

SLIABH BUI Rover Athletics Club hosted the Mr Oil Senior and Juvenile (uneven ages) Wexford cross-country championships on Sunday in Ferns.

Well, not quite in Ferns: the course was in the townland of Newtown, just off the long and winding Carnew Road. Word has it that local running celebrity Tommy McElwaine had a hand in designing the course.

And what a course, laid out, as it was, on a huge undulating stubble field. Some might say 'undulating' does not quite capture the energy-sapping ascents. And they would be right. Add to that a stiff breeze and, notwithstanding the firm and springy underfoot conditions, this was a tough and testing course.

The Senior men's 10,000m race was the highlight of the day. Slaney Olympic's Ger Forde wasted no time in stamping his authority all over the race with only Niall Sheil (St. Killian's) prepared to give chase. Forde went on to stretch his lead and had a 19-second lead on Sheil by the finish.

While the large audience was impressed with the leading two, it was the action a little further back that ensured no one was going home early. In cycling parlance, le peloton was where it was all happening with a large group sticking together, waiting for someone to break.

They all must have blinked at the same time as the host club's Tommy McElwaine pounced and broke away on one of the rises. The home crowd roared him on his way. And he responded with gusto, pulling away with each passing lap and looking good for the third spot on the podium. What a way to celebrate his 31st Senior championships!

Around the final bend and going hell for leather, with the finish sign up ahead. That's when young Enda Cloake burst past and broke his spirit. And yet everyone who witnessed this wonderful race knows that Tommy is now and always will be a true thoroughbred.

Tommy had the satisfaction of

finishing on the winning S.B.R. team. United Striders were second club home, while Slaney Olympic took bronze. Croghan, in fourth place, made a bit of history by entering a team in the race for the first time ever.

The ladies' 5,000m race provided no last-minute surprises although many will have been surprised by the order in which the first three finished. Okay, there were no surprises with the way Kilmore's Fiona Kehoe took off like a scalded cat and continued, all the way to the line, with a fine display of sustained pace front-running.

Behind her road specialist Jackie Carthy and D.M.P.'s Ciara Wilson looked, mid-race, like they might engage in battle royal for the minor placings. However, somewhere along the way, no doubt on one of those nasty hills, Jackie found that she could no longer move up through the gears. Ciara took off and ultimately opened a 20-second gap on her.

While Jackie may have had to settle for bronze in the individual race, she picked up a gold as a member of the winning Kilmore team, along with Fiona Kehoe, Elaine Cardiff (fourth) and Helena Doyle (sixth). **D.M.P led by Ann Sullivan placed 2nd.**

S.B.R. took 3rd just one point in front of Slaney Olympic despite the fact that Slaney's fourth and final scorer was a place ahead of the S.B.R. fourth scorer.

In the Juvenile races, the closest of the day was the non-championship girls' Under-9 race in which Ruby Gallagher (unattached) just beat Bree's Leah Bolger to the line. Saoirse Flanagan (D.M.P.) placed third.

Jayden Kenny of Bree won the boys' Under-9 race with Thomas Brennan (Enniscorethy) in second and Eli Jay Paige-Redmond (St. Paul's) in third.

A feature in the under-age races was the number of runaway winners.

In the boys' Under-11 1,500m, D.M.P.'s Kevin O'Mahony left it late to take the lead. However, once he moved he was out of sight. Katie

Doyle of Bree had an easy win in the girls' race.

Sinéad O'Reilly (Menapians) and Myles Hewlett (U.S.A.C.) ran away with their respective Under-13 races. Ditto for Claragh Keane (D.M.P.) and Joe Byrne (S.B.R.) in the Under-15 races. All looked very impressive and will be hoping to bring their good form to the Leinsters.

Rebecca Bawden (U.S.A.C.) and Conor Keane (D.M.P.) won the Under-17 races with ease.

Kate Daly (Kilmore) won the Under-19 race. She would have welcomed some competition! Aedan Rogers looked very strong in winning the boys' Under-19 race, with D.M.P.'s Liam Turner putting in a good run to take second.

**Senior ladies' 5,000m:** 1, Fiona Kehoe, Kilmore; 2, Ciara Wilson, D.M.P.; 3, Jackie Carthy, Kilmore; 4, Elaine Cardiff, Kilmore; 5, Ann Sullivan, D.M.P.; 6, Helena Doyle, Kilmore; 7, Ciara Bowe, S.B.R.; 8, Christine Stone, D.M.P.; 9, Mary Gorham, Slaney Olympic; 10, Fidelma Rossiter, Kilmore; 11, Kelly Long, Slaney Olympic; 12, Lillian Lawless, Slaney Olympic; 13, Belinda Kehoe, S.B.R.; 14, Helen English, Slaney Olympic; 15, Sinéad O'Brien, Kilmore; 16, Anne Marie Doyle, Slaney Olympic; 17, Christine Hill, S.B.R.; 18, Sarah Walsh, Slaney Olympic; 19, Marie Kinsella, Slaney Olympic; 20, Emma Morris, S.B.R.

**Teams:** 1, Kilmore (14); 2, D.M.P. (37); 3, S.B.R. (49); 4, Slaney Olympic (50).

**Senior men's 10,000m:** 1, Ger Forde, Slaney Olympic; 2, Niall Sheil, St. Killian's; 3, Enda Cloake, Slaney Olympic; 4, Tommy McElwaine, S.B.R.; 5, Alan O'Connor, U.S.A.C.; 6, Mark Poole, Croghan; 7, Denis Moynihan, S.B.R.; 8, Noel Kennedy, S.B.R.; 9, John McGrath, U.S.A.C.; 10, Brendan Lyng, U.S.A.C.; 11, Martin Askins, S.B.R.; 12, George Delaney, U.S.A.C.; 13, Paul Lynch, S.B.R.; 14, David Kehoe, Slaney Olympic; 15, Seán Murphy, U.S.A.C.; 16, Dave Leonard, S.B.R.; 17, Pat Foley, Croghan; 18, John Stone, D.M.P.; 19, Paul Gibbons, S.B.R.; 20, Paul Doran, U.S.A.C.

**Teams:** 1, S.B.R. (59); 2, U.S.A.C. (71); 3, Slaney Olympic (111); 4, Croghan (166).