



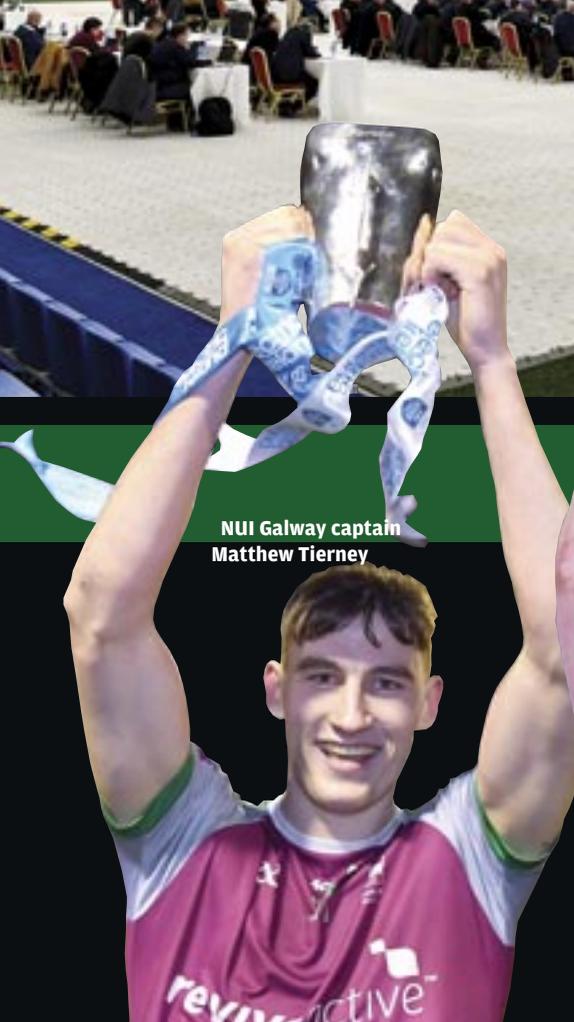
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Into the West



The bi-monthly magazine of the Connacht GAA Council

Historic Congress



NUI Galway captain
Matthew Tierney



Kilmeena captain Seán Ryder



Kilkerrin-Clonberne
captain Louise Ward

WINNERS

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Nóta an Uachtaráin

Dear friends,

STORM season is hopefully over and now we can look forward to a summer of endless possibilities.

But we've already got Sigerson Cup and All-Ireland championships in Connacht and it was the perfect way to start 2022.

The Sigerson Cup was such a huge success for NUI Galway after the long wait. It goes to show that they are promoting Gaelic games so well in there and the players are picked from across the province which is great too.

It would have been tremendous if they could have won the Fitzgibbon Cup as well but they lost it in the last few minutes, it just wasn't to be.

In Ladies football, Kilkerrin-Clonberne took down a Mounreabbey team with a huge amount of success behind them, they were going for three in a row but the Galway champions were absolutely dominant from start to finish. It was great to see.

To come out successful in the junior and intermediate championship the way it is structured across the board, it's always magic when a Connacht team is able to navigate it and Kilmeena were awesome in Croke Park. It was a tremendous achievement no more than the women winning their All-Ireland title.

On the county scene, the FBD League provided the perfect teaser for the year ahead. It was novel in that it was held under a roof and the NUI Galway Connacht Air Dome was the ideal backdrop. The games were fast and frantic and the scoring matched that, Galway were worthy winners but it was great to see every player getting the chance to strut their stuff in those conditions that early in the year.

The dome is getting tremendous exposure and just a couple of weeks ago we had the GAA Congress there, it was fantastic to host such a prestigious event.

But it's not just the FBD League and GAA Congress, there are a whole lot of other activities taking place there from teams using it to train and test themselves to matches at every age and grade level.

The games also continue on the outer fields and Began has become a hub for GAA in Connacht. There's no doubt that we have one of the finest facilities in the land and we want to make the most of it throughout 2022.

The summer is just around the corner now and we cannot wait to welcome more of you to the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence in the weeks and months ahead.

Is mise, le meas

John Murphy
Uachtarán Chomhairle Connacht



JOHN MURPHY
Connacht GAA President

Nóta an Rúnaí

A chairde,

THE national leagues are in full swing now and the GAA Congress took place in the NUI Galway Connacht Air Dome recently, it feels like we're really back in the swing in the things.

And it's great, we have All-Ireland champions in Connacht again, even Sigerson Cup winners, so there is plenty to be proud of and the future has never looked brighter for the teams across the province.

Starting off, it is great to see the Air Dome getting such use, we knew it was going to be a success but it's great to see that dream coming to fruition and staging big conferences like the GAA Congress is another real feather in the cap.

We also hosted the FBD League there of course and it meant for some fantastic action to really kickstart the year. High scoring has become the norm when you provide the perfect conditions for football and hurling, and Galway were brilliant as they went on to take that crown.

Then the women of Kilkerrin-Clonberne went all the way to claim the Ladies club All-Ireland senior championship. That was one of the most noteworthy victories for a Connacht side in recent years, especially considering the opponent. Mounreabbey were red hot favourites but their Galway opponents were deserved winners.

Kilmeena brought All-Ireland silverware back to Mayo too, another fairytale success and to do it against the odds in Croke Park, it was a win for the ages. It's always great to see a club like that winning on the biggest stage of all.

NUI Galway came within minutes of a historic double in the colleges competitions but it was no mean feat to pull off their Sigerson Cup success as it was.

UL were all the rage going to Carlow IT, especially considering they contained the great talent that is David Clifford, but NUI Galway stuck to their task and a young Roscommon man proved the hero for the Galway outfit, it really was a victory for the province as a whole.

Similarly the hurlers had a widespread representation, and they were so unlucky to come out on the wrong side of the result against UL in the Fitzgibbon Cup final.

But as I said, the future is bright, and the spring and summer will be bright too, illuminated by Gaelic Games. We cannot wait!

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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The NUI Galway squad celebrates

LEAD - GAA Congress took place at the NUI Galway Connacht Air Dome in Began.
 Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

Offlead left - NUI Galway captain Matthew Tierney lifts the cup after the Sigerson Cup final.
 Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

Offlead middle - Kilmeena captain Seán Ryder lifts the cup after his side's stunning success.
 Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

Offlead right - Kilkerrin-Clonberne captain Louise Ward lifts the Dolores Tyrrell Memorial Cup.
 Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.



Chloe Miskell scored a brilliant goal for Kilkerrin-Clonberne

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Galway celebrate with the Paddy Francis Dwyer Cup after their FBD League victory.

Kilmeena edge out Gneeveguilla

Kilmeena0-11
Gneeveguilla1-6

By COLM GANNON

AFTER being pegged back right at the death in normal time Kilmeena dogged it out in extra time to claim the All-Ireland Junior title.

Second half of extra time points from Joey Smyth and Darragh Keaveney saw them home against a stubborn Gneeveguilla side who refused to go away. After being locked level at 0-8 to 1-5 at the end of normal time, the sides were still level at the end of the first half of extra time, but in the final ten minutes the Mayo men found the extra gear they needed to see themselves home.

Padraig Doyle rattled the back of the net a minute into injury time to send this All Ireland junior final to extra time. Doyle made no mistake after being played in by John O'Leary after Kilmeena coughed up the ball as they tried to play it out from their own defence and see out the game.

The Mayo men looked like they had



STRONG: Conor Madden of Kilmeena holds onto possession in the tackle against Gneeveguilla's Ronan Collins at Croke Park.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.



SPACE: Kilmeena's Jack Carney burst forward despite the attentions of Ronan Collins of Gneeveguilla.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.

done enough to win this after Nellie Duffy had put them three points clear three minutes from the end of normal time - but the Kerry men kept plugging away and trying to create a goal chance.

They had a few goes at it in the final few minutes before Doyle's goal, with Kilmeena looking like they had survived but the Gneeveguilla men wouldn't say die.

Gneeveguilla led by a single point at the break - but Kilmeena were the dominate force in the second half, but failed to convert a number of chances that came their way,

Darragh Keaveney levelled the game up at four points each just after the start of the second half and five minutes later Sean Ryder fisted the ball over the bar to edge them in front. John O'Leary levelled it up for the Kerry men on 41 minutes from a free, with their last score until Doyle's goal at the death.

Keaveney pushed Kilmeena in front from a free and then Joey Smyth put them two clear with a nice score as they began to dominate the game. But they failed to make it count on the scoreboard, with Duffy's point three minutes from the end of time looking that it would see them home,





CHAMPIONS: The Kilmeena players celebrate their win in Croke Park.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

but there was still plenty of drama to unfold.

The Kerry champions led by a single point at the end of an engaging first half, where both sides attacked each other at every opportunity, but both sides forwards found it difficult to deal with the swirling breeze.

Conor Herlihy looked to have broken through for a goal chance right from the throw-in, but opted to go for a point and his effort tailed wide on the breeze. Kilmeena hit the front a few seconds later when Darragh Keaveney got in on the end of a flowing move to raise the white flag.

It didn't take Gneeveguilla long to level it up with Shane O'Sullivan pointing a mark from under the Hogan Stand three minutes in.

Both sides missed a number of chances before the next score arrived going to the Mayo side with John McGlynn pointing after being played in by Niall Feehan on the burst. Sean O'Keefe levelled it up 14 minutes in thanks to Sean O'Keefe who finished off a nice move involving Pa Warren and Michael Murphy.

Cornelius Buckley pushed the Munster men into the lead again from a free after Warren was fouled cutting in from the Cusack Stand side of the field.

After missing two frees from his hands Darragh Keaveney pointed his second of the day from the deck in front of the posts 25 minutes in.

The play leading up to that score saw Jack Carney break through the heart of the defence only to be hauled down by Conor Herlihy who was shown a black card for the foul.

Carney broke through in a similar fashion three minutes later, but pulled his effort wide of the far post. Despite being a man down the Kerry champions had the final say on the half with John O'Leary getting their fourth point, two minutes into injury time to give his side a slender lead at the break.

SCORERS - Kilmeena: (0-6, 4f), J Smyth (0-2), S Ryder (0-1), J McGlynn (0-1), N Duffy (0-1).

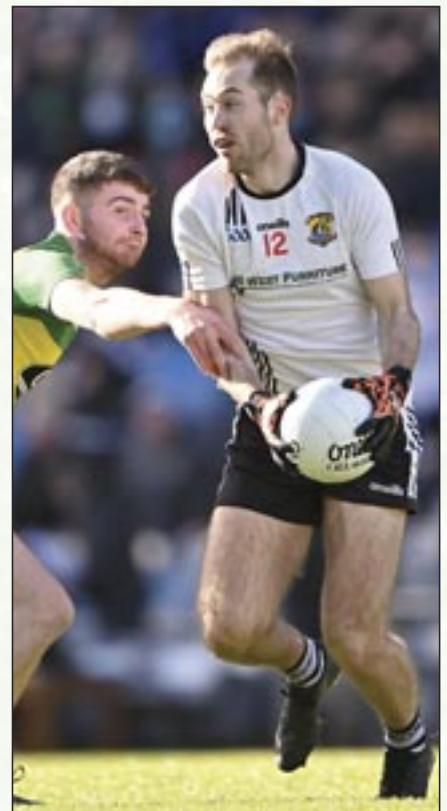
Gneeveguilla: P Doyle (1-0), J O'Leary (0-2, 1f), S O'Sullivan (0-1, 1m), C Buckley (0-1), P Warren (0-1), S O'Keefe (0-1)

KILMEENA: P Groden; C McGlynn, J Keane, J Ryan; N Feehan, S Staunton, R O'Donnell; J Carney, N Duffy; K Joyce, S Ryder, C Madden; J McGlynn, N Ryan, D Keaveney. **Subs:** P Keane for C McGlynn (26), J Smyth for N Ryan (36), K Sheridan for R O'Donnell (52), S Moore for N Duffy (65), C McGlynn for S Staunton (69), T Gill for J McGlynn (70),

GNEEVEGUILLA: P O'Riordan; E Fitzgerald, P O'Connor, P Brosnan; M Murphy, D Brosnan, P Warren; P O'Leary, R Collins; P Doyle, C Herlihy, S O'Keefe; J O'Leary, S O'Sullivan, C Buckley.

Subs: D Cronin for M Murphy (30), J Cremin for C Buckley (37), S Crowley for P O'Leary (47), Paudie O'Leary for S O'Keefe (54), C O'Connor for P P'Connor (54), M Murphy for R Collins (60), S O'Keefe for M Murphy (70), P O'Leary for P Brosnan (77).

REF: Séamus Mulhare (Laois).



SPEED: Darragh Keaveney of Kilmeena in action against Pádraig O'Connor of Gneeveguilla. Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.





KILMEENA - All-Ireland



Junior Club Football Champions



Heneghan shines bright as NUI Galway are crowned Sigerson Cup champions

NUI Galway0-12
UL1-6

ROSCOMMON'S Cathal Heneghan proved to be the super-sub with three crucial points to help propel NUI Galway to Electric Ireland Sigerson Cup glory at IT Carlow campus.

Level at half-time in a low-scoring game played in wet and wild conditions, Maurice Sheridan's side reeled off six points in a row in the third quarter to put themselves in a winning position, with Heneghan scoring three of them.

The Glaveys clubman and Roscommon senior only came on at the interval but ended up walking away with the man of the match award as NUI Galway clinched their 23rd title, moving them joint level in the overall roll of honour with UCC.

Gavin Burke, Paul Kelly and Mayo attacker Fionn McDonagh all capped strong performances with important scores too.

The win, NUI Galway's first since 2003, keeps the university on course for a potential third level double.



SPEED: NUIG defender Nathan Mullen gets past the challenge of Connell Dempsey of UL in the Sigerson Cup final at IT Carlow.
 Photo: Piaras Ó Mídeach / SPORTSFILE.



TURN: Cathal Donoghue of NUIG in action against Connell Dempsey at IT Carlow.
 Photo by Piaras Ó Mídeach / SPORTSFILE.

UL talisman David Clifford did his best to prevent the defeat with 1-02 overall, bringing his tournament takings to 6-22, and his 45th-minute penalty conversion inspired a comeback that took the Munster side to within a point.

But that was as good as it got for them with late NUI Galway points from Burke, McDonagh and Galway star Tomo Culhane sealing a memorable win.

NUI Galway, slight underdogs, played with the wind initially and wondered if they'd kick themselves for not making more of that initial advantage.

Opponents UL were boosted by the availability of Eoghan McLaughlin who was a late addition to the half-back line having initially been ruled out with ankle trouble.

UL were still without Kerry's Stefan Okunbor though NUI Galway had their own injury issues with Mayo star Tommy Conroy and Galway's Sean Mulkeerrin both absent due to knee problems.

NUI Galway did surge three points clear early on thanks to scores from



CHAMPIONS: The NUIG squad celebrates after their sensational victory over UL in the Sigerson Cup final. Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.

McDonagh, Kelly and Burke but didn't score again until early in the second as UL reeled them in to leave it 0-03 apiece at half-time.

Amid driving rain and high winds, two Clifford points from frees helped haul UL back after that slow start.

Heneghan's introduction was vital though and he reeled off the first two points of the second-half before Matthew Tierney clipped over a free.

Heneghan then drew gasps from the 1,300 crowd with a clever dummy solo before splitting the posts for the third time.

NUI Galway struck six unanswered points in total and while UL battled back bravely with Clifford converting the penalty and McLaughlin among the point scorers, their bid for a first ever title ultimately came to nought.

SCORERS – NUI Galway: T Culhane (0-2 frees), C Heneghan (0-3); G Burke, F McDonagh (0-2 each); M Tierney (0-1 free), P Kelly (0-1 each).

UL: D Clifford (1-2, 1-0 pen, 0-2 frees); E McLaughlin, D O'Sullivan, P Walsh, P Towe (0-1 each).

NUIG: C Carroll; E Kelly, N Mulcahy, C Murray; R Egan, S Kelly, G Durcan; P Kelly, M Tierney; F McDonagh, N Mullen, C Donoghue; G Burke (Corofin), T Culhane, C Sweeney.

Subs: C Heneghan for Donoghue (HT); T Gill for Durcan (43 mins).

UL: C Flaherty; C Donnelly, J Coyne, P Maher; G O'Donovan, S Powter, E McLaughlin; C Dempsey, D Walsh; C Downes, E McMahon, D Gray; P Towe, D Clifford, D O'Sullivan. **Subs:** J Glynn for Powter (HT, inj); P Walsh for Dempsey (43); O Looney for Downes (56); J McCarthy for Gray (58).

REF: David Gough (Meath).



OPTIONS: NUIG's Eoghan Kelly looks to attack against Daniel Walsh of UL. Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.

Sending offs are key to NUIG success

NUI Galway0-18

MTU Kerry0-15

(after extra-time)

NUI Galway are into the Sigerson Cup following a thrilling 0-18 to 0-15 semi-final extra time win over MTU Kerry at Mick Neville Park in Rathkeale.

Matthew Tierney starred for NUIG with 0-8 from a game that saw four MTU Kerry players sent off. Evan Looney was sent off in regular time, while Dara Moynihan, Jack Savage and Tony Brosnan were all given their marching orders in the late stages of extra time.

Brosnan and Savage scored 14 points for a MTU Kerry outfit that were never able to get any sort of rhythm going throughout.

Brosnan got the scoring underway with two frees in quick succession but Tierney soon levelled with a placed ball and a fine effort from play before MTU Kerry went two clear again courtesy of two more Brosnan frees.

However, NUIG settled with a Tomo Culhane free and a fisted point from corner forward Cathal Sweeney that levelled the game for a second time.

An Eoghan Kelly mark put NUIG in front for the first time with 20 minutes on the clock and a superb left footed point from Gavin Burke saw the Galway college to a 0-6 to 0-4 lead at half-time.

Two more Brosnan frees squared the game once more early in the second half but Tony Gill and two from Tierney saw NUIG take control.

Culhane stretched the advantage to five with two placed balls and things looked bleak for the Aidan O'Mahony managed MTU Kerry side.

There was a sting in the tail though with Jack Savage showing nerves of steel to score five times in the remaining stages to force extra time.

Paul Kelly started the scoring in extra time for NUIG with Gill and two Tierney efforts putting them 0-15 to 0-12 to the good at half-time in extra time.

With MTU Kerry looking dead and buried once more, Brosnan led the comeback with a pair of frees and another Savage placed ball saw the game level for a fifth time.

However, NUIG were not to be deterred with Tierney (2) and Culhane sealing the three-point victory before the



OPEN: NUIG attacker Tomo Culhane is challenge by Evan Looney of MTU Kerry at Mick Neville Park.

Photo: Diarmuid Greene / SPORTSFILE.

game finished in chaos with a flurry of red cards.

SCORERS - NUIG: M Tierney 0-8 (5f), T Culhane 0-4 (3f), T Gill 0-2, C Sweeney, E Kelly (mark), G Burke and P Kelly 0-1 each.

MTU Kerry: T Brosnan 0-8 (8f), J Savage 0-6 (4f), T Ó Sé 0-1.

NUI GALWAY: C Carroll; C Murray, N Mulcahy, G Burke; R Egan, E Kelly, N Mullen; P Kelly, S Kelly; G Durcan, M Tierney, C Donoghue; T Culhane, F McDonagh, C Sweeney. **Subs:** T Gill for Mullen

(41), R Monaghan for Donoghue (59), M McInerney for McDonagh (61), P O'Donnell for Mulcahy (67), McDonagh for Durcan (75).

MTU KERRY: K O'Leary; M Potts, D Carew, T O'Connor; E Looney, F Mackessy, D Lyne; M O'Shea, M Ryan; G Horan, J Savage, D Moynihan; T O Se, T Brosnan, P O'Shea. **Subs:** R O'Grady for P O'Shea (51), G Vaughan for O'Connor (51), M Fitzgerald for Looney (red card replacement 61), J Foster for O Se (68), A Darmody for Ryan (70), P O'Shea for Carew (75).

REF: Jonathan Hayes (Limerick).

Conroy injured in brilliant victory

NUI Galway2-8

Letterkenny IT1-8

By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

MAURICE Sheridan's NUI Galway advanced to the Sigerson Cup semi-finals despite being reduced to 13 men at one stage in the second half of a tough contest at Dangan in Galway.

But the win was marred by an injury to Mayo star Tommy Conroy just before the break, which led to him being carried off.

NUI Galway led by 1-5 to 0-4 at the break after recovering from a slow start with the wind and rain behind on an exposed pitch on the banks of the Corrib.

Letterkenny, bidding to reach the semi-finals for the second time in three years with an all-Donegal team, started well against the elements with Rory O'Donnell and Ryan McFadden doing well in midfield and they deservedly led by 0-4 to 0-1 at the end of the opening quarter.

But NUI Galway, with captain Sean Kelly and vice-captain Matthew Tierney leading the way, got moving and two points apiece from Tomo Culhane and Tierney edged them in front.

Then Tierney sent a superb ball through and Eoghan Kelly, one of three brothers from the Moycullen club, raced through and slotted home an excellent goal just before the interval.

But it all went wrong for them after the restart. They lost wing-back Nathan Mullen to a black card and then Letterkenny full-forward Jack McSharry forced home a goal before the Galway side lost Gavin Durcan to a second yellow after 40 minutes.

But NUI Galway responded superbly to the challenge. Tierney got them level with an excellent point after 46 minutes before McSharry and Culhane swapped points and then after smashing the post with a shot, Culhane finished a good move by drilling low to the net with three minutes remaining.

Tierney made it safe when he put four between them and while Letterkenny



CLOSE: NUI Galway substitute Cathal Heneghan in action against Joel B Walsh of Letterkenny IT at Dangan.
Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.

rallied to the end, a Peadar Mogan was all they could muster as Maxi Curran's side made their exit from the competition after what has been a good campaign.

SCORERS - NUI Galway: T Culhane 1-3 (0-3f), M Tierney 0-5 (0-3f), E Kelly 1-0.

Letterkenny IT: J McSharry 1-1, J B Walsh 0-2 (0-1 '45), C O'Donnell 0-2, K McGroddy 0-1, J McGee 0-1, P Mogan 0-1.

NUI GALWAY: C Carroll; C Murray, N Mulcahy, G Burke; N Mullen, E Kelly, G Durcan; P Kelly, S Kelly; F McDonagh, M Tierney, C Donoghue; T Culhane; T Conroy, C Sweeney. **Subs:** R Egan for Conroy (half-time), C Heneghan for Donoghue (48).

LYIT: E Maguire; K Tobin, J Gallagher, D Dorrian, O Langan, P Mogan, A Gilhooly; R O'Donnell, R McFadden; K Dunleavy, J McGee, C O'Donnell; E Dowling, J McSharry, J Bradley-Walsh.

REF: Chris Maguire (Clare).

NUIG advance to quarter-finals

NUI Galway3-10
Queen's University2-7

NUI Galway defeated Ulster opposition for the second time in the space of six days at Whitehall Colmcille GAA grounds in north Dublin to safely progress into the Sigerson Cup quarter-finals.

Courtesy of goals from Mayo attackers Fionn McDonagh and Tommy Conroy, the westerners developed an early 2-3 to 0-1 lead over Queen's University. Maurice Sheridan's side had the measure of Ulster University in the same venue last week and, despite Conor Turbitt rattling their net off a 14th-minute penalty, they led 2-6 to 1-2 at the interval.

A second goal from Sean Kelly in as many games helped NUIG to establish an 11-point lead (3-9 to 1-4) on the third-quarter mark, before Queen's enjoyed a mini resurgence in the closing minutes.

A 1-2 salvo from Armagh star Turbitt - bringing his final tally to 2-4 - wasn't enough to rein in the NUIG challenge, but Conor Deegan's men can take some solace as they seek to bounce back in the round three of the competition.

