

STAR SATURDAY AUGUST 5, 2017 Sport



ONE MORE STEP

West Cork's Rebels ready for All-Ireland senior camogie final

Read pages 4-5

Flying the West Cork flag on the Cork senior camogie panel are Orla Cronin (Enniskeane), Ciara O'Sullivan (Newcestown), Saoirse McCarthy (Coursey Rovers), Fiona Keating (Coursey Rovers) and Kate Wall (Kilbrittain).
(Photo: George Hatchell)

Waterford's Niamh Rockett pictured at O'Brien Hurleys in Thurles during an All-Ireland senior camogie championship knockout stages media day back in 2018. On Sunday she'll be hoping to help Waterford to a first ever All-Ireland senior camogie title and get her hands on that beautiful (O'Duffy) cup on the bench. Photos: Inpho.



Cork are well prepared for Deise task says Lee



Main picture Cork goalkeeper celebrates a score and above, Lee with Searlait Ni Shuilleabhain at Castle Road prior to the All Ireland final. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

CORK will be hoping to put the disappointment of successive All-Ireland Senior Camogie final defeats behind them when they face Waterford in Sunday's Croke Park decider.

Cork goalkeeper Amy Lee believes the Rebels are in a good place as they prepare to face the Deise.

"I think we're preparing well and we're all happy at the moment and it's just about getting over the next couple of training sessions before we go into next weekend."

"We always have great battles against Waterford, [and] I think they always come with massive intensity. Even last year's semi-final, they put it up to us for pretty much all of the time."

"I think just going out now, we just need to keep our heads down, we know they're the next step to winning an All-Ireland, so we'll have to go out like we've prepared for all the other games and try and get over the line."

The fact that Cork have failed to win

With just four days to go until the All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final, Cork goalkeeper Amy Lee talks to **JACK MCKAY** about the big occasion and discusses how her and the rest of the squad are feeling.

in two successive All-Ireland finals, losing to Kilkenny last year and Galway the year before, you would expect that will be something on the girls' minds.

"I don't think so; obviously it's very disappointing losing two All-Irelands in a row, even losing semi-finals, quarter-finals, but every year is a new year; you come out and just have to take it game by game, day by day, training session by training session."

"You can't be dwelling on what happened last year, you can't be dwelling on any other year, it's just this year

now, this set of players, and this management."

Playing in an All-Ireland final is a privilege that few will ever receive, but the Na Piarsaigh goalkeeper will get to do that once more, with the hope of avenging last year's disappointment.

Just how much does it mean to Amy?

"I love it. I get great enjoyment out of camogie, I really do. It's just so nice to play. It's so nice to play at this level as well with these girls. They're pushing you all the time; even there in goals, I love getting an old roar if they think

I'm not doing my job properly.

"I love it, they just push me to be way better and even the standard of coaching we get."

"Look, to be fair, we do get a lot in Cork, in terms of physios now, we've got some of the best hurling coaches; I've one of the best goalkeeping coaches around, I can't fault it, so I just love it really."

"I think the game has definitely progressed. I think [with] the rule changes and stuff that came in a couple of years ago, the game has definitely progressed."

"The referees are progressing as well, especially at inter-county level. I think there's much more physicality, and less stop-start."

"It's really coming on to be fair; in Cork, we're very lucky."

"We've a great sponsor in Keary's for the last two years, we get food after training."

"We've all the basics, the pitch was just redone in Castle Road, so we can't really complain. We get the majority of what we ask for anyway."

O'Connor hopes Cork can use past failure as stepping stone

NIALL SCULLY

As soon as she has her pre-match meal of pasta and chicken, the expectations begin to soar. As Amy O'Connor counts down the seconds to throw-in.

She can't wait to run down the tunnel. And the never-ending privilege of feeling the Cork jersey on her back.

"I love playing camogie. I love playing for Cork. It's such an honour. I enjoy it so much," says the Senior Project Manager at software company, Workvivo.

"People talk about the level of commitment, but I'd genuinely want to go training five or six nights of the week. To meet up with people who share a common goal. As long as I am afforded the opportunity to play for Cork, I'll grab it with both hands. I just genuinely love it."

She is from Knocknaheeny in north

Cork. She plays for the local St Vincent's club. And on Sunday, she will take her place in the Cork attack as they face Waterford in the All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final in Croke Park (5.0).

She attended the All-Ireland final Media Day at Croke Park. High in Suite 686 of the Hogan Stand, she took a moment to look down at the playing area.

"We have as tough a campaign as you could imagine to get here. We have played last year's All-Ireland champions and the previous year's All-Ireland champions. They are great games to get. And they are good for camogie too."

"Waterford are a very good team. It's going to be a very difficult game for us. We know a lot about them. They know a lot about us."

Waterford had Cork in deep trouble in last year's All-Ireland semi-final in



Cork's Amy O'Connor

Croke Park. Ashling Thompson came off the bench and changed the traffic.

"When you look over at the line and see Ashling warming up, it's such a huge boost. Not only for the players but for the

crowd as well. She carries such a presence about her."

Last year, Thompson was cleared to play in the semi-final following an appeal which saw a two-match ban overturned.

This season, she has been battling to recover from an ACL injury. "She has reacted like a professional in dealing with her injury. She is phenomenal. She is so regimented in her recovery."

"She's flying in training. She looks great. She looks sharp. She really went about it the right way."

Cork would love to welcome the O'Duffy Cup back to Leeside for the 29th time. They have won the trophy more than any other county. But they lost the last two finals. To Galway by three points in 2021 and to Kilkenny, by a point, last year.

"We are very, very hungry. It's been 2018 since we last won it. That seems like

a lifetime, especially for the players who have been on the road for a long time."

"It's very disappointing to lose an All-Ireland final. You commit your whole life to something. I know people will talk about friendships and all the rest of it. That's so true. But the thing you crave the most at the start of the year is the thing you're going to go without for maybe another year, or a couple of years."

For the county players it's a case of banishing that disappointment and lifting themselves to go again when they return to the bread and butter of the local scene.

"That can be hard," admits O'Connor. "And until you are in the bubble of trying to win the All-Ireland, you don't really appreciate the level of commitment that's involved. And then, at the end of it all, to have nothing to show for it."

Waterford Senior Camogie Squad profiles - MEET THE PLAYERS




Name:
Brianna O'Regan

Club:
De La Salle

Age:
24

Occupation:
SNA - De La Salle College

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Pre match is a loner (by choice) in the dressing room and wears an under armour in summer and winter.




Name:
Vikki Falconer

Club:
Tramore

Age:
29

Occupation:
Primary School Teacher - Mercy Convent

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Was once a corner forward.




Name:
Keeley Corbett Barry

Club:
De La Salle

Age:
22

Occupation:
Student at SETU studying Public Health & Health Promotion

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Doesn't like mushrooms but loves mushroom soup!




Name:
Beth Carton

Club:
De La Salle

Age:
25

Occupation:
Teacher at Presentation Secondary School

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Has a black belt in Karate.




Name:
Anna Hickey

Club:
Modeligo

Age:
19

Occupation:
Student - Studying Arts at UCC

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Very laid back.



Name:
Natasha Dobbyn

Club:
Tramore

Age:
20

Occupation:
Studying Arts at UCC

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Walks and talks in sleep - Studied for a leaving cert exam while asleep.



Name:
Mairéad Power

Club:
Clonea

Age:
27

Occupation:
Trainee Actuary

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Tans up before games.




Name:
Dearbhla Beresford

Club:
Abbeyside

Age:
21

Occupation:
Student - Studying Maths & PE at UCC

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Brushes her teeth in the shower.



Name:
Megan O'Regan

Club:
Abbeyside

Age:
26

Occupation:
Physio

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Attended Everest Base Camp in May 2022.



Name:
Clara Griffin

Club:
Tramore

Age:
23

Occupation:
Primary School Teacher at Mount Sion

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Went viral in 2022 for her skill in picking up the sliotar with a broken hurley in the All-Ireland Quarter-Final.



Name:
Laoise Forrest

Club:
Gailltír

Age:
18

Occupation:
Employed at Poyntown Sport Horses

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Has to listen to ACDC Thunderstruck before every match.



Name:
Shauna Fitzgerald


Club:
Gailltír

Age:
23

Occupation:
Sports & Societies Officer at SETU

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Guaranteed to have a row with her Dad the morning of a match.

Waterford Senior Camogie Squad profiles - MEET THE PLAYERS




Name:
Roisin Kirwan

Club:
St Anne's

Age:
21

Occupation:
Student_Health & Exercise Science

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Tore two cruciates in two years...just as well her Dad is a Sports & Fitness Instructor.



Name:
Kate Lynch

Club:
Gailltir

Age:
22

Occupation:
PE and Maths Teacher

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Eats Dominos the night before all games (We won't tell Aoife!)




Name:
Iona Heffernan

Club:
Ferrybank

Age:
26

Occupation:
Insurance Intermediary at Kiely Gaule Financial Services

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Tans before games because she's ginger!



Name:
Abby Flynn

Club:
De La Salle

Age:
22

Occupation:
Student - Studying Primary School Teaching at DCU

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Retired Basketball Player, and apparently was very impressive




Name:
Hayleigh Acheson

Club:
Tramore

Age:
17

Occupation:
Student at Ardscoil na Mara

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Has one very large tonsil



Name:
Clodagh Carroll

Club:
Gailltir

Age:
21

Occupation:
Student - Studying Micro Biology at UCC

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Best Sweeper Everrrrrr!



Name:
Oneila Whelan

Club:
An Rinn

Age:
18

Occupation:
Student - Hoping to study Secondary School Teaching

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Her name!




Name:
Melanie Buck

Club:
St. Anne's

Age:
18

Occupation:
Student - Hoping to study nursing

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Nickname 'Mel B'



Name:
Niamh Rockett

Club:
St. Anne's

Age:
29

Occupation:
Secondary School Teacher at St Declan's Community College

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Does not wear tan!



Name:
Annie Fitzgerald

Club:
Gailltir

Age:
22

Occupation:
Student - Studying Linguistics & Irish at UL

What you don't know about me / Quirky thing about me:
Loves a perfect pre match Plait and her Great Gran Aunt was on the 1945 All Ireland team.

Heroic Galway girls almost cause big upset in decider

Kane's charges push hot favourites Cork all the way in All-Ireland U-16 A Final

CORK	0-11
GALWAY	1-7

EANNA O'REILLY
AT NOWLAN PARK

THE Galway under 16 camogie team almost defied the odds when suffering a one point defeat in the All-Ireland A Final at Nowlan Park on Saturday. A very brave effort from Johnny Kane's charges just came up short as hot favourites Cork claimed their fourth consecutive All-Ireland title at this grade.

Entering this game as heavy underdogs, following a defeat to Cork earlier in the championship, the Galway girls gave an excellent performance for three quarters of this final. Galway matched the Rebels throughout the pitch and were the dominant side during the first half.

A lose opening quarter saw Cork launch the scoring with a point from Rachel Murphy. Galway replied two minutes later, with a good score from Emily Lawless, after some fine work from midfielder Leah Behan.

Cork's Laura Walsh put Cork back in front before Galway raised their game and tallied four points in a row. Cara O'Brien sent over two frees and a 45, before Katie Lawless pointed from the left wing, with Behan involved again in the lead up.

Rachel Murphy reduced the margin with an impressive score from the left wing. Shortly after, Galway 'keeper Leah Horan was called into action, making a good save from Cork's Maebh O'Brien. Five minutes later, Galway went three points ahead again, when O'Brien fired over after a great delivery from Rebecca Gardiner.

The final score of the half came from Cork's Catherine Murphy, leaving Kane's side ahead at the interval by 0-6 to 0-4. Galway were full value for their lead, with Behan and Kerri O'Driscoll particularly impressive in the middle third. Galway's half back and half forward lines were also on top during the first half, while Emma Barrett was effective dropping back as a third midfielder.

A hard fought third quarter saw few scoring chances for either side, but Galway received a huge lift in the 40th minute when Emily Lawless was

awarded a penalty. Kerri O'Driscoll played an excellent ball into Lawless, whose run took her inside the Cork defence, before being brought down in the square.

Centre forward Katie Lawless blasted a superb low shot to the net past Cork 'keeper Emma Honohan. Galway were in a very strong position at this juncture, leading by five points and dominating the play. However, it was the young Rebels who took the initiative when the game threatened to drift away from them.

Cork lifted their game substantially and scored the next seven points. Rachel Murphy hit three points in a row, including two tremendous scores from play. Laura Walsh then took a good point over her shoulder, before a score from Clara Murphy levelled the contest in the 53rd minute.

The momentum had turned in favour of the Leesiders at this stage, and they were now on top throughout the pitch. Aoife Cottrell and Ava McAuliffe were prominent in midfield, while Galway just couldn't get a handle on Rachel Murphy.

Some pressure from the Cork forwards led to two fouls which were converted by Murphy, as Cork edged two points ahead entering injury time. Galway badly needed a score and some good work from Behan set up Emily Lawless, who was fouled just outside the Cork square.



A ONE POINT LOSS IS ALWAYS VERY HARD TO TAKE, BUT THESE GIRLS HAVE A GREAT FUTURE AHEAD OF THEM

Katie Lawless sent over the free to set up a nail biting finish. Galway applied the pressure in the dying minutes in an attempt to engineer an equaliser, but Cork defended resolutely to keep the westerners at bay.

The Leesiders held on to claim their 17th All-Ireland under 16 A title. It was a very tough defeat for a gallant Galway side, who certainly made light of the underdogs tag, showing just as much quality as their opponents on the day.



Galway's Mary Brigid Cosgrove on the ball against Cork's Saoirse Cunningham during Saturday's All-Ireland U-16 A Camogie Final at Nowlan Park. PHOTOS: INFO/KEN SUTTON

Galway had particularly impressive displays from Leah Horan, Amy Morgan, Rebecca Gardiner, Leah Behan, Kerri O'Driscoll, Katie Lawless, Cara O'Brien, Emma Barrett, and Emily Lawless.

Team manager Johnny Kane was very disappointed after the defeat but expressed enormous pride in the application and efforts of his players.

"The girls gave it everything out there today. We came into the game against a team that had beaten us by 12 points earlier this year. We really nullified Cork for long stages, and I thought the girls were outstanding in the first half especially. We were a bit unlucky; a few things went against us in the second half, and it just wasn't our day."

"I suppose, when they [Cork] got that run of scores on us [in the second half], we probably struggled a bit. You couldn't ask for anymore from the girls though, they left everything they had out on the pitch. A one point loss is always very hard to take, but these girls have a great future ahead of them."

"I've no doubt we'll see them representing Galway again in the future. They're a fantastic bunch, and we've had great support from their parents and families all year as well. There's huge talent in this group and



Galway's Clodagh Burke breaking away from Cork's Ava McAuliffe at Nowlan Park.

they are the future of Galway camogie," he concluded.

Galway: L. Horan, C. Fahy, A. Morgan, M. Ni Liosaigh, E. Dillon, R. Kilkenny, R. Gardiner, L. Behan, K. O'Driscoll, M. Rodgers, K. Lawless (1-2, 1-0 pen, 0-1 free), C. O'Brien (0-4, 0-2 frees, 0-1

45), E. Lawless (0-1), M. B. Cosgrove, E. Barrett. Subs: E. Ryan for Ni Liosaigh (9-1), K. Flaherty for O'Brien (5), C. Burke for Barrett (55), A. Morrissey for Rodgers (60). Cork: E. Honohan, S. Cunningham, A. Cagney, C. Ryan, M. Lombard, A. Cussen, L. O'Shea, A. McAuliffe, A.

Cottrell, R. Murphy (0-7, 0-2 frees, 0-1 45), K. O'Sullivan, Catherine Murphy (0-8), M. O'Brien, A. Mulkenins, L. Walsh (0-2). Subs: Clara Murphy for O'Sullivan (9-1), T. Goulding for Catherine Murphy (39), J. Murphy for O'Brien (50). Referee: Liz Dempsey (Kilkenny).



Déise's Croke final date with destiny awaits

GLEN DIMPLEX ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOGIE CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL PREVIEW - WATERFORD'S KEELEY CORBETT-BARRY AND CORK'S AMY O'CONNOR

BY ADRIAN FLANAGAN

The countdown clock ahead of Sunday's Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final between Waterford and Cork is getting ever closer to the Croke Park showdown as the Déise go in search of their first-ever senior title success at only their second-ever attempt.

Ahead of the three final

deciders at GAA headquarters, representatives of the teams held a media briefing at Croke Park this in the build-up to the final where Waterford will be looking to get their hands on the famed O'Duffy Cup for a first-time.

Speaking at the launch ahead of the final, Waterford's Keeley Corbett-Barry said: "I suppose we did enjoy winning

the All-Ireland semi-final win over Tipperary because it's the first-time that we've got to an All-Ireland final in 78 years. It's a bit unbelievable, but we're so ready for the final now.

"We have to park the emotions of the semi-final now and just focus on Cork. We have to fine-tune things and we have to get ourselves right. I think that we have to keep on top of our hurling and our gym work, but we're ready for it now. "The thing about it is that we were so slow to get going in the semi-final, and we can't allow that to happen in the final. I was talking to a lot of people and then looking at it that it was 1-7 to 0-3 after 15 or so minutes and that didn't look great.

"But we knew ourselves that any game isn't won in the first 20 minutes. We stuck to our game-plan and we kept at it. We kept the focus and kept the scoreboard ticking over. We got back into the game, and we kept driving on.

"I suppose in that situation, it does take a lot of focus. I feel as well that we've learned a lot from the semi-final defeat to Cork last year. We're worked on a lot physically wise, mentally, and just our hurling in general. I think that we've improved on so many things. "I think that really stood to



Pictured at the Launch of the 2023 Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship Finals in Croke Park this week were L to R: Clare's Sinead O'Keefe (Premier Junior), Tipperary's Claire Stakelum (Premier Junior), Camogie Association President, Hilda Breslin, Waterford's Keeley Corbett-Barry (Senior), Cork's Amy O'Connor (Senior), CFO of Glen Dimplex Group, Yvonne Burke, Derry's Aine McAllister (Intermediate) and Meath's Ellen Burke. Photos: Inpho/Dan Sheridan.

us against Tipperary in the semi-final. I think that when this is what you want to do in life, it's easy for you and you will always make it work. I think that we're, lucky that we're such a tight group, and we're all the best of friends. When you go training, it's like you're going socialising for the week as well."

A DIFFERENT GAME

Four-time All-Ireland Senior winner, Cork captain Amy O'Connor said: "It's a completely different game to when I made my senior debut in 2014 to now. From the strength and conditioning perspective, it's a world apart to be honest. The game is faster, the players are stronger, quicker, and we are in the gym twice a week where before we probably weren't.

"The commitment that we put in is gone up ten folds. We're out maybe four or five times a week. We're doing different things, but we're together collectively maybe two or

three. We have the gym, the ball alley, and practicing frees is a big thing now.

"It's a huge commitment and people say that, but when it's what you want to do, you don't see it that way. You're happy to be there, and you're happy to be doing all those things. The semi-final win over Galway was huge for us.

"I said after the game that there was times in the game where Galway were genuinely the better team. I thought that there was times this year where we beat ourselves, which is obviously very frustrating. At the very beginning of the year, we said that we only needed to beat Galway once, and that has happened.

"It's a huge monkey off our backs, but very conscious even though we've beaten Kilkenny and Galway, we have a bigger test ahead of us on Sunday against Waterford."

"CHANGING OF THE GUARD"

Speaking at the launch,

GAA President Hilda Breslin said: "We're delighted to be here on what has been a tough couple of weeks, but we've seen some brilliant camogie. It's all about our finals now, and the showcase for our game. I said at the launch months ago that there could be a changing of the guard and I'm still convinced that there could be a changing of the guard.

"The fact that we've got six different teams in the All-Ireland finals is unique and it's going to generate an awful amount of excitement. We haven't seen Waterford in a senior final in 78 years and to get here is just wonderful, but now we need the teams to perform.

"Each county has embarked on an extraordinary

journey to reach this stage. May these games truly reflect the countless hours of training and unwavering commitment they have dedicated throughout the year.

The Finals is not just a day for the players and their management teams; it is a day of celebration for their families, clubs, underage mentors, and schools.

"These invaluable supporters have nurtured and cultivated the passion, skill, and enthusiasm for the game, which we will witness in full force in Croke Park. We invite all camogie enthusiasts, sports fans and women's sporting champions alike to join us in witnessing the crowning of champions at the 2023 Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Camogie Finals."



Waterford's Keeley Corbett-Barry with Amy O'Connor of Cork ahead of the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship Final in Croke Park.

GAIC

Joint-captain of Tipp's camogie team is from a family full of winners, including her cousin Declan Hannon

Claire Stakelum is talking Tipperary hurling when she is asked to detail precisely the role her various relations have played in the county's greatest successes.

A Garda Síochána member herself, she smiles. She wouldn't dream of hitting the most troublesome of offenders with such a probing and dense question. But she is game and gives it a go.

There's Pat Stakelum for starters, she says, her grandfather's brother, who won three All-Irelands and captained the county to success in 1949.

Back when they used to give out All-Time All-Star awards, he got one in 1993, a sort of nod to those who would have received an All-Star if they'd existed at the time.

Then there was Pat's nephew, Richie, who famously declared in 1987, upon skipping Tipp to a first Munster hurling title in 16 years, that "the famine is over". It had been 16 years without a provincial win.



Waterford's captain fantastic, Lorraine Bray.

Rockett flying high as she continues to set the bar for those who follow

NLAMH ROCKETT wears a couple of titles within the Waterford camogie panel. Some she wears less willingly than others.

Rockett is the arthritis sufferer of the group. Poor blood circulation in the affected left leg means she's the one they poke fun at in training for wearing leggings all the way into May.

She is the longest-serving member on the panel.

She is also the sole member of the group chasing the trifecta this Sunday. Having in her possession All-Ireland junior and intermediate medals, she only needs one more piece of silver to complete the set.

Rockett was just 16 when hitting two points from right half-forward on the afternoon of Waterford's 2011 All-Ireland junior final win over Down. A child, and yet that wasn't even her debut season. It wasn't her second spin either.



Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship Final

Cork v Waterford

Sunday: Croke Park, 5pm

Referee: TEC

TV: RTE2

Eoghan Cormican



Hardly halfway through her teens and she was already a three-season inter-county campaigner.

Waterford held their All-Ireland final media event upstairs at the SETU Arena in Carriganore last Friday evening. Rockett was the first player we approached. The same as she does on the field,

she set a high bar for those coming after her.

The PE teacher and veteran of 15 campaigns was in flying form. Brilliant company and carrying a bag full of one-liners.

Given she is longest in the dressing room and therefore can offer perspective from a far away time when the county struggled to emerge from the game's third tier, it made sense to begin our conversation back at the very start.

"I was brought onto the panel a few weeks before the 2009 junior All-Ireland. I was only 14 at the time," Rockett begins.

"I got on the starting team the following year and was 15 playing the 2010 All-Ireland. It was crazy.

"I was so lucky that there were six or seven of my club-mates from St Anne's already on the panel, the likes of Charlotte and Annette Raheer, Karen Kelly, Jennie Simpson,



Pauline Cunningham, and Mairead Murphy. They took me under their wing.

"If I got flattened on the pitch, the girls would be straight over to say, 'leave her alone, she is only 14'. And that was a fairly common occurrence too."

But once they learned she could mind herself, the stabilisers were taken off and her free pass revoked.

Rockett recalls their weekend trip to Wexford's Maldron Hotel in 2009 to walk through what their All-Ireland final weekend would look like in Dublin. The junior final was pencilled in for a 12-noon start, necessitating an overnight stay and an early Sunday morning rise. All of which they would practice in Wexford.

Shona Curran is a selector

in Seán Power's backroom team. Back in 2009, she was a player and lead prankster.

"Shona rang my room the evening before pretending to be the hotel receptionist. She said management have specifically asked that you receive a wake-up call. I was like, 'no, I am okay, I will set my alarm', but she replied that 'your management wants this wake-up call for you, and

Treacy: April defeat to Waterford left us with nowhere to hide

Eoghan Cormican

Half-time in April's Cork-Waterford double-header down at the Páirc.

The Waterford women have taken their Munster quarter-final celebrations off the field and down the South Stand tunnel. It's been so long since a Waterford team beat Cork in a senior camogie championship fixture that nobody in either camp has the slightest idea when last such a result materialised.

The Waterford hurlers are limbering up and loosening out in front of the Blackrock End ahead of their second Munster round-robin fixture. Their manager, Davy Fitzgerald, has briefly broken away from his players and is standing out around halfway with Cork centre-back Laura Treacy.

Old friends passing on the road have stopped for a quick natter.

Before Davy took up his latest posting with the Déise men, he was coach to the Cork women.

"Davy did so much for us last year, you'd consider him a



Kilkenny's Denise Gaule shows the radio she won for being player of the match to Cork's Laura Treacy after the All-Ireland Camogie quarter-final.
Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

pal at this point. It was good to see him as it had been a few months. We just had a general chit-chat about our season to date," Treacy begins.

"We didn't get the result or the performance that we wanted against Galway in the league final. We chatted a little bit about that and how hard it was to turn around again two weeks later and face Waterford."

Having just tasted another setback at the hands of the Déise, Treacy said to her old coach that there was nowhere

left to hide for this group. If their graph didn't start climbing and results didn't start turning, theirs would be a short summer.

"I remember saying to him that day, 'this is it now, shit or bust'. From there on, we were leading into the championship. We knew we were facing Galway in the first round and that things would have to pick up."

"I said to Davy that this Waterford defeat will have to stand to us and show us where we really have to improve. It

was either pull up the socks or we are not getting out of our championship group."

From serene sailing to the roughest of waters.

Cork had flown out of the blocks at the beginning of the league. Four consecutive wins. Kilkenny beaten by 10 points at UPMC Nowlan Park. Their average winning margin was a point better again.

But defeat at home to Galway in the final round began a sliding trajectory. Cork were already qualified for the decider, so the result was no major setback.

What it did do was allow the Tribeswomen sneak in the backdoor and join them at the table for the league final.

There, Galway bettered them for the second time in a fortnight.

When Waterford inflicted further misery in Cork's own backyard, Treacy was understandably concerned.

"I am my own worst enemy and I am critical of myself. We try to better ourselves all of the time and when things aren't working out, of course you are going to start doubting yourself. Among the ques-

tions that start popping into your head is 'am I doing enough'.

"But we had a really good chat after the Waterford game (manager Matthew Twomey said the dressing-room post-mortem ran for 40 minutes). That was the eye-opening point where you know, here we are now, we have to hold each other accountable, and we either go after this or we are not going to see ourselves being successful this year."

And although they suffered a fourth straight defeat when falling again to Galway in their championship opener at the beginning of June, Treacy sensed their wheel had turned in the interim five weeks.

Katrina Mackey had returned from a lengthy injury, Ashling Thompson was nearing the end of her cruciate recovery. Plus, it wasn't as if Galway had hurled them off the park that afternoon in Athlery. Cork had dominated, but just lacked a clinical edge with their final product.

"The jigsaw pieces started to come together once the championship started. We put up a huge performance

against Galway. Just couldn't get the result. But took an awful lot of positives from the game.

"Getting over Kilkenny in the quarter-final at Croke Park was massive, as was ending our eight-game losing streak to Galway in the semi-final."

Which brings us neatly to Sunday. Killeagh native Treacy, now 28, joined the panel as a 16-year-old in 2012. By the age of 23, she had pocketed four All-Ireland medals. None since, though.

If Cork are to bridge a five-year gap on Sunday, her contribution at the heart of the defence will be crucial.

The holding number six had seven second-half possessions against Galway. All but one of her clearances found a team-mate. The two-time All-Star doesn't do waste.

"When I came onto this panel, it felt like it was a right to be in an All-Ireland final. But it has been so long since we last won one. And I feel like I am training harder now than I was back then, and I had four All-Irelands back then. I really want that feeling back."



TOP FORM: Waterford's Niamh Rockett rises the ball during the All-Ireland SCC semi-final and (inset) celebrating victory over Tipp with Vikki Faulkner, left, and Orla Hickey right.
Pictures: Tom Maher, Ben Brady

nosis was delivered. "At one stage, I thought even playing itself would become a distant memory. Having overcome so many obstacles to get back playing, that intermediate win in 2015 was amazing."

That win offers further perspective when you consider the road travelled by the two finalists since. Eight years on, Waterford are involved in the senior decider. Kildare, meanwhile, were unable to field in this year's championship. From each Waterford player having to bring €2 to training sessions to pay for floodlights to every club in the county swinging open their gates to them.

The 2020 All-Star went down to her local shop the day before we chatted. She was stopped by four people, all of whom simply wanted to inform her that they were following the team to Croke. From indifference to insatiable excitement.

"I think we will have to go underground the week of the game," laughs the provider of 3-6 in this summer's championship. "Or maybe leave the county. We could go back to the Maldron in Wexford! I can't ever remember a build-up or buzz like this before, and I'm around a while."

"If we were to win, the last you'd see of us is going over the bridge in Waterford on Sunday, and then you'd not see us again until Christmas. It would absolutely blow up. "I couldn't think of any more of a wish I would have than to have that cup coming home with us on Sunday."

Ó Muirceartaigh said 'I came to see the great Kathleen Mills'

THE most extraordinary single collection of medals held in the GAA Museum in Croke Park is something to behold. The core of the collection consists of 15 All-Ireland senior championships, 20 Leinster senior championships, four inter-provincial championships, and six Dublin senior championships. The medals were won by the incomparable Kathleen Mills — known to her friends as Kay. The medals were won between the 1940 and the 1960s, and her life as a pioneering sportswoman is evocative of life in a different era — mid-20th century Dublin.

Kathleen was born in Inchicore 100 years ago — on October 8, 1923. She was just 18 months old when her mother died and she (along with her three older siblings) was then raised by her maternal grandmother, Charlotte Wills in Inchicore.

A plaque on the house where the family lived reads: "Lithe and graceful, a superb midfielder player with neat wrist work, quick to lift and strike at full speed. She could score from any angle."

Kathleen went to school at Goldenbridge Convent, before going to work in the nearby Lamb's jam factory at the age of 14. By then she was already developing a prodigious sporting talent. Her father Thomas was the defining sporting influence in her early life. Thomas — originally from Glanmire in Cork — worked with the Great Southern Railways (this company was later absorbed into Córas Iompair Éireann on its foundation in 1945).

Thomas was active in the Great Southern Railways' sports club, where workers and their families had access to excellent sporting facilities. It was here that Kathleen Mills excelled as an athlete and a gymnast, and learned to play games like table tennis.

But it was camogie that was her first and truest love. She first played the game when she was five years old and by the age of 14 she was a stalwart of the Great South Railway (later CIÉ) senior team.

The club first fielded a camogie team in 1931, wearing a wine tunic, green blouse, and a white sash.

By the age of 18 she was playing at midfield for the Dublin senior camogie team; she held that position for almost every moment of the next 20 years.

Her initial foray into competitive camogie actually

ended in defeat in the 1941 All-Ireland senior final when Dublin were defeated by Cork.

It appeared a similar result was on the way in 1942, but Dublin forced a draw against Cork in the All-Ireland final and duly won the replay.

Kathleen played brilliantly in these matches, scoring a superb goal and generally excelling in the general play where her skills were marked as being the finest on view. Dublin won again in 1942 and 1943, with Kathleen now having grown into a star on the team. It was a team with many excellent players — notably Idé O'Kiely, Úna O'Connor and Annette Corrigan — but Mills was the one who lasted the longest and won the most.

And as Micheál Ó Muirceartaigh was later to say of

“After Dublin won the 1961 All-Ireland she was carried shoulder high from the field”

his trips to All-Ireland camogie finals during those years: "I saw the great Kathleen Mills. I came to see her rather than to see a camogie game first because her name was all over the country."

By the end of the 1940s, she had won four All-Ireland medals and then in the 1950s, Dublin took over the All-Ireland championship.

The greatest camogie team in the history of the game won six All-Irelands in a row between 1950 and 1956. Their run of success was broken by Antrim in 1957, but Dublin then came back and won 10 All-Irelands in a row.

Mills played in all of the six in a row and in the first five of the 10 in a row. The highlight of this sequence was her captaincy of the team in 1958. It is noteworthy that more people saw her lift the cup than would ordinarily be present at All-Ireland senior camogie finals of the era.

At that

point, crowds only rarely passed 5,000 at the finals, played in Croke Park.

But in 1958, when Kathleen Mills led Dublin to defeat Tipperary, the game was played before the All-Ireland hurling semi-final when Tipperary beat Kilkenny by five points.

Some 53,000 spectators paid in on that day to see 19-year-old Jimmy Doyle run amok, scoring 1-8 of his team's winning total of 1-13. And they also saw Kathleen Mills take home the O'Duffy Cup.

After winning the All-Ireland in 1961 she was carried shoulder high from the field by her team-mates after they had defeated Galway by 7-2 to 4-1 and she duly retired.

What happens to a sports star when they retire? For Kathleen, the answer lay in her marriage, in 1947. They had no children but worked together for the rest of their lives. As Mary Moran explained in her fine biography in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*: "They ran the Red Seal Handbag Company, which was located close to Phibsboro church on the North Circular Road, and later on Hill Street. George cut out the bags while Kathleen put on the frames and sewed the bags. With Kathleen's drive and entrepreneurship, the business grew. They were kind and caring employers."

"This was just a first career together, however. Several years later, they took over and ran the Seventh Lock public house on the Grand Canal in Ballyfermot."

She died in August 1996 and is commemorated by the All-Ireland junior championship cup named in her honour.

George lived into his 90s and only passed away in 2014. In the almost two decades after Kathleen's death, he honoured her memory in many ways. The captain of the All-Ireland senior champions now also receives a replica of the O'Duffy Cup (awarded to the senior champions), from a bequest made by George.

He also supported the idea that her name should be put on the new bridge across the River Liffey between Marlborough Street and Hawkins Street. Kathleen's name made the final shortlist of five, alongside *Dracula* author Bram Stoker, the founder of the Legion of Mary Frank Duff, the labour activist Rosie Hackett and Willie Birmingham, the founder of ALONE.

Ultimately, the bridge was named after Rosie Hackett. ■ The author is Professor of history at UCD.



Paul Rouse

it looks really bad'. "She rang me at 6.30am the next morning, even though we didn't have to be down for breakfast until 8am. I went down, but sure there was no one there. "They welcomed me in, even if they made me the laughing stock on occasion." From there to here has been quite the spin. The Déise spent only four years at intermedi-

ate level before buying a ticket to the big show. For Rockett, it felt much longer. It was during their intermediate stay that she was told she had arthritis in her knee, how there wasn't an ounce of cartilage left, and that if she stayed playing, she could be in a wheelchair by 30. Both she and her dad, Eddie, cried tears that afternoon in Santry when the diag-

Stakelum hoping to add to her family's legacy

Paul Keane
Somewhere in a pocket of Croke Park seats on Sunday, you might see a group of family members with enough All-Ireland medals to make your head spin. Claire Stakelum will be playing for the Tipperary juniors in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland camogie final (throw-in 12.50pm) and she comes with quite the entourage. The joint-captain's surname by itself tells you plenty. Pat Stakelum, her grandfather's brother, is a three-time All-Ireland winner and his nephew, Richie, famously declared that 'the famine is over' after skipping Tipp to a first Munster hurling title in 16 years in 1987. Richie's brother, Conor, won his All-Ireland in 1991, on the same panel as his cousins, Bobby and Aidan Ryan. In 2016, when Tipp won the All-Ireland again, Conor was part of Michael Ryan's backroom team. Conor J has played for the

Tipp seniors as well, and netted in the 2018 All-Ireland U21 final. Turns out Claire has several more boughs to add to her extensive family tree. Padraic Maher and Ronan Maher are her cousins too. The real clinker though is the last cousin she rhymes off, Limerick's Declan Hannon. How exactly did that one come about? "His Mam and my Dad are brother and sister, so Declan's a first cousin," she explained. All of which means that, in any given year, Claire can be fairly certain that there will be an All-Ireland celebration of some sort to look forward to. In the last eight All-Ireland hurling campaigns, the Maher brothers or Hannon have come out on top in seven of them. Hannon won his fifth All-Ireland medal last month though the injury that ruled him out for the semi-final and final wins was a personal frustration. "That news breaking through was hard, it's hard for

anyone but when he's family it hits that bit closer to home," said Claire. "The other 15 lads stepped up of course and did what they did. It was great that he was still able to get the opportunity to go up with Cian Lynch to lift the cup." The family dynamic will change considerably this weekend because Claire will be the one to take centre stage. If Tipp can pull it off, and beat a fancied Clare team, she and joint-captain Ciannait Walsh will be the first to lift an All-Ireland camogie trophy at Croke Park since Joanne Ryan led the seniors to success in 2004. That she has got this far is no surprise really. "I wasn't given an option really," she said of her embrace of the family past-time. "Born and bred! There was never a phase where I never wanted to be playing or anything like that. It was always something I wanted to be doing. And I'd have to emphasise that - it's something you want to do."

Beth Carton - a player for the ages



Beth Carton at the launch of the All-Ireland Camogie Championship in 2019. Hopfully she'll get her hands on the O'Duffy Cup for real on Sunday evening next. Photos: Inpho

As a player, O'Rourke reckons Carton is as good as there is. "Beth is different. What Beth chooses to do today, no other girl would do. But then tomorrow, that makes her do stuff that no other girl can do. She maximises and tries to improve her game the whole time. She was an incredible player to be around," he explains.

"I personally think that I had the privilege of coaching two of the best camogie players that have played the game in the last ten years: Niamh Kilkenny in Galway and Beth Carton in Waterford. I was privileged to have coached incredible camogie players, but they were a different class."

Whatever the outcome is next Sunday, Beth Carton will likely add to her All-Star collection and could potentially win more with a Player of the Year award. But win, lose or draw. She is after a remarkable season (again).



Beth picking up the Player of the Match award after the 2015 Division 2 League Final.

BY DARRAGH O'FLYNN

Beth Carton is having a remarkable season as Waterford play in their first all-Ireland final since 1945.

The three times all-star is in prolific form. If you include the provincial championship, the De La Salle sharpshooter scored 4-58 this season, putting her on the list.

Carton's achievement blows away teammate Niamh Rockett. "It's unbelievable. A lot of players on different teams are just free-takers. Beth is an all-rounder. She is a tackler. In the Offaly game, she overturned someone, bounced the ball into her hand and then over the bar. She is a great tackler. Every day she goes training, she gives a hundred per cent."

The 2020 All-Star had a perfect view of Carton's second-half strike that flew into the top corner against the Faithful County. "It was a bril-

liant goal. What Beth does best. I could see her eyes light up. I said, 'We're a couple of points up now. She'll go for the show maker! I wasn't as confident. I went low! She was brilliant again today. She does it every day. Delighted to be playing with her.'

Her boss Seán Power was also full of praise for their star player.

"Beth is a wonderful player, a joy to watch. It's an honour to be involved with her as well," Power said.

Like everyone else in Carriganore, Power was amazed by Beth Carton's second goal against Antrim when she spotted Antrim goalkeeper Caitríona Graham off her line and judged her lob to absolute perfection.

"Look, when you're in the presence of greatness, you're in the presence of greatness! Cheeky, maybe one would say! To have the skill to execute that in a senior All-Ireland

championship, you have to be pretty special now, and she is that. We're so lucky to have someone like Beth Carton in Waterford. Other counties would kill for her. She's ours, and we're so lucky to have her. You have to take your hat off to her. She's brilliant."

Power acknowledges that Carton and her fellow teammates are role models for the county but wants to build a legacy in the county.

"This group of players; they are an incredible bunch of role models. The children of Waterford look up to them, and I couldn't be prouder of them," said Power.

"We've been going around the camps in the county the last couple of weeks, and we've been going to the nurseries in the different clubs. The young girls love seeing these players."

"And we are happy to do it because legacy is a big part of what we are about. We want to

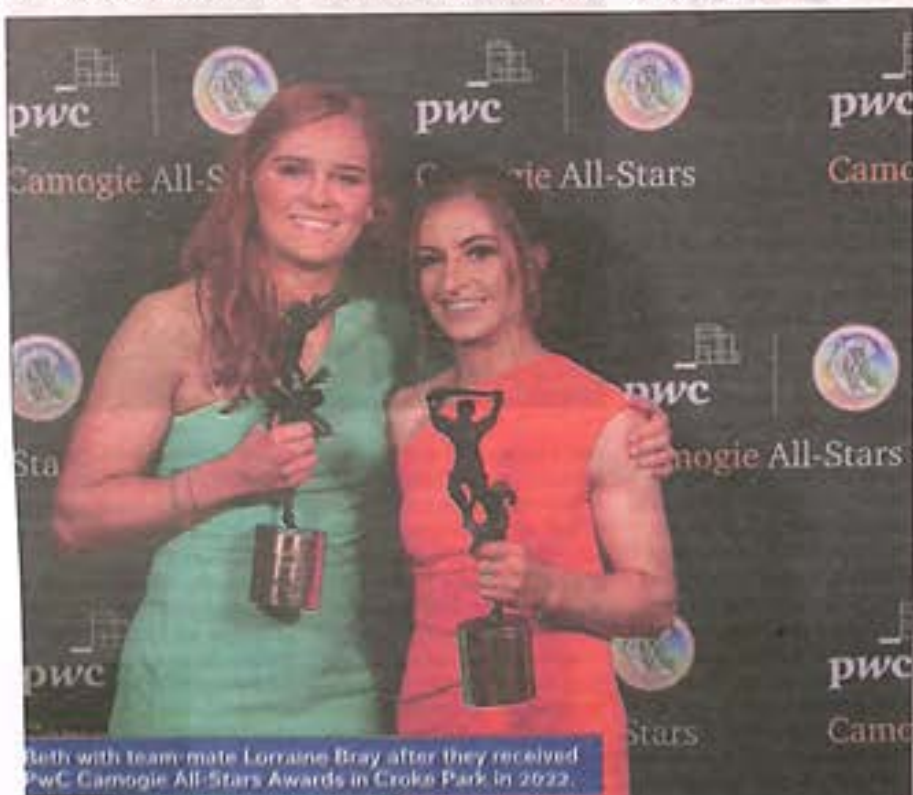
leave it in a better place. The sport itself is on a boom. It's so important we get this right, nationally and in Waterford. We are doing some good stuff on the Waterford front."

Cappoquin man Donal O'Rourke who was manager of the Waterford team that ended lengthy absence from the elite level by making the quarter-finals in 2018 and also 2019, when they led subsequent champions Galway by five points in the second half before wilting late on, is not surprised by the progress made in Waterford.

Niamh Rockett, Beth Carton, and Lorraine Bray were important figures four years ago, but the team totems are nationally renowned now, all winning All-Stars in recent years. "They were quiet and raw when I took them on first, but they got more confident, and their leadership skills started coming as they got more confident."



Beth picking up the Player of the Match award after the All-Ireland semi-final win over Tipperary in Nowlan Park.



Beth with team-mate Lorraine Bray after they received PwC Camogie All-Stars Awards in Croke Park in 2022.



Beth taking on the Cork defence during last year's All-Ireland senior championship semi-final in Croke Park.

Honouring Maura Healy (née Curran) and the Déisewomen of 1945

BY DERMOT KEYES

The streets of Carrick-on-Suir have been abuzz ahead of Sunday's All-Ireland Camogie Final thanks to one special resident who has represented both counties divided by its famed waterway.

Maura Curran of the St Mary's club was the second Waterford player listed in the Dungarvan Observer's match report from the 1945 All-Ire-

land Camogie Final played in Cappoquin on September 30 that year.

In 1951, Maura Curran married Billy Healy of Chapel Street, Carrick-on-Suir, which explains why her latter inter-county years were spent in her adopted county colours.

But since Waterford got the better of Tipperary at Nowlan Park on July 22, all the talk in Carrick has been of Maura's All-Ireland Final appearance

almost eight decades ago with her native county.

