

U14 Leinster Team Celtic Challenge Trip Report

Liza O'Rourke



Team: Riona Sumesh, Ananya Gopinath, Hannah Shochan, Rasa Norvaisaite, Amira Pender, Elma Luque Sakka, Eoin Evans, Dave Jaison, Theo O'Connell, Lochlann O'Rourke, Charan Deep Rajalupati, Ben Lynch, Manager: Kirsty Kelly, Coach: Craig McCourtney

The U14 Leinster team travelled to Edinburgh on Friday 24th February to compete in the Celtic Challenge against Ulster, Lothian and Wales. After a late night on Friday due to a delayed flight, the team was up and ready to face Ulster. The first match began with a shaky start; however, the team settled and beat Ulster 11-4. After lunch, which was provided by the host, Lothian, Leinster played Lothian and took the win 13-2. The final match of the competition was against Wales on Sunday morning, which Leinster won 14-1.

For most of the players, this was their first trip abroad to compete in a badminton competition, and all the players handled themselves like Pros. There were stand-out performances throughout the weekend from all the players involved. In total, Leinster won 38 matches out of a total of 45. Of these 38 matches, 37 were won in straight sets.

Kirsty and Craig made sure that the players were prepared for all their matches, and the Chairperson of Leinster Badminton Youth Activities, Jean Kelly, was also present to take care of the players off-court. Lothian were excellent hosts as usual and provide lunch and dinner for the team in addition to providing all transport over the weekend – thank you Lothian.



The Celtic Challenge is a long-running competition that has seen hundreds of players compete over the decades. The U14 competition was last held in February 2020, and its return has been widely welcomed by Lothian, Ulster, Wales and Leinster. Without the support of the Leinster Badminton Executive this simply would not happen – thanks go to the Executive for their ongoing support of all things juvenile. Thank you to Leinster Badminton President, David Murphy, who met the team in the airport upon their return.

One of the responsibilities of the Leinster Youth Activities Committee is the development of Leinster Juvenile squads and teams, and without this group of committed volunteers, juvenile badminton in Leinster would be in a far less fortunate position than it currently is. This committee is led from the front by Chairperson, Jean Kelly, who can be found at all juvenile events with her sleeves rolled up and a smile on her face. Jean loves the kids, and the kids love her right back. Special thanks go to Kirsty and Craig, who happily volunteer their time to take away a group of twelve children for a weekend of badminton. Not only do they get the best of the player on court, more importantly, they take the best care possible of the child and guarantee the happiest memories for life.

Leinster Badminton is delighted to be sponsored by Yonex and appreciates all the support received from the Yonex team. Our Leinster teams continue to look like the Champions they are! A special mention must go to Tony Weir, who has consistently gone the extra mile for Leinster Badminton.



As we all know, players are not just magically made. All twelve players made this team because of their hard work, commitment, and dedication to their sport. Which leads us to the parents! We really appreciate the parents of our players. We know of the time that you give to your children and the

sacrifices that are regularly made as you bring your young players to tournaments all over the country. We know that in addition to the Leinster squad training that your children attend, you are also bringing them to their clubs, their training groups and their private coaching sessions. And you are also raising players who are an absolute pleasure to bring away on trips – all of whom were mannerly, well-behaved, and good fun to be around. Thank you Parents!

