

By SEAN MURPHY

EVER since the first modern Olympic Games at Athens in 1896, to 1932 when Dr Pat O'Callaghan won his second gala medal at the Los Angeles Olympic Games, Irish athletes had adorned the weight throwing stages.

Records compiled by Spaldings Official Athletic Manual tells of the world records made, and the championship and Olympic medals won by the giants from the Emerald Isle.

Amazingly the dominant throwers in this group came from South/East Limerick, with Pallasgreen the focal point in an area of 25 miles radius—John Flanagan from Ballinvreena, Paddy Ryan from Pallasgreen, his neighbour—Willie Reale, JC Daly, Dromin, John O'Grady, Caherconlish, Denis Carey, Kilfinane and Mick O'Brien, Bulgaden.

Throw in Matt McGrath, Nenagh, Martin Sheridan, Mayo, JS Mitchel, Emly and Clareman Pat McDonald, and you have some idea of the manly power of these Irish men.

Next Saturday will be a historic day for the village of Pallasgreen on the main Limerick-Tipperary road, when the memory of one of their own—Paddy Ryan who won a gold medal and a silver insignia at the 1920 Olympic Games, will be remembered with the unveiling of a full sized memorial statue (sculptured by Seamus Connolly, Kilbaha) by Ronnie Delaney, the last Irish athlete, to win gold with his victory in the 1500 metres at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956.

Present for the ceremony will be Paddy Ryan's five daughters - Mrs Josephine Kilban, New York, USA, Mrs Bernie O'Dwyer, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, Mrs Mary Weatherhead, Pallasgreen, Co. Limerick, Mrs Catherine O'Grady, Killeely, Co. Limerick, Mrs Chrissie O'Donovan London, England.

Paddy Ryan was born at Bunavie, Pallasgreen on the 20th of January 1883, one of five boys that included Con, Jack, Mick and Ned, and three girls - Bridget, Ellen and Mary to his parents - Patrick Ryan and Bridget nee Hayes.

Paddy was naturally a strong man with powerful hips and shoulders and stood at six feet four inches and tipped the scales at 19 stone.



Paddy Ryan of Pallasgreen in action in the Olympic Games in Antwerp in 1920 when he won the Gold medal in the 16lbs hammer and the silver medal in the 56 lb weight

His earliest association with the hammer goes back to 1897 when he met Tom Kiely of Ballyneale, the greatest all-round athlete of his time, this was the moment that changed the sporting world.

In 1903, Paddy Ryan threw the hammer 136 feet, to inflict defeat on Tom Kiely for the first time in a championship contest and went on to win the first of nine All-Ireland medals under GAA rules.

His brother Con became a sporting hero in 1901, when he broke world record for the shot putt, and went on to win three All-Ireland medals.

At the age of 28, Paddy Ryan emigrated to New York in 1910, and immediately had been signed on as a member of the Irish-American club.

In 1911, he won the New York championship with a throw of 175 feet four inches. In 1912, in addition to John Flanagan and Matt McGrath he became the third man to beat the 180 foot mark with a throw of 182 feet 11 inches.

The longest standing record in athletics history was unfolded in the Firemen's Athletic Games in 1913 at Long Island when on February 6, Paddy Ryan threw a gigantic world best of 189 feet six inches—a record that stood until 1938, and remained unsurpassed in

the United States until 1956.

Paddy Ryan became undisputed king of hammer throwing. He won eight American hammer titles, and served with the United States expeditionary force in France in 1917.

Competing for the US, Paddy Ryan took part in the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp, Belgium. It was the fifth modern Olympics, and it proved very significant. For the first time the Olympic flag was unfurled, and the Olympic Oath was introduced.

After qualifying for the finals, conditions were very wet and totally unsuitable for hammer throwing, yet, Paddy Ryan threw 173 feet four inches, and as no other competitor succeeded in passing, 180 feet, he was declared 1920 Olympic champion, with almost 13 feet to spare over the runner-up Carl Lindh of Sweden.

A few days later Paddy Ryan won the silver medal when finishing second to Pat McDonald in the 564 event and at 37, became the oldest man to win an Olympic hammer title.

He returned to an adoring public in America, and a year later at 38 won his last American title with a throw of 170 feet seven inches.

Having achieved his goal in America, he

returned home to Pallasgreen and settled down with his wife Johanna Mary (nee King) and family on the farm at Moymore, Old Pallas.

Paddy Ryan was more than an Olympic champion and a great athlete. He had a rich warm personality, was a glorious storyteller, and an extremely lovable and homely character.

He had a tremendous zest for living, and missed the excitement when his name was known all over the world. He told his good friend Dave Guiney "sure I miss every day of them, they were great days, and I enjoyed them thoroughly, and I am sorry I can't live my life all over again".