5,000 ATTENDANCE

Having turned 97 last April, Maura Healy is the last surviving member of a Déise side which wore green and gold that famous day in Cappoquin, going down to the Glenswomen by 5-2 to 2-2. The sides were level at 2-2 apiece at half-time, with the visitors netting three of the game's remaining four goals after the interval.

"Before a gate estimated at 5,000 (gate receipts £289), Waterford, Munster champions, failed to hold the Ulster champions, Antrim in the closing stages of a fast and scientific display," according to the Observer report.

In what's by some distance the most comprehensive report printed in either east or west on October 5, 1945, the Observer noted that "the weather was ideal, the field was in apple-pie order, and the stewarding, despite the crowd, was all that could be desired..."

"The team(s) were played around the pitch by the Duffy Ladies' Pipe Band and received a rousing reception. Wm Kenneally, Lord (sic) Mayor of Waterford, wearing his chain of office, threw in the ball at the start of the game, which was capably refereed by Mr Frank Gleeson, Chairman, Munster Camogie Council. Before the start of the game the National Anthem was sung by the assembled thousands."

Sat in Carrickbeg in the home of her daughter Mags Power, Maura recalled a few snapshots from an occasion that's taken Waterford Camogie 78 years to emulate.

"There were a few McGraths playing then," said Maura, with a fellow clubmate - B McGrath - named in the Observer report "and Nonie Healy, she was a St Mary's player."

GLENBEG NATIVE

Maura, a native of Glenbeg, Dungarvan, was sister to Willie, Tommy, Bridie, Eileen and Kay, was, in all likelihood, introduced to camogie by her Auntie Eily.

"Auntie Eily played (with St Mary's) as well," said Maura. "And we were on the same team." Most of Waterford's camogie matches in that era were played in Cappoquin and Maura and most her team mates travelled to their fixtures "on bikes - bad bikes," she said with a wide smile.

When asked by Mags what equipment Maura had in

those years playing, she replied: "as little as was possible! And we had only runners. No boots."

Maura played on beyond 1945 and 'transferred' into Tipperary colours by virtue of her coming to live in 'Carrickmór' following her marriage to Billy.

"The interest in the past week or so has been lovely," said Mags. "Growing up, we knew Mam had played for both Waterford and Tipperary but there wouldn't have been big conversations about it. I remember when I was young, we'd always have ruffing races and she'd never let us win. She always won!"

The Irish Press, which pioneered sports coverage in national print journalism, offered a most precise synopsis of the '45 Final. Headlined 'Antrim Cailini Supreme', its October 1 report read: "A record crowd saw Antrim defeat Waterford in the All-Ireland Camogaidheacht final at Cappoquin yesterday. The game provided brilliant exchanges all through and Antrim had to fight hard for victory in the second half when the marvellous goal-keeping of K Flynn for Waterford was the highlight. The scores were level (2-2) at half-time but Antrim combined more cleverly in the closing stages of the game to win a well-deserved victory."

One suspects the Press may have benefited from the accounts carried by both the Waterford News & Star and Munster Express, which appeared in the edition dated October 5, given its not-too-dissimilar take on

proceedings.

"Remarkable speed and stamina were displayed by both teams, but Antrim showed better combination... Antrim showed up to better advantage in the second half and kept the Waterford defenders under great pressure, in the course of which K Flynn, in the Waterford goal, made several brilliant saves. The Northern girls continued to hold mastery, and were deserving winners. Neither Leinster nor part of Cork played in this competition."

Meanwhile, The Munster Express stated: "Antrim showed up to better advantage in the second half and kept the Waterford defenders under great pressure, in the course of which several fine saves were effected by K Flynn, the Waterford goalie; but the Northern colleens continued to gold the mastery and were deserving winners of a brilliant game on the final score of 5-2 to 3-2."

'GRAND DISPLAY'

A companion piece to the main Observer report said the travelling Antrim party "were charmed beyond expectation at the rousing reception they received from the residents, even at that late hour, and at once felt at home amongst their brother and sister Gaels of the Southern province. All Waterford was at the peak of excitement on the eve of the great event, and when the day dawned, people were already afoot to the All-Ireland camogie final. Were they disappointed? Rather their highest expectations were more than realised in the grand display



Maura Healy (née Curran), the sole surviving member of Waterford's 1945 All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final defeat to Antrim in Cappoquin, pictured in Carrickbeg on Friday, July 28. Maura celebrated her 97th birthday last April.

given by these two teams."

The Waterford team for the 1945 All-Ireland Final, as noted by the Dungarvan Observer, was as follows: C Flynn; M Curran, M O'Meara, N Breen, P Neville, K Sullivan, B McGrath (Captain), S McNamara, T Hynes, A Spencer, N Healy and M Kennedy. (Note: Camogie was 12-a-side at the time; with 15-a-side introduced in 1999).

Maura Healy was part of that great Waterford sporting occasion, held just a few pucks away from Cappoquin's famed Cornerstone. She'd readily agree that a fresh chapter in the history of Déise Camogie would make for welcome reading come full-time at Croke Park this Sunday evening.

With thanks to Mags Power and her family.



Maura is pictured with her great-grandson Bobby after he won an Under-12 county hurling medal with St Molleran's following victory over Roanmore last October.



Maura, third from the left of this photo from All-Ireland Final day - September 30, 1945 - standing alongside a cleric. Waterford wore green and gold that day while Antrim wore saffron and blue.

'Waterford camogie is back where it belongs'

GLEN DIMPLEX ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOGIE CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL: WATERFORD V CORK: THE CORK VIEW: THERESE O'CALLAGHAN



Therese in action against Galway in the 1996 All-Ireland senior camogie final.

BY THERESE O'CALLAGHAN

If the Camogie Association could bottle the emotional energy and electric atmosphere emanated in Waterford's Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior championship semi-final victory over Tipperary, it would be easy to promote the beautiful game.

It all began when they sprinted onto the immaculate surface of UPMC Nowlan Park, and their vocal support-

ers raised the roof. I don't think I have ever heard such a rapturous reception for a camogie team.

The outpouring of support made us all stand up and take notice.

This was the first sign something magical could be about to happen. With a little help from the stands, could it possibly help them past a side that beat them by 13 points in the Munster championship in May?

Now, the 16th woman will not do the work on the field. That is down to the players. And for a while, it looked like it might be a similar result to two months ago.

It didn't take long for the chanting 'Waterford, Waterford' to spur their county on. They drove them to something special. Those final few minutes were absolutely nerve-wrecking.

Liz Dempsey's full-time whistle spine-tingling.

'SUCCESS DOESN'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT'

As a result, this bunch of players are preparing for the White and Blue's first final since 1945. The history books tell us that showdown against Antrim was decided in Cappoquin, 5-2 to 3-2. We wonder if it is mere coincidence that the current captain fantastic comes from this neck of the woods. More about Lorraine later.

These days, the finals are always played in Croke Park. It adds to the thrill. So too, the fact they will face-off against near-neighbours Cork.

I was fortunate to be involved with Cork when we won three All-Ireland senior titles (Therese also played in five other finals). Akin to Waterford, success didn't happen overnight. We were fairly even-balanced. But, there is always one standout player. Sandie Fitzgibbon was ours. A legend in both camogie and basketball. I was lucky to play around the middle third where Sandie would always have your back.

Lorraine Bray reminds me of Sandie. Waterford's outstanding skipper is one of the best midfielders in this country. She already lifted Division 1B silverware in FBD Semple Stadium in April when they emerged big winners over Wexford. She said then 'Waterford camogie is back where it belongs.'

Lorraine has an incredible engine. She is a super player, and demonstrated this especially in the semi-final with her absolute relentless work-ethic. She is correct in saying, the Déise are back



Therese O'Callaghan played in eight All-Ireland senior finals with Cork.

where they belong.

'GOOSEBUMPS'

On Sunday, I will attend GAA headquarters as a reporter where I will see it from a different perspective. But, it doesn't alter my appreciation of the day. I still get goosebumps walking down Jones Road. Understanding those match-day nerves is part and parcel of the occasion. It is natural to be nervous. Seán Power has been through all this before with minor and U-21 squads. He and his back-room team will leave no stone unturned. His record speaks for itself. He is no stranger either to bridging gaps!

Managing the 'big day' challenge is key. You certainly don't want the mind to be distracted. If the semi-final is anything to go by, the hype will be huge. It is important to embrace it, but equally as important to shut it out as Sunday approaches. Once the media events are complete, the sole focus must be on the game.

Cork have been here before. And based on that, they will be pre-match favourites. They are familiar with the All-Ireland day routine. The team bus arriving into the tunnel of Croke Park, entering the dressing-room and getting ready. I used love when we got to that stage, when it was just my teammates and me.

Cork are battle-hardened in every line of the field. And for the first time in a long time, they have a very healthy bench which got them over the line against their bogey team Galway. It remains to be seen if Matthew Twomey will start

any of those players - the likes of Ashling Thompson, Laura Hayes, Orlaith Cahalane, Cianna Healy and Orla Cronin.

Because this article has a Waterford slant, I won't dwell too much on the Rebels. But as a Cork woman, I will always want them to do well.

'BREAKING NEW GROUND'

Having seen Waterford up close in the league final and in the Munster championship, I know they will be hungry, and know what to expect. Emerging on the right side of a pulsating encounter in the Marble City will give them great encouragement.

What can one say about Beth Carton that hasn't been said before. Donal O'Rourke paid her the ultimate tribute saying he had the privilege of coaching two of the best players in Beth and Galway's Niamh Kilkenny.

Again, referring back to the Tipp triumph. In the absence of injured full-back Iona Heffernan, Vikki Falconer was sensational in defence. What of Mairéad Power - wearing number seven - and her first-half goal that kick-started the Waterford revival. Goalkeeper Brianna O'Regan's superb point.

I could go on. But, I'll finish where I began. What Waterford has done for camogie makes us all proud. They are knocking on this championship door for a few years.

From Premier Junior honours in 2011 to Intermediate success in 2015.

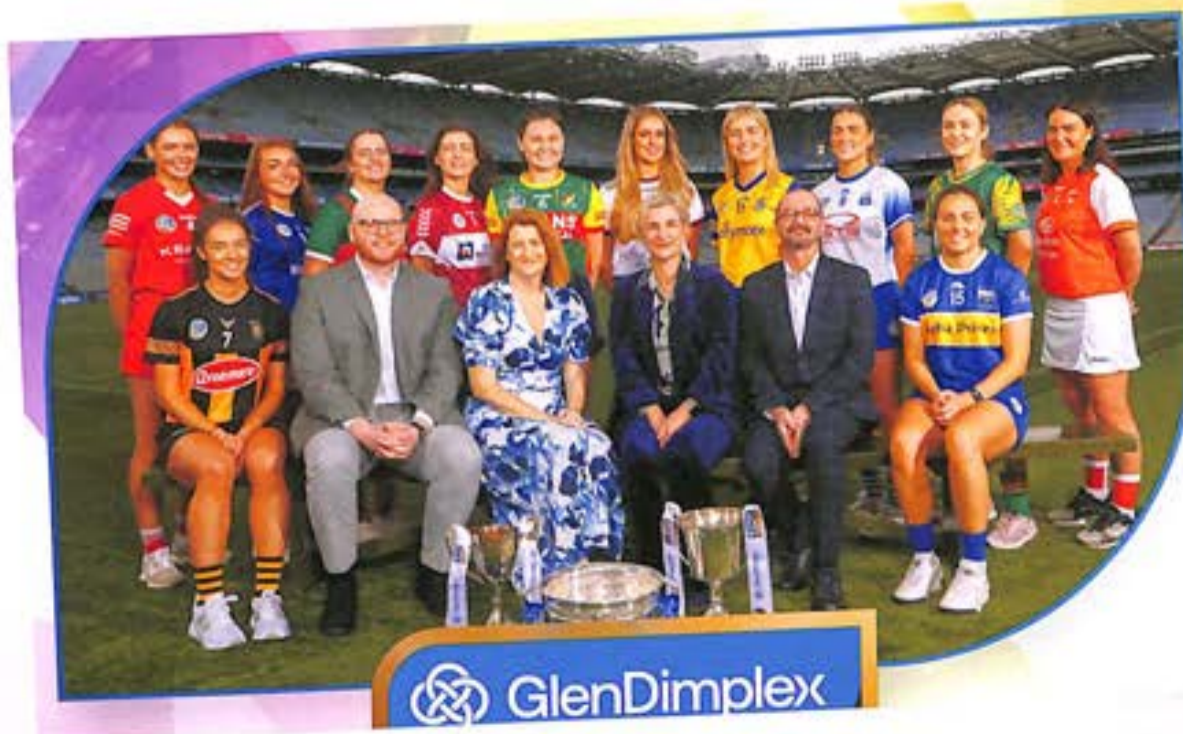
They are still breaking new ground.



There was blown away by the atmosphere that the Waterford fans brought to Nowlan Park the last day.



Waterford's Róisín Kirwan and Meabh Cahalane of Cork in action during last year's semi-final in Croke Park.



GlenDimplex

Redemption day for Cork

CAMOGIE

Barry O'Mahony

THE dictionary definition for the word redemption is 'an act of redeeming or atoning for a fault or mistake, or the state of being redeemed'.

September 12, 2021, and Paudie Murray is attempting to console his players following Cork's 1-15 to 1-12 All-Ireland Senior Camogie final loss to Galway.

August 7, 2022, and it is Matthew Twomey's turn to walk around the Croke Park pitch offering solace to each member of his panel. A brutal 1-13 to 1-12 All-Ireland loss to Kilkenny is difficult to take.

Music blaring, the black and gold streamers landing on GAA HQ's surface are in stark contrast to the tears rolling down the Cork's players faces.

For the Rebels, it's more heartbreak and all the emotions that come with losing on camogie's most important occasion for the second time in a row.

More recently, there have been constant dual-player headlines, GPA issues in search of equality, and a treatment room full of long-term injuries to contend with.

So it is fair to say that Cork have been through difficult spells over the past two and a half years.

Dealing with those issues, after coming up short in consecutive finals, would have broken the resolve of most teams.

Add to that, losing this year's National League final and twice more in the championship to Galway.

Then, a 2023 Munster championship exit at the hands of Waterford.

Obituaries were being written inside and outside the county bounds. House private, no flowers, thank you very much.

Yet, this Cork team and management doesn't do negativity or spend time wallowing in what might have been.

Instead, they have tapped into the late Irish international and Munster rugby stalwart Anthony Foley's assertion: "When you lose, remember the feeling and store it in the hurt locker for another day."

That hurt locker moment will arrive at Croke Park on Sunday afternoon. Standing in the way of Cork's redemption are camogie's 'new kids on the block'.

It is 1945 since Waterford last won an All-Ireland camogie senior title. Yet in 2023, the Déise are a welcome addition to the top table of Kilkenny, Galway, Cork,



Amy O'Connor captain of Cork senior camogie team with youngsters at the open evening prior to playing Waterford in the All-Ireland final at Croke Park. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

and Tipperary. Victory over the latter in the semi-final, or rather the manner of Waterford's win, proved two things.

One, they will not be travelling to Dublin to make up the numbers.

Two, irrespective of the result, Waterford are primed to be All-Ireland contenders for the next couple of years.

Down 1-7 to 0-3 in the early stages of their semi-final encounter with Tipp, Waterford demonstrated admirable resolve to change ends just a point behind.

Maintaining a steely determination, the Déise won 1-12 to 1-11 following a gripping finale.

A well-supported Waterford will have no qualms about taking on a Cork side they beat in this year's provincial championship.

Waterford's hard work at U16 and minor level over the past number of years is bearing fruit and the Rebels know they are in for the mother and father of battles.

The good news for Cork supporters is that Twomey and his panel understand what is required amid such a pressure-filled environment on All-Ireland final day.

Those experiences of losing to Kilkenny and Galway, heart-breaking as they were, should act as fuel to burn the fire that brings the O'Duffy Cup back to Leeside.

The recent Cork camogie media and supporters night was a well-organised event attended by hundreds of supporters, young and old.

That pleasant evening at Castle Road was a welcome reminder to the Cork players of how much they are admired and respected by a growing supporter base.

What struck this reporter the most, amid a lot of excitement and autograph hunting, was the calmness and resolve of the players.

The county's senior set-up doesn't need to be reminded of their past losses. They carry those memories with them every day.

Now it is time to banish the memories of 2022 and 2021. No better place to do that than the scene of those most recent heart-breaks.

On Sunday, it is time for Cork's redemption.

After five wins Mackey still hungry for more

CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

WHEN Katrina Mackey arrived on to Cork's senior panel in 2009, she won an All-Ireland medal. She expected that trend to continue, more or less.

This was Cork; surely she'd have at least nine medals by now, in her 15th season.

But barren spells between 2010 and 2013 and since 2018 means she has just five.

Five! A haul many players would give their right arm for. Not Katrina. This is Cork!

"When you come on and you win you don't think you're going to be without a title for four to five years," Mackey said.

"You think, this is Cork, you're going to be in an All-Ireland every year. It doesn't play out like that."

"Players retire, new players come in, management changes."

A knock to her ribs in Cork's opening league game led to a puncture at the top of her lung and kept Cork's ace forward out for two months.

Cork struggled without her. They lost the league final and their Munster Championship game to Waterford.

Mackey returned for their opening championship game against Galway and while Cork lost by a goal, Mackey had a stormer.

After such a tricky start to the season, it has turned around remarkably for Cork.

"The league final was disappointing. We performed in the first half but left it behind us in the last 20 minutes."

"We trained well coming up to the Waterford game and just didn't perform on the day. I don't know was there a bit of complacency."

"But you kind of have to put that aside when championship comes around. All we could do was take learnings from it and see could we improve game by game."

And they have; 35% conversion rate against Galway in Athenry, 60% in the quarter-final against Kilkenny, and 83% in the semi-final against Galway.

"I think we're peaking at the right time; you don't want to be peaking mid March. Obviously, it

wasn't good enough (conversion). It was poor and that was a major thing that we needed to rectify."

So familiar with playing either Kilkenny or Galway in finals, seven finals reached in the past 10 years were against one or the other, Waterford pose something different.

"To be honest, I don't care who we're playing. You have to beat everything that's put in front of you to win."

"The Kilkenny game; it was a perfect day weather-wise for hurling, a great game. But you look at the Galway game, it was shocking weather conditions, and it was a case of grinding it out."

"Waterford will bring a new challenge. We just have to be prepared, but we're concentrating on ourselves."

"We're looking for a performance. Get a performance out of yourself, get a performance out of the team. You job is on the pitch; we need to dictate the style of play and take it from there."

Cork's experience in Croke Park must count for something.

"The last few years were bitterly disappointing. I think in 2021 Galway were the better team on the day."

"Last year it could have gone either way. We won 2017 and 2018 by a point and Kilkenny just got it last year."

"Players have more experience this year, we have those defeats and that will stand to us."

"Training is very enjoyable, there's a good variation, a good bond, a good bit of slugging. It's a happy camp."

"There's not just good competition within the starting 15, it's within the 20."

Katrina gave up her pre-match rituals.

"I kind of got rid of my routines," she laughs. "They were kind of superstitions, and they don't do you any good really. You can be obsessed with them and that kind of plays in your head."

Novel final that Cork should win

CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

SUNDAY

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior camogie final: Cork v Waterford, Croke Park, 5pm.

IT'S a senior camogie final with a difference.

In the seven finals that Cork have participated in over the last decade, all were against either Kilkenny or Galway.

It's great for the game of camogie that Waterford are there and every neutral supporter in the country will be wishing them well.

I can't see them taking Cork, though. Cork have too much to lose, Waterford nothing, except that when you're there you want to win it.

It's hardest of all to lose on All-Ireland final day and this Cork group has experienced that twice in the past two years. It's three in a row of appearances, having gone the difficult route in 2023.

They won't leave it behind. Of course, they have to be cautious, but on the flip side I think this game will be far more open than recent deciders between the traditional finalists.

Waterford could batten down the hatches of course, play eight at the back, and try and break to Beth Carton, but I don't see that working for them over the hour.

With free players back, Cork will bottle Carton up. I think Cork will go into this game more relaxed than recent finals but not complacent.

We can't take away from Waterford's Munster Championship win over Cork. They deserved it; Cork were extremely disappointing on the day.

A week later however Tipperary smacked them 4-12 to 1-8. We could see something similar on Sunday if Cork click.

We know that Waterford turned that Munster defeat on its head in their All-Ire-



Meabh Cahalane with youngsters at the open evening to meet Cork senior camogie players prior to playing Waterford in the All-Ireland final at Croke Park. Picture; Eddie O'Hare

land semi-final clash, but Tipp were poor, particularly up front. They relied completely on Cait Devane.

I see huge gaps to be exploited in Waterford's defence. I see a lack of speed in a couple of players. If Iona Heffernan is still out, having missed the semi-final, she will be a significant loss.

Waterford and Heffernan were keeping their cards very close to their chest in the build-up.

Waterford had just Devane to seriously consider against Tipperary. Vikki Faulkner did brilliantly on her, and she will give Katrina Mackey or Amy O'Connor a sticky afternoon.

But Faulkner can't be everywhere, and Cork will have just too much firepower. Who will stop the juggernaut of Saoirse McCarthy, Fiona Keating, and Hannah Looney coming forward?

How will Waterford deal with the subs Cork have in Cliona Healy, Ashling Thompson, Orla Cronin, and Orlaith Cahalane, assuming they won't start?

I expect Laura Hayes to start. Cork will have just too much coming forward from midfield and up front, particularly when they bring on the bench.

Waterford won just four from 10 of their opening half puckouts in the semi-final. Cork will have a field day if that doesn't improve.

Carton is Waterford's superstar, has been for many years despite being only 25. She is a joy to watch. Lining out at

centre-forward for the semi-final, she was back in defence so many times, as far in as her full-back line, as Waterford struggled to get the ball forward.

From a Waterford perspective that's not good and Cork will take that all day long.

Carton will have to stay up front if they have any chance of winning. But where will the required supply of ball to her come from, outside of Lorraine Bray who is a brilliant midfielder?

Waterford will need a big performance from Orla Hickey and from Niamh Rockett, and Abby Flynn up front.

Someone will be specifically identified to mark Carton, possibly Pam Mackey. Carton will score; great players do.

She could finish the game with four or five points from play, but Cork will have just too much strength in depth, despite what is sure to be a battling opposition.

If Cork get the ball in fast, they'll split Waterford. Get the mix right, break the tackle, play off the shoulder when needed, but get the ball in fast.

There are goals there. I think Cork's forwards are running far better in anticipation of the delivery than they were previously.

They know it's coming, and they have that yard in front. Timing is everything.

Cork have a clean bill of health. Add that to their desire to win this title it's hard to see anything but a Cork victory.

There could be nine or 10 points in it at the finish.

THE ALL-IRELAND FINAL KEY BATTLES

Ger Lawton looks at some of the main battles that could play a key role in deciding Sunday's unique All-Ireland senior camogie final.



1.
BRIANNA O'REGAN
V
AMY LEE



Fitting that our number one battle to look out for is the battle of the number ones. Brianna, an All-Star nominee in 2022, is in the form of her life and even stepped with a monster free when badly needed against Tipp the last day. Amy Lee had a difficult semi-final but the Cork captain is a key Cork player in this panel. We all know that goalkeepers have so many roles these days and this pair are key players.



2.
VIKKI FALCONER
V
KATRINA MACKEY



The Tramore defender is the joint-eldest member of this Waterford panel along with Niamh Rockett. Both were All-Ireland intermediate winners in 2015 but the Mercy Primary School teacher is playing better than ever. Had the daunting assignment of marking Cait Devane in the semi-final but passed in flying colours. Mackey is a six time All-Star legend of the game with five All-Irelands. Bring it on.



3.
BETH CARTON
V
LAURA TREACY



What can one say about the De La Salle and Waterford great that hasn't been said before. She must have an extension on her house for all the Player of the Match accolades she's won in her time. She picked up another one in the semi-final win over Tipperary. She's just brilliant. She's likely to be picked up by Killeigh's Laura Treacy, two-time All Star with four All-Irelands in her 12th season with Cork.



4.
SEAN POWER
V
MATTHEW TWOMEY



After leading Waterford to a narrow defeat to Sunday's opponents in last year's All-Ireland semi-final, there were many raised eyebrows when Derek Lyons was relieved of his duties as Déise boss but two time All-Ireland winning manager with the county's minor and U-21 hurlers, Sean Power has taken to the role like a duck to water. Has a serious backroom team too and knows how to win All-Irelands. Matthew Twomey knows what it's like to lose an All-Ireland final now he wants to win one. Had now Déise hurling boss Davy Fitzgerald in his backroom team last year, now going it alone.

Hunger game

Déise chase history, but Cork on a mission to end final pain

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Waterford are no pushovers

AS SOON as the draws were made for the group stages of the All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship back in March, there was a sense that this season could be different from previous years, especially around the make-up of the final four.

With Cork, Kilkenny and Galway having dominated the last decade, with two of those three teams contesting every one of the last ten finals, the group draws certainly reduced the chances of that sequence of domination continuing.

With Galway and Cork in one group, and Tipperary and Kilkenny in another group, the draw certainly opened up the door for Waterford in group 3, who were pitted alongside Antrim, Offaly and Limerick.

Waterford and Limerick had contested last year's All-Ireland quarter-finals, while Antrim were coming with a young team and Offaly were rebuilding, but all four sides competed in Division 1B of the league during the spring.

Having Cork and Galway in the same group also added an extra layer of spice to the championship, as one of those teams was bound to end up in the quarter-finals.

Yet everything was thrown up in the air when Wexford drew with Kilkenny in their opening Group 2 game in Nowlan Park in early June. Kilkenny were ten points ahead in the 37th minute before Wexford staged a remarkable comeback.

When Tipp and Kilkenny drew in their final game, Tipp progressed to the knockout stages as group winners, which meant Kilkenny faced Cork in an All-Ireland quarter-final.

When Tipp drew the short straw, as one of the three group winners (along with Galway and Waterford) to have to play a quarter-final as opposed to going straight through to a semi-final, Cork's task suddenly got a lot tougher.

A win against Kilkenny meant a semi-final against Galway, a side they had struggled to beat over the previous couple of years.

When Cork finally overcame Galway two weeks ago in Nowlan Park, the sense of jubilation and relief was obvious.



CAMOGIE

Christy O'Connor

After so much heartbreak and disappointment, especially having lost the last two finals, Cork are now on the cusp of a first title since 2018.

Cork are on a mission but so are Waterford, who are chasing a first title, and who are now appearing in a first final since 1945.

Having beaten Cork in the Munster championship, Waterford will go into Sunday's game full of confidence that they can finally end the wait.

When the sides met in last year's All-Ireland semi-final, Cork had five points to spare, but that margin didn't tell the full story of that match. Waterford led by five points in the second half before Cork powered on to hit the last eight points.

If any teams were going to make the breakthrough and break up that dominance of Cork, Galway and Kilkenny, it was always likely to be Waterford or Tipperary. And Waterford took that huge step when beating Tipp in the semi-final.

Tipp would have expected to make that jump first, especially when they had joined the big three in the last four in four of the previous five seasons.

Losing a fifth semi-final in six years was absolutely heart-breaking but Waterford know even more about that kind of acute disappointment; they had lost four successive All-Ireland quarter-finals before finally overcoming that hurdle and then falling to Cork in the 2022 semi-final.

"It's nearly got to a stage now where teams are trying to get closer to Tipp, before you can go after the big three," said Waterford's best player Beth Carton, back in 2021.

Now that Waterford have got up to that level, beating Tipp and finally breaking

through to reach a final, can they go to the next level again?

Waterford showed against Tipp that they were capable of turning trends on their head. In their 12 previous league and championship meetings over the previous seven seasons, Tipp had won ten of those matches, including three All-Ireland quarter-finals.

When Tipp led by seven points after 20 minutes, they looked set to continue that dominance.

It would have been easy for Waterford to think back to the Munster semi-final in May, when Tipp hammered them, but Waterford stormed back.

Led by Carton, her final tally of 0-8, 0-4 from play, took her total to 6-114 for this season.

Carton is one of the best players in the country but Waterford have enough firepower right around their attack to trouble Cork.

They only had four scorers from play against Tipp but Niamh Rockett, Abby Flynn and Annie Fitzgerald have scored eleven goals between them.

Mairéad O'Brien's speed and strength is another huge weapon in the Waterford attack. Róisín Kirwan and Anne Corcoran, who came on in the semi-final, are two more quality forwards who can't get into the starting side.

This Waterford squad has also been getting stronger as the championship has progressed. Captain Lorraine Bray has returned from a shin injury. Outstanding centre-back Clodagh Carroll's heel problem has also cleared up.

Clara Griffin is also back after missing the entire Munster championship with a back injury.

Cork will rightly be favourites. As well as having come through an extremely tough side of the draw, Cork have all the experience, especially in finals.

Cork also have massive depth in the squad, along with the hurt and motivation to right the wrongs after having lost the last two finals by just one score.

Cork should win, but they'll still have to play really well to do so.

All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final 2023



Player profiles *Therese O'Callaghan*

- Amy Lee (Na Piarasaigh)**
The number one is calm under pressure, and confident too. Served her time as reserve goalkeeper. Considered to be one the Rebels' more experienced players having held the captaincy last year. Her puck-out strategy – long or short – will be key.
- Méabh Murphy (Ballinora)**
Fast making a name for herself. She has already shot to fame with UCC in the Ashbourne Cup. Fitting in nicely to Cork's last line of defence next to more seasoned colleagues. Impressed upon her debut in 2022.
- Libby Coppinger (St Colum's)**
One of four dual players. Lined out in attack for Cork against Dublin footballers last Saturday. Interestingly, she plays at different ends of the field in camogie and football. Fills this important full-back position with real assurance.
- Pamela Mackey (Douglas)**
Took a well-earned break recently following a long and distinguished career, but the defender is back doing what she does best. A great reader of the action. You will find her twin-sister Katrina further up the field.
- Méabh Cahalane (St Finbarr's)**
Accomplished in both codes, she decided to focus on camogie this year. Made her senior camogie debut eight years ago. She plays with a lot of determination. Her sister Orlaith – also a dual player – was introduced to noticeable effect in the semi-final.
- Laura Treacy (Killeagh)**
Another stalwart who has given outstanding service to her county. Most dependable as a centre-back. Anticipates what's ahead, especially if she is sweeping which she does brilliantly. If the numbers align, she could be marking Beth Carton.
- Izzy O'Regan (Ballygarvan)**
A natural wing-forward, but who can also slot in comfortably at wing-back. Or, for that matter, wherever she is asked to line out. Capable of scoring from out the field, she epitomises adaptability.
- Aoife Healy (Aghada)**
A natural wing-forward, but who can also slot in comfortably at wing-back. Or, for that matter, wherever she is asked to line out. Capable of scoring from out the field, she epitomises adaptability.
- Hannah Looney (Killeagh)**
Returned last year after moving to the States in late 2021. The dual participant is playing as good as ever. The bigger the game, the more she contributes. Her work-rate is massive.
- Chloe Sigerson (Killeagh)**
Among other things, she is noted for her booming long-range frees, and the composure she shows in doing so. Covers a lot of ground and in addition, can score from open play. Plenty to offer.
- Fiona Keating (Coursey Rovers)**
A stylish and classy forward, with great ability to carry the ball. Loves to run at the opposing defences and is well capable of taking her scores. Plays with huge energy levels.
- Saoirse McCarthy (Coursey Rovers)**
Usually found not too far away from her club mate Fiona Keating. Had the unique distinction of winning minor, intermediate and senior All-Ireland medals in 2018. Flexible in where she can fit in.
- Sorcha McCartan (St Finbarr's)**
The Down native moved to Leeside for work, and this is her second year lining out with the Cork attack. Physically strong, she pitches in with important scores. A difficult assignment to mark.
- Katrina Mackey (Douglas)**
Gives her teammates a real focal point in attack, loves quick deliveries. One of Cork's most decorated players. Won her first senior All-Ireland in 2009 along with her twin Pamela. Still loves her camogie.
- Amy O'Connor (St Vincent's, Capt)**
Leadership at its best. Free-taker also, she continues to score heavily. Provides plenty of options for her outfield colleagues. Vastly experienced with pace to kill. Can turn a game in a hop.

Possible bench options

Ashling Thompson (Millford), Cliona Healy (Aghabullogue), Orla Cronin (Enniskeane), Laura Hayes (St Catherine's) and Orlaith Cahalane (St Finbarr's) – although don't be surprised if one of these start.



Manager: Matthew Twomey (second term)

The Douglas man has been involved with various Cork senior camogie teams in different capacities over the years. He suffered defeat last year on All-Ireland final day against old foes Kilkenny by a small margin. He will try to use that disappointment to turn things around.

Has a twist of fate brought Power to his Déise destiny?

REWIND 12 months. Saturday, July 23, to be exact. Seán Power and his wife Denise are at home in Dunhill. On the television in front of them is the county's All-Ireland camogie semi-final against Cork.

A Waterford team hasn't been to the last four of the camogie championship since 1959. And yet here they are leading perennial challengers Cork by three points 14 minutes from the finish.

Waterford can't sustain their own blinding pace. There's a toll to be paid for holding Cork scoreless until the 25th minute of the opening half. Their defensive belt loosens a buckle or three.

Cork, for whom this isn't a first rodeo, find a few extra gears. They find a few holes too. They raise eight white flags without reply. Waterford raise a white flag in gallant surrender.

As a Waterford supporter, Seán Power is "gutted" for the players. As a manager, Seán Power says quietly to himself, "I think I can help here".

There was no impending vacancy that Power knew of. There was nothing premeditated about his thinking.

It was simply a case of looking at a team more intently than he had done previously and being absolutely certain there was more that could be achieved with them.

"Cork came so close to winning the All-Ireland last year. Lost by a point. So for Water-



ford to put them to the pin of their collar, you could see there was something that could be very special with that group.

"Who knows why these things happen, but I said privately, 'I think I can help here and get that extra couple of inches out of them'.

"After the match, there was a conversation over a cup of tea at the kitchen table where I said to Denise, 'there could be something in this, maybe'. And then you forget all about it."

Life moved on.

Tuesday, September 6.

The Waterford camogie board announce Derek Lyons has decided to step down after two years in charge.

The Waterford board commence their search for a new manager. The Waterford board call Seán Power.

"Hang on a second now. I said a month ago that there could be something in this and next thing the phone rings."

He tells the board he'll have a think about the vacancy. Power picks up the phone to Neil White. They've worked together with a couple of teams before. Power as manager, White as head of performance.

Power taking over a Water-



"I said, 'Neil, I have a funny one for you. I am thinking about getting involved with the Waterford camogie team'.

"He says back to me, 'would you believe, Seán, I had it in the back of my mind as well. You are after ringing me, when I was going to ring you about it'."

White is co-owner of Arch Coffee in Waterford city. The pair meet there at 1pm one afternoon in September. By 5pm, they're still going, thrashing out the job and the team at hand.

One by one, Power went away and assembled his cast. Wayne Power was his coach for the 2013 All-Ireland minor hurling success. Paul Flynn was his selector for the 2016 U21 hurling triumph. Philly Flynn is recruited as goalkeeping coach. Former player Shona Curran, after a lot of hard work, is persuaded in as their "camogie specialist".

"Now we have a team and a plan."

On November 2, he was announced as the new Waterford senior camogie boss.

Power taking over a Water-

0 - A Waterford hand has never grasped the O'Duffy Cup. The county celebrated All-Ireland junior glory in 2011 and intermediate in 2015.

1 - A first ever final meeting of Cork and Waterford. A first final to feature a county from outside camogie's big three since Wexford completed the three in a row in 2012. A first all-Munster final since Cork beat Tipp in 2006.

2 - Sunday represents Waterford's second All-Ireland senior final appearance. Their first was in 1945, Cappoquin the venue. Antrim went back up the road as champions on a 5-2 to 3-2 scoreline.

Final in numbers

3 - The margin of Waterford's victory over Cork in April's Munster quarter-final at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. It was Waterford's first competitive victory over their neighbours since the Déise's promotion back to the senior ranks in 2015. To do it on Cork soil only added to its significance.

4 - Cork's run of final defeats at Croke Park. The county has come off second best in the last two All-Ireland finals and the last two League deciders.

5 - Years to Cork's most recent O'Duffy Cup triumph. A third consecutive All-Ireland final defeat tomorrow would stretch their wait to six years, the longest gap without silverware on Leeside since the Downey sisters and a few more stripeywomen starved them of glory from 1983 to 1992.

6 - Points struck by Cork subs across their quarter-final and semi-final wins. Cliona Healy is responsible for four of those six white flags, sniping a pair both days.



CLASH: Cork's Saoirse McCarthy takes on Waterford's Clodagh Carroll in the Munster quarter-final last April. Picture: Brendan Moran/Sportsfile



time on that chapter and applied to replace McGrath. He didn't so much as get an interview. His fellow Mount Sion clubman Paraic Fanning was the preferred choice. Power wished him well and moved on.

The Waterford camogie boss studied philosophy at post-graduate level in Oxford. Well-placed, so, to give his views on where the road has taken him.

"Sometimes fate goes one way. Sometimes it goes another way. Are the stars aligned? Is your path marked out? Who knows.

"Sometimes these things happen for a reason. Maybe the senior hurling job wasn't for me in 2019. This opportunity popped up then a couple of years later, and capacity was there. Interest was certainly there. So, let's see what I can do."

What he's done is oversee Division 1B League success and a first All-Ireland senior final appearance in 78 years.

"I've loved every minute of this season. Tough going, but when you are working with diligent athletes; Jeez, they are incredible. Talk about being dedicated to your cause and your county. Their love for the game, love for each other.

"All those things are infectious and make it easier to come to training and matches and potter around the country for seven months of the year."

Seven months of progression has fed two weeks of local frenzy. The message from manager to players was to go out and embrace the madness.

"We don't get too many All-Ireland finals in Waterford. That is an unfortunate reality for us. But we do love our GAA here and so when that occasion arises, it is difficult to keep people's excitement and expectations in check.

"Do you lock yourself away from that or embrace the inevitable? We have embraced the interest in it in the county because it is all good feeling.

"I'll tell you on Sunday evening whether it was the right thing or not."

There's the bigger picture too. Camogie doesn't have the roots in Waterford it has in Cork and Kilkenny and Galway.

Those charged with developing the game in the county realise the imperativeness of capitalising on the groundswell of interest that has flown from their semi-final win over Tipperary. They need to market their leading lights to the next generation.

They've caught the attention of the next generation. They now need to hold onto it.

"One thing we talk about within the group is legacy. Leaving something behind for Waterford. To see all the young girls that are mad keen, and their heroes are the Beth Cartons and Lorraine Brays and Rocketts and Abby Flynn's of the world, for me and the girls that is really satisfying.

"If we can increase our player numbers in Waterford and we can make the sport stronger, then all of a sudden you have a situation where maybe in 10 years' time, Waterford are one of the big four in the camogie world.

"If that comes to be the case, a lot of it will be down to this group because they were the ones to inspire those coming behind.

"My own daughter Holly is nine. These girls are superstars to her. Her embracement of the game has come on leaps and bounds this summer. That has happened through this Waterford team, and it is brilliant."

This Waterford team have won 11 of the 12 league and championship games they've played under Power. Is there one glorious final chapter in them?

"Are we up against it? Course we are. Cork, in an All-Ireland final. We are Waterford. At the same time, we'll do our very, very best and hopefully we are smiling on the far side."

Player profiles Therese O'Callaghan



Brianna O'Regan (De La Salle)

One of the best when it comes to shot stopping. Her restarts are on the money too. Converted a lengthy free from her own '65 in the penultimate round to push her side three clear.



Vikki Falconer (Tramore)

A lion-hearted defender who is among the longer serving stalwarts within the Déise camp. Her heroics in Nowlan Park in the semi-final lifted the whole team. Captained WIT to Ashbourne success.



Iona Heffernan (Ferrybank)

Didn't feature in their semi-final triumph over Tipperary, instead management went with minor starlet Laoise Forrest. Iona has plenty of experience to offer having been a regular in this area of the pitch for some time now.



Kate Lynch (Gailltír)

So good at winning the dirty ball, and a vital part of Waterford's full-back line. One suspects Kate and the aforementioned Falconer will be key in attempting to limit the influence of Amy O'Connor and Katrina Mackey.



Keeley Corbett Barry (De La Salle)

Holds down the right-half back position with real authority, and having delivered a Player-of-the-Match performance in her club's first senior county title in 2022, the defender knows what it takes.



Clodagh Carroll (Gailltír)

It is not that long ago Waterford shipped four goals to Tipperary in the Munster semi-final - May in fact. Waterford have tightened up considerably in this area, the centre-back post pivotal in doing so.



Mairéad Power (Clonea Power)

It was the number seven who provided the inspirational moment in the semi-final, her goal before half-time ignited their challenge. Lining out amongst the higher numbers, one wonders what her plan is for her tomorrow.



Orla Hickey (Cappoquin)

Equally at home in defence or midfield, it could be a case of horses for courses this weekend. Whatever assignment she is given, she always does her best to shoulder the heavy work for her team.



Lorraine Bray (Cappoquin, Capt)

A pure dynamo for the Blue and White. Her endless energy and enthusiasm is one of the reason's Waterford are in the big showdown. Twice an All-Star as well. Sheer class.



Niamh Rockett (St Anne's)

An All-Star. But so much more. It's all of 12 years since Waterford won the Premier Junior title, and Niamh was one of those heroes. Nobody would begrudge this attacker her day in the sun. Has overcome adversity to give outstanding service to the jersey.



Beth Carton (De La Salle)

The ace in the pack. A household name, and extremely skilful. A three-time All-Star, she is the beating heart that keeps this team coming back for more. An accomplished free-taker too, she regularly accumulates double figures.



Abby Flynn (De La Salle)

A versatile player who can roam deep or nearer to the scoring zone. Caught the eye from a young age, scored two points last day out. An Ashbourne Cup winner with DCU, her accuracy and pace will be crucial if Waterford are to emerge.



Mairéad O'Brien (Modeligo)

Another decisive attacking position. Linking play and showing for possession are as important features of the game as rifling over the scores. Went off as a blood-sub in the semi-final, but came back on and made a goal-preventing block.



Rachael Walsh (Butlerstown)

Could spend more time in the half-forward line. Her job might involve moving further out the field than her number 14 shirt might suggest. The student is an All-Ireland Colleges winner.



Annie Fitzgerald (Gailltír)

A footballer of note. Having combined both, she is warmly welcomed back to the camogie team and is a valuable asset. An athletic player who always delivers.



Possible bench options

Laoise Forrest (Gailltír), Clara Griffin (Tramore), Róisín Kirwan (St Anne's), Anne Corcoran (Gailltír) and Aoife Landers (An Rinn).

Management may well opt for one of these to start.



Manager Seán Power (first term)

His big moments already include leading the Waterford minor hurling team to All-Ireland honours in 2013. It came after a 65-year gap. And he guided the U21s to the promised land

three years later. The 64 million dollar question now. Can the Mount Sion club man end their camogie wait?

ford senior team came as no real surprise. The surprise was that it was the women, in 2023, and not the men in 2019.

It is now 14 years since the Mount Sion man brought a Waterford U14 hurling team to the final of the 2009 Tony Forristal tournament. The first step on a fabulous journey.

Four years later, they won only the county's third minor All-Ireland. Three years further on, they blitzed all before them to secure a first U21 All-Ireland in 24 years.

The expectation within the county was that whenever the senior management position became vacant, Power would be the one to fill it.

In June 2018, Derek McGrath stepped down. Power, having done three years in the U21 role, called

Munster semi-final in May.

7 - Counties to have won a senior camogie All-Ireland: Cork (28), Dublin (26), Kilkenny (15), Wexford (7), Antrim (6), Tipperary (5), and Galway (4).

