

# LEESIDE REVIVAL

BY RAY SHANAHAN

**F**riday, 3rd July, 1992 is the date for the 42nd Nike Cork City Sports. It promises to be another exciting chapter in the history of the event.

There have been ups and downs in the last twenty years of the Sports. Highlights would have been the marvellous 3.56 mile of John Hartnett on grass, a sub 3.50 mile at the present track and, of course, the world record hammer throw of Yuri Sedykh. There have been disappointments too, most notably the cancellation of the Sports in 1989 and 1990, as the economic downturn affected sponsorship. 1991 saw the revival of the meet with an evening of classical racing which included an Irish mile record for Aisling Molloy and a sub 4 minute mile which made Niall Bruton the youngest Irishman to break that magical barrier.

This year, under the sponsorship of Nike, the Sports encompass a Triangular International between Ireland, Russia and a British team selected from Southern Counties AAAs. As always, there will be a generous sprinkling of international athletes, with strong representation from Birchfield Harriers.

In many respects, the Cork City Sports meet is quite different from others in Ireland. To begin with, it is not organised by any club, although most members of the Cork City Sports Committee have strong ties with the sport. For years, the driving force was the late John O. Jagoe, the Cork businessman who dedicated unlimited time and energy to the promotion of the Sports. Today, the committee is a useful mix of business and athletic experience geared only to the holding of one meet each year.

As its name suggests, the event is one which involves many aspects of life in Cork City. Patrons include the Lord Mayor of Cork, the President of University College Cork and the General Officer in Command of the Southern Command. In a novel move, a decision was taken to donate the gate proceeds to the Cork Diocesan Mission in Peru and Chile. The connections generated have done much to elevate the Sports in the public view.



• *Memorable Night at the Mardyke: Aisling Molloy and Sonia O'Sullivan had reason to smile.*

***"The involvement of Nike, the international sportswear company, as overall sponsor is of immeasurable value."***

Sponsorship, inevitably, is of vital importance. The involvement of Nike, the international sportswear company, as overall sponsor is of immeasurable value. Equally important, however, is the contribution of major sponsors Buckler. Last year, one of the meet highlights was the clash between Aisling Molloy and Sonia O'Sullivan which resulted in both breaking the old Irish record for the women's mile. Biggest cheer of the night, however, was reserved for the Buckler 5000m where the evergreen Liam O'Brien outpaced Noel Berkeley with his familiar finishing kick. But Buckler is not alone. A quick flick through the programme shows the importance of the involvement of the Imperial Hotel, Coca Cola, Merchants Quay Shopping Centre, Birmingham European Airlines and the E.S.B. Without such involvement, it would be impossible to hold an international event.

Notwithstanding its involvement with local institutions and sponsors, the approach of the Cork City Sports Committee has always been outward looking. Links with Birmingham and Birchfield Harriers go back to the days of the old Drapers Sports in 1928. The connection with the old Soviet Union saw the likes of Yuri Sedykh and Sergei Litvinov competing in the mid '80s. Villanova University and the US Army Team represented the United States on many occasions. Indeed the Cold War had not thawed at the time that Sedykh lifted the American trophy!

The timing of this year's event will be crucial in the plans of aspiring Irish Olympians. Local favourites Marcus O'Sullivan and Sonia O'Sullivan will be fancied in the Nike 1500m and City of Cork 3000m, respectively, but competition will indeed be formidable.