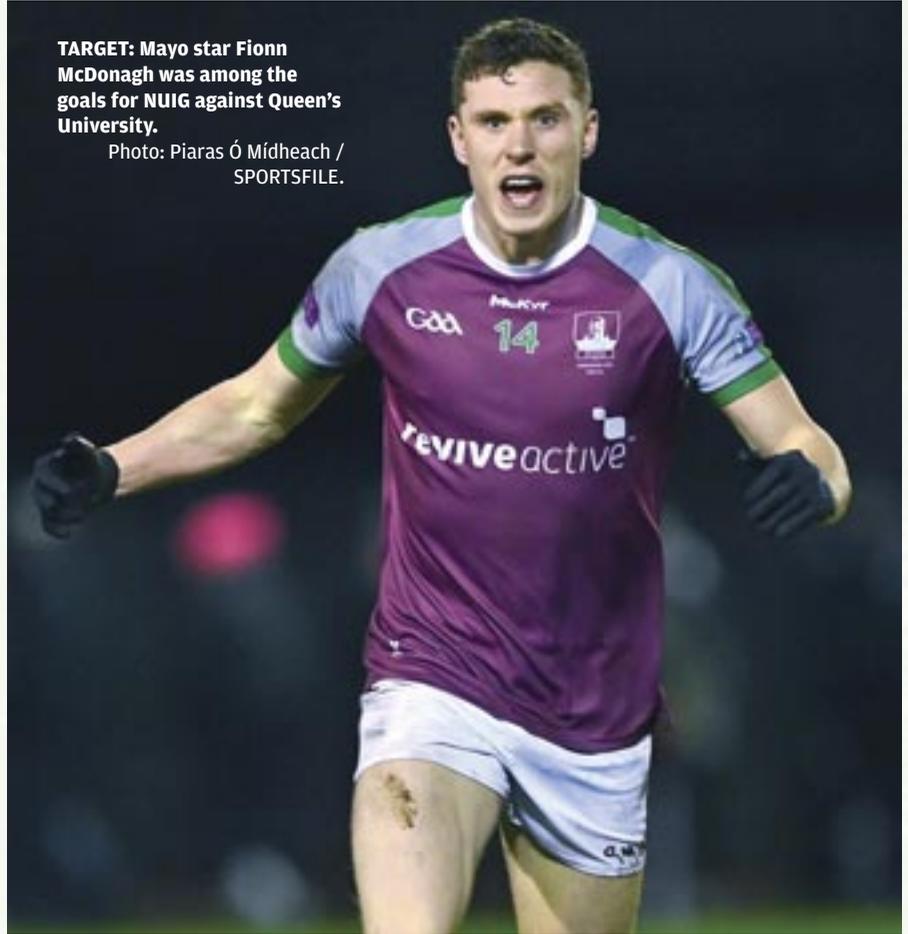
SCORERS - NUI Galway: F McDonagh (1-2), T Conroy, S Kelly (1-1 each), M Tierney (0-3, 2f), T Culhane (f), E Kelly, C Donoghue (0-1 each).

Queen's University: C Turbitt (2-4, 1-0 pen, 0-3f, 0-1 '45'), K Hughes (0-2), P Brooks (0-1).

NUI GALWAY: C Carroll; C Murray, N Mulcahy, G Burke; R Egan, E Kelly, N Mullen; P Kelly, S Kelly; F McDonagh, M Tierney, C Donoghue; T Culhane, T Conroy, C Sweeney. **Subs:** T Gill for Donoghue (20), C Monaghan for Egan (48), P O'Donnell for McDonagh (50), R Monaghan for Mullen (58), D Hunt for Culhane (61).

TARGET: Mayo star Fionn McDonagh was among the goals for NUIG against Queen's University.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY: E Mulholland; S Bolger, R Conroy, S McCarthy; M Murnaghan, P Fagan, P Brooks; T Bogue, D Guinness; C Gorman, P Finnegan, R Donnolly; K Hughes, C Turbitt, J Tunney. **Subs:** G Brown for McCarthy, O Mallon

for Tunney (both h-t), J Smyth for Gorman, C Love for Finnegan (both 42), C O'Hare for Bolger (58).

REF: B Cawley (Kildare).

UL trump their Sligo opponents

UL4-15
IT Sligo0-7

UL started their Sigerson Cup campaign in emphatic fashion with a facile victory over IT Sligo.

Goals from Mayo senior Eoghan McLaughlin and Kerry star David Clifford sandwiched a brace of efforts from Paul Walsh as UL began their campaign in style.

The result sets up a round two clash with Letterkenny IT, and in truth UL were never tested on home soil.

They were ahead 1-8 to 0-2 at the interval with Sligo's struggles emphasised by only one first-half wide to go with points from Barry Cafferkey and Matthew McGahern.

Eoghan McLaughlin found the net with a bullet finish from an overlapping run on 20 minutes. He was joined on the score-sheet by Paul Walsh – the former Kerry minor – whose first act from the bench was to send a curling effort to the top corner to the net.

He added a second soon after as when Knockmore's Connell Dempsey rattled the crossbar, Walsh was on hand to tuck the ball beneath Luke Jennings.

UL kicked eight wides in total and with time running out, Clifford brought a moment of magic for the large crowd in attendance. He caught a long direct pass and spun, before curling a wonderful left-footed effort into the top corner for UL's fourth goal.

UL were able to leave Kerry senior player Stefan Okunbor on the bench, owing to club commitments with Na Gaeil at the weekend in the Munster inter-mediate final.

SCORERS - UL: D Clifford 1-4 (0-3 frees); P Walsh 2-0; E McMahon 0-5; D O'Sullivan 0-3 (0-3, 0-1 free); E McLaughlin 1-0; D Gray, C Dempsey, D Walsh 0-1 each.

Galway outfit prevail despite early finish



LEADER: Sean Kelly scored a goal to help NUIG to victory over Ulster University.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

NUI Galway1-10
Ulster University2-5

DESPITE Seeing their game against Ulster University halted before time had fully elapsed, NUI Galway have

progressed to face Queen's University in the second round of the Sigerson Cup.

There was 58 minutes gone on the clock when NUI Galway substitute Sean Mulkerrins suffered a worrying-looking knee injury. With an ambulance taking more than half an hour to arrive, it was agreed amongst the teams that NUIG would be awarded a two-point victory.

Given the tight schedule of the competition – and the fact this wasn't a straight knockout affair – this was perhaps a sensible solution for both parties.

In the early moments, points from Down duo Seamus Loughran and Andrew Gilmore got the ball rolling for Ulster University.

Team captain Matthew Tierney and Mayo attacker Conroy responded at the far end for NUIG, before the lively Gilmore rattled the net at the end of a superb run in the 10th-minute.

Two points to the good at the first half water break, Ulster University added a second major through full-forward Niall Laughlin to lead 2-4 to 0-5 at the interval.

NUIG had introduced All Star nominee Sean Kelly in advance of the break, however, and his energetic presence made a difference to their cause.

By the third-quarter mark, Tomo Culhane (a brace), Tierney and substitute

Cathal Sweeney had all found the range.

Gilmore got Ulster University's solo score in this juncture, but – after another Tierney free had left the bare minimum between the sides – Kelly ruthlessly fired home at the end of a sweeping move to edge NUIG in front for the very first time.

Although it is difficult to determine how the game might have panned out if the remaining minutes had been played, a strong second half display does bode well for the Galway outfit heading into a difficult assignment against Queen's.

SCORERS – NUI Galway: T Culhane 0-4 (4f), M Tierney 0-3 (3f), S Kelly 1-0, T Conroy, C Heneghan, C Sweeney 0-1 each.

Ulster University: A Gilmore 1-2 (0-1f), N Loughlin 1-0, R Gormley, K Gallagher, S Loughran 0-1.

NUI GALWAY: C Carroll; C Murray, N Mulcahy, G Burke; R Egan, E Kelly, C Monaghan; M Tierney, C Marren; P Kelly, T Conroy, N Mullen; C Heneghan, T Culhane, T Gill. **Subs:** S Kelly for Marren (23), C Sweeney for Gill (32), F McDonagh for Mullen (37), S Mulkerrins for Monaghan (43), C Donoghue for Mulkerrins (58).

ULSTER UNIVERSITY: O Lynch; R Boyle, F McElroy, A Clarke; M Gallagher, M McKernan, R Jones; T Galligan, R Gormley, P McLarnon, M McKearney, K Gallagher; S Loughran, N Loughlin, A Gilmore. **Subs:** D McElhill for Jones (37), L Nugent for Loughran (44), D Mulgrew for Gormley (54).

REF: Patrick Maguire (Longford).

IT Sligo: M McGahern (frees), O McLaughlin (frees) (0-2 each); B Cafferkey 0-1, P O'Driscoll, D Fitzgerald 0-1 each.

UL: C Flaherty; J Glynn, C Donnelly, P Maher; G O'Donovan, S Powter, E McLaughlin; C Dempsey, D Walsh; C Downes, E McMahon, O Looney; D Clifford, D Gray, D O'Sullivan. **Subs:** P Walsh for O'Donovan (half-time), C Og Jones for Looney (39), J McCarthy for Glynn (42), E Connolly for Downes (46), J O'Brien for Powter (48).

IT SLIGO: L Jennings; T McSkeen, S Doak, S Murphy; C McKeon, C Joyce, A O'Brien; L Molloy, M Barrett; C Murray, M McGahern, J Keane; B Cafferkey, F Ayorinde, P O'Hehir.

Subs: O McLaughlin for Cafferkey (half-time), D Fitzgerald for McKeon (half-time), P O'Driscoll for Joyce (46), A Kellaghan for Keane (51), K Cawley for Molloy (51).

Lynch sees red as NUIG lose out



TARGET: Mark Kennedy scores NUI Galway's second goal against UL.

Photo: Matt Browne / SPORTSFILE.

UL1-21
NUIG2-15

ALATE Mikey Kiely delivered Fitzgibbon Cup glory for UL after an epic late charge against NUIG in an entertaining final.

UL were trailing by five points with four minutes of normal time remaining but produced a superb final 1-5 to clinch the win in stunning fashion. There was also a late red card for NUIG's Cian Lynch which was a factor in the final outcome.

This was a repeat decider between the colleges after the Sigerson Cup decider,

where NUIG were victorious. But it was UL who emerged as winners at the IT Carlow grounds today to deny NUIG a dream double.

Gearoid O'Connor was in superb form for the winners, landing nine points to help UL to glory. There were some natural nerves on display in the opening five minutes as both sides were shooting blanks in front of the posts.

Seán Twomey pleaded for a penalty in the second minute when he slumped in the NUIG square with ball in hand, but referee Fergal Horgan ruled for too many steps. That allowed the Galway university to open the scoring through a free from

Evan Niland who ended his day with an excellent 14 points.

That kickstarted a lively exchange of scores, with O'Connor putting UL on the board from placed balls. Cian Lynch looked sprightly in the early stages, getting his foot in front to win possession and draw frees for Niland to fire over.

NUIG drew the first major hit of the afternoon on 16 minutes when John Fleming scooped the ball on the run and thundered through the UL defence before whistling his shot low into the corner of Dean Mason's net.

That score put Jeffrey Lynskey's outfit 1-4 to 0-3 in front.

But UL responded calmly, hitting three unanswered points through Kiely, centre-back Bryan O'Mara and Ciarán Connolly.

Niland settled NUIG with another free before engineering their second goal of the day, delivering the ball into the heart of the UL defence to start the attack. A few swift transfers followed as Mark Kennedy completed the move with a fine strike into the net.

O'Connor struck twice more for UL before the end of the first half to leave his side trailing by 2-7 to 0-9.

That deficit was wiped out within six minutes of the restart. Kiely, who was aiming for the net, had to settle for a point when he unleashed a rocket after receiving a pass from Twomey in goal-scoring range.

O'Connor helped himself to a point from play while O'Mara brought his tally to four points with some super long-range shooting.

Substitute Ross Hayes briefly UL the lead before Niland converted a badly needed free in the 38th minute to give NUIG their first score of the second half.

It was then UL's turn to absorb the pressure as Niland took charge to sling over five more points, including four frees to regain the advantage for NUIG.

He hit his most impressive free of the afternoon on 52 minutes, landing a monstrous point from distance to put his side 2-14 to 0-15 in front. Niland repeated the trick from similar range shortly after.

NUIG finished the game with 14 players after Lynch was sent off with a red card in the latter stages. His dismissal came at the worst time for the Galway team as UL were still picking off points to stay in touch.

O'Connor landed his seventh free before Brian O'Grady swept over a lovely point to leave just two between them.

And they finished with a flourish to snatch the crown. Connolly landed the equaliser with his third point of the day, and it was Kiely who delivered the win with a heroic charge at the NUIG defence before finishing his effort to the net.

SCORERS – UL: G O'Connor 0-9, 8f, B O'Mara 0-4, M Kiely 1-2, C Connolly 0-3, R Hayes 0-1, B O'Sullivan 0-1, B O'Grady 0-1.

NUIG: E Niland 0-14, 12f, J Fleming 1-1, M Kennedy 1-0.

UL: D Mason; D Corcoran, TJ Brennan, M Gough; K Sampson, B O'Mara, C Flaherty; B O'Grady, C Connolly; N Brennan, G O'Connor, C Galvin; B Power, S Twomey, M Kiely. **Subs:** R Hayes for Galvin (37); M O'Sullivan for Brennan (45); S Staunton for Sampson (53).

NUIG: L Reilly; E Lawless, J Fitzpatrick, C Caulfield; C Killeen, D Morrissey, M Gill; I McGlynn, D Kilcommons; C Walsh, C Lynch, F MacDonagh; P Hickey, J Fleming, N Niland. **Subs:** D Kilcommons for McGlynn (injured) 20; O Flannery for Kennedy (injured) (45); A Prendergast for McDonagh (39); A Prendergast for Hickey (39).

REF: F Horgan (Tipperary).



SKILL: NUIG's Cian Lynch gets the handpass off despite the challenge from Darren Corcoran of UL in the Fitzgibbon Cup final. Photo by Matt Browne/Sportsfile

Lynch appeal successful

By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

HURLER of the Year Cian Lynch has had his controversial red card in the Fitzgibbon Cup final last week rescinded following an appeal.

The outcome has been welcomed by NUI Galway who said they did not want his time playing for their side to end on such a sour note.

Lynch was sent off three minutes from time by Tipperary referee Fergal Horgan, following advice from Kilkenny linesman Sean Cleere, after an exchange with UL centre-back Bryan O'Mara, with the Galway college leading by 2-15 to 0-17 at that stage.

NUIG's bid for the title collapsed after the dismissal with UL scoring 1-4 without reply to snatch the Fitzgibbon Cup deep into injury-time.

Video evidence showed that Lynch did not merit sanction for the tangle with the UL defender and the red card was overturned after a brief appeal last night.

NUIG GAA Officer Michael O'Connor

said they were pleased with the outcome.

"We want to thank Croke Park for hearing the appeal so quickly and dealing with it in the manner in which they did. It was clear an error had been made. We did not want Cian's time with us in Galway to end on that note and we are pleased that he has been cleared.

"We would like to thank Cian for his contribution to our hurling team, both on and off the field. Last weekend was not the outcome we wanted. We congratulate UL on their victory. It has been a very good season for us and we are pleased that Cian has now been cleared," said Clare native O'Connor.

Lynch had previously won two Fitzgibbon Cup medals with Mary Immaculate College from Limerick and the 26-year old, who is studying a Masters in Education at NUIG, is currently doing a teaching placement at his alma mater Ardscoil Rís in Limerick.

Lynch is due to return to the Limerick squad this weekend as they prepare for their Allianz League clash with Cork, after manager John Kiely gave him space to concentrate on the Fitzgibbon Cup.

NUIG win Galway derby

NUIG1-26
GMIT3-18
(after extra-time)

By **JOHN FALLON**
Media West Ireland

NUIG held off the challenge of their Galway city neighbours to book a place in the Fitzgibbon Cup final after a gripping contest in testing conditions at Pearse Stadium.

GMIT, hoping to reach their first final, forced the contest to extra-time with a late goal but they never led and were always chasing the game.

NUIG, playing with the wind, led by 1-15 to 1-6 at the break, with Evan Niland leading the way with 0-7, three of them from play.

NUIG opened up a 0-6 to 0-3 lead after nine minutes before GMIT hit back and Kevin Cooney finished to the net.

NUIG, with Hurler of the Year Cian Lynch prominent, responded with points from Oisín Flannery and Niland before Cooney hit back for GMIT.

Then Lynch saw an effort for a point come back off a post and Fionn McDonagh pounced to set up John Fleming and he blasted to the net to lead by 1-8 to 1-4 after 20 minutes and they led by nine at the break.

Two points from Fionn McDonagh and another from Niland in response to one from Conor Gardiner extended NUIG's lead to 1-18 to 1-7 five minutes after the restart. But GMIT rallied with three points in a row from Cooney, Gardiner and Luke Prendergast to cut the gap to eight and while Niland hit back with a brace, GMIT struck again with five in succession to get within a goal.

Another free from Niland seven minutes from time looked to be enough but Cooney cut the gap to three with a free heading into four minutes of stoppage time. And then in the final minute of stoppage time a free from goalkeeper Darrach Fahy dropped in front of goal and Jack Forde reacted quickest in the scramble to flash a shot to the net and send the tie to extra-time.

GMIT had the wind in the opening half of extra-time but they shot three wides and failed to score with it, while NUIG edged in front with two frees from Niland to be 1-23 to 3-15 at the break.

GMIT twice got it back to a point in the final segment but NUIG did enough to hold on and book their place in the final after an epic contest.



STAR: Evan Niland scored 0-16 in NUIG's narrow victory over GMIT.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídeach / SPORTSFILE.

SCORERS - NUIG: E Niland (0-16, 11f); J Fleming (1-2); M Kennedy, C Lynch, F McDonagh (0-2 each); J Fitzpatrick, O Flannery (0-1 each).

GMIT: K Cooney (1-10, 10f); E Egan, J Forde (1-0 each); C Gardiner (0-2 each); L Prendergast, S McDonagh, AJ Willis, P Commins, C Fahy, A Clarke (0-1 each).

NUIG: L O'Reilly; E Lawless, J Fitzgerald, C Caulfield; C Killeen, D Morrissey, M Gill; O Flannery, D Kilcommins; C Walsh, C Lynch, F McDonagh; M Kennedy, J Fleming, E Niland.

Subs: P Dunleavy for Morrissey (16); I McGlynn for Flannery (54); C Salmon for McDonagh (54); D Loftus for Dunleavy (71); A Prendergast for Walsh (83).

GMIT: D Fahy; L Prendergast, S Neary, K Meehan; J Forde, C Fahy, A Clarke; A O'Shaughnessy, P Foley; C Gardiner, AJ Willis, D Mannion; K Cooney, S McDonagh, P Commins. **Subs:** E Egan for Willis (half-time); P Martin for Mannion (67); E Duggan for Commins (67); D Duggan for O'Shaughnessy (69); E Hunt for Meehan (79); Commins for Egan (85).

REF: Liam Gordon (Galway).

McDonagh

NUI Galway1-22
Waterford IT2-13

By **KEVIN EGAN**

NUI GALWAY set up a local Fitzgibbon Cup semi-final clash against GMIT thanks to a six-point win over Waterford IT at Dangan, with Evan Niland continuing his immaculate run of form for both Galway and the university by scoring 0-14 over the course of the hour.

There was a style and polish to the home side this evening, and who twice looked like they had comfortably shaken off the threat posed by Waterford IT, only for penalty goals from Shane Bennett to drag Fintan O'Connor's side right back into the contest on two occasions.

Niland lands home advantage for NUIG

NUI Galway0-23
UCC0-14

By **JOHN FALLON**
 Media West Ireland

NUI Galway secured home advantage for the quarter-finals of the Fitzgibbon Cup after an impressive victory over UCC at Dangan in Galway.

Both sides had already qualified for the knockout stages so home advantage was the prize on offer on a wet afternoon in Galway and Jeff Lynskey's side delivered a solid performance in a game where they never trailed.

It helps, of course, to have the Hurler of the Year on board and the deft touches of Cian Lynch, especially in the opening half, were decisive and he could be poised to follow up his successes with Mary Immaculate in this competition with the Galway university where he is studying a Masters in Education.

But once again it was the accuracy of Galway's Evan Niland which provided the scores as the Clarinbridge man landed twelve frees and one from play, while another who will be key to Henry Shefflin's plans, Killimordaly's Brian Concannon, was again impressive.

UCC were just unable to break down a

rock solid Galway defence where Jack Fitzpatrick was again outstanding along with 2017 All-Ireland minor winning captain Darren Morrissey, while the 2019 successful captain Ian McGlynn was prominent in midfield.

That gave NUIG, looking for their first Fitzgibbon since 2010, a big platform and UCC were chasing the game from early on as the hosts opened up a 0-10 to 0-2 lead at the end of the opening quarter when they had the wind and rain behind them.

Three William Henn frees and points from the hard-working Shane Barrett and Mark Kehoe gave UCC hope but they turned around trailing by 0-15 to 0-6.

They needed a big start to the second-half but NUIG matched them point for point in the third quarter to lead by 0-19 to 0-10 and with UCC never looking like they would chisel their way through a resolute defence for a goal, the Galway college eased into a home quarter-final.

SCORERS - NUI Galway: E Niland 0-13 (0-12f), B Concannon 0-3, C Walsh 0-2, M Gill 0-1, I McGlynn 0-1, C Lynch 0-1, J Fleming 0-1, M Kennedy 0-1.

UCC: S Barrett 0-6 (0-5f, 0-1 '65), W Henn 0-3f, M Kehoe 0-3, C Bowe 0-1, S Kenefick 0-1.

NUIG: L O'Reilly; E Lawless, J Fitzgerald, C Caulfield; C Killeen, D Morrissey, M Gill; I McGlynn, D Kilcommins; C Walsh, C Lynch, B Concannon; P Hickey, J Fleming, E Niland.

Subs: M Kennedy for Hickey (50), S Burke for



ACE: Brian Concannon was one of the inter-county stars in action for NUIG again.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

Kilcommins (50), A Brett for Gill (53), L Forde for Fleming (53), E O'Donnell for Killeen (57).

UCC: I Butler; N O'Leary, G Mellerick, K O'Dwyer; R Downey, R Connolly, C Barry; T O'Connell, D Connery; C Boylan, C Cahalane, S Barrett; S Kenefick, W Henn, M Kehoe. **Subs:** P Power for Barry (27), C Bowe for Henn (half-time), J O'Connor for O'Connell (half-time), C O'Brien for Cahalane (46), E Roche for Connery (52).

REF: Johnny Murphy (Limerick)

goal paves the way

Ultimately however, the Waterford students simply didn't pose the same scoring threat from open play, though they will wonder how different things might have been if Eoin O'Shea hadn't missed the target with four scoreable dead ball opportunities.

On a dry and still evening that was as suited to hurling as any February night could hope to be, goalkeeper Billy Nolan opened the scoring for WIT with a long range free, but the home side quickly found their groove and four points on the spin from Niland, three frees and a quick strike from the left wing after he collected a sideline cut, set the tone for the game.

Ciarán Kirwan replied for WIT but a well-finished solo goal from Fionn McDonagh pushed the gap out to five points with just seven minutes gone. Waterford IT were competitive from general play, but they strugg-

led to get good possession close to the NUIG goal and were dependent on frees to stay in touch. Well-taken scores from Cáimín Killeen and Cian Lynch helped to extend NUIG's lead before WIT were handed a lifeline before half-time in the shape of a penalty, awarded for a hold on Tom Barron and crashed to the net by Bennett.

WIT kept their momentum going after half-time and reduced the gap to three points briefly, 1-11 to 1-8, before NUIG hit another purple patch, outscoring the visitors by 0-6 to 0-1 in the next ten minutes.

Consecutive points from Bennett and Pádraig Fitzgerald were followed by another penalty award with five minutes to play, so when Bennett found the top right corner yet again, suddenly Waterford IT were just one goal away from tying up the game.

NUIG's response to the setback was exem-

plary however. They won the next puckout and set up an attack that yielded another Niland free, and late points from Mark Kennedy and the Clarinbridge marksman, one from a free and one from play, gave them enough cushion to safely negotiate five minutes of added time.

SCORERS - NUI Galway: E Niland 0-14 (0-12f), C Lynch 0-3, F McDonagh 1-0, C Killeen 0-2, M Gill 0-1, J Fleming 0-1, M Kennedy 0-1.

Waterford IT: S Bennett 2-2 (2-0 pens), E O'Shea 0-7 (0-6f, 0-1 '65), B Nolan 0-2f, C Kirwan 0-1, P Fitzgerald 0-1.

NUI GALWAY: L Reilly; E Lawless, J Fitzpatrick, C Caulfield; C Killeen, D Morrissey, M Gill; D Kilcommins, I McGlynn; C Walsh, C Lynch, F McDonagh; P Hickey, J Fleming, E Niland. **Subs:** C Salmon for McDonagh (temp, 30-32), M Kennedy for McGlynn (50), O Flannery for McDonagh (52), N Collins for Hickey (60).

WATERFORD IT: B Nolan; C Ryan, D Walsh, W Halpin; R Smithers, T Barron, M De Paor; N O'Sullivan, S Bennett; A Kirwan, E O'Shea, J Lyons; O Reilly, C Kirwan, P Fitzgerald. **Subs:** P Boland for Reilly (43), P Hennebry for Murphy (56), R Tierney for Kirwan (58).

REF: R McGann (Clare).

NUIG brave wind and rain for another impressive win

NUIG1-20
Mary Immaculate2-9

By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

IT'S 12 years since NUIG last won the Fitzgibbon Cup but there is a hope in Galway that Jeff Lynskey's men won't be far off this season.

They have a good squad and advanced to the quarter-finals with an accomplished display in dreadful conditions on their college grounds in Galway as Mary I fell to a second defeat in the competition.

