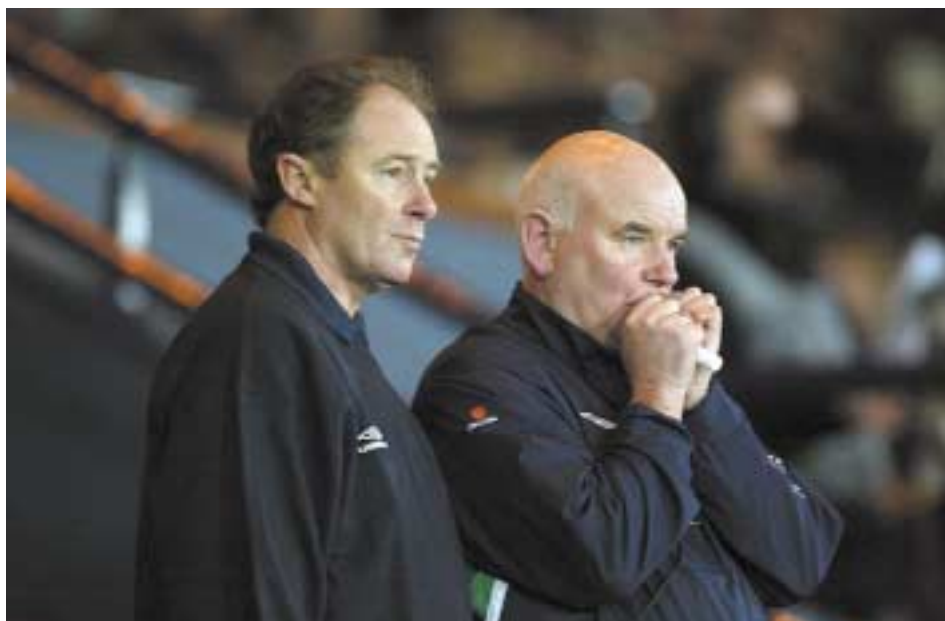


# Brian Kerr and Noel O'Reilly: Inspiring a Nation of fellow coaches

*A reflection*



Scotland versus Ireland at Hampden Park; the debut event for Ireland's new management team.

*Friendlies were never meant to be like this. I remember them as drab affairs. A match for the aficionados. Memories to be gathered and stored for future debates. Friendlies never tweaked my emotions.*

Hampden Park, Glasgow, February 12th 2003 was different. Very different. Watching Brian Kerr and Noel O'Reilly facing the Irish flag for their first game with the Irish senior international soccer team was unforgettable. Best pals. Best duo. Now sharing the best job in the world. My emotions were strained. Friendlies were never meant to be like this.

It was hard to vividly capture the moment. Images of their years together blurred the reality. Games won. Games lost. Sidelines trampled bare. Sessions planned and delivered. Dreams fulfilled. Dreams forgotten.

Hampden Park brought a feeling of immense joy. The right men for the job. The right job for the men. A new start. Yet in many ways the end of a journey which started many years before. There they stood, side-by-side, on the sideline in Scotland. Friendlies were never meant to be like this.

Brian and Noel got their first experience of international football in 1982 when then Ireland youth manager, Liam Tuohy appointed them to his backroom team. Out of loyalty they stepped down when he resigned in 1986. Tuohy, their guide and mentor, was one of their guests in Hampden. His dignified presence, unobtrusive yet palpable, amplified the qualities of Kerr and O'Reilly. To arrive here took hard work, time and support. Those who contributed were not forgotten.

Barren international years were devoted enthusiastically to club football. They helped St. Patrick's Athletic climb from the bottom of the table to League of Ireland champions.

More recently Kerr and O'Reilly have become synonymous with success at under-age international level. They led Irish teams to European success at the 1998 U16 and U18

championships as well as the 2002 European Youth Olympics at U16 level. Under their guidance the U20's have qualified for three of the last four World Cup championships. A remarkable third place in the 1997 U20 World Cup in Malaysia with a team that included Robbie Keane and Damien Duff, an obvious highlight.

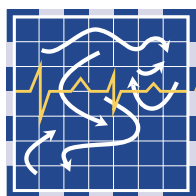
It is said that they have the Midas touch, whatever that is. What they do have, is what all great coaches possess - character and competence.

*They have that knack of creating a vision that players believe in. They talk about a better future. A better game. A better performance. Above all else, they scrape hammer and tongs to make things happen. Together they attract the best out of others.*

Brian and Noel are two of the boys. Honest gentlemen, who blossom from the security of each other and from the security of place. They have not forgotten where they come from and in putting something back they inspire a nation of fellow coaches.

Though the path they are now on is the one less travelled, they have also traipsed the same pathways as every other coach in Ireland. They are still travelling. Still learning. Still listening. Tread softly. You might meet them along the way.

*Liam Moggan, Coach Education Development Officer, NCTC.*



# Building Pathways

practical steps for coaches, players and athletes



## *I n s i d e*

▶ The 7th National Forum  
- Building Pathways  
in Irish Sport

▶ The Challenge  
of Athens

▶ NCTC Integrates  
Physiological Support

▶ The 10-Year Rule  
and Race-walking

7<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL FORUM: SEPTEMBER 5-7, 2003

# What are the pathways for the children and champions of the future?



Pat Duffy, Director, NCTC.

Over the last few years, NCTC in partnership with National Governing Bodies, has begun to focus on the stages in the long term development of players and athletes in the context of the overall

policies of the Irish Sports Council. This focus on Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) will assist in mapping out pathways for our young players/athletes. These pathways will chart clear stages and will recognise that it takes time to develop expertise to world level. In most sports disciplines, it can take at least 10,000 hours of focused practice over ten or more years to reach the top. Clear pathways will also provide each individual with a road-map to achieve their full potential, in line with their choices and capabilities.

*"It takes 10 years of extensive training to excel in anything"*

Herbert Simon, Nobel Laureate

To date, the focus on pathways has produced some significant changes in the way player/athlete development is viewed in this country. Under the guidance of international expert, Dr. Istvan Balyi, a widely representative Technical Advisory Group has developed a draft Long Term Athlete Development model that is specific to Irish needs. Clear pathways have already been mapped out in sports as diverse as bowls, cricket, cycling, equestrian, sailing, soccer, tennis and rugby.

These pathway statements are now beginning to have an impact on the content of coach education programmes, with an increased focus on the capacities that coaches need to develop in their players/athletes at each stage. The NCTC focus on LTAD will contribute to the objectives of the Irish Sports Council's recently published strategy 'Sport for Life'.

