

191

JAN 2020
TO
AUG 2020

2020 will be big for women in sport

Women in Sports



Denis Hurley

THIS year is shaping up to be a big one for Mary O'Connor, who wants women's sport to take advantage of what she calls a "perfect storm".

The Killeagh native, winner of seven All-Ireland senior camogie medals and five in ladies' football, is the CEO of the Federation of Irish Sport, which is leading the '20x20' initiative, which aims to help women's sports grow and develop.

Sports have been encouraged to aim for improvements of 20 percent under three headings and O'Connor is playing a key role. She is aware that there is an opportunity there, but it won't last forever.

"I think we have a finite length of time where this argument is valid, if I'm being very honest," she says.

"We have a huge opportunity now, on the world stage there are things happening with women in sport and the time is now to make sure we have systems in place that we can't go backwards.

"Women's sport in Ireland is in a good place but can it get better? Absolutely, there's appetite for it and people don't see it as a threat anymore.

"We know there are challenges but we need to be looking at solutions and how we're going to get there rather than continually going back over old ground." That's why 20x20 is so important.

"The campaign was launched in October 2018 and we had 71 national governing bodies (NGBs) and local sports partnerships signed up," O'Connor says.

"There were three headings — media coverage, participation or attendances at games — and they all signed up to at least one of those, or in some instances all three, and they would have a plan for how to achieve the stated goals.

"Then, in 2019 Sport Ireland appointed Nora Stapleton and brought out their Women in Sport Policy and Women in Sport funding. Those three things will complement 20x20 and vice versa, because the policy is going to have outcomes.

"The governing bodies will be able to really fine-tune their targets now because they have the resources and some of them have taken on Women in Sport Officers to drive that and that's important.

"Nobody in the country owns 'women in sport' and 20x20 doesn't either, but what we're trying to do is create a platform where real conversations take place and provide strength in unity."

In terms of Gaelic games, O'Connor acknowledges recent developments but wants to see a move away from what she calls "scoreboard journalism".

"Ladies' football has been on an upward curve for a number of years," she says.

"Camogie is maybe caught slightly in the sense of the same teams getting to final, whereas football has had one team consistently getting to the final



Sinead McGrath from Mayo is presented with their award by Mary O'Connor, CEO of the Federation of Irish Sport, and Richard Gernon, Regional Manager EBS during the Volunteers in Sport Awards presented by Federation of Irish Sport with EBS at Farmleigh House in Phoenix Park, Dublin.

VOLUNTEER
IN SPORT
AWARDS



Mary O'Connor, CEO Federation of Irish Sport, pictured making presentations to Paul O'Donovan and Emily Hegarty at the UCC Sports Star Awards in the River Lee Hotel.

Picture: Howard Crowley

but against different finalist.

"I think the point to make is that ladies' football isn't even 50 years old yet and look what has been achieved, especially in the last five or six years, and obviously this year again there was a record-breaking crowd.

"While the standard of football in the final wasn't fantastic, that shouldn't take away from the calibre of football all year, particularly the semi-finals, which were very good to watch as a spectacle.

"I think, the more exposure those games outside of finals get, the more important it is. I was playing up until 2010 and up until 2006 and 2007, only the All-Ireland camogie final was shown live and if it happened to be a poor game, that defined people's perceptions.

"We have to be able to criticise as well as admire the players and not just put them up there.

"It's something Rena Buckley has said previously and I would have gone on record with it, I don't think any player wants scoreboard journalism. When I played camogie with Cork, I was a back and the backs were never mentioned, only the scorers.

"Only by actually covering the games in a bit more detail and critiquing the players, that will create a bit more seriousness around them."

In Cork, there are a number of advantages compared to other counties.

"It's something I've often thought about," O'Connor says.

"Obviously, Cork has a strong Gaelic games background but also a strong background across a number of sports, real diversity. That tradition is there and we're lucky to have it.

"There's a huge amount of volunteers doing untold work, that happens in every county but in Cork there's a greater opportunity to try so many

"I think, the more exposure those games outside of finals get, the more important it is."

sports.

"Sports complement each other there and there's world champion or international competitor who hasn't been affected by a coach as a volunteer.

"It's really important from a female point of view that Cork girls have the opportunity to play a multitude of sports and if they're specialising in one sport they get to play at schools, colleges, club and county level.

"We almost take that for granted, if you're from another county, you mightn't get those opportunities.

"We're also fortunate in that we have a huge population, we have a wide base so it's broader at the top.

"In the last few years, I've been heartened that Cork underage teams have become successful again and don't think we can underestimate the importance of that.

"Senior teams need a conveyor belt and if you lose a few, you need players coming in who have had success.

"When I played football for Cork there was me, Juliet [Murphy] and Val [Valerie Mulcahy], who had won nothing underage but you had Angel [Walsh], Brid [Stack], Briege [Corkery], Rena [Buckley], who had won a lot and feared nobody, it was a perfect storm coming together."

MUNSTER COLLEGES FINAL

Whirlwind start gives Clonakilty school platform for historic win



Noel Horgan
reports from
Mahon

SACRED HEART SS 2-9
URSULINE CONVENT 2-3

'It's a first Munster junior A title for the school in our first year competing in the top grade, so we're very proud of our achievement'
- Brian Daly, Sacred Heart manager

THE foundations for Sacred Heart Secondary School's success were laid in the opening quarter of the Munster Colleges' Junior A Camogie final at Castle Road in Mahon last Saturday.

Although they always looked likely to prevail after forging 2-3 ahead, however, they were made to battle hard for the laurels by Ursuline Convent of Thurles at the same time, as Clonakilty manager Brian Daly admitted in the wake of their historic triumph.

'We had a brilliant start, as was the case in all our games this season when we knocked the stuffing out of the opposition early on,' he revealed.

'It was a different story this time, because Ursulines kept battling, they put us under a lot of pressure, but, while we appeared to be hanging on at times in the second half, we got there in the end, and we're delighted.'

'It's a first Munster junior A title for the school in our first year competing in the top grade, so we're very proud of our achievement,' said Daly, who spoke glowingly about the input from the defence.

'Even if we did concede two goals, our backs were unbelievable, because they cut out the danger so many other times when Ursulines came at us strongly in the second-half.'

Such as Niamh Kennedy, Kate O'Donovan and Alannah O'Brien were especially unyielding in front of Siofra Patwell, who always inspired confidence between the sticks and brought

off a superb save from Ursulines' top forward Lucy Kavanagh in the 33rd minute.

Leading by eight points at the time, it was obvious Sacred Heart had a fight on their hands after Kavanagh goaled for the Thurles students to make it 2-4 to 1-3 seven minutes later.

Switching Eimear O'Brien from full-forward to centre-back helped to galvanise the winners' rearguard in the last-quarter, however, with the result that Ursulines, despite enjoying the better of matters territorially, managed to register just one more score before the finish.

That was another three-pointer from Kavanagh, which left them 2-6 to 2-3 in arrears approaching the last ten minutes.

Eimear O'Brien's free-taking expertise enabled Sacred Heart to ease to safety in the closing stages, sealing a pillar-to-post win kicked off by an opportunist goal from Katie O'Driscoll within seconds of the throw-in.

An excellent point from hard-working midfielder Millie Condon followed before O'Driscoll found the net again, finishing with style after slipping her marker and racing in from the right in the fifth minute.

O'Driscoll and Eimear O'Brien moved most menacingly in Sacred Heart's inside line of attack during the opening exchanges - the latter making it 2-3 to nil after landing a good score from play in the 16th minute.

Caoimhe Murphy also made



Heart attack!

her presence felt at centre-forward as Sacred Heart looked equipped to fashion a facile victory before Ursulines dug deep to stop the rot in the second quarter.

Fortunately for Sacred Heart, who didn't waste a chance before the break, Ursulines clocked up five wides in the first-half, at the end of which they trailed by 2-3 to 0-2.

Katie O'Driscoll drew first blood for Sacred Heart within two minutes of the turnover, but Ursulines steadily increased their momentum as the second half progressed, so much so that the West Cork girls didn't add to their tally until the 46th minute.

Eimear O'Brien converted a free, won by Millie Condon, to give Sacred Heart a five-point

cushion, 2-5 to 1-3, at that juncture, and, primarily due to their defiance in defence, they remained on course for victory in the last quarter.

Scorers

Sacred Heart: K O'Driscoll 2-1; E O'Brien 0-7 (6f); M Condon 0-1
Ursulines: L Kavanagh 2-0; K O'Dwyer 0-2 (1f, 165); M Finnanagan 0-1 (f).

Sacred Heart: S Patwell (Ballinascahy); N Kennedy (Clonakilty); K O'Donovan (Kilbree); A O'Brien (Clonakilty); M Murphy (Kilbree); E Harrington (Clonakilty); C White (do.); L Sutton (do.); M Condon (Ballinascahy); M Kingston (do.); C Murphy (Kilbree); A Whelton (Clonakilty); K O'Driscoll (do.); E O'Brien (Enniskeane); O Deasy (Clonakilty).

★ THE HIGHLIGHTS

Our Star: Sacred Heart skipper **Eimear O'Brien** was involved in the lead-up to their first goal, pointed frees from various distances and angles in the second half, and made a telling contribution when switched from attack to centre back for the last quarter.

Star moment: Katie O'Driscoll's second goal, which pushed Sacred Heart seven points ahead in the fifth minute, was a fine individual effort.

Talking point: It was a second provincial medal for Kate O'Donovan, Alannah O'Brien, Lydia Sutton, Millie Condon, Maeve Kingston, Caoimhe Murphy and Eimear O'Brien - all of whom shared in Sacred Heart's Munster junior B success last year.

What's next? Sacred Heart will take on the Connacht champions in an All-Ireland semi-final at Clonakilty on February 15th.

Subs: K Nolan (Clonakilty) for Whelton (27); N McCarthy (Kilbree) for Harrington (44).

Ursulines: ML O'Rourke; J Ryan, G O'Donnell, E Gleeson; E Kelly, N McCormack, L Hickey; K Ferncombe,

E Power; L Ryan, L Kavanagh, A Kearney, H Fitzgerald, M Finnanagan, K O'Dwyer. **Subs:** K Gleeson for Fitzgerald (23); D Ryan for Finnanagan (35); Purcell for Power (43).
Referee: G Sheehan.



ABOVE: The victorious Sacred Heart Secondary School Clonakilty team pictured with the cup after their Munster colleges' Junior A final triumph. TOP OF PAGE: Sacred Heart captain Eimear O'Brien converts another free for her team. (Photos: Trevor Patchett)



Sacred Heart's Katie O'Driscoll outpaces the Ursulines defence during the big game.

Well done all the girls and management but a special mention to the three club members Millie Condon, Siofra Patwell and Maeve Kingston.

Well done also to Millie Condon on receiving the Rebel Óg award on behalf of her team last weekend, for captaining the U14 Cork ladies to an All Ireland ladies football title.

Camogie

Congratulations to Sacred Heart Secondary School who won the Munster A Camogie Colleges Final v Ursulines of Thurles on a score line of 2-9 to 2-3 on Saturday.

Clonakilty's Sacred Heart celebrate 'A' grade success



The Sacred Heart secondary school camogie team that won the Munster Junior A schools' camogie championship.

THE Sacred Heart Secondary School camogie team captured the Munster junior A championship title for the first time following their win against Thurles team Ursulines last Saturday. The Clonakilty secondary school won the All-Ireland B title last year and they have prospered in the A grade this year. Their coach Ciaran Mulcahy was delighted with the nature of their win. "It was a great win. There was great excitement when Eimear O'Brien lifted the cup. All the panel played so well. The girls

CAMOGIE

John Bohane

have really bought into the success we enjoyed last year. We have put in a lot of hard work over the last few months. "The players are keen to keep improving and winning," declared their proud coach. The players on the successful Sacred Heart camogie team are made up from the various club teams. Ciaran is full of praise for the great coaching the players re-

ceive on a constant basis from the local club teams. "This win highlights the great work that is going on within the locality. "All the various clubs and the coaches are putting in great work promoting the game and developing the skill-set of the players. We can only do a certain amount in school. There is so much hard work going on behind the scenes. "We are reaping the rewards from everyone putting their shoulder to the wheel. "Their parents also deserve a lot of praise as they provide so

much guidance and encouragement. "The girls themselves put in so much work also. They deserve their success. "They are great ambassadors and role models for the school and their respective clubs. There is a great buzz within the school since our Munster final success." Ciaran also paid tribute to his fellow coach Brian Daly who has been an inspirational coaching figure within the Clonakilty secondary school for many years. "Brian has been involved in

coaching within the school for numerous years. He puts so much work in. "It is nice to see all his hard work over the years come to fruition. Our senior team this year won the A county title for the first time in 101 years. "It is the oldest camogie competition and it was nice to win it. The school is very keen to promote camogie and all sporting disciplines. "We have a very talented squad of players. The players are constantly seeking to improve. They are great to work with. We have achieved a lot of success

in recent years. "The future is bright for the school camogie teams." The Sacred Heart team now progress to a much anticipated All-Ireland semi-final clash against the Connacht champions which is due to be played in February. Ciaran is eagerly looking forward to that tie. "We will continue to train hard in the coming weeks. It is a very exciting time to be involved with this team. We also have a county A final to play against Coachford. It is a very busy time."



Paudie Palmer

Young talent gives Cork fresh hope

IN ALL probability, there are not many counties that can boast the sequence of results, enjoyed by the four senior adult Rebel teams, last weekend. The camogie team had their first outing of the new season, when they welcomed their Déise neighbours, to the best carpeted stadium, in the country, and recorded a 1-18 to 0-12 victory, over the Dan Shanahan coached side. Akin to the ladies' footballers, our expectancy levels for both these sides, is autumn activity, in Croke Park. I think it is also fair to say though, that both teams may need to unearth some new talent, if the ultimate dream is to be realised. Prior to making mention of the new guns, it was good to see that Ashling Thompson was back in the side, as her level of experience, could be a vital factor for 2020. The only goal in Saturday's game was scored by one of the newcomers, Saoirse McCarthy from Courcey Rovers. Saoirse, who had the distinction of winning All-Ireland minor and intermediate medals two years ago, was the main player in a number of games in both championships and I am sure that Paudie Murray and his backroom staff, will be hoping that she will be one of those youthful ones, that will bring renewed enthusiasm to championship 2020.



Cork's Saoirse McCarthy takes control of the ball against Waterford during their Littlewoods Camogie League Round 1 clash at Páirc Uí Chaoimh last weekend.



Cork are set to welcome back Ashling Thompson for their Division 1 Camogie League clash against Waterford.

Picture: INPHO/Bryan Kear

Waterford test for Cork



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

CORK get their 2020 league underway against Waterford in Páirc Uí Chaoimh on Saturday in a double header with the Cork versus Tipperary hurling game.

It's a new look league with a number of trial rules commencing. In brief, the rules that will apply are:

- A player may use minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on, once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the sliothar.

- The referee will blow the whistle to signal a wide/score and from that point the sliothar is back in play and the goalkeeper is free to restart the game.

- A player may choose to take a quick free from their hand if they are fouled inside their own 45m line. Only the player that is fouled can take it from the hand and it is an indirect free.

- A player who is deemed to be persistently fouling another player in the first instance will be noted by the referee. For any further infringement normal rules apply.

- Should a player deliberately drop their hurley then this will result in a free to the opposing team from where the foul occurred.

- Any sliothar that is hand-passed directly into the net by an attacking player will be treated as a wide and therefore result in a puck-out.

- A penalty must be struck from on or outside the 20m line. Only one defending player may stand on the goal-line during a penalty and shall not move towards the 20m line before the sliothar has been struck.

I welcome the changes. The only one I have concern about is the 'contact' rule. I think it still leaves ambiguity and is open to referees' interpretation. Cork manager Paudie Murray also welcomes the changes describing them as 'progressive'



Cork's Laura Hayes in control against Waterford's Fiona Morrissey and Sarah Lacey on a wet summer Sunday last summer in Walsh Park.

Picture: Noel Browne

He does however feel that there isn't enough of a trial period.

"I think we're trialling these rules in poor weather conditions. At this moment we aren't coaching our side on the new rules. Why would we spend six weeks coaching on the new rules when they're only to be there for a few games? I'd like for them to be tried out for a full year.

"I think the hand pass rule will slow the game down and the way the contact rule is defined, it's open to referee discretion's. But I think the association are to be complimented on changes overall. I am giving out however, about having no semi-final in this year's league. I think it's doing nothing for the game. I've spoken to a number of other senior inter-county managers and not one of us were consulted on it".

Back to Saturday and Cork will field a significantly new-look 15 to that which lost last year's All Ireland semi-final by a point to eventual champions Galway.

Aoife Murray has retired. Cork hope to see Gemma O'Connor back but she isn't training with the squad. Orla Cotter has relocated to the US. Katrina Mackey is doing a PhD while the hand injury she picked up last year still isn't right. It's hoped to see Pamela Mackey back in six weeks once her PhD is completed.

Julia White is holidaying abroad with

Briega Corkery just back while Niamh McCarthy has decided to leave the panel.

The good news is that Ashling Thompson is back and could line out tomorrow. Amy Lee is sure to line out between the posts now. Defensively, Cork still maintain a number of long-standing panellists.

We could see Laura Hayes, Aoife O'Neill or Ciara O'Sullivan taking a position with Saoirse McCarthy and Cliona Healy also figuring.

The average age of the current squad is 22. With Waterford in high tempo after the high-profile appointment of Dan Shanahan Paudie agrees that they've a tough job ahead of them in their own yard.

"Look, we'd like to win everything, but we've got to be a small bit realistic as well, in that we've a very young team and we're going to have ups and downs.

"We went up to Tipperary two weeks ago (challenge game) and were 5-5 to 3 points down at half time. We did come back well so it's a massive learning experience for these girls. We'll be under massive pressure on Saturday night.

"First of all, most of us are top of the ground hurlers. A few will plough away but the majority of them want the fast ball. In one way it's fairly exciting from Cork camogie's point of view in that we now have a team taking to the field where the oldest is 24 and the youngest is 18".

Focused Slaughtneil keep dream of four in a row alive

Camogie

Slaughtneil are on target to become only the second club to achieve four-in-a-row honours in the AIB All-Ireland senior club camogie championship, as a result of their 2-10 to 1-10 defeat of Scariff/Ogonnellroe at a blustery Donaghmore Ashbourne.

And the Derry champions face familiar opposition in their bid to join Wexford's Butler's Alley in the history books as a result of Sarsfields getting the better of St Vincent's, 1-13 to 0-8 in MacDonagh Park.

The two teams met in the 2017 and 2018 finals but the Galway representatives will be hoping for a different result at Croke Park on March 1.

Former Offaly star Tina Bradley, pictured, shone for the Ulster

champions, hitting 1-5 yesterday, while Therese Mallon's goal helped them to a 2-8 to 0-6

lead at the break, and there was no way back for the Clare representatives.

Sarsfields took charge of their tie in the second half, having led 0-6 to 0-5 at the interval. Siobhán McGrath — the youngest of four sisters

on the team — hit 10 points, while Rachel Murray had the game's only goal.

The intermediate decider will be contested by St Rynagh's and Gailltír, who lost the final to Clonduff last year but gained revenge with a 2-13 to 0-11 win at Duggan Park.

St Rynagh's accounted for Carrmore in Conneff Park, 2-13 to 0-13.



Daragh Ó Conchúir



Milford's Elaine O'Riordan races away from Courcey Rovers' Grainne Hannon in the Cork Camogie Senior Championship semi-final at Camogie Grounds, Blackrock. Picture: Gavin Browne

Cork's tricky trip to Callan

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

SUNDAY

Littlewoods Division 2 National League: Cork v Kilkenny. Callan GAA Grounds (2pm)

IT'S all systems go as the Littlewoods Division 2 National league gets underway on Sunday with a tough trip to Callan for Cork as they take on last season's defeated finalists Kilkenny.

Whilst there will be some changes on both panels to last season there are changes in backroom personnel as well in Cork with Mark McCarthy from the Iniscarra club taking over as manager from Frances Killeen, who did not go forward this season to a role she filled superbly last season.

Mark was part of the back room team last season and he is joined by members of last season back room squad that included Kevin Hannon, Tomas Harrington, Mossy O'Sullivan, Jerry Ryan, and Darragh O'Callaghan.

Kilkenny have stuck with the same management team that got them to the final last season.

Aine Fahey, manager is joined by selectors John Scott and Robbie O'Flynn with Stephen Farrell remaining as hurling coach.

They will also have a strong backroom team of Michael Dunne, Nessa Farrell, Joe O'Callaghan, nutritionist Aaron Finn and Annie Molloy.

Both teams and management will also have some new rules to contend with which are being trialled at league level and these will see a change in the areas of Contact, Persistent Fouling, Quick Puck-out, Free from the hand, Dropping of the Hurley, Hand-pass Goal and Penalty and 20 metre free.

A player may now use minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on, once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the ball.

In the area of persistent fouling a player who is now deemed to be persistently fouling another player (two deliberate fouls) will be given a "tick" by the referee.

If that player commits one more foul, it will merit a yellow card.



Nora O'Riordan will have a key role to play in Cork's camogie panel. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

A quick Puck-out can now be taken, the referee will now blow the whistle once only, to signal a wide/score and from that moment the sliotar is back in play and the goalkeeper is free to restart the game via a puck-out from the correct position.

Players now have the option to take a free from their hand if they are fouled inside her own 45 metre line.

Only the player that is fouled can take the free from the hand and it is an indirect free.

Dropping the Hurley and Hand-pass Goals are now also outlawed. Players will now no longer be permitted to drop the hurley intentionally, players may no longer score a goal by hand-passing the sliotar into the net.

But a player may still score a point by hand-passing the ball over the bar.

There is also a change to the penalty and 20-metre free rule. A penalty must be struck from on or outside the 20-metre line but not inside it now and only one defending player can stand on the goal-line during a penalty and shall not move before the ball has been struck.

The rules will only be for the national league and not for club games. Speaking to both camps this week both expressed

concern as a lot of players are still playing Ashbourne and colleges games and are finding it difficult to get to grips with the changes.

It remains to be seen just how these will work out in the weeks ahead.

Cork will include experienced campaigners Hayley Ryan, Nora O'Riordan, Kate Dooley, Grainne Hannon, Aisling Maloney, Ciara Daly, Sarah Aberne and Roisin Killeen, whilst the panel also included new faces in Niamh O'Leary and Aoife O'Callaghan.

Having made it to the league final last season Kilkenny will be hoping to build on this, ten of last season's panel remain.

An added bonus is that Jenny Clifford who played a huge role in their All-Ireland success of 2016 has returned having taken some time out.

Her sister Tara who was a superb minor has also joined the panel as has Aoife Hynes, Rebecca Roche, Aine Phelan and Elizabeth Phelan who will take over the goal keeping duties this season.

They will join the experienced Aisling Grace, Laura Breen and Hanna Scott on a strong Kilkenny panel.

This is a very tough start for Cork and one they may not win.

Civic reception in Berrings to honour Rena



Award-winning sports star Rena Buckley. Picture: Dan Linehan

Sean O'Riordan

A special civic reception is to be held in Berrings to honour a woman who has won 18 All-Ireland medals, making her one of the most decorated sportspeople in Gaelic games history.

Macroom District Municipal Council is to host the reception to honour Rena Buckley on Friday, April 3.

Ms Buckley has played for both the Cork senior ladies' football team and the Cork

senior camogie team and represented Munster in the Gael Linn Cup and Ireland at international rules.

She won her large collection of All-Ireland medals between 2005 and 2017.

In 2012 she captained Cork when they won the All-Ireland Senior Ladies' Football Championship and in 2017 she captained Cork when they won the All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship.

Ms Buckley also was the first player to captain Cork to

both All-Ireland senior championships and was named as an All Star on eleven occasions.

In 2015 she and her teammate and fellow dual player, Briege Corkery, were named joint winners of the 2015 *The Irish Times*/Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year Award.

Rena graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physiotherapy and Performance Science (Hons) from University College Dublin in 2009.

She returned to University College Dublin and completed a Masters of Science in Sports Physiotherapy in 2017.

At the request of local councillors, council officials have arranged the civic reception in her home village rather than in County Hall as was initially proposed.

The council will unveil a commemorative plaque to her honour in Berrings and the civic reception will be held after that in the local community hall.

New-look Cork off to promising start

CAMOGIE LEAGUE DIVISION 1

Cork 1-19
Waterford 0-12

JOHN TARRANT
Páirc Uí Chaoimh



A NEW look Cork emerged the more efficient side for the best of starts on overcoming Waterford in the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League Division 1 camogie league at Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

With an obvious eye on giving promising talent an opportunity to blossom, a number of new faces adjusted smartly to a new environment coupled with the return of former captain Aisling Thompson allowed the Rebels control the contest.

Very much an experimental Cork team on duty, long serving goalkeeper Aoife Murray is retired with Orla Cotter domiciled in the USA and Niamh McCarthy off the panel, the likes of Gemma O'Connor, Julia White, Brieghe Corkery and the Mackey sisters committed to another season didn't feature on this occasion.

Fielding a side that had enjoyed success at underage and intermediate level, the vast experience of Thompson helped steady her colleagues in addition to sweeping up and distributing effectively.

Played on a perfect surface, the Dan Shanahan managed Waterford outfit opened in promising fashion, All Star Beth Carton delivering a pair of points. Indeed, the Decies went close to a goal, new Cork keeper Amy Lee read the danger and came off her line to erase a potential situation with Orla Hickey bearing down on goal only to be denied.

That burst of opposing pressure presented Cork with an early test of their composure, and in fairness, the response was positive, Cork settled once Orla Cronin split the uprights on the double.

With each passing minute, Cork's game grew in confidence, their hopes brightened from a massive point from distance by Thompson. The momentum was flowing very much Cork's way's now, terrific work from Linda Collins placed Saoirse McCarthy for the

game's only goal.

Indeed, the Rebels might well had added a second, McCarthy attempted to return the provider only for Collins to be denied by a timely tackle. With the sides trading points, clearly Cork possessed a slicker and competent side, stellar performances delivered by Thompson, Cronin, Collins, Laura Hayes and team captain Amy O'Connor helped dominate the key departments.

Points from Cliona Healy, Cronin and Thompson stretched Cork's grip though Waterford threatened, Niamh Rockett shooting narrowly wide to allow the home side hold a 1-10 to 0-8 advantage at the break.

The general standard of play dropped upon the restart and from a sluggish spell, points from Collins and Cronin were cancelled out by Waterford sharpshooter Carton. Again, the visitors created enough chances but they were betrayed by poor shooting with Caoimhe McGrath

failing to find the target from close range with Thompson ideally placed to stop a Carton effort.

That lack of penetration and bite proved a major shortcoming and though at times, Cork were wasteful with possession, they offered the shrewder ball usage, Chloe Sigerson on target from a long range free before additional scores from Cronin and skipper O'Connor put the icing on the cake for Cork to claim the points on offer.

CORK: A Lee (Na Piarasigh); L O'Sullivan (Glen Rovers), L Treacy (Killeagh), N O'Callaghan (Sarsfields); H Looney (Killeagh), L Hayes (St Catherine's), C Sigerson (Killeagh) 0-1; L Coppinger (St Colums), A Thompson (Milford) 0-2; A O'Connor (St Vincents) 0-1, O Cronin (Enniskeane) 0-9(0-5), S McCarthy (Courcey Rovers) 1-0; L Homan (St Vincents) 0-1, L Collins (Courcey Rovers) 0-2, C Healy (Aghabullogue) 0-2 Sub: A O'Neill (St Finbarrs) for L O'Sullivan, 50, E Murphy (Sarsfields) for C Healy, 50, C O'Sullivan (Newcestown) for L Hayes, 60, I O'Regan (Ballygarvan) for A Thompson, 60, H O'Leary (Ballycollig) for L Collins, 60

WATERFORD: B O'Regan; K McMahon, I Heffernan, C Whyte; S Hamey, S Curran, L Bray; C McGrath, J McCarthy; C McGlone, F Morrissey, N Rockett 0-1; O Hickey, B Carton 0-10(0-6, 0-2'45), A Power Sub: K Corbett Barry for K McMahon, 33, A Landers for F Morrissey, 40, C Griffin for J McCarthy, 48, C Murphy for O Hickey, 55

REFEREE: R Kelly (Kildare)

Murray delighted to win with experimental starting fifteen

BY JOHN TARRANT

A MIXTURE of happiness and annoyance summed up Cork manager's Paudie Murray reading of the game.

Delighted with a win from an experimental line up, new players have been drafted into the side and made a statement of intent.

"Some of our striking in the opening half was slow, that's an aspect we need to speed up. It's a young team, the average age in the panel is 22 years, we are starting to rebuild, that's probably a three year work project but to come in here and shoot 1-18 is promising," said Murray.

"At half-time, we asked them to tighten up in defence but tiring during the second half, we lost our way around the middle. Aisling (Thompson) had a rib injury, overall, we have not too much done for three weeks, our fitness levels are not what they should be," he said.

From a new look league with a number of trial rules operating in Páirc Uí Chaoimh frustrated Murray where a player may use minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on, once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the sliotar.

Elsewhere, the referee can blow the whistle to signal a wide / score and from that point, the sliotar is back in play and the goalkeeper is free to restart the game while a player may choose to take a quick free from their hand if they are fouled inside their own 45m line.

"I'm frustrated, I don't think anything has changed and I'm pulling my hair out. Consistency is the key word, consistent refereeing is required, we will go out next week and come up against something totally different," said Murray.

"It's all very hard for a management team to sit down and advice a team. The way the contact rule is defined, it's open to referee discretion but I think the association are to be complimented on changes overall," he said.



Linda Collins of Cork is tackled by Kate McMahon of Waterford during the Littlewoods Ireland National Camogie League Division 1 match between Cork and Waterford at Páirc Uí Chaoimh in Cork. Photo by Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile



Molly Barrett, Cork, struggles to get away from Aoife Maguire, Meath, in the Division 2 Camogie League game at Cork Camogie Grounds. Picture: Larry Cummins



Haley Ryan, Cork, struggles to keep possession against Meath on Saturday in the Division 2 Camogie League game at Cork Camogie Grounds. Picture: Larry Cummins



Cork's Aoife Prendergast gets away from Kilkenny's Aisling Nolan during their Division 2 League game in Callan. Picture: Dylan Vaughan

O'Regan goal proves crucial in the Rebels victory over the Cats

Cork 1-11
Kilkenny 0-12

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

A GOAL on 60 minutes from substitute Rachel O'Regan was enough to get Cork over the line at John Locks GAA grounds Callan yesterday as Cork and Kilkenny got their Division 2 Littlewoods National league campaigns off to a start.

It was nip and tuck in the opening 30 minutes as the sides got to grips with the game but through the opening half Mark McCarthy's side stayed in touch with the home side.

Hayley Ryan was again erring on target with five opening half points four from places balls and one from play whilst Moira Barrett opened the Cork account with a point.

Afton Grace was to the fore for the Kilkenny girls with three points two from frees and one from play whilst Eva Hynes with two and Aoife Prendergast with one ensured it was level pegging 0-6 each at the interval as nothing divided the teams.

Kilkenny made a good start to the second half with four early points Afton Grace and Jenny Clifford had one each and two in a row from Mary O'Connell in between a Hayley Ryan Cork point edged Kilkenny 0-10 to 0-7 in front 13 minutes in.

Rachel Harty and Linda Dorgan kept the scoreboard ticking over for Cork with a point each to cut the Kilkenny lead to two points as the game entered the final quarter.

Afton Grace, who was prominent for the home sides hit two points to put her side three points ahead on with six

minutes remaining and now was the time to try and close the game out but they met stern resistance from a determined Cork side.

Holding their composure, Cork kept working hard, Hayley Ryan narrowed the gap to two points before substitutes Rachel O'Regan struck for the only goal of the game following good work by Kate Wall.

Three minutes into added time, Hayley Ryan converted a free to put two between the sides and it ensured a two point victory for Cork to get their campaign off to the perfect start.

In the other game in their group, Meath recorded a 1-8 to 0-4 victory over Westmeath at home. Meath will come to Castle Road on Saturday next for a game that is sure to have a big bearing on the eventual outcome of this group.

Scorers for Cork: H Ryan 0-6 (0-5fs), R O'Regan 1-0, M Barrett, R Harty, L Dorgan 0-1 each.

Kilkenny: A Grace 0-6 (0-4fs), J E Hynes, M O'Connell 0-2 each, J Clifford A Prendergast 0-1 each.

CORK: S Ahern, C Daly, N O'Leary, A Crowley, A Maloney, A O'Callaghan, R Killeen, L Dorgan, K Dooley, M Barrett, R Harty, N O'Riordan, H Ryan, K O'Keefe, A Hurley.

Subs: G Hannon for R Killeen, K Wall for K O'Keefe, R O'Regan for A Hurley, M Murphy for N O'Riordan.

KILKENNY: E Phelan, E Naddy, C O'Shea, A O'Gorman, M Bambrick, A Prendergast, C Nolan, A Curtis, M Kennedy, C Phelan, A Nolan, E Hynes, A Grace, K Comerford, J Clifford.

Subs: M O'Connell for C Phelan, C Dowling for A Nolan, A Phelan for M Kennedy, M Doherty for K Comerford, S Keogh for M Bambrick, H Scott for A Grace.

Referee: Justin Heffernan (Wexford).



Cork's Rachel Harty and Kilkenny's Giara O'Shea challenge for the ball. Picture: Dylan Vaughan



Cork's Saoirse McCarthy shoots past Waterford's Iona Heffernan to score her side's first goal.

Picture: INPHO/Ken Sutton

Cork off to a flying start



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

Cork 1-19
Waterford 0-12

A VICTORY for Cork in the Littlewoods National league opener in Páirc Uí Chaoimh on Saturday evening.

In perfect match conditions, Cork impressed in the first half with plenty of flair and impressive scores.

The second half was that bit scrappy. One of the key reasons being the number of yellow cards dished out in the first three quarters of the game. With six yellow cards, players are left shadowing, afraid to commit and it had an impact on the game.

The new contact rule didn't seem to lighten the whistle or reaching for the back pocket.

Waterford started impressively, an expected spring in their step in the luscious stadium and went two points up. But it didn't last long. Chloe Sigerson lined out at midfield alongside Ashling Thompson with Libby Coppinger dropping back to right half. Orla Cronin played deep as Cork dominated the middle of the park.

Cork looked sharp. They played the ball around and Waterford were chasing. Saoirse McCarthy confidently had the ball in the net on six minutes after a Linda Collins pass and by the 10th Cork led 1-3 to 0-2.

Waterford were disappointing, their defence jittery, particularly the full-back line. A poor first touch and slow to gather, Cork pounced and were full value for their 1-7 to 0-4 22nd-minute lead.

Thompson was excellent in that opening half, covering fierce ground and hitting two points. Cronin was on fire, scoring effortlessly. Waterford were relying on the free taking of Beth Carton to keep them in contention.

Having said that, Waterford had three goal chances during the 60 minutes. Car-



Cork's Linda Collins in action against Waterford's Iona Heffernan.

Picture: INPHO/Ken Sutton

ton hit the cross bar on 12, Niamh Rockett pulled wide on 28 after Amy Lee had batted to the square and Caoimhe McGrath again pulled wide on 47 minutes with the goal at her mercy.

Waterford needed the bounce to go their, but fortune was on the Rebels' side.

While Lee is still developing after stepping into Aoife Murray's shoes, she made two excellent second-half saves, showing great bravery and athleticism. From that you could see the confidence growing in her distribution.

It's somewhat worrying that, despite Cork's dominance, we had just one goal, and Waterford goalkeeper Brianna O'Regan wasn't called into action after that. You could give credit to Waterford for knuckling down, but Cork will face far stronger defences as the campaign goes on.

To be fair to Waterford manager Fintan O'Brien and coach Dan Shanahan, they had to play without their Gailltir contingent who are preparing for their All-Ireland club Intermediate final.

The outcome was never in doubt. Cork were comfortable, maybe another reason for the lack lustre second half. They made substitutions. Maybe they should have been made earlier and players such as

Cliona Healy and Laura Hayes should have been left on for the full duration.

Healy and Hayes both did well, Healy playing in her first senior competitive game. Withdrawing more experienced players may have been more beneficial in the long run, but either way it was a great start for Cork's young guns in what was a big occasion for them.

Next up for Cork is a trip to Offaly next Sunday, home to Clare on February 29 and a home game against Kilkenny on March 8.

Scorers for Cork: Cronin 0-9 (0-5 fs), S McCarthy 1-1, A Thompson, C Healy, L Collins 0-2 each, L Homan, C Sigerson (f), A O'Connor 0-1 each.

Waterford: B Carton 0-10 (0-8 fs), A De Paor, N Rockett 0-1 each.

CORK: A Lee, L O'Sullivan, L Treacy, N O'Callaghan, H Looney, L Hayes, C Sigerson, L Coppinger, A Thompson, A O'Connor, O Cronin, S McCarthy, L Homan, L Collins, C Healy.

Subs: A O'Neill for L O'Sullivan, E Murphy for C Healy (53), I O'Regan for A Thompson, S Hutchinson for L Hayes (58), H O'Leary for L Collins (80).

WATERFORD: B O'Regan, K McMahon, I Heffernan, C Whyte, S Harney, S Curran, L Bray, C McGrath, J McCarthy, C McGlone, F Morrissey, N Rockett, O Hickey, B Carton, A Power.

Subs: K Corbett Barry for K McMahon (35), C Griffin for J McCarthy (47), C Murphy for O Hickey (55).

Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare).



Kilkenny's Aobha O'Gorman and Moira Barrett. Picture: Dylan Vaughan

Both Cork and Meath will be looking to build on their momentum

SATURDAY
Littlewoods Division 2
National League
Cork v Meath
Castle Road, 2pm

IT'S a top of the table clash on Saturday as Cork welcome Meath to Castle Road for round two of the Littlewoods Division 2 National league.

With five teams in the group Cork, Meath, Kilkenny Westmeath and Kildare every game is vital. There are three sections with the top team only going through to the semi-final with a draw being made between the three teams in second place for the remaining semi-final spot.

Meath made a good start to their campaign last weekend with a new sponsor Ecomm making their debut in Kinnead as they overcame Westmeath. In a close contest they got the upper hand on Westmeath to take the points on offer, at the break they led by two points 0-4 to 0-2 after an opening half where both sides enjoyed a lot of possession. They took charge in the second half with a Sinead Hackett goal helping to give them the upper hand as they controlled the game to the finish.

They are an experienced outfit captained by the experienced Kristina Troy, who was a leading light in both 2012 and 2017 during two of Meath Camogie's greatest days in recent times as they landed All-Ireland titles.

Following just a year participating in division one in 2018 they were back playing in division two last seasons and under a new manager Ray Gavin who took over the reins from John Davis, who enjoyed unprecedented success with the team over a ten-year tenure that saw huge success for the county.

They went from National Leagues Division 4 up to Division 1, winning the All-Ireland Nancy Murray cup, All-Ireland Premier Junior title against Down in 2012, they overcame Cork in the All-Intermediate final of 2017 following a drawn game in Croke Park it took a very close replay with Cork to win the crown. They also have enjoyed a lot of provincial success winning numerous Leinster titles along the way.

John came on board with Meath Camogie in 2007 and he worked hard and brought many Meath camogie players to the fore and introduced new and up and coming talent. He

contribution hugely to all aspects of Meath Camogie with dedication to training and coaching and on retiring he left Meath camogie in a good place. This year again sees a changing of the guard again with another new management in place with manager Brendan Skehan joined by Mark McManus, Gordon Ward and Ed O'Riordan. They are a very experienced outfit with Sinead Hackett, Jane Dolan, Sophie Payne Aoife Minogue Megan Thyme and Cheyenne O'Brien all prominent as they overcame Westmeath.

Cork had a great two point victory over Kilkenny in their opening round last weekend a goal from substitute Rachel O'Regan on sixty minutes edged them ahead in a game that Kilkenny looked to have done enough to win. All credit to the cork girls who never allowed their heads to drop and kept working away and were in a perfect position to close the game out with a late strike.

This season under new management with Mark McCarthy at the helm there are a number of new faces in the panel, former senior player Linda Dorgan made a return last weekend, Niamh O'Leary is a new face on the side and lined out in defence, whilst Kate O'Keeffe, Aisling Maloney, Ciara Daly, Moira Barrett Nora O'Riordan and Aoife Hurley were amongst those who were part of last season side.

Rosin Killeen who won an All-Ireland medal in 2018 has been regarded and lined out last weekend and in the weeks ahead we expect to see a few of the 2018 All-Ireland winning sides joining the panel as several have been re graded, at present a lot of players are involved in Ashbourne cup and have not committed. Up front Hayley Ryan was on target from frees and play and this proved vital.

With five teams in the group Cork, Meath, Kilkenny Westmeath and Kildare every game is vital. There are three sections with the top team only going through to the semi-final with a draw being made between the three teams in second place for the remaining semi-final spot.



Cliona Healy, of Cork, is tackled by Iona Heffernan, of Waterford, during the Littlewoods Ireland, National Camogie League Division 1 match at Páirc Uí Chaoimh, in Cork, at the weekend. Picture: Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile

Cork should beat Offaly



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

Littlewoods National League Division 1 Group 1 Round 2 Offaly V Cork St. Brendan's Park, Birr, Sunday, 3pm.

CORK travel to Birr on Sunday to face Offaly in round two of the Littlewoods Ireland National League.

With a win over Waterford last Saturday and Offaly losing to Clare in Birr, 2-7 to 1-3, Cork will be favourites, despite again fielding a number of new panellists.

Cork will be happy with the return they got against Waterford, given that they had new or less-experienced players, such as Amy Lee, Saoirse McCarthy, Cliona Healy, Laura Hayes and Lauren Homan, along with substitutes Aoife O'Neill, Siobhan Hutchinson, Hannah O'Leary, Emma Murphy, and Isobel O'Regan.

Cork manager, Paudie Murray, may well give last week's substitutes a start, or at least more of a run-out, against Offaly.

All players can be comfortable with their performance, and the subs were not on long enough to really get into the game, but that could change this week.

I thought Offaly would do better against Clare, particularly at home.

This time last year, with home advantage, Clare won by two points. So, for Offaly to lose by seven points at home is a poor outcome, and it looks like the energy they had a few seasons ago has left them.

When The Banner conceded a goal to Mairéad Teehan, Eimear Kelly responded with one of her own. Points from Robyn Conway and Kelly made it 1-5 to 1-3 at the change of ends.

An Aine O'Loughlin goal was the key moment of the second-half and Kelly added another brace to seal a win for Ger O'Connell's team. Despite such new faces on the field, Cork maintain a spine of seasoned campaigners: Chloe Sigerson, Orla Cronin, Laura Treacy, Leanne O'Sullivan, Hannah Looney, Libby Coppinger, Amy O'Connor, Linda Collins, and Ashling



Linda Collins, of Cork, is tackled by Shona Curran, left and Sibeal Harney, of Waterford, during the Littlewoods Ireland National Camogie League Division 1 match at Páirc Uí Chaoimh, in Cork, at the weekend. Picture: Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile

Thompson, who made a strong comeback against Waterford, after withdrawing from the panel in 2019.

You would expect Cork to win.

There were 34 frees in Cork's game against Waterford, many of them soft, adding argument to the fact that the new 'contact' rule still leaves too much to the discretion of the referee.

In other first-round games, Tipperary held out for a one-point win over Limerick at the Gaelic Grounds. There was confusion afterwards, with supporters and reporters of the view that Tipperary had won the game by a point.

However, the referee had the game as a draw, 1-7 to 0-10. After reviewing, the official match result was indeed 1-6 to 0-10, resulting in a one-point win for Tipp.

Maybe it's a coincidence, but I wonder if that error had anything to do with the new rules and the additional pressure on referees, particularly with the fast puck-out.

Tipperary went in at the break level, 0-06 to 1-03, despite playing with the wind. Joint captain, Cáit Devane, was in top form, contributing five points, three of

them from play.

Nicole Walsh hit the sixth for Tipp, but a Rebecca Delee goal and three points from the other joint skipper, Caoimhe Costelloe, put the Shannonsiders in a strong position.

In a low-scoring second-half, Limerick couldn't build on that good opening, although they did take the lead, thanks to points from Niamh Curtin and Costelloe, her fifth. But Devane levelled from a free to bring her tally to six, before Ciardha Maher shot what was to be the winning score.

It wasn't pretty for Galway in the other Group 2 tie, but they got the defence of their league title off to a winning start, 0-7 to 0-10, at TU Blanchardstown.

The All-Ireland champions looked rusty, but credit must go to a Dublin side that was starting its season under new managers, John Treacy and Willie Braine, and without a number of key players.

The hosts got to within one point of Galway twice in the second period, but the league and All-Ireland champions put a little daylight between the sides.



Orla Cronin: attended leadership programme. Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne

Camogie star Cronin applying leadership skills to her game

ORLA CRONIN'S involvement in the Jim Madden leadership programme has improved the Cork inter-county camogie senior's skills.

The Madden programme is run in conjunction with the GPA and WPGA. Participants drawn from inter-county hurling, camogie, and men's and ladies' football develop their leadership skills. Cork's Orla Cronin has nothing but praise for the initiative.

"The WPGA have been promoting the Jim Madden programme for some time and offered the leadership element of it to inter-county players," Cronin told the *Echo*.

"As GAA players, we already adopt a leadership role within our local clubs and communities. I was delighted when the WPGA offered the programme to those of us who wanted to expand our leadership skills."

The programme can be used in both an individual's personal life and sporting career.

Cronin gained a huge amount by attending workshops throughout the year, most of them held in Dublin. Cronin also benefited from leadership talks and panel discussions with CEOs of various companies.

"We had our leadership skills assessed, which involved a presentation in front of a panel and one-to-one interviews," the camogie star said.

"That involved developing personal development plans and regularly meeting up with our personal development coaches to identify key skills to work on."

"I'm in college, completing a masters, but have seen how the programme can be hugely beneficial to people from all walks of life, including those coming to the end of their inter-county careers. I used the experience to get involved in their Realta Programme. As a community leader, I gave two SDHE lessons in my local St Mary's national school in Enniskeane."

On the pitch, Cronin and Cork got their Littlewoods Ireland National League campaign off to the best possible start, with victory, at home to Waterford.

"Our winter preparations went very well, but it is good to be back playing in the National League," the Cork forward admitted.

"The club championships didn't wrap up until the end of

CAMOGIE

■ Ger McCarthy

last October, so I was able to maintain my fitness levels throughout the winter, by going straight into (Cork) training. League matches will be coming thick and fast over the next couple of weeks and that will help sharpen our skills. To be honest, you enjoy playing games more than anything else at this time of the year," Cronin said.

"The change to the league set-up and getting rid of the semi-finals means it will be more intense than ever. That's disappointing, in one way, because an extra game, especially knockout, is always a help before championship starts."

"On the other hand, it just makes every group (league) game that bit more important, as you have to win most, if not all of them to contest the league final."

Paudie Murray's new-look squad has been refreshed by Ashling Thompson's return, plus an injection of youthful talent. Newcomer Saoirse McCarthy scored a fine goal in the 1-19 to 0-12 victory over the Déise. Orla Cronin also shone, contributing 0-9 in a Cork team that reminds her of when she first broke on to the inter-county scene.

"Being referred to as a veteran is funny, but I suppose I am one of the older players on the panel, even though I don't want to call myself old," Cronin said.

"Cork is lucky to have had so many successful minor teams of late and that's produced a lot of talented senior players. I suppose, Cork has quite a young team this year, when you look at the number of new players that have come on to the panel over the last 12 months," Cronin said.

"It reminds me a bit of 2014 and 2015, when I was starting out and trying to break on to the Cork team."

"There is a bit of transition going on and you would be excited for the new players getting into the senior squad, as they are doing really well."

Clearly, Cronin's involvement with the Jim Madden leadership programme has benefitted the West Cork native.

It has enhanced the skills of a Cork inter-county player ready to make a big impact on and off the pitch in 2020.



Haley Ryan, Cork hits the turf after a challenge from Kristina Troy, Meath in wet and blustery weather conditions on Saturday. Picture: Larry Cummins

Weather and Meath get better of Cork after low scoring encounter

Meath	0-6
Cork	0-3

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

DISAPPOINTMENT for Cork as visitors Meath carved out a hard-earned victory in a low-scoring Littlewoods Division 2 National League clash in Castle Road on Saturday.

Appalling conditions made it hard on players and mentors alike, with driving wind and rain.

Cork, playing against the elements in the opening half, would have been reasonably happy at the interval to trail by three points. They did exceptionally well over the 30 minutes as they worked hard to contain Meath.

It was their inability to make any headway upfront in the second half that will be a cause of concern to Mark McCarthy and his back-room team as they failed to gain any ground and, in fact, all their scores came from placed balls over the hour.

Through the opening half Cork created as many chances as Meath and with their defence superbly closing down the Meath attack it looked as if they were in with a great chance. All credit to Meath who dug deep and carved out a valuable win that puts them in top spot with two wins out of two.

Inside three minutes of the start Jane Dolan had Meath in front opening the scoring with a point from play and she converted a 45 to put them two in front. Twice Cork had what looked like points not allowed as the umpires disagreed and ref Mike Ryan deemed both a free and a 45 wide.

Fifteen minutes in Hayley Ryan converted a free and

with their defence soaking up and dealing well with a lot of Meath pressure Cork looked comfortable. Jane Dolan pointed two frees in a row to edge Meath into a 0-4 to 0-1 interval lead.

Applying a lot of early second-half pressure Cork found it hard to break down a Meath defence that was dominant and despite playing with the howling wind it was 13 minutes into the second half before Cork pointed from a free.

Hayley Ryan again pointed a free to cut the lead to just a point but an Amy Gaffney point and one from a Jane Dolan free four minutes into injury time ensured Meath took the points.

All credit to the Cork defence and midfield who battled hard all through but time out of number the Cork attack failed to build on possession and failing to score from play will be a huge concern going forward.

Scorers for Meath: J Dolan 0-5 (0-3 f, 0-1 45) A Gaffney 0-1.

Cork: H Ryan 0-3 f. MEATH: M Randal; L Donoghue, C Coffey, M Clinch; C O'Brien, A Maguire, A Keogh; A Slattery, K Troy; J Dolan, A Minogue, S Hackett; M Thynne, A Gaffney, S Payne.

Subs: C Foley for S Payne (46), M Keogh for A Keogh (46), A Thompson for S Hackett (54).

CORK: S Ahern; G Hannon, N O'Leary, A Crowley; A Maloney, C Daly, L Cunningham; L Dorgan, R Harty; M Murphy, K Wall, Moira Barrett; H Ryan, K O'Keefe, K Dooley.

Subs: R O'Regan for K Wall (46), Mollie Barrett for K Dooley (41), N O'Riordan for K O'Keefe (41), D Carroll for M Murphy (46), K Walsh for Moira Barrett (54).

Referee: Mike Ryan (Tipperary).



Molly Barrett, Cork, struggles to get away from Aoife Maguire, Meath.

Orla bids for cup success with UCC

ENNISKEANE'S Orla Cronin is one of the big names on show at the Ashbourne Cup weekend at the Waterford IT Arena in Carriganore. Four-time All-Ireland senior camogie winner Cronin will be hoping that her luck is in as she lines out with UCC in the Ashbourne Cup.

The 24-year-old has lost three finals to UL including as captain in 2018. After an absence of a year, she is back on campus and desperate to help UCC bridge a 17-year gap from the most recent of their 32 triumphs.

UCC take on DCU in their semi-final, with champions UL play WIT in the other semi.

CAMOGIE

Focus is on the third level Purcell and Ashbourne Cups which conclude in the DCU complex over the weekend and both Cork colleges are involved.

UCC play hosts DCU in the Ashbourne semi-final, and with a strong squad on duty including Lauren Callanan, Chloe Sigerson, Fiona Neville, Keeva McCarthy, Orla Cronin and Nora O'Riordan, they will make a bold bid to win a title that has eluded them in recent years.

Likewise, CIT have a strong on duty for their Purcell Cup semi-final clash with UCD, and in Katie Walsh, Rebecca Keane, Isobelle O'Regan and Grainne Hannon, they have quality players.

With semi-finals on Saturday, and finals on Sunday, it's a real test of endurance and fitness will be a factor -best of luck to both Cork teams.



Ciara O'Sullivan

Camogie | Newcestown | Age: 18

THE Newcestown teenager made her senior debut for the Cork camogie team in their Division 1 league opener against Waterford at Páirc Uí Chaoimh recently – and that suggests another big year is on the cards for Ciara, who is the youngest player involved with Paudie Murray's senior panel.

She's coming off the back of an impressive 2019. Last year, Ciara won her second All-Ireland minor A camogie title with Cork, having also been involved in

the 2018 success. She then fired her club to county intermediate glory in October when she hit 1-5 in the final win against neighbours Enniskeane; the dangerous forward picked up the player of the match award that day as well. That triumph has sent Newcestown camogie up into the senior ranks for 2020 for the first time in the club's history.

The Coláiste na Toirbhirte Bandon sixth-year student, who has just turned 18, is a handful for any defence and causes a lot of damage from the half-forward line. She's also clinical from

placed balls, too.

The Cork senior management have kept tabs on Ciara for the past few seasons and feel there is plenty of potential to work with. The experience alone of being brought into the senior set-up this season will improve her.

With Newcestown preparing for their first season at senior and Ciara also in with the Cork seniors, we should see her take another step forward in her development this year. She is the latest in a long line of classy camogie players from Newcestown.



Saoirse McCarthy

Camogie | Ballinspittle | Age: 19

IN 2018, Saoirse announced her arrival when she won All-Ireland minor and intermediate camogie titles in the same year, and was also on the bench when Cork won the senior All-Ireland. Not only that, but she was named player of the match in the All-Ireland intermediate final, was crowned the 2018 intermediate camogie Players' Player of the Year and also won a Soaring Star All-Star award that year too. It was an incredible season.

Now the challenge is for the highly-rated Courcey Rovers forward to make an impact at senior level with Cork, and she has started this season well, with a crucial goal in the opening Division 1 league win against Waterford.

Saoirse is fast, dangerous and knows where the posts are, and with Cork manager Paudie Murray giving youth its chance during the league, there is a real opportunity for the Cork IT student to put herself in the frame for a starting spot in the Rebel attack for the championship.

Fiona Keating

GAA | Ballinspittle | Age: 18

HERE is a reason why Fiona was recently crowned the 2019 West Cork Junior Sports Star of the Year: she's one of the rising stars of Cork GAA, highlighted by her double All-Ireland minor success in 2019 with the county football and camogie teams.

On the big days, the Courcey Rovers player produces. She was player of the match in the 2019 All-Ireland minor camogie final and also in the 2019 All-Ireland football semi-final, before scoring 2-1 in the football decider then.

Fiona is a Leaving Cert student in Kinsale Community School, and recently she was part of the school team that won the Munster final, while her talent also spreads to basketball and she has an All-Ireland basketball final with the school to look forward to later this month.

In the GAA season ahead, the lethal forward will be a key player for Courcey Rovers in the senior camogie championship, and she will also play junior football with Courceys. Fiona also lines out for the West Cork ladies' senior football team.

In recent years, she has lost county senior camogie and football finals with Courceys and West Cork, and that's a wrong that she is keen to right in 2020.



ROYAL BATTLE Meath defeat Cork



Cork's Kate Wall (Kilbrittain-Timoleague) gets her pass away despite the best efforts of Meath midfielder Aedin Slattery during their Division 2 national league game last weekend. Meath won 0-6 to 0-3. (Photo: Trevor Patchett)

Sacred Heart just one win away from All-Ireland final

GAA BRIEFS

SACRED Heart Secondary School, Clonakilty will look to make home advantage count when they host Presentation Athenry in the All-Ireland Junior A camogie semi-final at Ahamilla this Saturday, at 12pm.

The Clon school won the Munster title in January when they defeated Ursuline Convent Thurles by 2-9 to 2-3 in the final played at Mahon. Katie O'Driscoll scored 2-1, Eimear O'Brien hit 0-7 (six frees) and Millie Condon was also on target.

That was an historic victory for Sacred Heart as it was the first time the school won the Munster junior A title, having triumphed at B level in 2019.

'It's a first Munster junior

A title for the school in our first year competing in the top grade, so we're very proud of our achievement,' manager Brian Daly said afterwards.

En route to the All-Ireland semi-final, Daly's side has defeated Coláiste na Toirbhirte Bandon (1-11 to 0-7), St Angela's of Waterford (5-8 to 4-6), Coachford Community College (5-5 to 1-5), Coláiste Choilm Ballincollig (8-6 to 2-6) and Ursulines. Now, they're in the last four in Ireland and one win away from an All-Ireland A final.



Eoghan Cormican of the 'Irish Examiner' receives the Best Media Innovation award from Una Dunne and president Kathleen Woods at the Camogie Association Volunteer & Media Awards in Croke Park.

Rule changes need clarification

CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

A NEW Camogie season has kicked off and I must say, there has been some good work done in the off season to further promote our game.

First was the announcement Tesco Ireland signed a 2-year deal to become Camogie's Youth Development sponsor until the culmination of the 2021 season. The sponsorship will see Tesco support the All-Ireland Post-Primary Schools championships as well as the All-Ireland Minor Championships.

Hopefully, it's the start of a relationship that will promote Camogie in the fantastic way that Lidl do for Ladies Football.

Next, of course, are the trial rule changes introduced for the 2020 National League. I mentioned them a few weeks ago in my Cork V Waterford preview so I won't list them again but having watched two Inter-county league games so far (Senior and Intermediate), there are early indications that some changes won't be all plain sailing.

The 'contact' rule is ambiguous and we're still seeing far too many frees for harmless tackles.

The second which has stood out is the rule forbidding the dropping of the hurley in order to make a hand pass.

I have witnessed cynical knocking of hurley's out of player's hands with the perpetrator winning her team a free.

This is a trial so areas like this can be addressed in the report findings at conclusion.

The Camogie association must be given huge credit in trialling these rule change steps in an effort to make our game more attractive to watch and more in line with the conditioning of players today.

What has also relatively gone unnoticed is the tremendous work the WGPA has done since its inauguration in 2015.

Project Manager, Gemma Begley is the only paid member of the WGPA.

The rest is voluntary and when one considers the significant progression the not for profit organisation has made, its hugely admirable.

Just last week 55 scholarships were awarded to third-level students across 18 colleges who play inter-county Camogie and Ladies Football. Undergraduate and postgraduate students both featured from 37 squads across 26 counties. That is 7 scholarships up on 2019.

You can hear the passion in Gemma's voice as she talks to me about the project.

"Every cent is put back into the development of the players.

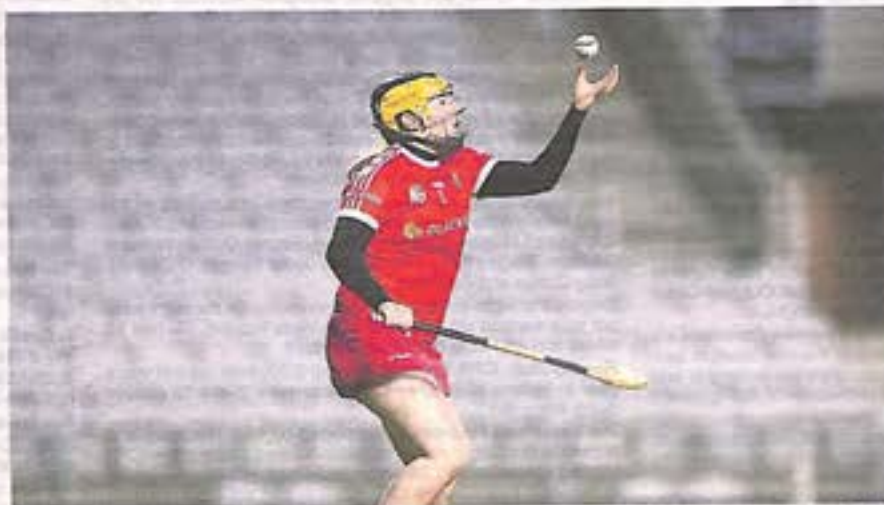
"With our budget at the start of the year we try and allocate as much as possible to player development programmes.

"The demand for counselling and personal development /coaching more than doubled last year so the demand is there.

"We're trying to stay as lean as possible to ensure all funding goes to the players which primarily is why there has only been myself (paid member)



Kilkenny's Anne Dalton, President of the Camogie Association Kathleen Woods, Gemma Begley WGPA, Deirdre Ashe of Liberty Insurance, Cork's Saoirse McCarthy and Dublin's Caragh Dawson after receiving their Player of the Year awards in 2018. Picture: INPHO



Cork's Amy Lee in action against Waterford in Littlewoods Camogie League Round 1, Pair Uí Chaoimh, Cork. Picture: INPHO/Ken Sutton

up to now."

The WGPA's grant funding has also improved significantly.

There's still a gap to be bridged between male and female athletes and that's a work in progress.

Gemma picks it up. "Our funding from Sport Ireland has grown. The first two years we got 500k each year.

"This year it's 700k. That additional funding has been ringfenced for a National Programme of Health checks.

"We tailored that around female triage issues such as checks on Iron levels, vitamin B levels, things that are relevant to women athletes rather than nationwide heart screening

checks which are more relevant to men.

"That's in progress.

"Our core team grants are that we give 9,000 euro per squad to 55 teams around the country.

"That's different to the GPA where players get individual grants of anything from 800 euro to 1,500 depending how far they get in the championship.

"The 9,000 is ringfenced for physios, doctors, S&C coaches, nutritionists, things like that.

"It can't be spent on expenses like travel. It must focus on team supports.

"There's an independent chair managing it and it's very well run. It's something we're very proud of.

“There's still a 70% funding gap between what the male players get in comparison to the female players”

"There's still a 70% funding gap between what the male players get in comparison to the female players.

"They got €3m last year. We got 700k. They've roughly 2,300 members.

"We work off about 1,650. But even when you take that into account it still works out as 1,300 on average for male players and 430 for female.

"The funding initially came about in relation to the GAA and the money it generates for the economy.

"My argument to that is that it shouldn't be discriminatory on that basis.

"It actually lends itself to the point that they should be investing more money into women to address the historical under investment, the lack of facilities and lack of broadcasting.

"That's some of the argument we'll be using to try and close some of that gap".

She must be proud, however, how far the WGPA has come?

"I suppose when we got all the players into the room together in 2015 there was a great energy there, so much solidarity around their expectations of what they wanted from themselves and their games and what they wanted to experience.

"I think the Government grant was probably the first major breakthrough. Aoife Lane and Deirdre Murphy drove that.

"They were exceptional leaders. They had the vision and the leadership. We were fortunate to have such good people in charge at the start.

"The mantle is handed over now to the non-executive and players coming through to continue that.

"The GPA have been incredibly supportive. They also give us funding every year and that's grown.

"It's nearly double since we started. "There are so many shared needs between us."

St Mary's girls face Kerry girls in decider

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

IT'S been a busy few weeks of Post primary camogie as the All-Ireland series reached its concluding stages and with the huge boost of sponsorship from Tesco announced, it is all systems go with all games going ahead last weekend despite Storm Ciara.

Pride of place from a Cork perspective goes to Colaiste An Chroí Naofa Carrignavar and St Mary's Middleton who both booked final places.

St Mary's Middleton were in fine form as they booked their place in the Tesco Senior B All Ireland final as they hit an impressive 0-18 to dismiss the challenge posed by Dominican Griffith Avenue who notched up 1-4. They will meet Loreto Beaufort in the final after they had a victory over Banagher College.

Colaiste An Chroí Naofa Carrignavar made the long journey to Roscommon where they overcame Convent of Mercy 5-6 to 1-2 to book their place in the Tesco Senior D Final with a side spearheaded by last year's Cork Minor duo co-captain Emma Murphy and Cliona Martin, current Cork minor Tara McCarthy, Lisa O'Riordan and Alanna Weir.

In the Tesco All-Ireland Senior A semi-final Presentation College Athenry overcame 6-8 Ursulines Thurles 6-8 to 1-4 and they will meet Loreto Kilkenny in the final after Loreto defeated St Patrick's Maghera 7-11 to 1-2. In the Tesco All-Ireland Senior C Semi-Finals St Dominic's Cabra overcame St Anne's Killaloe whilst it ended all square between St Patrick's Academy Dungannon and Scoil Mhuire Trim and the replay this week.

Today familiar names will once again contest the Tesco All-Ireland Junior A semi-finals today, Loreto Kilkenny task looks a hard one against Cross and Passion Ballycastle the five in a row Ulster champions will be hard to beat.

Cork sides Sacred Heart Clonakilty last year's All-Ireland Junior B champions had a superb victory over a fancied Ursulines from Thurles in the Munster final as they hit the Tipperary sides with two goals in the opening minute.

At home today they won't fear the challenge that Athenry will bring in a game that is in Clonakilty at noon.

In the Junior B semi-final Cashel Community School had a win over St Joseph's Lucan they await the winners of the Colaiste Bhríde Carnew and Dublin's Maryfield in the second semi-final today.

The Junior C semi-finals today Scoil Mhuire Trim meet St Colm's Draperstown and Presentation Thurles take on St Cuan's Castleblakeney.

In the Junior D semi-finals Mercy Woodford clash with Colaiste Dhún Iascaigh from Cahir and St Michael's Navan a meet Sacred Heart Newry.



Athenry: (left to right) Presentation College Athenry's Sabina Rabbitte (captain) and Megan Gannon, Referee Kevin O'Brien and Sacred Heart Clonakilty's Eimear O'Brien (captain) Maeve Kingston, Lydia Sutton and Caoimhe Murphy prior to the s All-Ireland Junior A Camogie semi-final at Ahamilla.

Rabbitte breaks Clon hearts in semi-final

**Presentation College Athenry 6-5
Sacred Heart Clonakilty 0-4**

SABINA RABBITTE netted five goals to end Sacred Heart Clonakilty's All-Ireland Junior A Camogie hopes at a storm-lashed Ahamilla last Saturday.

The Galway minor and daughter of former All-Ireland winner Joe Rabbitte scored 5-2 en route to a deserved Presentation College Athenry All-Ireland semi-final victory.

Sabina's sister, Olwen, also weighed in with a goal on a memorable day for the Rabbitte family.

Munster champions Sacred Heart fought gamely, but struggled to contain the game's standout player, Sabina Rabbitte. This was one of the few GAA fixtures completed this weekend and played out amid incessant rain and a gale wind. What should have been an entertaining spectacle turned into a battle of attrition. Both sets of

CAMOGIE

■ Ger McCarthy

players deserve credit for their efforts amid such awful conditions.

Athenry began with the aid of the wind and opened the scoring courtesy of an Olwen Rabbitte goal after five minutes. Sacred Heart responded via an Eimear O'Brien free, but their opponents kept pressing and Sabina Rabbitte added a second green flag on the quarter hour.

A ferocious midfield battle saw neither side shirk a tackle and Sacred Heart's defence repel a succession of attacks. Katie Nolan's goal bound shot was tipped over the bar by Athenry goalkeeper Laura Freeney to reduce the deficit.

Presentation heeded that warning and dominated the second quarter

with Sabina Rabbitte converting a difficult free and adding a point before Megan Gannon made it 2-3 to 0-2. The two players combined for Rabbitte to score her second goal and a marvelous Caoimhe Kelly point sent Athenry in 3-4 to 0-2 ahead at the break.

Athenry sealed victory when Sabina Rabbitte completed her hat-trick a minute after the restart. Goalkeeper Siofra Patwell produced some important saves and Eimear O'Brien added a couple of frees to keep Clonakilty on the front foot. The day belonged to Presentation College Athenry however, as Sabina Rabbitte sealed their place in the All-Ireland final with two late goals.

Scorers for Sacred Heart Clonakilty: E O'Brien 0-3 (3 frees), K Nolan 0-1.

Scorers for Presentation College Athenry: S Rabbitte 5-2 (1 free), O Rabbitte 1-0, M Gannon, C Kelly and E Joyce 0-1 each.

SACRED HEART CLONAKILTY: S Patwell (Ballinascarthy); N Kennedy (Clonakilty); K O'Donovan

(Kilmeen); A O'Brien (Clonakilty); M Kingston (Ballinascarthy); M Murphy (Kilmeen); C White (Clonakilty); L Sutton (Clonakilty); M Condon (Ballinascarthy); K Nolan (Clonakilty); C Murphy (Kilmeen); O Deasy (Clonakilty); N McCarthy (Kilmeen); E O'Brien (captain - Enniskeane); K O'Driscoll (Clonakilty).

Subs: A O'Flynn Meade (Clonakilty) for N McCarthy (38); R Deasy (Kilmeen) for A O'Brien (38, inj); C Hourihane (Clonakilty) for O Deasy (44); A Whelton (Clonakilty) for L Sutton (49); G Nyhan (Enniskeane) for C Murphy (52).

PRESENTATION COLLEGE ATHENRY: L Freeney (Athenry); G Murphy (Abbeynockmoy); N Feeney (Athenry); C Quirke (Athenry); K Coleman (Craughwell); E Burke (Kilconieron); G Leen (Craughwell); C Kelly (Athenry); A Carr (Clarinbridge); T Maher (Abbeynockmoy); M Gannon (Abbeynockmoy); A Cronnelly (Athenry); E Joyce (Abbeynockmoy); S Rabbitte (captain, Athenry); O Rabbitte (Athenry).

Subs: K Madden (Athenry) for O Rabbitte (42); A Treacey (Athenry) for E Burke (45); R Gannon (Abbeynockmoy) for A Cronnelly (53); S Carr (Craughwell) for T Maher (55); K Coleman (Craughwell) for G Leen (57).

Referee: Kevin O'Brien (Patrickswell).

Mulcahy admits his side were beaten by better team

SACRED HEART Clonakilty were defeated by a Sabina Rabbitte-inspired Presentation College Athenry in the All-Ireland Junior A Camogie semi-final at Ahamilla last weekend.

Munster Champions, SH Clonakilty, produced a battling display in dreadful weather conditions but couldn't prevent their Galway opponents from reaching an All-Ireland secondary school final.

"They ran out comprehensive winners and are a super team," Sacred Heart Clonakilty coach Claran Mulcahy told *The Echo*.

"We tried our best and stuck with them as best we could. I think the superior team won on the day, but we are very happy to get the run that we got by winning a first ever Munster A Camogie title this year. That is a great achievement for a school as far west as Sacred Heart Clonakilty." Mulcahy's sentiments were echoed by fellow SH Clonakilty coach Brian Daly.

REACTION

■ Ger McCarthy

"We have unbelievable characters in our dressing room and won Munster in our first year at the Junior A grade," Daly commented.

"The better team won today but Sacred Heart Clonakilty won't ever be beaten for lack of effort. There were times we have played superior teams but we beat them because we had more desire. We may not have as much hurling as them but will always give everything. I can't ask any more from the girls.

"It is a weird position to be in after losing an All-Ireland semi-final but I'm as proud of the girls today as I have been on any other time throughout the past year." The occupants of the winning dressing room were delighted to have overcome the elements and such tough opposition to reach an All-Ireland de-

cider. Sabina Rabbitte played a big role in that achievement, but Athenry Coach Fiona Page took time to pay tribute to her entire panel's success.

"They got their reward today to get to an All-Ireland final. To be honest, we didn't think much about the game possible being called off because of the weather. We walked the pitch in the morning and thought it looked good, it was in great nick. The (Clonakilty GAA) facilities are unbelievable." Whilst acknowledging that it took a team effort to see off Sacred Heart Clonakilty's challenge, Fiona Page couldn't help but praise Sabina Rabbitte's standout individual display and contribution of 5-2.

"Sabina is a class act," Page admitted.

"She is out again tomorrow for the Galway minors. Sabina does extra work by herself and the goals she got today were well worked. We have a very good panel overall, but our six backs and two midfielders are a great unit."



The UCC team that contests the Ashbourne Cup this weekend.

Feast of colleges cup action at WIT

CAMOGIE

■ Kieran Doherty

IT'S a big weekend for students today and tomorrow as all eyes will be on the WIT campus as they host camogie's oldest competitions the Ashbourne Cup.

The weekend will be a busy one for the CCAO organising committee as also on the calendar of events will also see the Purcell and Fr Meagher Cup competitions taking place.

The Ashbourne Cup is camogie's oldest and most prestigious competitions it's hugely competitive and is without doubt the highlight of college sporting life for camogie playing students. Huge preparations will have been made by all concerned since term began and the scene is now set for what promises to be feast of colleges camogie.

The highest division in college's camogie the competition features many of the current stars of the game with a huge number of our most elite players participating each year. The competition was the brainchild of Agnes O'Farrell founder member and president of the UCD camogie club who later served as president of the Camogie Association. In 1915 she persuaded Lord Ashbourne to donate a trophy for the camogie intervarsity competition. The first game college's camogie took place between UCC and UCD and it went from strength to strength with interest beginning to grow as more universities entered the competition.

Since 2010 the Purcell Cup has been stages alongside the Ashbourne which has been contested for since 1977. The Purcell Cup is the third level colleges division 2 championship and was donated by Una Purcell, president of the Camogie Association her husband Pádraig who was Gaelic games correspondent for the *Irish Press*. The format is similar to the Ashbourne Cup in the final stages of the competition six teams are divided into two groups of three in which each team play two matches. The top two in each group goes through to the cup semi-finals while the bottom team in each group plays in the final of the Purcell Shield. The Purcell Cup winners play the Ashbourne Shield runners-up the following year to determine promotion and relegation. Having initially been established for non-univer-



The CIT camogie squad that contests the Purcell Cup this weekend.

sity colleges in 1977, the standard of the team rather than the type of university determined whether colleges should participate in the Ashbourne Cup or the Purcell Cup.

