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DEC. 2020  
to  
MAY 2021

# 'Dark clouds lifted' as Cats end Croker hoodoo

THE 60 SECOND REPORT

## IT MATTERED

Obviously Denise Gaule's penalty. But Kilkenny's all-shoulders-to-the-wheel mentality was vital.

## CAN'T IGNORE

Kilkenny putting an end to their losing streak at GAA headquarters. The two one-point defeats to Cork in 2017 and 2018 were particularly harrowing, followed by a six-points loss to Galway last year.

## GOOD DAY

Nobody could begrudge Kilkenny their hour of glory. Saturday night was their 14th All-Ireland title.

## BAD DAY

Kilkenny turned the tables on Galway who were seeking back-to-back titles and Sarah Dervan looking to become the first captain to lift successive trophies since 1966.

## SIDELINE SMARTS

So many different match-ups. All fascinating, especially the battle between Davina Tobin and Orlaith McGrath. Kilkenny's placing of Grace Walsh at midfield with Anna Farrell worked very well.

## BEST ON SHOW

There were so many headline makers. Aoife Doyle received the official POTM and you could have no qualms. For me though, Katie Nolan was the star of the evening.

## MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Owen Elliot had a very good game. He left it flow while the trial playing rules look to be a welcome addition.

## HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE

Two Kilkenny greats — Nicky Brennan and Ann Downey — in the media box trying to stay calm doing commentary duty!

— Therese O'Callaghan

Dormer, D Tobin, C Phelan, M Farrell, K Doyle, G Walsh, A Farrell, D Gaule, M Walsh, A Dalton, K Nolan, A Doyle, M O'Connell.

Subs: L Murphy for M O'Connell (54), N Deely for K Doyle (60).

GALWAY: Sarah Healy, T Kenny, S Dervan (Capt), H Cooney, E Helebert, Shauna Healy, C Cormican, A Donohue, N Kilkenny, S Gardiner, A O'Reilly, N Hanniffy, O McGrath, C Dolan, S McGrath.

Subs: S Spellman for E Helebert (51), R Hennolly for A Donohue (62).

Referee: Owen Elliot (Antrim).



All-Ireland Senior Camogie final  
KILKENNY ..... 1-14  
GALWAY ..... 1-11

Therese O'Callaghan  
Croke Park



Kilkenny knew ever before they set foot in Croke Park on Saturday night if they couldn't match Galway's intensity, they wouldn't survive. They were taught a harsh lesson in last year's senior camogie final and a fourth successive defeat would be hard to stomach.

A ferociously physical and thrilling battle ensued. Level four times before Orlaith McGrath got through for a goal in the 25th minute.

Advantage Galway at the interval, 1-5 to 0-6.

Kilkenny re-emerged with all the answers. They tore into it and within five minutes were level. They wouldn't fall behind again.

Denise Gaule (1-6) arrowed over a pair of frees and the outstanding Katie Nolan, one of four players taking part in their first senior final (Aoife Norris, Mary O'Connell, and Michelle Teehan too), landed a huge point from distance.

If ever someone epitomised what was great about this Kilkenny come-back, it was Nolan who shared the inside forward line with another heroine, Aoife Doyle. O'Connell went deep.

Nolan's work-rate absolutely immense — hooks, blocks, and turn overs.

Doyle, whose sister Kelyann recovered from injury to form a strong half-back line alongside Meighan Farrell and Claire Phelan, ended with four points.

"You need that if you want to win against the likes of Galway," said Phelan. "That has to be there. The forwards ran themselves into the ground in



WE DID IT: Kilkenny's Meighan Farrell and Anna Farrell lead celebrations after a thrilling victory over Galway in the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final at Croke Park on Saturday. Picture: James Crombie

the second half. It's brilliant as a back to see those turn-overs. It drives you on even more.

"At half-time, the lads said 'back yourselves'. You've done it before. The same happened in Cork (semi-final had to come from behind). So no-one was going mad. It was, just stick with the game plan."

Exceptional Gaule, Aoife Doyle and Grace Walsh points put them in the ascendancy, 0-13 to 1-8 on 50 minutes.

Prior to this, three decent goal opportunities had gone amiss. Yet, they remained focused, despite Niamh Kilkenny and Carrie Dolan gaining parity again.

Gaule's penalty in the 58th minute was the game-changer. Brought down in the

danger area after a resplendent move involving Phelan and Anna Farrell, there was no time to feel sorry for herself. Under the new rules, the penalty is one-on-one, and she fired to the bottom corner.

A superb placed ball followed to push the advantage to four at the end of normal time. Dolan's sixth point arrived in the second minute of stoppage to ensure a tight finish, but the Cats survived.

"Sometimes it is your time and today was ours," reflected Brian Dowling, in his maiden year as manager. He was trainer under Ann Downey.

"We were so focused on winning this game. We knew Galway were a brilliant team, they have been great All-Ireland champions. I said it all

week this had to be our best performance of the year or we wouldn't be winning. And I think we did. At half-time, we said if we can get ahead we can win it.

"The devastation these girls have gone through. Going back into the dressing-room last year after losing to Galway was absolutely cruel, going back to the Red Cow (hotel), all the parents there and everyone crying.

"There has been a dark cloud hanging over this team for the last few years. It has finally been lifted."

While clearly disappointed, Galway manager Cathal Murray acknowledged the better team won.

"We are not really performing as well as we can all year.

We are kind of grinding out results without being very good in games. Kilkenny were very good today, we knew they would be. Their hooking and blocking around the middle was very good.

"You are always waiting for the big performance to come. We were hoping it would be today but it wasn't to be. They have been great champions and came back to an All-Ireland after winning last year. Very proud of that."

Scorers for Kilkenny: D Gaule (1-6, 1-0 pen, 0-4 frees, 0-1 45), A Doyle (0-4), A Dalton, M O'Connell, K Nolan and G Walsh (0-1 each).

Scorers for Galway: C Dolan (0-8, 0-5 frees), O McGrath (1-0), S McGrath (0-2), A Donohue, N Kilkenny and A O'Reilly (0-1 each).

KILKENNY: A Norris; M Teehan, C

# Hunger and hard work key to victory, says Dalton

Therese O'Callaghan

Anne Dalton has given unbelievable service to this Kilkenny camogie team. She has been rewarded with numerous All-Stars and now another All-Ireland senior medal.

There have been bad days mixed with the good, going back over a decade.

"(Collette) Dormer and myself are the longest serving. (Denise) Gaule came in a

couple of years after us. I think 2007 or 2008 was my first year senior. You always remember the losses more than the wins. We have been competing for the bones of 10 years. If we had gone out at the semi-final, I would have only one All-Ireland medal in my back pocket.

"It is a bit surreal tonight. It doesn't feel like a win. Maybe later on when we are all on the bus it will

"Maybe it is because there is no crowd here ... I'm not sure.

"Over the last couple of years, we were there or thereabouts. Once we went ahead today, we knew we had it in us to dig deep and push it over the line. What is the difference? Maybe the extra couple of girls coming onto the panel.

"The in-house games in training were absolutely brilliant; they were rough, tough,

a mixture of everything.

"The Cork game absolutely stood to us too. It made us believe if you go behind, that you can come back if you keep your composure and keep working hard.

"When I look back on tonight, it felt like there was massive work-rate especially in the forward line.

"We aren't known for that in Kilkenny. Today we were winning rucks that we

wouldn't have won four or five years ago.

"We knew Galway were a strong, physical team. Us six forwards, our target was to work hard and to make it hard for Galway and if the ball did come out that we would make it poor."

The St Lachtain's star smiles when you enquire if she was surprised to see Catriona Cormican who was listed at number 11, sent to

mark her. Their paths crossed in the 2019 final. Both players are equally at home in attack or defence.

"No, I was expecting it. She did a brilliant job on me last year, nobody can argue that," she says with modesty.

And no notion of retiring either?

"We will have a think over Christmas. We will enjoy the turkey first before making any decisions like that."



**WINNING FEELING:** Kilkenny celebrate after their final victory

**Kilkenny 1-14**  
**Galway 1-11**

By **Daragh Ó Conchúir**  
AT CROKE PARK

A 57th-MINUTE penalty goal by Denise Gaule sealed a deserved victory for Kilkenny to lay the ghosts of previous Liberty Insurance All-Ireland final defeats firmly in the past.

The Cats had lost the last three deciders in succession since getting their hands on the O'Duffy Cup in 2016 and were in no mood to fall short in this most unique of championship seasons.

Gaule finished with 1-6 but Brian Dowling had heroines all over the pitch. Grace Walsh has been immersed in Covid-19 as a nurse and she served up an all-action display that told of someone revelling in having the opportunity to express herself in that context.

It was a performance that will live long in the memory.

There were six changes to the team that were defeated in last year's final by Galway but so many of the newcomers stood tall on the most important day of all.

Aoife Doyle was the game's leading scorer from play with four points and two of those might well have been goals, while Katie Nolan thundered into the fray in the second half, as a supplier and scorer, and Mary O'Connell was noticeable too in an industrious Kilkenny attack that forced countless turnovers, a number of which led to scores.

The first significant news of the evening was the starting berth for Kilkenny's Kelly Ann Doyle, who tore her cruciate ligament for a second time on March 8 against Cork in the National League, and whose first bite since then was her 12-minute cameo against the same opposition in the semi-final a fortnight ago.

Among the more interesting match-ups, Davina Tobin was delegated to attend to Orlaith McGrath,

# Cats purring again after years of pain

with Niamh Kilkenny and Aoife Donohue faced off against Anna Farrell and Walsh, respectively.

Elsewhere, Caitriona Cormican was given the task of attempting to repeat her marking heroics on Anne Dalton 12 months ago.

As the game settled, both teams left two forwards inside, the result of which was a clogged middle and one spare player invariably in defence. It started quickly, Siobhán

McGrath marking her late call-up with a score in under 50 seconds, but Aoife Doyle replied with a brilliant point over her left shoulder running away from the posts.

As space became harder to come by, the teams were reliant on the free-takers and both Carrie Dolan and Gaule answered the call as they went into the first water break on 0-3 apiece.

Galway brought Niamh Hanniffy

into a deep-lying role in order to operate with a two-player full-forward line, and soon made the most of the space created inside by that decision.

There was a suspicion beforehand, that the Galway attack carried the superior threat but it was Kilkenny who carved out the better opportunities in that regard, while the Kilkenny defence was outstanding.

That said, Orlaith McGrath took a pass from her sister Siobhán to raise the game's first green flag and that sent Cathal Murray's charges in at the break leading by 1-5 to 0-6, though perhaps it was significant that Aoife Doyle pointed in response, and it should have been a goal after Walsh went on a mazy run before putting her in a one-on-one position.

It was more of the same after the resumption but Kilkenny gradually exerted dominance around the breaking ball. Nolan and Walsh were outstanding and when Gaule hit her only score from play in the 40th minute, Kilkenny were in front for the first time.

Dolan levelled quickly but Galway didn't score for another 14



#### CROWDED OUT:

Galway's Siobhán McGrath and Ailish O'Reilly tussle for possession with Claire Phelan

minutes. Doyle and Walsh put two between them but Dowling must have been feeling nervous when Niamh Kilkenny and Dolan, from a free, restored parity.

Then came the definitive moment, as Phelan emerged from a ruck with the sliotar and fed Anna Farrell, who had the vision to find Gaule with a hand-pass. She tumbled under a challenge from Shauna Healy and Sarah Dervan and the penalty was awarded.

The Windgap ace picked herself up off the deck to drill an unstoppable low shot past Sarah Healy, following up with a pointed free for the vital breathing space. Although Dolan brought it back to the goal from a placed ball, Galway could not create the opportunity for a spectacular escape.

The celebrations afterwards were understandably enthusiastic as Kilkenny marked a seminal victory after the strangest of years.

Staging the Camogie Championship was an achievement in itself and so this year's competition is given extra significance.

Given the disappointments suffered by their men's team in Kilkenny this year, it was a victory that will be treasured in the county, and huge credit goes to manager Dowling for marshalling his players into such a convincing force in his first year at the helm.

And to the players, who were able to put aside the heartbreak and mental challenge of losing five of the last six finals, they deserve to bask in the glory of this achievement, while Galway can hold their heads high after a commendable campaign.

A fitting way to round off a historic season, this was Kilkenny's day.

**KILKENNY:** A Norris; M Teehan; C Dorraet; D Tobin; C Phelan; M Farrell; K A Doyle (N Doyle 60); G Walsh; A Farrell; A Dalton; M Walsh; D Gaule; M O'Connell (L Murphy 54); A Doyle; K Nolan  
**SCORES:** D Gaule 1-6 (0-4s); 1-0 pen; 0-1 45); A Doyle 0-4; A Dalton; M O'Connell; K Nolan; G Walsh 0-1 each  
**GALWAY:** Sarah Healy; T Kerry; S Dervan; H Cooney; E Helebert (S Spellman 51); Shauna Healy; C Cormican; A Donohue (H Hennelly 60); N Kilkenny; N Hanniffy; A O'Reilly; S Gardner; O McGrath; C Dolan; S McGrath  
**SCORES:** C Dolan 0-6 (5s); O McGrath 1-0; S McGrath 0-2; A O'Reilly; N Kilkenny; A Donohue 0-1 each  
**REFEREE:** G Elliott

Kilkenny's Meighan Farrell celebrates at the final whistle while, inset, team-mates share their delight with Katie Power who missed the final through injury  
 DAVID FITZGERALD  
 SPORTSFILE



# Brilliant Kilkenny walking in the air

## Kilkenny Ratings



**AOIFE NORRIS** 7 Puck-outs weren't perfect but couldn't do anything about the goal and her nerves settled with such marvellous support in front of her.

**MICHELLE TEEHAN** 7 Looked like she might be overrun in the first quarter but played herself into the game and part of a defence that worked brilliantly as a collective.

**CLAIRE PHELAN** 9 Galway's decision to play two inside for long spells allowed her a sweeper role. Her trademark clearances came to the fore.

**DAVINA TOBIN** 8 Holding Orlaith McGrath to open score, albeit a goal, showed why Tobin is Kilkenny's top marker.

**COLETTE DORMER** 8 Started at full-back where she sniffed out multiple threats and dominated throughout.

**MEIGHAN FARRELL** 8 Did a brilliant job on Ailish O'Reilly but her immense work-rate and the quality of her passing to set up scores for others was also vital.

**KELLYANN DOYLE** 7 A surprise call-up who defied all logic to put in such a hard-working shift at wing-back considering she damaged her cruciate back in March.

**GRACE WALSH** 9 Another Player of the Match contender. Her marking job on Aoife Donohue was pivotal and she also chipped in an inspirational point.

**ANNA FARRELL** 8 As usual she put her head in where others would fear to put their hurls, relentlessly blocking, chasing and clearing to help Kilkenny dominate midfield.

**MIRIAM WALSH** 6 A relatively quiet day for the woman whose semi-final goal was so vital but keeping Sarah Dervan distracted on their big rematch was her specific role.

**ANNE DALTON** 7 Only scored a point thanks to an immense battle with Catriona Cormican which was probably a draw but the guile of her runs and rucking were vital in the final quarter.

**AOIFE DOYLE** 9 Kilkenny needed someone outside of their stars to shine and Doyle stepped up. Hit 0-4 but two of them should have been goals.

**MARY O'CONNELL** 6 Got a lovely point on the run after 25 minutes but not quite as involved as she would have wanted on her final debut.

**DENISE GAULE** 9 Player of the Match. Apart from two missed frees, she was impeccable, dropping deep into midfield to lead Kilkenny's brilliant second-half charge, winning and scoring the penalty and the vital follow-up free.

**KATIE NOLAN** 8 Showed absolutely no nerves in her final debut, constantly blocking and harrying and levelling the game for the first time in the third quarter.

**SUBS** **Laura Murphy:** Got stuck in when introduced to replace Mary O'Connell with 10 minutes left.

**Niamh Deely:** Not on long enough.

**MANAGER** **BRIAN DOWLING** 8 Unafraid to go with youth up front, got the big match-ups right and, most importantly, got a team who were on their knees mentally back to their combative, defiant best in his first year in charge.

## Galway Ratings



**SARAH HEALY** 8 Fast off her line whenever needed to sweep up, great long puck-outs and nothing she could do about the penalty.

**SHAUNA HEALY** 7 Strong in the first half when she kept Denise Gaule quiet enough but seemed to get caught between two stools later.

**SARAH DERVAN** 7 As combative as ever but never allowed to dominate the game in her usual manner because Kilkenny didn't rain ball down on top of her.

**HEATHER COONEY** 7 Effective in a sweeper role at times but was one of several defenders who struggled to contain the exuberance of Aoife Doyle.

**EMMA HELEBERT** 7 Seemed to be everywhere in the first half, driving Galway on with brilliant blocking and harrying but faded and the first to be called ashore.

**SIOBHAN GARDINER** 6 Made some brilliant blocks and scrapped hard in the multiple rucks that developed between the '45s but also faded in the second half.

**TARA KENNY** 6 Battled effortlessly but didn't win enough ball when the game was congested in the middle third.

**AOIFE DONOHUE** 7 Usually the creative platform for Galway's running game but found herself repeatedly bottled up and one superb point after half-time was small return by her standards.

**NIAMH KILKENNY** 6 Got a brilliant point to stop the Cats pulling away after the first water break but the crowding in midfield meant she rarely got up to her usual gallop.

**CARRIE DOLAN** 7 Galway's top scorer with 0-6 (5f) and metronomic from frees but not enough from play and often physically dominated in the final quarter.

**CATRIONA CORMICAN** 8 Had 11 on her back but played centre-back with a marking job on Anne Dalton and their tussle was simply epic.

**SIOBHAN McGRATH** 8 A last-minute inclusion to replace Rebecca Hennelly and didn't disappoint. Created the goal for her sister, added two points herself and so good that Davina Tobin had to switch to mark her.

**AILISH O'REILLY** 6 A great angled point was her only score but she didn't get close enough to goals to do usual serious damage.

**NIAMH HANNIFFY** 6 Played mostly out on the '45 but finished scoreless and never allowed to win enough primary ball to get scores or create them for others.

**ORLAITH McGRATH** 7 Combined brilliantly with her sister to take her first-half goal but while she worked her heart out afterwards, she couldn't shake off Davina Tobin.

**SUBS** **Sarah Spellman:** Replaced Emma Helebert with a quarter to go but Kilkenny were turning the screw.

**Rebecca Hennelly:** Not on long enough.

**MANAGER** **CATHAL MURRAY** 6 The decision to crowd midfield and play just two inside, especially when they weren't winning the rucks, seemed to lessen their strengths. Didn't make great use of bench.

CLIONA FOLEY

KILKENNY	1-14
GALWAY	1-11

**Conor McKeon**  
 ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CAMOGIE FINAL

A STRANGE kind of glory, but glory nonetheless. And for Kilkenny, that's all that mattered.

One by one, they climbed the steps of the Hogan Stand to hoist the O'Duffy Cup into the icy December air, the cheers of their team mates echoing around an empty Croke Park as 'Walking In The Air', the soundtrack to The Snowman, blared surreally from the stadium's sound system.

Four lost All-Ireland finals in successive years would surely have been too heavy a cross to bear. It's to Kilkenny's eternal credit then that they produced such a gutsy performance on Saturday with even so much as the thought of it loitering around their subconscious.

As their manager, Brian Dowling was swift to acknowledge afterwards "the devastation that these girls have gone through the last three years... I remember going back into that dressing room after the loss and it was absolutely cruel, going back to the Red Cow Hotel, all the parents there, everyone crying, where do we go from here?"

Even qualifying for another final, given the possibility for another final defeat, must have filled Kilkenny with an unacknowledged sense of dread.

"I was stressed anyway, I can tell you," Dowling admitted. "Yeah, look, it just felt like there's been a dark cloud hanging over this team for the last few years."

"At the start of the year, some girls didn't know if they were going to come back, how could they face it again?" Dowling revealed. "But after a few long conversations with girls they came back, a few other girls stepped away. I'm so proud of those girls after all the heartache they've gone through."

For Galway, the pain will be in knowing they could easily have won here. Not necessarily that they should have won, but victory was clearly within their capabilities.

For a county with just three senior All-Ireland titles in their entire camogie history, back-to-back crowns would

have verified this as a mini-golden era. Manager Cathal Murray was gracious in defeat. He noted that Galway, despite winning their way through to another final, hadn't scaled the performance heights of last year.

"We're kind of grinding out results rather than performing well in games," he noted. "You don't know what the reason for that is. You're always waiting for the big performance to come. We were hoping it would be today, it wasn't to be."

That they led by two points at the break suggested Galway were about to grind themselves all the way to another All-Ireland title. Orlaith McGrath's first-half goal, when she accelerated around Aoife Norris, showed the sort of killer instinct that Kilkenny seemed to lack.

Relative newcomer Aoife Doyle hit 0-4 for Kilkenny but two of those scores could quite easily have been goals. And

in a game where scores were far fewer and further between than last year's decider, that sort of profligacy could just as easily have been fatal.

"The second half was absolutely unbelievable," noted Claire Phelan, one of Kilkenny's most industrious players on the night. "The forwards ran themselves into the ground in the second half. It's brilliant as a back to see those turnovers. It drives you on even more."

Kilkenny looked to have established momentum just before the second-half water break, having scored four of the previous five points and leading by 0-13 to 1-8. But Galway grafted, Niamh Kilkenny and a Carrie Dolan free brought them level and from the very next puck out came the decisive moment.

