

On a gagné

Yes....it's official. Limavady Grammar School are the Northern Ireland French debating champions for 2006! Despite going into the final against Methodist College at the Magee Campus of the University of Ulster on 22 March, as massive underdogs, our team of Andrew McClarey, Danielle Haslett, Mary Hendrick and Joanna McCullagh held their nerve and pulled off a stunning victory, winning the title and a cheque for 500 Euros in prize money.

Things were pretty tense amongst the Year 14 French class on the morning of the debate. We had had some great results this season in previous debates, but this was the final and the opponents were "Methody". Could we possibly beat them or would they prove to be our nemesis? Was this to be one debate too far, the last great battle?

As we drove away from school, the minibus stalled. The team reminded me that this had happened before our first debate back in October. Could this be a good omen? Probably far more likely to be my bad driving, I mused, but this, together with some cheerful banter from our supersubs, Alex and Fionnuala, meant that spirits were high as we arrived at Magee to follow our familiar pre-debate ritual – a light lunch followed by a little walk to clear our heads, a toilet stop (or two) and the all important team talk.



Then it was time to enter the hall as the spectators started to arrive. This was to be no sterile debate behind closed doors. Instead over a hundred partisan spectators were there to cheer on their teams, along with visitors from other schools and a panel of judges from both north and south of the border.

Our task was to speak against the motion "*L'école ne prépare pas les jeunes pour le monde du travail*" ("school does not prepare young people for the world of work").

As expected, Methody began strongly, arguing for the motion and quoting current dissatisfaction amongst employers at the skills of young people today. But we fought straight back, with Andrew producing one of our trump cards, evidence from the Methody website citing the achievements of some of their famous alumni. This was followed by a passionate speech by Danielle about the interpersonal skills gained at school and how they can be utilised in the workplace, Mary highlighting the proposed changes to the school curriculum and how they will better prepare pupils for the world of work and Joanna focusing on extra-curricular activities and how they help us to become well-rounded personalities with varied skills and aptitudes.

Even in the midst of such an important debate, there were moments of humour which lifted the tension. Who can forget Danielle's inspired heckle that subjects such as Religious Education are very relevant to the workplace if you intend to be the next Pope. And Methody's comment that school does not encourage teamwork was quickly met with an acerbic comment from Joanna, reminding them about a certain rugby match played at Ravenhill on St Patrick's Day. This got a definite chuckle from the judges.

As the judges retired to consider their verdict, an uneasy silence fell over the room. Both teams had given their all, but only one could win. Methody's presentation had been slick and confident. We had certainly been passionate with a touch of humour. Which team had appealed most to the judges?

When Professor John Gillespie, Head of the Faculty of Languages at the University of Ulster, stood up to announce the winners, you could have heard a pin drop. For a split second after the verdict, there was silence. Then, shouts of celebration. Even experienced teachers were heard to whoop with delight. We had won, with Mary H being judged best speaker and Joanna McC receiving a "*prix d'honneur*", a kind of "debater of the season award" for her efforts throughout the year and, in particular, for being the only pupil from Northern Ireland to be selected for an all-Ireland team that debated against a team from France in Dublin last January.



Our very best wishes go to Methody who were gracious in defeat. Their turn will no doubt come again. But this was to be our year and, as we celebrated with a post-debate meal in a local restaurant (you can buy a lot of Banoffee Pie with 500 Euros), we reflected that this was a real team effort. My thanks go to Marjolaine Jégou, our French Assistant, who played a big part in our success, but most of all to our team members – Andrew, Danielle, Mary and Joanna. It has been such a pleasure to work with pupils who have been so committed and enthusiastic about what they are doing and who have shown such a love and passion for speaking French. We wish them well as they decide how to spend the rest of their prize money and hope that their efforts this year have spurred on the Lower Sixth to defend our title next year. *Félicitations!*



SPORTING CONGRATULATIONS

Rugby

Congratulations to Niall O'Connor, our Head Boy who has been selected as part of the Ireland U19 rugby World Cup squad. He is presently playing in the World Cup tournament in Dubai.