Colleges who do not compete in the Ashbourne and Purcell Cups play for the Fr Meagher Cup it was inaugurated in 1986 and the format is similar to the Ashbourne and Purcell.

Close on 400 camogie players will descend on the WIT complex this afternoon for the semi-finals in the three competitions. Many of the players in action are already involved in inter-county camogie while for a lot of players it will be a huge privilege to represent their college on such a prestigious stage. Down through the years many players have made the breakthrough to inter county camogie thanks to their efforts in Ashbourne and Inter county managers will be out in force keeping an eye to proceedings.

Last season UL made it four in a row of titles and they will be going all out to make it five when they meet WIT at 12.45pm in the first semi-final with UCC will meet DCU in the second semi-final at 2.45pm. It's been 16 years since UCC were victorious, can they breach the gap? They have a strong side and will certainly go in confident of making it to the final. It's down to the last four and they want to go all the way. This year Ken Bulman, Fergal Cullinane, Dave Ellis are joined at the helm by Cork intermediate manager Mark McCarthy and former Cork senior Linda Mellerick and they are determined to get UCC back on the victory rostrum.

The Purcell Cup semi-finals go ahead at 14.45pm with CIT meeting UCD and UUJ facing TUD.

Cork are well represented in the Ashbourne semi-finals with UCC fielding a strong side that will feature a host of Cork seniors and Intermediate players including Chloe Sigerson who captains the side, Orla Cronin, Laura Hayes, Nora O'Riordan, Keeva McCarthy Lauren Callanan, Niamh O'Leary and Waterford's Sibeal Harney. Last year they lost out in the final to UL and they will be hoping for better fortunes this year.

DCU have a sprinkling of inter-county players as well with Waterford's Ciara Jackman, Kilkenny's Michelle Teehan, Ciara Phelan and Kelly Ann Doyle, Galway's Ava Lynskey and Cork intermediate player Rachel Harty.

WIT will feature Waterford's Brianna O'Regan, Kilkenny's Aisling Maher and Mary Burke from Kilkenny.

Tipperary's Róisín Howard, Waterford's Beth Carton and Annie Fitzgerald, Limerick's Rebecca Delee and Aoife Hurley form St Catharine's Cork will spearhead a strong UL challenge for five in row.

The Ashbourne Cup weekend always attracts huge crowds and big support is expected on both days for what will be a tightly fought series of semi-finals and finals. Tomorrow Sunday all eyes will be focused on the Ashbourne, Purcell and Meagher Cup finals. At 12 noon it's the Father Meagher final, followed at 2pm by the Purcell Cup final with the big one the Ashbourne Cup final at 4pm.

It promises to be a feast of college's camogie.

McAllen and Lynch thrilled with awards

AWARDS

■ John Tarrant

SARSFIELDS Camogie and Glanmire Ladies Footballer Olivia McAllen along with Sars keeper Molly Lynch rounded off the memories of a brilliant past 12 months on securing the Cork City and County Youth Supreme Sports Star of the Year hosted in the Metropole Hotel.

Cork's most talented young sporting achievers won the admiration of civic dignitaries and administrators, the tension and excitement grew as the audience waited to hear the destiny of the Sports Star of the Year hosted in conjunction with John Buckley Sports.

McAllen and Lynch were phenomenal for their clubs and county, key to Sarsfields Camogie breakthrough to win the county senior title after a 30-year wait.

Success at underage level, dual player Olivia captained the Cork U16 Camogie All-Ireland winning team in addition to leading the Cork Ladies U16-Football side to better Kerry in the Munster final.

Sarsfields had five girls on the camogie panel while Glanmire Ladies Football were represented by four players on the county squad which included Olivia's twin sister Aishling. Summing up her involvement, Olivia had a very enjoyable year with Cork and paid tribute to the players, management, camogie manager Donie Daly and football manager Denis Mulvihill.

"I was honoured to be captain of a great bunch of girls in a terrific season for Sars, Glanmire and the county teams.

"With the addition of the Junior Certificate, it proved to be a busy year but the coaches were very understanding," said Olivia.

Colleague Molly had to make the difficult decision of getting surgery to correct a knee cap dislocation. Working extremely hard for six months to get back to full fitness, she was duly awarded for her efforts on selection on the 2019 Cork Minor team who went on to retain their All-Ireland title.

That was the start of a memorable year for Molly, goalkeeper to the Sars Senior Camogie team that bridged the 30-year gap to collect county accolades.

CAMOGIE

UPMC Ashbourne Cup final (Third level colleges): UL 3-14 UCC 0-12;
Purcell Cup final: UCD 1-6 TUD 0-5;
Fr Meagher Cup Final: TCD 0-13 UCD 0-8.

CAMOGIE: University of Limerick will aim to win a fifth Ashbourne Cup in a row this afternoon when they face UCC in the final, the team that has lost the last four finals. UL overturned an eight-point deficit to beat hosts WIT 1-6 to 1-5. Beth Carton got all the winning side's points, including a late goal. UCC got the better of DCU in an arm wrestle, 0-6 to 0-2.

UPMC Ashbourne Cup final

University of Limerick 3-14

University College Cork 0-12

Daragh Ó Conchúir
Carriganore

Powerful UL outgun UCC to complete drive for five

The University of Limerick secured an Ashbourne Cup five-in-a-row, emerging deserving winners over a gutsy but outgunned UCC at WIT Arena in Carriganore.

It was a bitter pill to swallow for the Leesiders, who have lost to UL in each of those campaigns.

But the Cork side just had no answer to a side boasting the type of firepower provided by joint-captain Beth Carton, who finished with player-of-the-match honours for the second consecutive season. Tipperary's Ciardha Maher and two inter-county stars that will be the chief threats for their clubs on All-Ireland duty at the end of the month, Siobhán McGrath (Sarsfields and Galway) and Annie Fitzgerald (Gailltír and Waterford).

Four-time All-Ireland winner with Cork, Orla Cronin took the fight to the Shannonsiders, ably supported by Intermediate Rebels, Hayley Ryan and Finola Neville along with Tipp attacker Caoimhe Perdue. But despite their efforts, they never looked like upsetting the odds.

Keeva McCarthy opened the scoring with a brilliant point after 87 seconds for UCC but UL quickly settled into their groove, Carton feeding Waterford teammate Fitzgerald for the equaliser before converting three frees.

The double All-Star, who hails from the De La Salle club just three miles away, turned provider once more with a delectable pass for Maher to point and when Maher goaled in the 13th minute, UCC were in trouble.

It was a well-worked score,



UL's Roisin Howard and Beth Carton battling with UCC's Finola Neville and Roisin Phelan in yesterday's Ashbourne Cup final at Waterford IT.
Picture: Inpho/Laszlo Gecco

Carton coming out of a ruck in possession and feeding Maher, who exchanged passes with Fitzgerald before finishing with a low shot past Sarah Aherne.

That put seven points between the sides and while Cronin shot three points to give the Skull and Crossbones some hope, that was quickly

dashed when McGrath rattled the net with a first-time pull off the sod in the 22nd minute.

Cronin was impressive from frees but so was Carton at the other end and UL had a greater breadth of scoring threat, Mairéad Burke and Roisin Howard also pointing to leave it 2-9 to 0-7 at half-time.

UCC needed goals but could not break down a UL defence that was aided by the industrious Sophie O'Callaghan.

On the rare occasion Deborah Murphy was called upon, the Clare netminder was not found wanting either.

Cronin slotted a neat score but Carton bulletted a 39th minute penalty to the net,

after Fitzgerald had been unceremoniously hauled to the ground, and there would be no way back for UCC.

Earlier in the day, UCD claimed the UPMC Purcell Cup, cementing their return to the top tier with a 1-6 to 0-5 victory against Technical University Dublin while 12 points from Limerick's Laura Stack

helped TCD to a 0-13 to 0-8 triumph over UCD's second team in the Fr Meachair Cup final.

Scorers for UL: B Carton 1-8 (0-6fs, 1-0 pen); S McGrath 1-3; C Maher 1-1; A Fitzgerald; M Burke, R Howard, C Lyons 0-1 each.

Scorers for UCC: O Cronin 0-6 (5fs); C Purdue 0-2; K McCarthy, K Blair, F Neville (f), L Hayes 0-1 each.

UL: D Murphy (Clarecastle/Clare), C Brogan (Clonony Quin/Clare), C Hehr (Inagh Kilnamona/Clare), M Quaid (Bruff/Limerick), A Ryan (Kikishin Bodyski/Clare), K Kennedy (Thurles Sarsfields/Tipperary), K Lynch (Gailltír/Waterford), R Ambrose (Newcastle West/Limerick), M Burke (Eyrecourt/Galway), S O'Callaghan (Adara/Limerick), B Carton (De La Salle/Waterford), R Howard (Cahir/Tipperary), A Fitzgerald (Gailltír/Waterford), C Maher (Burgess Duham/Tipperary), S McGrath (Sarsfields/Galway).

Subs: A O'Keefe (Inagh Kilnamona/Clare) for Burke, C Lyons for Fitzgerald (Monaleen/Limerick), S Conlon (Tulla/Clare) for Maher, J Horgan (Glanmaurice/Kerry) for Ryan.

UCC: S Aherne (Balygarvan/Cork), S Harney (St Anne's/Waterford), N O'Leary (Brian Dillon's/Cork), C Daly (Killeagh/Cork), L Hayes (St Catherine's/Cork), R Phelan (Conahy Shamrocks/Kilkenny), F Neville (St Catherine's/Cork), L Callinan (Glen Rovers/Cork), K Doolley (Ballinora/Cork), C Sigerson (Killeagh/Cork), O Cronin (Enniskeane/Cork), K McCarthy (St Finbarr's/Cork), H Ryan (Blackrock/Cork), C Perdue (Cashel/Tipperary), K Blair (Cashel/Tipperary).

Subs: H McCaulliffe (Nenagh Éire Óg/Tipperary) for Daly, C McCarthy (Aghabullogue/Cork) for Blair, M Lynch (Newcestown/Cork) for Perdue.

Referee: Mike Ryan (Tipperary)



HONOURED: Marian McCarthy of St Finbarr's being presented with the Camogie Award by Maolmhuire Tynan, Head of Public Affairs AIB, and Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael John Horan during the GAA President's Awards at Croke Park. PHOTO: PIARAS Ó MIDHEACH/SPORTSFILE

Two Cork schools have Post Primary All-Ireland Colleges Camogie Finals on Saturday.

In the Tesco 'B' decider, St Mary's Middleton play Loretto Beaufort from Dublin in St Rynagh's Ground Banagher at 1pm, and the Cork school will look to Ali Smith, Anita Hurley and Aimee Morgan, who are all current Cork minors, and under 16 player Aoife Healy.

In the 'D' Final, Coláiste An Chroí Naofa Carrig Na bFhear play Coláiste Mhuire Johnstown from Kilkenny in Clonmel, also at 1pm. Emma Murphy captains the team, with Cliona Mártín, Tara McCarthy, Meaghan Martin and Sarah Aherne leading their bid for a historic first title - best of luck to both Cork schools.

Storm Rabbitte breaks Hearts

Young Clon team will bounce back from All-Ireland semi-final loss, insists manager

PRESENTATION

COLLEGE ATHENRY 6-5

SACRED HEART SS 0-4

TOM LYONS REPORTS

IT wasn't Storm Dennis that defeated Sacred Heart Secondary School in their All-Ireland junior A schools' camogie semi-final at wind and rain-ravaged Clonakilty last Saturday.

Instead, it was Storm Rabbitte that dashed the Clon school's hopes of an All-Ireland final after Sabina Rabbitte inspired Presentation College, Athenry to victory.

Lining out at full forward, Rabbitte, daughter of legendary Galway hurler Joe Rabbitte, was a class apart as she rifled home five goals and added two points for good measure. With her sister, Olwen, accounting for 1-1 at corner forward, Clonakilty have good reason to remember the name Rabbitte in their first venture in this grade.

In their first year in the A grade, Sacred Heart achieved admirably in winning the Munster title but on Saturday, in atrocious weather conditions, they came up against a class Athenry side, who have their sights firmly set on their first All-Ireland title since 2005.

'Our immediate reaction is that we couldn't be more proud

of our girls,' said Clonakilty coach Brian Daly.

'The scoreboard tells the story of how good Athenry are but this was all about our own girls for us today. It's our first year up A and to win a Munster title is nothing short of phenomenal.'

'Teams don't like to get drawn against us because we have built up a reputation of giving everything out on the pitch. And that is what you saw today.'

'We had over 33 training with this team and there's a great attitude among the girls, no mé-féin stuff. They're a young side with eight of the starting 15 available again next season. We had about 16 second years on the panel and they'll be all underage again next year. This season we've won the county senior A for the first time and the Munster junior A, also for the first time, so the future for camogie in the school is extremely bright.'

The gale of diagonal wind slightly favoured Clonakilty in the opening half and it was clear from the throw-in that the Galway girls had a clear physical advantage, which proved vital in the shocking conditions.

With Clon forewarned of the threat of Sabina Rabbitte, it was her sister, Olwen, who struck the first blow in the seventh minute when she rattled



Sacred Heart Secondary School's Kate Nolan on a solo run from Presentation College's Grace Murphy during the All-Ireland post-primary junior A camogie semi-final at Clonakilty on Saturday. (Photos: Paddy Feen)

the back of the Clon net.

Undaunted, Clon dug in, but scores were hard to come by. Eimear O'Brien, Clon's best player on the day, pointed a free and it was 1-0 to 0-1 at the end of a hard-fought first quarter.

The second quarter saw Sabina Rabbitte getting into her stride, despite some brave defending from Clon full back Kate O'Donovan. Rabbitte's two goals, sandwiching points from play and a free, put clear daylight between the teams. Further points from Megan Gannon and Caoimhe Kelly widened the gap but Clon almost had a goal when Kate Nolan saw her shot brilliantly tipped over the crossbar by goalkeeper Laura Freaney.

It was 3-4 to 0-2 at half time and supporters were fearing that Clon might be in for a drubbing in the second half, especially when Sabina Rabbitte struck for her third goal immediately on the resumption. To their credit, Clon refused to wilt and gave as good as they got all over the pitch as the half wore on.

Sabina Rabbitte went on to complete a second-half hat-trick of goals, while Olwen Rabbitte added their only point of the half.

Clon battled hard right to the end with full forward Eimear O'Brien, who switched very successfully to the role of sweeper, converting two frees. Siofra Patwell coped extremely well in difficult conditions in goal, making some fine saves, while Kate O'Donovan, Mary Murphy and Niamh Kennedy

gave their all in defence. Midfielders, Lynda Sutton and Millie Condon, played their hearts out and came off exhausted at the end, while Caoimhe Murphy, Kate Nolan and Katie O'Driscoll tried hard in attack.

They might have missed out on the All-Ireland final, but Sacred Heart certainly lost no honour in a great battling performance.

Scorers

Sacred Heart: Eimear O'Brien 0-3f; Kate Nolan 0-1.

Presentation College Athenry:

Sabina Rabbitte 5-2; Olwen Rabbitte 1-1; Megan Gannon, Caoimhe Kelly 0-1 each.

Sacred Heart: Siofra Patwell (Ballinascahy); Niamh Kennedy (Clonakilty); Kate O'Donovan (Kilmeen); Alannah O'Brien (Clonakilty); Maeve Kingston (Ballinascahy); Mary Murphy (Kilmeen); Clara White (Clonakilty); Lydia Sutton (do.); Millie Condon (Ballinascahy); Kate Nolan (Clonakilty); Caoimhe Murphy (Kilmeen); Orlaith Deasy (Clonakilty); Niamh McCarthy (Kilmeen); Eimear O'Brien (Enniskeane); Katie O'Driscoll (Clonakilty).

Subs: Aoife O'Flynn Meade (Clonakilty) for NMcCarthy (38); Rachel Deasy (Kilmeen) for A O'Brien (38); Clara Hourihane (Clonakilty) for O'Deasy (46); Margaret Sexton (Kilbrittain) for L Sutton (48); Grace Nyhan (Enniskeane) for C Murphy (53); Tara Fleming (Barryroe) for M Condon (56).

Presentation College,

Athenry: Laura Freaney; Grace Murphy; Niamh Freaney; Chloe



Sacred Heart's Alannah O'Brien clears the ball under pressure from Presentation College's Megan Gannon.

★ THE HIGHLIGHTS

Our Star: Lots of brave performances on both sides in the appalling conditions but Athenry full forward Sabina Rabbitte stood head and shoulders above all, hitting five goals and causing havoc in the Clon defence. A future senior Galway star.

Star moment: Goals and saves galore but Sabina Rabbitte's goal immediately on the restart killed any faint hopes Sacred Heart might have harboured of a comeback.

Talking point: The bravery of all the players in the shocking conditions and, of course, the unwilling of a future camogie star.

What's next? Athenry get ready for an All-Ireland final while Sacred Heart take satisfaction in a successful maiden voyage in the A grade and a young side for next season.

Quirke; Keisha Coleman, Ellen Burke, Grace Leen; Caoimhe Kelly, Aoibhe Carr; Tara Maher, Megan Gannon, Aisling Cronnelly; Emma Joyce, Sabina Rabbitte, Olwen Rabbitte.

Subs: Kayla Madden for E Joyce (45); Aileen Treacy for E Burke (50); Rachel Gannon for A Cronnelly (53); Slobhán Carr for T Maher (55); Kacey Coleman for G Leen (56).
Referee: Kevin O'Brien (Limerick).



Presentation College's Sabina Rabbitte is challenged by Sacred Heart's Kate O'Donovan.

Heartbreak as Cronin loses fourth Ashbourne Cup final

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

THE Ashbourne Cup has not been kind to Orla Cronin.

Prior to last weekend, the Enniskeane woman had lost three Ashbourne Cup finals in the colours of UCC, including one as captain in 2018.

Not involved with UCC last year, the Cork forward (24) is back on campus with the college this season and a massive addition to their hopes of wrestling the Ashbourne Cup off five-in-a-row chasing UL.

But there was no fairy tale story at the WIT Arena in Carriganore last weekend.

Cronin was on target with two points in Saturday's semi-final win (0-6 to 0-2) against DCU, and that sent UCC back into the final against their familiar foe, UL.

UCC were hell bent on ending their 17-year wait for Ashbourne Cup glory, but the camogie gods favoured UL's five-in-a-row success instead. Those five titles on the trot have all come at UCC's expense in the final.

The Limerick college won Sunday's showpiece decider by 3-14 to 0-12, despite the

best efforts of Cronin who top-scored for UCC with six points, five from frees.

Cronin was well supported by Cork intermediate players, Hayley Ryan and Finola Neville, and Tipperary forward Caoimhe Perdue, but UCC never looked like upsetting the odds against a UL team inspired by player-of-the-match Beth Carton.

Four-time All-Ireland winner Cronin kept UCC in touch with her frees in the first half but they trailed 2-9 to 0-7 at half-time.

The goals that UCC needed in the second half never came, resulting in more Ashbourne Cup heartbreak for the West Cork woman. Maeve Lynch from Newcestown came on as a second-half sub for UCC.

Earlier on Sunday, BallinasCarthy's Moira Barrett was involved with the UCD team that won the Purcell Cup and earned their return to the top tier with a 1-6 to 0-5 victory against Technical University Dublin.

In 2018 Barrett captained the Cork minor camogie team to All-Ireland minor A glory.



ABOVE: UCC's Orla Cronin gets away from UL's Alannah Ryan during the Ashbourne Cup final at the WIT Arena in Waterford on Sunday. INSET: BallinasCarthy's Moira Barrett (right) in action for UCD as they won the Purcell Cup final on Sunday.

(Photos: Laszlo Geczo/INPHO)

Kilbrittain woman hoping to fire Cork intermediates to success

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

KATE Wall could give her older brother Jamie a run for his money when it comes to interviews.

He's well able to talk, but so is Kate. She insists that he's more articulate but 20 minutes into this chat, it's as engaging as the first minute.

She's passionate about camogie. It's been a part of her life for as long as she can remember.

'I've been playing camogie since I was three years of age,' Kate says.

'It's a massive part of my life and who I am, it's part of my identity in a load of ways.'

'I wouldn't be allowed in the door at home if I wasn't playing,' she jokes.

Her father, Michael, a Tipperary man, knows hurling inside out and back to front. So too does Jamie whose hurling CV is impressive – he played minor and U21 with Cork, has coached Mary I to Fitzgibbon Cup success, coached the Cork U16s and is the current manager of the Kilbrittain intermediate hurlers. There's also Kate's twin brother, Philip, who lines out with Kilbrittain at home.

That's a wealth of knowledge to lean on when needed and

'If I was watching a game, Jamie would tell me watch this, watch that, watch why the centre forward makes this run, tell me where they should be running to.'

Kate avails of it when she can. Jamie's not known for keeping his opinions to himself, she jokes.

'Dad and Jamie, they would be two people who I'd turn to for advice,' the Cork intermediate forward says.

'If I was watching a game, Jamie would tell me watch this, watch that, watch why the centre forward makes this run, tell me where they should be running to. It's even about wanting it and desire, about dying on a ball in a match and how you should act like every ball is your last ball.'

They are strong influences on Kate, but she is very much her own woman too.

The 20-year-old is in her third year on the Cork intermediate camogie team. In her first season, 2018, she won an All-Ireland title, and that's the target again this year.

She's been involved on Cork teams since fifth class in national school and has come up

through the ranks, from U14 to U16 to minor, reaching the All-Ireland semi-final in her last year as minor and she started all that campaign at centre forward.

Then came the call-up to the intermediate panel.

'That was a huge deal,' Kate explains.

'When I got the break into the intermediate team I was delighted because I got my foot in the door.'

'It was a great experience to be training with women. I had never played with likes of Niamh Ni Chaoimh, Sarah Harrington and Leah Weste. In and out of the dressing-room they showed you how to prepare for matches, how to train, how to eat properly.'

Kate points out another big difference between minor and intermediate: physicality.

'You go from playing against girls to playing against women and that's more physical. I found the physicality a step up,

that element wasn't there in minor and it takes time to get used to that.'

Now in her third year at intermediate inter-county level, she knows what it's all about, has experienced the high of the All-Ireland win in 2018 and the disappointment of last year when a new-look Cork relinquished their title.

Off the back of their 2018 success, Cork had to start last season with a new squad, and Kate was one of the few players who were able to be re-graded.

'It was a new team so it's a building process again to get a team together that can win an All-Ireland, to get to know each other and to get that bond – but we came really close last year,' the Kilbrittain/Timoleague club woman explains.

'For a new team to be there or thereabouts last year was very encouraging and we want to build on that this season.'

So far this year, in the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League Division 2, Cork beat Kilkenny (1-11 to 0-12) on the opening weekend and then lost to Meath at home (0-6 to 0-3) in horrible weather conditions. Cork aren't in action again until a March 8th trip to Kildare and then a home tie against Westmeath.

The league is important, but there's the bigger picture to keep in mind too.

'You'd never say no to a national league title. In my first year with the intermediates I won a national league and it meant a lot because it was my first win with the intermediates,' Kate says.

'I'd never take the league for granted, but it is all about the championship and it's about building a team and building a panel that can compete – because we have six championship games in a short space of time during the summer.'

'There are about 54 girls on the training panel at the moment and there is great talent in Cork camogie right now, the minors have won the last two All-Irelands and we have players coming off those teams, the senior county championship has come on leaps and bounds and the standard is high now.'

'There is great ambition in this team, we want to win an All-Ireland, and it is within our reach and within our capability.'

For players on the intermediate panel, they realise this is a stepping stone to the senior set-up. This is their chance to show senior manager Paudie Murray and his management team what they can do.

The dream is to play senior

with Cork. That's what Kate wants too.

'The intermediate is about developing you as a player and the goal is to play senior,' she agrees.

'We share the dressing-room with the senior girls and they are who you look up to. You see Chloe Sigerson outside an hour before training taking frees and that's who you aspire to be like.'

'That's the goal for everyone, to play senior. You want to be on that senior panel, you want to be in there. The intermediate is a stepping stone. Look at Linda Collins from Courcey Rovers, she was player of the match in the 2018 All-Ireland intermediate final and then she got called up. She had two years developing as an intermediate player and then she got called up to the senior panel and she's playing there now.'

A nursing student in Cork, Kate has the summer off from work placement so that's more time for camogie as the Rebels hope to build on last year's encouraging performances.

There's more to come from Kate and this Cork team.

TOP OF PAGE: Kate Wall in action for Cork in their recent Division 2 game against Meath. (Photo: Trevor Patchett)



Colaiste an Chroí Naofa, who play in the Tesco Senior D All-Ireland final.

Two Cork schools go in search of All-Ireland glory this weekend

THIS is a big day for two Cork schools as they go in search of All-Ireland honours.

It is great to see Cork teams once again featuring at All-Ireland level and battling for title, last weekend Clonakilty failed to get over the final hurdle as they lost out in the junior series.

It's all systems go as St Mary's from Middleton head to Banagher in Offaly where they will take on Loreto from Dublin in the Tesco Post Primary All-Ireland Senior B final.

Colaiste an Chroí Naofa, Carraig na bhFear hit the road to the Clonmel Commercial GAA grounds for their meeting with Colaiste Mhuire Johnstown Kilkenny in the Tesco Post Primary All-Ireland Senior D final.

St Mary's Middleton clinically dispatched the challenge posed by Dominican College Dublin 0-18 to 1-4 to advance to the final. They are a strong side with Cork minors Ali Smith, Anita Hurley and Arnie Morgan and Cork U16 Aoife Healy.

Two years ago they took the junior colleges title and they have made huge strides to make it to the Senior B decider. Loreto had a fine victory over Banagher College on a 2-14 to 3-6 and they will be determined to keep that going and take the title to the capital.

Colaiste an Chroí Naofa had a superb victory over Convent of Mercy Roscommon and they will be led today by last season's All-Ireland winning Cork minor joint captain Emma Murphy and last year's Cork minor Cliona Martin, current Cork minor Tara McCarthy, Cork U16 Meaghan Martin and Glen Rovers senior Lisa O'Riordan.

Colaiste Mhuire had a point to spare over Heart's Newry in a battle of a semi-final and they will be looking to Aoife Ryan, Sarah Phelan, Kelly Webster, Michaela Ryan and Eimear Fitzpatrick to lead the way for them.

MINOR:	
Dublin	1-12
Cork	1-9

NOT the best of starts for reigning All-Ireland minor champions Cork in their quest for three in a row as Dublin held out on Saturday last to record a three-point victory in the opening game of the round robin series.

Gusts of wind and spitting rain from Storm Dennis in

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Bray didn't help matters as the teams took to the field.

Aisling O'Neill opened the home account with a point and with Niamh Comerford adding one from a free and they went three clear thanks to O'Neill.

Cork found strong resistance from the Dublin defence before Rebecca Sheehan finishes to the net in a goal mouth scramble.

The sides exchanged points Ciara Golden and Niamh Comerford on target as the rain gathered momentum and with both defences under a lot of pressure Dublin force a 45 which Comerford converted.

Cork replied with a Clodagh Finn point but Dublin upper the pace to finish the half stronger adding two points to their tally, a free from Comerford and one from play by Katie McDonald puts them 0-7 to 1-2 ahead at the interval.

Cork applied pressure from the restart with two Daire O'Brien points to level matters, Comerford and O'Neill again edge Dublin back in front as the wind and the rain howled.

Cork cut it back again to a point but Ellen Dunphy made it two with a point on the run before Comerford converted a free to make it three points.

With both defences still under a lot of pressure it was end to end stuff.

Dublin won a free which Katie McDonald sent goal wards where Comerford duly dispatched it to the net.

Cork produced a strong finish which saw them hit two points from play Isobel Sheehan and Ali Smith on target but Dublin replied with one.

Cork responded with two in a row from Claire Kingston and Smith but it was not enough as Dublin had maintained and protected their small but vital lead when it mattered.

With all the other games in the group cancelled last weekend due to weather Dublin sit on top of the table. Cork will now re focus and battle to gain a foothold as they try to secure a semi-final spot.

They will take on Tipperary on February 29 and Waterford on March 7 both game at home before travelling away to Wexford on March 21 and Laois and March 28 and from here on in every game is vital if the semi-final spot is to be secured.



Slaughtneil's Siobhan Bradley clears ahead of Susan Daly of Scariff/Ogonnelloe during their AIB Camogie All-Ireland Senior Club Championship semi-final in Donaghmore Ashbourne GAA, Co Meath last month. Picture: INPHO/Morgan Treacy

Slaughtneil's story rolls on



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

SLAUGHTNEIL remain on target to become only the second club to achieve four-in-a-row honours in the AIB All-Ireland Senior Club Championship,

The Derry champions face familiar opposition in Sarsfields, Galway, in their bid to join Wexford's Buffer's Alley in the history books.

The two teams met in the 2017 and 2018 finals.

The story of Slaughtneil is inspiring. Around 2004 things began to change in Slaughtneil. They didn't suddenly benefit from a big increase in population to change their fortunes; there are still only 300 houses in the little parish at the foot of the Glenshane mountains, but every single one of them started working together.

The GAA club became the absolute centre of the community, and nothing else would take away from it. Kids and their parents would be down there every second night, the kids practising, the parents all giving a helping hand be it through coaching or through organising.

And how it has paid off. In the last few years, the Derry club have become an inspiration for every other club in the country.

In Camogie, women like Grainne O'Kane and Siobhán Bradley have led them to glory but the way they talk about their community, their teammates and about the pride of it all just sums them up.

"I genuinely just think it is the attitudes of people in the club, everyone buys into the same ethos. Slaughtneil itself is a small, rural Derry club but full of people with passion and heart for GAA and all the one culture," said joint captain Siobhan Bradley.

On the intercounty scene matters have pushed back a little due to the storms over



A disappointed Grace Walsh of Kilkenny leaves the field after the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final against Galway at Croke Park in Dublin last September. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

the past two weekends. Cork's postponed game with Offaly looks like it will go ahead on March 15. First place from each group will head straight to the final. Therefore, the key game should be between Cork and Kilkenny in Cork on March 8. You would expect both Cork and Kilkenny to account for their two remaining games, both against Clare and Offaly.

The league isn't the most exciting of competitions with counties using it more and more to uncover and develop new talent. It's all about the championship. Galway Kilkenny and Cork will again be the contenders, but you see how I now have Galway listed first, when I would typically refer to them as third. Kilkenny will either bounce back from their third All Ireland defeat in a row or their spirit is broken. You'd imagine it would be the former, but I expected that too last September.

Grace Walsh spoke to RTE 2FM during the week about why they have found it so hard to seal the deal on the big day.

"To be honest, it's so hard to pinpoint why because last year was one of our best years," said the 26-year-old.

"The whole way through we had been playing really good as a team and when it came to the final, we didn't perform but I don't even know if it was down to us to be

honest. I just think Galway blew us out of the water and they didn't allow us to perform.

"It's a really hard one to say how we are not getting over the line because we definitely have the players. I look at the team I'm going training with and I'm in awe of some of the players most days".

Kilkenny legend Ann Downey stepped down as manager after four years (her second spell in charge) after the loss to Galway but she had already planned for the future by enlisting Brian Dowling as coach in 2019.

Dowling has now taken over the reins and while admitting she will miss Ann; Grace is enthusiastic about what the two-time All-Ireland winner will bring to the table.

"It's been a bit of a change, but Brian was in with us last year as a selector and he was brilliant," she said.

"He's probably that bit more comfortable now this year. He's extremely organised and the setup has been class so far.

"He has a great backroom team behind him so, so far so good.

"Ann was always the heartbeat of the team so it's different not having her there but her sister Angela is still with us and Breda (Holmes)."



Coláiste an Chroí Naofa players celebrate at the final whistle

Cork minors will need to prevent another slip-up in clash with Tipperary

IT'S a busy weekend of inter-county games and all the focus is on the younger players today as the Cork minors are in action in round two of the Tesco All-Ireland Minor Championship in Castle Road at 2.30pm.

Both the U16A and B sides get their provincial campaigns off the ground also with the A side in action in Castle Road at 12pm and the B side travelling to Tipperary.

With both the U16 and Minor championships played on an open draw basis the staging of the provincial U16 championships gives the mentors time to get their teams organised for the All-Ireland championship which starts the first weekend in July.

For the minors the All-Ireland competition is first and given that most of these players are also leaving certificate students one has to question is this a good idea, however for the last two years it has worked well for Cork and with two titles back to back the hope will be that they will make it three-in-a-row.

Their bid to achieve this was dealt a blow in round one as they lost out to a Dublin team who showed they certainly mean business.

On a horrific day for outdoors sport with Storm Dennis in full flow Bray was certainly not a nice place to be but the game went ahead and despite a strong second half performance Cork came up short, from here on in every game is vital as another slip up could see them struggling to win a semi-final spot.

Tipperary's game against Laois the same weekend was cancelled so this is their first outing in championship.

The only side to beat Cork last year they are under the management of Ger Brown this year and with six remaining from last year's panel they will come to Cork determined to get their campaign off to the best possible start.

They have put in huge preparations with challenge games played against Kilkenny, Limerick and Galway over the last few weeks and they will look to the experienced campaigners Aine Ryan, Anne Quirke, Leah Heffernan, Dervia Heffernan, Grace O'Dwyer, Ciara Dwane and Laura Heffernan to lead the way.

Cork will now need to re-focus for the job in hand as another slip up will see them

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

with a big battle on their hands, they look to captain Ciara Irwin, Daire O'Brien Olivia McAllen Hannah Sexton Ali Smith, Isobel Sheehan and Claire Kingston to be amongst the leaders as they look to get back to winning ways.

U16s IN ACTION ALSO

The Under 16A Cork mentors have been busy since last November and after a lot of work they selected a panel of 29 players for the provincial series. Current provincial and All-Ireland champions, they will open the defence of the provincial crown when they also meet Tipperary today in Castle Road at 12.30pm.

With just five of last years All-Ireland winning squad remaining it is very much a new look panel; those who remain are Cliona Lynch, Katelyn Sheehan Kate McCarthy, Tara Crowley and Orlaith Cahalane.

The side is captained by Cliona Lynch and amongst those on the panel are several players who lined out with the Cork under 14 and under 15 squads of 2019 including Kate Redmond, Aoife Healy, Orlaith Mullins, Shauna Sheehan, Millie Condon, Fiona Twohig, Erinn Curtin and Grainne O' Mahony.

BIG DAY IN CROKE PARK

All eyes will be focused on Croke Park tomorrow as the battle for the AIB All-Ireland Senior and Intermediate club titles take place, Galway's Sarsfields take on holders Slaughtneil of Derry in the Senior final, while Waterford's Gailtir will face St Rynagh's of Offaly in the Intermediate final. Sarsfields stand in the way of the all-conquering Slaughtneil who are bidding to emulate the only other side to take four club titles in a row, Buffers Alley from Wexford who did it from 1981 to 1984.

Gailtir will hope to make up for last year's final defeat as they return to Croke Park for the second season in a row. It is St Rynagh's first appearance in the Intermediate final. It promises to be a great occasion as the heart of the communities gathers at headquarters.



Sacred Heart's Maeve Kingston blocks down a shot from Presentation College's Megan Gannon during the All-Ireland colleges' junior A camogie semi-final at Clonakilty.

Loreto Kilkenny grab the glory

Camogie

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Loreto Kilkenny claimed the Tesco All-Ireland Senior Post Primary Schools camogie title for the third time in four seasons with victory over Presentation Athenry (1-15 to 2-10) at Banagher yesterday.

The Noresiders had to withstand a torrid second half when they saw an 11-point lead whittled away.

However, having been reeled in by their game opponents, they responded to being level with two late points from a Rachel Kelly penalty and sub Claire Doheny, to ensure that Ciara O'Keefe would receive the Corn Scailge.

Emma Minogue was a leading light of the Loreto team that lost the Junior A decider by a point last year and made little of the step-up when excelling to be named player of the match. The James Stephens tyro was a constant

threat, scoring two points and playing a part in a number of other scores. The Kelly twins, Rachel and Hannah, were magnificent once more for the Leinster representatives, the latter striking for a goal after two minutes as they went onto lead 1-10 to 0-4 at the break.

Emily Hughes and Rachel Kelly stretched the lead early in the second half but a Niamh Niland-goal, followed by five points from the Clarinbridge starlet made this a contest. A 58th-minute goal by Sabina Rabbittie and a Niland point had them level before the Kilkenny girls dug deep.

On Saturday, St Patrick's Academy Dungannon became just the second Ulster school team to annex the All-Ireland C title, by virtue of a 1-10 to 0-7win over St Dominic's Cabra.

Emma Murphy hit 10 points as Coláiste an Chroí Naofa Carrignavar defeated Scoll Mhuire from Johnstown by 1-12 to 2-3 to secure the All-Ireland D title.

The rules are too technical



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

I listened and watched last weekend's Wexford v Dublin and Cork v Limerick hurling games and found myself bemused.

To listen to the 50 frees awarded in Saturday's game to watching a recording of the Cork v Limerick 42 frees down the Páirc (I admit to choosing the rugby first last Sunday), I was mystified to the point where you throw your eyes up to heaven and sigh. When Wexford's Rory Jacob commented on twitter Saturday evening about the ridiculous free count I replied with the underlying message of 'welcome to our world'.

Then I read Anthony Daly's column in the *Irish Examiner* on Monday. He referenced the 26 points from two free takers in the Cork/Limerick game and quoted: "I appreciate that referees are assessed to the highest standards but sometimes, common sense isn't that common."

"I don't want to be hammering refs when they have such a difficult job."

"But they just need to officiate with more common sense. We have the best sporting product in the world and the last thing we need to do is contaminate it with too many technical regulations."

And this time I almost gave an hysterical laugh.

Because this is oh so familiar to us camogie contingent who have been crying out for years for not only positive rule changes in relation in particular to the 'contact' rule but also for referees to officiate with more common sense.

The problem with common sense is that it lends itself to significant variants of sense. If a referee lets things go, most teams, mentors and supporters will love it. But the referring watchdog won't and the ref risks not getting another big game.

If the ref decides to play to the rules, he might please the watchdog but will frustrate the life out of teams, mentors and



Cork in action against Meath in wet and blustery weather conditions on Saturday in the Littlewoods Ireland Division 2 Camogie League at Cork Camogie Grounds. Camogie has been crying out for years for changes to the 'contact' rule.

Picture: Larry Cummins

supporters. When criticised he/she will come out and defend themselves stating, 'those are the rules'.

The problem is the rules. They are too technical. You can't in my opinion leave matters to common sense.

A number of years ago, I witnessed a camogie referee give 40 frees during a championship round robin fixture only to give less than half that on All-Ireland final day when in front of the cameras.

How do players know where they stand when even the same referee officiates to different moods?

The new trial 'contact' rule in camogie allows for a player using 'minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on, once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the sliotar'.

It's a waste of time. I've seen no change to how referees are officiating this rule to previously. It leaves too much to 'common sense'.

I'm surprised the GAA feel they need to tamper with hurling. For the most part its fair, fast and relatively safe, allowing little time for cynical play.

If they don't stop trying to fix something that isn't broken, like camogie (at times) most of the talk walking away from games will be the referee and not the match.

As the league continues, champions

Galway blitzed Limerick at Duggan Park by 4-13 to 0-7. Niamh Hanniffy dominated the first half, scoring 1-2, and having a hand in the other three goals, as Galway went in at the interval 4-6 to 0-4 ahead.

Hanniffy set up Catherine Finnerty for a goal after just 87 seconds and Finnerty pounced on a break off the full-forward to grab her second 16 minutes later.

The other two goals arrived inside a minute towards the end of the half.

The tempo dropped in the second half and Limerick improved with the wind, but Galway's defence held firm, captain Sarah Dervan and Roisin Black particularly effective.

There is no doubt that the story of the day was Clare's 1-9 to 0-10 triumph over Kilkenny at Nowlan Park.

In a low scoring game Clare's Eimear Kelly converted four frees to make it 0-4 to 0-2 at half-time.

Kilkenny were back within one when Clare found the net.

It was nip and tuck from there to the end before Kelly and Greta Hickey split the posts for the win.

In the other Group 2 clash, Tipperary made it two from two by accounting for Dublin 0-14 to 0-8.

Offaly and Waterford secured their first points of the campaign with a 0-12 to 1-9 draw in the Waterford IT Arena.

Gailltír star Fitzgerald continuing a proud family tradition

Camogie

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Annie Fitzgerald chases her second All-Ireland medal in a month when spearheading the Gailltír attack in tomorrow's All-Ireland Intermediate Club Camogie Championship final against St. Rynagh's of Offaly (Croke

Park, 1.30pm).

Fitzgerald secured Ashbourne Cup glory with the University Of Limerick with victory over UCC in Carriganore on February 16th. Not a bad achievement for an 18-year-old first-year student — but not a surprise considering her pedigree. She explained: "Mam (Gail) comes from a big hurling family. She

is an O'Sullivan. Shane O'Sullivan, who played with Waterford is her brother. Philip and Pauric Mahony would be first cousins as well. Mam used to play for Gailltír and I used to go down to her training and do the warm-ups! My granny, Lillian Howlett (O'Sullivan) played on the Munster camogie team when she was 14. Everyone says the hurling in

our family comes from grandad (Ballygunner legend Pat O'Sullivan) but I think it comes from granny!"

Fitzgerald is surrounded by talent — and first cousins — on this team with captain Aine Lyng, Trish Jackman and Emma Roche providing plenty of experience for the younger brigade.

Orla Murphy's troops are

feeling confident having defeated Clonduff — the side who pipped them in last year's final — in the last four.

Fitzgerald admitted: "The occasion maybe got to us a little bit last year. It was the first time playing in Croke Park for many of us."

"You go out and think, 'I am not going to let this get to me.' But some element of it maybe

does. It was great to beat Clonduff (in the semi-final) but we still have a big task on our hands with St Rynagh's."

"They play a very quick passing game off the shoulder. We haven't come up against anything like that this year. They play nearly a football running game. We will have to be ready. We just can't wait now."

Dougan savouring Slaughtneil's bid for a four-in-a-row

THE Slaughtneil phenomenon is one to engender hope in us all.

The manner in which a parish spirit was built entirely around a GAA club, how An Carn community centre emerged from that and how a de facto Gaeltacht was established out of nothing, is an inspiration.

When the Gaelic football, hurling and camogie teams each won their Ulster senior championships in 2016, it showed how ingrained the GAA is in the tight-knit community.

The camogie squad then went and won the AIB All-Ireland senior title — just four years after getting over the line for the first time in Derry. They were only the second Ulster side to do it and completed a three-in-a-row 12 months ago.

Today, they are back facing their vanquished opponents of 2017 and '18, Sarsfields (Galway) and an hour from joining Buffer's Alley (Wexford) as the only other side to go four seasons unbeaten in the competition.

Louise Dougan has been a central cog in those successes. She is a strong personality, on the pitch and in the dressing room.

Her influence as a sweeper in the really big games is huge. She tends to weigh in with a point or two as well, not content to just represent an iron curtain in front of her full-back line. And she is always barking out instructions.

It is interesting to hear Dougan recount the type of experience that many other sportspeople have described as their worst nightmare: engaging in well-meaning interactions they fear will drain them.

But up around Slaughtneil, it's one-in, all-in so Dougan adopts a positive slant.

"These last couple of weeks are usually the most enjoyable. All the hard work has been done and it's just the wee, fine details, tidy it up," she says.

"It's a good vibe around the community as well. You can't go out the door without people asking how things are. Some people might get fed up with it but it's not every time they'd be able to ask you. Next year is a different year. It might never come around again. Just take it all in your stride. Enjoy it while it lasts."

"Going back 10, 15 years ago, when we weren't

winning anything, if you're playing league matches, championship matches or All-Ireland, everybody

looks at it the same. You're representing the club, people are looking up to you.

"It's the centre of conversation in the community because it is in everybody's blood."

"It is passion and it is just what everybody knows. It's no different now. It's just we're finally getting the rewards." The 29-year-old

By Daragh Ó Conchúir

played her first adult camogie match at 12 and, while that is no longer allowed, the policy of introducing youth remains central to the club's progression. And it isn't a problem because they are in sync with the culture of Slaughtneil.

They are down three significant players from last year — Bróna Ní Chaiside, Eilís Ní Chaiside and Faoláirna Burke but back then it was Clare McGrath who was away, having a baby. She has returned while Eilís McGrath and Cliona Mulholland have stepped up from the bench.

"Belief is one of our strongest points. It comes from winning and losing. It's part of the process of both. You can't teach somebody how to believe in themselves and believe in other people. It's just a process through all the years of the victories and the defeats, that we have gained from it."

"Whatever we're doing, it must be working. When you see those



BIG HONOUR: Louise Dougan of Slaughtneil's picks up the player-of-the-match award after their All-Ireland semi-final victory

younger girls coming in, that weren't there from the start, they have that belief too."

The sweeper role seemed to come naturally to her.

"It's about the mind as much as anything else, reading the game... Cutting out the ball is one thing and then it's what you do with it when you get it."

"In our team, if you stopped for a few seconds, you'd soon get a mouthful to get you into the zone. And I wouldn't really be the quietest on the pitch either, so, I play my part there as well."

It is no surprise to hear that they are not discussing a four-in-a-row. What is noteworthy is the admission that she looks forward to retirement so she can enjoy what has been achieved. At the moment, it is about doing it.

"To be honest, I can't wait to get to that stage, when I am looking back, not running around like a lunatic. Right now, you don't really have time to reflect. So I'm looking forward to looking back."

"To be even able to say you have one All-Ireland is unreal stuff."

ALL-IRELAND CLUB SENIOR CAMOGIE FINAL: Sarsfields (Galway) v Slaughtneil (Derry), Croke Park, 3.30, LIVE RTÉ News Now, RTÉ Player



Amy O'Connor, part of the Cork side that will take on Clare.

Banner ladies will host Cork with spring in their step after beating Cats

Littlewoods Ireland National League Division 1 Clare v Cork

Venue: TBC Saturday, 2pm THE shock of the league over the past number of seasons has been Clare's defeat of Kilkenny last Sunday.

Very few, if anyone, expected that. Not only did they win but they did it in Nowlan Park, which is a tall order. They shouldn't get too carried away though as Kilkenny started just 8 of their All Ireland final team and brought Michelle Quilty on with ten minutes of normal time remaining. But even so, it's a surprise and a big scalp for Clare.

Ger O'Connell is in the process of rebuilding Clare after fourteen players from last year's panel stepped away and that victory will spur them on. Clare host Cork this Saturday and they'll do so with a spring in their step. Cork can put themselves in the driving seat to reach the league final if they do the business, with Kilkenny having dropped points. Cork too travel with just eight of last year's semi-final line-out and are without key players, but they have introduced young talent who should match their opponents. Kilkenny's defeat opens the door in group 2 a bit and makes their visit to Cork on March 8 all the more important.

That becomes a must win game for them. If Clare beat Cork, they'd be fancied to make the final despite a final game against Waterford to play.

To mention league final and Clare in the one breath hasn't a familiar ring to it. They haven't impressed of late. There have been many changes in the off season in the Clare camp. As mentioned, fourteen players left the panel due to personality clashes, so once again Clare are in transition. They never seem to come out of it and really the County Board need to get more serious about competing at the highest level.

Truagh-Clonlara forward Eimear Kelly struck 1-3 in Clare's opening win against Offaly and 0-7 against the Cats. She'll need curtailing. Pre their victory over Offaly, Kelly said that despite the changes, the squad is settling down and the newer members, or those that have re-joined the side, have brought with them plenty of



Linda Mellerick

CAMOGIE

cause for optimism.

Four debutantes featured against Offaly and Kelly believes the side are all the better for them.

"We were almost happier with how we performed overall throughout the game, rather than getting the bare result. Even compared to the things we were doing last year, there is a feel-good factor in the camp after it. Especially with the tough conditions, we were still able to execute what we have been working very hard on in training."

"One of the things that I am happy about is that before maybe we might have made excuses for ourselves. We had gotten the heads right the week before the Offaly game and really worked on that performance."

"You can say that we're a young team or that we're a team in transition or whatever, but we're a team now and that's the end of it. The younger girls have come in and put pressure on the rest of us. There's a solid team of us there now and so far, the younger girls have laid down a marker and they don't have any negative connotations about playing Cork or Kilkenny and that has helped us too." Expect Clare to be dogged tomorrow.

Amy Lee, Aoife O'Neill, Ciara McCarthy, Cliona Healy, Saoirse McCarthy, Emma Murphy, Siobhan Hutchinson and Hannah O'Leary are some of those that will start or get a run for Cork. Ashling Thompson is out for the game with a groin strain. Lauren Homan hasn't trained since Cork's victory over Waterford with a rear knee issue but had a run out on Thursday.

It's four weeks since Cork's last competitive outing due to the weather enforced postponement of their second round with Offaly, now rescheduled for March 14th.

By Wednesday evening due to flooding in Clare and many pitches under water, a venue for the game still hadn't been determined.

Ten out of ten for Murphy in decider

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Chroi Naofa 1-12
Scoil Mhuire 2-3

LED superbly by last year's Cork All-Ireland winning captain joint captain Glen Rovers' Emma Murphy, who recently made her senior debut with Paudie Murray's Cork senior team, she contributed ten points to her side's tally Colaiste an Chroi Naofa Carrignavar were crowned Tesco Senior D post primary All Ireland champions in UL on Saturday.

Aided by the wind in the opening 30 minutes the Cork girls tore into the game and with Murphy in tremendous form sending over the opening three points they took control.

Elizabeth McGrath stretched their lead with a point. Murphy and Ryan twice swapped points but with the Carrignavar defence controlled superbly by Lisa O'Riordan, Cliona Martin ably assisted by Jennifer Whelan at midfield the Kilkenny girls found it hard to gain a grip.

Two Emma Murphy points as the clock ticked onto thirty minutes had her side 0-7 to 0-3 ahead but an Aoife Ryan goal on thirty one minutes handed Scoil Mhuire a much needed boost but again Emma Murphy answered the call as she slotted over a free after she was once again hauled down by an over-worked Colaiste Mhuire defence and it was the Cork girls who led 0-8 to 1-3 at the interval.

With the strong wind in their favour Scoil Mhuire applied early second half pressure but the superb Carrignavar defence held solid with Lisa O'Riordan, Cliona Martin, Tara McCarthy, Alanna Weir and Elizabeth McGrath all solid, ten minutes into the half Riordan added a point to their tally when she cleverly collected a quick Murphy pass from a free and slotted over.

Then Murphy's dropped a free into the square which was collected and finished superbly to the net by Danielle Foley.

Murphy continued to lead the way as she caused Kilkenny huge headaches and pointing with seven minutes remaining she stretched her side's lead before Michaela Ryan first timed and shot to the net on 60 minutes to give Scoil Mhuire a boost but four minutes into added time it was fitting the Chroi captain Murphy had the final say as she struck a point. Chroi midfielder Jennifer Whelan was named as player of the match.

Scorers for Colaiste an Chroi Naofa: E Murphy 0-10 (0-4fs), De Foley 1-0, L O'Riordan, E Mc Grath 0-teach.
Scoil Mhuire: M Ryan 1-3 (0-1f) A Ryan 1-0.

COLAISTE AN CHROI NAOFA CUTHBERT: R O Halloran, L O Riordan, A Weir, S Aheron, C Martin, A Noonan, T McCarthy, J Whelan; S Murphy, E Murphy (c), E McGrath; A O Connell, M Martin, J Corway.

Subs: D Foley for A O Connell (1v1), G Doran for M Martin (1v1) 59.

SCOIL MHUIRE: S Farrell; J Newman, C Quailly, M Fitzpatrick; R Phelan (3c) J Bergin, S Pembroke; L Puroell, C Ryan; S Phelan, E Fitzpatrick; M Ryan, A Ryan; A Webster (1c), A Ryan.
Subs: R Aheron for A Ryan (45), E Delaney for A Ryan (45)

Dramatic injury-time Jackman goal seals title for Gailltír

AIB All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Club Final

Gailltír (Waterford) 1-13
St Rynagh's (Offaly) 0-13

Daragh Ó Conchúir,
Croke Park

Gailltír snatched victory from the jaws of defeat when Una Jackman sent a close-range piledriver to the roof of the net to deny a heartbroken St Rynagh's in a pulsating AIB All-Ireland Intermediate Club Camogie Championship final. Eleven points from the magnificent Kate Kenny and official player of the match Siobhán Flannery looked to have edged the Offaly girls over the line, as they led by

one point in the fourth minute of injury time.

But then came must the dramatic of endings with Shauna Fitzgerald teeing up Una Jackman for a sensational goal and seconds later a Trish Jackman free sealed the win and the Agnes O'Farrelly Cup was headed Suiside.

"I feel like I'm dreaming" said Jackman.

"I feel like I'm dreaming. I thought it was gone. I just honestly can't believe it. Shauna caught that ball, I don't know how she did it. I turned and I could see another girl in front of the goalkeeper. And I just hit it to the back of the net.

"For Shauna to get the ball to me was unbelievable but she's unreal. It's unbelievable. I didn't have a second. There

were two girls standing in front of the goal but I just said, 'We have to win this, there's no way we're losing this.' The feeling is unreal. I can't even describe it. Trish scoring the point after then..."

The agony of losing last year's decider to Clonduff by a point may well have been decisive in the Waterford girls never say die spirit.

"We were so hurt, everyone in the club (was hurt) and we just needed to come back, we needed to get this. There was no way we were coming back without that cup.

"Every single one of the girls are worthy of a spot on the team, they're training so hard, week-in, week-out, eight o'clock in the morning on Saturdays. All of us want to be on

the field but once we're winning, it doesn't matter who's on the pitch."

Gailltír led by 0-7 to 0-2 after 25 minutes, Ciara O'Sullivan, Aine Lyng and Aoife Fitzgerald among the scorers.

Flannery and the excellent Linda Sullivan reduced the margin before the break and Rynagh's carried that momentum through to the second half, when Flannery did the business from placed balls, while Kenny hit fantastic points off either wing. That put them two ahead but Gailltír came back with three on the trot, two from Annie Fitzgerald frees. Gráinne Dillon quickly levelled and then Flannery from a 45 restored the Rynagh's advantage. Annie Fitzgerald and Flannery swapped pointed placed balls before the last ditch Hollywood ending.

nery swapped pointed placed balls before the last ditch Hollywood ending.

Scorers for Gailltír: Annie Fitzgerald (0-4, fs); U Jackman (1-0); Aoife Fitzgerald, A Lyng, C O'Sullivan (0-2 each), A Corcoran, S Fitzgerald, T Jackman (f) (0-1 each).

Scorers for St Rynagh's: S Flannery (0-7, 6fs, 1 45); K Kenny (0-4); L Sullivan, G Dolan (0-1 each).

GAILLTÍR: C Jackman, M Heffernan, L Sheridan, H Flynn, E Roche, C Carroll, T Jackman, K Lynch, S Fitzgerald, C O'Sullivan, A Lyng, Annie Fitzgerald, A Corcoran, Aoife Fitzgerald, E Walsh.

Sub: C Dunne for Heffernan (47), U Jackman for Walsh (51)

ST RYNAGHS: E Gilgan, C O'Connell, E Sullivan, S Moran, R Daly, L Sullivan, E Corcoran, H Dolan, R Egan, A McLoughlin, S Hanamy, G Dolan, L Mannion, K Kenny, S Flannery.

Sub: T Nugent for O'Connell (22), M Dooley for Hanamy (80+3).

Referee: Owen Elliott (Antrim)

Cork away to Clare in Division 1

PAUDIE Murray's Cork are back in national camogie league Division 1 action this Saturday when they travel away to table-toppers Clare.

Cork haven't played since their opening league match on February 1st when they beat Waterford 1-19 to 0-12 at Páirc Uí Chaoimh thanks to 0-9 from Enniskeane's Orla Cronin. Their game away to Offaly scheduled for the following weekend was postponed due to the adverse weather conditions.

Clare have two wins from two games, including a shock 1-9 to 0-10 triumph over Kilkenny at Nowlan Park last weekend, so Cork will not underestimate the Banner County.

On March 8th, Cork will host Kilkenny in a heavyweight tussle and then on March 14th, Cork are away to Offaly in their final group game.

Magnificent McGraths fire Sarsfields to thrilling victory

AIB All-Ireland Senior Club Camogie championship final

Sarsfields (Galway) 1-8
Slaughtneil (Derry) 0-10

Daragh Ó Conchúir
Croke Park

Sisters Orlaith and Siobhán McGrath combined to send Sarsfields on their way to All-Ireland glory in a thrilling climax to yesterday's senior club camogie championship final at Croke Park.

With the Galway champions within seconds of suffering their third defeat to Slaughtneil on decider day, Orlaith set up Siobhán to blast to the net for the match-winning strike.

That effort put two points between the teams and though Therese Mellon reduced the margin to the minimum after a brilliant run by Tina Bradley, time ran out on the Ulster outfit.

Sarsfields lost to Slaughtneil in the 2017 and 2018 deciders but this was more about getting over the line than revenge.

"It's a bit surreal," said Orlaith McGrath.

"It doesn't feel like I thought it would feel. Something you've always dreamed about and it actually comes to pass, it's just wow! It is an unbelievable feeling. It's a relief.

"Especially considering our second-half performance, I don't know what happened to us. They came at us all guns blazing and we didn't react to that at all.

"At one stage, it looked like the game was gone. They were making darting runs down the centre and Tina Bradley and Shannon Graham could easily have gotten goals there. We were lucky for a change.

"Of course, your luck comes down to hard work and in the first half, we worked immensely hard and maybe



Sarsfields players celebrate with the Bill & Agnes Carroll Cup after victory over Slaughtneil in the AIB All-Ireland Senior Club Camogie Championship final at Croke Park yesterday. Picture: Laszlo Gezo

didn't capitalise on that ourselves.

"We didn't score as much as we should have.

"To be fair, the goal came against the run of play. We weren't in it but we kept with-in touching distance. We're over the moon."

The two McGraths — who were joined on the team by captain Niamh and midfield partner Clodagh — were magnificent.

So too was Maria Cooney, the daughter of another legendary club and county figure Joe, who excelled as a defensive screen for the westerners.

Sarsfields hounded Slaughtneil in the first half and were well worth a 0-6 to 0-3 half-time lead. Orlaith

McGrath in particular was always a threat, but Siobhán was not far behind and the duo's desire to take on their markers at every turn caused mayhem in the normally assured Slaughtneil defence.

They were responsible for all six of their side's first-half scores and all but one point of the final tally.

Unsurprisingly, Slaughtneil responded like champions and could have had two goals early in the second half, but Graham and Bradley took points when the goal was on.

Still, the Derry representatives hit the front in the 51st minute, when Aoife Ni Chaiside fed Siobhán Bradley, who made it 0-7 to 0-6.

It took Sarsfields 23 minutes

to register their first score of the second half, and it was a vital one from Rachel Murray. Orlaith McGrath gave them the lead straight after but Siobhán Mellon levelled and then Dougan drove over from a different postcode.

It seemed as if Slaughtneil had effected one of their now famous rescue acts but the McGraths had the definitive say.

"When Slaughtneil came out of the other semi-final, we said 'Great'" explained Orlaith.

"They beat us twice and they beat us fair and square.

"We were coming up against the best and what's the point in playing if you're not playing the best and Slaughtneil

are an unbelievable team. It was just our turn today."

Scorers for Sarsfields: S McGrath (1-4, 2fs); O McGrath (0-3); R Murray (0-1).

Scorers for Slaughtneil: T Bradley (0-4, 1f); L Dougan (0-2, fs); S Graham, S Bradley, S Mellon, T Mellon (0-1 each).

SARSFIELDS: L Glynn, S Cannon, L Ward, K Gallagher, S Warde, M Cooney, J Daly, C McGrath, N McGrath, C Kenny, O McGrath, S Spellman, A Deeley, S McGrath, R Murray.

Subs: E Leslie for O McGrath blood (22-23), Leslie for S Warde (52)

SLAUGHTNEIL: J Bradley, Céat McEidowney, G Ni Chatháin, E McGrath, B McAlister, A Ni Chaiside, C McGrath, C Mulholland, S Graham, S Bradley, T Bradley, L Dougan, S Mellon, J McMullan, T Mellon.

Subs: O Rafferty for Mulholland (42), Carla McEidowney for S Mellon (80+3)

Referee: J Dermody (Westmeath)



Cork boss Paudie Murray.



CUP CHEER: The Gailltír players celebrate following their victory over St Rynagh's in yesterday's AIB All-Ireland Intermediate Club Camogie final at Croke Park. See report on page 16. Picture: Harry Murphy/Sportsfile

Dublin legend Úna O'Connor passes away

Úna O'Connor, the Dublin camogie legend who won a record ten All-Irelands in a row, has passed away. She was 83.

O'Connor won 13 All-Irelands in an inter-county career which coincided with the golden era of Dublin camogie, playing alongside fellow greats like Kathleen Mills and Sophie Brack.

They were named together in the half-forward line on the Camogie Team of the Century in 2004.

Her scoring record was immense, getting a goal in all 13 finals she started in, including four in her first two finals in 1953, aged 15, and 1954. Her final contributions totalled 25 goals and 16 points.

She also captained Dublin to the 1963 and 1964 titles, their seventh and eighth in a row, under legendary Cork coach Nell McCarthy.

Camogie

Her pioneering achievements included winning the first Player of the Year award in 1963, being the first camogie player to be awarded the Caltex Award (later known as the Texaco Award) in 1966, and winning the first All-Ireland Club title with Celtic.

Dublin Camogie Board noted: "Úna played for the famed Celtic club. She played in the era when the Phoenix Park would have been her camogie home. A witty, good-humoured player, she played with a short stick which is so much in vogue today."

"One of the finest exponents of the game, she was a born forward," read a Camogie Association tribute on the announcement their Team of the Century.

Tributes to 13-time All-Ireland winner O'Connor

TRIBUTES have poured in following the passing of Dublin camogie legend Úna O'Connor - one of the greatest of them all, with 13 All-Ireland senior camogie medals in the cabinet.

Úna played on one of the greatest Dublin teams to have graced camogie in a golden era when the Dubs won a basket of All-Ireland titles in the 1950s and '60s.

Úna was at her majestic best in the All-Ireland final of 1963 when they beat Antrim. She was the captain and played as a roaming full-forward, scoring two goals.

She was selected on the Camogie Team of the Century. She was the first camogie winner of the Caltex award, and played on the Celtic team that won the first All-Ireland Club



Úna O'Connor (front row, fourth from left) with the 1963 Dublin camogie team

Championship in 1964.

She was only 15 when she won a place on the Dublin senior team, and went on to become one of camogie's true superstars.

Úna will be laid to rest on Saturday in Marino. The camogie community have been asked to wear blue as a mark of respect.

- NIAL SCULLY



ONE OF THE GREATS: Úna O'Connor (front row fourth from left) with the 1963 Dublin camogie team

Tributes to Dub legend Una

TRIBUTES have poured in following the passing of Dublin camogie legend, Una O'Connor - one of the greatest of them all. Thirteen All-Ireland Senior camogie medals in the cabinet.

She was an exceptional forward with superb balance. She was brilliant at reading the play and bringing her team-mates into the game.

Una played on one of the greatest Dublin teams to have graced camogie. A golden era when the Dubs won a basket of All-Ireland titles in the 50's and 60's.

"She knew exactly where the goal was," recalled Phyllis Breslin, the former Dublin player who became President of the Camogie Association.

"Una was a very clever player," added Phyllis. "And she played alongside two great Dublin players in the attack - Judy Doyle and Sophie Brack."

"The three of them had a wonderful understanding. They knew each other so well it was like telepathy."

Una was at her majestic best in the All-Ireland final of 1963 when they beat Antrim. She was the captain and she played as a roaming full-forward, scoring two goals herself.

She was selected on the Camogie Team of the Century. She was the first camogie winner of the Caltex award, and she played on the Celtic team that won the first All-Ireland Club Championship in 1964.

"She was such a lovely person," remembers Phyllis. "She had a marvellous sense of humour. You were always glad to be in her company. She did a fantastic impersonation of Marlene Dietrich."

Una was born in Marino. She was the youngest of a family of seven. Her camogie talent was spotted when she played hurling on the road with the boys.

She was only 15 when she won a place on the Dublin senior team, and went on to become one of the camogie's true superstars. Una will be laid to rest on Saturday in Marino. The camogie community have been asked to wear blue as a mark of respect.

- Niall Scully



Shauna Sheehan, captain of the Éire Óg Féile camogie team, with selectors Jacqui Sheehan, Kieran Murphy, Suzanne Brennan, John Conway, Yvonne O'Brien, Yvonne Coakley and Pat Sheehan. Picture: Mike English



Éire Óg's U12 Camogie panel and mentors at the club's medal presentation function at Lee Valley Golf Club including team captain, Molly McCarthy. Picture: Mike English

Presentation marks success of Éire Óg

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

ÉIRE ÓG camogie club have always been one of the strongholds of the great game in the Muskerry region, but 2019 stands out as a special year.

The club's U14 side captured the All-Ireland Féile crown and, in the process, overcame holders and Lee-side rivals Sarsfields, who were bidding for four in a row.

The victory was celebrated recently when the club held a medal presentation at the Lee Valley Golf resort where parents, club mentors and friends gathered to pay tribute to the team.

Joining them on the evening were the U12 team who also annexed silverware last season, when they also got the upper hand on Sarsfields in the U12 A decider.

The paid tribute to their Cork minor players, Isobel Sheehan and Emma Quigley as well, who were members of the All-Ireland winning Cork side who defeated Clare.

Chairman Ken Murphy welcomed everybody and acknowledged the players and mentors who had worked so hard to ensure victory was secured.

Guests on the night included the



Éire Óg, Féile camogie champions, attending the club's medal presentation function at Lee Valley Golf Club. Included is Siobhan Hutchinson, Cork senior. Picture: Mike English

county board chairman Mary McSweeney and club sponsor Michael O'Flynn, who is a terrific backer of camogie and a wonderful sponsor to all sections of the Éire Óg family.

Club president Rose Malone also

joined a host of club members and friends.

The Féile team was led by their captain Shauna Sheehan with Molly McCarthy leading her U12 panel while Cork senior player, and Éire Óg native, Siobhan Hutchinson pres-

ented the medals to the players.

There was huge praise also for the mentors of each teams with the Féile winning sides guided to victory by Kieran Murphy (manager), who was ably assisted by selectors Jacqui Sheehan, Pat Sheehan, Yvonne

O'Brien, John Conway, Yvonne Coakley, Suzanne Brennan and Aine Barry.

The U12 teams were guided to victory by Deirdre O'Sullivan (manager), along with Colm Barry-Murphy, Conor Healy and Finbarr Moynihan.



Éire Óg's Ciara O'Brien, Laoise Murphy, Shauna Sheehan, Grainne O'Mahony and Edel Sheehan helped Cork win the U14 championship.



Éire Óg's Orlaith Cremin and Nevaeh O'Connell of Sarsfields do battle in the Féile final. Picture: INPHO/Lorraine O'Sullivan



Michael O'Flynn making a presentation to Isobel Sheehan, Éire Óg in recognition of her selection on the Cork minor camogie team. Included is Ken Murphy, chairman. Picture: Mike English



Linda Dorgan, Cork and Ballincollig, takes on the Meath defence.
Picture: Larry Cummins

Cork ready to bounce back to winning ways against Kildare

SUNDAY

Littlewoods Division 2 National League: Kildare v Cork, Hawkfield Centre of Excellence, 2pm

HAVING recorded a superb victory over Kilkenny in their opening game Cork came a cropper against Meath in the Littlewoods Division 2 League.

It's back to business again as they head to Kildare. With just one team to qualify for the semi-final from each group and one team to be drawn from the three runners-up in each group, it will be tough to try and grab the top spot.

Meath with three wins out of three are on top and if they defeat Kilkenny this weekend they will be through as group winners. They overpowered Kildare last weekend as they hit 11-17, demoralising on the hosts going into this weekend.

It is a step up for Kildare to Division 2, having won Division 3 last year they then had to survive a tough relegation battle to retain their intermediate championship status for 2020.

It was a tough introduction to Division 2 last weekend. Caoilfhionn Hallissey captains a side that includes Orlaith Fahy, Ciara MacAndrew, Jenny Cahill and Annette Corcoran. Cork were hugely disappointed not to have got more out of their clash with Meath. In a low-scoring contest the visitors came away with an 0-6 to 0-3 victory.

Weather-wise it was a horrific day for a game with appalling conditions which made it hard on players. The driving wind and rain turned it into a lottery.

Cork, playing against the elements in the opening half, would have been reasonably

happy at the interval to be trailing by three points having played exceptionally well over the 30 minutes as they worked hard to contain Meath.

It was their inability to make any headway upfront in the second half that is a cause of huge concern and with all of their scores coming from placed balls over the hour the management and players know this is not good enough.

The Cork defence was superb over the hour and with their midfield working hard they enjoyed plenty of possession but time and again their attack failed to make any headway and this is something that they need to improve on.

Over the hour Cork had good displays from Linda Dorgan, who took on the challenges posed by Meath, Lydia Cunningham, who showed huge composure, and Ciara Daly, Aisling Maloney and Aine Crowley all did well too.

Cork will be expected to come away with the points on offer in this one given that Kildare are just finding their feet at this level.

MINORS:

The minors, having had their game against Tipperary postponed on Saturday last, will be hoping to get their campaign back on track when they take on Waterford tomorrow in Castle Road at 2.30pm. Waterford got their campaign off to a good start with a win over Wexford.

Cork having lost to Dublin cannot afford another slip in their quest for a last four place.



Cork's Cliona Healy bursts past the tackle of Waterford's Iona Heffernan at Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

Picture: Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile

Every game a must win now

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

SUNDAY: Littlewoods Division 1 National League: Cork v Kilkenny, Páirc Uí Rinn, 2pm.

SO far it has been stop-go and all over the place in the Littlewoods Senior Division 1 league as storm after storm has played havoc with the fixture schedule.

Games were falling by the wayside at a huge rate last weekend and throughout February.

After having their first-round match postponed against Waterford on February 9, Kilkenny finally got their league campaign up and running with a home fixture against Clare. And with new boss Brian Dowling looking to guide them to their fifth successive league final appearance it was expected that they would get their quest off to a good start.

However, they were brought down to earth by a gutsy Clare side who, after a great win in their opening round clash with Offaly, made the journey to Nowlan Park a winning one, with a dogged 1-9 to 0-10 victory.

That victory propelled them to the top of the table but it was Ger O'Connell's turn last weekend to be storm hit as his side's much awaited clash with Cork fell foul to the weather.

Kilkenny lined out with just eight of last year panel for their clash with Clare. Dowling and his management team of Tommy Shefflin and Ray Challenor are finding their feet in their new roles and are still in experimental mode but we can expect to see more familiar faces return as the season progresses.

They got a victory under their belts on Saturday last as they hosted Offaly in Dr Tierney Park in a game where they led by just a point at the interval 0-4 to 0-3 but a vital goal from corner forward Danielle Morrissey at the start of the second half helped them push on in the second half to secured their first win with five points to spare.

Miriam Walsh, Katie Nolan, Michaels Kennelly, Danielle Morrissey, Denise



Cork's Linda Collins of Cork is tackled by Shona Curran, left and Sibeal Harney of Waterford.

Gaule, Michelle Teehan and Aoife Doyle have featured prominently and for their clash with Cork we can expect to see them in their line out as they come to Cork for what is an important game for both sides.

With their games against Clare and Offaly both falling to weather Cork are now two games behind and have gone five weeks without a competitive game.

Having got their campaign off to a perfect start as they overcame Waterford in Páirc Uí Chaoimh as they pulled way in the second half to record a 1-18 to 0-12 victory, it has been an unsettling few weeks for Paudie Murray's squad.

Against Waterford the Rebels introduced a lot of new faces. Amy Lee started in goal as Aoife Murray is now officially retired and whilst sterner tests will come her way she acquitted herself well when called upon. She made two excellent second half saves while distributing the ball well under pressure.

Cliona Healy showed well and is certainly a player who has a lot to offer. Saoirse McCarthy finished smartly for the only goal of the game.

Reacting after his side's win over Waterford Cork manager Paudie Murray told us his charges are a team in transition and in the process of team building.

Given that he can still call on experienced campaigners such as Laura Treacy, Chloe Sigerson, and Amy O'Connor, along with Leanne O'Sullivan, Hannah Looney, Libby Coppinger and Linda Collins whilst Orla Cronin continues to grow in stature and turned in another fine hour in Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

Ashling Thompson made a welcome return for the Waterford game and was excellent in the opening half covering a lot of ground and hitting two points. She was injured for last week's postponed clash against Clare but Murray is hoping to have her fit for this weekend.

Julia White is also returning to training this week and will be another option going forward and all going well will be on the bench on Sunday.

Among the younger players on the panel are Aoife O'Neill, Emma Murphy, Clara McCarthy, Hannah O'Leary and Siobhan Hutchinson and we can expect to see more of these players as the league progresses.

A win for Cork will give them two out of two with Clare and Offaly to play.

A defeat for Kilkenny could signal their exit from the league.

With just one team to qualify from the group every game is a must win.



Cork and Meath battle for the ball in wet and blustery weather conditions.
Picture: Larry Cummins

Date for league final is in doubt



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

THERE was only one senior intercounty national league fixture that went ahead last weekend.

