

BOOK NO 198

AUGUST, 2022

Requiem Mass for



Lily Spence

22nd August 1924 - 1st August 2022



St John's Church, Belfast
3rd August 2022

SPENCE Lily died peacefully, August 1, 2022 at Nazareth Care Village, formerly of Falls Road, Belfast. Beloved daughter of the late Joseph and Ellen Spence and sister of the late Harry, Margaret and Vincent. Lily's remains will leave 286 Falls Road, Belfast on Wednesday 3rd August at 11.30am to arrive at St John's Church, Falls Road for 12noon Requiem Mass followed by burial in Milltown Cemetery. Deeply regretted by her nieces and nephews Joe, Maire, Roisin, Aidan, Ailish, Fr. Michael, Anthony, Anne, Canice, Clare and family circle. May she rest in peace. Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for her. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam uasal. Enquiries to O'Kane's Funeral Directors (Tel: 028 9024 3129).

SPENCE Lily, August 1st. Comhairle Camógaíochta Iarthuaiscoileanna. Uladh deeply regret the death of Lily Spence, our founding member and secretary 1943-93. Lily fulfilled many roles in the Camogie Association and has left an indelible mark on them all. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam uasal.

Obituary

Lily Spence – a driving force in the sport she loved

FORMER camogie president Lily Spence has passed away. Lily was introduced to camogie while a student in St Dominic's on Belfast's Falls Road and soon came to the attention of camogie followers as a member of the St Teresa's club that won four Antrim titles in-a-row in the early 1940s. She later added another medal in 1952 and was a substitute on the Antrim county team that completed a third successive All-Ireland senior championship in 1947. As a delegate for St Teresa's to the Antrim County Board, the young civil servant was never afraid to air her views and questioned any matter that she was not happy with. The board officials recognised her interest and quickly brought her to the other side of the top table,

initially as treasurer. Within a short time she was involved at provincial level and then in 1956 was elected president of the Association, one of the youngest ever in the role, at the same time as fellow Belfast and Antrim official Séamus McFerran held the position of GAA president. When her term as president ended, Lily was voted in as association treasurer, a role she filled with great efficiency for 20 years.

'Above all, Lily was a friendly affable person, good company no matter what age that company happened to be'

She was also a founder member of the Ulster Colleges' Council (later Ulster Post Primary schools) in 1943, the first provincial schools' council in the country, and was secretary for the first 50 years of its existence. When the All-Ireland Colleges' Council was formed in 1969, she was the first cathaoirleach and was a regular fixture along with her great friend and also former president Rosina McManus, collecting money at gates, selling programmes and, more often than not, one of them refereed the fixture. Lily was referee for four All-Ireland senior finals (1953, 1955, 1971 and 1972) and probably would have had the whistle for more had not Antrim been competing so often in finals over the same period. I first encountered Lily as a

referee while I was umpire in an Ashbourne Cup game. I soon found out that no-one questioned her decisions. Later as a member of Ardchomhairle I found her a formidable force in the committee room, strong in getting her point across, but also very much the champion of the underdog. Later while still involved with schools' camogie I found out that there was no job that needed done that she wouldn't undertake despite her advancing years and status within the association. Lily was also an avid golfer, although we never knew how she found time for golf, and had many other interests outside the game of camogie, none moreso than her extended family. Above all, Lily was a friendly affable person, good company no matter



FOND MEMORY Four Antrim past presidents of the Camogie Association with fear an tÍ Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh at a Centenary Dinner in Loughglin in 2004; (from left) Nancy Murray, Rosina McManus, Lily Spence and Brídín Uí Mhaolagáin

what age that company happened to be. She connected to people, especially those in camogie. Camogie was the passion of her long life and the

Camogie Association owes her a great debt. *Leaba i measc na naomh go raibh aici. Crothnóimid uilig í.*

SMcA

ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOGIE SEMI-FINAL

Waterford come up just short

CORK	0-15
WATERFORD	0-11

THOMAS KEANE

Waterford's interest in this year's All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship ended at Croke Park on Saturday when they lost to Cork in the first of this year's semi-finals.

Waterford led for 53 minutes and looked as if they would end a 73-year wait to get back to a senior All-Ireland Final, but in the closing minutes Cork were able to call upon all of their experience to see them over the line.

The Rebels were well tested and after the game many of their players and supporters acknowledged that for much of the game Waterford were the better team.

Cork's Ashling Thompson was set to miss the game after she was sent off against Tipperary, but following a successful appeal to the two match ban, she was sent on as a sub in the second quarter of the game and her presence made a difference to Cork as she steadied the ship at a time when Waterford were well on top.

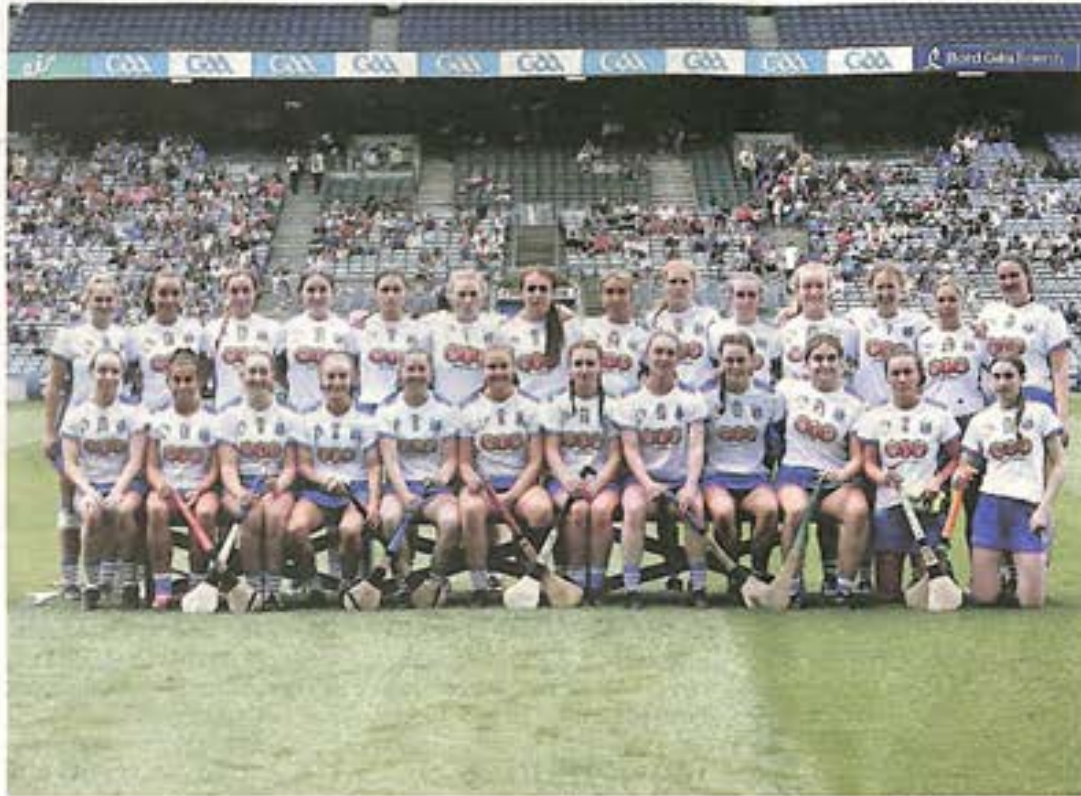
Waterford will be disappointed with the final result but the side have made progress this year. Beating Tipperary and reaching the semi-finals with so many of last years panel missing was a big plus and there is bound to be an unbelievable hunger in this group of players nearly 12 months out from the start of the 2023 championship.

Knowing they have pushed some of the traditionally stronger sides all the way, they will believe that maybe if this present panel stick together, anything can be possible in 2023.

Waterford opened the scoring with 73 seconds played when Beth Carton fired over from the 21-metre line.

Carton put Waterford's second point over from a free 30 metres from the end line with 12 minutes played.

Five minutes later Mairead O'Brien played the ball out of her own defence in the direction of Abby Flynn who ran at the Cork full back line and, with a score on, she spotted Róisín Kirwan in a better position inside the 20 metre line and the Saint Anne's club player tried to lob Amy Lee in the Cork goal but she saw



Waterford

her effort rise a little too high over the Cork crossbar.

Beth Carton added another point when she got the better of two Cork players and from 55 metres out she fired over her third and Waterford's fourth point of the game with 20 minutes played.

Cork were in trouble and with 21 minutes played they sent on Ashling Thompson in place of Katie O'Mahony, but Waterford extended their advantage further when Beth Carton put over a 24-minute free following a foul on Niamh Rockett.

Cork eventually broke their duck on 25 minutes when Katrina Mackey fired over from the Cusack Stand side of the field and the Rebellettes followed up with a score from Sorcha McCartan.

Chloe Sigerson put over what looked to be a dubious free on the half hour mark. Cork played the ball over the sideline on the Hogan Stand side of the field and while the linesman signalled a line ball for Waterford, referee Ray Kelly deemed that Abby Flynn had fouled the player before the ball went over the sideline.

From the restart Mairead O'Brien and Rachel Walsh linked up to find Abby Flynn and she made no mistake in firing over the Cork, crossbar restoring a three-point lead for Waterford and in the second of two added minutes Niamh Rockett fired over to give Waterford an 0-7 to 0-3 advantage at half-time.



Waterford's Mairead O'Brien made runs like this all afternoon.

Having taken just 73 seconds to open their scoring in the first half, Derek Lyons side needed six seconds longer in the second half with Niamh Rockett shooting over into the canal end of the ground.

Katrina Mackey hit Cork's first score of the second half on 33 minutes and the Rebels followed up with a score from Cliona Healy to cut Waterford's lead to three.

Abby Flynn got her second of the game on 35 minutes after some good work by Orla Hickey to open up a four

point lead once more, but Cork reduced it on 39 minutes when Amy O'Connor put over a free and the lead was down to two when Fiona Keating fired over after 42 minutes.

Lorraine Bray, who had a fantastic year for Waterford, got on the score sheet on 46 minutes but this score was wiped out when Amy O'Connor put over a free from the 20 metre line after Keeley Corbett Barry took a yellow for the team as Hannah Looney bore down on the Waterford goal.



Waterford's Beth Carton takes on Cork's Saoirse McCarthy.



Waterford's Clara Griffin gets his shot away despite the pressure from Cork's Hannah Looney.



Waterford's Beth Carton solos past Cork's Saoirse McCarthy.

Brianna O'Regan is one of the finest goalkeepers in the country and she showed why on 49 minutes when she made two excellent saves from Emma Murphy, not once but twice deflecting the second effort out for a '45 and from the resulting puck

Amy O'Connor fired over to leave Waterford ahead by the minimum (0-10 to 0-9).

Amy O'Connor levelled matters with just under seven minutes to play and they took the lead with just over four

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ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOGIE SEMI-FINAL

Continued from Page 56

minutes left when Emma Murphy fired high over the head of Brianna O'Regan. Cork went two in front with two minutes to play when Sorcha McCartan pointed, Cork's fifth point in a row.

Cork made sure of their passage to this year's All-Ireland when Sorcha McCartan pointed from a long range free and they rounded off a strong last quarter performance with a late Amy O'Connor point from a free and an even later score from Fiona Keating.

So Cork march on to this year's All-Ireland Final, but Waterford are not very far behind the traditionally stronger sides right now.

Some great work has been put in with different underage and adult sides at both club and inter county level and that great work is beginning to reap its rewards.

In a few weeks time we will get to see the nominations for this year's All-Star team and it would be no surprise to see many Waterford players included. If Waterford do not get a record number of nominations, then many will be surprised.

Players that compete in the latter stages of the championship usually are those that make up the team.

Whoever picks the All-star team will have to be impressed with what they have seen from Waterford this year. Recent All-Star winners Beth Carton, Niamh Rockett and Lorraine Bray were again to the fore.

But they were not the only standout players. How long more does Brianna O'Regan have to wait to win an All-Star? She has proven time



Waterford's Abby Flynn scored a fine point for her side in the first half.

and time again to be an outstanding goalkeeper. Waterford had other heroes this year such as Clodagh Carroll in the number six shirt and players like Keeley Corbett Barry, Iona Heffernan, Orla Hickey, Clara Griffin, Abby Flynn and Róisín Kirwan, a new player to the Waterford set up this year. These are just some of the Waterford players to stand out. All might not get All-Star nominations this year but they cannot be far away Time will tell.

2022 is all about so much achieved but going forward the team know they have

what it takes to make the next step or two.

WATERFORD: Brianna O'Regan, Keely Corbett-Barry, Iona Heffernan, Mairead Power, Orla Hickey, Clodagh Carroll, Aoife Landers, Lorraine Bray, Clara Griffin, Abby Flynn, Beth Carton, Mairead O'Brien, Rachael Walsh, Róisín Kirwan, Niamh Rockett.

SCBS: Tara Power for Mairead O'Brien (46), Sarah Lacey for Róisín Kirwan (55).

SCORERS: Beth Carton (0-4, 0-2 f), Abby Flynn, Niamh Rockett (0-2) each, Róisín Kirwan, Lorraine Bray (0-1) each.

CORK: Amy Lee, Meabh Murphy, Libby Coppinger, Meabh Cahalane, Laura Hayes, Laura Tracey, Saoirse McCarthy, Katie O'Mahoney,



Waterford captain Lorraine Bray tries her luck from the far sideline during the first half.



Waterford's Clara Griffin in command against Cork's Fiona Keating.

Hannah Looney, Katrina Mackey, Fiona Keating, Cliona Healy, Amy O'Connor, Chloe Sigerson, Sorcha McCartan, Sigerson, C Healy, E Murphy,

SCBS: Aisling Thompson for Katie O'Mahoney

(22), Emma Murphy for Chloe Sigerson (47), Orlaith Cahalane for Cliona Healy (55), Clara O'Sullivan for Meabh Murphy (64).

SCORERS: Amy O'Connor (0-5, 0-3 f, 0-1 45),

Sorcha McCartan (0-3, 0-1 f), Katrina Mackey, Fiona Keating (0-2) each, Cliona Healy, Chloe Sigerson (0-1) each.

REFEREE: Ray Kelly (Kildare).



Waterford's Róisín Kirwan is dragged back by Cork's Libby Coppinger.



Waterford's Niamh Rockett tries to get past Cork's Libby Coppinger.

PHOTOS: NOEL BROWNE

Class is permanent in the rivalry that defines modern camogie

WOMEN'S team sports are having a moment right now, a state of affairs that is both exciting and frustrating. It's exciting because I love overhearing people talking about the Lionesses at the Euros (even if it's just to give out about England winning something); because I was able to watch a surprising amount of women's softball on the screens in sports bars on my recent travels to the US; because it's heartening to read that half a million people tuned into TG4 to watch Meath win back-to-back All-Irelands.

It's frustrating because one would never have to utter the same phrase about men's team sports 'having a moment right now' — it is never not their moment. But with a tantalising All-Ireland camogie final on the slate this weekend, women's sports are hanging onto column inches and podcast airtime for another while yet. Here are five talking points ahead of the decider:

1. Familiarity breeds fierce rivalry

This is the rivalry that defines camogie in the modern age. Cork and Kilkenny met in a trilogy of thrilling finals from 2016 to 2018, a period that coincided with RTE significantly stepping up their television coverage of the camogie championship. In 2016, Ann Downey's Kilkenny won their first All-Ireland since 1994 — when the cup was lifted, incidentally, by Ann Downey. 2017 was the iconic final of Gemma O'Connor's monster equaliser and Julia White's how-did-she-manage-to-get-the-shot-off winner. And in 2018, Cork once again edged it by a point in a tense, tactical affair that ended up being a masterclass in freetaking by Orla Cotter, Chloe Sigerson, and Denise Gaule. The personnel — both management and players — have changed significantly since this trilogy of finals, but the rivalry remains fierce, as evidenced by last year's semi-final: this time, it was Linda Collins's turn to break Kilkenny hearts deep into injury time after coming off the bench.

2. Teams in transition — but class is permanent

Both teams have battled to the final despite losing several key players through injury and retirement, managing to sustain a winning culture in a time of transition. In his first year as manager, Matthew Twomey has had to contend without the likes of Orla Cronin, Pamela Mackey, and Linda Collins from last year's panel; although new finds Emma Murphy and Sorcha McCartan, both crucial in Cork's semi-final turnaround against Waterford two



CLOSE ENCOUNTER: Cork's Orla Cotter tries to break away from Kilkenny's Edwina Keane (left) and Claire Phelan during the 2018 All-Ireland camogie final. The rivalry between these counties remains as strong as ever. Picture: Inpho/Bryan Keane

weeks ago, should bolster the Cork attack. Meanwhile, Brian Dowling is without sisters Kellyann and Aoife Doyle — both, coincidentally, out with cruciate injuries — and defensive stalwarts Collette Dorner and Davina Tobin, who both retired after last season. Back in the fold is Julianne Malone, Player of the Match all the way back in the 2016 final, who has been living in Australia for the past few years; she popped over four points from play in Kilkenny's defeat of champions Galway in a pulsating semi-final. Meanwhile, goalie Aoife Norris, corner-back Michelle

Teehan, and newly-minted centre-back Grace Walsh are emerging as defensive leaders. As John Kleely would say: next woman up.

3. The Ashling Thompson factor

Two weeks ago, Cork got a fright against a determined and focused Waterford side, who made the most of their first semi-final since 1959. Waterford's game management was excellent and after 20 minutes, Cork hadn't registered a single score. Enter Thompson, whose availability on the day had only been determined that very morning, when her two-match ban incurred in Cork's round-robin loss to Tipperary was overturned. She dropped to sweeper, freeing up centre-back Laura Treacy to pick up Beth Carton, who had been making hay up until that point. Thompson's experience, aggression and distribution were crucial to Cork's ability to steady the ship, although they still only took the lead for the first time four

minutes from the end, piling on point after point to win by five. Brinkmanship, or a gutsy recovery to dig out a win? We know which narrative Davy Fitz will be going with.

4. Kilkenny's savage work-rate

Kilkenny have always had the players, but there have probably been years when they lacked that ruthlessness and refusal to lose that we associate with the cats. There's an extra sting to them this year, however, that could nearly be described as Co-dyesque. Brian Dowling is tilting for his second All-Ireland in three years of being in charge, and he — along with his backroom team of Philly Larkin, Pat O'Neill, and Tommy Shefflin — is steeped in that ferocious Kilkenny hurling culture. It's that 'forwards are the first line of defence', hooks-and-blocks approach, and the Kilkenny women have never looked more ravenous for the ball. They are as yet unbeaten this year; this fact, and their defeat of the champions in the semi-final, should have them brimming with confidence.

5. Looking ahead: who will break the Cork-Kilkenny-Galway trifecta? Camogie has never been

played at a higher standard or tempo, and yet the sport has become predictable in some respects.

Every iteration of the final since 2013 has involved some combination of these three counties. Periods of domination don't last forever, but the longer they go on, the harder it is for an outsider team to break through. Winning begets a winning culture, but emerging teams have to carve out a new route.

In recent years, Tipperary and Waterford have pushed the top three hard, and on occasion come close to overturning them.

Last year, Tipp were within two points of eventual champions Galway before conceding a late goal; Waterford went three points ahead in the 46th minute in this year's semi-final, but failed to score again.

It's often those closing stages when experience shows. Young emerging teams focus on explosive starts, but experienced teams think about the last five minutes: you might be ahead, you might be behind, you're tired — what are you going to do?

It's this extraordinary resilience that has brought these two great rivals to the final, and I for one can't wait to watch how it all unfolds.

Phelan: It's tough on injured comrades

Paul Keane

Back in March, when All-Ireland camogie finalists Kilkenny and Cork last met, finishing in stalemate in the National League, both Doyle sisters lined out for Kilkenny.

Defender Kellyann came off just 13 minutes into that 1-8 to 1-8 draw with a cruciate knee ligament injury, the third of her career, and all suffered in games against Cork while, two months later, sister Aoife suffered the same injury in Kilkenny's Championship clash with Limerick.

The pair have been in experienced defender Claire Phelan's thoughts all week as the county gears up for Sunday's All-Ireland final rematch with Cork.

"Poor Kellyann, blow after blow," said Phelan. "She did hers earlier in the year against Cork. And then Aoife did the same against Limerick. It's hugely tough on both of them but they're brilliant, they're at every training session, they're on the bus, they're tipping around still and it does make a difference to have them there, chatting away to girls."

"But you'd just be devastated for them, the amount they put into it. Laura Norris as well, she's had a foot injury, but she's back now, running every night. You just see how much it means to all of them."

Phelan gets that it sounds a little cheesy but it really does make her extremely grateful for the position she finds herself in now, counting down the days until the final.

"We have the opportunity that they don't, we have the opportunity to get out on the pitch and play so we'll do everything we can because they'd love to have that opportunity as well," she said.

Phelan, on the panel for over a decade, Grace Walsh, Denise Gaule, and Miriam Walsh are among a core group of experienced players guiding Kilkenny through the period of transition.

It's a case of so far, so good though as much as things change they also stay pretty much the same; Kilkenny v Cork in a national decider. The pair have contested four finals since 2014 and last year's semi-final.

"We've been on both sides of the results so we know how easy they can slip away and how quick these games go by. You really have to be tuned in and concentrating and have yourself ready and in the best possible shape you can be."



Eimear Ryan



Cork's Amy O'Connor battles Grace Walsh of Kilkenny. Picture: INPHO

Resurgent Rebels cannot afford any slip-ups against the Cats

AFTER winning four All-Ireland's in five years between 2014 and 2018, the years since have felt extremely barren for Cork camogie, with Sunday's All-Ireland final against Kilkenny being a wonderful opportunity to push Cork out to 29 titles in the roll of honour table.

If the Cork management and players are honest they will probably admit that this year's draw was kind to them, as it put them on the opposite side to big hitters Kilkenny and Galway, the winners of the last two All-Ireland titles, all the way through to the final.

However, it might not have felt like that when they were three points down to an impressive Waterford outfit in the 46th minute of the All-Ireland semi-final two weeks ago. They may have gone into that game as hot favourites, but all bets were officially off now. They were on the brink — their season was on the line.

Cork manager Matthew Two-mey will no doubt have been delighted with his side's performance in the last quarter of that game, as they rallied to rattle off the last eight points of the game to emerge as winners by 0-15 to 0-10, as Cork's extra experience and fitness levels came to the fore late on.

And while the late revival must be commended, both players and management alike will be under no illusions as to how they played that day. If they perform in Sunday's All-Ireland final against Kilkenny in similar fashion to how they performed for the first three quarters of the Waterford game then they are probably going to be in big trouble, as this Kilkenny side would appear to be a level up from the Déise given their performances this season.

It is no great surprise, therefore, that the bookies make Kilkenny as slight favourites for Sunday.

Cork will have taken two huge positives from the manner in which they somehow discovered a route to victory in that semi-final. Waterford sharpshooter Beth Carton had been causing Cork loads of problems early on despite the fact that Cork had deployed Laura Treacy as a defensive sweeper and had earmarked Katie O'Mahony to 'man-mark' Waterford's main attacking threat.

Once Treacy got switched onto Carton and Aisling Thompson came on to fulfil the free defensive role that attacking avenue got shut down for Waterford. This in-game switch will certainly have given them confi-



CAMOGIE

Derek Daly

dence in their ability to put out any fires in defence on Sunday. Thompson only got cleared to play in the semi-final a matter of hours before throw-in, which clearly hampered Cork's preparations. That will not be an issue in the final on Sunday.

The other area where Cork showed significant improvement is that they finally started getting quality ball into their shooters, after an extremely sloppy start. Early on in the game they struck five poor wides from speculative positions, and took 25 minutes to register their first score from Katrina Mackey.

It appeared as if Cork, as a whole, were playing too deep in the first half against Waterford, with their half-forward line dropping too far back. Against Kilkenny they cannot afford such a slow start and must get better ball into Mackey, Sorcha McCartan and Amy O'Connor inside, and much closer to the posts, from the onset.

In their semi-final against reigning champions Galway, Kilkenny had their goalkeeper Aoife Norris to thank, as she saved a Sarah Healy penalty as well as making a couple of other excellent stops. Cork will certainly take encouragement from the fact that Galway created so many goal scoring opportunities and will be hoping to do likewise — they just have to be more clinical in taking these chances if and when they arise.

Last September, Cork left Croke Park disappointed after a three-point defeat to Galway in the final when a late goal from Siobhan McGrath and two points from Orlaith McGrath painfully pushed victory out of Cork's grasp.

That loss will certainly act as motivation on Sunday, as Cork will certainly not want to experience two All-Ireland final defeats on the trot.

Conversely, last year's semi-final defeat to Cork by a single point will be on Kilkenny's minds this week, as it denied them the chance to retain the title they had won in 2020.

Either way, pain is going to be experienced by one team or the other. Cork will be hoping that it is not them on this occasion, as they look to secure their first title since 2018.



Cork's goalkeeper Amy Lee and Lorraine Bray of Waterford with referee Ray Kelly before the All-Ireland semi-final. Picture: James Crombie

Amy proud to lead Cork for Na Piarsaigh and for her family

WHEN Amy Lee leads Cork out onto the pitch in Croke Park on Sunday there will be no one prouder than her mother Angie. Every parent is extremely proud when their child plays in an All-Ireland final, but for a woman who single-handedly raised her two daughters, she is sure to have a beam from ear to ear. Amy's early years were spent living in south London before moving back to her mother's birthplace while still a child. She picks up the story.

"My mam decided it was best for us to come home. We were living in a block of flats in Camberwell London up until I was about 10, and weirdly enough the flats caught fire about a year afterwards. It was one of the worst tower block fires until Grenville. Six people died in the blaze including three children.

"My mam has stories about the area in that if the lifts were broken you wouldn't go down the stairs because you wouldn't know who would be on them." There's just Amy, her sister, and her mam in the tightknit household. Her mother came home as a single mother after Amy's parents separated.

"To be fair my dad's family were always very good to us in London. My dad was probably in and out. I'm in contact with him and he follows my career. I'll get the odd text."

Angie came back to Farranree and set down roots in Fairfield Meadows, just above Na Piarsaigh GAA club and as soon as she unpacked her bags Amy was on the pitch.

"I remember having a hurley, I don't know if my uncle's friend made it; it was a block. But I flaked away and loved it."

On Sunday Amy will lead Cork out in the All-Ireland senior final, the only Na Piarsaigh player ever to do so. Not just for Amy, but for



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

her mother it must be an incredibly proud moment. "Oh, she's my biggest fan. She got tee-shirts printed for the last match in Páirc Uí Rinn with me on the front and a picture of the team on the back," she laughs. "She loves it. She couldn't be any prouder of me."

At 26 years of age, Amy recalls not making the minor panel when she was 17 and was gutted. She made it the following year, losing the All-Ireland final replay to Kilkenny.

"I was called up then to the intermediate side and before I knew it, I was down in the Mardyke playing my first senior game in 2015. I learned so much being understudy to Aoife Murray. 'I'll never get training like that again. It makes the world of difference and I hope Molly Lynch is now learning a few bits from me."

Roll forward to 2021; Seandún win the senior county championship and Amy is handed the Cork captaincy for 2022. She was inundated with phone calls of congratulations.

Now heading in the final what are the feelings?

"On game day the captaincy won't even come into my mind. I'll concentrate on my game. It will mean everything to walk up the steps. I think I'll be crying at that stage."

"Not just for me but for my mam and my club. They've been fantastic. I'm afraid though of the tee-shirt my mam might rock up in."



Cork captain Amy Lee raises the Munster trophy after defeating Clare at Páirc Uí Rinn. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

St Colum's will be cheering for Libby

CAMOGIE

John Bohane

EXCITEMENT is mounting in the St Colum's GAA Club ahead of this year's All-Ireland senior camogie final between Cork and Kilkenny on Sunday.

St Colum's clubman Mike Murnane said there are plenty of flags and banners up around the locality in support of their club colleague and Cork full-back Libby Coppinger.

"There is a great buzz in the club and community ahead of the big game. There are lots of flags and banners up around the locality. A bus has been organised to take people to Croke Park. I reckon we will have around 100 fans from the club at the game."

"Hopefully, we will be celebrating Libby winning an All-Ireland senior championship title on Sunday. We are delighted for her. Libby comes from a great family, and we are so proud of her," he said.

The dual star has enjoyed another brilliant season with the Cork senior camogie team.

"She has had another unbelievable season and it is better she is getting. I thought she was outstanding against Waterford in the semi-final."

"She has a great temperament. I have been involved with Libby with various teams over a good few years and I have never seen her get cross."

"She is a great player and so unassuming. She has a perfect attitude, and she has a great work-rate."

"The people who trained Libby on her way up also deserve great praise."

"They played a big part in helping develop Libby into the star she is now today. She got great coaching," he added.

"She is a fantastic ambassador for the club," said the club coach and official about the impact Libby has throughout the club.

"We brought her to one training session this year and we left her to do the session. You could hear a pin drop."

"She is a great role model. She is brilliant to give advice to young players and attending functions to present medals."

"St Colum's had no ladies football or camogie team when she was coming through so she played with the boys right up until U14 level and that is standing to her now in terms of physicality."

The St Colum's camogie club was established in 2009 due to growing demand from players within their hinterland.

The club is thriving at present. Mike paid tribute to the many people doing great work within the club.

"Camogie is going very well. We have a lot of good coaches doing great work in the club. The numbers playing ladies football and camogie are very strong particularly from U16 level down."

Neville parks cruciate woe to maintain final focus

All-Ireland intermediate camogie final

Therese O'Callaghan

You would have to admire Finola Neville's positivity.

She is sidelined with a serious knee injury, which means the Cork intermediate camogie captain is ruled out of Sunday's All-Ireland intermediate final against Galway (2pm, Croke Park). The St Catherine's stalwart picked up the season-ending injury in May. An injury she is only too familiar with. It is her second time.

Yet, she still attends

training and matches and remains focused on the task at hand.

"It was the first group game against Wexford. I got an injury to my knee, it was my cruciate, I will be having the operation mid-August. That is all ahead of me, but these things happen."

"I actually did my cruciate on my other side, my left knee, about nine years ago. But, between the last cruciate and this one, I have been injury free. I've gotten away with a lot."

"So, yeah, it is the other side this time, just to make it a bit more even," she

smiles.

"It is great to be still involved with the team, and the management have been very good to me. That has helped me totally, that I am still going to the training sessions and the matches."

"They are a great group, they have been very supportive. You feel like you are still involved. You get up and you go again."

"You are going to training the following Tuesday and Thursday nights, it has enabled me to keep the routine."

Neville is a vastly experienced player, having already tasted success at

Jones Road. She has a few senior All-Ireland medals to go with intermediate glory four years ago.

"I was on the senior panel when I suffered my first cruciate."

"It happened when we were just after getting knocked out with Cork. I went out in a club game a few days later so that was the end of the club year and into the following year."

"Back then, if you were on the senior panel and you didn't come on, you could play intermediate. Senior and intermediate trained together. Players were going up and down, depend-

ing on how you were going. You started with the intermediates and maybe then you were brought on to the senior panel."

"I have been in Croke Park a good few times. We've had some very good days and some bad days with the intermediates."

"The cream of the crop was 2018 when we finally got over the line, we beat Down."

"It is a great achievement to be in the final again, we have been together since the start of the year. We are absolutely buzzing and I still feel like I am part of it all."

Former Cork star Jenny Curry making her mark with Armagh

After her goal in the 2014 All-Ireland final sparked a remarkable Cork comeback, Jenny Curry retired with four senior titles and eight All-Stars. Now she's bidding for glory again, this time with Armagh, writes **Daragh Ó Conchúir**

All-Ireland Junior Championship final

THE Yummy Mummies WhatsApp group really lit up after the semi-final with messages of congratulations from friends who had shared the good, the bad, and the ugly. Briege Corkery, Orla Cotter, Síle Burns, Eimear O'Sullivan, Joanne O'Callaghan and Rena Buckley are just some of the legendary figures in the cabal that had all exited centre stage over the years, moving on with phase two of life.

Jenny Curry had done likewise but she is the odd one out now. After her early second-half goal in the 2014 All-Ireland senior final sparked a remarkable Cork comeback, she retired from the big stage with four triumphs at the highest

level and eight All-Stars. This was despite taking a couple of years out to travel to Australia and missing out as the Rebels completed two-in-a-row in 2008-09. She could easily have been doing the business in 2015, 2017, and 2018 too but she hadn't really intended to play in 2014 as it was, having moved to Monaghan the previous year to take up a teaching post and begin married life in Middletown with her new husband Paul, who she met on that Aussie sojourn.

Yet here she is, two months short of her 39th birthday, preparing to run out onto Croke Park once more on Sunday, this time for her adopted Orchard County in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior final against Antrim (12pm, live on RTE2).

What's more, it is her second-half contribution of 1-3 that broke the Cavan in that semi-final. She's still got it, no doubt. Balance, skill, speed of movement and thought. Also, the predator's killer instinct.

Whatever happens on Sunday, there will be plenty of cake in the Curry household, as Jenny's son Tiernan will be celebrating his first birthday. He won't know much about what's going on but Lauren, who will be three in December, is very clued in.

"For the semi-final, she was at home and watched it on TV," Curry regales. "Paul was saying when I got the goal, she actually stood up and was like, 'Yay Mummy!' And then, the full-back fouled me at one stage and she was giving out, 'Don't you hurt my mummy!' So she's very aware."

"Sometimes when I go to training, she doesn't want me to go but when I come home, the next day (as Paul will have put her to bed before her mother is back), she's like, 'Did you enjoy your training?'



STILL GOT IT: Jennifer Curry celebrates after scoring a goal for Armagh in the semi-final. Curry knows the challenge Antrim will provide her adopted county Armagh side in Sunday's final. Picture: Evan Treacy/Inpho

So it's good for her to experience it as well."

Having that opportunity to be a role model to her daughter is something Curry values highly.

"Growing up, seeing people in my club, I was aspiring to reach their level. So Lauren being my daughter, that would be even more powerful. I suppose a big motivation for me would be to get that photograph with my two smallies and my husband, hopefully — hopefully — lifting that cup, for her to be able to look back on it and recall the day."

She knows the challenge Antrim will provide. Only two points separated them in the group stages, and after that game, Antrim's Brónach Magill introduced herself as the

primary school student that had written a letter to her the guts of a decade earlier, because she was her idol. That was and is her status.

From that 2014 final, only Laura Treacy, Ashling Thompson, and Katrina Mackey of Cork's starting 15 will line out in the senior final. Joanne Casey, who came on for O'Leary in injury time, is leading scorer for the Leesiders' intermediate contingent also chasing ultimate honours.

Curry had moved north a year by then and was a Middletown player when that last All-Ireland was grasped, famously topping the squad's bleep test charts despite doing a lot of work on her own as well as making regular 500-

mile, eight-hour round trips to Cork to train.

