

Bridie makes history with Ireland's first-ever Petanque gold

Contributed by Liam Horan
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A Sligo woman transplanted with a new liver and pancreas seven years ago created history in Bangkok this morning (THURSDAY) by winning Ireland's first-ever Gold medal in the sport of Petanque at the World Transplant Games.

Seven years ago Bridie Nicholson was chronically ill and had lived on daily insulin injections for almost 30 years. But the liver and pancreas gave her a new lease of life that she has grabbed with both hands.

This morning, amid emotional scenes at the 16th World Games, she performed brilliantly to capture the first Gold medal ever picked up by Ireland in the sport. Petanque is a bowling game played on a fine gravel surface.

"I can't believe it. I trained very hard for these Games on the purpose-built Petanque pitch at Mitchell Curley Park, in Sligo. I hoped I might get a bronze medal, but to win the Gold is just something else," said Bridie, an employee of Sligo Co. Library, who defeated opponents from Thailand, Finland and Australia en route to beating a player from the Phillipines in a tense final.

"During my recent fundraising efforts for the Games, I constantly promoted all aspects of organ donation, from encouraging people to discuss the possibly of donating organs with family members to carrying donor cards," she added.

"People were able to speak and see at first hand how a transplant changed my life and the difference it has made to the quality of my life."

Ireland have now won 17 medals at the Games which conclude on Saturday.

You can follow the athletes' progress on www.transplantteamireland.com. For an organ donor card free text the word 'DONOR' to 50050 or for more information log on to www.ika.ie.

Go to Photo Gallery to see pictures of Bridie's win.

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