Kilkenny had a five-point win over Offaly. Cork and Clare was postponed leaving them now with two re-fixtures to play against Offaly and Clare respectively.

They travel to Offaly on March 14 with no date confirmed yet for Clare. The league final is down for March 22 so that may have to be pushed out, depending on stadium availability.

Of course, first Cork play Kilkenny in Páirc Uí Rinn tomorrow and based on Kilkenny's defeat to Clare and low margin victory over Offaly you would expect that Cork might have the slight upper hand.

Both sides are fielding recently with roughly eight of their 2019 regular 15. Some changes in personnel are enforced due to retirement and circumstances, namely for Cork, Aoife Murray and Orla Cotter. I haven't heard of any Kilkenny retirements although Edwina Keane, who featured intermittently for the Cats last season could call it a day.

Other than that, both managers are again using the league for development. So regardless of what way the result goes tomorrow it will have little meaning in the bigger picture.

We have new senior and intermediate All-Ireland club champions in Sarsfields of Galway and Gailltír of Waterford. Both took late goals to snatch victory which is the ultimate stomach churner for the losers. An incredible way to win though and congratulations to both clubs.

If the rules of forbidding the dropping of the hurley to hand pass had been in play by now Shauna Fitzgerald wouldn't have found Una Jackman with that pass for the latter to cling it to the back of the net. Jackman finished brilliantly. Gailltír lost last year's decider by a point to Clonduff and history looked like repeating itself, but the game is never over until that final whistle.

St Ryanaghs led by a point in the fourth minute of injury time. Heroine Jackman came on as a sub in the 51st minute. It was a dream for her, absolute agony for St Ryanaghs. I question however how Gailltír are back in the final again. They lost the All-Ireland semi-final two years ago, the final last year and won it last Sunday.

Waterford are a senior camogie county. Their highest club camogie competition is senior and yet their senior champions are permitted to enter the Intermediate Munster and All-Ireland championships year after year. I don't think that's right.

Waterford reached the senior championship quarter-finals in 2019, losing out to Galway by eight points after giving the eventual All-Ireland champions a stern test. It can't be one rule for one county and another for others.

It was the same with Lismore, who despite winning the All-Ireland intermediate title in 2013, contested the final again in 2014 only to lose out to



Cork's Aoife Hurley and Kilkenny's Eimear Naddy battling during a Division 2 Camogie League clash last month. Picture: Dylan Vaughan



Volunteer of the Year Award winner for County Cork, Lorraine Looney, with Moira Dunne and president of the Camogie Association, Kathleen Woods. Picture: INPHO/Bryan Keane

Pilltown, Kilkenny. So senior clubs from Waterford will continue to contest Intermediate Munster and All-Ireland championships until this changes.

Maybe at one stage Waterford were considered a weaker county but that's no longer the case. They repeatedly compete at Intermediate level and that isn't fair to genuine Intermediate clubs.

Cork's second highest club competition for 25 years was senior B and yet Cork were forbidden from entering the Intermediate Munster and All-Ireland club series as the competition senior B wasn't recognised by the association.

So effectively our junior A teams ended up representing Cork at Intermediate level, hence no silverware there. We've done away with senior B now and that was the right thing to do. There's a wide gap overall in how clubs/counties are graded at this level.

What a day it was for the McGrath's of Sarsfields. Dad 'Hopper' coaching the team with four daughters involved. Former Galway and Sarsfields All-Ireland winner Michael 'Hopper' McGrath, Captain Niamh, Siobhan, Clodagh and Orlaith completed the family line up.

Just as in the Intermediate decider, it was an injury-time goal that decided the game, 1-8 to 0-10 in Sarsfields' favour over Slaughtneil.

It was Siobhán McGrath, set up by sister Orlaith, who blasted to the Slaughtneil net, just 30 seconds after Louise Dougan had converted a free from right on the centre-field line to put the champions within touching distance of a fourth consecutive title.

Considering it was Sarsfield's third attempt at the title you had to be happy for them, albeit being a huge admirer of Slaughtneil. Niamh and Clodagh were magnificent in midfield while Or-

laith McGrath was always a threat, with Siobhán not far behind and the duo's desire to take on their markers at every turn caused mayhem in the normally assured Slaughtneil defence.

I'd love to see the clock come into play in Camogie just as it is for Ladies Football. The amount of added time at the end of every game now is becoming over the top. At the Ashbourne cup weekend recently the amount of added time was excessive, the UL-WIT semi-final in particular where seven additional minutes was played and not one person watching that game could figure out where that seven minutes came from. It cost WIT a place in the final.

I think referees would appreciate the clock. It takes a big responsibility off their shoulders. And it lends itself to consistency, which is lacking as we've said many times in Camogie and GAA in general.

Lorraine honoured at camogie awards

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

THE Camogie Association Volunteer and Media Awards recently took place where over 100 guests were in attendance in Croke Park to honour the various winners.

This is the 14th year of the awards which recognise the contributions of local and national press and volunteers in the promotion and development of camogie.

The Volunteer and Media Award winners were selected on the basis of their efforts in 2019 and they included Lorraine Looney, from the Cobh club, who was chosen as the Cork Volunteer of the year.

Lorraine Looney was a worthy recipient of the Cork volunteer award, in her 12th season as club secretary she is a huge part of the Cobh Camogie story.

She is 'Mrs Camogie' in the club and is always busy. She works closely with the primary schools coaching programme where she liaises with the schools and coaches to ensure they are scheduled.

She oversees the Cúl camp every year where she coordinates and distributes receipts and gear for over 250 children. During this week she personally provided the first aid support and makes sure each child is looked after well.

Lorraine is also to the fore in promoting the Cobh Facebook page with the club PRO and this ensures maximum publicity for her club.

In 2019 along with all her club jobs Lorraine took on the role of co-coordinator for the club U8s and this is just one of many jobs she does for her beloved club.

Every Saturday to the end of October and every Sunday to the end of December from March, she opens and runs a club shop where everybody can buy their gear or just pop in for refreshments.

Along with all of these jobs the job of club secretary is a huge one as it entails the registration of every player in the club this entails doing out and collecting membership forms collecting fees and making sure everybody players and mentors are insured.

She has a huge commitment to the Cobh club and is the link from the newest girl trying out camogie to the adult players each who look to her for guidance.

Her uncanny ability to spot a problem before it arises is a skill that is one that is hugely important and she possesses an ability to get the job done and sorted.

To sum up Lorraine in the words of her club she is the unsung star of the show in Cobh camogie she is the one who keeps everybody on their toe and ensured the job is done.

"I'd love to see the clock come into play in Camogie just as it is for Ladies Football"

Cork into the semis with easy victory

MINOR CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Cork 1-19
Waterford 0-5

CORK got their bid for a place in the last four of the Tesco All-Ireland minor championship back on track.

They recorded their first victory in the round robin series over a Waterford side that came into the clash with a win from their opening game under their belts.

Aided by the gale-force wind in the opening half, Cork availed of every opportunity that they created.

They built up a 0-13 to 0-2 interval lead thanks to the accuracy of Ali Smith, Clodagh Finn, Isobel Sheehan, Rose Murphy, Daire O'Brien, Claire Kingston, Olivia McAllen and Maebh Murphy who were all on target.

Waterford had two Mairead O'Brien frees in a half where they battled hard to try and contain a focused Rebel outfit who were still smarting from their defeat at the hand of Dublin in round one.

Cork enjoyed the best of the early second half exchanges and had added three points to their tally inside the opening five minutes with Finn, Smith and Ciara Irwin splitting the posts.

Working away, Waterford began to gain a foothold and two points without reply from O'Brien and one from Rhona Drohan cut the deficit.

Responding to the challenge, Cork hit back adding three points in a row as they keep the foot on the pedal.

Smith, Sheehan and Katelyn Dineen were finding gaps in the Waterford defence before a Rose Murphy goal in added time put the icing on the cake.

In the other game in the group, Dublin continues their impressive displays as they made it two wins from two as they defeated Laois 1-10 to 2-2.

Scorers for Cork: A Smith 0-5, C Finn 0-4 (0-3 f), R Murphy 1-1, D O'Brien 0-2 f, I Sheehan 0-2, O McAllen, C Kingston, K Dineen, M Murphy, C Irwin 0-1 each.

Waterford: M O'Brien 0-4 f, R Drohan 0-1.

CORK: C Buckley; M Murphy, S O'Brien, S O'Keefe; H Sexton, C Dooley, C Keane; I Sheehan, O McAllen; A Smith, C Kingston, R Murphy, E O'Brien, C Finn, C Irwin (c).

Subs: M Crowley for E O'Brien (inj 29), K Dineen for O McAllen (46), J Doyle for M Murphy (46), E Foley for S O'Keefe (53), V Gleeson for A Smith (54).

WATERFORD: E Gallagher; H Connolly, S McGuckin, D Fitzgerald, R Jones, B Gardner, A Jones; A O'Neill, J Tuohy; M O'Brien, A Flynn, H Ryan (c); C Hoctor, R Drohan, R Walsh.

Subs: A Quinn for B Gardner (h-f), C Sheehan for C Hoctor (46), C Bolger for A Jones (50), M Delaney for J Tuohy (inj 56).

Referee: Liz Dempsey (Kilkenny).



Marian McCarthy of St Finbarr's is presented with the Camogie Award by Maolmhuire Tynan, Head of Public Affairs AIB, and Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael, John Horan, during the GAA President's Awards at Croke Park last month. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

Gradings for leagues made

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

THE grading of clubs and draws for the adult and minor leagues have been made.

There's a starting date of the first week in April for the adult leagues so teams are busy with preseason preparations and are hopeful the pitch conditions will improve soon to allow time to ready for throw-in.

The following are the groups and gradings of clubs from senior down to junior.

SENIOR LEAGUE

There are 14 teams in the senior league and there are two sections of seven. Games commence at the start of April and are scheduled for every Friday. Section A has Ballygarvan, St Finbarr's, Milford, St Catherine's, Glen Rovers, Éire Óg and Killeagh.

In Section B holders Inniscarra are joined by county champions Sarsfields, Cloughduv, Douglas, Ballincollig, Courcye rovers and Newcestown, who make a return to the senior grade following their victory in last season's Intermediate championship.

INTERMEDIATE

Twelve teams will battle it out for this league title and here there are two sections of six: In Section A, it's Carrigaline, Na Piarasigh, Aghabullogue, Fr O'Neill's, Enniskeane and Clonakilty.

In Section B, it's Kilbrittain/Timoleague, Valley Rovers, Blackrock, Watergrahill, Brian Dillon's and last year's junior county champions Ballyhea.

JUNIOR

There will be five junior grades and



The St Mary's, Midleton camogie team who reached the Tesco Senior B All-Ireland final.

Ballinhassig and Barryroe who have both re-graded this season to junior A.

Junior B: In junior B there are nine clubs and these have made the decision to go with just one section where they will play a total of eight games participating clubs are Youghal, Inniscarra 2, Millstreet, Bride Rovers, Castlielyons, Ballincollig 2, Blarney, Cobh and Bishopstown who have regraded this year from A level.

Junior C: The Junior C league has 13 teams and these are divided into two sections one of seven and one of six. Section A is: Aghada, Kilbree, Na Piarasigh 2, Kilworth, St Colum's, Castlemartyr, and Inniscarra 3.

Section B has Grenagh, Buttevant, Midleton, Kinsale, Castlielyons 2 and St Fanahan's.

Junior C 13-a-side: For clubs who may

Section B is Éire Óg, Barryroe, Douglas and Enniskeane.

MINOR

Minor A: In Minor A there are eight teams with two sections. Section A: Inniscarra, Ballinora, Éire Óg and Sarsfields. In section B it's Newcestown, Aghabullogue, Aghada and St Finbarr's.

Minor B: There are 20 teams in four sections of five. In section A we have St Catherine's, Ballyhea/Milford, Kilbrittain/Timoleague Killeagh, Mallow. Section B: Fr O'Neill's, Ballygarvan, Courcye Rovers, Cloughduv and Buttevant.

Sections C: Glen Rovers, Ballincollig, Na Piarasigh, Blackrock, Enniskeane. Section D has Douglas, Ballinhassig, Charleville, Castlemartyr and Kilbree.

Minor C: There are 18 teams divided into

Cork totally outplay Kildare in league

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Cork 1-22
Kildare 0-3

CORK were totally dominant as they outplayed Kildare in Hawkesfield in the Division 2 Littlewoods League.

Cork set the tone of the game quickly and they had first-half points from Katie Walsh, with five, Michelle Murphy, who had two from play, and converted two frees, Lydia Cunningham and Kate Wall (three apiece) and Caroline Murphy.

That helped Cork open up a 0-16 to 0-2 interval lead. Leah Sutton was on target for Kildare as they struggled against a strong Cork defense who held a firm grip.

On the resumption Cork continued to hold the upper hand. Aoife Hurley nabbed a goal while five Kate Wall points, two from play, and a Hayley Ryan point left no way back for the hosts.

Scorers for Cork: K Wall 0-8 (0-3 f), K Walsh 0-5, M Murphy 0-4 (0-2 f), L Cunningham 0-3, A Hurley 1-0, H Ryan, C Murphy 0-1 each.

Kildare: L Sutton 0-3

CORK: C Casey, E Flanagan, K Falvey, C Hayes, K Kilcommins, A O Callaghan, M Lynch; L Dorgan, D Carroll, M Murphy, L Cunningham, N O'Riordan, C Murphy, K Wall, K Walsh.

Subs: N Crean, A Hurley, S Hurley, E Lonergan, A Moloney, J Murphy, A Nic A Bhaire, H Ryan for K Walsh, A O'Callaghan, L Dorgan, N O'Riordan, D Carroll, L Cunningham, K Wall, E Flanagan.

Meanwhile, Tipperary will play in the National Camogie League Division 1 final for the first time in 11 years after shocking champions and All-Ireland queens Galway at Duggan Park.

The Premier women failed to score in the second half but produced some heroic defending to hold out 1-8 to 0-10.

Captain Cáit Devane was inspiration for Tipp, scoring six points in the opening period to supplement Róisín Howard's early goal and then dropping deep to help protect the 1-8 to 0-5 interval lead into the wind.

Indeed, the Clonoulty/Rossmore All-Star made one fantastic dispossession of Rebecca Hennelly on the edge of her own area, deep into injury time in the second half, to help keep Galway at bay.

Cathal Murray will be disappointed that his charges could only match their first-half return with the elements after the resumption, Carrie Dolan adding to her three first-half points and Niamh Kilkenny also on target.

The westerners poured forward late on but the big plays were being produced by Bill Mullaney's players.

Aoife McGrath was sensational in added time, nipping in to clear after Aoife Butler spread herself well to stop an Aoife Donohue shot. Later on, she took a yellow card for fouling Ailish O'Reilly at the expense of Galway's last score from a Dolan, and then got in a block on O'Reilly to maintain her side's advantage.

Pioneering women like Una changed everything



'Family flowers only. Donations, if desired, to Dogs Trust Ireland.'

THUS ended the death notice for Una O'Connor, whose funeral takes place in Marino today.

She was a giant of camogie, an absolute laoch.

She debuted for Dublin's seniors at 15, won 13 senior All-Irelands, was on the Team of the Century and, in 1966, was the first camogie player to win the Caltex award (equivalent of the Texaco).

She starred for a club called Celtic, scored 3-1 for them in the inaugural All-Ireland club final and obviously loved dogs, but how little else we know of her.

This week I couldn't find one single picture of her on the all-seeing, all-hearing internet.

Dublin camogie's website - the only place that subsequently carried a decent tribute - eventually had one but it was a team photo. Even kneeling in the front row she towered over her teammates

and was ahead of her time in favouring a short hurley.

She played from 1953-67 (came out of retirement briefly in 1975) so her career converged at points with Christy Ring's yet the media of the day virtually unrecorded her.

Tomorrow is International Women's Day (IWD) but March is also 'women's history month' and a conference to mark Irish women's sporting history in Dundalk Museum last week underlined just how lost and under-catalogued so much of it is.

Hayley Kilgallon from Sligo, who did a thesis on it for her Masters in Public History at UCD, gave great insight into the genesis of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA), founded in 1974.

She showed a cutting of a letter printed in the *Sunday Independent* on August 27, 1967, a year after Una's Caltex award.

Headlined 'Keep

Women out of Croke Park' it came from a 'Cork farmer' who hoped women would be barred from All-Ireland finals because "to me there is nothing more revolting or unnatural than to see a pleasure-bent woman up in the city for fun and enjoyment, instead of being satisfied with her lot at home."

The great news, Kilgallon explained, was that this steaming pile of verbal manure was returned to the Cork farmer, with interest, from many protestors.

Fifty-four years later Croker had plenty of pleasure-seeking women in it last Sunday, lighting up the AIB All-Ireland camogie club finals.

Gailltír's super-sub Una Jackman stole the headlines for nabbing a brilliant injury-time goal to win the intermediate title but the insurance point was provided by her sister Trish who has been commuting from England, for club and county, for the best part of five years. Waterford star Jackman is a pro-

fessor of sport and exercise psychology at the University of Lincoln.

As she quipped to reporter Valerie Wheeler afterwards, "I'm the only one who has to write 'passport' on her gear checklist."

She was on a flight back to England that night and, depending on where she flies from, often faces a three-hour plus drive on return.

A male inter-county player of Cashman's skill and importance would be a household name.

For such remarkable dedication, he'd be sainted. She is neither. So while women's team sports (the big area of inequity) are slowly gaining more recognition, support and funding, there's still massive ground to be made up.

That's why special initiatives are needed.



WEST CORK IN A MINUTE



Courcey Rovers' Christine O'Neill tells us the sing song in Mary O'Donovan's Bar in Ballinadee will be mighty when the good times roll again ...

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself? I was bald until I was nearly three.

What Netflix/TV show are you watching at the moment? Queen of the South, Selling the Sunset and The Sinner.

Who's the greatest West Cork sportsperson ever? The O'Donovan brothers or Jennifer O'Leary.

If you could be any superhero, who would it be? St Anthony - he's not a superhero but he's a mighty man for finding things.

Name one friend who'd love to see their name appear in The Southern Star? My uncle Jimm McCarthy in the Blue Horizon. A great character, loves hurling, a fine singer and a man with true Courcey spirit.

Highlight of your sporting career? Winning the senior league with Courceys in 2017 - the craic after winning nothing for 17 years was unbelievable.

Tell us a funny joke: How does Batman's mother call him for dinner? Dinner dinner dinner dinner dinner dinner dinner BAT-MAN!!!

Where's your favourite place in West Cork? Is it biased to say Garrestown? Glandore on a sunny day is a close second.

Tea or coffee? Coffee all day long.

How many penguins would it take to kill a shark? Depends on the size of the penguins.

Against your will, you have to live in another county besides Cork, where do you go? Kerry - it's the only place we were ever taken to on our holidays as children. Great memories of playing games of My House Your House, I Spy and Corners on the way down in the car.

What sport event would you love to tick off your bucket list? A Six Nations rugby game between Ireland and England in the Aviva.

You're in a karaoke bar and have to sing a duet - who do you sing with and what would you sing? The Ferryman with my sister Caroline or Uncle Cracker's Follow Me with the Courcey girls. Both renditions can be heard live in Mary O'Donovan's Bar in Ballinadee when the good times roll again.

What question would you liked to have been asked in this interview? Would you rather have fingers for toes or toes for fingers?

Christine O'Neill (30) from Ballinadee is a stalwart of Courcey Rovers, who has enjoyed the good days in recent seasons. She hopes Courceys will figure in the business end of this year's county senior camogie championship as they look to get back to the county final, having reached it in 2018.

Cliona Foley



Cork's Orla Cronin, looks to block down Kellyann Doyle, Kilkenny, in their Littlewoods Division 1 camogie league match at Páirc Uí Rinn.

Picture: Dan Linehan

Rebels roar against greatest rivals Kilkenny

CAMOGIE

■ **Mary Newman**

CORK took a major step towards the Littlewoods Ireland Division 1 League final with a dominant 2-17 to 0-9 display against old foes Kilkenny at Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

Tipp are through to the decider after beating Galway, while the Rebels are now in a strong position, two wins from two, with Offaly and Clare to come.

Goalkeeper Amy Lee was thrilled to get one over the Cats, who were fired up after a loss to Clare last month. "Kilkenny always pose a huge challenge so we're just happy now to get the win under our belts."

Lee is this season taking over the number one spot from Aoife Murray "Aoife is a legend and someone I really look up to, she has been so good to me down through the years and is always so helpful. I would have played in a few league games and Munster championship games and the experience gained in these games helped me and Aoife

was there encouraging me all the way."

This is a new-look side under Paudie Murray, with the likes of Gemma O'Connor and Orla Cotter unavailable.

"Some of the players who have come through from the last two winning minor teams have all played well."

■ See inside for more.

Una O'Connor (second from right) at a Dublin training session in 1954. Una won 13 senior All-Irelands and was on the team of the Century.



Keep women out of Croke Park!

SIR—Now that the All-Ireland finals are at hand again, let's hope the G.A.A. will bar women from attending these games, taking up valuable space.

To me, there is nothing more revolting or unnatural than to see a pleasure-beet woman up in the city for fun and enjoyment, instead of being satisfied with her lot at home.

A letter received at the Sunday Independent in 1967.

with another IWD initiative, Britain's #JustJockeys campaign, which stresses that no gender differentiation is needed or wanted in horseracing.

Polar opposite campaigns yet room for both surely?

In Ireland 20x20 has coincided with, and arguably caused, others to up their game, including media, national governing bodies (NGBs) and sponsors.

Sport Ireland's been funding NGB's own women in sport (WIS) projects since 2005 yet had no formal WIS policy itself, which was always puzzling.

In 2018 they finally produced one, set up a women's sport committee (chaired by Lynn Cantwell) and, in 2019, employed their first fulltime WIS lead (Nora Stapleton).

So, have things improved? Irrefutably.

Have we a long way to go still? Yes.

Like, what could even a fraction of Mick McCarthy's €1.1m 'exit fee' from the FAI do for the development end of the women's game and rising talent like Rebecca McMahon?

The hashtag for 2020 International Women's Day is a worthy #eachforequal.

But sport, surely, demands something more active, tangible and assertive.

So I'm suggesting #pleasurebentwomen.

I really regret never meeting or seeing Una O'Connor in action but suspect she'd approve.

Camogie is in a good place - but let's make it better

Sinead McNulty



all fronts and in all parts of the country and beyond.

There are still some challenges facing us as an Association - growing the numbers of female referees and coaches, and tackling player drop-out at key transition stages remain major issues.

National and international campaigns and frameworks such as Sport Ireland's Women in Sport Policy, help us to look at new and innovative ways of tackling these issues giving rise to new initiatives such as our recently launched M.N.A. Programme which will specifically target increasing numbers, upskilling and mentoring the female coaches involved in our game.

Next month we will launch a new National Development Plan setting out our vision for the future, with clear and ambitious targets to build on the positive developments in camogie over the past decade and more. Engagement and building capacity is key to the success of this plan.

'A rising tide lifts all boats' and the collective progress and achievements of women's sports both in Ireland and internationally is positive for everyone involved. Our peers are on a similar positive and progressive path - we are pioneers for Irish women's sport - with each new achievement by an individual sport, team or athlete bringing immense pride - and raising the bar for all of us.

Record attendances in recent years by our colleagues in the LGFA and across the water with women's soccer - seeing 50,000 plus in a stadium, have shown what is possible for major women's sports events. Our athletes merit these attendances, and more.

The international attention which the FIFA Women's World Cup enjoyed last summer - the way in which it captured the public's imagination, particularly the role played by Irish official Michelle O'Neill - illustrated the appetite for quality coverage of women's sporting events and showed that the public both male and female recognise quality sport as quality sport - once they have the opportunity to do so.

Such achievements build the case for further investment and growth. They demonstrate the merits of the athletes and sports and dissipate the voice of the naysayer.

On a practical level sporting organisation's across Ireland and the world can be more ambitious in their plans to grow women's sport - this a very exciting time. Ultimately we are working to provide opportunities for girls and women to play and enjoy sport to the same extent as their male counterparts.

We're on the right road towards achieving this, momentum is building and moving faster than ever - let's all play our part and get involved!

The author is Ard Stiúrthóir of

2019 was a seminal year for camogie on many fronts, as it was for women's sport in general - for all the right reasons.

We saw thrilling matches, a record crowd attend our All-Ireland finals, major increases in media coverage, growth in memberships and new clubs being founded around the country and beyond. The perspective on the role and impact of women in society over the past decade has evolved; highlighted by movements such as #MeToo, and the '30% Club' which have acted as lightning rods for women to stand up, and use their voice more actively than ever before, eliminating barriers - both real and perceived.

The role of women in all aspects of sport - participation, high performance, officials and leadership is making similar strides. We've seen a huge change in the Irish sporting landscape in the last decade much of which has been reflected in our own standing and progression as a sport.

Participation numbers are at an all-time high, and our staff team has grown in numbers, experience and capacity to match the needs of our membership. Sponsors have flocked towards our game, and media coverage is constantly reaching to new areas and more eyes on our game.

With such growth the very dynamic of our heritage sport and Association has also changed, presenting many positive challenges for us to tackle and overcome. The increasingly professional approach towards match preparation, in particular at the elite level of the game has brought with it a greater need to look at how our game is played. Indeed, the level of coverage and serious, critical analysis of our game has helped to drive the Association forward in areas such as our recent trialling of playing rules.

Players themselves are becoming more empowered to play a wider part in the Association, one that is not limited to the playing field.

Player engagement is now a key focus of the Association to ensure that we all move forward together and at the same pace.

Support structures for players, referees, volunteers and our wider membership are critical to creating an environment for camogie to continue to flourish. As a volunteer-based organisation much of our work is dedicated to supporting our members and developing their capacity to grow and sustain our game on

I've heard some argue that the 20x20 campaign is just a load of PR fluff for the Insta-generation and won't effect lasting change.

It may not exactly achieve its stated goal - 20% more participation/attendance/coverage/leadership of women's sport by the end of 2020 - but it has, inarguably, shifted the conversation and highlighted inequities.

It's not alone. A combination of feminism's fourth wave, the #MeToo movement and the power of social media means 20x20 is part of a worldwide movement to give more recognition and reward to female athletes.

In Australia tomorrow all eyes will be on the T20 Cricket World Cup in Melbourne where they're aiming to break the world record attendance

for a women's sporting event (90,185 from the 1999 FIFA World Cup final).

They're flying in Billie Jean King and employing Katie Perry as entertainment but, with 16-year-old Indian wonderkid Shafali Verma involved, it should sell out anyway.

Verma comes from the same very conservative Hindu state that produced Kapil Dev but, at nine, there was no girls cricket in her town and no boy's club would accept her.

So her father cut her hair and enrolled her as a boy.

Her old school now has girls' teams but such obstacles still aren't confined to religious or cultural differences.

This week, via 20x20, we heard Rebecca McMahon (15), a member of the FAI's U16 girls' squad, explain how she

had to initially play with a boy's team for similar reasons.

When it got "competitive, around nine to 10" she'd only get on in the last 10 minutes.

She plays for Ireland now but still hears that old brickbat: 'Sure it's easy to get on the girls' team - you're aren't as good as boys.'

"It feels sometimes like our achievements are diminished because we're girls," she said.

Heartbreaking to hear in 2020.

New initiatives don't always get it right or attract consensus.

The T20 World Cup's been criticised for having no semi-final 'reserve' day for weather delays, giving India free passage past England into the final.

#FilltheMCG coincides



Cork's Ciara McCarthy breaks her hurley in this clash with Niamh Deely, Kilkenny in their Littlewoods Division 1 league game.

Two wins from two as Rebels show their class

TWO games and two wins for Cork in the Littlewoods National Camogie League and you can't ask for any more than that.

With the weather seeing their games against Clare and Offaly postponed it meant a longer wait than usual for Cork to get back on the pitch.

And yesterday not only did they have to battle their arch-rivals, but they also had to battle the conditions with a hail storm in the second-half, driving into the faces of the Cork defence.

Any time that Cork face the Cats you know it's going to be a battle and if you are not up for it then you will be beaten. Right from the off yesterday you could see that the Rebels were determined not to let this one slip and they were going to add to their points tally.

With a number of changes from the team announced it meant a move to midfield for Chloe Sigerson, alongside Ashling Thompson. Aoife O'Neill, from the Barrs, made her senior debut in defence and it's one she can be proud of.

Plenty

She did little wrong and is sure to have plenty more days in the red jersey.

Defensively Cork looked very strong, with the likes of Laura Treacy, Hannah Looney, Libby Coppinger and Laura Hayes outstanding.

Sigerson played a key role in midfield and Thompson, once again, showed just what Cork missed when she didn't play last season.

Her tenacity in the middle of the pitch is crucial for Cork and they will be hoping the form she has shown in the two league games will continue all through the season.

Up front Orla Cronin is as good as any free-taker, hurling or camogie, in the country and no matter how difficult the angle she doesn't miss too often.

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

Linda Collins leads the full-forward line and in Amy O'Connor they have an outstanding captain.

She certainly leads by example and gave it everything over the 60 minutes. It was her goal early in the second-half that settled Cork, when Kilkenny were getting a bit of a foothold in the game.

Amy drove at their defence all through and had their been a Player of the Game award it would have been hard to look beyond her.

Afterwards she was delighted with the win saying: "Anytime you are playing Kilkenny you know it's going to be a tough battle and we expected nothing less from them."

"Conditions were fairly bad as well and make it difficult at times to play, but we are delighted to get the win."

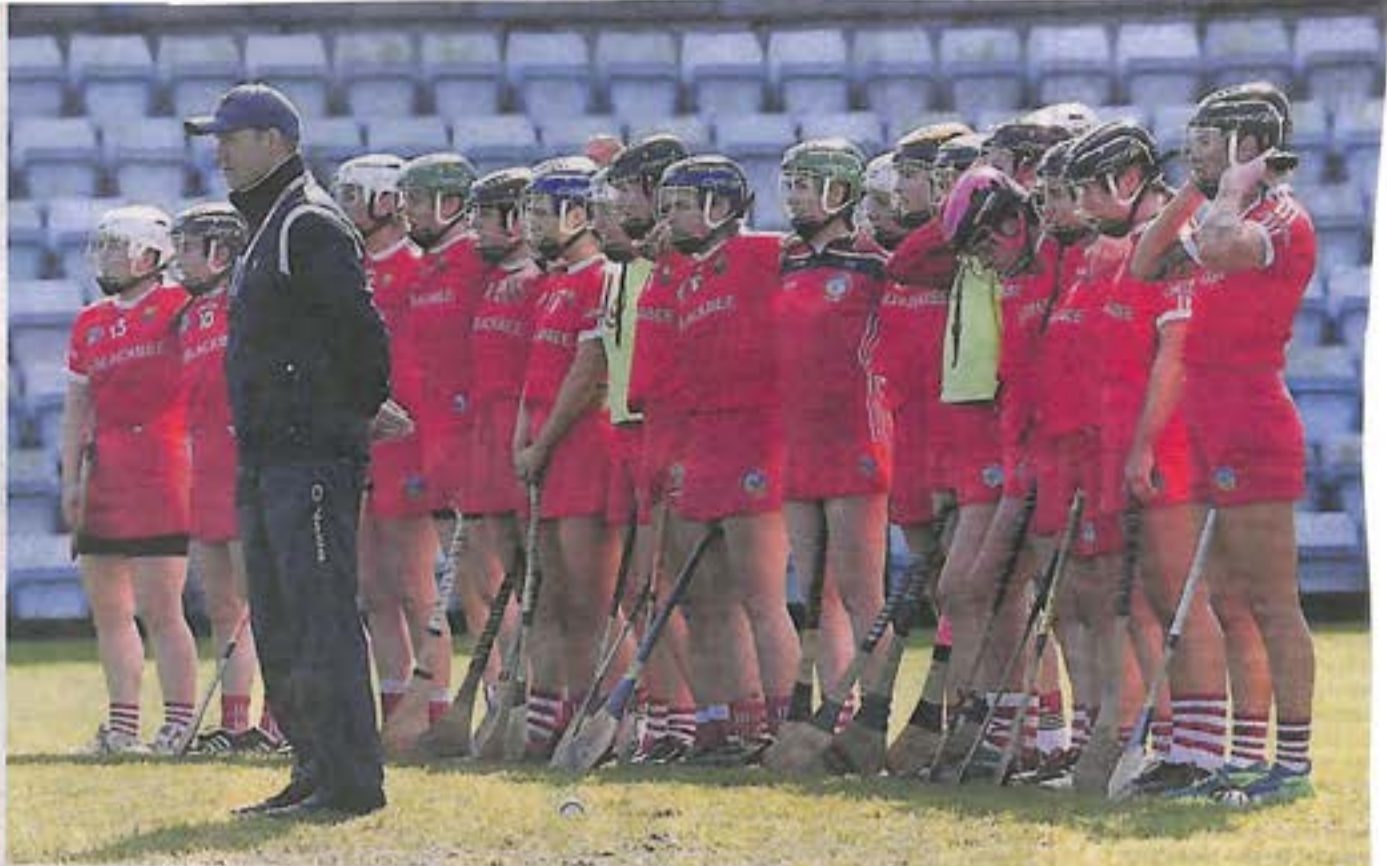
"We have a few new players and in fairness to Paudie (Murray) he is giving everyone a chance and that is good for them but also keeps the players that are there for a while on their toes."

"It people aren't doing it on the pitch then others will get their chance and it keeps it competitive for everyone which is good for us. There is good competition there at the moment to try and get into the starting 15."

"It settled us a bit but it didn't as much as I would have liked as they got a few scores after, but we settled then and I thought we finished the game out well," concluded Amy.

The win puts Cork in a strong position in the league ahead of a difficult away game against Offaly next Saturday.

But on this performance then the Rebels are going to be one of the teams to beat again this year.



The Cork team who lined up against Kilkenny in their Littlewoods Division 1 camogie league match at Páirc Uí Rinn.

Picture: Dan Linehan

Rampant Reds blitz Kilkenny

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Cork	2-17
Kilkenny	0-9

THIS was an impressive display from a focused Cork as they totally outclassed their great rivals on Sunday.

This Kilkenny side were battling to keep their hopes of remaining in the Littlewoods Division 1 league alive in Páirc Uí Rinn. Instead the Rebels closed in on a berth in the decider, with Tipperary already qualified for the first time in 11 years by virtue of a win over Galway at the weekend.

In all sectors Cork were on top and while Kilkenny's tactics of crowding around the middle did little to upset Cork to a degree, once they took control on proceedings from the early stages.

Orla Cronin is proving to be one of the leaders of this young Cork outfit. In superb form, as she contributed nine points over the hour.

Team captain Amy O'Connor's pace caused a lot of problems for an over-worked Kilkenny defence whilst Aisling Thompson turned in another good display around the middle winning good ball and off loading smartly to the inside lines.

Paudie Murray continued the policy of bringing along the younger players, handing starts to Aoife O'Neill and Ciara McCarthy and both slotted in efficiently. Cliona Healy, who was hugely impressive against Waterford, came on for 20 minutes and showed well helping herself to 1-1.

Playing with the strong wind in their favour in the opening half Cork tore the Kilkenny defence apart despite Denise Gaule getting the Cats off to a good start with the game's opening score.

Cronin replied immediately and when Danielle Morrissey edged Kilkenny in

Three talking points from game

DEFENCE: Cork have always had a strong defence, but with the likes of Aoife Murray retiring and Gemma O'Connor still undecided it was an area that some would have been concerned about, writes **Rory Noonan**.

Yesterday Amy Lee looked assured in goal and Laura Hayes was outstanding at centre-back.

Add in the likes of Laura Treacy and Hannah Looney and this defence will take some beating. They have a nice blend of youth and experience and with others like Leanne O'Sullivan and Libby Cop-

pinger to call on as well there will be serious competition to get a starting spot in the championship defence.

Tenacity: The determination and tenacity in the tackle was of the highest standard yesterday, led by the midfield pairing of Chloe Sigerson and Ashling Thompson.

Both were superb and controlled the game from the middle of the pitch. But the forwards have to also be complemented here as they made it difficult for the Kilkenny defence to clear their lines and they turned over sev-

eral balls that then led to Cork scores.

Captain's role: Whilst one player doesn't make a team, one player can certainly set the tone and in Amy O'Connor Cork have a captain who does so.

Her work-rate can only be applauded and admired and she set the tone for her team-mates yesterday.

As well as getting a crucial goal at the start of the second-half she was involved in many of their good moves and no doubt her display helped to lift all those around her.

front on 10 minutes we thought maybe we had a good contest on our hands. Cork upped the pace though. Quicker and slicker they picked off points and holding Kilkenny scoreless for 22 minutes they opened up an eight-point lead.

Laura Murphy got one back for the visitors but it was 0-10 to 0-3 at the break.

Aoife Doyle fired one over on the resumption but a great Cork move saw Laura Hayes off-load to Linda Collins whose inch-perfect pass to Amy O'Connor was finished well to the net.

With overhead conditions deteriorating we had torrential rain and hail stones and with it came a brief Kilkenny rally which yielded four points without reply.

Cork settled and hit two points in a row. Denise Gaule clawed one back for Kilkenny but a strong Cork finish led by a Healy goal and five points without reply. Cork were full value for their victory and they will look forward to the challenge Offaly

will pose next weekend as the quest for a place in the final gathered momentum.

Scorers for Cork: O Cronin 0-9 (0-7 f), A O'Connor 1-3, C Healy 1-1, C Sigerson 0-2, L Collins, C McCarthy 0-1 each.

Kilkenny: D Gaule 0-3 (0-1 f), L Murphy 0-2, A Doyle, S Fitzgerald, K Nolan, D Morrissey 0-1 each.

CORK: A Lee; A O'Neill, L Treacy, N O'Callaghan; H Looney, L Hayes, C Sigerson; L Coppinger, A Thompson; A O'Connor, O Cronin, S McCarthy; L Homan, L Collins, C McCarthy.

Subs: C Healy for C McCarthy (40), I O'Regan for S McCarthy (47), E Murphy for L Homan (52), C O'Sullivan for A O'Neill (57), H O'Leary for L Collins (62).

KILKENNY: E Kavanagh; C O'Shea, C Dormer, M Teehan; N Deely, C Phelan, G Walsh; L Murphy, KA Doyle; M Walsh, A Doyle, L Norris; K Nolan, D Gaule, D Morrissey.

Subs: C Foley for KA Doyle (inj 12), S Fitzgerald for M Teehan (1-1), M Kenneally for L Norris (47), M O'Connell for M Walsh (54).

Referee: John McDonagh (Galway).

RESULTS

Division 1, Group 1: Cork 2-17 Kilkenny 0-9; Clare 1-11 Waterford 2-11.

Division 1, Group 2: Limerick 1-10 Dublin 0-10; Tipperary 1-8 Galway 0-10.



Galway's Sarah Dervan battling with Tipperary's Cait Devane in yesterday's Littlewoods Camogie League Round 5 clash in Ballinasloe. Picture: Inpho/Brian Reilly-Troy

Tipperary end 11-year wait for League final spot

Camogie

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Tipperary will contest a National Camogie League Division 1 final for the first time in 11 years after shocking champions Galway in a pulsating affair at Duggan Park (1-8 to 0-10).

Captain Cait Devane was inspiration for Tipp, scoring six points in the opening period to supplement Róisín Howard's early goal and then dropping deep to help protect the 1-8 to 0-5 interval advantage into the wind.

Galway boss Cathal Murray will be disappointed his charges could only match their first-half return with the elements after the resumption, Carrie Dolan adding to her three first-half points and Niamh Kilkenny also on target.

Aoife McGrath was sensational in added time, nipping in to clear after Aoife Butler saved well from Aoife Donohue and then got in a tremendous block on O'Reilly.

Group 2 remains up for grabs but Cork signalled their intentions with an emphatic 2-17 to 0-9 victory over an inexperienced Kilkenny at Páirc Uí Rinn. Kilkenny led early on thanks to points from Denise Gaule and Danielle Morrissey but Orla Cronin levelled with a brace and the Enniskeane sharp-

shooter continued to find the target. So too did Chloe Sigerson and Amy O'Connor for the Leesiders to go in at the break leading 0-10 to 0-3.

Aoife Doyle made it a six-point game but Cork replied with a goal from O'Connor in the 34th minute, after a fine pass from Linda Collins. Laura Murphy and Katie Nolan kept Kilkenny in touch but Cork had too much know-how and pace down the final stretch. Ashling Thompson's return to the fold has certainly strengthened Cork and she began a fine move that ended with Cliona Healy rifling home.

A scintillating Karen O'Leary goal with four minutes remaining crowned a wind-assisted second-half comeback and cemented Limerick's Division 1 status at LIT. In the process, Paul Sexton's troops consigned Dublin to a relegation play-off by virtue of the 1-10 to 0-10 scoreline.

The visitors led 0-7 to 0-3 at half-time but Limerick were a transformed side on the restart and their fighting spirit was rewarded with O'Leary's late goal. On Saturday, Beth Cardon scored 1-9 as Waterford inflicted a first defeat of the campaign on Clare and secured the first win of the Fergal O'Brien reign on a 2-11 to 1-11 scoreline.

Cork look to seal place in final with win against Offaly

CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

CORK are in a very strong position to reach the Littlewoods Division 1 league final after their trouncing of Kilkenny last weekend.

They take on Offaly in Banagher on Sunday with their final game against Clare, with the Rebel County topped Group 1 after defeating Offaly and Kilkenny, but their defeat to Waterford last Saturday was a major setback.

Offaly have yet to win a game and there aren't any surprises expected against Cork, with the Rebel County hot favourites to take the points from their remaining two games.

The trip to Banagher was to take place on Sunday, February 9, but was postponed due to the adverse weather. Since then, Cork have played just one competitive game.

Offaly are out of the running with just one point from three outings. With defeats to Clare and Kilkenny and a draw with Waterford, it's purely for cham-

ionship preparation that Offaly will take to the field.

After Cork's demolition of Kilkenny, they are poised to not only reach the league final but fancied to win it. After Galway's surprise defeat to Tipperary last weekend, Tipp now top Group 2 and advance to the final, with no semi-finals taking place this year.

Cork are the county most hindered with reschedule games. The league final was initially set for March 22. That weekend has now been set aside for Cork's game with Clare. If Cork defeat Offaly and Clare manage to surprise Cork, Cork would still go through on scoring difference as they currently lead Clare by 17 points with a game in hand. So, Cork's victory over Offaly on Sunday secures their place.

Considering Cork are in league transition, they can be very happy with their current sitting. Gemma O'Connor, Katrina and Pam Mackey, and Julia White have all sat the league out due to various reasons along with the retirement of Aoife Murray and the relocation of Orla Cotter to New York.

Players such as Cliona Healy, Aoife O'Neill, Ciara O'Sullivan, Clara McCarthy, Emma Murphy, Hannah O'Leary and Isabelle O'Regan are all developing well, as is Saoirse McCarthy. The patient Amy Lee, who has been understudy to Aoife Murray for many years, is now getting her chance and is doing well.

A league victory would bring younger panellists on and that's sure to be in Paudie Murray's thoughts. The league final could now be played on the weekend of March 28, but that has yet to be confirmed.

For now, full attention within the squad will be the journey and result in Banagher as they endeavour to take a place in the final two.



Clara McCarthy, Cork tracking Katie Nolan, Kilkenny in their Littlewoods Division 1 camogie league match at Páirc Uí Rinn, Cork. Picture: Dan Linehan



3. ORLA CRONIN – 'As a centre forward she has the best movement that I have seen in that position, and I include hurlers in that' – the words of Cork senior camogie manager Paudie Murray recently. UCC student Orla is only 24 years old, already has four All-Ireland senior medals,

and she is getting better every season. The best centre forward in camogie right now, the Enniskeane woman is on an upward trajectory. Back in 2017, she was player of the game in the All-Ireland final, and it's baffling how she hasn't won an All-Star yet.

7. LIBBY COPPINGER – the St Colum's club woman is the jewel in West Cork's dual crown as she splits her time between football and camogie. It's not easy being a dual player at the highest level but Libby makes it work. Cork camogie boss Paudie Murray felt Libby had her best year yet with his side last season, and already this year she's impressing for the Cork footballers, scoring a crucial goal in a Division 1 league win against Mayo. Hard-working and industrious, she covers plenty of ground for both Cork teams, and juggles the demands of both codes.

MARCH 2020

Rebels tame Cats

Murray pleased with Cork young guns after annihilating Kilkenny



Cork forward Orla Cronin converts a free in the midst of a very heavy hailstorm during the league game against Kilkenny at Páirc Uí Rinn. (Photo: Trevor Patchett)

No room for error in Division 1, says Orla

BY NOEL HORGAN

HAVING home advantage provided Cork with additional motivation for last Sunday's league encounter with Kilkenny, according to ace centre-forward Orla Cronin.

Involved with the squad since 2012, and a first-choice player since 2015, the Enniskeane sharpshooter revealed she hasn't often tasted defeat with the Cork seniors in a game at Páirc Uí Rinn.

'It's obviously the same for most of the other girls and we said before the match we were determined to add to our good record here today,' Cronin said.

'We're very pleased with the way it worked out, especially since we have had a lot of postponements since beating Waterford in round one, so we couldn't be sure how we'd perform,' added the four-time All-Ireland medal winner.

Cronin, who has yet to win a league medal, feels there is a lot of pressure in every game this season in view of the manner in which the competition has been restructured.

'It's almost like a championship now because, in contrast to previous years when you had two semi-finals, it's the top team in each group that goes through to the final, so there's little or no room for error in our four-team group.'

'As I've said, we were a little bit anxious going out today after being without a competitive game for so long, but I think we managed to put our best foot forward, and we're delighted.'

Cronin, not for the first time, pulled a lot of the strings up front for Cork, and she agreed the team performed superbly as a unit during the last 20 minutes of the first half.

'We took a while to settle, but once we began to deal with their puck-outs, we were able to build up some momentum, and we just kept driving on until half time,' she said.

'We knew Kilkenny were going to come back at us in the second half, but we responded well after they brought our lead down to five points, which was very satisfying.'

'I suppose you'd have to say we're a team in transition now, because there's several players from last year who aren't with us at the moment.'

'It means there's a lot of young girls trying to break into the team, and to be involved in games like this against Kilkenny has to be a big positive for them,' Cronin concluded.

CAMOGIE LEAGUE

CORK 2-17
KILKENNY 0-9

NOEL HORGAN REPORTS

CORK manager Paudie Murray was keen to keep things in perspective in the wake of an emphatic win over Kilkenny in the Littlewoods National Camogie League Division 1 clash at Páirc Uí Rinn last Sunday.

Acknowledging it was an impressive performance from a developing side, Murray felt one of the most satisfying aspects of it was the input from teenagers like Aoife O'Neill, Cliona Healy and Ciara McCarthy.

'Aoife did well in her first game at corner back, and I thought Cliona made a big difference when she came on, while Ciara worked very hard at wing-forward. We're looking to the likes of those young players to step up to the plate at the moment,' Murray said.

'I've always believed if you get two or three new players out of the league, it's been a good campaign, but it's early days yet, and we might have a few more experienced girls back for the championship.'

'If not, we'll try to develop what we have, but we must go away happy today, even if Kilkenny were missing a lot of regu-

lars,' Murray stressed.

That the Cork management had reason to be encouraged by the manner in which Kilkenny were dispatched is beyond dispute.

Following a tentative start, the Rebels hit the front for the first time when Chloe Sigerson pointed to make it 0-3 to 0-2 in the 11th minute, triggering off a purple-patch which yielded seven more scores before Kilkenny's Laura Murphy broke the sequence in stoppage time.

The Rebels hadn't a weak link in this period, with particularly eye-catching contributions coming from dynamic duo Amy O'Connor and Orla Cronin in the half-forward line where Ciara McCarthy also made her presence felt on the left wing.

Chloe Sigerson chipped in with two points alongside the influential Ashling Thompson at midfield, while Laura Treacy and Hannah Looney backboned a tightly-knit defensive sextet in

front of dependable custodian Amy Lee.

Considering Cork's Saoirse McCarthy, put clean through by Lauren Homan, had a shot from point-blank range saved by Kilkenny goalkeeper Emma Kavanagh in the 18th minute, they weren't flattered by their 0-10 to 0-3 advantage at the interval.

The deal looked done and dusted after Amy O'Connor, fed by full-forward Linda Collins, goaled to make it 1-10 to 0-4 within four minutes of the resumption.

To their credit, Kilkenny didn't throw in the towel at that juncture, responding with four points on the trot to rekindle their hopes nearing the three-quarter mark.

Perhaps Cork were guilty of resting on their laurels to a certain extent, but, whether or which, normal service was resumed after Orla Cronin won a free which she converted herself in the 44th minute.

Effective substitute Cliona Healy quickly stretched the gap to seven points, and, after Denise Gaule replied for Kilkenny,

Amy O'Connor and Orla Cronin combined to create an opening that led to Cork's second goal from Healy, leaving them 2-12 to 0-9 to the good with 12 minutes of regulation time remaining.

Cork, with Cronin flawless from placed balls, piled on the pressure and the punishment in the concluding stages.

Paudie Murray revealed he couldn't be happier with the attitude of the players, stating it's always a positive when that's right.

'It's pleasing to have won our first two league games, but there's bigger days in front of us, and I'd say we're a good bit off All-Ireland champions Galway at the moment,' he concluded.

Scorers

Cork: O Cronin 0-9 (8f); A O'Connor 1-3; C Healy 1-1; C Sigerson 0-2; C McCarthy, L Collins 0-1 each.

Kilkenny: D Gaule 0-3 (2f); L Murphy 0-2; D Morrissey, A Doyle, S Fitzgerald, K Nolan 0-1 each.

Cork: A Lee (Na Piarasigh); L Coppinger (St Colum's); L Treacy (Killeagh); A O'Neill (St Finbarr's); N O'Callaghan (Sarsfields); H Looney (Killeagh); L Hayes (St Catherine's); C Sigerson (Killeagh); A Thompson (Millford); A O'Connor (St Vincent's); O Cronin (Enniskeane); C McCarthy (Aghabullogue); L Homan (St Vincent's); L Collins (Courcey Rovers); S McCarthy (do).

Subs: C Healy (Aghabullogue) for C McCarthy (41); I O'Regan (Ballygarvan) for S McCarthy (51); E Murphy (Glen Rovers) for Homan (53); C O'Sullivan (Newcestown) for O'Neill (58); H O'Leary (Ballinacollig) for Collins (63); S Hutchinson (Eire Og) for O'Callaghan (63).

Kilkenny: E Kavanagh; C O'Shea, D Tobin, G Walsh; N Deely, C Dormer, L Murphy; M Teehan, K Doyle; M Walsh, A Doyle, L Norris; K Nolan, D Gaule, D Morrissey.

Subs: S Fitzgerald for Deely (ht); M Kenneally for Norris (47); M O'Connell for M Walsh (52).

Referee: John McDonagh (Galway).

★ THE HIGHLIGHTS

Our Star: Amy O'Connor employed her dazzling pace and admirable ball control to pose countless problems for the Kilkenny rearguard.

Star moment: In completing a typically incisive run with a cracking goal to put Cork nine points up, Amy O'Connor effectively settled the issue in the 34th minute.

Talking point: To run out such convincing victors over the 2019 runners-up in both league and championship has to be a boost to a tender-aged Cork team going forward.

What's next? Cork will bid to make it three wins out of three in an away fixture against Offaly this weekend.

DIVISION 1 GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	Pts
Cork	2	2	0	0	44	21	23	6
Clare	3	2	0	1	39	33	6	6
Waterford	3	1	1	1	41	48	-7	4
Kilkenny	3	1	0	2	32	42	-10	3
Offaly	3	0	1	2	26	38	-12	1

They care for their own club



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

THERE was a lot of negativity at the LGFA's congress in relation to the defeat of the Dublin motion last weekend.

It purported that the LGFA 'recognise and supports the concept of a dual player, as defined, and will encourage all of its units to support and facilitate its playing members of all ages, who wish to do so, to play both Ladies Gaelic Football and Camogie'.

I'm not at all surprised it was defeated. I believe if a similar motion was put before Camogie's congress it too would have been shot down.

The reason? Because those voting at Congress aren't concerned about the general individual. What they care about is their own sport and to narrow it down further, their own club.

Very few make decisions for the good of the inter-county game or the bigger picture. That's why so many motions around the Camogie rules have been defeated over the years.

LGFA President elect Michael Naughton said that the motion was defeated because of the wording. I quote, "That motion came down to one word, that word being 'facilitate'".

"Basically, if we allowed that motion to go through, with that word in it, it could hold up all our competitions, right down to club and underage level.

"When we talk about facilitating dual players, we could be talking about basketball or any number of sports that our players also play, not strictly camogie."

I'm not so sure that's the case. The motion did specify ladies football and camogie. He said that both associations will continue to work together to ensure that those who play both codes are not asked to choose between either or line out twice in the one day.

One such alleviating step taken last year was to play the senior camogie and All-Ireland ladies football semi-finals on separate weekends.

Libby Coppinger missed the footballer's defeat away to Donegal last weekend as it clashed with Cork's victory over Kilkenny.

And now Cork's re-scheduled league game with Clare on March 22 threw another spanner in the works with the clash of Cork's footballers in Galway, meaning the camogie team would line out without Libby and Hannah Looney. Why was that fixture just thrown out there stirring negative publicity and leaving it to Cork and Clare to sort out between them?

Why wasn't the game just fixed for Saturday? If the Saturday clashes with other sports for Cork or Clare that their players may be involved with, then so be it.

Then they make a choice. With group formats now the norm in GAA it's difficult enough to avoid clashes with ladies football and camogie without having to work around other sports as well. If a player chooses to play another sport outside of GAA then of course individual choices will have to be made.

But the ladies GAA codes, albeit under separate organisations, should



Cork dual ace Hannah Looney is fouled by Davina Tobin of Kilkenny to win a penalty in the All-Ireland in 2016. Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne



Chloe Sigerson, Cork, looking to break past Kilkenny players Aofie Doyle, Danielle Morrissey and Laura Norris last weekend. Picture: Dan Linehan

work together. I think Cork and Clare will agree to switch to Saturday.

Meanwhile Cork are in a strong league position, guaranteed to reach the final if they defeat Offaly tomorrow in Banagher, which I'm sure they will. Their last final appearance was 2017.

Cork blitzed Kilkenny last weekend. I appreciate that Kilkenny were down a significant number of top calibre players such as the Farrells, Michelle Quilty, Ann Dalton, and Davina Tobin but such was the gap you'd wonder if Kilkenny can do enough over the coming months to get to an All-Ireland final again.

They currently lie second from the bottom in group 1 with a game with Waterford today. Based on current form Waterford, with the Gailltír girls back, could just as easily take the points here.

That's as far down the table as Kil-

kenny have been for years. They won their fourth title on the trot in 2019. I don't believe they have the underage coming through either like they had midway through the last decade.

Cork meanwhile have won two back to back minor titles and I think the pendulum has switched a little. Kilkenny continue to hold a strong record in senior schools camogie though with Loretto having won their seventh title since 2010. With inter-county players now figuring relatively young at senior level this must stand to the Cats, but they seem to have a bit of work to do.

Meanwhile despite Cork also being without eight of last year's All-Ireland semi-final side they are playing impressively and blending in their youth successfully at this stage of the league.

Tipperary have reached the division 1 final for the first time in 11 years after shocking champions Galway in a

"If a player chooses to play sport outside of GAA then choices have to be made.

tight affair at Duggan Park. The Premier women failed to score in the second half, which is a poor sign at senior intercounty, but conditions were poor, and they produced some heroic defending to hold out by 1-8 to 0-10. Captain Cáit Devane was again excellent for Tipp, scoring six points in the opening half.

Róisín Howard goaled early and then dropped deep to help protect the 1-8 to 0-5 interval advantage into the wind.

She dispossessed Rebecca Hennelly on the edge of her own square, deep into the eight minutes of injury time to secure the win for Tipp.

Cathal Murray will be disappointed but the McGrath sisters are now back with Galway after their All Ireland club victory with Sarsfields and things will settle again as their thoughts now move to defending their All Ireland crown.

Win may not even be enough for Cork

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

SUNDAY
Littlewoods Division 2
National League
Cork v Westmeath,
Cork Camogie Grounds
Castle Road, 2pm

CORK face into the last game in their group of the Littlewoods Division 2 National League on Sunday knowing that a win may not even be enough to get them a place in the final.

With just one team to qualify from each group Meath have already secured their semi-final place as group winners having recorded wins over Cork, Kildare, Kilkenny and Westmeath. There are three groups with the top team in each group going through but one team will be drawn from the three runners up in each group to make up the four semi-finalists.

If Cork win they are guaranteed a runners up spot and they will then be at the mercy of the draw so it will be very much fingers crossed and hope for a bit of luck. Westmeath have just one game played where they lost out by seven points to Meath 1-8 to 0-4.

Last season Westmeath blazed a glory trail as they captured the Intermediate All Ireland title a win that sees them graded senior for championship, amazingly they remain in division 2 for the league despite their players having won Intermediate championship medals last season.

It doesn't make sense given that when Cork won the same Intermediate All Ireland title two years ago none of the sides were eligible for division 2 league the following year.

Surely if they are to have any chance of making progress and learn it would have been better to participate in the division 1 league and get a taste of what is to come in championship.

They secured championship senior status for the first time in their history just two years after winning the Premier Junior decider and they will field a strong sides with players of the calibre of the outstanding thirty seven year old Pamela Granville who all through has been a shining light for her county.

They have a strong experienced outfit with players of the calibre of Laura Doherty Amy Scally Megan Dowdall and last season's team captain Mairead McCormack, whose second half goal e goal swung the All Ireland final in Westmeath's favour.

Cork got back to winning way last weekend as they overcame a Kildare side struggling to get to grips with promotion this season.

They had excellent displays from Kate Wall, Katie Walsh, Michelle Murphy, Lydia Cunningham, Aoife Hurley, Hayley Ryan and Caroline Murphy who were all on the score sheet.



The Cork U16 team that defeated Tipperary to qualify for Munster camogie final.

Cork take on Déise in final

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Cork	3-12
Tipperary	0-5

PROVINCIAL and All-Ireland champions Cork got their defence of their Munster U16 title underway in impressive fashion under lights at Sarsfields GAA pitch on Wednesday evening as they overpowered Tipperary to secure their place in the final.

On a bitterly cold evening which was made even more difficult for the players mid-way through the opening half with driving rain beginning to fall Cork playing with the aid of the strong wind laid the foundations for victory with an impressive opening half display which saw them take a 1-10 to 0-2 lead to the dressing room at the interval.

From the throw in Cork attacked and they were on the score board inside forty seconds with a well taken Grainne O'Mahony point, two in-a-row from Orlaith Mullins from a difficult angle and Orlaith Cahalane settled Cork into the game.

Grace Maloney had one back for Tipperary as they opened their account at the end of the opening quarter but with the Cork defence and midfield holding the upper hand extended their lead.

Kate Redmond, Orlaith Cahalane Orlaith Mullins and Fiona Twohig had Cork 0-7 to 0-1 in front before Kacey Meehan who had an excellent hour in the Tipperary goal denied Cork with three fine saves in a row.

As the rain began to fall Cork kept the foot on the pedal Cliona Lynch pointed a forty five after Meehan had denied with a fine save, but eventually Cork got the goal they had threatened to grab when Orlaith Mullins finished well from close range and they added points from Shauna Sheehan and Orlaith Cahalane before the final of the half was with Tipperary's Cora Heffernan who pointed two minutes into injury time.

Turning to play with the aid of the wind in the second half Tipperary had a lot of work to do and to their credit they held



Leah Hayes, Sophie O'Connell, Orlaith Cahalane, Niamh O'Shea, Edel Sheehan, Megan Sheehan and team captain Sadbh McGoldrick of Éire Óg gaelic football team who were presented with the Rebel Óg Award for August following their All-Ireland Féile success. Picture: Howard Crowley

Cork to four scores as they worked hard to close down their lively attack.

Orlaith Cahalane pointed an early free and when Orlaith Mullins off loaded a superbly pass to Erin Curtin she finished to the net to stretch the Cork lead to fifteen points.

Tipperary kept battling away and contested every ball with determination Abbie Linehan pointed a forty five to which Kaitlin Sheehan replied seven minutes in but we had to wait until the twenty second minute before the next score as both defences began to get on top.

Celine Guinan and Abbie Linehan added to the Tipperary tally with points before Evie Twomey kicked the ball over the line for Cork's third goal three minutes into added time.

Cork manager Donie Daly was pleased with his sides display on night when it was hard for hurling. "We were delighted with the attitude and thrilled to be in the final," Donie Daly said.

"It was a comprehensive win and really I thought our first touch was very, very good, when you consider the conditions

were not great.

"It was a very cold night and then the rain made it slippery and awkward.

"We have prepared very well for this Munster championship and of course later in the year we will be very focused on the All-Ireland championship but for now it's all about Munster and were delighted to be in the final."

After the game the toss was made for the venue for the final and Cork will travel to Waterford today (Sat) to meet the home side, who defeated Clare in their semi-final.

CORK: K McCarthy; N Crowley, E O'Donovan, T Elliot; A Healy, C Walsh, C Lynch (c); K Redmond, L Hallihan; G O'Mahony S Sheehan, O Cahalane; O Mullins, F Twohig, E Twomey.

Subs: K Sheehan for L Hallihan (21), E Curtin for G O'Mahony (21), C Murphy for S Sheehan (40), M Condon for O Mullins (in 46), Y Abernethy for N Crowley (55).

TIPPERARY: K Meehan; L Ryan, L Fahie (c), E Fogarty; E O'Sullivan, A Lenihan, K Fitzgerald; N Costigan, S Heffernan; K Fercombe, G O'Donnell, A Fahie, G Maloney, C Guinan, C Heffernan.

Subs: D Ryan for K Fercombe (26), E O'Sullivan for E O'Dwyer (50), E Horgan for C Heffernan (52).

Referee: John Paul Keely (Limerick).

Féile games are cancelled for year

GAA

■ Rory Noonan

FOLLOWING on from the decision of the Cork County Board to postpone all senior championship games in April, Croke Park has announced the postponement of certain underage competitions for the year.

In a letter sent to all clubs in the last 24 hours, it sees competitions like the Féile cancelled. This will come as a massive disappointment for many, but considering the organising of this event, it is the right decision. Also gone are the Celtic Challenge Cup and activities involving academy squads, but not the inter-county minor championship.

Director general of the GAA, Tom Ryan stated: "As part of our collective efforts in dealing with the Covid-19 outbreak, it is our intention to communicate with our units on a regular basis and keep you informed of developments as they happen.

"The GAA can confirm that a number of coaching and games initiatives will not proceed in light of the prevailing circumstances. These include the 2020 Féile



Éire Óg's Laoise Murphy in action against Sarsfields in the last year's Féile.

competitions, the Celtic Challenge and activity involving academy squads.

Newcestown celebrates great success

Club basks in the glory of its fantastic camogie, football and hurling exploits



Emma Tarrant, Saoirse Hayes, Eabha Collins and Bronagh O'Sullivan having fun at the club's celebrations on Saturday night.



Orla Dineen, Aoife O'Sullivan, Siobhán Kelleher and Maeve Lynch enjoying Newcestown's victory dinner dance.



Maeve O'Donovan, camogie captain Mary McSweeney and Sue Deasy enjoying Newcestown's Camogie/GAA victory dinner dance at the Munster Arms Hotel in Bandon on Saturday night. (Photos: Paddy Feen)



Having fun at the dinner dance were Grace Ryan and Lauren Whelan.



Newcestown Camogie Club officers enjoying their victory dinner; from left, Mary Burrows, secretary; Hilda O'Mahony, chairperson, and Carmel Kenneally, treasurer.



Clara Sheehan and David Buckley at the victory dinner.



Members of Valley Rovers U16 camogie county and league winning panel pictured at the club's medal presentation night in March. Back from left, Clare Flynn, Laoise Collins and Grace Geary. Front from left, Clodhna Prendergast, Orla O'Sullivan, Molly Lynch and Kate Lynch. (Photo: Donie Hurley)

MARCH 2020

Google amy o'connor cork camogie
 intermediate camogie player eimear o sullivan orla cotter cahalane meabh irish



AIB Camogie Club Team of the Year: 1. Laura Glynn, Sarsfields; 2. Céat McEidowney, Slaughtneil; 3. Laura Ward, Sarsfields; 4. Susan Vaughan, Scariff-Ogonnell; 5. Aoife Ni Chaiside, Slaughtneil; 6. Maria Cooney, Sarsfields; 7. Shannon Graham, Slaughtneil; 8. Mairead Scanlan, Scariff-Ogonnell; 9. Niamh McGrath, Sarsfields; 10. Siobhán Bradley, Slaughtneil; 11. Orlaith McGrath, Sarsfields; 12. Tina Bradley, Slaughtneil; 13. Louise Dougan, Slaughtneil; 14. Siobhán McGrath, Sarsfields; 15. Niamh Hetherington, St Vincents

Google uses cookies to deliver its services, to personalise ads and to analyse traffic. You can adjust your privacy controls at any time in your [Google settings](#).



Cork All-Star Amy O'Connor Not Defined...
 Amy O'Connor sets sights on chasing...
 Cork camogie star Amy...



Camogie star Amy O'Connor is proud...
 Amy O'Connor - Cork Camogie...
 Hurling is unbelievable and w...

The42
 Cork star says camogie has become 'boi to ...'
 Images may be subject to copyright. [Learn more](#)



amy o'connor cork camogie -



Ladies Sport In General, I Don't Kno...
 Amy O'Connor sets sights on chas...
 Amy O'Connor Blazes Trail For CL...
 camogie match...
 APC Microbiome Irish...
 The All Ireland final wasNT attracti...
 Amy O Connor At The Camogi...
 Amy O'Connor says Cork deserve...
 Amy O Connor At The Camogie League...



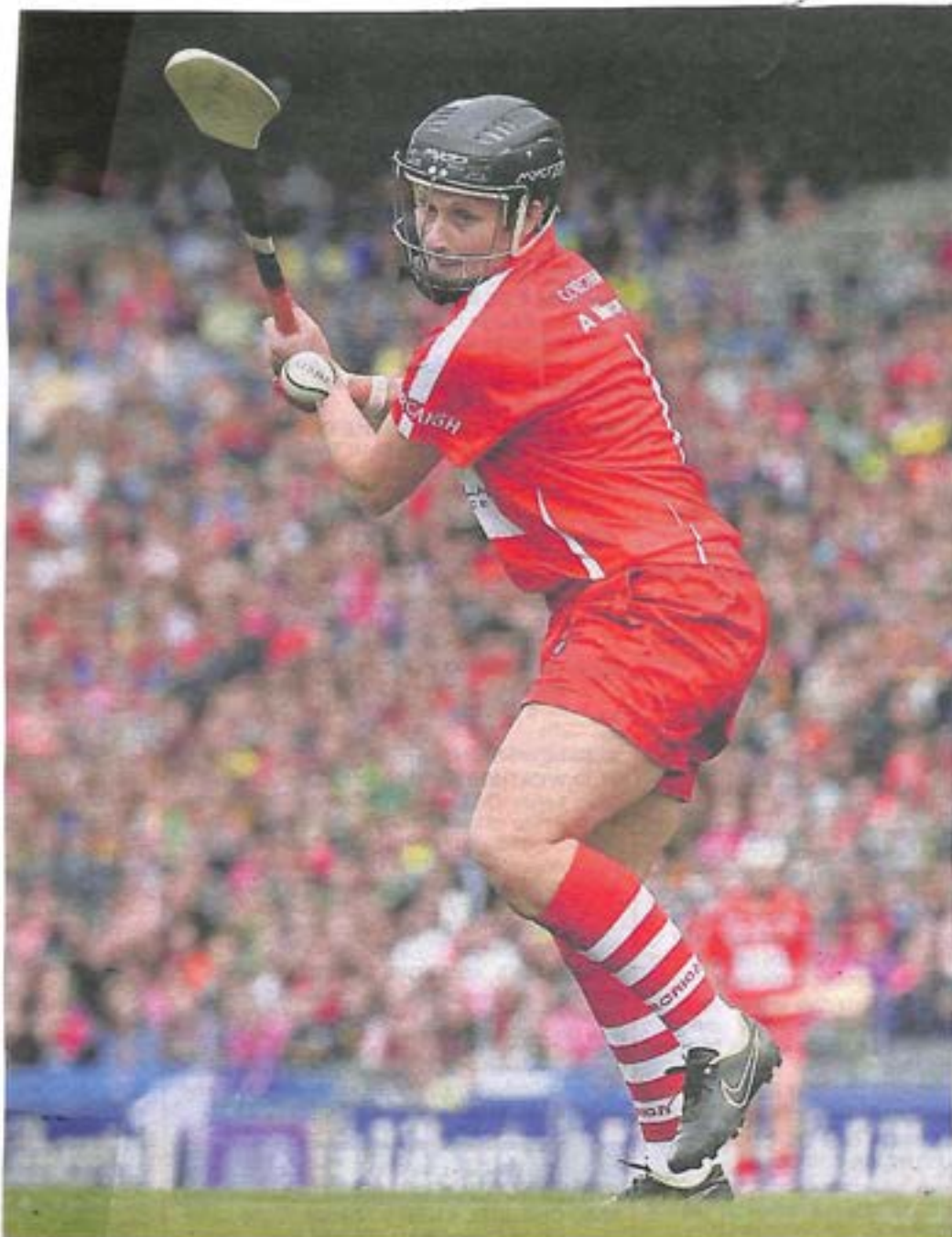
Amy O'Connor: 'I am very, very prou...
 Cork Camogie Player Amy O'Conno...
 Cork camogie star Amy O'Connor is ...
 Munster Camogie on T...
 Amy O'Connor sets sights on chasing...
 Cork All-Star Amy O'Connor Not Defined...
 Amy O'Connor says state of C...
 In a West Cork Minute - Amy...

Related searches



amy o'connor journalist
 He loves a challenge, and I...
 I love to get dressed up...
 News | University Colle...
 Rebels time their assault on Kilkenny...
 Cork camogie star - 'All-Irela...
 The Camogie Association: News...
 Amy O'Connor At The Camogie League...
 Cork, Ireland: Captains Amy O...
 Cork camogie announces new L...
 Cork All-Star Amy O'Connor Not...
 Cork camogie star Amy O'Co...

Walker (Nuns Walk, Ballyphehane, Cork): On April 1, 2020, peacefully, in his 90th year, after a short illness, at Cork University Hospital, ARTHUR (late of Murphy's Evergreen, former President of Redmonds Hurling & Football Club and AOH), beloved husband of the late Teresa (nee Dennehy) and loving father of Pat (Mulcahy), Bernice (Kavanagh), Harry, Arthur, Lucy (Diggin), Gregory and the late Hilary. Sadly missed by his loving family, sons-in-law Andrew, Matthew and Robert, daughter-in-law Fiona, Arthur's partner Millie, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews, nieces, cousins, relatives, neighbours and friends. In accordance with current guidelines on public gatherings, a private funeral will take place. A Memorial Service will take place at a later date.
 May he rest in peace.



Cork goalkeeper Aoife Murray seen here taking a first-half penalty against Kilkenny during the All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final in 2016 has announced her retirement. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach

Aoife calls time on a glittering Cork career

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

ARGUABLY the best goalkeeper in the history of camogie announced her retirement earlier this week.

Aoife Murray slipped away quietly from the Cork panel last November.

This week however she publicly announced that she would not be returning to wear the number one jersey that she held for 18 seasons.

The 36-year old's professional approach to the art of hurling goalkeeping raised standards across the country.

Holder of nine All-Ireland medals, from 2002, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2018, Aoife also won All Star awards in 2004, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2015, and 2017.

A goalkeeper's role on the field became far more than being just a shot-stopper over the past decade and more.

Leadership, shot-stopper, puck-outs, dead-ball expert, Aoife was top class at them all.

Her acrobatic saves, her alert and accurate puck outs, her penalty taking, and inspiration to her team from between the posts was instrumental for Cork over the past 18 seasons and her boots will be hard to fill.

She fulfilled a lifetime ambition when she captained Cork to her last title in 2018,

especially for her mam and dad.

She knew what it meant to them and her family who had supported her all through her career.

Aoife also won three county senior championship medals with Cloughdun and was captain in 2005 for their third title.

She has worked in Dublin for a number of years and made the return journey three times a week for Cork training. Incredible commitment.

Aoife works with Colliers International as an associate director, responsible for the assembly and asset management portfolio of investments.

Speaking of her parting from what has been her life for so long Aoife said: "It has been the main part of my life since I was seven and I played with Cork since I was 14.

"It's almost like a really bad break-up because it's the only thing I've known all my life.

"This is probably the happiest I've ever been with a decision, but at the same time, it's really hard."

Young McCarthy adds fresh ideas

CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick



Inniscarra club man Mark McCarthy, at just 24 years of age, is the new Cork intermediate camogie manager.



Cork's Linda Dorgan and Kilkenny's Aoife Prendergast in the league Division 2 game in Callan. Picture: Dylan Vaughan

“You’re always learning though. I rely on Frances and the other selectors to fill me in on the opposition”

It's always welcome when someone new puts their hand up and gets involved in coaching in any sport at any level.

Cork Camogie welcomed such an addition with Inniscarra's Mark McCarthy, who at just 24 years of age is the new Cork Intermediate Camogie manager.