The time has come to further demonstrate how this 'pathway thinking' can provide practical and tangible benefits for coaches and players/athletes. For this reason, NCTC's 7th National Forum, which will take place on September 5, 6 and 7, will have the theme '*Building Pathways in Irish Sport: Practical Steps for Coaches, Players and Athletes*'. The Forum will have inputs from top national and international personnel and will address each stage of the pathway (i.e. Fundamental; Learn To Train; Train To Train; Train To Compete and Train To Win). NCTC's specialist advisor on LTAD, Dr Istvan Balyi, will present a series of practical workshops in these areas and will be backed up by a strong programme of national and international presenters. The Forum is not to be missed and you are now invited to book early to guarantee your place. Further details are included in this issue of SportsPulse.

Recent Irish sports performances highlight the progress being made in putting in place world-class systems. Coaches such as Brian Kerr, Noel O'Reilly, Eddie O'Sullivan, Declan Kidney, Michael Lane, Jim Kilty, Hayley Harrison, Drew Harrison, to name a few, have shown that Ireland has the coaching talent to help our players/athletes produce world level performances. We must continue to identify, nurture and support coaching talent as well as talented players/athletes.

As usual, we have an issue which outlines details of the latest developments in Coaching and in Player/Athlete support. We also include, in co-operation with the world leading *1st4sport*, a Spring Catalogue of publications and resources. We hope that you can take the time to study this catalogue and to tap into the huge array of available resources now on offer.

We look forward to seeing you at the Forum in September and, as always, we welcome your comments on this publication or on any aspect of NCTC work.

Pat Duffy, Director, NCTC

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### 13 Long Term Athlete Development: the '10-year rule' and Irish race-walkers

*In the last issue of Sports Pulse, we reported that scientific research has concluded that it takes eight to twelve years of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels. This article examines the case of Ireland's race-walkers.*

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# Building Pathways in Irish Sport:

## Practical steps for coaches, players and athletes

7th National Forum, 5-7 September, 2003.

The NCTC 7th National Forum promises to be the most exciting one ever. If you are involved in sport at any level this is the sporting event not to be missed. This years Forum will be based on the Pathway Theme (Long Term Athlete Development).

The Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model, consisting of the FUNDamental, Learning to Train, Training to Train, Training to Compete, and Training to Win stages, has become the foundation for many sports and sport systems, including British Columbia – Canada, England and Scotland. The first two stages of the model provide the foundations for life-long physical activity and for competitive sport performances.

In principle, sports can be classified as either early specialisation or late specialisation sports (Balyi and Hamilton, 1999). Early specialisation refers to the fact that some sports, such as gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, figure skating, diving and table tennis require early sport-specific specialization in training.

Late specialisation sports, such as athletics, combative sports, cycling, racquet sports, rowing and all team sports require a generalised approach to early training. In these sports, the emphasis of training should be on the development of general, fundamental motor and technical-tactical skills. Reviewing the existing literature Balyi concluded that early specialisation sports require a four-stage model, while late specialisation sports require a six-stage model:



Dr Istvan Balyi – Technical advisor on Long term athlete development.



### EARLY SPECIALISATION MODEL

1. Training to Train stage
2. Training to Compete
3. Training to Win
4. Retirement

### LATE SPECIALISATION MODEL

1. FUNDamental stage
2. Learning to Train stage
3. Training to Train stage
4. Training to Compete
5. Training to Win
6. Retirement

The 7th National Forum will have workshops on all levels of the pathway, under the strands of technical/tactical, mental/physical and lifestyle/personnel. Regardless of your role in sport, be it parent, coach, athlete, sport science, medical, Development Officer, Local Sports Partnership, NGBs, Facility managers, this forum has something to offer.

*“The health and well-being of the nation and medals won at major games is a simple by-product of an effective sport system.”*

Balyi, 2002

### OVERALL FORUM AIMS:

1. To increase awareness of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD)
2. To motivate and inspire delegates to continue to work at their level of the pathway for players/athletes
3. To inform delegates of best practice on the pathway
4. To provide the opportunity for delegates to consider how the principles of LTAD can apply to their work on a day-to-day basis
5. To provide delegates with the opportunity to network with each other
6. To provide an open forum on the pathway concept

This is an event not to be missed, and a preliminary booking form is available on the NCTC website ([www.nctc.ul.ie](http://www.nctc.ul.ie)).

Full details on workshop presenters will be available on the website in early May 2003. For more information on Pathways (Long Term Athlete Development) see our website under publications from April 30th. Please note that places are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Accommodation will be available on the Campus of the University of Limerick.

# The Challenge of Athens

## Sports Science and Medical Support gears up to back Irish athletes

*For 17 days in August 2004, Irish athletes will take part in the Athens Olympic games.*

The average daily maximum temperature in Athens at that time of year is likely to be 33 degrees, which will present a significant physiological challenge to our athletes. The effect of temperature is even more significant when you consider that actual temperatures may be higher than this - Athens has experienced heatwaves during the month of August before, with

midday temperatures into the low 40's not unheard of. As such, issues like heat acclimatisation, hydration and pre-cooling before competition are of paramount importance to Irish athletes.



*Dave Egan, Exercise Physiologist, NCTC.*

Athens is one of the most polluted cities in the E.U. Pollutant levels exceed those considered safe by the World Health Organisation, and this poses a very real concern regarding performance levels. Sometimes a green cloud of smog (locally known as "the Nephos") hangs over the basin in which Athens is situated. The type of smog present in Athens consists of oxidant smog and particulate smog. Most of this pollution is caused by automobile emissions, and contains high levels of ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds.

"NCTC is currently working to determine optimal strategies that could be



*Athens, site of the 2004 Olympics, will pose challenges to the Irish team. Sports science and medical support can help players/athletes address these challenges.*

used by Irish athletes to maximise performance in the heat and pollution of Athens. We have access to the latest research into these areas, and we are developing guidelines for players/athletes and coaches based on cutting-edge science and international best practice, said Dave Egan, Exercise Physiologist at the centre."

All of the supports developed by NCTC will be provided in the context of the work of the Olympic Performance Committee (OPC) and Paralympic Performance Committee (PPC). These committees are comprised of representatives from the Irish Sports Council (ISC) and from the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) and the Paralympic Council of Ireland (PCI), respectively.

In addition, the Medical and Science Working Group of the OCI is currently identifying the specific issues and actions that need to be put in place by the OCI for and during the Athens Games. NCTC Head of Player/Athlete Services, Dr. Giles Warrington sits on the OCI Medicine and Science Working Group, having been nominated to that position by the Irish Sports Council.



*Chantal Gibney (Swim Ireland), in action at the Sydney Olympics 2000. Ireland's potential Olympians are gearing up their training and competition programmes for Athens in 2004.*



Ireland's cyclists will be hoping to make an impact in Athens. Robin Seymour (above) will be hoping to make an impression.

