

UK SPORTS ASSOCIATION For People with Learning Disability

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PRESS RELEASE

“Great Britain Scoops Bronze Medals in Paris Semi Marathon”

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Braving the elements, together with over 20,000 other runners, 5 athletes with learning disability from Great Britain emerged victorious from the streets of Paris in this years Semi Marathon.

As part of the 1st INAS-FID Semi Marathon European Cup incorporated into the official 2005 Paris Semi Marathon, the GB Squad took a proud team bronze behind Portugal and France this weekend.

Sub zero temperatures and falling snow didn't hamper the athletics ability of the Team on Sunday 6th March 2005. Despite a slow start to the race and a strong head wind, the 5 men from Great Britain ran particularly well, some achieving personal bests, overall positions in the top 15% and INAS-FID rankings in the top 10.

First to cross the finish line for Great Britain was Tony Collins (Essex) achieving a strong top 500 position of 371st overall, in a tremendous 1h 22' 04", a personal best and overall ranking of 6th with INAS-FID.

Neill Collins, finished 640th, closely pursued by Pascal Piron of France, just 8 seconds behind. The performances by the Essex men, were complimented by great races from the remainder of the squad, Kevin Lewis, finishing 880th, Derek Lee, placed at 1813th and Richard Robb finishing in 1hr35' and placed 2626th.



“These guys worked so hard” says Kathy Collins, Team Support Officer “I’m thrilled for the whole squad, but especially proud of my two sons, Tony and Neill”. We are all really happy with the results and can’t wait to do it all again next year!”

Team Manager, John Wootton said, *“I am thrilled with the Team result and their overall performances. At least 3 of the athletes achieved personal bests which is fantastic in a race of this calibre, particularly when you consider it was minus 8 at the start line and started to snow! They all performed admirably and we all thoroughly enjoyed the competition”.*

Tracey McCillen, National Director at the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability, commented, *"It seems there is no stopping the GB Athletics Squad! Time after time, they demonstrate their dedication, ability and medal potential. Despite all the odds they keep performing and winning. A truly deserved result – our congratulations go out to each and every person in the Squad. We hope that Governing Bodies see what our Squads can achieve and merit them worthy of their full support"*.

Three, INAS-FID athletes from Poland and Portugal performed particularly well achieving 5th, 31st and 49th place out of thousands of Semi Marathon runners.

The Semi Marathon is the first event of this nature organised by the International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID). INAS-FID and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) continue to work together to include athletes with learning disability in the next Paralympic Games in Beijing in 2008.

The decision to include athletes with learning disability in the IPC programme of events was taken at its General Assembly in November 2004. INAS-FID athletes still await the outcome of INAS-FID and IPC discussions, to see what will be the first event at which they are welcomed back by the IPC.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

1. The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability is the national body that co-ordinates sport for people with learning disability in the UK and is the organisation responsible for the selection and management of Team GB to international events. It is also the officially recognised GB representative on INAS-FID.
2. The event is organised under the auspices of INAS-FID, the Intellectual Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability. INAS-FID, founded in 1986, is a member of the International Paralympic Committee. See further information at www.inas-fid.org
3. Further information on the Event can be obtained by visiting, www.inas-fid.org, or the INAS-FID Organisers in France www.ffsa.asso.fr. The Semi Marathon site address is www.parismarathon.com
4. Interviews, comments, photographs and profiles of individual team members are available by contacting Tracey McCillen on the above numbers.
5. Further details on the November 2004 IPC decision are available from www.paralympic.org. Background to leading to the original ban on athletes with learning disability can be found at www.inas-fid.org