He was ratified earlier this year as manager having been the Hurling and Strength and Conditioning coach in 2019.

Possessing a BA in Sports Science and Physical Education from UCC with Maths as his chosen subject, Mark took a year out from education.

Rather than head straight down the teaching route, he put his knowledge and skills towards personal training.

“Yeah, I went down the sports route for this year,” Mark advised.

“I was looking to come out of education for a bit after being in it for nineteen years and I was enjoying the coaching, so I put the teaching on pause for a year.”

Based in Ballincollig with the Gerry Lynch Personal Training Centre, Mark joined up with Gerry after a stint in Dennehy's Fitness in Blackpool.

Such is the success of the PT duo that within six months they opened a second unit in Glanmire in Old Christians rugby club.

They specialise in one to one work, putting individuals through their paces for 30 or 60 minutes.

“It's going well,” Mark admits.

“We're looking to open four units in four years.”

Mark's baptism in Camogie came as a third-year student in UCC.

“In September 2017 I was asked by Dr Wesley O'Brien, lecturer and Strength and Conditioning coach with the hurlers, if I'd consider the position of S&C coach with the UCC Intermediate side.

“So Darragh O'Callaghan and I, who's now the hurling coach with the Cork Intermediate side, came together as joint management and ran the Intermediates for that year.

“It was a great opportunity having not been involved in Camogie before to going directly into management.

“I was going back to the Intermediate team for the 2018/2019 season when John Grainger rang me saying that Dave Ellis the UCC senior Camogie manager was looking for a S&C coach, so I stepped up to that and I've been involved with them for the past two seasons.”

Mark's own hurling career was shortened when he had surgery on both hips by the age of 21.

He played all the way though underage with Inniscarra and was playing an U21 hurling game when his career took an abrupt halt.

“I picked up a few injuries from just overplaying. The hip surgery is common enough. It's called scoping where both hips were cleaned out and reshaped.

“It isn't a replacement. I remember jumping up to catch a ball, coming down and both hips locked.

“The bones were after cracking off the side of their sockets. There are no

issues since but that's how I found myself going into personal training as I was out for 12 months.

“Then I went into coaching. I intended to go back playing sooner but the schedules just didn't allow it but as a priority I need to go back playing as I'm going on 25.”

In 2019 With two seasons of UCC Camogie behind him Mark was called upon to get involved with Cork.

“March 2019, I got a call from Frances Killeen (former Cork intermediate manager) to step in as hurling and S&C coach.

“I jumped on that opportunity. It was certainly a learning curve. It took me two to three weeks to get to know the player's names.”

How does the responsibility of manager rest on his shoulders?

“This year I find myself in a much better place. I know the players, the structure of Cork Camogie.

“You're always learning though. I rely on Frances and the other selectors to fill me in on the opposition and whether theres any other player out there that we should be looking at.

“I just treated it again as another opportunity.

“We had a meeting and Frances couldn't continue the manager role as her son Sean is on the Cork Minor Hurling panel and she's really busy with that.

“I was voted in. I suppose the toughest part of the role was getting to know the players across the county.

“We wanted to give everyone an opportunity. I was given ample notice. We started with 89 names.

“We reduced that down to 63 fairly quickly.

“We're now at 44. We've used the league to give everyone a game.

“We'll reduce the panel to 30 for the championship. That'll be the toughest

decision we'll have to make this year.

“Those that may not make it will have been blooded for next year or the year after.”

Cork have a home fixture left in the national league against Westmeath but with Meath uncatchable at this point that game may not now be played due to time constraints with Meath given the green light to go straight through to the final.

We'll hopefully know the fate of the league in a couple of weeks' time.

Mark acknowledges that they face a tough championship campaign.

“Yeah, it'll be a tough challenge with home games against Meath, Laois and Tipperary and away to Kilkenny, Antrim and Derry.

“The two trips up the North will be tough and how we respond to that will be key.

“We've six games in seven weeks. But we'll go all out for it.”

Camogie has lost a leading light

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

CAMOGIE lost one of its leading lights recently with the recent passing of legendary Dublin player Una O'Connor.

For many of our modern-day players and mentors, the name would not be familiar but Una was one of the women who blazed a trail for those that followed.

Her skills were legendary as the Dubs ruled the camogie world.

In this modern age of wonderful technology, we have plenty ways of knowing the star players of the game and this brings these players into the limelight for youngsters who aspire to be like them.

Una O'Connor should not be forgotten as she was, without doubt, a player whose like we probably will never see again.

Having won 13 All-Ireland senior medals, she has to be regarded as one of the greatest players of all time. A superb forward, she played with a very short hurley but had brilliant accuracy and speed and ball control.

She began her inter-county career by helping Dublin win three All-Ireland titles in a row, collecting her first senior medal at the tender age of 15 in 1953 as Dublin overcame Tipperary.

Stopped in their tracks by Antrim in 1956, Dublin were back as winners the following year 1957 and Una carved her own record of 10 successive All-Ireland medals between 1957 and 1966 captaining the side in 1963 and 1964.

She was acknowledged in 1967 with the camogie player of the year in 1967 despite Dublin suffering All-Ireland defeat at the hands of Antrim. She sits in second place in the roll of honour to her teammate 15 times All-Ireland senior camogie medal winner Kathleen Mills.

A key member of the famed Celtic club in the capital where she won 10 senior county championship medals she starred as they landed the inaugural All-Ireland club championship in 1964 as they defeated Antrim club Deirdre on a day when O'Connor scored 3-1. This was to be her only All-Ireland club medal as Celtic become one of the few Dublin clubs to win the title.

Celtic reached the final having overcome Cork and Munster champions Glen Rovers in a semi-final that went to a replay and goalkeeper on the day with Glen Rovers' Deirdre Sutton-Coleman remembers Una O'Connor as one of the greatest players she faced in her own illustrious career.

"Una was a superb player and a great forward, you could not take your eye off her for a second she was lightning fast and had such great skill, she was also a very nice person and very humble, I can remember her well playing with Celtic and Dublin.

"We played Celtic in the All Ireland club semi-final in Cork in 1964, it was the first time that the club championship took place and we were fairly evenly matched and the game ended in a draw and the replay was in Dublin. Again there was little in the game but they beat us by a goal and went on to win the first club All-Ireland title." I also spoke to my mother Nora who was a selector with that Glen Rovers team on the day.



Una O'Connor (second from right) in this Dublin team training session in 1954.



28 February 2004: The Camogie team of the Century, back row from left: Sheila Wallace, Ard Stiurthoir, Cumann Camogaiochta na nGael, Liz Neary, Kilkenny, Marie Costine O'Donovan, Cork, Mary Sinnott Dinan, Wexford, Bridie Martin McGarry, Kilkenny, Sandie Fitzgibbon, Cork, Kathleen Mills Hill, Dublin, Linda Mellerick, Cork, Marian Carolan, on behalf of the late Kathleen Mills Hill, Dublin, and Mary Fennelly, on behalf of Angela Downey Browne, Kilkenny, and front row, from left, Eileen Duffy O'Mahony, Dublin, Mairead McAtamney Magill, Antrim, An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, T.D, Miriam O'Callaghan, Uachtaran, Cumann Camogaiochta na nGael, Una O'Connor, Dublin, Nancy McCarthy, on behalf of the late Sophie Brack, her sister, Pat Moloney Lenihan, Cork, and Deirdre Hughes, Tipperary, at the Cumann Camogaiochta na nGael centenary celebrations at the Citywest Hotel, Dublin.

Picture: Brendan Moran

"After drawing with them in Cork we headed to Parnell Park for the replay and there was fierce excitement in the club, we had great support from everybody and we travelled in force. The game looked to be going our way and then Una got injured and had to be replaced and it seemed to spur Celtic on. They came back at us. Kit Kehoe who played for Wexford replaced Una and she first timed a shot to the net, she got a second goal shortly after to turn the game in their favour."

In 1964 Una was the recipient of the Gaelic All-Star award in its first year

as a scheme for players. In 1966 She also became the first-ever camogie player to be honoured with a Caltex award which later became the Texaco award. Both of these awards were coveted honours for hurlers and camogie players with such great household names such as Christy Ring, John Doyle, Henry Shefflin, Seán Og and DJ Carey amongst those who have been honoured.

Retiring from the game in 1967 she came out of retirement briefly in 1975 and made her return as a defender.

When the Camogie Team of the Cen-

tury was named in 2004 she was a certainty to feature and taking the wing-forward position her citation read as follows: "A born forward Una O'Conor was a great reader of the game she gave accurate passes to her teammates and had a devastating shot. A beautiful striker, elusive with an exceptional body swerve and a great turn of speed, modest and unassuming she played the game with grace and beauty and deserving of her place amongst our elite."

Una's recent passing at the age of 83 has taken one of camogie finest: RIP.

'Camogie in Cork U16 boss's blood'

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

THE cancellation of all games, because of the continuing health restrictions imposed to combat the coronavirus outbreak, initially disappointed the Cork U16 camogie camp, who were focused on the Munster final, against Waterford.

Manager Donie Daly understands that health comes first.

"It's an awful pity, really, but it's a priority that we stay safe. We were ready to go, but we just have to sit tight now and hope things work out and we get back to action soon," Donie says.

Donie started out playing GAA with his local club, Youghal, at just eight years of age.

"I played all grades with Youghal, mainly hurling. The highlight, for me, was being part of the intermediate panel that won the 1988 county. In 1996, I moved to Wexford, with work, and played with Faythe Harriers. In 1998, I moved back to Cork and spent two years playing with Cloyne.

"They had just won the county and it was my father's club. I had always a strong connection there and I always felt that if I ever got the opportunity to play there, I would and I was lucky to get an opportunity to play with great players," Donie says.

Then, 2000 saw big changes: Donie bought a house in Grenagh and spent five years playing with Grenagh, where he won four mid-Cork junior A medals and featured in the 2004 junior A county final, which Grenagh lost narrowly to Ballygarvan. He retired from playing in 2006, with Youghal, where his career had begun.

Donie credits Grenagh for getting him involved with camogie.

"I first got involved with camogie with Grenagh juniors, in 2001, and really enjoyed it. My camogie involvement stopped until my daughter, Aoibhe, went to her first training session with Youghal, in 2012.

"Initially, I wasn't going to get involved, but once I did, it just snowballed and I've coached from U10 to U16 with Youghal and I'm currently helping out with U16s," Donie says.

Camogie is in Donie's blood. His mother, Mary Jo, was part of the Cork All-Ireland winning four-in-a-row team from 1970 to 1973. With that pedigree, it comes as no surprise that Donie has already led Cork to All-Ireland and provincial titles.

"I was lucky that both sides of my family were steeped in GAA. Both my father and mother played senior with Cork; my mother was part of the last four-in-a-row All-Ireland-winning teams; my uncles, Billy and John Ryan, played with Imokilly and Cork; John also played senior with Waterford.

"On my father's side, Denis, John, and Seamus were renowned hurlers with Cloyne, Imokilly, and Cork. Bearing in mind that I was born during Cork's four successes, which my mother was part of, you could say I was involved even before I was born.

"My father likes to tell the story that I was technically on the field of play during the 1970 All-Ireland final... I was born in May 1971," Donie says.

The call to step up to inter-county



Donie Daly, Cork camogie U16 manager and sales director with BlackBee (sponsor) and Cork County Board chairperson, Mary McSweeney, with the under-16 Munster and All Ireland trophies.

Picture: Howard Crowl



Donie Daly, sales director with BlackBee; Gemma O'Connor, Cork camogie senior captain, and Paudie Murray, senior team manager.

Picture: Miki Barlok

camogie came when Donie was approached in 2016 and, despite nervousness, he took on the job.

"Cork lost the 2015 Munster junior final and they were looking for a new manager. Sheila Golden persuaded me, along with Suzanne Deasy, to manage the team," Donie says.

"To be honest, there was trepidation at first: would I be capable of it?"

"Would I have the knowledge? Obviously, it's a very proud moment to be asked, no matter what level. When it's Cork, there is an expectation.

"We put a lot of effort into it and were delighted to beat Kerry in the Munster semi-final and we went on to defeat Clare in the final," Donie says.

For the last three years, Donie has been in charge of the Cork U16s and

younger players present different challenges.

"Adults have work, college, families. U16s have school, exams, and other social pressures to contend with, but, I must say, being involved with the U16s, over the last three years, has been absolutely amazing. We have been blessed with some of the best, most committed girls coming long distances to train three times a week."

Donie works with BlackBee, who have been Cork sponsors for the last two years, something he is hugely proud of.

"I was delighted that David O'Shea, BlackBee CEO, agreed the sponsorship deal with Cork. With David, I was pushing an open door, as he is a big GAA supporter and has two young girls of his own.

“Being involved with the U16s, over the last three years, has been absolutely amazing”

"He was more than happy to support an organisation that was so fundamental to the personal, physical, and emotional development of thousands of girls in Cork," Donie says.

"Shirley O'Regan, BlackBee marketing manager, could also see the obvious benefits of being associated with the most successful camogie teams in the country."

With two young daughters, Aoibhe, 14, and Aisling, six, and his Limerick-born wife, Denise, Donie is focused on the season ahead, when he can get his charges back on the playing pitches. "My aim is to win a third U16 Munster and retain our All Ireland title and try and get Youghal U16s as far in the championship as possible," Donie says.

No better man to do it

Wallace lauds the structure in Cork



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

JERRY Wallace is one of the most respected names in the hurling world as a trainer and coach.

He was the physical trainer with the Cork senior hurling team that won back-to-back All-Ireland titles in 2004 and 2005. He later served as trainer with both the Antrim and Limerick senior hurling teams.

Jerry was director of Limerick underage hurling academy and also as a hurling coach and selector to their minor team. The current group of the Limerick senior team came through Jerry's era.

In 2018 camogie board members Marian McCarthy and Mary McSweeney approached Jerry and asked him if he'd be interested in taking on Cork's minor camogie team. Jerry's daughter Lucy was on the panel.

It was an approach that had immediate success. Cork won back-to-back All-Ireland titles and now bid for three-in-a-row.

Jerry picks up the story.

"I remember I met Marian and Mary. I told them I'd do it and that I'd get them to an All-Ireland final in 2018 but I didn't know if we'd win it.

"The first thing I did was I had to learn the rules as I knew there was changes to hurling. Then I had to look at the coaching, the technical skills and so forth.

"I brought myself up to speed with that. I've a good friend Mick Boland and we sat down many a night. Mick was aware of the underage players that were there.

"So, we set about very quickly with getting permission for 35 players and then working diligently with them. I find working with the minors and the underage in Cork very compatible because the season starts in January and you're playing up to the end of April if you're successful and then you have the summer to do your own thing.

"For the last couple of years, we've kept the training going one day a week. Then you had the Munster championship in July. But the Munster championship is gone this year and that's a bit of a set-back, I think.

"There's nothing to aim for now in July so the girls that are of the age - they're finished with Cork in April.

"We meet twice, sometimes three times a week and I find that we've got a good programme in place. I've got good coaches involved with me; Michael Boland, Mark O'Sullivan, a good hurling coach, he's got a great positiveness about him. We have Martin Enright in strength and conditioning."

Michael Walsh assists us with goalk-keeping coaching. Mary Sexton and Rachel Crean are the liaison officers.

Jerry is also running a development programme with the U17s as he builds minors for the following season.

"We have the 4G pitch and CIT, so the girls have a very modern and positive location for training. It's worked well for the last two years."

Programmes have been sent to the players during the Coronavirus iso-



The Cork Minor A Camogie All-Ireland champions came to West Cork to celebrate their historic All-Ireland win with captain Moira Barrett from Ballinascarthy, in 2018.



Jerry Wallace is always at home on the training field.

Picture: Oliver McVeigh/SPORTSFILE

lation period for them to work on.

This year the Munster minor championship is a bit up in the air. Jerry's understanding is that it has been disbanded and a new U17 tournament will replace it, but nothing has been confirmed. He is concerned that young girls finish their inter-county career at 18 if they don't get called up to the senior grades.

"One thing I have noticed is that in the inter-county set up there is nothing to absorb the girls after the age of 18 if they're not called up to the intermediate and senior squads.

"There's no U21 competition and maybe that's where the camogie association should look at. They're talking about a fall off of young women and that's the key age."

He feels that Cork have a great structure in place that will reap benefits.

"Paudie (Murray) is on a three-year

development plan.

"He's delighted with the young group that's gone into him.

"He's got a good mix. I think Cork camogie are going to be very competitive. You take it at the moment. You have a very strong programme going on with the seniors, a strong Intermediate and minor programme, with the underage being very well looked after.

"One thing I will say about Cork Camogie is that they try to do everything right. I know it's a challenge and I think that more support from the business community needs to be given to the camogie set up.

"I'm an outsider as such, only coming in three years ago but I'm hugely impressed with Castleroad and the facilities. To have your own ground for matches and state of the art clubhouse. I know it's still early days with it but it's there and it's taken a lot of

“The goodwill and calls I get sometimes from people thanking me for getting involved is fantastic”

work and commitment.

"The goodwill and calls I get sometimes from people thanking me for getting involved is fantastic. I think if someone is looking to invest their money, they should look at Cork Camogie."

Referring to the stability now around Cork Camogie Jerry says "I think we're not fly by nights. Myself and Paudie are both stable. I was asked a year ago would I move on and I said, 'no, I'm very happy with what I'm doing'."

"At minor level it's not all about winning. We're battling for a three-in-a-row and I hope we can get ourselves into a final and we'll see what happens on the day.

"If Cork can always be in the late stages of these competitions that will be very good in the long term for Cork camogie. You'll always get one or two players."

Marion a deserving recipient of award

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

GAA president John Horan recently honoured 11 people all involved in Gaelic games who have shared the common theme of making an inspirational impact on their chosen code of hurling football, camogie, ladies football, and handball for either their club county or community.

These are very prestigious annual awards which are organised with the support of AIB and TG4 and they give the GAA president an opportunity to acknowledge outstanding commitment and long service across the various codes.

Speaking about the awards Horan explained their importance.

"The GAA exists because of the volunteer effort of inspirational people. The impact and infectious enthusiasm of these people is the beating heart of what our great Association has grown to be for more than 130 years.

"These awards present us with an all too rare opportunity to stop and reflect and say thank you to a group of people who have made and who continue to make a life-long contribution to the GAA and who are such magnificent role models.

"There are 11 awards presented across all codes and all walks of the GAA life. In their own way, they are ambassadors and shining examples of the countless other volunteers at home and abroad who give so much of themselves for the betterment of the GAA and who we are proud to be able to call our own."

Cork were honoured to have two of its most distinguished and hard-working officials among the 11 people hailed and it was a wonderful occasion for the county to see Marion McCarthy and Peter Dennehy duly recognised for their efforts.

Current treasurer of the Cork Camogie board and former board chairperson Marion McCarthy's honour is one that is well deserved.

Marion comes from a family who have a long connection with the St Finbarr's GAA club. Her sister Catherine O'Brien is actively involved with the Barrs having served on various committees in the club while their late mother Nellie was also a great club woman being involved with the ladies club at all levels until her passing two years ago.

Marion is the current president of the camogie section within the club and is also a mentor with the club's senior team a role she also held in 2006 when the club won the senior county for the first time.

On the day Marion as chairperson of the county board had the honour of presenting the county cup to her club's captain Lynda O'Connell, a moment she truly savoured and one which ranks as one of her proudest moments.

Having attended secondary school in St Aloysius, Marion took up playing camogie and playing with the Barrs where her early exploits as a player saw her play on the clubs junior team that won the Junior A championship in 1981. Promotion followed for the team and the following year at



Paudie Murray, Cork manager with Marion McCarthy, treasurer of Cork Camogie. McCarthy was among 11 honoured by for their input into Gaelic Games.

Picture: Jim Coughlin



The Cork All-Ireland camogie team defeated by Kilkenny after a replay in 1981. Back: Val Fitzpatrick, Joan O'Sullivan, Mary Geaney, Mary O'Leary, Patricia O'Riordan, Eileen Dineen, Claire Kelleher, Ger McCarthy, Claire McCarthy, Nancy O'Driscoll. Front: Marion McCarthy, Miriam Higgins, Martha Kearney, Clare Cronin, Liz Lynch, Anne Delaney, Angela Higgins.

intermediate grade they won the title elevating the club to senior level for the first time.

Always to the fore in all camogie activities in the Barrs when she finished playing Marian stayed on as an administrator within the club and served as club treasurer and on various club committees.

She also got involved in the coaching side as a club mentor passing on her love of camogie to the next generation of club players. In 1991 she was elected as vice-chair of the Cork county board a position she held until 2002 when she was elected chair

of the Cork board in 2002 as chairwoman Sheila Golden retired.

Marion went on to hold the position of chair for fourteen years and she then stepped into the breach in 2017 and took on the role of county treasurer a position she currently fills with huge efficiency.

A prominent member of the county boards development committee Marion was very much to the fore as the board achieved the dream of finally owning their own pitch and without doubt, the wonderful achievement that is the development of Cork's Camogie Grounds and club-

house in Castle Road is a credit to her and her committee as they continue to work to bring the development to its fruition.

Also honoured on the night was another Cork man with the Handball award going to Peter Dennehy of the Lisacroll Handball Club.

A well-known voice in Páirc Uí Chaoimh and Páirc Uí Rinn through his volunteer work as stadium announcer Peter's handball career began with Cosset's Handball Club in the Sugar Factory in Mallow where he worked for many years.

As a player and now as an admin-

“Peter leaves no stone unturned in his promotion of handball and a long association with inter-firm GAA”

istrator Peter has been and is a tireless worker for his beloved sport his roles as treasurer and PRO Cork GAA handball he leaves no stone unturned in his promotion of the game and his voice is well known on the airwaves of 103FM as he delivers his weekly round-up. For many years he also has had a long association with the Inter-Firm GAA Board where his work in promoting games and ensuring everything runs smoothly is greatly appreciated.

Well done to Marion and Peter doing Cork and their clubs proud.

All counties are in the same boat

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

AT this stage I'd imagine that the Camogie association will cancel the latter stages of the National League.

While if that happens it'll be disappointing, imagine how the athletes that spent the last four years preparing for the Olympics feel.

The Olympics will go ahead in 2021 but athletes plan the timing of their preparation so diligently that this is certainly a big upset for them.

In addition, as we all know, there are seasons that you feel on top of the world and your performances match that, but there are seasons when you might put in the same effort and it just doesn't work for you.

So, the Olympic re-fixture will be a huge disappointment for some, but all acknowledge the wider picture of public health. A year is a long time in sport.

Cork are in prime position to win the league.

They lag behind in group games due to the weather causing the postponement of their away games to both Offaly and Clare and then Covid-19 kicked in.

Tipperary are already through to the final from group 2.

If Cork beat Offaly they can't be caught on scoring difference even if they went down to Clare.

Based on history and current form between Cork and Tipp, Cork are still the better side despite the introduction of a few new players.

I don't think Paudie Murray's real concern is whether the league is cancelled or not.

I think what he would regret is not having the remaining three games as a run in to championship.

It would have been an uplifting start for the new panellists to feel success with the league and give them a taste of what can be achieved, but it's not the end of the world.

At this stage all counties are in the same boat preparation wise. It will depend on the personal drive and commitment of the players to train somewhat while in isolation and that will determine how much work is to be done for championship as a group when squads return.

With regards the championship who knows what will happen. We expect that order will be restored in time for June but who knows?

The situation had me wondering if the All-Ireland senior camogie championship was ever cancelled.

It doesn't seem to have been, even in the war years.

Cork however didn't partake in the All-Ireland senior championship from 1944 to 1951.

A disagreement between Cork and both the Munster and Central Councils led to Cork being left out in the cold for eight years.

A special meeting was called in 1944 to reform Munster Council. With Tipperary, Clare and Waterford on board, Fr O'Flynn of Waterford made a strong appeal for Cork to join the new council and help to make Camogie strong in the province once again.

Cork's delegate Idé Bean Uí Shé outlined a number of conditions that Cork required to be fulfilled, including an all-female Munster Council. Cork's re-



The Cork team which defeated Kilkenny in All-Ireland Senior Camogie final in 1972 and 12 months later completed the four in a row
Back: B Sugrue, P Moloney, L Garvan, A McAuliffe, M Sweeney, M McCarthy, D Sutton, R Hennessy. Front: A Keane, A Comerford, N Guilly, H Dineen, M Whelton, S Dunne, M Costine. Subs not in picture: S Dunne, N Guiley, A Keane.



Cork's Moira Barrett and Kilkenny's Aobha O'Gorman in a recent Division 2 camogie league outing.
Picture: Dylan Vaughan

quest was refused.

When the names went into the hat later in the meeting for the Munster Championship draw there was no slip of paper with the name Cork on it.

Mid-Cork under their own West Cork Divisional Board at the time joined the other Munster counties in the hat and were drawn away to Clare. Cork were out of the Munster championship and therefore the All-Ireland series.

Mid-Cork didn't have any success in Munster. In 1945 the conflict continued and there was no sign of a light until 1949 where a move towards unity seemed to be in the air.

Central Council received a letter in March 1949 stating that Cork desired Camogie to be run by women with no man holding an official position.

It also requested that income be used to cover the expenses of playing games instead of being diverted into

administrative expenses.

The communication concluded that they considered these demands to be very reasonable and that they were the only things preventing unity on the Cork side.

Sheila McNulty from Warrenpoint, in Down, set about bringing the various factions and splinter groups of camogie together when she was elected President of the association.

She reported to Central Council on her initial contact with Cork. She considered the position to be very delicate and thought that the Cork people themselves were the only ones who could right it.

There was a growing feeling within Cork that the stand taken in relation to male officials had gone too far.

The status of Cork had tumbled, and scores of players had been denied the privilege of representing their county.

“When the names went into the hat in the draw there was slip of paper with the name Cork on it

An impromptu meeting of Central Council was held after congress in April 1951. It was underlined that agreement with the Cork board must be reached within the Constitution of what was then called Cumann Camógaiochta na nGael.

The initial meeting was considered satisfactory. Progress continued to be made.

On January 26, 1952 Cork's affiliations were accepted and permission to participate in the competitions and activities of the association was extended to Cork.

The chapter was closed on Cork's darkest hour. A cloud was lifted and replaced by a buzz around the county.

It was 1970 before Cork lifted the O'Duffy Cup again.

But they did it in style by winning four in a row, never since achieved by the county.

Cork star Treacy primed and ready to face another battle

Eoghan Cormican

For Laura Treacy, it is a waiting game.

The Cork camogie full-back is a nurse at the colposcopy clinic on the grounds of St Finbarr's Hospital in the city. But for how much longer the clinic remains open is being reviewed on a daily basis.

Treacy and her colleagues are taking it day-by-day, fully cognisant their services may swiftly be required elsewhere in the battle against Covid-19.

Notice of redeployment could arrive at any moment.

The 25-year-old was at home in Killeagh when Taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced the latest suite of restrictive measures on Friday evening. But even if the two-week lockdown is lifted in mid-April, Treacy knows she won't be going back out to East Cork any time soon should her work situation change.

The city centre house where she lives — and lives alone at present given her housemate has gone home — would become her isolation bunker for as long as this pandemic persists.

"In the clinic, we are dealing with women whose initial cervical check screening has shown an abnormality or who have concerning symptoms. We do biopsies and provide treatments for people with pre-cancer cells. It is not anywhere near the frontline, but we are dealing with some cases which are urgent," the four-time All-Ireland medal winner explained.

"One of the reasons the clinic is still open and continuing to provide a service to the women who need it is because we are located off-site.

"If we were located inside Cork University Maternity Hospital, we would not be remaining open because the volume of women coming in and out the door would be too high, and it would be much harder to manage social distanc-

ing than it is in the clinic.

"I think another reason why we are still open is that the numbers presenting for Covid-19 are still at a manageable level, for the moment."

But given the predicted surge in the coming days and weeks, and with the HSE having paused cervical screening until April 19, Treacy is prepared for a changed working environment.

"We could be called at any minute. If the numbers rise sharply and more staff are needed, the clinic would be closed and we would be redeployed. A lot depends on the numbers, really."

The 2017 All-Star corner-back has nothing but admiration for her colleagues who are tending to those admitted to hospital with Covid-19.

It is a frightening time for everyone, not least healthcare workers who account for almost one quarter of all confirmed cases.

"It is obviously a very contagious virus. The amount of people who are

obtaining it and they don't even know where some people have picked it up is very scary.

"If you are on the frontline and you are working with patients who have it, then you are at a high risk of getting it. Obviously, the PPE (personal protective equipment) is there, but it only takes a mistake when taking off a glove or for you to forget to wash your hands at a certain point whilst taking off your PPE for you to contract the virus.

"It is scary for all the

frontline workers who are doing such amazing work."

Treacy continued: "It is the unknown about it which makes it scary. Symptoms mightn't come upon you for days and days, and then you are thinking about the people you were in contact with during the days previous.

"People are scared for their families because nobody wants to bring this home. And I'm sure they have certain protocols for themselves, be that



Laura Treacy: 'It is scary for all the frontline workers who are doing such amazing work.'

running straight into the shower the minute they get inside the front door after work. It is hard for those on the frontline — the unknown as to whether they are bringing it home to their families and kids."

The numbers have quickly put sport into perspective.

Cork were on course to reach the Division 1 National League camogie final before the country went into lockdown. As to when the All-Ireland Championship might throw-in, nobody has the faintest idea.

"Up until now, sport came first for a lot of people and everything else came second. I was working in the Mercy Hospital after I graduated. I was working nights, 12-hour shifts. It wasn't working for me. I made a huge decision at that point to become an agency nurse. I made a huge decision because of sport.

"At the moment, health is coming first and sport is coming second."

Investment and innovation required to rescue Irish sports

SPORT is central to the Irish story; we revel in it so much so that for many it's essential to our very existence, part of our DNA. We want to enjoy it, be excited by it, entertained by it, educated by it, and simply just to be part of it.

Like every sector right now, sport is navigating uncharted waters. When we think of sport we seldom think about what it does for us all.

Yes, it is good for health, is inclusive, is a great source of national pride and identity and is good for our tourism industry. It is however all too easy to forget that modern sport is a business and a big business at that. For many people sport remains a diversion — something that just happens no matter what. What the current situation has shown is that we cannot take sport for granted and in fact it is perhaps more important than ever — and will be a vital pillar as we come out of the current pandemic.

Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus the value we place on sport and physical activity and it is



ment there is a return of €195 in associated taxes.

Our counterparts in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have all benefited from significant government measures to support grassroots sport clubs and organisations but that is not the case here.

Time is rapidly running out for our sports organisations, our clubs and their volunteers.

We need definite action now from the Government.

So why has finance for sport dried up? The simple answer is that the very activities that makes sport and physical activity happen are now on hold and these are our members' main sources of income. They have lost gate receipts from major events, sponsorship revenues, membership/affiliations fees, coaching programmes, educational workshops; camps; closure of facilities and on an on.

The list is a long one. Without support it will be difficult for sport to get back up at its current levels.

Mary O'Connor

Earlier this week a position paper on the impact of Covid-19 crisis on the sport sector in Europe was published. Its findings were stark.

Every 47th euro generated in the EU is by the sport sector, sport has a related employment in the EU of 5.56m persons and sport related GDP of €279.7bn.

However, Covid-19 presents an unprecedented challenge, the very sector trusted with the responsibility of promoting wellbeing, health, and social interaction is in the real world itself under pressure to survive.

It goes on to state that European sport largely relies on a fabric of small clubs and associations which play a key role in allowing so many citizens to take part in affordable sport activities and to enjoy sport and physical activity on a daily basis. These small clubs and associations are the backbone of European sport. However, being non-profit by nature and thus without any reserves, they work in precarious conditions often, driven by the support of passionate volunteers and employees. In sport, especially at grassroots level, this economic crisis will result in the bankruptcy of associations and clubs which promote physical activity and offer affordable sport activities to citizens across Europe.

Consequently, the sport sector is also set to face an unemployment emergency. These smaller European grassroots

associations are at the greatest risk of shutting down due to the crisis, which could have a number of long-lasting impacts on the economy and society.

This will endanger the future of all grassroots sport in Europe. This is Ireland in a nutshell: 81 national governing bodies of Sport (NGB) are members of the Federation of Irish Sport and they account for approximately 13,000 clubs.

A recent piece of work by the Federation of Irish Sport with our NGB's tells a compelling story, our sports clubs who for the most part are run by volunteers currently have a loss in revenue of between 60 and 100% but they still have expenditure of 85% on costs such as insurance, rates, utilities, maintenance loan/mortgages. These clubs are all affiliated to their NGB and if the clubs are at risk so is the NGB.

The federation have been actively advocating on behalf of our membership to government and we have had number of productive meetings with Minister of State with responsibility for Sport and Tourism Brendan Griffin along with DTTAS officials. However, we now need outputs it will be infinitely harder to reboot sport post pandemic than it will be to support it through the crisis.

Our key asks have been as follows:

- The establishment of a sport, physical activity, and recreation sector working group for an immediate and

long-term response to Covid-19.

- Provision of a government led funding injection package through Sport Ireland for NGB'S to stimulate activity post the Covid-19 emergency.

- Sport specific direct financial supports for clubs similar to the hardship/resilience funds available in the UK.

- Potential repurposing of a proportion of the 2020 Sports Capital Grant to current funding.

- Construction of a plan in relation as to how to sport will come back as restrictions are lifted, this could be endorsed by government and/or Sport Ireland. (Being mindful that is of course health led). A framework such as Protect, Prepare, Prevail.

- VAT rebate available to all sports bodies for six months to help towards sport as a business remaining operational.

Sport and physical activity have always added value to people's lives and right now Irish Sport finds itself in a unique circumstance.

We are eager to play a significant role in the revival of normal Irish life and deliver health enhancing activity as well as contribute robustly to the Irish economy in a myriad of ways but we need innovative thinking, swift action, and investment at local and national level.

- Mary O'Connor is Federation of Irish Sport CEO.

Sandie Fitz the bill to be Leeside legend

Talented Rebel a star on the pitch – and the court

CAMOGIE

John Coughlan

THE sport of Camogie has always been a particularly successful one for this county and the outstanding Sandie Fitzgibbon made a huge contribution to that success during her playing career.

Sandie enjoyed a very successful career which included winning seven consecutive Senior county medals with her beloved Glen Rovers.

She began playing with the Glen as a nine-year-old and won her first All-Ireland Minor medal in 1978, at the age of 14.

Sandie was born in 1964 and was one of a sporting family of six sisters and one brother.

Her achievements in camogie are nothing short of amazing and her most notable achievement was playing in 13 Senior All Ireland camogie finals with Cork.

At club level she won 10 senior county medals that included seven on the trot between 1990 and 1996.

Sandie also has eight Munster championship medals and just to round off her club career she won four Senior All Ireland medals in 1986, 1990, 1992 and 1993.

There is no doubting that Sandie played with and against the best during her illustrious career and she looks back on it with mixed emotions.

"I would say losing six All-Ireland titles in a row up to 1991 was the most disappointing for me but in a nutshell it was the same for all my teammates," she said.

At no stage did Sandie ever feel that she wouldn't reach the Holy Grail with the Rebels.

"Thank God our luck changed, and it was a dream come true for me when I captained Cork to the 1992 All-Ireland title," she added.

After playing at the top level for 17 years, Sandie decided to call it a day in 1997 at the age of 33.

"When you play at the top level for a long time it really does take a great deal of commitment and I felt at that time that I could no longer give it the dedication that was required to play at inter-county level," she said.

Two years later, after giving Glen Rovers 26 years of incredible service, she decided it was time to bow out.

There were many great opponents



Sandie Fitzgibbon enjoyed a long career in the Cork jersey, including playing in 13 Senior All-Ireland finals.



Sandie Fitzgibbon had the ability to wreak havoc on a basketball court.

that Sandie faced both at club and inter-county level.

"I respected all my opponents, but I would say the Downey sisters, Angela and Ann, were the most competitive I had to face.

"I could not pick a favourite teammate because I was very lucky to be surrounded by talented players throughout my career."

Sandie was also a top-class basketball player. Playing with the North Presentation School, in 1978 she led them to the All-Ireland Cadet title.

At Senior level she helped Blarney win four National League titles, three National Cups, six Cork Senior leagues and five Cork senior championships.

Her basketball skills were dazzling

Facts and figures

- Won first All-Ireland Minor camogie medal with Cork at the age of 14.
- Was on six consecutive losing Cork teams in the All Ireland Senior Camogie finals up to 1991 but her dream was realised in 1992 when she captained the Rebels to win the title.
- Retired from Inter-county camogie in 1997 and two years later did likewise at club level.
- Played a total of 26 years at club level for Glen Rovers.
- Won a total of 64 caps for Ireland at Senior International level.

and despite being only 5'-6" she had the ability to wreak havoc on the court.

Indeed, Sandie's talent is still spoken about in basketball circles and to represent your country at the highest level of the sport speaks volumes of her skills.

Amazingly, throughout her playing career Sandie mixed camogie

and basketball and was never fazed by the demands.

The busiest week of her life came in October 1990.

On Sunday she played an All-Ireland club camogie semi-final with Glen Rovers in Derry and immediately after the game travelled to Boston to play three Internationals with Ireland.

Having returned to Ireland on Friday, she had only two days to recover before lining out with Glen Rovers in the All Ireland camogie final.

Sandie once again showed her incredible commitment and skills as she helped the Blackpool side defeat St Paul's in the decider.

To round off her silverware collection, Sandie won the Munster Youth Sports Star in 1983, Jury Sports Star in 1990 and 1992, Camogie Player of the Year in 1992 and 1995 and the Delta Airlines Olympic Basketball award in 1992.

In 2000 Sandie was presented with the Millennium award for her achievements in Sport in Cork, an award she so richly deserved.

There are many legends in the sporting world on Leeside but the name of Sandie Fitzgibbon will always be remembered as one of Cork's finest.

St Catherine's finest is adjusting to New York life

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

WHEN the final whistle went in The Gaelic Grounds last August as Cork's dream of three in row senior camogie titles was ended by Galway, it signalled a significant moment for five times All-Star and six times All-Ireland senior medallist, St Catherine's finest, Orla Cotter.

Few knew that six weeks later she was about to embark on a life changing move to the Big Apple as husband Mark took up a new role with his employer and Orla took a career break from teaching Irish and PE at Middleton College.

Now six months into their new life I linked up with Orla on Wednesday last for a chat about life in the USA.

"We've really enjoyed the last few months, we've been to a few Broadway shows and Basketball games in Madison Square Garden," Orla Cotter said.

"It's nice to be able to take advantage of living so close to all these events.

"We're living just across the water from Manhattan in Jersey City and so it's a little quieter than the madness of NYC."

For Orla and Waterford native Mark it was a huge move and one that made for a big upheaval and lots of change:

"The first few weeks were a big change alright, getting used to our new surroundings and the PATH and metro systems became our new mode of transport. I'm still figuring out the metro system but thank god for Google maps."

Orla does miss some things though: "Obviously we missed, and still miss, our friends and family at home as well. We don't have any relatives in New York and on coming over we really only knew Mark's boss and his wife whom I'm very good friends with now."

"It was a very big change alright to go from a life of routine and structure to, all of sudden, having a blank schedule. I suppose coming out here I knew that was to be the case and so I had to try to look at it as an opportunity to try some new things and research what I might potentially work at out here. I still haven't figured that one out yet.

"It has its plusses though — living here has also given us an opportunity to travel within the US which is something we obviously didn't do too much of before"

Camogie has played a huge part of her life and I asked her how she is coping without club or county involvement at such a high level:

"I wasn't here long when I made contact with the local camogie club Liberty Gaels, but their season had obviously finished and wouldn't be starting up until March.

"Jane Mc Cooney, the chairperson of the club was very good in helping me out and I've met up with her a few times. I've also touched base with some underage teams so I might hopefully do some training sessions with them at some stage. I was looking forward to starting training with

Cotter in the Big Apple

EYE ON THE BALL: Orla Cotter takes a free during the 2018 All-Ireland final win over Kilkenny at Croke Park. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile



Cork's All Stars Aoife Murray, Amy O'Connor, Katrina Mackey, Gemma O'Connor, Pamela Mackey, Hannah Looney, Laura Treacy, Chloe Sigerson and Orla Cotter at the Statue of Liberty during the trip to New York last November. Cotter has since taken up residence in the Big Apple

keeping myself somewhat busy."

It's a big change for Mark as well and not just in a work environment as Orla is now around a lot more and she laughed as I put this to her.

"Yes I suppose we've never seen so much of each other these last few months and especially in light of his working from home at present.

"It has been nice to be able to plan weekend trips without worrying about upcoming training or games or even heading to a concert on a Thursday night which would have been a typical training night at home."

The mention of home brought us to the All Star camogie trip for the 2018/

19 teams in November when Orla was just settling into her new surroundings.

Having been picked on the All-Star team of 2018 Orla did not have to make as long a journey as her colleagues.

"I was only here maybe six weeks when the All-Star group came out, so that was so nice having a good few Cork girls to show around my new city. Two years ago we were in Madrid on the inaugural All-Star tour and had a good old laugh.

As for the game itself in New York: "The game was good and competitive it's always a little bit more relaxed

going in to play an exhibition game like that. It doesn't matter who wins or loses. It's good fun."

Finally before we wrapped up I enquired what the future holds for a player who is without doubt one of the games finest.

"We'll stay here for another bit anyway, play it by ear and see what happens, we will definitely try and get home during the summer for a bit, and who knows if there's a match or two on, I'd only be too happy to tog out."

Maybe, just maybe, we will see her in the red and white again, so we will say for now: Never say never.



Lockdown 'is really, really tough'

WATERFORD camogie captain Niamh Rockett was born to play sports. Her father Eddie played hurling for the county and from a young age she had a hurl in her hand.

The Déise player didn't stop there. While still in primary school, she also played hockey, soccer, and football. But an ongoing problem with her knees forced her to concentrate on one sport.

She was diagnosed with arthritis in her left knee aged 16. But instead of easing up, she continues to undergo intensive physiotherapy and trains relentlessly.

It comes as no surprise to hear she's finding the lockdown "very, very tough".

A determined optimist, the PE teacher is making the most of the situation. "I'm coping with training and teaching remotely at the moment," she says. "I live on the farm at home, so there are always jobs to be done."

One of five children, she shares a roof with her mum and two sisters. Her brother, who runs the family dairy farm, lives close by with his wife and three children aged

five, three, and one. When her sister-in-law, a speech and language therapist, is at work, she steps in to help with the childminding. "We are all in this together," she says.

Niamh has partnered with Littlewoods Ireland for the Style Meets Substance campaign. #StyleOfPlay.

What shape are you in?
I teach from about nine to four and take a break at lunchtime when I do a bit of camogie, a bit of skills. In the evening I go for a run with my sister, she's working from home as well. We can access the greenway from two fields behind our house. It's ideal. We run for maybe 5-6k.

What are your healthiest eating habits?

I do a lot of cooking for myself. When I was in college, living away from home, I got used to it. Most mornings, I'd have porridge with fruit, flaxseeds, chia seeds, and some honey. I use a lot of Daniel Davey's recipes, and I follow a lot of food pages. My mam is delighted with all the

and baking and cooking.

What are your guiltiest pleasures?

I'm a big baker, so I've a very, very big sweet tooth. I bake cheesecakes, or chocolate or biscuit cakes at least maybe once a week. What I'm into now is Kinder Maxi cookie bars.

What would keep you awake at night?

Sometimes if you are after having a bad game or if the mood isn't right in the camp or if you're coming up to a game, that'll keep me awake. In a different sense, having arthritis, after a game my knee would be absolutely in bits — really, really sore. Not only would I be thinking of the game, I wouldn't be able to sleep because of my knee. I would have to take painkillers, anti-inflammatories and stuff like that.

How do you relax?

A bit of baking and reading. I like to go walking. I like to explore places, different mountain walks, and chill out. We're lucky at home the Comeragh mountains are at

our doorstep. I'm a sports enthusiast, so watching sports or playing sports, I'd play anything. I'm always on the go.

I struggled massively at the start of lockdown to unwind. I was getting up at quarter to seven every morning and my commute to school was an hour. Between that and grinds and training and trying to see friends, I'm always on the go. It's really, really tough. I think a lot of people are in the same boat.

Who would you invite to your dream dinner party?

I really, really admire Katie Taylor for everything she has done. I'm a bit fascinated by Joe Schmidt because I want to know what makes him such a good leader/coach. And for a bit of fun, I'd love Doireann Garrihy. I think I've the exact same sense of humour as her, I'd be a bit of a messer as well.

I'm big into music — I'm learning the guitar at the moment. Chris Martin is someone I'd love to have over, I've been to see Coldplay concerts and they are unbelievable.

What's your favourite smell?

I love Laura Mercier's Crème Brûlée Body Crème. You'd nearly eat it off yourself.

What would you like to change about your appearance?

I'm into my appearance. I wear a bit of fake tan so the scars on my knee from the three operations I've had don't really go well with the fake tan — I'd like to get rid of those scars. A new left knee would be ideal, to be honest with you.

When is the last time you cried?

The last time was at a friend's funeral a few months ago. That was really upsetting. Other than that I'd be very emotional after losing a big match, like a quarter-final — all the photographers seem to pape me when I'm crying and it's not a pretty sight.

What traits do you least like in others?

Someone who is not honest or straight up, that would

really, really frustrate me.

What traits do you least like in yourself?

A lot of people say that I'm stubborn. I would have to go with that.

Do you pray?

My grandmother passed away last year but we couldn't have the anniversary due to Covid-19. We won the All-Ireland junior and intermediate titles in 2011 and 2015, and she was at both. She was a massive follower of Waterford camogie. I miss ringing her up after matches and calling into her. I would pray to her, especially coming up to games.

What would cheer up your day?

Seeing my niece and nephews. They don't really care what's going on in your life; they are just happy to see you, to play with you. They always cheer me up any time I go down to see them. We're all very, very close. They light up your day.



ON THE GO: Waterford camogie captain Niamh Rockett partners with Littlewoods Ireland for the Style Meets Substance campaign.

Irene Feighan

Camogie Association implements 10% pay deferrals for staff

Stephen Barry

The Camogie Association has implemented 10% pay deferrals for staff as part of cost-cutting measures.

It comes as the association's suspension of its regular schedule of games has been extended to May 5, in line with the Government's Covid-19 restrictions.

"The suspension will be revised in due course. However, the association says it still aims to complete all competitions planned for 2020, unlike the Ladies Gaelic Football Association which cancelled its league programme last month.

"The association will continue to defer all activity and competitions, however it is our intention to complete all competitions planned for the year." It said in a statement.

"We acknowledge that this step will result in further inconvenience and disruption to members as well as the game at all levels, however we appreciate the continued co-operation and support of everyone involved at this time.

"The health and safety of our members is, as always, of paramount importance and these steps will assist us all in taking the necessary precautions to limit the spread of Covid-19 and to return to full activity as early as possible.

"Our thoughts are with members whose families are affected by the Covid-19 virus.

"The association's ard chomhairle has also approved a 10% pay deferral in coming months for the Camogie Association staff team as part of cost-saving measures.

"The staff team continue to provide support, education, and upskilling opportunities to our members through utilising online technology.

"The Camogie Association is delighted with engagement levels amongst members with supports provided across all aspects of the association's activity, from coaching and safeguarding to contingency planning.

"We encourage units and members to use this time to avail of the training and education opportunities being provided."

Echo sports quiz



Cork dual icon Rena Buckley.

RENA BUCKLEY

11. How many All Star awards has she won in total across camogie and ladies' football — nine, 10 or 11?
12. For which club does she play ladies' football?
13. With which college did she win two Ashbourne Cup medals?
14. In which year did she captain Cork to win the All-Ireland camogie title, becoming the first woman to captain the same county to win camogie and football All-Ireland?
15. She currently runs what kind of practice in Macroom?
16. With whom did she share the 2015 Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year Award?
17. How many of her 18 All-Ireland senior medals were in camogie?
18. Which primary school did she attend — Berrings, Claghroe or Vicarstown?
19. Up to and including the 2018 victory, how many consecutive Cork senior camogie titles did she win with Iniscarra?
20. Buckley was the first woman to captain the same county to All-Ireland in camogie and football, but Mary Geaney captained a different county to glory in each code. She led Cork to a camogie title, which county did she skipper to win the ladies' football?

RENA BUCKLEY

11. Eleven
12. Donoughmore
13. UCD
14. 2017
15. Physiotherapy
16. Briege Corkery

17. Sevan
18. Berrings
19. Three
20. Kerry

At right corner back, where she won a couple of her 12 All-Ireland, is Ann Downey for her honesty and directness. About growing up in the shadow of Angela, struggling with her mental health in the wake of being let go in her job, her duty of care to players, yet how she doesn't settle for a text or WhatsApp message from them — If you can't make training, call her, don't text. At full back, where she...

Don't overtrain during lockdown



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

WITH so many clubs and intercounty teams now receiving training instructions via various apps from their coaches, one of the country's leading fitness experts recently warned GAA players of the dangers of over-training on their own during the shutdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

A lot of players will almost certainly overdo things and, if they approach a particular strength and conditioning drill wrong, they could find themselves doing a lot of damage and be out injured for a period of time.

Limerick strength and conditioning coach Joe O'Connor says that, despite what a lot of clubs will tell you, you don't need a lot of equipment. He has switched his gym clients to online and put up a video of bodyweight exercises which they can follow.

"Of course, if you want to be bigger, faster, and stronger you need to be doing your strength and conditioning properly but, at times like this, bodyweight exercises will do," he advised.

There are upsides to the ban on collective training, according to O'Connor.

"Players will have more time to recover, while those carrying niggling injuries will get an opportunity to allow it to recover properly."

The value of rest cannot be overemphasised he stresses.

"I have always said that the difference between professional and amateur athletes is time management and recovery."

"Now, all GAA players, irrespective of whether they play for their county, their club, or play camogie, are getting what they always wanted, that is time to rest and recover."

"The one warning I would give is that just because you have an opportunity to train by yourself, make sure not to burn yourself into the ground."

The Camogie Association issued guidelines during the week relating to the safe and secure staging of online training sessions for their players and teams.

Included were protocols around organising these sessions, outlining the safeguards that must be adhered to when staging this type of activity, and a guide to using Microsoft Teams, an online collaboration tool which is available to holders of official Camogie e-mail addresses, and can be used to organise unit activities with members.

The communication was made with the intention of providing best practice to their members and the information issued can be found and downloaded on their website. They say it is gratifying to hear of coaches and clubs who have recently contacted them seeking permission in these restricted times, to deliver live online exercise and coaching sessions for their underage teams.

With the correct safety guidance and good practices in place, the association wants to support such initiatives.

They say this will assist coaches in delivering live online exercise and coaching sessions for young people U18.



After Galway's Sarsfields were crowned club camogie champions last month, Niamh McGrath — pictured in the 2012 All-Ireland semi-final being tackled by Cork's Joanne O'Callaghan in Nowlan Park — has been named on the All-Ireland Senior Club Championship Team of the Year. Picture: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile



Limerick S&C coach Joe O'Connor, pictured with coach Paul Kinnerk lifting the 2018 Liam MacCarthy Cup, has advice about training during the lockdown. Picture: Seb Daly/Sportsfile

"It will assist our coaches and young people to work in a safer environment using secure online communications and the ability for coaches to access additional online coaching resources."

"It is important that all safeguarding measures are maintained to protect our young people."

AIB and the Camogie Association recently announced the 2019/2020 AIB All-Ireland Senior Club Championship Team of the Year.

With Cork champions Sarsfields losing out narrowly to Drom & Inch of Tipperary in the Munster semi-final Cork, unfortunately, didn't get far enough in the competition to get a player named.

Thirty years on from Clare's solitary Munster senior club championship title, newcomers Scariff-Ogonneloe caused a shock when they defeated Drom in the Munster final by 1-7 to 0-8.

Despite losing the All-Ireland semi-

final to Derry's Slaughtneil, Scariff have two players named on the team; Susan Vaughan at left corner-back, and midfielder Mairéad Scanlan.

That's where Munster's interest in the team ends, as the remaining 15 are dominated by champions Sarsfields of Galway and Slaughtneil, with Niamh Hetherton of St Vincent's in Dublin, the only player outside of the other three mentioned teams to get a spot.

The team features six players from champions Sarsfields, and six from the Ulster Champions and All-Ireland runners-up, Slaughtneil.

Four players — one from each province — were named as Provincial Players of the Year. Aoife Ni Chaiside of Slaughtneil; Niamh Hetherton of Leinster and St Vincents; Mairéad Scanlan from Scariff-Ogonneloe, and Siobhán McGrath of Connaught and Sarsfields. The four players were in the running for the prestigious AIB

“Now, all GAA players are getting what they always wanted — that is, time to rest and recover”

Camogie Club Player of the Year Award, and the winner was announced last week.

Sarsfields' Siobhán McGrath was named the Player of the Year.

It capped a wonderful year to add to her All-Ireland glory, as the Galway side defeated Slaughtneil who were chasing four in a row in Croke Park.

Siobhán played a starring role in the final and her late goal was crucial in securing victory.

While the current Covid-19 emergency prevents the holding of a ceremony to celebrate the announcement, AIB, together with the Camogie Association, still wanted to acknowledge the selected players for their performances throughout the season.

All 15 players whose performances, skills, and talent lit up the championship will be awarded with handcrafted trophies created by renowned sculptor Jarlath Daly.



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

Staying sharp for a return to play

THESE are unusual times for athletes and managers across Leaside.

With sport locked down due to Covid-19, everyone is trying to stay sharp for when they do return to the training and playing pitches.

We caught up with the camogie community to see how they are coping.

KEVIN HANNON (Courcey Rovers)
How are you and your team preparing and training now?

"As a group, we have realised the importance of our text app as it's really keeping us connected."

What type of programmes are they following?

"We have Shirley Moloney who has joined the management group this year posting her daily video workouts demonstrating the correct technique and setting a goal for the day. We also have Joey Gallagher who posts his suggestions."

Joey has a more holistic approach as he's a big fan of Zen. He works on the mental side of things. Mike Boland who has been housebound in Carrigtwohill is also on, regularly keeping in touch with the girls.

What are the biggest issues you are facing now to keep players fit and in contact?

"It's important both physically and mentally that the girls stay in contact with each other. We're no different to any other team. The girls themselves are posting what exercise they have done and also posting quizzes etc."

It's definitely a tough time as by now we should be all out on the field starting our league games. However, we all realise the seriousness of the situation and doing our bit by keeping the government guidelines.

"I would like to thank and compliment our girls working in the essential services, especially those in the healthcare sector. As for the season ahead, nobody knows when it will get going and what format it may take. Hopefully, we will all be in reasonable shape and looking forward to our 8am Saturday training again."

KEVIN MURPHY (Inniscarra)
How are you and your team preparing and training now?

"Our club kind of called it early enough in cancelling things before it was called nationally. So, we are at it a few weeks."

"We've given the girls schedules to do three times a week and when they're done either take a photograph or record back in."

What that does is it drives other players on when they see that their teammates have done it so it's a collective responsibility.

"In fairness, they've been brilliant, very committed and adapting to whatever they can do."

"We're working off Viber. I know the GDPR people were saying you're to get off things like WhatsApp and go onto Clubforce and things like that but actually you could not connect the way we're connecting now with those types of apps. Viber is quite good."

What type of programmes are they following?

"The programmes would vary on the physical, skill, and strength and conditioning side but it's not about camogie, it's about mental health. That's the key to it. The last two years we did a lot of work on mental wellness. Last year we did work on resilience and that's the kind of stuff you're drawing on now because getting through this is different, it's extremely hard."

"But it's trying to keep some bit of focus on doing something like ball work or skills off the wall in your house and give them that escape for the 20 or 40 minutes they're doing it, away from all the social media bad



Ballincollig's Hananh O'Leary is tackled by Glen Rovers' Lydia Cunningham last season at Castle Road.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare



Courcey Rovers' Ashling Moloney clearing the ball downfield as Keeva McCarthy of St Finbarr's tries to block down the shot.

Picture: Denis Minihane



Claudia Keane, Inniscarra, is tackled by Denise Twomey, St Catherine's goalkeeper.

Picture: Jim Coughlan

news that's out there at the minute." What are the biggest issues you are facing now to keep players fit and in contact?

"Look it's very hard but it's all about positive connectivity. That's what we're hugely focusing on. These couple of weeks or months, whatever it turns out to be, it's all about staying connected."

"The girls are connecting themselves; we're connecting as a group and we're going to try a virtual quiz soon and see how we get on with getting everyone online. We'll have fun and have virtual prizes."

"Since Friday it's a total lockdown. These are the key weeks that we need to ensure we're connecting."

"Camogie is secondary to this. The isolation is what will get to people so it's about keeping a smile on their face."

TARA CUNNINGHAM (Glen Rovers)
How are you and your team preparing and training now?

"Our coach Brendan O'Callaghan puts weekly sessions into our WhatsApp group and the girls are throwing up when they've their session done. Even early this morning two girls threw up 'session done' on the app and it started the others moving."

"Also, Hoggie (Patrick Horgan) is putting up videos of various challenges every day and we're challenging the girls to see how many they can get so that's a bit of fun."

"You'd have 30 girls and it's getting good interaction going. If players are quiet in general, it gets them involved too. But look it's nothing compared to the intensity you'd have as a group on the field."

What type of programmes are they following?

"They're doing sprints, shuttle runs, things like that this week rather than just doing 5k runs so it varies weekly. It is good as the videos are coming in and there's a bit of banter going."

"We're addicted now as we're looking at the app constantly to see the videos coming in. And it's good to check in that the girls are doing ok."

"We were just getting into our stride when this happened. The biggest challenge is keeping players motivated and connected but so far so good."

What are the biggest issues you are facing now to keep players fit and in contact?

"We're so dependant on WhatsApp now. I remember Colm Cooper saying one day in work a few years ago that he'd love to get into the psychology of things like WhatsApp because

it's crazy what's going on in them."

"It became standard for him in the year he was retiring to get a video of the player he was going to be marking the following day indicating 'this is the way he turns; this is the foot he mostly kicks from, etc'."

"He said he never grew up with that and that he loved going out to the unknown marking a player he didn't know much about. Now more than ever with what's going on today we need WhatsApp to ensure people are ok."

"It's going to be very hard to know how good things have worked out, until we go back. It'll also depend on what equipment players have at home."

"The onus is on the players to do it. But everyone is on the same boat. It might benefit a lot of them. They might actually do an extra bit."

The day Seandún put it up to the Glen

CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick



Eye on the ball! Linda Mellerick (Glen Rovers) prepares a shot at the Toomevara goal in the Munster Club semi-final. Picture: Kieran Clancy

and Karen Mellerick combined to score 6-15."

"We knew in the Glen we were up against it in the final. What I vividly remember about the game was that it was played on a lovely sunny evening and Ballinlough was packed for the game. It was certainly one of the biggest crowds ever at a county camogie final.

And we were under pressure. I found myself on the opposite side

to my sister Karen who was appearing in her first senior final. The extract from Mary's book reads as follows:

"Seandún paid little heed to the standing or records of Glen Rovers and put it up to the champions. Twice, in a pulsating match, the champions hauled themselves back from a five-point deficit.

"The divisional side made the early running. Tremendous play by

“Seandún paid little heed to the standing or records of Glen Rovers and put it up to the champions. Twice, in a pulsating match, the champions hauled themselves back from a five-point deficit.”



The Glen Rovers All-Ireland Club Camogie champions of 1986. Back: Dina Deane, Ger McCarthy, Marie Ryan, Val Fitzpatrick, Fiona McCarthy, June Hamill. Front: Ann O'Donovan, Mary Ring, Sandy Fitzgibbon, Mary Currid, Therese O'Callaghan, Ann Connolly.



St Finbarr's Colette O'Mahony going for a point in 2006. She was one of the star performers for Seandún 10-years previous. Picture: Kieran Tobin

Colette O'Mahony, Paula Goggins, Karen Mellerick and Sheenagh Morley saw Seandún race into a 0-6 to 0-1 lead. Glen were reeling for a while but the unerring accuracy of Lynn Dunlea from frees brought them back into the game.

"A goal from Eithne Duggan and points from Jill Hannon had the holders in trouble. The champions switched Lynn Dunlea from the wing forward position, where Paula Goggins had her under lock and key, to full forward. Lynn rescued the Glen from the jaws of defeat with 1-3 in the final moments.

"Therese O'Callaghan was presented with the Player of the Match award following a marvellous mid-field display. The game, when ended Glen Rovers 1-14, Seandún 1-9 was undoubtedly the best county final in

years and it aroused great interest among camogie followers."

I remember the final whistle blowing and the absolute joy. We truly celebrated that win. We felt we had beaten the best of Cork in an incredible game and it stands out as one of my nicest memories.

GLEN: Mairead O'Leary, Mary Ring, Deirdre McCarthy, Sandie Fitzgibbon, Stephanie Dunlea, Denise Cronin, Therese O'Callaghan, Mary Currid, Linda Mellerick, Lynn Dunlea, Ger McCarthy, Claire McCarthy.

SEANDÚN: Rose Desmond (Bishopstown), Evelyn Healy (Na Piarraigh), Colette Cronin (St Finbarr's), Paula Goggins (Na Piarraigh), Liz Towler (Bishopstown), Sheenagh Morley (do), Karen Mellerick (Brian Dillon's), Jill Hannon (do), Vivienne Harris (Bishopstown), Liz O'Neill (do), Colette O'Mahony (St Finbarr's), Niamh O'Regan (Brian Dillon's).

We truly were a tight knit and very close team during that era. A member of that great Glen family was Helena Mullins who lost her husband Tommy last week.

Tommy was a great character and we have tremendous memories of him. During Covid-19 it is heartbreaking that we can't be there for Helena and her family at this time, but we will be once this is all over. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

WITH the nostalgic clips and pics circulating on twitter and a look back at some great games of the past on TG4's All-Ireland Gold, I was thinking of some of the great memories I have of past games where everything was left on the field by both teams.

Glen Rovers won seven county titles in a row from 1990 to 1996 and during that time we had some tremendous battles with some great club sides. One in particular stands out and that was the 1994 county final victory over Seandún.

At the time we in Glen Rovers felt the county was against us. We had won four titles and it wasn't going down well at all. Mary Moran's book 'Cork's Camogie Story' recalls:

"It was felt that the gap in standards between the Glen as All-Ireland champions at the time and the remaining senior club sides had become so wide that convention voted in a new senior B championship."

So, every club side bar the Glen were graded senior B leaving the Glen to play for the senior A title against divisional sides only. I still find that strange.

Look at the teams at county and national level that have won four in a row and more since. But that's what happened, and we felt that we were being hard done by. Of course, that made us want to win the county even more.

Seandún, Imokilly, Muskerry and Carbery joined us in the senior A championship. Taking extracts from Mary's book brings back a lot of memories. She scribes how Carbery trained hard for their opening round with the Glen.

They played a number of challenge matches to sharpen their side and generate good teamwork. The Glen's winning margin of 23 points brought home the reality of the disparity of standards'.

Seandún however were a different story. In my view they were a star-studded side and we knew it was going to be a real challenge to retain our title.

Seandún had the pick of Bishopstown who were very strong at the time (and won four in a row from 1997 to 2000), St Finbarr's, Brian Dillon's and Na Piarraigh and they faced Imokilly in their first-round tie with players from Sarsfields, Killeagh, Fr O'Neill's, St Catherine's and Cobb.

Mary's record states, "The accurate free taking of Colette O'Mahony, an excellent goal from Vivienne Harris and some good points by Irene O'Leary gave Seandún the edge. Imokilly were over reliant on Fiona O'Driscoll for scores and the tight marking Paula Goggins kept a rigid reign on her.

"Seandún were never in danger of losing the semi-final against a disappointing Muskerry side. Liz O'Neill, Colette O'Mahony, Niamh O'Regan, Vivienne Harris, Sheenagh Morley



The 2019 Blarney Camogie Club U16 squad wearing the club's new kit. The team were runners-up in the 2019 League.



Blarney Camogie Club's U18 team.

Golden celebration for Blarney camogie

CAMOGIE

■ Diarmuid Sheehan

SPORTING clubs up and down the county have treasured moments from their past that bring the young and the not so young together to celebrate their collective and sometimes historic successes.

In GAA circles, those achievements from the past tend to become part of the folklore of an area with older members often holding a near mythical status as the stories from past achievements often grow legs as time bends the reality of what was achieved in times gone by.

Just over 50 years ago, Blarney Camogie Club celebrated one of its most famous days and while half a century has passed since that glorious day, the detail of what was achieved has remained as clear in the heads of those that participated as if it were only yesterday.

Recently, Blarney Camogie Club's most successful ever panel came together to celebrate the anniversary of the club's greatest period and all involved were proud to be associated with what the club achieved.

Blarney Camogie Club was founded by a Fr Tom Browne back in 1964 and soon joined the ranks of the Cork County Junior grade.

As was the way at the time, getting young girls involved in sport proved a challenge to the club. However, right from the off Blarney were in a position to field a team and the story of one of Cork's oldest camogie clubs began.

One year after the club's first game a hugely talented set of players made it all the way to the runners-up spot in the junior county league.

Progression continued as the club went a step further the following year, taking the top prize in the county League with players of the quality of Pauline and Mary Humphreys, Marie Mackey, Mary Doherty and Mary Heelan all doing their best to bring honours to the young club.

Twelve months later Blarney made a significant leap forward with their first County Championship win; they also retained their league title — their first significant double.

1968 saw the club secure their first ever promotion, to intermediate, and right from the off success came their



Pictured at a reunion of the famous 1969 Blarney Intermediate Camogie Champions were Marie Crowley Mulcahy, Kathleen Doherty Conway, Kathleen Hurley Ward, Mary Cronin O'Leary, Mary Humphrys O'Connell, Cora Humphrys, Celeste Mulcahy Foley, Betty Burke White, Anna Gaffey Lane, Nuala Kiely O'Brien, Angela Gaffey Dooling, Pauline Humphrys Hegarty, Mary Heelan Casey, and Eileen Spillane O'Sullivan.

way with the county league title heading back to Blarney.

1969 was another huge year for the club as they collected their second league title on the bounce (their fourth league in a row) before claiming the Intermediate County Championship crown later in the year, elevating the club to that of two grade champions.

Far from being one hit wonders, Blarney was enjoying their golden generation and made the most of all the talent they had at their disposal with four of the next four intermediate league titles (1970, 72, 73 and 74).

Titles dried up for a period before the club eventually had to close its doors as numbers failed to materialise and teams became difficult to field but there was to be a second

chapter to the story of this club — a story that keeps delivering to this day.

After more than 20 years without an organised club, Blarney Camogie Club rose again from the ashes in 1999 and from that day to this the club has continued to thrive.

After reforming, the club competed at junior and bagged the county title in 2019, all of 50 years after the club's most historic day — that 1969 Intermediate crown.

Between 2018 and 2019 the club has managed to get three players onto All-Ireland winning Cork minor teams with Olivia Murphy and Orla Cremen making the grade in '18 with Cremen again doing the deed in '19, this time joined by Jennifer Murphy.

The club also brought through

three girls to play for the rebel county at U14 last year with Katie Kelleher, Niamh Power and Amy Bannon all getting their reward for impressive displays over the previous year or more.

From a club that was out on its feet in the latter part of the last century, Blarney Camogie Club was able to boast more than 100 members at U12 alone last year which all bodes well for the future of this spirited and progressive beacon of light for young girls interested in sport in the mid-Cork area.

Blarney Camogie Club may have taken a two decade hiatus but now, after celebrating 21 years back in the fold, the club is looking to the future and looking to make many more good days ahead to keep all in the locality

involved in what is a genuine good news story in the Blarney area.

Celebrating the successes of the past is a sure fire way of making sure that the current wearers of the Blarney colours know what it is like to be part of something bigger than the individual and know what it is like to be remembered for achieving something that has never been done before.

Blarney Camogie Club currently has a host of young stars of the future making their own history right now and with time on their side they are sure to bag themselves many special memories. However, for now the players listed here will take their time to remember and celebrate what it was like to be part of Blarney's greatest ever camogie side.

Cork boss is hopeful of June return

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

WE'RE all still a little bit in limbo as to the club and inter-county GAA season.

Will it, won't it go ahead and if it does, in what format?

Cork camogie manager Paudie Murray is positive things can resume soon.

"I'm positive that we'll be back doing something late June and in July we might finish the league and the championship might start in August," said Murray.

I have my doubts that the league will be completed, but the Cork boss feels otherwise.

"I think they have to finish the league, for the sponsors if nothing else."

Cork's championship was pencilled to start on the weekend of June 13. Paudie feels that "10 weeks would finish our championship. They may not necessarily hold the All-Ireland date of September 6, that could push it out and if it does, so be it."

"Regarding the clubs, I see that the All-Ireland hurling and football club series are gone, which I was expecting. I would expect that camogie will do the same in that there'll be no All-Ireland club finals this year."

"If the club scene started in the middle of September and finished at the end of October it would be fine. We were in CIT on a Friday evening in October for the semi-final between Killeagh and Inniscarra last year, there was a massive crowd and a massive atmosphere there."

If the inter-county championship does start in August and takes 10 weeks, then you wouldn't see club action start until mid/late October.

Forfeited

In that regard I feel that the inter-county league could be forfeited.

Paudie continued: "There are talks circulating that they might run off the clubs before the inter-county. If the clubs could start in July and work through to the end of August and the inter-county series started then and finished October 31 or afterwards."

"That'll probably also become a 'backdoor' situation where if you lose two games you're out. Now the social distancing is the only thing you would query."

"But I'm thinking we will be allowed to do some form of training towards the end of June. Based on what was said in relation to gatherings of 5,000 there should be no reason why we can't fulfil a lot of our fixtures this year."

Does he feel the group structure of the championship will change?

"I can't see why they'd have to change it. We're out five weeks on the trot. I think they'd finish it in 10 weeks."

Paudie mentioned the social distancing issue and that's where I feel the real problem lies. I'm not so sure it'll be that straightforward to run games off.

Camogie wouldn't get 5,000 spectators at a round robin game so they're okay there, but you'd have 30 plus players on top of each other dur-

Murray is optimistic that the season can be completed

Cork camogie manager Paudie Murray remains positive about a return to the season in the summer.

Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne

ing games, sweating, where undoubtedly fluids transmit during games.

Between panels, management, backroom staff, groundsman, county board members etc the numbers don't take long to rise.

You would have players travelling in buses, going home to families after mixing on a pitch. Yes, the numbers are within the criteria of volume, but if social distancing is still the priority for Government, and we'll find that out on May 5, then we've an issue.

Insurance could play a big part here too. Will players be covered? How strict are the insurance companies going to be without a vaccine?

Will they cover organisations?

Government aside, a large section of the ethos of the GAA is dedicated to player welfare and this falls under that bracket. I think there's a lot to consider and it isn't as simple as just going out there.

I feel sorry for Cork minor players in all codes. This may have been the only year some are eligible and the championship could be cancelled. That's their dream gone. I know there are more important matters, but to a minor who wants nothing more than to play for Cork, it's hard.

Jerry Wallace, the Cork minor camogie manager, is in the dark as much anyone as to what will happen.

Today is the day the All-Ireland minor final was to be played and Cork were hoping to be there fighting for a three in a row.

He is upbeat however with his panel. They aren't putting any pressure on the girls. Many of them will now sit the leaving cert in late July. "We've been keeping in contact with the girls," Wallace said.

"All along it's just been once a week. Martin Enright, who does fitness for us, sent in some nice videos. But we're not asking them to stick to any programme. I know there's a lot of mentors asking their players to go out every day telling them to do this and that. I've gone about it the other

way. If they can do a small bit, say 15/20 minutes twice a week and not feel that they have to be doing it every day at the same time, that it's not pressurised.

"Because they're juvenile players, we decided we wanted their training to be age specific. The gym work that's coming into them from Martin, it's maximum twice a week and we've asked them to take their brothers, sisters, and parents out the garden for a puck around as well.

"In their runs we've asked them to do no more than 4km, 2k out and 2k back and it's working out fine."

We'll see what the next few weeks brings. Stay safe everyone.



Cork's many great camogie leaders

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

WITH the Camogie Congress deferred due to the Covid-19 crises, the election for the president of the Association has been put on hold.

The two candidates in the running to succeed Kathleen Woods are Hilda Breslin, Kildare and Wexford's Ailish Whitty.

The Camogie Association has had 30 presidents since its foundation, including two Life Presidents and Cork has more than played its part in supplying excellent leaders for the strongest women's sport in the country.

There have been five presidents from Cork clubs, whilst two Cork natives lead the association under the banner of their adopted counties.

History and tradition has always played a huge role in sport and camogie is no exception since 1935 some wonderful people have led the way with the huge honour of Life Presidency bestowed on Professor Agnes O'Farrelly and Sheila McAnulty in recognition of their unique contribution to the Camogie Association.

The first Cork native to hold the role of President was Lil Kirby elected in 1942.

Lil grew up on the Model Farm Road and was educated at St. Aloysius School.

She captained UCC to Ashbourne Cup success in 1936 and enjoyed a wonderful playing career.

A regular on Cork teams from 1934 to 1941 she won six All-Ireland senior medals and led the county to success in 1940.

She was the first woman to chair the Cork Camogie Board and the county benefited from her leadership.

She was elected President of the Camogie Association at a time when two sides came together following a split over the hockey ban.

After marriage Lil became Lil Crowley and she settled in Bandon.

She was also a top class swimmer and she passed away 1987 at the age young age of 66.