"I was saying that myself this year, 'If you can travel up and down and do that, surely you can travel 15 minutes to training a couple of times of week and play a few games. Anything is possible.'"

It wouldn't be possible without the support of Paul, family and friends. Indeed it was her husband "who planted the seed" of the idea to return.

"You're playing with your emotions and the guilt overcomes you a little bit as well but I always had in the back of my head, there was something told me I should do it so I'm delighted now to be this far on and where I wanted to be."

Even while pregnant, she kept in shape and that has

been a big help. The biggest challenge was getting the speed back and recovery takes longer but she has gotten to the point where she feels like she can go at full pelt for an hour now.

IT will be special for her dad, Joe to make the trip up again, having shared so many wonderful days with his late wife Kathleen following their daughter around the country. Kathleen passed away early in 2014 and Jenny's sister, Paula died just a couple of weeks before Jenny burst through the Kilkenny defence to score the vital goal in that year's All-Ireland final.

Joe will have Jenny's sisters Carol and Debra for company but the brothers, Michael, Damien, Joseph and Ryan will have to watch at home, as they are preparing for the All-Ireland coastal rowing championships the following week.

She will have other supporters too. "The WhatsApp group has been buzzing and I'm delighted to see that they're excited as well."

"And d'you know, it's even more exciting with the Cork girls in the senior and intermediate as well. (Senior manager) Mattie Twomey would have been involved with us in 2014 as well. I'm delighted for them."

"I can't wait to drive into the stadium, like we used to, under the stands. Even the warm-up and things like that. And to step out on the pitch again. I'm excited. I know I'll be nervous but that's a normal experience for me. I'm gonna relish it."

"I know days like these don't come around too often and I'm in a very lucky position to be able to do this again at my age. So I'm just gonna take every bit of it in and enjoy it with my new teammates."

Strength in depth key for Cork, says captain Lee



All-Ireland Camogie senior final Cork v Kilkenny

Sunday: Croke Park, 4.15pm
Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare)
TV: RTE

Therese O'Callaghan



"There is plenty of talk these days about the role of the bench and how decisive it can be in determining games. Cork senior camogie captain Amy Lee believes if the Rebels need an impact sub in Sunday's All-Ireland decider

against Kilkenny, they possess the necessary firepower. The proof, she says, came in their hard-earned victory over Waterford.

"I do think we have the bench to make a difference, or if we were ahead to help us get the win. We used a lot of players this year. Cliona Healy got injured, now she is back. That meant someone else was getting game time."

"Emma Murphy came on and could have had a goal against Waterford but she put over a great point. Her pace really helped us. She is finally getting her chance to make a difference."

"And Ashling Thompson coming on as well. We had young Orlaith Cahalane too, who was introduced in the semi-final, she is flying in training. There is definitely a

talent pool coming through."

At the beginning of the season, the modest Na Piarasigh custodian was surprised when she was asked to lead her county. Pleasantly surprised, mind you.

The honour came her way after city divisional outfit Seandún triumphed in the county championship final for the first time.

She thought Amy O'Connor — who scored two match-winning goals that day — might have been chosen.

"I thought they would give Amy O'Connor another run at it, she only got a couple of months during Covid, it was over pretty quick for her. If she got it, I would have been just as happy."

"But I was delighted when they told me. The emotions were happiness and nerves. I

didn't know how to feel. I got a few phone calls from people, which was nice."

"It is a massive honour for my club. Any match I go to, there is always a Piarasigh child, a Piarasigh supporter. It is great to see. They follow me around everywhere. They see me as the superstar, I don't know why, because I am always down in the club and they see a lot of me anyway."

"Even at the Cúl camps, we had a lot more boys interested this year, they knew more about camogie than other years. The club has been really promoting our progress putting posters up and they are all posting stuff on social media. And the lads post about it too, also the male juvenile academy."

Lee had to bide her time before getting her hands on the



STRENGTH IN DEPTH: Amy Lee feels her side has the firepower on the bench to make an impact when needed.

number one jersey, the position filled by Aoife Murray — one of the best goalkeepers in the game.

"I was there five years before the breakthrough came. I joined the senior panel in 2015

and played all of the league and the league final that year. Then Aoife came out of retirement. So it was 2020 when I got my chance. Then came Covid, so the last couple of years have been that bit different."



Sister act will be hoping to

Family fortunes: Steffi and Tiffanie Fitzgerald will represent Gowran with pride on Sunday

Michael O'Leary
sport@kilkennypeople.ie

The latest chapter in the long line of successful Kilkenny camogie sisters could be added to the county's sporting story this Sunday.

Gowran will hope to have representation not once but twice in the starting 15 for Sunday's final as Tiffanie and Steffi Fitzgerald set their sights on capturing the O'Duffy Cup on Croke Park.

The duo, who have been regular starters throughout the year for Brian Dowling's charges, could be the first Gowran players to feature in the final since four-time All-Ireland senior medal winner Peggy Muldowney (née Carey) started the 1981 decider.

And, if that comes to pass, it will be first time that a

member of the Young Irelands camogie club will have started an All-Ireland senior final since the club was formed in 1994.

The progression of the Fitzgerald sisters is a tribute to their hard work and continuous improvement to their game as they stand on

Tiffanie and Steffi's grandmother Beatrice Treacy was one of the great loyal servants to Young Irelands

the verge of starting for Kilkenny in Sunday's All-Ireland final.

The pair have won plenty of silverware over the past five years having earned All-Ireland honours with Loreto Kilkenny and county titles with Young Irelands. They have also won silverware with the county, but victory on Sunday would be the pinnacle of their achievements so far.

Steffi won both senior and junior colleges titles with the Loreto in 2017 and 2018, while she was also on the Loreto team that retained the Senior All-Ireland in 2018.

Tiffanie was on the Loreto panel that won junior and senior All-Irelands in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

In 2020 she was a starting member of the Loreto team that regained the senior All-Ireland with fellow



Steffi Fitzgerald has been a key component in what has been a solid Kilkenny defence this season PICTURE: PIARAS Ó

county senior panelist Ciara O'Keeffe the winning captain on that occasion.

Young Irelands were starting to enjoy plenty of success also and the two sisters, along with O'Keeffe, were central to the club's minor Roinn A championship victories in 2018 and 2019.

MADE GREAT STRIDES

The Young Irelands camogie club has made great strides in recent years, as evident by the success attained. The club has also won junior and intermediate county titles in 2016 and 2018 respectively and reached a Leinster intermediate final in 2018.

The three girls have certainly been a major part of the club's success and they will have a prominent role to play in continuing the progression going forward.

While still a minor, in 2018

PeoplesRepublicOfCork.com

Camán feel the noise! Cork in quest for camogie clean sweep

WHEN JP McManus secured another All-Ireland win over Kilkenny, we were made to believe there was nothing more of interest to GAA fans due to happen outside the Cork county bounds until 2023.

All the action was to be an internal affair, with the club championships getting under way in each county.

Admittedly, it has been a welcome distraction from the Cork senior hurlers' unexpected early exit against Galway in the quarter-final, after recovering well from a severe bout of severe mid-season tippy-tappyitis.

After that brilliant win over Waterford, most Rebel fans felt the team had turned a corner and were at least in contention for a semi-final, or maybe more. So, after a gut-wrenching 'Reb-xit' at the hands of the Tribesmen, two stages earlier than 2021, and a widely-expected football trimming from the Dubs, the distraction of club championship matches on long summer nights was welcomed with open arms.

Once again, there are games we can get excited about going to without the helpless feeling that overcame all Cork fans when watching Limerick and Kilkenny do battle in the All Ireland final and trying to decide who you'd prefer to win, before concluding that you wished there was some way both counties could lose.

There has been so much furore about the new split season and the inter-county scene wrapping up early, that you'd be forgiven for putting the Cork jersey, flags and bunting up in the attic 'til next year.

Hold your horses there, boy! And 'boy' is the apt word, because you may have been ignoring the rip-roaring success your Rebel sisters have been having at the small ball while you were packing away the blood and bandage paraphernalia. A quick reminder:

First off, Cork won the All-Ireland minor camogie championship in March, beating Galway by five points. Daycint. Then, last weekend, Cork added the U16 title to their mantlepiece by giving Tipperary a ferocious 14 point hiding in Mallow. Pure daycint.

Meanwhile, the senior and intermediate camogie teams are preparing for their respective All-Ireland finals in Croke Park this Sunday in what could result in an historic, unprecedented camogie 'clean sweep' for the Rebel County. Imagine that!



Cork's Ashling Thompson will aim to help her county to All-Ireland final success against Kilkenny. Picture: INPHO/James Crombie

When each camogie season concludes, somebody in each county has to do a report on how the season went for the board - detailing the highs (if any), the inevitable lows and, most importantly, how things can improve. Just three words would do to summarise Cork's camogie championships if both results go our way on Sunday:

"We won everything."
The intermediates face Galway in their final at 2pm while the senior final boasts as juicy a rivalry as anything, with Kilkenny standing between the Rebelettes and the O'Duffy Cup. The sides drew in the league in February, but that's about two or three Covid variants ago at this stage, and both teams have improved no end so it's likely to be a massively entertaining (and nerve-wracking!) clash that goes right to the wire.

Cork's path to the final has been extremely impressive. They bate Wexford by 11 points, trounced Clare by 12 and clobbered Da Dooobs

by seven (Dublin are second to Cork in the roll of honour so this thrashing once again suppressed any false sense of superiority they might have in The Pale - who, it should be mentioned, haven't had a sniff of a final since 1986, not to mind the cup itself).

In the semi-final, Cork shattered Waterford hearts with a five-point victory to book tickets for The Big Day Out and now face The Cats for the O'Duffy Cup.

The best news is that All Star camogie legend Ashling Thompson is back in business at centre back and doing a roaring trade. Libby Coppinger is bossing it at 3 and Maebh Cahalane's performances are so good that they are adding to the already strong argument that her family's DNA should be studied and given some sort of 'national treasure' status on Leeside.

With a defence as mean as a College Road landlord and a potent attacking unit, The Cats will have to pull every trick in the book to be in with a chance of derailing Cork's ambitions to

reclaim the title for the first time since 2018.

Listening to their captain, Aoife Prendergast, Kilkenny believe they have the biggest motivation tool at their disposal to win the final - Cork knocked them out of last year's championship. That counts for plenty in the weird world of GAA psychology, as does knocking out reigning champions, Galway, but there's bigger bitterness brewing on the red side of the fence that has been driving Cork on all season - they lost last year's final by a single score and had to go through the pain of standing in Croke Park and watching Galway Girls celebrate their win.

The brutal experience of having a loss like that rubbed in your face will provide more than enough incentive for Cork to see this one out and bring, not just the O'Duffy Cup back to Leeside, but be the final result we need for an historic and glorious camogie clean sweep.

Intermediate final: Cork v Galway 2pm
Senior Final: Cork v Kilkenny, 4.15pm.
Croke Park/TG4



lead Kilkenny to glory

Steffi was called into the intermediate county panel where she made a good impression. The following year, in 2019, she was called into the county senior panel.

Now in her fourth year with the senior set-up, in 2020 she was part of the Kilkenny panel that won the All-Ireland, bouncing back after tasting defeat the previous three years (2017, 2018 and 2019).

Steffi featured throughout that championship run which included an appearance as a half-time substitute in the All-Ireland semi-final victory over Cork.

She became a more regular figure last year, particularly in the league final victory over Galway, a thrilling contest which was played in Croke Park.

The teams were level at 1-15 each entering the closing few minutes but Steffi led the way for Kilkenny during those closing few minutes.

She struck over a superb point from 40 metres near the sideline to give Kilkenny the lead and, after Denise Gaule doubled the advantage with a pointed free, Steffi was involved in the final act as she turned provider with Mary O'Connell popping up to land the final point.

It was proof that she had fully arrived as an established county senior member. On that Sunday night in Croke Park she thrived superbly in a pressure situation.

That progression has continued into 2022 where, along with her sister Tiffanie, she is now a regular feature in the Kilkenny starting line-up.

ASHBOURNE CUP

Earlier this year, Steffi played a central role for DCU as they strolled to their very first Ashbourne Cup triumph.

At one stage throughout the academic year the sisters had a most rare occurrence of being on the same pitch - but on different sides!

The two played against



Tiffanie Fitzgerald in action for Kilkenny in the 2021 All-Ireland intermediate camogie final against Antrim. Her performances saw her drafted into the senior set-up PICTURE: BEN MCSHANE/SPORTSFILE

one another in a third level match with Tiffanie in action for NUIG. Unfortunately for her she was on the losing team that lost the Purcell Cup final.

Tiffanie impressed greatly in her intercounty adult debut year last year when she featured on the Kilkenny intermediate team that went all the way to the All-Ireland final before losing out to Antrim.

DEBUT

Last February, she made her senior county debut for Kilkenny in the National League opener against Limerick. She has been an ever-present on the team since, giving a series of solid performances.

Tiffanie and Steffi's grandmother Beatrice Treacy was one of the great loyal servants to Young Irelands and Kilkenny Camogie for several years and, indeed, a wonderful servant to the Young Irelands GAA club in general.

Beatrice was a selector

with the 1974 All-Ireland team. She also served as secretary of the county camogie board from 1972 to 1976 and was chairperson in 1977.

Beatrice's husband Paddy Treacy has been a wonderful and loyal long-serving supporter of Young Irelands and Kilkenny hurling and camogie teams and along with Peggy Fitzgerald, Tiffanie and Steffi's other grandmother, they are two of the girls' greatest supporters. Both will be hoping to be in attendance in Croke Park on August 7.

Peggy's late husband Jim Fitzgerald was also a loyal long serving member and supporter of Young Irelands. He would, no doubt, have been very proud of the girls progression.

HUGE DAY

It's a huge day for the Young Irelands club with Ciara O'Keefe also part of the panel, while Pat O'Neill is part of the backroom team.

Ciara, along with Tiffanie made her intercounty adult debut with the county intermediate team that reached the All-Ireland final against Antrim. She also featured with the Kilkenny intermediate team this year along with being part of the Kilkenny senior panel. Both Ciara and Tiffanie came through the underage ranks together, enjoying All-Ireland success with Loreto Kilkenny, while they were also part of the Young Irelands team that won consecutive county minor titles in 2018 and 2019.

She also won senior colleges All-Irelands with the Loreto in 2017, 2018 and 2020, captaining the school to the title in 2020.

She was also captain of the Kilkenny minor team in 2020, with Tiffanie as vice-captain, but the Leinster and All-Ireland championships were severely affected due to the pandemic restrictions. They have bounced back from that disappointment and are now only 60 minutes away from winning an All-Ireland medal.

Pat O'Neill has become a vital part of the management

At one stage throughout the academic year the sisters were on the same pitch - but on different sides!

team since coming on board in 2020. Initially, he was brought in as a defence coach, but subsequently has had a broader role in the coaching set-up.

EXPERTISE

His experience of playing for Kilkenny and winning senior All-Irelands has been a major factor in the backroom team which also features Philly Larkin and Tommy Shefflin. Their expertise and knowledge has been well

received and well respected by the squad.

Since the pandemic began in March 2020, Kilkenny have lost just once in league championship and that was last year's All-Ireland semi-final to Cork. They have unquestionably become a tough nut to crack, which is a huge testament and tribute to the management team.

It's one of the biggest days in the history of Young Irelands camogie club and with the juvenile section of the club represented in huge numbers at the semi-final against Galway, no doubt a bigger crowd will be heading for Croke on Sunday.

The camogie club has organised a supporters bus for Sunday's game so there will surely be huge support from the parish in attendance as they cheer on the Young Irelands contingent and the rest of the Kilkenny squad in their quest to regain the O'Duffy Cup.

Magic of Croke Park on All-Ireland day awaits Cork players and fans

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

YEARS fly by so fast. It doesn't seem like 12 months ago since Galway edged Cork out in an exciting All-Ireland. The heads were down and sadness prevailed but Cork have risen again and Croke Park is calling again on Sunday.

It's always a great occasion. Busloads of underage camogie players will be gathering in club car parks from early Sunday morning to head to Dublin. Others will make the trip by train and car and Cork will have a big following when they run out on the pitch at 2pm for the intermediate game, with the senior showdown with Kilkenny at 4.15pm.

All-Ireland camogie final day is unique, a day that gives families a chance to get to and savour the Croke Park atmosphere without the hassle of grappling for tickets as would be the case for a hurling final.

Nothing beats having Cork in an All-Ireland camogie final, the buzz is unbelievable. I started out as a youngster making the trip to Dublin on the train and that ritual is as important as ever for the next generation.

Year in year, out we made the journey. Sometimes the titles came our way and sometimes titles went astray. The love of camogie and Cork and that annual pilgrimage never wavered.

Kilkenny took centre-stage for a while and were dominant before Cork returned to the top, then for a few years a new force emerged as Tipperary burst on the scene when Cork were beaten by a late Kilkenny goal in the 1999 semi-final and proceeded to dominate, an-

nexing five titles in six years. Cork bounced back and regained control but failed to make it three in a row as Wexford seized their chance. Kilkenny were on top at underage level, with four U16 and three minor All-Ireland titles in a row, but Wexford remained the team to beat at senior.

Galway took a title in between in 2013. Cork were revived and pulled off back-to-back wins in 2014 and 2015 but lost the three-in-a-row bid to the Cats. In 2017 and 2018 Cork grabbed dramatic late winners before Kilkenny ended their hurt in 2019 against Galway and the roles were reversed the following season.

Last year Cork were disappointed to fade to a late Galway rally.

For the legions of fans heading to Dublin this weekend the aim is a clean sweep, to add the two adult titles to the minor and U16 crowns safely tucked away already.

A whole new generation of youngsters will experience the magic of Croke Park from the stands and dream of maybe someday making it to Croke Park themselves.

Cork has no shortage of camogie heroines and huge history; on Sunday, a lot of new faces will make their Croke Park debut proudly wearing the Red and White of their beloved Cork.

Best of luck to the two teams as they bid to bring home the titles. Rebels abú!

Young Rebels seal three-in-a-row

West Cork connection to All-Ireland winning Cork U16 camogie team

BY GER MCCARTHY

CLONAKILTY'S Amy McCarthy and Newcestown's Alice Buckley were part of Cork's three-in-a-row winning Tesco All-Ireland U16A camogie final panel last Sunday.

The Rebels faced provincial rivals Tipperary in front of a bumper attendance in Mallow in a repeat of their 2022 Munster final.

Cork won that provincial decider and emerged from a tough All-Ireland qualifying group involving Kilkenny and Galway before facing the Premier County again.

Hot weather conditions and a determined Tipperary effort couldn't prevent Cork from emerging 2-18 to 0-10 winners. On a memorable afternoon, Cork manager Donie Daly's third consecutive All-Ireland U16 camogie success owed much to the depth of his tal-

'It feels great to be All-Ireland champions again'
— Alice Buckley

ented panel.

Centre-forward Gráinne Finn (Fr O'Neill's) scored 1-3 and Sarah Murphy (Glen Rovers) came off the bench to contribute 1-2.

Yet, it was the Rebels' midfield pairing of Amy McCarthy (Clonakilty) and player of the match Ava Fitzgerald (Sarsfields) and half-forward Kate Fennessy's (Sarsfields) combined efforts in the middle third that swung the result in Cork's favour.

After a disjointed start, the eventual winners built a 2-6 to 0-5 lead at the break. Cork found another gear and added 12 second-half points to secure



Clonakilty's Amy McCarthy celebrates winning the All-Ireland Camogie U16A final with Cork.
(Photo: Evan Treacy / INPHO)

a convincing victory.

'We had a tough start and didn't get going until about ten minutes in,' Clonakilty's Amy McCarthy commented.

'Those two (first half) goals got us going and the girls started popping over scores after all those early wides. There was no concern with those misses because we have trust in all the girls on this team.'

'As for dealing with the hot conditions, well, we played in

27 degree heat in last year's All-Ireland U16 final and would be used to it training and playing with our clubs throughout the summer.

'I think that the Kilkenny and Galway group games really set us up for this match. They are both tough teams so we were well prepared for Tipp.'

'We had beaten Tipp before as well so we had hope coming into the All-Ireland final. Tip-

perary are improving though. We expected to get a tough final and that's what we got today.'

McCarthy's delight at claiming another All-Ireland U16 medal was mirrored by her West Cork inter-county teammate Alice Buckley.

'It feels great to be All-Ireland champions again because we worked so hard and deserved to win it,' the Newcestown player said.

'Donie Daly and the management team have been so important to us. They worked really hard with us throughout the year and it was all worth it in the end.'

'I learned a lot playing for Cork and am excited to get back playing for my club Newcestown now. It is one of the better things (about the split-season) being able to go back to your club after the inter-county season is over.'

Courceys ace will line out for Cork intermediates in Croke Park

BY JOHNNY CAROLAN

A FAMILY tradition will be followed on Sunday as Ashling Moloney lines out for Cork in the All-Ireland intermediate camogie final against Galway in Croke Park (2pm).

In 2008 and 2009, Ashling's sister Rachel was part of Cork sides that won the O'Duffy Cup while another sister, Shirley, served as county board PRO from 2016-19, a period which took in All-Irelands in 2018 and 2019.

Having been there as a supporter cheering Cork on, Ashling, a primary school teacher in Ballinspittle, is looking forward to getting out on the Croke turf.

'Rachel would have trained my team, all the way up to U16,' the Courcey Rovers star says, 'and then Shirley took us over at minor.'

'They were obviously two massive influences and then Rachel playing with Cork - being in Croke Park, watching her, I suppose it was always the dream to somewhat emulate her success.'

'Seeing her on the big stage, I was hoping that I'd get the chance some day and, a good few years later, here we are!'

'The one thing that Rachel has said is that Croke Park is a very big pitch and to just be aware of that, but other than that the advice has been to enjoy the build-up and the occasion.'

'She has been through it before, she knows what to expect and obviously I don't, but she said that the two weeks

Moloney maintaining a family tradition



Ashling Moloney celebrates Cork's All-Ireland semi-final win against Derry.
(Photo: Evan Treacy / INPHO)

beforehand are brilliant and to enjoy the excitement of it all because it doesn't come around very often.

'It's definitely something to embrace rather than to fear. Croke Park is the dream, not everybody gets the chance to play there so you have to grab it with both hands.'

Cork's last intermediate title was in 2018, as part of a double along with senior victory.

It was after that that Ashling came

into the panel as Cork had to start from scratch at that level.

'You can't play for three years after you win,' she says, 'so it's the first final for a lot of us as in 2019 we had to start with a whole new panel. There are some of the 2018 girls back again too, though.'

Ashling has Courceys colleague Gráinne Hannon for company in the other corner of the Cork defence, adding to the Courcey connection to

Croke Park this Sunday. Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy will be on duty with the senior team.

Wins over Wexford, Meath, Kilkenny, Derry and Kildare in the group stages were followed by a one-point semi-final win over Derry.

'Every team goes out to hope that you'd be in this position,' Ashling says, 'but I've been on the panel since 2019 and we haven't got there.'

'You have to be realistic and put

in the performances throughout the year to get yourself to Croke Park. We all know how hard it is to get to an All-Ireland final no matter what code you're playing and you have to put in the work.'

'We met back on December 30th in wet, rainy conditions, playing our first challenge match against each other and you're hoping then that you'll make it to Croke Park in August and that that night will be worth it!'

ALL-IRELAND
SENIOR
CAMOGIE
FINAL

KILKENNY v CORK

SUNDAY,
AUGUST 7,
CROKE PARK
4.15PM



Kilkenny's belief can inspire them to Croke success

All on the line: Cork and Kilkenny set for another All-Ireland final showdown with both sides trying to take the seat vacated by Galway and regain the O'Duffy Cup in the process



ROBERT CRIBBIN
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Old foes will meet when Kilkenny and Cork collide in this Sunday's Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship Final in Croke Park.

It will be the first meeting in a final since 2018 when Cork won back to back titles after the sides met in three successive finals between 2016 and 2018.

Kilkenny won only one of those meetings but this will be their sixth final appearance in seven years. Hope is high on Noreside that they can recapture the O'Duffy Cup after Galway won last year's All-Ireland title.

When it comes to history and tradition there should only really be one winner on Sunday with Cork having double the amount of titles of their counterparts.

Kilkenny have 14 All-Ireland titles to their name but there is a feeling

that they should have a bit more and that they maybe have underachieved a little in recent seasons.

That's why the 2020 success over Galway was so significant, but even since that dreary December night in the midst of the Coronavirus, a lot has changed.

Kilkenny have lost the majority of their defence as well as a midfielder and key players in attack.

In essence, the Cats shouldn't really be able to absorb such mammoth losses but that's what makes this group of Kilkenny players so unique.

Brian Dowling has instilled a huge jolt of confidence amongst them and they will be going to Croke Park fully expecting to

The two teams met in the final round of the National League and drew. It's expected to be close again



The Kilkenny senior camogie team ahead of the All-Ireland semi-final victory over Galway
PICTURE: INPHO

come away with the victory.

Despite not making the league final, Kilkenny are still unbeaten in 2022 and the Leinster Championship certainly helped in gearing them up for a crack at the round robin campaign.

Wins over Wexford, Offaly and Dublin ensured the Cats of provincial honours and they maintained that

consistency throughout the All-Ireland championship.

Victories over Down, Antrim, Offaly and Limerick arrived before they drew with Galway in the final group game in Athenry.

That was a game Kilkenny could have easily won but it was also a day where the team and squad began to take a bit of shape.

The Cats duly beat Dublin comprehensively in the quarter-finals before dethroning the All-Ireland champions Galway in Croke Park the last day.

The Fitzgerald sisters, Tiffanie and Steffi, have been a revelation this term while Laura Murphy and Niamh Deely have also taken command in a defence that is well marshalled by the experienced duo of Grace Walsh and Claire Phelan.

That mixture of youthful flair and exuberance mixed with a handful of experienced heads is certainly working a treat.

Up top it's even more noticeable with Denise Gaule, Miriam Walsh and Julianne Malone offsetting the likes of Katie Nolan, Mary O'Connell and Michaela Kenneally.

Katie Power has moved to midfield due to the absence of Aoife Doyle and she looks to be really prospering after

suffering an injury nightmare in recent seasons.

Cork will certainly be no pushovers though and despite trailing for long periods of their semi-final with Waterford, they found a way to win.

Chloe Sigerson and Amy O'Connor are their main assets in attack while Hannah Looney, Libby Coppinger and Ashling Thompson provide the leadership.

Matthew Twomey has taken over from Paudie Murray while most interestingly is the sight of Davy Fitzgerald as a selector.

Being All-Ireland final day, the Clare man's presence in the backroom team will be

under the spotlight a bit more.

After a weekend where Ladies Football attracted over 46,000 to its three All-Ireland finals, camogie takes the headlines this week. While it hasn't received the boom that Ladies Football has had there should still be a good attendance in Croke Park on Sunday.

After the hurlers went so close against Limerick a few weeks ago, it would be a great boost to the county if Kilkenny could get over the line. Taking everything into account, if Kilkenny can find their usual flow then it's all set up for them to take the victory - but it will be close.



St Martin's star Katie Nolan will be hoping to maintain her fine form that has marked her out as one of the key players on the Kilkenny team
PICTURE: INPHO



Kilkenny and Cork in action during their last final meeting

ALL-IRELAND
SENIOR
CAMOGIE
FINAL

KILKENNY v CORK

SUNDAY,
AUGUST 7,
CROKE PARK
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Norris stands tall as Kilkenny's last line of defence

If it wasn't for the goalkeeping heroics of Aoife Norris in the All-Ireland semi-final victory over Galway then Kilkenny's season may already be at an end.

The Piltown stopper played a crucial role in helping the Cats see off the defending champions as she produced a number of important saves.

"I was happy with my own performance but most importantly was the performance of the team and everyone put in 100%," she said.

"Everyone has a job to do on the field and I was just doing mine. We were delighted to get the win and the focus is now on the final against Cork."

The 23-year-old schoolteacher saved a penalty from fellow net minder Sarah Healy in the opening half. She credits her work with Denise Gaule in training as a reason for being able to flourish when it matters most.

"I don't know about the technique to be honest as I just face it as it comes," she said. "When you're practising with Denise Gaule in training she'd have you well tested by picking balls out of the net but I stood tall - that's all."

"Denise is one of the best penalty takers in the game and if you are getting anywhere near her shots, you are going to be happy. That's just the way it went on the day and I'm happy with it but overall it was more important to get the win at the end of the day."



Aoife Norris will be looking to continue her fine form on Sunday.

Norris has been a mainstay in the Kilkenny side since making her intercounty debut in 2019 and she has seen a big change in the way the game is played during that time.

COMPOSURE

"The game has developed for the better in general. I think the day of just hitting the ball long and hoping for the best are gone and the likes of Brian Dowling have been telling us to keep our composure and give the ball to the person in the best position. It's something we work on and we'll continue to try and improve on it too."

She added: "We have players who give everything to the team and getting that creativity in using the ball wisely to find the player in the best position without giving away possession is the aim."

The goalkeeper is one of four Kilkenny players that are based in Dublin. Along with Michelle Teehan, Grace Walsh and Laura Murphy the

group travel to training together each week.

Coincidentally they are four of the starting back seven and they've created a great bond on and off the pitch.

All bar Grace Walsh are teachers and it's clear it's an occupation that suits.

"There's a group of us in Dublin and it has been a really enjoyable year," she said. "Even the car journey home is something we look forward to and we've become a lot closer as a result and as it happens we all play in defence too and that maybe makes the bond even tighter."

"We are all friends at the end of the day and that bond shines through the whole team and it's that enjoyment that makes us all play the game of camogie."

"Being a teacher helps with the lifestyle of an intercounty player too," she finished. "Our holidays are spent training, but we all love doing it."

Back from abroad- Malone ready to take big chance

Robert Cribbin
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It's been an action packed couple of years for Mullinavat's Julianne Malone.

Back in 2016, the Kilkenny star won an All-Ireland title in her debut intercounty season and she also picked up an All-Star at the end of the year.

The talented forward played with the Cats for another two years before making the decision to emigrate to Australia.

Malone has since returned from Down Under and she outlined her reason why.

"I was enjoying life in Australia but I suppose family commitments brought me home," she said. "My brother and sister were having children and my brother was getting married too. Throw covid into the mix and that kind of confirmed my decision because the holiday visa I was on meant if I left the country I wasn't going to get back out."

The 27-year-old nurse returned to the Kilkenny squad at the beginning of the year and she's even exceeded her own expectations over the course of the championship season thus far.

"I was delighted when Brian Dowling texted me to ask me to come back in to the Kilkenny squad," she said. "I'm delighted to be on the starting team at the moment as it probably wasn't an expectation when I came back in."



Julianne Malone will be aiming to win in Croke Park once again

"I was thinking this year I would maybe build myself up with a bit of game time and then break onto the team next year, but I'm delighted at the same time."

FULL COMMITMENT

"I didn't have to think twice about coming back in as I was well ready to come back and give it my full commitment," she said.

Malone has rejoined a much different squad to the one she left four years ago but she's full of praise for the new talent emerging in Kilkenny.

"You are probably coming

in expecting to see the same faces that were here when you left but girls have moved on with their own lives and unfortunately others are injured at the moment, even if they are still around."

"There's a lot of new girls in the team and it's great to see the fresh faces. They are all really good hurlers that are well able to hurl so it's great as they are bringing on Kilkenny camogie even more."

While the future looks bright for the Cats, Malone is firmly living in the present with her four point tally in the semi-final win over Galway illustrating that.

"I probably had one of my better days in the semi-final and I'm kind of putting that down to just going out and throwing off the shackles as I've nothing to lose and I've nothing to prove to anyone so I just give it my all," she said.

"I don't put huge expectations on myself so I just give it everything when I'm on the pitch and I'm just delighted to be back involved."

Cork always bring their A game when they play Kilkenny so we know they will put it up to us and we've a big task ahead



THE FINAL COUNTDOWN: Kilkenny's Claire Phelan and manager Brian Dowling line up against Cork manager Matthew Twomey and Ashling Thompson ahead of the All-Ireland senior camogie final media day. The Cats will take on their Munster rivals in a battle for the O'Duffy Cup on Sunday. See inside for a big match preview PICTURE: LASZLO GECZO/INPHO



Coppinger at the top of her game

St Colum's dual star Libby is the rock in the Cork defence

BY MATTHEW HURLEY

INSPIRING. Focused. Unassuming. Determined. Those are just some of the words to describe St Colum's camogie star Libby Coppinger.

The Cork full-back, who has been in phenomenal form this season with the Rebels, seems to be getting better and better each year.

'I think Libby now is probably coming into the section of her career that she can drive on and put herself as one of the greats of the game in her generation,' former Cork camogie manager Paudie Murray told *The Southern Star*.

'She's a nailed-on All-Star in my eyes. I've watched a lot of her performances (this year) and she's been top class.'

The 26-year-old Kealkill woman has been playing with the Cork senior camogie team since 2016. To date, she has won two All-Ireland senior titles in 2017 and 2018. She will hope to add another All-Ireland medal to her collection this Sunday.

Coppinger's class is there for all to see on the pitch for the Rebels, but what most people don't see is what she is like off the pitch.

'Libby would be the type of player that if there's messing going on, she wouldn't be part of it because she's a very serious girl,' Murray added.

'This girl drives an hour and

a half to training, gets on the pitch, does her bit and gets out of there as quickly as possible. That is Libby Coppinger.'

Versatility is a key aspect to the modern player. The St Colum's star is one of those who excels in that department.

'Libby has played in many positions within this Cork team. She played in an All-Ireland final at midfield. I think she had a blinder wing-forward for us.'

