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Into the West

The bi-monthly magazine of the Connacht GAA Council

Ready for action!

Underage
and inter-county
teams given the
go-ahead to resume
collective training

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Nóta an Uachtaráin

Dear friends,

AM delighted to give my first address to all the readers of Into the West. My name is John Murphy and I am the new President of the Connacht GAA Council.

As the first Tubbercurry man to be elected to the role, on behalf of my club and my family I am honoured and delighted. Coincidentally, the first Sligo man to be Connacht GAA President was my grandfather, Jack Brennan, and although it is a consequence of my family's love of the GAA that I became involved in GAA administration, I am not in the job because my grandfather did it, but because I wanted the position myself. I am absolutely thrilled to have the job and I am excited about what the next few years holds.

In the coming months and years, I hope to use this platform to deliver information on some important projects and initiatives taking place in Connacht GAA.

One of the first projects we undertook was the delivery of five webinars about property issues in the GAA to the five counties in the province. The webinars were very well attended, so it is clear there is a genuine interest there from the membership. The webinars dealt with:

*Insurance and its importance

*The protocols that have been put in place for clubs and counties that wish to develop an infrastructural project

*We finally dealt with property ownership and the necessity of having the Trustees up to date, while also asking clubs to consider entering the corporate Trust model

If a club has an idea for a development, that project must first be assessed, recorded in the minutes and gain support from the club itself. The project will then go to the County Development officer and then to the County Board where it will be scrutinised along with the business plan. If approved, it will go to the Connacht Council and if necessary, to the National Finance and National Infrastructure Committee. Large projects must be signed off by Coiste Bainistí. Further information on the subject is available from the County Development officers or the Connacht GAA webpage.

At the time of writing, we are counting down the days to the return of inter-county and underage Gaelic Games activities, and while it is a huge challenge for us, we must understand that Covid-19 is a world pandemic. Everybody wants to get back playing all sports and as an organisation we want to resume playing, but we simply must adhere to Government and HSE guidelines.

We are all very keen to get playing again, but because the GAA is one of the biggest organisations in the country, if we move too early and the number of cases rise again, we will be back to square one.

While it is painful to not have any Gaelic Games activity taking place, it is better to hold off until 19 April for adult county teams and a week later for all underage training, within the strict guidelines.

On another note, there has been some unease about Croke Park withdrawing the wages cover from the player injury fund. The cost of the wages section of the player injury fund was in the region of €1.3m per annum and because of the financial situation Croke Park withdrew that cover. It is important to note that the GAA is one of a few organisations that offers such a player injury fund.

To counter the withdrawn of the wages fund, Croke Park have two options: they can either increase the insurance premium for all clubs by 25%, or they introduce an injury benefit insurance policy for players. The GAA is in the process of negotiating this type of policy with their insurers, Marsh. I believe the cost of such a policy will be reasonable and acceptable to all players.

Rather than increasing the payments into the fund for all clubs, it may be better to offer the players the option of this insurance policy.

Is mise, le meas

John Murphy
Uachtarán Chomhairle Connacht



JOHN MURPHY
Connacht GAA President

Nóta an Rúnaí

A chairde,

It has been a long winter and spring without any Gaelic Games activity whatsoever, but it looks like the patience of our club members and families will pay off in the weeks and months ahead.

At the time of writing Government restrictions keeping us within a 5km radius of our houses have been eased slightly. There is a date on the table for a return to collective training for our inter-county teams, while most importantly, in my eyes, is the reopening of our club grounds to facilitate underage training one week later on 26 April. All of these easing of restrictions will have to be conducted within the guidelines provided.

With the evenings getting longer and the weather improving it is brilliant to be able to bring our young GAA players back to the training field. They will have to stay in pods of 15, but after a winter of very little activity this is a real boost to everyone.

Just exactly what the GAA calendar will look like in the months ahead remains to be seen, but discussions are ongoing as to when our county players and club players can get back to action. Like everyone, I am very excited about the 2021 season.

Our new Connacht GAA Council has been busy in the early months of the year, and despite the travel restrictions, we have been meeting as usual - albeit over Zoom - to keep GAA business moving. Our new council members have settled into their roles, and as our new President John Murphy describes in this publication, we have been in regular contact with the various Clubs and County Boards in the last couple of months.

The easing of restrictions around the Covid-19 pandemic have given us all hope that it will soon be gone from our midst, but that is far from the case just yet. I urge all clubs, counties and GAA members to continue to follow the HSE and Government guidelines, and if we do so I'm sure we'll see further relaxations in the months to come.

Is mise, le meas

John Prenty
Rúnaí, CLG Cuige Connachta



'Into the West'



Keep yourself in the loop. Sign up today for your free electronic copy of the magazine - emailed directly to your Inbox. To sign up, email magazine@connachtgaa.ie

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COVER PICTURE –Paddy Maguire of Leitrim leads his team out for their 2020 Connacht GAA Football Senior Championship quarter-Final against Mayo at Avontcard Páirc Sean Mac Diarmada in Carrick-on-Shannon. Photo: Ramsey Cardy/Sportsfile

Launch of new Gaelic Games Player Pathway

THE GAA, THE LGFA and
AN CUMANN CAMÓGAÍOCHTA

THE GAA, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association & An Cumann Camógaíochta are delighted to announce details of a new and exciting Gaelic Games Player Pathway.

For the first time, all three Associations with responsibility for the promotion of Gaelic Football, Hurling, Ladies Football and Camogie will have an aligned pathway and vision for player development.

All players are at the heart of this new Pathway – with club involvement central to its success – and there will be a key focus on creating an effective player development environment.

The Gaelic Games Player Pathway aims to fulfil the mission of the three Associations to address elitism in underage development, make quality coaching within clubs a lynchpin and to provide an opportunity for lifelong participation in our games for every boy and girl, regardless of their ability.

The Pathway has three main phases: Foundation, Talent and Elite/High Performance, with these phases further subdivided into eight sub-phases.

All three Associations are committed to providing players with the right supports at the right time, which will enable them to individually empower themselves to engage with the many challenges they will face along their Player Pathway Journey.

Kilkenny hurling legend Henry Shefflin (Ballyhale Shamrocks) was on hand today to launch the new Player Pathway, along with Kilkenny Senior camogie player Davina Tobin (Emeralds), and Meath Senior Ladies Footballer Vikki Wall (Dunboyne). This announcement reinforces the commitment and joint approach to Games Development from all three Associations, and builds on previous collaborations such as Go Games, Féile, Volunteer Training, the recently-launched 'Be Ready to Play' and the Introduction to Coaching Gaelic Games Course, which will be launched very soon.

The Pathway outlines a holistic approach to Player and individual development, with the overriding aim of providing all players with positive experiences, thereby increasing the retention rate of lifelong participants.

The GAA, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association & An Cumann Camógaíochta are united in the wish to create a better understanding of the Player Pathway for all involved in nurturing a love of Gaelic games – the player, the parent/guardian, the coach, the club, the teacher.



Speaking about today's launch, Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael, Larry McCarthy, said: "The Gaelic Games Player Pathway is the result of several years of careful work and planning that is designed to give every player the chance to have the best experience possible from their involvement in Gaelic games.

"All of our players are club players; and so it is vital that we put the club at the heart of our player development pathway and ensure that whatever road your playing career takes, that it is something positive and that the club in turn benefits.

Aligning this work across the GAA, LGFA and Camogie will embed this philosophy throughout Gaelic games coaching with a culture that nurtures the Person as much as the Player."

Uachtarán Cumann Peil Gael na mBan, Mícheál Naughton, commented: "This exciting programme will help greatly to foster and enhance a culture of participation and enjoyment for all of our players.

"Our wish is that our players get involved in our Association and stay involved for life.

"You may be a player who is fortunate to line out for your county on All-Ireland Final day – or you may be a player who's in our sport simply for participation and enjoyment.

"There is no distinction to be made here – it's about playing our sport because you enjoy it, and being encouraged to play.

"I would like to acknowledge the hard

work and collaboration of key stakeholders in all three Associations in bringing this Gaelic Games Player Pathway to fruition."

On behalf of An Cumann Camógaíochta, President Kathleen Woods commented: "The Camogie Association is delighted to be part of this historical and ground breaking collaboration.

"The core and heart of this new pathway is that it is player-centred and club-centred.

"This new pathway facilitates the development of all players at all levels from participation to performance.

"The underpinning philosophy of the Gaelic Games Player Pathway is to support players with the right environment, at the right time of development through coaching, education and developing their athletic and personal capacities as they grow.

"This will ensure that the experience of playing our games is always appropriate for the developmental stage of the player involved and will assist players, parents, coaches, teachers officials and administrators to make informed decisions about player development so that every child youth and adult can reach their desired potential and enjoy our games throughout their lifetime.

"I would like to acknowledge and thank the work of the staff within all three associations and the many volunteers who have contribute to the Gaelic Games Player Pathway Development."

For full details on the Gaelic Games Player Pathway, visit
<https://learning.gaa.ie/playerpathway>

Boland and Freeman make the cut in GAA/GPA Champion 15 selection



Shane Boland of Mayo prepares to take a free during the 2020 Nickey Rackard Cup Final against Donegal at Croke Park.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach/Sportsfile.

Christy Ring Cup winners, Kildare, lead the way with four players on the 15-man selection, while Down, Donegal, Mayo, Fermanagh, Offaly, Louth, Wicklow, and Tyrone are also represented.

The Player of the Year winners in the three competitions have also been confirmed.

Paul Divilly of Kildare (Christy Ring Cup), Donegal's Danny Cullen (Nickey Rackard Cup), and Louth's Andrew Mackin (Lory Meagher Cup), are all singled out for personal accolades on the back of excellent campaigns.

Congratulating the winners, Uachtarán CLG John Horan said: "This is a great honour for the players chosen and for their families and clubs who they represent. These awards will be a reminder of the lengths all our players went to for our benefit during the tough year that was 2020."

Paul Flynn, CEO of the GPA, added: "First of all, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the players who competed in the Christy Ring, Nickey Rackard and Lory Meagher Cups in 2020. In very challenging times, you helped give fans of our games all over the country something to look forward to and discuss on a weekly basis and that should not be underestimated. My warmest congratulations to the 15 players who have made the Champion 15 and to Paul, Danny and Andrew on being named as Players

of the Year in your respective competitions. You are all very deserving winners."

The selection process for the GAA/GPA 2020 Champion 15 included player and coach feedback and was finalised by an independent selection committee of journalists and referees.

Cathal Freeman of Mayo breaks out of defence during the Nickey Rackard Cup Final.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach/Sportsfile.



GAA/GPA Champion 15

- 1: Stephen Keith (Down) - Christy Ring Cup
- 2: Sean McVeigh (Donegal) - Nickey Rackard Cup
- 3: Caolan Taggart (Down) - Christy Ring Cup
- 4: CATHAL FREEMAN (Mayo) - Nickey Rackard Cup
- 5: Conor McShea (Fermanagh) - Lory Meagher Cup
- 6: Rian Boran (Kildare) - Christy Ring Cup
- 7: Danny Cullen (Donegal) - Nickey Rackard Cup
- 8: Eoghan Cahill (Offaly) - Christy Ring Cup
- 9: Paul Divilly (Kildare) - Christy Ring Cup
- 10: Damian Casey (Tyrone) - Nickey Rackard Cup
- 11: James Burke (Kildare) - Christy Ring Cup
- 12: SHANE BOLAND (Mayo) - Nickey Rackard Cup
- 13: Jack Sheridan (Kildare) - Christy Ring Cup
- 14: Andrew Mackin (Louth) - Lory Meagher Cup
- 15: Christy Moorehouse (Wicklow) - Christy Ring Cup

GAA/GPA Christy Ring Cup Player of the Year: Paul Divilly (Kildare)

GAA/GPA Nickey Rackard Cup Player of the Year: Danny Cullen (Donegal)

GAA/GPA Lory Meagher Cup Player of the Year: Andrew Mackin (Louth)

THE best hurlers from the 2020 Christy Ring, Nickey Rackard, and Lory Meagher Cups have been announced with confirmation of the 2020 GAA/GPA Champion 15 team, with Mayo duo Shane Boland and Cathal Freeman named in the team of the year.

The selection contains players from nine counties and features seven players who competed in the Ring Cup, six who competed in the Rackard Cup, and two who competed in the Meagher Cup.

Mayo's Mullin and O'Connor impressive season with PwC

BLUE is the dominant colour in an historic football selection that crowns the 2020 PwC All-Stars, but the Green and Red of Mayo were also awarded for a brilliant year.

All-Ireland champions Dublin are represented by a record-equaling tally of nine players on the final 15 – a haul not seen by the Sky Blues since their iconic All-Ireland championship winning team of 1977.

It is a landmark selection for the Breffni Blues of Cavan too, who previously had received two awards in the 50 years of the scheme in Ollie Brady and Dermot McCabe. However, their magnificent Ulster Championship triumph is recognised through awards for ace goalkeeper Raymond Galligan, heroic defender Pdraig Faulkner

and the influential Thomas Galligan at midfield. In the case of goalkeeper and captain Galligan it makes him the 800th player to have received an All-Star since they were first held back in 1971.

Elsewhere, there is another notable first for Tipperary captain Conor Sweeney who is acknowledged for his prolific role in leading Tipperary to their first Munster win since 1935 with selection as a PwC All-Star in the full forward line. In the process he follows in the footsteps of county men Declan Browne and Michael Quinlivan.

Mayo's Oisín Mullin, who is nominated for the PwC GAA/GPA Young Player of the Year, is picked in a defence where Dubs dominate.

Dublin's Brian Fenton, who has never lost a senior championship match since his 2015 debut, partners Thomas Galligan in the middle and collects his fifth career PwC All-Star.

Cillian O'Connor's razor-sharp contribution to Mayo in their march to Connacht glory and in reaching the All-Ireland final is recognised in an attack that features the towering Conor Sweeney, a first-time award for Niall Scully and then an addition to the personal hauls of Dublin's big guns Ciaran Kilkenny, Con O'Callaghan and Dean Rock.

The awards were picked by a panel of Gaelic Games Correspondents from across print, radio, tv and digital media. The winners will be showcased on a special tv programme on RTÉ 1 this Saturday evening at 6.35pm, where the PwC All-Stars in hurling will be announced and also the winners of the PwC GAA/GPA Player and Young Player of the Year will be announced in hurling and football.

Uachtarán CLG John Horan said: "I'd like to extend the warmest congratulations to all of those players who have been selected and know it is an honour that will mean a lot to them, their families and the clubs and communities who they represent so well. These awards have stood the test of time as something truly special, and I want to acknowledge PwC for their support and helping ensure that after the achievement that was getting the 2020 Championships played that we can acknowledge all of our players who made it possible and salute the cream of the crop."

Paul Flynn, GPA CEO said: "I know what a great honour it is to be selected as a PwC All-Star and all 15 players should be very proud of their achievements.



202 All-Star and Young Footballer of the Year Oisín Mullin of Mayo is tackled by Brian Fenton – Senior Footballer of the Year – during the 2020 All-Ireland football final at Croke Park.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach/Sportsfile.

awarded for All-Stars

Individually they were the best of the best in 2020. I also want to congratulate all the nominees who were shortlisted."



Cillian O'Connor takes aim for Mayo during the 2020 All-Ireland final. Photo: Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile.



PwC All-Stars Football 2020

(previous years selected in brackets)

1. **Raymond Galligan** (Cavan)
2. **OISÍN MULLIN** (Mayo)
3. **Padraig Faulkner** (Cavan)
4. **Michael Fitzsimons** (Dublin) (2017, '19)
5. **James McCarthy** (Dublin) (2014, '17, '18)
6. **John Small** (Dublin)
7. **Eoin Murchan** (Dublin)
8. **Brian Fenton** (Dublin) (2015, '16, '18, '19)
9. **Thomas Galligan** (Cavan)
10. **Niall Scully** (Dublin)
11. **Ciaran Kilkeney** (Dublin) (2015, '16, '18)
12. **Con O'Callaghan** (Dublin) (2017, '19)
13. **CILLIAN O'CONNOR** (Mayo) (2014)
14. **Conor Sweeney** (Tipperary)
15. **Dean Rock** (Dublin) (2016, '17)

PwC GAA/GPA Footballer of the Year – Brian Fenton (Dublin)
PwC GAA/GPA Young Footballer of the Year – OISÍN MULLIN (Mayo)

Healy and McGrath claim

First-time All Star Orlaith McGrath celebrates scoring Galway's first goal against Kilkenny during the 2020 All-Ireland Senior Camogie final.

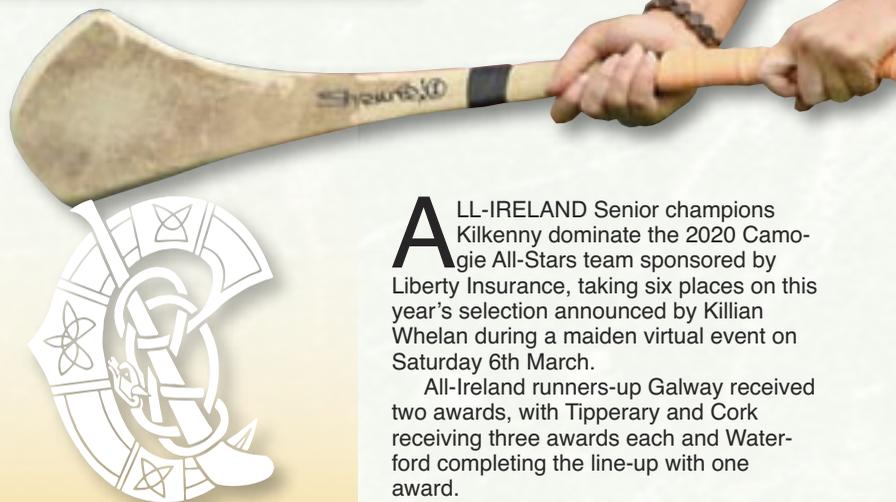
Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach/ Sportsfile.



2020 All-Stars team

sponsored by Liberty Insurance:

1. Áine Slattery (Tipperary) - 1st Time Winner
2. SHAUNA HEALY (Galway) - 2nd Time Winner
3. Claire Phelan (Kilkenny) - 2nd Time Winner
4. Mary Ryan (Tipperary) - 1st Time Winner
5. Hannah Looney (Cork) - 2nd Time Winner
6. Karen Kennedy (Tipperary) - 1st Time Winner
7. Davina Tobin (Kilkenny) - 1st Time Winner
8. Chloe Sigerson (Cork) - 2nd Time Winner
9. Grace Walsh (Kilkenny) - 2nd Time Winner
10. Niamh Rockett (Waterford) - 1st Time Winner
11. Orla Cronin (Cork) - 1st Time Winner
12. Denise Gaule (Kilkenny) - 4th Time Winner
13. ORLAITH McGRATH (Galway) - 1st Time Winner
14. Miriam Walsh (Kilkenny) - 2nd Time Winner
15. Anne Dalton (Kilkenny) - 7th Time Winner



ALL-IRELAND Senior champions Kilkenny dominate the 2020 Camogie All-Stars team sponsored by Liberty Insurance, taking six places on this year's selection announced by Killian Whelan during a maiden virtual event on Saturday 6th March.

All-Ireland runners-up Galway received two awards, with Tipperary and Cork receiving three awards each and Waterford completing the line-up with one award.

Amongst the winners for the champions were full-back Claire Phelan, left half-

Camogie All-Stars

back Davina Tobin, midfield Grace Walsh, left half-forward Denise Gaule, full-forward Miriam Walsh and left corner-forward Anne Dalton.

All-Ireland runners-up Galway are represented with right corner-back Shauna Healy and right corner-forward Orlaith McGrath.

Tipperary players Áine Slattery (goal-keeper), Mary Ryan (left corner-back) and Karen Kennedy (centre half-back) receive their first All-Stars Awards and are joined on the All-Stars selection by Cork trio Hannah Looney (right half-back), Chloe Sigerson (midfield) and Orla Cronin



Shauna Healy of Galway won her second Camogie All Star for her performances in 2020.

Photo: Cody Glenn / SPORTSFILE.

(centre half-forward).

Waterford captain and right half-forward Niamh Rockett completes this year's winning selection.

Kilkenny manager Brian Dowling was named as Manager of the Year for the first time after guiding his team to All-Ireland glory in December.

Kilkenny's Denise Gaule also collected the Camogie Association/WGPA Senior Players' Player of the Year award following on from her match winning performance in the All-Ireland Senior decider. Niamh Mallon of Down was the recipient of the Intermediate accolade whilst Armagh's Ciara Donnelly was chosen as the Junior Players' Player of the Year. All three were selected after voting by inter-county players through the WGPA with the awards sponsored by Liberty Insurance.

All-Ireland Intermediate champions Down lead the 2020 Soaring Stars Awards, represented by six players; defenders Dearbhla Magee and Fionnuala Carr, midfielder Paula O'Hagan and forwards Sara-Louise Graffan, Niamh Mallon and Sorcha McCartan.

Intermediate runners-up Antrim are represented by three players; defenders Chloe Drain and Niamh Donnelly along with forward Maeve Kelly.

Represented from the All-Ireland Intermediate Semi-Finalists are goalkeeper Aideen Lowry and defender Clodagh Tynan from Laois, while Meath defender Claire Coffey also receives an award.

All-Ireland Premier Junior Champions Armagh receive two Soaring Stars awards to forwards Leanne Donnelly and Ciara Donnelly while the remaining position is taken by Nancy Murray Cup champion Róisín O'Keeffe from Cavan.

Speaking at the event Camogie Association President Kathleen Woods said:

"I would like to welcome everyone to this evening's Camogie All-Stars presentation. This event is down to the commitment of you, our players. It is down to the commitment of Liberty Insurance our sponsors who stood firmly with us throughout 2020. It is down to the commitment of county managers and county boards to comply with all the protocols and procedures that were necessary. To all of you, thank you.

"You, our All-Star nominees played the Championships behind closed doors in empty stadia and it didn't curtail you're your passion and commitment. Thank you also to the WGPA for their input in the Players' Player of the Year awards.

"Congratulations to all of tonight's nominees and winners. Let us now look forward to the 2021 Championships".

Galway Bay FM's Ollie Turner pens 'Game of My Life - Galway'

A NEW book featuring 25 well known former Galway hurlers telling their stories about the game that helped define their career and the highs and lows experienced along the way is now available in Irish bookshops.

'Game of My Life' is penned by Galway Bay FM's Ollie Turner and dedicates chapters to local legends who've worn the maroon and white over the past 50 years.

25 of Galway's greatest hurlers remember the one game that will live with them forever ... including Jimmy Hegarty, Ned Dervan, Andy Fenton, Iggy Clarke, Sean Silke, Joe Connolly, PJ Molloy, Noel Lane, John Connolly, Mike Conneely, Anthony Cunningham, Pete Finnerty, Eanna Ryan, Gerry McInerney, John Commins, Michael Coleman, Micheál Donoghue, Pádraig Kelly, Kevin Broderick, Ger Farragher, David Collins, Ollie Canning, Alan Kerins, Fergal Moore and Gearoid McInerney ... the day that defined their lives.

One of those hurlers is five time All Star Pete Finnerty, who picked the 1985 All Ireland semi final when Galway shocked Cork. Here is an excerpt from Pete's chapter:

"When it came to picking the team for the 1985 semi-final, Phelim often commented that the question was asked at a hurling board meeting... 'Did ye pick that team from a hat?'

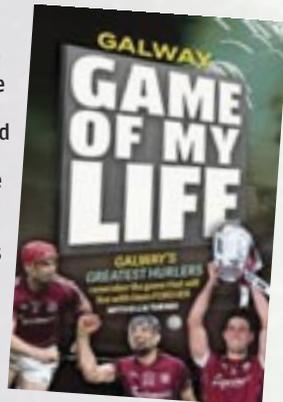
It was seen as a bit of a laugh to put myself at wing back and Keady at centre-back instead of centre-forward where he had played as a minor. Tony Kilkenny made his debut that day at 28 years of age, and Sylvie at corner-back was never that far back in his life. If Galway hurling wanted a change, this was definitely it.

Farrell always sat us down in the middle of the field on the Tuesday before a game to announce the team and it would be in the press the following day. I sat there and really did not expect to be playing. There were still a number of established players like Seamus Coen, Conor Hayes and Ollie Kilkenny to fill the full-back line and Sylvie was there for half-

back. Even though I was picked at wing back in training and had won an All-Ireland under-21 there, I wasn't given any real encouragement that I was doing well and so when the team was called out, I wasn't sure whether I had heard my name or not.

He did say my name... didn't he? I thought to myself, but it was only after the team was announced that the subs went away and the starting 15 remained for a chat. There was a lot of us looking at each other. As if to say... Jesus, he did say your name too!"

Game of My Life - Galway is now in all good bookshops, priced at €20.



Ward and Higgins named in Ladies football Teams of the 2020 Championships

GALWAY'S Louise Ward and Roscommon's Jennifer Higgins were named in the 2020 Senior and Intermediate Team of the Championship respectively at the recent awards ceremony.

Armagh forward Aimee Mackin was been crowned TG4 Senior Players' Player of the Year for 2020.

Mackin (23) was voted best in class by her peers, with the Shane O'Neills player fending off stiff competition from Dublin duo Carla Rowe and Sinead Goldrick to claim the coveted individual award.

Mackin's Senior Players' Player of the Year accolade was confirmed on 'Peil na mBan – Foirne na Bliana,' in association with AIG Insurance, which aired on TG4.

And it was a show to remember for Mackin, who was also named on the Senior Team of the Championship, while her sensational second half semi-final goal against Dublin earned the lethal attacker the AIG Cúl na Bliana award.

Vikki Wall, meanwhile, was named as the TG4 Intermediate Players' Player of the Year following a brilliant season for the Royals. The Junior accolade went to Fermanagh's 20-year-old forward Eimear Smyth for the second successive year.

On the Intermediate team, Player of the Year Wall makes the grade as one of seven Meath representatives. Runners-up Westmeath have four players selected, Clare have two players on the team, with one each for Kildare and Roscommon – Jennifer Higgins.

