

CORK ATHLETICS NEWSLETTER



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CORK COUNTY BOARD

January/February/March 2020

COVID-19

With the current global situation, we are all unsure as to when normal Athletics activity will resume. Many upcoming events and fixtures have been postponed or cancelled and many of us have found that our usual club training routines and activities have come to a halt. Athletics Ireland have advised that all organized indoor and outdoor events of any size are not to take place and have warned that no insurance covers of Athletics Ireland for Provinces, County Boards, Clubs or affiliates are operational during this period. Importantly, this includes club personal accident cover. There should be no club activity ongoing at this time.

With regard to individual exercise, the current HSE guidelines permit **brief** periods of exercise within **2km of your own home**. Cork Athletics would like to thank the overwhelming majority of Athletics Ireland members who have been adhering to these guidelines. We would ask Athletics Ireland members to continue to follow these guidelines and to resist breaching or bending these rules. Hamish Adams, CEO of Athletics Ireland, has said that Athletics Ireland “take a dim view” of those who breach these guidelines and risk bringing the sport of athletics into disrepute.

During this period it is impossible (and inappropriate) to try to train as normal. While it is good for both our physical and mental health to get some fresh air and exercise during these unprecedented times, hard training / high mileage is not recommended. With no fixtures in place for the foreseeable future, training to the same level of intensity as we would during normal times could lead to overtraining, ‘burnout’, and, inevitably, injury. We ask all members to stay safe – competitive fixtures **will** return, but until then it is important to prioritise the health and wellbeing of ourselves and the nation.

The Athletics Ireland and Cork Athletics websites will aim to keep members up to date on new information, event postponements and cancellations, etc. While we understand that the postponement/cancellation of races is a distressing time for race organisers, Cork Athletics would request that event organisers **do not advertise a rescheduled date** until it has been sanctioned by Cork Athletics County Board. Neither Cork Athletics nor Athletics Ireland is in a position to sanction new event dates, until, at the very least, the Covid-19 crisis has passed, and the HSE has lifted restrictions for mass gatherings. Please be reassured that Cork Athletics, along with Athletics Ireland, will do its utmost to facilitate you in rescheduling your event.

While there won't be too many races and events to report on the Cork Athletics website over the next few weeks, keep checking the website for interesting reads about Cork great athletes, races, and athletics stories from Cork's rich athletics history. We hope everybody is keeping well during this time and, most of all, looking after their health and well-being. We are looking forward to when we can see everyone again out on the track, roads and cross country fields enjoying the sport we all love.

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While the first three months of 2020 were a few very busy months for athletics in Cork, these events and achievements were overshadowed by the death of Mary Meaghar of Blarney / Inniscarra AC, Cork County Board Competition Secretary. Cork Athletics County Board extend our condolences and deepest sympathy to our friend and colleague, John Meagher, along with family and friends, on the death of our esteemed colleague Mary Meagher.

CORK CITY SPORTS ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Darragh McElhinney of UCD AC, formerly of Bantry AC, was awarded the Cork City Sports Athletics Person of the Year award at a ceremony at the River Lee Hotel on Friday 28 February. Darragh had a fantastic year of athletics in 2019. Last summer, Darragh won a bronze medal in the 5000m at the European U20 T&F Championships in Sweden. In May, Darragh also set a new Irish U20 record at the 5000m distance. Running a time of 13.54.10 at the Oordegem International in Belgium, Darragh became the first Irish teenager to break the 14 minute barrier for 5000m.



NATIONAL INDOOR 200M RECORD FOR PHIL HEALY

On 12 February Bandon AC's Phil Healy clocked a time of 23.10 to set a new Irish national indoor record over 200m. Phil's run at the AIT International Grand Prix broke the 17 year old record of 23.17, set by Ciara Sheehy in 2003.



CHARLIE O'DONOVAN BREAKS 4 MINUTE MILE

Leevale AC athlete Charlie O'Donovan has become the seventh Cork athlete to break four minutes for the mile. Charlie clocked a time of 3.58.95 at the David Hemery Invitational Meet in Boston on 15 February, representing Villanova University where he is currently on an athletics scholarship. Charlie is the seventh Cork man, and fifth Leevale athlete, to dip under four minutes for the mile, following in the footsteps of Mark Carroll, Marcus O'Sullivan, Ciarán Ó Lionáird, John Hartnett, Ken Nason and Kieran Stack.