Denise Gaule was fouled with three Galway players around her and having played advantage, referee Owen Elliott brought back play for a penalty in the 56th minute. Gaule stepped up and with all the pressure of not just an All-Ireland on the line but the memories of three lost finals lingering, buried her shot wide of Sarah Healy's reach.

"If you told me at the start of the year that we were going to be All-Ireland champions," Dowling insisted afterwards, "I wouldn't have cared if it was on the 25th of December at seven o'clock in the morning to be honest with you."

"Once we're All-Ireland champions that's all that matters and look, a few things are not going to be the way it normally is, the homecoming and stuff like that but look the girls are so happy. I don't think they care when it is or what it is."

"We're All-Ireland champions and they have their medal. That heartbreak from the last few years is finally gone, that stress and that pressure is finally gone away now and it's absolutely brilliant."

**SCORERS - Kilkenny:** D Gaule 1-6 (1-0 pen, 4f, 1 65); A Doyle 0-4; A Dalton, M O'Connell, K Nolan, G Walsh 0-1 each. **Galway:** D Dolan 0-6 (5f); O McGrath 1-0; S McGrath 0-2; A Donohue, N Kilkenny, A O'Reilly 0-1 each.

**KILKENNY -** A Norris; D Tobin, C Dormer, M Teehan; C Phelan, M Farrell, K Doyle; G Walsh, A Farrell; A Dalton, M Walsh, D Gaule; M O'Connell, A Doyle, K Nolan. **Subs:** L Murphy for O'Connell (54); N Deely for Doyle (69).

**GALWAY -** Sarah Healy; T Kenny, S Dervin, H Cooney; E Helebert, S Gardiner, Shauna Healy; A Donohue, N Kilkenny, C Cormican, A O'Reilly, N Hanniffy; O McGrath, C Dolan, S McGrath. **Subs:** S Spellman for Helebert (51); R Hennelly for Donohue (62).

**REF -** O Elliott (Antrim).

### AT A GLANCE

#### PLAYER OF THE MATCH

**Denise Gaule (Kilkenny)**

Aoife Doyle and Grace Walsh had strong claims but Gaule turned the game when she dropped into the middle, scored 1-6 and won the match with her penalty.



#### TALKING POINT

Kilkenny deciding that three lost finals was enough. Their second-half performance was more dominant than the scoreboard hinted.

#### MAGIC MOMENT

Gaule's championship-winning penalty again. Given the limited time remaining, many would have considered taking a point.

#### REF WATCH

Owen Elliott seldom blew his whistle and it made for a gritty contest. Penalty call was marginal but correct.

#### MATCH STATISTIC

**Wides - Kilkenny:** 4 (3 in first half); **Galway:** 2 (1)  
**Yellow cards - Kilkenny:** 1 (Phelan 22); **Galway:** 1 (Hanniffy 5)

# Will to win delivers Cats to promised land

DERMOT CROWE

**A**FTER half-time Kilkenny's greater appetite became even more pronounced and all the technical virtuosity in the world is no use without it. To lose an unprecedented fourth consecutive All-Ireland final was inconceivable if you judged it by the bullish way they played, a tense and tight opening half opening up after the interval into a gripping contest.

In the final moments as Galway went searching for a goal to force a replay the ball was sent in towards Carrie Dolan with generous space around her. But Claire Phelan, heroic all through, was keeping guard and had one last act to perform before she could claim the medal she so richly deserved. She won a free and soon the final whistle sounded. Trying to get through the Kilkenny backline at times was like trying to slash through briars with your bare hands.

Galway hit Kilkenny with three first half goals in last year's final and there was no comeback from it. This time they only conceded one, a well-worked first half finish involving the McGrath sisters from Sarsfields, Siobhan setting up Orlaith who went round Aoife Norris and finished to the net at the Hill 16 end.

The goal was a severe insult to Kilkenny's defensive effort up to then. Aside from Phelan, Michelle Teehan had made a series of alert interventions, and Grace Walsh was often seen helping out and relieving pressure. They harried and hassled Galway and closed up the spaces around goal.

In a tight match — then tied at 0-5 each — the goal seemed a hefty psychological blow for a team with a



Kilkenny's Grace Walsh gathers possession on her way to scoring a second-half point during the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship final. Photo: Piaras Ó Midheach

losing track record in finals. But Kilkenny didn't blink. On the half hour mark they stitched together one of the game's best moves. Kellyann Doyle, who has made it back from a cruciate injury, began a sequence of passes that brought in Grace Walsh, and then the lively Katie Nolan whose pass seemed destined to end with Aoife Doyle scoring a goal. In the 11th Piltown player shot high over the crossbar. Galway went in at half-time 0-5 to 0-5 ahead and still hadn't won their best.

The first half didn't have much hurling, it was more of a battle fought

at close quarters. Owen Elliot, also in charge when Kilkenny lost to Cork in 2017, seemed intent on letting as much of the play run as possible. That was in the spirit of the new rules being trialled that included a great allowance for physical contact.

Ultimately, Kilkenny would probably have won whatever way the game was played. Immediately after the interval they upped the tempo and went to Galway. In five minutes they had drawn level. Aoife Donohue hit a sweet score for the champions but they were hurling only in spurts

and by now Davina Tobin, a tenacious marker, had been ordered on to Siobhan McGrath — from there the forward's influence waned.

In the 40th minute Kilkenny edged in front and the score had an inspirational quality, Phelan defending expertly and setting up an attack in one stroke. The ball went down the field to the hand of Denise Gaule and she sent over a huge score. By the second water break Kilkenny were still ahead, having outscored Galway in the period after half-time by 0-6 to 0-3.

Just before the water pause Mary O'Connell, playing in her first All-Ireland, had a goal chance but she dropped the ball. What followed was instructive. Instead of wallowing she set chase and hooked her opponent, helping to turn over the ball which led to a fourth point from play for the busy Doyle. When they resumed Grace Walsh's point put them two points clear for the first time with ten minutes left, but Galway, without ever reaching high gear, hit back to level in the next five minutes, a point from Niamh Kilkenny punishing a handling error, and then Dolan levelling from a free after Tobin had committed a rare indiscretion in pushing McGrath.

The decisive moment came with two minutes left when Gaule, hard working and willing throughout, won a penalty after being set away by Meighan Farrell's pass. Galway might deem it a harsh award, but Gaule, now faced with just one on the line after recent rule change, put the ball away confidently low to Sarah's Healy's right. In injury time Laura Murphy, who had just come on, won a free showing terrific guts and Gaule nailed it.

There was time for a final Galway score, a Dolan free, but soon the Rose of Mooncoin was being cranked up and Kilkenny's brave and spirited players were dancing with joy.

## Kilkenny have Gaule to end years of misery

Kilkenny 1-14

Galway 1-11

CROKE PARK

**T**HREE is the limit of Kilkenny's suffering, the end of their misery. After losing each of the last three finals, Kilkenny are All-Ireland senior camogie champions once more, ending a run of sorrow that stretches back to their last title in 2016.

Kilkenny's win came wrapped in a dramatic finale. In the 56th minute, after Galway had hit two points to level a tense, gripping final, Denise Gaule went galloping through and was felled. Decision time.

In a game with such a premium on scores, a point may easily have sufficed. As Gaule rose the ball several feet outside the 21 yard line at the Hill 16 end, only a body language expert might have read her intentions. But her strike was definitive. Low. Hard. Lasered into the corner of the Galway net.

Clearly, a fourth All-Ireland final loss in four years would have been too much torture for one group of players to bare.

They came into Croke Park off the back of a victory over Cork that suggested their time was nigh. They also came with plan.

Last year Kilkenny hit 0-17, the highest score of a losing All-Ireland finalist since the 50s. But they also conceded 3-14, the biggest winning total of any team since 1993. This match was played on different terms.

Kilkenny played with just two players up front — Galway had three for the most part — while just about everyone else could be described as occupying the

middle third.

This was a far grittier affair and those terms of engagement seemed initially to suit Galway. They kept Anne Dalton in the shadows and in the 27th minute, scored a goal that put light between themselves and Kilkenny. Siobhán McGrath's lopping handpass found her sister, Orlaith, who turned on the afterburners, rounded Aoife Norris and tapped in a goal.

All of Kilkenny's best hurling came from running the ball through the apertures they occasionally found in the throng.

Galway's Siobhán Gardiner — wearing six but playing a multitude of positions — got through a feast of work, as did Grace Walsh at the other end. Aoife Doyle, in her first championship as a starter for Kilkenny, had a final to remember.

Having scored just 1-1 in her entire career to date, she sniped 0-4, all from play, and might have had a couple of goals too. In the first half, Walsh went steaming through but Doyle skyed her shot with the goal gaping. In the second, she was put in by Mary O'Connell, but from a similar distance and identical angle, did the same.

But it was enough to keep Kilkenny in contact and in the end, having generated so many goal chances, the damn eventually broke when Gaule went through and was fouled before firing home.

Scorers — Kilkenny: D Gaule 1-6 (1-0 pen, 4f, 1'65), A Doyle 0-4, A Dalton, M O'Connell, K Nolan, G Walsh 0-1 each. Galway: D Dolan 0-6 (5f), O McGrath 1-0, S McGrath 0-2, A Donohue. N Kilkenny, A O'Reilly 0-1 each. Kilkenny: A Norris; D Tobin, C Dorrner, M Teehan; C Phelan, M Farrell, K Doyle; G Walsh, A Farrell; A Dalton, M Walsh; D Gaule; M O'Connell, A Doyle, K Nolan. Subs: L Murphy for O'Connell (54), N Deely for Doyle (60). Galway: Sarah Healy; T Kenny; S Derrvin, H Cooney; E Helebert, S Gardiner, Shauna Healy; A Donohue, N Kilkenny; C Cormican, A O'Reilly, N Hanniffy; O McGrath, C Dolan, S McGrath. Subs: S Spellman for Helebert (53), R Hennelly for Donohue (62). Referee: Owen Elliott (Antrim).

## COOL FOR CATS: KILKENNY CLAIM CAMOGIE CROWN



FOURTH TIME LUCKY: Michelle Teehan, Meighan Farrell and Anna Farrell celebrate after Kilkenny, having lost the last three finals, beat Galway in the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland Senior Camogie decider. Photo: INPHO/James Crombie. See Sport



Seandún Camogie U14 skills winner, Odrhna Hurley, Glen Rovers, centre, with runner-up, Hazel O'Connell, Blackrock, and third-placed Heather O'Connor, St Finbarr's.

## Seandún division has kept up a 'team spirit' throughout pandemic

CAMOGIE in the city has always been strong.

Four city sides have been crowned Cork senior champions over the years and there's massive work being done at underage. 10 clubs participate in the Seandún competitions, with three of those in the senior county championship.

Another three field at intermediate, with the remainder, bar one, all at junior level.

Camogie in the city was hugely affected by Covid-19, but the Seandún division ploughed on, under chairperson, Donnacha Broderick (Bishopstown), vice-chair, Catherine Allen (Na Piarasigh), secretary/treasurer, Louise Weldon (Blackrock), development officer, Gwen Fitzpatrick-Goulding (St Vincent's), PRO Mary Newman (Glen Rovers), and child welfare officer, Catherine Sloane-Slaughter (Na Piarasigh).

Seandún organised the U12 league, run this season by all the divisions on a regional basis, under the auspices of the Cork County Board. The U13 and U15 Seandún championships are always fiercely contested and, once the go-ahead was given to begin, we saw some superb games in all three grades.

Seandún also got in U13-U14 and U15 development training and stand-alone matches, pre-lockdown.

A hugely successful event was an U14 skills competition.

As the underage competitions moved along at pace, clubs were also involved in U14, U16, and minor county board championship competitions and it is a tribute to the hard work of all the clubs that the Seandún competitions were down to their final stages by October 31, when the county again went into lockdown.

At U15A level, Blackrock are through to the semi-final and awaiting the winners of Na Piarasigh-St Finbarr's. Bishopstown will meet Glen Rovers in the other semi-final.

In U15 B, Douglas are through to the semi-final and they will play the losers of the Na Piarasigh-St Finbarr's game.

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In U15 C, there is one round of the league to be played, between Nemo and St Vincent's, to determine who the finalists

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will be. The U13 A final is ready to go, with Douglas meeting St Finbarr's. The U13 B semi-finals are also ready to be played, where Na Piarasigh will meet Bishopstown and Glen Rovers will play Blackrock.

The U13C is still to be completed, as there are a few outstanding games.

In U12 A semi-final, St Finbarr's will play Glen Rovers and Douglas will meet Bishopstown.

In the B semi-finals, Nemo Rangers play Brian Dillon's and Na Piarasigh will play Blackrock. In the U12 C final, Passage West meet St Vincent's. The division are determined that the players will not lose out and they have given a commitment to the clubs that we will finish these competitions as soon as restrictions allow matches to recommence in 2021.

The School of Excellence started early in the year with players selected to the panels and whilst a number of stand-alone matches were held before the pandemic, the group were unable to train or compete from March onwards.

Seandún held a very successful U14 skills competition, where 30 players competed for the title.

After a superb exhibition of skills, two players ended up on the same points: Odrhna Hurley, from Glen Rovers, and Hazel O'Connell, from Blackrock. After a tie-breaker, the girls were still level.

It was only after a second tie-breaker that Odrhna emerged in first place, with Hazel O'Connell in second, and Heather O'Connor, from St Finbarr's, in third.

Seandún fielded a senior team in championship, with players from intermediate and junior city clubs, Bishopstown, Blackrock, Brian Dillon's, Na Piarasigh, Nemo Rangers, and St Vincent's, and they opened their campaign with a win over Imokilly to advance to a meeting against Glen Rovers. After a thrilling contest that went to extra time, the Glen advanced.

With competitions to be completed, there is something for clubs to look forward to when games can resume and this will help with pre-season preparations for the city clubs.

Grace Walsh of Kilkenny in action against Aoife Donohue and Siobhán Gardiner of Galway.

Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile



# Camogie final was better than hurling decider

### CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

I THOROUGHLY enjoyed the All-Ireland camogie final last Saturday evening.

I enjoyed it more than the hurling final, which was a foregone conclusion from early on, even if Waterford did hang in there for a long period. The difference between hurling and camogie now is that you see far more outfield action in a camogie game.

It gets a bit boring seeing one or two touches and the ball put over the bar or wide from anything up to 80 metres. Goals, for some hurling teams, don't even come into their thought process now; it's a case of racking up the points at ease.

Because women don't have that strength we see far more outfield play and I thought both Galway and Kilkenny contributed to a really good final. While many praised referee Eoin Elliot for his handling of the final, it irritated me a little, if I'm honest. He refereed the final completely different from how he refereed the semi-final.

Where was his obsession with penalising players on both sides for overcarrying on the fourth step?

I tipped Kilkenny last Saturday because I felt their defence had come on hugely in 12 months and that was where their problem lay in previous years. Tommy Walsh was one of my favourite hurlers, but I'm also a big fan of sister Grace.

She was brilliant again. Her toughness is admirable; she's a classic defender.

Many spoke of Kilkenny's work rate, but I think it was there from both sides. You could see Kilkenny slightly getting the upper hand in the latter stages as Galway tired. Someone from Kilkenny mentioned afterwards that you could see Tommy Shefflin's stamp all over the strength and conditioning of the team.



Galway's Emma Helebert and Aoife Doyle of Kilkenny.

Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne

Last year I was rooting for Galway. This year it was Kilkenny which is something I never thought I'd see myself do, such as our rivalry over the years.

But after losing the last three finals and beating Cork in the semi-final, why wouldn't you want to see them get over the line?

They were undoubtedly the better team on the night. They struggled at the start, particularly with their puck outs which were long and high and which their half-forward line were struggling to win.

Aoife Doyle should have had two goals but inexperience from the player, who started in her first final, was evident in those situations. But she got four points and finished up with the Player of the Match accolade.

Mary O'Connell, another new regular starter for Kilkenny, also had a chance on 46 minutes, but in her mind she had the ball in the back of the net before she had fully grasped the sliotar and the opportunity was lost. Apart from Galway's goal, just before half-time, they didn't really threaten the net and that was a credit to

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I thought Miriam Walsh gave Sarah Dervan a right battle at the other end of the pitch too.

As Kilkenny started to get a grip on the game midway through the second half, they could easily have rued a few short balls into goalkeeper Sarah Healy's hands, affording her the opportunity to pump the ball back up the field. I mentioned last week that typically conversion rates in camogie from penalties are poor and that if either side got an opportunity this year they needed to take it.

The penalty was well-struck by Denise Gaule even though Healy should have reacted better and it was the deciding factor in the end.

Big news during the week when the GPA and WGPA voted overwhelmingly to merge into a 4,000 strong players' body. 100% of GPA members voted in favour and 96% of the WGPA members voted yes. An AGM will take place in the second quarter of 2021 to elect a new national executive which will proportionally represent the association's female and male members.

This will further push the three sporting organisations of the GAA, Camogie Association, and the LGFA to come together under the one umbrella. I think that while there will be those against it, it's only a matter of time before it happens.

But that time can't drag on. This must happen within three years. By 2023 we should see this in play.

Reflecting on 2020, it's been a tough year, but on the camogie front I think we had an excellent club championship and the club/inter-county format must be the way going forward.

The senior inter-county championship was also completed even though it was wrong to not continue with the minor and U16 championships.

As we close, I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a safe and healthy 2021.



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# Kilkenny lay the ghosts of finals past in real style

**Kilkenny** 1-14  
**Galway** 1-11

Beforehand, talk of the impact of three consecutive All-Ireland senior final losses, the five reverses in seven seasons, and for many of the players, six in seven appearances on the biggest stage, was batted away. The past had no impact on the present. But now, with a 1-14 to 1-11 triumph over Galway, and a companion to the 2016 triumph at

last, only Kilkenny's second title since 1994, the truth could be acknowledged in the public domain. It wasn't the fear of being the first county to lose four decisions on the trot that drove them through. Just knowing the pain of each one and the damage it had done. "The devastation these girls have gone through," noted a relieved manager Brian Dowling afterwards. The former Kilkenny hurler had been brought into the fold by Ann Downey last year, her parting gift to a group of play-

ers she moulded and mothered over a decade, and who was in attendance on media duties. There was hardly a happier person in Croke Park. Denise Gaule goalied from a 57th minute penalty when the sides were level after being fouled herself and finished with 1-6, while Aoife Doyle rapped over four points, while Grace Walsh, Katie Nolan and Claire Phelan were just three others to provide monstrous performances. Orlaith McGrath had a first-half goal for the champions, who went in at the break

leading by 1-5 to 0-6 but Kilkenny found another level of intensity after the resumption. When Owen Elliott sounded his final whistle, Dowling threw himself on the ground in almost disbelief. "Going back into the dressing-room last year after losing to Galway was absolutely cruel, going back to the Red Cow (Hotel), all the parents there and everyone crying. Where do we go from here? "We started back this year and some girls didn't know whether they would come back. How could they face it again? A

few long conversations with girls and they came back. I am so proud of them girls, the heartache they have gone through. I am over the moon now. "In fairness to them, they were the better team", declared Murray. "In that time, the quarter after the half-time, they won all the breaks and we had no answer to them in that period."

near misses of their own. Now in the beaten corner, the Sarsfield man was very generous in his praise of the victors. "In fairness to them, they were the better team", declared Murray. "In that time, the quarter after the half-time, they won all the breaks and we had no answer to them in that period."



Kilkenny's Anna Farrell and Meighan Farrell celebrate at the final whistle. PHOTOGRAPH: RYAN BRIDGEMAN

**KILKENNY:** A Harris, M Trehan, C Dormer, D Tobin, C Phelan, M Farrell, K A Doyle, G Walsh (0-1), A Farrell, A Dalton (0-1), M Walsh, D Gaule (1-6, four frees, 1-0 pen, one 45), M O Connell (0-1), A Doyle (0-4), K Nolan (0-1), Subst: L Murphy for O Connell (54 mins), K Deely for K A Doyle (60 mins).  
**GALWAY:** Sarah Healy, T Kenny, S Dervan, H Zanny, E Heibert, S O'Connell, C Corcoran, A Donohue (0-1), N Kilkenny (0-1), N Harnedy, A O'Reilly (0-1), S Gardner, O McGrath (0-0), C Dolan (0-6, five frees), S McGrath (0-2), Subst: S Spellman for Heibert (58), R Harnedy for Donohue (60+2).  
 Referee: Owen Elliott (Peters)

# Camogie belongs as another headline act on hurling's Electric Picnic

**A**T the final whistle in Croke Park on Saturday night, the pent-up emotion of the last nine months were plain to see in the faces and body language of those involved, from Brian Dowling's exuberant leaps to the frustration etched across the faces of the Galway defenders. It's been quite a year, and on a night like this, all the joy, pain and catharsis comes pouring out.

At least three players on the pitch — Sarah Dervan, Niamh Kilkenny, and Collette Dormer — had to postpone their weddings this year. Caitriona Cormican and Grace Walsh are among the squads' frontline healthcare workers. Katie Power was there on crutches; Kellyann Doyle was back playing after tearing her cruciate in March. To say that all these players have burst a gut to get themselves into a final two weeks before Christmas would be an understatement.

Margins. There really only is a puck of a ball — or a blow of a whistle — between the top few teams in camogie. On their path to the final, Kilkenny finished up their group stage with a scoring difference of +52 points, but won their semi-final against Cork by just two and the final by a goal, courtesy of the unflappable Denise Gaule in the 57th minute. The reverse angle on her penalty really highlighted the precision and repetitive practice that went into it; training-ground excellence brought to the biggest stage in the sport.

