

**IRELAND IN TOP THREE MEDALS TABLE AT EUROPEAN TRANSPLANT GAMES
WITH SPECIAL AWARD FOR BEST FEMALE ATHLETE**

An air of celebration and pride swept through Dublin Airport's arrivals hall on Saturday night when Transplant Team Ireland arrived home with 50 medals. The brave athletes breezed through Terminal 2 adorned with their impressive haul from the 7th European Transplant & Dialysis Games in Zagreb, Croatia.

Members of the 26-strong team were greeted with a rapturous welcome by family, friends and supporters celebrating their achievement in winning 14 Gold, 15 Silver and 21 Bronze. This scoop placed Ireland in 3rd place on the medals table after France and Slovenia out of 28 participating countries.

Further cause for celebration was that newcomer to the team Alison Honner was announced 'Best Female Athlete on Dialysis' at the Games' Gala Dinner closing ceremony. The 26 year-old from Pike-of-Rushall, Portlaoise demonstrated great spirit and determination at the Games securing a Silver for Bowling and Bronze in Badminton as well as a category Gold medal in a Bowling doubles event along with Athenry woman, Linda Waters.

One of the highlights of the homecoming for the team was to see Transplant Surgeon David Hickey in the welcoming party and it was particularly heartening for a number of the athletes who had their kidney transplants conducted by the former 1970s Dublin Football All-Star. Mr Hickey described the athletes as 'true Corinthians and more'.

Speaking about her complete surprise in being awarded 'Best Female Athlete on Dialysis' at the Games, Alison Honner, said, "I'm overwhelmed. It's a privilege to win such an award and to come home with the award and medals is fantastic. Not only am I thrilled, I'm over the moon".

Commenting about the Games experience, Team Manager Colin White said, "we received a warm welcome in Croatia with temperatures regularly reaching over 40 degrees throughout the week. Notwithstanding, the Irish team kept its cool to pull off some great performances. The team was family to us all with great support at every venue. The Games experience goes beyond simple sports competitions. The bond between competitors from all countries was palpable and the united desire to express appreciation to organ donors and their families was humbling. Transplant and dialysis sports is growing consistently in Ireland and we look forward to many more people joining our team in time for the 2013 World Transplant Games in Durban, South Africa."

The unique Games which promote organ donation and celebrate life through sport brought together 300 athletes from 28 European countries.

The biennial event was hailed as an outstanding success both on and off the sporting field as all those taking part were united in sharing a common and poignant bond. They all had suffered organ failure and many were embracing a second chance at life, while honouring their organ donors through sport.

The Games were held from August 18th to 25th and involved athletes who received organ transplants including heart, lung, liver, kidney and pancreas as well as people on dialysis.

The Irish team of athletes includes 17 men and 9 women, ranging in age from 18 to 74, from all over Ireland. The team includes 6 people who are receiving dialysis treatment as well as transplant recipients including 2 kidney and pancreas combined, 3 liver transplant recipients, and 15 kidney transplant recipients.

Athletes competed in badminton, tennis, cycling, darts, golf, petanque, swimming, table tennis, ten-pin bowling, volleyball, mini-marathon and track and field events.

Transplant Team Ireland Games Manager Colin White said, "just as our Olympians on their return from London 2012 wished us good luck and success, we would also like to pass on our best wishes to our Paralympics Team at the Games which commence later this week."

Members of Transplant Team Ireland are as follows:-

Antrim: John McAleer, Newtownabbey (*oldest team member*)

Cork: Mike Keohane, Roscarbery; Charlie Ryan, Cobh; Catherine Murphy, Aghabullogue; and Anne Lankester, Roscarbery

Clare: Eoghan O'Neill, Newmarket-on-Fergus (now living in Limerick)

Donegal: Noel McGeever, Letterkenny

Galway: Maura O'Sullivan, Kilcolgan; and Linda Waters, Athenry.

Kildare: James Nolan, The Curragh.

Laois: Alison Honner, Portlaoise; Niall McAuliffe, Abbeyleix; and Robbie Lyons (*youngest team member*), the Swan, via Athy.

Limerick: John Loftus, Clarina.

Offaly: Declan Guing, Edenderry

Roscommon: Monica Finn, Roscommon town.
and Shane Lafferty, Monksland, Athlone.

Sligo: Bridie Nicholson, Sligo town and Megan Fahy from Toonaphubble.

Tipperary: Sheila Gregan, Nenagh.

Dublin: Leonard Ryan, Tallaght, D.24; James Reynolds, Tallaght, D.24,
Paul Prendergast, Santry Avenue, D.9; Owen Kelleher, Lucan; Peter Heffernan, Skerries
and **Team Captain**, Harry Ward, Baldoyle, D.13;

Team Medical Director Yvonne Ryan

Team Physiotherapist Clare Hogan

Team Manager Colin White

A team blog was set up where supporters could follow the Irish Team's progress
www.transplantteamireland.wordpress.com

The 8th European Transplant & Dialysis Games will be held in Krakow, Poland in 2014.

The Irish Kidney Association is responsible for organising the Irish Team's involvement at Transplant & Dialysis Games. It receives no government funding and many of the athletes fundraise to cover their costs in taking part.

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It is now possible to download an organ donor card on smartphones by searching for 'Organ Donor ECard' at the iPhone store or Android market place.

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