



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
**WORLD
WINTER
GAMES**

TURIN 2025
MARCH 8th - 15th



**Special
Olympics**
Ireland

INFORMATION PACK



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**Special
Olympics**
Ireland





SPECIAL OLYMPICS
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TURIN 2025

Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025

8th – 15th March 2025

The Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025 will take place from 8th - 15th March 2025, gathering over 1,500 athletes from 102 countries to compete in eight winter sports, showcasing the determination of people with intellectual disabilities and the power of inclusion through sport.

Dates

- **7th- 8th March - Delegation Arrivals**
- **8th March - Opening Ceremony**
- **9th - 15th March - Training, Competitions & Awards**
- **March 15th - Closing Ceremony**
- **March 16th - Delegation Departures**

Participants

- **More than 1,500** Athletes & Unified Partners
- **102** Countries
- **2,000** Volunteers
- **More than 1,000** Coaches and Delegation Officials
- **160** Youth Leaders
- **3,000** Family Members
- **1,000** Honoured Guests
- **1,000** Credentialed Media
- **100,000** Spectators.

Team Ireland: 8 Floorball Players & 6 Alpine Skiers

Sports (Team Ireland in Red)

Alpine Skiing

Cross Country Skiing
DanceSport
Figure Skating

Floorball

Short Track Speed Skating
Snowboarding
Snowshoeing

Special Events & Programmes

Global Youth Leadership Summit
Healthy Athletes Law Enforcement
Torch Run Final Leg Motor Activities
Training Programme Reception &
Meetings Unified Sports Experiences
Young Athletes Programme

Locations in Italy's Piedmont Region

Turin

§ Figure Skating
§ Floorball § Global Youth
Leadership Summit
§ Healthy Athletes
§ Motor Activities Training
Programme
§ Opening Ceremony
§ Short Track Speed Skating
§ Young Athletes Program

Sestriere

§ Alpine Skiing
§ Snowshoeing

Bardonecchia

§ DanceSport
§ Snowboarding

Pragelato

§ Cross Country Skiing

Join the conversation

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Special Olympics Ireland Social Handles:

- **Facebook:** [@SpecialOlympicsIreland](#)
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Team Ireland Launch

Friday 13th September 2024 Press Release Excerpt:

Just when you thought the excitement of the Olympics and Paralympics was over, think again! Get ready for another world-class event: the **Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025!**

As excitement builds for the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy, **Special Olympics Ireland is thrilled to announce the official selection of Team Ireland, comprising 14 exceptional athletes who will represent the nation** on the world stage. Taking place from March 8th– 15th 2025, the games will see over 1,500 athletes from 103 countries compete in eight winter sports, showcasing the dedication, talent, and unbreakable spirit of athletes with intellectual disabilities.

Team Ireland's athletes have trained tirelessly to secure their place, with eight athletes set to compete in floorball, a fast-paced team sport, and six athletes competing in alpine skiing. These athletes are a shining example of perseverance and determination, and their achievements are a testament to their hard work and passion for sport.

Matt English, CEO of Special Olympics Ireland, delivered a rousing speech which highlighted the importance of shining a light on the incredible athletes and the clubs volunteers and families that support them: *"A huge thank you to all the clubs out there, we have over 260 across the Island of Ireland. Thank you to the volunteers and to the family members who help and support our athletes week in and week out, and last but definitely not least, what an amazing achievement for these Athletes, we are so proud. Let's be there for Team Ireland, we need greater visibility for them, their stories deserve to be told, and we need the media to join us in celebrating their achievements! Go Team Ireland!"*

- Full Press Release & Photography [available here](#).
- More Team Ireland Info on our dedicated [Team Ireland Webpage](#)



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD
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TURIN 2025

Team Ireland Delegates

Team Ireland - Floorball Team,
proudly supported by eir:

James Hunter, Cork
Jack Buckley, Cork
Joseph Sheehan, Cork
Gavin Bourke, Cork
Frank O'Dwyer, Tipperary
Niall Corcoran, Waterford
James Upton, Waterford
Damien Kirwan, Waterford

Head Coach, Peter Merrins
Assistant Coach, Dorothy Kavanagh
Assistant Coach, George Fitzgerald (Athlete, Kilkenny)

Team Ireland - Alpine Skiing Team:

Lorraine Whelan, Wicklow
Donal Brennan, Dublin
Maire Connolly, Galway
Lucy Best, Belfast
Caolan McConville, Antrim
Clive Healy, Waterford

Head Coach, Jill Sloan
Assistant Coach, Glyn Williamson
Assistant Coach, Jane McDowell

Head of Delegation - Sinead Costello
Assistant Head of Delegation - Willie Conlon
Medical Coordinator - Collette Cahill

Team Ireland will be supported by
over 80 Family Members &
Almost 50 Volunteers!