4 NATIONAL TITLES FOR CORK ATHLETES AT THE IRISH LIFE HEALTH NATIONAL SENIOR INDOOR T&F CHAMPIONSHIPS

Four Cork athletes became All-Ireland Champions at the Irish Life Health National Senior Indoor T&F Championships. Phil Healy of Bandon AC powered home to win the women's 200m in a championship best performance time of 23.16. Phil also medalled in the 60m, claiming the bronze medal in a time of 7.36, finishing just behind her sister Joan Healy (Leevale AC) who won the silver medal in 7.33.

Leevale AC's Louise Shanahan put in a superb performance in the women's 1500m,



David Cussen of Old Abbey AC in action during the senior men's high jump competition

running a smart race to claim victory in an exciting finish. Louise's victory carries an extra achievement, as her father Ray Shanahan also won the senior 1500m title in 1988/89, making them the first father-daughter to achieve this feat. Louise's day didn't end there, as she was also part of the Leevale senior women's 4x200m relay team which won gold in the event. The Leevale team of Emily Wall, Shona Lowe, Louise Shanahan and Joan Healy stormed home to win the gold medal in a new club national record time of 1.42.26.



Louise Shanahan of Leevale AC crossing the line to win the senior women's 1500m

Another Cork athlete to bring home a gold medal was David Cussen of Old Abbey AC. David cleared a height of 2.08m to claim the title ahead of Le Chéile's Ciaran Connolly.

In addition to National Title winners, other Cork athletes also came home with medals across a variety of events. Clodagh Walsh of Abbey Striders AC won bronze in the women's high jump, clearing a height of 3.55m. Conor Morey of Leevale AC won bronze in a time of 6.85 in a very competitive men's 60m. Also medalling was Darragh McElhinney who won bronze in the men's 3000m in a time of 8.06.18.



The Leevale AC senior women's team take gold in the 4x200m relay

36 NATIONAL MEDALS FOR CORK MASTERS

There was great success for Cork masters athletes at the recent National Masters Indoor Championships in Athlone IT. A total of 36 medals made their way back to Cork, including 17 golds, 13 silver and 6 bronze. There were some very impressive performances from lots of Cork athletes, including some double gold medallists. One of the highlights of the day was Carlton Haddock of Leevale AC. In addition to winning the gold medal in the 200m, Carlton also set a new M45 National Record with a time of 23.80. Carlton also won the gold medal in the M45 60m in a time of 7.61. There was another double sprint gold on the women's side, with Riverstick Kinsale athlete Sinead O'Regan winning the W40 60m in a photo finish in a time of 8.29, as well as winning the W40 200m in 27.33.

In the middle distance races, St. Finbarr's AC athlete Denis Coughlan claimed victory in both the M35 800m and M35 1500m. Denis also narrowly missed out on a medal in the M35 400m,



Flor O'Leary of St. Finbarr's AC with coach Fergus O'Donovan

missing out on the bronze medal by just four hundredths of a second. Two more Cork athletes also managed to set National Records in their events. Flor O'Leary of St. Finbarr's AC set a new M85 National Record in the 400m, winning the gold medal in a time of 1.36.25, while Michael Kiely of Rising Sun AC set a new National Record in the M75 800m, winning gold in 2.52.36. Two more Cork athletes managed to achieve double gold medals – Con O'Donovan of Rising Sun AC won both the M75 60m and M75 long jump, while Hugh McSweeney of Eagle AC won both the M70 60m and the M70 200m. Other gold medalists from Cork included Marion Lyons (St. Finbarr's AC) in the W65 200m, David Keating (Belgooly AC) in the M40 200m, Ken Higgs (Eagle AC) in the M70 400m, John Rice (Grange Fermoy AC) in the M70 high jump, and Seamus Fox (Fanahan McSweeney AC) in the M65 long jump.

In addition to her gold medal in the W65 200m, Marion Lyons of St. Finbarr's AC also won silver medals in the W65 400m, the W65 3000m and the W65 800m. St. Finbarr's AC had more medal success on the day, with silver medals for Eddie Barry in the M65 400m, Michael Murphy in the M60 800m and Sandra Hickson in the W40 weight for distance. Michael Kiely of Rising Sun AC added to his gold medal and National Record in the M75 800m with silver in the M75 400m while his Rising Sun AC clubmate Con O'Donovan added to his gold medals in the 60m and long jump with a silver in the M75 200m. Liz McCarthy Coomey of Bandon AC picked up three medals on the day – silver in the W50 high jump and weight for distance and bronze in the long jump. David Keating (Belgooly AC) added to his 200m gold with a bronze in the M50 60m while Ken Higgs (Eagle AC) also medaled in two events with silver in the M70 800m and bronze in the M70 1500m.