On the Senior selection, Dublin lead



Named on the Senior Team of the Season, Louise Ward of Galway breaks away from the Monaghan defence during the 2020 TG4 All-Ireland Senior Ladies Football Championship encounter with Monaghan. Photo: Sam Barnes/Sportsfile.

Junior Team

1. Shauna Murphy - Fermanagh
2. Emily Mulhall - Wicklow
3. Sarah Jane Winders - Wicklow
4. Rebekah Daly - Limerick
5. Alanna Conroy - Wicklow
6. Saoirse Tennyson - Antrim
7. Sarah McCarville - Fermanagh
8. Aoife Gorman - Wicklow
9. Róisín O'Reilly - Fermanagh
10. Áine Cunningham - Limerick
11. Laura Hogan - Wicklow
12. Aisling Maguire - Fermanagh
13. Eimear Smyth - Fermanagh
14. Meadhbh Deeny - Wicklow
15. Marie Kealy - Wicklow

Intermediate Team

1. Monica McGuirk - Meath
2. Rachel Dillon - Westmeath
3. Lucy Power - Westmeath
4. Emma Troy - Meath
5. Róisín Considine - Clare
6. Fiona Claffey - Westmeath
7. Megan Thynne - Meath
8. JENNIFER HIGGINS - Roscommon
9. Máire O'Shaughnessy - Meath
10. Emma Duggan - Meath
11. Vikki Wall - Meath
12. Anna Jones - Westmeath
13. Stacey Grimes - Meath
14. Niamh O'Dea - Clare
15. Róisín Byrne - Kildare

Senior Team

1. Martina O'Brien - Cork
2. Martha Byrne - Dublin
3. Clodagh McCambridge - Armagh
4. Eimear Meaney - Cork
5. Melissa Duggan - Cork
6. Bláithín Mackin - Armagh
7. Sinead Goldrick - Dublin
8. Jennifer Dunne - Dublin
9. LOUISE WARD - Galway
10. Carla Rowe - Dublin
11. Lyndsey Davey - Dublin
12. Aimee Mackin - Armagh
13. Áine O'Sullivan - Cork
14. Aishling Moloney - Tipperary
15. Noelle Healy - Dublin



Bronze sculptor Jarlath Daly's awards that will be presented to the players named on the Teams of the 2020 TG4 All-Ireland Ladies Football Championships, at his Dublin workshop. Photo: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile.

the way with six players included, with beaten finalists Cork providing four players on the chosen 15. Galway's 2020 captain Louise Ward and Tipperary's Aishling Moloney are also listed on the Senior Team of the Championship.

Marie Hickey, Ladies Gaelic Football Association President, said: "We are delighted to salute the various winners from 'Peil na mBan – Foirne na Bliana – le AIG Insurance.'

"This was a wonderful production that brought so many memories flooding back as we looked back on our 2020 TG4 All-Ireland Championships.

"It was an extraordinary and unprecedented season that saw us play two of our All-Ireland Finals five days before Christmas Day – and we were treated to some brilliant football across the three grades.

Individual awards

TG4 Senior Players' Player of the Year – Aimee Mackin – Armagh

TG4 Intermediate Players' Player of the Year – Vikki Wall – Meath

TG4 Junior Players' Player of the Year – Eimear Smyth – Fermanagh

AIG Cúl na Bliana

1. Aimee Mackin – Armagh v Dublin (TG4 All-Ireland Senior semi-final)

2. Vikki Wall – Meath v Westmeath (TG4 All-Ireland Intermediate Final)

3. Áine O'Sullivan – Cork v Dublin (TG4 All-Ireland Senior Final)



Jennifer Higgins from Western Gaels GAA club in Roscommon is presented with her Coaching medallion by LGFA President Marie Hickey during the Learn to Lead – LGFA Female Leadership Programme graduation evening at The Croke Park, Jones Road. Photo: Brendan Moran/Sportsfile.

"Our players went to great lengths to represent their counties and it was right to acknowledge the efforts of leading players in the Junior, Intermediate and Senior grades.

"Well done to the 45 players selected on the Teams of the Championship, and our TG4 Players' Player of the Year award winners.

"What a night it was for Aimee Mackin – who won the TG4 Senior Players' Player of the Year award, found a place in the forward line on the Senior Team of the Championship, and saw her brilliant goal against Dublin named as the 'AIG Cúl na Bliana.'

"We look forward to more brilliant football in 2021, when I expect so many of the players acknowledged this evening to feature prominently for their respective counties again."

Alan Esslemont, Ard-Stiúrthóir TG4, added: "Comhghairdeas le gach duine den 45 imreoir a ainmníodh tráthnóna inniu ar 'Peil na mBan - Foirne na Bliana' le AIG Insurance'.

"These players, from across all three inter-county grades played their part in keeping the country's spirits strong in 2020 and showed that in a challenging year for sport globally, the LGFA is a world-class model for women's sport. TG4 was delighted that it could continue to showcase these superb athletes in 2020.

"Congratulations to Aimee Mackin, Vikki Wall and Eimear Smyth, who were chosen by their fellow footballers as TG4's Players' Players of the year.

"A special congratulations is due to Armagh's Aimee Mackin, who was not only awarded 'Senior Player of the Year' but who also scored the 'AIG Cúl na Bliana'. What a year 2020 was for her!"

Fifth hurling All-Star for Galway's Burke



There was a fifth All Star award for Daithí Burke of Turloughmore and Galway at the PwC All-Stars for Hurling 2020.

Photo: Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile.

LIMERICK'S status as the current benchmark in hurling excellence has been underlined with their domination of the final 15 in the PwC All-Stars for Hurling 2020. After their clean sweep of all major trophies last season, the All-Ireland champions were rewarded with nine places on the star-studded final team – a record equalling total and eclipses the six awards the Treaty County claimed when they won the MacCarthy Cup in 2018.

Nine is the highest number of PwC All-Stars won by any team. It not only sees Limerick match their football counterparts Dublin in 2020 – but puts them in an exclusive group with the great Kilkenny hurling teams of 1983, 2000 and 2008 and iconic Dublin and Kerry football teams of 1977 and 1981 as the only other teams to claim that number of awards.

On top of that, Limerick's towering wing forward Gearóid Hegarty has been chosen by his peers as the PwC GAA/GPA Hurler of the Year with the St Patrick's star claiming his first award. Eoin Cody from Ballyhale Shamrocks is the PwC GAA/GPA Young hurler of the Year after his exploits with Kilkenny last season.

In what is the 50th year of the prestigious awards scheme, Galway's defensive rock Daithí Burke is honoured for the fifth time in defence, the prolific Clare ace Tony Kelly picks up a second career award, while TJ Reid's status among the game's greats is enhanced with a fifth award for the top Cat.

Another notable piece of history is made in the choice for goalkeeper. Nickie Quaid's selection sees the Limerick custodian follow in the footsteps of his late father Tommy who was also a goalkeeping hero with Limerick and an All-Star in 1992. It is the fourth time that a father and son duo have been honoured in hurling – following Tipp's Ken and Brian Hogan, Richie Power senior and junior in Kilkenny and 'Fan' and Philly Larkin from Kilkenny.

In addition to this there is yet another Limerick landmark in the selection of brothers Dan and Tom Morrissey. Brothers winning All-Stars is not rare – but siblings honoured in the same year is more unusual and an added feat for the Ahane duo.

Wexford's Martin and John Quigley in 1974 were the first set of brothers to be picked on the same hurling team – followed by Kilkenny's John and Ger Henderson in 1983, and Ger and Liam Fennelly also in 1983.

Tipp's Conal and Cormac Bonnar were both honoured in the same year twice – in 1989 and 1991. Billy and Johnny Dooley also shared the honours twice in 1994 and 1995.

Tipp's Paul and Eoin Kelly featured on the 2002 team and Cork's Sean Óg and Setanta Ó hAilpín were there in 2003, and Ben and Jerry O'Connor featured in 2005. More recently it is an honour bestowed on Galway's Ollie and Joe Canning in 2009 and Tipp's Ronan and Padraic Maher in 2016 and 2019.

Uachtarán CLG John Horan saluted the winners and said: "For the last 50 years the All-Stars has stood apart as something special in Irish sport, and our thanks to PwC for enabling us to continue this great tradition and particularly after the significance of staging the Championships last winter. Congratulations to all of the players, not only for their awards, but for the inspiration they are to their clubs and counties and it's an especially great night for Gearóid, Brian, Eoin and Oisín and their families for being chosen by their peers for overall awards."



PwC All-Stars Hurling 2020

(previous awards in brackets)

1. **Nickie Quaid (Limerick)**
2. **Seán Finn (Limerick) (2018, 2019)**
3. **Dan Morrissey (Limerick) (2018)**
4. **DAITHÍ BURKE (Galway) (2015, '16, '17, '18)**
5. **DIARMAID BYRNES (Limerick)**
6. **Tadhg de Búrca (Waterford) (2015)**
7. **Kyle Hayes (Limerick)**
8. **Jamie Barron (Waterford) (2016, '17)**
9. **Tony Kelly (Clare) (2013)**
10. **Gearóid Hegarty (Limerick)**
11. **Cian Lynch (Limerick) (2018)**
12. **Tom Morrissey (Limerick)**
13. **Aaron Gillane (Limerick) (2019)**
14. **TJ Reid (Kilkenny) (2012, '14, '15, '19)**
15. **Stephen Bennett (Waterford)**

PwC GAA/GPA Hurler of the Year – Gearóid Hegarty (Limerick)

PwC GAA/GPA Young Hurler of the Year – Eoin Cody (Kilkenny)



Micheál Naughton, Uachtarán, LGFA, is presented with his Presidential medal by his wife, Annette, at the family home in Co. Donegal. Micheál Naughton was inaugurated as the new President of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association at 2020 Annual Congress, which was held remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Photo: Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile.

Castleconnor's Micheál Naughton is the new President of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association

THE Sligo native, representing Donegal and Ulster, took over the position from outgoing Marie Hickey, who had served six years at the helm, at the association's recent virtual Annual Congress.

A successful businessman, and working in the hotel industry, Naughton is the 13th different President of the LGFA since its inception in 1974.

Naughton will now preside for the next four years - and lead the LGFA into its 50th year in existence in 2024.

Laois native Marie Hickey completed her second three-year stint before handing over the reins to Naughton.

Westmeath's Geraldine Giles also served for two terms as President from 2003-2009, while Wexford's Pat Quill was President of the LGFA for three terms (1985-1988, 2009-2012 and 2012-2015).

Hailing from West Sligo, but based in Donegal for over 23 years, Micheál Naughton is a former Donegal and Ulster Council Chairperson who also managed the Donegal Ladies Senior Football team.

Affiliated to the Four Masters club, Naughton guided Donegal to the 2010 TG4 All-Ireland Intermediate crown during her first stint in charge, before returning to preside over a 2016 Lidl National League Division 2 title win.

Micheál is married to Annette, and they are the proud parents of daughter, Erin.

Speaking at today's Annual Congress, Naughton said: "I will always do my utmost to continue the good work that has already been done. I will continue to champion one of the fastest growing female sports in Europe.

"We're not the finished article but we've built an Association that we should be very proud of.

"We need to focus on our biggest asset - our players. In my term as President, I would love to see Croke Park at full capacity for All-Ireland Final Day.

"Looking forward to the next four years, I want to continue on the great work and collaboration with the GAA and Camogie Association. I want to forge greater links and bonds."

In her final speech as President, Marie Hickey said: "Our links with the GAA and Camogie Association have never been stronger at national level. This will continue to improve as we work towards a federal system of governance.

"This is a time for great reflection - it has been an incredible journey."

Gradaim an Uachtaráin CLG GAA President's Awards

THE GAA is pleased to confirm the recipients for Gradaim an Uachtaráin 2021.

These prestigious annual awards, organised with the support of AIB and broadcast by TG4, affords Uachtarán CLG, John Horan, with an opportunity to acknowledge outstanding commitment and long service across the club and county network.

The 11 awards are a cross-section of people who have shared the common theme of making an inspirational impact on their code and also their club and community.

Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael, Seán Ó hOráin, said: "The GAA stands on the shoulders of the people we are fortunate to be able to call our own. Ultimately, the strength of the Association is down to the resilience, dedication and inspiration of the volunteers who make it happen, week after week, year after year.

"These awards give us an opportunity to single out a group who are not motivated by recognition, but who have made an invaluable contribution to our Association and are worthy of this acknowledgement and are great ambassadors for the tens of thousands like them all across the GAA.

"I would like to acknowledge AIB for their ongoing support of these awards and of their wider commitment to Gaelic games.

"Míle buíochas also to TG4 for their assistance in helping us to bring these awards to the widest audience possible and for the work they do each year in showcasing Gaelic games."



CONNACHT RECIPIENT PETER JOE FITZMAURICE, Kilmore GAA, Roscommon

Peter Joe was born in September 1930 and has given outstanding service to the Association. Kilmore GAA club was reformed in 1972 and Peter Joe became vice-chairperson in its inaugural year and has been involved in the club ever since.

On the field, Kilmore have won the County Junior championship in 1975, Intermediate championship in 1981 and Roscommon senior championship in 1983 and Peter Joe Fitzmaurice has been an ever constant and was a selector on all three occasions.

He has held many roles within the club including Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, assistant Treasurer and is President of Kilmore GAA for over 20 years. Peter Joe also served as a selector on many underage teams down the years.

He was a crucial part of the club drive back in 1979 when Kilmore acquired new ground and developed the current pitch and facilities which were opened in 1982. He has also given over 20 years of service to Roscommon GAA as a loyal gate collector on gates for club & County games.

EDUCATION AWARD MICHAEL McMAHON, AIT and Clare/Galway

Mike has been involved in AIT GAA since joining the staff as a lecturer in Civil Engineering in the early 90s. He has been a driving force in the hurling club ever since.

Mike was involved with Comhairle Ardoideachais for a long number of years, serving in a number of roles most notably as Rúnaí. His dedication was unwavering and he put in countless hours, above and beyond what most would deem necessary.

He has been a driver of competition for the 'weaker' colleges, notably the Corn Pádraig MacDiarmada. Mike no longer serves on CA having finished up at the 2019 AGM but left a great legacy through his devotion to the



role and to Gaelic games in this sector.

A native of Kilfenora in the Burren, Mike is heavily involved in Clarinbridge GAA Club and Galway GAA and a great role model for his selflessness and commitment.



HANDBALL RECIPIENTS MICHAEL & ANN NAUGHTON, St. Coman's GAA Club, Roscommon

Michael and Ann Naughton have served their club, county and province in a coaching and administrative capacity since 1980.

Michael and Ann coached both boys and girls in St Coman's, Roscommon, over this period and were particularly influential in promoting and developing girls and ladies handball at the club.

An incredible haul of honours followed and titles in Féile na Gael, Community Games, Tailteann Games, All-Ireland 40x20 & 60x30, Girls Team of 10, World Championships, USHA Nationals, 40x20 and 1-wall Nationals were brought back to the club and county during their time.

Ann served as Team manager to official Irish teams at various World Championships. Michael has served as club and county PRO. He won a number of Masters titles in both 40x20 and 60x30 and had a long-playing career. He continues his promotional work for handball through the Roscommon GAA History Committee and is still coaching at the St Coman's Handball Club. Both have been lifelong devotees to Handball and have given a lifetime of invaluable service to the game.

GAA Congress approves cynical fouls penalties

GAA Annual Congress ratified new penalties for aggressive and cynical fouls in hurling and football on a trial basis for a year. 61 per cent of delegates voted in favour of the three deterrents that were included in Motion 20.

In hurling, if a player with a goal-scoring opportunity either inside the 20-metre line or the semi-circular arc that extends from the 20 metre line is pulled down, tripped, or struck with a hurley in a careless manner then a penalty shall be awarded and the offender will be yellow-carded and sent to the sin-bin for 10 minutes.

If the foul committed is a second caution or one that merits a red-card then the offender is ordered off for the remainder of the game including any extra-time to be played.

Similarly, in football, if a cynical foul is committed on an attacking player with a goal-scoring opportunity inside the 20-metre line or the semi-circular arc, then a penalty will be awarded to the team affected.

Motion 20 was one of eight motions from the Standing Committee on Playing Rules that were voted through by Annual Congress.

Motion 21: This motion deals with the advantage rule and is somewhat related to Motion 20. If an aggressive foul is committed then the referee can allow play to continue if he believes the attacking team have a potential goal-scoring opportunity. This period of advantage can last for up to five seconds. If it becomes clear after five seconds that no advantage has accrued, then he can award a free. That would naturally mean a penalty would be awarded if the foul occurred inside the 20-metre line or semi-circular arc.

Motion 22: This motion dealt with misconduct by team officials and has defined what the categories of misconduct are and introduced a scale of sanctions that includes match suspensions rather than time suspensions. The implementation date is for the 2021 All-Ireland Championships in both codes and all grades and then for other competitions it will come into effect in 2022.

Motion 23: This motion relates to Motion 22 and dealt with unauthorised incursions onto the field of play. Now no-one will be able to come on to the field of play except a medic summoned by the referee. The sanction for an unauthorised incursion will



Dublin Chief Executive John Costello during the GAA Annual Congress 2020 at Croke Park.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile.

be a yellow-card. A repeat offence on the day would incur a second yellow-card followed by a red-card which would bar the offender from the pitch enclosure for the remainder of the game including any extra-time. If an individual is ordered off the pitch for a third time, then they will incur a one-match suspension. This motion will only come into effect after the cessation of the current Covid-19 protocols.

Motion 24: The passing of this motion has extended the scope of the rule dealing with abuse of a racist, sectarian, or anti-inclusion nature against an opponent to also include such abuse against a match official.

Motion 25: Teams can now validly start and finish a match with 13 players. Previously if they started a match with 13 they were required to have a full complement of 15 by the start of the second half.

Motion 26: It was already a foul in football and hurling to attempt to distract a free-taker by waving your arms or Hurley, shouting at them, or jumping up and down. The passing of this motion has extended the rule to include attempting to distract someone in similar fashion while they are taking a puck-out/kick-out or side line puck/kick.

Motion 27: The passing of this motion means teams can now make a temporary substitution of a player with a suspected head injury.

A proposal to split the GAA season between inter-county and club was ratified. There was no opposition to Motion 12 which stipulated that the All-Ireland Inter-County Senior Finals will from 2022 be played on or before the 29th Sunday of

the year. The exception would be where the first Sunday falls on January 1st, in which case the finals would be played on or before the 30th Sunday of the Year. In 2021, for example, the 29th Sunday of the year falls on July 18th.

The successful motion has also given Central Council the power to make other arrangements "in exceptional circumstances."

So, for example, restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic might make it impossible to play the All-Ireland Football Final by the 29th Sunday of the Year, in which case alternative arrangements would have to be made.

Motion 13 was passed that proposes restricting county senior championships to a maximum of 16 teams to help streamline the club season and make it easier to deliver a practical fixtures schedule.

Motion 12: There was no opposition to Motion 12 which stipulated that the All-Ireland Inter-County Senior Finals will from 2022 be played on or before the 29th Sunday of the year.

The exception would be where the first Sunday falls on January 1st, in which case the finals would be played on or before the 30th Sunday of the Year. In 2021, for example, the 29th Sunday of the year falls on July 18th.

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Pakie McGarty, RIP, is pictured here second from left, while in attendance at the Leitrim Supporters Club 25th Anniversary launch in 2011. Also pictured from left to right were: Tony Gallogly, Leixlip; Leitrim legend Pakie McGarty; Ben Wrynn, Leixlip; and Peter Hugh McPartland, Ballinaglera.

Photo: Brian Lawless / SPORTSFILE

Tributes pour in for Leitrim GAA legend Pakie McGarty

By **JOHN FALLON**
Media West (Ireland)

TRIBUTES have been paid to legendary Leitrim footballer Pakie McGarty, widely regarded as the best player ever from the county.

The Mohill native had a distinguished 23-year career with Leitrim, making his debut when he was just 16, and won Railway Cup honours with Connacht.

He played in six Connacht finals, losing five of them to Galway and one to Mayo in a career that went from 1949 to 1971.

Former Leitrim chairman and Connacht president Gerry McGovern from neighboring club Cloone said that McGarty was an outstanding footballer.

"He wasn't a big man but he could run at defences, had great agility and could pick off scores. He modelled himself a lot on Leo McAlinden here in Cloone who had

played for Connacht and Ulster and was a great man to solo. So Pakie practiced and perfected soloing and was very hard to mark.

"He gave outstanding service to Leitrim and continued to come back here down through the years. He came back and played for Mohill towards the end of his career. I remember playing against him one of those years.

"He was a natural footballer and it's a sad day for Leitrim. It's the end of an era," said McGovern.

McGarty had the distinction of playing in a national league game against Offaly in 1949 when he was just 16, and it was another eight months before he made his minor debut for the county.

He was on the Leitrim junior team which was defeated by Meath in the 1952 All-Ireland final and, along with Noel Blessing, became the first from the county to win a Railway Cup medal when Connacht triumphed in 1957.

McGarty moved to England where he worked on building sites and with London Transport but continued to travel home to play for Leitrim and notch up big scores. He played for the Tara club in London.

He moved back to Ireland in 1964 and opened a grocery shop in Clondalkin in Dublin which he operated until he retired in 1998.

He was the only Leitrim player selected on the Connacht Team of the Millennium.

McGarty, who would have been 88 later this month, played for the Sean McDermotts and Round Towers clubs after moving to Dublin and continued to have a keen interest in Leitrim GAA throughout his life, rejoicing when manager John O'Mahony led them to only their second Connacht title in history when they triumphed in 1994.

"He was a super footballer," said Stephen Flynn, secretary of Mohill GAA. "He was a superstar of his time."

Clubforce investment good news for the West

Clubforce, the Galway-based sports participation software company, has announced plans to double its workforce following a €2.5m investment in the business.

This expanded workforce of 40 members of staff will be spread between its Galway and UK offices and will allow Clubforce to accelerate delivery of an ambitious product roadmap. This will see the existing club management system evolve into a complete sports participation system, which will transform how club members, sports clubs and their governing bodies interact with each other.

The new investment comes as Clubforce finished 2020 strongly with unprecedented demand for new and better technological solutions from sports club volunteers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the announcement, Warren Healy, founder and CEO of Clubforce, said: "Sports organisations were already feeling a certain level of strain before the pandemic struck. Grassroots sports relies heavily on volunteers, who tend to be time-poor and the pandemic has made the role far more challenging.

"Our plan is to provide these volunteers with a significant number of additional tools to simply make their roles easier. We know that volunteer tasks are an increasing challenge and we're helping sports clubs to solve these challenges. The volunteers are the fulcrum around which everything else rotates in amateur sports."

Healy pointed out that most of the heavy lifting on the fundraise was driven by the company CFO, Carole Neylon and



Clubforce CEO Warren Healy



Carol Neylon, CFO, Clubforce

the existing board. Carole said that the funds will allow Clubforce to deliver on the vision of the company which is to bring

participation management to the core of its product and to continue its international expansion from the Galway base.

"While the product will be expanding significantly in its reach, the volunteer in these sports organisations will always be core to all of the product development," said Ms Nealon.

"Demand across the country, and overseas, has gone through the roof in recent months because of good marketing, good product and the effects of the pandemic. The investment and ongoing recruitment drive will give us everything we need to develop a world class product for our loyal and increasing customer base".

The investment also sees a significant addition to the board as Noel Murray, ex Head of Operations – Japan and Asia with Microsoft, is set to re-enter the fray of business as Chairman of the board at Clubforce.

The advertisement features a book titled "Into the West" celebrating 53 years of U-21 Championship Football in Connacht. The book cover shows a large silver trophy and several smaller club crests. To the right of the book is a large "ON SALE" sign in a stylized font. Below the sign is the Connacht Council crest, which depicts a hand holding a sword. A yellow-bordered box contains the following text: "Send payment to: Into the West, Pdraig Corcoran, Toneybane, Foxford, Co. Mayo, Ireland. Make cheques payable to: Connacht Council".



19 December 2020: Slippery Sam, elusive and still out of reach. Aidan O'Shea has a quick look as Colm Basquel takes his turn to lift the Sam Maguire Cup, no doubt wondering when he and Mayo will reach the holy grail. This is the county's 10th All-Ireland final loss since they last won the title in 1951 and O'Shea's fifth time to be on the losing team in a decider.

Photo by Brendan Moran/Sportsfile.

Sportsfile's 'A Season the strangest of years'

THE GAA president, John Horan, attended a virtual launch to officially unveil the 2020 edition of A Season of Sundays.

Over the past 24 years, the publication of Sportsfile's A Season of Sundays has become an annual sporting tradition, marking the end of each GAA season with a stunning collection of images.

This year's eagerly anticipated offering looks back at all the memories throughout a year like no other and is once again supported by Carroll's of Tullamore.

The 2020 edition captures the highs and lows of an incredible GAA season with another captivating and colourful look back on a season that hung in the balance

because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the highlights of another spectacular calendar year in the life of the GAA are expertly captured by the lenses of the Sportsfile photographers – and enhanced by Alan Milton's perceptive captions – even they could not have envisaged the challenges that 2020 would bring to people's lives and by extension to the activities of the GAA.

While the initial shutdown in March is expertly captured, so too is the grassroots volunteer movement that sprouted up across the wider GAA club network, underpinning a massive community effort during the first lockdown.

When training and games did return,

much of the activity took place in front of small crowds or none at all and a host of new precautionary measures accompanied the staging of matches and training sessions.