Galway keeper Sarah Healy had a very solid game but the shot was unstoppable. I can't have been the only spectator murmuring "Take your point" when Gaule stepped up to the set-piece, but she knew exactly what she was doing.

Afterwards, the penalty was the major talking point, having ultimately been the deciding factor between the two teams. It's true that it wasn't the most blatant penalty in the world. Gaule was brought down in the square, but as a culmination of three Galway backs bearing down on her rather than a cynical foul by an individual defender. In the end, Galway can have few complaints about that decision. I do feel, however, that they were unfairly penalised in the 25th minute, when Niamh Kilkenny's storming run through on goal was called back, the final pass from Ailish O'Reilly having been deemed to be a throw ball. Having watched it back, I thought it was a perfectly fine handpass.

It was frustrating for two reasons: it called a halt to one of the best moves of the match, and it highlighted how infrequently that rule is invoked in the men's game, where ambiguous slung handpasses have become the norm. But to be fair to referee Owen Elliott, he had a good game overall, letting the game flow and ensuring that the final was a nail-biting spectacle — not strictly a ref's raison d'être, but arguably giving the people what they want.

The other

main talking point, of course, was the newcomers. When you can afford to have quiet games from Miriam Walsh and Ann Dalton, both leaders who led the charge against Cork, you know you're on to something. Michelle Teehan, Aoife Doyle, Mary O'Connell, and Katie Nolan were all making their All-Ireland final debuts, and all of them put in energetic, hardworking shifts. The confidence of the three forwards, in particular, was remarkable, all of them scoring important long-range points from play.

Aoife Doyle, in particular, looks to be an outrageous talent, as her opening point from the right wing demonstrated. And yet, twice in the game she found herself with only Sarah Healy to beat, and twice she fired it over the crossbar.

I was glad for her as a young player that the game didn't come down to those chances.

She knew it herself, too. "I'll be sickened about that," she said afterwards as she accepted her Player of the Match award. Experience will stand to her, and she'll be calmly slotting goals away for years to come; but for now, four points from play in an All-Ireland final is an excellent return.

It was wonderful, too, to see camogie share in the excitement of All-Ireland final weekend. Staging the camogie final the night before the hurling decider made it feel less like a curtain-raiser and more like a fellow headliner at some kind of hurling Electric Picnic. It feels only natural for the two codes to cooperate and share space.

There was more good news on this front earlier this week when the GPA and WPGA voted in near-unanimity to merge their associations into one 4,000-member body.

Camogie players and ladies footballers have been calling for more integration with the GAA for years, and it's inspiring to see the players leading the way on this, and gratifying to know that the fellas have their female counterparts' backs.

That support has never felt more important. I resisted writing about the recent ladies football fiasco, in which Cork and Galway were shunted from venue to venue for their All-Ireland semi-final, because it was somehow both enraging and boring.

On the one hand, how is this sort of thing still happening in the year of our lord 2020? But on the other hand, maybe I was naïve to think that it wouldn't; that women wouldn't be the first to be thrown under the bus as soon as a scarcity in resources arose.

"But they're different organisations. Of course the men should get first dibs on GAA grounds," the argument often goes.

As if women have any choice in who governs their games, or could simply pull themselves up by their football bootstraps. To my mind, the sooner the women's associations merge with the GAA, and render this particular line of argument obsolete, the better.



Eimear Ryan



In the second of a two-part series, TOM LYONS continues to delve into the early days of camogie in West Cork. Here, he focuses on the first West Cork camogie championship held in 1917

# Odds are Clonakilty won first-ever West Cork camogie championship

ALTHOUGH media coverage of camogie in West Cork in the years 1915 and 1916 was almost non-existent, the game was catching on very well in many areas.

Just like football and hurling, one of the main problems facing the camogie clubs was the travelling difficulties to play matches. Playing matches against teams from other parts of the county was not practical, so to cope with the problem, the first-ever West Cork camogie championship was set up in 1917.

Involved in this first championship were:

**Barryroe (Lislevane)** – A camogie club was formed in August and there was no shortage of practice fields. The ladies were able to wield the camán with skill and dexterity.

**Bantry** – A team was formed at Scart, with a practice field by the School House. Bantry beat Skibbereen easily at the Skibbereen Feis. This strange advice was given by the reporter: 'If you don't hit the ball, hit something. And no matter whither it goes, or how fares the fortunes of the game, keep one eye at least on the on-lookers.'

**Clonakilty** – Local Sinn Féin activist and a member of the Clonakilty football and hurling teams, Mick Ahern was the chairman of the new Clonakilty club. Captain of the team was Babe Crowley, aunt of the famous Tadhgo Crowley.

**Casheliskey** – Situated between Clonakilty and Kilbree, they had a strong team as camogie was also being played in the nearby Kilmeen area.

**Dunmanway** – To match the men who had formed the first hurling team in Dunmanway in 1917, the ladies of the town formed their first camogie team. The team was made up mostly of girls from Castle Street.

The first camogie championship to be run off in West Cork was for a set of silver medals. It's not clear who was organising the competition. The opening two games were played in Clonakilty's Fair Field (which is now the children's playground and the Scoil na mBuachaillí playground) on September 2nd, 1917.



The 1919 Clonakilty/Ballymacowen camogie team. We have some of the names and they are as follows. Back from left, C. O'Brien, Jer Cronin, Con Murphy, Danny Calnan, Sonny Murphy, Jack Mennis, J. Kingston, Florrie McCarthy, John Keohane, Con Moloney, Tim Brien and Thomas O'Leary. Middle from left, NN. O'Brien, ?, ?, Nel Brien, Mina Moloney, Mary Crowley, - Brien, - Calnan, - Donovan, - Coomey, - Coomey and Babe Foley. Front from left, Mrs. Holland, - Donovan, - Calnan, - Fleming, Elsie Walsh, Molly O'Brien, - Brien, - Coomey, - Cronin.

## Round 1 – Casheliskey 7-0 Dunmanway 2-0 (12-a-side)

From the throw-in 'the O'Rahilly combination' proved the superior side. Dunmanway were only recently formed and lacked official training but showed promise, with captain Maggie Ahern showing rare judgement and hitting power, well assisted by Eileen Lynch and Maggie Barry. Casheliskey showed great combination, with Frances McCarthy and Kate O'Leary outstanding, 'whose exhibition won countless plaudits.' Among the winning players was Mina Moloney, who was to marry John 'Count' Donovan of Clonakilty in 1920. O'Donovan was an All-Ireland medal winning footballer with Cork in 1911 and a top-class athlete. He tragically died of pneumonia a few weeks after the wedding. Referee for the game was Mick Ahern, chairman of the Clonakilty Camogie Club.

## Round 1 – Clonakilty 3-0 Barryroe 1-0 (12-a-side)

This was a great contest, with Clonakilty doing most of the pressing but being thwarted by a fine Barryroe defence. Outstanding for Clon was Babe Crowley (captain), Eileen Harte, Katty Murphy, Mina Moloney, Julia Coleman, Mag-

gie Twomey and Kitty Hurley, 'an inveterate worker whose display in the forward division was frequently applauded.' For Barryroe, May Brophy and Mary Whelton did excellent work at midfield, with Mary Dineen and Maggie O'Brien also doing well. Referee was Con Ahern, Dunmanway.

## Round 1 – Bantry beat Skibbereen

Bantry beat Skibbereen in a challenge game and then played them on September 9th in the West Cork championship. The Bantry ladies emerged victorious.

The report said: 'The Bantry ladies have at present put away their walking sticks and are sporting their camogies in preference. It is an every-day occurrence to meet a number of ladies out walking, each carrying their hurleys. It is to be hoped that the Bantry club will win the West Cork Championship. If they keep on as at present, they will make a big bid for it.'

## Round 2 – Clonakilty beat Bantry

Clonakilty and Bantry met in Skibbereen on September 23rd and the Clon girls proved well superior, winning by a substantial amount. Bantry lacked training but showed promise.

**Final?** – No further report of any camogie championship game is available. The final would have been Clonakilty v neighbours, Casheliskey, with the Clon girls as hot favourites to win.

A camogie game was played between the newly-formed teams of Kilmeen and Kilkerrin in Dan O'Brien's field near Sam's Cross on December 2nd. Kilkerrin were captained by Katty Hurley and Kilmeen by Nancy Collins. The Kilkerrin girls won by 1-1 to 1-0 and the standard was quite good for two new teams.

The fledgling camogie clubs were soon caught up in the turmoil of the political scene in Ireland in 1918 and media coverage of games was almost nil. The harassment of the GAA by the RIC and the military continued in all areas. Even the ladies were not safe.

The Dunmanway Feis on July 7th, 1918 was attended by thousands from all over the area but was stopped by the police and the military, under Inspector Rowan of Clonakilty. Many of the crowd then made their way to a field near the town which was being used for

## Captain of the Clonakilty team was Babe Crowley, aunt of the famous Tadhgo Crowley.

a camogie match. However, the match was not long in progress when a force of about 20 soldiers charged the players, who had to disperse. The soldiers then charged the spectators, who scattered in all directions and the field was cleared.

On their way back to town the police were met by a menacing mob and they again charged. A man named Walsh from Lyre received an ugly head wound. In the town itself the police and military spent the evening clearing the streets, without serious opposition.

The War of Independence, the Civil War and the political troubles of the following years seem to have put an end to the camogie activity in West Cork as not a single word is written of any activity until the late 1930s, with a vibrant camogie scene emerging in the 1940s.

## PHOTO: HELP NEEDED

The main photograph accompanying this article is of the Clonakilty/Ballymacowen (townland north-east of the town) camogie team. The date given for it was 1919 but



Babe Crowley, captain of the Clonakilty camogie team in 1917, probable winners of the first West Cork camogie championship. She was an aunt of the legendary Tadhgo Crowley.

it is, probably, the Clon camogie team which played in the first West Cork camogie championship in 1917. The fact that the photograph was taken would suggest that the team did go on to win the championship. Unfortunately, only some of the names are available and maybe somebody could put names on some more. Contact 087-6425180 with information.

# Only way is up for Enniskeane



Enniskeane captain Kate McCarthy lifts the cup after they won the county intermediate final against Aghabullogue in September.

## Third time lucky for Enniskeane in 2020 as they finally won the county intermediate title

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

ELAINE Aylward knows better than most what's needed to compete at the highest levels – and that's why she is backing Enniskeane to find their feet fast in senior camogie in 2021.

A former Kilkenny senior camogie star for 13 years, and an All-Star in 2009, Aylward moved to Enniskeane in 2016 – after marrying a local man – and has been involved in a coaching capacity with the local camogie team since 2017.

She watched on from the sideline when Enniskeane lost the 2017 and 2019 county intermediate finals, but 2020 proved third time lucky as they got their hands on the prize that had eluded them.

The reward is a place in the Cork camogie senior ranks in 2021, and Aylward feels Enniskeane can hold their own with the best in the county.

'It's a huge step, it's senior camogie in Cork, and Cork are one of the top three teams in the country so the standard is very high,' Aylward says.

'But what 2020 proved is that if you have a good bunch of girls, like Enniskeane have, that's a big help.'

'The sooner the 2021 championship starts and the girls get into it, the better. We have played challenge matches and county league games against senior teams over the years and we have always been able to hold our own.'

**'I think the best way to improve is to play at a high standard and Enniskeane will only improve by playing senior' – Elaine Aylward**

'I think the best way to improve is to play at a high standard and Enniskeane will only improve by playing senior. The young girls coming through now will have the chance to play senior camogie too and that can only help the standard in Enniskeane.'

That's a view shared by Enniskeane player Siobhan O'Driscoll, as the Carbery club intends to kick on.

'I am confident we will make an impact at senior next year,' O'Driscoll says.

'We will be playing the great teams that we want to be playing against, like Courneys, Killeagh, Milford, Inniscara and St Finbarr's.'

'We are already looking forward to the championship draws.'

And Enniskeane are bouncing into 2021 off the back of a dream 2020 campaign.

A silver lining to the Covid pandemic was that Enniskeane had a full squad at training every night. Everyone was together



Orla Cronin with her player of the match award from the 2020 county final.

and everyone was pulling in the same direction. The bond between them strengthened.

'They were always close as a team and close as friends, but in a year like 2020 when you had no other outlet, and you couldn't go anywhere or do anything else, the GAA was your only social outlet and you were delighted to have that,' Aylward explains.

'There were no JIs gone for the summer, no one gone travelling, very few had part-time jobs, the inter-county players were all with the club too, so we had the same bunch of girls every night for training. They became a big family for one another.'

For Aylward, a selector on

the management team that also included Dermot Curtin, Brian Daly and Anthony O'Sullivan, it meant they had a full hand to train and pick from – and that helped.

Having influential Cork forward Orla Cronin involved from the start was also a huge help. With the club and inter-county seasons separated, Cronin had an uninterrupted few months with her home club, and that benefitted everyone.

'She was outstanding for us,' Siobhan O'Driscoll says.

'The only good thing about Covid was we enjoyed training with Orla full time. We got to know how she plays, we learned a lot from her but even off the pitch the team bonded really well together.'

Cronin led by example throughout the campaign. The Cork centre forward hit 1-11 against Ballyhea, 0-10 against Blackrock and 0-7 against Fr O'Neills, before saving her best performance for the county final against Aghabullogue. Player of the match that day, Cronin scored 0-11 to get Enniskeane over the finishing line.

A few weeks earlier, though, they found themselves in a tricky spot in the county quarter-final against Blackrock.

At one stage in the first half of their last-eight tie against Blackrock, Enniskeane trailed by 13 points.

The outlook appeared grim. 'On the sideline there is not a lot you can do when you are in that situation, only try to get messages into the girls,' Aylward says.

'But credit to them, it was their own motivation that got them out of trouble, their own words at half time, and they drove on in the second half. They didn't panic, they kept tipping away with the points, and I think that the real difference was the belief they had in themselves.'

'They weren't happy with their first-half performance, it wasn't a reflection of what they did in training in lockdown and it was their hard work and effort that saw them pull through that game.'

Louise Duggan, Siobhan O'Driscoll, Kellie Scannell, Aisling O'Driscoll, Laura Mannix and Orla Cronin, they all stood up that day, they refused to accept defeat and they got their reward: a narrow win and a place in the last four.

Confidence grew with each victory, and Aylward noticed a change in the group this season.

'There was definitely something different about them in 2020,' says the Kilkenny woman who still lines out for her home club Mullinavat in south Kilkenny.

'Even from the start of the year you could see it in their attitude, they realised how close they had come in the last few

seasons and probably realised too that there is nothing given in sport and that you have to go and earn it.'

Enniskeane earned it in 2020, and it all came together on county final day.

September 20th, 2020, that's the day Enniskeane beat Aghabullogue by 1-16 to 2-8 at Castle Road to be crowned county intermediate champions.

It was a day worth waiting for, even more special in 2020 as it was the club's 25th anniversary.

'As a unit we performed well in the final,' explains Siobhan O'Driscoll, 'our defence left quick ball into the forwards and they did the damage inside then.'

'This year we were a lot more mature than other years, which was the difference.'

'Every game we absorbed any pressure that was on us and we just never gave up. This was evident from our quarter-final win against Blackrock. We were 13 points down, we kept on hunting our opponents, tipping the scoreboard over and showing leadership all over the pitch. We brought that fight to the other games – that is why we are county champions.'

Now they're eager to see what 2021 brings and Enniskeane, who also fielded a second adult camogie team for the first time in 2020, are in a good place heading into their first season in the senior championship.



# REVIEW OF THE CLUB CAMOGIE YEAR

By Mary Newman

**Huge credit has to go the Cork Camogie board and their juvenile committee for again organising a season of excellent championship competitions, despite the huge challenges posed by Covid 19.**

With 66 clubs registering to participate in competitions at all levels, from senior down to the younger brigade who continued to embrace camogie with huge enthusiasm, the task facing the board was not an easy one. The board were all set to roll with their league competitions when the first lockdown got underway and, with their programme of league games completely wiped out, they began to plan ahead. Championship draws were made and, with the agreement of the intermediate and junior clubs, the format for both of this championship reverted to a backdoor competition – previously, these championships had been played on a league basis.

The senior board was again fortunate to have the all of their adult championship competitions sponsored by SE Systems and this support ensures that a huge burden is taken off the shoulders of the board. There were many success stories and fairytale endings, of course also a lot of heartache and tears both of sorrow and joy as titles were won and lost. Many clubs suffered losses also off the field of play and we remember these people with a silent prayer as we take a quick look back on the year.

## Senior

Fourteen clubs and three divisions went into the draw for senior championship but, before a ball was struck, Carbery withdrew, leaving just Seandun and Imokilly to contest round one, which

was the divisional section. Seandun accounted for Imokilly and went into round four while Imokilly went into the losers' rounds.

Round two threw up plenty of action and a few surprises. Defending champions Sarsfields were consigned to the losers' round as Glen Rovers recorded a 0-14 to 1-9 victory. Courcey Rovers signalled their intent as they brushed aside the challenge of Cloughduv, Killeagh overcame Newcestown, Éire Óg got the upper hand on Milford, Inniscarra were too strong for Ballincollig, St Finbarr's had four points to spare over Douglas while St Catherine's were too strong for Ballygarvan.

The losers battled it out in round three and we saw Ballincollig make their exit at the hand of Douglas while Newcestown defeated Imokilly. Champions Sarsfields got themselves back into contentions as they ousted Cloughduv and Ballygarvan ended Milford's campaign as they booked themselves a place in round four. Twelve teams now remained and with four, St Finbarr's, Killeagh St Catherine's and Éire Óg, receiving a bye to the quarter-finals, eight remained to contest round four.

The first game in round four was a thriller with Douglas forcing extra time thanks to an injury-time Pamela Mackey point. Douglas built on that as they dethroned the champions Sarsfields, recording a 1-20 to 3-11 victory. Courcey Rovers overcame the challenge posed by championship debutants Newcestown, who will have been pleased with how the year

went for them. Two first-half goals were crucial to Killeagh as they advanced at the expense of a spirited Ballygarvan side. We had more extra-time drama in the all-city clash between Seandun and Glen Rovers and in the extra time, the Glen Rovers girls showed huge spirit to fashion out a two-point win, 2-18 to 3-13.

And then there were eight and all eyes were on those remaining as the hunt for the title intensified. There was more off-field drama as the first championship game in any code in Cork GAA to be postponed due to a Covid test saw the Glen Rovers-Inniscarra game called off due to a player being tested in the Mid-Cork club. The remaining three games went ahead and Courcey Rovers had to fight to the end before getting the upper hand on St Catherine's. Goals were the difference as St Finbarr's hit Killeagh for three to secure a semi-final spot and Douglas had too much strength for Éire Óg. A week later, Glen Rovers and Inniscarra battled it out with Inniscarra edging it by a goal.

The scene was now set for the semi-final. Inniscarra had to call on all their experience before defeating St Finbarr's by 1-11 to 0-11 but it was Courcey Rovers who set the weekend alight with a stunning performance that saw them overcome Douglas by 2-15 to 2-5 to set up a repeat of the 2018 final.

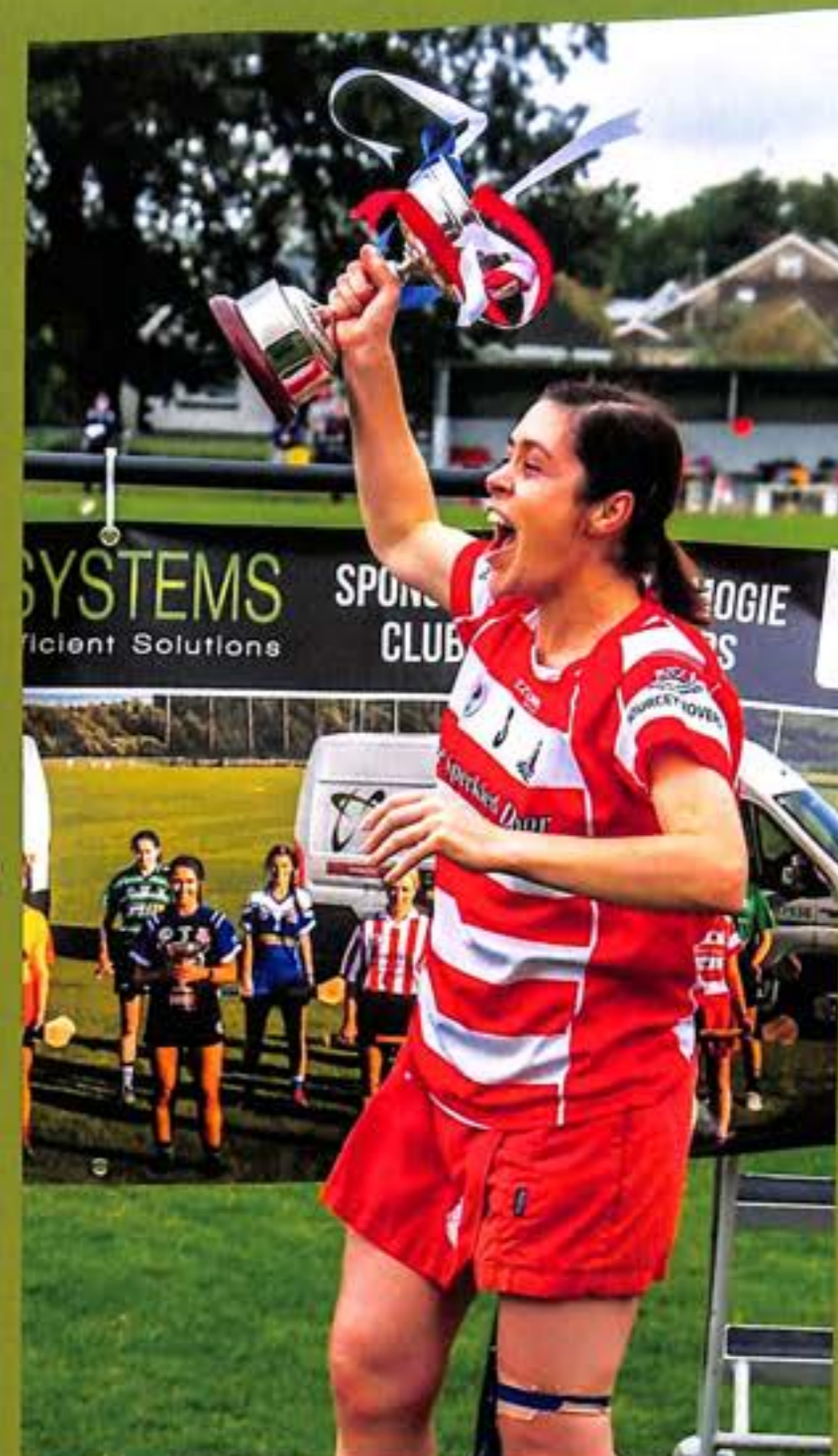
County finals usually draw massive crowds but this was a surreal experience as both clubs had just a small amount of supporters due to Covid restrictions but the county board went all out to make it a special day and with the game live-streamed, it brought the final to those at home and what a day it proved to be for Courcey Rovers.

