

McGrady Financial Services Junior XC Series

Race 4 – Delamont

The 4th race in the McGrady Financial Services Junior Cross Country saw over 100 junior athletes make their way to Delamont Country Park to take part. This series between Newcastle AC, East Down AC, Dromore AC, Burren AC and 3 Ways is supported by the sponsorship of McGrady Financial Services and provides racing for junior athletes at low cost to the clubs. The competition is always fierce and by race 4 rivalries and friendships have formed in equal measure.

Conditions at Delamont were very cold, damp underfoot, and mucky in areas of the undulating course. The finish is an uphill slog which needs to be factored in when pacing each distance. The first to tackle the course were the P4 Girls running a distance of 500m. There were 12 runners in this race. Lily Foster of East Down took off from the start leading all the way to the end finishing in 1:55. Not long after was Maisie McVeigh from Newcastle AC finishing strongly in 1:59 and Maisie Nicholl of Dromore completed the podium. A few minutes later 11 P4 Boys toed the line. There was a clear winner in this race, Darragh Ruddle from Newcastle finishing in 1:59 ahead of club-mates Rónán Grant in 2:12 and Joseph Uhomuibhi in 2:14.

Next up was the P5 Boys and Girls running in a combined 750m race. Crossing the line in a comfortable 1st place was Henry Houston of Newcastle followed by Ethan McPolin of Burren and Jamie O'Flaherty (Newcastle) in 3rd. In the Girls' race, Erin Easton (Newcastle) dominated from the whistle to finish in 3:11. Sara Uhomuibhi (also Newcastle) just snatched second from East Down's Aoibheann McVeigh-a mere second to split them.

P6 Boys and Girls were also combined for a 1k distance. Alex Robinson from East Down AC led this race until the final bend when clubmate Kieran Trainor stormed past, powering up the hill to take the title in 3:53 with Alex gamely hanging on for 3:58. In 3rd was Daire O'Gorman from Newcastle AC. Kari Foster (EDAC) took the P6 Girls' win with a strong run in 4:04 from teammate Erin Moore (4:23) and Cara Napier was next in 4:42 to make it a 1,2,3 for EDAC.

There were 9 athletes in P7 Girls (1200m). Jodi Foster from East Down ran solo for the course completing in 4.41. Lily Rimmer from Dromore followed and finished strongly in 4:49, accompanied by teammate Sophie Stevenson in 5:06. The P7 Boys race had one of the best finishes of the day. Robbie Nicholl from Dromore was leading the way until the final uphill sprint when Michael Uhomuibhi and Calum Cope (both Newcastle) made a last minute kick for the line. Michael just pipped them to the timing line, with Robbie squeezing in second just a step ahead of Calum. Great to see this fight to the finish spirit!

Moving on to Post Primary, the year 8 Boys and Girls took the spotlight. They ran a distance of 1400m. Oliver Robinson (East Down) had a super run leading all the way and getting his pace spot on, crossing the line 5:25. 2nd was Oliver Corrigan from Newcastle in 6:00 and also from Newcastle Charlie Easton in 6:09. In the Girls' Race

Ava Mehaffey (Dromore) had a comfortable run (5:35) to finish ahead of an under the weather Emily Burns (EDAC). Emily came on at 5.47. Third place went to Cara McQuade from 3 Ways AC.

Year 9 Boys and Girls ran together. The EDAC girls had a stronghold in this event. Lucy Foster led most of the way but East Down club mate Lauren Madine snatched victory in the dash for the finish. Lauren finished in 6:01 and Lucy in 6:03. Kara Trainor made it a full East Down podium finishing in 6:42. Only 3 boys ran in the year 9 race. It was led by Ethan McMullan from Newcastle in 7:00 and then the 2 Dromore boys Ethan Brownlee in 7:08 and George Hodges in 7:45.

Second to last were the year 10 boys and girls. Mackenzie Murray was the solo boy in this race but had a strong run nevertheless covering the 1800m course in 6:43. With no competition he used the girls for pacing. Kirsti Foster (East Down) kept him in her sights in 6:50 - a powerful run. There was a close battle for 2nd and 3rd between Kate McCartan (Dromore) and Ciara Savage (Newcastle). Kate came out on top finishing 2nd in 7:28, Ciara 3rd in 7:29. Mention must also be made of Anna Byrne who missed out on podium but never gave up the chase till the line (7.30)

Finally, the year 11+ boys and girls got to race. Well done to them all for patiently hanging about in the cold and their support of the younger ones was much appreciated. Indeed Edie Carroll had the job of leading the youngest racers around the course and she and a few others from various clubs had helped a few stragglers to make it to the line. Christopher Neil from Newcastle took a well earned first in 7:14. Adam Morgan ran well to take 2nd in 8:38 ahead of Newcastle's Rory Corrigan who finished in 9:08.

The Girls' Race saw Edie Carroll (East Down) have a strong lead, taking the win in 8:02 from Dromore AC's Lucy Bradshaw (8:36) who finished just ahead of Burren's Maeve Murdock who completed the 2k course in 8:38.

While not everyone gets their name in the reports, everyone gets a cheer on the day and the feeling is one of encouragement. Those who finish further down the field are cheered every bit as loudly! Everyone gave their all and should be proud of their efforts. Also thanks to McGrady Financial Services for their continued support and to all parents, coaches, helpers etc for making this day such a great success. See you in Tollymore on February 24th for the season finale!