Other medalists included silver for Ian O'Leary (Leevale AC) in the M50 3000m and John Rice (Grange Fermoy AC) in the M70 long jump while bronze medals went to John Murphy (Liscarroll AC) in the M60 60m, Seamus Fox (Fanahan McSweeney AC) in the M65 high jump, and Gerard Tobin (Leevale AC) in the M50 shot put.



Clayton Haddock (Leevale AC) in action at a recent track and field event

AWARDS ROUND UP

Cork Athletics Annual International Awards Night 202

A very large crowd turned up at the Kingsley Hotel on Friday 21 February for the Cork Athletics Annual International Awards Night. Awards were presented to Cork athletes who had been selected to represent Ireland in international competitions over the previous 12 months. Along with the international awards, a group of Young Aspiring Athletes were presented with training bursaries. These Young Aspiring Athletes were selected on several criteria including significant athletic achievement, progression and application to their chosen athletic discipline(s). Liam Fleming of Bandon AC also made a special presentation to both the male and female Cork cross country teams of 1968, both of which won the National Cross Country titles that year.



The Young Aspiring Athletes receiving bursaries from Cork Athletics Chairman Paddy Buckley and special guest Peter Hanlon of Athletics Ireland

Tom Burke Receives Hall of Fame Award

The Cork Athletics International Awards Night culminated in a very special presentation of the Hall of Fame Award to Tom Burke. Tom Burke was recognised for his major contribution to athletics in Cork, and Ireland, for his organisation of the Grange International Cross Country.

Tom Burke was the driving force behind the Grange International Cross-Country. Such was its popularity that, to this day, people ask where the Grange International was held – it was held on the Dublin Road, just outside Fermoy, on the lands of the Coughlan family.

Tom brought some of the best athletes from across the world to Fermoy – European champions, World champions and Olympic champions. The great Rob De Castela, Craig Virgin, Steve Jones, Henry Rono, Hans Juergen Orthmann, Leon Schots, Danny McDaid, Noel Carroll, John Buckley, Donie Walsh, Eamonn Coughlan, John Treacy, Fanahan McSweeney, and many, many more, including the cream of athletes from across Ireland, came to Fermoy.

Tom's vision of the Grange International Cross-Country brought world-class athletes and athletics to a small Cork town. In doing so, Tom was the inspiration for many organisers and administrators. He also provided an international platform for so many athletes around him. The Grange Fermoy International Cross Country may have ceased over 30 years ago but the legacy of Tom Burke's vision has lasted the test of time.

Some famous names sent testimonials to Tom Burke on hearing that he was to receive the Cork Athletics Hall of Fame Award. Testimonials from Craig Virgin, Mike McLeod and Steve Jones were read out at the Cork Athletics awards night and are currently available to read on the Cork Athletics website.



East Cork Athletics Division Awards Night

There was a large crowd at the Midleton Park Hotel on Friday 28 February for the East Cork Athletics Division Awards Night. The awards honoured outstanding athletes and clubs in the East Cork Athletics division for their performances and achievements at National level over the past 12 months. Many of the awards on the night were presented to juvenile athletes, highlighting the impressive depth of juvenile athletics in the East Cork region. Carraig na bhFear AC were very successful on the night, winning both the Maureen O'Connor Trophy for Best Girls Juvenile Cross Country Club and the Gerry Russell Trophy for Best Boys Juvenile Cross Country Club, as well as the Willie Harte Trophy for Best Club at T&F Championships. The final award of the night, the Kathleen McCarthy Memorial Shield for East Cork Division Athlete of the Year was presented to Carraig na bhFear AC's Orla Coffey, who had a fantastic year of athletics in 2019. The evening was introduced by East Cork Division Secretary Tim Twomey, of Youghal AC while MC Michael Byrne of St. Catherine's AC conducted the events for the evening. International race walker Kate Veale and Cork Athletics County Board Vice Chairman Bill Allen were the guests of honour for the evening.



Orla Coffey (Carraig na bhFear AC), East Cork Athlete of the Year, receiving the Kathleen McCarthy Memorial Shield from Dan McCarthy

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We hope that you enjoyed this installment of the Cork Athletics Newsletter. We hope to produce this on a regular basis but, as always, we need your help. If anybody would like to contribute any news, articles or has any other ideas about how to add to this newsletter, please email corkathleticsnewsletter@gmail.com.