

TIPPERARY ATHLETES



Patsy Fitzgerald

by **Michael O'Dwyer**

Patsy Fitzgerald was born on 2 January 1929 at Poynstown, Glengoole, County Tipperary. He was the eldest son of Pat 'Foxy' Fitzgerald, a farmer, and Catherine Fitzgerald (née Croke). His father was native of Poynstown, and his mother was native of Grawn, Ballingarry, and they got married in Thurles cathedral on 21 February 1928. Pat 'Foxy' Fitzgerald was a member of the Thurles Blues side representing Tipperary which won the 1908 All-Ireland senior hurling final against Dublin. The match was a replay held in Athy on 27 June 1909 and Tipperary won by 3–15 to 1–5. Patsy Fitzgerald also played hurling but athletics was his main sport. After John Joe Barry had won both the Irish junior and senior inter-county cross-country championships in 1945, and leading Tipperary as first team in both races, seventeen-year-old Patsy Fitzgerald did the exact same in 1946. He won the junior title at Ballinasloe on 24 February, finishing 300 yards ahead of the second-placed runner. All of Tipperary's scoring six finished in the first eleven. The other five were Pat Leatham, Din Kennedy, Mick Cleary, Tom Fitzgerald and Paddy Sheedy. The following month, on 31 March, Patsy Fitzgerald only went to the senior race at Mount Merrion, Dublin as a spectator because the Tipperary mentors decided against running him as they considered him too young. He was on the Tipperary panel and when his neighbour and team member, Tom Fitzgerald was unable to start due to an injury, Tom Healy, the manager, decided to include Patsy on the team. He went on to win the race by twenty seconds and all of Tipperary's scoring six finished in the top seven places. The other five were Mick Blake, Larry Donnelly, Christy Ryan, Patsy Carroll and Din Kennedy. That autumn Patsy's club Coolcroo changed to the AAU association and he won both their national junior and senior inter-club cross-country championships the following year. In all, at national senior level he won five AAU cross-country titles and was on the winning team five times, and won two NACA cross-country titles and was on the winning team both times. He was also first individual and in the winning team at the All-Ireland AAU/NIAAA junior cross-country championship held in Belfast in 1947, and was a member of the winning senior team on four occasions in those championships. Patsy Fitzgerald represented his country in the International cross-country championships a number of times and was first Irish finisher in 1952 when it was held in Scotland. He was honoured as the 2010 Knocknagow hall of fame award winner at the Annerville Sports Awards. A monument depicting his achievements was unveiled in Glengoole in 2015. Patsy Fitzgerald died on 4 May 2017, aged eighty-eight, and is interred in Glengoole cemetery.

Titles Won at Senior National Championships:

National Athletic and Cycling Association Championships

1946	Cross-Country (Inter-County)	49:05
1954	Cross-Country (Inter-County)	43:35

Amateur Athletic Union Championships

1947	Cross-Country (Inter-Club)	54:03
1948	Cross-Country (Inter-Club)	44:32
1950	Cross-Country (Inter-Club)	49:58
1952	3 Miles	14:49
1952	Cross-Country (Inter-Club)	51:28
1953	Cross-Country (Inter-Club)	47:06

All-Ireland AAU/NIAAA Championships

1952	3 Miles	14:38
1952	10 Miles	53:09