

SIAB Schools Cross Country International - Saturday 23rd March



Written by Nathan Jones

Saturday, 23 March 2019 16:02

Thirty-six of Wales' cross-country youngsters finished off their 2018/2019 winter season on **Saturday (March 23rd)**,

at the annual end-of-season

SIAB Schools International Athletic Board Cross Country International

in

Dublin's Santry Demesne

. Situated next to the Morton Athletics Stadium, a total of almost 150 athletes were in action from all areas of the United Kingdom during the day.

Gwnaeth tri deg chwech o athletwyr Cymru orffen eu tymor traws gwlad dros y penwythnos (Mawrth 23ain) wrth iddynt gystadlu ym mhencampwriaeth blynyddol Rhyngwladol Ysgolion SIAB yn Nulyn. Wedi'i leoli nesaf i'r trac athletau Morton yn Santry, wnaeth bron i 150 o athletwyr o bob rhan o'r Deyrnas Unedig gymryd rhan yn ystod y dydd.

This high standard competition, which takes place in each of the four countries once every four years, returned this weekend across the Irish Sea in Northern Ireland and hosted by the Irish Schools Association. Wales took its turn two years ago to put on the event at the historic and scenic Margam Park near Port Talbot and provided with a great setting for the competition. In 2018, the international fixture headed to Nottingham's Wollaton Park where a testing and hilly course awaited the competitors of all ages.

The #SIAB2019 gave an opportunity to test form against the cream of cross-country talent from across the UK and Ireland. There were a number of experienced athletes out on show however they ran alongside a number of debutants making their first appearance on the international stage.

On a sunny afternoon watched on by a vocal crowd, Teams of eight from Welsh Schools, English Schools, Irish Schools and Scottish Schools battled it out in the under 15 junior and under 17 intermediate races. They competed over distances of 3,000m, 4,000m and 6,000m split into a small lap and large lap.

Additionally in 2019, a new 4 x 1500m relay took place for the upper age group, where an additional 2 boys and 2 girls were invited to participant for their country in this element in the final race of the programme.



Strong Showing from Welsh Schools' youngsters

Welsh Schools pupils wearing the red vest of Wales were selected to run following the Welsh Schools National Cross Country Championships, in Brecon on 13th February. The first eight respectively in the under 15 and under 17 age groups that day were automatically chosen to be involved in this season climax match participating against unfamiliar opponents.

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This year's squad was very much spread from schools across Wales' four regions, with runners involved from locations such as Barry, Cowbridge, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Bridgend, Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Bangor, Denbighshire and Flint just to name a few.

The South Wales contingent started out early on Friday morning picking up along the M4 corridor before heading up North to Holyhead via Aberystwyth. They travelled in style thanks to our club sponsors, Ffoshelig Coaches who provided the coach and the 8-hour round-trip by road to North West Wales. Welsh Schools have a long standing relationship with Rhodri Evans and his team and have been grateful for their support once again this year.

The Welsh teams were accompanied for the weekend by a management team of seven under team leader Zane Maynard (Morrison Comprehensive). He was joined on management duties by Delyth Brown, Carol Jones, Joan Goldsmith and John Messum alongside SIAB Delegates Dai Gatehouse and Steve Jones. An army of parents, coaches and family members also travelled to support the children and country.

Following a dominant display in Nottingham last year on home ground, the powerful English Schools athletes continued their fine form at these Internationals, again coming away from Ireland with a clean sweep of four team titles and victories individually. It proved to be a successful day for Wales' up and coming stars with the best result of the day coming in the first race at lunchtime, which was the Junior Girls. The girls finished six in 29 places to come away with team bronze behind England and Scotland. There were also strong showings from the other promising age groups who scored full teams. Several now looking ahead to the London Mini Marathon on the final Sunday of April as well as being eligible for next year's Schools International in Scotland.

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