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# IRISH OPEN FENCING CHAMPIONSHIPS

For World's Top Fencers, The Road to Rio Leads Through Loughlinstown This Weekend

**Date: Saturday, 28 November, 2015**

**Gala Final: 17:00**

**Location: DLR Leisure Loughlinstown**

This weekend, the Irish Fencing Federation will host some of the world's top fencers as they compete for vital points towards qualification for the Olympic games in Rio. For the 9<sup>th</sup> year, the Irish Open Fencing Championships will be a Men's Epee World Cup event. Fencers from 21 nations, including Ireland's men's senior team, will compete in the event, which this year will take place at DLR Leisure Loughlinstown.

This influx of overseas fencing talent at senior level coincides with a recent renaissance of the sport in Ireland. This past weekend, Pembroke Fencing Club's Anna Lee (17) won bronze at the senior Welsh Open in Cardiff. Meanwhile, teams of young Irish fencers at cadet level (under-16) have dominated competitions in Belfast and most recently in Marburg, Germany, with the young team capturing 4 gold medals across a range of age categories.

"We are beginning to see the blossoming of young talent at a junior (under 20) and cadet (under 18) level, where young Irish fencers are in turn starting to make their mark abroad," explained Irish Fencing Federation (IFF) chairman, Philip Lee. "Attracting these top athletes from abroad to compete here in Ireland is part of our strategy of raising our fencers' level of competition. We are looking to encourage and develop our young athletes to one day compete at the highest international level, and I believe it's working."

This is part of a deliberate strategy from the sport's national governing body to nurture young Irish talent and build a sustainable base for the sport in Ireland. "There are a myriad of benefits to fencing from fitness and sporting standpoint - balance, power, anaerobic and aerobic fitness, but it also engages the grey-matter through tactical and mental awareness. All of that wrapped in the framework of respect and discipline coming from the great tradition in this Olympic sport," continued Mr. Lee; "And most of all, it's great fun."

So what chance do Ireland's young fencers have against the world's best? Geoffrey Corcoran, who at 21 has already competed at Junior World Championships, is not intimidated. "Anyone is beatable in this sport. On any given day, if you can get yourself into the right space physically and mentally you can take on anyone. That's a big part of why I love this sport."

Fencers from 21 nations including USA, Canada, Switzerland, Switzerland, Spain, Hungary, Israel, New Zealand, Poland and Turkmenistan - and of course a large contingent from Ireland - will compete this weekend. Several fencers ranked within the top 50 in the world are included in the field and will be amongst the favourites. Spectators are welcome to come along to watch the gala finals from 5pm.

For children looking to try a new and exciting sport, a new club is opening soon in DLR Loughlinstown, the venue for this week's competition, and those interested should contact coach Olga Velma at [info@pembrokefencing.com](mailto:info@pembrokefencing.com).

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Pictures to follow Saturday's competition.

For any further information: Owen McNamee +353 87 938 9605