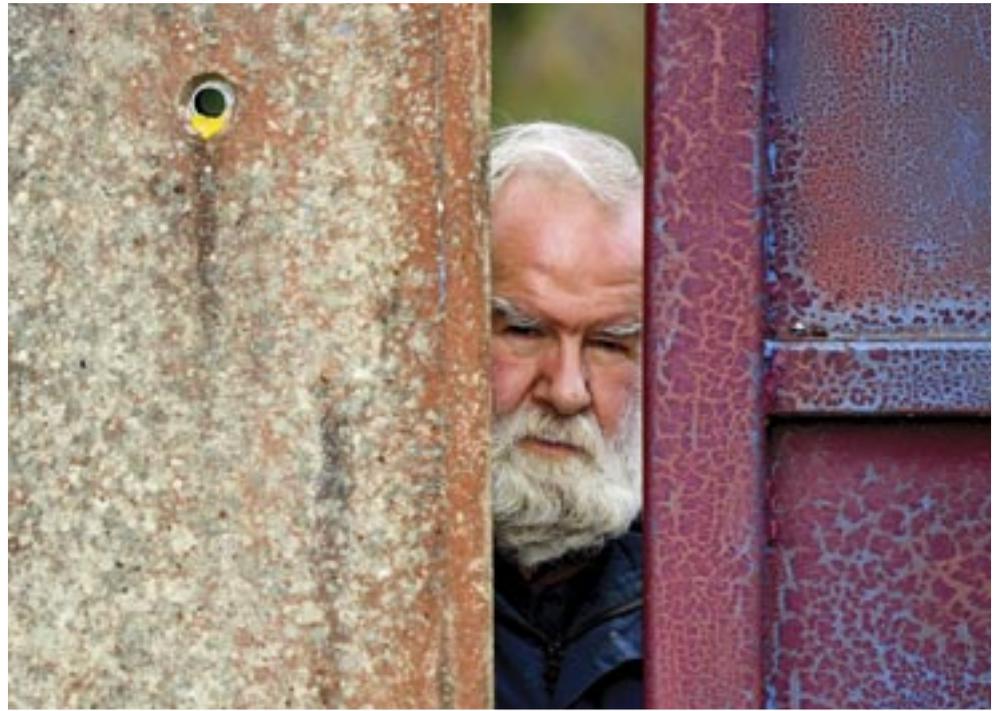
Thankfully, the club and inter-county championships exploded into life, providing a welcome distraction and memorable on-field exploits followed.

Speaking at the launch, the book's creator Ray McManus said: "While we all knew that something was heading west we never thought it would have such an impact on Irish society and indeed on the world. I remember sitting at my desk waiting on the TV broadcast (by the Taoiseach) and trying to work out what



1 August 2020: Walking down the aisle. After toggging out in the stand, the footballers of Milltown, Co. Galway, make a grand entrance in Pearse Stadium.

Photo by Piaras Ó Mídheach/
Sportsfile.



18 October 2020: Where there's a will there's a way. The longing to get into grounds to see matches live and the frustration of being locked out have generated some ingenuity among fans. In Tuam Stadium local man, Martin Connolly, finds a narrow viewing point at the gates.

Photo by Ramsey Cardy/Sportsfile.

of Sundays' captures in GAA history

would happen games and sports in general. That may seem somewhat selfish but it was my staff in Sportsfile I was really thinking of and how it would affect us as a group.

"Little did I know then that a hashtag used by the Press Photographers Association of Ireland would never be more relevant. #CapturingHistory is what photographers do every day and this year was probably the best example ever. In this, the 24th edition of A Season of Sundays, I believe we have captured a most extraordinary year in Gaelic games.

"When the historians or The National Museum of Ireland – specifically the Decorative Arts & History branch in Collins

Barracks – look back in 100 years' time I hope that this pictorial record of a strange year accurately reflects the 2020 GAA season."

Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Seán Ó hÓráin added: "We might be a little later than normal marking the release of A Season of Sundays – through no fault of Ray McManus or Sportsfile it must be noted – but isn't it fantastic to have a high-quality collection capturing the highs and lows of a season we thought we'd never see in our lifetime.

"I'm delighted Ray and his team waited to capture the finals and the front cover picture of Gearóid Hegarty celebrating a memorable final performance and Limer-

ick's win underlines the importance of the finals to the season as a whole.

"This year's edition will doubtless be remembered for the many non-playing pictures it includes and in capturing them, Sportsfile have secured important snapshots in history. Congratulations to Ray and his team and also to Carroll's of Tullamore for their ongoing support of this treasured publication."

An ideal gift for any GAA fan, the book is available at bookstores nationwide and online at www.sportsfile.com and is priced at €27.95.



Antrim hurler Neil McManus and his father Hugh at Cushendall GAA Club in Antrim. Neil is an ambassador for the GAA Community Heart Programme which seeks to raise awareness of the benefits of defibrillators to clubs and make it possible to fundraise to acquire them. Neil's work is inspired by his family experience five years ago when his father was saved by the presence of a defibrillator in the community during an emergency. GAA club-based defibrillators have been used to save 42 lives.

Photo: David Fitzgerald/
Sportsfile.

GAA Community Heart Programme seeks to help save lives through defibrillator awareness

ACCORDING to a recent survey, 42 lives across Ireland have been saved by Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) located in GAA facilities being used on members of their communities.

The GAA is marking this by today launching the Community Heart Programme.

This initiative encourages every club in the country to A.C.T. now and ensure that their club can also be prepared in case of an emergency and that they can avail of a defibrillator that is ACCESSIBLE, CHARGED and that there are enough TRAINED rescuers within your club who have the ability to operate the device.

The Community Heart Programme allows GAA Clubs to fundraise for life-saving Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) via a bespoke fundraising platform. The programme allows clubs to fundraise for new AEDs, which are connected to the internet via the mobile phone network. This means the AED will check itself and notify designated club members via email if there is an issue that needs to be addressed, such as the battery or pads needing to be changed.

In addition to having a bespoke fundraising platform, Clubs will be able to avail of a significant reduction of €995 saving per unit if they register and secure their AED(s) via the Community Heart Programme. Once the fundraising target of €2,150 per unit has been reached, the AED unit(s) will also be delivered directly to the club. Programme partners Heart Safety Solutions will supply the unit to the club.

We know that AED units save lives. However, AEDs, like all medical equipment, need to be replaced over time. The life expectancy of an AED is between eight and 10 years. Critical components such as pads and batteries need to be checked regularly.

Remember, an AED should be ACCESSIBLE, CHARGED with sufficient Club members TRAINED in how to operate the device. AEDs must be checked regularly to ensure that they are in working order and ready for use.

From school children to seemingly fit and health club players to older members of the community, there is a broad spectrum of people represented among the list of those who have benefitted by being

near a GAA-based AED during an emergency.

Uachtarán CLG Larry McCarthy encouraged clubs to engage with the Community Heart Programme. He said: "The GAA club is the focal point of the communities in which we operate. In the past we have seen how access to these devices have made a critical difference during an emergency. This Community Heart Programme not only plays a vital role at raising awareness, but also affords clubs an opportunity to ensure that they have some of the most up-to-date equipment available."

The GAA is working alongside Stryker to deliver the program. Stryker is one of the world's leading medical technology companies and, together with their customers, is driven to make healthcare better. The company offers innovative products and services in Orthopaedics, Medical and Surgical, and Neurotechnology and Spine that help improve patient and hospital outcomes.

For more information see: <https://savealife.communityheartprogram.com/gaa>.

Mayo and Connacht GAA mourns the loss of PJ McGrath

MAYO GAA & THE CONNAUGHT TELEGRAPH

MAYO GAA are saddened to learn the passing of PJ McGrath, Kilmaine GAA. PJ was a member of the Mayo Senior panel in the mid-60s before he took up refereeing at club and national level.

PJ was regarded as one of the greatest referees. He went on to referee the 1982 All-Ireland senior football final between Offaly and Kerry in 1982 and two All-Ireland minor finals.

PJ was heavily involved in GAA Administration, serving as Mayo County Board Chairman from 1997 to 2002. Over this time he served on the Connacht Council as president from 1994 to 1996. PJ was nominated to contest the position of Uachtaran C.L.G in 2002. He also was Chairman of the National Referee's Committee.

P.J. was presented with a Hall of Fame Award by the GAA in November 2014.

The South Mayo GAA Board said P.J. served the GAA throughout his life for club, county, province and nationally.

A tribute by the board stated: "He played his club football with Kilmaine and was a member of the 1966 Mayo senior football panel.

"He also played at full back on the Mayo Junior team the same year.

"He served Mayo as County Board chairman from 1997 to 2002 and later as president. He also served as Connacht Council president and ran for the GAA presidency in 2002.

"P.J. refereed the 1982 All-Ireland senior football final and two All-Ireland minor finals and was also chair of the National Referees Committee.



Former referees PJ McGrath (right) and Neil Duggan from Limerick are presented with their Hall of Fame awards at the 2014 National Referees' Awards Banquet at Croke Park.

Photo: Barry Cregg / SPORTSFILE

"Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis."

Away from sport, the deceased was a leading figure in the Mayo Fianna Fáil organisation for many years and served as constituency chairman.

Paying tribute to him, Deputy Dara Calleary stated: "It is with great sadness that I have learned of the passing of P.J. McGrath of Kilmaine and Claremorris.

"P.J. was one of life's gentlemen. He was a distinguished member of the GAA as a player, a referee and an official at all levels.

"He served as referee of the famous

1982 All Ireland football final between Offaly and Kerry.

"He was also a dedicated and active member of Fianna Fáil. He served as chair of Mayo Fianna Fail.

"I and many more benefited from his generosity of time and spirit and his immense wisdom and experience. I will be for ever grateful for that.

"My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Phil and their wonderful family.

"His legacy is immense, his influence wide and long lasting. Go ndeana Dia trocaire ar a anam."



PJ McGrath, RIP, is pictured here in 1983. Dublin captain Tommy Drumh (right) shakes hands with Cork captain Christy Ryan ahead of the All-Ireland senior championship semi-final replay at Páirc Uí Chaoimh as PJ McGrath gets ready for the game.

Photo: Ray McManus / SPORTSFILE

GAA Green Clubs mark National Tree Week



To mark National Tree Week Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael, Larry McCarthy, planted a native oak tree, presented by Orla Farrell, Project lead of Easy Treesie. The planting took place on Fingal County Council land at Malahide Castle adjacent to the St Sylvester's GAA playing fields.

Photo: Brendan Moran/Sportsfile.

TO mark the launch of Phase 1 of the GAA Green Club Programme and National Tree Week, the Easy Treesie – Crann Project (www.easytreesie.com) supported by Coillte (www.coillte.ie) and Trees on the Land (www.treesontheland.com) will provide GAA, Camogie and LGFA clubs with 45,000 native tree saplings, which due to current restrictions on access to Club grounds will be distributed to selected Clubs at the beginning of the next planting season in November.

Coillte and Trees on the Land will donate and deliver the 45,000 native saplings to the project. The saplings will be used to create shelter belts, planted along walkways and to generally enhance the natural landscape and biodiversity of the site.

Planting trees is included in the five ways to make clubs biodiversity-friendly as identified in the recently published guidelines on pollinator-friendly management of sports clubs by the National

Biodiversity Datacentre. Biodiversity is one of five themes being explored through the Green Club Programme, which is a partnership between the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association and local authorities across Ireland.

The Easy Treesie Project aims to plant one million trees with Ireland's one million school children and their communities by 2023 joining the UNESCO-backed Plant-for-the-planet's www.trilliontreecampaign.org challenge, reducing global heating by 1°C during the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, 2021-31.

Orla Farrell of Easy Treesie said: "We are delighted to support the GAA with this initiative which will help restore biodiversity in communities across the island. We would like to thank our many supporters who have successfully started this work in recent years, planting approximately 14,000 saplings and apple trees with several GAA clubs and their communities."

"We're delighted with our new partner-

ship with the GAA and to see our trees planted in GAA, Camogie and Ladies football clubs nationwide this year," said Mark Carlin, Managing Director of Coillte.

"National Tree Week reminds us of the multiple benefits of trees and forests for climate change, for nature, for recreational spaces and for providing a sustainable source of wood for our homes."

Larry McCarthy, Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael said: "The GAA, along with our sister organisations are very grateful for the donation of these native saplings to our clubs. While reinforcing our responsibility to our environment through the Green Club Programme we will also be exploring how our Clubs function from a sustainability perspective, in terms of energy use, water, waste and transport. This work is directly related to our values of Community Identity, Respect and Teamwork and reflects the best of our manifesto 'Where We All Belong'.

Eastern Harps gets up and gets moving

AFTER Christmas, Sligo club Eastern Harps' Healthy Club group came up with their 'Get up, Get Moving' initiative. This is a community-based event that caters for all ages and levels of fitness and is family orientated. This event is free to all participants as the club has received a grant from Healthy Ireland to run this event. Over 160 adults and children had registered for the six weeks programme which started on 13 January.

It has been hugely successful and due to popular demand and the fact that our club's initiative made the six one news on Saturday 13 February we are going to run this event for at least another 3 weeks.

Have a look at our news clip here: <https://www.rte.ie/news/connacht/2021/02/13/1196949-healthy-activities-sligo>

The club offers Pilates classes live on zoom with instructor Ann Wynne which take place on a Thursday evening and Sunday morning. They also offer pre-recorded HIIT sessions from TAPA Coaching which allows people to do these in their own time. Some fun bonus point activities that were in place over the six weeks included ice-bucket challenges, baking banana bread, creating a romantic Valentines table setting, Jerusalem dance challenge and making snowmen.

Phase two of the programme started on Wednesday 24 March with an additional 70 participants joining in, swelling number to 220 participants starting the second phase of the challenge.

This programme has proved to be a big hit during lockdown as it motivates people to get outdoors and be active with their kids.

VIRTUAL BAKING AND COOKERY CLASS

Another idea that was brought to life after hearing of another lockdown after Christmas was virtual baking classes over zoom. The Healthy Club approached Eileen Kirrane – Eileen's Kitchen Table from Cloonacool and organised six weeks of virtual classes on a Saturday from 10-12noon. We currently have over 70 parents and children baking each Saturday morning with this number growing each week. This is another initiative that has been a huge success in our locality with past club players and families joining too.

This programme has proved to be the break that both parents and kids needed from home-schooling. It allows parents to have the dinner ready by noon and the kids get a couple of hours entertainment in the morning as well as getting to spend time together as a family. We are currently looking at extending this programme as the feedback is extremely positive. This



Eastern Harps members were building snowmen as part of their Healthy Club initiative.

cookery class coincides with our 'Get Up Get Moving' initiative as there are a lot of the same people involved in both. The baking class is another family-based initiative by our Healthy Club committee.

FAMILY FUN QUIZ & SHORT STORY COMPETITION

The club hosted a family lockdown quiz on 30 January. This encouraged families to get together on a Saturday evening for a battle of wits. The quiz gave people the chance to test out their knowledge but also acted as a social event allowing members of the club the chance to chat and have the craic between rounds. The event was very successful with kids and adults of all ages logging into zoom and taking part.

BROADBAND HUB

The club has also been working alongside Sligo County Council in exploring the options to form a broadband hub in line with the national broadband plan. The hope is that this could present the opportunity of creating a hot desk area in our clubhouse. This could

then be a facility with high internet speeds for members of the community to work and study from. This would be a great asset to our rural area.

WEEKLY 50/50 DRAW

The club has launched a new weekly 50/50 draw which began in January. The total amount of money raised by weekly ticket sales is split, with 50% going to the winner and 50% going to the club.

People wishing to take part have the option to buy tickets both in the local supermarket or online, where they can pay weekly or enter multiple draws with a single payment. The draw has been highly successful thus far as there is a winner each week and the club aim to continue running the draw every week. Play our 50/50 draw here lottoraiser.ie/Eastern-Harps



Eastern Harps' Healthy Club t-shirts, kindly sponsored by East Brothers Machinery and supplied by GRG.



Connacht GAA's centre of e

By JOHN HARRINGTON

THE Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence has a higher profile than ever thanks to the completion last year of the full-pitch air dome at the heart of its campus in Beken, County Mayo.

Less visible to the naked eye than that impressive structure is the considerable work that Connacht GAA have undertaken to make their Centre of Excellence also live up to its name as far as sustainability and being kind to their local environment is concerned.

This is why they're one of two regional grounds, along with O'Moore Park in Laois, participating in Phase 1 of the GAA's new Green Club Project, which

helps clubs and grounds in implementing green and sustainable actions.

Connacht GAA's commitment to this ethos was apparent even before the Centre was officially opened back in 2012, as four acres of the site were planted with ash trees in 2008.

And when the Centre of Excellence was then built it was designed to collect rainwater from its main roof area which could then be stored underground in a 72,000 litre tank.

Excellence in Sustainability - Green Growth in Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence

The full-pitch air dome that is at the heart of Connacht GAA's Centre of Excel-

lence in Beken, Co. Mayo was completed in September 2020, the culmination of a project many years in the development. Even before the first sod was turned on site, sustainability and respect for local and community heritage were at the heart of the Centre of Excellence planning. In 2008 four acres of the Beken site were planted with ash trees and the fairy fort area on the site was secured. And it seems that a_n lucht sí _ have indeed given their blessing to the development, as the Centre of Excellence project has gone from strength to strength, in doing so setting the example for the sustainable development and operation of regional sport facilities.

The Centre of Excellence collects rainwater from its main roof area, which is then stored in an underground 72,000 litre



energy efficient excellence

tank, the toilets are now fed from this rain-water system, reducing water bills and the pressures on water supply. Movement detectors and low flow valves further enhance the water efficiency across the Centre.

Energy efficiency measures throughout the site include a recent LED upgrade, a full building management system to manage energy usage and lighting sensors throughout the facility, while there are plans in place for a new solar installation and a number of e-car charge points.

The Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence isn't only a sports centre, it is also a community facility and the Centre's team are looking forward to welcoming school and community groups to explore the facility and to help the team in its future sustainability and community projects. The

most recent biodiversity project on the Began site is being undertaken in partnership with a number of local schools while the Centre's management are collaborating with the local bee club in plans for the installation of hives onsite.

Began Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence is one of two regional grounds, along with O'Moore Park in Laois, participating in Phase 1 of the GAA's new Green Club Project. The Green Club project is working with the two regional grounds, 45 clubs for the island of Ireland, the local authorities, through the Climate Action Regional Offices, and a number of expert partners to develop a Green Club Toolkit to support clubs and grounds in implementing green and sustainable actions. For more information, please visit www.gaa.ie/greenclub

List of participating clubs:

The following Connacht clubs and grounds are participating in Phase One of the GAA's new Green Clubs Programme:

Ballina Stephanites, Mayo
Shannon Gaels, Roscommon
Clarinbridge, Galway
St Colman's Camogie Club, Galway
*** Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence, Began (regional venue)**



Owennore Gales completes its Solar Lighting Project

OWENNORE Gaels are delighted to announce that the Solar Lighting Project along our walking track at Connolly Park has been completed. This is the first such lighting system to be installed at a GAA club grounds in the country.

The project was 75% funded by the Sligo Leader Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, under the Renewable Energy Category. Thanks

to Electric Skyline Ltd for their expertise and assistance throughout the whole process from planning stage through to its completion.

The lights will come on at dusk and turn off at 10pm. The club requests

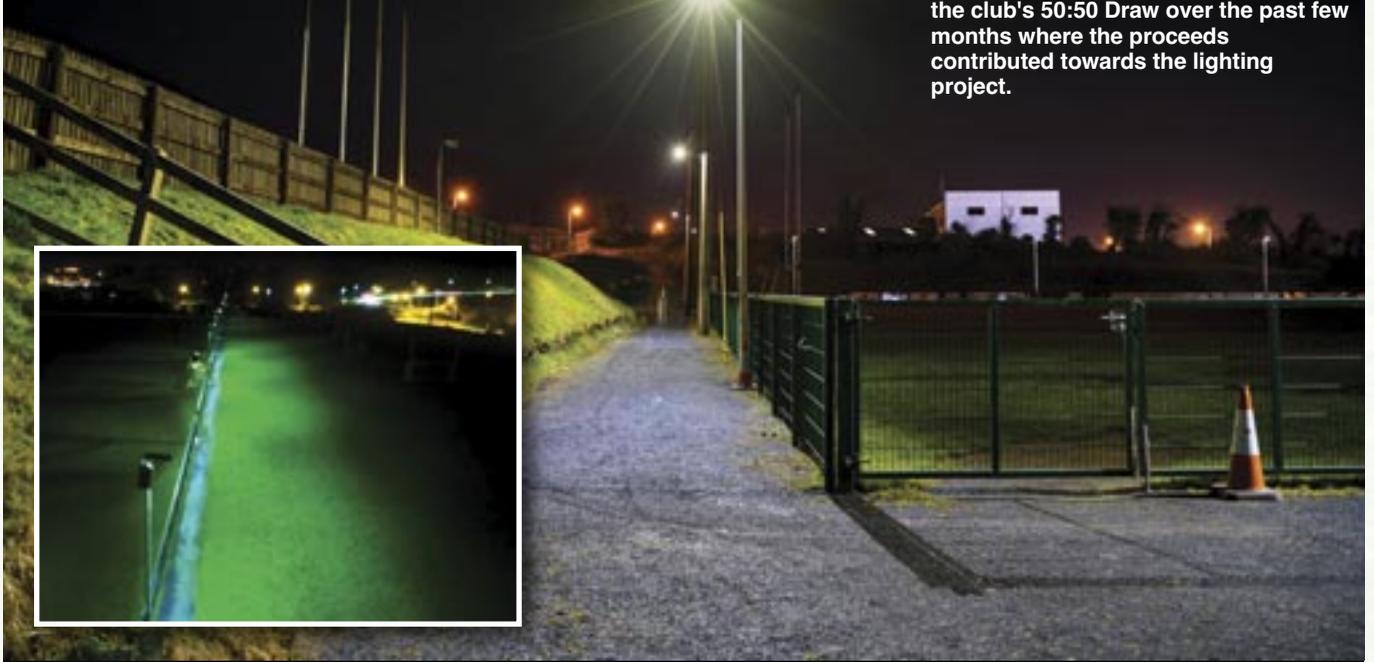
that you would walk in the direction around the track as indicated by the signage erected along the fencing. Social distancing should be maintained at all times. Dogs are not allowed on the track at any time.

Did you know?

- 10 laps of the track at Connolly Park is equal to 5km!

- Our electricity costs are nil!

Thanks to everyone that supported the club's 50:50 Draw over the past few months where the proceeds contributed towards the lighting project.



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Roscommon GAA finances back on track as Interim Finance Committee stands down



Roscommon captain Eoin Colleran lifts the Connacht minor title in 2020.

Photo: Ramsey Cardy/Sportsfile.

ON Monday, 22 March Roscommon GAA turned another financial corner when the Interim Finance Committee, appointed by Croke Park, stood down and passed all financial control back to the County Board officers.

At the final meeting, held virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions, Interim Finance Committee Chairman John Murphy, complemented the massive efforts of Roscommon GAA in completing a remarkable financial turnaround in just over three years.

Since its inception in 2017, the Interim Finance Committee has assisted the board in monitoring and managing significant income and expenditure items by conducting regular financial scenario planning and recommending a long-term framework.

With full financial control, the Roscommon County Board now looks forward to a stable financial future and hope to commence capital development works at Dr Hyde Park and the Dermot Earley Centre of Excellence in the near future, while also ensuring teams are adequately prepared and the current coaching structures continue their excellent work.

Roscommon GAA are the envy of many counties due to the very strong commercial and fundraising arm, Club

Rossie, which has raised €2.1 million (net) during the past three years. This committee, working alongside the County Board officers, the County Executive and all the clubs within the county are responsible alongside our two main sponsors, Seán Mulryan and Tom Hunt, for reverting Roscommon GAA to a stable financial footing.

Roscommon Treasurer, David O Connor, thanked the outgoing Interim Finance Committee for all their help and commended the finance team in Croke Park, led by Kathy Slattery, for advising and guiding them through this tough period.

David O'Connor said: "We have terrific supporters, are blessed with two wonderful main sponsors in Seán Mulryan and Tom Hunt and with Club Rossie going from strength to strength each year, the future looks bright."

Roscommon GAA will now proceed to appoint a new Finance Committee in 2021. An audit committee will also be appointed with external independent members to oversee and review regularly how the Roscommon GAA County Board are running their affairs. This will ensure continued good governance.

Both committees will be confirmed by the County Committee over the next few

weeks and then the make-up of these committees, along with all our other sub-committees will be announced.

Roscommon GAA Chairperson Brian Carroll looks forward to some normality returning to the GAA scene later this year and is committed to do what's best for Roscommon GAA, both on and off the field.

"As a county we found ourselves in a very challenging financial position in 2017. Since then, with the help of the Interim Finance Committee, we worked together to get our financial situation back on track," said Carroll.

"I want to thank everyone in Club Rossie, the members of the Interim Finance Committee, members of the County and Management Committees, all our clubs, our two main sponsors Seán Mulryan & Tom Hunt and all our other sponsors for their continued support in reaching this milestone.

"We must now ensure that our financial situation stays in a healthy state while continuing to progress the GAA in Roscommon, both on and off the playing field. Hopefully, before long, we will see all our players back on the pitch and our supporters at games, with everyone back where they belong."

GAA members get timely health boost thanks to Healthy Club / MyLife by Irish Life Steps Challenge

PROFESSOR Niall Moyna has heralded the personal and public health impact of the regular exercise and health score improvements experienced by the participants in the recently concluded GAA Healthy Club / MyLife by Irish Life Steps Challenge.

Between January 13th and March 3rd, 28,000 GAA members walked a combined total of 6 million kms as part of the 'Every Step Counts' challenge hosted on Irish Life's MyLife App. To put that into perspective, it is the equivalent of walking the circumference of the earth 15 times; a combined step count of 7.5 billion. The aim of the challenge was to offer GAA members a fun incentive to stay active within their 5km radius. On average, each participant walked just over 200km.

Prof. Moyna, BA, MSc, PhD, FACSM, FFFPHM, Full Professor: Clinical Exercise Physiology, School of Health and Human Performance, Faculty of Science and Health, Dublin City University, who is also well known for his GAA credentials, said:

"It is very gratifying to see that the participants in this MyLife by Irish Life Healthy Club Steps Challenge walked an average of 268,000 steps and had an 11-point increase in their health score in the only, eight weeks. The public health implications of these results cannot be underestimated and demonstrate the value of promoting walking across the lifespan."