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
**WORLD
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TURIN 2025



Meet Team Ireland

Athlete Bios - Floorball



Joseph "Joe-Joe" Sheehan, 21, from Doneraile, County Cork, has made a huge impact since joining Mallow United Special Olympics Club four years ago, earning two gold, two silver, and two bronze medals at regional and Ireland Games. Active in floorball, golf, and football, Joseph thrives on fitness and purpose—qualities driving him as part of Team Ireland for Turin! His advice? "Be kind, believe in yourself, respect coaches, train hard, and always enjoy the journey while having fun!"

Frank O'Dwyer, 30, from Ballylandis, County Limerick, has been with Tipperary Special Olympics Club for 12 years, winning 10 medals in basketball, swimming, athletics, football, and floorball with Team Munster and Team Ireland. A fan of Manchester United, Limerick hurling, and Munster rugby, he enjoys cinema and socialising. His advice: "Be a good team leader, support each other, and respect coaches and volunteers—they make it possible."



20 year old **Gavin Bourke**, from Doneraile, County Cork, is a powerhouse at Mallow United Special Olympics Club, dominating both floorball and football for the past four years. After securing gold at the Ireland Winter Games in Armagh, he's hungry for more, setting his sights on a World Games medal! Fiercely passionate about floorball, Gavin trains relentlessly with his team. A true Manchester United fan, he also loves footgolf. His advice to young athletes? "Believe in yourself, and never stop pushing!"

Meet Team Ireland

Athlete Bios - Floorball



James Upton, (Goal Keeper) 42, from Passage East, in Waterford, has proudly represented Waterford Special Olympics Club for over 20 years, Excelling in floorball, soccer, and basketball. Highlights include the Ireland Games in Dublin (2002) and Belfast (2006), a silver medal in basketball at the 2010 Limerick Games, and representing Ireland in floorball at the 2017 World Winter Games in Austria—a dream come true! Now, James eagerly gears up for the 2025 World Winter Games in Turin, determined to give it his all.



Jack Buckley (Goal Keeper), from Mallow, Cork, has been competing in floorball for 2 years, and has already made his mark as part of a gold-winning team in the 2024 Ireland Winter Games. The 20-year-old started with Mallow United Special Olympics Club just four years ago, and has been active across badminton, football and basketball as well as floorball. His advice to fellow athletes is "focus, focus, and focus!"

Damien Kirwan, 38, from Waterford City has been a proud member of Special Olympics Waterford, for over 12 years. A major highlight was when Damien was awarded his first Irish Cap for representing Ireland at the Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles (2015) by Waterford and Irish Football legend Alfie Hale. Damien's athletic career reflects his love of sport generally, and football in particular as he is a major fan of Man United. His advice to his fellow athletes is "Keep going and going!"



Meet Team Ireland

Athlete Bios - Floorball



James Hunter, 29 from Mallow, County Cork, is a Special Olympics stalwart, having competed successfully for 14 years across numerous sports. A highlight of his athletic career was winning bronze in seven-a-side football at the 2019 Abu Dhabi World Summer Games, but this is just one of around 30 awards he's received, including a "Sportsman of the Year" award. He can't wait to represent Ireland on the floorball court in Turin, and his advice for athletes is to "train hard, put in the time and dedication to sport and teamwork".



Niall Corcoran, a proud native of Ballinahassig, County Cork, has been a dedicated member of the Waterford Special Olympics team for some years. Although this marks Niall's debut at a World Games event, his exceptional defensive abilities and impressive shooting skills make him a standout competitor to watch. Thrilled to represent Team Ireland, Niall is overjoyed to embark on this exciting journey to the World Games in Turin, where he's eager to showcase his talents and face off against top international contenders.