8 - Unanswered points hit by Cork in the final quarter of last year's All-Ireland semi-final against Waterford. Behind by 0-10 to 0-7 on 46 minutes, Matthew Twomey's side closed powerfully to hold their opponents scoreless and run out five-point winners.

11 - Waterford victories this season, from 12 outings. Their sole defeat of 2023 was a 4-11 to 1-9 reverse at the hands of Tipperary in the

14 - To use her own words, Niamh Rockett was but a "baby" when called into the Waterford set-up a few weeks before the 2009 All-Ireland junior final defeat. She is the sole member of Seán Power's panel looking to complete the set of All-Ireland junior, intermediate, and senior medals this weekend.

16 - Minutes Ashling Thompson spent on the field at the end of Cork's semi-final win over Galway. During this time, she had six possessions, an assist for a Saoirse McCarthy point, and forced four turnovers.

24 - Percentage of Waterford's championship total to come from the stick of Beth Carton. Waterford's go-to operator is responsible for 3-41 (1-24 from the placed ball) of her county's 10-73. No question but there is an over-reliance on Waterford on the championship's overall top-scorer.

24 - Minutes Ashling Thompson spent on the field at the end of Cork's semi-final win over Galway. During this time, she had six possessions, an assist for a Saoirse McCarthy point, and forced four turnovers.

49 - Percentage of Waterford's championship total to come from the stick of Beth Carton. Waterford's go-to operator is responsible for 3-41 (1-24 from the placed ball) of her county's 10-73. No question but there is an over-reliance on Waterford on the championship's overall top-scorer.

730 - The largest ever All-Ireland camogie final attendance was that which watched the 2019 decider between Galway and Kilkenny. That record will be smashed this weekend, as could the 30,000 barrier.

All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final 2023

Thompson: I want to be at Darragh's level and to be successful

ASHLING Thompson soaked up the festive atmosphere that greeted the Limerick hurlers following their historic four-in-a-row a couple of weeks ago. She could see how success does indeed breed success.

Sharing the joy with her partner Darragh O'Donovan — Limerick's midfield workhorse — it makes her only more determined to have her own story to tell in Croke Park circa 6.30pm tomorrow evening.

She even admits to casting the odd envious glance his way.

The 2015 All-Ireland-winning captain, who claimed her first senior medal 12 months earlier, would very much love to feed off the Shannonsiders' historic feat.

She is fully recovered from the ACL injury she suffered almost a year ago while playing with her club Milford. All through that lonely road back, she credits the staunch support of Darragh, and the help she received from the Limerick hurling backroom team.

"It was nice being in the winning Limerick camp," she says. "I suppose it was the first time I got the opportunity to be at the celebrations, because other years, we might be playing the following week

Therese O'Callaghan



ourselves. There is always a bit of jealousy there from my end because I want what Limerick have. I've seen it the last few years with Darragh. They have been so successful. We have been starved since 2018.

"I didn't meet Darragh until 2019, so we have yet to win an All-Ireland together in the same year. I'm obviously extremely happy for him. But at the same time, I know what it is like to be on the winning end, so the fact we haven't won for so long is a huge factor for me going forward, and there is a huge hunger.

"Limerick have been very good to me. The door is always open if I ever need them on or off the pitch and they have always made that very clear.

"Their physio Seanie McAuliffe is my physio. Himself and Mark Melbourne are the head physios with Limerick. They helped in my entire recovery. They played a massive part.

"When I got the injury, the

first thing for Darragh was who is the physio and where do we go. It was Seanie McAuliffe straight away.

"Darragh is such an influence on me, and gives me the want to be at that level and to be successful."

High standards have been set by the Doon clubman during the past number of years. Despite the demands, this is to her benefit too. As a result, she believes her own performances have improved.

"Absolutely. In my own preparations, everything Darragh does, he has passed on to me. I would say in the last couple of years my game has probably gone to a new level. And a lot of it has to do with him.

"You see what it is like to be on that side of it and they are obviously at the top of their game. You see the way they are looked after and their structure. He does a lot for me.

"Even down to supplements, he would really look after me. There is a complete polar-opposite in terms of player welfare between them and us."

Rehab from ACL surgery takes both patience and time. Having won almost every honour in the game (three All-Ireland club titles as well as four with Cork and numerous other gongs), we ask the 33-

year-old if she ever contemplated retiring instead of facing the hell journey back from such a horror injury.

Her response shouldn't surprise. After all, this is the answer she gave in a Q&A going into the final eight years ago as to what her motto back then was: 'Start unknown, finish unforgettable.'

"Not for a second did I think of retiring," she affirms. "The first thought was how do I get on the operating table as fast as I can. I was trying to add up the months and I knew there was a little window I might be able to see a semi or final. "I still waited until I was at the nine months and I still waited before doing full contact training. I didn't go against the book, it was all above board.

"I have been extremely lucky, I've had no setbacks and recovered really well. It was plain sailing. I was a small bit ahead of myself to get time in the quarter-final (v Kilkenny)."

Judging by the number of selfies she posed for as auto-graph hunters — boys and girls — awaited their turn at the county's meet-and-greet last week, her positive decision to keep going is camogie's gain. Even if it is interesting to hear one of the most recognisable names in the sport, feared

Munster Camogie Championship

Cork 1-15 v 1-18 Waterford
Tipperary 4-11 v 1-09 Waterford

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Championship

Cork Pathway

Galway 1-12 v 0-12 Cork

Cork 3-19 v 1-10 Down

Clare 0-08 v 3-19 Cork

Cork 2-14 v 2-13 Kilkenny

Cork 0-15 v 2-06 Galway

Waterford Pathway

Offaly 1-09 v 2-26 Waterford

Limerick 0-11 v 2-19 Waterford

Waterford 5-16 v 0-10 Antrim

Tipperary 1-11 v 1-12 Waterford

she mightn't slot back in that easily.

"The whole recovery process was extremely difficult, it has been tough. But I don't feel any different to what I felt last year in terms of fitting in and being part of the group, which was obviously a massive obstacle I thought I would have to face.

"I feel like I have trained a lot harder than I have ever trained before. It was nice as well to get time against Kilkenny and a bit of time against Galway. There are other girls


who never got back (from that injury) so I can't complain.

"I have given Matthew the heads up, if they want to start me in the final, I am good to go. Whatever is best for the team, I will be happy with that. I can't be selfish, I am lucky to be here.

"I trust what they are doing and they've done a great job. Whatever they have in mind, I am looking forward to it either way."

Having lost the last two finals, the Red and White will start favourites. However, this

How they will line out

			A Lee		
M Murphy	L Coppinger	P Mackey	R Walsh	N Rockett	A Fitzgerald
M Cahalane	L Tracey	I O'Regan	L Bray	B Carton	M O'Brien
S McCarthy		A Healy	A Flynn		
C Sigerson		F Keating	H Looney		
M Power		C Carroll	K Corbett Barry		
A O'Connor	K Mackey	S McCartan	K Lynch		
V Falconer		I Heffernan	B O'Regan		

Cork's nerve should hold to avoid another final



Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final

Cork v Waterford

Tomorrow: Croke Park, 5pm
Referee: John Dermody (Westmeath)
TV: RTE2

Eoghan Cormican

It won't be until the Cork team lines up behind the Artane Band at 4.52pm that we

know for certain what 15 manager Matthew Twomey has gone with and how many of his All-Star bench — if any at all — he has promoted.

On ability alone, Ashling Thompson and Laura Hayes would be two of the first names on the Cork team sheet. But do either have a full 60 minutes in them given their injury-disrupted campaigns?

Laura Hayes missed all three All-Ireland series group games because of a broken bone in her foot. Since returning, she saw two minutes of the quarter-final and the second half of the semi-final.

Ashling Thompson, meanwhile, only made her first appearance of the year when

coming off the bench in the 44th minute of the quarter-final. Last time out against Galway, she was sprung in the 49th minute.

If Twomey goes with the same starting 15 as he did in the semi-final, he gives Waterford an excellent chance to both establish and assert themselves in this final. And given the large Waterford following they will have behind them, the longer the Déise are in contention the more they will believe they can see the job out to the finish.

Twomey has emphasised the need for finishers, but when the opposition are a team appearing in their first senior final, starting strong and sowing doubt as early as possible is nearly as important.

Waterford's scoring load will have to be shared more evenly than has been the case up to now where Beth Carton has been responsible for 49% of their total.

Cork centre-back Laura Treacy produced a fine containment job on Carton in the final quarter of last year's All-Ireland semi-final.

But given Treacy's efficiency in the holding, plus-one, role, management will be reluctant to assign her a shadowing job.

Carton and Lorraine Bray are the Waterford pair Cork will have concentrated on. Nobody links the play better than Bray. Disrupt this pair and Cork will disrupt both Waterford's supply and their chief scoring threat.



Ashling Thompson: It will be a long time before I will think of hanging up any boots. The hunger never goes away. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Who will be given the task of curbing classy Carton?

Elaine Aylward



Talking points

How will Waterford handle the occasion?

If a week is a long time in politics, I'm not sure what 78 years in camogie is, but it is 1945 since Waterford contested a senior final, losing out to Antrim by 5-2 to 3-2. By my reckoning, Cork have played in 44 Senior finals since, winning 23. Differing fortunes, but you need to look at where Waterford camogie has come from in the past 12 years to fully appreciate this achievement. Having finally annexed the Junior title in 2011 at the third time of asking, they followed up with Intermediate success in 2015 and are now one hour away from securing the county's first ever Senior title. Niamh Rockett could create her own little bit of history by winning all three medals.

How Waterford handle an occasion this seismic will be crucial. While they have experience of Croke Park, a senior final is different. You have all the added pageantry, the parade, the President, added to the circus that can accompany everything you do in the two weeks between semi-final and final.

They are fortunate their manager, Seán Power, has guided the Waterford minor hurlers team to the county's first All-Ireland success at that grade in 65 years in 2016. He, of all people, will know how to handle the pressure of the occasion and the expectation of a county.

Who will counter Carton?

Beth Carton's (pictured) scoring exploits for club, county and college are one thing. What the numbers don't tell you is how the De La Salle star reads, manages and influences games, how her hurling brain is as phenomenal as her execution of the skills. She often operates at a level above everyone else. Watch back the goal against Antrim in this

year's final group game, a perfectly weighted lob of the keeper, just one of her 2023 highlights, to date.

She is a marked player every day, as she will be this Sunday. Who Cork choose to pick her up will have a telling influence on the game. It was Katie O'Mahony for the opening 20 minutes of last year's All-Ireland semi before she was withdrawn and Ashling Thompson introduced. Laura Treacy pushed forward onto Carton from there with Thompson sitting deeper.

However Beth showed in this year's semi-final victory over Tipperary that she is equally as comfortable in her own full back line as she is in the full forward line. If she cannot get on enough ball up front or supply is limited she is well capable of coming deeper and becoming a playmaker. Matthew Twomey may choose to deploy someone like Aoife Healy to try to curb Carton's influence. The emerging dual star would seem ideally suited to following Carton and being comfortable anywhere on the field.

Whoever gets the task, curbing Carton would go a long way to getting Cork over the line.

Bounce from the bench

Matthew Twomey has openly admitted he and his fellow selectors face a massive headache in selecting their starting 15-20 into 15 just doesn't go and realistically Cork have an embarrassment of riches, a problem they could only have dreamed of when they struggled with injuries right through League and Championship.

If you can time a run, Cork have done it to perfection, getting valuable game time into the recovering Thompson, Cronin, Hayes and Cahalane in the quarter-final victory over Kilkenny. They were all introduced again in the semi-final and didn't just add game time but contributed to the end result, adamantly putting their hands up for selection for the final.

None more so than the in-form Cliona Healy who added two points when introduced. But an impact bench comes with its own complications. These are competitive athletes and everyone wants to start a final. Managing expectations

and emotions is a huge balancing act.

The final camogie deserves

All-Ireland camogie finals day is like no other in Croke Park. We might lag behind our GAA counterparts in terms of numbers and ticket sales, but we more than make up for it with a sea of colour and a wall of noise. Everyone in the crowd at a camogie final is a participant and I fully expect Sunday to be the best yet.

Extra trains from Kent and Plunkett stations, queues for the turnstiles and record-breaking attendances are what our game deserves.

Nowlan Park was humming two weeks ago for the semi-finals, there were traffic and parking conundrums, there were hats, flags and headbands and there was noise and lots of it. It was a privilege to sense that excitement, which has been missing from the closing stages of the competition for some years.

Waterford brought a huge crowd and you could feel the stand shake with each score as they reeled Tipperary in. Cork too brought big numbers and plenty of colour and will do so again.

So, who will win?

Cork are favourites and rightly so, they have definitely had the tougher route to tomorrow's final. Despite an opening-round defeat to Galway, they have gone on to dethrone champions Kilkenny, before turning the tables on Galway at the fourth time of asking. That they could have won both games by a greater margin is both impressive and concerning — they were a better team than one — and three-point winning margins suggest but they ground out victory in tight games, something they had previously been failing to do.

Despite playing out of Division 1B and the seemingly easier championship group, that win over Tipperary and the Munster championship victory over Cork should give Waterford every right to be confident. Interestingly when they won the Junior All-Ireland in 2011, they doubled up with the Division 2 League title. When they won the Intermediate All-Ireland in 2015, they did likewise.

This year, they have already captured the Division 1B League title — could the Deise double be on again?

midfield supremacy is around far too long to take an ever-improving Waterford for granted.

"The fact we have got over Kilkenny and Galway, we can take huge confidence from it. But at the same time, we are in a place where we can't leave it behind us. We have done that too many times in the last couple of years.

"That's not to say Waterford are going to be a pushover. If

we don't turn up, we will be crying into our drinks again on Sunday night.

"We nearly lost to Waterford in the semi-final last year in Croke Park. We struggled against them a few times. They have beaten us this year.

"They are a team that are coming, and they have beaten the team (Tipperary) in my opinion, who were on form. They've made it to an All-Ireland final, they are not there

to take part, they are there to win.

"We can't let ourselves down. We've struggled this year more than any other year I've been involved with. But we have that hunger to stick at it. Game by game, we are finally finding our form. And it has probably come at the right time. It will be a long time before I will think of hanging up any boots. The hunger never goes away."

defeat

The scoring threats are more plentiful on the other side. Inside forwards Amy O'Connor and Katrina Mackey have hit 3-30 and 3-15 respectively across Cork's five championship outings. Outside of them, Fiona Keating, Saoirse McCarthy, and Cliona Healy off the bench can be relied upon to chip in with a scattering of white flags.

Cork held their nerve and their composure late on in the quarter-final and semi-final against Kilkenny and Galway, something they failed to do in the last two All-Irelands against the same counties. They won't allow a three-in-a-row of final defeats.

Verdict: Cork

Waterford can handle the hype, says Hickey

Cian Locke

Waterford have managed the All-Ireland final hype, says Cappoquin's Orla Hickey who can't wait for tomorrow's All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final.

"The atmosphere in training over the past 10 days has been great and we've remained totally focused on training and nothing else," Hickey told *Waterford News and Star*.

"Yes, there's a lot of excitement about playing in this game but we're mainly focused on the goal — to win the All-Ireland — so we have to keep everything else to the back of our minds for now and keep on eyes on Sunday.

"If we weren't in the All-Ire-

land final, we wouldn't have been talking to the media last week. But our aim every year is to reach an All-Ireland final and then to win it, so the press stuff has to be done and we were more than happy to do it. Since then, our total focus has been on the Cork match.

"To be heading to Croke Park to play in an All-Ireland senior final for Waterford is just an unbelievable feeling. When the final whistle went against Tipperary, Beth (Carton) was far from the only one of us struggling to find the words to describe what it meant to win that game. Naturally, we're very proud of ourselves and now we're 60 minutes away from potentially winning an All-Ireland."

All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final 2023

Breslin: 'Would I like the interest football has? Yes, but our game is better'

AN UACHTARÁN TOFA of the Camogie Association has just been dragged into a debate which could be entitled: 'If hurling is more loved than men's football, can the same be said about camogie over ladies football?'

Generally such curveballs are dealt with tactically through excruciating, deferential diplomacy by presidents, secretary generals or chairpersons of major sports organisations — but that's not Hilda Breslin's style.

While a highly skilled political and organisational figurehead — this great-granddaughter of Jim Larkin — cannot pass the opportunity to address the question of whether ladies football receives the greater attentions and affections of the female codes.

"Would I like the interest football has? Yes, but I'll still always think of our game as a better game, I think it's a better game to watch and that's no disrespect to football," is the honest and unapologetic presidential view.

"They're different game — you can't compare hurling and football and I don't think you can compare camogie and football — they're just a

Ian Mallon



different type of game and to us that's what we're going for — we're going for a game that moves very fast and is very skilful."

Indeed, as the mother-of-one from Athy, Co Kildare, explains, much work has already been done and is continuing to be reviewed during her term to change perceptions about camogie which she says is now a faster and more exciting sport.

"We redid our rules — I was part of that three years ago — and without doubt that has changed our sport, it is not the same sport that it was before," she explains.

"There is an element that you must retain the skill in the sport and you make it fast and we are looking at our playing rules again, and again the focus will be the skill and the speed of the game, because I think that is often what drives people's interest."

"If you can give them a fast

skilful game... nobody wants a game which is particularly physical.

"There is physicality in camogie, absolutely, but it can't be the key aspect of the game — it has to be incidental."

While she's at it, Hilda Breslin also believes that camogie is a more attractive option than hurling too, by being less formulaic in its play and tactics, for starters.

"In lots of ways hurling has become slightly predictable in terms of the puckout, the drive it down (approach)," she explains.

"Camogie has a lot more inter-play around the field and I think we've probably driven the game to be very fast and skilful, and if we keep it on that tact, that's the way forward for it."

There is real passion when the president speaks of her sport — as you would expect from any sporting leader — but it's that layer of calm certainty which impresses most.

This despite playing catch-up with football, where the LGFA is a bigger organisation — 170,000 registered members versus the Camogie Association's 110,000 members.

Breslin believes such comparisons are not healthy.

"I certainly don't see it as a them or us," when asked about a perceived rivalry between the two sports.

"I'm a firm believer — and I was chair of competitions for six years — and I said this every time people raised ladies football, that we need to stop looking at other people looking over our shoulder all of the time."

"Because if you do that you can't move, you're forever watching what someone else is doing."

"Ladies football is always going to have, in some ways, a different scope than us. It's very similar to hurling and football."

But is there any truth in the perception that the game is played by two different types of women and girls, from different backgrounds with contrasting demographical profiles, albeit two sports with increasing memberships?

"You're not always going to have the same market," agrees the former Kildare county chair.

"Ladies football has achieved enormous growth to be very fair to them, but that doesn't mean that we can't achieve growth where ladies football has."



"It also doesn't mean that we can't achieve growth where ladies football hasn't achieved growth."

Camogie, she points out, is moving into new markets, with counties like Donegal Cavan and Sligo reporting increases in participation numbers, as well as the game overseas.

An All Star trip to Canada this summer to promote the game in North America was

pulled earlier this year after players objected to the short run-in time to the County Championship season.

That incident appeared to show a divide between players and the NGB, with the tour scrapped and calls from a small but vocal few on the need for better relations between association and player.

"I don't think it's a question of rebuilding relationships," she insists.

A varied selection of ingredients mix to

Daragh Ó Conchúir

In the ever-increasing era of control, the personality of sportspeople within a team setting is becoming harder to unearth.

As crowds of children and adults swarmed around the players at the Cork Camogie Grounds ahead of the Leesiders' appearance in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final against Waterford at Croke Park tomorrow (5pm throw-in, live on RTE2), the various personalities shone through.

Take Amy Lee, last year's captain when they lost to Denise Gaule's brilliantly-pointed free at the death.

It's just the way she is wired. Indeed Lee is probably more stressed about how Man United will fare in the year ahead. The Red Devils have always been her club, even though she lived in London until she was 10.

The fact her family and close-knit circle of friends outside the Cork panel aren't Gaelic games nuts might be a contributory factor to her laidback nature.

"I go home, my mother is like, 'How is training?'" Lee explains. "I'll be like, 'Grand,' and she will say, 'Do you want something to eat?' 'I got fed at training.' Off up to bed. Hasn't a notion. Loves going to the matches. Loves being a part of the buzz. She can't wait to go to the All-Ireland final. She won't ask me about it. What a great way to be?"

Laura Hayes is another with a confidence rooted in being able to put it all in



Cork's Emma Murphy, Fiona Keating and Laura Hayes celebrate after the final whistle of the semi-final win over Galway.

proper context. Her former manager, Paudie Murray, once compared her to Brieger Corkery. For sure, there was an element of that coming from an ability to raid forward from wing-back to get a score.

The mindset of absolute seriousness while playing and training being coupled with

an element of what the St Catherine's All-Star and graduate of UCC's Quercus Talented Students' Programme herself describes as a sometimes chaotic approach to life beyond that, was implicit in the comparison too, however. According to Murray, it was rare for the kit van to leave

training without some jersey or hoody belonging to Hayes having to be thrown in the back, left behind on the pitch or the dressing room.

"That would be me," says a grinning Hayes. "I wouldn't be the most organised. I would be organised with the important things like the gear bag before the match, but I can be a bit chaotic at times."

"I love the pressure," she adds of what comes with an All-Ireland final appearance. "I love the big day. They are the days you play for at the end of the day. You wouldn't want to let your nerves affect you in those times."

Sorcha McCartan is also beaming, completely settled in now having made the transition from Down last year. She had to play against her native county and many of her best friends for the first time in the group stages of this year's Championship. It wasn't easy

but it was fine. And her former teammates completely understood her position.

A work placement brought McCartan to Cork and she is now studying at MTU. She transferred to St Finbarr's, the travelling proving too difficult to sustain in 2021. An All-Ireland winner with Down at intermediate level the previous year, following in the footsteps of her father Gregory, who won two football All-Irelands, it would be quite a double to add a senior memento with the Rebels.

Her nose ring glistening in the sun, McCartan happily admits that not a lot of thought went into the tattoo inside her left arm that reads, 'Dare To'. The '11:11' stamp inside the right arm is different though.

"Every wish I made on the time 11:11 just came true. Anytime I see it on the clock or whatever, I make a wish. People will think I'm crazy but



Clare's Sinead O'Keefe (Premier Junior), Tipperary's Claire Stakelum (Premier Junior), Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin, Waterford's Keeley Corbett-Barry (Senior), Cork's Amy O'Connor (Senior), CFO of Glen Dimplex Group Yvonne Burke, Derry's Aine McAllister (Intermediate) and Meath's Ellen Burke (Senior) at the finals launch.



Picture: Dan Sheridan/Inpho

As terms of office go, this has been one which started off with a remote coronation during covid times and will end with the extraordinary first steps towards the integration of the Camogie Association, Ladies Gaelic Football Association and the GAA.

In between there has been the expansion of the organisation as a highly valuable commercial business, one which now boasts a suite of blue ribband sponsors under the top-tier partnership of Glen Dimplex and co-owner Carmel Naughton, through a multi-million euro five year deal. Almost €3m in commercial revenues are now recorded at the body through a portfolio which includes corporate heavyweights Alliance and Electric Ireland.

Such growth has been elevated through a commercial agreement with the GAA — the Camogie Association retains the services of Croke Park's commercial team, led by Peter McKenna, to manage its sponsorship affairs.

The biggest business activity of all is yet to come, however, with the merger between the three main Gaelic games sports bodies.

The Camogie Association will have its plan in place by next February — to be part of what will become the biggest and most powerful sporting body of all — under a 'One Association' union of almost one million members.

When asked if she has any fears around the merger, the president responds with optimistic certainty, but then and very interestingly, checks her

answer slightly.

"To be absolutely honest with you, I don't have a fear of integration," she begins.

"I suppose if there was a fear, my fear is that there is a window of opportunity and if that window passes us by, integration will not come and that's a fear to me because the sports will not grow to a level that they should grow.

"Then we will not have an association that we can truly say is one association for all — I think that's my fear."

The key aspect for the formative steps of integration, says Breslin, is the calibre and quality of those charged with putting the various kingdoms together into one empire.

"If you do it properly and you have quality people you have nothing to fear," she continues.

"If you go in with agendas and hidden agendas that's where fear comes. We must do this properly and lay our cards on the table and if we do this for the good of everybody we have nothing to fear."

With the desire and the right attitudes from all parties, Breslin believes the whole process can be completed by 2026, by which time the then former president will have played a significant role in making history.

Tomorrow's showpiece Senior decider between Cork and Waterford for the Seaghan O'Duffy Cup, will be preceded by Meath versus Derry in the Intermediate Final, while Tipperary and Clare fight it out for the Junior title with coverage on The Sunday Game Live starting at 12.40pm on RTE2.

Two sides who know each other very well



Glen Dimplex Intermediate All-Ireland Championship final

Derry v Meath

Tomorrow: Croke Park, 2.45pm

Referee: Barry Nea (Westmeath)

TV: RTE2

Daragh Ó Conchúir

These are two teams with very similar profiles, having had a brief period at senior level after All-Ireland intermediate success in 2012 and 2017 respectively and then enduring a rebuilding phase upon their relegations.

Derry had two years at the highest grade before making the drop but the rules had been changed surrounding newcomers being given a year's grace by the time Meath made the step up and they fell through the trapdoor at the end of their only season at senior.

In the meantime, they have both endured plenty of semi-final heartbreak in

their bid to return to Croke Park. So there is some redemption in finally getting over that hurdle but only one of them will enjoy the ultimate satisfaction of getting their hands on the Jack McGrath Cup and celebrating a return to senior competition next year.

This is only Meath's second ever appearance in an intermediate final, while it is Derry's third. It is a very difficult game to call with so much experience in both squads, even though a number of legendary figures are no longer involved.

Both teams competed in Division 2A of the Very League and Meath's two-point victory over Derry in the final round earned the Royals a berth in the final at the expense of the Ulster side. They came away from Croke Park without the silverware however, Kerry prevailing by the odd point in 27 in a tremendous game.

The teams have been operating in the same tiers of League and Championship over the past six seasons and there has rarely been much between them. There is no reason to expect anything different with silverware at stake here.

Tipp stand in way of Clare taking next step



Glen Dimplex Premier Junior All-Ireland Championship final

Clare v Tipperary

Tomorrow: Croke Park, 12.50pm

Referee: Bernard Heaney (Meath)

TV: RTE2

Daragh Ó Conchúir

The second teams of Clare and Tipperary do battle for the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior honours.

For Tipperary, Jean Kelly, Claire Stakelum and Jenny Grace have exhibited all their ability and experience to get to this juncture with Kelly in particular, in outstanding form, scoring 2-7 as Tipp overcame Roscommon to clear the penultimate hurdle.

Amazingly, the former senior forward is responsible for all 10 of her side's goals in the Championship and snuffing out her threat

will surely be a priority for the Banner.

It wasn't all about the attack, as Ciara McKeogh's nullifying of Roscommon danger-woman Shauna Fallon was a key ingredient of the triumph. Clare were denied by a point at the end of two periods of extra time in last year's semi-final by eventual champions Antrim and after winning the Very League Division 3B crown — the second tier for second-string teams — they made short work of group opposition to return to the knockout stages, before beating Cavan and Armagh.

Caoimhe Lally and the experienced Laura McMahon form a formidable defensive spine, while Carmody, Loughnane and Olivia Phelan are considerable offensive threats and Clare have clearly learned to close out very close games.

They are sure to be optimistic about scaling the peak but so will Tipperary, given the proven artillery they possess also. It promises to be a hugely entertaining opening to the day's carnival of camogie.

make Rebels roar loudly

they always come true. They're definitely my lucky numbers and it's worked till now."

It takes a big personality to take on the challenge she did and the 22-year-old admits that there were plenty of doubts.

"Initially I was wondering was I good enough. Then I thought, 'If I'm not good enough, that's okay.' I played against these girls in Newry. I knew that I would have a fighting chance. Then I came to training and I found out it's either sink or swim so I had to just get with it.

"Last year was absolutely brilliant. I got to know the girls on a personal level. This year is just so much sweeter now that we are all best friends and it's such a nice group to be a part of.

"I'd love nothing more than to go with these girls into Croke Park, give it our best

will be replaced by incoming uachtarán Brian Molloy, a first man to occupy the post in 120 years.

ALONG with an expected 30,000 supporters who will watch Cork take on Waterford in a highly anticipated senior final, there will surely be a sense of achievement by the president as she surveys the scene.

and see how we end up."

She isn't the Cork prototype but that is why Matthew Two-mey was so keen to add her power and ball-winning to the mix. Add the accuracy of her shooting, from play and placed balls, makes her an important contributor.

"I know I'm not a strong runner so I have to play to my strengths most of the time. It's obviously just trying to adapt and use my strengths when I am on the pitch. I have become a bit more versatile. I can't be as one-dimensional as I was prior. I think it's just a learning curve. Liam Cronin has taught me a lot and given me nuggets to work on and so has Matthew."

Lee served a lengthy apprenticeship under legendary goalkeeper Aoife Murray and the Na Piarsaigh netminder was champing at the bit when the time finally came to step into the fold.

"I was ready to go. Aoife, the training with her was savage. There was so much to learn from her and she was so encouraging all the time.

"I was only young when I came on the panel. I came from nowhere. I made one year minor. My camogie has come on massively since I came on board. Even my game play. I think Aoife set down some ground rules for goalk-keeping and it's nice to carry on. I don't think many counties do what we do. In terms of distribution, we do what the men do with the 15th player. I get the ball back a lot.

"I love it. Back in the day it was puck the ball and that was it. Now you are starting attacks all the time. When we played Kilkenny in the quarter-final, Laura Treacy hit a ball back to me, out to Fiona (Keating), then into Amy O'Connor and into the back of the net. Three or four

passages of play that started a way back. Gone are the days where the ball is just planked there."

Hayes' involvement was put in doubt when she broke her foot but two strong substitute appearances in the knockout victories over Kilkenny and Galway make her a strong contender to play an even bigger role tomorrow.

"Originally, we were told it could be at least 12 weeks but in fairness I can't say enough about our physio Donal O'Sullivan," Hayes declares. "Oh my God he's unbelievable. I'd say I had his head wrecked. To be fair between us we just worked hard and tried to get back... I feel good now.

"I just tried to do whatever I could. I was down in the oxygen chamber in Bandon, and we have a river beside our house. It's called the Healing Waters so I was down there as well."



Waterford feel ready to end

[transition year] in school and Beth was in fifth year. When you're that age you do everything by the skin of your teeth."

O'Regan and Carton have been close friends ever since O'Regan's world was turned upside down. In 2006, when she was just seven, her parents, Bryan and Johanna, and her 21-month-old sister Niamh were killed in a fire at their family home. Brianna and her brothers Cian and Aaron managed to escape.

The three siblings went to live with Bryan's parents, Patrick and Joan, around the corner from Beth. She grew up in that embrace. The Cartons were steeped in De La Salle and Brianna was taken there, by the

“

On the bad days you just have to remind yourself you have good people around you and they're proud of you, no matter what

■ Main image: Vikki Faulkner, Niamh Rockett and Orla Hickey of Waterford celebrate after defeating Tipperary in the All-Ireland semi-final at Nowlan Park, Kilkenny. Below left: Waterford goalkeeper Brianna O'Regan holds off Grace O'Brien of Tipperary in the same match. PHOTOGRAPHS: BEN BRADY/INPHO

without her. In the middle of the season, though, there was one weekend which captures the lunatic schedule of a dual player.

"I was in Letterkenny at 2pm on the Saturday for a football championship match,

78 years of hurt



Denis Walsh

Tomorrow, the Déise will contest their first senior camogie final since 1945. Their players are glad they've stuck it out till now

During the 2009 championship, when Niamh Rockett was just 14, Waterford invited her to join them. They needed players to fill out 15-a-side training matches and, in their shallow pool, any qualms about Rockett's age were tranquillised by her brilliance. At the time it gave her conditional status on the panel. On match days she had a jersey but no prospect of playing. That changed when she was 15. Waiting any longer would have been ridiculous.

Waterford reached the junior All-Ireland final in 2009 and Offaly beat them by nine points. A year later, they reached the

final again and Antrim beat them in a replay. That was their station, locked in camogie's third tier. Over the previous 20 years Waterford had won six senior All-Irelands in women's football, and contested another three finals. The camogie team lived in their giant shadow, unnoticed, or seen at a glance.

Tomorrow, Waterford will contest their first senior final in 78 years and, in the slipstream of that momentous breakthrough, Rockett will attempt to become the first player in the game's history to win All-Irelands at all three adult grades: junior, intermediate and senior. Along the way there was no signpost to here.

"Getting over that semi-final this year meant so much, I swear," she says. "I think we celebrated as if we were after winning an All-Ireland. People were saying it was a bit over-the-top maybe, but it just meant so much to us."

Nothing had come easily. After they won the intermediate All-Ireland in 2015 Waterford managed to win just one championship match in their first two seasons at senior level. In their first year Waterford's scoring difference in the round-robin stage was minus 38; a year later it was minus 54. When they mastered qualifying from the group stages, they lost four quarter-finals in a row. All of their learning was in a hard school.

"The difference between intermediate and senior was massive. Massive. We were very green. In the early years Galway gave us a fair few beatings. Other teams gave us beatings too but I just remember Galway

really, really taking us to the cleaners up in Athenry - some really heavy defeats. I think there's still a bit of PTSD from that."

Donal O'Rourke is coach to the Cork senior hurlers now, but he was manager of the Waterford camogie team when they found a way to stand taller. Rockett remembers a Munster championship match against Cork during O'Rourke's time when he wanted to make a statement.

Familiar comforts

Waterford had home advantage and the manager insisted they take the game out of the familiar comforts of the WIT Arena and up to Modeligo, a small club nestled between the Knockmealdown Mountains and the Comeraghs. He wanted them to be awkward and bolshie.

"It's in the middle of nowhere - up hills and down hills," says Rockett. "He organised bagpipers and he made sure there was a bit of hype for the match. He made it like a fortress. All the local people came out. That was the first time there was a really big crowd at one of our games. People really took notice. They beat us in the end but he really spurred us on. He taught us loads. He set the foundations of professionalism in our set-up."

The team kept changing its skin. When Waterford won the intermediate All-Ireland in 2015 Beth Carton and Brianna O'Regan were the whizz kids, young and dauntless.

"Looking back on it now, I wish I appreciated it more," says O'Regan. "I think it was Beth's first year as well. I was in TY

and I came down to Limerick for a camogie championship match the following day [a 206-mile journey]. One of the girls drove me down. I was wrecked after the camogie match, but I was actually fine playing the game. The girls tell me I'm crazy."

Until last year, Waterford hadn't won an All-Ireland quarter-final in 63 years. In the semi-final, they led Cork with seven minutes to go and couldn't see it through. This year, they trailed Tipperary by seven points in the semi-final, midway through the first half, and all of the strides they believed they had made under new management came under the microscope.

"We went away from our principles in the first half, and the things we're good at," says O'Regan. "But we had bottled the hurt from last year and said to ourselves that we can't let it slip away from us again."

"No one panicked," says Fitzgerald. "We all knew what we were doing. We trusted the players around us."

Seán Power took over this year, with the former Waterford hurler Paul Flynn as part of his back room team. In hurling, Power's reputation preceded him: he had coached Austin Gleeson's generation to a minor All-Ireland 10 years ago, and an under-21 title three years later. Power and Flynn, though, had never managed a camogie team before. Their recruitment was seen not just as a coup, but an expression of escalated ambition.

"There's been a massive improvement in 12 months," says Rockett. "Everything is meticulous within our environment. We're not left wanting for anything. Anything we want we can get."

Rockett played when they had next to nothing: no post-training meals, no gear, no expenses, patchy medical back-up, hazy prospects. In the middle of her career, she had every reason to quit. Her knee caved in and it took three surgeries to put it back together. After 14 months, she had to learn to run again. That was eight years ago.

She kept going. Fifteen years. Now this. Imagine.

on she was too good to be released. This season she's in All-Star territory.

Source of conflict

Are they better than last year? Without question. Among other things, Annie Fitzgerald came back. She was just a teenager when she broke on to the team in 2018, and was a fixture in the starting 15 for the next three years. Then she took an Erasmus year in Cyprus as part of her linguistics degree in UL, and when she returned she committed to the Waterford footballers for a year.

Dual players have been a source of conflict in women's Gaelic games for years, but in Waterford there was no recent history of the practice. With the blessing of the two senior managers, Fitzgerald tried it.

Between the LGFA and the Camogie Association the fixtures programmes are barely on speaking terms. Fitzgerald, though, was lucky. In the course of the season, there were just two head-on clashes. For the first, she went with the footballers, for the second she went with the camogie team. On both days, the other team won



Camogie final previews

By Daragh Ó Conchúir

Sunday

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Final: Cork v Waterford, 5pm

There will be a new energy about the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior final in 2023 with a unique pairing of neighbours and keen rivals that have crossed swords on plenty of occasions in recent years.

Waterford go in as underdogs perhaps but after securing their first triumph over Cork since returning to the top grade in the Munster Championship this year, they will not be cowed.

Managed by Sean Power, they won the Very League Division 1B crown with a degree of ease. Their progress through the group stages of the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Championship was similarly without fuss but their All-Ireland semi-fi-

nal defeat of Tipperary made up for the lack of drama up to that point. They went in trailing by just one and at the final whistle were one up.

Brianna O'Regan, who has been one of the country's top goalies for a number of years now, scored a whopping point from a free on her own 65. Vikki Faulkner, Lorraine Bray, O'Brien and Beth Carton (inset) were others to provide huge performances. Captain Niamh Rockett is aiming to join rare if not exclusive company by adding a senior medal to premier junior and intermediate mementoes won in 2011 and 2015.

Cork represent serious opposition, and have undoubtedly come through a more rigorous path. They came out on top against champions Kilkenny by a point in the quarter-final, and League victors Galway by three in the semi-final.

The return from injury of Ashling Thompson, Orta Cronin, Laura Hayes and Orlaith Cahalane at almost the same time as the knockout stages of the Championship got under way has suddenly given Matthew Twomey real depth.

While free-taking has been an issue, skipper Amy O'Connor has been doing well of late and is the third leading scorer overall with 3-30, 3-7 from play. Katrina

Mackey, with 3-13, is only four points shy of the Championship's leading scorer from play, Tipperary's Cáit Devane on 6-8.

Amy Lee has made the goalkeeper's jersey her own while Libby Coppinger, Laura Treacy and Pamela Mackey are tremendous defenders. It is the running power of Saoirse McCarthy, Fiona Keating and Heather Looney that is among Cork's greatest weapons, however, and they will look to break the opposition defensive lines to create an overload as often as possible.

If the weather co-operates, this could be a high-scoring tussle.

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate Final: Meath v Derry, 2.45pm

These are two teams with very similar profiles, having had a brief period at senior level after All-Ireland intermediate success in 2012 and 2017 respectively and then enduring a rebuilding phase upon their relegations. Derry had two years at the highest grade before making the drop but the rules had been changed



surrounding newcomers being given a year's grace by the time Meath made the step up and they fell through the trapdoor at the end of their only season at senior.

This is only Meath's second ever appearance in an intermediate final, while it is Derry's third, Antrim proving too strong for the Oak Leafers in their maiden appearance in 2001.

Aine McAllister and Aoife Ní Chaiside are among the survivors from Derry's last triumph 11 years ago, while Meath can call on Aoife Minogue, Claire Coffey, Ellen Burke and Amy Gaffney.

Both teams competed in Division 2A of the Very League and Meath's two-point victory over Derry in the final round earned the Royals a berth in the final at the expense of the Ulster side. They came away from Croke Park without the silverware, however, Kerry prevailing by the odd point in 27 in a tremendous game.

Derry came through the group stages of the Glen Dimplex Championship without any bother but looked to be in for more semi-final heartbreak when they

trailed late on to Kilkenny. This time though, Aoife Shaw converted a free to bring them level and with McAllister in inspirational form they made the most of extra time with six consecutive points to secure the verdict.

Meath lost to Westmeath in the group stages and had to play an All-Ireland quarter-final but that may have been a blessing, as they conceded only four points in the second half to win by six. That set up a rematch with their Lakeside neighbours and this time, it was the Greens that took the spoils, a goal from Gaffney on the hour ensuring qualification after a tense and fiercely-fought battle.

The teams know each other well, having been operating in the same tiers of League and Championship over the past six seasons. There has rarely been much between them: expect the same today.

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior Final: Clare v Tipperary, 12.50pm

The day's proceedings begin with the first of two all-Munster pairings as the second teams of Clare and Tipperary do battle for the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior honours.

Tipperary had far too much firepower for Wicklow and Cavan in the round-robin

stages of the competition, scoring 8-31 in those two outings to advance to the semi-final. Jean Kelly, Claire Stakeelum and Jenny Grace have exhibited all their ability and experience to get to this juncture with Kelly in particular, an outstanding form: snuffing out her threat will be a priority for the Banner.

Clare were denied by a point at the end of two periods of extra time in last year's semi-final by eventual champions Antrim. They have had the look of a group on a mission all season and Sarah Loughnane scored two goals in the quarter-final defeat of Cavan which brought them back to the penultimate stages. They were involved in a nail-biting affair against Armagh, trailing by five points at the three-quarter mark, but found another gear and some fabulous point-scoring from Loughnane and Grace Carmody saw them advance by the minimum.

Caoimhe Lally and the vastly experienced Laura McMahon form a formidable defensive spine, while Carmody, Loughnane and Olivia Phelan are considerable offensive threats and Clare have clearly learned to close out very close games. They will be optimistic about scaling the peak but so will Tipperary, and something will have to give.

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

By Philip Lanigan



HERE'S something you probably didn't know about Hilda Breslin. Her great grandfather was James Larkin. Irish republican, socialist and trade union leader, the man who drove the Dublin lock-out of 1913, Larkin made a stand with workers over pay and conditions, as well as their right to organise, a stand that gained global coverage and became a seminal moment in Irish history.

On the eve of her inauguration as president of the Camogie Association in 2021, Breslin recalled how 'Big Jim' and his sister Delia founded the Women's Workers Union. Her grandfather 'young' Jim Larkin took up the baton in his own way, becoming a Labour Party politician and trade union leader. And his daughter Hilda Larkin-Breslin - her mother - became 'involved in SIPTU and active in setting up centres for the unemployed in Kildare and in fighting for women's issues'.

Worth knowing, considering some of the issues bubbling in what has been a headline-grabbing year for the Camogie Association.

The scheduled All-Stars trip to Canada in May, with all the promotional opportunity set to flow from that, was cancelled in the wake of various public player statements critical of its timing ahead of the championship.

And recently the #UnitedforEquality protests have seen players wearing t-shirts and throwing being delayed. There is frustration felt by the Gaelic Players Association and its members that the overall integration process between the GAA, Camogie Association and Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) isn't happening fast enough.

There is a steering group with President Mary McAleese overseeing the integration process between the GAA, Camogie Association and LGFA, currently separate bodies with separate memberships.

Today at Croke Park a triple-header of senior, intermediate and junior finals is expected to draw a bumper crowd of around 30,000 to go with live RTE coverage. Waterford's presence in a first final since 1945 has helped to generate huge interest with six different counties involved.

The 20x20 promotional campaign - 'If she can't see it, she can't be it' - has helped drive interest in women's sport across the board and there is the sense of a rising tide lifting all boats.

'We changed our playing rules so we would say that we are a much different game than we were, say, five years ago. We're a very different sport,' says Breslin.

'We saw five years ago a huge growth in underage membership and for women's sports activities and that is starting to filter up now and you're seeing it at the adult level. You're seeing the sponsorship, the coverage, all of that feeds in.

'Ten years ago, women's sport was a niche area. People didn't follow it to the same extent. With the push on women's sport we've seen it come into its natural habitat which is the 20 or 24-year-old who has been playing all the way up.

'The 20x20 campaign pricked people's consciousness a bit. There's a lot of lip service that goes on about supporting girls, supporting women, you know that idea that I support my whole family the same, I treat my girls the same - but actually I attend my boys matches and I don't attend my girls matches.