Incessant rain, a strong breeze and a very wet surface made conditions extremely testing for both sides but they still served up a good contest for the sizeable crowd on a miserable night on the banks of the Corrib.

NUIG held an edge throughout and Clarinbridge's Evan Niland showed the sort of pinpoint accuracy which he will hope to take into the Allianz League in Henry Shefflin's first year in charge of Galway.

It helps, of course, in such testing conditions to have the Hurler of the Year in your ranks and the deft touches of Cian Lynch were pivotal throughout as the Galway college got on top.

Brian Concannon, NUI Galway and Shane Ryan, Mary Immaculate College try and deal with the heavy rain in the Fitzgibbon Cup clash. Picture: Ray Ryan

Brian Concannon, NUI Galway and Shane Ryan, Mary Immaculate College try and deal with the heavy rain in the Fitzgibbon Cup clash. Picture: Ray Ryan

Galway senior Brian Concannon was also influential as they used the breeze to build up a 0-7 to 0-1 lead after 12 minutes before the Limerick college responded with a handful of frees from Devon Ryan which saw the gap cut to 0-8 to 0-5 eight minutes from the break.

But NUIG finished the half strongly and a good point from impressive corner-back Conor Caulfield and a couple of more frees from Niland saw them lead 0-12 to 0-5 at the interval.

Mary I needed a good start to the second-half and they got it when goalkeeper Eamon Foudy blasted home a penalty and Ryan added another free to cut the gap to 0-12 to 1-6.

Niland and Phillip Wall exchanged



SKILL: Hurler of the Year
Cian Lynch was on form
against his former team.
 Photo: Stephen McCarthy /
 SPORTSFILE.

points before another one from the Galway sharpshooter pushed them four clear and they never looked back when Concannon soloed in from the left and blasted to the net and another Niland point pushed the gap out to 1-15 1-7 with ten minutes left.

NUIG never looked like getting caught and while Diarmuid Ryan got a late goal they were unable to rescue a lost cause and bowed out with a second defeat.

SCORERS - NUIG: E Niland (0-10, 0-8f); B Concannon (1-3); C Caulfield, M Gill, I McGlynn, D Kilcommins, C Walsh, C Lynch, M Kennedy (0-1 each).

MARY IMMACULATE: Devon Ryan (0-6, 6f); Diarmuid Ryan, E Foudy (pen) (1-0 each); P Wall (0-2); C O'Brien (0-1).

NUIG: L O'Reilly; E Lawless, J Fitzgerald, C Caulfield; C Killeen, D Morrissey, M Gill; I McGlynn, D Kilcommins; C Walsh, C Lynch, B Concannon; P Hickey, J Fleming, E Niland.

Subs: M Kennedy for Hickey (39), Collins for Fleming (56), S Burke for McGlynn (58), O Salmon for Walsh (58).

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE, LIMERICK: E Foudy; J Ryan, K Ryan, PJ Fanning, S Ryan, Diarmuid Ryan, D Lohan, A Ryan, M Stokes; J Gillane, Devon Ryan, E McBride, P Wall, A Ormond, C O'Brien. **Sub:** J Ryan for Fanning (10).

REF: F Horgan (Tipperary).



SOLID: Darren Morrissey in action for NUIG against UCD at UCD Billings Park.

Photo: Stephen McCarthy / SPORTSFILE.

McDonagh the winner for NUIG

NUI Galway1-21
UCD1-18

EVAN Niland struck 12 points at Belfield as NUI Galway held off a strong challenge from UCD to earn victory in the opening round of the Fitzgibbon Cup.

Thanks in no small part to a superb Fionn McDonagh goal in the 12th-minute, NUIG - playing with the aid of a strong breeze - led 1-3 to 0-4 on the first-quarter mark. Galway native Donal O'Shea contributed seven points for the hosts during the opening period but with two-

time Hurler of the Year Cian Lynch helping himself to a brace of scores, the Westerners brought a 1-10 to 0-8 cushion into the interval. Despite an encouraging start to the second half from UCD, NUIG remained in the driving seat courtesy of the steady influence of both Niland the ever-impressive Lynch.

An outstanding 1-1 salvo from midfielder Eoin Guilfoyle offered renewed hope to UCD, but with Niland knocking over four points in the closing stages, it was NUIG who prevailed.

SCORERS - NUI Galway: E Niland (0-12, 8f), J Fleming (0-5), C Lynch (0-3), F McDonagh (1-0), B Concannon (0-1).

UCD: D O'Shea (0-11, 8f, 1 '65'), E Guilfoyle (1-1),

L Murphy, K Lahiff (0-2 each), T Hannan, C Foley 0-1 each.

NUI GALWAY: L Reilly; E Lawless, D Morrissey, I McGlynn; M Gill, J Fitzpatrick, C Caulfield; C Killeen, C Lynch; B Concannon, C Walsh, F McDonagh; E Niland, J Fleming, P Hickey.

Subs: O Salmon for McGlynn (26-27, blood), D Kilcommins for Walsh (48), E McMahon for McDonagh (49), S Burke for Killeen (52), Salmon for Lawless (57), L Forde for Hickey (60).

UCD: C O'Donoghue; B Sheehy, E Geraghty, S Audsley; T Hannan, I O hEithir, C Minogue; N Heffernan, E Guilfoyle; D O'Carroll, C Foley, L Murphy; L O'Brien, D O'Shea, C Prendiville.

Subs: C O Cathasaigh for Geraghty (43), D O'Brien for O hEithir (52), K Lahiff for O'Carroll, D O Floinn for Murphy (both 54).

REF: J Keenan (Wicklow).

GMIT book final four spot

GMIT1-19
TUS MIDWEST1-12

By KEVIN EGAN

GMIT's greater efficiency, thanks in no small part to a superb display of sharpshooting from Kevin Cooney, powered them into the semi-finals of this year's Fitzgibbon Cup as they accounted for TUS Midwest at Carnmore.

A strong breeze blew diagonally down the Galway venue and GMIT took full advantage of it in the opening half, albeit only clicking into gear after the contest got out to an even start.

The first four points of the game were equally shared, but GMIT kicked on from there to score six of the next seven, with Cooney very much to the fore as he set about racking up a final tally of eleven points, four from play, by the final whistle.

Defensively, Seán Neary and, in particular, Cianán Fahy were superb in holding TUS Midwest at bay, with only Billy Seymour making any impression for the away side at the road end of the ground.

Cooney, Seán McDonagh, Conor Gardiner and AJ Willis were all on the mark for GMIT before they gave themselves a huge shot in the arm after 20 minutes, Willis firing to the net after a deft chip lift and pass from Paddy Commins set up the Tipperary man just inside the 13 metre line.

It wasn't until the 26th minute that GMIT finally put a shot wide of the target, as they used their possession incredibly well in building up a 1-12 to 0-7 interval lead.

Scores from Cooney and McDonagh after half-time proved no less valuable in helping to keep the Limerick students at bay, as it meant that even after Seymour scrambled in a goal for the visitors eight minutes into the second half, GMIT always had six points or more to spare.

An incredible save from Darrach Fahy to deny Robin Mounsey and a last ditch hook from man of the match Cianán Fahy to block a Ross Bonnar goal attempt ensured that the green flag that TUS Midwest badly needed never came, while a series of poorly selected shots meant that the wide count kept mounting at the GMIT end.

Points from Gardiner and Cooney late on helped to keep things controlled from a GMIT perspective and ensure their progression to the last four where they will meet the winners of NUI Galway and Waterford IT.



SPEED: Donal Mannion helped seal a precious win for GMIT.

Photo: Matt Browne / SPORTSFILE.

SCORERS - GMIT: K Cooney 0-11 (0-7f), AJ Willis 1-1, C Gardiner 0-3, S McDonagh 0-2, P Commins 0-2. **TUS Midwest:** B Seymour 1-4 (0-3f), E Fitzpatrick 0-2, K McCarthy 0-2, R Mounsey 0-2 (0-1 sideline), K O'Kelly 0-1, R Bonnar 0-1.

GMIT: D Fahy; L Prendergast, S Neary, K Meehan; J Forde, C Fahy, A Clarke; A O'Shaughnessy, D Mannion; C Gardiner, AJ Willis, P Foley; K Cooney, S McDonagh, P Commins. **Subs:** E Egan for O'Shaughnessy (half-time), E Duggan

for Mannion (56), P Martin for Clarke (56), M Cullen for Meehan (59).

TUS MIDWEST: C Broderick; J McCarthy, T O'Connor, D Tuohy; E Killeen, P Donnellan, B Mahony; C McCarthy, E Fitzpatrick; R Mounsey, R Maher, C Downes; B Seymour, K O'Kelly, K McCarthy. **Subs:** Mulcahy for Maher (36), S O'Loughlin for K McCarthy (45), R Bonnar for O'Kelly (55).

REF: Fergal Horgan (Tipperary).

Cooney stars in narrow win

GMIT1-19
MTU Cork1-17

BOTH these teams had already qualified for the knockout stage of the Electric Ireland Fitzgibbon Cup, so this final group game in the MTU Campus was to decide the pairings for the quarter-final.

And following their victory, GMIT finished top of Group C and have home advantage against TUS Midwest, while MTU are away to UL.

There was very little to separate them throughout, but it would have to be said the visitors were that bit more accomplished. Albeit they struck 18 wides over the hour, but the game was played in difficult conditions.

A 13-point return from free-taker Kevin Cooney helped them on their way.

The Sarsfields sharp-shooter also struck the post with a rasping shot at Ger Collins' goal early in the opening period.

GMIT had the sweeping wind and rain to their backs in that opening half and whilst the opening exchanges were close, the westerners struck a blow in the 11th minute when Gort club man Paddy Commins found the net following an inch-perfect pass from Sean McDonagh, who did extremely well to win possession in the first place.

Liam O'Shea's accuracy kept MTU in contention, and at the midway stage, the hosts trailed 0-8 to 1-10. But they were in with a fighting chance as they were turning with the elements in their favour for the second half.

GMIT kept MTU at arm's length though, and it remained a five-point match at the three-quarter mark, 1-15 to 0-13. The home side were grateful to two excellent points from Patrick O'Flynn and O'Shea — both from play when it looked like the contest might be slipping away from them.

It was evident MTU would need a goal to bridge the gap, and it duly arrived 10 minutes from time when Kanturk's Alan Walsh fired past Darrach Fahy — Paddy Creedon setting him up. The gap was now at two points.

However, with Cooney landing late flags from frees, that was as close as MTU could get.

SCORERS - GMIT: K Cooney (0-13, 0-11 frees), P Commins (1-1), D Mannion (0-2), S McDonagh, P Foley and E Egan (0-1 each).

MTU: L O'Shea (0-8, 0-6 frees), A Walsh (1-1), P Creedon (0-2), S Quirke, B Twomey, T Howard, C Hickey, P O'Flynn and D Hanlon (0-1 each).

GMIT: D Fahy; K Meehan, S Neary, L Prendergast; J Forde, C Fahy, A Clarke; P Foley, A O'Shaughnessy; K Cooney, A J Willis, C Gardiner;



TARGET: Kevin Cooney was in blistering form for GMIT.

Photo: Harry Murphy / SPORTSFILE.

D Mannion, S McDonagh, P Commins.
Subs: E Egan for K Meehan (half-time), E Duggan for A O'Shaughnessy (46), E Hunt for P Commins (55).

MTU: G Collins; B Murphy, W Hurley, L Ryan; S Keoghane, P O'Flynn, J Cranny; B Twomey, S

Quirke; T Howard, L O'Shea, A Walsh; B Kehoe, P Creedon, J Mulcahy. **Subs:** C Hickey for B Twomey (half-time), K Murphy for J Cranny (39), D Hanlon for J Mulcahy (48), E Collins for P O'Flynn (52), C O'Leary for B Kehoe (58).

REF: Fergal Horgan (Tipperary).

Kilkerrin-Clonberne are All-Ireland champions

Kilkerrin-Clonberne1-11
Mourneabbey1-7

By **DARREN KELLY**

OLIVIA Divilly drove Kilkerrin-Clonberne to their first ever currentaccount.ie All-Ireland Senior club title following a stunning four-point win over Mourneabbey in St Brendan's Park, Birr.

The Connacht champions are also the first team from Galway to get their hands on the Dolores Tyrell Cup since Galway Gaels in 1982.

Chloe Miskell's 12th minute wonder goal gave them a lead they never relinquished and scores from Olivia Divilly, Louise Ward and Eva Noone helped avenge the heartache of defeat to the same opponents in 2019.

Doireann O'Sullivan opened the scoring for the reigning champions from a free on five minutes before a foul on Ailish Morrissey resulted in Eva Noone hitting the target.

But the game came to life in the 12th minute when Louise Ward, Lynsey Noone and Morrissey combined to allow Miskell

CRUCIAL: Chloe Miskell scored a brilliant goal for Kilkerrin-Clonberne in the first half against Mourneabbey.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.



Doireann O'Sullivan of Mourneabbey in action against Nicola Ward of Kilkerrin-Clonberne.

Photo by Piaras Ó Mídheach/ Sportsfile

score with a rocket of a shot past Meabh O'Sullivan, for Kilkerrin-Clonberne's goal.

Doireann O'Sullivan responded from a free but the Galway club were in the ascendancy. Olivia Divilly and Morrissey scored before Nicola Ward sliced through the heart of the defence and added another point.

Kilkerrin-Clonberne led by 1-4 to 0-2 but Doireann O'Sullivan reduced arrears again. Olivia Divilly's latest free restored Kilkerrin-Clonberne's five-point advantage and the teams traded points, a fourth for Doireann O'Sullivan was cancelled out by Morrissey.

Ciara O'Sullivan was taken down for a Mourneabbey penalty just before half-time. Laura Fitzgerald scored the goal for the sixth consecutive game and left the Cork side just 1-6 to 1-4 down at half-time.

Divilly stretched Kilkerrin-Clonberne's lead to three after the restart but Mourneabbey enjoyed the better chances with Doireann O'Sullivan adding two more points from frees, although two goals chances were missed. Kilkerrin-Clonberne goalkeeper Lisa Murphy saved from Laura



ACE: Olivia Divilly was the star player for Kilkerrin-Clonberne in their stunning All-Ireland final victory over Mounreabbey in Birr. Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.

Fitzgerald while Ciara O'Sullivan hit the crossbar.

An Olivia Divilly point gave Kilkerrin-Clonberne a 1-8 to 1-6 advantage at the last water break and they pushed on after the resumption as Olivia Divilly again, and Louise Ward, put four between them.

Ciara O'Sullivan responded with Mounreabbey's only point from play but the second goal they needed never materialised and they finished with 13 players as Niamh and Doireann O'Sullivan picked up late yellow cards.

Eva Noone had the final say, where she finished a move involving Nicola and Louise Ward to restore Kilkerrin-Clonberne's four-point cushion, and ensure they were crowned champions.

SCORERS - Kilkerrin-Clonberne: O Divilly 0-5 (3f), C Miskell 1-0, E Noone 0-2 (1f), A Morrissey 0-2, N Ward 0-1, L Ward 0-1.

Mounreabbey: D O'Sullivan 0-6 (6f), L Fitzgerald 1-0 (1-0 pen), C O'Sullivan 0-1.

KILKERRIN-CLONBERNE: L Murphy; A Costello, S Gormally, C Costello; S Fahy, N Ward, C Dunleavy; S Divilly, H Noone; O Divilly, L Ward, L Noone; E Noone, C Miskell, A Morrissey.

Subs: N Divilly for Miskell (42), K Mee for Fahy (47), A Clarke for Morrissey (52), M Flanagan for L Noone (60).

MOURNEABBEY: M O'Sullivan; M Burke, E Meaney, K Coakley; A Ryan, M O'Callaghan, E Jack; E Coakley, N O'Sullivan; E Harrington, R O'Sullivan, B O'Sullivan; C O'Sullivan, D O'Sullivan, L Fitzgerald. **Subs:** A Cronin for Harrington (39), D Cronin for Jack (53), A O'Sullivan for Burke (57).

REF: Kevin Phelan (Laois).

Ward-inspired victory

Kilkerrin-Clonberne2-8
Donaghmoyme0-8

By **DARREN KELLY**

NICOLA Ward scored the vital goals and Kilkerrin-Clonberne moved through to the current account.ie All-Ireland Senior final following this 2-8 to 0-8 victory over Monaghan's Donaghmoyme.

Both goals arrived in the first half and the Galway champions took a six-point interval advantage that proved enough at the finish in Clonberne.

It was a cagey start from both teams before Kilkerrin-Clonberne made the breakthrough on seven minutes. Eva Noone found Ailish Morrissey down the right and she worked her way inside Joanne Geoghegan to open the scoring.

And the next attack involved a five-player move, started by Nicola Ward, including her sister Louise, Claire Dunleavy, Eva Noone and Chloe Miskell before Nicola Ward shot to the net to make it 1-1 to 0-0 on eight minutes.

Morrissey added another on 14 minutes, for a five-point advantage and Donaghmoyme opened their account with Cathriona McConnell on target moments later.

Despite struggling with a resolute Kilkerrin-Clonberne defence, Donaghmoyme were getting chances but Francie Coleman's charges were guilty of three shots dropping short when they were within range.

Morrissey got her third from play before McConnell replied from a free but Kilkerrin-Clonberne moved clear, three minutes before the break.

Again, Nicola Ward bookended the move involving Louise Ward and Hannah



POWER: Kilkerrin-Clonberne midfielder Sibohan Divilly challenges Amanda Finnegan of Donaghmoyme for possession in the All-Ireland semi-final.

Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.



CHALLENGE: Lynsey Noone of Kilkerrin-Clonberne in action against Donaghmoyme's Hazel Kingham. Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

Noone, the 2019 All-Star got around Fiona Courtney for her second goal.

Then a Louise Kerley free left Donaghmoyme 2-3 to 0-3 in arrears at half-time.

The visitors needed a strong third-quarter and got another McConnell free but then found themselves down to 14 players when Eimear Traynor received a yellow card for a foul on Hannah Noone.

Nevertheless, this triggered a Donaghmoyme comeback as McConnell led the resistance. She took Amanda Finnegan's pass for a score from play before another free on 40 minutes had them 2-3 to 0-6 behind.

Morrissey responded for Kilkerrin-Clonberne but the momentum was with Donaghmoyme. Cora Courtney brought it back to three points, before she won a free which McConnell converted.

Donaghmoyme trailed 2-4 to 0-8 at the water break but they didn't score again. Olivia Divilly sent over two points for the victors before Eva Noone got on the scoreboard.

Divilly added another point from a free to wrap it up and Kilkerrin-Clonberne turned their attentions to Mounreabbey.

SCORERS - Kilkerrin-Clonberne: N Ward 2-0, A Morrissey 0-4, O Divilly 0-3 (2f), E Noone 0-1. **Donaghmoyme:** C McConnell 0-6 (4f), L Kerley 0-1 (f), C Courtney 0-1.

KILKERRIN-CLONBERNE: L Murphy; A Costello, S Gormally, C Costello; C Dunleavy, N Ward, K Mee; S Divilly, H Noone; O Divilly, L Ward, L Noone; E Noone, C Miskell, A Morrissey. **Subs:** S Fahy for Mee (50), N Divilly for Miskell (50), A Clarke for H Noone (59).

DONAGHMOYNE: L Martin; J Geoghegan, N Callan, S Courtney; H Kingham, F Courtney, R Courtney; A Finnegan, C Courtney; A Burns, E Traynor, L Garland; C McConnell, L Kerley, A Garland. **Subs:** A Callan for Geoghegan (42), Á McElroy for A Garland (59).

REF: Gus Chapman (Sligo).

Castlebar come up short

St Sylvester's1-6
Castlebar Mitchels0-7

By DARREN KELLY

DUBLIN captain Sinéad Aherne scored 0-4 and St Sylvester's were crowned currentaccount.ie All-Ireland Intermediate club champions following a thrilling win over Castlebar Mitchels at Duggan Park in Ballinasloe.

Kate Sullivan's goal in the first attack ultimately proved the difference between the teams but the Leinster champions still needed two late points from Aherne and Niamh Harney to seal the win.

St Sylvester's began in scintillating fashion with their goal after just 10 seconds. Sullivan took her place at midfield for the throw-in, won possession and raced at the heart of the Castlebar defence before she struck low past Fiona McLoughlin.

And with a strong wind at their backs they added a point 60 seconds later. Aherne gave the pass to Nicole Owens to slot over.

But Anthony Cooke's team didn't score again from play in the first half with two further frees courtesy of Aherne giving them a 1-3 to 0-3 half-time lead.

Castlebar Mitchels were struggling to settle as they tried to gain a foothold but eventually got off the mark on 22 minutes. Danielle Caldwell pushed forward and she found Grainne Flynn to her right, who scored.

Castlebar were in the ascendancy now and St Sylvester's and finished the half strongly with two more scores to leave just three between them at the break. Flynn was involved in both, setting up Kathryn Sullivan on 29 minutes before converting a free herself to leave them just three behind at the interval.

Anna Tuohy picked out Laura Brody for a Castlebar score two minutes after the restart but St Sylvester's hit back with a well-worked move as Louise Ryan and Sophie McGlynn combined to allow Aherne her first from play.

However, Mitchels pitched up again as Niamh Hughes started to make an impact. She converted a free won by Orla Conlon on 37 minutes before immediately adding a point from play.

Scores were at a premium as defences reigned supreme and the Mayo side struggled to find a way past a St Sylvester's defence led by Dannielle Lawless, Lisa Murphy, Kim White and Cliona Fitzpatrick.

Flynn's free on 50 minutes levelled it



SKILL: Sinéad Aherne of St Sylvester's in action against Aoife Brody of Castlebar Mitchels at Duggan Park in Ballinasloe, Galway.

Photo: Michael P Ryan / SPORTSFILE.

for the first time but Castlebar wouldn't score again. Aherne won a free and scored to put St Sylvester's back ahead.

And then Owens and Katie O'Sullivan combined to allow Harney give them a two-point cushion, which was enough to secure victory.

SCORERS - St Sylvester's: S Aherne 0-4 (3f), K Sullivan 1-0, N Owens 0-1, N Harney 0-1.

Castlebar Mitchels: G Flynn 0-3 (2f), N Hughes 0-2 (1f), K Sullivan 0-1, L Brody 0-1.

ST SYLVESTER'S: S Brennan; C Fitzpatrick, K White, L Harrold; L Murphy, D Lawless, E Lynch; N Owens, G Twomey; K Sullivan, E Sullivan, N Harney; L Ryan, S Aherne, S McGlynn.

Subs: K O'Sullivan for Lynch (30), G McGinty for E Sullivan (38), K Slattery for McGlynn (45).

CASTLEBAR MITCHELS: F McLoughlin; K Moore, A Brody, A Towey; T Flynn, O Conlon, D Caldwell; L McManamon, K Sullivan; G Flynn, E Lyons, S Conlon; N Hughes, L Brody, A Tuohy.

Subs: S Prendergast for S Conlon (45), M McDonald or Lyons (51).

REF: Shane Curley (Galway).

Third-quarter goals make the difference



Castlebar Mitchels3-7
Castleisland Desmonds ...2-7

By DARREN KELLY

NIAMH Hughes scored 1-3 as Castlebar Mitchels held off a thrilling late comeback from Castleisland Desmonds to book their place in the currentaccount.ie All-Ireland Intermediate club final in Josie Munnely Park.

The teams were level, 0-6 to 0-6, at the second water break before the supporters in Castlebar were treated to five goals in the final quarter.

The hosts were guilty of 17 wides over the hour but worked wonders after that water break as they struck 3-1 in a four-minute spell.

On their first attack, Fintan Keane's team couldn't believe their luck when Laura Brody's effort landed over goalkeeper Fiona Griffin and under the crossbar for the first goal in the 47th minute.

That score allowed them to unleash and sensing an opportunity they quickly created another goal, which was finished

off by Hughes.

Anna Tuohy added a point to make it 2-7 to 0-6 and the Mayo champions seemed to be out of sight on 50 minutes when substitute Marita McDonald set up Danielle Caldwell for the third goal, to leave ten points between the sides.

Castleisland were in trouble but they were given a glimmer of hope as Paris McCarthy sent Amy Curtin through and she passed a few defenders before finding the net with five minutes of normal time remaining.

Things got even more interesting in the 60th minute, when Julia Ann Twomey got the vital touch in a goalmouth scramble for a second Castleisland goal. And the Kerry side were just three behind when McCarthy added a point from a free but their quest for an equaliser went unwarded.

Castlebar Mitchels were the better side in the first half but only held a 0-5 to 0-3 lead at half-time with 11 wides. Hughes converted two points with Tuohy, Orla Conlon and Brody also on target.

