

IMAA Gazette

Irish Masters Athletes Association

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Gold in the Alps and Mountains

BY MICK FENNEL AND PHILIP MAGNIER

Irish athletes won a good haul of medals at three of our international events this year, the EUROPEAN MASTERS T&F CHAMPS in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the EUROPEAN MASTERS MOUNTAIN CHAMPS in Bergaluff, Switzerland and the WORLD MASTERS MOUNTAIN CHAMPS in the Czech Republic. Several Irish athletes also competed at the WORLD MASTERS INDOOR T&F in Clermont, France, and registered good performances without bringing home any medals.

Geraldine Finnegan, W40, did tremendously among the Julian Alps of Slovenia, returning with two golds in the pentathlon and heptathlon and a silver in the 400m hurdles. Joe Gough, M55, and Dorothy McLennan, W70, also struck gold in their events: the 800m and pole vault. While both

perennial competitor, Nick Corish, M80, and Sean Naughton, M75, won silver in the 5000m and the pentathlon. Dermot Kerr, M50, and Martin McEvelly, M60, each won bronze in their events, the 5000m and the



Geraldine Finnegan, European Masters, Slovenia

2000m Steplechase. This led to a final tally of nine medals by the team, a very respectable return, with a number of 4th placings also.

Mags Greenan, W50, and Aisling Coppinger (sister of Eugene), W35, won individual gold at only the second ever championships devoted to European masters mountain running. Mags also went on to take gold at the World championships. Please see "Mastering Mountains" directly below for a small article on this.

For 2008 on the international front, there is just one more trip to enjoy: Swansea for the HOME COUNTRIES CC on Sat 15th Nov. As usual, teams will be selected following the trials, which will again be run in conjunction with the GERRY FARNHAM CC on Sun 19th

Oct. *Important:* Those wishing to avail of a "wild card" selection for Swansea must put their request in writing to the IMAA secretary, Anne Gormley, by Friday 17th Oct. Please see the bottom of the last page for Anne's contact details.

If you are planning ahead to 2009, you have a choice between Italy (EUROPEAN INDOORS T&F), Denmark (EUROPEAN ROAD CHAMPS), Finland (WORLD T&F) and the Isle of Man (HOME COUNTRIES CC). Please see "Forthcoming Events" on page 2 for more details, or check www.imaa.ie.

For those with Internet access, please print off the entry forms from there: it is proving very difficult to get information booklets from the organizers.

Mastering Mountains

BY GERRY BRADY

A small but very successful Irish masters team competed in the 2nd European Masters Mountain Running champs in Lenzerheide, Switzerland in June. They brought home two individual gold medals, and silver and bronze team medals.

The race was held over a very testing 6.5k course with a 970m (3182') climb in considerable heat to a finishing summit at 2,900m (9514'). For those not familiar with mountain races, that means the competitors were working very hard to avoid walking during the race!

In the days before the race, we walked slowly through Lenzerheide casting apprehensive glances at the mountain summit we were to run to and wondering whose idea it was and, by contrast, how nice it was to run in industrial estates!

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Anne Gormley, Ireland team manager, copes with 31 degree heat in Slovenia

20 Questions for Niamh O'Sullivan

BY PHILIP MAGNIER

Winner of the Tadhg Lynch award in 2006, Kerrywoman Niamh O'Sullivan has been an outstanding cross country and road runner for many years.

In 2003, she won the LIMERICK MINI MARATHON, the NATIONAL HALF MARATHON, and the MUNSTER MASTERS CROSS COUNTRY (a race she also won in 2004 and 2005).

In 2004, she won the HOME COUNTRIES CROSS COUNTRY, and went back to win the same race in 2005 and 2006, a great achievement.

In 2006, she won the MALLOW 10 MILES, and in 2007 reached a pinnacle by winning gold at the WORLD MASTERS 8K CROSS COUNTRY at the WORLD T & F CHAMPS in Riccione, Italy.