The challenge helped fill some of the void created by the absence of any on-field GAA activity and the forced cancellation of the popular annual Ireland Lights Up walking initiative, normally delivered in conjunction with RTE's Operation Transformation during January and February.

The 28,000 participants represented over 700 GAA clubs across the 32 counties. It was the second such steps challenge delivered during the pandemic through the GAA's award winning Healthy Club Project. The Healthy Club Project is delivered in partnership with Irish Life, Healthy Ireland, the HSE, and National Office for Suicide Prevention. The first challenge in June 2020 attracted 12,000 participants from over 400 clubs, with the MyLife App once again tracking all 2.2 billion steps taken.

"The amount of physical activity required to produce substantial health benefits is quite

28,000 participants representing almost 700 GAA clubs walked an average 268,000 steps each and recorded an improved Health Score during challenge



small. Walking is a highly accessible activity. It requires no special skills or facilities, can be easily accommodated into an existing lifestyle, can be undertaken at almost any age with little risk of injury and has been shown to positively impact on physical, psychological and cognitive function. Indeed, there isn't a single organ in the body that is not positively affected by a brief walk," Prof. Moyna added.

A club target of 4,000km was set for the 'Every Step Counts' challenge - the equivalent of a circuit of the coast of Ireland. All clubs that achieved this goal were entered into randomised draws in their province for gear vouchers worth €2,500, €1,500, and €1,000, generously provided by Irish Life as part of their on-going CSR partnership of the Healthy Club Project. An additional €23,000 worth of gear vouchers were set aside for specific achievements within participating clubs, with the winners to be announced next week.

While the winning clubs welcomed the prize monies during this challenging financial period for all sports clubs, the benefits of the challenge far exceeded the financial rewards.

Ciara Lalor, PRO with the St. Colmcille's Healthy Club in Meath, explains:

"Seeing the engagement that we have had from members and the community and giving something back to our members at this time when there is very little else going on, you take great pride in been able to do it. We take great pride in keeping people active, keeping people engaged and keeping people having a bit of fun and giving them a reason to get out and a reason to walk."

Ciara also noted the benefits of a bit of inter-club rivalry during a time when Gaelic

Games have been forced to stop as leader boards on the MyLife App allowed clubs to see their standing within their own county, province, and nationally. St. Colmcille's topped the Leinster leader-board for total distance covered, just ahead of Clontarf in Dublin.

"(We were) having great craic with them on social media chasing each other. They have done super work in their community as well. I saw a fundraiser they did in aid of the Irish Cancer Society and Pieta House encouraging all their members to do something active. They have been a great kind of adversary in the nicest possible way for us throughout this."

GAA President Larry McCarthy said: "The steps challenge provided our clubs with a meaningful and safe way to express their community identity while keeping people connected during this difficult period of lockdown. As the incredible figures demonstrate, it also helped motivate thousands of participants to achieve their recommended weekly physical activity levels within their 5km limit. I'd like to thank Irish Life for their continued, innovative, support of the GAA Healthy Club Project and look forward to more clubs getting involved in this great project in the future."

Head of Wellness, Irish Life Stacey Machesney said: "Health & Wellbeing continues to become increasingly important with immediate and long term health benefits directly linked to physical health and exercise. From our own research carried out we know approximately 90% of us are looking to improve our health with lack of motivation being the biggest challenge to achieving this. The insights coming from MyLife are showing us, the more opportunities we get to exercise in a social and connected way, the greater success we have in staying motivated to be physically active".

The GAA Healthy Club Project currently engages 300 clubs and will open expressions of interest for to new entrant clubs in November 2021. For more details go to: www.gaa.ie/community

Winners of random provincial draw amongst all clubs that reached 4,500km target:

Province	€2,500 O'Neill's gear voucher	€1,500 O'Neill's gear voucher	€1,000 O'Neill's gear voucher
LEINSTER	Gaeil Colmcille CLG (Bettystown) Meath	Johnstown bridge GAA, Kildare	St. Michael's GAA, Meath
CONNACHT	Owenmore Gaels, Sligo	Allen Gaels, Leitrim	Ballinaglera GAA, Leitrim
MUNSTER	Beale GAA, Kerry	Ballybacon-Grange Hurling & Camogie Club, Tipperary	Emly GAA, Tipperary
ULSTER	Loughgiel Shamrocks GAC, Antrim	Lavey GAA, Derry	Derrynoose GAA, Armagh

Tribute to former Gortletteragh footballer Hugh Colreavy



LEITRIM OBSERVER

ON January 22, Gortletteragh GAA lost one of its former players when Hugh Colreavy passed away to his eternal reward.

Hugh was a member of the Colreavy family from Annaghoney and, along with his brothers Fr Tom, Mick, Jack and Seamus, played for the Club during the 60s and 70s and later served as a team selector.

He represented his county at under 16 level in 1959. He graduated to club senior level after that and had the honour of getting the first score when the Club returned to senior ranks in 1965 after a break of 25 years.

In 1970, Hugh was a selector with the Senior team that won its first Championship title in 64 years. This was the team that paved the way and set the standards for future Championship winning teams in the Club.

He will always be remembered as a teak-tough player with the Club who never shirked a challenge. Indeed, nowadays, we hear that all the great teams in all sports attempt to train with match day intensity but that was the way Hugh was operating back in the 60s as any of his opponents in the park, during practice matches, would testify.

Hugh grew up in Annaghoney and

attended Drumgownagh National School. Typical of him, he took great pleasure from meeting some of his old school mates when he attended the school reunion in 2013.

After attending the Tech in Mohill, he headed for the big city of Dublin, like a lot of others at that time.

While working as a barman in some of the better known hostelries of that era like the Beachcomber Bar in Raheny and the Starlight Hotel in Bray, Hugh encountered many colourful characters that he often talked about in later years.

In the late '60s, he returned home to Leitrim to take over the family farm and work in Hanley's Meat Factory in Rooskey.

Farming life may not have been very profitable at the time but it was always far from dull when Hugh was around.

It was during these years that he met his future wife, Jacinta McGowan, from the neighbouring parish of Mohill.

After living in Gortletteragh for a number of years, they then moved to Mohill. They had a wonderful life together and were inseparable.

Hugh had a number of health issues in recent times but managed with the help and support of Jacinta to come through them all.

He was a man of great faith and was a deep thinker on all things spiritual and religious. He was an avid reader and was willing to hear all sides of the story.

Hugh had a great interest in people and was always happy to have a 'chat' with whoever he came into contact with, be they young or old.

Even though he lived in Mohill for the past number of years, he never lost his interest in Gortletteragh and had his green and gold flag out on the lawn beside the Mohill flag for the 2020 County finals.

For all of us Gortletteragh people and visitors in general, Hugh and Jacinta's house in Mohill was always a very welcoming place to call to.

Whatever your timetable was at the start, you could forget it, as conversations took place on subjects ranging from playing football to farming to the meaning of life and everything in between.

Predeceased by his brother Fr. Tom and his sister Bridget, Hugh will be sadly missed not only by his family but by his many friends in south Leitrim and beyond.

We offer our sympathies to Hugh's wife Jacinta, to his brothers, Mick, Jack and Seamus, his sister Kathleen, the extended Colreavy family in Gortletteragh, the McGowan family Mohill and his wide circle of friends.

Hugh now joins an elite band of former Gortletteragh greats in their heavenly home where we can be sure they are reminiscing on their happy footballing days.

God be good to Hugh and may he rest in peace. Solas na bhFlaitheas ar a anam uasal.

Leitrim are well represented in GPA Rookie Camp

LEITRIM OBSERVER

EIGHT players from Leitrim were among 303 players new inter-county panel members who logged on to the GPA's 2021 Rookie Camp which was held remotely across three evenings in January.

The camp, which is in its third year, is aimed at helping young players to adapt to life on a senior panel and also at showcasing the supports they have at their disposal through the GPA.

Gráinne Hyland (Camogie), Oisín McLoughlin, Tom Prior, Michelle Hackett, Michelle Beirne and Mary Alice Maguire (Football) and Michael O'Brien and Cathal O'Donovan (Hurling) all attended.

On Tuesday night sport's psychologist Dr. Ciara Losty delivered a presentation



Mayo's Stephen Coen spoke to players in attendance at the GPA's Rookie Camp.

Photo: Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile.

focused on Strengths-based approach to developing my personal wellbeing toolkit, helping players prepare for the opportunities and challenges associated with being an inter-county player.

Dr. Losty works with many international athletes including members of Irish Olympic teams.

This was followed by a panel discussion where Mayo footballer and current PhD student Stephen Coen and Cork footballer Dr. Orlagh Farmer shared their experiences on how building their own personal wellbeing toolkits have helped them overcome challenges and setbacks on and off the field.

The final night of the camp saw international athlete Ciara Mageean and Irish 7's rugby star and Love Island winner Greg O'Shea discuss how they balance their lives in sport and outside of sport.

They focused on how they ensure they look after the 3 p's – the physical, personal and psychological parts of their lives.



Putting in the hard miles at 93 years of age for Leitrim GAA

THE big weekend is here as over 1,250 fundraisers from around the globe finish out the 50 Mile challenge in various time zones. There have been many wonderful Leitrim themed stories shared amongst the group who assembled on Facebook. It has been a month long trip down memory lane coupled with some very touching stories. The pride of following the Green and Gold has been the common bond.

One of the participants in the challenge is 93 year old PJ McNabola - a proud Leitrim man.

PJ McNabola one proud Leitrim man

Leitrim people are proud and none prouder to be from Leitrim than PJ McNabola. PJ was born in 1927, a historic year for Leitrim football when they won the Connacht Senior Championship. He was present the next time Leitrim won the Connacht Senior Championship in 1994. When Leitrim got to the Division 4 final in 2019 against Derry in Croke Park PJ was not going to miss it. At the age of 92 PJ's family ensured he would be in attendance and the Leitrim Observer honored him by taking his photo in the Croke Park Hotel before the match.

For a man that never played football his love of football was all consuming. In Eslin at that time they had no football team and PJ still regrets not been able to play. Down the years he has been an avid fan of his beloved Eslin, he loves to cheer on his grandchildren Kyle, Joshua, & Kayleigh who play for Fenagh and Niamh who plays for Mohill. PJ occupies the only Corporate Box overlooking Mohill GAA pitch namely his bedroom window!

PJ was an ever present at all Leitrim games over the years. Wherever the match was PJ with his nephews Padraig and Liam Higgins would be there. Limerick or Belfast, wet wind or rain the three boys would be there.

PJ, at 93 is still out and about and has participated in our 50 Challenge during the month of January.

Well done PJ and all of the participants, you are wonderful people!

Leitrim GAA chairman congratulates everyone on 'phenomenal' 50 miles challenge

By DONAL O'GRADY
Leitrim Observer

IT started out as a chance to raise some badly needed funds for Leitrim GAA at a time when such opportunities were difficult to envisage, let alone put into practice.

But mighty oaks from little acorns grow and how this 50 miles in January challenge captured the imaginations and hearts of Leitrim people here at home and throughout the world.

Leitrim people have been drawn to this unique event from all corners of the world and not alone has it helped to raise funds for Leitrim GAA, but it has brought together and re-connected Leitrim people in a very special way.

The target at the beginning was an optimistic €50,000 but Chairman of Leitrim GAA, Enda Stenson said the figure at the time of going to press is now somewhere between €70,000 and €80,000, while the €100,000 mark was soon passed.

"No words of mine could say how surprised, delighted and grateful I am to all the people who took part in this," Enda said.

"It drew Leitrim people from all corners of the world. It was more than a fundraiser, the connectivity of the people was something to behold.

"People were absolutely so grateful to us for doing this and for them to be able to connect to other Leitrim people they hadn't seen in years," he said.

"I want to thank all the people who contributed, who got out and did it and donated," he said.

A clearly emotional Enda paid huge tribute to the men behind the idea who drove it to ever greater lengths and heights in recent weeks.

He thanked former Leitrim footballer Adrian O'Flynn who came up with the idea, and Eamon Duignan and Mike Feeney of the Leitrim Supporters Club in Dublin who met with the County Board, outlined the idea and drove it on and kept it front and centre at all times. He also thanked the tireless Brendan Doyle for his expertise in the field of IT.

Thanking everyone for their contributions, including the footballers, the hurlers and the

underage players, Enda didn't want to single people out but felt it would be remiss of him not to acknowledge the contribution of former Leitrim player and 1994 hero, Aidan Rooney who personally raised over €6,000 for Leitrim GAA.

"Everyone got out and walked and ran and people just loved it, even people who have little or no connection to the GAA. At a time of lockdown people needed a boost and they got a boost, it was just phenomenal," said Enda.

He said he was amazed to see that over 100 Leitrim people of all ages came together in New York last Sunday to support the challenge and raise €5,000 in the process.

Three former presidents of the Leitrim Society of New York, Margaret Taylor Finucane (New York), her father Joe Taylor (Eslin), and Dessie McWeeney (Aughnasheelin) proudly supporting the 50 miles in January challenge for Leitrim GAA

"It just goes to show the huge amount of Leitrim people there are out there and the support there is for Leitrim. If you're from Leitrim, you're from Leitrim, and you love it," Enda said.

Adrian O'Flynn, the former Leitrim player who conceived and designed the whole campaign said, "I am thrilled with the way things are working out and the really good thing is the level of enjoyment and satisfaction expressed by the participants."

Meanwhile, Joe Dolan of The Bush Hotel, has penned a lovely letter in tribute to Leitrim GAA.

In it, he acknowledges their innovative and resourceful initiative in raising much needed funds in such unprecedented times this January.

"This event has so captured the attention, imagination and admiration of all Leitrim and Leitrim connected people in Leitrim and beyond... in Ireland and around the world.

"Aside from the (amazing) financial outcome this initiative has been an emotive and evocative stimulus in strengthening community engagement, physical and mental wellbeing, pride, camaraderie and crack.

"In essence, it is what the GAA is all about. Whilst we may not frequent Croke Park as often as other better resourced counties with greater talent and financial pools one cannot but acknowledge our resilience. It's not all about on the pitch!"





Leitrim GAA 50 Miles winners

The prize draws, associated with the Leitrim GAA 50 Miles in January Challenge, for the fundraisers and donors took place recently and were beamed out on Facebook live. The following were the lucky winners:

FUNDRAISERS DRAW

- 1st Prize Signed Leitrim Jersey:
Ann Whitney, Keshcarrigan.
- 2nd Prize Leitrim GAA Jacket:
Paula Mollahan, Leitrim Village.
- 3rd Prize Leitrim GAA Wind Cheater:
Aoife Dorr, Longford.

DONORS DRAW

- 1st Prize Coaching Session for a nominated team at Leitrim COE with Terry Hyland's Management Team: **Mandy Gilmartin**
- 2nd Prize €1,000 Brick in Wall at Leitrim GAA McGovern Aughavas COE: **Marie McWeeney**
- 3rd Prize 1 Year Subscription to Leitrim GAA TV: **Patrick O Meara**

While we have the contact details of the winners in the Fundraisers Draw, we do not have access to the contact details of the winners in the Donors Draw. In order to claim your prize, you need to contact secretary.leitrim@gaa.ie with factual verification of your donation receipt and we will contact you back to confirm details.

Leitrim GAA is hugely appreciative of the efforts made by almost 2,000 people across the globe towards this extraordinary success which has been contributed to and shared equally by all donors, participants and organisers.
Míle Buíochas daoibh go léir.



Win a €25,000 dream wedding day with Cairde Liatroma



Win your dream day at Lough Rynn Castle Estate & Gardens

IT'S a fairy tale dream of many to get married in a Castle, and for one lucky couple this dream could be made a reality, by simply entering a competition on winaWedding.ie

If you have put your wedding plans on hold due to the pandemic, or maybe you are recently engaged, then here's a competition worth entering. Leitrim GAA in partnership with the luxurious Lough Rynn Castle Estate and Gardens, are offering a lucky couple the opportunity to Win a Dream Wedding, valued at €25,000 for 150 guests.

The ticket price of €22.50 is for an early bird purchase with multiple ticket purchases priced at €20 each

The dream prize covers everything you would want for that perfect day:

- **Arrival Drinks and Canapé Reception for all your guests**
- **An exquisite 6 Course Meal**
- **Wine served though out the meal**
- **An Evening Buffet**
- **Room décor – including pipe draping, fairy lights and chair covers**
- **Wedding Suite + 10 deluxe bedrooms for bridal party and / or family**
- **Full access to the Lough Rynn Estate & Walled Gardens for Photography**

Simply enter at winaWedding.ie with the first 1,000 tickets offered at €22.50 each. Tickets can be purchased for yourself or as a gift.

Chairman of Leitrim GAA, Enda Stenson says "we are delighted to partner up with the beautiful Lough Rynn Castle. It is one of the leading wedding venues in the country, and we are thrilled with Lough Rynn's support to Leitrim GAA. It's an amazing prize for some lucky couple to win, I've been to weddings there myself, and it's a super venue, the service is always top class, and the grounds and

walled gardens are spectacular for wedding pictures. This is a hugely positive initiative given the difficult year we have all had".

Speaking to Lough Rynn Castle's General Manager Ciaran Reidy, "We have always been loyal supporters of our local GAA community, and we are extremely proud to support Leitrim GAA through this campaign, which will benefit the overall development of county Leitrim GAA.

For the prize winners, they certainly are in for a treat; we will ensure they have the most wonderful wedding day experience.

This competition is open to everyone, we are particularly mindful of all those who have been unable to hold the wedding of their dreams due to restrictions and who have a wish to celebrate their union with wider family and friends at a later stage, where this prize is ideally suited to them also. We are extremely excited about this partnership. The tickets can be also purchased as a gift and the prize is valid up to January 2025."

Lough Rynn Castle Estate & Gardens have a dedicated Wedding Team available 7 days a week, and look forward to working with the winning couple in putting their dream plan together.

The wedding prize is valid until January 2025, with an option to extend to January 2026.

To enter the draw, tickets can be purchased at winaWedding.ie, so hurry as the first 1,000 tickets are being sold at an Early Bird price of €22.50 with total tickets limited to 4995. There will be an additional mini draw for €1,000 when the early bird tickets are sold.

The Draw is scheduled to take place on July 3rd and is being run by Cairde Liatroma on behalf of Leitrim GAA.



St Mary's Kiltoghert GAA for All – All-Stars Club programme

LEITRIM OBSERVER

ST Mary's Kiltoghert GAA Club in Carrick-on-Shannon is pleased to announce the introduction of the GAA for All – All Stars Club programme.

This initiative is being rolled out for children with any additional need which hinders their full participation in mainstream sport.

The rationale, in St Mary's All Stars, is to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where all children can participate.

Their emphasis will be on engagement, participation, development of fundamental movement skills and most importantly, fun, in a safe environment.

"We have plans for integration and reverse integration within training sessions, as a starting point.

"However, this is not set in stone, as we will continually adapt to meet the needs of the children. The initiative is child centred and we aim to give children the support they need.

"Another important aim for us is to promote the ethos of inclusion in the community and the club," the club stated.

Parent, Martin McGill, explained the importance of including all children in club activities.

"Children with disabilities get the same enjoyment out of supporting their club, preparing their gear, and heading off to training as their peers. They love the feeling of being involved with their friends, and being an active part of the team.

"However, the pace of the training sessions, and the pace of the games, can be too much for our children with disabilities to keep up with.

"The 'All Stars Club' programme is terrific in that the training sessions and games are specifically designed to accommodate children of all abilities, and will allow our son Caelan to reach his full potential, in the sport that he loves."

This programme has been in the ether for a while. In November, a committee including parents, coaches and club officials, was formed. The initial intention was to begin their All Star Academy in late February, however that date will likely change due to HSE restrictions.

"Our coaches have been recruited and have been Garda vetted and have completed GAA Safeguarding 1. All

coaches attended a 2 hour CARA webinar, delivered by club member Brian O'Donnell, with a focus on awareness of disability, inclusion and meaningful integration.

St Mary's All Stars will be launched officially when restrictions are eased.

GAA for All is a national initiative run by the GAA. The GAA charter espouses the aim of this social inclusion initiative which is to offer an inclusive, diverse and welcoming environment for everyone.

Inclusion essentially means people having a sense of belonging, of being comfortable in being part of something they value.

Inclusion is a choice. Diversity means being aware of accommodating and celebrating difference.

This initiative welcomes all children who would like to become involved. Club, parish, county boundaries are forgotten. All children are welcome.

CONTACT DETAILS:

If your child would like to be involved, or if you have any questions, please contact:

Kathy: 086 - 831 8696

Emma: 086 - 237 9036

Cairde Liatroma CLG Committee approved among other Leitrim GAA 2021 Committees

AMONG the various 2021 sub-committees of Leitrim GAA which were approved at a meeting of the Leitrim GAA Management Committee of 13 March 2021 is the newly established Cairde Liatroma Sub-Committee. This committee will be responsible for fundraising ongoing and in addition to normal activities of the Leitrim GAA Supporters Club Committee.

We wish the members of all the sub-committees the best of luck in their work throughout 2021.

Leitrim GAA Management Committee: Enda Stenson (Chair): Michael Quinn: Declan Bohan (Rúnaí): Martin McCartin: Noeleen McLoughlin: Barbara Loughlin Byrne: Terence Boyle: Attracta O'Reilly: PJ Meehan: John Mulvey: Pat Feely: Enda Tiernan: Laura Crossan: Paddy O Connor: Paul Murphy: Jamie Murray: Mark Heslin: Vincent O'Rourke: Brian Blake.

Competitions Control Committee: Seamus McManus (Chair): Vincent O'Rourke (Rúnaí): John Keenan [Rúnaí Smachta]: P. Mc Morrow: M. Doherty: S. Mc Goldrick [Underage Fixtures]: H. Phelan [Coiste Iomána]: E O Grady [Referees coordinator]. D. Bohan (Fixture Analyst)

Hearings Committee: S. Mc Govern (Chair): L. Faughnan [Rúnaí]: P. Egan: S. Murray: J. Mc Nama: K. Torsney: T. Boyle.

Finance Committee: M. McCartin [Chair]: J. Mulvey: N. McLoughlin: P. O'Connor: M. Quinn: E. Stenson: D. Bohan.

Cairde Liatroma Committee: M. McCartin (Chair): J. Mulvey: M. Feeney: N. McLoughlin: E. Duignan: P. White: S. Clarke: C. Clarke: B. Doyle: B. Blake.

Public Relations/Marketing Committee: B. Loughlin-Byrne: J. Molloy: B. Doyle: D. Bohan: E. Tiernan: B. Blake.

Coiste Iomána: P. O Connor (Chair): H. Phelan (Rúnaí): E. Stenson: D. Bohan: Martin McCartin: plus one delegate of each affiliated club.

Cultural Committee: L. Crossan (Chair): G Keegan: B. Reynolds: R. Kennedy: C. Crossan: K. Butler.

Supporters Club: J. Mulvey (Chair): M. Quinn, M. Mc Cartin: J. J. Cullen: M. Feeney: N. McLoughlin: S. Mc Goldrick: G. Gallogly: J. McWeeney: T. Boyle: A. O'Reilly: B. Loughlin-Byrne: P Brown: C. McCartin (NY).

Coiste na nÓg: P. Murphy [Chair]: M. Kenny (Rúnaí): B. Loughlin Byrne: N. McLoughlin: S. McGoldrick: P. McGourty: M. McKiernan: M. Heslin.

Coaching and Games Steering Committee: P. Murphy [Chair]: T. Keenan [Rúnaí]: E. Stenson: D. Bohan: M. McCartin: B. Loughlin Byrne: M. Heslin: C. Cregg.

Páirc Seán Committee: S. Mc Goldrick (Chair) M. Doherty: R. Butler: S. Murray: E. Stenson: S. Butler: M. Diffley: A. O Reilly: M. McCartin:

Health and Wellbeing: B. Loughlin-Byrne (Chair) N. Brady (Rúnaí): K. Williams: M. Fanning: T. Boyle: D. Loftus: H. McHugh: M. Heslin.

Handball: J. Murray (Chair): J. Smyth (Rúnaí): S. Wrynn (Treasurer): N. Scollan (PRO):

Fixtures Analysts: D. Bohan: M. Quinn.

County Development and Safety: T. Boyle (Chair) M. Quinn: P. McGourty: P. Feely: PJ Meehan: H. Clinton: S. Mc Goldrick.





Sligo native Marty Duffy has been named as chairperson of the GAA's Central Referees' Appointments Committee (CRAC).

Photo: Oliver McVeigh/Sportsfile.

Duffy is Chair of Referees' Appointments Committee

By **CATHAL MULLANEY**
The Sligo Champion

MARTY Duffy has been appointed as the new Chair of the GAA's Central Referees' Appointments Committee (CRAC).

The Enniscrone/Kilglass man - who is currently chairperson of the West Sligo club - enjoyed a lengthy period as an inter-county referee. He was the man in the middle for the All-Ireland Senior men's football final in 2009 between Kerry and Cork, while he was also in charge of two All-Ireland Ladies football finals earlier in his career. Having also been assigned to provincial finals in Munster and Leinster,

Duffy hung up the whistle at the end of 2017 with his final game being the Connacht Senior club final of that year.

His brother, Michael, was also a member of the national panel and refereed All-Ireland finals at both minor and U-21 level. He has also been extensively involved in the administration side of refereeing, both in Sligo and Connacht. He was chairperson of the Connacht referees committee in recent seasons and delivered his final report in last month. His elevation to the national role will see him chair the committee tasked with appointing referees to fixtures at national level.

Two Sligo officials - Castleconnor's Barry Judge and Curry's John Gilmartin - have been on the national panel of referees in recent years, while Ronan Hynes from St Farnan's ran the line in a number

of high-profile Division One football matches in early 2020.

Duffy's appointment comes following Larry McCarthy's official stint as Uachtarán beginning following Congress at the end of last month. The Cork native says it is his intention that each of the committees established under his Presidency will have female representation.