'What 20x20 started to do was call them out on that. That it doesn't matter what you tweet, it doesn't matter what you post on social media, if you're not sitting in the stands you're not supporting women's sport. That's the reality.'

Larkin evoked James Larkin when she took over the role: 'Larkinism was about fighting not just for a loaf

In the spirit of Larkin

Breslin's famous ancestor inspires her in drive to make Gaelic games more accessible and equitable



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Camogie president Hilda Breslin (third from left) with the six captains from today's finals and Yvonne Burke of sponsors Glen Dimplex

of bread but also for a rose in a vase on the workers' table.' What exactly did she mean by that?

'I was raised in a Larkin house, a socialist house. We were trade unionists and the Larkin ideal is that it's not just about a working wage, it's about all of the rest of your life. So the bread on the table is the sustenance and the rose on the table is the extra that people deserve.

'In some ways, you could say sport is the rose on the table. It's the extra piece, the piece that makes people's

lives worth living. Because nobody should be living to work. Whatever the extra is, we all deserve the extra.

'That was the thing with 1913 where they were literally working seven days a week and there was no extra. We slightly take it for granted now that the rose on the table is there for everybody - but it's not.

'It's one of the things I've raised, that when we look at integration and we look at facilities and we look at increasing (price of) memberships,

we're looking at a Gaelic games that will not be accessible to working-class families. The people won't be able to afford to join clubs. We've seen in Dublin how membership can be up sometimes at €200 or €300.

'We are the most wonderful community sport in the world and we say this all of the time. But we have to be based in all of our communities. There's an onus on all of us to ensure that we have access for everybody for Gaelic games.

'Sports should be access for everybody. At the basis of all our associations is the club - sometimes that gets forgotten. And that's what you can't forget. I wouldn't like us to turn into an association where the club is at the bottom of the run. And they aren't in camogie at that's what we really need to protect.'

Given how that principle of fighting for rights is a long part of Breslin's family tradition, how did it feel to witness the public row over expanded inter-county player charter for 2024 - one which has since been agreed - and the narrative over players not being properly looked after?

'The Camogie Association's credentials for players and for women's sport are there. We're 120 years in existence, it's a given. Since 20 the Government (support) scheme is in place and we have fought very hard for player welfare.

'We met the GPA in advance of the players' protests and we did have very productive meeting with them. They came to Ard Comhairle (Central Council) and presented their players' report to us. We were very

'Split season impacted cancelled All-Stars trip'

THE Camogie All-Stars trip to Calgary in Canada was scheduled for May 19-25 and was to feature the 2021 and 2022 PwC All-Star teams.

However, it was cancelled after a threatened Cork player boycott over it being too close to the start of the All-Ireland championship.

'There was a vote taken where our players clearly said there is a club window and an inter-county

window - and we will respect that club window absolutely. The timing is very difficult with the split season,' says Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin.

'We believed we had a window. I had spoken to managers over the weekend. But if players do not want to travel on an All-Stars trip we absolutely respect their right.

'It was going to be an enormous opportunity for Canada, to grow the

sport. And for the players, many of whom really wanted to travel. The LGFA went before the league final. They didn't seem to get the same backlash.

'I'm not sure it will happen again, to be honest. To be fair the GPA were very supportive of it, we had the discussion about where could it re-sit? And we all said where is the space in the calendar where it doesn't impinge?'



COMMUNITY:
Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin believes clubs are central to GAA's ethos

President sees full integration of GAA by 2026

By Philip Lanigan

HILDA BRESLIN is part of the steering group tasked with mapping out the process of integration for the GAA, Camogie Association and LGFA, a group chaired by Mary McAleese. She has a clear vision herself of where the process needs to go – and how fast.

'If we were founded today we would be all one,' says Breslin. 'That would just be it. It would seem very simple to say that is what we should be. Our clubs to a large extent, certainly our new clubs, are one club. They're not without their problems obviously and some of them are local based problems rather than structure.'

'I think there is an appetite for integration but also a very clear view of "why is this not happening? This should happen immediately". We can all sit around and wring our hands and say this hasn't happened before and we tried this and got it this far but that is only going to delay us.'

'This should happen quickly. The integration committee released a statement to say that in February 2024 we would have a structure, we would have a timeline, and we would have a framework.'

'People maybe have got frustrated because they think we have been working in some darkened room in Croke Park, working in secret, but we haven't. We have been engaging widely. Currently there is a member survey which will drive the change.'

'We have listened to county boards, we have listened to the clubs, and we have listened to the provinces. We have taken all those consultations on. My belief is that it should be one association from top to bottom, from ground up. What we don't want to do is replicate what we have already – that to me is a nonsense. Why would we do that? It will be one association based on the Gaelic games family. One based on equity and equality.'

What of speculation then that it could be 10 years off happening?

'I'm not having it. Firstly to be very fair, three presidencies went in with a vision that we would do this. We were coming out of Covid so the first year was difficult and maybe it didn't take the same priority because we were concentrating on getting games back. A working group was set up then with the three presidents and the three Ard Stiúrthóir (director general).'

'We were honoured and delighted that Mary McAleese agreed to chair this group last autumn. People sometimes say, "Oh this will take 10 years". I think it's quite funny at times because people clearly don't know Mary McAleese if they think she will take 10 years doing this.'

'If I were to guess, if you were to come back to me and say 2026, will we be one association? I would be very disappointed if we weren't. Now maybe that is overly ambitious but if there is a will...'

Integration has the potential to be transformative and validate claims that the GAA is one of the great amateur sporting organisations.

'It is one of the greatest but it is a national governing body that doesn't provide sport to all its members,' says Breslin. 'It is providing to male players largely. No disrespect to rounders or handball but outside of those it is an enormous association that does not provide gender parity or sport to all its players.'

'I'm not sure you can call that a world class leader if you are not providing support and access to all players.'

'What you have seen and what you will see increasingly is sponsors are very clear on this, governments are very clear on this and the membership are very clear on this – we must provide to all genders. That is when you can call this new Gaelic games family a world leader and a community-based sport.'

clear we would work with them, particularly on the medical element that all of our players would have a baseline, to establish that.

'What we needed was the data to do that. A report was produced across the two codes, across all counties, across all grades. But it didn't say to me Cork camogie players or whoever aren't having a physio at training. What we have agreed is that the data will be regathered for championship 2023.'

'I said this from the very first call with the chairs of the counties, we would respect the players' protest. Because, if anything, I have always been taught you respect somebody's right to protest.'

'To me it was very much about finding a solution. That became a bit frustrating in that we wanted to find a solution, we wanted to work together and I'm not sure if the protests were actually contributing anything to us working together to improve. But I understand where players are coming from because they saw an inequity compared to

INFLUENCE:
Breslin's ideals are informed by her great grandfather Jim Larkin

the male player. We can all explain why that can happen. I can tell you that if I don't have 80,000 in Croke Park on Sunday, I don't have the revenue to support a female player the same way as the GAA have the revenue to support a male player. That's the reality.'

'If I say that to a 22-year-old female, she quite rightly doesn't care. What she cares about is the principle that everybody should be equal. You have to respect that prin-

ciple while also trying to govern as a national body.'

'There is a charter in place. A voluntary charter. That got lost. There is a grant to counties and counties then on top of that grant provide enormous support to their inter-county teams.'

'It's €14,000 for team expenses that come out of the grant. That goes to each county. We would have had teams being supported on top of that anywhere in the region of €40,000, even up to €100,000 and €120,000.'

When it comes to the overall pot and how a female player is supported compared to a male player, in terms of expenses and player welfare supports, there is a discrepancy.

'Absolutely there is,' says Breslin. 'But the male player is also funded by a GAA that has a turnover somewhere in the region of €60million. We have a turnover somewhere in the region of €3million, as has ladies football. So there isn't like with like when it comes to the associations.'

Where is the future given Limerick senior hurling manager John Kiely said he fully supports the idea of equity for inter-county players – but not at the expense of the men's pot?

'I think it's interesting that people say we want equity but we don't want to give up anything. A new Gaelic games family cannot sustain inter-county codes at the level of where the male inter-county player is running to. That is probably a reality. If we were to say, well, we also need that amount of money to be available for female inter-county players, then I think most county boards would say that would bankrupt us very quickly and we would be gone.'

'You have to say where are the economies of scale? Where can there be some sort of a levelling? You see backroom teams of 15 and 20 people. You're not talking about levelling player expenses, that the Mayo player needs to reduce the player expense. Maybe what we're saying is that there needs to be a realignment of inter-county spend.'

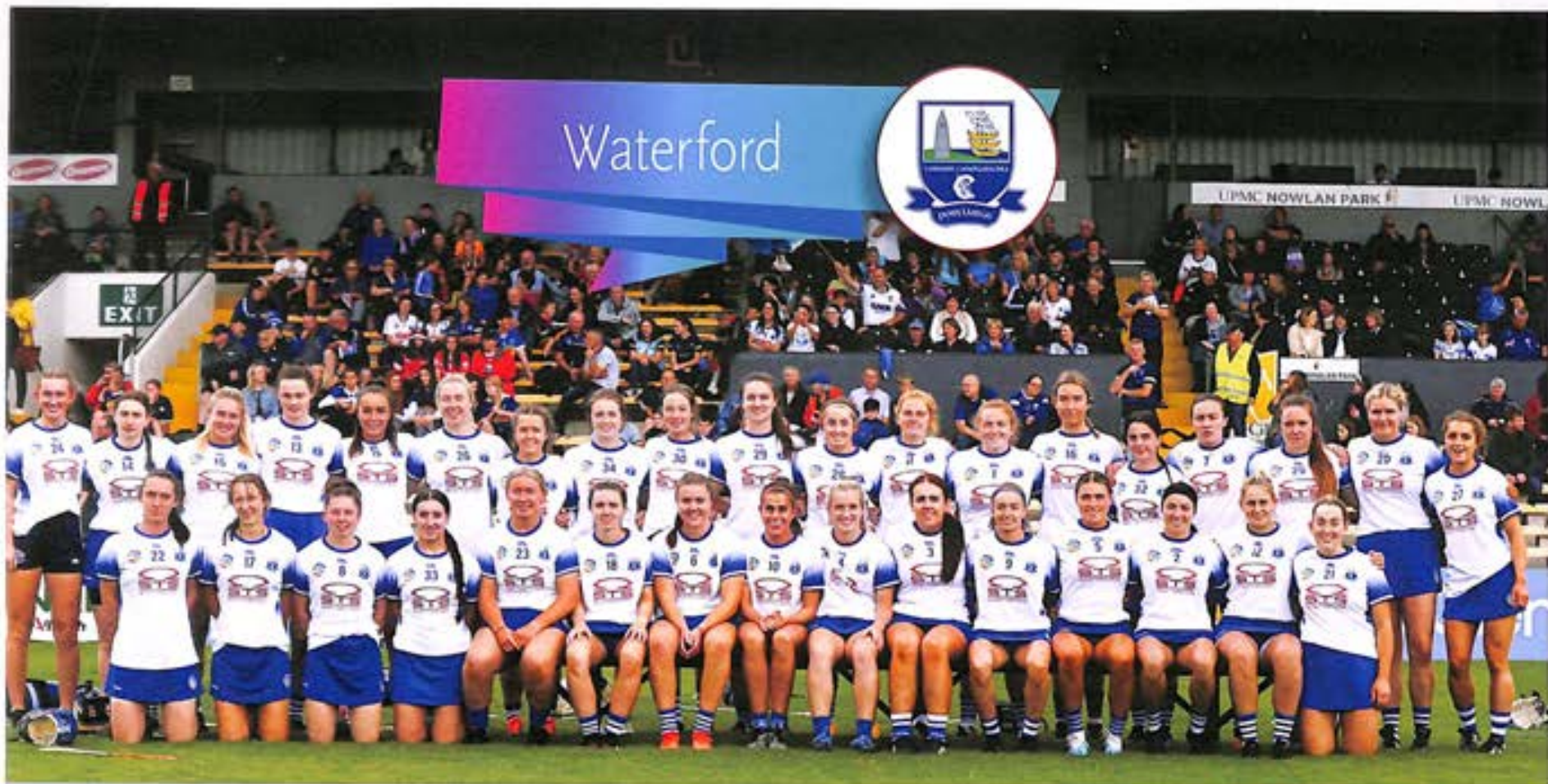
'Personally, and not speaking as Uachtarán but as a member of the

GAA, I think that clubs and people are realistic about that because we also have to sustain the club. We have to sustain coaching; we have to sustain the growth of Gaelic games at all levels. And one or two per cent of our players cannot be the ones taking all of the pot in order to support their game.'

'I find it interesting then when we hear managers coming out and saying "oh we support equality, we support equity". Are you willing to give up your pitch on a Monday so that the female player can train? Are you willing to train in a different place?'

'Is John Kiely going to say, "I don't need to train in Limerick, I can train somewhere else" because the LGFA or the Camogie Association need to be in those pitches?'

'That would be a hard conversation for people to have. And maybe these managers would say "absolutely" but it's not that long ago where teams would have been asked to move because a male inter-county team was playing, or an inter-county camogie match would have to be moved because the team might be training.'



Waterford



Front Row (L to R)
 Bevin Bowdren, Rachael Walsh, Anne Fitzgerald, Mairead O'Brien, Roisin Kirwan, Niamh Murphy, Orla Hickey, Mairéad Black, Anna Hickey, Sarah Morrissey, Deborah Breenford,
 Mairéad Power, Anne O'Regan, Hayleigh Adeson, Rachael Walsh, Mairéad Power, Shauna Fitzgerald, Anne Corcoran and Megan O'Regan

Back Row (L to R)
 Tara Power, Aoife Landers, Orla Hickey, Lorraine Forrest, Louise Forrest, Niamh Carroll, Clodagh Carroll, Niamh Rockett, Kate Lynch, Abby Flynn, Lorraine Bray, Keeley Corbett Barry,
 Vikki Falconer, Abby Flynn and Clara Griffin

WATERFORD SENIOR TEAM

Phort Láirge - Bán Agus Gorm

1 Brianna O' Regan Brianna Ní Riagáin De La Salle		
2 Vikki Falconer Vikki Ní Fackna Tramore	3 Iona Heffernan Iona Ní hÍdeáin Ferrybank	4 Kate Lynch Cait Ní Loimigh Galtee
5 Keeley Corbett Barry Killy Ní Choirde-de Barra De La Salle	6 Clodagh Carroll Clodagh Ní Chearbhaill Galtee	7 Mairéad Power Mairéad de Paor Clonsilla Power
8 Orla Hickey Orla Ní hÍdeáin Cappoquin	9 Abby Flynn Abby Ní Flainn De La Salle	12 Lorraine Bray (C) Lorraine de Brae Cappoquin
10 Mairéad O'Brien Mairéad Ní Bhriain Modelgo	11 Beth Carton Beth Ní Artáin De La Salle	
13 Annie Fitzgerald Aine Ní Ceannailt Galtee	14 Niamh Rockett Niamh Rockett St. Anne's	15 Rachael Walsh Rachael Bhreathnach Butlerstown

IONADAÍ

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 16 Hayleigh Adeson - Hayleigh Adeson
Tramore | 21 Tara Power - Tara de Paor
Tramore | 26 Niamh Murphy - Niamh Ní Mhuirich
De La Salle |
| 17 Aoife Landers - Aoife de Londain
An Rinn | 22 Louise Forrest - Louise Forrest
Galtee | 27 Anna Hickey - Anna Ní hÍdeáin
Modelgo |
| 18 Roisin Kirwan - Roisin Ní Chianbháin
St. Anne's | 23 Niamh Carton - Niamh Ní Chaitin
Dungarvan | 28 Dearbhla Breenford - Dearbhla Dúinnéamach
Abbeyside |
| 19 Anne Corcoran - Anne Ní Chioráin
Galtee | 24 Shauna Fitzgerald - Shauna Ní Ceannailt
Galtee | 29 Sarah Morrissey - Socha Ní Muirne
An Rinn |
| 20 Clara Griffin - Clara Ní Grifín
Tramore | 25 Megan O'Regan - Megan Ní Riagáin
Abbeyside | 30 Bevin Bowdren - Bevinne Buidéin
St. Anne's |

PLAYER PROFILES - CORK



Amy Lee
Na Piarasigh
Client Associate



Meabh Murphy
Ballinora
Student



Libby Coppinger
St Colums
Depositary Officer



Pamela Mackey
Douglas
Technical Operations Engineer



Meabh Cahalane
St Finbarrs
Accountant



Laura Treacy
Killeagh
Nurse



Izzy O Regan
Ballygarvan
Customer Success Manager



Saoirse Mc Carthy
Courcey Rovers
Student



Aoife Healy
Aghada
Student



Chloe Sigerson
Killeagh
Postal Operative



Fiona Keating
Courcey Rovers
Student



Hannah Looney
Killeagh
Chemical Engineer



Amy O'Connor
St. Vincents
Project Manager



Katrina Mackey
Douglas
Post Doctoral Researcher



Sorcha McCartan
St Finbarrs
Student



Molly Lynch
Sarsfields
Student



Emma Murphy
Glen Rovers
Student



Hayley Ryan
Blackrock
Secondary School Teacher



Cliona Healy
Aghabullogue
Student



Clodagh Finn
Fr. O'Neills
Student



Aoife O'Neill
St Finbarrs
Student



Ali Smith
Aghada
Student



Aoife Barrett
Aghabullogue
Student



Orla Cronin
Enniskeane
Physiotherapist



Kate Wall
St Finbarrs
St Finbarrs



Olivia Mc Allen
Sarsfields
Student



Laura Hayes
St Catherines
Student



Aisling Egan
St Finbarrs
Student



Orlaith Cahalane
St Finbarrs
Student



Ashling Thompson
Milford
Personal Trainer

2023 Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Championship Path to the Final



Cork

Date	Team 1	Score	Team 2	Venue
03/06/2023	Galway	1.12 0.12	Cork	Kenny Park Athenry
17/06/2023	Cork	3.19 1.10	Down	Páirc Uí Chaoimh
01/07/2023	Clare	0.08 3.19	Cork	Cusack Park Ennis
09/07/2023	Cork	2.14 2.13	Kilkenny	Croke Park
22/07/2023	Cork	0.15 2.06	Galway	UPMC Nowlan Park



Waterford

Date	Team 1	Score	Team 2	Venue
03/06/2023	Offaly	1.09 2.26	Waterford	Banagher
18/06/2023	Limerick	0.11 2.19	Waterford	Cappamore
01/07/2023	Waterford	5.16 0.10	Antrim	SETU Arena
22/07/2023	Waterford	1.12 1.11	Tipperary	UPMC Nowlan Park

PLAYER PROFILES - WATERFORD



Brianna O'Regan
De La Salle
Special Needs Assistant



Vikki Falconer
Tramore
Primary School Teacher



Iona Heffernan
Ferrybank
Insurance Intermediary



Kate Lynch
Gailltír
PE & Maths Teacher



Keeley Corbett Barry
De La Salle
Student



Clodagh Carroll
Gailltír
Student



Mairead Power
Clonea Power
Trainee Actuary



Orla Hickey
Cappoquin
Personal Trainer



Abby Flynn
De La Salle
Student



Mairéad O'Brien
Modeligo
Student Physio



Beth Carton
De La Salle
Secondary School Teacher



Lorraine Bray
Cappoquin
Early Years Practitioner



Annie Fitzgerald
Gailltír
Student



Niamh Rockett
St. Anne's
Secondary School Teacher



Rachael Walsh
Butlerstown
Student



Hayleigh Acheson
Tramore
Student



Aoife Landers
An Rinn
Secondary School Teacher



Roisin Kirwan
St. Anne's
Student



Anne Corcoran
Gailltír
Radiographer



Clara Griffin
Tramore
Primary School Teacher



Tara Power
Tramore
Strength & Conditioning Coach



Laoise Forrest
Gailltír
Poynstown Sport Horses



Niamh Curran
Dungarvan
Student



Shauna Fitzgerald
Gailltír
Sports & Societies Officer



Megan O'Regan
Abbeyside
Physio



Niamh Murphy
De La Salle
Analyst at Teva



Anna Hickey
Modeligo
Student



Dearbhla Beresford
Abbeyside
Student



Sarah Morrissey
An Rinn
Microbiology Analyst



Bevin Bowdren
St. Anne's
Student



Natasha Dobbyn
Tramore
Student



Onelia Whelan
An Rinn
Student



Melanie Buck
St Annes
Student



Leah Sheridan
Gailltír
Juice Master



Premier Junior Final
Clare v Tipperary

Referee:
Bernard Heaney

Club:
Clann na nGael, Co. Meath



Senior Final
Cork v Waterford

Referee:
John Dermody

Club:
Lough Lene Gaels, Co. Westmeath



Intermediate Final
Derry v Meath

Referee:
Barry Nea

Club:
Clonkill Camogie Club, Co. Westmeath

Cork frustration washed away in a red tsunami



All-Ireland senior camogie final
Cork 5-13
Waterford 0-9

Eoghan Cormican
 Croke Park



Cork's hurt locker overflowed. Five years of pent-up pain and the torment of four consecutive final defeats swept up and submerged Waterford and all the romanticism that followed the final newcomers to Croke Park.

Amy O'Connor was nearing the end of her acceptance speech when the heavens opened at GAA HQ. The rain thought to oblige by holding off for the game itself. But not even an hour of still skies in the capital could prevent a final washout.

With 26 minutes left to run in this decider and Cork 18 points in front, all that remained to be decided was the size of victory. And on an afternoon of a record final attendance, we wound up with

the biggest winning margin since Dublin whacked Mayo by 33 points way back in 1959. As much as the Camogie Association wanted an audience that reflected greater interest in their showpiece, they'd surely have preferred a competitive contest. Because this was anything but a contest.

Cork's ruthlessness and relentlessness was to be expected. The surprise was that Waterford weren't better equipped to deal with the red tsunami. Or at the very least stymie it early doors so that a team appearing in their first senior final were allowed to settle and grow legs in the game.

The Déise didn't employ a sweeper and matched up 15 on 15. Admirable, but also naive. They paid dearly for the space this facilitated Cork's inside line of O'Connor, Katrina Mackey, and Sorcha McCartan. Their defence, which suffered the blow of losing Vikki Falconer inside five minutes, was exposed early and often.

Having spent far too much time in the losing enclosure in recent years and having been caught with far too many late final goals, when the chance was presented to Cork here for an early kill, they didn't need to be asked twice.

We can only surmise how

How they lined out



1. A Lee		
4. P Mackey	3. L Coppinger	5. M Cahalane
13. A Fitzgerald	15. R Walsh	14. N Rockett
9. A Healy	6. L Treacy	7. I O'Regan
11. B Carton	7. M Power	10. M O'Brien
27. L Hayes	12. H Looney	9. A Flynn
12. L Bray	9. A Flynn	
10. C Sigerson	11. F Keating	8. S McCarthy
6. C Carroll	8. O Hickey	2. V Falconer
13. A O'Connor	14. K Mackey	15. S McCartan
5. K Corbett Barry	4. K Lynch	22. L Forrest
1. B O'Regan		

Matthew Twomey's charges would have responded to having their first-half lead cut to six at the break had Beth Carton hit the target with her injury-time penalty. For as much as the miss further deflated the Déise, the lack of a green flag conceded would have deepened Cork's belief

that they were not for catching.

Their work-rate, running lines, and passages of intricate passing went to a higher level upon the restart. It was the tireless Carton who was turned over for the first of O'Connor's one-minute-and-59-second hat-trick on 33



minutes. Fed by Fiona Keating, O'Connor finished clinically.

Having arrived into the final with three green flags beside her name, the captain's goal total was sensationally doubled in record speed.

Her turn of pace produced a super individual second, with her almost two-minute hat-trick coming at the end of a Mackey assist.

An interval lead of 1-9 to 0-3 had now doubled to 4-9 to 0-3.

Having arrived into Croke Park with the weight of four consecutive final defeats hanging over them, Twomey's charges showed themselves to be totally unburdened by the narrow All-Ireland final losses of 2021 and 22, and the league final setbacks of last year and last April.

With 26 minutes remaining, they knew their five-year

famine was no more. Yet they still refused to begin the party early.

Experienced campaigners Pamela Mackey, Libby Coppinger, and Laura Treacy continued to hound and harry every Waterford forward who set eyes on Amy Lee's goal.

Annie Fitzgerald and Niamh Rockett got themselves into plenty of menacing positions but Waterford's forward pair had only a white flag between them to show at the end of 60 minutes.

Further out, Laura Hayes ran herself empty disrupting Lorraine Bray's link game. Beside her at midfield, Hannah Looney transported possession and transitioned the play often.

Fiona Keating's 51st minute goal meant all six starting forwards had their names scribbled on a busy

Crucial Hogg block key as Banner lift Junior crown

Nobody doubted the moment that altered the flow of the All-Ireland Premier Junior Camogie final.

A wonderfully opportunistic goal from Rachel O'Dwyer had helped Tipperary established 1-3 to 0-0 lead by the end of the opening quarter and had Clodagh Horgan rattled the net in the 17th minute, it would have been hard to see Clare turning around a nine-point deficit after not having yet raised any sort of flag.

But Sinéad Hogg came from nowhere to get a block in. Goalkeeper Lauren Solan gathered possession and within seconds, Sarah Loughnane was slotting a shot into the far corner of the Tipp net from a tight angle.

"It's fine margins," admitted Clare manager, John Carmody.

"Tipperary were a fine team and were unlucky to go down to 14 players. Then they showed great character to come back at us. They held us scoreless after going down to



All-Ireland premier junior camogie final
Clare 3-7
Tipperary 1-9

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Croke Park



14 players. That shows character.

"That was a six-point swing, a brilliant block from Sinéad, a great goal from Sarah at the other end. That settled us and I think from thereon, we were the better team over the hour."

It was Clara Brennan who received her marching orders in the 42nd minute after being shown a second yellow card. By then, Clare led by seven, having been delighted to go in

at the interval, level on 1-5 apiece.

"It took us a while to settle and get the nerves down but once we got going we gave it hell for leather," said Caoimhe Cahill, who will be back at HQ with the ladies footballers next weekend.

"At half-time, it was a draw game so it was go from the start again. It was just an unbelievable feeling to get over the line. The first goal definitely settled things. Once we got our feet grounded, we got that good goal and thank God got over the line."

"We looked a bit nervous but in fairness to Tipperary they hit the ground running," Carmody noted. "Their use of the ball, their turnovers — they scored 1-2 turning over ball in our half-back line. Sarah Loughnane popped up with the goal and that was it. We dominated the second and third quarters, played excellent camogie. Then it was about seeing it out. It's an amazing feeling to win an All-Ireland and a huge boost for



camogie in County Clare."

Labhaoise O'Donnell raised a green flag in the 38th minute and that was enough to see them home.

"It's unbelievable," said 19-year-old vice-captain Caoimhe Lally. "I'm still emotional, I'm shaking. We worked so hard for this from the start of the year. We were behind in games a good few times before and I feel like having the experience of Laura McMahon, Sinéad

O'Keefe, and in the Armagh game, we were in the exact same position, to have that to look back on, we could push on."

Added Niamh Mulqueen: "The last few minutes they were on the attack and were very, very unlucky not to get a goal. To have an intermediate and senior team will be savage. Our Munster campaign was at intermediate level and that stood to us. We only lost by two points to Kerry and

Clare's Jennifer Daly goes for the sliotar ahead of Tipperary's Ciara Ryan during the All-Ireland Premier Junior Camogie Final at Croke Park. Picture: Laszlo Gezo

they're an excellent team. We were ready for the big test and we're looking forward to it."

Scorers for Clare: S Loughnane 1-3 (0-3fs); L O'Donnell 1-1; C Cahill 1-0; M McMahon 0-2; J Daly 0-1

Scorers for Tipperary: J Kelly 0-5 (4 fs); R O'Dwyer 1-0; C Brennan 0-1; C Stakelum, C Horgan 0-1 each.

CLARE: L Solan, S Hogg, C Lally, R Kelly, E Casey, L McMahon, S O'Keefe, N Mulqueen, G Carmody, L O'Donnell, M McMahon, J Daly, C Cahill, S Loughnane, O Phelan.

Subs: A Anderson for Phelan (ht), C Quailly for L McMahon temp (44-45), Quailly for M McMahon; A Cooney for Loughnane (56), R Crowe for Hogg (60+1), K Toomey for Cahill (60+2)

TIPPERARY: A O'Brien, L Cahill, A Sheedy, C Ryan, R Maher, C Walsh, C McKeogh, E Cunneen, K Fitzgerald, R O'Dwyer, C Brennan, C Stakelum, J Kelly, A Dwyer, C Horgan.

Subs: A Callanan for Maher (ht), A Crossie for Fitzgerald (ht), A McLoughney for Dwyer (37), N Murray for Sheedy (41), C Shanahan for O'Dwyer (53)

REFEREE: Bernard Heaney (Meath)



REBEL ROAR: Cork's Amy O'Connor lifts the O'Duffy Cup after their victory over Waterford in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final at Croke Park. Picture: Bryan Keane/Inpho

scoresheet. The assist for this fifth goal was provided by sub Orla Cronin, Cork's bench again delivering a bounce.

Another sub, Orlaith Cahalane split the posts at the death, with Ashling Thompson twice off-target.

For Waterford, a chastening afternoon that will take a long time to recover from.

They finished the first half with just three points — all from the stick of Carton — and just one from play. They finished the half ruing a missed Carton penalty.

Outside of their ace, no Waterford forward sparked real trouble on the rare occasion they enjoyed clean possession within range of Lee's posts. No score at all in the opening quarter said as much.

Down the other end, O'Connor and company were turning Waterford's rearguard

inside out. They were four to the good, three of those O'Connor white flags, when Carton belatedly opened their opponents' account on 15 minutes.

Sorcha McCartan's 25th minute major to send Cork 1-7 to 0-2 clear sent them well down the road to victory. The destination was reached long before full-time.

Having wobbled mid-season when suffering four consecutive defeats between league and championship, Cork unearthed form and unshakable confidence at the right end of the season.

All-Ireland title number 29. Old order restored. Romanticism and a first Waterford win will have to wait for another year.

Scorers for Cork: A O'Connor (3-7, 0-5 frees); S McCartan (1-1); F Keating (1-0); K Mackey (0-2); C Sigerson (0-1 free); H Looney, O Cahalane (0-1 each).

Scorers for Waterford: B Carton (0-7, 0-5 frees); N Rockett, L Forrest (0-1 each).

CORK: A Lee; P Mackey, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; A Healy, L Treacy, I O'Regan; L Hayes, H Looney; C Sigerson, F Keating, S McCarthy; A O'Connor, K Mackey, S McCartan.

Subs: C Healy for Hayes (44); O Cronin for McCartan (46); A Thompson for McCarthy (51); O Cahalane for Sigerson (52); M Murphy for Mackey (53).

WATERFORD: B O'Regan; L Forrest, K Lynch, K Corbett Barry, V Falconer, O Hickey, C Carroll; A Flynn, L Bray; M O'Brien, M Power, B Carton; N Rockett, R Walsh, A Fitzgerald.

Subs: I Heffernan for Falconer (5 mins, inj); B Bowdren for M Power (HT); T Power for O'Brien (40); C Griffin for Carroll (42); S Fitzgerald for Lynch (54).
Referee: J Dermody (Westmeath).

Munster loss to Waterford was 'turning point in season'

Paul Keane

They won't want to hear it now but it turns out that Waterford may have created a monster back in late April when they beat Cork in the Munster championship.

That quarter-final win, Waterford's first from over a dozen attempts against Cork since being restored to the top grade, came in Cork's backyard too, at Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

Afterwards, according to Meabh Cahalane, the air was thick with tension in the Cork dressing room. A quiet fury gnawed at them all summer.

"They really hit us that day in Páirc Uí Chaoimh," said Cahalane of the Déise. "They outworked us; the intensity they brought was huge. They

really beat us all over the field that day. I think we kind of looked at ourselves collectively and individually and without anybody saying too much, training the next week went up a level.

"We felt we had something to prove. I definitely think that could have been a turning point in our season."

Cork extracted revenge at Croke Park and Waterford were so shell-shocked by the beating and the outcome that nobody turned up for the post-match press conference.

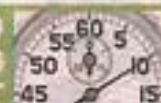
What could Seán Power or any of his management team have said anyhow? It would have been a tough one to explain away. Perhaps things would have been different if Beth Carton had struck that

Waterford penalty to the net late in the first half but Cork always looked to have the game in the palm of their hand.

Every All-Ireland final win is sweet but this one will surely go down as extra special for Cork, who beat the holders Kilkenny, their great rivals Galway, and then their neighbours Waterford. They'd had a bone to pick with all three of those.

"I think today, when the final whistle went, it was probably one of my favourite sporting memories," said Cahalane. "I suppose a lot of us who would have played underage together, we'd be the so-called older players in the group now so that's just extra special. I'm just delighted."

THE 60 SECOND REPORT



IT MATTERED

This final was settled either side of half-time. Beth Carton's missed penalty in first-half stoppages was a missed opportunity for Waterford to begin the second period with a cause to chase. The nine-point deficit they did come back out to face quickly doubled as Amy O'Connor stuck a sensational hat-trick in one minute and 59 seconds.

CAN'T IGNORE

A record crowd of 30,191 turned up at Croke Park yesterday, surpassing the previous attendance best of 24,730 that watched Galway overcome Kilkenny in 2019.

GOOD DAY

A timely end to Cork's run of four consecutive final defeats.

BAD DAY

A final nightmare for Waterford. The scars from this 19-point hammering will take a while to heal. Only three scorers and only four scores from play over the hour captured their struggles in the opposition half.

BEST ON SHOW

With 3-7 from 10 shots, Amy O'Connor enjoyed a dream final. The case could be made that Cork's three best performers were their inside line of O'Connor, Katrina Mackey, and Sorcha McCartan. Mackey provided the final assist for two of the goals and also clipped two points from play. McCartan, meanwhile, hit 1-1 and won three converted frees — all in the opening half.

PHYSIO ROOM

Waterford lost half-back Vikki Falconer to injury inside five minutes, robbing the Déise of one of their most dependable and resolute defenders. Her presence

was certainly missed at the start of the second half when large swathes of green grass opened up in the Waterford half and the Cork forwards — O'Connor, in particular — duly capitalised on all this space.

SIDELINE SMARTS

Cork detailed Aoife Healy onto Beth Carton and Laura Hayes onto Lorraine Bray. Despite Healy's best efforts, Carton still exerted considerable influence in the opening half, albeit she regularly operated too far from the Cork posts. Hayes' relentless tenacity curtailed the usually flowing Bray.

MAN IN THE MIDDLE

John Dermody left them at it for the most part, which is really the sole requirement of a camogie final referee, given the many deciders in the past that have been ruined by needlessly pernickety officiating.

— Eoghan Cormican

Derry and Meath to meet again in intermediate final

Derry and Meath will have to do it all over again after the pair could not be separated in an entertaining Glen Dimplex All-Ireland intermediate camogie final at Croke Park.

Aoife Minogue had a late opportunity to snatch what would have been a brilliant comeback win for Meath, but her shot from a difficult free drifted just wide after looking on target for most of its trajectory. Hawk-Eye did not intercede to indicate that the umpire had made an incorrect decision and that was that.

Dual star Minogue hadn't have her best day from placed balls but it was a credit to the Dunderry flier that she did not allow those difficulties to impact on her general play, proving an inspiration with her forceful effort and indomitable spirit as Meath clawed themselves back into the fray after trailing by seven points.

Derry will be distraught that they failed to score from Lauren McKenna's point midway through the third quarter, which put them 1-9 to



All-Ireland intermediate camogie final

Derry 1-9
Meath 2-6

Daragh Ó Conchúir
Croke Park

1-2 ahead after Abbye Donnelly had gotten the second-half scoring under way.

In the end, they were probably the happier to emerge from proceedings with a second bite of the cherry as they were undoubtedly hanging on when the final whistle came from Bernard Nea, who contributed to the enjoyable fare with his commitment to avoiding unnecessary involvement.

Minogue had a point on the board after nine seconds but Aoife Shaw hit back with a

quick-fire double for Derry.

Then came a lovely finish for a goal from Ciara Foley in the sixth minute but Meath would not trouble to score-keeper for the rest of the half, while Derry took over, with Dervla O'Kane dropping deep to enable captain and the sole survivor from the last Derry team to win the Jack McGrath Cup, Aoife Ni Chaiside, to drive forward at every opportunity.

Points from Shaw, McKenna, and Aine McAllister gave them the lead and then a goal came from Mary McNicholl, whose sister Gráinne was an Oak Leaf star 12 years ago. The Swatragh forward's shot for a point just dropped under the crossbar in the 23rd minute, somehow eluding Meath netminder Tara Murphy.

McAllister (free), Shaw (45) and McNicholl split the posts again and it was 1-8 to 1-1 at the break.

Derry goalie Niamh Gribbin had been kept busy however and in truth, when Meath look back on this, they will think



they could have had a few more goals at least.

They had wasted a couple of more chances, including a missed penalty, when Minogue shot straight at Gribbin, when they finally raised the green flag that infused their challenge with much needed oxygen in the 45th minute.

It was a real goalmouth scramble before sub Aoibhinn Lally found the necessary finish. From there, it was all Meath.

Foley reduced the margin to two before skipper Ellen Burked fired over a superb point from the left in the 55th minute.

Minogue levelled after Si-

Meath's Aoife Minogue scores a point to equalise the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Championship Final in Croke Park. Picture: Laszlo Geczo

nead McGill rugby-tackled Aimee Lennon unnecessarily to the ground around 30m out and the counties, who both won their last titles in replays, will go at it again.

Scorers for Derry: M McNicholl 1-1; A Shaw 0-4 (11, 1, 45); A McAllister (1), L McKenna 0-2 each.

Scorers for Meath: C Foley 1-1; A Minogue 0-3 (26); A Lally 1-0; A Donnelly, E Burke 0-1 each.

DERRY: N Gribbin, N Quinn, L Lennon, S McGill, R Downey, A Ni Chaiside, L McKenna, D O'Kane, A McGill, M McNicholl, A McAllister, E McGuigan, A Shaw, R McAllister, M Hegarty.

Subs: O Hall for Hegarty (45), A Lennon for McGuigan (49), S O'Connor for McNicholl (60).

MEATH: T Murphy, R O'Neill, C Coffey, S Payne, T King, M Cincio, L Devine, G Coleman, A Minogue, A Gaffney, A Donnelly, O O'Halloran, C Foley, E O'Connell, E Burke.

Subs: A Lally for Coleman (30), N Doyle for O'Halloran (54).
Referee: Barry Nea (Westmeath)

'Scintillating... remarkable... devastating... and fantastic!'

Therese O'Callaghan

Croke Park



A CROWD of 30,191, a new record for a final, witnessed a devastating Cork at their ruthless best claiming a 29th All-Ireland title in Croke Park.

Matthew Twomey's side absolutely blitzed Waterford. Amy O'Connor, fantastic throughout, set the pace from early doors on a day she won't forget — captaining her colleagues to All-Ireland honours is one thing, but to score 3-7 (from 10 shots) in the process is borderline incredible.

When she pumped her fist after nailing the opening point in the fifth minute, you could see the St Vincent's woman was in the zone. But Cork were scintillating all over the field. Sorcha McCartan and Fiona Keating weighing in with the other two goals.

At the other end of the pitch, they didn't give Waterford a sniff, working the ball out with ease and seemingly relaxed in doing so. To only concede four points from play in an All-Ireland camogie final is

a remarkable statistic.

Firm favourites coming into this game, the Rebels, who made one change beforehand, bringing in Laura Hayes for corner-back Méadh Murphy, began to dominate in every position.

Cork registered 5-13 — and only six of the points were from frees. All their forwards scored. It was as complete as that. Sub Orlaith Cahalane got in on the act too. It capped a special day for the Cahalane family with her sister Meabh, one of those aforementioned defenders.

For Waterford, it was a sobering afternoon to finish a wonderful season. They were appearing in their first decider since 1945, and while there was huge respect and admiration for the incredible journey they travelled, the fear was it would prove a bridge too far.

Sadly for them, this game was over after 15 minutes. Waterford had just got their first point from, who else but, Beth Carton. Cork already had four on the board.

In fairness to them and their great band of supporters, they didn't go down without a fight. But it wasn't to be. The result will be a bitter pill for Seán Power and his squad.

Granted, they suffered a massive setback after a mere five minutes when corner-

back Vikki Falconer went down in a heap under the Cusack Stand. Unfortunately, she ended up being stretchered off — thankfully the cameras did pick her out later sitting on the sub bench.

Waterford won't want anyone's sympathy but it's hard not to feel for them on the biggest day of their careers. For Falconer, it was doubly-difficult to swallow, the Tramore woman being so inspirational in their win over Tipperary.

It meant sub Iona Heffernan had to come in a lot earlier than expected. It seriously disrupted the set-up for certain and was something they could have done without, especially when — as all of this team was — appearing in their first All-Ireland final.

So, what else happened to Waterford? Overwhelmed by the occasion, yes, which can so easily happen with all the hype and noise. And it didn't help they met a Cork team that was hungry for victory having lost the last two finals by three and one point respectively.

Carton and Lorraine Bray tried their best to stem the flow. They fought the good fight but when you are being steamrolled, there is nothing at all you can do.

Had the Déise scored the penalty before half-time, it might have helped heading to



the dressing-room. Carton's effort skimmed the outside of the post.

They collapsed completely after Amy O'Connor's hat-trick, which came within a scorching two-minute spell (actually 1.59 minutes to be precise) immediately after half-time.

At this level you have to get the basics right; you have to score your frees, and there were too many unforced errors. It was just one of those days when nothing went right for the Déise. Everyone in the game will hope this doesn't upset the progress they have made.

However, it was Cork's day: the stamp of coach Liam Cronin written all over it. They got the match-ups spot on. Aoife Healy, winning her first senior All-Ireland medal, was given the task of marking Carton. Hayes was brought in to keep a tight rein on Bray.

A richly-deserved honour

O'Connor: I didn't realise I'd scored a hat trick until

Therese O'Callaghan

It was no surprise to hear Matthew Twomey's dominant emotion after winning their 29th All-Ireland senior camogie title was one of relief. Twelve months ago, he sat at the same table in the same Croke Park media room totally dejected after Kilkenny defeated them by a single point.

"Myself and Laura [Treacy] were here last year after losing it and I suppose we were drained and we couldn't see how we would get over the line. When we came back this year we decided one focus obviously was to win the All-Ireland. We went through a bad patch in the middle of the year and I suppose a lot of people wrote us off.

"In our own way we used that as a spur. After we got

beaten by Galway in Athenry [round-robin], we had a real long chat with ourselves. We were going into the Down game under pressure, the Clare game under pressure and every game we have been under ferocious pressure.

"Even today we were under fierce pressure coming up. These players are just incredible, the more their backs were to the wall the better they got. What we got today, they totally deserve. They have just been immense."

Victory over Kilkenny and Galway installed them as favourites, so how did they keep a lid on expectation?

"Very easy, because we have a lot of hurt in us. We know if we put in a big performance, we could be close enough to it at the end. All we were concerned about were ourselves. We had a few match



Amy O'Connor celebrates after scoring her side's fourth goal.

ups but we were just concerned with our own performance. That is what we got today and it is incredible.

"It came down to each quarter, what we had to do with the ball, even the players themselves. It was every ball, every minute. We didn't get carried away. It didn't put us off [the tag of favourites]. It didn't make a difference.

"The same people I suppose were cutting the daylights out

of us after losing to Waterford in the Munster championship and we lost four games in a row. So we were not concerned about anything else. All we were interested in was getting back to Cork with silverware."

It was an up-and-down season, but they peaked at the right time. "Unbelievably like. We were saying since January that some team could get a hammering off us. There is part of you, would feel sorry for Waterford. We were creating goal chances, we got three against Down, we got three against Clare [both in group stage]. Today, in the big day, to get five. It is brilliant.