1. *What running shoes do you train in?* - Nike Pegasus
2. *Training miles last week?* - 5 miles. First week coming back from knee injury but I cross trained every day.
3. *Favourite racing distance?* - 10k
4. *What do you like most about running?* - Friends, freedom and the feel-good factor.
5. *Favourite race or event?* - MASTERS HOME COUNTRIES CC and NATIONAL SENIOR INTER COUNTIES CC
6. *What annoys you most at races?* - Late starts.
7. *What new race would you most like to take part in?* - Great North Run
8. *Best-ever running performance?* - Winning the 8k CC race in Italy at the World Masters 2007.
9. *Worst-ever running performance?* - CC championships in Glenbower Co.Cork, one to forget!
10. *What's the strangest thing that you've seen on a training run?* - Seeing a bottle of whiskey being passed between a group of guys running a half marathon, and they all finished!
11. *Favourite item of running gear?* - My Mizuno racing strip.
12. *Who would you most enjoy beating in a sprint for the line?* - Paula Radcliffe, I am allowed dream!
13. *What was the best bit of training advice you were ever given?* - You are only as good as your last race.
14. *In ten years time will you still be running?* - Yes and hopefully a lot longer if I can stay injury free.

15. *If you were told you could never run again, how do you think you'd react?* - I would be devastated, but I would do what I have done for the last 3 months while out with a knee injury, cross train, cross train, cross train. I need those endorphins!
16. *Ever been bitten by a dog while running?* - No, but I have been chased by a bull and got away - just!
17. *What got you started?* - Running in the Community games and



Niamh O'Sullivan

with my local athletic club, Fossa, Killarney

18. *Favourite post-race food?* - Brown bread and bananas
19. *Most embarrassing ever running-related moment?* - I tried to throw the javelin at a National League Track competition, when the club was short on numbers. I was pathetic!
20. *Greatest Irish Athlete of all time?* - Sonia O'Sullivan

Forthcoming Events

Ireland 2008 & 2009

Sun. 5 Oct., RATHFARNHAM WSAF 5K ROAD RACE, Dublin.

Sun. 19 Oct., GERRY FARNHAM CC, Phoenix Park (inc. Masters trial race)

Mon. 27 Oct., LIFESTYLE SPORTS-ADIDAS DUBLIN MARATHON (inc. AAI National Champs).

Sun. 14th Dec., DONORE HARRIERS JINGLE BELLS 5K, Phoenix Park.

Sat. 10 Jan. (provisional) AAI MASTERS INDOOR CHAMPS, Nenagh, Tipperary.

Sat 14th Feb. (provisional) AAI MASTERS & INTERMEDIATE CC CHAMPS, Santry.

UK 2008

Sat, 15 Nov., HOME COUNTRIES CC CHAMPIONSHIPS, Swansea, Wales.

Mainland Europe 2009

23 – 29 March, EUROPEAN MASTERS INDOOR CHAMPS, Ancona, Italy.

Please see www.ancona.evaci2009.com. Entries close 31st Dec. 2008.

29–31 May 2009. EUROPEAN NON-STADIA ROAD CHAMPS, Aarhus, Denmark.

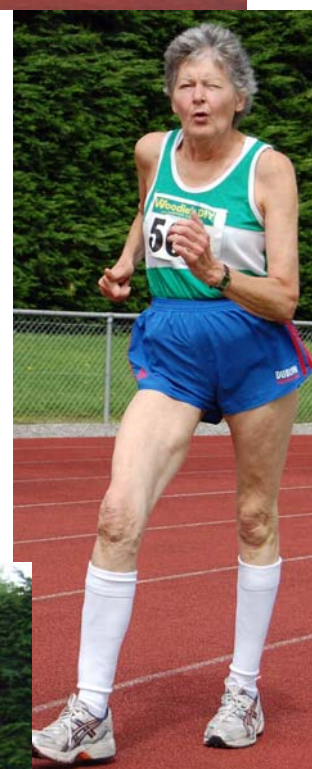
www.aarhus1900.dk/evacns2009. Entries close 13th March 2008.

28 Jul – 15 Aug. WORLD MASTERS T&F CHAMPS, Laiht, Finland.

Please see www.wma2009.org. Entries close 17th May 2009.