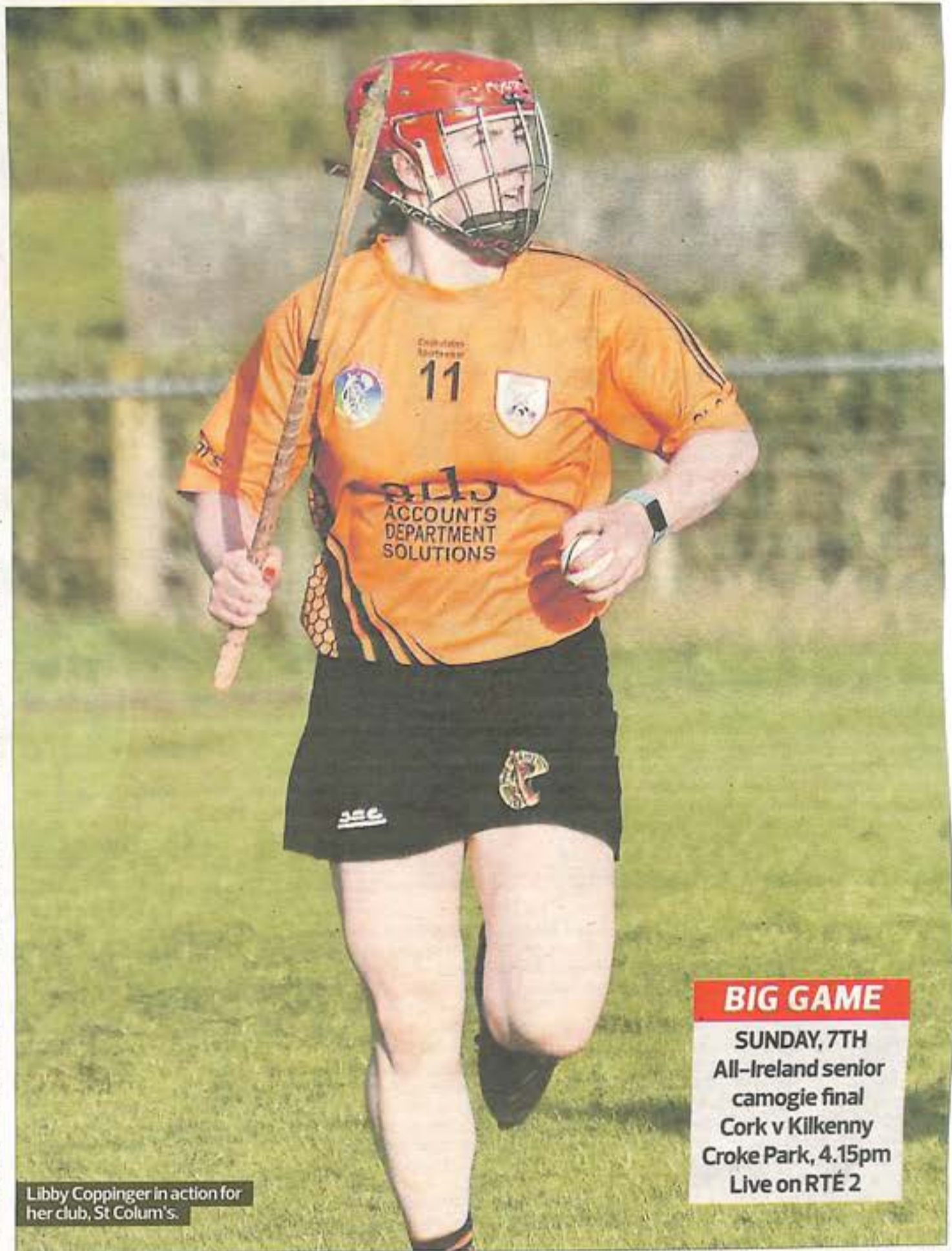
'One year, she was playing midfield up to the final, was then put at corner-back and had a great game the same day.'

There is something somewhat unique about Coppinger, according to Murray.

'There aren't too many players that play midfield in an All-Ireland semi-final and three weeks later, find themselves at corner-back, a position she has never played in before. It would have bothered a lot of players, but it certainly didn't bother her,' Murray said.

Both Coppinger and Meabh Cahalane are dual stars. They play football and camogie for Cork at the highest level. With the footballers going out in the quarter-final, their progression in the camogie championship has got more focus. Murray believes it helped the players.

'I don't think it is possible anymore (playing dual). I think the one bit of luck Libby and Meabh have was that the footballers were knocked out two weeks previous,' he explained.



Libby Coppinger in action for her club, St Colum's.

BIG GAME

SUNDAY, 7TH
All-Ireland senior camogie final
Cork v Kilkenny
Croke Park, 4.15pm
Live on RTÉ 2



Cork forward Fiona Keating.

Keating battled through broken

BY GER MCCARTHY

IT HAS not been a straightforward year for Fiona Keating – but she's hoping for the best possible ending. The Cork forward has overcome a broken hand and broken finger this season to take her place back in the Rebels' first 15 for the business end of the campaign.

'I broke my hand back in February and was in a cast for a few weeks,' the Courcey Rovers player explains.

'Then I broke my finger a few weeks after that but all is going

'With the finger injury, I just got on with things and played away' – Fiona Keating

well at the moment though. With the finger injury, I just got on with things and played away. You just suffer through things like that.

'It was bad enough having to step away for a few weeks with the hand injury. You know what, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger!'

Keating has been one of Cork's most consistent performers as they battled their way back to the All-Ireland final after last year's heartbreak. Galway took the big prize back west, but one of the most memorable moments of the 2021 campaign was Cork's pulsating 0-15 to 1-11 All-Ireland semi-final victory over then reigning champions Kilkenny at Croke Park. Keating's Courcey Rovers team-mate Linda Collins scored the last-gasp winning point at GAA HQ. Now, Cork and Kilkenny meet again. This time in the final.

'It goes without saying that

Kilkenny will be out for blood, especially after last year's semi-final loss to us,' Keating says.

'At the end of the day, it is up to us and what Cork can bring to the table before the O'Duffy Cup is lifted around 6pm on Sunday evening.

'Kilkenny are a great team. We have so much respect for them. They are well able to play as you would have seen in their semi-final win over Galway. Kilkenny are also very physical and we will have to match that on the day.'

Cork manager Matthew Twomey's positive influence on the pan-

ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOGIE FINAL Cork v Kilkenny



Cork's Libby Coppinger tackles Katie Power of Kilkenny in the 2021 All-Ireland semi-final.



'It allowed them to recharge the batteries. You can see that in their performances against Waterford.'

Cop-



Libby Coppinger has developed into a key player for Cork.

ping's leadership qualities are also recognised, es-

pecially in her own club.

'She is always positive and unassuming,' said St Colum's chairperson Mike Murnane.

'She wouldn't be roaring or giving out to the team, she'd speak when she's asked to speak. Paudie (Murray) could see the potential, she's a leader.'

previously and now Libby, the two of them are just fantastic ambassadors,' Murnane added. 'If you bring Libby to a training session, you can hear a pin drop. She's a professional.'

Coppinger is not afraid to make herself known around her club either, despite training so much at inter-county level.

Role-model is another term to describe the Colum's player. The way she conducts herself in the club is an inspiration to anybody.

'The kids look up to her totally, because of Alan O'Connor

'She's a nailed-on All-Star in my eyes' – Paudie Murray, former Cork manager

underage while there were no camogie or LGFA clubs.

'We didn't have a camogie club and our ladies football club kind of disbanded. She was playing with the boys up to U14 and she was one of the best players of that U14 team,' Murnane said.

'You could tell when she came onto the girls' team, she was impossible to mark. I do think she physically improved after playing with the boys,' the Colum's chairperson said.

Their Cork hero is also an inspiration to those in the Keatill area, a player to look up to.

'When Libby is out on the pitch, she's so focused, she's one of the best players to go out (and play) with,' concluded Murnane. In most people's eyes, the West Cork woman was the Player of the Match in the recent All-Ireland semi-final win against Waterford. It was one of her best displays at full back. Cork manager Matthew Twomey agrees.

'Against Waterford I thought Libby was the player of the match. She was absolutely outstanding,' he said.

'She's quiet and unassuming, but does her talking on the field,' Coppinger has been an integral part of the Cork camogie team this year, not just as a player but also as an inspiration for others. Twomey even compared her to a legend of the game.

'On the field she reminds me in so many ways of Briege Corkery. She is a livewire,' he explained. 'You can see her with the younger girls, she would have a quiet word with them.'

Her influence on not just Colum's but the Cork camogie team hasn't gone unnoticed.

Whether she will win an All-Star remains to be seen.

Nevertheless, she has put West Cork on the map for camogie.

THE ROAD TO GLORY

STEP 1: The Rebels opened their Group 1 championship campaign with a comprehensive 2-14 to 1-6 win away to Wexford in Enniscorthy. Star forward Amy O'Connor scored 2-4 in this rout of the Model County.

STEP 2: Their first home All-Ireland championship game of the campaign, in Pairc Uí Rinn, was an easy victory over Munster finalists Clare on a scoreline of 2-17 to 2-5. Amy O'Connor was once again in inspired form in this game, scoring 2-5. Meanwhile Chloe Sigerson and Orla Cronin hit another 0-6 between them.

STEP 3: Dublin was next on the Rebels' hit list in a seven-point victory (2-10 to 0-9) away from home. Cork hit 1-8 without reply to finish the game off. Katrina Mackey was outstanding, scoring 2-1, while Courcsey Rovers' Saoirse McCarthy also popped up with 0-2.

STEP 4: A tighter game followed when Cork came up against Waterford in Walsh Park, eventually winning 0-16 to 0-10. It was a game of missed penalties as Chloe Sigerson and Deise free-taker Beth Carton both missed from the spot. This win guaranteed Cork their All-Ireland semi-final spot with one group game to go.



Cork's Izzy O'Regan and Kate Wall celebrate the semi-final win.

STEP 5: Cork's first loss (1-17 to 1-16) in the championship came at home to Tipperary in Pairc Uí Rinn. Laura Hayes scored the sole Cork goal. But, for context, Cork had already qualified for the All-Ireland semi-final before this game.

STEP 6: Cork went into their All-Ireland semi-final with Waterford having beat them in the Munster championship and in their Group 1 match. However, it was the Deise that flew out of the traps with a 0-5 to 0-0 lead after 23 minutes. That deficit was eventually pulled back however, as Cork took over in the second half to eventually win 0-15 to 0-10 overall, inspired by Aishling Thompson.

bones to get Rebels back on the big stage

el is clear. The county's senior management team have been equally influential and Keating is hoping to repay all their manager, selectors and backroom team members' efforts.

'I couldn't speak more highly of Matthew and our management team this year,' she says.

'The work Matthew puts in ... he told us he is involved with Cork camogie for over ten years now. I haven't been involved that long myself but for the likes of Aishling Thompson and Laura Treacy, they have seen how much Matthew has put into it during all

that time.

'Along with Davy (Fitzgerald) and all the lads, they have been great too. You also have Teddy O'Donovan; he is an unsung hero within the camp. Teddy always brings a great atmosphere to training.'

Previous Cork senior manager Paudie Murray's influence still resonates with Keating and her team-mates. Not least because Twomey was such an integral part of the Cork senior backroom team under Murray's tutelage. That continuity within the Cork senior set-up has benefited this

year's pathway to the All-Ireland final.

'Paudie Murray did so much for Cork camogie and Matthew was a part of that for many years as well,' Keating says.

'Matthew has learned from working with Paudie and you can definitely see that this year. Everything Matthew does, he does to perfection. Great credit is due to both of them. They have brought Cork camogie on so much.'

The Rebels return to Croke Park having overcome Waterford at the same venue in the

All-Ireland semi-final less than two weeks ago. Keating is used to playing at GAA HQ but believes the experience gained by Cork's younger panel members will be important against Kilkenny.

'It was great to get up to Croke Park and play the semi-final there against Waterford,' she says.

'Matthew was only saying it at training, that for some of us, it was our fifth time playing in Croke Park in the space of a year.'

'For all the younger girls coming on to this year's senior panel - we have a good few of them, to be fair - getting to experience

playing in Croke Park will stand us for the final.

'You see the likes of Meabh Murphy coming in this year and starting at corner-back. For me, last year was my first time starting on the senior team so I consider myself nearly in the middle-age category at the age of 21!

'Seeing the Cork UI6s and minors winning All-Irelands is great for camogie (in the county). There is so much talent coming through and lots of silverware coming back to Castle Road as well. Those are real positives for Cork camogie's future.'

Galway target a fourth title in decisive battle with Cork girls

■ Tribeswomen seek intermediate glory

EANNA O'REILLY

THE Galway intermediate camogie team face Cork in Croke Park on Sunday (2pm) seeking to win a first All-Ireland title at this grade since 2013. Cathal Murray's charges will be hoping to secure the county's fourth ever Intermediate All-Ireland, and based on their form so far this year, will feel they have every chance of success.

All-Ireland Final day in 2013 was an historic one for Galway camogie, as Tony Ward's charges recorded a double of senior and intermediate titles. Captained by Sinéad Keane, the Galway intermediates defeated Limerick on that occasion, on a 0-12 to 0-10 scoreline. Since that victory, Galway appeared in one intermediate decider, against Westmeath in 2019, when they went down to a 1-11 to 1-9 defeat.

This year's Galway intermediate team contains some outstanding talent, and a good mixture of youth and experience. Team captain Lisa Casserly (Ballinderreen), Ciara Donohue (Mullagh) and Laura Loughnane (Eyrecourt) are key leaders on the field and will be vital to the outcome on Sunday.

Fiona Ryan (Ballinderreen) is a solid 'keeper, while Katie Manning (Mullagh) and Caoimhe Starr (Killimor) have defended impressively throughout the championship. Furthermore, Davitts' pair Ciara Hickey and Katie Anna Porter are two of the most promising young defenders in the county.

Ally Hesnan (Shamrocks) and Jennifer Hughes (Carnmore) are a strong and athletic midfield pairing, who impressed during the semi-final victory over Meath. In attack, they have plenty of strong options to choose from. The Galway management are hoping that Sarsfields' Cora Kenny will be available for selection, as she continues to recover from a concussion.

Shamrocks' sharpshooter Katie Gilchrist is also a doubt, as she is attempting to overcome a hamstring issue. Galway will

look to the likes of Niamh McPeake (Liam Mellows), Olwen Rabbittie (Athenry), Laura Loughnane, and Tegan Canning (Mullagh) to lead them in the scoring stakes.

Salthill's Laura Kelly and Siobhán Divilly have also impressed in attack during the year, as have minor players Niamh McInerney (Shamrocks) and Shannon Corcoran (Sarsfields).

Their championship campaign began on May 21, with a 0-20 to 0-8 victory over Laois at Duggan Park. The Tribeswomen subsequently inflicted a heavy defeat on Carlow (5-22 to 0-7), before overcoming Westmeath in Mullingar (1-15 to 0-11). Their final two group games produced emphatic wins over Dublin (3-23 to 0-5) and Kerry (2-17 to 0-6).



DEFINITELY FOR THE OLDER GIRLS, WE JUST HAVE THAT HUNGER TO TRY GET OVER THE LINE THIS YEAR FOR SURE

Galway, however, were well tested by a hard working Meath side in Nowlan Park in the semi-final, before eventually shaking off the Royals challenge to record a 3-9 to 2-8 victory. Each of Galway's three goals reflected the quality of their team play and their class in attack. Gilchrist finished the first goal superbly, after a great move involving McPeake and Rabbittie. Galway's second goal saw Laura Kelly finish a move involving Canning, Loughnane and McInerney.

The lethal threat of their inside line was underlined by Galway's third goal, which saw McPeake, McInerney, and Rabbittie combine, before the Athenry forward fired to the net. The quality of Galway's forwards has been reflected in their scoring totals throughout this year's championship, with a highly impressive 14-106 being accumu-

lated in six matches so far.

Galway captain Lisa Casserly said this week: "When everyone starts out pre-season, the end goal is always to get to Croke Park but I suppose for us, we've had a lot of turnover of players from last year, so our main goal was to just get the minors in, try and get a structure in place and we really just took it one game at a time then from that."

Casserly is a member of the intermediate panel since 2017 and was called up to the senior squad two years later, garnering two All-Irelands as a sub. She, Ciara Donohue and the injured Tara Rutledge are the only survivors from the two-point loss to Westmeath in the 2019 All-Ireland intermediate final.

"I suppose this year we needed to step up and we have given the girls the perspective that All-Irelands don't come around too often," says Casserly of her increased leadership responsibilities in such a youthful set-up.

"Cork are going to be a phenomenal team. They've had a great campaign themselves. So we've been able to ground the girls as well and give them the perspective of being on the other side, in 2019. It's not the side you want to be on. Definitely for the older girls, we just have that hunger to try get over the line this year for sure," added Casserly.

Galway's opponents Cork come into this final on the back of a one point win over Derry in the penultimate stage. The Rebels reversed a group defeat to the Ulster side in the semi-final, which was their only loss during the championship. Trevor Coleman's side had to come from behind late on against Derry, hitting the last four points to snatch the victory. Sharpshooter Joanne Casey held her nerve to convert two injury time frees, to send Cork into the final.

Captained by midfielder Rachel Harty from Ballyhea, the Rebels have quality throughout the field and will look to the likes of centre back Kate Kilcommins, midfielder Lauren Callanan, and



Galway's Lisa Casserly who will lead her team into battle against Cork in Sunday's All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Final at Croke Park.



Galway's Ciara Hickey at full stretch against Olivia O'Halloran of Meath in the All-Ireland semi-final.

forwards Lauren Homan and Hayley Ryan, along with Casey, to lead their efforts.

Cork had impressive group victories over Wexford, Kilkenny, Meath, and Kildare, while they suffered a three point defeat to Derry in Owenbeg. Coleman's charges overturned that result when it counted in the knockout stages to qualify for their first intermediate decider since 2018.

That year was also Cork's last victory in the intermediate final when they overcame Down on a 1-13 to 0-9 scoreline. They also triumphed over Kilkenny in the

senior decider on that day, which was also their last time winning the O'Duffy Cup. Cork will undoubtedly be very determined to record the double once again on Sunday.

The last meeting between Galway and Cork in an intermediate All-Ireland was in 2009 when the Tribeswomen overcame the Rebels after a replay victory in Nenagh. Galway triumphed by 3-10 to 1-5 on that occasion, after the sides had previously played out a 0-15 to 2-9 draw at the Gaelic Grounds.

Galway's captain on that occasion was current senior cap-

tain Sarah Dervan, while the goal scorers were Caroline Murray, Laura Mitchell, and Aoife Lynskey. Galway's only link to that victory 13 years ago is Portumna's Rutledge, who has been sidelined with a knee injury this year.

In what promises to be a cracking contest, Galway's pace and attacking quality can make the difference in the open spaces of Croke Park. If Galway perform to their ability on the day, they will have a great opportunity to bring home the Jack McGrath Cup for the fourth time.

Cork girls are chasing double glory in Croke Park finale



Cella and Cork senior camogie player Saoirse McCarthy, Ballinspittle, out for a walk on their local Garrylucas beach. Picture: Denis Minihane



Sisters Molly and Lucy Lynch, All-Ireland Long Puck senior and U16 winners.

Cork sisters bag Poc Fada All-Irelands

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

CORK sisters Molly and Lucy Lynch delivered a double for Sarsfields in the M Donnelly All-Ireland Poc Fada finals.

The talented duo won at senior and U16 level on Bank Holiday Monday in the Cooley Mountains.

Molly Lynch made history last year when she won the senior crown, having previously captured the U16 title in 2017. That success made her the first camogie player to win both grades, which was a huge achievement.

Defending her title, she had to hold off a star-studded senior field which included Antrim's Roisin McCormick, Clare's Chloe Morey, Galway's intermediate star Katie Gilchrist, Catherine Muldoon (Tyrone), and Noelle Murphy, Kilkenny.

It starts off what Molly is hoping will be a successful week as she is also part of Matthew Twomey's Cork senior squad who face Kilkenny in the All-Ireland final in Croke Park on Sunday. Cork intermediates take on Galway in the opening game of a double-header on Jones' Road.

Lucy Lynch followed in her sister's footsteps when she took the All-Ireland U16 trophy, holding off the challenges of Tiarna Kelly (Derry), Laois' Amy Lacey, and Andrea Fallon, Roscommon.

Molly will have stiff opposition from Lucy in 2023 as she bids to make it a senior three in a row.

In the hurling section, Killian Phelan of Kilkenny took the senior hurling silverware with Darragh Smith from Westmeath landing the U16 trophy.

The Poc Fada continues to be sponsored by Martin Donnelly, who has backed the competition for more than 25 years through his MD myclubshop.ie brand and his contribution has kept the event on the go.



GAA

Paudie Palmer

WITH the Croker series almost at an end, it is now the responsibility of our club personnel to guide us home to Christmas.

All those inter-county players that some pundits mentioned you wouldn't see again in action until next January will also be part of the club campaign!

But there is one more day in the big house to come and it will have a serious red entry.

Next Sunday's camogie finals will feature Cork's intermediate and senior teams; the intermediates face Galway at 2pm and the seniors will be bidding to win their first since 2018 when they take on Kilkenny at 4.15pm.

However, there is also a Cork angle to the premier junior final which throws in at 12pm between Antrim and Armagh. Lining out for Armagh will be Jennifer Curry, formerly Jennifer O'Leary from Barryroe. Arguably one of the best ever to come from the west, Jennifer won four senior medals with Cork, her last game with the county was in 2014; she also received an incredible eight All-Stars.

After a lapse of eight years, she donned the inter-county attire again and in the semi-final against Cavan, her contribution of 1-3 was key in enabling her adopted county reach the final. It probably should be mentioned though, that Antrim will be favourites.

Nonetheless, it is some achievement for the now 38 years young forward to be back on the big stage.

Can we hope for a Rebel double? Well, it would be some achievement and would crown a marvellous year for camogie in the county. Last Sunday, the U16 team won the All-Ireland with a comprehensive 2-18 to 0-10 victory over Tipperary.

In late March, the county minors defeated Galway 2-11 to 2-7 to land that All-Ireland.



Hannah Looney drives at Keeley Corbett-Barry during the Glen Dimplex Senior Camogie All-Ireland semi-final win over Waterford at Croke Park. Picture: Sportsfile

So, what are their chances on Sunday?

The intermediate one is always a difficult call because it includes a number of second teams together with the best of the so-called weaker counties. Both Cork and Galway had impressive semi-final wins over two counties that would be considered strong contenders, Meath and Derry.

For what it is worth, the Trevor Coleman-managed side have been together for a while, hence they get the nod.

As regards the senior decider, it must be mentioned that with only three top teams in the country at the moment — Cork, Galway, and Kilkenny — any outcome, other than a Cork victory would be viewed as a bad day at the office.

A four-year camogie drought in Cork compares very favourably with eight-year football thirst in Kerry.

That is probably where the comparison ends because, whereas Kerry were

deserving favourites going into their decider, this Rebel side will parade behind the underdog banner.

On how many occasions have we made the error of basing our final predictions on semi-final performance and I suppose, now is too late to change a habit of a lifetime!

Most who attended the Waterford win were of the opinion that were it not for Ashling Thompson coming on in the first half, a major shock was on the cards. Then again, maybe the uncertainty surrounding the Milford star had an unsettling effect on the team.

Whatever about that, the episode did not reflect well on the camogie association, particularly when it emerged that the Cork star got off on a technicality, not sure for exactly what, but mention was made that she may have been reported or charged under the incorrect rule. Going into last year's final, there was another disciplinary issue in relation to Orla Cronin which, in the view of many, was not conducive

to proper preparation.

The fact that the Enniskeane player is not involved this year is a considerable blow. Thankfully now, with no distractions, Cork will arrive on the big stage in the proper frame of mind and leave their best wine to the last.

Amy O'Connor, the St Vincent's player, is a serious attacker but Chloe Sigerson, Killeagh, and Katrina Mackey, Douglas, know a thing or two about the location of the posts in the big field.

All year the half-back line have been impressive. Now that Laura Tracey, Killeagh, is fully fit again, the hope would be that they can be even more impressive.

Laura Hayes, St Catherine's, and the youthful Saoirse McCarthy (Courcey Rovers) are all influential operators in this area, the latter the MVP in the semi.

Earlier we mentioned the best westerner of another era, of probably of any era, but in the game against Waterford it was Libby Coppinger from St Colum's club in Kealkil who fought a massive rearguard action when the Déise were going for the jugular.

Another favourable aspect of team preparation is the absence of the challenges posed by dual players.

Ever since the footballers' surprise defeat to Mayo, Coppinger, Maebh Cahalane, St Finbarr's, and Killeagh's Hannah Looney have been able to concentrate on the liathroid bag.

For all Cork camogie clubs, Sunday is an important day and even more so for clubs who have players involved, but for Courcey Rovers it will be even more special. Ashling Moloney and Grainne Hannon will be involved with the intermediates while Saoirse McCarthy and Fiona Keating are vital played for the seniors.

Wouldn't it be just the perfect ending to have the O'Duffy and the Jack McGrath Cups as special guests in the community hall in Ballinspittle some night next week?

I am sure the statue could be convinced to move one more time...

■ Contact: paudie.palmer@hotmail.com Twitter: @paudiep



Cork intermediate manager Trevor Coleman. Picture: Larry Cummins

Coleman says his Cork team will give All-Ireland title bid their 'best shot'

WHEN Trevor Coleman began playing street leagues in Na Piarasigh, he never imagined he would manage a Cork team to Croke Park in quest of an All-Ireland title.

This Sunday, his Rebel intermediate side face Galway at 2pm in Croke Park, bidding to lift the Glen Dimplex Intermediate crown.

"My family are deeply involved and my uncle's wife is the former camogie great Deirdre Sutton-Coleman, who won a huge amount of honours," Coleman says. "She is a person, down through the years, I could always go to to bend her ear and she is a great woman, with huge experience of all things camogie."

Coleman's wife and daughters are involved in the sport, but long before he got involved in camogie, he was coaching boys' teams at Na Piarasigh.

"Starting out in the street leagues in Na Piarasigh, I played at all levels right up to U21, where we enjoyed great success all the way up, winning everything underage, except a football championship," Coleman says. "I didn't play much after U21 and when I was around 19 or 20 and playing junior, I got into the coaching side of things and followed that path from there. I suppose, I probably gave up playing too young and I say to all the young people now to play away as long as you can."

He was also deeply involved in administration, was minor chairman for three years, and three years on the senior committee, but for almost 20 years he has also been involved with camogie.

"I got involved with the Na Piarasigh junior team, which my wife, Trisha, was playing with and we won the Junior B

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

and then the Junior A championship and it was great."

Mentor with Seandún underage teams 10 years ago at U16 level, in 2020 Coleman was asked to assist with the senior divisional side.

"I was delighted to get involved, as I knew the calibre of players that were there. It was a huge honour for me to be involved and to win the championship last year."

Galway will be another huge challenge for Cork after an excellent season so far.

"We saw them against Meath: They are a good side. Cathal Murray is in charge and they trained with their senior squad, so we know they will be going all out as we will to win."

He paid tribute to his backroom team and to the players, who have worked very hard.

"The lads are excellent, they are doing huge work with the team, and the girls are superb. We have played challenge matches all over the country and they are great. I'm only the manager and my job is to pull it all together and, to be fair to them all, they row in and make my job easier."

The hard work is done and he is confident his side won't be found wanting.

"We have spoken about the atmosphere that will be in Croke Park, the noise levels, and to be just conscious of it when calling for the ball and little things like that, so it's just about getting out there now and giving it our very best shot and, rest assured, we won't be found wanting."



Cork's Kate Kilcommins and Derry's Aine McAllister on the move in the All-Ireland semi-final.

Picture: Patrick Browne

Experience could be a key factor in intermediate final

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

SUNDAY: Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate final: Cork v Galway, Croke Park, 2pm

IT'S Cork and Galway battling for the Glen Dimplex Intermediate crown; they meet in the second game of a triple-header in Croke Park on Sunday.

It comes as no surprise that these are the last two standing, though when they met in the Littlewoods League quarter-final Cork ran out 1-13 to 0-10 winners.

That will count for little with the big prize up for grabs on Sunday.

Cork last took the title in 2018 and survivors from that glorious day when it was a Rebel double include Lauren Callanan, Siobhan Hutchinson, Roisin Killeen, and Kaitlin Hickey while captain Finola Neville, who is unable to line out due to a knee injury, was also a key figure then.

The victory four years ago ended heartbreak for Cork who had suffered back-to-back final defeats in 2016 and 2017.

Galway last tasted success at intermediate level in 2013 on a day when they also won the double as their senior overcame Kilkenny. They have been back on the big stage since then, surprisingly losing out in the 2019 final to Westmeath.

With Cathal Murray at the helm of both the senior and intermediate teams since 2019, camogie in the county has enjoyed a huge profile.

The foundations were laid with the All-Ireland minor successes in 2012 and 2017 and four in a row of U16 wins from 2015 to 2018.

Add in the quality of club teams such as Sarsfields and Killamore and it's not hard to see the desire and passion they have for camogie.

Underage stars like Teegan Canning, Katie Gilchrist, current minor player Ally Heslin, who lined out at midfield in their semi-final clash with Meath, and Olwen Rabbittie, who played at corner-forward and scored a vital goal, will all be ones to watch.



Cork's Grainne Hannon keeps her eyes on the sliotar.

Picture: INPHO/Evan Treacy

They were the dominant force of the group stages as they racked up big scorers while in defence they have been rock solid all through. They got off the mark with a 0-20 to 0-12 win over Laois before hitting 5-22 against a Carlow side that they held to just seven points.

Westmeath provided a strong challenge, but they showed plenty of character to run out on -15 to 0-11 winners, they racked up an impressive 3-23 against Dublin before hitting Kerry with 2-17 as they confidently topped the group and booked their semi-final spot.

They got more than they bargained for against Meath and it took substitute Laura Kelly's late goal to finally seal it.

Cork have had a nice steady path to the final, only losing one game in the group series to Derry. They overcame Wexford, Meath, and Kilkenny to top their group and secure a semi-final spot where they once again came face to face with Derry who had recorded a quarter-final win over Dublin.

It was a tough encounter that went right down to the wire and Cork had to dig deep to make it to the final. It took a pointed free three minutes into added time from

scorer-in-chief Joanne Casey to secure the win.

Cork know they got out of jail in a game that Derry dominated for long periods.

If Cork allow Galway get to grips early in the game, as it happened against Derry, they will be in trouble.

Against Derry, Cork went short on several occasions and didn't pump ball into their inside line, particularly in the second half when they played with the aid of a strong wind.

They also sat back and didn't attack and it wasn't until the last 10 minutes when they pushed forward that they really troubled Derry, outscoring them 0-8 to 0-3.

Cork have a lot of experience.

Leanne O'Sullivan is the holder of four senior All-Ireland medals and has huge experience playing in Croke Park. Joanne Casey and Lauren Homan are both senior medal holders; Casey coming on as a sub in 2014 with Homan introduced in the 2017 and 2018 wins.

Experience at this level will be vital with a lot of players on both sides lining out in Croke Park for the first time it could be the key factor in tipping the balance.



Galway's Lisa Casserly, Rowena Rodrigues, Glen Dimplex head of external relations and engagement, Sinead McNulty, CEO of the Camogie Association, Cork manager, Trevor Coleman, and Finola Neville.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo



Cork's Hannah Looney in action at Croke Park in the All-Ireland semi-final. Picture: INPHO/James Crombie

Hannah is determined to make amends for last year's defeat

A CHAT with one former Cork player and a phone call to another made Hannah Looney's mind up about returning to Cork.

The dual star has been in New York since last October, for work reasons, but had this niggling voice in the back of her head about how the season ended for the Cork senior camogie side and Hannah wanted to help make amends for their loss to Galway in the final.

When the season ended she had the opportunity with her employer's MSD to move to New York and work there for a year and she decided to head Stateside to experience life in the Big Apple.

"I came home the last week in May and it has been a whirlwind since then. It has been great and in some ways, it's like I was never away and I came back with the intention of giving the All-Ireland a good crack.

"I left with a one year contract to go to New York and live it up over there and I don't regret anything at all. I went in October so did about eight months in the end. Matthew [camogie manager] was on to me when I left and I said we will address it in January.

"I moved over there and Orla Cotter [former Cork camogie star] was living down the road from me, so just having her support from day one and meeting all her friends meant I had a great community behind me and I was having the time of my life.

"A lot of my identity growing up has been around playing GAA because that's what I have done since I was 10 or 11 and I made great friends and have had great experiences



from it. But it was great to be in a big city where GAA was at the bottom of everyone's agenda and kind of find myself and know I can have passions for different things.

"But at the back of my mind was how the camogie final finished last year and it was always lingering and Matthew would check in with me every few weeks about coming back. I remember I sat down with Orla and said this is where my mindset is at and kind of made a plan and said I could probably get back workwise at the end of May.

"I was also training away over there and that was another thing I had a healthy relationship with exercising. When I'm home it's training for camogie or football and it's eat this and do that, whereas over there I just went for a run or went to the gym, without the pressure of needing to go training.

"I had a conversation with Orla about coming back and I rang Briega Corkery as I knew she would be someone to give me good advice. I told her where my head was at and that I was thinking of coming home for the championship.

"She told me that if I had any bit of itch for it to go back as I would regret it, so that helped me make my mind up then to come back and whatever happens on Sunday I have no regrets."



Hannah Looney celebrates with team-mate Katie O'Mahoney after beating Waterford. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile



Cork's Sorchá McCartan will offer physicality up front at Croke Park this Sunday. Picture: Eddie O'Han

Cats fancied but final should be a close contest



SUNDAY
All-Ireland Senior Camogie final: Cork v Kilkenny, Croke Park, 4.15pm.

IT'S a cliché that All-Ireland finals are 50/50, but I genuinely think it's very hard to call between Cork and Kilkenny on Sunday.

At the start of the year the pecking order was Galway, Cork, and Kilkenny, but retirements, injuries, and form have Cork and Kilkenny in the final. Based on the semi-final displays and Kilkenny dethroning the champions, they will go in as slight favourites. But Cork love All-Ireland finals.

Kilkenny lost 50% of the defence that were beaten by Cork in the 2021 All-Ireland semi-final by a point; Davina Tobin, Megan Farrell, and Colette Dormer have been replaced by Niamh Deely, Tiffany Fitzgerald, and Laura Murphy.

But what a transitional job manager Brian Dowling has done here. Kilkenny's defence was excellent against Galway. Having said that it was the collective tracking back that prevented Galway from netting. That and goalkeeper Aoife Norris, who blocked two potential goals and a penalty.

I think Kilkenny are somewhat sacrificing their attack by playing key forwards so deep. Right half-forward Denise Gaule played very defensively and I think Kilkenny will need her further up the field against Cork.

Katie Power, so often a thorn in Cork's defence, missed the 2020 campaign because of a cruciate injury and while she returned last year, she didn't have as much of an impact. Twelve months later



Katie Power of Kilkenny in action against Gaby Cough of Dublin. Picture: George Tewkesbury/Sportsfile

Kilkenny have her playing in midfield. I don't think they are getting the best out of Power there.

They moved her into their half-forward line during the second half against Galway and she had a hand in 1-1.

Traditionally Kilkenny are goal-getters. With Gaule and Power deep they don't look as dangerous in that regard as they used to.

Galway looked more likely to hit the net in the opening half of their semi-final, having a number of chances, but they failed to do so and a wonder strike by wing-back Laura Murphy saw Kilkenny breach the Galway rear-guard and go in front.

It shows the way the game has gone now, when your wing-back goals in an All-Ireland semi-final. Similar to Cork's Laura Hayes and Saoirse McCarthy she's an attacking defender.

