



# ***WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER***

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# MEET THE TEAM NI COACHES

UNIQUE ROLES



**Andy Gill**  
Performance  
Pathway  
Co-ordinator



**Patrick O'Neill**  
Senior 3x3  
Lead  
Consultant



**Marc Mulholland**  
BNI Vice Chair  
with Responsibility  
for Performance

SENIOR  
MENS 3X3



**Ryan McCormick**

HEAD COACH

SENIOR  
WOMENS 3X3



**Patrick O'Neill**  
Basketball  
Ireland

HEAD COACH

U17 WOMEN



**Paddy McGaharan**  
Belfast  
Star

HEAD COACH

U17 MEN



**Marc Mulholland**  
Belfast  
Bulls

HEAD COACH



**Michael McCabe**  
Mourne BC

CO HEAD  
COACH

U15 BOYS



**Rolandas Bartkus**  
BC Wolves

HEAD COACH



**Ignas Vaisvila**  
BC Wolves

ASSISTANT  
COACH

U15 GIRLS



**Lexi Possett**  
Belfast  
Star

HEAD COACH



**Aoife Callaghan**  
Ulster University  
Tigers

CO HEAD  
COACH

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# INTRODUCTION

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This extended Newsletter summarises the Team Northern Ireland season. This began in October 2024 with under 15 selection camps and Christmas for U17 squads. Training took place at Christmas, February and Easter and a summer programme began at the start of July.

The senior 3 X 3 squad began their season in May with practice in UUU and the new University sports hall in Belfast city centre. The U15 squads played Wales at NewForge in July and the U17 squads v Wales and BI academies in the same venue in August.

The senior 3 X 3 teams took part in 2 major events each. Both were in action in the BNI 3 X 3 invitational at the end of May with the men travelling to RISE a high-level senior 3 X 3 event in London and the women to Amsterdam for practices and games v the world leading Netherlands squads.

Andy Gill, Performance Pathway Coordinator stated, "We are now in our second year of performance programme and continued to benefit from Sport NI and Commonwealth Games federation NI financial support."

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# THE FOUNDATIONS OF PERFORMANCE

Performance in Basketball Northern Ireland is founded on the following principles:

-  To drive individual and team development across all age ranges and levels of competition
-  To identify players with the potential to represent Team NI in competitive games at both 5v5 and 3x3.
-  To introduce the technical foundations of successful basketball performance.
-  To introduce players to support services that can enhance individual performance.
-  To introduce registered players to the Team NI style of play.
-  To compete in competition that enhances individual play and team development.
-  To act as the principle means to identify, select, train and compete in the Commonwealth Games competition.
-  That the performance systems are able to develop a greater % of players able to play in Basketball Ireland academies and National team squads.



# 3X3 SENIOR CELTIC INVITATIONAL



In preparation for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2026, Basketball NI proudly hosted the TEAM NI 3x3 Senior Celtic Invitational 2025 on May 30th, 2025. The event brought elite 3x3 teams from across UK and Europe to Jordanstown for a weekend of high-level competition and collaboration.

Basketball Northern Ireland welcomed top-tier teams from Basketball Ireland, Basketball Wales, Great Britain Basketball, and the Lithuanian Basketball Federation, with both men's and women's squads competing. Over three days, teams showcased elite-level talent and built meaningful international connections through competitive play and joint training sessions.

Andy Gill, Performance Pathway Coordinator commented, "The BNI 3X3 Senior Celtic Invitational Weekend was a really positive event for Team NI and the teams involved. GB women, Lithuania women and Ireland men all went on to qualify to the Euro cup finals at events held the weekend after. Team NI men have received an invitation to a high-level event in London in July and our female squad depth was significantly improved with the experience gained. The support of the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Federation was vital to the event success. This was a showcase event and one we would love to host again."

A special highlight of the weekend was the presence of Iona Cojocar, a highly respected Netherlands-based FIBA 3x3 referee. Iona provided expert mentorship to local referees, delivering invaluable insights and elevating the officiating standard of the tournament.

Marc Mulholland, Vice Chair of BNI said, "We are incredibly grateful to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Federation and Sport NI for their continued and vital support in making the 3x3 Senior Celtic Invitational a reality. Their backing has not only enabled this high-performance event but also created an environment for valuable opportunities for our players, coaches, officials, and wider basketball workforce to grow, learn and thrive as we continue to grow and develop opportunities for People Development .

