

A Great Athlete

Passing of Mr Mick O'Neill

Still they are passing—the old champions of the Gael! Last week it was T. D. Shanahan; hardly month ago Wm Gleeson; and now Mick O'Neill of Kilbready, Adare, one of the greatest runners the world has known.

In an interview some years ago the celebrated athlete told his own story as follows:—

I forget most of my races, never bothered after stopping. However, I will give you an idea of some of them. I ran in all four hundred and fifteen amateur races and just a dozen professional. I won most of the amateurs from scratch and all the professionals. I won the three mile championship of the world from Watkins at Rochdale on September 18th, 1893, after which I retired.

The most interesting race I ever ran was against Dr Monroe at the international contest at Hallebridge in 1898. The betting was twenty to one against me, and I beat him by ninety yards. My time was 30 mins 18 2/3 secs, and the distance four miles. I was carried shoulder high around the grounds and there were hats lost that day that never found their owners again.

I covered the mile in 4 mins 20 secs, twice and never got a record for it. My only Irish record was in the Five Mile Flat, which I got over in 27 mins 19 4/5 secs, at the G. A. A. Championships of 1894. I hold the championship from One Mile to Five Miles for four years, winning the G. A. A. mile in 1896 (4 mins 52 1/5 secs), the Five Miles of 1898, already mentioned, and the Four Miles of the I. A. A. in 1897 (22 mins 25 secs), and in the following year (20 mins 25 1/5 secs).

I once rode a horse race and won it, and then came off the horse and stripped and raced out for the 440 yards and won that also. This was at a "Fupper" meeting in my youthful days. Of course I hit off in my athletic career at Adare Sports in 1892, and fared very well, being placed second in the 440, 880 and mile races. Not until the following year did I again compete, when at the same venue I won the half and one mile flat races. That encouraged me to seek laurels further afield, and that same year I won the mile flat championship of Munster at the Limerick Sports, and in Dublin was second for the 4 mile I. A. A. Championship. In 1895 at Tipperary I succeeded in retaining my Munster title, and for four years after I won many further Southern championships, ranging from half to five miles.

The G. A. A. gave me a medal in 1896, and that was one of the causes of my turning professional. I visited Mullin at Limerick, Tynes, Dublin and Belfast in one tour, and four mile victories. I beat O'Connell in the four miles at Limerick, and also scored a similar victory over Jones and Tynes. At Dublin under Lyons and Hamilton I beat Joe Jones in five and six mile races. He is very fast, but almost dead weight. I got the one mile in 28 seconds, and the seven mile race had to get me at twenty one when you get a pound the world over would knock me.