After 21 years playing senior camogie, they won their first senior championship in style. Trailing by five points after 13 minutes and having yet to score, things were not looking great but a brilliant spell saw them turn the game around to lead by 2-8 to 0-6 at half time. All over the field, they were superb and when the excellent Linda Collins stuck for their fifth goal on 52 minutes, they were not going to be denied.

An emotional Karyn Keohane accepted the senior championship trophy to tremendous scenes of jubilation having served the club down through the years with huge determination and she could not contain her delight: "I'm honoured and privileged to captain my club and to lead this fantastic group of girls to our first senior championship title is something I will always cherish," she said.

"This win is just not about today, it's about years and years of hard work and dedication by so many people to promote and keep camogie alive in our area. There are so many people I could mention, but this win is for every person who has worn the Courcey jersey. It's a dream come through to see our club go onto the Cork roll of honour to join the names of all the great clubs who have won the title and we are really thrilled to have finally got over that line."

Fiona Keating, who gave a tremendous display, notching up 3-2, was named as The Echo PPlayer of the Match, an accolade well-deserved.



Karyn Keohane, Courcey Rovers winning captain.



Photo: Trevor Patchet

Photo: Trevor Patchet

**Intermediate**

Twelve teams battled it out for the intermediate title and again we had some exciting contests. In round one, Blackrock, Aghabullogue, Enniskeane and Fr O'Neills signalled huge intent as they confidently overcame the challenges posed by Valley Rovers, Watergrashill, Ballyhea and Na Piarsaigh respectively, while Carrigaline and Brian Dillons edged close contests with Kilbrittain/Timoleague and Clonakilty.

Round two saw a nail-biting clash as Ballyhea knocked out Valley Rovers by 2-11 to 2-10. Likewise, Kilbrittain/Timoleague had two points to spare over Na Piarsaigh as Watergrashill knocked out Clonakilty.

Nine teams remained in contention, with Ballyhea and Watergrashill meeting in the only round-three game where Ballyhea emerged as victors to book their quarter-final spot. Fr O'Neills' ability to grab goals was important as they recorded a 4-7 to 0-6 victory over Kilbrittain/Timoleague and Aghabullogue looked impressive as they got the upper hand on Carrigaline. Elsewhere, in an exciting high-scoring contest, Enniskeane had two points to spare over Blackrock.

The semi-finals draw pitted two of the favourites against each other with Enniskeane lining up to take on Fr O'Neills and in this clash Enniskeane had to call on all their reserves before booking a place in the final. Aghabullogue had too much strength for Ballyhea, who, despite losing out, would have been pleased with the year, given they were making their intermediate debut.

Enniskeane put the heartache of losing last year's final behind them as the wait to be crowned champions was ended. Aghabullogue made the better start and settled into the momentum of the game but Enniskeane rallied and took control. All through, Aghabullogue applied huge pressure and they cut the deficit to ensure Enniskeane had a few nervous closing minutes but with Orla Cronin leading the way they thwarted the Coachford side's rally to ensure the title was secured. Orla Cronin was named Evening Echo Player of the Match after leading the way for her club with a superb display as she notched 13 points of their tally.



The Echo Player of the Match in the SE Systems Senior B final, Leah Holroyd of Coachford, is presented with her trophy by Lisa Golden, vice-

**Junior**

Newtownshandrum defeated Tractor to take the SE Systems Junior A title and Castlelyons atoned for last season's final defeat as they overcame Inniscarra to take the junior B title. It was third-time lucky for Aghada as they banished the ghosts of losing two previous finals to take the junior C championship, overcoming Kilbree. Cloughduv took the junior second teams title with a win over Éire Óg and Rockban defeated Dungourney to take the 13-a-side title.

**Underage**

Despite the difficult task of getting underage games up and running, the juvenile committee worked hard to ensure championships were played. The divisions took over the running of the U12 competitions with the juvenile committee working to get the U14 and U16 championships played. Everything was running smoothly and with one big weekend to go, all finals were on scheduled to be completed but level-five restrictions ensured these were not played and it will now possibly be 2021 before there will be completed.

At U14 level, Sarsfields took the premier title, defeating Éire Óg. In U14A, the combination of Fr O'Neills and Youghal proved too strong for Enniskeane and in U14C, Kinsale were crowned county champions, defeating Kilworth. The U14 premier plate was won by Ballinora as they overcame Clonakilty, Middleton beat Ballinhasig to take the A plate and Bandon defeated St Vincent's in the C plate final. Just one U16 final was played before level-five restrictions stopped games and in the U16C final, Bandon defeated Kinsale.

While it not may have been the year that was planned, camogie clubs all over the county were just happy to be able to get out and play and huge credit to all as they worked hard to ensure the safety of their players, mentors and officials while enjoying championship action at all levels.

Let's hope 2021 bring plenty of camogie for us to all enjoy.



Marian Graham of the Camogie Association presents Goldiste an Chroí Naofa captain Emera Murphy with the Tesco Senior D Colleges All-Ireland trophy.



St Mary's MS, Mallow, Tesco All-Ireland Senior B winners.



Aghada: winners of the SE Systems Junior C Championship



Mairiad Donovan, registrar of Cork Camogie Board, presents the Premier U14 championship trophy to Anna Nestor, captain of Sarsfields.



Celebrations for Kinsale after winning the U14C Championship.

# Mike Boland, Karyn Keohane and Fiona Keating share their thoughts and memories on Courcey Rovers' historic first Cork senior camogie championship success



Courcey Rovers celebrate their sensational county senior camogie championship final win against Inniscarra in September.

## Courceys hit top spot

BY GER MCCARTHY

NOTHING beats your first time, just ask Courcey Rovers. The Ballinspittle-based club won their first-ever SE Systems Cork senior county camogie title in 2020 following a 5-12 to 1-12 win over Inniscarra.

Twenty-one years on the road at senior level, finally Rovers achieved their ultimate goal.

In doing so, Courceys delivered some badly-needed happiness to the parishes of Ballinspittle and Ballinadee during a year dominated by constant global pandemic headlines.

Key to that success was the positive rapport between players and management. Mike Boland has been involved with coaching Courcey Rovers for close to four years. In his first 12 months, they won a league trophy and by the end of his second season in 2018, reached a county final only to lose to a battle-hardened Inniscarra.

According to Boland, the way Rovers bounced back from that Inniscarra defeat two years ago and reached their holy grail is what makes this group special.

'This is a special group of players but two years ago really hurt,' Boland said.

'They were very young and inexperienced back then so to have come back from that and won a first senior county is unbelievable. These girls have been through a lot over the last three years, but it's stronger and stronger they have gotten. Something was different this year. It still hasn't really sunk in yet, even though it is only a cou-

**'They give you everything they have got and if you want something extra, they give you more. That's what makes this group special' – Mike Boland, Courcey Rovers manager**

ple of months ago. We haven't had time to digest the enormity of it. It is special, winning your first county senior is always special. This year, thank God, we got over the line. You ask any of the girls to do something and they do it.'

A dedicated management team left no stone unturned when it came to their preparation. That commitment was central to delivering the club's maiden senior title.

'There was a lot of work done behind the scenes that people didn't see,' Boland added.

'Shirley Moloney did a huge amount of work with the girls using Zoom during the lockdown. We brought extra people in, including Martin Enright to help with the strength and conditioning once it was safe to return to training.

'Mark O'Sullivan (aka 'Fanta') helped with the girls' technique and we also had Kevin Hannon and Joey Gallagher who were great motivators. Nuala O'Reilly and Rebecca Crowley did massive work for us too. In all, we had about nine people on the management team. The success the players enjoyed was just as special for us.'

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For team captain Karyn Keohane, the honour of lifting the

club's first senior camogie title was a proud moment.

'It was a huge honour to be named captain at the start of the year and to lead the team to our first county senior title is the stuff dreams are made of,' Keohane said.

'We slowly built momentum in every match. One big difference in this championship was that no head dropped if we ever went behind. There was no beating us and we didn't panic at any stage, we kept driving on.

'Confidence grew and we had different players taking their scores rather than relying on one individual. Linda Collins, Jacinta Crowley, Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy are all capable of getting scores for us now. We had more options in our forward line and off the bench this year.'

Keohane made sure she and her players used the experience of losing a previous county final in 2018 as a motivating factor in 2020. That proved an astute move.

'We talked a lot about bottling the hurt and not the occasion this year,' Keohane added.

'Everyone put their minds to the ultimate goal. We had that extra bond from all the Zoom sessions we did during the lockdown. Having the Cork girls at every training session

and all our challenge matches was huge too. That really helped the team grow and develop as a unit. It drove us and encouraged everyone on the team to step up and increase their standards.'

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Few Courcey Rovers players experienced a 24-month period quite like Fiona Keating. The rising inter-county dual star achieved unprecedented success with her division (West Cork), county and school (Kinsale-Community School) on a scale not previously seen before helping her local camogie club make history. You would think scoring 3-2 in your club's senior county final victory would be Keating's lasting memory of the past year. Not so, for the versatile Cork star.

'Winning a county final with Courcey Rovers was unreal,' Keating said. 'Winning a county senior title with the girls you started school with when you were five or six years old and played alongside all the way up through the underage ranks is something you dream of.'

'For me, our homecoming celebrations in Ballinadee and Ballinspittle are my most cherished memories. Being greeted by bonfires and people out at their doors celebrating, because they had to stay at home due to Covid, are memories I will have for the rest of my life.'

'I'm working in Centra in Ballinspittle and, to this day, some of the elderly members of the parish are still coming up and saying how much winning the

county meant to them, especially with the pandemic. It is only then that it hits you what a big deal winning the county was.'

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We will leave the final words of an historic year for the Ballinspittle and Ballinadee side to Mike Boland. Managing and coaching a large squad to a county title had its expected ups than downs. Yet, Courcey Rovers' resilience and sheer bloody-mindedness shone through to make sure they brought home a first senior crown 21 years after joining the top tier.

'It doesn't matter what grade you are involved in, there are always headaches and little things to sort out,' Boland said. 'In fairness, I have always said it since I first got involved with Courcey Rovers four years ago. The one thing you want out of a team, more than anything else, is to give you a chance of winning silverware at the end of the year. You want to be a

and fighting for silverware. I've always said about this particular group, they always give you a chance. You deal with the early teething problems, hiccups and move on.

'The bottom line is that no-

one is bigger than the team. No one is bigger than the club. We are all in this together. I am here four years now and these girls are very special. I'm absolutely mad about them. I've told the girls many times before how I feel about them. They give you everything they have got and if you want something extra, they give you more. That's what makes this group special.'

**Courcey Rovers' rising star Fiona Keating scored a hat-trick of goals in the county final.**





Mairead Donovan is the new chair of the Cork Camogie Board. Here the Ballincollig club woman presents the Premier U14 trophy to Anna Nestor, captain of Sarsfields.

## Mairead Donovan steps into the top role of Cork camogie

THERE are changes at the top table of Cork camogie.

Long-serving chair Mary McSweeney and vice-chair Sheila Golden handed over the reins to outgoing registrar Mairead Donovan, who assumes the role of chairwoman with Rachel Crean taking on the vice-chair role. Darina Foley is now registrar while Louise Weldon is the board's new PRO.

Mairead Donovan from the Ballincollig club is an experienced administrator having served in various roles with both club and county. She brings a wealth of knowledge to the role of chairperson of the Cork Camogie Board and is a very capable official.

A member of the Ballincollig club who she has served with pride on and off the playing fields, Mairead has been involved in the club since its inception in 1974 when her late mother Lily O'Sullivan, Nell Hennigan and Fr Kieran Twomey got camogie up and running for the young girls in the area. Little did they think all those years ago that one of their members would one day go on to lead the county board.

She has excelled as a player, trainer and officer for the club for the past 44 years, where she served in various roles including club chairwoman, a role she held until stepping down in 2012.

Coming from a family steeped in all things GAA her late father Con O'Sullivan was a hard-working official with the Ballincollig GAA club and Bord na nÓg.

Mairead played in the club's first underage team and went on to line out with the first adult team too, and continued to do so for many years. She held the position of club treasurer and PRO before taking on the role of chair where she guided the club through a huge growth curve as they saw a doubling in size of players, mentors and members.

The club grew from being a junior club with approximately four underage teams to the senior ranks with at least 12 active teams. She had the honour of seeing them achieved success winning the junior A and senior B county championships in successive years.

Not alone has Mairead served her club with great enthusiasm she also served as an officer of the Cork County Board and Cork juvenile board, from 1982 to 1984 she

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

held the position of county treasurer and served as an officer in those years with her late mother Lily who was county registrar.

She was appointed as a development officer in 2011 to steer the Go Games ethos in underage camogie throughout the county, this involved organizing a structured programme of games for seventy clubs at U8, U9, U10 and U12 age groups.

As well as organising the games she organised refereeing courses for young girls to learn how to referee the Go Games. As the development officer, Mairead was also instrumental in helping set up new under age camogie clubs as she arranged start up equipment, funding and education courses for the mentors in these new clubs who are now flourishing.

In recent years she took on the role of registrar and over the last two years headed up a juvenile committee which successfully oversaw the organizing of underage league and championships.

Last year, she was elected as incoming chair which is a stepping stone to taking over the role as next chairperson the following year. Despite Cork camogie being unable to hold a convention Mairead formally assumed the role virtually as the 2020 season drew to its conclusion recently.

She is passionate about spreading the game to all corners of the county through her work at county level has seen her always available for fundraising, gate collections at matches, and supporting various county teams at all levels she has always shown total commitment to camogie with her club and county. She simply has a genuine love of the game and an enduring wish that all players, parents and trainers who take part enjoy themselves and learn about the game of camogie.

I have been privileged to have worked closely with her on various committees, down through the years, she is a hard-working, genuine person and both Linda Mellerick and I are looking forward to working closely with Mairead and her team as we all continue to promote Cork camogie to the highest levels



Best seat in the house, as residents on Castle Road watch Glen Rovers and Sarsfields.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# Another push for the Punch



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

I THINK it's fair to say that every GAA player across all codes thoroughly enjoyed the split club and inter-county season this year and if there are any positive at all to come out of the year that was 2020 it was that Covid-19 forced organisations down that path.

Next season will take on the same format in hurling and football with county first this time around. While there are draft camogie fixtures circulating showing no split season there is nothing official on that front yet so we'll hold our counsel until we are officially informed.

I hope we too continue to have a split season. Maybe to run our championships in reverse format to the men would be a good option from a pitch availability and viewership point of view.

Camogie clubs have been pushed to the back with an excess of intercounty fixtures over the past number of years and that needs to change.

You could see the enjoyment intercounty players got from fully committing to their clubs and I thought we had a much better 2020 championship for it.

In addition, all players knew well in advance when their games were being played. Clubs were aware that all games would go to extra time, except for the semi-finals and finals.

All games had to finish on the day which meant we didn't have fixtures piling up.

And Castle Road is such a magnificent pitch that it coped very well with the battering it got week-in and week-out. It was also great to have the games played in summer weather. Of course, on the flip side of that inter-county players got the short straw of the seasons for their championship.

Once again we have new county champions in Courcey Rovers.

From the start, they impressed and



Courcey Rovers' Saoirse McCarthy is tackled by Douglas' Mairead Mulrooney.

were thoroughly deserving of the title. You sometimes need a bit of luck to get over the line in championship games but Courceys didn't need it. They had strong wins in all games.

Some clubs got an extra game in round four and that was a benefit before heading into a quarter-final.

For the likes of Éire Óg recently back competing at senior level they would have welcomed the games. As it turned out they went from an opening round win straight to a quarter-final, where to their credit, they did well against Douglas.

Newcestown in their first year senior had three good games.

A heavy first round defeat to Killeagh gave them a backdoor path where they enjoyed a strong victory over Imokilly before losing in round four to champions Courcey Rovers.

All in all, they'll be happy with how their first season played out for them.

2019 champions Sarsfields seemed to struggle from the outset in 2020.

They had an opening round defeat to Glen Rovers and while defeating Cloughduv in the losers round lost out to Douglas after extra time in round four.

Emer Fennell was a huge loss, not only for her strength and scoring prowess but for her leadership qualities and Sars need a spread of those qualities in 2021 to take another title.

Inniscarra didn't hit the form of recent years in any of their games and that's no surprise.

A lot of that team are on the go since their first senior championship title win in 2010 and the bite was gone.

Niamh McCarthy was a big loss but come final day I don't think there was anything going to stop Rovers from taking their first title.

There is still plenty of a backbone in the Inniscarra squad to come again where they'll need an injection of four or five strong underage players to come through.

Glen Rovers will be disappointed with their performance against Inniscarra in the quarter-final while St Finbarr's were oh so close to reaching their first final since 2008.

They need more scoring forwards to do so.

2021 is a new season which we look forward to it with any number of clubs again capable of taking the Punch Cup home.

# Young Imokilly women show the hunger to compete at top

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman



The Imokilly senior team that participated in the SE Systems senior camogie championship.

LIKE all the other divisions Imokilly were geared up and ready to go for a busy 2020 season but unfortunately Covid 19 put paid to many of their plans but never the less there were many positives during the season. Under the guidance of Chairman Eoin Kennedy, Secretary Lorraine O'Connell, treasurer, Vincent Cashman, PRO Linda Cashman and committee members Maria Dinan, Pat Mellerick, and Ger McCarthy they decided to field a senior team to participate in the county championship. Many years ago Imokilly would have graced the championship with the senior county title finding a home in the barony of Imokilly in 1947 for the first time. They went on to record five in a row of titles from 1972 to 1976 with superb teams that features inter-county stars Marie Costine, Marion Sweeney, Mary O'Leary and Pat Moloney. With many of their clubs gaining senior status the strength of the division was weakened and they had to wait again until 1996 to contest a final when they lost out

to Glen Rovers. They were back again in 2006 but lost out to St Finbarr's and in 2010 they fell at the hand of Iniscarra in a thrilling final. With the emergence of new clubs within the division and clubs such as Aghada and Midleton emerging as strongholds once again the decision was made to contest the championship in 2020. This was a huge challenge but there was huge determination and a young group of players under the guidance of a deter-

mined management team and to their credit they gave everything as they stepped out to represent their division. With a lot of their panel just out of minor grade they were a young sides but they showed huge belief and passion, they met Seandun in their opening game and lost out but it was onto the losers round where they met Newcestown who were making a return to the senior grad having won the Intermediate Championship in 2019. In a tough battle Newcestown

came out on top but no doubt the experience will have stood to all who lined out with the divisional. For the first time in a number of years Imokilly re-introduced an U11 League to be run in conjunction with their U12, U10s and Under 8's competitions and this was a testament to the growing numbers in all clubs in East Cork and it was excellent to see all the clubs fielding teams in most of age groups. Some clubs even managed to run a few U6 games in the short

gap between lockdowns and these were something that was enjoyed by the very young participants. Unfortunately things were running well when the Covid situation worsened and so the final days and blitzes had to be put on hold. This was a huge disappointment for all the clubs who had worked so hard keeping everybody safe whilst getting their games played on time but the division is hoping that they will be in a position to roll out their final and get them all

played when restrictions are lifted and before 2021 competitions get under way. Due to the unprecedented situation the divisions U15 and U13 teams found themselves at the wrong end of lockdown, the Under 15 team were lucky as they did get to play a few games against their divisional counterparts while the U13 team had just one game. Despite the difficult circumstances the enthusiasm was very evident and numbers at training were exceptional for both teams. Huge credit must go to each and every club who turned a very difficult situation into one of safety and fun for all the young players in the division. The hard work that was done in every club with return to play protocols was very evident and all worked with their club's Covid supervision and ensured all training sessions were held in safe playing pods. The effort put in not just in Imokilly but in all the clubs and divisions through the county exceptional to say the least and not to be underestimated. The long hours put in by officials before a ball was struck was immense as they ensured the safety of their players and mentors and it was a job well done by all.