McCarthy scored twice for Castleisland with Niamh Walsh also scoring and the latter reduced the deficit two minutes into

the second half.

Hughes sent over a free to restore Castlebar's two-point lead with a 41st minute free but the momentum was certainly with the visitors when Lorraine Scanlon and McCarthy converted from frees.

However, after the water break Castlebar scored three quickfire goals and they had enough in the tank to reach the final.

SCORERS - Castlebar Mitchels: N Hughes 1-3 (2f), L Brody 1-1, D Caldwell 1-0, A Tuohy 0-2 (1f), O Conlon 0-1.

Castleisland Desmonds: P McCarthy 0-4 (3f), JA Twomey 1-0, A Curtin 1-0, N Walsh 0-2 (1f), L Scanlon 0-1 (1f).

CASTLEBAR MITCHELS: F McLoughlin; K Moore, A Brody, A Towe; T Flynn, O Conlon, D Caldwell; L McManamon, K Sullivan; S Conlon, E Lyons, G Flynn; N Hughes, L Brody, A Tuohy. **Subs:** A Hussey for S Conlon (30), M McDonald for Lyons (49).

CASTLEISLAND DESMONDS: F Griffin; L Cox, S Murphy, E Twomey; G Kearney, C Griffin, E Mangan; C Lynch, L Scanlon; A Curtin, P McCarthy, H Herlihy; N Walsh, JA Twomey, R Cahill. **Subs:** K O'Connor for Cahill (27), L Joyce for Herlihy (49), E Doody for Walsh (53), M Curtin for Cox (53), H Bourke for JA Twomey (60).

REF: John Devlin (Galway)



Fitzgerald seals first

Galway1-18
Roscommon1-16

By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

NEW captain Sean Kelly had to wait just five days to lift silverware for Galway as they came from behind to capture their tenth FBD League title as both sides reveled in the splendid indoor setting at the Connacht GAA Air Dome.

Manager Padraic Joyce said it's good preparation for the start of the league and both teams used the occasion to try out a large number of players.

"It's great to get something out of it. You try and win them all when you enter them and we will get ready out now for the league in two weeks," said Joyce.

"Fair play to FBD, they have sponsored this competition for years and to Connacht GAA for this facility. It's great to play in it and a great chance to try out players."

Once again the indoor setting at the splendid Mayo facility ensured a fast and furious encounter with Roscommon, and



SKILL: Galway substitute Shane Walsh gets past Richard Hughes of Roscommon.

Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILÉ.

in particular Conor Cox, doing most of the early running to lead by 0-5 to 0-3 after just eight minutes.

Rob Finnerty's second point for Galway narrowed the margin before two

efforts from Donie Smith and one from brother Enda saw Anthony Cunningham's men lead by 0-8 to 0-4 before Galway full-back Sean Fitzgerald continued a run forward to finish to the net after the ball was worked back in by Paddy Kelly and Dessie Conneely.

The Roscommon response was good with points from Andrew Glennon and Cathal Heneghan but Galway's ability to attack at pace was evident as debutant Owen Gallagher, the former Antrim player, set up Johnny Heaney but he rattled the crossbar.

Galway finished the half well to reduce the margin to 0-10 to 1-6 at the interval and then took over after the restart and outscored Roscommon by 0-6 to 0-2 as both sides emptied their benches to lead by 1-13 to 0-12 at the second water break.

Conroy and Heaney extended that lead for Galway but then Enda Smith got a goal for Roscommon after a turnover by sub Cian McKeon to reduce the margin to 1-15 to 1-12 after 57 minutes.

Two points from sub Cathal Sweeney pushed that out to five before Cox and Ciaran Sugrue got it back to a goal with two minutes left but Shane Walsh's fourth pointed free extended the lead.

SILVERWARE: Galway celebrate with the Paddy Francis Dwyer Cup after their FBD League victory in the NUI Galway Connacht Air Dome in Began.

Photo: Sam Barnes/Sportsfile



trophy of the year



QUICK: Roscommon forward Donie Smith gets his pass away despite the attentions of Liam Silke.
Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

An exciting finish ensued when Ultan Harney and Cox cut the gap to two but Galway held on for their tenth crown in the grade.

SCORERS - Galway: R Finnerty 0-5, S Walsh 0-3 (3f), P Conroy 0-3 (0-1f), S Fitzgerald 1-0, J Heaney 0-2 (0-1 '45), C Sweeney 0-2, S Kelly 0-1, T Gill 0-1, M Tierney 0-1 ('45).

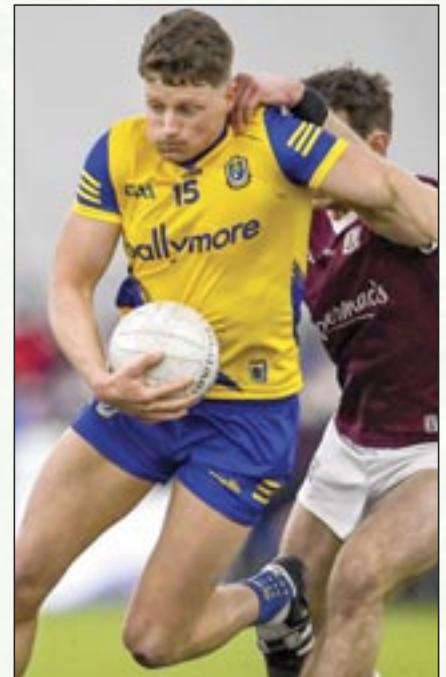
Roscommon: E Smith 1-3, C Cox 0-5 (0-3f), D Smith 0-3 (0-1f), P O'Malley 0-1 ('45), U Harney 0-1, C Heneghan 0-1, C Sugrue 0-1, A Glennon 0-1.

GALWAY: C Flaherty; C McDaid, S Fitzgerald, L Silke; D McHugh, S Kelly, J Heaney; P Conroy, P Kelly; C McWalter, O Gallagher, F Ó Laoí; P Kelly, R Finnerty, D Conneely. **Subs:** S Walsh for McWalter (25), T Gill for McDaid (25), M Tierney for Conneely (half-time), C Sweeney for Ó Laoí (45), T Culhane for Gallagher (48), D Canney for Finnerty (48), K Molloy for S Kelly (61), J Glynn for P Kelly (66), L Costello for Canney (69).

ROSCOMMON: P O'Malley; E McCormack, C Walsh, R Hughes; C Lawless, U Harney, D Ruane; F Lennon, S Cunnane; C Heneghan, E Smith, D McGann; A Glennon, D Smith, C Cox.

Subs: K Doyle for Cunnane (38), C McKeon for Glennon (43), B O'Carroll for Heneghan (47), T O'Rourke for McGann (53), B Derwin for Lennon (53), C Kenny for Lawless (56), A Lyons for Ruane (57), C Sugrue for D Smith (58), E McGrath for E Smith (60), A McDermott for Walsh (60).

REF: J Gilmartin (Sligo).



CHANCE: Roscommon's Conor Cox spots an opening ahead of the challenge of Cillian McDaid of Galway.

Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

Cox stars for brilliant Roscommon

Roscommon3-23
Sligo0-21

By **LIAM MALONEY**

ROSCOMMON'S second-half scoring flourish saw them overpower Sligo 3-23 to 0-21, in another high-scoring thriller hosted indoors at the NUI Galway Connacht GAA Air Dome.

Inspired by Conor Cox, who scored 0-



STAR: Conor Cox scored 0-11 as Roscommon eased to victory in the FBD League semi-final.

Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

11, Roscommon set up an FBD Connacht Senior League final clash with Galway thanks to some devastating finishing in the second-half, including late goals from substitutes Enda Smith and Ben O'Carroll.

Leading by seven points at half-time, 1-13 to 0-9, Roscommon were often very fluent in attack.

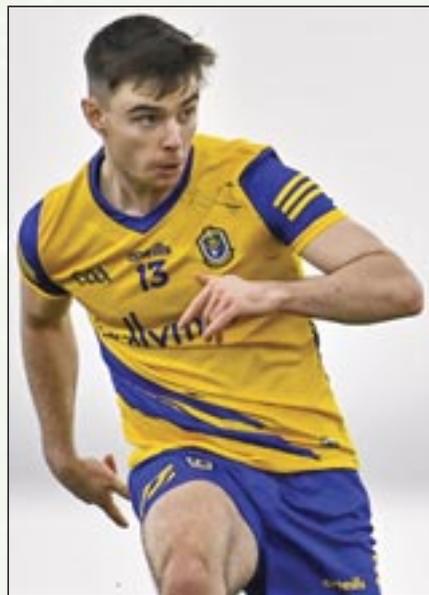
Still, they were almost undone by Niall Murphy's brilliance - the Sligo corner-forward kicked 13 points.

SCORERS - Roscommon: C Cox (0-11, 3f), D Smith (0-4, 4f), D McGann, E Smith, B O'Carroll (1-0 each); C Heneghan, S Cunnane (0-2 each); C Sugrue, B Derwin, K Doyle, C McKeon (0-1 each). **Sligo:** N Murphy (0-13, 4f, 1 '45', 1 mark), A Reilly (0-4), P Hughes (1 mark), B Egan (1f, 1 '45') (0-2 each).

ROSCOMMON: C Carroll, F Lennon, C Walsh, N Higgins, R Hughes, E McCormack, D Ruane, E Nolan, S Cunnane, C Heneghan, U Harney, D McGann, C Sugrue, D Smith, C Cox.

Subs: E Smith for E Nolan, h-t; C McKeon for U Harney, h-t; C Lawless for N Higgins, 39; B Carroll for C Sugrue, 44; A Lyons for F Lennon, 44; B Derwin for C Heneghan, 48; K Doyle for S Cunnane, 51; T O'Rourke for D McGann, 61; R Dowd for D Ruane, 67; A McDermott for D Smith, 67.

SLIGO: E Kilgannon, E McGuinness, E Lyons, M Walsh, K Cawley, P Kilcoyne, N Mullen, P Laffey, C Marren, K McKenna, A Reilly, M Gordon, B Egan, P Hughes, N Murphy. **Subs:** K Gavigan for K



Conor Heneghan racked up 2 points.

Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

McKenna, h-t; D Phillips for M Walsh, h-t; P McNamara for M Gordon, h-t; N Rooney for B Egan, 49; O Kennedy for P Laffey, 53; S Taylor for E Kilgannon, 56; R Connolly for A Reilly, 66.

REF: L Devaney (Mayo).

Sligo begin New Year with

Sligo1-21
Leitrim1-17

The Sligo Champion

SLIGO got their New Year off to a positive start with a victory over neighbours Leitrim in an entertaining FBD encounter in the NUI Galway Connacht GAA Air Dome, the first inter-county game to be played indoors.

Niall Murphy, who scored 1-10 for Tony McEntee's men was superb up front alongside Pat Hughes and Curry's Alan Reilly.

Emlyn Mulligan who plays his club football with St Mary's returned to Andy Moran's Leitrim and the sides were level at half-time, with the Sligo forwards digging deep in the second period with some sensational scores.

The Yeats men were six points in front just before the second water break, Leitrim clawing it back to a 2 point affair in the latter stages, before scores from the



STEADY: Leitrim stalwart Emlyn Mulligan gets a pass away against Sligo.

Photo: Ramsey Cardy / SPORTSFILE.

impressive Mikey Gordon and Murphy with two put the game out of Leitrim's reach.

Those in attendance at the historic match were treated to a decent, fast flowing encounter as Sligo pounced to an early lead, Murphy following the opening point



OPEN: Paul Kilcoyne of Sligo in action against Leitrim in the NUI Galway Connacht GAA Air Dome in Bekan.

Photo: Ramsey Cardy / SPORTSFILE.

Galway claim the bragging rights

Galway0-17
Mayo0-13

By MIKE FINNERTY

A FLYING finish from Galway saw them book a ticket to the FBD Connacht League final at the expense of Mayo at the NUI Galway Connacht GAA Air Dome in Began.

Pádraic Joyce enjoyed his first win in this derby fixture as Tribesmen manager thanks to a string of late points in the last quarter from Matthew Tierney, Shane Walsh, Tomo Culhane, and Paul Kelly.

Mayo, in contrast, faded out of contention in the closing stages and only managed a single point in the last 20 minutes — a free from impressive substitute Ryan O'Donoghue in the 69th minute.

The winners also led at half-time by 0-10 to 0-7 in front of 300 spectators.

Mayo had started brightly with early scores from the impressive duo of Fergal Boland and debutant Sam Callinan, but Galway quickly took the initiative back and led by 0-5 to 0-3 at the first water-break.

Wandering full-forward Damien Comer (2) and Johnny Heaney kicked the pick of their scores as Galway defended deep



QUICK: Cormac McWalter is tackled by Paddy Heneghan. Photo: Eóin Noonan / SPORTSFILE.

made an instant impact, shooting three quickfire points (two from frees) to close the gap to the bare minimum.

Galway only led by 0-13 to 0-12 at the second water-break but Joyce sprung the likes of Kieran Molloy, Kelly, Culhane, and Walsh from the bench and they all helped to turn the tide.

The winners dominated the last quarter as Mayo tired and excellent points from Culhane and Kelly, in particular, saw Galway book their place in the Connacht League decider.

GALWAY: C Flaherty; J Glynn, S Fitzgerald, L Silke; J Heaney (0-2), D McHugh, C McDaid; N Daly, M Tierney (0-3, '45); C McWalter, P Conroy (0-3, 1s/l), F Ó Laoi; R Finnerty (0-3, 3fs), D Comer (0-2), D Conneely (0-1, 1f). **Subs:** J McLoughlin for Daly (HT); T Gill for McDaid (HT); T Culhane (0-1) for Conneely (HT); P Kelly (0-1) for Finnerty (47); K Molloy for Glynn (inj, 50); S Walsh (0-1, 1f) for Comer (50); J McGrath for Silke (57); L Costello for Tierney (60).

MAYO: R Byrne; D McHugh, P O'Hora, S Callinan (0-1); P Durcan, M Plunkett, E McLaughlin; C O'Shea, J Flynn; F Boland (0-2), D O'Connor, F Irwin (0-1); J Healy, F Duffy (0-4, 4fs), J Mahon. **Subs:** R O'Donoghue (0-5, 4fs) for Mahon (HT); P Heneghan for Healy (HT); R Brickenden for Plunkett (HT); C Loftus for Duffy (47); S Coen for Durcan (51); R Keane for McHugh (51); M Ruane for Irwin (51); D Coen for Callinan (68).

REF: J Gilmartin (Sligo).

and in numbers to frustrate Mayo's inexperienced forwards.

The second quarter was a similar story with Mayo's only score from play arriving from Frank Irwin while Fionan Duffy converted three frees.

James Horan introduced All-Star attacker O'Donoghue at the break and he

victory over Leitrim



with a goal after the excellent Reilly sought him out.

A weekly update on Sligo's leading stories in news and sport, straight to your inbox Brian Egan with two edged Sligo into a three point lead, Leitrim freetaker Keith Beirne slotting over two frees down the other end.

Two more from the superb Murphy had Sligo leading by 1-5 to 0-4 at the first water break.

Reilly got his first of two in between a fine Hughes score on 22 minutes as Sligo led by 1-8 to 0-4.

Darragh Rooney then netted and brought Leitrim back into the game after a neat one-two with the lively Ryan O'Rourke. Further scores including another Beirne free saw it back to a one point game, the excellent Paddy O'Connor adding another for Sligo after Murphy sought him out.

Beirne keeping the scoreboard ticking over as the sides were level at 1-9 apiece, Eamonn Kilgallon doing well in the Sligo goal to thwart a goalchance from Rooney.

Sligo captain Keelan Cawley sent over a superb score on 35 minutes with O'Rourke bringing the sides level at the break at 1-10 all.

Murphy pointed a free a mere 50 seconds after the resumption and he added two more (one free) as Sligo nudged in front.

Scores from Hughes (mark), Murphy (2 frees) and an excellent effort from David Quinn saw Sligo leading by 1-17 to 1-11 at the second water break.

Leitrim rallied again though, hitting five on the bounce, Beirne (2), Paul Keane, Riordan O'Rourke and a huge strike from corner back David Bruen seeing just two in it.

Gordon with a brilliant effort put a goal between them in the closing stages, Beirne and Murphy trading scores before Reilly was then fouled and from an outrageous angle Murphy stepped up to send over one of the points of the game as Sligo march to the semi-final.

SLIGO: E Kilgallon, E Lyons, K McKenna, M Walsh, K Cawley, P Kilcoyne, D Phillips, G Gorman, P O'Connor, D Quinn, B Egan, D Conlon, A Reilly, P Hughes, N Murphy. **Subs:** M Gordon for Conlon (26), A Cummins for O'Connor (46), O Kennedy for Cawley (58), S Regan for Egan (58), J Haran for McKenna (64), I Barrett for Walsh (60).

LEITRIM: B Flynn, P Maguire, M Diffley, D Bruen, J Rooney, D Casey, J Heslin, C McGloin, D Wrynn, E Mulligan, K Beirne, E Sweeney, R O'Rourke, S Quinn, D Rooney. **Subs:** R O'Rourke for Sweeney (h/t), Dolan for McGloin (45), P Keaney for Mulligan (46), A Hoare for Rooney (51), O McLoughlin for Heslin (56).

REF: Thomas Murphy (Galway)



Pictured are the Clarinbridge U-20 'A' team who beat Castlegar. Back row (from L to R): C McMahon, M O'Dwyer, R Kearney, A Haugh, A Shannon, L Forde, D Lee, L Spellman, M Donoghue, C Moore, P McMann, O Salmon. Front: G Lee, S Fox, M Egan, D Dunne, J Ryan, C Donoghue, L Leen, E Ryan, L Martyn, O Shannon, C Kennedy, G Kelly, C Brennan.

College pictures by Joe Keane



Liam Challoner of Challoner Trophies presents Gavin Lee with the U-20 'A' man of the match award.



Galway Hurling Committee secretary John Fahey gives the U-20 'A' Cup to Clarinbridge captain Eoin Ryan.



The Castlegar U-20 'A' team. Back row (from L to R): D Connell, S Murphy, P Coyne, A Walsh, L O'Reilly, K Grennan, D Costello Hynes, S Neary, A Walsh, G Thomas, J Kilgannon, S Healy, C Callaghan, M Giles. Front: P Ryan, M Feeney, C Callaghan, C Gillespie, R Hickey, L Fahy, F Conway, D McNulty, PJ Feeney, E Connolly, D Neary, J Connolly.

College pictures by Joe Keane



The Sarsfields team who defeated Loughrea at Kenny Park. Back row (from L to R): D Murphy, D Donohue, A Donohue, F Deely, S O'Neill, M Hanlon, N Dwyer, O Stratford, P Kelly. Centre: L Donohue, G McGuinness, J Cooney, E Cox, F Garvey, R Dolan, G Kenny, C O'Regan, D Kane, A Connaire. Front: O Maher, J Cosgrave, O Keane, C Dillon, M O'Regan, J McMahon, L Connaire, C Ward, C Warde. College pictures by Joe Keane



Galway County Board chairman Paul Bellew presents the man of the match award to John Cooney.



Sarsfields captain Evan Cox receives the U-20 'A1' Cup from county board chairman Paul Bellew.



Loughrea's U-20s that lost to Sarsfields. Back row (from L to R): S Coyle, A Kavanagh, D Shaughnessy, S Corrigan, T Burke, D Lynch, C Griffin, E Quinn. Centre: I Griffin, M Murray, M McDonagh, P Mannion, J Lewins, A Monaghan, G Barrett, N Botes, D Quinn, T Killeen. Front: O Griffin, J Feeney, S Morgan, J Fahy Jun, A Burns, K Hanarhan, L Botes, D Coyle, M Burns. College pictures by Joe Keane



The presentation Collage Athenry team, which defeated Gort Community College in the 'A' Connacht final in Athenry, back row, left to right: Gavin Lee, Capt, ben Haverty, Darragh Walsh, Ryan O'Donnell, Eanna Brady, Oisín Quirke, Gavin Kelly, Gearoid Fahy, Aaron McDonagh, Niall Daly, Callum Cooke, Michael Molloy, Eoin Byrne, Conor Lawless, Shane Monaghan, Shaun Gilligan, Sean Redmond, Aaron Niland, Liam Leen. Front row, left to right: Alex Haugh, Cathal Shaughnessy, Thady Moran, Matthew Tarpey, Nigel Kelly, Luke Martyn, Tiernan Leen, Cian Donoghue, Rory Fitzpatrick, Conor Rooney, Adam Stewart, Colin Counihan, Cian Shaughnessy, Colin Noone, Rian Kearney, Dara McCartin. College pictures by Joe Keane



Man of the match Liam Leen receives his trophy from Anthony Flaherty, Treasurer Connacht Council.



Gavin Lee, captain Presentation Collage Athenry receives the John Ryan Cup from Eanna Ryan, Also in the photo is Anthony Flaherty, Treasurer Connacht Council.



The Gort Community School team who were defeated by Presentation Collage Athenry in the A Connacht final in Athenry, Back row, left to right: Evan Brady, Alan Lee, Nathan Smyth, Daniel Cunningham, Adam Andrews, Tiernan Finn, Luke Ketelaar, Peter Nolan, Sean Slevin, Nathan Gill, Niall Cunningham, Aaron Kennedy, James O'Malley, Darren Hynes, Harry Lynch, Rory McNamara, Liam Collins, Ben O'Donovan, Gary Kennedy. Front row, left to right: Alex O'Flynn, Kianan Fahey, Matthew O'Connor, David Keane, Evan Morgan, Darren Farrell, Enda Gardiner, Keith Smyth, Capt, Eanna Gantley, Donagh Fahy, Sean Slevin, Lorcan Walsh, Cian Callanan, Eoin Fahey, Adam O'Connor, Ethan Harrington. College pictures by Joe Keane



Presentation Collage Athenry centre half-back Tiernan Leen breaks out of defence despite the close attention of Gort's Enda Gardiner and David Keane during the Connacht Collages 'A' final in Athenry.



Presentation Collage Athenry Corner Forward Ryan O'Donnell about to set up another scoring chance despite the close attention of Gort's Eoin Fahey during the Connacht Collages 'A' final in Athenry.



Presentation Collage Athenry Corner Forward Aaron Niland about to score another point for Athenry as Gort Centre Half back Nathan Gill gives chase during the Connacht Collages 'A' final in Athenry.



Gort Community School Corner Back Kianan Fahey races clear of his marker Aaron Niland of Athenry to set up another attack for his side during the Connacht Collages 'A' final in Athenry.



The Ballindeereen U-20 team that defeated Mullagh/Kiltormer in the 'B' final in Gort. Back row (from L to R): M O'Connor, R Meehan, D Murphy, B Duffy, A Delaney, C Rodgers, M Leahy, E Morgan, E Moylan, S Lyons. Front: D Niland, R Ruane, C Crotty, Mascot, L Prendergest, C Bailey, R Larkin, D Lane, K McNamee.

College pictures by Joe Keane



By **JARLATH
MCDONAGH**

Dublin need to win an All-Ireland hurling title

IT'S over 50 years since I left the great bastion of hurling that is Turloughmore in County Galway. On the day that I write, we have lost one of our legends, one of the greatest hurlers Galway ever had, and that was the great Pakie Burke and this got me thinking of hurling.

So, to come back to my own life, I went to my first teaching post in Tubbercurry in County Sligo and I took with me some hurleys and a few sliotars, thinking I could just continue my hurling craze. In the mid-sixties, it wasn't that easy, as I found little or no hurling in Sligo. Gaelic football and soccer were the chosen games.

Not deterred, I set out on what looked to be an impossible mission to start up hurling in Sligo. This was a time when a lot of promise of service and support was being aimed at our greatest national game, the game played by Setanta alias Cuchulainn. Pat Fanning of Waterford became president and he had a great love for the game of hurling.

After a short while in Tubbercurry, I found a few so-called 'blow-ins' like Tipperary man Mick Burke, and fellow Galway men Mick Seevers and Tom Callinan, Leitrim man Eamon Sheridan, together with former Westmeath goalkeeper, the late Joe Cawley, who showed interest in hurling.

Soon we were in Kilcoyne Park playing the great game. Quickly, some of the natives came around and we formed a Tubbercurry senior hurling team. From then on we formed a County Hurling Board, to be chaired by the late Joe Cawley and I was the secretary myself.

Free hurleys were being given out at the time and I got a big bundle for my school and Tubbercurry Vocational School and more for areas like Easkey, Enniscrone, Sligo Town and North Sligo, the home of the Galway man Mick McTighe, a local primary principal.

In my own school football was the predominant game but the football coach at the school, who turned out to be one of my best ever friends, Colm Mullarkey, had no problem with my starting up hurling there. I set up leagues played at lunchtime, more often than not missing my dinner, but it was rewarding as the boys took to hurling like ducks to water.