## Athens Enhancement

As part of its High Performance strategy the Irish Sports Council has identified a number of sports who will receive focused support to assist their preparations for Athens. These "Athens Enhancement" sports include athletics, boxing, canoeing, cycling, equestrian, rowing and sailing. Additionally, the Paralympic Council of Ireland will also benefit from Athens Enhancement funding and support. In order to assist these sports with their planning and preparation for Athens, the Irish Sports Council has established an Athens Enhancement Group consisting of Brian Samson, Kevin Hickey, Shane Keane (ISC) and Giles Warrington (NCTC).



Members of the OCI visiting party to Athens and Cyprus.

The NCTC has been charged with responsibility for co-ordinating the delivery of Sports Science and Medical Support services to the Athens Enhancement Sports. This process has involved a series of planning meetings to identify the specific needs for each sport so they can be effectively integrated into the annual training and competition programme. Once this needs analysis has been completed, sports specific "Medical-Science" support teams will be established for each of the sports, which will seek to ensure the effective and holistic delivery of Sports Science and Medical support services to each of the sports.

To date these support teams have been established for boxing, rowing and sailing. The "Medical-Science" support teams and the Performance Directors and High Performance Coaches will meet on an on-going basis throughout the year to evaluate the effectiveness of the supports delivered to the Athens Enhancement sports. The supports provided to each sport will be delivered in the context of the work of the OPC, PPC and of the OCI Medicine and Science Working Group.

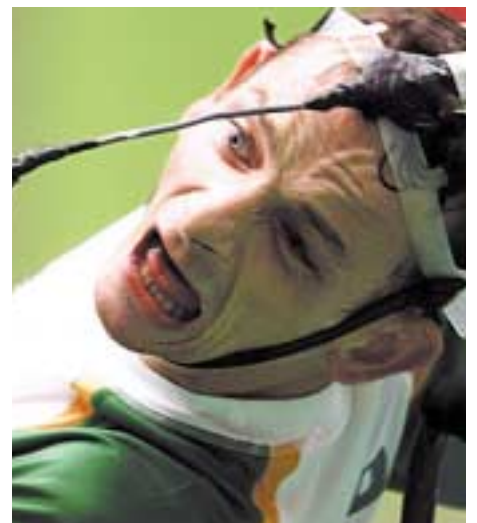
## Athens and Cyprus study visits



Dr. Giles Warrington, Head of Player/Athlete Services, NCTC.

As part of the build-up to the 2004 Olympics, Giles Warrington Head of Player/Athlete Services, formed part of an official Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) study visit to Athens and Cyprus

from 14-20th January. Giles undertook the visit in his capacity as Irish Sports Council nominee to the OCI Medicine and Science Working Group. The delegation led by OCI Chef de Mission, William O'Brien, included the OCI PR Consultant, Jack McGowan, OCI Medical Officer Dr. Sean Gainne, OCI Pre-Training Camps Manager, Dermot Henihan, Paralympic Committee representatives Jim McBride and Liam Harbison, and Team Managers from the sports of athletics, boxing, canoeing, cycling, clay shooting, rowing, sailing and triathlon. The purpose of the study visit was to view the training and competition facilities, transport infrastructure, and athletes' village in Athens, as well as the accommodation, transport, medical support services and training facilities at the proposed holding camp in Cyprus.



John Conin of the Irish Paralympic Team, who struck gold in Sydney. John is gearing up his preparation for Athens.

# NCTC INTEGRATES PHYSIOLOGICAL SUPPORT INTO NGB PROGRAMMES



Caroline MacManus,  
exercise physiologist, NCTC.

The NCTC began 2003 having met with many of the Athens Enhancement Support teams. Integrated service provision in terms of Sports Science and Medical support was agreed with

boxing, cycling, rowing, sailing and slalom canoeing for the 2003 training and competition season. An overview of the direct physiological services provided by NCTC between January and March 2003 is given in Table 1. In addition, members of the Sports Science and Medical Support Network provided physiological supports to over 60 athletes in a range of sports.

The Irish Lightweight rowing squad attended a training camp in January 2003 at the NCTC where they competed in the St. Michael's Head of the River and also undertook physiological evaluation. This was the first of 4 agreed camps for 2003.

Head of Player/Athlete Services Dr. Giles Warrington attended a training camp with the Lightweight rowing squad in Seville, Spain late in March to monitor training sessions. This is the location for a number of their training camps for the 2003 season.

March saw the first input of physiological evaluation with the Irish boxing squad. A battery of tests was devised,



Eadhoin Ní Challarain, looking forward to Olympics 2004.

from a panel of sport science specialists, to cater for boxing specific fitness parameters. The testing was carried out at the National Boxing Stadium in Dublin. The entire high performance support team also met with the squad for a full day introduction.

Exercise Physiologist Caroline MacManus attended a training camp with the slalom canoe squad in Augsburg, Germany. The squad trains there on regular occasions as it is a world class training facility, and it will also be the venue for the 2003 World Championships. Physiological evaluation and session monitoring was undertaken. The slalom canoe squad also attended NCTC for a 1-day visit, which included a monitoring session, at the National 50m pool at the University of Limerick Arena.

An athletics training camp was organised for the Paralympic track and field athletes, which was the first of a number to be held this year.

A series of seminars on a number of topics which included: The female athlete; International Carding Scheme, Lifestyle and other sports science subjects was delivered to a group of doctors currently undertaking the Masters in Sports Medicine at UCC. The seminars were delivered over two days, by NCTC and UL staff.

Finally, the NCTC has been working with the Special Olympics soccer team in the run up to the Special Olympics which will be held this summer in Dublin. The testing took place in Limerick with the squad during the final weekend in March.

TABLE 1: PHYSIOLOGICAL SERVICE INPUTS TO ATHLETES IN QUARTER 1, 2003 (JAN – MARCH)

SPORT	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
NUMBER OF PHYSIOLOGICAL INPUTS			
Athletics	1	2	1
Boxing	-	-	11
Canoe (Slalom)	-	5	8
Cycling	3	1	4
Rowing	1	11	9
Sailing	1		7
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>40</b>

# NEW SCREENING PROCEDURES TO HELP ATHLETES

**THE IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL**



AN CHOMHAIRE SPÓIRT

On March 26th 2003 the Irish Sports Council announced the list of 220 Irish players and athletes from 23 sports who will receive both financial and non-financial support

under the International Carding Scheme for 2003. The National Coaching and Training Centre is responsible for co-ordinating the non-financial aspects of the Carding Scheme, which nurtures and encourages emerging and existing talent in the Irish sports system.