Tullamore shot putter, Masters T&F, 2008



**Action from
Tullamore, July 2008:
Masters T&F**
PHOTOS BY PHILIP MAGNIER

Living the Dream

BY BERNADETTE KAVANAGH



photo courtesy of sportsfile.com

As an athlete, think about what the ultimate dream in your running life might be; almost everyone would say: "I want to run in the Olympics".

Pauline Curley from Tullamore Harriers was on holidays in Torremolinos at an amusement park when she received a text from fellow Harrier Mick Hayden to tell her she had been picked to run the marathon in Beijing, just three weeks away. Her first reaction was "this is a joke"; but when Harriers club chairman John Cronin called her to confirm, she knew it was for real. The blood drained from her and luckily she was sitting down.

Pauline travelled with Thomas Chamney (running in the 800m) and a group of physios and coaches to spend one week in Japan before making her way to Beijing for the big event. Her family also travelled to support her. You've heard of the Guilford 4, then the Birmingham 6, and now there was the Beijing 10!!

The heat was intense in Japan, being 38–39°C at 8AM in the morning and so you can imagine how concerned Pauline was about running a marathon in China. But the week in Japan helped her acclimatize and Beijing was 10 degrees cooler and more tolerable.

It also had the Olympic food hall, which had excellent meals, catered for 5000 athletes, stayed open 24 hours a day, and served Mediterranean, Asian, and... McDonalds (Pauline declined I hope!!).

Patsy McGonigle managed the team and from previous times of being on international teams with him, I know he must have done a fantastic job. Former Olympian Anne Keenan Buckley was also there

and gave great support which helped Pauline feel very relaxed before the race. Lining up at 4:45AM at the start, Pauline was very nervous watching top class athletes warming up beside her.

The race started and as it progressed and she moved through the field she was surprised to see so many athletes dropping out. (These included some big names like the two Ethiopians). Pauline felt in control at all times and seeing the "Beijing 10" cheering loudly—especially her baby son Emmet—it made her even more determined to finish.

When Pauline entered the stadium through the tunnel there were 91,000 spectators cheering and clapping. The feeling was ecstatic!! In the conditions, her placing at 63rd with a time of 2:47.16 (a full 8 minutes slower than her PB) was very respectable and a credit to her.

When asked would she do it again Pauline replied "Of course I would. It's every athletes dream to take part in the Olympics. Ah, London's not that far away!!"

Well done Pauline we are all so proud.

Mastering Mountains

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We would then escape from the challenge ahead of us with a jog around the local lake, accompanied by a quick dip.

All age groups and categories came together for a mass start. From the off,



Mags Greenan

Mags Greenan (Clonliffe) asserted herself to ensure that no W50 was unknowingly ahead of her. The more experienced mountain runner Aisling Coppinger (Clonliffe) ran a more even paced race, losing ground on Mags in the first half before pulling some of it back in the second.

The pain of the climb was eased somewhat by the enchanting sound of a Swiss horn player urging us through the final kilometres. There was uncertainty about our individual category finishing places but when the official results were announced, Ireland had two new European champions in Greenan and Coppinger.

The team competition spanned 10-year age groups and the W35-W40 Irish team won silver medals while the M45-M50 team won bronze.

In contrast to the Europeans, the World Masters are long established, this being their 11th year.

Seven Irish masters competed in this year's competition at Dolni Morava, Czech Republic. Again it was Mags Greenan who took a gold medal at W50 ahead of the 2007 winner (a previous Olympic cross-country ski medallist from the Czech Republic). This completed a magnificent first year in mountain running for Greenan. Zoe Melling (Rathfarnham) was next best with a 6th placing in W35. The men's M50 team finished 5th, with Martin McDonald 8th in the individual contest.

The next EUROPEAN MASTERS will be held in 2010. The 2009 WORLD MASTERS will be held just outside Zagreb in Croatia in September, and a large and competitive Irish contingent is expected to travel, intent on individual and team medals.

Keep an eye on www.imra.ie and join the adventure to add a little spice into your running! On the way home we were listing out the toughest of the Irish masters cross-country runners (potential mountain runners), and by the end we had mentally plundered all team and individual gold medals that will be on offer in Croatia in 2009!

IMAA Committee, 2008

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