



Triathletes aim to make Olympic history

IRELAND has never been represented in an Olympics triathlon but in Beijing in August that may all change.

Enniskillen's Gavin Noble is chasing qualification for the men's event and it's a Bangor girl, Emma Davis that could eventually make it in the women's race.

The triathlon first became an Olympic sport in Sydney in 2000 and involves a 1500m swim, 40km cycle ride and a 10km run and both continued their chase for qualification over the past week with Davis recording her best result of the year to take 10th place in the Tongyeong Triathlon World Cup in South Korea on Saturday (April 26), and Noble finishing 20th in the Pontevedra European Cup in Spain.

Davis, who is based in Surrey, has climbed to 83 in the world rankings after her impressive performance at the weekend, and her strong performances in the previous World Cups of 15th and 14th. This ranking brings Davis within striking distance of a Beijing qualification position; four places behind the last qualification spot as it stands today. However, there are only a handful of events left where Davis can accumulate the necessary ranking points to overtake her competitors for that Olympic qualification spot.

She will race this weekend in the next stage of the Triathlon World Cup in Richards Bay, South Africa, and will follow that up with the European Championships in Lisbon, Portugal on May 10. The European Championships carry bonus ranking points so will be particularly important in the race for qualification.

Following that Davis intends to race in the World Cup in Madrid, Spain on May 25.

Olympics: Triathlon

By Nigel Ringland

Depending on how her bid for qualification is progressing she may also race at the ITU World Championships in Vancouver, Canada on the June 8.

"I am extremely pleased with my recent results but do feel that there is a lot more to come. I am still very new to the professional circuit.

"I only started training full time in May 2007 and therefore have a great deal more to learn.

"I wouldn't say I was surprised as I know all the hard work I have had to put in but I do feel lucky that things turned out as they did," she explained.

Noble is chasing Olympic qualification via a different route to Davis. The Commonwealth Games triathlete is hoping to secure the European Flag qualification slot which is awarded to the leading athlete in each Continent as per the Continental Cup rankings.

Thanks to his 20th place in Spain, Noble now occupies the slot ahead of his closest rivals; Tamas Liptak of Hungary, and Zvonko Cubric of Croatia.

Two tough races now lie between Noble and a place in Beijing and he must perform to the best of his ability in both races to secure his long held Olympic ambition. The first of those races is the European Championships in Lisbon, Portugal on May 10, which carries bonus ranking points.

The final race that will count towards the flag qualification for Noble is the ITU European Cup in Brno in the Czech Republic on May 18.