Sligo GAA Chairman Sean Carroll and Sligo GAA also extend congratulations to West Sligo men Marty Duffy Enniscrone/Kilglass & Micheál Naughton Castleconnor.

"Marty Duffy who has been appointed Chair of the Central Referees' Appointments Committee & Micheál Naughton who became President of the LGFA.

"We wish them both every success in their new roles."



Kathleen recognised for

By **EMMA GALLAGHER**
The Sligo Champion

KATHLEEN Kane made history by becoming the first person from Sligo to receive an LGFA Volunteer Hall of Fame award.

She has done so much for ladies football not only in Sligo but also through her various roles nationally.

Kathleen has been influential in her club, St Nathy's and also her county, both as a player and a manager along with numerous administration positions down through the years.

Kathleen first started out her playing career at 27 and she hung up the boots ten years after a successful tenure, which included a National League title in '95 with Sligo and an All-Ireland Junior final appearance with St Nathy's. She wasn't long taking over as manager after her playing career came to an end, guiding her county to two All-Irelands in '04 and 2005.

Daithí O'Sé was the host at the virtual award ceremony, which was also streamed live on Facebook.

The Kerry native said that the last award on the night was the Hall of Fame award. "The volunteer Hall of Fame award will be presented to an individual who has given exceptional service or made an outstanding contribution to volunteering in ladies Gaelic football over an extended time period.



Sligo match officials Kathleen Kane and John Niland, during the 2014 TG4 Ladies Football All-Star Tour to Hong Kong Football Club.

Photo: Brendan Moran / SPORTSFILE.

"This volunteer has contributed as a club player, county player, club manager, county manager, club officer, county officer, Provincial officer and National officer.

"I better take a drink here now because there's more to come," the Kerryman joked. "I'm only halfway there Kathleen Kane!

"I mentioned all that and she represented her county as a player and as a manager and managed her county to two All-Ireland final appearances. "She would later become County Board Chairperson, took on the role of Children's Officer before moving on to become Connacht LGFA President.

"She is now fulfilling the role of Assistant Secretary at National level and the hours of dedication and diligence this volunteer has given to ladies football is unquantifiable.

"Our Hall of Fame winner is Kathleen Kane from the St Nathy's club in Co Sligo.

"Kathleen, how are you this evening?," the presenter then asked the Ballinacarrow native.

"Do you know what, we were rehearsing this earlier on and I said when I'm naming out half the stuff, I better take a break and a drop of water!

"Where did you get the time to do all these jobs?". Kathleen said: "Well, it didn't happen now all together! It has taken about 28 years to get there."

Daithí added: "With all joking aside, all the jobs they've named out there, you've seen it all Kathleen." "I would like to think that I have yes. I suppose when we started back in 1993 and you told me that I'd still be involved 28 years later, I would have thought no it's not possible. "Here I am, it's not like it's a chore, it's definitely a passion with me."

Daithí said that having been involved with Ladies Gaelic football for so long, did she ever think she would be getting the Hall of Fame award and Kathleen replied she never did.

"It's totally humbling, it's a huge honour to get for myself and I'd like to thank Olivia Flannery McLoughlin for the nomination and I think I might speak on behalf of all the winners tonight to say that we're standing on the shoulders of thousands and thousands of people all over the country, all over the world who profile ladies football and do similar type of work to what the rest of us are doing at a volunteering level."

Daithí said she must be very, very proud as a volunteer getting a Hall of Fame award and seeing the progress of ladies Gaelic football, particularly in the last 20 years.

Kathleen said that there was no doubt about it and the differences from when she started playing to now was huge, including live streaming of matches and she praised the role TG4 is doing nationally at promoting the sport.

"That was completely foreign to us 27 years ago. The whole advent of media has been wonderful for the game," she added.

"To bring the ladies game into so many



Pictured during the 2020 LGFA Annual Congress, from left, Kathleen Kane, Assistant Secretary; Geraldine Carey, Treasurer; and Con Moynihan, Development Officer.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídeach/Sportsfile.



her ladies football role

households, it's fantastic. The numbers that have been at our All-Ireland's have been so pleasing to watch, moving up exponentially and over 56,000 in 2019, we were kind of cheated a little bit in 2020, but I'd think maybe not in 2021 but certainly in 2022, we're going to build on those figures."

Daithí then said that cameras had been filming in Sligo ahead of the award ceremony and then a video was played featuring locals who praised the work of Kathleen. The first lady, Kathleen's sister Edel Healy, described Kathleen as selfless in everything she does and said she has given so much of her time over the years and has made many sacrifices for ladies football. Susan Final, former Secretary of Sligo LGFA added that she is very loyal, extremely supportive and very kind, always there for you. Marty Duffy, former Chairperson of Sligo LGFA, described Kathleen as dedicated, busy, headstrong at times and very enthusiastic about what she does. Marie Clancy, Chairperson, St Michael's GAA Club said Kathleen is very dedicated at promoting the game and trying to get kids involved. Angela Doohan, St Nathy's committee said she has been with the club since day one and was always a very committed player and brought younger players along. A role model within the club. Edel added that as the eldest of 4 girls, Kathleen is the one they all turn to and is fantastic with her nieces and nephews and the extended family are so proud of her achievements. Liam McDonagh, former Connacht LGFA President said ladies Gaelic football is part

and parcel of Kathleen's life the best part of 30 years. Anne Cunnane, Sligo LGFA PRO, said she's been a player, mentor, manager and a manager of people. Knowledgeable supportive, loyal and at the forefront of ladies Gaelic football, were the words describing the Hall of Fame winner, Kathleen Kane.

Connacht LGFA also paid tribute to the Ballinacarrow woman on her award. "Connacht LGFA would like to Congratulate Former Connacht President Kathleen Kane on being named in the LGFA Hall Of Fame tonight.

"Friday, 12th February 2021, a date in the History of Sligo LGFA, a day or rather an evening when one of their own joins the National LGFA Hall of Fame. The reference of course is to one Kathleen Kane. "The Ballinacarrow Native has been involved with the Association since the very beginning in Sligo back in 1993. Over 27 Years, Kathleen has covered a lot of ground, From a player with St Nathy's & Sligo to being a Manager of both Sligo and St Nathy's along with being Chairperson of Club, County and Connacht President, not to mention the Assistant Secretary of National and also on a National Appeals Committee for over 10 years. Probably one of the highlights as an Officer would be to welcome Congress to Sligo not once but twice as Chairperson 16 years apart in 2000 & 2016.

"As a Player there is very little she hasn't won bar the All Ireland Championship Medal with either Club or County. A National League success with Sligo in 1995 started the ball rolling, quickly

followed with 2 Connacht Championship success later the same year and again in 1996. While the Association didn't form until well into her Adult years missing out on Underage success, she more than made up for it with 6 Senior Championships in 7 Years with St Nathy's, the first coming in 1996. "A Connacht title and an All-Ireland appearance followed in 1999 - a time when she was both Chairperson of Sligo also Captain.

"Following her retirement from the County she would become part of a County management that would claim a Connacht Title in 2003, the following year as Manager she would lead Sligo all the way to Croke Park and repeat it the following year. Sadly on both occasions Sligo would come up short.

"After a successful hosting of Congress in 2000, Kathleen stepped down as Chairperson of Sligo but remained on the Co Executive in the role of Registrar while also being President of Connacht Council. Towards the end of the decade she returned to her roots to take up a management position first at underage and then with the Senior outfit leading them to a Co Senior Title in 2010. In the last decade Kathleen's involvement with the Association maybe more associated with Connacht, County and National than Club. "A second term as President of Connacht Council, followed by a second coming as Chairperson of Sligo LGFA and later as Children's Officer. In 2015 she became the Assistant Secretary.

"Well done Kathleen."



Kathleen Kane (front centre) pictured with the St Nathy's team during the early '90s.

Photo: St Nathy's LGFA Facebook.



St Nathy's only Sligo club in



The 2020 St Nathy's Ladies senior team.

By EMMA GALLAGHER The Sligo Champion

THERE might not be much activity on the pitch at the moment, but that doesn't mean there isn't plenty of work happening behind the scenes.

St Nathy's GAA players and members are busy taking part in Lidl Ireland's One Good Club initiative.

The South Sligo club are the first and only club from the county to be chosen among 24 around the country to take part in the programme, which is aimed at promoting better mental health and well-being.

The initiative runs for ten weeks with a different theme every two weeks.

Kathleen Coleman, St Nathy's PRO, said everyone involved was really enjoying the whole experience so far.

Kathleen told The Sligo Champion: "How it came about was you submit you write up and put your name forward and they go around and select who they would bring in.

"Looking at our team's success in the last two years off the back of the success in 2019 and 2020, we got selected."



Members of the St Nathy's LGFA club in Sligo are reaching out to the community as part of the Lidl Ireland's One Good Club initiative.

St Nathy's reached the semi-final stage of the All-Ireland Intermediate Championship in 2019 where they narrowly lost by a point.

The One Good Club programme is aimed at promoting positive mental health and particularly during covid, at making sure people feel connected.

What better theme to start off with then, than Connect as Kathleen explained.

"They were meant to actually run the programme in early 2020, but then because of Covid it was postponed.

"It started on Monday, March 1st. They have a lot of training webinars explaining the whole thing and it is a 10 week programme, with five different themes so it changes every two weeks. Connect is the first theme and with covid it's taken on a whole new meaning really."

Kathleen said it's about making sure the whole club, young and old, feel connected. She said that Louise Kilbane, who runs the Lollipop Lane creche, has also been showing videos from the St Nathy's players with their pets or farm animals to the kids who are also sending their own videos with the hashtag One Good Club.

She said that Lidl are following each team's progress through their social media pages.

Kathleen said the reaction and enthusiasm from players, members and supporters of the club has been phenomenal.

"The senior players are all involved, it's not the Club Executive itself that's running it, we have our own committee of ten people, all senior players.



new national programme



St Nathy's captain Aine Gormley accepting the Sligo Senior club title.

"It's about giving back to the community, making sure we are reaching out to people and the reaction has been really, really good. Normally now in March, we would be back training and looking ahead to matches but having this is great.

"The kids too are loving it and the parents' groups too are all involved which is fantastic. We also connected with a club we played in Féile 15 years ago too, Aherlow, which never would have happened only for this One Good Club initiative. We

sent them a postcard and they put it up on their Instagram page, we never would have done something like that only for this programme which is great.

"There are only four clubs in Connacht involved, so it's great for St Nathy's and great for Sligo too."

Kathleen was also extremely complimentary of the work that Lidl Ireland is doing at promoting Ladies Gaelic football.

"Lidl are absolutely fantastic and with their whole initiative of raising money for your club when you shop with them is brilliant too.

"The whole points thing doesn't require that much at all."

Kathleen said that now, more than ever, people realise how much sport means to people of all ages and to their local communities.

"Kids are really starting to realise how much they depend on sport and this is really keeping everyone involved in the club in touch.

"Each senior player has been given three underage players in the club to write to, keeping connected, which is what it's all about," Kathleen added.

For more information on the One Good Club initiative, keep an eye on their Facebook page "St Nathys LGFA" and Instagram "stnathyslgfa" for all information on their weekly events.





“Sligo’s a great county and I got everything I could from the players. I can’t speak highly enough of them”

Former Sligo and Galway manager, who has written his autobiography, **The Invisible Game: Maths, Minutes and Movement.**

Photo: Ray McManus / SPORTSFIFE.

By CATHAL MULLANEY The Sligo Champion

A PERIOD during which Sligo came so close to having the most successful stint in the county's history forms a key part of a new book written by former manager, Kevin Walsh.

The Galway legend has penned an autobiography titled *The Invisible Game: Maths, Minutes and Movement*, alongside journalist Daragh Ó Conchúir, published by Hero Books.

A two-time All-Ireland winner with his native county, Walsh took his first job in inter-county management with Sligo in late 2008. That year, having won the Connacht title in 2007, Sligo slumped to a heavy defeat to Mayo before losing to London in the Tommy Murphy Cup.

However, the Kilannin club man helped turn the county's fortunes around and won National League titles in 2009 (Division Four) and 2010 (Division Three).

The lingering regret of his tenure, however, is that Sligo failed to win a Connacht Championship -they lost by a point to Roscommon in the 2010 decider, and to Mayo by two points two years later.

That said, there were some unforgettable days, including wins over Mayo and Galway on the run to the 2010 final as well

as a superb defeat of his native county in Salthill in 2012.

The final year of Walsh's stint ended in disappointing fashion. A shock loss to London in the 2013 championship was followed by a qualifier defeat to Derry, after which he stepped down.

He would go on and enjoy success on the provincial stage with Galway in later years, spending five years at the helm and guiding his charges to Connacht success in 2016 and 2018.

The book provides a unique insight into his playing and managerial career, as well as engaging comment on the methods of coaching he employed and what he believes should be coached in the modern game.

"That's one of the reasons, to be honest, why I wrote the book," he told *The Sligo Champion*.

"I would never write a book for stories or personal stuff, but I would love to see the public and young and upcoming coaches think outside the box, and maybe some of the older coaches might open their minds and look at it from a different perspective."

The coaching element to the book will be of particular interest to those involved with teams at present, as Walsh refers to scenarios which he witnessed either as a manager or a viewer in an interesting

chapter under the title 'Proof Positive'.

Here, he picks out various plays and dissects them through a case study style format with a particular focus on an element of the game he believes is under-coached - football.

It is a thought-provoking subject matter and is something Walsh has focused on during his time as a manager, while also drawing on his experiences as an elite basketballer in his younger years, which is also discussed over the course of the 260-odd pages.

Reflecting on his time in the Yeats County, Walsh delves into the detail of his five years, which he says he remembers very fondly indeed.

"I really enjoyed my time in Sligo. It was two or two and a half hours up and down, you wouldn't keep it going if I didn't. It was a group I really enjoyed working with and they gave everything and the lads we had, we worked hard together and when you're improving it's enjoyable.

"Sligo had never beaten Galway in a replay, not sure if they had ever beaten Galway on Galway soil, never beaten Galway and Mayo in the same championship so there was a lot of stuff achieved. And we won the All-Ireland Junior too for the first time since 1935 so all of that drove up expectations."

There are three days, in particular, that stand out as during Walsh's time in charge.

The first came in 2009 when Sligo came so close to sensationally knocking Kerry out of the championship in a qualifier game in Tralee.

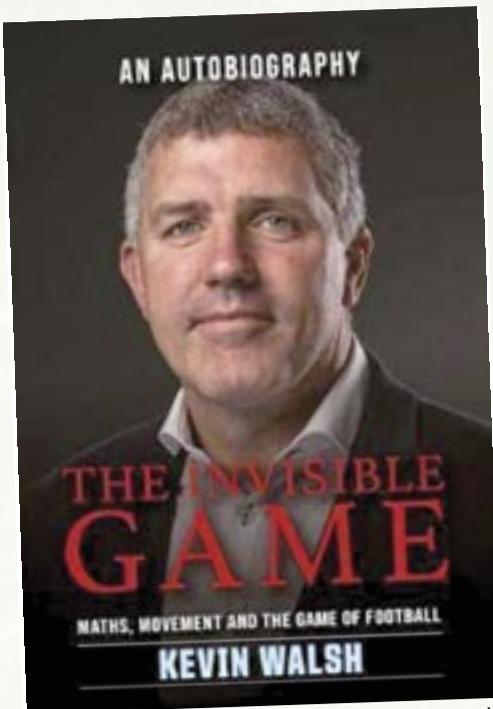
Leading at half-time, Sligo were in the driving seat but failed to build on their superiority and saw a late David Kelly penalty saved, with Kerry winning by a point and eventually going on to lift the Sam Maguire a couple of months later.

In 2012, Sligo had the measure of a Mayo side that would go on and contest that year's All-Ireland final - much of the same Mayo team was there for the next eight seasons - in the Connacht final at Dr Hyde Park.

Unfortunately, James Horan's men put in a late scoring burst to eventually squeeze past Sligo by 0-12 to 0-10, and a meek qualifier exit to Kildare followed at the same venue shortly afterwards.

The Connacht final of 2010, however, was without doubt the most jarring defeat of them all.





Having accounted for Mayo and Galway after a replay in previous rounds, there was a huge sense of expectation in the county that they could win just a fourth ever Connacht crown, but a second in four seasons, and establish the county as a real force.

Many supporters in Markievicz Park, particularly after the Galway replay win in highly dramatic circumstances, will recall the sense of elation on that wet Saturday evening. Looking back now, almost 11 years on, did the hype have an impact before the final?

"Without a doubt it did, and it's very hard to manage too," he remembers.

"There were three pitch invasions before that, a win against Mayo, a draw against Galway, a win against Galway, having to deal with all of that. Roscommon were operating in Division Three or Four at the time, we had beaten them by eight or nine points in the league. There's no doubt about it, we were 0-10 to 0-4 down before we knew it but in fairness again to the lads they showed massive character to get it back to 0-13 apiece, but definitely it was one of the big regrets that we didn't pull it off because they deserved it, after all the work that had been done before that.

"2012 was a massive regret. I remember it well, one massive decision in that game that turned it upside down. The handpass from David Maye called for a throw, Cormac Reilly blowing it up and it took away a bit of momentum as well because we were away, Brendan Egan was off his shoulder.

"We were well in that game, the one or two decisions that day are still on my mind. I don't like losing.

"That game was there for the taking,

even with all the Mayo stars that they had. There was a lot of consistency there, it's just a pity we didn't get one or two Connacht titles."

Perhaps an achievement of Walsh's that is overlooked is the All-Ireland Junior success of 2010. In a county where Connacht titles are usually the goal, at any level, to go on and win beyond the Province was a major achievement, irrespective of the grade.

In that campaign, they overcame some of the so-called stronger counties en route to success including a final win over Kerry at Pearse Stadium. It was the county's second success at All-Ireland level in that grade, having previously annexed the title in 1935. A number of the players involved in that campaign progressed to play senior football for the county in subsequent years.

He says he and his management team placed a particular emphasis on the junior set-up in an effort to develop and cultivate talent which would ultimately add to the senior team.

"There's always talent in most places, but if you're low in numbers, the chances of finding talent in places with bigger numbers is higher. Then you've got tradition to deal with, and that's another thing.

"But I did feel that really needed to be pushed out, and it took a lot of time to get it to a level where we were able to compete with the big boys. You look at the juniors, we took over them and we put a lot of effort into the juniors.

"And it wasn't necessarily to win the All-Ireland title but it was to develop players and I knew I needed to develop some players to add to that senior team to try and make it more consistent.

"As well as that, I also wanted to show the county we were looking at everyone within the county regardless of where they were from, and that gave a lot of hope to young lads who saw that well, if my buddy from over the road is getting a chance maybe I will too.

"That was awful important, we really wanted to show the county we were looking everywhere as well as developing the players, getting them on the play. If you look at Eugene Mullen, David Rooney, Shane McManus, fellas like those that may have not come along only for the junior."

Sligo found themselves in the media spotlight after their surprise reversal to London in the 2013 Connacht Championship.

The defeat coincided with Eamonn O'Hara's appearance as an analyst on *The Sunday Game*.

Having played under Walsh for four years, O'Hara was not involved in the 2013 campaign and announced his retirement from inter-county football in May of that year.

He was critical of Walsh's management

in his analysis of Sligo's loss on the programme, and it is something Walsh addresses in the book.

"I've dealt with some of it in the book in case anyone was in any doubt about the story that is out there," he says.

"I think it was important that people know the story. But it doesn't sour the experience one bit.

"To be honest, I still keep in contact with people in Sligo, I've great memories in Sligo and it's just the one or two maybe that fall by the wayside but you'll always have that and it doesn't sour the relationship, Sligo's a great county and I got everything I could from the players in Sligo. That group, I can't speak highly enough of them."

Having departed the Sligo job, Walsh took the Galway reins in 2014, and revitalised their fortunes over the coming years, reaching a Division One league final and All-Ireland semi-final as well as their two Nestor Cup successes.

He would also go on to manage against Sligo twice in the Connacht Championship, in 2018 and 2019.

He says his experiences in Sligo were invaluable to developing his managerial style, which he carried forward into the Galway job.

Indeed - and this is a point he references in the book on many occasions - Walsh emphasises that in his various set-ups he always advocated for constant review and analysis of what they were doing in terms of training, preparation and anywhere else they felt they could help the players in either Sligo or Galway gain an edge.

"I learned so much in Sligo, and any management team I've been involved in we always looked at ourselves and assessed ourselves, to see what worked and didn't work.

"I was lucky enough to get a chance in Sligo, we fine-tuned different things, we were always doing that, and there's no doubt that I was far better equipped to take on the Galway job after my five years in Sligo than if I was red raw.

"I'd the likes of a Gerry Hussey, a top Sports Psychologist, in behind me as well and I wanted this to continuously challenge methods, ask what that's about, so we could sit down the next day away from the football field and analyse what we're at and where we could be better as a management.

"That's something we always did with Sligo and Galway. It was a challenge me environment that I always worked from, and I'd expect the players to always understand why they were being challenged as well."

The Invisible Game: Maths, Minute and Movement by Kevin Walsh with Daragh Ó Conchúir is available in all good bookshops now as well as online.





Fais Faisal co-founder and CEO of The Irish Tech Society



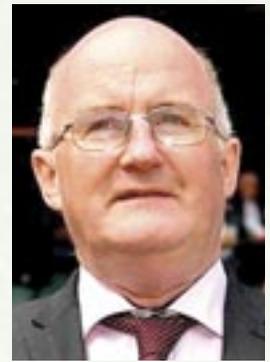
Sean Dunnion, GAA ITC Chair



Gerry O'Connor Company Secretary to ITS



Tomás Meehan, GAA's Chief Information Officer



John Horan, Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael

Comortas na Hacatonáí

TWO members from the Province had significant roles in this year's inaugural International Hackathon; a collaboration between the GAA and the Irish Tech Society. Tomás Meehan, the GAA's Chief Information Officer and Gerry O'Connor former Rúnaí CLG (Sligeach) and presently Company Secretary to ITS.

The event was powered by Microsoft and had the support of the Guinness Enterprise Centre as well as Sports-Tech.

CEO and co-founder Fais Faisal opened proceedings by acknowledging the importance of the GAA to his new home "this beautiful island" and the significance of having such a community based organisation to partner with on this project. He introduced the Minister for sport Jack Chambers TD who explained that 'diversity and inclusion' were central to the ethos of the GAA, Microsoft Ireland and the Irish Tech Society.

Gerald O'Connor presented John Horan Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael, to the on-line audience by paying tribute to the way the President had led during unprecedented challenges while overseeing the completion of the fixtures plan even if 'All-Ireland's had to be played on unusual dates.' For his part Sean Ó Horáin emphasised the willingness of the GAA to embrace change and use technology to improve everyone's experience.

Every speaker paid tribute to key players who worked on the project for six months including Sean Dunnion, Chair of the National IT Committee, Paul Reardon, ITS; the project organiser, Leah Cullen co-founder ITS, Pierrick Picard; Microsoft Ireland and Eamonn Sayers of GEC.

Ntsoaki Phakoe-McDevitt, moderated a discussion on day one that evaluated every angle where Tech meets sport and both embrace entrepreneurship. Tomás Meehan GAA was well qualified to tackle some of these issues having as he does

an in-depth knowledge of technology and its application in AIB, PWC, Government and the GAA. Tomás explained that while the focus may be on the inter-County player: administrators, spectators, the non-elite player (the junior b), sponsors, broadcasters and other media were equally in need of Tech solutions. He pointed out that stats gathered on players now accompanied a player rather than a coach. A player with many different trainers even in different codes has a greater chance of having his or her status understood and his or her current mentors would have the necessary information to provide appropriate training regimes while preventing injury. The use of Tech and issues around child protection were constantly being monitored by the GAA.

Sean Dunnion, GAA ITC Chair, explained his committee's involvement in the GIS survey which highlighted the urban-rural divide that has been created by a population shift resulting in a scarcity of facilities in urban areas and their under-utilisation in rural Ireland. Streaming of games and the challenges this provided

was a direct result of the restrictions on movement but the former Donegal Chairperson felt that streaming was here to stay and any Tech challenges would have to be overcome.

Ian Fitzpatrick, rugby 7s, gave examples of tech in use as in GoPros, drones and even virtual reality. The advantages provided by Tech are especially relevant in the area of injury prevention. GPS devices collect DATA that make professionals aware of their threshold before the onset of injury. He suggested that players who use gaming consoles in their down-time are assisting their mental wellbeing. Another professional rugby player, James Tracy, agreed that tech was now enabling the management of a player's load. Tech he suggested had enabled every player in every sport to be the best version of themselves and explained that he as a professional player he had ownership of his medical records but that other data became the property of the union by agreement. Ownership of data provoked quite a bit of discussion throughout the debate.





Greg Deane,
The Irish Tech Society



Jack Chambers TD



Michael McCarthy,
The Irish Tech Society



Nickey Brennan



Jack O'Connor,
UN Youth Rep

Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael, John Horan spoke of the willingness and need for the GAA to embrace technology in a continuous drive to promote and preserve the ancient games and pastimes



Jonathan Eustace, Microsoft, gave his audience a better understanding of the convergence of tech and sport. Many solutions have been built on Microsoft platforms and as Microsoft had been the first to embrace GDPR when creating their systems this should be of some comfort to users. Security of data is another consideration when considering a platform. "Tech is a disruptor" he declared forcing organisations to build out capabilities. The future will feature the Internet of Things (IOT) being used to enhance fan experience and safety.

Eamonn Sayers, GEC, spoke of the special moments in sport including the Ireland England rugby international and the playing of the UK national anthem that day in Croke Park. There was much involvement of sports people in start-up ecosystems that include food tech, mindfulness and stadia as entertainment venues. LEO and Enterprise Ireland provide supports and the Guinness Enterprise Centre is there to help entrepreneurs to become investor ready. Angel investors and international investment syndicates are also an option for start-ups.

Ronan Donagher (Hackathon judge) was of the opinion that all sports have similar challenges. He speculated as to the effect of the role out of 5G would have on the experience for players, administrators and volunteers.