"The defence was unbelievable. We got a penalty decision against us again. I can't fathom it after having three against Kilkenny we should have got. Here we got one put

against us. I can't see what it was for. But look, the defence was absolutely outstanding."

Amy O'Connor was one of the top trends on Twitter last night. That the project manager was the topic of conversation wasn't unexpected, considering her hat-trick scoring record on the most important stage of all.

The honour of captaincy was bestowed upon the corner-forward after city divisional side Seandún claimed back-to-back Cork titles in 2022. It seems Amy likes the big day, because in that final she was crowned player of the match for her stunning 2-8 return.

"I didn't realise I had scored a hat trick until someone said it to me after the match, which is probably a good thing because we were so focussed on the next ball, the next pass

whatever it might be," she tells. "That might sound clichéd but that's the way we drove it for the last three, four months. It was a building process, everything was a process. We played a certain way. We were adaptable the whole time and our focus was always on the next thing, the next thing."

"I didn't really think too much about it in the game. It's nice [scoring the hat-trick]. It is probably something that you wouldn't dream of really. I actually went practising frees yesterday. I don't think one went over the bar. I suppose you do have days when everything you hit goes over."

"It is a very proud day for me obviously. I come from quite a small junior club [St Vincent's] on the north side of the city [Knocknaheeny]. We haven't had too much success

Pain can be fuel and hurt can motivate Déise to greater heights

As a neutral, you want a heavy metal final. The crowd of just over 30,000, including a huge Waterford contingent, was the biggest ever on All-Ireland camogie final day, but the game wasn't quite the thriller that you want camogie's headline act to be.

That's not to say there weren't thrills and spills. After accepting the trophy, Cork captain Amy O'Connor gave a rousing speech, reaching out to the devastated Waterford team as the heavens opened in Croke Park. We've been where you are, she told them; we know how you feel. O'Connor also showed respect to her opponents in the way that she ruthlessly put them to the sword early in the second half. She wasn't going to patronise them by tapping it over when golden opportunities arose. Three strikes, you're out.

In the RTE studio, Anne-Marie Hayes was amused by the elated Laura Treacy's assertion that it had been far too long since they lifted the O'Duffy Cup. Five years is hardly a famine. But it's all relative. For a county, a gap of five years is not much in the scheme of things, but five years is still a long time in a player's career.

Waterford had a far greater psychological hill to climb: 78 years since they last appeared in a final, and never having won. Neutrals and Déise faithful alike would have been drawn into the optimism around this Waterford team. Maybe they would have a breakthrough, like Wexford in 2007. They'd come close to besting Cork in last year's semi-final; who's to say they couldn't match them again?

Despite the heartache of the 2021 and 2022 finals, Cork so obviously enjoy playing in Croke Park, and they bossed the game almost from the get-go, dominating possession and backing themselves to pick off superb scores. Their thorny path to the final — beating fellow Big Three members Kilkenny and Galway — seems to have stood to them.

You found yourself thinking of the Waterford hurlers in 2008. I always remember John Mullane's defiance from that day, and Lorraine Bray showed similar spirit. I felt for the magnificent Beth Carton, who at midfield was further from the danger zone than she would have liked, and who shouldered a huge individual responsibility for getting Waterford on the

scoreboard. She made countless weaving solo runs, took a fair amount of punishing tackles, then had to stand over the resulting frees herself. I'm glad her overcooked penalty on the stroke of half time was not a deciding factor in the end.

Waterford just had no luck, beginning with defender Vikki Falconer being stretchered off after just a few minutes.

Lorraine Bray got booked for charging in the 14th minute, perhaps the one ridiculous rule that remains to be routed from the camogie rule-book. They coughed up frees in scoreable positions for O'Connor, and were often themselves awarded frees when Waterford players were on the break and advantage might have been a better call.

Ten minutes from half time, Bray was unlucky not to connect with a tantalising ball in from Niamh Rockett. They just never got that break.

The tenacious Cork defence packed the Waterford scoring zone like a phalanx and didn't let them have an inch of space.

Waterford's touch needed to be impeccable to cope, and it wasn't always. At the other end of the pitch, the Cork forwards exploited the naivete of the Waterford defence.

Almost every Cork goal came from drawing the last defender and giving an overlapping pass to a waiting teammate, from Sorcha McCartan's sublime volley in the 25th minute to O'Connor's three astonishing bangers after half time.

Cork's approach is simple but effective: A running game in which every player in possession has multiple supporting teammates going with her, where ball is worked out of defence methodically through the lines, where the forwards pull in tight and then accordion out into space.

It's a style of play that demands high levels of fitness, communication, trust, and patience; knowing there'll be someone to take the ball from you, not coughing up possession or getting rid of the ball for the sake of it.

Waterford don't yet have the same connective tissue. At times, the understanding and interplay between Carton, Bray, and Rockett was exceptional, but that

telepathy is all over the field for Cork. I hope Waterford come back strong next year; I hope the sting of this result is grist to the mill. Pain can be fuel, and hurt can motivate you to greater heights. Just ask Cork.

Eimear Ryan



NO WAY OUT: Waterford's Annie Fitzgerald is put under fierce pressure — a hallmark of Cork's campaign — by Pamela Mackey and Libby Coppinger during the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland SCC final at Croke Park. *Picture: Ben Brady*

too for Matthew Twomey, leading Cork to their 29th title. You have to hand it to him, especially after the heartache of 2022 in his first year as manager. There will be great delight in Douglas, where they

will also be celebrating the sixth All-Ireland medal won by twins Pamela and Katrina Mackey — their first was in 2009. Some service to Cork. Undoubtedly, Twomey and co. has built the best squad of

players in the country. This was flagged after they defeated Kilkenny and Galway en route to the final, their power and athleticism to the fore. For now, they can celebrate and enjoy this one.

Finally, a word on Westmeath referee John Dermody, whose job was made easier by the one-sided nature of proceedings but who managed the game without fuss throughout.

later

at club level. So it is nice to be able to do something like this and represent the club and the area.

"To be honest, while people were saying we went through a bad patch, there was only once or twice that we actually played quite poorly. We actually performed quite well throughout that bad patch.

"I think the most important thing was that we stuck together as a group. We really trusted in what our management team was doing. And they really trusted us as players. So we didn't panic. There was no panic within our group and I think that was the most important thing for this year.

"Nothing outside our group mattered. To be honest I don't even think we knew we were favourites because we didn't take any notice."

Waterford are left to rue first-half missed opportunities

Three key moments

1. When it happened in real time, the 21st minute half goal chance that Lorraine Bray was unable to latch onto didn't look like very much at all. But in the context of a game where Waterford needed to feed on every morsel of possession they worked into the scoring zone, it was one of many first-half opportunities they were left to rue. The initial point attempt fell to Annie Fitzgerald, her shot blocked. Niamh Rockett gathered the breaking ball and sent a dangerous delivery into the large parallelogram that Bray charged onto but couldn't make contact with. All it had required was the slightest touch to take the sliotar past the outcoming Amy Lee. As it was, though, Cork

cleared the danger. The play ended with Hannah Looney splitting the posts at the Davin End to send Cork 0-6 to 0-1 in front.

2. Another Waterford goal chance not taken; this opportunity far more clear-cut than Bray's half opening. Four minutes into first-half stoppages, Annie Fitzgerald was fouled by Libby Coppinger for a penalty. In arrears by 1-9 to 0-3, this was Waterford's ticket to revive their own cause and the final itself. An opportunity to send them back down the tunnel believing. Beth Carton stepped forward, her penalty effort missing the top left corner of the goal and instead flying wide. A deflating end to a deflating first half for the final newcomers. As ominous

a sign as any that this was not going to be their afternoon.

3. With a solid grip already on the O'Duffy Cup, Cork captain Amy O'Connor clasped both hands firmly onto the main prize when producing a sensational two-minute hat-trick within four minutes of the restart. The rain may have subsided, but with a scoreline of 4-9 to 0-3 and still 26 minutes left to run, this final was a washout. O'Connor was fed by centre-forward Fiona Keating for the first, made and finished the second all on her own when displaying her trademark turn of speed to cut in from the Cusack Stand side, and was assisted by fellow inside forward Katrina Mackey for her hat-trick. For a forward who managed only one point from play across Cork's 2021 and 2022 All-Ireland final defeats, O'Connor was not to be found wanting on this occasion.

- Eoghan Cormican

Irish Examiner

Sport

MONDAY

07.08.23

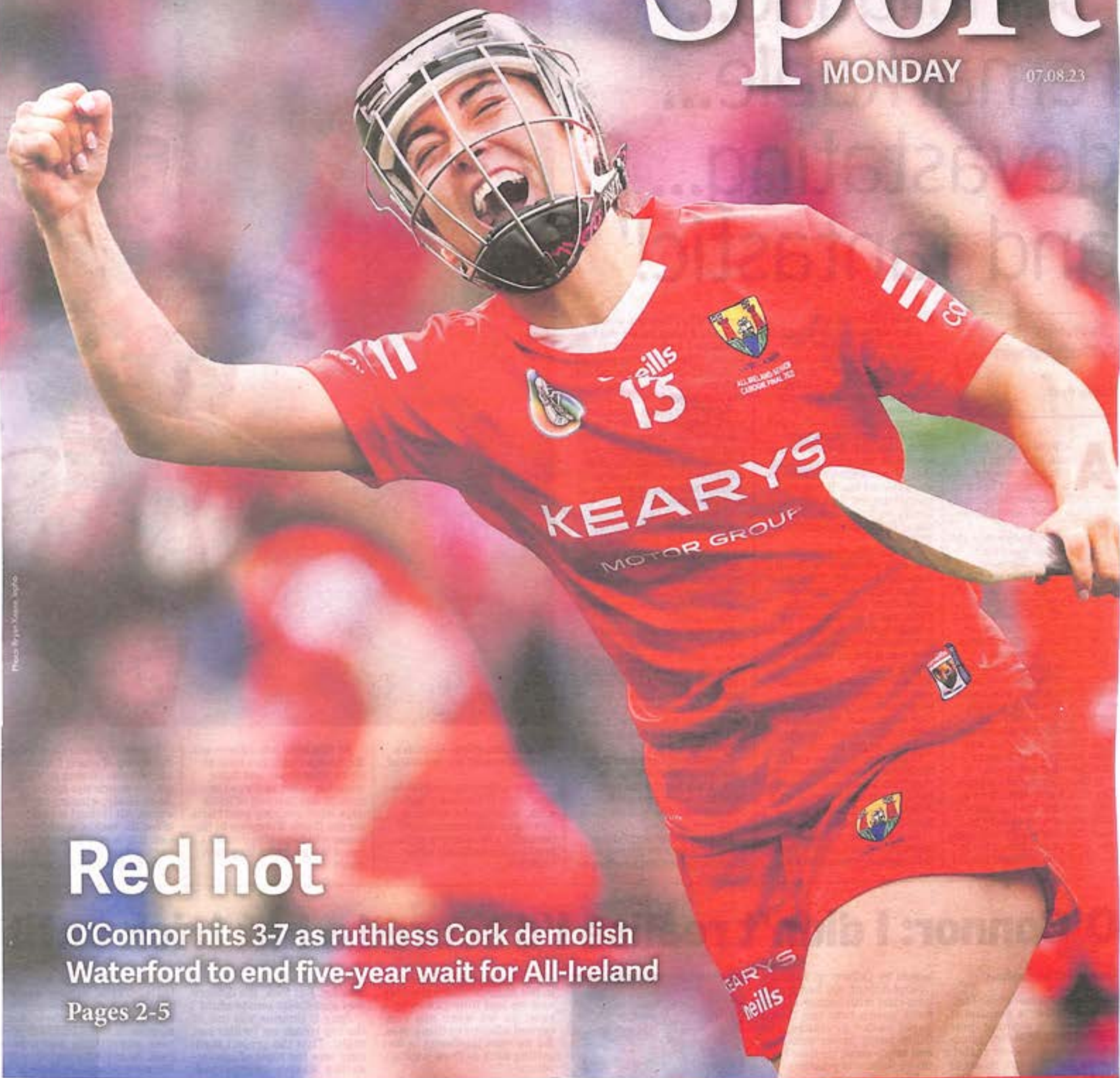


Photo: Ryan McManus / Sportsfile

Red hot

O'Connor hits 3-7 as ruthless Cork demolish Waterford to end five-year wait for All-Ireland

Pages 2-5



Mid-season shift in tactics finds winning formula for awesome Cork

EXPERT VIEW

URSULA JACOB



Under the rainy skies of Croke Park, Waterford brought a breath of fresh air. A sea of blue. A big crowd. An atmosphere crackling with great expectations.

Then, just after two minutes, Vikki Falconer got injured. She played brilliantly in the semi-final. She is such an influential presence, and seeing her go off was a real setback. It really unsettled the team.

But that aside, there was no debate. Cork were Cork. Clinical Cork. They were magnificent.

They looked hungry – almost as if they were the ones who were playing in their first All-Ireland senior final in 78 years, and who were seeking their first All-Ireland title rather than their 29th.

They resembled a side on a mission. They lost their last two All-Ireland finals. And that hurt showed. Right from the first whistle.

They settled so quickly. Comfortable and controlled. Their work-rate was relentless. They always say a good side are built from the back, and that was so evident here.

The hungry Leesiders didn't allow Waterford a crumb, surrounding their opponents in twos and threes. The Waterford attack would have found more room in a lift.

Cork were snuffing out any hint of an opening. Finger-nails, toe-nails. Blocking, hooking. Making the hard yards. They brought such intensity to their tackling.

And then when they had the ball, they were so composed, working it out from defence. Short, precise passes. Assured and confident.

They put the Waterford defence under serious pressure. The delivery of the ball going into the Cork forwards was very telling.

Cork got on top in the middle third, finding space and running off the shoulder and supporting each other.

Climb

In that first half, Waterford were attacking the Hill end, but by the interval, they had a mountain to climb.

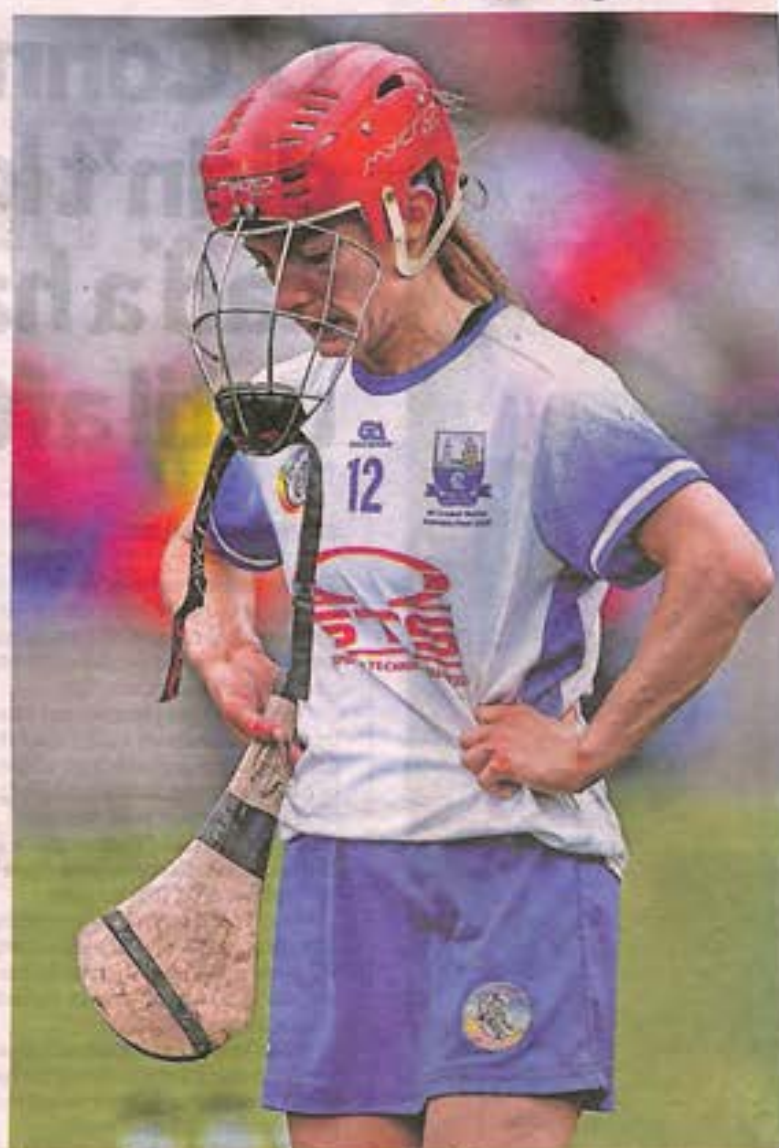
In the semi-final against Tipperary, they trailed by seven points. There, they managed a comeback, but going into this one I felt the Déise could not afford to go so far behind again.

Yet by half-time I had different thoughts. Waterford were behind by nine, but I thought, based on what I saw in Croke Park, that they had a performance in them.

Waterford did show character. Nobody more so than Beth Carton. It wasn't her day, but she kept going. And that's the real sign of a champion.

She was unfortunate with that penalty before half-time. She struck it so well. It

'Waterford did show character, none more so than Beth Carton'



Waterford captain Lorraine Bray after her side's defeat. The Déise contributed so much to this championship

only missed by inches. In the second period, she scored a fabulous point.

But this Cork team were not for turning, producing one of the great All-Ireland final displays.

And Amy O'Connor had one of the games of her life. Ten shots on goal and scoring 3-7, 3-2 from play. She played a real captain's part. Her movement off the ball was so good. She was causing havoc. She looked dangerous any time she got possession. She works so hard.

Matthew Twomey and his management team deserve so much credit. They changed their tactics during the season, and it worked. They combined the running game with letting the ball in quickly to the forwards, and it proved a winning combination.

Twomey watched the match from the stand. Like the Cork players, he has known

the hard days. But, in victory and defeat, he remained the same. Such a gracious gentleman. A class manager. He had some big decisions to make over his selection. And he got them spot on.

Cork have such strength in depth. And when Ashling Thompson came on, Cork had already five goals in the net and the O'Duffy Cup in the bag.

Matthew was quick to commend Waterford on the season they had. Yesterday wasn't a true reflection of their abilities. It was such a huge occasion for them. There was a lot of pressure. And as good as Cork were, those little slices of luck that you need just weren't with Waterford.

Camogie needs stories like Waterford. And, no doubt, they will learn from days like this. But there's not a team in the country that couldn't take lessons from this Cork display. They were awesome.



Dejected Waterford players Beth Carton and Laoise Forrest after losing yesterday's All-Ireland Senior Camogie final against Cork at Croke Park.

AMY GIVEN

Paul KEANE
REPORTS

Cork 5-13 Waterford 0-9
All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final

A few weeks later, four-time All-Ireland winner Thompson suffered cruciate knee ligament damage and didn't get back to action with Cork until the recent All-Ireland quarter-final win over Kilkenny.

Defeat

She came on as a sub in that quarter-final defeat of holders Kilkenny, came on against Galway in the semi-final too and was brought on again yesterday. At full-time, she fired her hurley in the air, bear-hugged a team-mate

and fell to the ground before whipping off her helmet and slamming that down into the turf as well. Redemption, right there. It must have felt so good. If Cork had lost, it would have been a three-in-a-row of final defeats having also slipped up against Galway in the 2021 decider.

Throw in National League final defeats in 2022 and 2023 and they'd have been talking about a hoodoo on Leaside. So they turned up at Croke Park on a mission to wreak havoc and were ably led by O'Connor who scored the first point, putting Cork into a lead they never relinquished, before adding another 3-6.

The Cork captain didn't so much lead by example as take a sharpened axe to Waterford's hopes of a landmark win. Her goals arrived in a matter of minutes early in the second-

half as Cork wrapped up their 29th title long before full-time.

Sorcha McCartan, son of Down football great Greg, and Fiona Keating slammed in goals too.

Aside from the performance itself, it was an historic day simply because 30,191 turned up, a final record. They were treated to a Corker.

Hammering

Rebelettes boss Matthew Twomey smiled: "It's unbelievable. But then we were saying since January that some team could get a hammering off us."

Unfortunately for Waterford, they were that team. It won't be any consolation to them that a first final appearance in 78 years still ranks as progress.

They wanted the win badly and boss Sean Power and his players were so distraught that they skipped the regular post



BANNERS FLY HIGH IN FINAL

CLARE recovered from an atrocious start and a six-point deficit to record a deserved victory in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior final. The Banner were winning the title for the first time since 2008 but that was the county's first team and it is reflective of progress Shannon-side that they now have a second outfit capable of securing the honours. Tipperary played the last quarter at a numerical disadvantage, after the 42nd minute sending off of Clara Brennan on a second yellow, but they were treading water at that juncture anyway. They fought hard and actually kept Clare scoreless, but the damage had been done. Brennan opened for Tipp after 20 seconds, though Aoife O'Brien was alert in the goals and would go on to have an outstanding game.

Clare 3-7
Tipperary 1-9
ALL-IRELAND CAMOGIE
PREMIER JUNIOR FINAL
Darragh O'CONCHUIR

the far corner of the net from a tight angle.

The momentum turned completely from there and the sides went in at half-time level on 1-5 each. Claire Stakelum extended Tipp's advantage briefly but there were three points in a row from Laobhaise O'Donnell and a brace of Sarah Loughnane frees.

Bounce

Brennan and McMahon exchanged points and there was a bounce in Clare steps going into the dressing rooms.

They continued as they had left off and after an excellent McMahon point, Caoimhe Cahill sent a howitzer to the Tipp net in the 34th minute after O'Brien had saved from half-time sub Aoife Anderson.

Horgan and Daly swapped points when Clare found the net again just over seven minutes after the resumption through Caoimhe Cahill.

It was about not conceding a major from there and though Jean Kelly converted three frees, they had left themselves too much to do. It was Clare's day.

SCORES FOR CLARE: S Loughnane 1-3 (0-3fs); L O'Donnell 1-1; C Cahill 1-0; M McMahon 0-2; J Daly 0-1. SCORES FOR TIPPERARY: J Kelly 0-5 (4fs); R O'Dwyer 1-0; C Brennan 0-2; C Stakelum, C Horgan 0-1 each.

CLARE: L Solon, S Hogg, C Lally, R Kelly, E Casey, L McMahon, S O'Keefe, N Mulqueen, G Carmody, L O'Donnell, M McMahon, J Daly, C Cahill, S Loughnane, O Phelan. Subs: A Anderson for Phelan (ht), C Queally for L McMahon temp (44-45), Queally for M McMahon; A Cooney for Loughnane (56), R Crowe for Hogg (60+1), K Toomey for Cahill (60+2). TIPPERARY: A O'Brien, L Cahill, A Sheedy, C Ryan, R Maher, C Walsh, C McKeogh, E Cunnane, K Fitzgerald, R O'Dwyer, C Brennan, C Stakelum, J Kelly, A Dwyer, C Horgan. Subs: A Callanan for Maher (ht), A Crosse for Fitzgerald (ht), A McLoughney for Dwyer (37), N Murray for Sheedy (41), C Shanahan for O'Dwyer (53).

REFEREE: Ben

QUOTE ME ON THAT

"We played Waterford a number of times over the last few years, between league and Championship, and we never found it easy against Waterford. They really hit us that day earlier this year in the Munster championship in Pairc Uí Chaoimh. "They outworked us, the intensity they brought was huge and they really beat us all over the field."

Cork's Meabh Cahalane

STAR PLAYER

AMY O'CONNOR (Cork) NO QUESTION about this one. Amy O'Connor didn't just take the fight to Waterford as team captain - she brought a battering ram to the Deise's door with a remarkable 3-7. It broke down as 10 shots, 10 scores. She was already contributing well with five first-half points, but took things up several notches between the 33rd and 35th minutes. Her goals amounted to a mixture of impressive positioning, timing, pace and determination as she single handedly tore Waterford asunder.

DUAL OF THE GAME

When Waterford defender Vikki Falconer went off early with an injury, the Deise reset their match-ups. Keeley Corbett Barry got the really sticky wicket with Amy O'Connor. In Corbett Barry's defence, O'Connor was unmarkable on form. Perhaps the most intriguing battle was at the other end where Cork's Meabh Cahalane went head-to-head with Waterford forward Niamh Rockett.

SCORE OF THE GAME

O'Connor's second was a beauty and a victory for determination. She had the scent in her nostrils and burst goalwards with a terrific run before blasting beyond Brianna O'Regan.



RED LETTER DAY: Cork's Meabh Cahalane, Ashling Thompson and Hannah Looney celebrate after the game with the O'Duffy Cup

YOUNG REBELETES: Young Cork fans Aolbhe (10), Siún, Aisling (9) and Annie (8) Murphy at Croke Park and (right) manager Matthew Twomey

SUNDAY



O'Connor's goal blitz dashes Decies hopes

match press conference. What could they have said to explain it all away anyway? Sure, things might have been a little different had Beth Carton not blazed a penalty wide approaching half-time. But it would only have left six points between them at half-time instead of nine, 1-9 to 0-3. And O'Connor's blitzkrieg of goals in just over two minutes between the 33rd and 35th minutes would still have wiped them out anyhow. O'Connor said: "A very proud day for me, obviously. I come

from quite a small junior club on the northside of the city. We haven't had too much success. "So it is nice to be able to do something like this and to represent the club and the area.

Focused

"I didn't realise I had scored a hat-trick until someone said it after the match, which is probably a good thing because we were just so focused on the next ball, the next pass, whatever it might be. "That might sound clichéd but

that's the way we drove it for the last three, four months. "It was a building process, everything was a process. We played a certain way. Our focus was always on the next thing, the next thing. "So I didn't really think too much about it in the game, what I'd scored. It's obviously nice. It is probably something that you wouldn't dream of really. "To think people were questioning this Cork team only a few weeks ago after a series of league and Championship losses to Galway. They also lost a Munster quarter-final to Waterford. Cork defender Meabh Cahalane said: "Waterford outworked us that day, the intensity they brought was huge and they really beat us all over the field. I think we kind of looked ourselves at

collectively and individually and without anybody saying too much, training the next week went up a level. We felt we had something to prove. "That could have been a turning point in our season." Not that O'Connor ever really bought into talk that Cork were in mid-season turmoil either. **Patch** She said: "While people were saying we went through a bad patch, there was only once or twice we actually played poorly. "I think the most important thing was that we stuck together as a group." **Twomey said it was simply a relief to get over the line.** He said: "Definitely massive relief. To lose the All-Ireland last year was very hard. But we learned so much. It was tweaking rather than pressing the nuclear button."



INSEPARABLE: Derry's Lauren McKenna tackles Amy Gaffney of Meath as the sides played out a draw in the intermediate final yesterday

STALEMATE IN CROKE FINALE

DERRY and Meath will have to do it all over again after the pair could not be separated in an entertaining Glen Dimplex All-Ireland intermediate camogie final at Croke Park.

Aoife Minogue had a late opportunity to snatch what would have been a brilliant comeback win for Meath, but her shot from a difficult free drifted just wide. Dual star Minogue hadn't her best day but it was a credit to the Dunderry flier that she did not allow those difficulties to impact on her general play, proving an inspiration with her forceful effort and indomitable spirit as Meath clawed themselves back into the fray after trailing by seven. Derry will be distraught that they failed to score from Lauren McKenna's point mid-way through the third quarter, which put them 1-9 to 1-2 ahead after Abby Donnelly had gotten the second-half scoring under way. In the end, they were probably the happier to emerge from proceedings with a second bite of the cherry as they were undoubtedly hanging on when the final whistle came.

Double Minogue had a point on the board after nine seconds but Aoife Shaw hit back with a quick-fire double for Derry. Then came a lovely finish for a goal from Clara Foley in the sixth minute but Meath would not trouble to score-keeper for the rest of the half, while Derry took over, with Dervla O'Kane dropping deep to enable captain and the sole survivor from the last Derry team to win the Jack McGrath Cup - Aoife Ni Chaiside - to drive forward at every opportunity. Points from Shaw, McKenna and Aine McAllister gave them the lead and then a goal came from Mary McNicholl, whose sister Grainne was an Oak Leaf star 12 years ago. The Swatragh forward's shot for a point just dropped under the crossbar in the 23rd min-

Meath 2-6
Derry 1-9
ALL-IRELAND CAMOGIE INTERMEDIATE FINAL
Darragh O'CONNOR

ute, somehow eluding Meath netminder Tara Murphy. McAllister (free), Shaw (45) and McNicholl split the posts again and it was 1-8 to 1-1 at the break. Derry goalie Niamh Gribbin had been kept busy however and in truth, when Meath look back on this, they will think they could have had a few more goals at least.

Wasted They had wasted a couple of more chances, including a missed penalty, when Minogue shot straight at Gribbin, when they finally raised the green flag that infused their challenge with much needed oxygen in the 45th minute. It was a real goalmouth scramble before sub Aoibhinn Lally found the necessary finish. From there, it was all Meath. Foley reduced the margin to two before skipper Ellen Burked fired over a superb point from the left in the 55th minute. Minogue levelled after Sinéad McGill tackled Aimee Lennon unnecessarily to the ground around 30m out and the countess, who both won their last titles in replays, will go at it again. **SCORERS FOR DERRY:** M McNicholl 1-1; A Shaw 0-4 (11, 1-45); A McAllister (11); L McKenna 0-2 each. **SCORERS FOR MEATH:** C Foley 1-1; A Minogue 0-3 (2fs); A Lally 1-0; A Donnelly, E Burke 0-1 each. **DERRY:** N Gribbin, N Quinn, L Lennon, S McGill, R Downey, A Ni Chaiside, L McKenna, D O'Kane, A McGill, M McNicholl, A McAllister, E McGulgan, A Shaw, R McAllister, M Hegarty. **Subs:** O Hall for Hegarty (45); A Lennon for McGill (49); S O'Connor for McNicholl (50). **MEATH:** T Murphy, R O'Neill, C Coffey, S Payne, T King, M Clinche, L Devine, G Coleman, A Minogue, A Gaffney, A Donnelly, O O'Halloran, C Foley, E O'Connell, E Burke. **Subs:** A Lally for Coleman (30); N Doyle for O'Halloran (54). **REFEREE:** Barry Nea



UP AND DOWN: Cork players celebrate with the cup, while (below) Waterford's Beth Carton and Laoise Forrest deal with their defeat

CORK		WATERFORD	
Amy LEE	8	Brianna O'REGAN	5
Libby COPPINGER	7	Laoise FORREST (0-1)	6
Meabh CAHALANE	8	Kate LYNCH	6
Pamela MACKEY	7	Keeley Corbett Barry	5
Aoife HEALY	7	Ciodagh CARROLL	6
Laura TREACY	8	Orla HICKEY	6
Izzy O'REGAN	8	Vikki FALCONER	5
Laura HAYES	7	Abby FLYNN	6
Hannah LOONEY (0-1)	8	Lorraine BRAY	6
Chloe SIGERSON (0-1, 1/7)	8	Malread O'BRIEN	6
Fiona KEATING (1-0)	8	Malread POWER	6
Saoirse MCCARTHY	7	Beth CARTON (0-7, 5f)	7
A O'CONNOR (3-7, 4f, 145)	9	Rachael WALSH	6
Katrina MACKEY (0-2)	8	Niamh ROCKETT (0-1)	6
Sercha MCCARTAN (1-1)	8	Annie FITZGERALD	6
SUBS		SUBS	
Cliona Healy 7 for Hayes 45		Iona Heffernan 6 for Falconer 5	
Orla Cronin 6 for McCartan 47		Bevin Bowdren 6 for Power 1/1	
Aodhán Thompson 7 for McCarthy 51		Dara Power 6 for O'Brien 41	
Orlaith Cahalane (0-1) 7 for Sigerson 52		Clara Griffin 6 for Carroll 42	
Meabh Mulcahy 6 for Pamela Mackey 53		Shauna Fitzgerald 5 for Lynch 54	

Referee: John Dermody (Westmeath)

Classy Cork end the

A winning approach: Stylish, confident, brave, and measured

IT'S rare you get to enjoy an All-Ireland final as a manager and team.

Yesterday was a day when Cork could bask in the glory of a dominated final.

The victory was no more than they deserved after beating the All-Ireland champions Kilkenny, and their bogey team in recent years, Galway, en route.

We predicted a comfortable win.

I said on Saturday that if Cork clicked, Waterford could get smacked, and smacked they were.

No one likes to see a team suffer a defeat like that in Croke Park, but Cork weren't there for sentiment.

Waterford needed everything to go right for them. Losing Vikki Faulkner in the second minute was a huge blow and too unsettling for them to cope with.

She was predicted to give whomever she picked up a tough afternoon. In her absence, both Katrina Mackey and Amy O'Connor ran riot.

While Waterford didn't put eight behind the ball, they played Beth Carton too deep, out around the middle.

A mistake.

Her impact was minimal thanks in no small part to the excellent work of Aoife Healy. I mentioned in my preview that Waterford needed to push Carton up and that they had to find a way to get a supply into her through Orla Hickey, Lorraine Bray, and Abby Flynn.

They didn't do that. Cork dominated the middle third.

However, from a Waterford perspective, was it a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul?

Cork had just too many stars for them to cope with.

Rachel Walsh was given the job of marking Laura Treacy.

Strange to see a centre-forward go shoulder-to-shoulder with the centre-back. Creating opportunities or scoring wasn't on Walsh's radar, just stopping Treacy.

Doesn't that say it all as to the approach Waterford took into the game? But again, hard to blame them, such was the mammoth task they faced.

Beth became somewhat disturbed herself.

You'd put your house on her scoring that penalty but that's what Croke Park can do to you.

Cork were comfortable with their nine-point half-time lead.

The game was over, we could all see that, but it became unbearable for Waterford five minutes after the restart.

A hat-trick by Captain Amy O'Connor inside five minutes. What are dreams made of? Captaining Cork to an Ireland title and scoring a hat-trick in the process.



Aoife Healy had a vital role to play in marking Beth Carton. Picture: Bryan Keane/Inpho



Match analysis

Linda Mellerick

Build the monument now. Cork's management could enjoy the second half.

Waterford didn't have the speed; they didn't have the depth of good hurlers that Cork had. We knew that coming into the game. The only question beforehand was whether Cork would turn up and show what they were capable of. I had a feeling they would.

They wanted this one so badly and I felt the shackles were off having beaten the two counties already mentioned. I believed they would go into the final in a more relaxed frame of mind than the last two years and that they would enjoy the game.

They enjoyed it. And it showed.

While Amy will get the plaudits, what about the unselfish play of Katrina Mackey?

Two goals she had a direct hand in after drawing three and four defenders each time. Her first pass to Sorcha McCartan on 25 which was nicely finished signalled the end of Waterford's challenge.

All of Cork put their shoulder to the wheel, all were stylish, all were confident, all were measured and brave in their approach.

That all comes with experience and confidence.

They would have been forgiven if they had started to throw the ball around and show off a bit as the second half wore on.

They didn't though. They stuck to their game plan, worked hard, tracked back, and literally snuffed out any Waterford attack. No sentiment today.

Cork's inside line scored 4-10, 4-5 from play. Orla Cronin came on and made it 4-6.

Imagine how Waterford must have felt, 44 minutes in when trailing by 4-10, to see Cliona Healy, Orla Cronin, and Ashling Thompson enter the fray.

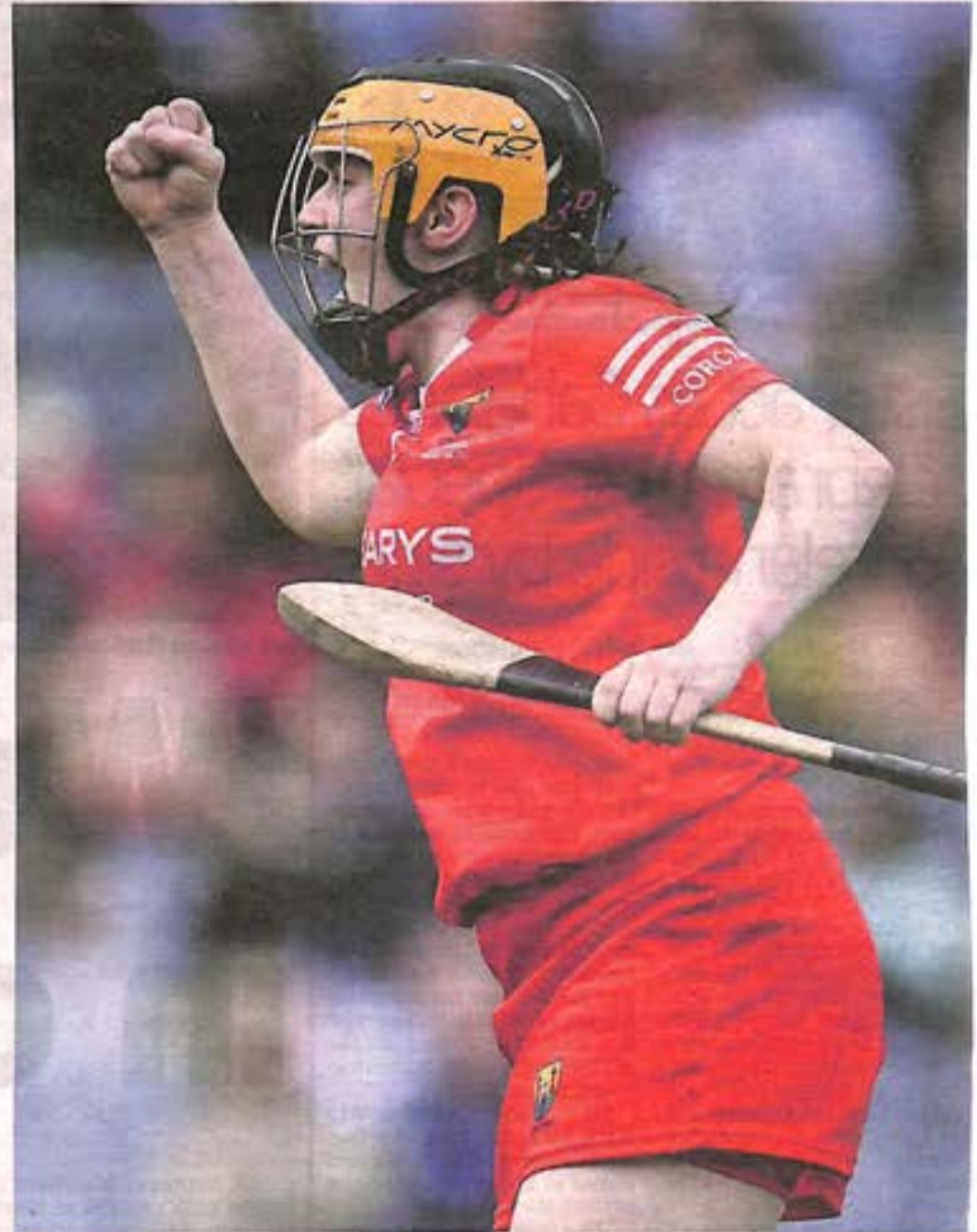
All threw their weight around, Thompson on a lot of ball.

Hannah Looney was outstanding from start to finish.

Her runs forward were massive in that opening half and she flipped to play a more defensive role in the second half, each time driving out and forward with the ball.

For the neutral, they are possibly lamenting that it was a poor final.

It wasn't a poor final. Waterford should have gone for it more, but Cork were class.



Cork goalkeeper Amy Lee celebrates her side's first goal, scored by team-mate Sorcha McCartan, during the Leesiders' win over Waterford at Croke Park yesterday. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile



Cork's Katrina Mackey takes on Waterford's Kate Lynch at Croke Park. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo



Abby Flynn challenges Hannah Looney, who had a powerful game. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

Story of the Game

Score of the Game: You could pick any of Amy O'Connor goals as contenders as she finished all with style. But the honour has to go to Fiona Keating for the simply sublime ball that Orla Cronin played to her as she didn't break stride to collect and score.

Turning Point: The first five minutes of the second

half were key to securing Cork's win. Even though they were well ahead the three goals killed off any hope of a Waterford comeback.

Player of the Game: You could pick plenty, from Coppinger at full-back out, but when you score a hat-trick of goals in an All-Ireland final the accolade has to go

to Amy O'Connor. The captain led by example from start to finish.

Ref Watch: While you never agree with all the decisions a referee makes, he didn't have any influence in the final result. Probably the only contentious decision was the awarding of the penalty to Waterford, but it didn't matter in the end.

drought in style

Cork player ratings



Amy O'Connor of Cork celebrates after completing her hat-trick in the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final win over neighbours Waterford at Croke Park. Picture: INPHO/Ben Brady

Cork 5-13
Waterford 0-9

THE drought is finally over for Cork and they did it in style as they were crowned Glen Dimplex All-Ireland senior camogie champions at Croke Park yesterday.

Having not won the title since 2018, with losses in the last two finals, there was a determination in this squad to put that right and they did so.

Led by the likes of Aoife Healy, Libby Coppinger, Katrina Mackey and Hannah Looney, Cork were the better team from start to finish.

Add in captain Amy O'Connor, who led by example all through, and it was her three goals in the first five minutes of the second half that killed off any hope of a Waterford win.

Cork were simply awesome and there wasn't a team in the country that would have beaten them.

The game was hardly on when it had to stop due to an injury to Waterford's Vikki Falconer, which saw her replaced by Iona Heffernan.

In a low-scoring start it took until the ninth minute for the second score to come, with both sides having two wides in between.



Rory Noonan

It doubled Cork's lead as Chloe Sigerson pointed from a long-distance free. O'Connor pointed a free and she added another to make it 0-4 to no score soon after.

Waterford got off the mark 15 minutes in with Beth Carton firing over from distance to make it a three-point game. Then O'Connor landed another free before Cork keeper Amy Lee had to keep her eye on the ball from free that dropped short as she cleared.

Hannah Looney burst forward to increase the Rebels' lead before O'Connor got her first from play as they led by 0-7 to 0-1 after 22 minutes.

Three minutes later and Cork were further ahead when Katrina Mackey picked up the sliothar, took on the Waterford defence. She played an inch-perfect pass to Sorcha McCartan who batted the ball to the back of the net, to

make it 1-7 to 0-1.

Carton landed another free for Waterford as they tried to get back in contention. Mackey and McCartan added points for Cork as the game headed for injury-time.

Carton added a point from a free before Waterford were thrown a lifeline when they were somewhat controversially awarded a penalty. But Carton put it wide to see the Rebels in a commanding 1-9 to 0-3 lead at half-time.

Cork got the perfect start to the second half when Fiona Keating burst forward and played O'Connor in to raise Cork's second green flag.

Within a minute O'Connor had her second goal, this time Mackey setting her up, to make it 3-9 to 0-3. And from the restart Mackey regained possession and played in O'Connor to complete her hat-trick and it was game over at this early stage, as the Rebels led 4-9 to 0-3.

Carton pulled a point back from a free for Waterford but it was a case of damage limitation for the Deise. Niamh Rockett got their first point from play in the 39th minute, with Carton adding another.

O'Connor and Mackey kept the scoreboard ticking over and with 13

minutes left it was 4-11 to 0-7.

With 50 minutes on the clock, the fifth goal came when Orla Cronin played a simply sublime ball to Fiona Keating and she made it 5-11 to 0-7.

Long before this, it was simply a case of waiting for the final whistle to go to let the celebrations begin. When it did it was sheer joy for Cork.

Scorers for Cork: A O'Connor 3-7 (0-6 f), S McCartan 1-1, F Keating 1-0, K Mackey 0-2, C Sigerson (f), H Looney, O Cahalane 0-1 each.

Waterford: B Carton 0-7 (0-6 f), N Rockett, L Forrest 0-1 each.

CORK: A Lee (Na Piarasaigh), L Hayes (St Catherine's), L Coppinger (St Colum's), P Mackey (Douglas), M Cahalane (St Finbarr's), L Treacy (Killeagh), I O'Regan (Ballygarvan), S McCartan (Coursey Rovers), A Healy (Aghada), C Sigerson (Killeagh), F Keating (Coursey Rovers), H Looney (Killeagh), A O'Connor (St Vincent's), K Mackey (Douglas), S McCartan (St Finbarr's).

