

## **Race 5 – McGrady Financial Services Cross Country Series: Tollymore 24th Feb 2019**

### ***Race Report by Lynda Martin***

I'm sure I heard a weather forecast earlier in the week that stated Sunday was to be dry, maybe even a mention of sun!?

Fast forward and it's the morning of race 5, the final meet of the McGrady Financial Services Junior cross country series at Tollymore Forest Park. It's cold, breezy (the Newcastle AC gazebo toppling over being testament to this) and there's a very atmospheric mist hanging over the damp course and surrounding areas.

The new course layout meant post primary runners no longer go out of sight behind the copse of trees at the bottom of the field. It should have been great viewing, but the mist came down tight and ensured that visibility became more and more difficult as the day progressed. This all added to the entertainment as placings changed throughout the race, and it was a guessing game as to who would emerge through the mist first.

Having already completed the obligatory four out of five races, some of the usual contenders were missing from the running order, giving others the chance to leapfrog a place or two, and resulting in some close finishes and great personal performances.

The course bore similarities to that of Delamont earlier in the year with a camber on the gradual ascent around the far side, and a climb to the funnel/finish line.

Exactly 100 runners took part.

First up were the **P4 boys**. With nine boys and 12 girls running in the P4 and under category it was the only race of the day run separately. With three 1st place positions already secured, Darragh Ruddle from Newcastle AC made it four with a comfortable win in 2:15, ahead of Newcastle AC's Ronan Grant 2:34 and Joseph Uhomobhi 2:36.

**P4 Girls** – Maisie McVeigh from Newcastle AC had a fantastic run to place 1st in 2:17 ahead of Maisie Nicholl of Dromore AC in 2:33 and Niamh Watson of Newcastle AC 2:36.

With ten P5 Boys, and six P5 Girls, it was decided to run them together, as was the case for the remainder of the day's races.

**P5 Boys** – with three firsts and a joint first already in the series, Henry Houston from Newcastle AC managed to win the race in 3:14 with Adrian Crimmins from 3 Ways AC in 3:28 ahead of Ethan McPolin of Burren AC in 3:36

**P5 Girls** – in the girl's race Erin Easton of Newcastle AC was able to hold off the opposition to take her fifth win of the series in 3:33 ahead of Aoibheann McVeigh of East Down AC in 3:45 and Sarah Uhomobhi Newcastle AC in 3:49.

**P6 Boys** – with three firsts and a second already Alexander Robinson of East Down AC looked comfortable taking the win in 4:12 ahead of teammate Kieran Trainor in 4:27. A sprint to the finish line saw Newcastle AC's Louis Donnelly come in third in 4:46 ahead of East Down AC Finn Gibney in 4:47.

**P6 Girls** – East Down AC Erin Moore took first place in 4:43 ahead of Aoife McGrady from 3 Ways AC in 4:49 and Cara Napier of East Down in 4:50 who challenged one another to the finish line.

**P7 Boys** – Robbie Nicholl from Dromore AC was able to add to his impressive three firsts and one second, in a time of 5:26, with Michael Uhomobhi of Newcastle AC in second place in 5:30. Newcastle AC's Callum Cope in 5:42.

**P7 Girls** – Lily Rimmer of Dromore AC took the win in 5:07 ahead of teammate Sophie Stevenson in 5:19. Alene Butterfield of Burren AC took the third spot in 5:53.

**Year 8 Boys** – Just four boys toed the line with Oliver Robinson of East Down AC capitalising on his two firsts and two seconds already in the series in a time of 5:21. Oliver Corrigan of Newcastle AC took second in 5:40 with Tiarnan Serridge of Burren AC third in 6:16.

**Year 8 Girls** – with eleven girls in the race Dromore AC's Ava Mehaffey made it four wins in a time of 5:33 ahead of Emily Burns of East Down in 5:35. Cara McQuade of 3 Ways AC came third in 5:58.

**Year 9 Boys** – Sean McGrady of 3 Ways AC made it four wins in a time of 6:41 ahead of Ethan Brownlee of Dromore AC in 7:20. Ethan McMullan of Newcastle AC came third in a time of 7:27.

**Year 9 Girls** – Lauren Rose Madine of East Down AC took her fourth win of the series in a time of 6:41. Having tucked in behind Sean McGrady for most of the race, Lauren and Sean emerged from the mist within touching distance of one another. An exciting sprint finish saw them cross the line together with the same time. Karen Trainor from East Down took second spot in 7:22 with Anna McKernan of Dromore AC third in 7:39.

**Year 10 Boys** – with just 2 boys competing, Mackenzie Murray of East Down AC led from the start to take the win in 6:54 ahead of 3 Ways Brian Waters who also looked very comfortable finishing in 7:22.

**Year 10 Girls** – meanwhile a great race was unfolding between Newcastle AC's Ciara Savage and Dromore AC's Kate McCartan. Ciara tucked in behind Kate for much of the race and made her move in the closing stages, pulling away to emerge victorious in a time of 7:41 with Kate in second in 7:45. Ellen Tumelty of East Down took third place in 10:02. And well done to Seana Murray also of East Down in fourth in 10:08.

**Year 11+ Boys** – another great race to finish the day. Visibility at this stage was down to just a few metres at the far side of the course. Ultan O' Callaghan of 3 Ways AC took an early lead, and put some considerable distance between himself and 2nd place runner Christopher Neill of Newcastle AC. With approximately half a lap to go Christopher slowly moved his way to the front to take the honours in a time of 7:36, Ultan finishing in 7:41. Rory Corrigan of Newcastle AC was third in 9:56, and well done to James McCartan of Burren AC in 11:01.

**Year 11+ Girls** – Lucy Bradshaw of Dromore AC took the win for the girls in 8:55 with teammate Rebecca Evans finishing in 9:36.

This brings the series to an end. A big thank you to the sponsors, coaches and club members who make it all happen, and to the many parents, grandparents and other relatives who come out in force to help set up, marshal, and cheer on each and every athlete throughout the series.

Details of presentation night to follow.