George Fitzgerald (Assistant Coach), Kilkenny an athlete and now Assistant Coach at Waterford Special Olympics Club, brings a wealth of experience to his role. He proudly represented Ireland at the 2013 South Korea Games and secured a bronze medal at the 2010 European Games. As the captain of the Irish floorball team, he led his teammates at the 2017 Games in Austria. Additionally, George has been a dedicated basketball player for Waterford Club since 2003 and has achieved coaching and refereeing qualifications through Basketball Ireland in 2017. He is excited and honored to support Team Ireland as Assistant Coach in Turin this March, and his extensive background makes him an exceptional mentor for the athletes.



Meet Team Ireland

Athlete Bios - Alpine Skiing



Lorraine Whelan, 43 from Delgany, Co. Wicklow is a seasoned Special Olympics athlete with 25 years of dedication to skiing and swimming. She has proudly represented Ireland in alpine skiing at four World Winter Games and competed in swimming at the 2014 European Games, earning an impressive medal collection. In 2018 she had a terrible car accident that put her ability to ski in great jeopardy. She has bravely and slowly fought her way back to this impressive level! Balancing her career at Bank of Ireland with fitness and travel, she's energized and ready to take on her next big challenge!

Lucy Best, 32, from Ballinderry Co. Antrim, has been tearing up the slopes since she was 10, competing in Special Olympics for 12 years. A bronze medalist in South Korea (2013) and double silver winner at the 2023 European Ski Championships, she loves the thrill of skiing and meeting new athletes. Off the slopes, Lucy enjoys rugby, horses, cats, and sheep rounding on her quad bike. Her advice? "Skiing is amazing—give it a try, and you'll love the coaches!"



Caolan McConville, 21, from Aghagallon, Co. Antrim, has his sights set on gold as one of Ireland's top skiing talents. He began skiing at age nine and made waves at the 2017 Winter Games, where he progressed from novice to intermediate level and earned both a silver and a bronze medal. At just 13 years old, he was Ireland's youngest competitor and proudly carried the Irish flag. Now 21, Caolan is ready to take on the 2025 Winter Games, competing in the Slalom and Giant Slalom events. All eyes will be on this determined young athlete!

Meet Team Ireland

Athlete Bios - Alpine Skiing



Clive Healy, 30 from Waterford City, is a Special Olympics veteran, a part of Waterford Special Olympics club for the last 15 years - he has achieved 100 medals, including golds in football and floorball when competed at the World Winter Games in Austria in 2017. A multi-sport star, he's dominated darts for four years and earned accolades in skiing. Thrilled to represent Ireland in Turin, Clive balances his love of sports with socialising. His advice for athletes? "Work hard, respect others, and never give up. Stay positive, give it your all, and you can achieve greatness in any sport!"

Maire Connelly, 20, from Clarinbridge, Galway, is set to make her mark at the World Winter Games in Turin! Maire travels weekly to the Kiltarnan Karvers Special Olympics Club. A member since 2016 Maire has really made her mark, and is fresh off winning two golds in alpine skiing at the 2024 Ireland Winter Games. Though this is her debut at the Winter Worlds, she's no stranger to success—earning one gold and three bronzes in artistic gymnastics at the 2023 World Summer Games in Berlin. Fueled by her favorite tunes from Westlife and One Direction, Maire's motto for fellow athletes is simple: "Don't be afraid; just do it!"



Donal Brennan, 24, from Ballinteer, Dublin, began skiing at age 7 on a family holiday in Germany. A year later, he joined Kiltarnan Karvers Special Olympics Club and has excelled ever since. He won gold and silver at the Ireland Winter Games in 2012, 2021, and 2024, and also at the 2020 Switzerland National Winter Games. Donal has also earned medals in swimming, golf, and athletics at the Ireland Summer Games in 2014, and 2018. Selected for the 2023 World Winter Games in Kazan, Russia (later cancelled), his advice to athletes is: "Enjoy the preparations, get to know your team, practice hard, stay confident, and have fun!"



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN

PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Message from President Michael D. Higgins
Special Olympics World Winter Games
March 2025

Is mian liom mo bheannachtaí a sheoladh d'Fhoireann na hÉireann agus iad ag ullmhú do Chluichí Oilimpeacha Speisialta Domhanda an Gheimhridh 2025 i dTúrin.

May I send my very best wishes to Team Ireland as they prepare to travel to the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin.

To each of the members of Team Ireland – to be chosen to represent your country on the international stage is a great honour indeed, a testament to your outstanding talent, passion, commitment and dedication. These are the qualities that make you such inspirational role models and outstanding ambassadors for Ireland.