Miriam Walsh at full-forward is Kilkenny's main attacking threat. Her battle with Libby Coppinger is going to be crucial. Walsh has strength and height and wins difficult ball. Coppinger has master-

ed the art of standing off and not being rounded easily.

Kilkenny will look to stop Cork's runners, particularly up the flanks by the aforementioned wingers. By default, due to all teams now pulling out their forwards and leaving typically two, maybe three inside, both sides will operate a sweeper.

Cork's good play comes from that sweeper initiation, primarily by Laura Treacy. The overlap and support play before striking to open space didn't work that well against Waterford for three-quarters of the game. Space was tight and it was only in the last quarter that they split Waterford, racking up eight points in a row.

Ashling Thompson and Hannah Looney will more than likely take midfield, both runners, both good at tracking back and moving forward.

There will be no better person to expose Kilkenny's new wing-back than Katrina Mackey. However, I doubt they'll leave Laura Murphy on her. If Cork play two inside then Michelle Teehan and Grace Walsh will pick up Mackey and Amy O'Connor, two brilliant defenders.

There was a lot of jersey pulling by Kilkenny defenders in last year's semi-final, preventing Amy O'Connor's bursts and it wasn't penalised.

Against the top sides, Cork rely on their runners, they'll need that and Chloe Sigeron to find space and score from distance. Of the 1-13 Cork scored in their recent league final, seven came from their midfield and defenders.

Sorchá McCartan will add physicality and a good role for her could be at centre-forward on Claire Phelan and go toe to toe.

Kilkenny played Galway twice in the past five weeks. Tremendous battles that are sure to stand to them.

Cork had the easier group, lost their final group game to Tipperary and struggled for long periods against Waterford. But Cork's intensity and tempo has been proven time and again in Croke Park.

Leaving the Big Apple to take another bite at All-Ireland glory



All-Ireland Camogie senior final
Cork v Kilkenny
 Sunday: Croke Park, 4.15pm
 Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare)
 TV: RTE

Therese O'Callaghan



Should I stay or should I go? That was the decision facing Hannah Looney after she moved to New York when a job opportunity came her way last October. Meant to stay for a year, her love for camogie was telling her otherwise. She was torn between the two, so she called upon a couple of friends to help her out.

"New York was so brilliant because Orla Cotter was living down the road, five minutes. Having Orla's support from day one was a great comfort, and I had a great community behind me. I was having the time of my life and I don't regret any of it.

"A big thing I learned, a lot of my identity growing up has been around playing GAA.



BACK IN THE FOLD: Hannah Looney warms up before Cork's championship clash with Dublin. 'It has been a whirlwind since I came home. It is like I never left in many ways,' she says. Picture: Inpho/Evan Treacy

That is all I have done since 10 or 11 and I don't regret that either because I made the best friends, had the best experiences. But it was great to be in a big city where GAA was on the bottom of everyone's agenda and to know I could find

myself in different ways.

"In the back of my mind, after the way the camogie final finished last year, it was always kind of lingering. And Matthew (Twomey) would check in every couple of weeks.

"I had a conversation with Orla because I knew I could probably get back to Ireland at the end of May. I was training away. That was another thing I found over there, was a really healthy relationship with exercise. When I am at

home, I am doing everything for camogie. You need to eat this and do that, to play camogie or football. Whereas over there, I just pick up my runners and go for a run without the pressure of, I need to train.

"I also rang Brieghe Corkery and I knew she would be a good one for advice. She has done it all on and off the pitch. I said this is where my head is at, I am going to try to go home for the championship or else stay here. Brieghe's advice was, if you have any bit of itch, go back. That made up my mind. I had an itch. And whatever happens on Sunday, I will have no regrets."

Looney arrived back in Ireland the last weekend in May and rejoined the Cork camp straight away.

"It has been a whirlwind since I came home. It is like I never left in many ways. It is great for my mindset to be going training and to have that routine since I came back has been brilliant.

"I came home with the intention of giving the All-Ireland a good crack. That is the honest truth, I came back for camogie.

"My company where I work as a chemical engineer, MSD or Merck as they are known in

the United States, have been so sound. I knew if I had a conversation with them, they would do their best to help me.

"The obvious goal now is to win the All-Ireland, but it is a big challenge. We are going in as underdogs, which we can't question with the run Kilkenny have had. They are unbeaten in the championship. They looked very strong in the last 15 minutes of the semi-final, they looked that bit hungrier than Galway.

"Have we played our best, is the question. We all know if we do, we are well able to get over the line. That is the plan and that is the hope."

Whatever happens, the travel bug may have bitten the Killeagh star.

"New York has opened my horizons. I will probably be based in Ireland for another year or two and reassess again. The want to travel the world is definitely high on my priority list. With MSD/Merck, there are plenty of opportunities if I want to go back. So, I could see myself taking time out of work and travelling the world. And definitely going back to New York. What I loved about it was you could be anyone over there, and no-one bats an eyelid. I kind of fit right in."

2020 All-Ireland win lifted cloud over Kilkenny

Paul Keane

Kilkenny manager Brian Dowling has admitted a cloud hung over the camp throughout 2020 as they felt the pressure of trying to avoid four All-Ireland final defeats in a row.

That was Dowling's first season in charge after taking over from Ann Downey and he sensed the desperation of his players after three consecutive final failures.

Croke Park was empty for that December 2020 final win over Galway though the breakthrough still meant everything to long-suffering players. Icons like Denise

Gaule, Grace Walsh, and Claire Phelan return for Sunday's decider against Cork with fond memories of ending their All-Ireland hoodoo.

"It was a strange final with no crowd but looking back it probably suited us because there was huge pressure going into that one," said Dowling of 2020.

"We had lost three finals in a row — to lose a fourth would have been absolutely disastrous.

"To lose that final, I don't know whether some of them would still be playing today, I just think there was so much baggage there. That year,

there was a cloud over us and it finally lifted after that match."

Cork stopped holders Kilkenny at the semi-final stage last season though Dowling insists Sunday isn't about revenge. "It's not revenge because this year was more about building again because we lost so many players from last year, to retirements and injuries," he said.

"It was just about trying to get our team right and I suppose we targeted the Leinster championship early on in the year. We won that and that gave us a lot of confidence.

"But we didn't really know

where we were until we went up to Athenry and we knew leaving there that we had a decent team and that we were able to put it up to Galway.

"Then we got Dublin in the All-Ireland quarter-final, got Galway again after that and to beat Galway was great because we have a lot of new girls and that gave us confidence going into the final now."

It's been a tough year for Dowling. Back in March, a fire gutted the home of his elderly uncles Dominic and Oliver, taking Oliver's life and leaving Dominic homeless. It came just weeks after Paul Shefflin,

brother of Kilkenny coach Tommy Shefflin, passed away suddenly while out running.

"It was tough," said ex-Kilkenny hurler Dowling. "In fairness, the camogie really helps things and the girls being there has been really helpful to go and train and stuff like that, it helps take your mind off it. Obviously to win an All-Ireland would really top off the whole year for us. That (grief) will never go away, especially for the likes of Tommy who lost his brother, that will never go away but I'm sure it will help in a small way if we get over the line against Cork."

A gofundme page was set up to help Dowling's uncle Dominic and raised tens of thousands of euro. Among the first to put their hands in their pockets or offer condolences were camogie and hurling teams and players that Dowling had been doing battle with for years, Cork included.

"A lot of the Cork players and Matthew (Twomey, manager) contacted me and offered their condolences," said Dowling. "That meant a lot at the time and they did not have to do that. For 60 minutes on the pitch, we will be rivals but we will shake hands afterwards."



Derry's goalkeeper Niamh McQuillan's hurley connects with Cork's Lauren Homan. Picture: Patrick Browne



Cork's Ashling Thompson and manager Matthew Twomey, Rowena Rodrigues, Glen Dimplex Head of External Relations and Engagement, Si-nead McNulty CEO of the Camogie Association, Kilkenny manager Brian Dowling and Claire Phelan ahead of Sunday's All-Ireland final.



Chloe Sigerson of Cork in action against Iona Heffernan of Waterford at Croke Park. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

Cork boss relishing his All-Ireland final day out in Croke Park

Twomey loving camogie journey

CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

WAS there a bigger plan for Cork manager Matthew Twomey when his GAA playing career was abruptly halted at 19 years of age?

Could he have imagined at the time that that awful episode would lead him into a lifetime of rewarding coaching and an All-Ireland final in Croke Park as manager of the Cork senior camogie team?

How many people get to manage a team in Croke Park on All-Ireland final day?

It's an honour not to be taken lightly and with Twomey's likable and unassuming nature, there is no one more aware of that.

"In 1993 I developed a lump in my head that had to come out. It obviously was a big operation. I tried to play hurling afterwards, but it was impossible.

"I found it very hard to deal with. The lads in the club pushed me into coaching. I coached in Douglas for 23 years.

"I got involved with people in Douglas who I learned an awful lot from, managers and coaches. Then I got involved in the Douglas camogie side of things with Mick O'Regan. Mick was absolutely brilliant. I suppose I was kind of the 'bang your chest' type of coach whereas he was very calculated and astute, and I learned an awful lot from him."

He's indebted to Douglas for where he finds himself this weekend, preparing to face Kilkenny at Croke Park.

"My dad was chairman there for 30 years so myself and my brother hadn't much option but to be down there! I love the place. I feel, I don't know, kind of guilty or something that I should enjoy days like this in Croke Park when people who gave their life and soul to the GAA as much if not more than I did never get to experience the day of an All-Ireland final."

He came in as coach to the camogie team in 2014, had to

step away the following year but was back again in 2016.

"In 2016 I was back in full-time. I then took a total GAA sabbatical for the first time for about three years and didn't miss it massively at the time.

"Then an opportunity came in 2021 again. The role Paudie Murray offered me in 'player management' suited me down to the ground."

Having three surgeries took a toll, but it isn't something he wants to dwell on.

"They're my problems. Everyone else has their problems. I'm able to deal with them."

After Murray left, he was approached to take the main role, with his partner Maria urging him to take the opportunity.

"Since I got involved with Cork camogie, I've loved it. The girls are fantastic. I'm stone mad about them. I'm not there for the ego side of things."

And of course, he got Davy Fitzgerald on board with him.

"Yeah, Anna Geary set us up. I met him for a couple of hours. I knew I had him even though it took him about a month to accept."

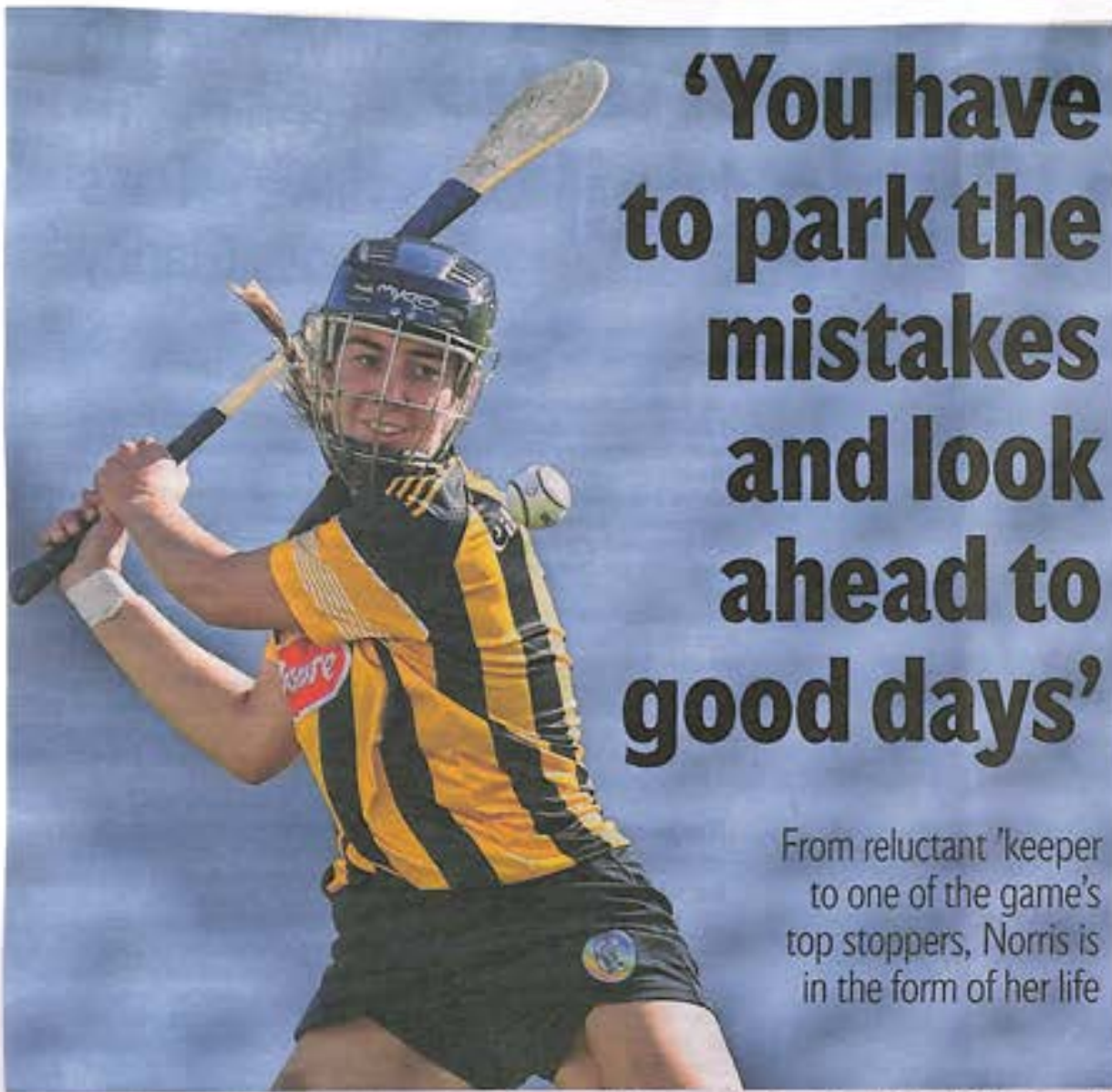
"He was vital but I think the people that were vital to me were Teddy O'Donovan, Anthony O'Neill, and Niall Collins, from last year's management to stay on as I needed that continuity and support. We all get on well. It's important we have a craic."

"They're super at that as well as all those that joined us this year, we've about five or six coaches. Davy leads it all. He came down with James Hickey as well who's absolutely excellent."

"We're at the pinnacle now. We've a great opportunity and we hope we'll get a great following up there."

'You have to park the mistakes and look ahead to good days'

From reluctant 'keeper to one of the game's top stoppers, Norris is in the form of her life



Kilkenny goalkeeper Aoife Norris has starred for the Black and Amber en route to Sunday's All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final against Cork SPORTSFILE

Cliona Foley

SANDFORD PARK, a small private school in the well-heeled Dublin suburb of Ranelagh that only first accepted girls nine years ago is not, as a legendary commentator might say, a camogie stronghold.

Hockey, rugby and cricket are its sports of choice, but in PE and maths teacher Aoife Norris they've got one cracking hurler.

Keeping goal may not have been her first positional choice but, at 23, her trademark speed off the line and fearless courting of anything approaching her domain has already made her one of the best in the game.

Freedom

"I'd love to say I always wanted to be one (goalkeeper) but, under-age, you always wanted the freedom of being out the field and scoring, so it's definitely something I grew into," she admits.

She credits the late Tom Holden, her under-age club coach in Piltown, for making her stick it out between the posts - and his faith was well founded.

She was heroic once again in Kilkenny's All-Ireland semi-final, making four outstanding saves against Galway (including a late first-half penalty) and seems to have ice in her veins.

Wasn't she worried facing her opposite number Sarah Healy after 28 minutes?

"Nah, the pressure is all on the forward in penalties. I look forward to the challenge," she grins.

"If you're standing up facing Denise Gaule (inset) on a

weekly basis, there's not really anyone else that's going to put the same fear in you."

With distribution now just as important as shot-stopping in an increasingly tactical game, puck-out strategies have become a central plank of every small-ball team.

She is constantly working to increase her striking accuracy, and having a former county goalkeeper in the backroom team helps.

"I've done a lot of development work with PJ Ryan, he's a big help and all you want to do is keep learning. Everyone has something to add."

"It (the emphasis on puck-outs) has come really with the overall revolution in the game. The Limerick hurlers probably set the tone with their use of the ball, that 'primary possession'."

"Gone is the day when you'd just hit it up the field and your job is done. It's all about composure. That's something that we've really worked on since last year, to find the right player and use the ball well."

"The first 15 minutes of every training we work on our own game and it (accuracy) comes with practice, practice, practice; long puck-outs, short puck-outs, being able to vary them."

"Seeing them comes with communication and I trust every one of the girls out there. They make the move and I have to spot it and hit it. Sometimes you don't see it but the backs will tell me where the pocket is. We all work as a team."

A raft of retirements and injuries meant Kilkenny only retained half of last year's starting defenders, but you certainly wouldn't know it - and their Dublin crew have accelerated that bond.

Norris shared accommodation with centre-back Claire Phelan and corner-back Michelle Teehan while studying in DCU. She still lives with the latter on Dublin's southside and Laura Murphy and Grace Walsh are also based in the capital.

Three teachers and a nurse, they all share the journey up and down to county training, once or twice a week during term time - and shortening the journey is not the only benefit.

Love

Norris's first senior call-up came in 2019, she became first-choice 'keeper in 2020 and seems to love big days, winning player of the match in last year's league final.

But, in sport's most precarious role, she's not immune to the odd blooper.

"There's always tough days and matches as a goalkeeper. I just came to the realisation that you have to park the mistakes and just look ahead to the good days. No player in Ireland has a flawless game every day, there's mistakes made in every corner of the pitch."

"Accepting that it's part of the game probably took me a while to learn. It comes with experience and maturity - and I have to credit Brian (Dowling, manager), too."

"He's really put that message out to us, 'don't be afraid to make mistakes, everyone does it, it's how you deal with it that will make you'."

"There's games when you're dropping balls or they're flying past you and you're sick of picking them out of the net, but it's how you react to the next one that matters. If you dwell on it, there'll be four more passing you."



Cork manager Matthew Twomey and coach Davy Fitzgerald at Croke Park last month. Picture: INPHO/James Crombie



The Echo
TV WEEK
YOUR GUIDE TO
THIS WEEK'S TV

Saturday, August 6, 2022

Glory for Lee and Leaside?

Cork camogie captain Amy in All-Ireland quest: Page 3





GAA President Larry McCarthy with the U8 and U10 camogie group and their coaches during his recent visit to the Na Piarsaigh GAA Club. Picture: Howard Crowley

On a year of celebration Na Piarsaigh stalwart to lead out Rebels in final

IT'S fitting that as Na Piarsaigh celebrate their 50th year affiliated to the Camogie Association, for the first time in their history they have a player leading Cork out to a senior camogie final in Croke Park.

Catherine Martin, who is synonymous with Na Piarsaigh Camogie Club and who was until this year chairperson for 25 years and now holds the position of treasurer, said that the entire club, GAA and camogie alike, are absolutely over the moon for Amy Lee.

"We've had great players represent our club over the years, players like Paula Goggins, Irene O'Leary, Jean Paula Kent but if Amy lifts the cup on Sunday, she'll be the first Na Piarsaigh person to lift the O'Duffy Cup. She is an absolute amazing ambassador for the club.

"All the kids know her from the U6 busy bees, boy or girl, every child in the club knows Amy. No matter what's on in the club she's there, you don't even have to ask her. We took two buses up to the league final and Amy's mother Angie came down that morning to go on the bus with two big bags of sweets that Amy sent down for all the kids on their bus trip.

"Amy has always been like this, it's not just because she's captain. She's always there."

The added bonus for Na Piarsaigh is that Trevor Coleman is manager of the Cork intermediate side and Trevor Allen, Catherine's husband, is an intermediate selector, making tomorrow a massive day for the club. Both men are also involved in underage hurling with Na Piarsaigh and widely known.

"I think it shows that they're just great GAA people," said Catherine. "All in all, it's great for our club and great for the northside. With Amy O'Connor captain in 2020 and now Amy Lee, it's brilliant for us."

What's great I feel is that young boys see their coaches managing and coaching women's teams and I'm sure there'll be as many boys as girls jumping into the buses to head to Dublin tomorrow and support them.

Spare a thought for Finola Neville. She's captain of the intermediate side but suffered a cruciate injury in their first championship game with Wexford. She never complained. It wasn't about Finola but the collective, and she has remained by her team's side.

At every training session and game, she has been a positive



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

and calming influence. The St Catherine's player wears her heart on her sleeve on the pitch and will do so again tomorrow from the sideline.

What a brilliant U16A All-Ireland final win last Sunday. And what a terrific crowd in Mallow for the occasion. The stand was full to capacity with standing space around it also full.

I really enjoyed the game and I think the main reason for that was that it was 15-on-15. The good old days when you went out and won your position. There were no gimmicks, just hard work and skill with some brilliant performances.

Ava Fitzgerald was also my Player of the Match. But it was an excellent team performance where Cork dominated after the first 15 minutes. Amy McCarthy, Grainne Finn, Amy Sheppard, Rachel Roche just some from a top-class display.

Tomorrow is a special day. We have two teams in Croke Park as we look to complete a clean sweep of All-Ireland titles and we have the 1995 and 1997 jubilee teams being honoured at a lunch in the stadium and introduced to the crowd at half time in the senior game.

A 'quiet' reunion is taking place Saturday night with 1997 member Sinead O'Callaghan flying in from New York. The 1995 team had to wait two years for their day due to Covid in 2020 but there isn't too much of a difference between both panels and it's worked out great.

1995 of course was our big win over Kilkenny where Cork hadn't beaten them in a final since 1972; six points down midway through the second half, we won by four; 4-8 to 2-10. 1997 we regained our crown against Galway having lost it in 1996 to the same county; 0-15 to 2-5.

There were some great players on those teams, players that people still reminisce about today. I won't start naming as I could name them all. Those were the days when you again won your patch, and these girls unquestionably did that.

Tom Nott was manager, a great manager, for both years and he will also join us on the day.



Cork's Chloe Sigerson scores a point against Kilkenny in 2020.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

Cork must be prepared for a Cats onslaught

WHEN Kilkenny met Galway in the 2020 All-Ireland camogie final, it was a game that Kilkenny just could not lose, a result they refused to let go again.

They entered an empty Croke Park on that mid-December evening with history and a world of pain from the previous three years, but despite the apocalyptic potential of losing a fourth successive final, Kilkenny played with an intent and an insistence that, this time, it would be different.

It was. The pain of the previous three years was the poison in their bite, the venom in their sting. It was also the ice in their veins when Galway levelled the match with four minutes remaining and Kilkenny were suddenly back in that mental place where past demons were granted the licence to scream loudly into their ears again and spook them.

Instead, Kilkenny turned that fear into inspiration.

Pain is often the best source of motivation. In "The Her Sports Show" last week, Kilkenny captain Aoife Prendergast spoke about the disappointment of losing last year's All-Ireland semi-final to Cork.

"That was a huge defeat for us," said Prendergast.

"There was massive disappointment in our dressing room afterwards. We have bottled that hurt up from last year and we need to use that now as momentum going into the final."

At this stage, Kilkenny camogie could nearly sell shares in hurt given how often they have lost on the big stage over the last decade. Sunday will be Kilkenny's eighth final in 10 years but Kilkenny have only won two titles in that timespan.

They haven't won successive All-Irelands now for over 30 years but when Kilkenny set out on that bid last year, Cork stopped them in their tracks. Again. Three of those five All-Ireland final defeats Kilkenny have suffered since 2013 have come at the hands of Cork. And Kilkenny will be desperate to ensure it doesn't happen again, especially in another final.



CAMOGIE

Christy O'Connor

Cork will want to keep their foot stamped on Kilkenny's throat, which is also bound up in the historical context of the rivalry and how Kilkenny dominated the relationship for so long.

Historically, there has always been an edge to the rivalry, especially from a Cork perspective, primarily because they always struggled to beat Kilkenny.

Despite topping the roll of honour with 28 titles, Cork only managed to beat Kilkenny in seven of those finals. And three of those wins have come in the last decade.

On the other hand, of Kilkenny's 14 titles, nine were won in finals against Cork. When Kilkenny won seven-in-a-row between 1985-1991, they defeated Cork in four of those deciders.

First

When Cork finally defeated Kilkenny in the 1995 final for the first time in six final meetings over the previous 20 years, it was the sweetest victory Cork camogie had ever tasted.

That 1995 game also ended a remarkable sequence of Cork-Kilkenny camogie dominance. Between 1970 and 1995, the two shared 23 of the 26 titles of that period.

When RTE first started showing highlights of camogie finals in the 1980s, Cork and Kilkenny always seemed to be the only two counties competing, such was their dominance.

They were ahead of everyone else, on so many levels. In the 1989 All-Ireland final, Cork played with a sweeper, long before the term became so popular in hurling or camogie.

That level of innovation captured how much the teams put into trying to beat each other.

The Cork-Kilkenny rivalry always meant something, but it evaporated during the late nineties and noughties as Kilkenny slipped in the rankings. The relationship between the counties changed dramatically at senior level, but it was still highly active at underage level, which helped hone the rivalry as many of those players met at senior level.

Yet the edge has really been sharpened in recent years, with tomorrow being the sides fifth final meeting in nine seasons.

Kilkenny only beat Cork in one of those finals — in 2016 — but Cork came back to exact the ultimate retribution with successive final wins over their great rivals. The pain was all the more acute again for Kilkenny with Cork winning both games by a single point.

The modern game has been absolutely dominated by Cork, Galway, and Kilkenny, but the big difference in the Cork-Kilkenny rivalry now is that Kilkenny are trying to crack Cork in the same way that Cork spent so long desperately trying to break Kilkenny.

And all those bitter losses have imbued Kilkenny with the same desire and hunger for success that propelled Cork against Kilkenny for years.

"We're well versed in loss at this stage," said Collette Dormer in 2018.

"But you learn to pick yourself up again, to push through that heartbreak and pain, to keep moving."

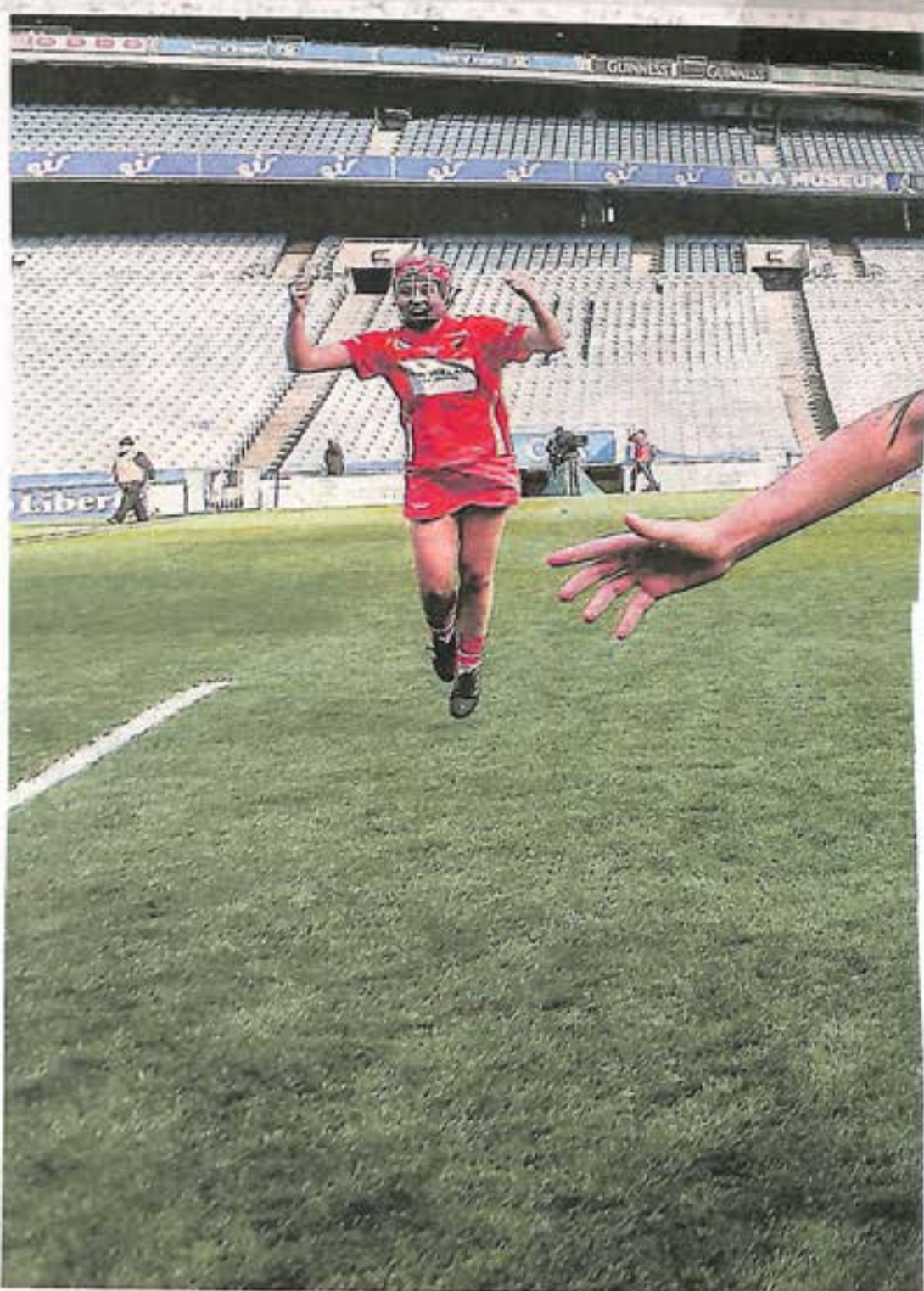
"You learn not to see your losses as a weight holding you down but as fuel — fuel to succeed."

Kilkenny will be powered by that fuel again tomorrow but Cork have their own hurt and motivation too, having lost last year's final to Galway.

It's also four years now since Cork last won an All-Ireland. Since the 10-year drought between 1983-92, when Cork were under Kilkenny's thumb, Cork have never gone more than five years without an All-Ireland.

Cork will be highly motivated tomorrow, but so will Kilkenny. And that is the kind of onslaught that Cork will now need to meet head on.

Thompson is impatient after four-year wait



Three key battlegrounds

Midfield: This sector promises to be an intriguing battle with both management teams looking to gain a decisive edge. Ashling Thompson's performances all year have once again established her as one of the great Cork players while 2021 double All-Star Hannah Looney's early return from New York is a huge boost for Matthew Twomey. It is likely they will be pitted against Denise Gaule, Laura Murphy or Katie Power. Murphy's goal was vital in the semi-final and it was testament to Kilkenny's incredible work rate. Expect sparks to fly around the middle third.

Dealing with Denise Gaule: Gaule is one of Kilkenny's most influential figures from play and from placed balls. Her experience and versatility are key to her side's hopes of All-Ireland glory. Cork know the former Player-of-the-Year only too well. What plan Twomey, Davy Fitzgerald and company come up with in an attempt to curtail her influence will be interesting. When the Windgap woman delivers, as she usually does on the big stage, the Cats play well.

Defensive duties: Cork's back six face their biggest test of all against a much-vaunted Kilkenny attack. The full-back line of Meabh Murphy, Libby Coppinger and Meabh Cahalane have soldiered together for years. Outside them, Laura Hayes, Laura Treacy and Saoirse McCarthy are the familiar names that fill the number five, six and seven jerseys. Closing down the Kilkenny threat in front of Amy Lee's goal will be their main focus. They conceded four goals in their five group round-robin games, and they kept a clean sheet in their semi-final victory over Waterford.

Words: Therese O'Callaghan



Glen Dimplex Senior All-Ireland Championship Final

Cork v Kilkenny

Tomorrow: Croke Park, 4.15pm

Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare)

TV: RTÉ

Paul Keane



WHEN she calls it a 'drought' you check to see if Ashling Thompson is about to break into a smile but no, nothing. She truly means it.

It's only four years since Cork last won the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland camogie title, a mere Olympic Games cycle.

Yet for Thompson, four times a winner in the five seasons between 2014 and 2018, it

feels like a famine.

"Yeah, it is, because it's something we're not used to," she said. "When you go, what's it been now, 2018 since we won a final, it's a drought in Cork camogie. It mightn't be for other counties but it's a drought for us."

"Do you know what though, you learn a lot from losing. I know you want to be winning but at the end of the day, you only learn from your losses I think so look, it's been a big help for us in ways, it's been a big motivator."

With seven All-Ireland senior medals in all — four with Cork and three with Milford — in the space of just five years between 2013 and 2018, her craving to return to the podium is perhaps a little more understandable.

It's partly why the combative midfielder moved heaven and earth to overturn a two-match ban which would have ruled her out of last month's semi-final win over Waterford and tomorrow's decider.

Then again, there may not have been any final had she not been introduced to such a positive effect against the Déise. That is putting the cart before the horse though in terms of explaining just how the 2015 All-Ireland winning captain managed to get clear of the ban.

At 6am on the morning of the Waterford game, she hit the road for Dublin and a 10.30am hearing at the Croke Park Hotel.

The hearing went her way and, just hours later, Thompson took her place on the bench across the road at Croke Park, too 'unsettled' to actually start, according to manager Matthew Twomey, but available to come on and turn the game back in Cork's favour with a lionhearted

personal display following a poor start by the team.

"We had spoken about whether or not to start me for the game and I think we had kind of agreed that it would be better off to see how things went and if they needed me to bring me on," she said.

"That was the plan because I wasn't sure how much I would have in the tank. Look, if I was to come on I was going to give it hell for leather anyway, no matter what, but I think the worry was in terms of how much was left in the tank at that stage because it was a long three weeks."

It was the longest of days too, that Saturday, and the wonder is why the disciplinary process couldn't have been wrapped up much sooner, for better or for worse.

"Yeah, I mean we had three weeks to get it looked after," said Thompson. "To have two hearings was kind of disappointing in the timeframe that was there. But I don't know the ins and outs of it and whose job it is to get these hearings in place. It could be our fault, it could be anyone's fault."

Thompson acknowledges there was fault on her part

too. Initially booked in Cork's final round group game against Tipperary, she was reportedly shown red in a separate incident at the end of the game for abusive language.

"It's funny because I've actually never been in that position myself before as a player. It was something that I don't ever want to see from myself in the future as a player."