Subs: C Healy (Aghabullogue) for L Hayes (44), O Cronin (Enniskeane) for S McCartan (46), A Thompson (Milford) for S McCartan (50), O Cahalane (St Finbarr's) for C Sigerson (52), M Murphy (Ballinora) for P Mackey (53).

WATERFORD: B O'Regan, V Falconer, L Forrest, K Lynch, K Corbett Barry, C Carroll, M Power, O Hickey, A Flynn, M O'Brien, B Carton, L Bray, A Fitzgerald, N Rockett, R Walsh.

Subs: I Heffernan for V Falconer (3 inj), B Bowden for M Power (4), T Power for M O'Brien (40), C Griffin for C Carroll (42), S Fitzgerald for K Lynch (56).

Referee: John Dermody (Westmeath).

■ **Amy Lee:** Didn't have too much to do but her puck outs, as always, were on the mark. 8
■ **Pamela Mackey:** Coped with everything that came her way. When there was a game in it, Waterford could find no way through. 8

■ **Libby Coppinger:** So dependable, the penalty was harsh. Tenacious, hard as nails, great marker. Didn't give Annie Fitzgerald an inch. 8

■ **Meabh Cahalane:** Outstanding all season, rarely puts a foot wrong. Yesterday was another day where she was Miss Dependable. Calm and measured. 8

■ **Laura Hayes:** Picked up Lorraine Bray at times and didn't give her an inch. A great block on 19 minutes which helped to wear Waterford down. 8

■ **Laura Treacy:** Cork's lynchpin. Man marked but won vital frees and possession and broke out in her customary style to execute excellently. 8

■ **Izzy O'Regan:** Didn't put a foot wrong. Has grown in confidence and stature this season. 8

■ **Saoirse McCarthy:** Sets high standards. Covered a huge amount of ground even if she didn't always get on the ball. Drew Waterford's attention. 8

■ **Aoife Healy:** What a performance on Waterford's star player. It shows the trust Cork's management have in Healy to leave her with the job when Carton started at midfield. 9

■ **Chloe Sigerson:** Worked hard. Put herself about in Cork's half-forward line. Good opening half free converted. 8

■ **Fiona Keating:** Created Amy O'Connor's first goal and struck one for herself on 50 minutes after brilliant customary piercing runs down the middle. 8

■ **Hannah Looney:** Outstanding. Drove at Waterford with pace in the opening half. Worked her socks off. Part of the running juggernaut from the middle third that we knew Waterford wouldn't be able to stop. 9

■ **Amy O'Connor:** It's rare a player gets a 10. But 10 shots, all scored. A hat-trick. Captain. Enough said. 10

■ **Katrina Mackey:** Brilliant. Worked like a trojan. Unselfish. Drew three and four of Waterford's defence and off-loaded to assist two goals. 9

■ **Saoirse McCartan:** Worked hard, hit 1-1, put herself about. 8

■ **Cliona Healy:** Introduced on 44 minutes. Didn't see a huge amount of ball but covered huge ground. 8

■ **Ashling Thompson:** Got on an enormous amount of ball despite getting just 10 minutes of normal time. 8

■ **Orla Cronin:** What a pass into Fiona Keating who didn't even have to break stride for her goal. 8

■ **Orlaith Cahalane:** Added even greater speed to Cork's inside line. Picked off a nice point in additional time. 8

■ **Meabh Murphy:** Late cameo after a tremendous season. 7

Three reasons why Cork delivered on the big stage

Goals, goals, goals...

The old saying goals win games was certainly the case for Cork and any day you get five, you generally win, in a final. They were all key scores, especially the three at the start of the second half, killing off any hope of a Waterford comeback.

Tough defence

Cork's success was built on a solid defence. They

were simply outstanding, starting with Amy Lee. On the two occasions her goal was half threatened she didn't panic, and that laid down the foundation of their win.

In front of her, Libby Coppinger is a full-back that any forward hates to come up against as she is tigerish in the tackle and doesn't give anyone an inch.

Around her the likes of Laura Tracey, Pamela

Mackey, and Meabh Cahalane all played their part.

Determination

Having lost the last two All-Ireland finals, and the league final earlier this year, these players and their management were hurting. There was a determination to put that right and make up for those losses and, from the first minute to the last, they never let up.



LETHAL AMY'S REBEL TREBLE

O'Connor's quickfire hat-trick blows Déise away

CORK

5-13

WATERFORD

0-9

By PHILIP LANIGAN
at Croke Park

HER sporting talent is such that it's not a big leap to think that Amy O'Connor could have been feted by thousands of Ireland fans outside the GPO on Thursday night at the homecoming reception for Ireland's World Cup team.

After all, she shared a stage at international level underage with her fellow Cork Knocknaheeny star Denise O'Sullivan. And she had the talent to pursue a dream that led O'Sullivan and the rest of Vera Pauw's squad to making history Down Under with qualification for football's Big Show.

Instead, she followed her own camogie dream.

At Croke Park yesterday, her dedication to the Cork cause paid

Her ruthless finishing put a one-sided final to bed

off so handsomely for her county. In the space of a couple of minutes at the start of the second half she fired in a remarkable hat-trick of goals. It's hard to imagine Croke Park ever witnessing anything like it where a player bagged a hat-trick in a senior final in such a short space of time. From the 33rd to the 35th minute, her exhibition of finishing put an already one-sided contest to bed.

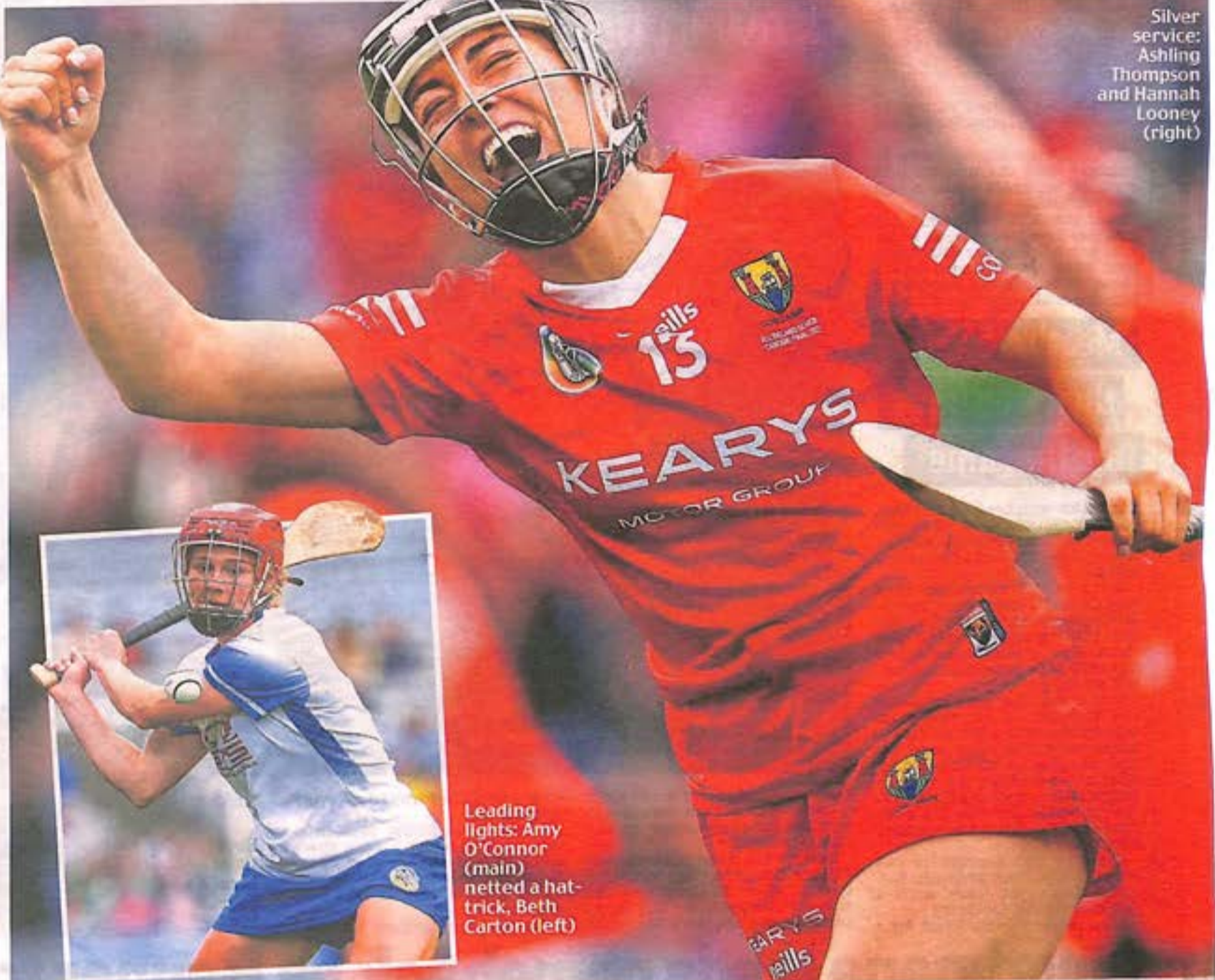
It was a ruthless display of finishing by Cork who were already 1-9 to 0-3 ahead at half-time before putting the foot to the floor.

All three were created by Cork's strong running and ability to either create an overlap or enough space for the St Vincent's corner-forward to do her thing.

The first she flashed to the net from close range; the second she stole in from the right corner to pick her spot. The third? Set up this time by full-forward Katrina Mackey, the last pass allowing her to finish from close range. Mackey, O'Connor and Sorcha McCartan — who scored arguably the pick of the bunch in the first half — caused Waterford trouble throughout.

At the final whistle, O'Connor sank to her knees on the pitch before being swallowed up by delirious teammates.

It was a sweet redemption for



Silver service: Ashling Thompson and Hannah Looney (right)

Leading lights: Amy O'Connor (main) netted a hat-trick, Beth Carton (left)

Cork after back-to-back All-Ireland defeats at the hands of Kilkenny and Galway. This first title since 2018 also extended their lead in the roll of honour to 29.

And it felt fitting that it was O'Connor, as Cork captain, who lifted the O'Duffy Cup.

No words can offer Waterford consolation for seeing their own All-Ireland dreams stamped on in such emphatic fashion. The Déise have endured tough days on big Croke Park occasions between this and the hurlers' continued Liam MacCarthy Cup drought and it was a cruel end to a season in which they contributed so much. While Cork came in as favourites, the gutsy manner in which Waterford had disposed of Tipperary in the semi-final, not to mention their Munster championship win over Cork, gave the big Waterford support plenty of reason for optimism. And it was

their support that contributed to a new record attendance for a standalone camogie final of 30,191.

Unfortunately, in what was the county's first senior final appearance since the 1945 defeat by Antrim, they never got going and were overrun by a powerful, free-running, free-scoring Cork side.

Beth Carton did carry the fight from start to finish but when her penalty flashed high and wide just on the stroke of half-time, it summed up Waterford's day.

She finished with all but two points of her side's total, with only Niamh Rockett and Laoise Forrest adding to her total of 0-7 with a point apiece.

It didn't help Waterford's cause that Vikki Falconer crumpled to the ground only minutes in and had to be carted off. Whether it was down or not to the occasion but Waterford were looking a bit

nervy and were slow to settle.

Cork were the opposite. O'Connor greeted the first score of the game with a fist pump and signposted what was to come as her team jumped into a 0-4 to 0-0 lead.

Waterford needed a score. And it came from Carton who really looked on her game. After a couple of early surging runs had come to nothing, this time she sprinted clear and fired an important steady-point. That it took until the 15th minute was a worry for Waterford.

Cork were far more confident and fluid in their play with Laura Tracey, Aoife Healy, Hannah Looney and Fiona Keating full of energy and invention.

Then came the first big swing moment. Rockett played a ball in front of the goal and into the path of Lorraine Bray — she went to volley it past the goalkeeper but

missed the touch and the chance was gone.

Just to rub it in, Cork broke at pace and Looney stroked over a point on the run. Instead of being 0-5 to 1-1 and just the minimum in it, Cork had clear daylight with a five point lead.

Then Katrina Mackey took the ball on the turn and flew past marker Kate Lynch in the 25th minute. After drawing the last defender, she played a floated pass across to McCartan who showed such skill and composure to hit a lovely cushioned volley to the net.

At 1-7 to 0-1, this was already getting away from Waterford before Sean Power's side were awarded a penalty just before half-time.

Annie Fitzgerald did so well to get the ball into her hand and was bundled to the ground as she shot. Referee John Dermody went in and consulted with his umpires

Camogie All-Ireland Senior Final



Ruthless Cork crush Waterford's dreams to claim final glory



Denis Walsh
at Croke Park

O'Connor strikes a lightning hat-trick in biggest winning margin for 64 years

Fairytales are heartless. They suck you in and spit you out. Waterford's journey to the All-Ireland final, their first in 78 years, had been the story of the camogie summer, but the dreamy make believe came to a withering end. Cork won their 29th title by 19 points, 5-13 to 0-9, the biggest winning margin in a senior final in 64 years.

Cork were dominant from the beginning, and utterly ruthless in their finishing, but the game was blown to smithere-

ens just after half-time when the Cork captain Amy O'Connor scored three goals in 119 seconds, surely the fastest hat-trick in the history of senior finals, women's or men's. O'Connor finished the game with a staggering tally of 3-7, scoring with every shot she directed at the target.

"It's a very proud day for me obviously and for my club," said O'Connor. "I come from a very small club, a junior club on the northside of the city [St Vincents]. We haven't had too much success at club level, so it's nice to be able to do something like this to represent the club and the area."

"I didn't realise I scored a hat-trick until someone said it to me after the match - which is probably a good thing because we were so focused on the next ball, the next pass, whatever it might be. And that might sound so clichéd but that's the way we drove it for the last three or four months."

It was a day of sweet redemption for Cork. They had lost the last two All-Ireland finals, and the last two National League finals to boot. Earlier in the year

they stumbled into a four-game losing streak, including a defeat to Waterford in the Munster championship, and to Galway in the opening game of the round-robin series. By mid-June their season was at a crossroads.

"We went through a bad patch in the middle of the year and I suppose everyone wrote us off," said Matthew Twomey, the Cork manager.

'Pressure'

"In our own way we used that as a spur. After we got beaten by Galway in Athenry we just had a real long chat with ourselves. We went into the Down game under pressure, the Clare game under pressure, every game we've been under ferocious pressure."

"Even today we were under fierce pressure coming up here. These players are just incredible. The more their backs were to the wall the better they got. What they got today they totally deserve, they were immense. We were saying it since January that some team could get a hammering off us."

That prophecy finally came

Inside Page 5

■ **Senior:** O'Connor's express hat-trick ends Cork heartbreak

■ **Intermediate:** Derry and Meath must do it all again

■ **Junior:** Clare overcome slow start to see off Tipp

true. The game was hanging by a thread as a contest when Cork struck for their first goal, five minutes before half-time: Sorcha McCartan finished Katrina Mackey's pass to the net, unmarked on the edge of the square. That put Cork 1-7 to 0-1 in front, a nine-point advantage they held until the break.

Any remote chance of a Waterford comeback probably perished in first-half injury time when they walked away empty-handed from a penalty. Annie Fitzgerald was brought down and Beth Carton stood up to the shot; she hit it with pace but it flew inches wide of the top corner.

Carton had been magnificent on Waterford's run to the final and her performance yesterday was an ornament on the final. Of Waterford's total of nine points she accounted for seven, including the score of the match midway through the second half. Slaloming through the middle third, bouncing the ball off the ground and back up on to her stick, she launched a sweet shot on the run from 55 metres.

She hit that point on her right-hand side, and struck all of her long-range frees on that side as well. But for short-range frees Carton switches to her left, and she took the penalty on her backhand side. To be able to generate as much power as she did on the penalty with her non-dominant hand was another illustration of her luminous talent.

Waterford, though, could never settle into the game, or find any rhythm. Vikki Falconer, the leader of their defence, was injured in the first couple of minutes and carried off on a stretcher, irreplaceable essentially. As the half wore on her loss mounted up. The Cork

■ **Cork players celebrate with the O'Duffy Cup after their emphatic win over Waterford at Croke Park.** PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN KEANE/INPHO

full-forward line tormented them and finished the game with 4-10.

Midway through the first half, when the game was still alive, Lorraine Bray couldn't apply the finishing touch to a Niamh Rockett cross, just four or five yards from the Cork goal. Who knows how a score like that might have changed the mood? Waterford needed something to settle their nerves and make them feel like they belonged. That comfort never came.

It was Cork's first All-Ireland since 2018, and in that time the panel has gone through revolutions. Of the 32 players in the current Cork squad, 20 of them were winning their first medal. In the quarter-final and semi-final they eliminated the teams that had beaten them in the last two finals, exorcising those ghosts. By the end, they were undisputed champions.

Derry and Meath must do it again after draw in decider

Daragh Ó Conchúir
at Croke Park

Royal County will feel they left title behind them after wasting a number of goalscoring opportunities

Derry	1-9
Meath	2-6

Derry and Meath will have to do it all over again after the pair could not be separated in an entertaining Glen Dimplex All-Ireland intermediate camogie final at Croke Park.

Aoife Minogue had a late opportunity to snatch what would have been a brilliant comeback win for Meath, but her shot from a difficult free drifted just wide after looking on target for most of its trajectory. Hawk-Eye did not intercede to indicate that the umpire had made an incorrect decision and that was that.

Dual star Minogue hadn't her best day from placed balls but it was a credit to the Dunderry flyer that she did not allow those difficulties to impact on her general play, proving an inspiration with her forceful effort and indomitable spirit.

“Derry will be distraught that they failed to score after Lauren McKenna's point midway through the third quarter

as Meath clawed themselves back into the fray after trailing by seven points.

Hanging on

Derry will be distraught that they failed to score after Lauren McKenna's point midway through the third quarter, which put them 1-9 to 1-2 ahead after Abbye Donnelly got the second-half scoring underway.

In the end, they were probably the happier to emerge from proceedings with a second bite of the cherry as they were undoubtedly hanging on when the final whistle came from Bernard Nea, who contributed to the enjoyable fare with his commitment to avoid-

ing unnecessary involvement.

Minogue had a point on the board after nine seconds but Aoife Shaw hit back with a quickfire double for Derry.

Then came a lovely finish for a goal from Ciara Foley in the sixth minute but Meath would not trouble to score-keeper for the rest of the half, while Derry took over.

Dervla O'Kane dropped deep to enable captain and the sole survivor from the last Derry team to win the Jack McGrath Cup, Aoife Ni Chaiside, to drive forward at every opportunity.

Crossbar

Points from Shaw, McKenna and Aine McAllister gave them the lead and then a goal came from Mary McNicholl, whose sister Grainne was an Oak Leaf star 12 years ago. The Swatragh forward's shot for a point just dropped under the crossbar in the 23rd minute, somehow eluding Meath netminder Tara Murphy.

McAllister (free), Shaw (45) and McNicholl split the posts again and it was 1-8 to 1-1 at the break.

Derry goalie Niamh Gribbin had been kept busy, however, and in truth, when Meath look back on this, they will think they could have had a few more goals at least.

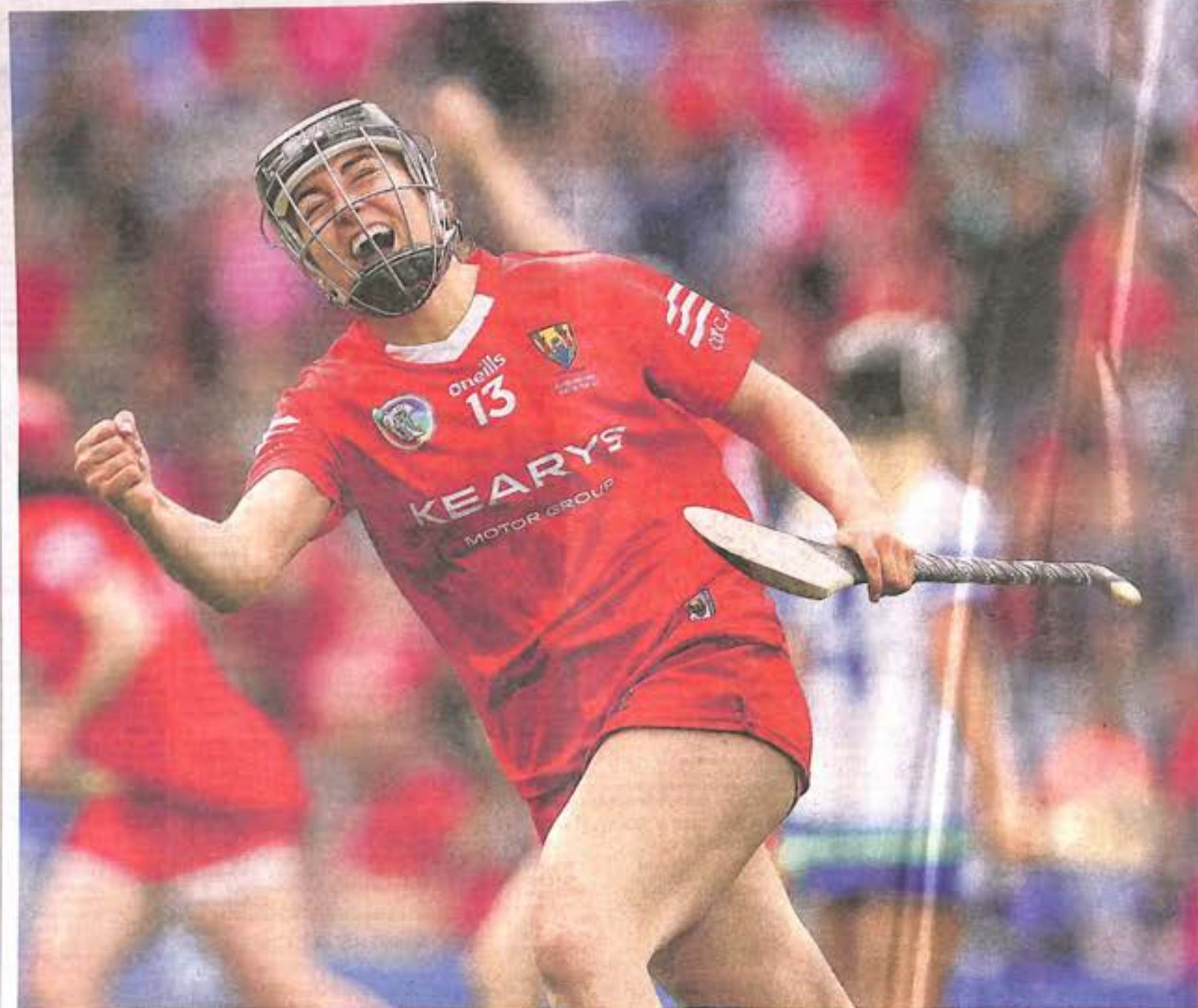
They had wasted a couple of more chances, including a missed penalty, when Minogue shot straight at Gribbin, when they finally raised the green flag that infused their challenge with much needed oxygen in the 45th minute.

It was a real goalmouth scramble before sub Aoibhinn Lally found the necessary finish. From there, it was all Meath.

Foley reduced the margin to two before skipper Ellen Burke fired over a superb point from the left in the 55th minute.

Minogue levelled after Sinéad McGill rugby-tackled Aimee Lennon unnecessarily to the ground around 30 metres out and the counties, who both won their last titles in replays, will go at it again.

DERRY: N Gribbin, N Quinn, L Lennon, S McGill, R Downey, A Ni Chaiside, L McKenna (0-2), D O'Kane, A McAllister (0-2, one free), E McGulgan, A Shaw (0-4, one free, one 45), R McAllister, M Hegarty.
Substitutes: O Hall for Hegarty (45 mins), A Lennon for McGulgan (48), S O'Connor for McNicholl (60).
MEATH: T Jy, R O'Neill, C Coffey, S Payne, T King, M Cince, L Devine, G Coleman, A Minogue (0-3, two frees), A Gaffney, A Donnelly (0-1), O O'Halloran, C Foley (0-1), E O'Connell, E Burke (0-1).
Substitutes: A Lally (0-0) for Coleman (30 mins), N Doyle for O'Halloran (54).
Referee: Barry Nea (Westmeath).



O'Connor's rapid-fire hat-trick melts away Cork's heartache

Gordon Manning
at Croke Park

Cork captain scored 3-7 from 10 shots, including a whirlwind hat-trick in just 119 seconds

Cork	5-13
Waterford	0-9

Amy O'Connor produced one of the great All-Ireland final performances as Cork returned to camogie's summit. If this season was a year of redemption for Cork, the final was a day of days for their captain.

O'Connor scored 3-7 from 10 shots, including a whirlwind hat-trick in just 119 seconds. The three goals immediately after half-time ended the game as she and ensured the Rebels would collect their 29th All-Ireland senior title on a record-breaking day at Croke Park.

Cork's 19-point victory was the largest winning margin in an All-Ireland senior camogie decider since 1959, with this game played in front of 30,191

spectators – the largest ever attendance for a stand-alone camogie decider.

And they were treated to what is believed to be the fastest hat-trick ever in an All-Ireland senior final across all four codes – O'Connor netting her three goals in just 1 minute and 59 seconds. The first one hit the back of the Waterford net with the clock at 32.44 and the third at 34.43.

Antrim's Dervla Cosgrove needed just 84 seconds to score a hat-trick in the All-Ireland junior decider last year.

Local pitch

Speaking afterwards, O'Connor said she was so caught up in the game that she wasn't aware she had scored a hat-trick until it was mentioned to her at the final whistle. On Saturday afternoon the St Vincent's player went down to her local pitch to puke a few balls.

"I went practising frees," she said. "I don't think one went over the bar."

But everything she touched at Croke Park on Sunday turned to gold.

"I suppose you do have a day where everything you hit goes over and it's nice to have those days because they don't come around too often," she said. "It was nice to get one of those days today."

"Very proud day for me obviously. I come from quite a small junior club on the north side of the city, we haven't had too much success at club level so it is nice to be able to do something like this."

This is Cork's first O'Duffy Cup triumph since 2018 and helps bury the heartache of losing the last two finals – to Galway in 2021 and Kilkenny in

2022. On their way to this success, Cork vanquished both Galway and Kilkenny. It extends their lead in camogie's roll of honour to 29 senior titles, ahead of Dublin on 26.

It was only Waterford's second appearance in the senior decider and their first since 1945, but it never looked like a day the Deise were about to claim a first

“I suppose you do have a day where everything you hit goes over and it's nice to have those days because they don't come around too often. It was nice to get one of those days today

“I suppose you do have a day where everything you hit goes over and it's nice to have those days because they don't come around too often. It was nice to get one of those days today

All-Ireland senior camogie title.

Cork 1-9 to 0-3 at half-time and O'Connor's three strikes on the restart killed off the contest.

Waterford only had three scorers over the course of the game, with Beth Carton accounting for seven of their nine points. However, the De La Salle player drilled a penalty wide in first-half injury-time at a stage when Waterford were just about clinging on.

"Massive relief," said Cork manager Matthew Twomey afterwards. "To lose the All-Ireland last year was very hard but

we learned so much last year.

"We had an idea ourselves how we could change it, we were very lucky that we got a coach like Liam Cronin. He's meticulous. This year we went in a different direction, it was more kind of forward thinking.

"Even in the dark days we were able to analyse the game and see exactly where we went wrong. It was tweaking rather than pressing the nuclear bomb. After losing previous finals, I tried to block it out of my head all week. It is a massive relief.

'Fierce hunger'

"Cork haven't won it since 2018, we've 32 on the panel, 12 have All-Ireland medals, 20 hadn't. They have now. That was a massive motivation. We had a wealth of experience but the rest of the players brought a fierce hunger.

"We were just extremely lucky. We got on kind of a roll, it was like a train."

Meabh Cahalane, of the Cahalane dynasty, did a fine job picking up Niamh Rockett and holding her to just a single point while in the middle of the field Cork dominated the physical exchanges.

Sorcha McCartan, daughter of Down football great Gregory, became the first player from Ulster to win an All-Ireland senior camogie medal in 44 years.

■ Cork's Amy O'Connor celebrates after scoring her third goal against Waterford.
PHOTOGRAPH: BRYAN KEANE/INPHO

This is McCartan's second year playing for the Rebels and she scored their first goal against Waterford, volleying home after an unselfish pass by Katrina Mackey to put Cork 1-7 to 0-1 ahead.

Carton drilled a penalty wide of the post in first-half injury-time but if there was a sense the game had already slipped from Waterford at the break, then O'Connor's blitzkrieg after the interval confirmed Cork would not be losing a third straight final.

Fiona Keating finished the goalscoring spree in the 50th minute on a glorious day for the Rebels at Croke Park.

"We've never really been in that position before," added O'Connor. "It's always been better-skelter until the final whistle so it was probably nice to kind of enjoy the last few minutes.

"There were 62, 63 minutes on the clock and you know there's a huge deficit so it was highly unlikely they were going to come back so it was nice to take it all in. It was a huge feeling of satisfaction."

A day of days for O'Connor. A year of redemption for Cork.



Meath's Tracy King is challenged by Aine McAllister of Derry. PHOTOGRAPH: LASZLO GECZO/INPHO

CORK: A Lee, P Mackey, M Cahalane, L Coppinger, A Healy, L Tracy, D O'Connell, N Lennon (0-1), L Hayes, C Sigerson (0-1, one free), F Keating (1-0), S McCarty, A O'Connor (3-7, 1-5 from frees), K Mackey (0-2), S McCarty (1-1).
Substitutes: C Healy for Hayes (44 mins), O Cronin for McCarty (47), A Thompson for McCarty (51), O Cahalane (0-1) for Sigerson (52), M Murphy for P Mackey (53).
WATERFORD: B O'Regan, K Corbett, Barry L Forrest (0-1), K Lynch, V Falconer, E Dickey, C Carroll, A Flynn, L Bray, M O'Brien, B Carton (0-7, five frees), M Power, A Fitzgerald, N Rockett (0-1), R Walsh.
Substitutes: I Heffernan for Falconer (5 mins), B Bowdren for Power (16), T Power for O'Brien (41), G Griffin for Carroll (42), S Fitzgerald for Lynch (54).
Referee: John Dermody (Westmeath).



CORK RATINGS

Amy Lee 7
Didn't have a save to make but had a good return on her puck-outs and always looked composed.

Meabh Cahalane 8
Had a good day on Niamh Rockett, who caused Cork problems in last year's semi-final. Cahalane limited her to a point from play.

Libby Coppinger 7
The dual player was rarely in trouble, although she conceded the first-half penalty, an arguable call.

Pamela Mackey 7
On the senior team at 16, now into her 30s, the twin sister of Katrina played her part in shutting down the Waterford attacking threat.

Aoife Healy 7
Healy dropped back on Waterford's most dangerous forward, Beth Carton, and worked tirelessly, bringing much aggression to the role.

Laura Tracey 8
An effective sweeper and an assured presence when needed who showed strong leadership.

Izzy O'Regan 7
Another of the defence to come out on top of her duel and also contributed under the Waterford puck-out.

Laura Hayes 7
Late replacement for Meabh Murphy, the St Catherine's player started at midfield with Hannah Looney, dominating the area before going off.

Hannah Looney 8
The dual player from Killeagh partnered with Hayes and picked up Abby Flynn. She helped Cork significantly to rule the middle third.

Chloe Sigerson 7
The 27-year-old landed the only free of the game, considered outside Amy O'Connor's range, and did a lot of unselfish work and hard running.

Fiona Keating 7
Had Orla Hickey for company. The Coursey Rovers player claimed Cork's fifth goal after taking a pass from Orla Cronin in the 50th minute.

Saoirse McCarthy 7
Earned All-Star recognition last year as a wing-back, McCarthy collected her first senior medal on the field of play in the half-forward line.

Amy O'Connor 10
The team captain was immense and put the match beyond Waterford with three goals in three minutes just after half-time. Missed nothing in a 3-7 haul.

Katrina Mackey 8
Vastly experienced, Mackey held the inside line with O'Connor, and set up the first goal for McCartan. Scored two points from play.

Sorcha McCartan 8
The first Ulster player to win a senior medal since Antrim triumphed in 1979, excellent first half with 1-1.

Bench impact 7
Had potential to make impact but the stakes were not as high as expected when Cork released the cavalry. Orlaith Cahalane was the pick of them.

Dermot Crowe



Rebelettes show ruthlessness to dismantle Déise



COLM KEYS

CORK 5-13
WATERFORD 0-9

ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOGIE FINAL

What must be the quickest hat-trick in an All-Ireland senior camogie final at any level, or probably any All-Ireland senior final for that matter, sealed a 29th title for Cork in Croke Park.

Between the 32nd and 34th minutes, Cork captain Amy O'Connor stunned an already shaken Waterford defence with three goals to cap a magnificent display.

In truth, the outcome was already decided by then, a 1-9 to 0-3 interval lead

making clear that Cork's superior athleticism was overwhelming for Waterford.

But Cork were ruthless in how they went about their business. On a day when a 30,191 crowd turned up to set a new 'stand alone' record for the camogie finals, O'Connor set about establishing her own with lethal finishing for one of the greatest final performances in recent memory. She finished with 3-7 – five from frees, 10 shots all on target. One was as good as the other for the quality of the finish, but the second of the three probably stands out for the daring nature of it.

Fiona Keating was creator of the first, the centre-forward's pace carried her clear into open space before popping to O'Connor inside for the opening goal. There was 32 minutes and 44 seconds on the clock. The industry of Aoife Healy to get the turnover on Beth Carton as she tried to run the ball out of her own defence initially was also pivotal.

Hannah Looney began the move for O'Connor's second goal, putting full-for-

ward Katrina Mackey away. Mackey had work to do but kicked the ball into the right corner where O'Connor was in loads of space.

Buoyed by what had happened less than a minute earlier, the Cork skipper went for it again, this time rounding Laoise Forrest and striking off her left for a second time. At 3-9 to 0-3, any faint hopes of a stirring Waterford revival were gone.

But Cork, beaten by Kilkenny and Galway in the last two finals and also on the wrong side of the two most recent league final results, weren't leaving anything to chance.

When the Déise defence lost arguably their best marker, Vikki Falconer, to an injury that held up the game considerably in the opening five minutes, O'Connor sensed more opportunities. And when Mackey picked her out again, she engineered the space to pick her spot, off her right this time, past Brianna O'Regan.

There were 34 minutes and 43 seconds gone, all done in one minute and 59 sec-

onds. Only Derval Cosgrove, plundering three goals for Antrim in last year's junior final against Armagh, has assembled a hat-trick quicker in recent finals at all levels while Clare's Shane O'Donnell memorably did it in the first half of the 2013 All-Ireland hurling final replay.

Waterford did manage to stem the red tide but the gulf in class was all too evident.

Eventually a fifth goal came, a brilliant pass over the top from substitute Orla Cronin for Keating to gather and turn goalward on 50 minutes and again her pace told as she stretched past Orla Hickey and Keeley Corbett Barry.

This was the first senior camogie final since Wexford's 2012 appearance that both competing teams weren't from the Cork-Kilkenny-Galway triumvirate, and that dearth of exposure for Waterford at this level really told.

They had beaten Cork in the Munster Championship and had pushed them hard in last year's semi-final, but in a final Cork weren't going to cede ground and by the end they had established the biggest winning margin since the 1959 final, when Dublin beat Mayo by 11-6 to 1-3.

That's a tough outcome on Waterford and especially Carton who carried the fight all evening to Cork.

She finished with 0-7 (5f) and ran direct lines that Cork pursuers – she was tracked by Healy for most of it – found trouble with. But Waterford could never just generate sufficient support for her.

Carton struck a penalty wide just before the break when Libby Coppinger got a hand on Annie Fitzgerald after the latter shot wide from close range.

Referee John Dermody consulted with his umpires and took his time to make his decision but there was contact, how-



Final stretch: Sorcha McCartan in action for Cork yesterday



Glory game: Cork's Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy express their joy

By PHILIP LANIGAN

AMY O'CONNOR certainly had no inkling she was going to have a day of days in an All-Ireland final.

On Saturday, the Cork captain took herself off to work on a few things. Let's just say, there wasn't a whole pile to suggest she would light up Croke Park with a stunning personal display and a hat-trick of goals in a record burst of around 120 seconds in the second half.

'I actually went practising my frees yesterday - I don't think one went over the bar. I thought my boyfriend was going to kill me! I suppose you do have days where everything you hit goes over. It's nice, and they don't come around too often.

'Yeah, when you hit the sliotar... It's a different feeling on the bas of the hurley.'

Now this was a tour de force by Cork, rather than just a one-woman show. Cork's pace and athleticism and dominance of the middle third allowed the team to create those scoring opportunities. And yet O'Connor's finishing was of such a high quality as to be a lesson for any other forward in finding the net.

Already well in control with a half-time lead of 1-9 to 0-3 - Waterford's sole scorer at that point Beth Carton flashed a penalty wide just before the break - the fireworks display that greeted the O'Duffy Cup presentation was matched by that of O'Connor between the 33rd and 35th minutes.

She says that, so engrossed in the game was she, that she

"It was nice to enjoy the last few minutes"

wasn't even aware of what she'd achieved.

'I didn't realise I had scored a hat-trick until somebody said it after the match, which is probably a good thing because we were so focused on the next ball, the next pass - that might be so clichéd but that's the way we drove it for the last three, four months.

'Very proud day for me obviously. Come from quite a small junior club on the north side of the city. We haven't had too much success at club level. So it is nice to be able to do something like this and represent the club and the area.'

Sorcha McCartan's first-half goal was also top quality and Fiona Keating rounded off the goal rush with 10 minutes to go.

For a core of this Cork team, it was a nice feeling to play out the final quarter knowing the cup was already secure, especially after the trauma of losing the previous two finals to Kilkenny and Galway.

'We've never been in that position before.

'It's always helter-skelter until the final whistle, so it was nice to enjoy the last couple of minutes, when it was 62, 63 and you know there is a huge deficit and it's highly unlikely that they were

'I didn't even realise that I had scored a hat-trick until after the match!'



Party time: Cork celebrate their victory at Croke Park yesterday

going to come back.

'It was a huge feeling of satisfaction because of all of the work that we have put in.

'When you see different types of plays that we have practised over and over coming out on a day like today it's brilliant.'

Cork manager Matthew Twomey (below) was flanked by Laura Tracey at the post-match press conference and admitted that it was such a different situation to last year's shell-shocked dressing room.

'Myself and Laura were here last year after losing it and I suppose we were drained and we couldn't see how we would get over the line.

'When we came back this year we decided our focus obviously was to win the All-Ireland. We went through a bad patch in the middle of the year and I suppose a lot of people wrote us off. In our own way we used that as a spur.

'After we got beaten by Galway in Athenry we had a real long chat with ourselves.

'We were going into the Down game under pressure, the Clare game under pressure and every game

we have been under ferocious pressure - even today we were under fierce pressure coming up.

'These players are just incredible. The more their backs were to the wall the better they got. What we got today they totally deserve. They've been immense.'

He admitted it was almost overwhelming. 'Probably a bit of shock. Massive relief. To lose the All-Ireland last year was very hard. We learned so much last year. We had an idea ourselves how we could change it.

'We were very lucky that we got a coach like Liam Cronin.

'He's meticulous. Top, top class. This year we went in a different direction. It was more kind of forward thinking.

'The way he broke it down to the players, he made it so, so simple. We were very confident that if we just kept to the process that he was implementing we were going to be successful.

'Even in the dark days we were able to analyse the game and see exactly where we went wrong. It was tweaking rather than pressing the nuclear bomb.

'After losing three finals, I tried to block it out of my head all week. It is a massive relief.'



and took his time about deciding whether Fitzgerald had been fouled with replays showing Libby Coppinger maybe just getting hands on at the critical moment. He signalled for a penalty then for Waterford with sharpshooter Carton stepping up only for her shot to flash high and past the top left corner. She thumped the ground in frustration just as the whistle blew for half-time.

At 1-9 to 0-3, the odds were already stacked in Cork's favour before O'Connor's hat-trick sealed the deal. Fiona Keating added a fifth with 10 minutes to go and it said so much about Cork's accuracy and dominance that they didn't hit a second-half wide until substitute Ashling Thompson came on and fired a shot that just tailed left of the posts in the 53rd minute.

PLAYER OF THE MATCH: No doubt about this one. Take a bow, hat-trick hero and

captain Amy O'Connor.

MOMENT OF THE MATCH: More a series of moments just after half-time. That three-goal burst finished off the game in devastating fashion.

CORK: A Lee; M Cahalane, L Coppinger, P Mackey (M Murphy 53); A Healy, L Tracey, J O'Regan; H Looney, L Hayes (C Healy 44); C Sigerson (O Cahalane 52), F Keating, S McCarthy (A Thompson 50); K Mackey, McCartan (O Cronin 47), A O'Connor.

SCORERS: A O'Connor 3-7 (46, 145), S McCartan 1-1, F Keating 1-0, K Mackey 0-2, C Sigerson (1), H Looney, O Cahalane.

YELLOW CARD: A Healy 30, L Coppinger 38

WIDES: 3 (3)

WATERFORD: B O'Regan; K Corbett-Barry, L Forrest, K Lynch (S Fitzgerald 54); V Falconer, C Carroll (C Griffin 42), O Hickey; A Flynn, B Carton; M O'Brien (T Power 41), L Bray, M Power (B Bowdren 1-1); A Fitzgerald, N Rockett, R Walsh.

SCORERS: B Carton 0-7 (56), N Rockett, L Forrest 0-1 each

YELLOW CARD: L Bray 15, C Griffin 42, N Rockett 58. Wides: 5 (3)

REFEREE: J Dermody (Westmeath).

ATTENDANCE: 30,191



Cork's Meabh Cahalane, Ashling Thompson and Hannah Looney celebrate after the game with the O'Duffy Cup. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

Sister act as Cahalanes celebrate their 'special' All-Ireland side by side

SHE may be softly spoken off the pitch, but when Cork were picking their team for the All-Ireland final you can bet that Meabh Cahalane would have been one of the first names on the team sheet.

A fierce tackler who doesn't give an inch, her display was key to Cork's win in yesterday's All-Ireland camogie final.

It was a special day for her and the famed Cahalane family as her sister, Orlaith, also was a winner on the day, getting Cork's last score in their 5-13 to 0-9 win.

"It was unbelievable to win, I knew we felt we were in a driving position at half-time, but I really felt we went after every ball in the second half to make sure we won," said Meabh.

"I felt we won nearly every one of them and when the final whistle went we couldn't believe it. It's just a really special feeling. The difference in feeling between now and last year is just unreal. There was a lot of hurt after losing the final last year."

Defensively, Cork were outstanding, but Meabh also praised the forwards for their part in this.

"I thought we put in a great defensive display but I felt the forwards' work rate also helped to make that easier for us. They really put Waterford under pressure coming out with the ball which allowed us to defend from the front."

"But everyone played their

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

part, everyone who came on, everyone who has been training all year who got game time. There is even people who didn't get jerseys today who all played a huge part in this win and everyone deserves it."

Meabh was also delighted to have won an All-Ireland with her sister, Orlaith, and said it was great to see her complete the set as, at just 19, she now has U16, minor, and senior All-Ireland medals, an achievement in itself.

"It's really special to win with Orlaith and she has medals now at U16, minor and senior so not too many people can say they have that."

"She really has had a massive impact coming into the senior panel this year and no doubt we will enjoy the celebrations for a few days now," concluded Meabh.

Another key defender was Laura Tracey, and when asked did she ever think Cork would get over the line she added: "I guess we probably did individually but at a group level we always try to keep as positive as we possibly can."

"I would never ever doubt any player that management have trusted to put next to me or in front of me or behind me, I just think that was really important was that we all stuck together and here we are as All-Ireland champions now."



