

No. 219—Dr. P. C. Bresnihan Of Castle

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(CONCLUDED)

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

MANY years before the establishment of the G.A.A. there was a tradition of athletics in Castletown, its surrounding countryside and neighbouring villages—a tradition that was to bloom to full maturity in later years, and produce some of the really great figures of the athletic arena.

One of the most prominent men in the area in the late 'seventies of the last century was a powerfully-built man, by name, Con Bresnihan, whose fame as a lifter and thrower of weights was widely known.

GREAT ATHLETIC STOCK.

When Con went seeking a wife he found one who also came of good athletic stock—the Kielys of Cullen. So it was not strange when their son, J. J. Bresnihan, came into the athletic picture at the dawn of the present century and was for almost thirty years afterwards numbered with the greatest men of his day.

Springing from such stock it is not to be wondered at that J. J.'s son, Pat, should give evidence in plenty of an aptitude for athletics and reveal a prowess above the ordinary.

Born at Castletown on July 9th, 1912, Pat received his early education at the local national school, where his father was then, and for almost half a century later, the Principal.

GAVE EARLY PROMISE.

The young pupil gave early promise, physically and intellectually, and at the age of fourteen when he entered Rockwell College, he got his place on the Dr. Harty Cup team, a fellow member of which was the well known Limerick hurler of after years—Jacky O'Connell, now Secretary of the County Board.

Pat distinguished himself at hurling and athletics whilst in Rockwell, specialising in the running high jump, which was his favourite event.

In 1930, whilst still at Rockwell, he participated in the Senior

Schoolboy Championships in Croke Park, and won the high jump at 5 ft. 6½ ins.

In October of that year he went to U.C.D., and the following season, competed at the Youths Championships in Croke Park, where he tied with J. J. Guiney in the high jump at 5 ft. 9 ins. — a then record.

In 1932 he was selected in the team from the National University of Ireland which competed in the Inter-Varsity contest held at Motspur Park, Wimbledon, and at which thirty-eight universities were represented, including Oxford and Cambridge.

SET NEW INTER-VARSITY RECORD.

He won the high jump off cinders at this gathering, setting a new Inter-Varsity record at 5 ft. 10½ ins., which held until 1936. He was then in his twentieth year.

An unfortunate accident to his foot at this stage kept him out of action for some time, and it was 1934 before we again find him in action, when he got first prize at the U.C.D. sports—a feat he repeated the two following years — doing 5 ft. 11½ ins. in 1936.

Before his injury he had also figured in the hurdles, winning first prize in this event at the University Sports in 1932.

Useful, too, at the shot and discus, he would have attained greater prominence in these but for the fact that his studies prevented his devoting the time and attention to the training that is essential in order to make a mark on athletic fields.

He had a natural spring in the high jump and Dr. Pat O'Callaghan often gave it as his opinion that he was capable of 6 ft. 2 ins. or 6 ft. 3 ins. if he could have trained properly.

ARDENT SUPPORTER OF GAELIC GAMES.

An ardent supporter of Gaelic games, particularly hurling, he still follows with keen interest the fortunes of the Limerick team, of which he was a playing member in

1933, at a period when the Shannonside lads were just entering one of the best spells in the history of Limerick hurling.

Two of the soundest judges I know — Paddy Mehigan ("Carbery") and Sean O'Ceallachain, had a high opinion of his hurling, particularly in the year when he was very much to the fore with the U.C.D. team, which won the 1934 Dublin senior hurling championship and league.

He played in the Fitzgibbon Cup competition for six successive seasons — and helped Dublin win on four occasions during that bright spell.

He had the distinction of competing at the same meeting as his father—and both were winners. It was in 1929, and J. J. won the 56 lbs. and his son the high jump.

Pat never had a real chance to train properly, which was a great pity. His height was something better than 6 ft. 1 in. and he weighed between 170 and 180 pounds when competing. He has added many pounds to that figure since.

SUCCESSES IN INTELLECTUAL FIELD.

His successes intellectually are worth mentioning also.

While in Rockwell he got first place in Ireland in the Intermediate Certificate Examination out of about three thousand competitors. And more remarkable still, this distinction was secured after two years there, whilst most boys take three years before doing that examination.

In the Leaving Certificate (1930) he was second in Ireland. At U.C.D., where he studied medicine, he won various prizes and exhibitions, including first place with first class honours in his final examination.

In 1937 he got a Travelling Studentship from U.C.D. after a difficult examination in Pathology, subsequently going to Freiburg University in Germany, where he studied under the Irish Medical Research Scheme. In 1940 he got the Degree of Fellow of the Royal Surgeons of Ireland, securing first place.

Popular with all, rich and poor, laity and clerical, he is rapidly climbing the ladder, and it is expected and hoped he will go high in surgery and medicine generally.