

IUAA CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS  
UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER, JORDANSTOWN  
7<sup>TH</sup> March 2009

Held in conjunction with the ISAA cross country championships on a flat parkland course at the University of Ulster's Jordanstown campus the University Championships attracted over 130 athletes representing thirteen third level educational institutions. The amalgamation of the ISAA and IUAA championships facilitates the opportunity of the IUAA institutions to promote themselves to their target market in regard to the schools cross country athletes of the present era.

The two races were held at the end of a full day's programme of racing held on the grass pitches on the campus at Jordanstown. With race HQ, changing facilities and an extensive warm up area on the indoor 3G pitch all within 100 metres of the course that athletes were well catered for. The Officials from both organisations were supported by Volunteers from the University of Ulster and the course accommodated spectators as they supported their colleagues. St.Johns was on hand to deal with any first aid issues that arose on the day.

As has become the standard for this championship over the past few years DCU dominated both races.

In the women's race TCD athletes put in a spirited performance to ensure that at least one individual medal was won by a non DCU athlete. Their close packing also meant that the team race was more tightly contested than in recent years but the strong DCU athletes; with four in the first six prevailed. A very concerning aspect of the race was the finishing of only three complete teams. Although the Ulster girls were delighted to be awarded with third place after some determined running by their four athletes the fact that almost half of the athletes completing the course represented only two institutions is a further example of the demise of cross country running amongst this gender generally and age group more specifically and one which all relevant bodies need to address more successfully.

In the men's race DCU were even more dominant. Winning all three individual medals and with their closest rival; UL over 70 points behind in the team competition it was a very dominant performance which again highlights the ability of this institution to attract the majority of the countries elite domestic third level athletes. Ulster again managed to take advantage of the home setting and their men finished a creditable third in a team race which had eight institutions represented by full scoring teams at the finish.

The evening concluded with an excellent meal supplied by the Universities Students Union and entertainment provided by the Union Bar.

The University and the Student Athletic Club were delighted with the days activities and both would like to record their thanks to all those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes both in the build up and on the day to ensure such a successful staging of an event which highlighted the enormous potential of cross country running and the benefits of staging a joint championships for students at all levels within the Irish educational system.