## Medical Screening

As well as access to sports science and sports medical support in the areas of sports biomechanics; sports nutrition; sports physiology, sports psychology; sports medicine and physiotherapy each athlete on the Scheme is entitled to a comprehensive medical screening.

The major aim of a medical screening is to detect any medical or musculoskeletal problems that may interfere with an athlete's health or with his/her performance in training and competition. In addition, it will introduce the athlete to the medical service for carded athletes and encourage each athlete not to delay in availing of all the medical expertise available, while he/she is supported by the Scheme.

The medical screening begins in a laboratory where special tests will be carried out on the heart, lungs and blood. Next, each athlete will receive an appointment to be examined by a chartered physiotherapist for assessment, and finally an appointment for examination by a medical doctor will be arranged where the doctor will discuss all the results from the laboratory tests and the recommendations from the physiotherapy assessment. Following this medical, each athlete will receive a summary of results from their medical screening and a copy of these results will also be sent to the National Governing Body's Medical Officer.

## Publications: Player/Athlete Diary and Services Directory

Each athlete supported by the International Carding Scheme also receives a structured training diary that assists them in recording and monitoring their training, competition and utilisation of sports science and medical support. Over the last six months, NCTC along with identified players/athletes, coaches and sports science professionals have been reviewing the structure, design and content of the diary. This new-look diary will be launched in June of this year.

Also this year, the 3rd edition of the International Carding Scheme Services Directory will be published. This comprehensive directory lists the services available to carded players/athletes nationwide and the location of points of access within each of the sports science and medical disciplines. Since its first publication in 1998, the Services Directory has become an invaluable tool to players, athletes, coaches and sports science and medical professionals across all sports throughout the country.



Paul McKee (bronze) and Dave McCarthy (fifth) in the World 400m Indoor Championships in Birmingham. Both athletes receive sports science and medical support through the Carding Scheme.



Peter Lawrie - One of the Team Ireland Golf Trust. Carding Scheme services have now been extended to the golfers supporters by the Trust.

## Golf Trust links golfers to Carding Scheme

The Team Ireland Golf Trust has allocated a total of €240,000 to aspiring golfers who are pursuing their sporting careers on professional golf tours. This year the Trust has targeted golfers who have playing rights on the major tours and young golfers who are starting out to compete on the professional golf circuit for the first time. Team Ireland Golf Trust is a partnership between statutory agencies and private corporations. Clients of Bryan Phelan, Ryanair and O'Callaghan Hotels each make generous donations to the scheme, which represents a significant investment in the long-term development of Irish golf.

The Irish Sports Council, Bord Failte and the PGA European Tour provide financial and other supports. The golfers on the scheme also have access to some of the non-financial services of the International Carding Scheme. These services include access to sports science and medical service providers nationwide as well as educational workshops.

Deirdre Lyons, International Carding Scheme Co-ordinator, NCTC.

# NEW RECRUITS ACROSS THE BOARD

*During the first quarter of 2003, there were new recruits to the National Coaching Development Programme (NCDP) at a number of levels. Congratulations to Motor Sport Ireland and the Irish Cricket Union who have successfully certified coaches in the NCDP, at Introduction to Coaching level.*

## Motor Sport Ireland

Motor Sport Ireland's first coach education course was delivered by four tutors in training, who worked hard to develop a syllabus and course outline, suitable for the driver pathway in their sport. Following the completion of all tasks, tutors Jacky Breathnach, David Smith, Kevin Reynolds and Keith Treanor graduated in April 2003. The course was attended by 8 participants, who enjoyed the high standard of course delivery at the Monaghan Motor Sport Ireland Centre.

## Irish Cricket Union

The Irish Cricket Union certified 11 coaches following delivery of an Introduction to Coaching level course in Malahide. Tutors Vincent Savino and Brian O'Rourke completed all tasks within the Tutor Development Course and graduated in April 2003. The participants on this course hope to develop cricket in the junior club and schools in the Malahide area. Brian Kelleher, a designated support tutor, assisted on this course making it a highly interactive one.

The numbers of coaches who have obtained NCDP certificates between January and March 2003 is outlined in Table 1.



*The sport of FAI qualified 848 coaches at Introduction to coaching and 213 coaches at Level 1 in the first quarter of 2003.*

TABLE 1: COACHES RECEIVING CERTIFICATION  
IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2003

### Introduction to Coaching

#### NGB

IB (Basketball)	85 coaches
BUI (Badminton)	80 coaches
ICU (Cricket)	11 coaches
IG (Gymnastics)	34 coaches
FAI (Soccer)	848 coaches
IHA (Hockey)	46 coaches
IRFU (Rugby)	171 coaches
MSI (Motor Sport)	8 coaches
PPUI (Pitch 'n Putt)	15 coaches

#### Level 1

##### NGB

IB (Basketball)	3 coaches
BUI (Badminton)	57 coaches
EFI (Equestrian)	16 coaches
FAI (Soccer)	213 coaches
IG (Gymnastics)	23 coaches
IHA (Hockey)	10 coaches
ISA (Sailing)	58 coaches
ITTA (Table Tennis)	27 coaches

#### Level 2

IG (Gymnastics)	11 coaches
-----------------	------------

Congratulations and many thanks to the tutors who have delivered the courses, and also the NGB/NCTC coach education contacts, who assisted in the quality assurance procedure necessary to accredit the above coaches.

### Graduation

The annual NCDP Tutor graduation took place in the Castletroy Park Hotel, Limerick on the 11th April 2003. Over 40 tutors graduated as part of the NGB/NCDP coach education process. Tutors represented 17 sports and look forward to spreading the good word on coaching to their sporting colleagues. The tutors who graduated were:

Surname	First Name	Sport
Black	Michael	Rugby
Breathnach	Jacky	Motorsport
Brown	Alistair	Rugby
Clinkscales	Deirdre	Basketball
Corkery	David	Rugby
Curry	Des	Volleyball
Durkin	Frank	Rowing
Elliot	Des	Badminton
Ewing	Brenda	Rowing
Ferrick	Gearoid	Rugby
Flynn	Pat	Boxing
Hehir	Tom	Badminton
Hennebry	Ann	Volleyball
Hodkinson	Blake	Canoeing
Holohan	Shane	Gymnastics
Houlihan	Frank	GAA
Kelly	Owen	Table Tennis
Keogh	John	Canoeing
Lacey	John	Rugby
Lalor	Patricia	Equestrian
Macken	Susanne	Equestrian
McCombe	Sidney	Boxing
McCourt	Frank	Boxing
McGahern	Harold	Equestrian
Nolan	P.J.	Billiards & Snooker
O'Brien	Colin	Soccer
O'Hara	Katie	Equestrian
O'Mahoney	Gerry	Boxing
O'Rourke	Brían	Cricket
Reagan	William	Basketball
Reynolds	Kevin	Motorsport
Savino	Vincent	Cricket
Scannell	Mark	Basketball
Sherwin	Ian	Rugby
Slattery	Christy	Racquetball
Smyth	David	Motorsport
Tansey	Vida	Equestrian
Thompson	Ron	Badminton
Tiernen	Keith	Motorsport
Treanor	Francis	Judo
Watters	Seamus	Racquetball

*Catherine Bird, Coach Education  
Development Officer, NCTC.*

# IRFU's new Coaching Initiative applauded by National Coaching and Training Centre



The Irish Rugby Football Union has launched a major new coaching initiative - **IRFU Coach Development – The Accreditation Pathway.**

It is aimed at consolidating and enhancing the Irish rugby coaching structures with the ambition of producing more and better qualified indigenous coaches for Irish rugby.