Events like this are a catalyst for development, and their impact will be felt well beyond the weekend. Thanks also to all of the BNI staff, officials, referees, coaches, support staff , fans of the game and of course the players who made every effort to make this event possible . We also appreciate and thank all of travelling nations who came to the Belfast helping make this event one to remember."



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All games were recorded through BNI's partnership with SportsVisio, whose AI-powered technology transforms raw footage into detailed player statistics and highlight reels. This innovative approach ensures that athletes have the tools to analyse and improve their performance.

Sean O'Connor, Chief Revenue Officer of Sportsvisio commented, "We're thrilled to be part of the Celtic Invitational and to support the growing 3x3 movement across the island. This format is fast, dynamic, and entertaining. At SportsVisio, we're committed to giving every player access to the stats and highlights that fuel improvement and amplify their impact — whether they're chasing medals or just playing for the love of the game."



Avonmore Protein Milk also lent their support, keeping athletes fuelled throughout the tournament with a range of delicious protein milk flavours—providing the perfect recovery option after intense back-to-back games.

# U15 TEAM NI CELTIC INVITATIONAL

The 2025 U15 Celtic Invitational Weekend delivered two days of thrilling youth basketball, marked by tight matchups, standout performances, and the kind of sportsmanship that defines the spirit of the game. Hosted in partnership with SportsVisio and broadcasted live on Swish, the event brought together elite youth squads for a competitive and inspiring experience.

The weekend tipped off with Team NI's U17 Girls taking on a talented Dublin side in a challenge match that provided valuable experience and a competitive start to the event.

The U15 Boys began their campaign against a physical and well-organised Wales team. Despite battling hard, they fell short with a 50–84 loss, learning key lessons to carry forward.

Closing out the day, the U15 Girls faced Wales in what turned out to be one of the most exciting games of the day. In a tightly contested battle, Team NI emerged with a 64–57 victory, showing resilience and composure in the final quarter.

Building on their momentum, the U15 Girls returned to the court on day two first with focus and determination, claiming a second win over Wales, 62–59. The result capped off an unbeaten weekend and highlighted their consistency under pressure.

Players from both sides were recognised for their outstanding efforts:

- Team NI Girls MVP (selected by Wales): #6 Niamh Ferguson
- Wales Girls MVP (selected by NI): #6 Chloe Hall





The U15 Boys wrapped up their tournament against a dominant Welsh side. Despite a strong effort, the game ended in a 96–67 loss. Still, there were standout moments and individual recognition for players who gave it their all:

- Team NI Boys MVP (selected by Wales HC): #7 Dylan Hughes
- Wales Boys MVP (selected by NI HC): #9 Max Marchant



From start to finish, the Celtic Invitational was about more than scores—it was a weekend of important youth development, teamwork, and cross-border competition.

Andy Gill, Performance Pathway Coordinator, praised the event's value in player development:

"This weekend was a fantastic opportunity for our young players to experience high-level competition. These kinds of games are crucial in helping them develop resilience, decision-making, and the ability to perform under pressure. We're proud of how both squads represented themselves and embraced the challenge."

Congratulations to all players, coaches, and supporters who made the weekend a valuable one.

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The U17 action tipped off on Saturday with a high-paced slate of four games featuring both male and female squads:

Team NI Men 62 – 92 Ireland Academy Men  
Team NI Men 54 – 51 Wales Men  
Team NI Women 85 – 43 Wales Women  
Ireland Academy Men 90 – 33 Wales Men



It was a competitive opening day with teams making a strong early statement, notably Team NI's women delivered a standout performance with a dominant win over Wales. Sunday brought more of the same: high-quality play, passionate support from the stands, and some big scorelines:

Wales Men 48 – 72 Ireland Academy Men  
Team NI Women 78 – 36 Wales Women  
Team NI Men 72 – 48 Wales Men  
Team NI Men 60 – 112 Ireland Academy Men



A key bonus of the weekend was the opportunity to test our U17 men against the Basketball Ireland Academy squads. These matchups posed fresh challenges for both players and coaches and marked the first time we've taken this approach as a National Governing Body. It gave us a valuable benchmark and insight into areas for improvement as we continue to shape our player development pathway here in Northern Ireland.

Across the two days, the event showcased not only the talent of our U17 squads but also the spirit of our basketball community.

A massive thank-you goes out to the referees, table officials, and everyone working behind the scenes who kept things running smoothly. Special appreciation goes to physios Ben Hesnan and Dervla Murphy, whose care and professionalism ensured players were well looked after throughout.