Who knows what role Thompson will have this time. The two-time All-Star came on as a firefighter against Waterford, putting out flames all around a besieged Cork defence. At her best she is a ball

GAMEZone

Cork v Kilkenny

Amy Lee	1	Aoife Norris
Meabh Murphy	2	Michelle Teehan
Libby Coppinger	3	Grace Walsh
Meabh Cahalane	4	Tiffanie Fitzgerald
Laura Hayes	5	Niamh Deely
Laura Treacy	6	Claire Phelan
Saoirse McCarthy	7	Laura Murphy
Ashling Thompson	8	Steffi Fitzgerald
Hannah Looney	9	Katie Power
Kazrina Mackey	10	Denise Gaule
Fiona Keating	11	Michaela Kenesally
Chloe Sperson	12	Julieanne Malone
Olivia Healy	13	Mary O'Connell
Sorcha McCartan	14	Miriam Walsh
Amy O'Connor	15	Katie Nolan

■ Cork ■ Kilkenny

Kilkenny have momentum but must deal with Cork sweeper



Enquiring reporter: Therese O'Callaghan got four experts to break down the All-Ireland camogie final

Cáit Devane (Tipperary player)

Caoimhe Costelloe (Limerick player)

Susan Earner (Former Galway player/Offaly manager - recently stepped down)

Beth Carton (Waterford player)

Cork against Kilkenny, who will win?

Cáit: This will be a hard one to call. Going on championship form it's hard to see past a Kilkenny win. They have been very consistent throughout the year showing great determination and work rate especially in their forward line. Even though they have been hit

with injuries and retirements, the new players have seamlessly stepped up to the mark.

Caoimhe: It is a difficult one to call. Both came through really tough tests in the semi-finals. I have been very impressed with Kilkenny's spread of scorers and the nature of their victories. Cork came out on top in an incredibly difficult group and needed everything to see off Waterford. Kilkenny will need to stop the Cork half-back running from deep, otherwise Laura Hayes and Saoirse McCarthy will hurt them. I am going to say Kilkenny by one or two points but I would

not rule out a draw.

Susan: I think Kilkenny will come out winners. I feel they had a bigger test against Galway in the semi-final and they showed great composure. Cork on the other hand seemed to stumble over the line and were hugely dependent on Ashling Thompson coming on to stabilise the team. I feel the Kilkenny management will know Cork inside and out whereas Mathew Twomey and his team will be less familiar with Kilkenny's strengths and weaknesses.

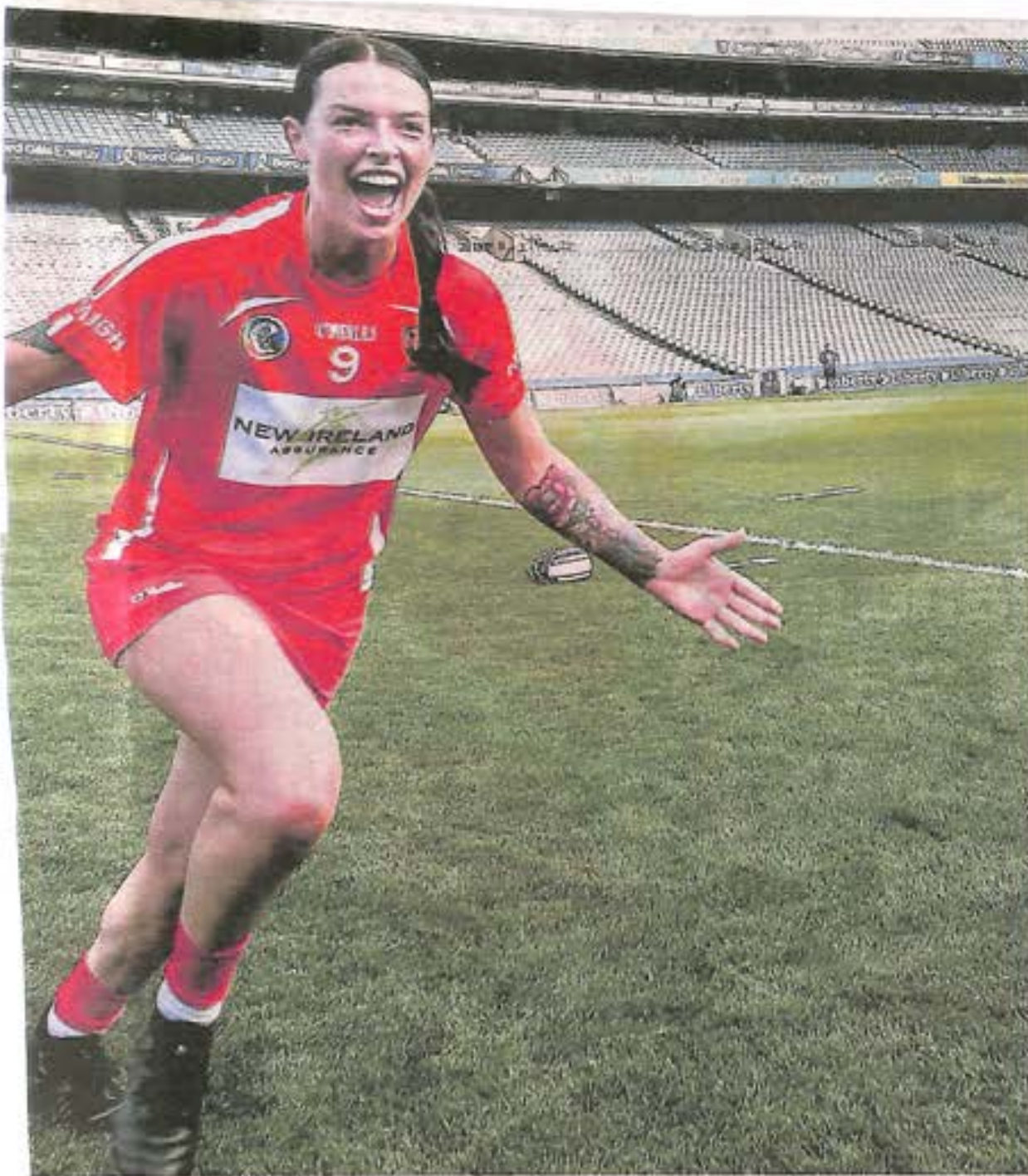
Beth: I think it will be an extremely tight game and very difficult to call. I think if I had to, I would say Kilkenny. I think they have great momentum going into this game after two very good performances in both their semi final and quarter final.

Who are the players to watch out for?

Cáit: For Kilkenny Denise Gaule

will be vital, providing scores from play, frees and the link between defence and attack. Grace Walsh and Claire Phelan marshal the Kilkenny defence from the pivotal positions of full and centre back, their experience will be a huge asset in containing the Cork attack. For Cork, Ashling Thompson is a massive leader, Cork improved immensely with her introduction in the semi-final. Amy O'Connor is finding form and will benefit from the wide-open spaces of Croke Park.

Caoimhe: Ashling Thompson dragged the Cork team back into the semi-final while also instilling belief in others. I am looking forward to seeing how Kilkenny will try to curtail her. Cork will also look to Amy O'Connor, Libby Coppinger, Hannah Looney, Laura Treacy and others who have done it before. Kilkenny's Claire Phelan's half-back role will be something to watch for. Her distribution and



Cork's Ashling Thompson celebrates after the All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship Final win over Kilkenny at Croke Park back in September 2018.
Picture: Bryan Keane/Inpho

of energy and creativity throughout the middle third and Cork will need that and more to take care of Kilkenny. The Leinster champions are slight favourites, even if they've lost four of their last finals to Cork since 2009, including that 2018 decider. "I've been around long enough to know what to expect from Kilkenny," said Thompson. "No matter what the obstacle in front of them, you'll always get the same, you'll always get the same

level of effort, the same level of fight." Both sides came from behind at half-time in their respective semi-finals. "That's it, we're kind of the same," nodded the 32-year-old personal trainer. "We don't really do panic either which is great. I think the few younger girls that got on our panel a few years ago, they've been there long enough now to know what to do when the game gets hairy. "That's the thing, whether

Kilkenny go down or we go down, there's no-one really going to throw the towel in too early. I think it'll go to the 64th, 65th minutes, whatever it takes, and that's what you want to see. "We came back from a five-point deficit against Waterford to win by five so that says a lot in terms of our character, in terms of our depth. But absolutely we have more in the tank and we're going to need to bring it in order to get over the line."

calmness is hugely impressive. They will also need a huge performance from Julie Ann Malone, Katie Power and Miriam Walsh. **Susan:** It was very evident in Cork's last outing that Ashling Thompson was orchestrator of all of Cork's attacks. If Kilkenny can stop her distribution, it would really help their chances. Denise Gaule is always an important player for Kilkenny. It was interesting to see her drop so deep against Galway. I feel it worked in Kilkenny's favour to create space up front. Aoife Norris has been brilliant for Kilkenny this year. **Beth:** Kilkenny's Denise Gaule is a player who must be marked tightly. She is a serious striker of the ball and she can score from anywhere. Miriam Walsh is another extremely strong player and a serious goal threat. For Cork, Amy O'Connor and Chloe Sigerson are the main scoring threats and will need to be

marked closely. Ashling Thompson plays that free role for Cork extremely well, she can't be left free. **What kind of a game do you think it will be?** **Cait:** I think this game will be tactical early doors, with Cork possibly setting up with a sweeper, a tactic they have successfully implied this year. It will be interesting to see how Kilkenny will try to counteract this. They have clever players in the middle third with the likes of Denise Gaule, Katie Power and Julie Ann Malone who have the potential to use the ball well and could cause this Cork backline problems. **Caolmhe:** I would imagine Ray Kelly will allow the game flow which should result in a more open game. I see it being tactical until teams settle and find their rhythm. It will be interesting to see who Cork delegate to mark Gaule and

Walsh. I am also excited to see the midfield battle between Ashling Thompson/Hannah Looney against Katie Power/Laura Murphy, with Gaule spending time out in the middle third at different stages. **Susan:** I think Cork will play a running game and try to create overlaps to get into the scoring zones. Kilkenny may drop Gaule back initially to settle the team but should push forward. We could see Kilkenny shoot from distance. **Beth:** I think it will be a defensive game. I think Cork like to play a defensive game. They will try to cut off the space for the Kilkenny forwards and leave it for their own inside line. It should be an interesting tactical battle. **Who are the favourites?** **Cait:** Kilkenny will go in as favourites. They are unbeaten in this year's championship and will take massive confidence from dethron-

'I've nothing to prove to anyone so I just give it my all'

Robert Cribben

It's been an action packed couple of years for Mullinavat's Julianne Malone.

Back in 2016, the Kilkenny star won an All-Ireland title in her debut intercounty season and she also picked up an All-Star at the end of the year.

The talented forward played with the Cats for another two years before making the decision to emigrate to Australia. Malone has since returned from Down Under and she outlined her reason why.

"I was enjoying life in Australia but I suppose family commitments brought me home," she said. "My brother and sister were having children and my brother was getting married too. Throw Covid into the mix and that kind of confirmed my decision because the holiday visa I was on meant if I left the country I wasn't going to get back out."

The 27-year-old nurse returned to the Kilkenny squad at the beginning of the year and she's even exceeded her own expectations over the course of the championship season thus far.

"I was delighted when Brian Dowling texted me to ask me to come back in to the Kilkenny squad," she said. "I'm delighted to be on the starting team at the moment as it probably wasn't an expectation when I came back in."

"I was thinking this year I would maybe build myself up with a bit of game time and

then break onto the team next year, but I'm delighted at the same time.

"I didn't have to think twice about coming back in as I was well ready to come back and give it my full commitment," she said.

Malone has rejoined a much different squad to the one she left four years ago but she's full of praise for the new talent emerging in Kilkenny.

"You are probably coming in expecting to see the same faces that were here when you left but girls have moved on with their own lives and unfortunately others are injured at the moment, even if they are still around.

"There's a lot of new girls in the team and it's great to see the fresh faces. They are all really good hurlers that are well able to hurl so it's great as they are bringing on Kilkenny camogie even more."

While the future looks bright for the Cats, Malone is firmly living in the present with her four point tally in the semi-final win over Galway illustrating that.

"I probably had one of my better days in the semi-final and I'm kind of putting that down to just going out and throwing off the shackles as I've nothing to lose and I've nothing to prove to anyone so I just give it my all," she said.

"I don't put huge expectations on myself so I just give it everything when I'm on the pitch and I'm just delighted to be back involved."



Cork's Sorcha McCartan is tackled by Julianne Malone of Kilkenny.

Little to separate old rivals

Daragh Ó Conchúir

This is the 15th meeting of Cork and Kilkenny in a Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior final but the first since 2018, when Aoife Murray received the O'Duffy Cup on behalf of the Rebels.

The old rivals are deadlocked on seven triumphs apiece, so overall bragging rights are also at stake. Though Cork have 28 titles to Kilkenny's 14.

The blood and bandage reached the League final but fell short to Galway, who had also proven a tad too good in last year's All-Ireland final. They cruised through the group stages until being stunned by Tipperary in the final tie, but that didn't impact on their direct progression to the semi-final, where they survived a huge challenge from Waterford before prevailing by a flattering five points.

They will need to be a lot better than was the case for at least 40 minutes of that game if they are to beat Waterford, particularly in attack. Ashling Thompson had a major impact upon her introduction, while Libby Coppinger and Saoirse McCarthy also stood out and Amy O'Connor did the business from placed balls. Emma Murphy also made some big plays when brought on in the second half.

Kilkenny remain unbeaten all season in competitive games, only failing to reach the League final on score difference after Cork's Chloe Sigerson pegged them back with a very late pointed free from distance to nab a draw. They then claimed provincial honours and scored heavily through the championship group stages, before again, just losing out on score difference, this time for the direct semi-final route, thanks to Aine Keane's stupendous equaliser for Galway in a game for the ages at Kenny Park.

The rematch was set up by a comfortable win over Dublin in the quarter-final and colossal workrate, allied with four big saves from Aoife Norris and Laura Murphy's brilliant goal, gave the Noresiders a four-point win.

Miriam Walsh has been operating at her best as the attacking focal point, while Julianne Malone's return after a three-year absence has added class and a regular scoring return. Katie Nolan is perpetual motion, while Claire Phelan's reading of the play and the marking of Michelle Teehan and Grace Walsh have been vital.

Both teams are missing influential figures from last year's semi-final, when Cork edged the verdict. Orla Cronin, Pamela Mackey, and Laura Collins are significant losses for Cork but Kilkenny have lost Davina Tobin, Collette Dormer, Meighan Farrell, Kellyann Doyle, and Aoife Doyle to retirement, travelling, and injury.

But Kilkenny have the likes of Tiffany Fitzgerald, Steffi Fitzgerald, and Michaela Kenneally that have capitalised on the increased opportunities, while for Cork, Meabh Murphy, Cliona Healy, and Katie O'Mahony are among those to have established themselves as regular first-team starters while former Down star, Sorcha McCartan has been a wonderful addition.

Don't expect a lot to separate the sides at the final whistle.

Who is your Player of the Year?

Cait: Claire Phelan. The centre-back is immense for Kilkenny and leads the team from this pivotal position.

Caolmhe: It is hard to look past Miriam Walsh. She has scored an incredible 4-13 in the All-Ireland series. Her technical and physical presence makes her invaluable. A special mention for Lorraine Bray. She was magnificent throughout the entire All-Ireland series.

Susan: Being a goalie, I always watch for the standout keeper and Aoife Norris gets my vote. Kilkenny wouldn't be in the final without her. It's very hard to pick an outfield player, it will be chosen from Miriam Walsh, Katie Power and Ashling Thompson.

Beth: I might be accused of being biased here but in my opinion Lorraine Bray. She has been phenomenal all year long.



Cork's Ashling Moloney evading the challenge of Meath's Rachel Harty in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Championship game at Castle Road. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Ashling is relishing the opportunity to play at Croke Park

SUNDAY'S All-Ireland intermediate camogie final will be Ashling Moloney's first time to play in Croke Park, but it's the culmination of a dream that began watching her sister Rachel do so.

Moloney will line out at corner-back as Cork face Galway at 2pm, the latest of the Courcyeys dynasty to distinguish themselves. Rachel won the senior title with Cork in 2008 and 2009 while another sister, Shirley, served as county board PRO from 2016-19, a period which took in All-Irelands in 2018 and 2019. Ashling, a primary school teacher in Ballinspittle, is looking forward to getting out on the Croke turf.

'Rachel would have trained my team, all the way up to U16,' she says, 'and then Shirley took us over at minor.'

'They were obviously two massive influences and then Rachel playing with Cork - being in Croke Park, watching her, I suppose it was always the dream to somewhat emulate her success.'

'Seeing her on the big stage, I was hoping that I'd get the chance some day and, a good few years later, here we are!'

'The one thing that Rachel has said is that Croke Park is a very big pitch and to just be aware of that, but other than that the advice has been to enjoy the build-up and the occasion.'

'She has been through it before, she knows what to expect and obviously I don't but she said that the two weeks beforehand are brilliant and to enjoy the excitement of it all because it doesn't come around very often.'

'It's definitely something to embrace rather than to fear. Croke Park is the dream, not everybody gets the chance to play there so you have to grab it with both hands.'

Cork's last intermediate title was in 2018, as part of a double along with senior victory. It was after that that Rachel came into the panel as Cork had to start from scratch at that level.

'You can't play for three years after you win,' she says, 'so it's the first final for a lot of us as in 2019 we had to start with a whole new panel. There are some of the 2018 girls back again too, though.'

Ashling, who has Courcyeys colleague Gráinne Hannon for company in the other corner,

CAMOGIE

■ Denis Hurley

was 'I've always been a defender, I play centre-back with the club,' she says.

'When I was very young, I was full-forward but I was quickly moved back!'

'You probably have some bit of an idea about who you're marking, but it's only after the ball is thrown in, you see with the first couple if she strikes on her left on her right and you figure it out as you go.'

'You try not to get too bogged down - obviously, you have to be aware of it because your first job as a defender is to stop your marker but you have to focus on your own game too and back yourself just as much.'

Wins over Wexford, Meath, Kilkenny, Derry and Kildare in the group stages were followed by a one-point semi-final win over Derry.

'Every team goes out to hope that you'd be in this position,' Ashling says, 'but I've been on the panel since 2019 and we haven't got there.'

'You have to be realistic and put in the performances throughout the year to get yourself to Croke Park. We all know how hard it is to get to an All-Ireland final no matter what code you're playing and you have to put in the work.'

'We met back on December 30th in wet, rainy conditions, playing our first challenge match against each other and you're hoping then that you'll make it to Croke Park in August and that that night will be worth it!'

With Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy on duty with the senior team as they take on Kilkenny, it will be a banner day for Courcyeys and Ashling is thrilled to be part of it.

'To have Saoirse and Fiona on the senior panel and then myself and Gráinne with the intermediates, it's great,' she says.

'From such a small club, to have four girls in Croke Park on All-Ireland final day is brilliant - obviously for ourselves and our families but from a club perspective, too.'

'Just like me watching Rachel and Sara Hayes, it gives the young girls something to aim for and hope that they'll be there too.'



Teddy O'Donovan in his days as Douglas goalkeeper. Picture: Gavin Browne

Teddy a safe pair of hands



GAA

Mark Woods

TEDDY O'Donovan, the Cork camogie goalkeeping coach since 2014, could have been excused for looking over his shoulder at the appointment of Davy Fitzgerald as team coach.

But Douglas man O'Donovan soon learned the former Clare netminder great had no intention of interfering with his role. 'I was chatting with our manager, Matthew Twomey, before Christmas, and he was laying out the plans for the season,' O'Donovan says. 'He told me Davy was getting involved, which I said was fine. The easiest way to describe it was that Davy told me to keep on doing what I was doing and he wouldn't be interfering.'

'Now, we'd often be bouncing things off one another, picking each other's brains, but he leaves me to my own devices.'

'Davy has his own puckout strategies, revolving around three or four systems, and we'd sit down and talk about them first, before he outlines what he's looking for in general.'

On the eve of another All-Ireland final against the old enemy, Kilkenny, all of Cork hope that the fruits of their endeavours will be seen at Croke Park tomorrow.

O'Donovan was brought on board by Paudie Murray to look after sister Aoife, who was the number-one 'keeper at the time. 'Part of my brief that year, and again the following season, was the six backs, too, not only on match days, but in training, also.'

'We'd be talking systems, game-play, defending, attacking forwards, and any problems that could arise,' O'Donovan says. 'Basically, anything between positions one and seven we'd discuss and anything that management wanted to talk about from a defensive viewpoint we'd iron out.'

Being a former 'keeper of renown, O'Donovan could appreciate Aoife's talent. 'She was exceptional; definitely the best in the business and the best the country has ever seen. Because Aoife worked in Dublin, we'd be in regular contact and, basically, anything that was annoying her or needed working on, we'd base our training on that.'



At the Skechers store at Opera Lane were Cork Camogie star Laura Treacy and Amy Garry of Skechers Ireland. The Cork camogie team were recently gifted a pair of Skechers trainers each by Skechers Ireland. Picture: Colm Lougheed

'Matthew was the coach back then and he said just 'listen to Aoife', because she had won All-Irelands and All-Stars; done it all in effect. Then, when it came to game time, she had peace of mind, because we had worked on everything she had asked.'

As camogie evolved, so did O'Donovan's role. 'In the first two years, I would have been on the sideline, but it changed a bit for the next three seasons, 2016, '17 and '18. On match days, I'd do the warm-up with Aoife, before going to the stands to watch the game.'

'I'd be with Niall Collins, who did all our stats and was a genius at it, compiling all the facts and figures as the game was progressing. You'd be looking at things like clearances from defence, how the opposition half-forwards, for example, were setting up for puckouts and how their inside line was moving, identifying their most dangerous forwards. And all that led to how we would try and get to grips with their attack, in all aspects.'

The changing of the guard, with Amy Lee taking over from Aoife, has also led to O'Donovan switching positions again.

'I'm back to my old original role with

Amy, Mollie Lynch, and Caoimhe Buckley, who are the three 'keepers on the panel, as well as the six backs.'

'Again, on match days I'd do the warm-up with them and back on the sideline once more.' It's been a rewarding journey for the Douglas pair, Twomey having soldiered in many a campaign, too.

'Matthew and I were unsure what we were letting ourselves in for, because while we knew the club standard, we didn't know about the inter-county scene.'

'Yet, it was easy, in a way, because you're dealing with elite athletes, who have a professional approach, though, obviously, it's an amateur sport.'

'I reckon the girls put as much into camogie as the lads do in hurling and it's great working with them.'

'You could have 30-odd players at training and you know every one of them is of the highest standard, which makes it that bit easier.'

'There's a good buzz about it as well. You're involved in the biggest games in the best grounds and meeting people you've not seen for years,' O'Donovan says.

Ian Mallon

Carmel Naughton is either the greatest benefactor the sport of camogie has had, or its most important ever sponsor.

For someone who has become the most influential female commercial partner across all Irish sport, she is at pains throughout our interview to emphasise that her multi-million euro outlay has not been done for praise.

"We certainly don't do it for thanks, but we do it for what we hope is for the good of camogie and in a small way the good of the country," she explains.

So instant gratification and backslap can be crossed from the list of possible reasons why a grandmother-of-10 would want to become one of the biggest players in Irish sports sponsorship at this stage in her life.

Even to get her to promote her investment in camogie took a little convincing, first with a phone call that felt more like a friendly interview, which then paved the way for a fascinating insight into a sport's most intriguing benefactors.

For those who don't yet know, Carmel Naughton is the media-shy matriarch of the Glen Dimplex electrical goods empire, who outside the embrace of family, philanthropy and business, puts a love of camogie as one of the most formative experiences in her life.

Such a passion for the sport has remained undiminished through her almost eight decades on earth, and last March she rocked the sports commercial world when unveiled as the new sponsor of the All-Ireland Camogie Championship and the Camogie Association.

Naughton and Glen Dimplex were announced in an extraordinary five-year deal which would see unprecedented investment in the game — in an initial headline partnership that represents a lifetime for a first-time sponsor.

Throughout our conversation and subsequent exchanges there is little doubt that this investment is unique in the sponsor-rights holder relationship — with this arrangement the sport must come first for the investor and the company brand second. A refreshing, and perhaps extraordinary position.

To fully absorb what the Carmel Naughton-Glen Dimplex arrangement means for camogie and women's sport, it

Camogie benefactor gives back to game she loves



CAPTAIN'S CALL: Kilkenny's Claire Phelan and Cork's Ashling Thompson pictured ahead of tomorrow's Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie final and (inset) Glen Dimplex's Carmel Naughton, who puts a love of camogie as one of the most formative experiences in her life. Picture: Laszlo Gezo

helps to appreciate the size of that investment.

By the most reliable information, Naughton and the Glen Dimplex company — established into a multi-billion euro business by her husband Martin — will pour millions into the game over the initial term of the agreement.

One trusted insider believes that arrangement may be as high as €1m per year, but whatever the actual total, it's not something she wants to get into except to describe it as "significant".

That money paid to the Camogie Association comes from a share of Carmel Naughton's personal cash and part investment by Glen Dimplex, in which all branding and marketing assets go directly to the company.

The cash exchanges will allow camogie to reach heights it could only dream of,

as it now has the funds to significantly redistribute to the 600 clubs and up to 100,000 girls and women who play.

So where does the enduring passion for the sport begin? For Carmel Naughton it goes back to County Monaghan, when times were less inclusive, and when she recalled girls were told they were "stupid".

While there is still some distance to travel for all women's sport, the landscape for sportswomen in the 50s and 60s was one of utter foreboding.

"We just got on with things as best we could," she says matter-of-factly.

The best they could, for Naughton, her sister Nuala O'Malley, and a group of other formidable young girls was to rely on nobody but themselves to provide the equipment and resources they needed to play.

"We made our own uniforms, which consisted of a short mustard skirt and big thick woolly tights," which she recalls was not to the approval of everyone.

"I can assure you the Monaghan of the 1950s and 60s was not an exciting place, so we really made the best of it."

"It's extraordinary how we had no coaches, but we brought our camogie sticks and went out to play ourselves."

"That's why the Ireland of today now delights me, particularly how far girls (and women's) sport has come — today girls can strive to do anything they want in sport, education or in business."

Not being told that she could do something would only spur her on, particularly after an even more profound exchange which led to another

great development in Carmel's later years.

"I remember we had a nun at school who told us that girls were stupid and couldn't do maths," she explains, with the same disbelief today that the comments provoked back then.

Many years later, she would set up the Naughton Foundation which awards scholarships to all students, boys and girls — with an emphasis on the STEM subjects — science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The foundation was established by Martin (now the advisory chair of Glen Dimplex) and Carmel Naughton in 1994 for education and arts, and was turned into a scholarship programme in 2008 to support Leaving Cert students.

This work probably demonstrates best that giving back is a key part of her make-up — albeit for someone with the means and desire to do so, right into later life.

That motivation turned towards camogie where Naughton said she always wanted to do something of value, and a conversation at a function with the GAA's commercial director Peter McKenna in recent years, led to her big move.

"When I met Peter (McKenna) I told him we were trying to organise something for the game of camogie, and I told him to come back to me when he was ready."

"I told him that he'd be pushing on an open door."

McKenna quickly introduced her and Glen Dimplex to the relevant people from the Camogie Association and the process of putting a commercial deal in place evolved.

Contract production can be a lengthy process in any major sport, especially for a first-time lead partner, and Naughton admits she much preferred "the days when deals were conducted through a handshake and your word".

"Of course these things are entirely necessary today and once documents and agreements were finally complete I was extremely happy that the

Camogie Association would be set up financially, and here we are," she says.

And where they are exactly is on the eve of a first 'Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Final' in which Carmel Naughton will witness that reality at Croke Park, together with teammates from her days in Monaghan.

It's quite clear that the sponsorship has had an enormous impact on the Camogie Association — its president Hilda Breslin described the partnership as something that would allow the realisation of so many plans it has for the game.

"This new sponsorship enables us to progress so many important initiatives and allows us to plan for the future. We look forward to working together to grow this wonderful women's sport," said Breslin.

It's a very Irish thing that rights holders and commercial partners generally don't give details on the value of such deals, and this one is no different.

"It's a substantial amount but really I'm not comfortable talking about it," she replied, to the crude question of cash.

"The real value is what the Camogie Association can do with this money and the good it will do for the sport."

Certainly the profile of the Camogie Championship has risen in the early lifetime of the arrangement in pure visibility terms alone, with engaging video and advertising activations obvious across social and all media.

Development of the game will follow, and an expected uplift in participation that such considerable investment should bring.

And with the commercial ownership of one of the four major All-Ireland championships, Carmel Naughton's entry into sports sponsorship has been a revelation for the quietly spoken, deeply thoughtful, saviour of camogie.

"This is a position I am very blessed to be in," she adds.

By Philip Lanigan



In terms of profile and promotion and boots-on-the-ground popularity, it can be tempting for camogie to look a little longingly at its counterpart in ladies' football.

If there is any sort of a silver lining, it's that at least a selection of its best stars aren't being cherry-picked by another sport to tog out on the other side of the world.

Just five days after another powerhouse performance in Meath's historic back-to-back title success, there was Orlagh Lally being greeted with flowers at Perth airport by Fremantle Dockers captain Hayley Miller.

Her team-mate Vikki Wall, the 2021 Player of the Year, is another legging up the air miles to join the Irish exodus as the expanded AFLW gears up for a new season.

And yet, there is a sense with camogie of a game that is ready to surf the wave of interest in women's sport as a whole, and find a

Another shot at the title lured Hannah Looney home from a life in New York

new and bigger audience. Who would have guessed that the next time Davy Fitzgerald would be involved on a sideline at Croke Park for an All-Ireland final, it would be with the Cork camogie team and as one of Matthew Twomey's sideline lieutenants?

Not with a men's senior county team after guiding his native Clare to the 2013 All Ireland title and to Wexford to a Leinster triumph in 2019 and an All-Ireland semi-final.

The Kilkenny management team also features plenty of crossover hurling royalty. Brian Dowling is one of the many players from the Brian Cody era to have spread his coaching and management wings while Tommy Shefflin's stock couldn't have been higher after being part of the coaching set-up when Ballyhale Shamrocks won back-to-back All-Irelands.

Philly Larkin and Pat O'Neill are two other favourite Kilkenny sons. In addition, of course, to camogie royalty in the shape of Angela Downey and Breda Holmes.

And if ladies' football is losing some of its best players – at least temporarily – it shows the pull of



SURFING THE

Camogie can benefit from surge of interest in women's sport

camogie when Cork's Hannah Looney explained this week how the dream of another shot at an All-Ireland lured her home from a life in New York.

With regard to important rule changes, the Camogie Association is ahead of the LGFA in listening to the chorus of voices, particularly from its playing and coaching ranks, to allow for a bit more physicality in the game and to upgrade the rules to make the game more

attractive as a spectacle. And they have done just that with a level of 'minimal' contact allowed in the tackle, the banning of the hand-passed goal and the unseemly sight of a player dropping a stick to make a handpass, and embraced the idea of a free-flowing spectacle rather than a free-taking contest.

Hopefully, referee Ray Kelly and the players will combine to make that happen this afternoon.

It was refreshing also to hear the

mutual respect and admiration between the respective managers.

There was Matthew Twomey unashamedly declaring his admiration for the values of Kilkenny hurling while Brian Dowling paid tribute to the support from Cork during a year tinged with personal tragedy.

Cork know they won't get away with the slow start that left them staring down the barrel of a gun in the semi-final against Waterford.

Ashling Thompson's introduction

after Cork overturned what should have been a two-match ban, was critical in transforming a five-point deficit into a five-point lead by the end. Keeping a clean sheet in that semi-final shows how well marshalled Cork are defensively with Laura Treacy an expert in sweeping across the half-back line.

Apart from Thompson's big impact around the middle third when introduced, Libby Coppinger and Saoirse McCarthy also shone with Amy O'Connor showing the way from placed balls. Cork's strength in depth was evident too in the impact Emma Murphy also made in the second half.

That Kilkenny remain unbeaten all season in competitive games is a monument to their consistency,

All-Ireland Premier Junior Final Antrim v Armagh, 12pm (Mike Ryan, Tipperary) Live on RTÉ2

Not too many were expecting an appearance in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior decider to be on the cards when Antrim decided to establish a second team to provide a pathway through the senior side.

In contrast, Armagh began the season as favourites, having landed the spoils for the second time in 2020 and then giving best only to a very strong Wexford unit by just three points last year. They cruised through the group stages, recording facile victories over Limerick, Down and Roscommon. The fourth game was a completely different matter altogether though.

There is an added element of intrigue to this encounter in that Jim McKernan, a long-time

Today's Previews

COMPILED BY DARAGH Ó CONCHÚIR

Antrim legend, who stood down as joint manager of the Saffrons with Paul McKillen after senior status was secured with intermediate glory last season, now returns to Croke Park in opposition to his native county, and opposite the joint managers, Brian Kearney and Mark McFadden he knows so well.

Jennifer Curry (right) has proved a significant addition to the Armagh ranks, after having two children since retiring from the inter-county game

following Cork's All-Ireland senior success in 2014 when she scored a crucial goal. In the likes of Ciara and Leanne Donnelly, and Michelle McArdle, Armagh already possessed game-changing talent. And with the wealth of experience they have built up in recent years, they will be tough nuts to crack.

But Antrim are riding the crest of a wave and must know that they are not far away from what would be a famous victory.

All-Ireland Intermediate Final Cork v Galway, 2pm (Gavin Donegan, Dublin) Live on RTÉ2

It is the first meeting of the counties with the Jack McGrath Cup up for

grabs since 2009, when Galway got over the line in a replay. The most recent of their three titles arrived in 2013, when they had two points to spare over Limerick, while Cork's latest of four triumphs came in 2018 against Down.

This is their first final appearance since, with Galway last in the decider in 2019 when Westmeath edged them out by two points. Both squads have undergone quite a transition in the meantime and will have to do without the considerable experience and ability of key operators Finola Neville (Cork captain) and Tara Rutledge (Galway) due to cruciate injuries. However they retain a sprinkling of experience to go with youthful potential, and obvious strengths in each sector.

The feeling is this tie will be closely contested right up to the final whistle.





WE'RE BACK: Cork's players celebrate the semi-final win over Waterford (main); Julianne Malone of Kilkenny (below)

Expect a close clash between oldest of rivals

By Daragh Ó Conchúir

AS EXPECTED, Cork make one change in personnel to their team for today's Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior camogie final against Kilkenny, with Ashling Thompson coming into the side. Thompson replaces Katie O'Mahony after coming on for the young Inniscarra player to very good effect in the 22nd minute of the semi-final victory over Waterford.

The powerful and vastly experienced Milford midfielder was a central cog as Cork managed to rescue themselves from a tricky position, quickly setting up Katrina Mackey for her side's first score.

A former All-Ireland-winning captain, Thompson only became available on the morning of that game, after winning an appeal against a two-match suspension. Her ability to read the play as a sweeper as well as force turnovers and win dirty ball turned the tie in the Rebels' favour.