Mr S Barr

Northern Ireland Archery Indoor Championships

Congratulations to the five students from Limavady Grammar School who took part in this tournament at Banbridge Leisure Centre on Sunday 26 March.

- Aaron Moison (Year 14) came second in the U18 category.
- Matthew Warke (Year 11), Andrew Moore (Year 11) and Rowena Moison (Year 11) came first, second and third respectively in the U16 category.
- Peter McCann (Year 9) came first in the U14 category with an outstanding score of 410/600. Peter only started this sport before Christmas.

Well done!

Miss M Doherty

Cricket

Congratulations to Stuart Thompson (10Y) who travelled to Spain (La Manga) from 24-29 March with the NICA U17 team for pre-season training. They played Spain's U15 team twice and won both games. Well done and Good Luck to Stuart who was also runner-up in the Male Youth Sports Awards for the Limavady Borough.

Miss M Doherty

Athletics

Congratulations to Jason Smyth (Year 14) who has just returned from the World Indoor Paralympics in Sweden with a gold medal, winning the 60m and setting a new Irish junior record time of 6.92 seconds.

Mr S Robb

Annual Spring Concert
will take place on Thursday 6 April 2006 at 7.30 pm
in Assembly Hall at Limavady Grammar School.
Everyone Welcome
(Retiring Collection in aid of Asthma Society)

'INST' Prove Too Strong

Despite a brave and skilful performance the 2nds lost 29-11 to a very strong RBAI team in the final of the 2nd XV Cup. The defeat brought to an end a magnificent cup run which had taken the school to its first ever cup final.

Limavady went ahead as early as the second minute. Number 8, Shane Martin, broke right from a scrum before feeding Andrew Moore, who showed great strength to score near the corner. RBAI stormed back and ten minutes later their pack drove over for a converted try and a 7-5 lead. After an incursion into the Limavady 22, Inst stole a lineout and moved the ball wide for their left winger to score and a 12-5 lead. However, we began to enjoy more consistent possession and were rewarded when a magnificent 40-metre penalty by Mark O'Connor reduced the deficit. Another period of LGS pressure had the Inst defence at full stretch. With half-time looming Mark converted another excellent penalty and the sides turned round with only one point separating them.

With the big Inst pack dominating the set play, quality possession became ever more difficult for us in the second half. After 15 minutes the pressure told as Inst broke through to score a converted try. Despite some astute tactical kicking we didn't really threaten the Belfast line. In the last 12 minutes, with Limavady throwing caution to the wind, the strong running boys from Belfast scored two more tries which, with one conversion, gave them a very comfortable 29-11 lead.

Whilst the result was a fair one, it doesn't fully do justice to our efforts. The defence was magnificent and the boys continued to play their brand of fast, 15-man rugby to the final whistle; a tactic made more difficult by the narrow pitch.

The whole squad deserves great credit for a memorable season. Encouragingly, on the day it was some of the younger players who caught the eye. Shane Martin was outstanding while Andrew Moore, Peter Henderson and Mark O'Connor played with great skill. In defence Chris Hunter and Josh Lewis were brave and committed. The pack consistently took on bigger, stronger opponents and was still attacking at the final whistle.

At the end both sides enjoyed warm applause from the big crowd and the Inst captain paid tribute to the efforts of Jeff Killen and his team. A fitting end to a fine contest played in a very sporting manner.

Mr B Dunwoody

Limavady Grammar School Parents' Association
are holding a dance on Friday 5 May in Limavady Rugby Club from 9 pm 'till late.
Music will be a combination of Jazz and Rock.
We hope that you will lend your support to this evening.
Tickets will be priced at £5.00 and will be on sale at school from 24 April 2006.
This event will be for over 21s and information will be sent to parents after the
Easter holiday.

**School closes for Easter holiday on Friday 7 April at 1.00 pm
and reopens at 9.00 am on Monday 24 April 2006.**