Thanks also to Newforge Sports Complex for their top-class facilities and support — and of course, to the families of Basketball NI and travelling supporters from Ireland and Wales who helped bring the atmosphere and support in the bleachers.

From a coaching perspective, one of the key goals this season was to deliver strong performances against Wales as part of our long-term development pathway — and together, we achieved that.

These wins serve as meaningful performance indicators, helping to track player progress and support ongoing investment from Sport NI into our development programmes.





# RISE 3X3

Continuing the upward trajectory of 3x3 in Northern Ireland, the Senior 3x3 Team NI men embarked on a trip to London on Saturday 5th where they competed in the Shoreditch Summer Slam.

This has been classified as a Quest event, which is the second highest tier of men's 3x3 basketball. The team, led by Ryan McCormick and containing players who achieved some great results at the recent Team NI Senior 3x3 Celtic Invitational, achieved some really credible results. Team NI was known as Team Belfast and competed against the GB world series team losing 20-9 and the GB U23 European series team 21-15.

The Senior 3x3 Men's Team Belfast.

Lucien Christofis

Paddy McGaharan

Shane Morgan

Robbie Graham

Performance Pathway Coordinator Andy Gill stated, "Following on from the U23 Ireland women success we are indebted to the Commonwealth Games Federation Northern for their support in this event. There is no substitute for playing games at the highest level and the squad had really competitive games against GB world series and European cup players.



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# AMSTERDAM WOMEN 3X3

At the beginning of August, the Team NI Senior Women's 3x3 squad travelled to Amsterdam for a three-day training and scrimmage programme at the Netherlands High Performance Centre.

This provided the athletes with a valuable opportunity to engage with one of the world's leading 3x3 programmes, supporting their ongoing development at the highest level.

The highlight of the trip was an Enya Maguire buzzer beating 2 securing an overtime win against a Netherlands team containing some of the world's top ranked players.

Such experiences are made possible through the continued support and funding of Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland and Sport NI.



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# TEAM NI PLAYERS AND COACH MAKING 3×3 HISTORY REPRESENTING IRELAND

Ireland U23 women made history last weekend with a first ever win in European 3×3 event.

Ireland competed in 3 competitions in 3 days in Riga, Latvia reaching the final every day with a win on day 2 v Serbia and a narrow OT loss to the Netherlands on day 3.

The team consisted of both Erin Maguire and Abigail Rafferty from Team NI and were coached by Patrick O'Neill who leads the senior Team NI women. Basketball Northern Ireland influence was also seen with the other 2 Irish players, Hazel Fin and Ella O'Donnell having been coached at national team level by Performance Coordinator Andy Gill. The team missed out on a world series spot by just one place



Abbie and Erin are members of the Senior Ireland 3×3 squad who continue to compete at the World series level which is the top tier of 3×3 play.

Head coach Patrick O'Neill commented, "This was a fantastic trip and experience for the team and to reach 3 finals was a magnificent achievement. This level of play can only help our Northern Ireland players and is a really positive step in our pursuit of qualification for next summer's Commonwealth Games".



# TEAM NI STARS FEATURING FOR IRELAND

The basketball community of Northern Ireland are proud to be supporting our players featuring for Ireland on the international stage. These players have worked tirelessly in the pursuit of excellence and are now important members of their respective teams.

## Enya Maguire

Enya has competed her college career in the US at NJIT and now has a professional contract in Liga silver in the Spanish women league. She once again added to her international caps with senior appearances in the summer and has the full set of U16, U18, U20, senior and U23 and senior women 3 x 3.

## Erin Maguire

Erin, now in her third year at college in the US has international caps at U16, U18, U20, U23 3 x 3 and senior women 3 x 3. She was part of the squad that missed out a spot in the U23 world cup. She was part of the Irish U23 3 X 3 squad that made history this summer with the first ever win at a European tour event and narrowly missing out on a spot in the world series finals.

## Abigail Rafferty

Abigail, a graduate of UUJ has just completed her first year as professional at Oaklands Collage in the British women super league. Hailing from Dungannon she has now competed for Ireland at U16, U18, U20, senior women 5 X 5, U23 3 x 3 and senior women 3 X 3. Abbie was also a member of the Irish U23 3 X 3 squad that achieved so much this summer.