Ballinora-native, Sheila Horgan carried on the Cork tradition of leading the association taking over the mantle in 1946.

She kept Mid-Cork faithful to the Camogie Association during the years that the Cork County Board was on the outside.

She organised the Mid Cork divisional board providing competition for the clubs involved.

She was vice-chairman of the Cork County Board prior to Cork's abstention she served as secretary of Munster Council for two years.

She was a key player on the Ballinora team which won the Cork junior championship in 1934.

Her brother Jim played full-back for the Cork senior hurling team.

In 1965 Lil O'Grady took over as President.

She was born in Sligo and on moving to Cork she played with St Aloysius School Old Aloysians and the Cork schools team.

Lil refereed the 1969 All-Ireland senior final, her late father Michael played football for Leitrim and was vice-chairman of the Sligo GAA Board. Her sister Jo was a regular for Cork



Mary Moran with the then Lord Mayor Tom O'Driscoll at the launch of her publication, 'The history Of Cork Camogie' in 2000.



Joan O'Flynn cuts the ribbon to open the new Cork Camogie Grounds in Castle Road.

and Munster.

Lil served in several positions on the Cork Board including chairperson and led Munster Council for twelve years.

She chaired Munster Colleges Council and was President of the All-Ireland Colleges.

Now, Lil O'Neill resides in Ballinlough and still has a huge love for camogie.

Mary Moran moved to Cork with her family at the age of 11 having been born in Limerick.

She won Cork and Dublin championship medals with Old Aloysians and Celtic (Dublin) and an All-Ireland senior medal with Cork and club All-Ireland with Celtic.

Mary chaired the Cork Camogie Board from 1968 to 1978 and coached Cork to win All-Ireland minor, junior and senior titles.

Elected President of the Camogie Association in 1979 Mary was secretary of Munster and All-Ireland Colleges for thirty-two years and served as President of the All-Ireland Colleges.

She also filled the roles of National Coach, National PRO, inter-county referee and Trustee.

An avid collector of camogie material and memorabilia, she has built up a considerable stockpile over the years and has written some wonderful publications on camogie including the superbly written History of Cork Camogie.

Maire Ni Cheallacháin better known as Mary O' was elected president in 1988.

She was a well-known and colourful character.

Maire played with Lee Valley but

joined Inniscarra when the club was formed in her parish.

She chaired the Cork Board 1980-1985 and Munster Council 1985-1987 and was a member of successful Cork selection committees.

Maire passed away in 1992 but her legacy lives on with the Inniscarra camogie grounds named Pairc Maire Ni Cheallacháin in her memory.

Two Cork-born ladies also led the Association under the banners of their adopted counties.

Nell McCarthy from Carrigtwohill, had an uncle Jimmy 'Major' Kennedy who captained Cork to win the 1919 senior All-Ireland.

Dan, her brother wore the Cork jersey and her grand-nephew Niall won two All-Ireland senior medals.

Nell joined the civil service in Dublin and helped make Celtic into a great club she chaired the Dublin board and was best known for her coaching ability she guided the great Dublin teams of the fifties and sixties.

Nell was elected President of the Camogie Association in 1971 but only served two years of her term of office.

She made a huge contribution to the game and passed away in 2009.

A native of Ladysbridge, Joan O'Flynn became the first President-Elect of the Camogie Association in 2008 under the banner of here adopted county Kildare.

Her father, Séamus Ó Floinn, was a well-known administrator with the Imokilly Divisional Board and the Cork GAA Board.

Joan helped Fr O'Neill's win the Cork junior championship before moving to London and then returning to Kildare for employment where she served in various roles on the Kildare and Leinster council.

Moran gave camogie her all in Cork



Mary Moran with the then Lord Mayor Tom O'Driscoll at the launch of her publication *The History Of Cork Camogie* in 2000.

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

EACH sport has their incredible volunteers.

There are few that have the expansive contribution of Cork's Mary Moran.

Mary was the 18th President of the Camogie Association, elected in 1973. She engaged in the most ambitious programme for a president at the time, travelling the length and breadth of the country to attend medals, functions and coaching courses.

When she moved to Cork from Limerick at the age of 11 she attended St Aloysius School (a prominent camogie nursery) and was introduced to game for the first time.

She won Cork Colleges senior and junior championship medals with them. She played Ashbourne Cup with UCC and won Cork senior and junior championship medals with Old Aloysius Camogie club.

On being appointed to AIB, Dame St, she joined Dublin camogie side Celtic, winning Dublin senior league and championship medals.

Mary won an All Ireland and Munster senior championship medals for her adopted county of Cork.

She joined St Finbarr's and became secretary of the club.

Mary then trained Cork to two senior All Ireland titles 1972 and 1973, an All Ireland Junior (two in the same afternoon in 1973), and two All Ireland Minor titles in 1975 and 1976.

With Ann Carroll in 1978 she wrote the first camogie coaching book called 'Camogie' and followed with a second one, 'The Coach in Action'.

Mary chaired the Cork Camogie Board for 10 years, 1968-77, and was President for five, 1993-97.

She was chair of Munster Council from 2002-06, secretary of Munster Colleges and secretary of All-Ireland Colleges Council for 32 years, 1969-2001, and trustee of the Camogie Association, 2006-2010.

Mary's writing continued.

She is the author of many camogie books, ones I often reference. 'Camogie Champions' (1997), 'Gymfrocks and Headbands' - a history of Munster Colleges, (1997), 'A Resounding Success' - a history of All Ireland Colleges, (1998), 'Cork's Camogie Story' (2000), and 'Munster's Camogie Story' (2004).

Her national history of Camogie 'A Game of Our Own', was published in



The old Aloysius camogie team which defeated Mourneabbey in the county junior championship at Church Road on March 3, 1957. The final score was 5-1 to 3-1. Front from left: Pauline Hegarty, Rena Manley, Helen Sexton, Mary Moran, Lily O'Grady (captain), Carmel O'Connell, Mary Clancy, Maura Fitzgerald. Back from left: Eileen Good, Betty Hegarty, Enda Wiley, Helen Horgan, Dymptna Langford, Phil Joyce, Carmel Joyce, Carmel O'Sullivan.

2011. If anyone can compare the past with the present, it's Mary and she gave me her views when asked about the changes she has seen over the years.

"Yes, indeed I have (seen changes) in all facets of camogie.

"Facilities were non-existent in my playing days. The County Board rented a field in Church Road.

Players toggled out at home, took the bus, cycled or walked to the venue.

Coats were placed in a bundle at the side of the field with the newest recruit's coat on top to catch the rain. Afterwards, we donned our wet coats, got on our bikes covered in mud and cycled home.

"Today's players enjoy state-of-the-art facilities at Castleroad.

Great credit is due to Marian McCarthy and her hard-working committee for their foresight, courage and energy in taking on the project and seeing it through.

At club level, camogie shares ever-improving facilities with the GAA.

"The workload carried by the officers of the senior and juvenile boards is colossal. The number of competitions catered for is huge.

How much longer can a busy county like Cork continue without at least a full-time paid secretary?

"Finance has always presented a headache for camogie. In my playing days, wages were small, government grants for sport did not exist, gate receipts were meagre, and sponsorship did not reach down the pecking order as far as camogie.

"Finding the money to meet the commitments on Castleroad and its upkeep, funding inter-county teams and general administration costs is a constant worry.

Expectations of present-day players is high.

"Publicity afforded to camogie has improved but it still lacks significantly behind that provided to male

sport. On a positive note, The Echo gives camogie a good showing. Modern technology opens up new channels to get our message across and enhance the image of the game.

That is a far cry from the days when "to get a mention" in a minute match preview or report was all that one could aspire to.

"The game itself has undergone huge change.

Present-day players may find it hard to believe that a "Points Bar" existed, joining the tops of the goal posts 20 feet from the ground. A ball passing over this bar was deemed wide. Prior to 1970, no player could be substituted unless the referee considered that she was unable to continue.

No under-age camogie existed at club or inter-county level and the National Leagues had not been established.

"The game was played primarily on the ground with longer and hea-

vier sticks than those in use today. The art of good ground striking, and dribbling have been lost.

"The greatest change that I have witnessed has undoubtedly been the introduction of the 15-a-side game on the full-sized pitch. It has necessitated much higher levels of fitness. The game has grown closer to hurling.

I was disappointed that no effort was made to rid the game of the increasing occurrence of scrums.

Why do so many players feel the necessity to join in'?

Has the game improved?

"The answer is undoubtedly yes. U14 players I watched at the National Feile na nGael displayed more skill than many of the players of yesteryear.

There have always been great players of exceptional natural ability. The big difference is the standard of the remainder of the team. All players can play now".

Linda was a colossus for Cork camogie

CAMOGIE

John Coughlan

THE All-Ireland camogie final of 2002 was a classic game and one which brought the sport to a higher level in front a new watching television audience.

Never before has a Cork versus Tipperary final generated such after-match discussion about the quality on show and the level of skill on show from the players.

One of the most skillful players on display that day and one of the most talked about was Linda Mellerick who clinched her sixth All-Ireland winner's medal.

Linda was actually born in Tipperary in 1967, but moved to Cork at a very young age where she attended St Patrick's school at Gardiner's Hill.

The school was canvassing for camogie players during her first year at secondary school and Linda decided to give it a go.

"To be honest I did not know what I was going to play and had no idea what type of sport camogie really was, but I was told by one of my friends that it was similar to hockey and that sounded fun," said Linda.

As a 15-year-old, Mellerick joined Brian Dillon's but after playing four years with the club she decided to join Glen Rovers.

Linda had to spend a year on the line, but moved into the Glen Senior Camogie team in 1990 after playing two seasons at Junior and Intermediate level.

The Glen Senior team were simply unstoppable during that period as they won seven Cork Senior championships from 1990 to 1996.

Linda won five Munster Senior championships and three All-Ireland Senior club medals.

Mellerick had some special memories of her first All-Ireland club title when the Glen defeated St Paul's who played under that name for the last time as they later came under the Lisdowney banner.

"To be honest the team that we had at the Glen was just something out of the ordinary as we had great players but most of all we had the most unbelievable team spirit that epitomised the whole team in general," said Linda.

Linda added: "It was an honour to play with such a great gang of girls and I will forever remember the great times that we had as I made some great friends playing with the Glen and was just as important as winning medals."

The inter-county scene was just as successful for Mellerick as she won All-Ireland Senior medals in 1992, '93, '95, '97, '98 and 2002.

Linda reflected on what it meant to represent your county.

"I never realised what a great thrill of playing with your county was until I joined up with Cork set-up and it was amazing with some great days



Glen Rovers' Linda Mellerick looking for a way round Imokilly's Helena Barry during a County final dash.

playing in Croke Park.

"I also count myself very lucky that I had the honour of captaining Cork twice to Senior All-Ireland successes in 1993 and 1997 as both of these days were very special and I will always treasure those wonderful memories."

The 1995 All-Ireland final was a very special for Linda and she played a huge role in helping Cork defeat arch-rivals Kilkenny in an epic final.

"That win stands out in my mind as I felt it was my best in a Cork jersey."

"Everyone was saying there was no way that we would beat Kilkenny and with the game in the melting pot we trailed by one point with a minute remaining."

"Amazingly we won by four points and Kilkenny looked shell-shocked at the final whistle but we were naturally over the moon."

In the previous year, with Glen Rovers, Linda had suffered a shattering defeat to Lisdowney in the All-

Ireland club final after having a nine-point cushion with 12 minutes remaining as four goals from the legendary Angela Downey killed their dream.

Mellerick pointed out that the switch from 12-a-side to 15-a-side was a great move for her beloved sport.

"It was the best thing that ever happened camogie as it was strange when we played 12 a side, a goalkeeper could pucker the ball to the opposite keeper because we had smaller and tighter pitches."

"Some counties and clubs may have complained in the past that they couldn't get 15 quality players but that's down to development at juvenile level."

Linda Mellerick retired from inter-county camogie after the epic 2002 All-Ireland final win over Tipperary in 2002.

Linda is regarded as a colossus of camogie and without doubt a fitting example for the up and coming players of the sport.



Linda Mellerick with the O'Duffy Cup after Cork's win over Galway in 1997.

Stats and facts

Linda Mellerick is the holder of five Munster championships and three senior All-Ireland championships, with Glen Rovers, and she is also the holder of seven consecutive Cork senior camogie championships, from 1990 to 1996.

In 1993 and 1997, Mellerick captained Cork to All-Ireland senior successes.

Linda was born in Tipperary, in 1967, but moved to Cork as a young girl.

Linda began her club career with Brian Dillon's, before joining Glen Rovers.

Linda retired from inter-county camogie in 2002.

Linda Mellerick is the weekly camogie reporter for *The Echo*.

This week Echo Sport camogie correspondents Linda Mellerick and Mary Newman look back over the past 40 years and pick their best 15, starting today with nominees for goalkeeper and the defence.

Making the case for a camogie defence

BETWEEN 1980 and 2019, Cork won 14 senior camogie titles.

Mary Newman and I were given the unenviable task of selecting our best 15 players of the past 40 years. It's not easy, particularly when you are a player yourself from that era.

But we'll give it a go and have a healthy debate.

We'll start with the goalkeepers and defenders, and already the pressure is on, such is the calibre of contenders there. But here goes.

GOALKEEPERS

MARIAN MCCARTHY: After winning four All-Ireland senior medals outfield, Marian switched to the position of goalkeeper.

She was an instant success and collected four more All-Ireland medals in her new role. Ball control and classic striking were effortless to her. She held the goalkeeping position from 1978 until 1991.

KATHLEEN COSTINE: Kathleen (RIP) took over from Marian in 1992 when Cork won their first senior title in seven years. She retired after the 1996 final, so her tenure was short, but she made a significant contribution. Her defenders loved her as she kept them on their toes.

AOIFE MURRAY: Arguably the best goalkeeper in the country over the past decade. Aoife's inspirational athleticism, her bravery in advancing on attacking players, her pinpoint puck-outs and her penalty-taking capabilities, not to mention the control she kept of her square and the six players in front of her, were exceptional.

DEFENDERS

CATHY LANDERS: Led Cork to the All-Ireland title in 1983 and is the holder of four senior medals. A tough defender who never conceded an inch, she frequently played a sweeper's role, cutting off many attackers' routes to goal. Strong and determined, she brushed aside tackles.

SANDIE FITZGIBBON: One of the greatest players to grace the game, Sandie was selected on the Camogie team of the Century in 2004. Playing with her heart on her sleeve, she won every honour in the game and had an ability to cover a huge amount of ground. Her ball control and skill were a joy to watch.

EITHNE DUGGAN: Made her stamp very early on as a no-nonsense defender. She was outstanding in her first senior final in 1995 as Cork overcame Kilkenny, showing calmness and standing firm under pressure. Her reading of the game was immaculate as she timed tackles to perfection.

GEMMA O'CONNOR: A brilliant defender and inspirational to all those around her, she is another of the game's finest. Having lined out in various positions with Cork, without doubt in recent times she has been at home at the heart of defence. Gemma has it all — skill, passion, with a huge determination to win.

CLARE CRONIN: A strong, athletic, and skilful player who stood firm in defence as Cork overcame Dublin to be crowned champions in



A determined competitor, Mags Finn's ability to cut off attackers and force them wide was one of the highlights of her game.

Picture: Tom Honan/Inpho



Anna Geary was an extremely versatile player and started her senior career at half-forward.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare

1978 and went on to firmly establish herself as a Cork great.

PAULA GOGGINS: Paula was often the player chosen to mark the opposition's most dangerous forward. A tenacious and physically strong defender whose work-rate was out of the top drawer. She was a thorn in many forwards' sides as they tried to evade her attentions, and a holder of three All-Ireland medals.

DENISE CRONIN: A fast and tenacious player who was at home in any position. A top-class defender who allowed her opponents no time

or space. A huge work-rate, great skill, and will to win were her hallmarks. She captained Cork to All-Ireland victory in 1995.

MAGS FINN: Mags had to wait patiently for her time in Cork's defence. Once her time came, she never relinquished her place, with consistent and dependable performances. A determined competitor, Mags' ability to cut off attackers and force them wide was one of the highlights of her game. Holder of four All-Ireland medals.

MARY O'CONNOR: One of Mary's greatest attributes was her ability to



Aoife Murray was the best goalkeeper in the country over the past decade, according to Linda Mellerick.

Picture: Larry Cummins

read the game. She was a solid centre back who swept up brilliantly and had a great hand under the high ball. She won her first of seven All-Ireland titles in 1997 and holds three All-Stars.

ANNA GEARY: Anna was an extremely versatile player and started her senior inter-county career as a half-forward.

She finished her career as a full-back in 2014 after captaining Cork to the All-Ireland title. One of her greatest attributes was her ability to emerge with the ball from almost every ruck, her strength and

presence of mind bursting out and distributing brilliantly to teammates.

PAMELA MACKEY: One of Cork's most consistent defenders over the past decade. A player whose work-rate, talent, and calm demeanour on the pitch is never found wanting, particularly when the pressure is on. Her speed, deceptive strength, and attacking attributes often turn defence into attack for her team.

RENA BUCKLEY: Rena retired from intercounty camogie in 2018 having worn the red and white for 15 years and with eight titles. She won 18 All-Ireland dual medals, making her one of the most decorated sportspeople in Gaelic games.

A player of absolute composure on the field of play, her ability to break up attacks and jig in and out between attacking forwards to relieve pressure was a highlight.

“Her pinpoint puck-outs and her penalty-taking capabilities, not to mention the control she kept of her square and the six players in front of her, were exceptional.”

Plenty of attacking talent to choose from

Linda Mellerick and Mary Newman choose their nominees for midfield and attack in their bid to pick the best Cork camogie team of the past 40 years.

THIS week we select the best Cork camogie team of the last 40 years.

Today we've come up with five midfielders and 12 forwards to make the line-up, Mary Newman and I pick. On the editor's instructions I had to include myself, which is a strange situation, but then again so is the whole Covid-19 shutdown.

Many of these players were versatile and played across both lines.

MIDFIELDERS

THERESE O'CALLAGHAN: A player who worked extremely hard and loved the nonstop action as she endlessly moved around the field. A great ability to catch and deliver the ball and was a strong determined hurler who never shied away from the tough tackles.

ASHLING THOMPSON: An extremely strong and athletic player matched with a great hurling ability. Extremely difficult to dispose and has a tremendous strike off both sides leading to her scoring some magnificent points from midfield.

LINDA MELLERICK: One of four Cork players selected on the camogie 'Team of the Century' in 2004. Led Cork to two All-Ireland senior titles. Linda always wanting to be in the thick of the action, her trademark was her long dashing solo runs.

VIVIENNE HARRIS: Vivienne's style of play looked effortless as she glided up and down the field. Showed incredible balance with speed and natural hurling ability. Won five All-Ireland titles in a glittering career.

ORLA COTTER: A consistent performer for Cork over 14 seasons Orla is another player whose style of play is effortless. Always available to take pressure off her defence and advance forward picking off wonderful points. Her free-taking was impeccable.

FORWARDS

MARY O'LEARY: A magnificent striker off her left-hand side, a great opportunist and an faultless free taker. Often took up a position around the edge of the square where she added the finishing touches to anything within reach.

FIONA O'DRISCOLL: A superb team player and played with great intelligence. A nifty forward, Fiona had great vision and used this to set up and take scores. Her huge energy level saw her cover open spaces well.

LYNN DUNLEA: Lynn was known as a goal-poacher supreme and had a great natural talent. Given half a chance she was away and had the ball in the net. A great first touch she used her strength to her advantage



Lynn Dunlea takes her point during the All-Ireland senior camogie semi-final at Páirc Uí Rinn.

Picture: Maurice O'Mahony



Orla Cotter fires over a point from play against Tipperary.

Picture: Larry Cummins



Cork's Sile Burns gathers the ball from Limerick's Finola Dore during the Munster junior camogie championship final at Douglas last night.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare

as she stood up to challenges. She was also a proficient free-taker.

MARIAN SWEENEY: Fearless and enthusiastic were the hallmarks of Marion. A versatile player who could play in any position, she always maintained a high standard in a glittering career. Her runs as she picked the ball and ran at opponents saw her cause endless problems.

PAT MOLONEY: Pat had a very distinct style of play. She ran at defences and stretched them to their limits. Her speed, style and skill were a joy to watch. She started as a midfielder before moving to attack where she made a great impact.

COLETTE O'MAHONY: A skilful forward who grabbed scores as well

as being a superb free-taker. Showing nerves of steel, those who witnessed it will never forget her three goals from frees in the All-Ireland semi-final of 1993 against Kilkenny.

IRENE O'KEEFFE: A slight player with a steely determination and an acute goalscorer. A player who never gave up, Irene was the scorer of two goals inside two minutes in the 1998 All-Ireland final victory over Galway. Five All-Ireland medals between 1992 and 1998.

JENNIFER O'LEARY: Jenny was one of the most stylish players to wear the jersey for Cork. With lightning space and a 'shimmy' that no defender could master she skipped through defenders at ease becoming

one of Cork's greatest forwards.

BRIEGE CORKERY: Briega covered every blade of grass on the field of play for Cork. Such was her versatility she was selected in defence, midfield and the forward line in a stellar career. A player of incredible energy and with great speed she holds seven All-Ireland medals and six All-Stars.

KATRINA MACKEY: When you see Katrina heading for goal there is only one outcome: goal. She has a clinical finish. Added to that is an intense work rate and an ability to pick off points with ease. Five All-Ireland titles and five All-Stars is testament to her consistency over the years.

SILE BURNS: A strong player with great balance it was hard to shift her

off the ball. A cool composure in front of goal scoring some top-class goals from tight corners. She was a consistently good performer for Cork even though her inter-county career was short compared with others.

Scored two late points under pressure in the 2010 All-Ireland semi-final to earn Cork a dramatic draw.

MARY GEANEY: Mary was a multi-talented player. She captained Kerry to the All-Ireland football title in 1976 and Cork to the All-Ireland camogie title in 1980 as well as being a member of the Irish international hockey team. An extremely intelligent player, particularly around the square, where she became a prolific scorer in the red and white.

15 of best in last 40 years of Cork camogie

After careful consideration of all the nominees, today Linda Mellerick and Mary Newman chose their best 15 camogie players to put on a Cork jersey

AFTER much deliberation this is what we decided upon as our final 15 Cork camogie players in our best of the last 40 years selection.

In goal, selecting between Marian McCarthy and Aoife Murray was tough.

In the finish Aoife shades, it. She has been truly amazing in the number one jersey.

Her bravery, athleticism and leadership set her apart.

Rena Buckley holds down the right corner back position.

Clever and smart Rena read the play, took stock of her opponents and remained patient, timing her tackles to perfection.

Eithne Duggan is named at full back.

Every time you thought you were away ready to do damage, Eithne's flick would come in and dispossess.

A steady, dependable, no frills full back who was a wall in front of goal.

Killeagh's Cathy Landers takes the left half back position.

One of the toughest opponents you could meet. I remember one night at training in my first year on the Cork senior panel we clashed for a ball.

I went about 3 feet up into the air, swivelled and landed on my backside thinking I had got hit by a train.

Captained Cork to All-Ireland glory in 1983, winning her fourth medal.

Sandy Fitzgibbon produced some memorable displays summed superbly by Brendan Larkin at the time: "Despite the atrocious underfoot conditions and the miserable wind and rain Sandy Fitzgibbon glided effortlessly across the mud splattered Field like Torville and Deane as she turned in a match winning performance."

We had great centre back nominees, but one player stood tall. Gemma O'Connor is a brilliant defender and a true leader, consistently breaking up attacks, winning possession and dazzlingly distributing.

A vital cog in Cork's wheel for 17 years.

At left half back is the speedy Denise Cronin.

What a versatile player to have in your side. The opposition could have five yards on her, and she'd catch them. Her dashes up field were a joy and her goal as captain in the 1995 All-Ireland final turned the tide.

Picking Linda Mellerick for one of the midfielders berths was a no brainer for me and the player the sports editor insisted had to be in the team even though she was involved in picking the team (Mary); one of four Cork players selected on the camogie



WHAT A LINE-UP: Left to right; Sandie Fitzgibbon, Marie Costine O'Donovan, Pat Moloney Lenihan and Linda Mellerick, who in 2004 were named on the Camogie team of the Century, at the Cumann Camogaíocht na nGael centenary celebrations at the Citywest Hotel, Dublin. Three of the four made Cork's best team of the last 40 years, Costine being the odd one out as she played her last game for Cork 1979.

Picture: Brendan Moran /Sportsfile



Tom Nott, selected to manage 'best of the last 40 years' team.

'Team of the Century' in 2004, Linda had a unique style.

What a pity players in her day didn't wear a GPS because she covered every blade of grass.

Her reddish/blonde hair stood out a mile as she weaved her magic, always in the thick of the action she left markers for dead.

Picking two midfielders was the most difficult of all.

We went with Orla Cotter to partner Linda.

Her consistent top-drawer performances for Cork over the years with her rangy style, her coolness under pressure and undeniable men-

tal strength with frees from difficult angles in high pressure games, sees her take the position.

Colette O'Mahony is selected at right half forward. Another who's free taking saved Cork on many a day.

Extremely skilful with a hard-working ethic Colette was a constant in every team sheet.

At centre forward is Fiona O'Driscoll. Her ability to read the game and find open space was brilliant.

A top-class hurler, her 3-2 in the 2002 All-Ireland final victory will live long in the memory.

At left wing forward is Cork's third



Cork's Denise Cronin is challenged by Galway's Pamela Nevin during the 1997 All-Ireland final. Picture: Billy Strickland/Inpho

member of the Team of the Century, Pat Moloney.

Full back Marie Costine was Cork's fourth player selected, but falls just outside this category having played her final year with Cork in 1979.

Pat's speed, skill and wonderful style are legendary, confidently taking on defences.

You could not take your eyes off Lynn Dunlea in the right corner for a second as she was lethal in possession and produced goals from nothing.

Hugely skilful, she was also a proficient free taker.

Those who were lucky enough to watch Mary O'Leary play saw craft, skill and ability to produce magic in the blink of an eye.

She had a great brain with a magnificent strike off her left-hand.

Jennifer O'Leary - The lightning space and nifty play of the small in stature Jennifer O'Leary was a joy to watch.

You held your breath with anticipation once Jenny had the ball.

She retired in 2015 with four All-Ireland titles and six All Star awards having missed two seasons in 2008/2009 while travelling in Australia.

She scored 2-38 in the 2011 championship.

Manager of the team

This was a toss up between Paudie Murray and Tom Nott.

Certainly, Paudie has brought camogie to a new level, such is the times we live in.

Before that, without the props we have today, Tom Nott was a fantastic man to analyse and read a game.

An incredible motivator he was manager of many Cork successful teams in the late 70s / early 80s and returned in 1995 to guide Cork to another three All-Ireland titles.

Tom Nott is our manager of this selection.

Cork Selection: Aoife Murray; Rena Buckley; Eithne Duggan; Cathy Landers; Sandy Fitzgibbon; Gemma O'Connor; Denise Cronin; Linda Mellerick; Orla Cotter; Colette O'Mahony; Fiona O'Driscoll; Pat Moloney; Lynn Dunlea; Mary O'Leary; Jennifer O'Leary.

Camogie extends suspension of activities



Cork players Chloe Sigerson and Niamh Callaghan looking to stop the breaking Katie Nolan, Kilkenny, in their Littlewoods Division 1 camogie league match at Páirc Uí Rinn. There will be no camogie activity until at least June 8. Picture Dan Linehan

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

THE Camogie Association issued its own statement during the week in relation to Covid 19 and its members.

"The Camogie Association welcomes the publication of the Irish Government's 'roadmap for re-opening society and business' on Friday, April 30, which provides all sports organisations with a pathway for a return to activity within the Republic of Ireland.

"In light of the latest developments in relation to Covid-19 and upon advice from the relevant state authorities, including the HSE, the Camogie Association will extend its current suspension of all camogie activities until Monday, June 8 (inclusive) or as further advised.

"The association is currently assessing the impact of the roadmap, as well as an awaited roadmap in relation to Northern Ireland, on the phased return to activity and will outline in the coming weeks the association's plans regarding how this will happen.

"We acknowledge that this step will result in further inconvenience and disruption to members as well as the game at all levels, however we appreciate the continuous co-operation and support of everyone involved at this time. The health and safety of our members is, as always, of paramount importance and these steps will assist us all in taking the necessary precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to return to full activity as early as possible.

"As this is still a rapidly developing situation, we will continue to monitor the information received from the relevant authorities on a day-to-day basis. Further updates will be issued in due course."

I clarified with the association that 'all camogie activities' includes training in any group size.

So, the government might be permitting groups of four to get together for sporting activity post May 18, but the Camogie Association are saying no until June 8 at least.



Éire Óg's Orlaith Cremin and Nevaeh O'Connell of Sarsfields in action during last year's Camogie Féile final.

Picture: Lorraine O'Sullivan

That's important to know as I don't think many members are aware of that and I wonder if teams will adhere to it.

People are so divided as to whether there should be GAA action this year, with already many heated debates around it. There are many who are truly desperate for action and refuse to see a situation where it may not happen.

My own opinion is that it just isn't going to work this year. I think it's too risky.

We all love our sport, but it isn't worth any player or associated member catching the virus and spreading it. Even if one additional death occurs because of collective training or a match that went ahead, then it's one death too many.

There are just too many avenues during close proximity activity by which this virus can spread. I don't

think games behind closed doors is the answer either. The numbers and close contact are just too much. I think referee David Gough coming out earlier this week saying that he wouldn't officiate until a vaccine is found is both wise and brave.

Of course, some blasted him on twitter for it, but he has every right to protect himself and his family. If the go ahead is given, we'll see some players pulling out of games or put under pressure to play when they really don't want to.

That's not right.

This is going to divide managements, players, and the public and I think the GAA, and I include camogie and ladies football in this, should take this unrest out of their hands, make the call and cancel 2020 and resume in 2021 with, please God, a vaccine in place by then.

We all think it'll never come to our

door. But it does. I as much as anyone miss the games, but nothing is worth the risk. I can't wait to spend time with my wider family when this is over, and I certainly wouldn't want to be the person to bring it into our fabric.

I'm sure many players are anxious about this too. Some will have a care-free attitude towards it of course. Everyone's home situation is different, and the risk levels vary greatly. If the season does go ahead, each player should have the freedom to make their own decision free from criticism. But, as I said, I think it's putting players in a very difficult situation and management too.

Meanwhile, while all of this is going on, Covid 19 has brought out the wonderful nature in the Irish people once again.

The fundraising activities nationwide are truly uplifting. The big two

that I'm aware of was the "Do It for Dan" fundraiser where little Dan Quigley has a rare genetic neuromuscular disease and over €2m was raised to help Dan get a life-changing and saving operation in the USA.

Then we had the 'GoFundMe' drive for Saoirse Ruane who at eight years of age was diagnosed with a tumour in her tibia resulting in intense chemotherapy and the amputation of her right leg. She's a camogie player from Galway and the fund will help her rehabilitation and obtain prosthetics which will need replacing regularly as her body grows.

Every club is doing something whether it's for Penny Dinners, Pieta House, Marymount, the Irish Cancer Society plus many more. It would be wrong to highlight a few clubs when so many are doing so much.

It's truly uplifting and well done to all.

Cork stars' hopes and fears for season



Cork captain Amy O'Connor keeps fit during the pandemic lockdown by going through her paces at the Glen GAA Grounds.

Picture: INPHO/Dan Sheridan

Camogie pair have plenty to focus on despite uncertainty

TWO Cork players, captain Amy O'Connor and Laura Treacy, have different views on the current playing season and how they think it'll play out.

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

"I can't personally see action this year, especially when John Horan said that if there's going to be social distancing still in October, then there won't be any GAA until social distancing is gone," says Laura.

"Social distancing could be here for another two years for all we know unless they come up with some vaccine or medication that is proven to work. They won't find that in a few months, and people will be slow to take the vaccine when there's no study or results to judge the effects of it".

Amy, with a Masters in pharmacy and currently working as a project manager with a software company, feels that a vaccine won't be available in the short term, but feels there is still a chance of action on the field. In her first year as captain of the team, she must be disappointed?

"It is very disappointing, I suppose, on a personal level, but at the same time there are much more important things at the moment, and that is my family and friends coming out of this healthy," she says.

"I want it (the games) to come back, but it's hard to tell at the moment. I was glad in a way that the GAA came out and left that bit of hope there by saying October. What if they had cancelled it completely and then come August we've come out of coronavirus and we'd be saying: 'we could have played'. So I'm glad that no decision has been made."

Laura is a nurse at CUMH, the maternity hospital, but is working in the Colposcopy clinic, based in St Finbarr's grounds in Douglas road. She is thankful her clinic has remained open.

"All of the outpatients clinics were cancelled in the CUH when the restrictions came in, but because we are offsite and Colposcopy is an urgent clinic, we are one of the lucky ones in that we are still operating," she says.

"Colposcopy is a cervical check. If you have abnormal smear results from your GP or the lab, you come into a colposcopy clinic. We're diagnostics. We do biopsies and treatments for people who have small cancer/pre-cancerous cells. We don't do major surgeries, that's the next step if required. We've a huge waiting list. Because of the dilemma over the CervicalCheck screening a couple of years ago, the referrals have increased massively. The whole screening programme is paused, so if you were due a smear test, you have to wait — but we are catching up on our waiting list and it's great to be getting that reduced."

"I trained in Waterford and was up and down the road for Cork training. I then got a job in the Mercy Hospital and worked there for nine months leading into the summer of 2018. I trained with Martin (O'Brien) before the girls would arrive to do their training and then I'd go to work and do a 12-hour shift. It was just torture."



"Social distancing could be here for another two years for all we know," says Cork's Laura Treacy.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Gezo

"I wasn't going to give up camogie, so I ended up doing agency nursing. I did a few shifts in the Colposcopy clinic and it really suited me. I loved the job and the hours suited camogie. I was offered a full-time role in there and now I'm training to be a Colposcopist".

How is she coping with the individual training?

"It's a hard one. I never took up camogie to be training alone. Up until last week I was doing a lot in building my fitness and strength. I'm still training five nights a week, but in the past week I'm changing how I train a bit. I used to time runs and try to beat that weekly."

"Sunday just gone I decided to do a longer run, but not as fast. It's very

hard to keep motivated and know what way it's going to go. I'd nearly wish they'd decide on it. If the HSE approved it then great, but more than likely it's not going to go ahead. How is it feasible? If it's not going to be safe in groups of 30, 40, or 50 people, then it's not worth it."

"Gathering 30 amateur players for training and going home to families with no cure or vaccine? I think they need to call it soon. If we are aiming for October, well how should we be training with that date in mind? So as much as I'd hate it, I just wish they'd call it."

Amy feels that you need to find a bit of "bite" within you to keep going.

"I think when you're playing with Cork you need to have a bit of bite. At

this level you need to be motivated regardless of whether you're on your own or with a team," she says.

"It is hard and some will find it easier than others. I think we need to keep a good baseline and if we go back, then ramp it up at speed. I think players should use the time to better themselves."

"I struggle with my flexibility so that's something I'll be focusing on, others could struggle with their speed, so they could work on that."

"I'm still hopeful, but I'm fully aware that if it's too dangerous, then we can't (go back)."

"[I know] from my pharmaceutical background, vaccines can take years to develop and get approval. So we'll have to wait and see".

'I think Dónal Óg Cusack said one time that a day you leave the hurley down is a day lost'

**Amy O'Connor
(St Vincent's and Cork)**

BEFORE I say anything at all about my hands I have to put something on the record: I have the coldest hands in the world if you want the complete truth! I'd wear gloves in the warm-up before games most of the time, and I always have hand-warmers in the gloves and in my skort pockets.

Injury-wise my hands are good. They're in great condition and I've never broken anything, touch wood. Over the years I've had small niggles and injuries — the ligament in my thumb might have been strained, or the ligaments in my wrist. When that happens I'd use a squeeze ball to build up the muscle and the grip in my hands to recover, but that hasn't happened in a while, and I wouldn't use a ball like that to build up the strength in my hands.

I do have long fingers — very long fingers.

My nan used to tell me when I was small that my fingers were perfect for playing the piano, but that's something I never got around to: Maybe when I stop playing camogie I might take it up. I suppose it has to help, to have long fingers, when it comes to controlling a hurley and sliotar.

I'm picky about my hurleys, but I think everyone is in this day and age. I go out to Michael Fitzgerald in Araglen, Fitzgerald Hur-

leys, for mine. I give him a ring once or twice a year and he has a record outside of what I want, length and weight. I take a size 31 hurley, which is very small, but

I'm not that big myself anyway. They have the weight on record — I can't remember what it is off the top of my head — and the style that I like. They



call it the Coleman style, though I'm not sure who Coleman is or was. I use a plain black grip, nothing fancy.

With Cork we tend to have four hurleys on the go during the season, but you'd want to switch them up as you're going along. If you're using one all the time and that breaks in a game, then the hurley carrier is running into you with a stick you're not going to be 1000% comfortable with.

You have to use them in rotation, even though they're all copies of each other, essentially. I could use one of those in a game, obviously, but I couldn't use a 34 inch hurley if I was unlucky enough to break my own four hurleys. I suppose if I had to I would, but I wouldn't be comfortable with it, certainly. At home I have hurleys everywhere. I'm not too particular where I keep them either, as my mother would know well — she kills me when she finds them in the two sheds, behind the door, in the hall, in the wardrobe.

Getting started off, the game came to me pretty naturally but it was also something I worked very hard on. I'd say I worked on my game every single day of my childhood with my dad.

Even though he didn't play himself, he would still have brought me up to the field or the park every evening — and I mean every evening — and that was something we did before I even joined a club.

And I still try to get the hurley in my hand as often as I could. It's necessary to keep your touch. I think Dónal Óg Cusack said one time that a day you leave the hurley down is a day lost, and



Amy O'Connor: 'Injury-wise my hands are good. They're in great condition and I've never broken anything, touch wood. Over the years I've had small niggles and injuries — the ligament in my thumb might have been strained, or the ligaments in my wrist.'

that's something that always stuck with me.

Obviously I've had times when, through college or work, I haven't been able to get the hurley in my hand, but I still try to practice as much as I can.

Players I admire?

Patrick Horgan and TJ Reid are obvious ones — they're not that much older than me but I admired them a lot when I was younger.

In camogie Orla Cotter has terrific skills. Jenny O'Leary was someone I played with for Cork for only one year, but she had fantastic hands.

Gemma O'Connor's someone I would

have looked up to, her striking in particular is every bit as good as a man's, and it's great to still have the opportunity to play with her for Cork.

Even watching camogie and hurling, in person or on television, I suppose I'm always evaluating people's skills and touch, though I try to stay away from judging them on mistakes because I know well how hard it is.

You hear people giving out on the sidelines or the stands and you know well they never played themselves.

So I'd always try to stop myself from criticising players for mistakes because I can sympathise with them.

In terms of the opposite, players doing things that you say to yourself 'how did they do that', Cian Lynch from Limerick is a player whose skills are really top, top class: He's done a few pretty extravagant things over the years in big games, things that leave you thinking: 'This guy's wrists are unbelievable'.

The other one that leaps to mind is Austin Gleeson's goal for Waterford against Cork in the All-Ireland semi-final a couple of years ago — he soloed through the middle and flicked the ball into the net. It was an incredible goal.

Interview: Michael Moynihan

Linda Mellerick

'We must work to find way back'

EIGHT weeks down the line, with camogie and GAA pitches still closed across the country, Cork manager Paudie Murray's views on the lockdown and whether he sees a playing season for camogie this year have not changed.

He is keen to see players allowed to get back to some form of activity, for both mental and physical benefits.

"First and foremost, the most important thing is everyone's well-being during this current time," he said. "However, I think there are further problems down the track with kids, teenagers, and young adults suffering from mental health and anxiety.

"I'd get them out as quickly as possible. I don't see anything wrong with groups of four meeting for social distance exercising, supervised by parents, which I am, or others."

Government guidelines for phase one of the lifting of restrictions on May 18 permitted outdoor group exercise of up to four people where social distancing can be maintained. The next phase on June 8 states: "People can take part in outdoor sporting and fitness activities, involving team sports training in small groups [but not matches] where social distancing can be maintained and there is no contact."

The Camogie Association has set June 8 as a date for any further update, but the GAA has banned all training until at least phase four, on July 20. That means all pitches are off-limits, even to individuals.

"All I'm saying is that, as per Government phase one, there is no question that people should be left into pitches now in small groups and let the decision about playing up to the experts. The Government have listened to the health advice," said Murray. "They've lifted restrictions.

"The GAA and camogie associations need to do the same. The Government have put in place an advisory group and the GAA have created a dedicated Covid-19 advisory group with medical experts and representatives from GAA, camogie, LGFA, and GPA. It is these experts that will make the decisions and provide future guidance.

"During the week, a software system figured on the Claire Byrne show, from a Cork software development company, 8 West Consulting. It presented a temperature patch that at regular intervals takes the temperature of healthcare staff and alerts if any abnormalities are found.

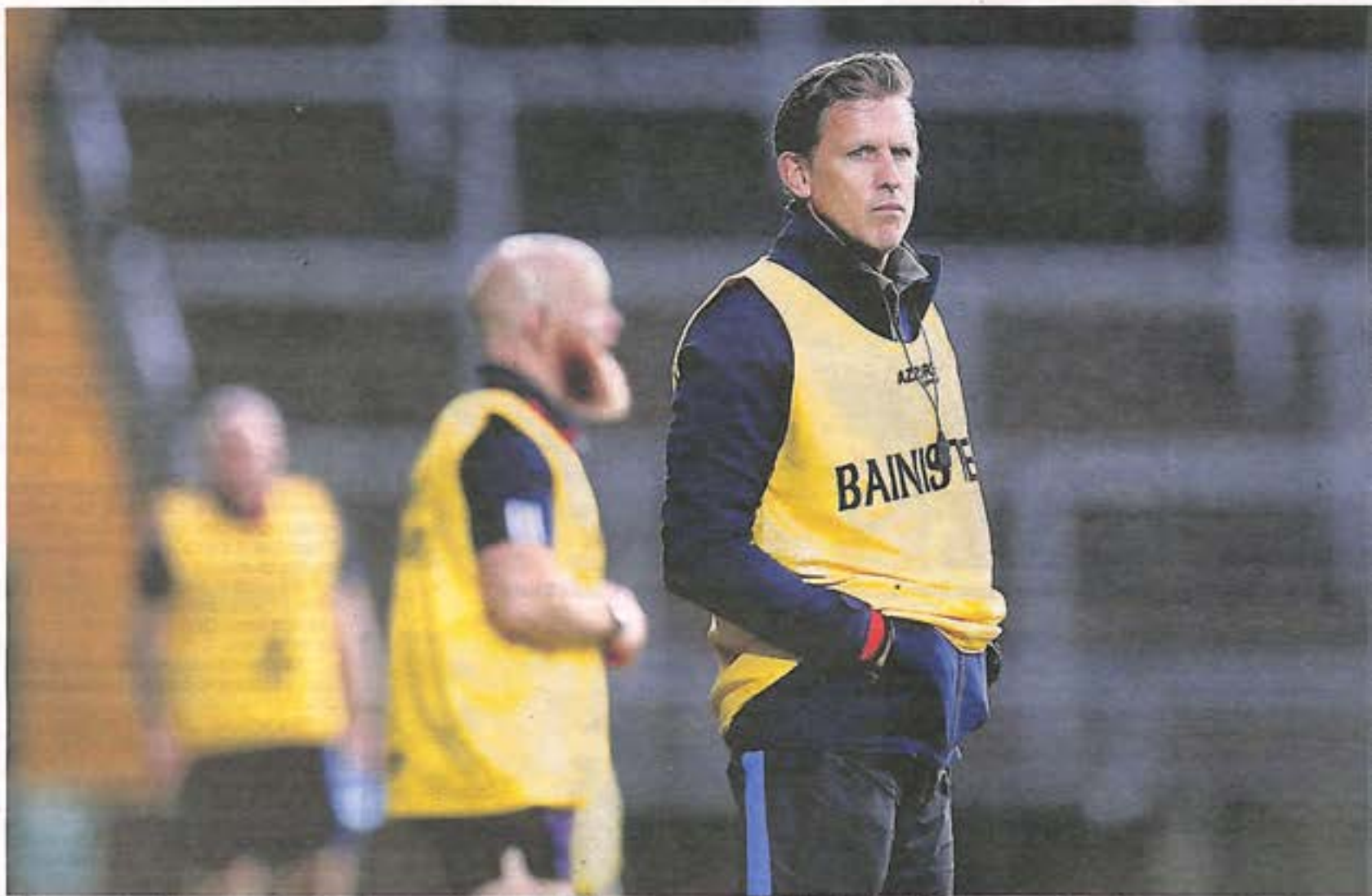
"This is being adapted for those involved in sport, to similarly alert if a player/management shows signs of the virus. If that does happen, the person is isolated from the group to protect the group and the person gets the necessary medical attention at the earliest possible point," he said.

"Just one of several measures being looked at behind the scenes to mitigate concern of all those involved. They're talking about clubs going first. I've no problem with that at all. I don't mind who goes out first, once we get groups back out and onto the pitches. I'm not so sure, however, it's possible to go club-first, considering the logistics of it.

"If both club GAA and club camogie are back at the same time, I would expect that camogie clubs will have difficulty getting facilities.

"What's going to happen next year? Is there going to be no GAA or camogie again because the experts tell us it's highly unlikely there will be a vaccine before then, or social distancing end anytime soon.

"In my opinion inter-county will go first because it can be managed safely, and clubs who have larger numbers can safely follow on with these learnings. There is going to be



Cork manager Paudie Murray on the sideline in last year's All-Ireland semi-final. A return to action will be hard work, but a way must be found, he says. Picture: Ryan Byrne/Inpho



Amy O'Connor is ready for a return to action when permitted, but Cork camogie manager Paudie Murray says strict guidelines are expected. Picture: Dan Sheridan/Inpho

an awful lot of preparatory work and strict guidelines expected, between constant monitoring of players and management, disinfecting players, hurleys, sliotars, and all other equipment. Dressing rooms will need to be thoroughly cleaned, among many other measures. It's going to be hard

work," he added. With regard to the structure of camogie championship fixtures, Murray doesn't believe change is needed. "I don't think the camogie championship has to be knockout. If we leave the group stages as is and play week after week, have no quarter-finals and have a



Milford's Ashling Thompson returned to the Cork squad this spring. The Camogie Association has set a June 8 date for any update on play resuming. Picture: Eddie O'Hara

one-week break before the semi-final and a two-week break before the final you'd have the championship finished in nine weeks," he said.

"There's no arguing then about what team should play who, if the group games were scrapped. I think that would be the fairest.

"Once the experts allow, if the championship started on August 1 you'd have it run off by the end of September at the latest. Clubs could then start, but as I said I don't mind who goes first. At this stage what I want is to get the pitches open again so that male and female players can train in small groups and take it from there. Leave the experts make the decisions, rather than us trying to come up with A or B. We have two options which we will be guided on; we do nothing for the next year and a half or we sit down and see if there is a workable solution."

“They're talking about clubs going first. I've no problem with that at all. I don't mind who goes out first, once we get groups back out and onto the pitches.”

Costine will always be Queen of Cloyne

CAMOGIE

■ John Coughlan

The East Cork village of Cloyne has produced two of the greatest sportspeople ever to hold a hurley.

It is the birthplace of the late Christy Ring as well as camogie star Marie Costine, whose stirring displays at full-back made her a star in the 1960s and 1970s.

Marie was born in Cloyne in 1947 and attended Cloyne National School, but amazingly started playing camogie much later than some of her peers.

Costine began playing at the age of 17 when she was part of the Oil Refinery club which she helped to win a Junior championship medal.

Two years after her camogie debut, Marie joined Youghal where she remained until 1971.

Honours were hard to come by with the seashiders, and it wasn't until Cloyne set up their own camogie club that things changed for Marie.

It was the start of an illustrious career for the Cloyne lady and two years later she helped them win the 1973 Cork County Junior Championship title and the Intermediate championship followed two years later.

She was also part of the Imokilly divisional team that won five-in-a-row Senior County Championship titles between 1972-76.

Incredibly, she went on to win another four senior championships, this time with Killeagh, as she played a leading role in their county wins of 1980, '81, '82, and '84 that brought her Cork Senior County championships medal tally to nine.

Killeagh also had a memorable win in the 1980 All-Ireland Club Championship when they defeated Buffer's Alley of Wexford in a pulsating final.

Costine began playing with Cork in 1967 and she had to wait only four years for her first All-Ireland when she won a senior medal, the Rebels defeating Kilkenny in the final.

The brilliance of Cork at the time was epitomised as they won four in a row from 1970 to 1973. Marie was full-back on all four.

Marie was nominated as captain of the 1973 Cork team, and she proudly led the Rebels to a one-point win over Antrim in a pulsating decider.

"It was a day I will never forget, as I was always very proud to wear the jersey of Cork, but to captain the All-Ireland winning team was the proudest moment of my camogie career.

"The game itself was nail-biting from start to finish, but we just about held out for that memorable win."

Back then, camogie was only 12-a-side, but the Costine family were not far from fielding a full family team.

In the 1973 final of the Cork Intermediate Camogie Championship, when Cloyne were victorious, Marie



Cork's Marie Costine clears the ball during the 1973 All-Ireland camogie final against Antrim.

Stats and facts

- Marie Costine is the holder of nine Cork senior championship medals.
- Marie is the aunt of the former Cork Senior hurling goalkeeper Donal Og Cusack.
- Costine captained Cloyne to win the Cork Intermediate camogie championship of 1973 where her six sisters also played in the same team.
- In 2004 Marie Costine was named on the camogie team of the century at a presentation before 1,000 guests at the City West Dublin.
- Marie retired from camogie in 1987 at the age of 40.

and her six sisters were all part of the team on that day.

"It was unreal and unusual, but my six sisters, Bunnie, Bernie, Kathleen, Rita, Geraldine and Ashlyn, all played on the day and that meant a lot to all of us playing together with our beloved club."

Indeed, the family is steeped in sporting tradition as her sister Bernie is the mother of the former Cork senior hurling goalkeeper Donal Og Cusack.

Marie looks back on her career with pride, but believes more support at games is still needed.

"The present-day players are a lot fitter but to me attendances at games have not improved that much from my time as all young people want to do is watch TV and play on their laptops and phones and a lot of outdoor sports have suffered in a big way."

In 1979, Marie married Edmond O'Donovan and they later had two children, Edmond Jnr and Joanne.

After what was an illustrious career Marie retired in 1987 at the age of 40 after playing at the top level for 20 years.

As she recalled those memorable times, Marie says that an abiding memory is playing at the Cloyne GAA pitch as a young girl with the legendary Christy Ring.

"Every Saturday I would go up for a puck-about at our pitch and nine times out of 10 Christy would be up there," she said.

"Christy would always send me into goal, and at first his shots would be tame but when he gathered momentum his shots would pass me like bullets always advising me that wrist work was crucial."

If Christy Ring is classed as the King of Cloyne, then surely Marie Costine would have to be classed as Queen.

Her sporting honours in camogie are another great chapter in Cloyne's history.

'I never took to the plastic hurleys —

**Jill Horan,
Tipperary and
Cashel**

Hurling hands

MY hands are pretty okay — I broke a couple of fingers back in the day, but no surgery needed.

I got a few stitches over the eye one time when a hurley came in through the facemask, but in general I'd have been known for being on the periphery, looking for the breaking ball.

When I was playing I had the usual scrapes and cuts but one difference between hurling and camogie is the hoops on a hurley are taped over in camogie, so that helps — there aren't as many cuts.

I was reared in America until I was 10, and then we came back to my father's family area, Drangan in Tipperary. In America my brother, sister and I played tennis — my parents were big into tennis — as well as baseball.

That helped with the hand-eye co-ordination, but when we moved home we held the hurley like a baseball bat, the

'wrong' way, like a golf grip.

Our school principal William O'Grady, who played for Tipperary himself, hounded us into changing our grip — though my sister never did — and as a result it was sixth class in school before I got to grips with that changed grip, with holding the hurley the opposite way to how I'd started.

I wouldn't say it was that challenging: it was just a bit strange for a while, but my brother and I practiced away, hitting the ball off the wall, and we got the hang of it.

I was a bit precious with my hurleys — Jimmy O'Brien in Drangan made them when I was growing up, but then I used Torpey hurleys. A good friend of mine, Peter Maher, worked for Torpey's and would have gotten hurleys for me.

I liked my hurleys light, around 31 or 32 inches. Starting off in my career I liked a very light hurley because I was inside corner-forward, but as I moved outfield towards midfield I switched to a heavier hurley because I needed to de-



Jill Horan used to grip a hurley the 'wrong way' like a golf grip.

liver the ball a bit further, obviously.

When I moved to Dublin I fell in with Ballyboden St Enda's for training for a couple of years, and the plastic hurleys were huge at that time, a lot of girls used them and swore by them.

I never really took to them, to be honest. I tried one for a couple of training sessions and found the touch too strong — the ball would bounce too far off the plastic compared to the touch you'd get with the traditional stick.

the touch wasn't the same'

I'd have to use the same hurley and would usually have three: Two I'd be comfortable with and one then as a back-up if it came to it.

When it comes to skills, I first came onto the scene with Tipperary as a kid and was fascinated with how Deirdre Hughes was able to catch the ball over defenders, because she wasn't that tall.

Another difference between camogie and hurling is that you can play

the stick in camogie, and Deirdre was able to do so without swinging wildly — she was so cute at tipping her marker's hurley out of the way so she could catch the ball.

Una O'Dwyer was another player with great hands — she was so aware of a full-forward going to tip her hurley under a dropping ball that she'd switch hands and catch



the ball with her right hand rather than her left. Those skills always caught my eye. If I had to borrow another player's hands for one game, I'd say

Mary Leacy of Wexford. Fantastic in the air and always seemed able to read the game so well, ending up in the right place at the right time. Great hands.

Clara Gaynor as well — she was a player with a similar style to Mary.

Obviously backs are meant to mark forwards rather than the other way around, but Mary and Clara are the only two defenders I can remember being told — as a forward — to mark. It was always someone's job to mark those two players in a game because otherwise they'd dominate the games.

You'd see some players and their hands were so good... Jovita Delaney as a goalkeeper would rarely if ever bat the ball when it dropped into the goal. Some keepers would be touch and go under a dropping ball and would bat it out to be safe, but she'd always put the hand up and catch it.

Katie Power has a great hand, so has Anne Dalton. Orla Cotter is the same — she's tall enough to use that to her advantage, too.

Interview: Michael Moynihan

**Noreen Coen,
Athenry and
Galway**

'My sister and brother enhanced my competitive streak at home'

Q. Ambition or talent — which matters more to success?

A. I believe the two are intertwined. It was always my ambition to play for Galway at the highest level but obviously a certain degree of talent is required to make that happen. Talent will only go so far but ambition, drive, and determination outweighs talent.

Q. Who is/was your sporting mentor?

A. My family always had a huge influence on me. My father started me off playing when I was six years old. My sister and brother enhanced my competitive streak at home and my mother roared from the sideline! My partner and my brother-in-law have had a positive influence on me in recent years. Numerous coaches at club level have also had a huge influence on

me throughout the years.

Q. What ambitions do you still have?

A. To win another All-Ireland senior title with the current squad.

Q. Where are you happiest?

A. Spending time with family and friends. With sport being paused over the past few months, I have been able to spend a lot more time with my parents which I value. I have a niece and two nephews that bring so much fun and enjoyment to my life — there is never a dull moment! I am also extremely fortunate to have a great network of friends.

Q. What's your guilty pleasure?

A. Chocolate!! Every year I give it up for lent. Embarrassingly I set my alarm for 12.01am on Holy Thursday to devour my Cadburys caramel Easter egg. For

anyone who isn't aware lent finishes on Holy Thursday!

Q. The four people you'd invite to a dinner party?

A. Michael Jordan — because I am obsessed after watching *The Last Dance*. Rory's Stories for the craic. Beyoncé for the sing-song after and Brian O'Driscoll because everybody loves BOD!!

Q. If you could pick one superpower, what would it be?

A. Slow down time — I am getting too old too quickly!!

Q. What advice would you give your 18-year-old self?

A. Be yourself. Do not be worrying about how people perceive you both on and off the field. Do not dwell on the negatives, dust yourself down and move on.

Q. The one result you'd change if you could?

A. The Senior Club All-Ireland final in 2009. We were beaten by Cashel by two points. They had beaten us significantly two years previously.



In 2009 we had won our fourth consecutive county title. We were a very close-knit group. We felt we had a great chance that year. But unfortunately, injuries, weather conditions, and missed chances meant that it was not our day.

Q. A motto you live by?

A. Treat others how you would like to be treated.

Q. One team-mate you'd want to have your back?

A. Niamh Hanniffy — a tough woman but says it how it

this girl is a privilege and a half!! Similar characteristics with Therese Maher and Ann-Marie Hayes in previous years.

Q. Your manager's on a lie detector, what's the first question you ask him?

A. Applicable to all managers — Why is the corner forward always the first one to go?

Q. Best perk of your sport away from the game?

A. Learning to be disciplined and resilient. The lifelong friendships created. The All-Stars Tour to New York last year was a major highlight also! (Cheers Michelle Quilty and the Camogie Association for the nod).

Q. Out of 10, rate your satisfaction

A. Generally, I am a happy person. I'm happy in my work, in my relationship, and in my sport.



Noreen Coen: Counts herself lucky to have a great network of friends.

'I get such joy from sport'

SCHOOL DAZE

AMY O'CONNOR

I HAVE really good memories of going to the Cork City Sports in Páirc Uí Chaoimh in primary school and practising in the weeks leading up to that every year. My most vivid memory of my first day in secondary school is getting the top locker which was a bit of a disaster for me as I was so small at the time.

I was always a good child — sports-mad and I loved school. I was good at sport and subjects like biology, chemistry and business but was absolutely dreadful at singing and anything that involved music.

As for lessons I learned during school years that apply to my life today? You will be rewarded for the work that you put in and to always try your best!

If I were to meet myself as a kid, I would say: The most important thing in life is to be a good, honest and caring person and to ensure that no one feels left out and left behind. Treat everyone how you would like to be treated.

The best advice I got back then that I apply to my life today? An investment in your education pays the best interest.

I was lucky enough to have had brilliant teachers, especially during secondary school. There are four that stand out and all for very different reasons. Mr Stuart Barry was my maths teacher and also the school camogie coach. He put a lot of time and effort in with me as I missed quite a bit of school playing soccer abroad and because of his help outside of class I was able to sit higher-level maths for my Leaving Cert. He also really helped me camogie wise and said a few things over the years which I still think about today.

Ms Eibhlís Lysaght was my business teacher and again put so much effort in with not only me but all of her students. Our class absolutely loved Ms Lysaght and had so much respect for her. She taught me so much about organisation and leadership.

Ms Rita Ferriter was my biology and chemistry teacher and her classes were always so entertaining.

She made these difficult subjects easy and I went on to study pharmacy in college and believe that it was as a result of her making chemistry and biology so enjoyable to study. I still laugh today at some of the things that happened in her class.

Ms Naughton was our guidance counsellor in fifth and sixth year and encouraged me to seek out a scholarship to college. She helped me in so many ways during the application and interview process and I was awarded the Quercus scholarship in

UCC for the entire duration of my studies.

I think I actually only ever went to one school disco as I absolutely hated anything like that! It was the night of our Junior Cert results.

Growing up, all I ever wanted to do



Cork senior camogie player and All Star Amy O'Connor. Picture: Inpho/Dan Sheridan

‘Sport teaches us such valuable life lessons like discipline and resilience and I would encourage everyone to get involved’

was be a Cork senior camogie player and the joy I get from sport, especially camogie, is something I can't describe so I always knew it would be a big part of my life.

I definitely didn't always know I would end up working in the field I am working in. I studied Pharmacy in UCC and did a Masters in Pharmacy with the Royal College of Surgeons and now I'm working with a technology company who focus on internal employee communications.

I always thought I'd end up working in the pharmaceutical industry or something to do with medicine — and maybe someday I will — but for now I'm delighted to be trying something totally new to me.

It is a challenge but it will stand to me in the future and when the opportunity arose, I knew that these opportunities won't always come knocking so I jumped at it. I'm currently working with Workvivo and the people I work with are unbelievably talented at what they do.

As for these strange times, I would say to people to try and enjoy the slower pace of life because before we know it, we will all be back running and racing everywhere. Enjoy the time spent with family, we may never get this much time again!

Sport also teaches us such valuable life lessons such as discipline and resilience and I would encourage everyone to get involved in sport — not only for their physical health but also for their mental health.

■ Amy O'Connor is a Cork senior camogie player and All Star. She is currently working with Cork company Workvivo.

IN CONVERSATION
WITH EVE KELLIHER

GAA family pitch in for coaching project

GAA

■ Linda Mellerick

ALL Gaelic football, hurling, and camogie coaches throughout the city and county are being asked to help the GAA to deliver improved coaching education and development throughout its clubs.

It surely has been a time for reflection and focus on development during this pandemic. It's good to take a step back and take stock and if there is anything that Covid-19 has given us, it's the time to do this, in all aspects of life, not just sport.

With all of us forced to slow down, other areas have taken our focus. In what the GAA says is the biggest coaching survey conducted in Irish sport, the organisation has joined forces with the Camogie Association and the Ladies Gaelic Football Association to "help shape the future development of Gaelic games".

The survey will be undertaken over the next three weeks and the GAA says coaches at every level are being urged to make their voices heard via the online survey.

GAA coach education officer Dr Peter Horgan says coaches play an important role in gaelic games, providing support and guidance for their teams and players and none more so than in the current suspension of activities.

"We are interested in feedback from coaches on their coaching experience, their coaching practice, and how coaches see coaching into the future. We are also very interested in coaches' experience of coach education, and what coaches feel are their own learning needs."

Those people who have dropped out of coaching are also part of this survey to help the GAA understand why they are no longer coaching and whether there is anything that can put in place to encourage them back into coaching.

The GAA is targeting more than 10,000 responses, "making it one of the most comprehensive coaching studies ever undertaken."

The survey will take place online, and the GAA says it is completely anonymous, and confidential.

President of the Camogie Association, Kathleen Woods, says this important research will give the GAA a great insight into the world of its coaches throughout the gaelic games family.

"Coaching is a vocation to many volunteers and they provide expertise, support, enthusiasm, and guidance to players within our games at all ages and levels of the game, to enable players to enjoy our games as much as possible and to reach their full potential.

LGFA President Marie Hickey says



Kathleen Woods, Camogie Association President, says this important research will give the GAA a great insight into the world of its coaches throughout the Gaelic games family.

it is "imperative coaches are equipped with the tools which will allow them to develop our sport.

"Coaching is a multi-faceted discipline, with key skills and qualities required to fulfil the role.

"In that regard, research that explores best practice and education should be welcomed and embraced.

"I would encourage as many of our coaches as possible to engage with the survey, and your feedback will prove invaluable. I look forward to the results that emerge from what is sure to be a substantial body of work."

The GAA says that over the last year the GAA, the Camogie Association, and the LGFA have been developing a new introduction to coaching gaelic games award that will operate across all of the codes.

To continue that development, it is

important it builds its programmes on solid information on the role and experiences of coaches within our games.

This survey is for coaches of all levels involved in the gaelic games associations of camogie, hurling, handball, gaelic football, ladies gaelic football, and rounders.

The survey is available online through Gaa.ie, Camogie.ie, and LGFA.ie as well as the GAA Learning site — learning.gaa.ie, or email gamesdevelopment@gaa.ie

Meanwhile, phase 2 did not initiate small group GAA training. Earlier last week the GAA stated: "We do not envisage a return to training in small groups in phase two and pitches and playing areas are to remain closed," the association said.

"However, as per the government roadmap, this may be reviewed in

phase three."

There are plenty of open fields for which people in general can have a puck around. If you pass any open field you'll see well over a dozen people of all ages playing soccer, hurling or football in their own groups of four while maintaining distance and that's ok as per government guidelines.

The GAA also confirmed that it will publish its 'Return to Safe Activity Document'.

This document will require approval from the government's own expert group on 'Return to Sport'.

This group currently considers gaelic games a 'phase 4' sport. However, general feeling is that we may see some restrictions to training lifted in phase 3.

"No one is keener to return to games and general games-related ac-

tivity, but this will only be considered when it is acceptable to do so to maximise the safety and well-being of our players, members and wider society," the association finished.

The camogie association most definitely will not move before our GAA brothers. They are all on the one advisory board. There are talks that club activity will start first. We could well see the inter-county camogie season commencing in October.

Its 25 years since Cork beat Kilkenny in the 1995 final and that team were due to be honoured on All-Ireland final day on September 6. Whether that goes ahead is anyone's guess, but we'll have a reunion all the same. We could be wearing the woolly hats in November or December on All-Ireland day. It certainly is a strange one.

Plans for the season will be put in place

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

NOW that we have a return to GAA roadmap, the Cork camogie board met last Monday to start planning their 2020 competitions.

The first thing they did was email all clubs to confirm that they are still partaking in this year's competitions.

It isn't a foregone conclusion that all clubs or divisions will pick up where they left off and I think it was a wise call to determine that before the officials start putting club names into the bowl.

Cork will be running their club championships first and will give clubs the option of continuing the league into the winter months.

It'll be a backdoor scenario in all championship grades. The intermediate championship was originally a round-robin format. Each team is guaranteed two games. There are no draws made yet.

The board will meet again tonight where the clubs will, by then, have confirmed that they are entering this year's championships and the officers hope to carry out the new draws via Zoom towards the end of this week.

The plan is that championship games will commence towards the end of week one in August.

Speaking with Marian McCarthy earlier this week on the timelines around the championship, her hope is that they will get the club championships finished in time and ahead of the inter-county start-up in October.

To give the inter-county players a bit of space you would be looking at late September at the latest to finish club games.

If the inter-county championship also becomes knockout, who Cork are paired against in round 1 would have a big bearing.

There would be a considerable difference in being paired against Clare than Galway or Kilkenny.

The crossover with the start of the inter-county start-up is very tight. Inter-county managers are going to want their players from September 14 and it's going to cause problems and friction.

The board can only do its best. These are unusual times and we're all going to have to work together to get the best for all players. Remember that we have a significant number of dual players and dual clubs.

It isn't just about club and inter-county camogie. It's about club and inter-county ladies football too and it's going to be a huge headache for county boards.

Clubs and players are going to have to accept that these are the

cards we are dealt with and there will be no postponing of fixtures once fixed, for any reason.

The gap between games will be shorter than usual too. This will hit divisional players where they may be expected to line out at senior divisional level one day and with their own club at intermediate or junior level the next.

But something's gotta give. We all must appreciate that the room for flexibility is tight. As always the board will do their best but they aren't magicians.

I laugh when I think that this is the first year no club is going to have to worry about player's holidays. That's a first.

As pitches will be at a premium thank goodness for Castle Road. We will need it more than ever and thankfully it's a fantastic pitch that

can hold a number of games night after night.

And that's how our championships will play out in order to get them completed. Night after night. Availability of referees will be a problem I'd imagine.

Inter-county training is commencing on September 14 with competitive activity starting on October 17.

The GAA should have given more thought to that. The overrun is going to cause headaches.

As of yet we've had no update from the national Camogie Association. While they'll go parallel with the GAA I'm sure, as of yet with regards format or fixtures we have no indication of those and we need to know that asap.

I understand that there is a fixtures meeting on Wednesday and that's welcomed as, at this point,

managers need to know if they intend to finish the minor championship, start the U16 championship and many other things besides.

There's an awful lot we have yet to know. President of the association, Kathleen Woods, said that the camogie championships won't spill over into 2021. The GAA on the other hand say that theirs will. Spilling over is going to affect 2021 for many teams, particularly those that reach the latter stages of the championships or leagues — whichever goes first. There'll be no break or start-up winter training.

Having said that, there'll be no need for winter training as fitness levels will be high. It's the winter period however when players' strength and conditioning routines take place.

It's hard enough to retain titles. It'll be even harder in 2021.

Guidelines must yet be received on social distancing in grounds. So, we don't know yet how many spectators will be allowed into Castle Road. The two metre distancing gaps may be highlighted, but in general, people are just going to have to take personal responsibility.

In everyday life we can't mark out two metres all over the country. People can't be spoon fed. Individual responsibility must be paramount.

Everything will be happening together. And I've no doubt it'll be very frustrating at times. Excuse the irony, but I can see peoples temperatures soaring.

By this time next week, we should all be fairly clear on how our inter-county and club scene will run with fixtures and dates finalised.

It certainly is a year with a difference.



Camogie Association president, Kathleen Woods, has said that the championship won't spill into 2021, but we will be operating on a very tight schedule.

Roadmap sets out the return of camogie

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

THE club camogie championship draws will be made tonight on the Cork camogie Facebook page.

All clubs will have received notification with a link to connect. It's amazing how exciting this is. It's great to feel we're coming back.

There are 17 teams taking part in the senior championship, 14 clubs and three divisions.

Muskerry and Avondhu have now withdrawn. Twelve clubs will partake in the intermediate and junior A championships, 10 in junior B and 15 in junior C.

As mentioned last week all championships will be knockout with a backdoor system, guaranteeing clubs two games.

The Camogie Association had arranged a national fixtures meeting for last Tuesday night, but it was cancelled. They wanted to wait until phase three was given the all-clear on June 29 and now that we have that, and more, we can expect fixtures to be made in the next week or so.

Over 2,500 tuned in to a Return to Play webinar led by Eoghan Tuohy, the GAA development co-ordinator, Shay Bannon Chairperson of the Covid-19 Advisory group and Feargal McGill, GAA director of player, clubs and games administration last Tuesday evening.

With Taoiseach Leo Varadkar's announcement last Friday regarding close contact sport being given the all-clear on June 29, we wonder now if the GAA will bring forward their playing protocols.

They were operating a few weeks behind Government guidelines anyway. What they probably will do however is pull in the date for close contact training and possibly the start dates for club competitions.

Maybe inter-county competitions too, but that's less likely.

Their guidelines last week were that in phase three and four there is no access to changing rooms. Stats have shown that you are 19 times more likely to contract the coronavirus indoors than outdoors. Players from separate households are advised not to travel together.

No indoor meetings will be allowed during these stages.

Before returning, each supervisor, officer, manager, coach, player, or parent of a child, medical personnel, referee or anyone else present to run a session/game must complete a health questionnaire online or in hard copy (returned to the Covid-19 supervisor). This is to be filled out just once.

Each player or parent will be required to sign a declaration at each subsequent session to confirm their health status has not changed.



Amy O'Connor takes a break during a recent improvised training session. The Cork star will be soon by back in organised sessions for her club and county.

Picture: INPHO

Full details of the online system for the questionnaire will be circulated this week.

There will be an electronic learning module which each of the above personnel must also complete before returning.

Each team must have a nominated Covid-19 supervisor. I think that will be difficult for many clubs.

The GAA roadmap is consistent with the government roadmap. Any delay in the government roadmap will delay Gaelic games further.

As GAA pitches open up around the country next Monday, training is to be in small groups of 10 with two coaches and no contact allowed (unless this changes). Players must arrive and depart togged out.

Only players and management are permitted entry to the grounds. Underage players must be dropped

off and collected. There is no sharing of water bottles.

Phase 4 on July 20 will see a return to contact training (if not pulled in). Competitive games are allowed from July 31, however if clubs want to run challenge games during those 11 days they are permitted to do so.

The Government has said that they envisage spectators, but only where they can social distance. From July 20, they hope for gatherings of 500 outdoors, with distancing in mind. The GAA will follow Government guidelines.

There is no Covid officer as such. They are called Covid supervisors and the number of Covid supervisors isn't proportional to the size of the club. Each team must have one regardless.

Clubs should not invest in thermometers. There is no requirement

for clubs to check temperatures on-site. That's a huge relief for clubs. The onus is on the individual or parent/guardian.

It is strongly recommended that hand dispensers be provided in the car park, toilets, entrance to pitch and pitch-side. However, hand washing facilities and anti-bacterial soap will suffice. That's no harm. You'd be amazed at the number of clubs you'd visit with no soap in the toilets.

If someone at a training session turns out to be Covid positive, Feargal advised that one of the things that is important to point out is that there is 'close contact' and 'casual contact'. A close contact with someone who has the virus means you must self-isolate for fourteen days. You do not have to self-isolate if your contact has been casual, you must just monitor your own health for the following

14 days. While awaiting clarification from Government Feargal said that the likelihood is that in the sporting context outdoors, people you have been training with would be considered casual contact as opposed to close contact.

The onus is on clubs to ensure that everyone entering their facilities for training / playing purposes have completed the eLearning module.

Players can train with multiple teams within the club and there is no restriction on the number of teams that a coach can be involved with.

The advisory group is satisfied that the risk of transmission via equipment is low. Equipment should be provided and sanitised.

Everyone has a role to play. It is the personal responsibility of each participant to ensure a safe return to contact sports.

Complaints of age discrimination

Eoghan Cormican

Inter-county minor camogie managers have called on the Camogie Association to row back on its decision to cancel this year's All-Ireland minor championship.

A Camogie Association statement released on Monday evening confirmed the cancellation of the 2020 All-Ireland minor (U18) championship, the opening two rounds of which were played in late February and early March.

Minor competitions will be organised on a provincial basis when inter-county

activity resumes in October, but minor managers are adamant the All-Ireland championship must not be done away with and can be reformed to fit into the truncated inter-county season.