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

SUCH is our history in camogie in Cork at senior level that we expect to win All-Irelands every year.

At the very least we expect to be in the last two and that's why losing last year's All-Ireland semi-final to Kilkenny was disappointing.

For the second year in a row Cork fell at the semi-final stage but it's not all doom and gloom; Cork will still be in the top three in 2021. Last year was disappointing for them in many ways in that they were in prime position to win the league before the competition was cancelled.

They had two postponed games due to bad weather to both Offaly and Clare and then Covid-19 kicked in.

Cork would have expected to win those two games, in fact they only needed to beat Offaly to qualify, and their final opponents would have been Tipperary.

Cork, despite the introduction of a few new players, at that point would have been favourites to win the league but I think the biggest regret was not having those three games as a run in to the championships ructions and issues due to the pandemic.

Cork weren't too far away in both semi-finals. In 2019 they lost by a point to eventual champions Galway. Their short passing game caught them as they couldn't shake Galway's intensity and were overturned many times.

Last year it was by two points to eventual champions Kilkenny in a game they had more than enough possession to win. Cork started that game so brightly and played it fast for the opening 20 minutes or so. They played direct, took scores from distance and raced into a 1-3 to no score lead. But Kilkenny started to settle and Cork's pattern changed.

When Orla Cronin and Chloe Sigerson were scoring from out around the 40 Cork were well in control of the game. When deliveries started to filter inside they struggled. Kilkenny's full back line excelled.

So, it's not as if everything needs to change but some things should.

## Cork are still in top three

We don't have the physique to compete for 50/50 balls in a lot of positions.

We have speed and we need to capitalise on that. Cork's management would feel that their forward division isn't winning enough long deliveries in, hence their original short passing style.

As mentioned they moved away from that in the first 20 minutes against Kilkenny and scoring from out around the 40 is good but too few are doing it and a way must be found to get inside their line in particular winning ball because you can't expect to win if one of your lines is ef-

fectively taken out of the game.

I think Tipperary could have a bigger say this year. While still having a fair bit to do in terms of conditioning they lined out in the semi-final without Aishling Moloney and Nicole Walsh, two huge players.

They lost the semi-final to Galway by six points and should those players figure in 2021 they'll be there or thereabouts.

This new year is starting as unpredictably as last March. In line with the GAA, the camogie association has issued advice to clubs and counties for activities that are permissible and not permissible in 2021 until



Cork's Meabh Cahalane after the game against Kilkenny. Picture: ©INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

further notice.

All collective 'on field' camogie activities (training and competitive) are suspended until further notice.

GAA club grounds must stay closed and obviously club games are not permitted.

For inter-county the specific guidelines are that at present, no adult intercounty collective/ group camogie training is permitted.

Given the current growth rates in virus transmission in both jurisdictions, the date for adult inter-county resumption of training is under review. Counties will be informed as soon as there is any change to this —

to confirm a return to collective training date.

For the moment, senior intercounty players may train on an individual basis only.

No training is currently permitted for any other intercounty panels (e.g. minor/under 16/development Squads).

It's widely known that some counties across all codes were breaking the guidelines in 2020 to either get a head start or because they were afraid that the opposition were getting a head start on them.

It's crucial now that management and players follow them 100%.

# 'It was the year female athletes had the confidence to speak up about issues in their sport and society'

Monday's Examiner Sport podcast focuses on women's sport. As part of a wide-ranging discussion on progress and problems and the impact of the 20x20 campaign, our guests select a highlight of 2020 and wishes for women's sport in 2021.

## Louise Galvin

(Ladies footballer, Sevens rugby international, basketball. Qualified physiotherapist).

### MY HIGHLIGHT

It was one of the lockdown days when sport was back up and running and myself and my husband watched England-France in rugby, Armagh-Mayo in football, and the Katie Taylor fight. All ladies sport, all brilliant. International, amateur, team sport, individual sport. And at the end of the day, he turned to me and said, 'that was brilliant'. It was all on the TV, we could see it. If you build it, they will come and I went to bed thinking we're really getting places, there was such talent on display. And obviously, Katie Taylor winning again, a national treasure, and the pride associated with that.

### MY WISH

Obviously, funding for sport in general will be down for obvious reasons and I hope that female sport doesn't suffer more than male sport because of that, or that we don't lose some of the promises that were in place. For example, in World Rugby a huge drive has been in investing in the women's game. Obviously, World Rugby are going to be running into trouble, because of games cancelled, bums on seats not being there, and I hope that doesn't fall back on the women's game specifically. And the same in all sports. My wish is we don't see a step back because of the pandemic.

## Cliona Foley

(Sportswriter)

### MY HIGHLIGHT

One of the things that really encouraged me this year was athletes speaking out. The WNBA in American had a new collective bargaining agreement, it includes brilliant maternity cover, all kinds of things they weren't entitled to before. But also they were one of the first organisations to come out on Black Lives Matter, and wore Breonna Taylor's name on the back of every team jersey. Naomi Osaka was another example, Nadia Power and Gina Akpe Moses on the racism issue. Amy O'Connor speaking up, Aishling Moloney speaking up, female athletes having the confidence to speak up about issues in their sport and society. That really encouraged me and the fact they got good coverage for it and were rightly respected for it.

### MY WISH

I'm really encouraged by a story coming out of American soccer. The team coming into the NWSL, probably in 2022. At the moment the name is Angel City, a women's soccer team playing out of Los Angeles. Natalie Portman is involved, a lot of tech and online people, who have decided that women's football is worth investing in. Serena Williams is a shareholder, and her daughter, possibly the youngest shareholder in a pro team. Some actresses as well. It's really interesting, the crossover between art and sport and industry. When you get people that see potential for a women's team and are willing to invest in it, that's what women's sport needs going forward.

## Therese O'Callaghan

(Irish Examiner GAA writer, All-Ireland Camogie winner)

### MY HIGHLIGHT

Seeing sport being played. The months where we had no live sport made us all realise how much a part of our life sport is. For all age brackets, but particularly for older people. Another highlight was the streaming of matches. I thought the fun at a lot of club matches, where they were done locally, was great, the craic and the excitement. And those videos were played over and over. What the GAA did within their communities as well, when there was no sport, going into pharmacies and collecting prescriptions, bringing food to people.

### MY WISH

That women's sport keeps going in the right direction, but that it keeps growing on merit and we don't have to be constantly pushing it. One of the frustrations is how there is always pressure on a women's game to be a good spectacle. Camogie was my sport and I still feel nervous at games, particularly a final, that it's going to be one-sided or it's not going to be a spectacle, because this is our showcase. I feel under pressure watching women's games that it has to be a spectacle so people will talk positively about it. That doesn't happen in men's games.

## Eoghan Cormican

(Irish Examiner staff writer)

### MY HIGHLIGHT

It was fantastic to be able to watch the Cork camogie final on live stream, and the Galway final. I rang my sister that evening specifically to talk about the Galway final. I was in Cork, she was in Galway, that just never would have happened before. That's one of the positives to come out of Covid. Then there was the Ireland-Ukraine soccer international. The result was a disaster, but the day of the game, I haven't seen a female game to draw that much attention.

### MY WISH

Maybe it's a good thing that some of the lows happened, Cork-Galway, what happened in Cahir with the dual players. Maybe a line has been drawn in the sand and we will never go back. Going forward, just incremental improvement. It sounds very simple, but that should be the goal. We always look at the ladies football final crowd and it jumps every year. I'd be very much for just incremental improvement in all areas, in terms of participation, and media coverage. Steady as she goes. Others mightn't like that, but I think it's the best path forward.

## Linda Collins to lead the Cork senior camogie team

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

CORK County camogie champions Courcey Rovers have named Linda Collins as Cork senior captain for the 2021 season.

The nifty corner forward will lead the county's challenge to bring the O'Duffy Cup back to Leeside for the first time since 2018.

Collins first came to prominence as a young player with Courcey's underage teams and her potential was quickly spotted as she graduated to the Cork under 16 and then the minor's squads.

She quickly became a player to keep an eye on.

Fast to the ball her reaction time is superb and her movement when in possessions makes her a handful for any defender.

She has a wonderful eye for goal and once in possession is very hard to stop moving at lightning speed.

She has a deceivingly fast and skilful burst of speed.

Linda is no stranger to All-Ireland finals having played in minor and intermediate deciders before winning her first senior medal in 2018 as Cork won in dramatic circumstances as an injury-time Orla Cotter free proved the winner.

Linda is teaching in Summercove National School and helped her club Courcey Rovers take their first senior county title contributing 1-5 of her sides tally as they brushed aside the challenge of Inniscarra to be crowned champions for the first time in their twenty one year history.

She began her camogie career in Ballinaspittle National school where along with most of her classmates she went on to join the local camogie club.

Despite the family having no real connections in the game Linda, her sister Theresa and brother Liam became deeply involved in playing with the club and their mum Geraldine is now also very much involved in the camogie club and is a member of the club's committee and has also acted as a delegate to the county board.

Courcey Rovers mentors Kevin Hannon said they were delighted to put the name of Linda Collins forward as captain of Cork.

"We are delighted to nominate Linda as captain of the Cork senior team for 2021," Hannon said.

"It is a huge honour for our club as county champions and we wish her and the team well in the season ahead.

"She will do a great job for the team."

## Weldon is new PRO of camogie board

CAMOGIE

■ John Bohane

LOUISE WELDON has been appointed as the new PRO for the Cork Camogie Board.

The Blackrock club member is looking forward to her new role.

"I am looking forward to starting. I am fortunate there is a great committee in place which will be a big help.

"I have worked with a good few of them down in recent years which is also very beneficial. The grassroots and the structures are very strong in Cork. There is also great support from the clubs throughout the county which is a great help.

"This ensures Cork camogie is so strong and successful," said the county board official.

Louise brings a wealth of experience to her new administrative role. Louise previously served on the Cork Juvenile Board.

She has also served as a PRO for Blackrock and she was formerly a PRO and secretary with Seandun.

Louise who has always been a keen photographer is determined to bring more exposure to camogie.

"I always turn up at matches and start snapping away. The players and their parents love seeing the pictures of them in camogie action.

"It gives the players and their clubs a sense of identity and it raises their profile.

"It is creating awareness and it gives them a platform. It is very important that the girls are out there and they are visible.

"They deserve the recognition. Promoting the sport and getting it out there is key.

"We have so many talented players within the county and we need to keep promoting it. Another aspiration of mine is to ensure we keep as many girls playing sport as possible. "It is crucial to keep kids playing sport. They need to have a focus."

Ballincollig club official Mairead Donovan has been appointed the new chair of the Cork Camogie Board.

Louise is full of praise for the experienced administrator.

"She will be excellent. Mairead reminds me of Rose Malone. She has a wealth of knowledge and she will bring great energy, expertise and drive to her new role."

The 20x20 concept which was designed to create a more inclusive and healthier Ireland has proved a huge success since it was initiated.

Louise is full of praise for the many role models within Cork Camogie who have helped entice so many players to take up playing camogie.

"We are so fortunate to have so many role models. Last year's captain Amy O'Connor is a brilliant player and ambassador for the sport. Gemma O'Connor is another inspiration."







Mike Boland, Michael Walsh and Jerry Wallace after the All-Ireland Minor final 2017.

## Familiar and experienced look to minor and U16 management teams

DESPITE the on-going uncertainty surrounding fixtures and schedules of competitions at all levels, the Cork Camogie Board recently ratified their selections committees for the Cork minor and U16 teams and it comes as no surprise to see both Jerry Wallace and Donie Daly continue in their roles.

Both were involved with their respective sides in 2020 and it was a hugely disappointing season for both.

The cancellation of all games because of the continuing health restrictions came as a huge disappointment to the Cork under 16 camp that were focused and ready for a Munster final against Waterford when the first round of restrictions were implemented just days before the final.

The U16 championship was to take place in July but this didn't even get started, the hope was there that the provincial final would have been played and given now that almost a year has passed it is hard to see this happening.

It was a slightly different scenario with the minor side, they had played two rounds of championship when restrictions came into force, we then had the Camogie Association making the strange decision not to allow the competition to be finished when restrictions were lifted as they decided to cancel the minor championship which was half way completed and give the go ahead to the U16 championship to begin.

As it worked out this did not happen with round two restrictions coming into force as the under 16 was about to get under way.

The Association had decided to allow the minor provincial competitions to be completed and Cork were looking forward to a Munster final but this also fell by the way side.

As with the Munster under 16 competitions it is now looking as if the minor final for 2020 may never be played. What a pity if all of these players are to lose out on a chance to win a provincial championship but such are the times we now find ourselves living in.

Jerry Wallace is no stranger to GAA followers, as manager of Cork minor team in 2018 he guided them to the counties first ever All-Ireland Minor title with a 0-18 to 1-11 victory over Galway.

In 2019 he repeated the feat

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

as Cork overcame Clare with an impressive 3-15 to 2-12 victory and it was all systems go for three in a row in 2020 until Covid put paid to it all.

A hugely respected official Jerry formerly managed the Antrim senior hurling team, the Middleton native was physical trainer with the Cork senior hurling team that won back-to-back All-Ireland titles in 2004 and 2005.

He went on to work with both the Antrim and Limerick senior hurling teams as well as being involved with Kerry club Ballyduff where he led them to back-to-back county titles in 2010 and 2011.

He managed and coached his club Midleton senior hurling team from 2015 to 2017 where he successfully guided them to win the Senior Hurling League in 2015. He also enjoyed a spell with Glynn-Barn-town of Wexford in 2017.

Jerry will be joined by Michael Boland who will coach the side, the Carrigtwohill native lead Courcy Rovers to their first senior camogie title in 2020, Mark O'Sullivan from Midleton, Michael Walsh Midleton, Sonya Walsh Glen Rovers and Orla Hallihan Castlelyons make up his back room team with Louise Weldon county PRO as county board liaison officer.

2021 will be the fourth season for Daly to be involved with the Cork U16s as side he guided to All-Ireland honours in 2019 he first got involved at inter county level in 2016 when he was approached to take charge of the Cork Juniors team a team that went on to take the Munster title.

His is joined on his back room team by selectors John Moloney from Newtownshandrum, Mossie O' Sullivan, Ballincollig, Conor Desmond from Sarsfields, Michelle Gould St Vincent's and Steven O'Mahony who has been the strength and conditioning coach with the side.

They will be joined in a liaison capacity by the county board registrar Darina Foley from the Midleton club.

Whilst the Senior and Intermediate managements teams are as yet not finalised or ratified it is widely anticipated that both Paudie Murray and Mark Mc McCarthy will be continuing in their respective roles with this to be clarified and then ratified by the board in the coming weeks.



Cork camogie manager, Paudie Murray, wants to continue in the job.

Picture: Eddie O'Hara

# Murray wants to stay on



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

PAUDIE Murray has informed the Cork County Camogie Board that he is prepared to stay as senior manager for 2021.

The management are yet to be ratified by the board. Matters are slower this year, because of Covid-19.

Typically, Cork would be training now, but group activity is on hold, with players training alone. Murray has indicated that if ratified, he will be reviewing his panel for 2021. We are also still waiting for the inter-county fixtures to be finalised.

There have been a number of changes to the camogie board for 2021, some because of term limits.

Mary McSweeney stepped down as chairperson. She did a tremendous job and a knowledgeable replacement has been found in Ballincollig's Mairéad O'Donovan. Mary will remain as a member of GPC and will, no doubt, still be a regular presence at Castle Road.

Vice-chair is Ballinora's Rachel Wycherley, Tracey Sheehan remains as secretary, and Marian McCarthy as treasurer. Midleton's Darina Foley is registrar, Esther O'Leary continues as development officer, and Blackrock's Louise Weldon is the new PRO.

It's a good mix of board regulars and additions, signalling continuity as well as new ideas. Louise intends to promote well-being and mental-health awareness, particularly among younger players, and, in conjunction with Blackbee and Jigsaw Cork, will be staging a 5k run on the last weekend of February. The 5k will be called Camán Corcaigh and funds raised will be split between Cork Camogie and Jigsaw Cork.

Ann Dalton, Kilkenny's most versatile player over the past 15 seasons, has retired from inter-county camogie. She walks away with two All-Ireland senior titles and six All-Star awards.

Dalton caused the opposition massive



Cork's Chloe Sigerson, with Kilkenny's Ann Dalton and Anna Farrell. Dalton is retiring from the inter-county game.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Gezso

problems regardless of her position, moving from defence to midfield to forward, where she got the important goal for Kilkenny in their All-Ireland semi-final victory over Cork in Páirc Uí Chaoimh. Kilkenny trailed by six points in the opening half, only to be a point ahead at half time, because of Dalton's goal. Dalton, 33 in May, is a huge loss to the Cats, and big boots to fill.

Limerick Camogie have confirmed Knockalney native Pat Ryan as their new inter-county manager.

Ryan is to take charge of the senior and junior teams. His appointment was confirmed at a Limerick County Board meeting on Monday night.

A former hurler who also managed his local Knockalney team, Ryan will bring a wealth of experience to the role. A bank official, when work took Ryan to Belfast, in 2019, he was Antrim senior camogie manager and coach to the Queens University camogie side. When work took Ryan to Co Kerry, from 2013 to 2015, he was manager of senior club side, Causeway, and was involved with the Kerry minor hurlers that won the 2013 All-Ireland MHC B title.

Ryan will look to steady the ship after a somewhat turbulent period for Limerick

camogie, which included nine players from the 2019 panel withdrawing ahead of the 2020 campaign.

Limerick showed promise up to a few years ago, but it all fell asunder. They lost all three of their 2020 championship fixtures. There are a lot of problems, some of which were publicly aired last year.

Relationships have to be rebuilt, primarily between the board and players, and how the players feel they are being treated will have to be addressed. There's a long road ahead, before Limerick get back to the heights of three or four years ago.

I wonder if games will be streamed again this year, even if crowds are permitted to attend. The volume of viewers far exceeded the numbers that attend games in person and streaming brought camogie to a much wider audience.

4,200 were logged in to view the Cork-versus-Wexford group game. You'd be lucky to get 200 to attend in person. Many people tuned in to counties outside of their own and there's certainly scope to continue this service.

People that normally attend games in person will still do so, while many others will view remotely and that can only be a win for the game.

# Murray very determined to complete rebuild of Rebels

## Cork boss to stay in charge of Rebels for tenth consecutive season

BY DENIS HURLEY

WHILE the official ratification won't take place until he has his management team in place, Paudie Murray will be back as Cork camogie manager for 2021, making it a decade in charge.

The need to replenish his off-field set-up is necessitated by the fact that key figures have moved on to the Cork minor hurling and football managements, but Murray sees that as a positive and hopes that it shows prospective newcomers that the experience gained with the camogie team can be valuable.

'I normally go to shake things up anyway and I will be doing it this year,' he says.

'If we look at our management team from last year, Martin O'Brien has a new role as coach of the minor footballers, so he's gone.

'We're delighted for him and wish him well and hope that he has a successful time there. He's in the minor football set-up and on the minor hurling side you have Wesley O'Brien and Niall McCarthy, who were with us too, so they're all positive steps.

'I think it's great. From my own point of view, when I'm going out to look at people now, they can see that there is a pathway there to other things as well. Three people involved in the minor set-ups this year, who have been involved with us before - that has to be positive.'

The year just gone saw Cork knocked out of the All-Ireland championship at the semi-final stage by Kilkenny - the first time since 2010 and 2011 that the Rebels have missed two finals in a row.

However, it wasn't necessarily a difficult decision for Murray - who has guided Cork to four senior All-Irelands during his time at the helm - to stay on.

'It's well-documented at the moment that Cork is going through a rebuilding phase,' he says.

'I was very excited starting out last year with the new players that came in but the Covid hit us and probably killed any momentum that we were start-



**'It would be our third time rebuilding a team that had won an All-Ireland and that is our focus'**  
- Paudie Murray, Cork senior camogie manager

ing to gather at that stage.

'We really needed the summer to bring the younger girls up to speed, but we had little or no time with them. That was a bit of a downer on our side.

'Then, we're back, club championship starts and we're looking at little time to work with them. A lot of things happened and then, as well as that, you had four major injuries leading into the championship.

'You had Gemma O'Connor, who had a punctured lung; Julia White had a fractured kneecap; Saoirse McCarthy tore ligaments in her shoulder and Libby Coppinger tore ligaments in her ankle. If you take all of those things into account, we were fighting an uphill battle.

'From my point of view then, I'm quite determined to rebuild the team. It would be our third time rebuilding a team that had won an All-Ireland and that is our focus.

'I think we're nearly there. We will have changes again this year, no question about it. We're bringing in some young-

er girls and our goal is to leave Cork camogie in a better position compared to where we got it.'

In that regard, is time the most important ingredient?

'I think it is,' Murray says, 'I think you have to be very patient with it.'

'This is our third year involved in this process and you have to be patient. We never put any pressure on the younger girls coming in - we normally say that it can take up to three years for someone to make it.'

'Some make it before that and some don't, but they have to be given time. We've a couple of very good girls coming again this year, so it's key that they take the step and it's key that last year's girls take another step forward again and hopefully that will help us to get to a final this year.'

When that may be, he's still unsure.