We grew slowly, Clare man Eamon Forde joined the revolution and away we went. We also discovered we had some great players in the county like All-Ireland former Kilkenny star Willie Murphy, who

got local support from Colm Mullarkey, the late Joe Masterson, that great GAA family, the Murphys of Tubbercurry, the late Peadar Gorman of Mullinabreena and Margaret Toolin of Coolaney.

Soon we had a number of senior teams, like Easkey, formed by Galway men Jimmy Conneely, the late John Gilbride, Rory O'Beirne and Fr Cawfield. Mick McTighe led Craobh Rua and was also involved in promoting Sligo Town and North Sligo. Our senior team was a star-studded selection, mostly blow-ins. The big local star was Sean Armstrong of Tubbercurry.

1968 was our greatest year – we won the Connacht final, beating Louth in the All-Ireland semi-final. In that game I marked legendary footballer Leslie Toal and scored 1-2. In the All-Ireland final we faced a Kerry team with Johnny Cullity in goals and Niall Sheehy at full back. We were missing one of our key players, Willie Ragget from Wexford. Kerry beat us by three points but the seeds were set.

In 1969 we had two players on the Connacht Railway Cup team, Willie Murphy and Mick Burke. Connacht were beaten in a replay by a point. The local paper, the Sligo Champion gave us great coverage, hurling was thriving in Sligo.

Soon the school came to the fore and in 1970 we were in Croke Park. We were beaten by Armagh in the Under-16 final but in 1971 we came back and we climbed Mount Everest when we won the All-Ireland Under-16 final, in Croke Park, beating Armagh again.

The next year we won the Under-17 national title beating Westmeath with players mostly from Tubbercurry Vocational School. Some, I believe, if living in Galway, would have made the great Galway teams, players like Joe Quinn, Tommy Richardson and Michael Langtry.

So hurling continued, but I noticed no matter what we did or won, we never brought in a sizeable Sligo audience. Football and soccer were the games. When we returned triumphant with our All-Ireland title, there were no bonfires, no football officials, no reception. But we carried on and struggled against the odds. I left Tubbercurry in 1978, having captained Tubbercurry on two occasions to win two county titles. We also won three Connacht titles and an All-Ireland runners-up medal.

Today there is no hurling in Tubbercurry but on the upside players leaving the Vocational School set up their own hurling club in Tourlestrane, in Mickey Gallagher football country. They even won a county

title, and three years ago they held a great reception in the Yeats Country Hotel in Sligo and the great centre of fame of the Colleary footballing brothers, to celebrate 25 years of hurling in Tourlestrane. They invited me along, a gesture I was honoured to take up. This indeed warmed the cockles of my heart.

I write now because I wish I was back in Sligo, working on promoting and enjoying the great success that hurling seems to be having at the moment. Sligo have powered their way to three reams of silver and gone to the top of the league. What a great achievement and I congratulate them.

Hurling, I believe, is going very well in Sligo. We have St John's in Sligo Town, Easkey are the county champions, Tourlestrane are still playing and sadly Tubbercurry are dormant. But it's great to see the former county footballer, Keith Higgins, giving his full time to Mayo hurling. That must be a big boost for Mayo.

So, can hurling be revived in the so-called weaker counties? It's a really difficult task, and almost impossible to attract supporters. Some counties have done well, like Kerry, Westmeath, and Carlow, to mention just a few, and of course Sligo seem to have rekindled their hurling spirit, but how do you attract spectators?

One way I believe would be a great help if a football county won an All-Ireland senior hurling title. I think there is one county that could achieve this if given sufficient help and support, and that is Dublin. I'm not suggesting that the Dublin County Board are not giving some support to the hurlers, they are indeed. But I think that if they were allowed to utilise dual players or if some of the footballers were known and recognised to be great hurlers, and enabled to play hurling, then Dublin could be the team to make the breakthrough and show the world that a football county can win an All-Ireland hurling crown. Surely, supporters from other counties would grace the occasion then, follow suit and keep playing the greatest game in the world.

I write this article on a Monday. As I do daily, I read the Irish Independent. I went for the sports pages as I always do. I didn't look for the big games, the involvement of the Kilkennys, Tipperarys or even my own beloved Galway.

No, I went first to see how Sligo hurlers fared out and that is the way it will always be. Hopefully now Sligo can keep on rising, and Dublin, with the aid of some footballers, could win the Liam MacCarthy Cup.



Mulligan announces retirement

By JESSICA FARRY
The Sligo Champion

SLIGO footballer Jacqui Mulligan has announced her retirement from playing after 21 years.

On her social media accounts, Mulligan said 'there is no greater honour than pulling on the jersey' for club and county.

Mulligan's attention will turn to coaching, as she is part of Steve Feeney's back-room staff with Sligo Rovers' Women's National League team.

In a statement posted on her social media, Mulligan said:

"21 years later, I am taking the key and turning it in the door of my footballing days. Today I have taken the decision to step back over the whitewashed line for both county and club.

"It has been a prodigious road with lots of fantastic and entertaining moments and bumps which began under the wings of St. Farnan's/Easkey senior team in 1988.

"It was always my wish to represent my club at the highest level and I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to play at every level and grade available within LGFA circles.

"I'm fortunate to say that I achieved so much alongside my county and club mates, which included my two younger sisters Virginia and Fidelma.



RETIRING: Sligo's Jacqui Mulligan in action during the Division 3 league final in 2019.

Photo: Matt Browne / SPORTSFILE.

"Of course, I would always want more, but at least we lifted some of the most prestigious and beautiful trophies together, bringing so many dreams to fruition.

"The LGFA circles has given me the opportunity to discover diverse countries, play and train in spectacular places like our national stadium, Croke Park and live unique moments.

"In addition to meeting lots of wonderful team-mates, who have become my friends, it was a scintillating venture overall.

"Ladies Gaelic football for me was always played within the Tir na nÓg domain, I never seen the sands of time running out. So my advice to anyone, especially my nieces and goddaughter Kayleigh is appreciate what you have while you have it and cherish every moment.

"If I could do it all over again, I would in a heartbeat. I wish all my peers in the 2022 squad every success for the season ahead.

"I say to them, enjoy your days in the black but also the blue and white. There is no greater honour than pulling on the jersey.

"The last two seasons were physically the toughest by far, having two hip surgeries within 10 months was an unexpected challenge to face. The comeback wouldn't have been possible without the help of Sr. Carton and the medical team at Whitfield Clinic, but one particular constant figure throughout my entire career was Sarah Cass, a huge thank you to all."

Kerry native Spillane Jnr heads for Sligo

KERRY native Pat Spillane Junior will be part of the Sligo squad for the Allianz Football League after his transfer to the county was approved by the GAA.

The 23-year-old qualified to play for the county under the parentage rule as his mother Rosarii hails from the Yeats County.

Spillane, son of the Kerry legend bearing the same name, transferred to St Jude's in Dublin from Templeogue last year and impressed on their run to the county final where they lost to Kilmacud Crokes.

He is not required to change clubs to complete the switch. While he never played minor or U21 for Kerry, Spillane was part of

the Templeogue team that lifted Kerry and Munster IFC honours in 2020. He also took place at an AFL Combine in UCD in the past.

His addition is a boost for Tony McEntee ahead of Sligo's Division 4 campaign.

"Sligo county board can confirm that Pat Spillane has joined with the county's senior football panel following the approval by the Competition Controls Committee of the GAA of his request to field with the county of his mother," a Sligo GAA statement said.

"Spillane, who is resident in Dublin where he plays for the St Jude's club in Templeogue has begun training with Sligo's Dublin based players and will participate in preparations for the forthcoming National League campaign."



MOVE: Pat Spillane in action for Sligo against Wexford in the National League.

Photo: Matt Browne / SPORTSFILE.



Sligo club competitions to undergo a revamp

The Sligo Champion

WHILE the attention of GAA fans this year so far has been on intercounty fare, the Management Committee of Sligo GAA has this week ratified the full calendars for club activities for the year ahead presented by the CCC and Coiste na nÓg.

There are a number of additions to the calendar for the 2022 season as officials continue to work out how best to deal with the 'split season' which was introduced for the first-time in 2020 and 2021 with a condensed year due to Covid19 restrictions.

The split season sees all county team activity take place in the early part of the year with the second half of the year given over to club competitions.

As players involved in the county teams will only be occasionally available to the clubs until the early summer, the start of the county league has been put back to May and a new competition has been announced to provide competitive games for club only players.

The Divisional competitions will be run along geographical lines with clubs pitted against local rivals in five or six team groups that will stir up many memories of Divisional battles in days gone by.

Sligo GAA Chairman, Sean Carroll believes that the prospect of local rivalries renewed will stir players and supporters alike and kickstart the local club scene while intercounty competitions continue. "Each 'division' of five or six is a discreet competition in its own right and the opportunity for local bragging rights is sure to get the competitive juices flowing".

A second new initiative is the announcement of a special tournament for the U19 age category over the summer.

Mr Carroll explained: "We have made great strides in developing the skill of our players up to the U17 level as evidenced by last year's Connacht minor championship victory and consistent competitiveness at that level. It is essential that we maintain a competitive environment for those players and the clubmates and their continued success is dependent on raising the standard on the club scene.

"The gap from U17 to U20 is too big. We have already put in place an U19 development squad led by 2021 minor team manager Paul Henry.



Pictured is Sligo county chairman Sean Carroll.

Photo: David Fitzgerald / SPORTSFILE.

"This competition will provide a competitive setting that complements that work.

"This is also a response to the promptings of our clubs who also identified the need for a competition of this nature".

The county Leagues will resume on the weekend of May 7/8 – the weekend after the May Bank holiday.

They will run to the same format as in 2021 with 9 teams in each division playing 8 games each over May, June and July and then the top two meeting in a final. I

n a new innovation, teams will be designated three Friday fixtures in each division during the summer months and League Finals may also take place on Fridays.

Additional teams will be promoted from Division 2 and Division 3 to restore both Division 1 and 2 to 10 teams for 2023.

The football championships this year will also be run in the same format as last year – two groups of five (Senior and Intermediate) or four (Junior A) playing a round robin with the top two in each group qualifying for semi-finals.

There is change also in hurling competitions.

The season will open with the Dermot Molloy League.

With the involvement of two clubs from Leitrim – Carrick on Shannon and Cluainin

lomainn there will be two groups of four with the two group winners contesting the final in early June.

Shortly after that completes, all six Sligo adult hurling teams will participate for the first time in the Cuchulainn competition – a cross county initiative that will provide a new challenge to the individual player.

Across the summer, all six clubs will meet each other in five rounds of championship with the semi-finals and finals in October.

The full fixture master Calendar is being shared with clubs this week and will be available shortly on the Sligo GAA website.

In summary, Mr Carroll said "As an organisation that is built around its clubs, we must make sure that every member has plenty of opportunity to play meaningful, competitive games, and that they have a schedule from as early in the year as possible that allows them to plan for ahead.

"The split season is a golden opportunity to revamp our club schedule.

"This structure will give every club player at least 18 meaningful games a year and I commend our committees for their efforts with these plans and all those who provided constructive feedback and ideas"



Sligo connection as NUI Galway wins coveted Sigerson Cup

Sligo Champion

THERE was a big Sligo connection NUI Galway's Sigerson Cup victory over UL with Coolaney/Mullinabreena's Nathan Mullen and Conan Marren of Tourlestrane on the panel.

Former Sligo Senior captain Kevin McDonnell from Castleconnor is also part of the management team for the Galway college who clinched the title for the first time since 2003.

The Westerners were buoyed by the introduction of man-of-the-match Cathal Heneghan at half-time, the Michael Glaveys' man scoring 3 points after coming into the fray at the break.

The game in IT Carlow was held during Storm Dudley with tough conditions, but Maurice Sheridan's side were victorious on a 0-12 to 1-6 scoreline.

Kerry star David Clifford netted a late penalty for the University of Limerick, however the Connacht college held on showing great composure as their Munster opponents battled back to bring it back to a one point game.

Coolaney/Mullinabreena's Mullen and Tourlestrane's Marren, who picked up an injury earlier in the campaign, have played a big role for their college during the competition, Mullen starting for the decider.

He told The Sligo Champion it's a massive honour to win a Sigerson medal and he was delighted too for Conan and Kevin.

"Yeah, it's absolutely great, it hasn't really sunk in yet!

"2003 was the last time NUI Galway won the Sigerson, so it's been a long wait, especially coming close a few times."

The PhD student has been six years studying in the college, having also completed an undergrad and he said it's great to end the 19 year wait for the Sigerson.

"This is my 6th year here in Galway so it's really nice to win it.

"The conditions were not great on the night, but that's winter football for you and you just get on with it.

"It was a tough game and we knew it was going to be against UL.

"Our first 3 games were all with Northern teams, we had Queen's, Letterkenny and Jordanstown who are all decent teams and then the semi-final was with MTU which went to extra-time, which was another tough game.

"They had three players sent off at the end late on," he added.



SPEED: Nathan Mullen was one of the Sligo stars for NUI Galway.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.



BRILLIANCE: Tourlestrane clubman Conan Marren also played his role.

Photo: David Fitzgerald / SPORTSFILE.

There had been plenty of talk about UL during the Sigerson with Clifford in superb form for the college and also Kerry in the Allianz league since it started.

"We were familiar with UL they have a lot of good footballers on the team and I suppose going into it we knew that it was going to be a tough game.

"I think we were well prepared though and I think the depth of our panel there really showed.

"Having Cathal Heneghan coming on and scoring 3 points from the bench was massive, we have serious depth especially considering our injuries too, losing Tommy and Seán there at the start of the year too.

"Our depth showed that we were able to pull off the win, when David Clifford got the penalty we were a bit nervous but for me overall I think we performed really well and we put them under a lot of pressure and didn't give them that many chances on the ball. The conditions played their part as well and there's not too much shelter in Carlow!"

Mullen has been playing with NUI Galway since 2018 and they reached the final that year with UCD but he was unavailable due to injury.

"I've been playing with them every year since, last year of course because of covid there was no Sigerson. It's really nice to have a Sigerson medal with NUI Galway, we got to a Freshers' final when I was in first year and we lost so to top it off now with a Sigerson is really good."

The support and well wishes from back home too including his club Coolaney/Mullinabreena has been massive, he added.

"There has been some amount of messages, I really appreciate them and it is great having Conan there on the team too.

"Unfortunately he has been struggling with a back injury but hopefully he will get over it as he is making a big impact with Sligo as well."

Speaking of Sligo, Mullen admitted they have hit the ground running with two wins so far in their opening Allianz league with victories over to Wexford and at home to Carlow.

"We have had a nice start to the league with the wins but there are a few tests coming now with Cavan and Tipperary so time will tell but hopefully we can continue with our good form.

"The players are gelling really well this year and have been together now for a few years and there's definitely a great mood around.

"Our club chairman Ollie Lee was telling me the last time a player won a Sigerson medal was back in 1975, so it's been awhile.

"It's brilliant too having Kevin part of the management too, he's a stalwart of NUI Galway and is doing a PhD as well, unfortunately he had to retire through injury from football so young."

Also cheering the side on in Carlow was Nathan's family who he said are also delighted and over the moon.

So too were Coolaney/Mullinabreena and Tourlestrane for their players involved.

Coolaney/Mullinabreena said: "Congrats to NUI Galway and our own Nathan Mullen on winning the Sigerson Cup this eve in Carlow. Superb achievement and an All-Ireland medal back to the Club!" Tourlestrane were also congratulating their clubman Conan Marren for his part in the victory.

"Congratulations to the 2 Sligo men on the NUI Galway panel Nathan Mullen and our own club man Conan Marren from all in Tourlestrane GAA club."



An inspirational GAA man

By IAN COONEY
The Roscommon Herald

THERE have been many GAA icons since the founding of the Association in 1884, but, it's fair to say, that it has been people like the late Mickey Connolly who have made the GAA the great organisation it has become today.

Mickey, who sadly passed away a few weeks, was an inspiration, regularly travelling from his adopted home in London back to attend Fuerty or Athleague games or, indeed, his beloved Roscommon. His dedication and support was immeasurable — his passing has left communities on both sides of the Irish Sea grieving.

From Corrderryhugh, Castlecoote, Mickey was born in August 1941. He attended school locally, where he developed as a keen hurler. After working in Farrell's Mill, Michael — father to Tara, Siobhan and Michael, all of whom he was extremely proud of — moved to work in London.

Upon his retirement from construction in 2005, his trips home became more regular, always coinciding with a GAA match. The traditional club finals on St. Patrick's Day were an annual pilgrimage, with Mickey proudly stewarding on those occasions at Croke Park.

GAA memorabilia was his delicacy. Photographs appeared on every correspondence, with mugs, rosettes and plates also frequently delivered by Mickey or the postman.

Former Fuerty Chairperson Padraic Cuddy explained that, when you were chairperson, you got special attention from him. Intermittently, an envelope would arrive in the post with cash inside. It would be wrapped in tin foil or tissue to conceal it and there would be no message — just 'M Connolly London SW17' on the back of the envelope.

"You knew what it was for, and this happened often," recalled Padraic.

Another avid interest of Mickey's was his Christmas lights. He would never be in Ireland for Christmas, because he had to mind the lights. Nobody was allowed to interfere with them, particularly at night-time, when he would sit looking out the window protecting his pride and joy.

"After Christmas, the four or five pictures were again sent home to family, cousins and friends," smiled Padraic.

"No note — again, just 'SW17' on the back!"

Close relation Iris Allen described Mickey as "an incredible family man" and also spoke of the bad accident Mickey



had in London in 2016, when he was knocked down by a van outside a filling station.

She said, while recovering, one of those to visit him in his South London hospital bed was Padraic Cuddy.

"He said it was like a dream and gave him a great lift. It made him determined to cross the Irish Sea again and see his parish and county," remembered Iris.

As with Padraic, former Fuerty Chairpersons Domnick Connolly and Seamus Cuddy have the mugs and the rosettes from London and it almost became a competition to see who had the most.

Very close friend Martin Connaughton described Mickey as "the most colourful, best dressed supporter.

"He was the greatest supporter a club could ever have," said Martin, while neighbour Christy Neilan described him as "a very tidy, neat man, everything was done right and simple."

There have been many more tributes since Mickey's passing last week. Current Fuerty Chairperson Gerry

Wynne said: "The three places we met regularly were the three places Mick held dear to his heart — Fuerty, Croke Park and Ruislip.

"His interest in both Fuerty and Athleague was amazing. We are proud to have known him and we will always be proud to say he was one of our own. Mick will be very sadly missed by both young and old in the area."

It was a sentiment shared by Athleague Hurling Club Chairperson Kevin McGeeney.

"It was with deep sadness that Athleague's members learned of the untimely death of Michael (Mickey) Connolly.

"One of our club executive members, Padraig Moran, had a very close friendship with Mickey and he and his wife Teresa regularly went to visit him in London. We will miss Mickey in Athleague on big days. May his soul now rest with the Angels."

Roscommon GAA Chairperson Brian Carroll also expressed his deepest sympathy to Mickey's family and friends.

"Mickey was a mighty supporter of Athleague and Fuerty GAA clubs. He also gave every Roscommon team a very warm welcome whenever we visited Ruislip in London. He will be sadly missed by all who was lucky enough to have known him."

Such is Mickey Connolly's legacy, Padraic Cuddy concluded: "You would like to think that, right now, he's having a mug of tea with some great Fuerty and Athleague legends, along with, maybe, Jimmy Murray and Dermot Earley — and, of course, that their pictures would be on the mugs."

Mickey is survived by his three children along with his brothers Liam, Dennis and Padraic, sister Maura, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, family and communities of friends.

May he Rest In Peace.



Mickey Connolly, pictured in Ruislip with Roscommon senior hurlers Pete Kelleghan, Alan Moore, Darragh Heavey, Michael Kelleghan and Pat Nolan.





SHINING: Laura Fleming continues to play Ladies football and camogie for both club and county. Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

Fleming heroics

By IAN COONEY
The Roscommon Herald

WHEN it comes to commitment to the Roscommon jersey, you'll go a long way to find a more dedicated player than Laura Fleming.

At a time when the demands on club and intercounty players have never been greater, the Athleague camogie and St. Ciaran's football star has never let her sides down. If she's available, she'll be there to answer her clubs' and county's cause.

On a recent Sunday, Laura made her 100th appearance for the Roscommon intermediate ladies' football team. She marked the occasion with a personal tally of 1-2, although it wasn't enough to

prevent an agonising 4-10 to 4-9 defeat against Down at Páirc Esler in what was a thrilling game of football.

The following Saturday, Laura was due to line out for Athleague in their All-Ireland junior club camogie semi-final against Eoghan Rua in Inniskeen.

Twenty-four later, she would be back helping the Roscommon intermediate footballers to try and get their first win of the 2022 LGFA National League campaign when Ollie Lennon's side travelled to Louth.

Chances are that Laura Fleming will play a pivotal role in both games, just as she always has done.

As a dual player for both club and county, Laura Fleming is a rare breed, but you'll never hear her complain.

Congratulations Laura on reaching such a milestone.

Cregg honoured for years' service

Roscommon Herald

ONE of Roscommon GAA's greatest servants for over 15 years was recognised at the league game against Cork at Dr. Hyde Park.

Cathal Cregg was honoured for his sterling service to the county senior football team when he was introduced to the crowd at half time.

The Western Gaels player enjoyed a long and successful career with the Rossies. He made his intercounty senior debut in 2006 against Limerick in the National Football League and went on to represent Roscommon 165 times.

During 15 years with the team, Cregg won two Connacht senior medals, three Division Two League medals, one Division Three League medal, three Connacht League medals, one Railway Cup medal, and two Sigerson Cup medals.

He also received an All-Star nomination in 2010 and had the honour of representing Ireland in the 2014 International Rules Series.

LEGEND: Chairman of Roscommon GAA Brian Carroll (right) makes a presentation to former Roscommon footballer Cathal Cregg at half-time during their clash with Cork at Dr Hyde Park.

Photo: David Fitzgerald / SPORTSFILE.



Loud and clear



Aisling Hanly in action against Fermanagh in the league last year.

By DARAGH SMALL
Media West Ireland

AISLING Hanly's world falls silent at night, she won't hear another sound until she puts her cochlear implants back in in the morning.

She was born profoundly deaf, eight years after her sister, Róisín, who received the same diagnosis.

But neither sibling have let it define them, and with the help of the Cochlear Nucleus Implant System, Aisling has gone on to represent Roscommon in Ladies football and Ireland in Futsal. She has a

Nucleus Smart app on her phone which allows her to connect to her implant via Bluetooth. Then, when a call comes through, she hears the audio directly from the phone, removing background noise.

The 17-year-old is in fifth year at the Convent of Mercy secondary school in Roscommon, and when she is in the classroom she is able to listen directly to the teachers. They wear a special microphone that goes straight into her implant as well.

"I'm so grateful for the implant. It's class," said Hanly.

"In school, the microphone is unreal. Other students in the class mightn't even hear the teacher sometimes and they will

say: 'Aisling, what did they say?'

"They know I definitely heard the teacher because the teacher's voice goes straight into my head, whereas the others could be talking to other people and trying to listen to the teacher at the same time."

But there were two brain surgeries to get Aisling to this point, and she was lucky to have received her diagnosis so early. She was just three months old when it was identified that she was profoundly deaf.

Beaumont Hospital were screening the new-born siblings of deaf patients, and while Aisling's older brother Seán was born five years earlier without issue, the two sisters would face into the same unknown.





Aisling Hanly with her parents Colman and Liz after she played with Connacht in the interprovincial soccer tournament in Dublin in 2019.

On the first occasion, Liz Hanly had to bury her mother on the Tuesday and then on Thursday bring her daughter, Róisín, to Beaumont Hospital for an appointment to determine her level of deafness.

“It was a very difficult time, we knew zilch about it,” said Liz Hanly.

“At that stage the term cochlear implant was just foreign to us. Róisín had the brainstem electrical response which is the ultimate test that they do where they hook up electrodes to her head. That is what determines how severe it is and it is under a general anaesthetic.

“I still clearly remember talking to the surgeon as she was waking up from the anaesthetic. She was crying and the surgeon said, to me that does not sound like the cry of a deaf baby but all of the results are showing she is profoundly deaf.”

The surgeon suggested a new procedure called cochlear implant surgery and that Róisín may be a candidate for it. Parents Liz and Colman were delighted to have the technology available for their daughters. And when it came to Aisling, she had her first surgery a month before her second birthday.

She had the implant put inside her head from her right ear. In that implant, were 26 electrodes. For a completely successful implant, they needed to be able to implant all of the electrodes and they all had to work.

Luckily they did and a month after surgery, when the wound healed, they attached the external part of the implant which is a coil the size of a €2 coin, and that is attached to a little wire which goes to what looks like a hearing aid, which goes up her ear.

