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# *Tipperary Juvenile Athletics*

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## **Tipp Tops at National Cross Country Championships**

A hat trick of victories for Aimee Hayde and the Tipperary Boys U/12 team earning top spot were just two notable highlights from The National Juvenile Even-Age Cross Country Championships held in Abbotstown, Co. Dublin on Sunday last.

On a perfect day for cross country running, on a course that has been purposely built and with over 1,500 competitors, it was the young athletes from Tipperary who earned the plaudits. A brilliant display of running from Aimee Hayde, Newport saw her capture her third All Ireland title while the Tipperary Boys U/12 team upset all the odds to finish in pole position and win the County's first set of gold medals in a number of years. Adding in the individual medals won by Leah Quane, Moreabbey Milers, Kate Ferncombe, Dundrum, Cian Hodgins, Nenagh Olympic and Joe Egan, Moycarkey-Coolcree it certainly proved to be a fruitful championships for Tipperary. These Tipperary athletes along with Shane Buckley, Dundrum were also instrumental in helping the province of Munster win national medals.

The Girls U/12 event started the programme and it was not long before our Tipperary athletes Leah Quane, Moreabbey Milers and Kate Ferncombe, Dundrum made their presence known at the head of the field. The pace was fast and furious but the two girls made light of the occasion to finish 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respectively. Both girls by virtue of their finishing places were awarded bronze medals for their huge efforts over the 2,000mts event with Leah also proving to be a vital member of the Munster team that won the gold medal in the Inter-Provincial championships. Leah had known race form coming into this event following her Munster individual victory but Kate certainly caught the eye of many of the Tipperary supporters present. Tipperary qualified a team in this event and with Ruby Carroll, Clonmel coming through for 53<sup>rd</sup>, Saoirse Walsh, Newport 55<sup>th</sup>, Helen Cleere, Moyne 67<sup>th</sup> and Chloe Carroll, Templemore 88<sup>th</sup> the team finished 5<sup>th</sup> overall and a performance well up on their Munster showing. Completing the squad were Orla Ryan, Dundrum 94<sup>th</sup>, Louise Hickey, Moyne 140<sup>th</sup>, Amy Reddan, Moyne 143<sup>rd</sup> and Tara Gleeson, Moyne 145<sup>th</sup>.

If Tipperary had something to cheer about in the girls' event the Boys U/12 race exceeded all expectations. We are lucky in the County that there is such a talented group of athletes at this age group and they have been consistent performers over the past couple of years but without the success that they deserve. Cian Hodgins, Nenagh Olympic and Joe Egan, Moycarkey-Coolcree have traded places at County and Munster level already this season with some great success and Sunday's race was no different despite the high quality of athletes on show. Both were very much with the pace throughout the race and despite the pressure being mounted over the final half of the race they responded magnificently to pick off their opponents, crossing the line in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> place respectively in yet another titanic battle. Seeing the effort the two boys were putting in spurred on the rest of the team to equally magnificent performances with Dara Kennedy, Newport crossing the line in 27<sup>th</sup>, closely followed by Shane Buckley, Dundrum in 31<sup>st</sup> with Oisín Shelly, Moyglass and Tom Walsh, Nenagh Olympic battling it out to finish 42<sup>nd</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> respectively. With a combined score of 160pts the County not alone secured the gold medals but did it in fine style with over 20pts to spare on their nearest competitors. What a turnaround for this group of athletes who were left so disappointed last year, finishing in that agonising 4<sup>th</sup> place. Whilst the

above were the scoring members of the team we cannot forget the efforts put in by Odhran McGrath, Clonmel who finished 75<sup>th</sup> just one place ahead of Aaron McLoughlin, Moyne in 76<sup>th</sup> with Jake Bowe, Moyne in 105<sup>th</sup>. Such was the dominance of the Tipperary athletes in this event that Cian, Joe and Shane made it on to the Munster team that won the bronze medals.

Moyne also qualified a club team in this event and in addition to Aaron and Jake above they had David Doyle finishing 140<sup>th</sup> and Cormac Burke 164<sup>th</sup> to finish 17<sup>th</sup> overall in the club competition.

Without doubt the Girls U/14 race was the one that the Tipperary followers were most looking forward to as our own Aimee Hayde, Newport was striving to capture her third All Ireland title having won the U/11 and U/12 events in the past two years. Aimee has a rare talent and one that once again shone bright on Sunday. Moving up to U/14 level also brings with it the increase in distance and with over 3,000mts to cover on a firm, undulating course that has been especially designed to test the mettle of the athletes these were all factors that Aimee seemed to take in her stride as from the gun she surged forward to place herself at the head of the field. In her usual front running style she then proceeded to open a gap on her opponents and continued to lead the field heading out on the larger of the two laps. Having been out of sight of the spectators for much of this lap she came back into view still in the lead but with an ominous threat coming from the athletes behind. One of these athletes duly moved up onto her shoulder but Aimee quickly responded to the threat using every ounce of energy left in her body to once again draw clear and headed down the finishing straight with a lead of approx. 20mts which she held to the line to claim the National U/13 title. Not many athletes can claim to have won three national titles in three years whilst also finishing runner-up in at least another two but Aimee has that claim to fame and fully deserves the accolades heaped upon her. Tipperary had a team in this event with Ailbhe O'Neill, Nenagh Olympic coming through to take 45<sup>th</sup> followed by Lorna Ryan, Dundrum in 55<sup>th</sup>. Gillian Hughes, Clonmel finished 93<sup>rd</sup> with Emma Gleeson, Moyne in 104<sup>th</sup>, Emma Leahy, Moyne 126<sup>th</sup> and Aine Duggan, Moyne 132<sup>nd</sup> to leave the County in 10<sup>th</sup> place in the team competition. Aimee also led the Munster team to silver medals in the Inter-Provincial competition.

Thurles Crokes had a club team in action in the boys U/14 race and their six athletes performed very well to finish 12<sup>th</sup> overall in the team competition. Sean Phillips led them home in 78<sup>th</sup>, Jack O'Meara 84<sup>th</sup>, Darragh Minogue 89<sup>th</sup>, Emmet Fogarty 90<sup>th</sup>, Alex Crowley 144<sup>th</sup> and Stephen Mawe 153<sup>rd</sup>.

Our final representative on the day was Emma Fagan, Newport in the Girls U/18 event who was competing as part of the Munster squad. Both the Junior Women and U/18 Women are run as one race and in finishing 40<sup>th</sup> overall Emma did exceptionally well.

To come back to Tipperary with five individual medals (1 gold, 4 bronze), five inter-provincial medals (1 gold, 1 silver, 3 bronze) and one set of gold team medals was a great result for the County and can only lead to even better things to come with success breathing success.

Well done to each of our athletes on the day who left all behind them on the course.

### **Munster Juvenile "B" Cross Country Championships**

Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare is the venue on Sunday next for the Munster Juvenile "B" Cross Country Championships. This event is open to athletes who competed at the Munster Even and Un-Even

events and did not win a championship medal. The event gets underway at 11.30am and involves athletes from U/9 to U/17. All County athletes are wished the very best of luck on the day.