Cork manager Jerry Wallace — physical trainer when the county won back-to-back All-Ireland hurling titles in 2004 and '05 — said minor camogie managers have been in communication with one another since the announcement on Monday evening and will continue to lobby camogie top-brass until such time as the decision to abandon

the minor championship is reversed.

Wallace has written to Camogie Association Ard Stiúrthóir Sínead McNulty, describing the decision as age discrimination given the large number of players in each squad currently in their last year of minor.

"I fully appreciate the fixture and organisational quandaries of running competitions over a short period of time. Saying this, the Camogie Association should not allow the difficulties of the pandemic or logistical concerns to stop a championship that started in

over cancelled minor camogie

February from completion. Play the games," he wrote.

If the All-Ireland minor championship was restarted under its original format, seven weekends would be required to conclude the competition.

Wallace insisted he and other managers have no problem with a more condensed format coming on stream. But to uphold the decision to cancel the competition outright would, he warned, "destroy the spirit of young camogie players".

"Not allowing them to finish this

journey is not right, especially when it can be finished. It is dynamite," the 2018 and 2019 All-Ireland minor winning manager told the *Irish Examiner*.

"A WhatsApp group, bringing together minor managers, has been set up. Everyone is absolutely dismayed at what has happened. We are lobbying as much as we can to get this decision reversed. What will this decision do to each player's development and progression? It certainly won't have a positive impact.

"Whether the Camogie Association

has quandaries in relation to the crossover of minor players playing junior, intermediate, or senior in other counties where they are allowed to do so, I don't know, but that does not mean they should dismiss this competition.

"Our understanding is the next meeting of the association is at the beginning of next week.

"Between now and then, I have no doubt there will be a volume of support sent into county boards to challenge this decision of the national executive to abandon this competition."

Excitement as championship pairings determined

The live camogie draws on the Cork Camogie Fanpage on Monday night were brilliant.

The excitement was palpable; it should be done this way every year. There was great anticipation among players and they tuned in by the dozens.

Normally, the board delegates attend the draws and send texts via WhatsApp to their groups on who their club was drawn against. But there was excitement too in seeing firsthand how other clubs fared and, overall, it worked a treat.

There are a few mouth-watering clashes.

Champions Sarsfields will look to hold on to their crown and face a strong Glen Rovers challenge while Newcestown, in their first senior year, will face the might of Killeagh.

The meeting of St Finbarr's and Douglas is almost an annual event now and they never fail to excite us while Milford and Inniscarra in particular will be anxious to reach the pinnacle once again.

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

There are four weeks to wait before throw-in.

The championship pairings are as follows:

■ Round 1: Seandún v Carbery; Winners v Imokilly; Winner to round three.

■ Round 2: (D) Courcey Rovers v Cloughduv; (E) Killeagh v Newcestown; (F) Milford v Eire Óg; (G) Ballincollig v Inniscarra; (H) Glen Rovers v Sarsfields; (I) St Finbarr's v Douglas; (J) Ballygarvan v St Catherine's.

■ Losers' Round: I v G; E v runners-up of divisional round; D v H; F v J.

There are 17 teams participating in the senior championship, 14 clubs and three divisions.

While no fixtures have been finalised, the championship will start the weekend of July 24 so all clubs

have been put on notice. There will be extra all games and if the sides are still deadlocked point further extra time will take place until a winner is determined.

Mary McSweeney, chairperson of the board, asked that clubs work with them during unprecedented times as venues and referee at a premium.

The three divisional sides are Seandún, Imokilly, and they play their own minor championship in round one. Seandún are drawn Carbery and the winners play Imokilly.

The overall winner advances to round three; the runners-up will move to the losers' round. Locally, the divisional sides get one chance to but, on this occasion, possibly to bala numbers, the runners-up get a second bite of cherry and advance to the losers' round.

Let the games begin.

No reviewing decision to scrap championship

Camogie

Eoghan Cormican

A Camogie Association statement released to the *Irish Examiner* indicates there will be no reversal of the decision to cancel this year's All-Ireland Minor Camogie Championship.

The decision to scrap this year's minor championship, the opening two rounds of which were played in February and March, has been met with widespread opposition since it was announced on Monday.

Cork manager Jerry Wallace, in a letter to Camogie Association Ard Stiúrthóir Sínead McNulty, described the decision as age discrimination.

An online petition to have the competition reinstated had garnered almost 2,000 signatures at the time of writing.

But despite this groundswell of public support, it appears the Camogie Association will not be backtracking on its initial decision.

When contacted by the *Irish Examiner*, a Camogie Association spokesperson gave no indication that the decision to cancel the minor championship will be reviewed, much less reversed.

The spokesperson said that "difficult decisions have had to be made so as to maximise the opportunities for all members of the association to participate in camogie in the remainder of 2020".

One of the reasons cited for the cancellation of the minor championship is the crossover of minor players who are also involved with their county junior, intermediate, or senior set-up.

Running the minor championship concurrent to the All-Ireland junior, intermediate, and senior championships during a truncated window is, according to the association, "not possible".

"In light of the challenges posed by Covid-19, the focus of the association has been to firstly return our game to activity at club level, at all ages, which will take place from now until mid-October as outlined in the 'Safe Return to Gaelic Games' roadmap," the Camogie Association stated.

"Given the limited timeframe in which to run competitions at all levels in the remainder of 2020, it is not possible to run this year's All-Ireland minor championships outside of provincial level, particularly given the crossover of many minor teams with adult inter-county teams which would also be occurring during the inter-county window," it added.

"The minor championships will still take place at a provincial level to facilitate a program of games to this age group.

"We appreciate that the cancellation of many competitions this year is of great disappointment to those involved."

All-Ireland camogie to start in October

IF Cork are to win the All-Ireland senior camogie championship this year, then they'll be playing deep into December.

After reviewing its national fixtures schedule the Camogie Association has confirmed the arrangements being made for national competitions for the remainder of 2020 in light of the disruptions to this year's calendar as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The 2020 Liberty Insurance All-Ireland championships will take place between October and December. The exact format and dates of these competitions will be finalised in the coming weeks. The competitions will begin on a round-robin basis with increased groups

before progressing to the knockout stages. There will be no automatic promotion/relegation in the 2020 All-Ireland championships.

Cork last won the All-Ireland senior title in 2018 and were knocked out in the semi-finals last season, but they will be seen as one of the front-runners in this year's championship.

It's been confirmed, too, that the 2020 Littlewoods Ireland Camogie Leagues which began in February have now been cancelled. Paudie Murray's Cork team had started with two wins in their opening two matches in Division 1.

While there will be competitions on a provincial ba-

sis at minor level, there will be no 2020 All-Ireland minor championships, which is disappointing news for Cork who had won the last two minor 'A' titles, backed by a number of West Cork players.

Also, the 2020 All-Ireland U16 championships will take place between October and December, and the exact format and dates of these competitions will be finalised in the coming weeks.

The 2020/2021 AIB All-Ireland club championships will proceed as normal but with a revised calendar that will run into 2021. Again, the exact format and dates of these competitions will be finalised in the coming weeks.



Aoife Murray captained Cork to All-Ireland senior glory in 2018.



The Cork minor camogie squad celebrate with the trophy last season. The Camogie Association has opted not to have a championship this winter.

Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne

Cork boss upset as minor title off

THE Camogie Association's announcement on Wednesday night that the minor All-Ireland championship has been cancelled for 2020 was greeted with shock across the country.

That's particularly the case for Cork, who won the title in 2018 and 2019 and put huge work in this season to try and make it three in a row.

County boards and managers are up in arms and it is dominating social-media conversation. The reasoning is baffling, because the championship is already under way.

Cork minor manager, Jerry Wallace, said that he was very upset.

"I have been inundated with phone-calls from upset players, parents, and clubs. The decision to cancel the All-Ireland minor championship is

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

wrong," Wallace said.

"In my view, this is age discriminatory. The young ladies representing their counties, for the most, will leave this age group in December 2020. They will never play minor again," said the Middleton club man.

"I fully appreciate the fixtures and organisational dilemma of running competitions over a short period of time, but, saying this, the Camogie Association should not allow the difficulties of the pandemic, or logistical organisational concerns, stop a championship that started in February 2020

from competition," Wallace said.

"The county boards were hit with this last night, with no discussion or warning. This is the first notification they got that the minor championship was being pulled and the leagues discontinued. They could not believe it. I don't know who took this decision or what was the basis behind it, but I think it's an absolute disgrace. I have no personal agenda. I have no daughter involved, but I'm going to keep trying to get this decision reversed, because I think it's wrong."

The Camogie Association has stated that a provincial minor championship and the U16 All-Ireland championship will take place between October and December, yet neither competition has started yet. Why start a provincial

championship that doesn't hold half the attraction for players and stop an All-Ireland championship that is under way? It makes no sense and I think it's the worst call possible.

Year in and year out, the significant drop-off in sport of girls in that minor age group is highlighted. Some of these girls will never get a chance to represent their county again in an All-Ireland championship. Only a handful will go on to represent their counties at a higher level, yet we take that opportunity away from them.

The only age group to have been robbed of playing is minor. Is it because that age group can cross over a number of teams? Cork are going for three in a row. I'm so disappointed for minor players all over the country.

Newcestown and Carbery discover opponents

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

NEWCESTOWN have been handed a tough opening-round tie in the 2020 county camogie senior championship.

Last year's county intermediate winners, who got the better of Enniskeane in the final, will take on 2019 senior semi-finalists Killeagh in the second round of this year's senior championship.

There is already the potential of a Carbery derby between Newcestown and the Carbery divisional side, which bowed out at the quarter-final stage last season.

If Newcestown lose their first-round game, they will go

into the losers' round and they will take on the runners-up in the divisional section – this is a round-robin group with Carbery, Seandún and Imokilly involved. Carbery will take on Seandún and then Imokilly, and the overall winner of this mini-group advances to round three while the runner-up takes on the loser of Newcestown v Killeagh.

Seventeen teams will line out at the start of the senior camogie championship which is expected to throw-in in late July. There will be extra time in all games, and further extra time if needed. In the club section there are seven round two games with the winners moving

CAMOGIE DRAWS

into round three and the losers getting a second chance in the losers-round.

The senior draw is as follows:

Round 1 (divisions): A. Seandún v Carbery; B. Carbery v Imokilly; C. Seandún v Imokilly

Round 2: D. Courcey Rovers v Cloughduv; E. Killeagh v Newcestown; F. Millford v Éire Óg; G. Ballincollig v Inniscarra; H. Glen Rovers v Sarsfields; I. St Finbarr's v Douglas; J. Ballygarvan v St Catherine's.

Losers' Round: I v G; E v runners-up of divisional-round; D v H; F v J.

Meanwhile in the county intermediate camogie championship, Enniskeane meet Ballyhea in the opening round, Clonakilty take on Brian Dillons, Valley Rovers meet Blackrock while Kilbrittain/Timoleague play Carrigaline. There is a backdoor in this championship.

In the 2020 county Junior A draw, Ballinascorthy play Ballinhassig while Barryroe take on Mallow. In the Junior B draw, Newcestown 2 meet Bride Rovers in the first round and the winner here plays Millstreet in the second round.



Newcestown's Suzanne Deasy in action.

DEATH NOTICE

The death has occurred of Eileen O'MAHONY (née Duffy)

Clontarf, Dublin / Glasnevin, Dublin



O'MAHONY (née Duffy) Eileen (Clontarf, Dublin and formerly of Botanic Avenue, Glasnevin) June 29th 2020. Peacefully in the tender and compassionate care of the staff in Marian House Nursing Home. Pre-deceased by her husband Dermot, daughter Sheila, sisters May, Kay, Rosaleen, Pauline and brother Billy. Deeply regretted by her daughters Niamh and Gráinne, relatives, friends, neighbours and the Celtic and Dublin Camogie Family.

Due to government advice regarding public gatherings, a private funeral will take place but can be viewed online at 11am on Thursday July 2nd at <https://www.stjohnsclontarf.ie/webcam/>. A memorial Mass to celebrate her life will take place at a later date. House private.

"Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dilis"

Camogie legend Eileen O'Mahony has died

Updated / Monday, 29 Jun 2020 17:52



Eileen O'Mahony, nee Duffy, was on the Camogie Team of the Century

Eight-time All-Ireland camogie championship winner Eileen O'Mahony has died.

The Dublin native, who played as a goalkeeper, was named on the Camogie Association's Team of the Century in 2004.

O'Mahony's career with the Dubs lasted from 1949 to 1957, during which time she picked up eight All-Ireland medals and captained the team to victory in her final year.

Born in 1930, O'Mahony, nee Duffy, won five Dublin championships with the Coolock-based Celtic camogie club.

The citation at the awards ceremony back in 2004 said O'Mahony was "quick to react between the posts, sure and confident, she had a great understanding with her backs, her lengthy clearance and long puck out were other features of her game."

Exciting ties at all grades in camogie

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

THIS year's club championship formats have been changed with all to be played on a back door system with first-round winners going to round three and losers playing off in round two. Every year the draws throw up exciting pairings and this season is no exception and there are some interesting games to look forward to from July 24.

INTERMEDIATE

Last season's beaten finalists Enniskeane will be determined to go one better this year. They will take on newly-promoted 2019 junior A champions Ballyhea. Watergrasshill, in their second season at intermediate, will be hoping to make further progress, but they face a tough opener against an ever improving Aghabullogue. Fr O'Neill's will take on Na Piar-saigh, Brian Dillon's meet Clonakilty, Blackrock meet Valley Rovers, and Kilbrittain/Timo-league will face Carrigaline.

JUNIOR

There are five junior grades and players of all grades are well catered for with junior A, B, C, junior 13-a-side, and a second adult team's championship for clubs who want to compete on the same level as other clubs with second teams.

JUNIOR A

There will be six opening rounds in junior A, with 12 teams fighting for a place in round three. Ballinora won the junior B title last season and they will relish the challenge which Newtownshandrum will pose. Ballinhassig, who re-graded, will meet Ballinascorthy, last year's defeated finalists Charleville meet Sars' second team, who were winners of the second junior teams championship last season. Barryroe are another side who have made the step down to junior A and they meet Mallow who dropped to junior in 2019. Ban-teer will meet Tracton while St Vincent's meet Sliabh Rua.

JUNIOR B

The junior B championship will have 11 teams battling for the title. Last year's junior C champions Blarney meet Ballincollig's second team, Newcestown will play Bride Rovers with the winners facing Millstreet. Youghal will take on Bishopstown, who have re-graded this year, and Castlelyons will meet the winners, while Cobh will take on Inniscarra's second team.

JUNIOR C

Sixteen teams will contest the junior C championship and, such is the strength of Inniscarra, they will also field a team in this grade where they will play the winners of the Kilbree/St Fánáhan's first-round game. Aghabullogue will meet Castlelyons, Midleton, who will field an adult team for the first time, meet Killeagh, Na Piar-saigh will play Castlemartyr, Grenagh take on Buttevant, Kilworth meet Kinsale, and St Colm's play Aghada.

'You can drive past the pitch now and the gates are open'

Courseys goalkeeper Sinead O'Reilly is glad to be back training after challenging few months

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

SINEAD O'Reilly is a frontline hero who will guard the backline for Coursey Rovers in the upcoming county senior camogie championship.

In sport, she's Courseys goalkeeper. By profession, she's a nurse at Bandon Community Hospital. It's been a demanding few months for the Ballinspittle woman (28), as the Covid-19 pandemic gripped the country, but this week she was back training for the first time in months, making Monday's night session before heading into night shifts. Being back on the pitch felt like a step forward.

The draw for the senior county camogie championship was made last week and Courseys drew Cloughduv in the opening round – that felt like another step forward.

'You can drive past the pitch now and the gates are open, and it's that bit more welcoming,' Sinead says.

'It has been a super hard time for so many people. It was very stressful for people and the unknown was hard to deal with – is it going to come? Is it going to happen to us? What will happen if we do get it? There was a lot of worry for people, and for some there still is.

'We are not out of it yet but we are on the other side of it. Hopefully we are through the worst of it.'

That's why the return of the GAA feels like an important milestone in the country's recovery. The GAA is engrained in every community in the country and the opening of pitches and return of teams to training and games is a boost for the physical and mental health of so many. Sinead agrees.

'We are going to have a strange normal now for however long it's going to be, but having the GAA back gives so many people an outlet to get out again to meet and interact with people,' she says.

'Our mental health is so important and there's no denying that it's been a very stressful time. It's been hard for people so if having the pitches open will see someone head down there on Sunday morning to watch training up in the bank in Courseys and chat to someone five metres away, that's great.

'Even for us, it's great to be able to meet up with all the girls again, have a catch-up in person and go for a puck-around at the pitch.'

Sinead is luckier than most



The O'Reilly sisters – Deirdre, Caitriona, Eimear and Sinead – are looking forward to getting back out on the pitch with Coursey Rovers. (Photo: David Ribeiro/MLee Media)

'We are going to have a strange normal now for however long it's going to be, but having the GAA back gives so many people an outlet to get out again to meet and interact with people'

in that regard. She has three younger sisters who are all on the Courseys camogie team with her, so she wasn't short of options when it came to a puck-around in recent months. There's Caitriona (24), Eimear (22) and Deirdre (20), and the four O'Reilly sisters are also on Courseys junior C football team. Add in their first cousins, Elaine and Aisling O'Reilly, who are also involved, and it's a family affair for the O'Reillys.

There have been highs and lows on the pitch over the years. The biggest high, Sinead recalls, came in May 2017 when Courseys won the county camogie senior league final against Glen Rovers. That was a breakthrough moment for Courseys, the camogie club's first adult silverware.

'We always say if there is any weekend we could go back to, it's the weekend that we won the league. We had Sarah Hayes on our team, that was her first silverware for Courseys and she was playing for 17 years. That was a super, super weekend,' Sinead recalls.

The following season, 2018, had highs and lows. The high was Courseys qualifying for their first-ever county senior camogie championship final after beating Milford in the semi-final. The low was the loss to Inniscarra in the county final.

'I often think about the lead-up and the week before the county final and how many things I would change if I got the same opportunity again,' Sinead says.

'I was working, I took a few days off and maybe I was off for too much and thinking about the game too much. If I could do it again, I'd be more relaxed and try not to think about it too much, but for all of us it was our first county senior final. Even when they played the national anthem before the game, we were all looking around at each other because we hadn't experienced that before and it was all new to us.'

Courseys now have that ex-

perience in the bank. The hope is that they will get another crack at a county final. They're genuine title contenders again this season. County finalists in 2018, semi-finalists last season, they're knocking on the door. They have players with Cork experience. Linda Collins, Saoirse McCarthy and Fiona Keating are with the Cork seniors, while Ciara Hayes, Ashling Moloney and Grainne Hannon are with the Rebel intermediates.

There's a certain degree of the unknown heading into the championship too, as there's no recent form to gauge teams on. Momentum will be crucial.

'Every team is in the same boat this season. We all thought that there would be no season and here we are, preparing for one. The draw has been made and it has given us all some bit of structure for the next few weeks,' Sinead says.

'All teams are striving for the same thing, it's hugely competitive, you can never underestimate anyone and you have to mind your own corner. We beat Milford last year and then got beaten by the Barrs in the semi-final. We have Cloughduv in our first game later this month and that's our focus now.'

When the championship does throw-in, Sinead will be a familiar sight in goal for Courseys. It can be a lonely position, she admits, but she's played a starring role in their rise in recent seasons. Think back to the 2017 league final success against Glen Rovers when she pulled off a crucial save from Lydia Cunningham in the closing stages as Courseys were holding on to a one-point lead.

'I've had some good days and bad days in goal – and it's after the bad days that you feel really accountable if goals go in. Even when the others are saying it's not your fault, I'm saying "but I was the last person". You have to pick yourself up and go again.

'We've a good team and there are some great young players coming through, some nippy forwards, and we're all look-

ing forward to getting back out playing again.

'A couple of months ago there was no way there was going to be anything played but look at us now, we're preparing for the championship. It's good, I think, that we don't have to wait until next year to play because a lot of people might have dropped out or retired and people might have found it hard to come back after a year out.'

For Sinead, it's back to juggling her job as a nurse and the commitment of training, but given the last few months she's not complaining. When she drives past Courseys pitch in Ballinspittle now, the gates are open. That's a welcome sight, another step in the right direction. She hopes Courseys will make more strides in the right direction this season too.

2020 SENIOR DRAW

The draw for the 2020 county senior camogie championship is as follows:

Round 1 (divisions): A. Seandún v Carbery; B. Carbery v Imokilly; C. Seandún v Imokilly. **Round 2:** D. Coursey Rovers v Cloughduv; E. Killeagh v Newcestown; F. Milford v Eire Og; G. Ballincollig v Inniscarra; H. Glen Rovers v Sarsfields; I. St Finbarr's v Douglas; J. Ballygarvan v St Catherine's. **Losers' Round:** I v G; E v runners-up of divisional-round; D v H; F v J.

Minor cancellation a major disappointment

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

I BELIEVED by mid last week that the decision by the camogie association to cancel this year's minor championship would be reversed.

The association held a virtual meeting on Tuesday with the chairpersons and secretaries of county boards across the country and at the end of that meeting asked for 10 more days to consider their decision.

I took that as a positive sign. This situation had garnered huge national anger and support.

The petition, at the time of writing, had 4,680 signatures while outside of that many well-known male and female GAA players have publicly condemned the decision.

Everyone appreciates how important the minor grade is in so many ways.

Unfortunately, though, on Thursday night, via email, county boards were informed that the association were steadfast in their decision to cancel the championship.

This decision of Ard Chomhairle is now to be challenged in an appeal application under Arbitration and Disputes Resolutions. That has been submitted to the Ard Stiúrthóir of an Cumann Camógaíochta.

It's a shame it's come to this and I can't for the life of me understand the association's position. I'm genuinely gutted for the players involved.

Meanwhile, as we enter a worrying phase of return to play let's hope we do get to play all championships. I think another serious wave of Covid 19 will result in 2020 being cancelled altogether at all levels. Undoubtedly getting back training is doing wonders for players, you can feel the buzz they're getting from being out on the pitch, training hard and having the craic. We can't underestimate how important that is and I think to shut down for a second time would be horrendous for many.

Let's keep the positive face out and do whatever we can to minimise the chances of a second wave. It's individual responsibility at this point that will hopefully see us through.

The full adult camogie club fixtures for 2020 were released this week and I have to say that it's a breath of fresh air to have a full fixtures list with dates from start to conclusion for all championships. It's just great. I think we can learn from this.

Giving a dedicated time to club and a dedicated time to county is the perfect way forward. It's been very difficult for players to plan holidays or anything else in the past as you may not get a match date until a few weeks, often less, in advance of a game and it all depends on the club players' involvement with the county team and how far the county gets



FRIENDLY RIVALRY: Glen Rovers' Caoimhe O'Brien greets Blackrock's Hayley Ryan at Saturday's challenge game at the Blackpool club's pitch. The game ended on a scoreline of Glen Rovers 0-14, Seandún 0-09. Picture: David Bihain / M. Lee Media

in the All-Ireland championships, across all levels. Completely separating the club and county season is the only way forward. Year in and year out the headaches the fixtures committee have and the frustration clubs are feeling is significant. We could eliminate all of that, create better relationships between clubs and inter-county with a little better planning.

If we can do it in 2020 in such a short window of playing time, why can't we do it with a full 12 months available to us?

On the national front I really think it's about time they got those fixtures out. What's the hold-up?

The minor championship challenge maybe? We need those dates as soon as possible. There's nothing like

having an actual team and date to focus on to get the adrenaline going and teams need to know who they're facing at this stage.

I'm looking forward to the senior club championship kicking off on July 31. That curtain raiser is a divisional clash between Seandún and Carbery.

Funnily enough two divisional sides are getting three games this year while clubs are getting two. Seandún, Carbery, and Imokilly stand alone in round one and battle it out with the winners advancing to round 4 (winners round) and second placed moving to round 3 (losers round).

The exciting club ties of round 2 are giving us some immediate games

to look forward to. Glen Rovers and Sarsfields should be one to watch. Of course, Sarsfields are coming in defence of their title and if you're going to be paired against the champions the best time to do that is in the opening round.

Unfortunately for the Glen, Emer Fennell hasn't retired. And why should she? She was instrumental in Sars' first county title in 30 years and was the club camogie player of the year. Her fitness is top class and if you're still enjoying the game you should keep playing.

Glen Rovers have a very good side. They still haven't reached their potential. But some teams never do and it's important that they get that bit between their teeth this year and

bring it up a notch. Otherwise the momentum will drop off.

St Finbarrs and Douglas usually serve up a cracker but I wonder if the gap has widened. St Finbarr's reached the semi-finals last year and lost out by just four points to Sars.

Douglas took a heavy defeat to Sars in round one and lost comprehensively to Éire Óg in the backdoor. In their defence, they were without Katrina Mackey for those games and it just shows how much they need her.

Killeagh had a great year, losing semi-final replay to Inniscarra by point after two cracking games.

That'll stand to them as they fight for the title in 2020. They face debt Newcastle on August 1.



Jennifer O'Leary loves a challenge. She always has. It motivates her. After having her first child, Lauren, last December, Jennifer is keen to prove that she can hit top gear again and inspire her Armagh club, Middletown, to their first county senior camogie title. **KIERAN McCARTHY** caught up with the Barryroe legend

Jennifer's relishing her latest challenge

GIVEN everything she's achieved in camogie, nobody would have thought any less of Jennifer O'Leary if she didn't return to action following the birth of her first child, Lauren, last December.

If any player deserves to sail off into the sunset, then it's the Lislevane legend.

Her camogie CV is stacked: four All-Ireland senior titles with Cork, six National Leagues, eight All-Stars, countless highlights. She is one of the greats. She's 36 years old, too, and that will turn to 37 in October. Perhaps she might have felt it was time to wind down. Think again.

Last Monday week, O'Leary was back on the pitch with her club, Middletown, in Armagh for their first training session ahead of the new season.

She's not back to make up the numbers either. She means business. Middletown have never won the Armagh senior camogie championship. They've come close though. In Jennifer's first season Middletown won the county intermediate final and she was player of the match. They found their feet fast at senior level, but lost the 2015 and 2016 county finals, and again came up short in the 2018 decider. They're close and Jennifer

'It's an innate competitiveness that drives me on; it's just a part of who I am. No matter if it's sport or other facets of life, I think I just have that in me, it makes me work hard.'

thinks they have a chance this season – that's one of the reasons she's laced up her boots again.

'I knew Jen would go back after having Lauren and I bet she will be their star player for the year too,' says her former Cork team-mate Joanne Browne (O'Callaghan). These two have been close friends since they started played together with Cork when they were 14 years old. Nothing Jennifer does surprises Browne anymore.

'I can honestly say she got better with age. She pushed herself harder and harder every year because she always wanted to better herself,' Browne explains.

No shock so that over the last few months, Jennifer was pounding the ball off the wall at home, trying to get as many touches as possible.

Repetition. Repetition. Repetition.

Jennifer O'Leary is regarded as one of Cork's greatest ever players.



Jennifer O'Leary celebrates scoring a Cork goal in the 2014 All-Ireland senior camogie final against Kilkenny at Croke Park.

It's all about repetition. That skill base is there but she wants to get up to speed fast so she feels confident and has that trust in herself.

'I just hope it will come as good as I want it to be. I know it will never be as good as before but I have to be satisfied that I can get it as best as I possibly can and hope that's enough to get us over the line. I'm going to have to work even harder, especially as I'm getting older,' she explains.

Hard work has never scared Jennifer. She loves a challenge. It brings out the best in her.

In her last season (2014) with the Cork senior camogie team, Jennifer had already swapped west Cork for south Armagh. That's home now. She lives in Middletown with her husband, Paul Curry, and works as a teacher at St Louis Secondary School in Monaghan.

That final year, she regularly made the 480-mile, eight-hour round trip to training sessions in Cork city and she also trained a lot on her own.

One time, as her Cork team-mates ran a beep test together, Jennifer had to do it on her own in Armagh. She sent the results to Cork's fitness trainer and the numbers were so impressive that he was convinced Jennifer

had measured it wrong.

A few weeks later when she was with the Cork squad they all did another beep test. She hit the exact same score and beat everyone else. No-one could keep up with her, but that's always been the way with the Barryroe dynamo. A lot of players are either fast or fit but, as Joanne Browne explains, Jennifer was unusual because she was extremely fast and extremely fit.

'She would kill teams with her pace and then she had an engine to keep going at the same pace she started the game with. No-one could keep up with her for a full game. Usually the player marking her was either substituted or they would change halfway through the game,' Browne explained.

One constant throughout the years is her competitiveness. It hasn't waned. Even now, at 36, there's a bite to her. She senses an opportunity with Middletown this season and she's keen to grab it. A lot of players have returned to the set-up. The management team that was in charge when they contested those first two county senior finals are back. Three of her four sisters-in-law play camogie and all three (Oonagh, Orlagh and Stephanie) are around this

year, too. The stars look to be aligning.

'I think we have a very good chance,' Jennifer says.

'Over the next six weeks we have to train very hard, really improve our stick work, get up to speed and get match fit. Do that and I think we have as good a chance as everyone else.'

Middletown's West Cork import will lead the charge and they know that. Her team-mates know what Jennifer Curry, as she's known in Armagh, brings – high standards, commitment, determination and a match-winning ability.

And then there's her competitiveness. It's in the O'Leary's genes, she laughs. Eight kids – an even split of four boys (Michael, twins Damien and Joseph, and Ryan) and four girls (Carol, Jennifer, Paula and Debra) – in the one house meant you fought hard for what you wanted. Her parents always banged the same tune: go out, you're not staying inside, go outside. And they did. There were obstacle courses where only the strongest survived. There were puckerounds where every goal mattered.

'I don't know if it comes from my mom or my dad, but it's there, and it will always be there,' Jennifer explains. Her sister Debra ran quite a lot during lockdown and really im-

proved – and that spurred Jennifer on, even though she's in the opposite end of the country.

Paul Curry was well aware of Jennifer's competitiveness before they married. They met while they were both in Australia and both played with Central Coast GAA Sydney. He is a hurler, she is a camogie player, and it clicks off the field too.

'Paul would say to me that I am very competitive,' she laughs. 'We were doing certain runs over the lockdown, we were timing each other, putting it up on an app, comparing and contrasting. Maybe there was a certain week when I didn't get up to speed and I was like, "Oh, for God's sake!" and Paul would be like, "You're supposed to enjoy this, Jen!", but I would be very competitive.'

'It's an innate competitiveness that drives me on; it's just a part of who I am. No matter if it's sport or other facets of life, I think I just have that in me, it makes me work hard.'

'I just like to be doing something all the time. I know it's harder when you have a child, and they will always be number one, but I wanted to get a little bit of me back too so if I can get back this year I'd feel very satisfied and that I have achieved a lot in the past year – bringing Lauren into the world, bringing her up with Paul, making sure



Jennifer O'Leary in action for Barryroe. She played her last game for her home club in 2013 before transferring to Middletown.

'You hear a lot of athletes struggling to come back after having a baby and I want to see if I can do it. Thank God, I feel good and I feel fit at the moment.'



Jennifer O'Leary in her Middletown club colours. It's no surprise to learn that she's a key player for the Armagh club.

she's healthy and then it would be a dream to fulfil my camogie dreams with Middletown.'

By now you know that Jennifer loves a challenge. She sets them up as targets to motivate and drive her on. Lauren Curry is only seven months old and has already set her mom a challenge.

'You hear a lot of athletes struggling to come back after having a baby and I want to see if I can do it,' Jennifer explains.

'Thank God, I feel good and I feel fit at the moment. I have more to do, but I just wanted to set myself a different challenge.'

It was always in Jennifer's plans to get back playing.

'I will play for as long as I can,' she says. 'I played one league game last year, against Crossmaglen, and that night we found out I was pregnant with Lauren so that stopped our plans in a great way.'

'If I feel okay and if I feel I have the time I will play as long as I'm able because I'll be retired long enough and I'll miss it long enough. If I can contribute in anyway and help and encourage young players coming up, that's important to do.'

Don't underestimate Jennifer's influence either. In the dressing-room everyone lis-

tens when she talks. It was the same when she played with her home club Barryroe and with the Cork senior squad. She has earned that respect by her actions on and off the field, in training and in matches.

As Lauren grows up there will be no shortage of stories about her mom's camogie heroics, her glorious career, those All-Irelands and those All-Stars, her journey to becoming Barryroe's most decorated player and the greatest camogie player ever from West Cork. Twice, she was crowned West Cork Sports Star of the Year, the second time was in 2014 – the most challenging year of her life.

There's a picture in Jennifer's home in Middletown of her late sister, Paula, in a Cork jersey, taken during the 2014 championship campaign. Paula tragically died on September 1st, 2014. A few weeks later, Jennifer took centre stage in Croke Park as she inspired Cork to the All-Ireland senior title, the fourth of her career. Early in the second half, the Barryroe woman burst through the Kilkenny team to rifle home a goal that gave Cork the lead for the first time in the final. They never looked back.

'I will never forget that goal,

we were down at that stage, she broke through two players trying to pull her down but they hadn't a hope of catching her. I just knew when she got that goal that we were going to win. Everyone that day wanted to win it for her,' her Cork team-mate Joanne Browne recalls.

In the stands in Croke Park that day, her husband Paul watched Jennifer's goal with her family. When the goal went in, everyone cried. It was a release of emotions. Her mom, Kathleen, had passed away earlier that year. Then Paula died, too. It was a lot to deal with. Jennifer was travelling up and down from Armagh to Cork for training. Emotionally, physically, it was demanding.

'I definitely think I was lucky to have camogie that year because it helped to block out everything that was going on but at the same time deal with it,' she reflects.

'My team-mates were brilliant, I remember them all being at the funeral home dressed in red and they showed their support – and that made me want to get back and play. My family were very supportive too and they wanted me to line out in the final. I know other families might find it too difficult and that physically they wouldn't have the energy



Jennifer O'Leary and her husband Paul Curry pictured with their daughter Lauren on her first trip to West Cork.

but somehow I found it.

'I had a feeling it would be a good year for Cork. I felt that Paula wanted me to play in the final and I felt strength knowing that she was above with mom and that they were looking down on us. It's Paula that gave me that little bit of energy to get that goal when so many people were trying to block my way but I felt I had a strength that I never had before.'

'Paul often brings up what it was like in the stand with my family after I scored that goal. When you hear things like that it makes it all worth it. If you can bring joy to peoples' lives at a time when it was so difficult, that's very satisfying.'

Jennifer knew too that it was going to be her last match for Cork. She had retired from the inter-county game in 2013 but always knew she'd be back in the Rebel red. In 2013 she had moved to Armagh and it seemed like the trip up and down was too much – but then she saw that as another challenge, took it on and won.

'I didn't want to miss out, I didn't want to have any regrets and I had a feeling that there were good times ahead and that there was a good team there. I felt I still had it in the legs so I wanted to go again,' Jennifer explains.

'I was living in Armagh then

but I saw that as another challenge. You need something different every year to keep you ticking over, to motivate you. I was a bit premature that year when I said I was retiring but I knew in the back of my mind that it wasn't the end. I just needed a bit more time to think it through in my head but I'm glad in the end that I did return and I got that extra medal.'

That All-Ireland medal in 2014 was followed by her then record eighth Camogie All-Star Award and her second West Cork Sports Star of the Year Award (she's the only woman to have won this award twice). Given her glittering career, and it's not over yet, Jennifer was a shoo-in to be amongst the 16 local sports star shortlisted in the recent Best in the West competition, the search for West Cork's greatest sportsperson.

In Cork and Armagh, huge numbers voted for her on Twitter, including her dad, Joe, who signed up to his own Twitter account to follow Jennifer's progress. In both rounds she was involved in, he stayed up until 2am, cheering on his daughter, like he has done since she fell in love with camogie in national school. All these years later, she's still bringing happiness to her family and friends – and she's not finished yet.

Jennifer wants to add a new picture to her wall.

'In the last few years I always envisaged lifting a cup and having a son or a daughter to have in the picture. I know that sounds really cheesy and corny. I have seen people in the past with a family around them and I wanted to build my own family and have that lovely picture to put on the wall,' she says.

'Definitely, Lauren is a big driving force this year and I have all of Paul's sisters around too. It would be lovely to have that picture of us celebrating, all the Curry sisters together.'

She's determined. You can hear it in her voice. She's working extra hard to get back up to speed. She's pucking around at home, doing her own circuit training and her own gym work.

'Building up the speed is the hardest thing, but I'll get there. I don't think I'll be like I was in the past but if I can keep up with the younger players around me then I'll be happy enough,' she says, modestly, but the odds are that everyone else will have to keep up with her. That's the way it's always been. Fingers crossed, Jennifer will get her Armagh senior camogie medal this season. She's motivated by the challenge – and we all know how competitive she is. Just watch her go.



Cork's Amy Lee in action against Waterford. Picture: Ken Sutton

Lee relishing the chance to fill Murray's boots long term

THEY may be big boots to fill, but Na Piarsaigh goalkeeper Amy Lee is confident she can be the long-term successor to Aoife Murray on the Cork camogie team.

Following a glittering career with the Rebels which saw her garnering a phenomenal haul of nine All-Ireland titles and seven All-Stars, Murray officially announced her retirement from the inter-county scene in March of this year.

A senior panelist since 2015, Lee was between the sticks for Cork's comprehensive National League victories against Waterford and Kilkenny in the spring. Despite being Murray's understudy up to this point, the CIT graduate already has considerable experience under her belt. "I played the whole league in 2015 and the Munster championship I would have played the same again. If there was six games, we'd always get three each," Lee says.

"Obviously, come championship you need the one person all the time. It's not too bad stepping up now, especially as the same girls are in the back line. I'm used to the way they play. Hopefully, I'll be flying if I'm thrown in there." Nonetheless, Lee says Murray's presence was missed in the early part of the season and is hopeful of maintaining the high standards set by the Cloughduv keeper.

"Training is different. You would miss her giving out now. I'm not going to lie, you would! She'd put you in your place, she was always good for that. She'd praise you when you needed praise and she'd tell you 'cop on' when you needed it."

"There's two goalies now and we'll have to drive each other on. She definitely taught me loads and I've been there since 2015. I suppose I have to take the reins a bit now and take my chance, while I can."

While Aoife's older brother Kevin has also stepped away from his role as selector, the Murray clan will continue to be represented in this Cork set-up. After taking some time to mull over his future, team manager Paudie Murray decided to remain at the helm of the Leesiders.

Given how much she has achieved under his stewardship with three senior All-Irelands and a national intermediate title in 2018, Lee was thrilled to see him committing for another year.

CAMOGIE

■ Daire Walsh

"It's unbelievable and he just can't seem to stop. He just seems to bring something new or something different every year. He's so professional, training is unbelievable all the time. He does look after us, he's always watching out for us and trying to give us advice."

"He'd ring me a few times or he'd ring a few of the girls. See how we're getting on. Especially, if you're slacking off a bit, 'come up and practice a few puck-outs or come up and practice your frees'. I can't fault him really."

Having played the waiting game for so long, Lee finally returned to group training with Na Piarsaigh on June 29. Considering how many of her club-mates were anticipating a 2020 that was bereft of club action, she feels the forthcoming return of competitive fare has brought a new kind of energy to the squad.

"We were all doing stuff individually for a long time. It's nice to actually see people now. We've a training plan until our first championship game and we'll see after that. It's weird interacting with people," she says.

"You'd still be interacting a small bit, but seeing everyone, there's a buzz around. Because most people thought it was going to be called off. Now everyone is buzzing that we're getting a few games and it's not going to be in the depths of winter. It will be good."

Like the GAA and the LGFA, the Camogie Association have opted to resume club activity in the coming weeks with the various inter-county championships to follow in October, despite some calls to run the All-Ireland series at an earlier date.

While she doesn't have a definitive opinion on which level of competition should be given initial preference, Lee can see the logic behind the decision. "There's more facilities available for us as inter-county. It might work a bit better. Obviously clubs, especially camogie clubs, won't have the luxury of going down to Páirc Uí Chaoimh or say up to WIT. It honestly doesn't matter to me which one comes first. Either way, you're going to have people giving out. They might as well stick with their plan now," Lee said.



Cork's camogie captain Amy O'Connor says the Camogie Association should have resumed inter-county games first. Picture: Jim Coughlan

Inter-county should be first

CAMOGIE

■ Daire Walsh

CORK camogie captain Amy O'Connor believes the association missed a trick by holding back the inter-county championship until October.

Just like their GAA and LGFA counterparts, club competitions will be the main focus for camogie players across the country as live sport emerges from the shadows in the coming weeks.

Whilst the 2019 All Star is thrilled to be back in the saddle with St Vincent's, she felt there was massive marketing potential behind a summer start to the county game.

"I thought the Camogie Association had a huge opportunity to try and showcase our game, by maybe putting inter-county first. I know there's a lot of people who have come out and said that. I would have thought that at the beginning," says O'Connor.

"With no other senior men's games on, maybe we would have been showcased on RTE on *The Sunday Game*. It just would have been a great opportunity for people to see our game, because no other games probably would have been televised."

"I think maybe there was an opportunity there. I also think that it might have been easier to manage. At inter-county level, you have more people involved, in terms of managing sanitisation of equipment. If that's how it was going to go. We're just happy to be back to playing anything and I'm happy to be back with my club."

Now that Cork's All-Ireland championship campaign is set to take place in the winter months — when conditions may be testing — O'Connor is adamant the games will need to be hosted in the very best stadia the GAA has to offer.

"There's no way we can go and play a championship match at some of the camogie grounds around the country, because it's not going to be a good spectacle. It's not going to be good for the game."

"I think there's a responsibility on whoever arranges the venues to ensure Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Nowlan Park, Semple



Camogie club players Lorna Coffey, Amy O'Connor and Courtney O'Keefe, and (rear from left) army signalman, Aaron O'Donoghue; Michelle Gould; Sgt David Lockyer, vice chairperson St Vincent's Camogie Club; Willie Walsh, chairperson; former lord mayor Cllr John Sheehan; Tommy Gould, TD and club development officer; Darren Coyle-Garde, Pieta House; Vincent Stokes, president, and player Chantelle O'Donoghue, at the launch of their fundraiser for Pieta House and Mna Feasa.

Stadium, Croke Park and the Gaelic Grounds are going to be used. They should be using the main stadiums."

Before the coronavirus pandemic struck O'Connor was enjoying a whirlwind opening to 2020. She was named team skipper by manager Paudie Murray at the beginning of the year and subsequently guided the Leesiders towards back-to-back National League wins against Waterford and Kilkenny.

As a member of a junior club, O'Connor couldn't have dreamt that this particular opportunity would come her way. However, the policy of the senior champions selecting the county captain was discontinued in recent years and this opened the door for the Knocknaheeny native.

She is following in some pretty big footsteps; Gemma O'Connor, Aoife Murray, Ashling Thompson and Anna Geary have previously filled the key leadership role.

"It's a huge honour for me and for my club to captain Cork. We've such a young team as well. I'm 24 this year and I'd say I'm one of the oldest on the team at this stage. There's a core group of us around my age," O'Connor says.

"Gemma O'Connor is a person I would have looked up to hugely, growing up

playing camogie. I've a hurley signed by Gemma O'Connor, I've some of Gemma O'Connor's gear from when I was 13 years old. It was always unusual to play with her. Herself and Orla Cotter in particular. They would have been people you just admired so much and still do to this day."

Although reclaiming an All-Ireland crown with Cork will be high on her agenda, O'Connor is every bit as determined to secure a Junior 'A' county title in the St Vincent's colours. If they are to achieve the latter goal, she acknowledges it will be down to work-rate and desire rather than skill and raw talent.

"This championship is not going to be won by the best hurlers. It's not going to be won by the fanciest team or the best team, for that matter. It's going to be won by the people who genuinely want it the most, in terms of working hard," says O'Connor.

"For me, it's just going to be dogged. The more matches we get to play, people will improve."

"Maybe the latter stages of the championship will be better games, better spectacles. For me it will just be genuine hard work and grit to win the club championship this year."

'There have been tough decisions, 2020 has been a challenging year'

The Camogie Association was looking to build on a record All-Ireland final attendance and bed in widely welcomed trial playing rules when the pandemic struck. **Brendan O'Brien** spoke to Ard Stiúrthóir **Sinéad McNulty** as the sport adapts and prepares to return to play

■ What was the moment you realised that this was a challenge on an entirely different scale?

>>>It was in March. I was in the Croke Park Hotel and about to meet Helen O'Rourke from LGFA and have a chat when we got a call that the Government had announced the schools were closing. So putting in a full suspension of on-field activity from the 12th of March onwards was the moment, really.

■ Has anything in your past professional experience been a help in dealing with this?

>>>I was working in the public sector when the Employee Control Framework [no renewal of contracts, no new posts] came in during the last crisis post-Celtic Tiger. At that point we had major changes in how we employ staff in the public sector and having to deal with that and restructure and look at budgets and operational plans and keeping facilities open. That is probably the closest I have been to something like this but it is not nearly on the same level.

■ Both are highly uncertain, changing landscapes. Does that help?

>>>The difference with this is that you didn't know what was coming day to day. In the financial crisis there was

somebody somewhere who could plan the way out of it, or who had been in a financial crisis before. We are all going through a global pandemic for the first time and at the same time together, more or less. There was no guide book or road map. We are already on our third iteration of the roadmap for Gaelic games. People look to you for answers to the questions they have and it is really challenging when you don't have those answers and a lot of the same questions.

■ Where was the Camogie Association at when Covid-19 struck?

>>>We were in a very exciting place. 2019 was a fantastic year for us. We had a record attendance at our All-Ireland finals. We had growth in membership, we had new clubs springing up and funding from Sport Ireland for our Mná programme. And we had record viewership between streaming and, most importantly, on TV. The camogie final was the most watched women's sports event of 2019 on TV. That's where we were coming from.

We had a full team of staff for 2020 after having had a couple of vacancies in the last few years. We were launching our new National Development Plan in April at Congress and bringing sponsors on board across all of our competi-



tions. So it was going to be a really exciting year.

We will still look back at the end of the year at things we have achieved, albeit that they are different from what we intended in January. Right now we are excited about people being back on the pitch, a return to some sort of normality.

■ When will the National Development Plan be launched and is it altered by the pandemic?

>>>It hasn't been formally launched. Given the uncertainty we said we would hold off on a formal launch. It's hard to build up excitement about new sports activities when you're not allowed to go outside the door. The pandemic had started when we were finalising the plan itself so we did temper the ambitions for 2020 but it is still a plan for up to 2023 and all of the actions within remain absolutely valid despite Covid, like our move towards the online world which has been helped by Covid. We had 6-700 people taking part in training weeks online some weeks. That's record levels for us.

■ How severe do you think the financial losses will be for your organisation and for the sport?

>>>Right now we are looking at it with

slightly more optimistic views that we were six-eight weeks ago. Initially we were looking at a reduction of 80% of our revenue for the year. We have been impacted on grants, on gate receipts. We were really concerned about membership if we would not be in a position to deliver games during the year. Right now it is looking at about a 40-45% reduction but that is based on the games programme being delivered to the end of the year. So we are reviewing it every week.

The temporary wage subsidy scheme has been huge for us and has enabled us to keep all of our staff on board and keep working and engaging with our members. Without that we would be telling a different story today.

■ What happens if a second wave of Covid-19 materialises and sport is shut down again?

>>>The reality is we don't know. If you listen to what public health authorities are saying, they have developed a five-stage roadmap so it really depends on the scale of any second wave. We know what we need to do now and how to do it, things like the health questionnaire and online resources.

There is talk of the reproduction rate being at one or even over and that is worrying. It would be hugely impactful and

people's confidence has been damaged. We have members through all age groups who have underlying conditions and don't have a huge amount of confidence about going back.

They would be severely hit if there was a second wave. We have various sets of contingency plans from your best-case to your worst-case. We've already seen things that were unheard of, like moving our All-Ireland final into December. Who would have ever thought that?

■ When will the inter-county fixture list be published?

>>>We plan to do the draw for our championship fixtures next week. The roadmap is very clear that inter-county training cannot recommence until the 14th of September. It's up to us to ensure that the structure allows some games for everyone.

It's not what we had planned at the start of the year but we are essentially trying to get nine months of activity into an eight-week programme and that is really challenging for everyone.

The positive for a lot of people is a full club programme right up to the All-Ireland final which will take place next March.

There have been some tough decisions we have had to take about particular events

and at age grades, and it has been really disappointing for people in those, but we have looked at it from every possible direction and come up with the best programme that we could to give as many games to as many people as possible. It's not perfect but 2020 has been a really challenging year.

■ The decision to cancel the All-Ireland minor championship has been heavily criticised. Where is the association with regard to this now?

>>>It was one of the tough decisions that was made and there were a number of factors that went into the decision-making process. We have received an appeal on that decision. That is being considered through the process and procedures so I can't really talk about that any more at the minute.

■ Last year's Galway-Kilkenny final came on the back of widely welcomed rule changes and it was the highest-scoring decider in 32 years. So how frustrating was it that the pandemic shut things down with further rule changes being trialled and the sport gaining momentum?

>>>We had a very good conversation with all the stakeholders in advance of the trial rules. We were very excited. The first couple of weekends went super and then we had four weekends of wet weather warnings and an awful lot of matches cancelled.

It was really frustrating not to see the full programme delivered but we look forward to trial rules in future competitions.



Sinéad McNulty: The positive for a lot of people is a full club programme right up to the All-Ireland final which will take place next March.

Guide to 2020 fixtures

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

WITH two full weeks of training behind them, intermediate clubs were glad this week to get back to some semblance of normality. Already a few clubs have had challenge games as they rush to get match fit. Gone is the pre-season training, the league and friendly games and it is now very much straight into championship we go.

A lot of intermediate clubs will have players involved with divisional senior sides and with three divisional having opted to still participate in the senior championship. This presented its own problems for the county executive as they worked to fit in fixtures. Given the timeframe that they have to work with it is a tough schedule but it has to be done to be ready for the intercounty games which will start at the end of September, though final details have yet to be announced.

The Intermediate championship begins on July 26 when Castle Road will host three games as last season's defeated finalists get their campaign underway when they meet last season's junior A champions Ballyhea.

This is a tough opener for the newly promoted Ballyhea but coming off the back of a marvellous season in 2019 they will relish the challenge. Junior A champions of 2018 Watergrasshill will take on Aghabullogue whilst Fr O'Neill's and Na Piarasigh will be the third game on what is sure to be an extremely busy day in Castle Road.

On July 27 there are two further first-round games down for decision: as yet a venue for these has not been announced: Brian Dillon's will meet Clonakilly while Blackrock take on Valley Rovers.

The following night, Kiltirritain/Timoleague will meet Carrigaline. Again the venue for this has not been given.

The six losing teams from round one will go in into a back door round on August 9. It will be the losers of Blackrock versus Valley Rovers meeting the losing teams from the clash between Enniskenne and Ballyhea, the losers of the Kiltirritain/Timoleague versus Carrigaline game will meet the losing team from the Na Piarasigh/Fr O'Neill's clash and the losers between Brian Dillon's/Clonakilly meet the losers of Aghabullogue/Watergrasshill.

Round three will have the six winning teams plus the winners of the back door games which give nine teams. Of these, two teams will play a knock out on August 18 with the winner progressing to join the other seven to the quarter-finals which are down for decision on August 30.

The semi-finals will be played on September 12 with the final down for decision eight days later.



Newcestown are preparing for their first-ever campaign in the county senior camogie championship. In 2019 they were crowned county intermediate champions and now they're ready to mix it with the heavyweights. **GER McCARTHY** spoke to Mary McSweeney, Maeve Lynch and Evelyn Crowley to chart Newcestown camogie's remarkable rise

Newcestown trailblazers keen to brew up another camogie storm

SUNDAY, October 13th, 2019 was a hectic day for members of the McSweeney household. Micheál McSweeney was busy getting ready for Newcestown's first-ever Cork senior football championship semi-final appearance, against Duhallow. His sister Mary was preparing to captain the West Cork club in an intermediate camogie county final against local rivals Enniskeane on the same afternoon. Both matches were in the city.

By late evening, Mary and her teammates were back home celebrating the narrowest of victories. They were joined by the senior men's squad despite their five-point loss to Duhallow. What followed was a tumultuous couple of days celebrating an unbelievable year for Newcestown camogie.

'That whole week was just plain crazy,' Mary McSweeney recalled.

'We came back from the dead to beat Blackrock in the county semi-final on the Wednesday and then defeated Enniskeane to become intermediate champions the following Sunday. The day of the final was mad in our place as my brother Micheál was getting ready for his semi-final as well. You can imagine the intensity of the household that morning. Everyone was racing just to get out the front door.'

Thankfully, the McSweeneys managed to get to Cork in time for the first of two hugely important matches. Enniskeane were expected to present formidable opposition in the county intermediate championship decider at Castle Road and didn't disappoint.

Cork's Orla Croin played a leading role with 1-6 for Enniskeane but it was a future senior inter-county prospect.

Ciara O'Sullivan, who picked up the player-of-the-match award and contributed 1-5 of Newcestown's winning total.

'Playing Enniskeane was nerve-racking because we had come across each other so many times in the past,' McSweeney added.

'We worked extremely hard to get to that county final, in particular the last five minutes of the Blackrock game when we turned what looked a certain defeat into an unexpected victory.'

'Looking back, the county final day is a complete blur. Maybe that's because of the excitement of winning the county, I don't know. Being captain made it extra special, but it was all rush, rush the whole day because our final was at noon and Micheál's semi-final was only a couple of hours later.'

'It was a brilliant feeling to lift that Nano Nagle Cup. Then, I had to immediately race across town from Mahon to Páirc Uí Rinn to be on time for the lads' semi-final. I remember leaving the car on double-yellow lines. Sure, I didn't give a damn at that stage!'

McSweeney's account of county final day is a snapshot of what camogie means to families living in rural areas all over West Cork. Newcestown will be the first to admit that their most recent success didn't happen overnight. Yet, that run to the intermediate title was also the catalyst for the club to prosper across all their age-grades as the Carbery club achieved a remarkable trophy-haul during that 12-month period.

In 2019 alone, and aside from the men's achievements, Newcestown Camogie Club brought home the county intermediate, Carbery minor, U16A county plate and U16B league trophies as well as finishing runners-up in both the Carbery U13 and U14

Newcestown young gun Ciara O'Sullivan is one of the rising stars of Cork camogie.

'Some of the girls pulled out the county medals they had won many years earlier and showed them to us. That was an emotional moment for everyone in the dressing room. But that's the way Newcestown operates' - Maeve Lynch

county league finals. So, where does the hunger, passion, dedication and drive come from within such a small village and rural area? There is no straightforward answer but the DNA for success probably lies in the fact so many of the 2019 camogie county-winning squad were pucking a sliotar around the pitch together from a young age.

Cork intermediate Maeve Lynch is currently studying Intellectual Disability Nursing in UCC and working as a healthcare assistant with the COPE foundation. She lined out at centre-back in Newcestown's 2019 county final triumph.

Lynch's GAA career began in her native Bandon before joining Newcestown's camogie set-up at a young age. As someone coming in from the outside, from day one, Lynch began to understand what the sport meant to the local community.

'I played hurling with the boys in Bandon up until U10 before joining Newcestown camogie and starting with them at U12,' the centre-back said.

'What I found when I started going to Newcestown is that, even though it is a small village, everyone there is absolutely GAA mad. There was and still is a real love for the game there. Coming up through the underage ranks, everyone always wanted to make the team. Every trainer drove you on. Each year, you were driving to



Newcestown players celebrate winning the 2019 county intermediate camogie final against local rivals and neighbours Enniskeane.

be as good if not better than the older team just ahead of you.'

Lynch made her mark, so much so that she lined out for Newcestown in the 2015 junior A county final at the tender age of 15. Producing a blistering second-half display, the West Cork club ran out 4-12 to 0-6 winners over Watergrasshill a week after Newcestown's men claimed the Premier intermediate county hurling title. Success breeding success and

driving the club forward. That junior A victory kickstarted a golden era for the club and they've risen through the ranks since then.

'To get the chance to play in that (2015) team was just surreal,' Lynch admitted.

'Again, it was the older and more experienced players that drove you on. You had to match their passion and intensity otherwise you wouldn't be playing with them for very long.'

'I'll never forget that day in the dressing room right before we walked out on to the pitch for the county final. Some of the girls pulled out the county medals they had won many years earlier and showed them to us. That was an emotional moment for everyone in the dressing room. But that's the way Newcestown operates. Constantly driving you on and demanding more of those around you.'



Newcestown celebrate after they were crowned 2019 county intermediate camogie champions.

Another county final story and another snapshot of what camogie means to the West Cork club.

Evelyn Crowley was midfield alongside Lauren Whelan during Newcestown's historic 2019 intermediate camogie county final victory over Enniskeane. The primary school teacher in Sunday's Well began her Newcestown odyssey over 25 years ago and is in little doubt as to where the origins and roots of their latest success lies.

'It all started while I was still in national school, that's where the love of camogie first came from,' Crowley explained.

'Why is it so popular in Newcestown and the surrounding area? I guess you would have to say that the local schools had a big role to play. Every one of our national school teachers were brilliant for bringing us out to play camogie at the earliest opportunity.

'There was and still is a big emphasis on hurling, camogie and football too to be fair, here. The teachers' love for the GAA would have had a big influence on us as children. Our families too, there would always have been a strong GAA tradition in the locality and that's why so many people, like myself, grew up loving and playing it.'

It is worth recalling that Newcestown also claimed the county intermediate title as recently as 2017 – again, getting the better of Enniskeane in the final – only for the senior B grade to be removed the following year. That meant a return to the tier that the Carbery side had just conquered. Yet, the desire to mix it with the best at senior level has only served to spur Newcestown on – and this season they will campaign in the county senior camogie championship for the first time in the club's history.

The Carbery club's achievements did not go unnoticed at inter-county level during the past three years. Ciara O'Sullivan recently made her



Captain Mary McSweeney.

debut appearance with Cork seniors in the national league having previously won back-to-back All-Ireland minor medals alongside club-mate Emma Tarrant. Add to that, Maeve Lynch lining out for the county intermediates and Grace Ryan helping Cork end a 16-year drought for a U16A All-Ireland title.

So, it is fair to say that Newcestown camogie has never been in such a healthy state as they embark on their first county senior championship campaign. Covid-19 means a reduced timeframe to complete this year's competition but a reinvigorated Newcestown are ready for the challenge.

'It has been a difficult time for everyone during Covid,' Evelyn Crowley said.

'Thankfully, our new trainer Declan Crowley kept everyone going with training plans and WhatsApp chats which was brilliant. Obviously, we missed the girls' company when training as a team, but then every team was in the same boat.

'It makes it all the better being back out on the pitches again now after the lockdown. The return of GAA also represents a major boost to the local community. I hope that we prove that we are worthy of being senior. We are going to give it our all and put our best foot forward.'

'We knew that we were an up-and-coming club over the last couple of years,' Maeve Lynch added.

'There are some young



Key player Maeve Lynch.

16-year-old girls in our squad right now playing like they are in their mid-20s. The likes of Grace Ryan, Emma Tarrant and the other younger girls are already vital members of the team now. Then you have Ciara O'Sullivan who has made the Cork senior team as well.

'Working with vulnerable adults, I haven't been involved in any team training sessions and working away on my own thanks to a training plan from the Newcestown management team. Covid-19 has been a very strange time and it is tough to know what will happen. At the end of the day, we must remember that every club in Cork and the rest of the country is as unprepared. That's a good thing in a way and should drive us on even more to succeed. We are entering the championship with the intention of giving it our best shot.'

Newcestown's success, both male and female and at adult and underage level, is nothing short of sensational over the past 24 months. In comparison to city clubs with huge playing numbers, for a rural West Cork club drawn from such a small population to be punching above their weight at senior level is the stuff of dreams. The club now has senior camogie, football and hurling teams.

No one knows what the immediate or long-term future holds with fears of a second wave of the pandemic looming



Newcestown's Evelyn Crowley is sandwiched between two Gailltír players during the 2019 Munster intermediate camogie club semi-final at Newcestown. The Waterford team won 3-11 to 2-5.

'Why is it so popular in Newcestown and the surrounding area? I guess you would have to say that the local schools had a big role to play' – Evelyn Crowley

large on the horizon. In the interim, all GAA clubs can do is play as many matches as possible and try to get back to some semblance of normality.

It would be a shame for Covid-19 to interrupt the Newcestown football, hurling and camogie juggernaut for a second time. That's what makes the connection between community and GAA club so important, especially living through these unheralded times.

'You could walk up to the Newcestown pitch any night of the week and there will be something going on, a match or just a training session,' Maeve Lynch said.

'As well as that, there are always enough coaches and parents around and willing to help out. The community drives this club. There are people up

2020 SENIOR DRAW

Newcestown's introduction to life at the top table of Cork camogie is an opening tussle with seasoned senior campaigners Killeagh. With Carbery after pulling out of the 2020 county camogie senior championship, Newcestown are the only Carbery representative in the competition.

The loser of the Newcestown v Killeagh game has a second chance as they will go into the losers' round, and face either Seandún or Imokilly.

The club section draw in the 2020 senior championship is as follows: Round 2 – Courcsey Rovers v Cloughduv; Killeagh v Newcestown; Milford v Éire Óg; Ballincollig v Inniscarra; Glen Rovers v Sarsfields; St Finbarr's v Douglas; Ballygarvan v St Catherine's.

at the GAA club who don't have kids helping out in whatever way they can.

'Competition between the boys and the girls is definitely still there and as strong now as when I first started out. Everyone is delighted at the success our U21s and men's teams have had but that also drives the camogie on to try and achieve the same.

'Last year was just fantastic and the lads seemed to be winning all around them. It shows that the foundations are there for the club to build on and achieve even more. In the middle of it all, the local community keeps rowing in behind us and they are absolutely fantastic

the way they come out and support so many different teams across all the age grades.

'Everyone in Newcestown is willing to do whatever it can for their GAA club.'

Against that positive backdrop, Newcestown camogie are ready for their first campaign in the county senior championship. They've drawn Killeagh in the opening round. It's a tough task, but Newcestown are ready, they've waited long enough for this chance. The club's underage structure has attracted huge numbers once again for 2020 and beyond, suggesting a positive future is attainable. It's time to brew up a storm once again.



Shiela Spillane, from Killeagh, who has attended every race night at Youghal greyhound track since its opening, in 1948. Picture: Howard Crowley

Wallace blasts Camogie Association after minor appeal fails

Eoghan Cormican

Cork minor camogie manager Jerry Wallace has branded the Camogie Association a "tired governing body" after he was refused an appeal hearing to contest the decision to abandon this year's All-Ireland minor camogie championship.

Wallace was informed on Friday that his request for a hearing to appeal the decision taken by Ard Chomhairle last month had been turned down.

In an email to Wallace setting out why no appeal was being allowed, Camogie Association Ard Stúirthóir Sínead McNulty pointed to Rule 10.5 (p) of the game's Official Guide, which states that the roles and responsibilities of Ard Chomhairle include controlling All-Ireland competitions, and Rule 5.1, "There shall be no appeal against a decision of Ard Chomhairle or of any unit implementing such a decision".

The Cork manager confirmed to the *Irish Examiner* he would not be taking the matter to the Disputes Resolution Authority (DRA) and was now drawing a line under his efforts to have the competition reinstated.

The 11-team All-Ireland minor camogie championship was two-rounds old when the sporting world ground to a halt in mid-March.

In a statement to this newspaper last month, the Camogie Association highlighted the crossover of minor players with adult inter-county teams as one of the key reasons why the

Cork minor camogie manager Jerry Wallace will not be taking the matter to the Disputes Resolution Authority (DRA) and was now drawing a line under his efforts to have the competition reinstated.

Picture: Ryan Byrne



2020 minor championship was not being restarted when inter-county activity resumes from mid-October.

Provincial championships will be organised for minor camogie teams later in the year and while Cork will compete in the Munster competition, Wallace remains adamant that an All-Ireland championship should have been played.

In his letter seeking an appeal, the 2018 and 2019 All-Ireland minor camogie winning manager cited Rule 2.3 of the Camogie Association Official Guide Part 1. This rule states that "The core values guiding the Association are: (a) inclusiveness; and (c) equality in accordance with relevant equality legislation and fair play". He also made reference to Rule 10.5 (t) "promotion of best practice in player welfare".

Wallace, reflecting on the decision to deny him an appeal hearing, said the association "ran for cover and buried the appeal with their own rule, which protects the members of Ard Chomhairle".

He continued: "I was aware and conscious of the rule which states that there shall be no appeal against a decision of Ard Chomhairle. That rule does protect the Ard Chomhairle, but I was hoping we'd still be able to get a hearing and gain a better understanding as to why the decision was made."

"As a member of the association, you cannot actually challenge the Ard Chomhairle."

"There is a tired administration up there. I think the organisation is very tired, and didn't want a challenge. I think they realise they have made a mistake because of the lobbying that went on and are not big enough to change it. The issues we raised in seeking the appeal, particularly in the rule pertaining to equality, they ran from that."

"I am disappointed not to have been brought in and afforded a hearing, to be allowed to put a few points to

Galway on collision course with Cork

Camogie

Eoghan Cormican

Reigning All-Ireland camogie champions Galway and 2018 winners Cork have been pitted against one another in Group 1 of the redrawn 2020 All-Ireland Championship.

The two counties met in last year's All-Ireland semi-final, with Galway scoring a narrow one-point win to end Cork's three-in-a-row title bid.

Completing Group 1 are Offaly and Wexford.

Beaten finalists in 2017, '18, and '19, Kilkenny find themselves in Group 2 alongside Limerick, Waterford, and last year's intermediate winners Westmeath.

Kilkenny have a new manager at the helm in Brian Dowling after Ann Downey's decision to step down after last year's final defeat.

The original two-group format for the senior championship has been replaced by three groups, with Group 3 comprising just three teams.

With Group 1 and Group 2 containing the seeded counties — Galway and Kilkenny, the respective winners of these two groups will advance to the All-Ireland semi-finals. The winner of Group 3, along with the runners-up in the three groups will progress to the quarter-final stage.

No start or finish dates have yet been announced for the 2020 Championship.

In the intermediate grade, the four group winners will progress to the semi-finals. The winner of Group 1 will meet the winner of Group 2, with the top teams from Groups 3 and 4 clashing in the second semi-final.

In the junior championship, the top two from either group will advance to the semi-finals.

Camogie Association president Kathleen Woods said it was a "dream" that there was camogie action to look forward to later this year given the uncertainty of recent months.

All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship
Group 1: Galway, Cork, Offaly, Wexford; Group 2: Kilkenny, Limerick, Waterford, Westmeath; Group 3: Tipperary, Clare, Dublin.

All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Championship
Group 1: Galway, Dublin, Kildare, Laois; Group 2: Meath, Kerry, Cork; Group 3: Down, Derry, Kilkenny; Group 4: Tipperary, Antrim, Carlow.

All-Ireland Premier Junior Camogie Championship
Group 1: Clare, Offaly, Wexford; Group 2: Armagh, Limerick, Roscommon, Waterford.



Kathleen Woods: Welcomed news.

Mad rush to arrange challenge games

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

JUNIOR camogie clubs are back preparing for their championships but it's been a tough few months with no leagues games. Now it's a scramble as teams search to play challenge games before the championship.

With five grades of junior competitions to cater for the board has its hands full to get everything done and dusted and it all begins on July 24 as the Junior A championship throws in with two games as Ballinhassig, who this year have regraded down to Junior A, take on Ballinascarty. On the same evening in Castle Road, last year's runners up Charleville meet Sarsfields second string and given that Sarsfields senior side will not take to the field until August 2, they will have plenty of talent at their disposal as only 15 players will be graded senior when their Junior's take to the field for championship.

Three first round games take place on July 25.

Castle Road will host the meeting between Barryroe and Mallow and St Vincent's against Sliabh Rua while a venue is to be announced for the meeting of Tracton and Banteer. The remaining first round will be on Monday July 26 when Newtownshandrum meet last year's Junior B winners Ballinora in Grenagh.

JUNIOR B

Ten clubs will battle it out for the Junior B title.

It all begins on August 4 when Newcestown play host to Bride Rovers and Bishopstown, who have regraded to Junior B this year, make the trip to Youghal to meet the home side with the winners out again on August 11 against Castletyons, who were runners up in last year's championship.

Blarney have a home venue when they meet Ballincollig's second adult team.

The winners of the Newcestown / Bride Rovers clash take on Millstreet who have home venue and the final game of round two will see Cobh hosting Inniscarra's second adult team on August 12th.

JUNIOR C

The junior C championship is a highly competitive competition with 15 clubs battling for the crown.

Kilbree and St Fanahan's get proceeding off to a start on July 27 in Kilbree in the only round-one game.

Onto round two on August 5 as Aghabullogue host Castletyons and on the same night Midleton making their adult debut are at home for their meeting with Killeagh's second adult team.

August 6 three game on the agenda, Na Piarasigh host Castlemartyr, the winners of the Kilbree / St Fanahan's first round game meet Inniscarra's third adult team and Grenagh host Buttevant.

On August 7 Kinsale head to Kilworth to meet the home sides and last year's runners up Aghada travel to meet St Colm's.

them. It is a wrong decision to get rid of a competition like this. It reflects a tired governing body, a governing body that doesn't want to take on the challenges of putting in the fixtures. It is up to managers to arrange their teams, to get their players out, and to work with other managers in the county. To me,

that should be our worry, not theirs. But they have cited this as their problem — the fixtures affecting other teams in the association at inter-county level. That is only codswallop."

Despite collective disappointment among county minor managers, there will be no further challenges to the deci-

sion. "The only option is the DRA, but we are not going down that avenue. We move on now. We have to drive on and make the best use of the provincial competition for the development of the young players. That is all we can do. We need to bring closure to it. We tried, we weren't successful, and now we move



Ballinadee Macra members, brother and sister Jerry and Christine O'Neill, who won the Carbery round of the men's and women's poc fada, respectively, in Dunmanway last Saturday afternoon. (Photo: David Ribeiro / M Lee Media)



TIGHT SPOT: Sarsfields' Lucy Allen is tackled by Glen Rovers' Cliona Martin and Kelly Falvey during the Cork senior camogie championship at Castle Road. The Glen won 0-14 to 1-9. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

'God forbid anything happened, we could wipe out Carbery'

Carbery senior camogie team has withdrawn from the county championship over Covid-19 fears

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

IT was a difficult decision to make, and it has left a lot of players disappointed, but Carbery Camogie feels it has made the right move by withdrawing its senior team from the upcoming county championship.

This all unfolded quite quickly on Friday and in the wake of three local GAA clubs – Argideen Rangers, Ballinascorthy and St Oliver Plunkett's – all temporarily suspending activities after club members came into contact with a person who subsequently tested positive for Covid-19.

On Friday morning Carbery Camogie was contacted by a club that they were due to play in a challenge game last Monday, and the club side outlined their concerns given what was un-

folding in West Cork. The powers-that-be in Carbery Camogie then moved fast and, putting health and safety first, made the decision to withdraw their senior team from the county championship.

'The safety of the girls and the clubs is priority for us,' explained Carbery Camogie secretary Mary Sexton.

'After the club contacted us and said that they weren't comfortable to go ahead with the challenge in light of what was happening locally, we had a meeting and decided that the safety of our players, and the local clubs, is a priority.'

Given that six clubs from Carbery are involved in the divisional camogie team this season, the decision-makers were very cognisant of the knock-on effect on



Hannah Sexton in action for Carbery during last season's county championship win against Ballincollig.

local clubs if a similar situation to what unfolded last week played out again in the weeks ahead.

'We were due to play Seandún (on July 31st) and Imokilly (on August 4th) within four days of each other and we have six of the nine clubs in Carbery represented on the panel. God forbid anything happened, we could wipe out Carbery and it could bring it all to a standstill. We couldn't take that chance,' Sexton explained.

'We were going to play two more divisional sides so that's a lot of clubs mixing in a short space of time. Potentially it was a

bit of melting pot and we have to put the health and safety of our players and their clubs first.'

Sexton understands that players will be disappointed as Carbery were confident of going on a run in this year's senior championship, having come very close to making the semi-finals last season. At least players still have club championships to look forward to.

Ballinascorthy's Jerry Ryan is part of the Carbery management team along with Paul Crowley, and they were informed of the decision to withdraw by the board.

'I didn't disagree with the de-

cision and I didn't argue with it, what I did say is that some of the girls will be very disappointed and that's natural enough where-as maybe others might be happy if they were uncomfortable with games going ahead,' Ryan said.

The Carbery team had yet to get together ahead of the county championship, but there was a feeling that they could be one to watch this season, even without the Newcestown contingent as they have gone senior on their own. But wary of the repercussions in the event of a Covid scare in the weeks ahead, Carbery have pulled out.

Tougher route may suit Cork



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

CORK versus Galway is certainly the most attractive pairing that came out of last Thursday evening's live camogie championship draws on the association's Facebook page.

With 11 counties partaking in the senior championship, there are two groups of four and one with three teams. Galway and Kilkenny, last year's finalists, were seeded into groups 1 and 2 while Cork and Tipperary, last year's semi-finalists, were separately put into a bowl where first drawn went into group 3 and the remaining team joined, as it turned out, Galway in group 1.

While Tipperary were possibly thrilled to be selected first and head to the two-game round three group with Clare and Dublin, I think Cork are far better placed to be where they are.

They are almost guaranteed a quarter-final spot even if they drop points to Galway and the tougher the games in your group the more they'll stand to you.

