



Swimmers take a diving start for the Vibes and Scribes Lee Swim yesterday afternoon, above. Below: competitor Rob readies himself for the race.

Picture: Jelly O'Sullivan/Provision

# Lee Swim gets an unexpected seal of approval

by Eoin English

A CURIOUS seal joined more than 230 competitors in one of the biggest Lee Swims yet over the weekend.

The mammal was spotted frolicking in the river's south channel early on Saturday morning.

And he stuck around to keep a close eye on the race that afternoon, even accompanying some swimmers right up to the finish line.

He wasn't the only non-competitor who joined

in the fun. An over-excited man, who gardai believe had consumed a considerable amount of alcohol, jumped in to the river from St Patrick's Bridge during the race.

He was rescued by life-guards in the water and was escorted away from the course by security.

Thousands of people lined the city's quays to watch the Vibes and Scribes-sponsored race, which this year attracted three times more entrants than last year.

Only two swimmers

failed to complete the two-kilometre course, which ran from the North Mall, down the north channel and back up a portion of the south channel, finishing by the Clarion Hotel.

With an average race time of 24 minutes, organisers said times were slower than last year.

But Aidan Maguire, of Dublin's Glendalough Swimming Club, didn't care.

Aidan, who was pipped by half a second into second place last year, surged to the finish to win the Lee



Swim Trophy with a time of 24 minutes 50.5 seconds.

The female race was won by Deirdre Kearney from Limerick Masters with a time of 27 minutes 50.6 seconds.

She also won the 1937 Denis Ollivere trophy for coming closest to the notional world record for the Lee Swim, calculated by organisers.

Sponsorship raised by some of the swimmers, combined with a bucket collection along the quays, raised up to €10,000.

The Lions Club will

donate the money to the Mercy University Hospital to help fund a holiday to Spain for sick children in September.

Lee Swim spokesman Pat Murphy said the organising committee was delighted with this year's event.

"I would like to thank all those who took part, and all the agencies who helped make it possible," he said.

"It wouldn't be possible without the help of all the agencies, and the backing of Cork City Council." Plans for next year's event are already being discussed.