

McGrady XC Race 2 report

Despite the second race of the McGrady Financial Services Junior Cross Country Series being organised in four weeks, a great day was had by all. The race was hosted by Murlough AC and was held in the scenic Tollymore. Murlough AC were fairly new to the field, with this being their second time hosting. The organisation and preparations were overwhelming at the start but with the guidance and help of Newcastle AC and East Down AC, the process was completed and the course was set up.

Weather conditions were perfect, which meant that the course was dry along the way. Wind speed picked up towards the end just in time for the Year 8 plus races.

The race was attended by just over 100 juniors, which was a positive and encouraging sight, with participants from Newcastle AC, East Down AC, Burren AC, Dromore AC, and Murlough AC.

The biggest race to start the day was the P4 and under boys with 13 juniors taking part. Conor Gallagher from Murlough AC was first to cross the finish line in a time of 2.02, closely followed by fellow Murlough AC club mate Cahal Cunningham in 2.04 and third podium place was also awarded to Murlough AC, with Ciarnan Murray coming in at 2.07. The P4 and under girls race was a similar podium placing but with Newcastle AC taking the top 3 spots. Cliona McAleenan toed the line in 2.11, followed by Meabh Flynn in 2.27 and Sophie Kerr in 3.37.

The winners in the P5 race for both the girls and boys were participants from Newcastle AC with Elizabeth Houston completing the course in 2.45 and Harry McVeigh coming in at 2.09.

Next up was the P6 boys race with Harry King, from Murlough AC finishing strong in first place. Newcastle AC got another podium placing with Emily Kerr coming in at 5.00.

The P7 boy's race saw Murlough AC's Ryan Thorton crossing the line first in a time of 4.21. 9 seconds later Dromore AC's Brodie Hull came in followed by Jack King of Murlough AC.

The P7 girl's race was another race with good numbers. 10 girls set off around the course with Newcastle's Saorlaith McAleenan and Mary Houston, taking 1st and 2nd places respectively, with Murlough AC's Emma O'Rourke coming in 3rd place.

The course got a little bit longer as we approached the secondary school competitors. Newcastle AC's Fiachna McAleenan won it for the Year 8 boys, with Dromore AC's Mollie Tumilty finishing strong in the girls race.

As the distance increased, there was a decline in numbers so the Year 9 race was a combined race, with Newcastle AC claiming both first places in the girls and boys race. Aaron O'Boyle was first home in a time of 5.39, with team mate Erin Easton winning the girls race in 6.55.

There were 4 competitors in each the Year 10 boys race and the Year 10 girls race, so they set off together in a combined race. Dromore AC's Emma Stewart flew through the finish line in 6.12, ahead of Cara Napier and Charlotte Barr, both from East Down AC. In the boys race, East Down AC claimed the top three podium places, with Alexander Robinson, Thomas Magee and Eoin Rooney finishing respectively.

The final race saw Years 11, 12, 13 and 14 join forces. In the boy's race, Oliver Robinson (East Down AC), pipped everyone to the post with a finishing time of 7.20, with Amy McCartan from Dromore AC winning it for the girls in 9.18.

Well done to all the juniors who participated in this race. Many thanks to the parents for their continued support and in allowing the juniors to participate. A huge thanks to all the clubs and coaches who helped and will help to organise all the events throughout the series. Special thanks to Newcastle AC for lend of the equipment and help to set out the course on Sunday. In closing, a special thanks to McGrady Financial Services for sponsoring the series.