

THE SERIES MOVES ACROSS TO NORTHERN IRELAND TO FEATURE A CLUB WHICH LIES ON THE RIVER LAGAN

History

ONE of the earliest recorded athletics events in the Lisburn area was a meeting organised by the local cricket club in 1869 when a sizeable attendance and high standards were recorded. However, the field took such a pounding from athletes and spectators that the effort was not repeated!

In 1897 Lisburn Harrier Club was formed with the running of two races including a three mile race in Wallace Park. Later that year a special meeting to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria was held and this also included cycling and walking races.

The Wallace Park Relays have spanned two centuries with the annual event usually being held in October as an opener for the winter season. In 2004 the club hosted the successful Moira Demesne cross country which has continued every year since, being held in early January.

The club has gone through several name changes over the intervening years, eventually being renamed City of Lisburn AC (CoLAC) in 2002 when Lisburn was awarded City status as part of the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee. The club emblem depicts a phoenix rising from the ashes and this is displayed on the red, green and silver club vest.



City of Lisburn AC



Training night at Lisburn AC with some of the youngsters

Background

THE club trains mostly at its base at the Dame Mary Peters track, named after the most famous athlete from the province. The club was the top performing junior outfit in Ulster last season, both in the age group championships and in winning the Northern Ireland Youth Development League final for the third consecutive year. They were presented with the "Junior Club of the Year" award by Athletics NI in December.

The Northern Ireland club has produced a long tradition of junior and senior international athletes, with several going on to win selection for the major junior and youth international championships, the Commonwealth Games and even the Olympic Games. Some of their current coaches have representative honours and several have held, or still hold, Northern Ireland records.

Most recently, Amy Foster, Irish 100m record-holder, was part of the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team and the club's U17 athletes have provided a sizeable portion of the team competing in the UK School Games over the past two seasons. In fact, all the Northern Ireland medallists in that competition last season came from the club.

are training with the Athletics NI Talent Squad Youth Academy with several others involved in the Rising Stars programme which is aimed at developing talented younger athletes.

Sessions

A TYPICAL club night could see eight different groups in action. Primary school aged athletes take part in some skill-based fun activities after their dynamic, movement based warm-up with a slightly older group practicing higher level multi-event training. There is also a young middle distance group who may be on the grass or the track while the adult distance group are usually running in the forest which surrounds the training base. One area of the track will have a speed session, often involving hurdle drills, while some smaller event stage groups will be using the indoor track facilities at the sports centre at the University of Ulster during the winter.

The club ethos is to try to keep all the young athletes training across many events until well through their teenage years, when sessions become more focused.

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Two of its young athletes were selected for the Irish team for the European Youth Olympic Trials in Baku with Roseanna McGuckian going on to compete over 200m in the IAAF Youth Olympics in Nanjing. Several others finished the season high up the UK rankings with six in the top 10 in their event.

Lisburn caters for athletes from the age of eight years across all disciplines and saw athletes from three generations of the same family all competing on the same day last season. The past few years have seen enormous growth in the junior section to such an extent that the club presently has a waiting list of youngsters. Currently 14 of its teenage athletes

