

OLYMPIC GAMES - RIO 2016

Lynch: "It has been amazing journey"

By COLM KINSELLA

e-mail: ckinsella@limerickleader.ie
Twitter: @ckSportLeader

St Michael Rowing Club's Sinead Lynch has described the run to a sixth placed finish in the lightweight double sculls at the Olympic Games as 'one incredible journey'.

Thirty nine-year-old Lynch and partner Claire Lambe fell short of the medal places when finishing sixth in their final at the Lagoa Stadium last Friday.

The Netherlands' crew struck goal, ahead of Canada and China. Lynch and Lambe were the first Irish womens crew to qualify for an Olympic 'A' final.

Afterwards, Sinead Lynch said she was disappointed by the result, but is not ruling out the possibility of looking

to compete in another Olympics in four years time.

Mum of three Lynch said: "We are disappointed. It would have been nice to be up there. We felt we had a really good shout of getting into the medals, but as you can see it is such a tight pack.

"We didn't get as good a start as we wanted. But I think we rowed really well. It was one of our better races. We even had a bit of a sprint to the finish. It's only a tiny bit, but it was enough to keep us out of it.

"If I can talk this one (Claire Lambe) into coming back, I definitely will. I dunno. It has been amazing. People talk about the hard days out training and the cold and the wind. But to me they aren't the hard days. The hard days are when you can't row



St Michael Rowing Club's Sinead Lynch, right, and Claire Lambe, behind, pictured after their lightweight double sculls final at Rio 2016

or don't row as well as you should and Claire has always been with me on those days.

"It has just been one incredible journey. I don't think I can give it up."

Lynch said she hoped their achievement in getting to an Olympic final would pave the way for other Irish womens crews to follow suit.

"We showed that Irish women can make Olympic finals. It's wonderful, but what I am so sad about now is that it is the end of a fantastic journey.

"It has been absolutely brilliant, the last 18 months rowing with Claire. I can't be-

lieve that is over now. We got through so much, the highs and the lows together and it has been unbelievable."

Sinead Lynch also thanked everyone who had supported them on their path to an Olympic final.

"Thank you so much to everyone at home. I know there were huge gathering, including St Michael's Rowing Club. My daughters made it up there with their granny. The support we have been getting is just so incredible. That made it so amazing."

Meanwhile, Limerick swimmer Fiona Doyle is con-

sidering her future in the sport after missing out on qualifying for the semi-finals of both the 100m and 200m breaststroke events in Rio de Janeiro.

"It's a very big question," she admitted.

"My coach is trying to get me to stay on and do the World Short Course Championships in December. I've never been this fit, I've never been this strong, I haven't swam this fast - ever."

Doyle would have needed to beat her Irish record of 2:27.63 by over a second to make the semi-finals of the

200m breaststroke.

"I'm disappointed again, because I'm fitter, leaner, stronger than ever before, doing times in training and warm-up that I've never done before.

"Anyone who knows me will know I'm going to be bitterly disappointed, and unhappy, about this week. I came here hoping to do a lot more, knowing I could do a lot more. Maybe in a few weeks time I will look back on the Olympic Games and I'll be delighted with how I composed myself, but I'm never going to be happy with the performances."

UL student Barr eyes Olympic glory in 400m hurdles final

By COLM KINSELLA

e-mail: ckinsella@limerickleader.ie
Twitter: @ckSportLeader

UL student Thomas Barr has become the first Irish athlete for 84 years to reach the final of the 400m hurdles at an Olympic Games.

Barr became the first Irish athlete since Bob Tisdall in 1932 to make an Olympic final after a breath taking performance to win his 400m Hurdles semi-final in a new national record of 48.39 seconds.

The 24-year-old was in fourth place coming into the home straight, but produced a storming finish to win his semi and go into the final as the third fastest qualifier.

The men's 400m hurdles final takes place this, Thursday, August 18, at 4pm Irish time.

After his semi-final suc-

cess, Barr Tweeted: "Hope that was worth staying up, I can't believe it!"

"Thank you all for the support I'm overwhelmed and smiling ear to ear. Roll on Thursday!"

Barr also told journalists: "He told reporters: "Anything is possible now. I want to thank my coach Hayley Harrison and Emma Gallivan (Athletics Ireland physio) for all the physio.

"I'll rest up now and get ready for the final."

"I'm delighted. I went in really relaxed. I know I've a really good finish. I'm not being cocky. I was smiling coming over that last hurdle."

UL MSc Sports Performance student Barr was also Ireland's Athlete of the Year in 2015. He won gold in the World University Games and narrowly missed out on a place in the final of the World Champions in Beijing.

Barr is drawn in lane four in Thursday's final.

"Coming from where I've come from, to get into an Olympic final... anyone will tell you, an Olympics is different to the Worlds.

"It comes with a lot more pressure and a lot more focus. At the Olympic Games, everyone always ups their game.

"I didn't think I would be standing here, coming with the preparation that I had, waiting to go into an Olympic final.

"That really is astonishing, and to come home with a new national record as well. To be honest, when I crossed the finishing line first, I just didn't care what the time was.

"But then when I saw that come up on the screen, I didn't know what to do, I was rubbing my head and looking all around the stadium!"



UL student Thomas Barr who has qualified for the 400m hurdles final at the Olympic Games