

The Tipperary County Senior Men's Cross Country

January 2020 I won my third Tipperary County Senior Men's Cross Country title in Galbally. I have always been fascinated with the history of this race and gathered a lot of information over the years which I have now updated from my article of a few years back and which I would now like to share again with your readers.

The race especially in later years would never have the quantity of runners of your modern day open road races. The main reason for this been a lot of runners would probably not fancy the battle of a 10,000 metre (it used to be up to 10 miles in the early years) race ran over 5 or 6 laps on fields of varying terrain which would include soft ground, rough ground, hills, muck, ditches etc. Throw in the often middle of winter harsh weather and you get the picture.

The first organised race I have been able to get my hands on was won by the Coolcroo club now part of the present day Moycarkey Coolcroo club under the National Athletics and Cycling Association of Ireland (N.A.C.A.I) rules. The season was 1936/37 and indeed Coolcroo dominated up to the 1944/45 season until Coolquill put a stop to their gallop to win the title in season 1945/46. Then a new club from north Tipperary Moneygall started a dominance winning seven of the next eight titles up to season 1953/54 with Ballysloe doing a Offaly style GAA job led by Sean Hayden to break their dominance for one year in 1951/52. A new name Moyne had their first win in 1954/55. Ballincurry then arrived on the scene to win three in a row to bring us up to season 1957/58. Holycross then took over to win five in a row to bring us up to season 1962/63 and put another new name on the team title. Coolcroo then came back after nearly 20 years to win two in a row again. A new club Dundrum then won the next four to bring us up to season 1968/69 but the second two they won were under the newly formed Bord Luthchleas na hEireann (B.L.E). Another new club Ballytarsna won the race under N.A.C.A.I rules in 1968/69. We now had the unique situation of having two separate Tipperary County Seniors for the next twenty years. The year 1969/70 another new club Moycarkey Borris won the B.L.E race while Ballytarsna retained the N.A.C.A.I title. In 1970/71 Dundrum came back again to win under B.L.E while another new club Suirside added their name to N.A.C.A.I title. Incredibly then for the next twelve years another new club Premier won every B.L.E title right up to 1982/83 some record which will never be beaten twelve titles in a row. For the N.A.C.A.I title over the same period six clubs claimed their title. Drangan put a new name on the list for the next two years until Suirside came back again to win the 1973/74 title. Ballytarsna won the next two and then Moyne came back again after nearly twenty years to win four in a row to bring us up to 1979/80. The title then went back up to the Offaly border when Dunkerrin won their first title in season 1980/81. Ballytarsna came back again to win the following year while another new club Anner Kickham's put their name on the title in season 1982/83. An interesting statistic to note that up to this date was that every county title was won by a country club. The nature of the event running in fields a natural everyday chore for country people especially the farming community probably one of the main reasons for this trend. The trend was broken when Thurles Crokes won their first B.L.E title in season 1983/84 the first of three in a row for the mid Tipp club. Coolquill then came back after nearly forty years to also win three N.A.C.A.I titles in a row. A second town club Clonmel won their first title in 1986/87 and followed this with a hatrick of wins from 1988/89 to 1990/91. Clonmel and Thurles Crokes dominated the B.L.E titles up to 1993/94. Clonmel also winning in 1993/94 with Thurles Crokes breaking their sequence with wins in 1987/88, 1991/92 and 1992/93.

In the N.A.C.A.I Ballytarsna were back again in 1986/87 to start another run of four in a row until Moyne put a stop to their run in 1990/91. Dundrum then came back after twenty years to claim another title under N.A.C.A.I rules 1991/92. Moyne came back again for wins in 1992/93 and 1993/94. A new club then arrived on the B.L.E scene St Catherine's and they started a hatrick of victories in 1994/95. Dundrum matched this with three wins in the N.A.C.A.I race to bring us up to 1996/97 season. Nenagh Olympic then won their first title in 1997/98 and St Catherines came back to win in 1998/99 with Nenagh winning the last B.L.E title in 1999/2000. Coolquill and Dundrum then shared the last three N.A.C.A.I titles Coolquill winning in 1997/98 Dundrum in 1998/99 and Coolquill the last one in 1999/2000.

