



News Release



Friday 12th October 2007

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER TO HOST NI & ULSTER AGE GROUP CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

University of Ulster are the official sponsors of the Northern Ireland & Ulster Even Age Group Cross Country Championships this year. The event will be held at the Jordanstown campus pitches on Saturday 27th October (first race 12.00 noon).

The annual event attracts over 1000 young athletes from clubs and schools from all over the province striving to take one of the ten individual titles on offer, as well as helping their club and county teams to the honours. The championships are a joint venture between the Northern Ireland Athletic Federation and the Ulster Athletic Council.

This looks likely to be an exciting sporting year for the University of Ulster. Already this month their Jordanstown campus have been host to a European Volleyball match and the first UU Basketball Super league match, not to mention their new £12 million High Performance Sports Centre opening in early 2008 – of which the Northern Ireland Athletic Federation is a key partner.

The Federation, along with the help of the UUJ Athletics Club have mapped out a visible course at the university's pitches, which ranges from 600metres for the under 10's to 5000metres for the under 18's.

Northern Ireland Athletics Development Officer Kerry Harty remarked:

"Myself and others have drawn out a clear course around the pitches, which we hope will benefit all the athletes involved. The facilities here at Jordanstown are perfect for an event like this and with the help of the University's Athletics Club and our Sports Outreach students we trust that everything will run smoothly."





Director of Sports Development and Services Communication and Institutional Development
Dr Nigel Dobson commented on the event,

"It is fantastic to be the host of this year's Juvenile Cross Country Championships. It is great to have children and their parents and friends down to see our new facilities, especially as these could be the athletes of our future. We have developed a very close partnership with the Federation and it is our joint aspiration to provide the very best opportunities for young athletes across the province and beyond.

The new High Performance Centre, which is currently under construction and scheduled to be completed at the end of this year, is an investment into community and performance sport of £12m. It is jointly funded by the University and the Sports Council, and will also be home to SINI, the Sports Institute for Northern Ireland.

We hope that many of these athletes in the future would benefit from our new facilities which will include indoor sprint and warm-up areas, athletics field event area, a strength and conditioning hall, sports science and sports medicine facilities, a water recovery area, a large indoor hall with artificial grass surface and an outdoor sprint track – to add to the extensive range of current facilities at Jordanstown.

We at the University wish all the competitors the best of luck and look forward to hosting this event and hopefully more like this in the future."

This year the University has also invested in a £350,000 fitness suite. The Techno-Gym Wellness Suite which opened in September 2007 includes the first ever Kinesis Wall in Ireland. These fantastic facilities along with the High Performance Centre are available for use by everyone from our Elite Athlete Sports Scholars to the locals in the area.

On the competitive side, the U18 Boys race will be the most highly contested with last year's top 5 making a reappearance. One of Northern Ireland's top athletes, Noel Collins from Omagh Harriers who won a silver medal in the Steeplechase at the recent European Youth Olympics Festival and has numerous titles under his belt including Irish Schools Champion in





both track and cross- country. Finn Valley's Ian Ward who won the race last year will be hoping to retain his title but faces tough opposition from the likes of St. Malachy's Ryan Faulkner, Andrew Doherty and Willowfield's Andrew Gourley who was the first junior home at the recent Rathfarnham 5K.

On the team front, the St. Malachy's boys are hot favourites in the U16 & U18 age group sections having placed in the top 4 last year and winning the U18 boys section.

Other contenders on the day are the Monaghan twins, Patrick and Andrew (Lagan Valley) who finished in the top 3 last year and went on to succeed in the UK Cross Challenge, Adam Ingram (Lagan Valley) who won silver at the AAA's and City of Derry's Marcus Christie.

In the girl's races, Fionnuala Ross who was 3rd last year and won the inaugural Women's 5K in August;, Aishling Fegan, Joanne Mills (East Down AC) and Emma McShane who were the top finishers in the U16 section. 2006 U14 winners Emily Mills and Katie Kirk will also be competing for places this year.

Hot favourite however, will be Ciara Mageean who produced a powerful display of endurance at the UK Schools Games recently, running to win the girls 3000m in 9.51.06. Ciara has only entered athletics in the last few years and is already marking her mark locally and across the water. She easily won the 3000m at the Celtic Games and also at the AAAs recently. She is currently ranked 3rd fastest in the U17 3000m in the UK.

The first 12 individual winners and the top 3 teams will qualify for the All Ireland Even Age Group Championships which are to be held on Sunday 25th November 2007 in The Curragh, Newbridge.

On the day, not only can parents and friends benefit from the cross country entertainment on offer, there is also a special treat for all the spectators. The Sport and Recreation department are giving all visitors the opportunity to visit their new Wellness Suite and receive three weeks membership for the price of two.

The entry cost is £5 per individual runner or £14 for teams of six. Entry forms can be by





downloaded from the NI Athletic Federation website and are available at the office. The closing date is Wednesday 17th October for all entries. Registration and collection of race numbers will take place at the gymnasium of the University Sports Centre.

Visit www.niathletics.org for further information.