

2024 U18 ICT Champions



Team: Liza O'Rourke, Jean Kelly, Praneel Reddy Vallapureddy, Paddy Nolan, Pranav Erukattil, Aman Kothiyal, Senan O'Rourke, Adam McAllister, David Walsh, Nicole Joy, Orlaith Evans, Chloe McGrane, Laura Heery, Michelle Shochan

History was made this week when Leinster retained the U18 Intercounty Tournament title with back-to-back wins in 2023 and 2024. Leinster has been privileged to be invited to compete in the English Intercounty Tournament for more than four decades and won the competition for the first time in 1994. In 2019, Leinster came 5th and in 2022, Leinster came 3rd. Many thanks go to Badminton England, the tournament organisers and tournament referees for running such a wonderful event.

In 2019 a small group of Youth Activities Committee members was upstairs in the Terenure Badminton Centre running one of their many juvenile tournaments. And a prediction was made that that the 2007 group of players would win "Notts". To win two years in a row is beyond our wildest dreams. Phrases such as "Once in a Generation", "Golden Era" are bandied about at various times, however, it is difficult to talk about this group of talented players without reverting to these cliches.

The team travelled on the 3rd April and unfortunately, had two late withdrawals due to injury and illness. The team wishes a speedy recovery to Siofra Flynn and Fionn Dowling and both players were missed both on, and off the court. Thankfully, Orlaith Evans and Paddy Nolan were available and stepped into the breach at very short notice.

Leinster was seeded 2 in the competition and on Thursday commenced the competition in Group B along with Isle of Man, Devon and Surrey. The first match was against Isle of Man, and Leinster put up an impressive performance to win the match 10-0. The second match on Thursday was against Devon, and once again Leinster did not drop a set to take the win 10-0. On Friday morning, Leinster beat Surrey 10-0 to top Group B and move into Group K.



Hertfordshire, Gloucestershire and Leicestershire joined Leinster in Group K. Once again, the team brought 100% effort to this group of matches. On Friday Leinster beat Hertfordshire 10-0 and Gloucestershire 10-0. Leinster played Leicestershire on Saturday morning and won 9-1. This meant that Leinster now moved into Group Q which would decide the teams placed 1-4.



Saturday afternoon saw Leinster play Berkshire. This was one of the toughest matches that the team played over the course of the four-day competition. Although, Leinster won 7-3, every match was hard fought and at one point it seemed that a 5-5 draw would have been a true reflection of the quality of the competition. With this win, we now knew that the team was going to be on the podium, although the colour of the medal was still unknown.

Leinster played Kent on Saturday night. Kent had some extremely impressive results up to this stage of the tournament. However, the experience of the Leinster players, which is way beyond their tender years, meant that Leinster took the win 10-0.

The final match was scheduled for Sunday at 1pm and Leinster were meeting Yorkshire who were Number 1 seeds in the competition. The team checked out of their rooms by 10am and players did the sums and knew that 3 games were enough to win Gold. However, the group spoke about this and decided that this was not good enough for our group of players, and that only a true win would suffice. The players wanted to win Gold and remain unbeaten in the competition. True to form, the team went on court and beat Yorkshire 6-4.



Over the course of 4 days, the team played 90 games with an extraordinary 82 games won. To have two coaches of the calibre of David Walsh and Adam McAllister is invaluable. They coached 90 games between them, and the effort and energy required to do this was nothing short of heroic. Both are experienced and talented senior players and brought all their experience of playing in pressurised matches to the fore to help the players get across the line. Jean Kelly managed the team along with her assistant, Liza O'Rourke. Both made sure that player welfare was top of the agenda and that the team was cared for in every possible way both on and off the court. Overall, it was a tremendous team effort that made this historic win possible. Thanks go to Leinster Badminton President, David Murphy, who met the team at the airport to acknowledge this historic achievement.

A result of this nature does not happen in a vacuum. The coaches who have worked with each of these players over the years must be acknowledged for all their efforts. Additionally, the various Leinster squad managers that have volunteered their time over the years are also highly valued and appreciated. This phenomenal group of players has won the U14 Celtic Challenge, the U16 Celtic Challenge and U13, U15 & U17 Interprovincial titles over the last number of years. The 2007 players now move out of Leinster juvenile badminton and the Youth Activities Committee wish them all well in their continuing journey in badminton. We have no doubt that many of these players will be seen again representing Leinster at a Senior level in the coming years.

The Youth Activities Committee and the team appreciates all the ongoing support provided by the Leinster Executive Committee. We would also like to thank our sponsor, Yonex for kitting out the team. Finally, a special word of thanks to the parents whose dedication and sacrifice has produced such talented players, but more importantly, such amazing young people.