The formation of the Athletics Association of Ireland brought the two associations back together and we were back again to the one Tipperary County Senior. Nenagh Olympic carried their form into the new association to win the first three titles to bring us up to season 2002/03. Ballynonty then won their first title in 2003/04 and defended it again the following year. Dundrum then came back for a hatrick of victories to bring us up to 2007/2008. Thurles Crokes were back to do the double to bring us up to 2009/10. Nenagh Olympic were back for another win in 2010/11. Dundrum were back again for victory in 2011/2012. Clonmel then after twenty years were back and made up for their absence to win four titles on the trot to bring us up to 2015/16. Then a new club Mooreabbey Milers had their first win 2016/17. Dundrum won in 2017/2018, Clonmel in 2018/19 and then Dundrum back again to win in 2019/20.

A summary of all the titles then has Dundrum out in front with a total of 16 titles. Premier are second with 12 titles, Clonmel are on 10 Ballytarsna have 9, Coolcree, Moyne and Thurles Crokes have 8 each. Moneygall have 7 titles while Coolquill and Nenagh Olympic are on 6. Holycross have 5 with St Catherine's on 4 and Ballincurry on 3. Then we have three clubs Ballinonty, Drangan and Suirside on 2 titles each. We have five clubs then on one win each they been Anner Kickhams, Ballysloe, Dunkerrin, Moycarkey Borris and Mooreabbey Milers. Dundrum are the only club of the lot to have won titles under the three associations.

Individual winners of the race has Billy Morrissey Ballytarsna way out in front with 11 titles a remarkable record, John Daly Nenagh Olympic is next with 7 titles a magnificent record. We have two athletes with 6 titles Billy O'Dwyer Holycross/Dundrum and John Fitzgerald Clonmel, two more athletes are on 5 titles Seamus Kearney Ballytarsna and Michael Hassett St. Catherines, three athletes are on 4 titles Sean Hayden Moyne/Ballysloe, Mick Hickey Dundrum and Kenneth Morley Coolquill, six athletes are on 3 titles Mick Cleary Moneygall, Paddy Dwyer Upperchurch/Premier, Tommy Moloney, Christopher Bracken both Thurles Crokes and Kevin Moore Dundrum. We have nine athletes on 2 titles Mick Blake Coolquill, Myles Mc.Hugh Premier, Dessie O'Connor Tipperary Town/KCH, Paddy Smyth Dunkerrin, John Hogan Moyne, Terence Ryan Moyne, Tony Fogarty Thurles Crokes, Kevin Maunsell and Niall McCormack Clonmel. We have 24 athletes on 1 title Eddie Cooke Killenaule, John Joe Barry Ballincurry, Patsy Fitzgerald Ballysloe, Paddy Fahy Moneygall, Walter Scott and John Joe Bourke Ballincurry, Con Bowe Coolcree, Sean Caplice Cahir, Michael Gooney Moycarkey Borris, John Dooley D.C.H. Jim Tobin Drangan, Liam Hennessy Civil Service, John Phelan Donore Harriers, John Cahill Moyne, Jim Sheahan and Mark Gleeson Nenagh Olympic, Pat O'Sullivan Suirside, Pat Heffernan Thurles Crokes, Pat Ryan Dundrum, Patrick Guidera Clonmel, Ravis Zakis Ballynonty, Brian Murphy Carrick-on-suir, William Maunsell Clonmel.

While I cannot guarantee the information I have put together over the passage of time is 100% perfect I think it should be at least 90% right but please come back to me with any new information. I am sure there would have been some spicy arguments over the years especially when the two associations were in being but it is now part of our history and it is better to have a history to look back on than to have no history at all. I would like to thank Niall O'Sullivan Clonmel AC and Moyne A.C for their help with the article. Also a special thanks to the late Jimmy Fogarty Moycarkey Coolcree and John Joy Dundrum/Clonmel for their help with information supplied.

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