

# World championship success for Galway taekwon-do group

Members of Shane Fitzgibbon's Connacht Taekwon-do Academy represented Ireland in the International Taekwon-do Federation World Championships in South Korea recently, taking home an impressive haul of medals including a gold medal for instructor Mary Mannion.

fellow instructor Mary Mannion and four of his other students, Cathal Kilbane (Knocknacarra), Shane Rabbittie (Westside), Laura Costello (Briarhill), and Shannon Holland (Knocknacarra). As well as competing in the individual categories, Costello, Holland, and Kilbane represented

Ireland on the junior teams. Shane Rabbittie had originally been on the junior boys team but, due to a change in the age rules, was bumped up to the adult divisions.

The world championships saw the Ireland team compete with large squads from around the world — Argentina, USA, UK, and Canada all fielded



From left: Shane Rabbittie, Cathal Kilbane, Dylan Lacey (Athlone), Shane Fitzgibbon, Mary Mannion, Shannon Holland, and Laura Costello with their medals.



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squads of more than 100 people. Ireland presented 45 competitors, most of whom ended up on the podium. There were approximately 30 countries represented.

The tournament started with patterns, the juniors getting a run out. Cathal Kilbane picked up bronze in the 3rd dan section. The seniors followed, resulting in Ireland's first world champion — Mary

Mannion. Fitzgibbon also made it to the podium, winning bronze. In sparring the standard was incredibly high. Cathal Kilbane got off to a great start by using tactical counterattacking to beat his first opponent. He was narrowly defeated in the next round, however, as he could not quite get to grips with his opponent's reach advantage. In the men's senior

heavyweight division, Fitzgibbon fought strategically to overcome his various opponents, winning a bronze medal.

There was great success for Ireland in the team events. Fitzgibbon captained the men's team to bronze in sparring and also bronze in power breaking. The junior boys team, similarly, won the bronze in their power event. Laura and Shannon both featured in the Irish girls' team, winning silver in the team sparring event.

Overall, it was a major triumph for the Galway group, with each of the three juniors winning a team medal,

Fitzgibbon winning four bronze medals, and Mannion crowned with her first World Championship gold medal. It also represented the satisfying conclusion of Fitzgibbon's competitive career, winning 16 world medals in 10 years. Fitzgibbon, a four-time World Champion, will now focus on coaching for next year's European Championships.

Taekwon-do classes take place weekly at various venues around Galway city and county. For information phone (087) 2070577 or visit [www.connacht-taekwondo.com](http://www.connacht-taekwondo.com)



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