



2017 Leinster relay Championships

Date: 21st May 2017

The ever exciting Leinster relay championships took place on Sunday last 21st May at the Le Cheile AC track in Leixlip, Co Kildare. While the showers did make an unwelcome arrival during proceedings the sun had its way in the end and shone through, much like the young athletes of Dundalk St Gerard's AC. With seven teams taking part it was by far the highest representation the club has had at these championships in many years. Taking part were the U9 girls team of Niamh Gorham, Ciara Lavery, Cara Miele and Zariah Faapito, the U11 girls Meabh O'Connor, Tara O'Connor, Enya Silkena, Grainne Moran, Abaigh Moonan and Lucy Mahon, the U12 girls Mia Keely, Nicola McElroy, Rachel Culligan, Ciara Cunningham with Abaigh and Grainne moving up from U11, the U15 girls squad of Ellen Murphy, Ellen McBride, Kerrie Hazzard, Patricia Jumbo-Gula and Ava O'Hanlon, the U16 girls squad with the two Ellen's and Patricia moving up a year to join Maria Smith and Caoimhe O'Callaghan who in turn moved up a year to form the U17 girls team with Niamh Mulligan and Patience Jumbo-Gula and the boys U16 team of George Maas, Jamie Wynne, Joe Lennon and Keanu Van Beek.

With many athletes having to move up a year to make up teams the card is split into two halves with the odd ages taking to the track in part one and the even ages in the second session in the afternoon. First into action were the U9s who were having their first taste of action at this level. Ciara, Niamh Cara & Zariah gave their all and gained some experience along the way. The U11 girls came into their contest among the favourites having been successful for the previous two years at this level. Once again they didn't disappoint with an excellent performance to qualify for the decider as fastest team. In the final Meabh, Tara, Enya and Grainne stormed round the track to another impressive victory and complete a hat trick of Leinster titles in another great time. Next up the two Ellen's, Kerrie and Patricia took to the track for the girls U15. In a loaded heat they battled all the way to the line to finish fourth and qualify for the final as a fastest loser. The girls have another solid display in the final just missing out on the medals in fourth. Niamh Mulligan, Maria Smith, Caoimhe O'Callaghan and Patience Jumbo-Gula took to the track for the girls U17 race in what was a very competitive affair. The girls executed a brilliant race to leave themselves in second place at the final changeover. Another excellent finishing charge from Patience saw them swoop late to record another great win on the day.

The second half of the card opened up with the girls U12 the first of the clubs' teams into action. Drawn in a very strong heat the quartet of Mia, Abaigh, Rachel and Ciara ran fantastically to qualify for the final in a fastest loser spot. Unfortunately Rachel who is a brilliant prospect injured herself in the heat and had to be replaced by a very able deputy in Grainne. The girls ran another super race just outside the top spots to show they are moving in the right direction. Next up were the U16 quartet of Ellen, Maria, Caoimhe and Ellen who while experienced athletes were actually only having their second outing together as a team. The contest was always going to be one of the closest of the championship with at least four teams capable of beating each other on a given day. In the heat the girls ran strongly to win a very tight contest and qualify for the final as second fastest team only five hundredths of a second off local rivals Blackrock AC. In the final the girls once again had to raise their game and weren't found waiting. With a solid start from Ellen another fantastic back straight from Maria a great bend from Caoimhe and some slick changes they took a lead into the last changeover that Ellen brilliantly held all the way to the line in a tremendous contest to take another gold from Menapians AC of Wexford and Blackrock AC making it a great race for Louth a whisker away in third, with

only one tenth of a second between the first three teams. Last to line up were the boys U16 team of George, Jamie, Joe and Keanu. In a hot contest the boys ran a fantastic race showing brilliant speed to hold fourth at the final handover to Keanu. With a blistering last 100m he made up a lot of ground to draw level and just head with the third place team coming up to the finishing line. Unfortunately being a newcomer to athletics he lacked a little of the tactical nous that makes all the difference in a tight finish. With the line approaching the opposing runner timed his dip well to snatch third place back right at the death. The experience gained was invaluable and will give the boys great confidence in their ability to compete at this level.

The day proved a tremendous success for the club with three gold medal winning teams and six of the seven teams making their finals. The performances will give the clubs athletes a great boost in their belief and confidence of their ability to compete at the highest level in the upcoming championship season

Follow us on Facebook "<https://www.facebook.com/StGerardsAthleticClubDundalk>" and on our website "<http://www.stgerardsac.org/>".