

Irish athletes in scintillating track and field form

Contributed by Liam Horan
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Irish athletes have been in scintillating form today on day one of the Track & Field events at the 17th World Transplant Games, which have been taking place all week in Gold Coast, Australia.

Gold Coast is nine hours ahead of us here, and competition is almost finished there for the day – and there have been some great Irish displays to capture a total of nine medals so far.

Limerick athlete John Loftus – who actually celebrates his birthday today – won the 100m gold medal in the Over 60 category, two years after he was pipped on the line in the same final.

John won in a time of 15.22 seconds, which is .13 seconds better than the time he posted to win last year's European Transplant & Dialysis Games in Wurzburg, Germany.

Second in the same race Stepside, Co. Dublin, athlete Tom Metcalfe, taking part in his first Games.

Loftus also won a bronze medal in the Ball-throw, where the gold and silver medallists both broke the world record.

Angela Sherlock, Lucan, Co. Dublin, had an outstanding day too winning silver medals in both the Discus and the Shot Putt.

There were other great Irish performances too. The full summary is:

Gold medal:

John Loftus, Clarina, Co. Limerick – 100m

Silver medals:

Tony Gartland, Hackettstown, Co. Wicklow – 1500m;

Angela Sherlock, Lucan, Co. Dublin – Discus & Shot Putt;

Bronze medals:

Catherine Murphy, Aghabullogue, Co. Cork – 3km Walk;

Orla Hogan-Ryan, Summerhill, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary – 3km Walk;

James Nolan, Kicullen, Co. Kildare – 400m;

John Loftus – Ball-throw.

The 19-strong team, ranging in age from 22 to 64, have travelled Down Under with 13 new kidneys, five new livers and one new kidney-pancreas.

“Every day, the athletes remember their donors, and each performance, let alone victory, is a way of saying thank you to the donors who gave them the gift of life,” said team manager Colin White.

Some facts about the Team & the Games

- These are the 17th World Transplant Games
- Over 2,000 athletes from 50 countries will take part
- Next year, Ireland will host the European Transplant & Dialysis Games in Dublin from August 8th-15th.
- Athletes taking part will have received a transplant of one, or a combination, of the following: kidney, liver, heart, pancreas, lungs, bone marrow
- In 2007, in Bangkok, Ireland team finished tenth on the medals table from 49 competing countries. Ireland brought home a total of 39 medals