The microphone is in the ear and so the sound goes into that, and she hears

an electronic sound. It’s transmitted via the little wire, up into the coil which is attached to her head and the sound goes into her brain.

Even with this amazing piece of equipment, Aisling could still only hear out of her right ear until she was 13. She got her second surgery then and now she is a bilateral cochlear implant user.

“As a parent at the start, it’s easy for me to say now, but I advise you have to accept it, acceptance is number one. Once you accept it, take all of the supports that are being offered, don’t be too proud, take what’s available,” said Liz Hanly.

“Lucky Aisling’s personality has stood to her because she is so determined and anything she wants to achieve, she goes and does it. You have no choice, you can let it beat you or you can go with it and do what you need to do to overcome it.

“But it wasn’t easy to do it the second time. We tackled Róisín head on and Seán came along fine and you are just about to rest on your laurels and then you have to start all over again. But it was a help to have gone through it.”

Róisín turned out to be a model student and she is a qualified mental health nurse. Aisling followed suit and excelled with her studies while she was an outstanding talent on the football field too.

She is a star of the Kilbride Ladies football team and went on to make her debut for the Roscommon intermediates in the first round of the Lidl NFL against Fermanagh last May.

Hanly, who wears a rugby scrumcap to prevent any blows to the head, has a really bright future at her fingertips.

“At a younger age, she was conscious of wearing the cap and looking a little bit different but she has 52 electrodes in her head. A bang to the head could be very,

very serious,” said Liz Hanly.

“We, as parents, had to say very early on, when we knew she had a flair for football, we just said: ‘Aisling if you play you have to wear this.’ She just accepted that, it was wear it or not play.”

And the scrumcap hasn’t held her back, while a few visits to the local community centre in Kiltewan eventually resulted in a soccer career that has seen her receive international honours.

Hanly played with St John’s Athletic FC, CP Ajax and Athlone Town before she featured for a couple of regional teams.

Hanly was scouted for Ireland U15 trials and got to the final stages of that but missed out before she was made aware of an opportunity to link up with the Irish Women’s Deaf Futsal team.

She made the cut and has been to Amsterdam, Finland and Switzerland, and played in the European Championship Qualifiers, the European Championships and World Cup.

But Covid-19 put a halt to her soccer plans and she will focus on the primrose and blue again in 2022. She is excited about working with new manager, Ollie Lennon.

“I’m really look forward to playing with Roscommon again this year, playing with my county has been my dream since I was five or six,” says Aisling.

“I have always been looking up to players like Sinéad Goldrick, Niamh McEvoy, Cora Staunton, Sarah Rowe, all those playing in Croke Park because I really want to play there.

“But I’m really looking forward to another year with Roscommon, especially with a new manager and new players coming in.

“I feel like things are on the up and things are going to get better.”



WORK: A general view of Dr Hyde Park in Roscommon. Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

Dr Hyde Park renovations set for mid-year

By **KEVIN EGAN**
Roscommon Herald

DELEGATES at Roscommon's County board meeting were told that the long-awaited renovations at Dr. Hyde Park are on target to begin "sometime mid-year", if everything proceeds according to plan.

Pádraig Naughton, chairperson of the Roscommon GAA Infrastructure committee, told delegates at the Abbey Hotel that Mr. Martin Feeney had been appointed as Quantity Surveyor to the project, and that Mr. Feeney plans to submit detailed costings to the county management committee in two to three weeks, and that the process of sourcing finance could then begin.

"Hopefully we'll be in a position to make a presentation at the next county board meeting" said Mr. Naughton, who then confirmed that if the Roscommon County Board passed the proposals, the next step would be to seek approval from Connacht GAA and from Croke Park, before putting the project out to tender.

"Subject to the approval of the clubs of the county, we hope to start the actual work this calendar year, ideally some time mid-year" he said.

There was also good news on the financial front for the county, as Roscommon GAA treasurer David O'Connor

“It works best for all involved when county and club fundraisers don't clash, so while we would never tell a club how to run their own fundraising, we would ask that the clubs of the county give this some thought when they meet to talk about their plans for the year

confirmed that the county sponsorship deal with Ballymore Properties was extended for another three years.

"Seán Mulryan has been and continues to be a very generous patron of Roscommon GAA, and we are very grateful for

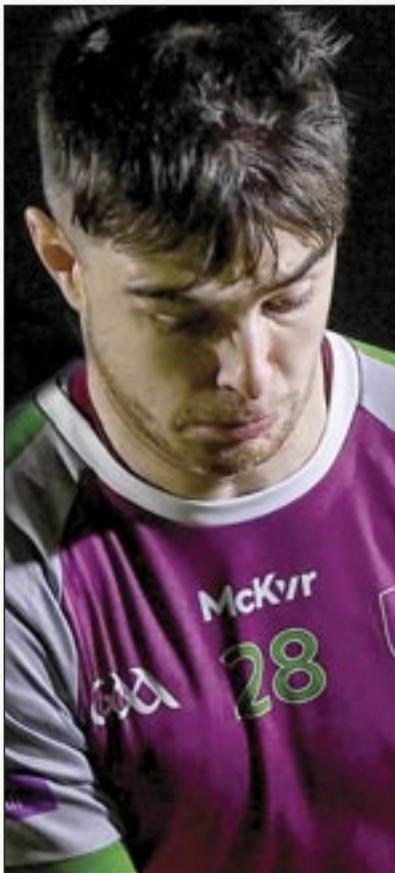
everything he does for us. His contribution goes far beyond his substantial financial commitment, as we also benefit from the expertise of some of his staff from time to time. He's a fantastic person to have on the end of a phone" said Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. O'Connor also informed delegates that the deal with Tom Hunt and Ranger Pipelines was extended for another year, while he announced plans to re-activate Club Rossie business membership and to run the annual Club Rossie County Board draw this year.

"In fairness to local businesses, it wasn't right or appropriate to approach them during Covid. We have nearly 100 business members and while some of them whose business was unaffected by Covid did approach us and made a contribution, we made the decision not to touch them if they didn't come to us", he said.

Speaking of the draw, he said that "This draw usually something south of €200,000 to Roscommon GAA, and it's very much part of our funding plan for 2022. It usually works best when it's run alongside the intercounty season, so it's likely that we'll do this again. It works best for all involved when county and club fundraisers don't clash, so while we would never tell a club how to run their own fundraising, we would ask that the clubs of the county give this some thought when they meet to talk about their plans for the year".





STAR: Cathal Heneghan made the difference for NUIG in their brilliant Sigerson Cup final victory over UL.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.

Heneghan inspires NUIG to glory

By **IAN COONEY**
Roscommon Herald

MICHAEL Glaveys and Roscommon forward Cathal Heneghan is the toast of NUIG after he inspired his team to a 0-12 to 1-6 victory against the University of Limerick in the Sigerson Cup final at IT Carlow.

With the sides deadlocked at 0-3 apiece at the break in terrible weather conditions, manager Maurice Sheridan turned to his bench at the break and introduced Heneghan who made a huge impact and kicked three second-half points in a Player of the Match contribution.

It was the Galway university's first Sigerson Cup success since 2003. The panel featured Roscommon players Cathal Heneghan, Darragh Heneghan, Conor Carroll, Aaron Brady and Paul McGrath. Former Roscommon and Kilmore player Don Connellan was part of the NUIG management team.



GONE: Former Tipperary manager Liam Kearns has stepped down as Clann na nGael senior football manager. Kearns had been ratified for a third year at the helm at the club's AGM in December, but he has stepped down from the post. During his two years at the helm, Clann na nGael reached the county senior football semi-final in 2020 and final in 2021 where they were defeated by neighbours Pádraig Pearse on both occasions.

Photo: Seb Daly / SPORTSFILE.

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All hail Kilmeena's champions

By GER FLANAGAN
The Mayo News

WAS sitting at the departure gates in Krakow Airport in Poland as I streamed Kilmeena's All-Ireland Junior club final success.

Everyone in my travelling group were asleep; in fact most of the people waiting to board the plane to Dublin were conked on the seats all around. But despite the tiredness from the previous few days of festivities, I was wide awake watching the stream on the dodgy wi-fi.

Obviously, it wasn't the end-to-end action that was keeping me on the edge of my extremely uncomfortable seat, it wasn't one of those games.

But it was the manner in which Kilmeena so maturely navigated their way to victory that had me impressed.

Kerry teams typically stroll through those All-Ireland Finals, aided by a totally unfair system that needs to be changed. But Kilmeena ripped that script up.

We played Kilmeena in the Mayo Senior League last season and they kept us honest for most of the game until we just powered through them in the final quarter to win comfortably.

They were, of course, without the talismanic Jack Carney that day, but even with his influence, I would never have foreseen them winning the greatest prize in Junior football.

Mind you, I was aware they had the talent, but I found that when we put the squeeze on hard that day, they crumbled in the face of the pressure.

So I won't lie, I was worried when the game went to extra-time after that late, late Gneeveguilla goal, that Kilmeena might have missed their chance.

Given how well they'd played and controlled the game—bar that minor mistake at the end that could have proved so costly.

They were representing the county in Croke Park and you could only imagine the 'hard luck' and 'same old Mayo' narrative that would have come about if they had let that victory slip from their grasp.

But ever if there was a coming of age, it was that extra time period for Kilmeena.

They composed themselves straight off, displaying a steely mentality of 'going back to the process' no matter what they experienced.

On the day, I thought Jack Carney, Darragh Keaveney and Niall Feehan were Kilmeena's three best performers. Niall was tireless at breaking lines from defence and gaining ground and was man of the match for me; Jack looked every bit the prodigious talent that he is and more with



VICTORY: Chris McGlynn of Kilmeena lifts the cup during the celebrations at Croke Park.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

such a controlling display; while Keaveney's accuracy and pace on a day like that is invaluable. And it would be remiss not to mention the couple of saves by Paul Groden near the end too.

It's been an incredible rise to the top for the small club on the outskirts of Westport.

Back in 2016, a week after we lost to Louisburgh in the County Junior semi-final, we had to go down to Kilmeena (then under the management of Mickey Feeney) with the prize of promotion to Division 3 up for grabs.

We had a serious hangover in the first half and conceded three goals, but we blew out the dirty petrol in the second half and won out after a war of attrition.

Many of the current Kilmeena team were playing that day, much younger mind you! I'm pretty sure their manager John Reilly might have made an appearance at some stage too.

That was the infamous day when club photographer extraordinaire Martin McIn tyre caught some 'handbags' on camera (worth checking out!) between myself, a couple of team-mates, and Kilmeena legend Dec' Ryan. I don't think Dec was even on the management team so I'm not sure how he ended up on the field!

But hey, that's ancient history now and myself and Dec have been great mates ever since!

No doubt the two aforementioned Kilmeena clubmen enjoyed that win, as did the whole parish. I was massively entertained in the car down from Dublin Airport listening to Michael Commins on Midwest Radio, while Michael D McAndrew was on the scene in Kilmeena to pump out the purest of emotions on the airwaves. It was radio gold.

Kilmeena always struck me as a club

that is well-organised, forward thinking and ambitious.

They've some great facilities down there, a vibrant top table, and a hardworking volunteer core. They've now broken the glass ceiling for Junior teams in Mayo and have a blueprint for what it takes to win the All-Ireland.

They started not too long ago from a very low base, fighting socio-economic and geographical challenges to this day.

They are a village on the outskirts of a large cosmopolitan town in Westport, and neighbours to a large town in Newport.

They shouldn't really be doing what they are doing, but clearly they don't listen.

Their success should be taken home and dissected by any of the current Junior clubs in Mayo who have serious intentions of winning a county title.

Some are in a much better position now than Kilmeena were back in the late noughties, back even ten years ago.

Sir Roger Bannister accomplished what many people thought impossible when he broke the four-minute mile mark for the first time in history back in 1954. It was a monumental moment in history, yet 46 days later Australian, John Landy, beat his time.

A year later, three runners in the one race broke the four minute mark. More than a thousand people have done it since. There could have been no crazy genetic mutation in that short space of time to see so many runners beat the barrier, the only change was the mental model.

It's like Kerry's mindset at winning All-Irelands. Now that it has been done by Kilmeena, we shouldn't be waiting so long for the next.



Living the 'Life of Reilly'

By **COLM GANNON**
Mayo Advertiser

THE celebrations are in full swing behind the yellow doors of the dressing room underneath the Cusack Stand in Croke Park. A few minutes earlier, the newly crowned All-Ireland junior champions breezed up the stairs from the tunnel and broke into song in the dressing room as they tried to take in what they had achieved.

Not long after, their manager, John Reilly, emerged from the dressing room, the song and cheer getting louder as the doors opened - the volume turning down again as the doors shut closed. Reilly had just masterminded the greatest day in his club's history and while he would have more than likely preferred to remain back inside with his comrades, he was ready to talk through what had just happened in the hour and half previously on the field.

"Lads I'm in shock, I'll tell yah. There was a lot of emotion there at the end for me, but yah, we are ecstatic, it is an amazing achievement there.

"I felt we had to win the game twice, I knew they were a serious outfit and we did our homework on them. You can see it was a tight game, and some of the skill-set out there from both teams was amazing; you could see the cough-ups from the two teams, there was a lot of turnover ball and tackling from both, they had their work done too and there is a sense of relief with it as well."

Having to win the game twice came about after their opponents managed to send the game into extra time, thanks to a



LEADER: Kilmeena manager John Reilly before the All-Ireland final in Croke Park.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

last-gasp goal after Kilmeena coughed up the ball trying to work it out of their defence; as for what he said in the few minutes between the end of normal time and extra time starting - it was all very simple, he explained.

"Look, we just had to start again, it is what you have to do, if something like that happens you can't dwell on it, as a manager I can look at some of the mess-ups, but for the players, I just said, 'look lads we're gone into it again, they got a lifeline, it is up to us to finish the job now and basically it was start again - and that is what we did.

"I think the bodies were sore, calves were getting tight and hamstrings on both sides, you could see men going down - I know this is junior championship, but this is high-level football out there and again skin of the teeth stuff and we got over the line."

As for what this means to himself, his team and the community at large, it means everything, Reilly said. "It's massive, the whole parish is out there, I don't think there is anyone left, my mother-in-law is at home minding the farm for me, just in case anyone comes into it and she'll keep everyone away.

"Everyone came up, people from Sligo, Donegal, Dublin and everywhere and a plethora of people came over from England for the game. It is huge, how often are you going to be in Croke Park? We started out there in some of the pitches in Mayo in the depths of bad weather and we had to tough it out - and then you come to Croke Park and it is a dream come true for every player out there and for me as a manager."

Delaney family fly the Mayo flag

By **JOHN CORLESS**
The Mayo News

THE Delaney family of Coolnaha, Ballyhaunis are well represented in the 2022 Mayo Camogie panel.

Six of them - three pairs of sisters - are included in manager Jimmy Lyons's squad for the league and championship campaign which was due to commence against Louth last weekend but the game was called off due to the weather conditions.

Sisters Ciara and Emer are joined on the panel by their first cousins, Grainne and Caoimhe, who are also sisters. They are joined too by their cousins, Meabh and

Saoirse - who are also sisters.

"I never played any sport, there wasn't much sport for women in my day," their granny Anne Marie Delaney told The Mayo News. "We kicked a ball around the garden, but that was the extent of it."

"My husband, George, played hurling," she added. "He was from Ballyhaunis. He started playing in Ballinasloe, when he was in school. He was involved when Tooreen Hurling Club was set up in 1957. He loved the hurling."

Anne Marie said she is very proud of the girls.

"I have eight children and 33 grandchildren," she said. "It's hard to keep track of them all.

"I'm delighted to see the six girls on the Mayo panel. This group of girls are all in or

around the same age. The camogie is great for them. Sport is very healthy."

Ann Marie said that she doesn't get to many of the games but she does take an interest.

"My daughters played camogie in Tooreen but it wasn't competitively organised. It was just amongst themselves."

Meabh Delaney, who had a great season with Mayo last year, culminating in the Nancy Murray Cup win, has been named Mayo team captain for 2022. She was vice-captain last year.

All of the girls play for Na Brídeoga Camogie Club, which was formed in 2006 and draws players from all over East Mayo. The club plays competitive camogie in the Galway league due to the shortage of camogie clubs in Mayo.





Conroy ruled out

By **COLM GANNON**
Mayo Advertiser

MAYO'S hopes for the new season were dealt a serious blow after star forward Tommy Conroy picked up a knee injury while playing for NUI Galway in the Sigerson Cup quarter-final.

The Neale GAA club player left the field of play shortly before half-time and did not return to the action.

BLOW: Mayo and The Neale forward Tommy Conroy got injured while in action for NUI Galway in the Sigerson Cup.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

The Mayo GAA medical team did a full assessment and examination and have confirmed that Conroy suffered a cruciate ligament injury.

Commenting on the news, Mayo GAA senior football manager James Horan said it was such an unfortunate injury. He said: "Tommy is such a great person and player. We all wish him well during his rehabilitation.

"Tommy will still play a huge part in Mayo's season and will remain very much part of the panel. Unfortunately, injuries like this are part of sport. I know all the players will rally around Tommy and I am sure it will galvanise the entire team, but I know his injury will inspire other players to drive forward, step up and follow in his boots."

Demand on players now 'unsustainable'

By **MICHAEL GALLAGHER**
The Mayo News

THE injury to Mayo's Tommy Conroy has filled a lot of column inches recently with commentary on the playing load experienced by inter-county footballers.

The knee injury sustained by The Neale attacker while playing for NUI Galway in the Sigerson Cup, less the 48 hours after lining out for Mayo against Donegal in the national league, has drawn attention to the demands placed on players.

James Horan didn't hold back in his criticism of competition scheduling when he spoke to members of the local media.

"It's unsustainable," he said. "If you were designing something from scratch the current scheduling of the Sigerson would be the worst case you could possibly design. The demands on players don't make sense at any level and we've worked hard to protect our players," Horan explained before outlining some of the problems

faced at Mayo training.

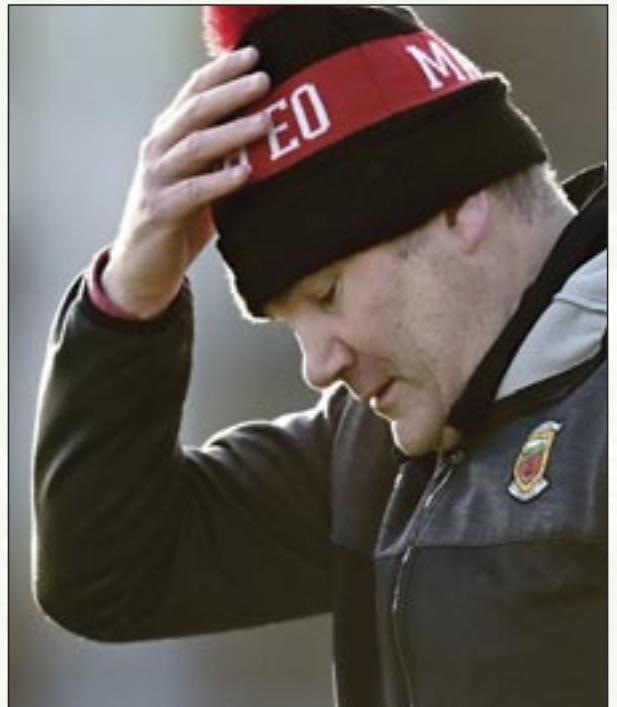
"We've had sessions where we have nine guys training and 22 not training. There are more guys not training than training most nights. We have to have them there because we need to go through how we play, but this situation doesn't make any sense to anyone.

"I'm not sure about the Under-20 competition and when that can be played but certainly the Sigerson must be pulled out of where it is. That's the first and obvious thing that needs to happen. Can it be pulled pre-Christmas like it used to be?

"I think that's what should happen and see how it works.

"It's just not right and I'd say the same thing if Tommy hadn't got injured," he added.

"The Sigerson cannot be played the way it currently is. Inter-county football is getting younger and younger and that age-group is being constantly squeezed. Players are trying to play for us, and they've got Sigerson or Trench Cup and the Under-20s as well."



HARSH: Mayo manager James Horan believes the demand on GAA players is now unsustainable.

Photo: David Fitzgerald / SPORTSFILE.



Coughlan joins Mayo GAA

FORMER Connacht and IRFU physiotherapist joins Mayo GAA medical team

Mayo GAA has announced that former Connacht Rugby lead physiotherapist Garrett Coughlan will be part of the Mayo GAA medical team for the 2022 season.

Coughlan brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the backroom medical team having worked with some of Ireland's most elite athletes, the Ireland Under 20 rugby team and the Irish men's and women's rugby sevens teams.

Welcoming the news, Mayo GAA chairperson Seamus Touhy said he was looking forward to working with Coughlan and wished him well in his new role with Mayo GAA.

"Garrett will oversee the physiotherapy requirements for all of our county teams in the coming year. It is important that we have a consistent and coordinated approach to injury prevention and injury treatment, and Garrett and his team have the expertise to deliver this service. I want to wish him and all our medical team all the best for the year ahead," commented Touhy.

Coughlan has already worked with the Mayo senior football team and was part of the backroom medical team for both the Donegal and Monaghan Allianz National Football League games.

Commenting on his new role, the Westport-based physiotherapist said he was delighted to take up this unique opportunity to work with Mayo GAA.

"I have spent a fantastic 11 years with the IRFU and Connacht Rugby, and now I hope that my experience will further assist Mayo GAA and the local community," he stated.

In 2015 Coughlan was awarded Specialist Membership of the Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (SMISCP) in the area of sports medicine. He has over 30 journal articles published in the areas of athlete profiling, concussion, lower limb rehabilitation and assessment. He has also launched a private practice called CORE Health and Performance that will operate from the new high performance centre at Hastings Insurance MacHale Park, Castlebar.



Garrett Coughlan will join up with Mayo for 2022.

Photo: Mayo GAA.



Breathnach keeping his si



By **DARAGH SMALL**
Media West Ireland

HE had played outfield for his club for over a year and as the space opened up in front of him, this was his first real opportunity to stretch his legs and make an impression in Croke Park.

Maghnus Breathnach was a relatively new face in the Galway setup when he left the comfortable surrounds of his own goalmouth and reached the Cork 45 in that Round 4 qualifier in 2013.

It was an age, before Rory Beggan and Niall Morgan made it the norm, where goalkeepers were confined to a life deep in their own territory but the An Spideál clubman was about to set a trend.

“I think the first game I did it for Galway was when we played Cork in the qualifiers and I just took off up the pitch on the Cusack Stand side,” said Breathnach.

“I was playing outfield for the club, where Pádraig Lally was our keeper so I was playing a lot at midfield and centre forward and that was how it kicked off.

“It was not frowned upon at the time. It was a tool I had, so I thought I might as well use it. I was fit and athletic and I was comfortable on the ball. I had no problem coming off the shoulder to a lad to support them.

“At the time there was serious pressure on backs and if you could create an overlap why not do it? There was never any instruction from management to do it, it was just off the cuff. I was never told not to do it either.

“Alan Mulholland was the manager and that was the last game of the championship. He couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Me absolutely tearing up the pitch and Alan O’Connor sprinting a hundred miles an hour after me.

“I started on our own 14 and got up to the far 45, back into Michael Meehan and it should have been a free-in but he got done for steps so I had to sprint all the way back in again. My legs were on fire.”

Meehan made that game famous for another reason, his stunning free-kick beat Cork goalkeeper Alan Quirke and nine outfield players standing behind him, to nestle in the roof of the net.

However, perhaps it was Breathnach’s exploits that day that set the tone for a new approach to goalkeeping in the modern era.

“I am looking forward to seeing how Conor Flaherty goes with Galway now. He is a similar mould, very comfortable coming out with the ball as well,” said

Breathnach.

“That is the way the game is going. You are not going to have a keeper and 14 outfielders, it’s going to be a keeper that is as good as an outfielder. Kick-outs are so important and being comfortable on the ball.

“If a keeper can create an overlap now and rattle a point over the bar, it’s an unbelievable thing to have in your locker. Monaghan really use it effectively and Tyrone now too.”

The 30-year-old Garda, who works out of Millstreet in Galway, has also suffered from a dreaded lob in his time spent roaming up the pitch.

There were 26 minutes gone in the All-Ireland intermediate club semi-final in January 2019, when Breathnach soloed up-field for An Spideál, who were trailing 2-4 to 0-4 against Naomh Éanna.

“It was a handpass I didn’t want, I was literally gone, I didn’t want the pass at all, it went straight through my hands,” said Breathnach.

“Your man got it, turned and shot, about 50 metres out. It was a serious finish but it was a hard luck. It’s awful disappointing but you just have to get on with it again.

“It didn’t deter me coming out with the ball after that. I am still doing it. If I didn’t do it in the county final we wouldn’t have won. It works out well sometimes and it doesn’t other times, that’s how things go.”

