

## Thomas Raises The Barr

Thomas Barr's scintillating start to the track and field season continued in style in Switzerland on Saturday when the Ferrybank athlete smashed the Irish record for the 400-metre hurdles.

Competing at the EAP meet in Geneva, Barr won in a time of 48.90 seconds from reigning European champion Rhys Williams of Great Britain who finished second in 48.95.

This world class performance saw Barr shave 0.71 of a second off the Irish record of 49.61 he set two weeks ago at the IFAM International Flanders meet in Oordegem, Belgium.

This win also moves Thomas to the top of the European rankings and sixth in the world.

Barr opened his season with 50.34 at Namur, Belgium on Tuesday, May 27th. Just five days later he broke Tom McGuirk's mark of 49.73, set in 1996, when he finished third in Flanders.

This time was well inside the 'A' qualifying standard of 50.15 for the upcoming European Championships which takes place in Zurich on August 12th.

Tom McGuirk posted this message on the Athletics Ireland Facebook "Congratulations Thomas! It was a true honour and I was very proud to run for Ireland. I was blessed to travel the world and found life-long friends in Nicky Sweeney and Neil Ryan. No doubt you will push that record much lower. I wish you the very best always!"

It was only a matter of time before Barr broke McGuirk's record as he came within five hundredths of a second of the old mark when he reached the final at the Under-23 European Championships in Finland last year.

But considering he was just finishing his final exams in University of Limerick and was recovering from a foot injury the breakthrough was achieved much earlier in the season than had been anticipated.

Barr's success was the highlight of a sensational day for Ferrybank AC.

Kelly Proper also had a superb meet when she won the long jump with an excellent leap of 6.45 metres and followed this up with a personal best of 23.38 seconds in the 200 metres.

Niamh Whelan won her 200m race in a fast 23.78 while Niamh McNichol took almost half a second off her 200m best to win her race in 24.47, achieving the qualifying standard for the World Junior Championships in Oregon in the United States next month.

Ben Kiely ran 52.52 for a season's best in his 400m hurdles while Jessie Barr also set a season's best for her 400m hurdles.

Ferrybank coach Bríd Golden was naturally thrilled with the performances of the club's athletes in Geneva as is confident Kelly

Proper will join Thomas Barr on the Irish team for the European Championships.

“Thomas Barr is without doubt one of the most talented athletes this country has ever produced,” she proudly declared.

“Those of us who watched him indoors this year would have known he was capable of these performances. He can only get better and is a realistic Irish medal hope in Zurich.

“Likewise Kelly Proper’s time for the 200m was only three hundredths of a second outside the ‘A’ qualifying and if she can get conditions in her favour I fully expect her to also make the Irish team for the European Championships.