Cork manager Matthew Twomey carries the O'Duffy Cup down to the pitch.

Picture: Ben Brady/Inpho

'We believed in ourselves'

CORK manager Matthew Twomey was sitting back relaxed as he reflected on a glorious All-Ireland victory, in stark contrast to last year when his side lost out to Kilkenny.

"We sat here last year and it was heart-breaking after losing and to be honest we were drained and to be honest we couldn't see how we could get over the line."

"When we came back this year we had one focus and that was to win the All-Ireland; we went through a bad patch in the middle of the year and a lot of people wrote us off."

Twomey explained how being written off was used to their advantage.

"After we lost to Galway in Athenry and we just had a really long chat with ourselves and we know from here on we were under pressure, we were facing into the Down game under pressure and again we would be under pressure for all the remaining games."

"In fact, coming in today, we knew Waterford would be determined so the pressure was there to perform."

He paid a huge tribute to his players.

Mary Newman

"These players are just incredible, the more our backs were to the walls all year the better they got and the rewards they have got today are totally deserved, they are immense."

Having beaten Galway and Kilkenny, the favourite tag was firmly on Cork's shoulders but his side was zoned in on the job they had to do.

"We knew we had to hit the ground running from the start," said Twomey. "We have a lot of hurt in us having lost the last two finals and we just focused on ourselves and getting our game right. We concentrated on our own performance and broke it down in what we needed to do, we did have a few match-ups but we focused on what we needed to do."

"We didn't get carried away, it didn't matter what anyone else thought. The same people were cutting the daylights out of us after losing to Waterford in the

Munster championship and we had lost four games in a row but weren't concerned with any of that, the focus for us was getting the 29th title back to Cork."

During the year, the Rebels' disappointing displays had been questioned but the management had huge faith in their side.

"We felt that we had the capabilities to get a huge performance and today we did."

"We got three goals against Down and today we got five and I suppose you have to feel sorry for Waterford, they gave it everything, but we just clicked and turned in a superb performance and I am really thrilled for the girls."

The Cork manager also paid tribute to the Cork defence.

"From the start, we closed Waterford down and our defence was excellent. They never allowed them any time on the ball, their work rate was huge, and once we stopped them getting a grip we settled into the game."

Twomey also paid tribute to the work going on in the county at all levels.

"The game is in a really good place and the players are coming through."



Waterford's Niamh Rockett dashes in the air with Cork's Meabh Cahalane and Laura Tracey in yesterday's final. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo



Cork's Fiona Keating celebrates after the final whistle with Emma Murphy. Picture: Ben Brady/Inpho



Amy O'Connor of Cork shoots to score her side's fourth goal at Croke Park. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

Multi-talented O'Connor is the high-flying hero that camogie so badly needs

A class act on the pitch and true to her native Knocknaheeny, Rebel captain can unlock the sport's potential

Amy O'Connor gave one of the year's finest individual Irish sporting performances yesterday. Her 3-7, one of the highest scores in camogie final history, included a spectacular Robbie Fowler-style two-minute hat-trick.

So let's not forget Cork's own AOC when the awards are being handed out at the end of the year. Because camogie may be this country's most persistently under-rated sport.

O'Connor is the kind of star who could change that. She's not just a sublimely skilful forward but a fascinating character.

The Cork captain is a former underage international soccer teammate of Katie McCabe and Megan Connolly, who could have turned professional but opted for camogie, doing so "because it was the thing that gives me the most joy in my life".

She was also a bright and determined kid who fought for her local secondary school to add chemistry



Cork star Amy O'Connor (back row, second from left) with current internationals Megan Connolly (back row, far left), Chloe Mustaki (back row, fourth from left) and Katie McCabe (front row, centre) when she was part of the Ireland U-19 squad that took part at the European Championships in 2014

to its curriculum so she could study Pharmacy in UCC.

O'Connor has listed making it to university as one of her proudest achievements and lamented the social problems afflicting her native Knocknaheeny on the north side of Cork City. Yet she's also outspokenly proud of her home patch and talks about living there for the rest of her life.

Her club, St Vincent's, plays camogie at junior level, yet she's resisted a

'O'Connor's extraordinary three-goal salvo just after half-time showcased the range of her talents'

move to a big senior outfit. This is a woman of substance off the pitch and considerable style on it.

The Cork captain believes camogie is an "untouched gem. There are huge opportunities for the sport to explode."

Yesterday she did the exploding. The extraordinary three-goal salvo just after half-time showcased the range of her talents.

Goal number one saw her take a pass from Fiona Keating before drilling a fierce shot past Waterford keeper Brianna O'Regan. The second was an individual effort as she rounded her marker, cut in from the right and, scoring a point, surged on to find the net.

The third too, with O'Connor calmly eluding a defender before precisely placing a shot beyond O'Regan's reach, showed that she possesses

that internal calculator common to all great opportunists.

There's something very Cork about her ruthlessness in front of goal, a touch of Seánie O'Leary and also of Fiona O'Driscoll, who 21 years ago hit a final-winning hat-trick against Tipperary.

This evangelist for camogie's virtues is exactly the kind of ambassador the sport needs. She's correct about the sport's potential. Its stars may not always get their due but the game still has an impressive popular appeal.

Maybe not as impressive as ladies football with its extraordinary world-class final crowds. But it's instructive to compare yesterday's record 30,191 attendance with those from the sport O'Connor left behind her.

It's constantly declared that the Irish public has fallen in love with the women's national soccer team and that interest in the game here is at an all-time high. That's fair enough.

Last month Ireland's final world cup warm-up match game against France attracted a record crowd of 7,633. Camogie, comparatively unsung and unglamorous, just drew four times that much to its blue riband fixture. There's a lot of love out there for the game Amy O'Connor loves.

Yesterday's unprecedented turnout owed something to the novelty of the final pairing. But camogie has been on a steady upward path since breaking the 20,000 barrier at the 2016 decider. Its appeal is underestimated.

This was the best of finals and the worst of finals. The best crowd-wise and the worst possible from a competitive point of view.

'It feels great to reclaim our title' – fans' delight as Cork reign again

Waterford faithful heartbroken but proud after their first final in 78 years

SYLVIA OMORODION

The driving rain failed to dampen Cork fans' celebrations at Croke Park yesterday as the Rebelettes became All-Ireland camogie champions in emphatic fashion.

Captain Amy O'Connor's hat-trick in the space of just over two minutes after the restart stunned Waterford.

As well as that, it confirmed to supporters of the Déise that this was not to be their year.

In this David-and-Goliath battle, it was clear from the early stages who would emerge the victor.

The 5-13 to 0-9 scoreline was a crushing blow to the legions of hopeful Waterford fans who had descended on Croke Park.

However, that won't be of any concern to Cork, who return to the Rebel County with their 29th title. They also

return home with their pride restored after falling to Galway and Kilkenny in the 2021 and 2022 finals respectively.

It was a record attendance for the camogie final – 30,191 – and the supporters ensured they made their voices heard despite the pouring rain.

From the first whistle, the intensity of the game was undeniable. Cork displayed their trademark skill and relentless spirit, while Waterford showcased an inspiring desire to keep going in the face of adversity.

The field was a canvas of swirling movement, as the players played with ferocity and grace.

However, after an impressive first half, the outcome was more or less assured. When O'Connor returned to the pitch with her devastating hat-trick, it was then undeniable.

For Cork fan Anne Marie, who had travelled up to Dublin with her two daughters for the match, it was a relief to be see her team becoming champions again.

"It feels great to reclaim our title as we've lost in the last few years," she said.

"Though there was a pressure on them to win, the game was absolutely enjoyable."



Saoirse McCarthy of Cork celebrates with her granduncle Paschal Robinson (left) and her parents Cella and Leonard. Photo: Sportsfile

While the Rebelettes are well used to lighting up the pitch in Croke Park on an All-Ireland Sunday, for fans of the Déise it's a different story.

This was only their second senior camogie final. The last one came all the way back in 1945.

It was no surprise, then, that the sense of hope and anticipation hung heavy in the air, as if the weight of decades rested on the shoulders of their players.

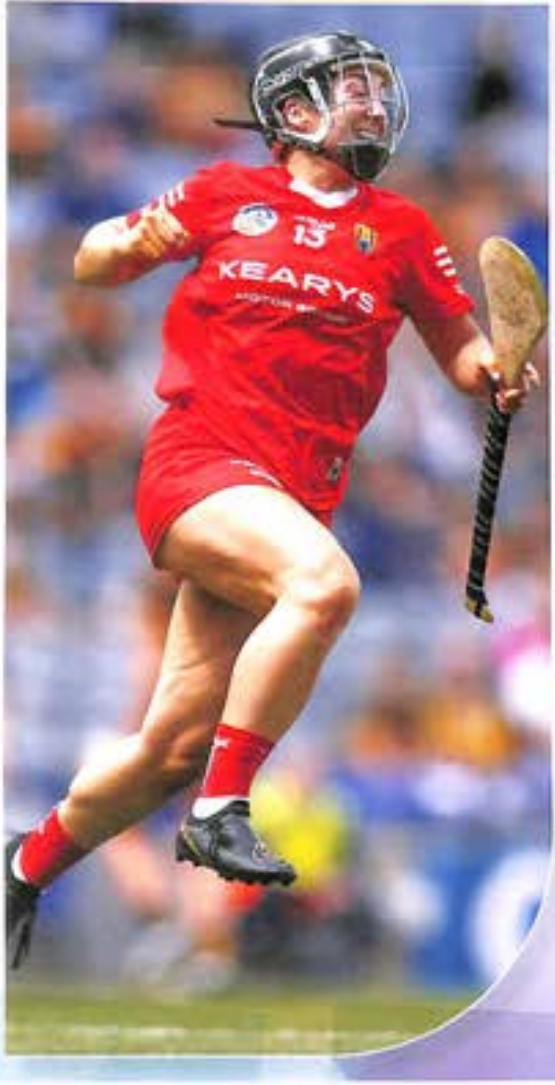
Waterford fan Orla had arrived in Dublin with absolute certainty that this would be their year at last. So when the final whistle blew, she felt crushing disappointment.

"I'm absolutely devastated for the girls, my heart is broken for all of them," she said. "I'm so proud of all the hard work they've put in but unfortunately it wasn't their day."

Eddie Delaney (56) from Portlaoise, Co. Waterford, had travelled by bus to see the game, donning his jersey and bringing his trusty flag.

"We're proud of the girls for getting this far and that's why we came up here," said Mr Delaney.

"Waterford played really well for their first time – you could see how much they wanted to win."



Amy O'Connor
Cork



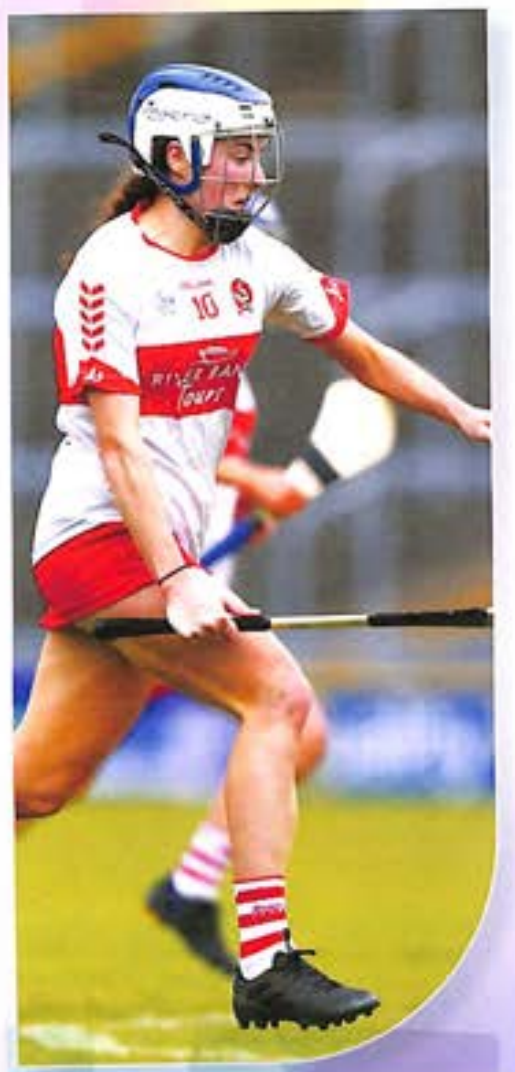
Lorraine Bray
Waterford



Ellen Burke
Meath



Claire Stakelum
Tipperary



Aoife Ni Chaside
Derry



Sinéad O'Keeffe
Clare



Ger McCarthy
reports from
Croke Park

CORK 5-13
WATERFORD 0-9

AN Amy O'Connor hat-trick inspired Cork to Glen Dimplex All-Ireland camogie senior final success in front of a record attendance of 30,191 at Croke Park.

Matthew Twomey's Rebels erased the hurt of losing the 2021 and '22 All-Ireland deciders by easily overcoming their Munster rivals and bringing the O'Duffy Cup back to Leeside for the first time since 2018.

Leading 1-9 to 0-3 at the break, Cork moved up a couple of gears immediately after the interval with captain fantastic Amy O'Connor netting a stunning hat-trick in three minutes. Fiona Keating raised another green flag as the Rebels ran out the most convincing of winners.

"This is unbelievable, we had plenty of conversations down through the year and things were looking dicey at times but we never gave up on the players," Cork manager Matthew Twomey told *The Southern Star*.

"The players drove us on the whole time. They are a credit to Cork. We knew that someday, if we clicked, that we were going to get this kind of a score. Today, we got five goals. Other days our conversion rate wouldn't have been great. To get five goals today, we were mad keen to get a good third quarter but to get three goals in three minutes? Unbelievable. Dreams are made of this."

A disappointing start to the All-Ireland decider saw Cork lead 0-3 to 0-0 after 12 minutes. Amy O'Connor (two, one free) and Chloe Sigerson (free) edged Cork ahead as their opponents hit three wides during the same time period. Struggling to settle, the Déise gave away another free just before

Cork's Amy O'Connor celebrates after scoring her second goal.
(Photos: INPHO)



'Unbelievable. Dreams are made of this'



'The players drove us on the whole time. They are a credit to Cork' – Matthew Twomey, Cork manager

the quarter-hour which O'Connor gladly converted.

Beth Carton looked menacing whenever in possession and got Waterford on the scoreboard shortly after. Cork remained in the ascendancy however, utilising Saoirse McCarthy and Laura Treacy's work-rate to dominate possession and territory.

O'Connor's fourth score was a beautifully floated free from under the Hogan Stand as Waterford's poor shooting continued. Hannah Looney and the excellent O'Connor stretched the

Rebels' advantage.

Cork's full-back line of Laura Hayes, Libby Coppinger and Pamela Mackey were rock solid, giving nothing away before the final's first turning point. Katrina Mackey's superb run found an unmarked Sorcha Mc-



Cartan, who instantly flicked the latter's pass into the net after 24 minutes.

Two Beth Carton frees were answered by Katrina Mackey and McCartan scores

before Waterford were handed a lifeline. A contentious penalty award saw Carton miss the target to leave Cork 1-9 to 0-3 ahead at the break.

It was damage limitation for the Déise immediately after the break when Cork struck for three goals in as many minutes.

Fiona Keating brilliantly set up O'Connor for a well-taken effort before the Cork captain broke free and billowed the net for a second time. Then, Katrina Mackey turned provider for O'Connor's hat-trick.

Three goals in three minutes from the country's top camogie

Meabh Cahalane, Ashling Thompson and Hannah Looney celebrate with the O'Duffy Cup.

Captain fantastic's three-minute

BY GER MCCARTHY

HAT-TRICK hero Amy O'Connor was one of Cork's many standout players in their All-Ireland camogie senior final win over the Déise.

The rain was teeming down on Croke Park minutes after the final whistle but captain fantastic O'Connor was walking on air.

She certainly made her presence felt with a player-of-the-match performance as well as 3-7 in her team's comprehensive victory. Her hat-trick, three goals in as many minutes, shortly after the break that will go down in history.

The first was clinically dispatched following excellent approach work from Fiona Keating. The second was all Amy O'Connor, cutting in and finding the roof of the net. The third was another cool finish after Katrina Mackey did all the hard work in the build-up.

Three chances. Three finishes. Three more reasons to underline O'Connor's importance to the Cork senior set-up.

Those green flags broke Waterford's resolve and confirmed the hat-trick hero as one of the best players of the 2023 senior championship.

"This is unbelievable, it is like

a dream," O'Connor said.

"Hard to put it into words, to be honest. The build-up play? Ah sure it was easy, just tap them into the net!"

"All the girls did the hard work and I had the easy job of putting them into the net. I'm just delighted for everyone."

O'Connor, like her Cork team-mates, suffered All-Ireland heartbreak in each of the two previous years but the 5-13 to 0-9 defeat of Waterford made up for those losses.

"It is just relief, that's the word I'd use to describe it," O'Connor said.

"Yeah, we are just going to go and enjoy the celebrations

now. It is lovely to see so many Cork supporters up here today and we just want to celebrate this win with them now."

Down native Sorcha McCartan and Courcey Rovers' Fiona Keating were the other Cork goal scorers on a memorable afternoon. The former made a big impression in the Cork full-forward line, netting a crucial first-half goal to send her side in 1-9 to 0-3 ahead.

McCartan's celebration, a fist waved to the crowd, underlined her delight at helping the Rebels win a first All-Ireland since 2018.

"Oh God, I don't know (about the celebration), I think it



Cork captain Amy O'Connor is presented with the 2023 Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Camogie Championship Player-of-the-Match award by Camogie Association President Hilda Breslin.
(Photo: Ben Brady/INPHO)



Ashling Thompson celebrates at the final whistle.



Fiona Keating on her way to scoring Cork's fifth goal.

night. We said let's use this and not feel that hurt again. It is all credit to the players. We got a great management team in this year too and everyone just stuck together.

The rain was falling heavy long after the final whistle but the Cork players, management team and supporters didn't care. Champions again and singing in the rain.

Scorers

Cork: Amy O'Connor 3-7 (5f); Sorcha McCartan 1-1; Fiona Keating 1-0; Katrina Mackey 0-2; Chloe Sigerson (1f), Hannah Looney, Orlaith Cahalane 0-1 each.

Waterford: Beth Carton 0-7 (5f); Niamh Rockett, Laoise F6rrest 0-1 each.

Cork: Amy Lee; Laura Hayes, Libby Coppinger, Pamela Mackey; Meabh Cahalane, Laura Treacy, Izzy O'Regan; Saoirse McCarthy, Aoife Healy; Chloe Sigerson, Fiona Keating, Hannah Looney; Amy O'Connor, Katrina Mackey, Sorcha McCartan.

Subs: Cliona Healy for L Hayes (44), Orla Cronin for S McCartan (46), Ashling Thompson for S McCarthy (51), Orlaith Cahalane for C Sigerson (52), Meabh Murphy for P Mackey (53).

Waterford: Brianna O'Regan; Vikki Falconer, Iona Heffernan, Kate Lynch; Keely Corbett Barry, Clodagh Carroll, Mairead Power; Orla Hickey, Abby Flynn; Mair6ad

WEST'S WONDERS

The role of West Cork players in the Rebels' success is a further boost to camogie in the region. 2022 All-Star Libby Coppinger (St Colum's) and Courcey Rovers' Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy all started, and played starring roles. Keating scoring a goal. Enniskeane's Orla Cronin (2020 All-Star) came off the bench after 44 minutes. Kate Wall (Kilbrittain) and Newcestown's Clara O'Sullivan, who missed the championship with an ACL injury, are also part of the set-up. Sisters Meabh and Orlaith Cahalane – daughters of Castlehaven football great Niall Cahalane – played big roles too, Meabh starting and Orlaith introduced as a second-half sub.



Saoirse McCarthy.

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Our Star: Amy O'Connor's hat-trick confirmed Cork's victory and the fact she is the most dangerous forward in the country. Led by example and is a shoe-in for an All-Star.

Star moment: O'Connor's three goals in three minutes ended the tie as a contest shortly after the break but Beth Carton's penalty miss was a blow Waterford never recovered from.

Talking point: A record crowd and a five-star Cork performance but Waterford's inability to make a game of this All-Ireland final was as surprising as it was disappointing.

O'Brien, Beth Carton, Lorraine Bray, Annie Fitzgerald, Niamh Rockett, Rachel Walsh.

Subs: Iona Heffernan for V Falconer (3, inj), Bevin Bowdren for M Power

(1f), Tara Power for M O'Brien (40), Clara Griffin for C Carroll (42), Shauna Fitzgerald for K Lynch (56).

Referee: John Dermody (Westmeath).

'We wanted to play this final on our terms' – Coppinger

BY GER MCCARTHY

LIBBY Coppinger and Meabh Cahalane's beaming smiles said it all in the immediate aftermath of Cork's emphatic All-Ireland camogie senior final defeat of Waterford.

Rebels' full-back Coppinger has enjoyed her best year in a red jersey, consistently shutting down opposing attacks from the edge of the square.

Sunday at Croke Park was no different.

In the immediate aftermath, the Kealkill native struggled to put it all into words. Who could blame her?

'It is unreal,' Coppinger told *The Southern Star*.

'The last couple of years, we have been looking for this. It has just been about us this year though and, thankfully, we came right at the right time.'

'Amy O'Connor's three goals gave us breathing room. There was no doubt but Waterford were going to come back at us and give it their all. We knew we had to weather the storm. At half time we just said we wanted to play this final on our terms.'

'Amy's goals at the start of the second half were just unreal. I'm delighted to see that happening at the other side of the pitch!'

Coppinger was part of a Cork full-back line including Laura Hayes and Pamela Mackey that excelled, not just in Croke Park, but against Kilkenny and Galway in previous rounds as well.

'Those two games brought us on massively,' Coppinger commented.

'I suppose we have been building since the start of the year. There were a few tough games in a row but ever since that second Galway game, we have just been getting better

'Amy O'Connor's three goals gave us breathing room' – Libby Coppinger

and better.

'The group here is unreal. Players slot in and out. Amy (Lee) behind me is phenomenal and always leading the way. We are just delighted to get over the line.'

'I am delighted for my family; they are the best. My supporters too. The people from St Colum's are incredible. They were here in Croke Park the previous two years when we lost so it is great to give them a win today. Their support has been unwavering.'

Former Cork senior footballer Meabh Cahalane was equally thrilled to have overcome Waterford. Another All-Ireland medal to add to the Cahalane collection along with sister Orlaith who came on as a second-half substitute.

'Orlaith and I have won an All-Ireland at every level although she has passed me out with a few (extra) at minor,' Cahalane laughed.

'I do think today was probably extra special. After the hurt we have endured the last number of years, it is even more special.'

'I remember winning the All-Ireland final the first year I got on the senior panel and thinking, you know, this is probably going to happen every year. I definitely believe when the final whistle went, it is probably one of my favourite sporting memories. I suppose a lot of us would have played a lot together at underage level too. That makes it extra-special.'

player in 2023.

Waterford battled bravely for the remainder of the final, but were powerless to prevent Keating from bursting through for Cork's fifth and final goal.

When the final whistle finally sounded, the outpouring of emotion showed what coming back from consecutive All-Ireland final losses meant to the Rebels senior setup.

This year was different though, this year an entire panel saw Cork over the line.

'Absolutely, it was the panel that won it for us this year,' Matthew Twomey explained.

'I think we bottled a lot hurt from last year even though we didn't play on it too much. We bottled it and we had an unbelievable meeting last Friday

hat-trick is the stuff of legend

was just the adrenaline going through me!' McCartan commented to *The Southern Star*.

'I am never speechless but today I nearly am. What a group of players and what a performance we put in. I think we really deserved it though, especially after last year. That was really disappointing but we came back and put in a huge effort throughout the year. Things didn't go our way at times but we are absolutely delighted to get over the line and everyone is buzzing.'

Waterford's Munster championship defeat of the Rebels proved a turning point earlier in the season. Cork had no

choice but to regroup. Using the additional time wisely, Matthew Twomey's side rebounded with wins over Kilkenny and Galway before seeing off Waterford for the O'Duffy Cup.

'The (previous) game against Galway, we played well but just didn't convert,' McCartan added.

'We worked hard on that and it paid dividends in the quarter-finals, semi-finals and final. Massive credit to Liam Cronin for getting us to concentrate better and work on our finishing. It feels unbelievable to be a winner here in Croke Park on All-Ireland final day. As I said, I'm usually not

THE FINAL IN NUMBERS

- 1 – This is manager Matthew Twomey's first All-Ireland senior title as Cork boss.
- 3 – The number of goals that Cork captain Amy O'Connor scored as she inspired the Rebels to glory.
- 5 – How many goals the rampant Rebels scored in this triumph; the most by a winning team in an All-Ireland final since Dublin in 1984.
- 28 – The total of Cork's final score of 5-13 is the highest score by a winning team in an All-Ireland camogie final since Dublin scored 10-1 in 1965!
- 29 – Cork have now won the O'Duffy Cup 29 times, more than any other county. Dublin, with 26, are next.
- 30,191 – A record attendance at an All-Ireland senior camogie final watched Cork put on an exhibition.

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

stuck for words but today, I'm close to speechless. I'll remember

this day for the rest of my life. I think we all will.'



Cork's Libby Coppinger and Sorcha McCartan celebrate the great win. (Photo: Laszlo Geczo/INPHO)

SPORT

TURSDAY AUGUST 12, 2023

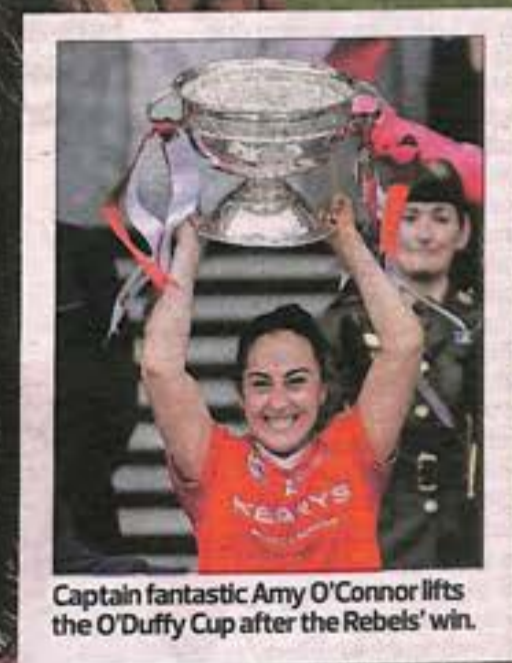


Fiona Keating celebrates Cork's emphatic All-Ireland senior camogie final win against Waterford.
Photo: Ben Brady / NPHO

REBELS BACK ON TOP

Five-star Cork crowned All-Ireland champions in front of record crowd

See pages 3-5



Captain fantastic Amy O'Connor lifts the O'Duffy Cup after the Rebels' win.



Rebel reign

Drought over, are Cork now set to dominate camogie?

Pages 2-3



Photo: Janet O'Connell, right

SINGING IN THE RAIN: REBELETTES DEMOLISH DÉISE



Cork players celebrate with the O'Duffy Cup after their side's victory in the All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship Final against Waterford at a rain-soaked Croke Park yesterday. The final score was 5-13 to 0-9. SEE REPORT PAGE 3 & SPORT. Photo: Sportsfile



Raucous Rebel reception for All-Ireland Cork camogie champions

Steven Heaney

Leesiders turned out in their droves to welcome their All-Ireland-winning camogie squad back home to Cork yesterday evening.

Having seen their hometown heroes blitz Waterford by a margin of 5-13 to 0-9 in Croke Park on Sunday afternoon, the Cork faithful gathered on the banks of their own lovely Lee from the early evening for the chance to see their team bring O'Duffy Cup back to the rebel county for the first time in five years.

Cork's talismanic captain, Amy O'Connor, and her victorious teammates received a raucous rebel reception from the moment their train pulled into Kent Station at 6.10pm on Monday.

Among those present at the station were nine-year-old Gemma O'Sullivan from Castlefreke in West Cork and her mam, Gemma.

Gemma, whose cousin Fiona Keating is a member of the Cork squad, said she was "really happy and proud" of what the Cork team had achieved.

From the station, the Cork team hopped aboard an open-top bus and made the short journey across the river and over to the South Mall where 2,000 or so fans had gathered for a special homecoming event.

First to address the crowd was Lord Mayor of Cork Kieran McCarthy, who heaped praise on the "unstoppable" Cork team.

"We are so, so proud of your efforts yesterday," he told the team. "The O'Duffy Cup hasn't been back for many years, but it is back this evening."

"It's been a long five years, but to Amy O'Connor and her team — you've been absolutely brilliant, you have inspired so many people."

"You are very welcome back to the banks of our own lovely Lee," Camogie player Luisne

Déiseach, 13, from Clonakilty, made the long journey to Sunday's final, so it was little hardship to attend yesterday's homecoming as well.

She told the *Irish Examiner* that atmosphere at both had been "amazing."

Luisne said having role models like the Cork team and the Irish women's soccer team really "helped a lot to keep everyone going".

"There was a huge crowd up at the match," said Luisne. "I was so happy that they won it."

Then, with dozens of Cork flags billowing in the breeze, captain Amy O'Connor stepped up to the microphone.

The fact that it began to rain as O'Connor took to the stage did little to dampen the spirits of those in the crowd.

She paid tribute to her squad, their backroom staff, and the fans who supported the team throughout the season.

"It has been a tough year, full of ups and downs, but we stuck together. Even when things weren't going well, we stuck together."

"We were honoured to get over the line yesterday in the way we did."

"Thanks for coming out and supporting us all year."

Echoing O'Connor's remarks, Cork manager Matthew Twomey said the support shown to the team from the outset had made everything worthwhile.

He added that there was "massive talent" to be found in Cork Camogie, from U16 all the way through to minor and senior level and predicted more Cork camogie successes were incoming.

Concluding the celebrations, the mayor of Co Cork, Frank O'Flynn, told the team they had made Cork "the proudest county in Ireland."

"Camogie is alive and well in Cork, and long may it live," he said.

Power: Falconer injury left Déise in disarray

Andrew Horgan

The early loss of Vikki Falconer in Sunday's All-Ireland final defeat to Cork threw Waterford's game plans into disarray, admits manager Seán Power.

Power confirmed the corner-back had been given the task of limiting the threat of Rebels forward Amy O'Connor, who would go on to score 3-7 following Falconer's exit.

The extent of her injury is not yet known, but it is feared she may have suffered anterior cruciate ligament damage.

"Yeah, it wasn't ideal. It was a disaster actually for Vikki to go off so early in the game," Power told WLR FM.

"In terms of the player's safety, that's my paramount importance even more so than a victory or a loss."

"We have assessed her there and waiting on a scan, but it looks to be quite serious for her knee, but we are waiting on a scan."

"It may be a cruciate, but we don't know but not an ideal way to start an All-Ireland final."

"We talked about organising match-ups and things like that and the reality of it was Vikki had a very specific job to do and a specific player but after 90 seconds she's gone."

"We had to readjust, we had back-up plans and things like that, but nevertheless to lose one of your marquee backs, one of our players of the year so far, big hit early in the game."

"That was the starting point of something that was going to be a tough day all round."

"It's a tough one."

Up for camogie

Having watched the commentary and analysis of the camogie finals last Sunday in Croke Park, I find it very disappointing that RTE does not have an *Up for the Match* programme prior to the camogie

and ladies' Gaelic football finals, as they do for the men.

With so many counties involved every year, it is a great opportunity to showcase the game, its mentors, entertainers, and talent within those counties.

Hannah Colter
Clonakilty
Former Cork camogie player

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Serving Cork since 1892

Thank you to Amy and all the Cork players

A HEARTFELT thank you to Cork's All-Ireland winning camogie team, who have given us so much to celebrate and enjoy all season and in particular in the last few days.

It has been a pleasure for all the team at *The Echo* to cover the story of this team's season, their fantastic victory on Sunday and the celebrations that began at the final whistle and have continued since.

What a joy it was to see the city centre turn red as these heroines were welcomed home and to see the pride and joy at St Vincent's as captain Amy O'Connor, who scored a hat-trick on Sunday, brought the O'Duffy Cup home to where it all began for her.

Before they boarded the train for their return journey to Cork, Amy, manager Matthew Twomey and teammate Izzy O'Regan also brought the cup for a visit to young patients in Temple Street Hospital.

It was lovely to see the excitement of the visit brings smiles to these brave children's faces — with none more delighted than a beaming Daniel McCarthy from Gurrabraher.

Whether getting to see them in person, or watching all the excitement unfold in the news and on social media, this very special group of players has brought joy to so many people.

"It's absolutely unbelievable," Amy said on Monday.

"This is such a proud day for me and for every player on the panel."

"It's been a tough year full of ups and downs, but we stuck together and that was the most important thing."

"We had huge trust in what we were trying to do and even when things weren't going well we stuck together so we're very proud and very honoured to get over the line in the manner that we did."

Gracious as always, the star thanked all the supporters for the welcome the team received.

"A huge thank you to everyone who has come out here," she said.

"We knew coming down here we would have a brilliant crowd, we always do."

It is who should be thanking you Amy, and all of your teammates.

Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Kieran McCarthy spoke for all of us at the homecoming.

"We are so, so, so proud of your efforts yesterday," he said.

"To Amy O'Connor and her team, you have been absolutely brilliant, you have inspired so many people."

What a panel, what a weekend and what a win — thank you for memories that will live forever.



Winning Cork captain Amy O'Connor is held aloft by team mates Amy Lee and Emma Murphy at the homecoming celebrations for the victorious Cork All-Ireland Senior camogie final champions at St Vincents Hurling and Football Club. Picture: David Creedon/David Creedon

Cork side on a mission of atonement were never going to be stopped by Waterford

IT was easy to feel sorry for Waterford in the aftermath of last Sunday's All-Ireland camogie final, as they walked head first into a relentless Cork whirlwind that they simply had no chance of halting.

Waterford were making their first appearance in a senior final in 78 long years, and their support travelled in huge numbers in hope that they were about to witness history being made, but in reality they had little hope against a hungry and rampant Cork side on the day in Croke Park.

Cork had gotten to the final by defeating the two teams that had beaten them in the last two All-Ireland finals in the quarter and semi-finals.

Those wins over Kilkenny and Galway had been hard won and had created a real sense of belief in this side, and a real sense of destiny. They simply were not going to be denied this year, as they collected the O'Duffy Cup for the first time since 2018, and in some style too.

Cork manager Matthew Twomey had a trump card in a loaded bench, but he did not really need it, as by the time he sprang the likes of Cliona Healy, Orla Cronin, Aisling Thompson, Orlaith Cahalane, and Meabh Murphy the game had long been settled.

When Cork faced Waterford in last year's All-Ireland semi-final it took them a whole 25 minutes to register their first score.

They were five points to no score down by the time Katrina Mackey belatedly got Cork up and running.

They eventually ended up winning that game by 0-15 to 0-10, when they hit the last eight points to triumph, but Cork would have been extremely eager to avoid such a poor start this time around.

They could not possibly have had a different start against the Déise this year.

This time it was Cork who got the first four points of the game, with Waterford not getting on the scoresheet until their main sharpshooter Beth

CAMOGIE

■ Derek Daly

Carton landed their first score from distance in the 15th minute.

Even then there was no let-up from Cork as two points from Amy O'Connor and one from Hannah Looney stretched their lead to six before they rattled the back of Brianna O'Regan's net for the first time.

It was made by Katrina Mackey, who ran at the Déise defence before brilliantly floating a pass to Sorcha McCartan, who expertly volleyed it first time to the net for a great goal.

Any chance Waterford had to launch a comeback ended when Carton sent her penalty attempt wide before half-time, as you just could not see Cork coughing up their nine point lead.

Amy O'Connor's quick-time hat-trick at the start of the second half knocked the stuffing out of Waterford completely, meaning Cork's 'Bomb Squad' was not required off the bench, at least not to impact the game, and the last quarter turned into a procession.

Cork only conceded nine points over the course of the hour, and amazingly they only shipped three points from play overall, one each from Beth Carton, Niamh Rockett, and Laoise Forrest.

That fact points to a truly remarkable defensive display by Cork, where every single member of the Rebel defence had the beating of their direct marker, which is something unheard of in All-Ireland finals.

This is all the more impressive when you consider that this Cork team went into Sunday's final with the scars of two recent All-Ireland and two league final defeats at Croke Park.

They had to collectively bury those defeats, and if anything they used them as motivation.

They were simply never going to be denied this time around.



Cork's Ashling Thompson battled back from injury this season. Picture: Laszlo Geczo/Inpho

Cork refused to be losers

CAMOGIE

■ Christy O'Connor

IN an excellent interview with Therese O'Callaghan in the *Irish Examiner* last Saturday, Ashling Thompson gave a revealing insight into the Cork mindset ahead of the All-Ireland camogie final against Waterford.

The road back to Croke Park had been an arduous journey for Thompson after rupturing her ACL last year but it had been all the more excruciating again for Cork after such serial disappointment along the way. That pain had been continuously referred to by the players but Thompson neatly encapsulated just how deep it ran, and of how intent Cork were to ensure that they didn't experience that heartbreak again.

"The fact we have got over Kilkenny and Galway, we can take huge confidence from it," said Thompson. "But at the same time, we are in a place where we can't leave it behind us. We have done that too many times in the last couple of years. If we don't turn up, we will be crying into our drinks again on Sunday night. We can't let ourselves down."

Cork hadn't really let themselves down in the finals they had lost, going down to Galway and Kilkenny in the 2021 and 2022 deciders by margins of just three and one point. In every knockout game Cork had lost since they had last been champions in 2018, they had been beaten by just one score, with the teams that beat them (Galway in the 2019 semi-final and Kilkenny in the 2020 semi-final) both going on to win the All-Ireland.

That's a serious level of consistency but that is never good enough for a county that demands — and has repeatedly demanded — the highest standards possible in the camogie world. In that context, it was easy to see just how pumped and charged Cork were heading into Sunday. And how driven they were for atonement.

There was a sense that Cork were building to a strong performance, especially having coughed and spluttered their way

through the early part of the season. Losing to Galway in Athenry in their group game was never going to derail Cork but it merely confirmed a trend that Cork had to break — it was another one score defeat in a big game.

Having lost the league final to Galway, albeit by four points, Cork had got into a habit of failing to close out tight games. They'd also lost the 2022 league final to Galway by the same margin.

Going back even further, Cork had lost league semi-finals to Galway in 2021 (after extra-time) and Kilkenny in 2019, by just one score. Galway and Kilkenny have been the standard in recent years and, while Cork have been right there at that level, they knew that if they were to really make progress that they would have to start finding ways to win tight games again.

The tide finally began to turn in the All-Ireland quarter-final against Kilkenny, a game Cork won by one point. It was just the second game Cork had won at Croke Park in their six previous matches. It was also just the second time in their previous 10 knockout games against either Kilkenny or Galway — in league and championship — that Cork came out on top.

Even more critical though, was that Cork finally won a tight game. In Croke Park. It definitely was a watershed moment in the season.

Cork were more comfortable than the final scoreline suggested in the semi-final against Galway but Cork still had to see the match out, winning by two points.

"We've struggled this year more than any other year I've been involved with," said Thompson to O'Callaghan. "But we have that hunger to stick at it. Game by

game, we are finally finding our form. And it has probably come at the right time."

It had. Their team was getting stronger as the season progressed, especially their bench. Cork's big game experience, especially in finals, was also bound to be a huge advantage against a Waterford side appearing in their first final.

And Cork made everything count early. In the first half, their conversion rate was an impressive 77%, especially when compared to Waterford's 30%. The game was long over as a contest just five minutes into the second half with three quick-fire goals, which put Cork 18 points ahead.

If anything, the sequence of play right after Amy O'Connor's second goal, and just before her third goal encapsulated just how driven, pumped, precise and ruthless Cork were all afternoon.

Rachael Walsh went on the attack right through the centre of the Cork defence but a gang of Cork players hunted her down and immediately initiated the counter-attack. Another long and accurate ball into the Cork full-forward line was picked up by Katrina Mackey, who bore down on goal before laying the ball on a plate for O'Connor for her hat-trick.

Cork never let up. When Annie Fitzgerald had a goal chance in the 47th minute, Libby Coppinger blocked her down. Cork had five players within 12 metres of the goal as Coppinger came away with the ball. When Cork scored their fifth goal in the 50th minute from Fiona Keating, it originated from another turnover, which Cork forced by hunting Beth Carton down in possession in the middle of their defence. By that stage, Cork resembled a ruthless, relentless threshing machine, where every play, every act was, not just an opportunity to win in style, but to purge the hurt of the last few years, especially the last two seasons.

And Cork did so in incredibly impressive fashion.



Cork camogie star Hannah Looney at Kennedy Quay as she is rowed up the Lee with the O'Duffy Cup, fulfilling a dream to do so since 2019. In the background are her teammates waiting to greet her. Picture: Dan Linehan

Hannah gets to row, row O'Duffy Cup gently down Lee

CORK camogie star, Hannah Looney, fulfilled her dream of being paraded down the Lee with the O'Duffy Cup.

Following the Cork camogie team's triumphant win over Waterford in the All-Ireland final, the cup returned to Leeside allowing Hannah to fulfil her long-held wish.

Hannah's dream to be rowed down the Lee in triumph first began in 2019.

"When we lost the semi-final back in 2019, I said that if we got the shot at the All-Ireland again and we win, I want to be rowed down the Lee. So, it has been my dream to bring the cup down the Lee since," the dual star explained.

With the cup well secured in her

Elaine Whelan

lap, the 2021 camogie player of the year nominee was joined by four members of the Cork Boat Club to float down the river.

The opportunity came thanks to Na Piarasigh's Amy Lee, with teammate Hannah saying: "Amy Lee came up trumps to get this to happen. "A physio that was working with

us last year, Ellen, is involved with the rowing club and Amy made the connections.

"Up until the last minute, I still didn't think it was going to happen. It's a bit surreal."

After her trip down the Lee, the exhilarated Rebel County player said: "Today has been phenomenal. I can't believe I was rowed down the Lee, on such a glorious morning. We

had some craic with the girls on the banks by the Marina, singing and dancing too."

After a four-year-famine, celebrations are ongoing for the All-Ireland winning Cork women.

Summing up the experience, the camogie star expressed: "We're enjoying every moment. It is very special to have the cup back here on Leeside."

Cork Jubilee Team

1	Cora Keohane	Barryroe
2	Eithne Duggan (Capt)	Bishopstown
3	Denise Cronin	Glen Rovers
4	Vivienne Harris	Bishopstown
5	Mags Finn	Fr O'Neill's
6	Ursula Troy	Newtownshandrum
7	Mary O'Connor	Killeagh
8	Linda Mellerick	Glen Rovers
9	Sinead O'Callaghan	Ballinahassig
10	Fiona O'Driscoll	Fr O'Neill's
11	Irene O'Keefe	Inniscarra
12	Lynn Dunlea	Glen Rovers
13	Leonie Nolan	Inniscarra
14	Paula O'Connor	Newtownshandrum
15	Caoimhe Harrington	Newtownshandrum
16	Stephanie Dunlea	Cloughduv
17	Miriam Deasy	Kilbrittain-Timoleague
18	Linda O'Sullivan	Ballinahassig
19	Mary Burke	Glen Rovers
20	Trisha Doyle	Bishopstown

Selectors

Angela Sheehan

Rose Mackey-Keane

Pat Murray

Manager

Tom Nott

MINI GAMES 2023



Killeagh

1	Caoimhe Walsh
2	Sara O'Connor
3	Lucie Nelo
4	Aisfe McGuckian
5	Meabh McDonnell
6	Lucy May Kelleher
7	Leah Griffin
8	Ethel DeHerts
9	Erin Cadogan
10	Neasa Barry
11	Keira Walsh
12	Courtney Daly
13	Teresa Fitzgerald
14	Ruby Daly
15	Julie Mulcahy

Mentors

Aidan Daly

John Walsh

Lisa Walsh



Clara O'Sullivan from Newcestown with Fiona Keating of Courcey Rovers.