## Aoibheann Donnelly

Aoibheann has been selected for her third Irish program in a row after captaining the U16 Women's team last year. In the tournament in Turkey, Aoibheann led in both scoring (14.9 per game, placing her 11th among all players) and rebounding (5.7) for the team. She featured for the Phoenix National League team last season, playing significant minutes and contributing at both ends of the floor. Aoibheann is a product of Belfast Star and continues their fine tradition of producing national team athletes. An exceptional athlete and defender, she has added an outside threat to her game, shooting 37.5% from the 3-point line in the European Championships.



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### Mark Burns

Mark's selection for Niall Berry's Ireland under 18 men's team is his second year as an international player. Last season he represented Ireland under 16 men and played in the European championships in Skopje, Macedonia finishing 4th in team scoring with 7.8 points a game with an excellent 32 % from the 3-point arc. Mark's experience and composure will be a valuable asset to the team and despite his status as a year young will be pushing for significant minutes.

### Hannah Cassin

Hannah, from Queens BC, has been selected for Paul O'Brien's U16 Women's team, which will be competing in the European Championships in Istanbul from August 20th–29th. Hannah was a member of the Team NI U15 Women's team that defeated Wales twice last July, showcasing her outstanding athletic ability and gutsy defensive prowess in those closely contested games. Coached by Team NI U17 Women's coach Paddy McGaharan at OLSPCK, Hannah is also captain of the Down U16 football team and a member of Carryduff GAA.

### Layden O'Neill

Layden, who was top scorers over the 4 games Team NI under 15 played v Wales last season continues his development trajectory with selection for Emer Howards Ireland under 16 men's team. They will be taking part in a number of warm up games and the European championships in Skopje, Macedonia from 7th to 16th August. Layden's all court game is sure to be an important weapon in coach Howards technical arsenal.

### Ollie Donnelly

Ollie, who is a member of the Team NI under 15 summer squad joins his sister in achieving national recognition with his selection for the Basketball Ireland under 14 boys academy team that take on Wales, Scotland and England in June. Ollie has been a standout guard for his club side , Belfast Star and was prominent in their play-off success this year sinking an amazing 5 free throws at the end of the game to seal victory.

### Niamh Ferguson

Niamh was selected for the Basketball Ireland U14 academy team that took part in the 4 nations tournament in Scotland during June. Niamh is also a member of the Team NI under 15 girls team and was a standout player across the under 14 BNI league last season.

### Fionn Doherty

Fionn, a member of Northstar basketball club in Derry featured for the Ireland academy U14 tournament along with Ollie. Fionn was a prominent player in NorthStar's U14 undefeated season in their BNI C league campaign.





# TEAM NI DEVELOPMENT CAMP



The BNI Summer Camp lit up the courts at UUJ Sports Centre with a full day of basketball action, energy, and teamwork.

Led by coaches Marc Mulholland and Andy Gill, participants took part in an exciting programme packed with drills, tactics, fun activities, and games.

The camp wasn't just about improving skills on the court—it was also about building confidence, teamwork, and a love for basketball.

Spot prizes added to the excitement, rewarding effort and enthusiasm throughout the day. Smiles, high-fives, and plenty of hustle showed just how much the young players enjoyed the experience.

Well done to everyone who took part in making the camp a success. It was a day of learning, laughter, and memories that will inspire many to keep playing the game they love.



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# ATHLETE AWARD SCHEME

We are thankful to Sport NI and UK National Lottery Funding as we have been able to use these vital funds to support our Performance Pathway Athletes with both a centrally core funding as well as Athlete Support to support our individual Athlete Support Fund for international selection and competition.



## FUTURE PLANNING

Planning for the 25-26 Team NI U15 and U17 representative teams is now nearly complete with information to be released in the next 2 weeks.

Performance screening camps will be held in November and December depending on age group.

Clubs should look out for relevant information being sent to their lead contacts.

We are also actively looking to add tour coaching and team management workforce and should any member in your club wish to discuss these opportunities please do not hesitate to contact Andy Gill at [andrew@basketballni.com](mailto:andrew@basketballni.com)

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# ***CLOSING REMARKS***

Basketball Northern Ireland would like to thank the efforts of players, coaches and parents in their support in the 23-24 season.

This is an exciting time to be involved in basketball in Northern Ireland and we are all looking forward to more success in 25-26. Clubs will receive information about the performance schedule for this season over the coming weeks.

*Andy Gill - Performance Pathway Coordinator*

*Marc Mulholland - Vice Chair*

*Niamh Mac Manus - Programme Coordinator*

*Lauren McCullough - Club Engagement Officer*