The Union sees the initiative as a major priority investment in recognition that good coaching is always the driver of high levels of participation and successful performance.

Stephen Aboud, IRFU National Coach Development Manager says:

*“The launch of this new Coaching Development and Accreditation Pathway is the most exciting development in Irish Rugby coaching in the last 10 years.*

*“It is a process of development and assessment ratified by the International Rugby Board and the National Coaching and Training Centre (NCTC), which will deliver Irish coaches capable of operating at all levels of the game on the domestic and professional fronts.”*

The IRFU initiative was welcomed by Pat Duffy, Director of the National Coaching and Training Centre who said:

*“We are delighted at the progress made by the IRFU in implementing the National Coaching Development Programme. The Coach Development and Accreditation Pathway developed by the IRFU is an excellent example*

*of the type of structure needed in Irish sport in the future and reflects the tremendous progress that the Union has made in promoting participation and high performance in the sport of rugby.”*

The IRFU has distributed 5,000 brochures outlining the exciting new project to all its affiliated Branches, Clubs and Schools.



*The IRFU is placing an increasing emphasis on producing more and better qualified indigenous coaches for Irish Rugby. Eddie O'Sullivan and Declan Kidney are two leading examples of Irish coaches who are making a significant impact on the international stage.*

# Long Term Athlete Development: the '10-year rule' and Irish race-walkers

In the last issue of SportsPulse, we reported that scientific research has concluded that it takes eight to twelve years of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels (Bloom, 1985; Ericsson et al., 1993; Ericsson and Charness, 1994). For players/athletes, coaches and parents this translates as slightly more than three hours of practice daily for ten years (Salmela, 1998) and might be loosely termed "the ten-year rule".

The sport of race-walking is no different! NCTC, along with junior race-walker Caitriona MacMahon and her coach Michael Lane, prepared a short questionnaire, which was circulated to seven members of the National Race-walking Squad. This yielded a 100% response, which showed excellent co-operation from the members, even though the group was a small one. The results were collated and compared with international trends and a short summary of findings is detailed below.

## General

Five (71.4%) members of the race-walking squad were male and 2 (28.6%) were female. The age of the participants ranged from 17 years to 31 years with an average age of 25 years. When asked about their long-term goals, medalling (4); a top 10 finish (1); or qualifying for an Olympics or major championship (2) were the responses cited.

The race-walkers were asked how they were introduced to their sports. Four of the athletes were introduced to their chosen sport through their school. Two of the athletes were introduced to the sport by their family, while one was introduced through an athletics club. Five of the athletes had parents who were either involved in race-walking itself or other sports, whilst two of the athletes' parents had no involvement in sport, although one race-walker had parental attendance at all events.



*Gillian O'Sullivan and Olive Loughmane; both race-walkers have shown steady improvements as part of their longer term plans with coach Michael Lane.*

## Training

The average age at which the race-walkers started in sport was 7 years, with the introduction to race-walking occurring at an average age of 13 years. The average age of specialisation in race-walking (i.e. when they began to train exclusively for the sport) was 16 years of age.

An analysis of the finalists and medallists in three recent major championships: 2002 World Championships; the Sydney Olympic Games (2000) and the Atlanta Olympic Games (1996), revealed that top performers varied in age from 25 to 34 years of age. Table 1 provides an overview of these findings, with an indicative age of

specialisation, based on the application of the '10-year rule'. These data provide race-walkers with an indication of the ages at which training exclusively for race-walking (i.e. with an average training load of 5 days a week or more) should begin if there is to be a realistic chance of medalling in the sport. Further research is needed on the application of the '10-year rule' to race-walking and on the implication for age of specialisation among Irish race-walkers. We currently do not have reliable data on the age of specialisation of the medallists outlined in Table 1.

When asked about involvement in other sport, all of the race-walkers had

**TABLE 1: AVERAGE MEDALLING AGE AMONG RACE-WALKERS IN THREE MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Competition		Average age of medallist (years)	Indicative age of specialisation, based on the 10-year rule (years)
World C'ships 2002	Men's 20k	31.8	21.8
	Men's 50k	32.3	22.3
	Women's 20k	34.0	24.0
Olympic Games 2000	Men's 20k	28.0	18.0
	Men's 50k	28.2	18.2
	Women's 20k	25.6	15.6
Olympic Games 1996	Men's 20k	28.4	18.4
	Men's 50k	27.6	17.6
	Women's 10k	28.3	18.3

participated in at least one other sport including cross country/running; Gaelic football/soccer (4); basketball (2); and a range of other team and individual sports. They competed at various levels, with some still participating in middle/long distance running events.

On average, the group undertake 10 training sessions per week, spending approximately 19 hours per week training for their sport. Most of this time is spent on mileage sessions (median=8hrs) and steady sessions (median=4.5hrs), with considerable time also allocated to interval training (2.8hrs) and strength training (1.8hrs). For the most part, the race-walkers train on the road (median=80%), and the majority train either alone (median=45%) or mostly alone (median=24%).

### Supports

Each of the race-walkers was asked to rate (on a scale of 1-7) a number of different support structures that have helped them throughout their sporting careers. The family (parents and siblings), coach, friends and others scored highly on moral support to the athletes. The coach and NCTC scored high on technical support, whilst parents, the ISC and other contributors scored the highest on financial support.

The majority of athletes cited the support they received from their coach as the most important factor in their development of athletic success. Support from their parents/family, clubs and friends were also seen as a contributing factor to their success. Some of the race-walkers also identified intrinsic factors such as determination and self-belief as major factors in their development. Some additional support they would like to have to help them achieve their sporting goals included improved sports science and medical support, better planning and support from their NGB, additional financial support and access to international competition and warm weather and altitude camps.