May I thank you for your commitment to representing our nation so proudly on the international stage and assure you that, as you travel to Italy, you bring with you the support and goodwill of all of the people of Ireland.

Being part of the Special Olympics is being part of a remarkable team that embodies the true spirit of inclusivity. May I take the opportunity to extend my gratitude to the extraordinary dedication of so many people who devote themselves to the athletes and to Special Olympics Ireland every year.

On behalf of all Irish people, may I wish each and every one of the 14 Team Ireland athletes, management team and coaches every success and many moments of enjoyment and happiness at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games. I know that taking part will be a wonderful experience for every one of you as well as your families and supporters, and I hope that you will enjoy every precious moment.

Beir beannacht.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael D. Higgins." The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

Team Ireland - Preparing for the Games: Healthy Bodies, Strong Minds



Training for Greatness

Team Ireland athletes follow individual fitness plans designed to ensure they meet the physical standards required for the World Games. Training independently and with their clubs each week, they also unite once a month for intensive team sessions. These gatherings are vital, allowing coaches to assess fitness levels and ensure each athlete stays on track. With the unwavering support of Team Ireland coaches, club coaches, and families, every competitor is driven to reach their peak sporting ability!



Alpine Skiers Take on the Slopes

Our Alpine Ski Team recently returned from an exhilarating week of snow training in Sestriere, Italy. Since they primarily train on dry slopes, getting time on real snow was an invaluable opportunity. Even more exciting, they trained on the very slopes where they will compete on in March! This experience was crucial, allowing them to acclimatise to real conditions, fine-tune their techniques, and gain confidence ahead of the big event.



Team Ireland - Preparing for the Games. Healthy Bodies, Strong Minds



Strength in Mind as Well as Body

Success at this level isn't just about physical strength—it's about mental resilience. Since early January Team Ireland athletes have been participating in a five-week Stronger Minds, Happier Lives course, arming themselves with the skills needed to tackle the pressures of elite competition. Weekly workshops focus on handling intense training, managing media attention, and coping with the emotional highs of victory and the challenges of defeat. Just as importantly, the programme prepares them for the transition back to everyday life post-Games, ensuring they stay mentally strong even after the roar of competition fades.

With the countdown to the World Games well underway, Team Ireland is training hard, staying focused, and ready to take on the world!



World Winter Games Venues



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Turin Inalpi Region
Opening Ceremony
Closing Ceremony
Torch Run Global



Alpine Skiing



Sestriere



Athletes **344**



Coaches **136**



Via Lattea Ski Resort



Floorball



Turin



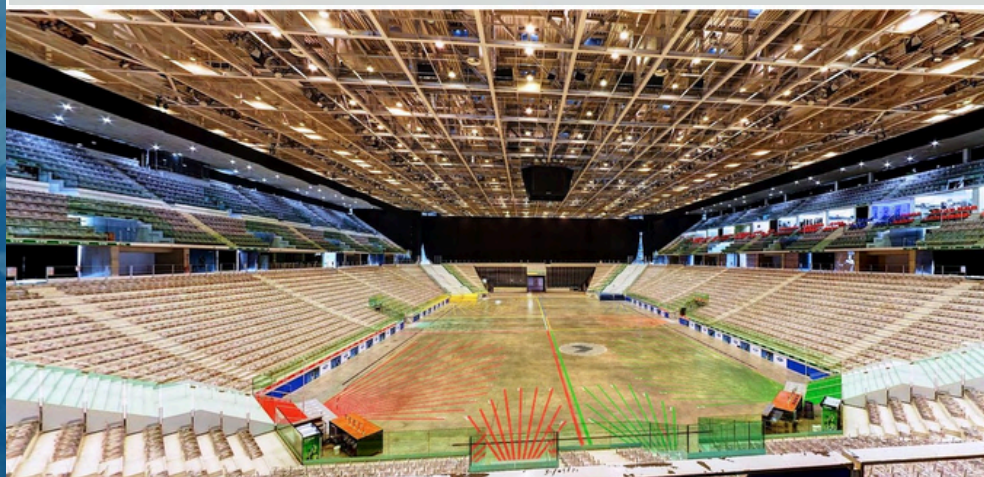
Athletes **282**



Coaches **75**



Inalpi Arena





**Special
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Ireland

World Winter Games Turin 2025 - Daily Schedule

[Daily Schedule Link](#)

