

McGrady Financial Services Junior Cross Country Series – First Race of 2016/17 – Rising Stars

The first race in the McGrady Financial Junior Cross Country Series was held at Springhill Gardens in Castlewellan Forest Park on Sunday 25th February 2016 at 1pm. Newcastle Athletics Club hosted Race 1 out of 5, on a mainly Sunny and partly drizzly day, which is usual for Northern Ireland.

From the lights & fireworks ringing round the stadium at the closing ceremony in the Brazilian National stadium in Rio, to Springhill Gardens, Castlewellan, is where Olympic athletes hang out these days, and our own Newcastle Olympian Kerry O'Flaherty, coaches and takes our junior McGrady athletes on their warm up. A motivation to all juniors, to join in the fun, and see where it takes you, on your athletics journey.

David O'Flaherty was the race pacer for the day, for each of the primary races, clocking up the most distance covered during the event, and breaking into a sweat, as each race got faster.

The day started out with the P4 girls lining up, eager to start their 500 metre lap around the gardens and climb the last hill, to sprint downhill to the finish, with their family and friends cheering every runner.

P4 and Under Girls race saw 20 runners of all sizes mainly 14 from East Down, 3 from Newcastle and 3 from 3Ways taking part. It was speedy Kari Foster who had a sprint finish to win in 1.21 ahead of Blaithin Carragher (3Ways) and Grace Savage of East Down. The biggest cheer came for a very young runner Niamh White of Newcastle who finished gallantly in 1.55.

P4 Boys race was dominated by Kieran Trainor of East Down, followed closely by Alexander Robinson in 2nd (ED) and Callum Clarke of Burren in 3rd and 2 Newcastle runners of Daniel McGeown and Louis Donnelly. A young runner Jamie O'Flaherty also ran for Newcastle, in the same race as his dad the race pacer, and finished well up, showing talent does run in the family.

The P5 girls race: Lyndsey Kelly of 3Ways started the series with her first win of the series in a time of 2 mins, and in a close second was Jodi Foster from East Down, with Caoimhe O'Hare from 3 Ways was third. This was the biggest race of the day with 22 competitors enjoying the fun, and half the athletes from East Down Athletics Club.

Lorcan Murray (Newcastle AC) who plays for the local football team (His dad denies any talent comes from his genes though), turned up for his first ever junior cross country race and led 99% of the P5 boys race, until Thomas McCabe (3 Ways) pipped him at the post to win in 1.57 seconds. Niall McCauley of Newcastle had a good run also, and closely followed in 2.02minutes, finishing well in 3rd.

P6 girls race was won by Amy McCartan of Dromore, who came from the back of the race to catch the front group in the 2nd lap, to lead coming off the last downhill, and sprint home in 2.41 minutes, with Gracie Crimmins of 3 Ways in second after a strong run, in the soft ground, and third placed runner was Laura Hanna of Newcastle gaining a few places also on the last hill.

P6 Boys: In another close race, Tiernan O'Hare (3 ways) finished first in 2.29mins, closely followed by 3 East Down runners of Oliver Robinson, Callum Kent, Anthony Clarke.

P7 Girls was won by Lauren Madine (East Down) in 3.03 minutes. Also of East Down Lucy Foster was 2nd in 3.17mins and Aoibheann Mynes (Burren) 3rd, with Anna Gardener (East Down) in 4th.

P6 Boys race seen a 1-2-3 for Newcastle AC with Daniel Sheil of Newcastle winning the first race of the series, and James McVeigh (NAC) having a good run on this course, coming in second, and Cathaoir King (NAC) in third.

Year 8 Girls race saw Kirsty Foster take her first win of the series and Anna Bryne (3 Ways) was in 2nd, followed by Niamh Carr of 3Ways. Kate McCartan (Dromore) was 4th and last year's winner in this age group Lara McCarthy (Burren AC) was 5th.

Year 8 Boys race had a 1st& 2nd from 3 ways Caolan O'Hare & Brian Watters with 5 seconds in it, followed by East Down's MacKenzie Murray.

Year 9 Girls was a 1-2-3 & 4 from 3 Ways led by Siofra McAteer with her 1st win of the series, and then Olivia Hall, Ellie Carr & Shannon Devlin.

Year 9 Boys saw Burren's Calum McDonagh win in 4.58 mins, with Ronan McVeigh (NAC) in 2nd, followed by East Downs athletes of George McBratney & Josh McMullan respectively

Year 10 Girls saw Eve Kenneally of Newcastle take pole position ahead of Dromore's Lucy Bradshaw in 2nd.

Year 10 Boys saw Christopher Neill of Newcastle take the first podium place in 6.16 mins, followed by 2 East Down runners of Nathan Tumelty and Ben Carson.

Year 11 Girls seen Edie Carroll of East Down took her first win of the series in front of Kiara Cairns of Newcastle AC, and her sister Ella Carroll (East Down) in third.

Year 11 Boys saw East Down dominate again with their first 3 runners taking podium places – Matthew McGrattan won in this 2km in 7.37 minutes, with Owen Edwards in 2nd and Daniel Atkinson in 3rd.

Well done to all who participated in this race and many thanks to **all** the organisers and the parents who cheer on every child.

The second race of the 2016/17 series is on Sunday 16th October 2016 at Dromore Leisure Centre. Check out the website <http://www.newcastleac.org> for the junior race calendar.