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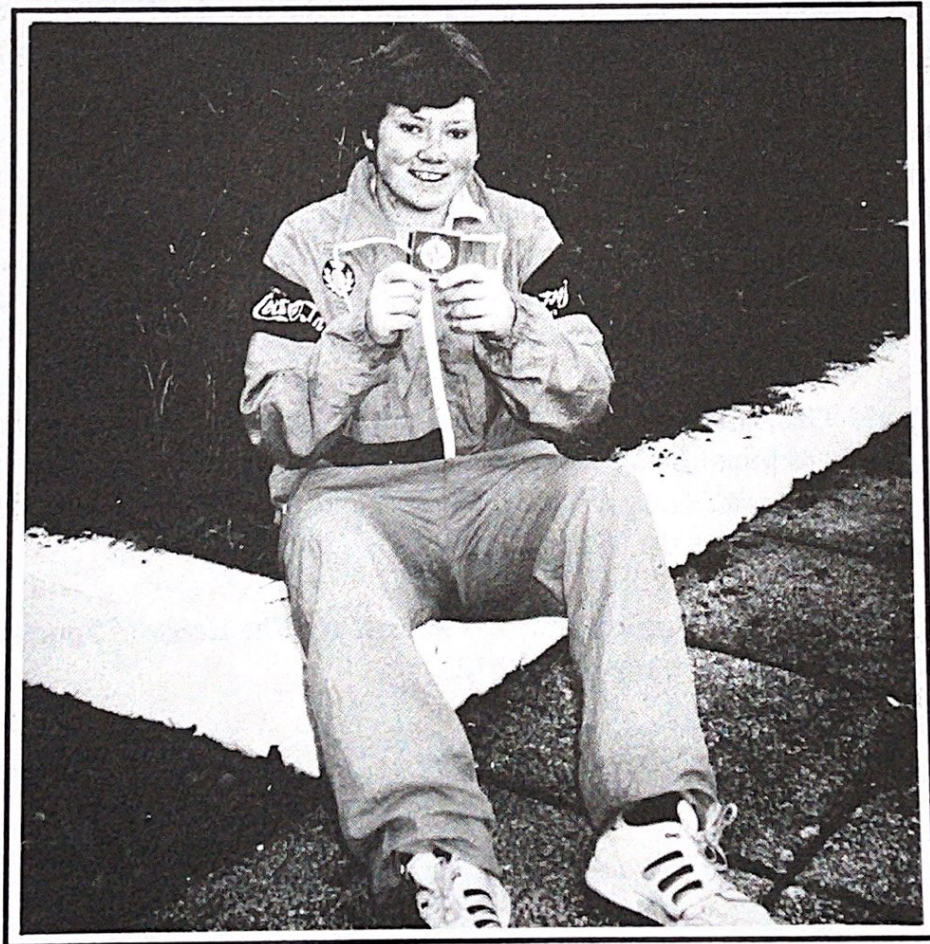
“It was Brilliant!”

John was at the European Games

John Lysaght, who attends the St. John of God Centre at Islandbridge, a keen swimmer and striker with the school soccer team, won a bronze medal at the Special Olympics in Glasgow in July 1990.

MARIAN MURPHY is a swimming instructor and pool manager at the St. John of God Centre, Island bridge, Dublin. She was also Sports Director of the Irish team in the 1990 Special Olympics.

The European Special Olympics were held in Glasgow in July 1990. A team of 200 athletes travelled from Ireland to participate in nine sporting events - athletics, swimming, gymnastics, soccer, bowling, basketball, table tennis, equestrian and carpet bowls. Each athlete qualified through regional competitions and the National Games the previous year.



The organisation is 12 years in existence in Ireland, and a comprehensive training programme exists in 120 centres country wide. It provides opportunities for athletes to compete in regional competitions, where many specialise in a particular sport. Some are "all rounders" until they reach the higher levels of competition, then they have to make a choice as to what sport they wish to pursue.

John Lysaght, who attends the St. John of God Centre at Islandbridge, a keen swimmer and striker with the school soccer team, qualified for the European Games in athletics by winning a gold medal at the National Games.

"Scotland was brilliant", says John, at the mention of the bronze medal which he won in Scotland. He added "I was delighted I won the medal but I wouldn't have minded at all if I didn't win, it was great fun anyway".

As in the case of many of the athletes, some of John's family travelled to Scotland to support him and participate in the many and varied social events which were part of these International Games.

Athletes and coaches might be forgiven for viewing the Opening Ceremony as the highlight of the Games, when Packie Bonner led the Irish team into the Stadium.

All the members of the team had trained individually under the supervision of their respective teachers/coaches. The team then got together over a weekend every month, under the supervision of the National Coach. These long months of training and hard work were reflected in the superb performances of all the Irish athletes. "We met people from everywhere at the discos and funfair", adds John, giving a hint that there were plenty of opportunities for celebrations!

The "World" Games are held every four years and Ireland have already selected their team to travel to Minneapolis - St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A. next July, so look out America, here we come! Here at home, there is an extensive programme planned for next year culminating in the National Games.

The Special Olympics National office is located at : The House of Sport, Land Mile Road, Dublin 12. Phone (01) 501633