Abdulla Thakur (INTURN Solutions), agreed with this sentiment by pointing out that there are plenty of studies on the effects of concussion and what was needed was a sharing of the information among all codes. Abdulla reasoned that the player was too often a secondary consideration and deserved more support especially after their playing days. Sportspeople make good entrepreneurs as they are used to preparation and how to cope with failure. He suggested those interested in business should consider investing a small amount in an existing entity before contemplating going it alone.

The Irish Tech Society's Michael McCarthy and Greg Deane had the final say as Michael alluded to the fact that Henry Ford had opened a factory in Cork in 1917 and that Irish people were creative and forward looking. Greg Deane assured the attendees that the Irish Tech Society intended to be at the forefront of education and entrepreneurship for the inevitable advancement in technology and its use in Ireland.

Jack Chambers TD declared that "there will definitely be better days ahead for sport" at the official launch of the GAA-Irish Tech Society inaugural International Hackathon (powered by MICROSOFT) which concluded on Sunday 8th February.

The Minister and Chief Whip alluded to the difficulties experienced by sporting bodies since March 2020, the support of Government to this important sector and the example shown by the organisers in hosting such a large technological competition virtually. He acknowledged the commitment of all parties involved to "diversity and inclusion" and pointed out that it was no surprise that the GAA was involved given the Association's commitments in An Fís Soléir.

Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael, John Horan spoke of the willingness and need for the GAA to embrace technology in a continuous drive to promote and preserve the ancient games and pastimes. An tUas Ó Horáin thanked the organisers Fais Faisal, Leah Cullen, Gerald O'Connor and Paul Reardon of the Irish Tech Society; Sean Dunnion and Tomás Meehan of the GAA and Pierrick Picard of Microsoft Ireland. He acknowledged the support also of the Guinness Enterprise Centre and Eamonn Sayers. He speculated that the GAA might be challenged by the ideas coming from this competition in a positive way. It would be useful to have "new eyes" on the Association for the next few days. The GAA wished to deliver sport to Society in a safe and caring manner and is always open to change.

Start-ups got a "heads up" in terms of what they should be considering as their ideas are transformed into viable businesses. The "Business Model Canvass" concept where a visual framework is used to track progress was explained. These thought provoking discussions focused on decisions such as who is best to head up these new enterprises; creators of the idea or someone more skilled in management? It was suggested that the targets set by new companies were generally too optimistic in the case of one year time-lines but more realistic when a 3 year period was considered.





Hurlers in big drive for fundraising

THE Sligo hurling panel are putting in a tremendous effort to prepare for the season ahead during the current covid restrictions. This includes strength & conditioning, nutrition, running sessions, Hurling skills and Wall Ball challenges; all of which require a daily focus.

This work would normally be done in group sessions but with current restrictions, the players are working on their skills individually while juggling family and work commitments.

Sligo Senior hurling has had an amazing run; winning three National titles (Allianz League 2020, Nicky Rackard 2019 & Lory Meagher 2018) while the younger players have excelled in Celtic challenge competitions (2018 winners). Sligo hurling is a great success story and is a 'super brand' which has a lot more potential in the coming years as they continue to build on their accomplishments.

Despite the tremendous support of the County Board, Croke Park and the Clayton Hotel, whose logo will be proudly displayed on team jerseys once again, financing all aspects of the code remains a challenge.

Sligo hurlers have in recent years, contributed to the cause by supporting Breakfast mornings and last-man-standing fundraisers, but such initiatives are impossible at this time.

This year they plan to build on the good-will and enthusiasm that already exists around hurling throughout the County and to that effect they are establishing 'Friends of Sligo Hurling'. This is an initiative that you can be part of and proud of.

On March 1st Friends of Sligo Hurling & the Sligo Senior Hurling Panel launched 'iSupport Sligo Hurling', which involves the hurlers embarking on a virtual journey from Sligo GAA in Scar-

den to Sligo GAA, Gaelic Park in New York, 'Sligo2Sligo'.

From Coney Island to Coney Island, the Metal Man to Statue of Liberty, IT Sligo to Setton Hall University, Clayton Hotel to Gerry's Place the starting gun has been fired!

On-line donations towards the mileage covered by the hurlers will be provided by Friends of Sligo Hurling and anyone who wishes to support this worthy cause. Each player will walk, run and crawl to accumulate the required 5,000 miles.

They are asking everyone to get onboard, get out and about to improve mental & physical health.

Get your mother, father, brother, sister, neighbours and friends up and out. While doing so, they are asking everyone to support in whatever way they can, big or small, all is appreciated.

Those who participate in this iSupport Sligo Hurling Challenge will also get to enhance their own mental and physical health by getting out and about in support of a great bunch of ambassadors for the County.

Along with helping Sligo hurlers of all ages in their preparation to be the best they can be, with funds raised going towards hurling facilities and equipment, organisers will also be making donations to both North West STOP and Sligo Cancer Support Centre.

"Sligo hurling has gone from strength to strength in recent years and we are committed to ensuring that the County remains in the upper tiers at National Level for many years to come.

"Maintaining and then exceeding Christy Ring level of competition is part of our vision and strategy for the future and we look forward to your help and support on this journey.

"You can track the progress of the players' journey to New York and get all the information about this event, including how to donate and roll in behind iSupport Sligo hurling, on www.idonate.ie/Sligo2Sligo," organisers added.

Sligo captain Niall Feehily lifts the trophy following the Allianz Hurling League Division 3B Final victory over Leitrim at the Connacht Centre of Excellence.

Photo: Harry Murphy/Sportsfile.



Moyles not looking back in anger

By **MIKE FINNERTY**
The Mayo News

THE recent spate of Mayo football retirements got Michael Moyles thinking about his own departure from the inter-county scene 15 years ago.

Social media was still in its infancy, Twitter was only being developed, and players often retired without so much as a 'bye or leave'.

That's how it was for Moyles too.

In his own words he 'ended up sort of floating away' in 2006 after he was advised to stop playing contact sports by doctors and medical specialists in Ireland, the UK and the US after an MRI scan showed that a bone in his back had moved dangerously close to his spinal cord.

The injury was attributed to years of taking heavy blows on playing fields all across the country, not to mention being involved in a car crash on his way to Mayo training a few years earlier.

Moyles was told that if he continued to play Gaelic football – or any contact sport – another heavy blow to his back could leave him paralysed.

"Getting the news was obviously very upsetting but you just have to remember that there's more to life," the All-Ireland club winner told *The Mayo News* in October of 2006.

"If I'd found out later and kept playing on there was a chance I'd end up in a wheelchair.

"As far as the doctors and specialists are concerned, if I was in contact again there's a chance that a bone in my back could sever my spinal cord."

So he was left with no option but to draw a line under playing with Crossmolina and Mayo.

He admits such a dramatic and traumatic end to his inter-county career took its toll.

"My last game with Mayo was the 2005 All-Ireland quarter-final [which they lost to Kerry]," he recalled last week. "I had to go for some tests and scans on my neck at the start of 2006 and I remember Liam Moffatt [current Mayo GAA chairman], who I played with all through my career in Crossmolina, and was a physio, was very good to me at the time.

"The initial shock at having to retire made me step back a bit from football for a while.

"I was 29 when I made the decision, and there was more than me at risk. I had to think about my immediate family and the strain and the worry that me playing on would have put on them.

"Of course, I'd love to have been involved in 2006 when Mayo got to the All-Ireland Final, it was a very hard decision to walk away from that. I found closure very difficult.

"There's no doubt it can be a very dark place.

"I remember 2006 very vividly. I was very hurt at the time because I felt I could have done a job, I felt I could have contributed. But I had to think of my health and my family.

"It was before Twitter and social media, and players announcing they had retired really, so you just ended up sort of floating away.

"That's where the GAA falls down a bit, I think. When players finish up with inter-county, something that's been such a huge part of their lives for so long, there's a huge void.

"I have filled that void with coaching and managing teams for the last 13 years.

"Of course you'd prefer to be playing, you want to play for as long as you can."

That was one of the reasons why Michael Moyles ended his self-imposed retirement and returned to play club football with Crossmolina some two years later, in 2008.

Having reviewed the medical advice and weighed up the risks, the pull of 'dabbling' with the Deel Rovers proved too strong to resist.

In recent years he has also felt confident enough to wear the Green and Red of the Mayo Masters and only last season made a few

cameo appearances with Enniscrone/Kilglass Gaels in Sligo.

"After a few years, I felt that I needed to go back and dabble in football again, to do a few bits and pieces," he explained.

"I love the team environment. I love the dressing-room, the camaraderie, the quizzes, the few drinks, the social aspect of it. I love being around that sort of environment.

"I love the coaching too, thinking about the game, watching the game, and getting feedback from players and working with them to get better."

Just as his 13-year management and coaching career would suggest.



Mayo Junior manager Michael Moyles patrols the sidelines during the 2013 Connacht Junior Final against Sligo at Pearse Stadium.

Photo: Diarmuid Greene / SPORTSFILE.



Long road back for injur

Brendan Harrison

By **MIKE FINNERTY**
The Mayo News

OUT of sight and out of mind. And nobody knows that better than the lads themselves. Everyone's plan is to be flying fit, playing well and in the team. But then an injury hits, you're out of action, out of the picture, and part of a different group altogether.

It's the same in every team sport and the Mayo senior football squad is no different.

'The walking wounded' who spend more time talking to and dealing with doctors, specialists, and team physios like Mark Gallagher and Brendan Butler than they do with management and teammates.

Players for whom training sessions have been replaced by rehab' programmes and for whom match days last season were spent at home on their couches, due to the GAA's Covid-19 regulations.

Ironically, the only exception to that rule was the All-Ireland Final last December, meaning that injured players who were outside the magic number of '26' were so near, and yet so far, from the action at Croke Park.

This week we focus on three Mayo players who missed all the drama of last season, but will be hoping to be back in the thick of it again when the 2021 campaign begins.

Brendan Harrison

Aghamore. Age: 28

Last played for Mayo: February 2, 2020

THE sight of Brendan Harrison on crutches on the field at Croke Park after last December's All-Ireland Final defeat was a poignant reminder of another man that Mayo missed badly against Dublin.

The All-Star defender had a procedure on his injured knee the week leading up to the final and didn't kick a ball for either Aghamore or Mayo from mid-July onwards last year.

An innocuous twist of his knee during the very first club match back after lockdown restrictions were lifted last summer — in the Michael Walsh League against Knockmore — turned out to be a lot more serious than Harrison thought at the time.

As he walked off the field that evening, before driving himself home and organising to get the knee examined, little did he know that he wouldn't lace up a pair of boots for a game again in 2020.

He was also set to miss most, if not all, of Mayo's National League campaign this spring, had the competition started last month as was originally planned.

However, with no start date confirmed for either club or county football yet this season, he now looks set to be ready to go — barring any setbacks.

Colm Boyle

Davitts. Age: 34

Last played for Mayo: January 28, 2020

RARELY (if ever) has a Mayo footballer 'not' sending a message via his social media account (@ColmBoyle is his Twitter handle in case you didn't know already) been a cause for such great celebration among Mayo supporters.

After the synchronised retirements of six players in the space of 20 days in January, there was a genuine sense of dread that 'Boyley' would also leave the Mayo stage.

However, it now seems that barring the inter-county season not going ahead this year, the Davitts dynamo will be back for at least one more shot at a few titles (and maybe a few cocky forwards too!).

It's 13 months since Boyle suffered what was described some weeks later as 'a serious knee injury' by James Horan. We now understand it to have been a badly damaged cruciate ligament that ended his inter-county season there and then against Dublin on January 28.

Typical of the man, he did battle back to line out for Davitts in the club championship in late July, just six months after getting injured, but he was unable to convince Horan and company that he was ready to play any Mayo minutes when the season restarted in October.

In fact, he didn't make the match-day squads for the Galway, Tipperary and Dublin matches.

The Westport-based Garda will be 35 this July so it will be fascinating to see what role the manager has in mind for the four-time All Star.



ed players nears the end



Colm Boyle



Jason Doherty

Jason Doherty Burrishoole. Age: 31

Last played for Mayo: August 3, 2019

THERE was a huge amount of sympathy and genuine disappointment for Doherty when news emerged last October that the talented forward had torn the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) in his right knee during a training session with Mayo.

After all, that unfortunate setback had occurred just 14 months after he had torn the ACL in his left knee during the course of the All-Ireland SFC 'Super 8s' game

against Donegal in Castlebar in early August in 2019.

Doherty had put himself through a gruelling rehabilitation programme to get back in action for Burrishoole last July and was back in the frame to line out with Mayo when the inter-county season restarted last autumn.

However, instead he was resigned to watching on from the sidelines with the rest of us.

We can only imagine what the last five months have been like for him, especially considering that he had been edging close to a Mayo return last spring when Covid-19 brought everything to a halt.

All going well, the hope is that Jason will be back in action again with club and county later this summer.



Freeman: Higgins is good enough to play for Galway hurlers

By **DECLAN ROONEY**
Media West (Ireland)

MAYO hurling stalwart Cathal Freeman thinks that having Keith Higgins' on board full time with the county hurlers in 2021 will be a priceless addition for the team.

Higgins retired from inter-county football in January, but signalled his intent to give his full focus to the Mayo hurlers this season after trying to play both codes on and off over the years.

Freeman (30) was part of the Mayo side that lost last year's Nicky Rackard Cup final to Donegal, while they were also relegated from an ultra competition Division 2A in the national league, but the Tooreen club man thinks having Higgins' experience to call on will be huge.

"It's massive for us. Not only is he a fantastic athlete in the physical sense, he is also a fantastic hurler," said Freeman, a third year medical student at University of Limerick.

"People would often say he would get into the Galway team on the basis of his athleticism and his speed alone. But he would also get in the Galway team on the basis of his hurling ability alone also. He is a wonderful stickman; he has the perfect package put together.

"And even aside from that, the experience that he will bring to the group at training sessions in meetings, the insight he will bring from his experience of playing high level sport for 15 years, is going to be massive for us.

"He'd be one of the elder statesmen within the group and a lot of the team would have grown up idolising him, looking up to him. The words he speaks will carry real weight. I'm sure as a group we will benefit from that hugely."

Last year turned out to be a time of mixed emotions for Freeman. In January he helped Tooreen reach the All-Ireland intermediate club semi-finals, only for a hamstring injury picked up the following week to rob him of his dream of playing Fitzgibbon Cup hurling.

He went on to raise more than €62,000 for the Irish Cancer Society and for protective equipment for HSE staff, when he soloed a sliotar a marathon distance in his garden. Tooreen then lost their Mayo club



Mayo hurler Cathal Freeman pictured with the new Mayo GAA jersey, which will be available from Intersport Elverys from 5th May.

Photo: INPHO/James Crombie.

title to Ballyhaunis in the autumn – Higgins scored nine points – before Donegal denied the county team in the Croke Park decider.

Despite that defeat and their relegation, he thinks there is plenty to be positive about in Mayo hurling.

"Looking in from the outside, it is difficult to understand where Mayo hurling is. Last year's league didn't go as well as we'd have hoped and we lost out to Donegal, but there are some green shoots appearing.

"Adrian Hession the GPO in Mayo has done incredible work. I shake my head when I think what he has done in order to get hurling into 44 national schools in the county. That has never happened before.

"Two great club mates of mine, Austin

Henry and Jackie Coyne, have done a powerful amount of work putting together a ten-year strategic plan for Mayo hurling.

"New underage clubs have been set up in Claremorris and Cashel Gaels, and Cashel have an adult team too. That's a big step forward; that's what we need. The more people you have playing any given sport the more opportunity you have for the top end of that group to progress."

After first studying in NUI Galway, Freeman returned to study medicine in Limerick in 2018, and after his time as a Sigerson Cup footballer, this year in his seventh academic season, he became ineligible to play Fitzgibbon Cup.

As part of his third year in medicine he has been working as a GP in Roscommon, and helping in the vaccination of some of the vulnerable in society has given him a real lift.

"It has been a great experience so far, but there has been difficult parts to the job too. As annoying as it might seem that the vaccinations programme is not going as fast as it might have hoped, in the GP practice here, we gave out the vaccines to the over 85 group last week.

The excitement amongst the group was just unreal. I can't describe it.

"Even all of us that were helping giving it out, the excitement from everyone, to just finally have it in our hands and to be able to give people that have been cooped up in their own homes, cocooning for months on end, to give them some hope is something that will stay with us for a long time.

"Often times when you ask how people feel about needles the usual answer is they're not too fond of them, but last week there was no complaints. 'Give it to me, the biggest needle you have, just put it in'. That will stay with us for a while."

Intersport Elverys, together with O'Neills, Mayo GAA, and Mayo LGFA, have unveiled the new home jersey which will be worn by all Mayo inter-county footballers and hurlers for the 2021 season. The new jersey will incorporate the Intersport Elverys brand for the 24th year and will be available from 5th May exclusively through www.Elverys.ie until stores across the country re-open.



By **DECLAN ROONEY**
Media West (Ireland)

MAYO forward Diarmuid O'Connor believes the defending Connacht champions have the depth of talent in the squad to thrive, despite the retirement of some of their most experienced players in the off-season.

O'Connor was part of the Mayo team that fell to Dublin in December's All-Ireland senior final at Croke Park, his third All-Ireland final defeat in a seven-year inter-county career, but after putting that setback behind him, the Ballintubber man hopes to improve again in 2021.

A significant amount of talent and experience left in January when Keith Higgins, Chris Barrett, Seamie O'Shea, Donal Vaughan, Tom Parsons and David Clarke called an end to their time in the green and red shirt, but O'Connor thinks the Mayo panel has the ability to evolve.

"The six lads will be massive losses, and not just on the field," said O'Connor, who was named young player of the year in 2015 and 2016.

"Obviously they are all top players and are still playing at the top of their game. They will be big losses on the pitch and at training. But off the pitch as well and around the dressing room. They were massive leaders and great friends. Just not having them around they'll be missed.

"But luckily enough in Mayo we have a huge array of talent coming through. I think that was shown last year and there was a lot of debutants. The average age of the team was way down on previous years.

"A lot of lads came in and there could have been more of them too. We have a lot of talent coming through but those lads will be missed both on and off the pitch."

When Mayo launched their Connacht championship campaign against Leitrim last November, manager James Horan handed out seven debuts, with three of those new faces – Oisín Mullin, Eoghan McLaughlin and Tommy Conroy – all nominated for All Stars. Mullin was named at corner back on that team of the year.

At 26 years old, whether he likes it or not, O'Connor is one of the elder statesmen in the panel now, as the 'young lads' are letting him know.

"It's scary how the years are going by so quickly," said O'Connor, a Maths and PE teacher at St Gerald's College in Castlebar.

"It's gas, talking to a couple of the so called younger lads...I'm still a young lad in my eyes, but they had a great laugh telling me I wasn't anymore.

"It's great that the lads that have come through have pushed everyone on and kept everyone on their toes. You could see the talent that was there last year and the impact the new players made. There'll be

more this year too, so there will be places up for grabs. The competition in the squad will be huge. It's great though; it's exciting times for Mayo."

A few weeks on from their loss to Dublin, the Mayo panel kicked off their 2021 preparation again, albeit through online fitness sessions. Having his older brother Cillian at home has given Diarmuid an equally driven training partner, but after going through lockdown preparation last year, he says he has learned to take it a little bit easier on himself.

"At this stage we have moved on from last season, I kind of moved on a week after the final, thinking towards this year, looking at how I can improve on a personal level and how the team can improve.

lievable and to see the joy that it brings to Mayo people is huge.

"Especially last year, anyone that I have been talking have all been saying how great it was. For them to have something to look forward to watching the game was a huge thing.

"And it was the same for us to be able to play. It will be more of the same this year I think, but I just can't wait to get back, meet the lads and have a bit of craic. We'll just see how we can improve."

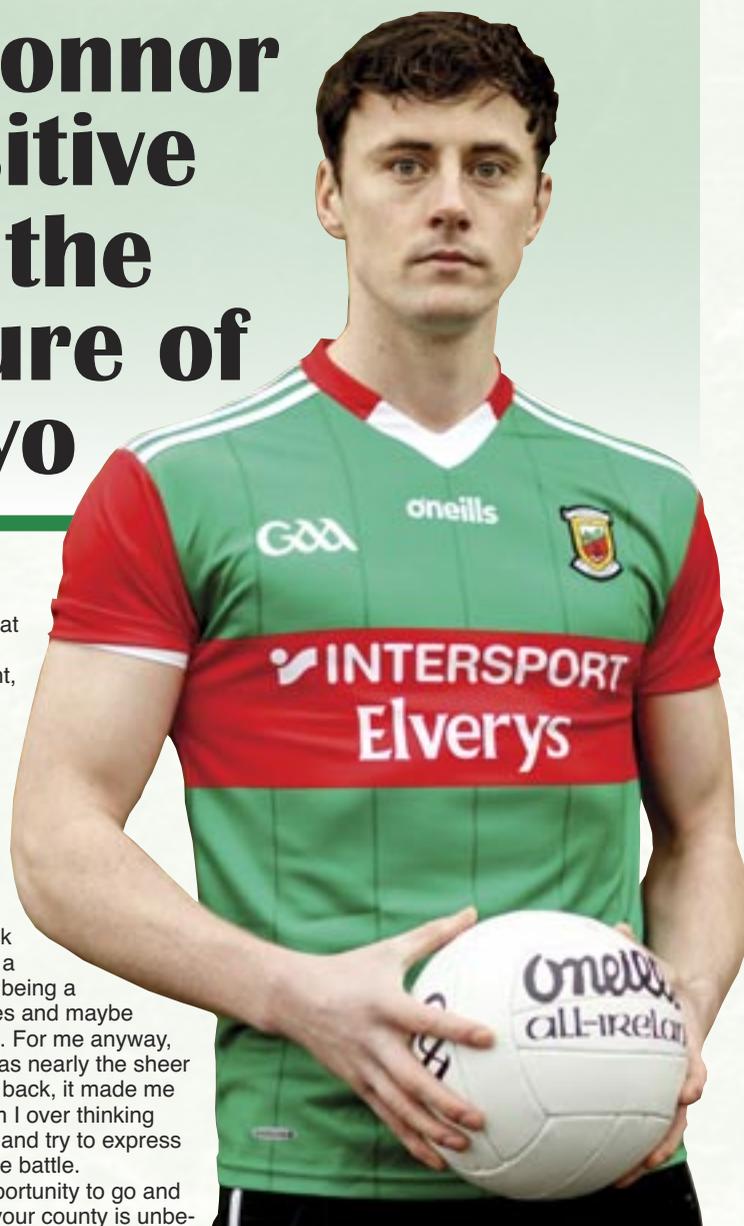
Mayo footballer Diarmuid O'Connor (below) pictured with the new Mayo GAA jersey, which will be available from Intersport Elverys from 5th May.
Photo: INPHO/James Crombie.

O'Connor positive for the future of Mayo

"The hunger is always there, but what is happening in the world at the moment, to be able to play and go out and express yourself, it's unbelievable to have that opportunity. We got that last year after the break and it was great.

"Before the break I felt things had got a bit heavy. We were being a bit hard on ourselves and maybe over thinking things. For me anyway, after the break, it was nearly the sheer enjoyment of being back, it made me ask myself: Why am I over thinking things? Just go out and try to express myself and enjoy the battle.

"To have the opportunity to go and be able to play for your county is unbe-



Sullivan eager to get back to action with Moyles' Mayo

By **DECLAN ROONEY**
Media West (Ireland)

THERE is plenty to be excited about in Mayo Ladies football circles as the 2021 season approaches, and one of the county's longest serving players, Kathryn Sullivan, says she is determined to help her team reach the next level.

A new manager in Michael Moyles, the return of some former players and the arrival of eager, fresh talent means Mayo turn towards the new season with vigour.

While their 2020 championship ended at the group stages, 2019's All-Ireland semi-final appearance suggests there is a talented group of players in the county. Add in some experienced faces like Carnacon's Fiona McHale and some of her clubmates, and Sullivan (30) thinks the team can make significant progress.

"When Michael came in, at the start the door was open to anyone if they wanted to play for Mayo, which was completely right," said Sullivan, who has been playing for Mayo since her debut in 2007.

"There are players who have come back, some younger players, some more experienced players. The likes of Fiona McHale, it's unreal to have her back. Eight or nine players were added to the training squad and they are all happy out.

"We are starting with a fresh slate. I'm sure there was nerves there at the very first Zoom call we had, just introducing the new management and seeing faces that we haven't seen in a while. Everyone is there for the same reason though, to be ready when we get back up and running.

"We had three years along with Peter (Leahy) and they were brilliant. We came so close. There was that semi-final loss by a point in 2019 against Galway. That was very, very disappointing.

"But this new, fresh approach might maybe add that tiny percentage that we have been looking for. Everyone has their own set of skills in the new management and already you can see that it's working wonders. Hopefully we can push on now



Mayo Ladies footballer Kathryn Sullivan pictured with the new Mayo GAA jersey, which will be available from Intersport Elverys from 5th May.

Photo: INPHO/James Crombie.

and try and get that extra bit further this time."

With the country in lockdown, gym instructor Sullivan could have ended up twiddling her thumbs, but working with Andy Moran's 'The Movement' in Castlebar, she has been kept busy.

In recent weeks the Castlebar Mitchels player ran a series of online training sessions in association with the LGFA, which culminated in a ferocious battle for workout supremacy with Moran. She is delighted to have been able to keep working behind closed doors.

"I'm two years working at The Movement this April. Andy is unbelievable. He is like the most positive person in the world.

The whole team here are the same. You bounce off that kind of energy. Even with these Ladies football videos he has had some great ideas.

"Unfortunately, our members couldn't come in to the classes, but we have a nice media set-up in Lough Lannagh in the leisure complex. We have two big screens and proper lighting so we can see all the members.

"The class lay-out and routine is the same as it always has been for them. The class is still full even to this day, which is crazy. People have kept with us and that has kept us going too, which is great."

