

MIXED FORTUNES FOR LEITRIM ATHLETES

Padraig Griffin

THE YEAR just past has been one of mixed fortunes for Leitrim athletes with many successes on the domestic scene and some disappointments for our top performers. Hopefully the coming year with the London Olympic Games providing the highlight will see outstanding Leitrim performances at the highest level.

In the period prior to Christmas the sport was highly honoured at the first Leitrim Sports Partnership Awards function when Colin Griffin was presented with the Leitrim Sportsperson of the Year Award while Laura Reynolds and Mary O'Donnell were also among those honoured. At the All Ireland even ages Cross Country Championships held over a snow covered course in Derry Ryan O'Rourke of Ballinamore, Keith Beirne of Mohill and David Bruen of Carrick won bronze medals as members of the Connacht team while Daire Farrell of Carrick finished an excellent eighth in the Under 16 Boys event. A few weeks earlier the Ballinamore quartet of Jack



Top: Irish International Laura Reynolds following her victory in the Woodies DIY AAI All-Ireland Indoor 5k Walk in the Odyssey, Belfast. On her left is Emma Doherty (Belfast), third and on her right is Kate Veale (West Waterford) who was second. Middle Left: Community Games — Leitrim Walkers Dearbhaille Beirne & James McNabola of Mohill who won both Walks at the HSE National Community Games in Athlone. PHOTO: MAI BEIRNE Middle Right: Daire Farrell with his coach John Connolly at the AVIVA Irish Schools Athletics Championship in Tullamore.

Bottom: Mr Frank Dolan, Cathaoirleach Leitrim County Council presents the 2010 Leitrim Sportsperson of the Year on behalf of Leitrim Sports Partnership to Colin Griffin at the annual function in the Landmark Hotel. Also in picture is the Guest Speaker for the night Mr Jack O'Connor Manager of the Kerry Football Team.

Gilheany, Oisín McLoughlin, Ciaran Kenny and Riordan O'Rourke won the Connacht Under 12 team title in Ballina and in January Oisín McLoughlin finished an excellent fourth in the All Ireland Under 11 Championship in Tullamore.

Laura Reynolds won the National 20K Walk and Colin Griffin took the silver medal behind local



athlete Robbie Heffernan at the National 30K Walk in Cork in January and some weeks later was also second to the same athlete in the AAI Indoor Championships at the Odyssey in Belfast. Here Laura Reynolds won a titanic battle with the young Waterford prodigy Kate Veale who, before the season was out, was to win the World Youths 5000m Walk title and set a new Irish 3000m Walk record. Laura was to go on take fourteenth position in the 20K at Lugano some weeks later in a time of 1:35.34 which was inside the "B" Standard for the World Championships of 2011 and the Olympic Games next year.

In the AAI Indoor Championships, Dearbhaile Beirne of Mohill A C took the bronze medal in the Under 14 60m in Magherafelt and won the Under 14 Walk in Nenagh where Eilis O Dowd of Ballinamore finished second, Dylan Mimna of Ballinamore was third in the Under 15 Walk, Michelle Beirne of Mohill second in the Under 17 event, Laura O Dowd second in the Under 17 800m and Daire Farrell second in the Under 17 Boys 800m.

Daire Farrell took third in the Intermediate 800m and second in the 400m at the All Ireland Schools Championships in Tullamore. A few weeks later he finished second in the 800m in the Tailteann Interprovincial and secured his place in the 800m on the Irish Schools team where he finished sixth in Cardiff. Michelle Beirne of Mohill Community College took the bronze medal in the Intermediate Walk in Tullamore.

In the National AAI Under Age Championships James Clinton and Diarmuid Giblin of North Leitrim took the silver medals in the Under 9 60m team event in Templemore.

In the Under 12 to Under 19 Championships in Tullamore Dearbhaile Beirne of Mohill took second in the Under 14 Walk, Dylan Mimna of Ballinamore was second in the Under 15 Walk and Michelle Beirne was third in the Under 17 Walk. At the Senior Championships Colin Griffin was second to Robbie Heffernan in the 10k track event and Laura Reynolds, following a layoff over injury which cost her the opportunity to compete in the European Under 23 Championships in Ostrava, finished second to Kate Veale.

The National Community Games in Athlone saw Leitrim win four medals with the two Mohill walkers Dearbhaile Beirne and James McNabola both winning their events, Ryan O Rourke of Ballinamore taking second in the Under 14 800m and Cathal McElgunn of Carrick taking fourth in the Under 16 100m. Carrick on Shannon won the national title in the Under 10 Mixed Gaelic Football. Mohill Under 16 Basketball Girls Team finished runners up to Castleisland (silver medals) while Odhran O Hara of Kinlough finished runner up in the Under 8 Boys Freestyle to Dara Quinn of Armagh.

Laura Reynolds finished twenty first in the 20K event at the European Cup of Racewalking in Olhao, Portugal, in May where Colin Griffin going very well in the 50K and in line for a position in the first eight had to pull out at 34K with a stomach problem which required medical treatment. Laura was back after injury in mid August when she finished twelfth in the World Student Games 20K walk in Shenzhen, China. Colin Griffin was out of luck in the World Championships

in Daegu when he was among twelve competitors disqualified in the 50K on a morning of severe judging. He was taken out at 30K while on the way to a personal best time and Olympic qualification.

There were some other highlights during the year. New York born Brian McGovern whose parents are from Leitrim and who is a member of Ballinamore A C, set Irish senior Indoor (5.15m) and Outdoor (5.02m) Pole Vault records in the USA and was selected to represent Ireland in the European Cup last June. Unfortunately he came into the competition in Izmir at too great an opening height and did not get a mark.

Leitrim County Board and Leitrim Sports Partnership organised Primary Schools Sports Hall Athletics and entered the winning teams for the inaugural National event in Athlone where three of the four teams finished second and the other third.

Ballinamore retained the O Beirne Trophy and St Caillins, Fenagh, the Overall winners title at the County Primary Schools just as St Manachan's of Mohill retained it in the cross country. Ciara O Dowd was awarded the AAI Juvenile County Award for 2010. Laura Reynolds (DCU) retained her National Universities indoor and outdoor Racewalking titles with Ciara O Dowd (NUIG), Gerard O Donnell (Athlone IT) and Fergal Ellis (DCU) also taking Inter Varsity medals.

Finally, Daire Farrell achieved the European Youth Olympics standard of 1.55.0 in the 800m but was among a number of similar achievers not selected for the event in Turkey.