If Tipperary win their two games they're straight through to a semi-final. Cork have three games against Galway, Offaly, and Wexford. They've an extra game and if they lose to Galway they'll have a quarter-final to also play — far better preparations in my view for a semi-final.

Liberty Insurance Senior Camogie Championship

■ Group 1: Galway, Cork, Offaly, Wexford.

■ Group 2: Kilkenny, Limerick, Waterford, Westmeath.

■ Group 3: Tipperary, Clare, Dublin.

First placed from groups 1 and 2 will head straight for the semi-final. First placed in group 3 go into a quarter-final with second-placed in groups 1, 2 and 3.

Cork have a tough group in the intermediate championship. Thirteen counties take part, three groups of three and one group of four is the make-up. Cork lie in group 2 with Meath, who have stepped back down from the senior grade, and Kerry, last year's junior premier champions.

Liberty Insurance Intermediate Camogie Championship

■ Group 1: Galway, Dublin, Kildare, Laois.

■ Group 2: Meath, Kerry, Cork.

■ Group 3: Down, Derry, Kilkenny.

■ Group 4: Tipperary, Antrim, Carlow.

No dates or venues have yet been given for the championships which is due to start on October 17.

Cork will feel they have amends to make after their one-point defeat to Galway in last year's senior championship semi-final.

It's the worst kind of defeat, one point, because you beat yourself up afterwards thinking about every ball that you could have won to get that one-point leveller, two to win it. To then see your victors, go on and win the All-Ireland in such emphatic style I'm sure hurt Cork.

Cork were flat in the Gaelic Grounds in Limerick that day. Galway players



Tara Kenny of Galway celebrates a second-half score against Cork in last year's All-Ireland semi-final.

Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne



Cork's Pamala Mackey and Nimah Hanniffy of Galway battling it out last season.

Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne

“I think Cork are far better placed to be where they are.”

wore their heart on their sleeves. That was the difference. And it's not an unexpected occurrence when a three-in-a-row chasing side are caught by a team willing to put their bodies on the line.

That's not taking away from Galway. They thoroughly deserved their win. Cork's slow passing game out of defence caught them where they were turned over on many an occasion.

Galway came to Limerick with a brilliant intensity. They had done that in the past, but always lost their way in the final quarter. This time, when Cork went three points ahead it was a different Galway side.

Instead of dropping their heads they picked off some lovely long-distance points and saw the game out, holding Cork to just four points in the second half.

In my opinion, Galway upped it again for the final, where Kilkenny had to be favourites, playing in their

fourth final, six in seven seasons. They blitzed the Cats, 3-14 to 0-17.

Does this make Galway the favourites for 2020?

It's been a strange year so how it has affected teams, time will tell. But in normal times you would expect that Galway have improved massively since they took to the field to play Cork last August in that semi-final.

The monkey is off their back. They have confidence now and if they don't mess it up, like so many Galway teams of the past, they could realistically win back-to-back titles.

In 2013, when Galway previously won the All-Ireland, I felt they got a handy one, if there is such a thing I know. I didn't expect them to be close in 2014 and they weren't.

But this team is different. What beating Cork and Kilkenny has done for their confidence on the way to becoming champions last September is immeasurable.

Let's take it back to 1999 when Cork hammered Tipperary in the league final by over 30 points. We lost the All-Ireland semi-final to Kilkenny when we were hot favourites, again going for three-in-a-row.

Tipperary came through on the other side and with Cork out of the way, beat Kilkenny in the final by a point and became a different team almost overnight.

They went on to win five All-Ireland titles in six years, beating Cork on a number of occasions in the process.

I often wonder if we hadn't fallen to Kilkenny what would have happened? If we reached the final and beat Tipp would they have dominated so much afterwards?

It doesn't matter, they won it and became an almost invincible force afterwards. Will history repeat itself with Galway? One thing is for sure, it certainly has made this year's championship all the more exciting.



Cork manager Paudie Murray during the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship semi-final against Galway at the Gaelic Grounds, Limerick last year. Cork have been drawn with Galway, Offaly and Wexford in this year's new championship format.

Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne

Festive finals on the cards

THE Camogie Association followed up last week's draw for the 2020 Liberty Insurance camogie championships by confirming that this year's senior All-Ireland final will take place at Croke Park on Saturday, December 12.

That will be the day before the rescheduled All-Ireland hurling final and one week before the football finals for both the men and women, 19th for the men and the 20th for the LGFA.

Due to the demands on the pitch in Croke Park in December, this year with various fixtures across all codes due to take place at a time of year when natural grass growth will be limited, the intermediate and premier junior finals will not be played on the same day as has been the case in recent years. That's hugely disappointing for those players but it's understandable.

Therefore, the senior camogie final will be a standalone fixture.

There is every chance also that regardless of the fixture time the game will be under Croke Park lights. On a dull December day, you might need the lights on as early as 2pm.

In 2018 Paudie Murray led Cork to All-Ireland senior and intermediate titles in Croke Park and in 2019 Galway Manager Cathal Murray took charge of both teams playing back-to-back All-Ireland finals on All-Ireland final day.

Any manager looking to do similar this year can assume that both grades will be scheduled to take place on different days. Of course, they will be. On the biggest day of the camogie calendar no other competitive game goes ahead across the country.

The details of the playing of those intermediate and junior finals will be made known in the coming weeks.

What a weekend it would be if Cork were in both the camogie and hurling All-Ireland finals. Imagine four finals over two weekends — dare we dream?

Any hope that the camogie association might backtrack on their decision to can-



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

cel the minor championship was well and truly dashed last Friday when the submitted appeal failed.

The appeal failed on the grounds of an association rule where the decisions of Ard Chomhairle cannot be challenged. So, the minor intercounty provincial championship will go ahead but the All-Ireland is no more.

It's bitterly disappointing for many young girls and still the wrong decision in my opinion.

Meanwhile, speaking with Paudie Murray during the week after Cork were placed in group 1 with Galway, Offaly and Wexford in this year's championship he was quick to state that there are a number of things that would need to go right in advance of the championship kicking off on October 17 for Cork to be where they want to be.

Having said that, 2020 is all about development of a panel where he has introduced a number of young players.

"We won't have much time to walk through with the group how we want them to play in advance of the championship," the Cork manager stated.

"It's a phenomenally tough group and we'll have six training sessions before it starts. We've a very young team and don't write off Wexford down in Wexford if we happen to play them there.

"They're getting their players back and there'll be a bit of pressure on there. But that's what you'd expect.

"No draws have been made yet so we don't know who we're up against first. I understand that Galway believe they are at home to us in the opening round but I'm

not sure how they worked that out.

"One would assume that the games will be in neutral venues and good stadiums. Nothing was mentioned about home and away venues being the format the day of the draws."

True, but nothing was mentioned that evening outside of the groups being selected so a home and away situation could still occur.

And all games are supposed to be in decent enclosed stadiums anyway. Cork were refused championship games in Castle Road because it isn't an enclosed pitch.

"I agree," Paudie said.

"But I'm looking at the likes of Thurles, particularly at the time of the year the games are to be played in.

"The sod has to be good. It'll be dark very early in the day as well. We would prefer not to be playing Galway in our first game with just six sessions behind us but we'll have to see how that plays out.

"I hope we get the pairings fairly soon. The Cork county senior final is down for decision on September 27.

"We'd be hoping that can be pulled forward to the week before to give us time for another two or three sessions. Most other counties are finishing mid-September.

"It may not matter if the clubs involved don't have inter-county players involved but we won't know that until after the semi-finals."

It's more difficult for Cork than other counties with so many clubs and divisions involved — it now stands at 16 after Carbery withdrew.

It could be a draw too on the 27th and then we're in a predicament if we do have inter-county players involved.

But it's a year with a difference and you can bet that when permission for inter-county training is given Cork will do everything in their power to do themselves justice in this season's championship even if Paudie states that: "we have a very young team so this year is about participation and development."



WEST CORK IN A MINUTE



Armed with a Black Tip belt in taekwondo, nobody will mess with Ciara O'Sullivan on the camogie pitch

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself?

I have a Black Tip belt in taekwondo.

What Netflix/TV show are you watching at the moment?

The final series of *Orange Is the New Black*.

Who's the greatest West Cork sportsperson ever?

I would have to say my second cousin Phil Healy — she is a fantastic athlete.

If you could be any superhero, who would it be?

The Flash.

Name one friend who'd love to see their name appear in *The Southern Star*?

My grandmother, Juju O'Sullivan.

Highlight of your sporting career?

Winning the 2019 county intermediate camogie final against our neighbours, Enniskeane.

Tell us a funny joke:

I once had a teacher with a lazy eye ... she couldn't control her pupils.

Where's your favourite place in West Cork?

The cliffs in Howe Strand, Kilbrittain.

Tea or coffee?

Tea.

How many penguins would it take to kill a shark?

Not enough.

Against your will, you have to live in another county besides Cork, where do you go?

My mother never forgave me if I didn't choose her home county of Waterford!

What sport event would you love to tick off your bucket list?

The Rugby World Cup.

You're in a karaoke bar and have to sing a duet — who do you sing with and what would you sing?

It would have to be *Adore You* with Harry Styles himself.

What question would you liked to have been asked in this interview?

When and where did I first play camogie? I think you could guess the generic answer to that.

Ciara O'Sullivan (18), from Newcestown, is one of the most exciting young players in Carbery camogie. A back-to-back All-Ireland minor winner with Cork, she was drafted into the county senior panel for this season and made her debut in the national league against Waterford earlier in the year. The classy forward was also player of the match in last year's county intermediate camogie final win after scoring 1-5 to help Newcestown go senior.



Cork draw Galway in All-Ireland

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

EVEN though Orla Cronin is completely focussed on club action for the weeks and months ahead, the Enniskeane woman watched the 2020 Liberty Insurance All-Ireland senior camogie championship draw with interest, as Cork were drawn in the same group as All-Ireland champions Galway.

The Connacht side defeated Cork, 0-14 to 1-10, in last year's All-Ireland semi-final, and Cronin feels this will be the ideal test for the Rebels when the championship throws in later in the year.

'It's something to look forward to. We are happy to have that game in the group against Galway. Last year was hugely disappointing for us so this will be a test and show us where we are because Galway are the number one team at the moment,' Cronin said.

Offaly and Wexford are also in Group 1 along with Cork and Galway.

The senior championship draw in full is: Group 1: Cork, Galway, Offaly, Wexford; Group 2: Kilkenny, Limerick, Waterford, Westmeath; Group 3: Clare, Dublin, Tipperary.

Cronin: Fast start can help our intermediate title bid

INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

TWICE in the previous three seasons Enniskeane have come up short in the county intermediate camogie final – but they are determined to take the next step this season.

Both in 2017 and 2019 they lost the county final to rivals Newcestown, who have since gone on to senior, but Enniskeane aren't too far away from getting their hands on the prize they want.

They kick off this year's county championship campaign against Ballyhea in Castle Road this Sunday evening (6pm) – and Cork star Orla Cronin is keen to make sure it's a winning start.

'There is a lot of emphasis being put on these first-round games and if we can get off to a good start we will put ourselves in a good position for the next few weeks,' the Enniskeane ace explained.

'Momentum will be a big

thing this season, if you can find form at the start that should stand to you because the championship is being played in such a short window.'

Cronin scored 1-6 in last year's county final loss (2-9 to 2-8) against Newcestown and with young guns like Sinead Hurley, Tara Sheehan and Daire O'Brien gaining experience each season, the team is growing stronger.

'Every year we have definitely learned something from the defeats we have suffered. Every year too we try to focus on the things that we feel might have let us down and work to improve them,' Cronin explained.

'We're also gaining experience all the time. A lot of girls have come onto the intermediate team over the last few years so they're learning and developing, and seeing what's needed at this level.'

There was more good news for Enniskeane last Friday



History was made last weekend when Enniskeane fielded a second camogie team for the first-time ever. They got the better of St Colum's by 3-7 to 0-9.

night when the club fielded a second team for the first time in the club's history – a side mixed with youth and experience beat St Colum's 3-7 to 0-9.

The history-making team included Celine Nyhan, Labhaoise McCarthy, Ruth O'Driscoll, Eibhlin Mangan, Kellie Scannell, Hazel Browne, Marguerite Nyhan, Saoirse Fleming, Davina Connolly, Aoife Shee-

han, Ciara O'Donovan, Deirdre Browne, Julie Anne Hayes, Lauren Corcoran and Caoimhe Hennessy.

This team, Enniskeane 2, will take on Glen Rovers 2 in the county junior championship on August 5th.

Other West Cork teams in action in the opening round of

the county intermediate camogie championship this weekend are:

- Clonakilty take on Brian Dillons in Castle Road on Monday, July 27th, at 7.30pm

- Valley Rovers play Blackrock on Monday, July 27th, at 7.30pm

- Kilbrittain-Timoleague play Carrigaline in Castle Road on Tuesday, July 28th at 7.30pm

Sponsorship boost as camogie returns

IT'S all systems go as the Cork Camogie Board gears up for a busy season of senior championship action starting this weekend.

In a major boost to the sport, yesterday they announced the continued sponsorship of all championships from senior to minor by SE Systems.

The Intermediate and Junior A championship first rounds have already taken place, whilst senior clubs are gearing up for a busy weekend which will see seven first round ties this weekend.

SE Systems have been wonderful championship sponsors to Cork Camogie since coming on board in 2008.

Managing Director John O'Leary is a man who has deep roots in local GAA, and a member of the Brian Dillon's club where he held various positions including club chairman and he knows just how important sponsorship is to the board.

'We are delighted to continue our partnership with the Cork Camogie board and sponsor their championships,' John O'Leary said.

'Down through the years we have witnessed the huge work that is going in at all levels.

'Their magnificent complex in Castle Road is testament to the hard

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

work they are doing and SE Systems is only too happy to continue to support the board in any way we can.

'We are looking forward to another great season of championship game at all levels.'

Speaking at the launch Mary McSweeney, Chairperson of Cork Camogie board was thrilled to have SE Systems back on board at a difficult time for companies.

'We are delighted to continue our partnership with SE Systems who have been superb sponsors of all our championship,' Mary said.

'John and his family have deep roots in our game and the support they give is second to none.'

'We look forward to a hugely exciting and attractive programme of games ahead and it is fantastic to have SE Systems on board with us once again.'

'We are in strange and trying times and to have this support is a huge boost to us, our thanks to everyone involved in making this happen.'



Players from the various senior clubs at the launch of the SE Systems camogie championships, with Jason Collins of SE Systems at Castle Road.

Eight teams to contest Minor A

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

THE dates for the SE Systems minor championship first round games have been announced.

With a lot of these players also involved with their clubs in adult championships there will be little time for recovery between games as fixtures come thick and fast.

With the U16 and U14 championship opening rounds to be slotted in as well, every single night between now and mid-September will be utilised as the county board work to keep the show on the road.

Minor A

Eight teams will contest the Minor A championship which gets under way on August 14 when Inniscarra host last season's B winners St Finbarr's and Ballinora travel to meet holders Sarsfields.

2019 B league winners Aghada host Aghabullogue on August 17 and on August 20, Éire Óg head to Newcestown.

Minor B

Twenty sides will battle it out in the opening rounds of the SE Systems Minor B championship which get under way on August bank holiday weekend.

On August 2 it's the all-city clash of Blackrock and Na Piar-saigh in Blackrock, and Fr O'Neill's head down to play Kilbrittain / Timoleague.

Castlemartyr make the trip to Mallow on August 3 and on August 8 Ballygarvan are at home for their meeting with Buttevant.

Four games are down for August 9: Ballincollig travel to meet Enniskeane, Killeagh make the trip to Courcsey Rovers, Glen Rovers are at home against Kilbree and Cloughdub head to Douglas.

Minor C

Seventeen teams will participate in the Minor C championship.

Six teams will play in round one, round two will have 11 teams plus one winning team from round one, round three will see three losing teams from round one plus seven losing teams from round two.

Tracton and Middleton will get proceedings underway on August 1 in Tracton, the following day Sliabh Rua head to meet Clonakilty and on August 3, Blarney host Barryroe.

Seven round two games get under way on August 13 when the winners of Blarney versus Barryroe meet Rockban and Newtownshandrum play the winners of Tracton versus Middleton.

Bride Rovers host BallinascCarthy the following night, August 14, and on August 15 Bishopstown travel to play Valley Rovers and Millstreet head to Carrigaline.

The last round two games are on August 16 as Castletyons meet Youghal in Youghal and Cobh meet the winner of Clonakilty versus Sliabh Rua.



Keevea McCarthy, St Finbarr's, Denise Luby, Glen Rovers, Katriona Mackey, Douglas, and Kaitlyn Hickey, Seandun at launch of the SE Systems Camogie Championships in Castleroad.

Senior starts back in action



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

THERE is an action-packed weekend in store as the SE Systems Cork senior camogie championship commences.

The long-awaited championship means that we have a full calendar for the next nine weeks as the 17 teams involved fight it out for the coveted Punch Shoe Care Cup.

Courcsey Rovers and Cloughdub are first up in Castleroad on Saturday.

Courcsey's had a topsy turvy year in 2019. They started the championship so well, with a mammoth victory over Milford, 6-23 to 0-5, but in turn took a heavy defeat to St Finbarr's 5-12 to 1-5. Plagued with injury and losing Jacinta Crowley and Fiona Keating the week of the game was a stretch too far and you'd expect them to be a more efficient side as they face a Cloughdub team which lost their opening round narrowly to Carbery and back door to St Catherine's. But Carbery were a tough outfit to whom Cloughdub lost narrowly and despite having a young side and being without Briege Corkery they will leave everything on the pitch.

Milford and Éire Óg meet in Coachford. Éire Óg gave a very commendable account of themselves in their first year in senior ranks. They face a Milford side rebuilding, with Elaine O'Riordan another retiree of that great team earlier in the decade. They still have the formidable Ashling Thompson who will take some watching but Éire Óg with a spirited approach can give this a right rattle.

Killeagh had such a great 2019, falling at the semi-final stage after a pulsating replay to Inniscarra. With three Cork senior players and all clubs feeling the benefit of having their intercounty players training with them, Killeagh are becoming a very strong force. More is needed from their forwards though if they want to go a step further in 2020. Senior debutants Newcestown will have it all to do but they are a dogged side who won't be found wanting in the desire department. A hard-working



Sarsfields' Emer Fennell hammers home a goal against Inniscarra in last year's Cork Camogie SE Systems senior championship final. Sars take on Glen Rovers on Sunday in what could be the game of the weekend. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

hour is required to make life difficult for the East Cork side.

On Sunday we have three great clashes. St Finbarr's and Douglas start the day in Castleroad. The Barrs are making steady progress, reaching their first semi-final in 10 years last season. They lost out to Sars by four points. They need clinical finishers up front and can't over rely on Keevea McCarthy. It was frighteningly obvious how much Douglas missed Katrina Mackey last year. She lifts the entire team and with Pamela Mackey and Julia White they can run the show. Clashes between these two sides rarely disappoint.

Inniscarra will be strong contenders again. They welcome the return of Joanne Casey and Aoife Kavanagh returns from injury. Inniscarra aren't represented on the Cork senior panel this season after Niamh McCarthy withdrew and with their full panel 100% club focused on regaining the title, who would bet against them.

Ballincollig had a good season against strong opposition in 2019. They narrowly lost to Glen Rovers in the opening round, beat Muskerry 3-14 to 0-8 in backdoor and subsequently lost to Carbery by four points, 1-17 to 1-13. If they can build on those performances this could be a close

encounter.

Sars v Glen Rovers could be the game of the weekend. Emer O'Farrell isn't lining out and that news would give a lift to any opposition but Sars have such a conveyor belt of stars and with last year's title surely raising standards by another 10% they are potential champions again. The Glen have a balanced outfit, if needing to be more clinical up front. They are without Emma Akinkouli through injury but with plenty heart and fight could put it up to the champions.

Ballygarvan and St Catherine's meet on Monday. Ballygarvan are a young side, still developing but with talent. Many of the team have a minor B and two minor A titles tucked away and that winning mentality should bring confidence to the pitch against a St Catherine's side without their backbone of many years, Orla Cotter. But St Catherine's will start as favourites.

FIXTURES:

Saturday August 1: Courcsey Rovers v Cloughdub, Castleroad 2pm; Milford v Éire Óg, Coachford 2pm; Killeagh v Newcestown, Castleroad 6pm

Sunday August 2nd: St. Finbarr's v Douglas, Castleroad 2.30pm; Inniscarra v Ballincollig, Éire Óg 5pm; Sarsfields v Glen Rovers, Castleroad 6.30pm

Monday August 3rd: Ballygarvan v St. Catherine's, Castleroad 4pm

Newcestown begin life at senior level

NEWCESTOWN begin life in the county senior camogie championship this Saturday, August 1st, when they take on Killeagh at Castle Road (6pm).

The Carbery club is the only representative from the division in this year's senior championship after the Carbery team pulled out. For Newcestown, it's a baptism of fire against a strong Killeagh but the Carbery team will back themselves and have plenty of talent to call on - like rising star Ciara O'Sullivan who made her senior debut with Cork in the league earlier this year, Maeve Lynch, Mary McSweeney, Aoife O'Sullivan, Evelyn Crowley, Maria Kenneally and more. Ciara O'Sullivan and Emma Tarrant have both won All-Ireland minor camogie medals in recent seasons, Maeve Lynch is involved with the Cork intermediate team while last season Grace Ryan helped Cork end a 16-year drought for a U16A All-Ireland title.

FIXTURES

SE Systems Senior Club Championship Round 1
Saturday, August 1st - 2pm, Courcey Rovers v Cloughdub, at Castle Road; 6pm, Killeagh v Newcestown, at Castle Road; 3pm, Milford v Eire Og, at Coachford.
Sunday, August 2nd - 5pm, Ballincollig v Inniscarra, at Eire Og; 2.30pm, St Finbarr's v Douglas, at Castle Road; 6.30pm, Glen Rovers v Sarsfields, at Castle Road.
Monday, August 3rd - 4pm, Ballygarvan v St Catherines, at Castle Road

Ballinhassig will take on Ballymartle

BALLINHASSIG will begin the defence of their South East JAFc title with a rematch of last year's final against Ballymartle.

The draw for the opening round of The Huntsman Bar & Restaurant South East JAFc is: Crosshaven v Shamrocks, Courcey Rovers v Valley Rovers, Ballymartle v Ballinhassig, Belgooly v Tracton, Ballygarvan v Carrigaline.

Meanwhile, defending South East junior A hurling champions Courcey Rovers begin their title defence against Ballinhassig. The draw for the Declan O'Neill Furniture and Carpentry South East JAFc is: Ballygarvan v Carrigaline, Tracton v Valley Rovers, Kinsale v Shamrocks, Ballinhassig v Courcey Rovers.

Enniskeane signal their intermediate intentions

INTERMEDIATE CAMOGIE

ENNISKEANE 4-19
BALLYHEA 0-9

RUNNERS-UP in 2019, Enniskeane are determined to go one step further in this season's county intermediate camogie championship. No surprise so that they kicked off this year's campaign in style at Castle Road last Sunday with a convincing Round 1 win against Ballyhea.

With some young players making their championship debuts and also fielding without their captain Kate McCarthy and stalwart Orla Coughlan it looked as if Enniskeane would have a huge battle on their hands.

Ballyhea opened the scoring with a pointed free from Kate Kilcommins, however Enniskeane through Cork senior star Orla Cronin responded with two of their own. Sinead Hurley then followed up on a goalkeeper error and crashed the ball to the net for Enniskeane's opening goal.

Ballyhea responded with two more points from frees, but Enniskeane had five points of their own and then Sinead Hurley, once again, was on the end of a pass from Tara Sheehan to score the Carbery club's second goal.

Ballyhea had some chances but excellent goal-keeping and defensive play from Enniskeane kept them out, while at the other end Orla Cronin, Laura Mannix and Tara Sheehan all scored as Enniskeane led 2-9 to 0-6 at the break.

With Aisling O'Driscoll and Danielle Carroll commanding the half-back line and Louise



Enniskeane's Tara Sheehan gets away from Ballyhea's Chloe Dundon.

Duggan marking Ballyhea's best player it was a case of one-way traffic in the second half as Enniskeane called the shots. Celine Nyhan, Kellie Scannell and Emma O'Driscoll left nothing past them. Daire O'Brien and Laura Mannix totally bossed midfield and in doing so laid off great ball to create wave after wave of attacks.

Aisling O'Driscoll broke from half back, passed to Orla Cronin who, with meticulous vision, picked out Tara Sheehan - and it led to another goal. A reward for her efforts Cronin then had a superb goal of her own from a Ballyhea puckout.

Also, 16-year-old Deirdre Browne was in great running form and aided by Siobhan O'Driscoll and young Eimear



Enniskeane's Laura Mannix gets the better of Ballyhea's Chloe Dundon during their county championship Round 1 game at Castle Road on Sunday. (Photos: Trevor Patchett)

O'Brien fed Orla Cronin, Tara Sheehan and Sinead Hurley, who all impressed. Caitlin O'Donovan when introduced continued the good work done by Louise Duggan.

Ballyhea launched one final attack and in doing so got a free and Kate Kilcommins went for goal, however Kate Corcoran stood firm in the Enniskeane goal and saved this shot to keep a clean sheet.

Enniskeane now move on to the third round and will be out again later this month.

Scorers

Enniskeane: Orla Cronin 1-11; Sinead Hurley 2-1; Tara Sheehan 1-4, Laura Mannix, Siobhan O'Driscoll, Eimear O'Brien 0-1 each.
Ballyhea: Kate Kilcommins 0-4f;

INTERMEDIATE UPDATE

Round 1 results: Fr O'Neills 0-16 Na Piarsaigh 1-6; Aghabullogue 2-15 Watergrasshill 1-5; Enniskeane 4-19 Ballyhea 0-9; Brian Dillons 1-7 Clonakilty 2-3; Blackrock 5-17 Valley Rovers 1-8; Kilbrittain-Timoleague 1-9 Carrigaline 1-11

Losers' round (August 9th): Valley Rovers v Ballyhea, Clonakilty v Watergrasshill, Kilbrittain-Timoleague v Na Piarsaigh.

Roisin Killeen, Rachel Harty 0-2 each; Elaine Crowley 0-1.

Enniskeane: Kate Corcoran; Louise Duggan, Celine Nyhan, Kellie Scannell; Emma O'Driscoll, Danielle Carroll, Aisling O'Driscoll; Daire O'Brien, Laura Mannix (0-1); Orla Cronin (1-11), Tara Sheehan (1-4), Siobhan O'Driscoll (0-1); Deirdre Browne, Sinead Hurley (2-1).

Eimear O'Brien (0-1).
Sub: Caitlin O'Donovan for L Duggan.

Ballyhea: Chloe Keogh; Laura Dundon, Mary Carroll, Laura Dillon; Isabel Mortell, Roisin Killeen (0-2), Grainne O'Leary; Chloe Dundon, Elaine Crowley (0-1); Kate Kilcommins (0-4f), Jade Hooper, Tara O'Sullivan; Rachel Harty (0-2), Jane Foley, Clara Harty.

Barrett blasts Bal to opening victory

JUNIOR A CAMOGIE

BALLINASCARTHY 2-8
BALLINHASSIG 1-10

BALLINASCARTHY jumped their first hurdle in this season's county junior A camogie championship when they beat Ballinhassig in Newcestown on Friday night.

The Carbery club thundered into the game and an early goal, pulled on by Aoife



Match winner Moira Barrett.

Nyhan, was the first score on the board, which helped Bal to settle.

Ballinhassig were slower to register scores with three points their total tally for the first half, and only one was from play. Michelle Dullea scored a great point for Bal before exiting the game due to a hamstring injury.

Bal captain Martina O'Brien, also Cork's senior football goalkeeper, pulled off the save of the season when she stopped a Ballinhassig penalty. Moira Barrett slotted over another

point from play and Clara Crowley finished the half by scoring from two placed balls. Bal led 1-4 to 0-3 at the break.

The second half started lively, with a close-range point by Moira Barrett followed quickly by a goal and a point from Ballinhassig. The next three points registered by Ballinascarth were from Clara Crowley's unerring free-taking, but heading down the final stretch it was Ballinhassig who led by two points.

Step forward Moira Barrett, who scored a brilliant goal for

Bal which shot them to victory by a single point. This is Bal's second season at junior A level and this was a welcome win to kickstart their campaign.

Ballinascarth: Martina O'Brien, Kaela O'Driscoll, Hannah O'Donovan, Maeve Kingston, Lisa Hegarty, Claire Kingston, Kate O'Donovan, Clara Crowley, Anna Flynn, Moira Barrett, Michelle Dullea, Annie Condon, Anna Cullinane, Megan Ryan, Aoife Nyhan, Sinead McCarthy, Marie Phayer, Sarah Cullinane, Cara Deasy Desmond, Niamh Nyhan.

Clubs taking centre stage

Six clubs advance to third round

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

I SPOKE with a number of managers this week, ahead of today's senior camogie club championship. They were all delighted to be back playing and looking forward to the weekend.

For those with senior inter-county players in their squad, having those players for training has been worth its weight in gold.

Inniscarra's Kevin Mulcahy has a full squad.

"It's great to have Aoife Kavanagh, Joanne Casey, and Rosie O'Mahony back. They were a big loss to the group, but, in fairness to the rest of the girls, they stepped up to the mark last year," Mulcahy says. "We had a programme during the lockdown and the girls came back in good condition. We don't have any player on the senior inter-county squad this year and it's a huge difference, and it's good that every club has the chance to have their players. It's a very short window and it's only fair they have them."

"The structure of the championship is great, too, and, in fairness, there's time for a break in between games. We have a couple of dual players and ensuring they weren't overloaded, once we went back, was key," Mulcahy says. "We're facing Ballincollig in a local derby. We know each other well, so there won't be much in it."

Ollie Hallihan, the man behind Ballygarvan camogie for many years, is looking forward to the challenge of St Catherine's.

"We're a young team; some of the older players are gone. But, you know, a lot of our young girls have a minor B and two minor A titles behind them, so we have talent and the great thing about young players is that they try hard. St Catherine's are tough, but we'll give it a good shot," Hallihan says.

Last year, Brian Barry had to step back from his involvement with Killeagh, for personal reasons.

"I came back this year and I'm thor-



Gemma O'Connor, St Finbarr's, outruns Saoirse McCarthy, Courcey Rovers. Picture: Denis Minihane

oughly enjoying it. We kept in contact during Covid, we put programmes on our group chat, but there was no pressure on the girls," Barry says. "We were very much in contact with them on a personal level, ensuring they were all okay."

"Looking to the year ahead, we haven't really been getting the scores on the board and we hope to rectify that. We have the three Cork girls all the time. They bring a professional approach to our training and training has ramped up, because of their presence."

"Facing Newcestown, they won the intermediate last year, so will come out with a bit of a buzz in them," Barry says. "We know we're going to have it tough; they've nothing to lose and will give it everything. There's an expectation on us."

Brian O'Sullivan, manager of St Finbarr's, is delighted to have Gemma O'Connor around.

"We're back about four weeks, as a collective group, and we're just looking forward to the game against Douglas, to be honest. Douglas are a good side, but we're

just focusing on ourselves. We've played a few challenge games, which were good, competitive games," O'Sullivan says.

"There was no league and we didn't have a summer cup, either. But it's the same for everyone. We've the same group as last year, with a few U16s coming up as part of the squad."

"It's great having Gemma training with us. The younger girls, in particular, are in awe of having her on the pitch and Gemma is a fantastic club person. The likes of Gemma and the older girls set the tone in training."

Tim Barry-Murphy is back with Cloughduv after a number of years.

"Thankfully, we all came out the right side of Covid and it's great to get back out onto the pitch training," Barry-Murphy says. "Every team was completely disrupted, so everyone is starting from the same position. I suppose, we're between teams in that a lot of the older girls have moved on and we're quite young. So, it's a learning curve for us."

"Courcey Rovers will always give you a tough game. They're a very committed outfit, with some great hurlers. We're expecting a tough game, but the girls are in good form and looking forward to it."

Mike Boland, of Courcey Rovers, is hoping everyone stays healthy.

"I think, in fairness to all teams, they're trying to do the right thing, in the sense of looking after each other," Boland says. "We had a lot of injuries last year and then coming into the match, we lost Jacinta Crowley and Fiona Keating. That was the nail in the coffin. We're back together about four weeks now. I suppose, it's like pre-season training, but things are good in the camp. The girls are comfortable and enjoying it."

Eire Og stepped up to the senior ranks in 2019 and Ken Murphy says, "We were happy with how it played out for us. We had a level of success underage, which was a help; the older and younger players gelled together. But last year is gone now. Timmy Kelleher, of Erin's Own, is coaching us. We shut down for the Covid period, but we're back at it now and going well."

"We're facing Milford and while they may not be as strong as they were in the past, they are still a very strong outfit. But we're looking forward to it. It's great to be back."



Ellen Murphy, Aine O'Regan, and Claudia Keane with the cup in 2018. Picture: Larry Cummins

AN action-packed opening weekend of the SE Systems camogie championship games at intermediate level saw six clubs advance to round three, while six clubs head for the losers' round.

Last season's defeated finalists Enniskeane signalled their intent as they recorded a 4-19 to 0-9 victory over newly-promoted Ballyhea at Castle Rd. Cork senior Orla Cronin was hugely effective as she notched up 1-11 of her side's tally, while there were also impressive displays from Sinead Hurley and Tara Sheehan, who both contributed to the scoreline.

Goals in the fifth and 21st minutes from Hurley helped Enniskeane open a 2-9 to 0-6 interval lead but it took two excellent saves from keeper Kate Corcoran to keep Ballyhea at bay in the opening half.

Kate Kilcommins, Rachel Harty, and Elaine Crowley worked tirelessly for a Ballyhea side who will no doubt relish the opportunity at a second bite of the cherry in the losers' round.

Aghabullogue got their campaign off to a winning start thanks to a solid display which saw them overcome Watergrasshill 2-15 to 1-5.

Aghabullogue led by five points at the break, 0-8 to 0-3, with Cliona Healy on target with 2-9, joined on the score-sheet by Ciara McCarthy, Aoife Twomey, Julie Tarrant, and Robyn Martin, who all contributed enormously as the Mid-Cork girls marched to round three.

For Watergrasshill, Marie O'Neill was their scorer, notching up 1-5.

Fr O'Neill's hit an impressive 16 points as they got the upper hand on Na Piarasigh in Ballynoe, where Clodagh Finn led the way with 10 points.

Leading eight points to three at the interval, they kept the pressure on in the second half, Clare O'Brien, Kate Harrington, Keelagh Cullinane, and Ciara O'Doherty driving them into round three.

Brian Dillon's had a point to spare at Castle Rd, edging out Clonakilty in a nail-biting contest. Level at the break 1-2 to 0-5, Dillon's dug deep with a Rebecca O'Mahony goal on 33 minutes proving vital as it finished 1-7 to 2-3 in their favour.

Blackrock signalled their intent as they overcame Valley Rovers 5-17 to 1-8 with goals from Michelle Murphy, Cait Kelleher, Sadhbh McCarthy, Grace Mulqueen, and Hayley Ryan.

Carrigaline and Kilbrittain/Timoleague went head-to-head at Castle Rd in the last game in round one and it was another cracker, Carrigaline emerging victors 1-11 to 1-9.

The loser rounds will be as follows: Clonakilty take on Watergrasshill; Valley Rovers meet Ballyhea; Kilbrittain/Timoleague play Na Piarasigh, all on August 9.

Siobhán's late goal seals win for Éire Óg

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Éire Óg 1-10
Milford 0-9

JUST a point divided the sides at the interval in Coachford as two evenly matched sides battled for control in this SE Systems Senior Championship clash.

And so it was also until the final moments of the game until a late Siobhán Hutchinson goal for Éire Óg saw them over the line.

Milford, playing with the aid of the wind, made all the early running as they applied a lot of pressure on the Éire Óg defence.

Level at two points apiece inside 10 minutes, Éire Óg went two clear with points from Emma Crowley and free-taker Margaret O'Herlihy.

Rebecca Finn cut it to a point, converting a free, but again Éire Óg edged in front with Maebh Ellen Desmond finding the range.

Battling hard, Milford were level again before O'Herlihy converted a 45 to give Éire Óg a 0-7 to 0-6 interval lead.

On the resumption it was Éire Óg enjoying the lion's share of possession, but a resolute Milford defence stood strong.

O'Herlihy converted a 45 and had a point from play in a low-scoring third quarter and at the water break it was advantage Éire Óg by three points.

With Laura Stack and Eadaoin's Goggin beginning to win a lot of possession, Milford showed great heart and they put the Éire Óg defence under a lot of pressure.

Finn converted a free to cut the deficit and with Hutchinson dropping back deep, Éire Óg were able to maintain their composure.

With five minutes remaining Éire Óg were left off the hook when Saoirse McCarthy found Eimear O'Gorman with a superb hand pass, but her effort, with the Éire Óg keeper beaten, hit the crossbar and bounced over for a point.

Relentlessly they attacked again from the puck-out winning a closed in free Finn's effort for a goal was turned for a point.

With just one between the sides and time almost up Éire Óg tore down the field and, with the second last puck off the game, a Hutchinson goal saw Éire Óg over the line.

Scorers for Éire Óg: M Herlihy 0-6 (0-5 f), 0-1 45), S Hutchinson 1-0, E Crowley 0-2, M E Desmond, I Sheehan 0-1 each.
Milford: R Finn 0-5 (all fs), A Thompson, E O'Gorman 0-2 each.

ÉIRE ÓG: R Murray; Aileen Hennessy, Aoife Hennessy, C Sheehan; E Quigley, K Mc Carthy, A O'Callaghan (c); S Hutchinson, A McSweeney; I Sheehan, A Barry, E Crowley; M E Desmond, R Murphy, M O'Herlihy.

Sub: R Sheehan for E Crowley (54).

MILFORD: C Buckley; M Fitzgibbon, K Galvin, A Galvin; O Linehan, T Fitzgibbon, S Sexton; N O'Connor, A Thompson (c); E O'Gorman, R Finn; S Sheehan; E Goggin, L Stack, M K Fein.

Sub: S McCarthy for M K Fein (41).

Referee: Andrew Larkin (Ballygarvan).

Determined Glen put down marker

CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

Glen Rovers 0-14
Sarsfields 1-9

AS predicted, this turned out to be the pick of the opening rounds in the SE Systems senior championship tie in Castle Road last evening.

And what a thriller it was. With wind advantage, the Glen came out determined to put it up to the champions. Hollie Herlihy got the game off the mark but the next four points went the Glen's way with Denise Luby getting three, two from frees and Kayleigh O'Sullivan hitting a beauty. The pace was fast, both defenders doing good work and both sides, playing a 15 on 15 format, attacked the game.

Molly Lynch made a point-blank save on six minutes and was competent throughout.

At the other end Lisa O'Riordan would have been called upon more often such was the danger Lucy Allen posed, but the Glen stopped her further out conceding a free which was pointed and a penalty.

The penalty was blocked but Allen herself slotted over the rebound. The Glen responded well with Lydia Cunningham and Katie Walsh pointing either side of another Saoirse Desmond free. Both defences were more than acquitting themselves well as two points separated the sides at the break.

With the wind now at their backs, the tempo increased from Sars. They started to win good battles in defence and get a grip around the middle of the park. They had the game level within four minutes and a Saoirse Desmond free gave them the lead for the first time since the third minute. A Luby free levelled it again before Aine Mullins had the ball in the net for Sars.

Lauren Callanan and Karen O'Connell were doing brilliant work as Sars attacked. Lydia Cunningham at the other end was giving it her all in the Glen jersey as three lovely points from Luby, the stylish Katie Walsh, and Lydia Cunningham had the sides level again. Desmond pointed.

The game went into additional time and what a class five three minutes the Glen produced. A Luby free and two

Powerful first half eases Inniscarra past Ballincollig

Inniscarra 2-14
Ballincollig 1-5

THIS Mid-Cork derby in the first round of the SE Systems Senior Camogie Championship saw in a big win for Inniscarra in a one-sided contest at Ovens.

Despite playing into the wind the opening half, Inniscarra led 2-8 to 0-2 at the break.

To their credit, Ballincollig improved in the second half, and an excellent display by their full-back line kept Inniscarra at bay with some excellent work by Leah Weste, Sarah Keating, and second-half substitute Miriam O'Leary.

Ballincollig netminder Leanne Doyle, who was only named on the team just before the start, brought off some spectacular saves.

However the slick passing of Inniscarra proved decisive, with Aileen Sheehan and Ellen Murphy



Glen Rovers' Emma Murphy is tackled by Sarsfields' Aine Mullins during the SE Systems Cork Senior Camogie Championship at Castle Road yesterday.

brilliant points from Emma Murphy and Kayleigh O'Sullivan put the Glen two points up. They fought for every ball, their defence where Cliona Martin, Kelly Falvey, Sinéad Fahy, Leanne O'Sullivan, Karen O'Connell, and Lauren Callanan were outstanding held off a potent Sars attack.

Lisa O'Riordan saved off the line five minutes into additional time and it was game over for a tremendous Glen win.

Scorers for Glen Rovers: D Luby 0-6 (0-5 f), K Walsh 0-3, K O'Sullivan, Lydia Cunningham 0-2, E Murphy 0-1.

Sarsfields: S Desmond 0-5 f, A Mullins 1-1, L Kelly, M Barry, H Herlihy 0-1 each.

SARSFIELDS: M Lynch; E Murphy, K Barry, N O'Callaghan; E Casey, M Mullins, O McAllen; C Mullins, L Kelly; C Irwin, M Barry, H Herlihy; S Desmond, A Mullins, L Allen.

Subs: C Casey for H Herlihy (40), R O'Mahony for L Allen (54), E Woods for A Mullins and M McCarthy for M Barry (60), G Cashman for L Kelly (62).

GLEN ROVERS: L O'Riordan; C O'Brien, K Falvey, C Martin; K O'Connell, L O'Sullivan, L Callanan; T McCarthy, E Murphy; N O'Riordan, L Cunningham, N O'Brien; K Walsh, D Luby, K O'Sullivan.

Subs: S Fahy for C O'Brien (29 in), A Wallace for N O'Brien (46).

Ref: Simon Stokes (Tullylease).



Sarsfields' Ciara Irwin breaks away from Glen Rovers' Emma Murphy.

CAMOGIE

■ Olan Allen

causing big problems when they ran at the defence.

Inniscarra raced into a five-point lead inside the opening 10 minutes with Joanne Casey getting two, Orla McCarthy one, along with a free and a 45 from Niamh Dilworth.

A great solo run by Sam Coomey set up Denise Cronin for Ballincollig's opening score, but Inniscarra's response was quick as a solo run by Sheehan saw Dilworth find the net.

They followed this up with a point from Murphy and a shot from Sheehan was blocked by Doyle, but Eimear O'Reilly slapped the ball into the net to leave Inniscarra 2-6 to 0-1 ahead at the water break.

Two frees from Dilworth to one by Casey left the Inniscarra side 12 points ahead at half time.

Olivia O'Leary pointed for Ballincollig but then went 20 minutes without a score as Inniscarra tagged on three points.

Two points from Patricia Buttimer and a goal from a free by Casey saw Ballincollig finish the stronger. Ballincollig now face Douglas in the losers round.

Scorers: Inniscarra: N Dilworth 1-8 (0-7f, 0-1 45), E O'Reilly 1-0, J Casey 0-2, A Sheehan 0-2, E Murphy 0-2.

Ballincollig: D Cronin 1-2 (1-1 f), P Buttimer 0-2, O O'Leary 0-1.

Inniscarra: S Walsh; A O'Regan, C Looney, A Kavanagh; C Ring, R Buckley, R O'Mahony; E Looney, K O'Mahony (capt); J Casey, N Dilworth, A Sheehan; R Quigley, E O'Reilly, E Murphy.

Subs: D O'Callaghan for Casey (ht), J Burke for Murphy (45), J Casey for Sheehan (64).

Ballincollig: L Doyle; C Healy; S Keating, O Keating; C Irish, L Weste (c), A Cotter; L Dorgan, M Healy; O O'Leary, D Cronin, S Coomey; N O'Brien, P Buttimer, A Lovett.

Subs: M O'Leary for C Healy (ht), C Hennigan for Lovett (40), O Ni Cathaigh for Dorgan (42).

Referee: C Egan (Glen Rovers).

Sigerson on fire as Killeagh triumph

SENIOR CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

Killeagh 1-23
Newcestown 1-5

A COMPREHENSIVE victory for Killeagh in the second game of the SE Cork Senior Championship in Castle Road on Saturday. An excellent display of free taking, side-lines, and striking from Chloe Sigerson was the hallmark of the second half after senior debutants Newcestown held the experienced East Cork side to level terms at the break.

Newcestown failed to be overawed by Killeagh, giving an honest hardworking performance and it stood them in good stead in the opening 30 minutes. Killeagh were out of the blocks with two points in two minutes. By the 14th minute they led 0-5 to 0-1, Sigerson with four points to her credit, three from frees. Newcestown knuckled down, with goalkeeper Orlan Dineen's strong puckouts reaching an impressive half-forward line where Ciara O'Sullivan, in particular, was causing problems.

A long Meabh O'Donovan ball slipped through the fingers of Stephanie Beusang in the Killeagh goal and the game was level on 17 minutes.

It was point for point and despite being more balanced, Killeagh couldn't get into their stride against a dogged Newcestown. Killeagh had the strong swirling wind advantage in the second half and were four points to the good after seven minutes. Rachel Sheehan and Laura Tracey, now operating at centre forward, with two apiece. Sigerson added another as Killeagh's deliveries improved. Credit must go to Newcestown full-back Mary McSweeney who had many good moments one-on-one over the hour against the Cork star.

But with Jessica O'Shea, Ciara Daly, Rachel Sheehan, and Laura Tracey providing a massive supply inside during that second period, Killeagh were ratcheting up the frees and Sigerson was punishing them.

She hit 10 second-half points with sweet striking, two from play as Newcestown's defence was bombarded with attacks. Against the wind, the West Cork side found it difficult to make headway beyond their half-forward line and working so hard for every ball became a tiring exercise.

When Killeagh won another close-in free on 65 minutes, for practice alone Sigerson was going to go for it and hit the net she did to secure a convincing win.

Scorers for Killeagh: C Sigerson 1-15 (1-10f, 0-1 45), L Tracey 0-4, R Sheehan 0-3, R Fogarty 0-1 Newcestown: C O'Sullivan 0-5 (0-4f), M O'Donovan 1-0

KILLEAGH: S Beusang, E Tracey, A Walsh, N O'Keefe, L McEvoy, H Looney, C Daly, C Barry, L Tracey, J O'Shea, R Fogarty, C Harney, A O'Driscoll, C Sigerson, R Sheehan.

NEWCESTOWN: O Dineen, L Jennings, M McSweeney, R Hattahan, M Lynch, A O'Donovan, S Kelleher, E Crowley, M O'Donovan, C O'Sullivan, M Crowley, E Tarrant, O O'Mahony, M Kennesaly, A O'Sullivan.

Referee: Cathal Egan (Glen Rovers).

Barrs make hard work of victory



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

St Finbarr's 1-10
Douglas 1-6

A TIGHT game with both defences on top ensured a low scoring, but entertaining, first-round SE Systems Senior Championship game in Castle Road on Sunday afternoon.

The Barrs had more opportunities in a stop-start first half with 17 frees and a number of throw-ins.

Keeva McCarthy had five points on the board for the Barrs by the 22nd minute, two from play.

Barrs keeper Ciara Hurley saved two minutes later and with Gemma O'Connor clearing upfield, Orlaith Cahalane made no mistake and struck the net from the left corner to put seven points between the sides.

Adding to that, the fact that the Barrs had five wides to Douglas' one, they certainly looked to be the better side and heading for the driving seat coming up to the break.

Great

Ashling Egan was having a great game at full-back, Hurley was competent in goal, Meabh Cahalane, O'Connor, and Lynda O'Connell were sweeping up and with Ciara Golden working hard in their half-forward line alongside the running Orlaith Cahalane and accuracy of McCarthy, things were looking good for the Togher side.

But Douglas halted the Barrs run when Katrina Mackey billowed a close in free to the net past a packed goalmouth.

The gap was down in the blink of an eye to four points.

McCarthy (free) and Mackey exchanged points leaving it 1-6 to 1-2 at the break. The second half started in much the same fashion.

McCarthy and Mackey continued to swap points with Mackey cutting the gap to three. The water break and a lift in the wind favoured Douglas.

They took the game to the Barrs. With their backs doing well a further two Mackey points, one from play, and it was game on.

The stop/start nature continued. Jessica Kavanagh was confident under



Ashling Shannon of St Finbarr's about to hit the sliothar upfield despite the challenge from Jess O'Mahony of Douglas during the SE Systems Senior Camogie Championship match at Castle Road. Picture: Howard Crowley



Gemma O'Connor of St Finbarr's pulls away from Katlyn Holland of Douglas during the SE Systems Senior Camogie Championship match at Castle Road. Picture: Howard Crowley

the dropping balls that St Finbarr's were lobbing in and as tensions grew every ball was vigorously fought.

A push in the back afforded Keeva another free opportunity and it gave the Barrs a three-point cushion head-

ing into injury-time.

They could afford to breathe when Orlaith Cahalane was fouled a minute later just outside the square and the reliable McCarthy pointed again.

The full-time whistle came shortly

afterwards. As always the game between these two sides served up an hour full of anticipation even if the standard wasn't where it should be at times, possibly due to the stoppages.

It was a game the Barrs deserved to win, but they made hard work of it and both sides will need to improve as the championship progresses.

Scorers for St Finbarr's: K McCarthy 0-10 (0-8f), O Cahalane 1-0.

Douglas: K Mackey 1-6 (1-3f)

ST FINBARR'S: C Hurley, S Punch, A Egan, A O'Neill, M Cahalane, G O'Connor, L O'Connell, A Shannon, R Finn, C Golden, K McCarthy, E Crowley, O Cahalane, E Oiden, E Wigginton-Barrett.

Subs: E Browne-Ryan for E Oiden (16), N Oiden for E Crowley (39).

DOUGLAS: J Kavanagh, E Kavanagh, A Curtin, S Mulrooney, C Nason, P Mackey, M Mulrooney, J O'Mahony, C Noonan, K Holland, K Mackey, C St. Ledger, R Swanton, J Leo, A Walsh.

Subs: K Twomey for A Walsh (11), J Donegan for J O'Mahony (44).

Referee: Fionn O'Murchu (Valley Rovers).

Keating fires Courceys to big win over Cloughduv

Courcey Rovers 3-15
Cloughduv 0-9

SENIOR CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

THE superior teamwork of Courcey Rovers saw them advance to the next round of the SE Systems senior camogie championship in Castle Road on Saturday.

At half-time Rovers were five points to the good with Cloughduv trailing by their five first-half wides. Defensively, Courcey's were strong with Edel and Ashling Moloney and Ciara Hayes very steady.

At midfield Jacinta Crowley was in top form while up front Rovers had speedy and stylish forwards particularly in Linda Collins, Saoirse McCarthy and Fiona Keating. Both sides showed steely determination and a young Cloughduv side battled hard, but the experience of a talented Rovers side came more to the top as the game went on.

Rovers, with a strong cross wind, had four wides within 10 minutes of the restart as they put ferocious pressure on Cloughduv.

The move of Collins to centre-forward paid off. With a great hand she caught a lot ball and fed Keating who was now starting to blossom and breaking through the Cloughduv defenders.

Jacinta Crowley and Lisa Lynch swapped points in a tight opening third quarter, but then Rovers started to pull away. Three points from Keating and one from Collins had Rovers leading 1-13 to 0-8.

Then Keating pounced for her first goal with 56 minutes gone. Cloughduv continued to put in the hard work all over the pitch, but the talent of Rovers in every line was proving a handful.

With lovely teamwork, Rovers were finding each other well. Ellen Maguire and Lynch exchanged points before Keating had the last say in the final two minutes with a point before finishing a lovely move to goal. Cloughduv now move on to the back door round where they face the losers of Glen Rovers and Sarsfields.

Scorers for Courcey Rovers: F Keating 2-5, S McCarthy 1-2, J Crowley 0-5 (0-2f, 0-1 45), L Collins 0-2, E Maguire 0-1 Cloughduv: L Lynch 0-5 (0-4f, 0-1 45), N O'Leary 0-2, J Downs 0-1, A M Ryan 0-1 each.

COURCEY ROVERS: S O'Reilly, E O'Regan, K Keohane, G Hannon, C Hayes, A Moloney, E Moloney, J Crowley, Elaine O'Reilly, Eimear O'Reilly, F Keating, L Collins, C O'Neill, S McCarthy.

Subs: A M Ryan for A Twomey (26), E Maguire for C O'Neill (42), O Twomey for L Collins (24).

CLOUGHDUV: A Murray, L Buttimer, E Dunne, A Corkery, A Barry Murphy, A Kelleher, N McCarthy, C Hughes, L Lynch, N O'Leary, R Hurley, A Twomey, O O'Driscoll, M Corkery, J Downs.

Subs: O Barry Murphy for J Downs (12), E Healy for R Hurley (18).

Referee: Cathal McAllister (Aghada).

Hurley stars for St Catherine's

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

St Catherine's	3-13
Ballygarvan	2-7

TWO flashes of second-half magic from the impressive Aoife Hurley gave St Catherine's a grip at the end of the third quarter of this SE Systems Senior Championship clash in Castle Rd yesterday afternoon.

Enjoying the majority of possession in the opening 30 minutes, St Catherine's held just a one-point advantage at the interval.

Ballygarvan settled quickly and took an early lead, Catriona Kelly, who returned this year from retirement, showing she has lost none of her accuracy pointing two long-range frees.

Inside ten minutes, the sides were level, 0-3 a piece, points from Finola Neville from play and a Linda O'Donnell pointed free levelling matters.

St Catherine's, with Neville, Laura Hayes, and Aoife Hurley hugely effective, took a grip on proceedings and, running at the Ballygarvan defence, they began to find gaps.

In the 14th minute, Aoife Hurley had the ball in the net for a goal. She had collected a pin-point pass from Neville, swivelled and side-stepped her marker, before finishing to the net. Continuing to apply huge pressure, St Catherine's picked off three points without reply via Neville, O'Donnell, and Laura Hayes.

With Michaela Buckley dropping back deep behind her defence, Ballygarvan were winning possession but a strong Catherine's rearguard, where Rachel O'Callaghan, Laura Hayes, and Ann Marie Rohan were hugely effective, never allowed them settle.

At 1-6 to 0-3 with eight minutes to the break, St Catherine's looked in control but Ballygarvan battled back and got themselves back into the game with three scores without reply, two Catriona Kelly points each side of a clever hand-passed Isobel O'Regan goal putting a point between the sides at half-time.

Ballygarvan came out all guns blazing for the second half and, with Michaela Buckley now operating in a forward role, they tested the Catherine's defence, but all credit to them, they never lost their focus as they withstood huge pressure.

Settling her side back into the game,



St Catherine's Rachel O'Callaghan breaks through the Ballygarvan midfield watched by Tara Crowley during their SE Systems Senior Camogie Championship clash at Castle Rd yesterday.

Pictures: Dan Linehan

Pinola Neville hit two excellent points before Hayes showed her skill with two superb goals that gave Sarah Ahern no chance in the Ballygarvan goal, the first a superb effort after a long solo run.

Boosted by this, St Catherine's upped the pace as they outscored Ballygarvan five points to one.

Ticking towards full-time, Michaela Buckley grabbed a Ballygarvan goal before Catriona Kelly added a late point to end the scoring.

St Catherine's now head on to round three with Ballygarvan taking on Milford in the losers round.

Scorers for St Catherine's: A Hurley 3-1, F Neville 0-7 (0-3 f's), L O'Donnell 0-4 (0-2 f's), L Hayes 0-1.

Ballygarvan: C Kelly 0-7 (0-6 f's), I O'Regan, M Buckley 1-0 each.

ST CATHERINE'S: Y O'Neill, O Neville, C Motherway, A M Rohan, R O'Callaghan, L Hayes, E Ronayne, S Barry, M O'Keefe, M Rohan, F Neville (c), N O'Regan, L O'Donnell, A Hurley, C Dunning.

Subs: A O'Regan for S Barry (38), C Dreaper for C Dunning (40).

BALLYGARVAN: S Ahern, S Lyons, S Wynn, E O'Regan, L Murphy, C O'Leary, S J Brady, T Crowley, Buckley, C O'Sullivan, I O'Regan (c), C Kelly, M Kelleher, G Kelleher, N Lyons.

Subs: R Crowley for M Kelleher (h/t), S Quilligan for G Kelleher (h/t), E Murphy for C O'Leary (50).

Referee: Dave O'Connell (Glen Rovers).



Ballygarvan goalkeeper Sarah Ahern gets the ball away watched by teammate Ellen O'Regan and Aoife Hurley of St Catherine's.



Clonakilty's Clodhna O'Regan races away from Shauna Cronin of Brian Dillons during their county intermediate camogie championship match on Monday night. Clon lost 1-7 to 2-3.

(Photo: David Pihlain)



THE LAST WORD

By Kieran McCarthy

FOLLOW MY LEAD | Aisling O'Donovan (19) is Newcestown's senior camogie captain this season

Talented locals put Carbery camogie on the Cork map



Enniskeane's Orla Cronin is one of the best camogie players to emerge from Carbery in recent years.

AISLING O'Donovan leaves a good first impression. Bubbly, outgoing, chatty and confident, she's made for centre stage. That's why it's hard to picture her standing in the background, and stepping out of the spotlight, but she'll admit she was caught for words at the county senior camogie championship launch last week, just days before the competition's throw-in.

The 19-year-old Newcestown captain was there, representing her club, rubbing shoulders with the established super powers of Cork camogie. All the big guns were present. Sarsfields. Inniscarra. Glen Rovers. Milford. Courcy Rovers. And Newcestown were there too, sitting at the top table for the first time in the club's history.

Last Saturday they played their first senior county championship game, against Killeagh at Castle Road. At half time, it was all square, 1-5 to 0-8. The East Cork club pulled away in the second half to win 1-23 to 1-5 so Newcestown learned quite quickly that senior is a different ball game than the intermediate grade they campaigned in for the past few seasons.

'The standard at senior is the next level altogether,' Aisling O'Donovan told the *Star Sport Podcast*.

'There are players on those teams that you thought you'd never be playing against but there they are, standing in front of you. It's exciting more than anything else.'

In the run-up to the championship, Newcestown played Inniscarra in a challenge game. Cork GAA

great Rena Buckley lined out for Scarra. O'Donovan almost took a double-take, but this is the level that Newcestown are now at. They're the only Carbery club in the senior championship and their rise in recent years, from junior to senior, mirrors the rise in standards in Carbery camogie in recent times.

Go back ten years and one player from the division, Barryroe's Jennifer O'Leary, was a regular with the Cork seniors. This year three Carbery women are involved with Paudie Murray's set-up - Enniskeane's Orla Cronin, St Colum's Libby Coppinger and Newcestown newcomer Ciara O'Sullivan. That's

progress right there. Cronin and Coppinger have been Cork regulars for the past few seasons while 18-year-old O'Sullivan, in her first year with the senior squad, is pushing hard and impressing the people that matter.

The Newcestown forward won her second All-Ireland minor A camogie title with Cork last year. O'Sullivan was one of a number of Carbery girls involved, along with Hannah Sexton (Kilbrittain/Timoleague), Claire Kingston (Ballinascorthy) and the Enniskeane duo of Sinead Hurley and Tara Sheehan. Newcestown's Emma Tarrant was also involved with the 2019 Cork minors. In 2018, Ballinascorthy's Moira Barrett captained the Cork minors to All-Ireland glory, and the Newcestown pair of Aisling O'Donovan (current club captain) and Ciara O'Sullivan both played too. Again, another indication that players from Carbery are making their presence felt.

Newcestown's Maeve Lynch, Caroline Sugrue of Ballinascorthy and Kate Wall of Kilbrittain/Timoleague are just some local players who have been involved with the Cork intermediate panel too in recent times.

There's talent in the Carbery division and it's coming to the fore, highlighted by the local clubs' success in county championships. Newcestown are the obvious example, they've won two of the last three county intermediate titles and now they're a senior club and their players have lined out at senior, intermediate, minor and

underage levels for Cork in the past 18 months. There's a conveyor belt of talent in the club now, and it's also fielding a junior team. That's more playing camogie. Success breeds success. More want to get involved. Think of the bounce that Irish rowing received off the back of Gary and Paul O'Donovan's Olympic medal success in Rio 2016.

Not too far away from Newcestown, Enniskeane are another club with ambition. They lost last year's county intermediate final to their neighbours by a single point but will be in the mix again this season. They beat Ballyhea by 4-19 to 0-9 in Round 1 last week. Recently, they also fielded a second adult camogie team for the first-time ever. Again, their numbers are encouraging. It's brilliant to see. Kilbrittain/Timoleague and Clonakilty are another two Carbery clubs operating at intermediate level. Ballinascorthy got their county junior A camogie campaign off to a winning start recently too. Barryroe, Kilbree, St Colum's are all in county championship action these weeks as well.

There's also the Carbery senior camogie team that reached the quarter-finals of last year's county championship and only lost out by one point after extra time to eventual champions, Sars. That divisional team is packed with talent. Newcestown's Aisling O'Donovan lined out for Carbery last season and she knows better than most how much the game has improved locally in recent times.

'The standard here is

'The standard here (in Carbery) is incredible, I don't think it gets enough recognition' - Aisling O'Donovan

incredible, I don't think it gets enough recognition to be honest. We only lost to Sars in the quarter-final so that shows that we have savage talent here,' O'Donovan pointed out.

That talent is being recognised. Just look at the representation of the various Carbery clubs on Cork panels. Camogie is growing in Carbery. More girls are playing it and now there are local clubs that can field two adult teams. It helps that Orla Cronin and Libby Coppinger, two local players, are the ideal role models for young girls across the division. They don't have to look too far to find a hero to aspire to be like. Cronin and Coppinger, like the legendary Jennifer O'Leary before them, have shown that the path exists from Carbery to the very highest level. They've shown it can be done and now there are several players lining up behind them, ready to show that they have what it takes to light up the big stage. Ciara O'Sullivan is one of those but before she switches her focus back to trying to break onto the Cork team she will want to

get Newcestown back on track in the senior championship. They'll need time to find their feet at senior level. It's faster, harder, a huge step up from intermediate, and the loss to Killeagh was an eye-opener.

'We will live and we will learn. It was our first time experiencing that quick, high-intensity game, but it was worth the experience,' Aisling O'Donovan explained.

They'll have to call on that renowned Newcestown fighting spirit to get back on track when they play the winner of Imokilly and Seandún in a few weeks. It will take time to acclimatise to life in the fast lane but given their upward trajectory they'll soon adjust. And the next time there is a senior camogie championship launch Aisling O'Donovan won't look around at all the other established senior clubs because Newcestown will be one of them. It's going to take time, and probably some suffering along the way, but they've the right attitude and they're willing to work hard to survive at the top level.



Newcestown captain Aisling O'Donovan led her team in their first senior championship game last Saturday. (Photo: David Ribeiro)

STAR SPORT PODCAST

This week on our podcast ...

Newcestown camogie captain Aisling O'Donovan chats about their rise to the senior ranks

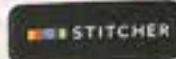
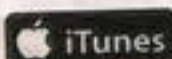


PLUS ...

We look ahead to West Cork's Cork SFC clash against Eire Og



You can subscribe and listen to our podcast on



Newcestown will learn from tough baptism of fire, insists McSweeney

SENIOR CAMOGIE

BY GER MCCARTHY

NEWCESTOWN'S opening county senior camogie championship encounter against Killeagh proved a chastening experience at Castle Road last Saturday.

A 1-23 to 1-5 loss at the hands of a more experienced and streetwise Killeagh was not unexpected but the margin of defeat was hard to take.

'This was our first senior championship game, we are a very young team and a lot of us had never played at this level before,' Newcestown's Mary McSweeney said.

'We learned a lot from the game too. Killeagh were a step ahead of us and a bit cuter. They have been senior the last few years and they were just smarter on the ball. We said afterwards that we would learn from our mistakes and move on. It is all a learning curve for a young team.'

At the heart of the East Cork side's success was Chloe Sigerson who accounted for 1-10 of her side's winning total. The inter-county star proved a handful for the West Cork club throughout the afternoon and it is to the latter's credit that they restricted Sigerson to just four points from open play.

But the repeated concession of frees – sometimes necessary to prevent Killeagh from break-

'We said afterwards that we would learn from our mistakes and move on. It is all a learning curve for a young team' – Mary McSweeney

ing through on goal – saw Sigerson punish her opponents from placed balls. A difficult wind blowing across the Castle Road pitch made life awkward during the second period but Newcestown could have little argument with the game's outcome.

'We did concede a lot of frees, yes, but there were times we had no choice but to pull their players down otherwise we would have conceded goals,' McSweeney admitted.

'Chloe Sigerson is a really good player and her free-taking ability showed that. She didn't miss one free all day. Again, we have to learn from that and try not to concede as many frees the next day out.'

So, a frustrating afternoon, yes, but Meabh O'Donovan's goal and five points from rising star Ciara O'Sullivan underlined the talent within Newcestown's ranks. The Carbery club's focus now turns to a must-win game against the losers of Seandún and Imokilly's divisional match-up in a fort-



The Newcestown camogie team that took on Killeagh in the county senior championship last Saturday at Castle Road.

night's time.

'It got very windy during the game, but we weren't able to use it to our advantage,' Newcestown full-back McSweeney noted.

'We were on top for a while in the first half but need to up our performance in our next game and play for the whole hour. Playing Killeagh was a very important experience, especially for the younger players on our panel. It was amazing to see such a young team going toe to toe with an experienced team like Killeagh and playing at such a high level.'

'There are loads of things for us to work on and it is im-

portant that we keep striving to improve our performances from now on at the senior grade. Everyone gave their all.'

'We will be playing whoever loses between Seandún and Imokilly on August 15th. If we win, we are in the county quarter-finals but if we lose, we will be out. Having two weeks to work and prepare for that game is a good thing as it gives us enough time to refocus and rectify the things that went wrong against Killeagh.'

'People expected us to lose against Killeagh and we wanted to prove them wrong. Now it is up to us to move on and be ready for the next day.'

Scorers

Killeagh: C Sigerson 1-15 (1-10f, 1-45); L Treacy 0-4; R Sheehan 0-3; R Fogarty 0-1.

Newcestown: C O'Sullivan 0-5 (4f); M O'Donovan 1-0.

Killeagh: S Beausang; E Treacy, A Walsh, N O'Keefe; L McEvoy, H Looney, C Daly; C Barry, L Treacy; J O'Shea, R Fogarty, C Harney; A O'Driscoll, C Sigerson, R Sheehan.

Newcestown: O Dineen; R Hallahan, M McSweeney, L Jennings; M Lynch, A O'Donovan, S Kelleher; M O'Donovan, E Crowley; C O'Sullivan, M Crowley, E Tarrant; A O'Sullivan, M Kenneally, D O'Mahony.

Referee: C Egan (Glen Rovers).

HIGHLIGHTS

Our Star: Killeagh's Chloe Sigerson scored 1-15 and was the best player on display.

Star Moment: Take your pick from any of Chloe Sigerson's placed balls.

Talking Point: Newcestown's first game at senior level saw them repeatedly punished for giving away frees. They will need to cut down on conceding frees in their next outing.

What's next? Newcestown play the losers of Imokilly and Seandún's upcoming encounter.

Keating scores 2-5 for Courceys

Courcey Rovers' star Fiona Keating keeps her eye on the ball as she solos towards the Cloughduv goal. (Photo: Trevor Patchett)



BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

FIONA Keating was named the 2019 West Cork Youth Sports Star because she's an outstanding sporting talent and she showed her class again as Courcey Rovers got their county senior camogie championship campaign off to an impressive start.

The former All-Ireland minor winning Cork camogie star, now in with the seniors, hit 2-5 as the 2018 beaten finalists defeated Cloughduv by 3-15 to 0-9 at Castle Road on Saturday.

The Courceys attack is stacked with speed. Keating (2-5), Saoirse McCarthy (1-2) and Linda Collins (0-2) are all Cork seniors and combined for 3-9, while midfielder Jacinta Crowley added 0-5 (2f).

The Courceys defence has three Cork intermediate players – Ciara Hayes, Ashling Moloney and Grainne Hannon – and they kept the Cloughduv attack at bay throughout, with the losers

only scoring four from play.

Also in Round 1 of the senior championship, Éire Óg defeated Milford by 1-10 to 0-9 thanks to a late Siobhan Hutchinson goal. The winners led 0-7 to 0-6 at half time. Margaret O'Herlihy scored six placed balls for the winners.

Despite Catriona Kelly scoring 0-7 (six frees) Ballygarvan went down by 3-13 to 2-7 against St Catherines, while Inniscarra showed no signs of rustiness when they defeated Ballincollig by 2-14 to 1-5 in a Mid Cork derby. The winners led 2-8 to 0-2 at the break – Niamh Dilworth, who finished with 1-8, and Eimear O'Reilly scored the goals.

Round 1 results – Courcey Rovers 3-15 Cloughduv 0-9; Killeagh 1-23 Newcestown 1-5; Milford 0-9 Éire Óg 1-10; Ballincollig 1-5 Inniscarra 2-14; St Finbarr's 1-10 Douglas 1-6; Glen Rovers 0-14 Sarsfields 1-9; Ballygarvan 2-7 St Catherines 3-13.



Cliona O'Leary, Ballygarvan looking for a way past St Catherine's Finola Neville during their SE Systems senior camogie championship match at Castle Road, Cork. Picture: Dan Linehan

All eyes on minor, U16, and U14 championships

WITH all the SE Systems adult championship games fixed and under way, thoughts are now turning to the minor, U16 and U14 championships.

■ Mary Newman

The senior board have worked in the minor fixtures in such a way that they will hopefully not clash with clubs who will be involved in senior, intermediate, and junior championships.

Already we have had a few of the opening rounds in the SE Systems minor B championship, where Blackrock overcame Na Piarsaigh in a close 1-13 to 3-6 game and in an equally exciting contest Kilbrittain/Timoleague edged it over Fr O' Neill's 1-16 to 2-12. In the SE Systems minor C opening rounds, Tracton had a four-point win over Middleton whilst a point was the winning margin as Sliabh Rua overcame Clonakilty.

With minor championship in four grades now under way, a busy two weeks lies ahead. The task of getting championships under way for the under 16 and under 14 players has begun with fixtures and starting dates released this week to the clubs.

Since the return to play, most clubs have been busy playing practice games as there hasn't been any window of availability to organise leagues which would in ordinary time have begun at the end of March, with championship usually beginning for under 14 at the end of July and on the third week in August for under 16s.

Given the huge amount of game to be played there is a slightly different format this season in both the under 14 and under 16 championships where there will be a round robin series of games in the first phase followed by knock-out games.

It is structured in such a way that each age group will be out every second week in championship and in a group of five teams they may be out more often so there is little room for manoeuvre.

All games will be played on a fifteen-a-side basis, however, clubs have been advised by the county juvenile committee that a few clubs are very tight with numbers and it is hoped that if required, opposition clubs will facilitate a reduction in numbers so that all children get a chance to play competitively in what is a strange year for everybody.

Some clubs have entered more than one team in a grade and for these clubs, they must submit and name 15 players for each panel, but as soon as a player progresses to the higher grade, they are then graded in the new grade, that means they cannot return to the lower grade as per the rule of championship grading.

Given that it is a different sort of year and the juvenile committee are under pressure to get all competitions completed, clubs are asked if possible not to change dates of their games.

If an opposition is unable to change a date then the match will stand at the date as notified.

This year's championships are a round robin format, with the top two teams from each section going to the knock out rounds of the championship. There are two sections and in under 16 C the top two teams go to the final as they will do in the under 14 second teams competition, again the top two teams to the final.

In the event of a tie in any group, the team with the least scores conceded will decide the group.

This is being done in the interest of no team inflicting a large defeat on another.

There will be extra time of ten minutes per half in all games in the round robin series and knock out stages and in the event of extra time ending in a draw extra, extra time of five minutes per half will apply.

If it is still a draw after that, both teams receive three points in the league table round robin and in the knock out stages a replay is to be played within four days of the original fixture.

At under 14 level, 68 clubs will compete in five competitions from premier to a second team's competition.

There are eight clubs in premier, 24 in A, 20 in B, 10 in C and six clubs have entered a second under 14 team.

In the under 16 championship there are four grades; eight clubs will contest premier, 28 in A, 20 in B, and five in C.

It is great to see everybody back, so let the games begin.



Aoife Hurley, St Catherine's, getting between Ballygarvan players Ellen O'Regan and Sinead Lyons during their SE Systems senior championship match at Castle Road. Picture: Dan Linehan

Glen deliver on leadership



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

WE await one more result from round one to finalise the backdoor pairings in this year's SE Systems Cork senior championship.

Douglas face up to Ballincollig, Cloughduv v Sarsfields, Milford v Ballygarvan and Newcestown will play the winners of Imokilly and Seandún who line out against each other next Tuesday evening.

The results last week were as we felt they might play out, except for the Glen-Sars encounter where that game was always going to be hard to call, particularly with the retirement of Emer Fennell.

What a loss she was. She scored 5-31 in last year's championship, 5-10 from play. That aside, she raised the confidence of those around her and Sars missed that leadership up front last Sunday.