### Barriers

When asked to list the three biggest obstacles that they had encountered to date, lack of finance and illness/injury problems were the main factors listed. Other barriers included lack of time to train and work commitments; lack of training facilities



Race-walkers generally peak in their late twenties or early thirties. Rob Heffernan (26) is an emerging talent in race-walking in Ireland.

which included being asked to leave tracks when training; lack of motivation and negative people; lack of planning; having no group to train with; lack of quality coaching and lack of overall support as a junior athlete.

### Advice to younger athletes

If this group were to advise younger athletes (based on their own experience) on what factors to prioritise earlier in their sporting careers, personal capacities came out strongest. The race-walkers would advise the development of determination; passion; hard work; enjoyment and patience. One athlete's recommendation was to try other sports. The improvement of physical capacities were also encouraged and these included base and strength training; speed, endurance and flexibility. Other factors included the development of mental and technical capacities. It was also felt that athletes should continue with their pursuance of a third-level education.

### Areas for Improvement

Listing three areas that could improve their performance, physical capacities such as strength, endurance, speed and flexibility, along with increasing the length and number of sessions were cited most often. More specific knowledge of training, rest and recovery and learning how to stay injury-free were mentioned along with improved system support, which includes support from their NGB, financial support and support for their coach. Finally, several

mental capacities including the improvement of motivation were cited.

### Likes in the sport

The best thing that these athletes liked about their sport was the friends and the people that they met along the way. Other items listed were the challenge and the sense of achievement they received from the sport as well as travel opportunities. In the future all of the race-walkers would like to continue to be involved in the sport, especially as a coach, either to young athletes or to high performance race-walkers. Some also expressed an interest at becoming involved as a judge/official or in the administration side of the sport.

### Summary

This preliminary study highlighted that the road to success in international race-walking is a long one, with at least a "10-year rule" applying from age of specialisation to top performance. The focus and dedication of the athlete, along with the role of family and coaches in assisting the athletes along the way was highlighted. The system-based supports provided by ISC and NCTC augmented the efforts of the athletes, their coaches and their families along the pathway towards improved international performances.

*Deirdre Lyons, International Carding Scheme Co-ordinator, NCTC.*

*Catriona McMahon, race-walker.*

# Partnership, Participation and Expertise

## The Key to NCTC Decision Making

A key element of NCTC work is the development of services and programmes that are of practical use to Irish sport. In order to ensure that the needs of players/athletes, coaches and NGBs are met, NCTC has a range of representative and expert groups in existence, and these are outlined below.

### Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for all major policy decisions and over-seeing financial expenditure, and meets on a monthly basis. Each Board member brings his/her own area of expertise to the meetings enabling the Centre to carry out its expansive role. The term of office for the last Board concluded in December 2002 and discussions are currently taking place in relation to the structure of a new Board, which will be chaired by Mr. Sean Donnelly formerly of the IDA. The Board of Management up to December last was chaired by Professor Pat Fottrell, former President of the National University of Ireland, Galway and a member of the Board of the Irish Sports Council.

#### THE OTHER OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

<b>Ms. Anne Ebbs</b>	Secretary General, Paralympic Council of Ireland
<b>Ms. Una English</b>	International Athlete
<b>Dr. Alan Donnelly</b>	Head, Dept of Physical Education and Sports Science, University of Limerick
<b>Ms. Kay Doyle</b>	Member of the University of Limerick Governing Authority
<b>Mr. Billy Kennedy</b>	Representative from the Olympic Council of Ireland
<b>Mr. Eoin McCann</b>	Assistant Dean. Academic Affairs College of Science, University of Limerick and a member of the University of Limerick Governing Authority
<b>Mr. Patsy McGonagle</b>	Sports Officer, Letterkenny Institute of Technology
<b>Mr. John McNamara</b>	Former General Manager, Bank of Ireland (West)
<b>Mr. Dave Mahedy</b>	Director, Sport and Recreation, University of Limerick
<b>Prof. Aidan Moran</b>	Department of Psychology, University College Dublin
<b>Lt. Col. Gerry Mullins</b>	Equestrian Federation of Ireland
<b>Mr. Michael Whelan</b>	Sports Officer, Dublin Institute of Technology

#### NCTC STAFF

<b>Dr. Pat Duffy</b>	Director,
<b>Ms. Olivia Sweeney</b>	Secretary to the Board

*The chairman of the new Board will be Mr. Sean Donnelly (formerly IDA) and it is expected that details of the new Board will be announced shortly.*

### Technical Advisory Group

In November last a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to the National Coaching and Training Centre was established. The TAG has the following functions:

1. To advise on the pathway stages which are relevant to Irish players and athletes
2. To advise on the technical, tactical, physical, mental, lifestyle and personal capacities which should be developed among Irish athletes and players at the different stages of the pathway and on the appropriate supports to be put in place to enhance these capacities
3. To advise on the proposed revision of the syllabus template for the National Coaching Development Programme (NCDP) and, in particular, on how coaching ladder and athlete pathway links can be maximised
4. To advise on the proposed implementation framework and manual for the NCDP

#### MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

<b>Mr. Stephen Aboud</b>	Irish Rugby Football Union
<b>Mr. Barney Ball</b>	Director, Coaching Northern Ireland
<b>Dr. Istvan Balyi</b>	World-leading expert on Long Term Athlete Development
<b>Mr. Pat Daly</b>	Coaching & Games Director, Cumann Luthchleas Gael
<b>Dr. Pat Duffy (chair)</b>	Director, NCTC
<b>Mr. Liam Harbison</b>	Technical Director, Paralympic Council of Ireland
<b>Mr. Billy Kennedy</b>	Olympic Council of Ireland
<b>Mr. Brian Kerr</b>	Irish Senior International Soccer Manager
<b>Ms. Deirdre Lyons</b>	International Carding Scheme Co-ordinator, NCTC
<b>Dr. Ann MacPhail</b>	Department of Physical Education and Sports Science, University of Limerick
<b>Mr. Peter McCabe</b>	Athlete Career and Education Co-ordinator, Sports Institute Northern Ireland
<b>Mr. Patsy McGonagle</b>	Sports Officer, Letterkenny Institute of Technology
<b>Mr. Thor Nilsen</b>	Head Coach, Irish Rowing
<b>Mr. Declan O'Leary</b>	Head of Coaching Services, NCTC
<b>Ms. Helen Raftery</b>	Programme Manager, Irish Sports Council
<b>Dr. Giles Warrington</b>	Head of Player/Athlete Services, NCTC
<b>Mr. Michael Whelan</b>	Sports Officer, Dublin Institute of Technology

### Level 3 Review Group (Coaching)

The Level 3 Review Group was also established in November last and consists of representatives of the sports that have carried out level 3 programmes so far, and nominated experts. The purpose of the group is to:

