

## EAGLE AC

### Paddy Linehan

Among the youngest of the clubs in the county, Eagle Track Club as it was originally known, was the brainchild of Fred Gilbert. Fred was formally a well known coach with the juvenile section of the St Finbarr's Athletic Club. Eagle Track came into being at the start of the 1982/83 cross country season and since then the club has provided the Cork area with many a fine athlete.

Eagle were formed to cater for juveniles initially. In a 1984 interview for 'Marathon' magazine he outlined the aims and ideals of the club were 'to cater for Juvenile athletics and to prepare them for the area of Senior athletics. In our minds any victories for our juveniles are a bonus to our aims'.

Among the better known names in the early years of the club were Tony Gilbert, a middle distance runner who won a scholarship to the University of Lowell near Boston and Fidelma Kirwan, a Celtic and schools' 400 metre hurdles international. Tony's brother, Declan, followed him on athletic scholarship to Lowell and a third runner to secure a similar crossing of Atlantic to America was Tony O'Gorman, who went to Minnesota.

In its very first year Eagle Track competed in the Omega League Division 'B' and at juvenile level there was a fourth place for Declan Gilbert in the national under-16 steeplechase and gold for Fidelma Kirwan in the girls under-17 400 metre hurdles and a silver in the 200 metres. Over the years the successes have accumulated with athletes securing National medals in the throws, jumps, walks, sprints and middle distance events.

Much of this success is due to the skilful coaching at the Club; from its early years there was Fred Gilbert and Mick Clancy. Since then the coaches in the club have included Mick Sheehan, Denis Aherne, Donal Cronin, Paddy Linehan, Colm Murphy, Liam Doherty, Pat Harrington and Catherine Murphy. Paddy Linehan is of course well known for his expertise in the throws as is Colm Murphy, a former National throws coach and currently the National triple jump coach.

Sprinting at the Club was at a high standard for many a year - under the care of Denis Ahearne. The quartet of Donal Cronin, John Corr, Mark Smyth and Gary Aherne were among the best squad in the country and indeed proved this at Provincial and at National level.

Over the years many a successful thrower has donned the club singlet. The three Linehan sisters - Noreen, Helen and Kathy accumulated many a County, Regional and National medal, with Noreen among the pioneers of women's hammer throwing in Ireland. This past Summer she secured an international 'cap' as Ireland were represented internationally in this event for the first time.

Pat O'Leary was yet another very capable thrower. Specialising in the shot putt, he was a regular over the 13 metre mark. He was also quite an exponent with the 56 pound weight. Paul Lynch and Seamus Manning were both 40 metre plus hammer throwers and Kieran Stack, when not steeplechasing, proved a very able javelin thrower.

Currently the club boasts of several first rate weight

throwers; at senior level there is Johnathan McSweeney in the shot, Tim O'Herlihy in the discus, Martin O'Sullivan and Noreen Linehan in the hammer and Colm Murphy who is making a comeback after a lay-off of a decade. All are under the guidance of Paddy Linehan.

On the track Fidelma Kirwan remains among the top women 400 metre hurdlers in the country and Ann-Marie Healy has made great progress in her training over the past winter. At longer distances national medals have been won at a number of distances up to and including the marathon and such as Joe Murphy, Eddie Noonan, Denis Hegarty, Pat Murphy and Tommy Ryan have ensured that the Club's name is never far from the final placings.

Many of the latter have taken a great interest in mountain running and indeed the Club is very active in promoting this activity in the Munster area. Besides organising the Munster Championships, Eagle Athletic Club also provide the majority of medal winners at regional and at national level.

The juvenile section of the club boasts of many exciting prospects and the care that Donal Cronin, Liam Doherty, Pat Harrington and Paddy Linehan have of their charges speaks well of the Club as a whole. Susan O'Rourke and Ciaran Foley are among those youngsters to benefit.

The veterans's section of the club is strong and such household names as Michael Kiely and Hughie McSweeney compete in the club singlet. Both are national champions of course and have competed successfully abroad. The two secured medals at the last World Veterans' Indoor Championships in Budapest, Hungary in 1991 with Michael taking a double gold and silver and Hughie taking two bronzes. The club is growing in numbers in this area and names for the future include Joe Murphy, Ted Twomey, Catherine Murphy and Ebhena Finnegan.

As a finale, mention must be made of the two main promotions of the Club. In March annually the 'Carrigaline 5' is run off with all the top athletes in the county and beyond taking part. This ranks among the few athletic promotions in the town. Last August the Club organised the first ever throwers only meeting. All the usual throwing events - to include the hammer and 56 pound for distance events - were included on what was a lengthy programme. The sports was well supported and all the top throwers in the country were in Cork for the evening's activities with Nick Sweeney throwing a new all-comers Irish discus record of 60,38 metres and for good measure had also the furthest mark for the 56 for distance for many a year - 8,48 metres.

At County Board and Southern Region level the Club has provided many an official. Paddy Linehan was active on the County BLOE Board and presently Colm Murphy and Catherine Murphy are BLE County Board PRO and Secretary respectively. Colm is also the National Triple Jump Coach and all three are very active as officials at meetings up and down the length and breadth of Ireland.

A very active club - both in active participation and indeed in the promotion of athletics.