But Sars aren't gone away and their defeat to the Glen might be the medicine they need to dig deeper. That's not to take from the Glen's performance. It was excellent.

I'm saying for a long time that the Glen needed leaders and they had them in abundance. Karen O'Connell, Lauren Callanan and Lydia Cunningham were outstanding and they're the leaders you expect to see.

And around them they had great performers all over the field. It's great to have a spread of scorers and the three-points Katie Walsh produced from acute angles, one a particularly great score from a tight angle in the first half, were top class.

Youngster Kayleigh O'Sullivan's two were of an equal quality, none more so that the one which gave the Glen a two-point cushion in injury time. Emma Murphy was strong and scored a great point to give the lead on 62 minutes.

I was impressed with Cliona Martin at corner back who played a steady game. When Aine Mullins netted for Sars in the second half to give them a three-point lead



Sarsfields' goalkeeper Molly Lynch takes a penalty which was saved by Glen Rovers' goalkeeper Lisa O'Riordan during the SE Systems Cork senior camogie championship at Castle Road. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

it could have been the turning point but the way the Glen battled back showed the positive switch in their mindset compared to that of recent times and their final five minutes implied they were the champions and not Sars.

It was a great game from two fine sides, fully committed and at a fast attacking pace. There's a long road to go yet and these two teams will have a big say as the championship progresses.

Cloughduv are a young side and felt the impact against a Courcey Rovers side injury free and with experienced talent in every line. Edel and Ashling Moloney and Clara Hayes are around a while and lined out in the county final of 2018. Jacinta Crowley's return was a blessing around the middle of the park and what management team wouldn't like to have three forwards the calibre of Linda Collins, Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy.

Brieger Corkery was a loss for Cloughduv, she most definitely would have run at Courcey's defence and tested them more. But time moves on and Cloughduv will rebuild as they always do. Unfortunately for them they have a tough backdoor against Sars but again they won't be found wanting on the effort front.

Killeagh have rejigged their team in an effort to strengthen their forward line. Laura Treacy, moving to midfield, seems to enjoy the freedom and enthusiastically covered a lot of ground on Saturday.

Chloe Sigerson has moved into full-forward. Time will tell if that will work for the East Cork side.

It's all very well having talent on the square but the ball must get in and if that supply is cut off or Chloe meets a tenacious full-back then her talent is nullified. The square is a constricted position with little freedom on a tight defender.

I have to mention again that I thought Newcestown's Mary McSweeney had a fine game at full back. Yes, the Cork star finished with 1-15, 1-11 from placed balls, and her exhibit of free taking and her sidelines, which are a joy to watch, were exemplary but on 50-50 balls McSweeney did very well.

I think Chloe must be one of the sweetest strikers of the ball in Cork at the moment. It looks effortless with great distance and style.

Newcestown did well for their first year up. They held Killeagh to level terms at the break. The speed at senior level compared with intermediate is a massive step up and their being second to the ball is what led to the number of frees being presented to Chloe to convert.

The St Finbarr's and Douglas game was ruined by frees and stoppages. A total of 45 and a number of throw-ins stopped any momentum. Some frees were genuine but a lot could have been left play out. I have annoyance at times with the advantage rule.

The ref must allow the advantage run for up to five seconds after the foul or for less time if it becomes clear that no advantage has accrued. Yet we find referees letting the play go on for far longer and still calling it back if no advantage occurs. The rules don't state that you wait until the ball is passed or a score attempted before deciding. It's five seconds.

Round one was always going to be tough considering the long layoff teams had. Getting to match pace was going to be harder for some than others.

The cobwebs have been knocked off now and we look forward to round two.

Spoiled for choice - Camogie's Top 50 players of the last 50 years

How do you compare players from different eras and different teams, especially in a sport where the rules have evolved hugely since 1970? Here, **Cliona Foley** picks her Fab 50 camógs (in alphabetical order) from a golden era for the sport



NIAMH KILKENNY

ORLA COTTER

DENISE GAULE

CIARA GAYNOR

HOW DO we measure greatness – in medals and trophies won or personal wizardry?

You may be an individual genius but, in Gaelic games, the height of your success is bound to the collective standard and success of your county.

You can also be a prodigy, like Cork teenager Liz Garvan – camogie's first Player of the Year who scored 3-6 from play in the 1970 senior final – but dazzle all too briefly.

She was lost to the game, to teach in Zambia, after the 1972 decider so is not included here.

Consistency with longevity is certainly one hallmark of quality, but comparing players from different eras is always tricky and worse in camogie.

Those gym frocks and black stockings weren't replaced by divided skirts until 1972 and the game was 12-a-side, on a smaller pitch, until 1999.

Today's players, on average, are fitter and play a more athletic, aerial game than previous generations and are also more visible, further adding to some recency bias here.

Yet the greats of any era are so indelible that you can picture their artistry and leadership holding their own in any game and it's the same with great junior or intermediate players.

There will always be personal bias in selecting any 'Top 50', as there certainly is in this list of camogie's top 50 players of the last 50 years.

But during this unprecedented pause in the inter-county game this, at least, puts on record and recognises them and if it stirs debate, then let it begin.

JANE ADAMS
(Antrim)

STARRED when Antrim won inter-

mediate in 2001 and scored 0-13 (8f, 2'45) of their 0-15 when they lost it to Wexford 10 years later. A senior All-Star in 2008, the year she led Belfast side O'Donovan Rossa to the All-Ireland senior club title.

RENA BUCKLEY
(Cork)

THE Inniscarra dual jewel star played in 22 All-Ireland senior finals (2004-2017), winning 18 and seven of 11 in camogie. Quietly fierce anywhere in defence and a great reader of the ball. Retired after winning Player of the Year and captaining Cork to All-Ireland glory in 2017.

ELSIE CODY (née Walsh)
(Wexford)

AT midfield when Wexford beat Cork in 1975 and still there, at full-back, in the 1990 final, doing a marking job on Angela Downey. Also part of the Buffers Alley team that won four club titles in a row in the '80s.

BRIEGE CORKERY
(Cork)

JUST 18 when switched to midfield to swing the 2005 final. Equalled Buckley's haul of 18 medals when she came out of retirement in 2018, six months after becoming a mum. Seven All-Irelands and six All-Stars and the last of only six camógs to win a Texaco Award (in 2008) but never Player of the Year.

MARIE COSTINE
(Cork)

LEGENDARY tall, powerful Cork full-back on the four-in-a-row team from 1970-73 and won in '78 too. Player of the Year in 1973 and full-back on the Team of the Century. Her skills were honed by practising with Christy Ring on their club pitch in Cloyne.

ORLA COTTER
(Cork)

STARRED at midfield in 2008 when Cork famously held Galway to a single score from play and won and scored a controversial late free to nab the 2018 title. Seven All-Irelands and six All-Stars to date.

VERONICA CURTIN
(Galway)

'RONNIE' won Player of the Match in both the All-Ireland minor and junior finals in 1994, scoring 3-5 in the former. She was only 16 when Galway won their maiden senior in 1996 and still going strong when they narrowly lost in 2010 and 2011.

ANNE DALTON
(Kilkenny)

ONLY one All-Ireland medal from seven finals (2016) but many were one-point losses and her status is reflected with two Player of the Year gongs (2009 & 2018), six All-Stars (three at centre-back for a natural midfielder) and three club titles with St Lachtain's.

MAGS D'ARCY
(Wexford)

ONE of the game's most agile shot-stoppers. Two-time All-Star and part of the great Wexford team that won four All-Irelands and three National Leagues from 2007-11. Also helped St Martin's to the 2019 All-Ireland club final.

JOVITA DELANEY
(Tipperary)

GOALKEEPER who won five of eight All-Ireland finals from 1999. Outstanding in the 2000 final when she was Player of the Year and on the 'Lynch-Pins Team of 2003', the precursor to the official All-Stars of which she won two more.

SARAH DERVAN
(Galway)

WON an Intermediate in 2009 and four All-Stars even while Galway lost a string of senior finals. Captain and full-back last year when she won her second All-Ireland and sixth All-Star.

JANE DOLAN
(Meath)

DEFIED two torn cruciates to help Meath go from winning All-Ireland junior (2012) and intermediate (2017) after a replay with Cork) to senior status and rewarded with a record six 'Soaring Stars' (the second-tier All-Star awards).

ANN DOWNEY
(Kilkenny)

MIDFIELD general in a 25-year career that yielded 12 All-Irelands, nine National Leagues and seven club All-Irelands with Lisdowney and St Paul's. Shared the Player of the Year trophy with twin Angela three times (1986, '89 and '94) and also a squash international.

ANGELA DOWNEY
(Kilkenny)

FIVE-TIME Player of the Year (from 1977-'94) and 12-time All-Ireland champion. First played in a senior All-Ireland at 15. In the summer of '77, she scored 6-3 against Tipp, four goals against Dublin and 2-3 in the final. Phenomenal pace and close control, she could find space in a coffin and turn any game in an instance. Top of the left on Team of the Century and the greatest of all time.

SANDIE FITZGIBBON
(Cork)

CORK giant who starred at centre-back or midfield. She was twice Player of the Year (1992 and '95),

she won six of 13 senior finals and captained Cork back to glory in 1992 after an eight-year gap. Won four club All-Ireland titles with Glen Rovers and has 64 Irish basketball caps. Centre-back on the Team of the Century.

DENISE GAULE
(Kilkenny)

YOUNG Player of the Year in 2009 when she won an All-Ireland minor title and starred in a senior semi-final. Her fielding, free-taking and ball-carrying have been vital to Kilkenny contesting six of the last seven senior finals and she hit 0-10 (7f, 2'45s) in the 2010 final. Player of the Year in 2016.

CIARA GAYNOR
(Tipperary)

A TEAK-TOUGH centre-back who won five All-Irelands and Player of the Year in 2001. A year later, she needed painkillers to play in the final after being assaulted three weeks earlier in her job as a garda.

ANNA GEARY
(Cork)

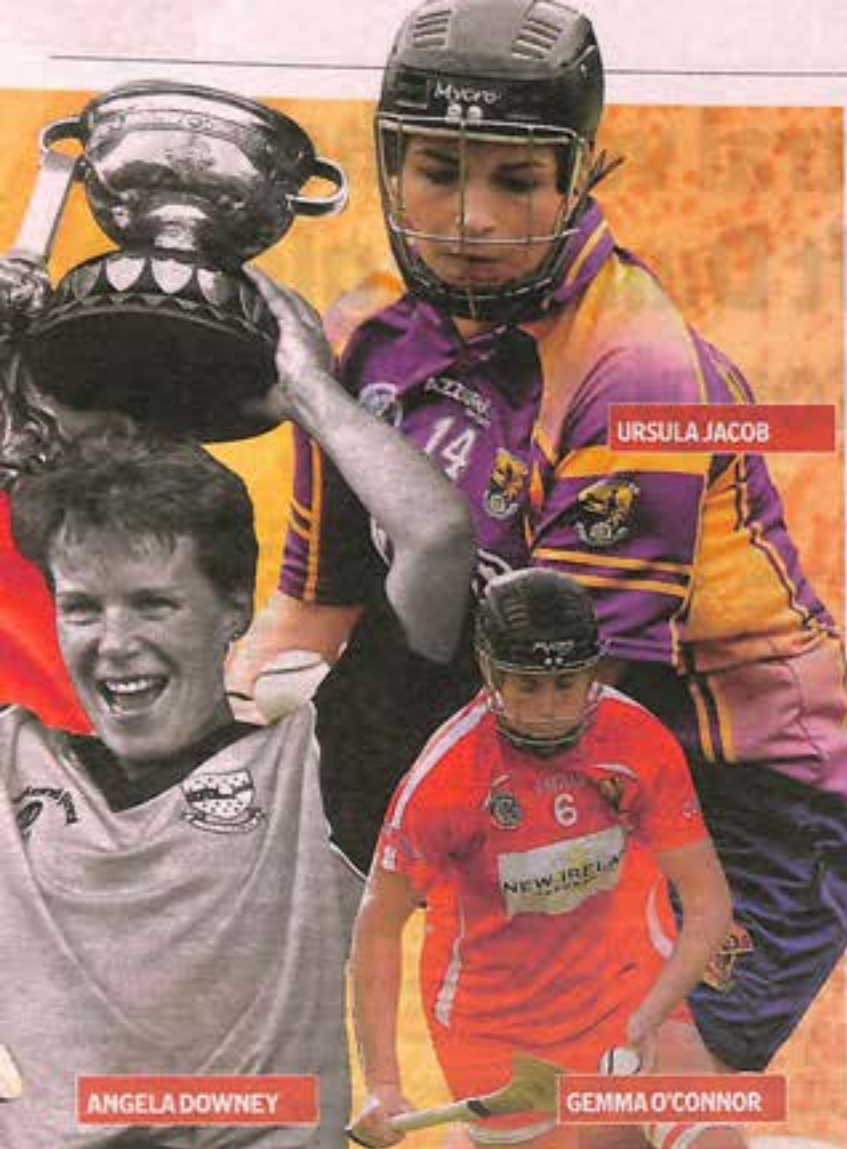
PART OF the tigerish half-back line that held Tipperary to just 0-4 in the 2006 final. She has won four senior All-Irelands and four All-Stars (Cork's only one in 2010), and was vital in Milford's three club titles.

SHARON GLYNN
(Galway)

A POWERFUL midfielder who contributed 0-5 when Galway finally won in 1996. She scored 2-12 of their 4-14 against Kilkenny in the 1997 semi-finals and also scored goals in every one of Pearses' five club All-Ireland finals.

CLAIRE GROGAN
(Tipperary)

JUST 14 when she scored 0-2 in



ANGELA DOWNEY

URSULA JACOB

GEMMA O'CONNOR

Tipperary's victory in 2000 and an integral part of their success thereafter, scoring 1-2 in the 2001 final and 0-9 (7fs) in the centenary final. A three-time All-Star before she was 19 and a double club champion with Cashel.

DEIRDRE HUGHES (Tipperary)

TOOMEVARA'S tearaway full-forward won an All-Ireland intermediate title in '97 and was senior Player of the Year two years later. Had a bullet of a shot that notched two early goals in the 2000 final and 2-2 a year later. The only active player selected on the Team of the Century in 2004.

URSULA JACOB (Wexford)

A FOUR-TIME All-Star and All-Ireland winner whose game-changing goal, off the turn, in the 2011 final is part of camogie legend. A year later, she scored 2-7 and took player of the match against Cork and also won two club All-Irelands with Oulart-The Ballagh.

PATRICIA JACKMAN (Waterford)

THE Féile Skills champion in 2004 was key to Waterford's junior All-Ireland in 2011 and inter title in 2015. Also won five 'Ashbourne' All-Stars, seven Poc Fada titles and helped Gaultier to intermediate club glory last year.

KATE KELLY (Wexford)

A NINE-TIME All-Star who was still topping the national scoring charts 10 years after most of her four-time champion team-mates had gone. Player of the Year when Wexford broke through in 2007, memorably scoring 1-11 of 2-14 in their semi-final. Elegant and effortless yet fiercely competitive.

won Player of the Year. The only Ulster player on the Team of the Century.

THERESE MAHER (Galway)

ARGUABLY Player of the Match in the 2011 final when Galway lost two in a row to Wexford. Won four of her five All-Stars (in three different positions) while losing five All-Ireland finals, but got her just reward in 2013 when she was at centre-back and player of the match.

MIRIAM MALONE (Kildare)

WHEN the Lilies won three junior titles in four years in the '80s, the Broadford midfielder, a regular for Leinster, scored 1-6, 1-11 (replay) and 0-7 in the finals. Key to Kildare making their senior debut in 1992 and scored 2-5 in their 1994 intermediate final loss to Armagh.

PAT MOLONEY (Cork)

WON four in a row from 1970-73 and three more, including Player of the Year in 1978. The Killeagh star captained Cork in an epic two-game semi-final victory over Kilkenny in 1982 and famously scored a goal, went off injured and came back on in the final. A midfielder who evolved into a centre-forward and No 13 on the Team of the Century.

MÁIRÍN McALEENAN (Down)

CHIEF playmaker when Down won the 1991 junior title, contested an intermediate in '92 and won Division 2 and the intermediate title in 1998, scoring 1-7 in the final. Aged 33, she was still leading them to a junior final and winning an All-Star in 2004.

MARION McCARTHY (Cork)

AN eight-time All-Ireland champion and uniquely won four in a row playing outfield (usually midfield, 1970-73) and another four as a goalkeeper (1978, '80, '82 and '83). Player of the Year in 1980 and her incredible career only ended after the 1991 All-Ireland final.

EIMEAR McDONNELL (Tipperary)

FIVE All-Irelands from eight finals in a row and a big-game forward. Player of the match in the 2001 final, she scored 1-4 from play in the 2003 final when she swept the boards, winning Player of the Year and a Texaco award, only the fourth camogie player to win one and the first since Angela Downey in 1986.

BRIDIE McGARRY (Martin) (Kilkenny)

CENTRE-BACK on the Team of the Century, she won nine All-Irelands in 21 years' inter-county service (1972-'93), twice captained Kilkenny to glory and only missed two of their famous seven-in-a-row due to her sons' births. Also famously scored a sideline cut in the 1985 All-Ireland semi-final.

LINDA MELLERICK (Cork)

ROLLS-ROYCE midfielder who inspired Cork for 21 years, contesting 13 senior All-Irelands and winning six, the last in 2002. Also won 10 National Leagues plus three All-Ireland clubs

CLIONA FOLEY'S TOP 10 PLAYERS

1. Angela Downey (Kilkenny)
2. Gemma O'Connor (Cork)
3. Sandie Fitzgibbon (Cork)
4. Deirdre Hughes (Tipperary)
5. Linda Mellerick (Cork)
6. Rena Buckley (Cork)
7. Ann Downey (Kilkenny)
8. Ursula Jacob (Wexford)
9. Kate Kelly (Wexford)
10. Anne Dalton (Kilkenny)

NEXT MONDAY: Don't miss the top 50 ladies footballers

with Glen Rovers. Twice Player of the Year (1993 and '98) and midfield on the Team of the Century.

MICHAELA MORKAN (Offaly)

LED Offaly to a junior final in 2008, the junior title in 2009, the intermediate in 2010 and the All-Ireland senior semi-finals in 2012. Also won Offaly's first All-Star at wing-back in 2008 and is still going.

NIAMH MULCAHY (Limerick)

YOUNG PLAYER OF THE YEAR in 2007 who scored 0-7 (4f) in the 2014 All-Ireland intermediate victory. Her phenomenal goal against Tipp last summer epitomised her threat and she also won her first All-Star after a handful of previous nominations.

AOIFE MURRAY (Cork)

A SPECTACULAR stopper on both sides whose speed off the line made her a seventh defender. Memorable All-Ireland finals include the 2008 and '09 deciders and that double save in 2018 when she captained Cork to glory. Nine All-Ireland medals, eight All-Stars and Player of the Year in 2018.

LIZ NEARY (Kilkenny)

LINED out for the Cats for 19 years in many positions but remembered as a brilliant full-back on their seven-in-a-row side plus six All-Ireland club medals, five with St Paul's and one with Austin Stacks of Dublin. Twice Player of the Year (1981 and '85) and right corner-back on the Team of the Century.

GEMMA O'CONNOR (Cork)

AS GREAT a player as the game has

ever seen and remarkably versatile. A scoring midfielder before becoming a totemic defender. Won nine of her 13 All-Ireland finals and 11 All-Stars. Player of the Year in 2005 and 2015 and scored that incredible long-range equaliser in the dying minutes of the 2017 final.

MARY O'CONNOR (Cork)

A NO-NONSENSE presence in the brilliant Cork half-back line which finally dethroned Tipperary and a brilliant reader of the game. Seven senior camogie All-Irelands and nine National Leagues on top of five football All-Irelands and two club titles (with Limerick side Granagh-Ballingarry) as well as Player of the Year in 2006.

FIONA O'DRISCOLL (Cork)

ANOTHER Rebel pocket rocket who was ice-cool on frees but lightning in full flight. The six-time senior champion was Player of the Year in 2002 which included her unforgettable 3-2 in the final and she went on to coach Cork to two All-Irelands (2005-'06).

UNA O'DWYER (Tipperary)

ONLY 21 when player of the match in the 2003 final and the staunch full-back won her fifth title. Player of the Year and one of camogie's rare Texaco awards in 2004 before adding two club titles with Cashel.

MARY O'LEARY (Cork)

A BRILLIANT natural striker and free-taker, she rarely finished a game without a goal and half a dozen points. Four All-Irelands (1978-'82) and Player of the Year in '82 when her 1-6 and late free pipped Dublin.

JENNIFER O'LEARY (Cork)

A FOUR-TIME All-Ireland winner with eight All-Stars. Went to Australia for two years after her first three All-Irelands but returned and, in 2014, while commuting from Armagh to train, had one of her best seasons, including a vital goal in the final.

KATIE POWER (Kilkenny)

PETITE but lethal, the Piltown ace may only have one senior medal to show from seven senior finals but is already a four-time All-Star and five-time league winner. She is one of those quicksilver forwards that causes havoc on the ball.

YVONNE REDMOND (Dublin)

DUBLIN contested five finals in-a-row between 1982-'86. They only won one (1984) but Cork just pipped them in '82 and Redmond was a renowned gatekeeper. Player of the Year in '84, she captained Crumlin to a famous club title a year later.

ASHLING THOMPSON (Cork)

VITAL to Cork ending that four-year drought in 2014 and won three more since. Rangy and very physical but also skilled enough to score points off both sides from midfield. Also has three club All-Irelands with Millford.



Michelle Murphy, Seandún, battling Chloe Cashman, Imokilly, in the Senior Camogie Championship at Castle Road. Picture: Jim Coughlan

Seandún see off Imokilly

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

Seandún	5-18
Imokilly	1-5

A strong all-round performance from Seandún saw them through to the next round of the SE Systems Senior Championship last night.

Considering this squad haven't had that much time together, this was a very impressive performance and Seandún could have a big say in this year's championship.

Their teamwork was exceptional. From the outset, Seandún attacked the game with flair. Three wides inside three minutes showed their intent.

As Imokilly settled with their defence working extremely hard it was ten minutes before the game got its first score.

At that point Imokilly themselves had three wides and it looked as if very little would separate these sides over the hour. But the experienced individuals in the Seandún side along with strong battling qualities and a teamwork approach saw them lead by 3-8 to 0-3 coming up to half time.

With Amy Lee highly dependable in goal, Courtney O'Keefe, Niamh O'Leary and Michelle Murphy excellent in defence, the commanding Katlyn Hickey and Susan Kate Brosnan in midfield, Seandún's stylish forwards received a plentiful supply. And how they used it.

Teamwork was at a premium as Hayley Ryan, Luran Homan, Sinead Mills and Laura O'Neill turned it on. Ryan and O'Neill hit the net as Seandún were pulling away fast. But Imokilly hit a purple patch where a good goal by Clodagh Finn on 31 minutes was followed by a penalty a minute later. But the penalty was saved and Seandún took a 12-point advantage into the break.

It was a mountain to climb for a young Imokilly side. They battled throughout and will develop from what was a tough physical game.

The second half took off in much the same fashion with Seandún still eager and



Katlyn Hickey, Seandún, puts in a challenge on Chloe Cashman, Imokilly.

attacking. Laura Homan restarted the scoring with Hayley Ryan and Imokilly's Clodagh Finn swapping points. But any hope Imokilly had of rescuing something from the game was well and truly dashed when Sinead Mills finished a brilliant team move to the net.

From there the points came fast. Clodagh Finn had a chance to goal with another penalty but it sailed over the crossbar for Imokilly's second and only score of the second half as a rampant Seandún continued to impress.

Both sides made full use of their bench as Imokilly try to find the right blend to take on Newcestown next Saturday in the backdoor losers round and Seandún move on to round three where they face Glen Rovers.

On the evidence of such a strong display and with quality clubs representing Seandún in Blackrock, Brian Dillon's, St Vincent's, Na Piarasigh, Bishopstown and Nemo Rangers, it should be a tight and highly entertaining clash with Glen Rovers.

Imokilly clubs also gave a strong return to Imokilly from Youghal, Fr O'Neills, Watergrasshill, Aghada, Middleton, Castlemartyr, Castlelyons and Bride Rovers.

SEANDÚN: M McCarthy (Youghal), J Doyle (do), S Murphy (Fr O'Neills), A Foully (Watergrasshill), Y Murphy (Fr O'Neills), E Murphy (Watergrasshill), C Cashman (Cobh), V Gleeson (Middleton), A Higgins (Fr O'Neills), C Cashman (Watergrasshill), C Finn (Fr O'Neills), A Smith (Aghada), L Wallace (Middleton), C O'Doherty (Fr O'Neills), M Sheehan (Watergrasshill).

IMOKILLY: K McCarthy (Youghal), J Doyle (do), S Murphy (Fr O'Neills), A Foully (Watergrasshill), Y Murphy (Fr O'Neills), E Murphy (Watergrasshill), C Cashman (Cobh), V Gleeson (Middleton), A Higgins (Fr O'Neills), C Cashman (Watergrasshill), C Finn (Fr O'Neills), A Smith (Aghada), L Wallace (Middleton), C O'Doherty (Fr O'Neills), M Sheehan (Watergrasshill).

Subs: E O'Keefe (Fr O'Neills) for L Wallace (M/S), L Hogan (Middleton) for J Doyle, E Boylan (Aghada) for C Cashman, A Dalton for C O'Doherty (45).

Ref: John Hogan (Gleann na Lae).

Three important games ahead

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

BY Sunday evening three intermediate and six junior A clubs will have exited the SE Systems championships.

Castle Road is again proving to be invaluable to the Cork board and it will host three important games on Sunday next, August 9.

First into the ring are Valley Rovers and Ballyhea who throw in at 12noon, this will be followed at 3pm by the meeting between Na Piarasigh and Kilbrittain / Timoleague and at 6pm Watergrasshill and Clonakilty round up proceedings.

All sides will be determined to get their campaigns back on track and join Aghabullogue, Enniskeane, Fr O'Neill's, Brian Dillon's, Blackrock, and Carrigaline in the draws for round three and four.

With nine winners emerging in total there will be one game in round three and the winners here will progress to join the other seven in the quarter finals.

Ballyhea who won last season's Junior A championship found their debut tough as they lost out to a very focused Enniskeane but they gave it everything they had.

Club secretary Marie Harty was happy to see the club make the big step up but said it was hard given that Covid -19 had a huge impact on what they had hoped they would have been able to do in preparation, however with a second bite of the cherry to come they will look ahead with confidence.

Their opponents Valley Rovers had to give way to an excellent Blackrock side and they will now have to dig deep to find a way back and certainly Ballyhea will not be a push over.

Kilbrittain / Timoleague lost out to Carrigaline in an exciting contest just two points separating them at the full time whistle, and they now take on a Na Piarasigh side that will be determined to put their loss at the hand of Fr O'Neill's behind them and get back to winning ways.

Clonakilty were edged out by a point by Brian Dillon's and they will be hoping to build on a solid performance and go one better this time out as they meet a Watergrasshill side who were defeated by Aghabullogue.

In the SE Systems junior A championship three game down for Saturday 8 with times and venues to be confirmed.

Barryroe take on A Newtownshandrum Sliabh Rua will meet Sarsfields who were defeated by an excellent Charleville side in round one.

Sliabh Rua lost out to St Vincent's by four points in round one and Banteer will be bidding to stay in contention when they meet Ballinhassig who lost by a point to BallinacCarthy.



Aisling Walsh of Douglas and Meabh Cahalane of St Finbarr's tussle for possession during the SE Systems Senior Camogie Championship match at Castle Road.
Picture: Howard Crowdy

Ballyhea edge out Valley Rovers for a place in round three

IT'S great to be back and to see championship game at all levels moving ahead, let's hope everybody stays safe and we continue to enjoy our games.

The back door rounds of the SE Systems Intermediate and Junior A Championship afforded a second chance for clubs to get their campaigns back on track and we had a weekend of exciting games.

It was nip and tuck to the final whistle as Valley Rovers and Ballyhea battled for a place in round three; at the finish, just a point separated the sides as Ballyhea edged it 2-11 to 2-10.

It was level pegging six points apiece between Watergrasshill and Clonakilty, with Marie O'Neill proving a handful for the Clonakilty defence on target with all the Watergrasshill points. Watergrasshill upped the pace in the second half, O'Neill adding to her tally with six points and with Ruth Kaiser, Ciara Cashman and Michelle Sheehan adding a point each they ran out 0-14 to 0-6 winners.

Kilbrittain/Timoleague and Na Piarsaigh were in a tight contest where it finished 1-8 to 1-6 in the Kilbrittain/Timoleague girls' favour.

In the SE Systems Junior A round two game, in a high-scoring contest, Sliabh Rua got the upper hand on a determined Sarsfields side. Sliabh Rua led 2-10 to 1-6 at the interval but Sars kept in touch with Donna Kerrigan, Nikki Barry and Amy McNamara on target with points and a Julie Allen goal.

Sliabh Rua kept the scoreboard ticking over with second-half points. Sars ensured a competitive finish with goals from Julie Allen, Donna Kerrigan and Orlaith Keane in a game where Sliabh Rua's ability to pick points was a major factor that assured them of a 3-17 to 4-8 victory.

Banteer got their campaign back on track as they hit 11 points to Ballinhassig's one goal and three, while Newtownshandrum proved much too strong for Barryroe as they ensured victory with Cliona O'Callaghan, Katie Coughlan, Mariah Reidy, Sarah Moloney, Aoife Twohill, Roisin Twohill, Katie Coughlan and Rosie Ryan all getting on the score sheet as they ran out comprehensive winners.

In the SE Systems Junior B Championship opening round, there were wins for

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Bride Rovers over Newtown and Youghal over Bishopstown.

In Junior C, Aghabullogue was victorious over Castlelyons, Middleton defeated Killcagh, Na Piarsaigh saw off the challenge of Castlemartyr, Kinsale defeated Kilworth, and Aghada overcame St Colum's.

In the opening rounds of the SE Systems Junior Second teams championship, Eire Og overcame Cloughdub on a 2-9 to 1-5 score line, St Finbarr's had a 6-13 to 1-7 victory over Kilbrittain/Timoleague. Glen Rovers got the upper hand on Enniskeane 5-8 to 1-7 while St Catherine's had a win over Douglas 3-10 to 1-5.

In the SE Systems Minor B Championship, Blackrock had a one-point win over Na Piarsaigh 1-13 to 3-6, Kilbrittain/Timoleague defeated Fr O'Neill's 1-16 to 2-12, Ballygarvan proved much too strong for Buttevant, and Cloughdub had two points to spare over Douglas 2-15 to 4-7. Kilbree/Kilmee and Glen Rovers battled it out to the finish in the Glen Field before the visitors edged it with three points to spare in a high-scoring 4-11 to 4-8 game.

In the SE Systems Minor C Championship, Sliabh Rua had a one-point win over Clonakilty, Tracton had five points to spare over Midleton, and Barryroe had a 3-6 to 0-2 win over Blarney.

And so to the draws for round three and in the SE Systems Intermediate Championship there is one third-round clash and this will see Ballyhea taking on Watergrasshill on August 18.

The quarter-finals are down for August 30: Fr O'Neill's will meet Kilbrittain/Timoleague, Enniskeane will meet Blackrock, Brian Dillon's will play the winner of the Ballyhea/Watergrasshill clash, and Carrigaline take on Aghabullogue.

In the SE Systems Junior A Championship, one third-round game will be held where Sliabh Rua meet Newtownshandrum on August 19. In the quarter-finals on August 29, Mallow will meet the winners of Newtownshandrum and Sliabh Rua, Ballinascarthy will play Banteer, Ballinora meet Charleville, and Tracton face St Vincent's.



Michelle Murphy, Seandún, and Ciara Cashman and Chloe Cashman, Imokilly, in action in this week's Senior Camogie Championship clash.
Picture: Jim Coughlan

New lockdown new concerns

CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

I WONDER if we will get to start and finish the inter-county camogie championships this year with the rise in Covid-19 cases.

The recent shutdown in Laois, Offaly and Kildare gave us all food for thought.

A statement on the camogie website explained: "Outdoor GAA facilities can reopen; No games are permitted involving clubs from these counties;

"Training may continue, but should be on a non-contact basis and in groups of no more than 15 people;

"The control measures outlined in the GAA's Return to Play document – and in particular the completion of Health Questionnaires before every training session – should continue to be adhered to.

"Indoor meetings should involve no more than six people, from no more than three households, and should adhere to the guidelines outlined previously by the GAA's Health and Safety Committee, including the need for 2m social distancing Government travel restrictions should be adhered to.

"It is hugely unfortunate that circumstances beyond the control of the three Gaelic Games Associations in Laois, Offaly and Kildare has led to the cessation of games."

If this happens during October or November with a number of counties put on restrictions there won't be room to fit in any postponed games, the schedule is tight as it is. The All-Ireland final is set for December 12 and a two-week shutdown will either cancel the competition altogether, depending on the number of counties involved, or we'll see the championship move into 2021.

I think moving it into 2021 would be a disaster for a number of reasons. The players won't have an 'off-season', it'll be detrimental to Colleges camogie and have a negative effect on next year's inter-county and possibly club leagues.



Finola Neville, St Catherine's wins the ball from Ballygarvan player Cliona O'Leary.
Picture: Dan Linehan

I'd imagine if we run into serious scheduling problems in the autumn/early winter the completion of the 2020 campaign could be in trouble. Hopefully that won't happen.

Meanwhile, the association launched its new National Development Plan 2020-23 which will guide the work of the association over the next four years.

The key messages of the new plan are 'Passion, People, Pride and Place' which represent the foundation blocks of the association.

Four strategic action areas frame their work for 2020-2023. Each aligns with Passion, People, Pride or Place and is underpinned by a series of key goals:

- Goal 1 – To provide lifelong participation within camogie.
- Goal 2 – To increase the standard of camogie at club and county levels.
- Goal 3 – To embrace the fixtures challenge to ensure adequate games programme for all.
- Goal 4 – To promote the health, well-being and welfare of all camogie participants.
- Goal 5 – To increase the availability of skilled and qualified coaches and referees and provide a supportive environment for volunteers.

■ Goal 6 – To ensure that volunteers and clubs are valued and have the skills and support to effectively and efficiently administer our game.

■ Goal 7 – To revitalise the camogie brand and identity.

■ Goal 8 – To develop commercially to power and drive our core business.

■ Goal 9 – To inspire more people to watch and engage with Camogie, locally, nationally and internationally.

■ Goal 10 – To work collaboratively with the GAA and LGFA as part of the Gaelic games family.

■ Goal 11 – To ensure appropriate playing facilities for camogie.

■ Goal 12 – To provide an innovative, dynamic and sustainable association that demonstrates best practice in governance and partnerships.

With the game growing all the time a few key numbers were highlighted. There are 578 registered clubs in Ireland. There were 323,400 TV viewers of the 2019 All Ireland final which was the largest audience for a live women's sporting event in 2019.

A number of key actions and success indicators are highlighted to ensure the above goals are achieved which are ambitious and will require a lot of work, as there are just 22 staff employed by the association.

GROWING up, all I ever wanted was to become a Cork senior camogie player. Sport was always a huge part of my identity. I loved sport as a child — it didn't matter what. Camogie was always my first love though.

I was always a good child and I loved school. I was quiet. I'm still a quiet person. But I'm happy that way. I like to keep to myself.

I always had the desire to have a 'good job' when I was younger without knowing exactly what that meant. Going to college was also a huge ambition of mine.

My biggest challenge in life was balancing sport at a high level with completing my degree in Pharmacy at UCC and then a Masters at the Royal College of Surgeons.

My greatest achievements have been going to university and also winning four senior All-Ireland Medals, an All Star, and being the Cork Senior Camogie captain.

I am very disciplined, and I always have been. Discipline is the key to success in my opinion.

The best advice I have ever received is to always be honest with yourself, do your best and never think 'if only...'

I love learning new things and, for that reason, I decided to try out something completely new to me. I'm now working with a technology company called Workvivo which is something totally different.

During lockdown, we've been able to work completely remotely and I kept training by myself — we are in the middle of club championships now so I am physically in good shape.

I don't have a mentor as such but my boyfriend Danny has been a huge influence in my life. We've been together for almost nine years and he always helps to guide me towards the right path. He's brilliant for advice both on and off the pitch. He is always honest with me, even if sometimes that is hard to take. That is something I really admire about him.

The personality traits I most admire in others are people who are honest, caring, respectful, and hardworking. My biggest flaw, which may also be seen as a positive, is that I am never satisfied.

If money wasn't an issue, and I didn't have to earn a living, I'd go and study medicine purely out of interest.

It irritates me when I see people with talent and they don't use it in the right way. I think ambition is more important than talent. My biggest attribute is that I work hard in all aspects of my life. It's something I pride myself on.

My biggest extravagance is the recent purchase of a camper van with Danny. We've been away in it every weekend since the restrictions were lifted. It's a great way to switch off. My idea of happiness is my family being happy and healthy, and I love dogs and sport.

My idea of misery is the opposite to my idea of happiness — sickness and death of the people I love. My greatest fear is losing anyone I love. I also have a huge fear of snakes.



This much I know

Amy O'Connor, camogie player

I do believe in an afterlife. I believe in heaven, and that we will all meet our loved ones again some day. I'm glad I believe in heaven. It gives me great hope.

So far, life has taught me the importance of kindness and of being a caring and honest person and of never letting anyone feel left out. You will be rewarded for the hard work you put in — and always do your best.

■ Amy O'Connor recently took part in the 5 Peaks 1 Week Challenge with Cope Foundation which supports more than 2,500 children and adults with intellectual disabilities and/or autism across Cork city and county.
■ www.cope-foundation.ie

HILARY FENNEL



Katrina Mackey of Douglas attempts to get past Aisling Shannon and Stephanie Punch of St Finbarr's during the SE Systems Senior camogie championship match at Castle Road. Picture: Howard Crowdy

Knockout fixtures offer potential of exciting fare over the next few days

WE'RE treated to another four senior championship games over the next few days as three backdoor knockout ties take place in Castle Road on Saturday with the remaining Milford versus Ballygarvan game on Monday.

Newcestown and Imokilly are first up at the early start of 12.30pm. Both sides had a tough opening round against Killeagh and Seandún respectively but both sets of management will feel that will have brought them on and this game is a close one to call.

Newcestown impressed in their opening half against Killeagh but in the second half the East Cork side pulled away primarily due to the frees that Newcestown gave away and it's something they'll need to be careful of. Ciara O'Sullivan impressed for the newly promoted senior side and when she runs down the middle she's a danger.

She'll need strong support on either side of her. Newcestown's half forward line didn't see much action in that second 30 minutes and need to come searching for the ball if supply is scarce. I think the score line didn't do Imokilly justice against Seandún in that the outfield battles were tough.

Seandún had a lot of marquee players, too many to handle. That won't be as big an issue with Newcestown. Both seem evenly matched.

Sarsfields will be itching to get back out and vindicate themselves for their loss to Glen Rovers. They'll no doubt try a few positional switches and maybe even personnel to get back to winning ways.

They should advance against a young Cloughduv side who are rebuilding but who will always leave all they have on the pitch. But it's hard to imagine the County champions losing this one.

Douglas and Ballincollig take to the pitch at 6.30pm. Without the services of Julia White, Katrina Mackey again scored all of Douglas's 1-6 in their first-round defeat to St Finbarr's, 1-3 from frees and it goes without saying that if she is held Ballincollig have a good chance.

Joy Leo is always a massive threat up front. She was surrounded every time she approached the ball against the Barrs but if she manages to get away at all she will score. Jessica Kavanagh is as competent as ever between the posts and Ballincollig would not want to waste opportuni-



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

ties by dropping balls into her capable hands. Her puck outs will also put Douglas on immediate attack.

Ballincollig took a heavy defeat to Inniscarra and they need to dig deeper to capitalise on the talent that they show on paper. Four points from play at senior level isn't good enough and more will be expected on Saturday.

Milford and Ballygarvan line out on Monday. Milford are certainly in evolution stage as they endeavour to start rebuilding after the loss of the three Watsons and Elaine O'Riordan. Big names to lose in any team. They still have strong players in Sarah Sexton, Rebecca Finn, Eimear O'Gorman, Laura Stack and Ashling Thompson and their game against Eire Og could have gone either way.

Their battle with Ballygarvan on Monday should be a tight affair albeit the experience of the remaining Milford contingent of that great era should count for a lot against a young Ballygarvan side. This Ballygarvan side however know how to win, with a minor B and two minor A titles to their credit.

Ballygarvan's nine-point defeat to St Catherine's didn't do the closeness of that tie justice. St Catherine's are a strong side and Ballygarvan stood up to the challenge with just a point between them at the break. So, this is another game that could go to the wire. These games are all knockout so expect more intensity as sides do their best to stay in contention. Four teams got a bye to the quarter final.

The following will play on the weekend of August 22. Newcestown or Imokilly will play Courcey Rovers, Cloughduv or Sars take on Douglas or Ballincollig. Ballygarvan or Milford meet Killeagh and the Glen face Seandún.

TOMORROW

SE Systems Senior Championship: Newcestown v Imokilly, Castle Road, 12.30pm; Cloughduv v Sarsfields, Castle Road, 3.30pm; Douglas v Ballincollig, Castle Road, 6.30pm.

MONDAY

SE Systems Senior Championship: Milford v Ballygarvan, Castle Road, 7pm.

Douglas move on to clash with Sars

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Douglas	3-19
Ballincollig	1-12

IT was level pegging at the interval in this SE Senior championship clash in Castle Road on Saturday evening but in the end, there was no denying Douglas, who upped the ante in the second half.

For the victors, last year's county champions Sars await in the next round, for the losers it's the end of the line after consecutive defeats.

Ballincollig got the perfect start opening up a seven-point lead before Douglas got on the scoreboard. Three Denise Cronin frees, one from Samantha Coomey and a sixth minute Patricia Buttimer goal gave them a dream start.

Douglas gradually got themselves into the game, spearheaded by the hard-working Mackey twins, the excellent Katlyn Holland and Julia White they hit six points without reply as they took the game to Ballincollig.

Twice the sides swapped points as the Village held their two-point advantage before Niamh O'Brien stretched it to three. However, a superb drive saw Mairead Mulrooney glide past several defenders and finish to the net to tie it up at the break 1-8 apiece.

Katrina Mackey, who covered every blade of grass, edged Douglas into an early lead on the resumption but Cronin clipped over two frees to put Ballincollig back in front.

Growing in confidence Douglas kept coming at them and when Mairead Mulrooney's long-range effort dropped just over the line for a goal nine minutes into the half they took a lead they were to hold.

Driven on by Mackey who contributed 12 points to their total they hit four without reply, Katlyn Holland and Joy Leo adding one each as Mackey fired over two. Buttimer pointed a Ballincollig free but Douglas continued to hold the upper hand.

Jess Kavanagh then denied Ballincollig with an excellent penalty save and Douglas were on their way before Julia White cleverly handpassed to the



Douglas' Pamela Mackey races away from Ballincollig's Denise Cronin during their Cork camogie SE Systems Senior Championship clash at Castle Road. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

net.

Caoimhe McCarthy hit a point as Mackey finished a splendid performance with three points in a row.

The end of the road for Ballincollig as Douglas advance to meet Sarsfields.

Scorers for Douglas: K Mackey 0-12 (0-7 f), M Mulrooney 2-0 (J White 1-1, K Holland 0-4, C McCarthy, J Leo 0-1 each).

Ballincollig: D Cronin 0-8 (1, P Buttimer 1-2 (0-1 f), S Coomey, N O'Brien 0-1 each).

DOUGLAS: J Kavanagh, S Mulrooney, A Curtin, E Kavanagh, C Nason, P Mackey, R Sheehan, M Mulrooney, C Noonan; K Holland, K Mackey, C St Ledger, A Walsh, J Leo, J White.

Subs: C McCarthy for A Walsh (55), E McAndrew for J Leo (55), K Twomey for C St Ledger (59), K Twomey for J White (52).

BALLINCOLLIG: L Doyle, C Healy, S O'Leary, O Keating, C Irish, L Weste (c), A Cotter, S Buckley, M Healy, D Cronin, L Dorgan, S Coomey, N O'Brien, P Buttimer, O O'Leary.

Subs: E Casey for C Irish (h-f), O McCarthy for S Buckley.

Referee: Niall O'Neill (Midleton).



Ballincollig's Niamh O'Brien is tackled by Douglas' Chloe Nason and Emma Kavanagh. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

O'Sullivan's brace sets Newcestown on road to big win

Newcestown	6-15
Imokilly	1-6

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

ON a muggy mid-morning last Saturday with not a puff of wind in Castle Road, Newcestown comfortably advanced to round 4 of the SE Systems senior championship.

It was fairly evenly matched between the sides before a goal by Aoife O'Sullivan on 18 minutes put a little distance between them and there was no looking back for Newcestown after that.

When Ciara O'Sullivan's 12th minute penalty was saved with the score sitting at 0-3 to 0-1 it seemed as if that could prove pivotal such was the closeness of the tie. But Newcestown started to get a grip on proceedings with their defence doing very well, Rachel Hallahan in particular and with Miriam Crowley busy around the middle of the park Newcestown began to gain the upper hand.

Collette Desmond was a massive handful inside

and by the 22nd minute Newcestown led 1-6 to 0-1. On twenty-six minutes Aoife O'Sullivan had Newcestown's second goal and they took a 2-7 to 0-4 lead into the break.

Three goals from the dynamic Desmond put this game well beyond the reach of Imokilly by the end of the third quarter. Her first two were from the top drawer giving Imokilly's net minder no chance.

The third came high off the top of the upright after a long delivery by Miriam Crowley fell into Desmond's path. Imokilly gave their allocation of five substitutes a run as they develop their divisional side and Newcestown continued to pile the pressure on.

Oria Dineen was highly competent in goal dealing with any Imokilly attacks while outfield Rachel O'Hallahan, Meabh O'Donovan, Aoife O'Sullivan,

Grace Ryan and Colette Desmond stood strong.

Substitute Olive O'Mahony had Newcestown's sixth goal on 52 minutes while Imokilly finished with a surge scoring 1-1, Faye McGrath hitting the net. Newcestown now advance to the round 4 where they'll play Courcy Rovers.

Scorers for Newcestown: A O'Sullivan 2-1, C O'Sullivan 0-6 (0-4 (0-1 f), C Desmond 3-6, O O'Mahony 1-1, G Ryan 0-1 (f)).

Imokilly: F McGrath 1-0, A Smith 0-3 (0-1f), M Sheehan, C Finn, L McNulty 0-1 each.

NEWCESTOWN: O Dineen, L Jennings, M McSwaney, R Hallahan, E Tarrant, A O'Donovan, S Kelleher, E Crowley, C O'Sullivan, M O'Donovan, M Crowley, G Ryan, M Kenneally, C Desmond, A O'Sullivan.

Subs: O O'Mahony for E Tarrant (45).

IMOKILLY: K McCarthy (Youghal), A Fouhy (Watergrasshill), S Murphy (Fr O'Neills), L Wallace (Midleton); C Cashman (Cobh), Y Murphy (Fr O'Neills), E Murphy (Watergrasshill); M Sheehan (do), V Gleeson (Midleton); A Smith (Aghada), C O'Doherty (Fr O'Neills), A Dalton (do), C Finn (do), C Cashman (Watergrasshill), L McNulty (Castletyons).

Subs: D Corcoran (Fr O'Neills) for V Gleeson and S Hayes (Bride Rovers) for C O'Doherty (38), F McGrath (Castlemartyr) for C Cashman (39), J Swayne (Youghal) for K McCarthy and C Smith (Cobh) for C Finn (45).

Referee: Andrew Larkin (Douglas).

Sarsfields back on track and prepared for Douglas clash

Cork Camogie

Therese O'Callaghan

A nine-point victory over Cloughduv on Saturday at Castle Road got champions Sarsfields back on track in the SE Systems Cork senior camogie championship. They fell to Glen Rovers in round one, so this was do-or-die for them. Their 1-15 to 0-9 win pairs

them against Douglas in the next round.

Mark Mullins, of Na Piar-saigh and Cork hurling fame, has taken over from Emmet Fennell as manager having been involved with the minors last year. Fennell guided the club to their first senior county title in 30 years in 2019.

Mullins has three daughters on the starting team — Meabh, Clare, and Aine — and

it was Aine who netted the only goal of the game. His other two daughters play underage.

He was delighted with the success, but he said it was hard-earned.

"The scoreline probably flatters us a little bit. Cloughduv put it up to us, they had their homework done but we pulled away with a couple of points at the end.

"The girls are very dedicated and it is great to be back in contention, we got a bit of a wake-up call from the Glen. It helped us refocus.

"We are looking forward to the Douglas game next Saturday, they have a few star players. But it is very much one game at a time for us."

Douglas advanced after they got the better of Ballincollig, also a second round

clash, 3-19 to 1-12.

A high-scoring encounter that saw the sides level at half-time, 1-8 apiece. Goals from Mairead Mulrooney (2) and Julia White added to a 12-point haul from Katrina Mackey.

In the third game of the day, last year's Intermediate title-holders Newcestown put up a big scoreline against Imokilly. A hat-trick from Colette Des-

mond and a brace from Aoife O'Sullivan helped them run out convincing winners over the east Cork divisional side, the 6-15 to 1-6 result sending them to a next round date with Courcy Rovers.

The final backdoor match takes place tonight at Castle Road involving Milford and Ballygarvan and the victors here will clash with Kill-eagh.

Desmond stars as Sars move on

CAMOGIE

■ Linda Mellerick

Sarsfields 1-15
Cloughduv 0-9

Cloughduv are renowned for their fighting spirit and never was it more evident than when they took on champions Sarsfields in the SE Systems senior championship backdoor round game in Castle Road on Saturday afternoon.

A Holly Herlihy goal nineteen minutes in was a key moment in the game as Cloughduv just couldn't bridge the four or five-point lead that Sars enjoyed from there. Enjoyment is possibly the wrong word as Sars had to battle hard for every inch over the hour with Cloughduv chasing and hounding every ball and opponent that moved.

With their defence magnificent Cloughduv soaked up big pressure where they dispossessed Sars on a number of occasions. Aoife Murray was in the right position for the goal but her vision was blocked as Herlihy's long ball defied the crowded Cloughduv square.

Molly Lynch pulled off a brilliant point blank save after 21 minutes as Cloughduv tried to cancel out the Sar's goal and the exemplary free taking of Saoirse Desmond pushed Cloughduv back time and again. Saoirse finished the first half with five points to her credit as Sars led 1-7 to 0-4 at the change of ends.

With teeming rain in the opening half conditions became slippery and it affected striking at times but nothing came in the way of two teams giving it their all Sars made a number of substitutes and all contributed well. Holly Herlihy who worked very hard throughout pointed just after a Saoirse Desmond free and the gap had extended to seven points. But such was the heart of Cloughduv they came back again. Two Lisa Lynch frees and a Mairead Corkery point gave the West Cork side momentum. They then had half a chance of a goal but the Sars defence did well to smother and try as they might Cloughduv just couldn't get beyond that four-point deficit.

With a stronger panel and with Cloughduv's legs tiring Sarsfields started pulling away again. Saoirse



Holly Herlihy, Sarsfields, shoots for goal as Eva Dunne, Cloughduv, tries to block her during their SE Systems championship tie at Castle Road on Saturday.

Picture: Jim Coughlan

Desmond continued her unerring free conversion and substitutes Rionna O'Mahony and Lucy Allen struck over as four further points saw the champions advance.

It was an honest hard hours work by both sides. Credit Cloughduv for such a spirited performance and credit Sar's for reciprocating the battle. It should stand to the city side as they face Douglas in the next round.

Scorers for Sarsfields: S Desmond 0-10 (0-8 10-1 45), M Herlihy 1-1, M Barry, C Mullins, R O'Mahony, L Allen 0-1 each.

Cloughduv: L Lynch 0-6 (0-5 10-1 45), C O'Leary, M Corkery, L Buttiner (f) 0-1 each.

SARSFIELDS: M Lynch; E Twomey, K Barry, N O'Callaghan; E Murphy, M Mullins, E Casey; L Kelly, O McAllen; C Irwin, H Herlihy, C Mullins; S Desmond, A Mullins, M Barry.

Subs: G Cashman for M Mullins (24), M McCarthy for A Mullins and E Lonergan for E Twomey (45), L Allen for C Irwin, R O'Mahony for M Barry (55).

CLOUGHDUV: A Murray; A Kelleher, E Dunne, A Corkery; A Barry Murphy, N O'Leary, N McCarthy; L Buttiner, C Hughes; R Hurley, E Healy, L Lynch; M Corkery, C O'Leary, A Twomey.

Subs: S Bateman for E Healy (h/t), O Barry Murphy for J Down (47).

Referee: Cathal Egan - Glen Rovers.



Saoirse Desmond, Sarsfields tussles for possession with Niamh O'Leary, Cloughduv, during their championship clash at Castle Road.

Picture: Jim Coughlan

West Cork club enjoy their 25th anniversary

CAMOGIE

John Bohane

ENNISKEANE Camogie Club reached a landmark occasion recently when they celebrated their 25th anniversary.

The progressive camogie club have enjoyed a very successful 25 years since they were founded in 1995. They have enjoyed a lot of success on the pitch, while behind the scenes the club appears in rude health. Enniskeane Camogie Club was formed by Angela Corcoran, Tony Coughlan, Catherine Barron, Joan O'Sullivan, Finbarr Lynch and many others.

Club PRO Siobhan O'Driscoll is delighted with their progress to date.

"We have been so fortunate that our club is growing in numbers every year. Currently, the club age groups are from UB up to intermediate level. At the end of 2019 we had approximately 192 registered players and 33 registered mentors/committee members."

The Enniskeane intermediate camogie team enjoyed a very strong league and championship campaign last season. They were narrowly defeated by near neighbours Newcestown following an enthralling county final.

They ended the season in style however when they captured the league title following a comfortable win against Blackrock. This was the first time the club won any title at this grade. They were guided to league glory by a management team comprised of Anthony O'Sullivan, Dermot Curtin and Brian Daly.

The strength of the Enniskeane camogie club is reinforced by them entering two teams in this year's adult county championship. The club is an integral part of the local Ballineen and Enniskeane community. They in turn receive great support from the local community.

"We thank everyone who has helped the club to date and who continue to support Enniskeane camogie. The club's strength is testament to the foresight of its founding members.

"Enniskeane Camogie Club continues to expand. At all age levels from UB to intermediate level, the interest in the game is reflected in the numbers playing and the number of mentors who give their time. A major strength of the club is the support we receive from the local community."

The club currently has a number of players representing Cork camogie teams at various levels. Cork senior star Orla Cronin continues to be a great role model for the club revealed club chairperson Aidan O'Driscoll.

"Over the last 25 years there have been many great camogie players in this club. They inspired so many young girls to pick up a hurley and play the game with pride and passion.

"Cork senior camogie star Orla Cronin is a great role model. She has won four senior All-Ireland medals. We currently have many girls playing on Cork teams. The club is represented from U14 to senior level. We move forward with great optimism."



Ballygarvan's Tara Crowley about to gather the sliothar ahead of Milford's Aisling Thompson and Olive Lenihan during the SE Systems Senior Camogie Championship match in Castle Road. Picture: Howard Crowd

Milford rue wides in championship

Ballygarvan 3-5
Milford 0-9

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Ballygarvan may have had five points to spare at the finish in this SE Systems senior championship clash in Castle Road but Milford will rue their wides tally of nine over an hour where Ballygarvan were a lot more economical hitting no wide in a game that was there for the taking to the finish.

At times it was sloppy, the stop start nature of proceedings never allowed the game to flow with play stopped on numerous occasions from minor injuries whilst the decision to have the water breaks on the 20th minute of both half and none on the quarter was

also strange.

Two Isobel O'Regan first half goals on eight and 19 minutes as she collected long Catriona Kelly delivery's helped Ballygarvan hold a 2-2 to 0-5 half time advantage. O'Regan also had contributed their two first half points.

Milford, with Aisling Thompson, Sarah Sexton and Sarah Sheehan prominent, fought for every ball and they showed huge determination as they withstood a lot of Ballygarvan pressure including a penalty save by Thompson from Catriona Kelly after

O'Regan was fouled en route to goal and with Rebecca Finn and Thompson finding the range, they were well in the contest.

Laura Stack and Catriona Kelly swapped early second half points but a determined Milford hit the next two from Finn and Thompson to cut the lead to a point as we entered the final quarter. Battling furiously for every ball and applying huge pressure, Milford won two frees but twice they wasted their chance of drawing level with erratic shooting.

Ballygarvan were granted a life line when Tara Crowley finished to the net after Catriona Kelly had delivered a long ball to the inside line.

Saoirse Mc Carthy pointed to bring

it back to three points but finishing stronger Ballygarvan added two to endure their passage to a meeting next weekend with Killeagh.

Scorers for Ballygarvan: I O'Regan 2-3, T Crowley 1-0, C Kelly 0-2(f).

Milford: A Thompson 0-4 (0-1f), R Finn 0-3(f's) L Stack, S Mc Carthy 0-1 each.

BALLYGARVAN: S Ahern, S Lyons, S Wynne, L Murphy, C O'Leary, E O'Regan, S J Brady, M Buckley, M Kelleher, C O'Sullivan, C Kelly, T Crowley, N Lyons, I O'Regan, A Finnegan.

Subs: R Crowley for N Lyons, (h1), M O'Donovan for M Kelleher (45), S Quilligan for A Finnegan (63).

MILFORD: E Goggin, C Buckley, K Galvin, A Galvin, S Sexton, T Fitzgibbon, O Lenihan, N O'Connor, A Thompson, E O'Gorman, R Finn, S Sheehan, M Fitzgibbon, L Stack, C Murphy.

Sub: Y Stack for K Galvin (in) 27.

Ref: John Horgan (Gleann Na Laol).



Ballygarvan's Michaela Buckley and Milford's Nicole O'Connor.

Féile champions Éire Óg show they are a force to be reckoned with

IT'S great to see the U14 and U16 championships get underway over the last two weeks as younger players finally got to taste some competitive action.

A lot of clubs over the last few weeks to get players back into training and played a lot of practice matches as they did not have league competitions this year due to the on-going situation with Covid 19.

Credit to all clubs who worked so hard to get their championship games played on time and in particular those who would have under 16 players also involved with their minor or adult teams, it means a lot of games each night but after having no games for so long it is a welcome return.

The U14 championships got up and running on August 9 and with the board ensuring it will be every second week for U14 or U16 mentors are able to manage their schedule whilst we still have some evening light to play games.

In the U14 premier Douglas had a win over a strong Inniscarra side 5-11 to 2-10 the score line here.

Douglas who won the Seandun U13 championship last season will be pleased with that result as they head into round two. Sarsfields were too strong for Ballinora, Éire Óg last season's Féile champions showed they are a force to be reckoned with again as they overcame Cloughdub and Newcestown accounted for Clonakilty.

In the U14 A championship Valley Rovers travelled to Tracton and came away with a win, Sarsfields second team had a win over Aghada, the combination of Milford / Ballyhea had two much strength for Millstreet. Enniskeane defeated Ballygarvan, Courcy Rovers got the upper hand on Kilbrittain / Timoleague, St Finbarrs and Ballincollig played out a thrilling contest where the Barrs edged it with a point to spare.

Glen Rovers travelled to Blackrock and came away with a win, Fr O'Neills who are joined by Youghal at under 14 level had an 8-12 to 5-3 win over Middleton.

Cobh had a three points win 4-2 to 1-8 over Erins Own when they met in Cobh. Newtownshandrum travelled to Banteer and came away with a win.

Two goals separated St Catherine's and Dungourney as Catherine's ran out 7-7 to 5-7

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

winners. Castlelyons defeated Bride Rovers 4-7 to 2-1, Bishopstown ran out 5-1 to 2-4 winners when they hosted Na Piarasigh.

In U14 C championship victories for Kilworth over St Vincent's, St Colm's defeated Kinsale and Bandon overcame Brian Dillon's.

U16 CHAMPIONSHIPS We had some wonderful games in the opening rounds of the Under 16 championships with four grade of competition from premier to under16 C.

A close contest in Clonakilty as the hosts had to give way to strong Aghabullogue who ran out winners with four points to spare 2-8 to 1-7, Inniscarra headed to Kilbree where they recorded a 3-11 to 2-7 win.

In the U16 A championship Newcestown had a win over Kilbrittain / Timoleague, Middleton had four points to spare over Sarsfields 0-6 to 0-2. Valley Rovers got the upper hand on Courcy Rovers in Ballinaspittle. Rockban defeated Erin's Own. Tracton were too strong for Sliabh Rua, Glen Rovers overcame Blackrock 2-12 to 1-7.

In U16 B and there were wins for Buttevant over Newtownshandrum, Blarney defeated Douglas 2, Aghabullogue 2 and Brian Dillon's ended up level 1-11 to 4-2 after an entertaining contest. Barryroe hit ten points as they ran out winners by three over Enniskeane who were on target with 1-4. St. Catherine's hosted Castlelyons and had a 4-9 to 1-10 win.

In the U16 C championship there were victories for Bandon over St Vincent's and Fermoy over Watergrasshill.

In the week ahead its back to U14 championship as clubs head into round two and we will have all the updates next week.

INTERMEDIATE CHAMPIONSHIP There was one game in the S. E. Systems Intermediate champions and here Ballyhea had a 2-8 to 1-6 win over Watergrasshill to book their place in the quarter finals against Brian Dillon's which goes ahead on August 30th as do the other quarter finals Fr O'Neills versus Kilbrittain, Enniskeane versus Blackrock and Carrigaline versus Aghabullogue.

Our alert levels must rise again

CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

AT the time of writing it was 24 hours since the Government re-introduced tighter restrictions on sporting and other activities. The Cork camogie board received the below email from the camogie association the following morning.

"Following last night's government announcement, the GAA is seeking clarification on a number of issues relating to the organisation of Gaelic Games (including camogie and ladies football) and activities (26 counties).

As soon as we get clarity on these issues we will update our units.

In the meantime, as games must now be played "behind closed doors", no more than 40 persons per team should be allowed access to games for the moment. This figure should include all players, management, coaches, ancillary backroom personnel and team officials.

The 80-team personnel (40 per team) is in addition to essential match-day personnel such as match officials (referees, linesmen, umpires), media and event officials (stewards etc).

While we await further clarification on the issue of parents attending juvenile games, we suggest that one parent or guardian may attend a game where they consider it necessary for the welfare of their own child.

Cúl Camps and team training should continue for the moment on the basis of no more than 15 people (including coaches) in a designated area of the field.

As ever, the association asks units and members "do their utmost to protect public health and we are very grateful for all of your efforts in this regard".

There was a lot of angry social media reaction to the Government's announcement. GAA members a large part of that. It's a different feel this time around, isn't it?

Blame

It doesn't feel like we are all in this together like in March. There's a lot of blame being thrown around. In March we were all naive in a sense as to what faced the country. It was an unusual and fascinating time with all of us glued to Six One on a daily basis for updates and health briefings. We felt we'd do our part for a few weeks. Things were going to be ok.

The weather was particularly nice and we were all looking out for each other. There's a different feel this time around. People are annoyed, but underneath that people are scared and tired. Heavily involved in GAA all my life, I still didn't fully appreciate until now how important sport is in some people's lives. For many, the GAA and a pint or a pot of tea in the local pub is the pivotal part of their day.

Without it they are lost. They'd get days out of discussing their local club's recent game and the plight of the inter-county teams. Then the focus would move to the next game and the opposition. It's as important to a local community as the post office used to be. How much more isolation can these people take?

We're close to autumn months, September to November. Our weather has been poor of late and the nights are getting darker earlier. It's going to be more difficult this time around. The chances of an inter-county GAA season seems less likely than it did two months ago.

Right, so that's the negative thoughts



Douglas' Joy Leo shoots for goal from Ballincollig's Leanne Doyle and Sarah O'Leary during the Cork Camogie SESystems senior championship at Castle Road. Picture: Eddie O'Hare



Olivia McAllen, Sarsfields, tackles Aoife Barry Murphy, Cloughdub during the Cork Camogie Senior Club Championship at Castle Road. Picture: Jim Coughlan

out of the way. What can we do to lift our hopes and spirits?

There is little point to the blame game. Thankfully we are shortly coming out of our holiday season and unnecessary visitors to Ireland should decrease — that's a positive. Our schools are going back and I believe it is critical that they return otherwise the gap between the privileged and not so will widen. From an educational and social aspect children and young teenagers need school. We all need to educate the young regarding Covid responsibility and do it in the most positive and uplifting way we can. We need to try and lighten the mood in schools when children and teenagers return and we can play our part outside the school grounds. There will be some that will buck the trend and teachers will have a difficult time getting the balance right in turning a blind eye and enforcing masks.

It can't be a daily distraction. We need to try and unite each other again in the goal to minimise the spread of this virus. Improved and more regular communi-

cation is key. It's too quiet on the leadership front in that regard. Small local wins should be prominent and highlighted and I think our councils and business groups such as the Cork Chamber of Commerce can play a big part here.

They're too quiet. When the Oliver Plunkett Street eating took off there was a real feelgood factor to it. It gave people a lift. Of course, other businesses are suffering heavily. I know people are lying awake at night worrying about business and financial issues in general. Trained professionals need to be more out there advertising free consultations and solutions.

Sometimes people just need to know that they'll get through something, that there's light at the end of the tunnel no matter how distant that light may be.

We've got to encourage positivity and that in turn will encourage good behaviour and responsibility.

Get garda vetted and do what you can via Alone to call to someone that needs some company. Even a phone call helps.

Experienced Newcestown forward announced her arrival to the senior championship in style

Desmond's debut was worth the long wait

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

COLETTE Desmond had to wait a little longer than her team-mates for her county senior championship debut, but it was worth it.

Last Saturday at Castle Road, the Newcestown full forward racked up 3-6 as they recorded the club's first-ever victory at this level – and also got their campaign back on track following a Round 1 loss a few weeks earlier to Killeagh.

Lessons were learned from that opening defeat and Imokilly were at the receiving end of a 6-15 to 1-6 scoreline. Desmond was rampant, as was the entire Newcestown team.

'The only time I can remember scoring something like this is when I scored 2-4 for Carbery in a senior championship game. I couldn't believe it when the goals were going in against Imokilly but the amount of ball and the quality of ball I was getting was exceptional,' Desmond noted.

Injured, she sat out the 1-23 to 1-5 loss to Killeagh a few weeks earlier. That was a baptism of fire for Newcestown in their first game in the senior grade. The teams were level at the break before Killeagh took over. Desmond admits it was a tough watch but they took on board learnings from the defeat and put them into practice against Imokilly.

'Everyone was disappointed after the Killeagh game, particularly because we were level at half time. We went back to training and our trainers told us that we need to improve the speed of our hurling, maintain possession better and just do the simple things right. We had two weeks to work on that in training, and we worked hard. Against Imokilly we gave it our all and it worked for us. Killeagh was a bad day but against Imokilly it was much better,' Desmond said.

The reward is a Round 4 clash with Courcey Rovers this Sunday evening at Castle Road (6.30pm throw-in). Courceys were county finalists two years ago and had a big win over Cloughduv in Round 1, so Newcestown, Cork intermedi-

'I didn't play last year and only came back in July, and when I went up to training and there were 29 there, I couldn't believe it. There was minor training going on too, with another 20 girls.'

ate champions last season, will have to raise their game again. Desmond knows this but it's for big days like next Sunday that she has waited for.

When Newcestown beat Enniskeane in the county intermediate final last October, she stood on the sideline. She was pregnant with her first child, Rian, who announced his arrival the next month, so there were more celebrations for herself and her husband, Fintan O'Toole. Still, in the back of her mind, she wanted to get back on the pitch with Newcestown this year and play in the senior championship.

'I missed out on last year, I looked on with envy at Castle Road as the girls celebrated the county final win, me with my baby bump. I would have loved to have been part of that win because they were buzzing after it. Rian arrived in November so we had our own celebrations,' she said.

'It was always in the back of my head to try and get back this summer, even to be part of the senior panel. I'm 35, I have played camogie for a long time with Newcestown, we have endured a lot of losses, we built up the club from junior so to get an opportunity to play senior was my goal.

'I was planning on coming back earlier but then lockdown came so I didn't get back onto the pitch until July when restrictions were lifted. I went back too hard then, did too much in the first week and ended up on the physio's table with back and knee injuries. Unfortunately, I didn't play against Killeagh which was disappointing,' Desmond had to



ABOVE: Colette Desmond was on target with 3-6 against Imokilly last weekend. INSET: Colette's biggest fan, Rian, cheered on his mom at Castle Road last Saturday.

wait that little bit longer for her first taste of senior action, and she announced her arrival in style against Imokilly. Newcestown gave the performance they worked for and it's given them a bounce in their step this week at training and also injected some optimism ahead of the clash with Courceys.

'We won the breaks and the dirty ball that wasn't happening against Killeagh. Orla Dineen's puck-outs were outstanding, they were landing on our half-forward line and this time we were winning them whereas against Killeagh we were losing the ball there and couldn't get it into the full-forward line,' explained Desmond, who knows Courceys are a team to be reckoned with.

'They are an experienced side with so many excellent players. They are playing senior a lot longer than us and they are a team that is in the conversation when you talk about possible winners. They want to win a county title.

'We have nothing to lose, it will be a tough encounter but we are going to enjoy it. This is a first for us. Being from Newcestown we will always wear the red and yellow jersey with pride, whatever the outcome we will be proud of how far the club has come in its first season in the senior ranks.'

The Newcestown camogie story is a great one, a club that's battled from junior up to senior, and it's also a club that's on the front foot and going places. Numbers are strong at all grades and they've players on Cork panels from underage to senior – the club has taken huge strides in recent times.

'When I was U16 or minor, I think I was the only girl in my class playing camogie so the club and the coaches deserve huge credit for the work they've put in over the years. Now there is a huge amount of girls training,' Desmond said.

'I didn't play last year and only came back in July, and

when I went up to training and there were 29 there, I couldn't believe it. There was minor training going on too, with another 20 girls. It was great to see. Newcestown will go from strength to strength, the conveyor belt is working, the underage talent is coming through and the club will stay in the senior ranks.'

Her advice for her team-mates ahead of Sunday's match is to cherish this moment. They've worked extremely hard to get to this point. For some, the wait has been longer than others but they're at the top table now and determined to keep pushing forward – and Desmond will lead the charge in attack.

TIMOLEAGUE

Senior camogie

The supporters at Castle Road on Saturday last were served up a good game of quick, fast camogie by Cloughduv and Courcey Rovers. Played on a great sunny afternoon, both teams started the game with some good scores: Cork and Courcey Rovers' Linda Collins gave a pass to Jacinta Crowley to score a peach of a point.

Jacinta soon followed with another pointed free after an equaliser from Cloughduv. This half was an even game apart from another great pass to team mate and Cork Senior Saoirse Mc Carthy's by Linda that went straight to the net. Courcey Rovers at this stage were a little stronger but Cloughduv did not give anything easy.

Saoirse finished this half for Courcey Rovers with a great point by overcoming some tough challenges enroute from the Cloughduv back line. In the last few minutes of this half, Cloughduv really looked to be getting closer to Courcey Rovers. The half time score was 1-8 to 0-6.

Following the small whistle, Linda hit a 'rasper' of a shot into Aoife Murray, the former Cork goalie, who displayed why she has held her place with Cork for so long. With Courcey Rovers gradually putting over the points, Cloughduv never really looked to be a huge threat to Courcey Rovers apart from being quite physical in their challenges.

Three points in the second half for Cloughduv was well below par to give Courcey Rovers any real challenge, with Courceys pulling well away in the end via some great passes in the forward line.

Fiona Keating playing well on top of her game scored three points in a row which meant the game was then out of Cloughduv's reach at this late stage.

Another great run from Linda and great run from Fiona resulted in Fiona scoring two more goals at this stage. Ellen Maguire came on as a sub in the second half and contributed a well-taken point near the end.

Still, Cloughduv challenged well and the Courcey Rovers backline held firm in defence. The final score was Courcey Rovers 3-15 Cloughduv 0-9.

The lineup and panel included Sinead O'Reilly, Emily O'Regan, Karyn Keohane (captain), Grainne Hannon, Ciara Hayes, Ashling Moloney, Edel Moloney, Jacinta Crowley, Elaine O'Reilly, Eimear O'Reilly, Fiona Keating, Lorraine Collins, Linda Collins, Christine O'Neill, Saoirse McCarthy, Deirdre O'Reilly, Orla Twomey, Anna Hannon, Isabelle Lordan, Grace O'Reilly, Anne Marie Collins, Roinín Nolan, Roisín Gallagher, Alanna Corcoran, Lara Helbrow, Lucy Crowley, Ava O'Donovan, Caitriona O'Reilly, Ellen Maguire and Caoimhe Hannon.

AN HISTORIC WIN

Newcestown picked up their first-ever county senior camogie championship win in some style last Saturday – they beat Imokilly by 6-15 to 1-6 in Castle Road. The Carbery women led 2-7 to 0-4 at half time enroute to a win that sends them into the last eight and a clash with Courcey Rovers this Sunday. Colette Desmond scored 3-6, Aoife O'Sullivan hit 2-1, Cork senior Ciara O'Sullivan added six points (five from placed balls), sub Olive O'Mahony helped herself to 1-1 and Grace Ryan sent over a free in a memorable Newcestown win.