Méabh Murphy, Cliona Healy and Sorcha McCartan will be making their first All-Ireland Senior final starts, though McCartan is an Intermediate championship winner with her native Down.

A daughter of former All-Ireland football hero Greg, McCartan had begun working in Cork city and training with St Finbarr's even as she was starring for the Mournewomen in 2020 but transferred to play with the Leesiders at the beginning of this year.

A more physical type of forward than Cork have had before, Matthew Twomey, Davy Fitzgerald and co will be hoping she might provide the extra ingredient that will get the county a first O'Duffy Cup since 2018.

Kilkenny name the same team that went out to do battle against Galway a fortnight ago. Niamh Deely made her first start since suffering a finger injury in that game and retains her position.

It is a big day for the Young Irelands club in Gowran, who will be represented in an All-Ireland senior final for the first time by the Fitzgerald sisters, Steffi and Tiffanie. Meanwhile, the Walsh first cousins, Grace (sister of Tommy and Pádraig) and Miriam (sister of the younger Tommy) are central figures at either end of the field for the Noreiders.

Julianne Malone was player of the match in the 2016 decider between these two counties when Kilkenny garnered ultimate success for the last time and she has added a real scoring bite to the Kilkenny attack with her economic point shooting, returning this year after a three-year absence when travelling.



BACK IN THE GAME: Cork star Ashling Thompson is restored to the starting team

HOW THEY LINE UP

CORK: A Lee (capt); M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; L Hayes, L Treacy, S McCarthy; H Looney, A Thompson; K Mackey, F Keating, C Sigerson; C Healy, S McCartan, A O'Connor. Subs: M Lynch, E Murphy, C O'Sullivan, D McAllen, K Wall, K O'Mahony, I O'Regan, O Cahalane, A Egan, M Ring, A Hurley, A Smith, E Flanagan, A O'Neill, H O'Leary.
KILKENNY: A Norris; M Teehan, G Walsh, T Fitzgerald; N Deely, C Phelan, L Murphy; S Fitzgerald, K Power; D Gaulle, M Kenneally, J Malone; O'Connell, M Walsh, K Nolan. Subs: E Kavanagh, A Prendergast (capt), M Bambrick, S Dwyer, C Phelan, A McHardy, S Crowley, L Fennelly, S O'Keeffe, A Curtis, R Breen, C O'Keeffe, L Norris, C Comerford.

their first two meetings in 1970 and 1972 as the Rebels registered a four-in-a-row, it was all about the Black and Amber for a lengthy spell with six consecutive final defeats of the Leesiders, the sixth arriving as Kilkenny completed an overall seven-in-a-row in 1991. That team was captained by Angela Downey, who along with another former All-Ireland-winning skipper Breda Holmes, is a part of the current team's backroom group, having being brought in by Angela's twin Ann - herself an All-Ireland-winning captain and manager.

Linda Mellerick's last-gasp goal to snatch victory in 1995 heralded the Reds' comeback against the Cats in deciders and they have inflicted more late torment with the injury-time winning points of Julia White and Orla Cotter in 2017 and 2018. As a result, Cork have won five of the last six final pairings, 2016 being the odd one out when Michelle Quilty became the first Kilkenny skipper to get her hands on the O'Duffy memorial since her manager, the aforementioned Ann Downey.

This is the first time in more than a decade that Paudie Murray isn't boss of Cork. One of his former lieutenants Matthew Twomey took over while illustrious hurling manager Davy Fitzgerald took over the coaching duties.

Cork are in pursuit of a 29th title from what is a landmark 50th appearance in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior camogie final. If Kilkenny were to prevail it would be a 15th success from 25. So even in terms of strike rate, there is nothing between the teams. Don't expect a lot to separate them at the final whistle either.

WAVE

only failing to reach the League final on score difference after Cork's Chloe Sigerson pegged them back right at the end, to nab a draw in the group.

Galway edged the league final to go with last year's All-Ireland title but Kilkenny showed their quality by coasting past Dublin in the All-Ireland quarter-final and knocking out the holders in the semi-final.

Claire Phelan's reading of the play in defence and the marking of Michelle Teehan and Grace Walsh have been vital to their side's progression. Goalkeeper Aoife Norris pulled off a string of saves to deny Galway and she could again be a potential match-winner.

Further up the field, Miriam Walsh has been in top form while the class of Julianne Malone (inset) has been evident after her return from a three-year sabbatical.

Cork have come out the right side of a number of tight affairs in recent clashes on the All-Ireland stage and it's not hard to imagine the same thing happening to copperfasten their status at the top of the roll of honour with a 29th title - and in what is a landmark 50th



appearance in an All-Ireland senior camogie final.

Kilkenny, meanwhile, are chasing their 15th title.

And yet, there was so much in Kilkenny's semi-final victory over Galway to suggest they can prevail. In a week when Derek Lyng was unveiled as the new Kilkenny senior manager after the 24-season reign of Brian Cody, the camogie team embody so many familiar qualities on the field - that workrate and spirit and team collective that makes them more than the sum of their parts.

Verdict: Kilkenny

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior camogie final
CORK V KILKENNY
4.15pm (Live RTE2)
Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare)



FAMILY TRADITION: Miriam Walsh



Cork, Senior



Back Row (Left To Right)

Orlaith Cahalane, Emma Flanagan, Kate Wall, Aoife O'Neill, Chloe Sigerson, Laura Treacy, Aisling Egan, Molly Lynch Murphy, Olivia McAllen, Hannah O'Leary, Izzy O'Regan, Aoife Hurley, Sorcha McCartan, Hannah Looney, Katrina Mackey, Ashling Thompson

Front Row (Left To Right)

Meabh Ring, Ali Smith, Amy Lee, Saoirse McCarthy, Libby Coppinger, Laura Hayes, Cliona Healy, Fiona Keating, Meabh Cahalane, Meabh Murphy, Amy O'Connor, Katie O'Mahony, Ciara O'Sullivan



IONADAÍ

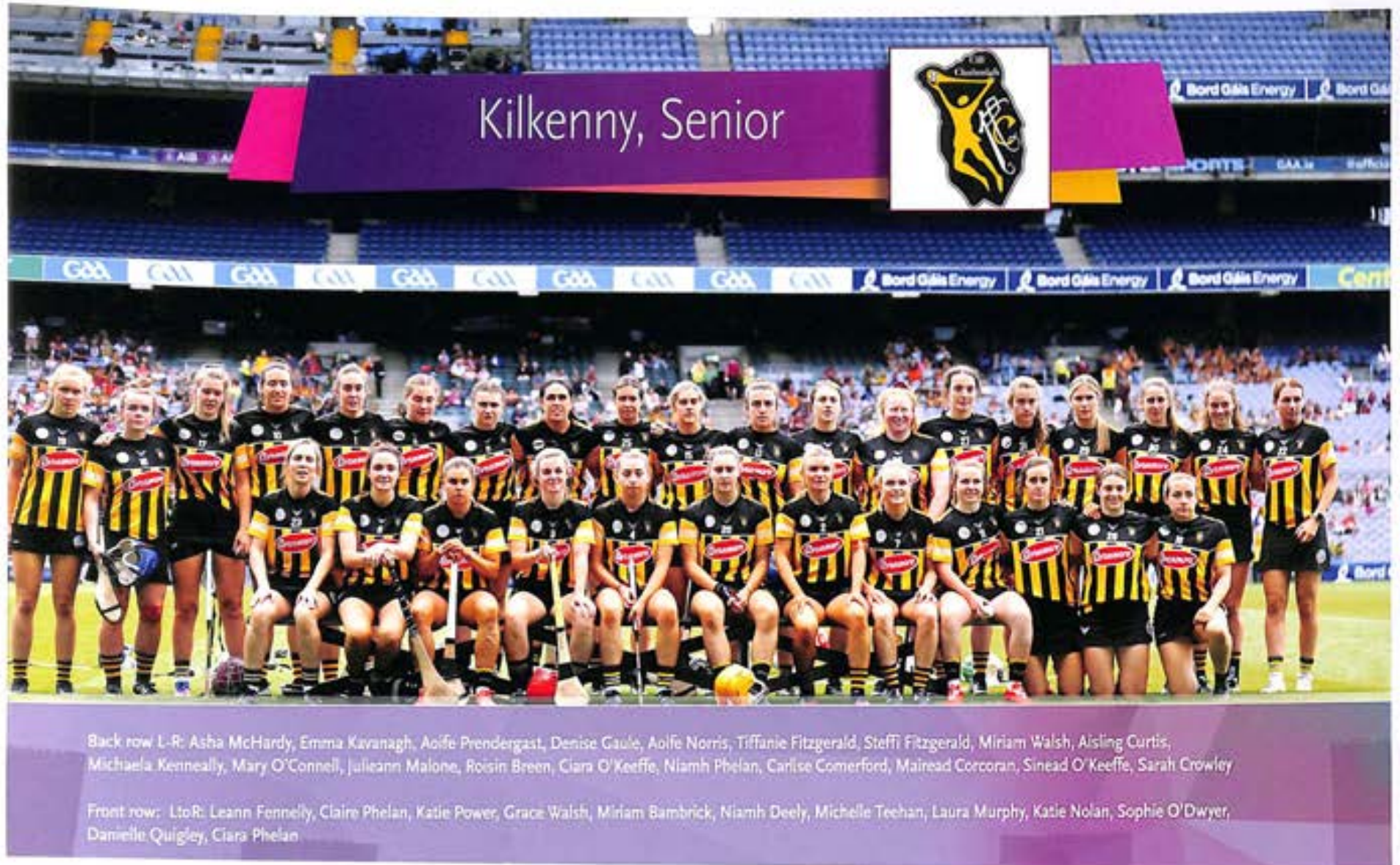
- 16 Molly Lynch
Mull Ni Loingsigh
Sarsfields
- 17 Emma Murphy
Emma Ni Mhurchu
Clen Rovers
- 18 Ciara O'Sullivan
Ciara Ni Shuilleabhain
Newcestown
- 19 Olivia McAllen
Olivia NicAllain
Sarsfields
- 20 Kate Wall
Cait de Bhul
Kilbrittain/Tinsleague

- 21 Katie O'Mahony
Cait Ni Mhathuna
Inniscarra
- 22 Izzy O'Regan
Izzy Ni Rhiagain
Bullygarvan
- 23 Orlaith Cahalane
Orlaith Ni Cathalain
St Finbarrs
- 24 Aisling Egan
Aisling Mac Aodhagan
St Finbarrs
- 25 Meadhóibh Ring
Meadhóibh Ni Rinne
Aghabullogue

- 26 Aoife Hurley
Aoife Ni Mhairthíle
St Catherines
- 27 Ali Smith
Ali MacCabhann
Aghada
- 28 Emma Flanagan
Emma Ni Flannagain
Aghabullogue
- 29 Aoife O'Neill
Aoife Ni Neill
St Finbarrs
- 30 Hannah O'Leary
Hannah Ni Laoghaire
St Finbarrs

TEAM OFFICIALS

- Matthew Twomey
Manager
- Davy Fitzgerald
Coach
- Brian O'Sullivan
Coach
- Teddy O'Donovan
Coach



Kilkenny, Senior



Back row L-R: Asha McHardy, Emma Kavanagh, Aoife Prendergast, Denise Gaule, Aoife Norris, Tiffanie Fitzgerald, Steffi Fitzgerald, Miriam Walsh, Aisling Curtis, Michaela Kenneally, Mary O'Connell, Julieann Malone, Roisin Breen, Clara O'Keefe, Niamh Phelan, Carlise Comerford, Mairead Corcoran, Sinead O'Keefe, Sarah Crowley
 Front row: LtoR: Leann Fennelly, Claire Phelan, Katie Power, Grace Walsh, Miriam Bambrick, Niamh Deely, Michelle Teehan, Laura Murphy, Katie Nolan, Sophie O'Dwyer, Danielle Quigley, Ciara Phelan



IONADAÍ

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 16 Emma Kavanagh
E. ni Coimhínáigh
Bower Instige | 21 Asha McHardy
A. ni Chartaigh
Dicksboro | 26 Roisin Breen
R. ni Ehbrián
Barrow Rangers |
| 17 Aoife Prendergast-Capt
A. De Priondergais
Dicksboro | 22 Sarah Crowley
S. ni Chraoilteach
Mooncoin | 27 Clara O'Keefe
C. ni Chaoimh
Young Ireland |
| 18 Miriam Bambrick
M. Bambric
Barrow Rangers | 23 Leann Fennelly
L. ni Chongailé
Mullinavat | 28 Laura Norris
L. ni Nóis
Piltown |
| 19 Sophie Dwyer
S. ni Dhubhair
James Stephens | 24 Sinead O'Keefe
S. ni Chaoimh
Thomastown | 29 Carlise Comerford
C. ni Chomartáin
St. Martin's |
| 20 Clara Phelan
C. ni Fáilín
Dicksboro | 25 Aisling Curtis
A. Cúirtis
Clara | 30 Mairead Corcoran
M. ni Charcoráin
Mooncoin |

TEAM OFFICIALS

- | | |
|----------------|---------|
| Brian Dowling | Manager |
| Tommy Shefflin | Coach |
| Ray Challoner | Coach |
| Philly Larkin | Coach |

Last minute Gaule free hands Kilkenny dramatic victory

Paul Keane
at Croke Park

Pointed free from 45 metres in the second minute of added-time seals a memorable one-point victory

Kilkenny	1-13
Cork	1-12

We've been here before with Denise Gaule and Kilkenny.

Just 20 months ago, in an empty Croke Park on a cold December night, she turned a level game against Galway into a three-point Kilkenny win, a 58th minute penalty that she both won and converted doing the trick on that occasion.

This time around she didn't win the 62nd minute free that handed Kilkenny the opportunity to secure their 15 All-Ireland camogie title but, crucially, she did convert it. Again, the scores had been tied and again her intervention was decisive as Kilkenny held on for a memorable one-point win.

Ashling Thompson did have an opportunity to level it for Cork late in the 65th minute - curiously, only four minutes of additional time was actually allotted - but it was a difficult chance from distance and she pulled it wide.

Hurt

Thompson, the 2015 All-Ireland winning skipper, was so distraught that when referee Ray Kelly blew for full-time moments later, she walked straight off the pitch and back to the Cork dressing-room.

The rest of the team remained on the field as Kilkenny celebrated their second title in three seasons and, to her credit, Thompson eventually returned to join them, grabbing the excellent Hannah Looney and Libby Coppinger in a teary clinch. When their brains are less scrambled, all of this hurt will morph into motivation for 2023.

Ultimately Cork may reflect on their slow start as their undoing. They conceded six points before they finally got off the mark and while their first score was a goal, scored by the excellent Fiona Keating, it took 20 minutes to arrive.

Matthew Twomey's side didn't score until the 25th minute of the semi-final against Waterford and turned a five-point deficit that day into a five-point win.



■ Cork's Ciara O'Sullivan and Fiona Keating battle with Michaela Kenneally and Katie Power of Kilkenny during yesterday's final. PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES CROMBIE/INPHO

They figured it was a nice way to win a semi-final, with plenty in the tank but didn't expect that they'd do virtually the same thing all over again in the final. To their credit, they wiped out the deficit with another brilliant fightback, tying things up by half-time and taking the lead early in the second-half.

They were even two clear with 58 minutes on the clock and after losing to Galway in last year's decider, redemption looked to be close at hand.

Then Kilkenny substitute Sophie O'Dwyer fired in a goal against the head, following up on Amy Lee's miscued clearance, and while Katrina Mackey tied it up yet again with a Cork point, somebody was always going to get the opportuni-

ty to strike the decisive blow. It turned out to be Gaule, from a free, and no better player to etch her name in the history books.

It goes down as a near perfect season for Kilkenny who were unbeaten in the National League, despite failing to reach the final, and went unbeaten then in the championship, claiming Leinster and All-Ireland honours.

Subtle tweaks

One of the two games they drew all season was against Cork, in the league, pretty much summing up just how little there is between these two teams.

Kilkenny did it all without Collete Dormer and Davina Tobin, both of whom retired before the season began, Meighan Farrell, who was unavailable this year and the Doyle sisters, Kellyann and Aoife, who suffered cruciate knee ligament injuries in March and May.

They were hit hardest in defence but some subtle tweaks from Dowling, like shifting



■ Cork's Fiona Keating scores a goal despite the efforts of Michelle Teehan of Kilkenny. PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES CROMBIE/INPHO

Grace Walsh to full-back, worked a treat and stabilised their unit. Holding Cork to 1-12 on such a big field was no mean feat. As the game wore on, Walsh came more and more into it and it was the Tullaroan colossus that came thundering out of defence in the closing stages, clearing her lines and finding cousin Miriam Walsh who won the foul off Cork's Ci-

ara O'Sullivan that presented Gaule with her shot at glory.

Earlier in the game, Walsh came from nowhere to deny Cork's most potent forward Katrina Mackey what looked a sure fire goal. Walsh ended up holding her neck and required treatment while boss Dowling revealed that at half-time she complained of being winded but still proceeded to give a team-talk

for the ages.

Miriam Walsh was terrific inside, just about getting the better of Cork full-back Coppinger and tossing over two great scores from the left wing early on. The wonder was that Kilkenny, six points to the good after that glorious start, didn't kick on.

Hard graft

Cork, desperate to avoid back to back defeats, and implored by coach Davy Fitzgerald from the sideline to run hard at Kilkenny, finally found some traction and began to tot up the scores.

Keating's initial goal came from nowhere, a piece of individual brilliance as she strode clear and left three players in her wake but the subsequent four points that Cork scored to tie it up at half-time, 1-4 to 0-7, came down to hard graft meeting craft, Keating's 29th minute point stroked over after winning the ball from a ruck of bodies.

The game went from good to

great as it trundled on, the second half opening out into an exciting back and forth. The sides were level six times in the half.

Cork looked to have stuck their noses in front with their two-point lead late on. But they couldn't hold on and for the second year in a row, they lost an epic.

Gaule was ultimately the game breaker but sub O'Dwyer's 58th minute goal for Kilkenny, when she pounced after Cork goalkeeper Lee failed to adequately clear a shot by the influential Katie Nolan, was a massive moment. Kilkenny had the momentum and made it count.

KILKENNY: A Norris, M Teehan, G Walsh, T Fitzgerald (0-1); N Deely, C Phelan, S Fitzgerald, L Murphy, K Power, D Gaule, M Kenneally (0-1), J Malone, M Walsh (0-3), D Gaule (0-3, one free), K Nolan (0-5, two frees). Subs: S O'Dwyer (1-0) for Kenneally (47 mins), A Pendergast for O'Connell (55).
CORK: A Lee, M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahillane, L Treacy, C O'Sullivan, L Hayes, H Looney (0-1), A Thompson, K Mackey (0-3), F Keating (1-2), S McCarthy (0-1), C Sgerson, S McCartan, A O'Connor (0-5, five frees). Subs: E Murphy for McCartan (51 mins), C Healy for Murphy (54), D Cahillane for Sgerson (50+2).
Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare)



Kilkenny's year of sweat and tears yields them the title once again

Paul Keane
at Croke Park

Dowling praises his side's spirit after a season that threw up many challenges

After all the retirements, the injuries, the withdrawals, the rank bad luck and the tragedies, Kilkenny are All-Ireland senior camogie champions again. It's been some journey, maybe the most challenging of manager Brian Dowling's entire sporting career.

If there is such a thing as karma, perhaps it finally swung around in Kilkenny's favour in the closing minutes at Croke Park as they came from two points down to topple Cork with a 58th-minute Sophie O'Dwyer goal followed by a stoppage time Denise Gaule match-winning point. Champions again, but boy did they wipe sweat from their brows and, at times, tears from their

cheeks throughout that game and that season.

"The off the field stuff was very tough," said Dowling. "A lot of stuff happened in March and April, obviously our coach Tommy Shefflin's brother, Paul, passed away. Then my own uncle passed away in a house fire.

"Aoife Prendergast's grandad passed away, Ciara Phelan's grandad passed away, and everything just happened in a couple of weeks and then to have Kellyann Doyle and Aoife Doyle's cruciate injuries on top of that.

'Galvanised'

"It just seemed that everything was going wrong. I don't know, we just sort of galvanised ourselves, that team spirit within the group and just that never say die attitude, you stay going and stay going.

"We said it on Friday night in the team meeting, 'Look, the amount of things that were thrown at this group this year and here we are, still fighting, still in with a chance of winning an All-Ireland'. I'm just so proud of them that they were

able to get through all of that and whatever went on.

"We had new girls stepping up, the likes of Tiffanie Fitzgerald who went up and scored the first point of the game, she's a corner-back, 19 years of age. That's just incredible. That sums up the whole thing I suppose."

Dowling referenced Grace Walsh too and her indomitable spirit. Back in 2020, when Kilkenny previously won the All-Ireland, she slotted over a terrific point from the wing in the closing minutes to help turn the screw on Galway. This time around, with injuries and retirements forcing Dowling to restructure his defence, Walsh was asked to forsake her attacking instincts and to play at number three, a challenge she met head on.

It was her powerful run out of defence and pass to cousin Miriam Walsh that drew the 62nd-minute free that Gaule converted to secure the win.

"If you heard Grace Walsh speaking in the dressingroom the last few days, it just put the hairs standing up on the back of your neck," said Dowling.

"It was unbelievable. She couldn't breathe coming in at half-time, she got a belt in her stomach. That girl just won't back down from anything. I'd like to mention them all, there's just so many characters there. Different ones stepped up at different times. That's what it's about."

Experienced

The two Walshes were among a core group of experienced players who experienced three All-Ireland final defeats in a row between 2017 and 2019. The first two of those were one-point losses to Cork, who also defeated Kilkenny in a semi-final last year. This time around it was the Cork players who stood on the Croke Park pitch looking up at the celebrations in the Hogan Stand, ash-en-faced.

Not that revenge was the motivation for Dowling and Kilkenny, or anything like it. It was more to do with wanting to honour their supporters who weren't able to celebrate or be part of the 2020 success because of the pandemic restrictions at the time.

"We said it all year, the message was that we wanted to win this for the Kilkenny people, for our families and friends," said Dowling. "They didn't get to celebrate with us in 2020 but they were there in 2017 when we lost, they were there in 2018 when we lost, they were there in 2019 when we lost.

"Last year it was our plan to win for them but we didn't get there. This year it was our mission to win an All-Ireland in front of Kilkenny people. I thought we had a huge crowd up supporting us and we're just so happy to bring the O'Duffy Cup home."

Between the camogie success and Derek Lyng's appointment, it's been a tidy few days of business for Kilkenny. It'll take a while for the gloom to lift in Cork. The senior defeat came immediately after the county intermediates' 0-11 to 0-13 final loss to Galway.

"In the 55th minute, I looked up at the clock and you see that you are two points up and you are kind of saying, 'Is this our day?'" said Cork senior manager Matthew Twomey.

"We are still trying to do the

■ Kilkenny's Michelle Teehan clears her lines as Cork's Katrina Mackey closes in at Croke Park yesterday. Inset: Kilkenny captain Aoife Prendergast raises the O'Duffy Cup. PHOTOGRAPH: EVAN TREACY/INPHO

right things and then you get a little break like that with their goal and then their gander is up and it was very hard to claw it back. Fair play to Kilkenny, they are an awesome team when they get into a position like that."

Cork, inevitably, will rue the slow start. They conceded the first six points of the game, similar to their terrible start against Waterford in the semi-final.

"There's no logical reason for it, we thought it was a freak thing when it happened in the Waterford game," said Twomey. "Then to go two points up late on, you should be finishing out the game."

➔ **Camogie**
News, reports and
reaction: page 5

Dwyer fires in crucial late goal as Kilkenny come from

CORK

1-12

KILKENNY

1-13



PHILIP LANIGAN
reports from
Croke Park

A WEEK when things are stirring again in Kilkenny. If the handover of power from Brian Cody to Derek Lyng represented a fresh chapter in the county's hurling history, then the senior camogie team continued that proud tradition of lifting silverware on the steps of the Hogan Stand. This time it was captain Aoife Prendergast lifting the O'Duffy Cup to secure a 15th All-Ireland in a thrilling final.

As if to surf the wave of interest in women's sport and show how the best talent across the codes can capture the imagination, Kilkenny and Cork served up a belter in front of a crowd of 23,426 at Croke Park. What started as a slow-burning tactical tussle ultimately cracked and fizzled as the teams went score for score deep into injury time until every ball won felt like a match-winning moment.

Just when it looked like Cork had perhaps done enough to edge 1-11 to 0-12 ahead with two minutes of normal time to go, up popped substitute Sophie Dwyer to sweep the ball to the net and set up a grandstand finish.

Especially when Katrina Mackey raced through and scooped the bar over expertly to level. Miriam Walsh - immense throughout - was then fouled in injury time for Denise Gaule to point from 45 metres and, even when the full four minutes of extra time had passed, referee Ray Kelly somehow allowed enough time for Cork to have one last chance, a full minute on from the four that had gone up on the board.

It fell to Ashling Thompson who galloped into space and shot on the run from nearly 55 metres out. There was an intake of breath around the ground as the ball was struck clean - but just dropped wide of the right post.

That was it. Kilkenny were champions, going unbeaten in league and championship.

For Cats manager Brian Dowling and his own backroom set-up that is a flavour of Kilkenny hurling and camogie royalty, this



SOPHIE REJOICES AS CATS GET CREAM

must have been heart-stopping to watch, especially after racing into a 0-6 to no score lead inside the first quarter.

It was all so very modern in the set-ups and tactical gameplay. The desire to have an extra body out around the middle third meant that the two respective centre-backs were effectively playing in a free sweeper's role - Laura Tracey for Cork and Claire Phelan for Kilkenny.

In the first quarter, Kilkenny were working the spaces that bit better with clever angled ball. Miriam Walsh's first point came from that kind of smart set-up play and she hit a cracker from a tight angle in front of the Cusack Stand.

Coming on the back of early

scores from Tiffanie Fitzgerald and Katie Nolan, this amounted to a dream start for Kilkenny, particularly when Denise Gaule pinged two more points.

Cork thought they had a first score when Sorcha McCartan shot for a point. Initially waved over by the umpire, Hawk-Eye intervened to rule it out.

Hannah Looney produced two tearaway solo runs as the chances kept coming for Cork. A weaving solo run by Katrina Mackey in the 16th minute saw her slip past a pack of chasing defenders and somehow find a gap through the centre of the Kilkenny defence.

Just as she went to pull the trigger and fire for goal, Grace Walsh came flying across to get a crucial

half block. Down 0-6 to no score, this was in danger of getting away from Cork. And then, the perfect riposte - a goal.

Fiona Keating, who had just drifted inside to full-forward as Cork constantly rotated their attacking personnel, showed an electric burst of speed to take her through on goal and she tucked a neat finish away to the corner.

And while Michaela Kenneally replied swiftly for Kilkenny, Cork hit the next four points to tie things up 1-4 to 0-7 at half-time.

Hannah Looney was another to the fore for Cork around the middle third while Miriam Walsh was such an important ball-winner for Kilkenny up front.

Kate Nolan was another on fire

and it went score for score - Katrina Mackey hitting some score from the sideline and Laura Hayes and Saoirse McCarthy so dynamic raiding down the wings for Cork, the latter hitting a huge point on the run.

Katie Nolan missed a free from 45 metres in front of the posts after Laura Tracey was blown for over-carrying. Cork went down the other end from the puck out for Hannah Looney to score and sneak her team one ahead 1-10 to 0-12 with 10 minutes to go.

Then, with just two minutes of normal time to go, Kilkenny got the break they needed. Niamh Deely's shot was partially blocked to send the ball looping towards goal. Goalkeeper Amy Lee batted



So gutted: Davy Fitzgerald and Saoirse McCarthy

'LOSING MEANS NOTHING BUT I'

FOR Cork manager Matthew Twomey, there is no consolation in being part of a camogie showpiece that entertained right to the very last ball. How could there be? The aesthetics of the occasion are for others to chew over. Coming on the back of last year's narrow, gut-wrenching defeat by Galway, he admits the bottom line is the only thing that matters. 'This is the second All Ireland final we are after losing; we are getting sick of people telling us we are losing great All-Irelands because it

By PHILIP LANIGAN

means nothing to us. When you look at the players, I couldn't be more proud of them.

'From day one when we got involved with them they have been absolutely incredible and I'm gutted for them. I'll get over it and move on but I'm gutted for them - they deserve more.'

Until Sophie Dwyer's goal went in for Kilkenny in the 58th minute, it looked like Cork were on course to edge a game that had been nip and

tuck throughout, having taken a two-point lead at such a crucial stage.

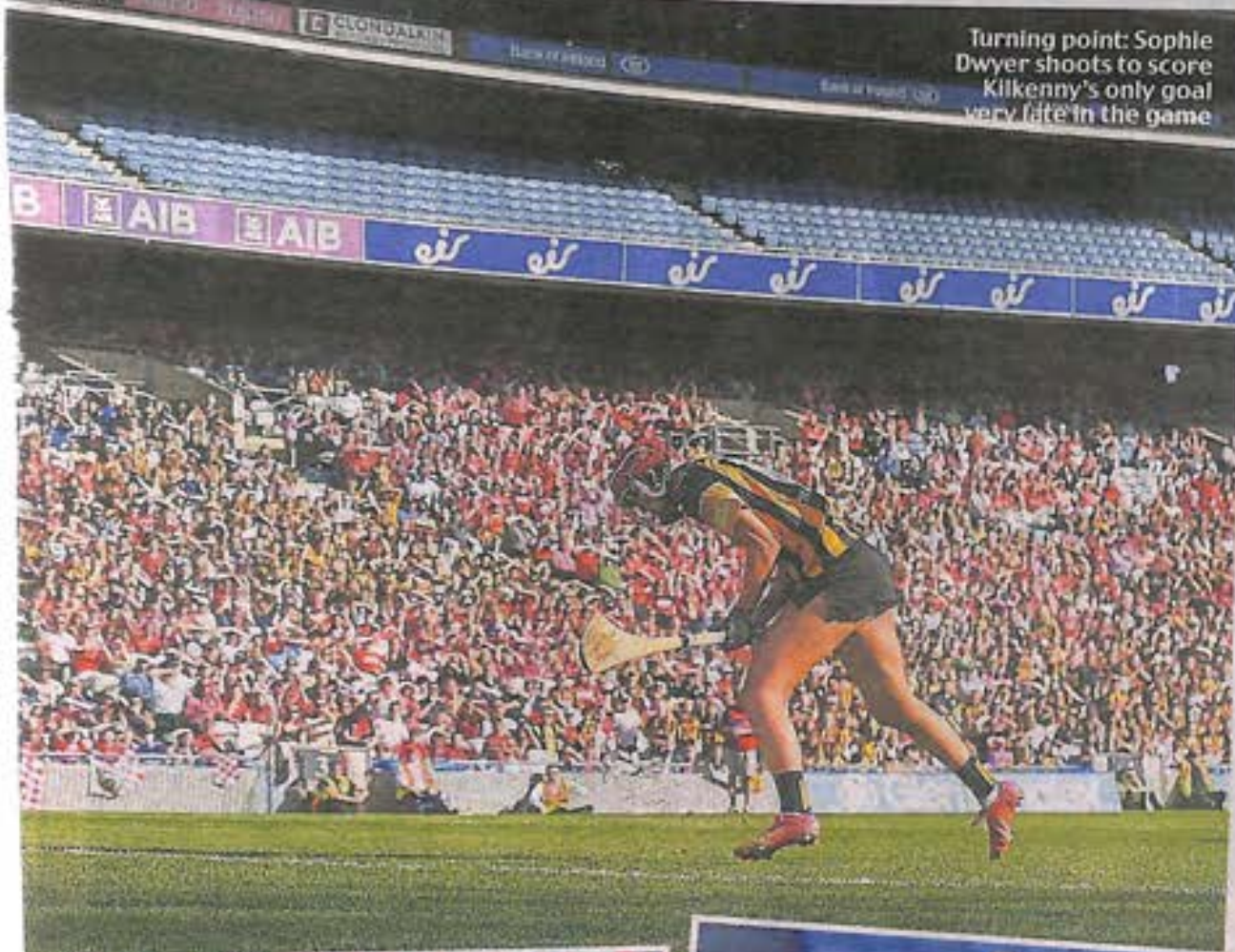
The messy nature of the goal, coming after a deflected shot nearly looped over goalkeeper Amy Lee's head - she had to react fast to scramble backwards and bat it out - made it hard to take.

'The defence has been superb all year, the girls have been unbelievable.'

'Anyone who got a goal earned it off us and it was just a bad break and the ball flicked up in the air. Amy wa:

behind to edge Cork in a thriller

Turning point: Sophie Dwyer shoots to score Kilkenny's only goal very late in the game



Proud moment: Brian Dowling with wife Alison and (r) Cork and Kilkenny in action



It back out where substitute Sophie Dwyer swept it to the net. Karina Mackey's equaliser ratcheted the tension up another notch before Gaule nailed the last free in injury time after Miriam Walsh was caught high. **PLAYER OF THE MATCH:** It's hard to look beyond Miriam Walsh as a ball-winner, scorer and the winner of that clutch free in injury time. **MOMENT OF THE MATCH:** When Ashling

Thompson picked up possession with the last play, Cork had one last chance to equalise, only for the ball to slip wide. **CORK:** A Lee; M Murphy (C Healy 54); L Coppinger; M Cahalane; L Hayes; L Treacy; S McCarthy; F Keating; A Thompson; K Mackey; C Sigerson (D Cahalane 62); H Looney; C Healy; S McCartan (E Murphy 50); A O'Connor. **Scorers:** F Keating 1-2, A O'Connor 0-5 (56), K Mackey 0-3, S McCarthy, H Looney 0-1 each. **Yellow card:** L Hayes 14; M Murphy 39. **Wides:** 5 (5)

KILKENNY: A Norris; M Teehan; G Walsh; T Fitzgerald; N Deely; C Phelan; S Fitzgerald; L Murphy; K Power; J Malone; D Gaule; M Kenneally (S Dwyer 46); M O'Connell (A Prendergast 55); M Walsh; K Nolan. **Scorers:** K Nolan 0-5 (36), D Gaule 0-3 (18), M Walsh 0-3, S Dwyer 1-0, M Kenneally, T Fitzgerald 0-1 each. **Wides:** 6 (5) **REFEREE:** Ray Kelly (Kildare) **ATTENDANCE:** 23,426

twitter @lanno10

Emotional Dowling in tribute to team spirit

By PHILIP LANIGAN

BRIAN Dowling is sitting in the media room in the bowels of the Hogan Stand talking about life and loss and hurling. It's been a year of triumph and tragedy, of highs and lows, that lent an emotional air to Kilkenny's All-Ireland senior camogie win over Cork.