Cork minor camogie team manager Jerry Wallace with his daughters Meg and Lucy who were part of his backroom team.

It's been a year to remember for Cork minor camogie team

WHAT a hectic few weeks it has been for Cork camogie and while most of the column inches were dominated by Sunday's high profile All-Ireland senior decider, the success of the U16 and minor teams indicate a glowing future for the game on Leaside.

The U16s made it four All-Ireland titles in a row with victory over Galway the previous weekend, with the minors adding the Munster title to their earlier All-Ireland win over Waterford.

More than half of the Cork players who were involved in the senior final in Croke Park last Sunday have come through the minor ranks since 2018. Under the guidance of Middleton's Jerry Wallace and his hugely dedicated backroom team, the ladies in red have won four minor All-Irelands and five Munster minor titles since that groundbreaking first win five years ago.

It's now down time on the inter-county scene and an opportunity for Wallace to reflect on the transition process that has led to a huge haul of silverware.

"It's fair to say that for all of us involved in the minor management it has been a very special few years," Wallace said.

"To come back and repeat last year's All Ireland/Munster double with nearly a new team is a great credit to the players and to the clubs.

"It's a tribute to the coaching that is going on in the underage structures across the county at club and schools level.

"Experience taught me that if you are building something, it is so important to keep looking ahead. Every year since I was involved I've tried to balance the panel, so that there are maybe 12 or 13 players aged 17 that would be coming forward for the next season.

"A lot of them have turned out to be very good players and participated at the highest level in their very first year."

It's an ongoing process for Wallace and his fellow selectors.

"We start back in October by contacting the clubs and then begin our trials. At the moment we already have a group of players who are making the transition into next year's programme and we have the U17 development

CAMOGIE

■ John Cashman

squad and the U16 winning team coming on board, who will be eligible to join us.

"Overall, it's a very good system that's in place. It then comes down to us as a management team to get motivated and give the time to bring these players forward into the system."

A star athlete in his younger days and a highly respected coach and trainer of inter-county and club teams across the country, the step into the camogie world in 2018 was something of a new departure for Wallace.

"Yes, it was different. I even had to get familiar with the rule book initially.

"I was very fortunate that I had a team back then that had players such as Cliona Healy and Saoirse McCarthy.

"Laura Hayes and Emma Murphy, who have risen to the highest level. They were a great group and when we won the All-Ireland first time out, things really took off.

"It's wonderful to see the girls that have worked their way from minor ranks to be so central to the senior team.

"Overall, what we have seen since 2018 is the influx of players who have made the step up to senior. It's not that they just arrived on the scene — they have all come through the minor programme.

"It has to be good for Cork camogie that this transition is taking place.

"Cork people love sport at all levels and personally I'm delighted that, having got so much out of sport when I was a competitive athlete, I can now put something back in, particularly at development level.

"When the opportunity came along I was delighted to take the chance.

"I've been very blessed to have people like Michael Boland involved since day one. Everyone has been very level-headed on and off the field and that for me has been one of the real secrets of what we have achieved.

"This year, again, the team has been fantastic. One could not speak highly enough of their attitude and commitment."



DOUBLE UP: Molly Lynch of Cork competing in the senior event during the M Donnelly All-Ireland Poc Fada Finals at Annaverna Mountain in the Cooley Peninsula.

Cork's win will be remembered as the Amy O'Connor final

STOP for a second and imagine what the reaction would be if Kerry's David Clifford scored 3-7 in an All-Ireland SFC final.

CAMOGIE

■ Ger McCarthy

Thank about how an Aaron Gillane three-minute All-Ireland final hat-trick would be lauded inside and outside of Limerick.

What would the impact be of Katie McCabe guiding the Republic of Ireland senior to the knockout stages of a Women's World Cup?

Imagine Dublin losing two All-Ireland SFC finals in a row — by a combined total of four points — before rebounding to win the Sam Maguire Cup.

It is against the backdrop of these hypotheticals that Amy O'Connor's individual performance and Cork's overall team display in bringing the O'Duffy Cup back to Leaside deserves every accolade.

This year's All-Ireland senior camogie final Player of the Match played a captain's role in Sunday's victory over the Déise.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the O'Connor's three-goal match-clinching blast was the humility she showed immediately afterwards.

O'Connor said: "It is hard to put it into words, to be honest. All the girls did the hard work (in the build-up) and I had the easy job of putting it into the net! I'm just delighted for everyone."

Do you think Saudi Arabian-based Cristiano Ronaldo would have expressed the same level of modesty after scoring a hat-trick in a cup final?

Me neither. No team wins anything without a captain setting the tone and leading by example on and off the pitch.

Cork are blessed to have a natural born leader in O'Connor.

History will reflect kindly on Matthew Twomey and his management team's 2023 triumph.

Rightly so, considering the heartbreak suffered by the same group of Cork selectors and players in consecutive All-Ireland final losses to Kilkenny and Galway.

The intestinal fortitude required to bounce back from those defeats, as well as an indifferent start to this year's campaign, underlines the mental toughness of Cork's camogie panel.

When it mattered most, Cork found a way past Kilkenny and Galway before taking down Waterford.

Effort

It took a full panel effort to achieve that goal, starting between the sticks with Amy Lee's saves and accurate puck-outs.

A full-back line that included Meabh Murphy, Laura Hayes, Libby Coppinger, and Meabh Cahalane hounded opposing forward lines all season long.

Pamela Mackey, Laura Treacy, Izzy O'Regan, Saoirse McCarthy, and Aoife Healy were a nightmare to face in the middle third.

Up front, Chole Sigerson and Fiona Keating improved as the year went on.

How many Hannah Looneys did you count in the All-Ireland final?

The dual star was everywhere against Waterford and delivered one of her most effective performances in a Rebel jersey.

A full-forward line comprising Sorcha McCartan, Pamela Mackey, and O'Con-

nor was the most ruthless in this year's senior championship.

Then you look to the bench, possibly Cork's greatest attribute, and see the likes of Cliona Healy, Orla Cronin, and Orlaith Cahalane ready to come on and make an impact.

A word too for one of Cork Camogie's greatest warriors.

What Ashling Thompson put herself through to recover from a long-term injury and play a pivotal role in Cork's success was one of the feel-good stories of the season.

Nowadays, legacy is a term, almost a cliché, thrown into conversations when attempting to capture a team or individual's impact.

Yet, it is fair to say that this Cork camogie senior panel's legacy will be felt for some time to come.

It may not be accurately measured in newspaper column inches, radio or podcast specials, or even All-Star awards.

This year's Cork camogie senior's legacy will be the increased number of young schoolboys and schoolgirls firing a sliota off a wall and honing individual skills.

Their legacy will be the increased number of small children perfecting goal celebrations, similar to O'Connor, and turning away to acclaim an imaginary Croke Park while at home in the garden.

Their legacy will be inspiring the next generation of Rebel GAA, camogie and LGFA players, whoever he, she, or they may be.

More than anything, the 2023 Cork senior camogie panel's legacy will be reminding teams, in whatever sport, that it is not about how many times you get knocked down. Sport is about sticking together, getting back up off the ground, and never giving up until you achieve your goal.



Cork prove too strong for Waterford

By Thomas Keane

Waterford 0-9;
Cork 5-13.
CORK won a first O'Duffy Cup since 2018 when they proved too strong for a Waterford side appearing in a first All-Ireland decider at this level since 1945 at Croke Park on Sunday.

Having lost the last two finals Cork made it third time lucky in this game and were the hungrier side throughout.

Played in front of a paying attendance for the day of 30,191, Waterford almost as soon as referee John Dermody started the game were dealt a severe blow when on five minutes Vikki Faulkner was forced to leave the field on the mobile stretcher after she picked up what looked to be a serious injury when she pulled up in front of the Cusack Stand and fell to the ground. The Tramore player played an instrumental role in the side's win over Tipperary in the semi-final as she was tasked with keeping a close eye on instrumental forward Cáit Devane and no doubt manager Sean Power had asked the Tramore player to try and repeat the performance this time around taking up a marking job on one of Cork's inside forward line.

Her loss was a huge one for Waterford, but had she completed the sixty minutes would Waterford have won is hard to know. One thing is for certain the margin of victory, the biggest by a winning team in 64 years may not have been so big.

The winners led 1-9 to 0-3 at the break, but they did most of the damage in winning this game in the third quarter when Player of the Match Amy O'Connor fired a hat-trick of goals past Brianna O'Regan. In fact, her hat-trick was achieved in about two minutes which in itself must be some sort of record.

Waterford found scores hard to find all day. Of the three in the first half all came off the stick of Beth Carton, two of them coming from frees in the 28th and 32nd minutes of the half. Cork clearly had their homework done. No free was going to be conceded in a position where the De La Salle player could capitalise and if frees were to be conceded inside her normal radius, they would be conceded from tight angles.

At the other end Cork were picking off their scores. Amy O'Connor had three scores registered and Chloe Sigerson had one before Beth Carton opened Waterford's account on 15 minutes. Another brace from O'Connor and one from Hannah Looney followed for Cork as they added to what they already had on the scoreboard.

Five minutes from the break Cork struck their first goal, Katrina Mackey picked the sliotar and ran at the Waterford defence. She played an excellent pass to Sorcha McCartan and she batted to the net to give Cork a 1-7 to 0-1 lead.

Beth Carton got her first free of the evening on 28 minutes but alas for Waterford points from Katrina Mackey and Sorcha McCartan fol-

lowed at the other end to extend Cork's lead. Beth Carton pulled a point back in stoppage time and just before the half-time whistle sounded John Dermody who had an excellent game all round with his team of officials went in and consulted with his umpires at the Hill 16 end of the ground after Annie Fitzgerald appeared to be fouled by Libby Coppinger. Even coming out from the talk between the officials Dermody did not indicate what was happening taking his time to think things over and when he reached the 20 metre line he stretched out his arms indicating a penalty for Waterford.

Beth Carton had scored a goal into the same end when Waterford won the Intermediate All-Ireland Final back in 2015, that score too coming from a placed ball but this time she saw her effort go to the Nally side of the uprights.

While nothing was going the way of Waterford much as they tried, at the other end everything Cork tried appeared to turn to gold.

Cork Captain Amy O'Connor got the first of her goals on 33 minutes when she was picked out by Fiona Keating.

Within a minute the same player once more had the ball in the Waterford net. This time it was Katrina Mackey that laid off the pass for a score that gave Cork a 3-9 to 0-3 lead and the game was already slipping away from Waterford.

And if things could not get any worse for Waterford, the Rebelettes won the restart and



Referee John Dermody pictured with Waterford captain Lorraine Bray and Cork captain Amy O'Connor. (Noel Browne)

Katrina Mackey again won possession and she again found Amy

O'Connor to give Cork an 18 point lead.

Waterford hit three points in a row from Beth Carton with a brace and Niamh Rockett with one in between to close the Cork lead, but it was goals that Waterford needed at this stage and many of them.

Both sides began to empty their bench as the game wore on. The only real surprise was that with the game won that the Cork management team did not take off Amy O'Connor so that she could receive the applause she deserved on the day. She did add another score which was followed with one from Katrina Mackey which gave Cork a 4-11 to 0-7 lead with 13 minutes plus stoppage time still to play.

If there was any doubting how this game would finish Cork well and truly secured the win on the 50th minute when they struck their fifth goal when substitute Orla Cronin picked out Fiona Keating to finish to the net.

Both sides added to their tally in the time that remained but these scores did not have any outcome on how this game would finish as it was decided well before the end.

Waterford will be disappointed with this result and the big Waterford support on the day felt it for the players and the management team. They came up against a Cork side who from very early on looked as if they were going to win. The only thing to be decided was the winning margin.

Waterford will come back from this loss. The players will now go back to their clubs for the club championships in the coming weeks which could prove to be one of the best in a number of years with little separating some of the clubs in the different grades.

How many of the older players

in the Waterford set-up will return next year remains to be seen? If they do return and whether it is Sean Power or someone else that is over the team one thing is for certain coming through are some excellent young players and they will benefit from training and playing alongside the likes of Beth Carton, Lorraine Bray, Brianna O'Regan and Laoise Forrest.

WATERFORD: Brianna O'Regan; Laoise Forrest; Kate Lynch; Keeley Corbett Barry; Vikki Falconer; Orla Hickey; Clodagh Carroll; Abby Flynn; Lorraine Bray; Mairead O'Brien; Mairead Power; Beth Carton; Niamh Rockett; Rachel Walsh; Annie Fitzgerald.

Subs: Iona Heffernan for Vikki Falconer (5 mins); Bevin Bowdren for Mairead Power (HT); Tara Power for Mairead O'Brien (40); Clara Griffin for Clodagh Carroll (42); Shauna Fitzgerald for Kate Lynch (54).

Scorers: Beth Carton 0-7, (0-5 frees); Niamh Rockett, Laoise Forrest 0-1 each.

CORK: Amy Lee; Pamela Mackey; Libby Coppinger; Meabh Cahalane; Aoife Healy; Laura Treacy; Izzy O'Regan; Laura Hayes; Hannah Looney; Chloe Sigerson; Fiona Keating; Saoirse McCarthy; Amy O'Connor; Katrina Mackey; Sorcha McCartan.

Subs: Cliona Healy for Laura Hayes (44); Orla Cronin for Sorcha McCartan (46); Aishling Thompson for Saoirse McCarthy (51); Orlaith Cahalane for Chloe Sigerson (52); Meabh Murphy for Pamela Mackey (53).

Scorers: Amy O'Connor 3-7, (0-5 frees); Sorcha McCartan 1-1; Fiona Keating 1-0; Katrina Mackey 0-2; Chloe Sigerson (f); Hannah Looney; Orlaith Cahalane 0-1 each.

Referee: John Dermody (Westmeath).



Waterford's Annie Fitzgerald is fouled late in the first half by Cork's Libby Coppinger which led to a penalty.

(Noel Browne)



Méabh Murphy and Izzy O'Regan enjoying ice cream. Pic: David Creedon

Championship season underway for Junior and Intermediate

WITH the inter-county season now over, all the focus is back on the club game and at long last the various championships gets under way.

It has been a long wait for club players and no doubt all are really looking forward to getting games underway.

It will be non-stop for most clubs with underage championships also being played and as the evenings shorten, it will be full steam ahead in every club ground in the city and county.

At the time of going to print we have not got venues or times for any of the games but we do have the dates, so, let us take a look and start planning your evenings from here to the end of the Intermediate and Junior A campaigns.

INTERMEDIATE

The SE Systems Intermediate Championship gets underway on Monday next, August 14, when Douglas, who have re-graded this year take on Watergrashill.

On Tuesday, August 15, we have Blackrock taking on Charleville and Na Piarasigh meeting Ballincollig.

On Wednesday, August 16, it's Brian Dillon's team taking on Valley Rovers and Clonakilty facing Carrigaline, and on Friday August 18, it's a meeting of neighbours, as Ballyhea and Newtownshandrum come face-to-face in a game that is sure to bring out the best in local rivalry.

On Monday August 21, Milford meet Douglas and there will be an interesting clash here which will see three Cork senior players, the Mackey twins, Katriona and Pamela with Douglas and Aisling Thompson with Milford in action against each other.

On Tuesday August 22,

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Blackrock take on Valley Rovers, on Wednesday August 23, Brian Dillon's squad will meet Kilbrittain / Timoleague, and it's Na Piarasigh against Watergrashill.

On August 24, it's Clonakilty versus Ballinhassig, who are newly promoted this year following their Junior A success in 2022.

On August 29, Milford meet Watergrashill.

On August 30, Kilbrittain/Timoleague meet Valley Rovers and Charleville meet Brian Dillon's group.

On August 31, the two sides who re-graded this year from senior meet with Ballincollig in action against Douglas.

On the same night, Ballinhassig meet Carrigaline.

On September 2, it's Newtownshandrum meeting Clonakilty.

JUNIOR A

On Friday August 18, the SE Systems Junior A Championship gets underway, when Sliabh Rua meet St Vincent's and on Saturday August 19, Ballinacathry meet Ballinora and Aghada play Cobh.

The following day on August 20, it's Mallow versus Castlelyons and Sarsfields 2 against Tracton.

On Saturday August 26, Ballinora play Mallow and Aghada meet Sliabh Rua.

On August 27, Ballinacathry meet Bishopstown and St Vincent's play Tracton and Cobh meet Sarsfields.

There are three games on September 3, where Sarsfields take on St Vincent's, Sliabh Rua meet Cobh and Tracton take on Aghada.



Captain Amy O'Connor is held aloft by teammates Amy Lee and Emma Murphy at the homecoming celebrations.

Picture: David Creedon

Fans saw the team at best



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

A GREAT reception for the Cork All-Ireland camogie champions on Monday evening last.

While a small crowd greeted the team as they arrived ahead of schedule at Kent station they enjoyed a rousing reception on the Mall and at St Vincent's.

The crowd continued to build during the city ceremony and they were particularly enthusiastic, cheering their champions time and again. A rousing reception in St Vincent's of course.

What a moment for them and captain Amy O'Connor.

It's thanks to Seandún's county championship win in 2022 that O'Connor was honoured with the captaincy, Amy Lee the year before.

They would never have got the opportunity otherwise. Tell me that divisional sides don't deserve to be in the senior championship.

Tell me that Amy O'Connor and St Vincent's didn't deserve last weekend. The argument all points in the opposite direction.

O'Connor enjoyed her best season in Cork's red and white. Cork's display last Sunday was the best they've presented in years.

Yes, they faced weaker opposition but no side would have beaten them on the day. Gone was the overcarrying of possession, gone was the restricting style of play.

The oceans of space in front of Mackey and O'Connor, the fast ball in, the timing of the runs, all led to Waterford being blitzed.

It was as good a defensive display as you'll see, Lee included.

The tenacity, the support play was just brilliant. A teammate (or two) always available off the shoulder. It looked as if they had a two or three player advantage



Conchúr Ó Conghaile with O'Connor at the homecoming celebration at St. Vincent's, Knocknaheeny.

Picture: David Creedon

at times. Fitness superb, execution superb, teamwork superb.

It doesn't get much better.

Sarah O'Donovan made a point on Newstalk's Off The Ball on Tuesday morning that the groups should have been seeded.

She pointed the finger at the camogie association for almost pushing a different final to Cork/Kilkenny/Galway and because of it, it was a one-sided affair.

Someone mentioned that Cork and Waterford had similar scoring stats coming into the game and that counted for something.

It meant little. Cork had met Galway and Kilkenny along the way, Waterford counties like Offaly and Antrim.

I felt Cork would win by nine or ten points, if Waterford showed up.

There was always a chance that they would completely collapse and Cork would run riot. That happened.

Waterford needed everything to go their way. I counted 2-6 missed opportunities in the opening half.

A goal chance on twenty minutes when Lorraine Bray couldn't connect on a Niamh Rockett pass.

Sorcha McCartan connected on a similar delivery at the other end from Mackey. From Bray's miss, Laura Hayes gathered, to Libby Coppinger, to Izzy O'Regan, to Hannah Looney, over the bar. Cork 0-6, Waterford 0-1 instead of Cork 0-5, Waterford 1-1.

That epitomised the juggernaut in Cork. The missed penalty.

Beth Carton tried her heart out, as did Bray. Aoife Healy was magnificent on Carton.

Thirty three minutes in, Abby Flynn was swarmed by Cork's defence, the ball cleared up the field, Carton got possession.

She raced forward, dispossessed brilliantly by Healy, picked up by Hayes again, to Fiona Keating, a blistering run down the centre forcing Keeley Corbett Barry to leave O'Connor.

Keatings pass, O'Connor's first goal. It was Healy dispossessing Carton again that led to Keating's and Cork's fifth goal on fifty minutes.

After the heartache of the last two All Ireland finals, the disappointment of the last two league final defeats, all four in Croke Park, headquarters finally became a bed of roses for this group.

It's taken a while for it to click, it's taken a lot of knocks and soul searching, what seemed more bad days than good.

But Cork now has a team capable of many more honours. They have many new leaders. Laura Treacy was always one, Katrina Mackey another. What about Meabh Cahalane, who goes about her dependable business day in and day out.

The outstanding Libby Coppinger, O'Connor, Healy, Pam, Saoirse McCarthy, Keating. You could name the entire squad as you can be sure that Sunday's display and victory has propelled them to a new level.

The amount of ball that substitutes Thompson, Orla Cronin and Orlaith Cahalane got on was huge. Cliona Healy not so much on the day but what a quarter final and semi-final she had to get Cork over the line.

Sunday was one to savour. Congratulations to Matthew Twomey and I want to single out goalkeeping coach Teddy O'Donovan. With the squad since 2014, his contribution has been invaluable.



Laura Hayes, Fiona Keating and Libby Coppinger celebrating.

Mental and physical challenges abound in replay



All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Final Replay

Derry v Meath

Today: St Tiernach's Park, Clones 3pm

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Six days is a very quick turnaround for an All-Ireland final replay and one suspects the challenges will be mental as much as physical.

Which team feels they had it won?

Which is glad of the second opportunity?

Well, the truth is that neither probably feels hard done by.

Derry led Meath by seven points at half-time and hadn't been in arrears from the time Lauren McKenna equalised in the 20th minute.

Yet, they only scored one second-half point and could

barely muster a shot in the final quarter.

They were hanging on and relieved to see Aoife Minogue's injury-time free drift inches wide.

Although Meath had started well, the always dangerous Ciara Foley giving them a sixth minute goal, they had faded badly, having no answer to the rampaging runs of Derry captain Aoife Ní Chaiside and the accuracy of Aoife Shaw and Aine McAllister.

There was a degree of fortune to Mairéad McNicholl's goal but there looked only one

winner at the break and Meath looked done.

The failure to capitalise on so many opportunities, including from a penalty, proved costly and though they never led, maybe it is that they will feel they should have done so by the final whistle.

The missed penalty itself might not have been significant as the goal from Aoibhinn Lally.

It was a hectic period that one feels had Meath failed to raise a green flag given their dominance, they would have been cooked.

Instead, a six-point lead became three and momentum was all in the direction of the Davin Stand.

If either team has picked up an injury or a restrictive knock, that could be significant.

It is an interesting quirk that the only times both these counties won the Jack McGrath Cup, it was in a replay away from Croke Park.

It was Derry in 2012, and five years later it was Meath's turn.

So there are good memories and positive vibes. But it's still a tough one to call.



The unfortunate injury after just four minutes of play to Waterford's Vikki Falconer had a huge effect on the way the team played after it.

(Noel Browne)



Waterford camogie chairperson Sheila O'Donohoe consoles Waterford's Orla Hickey at the final whistle.



Players Laura Hayes, Fiona Keating and Libby Coppinger celebrate at the homecoming celebrations for the victorious Cork All-Ireland Senior Camogie champions at St Vincent's Hurling, Football and Camogie Club, Knocknaheeny.

Five Cork camogie winners were students at MTU

MUNSTER Technological University (MTU) was well represented on Cork's All-Ireland winning camogie team on Sunday.

Five of the Cork squad who saw off Waterford on Sunday to end a five-year wait for All-Ireland glory are studying at MTU.

The Cork squad includes second-year student in Biomedical Engineering Aoife O'Neill, first-year student in Coaching Science and Sports Pedagogy Fiona Keating, first-year student in Coaching Science and Sports Pedagogy Orlaith Cahalane, final-year student in Sport & Exercise Management Saoirse McCarthy, and third-year Biomedical Engineering student Sorcha McCartan. The five students lined up on Sunday alongside MTU alumnus Amy Lee. Speaking ahead of Sunday's clash which saw Cork crowned All-Ireland champions, MTU Cork GAA development officer Kevin O'Callaghan said: "Sunday's final will be a huge day for the players, and it is a great boost to the MTU Student GAA Club to have players reaching the very top of their sport."

"Their talent was realised for MTU in February with the group creating history by winning the Purcell Cup, backboned by the Cork inter-county players who will be playing on Sunday."

A sea of red and white on the South Mall welcomed the team home on Monday evening following their win, with captain Amy O'Connor thanking the huge crowds that came out to celebrate despite the rain.

The 'real Derry' take title



All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Final replay

Derry 0-13
Meath 1-9

Tom Clancy

Clones

Derry claimed the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie crown, thanks to a superb team display in Clones.

After last week's drama at Croke Park, the Oak Leaf County were deserving winners, as a fine spread of scorers as well as a dominant rearguard helped them back to the senior ranks.

"When you put together good team performances you get your just rewards. Everybody was talking about what Meath did last Sunday but didn't give us enough credit — it hurt a lot of our players", explained Derry boss PJ O'Mullian.

"We got back in on Monday night and looked at it. It wasn't what Meath were doing right, it was what we were doing wrong. The players were wonderful from start to finish.

"Today, we decided if they got a purple patch that we had to react. So they got 1-1 to get back to a point and we replied with 1-2. Our big players stood up, the decision making was better — we scored 1-17, and I think if you played like we did, you deserve to win an All-Ireland."

"We were together for five and a half hours last Monday. We felt when we looked at everything, we couldn't be as bad again. We decided that if Meath wanted to win an All-Ireland they had to beat the real Derry."

"If the real Derry turned up, we knew Meath would have to be exceptional."

"We hadn't beaten Meath in a couple of years, today we decided no matter what happened we were going push on."

Scorers for Derry: A Shaw (0-7, 3 frees, 2 45s); S O'Connor (1-0); A McAllister (0-3, 1 free); E McGuigan, M McNicholl, M Hegarty (0-2 each); D O'Kane (0-1)

Scorers for Meath: A Minogue (1-6, 1-0 pen, 0-5 frees); E O'Connell, A Gaffney, S Leonard (0-1 each)

DERRY: N Gribbin, N Quinn, L Lennon, S McGill, R Downey, A Ní Chaiside, L McKenna, D O'Kane, A McGill, M McNicholl, A McAllister, E McGuigan, A Shaw, R McAllister, M Hegarty.

Subs: S O'Connor for McGill (27), O Hill for Hegarty (60), E McCloskey for McKenna (60), B McCullagh for Shaw (60).

MEATH: T Murphy, R O'Neill, C Coffey, S Payne, T King, M Clinch, L Devine, A Lally, A Minogue, A Gaffney, A Donnelly, D O'Halloran, C Foley, E O'Connell, E Burke.

Subs: S Leonard for Lally (ht), G Connolly for O'Halloran (43), G Coleman for Donnelly (58), E O'Brien for Gaffney (60).

Referee: Liz Dempsey (Kilkenny).

Collective effort earned Cork All-Ireland camogie senior final success

The Cork Camogie senior team's 2023 success came off the back of two heart-breaking final defeats

BY GER MCCARTHY

A WEEK on from hearing that final whistle and the ending two years of hurt must have felt glorious.

Cork Camogie senior manager Matthew Twomey and his players are still basking in the glow of bringing the O'Duffy Cup back to leaside for the first time in five years.

Having suffered defeats to Galway and Kilkenny in the two previous year's finals, the Rebels blew Waterford away to become senior All-Ireland champions once again.

A simple and obvious question to begin, has the enormity of Cork's achievement sunk in?

'No, a week on, I don't think it has fully sunk in yet,' the Cork Camogie senior manager said.

'The celebrations finished up for me on the Tuesday (after the final). I realised my age on Tuesday afternoon and that was it.'

'Things have been hectic since the All-Ireland final. Spending the last few days at home with my family has given me the chance to catch up on all the text messages and that side of things.'

'The goodwill towards the team from all around Cork has been unbelievable. I've never come across the likes of it.'

'As for the achievement? I've only watched the game back once so things are still all a bit surreal at the moment.'

Naturally, Cork's players would have had the memories of those two previous All-Ireland defeats somewhere in the back of their minds ahead of throw-in.

So, delivering correctly-toned instructions before the team headed out onto the pitch was going to be critical ahead of a third consecutive final appearance.

Turns out, Matthew Twomey and his backroom team decided to get everyone together before arriving in Dublin to get their message across.

'We went to the Rochestown Park Hotel on the Friday evening before heading to Croke Park,' Matthew Twomey said.

'I was conscious of having finished up training on Thursday night that we should spend a bit of time together before Sunday came around.'

'We set up a meeting where our performance coach Michelle O'Connor, myself and a few others spoke to the players.'

'I admit I tapped into that (the two All-Ireland final defeats)



Cork players celebrate with the O'Duffy Cup. (Photo: INPHO/Bryan Keane)

and referenced how it was like climbing a mountain. That's what we kept referencing.

'All the times we slipped back down but got back up. There was also a slideshow of our National League and All-Ireland final defeats.'

'We just said, there was now an opportunity to go one way or the other.'

'So the last message before sending the players out on the field against Waterford was straightforward enough: Please play to your potential and don't have any regrets coming off the field. The narrative was, if that's not good enough then it is going to take an exceptional team to beat us.'

Turns out that Cork were the exceptional team on All-Ireland final day. Building a 1-9 to 0-3 interval lead, Waterford had no answer to an Amy O'Connor three-goal blast immediately after the restart.

'All season, we have put a big emphasis on the third quarter of our games,' Twomey said.

'Obviously, management has our say inside the dressing room but the players drive things on as well.'

'One of the players kept saying let's win the second half, let's win the second half during the half time break. Cork are nine points up but that's the message the players were shouting.'

'We have our goals for each quarter but achieved way more than we set out to in the All-Ireland final and the game

was over.'

The quality and depth of the Cork senior panel is what delivered All-Ireland success in 2023.

Yet, as much as the Cork manager doesn't like singling out individuals, it is impossible not to acknowledge Amy O'Connor's match-winning contribution.

The Cork captain and Player of the Match couldn't have stamped her authority on proceedings any better with a hat-trick inside three minutes on the biggest stage of them all.

What were the Cork manager's

'The goodwill towards our senior team from all around Cork has been unbelievable. I've never come across the likes of it' - Matthew Twomey

thoughts, sitting on the sideline at Croke Park, as O'Connor wrote her name into the history books?

'It is very hard to put into words what Amy's importance is to the Cork senior panel,' Twomey admitted.

'Amy joined the panel in 2014 and there has been pressure on her since day one.'

'There's pressure on her every time she steps out on the pitch. Herself and Katrina (Mackey) are always heavily marked players.'

'Last year, Amy scored something like five points, all from frees, in the final against Kilkenny. I heard of question marks being said about her but I never listen to any of that.'

'The work Amy does in training is immense and she is constantly trying to better herself.'

'She was under pressure again as captain this year but to end up scoring 3-7 in an All-Ireland final is incredible, absolutely unbelievable.'

'We have different types of captains. The likes of Ashling Thompson, Hannah Looney and Laura Treacy are all leaders who motivate and speak well. Amy doesn't say much but when she does, her words really stick.'

'She leads by example in everything she does. Often during the year, she would

have come to me and had a quiet word rather than shouting or making drama about it inside the dressing room.'

'We took her off five minutes into the second half during our first game against Galway earlier this year. Things weren't going well for her. The following Tuesday, Amy approached us, in a professional manner, and asked what am I doing wrong? Where can I improve? It ended up being a simple conversation between herself, myself and Liam Cronin.'

'From there, she put her head down and, game after game, improved unbelievably. That's why everyone was so happy for Amy to put in the performance that she did on All-Ireland final day.'

At the time of writing, the Cork Camogie senior panel are enjoying their success ahead of preparing for the upcoming club county championships.

Matthew Twomey is also enjoying a well-earned break and embarking on a family holiday.

So any talk of what happens next with the Cork Camogie senior setup must remain on the backburner, for the time being at least.

'No, nothing has come up about my position or anything else just yet,' the All-Ireland winning manager stated.

'I got a two-year term and that



Cork manager Matthew Twomey. (Photo: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo)

two-year term is up now. Look, I haven't talked to anyone about it since the All-Ireland final.

'That's because the focus going into it was all about trying to regain the O'Duffy Cup. The (Cork) players are heading back to their clubs and I'm off on holidays so that's my first port of call for now.'

Finishing on a positive note with the county's All-Ireland winning manager is appropriate considering the huge effort put in over the past year.

Matthew Twomey is the first to admit that it took a collective effort along with plenty of goodwill for Cork to be successful.

'Well in terms of goodwill, two of the greatest players to ever play the game of Camogie (I don't want to mention any names) were on to me last week and wishing us well,' Twomey concluded.

'Cork senior hurling manager Pat Ryan contacted me and plenty more as well.'

'County boards are constantly criticised but our county board have been unbelievable to us. They gave us more than what we wanted in the leadup to the final.'



Courcsey Rover's Fiona Keating scores Cork's fifth goal. (Photo: INPHO/Ben Brady)



Sisters Lucy, left, and Molly Lynch of Cork after winning the U16 and senior titles after the M. Donnelly GAA All-Ireland Poc Fada Finals at Cooley Mountains in Louth. Picture: Harry Murphy/Sportsfile

League finals at U16 level were a huge success

THE juvenile board was busy over the last two weeks as they completed their league competitions with the U16 finals.

Seven finals were played and with attention now turning to championship, all clubs will be looking forward to getting back onto the playing fields. In the U16 Premier 1 final, Sarsfield's and Eire Og played out a close contest with Sars winning with four points to spare, 2-12 to 1-11.

In the U16 Premier 2 final another cracker of a contest saw Newtownshandrum take the title with a 0-11 to 0-8 win over Sliabh Rua.

The U16 A title was won by Castlemartyr who overcame Cloughduv.

Laochra Og took the U16B title with a 3-7 to 1-5 win over Kilworth.

The U16C was won by Blarney who defeated Banteer, and Eire Og 2 defeated Ballincollig 2 in the U16 B2 final which is for clubs with second teams.

Minor championships

Three rounds of the SE Systems Minor Championship have been completed and there will be a break for a few weeks as clubs focus on the adult championships.

In the premier championship, in group A, Eire Og and Clonakilty are the frontrunners with two rounds to go.

They are joint top with three wins from three games, followed by Aghabullogue, who lost one game. Enniskeane have one win to their credit, while Ballinora and Blackrock have lost all their games to date.

In Group B, Sarsfield's are joint top with Inniscarra and Erin's Own, but they have a game in hand having had a bye in round three.

Erin's Own have three games played with one to go, Inniscarra have two games to play.

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Cloughduv have two games to play having lost their first two, but they could still be in with a chance were they to get a result against both Inniscarra and Cloughduv who have yet to register a win.

In Minor A group A, Glen Rovers are on top with two wins from two games, followed by Sarsfield's 2, Ballygarvan and Fr O'Neill's.

Ballygarvan defeated Fr O'Neill's, while Sarsfield's 2 and Fr O'Neill's received walkovers in their games with Castlemartyr. Sarsfield's have one game remaining against Ballygarvan with the Glen Rovers still to meet Fr O'Neill's.

In group B, Newcestown are on top with two wins from two followed by Cobh and Laochra Og in joint second with Ballincollig and Rockban behind them but still in the hunt.

In Group C, Kilbrittain / Timoleague are leading the group with three wins from three followed by Baryroe, Na Piarasigh and Mallow.

Molly makes it three out of three

Molly Lynch, who was the sub goalkeeper on the victorious Cork senior team, headed to Ravensdale, Louth, the morning after the final to take part in the annual MD All-Ireland Poc Fada final. Lynch faced stiff opposition to retain the title she won in the previous two years. She showed huge determination to win in the Cooley mountain range.

Lynch came home with 24 pucks, three ahead of second-placed Susan Earner, Galway, who won the title in 2017 and 2018. Cavan's Emma Mulvaney finished third.



Cork's Fiona O'Driscoll about to strike her third goal against Tipperary in the 2002 All-Ireland senior camogie final at Croke Park. Picture Dan Linehan

Amy is following in footsteps of Cork goalscoring legends

I ENJOYED Cork camogie's homecomings on the South Mall.

We kind of built up a tradition over the years of having a couple of drinks with former players in the Imperial Hotel afterwards, just with whomever happens to be there.

I bumped into Marie Kearney of Sarsfields on my way to the ladies and stopped for a brief chat.

Who was the last person to score a hat-trick in an All-Ireland camogie final I ask her?

"I can't recall," answered Marie. Fiona O'Driscoll, said I, in 2002.

As soon as Amy O'Connor hit her third goal in Croke Park a fortnight ago my mind immediately went back to that occasion.

My last All-Ireland medal, Cork 4-9, Tipperary who were seeking four in a row, 1-9.

Twenty-one years ago, Fiona hit 3-2 in the final, the same as Amy did from play against Waterford.

Marie, not to be outdone came back at me and said: "well guess who this is beside me?"

I was introduced to Kathy Buckley, niece of Kitty Buckley, Cork captain in 1941 and a scorer of no fewer than six goals in the final.

A record that stands to this day and will never be broken.

I was intrigued. So of course, I went home and pulled out Mary Moran's book and flicked back to 1941.

Incidentally, all camogie followers should go online to Mary Moran's magnificent website — marymorancamogie.com — you won't be disappointed with her scrapbook collection dating from 1956 to the present.

Anyway, 1941 — Cork defeated Dublin in the final, a Dublin team that held the

CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

record 15 All-Ireland medal holder Kathleen Mills in their squad.

Mary's extract went like this.

"Following such a comprehensive victory in the All-Ireland semi-final an unchanged lineout was anticipated for the final.

"The Dublin newspapers jumped the gun and published the names of those who did duty against Galway.

"However, the Cork selectors made three changes. As in previous years the cost of traveling and overnight stay created a huge problem.

"The amount required to finance the trip was considerably up due to the increased price of train and hotel charges.

"The camogie board appealed to the GAA board who made a loan available of 20% of the total figure required.

"The players contributed 30% and the camogie board made up the balance of 50%.

"Money was not the only problem that faced Cork's officials and supporters. Petrol was unobtainable due to wartime restrictions.

"Rail services were limited and unreliable. But the resourceful Cork contingent made their way to Croke Park as their hurlers had some weeks earlier.

"The Cork hurlers overcame Dublin, and the girls were determined to make it a double.

"Cork retained their title. The Rebels raced into an early lead, rested on it, and

then came again when danger threatened. "Ahead by 4-5 to no score at the interval Cork were not seriously troubled at any stage and won by 7-5 to 1-2.

"Cork's players held the upper hand in all sectors of the field. But two players stood out above the rest.

"Kathleen Coughlan filled the role of provider and Kitty Buckley the clinical finisher with six goals."

Similar to the team of two weeks ago, Maureen and Patti Hegarty were the first twins to win All-Ireland camogie medals; Katrina and Pam Mackey following in their footsteps.

Back to club action with the Cork senior and intermediate championships kicking off during the week.

Who will win this year's title?

Seandún are chasing a three-in-a-row. They've lost several players from last year's panel, most notably Blackrock's Katlyn Hickey and Michelle Murphy.

But they could be replaced by the Douglas contingent should they decide to field for the divisional side.

My feeling is that they should, particularly the Mackeys.

Why not grab the potential of winning and captaining Cork in 2024?

Seandún, St Finbarr's, and Sarsfields are again on the tips of our tongues as potential champions.

Killeagh, Courcay Rovers, Glen Rovers, and St Catherine's are all looking to push further towards glory.

Inniscarra will need Katie O'Mahony, but she is still recovering from her cruciate injury, she will more than likely miss the group stages and hopefully be back if they progress.

Maybe that's too much of a stretch; to return to competitive action without having tentatively returned to play. Olivia McAllen likewise for Sars, a loss for sure but they should have the strength in depth.



Cork's Aisling Egan, Izzy O'Regan, and goalkeeper Molly Lynch celebrate after the All-Ireland final. Picture: Laszlo Gecco

Saints welcome home local heroes

CAMOGIE

John Bohane

CORK senior camogie captain Amy O'Connor and her team-mates were afforded a huge welcome at the St Vincent's clubhouse following their recent success in the All-Ireland senior final.

Cork cruised to a comfortable final triumph against Waterford and the team captain played an integral role in the success.

The Player of the Match notched 3-7, including a second-half hat-trick, as Cork secured the title for the 29th time in the county's history.

Michelle Gould, who enjoyed a distinguished club career with her beloved St Vincent's, recalls the very first time she encountered Amy playing adult camogie with the Saints.

"I played with Amy for many years. I remember the first time she came to training several years ago.

"It was up in the all-weather pitch. I would have been more physical than fast like Amy.

"I said I would give her a chance as it was her first night. To tell the truth, she had gone past me before I even saw the sliotar.

"She was unreal even back then. She is a phenomenal talent and ambassador for the club," she said.

Michelle who recently retired from playing with St Vincent's said a huge contingent of supporters from their club were in Croke Park cheering on Amy and her colleagues.

"I was at the game. It was an unbelievable game and win. I am delighted for her.

"The last time she was captain, it was during covid and she didn't get the benefit from the crowds or the atmosphere. It was brilliant to have record attendance as well at the game.

"There was a large crowd of supporters from St Vincent's at the game. There were two buses plus another 10 or so carloads on top of that.

"She is a great role model for all the players in the club and in the community. She is so humble. She is so talented and dedicated."

"We are so proud of her," said Ms Gould who won a Munster intermediate medal with Cork in 2002.

"She is so consistent. She will always perform in the big games. She always performs for the club as well, despite always being a marked player," she continued.

"She is already back training with the junior team. My daughter plays with her for the junior team and she came home delighted that she got to train with an All-Ireland-winning captain.

"She would be always up in the field taking frees. You would even see her taking frees in the various different pitches around the city.

"She is a perfectionist. She is always seeking to improve her game. She ended up with a final tally of 3-7 which is phenomenal.

"She had 10 possessions and ten scores which is an unreal stat and highlights her class. She had the perfect ten on the biggest day in the camogie calendar.

"The Cork camogie team were so good on the day. They beat all the best teams to deservedly win the All-Ire-



Amy O'Connor is held aloft by her team-mates Amy Lee and Emma Murphy at the homecoming celebrations for the victorious Cork senior camogie team at St Vincent's GAA club after their All-Ireland final win over Waterford. Picture: David Creedon



Cork captain Amy O'Connor and Meabh Cahalane holding the O'Duffy Cup as they celebrate arrived back in Kent Station, Cork. Picture: Dan Linehan

land. Seeing Amy lift the O'Duffy Cup was so emotional.

"I can only imagine her mam and dad and all her family. It was brilliant," she added.

The celebrations in Knocknaheeny following the arrival of the Cork senior camogie squad will live long in the memory said the camogie enthusiast who spearheaded the celebratory event.

"The celebrations in the St Vincent's clubhouse on the Monday night will live long in the memory. It was a brilliant night. Norman O'Rourke our piper led the players in.

"The underage players did a guard of honour as the players came up the pathway of Hollymount House.

"We had lovely music and ballads before the players came in the clubhouse and then we had a DJ set going when the players arrived."

"The atmosphere was unreal on the

night," said Ms Gould.

"The players were mobbed with people looking for pictures and autographs.

"It is great for the next generation to see a local player like Amy captain her team to All-Ireland glory. You always aspire to play at the highest level with your club.

"It just goes to show that coming from a junior club you can still achieve all of these things. It shouldn't matter to any young player when they were playing Junior Z or at the D grade at U12 you can still be spotted if you work hard. Your efforts will always be noticed.

"The garda escort with the players stopped outside Amy's terrace on the way up. All the neighbours came out. The team bus came up through Harbour View Road and people were out waving flags.

"The players left their hair down.

“Seeing Amy lift the O'Duffy Cup was so emotional. I can only imagine her Mam and Dad... It was brilliant”

The players were so nice and genuine. They were so patient.

"We kept our speeches to the minimum and the players really enjoyed the night," she added.

Michelle is hopeful that Amy's success will inspire the next generation of players in St Vincent's to emulate her feats and to keep playing.

"To have the captain and the cup come to St Vincent's was so good. Hopefully, her success will inspire more players to either take up playing camogie or to keep playing.

"The underage players were in awe seeing so many stars in the clubhouse. It is also a great boost for our area.

"She is a class act both on and off the pitch.

"She goes about her business so quietly. She is a real team player and is great with all the players, both adult and juvenile in the St Vincent's club," she added.