| Sports | Location | Venue | Sunday March 9 | Monday March 10 | Tuesday March 11 | Wednesday March 12 | Thursday March 13 | Friday March 14 | Saturday March 15 |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Alpine Skiing | Sestriere | Vialattea Ski Resort | Training Day | Training Day | Competition Finals & Awards | Competition | Finals & Awards | Competition | Finals & Awards |
| Cross Country Skiing | Pragelato | Olympic Cross Country Center | Training Day | Competition | Competition Finals & Awards | Competition | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards |
| DanceSport | Bardonecchia | Palazzo delle feste | Training Day | Training Day | Competition | Competition | Training Day | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards |
| Figure Skating | Turin | Tazzoli Ice Arena | Training Day | Training Day | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards | |
| Floorball | Turin | Inalpi Arena | | Training Day | Competition | Competition | Competition | Competition | Finals & Awards |
| Short Track Speed Skating | Turin | Tazzoli Ice Arena | Training Day | Training Day | Competition | Competition Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards | |
| Snowboarding | Bardonecchia | Bardo Melezet Ski Resort | | Training Day | Competition | Finals & Awards | Competition | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards |
| Snowshoeing | Sestriere | Sport Center | Training Day | Training Day | Competition | Competition | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards | Finals & Awards |



Volunteering: The Heart of Special Olympics



Celebrating Our Incredible Volunteers!

At Special Olympics Ireland, our volunteers are the heartbeat of our community, infusing every event with energy, passion, and unwavering support. From local training sessions to grand international stages, their dedication ensures our athletes shine their brightest.

A Legacy of Dedication

Since 1978, volunteers have been the driving force behind our mission. In 1985, when Dublin hosted the European Games, 2,000 athletes from 17 countries experienced the warmth and enthusiasm of our volunteer team. The monumental 2003 World Games, the first held outside the U.S., showcased thousands of volunteers coming together to create an unforgettable event.

The Magic Behind Every Event

Every competition, be it Regional, Ireland Games, or World Games, thrives because of our volunteers. Their support provides athletes with guidance, encouragement, and the resources to compete at their best. Simply put, without volunteers, these events wouldn't be possible.

Berlin 2023 – A Testament to Team Spirit

In 2023, at the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, 73 Irish athletes competed across 12 sports, supported by over 60 dedicated volunteers. Their combined efforts exemplified the spirit of teamwork and community that defines Special Olympics Ireland.

Looking Ahead to Turin 2025

As we gear up for the 2025 Winter World Games in Turin, nearly 50 enthusiastic Special Olympics Ireland volunteers are ready to support the running of the World Winter Games, continuing our proud tradition of dedication and excellence

Heartfelt Thanks to Our Volunteers

To all our volunteers: your passion and commitment make dreams come true. As one volunteer beautifully put it, "To see the joy these athletes experienced was sheer heaven; it was absolutely wonderful."

[independent.ie](https://www.independent.ie)

Thank you for being the champions behind our champions!



Contacts & Resource Links

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Athlete Profiles & Media Resources

- Special Olympics Ireland - [Team Ireland Webpage](#)
- [Turin 2025 Webpage](#)
- [Team Ireland Photography Resources](#) - with special thanks to Sportsfile

THE DAILY SCOREBOARD

Scan the QR Code below to receive daily highlights, images, video - directly from the Winter World Games



PRESS UPDATES

Click the Link [HERE](#) to receive Press Releases, Interviews & Daily Asset Updates Live from Turin! Or use the QR Code below:



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Charity Number: 20016883.
Charity Tax Number: CHY 7556 (ROI) IE00009 (UK)



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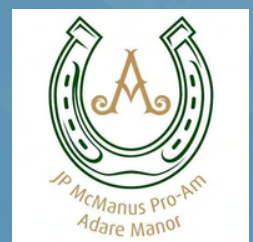
**Only 1% of athletes reach this level
of competition on the World Stage!**

We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation:

To the coaches & clubs who put in years of work and training with athletes helping them reach this calibre. To our supporters, volunteers, funding bodies, valued partners and our council of patrons Chaired by Denis O'Brien, thank you for helping our athletes to achieve their dreams!



Aer Lingus 



**RETHINK
IRELAND**





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