

## Juvenile Captains Address – AGM 11.05.26

Good evening everyone,

I am delighted to present my report on the Juvenile Section of Clonliffe Harriers in my second year as Juvenile Captain. I would like to begin by thanking Club Captain Noel Guider for appointing me to this role and for the support and guidance he has given throughout the year. Over the past twelve months, I have gained a much deeper appreciation of both the responsibility and the privilege that comes with this position.

Stephen, in his Honorary Secretary's address, has already outlined many of the successes and developments within the Juvenile Section, so I won't repeat everything in detail this evening. Instead, I'd like to reflect on some of the highlights from what has been another hugely successful and encouraging year for juvenile athletics in Clonliffe Harriers. I would love to read all of the successes we have had this year, but we would literally be here all night, so I would ask you to review the full Juvenile Captains Results Report that will be available on the club website. It is very impressive to show where we are growing, and our strong presence and results has been remarked on by other clubs which is very encouraging.

What stands out most is not simply medals or titles, but the overall growth of the section — in participation, in standards, in confidence, and in ambition.

Over the past year, our athletes produced outstanding performances at club and national level. At the National Indoor Juvenile Championships, Emily Bolton claimed the Girls U18 1500m title, Rory Quill won bronze in the Boys U19 1500m, and Rhys Daly secured bronze in the U13 Long Jump.

At the Dublin Outdoor Championships, we won nine titles across a wide range of events, from hurdles and relays to middle distance, throws, jumps, steeplechase and walks. That variety is especially pleasing because it reflects the strength and balance of the club across all disciplines. Alongside those titles, we also secured 15 silver medals and 10 bronze medals — a fantastic return and a testament to the hard work of both athletes and coaches.

At National Outdoor level, Rhys Daly became National Champion in the U13 Long Jump, while our U13 Boys Relay Team captured national gold in the 4x100m relay. We also had podium finishes from Braxton O'Shea, Sophie Kernan and James Lynch, showing again that our athletes are competing strongly at the highest juvenile level.

The Schools Championships also brought tremendous success for Clonliffe athletes. Emily Bolton won the Senior Girls 3000m title, Lorcan Benjacar won the Senior Boys 1500m, and Sarah McDonnell and Emily Jachna were part of the winning Senior Girls relay team.

Cross country also continues to be a huge strength of the club. Across the Dublin Championships we saw excellent performances from our athletes and teams, with medals and qualifications achieved right through from U13 to U18 level for both girls and boys. Luke Tracey took the Dublin U14 Boys Title.

One particularly memorable result came at the National Cross Country Relays, where the U15 Boys team of Braxton O'Shea, Conor Kenny, Hayden Kenny and Mark Kelly produced a superb victory.

At National level, our U14 Boys won team silver, the U15 Boys won team bronze, and the U19 Boys also secured bronze medals.

Moving into the 2026 indoor season, the progress within our sprint and field event groups has been especially encouraging. At the Dublin Juvenile Indoor Championships we won eight titles, with successes across hurdles, sprinting, middle distance, throws, walks and relays. At National level, Channing O'Shea had a remarkable championship, winning gold in both the Long Jump and High Jump while equalling the championship record in the High Jump. Isaac O'Neill also won national gold in the hurdles and silver in the Long Jump, while Maeva Edo Czechowska and Romi Banim added national bronze medals.

While medals and performances are important, I believe one of the greatest achievements this year has been growth in participation and development within the club.

When I first took on this role, I spoke about building a structure focused on inspiration, growing participation and progression. A key priority for me has been the retention of girls in sport, ensuring equal opportunities and creating a strong pathway for female athletes through the teenage years and into senior athletics. I am pleased to say that this remains a strong focus within the club and one fully supported by Noel Guiden and the wider committee. I am also delighted that the committee has agreed to extend our schools sponsorship programme to include St. Mary's H.F.C, Glasnevin in line with sponsorship to St. Aidans C.B.S.

Participation numbers remain extremely strong, with Clonliffe consistently among the top clubs for entries at Dublin Championships. Thanks to the flexibility and commitment of our coaches, we have managed growing numbers in training, reduced waiting lists and restructured groups where necessary. We have also had to increase the minimum joining age from 8 to 9 in order to manage demand.

Behind all of this is an incredibly dedicated coaching team. Our coaches continue to develop through Athletics Ireland qualifications and child safeguarding training, and they give enormous amounts of time not only on training nights but also at competitions throughout the year. Their commitment is extraordinary, and the success of this section is built on their work.

One of the things I am most proud of this year is the culture of inspiration and support that exists within the club.

At our Juvenile Awards Night last December, we invited five young Clonliffe athletes who had recently represented Ireland to present the awards while wearing their Irish kits. The message to our younger athletes was simple: these achievements are possible through hard work, dedication and belief.

Athletes such as Sean Cronin, Lorraine O'Connor, Tom Breslin, Christopher Lynch and Craig Duffy gave their time so generously to inspire the next generation, and I would like to sincerely thank them and their coaches for doing so.

We have also had fantastic support from members of our senior section. Sean O'Leary delivered an excellent talk to our cross-country athletes about both performance and dealing with disappointment — an important lesson in sport and in life. Sean Carraig has provided strength and conditioning support to our young athletes, Grace Casey has worked closely with our developing throws group, and Olympian Michelle Finn has given guidance to our aspiring steeplechasers.

Sarah Bateson has also created wonderful opportunities for our younger athletes through basket duties at senior competitions, allowing them to experience high-level athletics up close and be inspired by athletes who once stood exactly where they are now.

Development opportunities continue to grow. For the third consecutive year, our Junior Men qualified for the European Clubs Cross Country Championships, and once again we brought a development squad with us. This year we expanded that squad significantly, giving more young athletes exposure to elite competition and motivating younger groups to aspire towards future selection.

At the same time, we continue to emphasise enjoyment, friendships and positive experiences. Trips such as our recent visit to St. Abbans for the younger age groups are hugely important in building team spirit and ensuring athletes enjoy their athletics journey.

Before I finish, there are a number of people I would like to thank.

Firstly, Paddy Tuite for his continued support of juvenile events and awards nights. Thank you also to the committee members who have consistently supported the juvenile section throughout the year — Mick Kearney, Johnny O’Leary, Paddy Marley, Ciara O’Regan, Sarah Bateson and Noel Guiden.

Special thanks also to Sarah McFeteridge and Kieran Lyons in their roles as Juvenile Vice Captains, and particularly to Sarah for her safeguarding work as DLP.

To our coaching team — thank you for your commitment, your patience and your energy. And to our newer coaches Martin, Willie, Trudy, Colm, Joanna and Lauren, thank you for the hugely positive impact you have already made.

I would also like to thank the many parents who volunteer at competitions and help on training nights. Your support makes an enormous difference.

And finally, thank you to every juvenile athlete in the club. Your enthusiasm, sportsmanship and enjoyment are what make this section so rewarding to be involved in. You bring pride not only to me as Juvenile Captain, but to your coaches, your families and to Clonliffe Harriers as a whole.

The Juvenile Section continues to go from strength to strength, and it is a privilege to be part of such a committed and inspiring club community. I look forward to another successful year ahead.

Thank you.

**Eugenia Bateson**  
**Juvenile Captain**  
**11.05.26**