# controversy and scandal surround world irish dancing championships in dublin



The World Irish Dancing Championships, widely regarded as the most prestigious competition in the sport, commenced on Saturday at Dublin’s Convention Centre. The event, known locally as Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne, features around 5,000 dancers from approximately 30 countries competing throughout the week until 20 April, showcasing high-energy performances rooted in centuries-old Irish traditions.

Despite the excitement surrounding the competitors' quick footwork, high kicks, and characteristic upright posture, the competition has sparked controversy over the appearance and presentation of participants, particularly concerning female dancers. Many young competitors, some as young as eight, have been seen in heavily applied fake tan and makeup, with elaborate hairpieces, sparkling tutus, and glittering bodices.

On social media platform X, several spectators expressed disquiet about the emphasis on such aesthetics. One commentator described the children’s attire as “absolutely shocking,” lamenting the move away from focusing solely on the dancing. Another critic wrote: “Copious amount of make up, fake tan, fake hair and costumes so gaudy they wouldn't look out of place in American pageants! Sorry it’s time to go back to basics and let their feet do the talking.” This sentiment reflects concerns that Irish dancing has been “Americanised,” moving away from its traditional roots.

The criticism comes amid ongoing scrutiny of the Irish dancing world following a significant scandal that erupted in 2022. The Irish dancing community was shocked by allegations concerning cheating and bribery, coupled with claims of harsh training regimes imposed on young dancers. The scandal notably involved accusations of judges and teachers engaging in collusive behaviour to influence competition outcomes.

Owen Luebbers, a prominent US-born dancer who grew up in Philadelphia but trained and competed internationally, including at the Dublin World Championships, was among those who spoke out. In a 2023 BBC One documentary titled The Year that Rocked Irish Dancing, Luebbers revealed his fear of voicing concerns publicly due to potential repercussions affecting his competition results. He disclosed that he began questioning the legitimacy of his 2017 World Championships victory after exposure to text messages suggesting a judge had provided assistance.

Luebbers stated: “Obviously at the time, I wouldn't have thought anything of it but after having seen the text and seeing that my name was mentioned specifically. It does make me wonder. I go back and question ‘Did I deserve it?’” He later won the senior men's title in 2018. His former coach, Kevin Broesler, who owned the Broesler School of Irish Dance, voluntarily suspended himself amid the allegations.

Investigative journalist Ellen Coyne shed further light in the documentary, recalling how she initially received an anonymous email exposing potential match-fixing within the competitive circuit in 2022. Coyne described an atmosphere of silence akin to the “omerta” associated with Mafia organisations, where insiders refrained from speaking out despite widespread wrongdoing. At the same time, Kerry O’Shea, editor of Irish Central in New York, received similar revelations implicating teachers and judges in conspiring to fix competition results, including disturbing references to sexual bribes.

Among the leaked communications were messages that appeared to negotiate exchanges of “other forms of appreciation” for guaranteed top competition placements, with suggestive and explicit language. For example, one judge asked, “Is it not time you came to my room?” while a teacher countered: “If we can get [student] to first, you can have anything you want ;)” These allegations implicated numerous teachers and judges associated with the All-Ireland Championships.

The scandal prompted a formal inquiry. Then Deputy Prime Minister Leo Varadkar called for an independent investigation citing the risk of “reputational damage” to Ireland. This led to disciplinary hearings against 44 individuals beginning in August 2023. However, in 2024, Coimisiún Le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG), the sport’s main governing body, announced that no further action would be taken, effectively dropping the proceedings.

Returning to the current championships, the boys competing typically present a fresher, more natural appearance compared to their female counterparts, which some observers noted during the opening day. Among the competitors are international participants such as Madison Daniel and Brigid Hull, friends from Colorado, USA, highlighting the sport’s broad global appeal.

In recognition of the event’s significance, Dublin City Council has commissioned a special commemorative badge to be awarded to each competitor, underscoring the championships' cultural importance in the Irish capital.

The World Irish Dancing Championships continue to attract dancers and audiences worldwide, even as debate over costume, presentation, and the integrity of the sport persists alongside thriving performances.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.clrgoireachtas.com> - Supports the information about the World Irish Dance Championships, specifically the registration process, venue, and organization details. It mentions the event's prestigious nature and the involvement of CLRG.
* <https://www.irishdancing.com/resources/major-competitions/2025-world-irish-dance-championships> - Provides details about the 2025 World Irish Dance Championships, including the dates and venue, aligning with the article's description of the event.
* <https://www.feistv.com/products/the-clrg-world-championships-2025> - Highlights the CLRG World Championships 2025, emphasizing its global significance and competitive nature as the premier Irish dancing event.
* <https://www.bbc.com> - Typically BBC would host or reference content like 'The Year that Rocked Irish Dancing' documentary, which discussed scandals within the Irish dancing world.
* <https://www.irishcentral.com> - As Kerry O’Shea is the editor of Irish Central, this site might have covered the developments and scandals in the Irish dancing community, aligning with the article’s mention.