

Northsiders Play Their Part in Tae Kwon-Do World Championships

The Republic of Ireland Tae Kwon-Do team have brought home six gold medals from the 9th ITF World Championships which were held recently in Malaysia. And a number of Northsiders played a prominent role in this tremendous achievement.

Over 70 countries were represented in the four day event which was organised by the International Tae Kwon-do Federation and the Malaysian Government at a cost of \$2 million US dollars. Our champs may well have received little or no recognition back home but they were overnight media stars in Malaysia featuring in newspapers and watched on television by 18 million viewers.

Ireland took the world title in the 'Power Breaking' event which involves the smashing of four to five inches of wooden boards using various punches and

kicks. The six man team regained the title for Ireland which it first won in Montreal, Canada in 1990. This year's event saw Malaysia win the male team 'Patterns' and Germany take the gold in the 'Sparring' event. The favourites, North Korea, were top of the medals table.

Doing the Northside proud was team member Robert Howard from Santry. And it was double honours for the Howard family as his dad Robert Snr (6th Degree) received an instructor's award from General Choi, founder of Tae Kwon-Do, for his dedication to the mar-

tial art throughout the years. Mr Howard is the President of the Republic of Ireland Tae Kwon-Do Association (RITA).

The other team members were John Jacob (captain), Floyd Keane, Andrew Birtistle, David Cooney and Ambrose Murphy.

The team's coach was former world champion, Mr Liam Dandy (6th Degree), who is an instructor at the Donnycarney Tae Kwon-Do School.

All involved enjoyed the trip of a lifetime. Apart from the Championships, they attended two state bar-

quets attended by the Prince of Terengganu and the Prime Minister of Malaysia respectively.

RITA is critical of the apparent apathy from the Irish media at their success. National Secretary Valerie Keane said that the team hoped to be greeted with some recognition for their tremendous efforts abroad on their return home.

"Needless to say, once again there was no reward, publicity or recognition," she said. "It's sad to say that when the Irish go abroad to represent their country, they get more recognition and encouragement from the country they visit and other visiting countries than they get from their own native land."

Tae Kwon-Do is the Korean art of self-defence and was introduced into Ireland in 1970. The Irish win in Malaysia is all the more significant when you take into account the fact that RITA only has 800 members nationwide.

Irish on gold trail in Malaysia

HELSINKI wasn't the only place where Irish hearts swelled with pride as the National Anthem was played and the tricolour raised.

In Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, the Irish for the very first time took a team gold at the World Tae Kwon-Do (ITF) Championships.

International championships are divided into three sections — sparring, patterns and power or destruction — and it was in this last section that the Irish team of Andrew Birtistle, John Jacob, Robert Howard junior, David Cooney, Floyd Keane and Ambrose Murphy were triumphant.

They won six individual gold medals, enough to put them ahead of Canada with the former Soviet states of Tajikistan and Ukraine tying for third.

Over 70 countries were competing and inevitably, the Koreans, originators of the art, were overall champions in both team and individual categories. The Czech Republic, Germany, Argentina, Poland, Greece and the USA were also among the medals.

The event was sponsored by Malaysia to the tune of \$2.5m and was watched by an estimated 18 million local enthusiasts in Asia for each of its four days. Every team manager received a unique plaque, while Robert Howard, president of the RITA, was presented with a special instructors award by General Choi, founder of tae kwon-do some 50 years ago.