Moyles has assembled an impressive backroom team featuring Aidan McLoughlin, Tom Carney, Marita McDonald, Terry Kennedy, Conor Finn and Austin O'Malley. And with the continued support of Elverys – "they have been so good to us and so generous" – Sullivan says the transition has been a very smooth process.

"Michael has been brilliant so far.

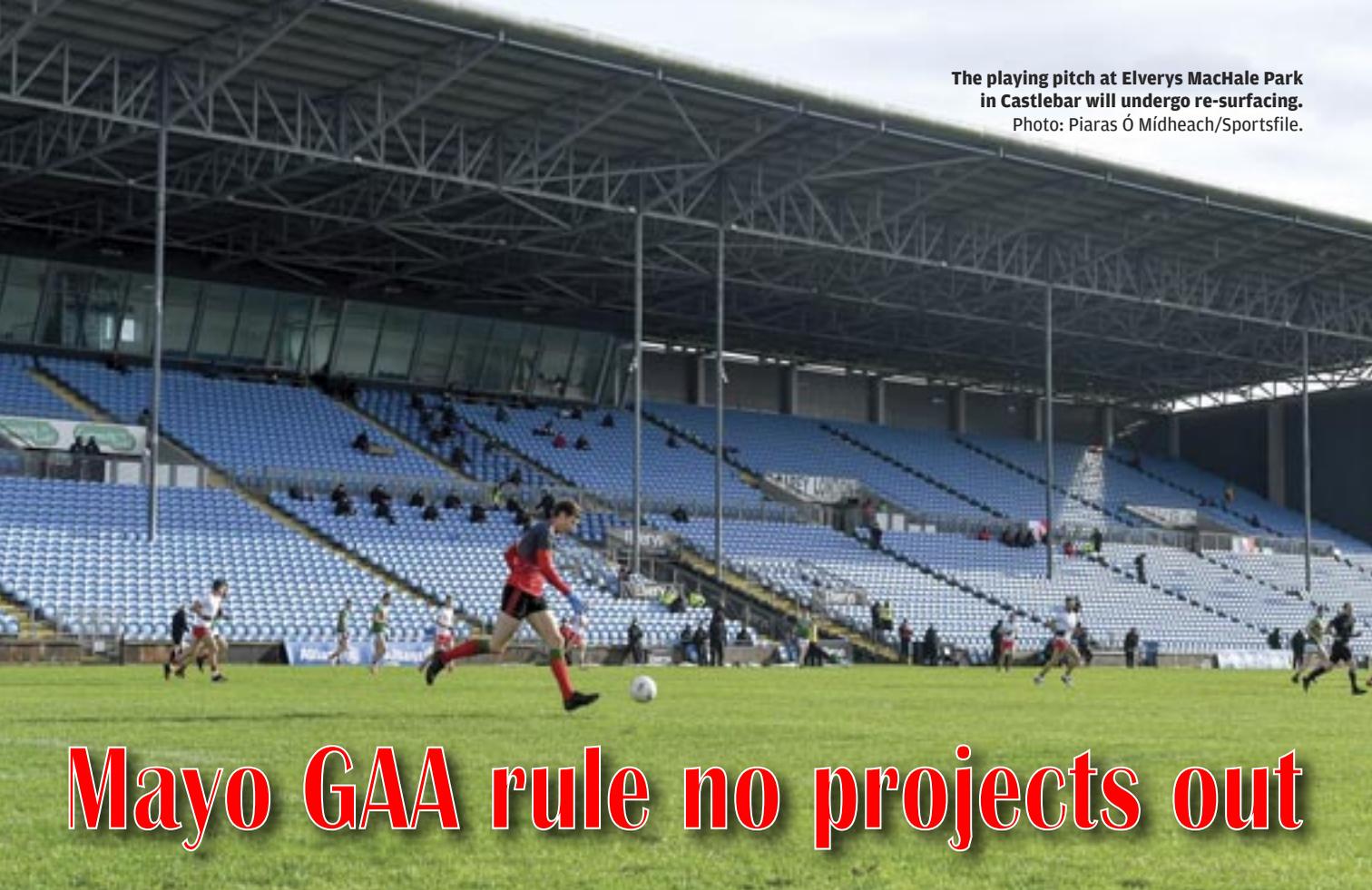
I have dealt with Michael before when he was in as a coach in 2015.

The team he has brought in now, everyone has a specific job and everything is delegated off to the right person.

"He is so professional and so approachable too. We have all noticed that. If there is any issue or anything it is no problem to pick up the phone and give him a call.

"He hasn't seen us in person at all, and that must be a hard part of it all as he gets to know all the players. At the minute it is going really well. It is exciting and we are looking forward to getting back whenever that may be. Hopefully it's sooner rather than later."





Mayo GAA rule no projects out

By MIKE FINNERTY
The Mayo News

THE pitch re-surfacing project at MacHale Park in Castlebar may be the primary infrastructure project being planned by Mayo GAA chiefs at the moment, but they haven't ruled out developing a 'Training Centre' in the future.

The County Board are rolling out the 'Laochra Mhaigh Eo' fundraising project over the next two months in an effort to raise money to pay for the re-development of the MacHale Park pitch. The planned works are expected to cost in the region of €300,000.

However, Mayo GAA Board chairman, Liam Moffatt, has told The Mayo News that officials are 'not ruling out any project in the future' but that, 'right here, right now, going on a County Board meeting we had last November, it was felt that this would be a prudent approach, given the times we're living in.

"It's not a cost on clubs. It will be paid for by the Laochra Mhaigh Eo initiative," he added.

Twelve months ago, shortly before Covid-19 arrived in the country, Michael Diskin, the assistant treasurer of the County Board (who also heads up their infrastructure and facilities sub-committee) told club delegates that there were five

options being explored in relation to developing infrastructure and facilities for the county's football and hurling teams.

These included developing three pitches and dressing-rooms at Lough Lannagh in Castlebar to create a state-of-the-art Mayo GAA Training Centre (at a projected cost of over €4m); enhancing Mulvey Park in Castlebar; developing pitches in both the South Mayo and North Mayo regions; and resurfacing MacHale Park.

"At the start of 2020 I commissioned Michael Diskin to look at our infrastructure demands," explained Liam Moffatt. "He did a very thorough review and he looked at five potential projects, one of which was the condition of the MacHale Park pitch and what was needed.

"If you talk to some of our coaches and players, they're very proud of the pitch, but nobody would object to having a better playing surface. As we've stated a number of times, we're not ruling out any project in the future.

"But right here, right now, going on a County Board meeting we had last November, it was felt that this would be a prudent approach, given the times we're living in.

"But I'll stress, it doesn't rule out any previously mentioned projects happening in the future.

"Right now though, we just want to get

this pitch as good as it can be to support our club and inter-county players. We're at the point now where we'll be bringing it to the next County Board meeting and will hopefully get the approval for that."

Moffatt said that, when completed, the MacHale Park pitch should have a playing surface 'comparable to Markievicz Park' in Sligo and believes that the works will add to the 'existing facilities' in Castlebar.

He also set out the background to the project.

"The facilities and the dressing-rooms at MacHale Park are great, but there hasn't been a significant investment in the pitch for over 20 years, there has been maintenance every year, but no dedicated project.

"When we set up the Cairde Mhaigh Eo sub-committee last year, one of the goals was that they became a think-tank for sustainable fund-raising ideas. A number of projects were put forward, and one of them was the Laochra Mhaigh Eo project.

"One of the goals of it is to revitalise the playing surface in MacHale Park."

Moffatt also confirmed that the pitch re-surfacing works will begin after Mayo conclude their inter-county programme of matches in Castlebar this year.

He also admitted that it was 'difficult to give a definitive start date for the work due to the current uncertainty over fixtures due to Covid-19'.



Making the Mayo panel

By **MIKE FINNERTY**
The Mayo News

TIME and again last season we heard about the fierce competition for places in the Mayo senior football panel. Everyone from James Horan to Conor Loftus to Aidan O'Shea spoke about the battle to make it into the match-day squads of 26, never mind the starting team.

This was borne out over the course of Mayo's five championship matches as there were some days when household names like Rob Hennelly, Colm Boyle and Keith Higgins failed to make the cut to get a jersey.

It was a similar story for the likes of Fergal Boland, Fionn McDonagh and James Carr, players with plenty of big-game experience who found themselves sitting at home watching some championship matches on television due to Covid-19 restrictions around the number of team personnel allowed into venues.

As most inter-county players discover at some stage, being invited into a county panel is only half the battle. Staying there, and nailing down a place in the match-day squad or first XV is the hard part.

We look at four players who joined James Horan's panel in 2020 and will be hoping to not just make the grade again this year, but kick on and get some minutes under the belts.

Goalkeeper

Rory Byrne

Castlebar Mitchels

HE may have spent all of last year (both pre-Covid and after the season restarted) inside the Mayo squad, but the 28 year-old goalkeeper from the Mitchels didn't get a single minute of game-time. Them's the breaks when you're third in line behind Messrs Clarke and Hennelly.

Byrne would probably have expected to get a run-out at some stage in the National League, especially early in the year, but instead James Horan kept faith with the tried and trusted duo.

The nearest Byrne got to action was sitting on the bench for the Connacht SFC quarter-final win over Leitrim. His last competitive outing for Mayo was in the 2017 FBD League.

There's no doubt that Mitchels not getting out of their group in the championship last autumn denied Byrne a chance to show the Mayo management what he could do.

But with David Clarke now retired, he must be closer to a long-awaited league debut.

Defender

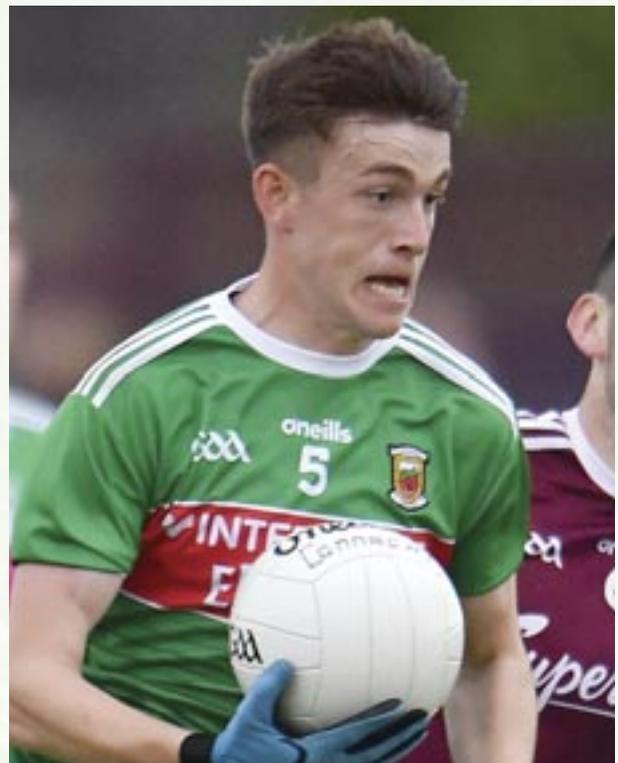
Rory Brickenden

Westport

THE tall defender was one of six members of last year's Mayo Under-20 squad that James Horan called into the senior panel last spring.



RORY BYRNE



RORY BRICKENDEN



is only half the battle

Horan had seen the teenage Brickenden up close during his season coaching Westport in 2018 and obviously rates him highly; the 21 year-old was fast-tracked to sit on the bench for last autumn's National League match against Galway on the weekend the season restarted.

And Brickenden made his senior debut just a few weeks later when he came on against Leitrim in the opening championship game while he was also introduced against the Rossies.

In fact, he was in the match-day squad for all of Mayo's five championship matches, including the All-Ireland Final.

Brickenden wore number six for the Under-20s against Galway last year and also operated at centre-back a bit during last season's senior club championship.

However, if he's going to get his chance with Mayo in 2021 it's more likely to be in a full-back line that has lost Chris Barrett and Keith Higgins to retirement, while Brendan Harrison is still on the road to recovery from injury.

Defender

David McBrien

Ballaghaderreen

VERSATILITY is probably one of the 21 year-old's biggest assets.

He has played with the Mayo Under-20s for the last two seasons and operated in both the full-back and half-back lines, while he has done a lot of his best work for Ballagh' as a dynamic wing-back.

He was another of the 2020 Under-20s called up by James Horan last season and made his senior debut against Galway in

the National League in October, lining out at full-back.

He didn't feature for Mayo for the remainder of the season, but he would have gained a lot of valuable experience from marking the likes of Cillian O'Connor and Aidan O'Shea on the training ground.

McBrien is very highly-rated in Ballagh' and Andy Moran, who plays with him and has coached him with the Mayo Under-20s, is a big fan.

Forward

Darren McHale

Knockmore

A STRING of impressive performances in the Mayo club championship last season, including a man of the match display in the County Final, saw the talented Knockmore attacker called into the Mayo squad last autumn.

His first and only appearance came as a substitute late in the day against Leitrim in the Connacht championship but he will have learned a lot from three months spent training with Cillian O'Connor and company.

The 26 year-old is a typical Knockmore forward; skilful, two-footed, accurate, and at his best when his confidence is high. Anybody who saw McHale score his brilliant goals against Ballintubber and Breaffy at MacHale Park last season will testify to his ability.

The half-forward line is his natural habitat so he will be competing for places with a plethora of others in the months ahead; but his first aim will have to be to nail down a regular place in the match-day squad.



DAVID MCBRIEN



DAVID MCHALE



Interested in winning a New Camper Van worth over €70,000?

ROSCOMMON'S Éire Óg GAA Club are running a fundraising draw at www.winanewcampervan.ie to give you the chance to win a new Peugeot Boxer Compass Avantgarde 196 6 Berth campervan.

Éire Óg GAA Club was founded in 1984 and from our first days right up to today we are to the fore in our parish community of Loughlynn, Lisacul and Gorthaganny here in West Roscommon.

Our club grounds were opened in 1991 and are dedicated to the memory of James Timothy a footballer with our club who was tragically taken from us in a traffic accident in 1985.

We need to complete a total renovation of our existing playing pitch and we hope to include an enhanced all weather playing surface to ensure that the club can continue to provide our youth and adult players with games throughout the year.

In addition, we intend to add a lighted walking/jogging track around the perimeter of the grounds to provide the greater community with a badly needed safe area to use for exercise and recreation.



We have further plans for improvements to the club grounds, including the parking and training areas, hopefully we will be in a position to raise sufficient funds to help us achieve this goal. With these improvements we can ensure Éire

Óg GAA club continues to deliver an enjoyable, safe experience to our members, players, spectators and to the wider community, into the future.

The draw is scheduled to take place on Bank Holiday Monday August 2nd 2021. If all tickets are sold earlier we may hold the draw at an earlier date.

Tickets cost €25 each, 3 for €65, and 5 for €100 and can be purchased from at www.winanewcampervan.ie.



Herald journalist named LGFA Volunteer of the Year

CONGRATULATIONS to *Roscommon Herald* GAA reporter Ian Cooney, who was recently named as Local Journalist of the Year at the LGFA Volunteer of the Year Awards, in association with currentaccount.ie.

Roscommon LGFA paid tribute to Cooney after he was announced as the winner. "Congratulations to Ian Cooney on achieving his LGFA Volunteer of the Year Award. Fantastic achievement and we at Roscommon LGFA are delighted for you and your family. Ian Cooney a Roscommon living loud legend, and a true gentleman well done Ian."



Former Roscommon minor footballer impressing with oval ball

By **JOHN FALLON**
Media West (Ireland)

FORMER Roscommon minor footballer and promising Connacht rugby player Niall Murray could well be planning a season with Anthony Cunningham's side instead of a rugby off-season as the 21-year-old only took rugby when he started throwing a ball around with his brothers during half-time in a match.

Murray, from Brideswell in South Roscommon, only took up rugby when he was 16 but with a frame heading 6'7" and over 16 stone, he revelled from the outset and just four years later helped Ireland win the U-20 Six Nations grand slam.

It was some rise for a versatile young fella whose talent pointed him in the direction of Roscommon gaelic footballers, Athlone Town FC and even the possibility of a professional career in Aussie Rules after he was approached by Tadhg Kennelly and impressed in trials.

But he fell in love with rugby after his mum took him into Buccaneers RFC one Saturday morning and he never looked back after that first day in Dubarry Park.

"I was just watching the Six Nations as a young fella, myself and my two brothers went out at half-time and we started throwing around the rugby ball and then one day when I was about 16 my mother brought me in to Buccaneers one Saturday and I gave it a go. To be honest, I haven't looked back since."

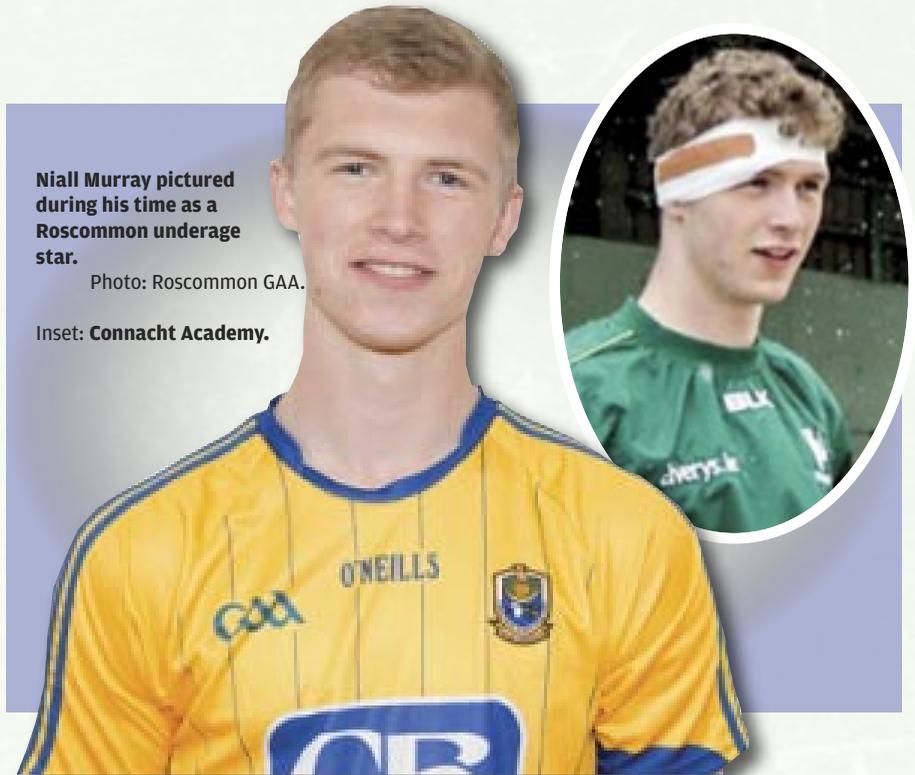
By then he was on the radar of the Roscommon footballers. He went to St Aloysius College in Athlone where GAA dominated and there was no rugby. He enjoyed success with the progressive St Brigid's GAA club in Kiltoom where Roscommon senior Senan Kilbride was among his managers and success there led to the county minors, following in the footsteps of current Connacht out-half Jack Carty.

"I played my young year at 17 playing minor. I loved it. We got to the Connacht semi-final, lost to Galway. I was asked the year after to play but I put all my eggs in one basket at that stage into rugby. It was a love of the game that I wanted to play but at the end of the day I wanted to be a professional sportsman."

Niall Murray pictured during his time as a Roscommon underage star.

Photo: Roscommon GAA.

Inset: Connacht Academy.



That professional dream almost came from an unexpected source when he was asked to put himself forward for Aussie Rules trials.

"I was in school one day and Tadhg Kennelly rang me and asked me to go to the AFL Combine in Dublin. It was a two or three-day Combine and I got picked to go to a kind of a preseason in Florida but I turned it down because we had the U-18 or U-19 rugby inter-pros at the same time, and I wasn't going to risk it all not getting picked for that preseason or getting dropped and having nothing at the end of the day so I stayed at home," said Murray, who turned 21 last October.

He made rapid progression with Connacht, starting at the top by making his debut in the Champions Cup against Gloucester in December 2019 and has since added a dozen appearances.

He used lockdown last year to bulk up, but faulty weighing scales at home led to a shock that he had added over a stone to his frame and was topping 17 stone by the time they came back to the Sportsground.

"I'm 113kg (17'8") at the moment and I would like to keep it on and the preseason I will try to bulk up again to 115 or 116kg.

I changed a lot of my diet but the load was still a lot less in lockdown even

though I was doing three running sessions a week, but I was doing a lot more gym than I usually did.

"My body never felt as good as it did in that first lockdown. I had a weighing scales at home but obviously it was faulty. It was reading I was 105kg but I came back in here to the Sportsground and suddenly I was 110 or 113kg."

Younger brother Darragh, also a lock, is in the academy in Connacht, while older brother Conor is studying in DCU, and all Murray wants now is game-time but he has Irish locks Quinn Roux and Ultan Dillane ahead of him in the queue.

"All I can do is try my best and hope I get selected but if not I'll keep a good spirit and help the boys out in whatever role needs to be done.

"I can't be too fussy. I'm sitting behind two Irish internationals and Gavin Thornbury is playing out of his skin this season, but we are learning a lot of the three boys ahead of us. It's a great learning curve for us. The three boys and Jimmy (Duffy, forwards coach) are great at teaching us younger lads. It's a great position we are in, it's a tough environment in the second row but, then again, you are only one injury away from the starting position, so we need to be ready," he added.





St Brigid's captains Darragh Donnelly, left, and Cathal McHugh lift the trophy following their side's victory in the Roscommon County final of 2016 against Padraig Pearces. Photo: Seb Daly/Sportsfile.

The sky's the limit for McHugh

By IAN COONEY
Roscommon Herald

THE sky will be the limit for Cathal McHugh from Curraghboy should his six-year-old "Skyace" triumph in the Mares Novice Hurdle in Cheltenham over two miles, one furlong. Like others, he'll be watching from afar, though in his case, Victor's Bar in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, where he lives with his wife Aoife from Lanesboro.

A teacher of Social Studies and Business at the Westshells Academy in the United Arab Emirates for the past three years, the former St. Brigid's corner-forward, an All-Ireland medallist in 2013, is on a career break from Roscommon Community College where he is also a teacher.

The son of Peter and Bridgetta McHugh (nee Phelan), Cathal also has two sisters Aisling and Cliodhna who live in Sydney and Dublin respectively. His grandparents ran the popular McHugh's shop in Curraghboy.

Cathal is one of the six-strong 'Birdinthehand' syndicate who owns the six-year-old, sired by Westerner, which is



trained by John 'Shark' Hanlon and ridden by Jody McGarvey. The horse is not without its chances in what is likely to be a two mile, one furlong cavalry charge.

Cathal and his friend Kevin Quaine from Wexford picked up Skyace for the bargain fee of €600 in November 2019 after being told the horse would make €10,000 at sale. He had been placed in three bumpers and when buying, Cathal thought there was a typo in the price!

"Our first race last June, we weren't expecting much. It was felt we'd get her a handicap mark first. We first ran in a three-mile maiden hurdle in Tipperary. We didn't think she'd get three miles. When she won, we knew we had a good horse," recalled Cathal before Skyace next won in Gowran Park.

"If she comes out well of Cheltenham, the plan is to for a Grade One in Fairy-

house in Easter and possibly Punchestown. We might even send her to race in France. I had a little nibble at her at 50/1 back in November.

"I wouldn't be putting anyone off backing her," revealed a confident Cathal.

"She's been carrying top weight because she's won in listed company. Over two miles, she'll go on anything apart from good to firm. She appreciates a cut in the ground.

"Skyace has won four times and Jody's ridden her in six of her eight races.

Shark's yard has done an excellent job. We've also been greatly supported by Brian Keenan, who has given us invaluable advice. Some of the threats in the field come from Rosie's Hollow and Gauloise. There's a lot of money on The Glens of Antrim.

"I've never been to Cheltenham. Three of the guys have been there before. Three of us are here in Abu Dhabi and we'll set it live. I go to Meyden racetrack quite regularly, it's a fantastic course. There's great access to racing people.

"It's funny, but my late grandad in Glenamaddy, Eamon Phelan, would have been celebrating his birthday the day Skyace is running. He liked the old horses, and wouldn't it be nice to win that day?" concluded Cathal.



Dual star Fitzmaurice makes Sportsdaz Team of the Year

By IAN COONEY
Roscommon Herald

RACHEL Fitzmaurice's reputation as one of the country's top camogie players has been further embellished by the Athleague star making the SportsDaz Camogie Team of the Year.

While there was ultimately disappointment for Roscommon in the All-Ireland Premier Junior Camogie Championship semi-final in November, Fitzmaurice's performance in the face of adversity against Cavan was a highlight, as she almost singlehandedly dragged her side back into contention against the Breffni County.

Now she has followed in Jenny Higgins and Aimee O'Connor's footsteps (who made the SportsDaz Ladies' Football Team of the Year) by taking one of the two slots at midfield on the 2020 camogie team following five days of polls, shocks and thrilling results.

There were 52 contests and 32,189 votes to bring 120 starters down to the final 15 where there are seven counties, including Roscommon, represented.

As usual, the Roscommon GAA community didn't disappoint as they rowed in behind Rachel, who also won a county title with her club Athleague in 2020, to make sure she deservedly made the team.

2020 SportsDaz Camogie Team of the Year

Áine Slattery (Tipperary)
Meabh Cahalane (Cork)
Dearbhla Magee (Down)
Danielle Harrison (Down)
Hannah Looney (Cork)
Sarah O'Connor (Wexford)
Grace Walsh (Kilkenny)
Niamh Hegarty (Kildare)
RACHEL FITZMAURICE (Roscommon)
Sorcha McCartan (Down)
Emer Reilly (Kildare)
Katrina Mackey (Cork)
Lauren Clarke (Down)
Joanne Dillon (Wexford)
Amy O'Connor (Cork)



Roscommon's Rachel Fitzmaurice in action against Sligo during the 2019 TG4 Ladies Football Connacht IFC final against Sligo. Her camogie exploits have caught the eye from 2020. Photo: Matt Browne/Sportsfile.