I feel he concurred with John Flanagan who once said, "I have one regret in my Olympic career in sports, I never won an Olympic gold medal for my homeland - Ireland".

Paddy Ryan died on February 13, 1964 at the age of 82, and, his final resting place is Old Pallas cemetery under the shadow of famed Knockgrean Hill.

The Pallasgreen unveiling ceremony will commence at 3 o'clock and all are welcome.

When he was at his peak, this poetic tribute by Rody Kirwan, Kilmacthomas was composed:

Paddy Ryan

In historic County Limerick around eighteen-eighty-three,

A bouncing boy was born and neighbours came to see,

For an infant prodigy was he - his size rarely seen,

He was the future Hammer Champion - Paddy Ryan of Pallasgreen.

Like a duck to water, he took weights in his boyhood days and youth,

That his training was unorthodox to say the barest truth,

What he lacked in proper coaching, he made up in strength 'tis clear,

For he was an Irish Champion before he reached his eighteenth year.

By now he had his fine physique as one could wish to see,

It was plain that he was destined to make athletic history.

And for the next few years or so, he won championships galore,

So, with no more friends to conquer, he left his native shore.

In nineteen-thirteen at Celtic Park, he made a world's record throw,

For three and twenty years it stood, the athletic records show,

Twas a Yankee record til '53 - so now it appears,

Defying the test by America's best for exactly forty years.

For years he was invincible at the different types of weight,

He won National and other titles throughout the United States,

Like Matt McGrath, John Flanagan and other other Irish names,

He won the hammer championship at the Antwerp Olympic Games.

He won an Irish Championship and had a training mate,

That gallant fighter, Tunney, the next world heavyweight,

It was the year nineteen-nineteen when quartered in Boulogne,

Finally - American Championships in twenty and twenty-one.

He was a super hammer man; of that there is no doubt,

One only had to see the way he threw the weight about,

He is credited - unofficially - with throws in Celtic Park.

That would equal, indeed, if not exceed the present world mark.

Thank God he's back in Ireland - his country and his home,

After all those hectic years and never more to roam,

May he enjoy prosperity, tranquillity and rest,

Until the time when Mother Earth will nurse him to her breast.

By Rody Kirwan, brother of Percy Kirwan, Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford

had their first score rom Louise Higgins. The Kingdom followed shortly with two points in quick succession before corner forward Sandra O'Connor goaled for Limerick to put them in front. Kerry equalised and the score stood at 1-1 to 0-4 at half time.

Kerry were on top for

game if they want to stay in contention for a place in the Munster Final on 15th August.

Team: Dyan Carroli (Old Mill), Deirdre Lyons (Old Mill), Alva Neary (Old Mill), Yvette Moynihan (Mungret/St Pauls), Rose Giltenane (Mungret/St Pauls), Meadhbh Nash (Athea).

The primary schools girls came up against a very strong Kerry outfit. Limerick trailed at half time 4-5 to 0-4. However, the second half proved to be all one-way traffic, with Kerry 6-14 to 1-7 deserving winners. Panel: Ciara Nolan (Mungret/St Pauls), Elaine Noonan

Ciara O'Grady (Gerald Griffins), Danielle Brouder (Monagea), Rachel Carmody (Monagea), Aoife Leahy (Drom/Broadford), Fiona Woulfe (Old Mill), Katy Fogarty (St Ailbes), Bernadette Bustin (Monagea), Ezra Neary (Old Mill).



Ladies and Gent from the Fourteen to One syndicate, [all nurses at St Josephs Hospital Limerick.] were in great form when their dog Knocktoo Jack came second in the final of the Tote Retention 30.00 Sweep.



Mr Gus Ryan presents the trophy to Jack O'Connell whose dog Glenbeg Lizzy, won the Tote Retention 29/30 final at Limerick. Also in picture, Kitty Garry and Bernadette O'Connell.



Gus Ryan, General Manager, Limerick Track, presents the Paddy Power trophy to Nuala O'Keefe, owner, Kefcar Denny, winner of the Paddy Power

Desmond League items

THURSDAY, July 22: Clubs who register for the coming season will pay half their fees and will receive player registration forms.

Clubs must show proof of current public liability insurance. The venue is Rathkeale House Hotel and the starting time is 8pm.

Monday, July 26: Youth delegate meeting at the Rathkeale House Hotel at 8pm.

All clubs who intend to enter a youths team must be present at this meeting.

The youths delegate meeting will be followed by a management committee meeting.

Monday, August 9: Junior delegate meeting commencing at 8pm in the Rathkeale House Hotel. Each club is entitled to send two