Earlier in the year, just weeks after team coach Tommy Shefflin suffered the shock loss of his brother Paul, the manager lost his uncle Oliver Brennan to a house fire. Another uncle Dominic was left homeless.

After setting up a GoFundMe page, Dowling was blown away by the kindness and support which came from far and wide, including from the likes of Cork manager Matthew Twomey and a number of Cork players.

Other members of the Kilkenny squad, too, had their own challenges, both on and off the field. And yet the 2022 inter-county season ended with the high of Kilkenny coming out the right side of a thriller against Cork.

Flanked by team captain Aoife Prendergast, Dowling takes the time out afterwards to put context on it all. 'Look, it was, it was tough, the off-the-field stuff was very tough. A lot happened in March and April, obviously Tommy's brother, Paul, passed away. Then my own uncle passed away in a house fire. Aoife's granddad passed away. Ciara Phelan's granddad passed away and everything just happened in a couple of weeks, and then to have Kellyann Doyle's and Aoife Doyle's cruciates on top of that. It just seemed that everything was going wrong.'

'I don't know, we just sort of galvanised some team spirit within the group and just a never-say-die attitude, stay going and stay going. I said it to the girls before the match, look... we said it on Friday night in the team meeting: the amount of things that were thrown at this group this year and here we are, still fighting, still in with a chance of winning an All-Ireland.'

'I'm just so proud of them that they were able to get through all of that and whatever went on. We had new girls stepping up there today, the likes of Tiffanie Fitzgerald went up and scored the first point of the game, she's a corner-back, 19 years of age. That's just incredible. That sums up the whole thing I suppose.'



Dream comes true: Aoife Prendergast lifts O'Duffy Cup

this for Kilkenny people, our families and friends. They didn't get to celebrate in 2020 with us but they were there in '17 when they lost, they were there in '18 when they lost, they were there in '19 when they lost.

'Last year it was our mission but we didn't get there. This year it was our mission to win an All-Ireland in front of Kilkenny people.'

'I thought we had a huge crowd today up here supporting us and we're just so happy to bring the O'Duffy Cup home.'

Once again, this one boiled down to such fine margins - Ashling Thompson just missing the posts with an attempted equaliser in the very last play of added time.

'When you get to an All-Ireland it's just about winning, whatever way you can.'

'We said it in the dressing-room, we knew it was going to come down to the last puck and that's what it came down to.'

'We found a way to get there. Unfortunately, we haven't in the past at different times. We found it today somehow. Look, maybe there were people looking down on us today. I'm just so grateful we're All-Ireland champions.'

Team captain Aoife Prendergast described the high of being the one to lift the O'Duffy Cup after coming on for the frantic finish that saw Kilkenny win by a single point.

'It was unbelievable. It's a special bunch of players, a special management team.'

'To be the one to climb up the Hogan Stand and lift that cup in front of all those it was something special and something I've dreamt of forever.'

'I didn't know if it would happen or not but I'm grateful to be the one to do it.'

SO PROUD OF MY PLAYERS'

backtracking and it was batted out and it happened to fall to a Kilkenny (player). 'When your name is on the cup, it is on the cup.' When midfielder Ashling Thompson galloped clear to have one final chance to equalise, he couldn't think of a better player to be in that position. 'I was thinking she's the right person to have the ball. Like if you were to give anyone on the team a ball like that it would

have been Ashling. It just went wide, she had the courage to take it on and have a go off it and we worked a great move to get her into position but ... it was hard.' Such fine margins mean that Cork have to regroup and try and come again next season. 'We just know what we have to do now - get a flipping win! 'But the players are immense, I'm so proud of them - I'm extremely proud to be their manager. All you want off a

team is to give it their all and they have done that numerous times over the years. 'In my reign they have done it every game, given their all. 'We lost a few players during the year. I know Galway and Kilkenny are the same, they lost players, but just talking about Cork they are huge losses. 'We had a lot of inexperienced players out there as well who will learn massively from this.'

Kilkenny draw spirit from tragedy and adversity



Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship Final

KILKENNY 1-13
CORK 1-12

Therese O'Callaghan
Croke Park

AROUSING finish earned Kilkenny their 15th Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior camogie championship title yesterday in Croke Park. Trailing by two points and with as many minutes remaining, substitute Sophie Dwyer pounced for a crucial goal.

It came when a shot from wing-back Niamh Deely took a deflection, and backing into the goal Amy Lee batted the sliotar, only for Dwyer to whip first time to the net.

Katrina Mackey struck an incredible levelling point at the end of normal time, but with at least four minutes of additional time signalled, there was plenty more action to come.

When Miriam Walsh was fouled, Denise Gaule showed remarkable composure to fire over from the 45-metre line — after missing a couple of earlier frees. In the sixth minute of additional time, Ashling Thompson made a brave bid for an equaliser but it wasn't to be and went wide of the post.

"Just so happy, just so re-

lieved," was manager Brian Dowling's reaction after an epic battle.

"Coming up the home stretch it looked like it was going to a replay but in fairness to these girls, they always find a way somehow. It's not good for my heart but they got there in the end and we're so happy to be All-Ireland champions.

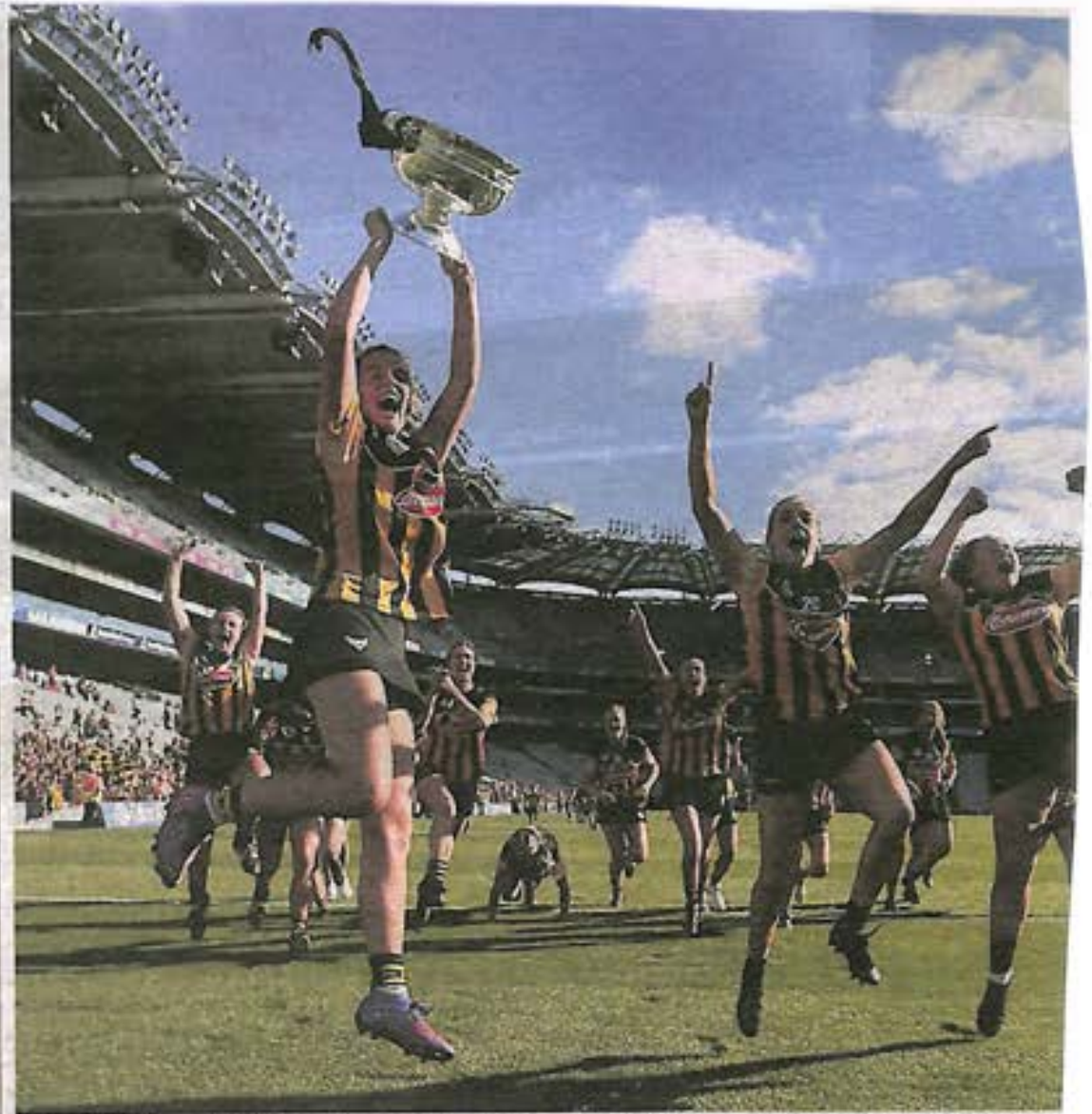
"You have to believe, there's no point in being out there if you don't believe. I know the character that's in these girls, we've been saying it all year. The girls are sick of me saying that we're going to get a bit of luck somewhere along the

way and we just have to be there to take it.

"We got it today and we know that. In the past, maybe we didn't, but today we got the luck and Cork didn't and that was the difference."

It was predicted that this showdown — where both sides went with sweepers in Laura Treacy and Claire Phelan — would go to the wire. And that was exactly how it panned out.

Kilkenny got off to a flyer in the first quarter, shooting six unanswered points. Cork didn't open their scoring until the 20th minute, a brilliant solo goal from Fiona Keating.



TOP CATS: Kilkenny's Aoife Prendergast, Ciara Phelan, and Roisin Breen celebrate with the cup after the Glen-Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final win over Cork. Picture: Inpho/Bryan Keane

How they lined out



A Norris

M Teehan G Walsh T Fitzgerald
A O'Connor S McCartan C Sigerson

N Deely C Phelan S Fitzgerald
S McCarthy F Keating K Mackey

L Murphy K Power
A Thompson H Looney

M O'Connell M Kenneally J Malone
L Hayes C O'Sullivan L Treacy

M Walsh D Gaule K Nolan
M Cahalane L Coppinger M Murphy

A Lee (Capt)



They went on to outscore their opponents four points to one.

Deadlock 1-4 to 0-7 after a cagey opening 30 minutes. The second-half turned into a ding-dong battle.

Tied four times during the fourth quarter, at the end of which the scoreboard read 1-8 to 0-11. Cork went two up through Hannah Looney and Amy O'Connor — Looney, along with Mackey and Fiona Keating were Cork's best players.

Kilkenny, however, wouldn't be denied.

"A lot happened in March and April. Obviously, (coach) Tommy (Shefflin)'s brother, Paul, passed away. Then my own uncle passed away in a house fire," Dowling said.

"Aoife (Prendergast)'s granddad passed away. Ciara Phelan's granddad passed away and everything just happened in a couple of weeks and then to have Kellyann Doyle's

and Aoife Doyle's cruciates on top of that. It just seemed that everything was going wrong," added Dowling.

"I don't know, we just sort of galvanised some team spirit within the group and just a never say die attitude, stay going and stay going. I said it to the girls before the match, we said it on Friday night in the team meeting, the amount of things that were thrown at this group this year and here we are, still fighting, still in with a chance of winning an All-Ireland.

"I'm just so proud of them that they were able to get through all of that and whatever went on. We had new girls stepping up there today, the likes of Tiffanie Fitzgerald, went up and scored the first point of the game, she's a corner-back, 19 years of age. That's just incredible. That sums up the whole thing I suppose."

Miriam Walsh and Katie

Nolan spearheaded the Kilkenny attack, while Grace Walsh and Katie Power worked like trojans. Power, who had to overcome a serious knee injury, was lost for words.

"It doesn't actually seem real. To miss out on 2020 and the slog and the heartbreak that this team has gone through in the last 12 months with deaths, with injuries and whatever was thrown at us, we just kept coming back.

"I know it's a cliché but the spirit in this group is unbelievable. I'm so grateful to be standing here, and without my family and my friends that supported me through all them tough days, I wouldn't be here."

It was, indeed, a magnificent achievement for Kilkenny who lost Davina Tobin and Colette Dormer to retirement, while Meighan Farrell took a year out. And spare a thought

Future is bright for Galway after intermediate win



Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie final

GALWAY 0-13
CORK 0-11

Daragh Ó Conchúir
Croke Park

Laura Loughnane is predicting a very bright future for Galway's next crop of champions, after a young intermediate side chiselled out a two-point victory over Cork in a tight Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie final.

For the Eyrecourt attacker, who scored three excellent first-half points, it was sweet redemption after her club had fallen to Cahir at the mecca of Gaelic games in the club intermediate decider of 2016.

But while she enjoyed being on the right side of it, she played down her own role and paid tribute to the slew of

young guns who were involved in Cathal Murray's new-look unit.

"I still can't believe it. There's just a lot of emotions but I'm delighted," said Loughnane. "It's a completely new team this year. It's basically made up of 17, 18, 19-year-olds and seven or eight of us bringing up the average age. I'm so proud of them, they're unbelievable.

"The older girls learned a lot this year from the younger girls and they learned hopefully a bit from us. I'm so glad to have won it with this bunch because they're unreal."

Galway were reduced to 14

in the 52nd minute when Kate Manning was shown a second yellow card in six minutes, but hard though Cork tried, they never really looked like scoring a goal though Katie Anna Porter did make a goal-line clearance from a Joanne Casey shot late on.

That said, they were a little fortunate when Joanne Casey elected to shoot low from a free just outside the 20m line in the 56th minute, with two points between the sides.

Katie Gilchrist shot seven points for the victors, while Casey hit six for Cork in a game in which scores from play were hard to come by.

Loughnane and Cork's Lauren Homan fared best in that regard, with three each but both teams were guilty of poor deliveries, all too often hitting the ball down the throat of the respective sweepers, Ciara Hickey (Galway) and Ashling Moloney (Cork), who did their jobs supremely well.

It was 0-10 to 0-7 at half-time and became a real dogfight after the interval. Subs Laura Kelly and Rachel O'Shea did well for Galway and Cork respectively but Galway could always keep the Rebels at arm's length.

Scorers for Galway: K. Gilchrist 0-

7(6fs); L. Loughnane 0-3; N. McPeake 0-2; T. Canning 0-1.

Scorers for Cork: J. Casey 0-6(5fs); L. Homan 0-3; K. Hickey, R. O'Shea 0-1 each.

GALWAY: F. Ryan, C. Starr, C. Donohue, C. Hickey, K. Manning, L. Casserty, K. A. Porter, A. Hasnan, J. Hughes, N. McInerney, K. Gilchrist, T. Canning, O. Rabbitt, N. McPeake, L. Loughnane.

Subs: L. Kelly for Canning, S. Corcoran for McInerney (both 40); C. Kenny for Loughnane (55); A. Kelly for Gilchrist (60).

CORK: S. Beausang, A. Moloney, N. O'Leary, G. Hannon, J. O'Leary, K. Kilcommins, L. O'Sullivan, L. Callanan, R. Harty, J. Casey, K. Hickey, S. Hutchinson, L. Homan, H. Ryan, C. O'Callaghan.

Subs: M. Murphy for Hutchinson (28); R. O'Shea for C. O'Callaghan (39); A. O'Callaghan for Ryan (59).

Referee: Gavin Donegan (Dublin).

THE 60 SECOND REPORT

IT MATTERED

Inspired substitution — Kilkenny goal scorer Sophie Dwyer made a big decision at the start of the year when she stepped away from the intermediate panel. She wanted to push hard for the senior panel. She showed form in recent weeks. Her persistence paid off handsomely.

CAN'T IGNORE

Brian Dowling said Kilkenny had a lot of hardship and bad luck in the group during the year and that they felt they were going to get that luck somewhere. That their luck was going to have to change. It surely did.

GOOD DAY

23,426 watched an epic contest with a breathless finish right up to the 66th minute.

BAD DAY

A second successive defeat for Cork, and by a single point. Kilkenny turned the tables after suffering one-point losses to the Rebels in both the 2017 and 2018 deciders.

SIDELINE SMARTS

This game was like a game of chess. So many tactical battles all over the field. Both camps came with their own plans and you would have to say worked because in the end it was just a hop of a ball that separated them.

BEST ON SHOW

Fiona Keating and Hannah Looney were standout for Cork. Miriam Walsh and Katie Nolan were outstanding for Kilkenny.

MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Ray Kelly left the game flow, and was consistent in doing so.

NEXT UP

Cork must regroup having lost the All-Ireland final in 2021, the league final earlier this year, and now the All-Ireland final again.

Therese O'Callaghan

'We wanted to win this for Kilkenny people'

Kilkenny reaction

Therese O'Callaghan

Brian Dowling said this All-Ireland success was for their people, their families, and their friends.

"We said it all year, the message was we wanted to win this for Kilkenny people, our families and friends," the Kilkenny manager said.

"They didn't get to celebrate in 2020 with us but they were there in '17 when they lost, they were there in '18 when they lost, they were there in '19 when they lost. Last year it was our mission but we didn't get there. This year it was our mission to win an All-Ireland in front of Kilkenny people. I thought we had a huge crowd today up here supporting us and we're just so happy to bring the O'Duffy Cup home.

"I was thinking it was looking like a replay, another two weeks of training. We'd have taken it if we got there. It was just great that the final whistle did go eventually. That moment of relief is just unbelievable when you win a game like that. We were here

in 2020. Don't get me wrong, it was one of the best feelings of my life but there were no supporters here."

Dowling had special mention for his non-starting captain Aoife Prendergast who he brought on for the final 10 minutes when the game was in the melting pot.

"Aoife epitomises everything about this group. She was on the starting team, she lost her place but by God she's some leader. She never backed away from anything. Every time she was asked to come on, she stepped up. That just sums it up, what our group is all about. It didn't matter who was on the pitch, it was everybody driving it on. They're just a credit to themselves."

Miriam Walsh was another player to cover herself in glory, scoring three points.

"We always want to keep Miriam close to the goal because she's a goal threat all the time but we felt we had to bring her out. I actually said, 'Look, she might win frees' and that's what she did. Miriam is in the form of her life this year. She's been unbelievable, she's been so consistent



Kilkenny manager Brian Dowling is congratulated by his wife Alison after the victory.

for us. Delighted for her.

"The likes of Miriam Walsh, Denise Gaule, Claire Whelan, Grace Walsh, they've lost three finals in-a-row and were probably questioning where they're going. But they don't ever step back. If you heard Grace Walsh speaking in the dressing room the last couple of days, it just puts the hairs standing on the back of your neck. It's unbelievable.

"She couldn't breathe coming in at half-time, she got a belt in her stomach. That girl just won't back down from

anything. I'll just mention them all, there's just so many characters there. Different ones stepped up at different times. That's what it's about."

Denise Gaule nailed the winner from a free in the 62nd minute. Prior to that, she had missed a couple so Katie Nolan stepped up.

"They were alternating themselves. I suppose Denise had a bad day the last day, her confidence was a bit low on the frees but she has been practising a huge amount for the last two weeks. Her first one went wide but it's amazing, she only got one free in the first half and it went wide, put her confidence down.

"Katie Nolan is just a super girl, has so much confidence. She stepped up to the frees. Unfortunately Katie missed one — I thought maybe it was going to be the reason we lost today. Laura (Murphy) said already, Denise Gaule, you don't have to mention character. She's a leader, has always been a leader for us. But the one thing she's done this year more than ever before is her work-rate. It's just unbelievable."

Twomey gutted but proud of 'immense' players

Cork reaction

Therese O'Callaghan

Cork manager Matthew Twomey said small margins were the difference between winning and losing.

"In the 54th minute, I looked up at the clock and we were two points up and you are kind of saying, 'is this our day?'. We were still trying to do the right things and then you get hit with the goal, it is very hard to claw it back.

"This is the second All-Ireland final (in-a-row) we are after losing. We are sick of people telling us we are losing great All-Irelands. It means nothing to us. It's no consolation.

"We were told this last year and we're here again. We don't know what we have to do to get a flipping win.

"The players, they are just immense and I am so proud of them. I'm extremely proud to be their manager. All you want off the team is to give it their all and they have done

that numerous times over the years. They have done that in every game.

"We lost a few players during the year. We have a panel, and I know Galway and Kilkenny are the same and they lost players as well, but we're just talking about Cork, they are huge losses. We have a lot of inexperienced players out there and they will have learned massively from this.

"I will get over it, but I am gutted for them because they deserve more. Fair play to Kilkenny, they are an awesome team when they get into a position like that. We just find it very disappointing.

"The second-half was nip-and-tuck, to go two points up you should be finishing out the game.

"There were a couple of situations, if we had luck when we were clean through. You have to take those opportunities and we didn't and we suffered for it afterwards. They died in their boots, I couldn't be more proud of them."

The clinching goal from Sophie Dwyer came two minutes from time.

"Defensively, we have been superb all year, the girls have been unbelievable. Anyone that got a goal off us, earned it. It was just a bad break. I think it flicked up in the air. Amy (Lee) was backtracking just to bat it out and it just happened to fall to a Kilkenny player. When your name is on the cup, it's on the cup. That's it."

It took Cork 20 minutes to start the scoreboard, Fiona Keating's goal got them motoring.

"I thought Fiona Keating had one of her best games in a Cork jersey and she was given an awful role to mark Katie Power. Fiona was brilliant.

"Our half-back line wasn't as electric going forward but we had to be cautious about Kilkenny as well because we knew they were so dangerous. I thought Libby (Coppinger) did well on Miriam Walsh because she is a massive handful.

"When Ashling Thompson

had a shot for the equaliser in the 65th minute, I was thinking she was the right person to have the ball to be honest with you. If you were to give anyone on the team the ball like that, it would be Ashling. It just went wide. She had the courage to take it on and have a go off it. We worked a great move to get her into that position... it was hard."

Despite the heart-breaking defeat, Laura Treacy said the future of Cork camogie is in safe hands.

"Losing the second year in a row, defeat is never going to be easy to take but we will all have to go back to our clubs, dust ourselves down and try to regroup, especially those young girls in the dressing room. The future of Cork camogie is very bright.

"The U16s and minors brought home silverware this year. The intermediates are here today and us coming up short as well. It is phenomenal to have four teams in an All-Ireland final but it is absolutely gutting."

for sisters Kellyann and Aoife Doyle (cruclate).

"We have a special bunch of players," remarked captain Aoife Prendergast.

"To be the one to climb up the Hogan Stand and lift that cup was something special and something I've dreamt of forever. I didn't know if it would happen or not but I'm grateful to be the one to do it."

Scorers for Kilkenny: K Nolan (0-5, 0-3 frees), S Dwyer (1-0), M Walsh and D Gaule (0-1 free) (0-3 each), M Kenneally and T Fitzgerald (0-1 each).

Scorers for Cork: F Keating (1-2), A O'Connor (0-5 frees), K Mackay (0-3), S McCarthy and H Looney (0-1 each).

KILKENNY: A Norris; M Teehan, G Walsh, T Fitzgerald, N Deely, C Phelan, S Fitzgerald; L Murphy, K Power; M O'Connell, M Kenneally, J Malone; M Walsh, D Gaule, K Nolan.

Subs: S Dwyer for M Kenneally (47), A Prendergast (Capt) for M O'Connell (54).

CORK: A Lee (Capt); M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; L Treacy, C O'Sullivan, L Hayes; H Looney, A Thompson; K Mackay, F Keating, S McCarthy, C Sigerson, S McCartan, A O'Connor.

Subs: E Murphy for S McCartan (50), C Healy for M Murphy (53), O Cahalane for C Sigerson (62).

Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare)

'It's brilliant and it's so special', says emotional Antrim star



Glen-Dimplex All-Ireland Junior Camogie Championship Final

ANTRIM 5-5
ARMAGH 0-14

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Croke Park

Antrim and in particular Dervla Cosgrove, went goal crazy to mark their first season in existence as the county's second team by winning the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior title.

Cosgrove finished with 4-2 and three goals in 84 seconds in the second quarter stunned Armagh, the champions of 2020 who were also runners-up last year.

None of it would have been possible but for Megan McGarry's pointed free in the second half of the second period of extra time as they clawed their way over the line in a marathon semi-final against

Clare. The Loughiel Shamrocks totem, who was a pivotal figure in this game too, was incredulous at what had been achieved, particularly as Armagh had been a bogey team in their short life. "It's unreal," said McGarry, wiping away joy-induced tears.

"I don't think I can believe it. It's just unreal. I was a bit emotional there. First time playing in Croke Park for all of us girls, it was just unreal to finally get the win against Armagh.

"It's brilliant and so special and to see everybody here, all that support. It's amazing to see so many here."

And all down to McGarry at Bord na Móna O'Connor Park 15 days previously.

"That was great," comes the instinctive reaction. "It was crucial, wasn't it? That was some game and some day but this is the ultimate. Unbelievable."

Armagh had plenty of opportunities for goals themselves, but Antrim goalie Aine Graham made three magnificent saves, while Ciara Donnelly had a first-half shot that rebounded across the goal after hitting the inside of the Antrim upright.

Former Cork star Jenny Curry was a danger for

Armagh, scoring two points and setting up that goal chance for Donnelly, but the supply was fitful and she was double-marked in the second half.

Donnelly did provide five points and had nine scorers in total but it was all about the three-pointers and with Fionnuala Kelly having breached the Armagh defence for the first time in the eighth minute and Cosgrove then hitting her hat-trick, the full-forward added her fourth in the second half, the Saffrons would not be denied.

Scorers for Antrim: D Cosgrove 4-20; F Kelly 1-2; E Leech 0-1

Scorers for Armagh: C Donnelly 0-5(3fs); J Curry 0-2; M McArdle, L Donnelly, E McKee, R Merry, S Quinn, E Smyth, K Comiskey 0-1 each.

ANTRIM: A Graham, M McLarnon, E Kearns, E McShane, C Crawford, M McGarry, S Cosgrove, C Kearney, A McNeill, O Lavery, C McNaughton, Brid Magill, E Lavery, D Cosgrove, F Kelly.

Subs: N Devlin for O Lavery (39); Brónach Magill for S Cosgrove (47); E Leech for McNaughton (51); T O'Neill for Kelly.

ARMAGH: C Devlin, M Lenahan, N Woods, E O'Kane, G McCann, E Hayes, T Maguire, M McArdle, L Donnelly, C Doyle, C Donnelly, E McKee, R Merry, J Curry, S Quinn.

Subs: E Lavery for Lenahan, C O'Kane for Woods (both 26); B Murray for McKee (34); K Comiskey for Merry (40); E Smyth for Doyle (55).

Referee: Mike Ryan (Tipperary)

Slow start costs Cork

Two Cork losses are hard to swallow, but that's the game

DESPITE witnessing a thrilling All-Ireland senior final, it was a tough day in Croke Park for Cork fans.

Before the game, the general feeling was that we could win both All-Irelands or head home empty-handed, it was that close to call.

Unfortunately, both games went against us. A one-point senior defeat is so hard to take. It was a two-point intermediate loss.

Of course, it's clear that Cork's slow start came back to haunt them. It mirrored their semi-final where they failed to score for the opening 25 minutes.

Here it was 20. We'd been here before though. Six points down to Kilkenny and still winning, so the game certainly wasn't over at the quarter-way mark, but Kilkenny had also hit five wides at that point.

Cork needed something and Fiona Keating provided it. Scoring an outstanding individual goal, she put Cork on their way and they were level at half time. You felt the pendulum had swung. Kilkenny's management must have been praying for the half time whistle to reset.

Cork were in trouble throughout the pitch in the opening stages. Kilkenny were closing down Cork's running game and were also emerging from rucks with the ball. Cork were striking under pressure and hit three too short into Kilkenny keeper Aoife Norris's hands and that was as far as their scoring threat returned.

The goal came, Michaela Kenneally replied with a point, but Cork found their mojo and starting winning more outfield possession. Four points on the bounce as Cork ran riot and the sides were level.

Predictably, Libby Coppinger picked up Miriam Walsh and while Walsh hit three points Coppinger did a great job getting vital touches in, and preventing her goal threat.

As the second half started, Cork continued their attacking mode. Hannah Looney was now making strong runs and Cork took the lead for the first time on 35. Kilkenny hit two back. The middle third was packed as we've come to expect. But outside of that space was opening up.

A wonder strike by Katrina Mackey from the left sideline was matched by a brilliant Saoirse McCarthy point.

Denise Gaule went back to defend showing the pressure Kilkenny now felt. Katie Nolan was causing problems for Cork though, winning frees and she hit her second point from play on 45 minutes.

Kilkenny were struggling to get strong shots in under pressure, and Walsh was clearly venting her frustration inside as another dropped shot into no man's land for Amy Lee to clear. Cork's flanks were finding the space and making runs.



Libby Coppinger shows her frustration at Croke Park on Sunday. Picture: Seb Daly/Sportsfile



Match analysis

Linda Mellerick

You couldn't take your eyes off the game for a second. The sides were level six times in that second half. Cork held a two-point lead with 12 minutes left. You couldn't, at that point, see a Kilkenny goal.

Cork's work rate and tracking back was strong. If anything, Kilkenny were starting to look frustrated. Nolan had a simple free to go one up with 11 minutes remaining. She uncharacteristically hit it wide. When Denise Gaule hit a similar wide with three minutes remaining, she was visibly troubled.

But then it all went wrong. A high pot shot dropped onto Amy Lee. She was off her line, and it almost lobbed her. Off balance backing back she got a hurley to it but when it hit the ground experienced substitute Sophie Dwyer pulled to the net.

Fifty eight on the clock but with four minutes of additional time, there was plenty of it. Mackey levelled it.

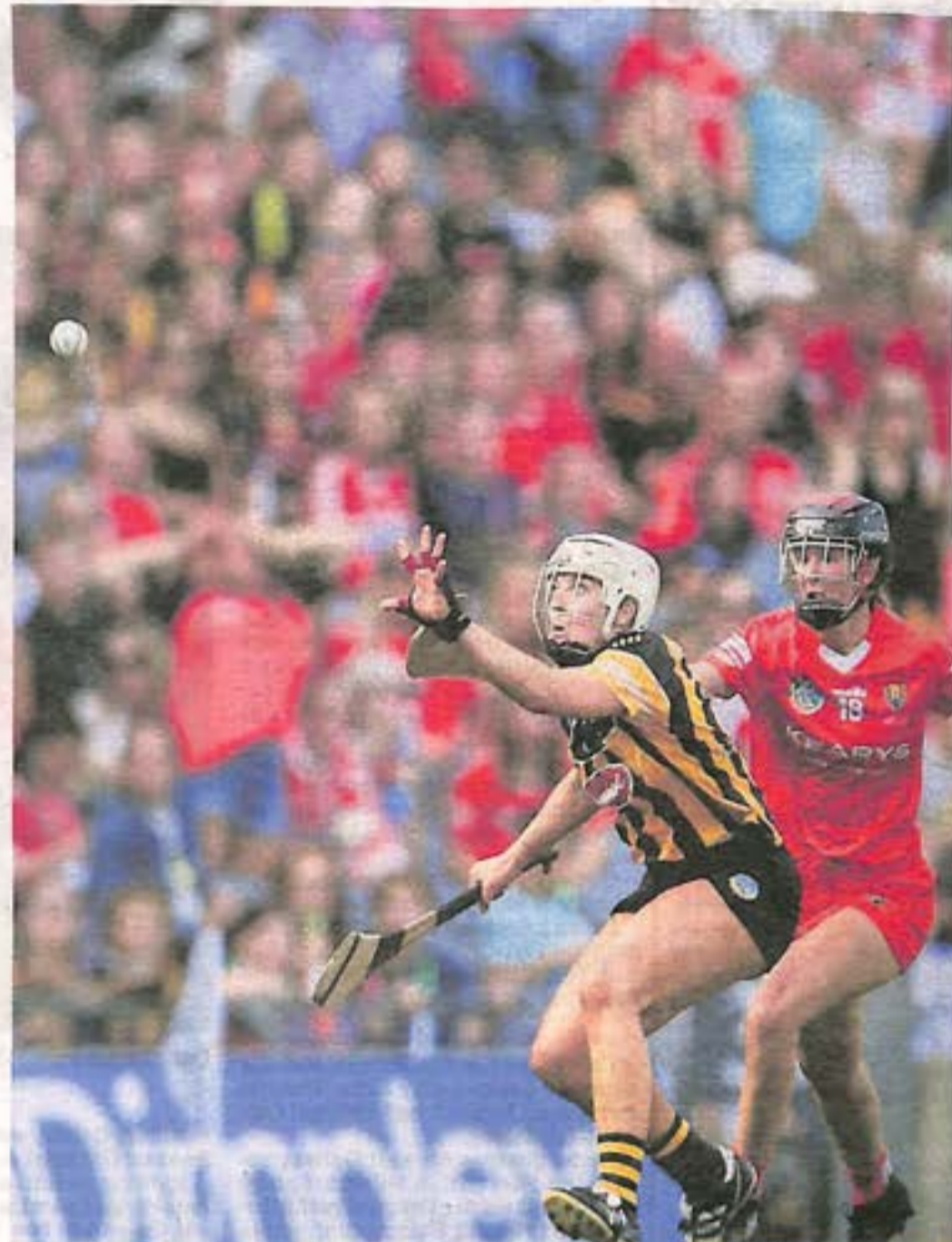
Cork gave away a free to Walsh. You have to give credit to Gaule who stood over it after missing one four minutes earlier. Still time.

Coppinger made a crucial interception to break down another Kilkenny attack, who now had a spring in their step. She won the free. Lee took it. Kilkenny won the breaking melee. With the clock edging towards 65 minutes Ashling Thompson ran towards the posts. She took on the responsibility in taking what could have been the equalising shot to force extra time but it went just outside the post. Then the final whistle.

The day didn't start out great when Cork lost to Galway by two points. Playing too deep, outnumbered by two in attack and the decision to go for a goal from a close in free when two points down with three minutes remaining all contributed to a day when Cork will feel this was a game they could have won.

The clearance from the saved free went up the pitch, Galway won a free and instead of it being a one-point game, it became three. Cork were then probably chasing a goal. They still had chances, but their finishing let them down. When Kate Manning was sent off with nine minutes of normal time remaining, Cork should have pushed up. Galway went 18 minutes without a score, yet Cork couldn't capitalise.

When games are tight, it's a day when both Cork teams will have regrets but that's sport.



Kilkenny's Michaela Kenneally with Ciara O'Sullivan of Cork at Croke Park. Picture: INPHO/Evan Treacy



Kilkenny's Mary O'Connell battles with Cork's Saoirse McCarthy. Picture: INPHO/Evan Treacy



Cork's Fiona Keating shoots from Michelle Teehan of Kilkenny. Picture: INPHO/Bryan Keane

Story of the game

Turning point: Denise Gaule's free in the fourth minute of injury-time was the telling score that meant the O'Duffy Cup was heading to Kilkenny rather than the Rebel County. Before that Sophie Dwyer's goal was crucial, but the winning point was a pressure one that she converted with ease.

