

Delamont McGrady Financial Services Junior Cross Country Races (hosted by East Down AC)

Marguerite Robinson

Another week and another day of cross-country races for those in the McGrady Financial Services Series on Sunday. This time the location was Delamont with races hosted by EDAC, who had a great bunch of helpers setting up the course from 10.30am. Although the morning started frosty, the sun quickly softened the ground making conditions great for cross-country running and warmish for spectators.

The course was made up of loops of approximately 600m with set-up made easier by the acquisition of small flags, the brain wave of assistant coach Jean Erskine and aided by coach Paul Burns. There was even enough time for a quick coffee before athletes arrived for registration.

Primary 4 & Under

As always distances increase with the age of the runners. The schedule started at 1pm with a distance of 500m for the Primary 4 and under Boys. This was approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a lap, but it started on a nasty incline. Murlough AC made up the majority of the runners in this race; 8 out of the 15 runners. They also took the top 3 places with Cahal Cunningham, Conor Gallagher and Ciaran Murray placing in 1st, 2nd & 3rd respectively.

Seven Primary 4 and under Girls ran next over the same distance with Meabh Flynn (NAC) winning the race in 2.12 followed closely by two EDAC runners, Rosa Canavan in second in a time of 2.15 and Fiadh Kellett in 3rd (2.16).

Primary 5

Primary 5 race was a joint Boys and Girls' race with 12 competitors running over a distance of 750m. They were the first group of runners who had to run past the finish line before needing to complete another full lap. Mark Canavan (EDAC) was sandwiched between two NAC runners. Harry McVeigh in first and Rossa McAleenan in 3rd. First girl home, Aoife Maguire (MAC) came in fourth in a time of 3.24 with Elizabeth Houston (NAC) following in second in 3.32 and Aoibhinn Kelly (MAC) in third in 3.39.

Primary 6

The Primary 6 Boys and Girls again ran together, this time 1000m with the girls outnumbering the boys 2 to one. Harry King (MAC) was a clear first place in 3.54 with a sprint finish between Senan Gosling (NAC) and Emily Kerr (NAC). They couldn't be split at the finish so were given the same time of 4.06. Third boy home was Luke McDonald (5.05) making it first, second and third for NAC. Second girl was Sophie Branagan (Burren) in 4.40 followed by Isla McMullan for NAC in a time of 4.42.

Primary 7

Primary Seven Boys and Girls ran just over two loops of the course measuring a total distance of 1200m. Boys and girls ran separately with 7 boys and 11 girls running respective races. Ryan Thornton (MAC) won in 4.29, a clear lead over second place Connaire Og McVeigh (NAC) who crossed the line in 4.42 ahead of Brodie Hull (Dromore) in 4.45. Saorlaith McAleenan (NAC) easily

won the primary 7 girls race in 4.53. Teammate Mary Houston followed in second in 5.14 followed by Annie Canavan of EDAC in third (5.23).

Year 8

Runners in the Year 8 boys race ran in a pack for the first lap of their 1400m race. On the second lap Fiachna McAleenan (NAC) and Paddy Sherrard (MAC) stretched their lead with Fiachna winning in 5.06 followed by Paddy in 5.10. Jarlaith Price, who has only recently joined EDAC came third in 5.24.

Maisie McVeigh (NAC) was the clear winner of the Year 8, 1400m Girls' Race taking the lead from the start. Two MAC runners completed the podium with Hermione Sheridan and Saoirse Maguire taking second and third with a close finish in 5.46 and 5.50 respectively.

Year 9

Aaron O'Boyle easily won the combined Year 9, 1600m Boys and Girls' Race in 5.40 with Lorcan Rowntree (Burren) and Jamie O'Flaherty evenly spaced in second and third (5.58 & 6.01 respectively). Erin Easton from NAC was the first girl home in 6.34 with a clear lead over teammate Sarah Uhomuibhi (6.54) in second and Jessica Martin of EDAC in third (7.11)

Year 10

East Down boys made easy running of the year 10, 1800m race. Alex Robinson took the lead early followed by teammates Thomas Magee and Eoin Rooney. These positions held until the end with Alex winning easily in 6.20, Thomas in 6.37 and Eoin in 7.00.

Emma Stewart (Dromore) followed Eoin coming first in the Girls' Race in 7.14 with Sarah Gilchrist and Charlotte Barr (both EDAC) 3rd in 7.32. Emily McMullan finished fast on Charlotte's heels.

Year 11 +

Equal number of girls and boys lined up for the year 11+ race. EDAC colours were dominant in this combined race with 9 out of the fourteen runners wearing the red and yellow sashed vests. Numbers were down as many athletes were saving their legs for the Ulster Schools Cross country final on Wednesday at Mallusk. Runners were a mix of those who wanted one last blast before Wednesday or those who were taking it easy. Best laid plans though can change during the race when the competitive spirit comes to the fore. Jacob Crawford (EDAC) finished in 7.00 dead having led from the start, closely followed by his teammate Oliver Robinson (7.04). Euan McIntosh (NAC) came third in a time of 7.18. In the Girls' Race Amy McCartan (Dromore) easily won in 8.34 followed by Sophie Neill (NAC) and Rebekah Wilson (EDAC).

Another fantastic day of racing was had by all and the weather ensured that all races had spectators to support. A big thank you to all who helped in the organisation of the day. Again, thanks go to our sponsors McGrady Financial Services. EDAC were grateful to Ryan McDonald Photography for taking pictures of the runners on the day. The next race, which will be hosted by Newcastle AC, will be run in early March.