'The Camogie Association sent out a draft proposal for the year,' he says, 'and that was similar to the normal fixture pro-



Cork's Ashling Thompson gets away from Michelle Teehan of Kilkenny during last season's All-Ireland senior semi-final that the Cats won in November.

gramme they had in other years.

'It puzzled me, because I just couldn't see how it would work this year. A lot of counties have gone back and express their concerns with it, so we are waiting for a new set of proposals. When that's going to happen, I don't know.

'I think that we have to follow the hurling and football this year and give the clubs a chance in the latter end of the year.'

'I don't know if it's the right option when things go back to normal or not but, in the present circumstances, I don't think you've any other option.'

## Daly to lead U16s for fourth season

CAMOGIE

John Bohane

DONIE DALY has been reappointed manager of the Cork U16 camogie team for the fourth successive season.

The Youghal club man is joined by a very strong backroom team of John Moloney, Mossie O'Sullivan, Conor Desmond, Michelle Gould and Steven O'Mahony. He is looking forward to getting started when restrictions are lifted.

'We are looking forward to getting going again. 2020 was a washout. We beat Tipperary back in March and that was it for the year. In 2019, we won the All-Ireland for the first time in 16 years, while in 2018 we were defeated in the All-Ireland final. There is still a lot of uncertainty which means we won't have our usual trial games. We however watched a lot of club games last September which was very beneficial.'

Daly is delighted with the strength of his backroom team which boasts a nice mix.

'John Moloney, Mossie and I have been together since the very start. We work very well together. We take the sessions together and we know what is required. Conor Desmond was a great addition to our team last year. He has great knowledge.

'Michelle Gould has great experience. She is our goalkicking coach and gets on great with the players. The final piece of our coaching team is Steven O'Mahony who is our strength and conditioning coach. He is great in his role.'

The structures and depth of playing talent within Cork camogie are currently very strong which has enabled various Cork underage teams to enjoy great success in recent years. 'The structures in place are very good. The new additions to the board are very positive. I can see Cork camogie getting stronger under their stewardship.'

'The future is bright. 17 players from last year's U16 squad have now advanced to the minor panel and they will be competing strongly for All-Ireland glory.'

'That all feeds into the intermediate and senior set up. We are going in the right direction. There is great goodwill from all the clubs. There is also great unity which is always important.'

Daly enjoyed a strong hurling career with both Youghal and Grenagh. He is pleased to pass on his extensive coaching knowledge to the Cork U16 camogie players.

'I started off coaching the Grenagh junior ladies camogie team in 2000. I then got involved in coaching various Youghal underage camogie teams. I have mixed coaching with administrative roles ever since with Youghal. I got involved with the Cork Juniors in 2015, before moving to the Cork U16 team. I love coaching. It is nice to work with players keen to improve.'

# The future of West Cork sport is safe with these young stars

## Daire O'Brien

Camogie | Ballinacarriga | 18

ENNISKEANE camogie is riding on the crest of a wave right now, helped by the influx of young talent, including Daire, whose stock is trending upwards. In last year's county intermediate semi-final against Fr O'Neills, when Enniskeane were trailing Daire was moved to full forward and she grabbed two goals to get them back on track – that's no surprise to those who have seen her develop because she has always stood out.

At school level Daire has captained Sacred Heart Clonakilty to numerous county, Munster and All-Ireland titles, including their 2019 All-Ireland junior B success. At club level with Enniskeane she has won titles at U14, U16 and minor, and the 2020 county intermediate title, while she has also represented Cork at various underage levels and is a player the Cork intermediates will surely be looking closely at.

A top-class ball striker, from open play and frees, Daire's best position is probably centre back, though she has played in nearly every other position. She has a great engine, has the ability to turn defence into attack in seconds, and we're told that Daire is often seen at her strongest when games are in the melting pot.

**Did you know?** Daire won a Celtic Ross West Cork Sports Star Youth Award in 2019 after captaining Sacred Heart to an All-Ireland junior camogie title.

## Saoirse McCarthy

Camogie | Ballinspittle | 20



IF 2018 was the year that the young Courcey Rovers forward grabbed headlines with her role in Cork's All-Ireland minor and intermediate camogie title success, then 2020 was another important stepping stone in her camogie story.

Not alone did she start for Cork in the All-Ireland senior championship quarter-final and semi-final, having also played in the earlier national league games against Waterford and Kilkenny, Saoirse also helped fire Courceys to the club's first-ever county senior camogie championship title.

Now the challenge is for the 20-year-old forward to kick on again this year. She has the talent, the determination and the work ethic – and the speedy attacker also knows where the posts. In Courceys' run to county glory last season Saoirse scored in every game apart from the county semi-final and she chipped in with 1-1 in the final against Inniscarra.

Courceys missed her cutting edge when she was injured for their subsequent Munster semi-final defeat against Kilnamona.

**Did you know?** Saoirse scored a first-half goal for Cork against Waterford in their 2020 national league meeting – it was the only goal of the game.

## Fiona Keating

GAA | Ballinspittle | 19

IT'S going to take something special for Fiona to top her 2020 sporting year – but that's what she's aiming to do.

A rising star in Cork GAA, last season she starred for both her club, Courcey Rovers, as they won an historic first county senior camogie championship title and her divisional team, West Cork, who captured their first Cork senior football championship crown. Her importance to both is highlighted by her player-of-the-match showing for Courceys (scoring 3-2) in the camogie decider and her five-goal haul for West Cork in the county football semi-final. It's a big ask but she'd love to repeat the double again in 2021.

At inter-county level Fiona was involved with both the Cork camogie and football senior set-ups, and she got championship minutes under her belt with Paudie Murray's camogie team. She wants to build on that in the year ahead and get more game-time.

Possibly she has a better chance of that with the Cork camogie team, given the competition for forward places in the football set-up right now.

Already we know that Fiona is a player for the big occasion as her GAA CV is packed with player-of-the-match heroics in the big games – and we expect that to continue in both codes.

**Did you know?** Fiona was selected as the 2019 Celtic Ross West Cork Junior Sports Star after winning All-Ireland minor football and camogie titles with Cork in 2019.



## Ciara O'Sullivan

Camogie | Newcestown | 19



HER second cousin is Ireland's fastest woman Phil Healy but Newcestown teen star Ciara is no stranger to the headlines either after her rise to the Cork senior camogie panel last year when she was still 18 years old.

She made her senior debut in a national league game against Waterford in early 2020 and Ciara – the youngest player on the Cork panel for last year's league campaign – wants to build on that breakthrough in the year ahead and force her way into the championship team. The experience of being on the panel last season, and seeing what's needed at the highest level, will stand to her.

A double All-Ireland minor winner (2018 and 2019), and player of the match in the 2019 county intermediate final, the Newcestown forward already has an impressive body of camogie work behind her.

With Newcestown heading into their second year in the senior championship it's the ideal platform for Ciara to test herself and improve her

game, up against the best defenders in the county. Ciara, who is studying in UCC, is dangerous from open play and accurate from placed balls.

**Did you know?** Ciara has a Black Tip belt in taekwondo.



## Hannah Sexton

Road bowling | Timoleague | 18

HANNAH'S road bowling record is, quite simply, phenomenal. This talented Timoleague teen has won her last eight Munster underage finals and has U18 (2), U16 (3), U14 (2) and U12 (1) titles to show, while she is waiting to play the 2020 Munster U18 final having booked her place in the decider before road bowling was suspended late last year. On top of that, last year, in her first campaign at intermediate level Hannah advanced to the last four and she's also hoping to play that score when action resumes this year.

Given it was her first year at intermediate, and she was in action against more experienced and stronger bowlers, three-time All-Ireland champion Hannah looked right at home and she'll be hard to stop at this grade. One of her targets is get to the senior grade in the next few years.

Hannah had also qualified for the Ireland U18 girls' team that was being sent to last year's European Bowling Championships in Germany, but after they were postponed it was decided to open the trials process again. Now that she's overage Hannah will try to qualify on the Irish senior women's team.

On the GAA front, the Kilbrittain/Timoleague camogie player missed out on her last year as a Cork minor in 2020 after the championships were cancelled, but she's set to line out for her club and the Carbery division in their 2021 championship campaigns.

**Did you know?** Hannah won an All-Ireland minor camogie title with Cork in 2019.



Courcey Rovers captain, Karyn Keohane, and Inniscarra captain, Katie O'Mahony, with referee, Cathal McAllister, before the SE Systems senior camogie county final.

# Credit to camogie board for navigating through difficult season

HUGE credit to the Cork Camogie board and their juvenile committee for a season of excellent championship competitions in 2020, despite the pandemic.

With 66 clubs participating, from senior down to the younger brigade, the task facing the board was not easy. They were all set to roll with their league competitions when the first lockdown began. They had to plan ahead.

Championship draws were made and, with the agreement of the intermediate and junior clubs, the format reverted to a back-door competition, where previously these championships had been played on a league basis.

Cork Camogie was again fortunate to have their adult championship competitions sponsored by the SE Systems, with *The Echo* as player-of-the-match sponsors for adult championships. This took a huge burden off the shoulders of the board.

**Senior Championship:** Fourteen clubs and three divisions went into the draw for senior championship, but Carbery withdrew, leaving Seandún and Imokilly to contest round one. Seandún accounted for Imokilly and went into round four; Imokilly went to the losers' round.

Round two threw up a few surprises. Defending champions, Sarsfields, were consigned to the losers' round, as Glen Rovers beat them 0-14 to 1-9. Courcey Rovers brushed aside Cloughdub, Killeagh overcame Newcestown, Éire Óg got the better of Milford, Inniscarra were too strong for Ballincollig, St Finbarr's had four points to spare over Douglas, and St Catherine's defeated Ballygarvan.

The losers battled it out in round three: Ballincollig exited at the hand of Douglas, Newcestown defeated Imokilly, the champions, Sarsfields, defeated Cloughdub, and Ballygarvan ended Milford's campaign.

Twelve teams remained and with four — St Finbarr's, Killeagh, St Catherine's, and Éire Óg — receiving a bye to the quarter finals, eight contested round four. Douglas forced extra time, thanks to an injury-time Pamela Mackey point, and went on to knock out the champions, Sarsfields. Courcey Rovers overcame Newcestown; Killeagh advanced over Ballygarvan.

## CAMOGIE Mary Newman

Extra time saw the Glen Rovers girls edge out Seandún, 2-18 to 3-13.

All eyes now were on the remaining eight, as the hunt for the title intensified. We had drama before a ball was struck, as the first championship game in any code in Cork GAA was postponed because of a Covid-19 test, with the Glen Rovers-versus-Inniscarra game cancelled.

The remaining three games went ahead and Courcey Rovers got the upper hand on St Catherine's. Goals were the difference as St Finbarr's hit Killeagh for three to secure a semi-final spot and Douglas had too much strength for Éire Óg.

A week later, Glen Rovers and Inniscarra battled it out, with Inniscarra edging it by a goal.

Semi-finals time and Inniscarra had to call on all their experience to defeat St Finbarr's. Courcey Rovers set the weekend alight with a stunning performance, defeating Douglas 2-15 to 2-5 to set up a repeat of the 2018 final.

County finals usually draw massive crowds, but both clubs had just a small amount of supporters, because of Covid-19 restrictions. The county board went all out to make it a special day and with the game live-streamed, it brought the final to those at home and what a day it was for Courcey Rovers.

After 21 years of playing senior camogie, they won their first senior championship in style. They trailed by five points after 13 minutes and had yet to score when a brilliant spell saw them turn the game around to lead 2-8 to 0-6 at half time. They were superb.

When the excellent Linda Collins stuck for their fifth goal, on 52 minutes, they were not going to be denied.

An emotional Karyn Keohane accepted the senior championship trophy to tremendous scenes of jubilation, having served the club down through the years with huge determination. She could not contain her delight.

Fiona Keating, who gave a tremendous display, in notching up 3-2, was named *The Echo* player of the match, an accolade well-deserved.



Inagh Kilnamona's Fiona Lafferty and Courcey Rovers' Jacinta Crowley clash last winter in the Munster club semi-final. Picture: Eamon War

# Split season on the agenda



CAMOGIE  
Linda Mellerick

A DRAFT inter-county camogie fixtures list has been circulating for some time now. I understand that county boards were to review the list and resubmit their comments by January 11. At the time of writing there has been no finalised schedule presented but the draft showed no split-season between club and inter-county.

During the week new Galway camogie chairman Brian Griffin described the draft inter-county fixtures proposal as "disappointing".

Noting the camogie association failed to gauge the mood of its membership, which he believes would be in favour of a split season, the new chairman hopes Croke Park will revisit their proposal.

"It is disappointing," said Griffin, "You would expect they would have looked at it. They had plenty of time to examine it and there wouldn't have been much resistance from county boards if they did."

In the camogie association's 2021 proposal the inter-county competitions would more or less revert to pre-2020, with the national leagues running from March to May and the All-Ireland series from July to September.

This would leave just the remainder of May and June free for clubs in the first nine months of the year and county managements would still want access to their players while the Leaving Cert examinations in June would also impact on club fixtures. Clubs struggle in June due to exams and can you imagine the headaches for clubs trying to get their players during June with inter-county championship around the corner?

I reviewed the draft fixtures a couple of weeks ago and I was really frustrated with them. The clubs are completely overlooked.

First thing that stood out is that all 'second team' counties, who like Cork have a



Cork's Ashling Thompson wins the ball from Clare's Laura McMahon at Páirc Ui Chaoimh.

senior team and where their intermediate team is their second, are placed in the one group for both league and championship.

The reason I suspect they have done this is that if restrictions are still in place come competition time they will cast aside these players just as they did in 2019 and eliminate them from the competitions. Having them all in the one group allows them to easily do this without upsetting the others. I could be wrong but it's a thought.

It's so disappointing that after a wonderful club season in 2020, which was given widespread approval across the country from inter-county players and clubs that no effort was made in those draft fixtures to try and emulate it.

The league is starting later, March 6 for Division 2 and March 13 for Division 1 and running weekly until May 1 with a replay May 8.

The championship games start on July 3 and run weekly until August 1. The quarter finals are mid-August with the semi-finals the 28-29 and the All-Ireland final September 11-12 with a replay if required the following week.

Should Cork reach the All-Ireland final, July, August and September are gone from a club championship point of view. The only chance Cork clubs would get

would be if Cork went the direct route and avoided a quarter-final.

There may be two weeks available there but that's not good enough for clubs. They're in limbo with the uncertainty that they may or may not have a game in August and if not then it's the end of September.

The intermediate inter-county championship dates are the same so most clubs will be affected. For Cork there's little opportunity to get clubs up and running as most would have at least one player in either grade.

Why didn't the association commence the championship a month earlier, in June? Few adult intercounty teams have leaving cert players and if they did well most of those have the minor championship to play in and that's their grade.

The camogie All-Ireland finals could also have been brought forward but they remain the same which boggles the mind. There could have been a quick win of four weeks there for clubs.

There are too just many games. There are eleven 11 counties and they are split into two groups, one of six and one of five. So that's five and four games respectively before counties even emerge to the knock-out stages.

# Perhaps there's no greater story of sporting resilience than that of persistent Maher



Orla Cronin received a Sports Star monthly award.



Karyn Keohane received her Sports Star award.



Rugby star Jack Crowley with his monthly award.

championship received an award.  
**Siobhan Courtney** – Castlehaven's captain was recognised for her role in their county junior B football championship triumph.  
**Karyn Keohane** – Captain fantastic at full back, she played a crucial role as Courcey Rovers won the club's first-ever county senior camogie championship crown.  
**Orla Cronin** – The Cork forward was the inspiration – and top scorer – behind Enniskeane's brilliant county

intermediate camogie championship success.

in preparation for this year's campaign, he has drafted four new players into his panel, while six members on the fringes of last year's squad have been omitted.

Defender Pamela Mackey of Douglas, who played with Cork for 12 years, winning four All-Ireland medals, has taken a year out but her twin sister, midfielder Katrina, is available.

"The four additions to our panel are Isabelle Sheehan of Éire Óg, who plays at midfield or wing-forward, Inniscarra's Linda Keane, who is a defender, Cliona Dooley, Ballinora, who generally plays in the full-back line, and St Finbarr's Ashling Egan, who is also a back. Isabelle, Linda, and Cliona all have experience of playing minor for Cork in recent years and Ashling had a very good club campaign for the Barrs last year.

"Isabelle is a niece of Lynn Dunlea, who played with the Cork camogie team in 1993, '94 and '95, and of Stephanie Dunlea, who played with the county from 1995 to 2003," added Murray.

**L**AST month, a number of Dublin footballers claimed their eighth All-Ireland medal, joining the top tier of all-time football medal-winners — a Dublin-Kerry axis that includes such household name as Cluxton, Spillane, and Páidí Ó Sé.

This stat is maybe most impressive in the case of James McCarthy, who has started in all eight of his All-Ireland final wins since 2011. For an outfield player, that's some going.

The hurling side of the medals league tables is similarly populated with greats.

Your Henrys, JJs and Eddies, and — harking back to the glorious black and white days — your John Doyles and Christy Rings. And then there's Rena, whose dual star status and consistent brilliance puts her way ahead of the pack with 18. (You'd have to wonder if Rena ever wears all 18 All-Ireland medals around her neck at the same time? I would, I think, if I were her — if I didn't crumple under the weight of glory first.)

We love stats, in sports — it's how we measure and quantify success, after all. We latch on to those big numbers and the shiny medals they represent. But what about those stars who never won an All-Ireland?

The list would make you weep. Brick Walsh, Ken McGrath, John Mullane, Paul Flynn.

Ollie Canning and Damien Hayes. Ciarán Carey and Mark Foley. Diarmuid Lyng. Anthony Nash. Pat Horgan, although there's hope for him yet. Declan Browne. David Brady, and all his fellow countyman besides.

It's a particular quirk of the GAA, being tied to county boundaries, that so many of the best can go their whole careers without earning the game's highest honour. In most sports, if you are an outrageous talent you will be snapped up by a successful team at some stage in your career. Not the case with the GAA.

Just as there are outstanding players with no All-Ireland titles, there are average players with All-Ireland medals in their back pockets.

You can be in the right place at the right time, and be swept along in the winning streak of a powerful panel.

I am one of those, picking up an All-Ireland camogie medal as a substitute in 2004, my first year up senior and the last time that Tipperary were champions. I think often of the stars in Tipp camogie since — the Cáit Devanes and the Mary Ryans — who are far more deserving of that accolade.

And then there's the ratio: When your All-Ireland medals are vastly outnumbered by your All-Ireland defeats. Kilkenny's Anne Dalton, one of the game's all-time greats, announced her retirement recently with two All-Ireland medals to her name, which is no mean haul.

When you consider, though, that she lost six finals — including three in a row from 2017-19 — it's remarkable that she had the fortitude to come back and secure her second title in 2020.

A brilliant note on which to bow out. Perhaps there's no greater story of sporting resilience, though, than that of Galway's Thérèse Maher. It was a joy to watch her get the *Laochra Gael* treatment the week gone by.

A relatable figure, she recounted the familiar hallmarks of a GAA upbringing: The family lore about the time you got tossed in the air by an excitable dad on the terrace; tearing out the back for pucks after watching your heroes on *The Sunday Game*; learning the hard lesson that the closer you are to the tackle, the safer you'll be.

Her career is an embodiment of the progress that has been made by camogie in recent decades.

She began her career

Just as there are outstanding players with no All-Ireland titles, there are average players with All-Ireland medals in their back pockets. You can be in the right place at the right time, and be swept along in the winning streak of a powerful panel

on a truncated pitch with 12 players a side, and finished it in the modern era. She was drafted onto the Galway senior panel as a scrappy 15-year-old, something which is not allowed now, even at club level.

She was minor captain at the time; this was when minor in camogie meant U16, not U18.

She got her first start in an All-Ireland final in 1998, which was also the first year ever that the camogie final was broadcast live.

She struck three long-range points from midfield that day, and though Galway ultimately lost to Cork, for 17-year-old Maher the future must have seemed bright. But she wouldn't make it back to Croke Park for another 10 years.

**T**HERE were more heartbreaking final defeats to come: 2008, again to Cork, by five; 2010, to Wexford, by two; 2011, a carbon copy of the previous year.

As she described on *Laochra Gael*, that twice-in-a-row defeat to Wexford was the hardest to take; she was 30 years old and had played in five All-Ireland finals without success.

There's always next year until there isn't. But as her mother had told her shortly before her death in 2008: "Something tells me you won't stop until you win one."

Even before the 2013 final, she decided it would be her last game for Galway.

She finished up her inter-county career as an All-Ireland champion and player of the year, having more or less given half her life to Galway camogie. The iconic image of her falling to her knees at the final whistle, a consternation of emotion on her face, sums up what that All-Ireland medal meant to her.

Alone it stands. And that's okay — more than okay.

Glorious, even. She's still playing. "The term 'one life, one club' definitely doesn't apply to me," Maher admits at the end of the episode, and it's true — at club level, you can be in control of your fortunes a bit more than at county.

Having played for Loughrea Shamrocks in her youth, she transferred to Athenry in 2003 when Shamrocks went down to Senior B.

"I wanted to keep playing senior camogie."

She has been playing with Athenry for 17 years now, winning four county titles along the way.

"My sister Imelda played until the age of 46," she added, indicating that her club retirement is still some way off.

Long live the queen.