Score of the game: Whilst Gaule's free was crucial to

their win, there were several great scores throughout. The pick of them was Katrina Mackey's point from out near the sideline in the 40th minute, a score that put Cork a point up at the time.

Player of the game: Plenty to choose from on both sides, with Ashling Thompson, Hannah Looney, and Libby Coppinger all in top form for Cork.

But for a number of crucial scores and for the way that she drove at the Kilkenny defence Katrina Mackey gets the nod in another outstanding display in the Rebel red.

What now?: For these players, it will be a break for a week or so to try and recover from this blow before they are back in club championship action in a few weeks.

in narrow defeat



CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

Kilkenny	1-13
Cork	1-12

AGONY for Cork as they lost out to an injury-time free from Denise Gaule in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior final at Croke Park.

They didn't deserve to lose and a draw would probably have been a fair result, with both sides enjoying their periods of dominance over the 60 minutes, but a late goal proved to be the key moment.

Sub Sophie Dwyer pounced on a batted clearance by scrambling Cork goalkeeper Amy Lee to strike the sliotar to the net in the closing stages to give the Cats a 1-12 to 1-11 advantage after the Rebels had dragged themselves into a two-point lead.

In the end, it was the slow start that cost Cork as they let Kilkenny build up a six-point lead before they got going. But with the likes of Ashling Thompson, Hannah Looney, Katrina Mackey, and Fiona Keating upping their game, Cork had it level by half-time and, to their credit, were a much-improved side in the second-half.

It was score for score for most of that half and it took that injury-time free to separate the sides and make it a day of double agony for Cork, with the intermediate side also losing their final.

There was only 20 seconds on the clock when Kilkenny were in front, with Tiffanie Fitzgerald getting the opening score, before Katie Nolan added a second as the Cats enjoyed the better of the opening exchanges.

Cork thought they were off the mark when the umpire raised the white flag but Hawkeye intervened and Sorcha McCartan's effort was deemed wide.

Kilkenny went further ahead when Miriam Walsh raised their third white flag after eight minutes as Cork were slow to settle, similar to the semi-final against Waterford.

In the first 11 minutes they had only one shot at the Kilkenny posts as Cork were finding it difficult to get any sort of a foothold in attack.

Walsh was on target again and Gaule got in on the scoring act to make it 0-5 to no score, with 14 minutes played.

From the restart she picked up the ball to score again, before Cork had their second real chance. A great run by Mackey saw her brush aside several defenders before a last ditch tackle from Grace Walsh denied her what looked like a certain goal.

With 20 minutes gone Cork had still to register a score and the Cats had five wides and they could have been out of sight.

But a minute later Cork got the boost they needed when Keating raced



Kilkenny's Tiffanie Fitzgerald takes on Cork's Hannah Looney during their All-Ireland senior camogie final at Croke Park. Picture: INPHO/Evan Treacy

through on goal to blast to the back of the net and the Rebels were up and running.

Michaela Kenneally got Kilkenny's seventh point before Amy O'Connor raised Cork's first white flag from a free, with 24 minutes played.

Again the Cats had another wide before O'Connor got her second, from another free as Cork upped their game and started to play much better.

By now Thompson and Looney were winning the midfield battle and Cork were unlucky not to be back on level terms, with another O'Connor effort going narrowly wide. With the last shot of the half Mackey was on target to leave the sides level at the break with Cork starting to come more into the game, with the score at 1-4 to 0-7.

It took until the 35th minute before Cork went in front for the first time, with O'Connor raising her third white flag from a free before Miriam Walsh levelled it again a minute later.

Another free from Nolan put the Cats back in front before a great pass from Mackey set up Keating to point. An inspirational point from Mackey

from near the sideline put Cork back in front with 40 minutes gone, as they led 1-7 to 0-9.

Nolan split the posts from another free, but again the Rebels responded in style, this time Sorcha McCarthy scoring from distance to restore their slim lead.

Nolan replied at the other end, with O'Connor raising another white flag from a free as the Rebels led 1-9 to 0-11 with 47 minutes played.

Another Nolan free had the sides level again before the same player missed an easy free to put her side back in front.

Looney put Cork back in front, with Emma Murphy — just on a sub — going close to extending their lead.

O'Connor made it a two-point game when she pointed another free as Cork led 1-11 to 0-12, with five minutes to go.

Kilkenny missed another free before Sophie Dwyer, just on the pitch, struck a huge blow for her side.

Amy Lee could only bat out a goal-bound shot and Dwyer was first to react to the breaking ball to find the back of the net to put the Cats back in

front, 1-12 to 1-11. Mackey levelled it and as the game headed into injury-time it was 1-12 apiece.

Gaule put Kilkenny back in front from a free as time was running out for the Rebels. They had one last chance for an equaliser but Thompson, who had been outstanding all through, saw her effort go just wide and with that, the ref blew the final whistle.

Scorers for Kilkenny: K Nolan 0-5 (0-3 f), D Gaule (0-1 f), M Walsh 0-3 each, S Dwyer 1-0, T Fitzgerald, M Kenneally 0-1 each.

Cork: F Keating 1-2, A O'Connor 0-5 f, K Mackey 0-3, H Looney, S McCarthy 0-1 each.

KILKENNY: A Norris, M Teehan, G Walsh, T Fitzgerald, N Deely, C Phelan, L Murphy, S Fitzgerald, K Power, D Gaule, M Kenneally, J Malone, M O'Connell, M Walsh, K Nolan.

Subs: S Dwyer for M Kenneally (47), A Prendergast for M O'Connell (53).

CORK: A Lee (Na Piersaigh), M Murphy (Ballinora), L Coppinger (St Colum's), M Cahalane (St Finbar's), L Hayes (St Catherine's), L Tracey (Killeagh), S McCarthy (Courcey Rovers), H Looney (Killeagh), A Thompson (Milford), K Mackey (Douglas), F Keating (Courcey Rovers), C Sigerson (Killeagh), C O'Sullivan (Newestown), S McCartan (St Finbar's), A O'Connor (St Vincent's).

Subs: E Murphy (Glen Rovers) for S McCartan (50), C Healy (Aghabullogue) for M Murphy (53), O Cahalane (St Finbar's) for C Sigerson (58).

Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare).



Cork's Fiona Keating at the final whistle. Picture: INPHO

The pain of another final loss hits hard

MATCH REACTION
Mary Newman

THE pain was etched on Cork defender Laura Tracey's face after a one-point loss at Croke Park to rivals Kilkenny.

"I'm actually devastated it's very, very difficult to be leaving Croke Park for the second year in a row without silverware," she said. "I suppose we are a little bit to blame with our slow start and we had to really battle to get ourselves into the game, but we showed huge character to do it." The Killeagh star was at a loss to explain how they ended up six behind before scoring themselves.

"It's very hard to really put your finger on our slow start, all of us played here in the league final and again two weeks ago in the semi-final.

"Was it nerves? I'm not sure really, most of us have played in a lot of finals, so really I just cannot figure it out.

"We were training really well leading up to the game, but I guess it ended up costing us today as we were chasing it thanks to our slow start."

Fiona Keating grabbed a goal and Cork went in at half-time level after a disappointing opening 20 minutes.

"We showed huge character to be level at half-time and we possibly could have been a point or two ahead. In the second half, I felt we were dominant, but the goal gave them a boost but we got back on level again, but fair play to them, they won a free and it was enough to get them over the line."

She acknowledged Kilkenny's strength and their battling qualities.

"You can never be far enough ahead of Kilkenny and you have to push on when you get ahead of them and when we went two points up with six minutes remaining they kept at it and they got the lucky break and the goal that put them ahead."

"We came back at them again and probably could have got an equaliser but it wasn't to be."

With the second last play of the game, Cork could have grabbed a late leveller but Ashling Thompson's shot went agonisingly wide.

"Fair play to Aishling she worked herself into a great position and went for it, she was brave enough to take the shot and it was just so disappointing for her that it went narrowly wide."

"She has given so much to Cork camogie and she showed huge bravery to go for it."

Three reasons why the Rebels were beaten by Kilkenny

Poor start

It happened in the semi-final against Waterford and they managed to recover but against Kilkenny, this made a tough task even harder.

With 15 minutes gone Cork found themselves 0-6 to no score down and they were fighting an uphill battle from here on.

To their credit, they gave it everything as they battled back and managed to be level at half-time.

But an effort like that takes its toll on any side and towards the end of the 60 minutes you could see Cork's legs were tiring, no surprise really with the effort they had to put in to get back level.

Luck

Sometimes you need that little bit of luck to win big games and Cork didn't have it against Kilkenny.

The goal came from a great save by Amy Lee but when the ball rebounded Sophie Dwyer was first to get a touch as it fell nicely for her and the Cork de-

fence had no chance of getting near her. On another day that ball would have been cleared but small margins like this can be killers on big days.

Experience

They have proved it time and time again and they did so again that an experienced side like Kilkenny are never beaten no matter what and when they needed a cool head late on then no better than Denise Gaule to convert a free to win an All-Ireland final.

Great Gaule stands tall as Kilkenny hold their nerve best

Cork recover from poor start but top Cats exact revenge for agonising defeats of 2017 and 2018

COLM KEYS

KILKENNY	1-13
CORK	1-12

ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOEGE FINAL

THESE were once the games that Kilkenny had developed a bad habit of losing.

Having beaten Cork in the 2016 final to reclaim the O'Duffy Cup for the first time in 22 years they then came out on the wrong side of agonising one-point margins in the next two deciders at the hands of the same opponents. A further three-point final loss to Galway in the 2019 final raised questions about their nerve in a tight battle.

But their 2020 win went some way to allaying that and now they have purged the memory of those painful 2017 and 2018 losses to Cork, and a further one-point semi-final loss to them last year, by inflicting something similar on the Rebels here. This will have felt good.

Kilkenny were defiant down an

absorbing home stretch. The official attendance was 23,426 and some of those from other counties had already trailed away but the noise that emanated was really something as the sliotar bobbed around as if it had entered the chamber of a pinball machine.

Every ball became a contest that felt like everything was hinging on it in those closing moments and it needed calm heads.

Building

Kilkenny just had a couple more of those, from Grace Walsh whose interception at one end led to the winning score at the other and Denise Gaule who converted the free from 45 metres, having missed one earlier, that pushed Kilkenny one point clear for the last time and then made a couple of blocks beneath the Cusack Stand that prevented Cork from building further.

Cork did have a chance and Ashling Thompson was brave enough to take it as time pushed well past the four minutes to be added but her shot drifted wide and that was referee Ray Kelly's cue to bring it to a close, a 15th senior title for Kilkenny and an eighth final win over Cork.

For Cork there was bitter disappoint-

ment. They had been completely out of sorts for the opening 20 minutes, just as they had been against Waterford in their semi-final, and fell six points behind to opponents that were cleverly bypassing Laura Treacy's placement as sweeper.

But they worked their way back into the game, Fiona Keating's brilliant solo goal the catalyst, and when they ran at Kilkenny it was clear that their athleticism could potentially make the difference.

Hannah Looney and Katrina Mackey were both rampant in the half-forward line as they used their running power to carve holes in the cover.

The end product didn't always come off for Looney and there were a few overcooked passes but the pace that Cork could summon through her and Mackey looked like it could create openings once they got a foothold in

the game. But their ploy of playing Chloe Sigerson up front as a sole target, on balance, didn't work. She was left with a lot to do and with Kilkenny placing Ciara Phelan back to support Walsh, the inside line never really threatened.

In contrast Kilkenny had Miriam Walsh at the other end doing real damage when the ball went in. She scored three points and won two more frees that were converted, including the winner when Ciara O'Sullivan pulled her down.

Nerveless

There may have been claims from Cork that Walsh's hand went in first but clearly the initial tackle from the Cork player was high and Gaule was nerveless in the follow up.

It was a magnificent second half and the sides were level six times. But Cork

looked to have made the decisive move when they pushed two points clear, 1-11 to 0-12, on 55 minutes after Amy O'Connor pointed a free, awarded for a foul on Sigerson.

Kilkenny kept coming though and while there was an element of luck about the breaks they got for their goal two minutes later, substitute Sophie Dwyer's first time finish was clinical.

In the build up Katie Nolan, always a hive of activity, got around Treacy and laid off to Julianne Malone whose initial shot was half deflected. The spin off that appeared to deceive Thompson who was back covering and she spilled, allowing Niamh Deely to snap a shot that was scrambled out by Amy Lee but Dwyer was ready and waiting and made no mistake to restore a one-point lead for Kilkenny.

All afternoon Mackey had been finding the type of gaps she got through



Dowling: We've had a lot of hardship and bad luck but

CLÍONA FOLEY

AFTER a year of awful losses on and off the field, Kilkenny still kept believing that Lady Luck would turn for them and she finally did.

Management were hit by tragic family bereavements, players got year-ending injuries, nothing seemed to go right for them yet they just kept believing their luck would change and it happened at the most critical time.

The first break came when super-sub Sophie Dwyer pounced on a mix-up

in the Cork goalmouth to bag the vital 58th-minute goal that put them back in the game.

And deep in added-time, when a long-range chance fell to Cork's Ashling Thompson and you'd have 'bet your house' on her earning a replay, the shot drifted wide, another tiny tip of the scales in their favour.

"We've had a lot of hardship and bad luck in the group during the year and we said it ourselves, we're going to get that luck somewhere," said winning manager Brian Dowling who looked like he'd played the whole 66 minutes himself.

"We kept saying that something's going to change and we got it today on



Kilkenny manager Brian Dowling is congratulated by his wife Alison

the biggest day of all," he admitted. "In the past maybe we didn't but today we got the luck and Cork didn't and that was the difference.

"Coming up the home stretch it looked like it was going to a replay but, in fairness to these girls, they always find a way somehow," he said.

"It's not good for my heart but they got there in the end and we're so happy to be All-Ireland champions."

Not for the first time did a Kilkenny hurling manager put faith in a relative unknown who'd been showing up well in training.

"Sophie made a big decision at the start of the year, she stepped away from the intermediate panel, wanted to push hard for the senior panel. She wasn't getting any game-time but she showed form in training a few weeks ago and pushed herself in there. Came

on against Dublin, got a point, came on against Galway and got a point so I knew she could do it."

Kilkenny had plenty of other heroes all over the pitch, not least Grace Walsh who, it was revealed, took a bad bang in the stomach before half-time yet wouldn't countenance not returning to the field of play.

Famous

Miriam Malone led the charge from the off and when pulled deeper won the winning 62nd-minute free. Denise Gaule was another, keeping her famous cool to slot it despite missing an easier one five minutes earlier.

And as winning captain Aoife



On the charge: Katie Nolan of Kilkenny in action against Meabh Murphy of Cork during the senior All-Ireland camogie final at Croke Park

'I couldn't be more proud of the players' - Twomey

DONNCHADH BOYLE



BY HIS own admission, Cork camogie manager Matthew Twomey was still trying to get his head around it all in the Croke Park auditorium as he stood in the bowels of the Hogan Stand.

His mind was full of regrets and 'what ifs' after seeing his side come up short in a thrilling All-Ireland final for the second year on the spin.

It was also the second successive match where his side sleepwalked through the early stages. Against Waterford last time out they didn't score for 24 minutes. This time around it took them 20 minutes to get on the scoreboard.

"What we can't fathom ourselves is the start again," Twomey said.

"I don't know, because we didn't do it all year and to do it in a semi-final and an All-Ireland final is just unreal. And we had a couple of opportunities, that was the thing.

"Before we scored we had an opportunity for two goals but we just took the wrong option again which is criminal in games like this. We could have had two goals and Fiona [Keating] got the goal, but look..."

The disappointment with the start was etched on his face. Despite that, they worked themselves back level by half-time and were within touching distance of glory down the home straight.

"On the 54th minute I looked up at the clock and you are two points up and you are kind of saying, is this our day?" Twomey continued.

"And we were still trying to do the right things and then you get a break like that with the goal. They got their dander up and it was very hard to claw it back.

"Fair play to Kilkenny, they are an awesome team when they get into a position like that. We find it very disappointing because I can't pinpoint the start again, to go 20 minutes without a score again, there's no logical reason.

"We thought it was a freak thing



Cork manager Matthew Twomey

minute after the allotted injury time was played. Ashling Thompson's effort fell narrowly wide.

"I was thinking she's the right person to have the ball, to be honest with you. If you were to give anyone on the team a ball like that it would have been Ashling. It just went wide, she had the courage to take it on and have a go and we worked a great move to get her into position but... it was hard," said Twomey.

"This is the second All-Ireland final we are after losing. We are getting sick of people telling us we are losing great All-Irelands because it means nothing to us. When you look at the players I couldn't be more proud of them. From day one when we got involved with them they have been absolutely incredible and I'm gutted for them.

"I'll get over it and move on but I'm gutted for them, they deserve more. We got to three finals, you can be proud of that, but to lose two of them, obviously today is the one we want but we were that bit short.

Fruitful

Cork camogie enjoyed a fruitful year, competing in four finals across U-16, minor, intermediate and senior, winning the first two and contributed handsomely to a thriller here. But after the second All-Ireland final defeat in a row, it was difficult to find comfort.

"It is no consolation, we were told that last year [that they had been part of a great final] and we are here again. We just know what we have to do now get a flipping win.

"But the players are immense, I'm so proud of them, I'm extremely proud to be their manager. All you want off a team is to give it their all and they have done that numerous times over the years - and in my reign they have done it every game, given their all.

"We lost a few players during the years, we have a panel and I know Galway and Kilkenny are the same. They lost players but just talking about Cork, they are huge losses. We had a lot of inexperienced players out there as well who will learn massively from this."

chance, on the biggest stage, and she took it.

As I wrote on these pages on Saturday, I believed it was going to come down to a moment of magic or one piece of play - and in the end it did.

Denise Gaule had missed two scores from frees before the key free in the 62nd minute and it took a great amount of resilience to step up and put Kilkenny ahead.

Then there was Grace Walsh, who was the epitome of toughness. She took two heavy knocks and looked in quite a bit of pain in the first half, yet she had an outstanding second half, steadying the ship and not letting a ball by her.

But you have to give huge credit to Cork for the part they played in making this what it was. Cork being Cork, they

believe they can win any game and they never gave up.

All the same, I'm thrilled Kilkenny will get to enjoy this victory. When they won in 2020 they couldn't celebrate as they wanted but they should make amends now.

You have to take your hat off to Brian Dowling, who took over the team in 2020 and has won two All-Irelands and one league title.

After losing a number of girls this year, he stuck at it and again got the best out of everyone in their ranks.

The players too stuck with him over the last three years, buying into his vision and doing everything asked of them to make it a reality - and now they've reaped their well-deserved reward.



Galway captain Lisa Casserty lifts Jack McGrath Cup

Cosgrove's 84-second hat-trick secures 'unreal' Antrim success

ANTRIM	5-5
ARMAGH	0-14

ALL-IRELAND PREMIER JUNIOR FINAL

ANTRIM, and in particular Dervla Cosgrove, went goal crazy to mark their first season in existence as the county's second team by winning the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior title.

Cosgrove (right) finished with 4-2 and three goals in 84 seconds in the second quarter stunned Armagh, the champions of 2020 who were also runners-up last year.

None of it would have been possible but for Megan McGarry's pointed free in the second-half of the second period of extra-time as they clawed

their way over the line in a marathon semi-final against Clare.

The Loughgiel Shamrocks totem, who was a pivotal figure in this game too, was incredulous at what had been achieved, particularly as Armagh had been a bogey team in their short life.

"It's unreal," said McGarry, wiping away the detritus of joy-induced tears. "I don't think I can believe it. It's just unreal. I was a bit emotional there. First time playing in Croke Park for all of us girls, it was just unreal to finally get the win against Armagh.

"It's brilliant and so special and to see everybody here, all that support. It's amazing to see so many here. People thought we'd no chance at the start of the year and they even



thought it in the newspapers but we proved them wrong."

Armagh had plenty of opportunities for goals themselves, but Antrim goalie Aine Graham made three magnificent saves, while Ciara Donnelly had a first-half shot that rebounded across the goal after hitting the inside of the Antrim upright.

Former Cork star Jenny Curry was a danger for Armagh, scoring two points and setting up that goal chance for Donnelly, but the supply was fitful and she was double-marked in the second half. Donnelly did provide five points and had nine scorers in total but it was all about the three-pointers.

SCORES - Antrim: D Cosgrove 4-2, F Kelly 1-2; E Larch 0-1. Armagh: C Donnelly 0-5 (3); J Curry 0-2; M McAuley, L Donnelly, E McKee, R Morry, S Quinn, E Smyth, K Conneely 0-1 each.
ANTRIM - A Goham, M McLanor, E Keams, E McShane, C Crawford, M McGarry, S Cosgrove, C Kearney, A McNeill, O Lavery, C McNaughton, Bini Magill, E Lavery, D Cosgrove, F Kelly. **SUBS** - N Davlin for O Lavery (70), Biniach Magill for S Cosgrove (47), E Larch for McNaughton (58), T O'Neill for Kelly.
ARMAGH - C Denis, M Lennihan, N Woods, E O'Kane, G McCann, E Hayes, T Maguire, M McAuley, L Donnelly, C Doyle, C Donnelly, E McKee, R Morry, J Curry, S Quinn, Sabz, E Lavery for Lennihan (26), C O'Kane for Woods (26), B Murray for McKee (38), K Conneely for Morry (40), E Smyth for Doyle (55).
REF - M Ryan (Tipperary).



No holding back: Kilkenny's Michelle Teehan is tackled by Cork's Katrina Mackey during yesterday's Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie final at Croke Park
PIARAS Ó MIDHEACH/SPORTSFILE

for her third point to restore parity and that gave Cork momentum again. But that final push wasn't there and maybe at that stage, the effort to get back into the game after such a poor start told.

Miriam Walsh and Gaule had both been instrumental in building that six-point lead by the 15th minute with Gaule's second point and Kilkenny's sixth a brilliant over the shoulder strike from 45 metres.

Mackey served notice of her pace and the route which would best serve Cork when she cut through but was denied by a last gasp Grace Walsh tackle on 17 minutes.

But then the breakthrough from another one of those powerful Cork runners as Keating surged 30 metres on 20 minutes to put some spark in their team with their goal.

Katie Nolan turned supplier for Michaela Kenneally to defuse the energy building around Cork but only briefly and O'Connor began to look more dangerous with her runs.

A free after Thompson was fouled, followed by Keating and Mackey points had them level by the break, 1-4 to 0-7.

Sublime

The lead changed hands five times between half-time and the 50th minute and two of Cork's lead scores in that sequence were sublime, one from Mackey as she hugged the sideline for 1-7 to 0-9, and then Saoirse McCarthy, after Nolan had levelled from a free, with a powerful run and strike down the same flank for 1-8 to 0-10.

But Kilkenny kept hanging in with the influential Nolan continuing to punish fouls on Katie Power who had moved inside for the closing quarter after going head-to-head with Thompson for so long.

The quality of striking and the exchanges added greatly to the entertainment value. The rule changes have really benefited the game and there was enough contact permitted to allow this game to flow at the perfect pitch.

Cork will look at their poor start and also some moves that were over prescribed but Kilkenny had 11 wides throughout which tells its own story on territory. At times it looked like Cork would out run them but Kilkenny just brought that little bit more consistency to their game.

SCORERS - Kilkenny: K Nolan 0-5 (3f); M Walsh, D Gaule (1f) 0-3 each; S Dwyer 1-0; T Fitzgerald, M Kenneally 0-1 each.
Cork: A O'Connor 0-5 (5f); F Keating 1-2; K Mackey 0-3; S McCarthy, H Looney 0-1 each.

KILKENNY - A Norris; M Teehan, G Walsh, T Fitzgerald; S Fitzgerald, C Phelan, N Deely; L Murphy, K Power; J Malone, M Kenneally, M O'Connell; D Gaule, M Walsh, K Nolan. **Subs:** S Dwyer for Kenneally (47), A Prendergast for O'Connell (54).

CORK - A Lee; M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; S McCarthy, L Treacy, L Hayes; F Keating, A Thompson; K Mackey, C Sigerson, H Looney; C Healy, S McCartan, A O'Connor. **Subs:** E Murphy for McCartan (50), C Healy for Murphy (54), O Cahalane for Sigerson (62).

REF - R Kelly (Kildare).

Kilkenny Ratings



AOIFE NORRIS 7
Played brilliantly in the semi-final win over Galway. Not as busy here. But still very assured in all her work.

MICHELLE TEEHAN 7
The Player of the Match in the semi-final. A vital part of the best defence in the sport. So focused on her task.

GRACE WALSH 8
A throbbing heartbeat of the victory. Foiled Katrina Mackey of a certain goal. Has settled so well in the No 3 jersey.

TIFFANIE FITZGERALD 7
Struck the opening point of the match. Won the hard ball. A brilliant marker who used possession wisely.

NIAMH DEELY 7
Quick feet. One of the busiest players on the pitch. Showed terrific energy. Battled for every crumb.

CLAIRE PHELAN 7
A leader of the Kilkenny defence. Sees the danger well in advance. Kept it tight and simple.

LAURA MURPHY 7
Produced one of the highlights of the contest with a delightful pick-up off the turf. Put in another shift.

STEFFI FITZGERALD 7
Showed grit. Never stopped running. No easy task trying to curtail Hannah Looney and Ashling Thompson.

KATIE POWER 8
Broke forward to good effect. Also did huge work in and around the back garden. The essential team player, bringing colleagues into the play.

DENISE GAULE 9
Character makes the champion. Hit a classical point. Played a big part in Sophie O'Dwyer's goal. At the hub of the action when it mattered most.

MICHAELA KENNEALLY 7
Grafted for every ball. Kept going. Provided an option with her selfless toil. Up against the formidable Laura Treacy.

JULIANNE MALONE 7
Showed impressive industry. Possesses pace. Her clever pass to Katie Nolan for a point was among the treasures of the afternoon.

MARY O'CONNELL 7
Always looking for a breaking ball. Put in the effort. The Cork defence didn't give away any loose change.

MIRIAM WALSH 9
So strong under pressure. Won plenty of ball. Scored a couple of nuggets. She could find room in a crowded lift.

KATIE NOLAN 8
Looked dangerous anytime she had possession. Clipped over vital scores from play and frees. A busy display.

BENCH IMPACT 8
Sophie Dwyer came on in the 47th minute and she was to strike the golden goal. The term super sub was invented for decisive moments like that.

Cork Ratings



AMY LEE 7
Cool under the hot sun. Crisp clearances. Short and long. Sought to get Cork on the front foot with her deliveries.

MEABH MURPHY 7
Diligent. Stood her ground. Foraged for every scrap. Tight marker. Had to keep a close watch on Katie Nolan.

LIBBY COPPINGER 7
Fully occupied marking Miriam Walsh but still found the time to push out and play tidy passes.

MEABH CAHALANE 7
Broke tackles and burst forward whenever the opportunity arose. Hit some precise passes, even in heavy traffic.

LAURA HAYES 7
Did many good things. Calm with the ball. Played some excellent hand-passes and went forward at the right times.

LAURA TREACY 8
Usually first to the breaking ball. Drove Cork forward so often. If the simple pass was on, she gave it.

SAOIRSE MCCARTHY 7
Showed composure to prevent an early point. Drilled over one of the best points. Terrific first touch.

HANNAH LOONEY 9
Played with such conviction. Supreme athlete. Went on surging runs. Lifted the team when it was needed.

ASHLING THOMPSON 8
The white boots were everywhere. However, Kilkenny didn't let her influence the match. Was unlucky to see her late shot go wide.

KATRINA MACKAY 8
Class act. Scored one of the points of the season in front of the Cusack Stand in the second period. Electric in full flow heading for goal.

FIONA KEATING 7
Provided the crucial opening score that settled Cork's nerves. A well-taken goal after a long 20 minutes. Also contributed a couple of polished points.

CHLOE SIGERSON 7
Played one of the passes of the tie that let in Katrina Mackey for a chance. Gave it everything. Won a valuable free for Amy O'Connor.

CIARA O'SULLIVAN 7
Late change to the starting 15, and more than did her bit. Always looking to pounce on any stray ball in and around the Kilkenny defence.

SORCHA MCCARTAN 7
Unfortunate for McCartan that her early point effort into the Hill goal was ruled out by Hawk-Eye.

AMY O'CONNOR 8
She can turn on a bottle-top. Blistering pace. And such a pure striker of the sliotar. Also excelled from the placed ball.

BENCH IMPACT 7
Emma Murphy came within inches of a point with her first touch after she was introduced in the 50th minute.

- NIAL SCULLY

AT A GLANCE

PLAYER OF THE MATCH

Miriam Walsh (Kilkenny)

Scored three points and won two frees - including the winner - that ultimately made the difference. Walsh was a powerful presence at full-forward, presenting Libby Coppinger with a real challenge.



TALKING POINT

These were the type of games that Kilkenny used to lose, but their willingness to battle and hang in against a more athletic Cork team was

admirable and they got the breaks to make up for some of the agonising final defeats in the last decade. Also the quality of the game was noteworthy, with enough physical contact permitted to let it flow properly.

MAGIC MOMENT

It was a top-quality final, but points from Katrina Mackey and Saoirse McCarthy along the Cusack Stand side in the second half really stood out.

MATCH STATISTICS

Wides

Kilkenny 11 (6 first half)

Cork 7 (4)

Yellow Cards

Cork 2 (Laura Hayes 14, Méabh Murphy 38)

Kilkenny 0

ATTENDANCE

23,426

that changed on the biggest day

Prendergast noted, it wasn't all luck but Kilkenny's relentless pursuit and effort that earned this victory, particularly to put Thompson's last shot slightly off target.

"We just had to keep the pressure on, we don't give up until the final whistle and maybe just a bit of pressure in her eyelid was what we done to get us over the line today," she said.

Victory was particularly special for midfielder Katie Power, forced to watch their 2020 victory from the wings after breaking her kneecap in a freak training ground incident.

"To miss out on 2020 and the slog and the heartbreak that this team has gone through in the last 12

months with deaths, with injuries and whatever was thrown at us, we just kept coming back," she said.

"I know it's a cliché but the spirit in this group, whatever was thrown at us we took it and kept coming back. It's unbelievable and I'm so grateful to be standing here with my family and friends that supported me through all them tough days."

"We said it on Friday night in the team meeting, look at the amount of things that were thrown at this group this year and here we are, still fighting, still in with a chance of winning an All-Ireland," Dowling reflected.

"We had new girls stepping up there today, the likes of Tiffanie Fitzgerald

went up and scored the first point of the game. She's a corner-back, 19 years of age. That's just incredible. That sums up the whole thing I suppose."

Losing to Cork by a late injury-time point in last year's semi-final was undoubtedly a motivation that kept them battling to the end but so too was the chance to win and properly enjoy their 15th title, unlike their surreal 'Covid All-Ireland' in 2020, when they eventually ended their losing streak of three finals in-a-row but won in an empty stadium and never got to celebrate with their supporters afterwards.

They've the perfect excuse to double the celebrating this time.

Gutsy Kilkenny stalwarts refuse to accept more final pain

A DREAM of a final decided by the doggedness of Cats. Cork can and justifiably will talk about the pain of losing a second successive All-Ireland final in a row, but the hurt Kilkenny had prior to winning in 2020 extended to three. And so it was that the tenacity of their senior stars prevailed having trailed on five occasions in the second half.

In the 2020 final when she scored 1-6, Denise Gaule was the gem that sparkled on a surreal December evening in a vacant Croke Park. Here, she was more workmanlike than wonder, called into the middle of the field in the second half to stem the wave of attacks Cork had been generating there from the second quarter.

The results were mixed, but just as she was called into action in the engine room, her services were required on frees, having initially being relieved of duties following a first-half miss. But then her replacement Katie Nolan, hav-

ing converted a couple of placed balls, sent one wide in the 48th minute and Gaule was restored, only for her 57th-minute effort to hit the outside of the post.

Just as she had earned that free, Miriam Walsh drew another in the second minute of additional time, and Gaule's effort was straight and true. Cork scrambled to respond as they did successfully after substitute Sophie Dwyer's freakish 58th-minute goal, but

no equaliser came, Ashling Thompson's last-gasp shot drifted wide and so last year's semi-final was aveng-



HARD LUCK: Davy Fitzgerald commiserates with Saorise McCarthy after Cork's All-Ireland final defeat to Kilkenny. Picture: James Crombie/Inpho

ed. Of course, it was much more than that for Kilkenny.

For the stalwarts, to lose a fourth final in seven years would have been unthinkable, and so it proved with their gutsy conclusion. "We always want to keep Miriam close to the goal because she's a goal threat all the time, but we felt we had to bring her out," recalled Kilkenny manager Brian Dowling. "I actually said: 'Look, she might win frees' and that's what she did."

"Miriam is in the form of her life this year. She's been unbelievable, she's been so consistent for us. Delighted for her. The likes of Miriam Walsh, Denise Gaule, Claire Whelan, Grace Walsh, they've

lost three finals in a row, and were probably questioning where they're going. But they don't ever step back."

For the management figures of Dowling and Tommy Shefflin, this was the sweetness in an otherwise bitter year when they lost their loved ones. Three weeks after Shefflin's younger brother Paul died suddenly while out for a jog in March, Dowling was mourning the loss of his uncle Oliver in a house fire.

This triumph hardly masks such tragedy, but camogie had sustained them, distracted them, comforted them. Dowling didn't speak extensively about his own experience before the final, but had mentioned how the team had



helped Shefflin. "Tommy could see that the girls really rallied around him. They were all at the funeral and were there when Tommy needed them. My own uncle died as well and the girls were very supportive."

If the team weren't doing it for their management, the men on the sideline would have reminded them they should also be doing it for themselves. Their 2020 All-Ireland title didn't carry an asterisk, but that it didn't carry a crowd either did subtract from what should have been an occasion.

The sight of the Cork jerseys that had brought about the end of their title defence 12 months ago clearly brought out the best in them, as they raced into a six-point lead by the 15th minute. So much was

going right for them. In the back-line, Michelle Teehan and Grace Walsh were foiling so much of the ball being delivered by Looney and Thompson. Up front, Miriam Walsh was converting from acute angles and in the 14th minute Gaule introduced herself to the game with the first of two points in quick succession.

But there was no panic on the Cork sideline, no deviation from the short pass game, just a couple of pitch incursions by Cork coach Davy Fitzgerald to implore Chloe Sigerson to stay closer to goal. Such was Looney and Thompson's dominance in the middle of the field that something would have to give.

A full 23 minutes plus had passed when Cork eventually scored, and it sliced the deficit in half, Fiona Keating leaving

John Fogarty

Croke Park