Breathnach stepped away from the Tribesman senior panel after 2019 but still plays with his club. While this year he and Fiona Wynne are joint-managers of the Galway Ladies footballers.

Breathnach was introduced to the Galway setup last year under Gerry Fahy where he was a goalkeeping coach and selector.

And with Fahy now gone, Breathnach has stepped up, alongside the Annaghdown clubwoman who won a TG4 All-Ireland with Galway in 2004.

“It’s very good, Fiona is top class,” said Breathnach.

“We really bounce off each other well, constantly talking to each other on the phone thinking about how we can make things better and improve the team.

“She brings a different dynamic and skillset than I would have. It’s great to be learning from her and we are improving the whole time.

“She knows what it takes as well. To go and win an All-Ireland, she has walked the walk. When she talks the girls listen because she knows what she is on about.

“She is really good at communicating and painting a clear picture and has such

LEADER: Galway Ladies football manager Maghnus Breathnach.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.



ights set on Galway future

a positive effect on everything. They have serious respect for her in the dressing room and among the management team too.”

Galway won't have to rely on Wynne for her All-Ireland expertise this year with the Kilkerrin-Clonberne contingent slowly filtering back in over the coming weeks.

Their 1-11 to 1-7 victory over three-in-a-row chasing Mourneabbey in the current account.ie All-Ireland Senior club final last month was a landmark occasion for the club and county.

“The Kilkerrin-Clonberne players will be back soon but in fairness they deserve the break. It's a long old slog for them. It was unfinished business when they didn't win it last time. To win it now it's a big relief,” said Breathnach.

“It's an unbelievable achievement and the manner of the way they did it. You could tell from watching them when they played Donaghmoynne and Mourneabbey, nothing was going to stop them. No matter what happened in those matches they were determined. You could see it in their eyes, this was it and they were going to take this opportunity, they weren't going to let this slip.

“They will be looking forward to coming back in now and we're looking forward to having them, integrating them into the team and creating a really competitive environment for players to go and try and take a jersey.”

Lisa Murphy is one of the returning players to add to Galway's options at goalkeeper with Alana Griffin and Karen Connolly also vying for the No 1 jersey.

But Dearbhla Gower, who was one of just two Galway players nominated for a TG4 All-Star last year won't be available this season due to work commitments.

Nevertheless, Breathnach is excited by what he has at his disposal while he sees more teams starting to implement fly-goalkeepers in their tactics in the womens' game now too.

“In fairness to Donegal's keeper the first day she was very good at it,” said Breathnach.

“It's another thing that will keep developing the whole time. I'd be very confident that you are going to have very good keepers coming out the field, really good and strong on the ball.

“It's something that county managers will definitely look at. I think they are looking at it now. Especially in the womens' game, any overlap and you are down the pitch. You have to be on the ball.”



CHARGE: Galway goalkeeper Maghnus Breathnach in action against Alan O'Connor of Cork in 2013.

Photo: Stephen McCarthy / SPORTSFILE.

O'Mahony takes over Salthill/Knocknacarra

By **JOHN FALLON**
Media West Ireland

DOUBLE All-Ireland winning boss John O'Mahony is back in management and will take charge of Salthill/Knocknacarra in 2022.

The 68-year old, who guided Galway to the 1998 and 2001 All-Ireland titles, will hope to lead the seaisiders to their first title in a decade.

O'Mahony, who had two stints in charge of his native Mayo and who led Leitrim to their historic Connacht title in 1994, has had a number of roles in club management in recent years, including The Downs in Westmeath.

Off the field he recovered from cancer and is keen to maintain his lifelong activity in the GAA.

The retired politician said he's looking forward to the challenge in Salthill/Knocknacarra, who won the last of



NEW: John O'Mahony previously managed Galway to two All-Ireland titles.

Photo: Ray McManus / SPORTSFILE.

their three county titles in 2012 and who were last in the Galway final in 2016 when they

were defeated by Tuam Stars. "I am looking forward to working with the club in the

coming season and I will be working with the football committee to finalise the senior football management team over the coming days," said O'Mahony.

Among the players he will be working with will be current county player Rob Finnerty, whose father Anthony scored a goal in the 1989 All-Ireland final when O'Mahony guided Mayo to their first All-Ireland final appearance in 38 years but it wasn't enough to prevent a 0-17 to 1-11 loss to Cork.

Salthill/Knocknacarra chairman Alan Mulholland, the former Galway player and manager, said that they are thrilled to have a manager of O'Mahony's experience on board for 2022.

"The club is delighted that someone of John's standing and record both within and outside Galway football is willing to work with our senior football team and we wish him every success in 2022," he said.

Clubforce sponsor Salthill-Knocknacarra

By **JOHN FALLON**
Media West Ireland

CLUBFORCE is delighted to announce a new partnership with Salthill Knocknacarra GAA, as principal sponsor in the adult sections of the "four codes" in 2022. Salthill Knocknacarra is the biggest GAA Club in Connacht and proud to promote Hurling, Camogie, Gaelic Football and Ladies Football with all teams having exceptional seasons this year.

It was announced last month that John O'Mahony (68), the double All-Ireland winning manager, who guided Galway to the 1998 and 2001 All-Ireland titles, is back in leadership to take charge of the Men's Senior Football team in 2022 with the hope of leading the Galway side to their first title in a decade.

"We look forward to a longstanding relationship with Clubforce who share many of our Club values," said Alan Mulholland.

"We're grateful to Warren for the work he does for us at SKGAA and to the team at Clubforce for their continued interest in

our club and community. We're excited to see what we can achieve together in the coming year."



John O'Mahony is pictured below receiving the sponsored jerseys from Warren Healy, Registrar of the club and Founder of Clubforce with (left to right) Sean Burke (Senior Hurling), Aisling Griffin (Camogie), Siobhan Divilly (Multiple Sports), William Finnerty (Football) and Club Chairman Alan Mulholland.



Johnson takes the reins in Corofin

By **JOHN FALLON**
Media West Ireland

COROFIN, the most successful club football side in the country in the past decade, have appointed Kevin Johnson as manager for 2022 as they bid to recapture the Galway title which has eluded them now for two seasons.

Johnson, who guided Tourlestrane to success this year in his native Sligo after previously steering Ballintubber to two titles in Mayo, takes over from Kevin O'Brien who stepped down after their Galway final loss to Mountbellew-Moylough.

Johnson is more than familiar with Corofin as his Ballintubber side were defeated by them in the 2018 Connacht final. A maths teacher, he also coached and worked with Frank Morris, the man credited with putting the structures in place several decades ago which led to Corofin's dominance, at Colaiste Einde in Salthill.

Johnson has also coached Salthill/Knocknacarra, Mountbellew/Moylough and a number of underage teams in Galway

and will be hoping to bring glory back to Corofin.

They were still the reigning All-Ireland club champions until recently, becoming the first side ever to win it three years in a row in January 2020. Their quest for eight Galway titles in a row was ended by Mountbellew/Moylough at the semi-final stage last season and they also went down to Val Daly's team in this year's decider.

They are now going through a period of transition but have a wealth of underage talent coming through and will be bidding to continue the run of success which saw them win five Connacht titles and four All-Irelands in the last decade.

Johnson comes from a family steeped in football coaching. His dad Denis, a PE teacher, guided Eastern Harps to four Sligo titles while first cousin Paul Taylor played for Sligo for 14 years before taking over as manager for two seasons to 2020 having served as a selector with Kevin Walsh.



Former Ballintubber manager Kevin Johnson has joined forces with Corofin.

Photo: Harry Murphy / SPORTSFILE.

Bellew elected Galway chairman

By **JOHN FALLON**
Media West Ireland

THE hurling officer who recruited Henry Shefflin as Galway manager has been elected the new chairman of Galway GAA.

Paul Bellew, who led the process which led to Shefflin's shock appointment in October, defeated outgoing football committee chairman Kevin Clancy by 167 votes to 97 at the annual Galway convention.

Bellew, who takes over from Pat Kearney who had served five years, had

served as hurling committee chairman for the past two years.

"It's a great honour and I'm very conscious of the responsibility it entails," said the 36-year-old from the Padraig Pearses club who is one of the youngest to hold the position.

He said it was time that Galway returned to the top table in hurling and football and he hopes to play his part in that.

"My ambition for Galway is for it to realise its potential. It's as simple as that. We have one of the best hurlers of all-time over our hurling team and one of the best footballers of all-time over our senior footballers. We are going to put

everything behind them but we have so much work to do.

"We have a lot to do there. It's something we will be concentrating and focusing on and it will require investment but if we want to stay at the top, not to mind get to the top, we have to put that in. It's time for everyone to get on the one bus in Galway and be positive about Galway and take pride in what we have," he added.

Meanwhile, history was made at the convention when Mary Judge from Caherlistrane became the first woman to be elected as county committee vice-chairperson.

Galway mourns passing of former All-Ireland winner

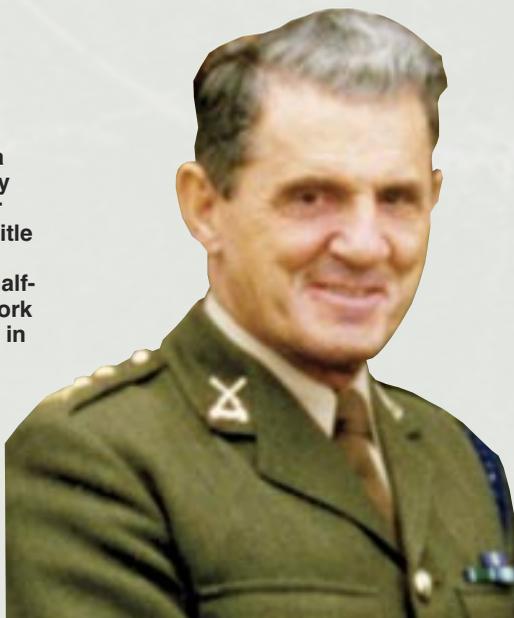
By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

GALWAY GAA is mourning a Kerry native who was a key figure when they won their fourth All-Ireland senior football title in 1956.

Jack Kissane, who was right half-back on the team that defeated Cork in that final, has died at his home in Salthill in Galway aged 92.

A decorated army officer who served overseas, Brigadier-General Kissane was General Officer Commanding Southern Command when he retired in 1990.

A native of Lisselton in Kerry, he came to prominence as a footballer as a cadet officer in the Curragh and moved to Galway in the early 1950s after



Jack Kissane RIP.

being commissioned. His displays for the Army team in the county championship led to him being called up to the Galway team and he made his championship debut in 1953.

He won two Connacht titles along with the '56 All-Ireland final when Sean Purcell and Frank Stockwell led them to a 2-13 to 3-7 win over Cork.

He served abroad on several occasions in Congo, Lebanon and Cyprus. In 1960 he was part of the first unit of the Defence Forces to serve overseas when they served in Congo.

Kissane maintained his lifelong interest in the GAA and sport and took great pleasure in recent years in the exploits of his granddaughter Molly Mayne, the promising Irish junior swimmer who set five new national records before Christmas, having won bronze at the European Youth Olympic festival in Baku over two years ago.

Debt of gratitude owed to Army players

By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

GALWAY owe a big debt of gratitude to the late Jack Kissane and other members of the Army who came to the city and made a big contribution to the GAA, according to one of the county's leading football officials.

John Joe Holleran, former chairman of Galway football board who has held numerous positions as a selector and official in the county and at Connacht level, said that nowhere was this more obvious than the Galway team which won the 1956 All-Ireland final.

Kerry native Kissane, who has died aged 92, was a key figure when Galway won their fourth All-Ireland senior football title that year and starred at wing-back

"We are all sorry to hear of Jack's death. He was a gentleman and settled well in Galway. There were three Army lads on that team, Cork's Billy O'Neill and Joe Young from Dublin. They added a lot," said Holleran.

"Indeed, there is a good history there of people making a big contribution to the GAA in Galway after moving here with the army. Jack Kissane was one of those, a very reliable and fit footballer. All the army lads were super fit and Billy O'Neill trained the team a year or two after that.

"I met Jack a couple of years ago at Gerry Daly's funeral. He was another member of that team. Jack looked well and was in great form. He contributed a lot to a great team. In many ways, they should have won more All-Irelands but they laid the foundation for what was to come with the three-in-a-row in the 1960s.

"Jack was also a key member of the Army team here. The Army team were strong in the county championship and teams had to raise their own fitness to match them and that, in turn, led to higher standards all round," added Holleran.

A decorated army officer who served overseas, Brigadier-General Kissane was General Officer Commanding Southern Command when he retired in

1990.

A native of Lisselton in Kerry, he came to prominence as a footballer as a cadet officer in the Curragh and moved to Galway in the early 1950s after being commissioned. His displays for the Army team in the county championship led to him being called up to the Galway team and he made his championship debut in 1953.

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Kissane maintained his lifelong interest in the GAA and sport and took great pleasure in recent years in the exploits of his granddaughter Molly Mayne, the promising Irish junior swimmer who set five new national records before Christmas, having won bronze at the European Youth Olympic festival in Baku over two years ago.



Gallagher in for a big campaign

By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

GALWAY manager Padraic Joyce said that a player who helped ruin his final day in a maroon jersey could now have a lot to offer the Tribesmen this year.

Antrim native Owen Gallagher made an impressive debut for Galway in their 1-18 to 1-16 FBD League final win over Roscommon at the indoor Connacht GAA Dome, and Joyce is confident he can make an impact this season for his adopted county.

Gallagher made his debut as a teenager for Antrim and in 2012 was at midfield when they dumped Galway out of the championship with a 0-11 to 0-10 All-Ireland qualifier clash in Belfast.

It turned out to be Joyce's last game for Galway as the double All-Ireland winner and former Footballer of the Year called time on his inter-county career.

Gallagher resurfaced in Galway a few years ago to study medicine at NUI Galway and continued his football career with a Moycullen side that he helped to their first ever county title in late 2020. Gallagher continued to impress as Moycullen reached the semi-finals last October, leading to a call-up to the county squad.

"He brings a different dimension to us as well," said Joyce, after Gallagher impressed with some strong running from



SPECIAL: Owen Gallagher after being substituted during the Connacht FBD League Final match between Galway and Roscommon.

Photo: Sam Barnes / SPORTSFILE.

centre-forward against Roscommon.

"He is a very strong runner with the ball. He did really well. It was his first game. He ran out of a bit of wind at the end there. It's January, you'd expect that.

"Overall, he has been very positive in the camp since he came in and he's been very good in fairness to him."

Gallagher, who last played for Antrim in

2017, was set to make his Allianz League debut for Galway against Meath in Pearse Stadium with his Moycullen teammate Seán Kelly poised to captain them in the competition for the first time.

"Seán, I felt, has been one of our better players in my time anyways, and he's really stepped up to be a real leader," added Joyce.

"He's a real driving force. We've had to play him full-back the last couple of years and I thought he was exceptional at centre-back against Roscommon. Good fella and a good captain and hopefully he'll have a successful year."

Matthew Tierney, who only really broke through and established himself last year, has been made vice-captain and Joyce had no hesitation in giving the Oughterard midfielder extra responsibility.

"He's one of the most talented footballers in the group that we have. I think he just needs to realise how highly he is held in Galway.

"Putting him as vice-captain, he just needs to step up and become one of the main men now this year. He is doing it so far, so look, hopefully he will have another good year as well."

Joyce was hoping that the FBD League wins over Mayo and Roscommon would help them get their league campaign off to a winning start against Meath as they tried to bounce back after being relegated from the top flight last season when they were caught by a late Monaghan rally.

Mulkerrin out for season

By JOHN FALLON
Media West Ireland

GALWAY manager Padraic Joyce has confirmed that full-back Seán Mulkerrin is out for season after picking up a serious knee injury in the Sigerson Cup.

NUI Galway were awarded victory in their clash with Ulster University when it was ended prematurely after 58 minutes with the Galway side leading by 1-10 to 2-5 when the Aran Islands native suffered the serious injury and there was a long delay in getting an ambulance to the Whitehall venue in Dublin.

Joyce said the extent of the injury has not yet been established but the 22-year old underwent surgery and the long road to recovery has begun.

"His season is over, the poor lad. It's unfortunate. We will give him all the support we can here in Galway and try get

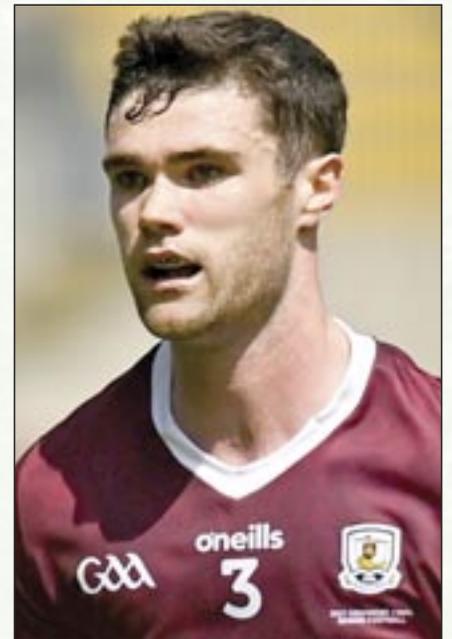
him back as quickly as possible.

"It's not good. We don't know the full extent of it yet but it's a knee injury and it's not good. I know it's not the cruciate thank God, but it is a serious injury with a dislocation and there is damage to the kneecap as well.

"It is serious, we are just waiting on the full scan. I know he had an operation on it," said Joyce, whose side retained the FBD League trophy with a 1-18 to 1-16 win over Roscommon at the Connacht GAA Air Dome.

Mulkerrin is a big loss for the season. He came up through the underage ranks in Galway, overcoming the logistical difficulties of commuting from Inis Mór on the Aran Islands to train on the mainland.

He broke into the senior team two years ago and became the first from the Aran Islands to play senior championship football when he made his bow in the delayed 2020 Connacht final loss to Mayo 15 months ago.



INJURY: Seán Mulkerrin won't play a part for Galway this season.

Photo: Harry Murphy / SPORTSFILE.

Leitrim Observer Men's Club Team of the Year for 2021

Leitrim Observer



1 - Darren Maxwell
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



2 - Liam Ferguson
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



3 - Rory Kelly
(St Patrick's Dromahair)



4 - Leon Harte
(St Patrick's Dromahair)



5 - Keelan McHugh
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



6 - Jamie Conlon
(St Patrick's Dromahair)



Wayne McKeon
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



8 - Shane Moran
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



9 - Keith Keegan
(Mohill)



10 - Riordan O'Rourke
(Fenagh St Caillin's)



11 - Keith Beirne
(Mohill)



12 - Seamus McMorrow
(Ballinaglera)



13 - Mark McGrory
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



14 - Martin Feeney
(St Patrick's Dromahair)



15 - Enda Moreton
(Leitrim Gaels)



THE Leitrim GAA public have spoken and while there will be lots of debate, here is your Leitrim Observer Men's Club Team of Year for 2021.

Congratulations to all those who have been voted by the public onto the Men's Club Team of the Year and congratulations to all who were nominated.

Senior champions, Ballinamore Seán O'Heslins, lead the way with six players selected while Intermediate champions, St Patrick's Dromahair, have four players on the team with two for Mohill and one each for Fenagh St Caillin's, Ballinaglera and Leitrim Gaels.

Only one member of the 2020 Men's team made it onto the 2021 selection with Mohill's Keith Beirne getting the nod from the voters for the second year in a row.

LEITRIM OBSERVER 2021 MEN'S CLUB TEAM OF THE YEAR

- 1** Darren Maxwell (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 2** Liam Ferguson (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 3** Rory Kelly (St Patrick's Dromahair)
- 4** Leon Harte (St Patrick's Dromahair)
- 5** Keelan McHugh (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 6** Jamie Conlon (St Patrick's Dromahair)
- 7** Wayne McKeon (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 8** Shane Moran (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 9** Keith Keegan (Mohill)
- 10** Riordan O'Rourke (Fenagh St Caillin's)
- 11** Keith Beirne (Mohill)
- 12** Seamus McMorrow (Ballinaglera)
- 13** Mark McGrory (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 14** Martin Feeney (St Patrick's Dromahair)
- 15** Enda Moreton (Leitrim Gaels).



Leitrim Observer Ladies' Club Team of the Year for 2021



Leitrim Observer



1 - Michelle McNulty
(Glencar Manorhamilton)



2 - Eimear Feely
(Glencar Manorhamilton)



3 - Mary Alice Maguire
(Glencar Manorhamilton)



4 - Siobhan McCartin
(St Joseph's)



5 - Rebecca Rooney
(Glencar Manorhamilton)



6 - Clare Owens
(St Joseph's)



7 - Molly Murphy
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



8 - Ailish Cornyn
(St Francis)



9 - Aoife Gilmartin
(Glencar Manorhamilton)



10 - Laura O'Dowd
(Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)



11 - Leah Fox
(Glencar Manorhamilton)



12 - Roisin Fowley
(Dromahair)



13 - Ailbhe Clancy
(Glencar Manorhamilton)



14 - Michelle Guckian
(Kiltubrid)



15 - Vivienne Egan
(Annaduff)

THE Leitrim GAA public have spoken and while there will be lots of debate, here is your Leitrim Observer Ladies' Club Team of Year for 2021. Congratulations to all those who have been voted by the public onto the Ladies' Club Team of the Year and congratulations to all who were nominated.

Senior 'A' champions, Glencar Manorhamilton, lead the way with seven players selected while St Joseph's and Ballinamore Seán O'Heslins have two each with one from St Francis', Dromahair, Kiltubrid and Annaduff. Four members of the 2020 Ladies team return on the 2021 selection with Clare Owens (St Joseph's), Laura O'Dowd (Ballinamore Seán O'Heslins), Leah Fox (Glencar Manorhamilton) and Michelle Guckian getting the nod from the voters for the second year in a row.

LEITRIM OBSERVER LADIES' CLUB TEAM OF THE YEAR

- 1 Michelle McNulty (Glencar Manorhamilton)
- 2 Eimear Feely (Glencar Manorhamilton)
- 3 Mary Alice Maguire (Glencar Manorhamilton)
- 4 Siobhan McCartin (St Joseph's)
- 5 Rebecca Rooney (Glencar Manorhamilton)
- 6 Clare Owens (St Joseph's)
- 7 Molly Murphy (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 8 Ailish Cornyn (St Francis)
- 9 Aoife Gilmartin (Glencar Manorhamilton)
- 10 Laura O'Dowd (Ballinamore Sean O'Heslins)
- 11 Leah Fox (Glencar Manorhamilton)
- 12 Roisin Fowley (Dromahair)
- 13 Ailbhe Clancy (Glencar Manorhamilton)
- 14 Michelle Guckian (Kiltubrid)
- 15 Vivienne Egan (Annaduff)



Big Apple 50-mile challenge for Leitrim GAA as Andy Moran launches new book

By **FRANK BRADY**
Leitrim Observer

MANY of the Big Apple's Leitrim supporters headed to Tibbetts Park, Yonkers, for the finale of the 'Fifty Mile Challenge'.

Last year the Leitrim Supporters Club launched this initiative, for the month of January, with a two-fold goal, firstly, to enhance general fitness of the county's residents, and secondly, to generate badly needed finances for the Leitrim team.

Well the project was a resounding success as local residents were regularly seen pounding Leitrim's highways, byways and boreens from Annaduff to Kinlough, in all sorts of weather.

This year the 50 Mile Challenge was embraced more enthusiastically, prompting comedian Seamus O'Rourke, to claim that if there was a census, you couldn't count Leitrim's people, as they were nearly all out walking, jogging and running, notwithstanding that the county has the smallest population of any county.

Naturally Leitrim people on this side of the Big Pond quickly embraced the challenge and soon the ex Lovely Leitrim folks were hitting sidewalks, pavements and parks regularly around the Big Apple's five boroughs, stockpiling the miles.

On the coldest day of the year over a hundred hardy souls showed up to complete the last few miles of the challenge. Of course the bond between native and emigrant is strong, and as James Orr, the Bard of Ballycarry, stated, "the savage loves his native shore".

Sure there's a sizeable influx of Leitrim exiles scattered throughout the tri-state area, but the biggest concentration is at the juncture of St. Barnabas parish in Woodlawn and McLean Avenue, aka, The Emerald Mile, in south Yonkers, prompting a journalist from the Irish Independent, to label the area "Little Leitrim" a comparison to "Little Italy", a staunch Italian enclave around Arthur Avenue in the Bronx.

At one stage the St. Barnabas football team had twelve starters with Leitrim origins as well as the backroom team being from the home county as well.

Basically the article chronicled the strong attachment that these exiles have to the home land and the home county.



New Leitrim manager Andy Moran during the Connacht FBD League.

Photo: Ramsey Cardy / SPORTSFILE.