## ORLA CRONIN

(Cork senior camogie forward)  
**All-Ireland SFC:** Dublin. Cork to continue the progress they've shown in recent seasons.  
**All-Ireland SHC:** Limerick, but Cork to win the Munster title.  
**All-Ireland Senior Camogie:** Cork, with Paudie Murray in charge.  
**All-Ireland Senior Ladies Football:** Dublin. Cork to reach the final, again.  
**Cork Premier SFC:** Castlehaven, but have one eye on Carbery Rangers.  
**Cork Premier SHC:** Erin's Own. My brother plays with them so I'm a little bit biased here.  
**Cork Senior Camogie:** Killeagh. They have a fine young team.  
**Cork Senior Ladies Football:** West Cork, if they're allowed to enter.  
**Team to watch for in 2021:** St Mary's junior hurlers.  
**Players to watch for in 2021:** Laura Hayes (St Catherine's) and Daire O'Brien (Enniskeane).



Orla Cronin.



# Never give up on your dream



Cork minor camogie manager Jerry Wallace.

## Wallace has big plans to get Cork ladies back where they belong

JERRY WALLACE has huge enthusiasm for Gaelic games and to chat to him is a breath of fresh air.

We looked back on the year gone by and looked ahead to what will hopefully be a good season when we will all get back out on the pitches.

Jerry is no stranger to GAA followers and in his own words he is a "gaelic games fanatic".

He gives one hundred and ten per cent to anything he is involved in and his commitment to the job he takes on it very evident.

Jerry is to be seen at almost every game that is played in Castle Road, he is there on the bank or at the railings watching and keeping an eye out.

Not only will you see him in Castle Road but he is liable to be at a club game anywhere in the county watching, observing, always on the lookout for players who would be an asset to his panel.

Prior to his involvement with camogie Jerry managed the Antrim senior hurlers but he is better known for the role he played as physical trainer to the Cork senior hurlers that won back-to-back All-Ireland titles in 2004 and 2005.

He went on to work with the Limerick senior hurlers as well as Kerry club Ballyduff whom he led to county titles in 2010 and 2011.

Jerry managed and coached his club Middleton's senior hurling team from 2015 to 2017 guiding them to win the senior hurling League in 2015.

A spell with Glynn-Barn-town of Wexford in 2017 was also slotted in but it was as manager of the Cork minor team in 2018 that he made camogie history as he guided the county to our first ever All-Ireland Minor title with a 0-18 to 1-11 victory over Galway.

In 2019 he repeated the feat as Cork overcame Clare with an impressive 3-15 to 2-12 victory something which is hard to do given the turnover of players that inevitably occurs at this level.

Undeterred it was all systems go for three in a row in 2020 until Covid put paid to it all and that brought a lot of frustration for Wallace and he along with all the other inter-county minor managers lodged an unsuccessful appeal against the decision.

"It was disappointing, we fully appreciated the fixture and organisational quandaries of running competi-

### CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

tions over a short period of time but the Camogie Association should not have allowed the difficulties of the pandemic or logistical concerns to stop a championship that had started in February from completion."

As 2021 dawned Jerry again answered the call and was ready and willing to help out in any way he could and now he is all set and ready to give it another shot with the Cork minors.

Always one to acknowledge his back room team Jerry said:

"It's not all about me we will all work together and bounce ideas around."

The "we" he refers to are his new back room team he is joined by coach Michael Boland the Carrigtwohill native who led Courcy Rovers to their first senior title in 2020 has been at Jerry's side since day one when he came on board in 2017 after serving for a few years on the Under 16 selection committee.

Mark O'Sullivan coached Middleton hurlers to win the county title in 2019 and Jerry says he will be a huge asset to the back room team.

"Mark or 'Fanta' as he is better known has a great way with players and he buzzes around full of energy, he also does a huge amount of community work promoting shows for special needs and he is a great guy."

Middleton's Michael Walsh has also been there since day one and he is the goalie coach, Jerry is delighted that he is continuing with the set up.

"Michael bring huge experience to the role of goalie coach, he played with Cobh and Middleton and his ability to coach is superb."

Sonya Walsh from Glen Rovers will oversee the fitness side of things, a former member of the defence forces she is a graduate fitness, health and exercise from UL and is very involved in her club's teams she brings a wealth of experience in the role.

Whilst there is uncertainty again as to what will be happening Jerry is hopeful that his panel will be given the green light and he is as always ready to roll once the go ahead is given for training to resume.

### CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

WHAT an inspirational TG4 Laochra Gael featuring Galway's Therese Maher was last week.

Too often we don't look behind the player, their personal lives and what drives them.

Therese spent her entire career trying to win an All-Ireland senior title with Galway.

She made her debut in 1997 at 16-years of age and finished in 2013, aged 32 with an All-Ireland medal finally tucked away and she then called time on her inter-county career.

There are so many intercounty players that go through their careers without winning an All-Ireland medal.

But when you reach so many finals and lose, it's hard. People talk about the heartache the Mayo footballers must feel. They aren't alone.

I was captain of Cork when Therese made her debut. And we won the 1997 and 1998 finals, defeating Galway.

There was little between us at the time. We were favourites to win the 1996 title and they caught us to win their first title.

They were a stronger outfit in '97 and it took an excellent performance from us, particularly from Lynn Dunlea and Vienne Harris to win 0-15 to 2-5.

I'll never forget 1998 and the driving wind and rain when Eithne Duggan captained us to a 2-13 to 0-15 victory.

We won by four points and many will have seen Denise Gilligan's wide in the closing minutes last week when a goal seemed certain.

Denise tweeted after the show that she lived with that nightmare miss for 20 years.

Unfortunately, I'm sure she did but credit must be given to our own Denise Cronin who came in from the right and dived full stretch to put her off.

I'm convinced Gilly, as she's affectionally known, saw her coming from the corner of her eye and it had the desired effect. Such is sport and we were overjoyed with that win.

At 17-years old Therese probably believed at the time that it was only a matter of time before she got her hands on a medal.

But nothing is a foregone conclusion in sport and many semi-finals and three further final defeats in 2006, 2010 and 2011 and Therese was ready to give up.

But she dusted herself down and went at it again in 2012 only to lose at semi-final stage. It was in 2013 that her dream became a reality.

She had personal tragedy in between, losing her mother and father, and she highlights that camogie got her through that, it was a way to channel her anger and sense of loss.

She made a few points that many of us could relate to when she said:

"There was probably a stage where I took camogie very, very seriously. When you're so focused on trying to win an All-Ireland, sometimes I look back now and think, did I really enjoy the journey or was I just so focused on winning that All-Ireland? I did enjoy it, but did I enjoy it enough?"

"At the time when you're in it I don't think you enjoy it as much, but as I get older...and I think that only comes with



Cork's Linda Mellerick clashes with Galway's Olivia Broderick in the 1998 All-Ireland Camogie final. Picture:INPHO/Lorraine O'Sullivan

maturity."

Paudie Murray has been ratified as Cork senior camogie manager for the 10th year in succession.

He told me a few weeks ago that he wants to leave Cork camogie in a better place than when he found it and with a number of players having retired and Cork in part transitioning he feels there is still work to do.

He has won four All-Ireland titles during the past nine seasons. Appearing in six finals since Paudie came on board, Cork won titles in 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018.

He brings back some of those he enjoyed success with in the past such as Teddy Donovan, who was coach to Aoife Murray for a number of years and Matthew Twomey, previously involved in 2014 and 2016.

Matthew's energy and passion is infectious. He had a great rapport with the girls in the past and was instrumental in getting them together and playing like a club team.

Paudie has always tried to keep things fresh with his backroom team and he has had a number of really strong mentors in his set up over the years.

Mark McCarthy of Inniscarra starts his second term as Intermediate manager.

It was a disappointing first year for him in 2020 as they never really got off the ground with the association removing Cork's second team from the championship in an attempt to get championships completed on time. 2021 could prove difficult again.

But we'll wait and see and wish both sets of management the very best of luck.



Linda Mellerick gives a thumbs up after victory in the All-Ireland Camogie final over Galway in Croke Park in 1997.

Picture: Billy Stickland/INPHO

# Optimistic McCarthy puts disrupted season last year behind him

WHAT a difference a year and a pandemic makes.

This week last year it was all systems go as the Littlewoods Division 2 National league got under way with a tough trip to Callan for Cork and newly-appointed manager Mark McCarthy looking forward to getting dug into round robin series of game.

Having being part of the back room team the year before Mark knew the ropes and had a solid relationship built with the players and 2020 promised so much for him, his charges and his back room team of Kevin Hannon, Tomas Harrington, Mossy O' Sullivan, Jerry Ryan, and Darragh O' Callaghan.

With two seasons of UCC Camogie behind him Mark got a call in 2019 from Frances Killeen who was then Cork intermediate manager to join her back room team as hurling, strength and conditioning coach and 2020 saw him take on the Managers job.

Everything went well and facing into their last league game they were in with a chance of making it to the semi-final it might have taken the luck of a draw and a few results going their way if they were to secure that sought after semi-final spot but having enjoyed a reasonable good league campaign hopes were high for the championship season that laid ahead.

The decision by the Camogie Association to eliminate second adult teams from participation in championship when games returned caused shock waves.

Despite counties exploring numerous avenues the decision was not reversed thus a group of players and mentors were left annoyed and disappointed as they watching in the wings as players of the same grade from other counties played away.

"We had seventeen sessions done and were ready for championship when the competition was scrapped so yes it was disappointing not to be allowed participate when other counties of the same grade were playing away simply because they were their counties first teams."

Disruption is nothing new to Mark his own hurling career was shortened when he had surgery on both hips by the age of 21, having played all though underage with Inniscarra and was playing an U21 hurling game when his career took an abrupt halt.

"I picked up a few injuries from just overplaying and the hip surgery is common enough injury."

"It's called scoping where both hips were cleaned out and reshaped, it isn't a replacement, I remember jumping up to catch a ball, coming down and both hips locked and the bones were after cracking off the side of their sockets."

"There are no issues since but that's how I found myself going into personal training as I was out for twelve months so then I went into coaching."

Possessing a BA in Sports Science and Physical Education from UCC with Maths



Inniscarra club man Mark McCarthy, at just 24 years of age, is the new Cork intermediate camogie manager.

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

as his chosen subject, Mark had taken a year out from education rather than head straight down the teaching route and he put his knowledge and skills towards personal training developing a business with business partner Jerry Lynch Personal Training.

With successful branches in Ballincollig and Glanmire the lads opened a third branch in December 2020 but after three weeks everything has now gone on line, but again he is optimistic.

"Sure we are doing free on line classes at the moment and hopefully when we can open again our customers will come flooding through the doors."

Mark is back stronger than ever on the camogie side of things and recently ratified to continue in the role as manager for 2021 he announced his back room team, Darragh O'Callaghan from Blackrock is skills coach with selectors Kevin Hannon Courcsey Rovers, Tom Harrington Fr O'Neill's, and Jerry Ryan Ballinacarrahy.

There are two new additions with analysis Tadhg O'Riordan Cloughdub and Laura McCarthy in the role of player liaison whilst county board liaison officer to the side is vice chairman Rachel Wycherley.

Mark himself will also be strength and conditioning coach and it is all systems go once Covid restrictions are lifted.

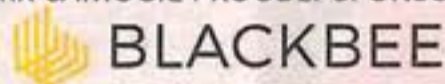
"We have parked 2020 it's in the past we just now need to move on and work towards our goals."

Mark is looking forward to the year ahead and despite the abrupt end to his season last year a lot of work was done and this will help as they face into 2021 and with McCarthy the helm Cork camogie are guaranteed no stone will be left unturned.

Once the green light is given to return to play he will be up and at them with renewed energy.



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Cork camogie team and their sponsors Blackbee are linking up with Jigsaw for a fundraiser for the charity.

# The key is to keep 'playing'

THERE is little news on inter-county management changes and panels, with 2021 uncertain as regards league and championship fixtures.

As a manager or coach, it's not enticing getting involved with new teams knowing your season is going to be so disrupted.

Taking over a squad, getting to know the players, and bringing your views and strategies to the table is time consuming without the upheaval of a pandemic.

Ireland had its first Covid-19 case on February 29, 2020, almost a year ago.

Little did we know how difficult the next year was going to be. The lockdown was a novelty at first and we all rowed the same boat. Not so much this time.

The season is different, too, of course. We all enjoyed the garden last March. We're sick of the walls this January and February. I'm working from home and busy, but I get out every day for a run or a walk, regardless of the conditions. It's an amazing lift. More often than not, I'll get out twice, as the dogs get sick of the walls, too.

There's a stretch in the evenings already and it's great. Things will get easier again. It's important to be optimistic.

This is a traumatic time, but I'm not going to talk about struggles, only the gains. We have reconnected with family. Board-game sales have risen, as people connect at home. Look at the additional time parents have with newborns.

People have had time to reflect. Some have taken early retirement.

Dr Vivek Murthy, former surgeon general of the US, in his book, *Together*, is a



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

huge advocate of connecting with others to combat the loneliness of lockdown.

But he reminds us that we need to have a strong connection with ourselves first.

Ironically, he recommends solitude as a way to cope.

"One thing that helps is to spend time with ourselves and to be comfortable with solitude," Dr Murthy says.

"Solitude and meditation are times when the mind connects the dots with what's happening in our lives, part of processing the world."

"When we don't have reflective time for ourselves, we bury a lot of the challenging issues and don't deal with them. It can detract from our emotional well-being when we don't spend enough time in solitude."

Like sports teams, we need to focus on what we can control. In the first lockdown, most of us over-indulged in food; in the second, many of us have a strong exercise routine.

The transformation in some people, mentally and physically, is incredible. It's about taking one day at a time.

We have control over building healthy habits and resilience. When so much of the coronavirus crisis is outside our control, it's not only essential, but empower-

ing, to focus on what we can control.

Those of you who have seen the movie *Erin Brockovich* will know that she is a US legal clerk, consumer advocate, and environmental activist, who, despite her lack of education in the law, was instrumental in building a case against the Pacific Gas & Electric Company of California in 1993, winning millions for her clients.

When interviewed recently for her book, *Superman's Not Coming*, she said that 'stick-to-itiveness' is a very powerful word. She said her mum taught her that everybody isn't born with stick-to-itiveness.

We have to develop resilience and perseverance, even if we don't want to and we'd rather give up.

She says when you get beaten down, you have to learn to pick the ball back up and run 10 yards and get slammed.

You don't throw the ball down and walk off the field. She continued with her metaphor of the Superbowl.

"Be prepared that you could get pushed back five or 10 yards, but, also, when you pick that ball up again, you could rush 30 or 40 yards."

"It's a process, and it doesn't happen on the first try. It took the ladies of Hannibal, Missouri, three years to get the ammonia out of their drinking water, but that dogged persistence, that loyalty to your cause, that stick-to-itiveness is a process."

"You'll have moments when you get pushed back, but you'll also have moments when you push ahead. And that's what you need to remember."

We got this.

### Mary O'Connor factfile

- Mary O'Connor, CEO of the Federation of Irish Sport
- Played underage at all levels with Cork.
- Seven All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championships (1997, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2009).
- Two All-Ireland Camogie Club Championships (one with Killeagh and one with Granagh-Ballingarry).
- Three All-Stars.
- Camogie Player of the Year 2006.
- Five All-Ireland Senior Ladies Football championships (2004-2009).
- One All-Ireland Intermediate Ladies Football championship.
- One All-Ireland Junior Ladies Football championship.
- All-Star.
- All-Ireland Intermediate ladies football championship with Inch.
- Two senior club ladies football All-Irelands with Donoughmore.

## CAMOGIE/FOOTBALL

■ Rory Noonan

TO many, Mary O'Connor is CEO of the Federation of Irish Sport. But to Cork people Mary is fondly remembered as a dual star who helped her county to glory in football and camogie.

Mary has amassed 12 senior All-Ireland medals over her 16-year inter-county career. She has also won All-Stars in both codes, national leagues, and provincial titles and was also honoured with an Honorary Doctorate from UCC in 2012 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to sport in Ireland.

As a young player with Killeagh Mary fondly remembers what used to happen at the end of a game. She recalls that when she used to take off her helmet, the boys would say "Oh my God, you were marking a girl!"

Mary laughs as she recalls the reaction to her 'big reveal' at the end of a match, as the lone girl playing for the boys' hurling team. Back then however, for a sports-obsessed little girl, it was serious business.

"I was conscious that I was different, and I didn't want to be different — I just wanted to play the game like everybody else and not have to worry about being the only girl," she said.

But that memory is with her to this day and in her role with the Federation of Irish Sport, she was instrumental in the launch of the 20x20 campaign, which aims to tackle key issues facing women's sport in Ireland.

With the backing of key sporting bodies, media organisations and sports figures — and the support of President Michael D Higgins — the aim is to increase media coverage of women's sports, attendance at women's games, and female participation at all levels of sport by 20%, with a review of that due at the end of 2020.

It's a cause of particular importance to Mary, who as a child, cut her hair short specifically to blend into the boys' hurling team. Already a member of the local girls' team, her passion for sport drove her to seek out every opportunity to play — and gender was not going to stop her.

Growing up in Killeagh Mary was lucky to be able to seize



Cork captain Mary O'Connor and Valerie Mulcahy celebrate victory in the 2009 All-Ireland Football final.

those opportunities. While the secondary school she attended — St Mary's High School, Middleton — was 'a hotbed of sporting opportunity', she spent her evenings at Cork or club camogie training sessions.

Mary began playing football with Cork when notions of winning All-Ireland titles were just a pipe dream. The Cork camogie teams had a proud tradition of winning national titles and when Mary joined the camogie squad in 1996, it was very likely that she would win an All-Ireland medal.

Her first triumph in camogie came in 1997 when Cork claimed the O'Duffy Cup and Mary played a key part. It took until 2004 for her first football All-Ireland title to come, with others following in 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009.

As well as 1997 camogie titles also came her way in 1998, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2009. The dual star played in 18 All-Ireland finals over her career and with 12 winners medals, her record is simply outstanding.

Something many may not know is that Mary also turned her attention to rugby and won honours playing with the oval ball.

Her contribution to camogie and ladies football in Cork is second to none and is truly one of the outstanding sports people of the Rebel county.



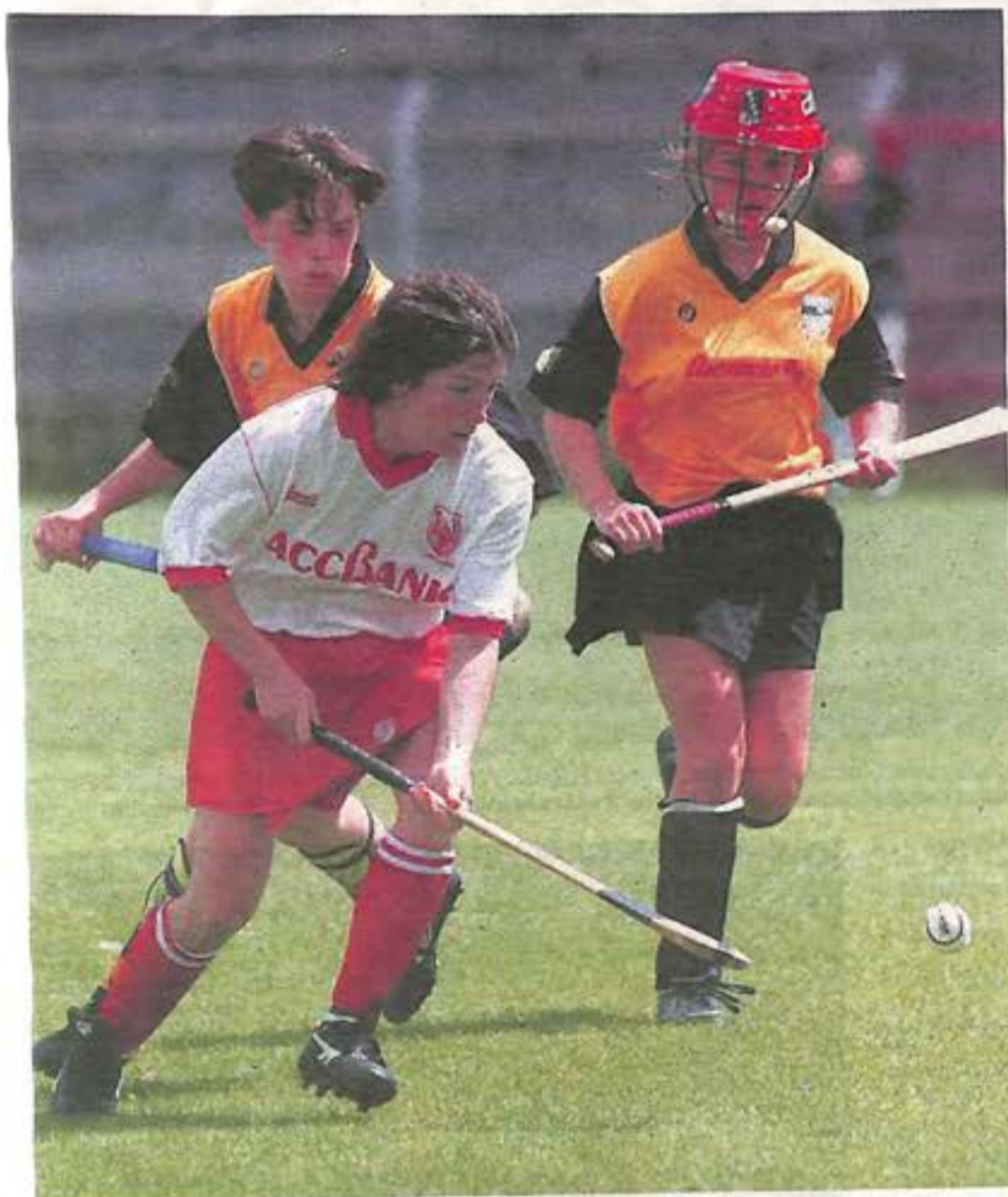
# Mary a driving force on and off the pitch

Mary O'Connor at a press night ahead of the 2004 All-Ireland camogie final.