1. To provide support for the review of existing level 3 courses
2. To collate major findings and progress actions arising from the review
3. To devise a revised level 3 model, incorporating:
  - Confirmation of capacities for international level players, in line with the recommendations of the Technical Advisory Group
  - Development of a revised level 3 syllabus
  - Central modules for delivery across all sports
  - Sport specific modules
  - Profiling of coaches and individualisation of educational opportunities
  - Mentoring and distance learning opportunities
  - Identification of suitable assimilation opportunities for level 3 coaches, in the context of the NCTC assimilation initiative
  - Modes of assessment
  - Development of suitable materials for coaches, tutors and NGBs
  - Links with third-level accreditation systems
4. Make pre-liminary recommendations on the format and structure of level 4 coach education courses
5. To identify possible areas of synergy between Physical Education and Sports Science Department at UL (PESS) and NCTC

#### MEMBERS OF THE LEVEL 3 REVIEW GROUP

<b>Mr. Barney Ball</b>	Director, Coaching Northern Ireland
<b>Ms. Mary Bryan</b>	Irish Badminton Union
<b>Dr. Pat Duffy (chair)</b>	Director, NCTC
<b>Dr. Drew Harrison</b>	NCTC
<b>Mr. Liam Hennessy</b>	Irish Rugby Football Union
<b>Mr. Tadgh Lambe</b>	Tennis Ireland
<b>Mr. Jimmy McDermott</b>	Football Association of Ireland
<b>Mr. Paddy McGratton</b>	Athletics Association of Ireland
<b>Mr. Declan O'Leary</b>	NCTC
<b>Dr. Alan Ringland</b>	Sport Psychologist, Tralee IT
<b>Mr. Richard Willis</b>	Irish Hockey Association

### Sports Science and Medical Support Network Co-ordinating Group

The Sports Science and Medical Support Network Coordinating Group is responsible for overseeing the services provided by the Network to players and athletes within the International Carding Scheme. The Group consists of representatives from each of the key disciplines:

#### SPORTS SCIENCE AND MEDICAL CO-ORDINATING GROUP

<b>Mr. Bernard Dunne</b>	Physiology
<b>Dr. Drew Harrison</b>	Biomechanics
<b>Ms. Deirdre Lyons</b>	International Carding Scheme Co-ordinator
<b>Ms. Mary O'Connor</b>	Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists
<b>Dr. Pat O'Neill</b>	Irish Sports Medicine Association
<b>Mr. Alan Ringland</b>	Sports Psychology
<b>Ms. Jill Sommerville</b>	Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute
<b>Dr. Giles Warrington</b>	NCTC (chair)
<b>Dr. Pat Duffy</b>	NCTC

### Medical Panel

The NCTC Medical Panel oversees the Sports Medical Support policies of the Centre. The members of the panel are:

#### MEMBERS OF MEDICAL PANEL

- Dr. Mary Archer**
- Dr. Geraldine Barniville (Chair)**
- Dr. Steve Eustace**
- Dr. Sean Gaine**
- Dr. Michael Griffin (NCTC Medical Officer)**
- Dr. Aideen Henry (NCTC Screening Officer)**
- Dr. Domhnall MacAuley**
- Dr. Nick Mahony**
- Dr. Conor McCarthy**
- Dr. Ray Moran**
- Dr. Brendan O'Brien**
- Dr. Conor O'Brien**
- Dr. Pat O'Neill**
- Dr. John O'Riordan**
- Dr. Martin Walsh**
- Dr. Giles Warrington (Head of Player Services)**



Dr. Michael Griffin, NCTC Medical Officer.



Dr. Liam Hennessy, IRFU Fitness Advisor. Member of the Level 3 review group.



Dr. Pat O'Neill, Irish Sports Medicine Association and a member of the Sports Science and Medical Support Network Co-ordinating Group and of the NCTC Medical Panel.

# Seminar highlights the need for action on womens sport

*We are the women on bleachers here to cheer our men: the screamers, the ardent beseechers.... It's why they bring us*

The "Women in Irish Sport" seminar held on February 1st, was attended by people from all facets and levels of Irish sport, including NGB's, coaches, administrators, athletes, teachers, sports development officers, and parents. The event was organised by Mr. Jimmy Deenihan TD, FG spokesperson for Arts, Sport & Tourism. The speakers included Mr Jimmy Deenihan, Prof. Moira O'Brien (Trinity College), Gina Menzies (Irish Squash), Joan McCloy (Irish Hockey Association), Dr Paul Rouse (UCD) and Paul Welsh (Fair Play). All of the presentations proved both extremely interesting and informative. Early in the day one fact was very clear: despite the fact that women and girls account for fifty percent of the population, their participation in Irish sport does not reflect this statistic.

Another striking fact was the paucity of statistics actually available on female participation at any level of sport in this country. The statistics that are available identify that urgent action is required if equal participation of women and girls is to become a reality. A number of examples are cited in Tables 1, 2 and 3

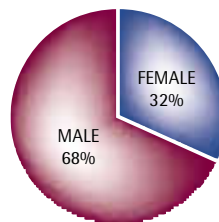
Historically women have been denied the opportunity and the encouragement to participate in physical activity. In The Evolution of Sex (1889), Geddes and Thomson argued that the biological basis of social arrangements were rooted in differing cell metabolisms: men's cells were active and energy dissipating but women's passive and energy conserving. In 1935 Baron de Coubertin of the IOC, stated "I am personally against the participation of women in public competition....At the Olympics their primary role should be like the ancient tournaments—the crowning of victors with laurels"

Fortunately, the world of female sport has made some progress in the last 70 years, but not nearly enough. This seminar will hopefully prove to be an important milestone on the road to not only equal opportunity for Irish females in sport but also equal participation at all levels both as participants and decision makers. The main outcome of the seminar included some recommendations as follows:

**TABLE 1: COACHING AND TUTORING: MALE- FEMALE INVOLVEMENT IN NCDP**

	Male	Female
National Coaching Development Program (Coach)	70%	30%
National Coaching Development Programme (Tutor)	75%	25%
Coaching NI	74%	25%

**TABLE 2: CARDED ATHLETES 2003**



## Recommendations (Fairplay, Issue 7, 2003)

- A national audit should be carried out of sports facilities for women nationwide.
- Participation in sport is influenced by the extent, variety and accessibility of facilities. Unless the current status of facilities nationwide is known, we cannot monitor the extent of exclusion or the success of future plans.
- The planning, design and management of these facilities should meet the particular needs of sportswomen, including childcare provision and safety.
- All new sports facilities in receipt of Government funding should be required to be women-friendly, and adaptable for use by athletes with disabilities or special needs.
- A Commission on Physical Education should be established.
- Physical education programmes should be implemented in both primary and secondary schools.
- Obstacles which discourage girls participating in physical education in schools should be removed.