That bond is currently accentuated by the fact that Seamus and Cairiona Clarke, proprietors of JP Clarke's on McLean Avenue are the major sponsors of the Leitrim team. In many ways the popular bar and beer garden is a home away from home for many of New York's Leitrim exiles.

So far this year over 200 folks have signed up to complete the fifty miles, and they will meet in Tibbetts Park for the grand finale of the challenge.

One of the hallmarks or highlights of an athletic career is being capped for your country. Well if Seamus Clarke had your phone number or knew of your whereabouts you were soon a capped Leitrim supporter. You couldn't say no to this man, when it comes to Leitrim. You might get away, if you had a bad phone connection.

Soon the lovely yellow, Leitrim logoed caps were cropping up in Tibbetts Park, Van Cortlandt Park, Central Park, Forrest Park, Flushing Meadows, and even on the other side of the US as Leitrim exiles cranked out the miles under all sorts of weather.

The caps seemed to be nearly everywhere, even one mature couple was reported to be using them as nightcaps. Word was things were a bit chilly in the bedroom.

Anyway as the Manorhamilton mainstream meteorologists would say, it was fairly hardy weather, so the caps came in handy. These capped runners will be greeted by Enda Stenson and Martin McCartin, Chairman and Treasurer of the Leitrim County Board, and of course the former great Mayo footballer Andy Moran.

Andy, a former Footballer of the Year, a two time All-Star, plus a host of other accolades, is the current Leitrim manager.

Andy was at the starting line to set the runners/walkers off and at the finish line to greet the finishers.

Maybe, perhaps in a gesture of sporting ecumenism, a few Mayo folks might show up to help Leitrim's cause. After all Leitrim have been Mayo's greatest supporters, especially when they get outside of Connacht. Meanwhile when the walking/running is finished all hands head up to JP Clarke's for refueling and refresh-



ments, and I'm sure any exertional pains or aches will be soon alleviated with a few copious potions of nature's oldest anesthetic.

Then the second part of the programme began, namely launching of Andy Moran's book, titled 'Lessons Learned in Pursuit of Glory'. This is a very compelling account of the two-time All-Star, Footballer of Year and former Mayo captain's football journey.

Moran, one of the most respected and admired footballers of his generation, details how sport influenced every facet of his life, highlighting the teachers, coaches, managers, teammates among others who inspired or influenced along the way.

The title is certainly very appropriate, and the book should be required reading for any young athlete, but especially Gaelic Players. It certainly makes great reading for all GAA folks, but none more so than for the band of loyal Mayo supporters who have lived through decades of agonies, ecstasies and near misses.

Well it was an opportunity for these folks to meet their hero, shake his hand and get their autographed copy of this highly acclaimed book by one of Mayo's greatest players.

Mike Morley, Chairman of the Mayo GFC in New York along with some players, officials and supporters will be there to make a presentation to Andy on his retirement from his long and stellar career

as a Mayo county footballer.

JP Clarke's has always been much more than a bar. Over the years it has hosted plenty of notable politicians, musicians, artists, authors and athletes among other celebrities. Well, Clarke's breaks new ground as it will have a runway featuring highly medaled models. Well, your typical model wouldn't hold a candle to these stars, and I'm sure you know them well, as they have showcased their awesome talents on the biggest of stages, Croke Park.

They are Martin Furlong and Andy Moran who will be modeling Leitrim's latest jersey.

Martin, the former Offaly goalkeeper, is a four time All-Star, a former Footballer of the Year, holder of four All-Irelands, three seniors and a minor, plus seven Leinster titles, will model the new goalkeeper's jersey. Don't be surprised if Martin executes a few shot-stopping dives as he comes off the runway.

Andy Moran, the recently appointed Leitrim manager, is also a former Footballer of the Year, holder of two All-Stars, two National Leagues, three Sigersons and eight Connacht titles, will model the outfield jerseys. Don't be surprised if Andy decides to pop a few points over the bar as he comes off the runway.

The rest of Leitrim's athletic attire was also on display.

The Leitrim Ladies were not left on the sidelines, as they are becoming a

formidable force on the Big Apple's playing fields. They will take to the runways too with players such as Sharon Redican and Lisa Sorohan among other Lovely Leitrim ladies modeling the McKeever sponsored jerseys and County Board sponsored sportswear.

There was also a draw for All-Ireland hurling and football tickets as well as many spot prizes. Dawn Doherty and Frankie McCormick as well as DJ Don provided entertainment. Dawn and Aisling Center's Band from Yonkers were featured on last year's Late Late Christmas show. I'm sure Seamus and Caitriona, proprietors of JP Clarke's and sponsors of the Leitrim team will ensure that all are well looked after for the evening, and the craic should be mighty.

The Clarke duo hail from great Gaelic strongholds. Seamus is a native of Gortletteragh, and Caitriona is from Drumshanbo, whose brother Pauric Kenny was on the '94 Connacht Championship team. The Leitrim dynamic duo were also the Leitrim Guardian Persons of the Year in 2021.

Also besides being a great advocate for Leitrim, Caitriona has done Trojan work in Irish American Community, and was chosen as Grand Marshall of the Yonkers St Patrick's Day Parade in 2019.

The rigors of walking and running will have built up reserves of stamina to withstand a bit of hardy partying and the caps could come in handy outside, especially in the beer garden.

Tighe named in AFLW Team of the Week

By **JOHN CONNOLLY**
Leitrim Observer

THE rise of Aine Tighe with Fremantle Dockers took another big step as the Leitrim star was named in the AFLW Team of the Week.

The Kiltubrid woman was named in the half-back line on the Team of the Week with Mayo's Aileen Gilroy of North Melbourne also making the selection as an inter-change player.

Tighe, who was rested in Fremantle's win over the Western Bulldogs, has made an enormous impact after two

injury ravaged seasons that denied her chance to make her AFLW debut and was described by coach Trent Cooper as "outstanding" in just her fourth AFLW game.

Fremantle teammate Kiara Bowers, who made the Team of the Week as an inter-change player, said of the Leitrim star before the season even started as "She's one of the best players I've ever seen."

Fremantle are currently top of the table with 20 points after five games with the Adelaide Crows, who have played one game less, second on 16 points and Melbourne third on 12 points.



SHINING: Aine Tighe was on form in Australia.

Photo: Brendan Moran / SPORTSFILÉ.



Drumreilly's James Holohan presented with GAA President's Award

Leitrim Observer

FORMER Leitrim player, selector and GPO James Holohan is among those who were honoured on TG4 when they broadcasted the 2022 GAA President's Awards.

A former Leitrim footballer and selector on Senior teams with PJ Carroll and County Minor, U20 and Junior teams with Martin McGowan, James is one of the most recognisable personalities in Leitrim GAA, known for his infectious enthusiasm and love of the game.

In the citation for James' award, it states "Every child in Leitrim knows Jimmy Holohan from his time as a GPO. He knows every player in the county and has been a player, selector and manager of several Drumreilly teams and the county team. He was a highly skilled and respected coach at all levels and his work as a Games Promotion Officer - whether in schools, clubs, or Croke Park Play & Stay days was always of the highest quality.

"Since retiring as a GPO Jimmy is to be regularly found as a reliable steward at Leitrim GAA games and all over the Province as a Connacht GAA Steward. His legacy from his GPO work is in passing on his love of our games to new generations of players, helping build their skills and their connection with their club.

"It is this commitment to others that has made him such a popular selection. He has planted many acorns at club, school and county level and Leitrim GAA will reap the rewards of that work for many years to come and be all the stronger for it."

The GAA President's Awards, organised with the support of AIB and broadcasted by TG4, February 11, afforded Uachtarán CLG 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.

GAA President Larry McCarthy said "The GAA is about Games, but it is people

who make the GAA what it is. The GAA Presidents' Awards is an opportunity for the Association to acknowledge a group of inspirational people who have made an outstanding contribution towards the success of Gaelic games."

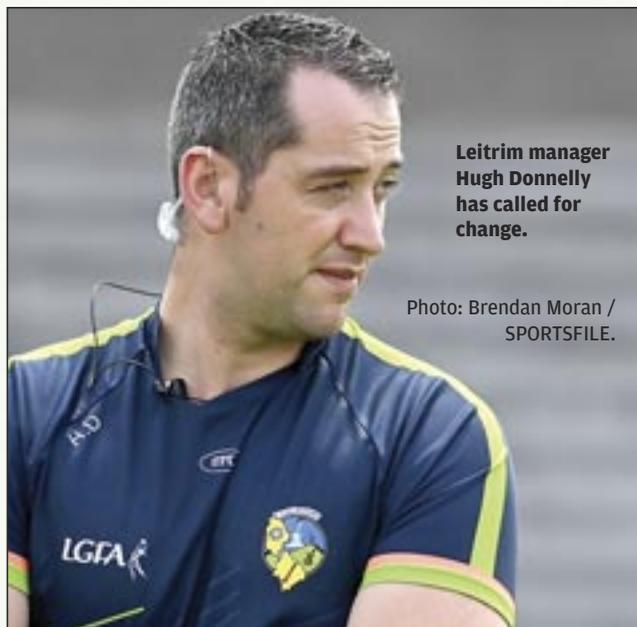
"They are, in many respects, ambassadors for the tens of thousands of volunteers who dedicate themselves to the promotion of Gaelic games at club, school and county levels and who we are so fortunate to call our own.

"Their work is not motivated by recognition – but that is why it is all the more important to appreciate the work that they do and celebrate the fact the GAA is the better for it.

I'd also like to thank AIB for their support of these awards and their long-standing support of the GAA and also acknowledge TG4 who since their foundation have played a crucial role in the promotion of our games."

The 11 awards are made on a provincial and code basis. As well as Gaeilge, Education and International Awards, the presentation of the annual Dermot Earley Family Award will also be made.

Leitrim boss Donnelly wants six-game league reinstated



Leitrim manager Hugh Donnelly has called for change.

Photo: Brendan Moran / SPORTSFILE.

By JOHN CONNOLLY

LEITRIM manager Hugh Donnelly has called on the LGFA to reinstate the normal full League programme for counties, stressing the importance of a full schedule of games to blood new players.

While the GAA have restored full league programmes, each of the four Lidl LGFA divisions is divided into two sections, cutting down on the number of games to be played and the Leitrim manager would like to see a full programme restored.

"Absolutely, the current set up means you have to win two, if not all three, games which means you can't really allowing for experimenting because you have to start 12 or 13 of your

starting teams," said Donnelly when asked about the issue.

"If you have a five or six game league, you can make those changes, you can probably get away with ten or 11 starters and blood in five new players at a time so I think it has to change, it must change, especially for Division 4 where you are trying to develop players and develop teams.

"I've been saying this for the last two or three years, we carry a panel for a reason and there is zero point in me not using that panel. We have like for like in terms of players that are coming in to replace the starting 15 so there is savage competition, they worked really hard the girls who came in, they turned a lot of ball over in the second half.



McCarthy looks forward to 2022

GAA.ie

LADIES and gentlemen, let me open my remarks by paying tribute to you and thanking you for the way in which you managed CLG in the last twelve months. I am not talking about the wonderful community response to the pandemic which we saw from GAA clubs around the world, I am talking about our bread and butter, our games, and the way in which you managed them through the course of a very difficult year. You were absolutely magnificent. There is no other word for it. Every county championship was completed, every competition was run off effectively. While we lost a few games to the pandemic, in the overall scheme of the number of games that were played the numbers lost were few and far between. We were always going to be able to run off the inter-county championships, that, in comparison to the club championships, are relatively easy to manage, but you really showed how effective you are as administrators when all of the county competitions were run off in an appropriate time frame. Congratulations, well done, and our gratitude to each and every one of you.

Let me also pay tribute to my predecessor, John Horan. Unlike 2021 when there was light at the end of the tunnel in terms of games coming back, and spectators coming back to grounds, for the last year of his Presidency John was faced with a grim scenario of cancelling games. It was totally unknown territory for a President. Even at Congress last year, which as you know was conducted remotely, he did not get, what might be termed an appropriate send off. Yes, he got a remote round of applause but that was inadequate given the brave leadership he showed through a very difficult 2020 in particular. Ladies and Gentlemen, I would ask you to give Uachtarán John Horan a standing ovation for his leadership as Uachtarán of CLG. Go raibh míle maith agat, John.

Notwithstanding the return of games and spectators, 2021 was a very difficult year for the Association. Yes, we managed it prudently and did well on a number of fronts, but it is not a year, that as an institution or as a society, we want to experience again. The two best days of the year were the two days that our children were allowed back into our clubs in the North and in the South. This brought a vibrancy



Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Larry McCarthy gave his address at the NUI Galway Connacht GAA Air Dome in Bekan.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE.

back to the clubs, it brought life back to our organisation and was such a joy for the children. It was equally as important for parents because it was such a relief that their children were out playing and enjoying themselves again. I travelled to a number of local clubs and the huge number of children in each was a testament not only to the relief of having children out and about, but to the importance of Gaelic games in the community and the joy that they bring.

Let me pay tribute to the work of Shay Bannon, Feargal McGill and the members of the Covid Advisory Group for the immense work that they did in guiding us through the harrowing pandemic. Part and parcel of that guidance was the creation of a return to play app which processed over 25 million return to play submissions. On one Saturday morning last September we were processing 8 forms every second. That is a phenomenal piece of work, and

all credit to Shay, Feargal and the committee, but also to the Tomás Meehan and the people who developed Foireann.

Last year when I addressed Congress I spoke of recalibration and restart. That recalibration started with the onset of a club season and a county season. Last year it was somewhat truncated due to various restrictions, but I am delighted to see that we will have our first real club season and county season this year. The reduction of the length of the inter-county season from 37 weeks in 2017 to 26 weeks in 2022 is to be welcomed because it gives clubs the time and the space in the calendar which they deserve. It also gives inter-county players the opportunity to play in a very meaningful way with their clubs. There is a lot of work involved in realigning competitions, but I don't doubt that once the club season becomes established it will be a more enjoyable season for all. It is the responsibility of our CCCC's, our Fixture Analysts, and our County Committees to ensure that our club players at all ages are well served by a progressive games programme. If that means reaching outside your own county or creating new and unique competitions, I encourage you to do so. One might look at the South Ulster Junior Development Hurling League as a model which ticks a lot of boxes in terms of being creative and non-traditional and gives hurlers from several counties the opportunity to play at an appropriate level.

I am delighted that we have passed a new structure for our intercounty competitions beginning next year. The structure will give more games to more counties at an appropriate level and at an appropriate time of the year. While there may be some teething problems, as there is with any new venture, we will work through those problems and adjust accordingly. The format is an exciting one and I look forward to great games and the opportunity for counties who may not have been successful for a while to develop and evolve and compete consistently.

Those changes will come onto effect next year, 2023, but this year we will have a very exciting season as well. The initiation of the Tailteann Cup will be a tremendous addition to the calendar and the an opportunity for developing counties to compete and progress at an appropriate level is something very much to savour.

The inter-county season will be followed then by a club season, and one

hopes that it will be as exciting as last year's was. Consider that the six All-Ireland Club Championships in 2022, were won by clubs from six different counties, Down, Waterford, Derry, Kildare, Kilkenny and Mayo. Each was a phenomenal achievement, and forgive me if I point to the success of the Steelstown Footballers and Nass Hurlers, in particular, as they are clubs from areas of the country that would not traditionally be associated with success in football and hurling. The spread of clubs is impressive, and hopefully it is a forerunner of having a very diverse range of counties and clubs achieve success this year.

While the championship restructuring is important, and indeed may be the headline from this Congress, I firmly believe that the adoption of a new coaching and games funding model is a more significant development for the association. The Talent Academy Group submitted their report a number of years ago and they indicated a need to address coaching and games funding. When John Tobin and I sat down last year to discuss his involvement as Chair of Games Development that was one of the first items he mentioned. Along with Shane Flanagan he set out to develop a model which was transparent and coherent and took into account various factors which would be of assistance to counties. Drawing on expertise from across the Association they assembled a creative and experienced group, including Aoife Lane, Caoimhe Ní Néill and Páraic McGourty, to develop the model. Consultation with counties, which has resulted in very good debate and some refinements to the model, has taken place over the last few weeks and the model has been endorsed by Ard Chomhairle. Not only does it bring transparency to funding but because it is set in a four-year time frame it allows counties to plan their growth and development strategically.

When allied to the work that Colm Cummins and the Rural and Urban Committee completed a few years, and allied with the data available through Foireann, it means that counties will be able to allocate their coaching and games resources in an extremely effective manner. The rise of data analysis can be seen in this development, which means that the Association will be allocating resources to counties to grow and expand on the basis of data. While data will be at the heart of the model, data is not the only consideration, as there will be a place for local expertise, creativity and experience when allocating resources.

The past year for the most part was one of continuous highlights in terms of games and the return of sport. One of the most depressing days was the day that Kilcormac/Killoughey camogie player Aisling Murphy was murdered. The outpouring of grief, sorrow, and anger which her murder generated was stagger-

ing. Tributes were rightfully paid to a wonderful young woman, to her talents as a teacher, as a musician and as a camogie player. How her family handled the tragedy is a great credit to them. How the Kilcormac/Killoughey club responded was exceptional.

As time passes we should not let the memory of Aisling slip from our minds. And we should not allow what happened to her to occur again. As a society we need to learn lessons from the tragedy and one of those is that we need to improve the circumstances of our daughters, our sisters, and our mothers. We need to show respect for all girls and women, and we need to call out people who do not. In the wake of the tragedy, I received a note from a mother whose son is on an U17 county hurling panel. At the end of training the coach gathered the squad together, mentioned the death of Aisling and asked them to have respect for women and girls. As the mother rightly pointed out, the 37 lads heard the message, but it was passed on to 37 other people who would have been picking the lads up after training. And it was a simple, uncomplicated message, have respect for girls and women. As we approach International Women's Day on March 8th, I am asking coaches, in every GAA club, to "Take one minute to mention to your team about respecting your female friends. Take a minute to call your buddy out if you don't think what they are doing is right".

It is a very simple idea. It is a simple gesture in memory of a wonderful young woman which hopefully will have an impact in creating a more respectful society. As Cathy Hannigan, the mother who wrote to me, suggested, it must start somewhere.

We are facing a deficit of referees and it is an issue that has been building for a couple of years. While the circumstances of referees have improved significantly, they do not get the gratitude that they deserve. It is self-evident that without referees we do not have games. But I suggest that we do not accord them the respect that we should. Much of the lack of respect that is displayed comes from ourselves. How many times have we seen back-room teams ignore the appeals of a fourth official to stay in the seating area? How many times have we seen managers burn the ears of linesmen for a decision, or non-decision, on the field? How many times have we addressed a ref, politely? How many times have we heard an expletive included in a query to a ref? These are all very small items in and of themselves, but they are elements of respect that are important and that set a tone for our games.

We have a very successful respect initiative that you are very familiar with, and it has been rightly lauded for its ambition. But respect is very much in the realm of the individual. We ourselves need to show leadership in respecting our refer-

ees, particularly at club and juvenile level. And if we have members of clubs who do not show the appropriate respect then we need to call it out. If we don't, our problem will be exacerbated, and we will face an ever-diminishing pool of referees, young referees, in particular. If we display respect and tolerance for referees, that will permeate the organisation, and contribute to a better atmosphere around our games for players and officials alike.

Respect begins at an individual level, but it is also applicable at an organisational level. As an institution we need to ensure that decisions made by referees are supported by CCCC's, and that their actions are well supported if appealed. In that regard the CCCC, the Central Hearings Committee, and the Tyrone County Committee, are to be commended for the way that the cases of the players who were dismissed in a recent league game were handled. The decision of the referee, the work of the CCCC, and that of the Hearings Committee, were ultimately accepted by Tyrone. There were a number of other steps that they might have pursued, but they had respect for the disciplinary process in terms of acceptance and adherence. Many more of us could follow that example, and rather than trying to absolve a player, perhaps on a minor technicality, accept the mantra, as elucidated in GAA terms by the great John Mullane, "if you do the crime, you do the time". Another small aspect of respect.

In my remarks last year, I referenced Bob Costas and his comments about a corrosive assault on civility. I mentioned that in relation to social media, but it is equally relevant in terms of respect for referees, officials, and the disciplinary process, lack of respect for which can be seen as a small, but corrosive assault on civility.

Let me reiterate a point that I made last year, and again after the All-Ireland football final; stop abusing our players, referees, and officials on social media. Stop the cowardly attacks on people who are volunteering their time and talent for the betterment of society. Stop the unwarranted assaults on people's characters. Stop the nefarious condemnations of amateur sports people. The abuse that Mayo players were subject to last summer was unacceptable, not only as sportspeople, but as human beings.

The question becomes what can we as an Association do about it? Given that we are at heart a sport organisation, I believe that the protection of amateur athletes and officials, in particular GAA, LGFA and Camogie players, through legislation should be investigated. The legislation would penalise severe, personal, and excessive criticism of amateur athletes and volunteers. A Protection of Volunteers in Amateur Sport Act might be considered by the Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media. This could entail the design and implementation of a



Former GAA president Dr Mick Loftus (front) with, from L to R, former GAA president Nickey Brennan, former Ard Stiúrthoir of the GAA Liam Mulvihill, former GAA president Christy Cooney, and Connacht GAA secretary John Prenty at the GAA Congress.

Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach / SPORTSFILE.

means to initially identify, and then penalise, people who abuse amateur athletes and volunteer sport officials. One might ask ‘why only amateurs?’ Amateur athletes and officials return to their communities after their games, they are back at work shortly after their games, and, unlike professional athletes, are not the beneficiaries of practiced support when they are the focus of such criticism. The very nature of amateur sport suggests that they are the most vulnerable.

I acknowledge the difficulty in dealing with multinational conglomerates in the identification process, and that there may be a fundamental peril in the danger of restricting speech in a democratic society. But is Irish society at a point where a formal, legislated, deterrent of social media abuse is warranted? Is the amateur player and official, and by extension the amateur ethos of the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association, worth protecting, not completely at the expense of freedom of speech, but in a form that will prevent the continuation of abuse? Could abuse in online forums be treated in the same way that misinformation about political events was? Without knowing the technicalities of the process, it would appear that it is at least worth consideration at a formal level.

In the next few weeks, we will publish our strategic plan for the next five years. It has been an exhaustive process of consultation and debate and I am extremely indebted to the group of people who worked on it over the last 11 months or so. Over 16k people participated and we are grateful to each and every one for their contribution. The plan is based on the vision of the GAA as a “sustainable

community-based and volunteer led association where as many as possible, participate in Gaelic Games and Culture for as long as possible”. Within the plan there are a number of priorities one of which is six codes, one association. That is our ambition, and the work towards it is well underway. This work is building on the cooperation that takes place on a day-to-day basis through MOU’s and projects, such as the recently published Coaching and Coach Education in Gaelic Games Report. The assistance provided to the Camogie Association in the area of commercial activity is an example. Conversations have also begun with those involved in amalgamating Irish sport organisations with similar structures to the Camogie Association, the LGFA, and the GAA in particular. Understanding how best to amalgamate the middle tiers of each association will be critical to the process. This process will not be easy; indeed it will be quite difficult in many ways, but we are ambitious to see it happen.

Access to playing facilities in a larger organisation will be a challenge, arguably access to facilities is currently a challenge. Given that we are in this magnificent dome, would it be appropriate that we investigate the possibility of investing in and locating a number of these structures strategically around the country? Think of the benefits to each association. While the cost of new stadiums is considerable, structures such as this are more affordable, and quite affordable if we work in cooperation with public bodies, such as the Department of Sport. Coiste Bainistíochta will consider this possibility in the near future.

Ladies and Gentlemen next week will be a sad occasion on one level, but a joyous occasion on another level, in the GAA, because Kathy Slattery is retiring. Sad for the many thousands of people she has dealt with over the years, sad for those of us who have worked with her, but joyous for Kathy as she moves on to the next phase of her life. To say that she has an encyclopedic knowledge of clubs, club structures, club personalities, and particularly their finances is an understatement. A line from Goldsmith’s *Deserted Village* comes to mind,

*“And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all she (edited) knew”.*

She was very much the go to person for club and county funding, and was a great believer and advocate for the National Club Draw which has benefitted so many clubs over the years.

Kathy has a wonderful capacity for getting straight to the point, but it was clear that she was, and is, a very passionate GAA person who always had the good of clubs and the broader GAA at heart.

A chairde, please stand and acknowledge Kathy Slattery for 40 years of dedicated service to the GAA.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very conscious that I am standing between you and lunch, so I’ll finish my remarks by thanking the AS, and the wonderful staff of CLG, for their continued support. I thank the many hundreds of people who made me welcome wherever I represented the Association, and finally I thank you for all that you do for CLG in so many parts of the world. I’ll see you at a match somewhere.



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- 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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