schools Athletics Championships in Manorhamilton, St Bridget's N S, Drumcong, won the Gilmartin Trophy as the best team. They also took the P J Reynolds Trophy for the Open Relay. The Under Age Relay was won by a young Fenagh N S Team.

Leitrim's only Athletics medal winner at the National Community Games in Mosney was Laura O Dowd who took third in the Under 12 600m. A few weeks earlier she had made the long journey to Cork to take the silver medal in the AAI Under 12 600m Championship.

Outstanding performances by top walkers

After a string of fine performances in 2005 culminating in an excellent 15th position at the World Youths Championships in Marrakesh it was little wonder that Laura Reynolds was added to the junior section of the prestigious Irish Sports Council Carding Scheme. During the past year she won Under 18 and Junior AAI titles both indoor and outdoor as well as taking runner up position to Anne Loughnane of Craughwell in both indoor and outdoor AAI Senior championships.

Back in March she joined with Colin Griffin to produce a great Leitrim double in the Isle Of Man Grand Prix where she won the Junior 10K Walk and he the Mens' 20K event. In May she finished fourth in the same event at the Leamington Grand Prix with