- The Commission should include officials from relevant Government Departments, including Education and Health, teachers' unions and the two Sports Councils amongst others.
- One person should have responsibility for women's issues within every sporting organisation. That person should have sufficient status to influence decisions and policy-making.
- A Women's Sports Foundation should be established. This to be solely committed to improving and promoting opportunities for women and girls in sport, at every level.
- A national Forum on Girls and Women in Sport should be established – meeting at least twice annually – to discuss and make recommendations on all issues that affect the participation of girls and women in sport.
- Gender equity factors must be built into NGBs' annual budgets with measurable outcomes.
- Ireland should immediately adopt the principles formulated, in 1994 at the Brighton Conference on Women in Sport. Other countries have long since adopted these principles.

The women in sport seminar was a tremendous success and a large percentage of the delegates think it should be an annual event. Gina Menzies (Irish Squash) said. "I look forward to the day when such a forum is an annual event in the Sport's calendar. We need to raise awareness about issues in relation to women's and girls participation and non- participation. Equality for women in sport and physical recreation will only happen when the sporting needs of women are identified and sporting environment is created which accommodates their specific needs."

The 7th National Forum will include a number of sessions on the issue of girls and women in sport.

Sheelagh Quinn, Head of Client Services, NCTC.

**TABLE 3: IRELANDS REPRESENTATION AT OLYMPIC GAMES**

Year	No of Competitors		OCI Mangt & Medical		NGB Coaches & Managers	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1992 Barcelona	58	10	10	5	23	0
1996 Atlanta	62	16	11	3	21	3
2000 Sydney	43	25	12	4	21	5

# Irish Sports Council Launches New Strategic Plan "Sport for Life"

## Major research initiative with the ESRI announced.

"During its short life the Irish Sports Council has made a huge impact on sport in this country. I applaud all that it has achieved since 1999 and fully endorse "Sport for Life". Minister O'Donoghue

The Irish Sports Council unveiled a three-year strategy called "Sport for Life" on April 8th. In the document the Council asserts its role as the development agency for sport, constantly seeking to raise standards and develop better ways to promote, plan and deliver sport.

Pat O'Neill, Chairperson of the Council made a commitment to continue to make the case for sport and seek additional investment for every level. He stated: "Sport makes an important contribution to the health of the nation. Investing our money in sport, particularly targeting young people, makes sense for our society and for our economy".

The document, "Sport for Life", was launched in Croke Park to an invited audience representing the wide diversity of Irish sport. The new strategy reviews the work of the Council over the past three years and is a manifesto for action for the next three years.

John Treacy, Chief Executive, gave a detailed presentation to the audience on the contents of the strategy. He said; "The benefits of the implementation of the first strategy are apparent for high performance athletes, for national governing bodies, and crucially, at local level through Local Sports Partnerships. "Sport for Life" will build on this work and continue to improve the planning, promotion and delivery of sport".

A survey of the Council's client organisations revealed a high degree of satisfaction with the work of the Council. 76% of sports bodies surveyed said that the work of the Council was important to them. 94% of National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and 100% of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) were satisfied with the work of the Council.

There was a commitment to continuing to work closely with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Pat O'Neill paid tribute to the commitment of Minister O'Donoghue and his Department to the work of the Council. In its first full year of operation in 2000 the resources available to the Council were 18 staff and an annual budget of 13.215 million euro. By 2003 that had risen to 24 staff with an annual budget of 28.265 million euro, a testimony to ongoing and increasing support.

In order to make the case effectively for sport the Council will place a major emphasis on research over the next three years. At the



launch it announced a significant new initiative in association with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). A Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity, based at the ESRI, will be established and begin work immediately on essential projects.

By the end of this year initial results from two critical studies will be available. Firstly, there will be results from the baseline study on participation rates. Secondly, a study into the socio-economic value and impact of sport in Ireland will have produced initial findings. They will be the first studies in a long-term research plan, which it is hoped, will make a major contribution to the formulation of policy in sport, health and education.

Twelve Local Sports Partnerships have been established around the country. The LSPs are the core of the Council's participation strategy though increasing opportunities for all at local level. An evaluation report on the initial phase of their work has been prepared and is currently with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. The aim remains the establishment of a national network of LSPs in the immediate future.

During the planning process the Council found the strong view in sport was that there should be a focus on sport for young people. In particular there is widespread concern about the long-term health effects of lifestyles that do not include sport and physical activity. The Council recognises the vital part that the Physical Education curriculum plays in the life of young people. It is available to support the Department of Education in every way possible to deliver the P.E. curriculum and will take every opportunity to highlight the critical importance of P.E. to the wellbeing of young people.

The Council is active, through the NGBs and the LSPs, at local level in providing opportunities for participation for all in sport. In particular the LSPs are working well with the local health authorities to ensure physical activity is a priority.

The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, published in 2000, is making

a real difference to the quality of sport for young people. Already established in all relevant NGBs, the Code is being delivered at a local level through LSPs and NGB tutors. It is being enthusiastically received in clubs around the country as it provides the means to give children a quality introduction to safe and enjoyable sport. It sets out how adults can ensure that children's crucial first interaction with sport encourages long-term involvement with physical activity. The Code will remain at the heart of the Council's work.

The Council enjoys an excellent relationship with partner organisations, notably the NGBs. The sports organisations supported the establishment of the new Council and have worked extremely well with it to ensure that the new opportunity for sport was taken. They view the Council as an accountable, innovative and professional organisation which has contributed to their effectiveness through increased funding, strategic planning, high performance support, coaching support, anti-doping and other services.

The Council's aim is to assist in the building of strong and dynamic governing bodies. Through funding and other supports the Council will strengthen the NGBs so that they can deliver greater participation in sport, raise the standards of performance and achieve excellence at international level.

Elite athletes have benefited directly from the work of the Council. Through the International Carding Scheme, the International Training and Competition funding for NGBs, and the investment and planning in high performance through the High Performance Strategy athletes have access to a package of supports which allows them focus on their sport and reach their potential.

The Athens Enhancement Programme for the 2004 Olympic Games ensures that the Irish team will be the best prepared ever. Since the Sydney Review the Council has worked closely with the Olympic Council of Ireland to ensure that focus in the build up to Athens will be on the Irish team of athletes and coaches and that the public can have confidence that our team will not be disadvantaged in any way. John Treacy concluded;

"The three long-term strategic thrusts of the Council's strategy, participation, performance and excellence, have been advanced and will remain the pillars of the Council's work. They will be underpinned by fair-play and delivered through partnership in sport".