Our All-Ireland Potato Champion
A Profile of Michael McGoldrick

NOT MANY VILLAGES can boast of having an All Ireland champion in their midst but this certainly cannot be said for the village of Dromahair whose expert potato grower Michael McGoldrick of Kilcoosey, Dromahair has scooped first prize on two occasions in the Board Glas National Potato Championships. Michael comes from a strong farming background and is recognised locally as the "budding Gerry Daly". Educated at Drumlease NS, Dromahair and St Clare's Comprehensive School in Manorhamilton, Michael has always been intensely interested in horticulture and when he won his first All Ireland Championship in 1993, it was no big surprise to his family and friends.

Michael McGoldrick, Dromahair with Brendan O'Donnell (left), Chief Executive of Bord Glas & Tom Maher, Teagasc potato specialist

The All Ireland Potato Championship has been running since 1992. It is sponsored by an Bord Glas. The aim of the competition is to increase the level of awareness, especially among amateur growers of what constitutes a good quality potato.

Michael first started gardening in 1988 and with his father's encouragement, he himself being an enthusiastic gardener, won his first trophy at Manorhamilton Show, sponsored by North Leitrim Vegetable Growers. In 1992 and 1993 he competed in the All Ireland Gardening Final and has qualified for all the potato All Ireland Finals. Michael also came 5th in the All Ireland onion championship in 1996. His very impressive and enviable success in the Bord Glas All Ireland Potato Championships is as follows:

1992–8th place; 1993–1st place; 1994–2nd place; 1995–3rd place; 1996–5th place; 1997–4th place; 1998–1st place; 1999–3rd place. An equally impressive achievement for Michael is that he holds no less than two All Ireland records. In 1992 he was the youngest winner of the All Ireland and in 1998 he was the highest scorer in the Final with an astounding 98 marks.

Michael usually qualified for the Finals at his native Dromahair Agricultural Show but had to travel to Riverstown last July to gain his qualification. Michael is very modest and unassuming despite his achievements and is always willing to advise and assist one, be it in his work place or in his free time. He says "its very hard work but very rewarding". He attributes his success to hard work, commitment and dedication coupled with his intense passion for the soil. He feels that there should be more classes (horticulture) for those interested in gardening and competitions which would promote interest and awareness.

In an All Ireland Championship, Michael explains that the best (potato) should be even sired, blemish free, uniform table sized and the exhibit should be well presented. Another very important factor for any show is that the schedule is always fully read and checking that the exact quantity is given. Michael's aim for the future is to contest the World Potato Championship some time in the future. With his winning formula, commitment and dedication, I believe Michael will put Dromahair and Co. Leitrim on the International Agricultural Map and it couldn't happen to a finer young man. We all wish you continued success Michael.