

Sixteen gents and ten ladies teams will contest the Inter-County Championships, at Navan Pitch and Putt Club, Co. Meath on Saturday/Sunday September 12th/13th.

In the ladies championship, holders Dublin seek to retain the title they won for the 22nd time at Lakeside last year. Most opposition to Dublin is likely to come from perennial rivals Kildare, Munster champions Tipperary, Cork and Meath. Offaly will hope to build on last year's encouraging performance which saw the Faithful County hold the halfway lead.

Dublin's victory in the Leinster Inter-County probably confirms their favouritism for Navan. Geraldine Ward and Sheelagh Elmes were key contributors to Dublin's victory when the championship was last played at Navan back in 1998.

The Dubliners are paired with Meath who seek a first win in the championship since 1989. The Royal County ladies will take heart from the fact that one of their previous four victories came at Navan in 1983.

Cork's Eleanor Walsh played in that 1983 championship (when the Leeiders racked-up one of their 14 second places) and will hope to inspire her colleagues to an eighth title. Cork play with Kildare who, unusually, didn't figure too prominently at R.G.S.C. recently but rule out the Lilywhites at your peril. Kildare haven't been out of the top three nationally since 2009.

Down, Kerry, Louth and Westmeath have all been showing signs of a recent resurgence.

Cork defend the Anchor Cup for the gents Inter-County. They will be partnered by hosts Meath. The home county last got their hands on the trophy 28 years ago at Navan but have been runners-up on three occasions (in 2006, 2008 and 2011) since. The great Sean Downes returns to the Meath line-up to provide a connection to that successful 1998 quintet.

John Walsh played on the Cork team that claimed second spot at Navan in 1998 and is still a key member of the Leaside set-up. Another veteran of that 1998 team is Ray Murphy, a reserve on this occasion in a slightly changed Cork formation, which will bid for the county's latest three-in-a-row.

Tipperary and Kerry both finished within a stroke of Cork in the Munster Inter-County at Riverdale and will each be itching to improve on two recent pairs of silver medal performances nationally, Tipp in 2023 and 2025, Kerry in 2022 and 2024.

Kildare will be buoyed by their second place in August's Leinster Inter-County championship at Glenville while Offaly (with NEC Officers Darren O'Connell and Mark Hogan on board) will hope to conjure up the spirit of 1998, which saw the Faithful County take third place at Navan.

1999 Leinster kingpins Down and 2018 Eamonn Birchall trophy victors Carlow get matters underway.

They will be quickly followed by counties like Waterford and Kilkenny that also have an excellent Eamonn Birchall trophy record.

So do Wexford who also won the overall championship at St. Patrick's in 2012 and have also claimed two third places in the main event.

Galway players have been making their presence felt on the circuit this season and will take to the course with confidence.

Limerick have been second three times and third twice and won't want to be in the Eamonn Birchall trophy this year.

Former champions Westmeath and Louth were fourth and fifth respectively last time round at Navan.

Dublin have been in the top three in each of the last twelve stagings of the championship and are sure to be in the shake-up again, albeit with a slightly altered squad. Dublin County Board Chairman Anthony Malone and team manager Junior Smith played on the Metropolitans team that claimed Inter-County laurels at Navan in 1983.

Links to other past championships at Navan abound.

Kerry linchpin Damien Fleming contested a play-off for the 2021 National Strokeplay at the Beechmount venue where Tipperary's Anthony Culhane was awarded Best Nett in the same event. Dublin's Stephen Murray and Kieran Earls (Limerick) missed out on extra holes by just a single stroke.

Justin McKeon (Kildare) was crowned 2021 National Intermediate Strokeplay champion at Navan where Meath's Evan Carry was victorious in the 2014 National Boys' 10-13 Strokeplay championship.

That same weekend, Evan helped Meath to third place in the National Under-16 Inter-County championship at Navan. (An interesting footnote to that championship is that David Howard, so prominent in this summer's golf news, played for winners Cork).

Tipperary's Breda White was a 1989 National Ladies Matchplay semi-finalist at Navan while Geraldine Ward (Dublin) finished as runner-up in both the National Ladies Strokeplay championships at Navan, in 1993 and in 2013.

Kildare's Chrissie Sheedy was a runaway winner of the 2013 National Ladies Strokeplay championship at Navan where Eileen McCarthy filled second place in the 1998 National Girls Strokeplay championship.

Mary Murray (Cork) and reigning National Strokeplay champion Glenda Hoey (Dublin) claimed bronze medals at Navan in the 2013 National Intermediate and 2013 National Junior Strokeplay championships respectively.

That year's National Junior Strokeplay champion was Offaly's Lauren Pyke.

Visitors to Navan this weekend will be served a feast of top-class Pitch and Putt. Sunday's play will be live-streamed on Pitch and Putt Ireland YouTube.