

Longford Sports Partnership



#WomenInSportTIRE



Sports Profile

#LongfordSportsWomen



Fiona Gettings

Women in Sport Longford

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As part of Women in Sport Week we have started our series on LONGFORD SPORTS WOMEN which will continue for March. Today we talk to Fiona Gettings (Blessington).

Early Sports background

Fiona is originally from Bunlahy, Granard, Co Longford and first got involvement in sport when she started playing football with Bunlahy National School boys' team (back then) at 8 years of age. Fiona remembers sitting on the bench with no jersey. She didn't feature in any competitive games that year but can remember being determined to train and become better so that she could make her place on the team the following year. Both of her older brothers played football so naturally she says she tagged along with them cycling to and from training and hoping there was enough room for her in the back of her neighbour's car when she'd be going to matches! Fiona says she was by no means a gifted player but was a determined girl who loved to train and equally loved to compete. Fiona started her club football with Ballymore GFC playing on the boys U12, U14, U16 teams and Ballymore Ladies football team from under 12 to the present day.

Fiona attended Cnoc Mhuire, Secondary School, Granard and played on the junior and senior football teams and the cadet and senior basketball teams during her secondary school years. Fiona played her first county Junior game in 1994 against Fermanagh at the age of 13 years and she says that was the start of her love for county football. Three years later she won the All-Ireland Junior Championship and Fiona received a sports scholarship from University of Ulster, Jordanstown and played on their senior ladies' football team from 2000-2002 while she studied for her Physiotherapy Degree.

Fiona competed in Community Games as a child qualifying for Ballymahon once or twice and Mosney on one occasion. Again, she says she was a slow burner and it really wasn't until after she had her child that she really began to enjoy running and invest more time in it. She joined Longford Athletics Club last year and is look forward to new opportunities to compete perhaps in Master events and Cross-Country competitions.

Who influenced you?

Fiona credits many influential people that helped her during her sporting days. Her parent's and brothers (in particular her brother David who pestered her to practice football with him every evening before the uniform was taken off!). Her husband Micheal who has always encouraged her to keep playing football/running and who is currently part of her club management team. She says she is very grateful to the many trainers I have trained under for their time and selfless commitment to training and managing teams. Her fellow team members in particular her current Ballymore club team (captained by Marie Martin) and all the girls off the 1997 All Ireland Junior winning team (captained by Dara Gill McGann). Special mention to Michelle Hannify-Mulvey and Mary Kiernan who she has huge admiration for as leading, life-long sports woman.

Did you stay involved or come back to sport later?

After Fiona finished college, Fiona says she took a 10-year hiatus from football. Looking back, I think I was a bit burned out. Fiona feels the county team had experienced a lot of earlier success but struggled to compete with the big guns at senior level. A few of the older girls retired and she wasn't enjoying it anymore. Fiona returned to playing around 2011 and took a second hiatus to have her first child in 2011/12, her second child in 2015 and finally her third child in 2018! So had plenty of comebacks!

From a running perspective Fiona really only began taking part in road races with any consistency from 2012/2013. After having her kids, she found running more family friendly in that she could fit it in whenever she had a few spare minutes rather than having to commit to being at football training at a certain time a few times a week.

Now Fiona continues to play with Ballymore Ladies football team. They had a successful year last year winning the Longford Intermediate Football Championship and qualifying for the Leinster Junior Club Championship final. The team is managed by Longford Slashers Club man Sean Meenaghan and Fiona's husband Micheal Gettings. Together Fiona say's they have built a formidable team in trying times, the club team is a joy to play with. They have a bunch of incredibly committed girls who have by now each completed hundreds of home workout's and runs on their road to the Leinster Club final (date to be confirmed subject to Covid guidelines)

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'From a running perspective I completed my first marathon during the summer. Having never ran one before I wasn't sure what to expect but I was delighted to complete it in 2 hours 58 minutes (fast enough never to have to run another one!!!). Having had no races this year I have focused on trying to better my times setting personal bests in the mile (5.20), 5km (18.14), 10km (38.52) and half marathon (1hr24 mins).'

Tells us a bit about a typical day/week in sport?

I love to train so it's a case of when and where I can fit it in with family and work commitments. My boot has always a pair of leggings and runners in it. During lockdown (when there is no organised team/group training) I try to stick to a routine of Tuesday after work- a speed session (something like kilometer/mile repeats, 8km-10km tempo, or 1 min hard, 1 min easy), Wednesday lunchtime 1 hour strength and conditioning, Thursday 10 mile long run easy pace, Saturday lunchtime strength and conditioning session x 1 hour and Sunday is usually another 10km tempo run. Monday and Fridays are usually recovery days.



What motivates you?

Fiona says, I'm one of those that loves to train- it's my glass of wine. I love the idea that if you train correctly you can improve from a physiological viewpoint. I love the excitement of a build up to a game or a race and the buzz of competing to the best of your ability.

What has sport given you?

Sport and football in particular have given me a network of wonderful, lifelong friends. It has given me confidence and ultimately it is a huge mood booster on a daily basis. Something we are all grateful for at the present time.

What's your proudest moments in sport?

I have been very fortunate to have experienced many proud team and personal moments during my sporting days. Winning an All-Ireland Junior Championship with Longford in 1997 and going on to receive 3 All Star Awards 1997, 1999 and 2000 and replacement All-Star awards in 1996 and 1998 rank amongst my proudest moments in sport. Playing on numerous provincial and All-Star teams and having the opportunity to line out beside some of the best players in the country were amazing experiences. Being part of a 5-time All-Ireland winning Cnoc Mhuire Secondary School football team and most recently qualifying for the Leinster Club final with Ballymore Ladies. And completing a sub 3-hour debut marathon (On her own the during the first lockdown)

Would you say things have got better for Women in Sport over the years?

When I started to play football there were no girls team so I would have played with the boy's teams. I never minded playing football with the boys (once they got over the fact that I was a girl!) and I always maintained it made me a better player. It certainly has improved since then with girls only teams/competitions at national school level and the emergence of under 10 age group girls only blitz'.

Gaelic for mothers and others has been hugely popular pre-Covid and I'm sure it will continue to thrive when things get up and running again

As a mother I would love to see more active family events to encourage the youngest to the oldest in families to team up together and take part in perhaps completion of a relay 10km or family fun team challenges. Local active pre-teen/teen clubs- eg. Girls on the run etc. to encourage this age group to remain active.

The emergence of sports science has greatly influenced how club/county footballers and athletes in general approach their sport- from the inclusion of preseason training, strength and conditioning programmes to the emphasis on nutrition and recovery. This focus on performance has 'professionalised' our approach to amateur sport in a good way.

What advice would you give other women/girls?

For those taking up sport/activity for the first time find some activity you enjoy and weave it into your day.

For example, have a pair of your runners and umbrella in the car and walk for the second half of your lunch break. You'll be glad you did!

Get a dog- they 'll appreciate the walk you took them on! For school going girls- walk and talk during your lunch break. Get the steps in!

