

Marathon's "Woman of the Year"

# The Making of a Champion

*Jim Dowling charts the rise to prominence of Mary Donoghue*



*Obliging the fans at this year's B.L.E. Championships.*

**She began quietly and by accident just running in the first Evening Press Women's Mini Marathon in June of '83. Her time of 43 mins. 23 secs. and her sixty sixth placing was very good considering that Hockey and Football were her two sports and she had only done a few miles training per week.**

But she was not moved or impressed. Some months later she ran again in the Puma 10km and can't even remember where she finished, and that was the last time Mary Donoghue ran a race of no

consequence because things moved fast after that. She ran the first of the ten race Guinness 10km series in Portmarnock on Sunday, December 11th, and placed tenth, thus eliciting an invitation from Anne Archbold to join Clonliffe Harriers where womens distance running had flowered since they first opened their doors to women in the sixties. From there had gone forth Claire Walsh, Anne O'Brien, Padraigin O'Dwyer (now Mrs. Joe Moore) and Katherine Davis. Soon Mary was tracing



*Guinness was good for Mary.*

their steps in the fields behind Santry first coached by Tom Coyle and then by her present coach Katherine Davis herself.

During 1984 she concentrated on the Guinness 10km series moving from regular placings in the top ten to regular placings in the top five until in August of '84, the Evening Press announced that Mary Donoghue was points leader in the series. In the meantime she had won the Eastern Region 3,000m. Emily Dowling and Eithne Kenny pushed her back to third in the Guinness series but her name was made as the "find" of the year. The end of the first Guinness 10km series was the end of Mary Donoghue as a mere road runner. She thereafter embraced the mainstream athletics tradition of her club and concentrated mainly on cross-country and track running.

Sport constantly reveals to us the amazing sight of fortune (or the caprice of the Gods if you will), constantly favouring certain sportspeople. Seldom has an athlete had such a smooth path to the top as Mary Donoghue. During the '84/'85 cross-country season she played second fiddle at Clonliffe to Anne Keenan, but still made the Irish team for the Home Countries Championship after one of those originally selected got injured. She was on hand when Ireland scored a famous victory though she did not make the scoring four. She annexed the Eastern Region Cross-Country Championship. Anne Keenan beat her in the Eastern Region 1,500m championship but she turned the tables in



*With Christine Kennedy and Yvonne Murray after this year's Evening Echo 10km - the best women's race of '86.*



Talking to R.T.E.'s George Hamilton.



Leading Anne Keenan, Olive Hartford and Teresa Kidd in Teresa Kidd in the '86 BLE 3,000m.

the National 3,000m championship where only Ailish Smyth prevented her from taking gold with Anne Keenan third. She was allowed compete in a few international races (in the South) and performed well in all of them to such effect that she gained two international caps. It looked just a matter of time before she progressed from the second rank to the first but her campaign from September of '85 to the end of this year's track season was nonetheless a startling affair.

She took a soft enough number in the Evening Echo 10km, but then easily defeated the best home based girls bar Roisin Smyth in Tullamore. Mary Friel who had peaked early then defeated her in the Dublin Cross-Country Championship. Mary resumed her winning streak in the Jack Hartigan Races, but only finished sixth in the Inter Counties and was left out of the Home Countries Squad. A brilliant fourth in Mallusk to Tooby, Murray and Smyth was followed by a not so hot sixth in Fermoy. However all this was race experience of the best kind and she

finished off the cross-country season in spectacular style. She defeated the full D.C.H. European Team in the Eastern Region Championship and then, in Clonliffes centenary year, wore the black and amber to a runaway win in the Nationals on the home ground at Santry. Any suggestion that this was a sub-standard win was dismissed at the World Championships where she was the only Irishwoman to make any impression in finishing sixty-first.

The track season, as is now her habit, began quietly. She finished tailed off behind Zola Budd over 3,000m at the Dale Farm Games. This was followed by fifth place and a personal best of 9 mins. 7 secs. behind Liz Lynch over the same distance in Cork. Then came the crowning glory, a runaway victory in the National 3,000m in Tullamore and third the following day in the 1,500m in a personal best time of 4 mins. 22 secs. Her last track appearance of ote was her splendid second in the Morton 3,000m behind Regina Joyce with Roisin Smyth third.

At the time of writing, her new

campaign has opened with another fine victory in Tullamore and a splendid second to Liz Lynch in Gateshead. Physically Mary Donoghue looks every inch a female footballer, but success has brought great maturity to everything she does as an athlete. She displays great tactical sense in her races, seems to relish a one to one battle and keeps her head when things go wrong. Her long programme of races is thoroughly planned with Katherine Davis and she remains limited in her objective.

At the moment her aim is "to make the World Cross-Country Championships", she says. She "thinks" she is doing about fifty five miles per week and "of course the training varies". She is reluctant to comment on any other matters and is genuinely surprised as to how well things have gone so soon. Already the name "Mary" in Irish athletics is becoming synonymous with Donoghue the way it was once so with Purcell, but that does not concern Mary too much. It's the next race that counts and her next should count for a lot.

**Jim Dowling**



The "Clonliffe Twins" Anne Keenan and Mary Donoghue contest the '85 Jack Hartigan races.



Shaking off Greta Hickey and Anne Hilliard to win the National Cross-Country Championships at Santry.