U-17 manager Enda Nugent

Nugent takes charge of Roscommon U-17s

ROSCOMMON GAA is delighted to announce that Enda Nugent has been ratified as the manger of the Roscommon U17 team for 2021.

Enda has previously managed this group of players at U14, U15 and U16. As a result he has an extensive knowledge of the panel.

Enda has also been involved with the coaching and development of St Brigid's underage teams since his move from Garrycastle. We would like to wish Enda and his back room team all the very best in the months ahead.

Emmet Durney will continue as manager of the 2020 U17 team. As Connacht Champions they will play Kerry in the All Ireland minor semi-final on a date to be confirmed.



Galway GAA legends 'On Call' during Covid-19 crisis

A NUMBER of Galway GAA legends are once again making themselves available to talk to those living alone or most in need at this very difficult time. The GAA chat initiative was first introduced last April and proved hugely successful, particularly with those cocooning. Brendan Mulry of Irish Rural Link is managing the initiative again in association with Galway GAA, Paul Byrnes Media and support from the 'Keep Well' Resilience Campaign.

Throughout this latest lockdown a number of Galway football and hurling legends have all very kindly made themselves available to talk to GAA fans on the phone. They include: 3-time All-Ireland winning manager Cyril Farrell, 3-time All-Ireland winner Noel Lane and Joe Connolly who captained Galway to All-Ireland success in 1980 as well as All-Star footballer John Tobin. "We are very lucky to have the likes of



Cyril, Joe, John and Noel all on board for this project. They are all legends of the game and are very kindly giving up their time to help," said Paul.

If you would like to receive a call from one of our legends or would like to arrange a call on behalf of a family member or friend just contact Brendan on 087 2194243 or brendan@irishruralink.ie who will arrange the calls over the coming weeks. Mr Mulry said; "While there aren't any firm rules, the focus is really on those fans who maybe need this most. Think of a parent or grandparent who is at home alone and would love to chat all things GAA with one of our legends."

Pat Kearney, Chairperson of Galway GAA said: "This initiative proved to be a great success last year and helped many stuck at home cocooning. It's still a very difficult time for everybody so projects like this really help in these uncertain times."

Your county, your colours, your support

OVER the last 11 months our frontline workers have worked tirelessly to keep us safe and well. In these unprecedented times they have certainly made the ultimate sacrifice to help save other people.

Tommy Devane, GAA commentator with Galway Bay FM and former inter-county player has come up with a wonderful initiative to acknowledge their incredible work. He has asked all 32 counties to supply one county jersey accompanied by a short message of thanks. The jersey along with their message will then be framed here in Galway and sent to the hospital or care setting of the county's choice.

"We've already received a huge reaction from the GAA community to the project which is in conjunction with Paul Byrnes Media, our main sponsors Merit Medical and Langan Couriers who have kindly agreed to sponsor the delivery of all 32 jerseys. I am in awe of the magnificent work our amazing frontline workers are doing to protect us every day and they certainly deserve huge recognition. They are the true heroes in this pandemic," said Tommy.

Galway GAA were the first county to support the initiative thanking all the frontline workers in the county for their continuing hard work and dedication. "This is a wonderful idea and we are delighted to be supporting it. We have a great relationship with all the hospitals and care settings in Galway and we would like to thank all the frontline staff who continue to do an amazing job every day," said Pat Kearney, Chairman, Galway GAA.



Galway Bay FM commentator Tommy Devane.



“March for Maroon”



GALWAY GAA have announced a hugely exciting fundraiser which will take place all this month called ‘March for Maroon.’

The event is a virtual 10K run, walk or cycle with all proceeds going to the Galway GAA Training Fund, Cancer Care West and the Oranmore-Maree Coastal Search Unit. All-Ireland winning captains David Burke and Sarah Dervan are both taking on the challenge along with many others including Joe Canning, Padraig Mannion, Shane Walsh, Johnny Heaney, Louise Ward and Paul Conroy. Everybody is welcome including all those living and working abroad.

‘March for Maroon’ will also include weekly competitions for best times, best locations and best colours as well as your greatest GAA moments. Everybody that takes part will also be entered into a draw for a very special VIP matchday experience prize for two. For more information and to donate just log onto www.galway-gaa.ie.

You can also post all your pictures and videos on #MARCHFORMAROON.

“In these challenging times we are delighted to be putting on an event like this with all four Galway teams involved including hurling, football, camogie and ladies football. They need your support in these difficult times. We hope all our supporters will join us from every part of the globe be it Athascragh or Australia. We are also delighted to be supporting two great charities who both do so much for so many every day,” said Pat Kearney, Chairman, Galway GAA.

“Cancer Care West are delighted to be involved in the ‘March for Maroon’ fundraising campaign. Our charity has had a very successful partnership with Galway GAA in the past and we are look forward to working with their members on this event. Our charity does not charge for any of our services and the pandemic has had a very detrimental affect on our fundraising revenue. Events such as ‘March for

Maroon’ enable us to continue to provide vital supports to cancer patients and their families in the West,” said Richard Flaherty, CEO, Cancer Care West.

Sean Greene, Search Co-ordinator with the Oranmore-Maree Coastal Search Unit said “we are delighted and grateful to Galway GAA for choosing Oranmore-Maree Coastal Search Unit as one of their charity partners for ‘March for Maroon.’ We as an organisation bring hope to families at times of crises and there is no doubt that during these unprecedented times we are looking to the GAA to provide a distraction and hope for so many people.”

Galway GAA is asking everybody who takes part to adhere to the current government guidelines.

For further information please contact Mark Gottsche on 085 2562422 or Paul Byrnes Media on 087 2500051.



SO, WHO'S UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

QUICKEST TIMES

BEST LOCATIONS

SUNRISE/SUNSET



ICONIC LANDSCAPES

NEW/OLD GALWAY JERSEYS

Treasure trove of Galway photographs

By JOHN FALLON
Media West (Ireland)

GALWAY PRO Seamus Finnerty has used the Covid-19 lockdown to great effect over the past few months updating the history section on the county's GAA website, throwing up a treasure trove of old photographs and records.

The Annaghdown clubman has added almost 300 photographs covering the 1980 period to the current day, featuring all the county champions in the various grades. Over 6,000 names are included in the captions, often featuring players who went on to make a mark further down the line.

Eric Elwood, the former Ireland rugby out-half and Connacht coach, is featured as part of a Mervue football side which won the 1988 county intermediate title, a team captained by future Galway United striker Donnie Farragher.

Joe and Ollie Canning's dad Sean was

in a full-forward line which won the junior hurling title for Portumna in 1982. That got them promoted to intermediate which they won a decade later and that, in turn, got them into senior where they went on to win four All-Ireland and six Galway SHC titles.

A lot of that Portumna success was down to successful underage sides and John Muldoon, who captained Connacht to win the Pro12 title in 2016 and who is currently forwards coach with Bristol Bears, was a key member of the side which won the 1988 county minor B title in a side which also included future All-Star Damien Hayes and his late brother Keith.

Another long-serving Galway hurler, Tony Og Regan, was the mascot for the Salthill team which won the Galway SFC title for the first time in 1990. The team, which included future Galway senior manager Alan Mulholland, was trained by his father Tony Regan, himself a former Roscommon player.

Another future Galway manager Kevin Walsh is photographed in a Killanninn side which won the county U-21 B title in 1988.

Ten years later he won the first of two All-Ireland senior medals alongside clubman Gary Fahy.

Current Galway selector John Concannon was on a Milltown team which captured the 1992 U-21 football title, with Galway Bay FM head of sport Ollie Turner the goalkeeper on that team.

Roscommon football manager and former Galway hurler Anthony Cunningham was a key player for St Thomas as they captured the 1996 intermediate hurling title before going to become a force at senior, winning the All-Ireland club title and recently won their fifth Galway title. John Burke, another key figure in that '96 intermediate success, had six sons on the St Thomas team which won their first senior title in 2012, including David who went on to skipper Galway to the 2017 All-Ireland title.

Former Galway chairman and Central Council delegate Gerry Larkin captained Abbey-Duniry to win the county junior C hurling title in 1990.

And the late Joe McDonagh, who was GAA president from 1997-2000, features



Mervue Intermediate Football Champions 1988 - Back row: Tony O'Donovan, Eric Elwood, John Carr, Garry O'Connor, Colin McHugh, Dermot McSweeney, Brian O'Donovan, Mick Lundy. Centre row: Albert Hardiman, Ger Cahill, Michael O'Neill, Robert Fitzgerald, James Healy, Ray Kelly, Pio Long, Frank Kinneen. Front row: Simon Warde, Pat Burgoyne, Martin Crowley, Donnie Farragher, Pat Grealish, Gabriel Higgins, Niall Beatty. Mascot: Joseph O'Connor



now available after records updated



St Thomas' Intermediate Hurling Champions 1996 – Back row: Mattie Forde, John Burke, Vincent Burke, Kevin Cunningham, Noel Burke, Anthony Cunningham, Enda Burke, Brian Burke. Front row: Dermot Smyth, Maurice Headd, Tony Headd, Adrian Burke, Alan Linnane, Sean Forde, Sean Fahy.

in a poignant photograph as he helped his native Ballinderreen win the county junior B hurling title in 1996. He was president-elect at that stage and his son Eoin was

also a key member of the side, along with Noel Lane, who scored the goals which clinched the 1987 and '88 All-Ireland titles for Galway.

The archive is available on the history section of www.galwaygaa.ie and also features a full list of county board officers from 1887 to this year.



Portumna Minor 'B' Hurling Champions 1998 – Back row: Cormac Flanagan, John Muldoon, Tony Monaghan, Ivan Canning, Ivan Muldoon, Stephen Madden, Leo Smith, Michael Dolphin. Front row: Keith Hayes, Damien Hayes, Eoin Lynch, Aidan O'Donnell, Johnny Keane, Ciarán Ryan, David O'Rourke.

Treasure trove of Galway photographs



Abbey Duniry Junior 'C' Hurling Champions 1990 – Back row: Frank Conroy (Selector), John Hodgins (Selector), Ger Power, Liam Power, Thomas Kavanagh, Noel Reilly, Brendan Kelly, Paul Hodgins, Bertie Roche, Sean Flynn (Selector). Front row: Kevin Larkin, Michael Murphy, Sean Holohan, Gerry Larkin (captain), John Quirke, Pat McDonagh, Raymond Finnerty, Pat Kelly. Mascot: Colm Larkin.



Abbey Duniry Junior 'C' Hurling Champions 1990 – Back row: Frank Conroy (Selector), John Hodgins (Selector), Ger Power, Liam Power, Thomas Kavanagh, Noel Reilly, Brendan Kelly, Paul Hodgins, Bertie Roche, Sean Flynn (Selector). Front row: Kevin Larkin, Michael Murphy, Sean Holohan, Gerry Larkin (captain), John Quirke, Pat McDonagh, Raymond Finnerty, Pat Kelly. Mascot: Colm Larkin.

Portumna Junior Hurling Champions 1982
Back row: Tim Walsh, John Harte, Tom Quinn, Pat Treacy, Dave Burke, Frank O'Brien, Christy Hogan, Sean Grady, Tom Burke, Donie Moran, Sean Canning, John Joe O'Rourke.
Front row: Cyril Lowry, Sean Treacy, Paul Durack, John Cormican, Larry Durack, Pat Dillon, Mike Monaghan, Gerry Campbell, Martin Foley, John O'Rourke, Dan Lynch, Raymond Durack.



now available after records updated



Killanninn U-21 'B' Champions 1988 - Back row: Stephen Kelly, Johnny Kelly, Declan Casey, Tommy Walsh, Frank Osborne, Brian O'Reilly, Tony Mahon, Edward Conlon, Kevin Walsh, Declan Faherty, Kieran Flynn, George Osborne. Front row: Donal O'Connell, Tony Halloran, Michael Feeney, Bosco Walsh, Michael Walsh, Paddy Lee, Tommy Kinnevey, Finbar Thomas, Kenneth Halloran, Gary Fahy.



Ballinderreen County Junior 'B' Hurling Champions 1996 - Back row: Fintan Fordham, Austin Connolly, Sean Lane, John Costello, John Hughes, Aidan Mannion, Gerry Fahy, Kevin Quinn, Dermot Lane, John Meehan, Michael Gallagher, Peter Ward, Mark Ganly, Eoin McDonagh, Noel Lane, Terrance Hynes, Joe Connolly. Front row: Thomas Costello, Cathal Flaherty, J P Bermingham, John Costello, Colin Forde, Ollie Lyons, Joe McDonagh, Paddy Moran, Liam Corcoran, Colm Meehan, Robert Hynes, Kieran Herbert, Thomas Fawle, Michael Coen. Mascots: Sean Costello, Patrick Lane.

Milltown U-21 Football Champions 1992 - Back row: T J Molloy, Enda O'Connor, Seamus, Boyle, Ollie Turner, John Cunningham, Eoin Godwin, Bernard Brennan, Brian Forde. Front row: Niall McWalters, Fintan Burke, Alan Feerick, Kevin Carney, Proinsias Glynn, Niall Forde, John Concannon. Trainers: Miko Feerick and Peter McGuinness.



A year of lockdown has not dam

PATRICIA KEENAN
Senior Consultant 2into3

IN December 2021, the eagerly awaited sports capital and equipment programme opened for applications with an estimated budget of €40million, this also coincided with increased restrictions and the cancellation of all organised sport. Speaking at the launch of the programme The Minister of State with responsibility for Sport, Jack Chambers stated "The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised how important sport is to our society..... critical for our physical and mental wellbeing. The new programme will again prioritise applications from disadvantaged areas,.... which will increase participation including female participation and disabled users and those which share facilities with other users and the wider community"

However what was the impact of COVID to grant applications and how did clubs and the wider community respond to the uncertainty?

The programme received a total of 3106 applications, which represents a 32.5% increase from 2018 and in monetary terms an increase of approximately €38.4 million or 23.6%, which indicates that there is still a demand locally and regionally. This optimism was evident through the level of interest in the programme through organised webinars offered by NGBs and the Local Sports Partnerships to assist in explaining the application process, some of which attracted attendance of over 300 clubs in one session.

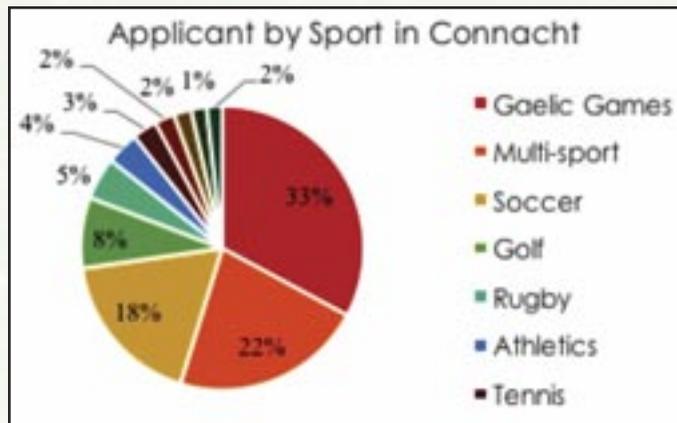
Number of applications			
County	2018	2020	% change
Galway	160	194	21%
Leitrim	24	28	17%
Mayo	84	113	35%
Roscommon	49	53	8%
Sligo	49	57	16%
Provincial Average			19.4%

Source: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2into3 analysis

In Connacht, the picture was similar with a 19.4% increase in the number of application across the province

However although there is an increase in the number of application and the amount sought what was the overall picture when we look at the amount sought per capita? This change was minimal as counties Roscommon and Mayo did show increases but this was far outweighed by the decreases in applications in Leitrim and Sligo

As the programme is designed to increase participation in sport, it is important for us to look at what sports are applying for grants in 2021?



Source: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2into3 analysis

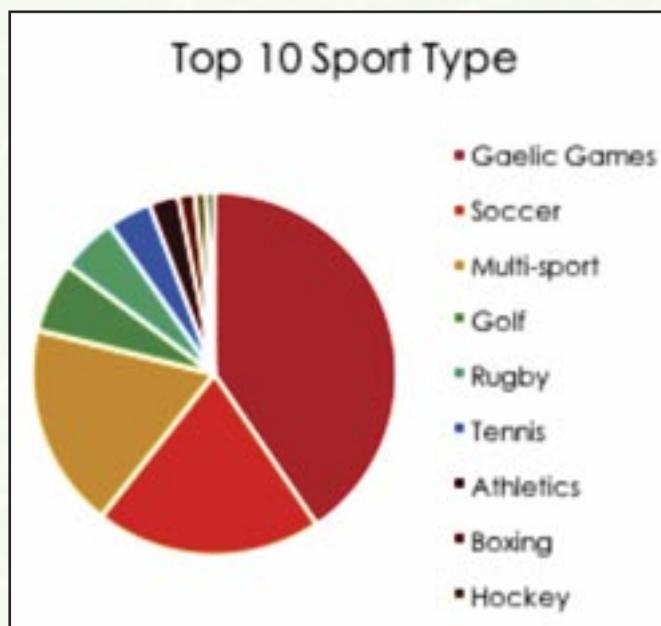
Per Capita amount			
	2018	2020	% change
Galway	€45.34	€46.88	3%
Leitrim	€54.34	€44.01	-19%
Mayo	€43.06	€49.46	15%
Roscommon	€42.93	€48.79	14%
Sligo	€49.89	€44.53	-11%
Provincial Average			0.4%

Source: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2into3 analysis

Applicant type

This diversity in sport is reflected in the groups who are applying to the programme for finance. The type of applicant tells us about the involvement of the wider community in submitting applica-

	Number	%
Sports Club	320	69.11%
Community Group*	71	15.33%
Local Authority	27	5.83%
School*	17	3.67%
Sports Centre *	9	1.94%
Scout Group*	4	0.86%
Sports Stadium	3	0.65%
Local Sports Partnership	2	0.43%
Disability Group*	2	0.43%
Special Interest Group*	2	0.43%
National Governing Body	2	0.43%
Education & Training Board*	1	0.22%
Diocesan Trust*	1	0.22%
Youth Club*	1	0.22%
Outdoor Education Centre*	1	0.22%
Grand Total	463	100%

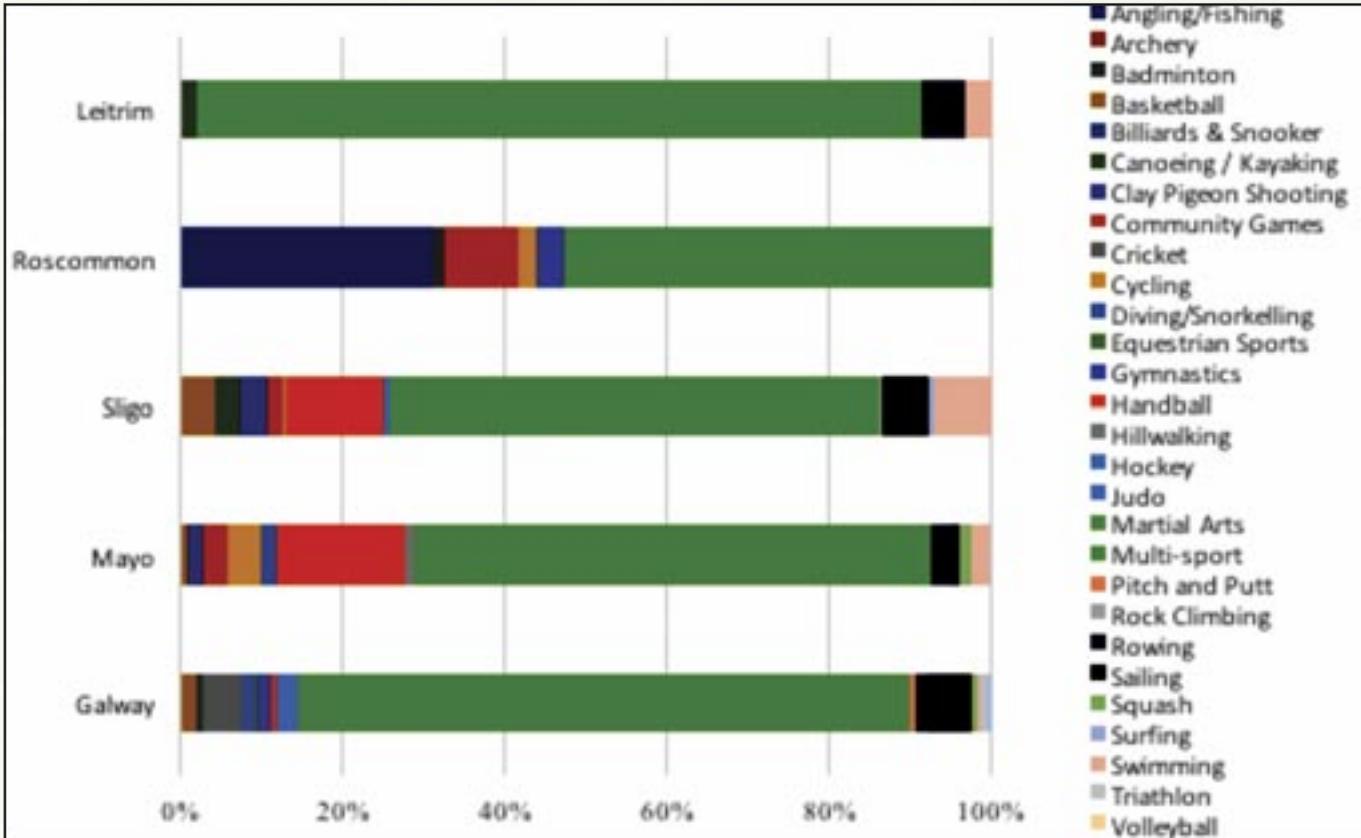


Source: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2into3 analysis

In comparison to the national picture of the Top 10 sports Gaelic Games is still the dominant sport in the Province and indeed across each county in Ireland, but it is more important to look at the rise of multi sports which are applying for funding.

Opened Sports Club Ambitions

But its important to look beyond the Top 10 and see what the breakdown of sporting interests are in the Province and who is seeking to develop their facilities



Source: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 2into3 analysis

tions and not just as a licensee but as a community wide initiative to increase participation in sport. Nationally 75.3% of applications are received by Sports Clubs and the remainder is a cross section of the nonprofit sector.

In Connacht the picture is similar with again the highest proportion from Sports clubs but there is a strong input from other community interests which accounted for 23% combined (*) of the rest of the applicants.

In conclusion

There is no decline in ambition for sports clubs to continue to grow and develop their facilities and they are looking to the future on how they can meet the current and future needs of their members. The Department are currently processing both local and regional applications and there is no indication on when the allocations will be announced, however given the level of interest in the programme and club engagement there is a will for sports club to survive through these challenges and continue to grow post lockdown.



Patricia Keenan is a Senior Consultant with 2into3 and leads the Grants Practice on behalf of the company. She has delivered numerous webinars assisting clubs in eth Sports Capital Application process as well as managing individual capital grant applications for regional and local funding on behalf of clubs and NGBs. Email patricia.keenan@2into3.com





CONNACHT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE



THE DOME

The Dome contains:

Fullsize indoor GAA Field
Running Track
Fully Equipped Gym capable of accommodating 30 people at once
Portable Stand

In addition, the Dome, within 72 hours, can be transformed into fully functional, adaptable conference arena unique on the island of Ireland.

On-Site Dome Capacity:
2,000+ for games
10,000-20,000 (seated and standing) for concerts/ events

FITNESS TESTING

Connacht GAA are continuing to offer our established service of fitness testing and programming for clubs, schools and individuals of all levels and age groups at the Connacht GAA Centre in Began.

Using our fully equipped state of the art gym our experienced Strength and Conditioning team offer a vast array of tests designed to help get the best indicators of strength and weaknesses in your group.

Testing days include:

Body Composition tests
Flexibility Tests
Full Body Movement Analysis
Power Testing
Aerobic Capacity
Speed Testing

We offer a full squad report including normative values that will allow players assess their individual needs compared players playing at the same level. If required we can implement a bespoke Strength and Conditioning program for your team based on results gained from our testing at no extra cost.

This cost-effective service provides clubs and players with a platform of knowledge and information, along with providing a system to implement a program to help develop and improve the conditioning of players.

To book your teams fitness assessment day or for more information contact seamus.burns.connacht@gaa.ie or call 094-9630335.



At the Connacht GAA Centre we have a main building with:

Games Based Facilities:

- Analysis Suite
- Two Physio Rooms
- Six Dressing/Referees Rooms
- Storage facilities

Administrative and Community-Orientated Amenities:

- Administrative Headquarters
- Six offices
- Three meeting rooms
- Lecture Theatre
- Board Room
- Dining Hall, Full Catering Kitchen

Outdoor

- Six pitches – five full size Prunty pitches and one 3G Pitch – of which five are floodlit
- A perimeter walking/running track measuring 2.2 kms
- Parking for up to 400 cars and 20 buses

VIDEO ANALYSIS

We also provide comprehensive video analysis of games using our in-house software. This service applies to games either recorded at the Connacht GAA Centre or elsewhere. Led by our highly trained staff this service can provide:

- Breakdown game play into short manageable clips
- Provides feedback to players and coaches
- Grouping of different aspects of performance e.g.: Kickouts, shots, turnovers

PRICING: €100 for 1 game
 €250 for 3 games
 €350 for 5 games

GYM HIRE

The Connacht GAA gym is available to hire to all teams. This fully equipped area allows teams to work on all aspects of their physical preparation.

The gym area includes:

- 8 squat racks complete with weights
- A vast array of dumbbells/kettlebells
- Benches
- Multi-purpose cable machine
- Battle ropes
- Assault bike
- Rower
- Ski Machine
- Jump Boxes
- Screening area

The option is also available to have a supervised gym session conducted by Connacht GAA strength and conditioning staff.



CONNACHT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE



 **CONNACHT**
GAA



Cloonacurry, Began, Claremorris, Co. Mayo. EirCode **F12 WF21**

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