

# Limerick Olympian Niall O'Shaughnessy dies at 59



The late Niall O'Shaughnessy competing for Arkansas University.

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LIMERICK athlete Niall O'Shaughnessy who died last week at the age of 59 was one Ireland's top middle distance runners and held the European record for the indoor mile.

A native of Adare, at 20 years of age he was the youngest member of the Irish athletics team at the 1976 Montreal Olympics where he competed in the 800m and 1500m events. The previous year, he set the Irish record for 800m with a time of 1:46.79 and in 1977, he set a European Indoor mile record with a time of 3:55.4 which was the second fastest time ever for the event.

Representing St. Munchin's College, he finished second in the 1973 Irish Schools 800m but went on to win the 800m at the Catholic Student Games (FISEC) in France later that year.

He won a sports scholarship to the University of Arkansas where, under the tutelage of Mayo native John McDonnell, he became the first ever Southwest Conference Cross Country champion. He was twice runner-up in the US Colleges (NCAA) indoor mile and third in the outdoor

1500m.

He established a number of records during his cross country and track and field career at Arkansas including becoming the first All-American title winner in every academic year he competed. He was a six-time All-American winner across three sports in five different events and his Arkansas indoor school record has not been beaten.

He graduated in 1978 with a degree in civil engineering and completed a Master's in environmental engineering in 1980. He qualified for the 1980 Olympics with a time of 3:39 for the 1500m.

As he was affected by the US boycott of the Moscow games because of his residency and employment in the US, he gave up his position on the team and retired from athletics later that summer at 24 years of age.

Three years ago, he was the first Limerick athlete to have a running trail named after him when the 3km Niall O'Shaughnessy run was officially opened in Adare.

He is survived by his wife Marcia and sons Stephen and Thomas.