The Echo and Echolive are looking for your help in picking Cork's best sportsperson of the last

# Sandie ticks all the boxes to be a sporting legend



Cork's Sandie Fitzgibbon wins possession during a National League final against Kilkenny.



Sandie Fitzgibbon won four national league titles for Blarney and was capped 64 times for Ireland.

The sport of camogie has always been a relatively successful one for this county and the outstanding Sandie Fitzgibbon made a huge contribution to that success.

Sandie enjoyed a very successful career which included winning seven consecutive senior county medals with her beloved Glen Rovers.

She began playing with the Glen as a nine-year-old and won her first All-Ireland minor medal in 1978 at the age of 14.

Sandie was born in 1964 and was one of a sporting family of six sisters and one brother.

Her successes in camogie are nothing short of amazing and her most notable achievement was playing in 13 senior All-Ireland camogie finals with Cork.

At club level she won 10 Cork senior medals with Glen Rovers that included the seven-in-a-row between 1990 and 1996.

Fitzgibbon also has eight Munster Senior Championship medals and just to round off her club career she

- Sandie won her first minor All-Ireland camogie medal with Cork at the age of 14.
- Fitzgibbon was on six consecutive losing Cork

teams in All-Ireland senior camogie finals up to 1991 but her dream was realised in 1992 when she captained the Rebels to win the title.

- Sandie retired from inter-county camogie in 1997 and two years later did likewise at club level.
- Sandie played a total of 26

years at club level for Glen Rovers.  
■ Sandie Fitzgibbon won a total of 64 caps for Ireland at senior level.

## Sandie Fitzgibbon factfile

won four Senior All-Ireland medals in 1988, 1990, 1992, and 1993.

There is no doubting Sandie played with and against the best during her career and she looked back on it with mixed emotions.

"I would say losing six All-Ireland titles in a row was the most disappointing for me, but in a nutshell, it was the same for all my team-mates," she said.

At no stage did Sandie ever feel that she wouldn't reach the Holy Grail with the Rebels.

"Thank God our luck changed, and it was a dream come true when I captained Cork to win the All Ireland title in 1992."

## Camogie/basketball

■ Mark Woods

After playing at the top for 17 years Sandie decided to call it a day in 1997 at the age of 33.

"When you play at the top level for a long time it really does take a great deal of commitment and I felt at that time I could no longer give it the dedication that was required to play at inter-county level."

Two years later after giving Glen Rovers 26 years of incredible service she decided it was time to bow out.

Sandie was also a top-class basket-

ball player and she helped the North Presentation School win the All-Ireland Cadet title in 1978.

At senior level she helped Blarney win four National League titles and three National Cups, and she also played with Lee Strand in Tralee where she helped them win national league and cup honours in her three years with the Kerry club.

Her basketball skills were dazzling and despite being only 5'-6" she had the ability to wreak havoc on court.

Indeed, Sandie's talent is still spoken about in basketball circles and to represent your country at the highest level of the sport speaks volumes of her skills.

Amazingly, throughout her playing career Sandie mixed camogie and basketball and was never fazed by the demands.

The busiest week of her career came in October 1990.

On Sunday she played an All-Ireland club camogie semi-final with Glen Rovers in Derry and immediately after the game travelled to Boston to play three senior internationals with Ireland.

Having returned to Ireland on Friday she had only two days to prepare before lining out with Glen Rovers in the All Ireland camogie final.

Sandie once again showed her incredible commitment and skills as the Glen defeated St Paul's in the decider.

In 2000 Sandie was presented with the Millennium award in Cork for her achievements in sport, an award she so richly deserved.

There are many legends in the sporting world on Leaside, but the name of Sandie Fitzgibbon will always be remembered with affection as one of Cork's finest.

50 years. We need your vote. Which person moves onto the next round from this talented duo?

THE name Linda Mellerick is synonymous with camogie.

She was one of only four Cork players selected on the camogie team of the century in 2004 where she was joined by her club mate Sandie Fitzgibbon and fellow Corkonians Marie Costine and Pat Moloney.

A wonderful player, she was born in Tipperary but moved to Cork at a very young age where she attended St Patrick's school at Gardiner's Hill.

It was there that young Mellerick decided to try out camogie. Up until then, Linda didn't really know what camogie was, but her friends said it was similar to hockey and so she thought ya this will be fun.

A superb athlete, Linda had a unique style, she covered every blade of grass on the pitch and her workrate was huge. She stood out a mile in the days when helmets were not worn and her reddish/blonde hair

## CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

could be spotted all over the pitch as she weaved her magic. A player who always liked to be in the thick of the action, Linda frequently left her markers for dead, she had huge energy and skill and was always available to help team mates in defence or attack.

Her trademark solo runs were legendary and she split many a defence as she set up or took scores.

Her wonderful spirit and leadership qualities made her a special player, Linda's dedication to training and the game was superb and she always put in huge effort. I have memories of Linda finishing shift work and coming straight to training with Cork

and Glen Rovers, tired and drained but ready to give one hundred per cent as always.

That was Linda Mellerick, always striving to be the very best and to lead by example, she frequently could be seen urging on and driving team-mates to be better and better.

She enjoyed a wonderful inter-county career with Cork which spanned twenty one years and won six senior All Ireland medals 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1998, and 2002, one minor All-Ireland and one junior, 10 National Leagues and four Gael Linn Inter-provincial titles.

The pinnacle of her career at inter-county level saw her captain Cork to All-Ireland success in 1993; she was honoured by her club to lead Cork twice and became the only player to captain Cork to win All Ireland senior titles on two occasions, in 1993 and 1997.

Linda was Player of the Year in 1993 and 1998. She originally planned to retire in 1997 but returned for five more years and eventually hung up her hurley in 2002 after winning her sixth All-Ireland medal and two years before the introduction of the Camogie All Stars Awards scheme.

In what was a fantastic club career, she won eight Cork County Senior Championship and three All-Ireland Club Championship medals as well as Munster Club and All Ireland sevens with Glen Rovers whom she joined in 1986 having played underage with Brian Dillon's. She captained Glen Rovers to county championship success in 1996 as they overcame Imokilly to record a record seven in a row, a feat only ever recorded once previously when Glen Rovers took titles from 1962 to 68.

She was a wonderful player and a great ambassador for camogie.

Cork's Linda Mellerick strikes the ball as Geraldine Codd, Wexford challenges during the All-Ireland senior camogie semi-final at Páirc Uí Rinn

### Linda Mellerick roll of honour

- Six All-Ireland senior medals.
- One All-Ireland junior medal.
- One All-Ireland minor medal.
- Ten National League medals.
- Four Gael Linn inter-provincial medals.
- Captained Cork to senior success in 1993 and 1997.
- ONE of four Cork players to be picked on the team of the century in 2004.
- Camogie Player of the Year in 1993 and 1998.
- Munster senior and junior All-Ireland sevens.
- Eight Cork County Senior Championships.
- Three all-Ireland Senior Club Championships.
- Six Munster Senior Club titles.

To cast your vote for your favourite sportsperson, daily, log on to to poll on [echolive.ie](http://echolive.ie)

# Linda was one of the greats of camogie



Cork camogie captain Linda Mellerick celebrates with team members on their arrival at Kent Station with the senior All-Ireland trophy



SE Systems Intermediate champions Enniskeane celebrate.

## Intermediate camogie championship hit some excellent heights

WELVE teams went into the draw for the SE Systems Intermediate championship and we had some exciting contests some which threw up a few surprises.

Before the draws were made with the agreement of the Intermediate and junior clubs the county board decided to change the format for both championships and it revert to back door competition.

Previously to this the Intermediate, junior and minor championships were played on a league basis but given the tight time restraints that were in place it was the sensible option and indeed when the season was completed the feedback from many of the clubs was that it was great and it is that may be the way forward in future.

Whilst the previous format did guarantee plenty of game the back door option seemed to work very well so maybe it is something that will be looked at again.

Certainly given the uncertainty that surrounds competitions for this year we would probably expect that the county board and the clubs will continue to show an interest in the back door option and keep the back door in place for 2021.

Round one got under way on July 26th and Aghabullogue with inter county senior Cliona Healy to the fore confidently overcame the challenge of Watergrashill on a 2-15 to 1-score line to book their place in round three.

Enniskeane showed they meant business as they notched up 4-19 as they overcame newly promoted Ballyhea, Fr O'Neill's had seven points to spare over Na Piarraigh, Brian Dillon's edged it with a point to spare over Lonakilty, Blackrock were no other side who showed they could be serious challengers as they hit 5-17 against Valley Rovers and Carrigaline went safely to round three as they edged it over Kilbrittain/Timoleague.

Round two saw the losers of their second chance and in a nail biting clash Ballyhea knocked out Valley Rovers 2-1 to 2-10, likewise Kilbrittain/Timoleague had two points to spare over Na Piarraigh as Watergrashill knocked out Lonakilty.

Ballyhea and Watergrashill meet in the only round three games where Ballyhea emerge

### CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Fr O'Neill's ability to grab goals was important as they recorded a 4-7 to 0-6 victory over Kilbrittain/Timoleague and Aghabullogue looked impressive as they got the upper hand on Carrigaline, in an exciting contest Enniskeane had two points to spare over Blackrock.

The semi-finals draw pitted two of the favourites against each other Enniskeane lined up to take on Fr O'Neill's and here Enniskeane had to call on all their reserves before booking a place in the final as they were tested to the limit by a determined Fr O'Neill's whilst Aghabullogue had too much strength for Ballyhea.

In the final Aghabullogue made the better start and settle into the game but Enniskeane rallied and took control with Daire O'Brien, Laura Mannix, Tara Sheehan and Orla Cronin doing a lot of work and they led 0-7 to 0-2 at the interval.

On the resumption Enniskeane kept the pressure on the Aghabullogue defence Orla Cronin pointed a free, Aghabullogue replied with a Cliona Healy point but Enniskeane continued to hold the upper hand as they hit the next five scores a Sinead Hurley goal on thirty seven minutes out them in control.

Aghabullogue battled to get into the contest. Julie Tarrant and Maebh Ring hit points but Enniskeane looked comfortable with Orla Cronin continuing to cause problems. Aghabullogue lifted their game and a Cliona Healy point set them on the road for a fightback. Winning a penalty they were denied by an alert Enniskeane defence but they continued to press and goals from Ella Foley and Cliona Healy on sixty one minutes led to a nervous closing minutes for Enniskeane but with Orla Cronin leading the way they thwarted the Aghabullogue rally to ensure the title was going west.

Orla Cronin was named The Echo Player of the match after leading the way for her club with a superb display as she notched up thirteen points of their tally.

Enniskeane now move on to senior grade for 2021 and they will look forward to partici-



Cork's Laura Hayes and Wexford's Emma Walsh tussle for the ball last season.

Picture: Eddie O'Hara

# Volunteering for camogie



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

FULL credit to the camogie association who are trying to give their volunteers a training focus and guidance during the lockdown.

For February they developed a guide toward succession planning and how to recruit and retain volunteers. It has some great points. It's always difficult to get volunteers and what I have found is that at times when people offer to give a little they get pulled into a lot and therefore sustaining volunteers over a lengthy period of time can be challenging.

This document aims to be a starter guide to clubs that would like practical tips on getting new volunteers involved and helping to develop their club. The first point to consider is why most people within Gaelic games are willing to volunteer and conversely why some people may be reluctant to get involved. "The reasons people volunteer are many:

To give back to their own club and county, their children are involved, there is the social aspect; to meet like-minded people or if they are new to the area. They can learn and use new skills: communication, leadership, teamwork and so on.

They like to be involved with something positive. Then you have the reasons people do not volunteer: They are not asked. People will rarely put themselves forward for a task. They do not know how to get involved. They do not have much free time. Once they are in, they can't get out. They feel that they do not have the skills or confidence."

The document goes onto the various methods of recruitment such as ...

Face to face: Meet people, get to know them, find out their skills and ask them to volunteer in a position that would suit them.



Douglas's Chelsea Noonan is tackled by Coursey Rovers' Elaine O'Reilly.

Picture: Eddie O'Hara

of jobs/ tasks/ positions that need to be completed/ filled.

Get parents involved: Send notes home from training or use online parent engagement surveys to help get them involved in the club. Ask parents to attend coaching/officer training/ child-protection courses to get them started.

Players: Ask players to help make links with younger underage players at matches/training or 'star of the week' awards for FUNDamentals. Ask former players to be involved in coaching or as officers or other tasks within the club.

Target recently retired people: They have more time on their hands and are willing to give back to the community. It helps maintain their social life. There are also key tips when asking for volunteers...

Be specific; tell volunteers of role required and time expected from them.

Do not ask 'can anyone volunteer?' instead ask for 'one hour a week commitment' and make sure to stick to this one hour. Give a list of possible tasks that volunteers could do include this on your website and registration forms.

It is important to constantly develop volunteers and ensure they attend as

tion; a club leadership development programme (joint GAA/LGFA/camogie officer training); camogie specific training; camogie website; camogie initiatives.

Retention: Once volunteers have been recruited into your club, it is important to ensure they are developed and retained.

Respect: Give respect for the volunteer's effort and time people put into tasks.

Recognition and reward: Thank everyone for their involvement no matter how small. This can be formal or informal. It can also be a good idea to hold volunteer social events and even better if each volunteer can bring a friend.

Role: Each volunteer should be provided with a clear role description and be aware of what is expected from them. Be careful not to overload volunteers leading to a burnout.

Development: The volunteer should be developing, leading to a positive image of the club.

Succession plan: Succession planning is simply a way of ensuring the club recruits volunteers, develops and retains them.

It helps the club plan for gaps that may be appearing in committees or coaching

# "The Best Camogie Player I Ever Saw"

19 Oct 2019

AHOGHILL will play Lavey this weekend in an Ulster club final 50 years almost to the day when they last featured in an Ulster club camogie final.

That was back in 1969 when the Antrim champions beat Eglis in the Ulster final and this week "the best camogie player I have ever seen" recalled that victory in looking back across a camogie career that extended to over two decades as Antrim full-back and appearances in ten All-Ireland senior finals in Croke Park, plus a replay. Moya Fordie chuckles to herself.

"I never actually saw that written down. Apparently it was in one of the national papers after an All-Ireland semi-final we played in Cork.

"I remember the game well though, don't ask me the year. But it was one of those games when just everything you do works out right. I could do nothing wrong and Antrim won.

"I went to club training in Ahoghill a couple of days later and people were saying to me that it was in the Irish Press or Irish Times. People seemed to remember it and even still there will be somebody who will come up to me and say it."

"My father was born and reared in Ballylanders on the Limerick-Cork border. He came to teach in The Braid and he was very keen on all sport, Gaelic games and athletics in particular. He played rugby for Ballymena and was on the team that won the first Town's Cup (1928). We were encouraged to play everything."

Moya's brother Donagh played both hurling and football for Antrim, was an Ulster decathlete champion, played rugby at representative level while a vet in Lancashire and even won an All-Ireland intermediate hurling medal with Galway where he eventually settled.

Moya played with her older brothers and sisters with "home-made hurls cut from a tree in the garden" and when someone decided to start a camogie team in The Braid, a small parish halfway between Ballymena and Carrlough, she was put into goals "because they were afraid I would get hurt outfield".

When she moved to St Louis Ballymena her game progressed significantly under a Cork-born nun.

"When we got off the bus before class, she was down on the pitch and we played away. She made us swing left and right and she ran camogie class leagues. And then there was the school team."

At this time there was only one competition, the Ulster senior schools' championship, and St Louis had won it in 1946 and 1947 with girls, such as the Dooey twins, who were also members of Antrim teams winning All-Ireland senior titles.

Moya collected three winners' medals 1949-51, the last of those captained by her sister Fionnuala who also played with Moya in Ahoghill and Antrim winning teams. Moya was to follow her as school captain in 1952.

"But we didn't get playing that year. We lost our pitch to rebuilding in the school and we had nowhere to train."

However she was already an Antrim senior playing in her first All-Ireland final in Croke Park in 1950.

"We beat London in London that year, but it wasn't the glamour trip you would think. We went from Larne to Stranraer on the boat and then got the train to London.

"When we got there late at night, all the shops were closed and we had nothing to eat. Then after the game the next day, it was straight back to the station for the return journey. We didn't see too much of London.

"Although I had been playing full-back earlier in the championship, I was moved to the wing for the final in Croke Park.

"I suppose it was a big thing playing in Croke Park, but when you don't win, it isn't that big. At half-time we were getting well beaten and I moved into full-back for the second half and that is where I stayed until I quit camogie in the early '70s."

Dublin was the top team for almost her entire inter-county career, winning 18 of the 19 titles from 1948-1966. Antrim won the other in 1956, but the Saffrons lost eight finals to them in that same period, as well as a few semi-finals.

"We were their main opposition. They were very good and we had some great battles with them, mostly in Croke Park.

"I really can't remember individual games. If I had played just one year with Antrim, I would have remembered every game. But one year just rolled into the next.

"I remember winning in 1956. Teasy (Kearns) was in goals. She was only 14, but I knew her well from playing Dunloy in club camogie and I knew she was a super player.

She was there for the next dozen years and we won a second All-Ireland together in 1957.

"We beat Dublin in Belfast in the 1956 semi-final and then Cork in the final. When we eventually beat Dublin again (in 1967) it was in a replay and both games were in Croke Park and that was great too."

"We had some wonderful players around that time; Sue Ward, Máiréad McAtamney, Eithne Dougan. I remember Antrim being written off before it because our defence was supposed to be too old. Including Teasy in goals, five of us were there from 1956. But we proved them wrong!"

Dublin fell heavily after that defeat, reaching just three more finals and collecting the title only once more, in 1984. Antrim also appeared in just three more finals, winning their sixth and final senior All-Ireland in 1979.

Moya's last All-Ireland final was in 1959, a two points' defeat to Wexford. But that was the year that Ahoghill delivered.

"The Braid fell away as quickly as it started. There wasn't the numbers there to sustain a team. St Louis was my outlet and then the county.

"But there was a Fr McGuigan out in Ahoghill and he was pushing camogie for the girls in the parish. He knew about us in school and asked us to come out and play and that is how I ended up with Ahoghill.

"Ahoghill had a lot of good players in my time, the two Mary McFaul (big Mary and wee Mary), Margaret and Bridget McFaul, Sarah O'Neill, Kathleen Neeson, Maureen Graham, Lily Scullion.

"There were a lot of good club teams around at the time and Deirdre became very strong in the 1960s."

The Belfast based club had already collected back to back titles in Antrim when in 1964 an Ulster club championship and also All-Ireland club championship was developed. In '64 and again in '65, Deirdre reached the national final where they were beaten firstly by Celtic of Dublin and then St Patrick's from Tipperary.



They didn't make it back into the All-Ireland final, but they stretched their Ulster run to five in a row and their Antrim collection to seven in succession, before Ahoghill broke the run in 1969. It was to be Ahoghill's second and, to date, their last Antrim senior title.

"Again I can't remember too much about individual club games. I do remember playing Greenlough at that time. It must have been in the Ulster championship and I had coached nearly all the Greenlough girls when I taught in St Mary's Clady. We won six or seven Ulster schools' Cups around that time.

"We beat Eglis in the Ulster final and I remember scoring a goal straight from a poc out.

"Then we went to Limerick to play Ahane. We got a good start in that game, I scored a goal from a free. But Lily Scullion, who had scored another goal, got injured. She could have played on and she would tell you that still, but they wanted our scoring threat off the pitch.

"We lost - but not by much in the end."

Fifty years on and Ahoghill's success in last month's Antrim junior final has paved the way for wins over Down's Aghaderg and Cavan side Kil and another appearance in an Ulster final - against Derry champions Lavey - this Saturday.

"Oh, yes, I have been following their progress in the paper. I would love to be at the final, but I am not too mobile at the moment. I hope they win. 50 years is a long time to be waiting."

## Virtual 5k will raise money for Jigsaw

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

CORK Camogie have exciting plans for the last weekend in February when they will hold Camán Corcaigh, a Virtual 5km with profits from the fundraiser going to Cork Camogie and Jigsaw Cork.

Launching the event, in association with their sponsors Black Bee and Jigsaw Cork, Lord Mayor Cllr Joe Kavanagh has asked all clubs to get involved, as he stresses the importance of the work and service Jigsaw provide for our young people, especially in the current climate.

"I am delighted to give my support to Cork camogie and jigsaw for their Virtual 5k and I am looking forward to taking part on the weekend."

The aim is for all camogie players, mentors and supporters to virtually re-connect with club mates while everybody is out of group training and in doing so also support Cork camogie and the fantastic service that Jigsaw provide.

Jigsaw Cork is a free, non-judgemental and confidential mental health support service for young people aged 12 to 25 living, working or studying in Cork.

They provide guidance and support for young people who are going through a difficult or distressing time.

They also provide advice and guidance for anyone who is concerned about a young person in their life.

The Cork Camogie board is now calling on all clubs, divisions, inter-county panels, supporters' camogie and GAA followers and friends to take up the challenge and to support this event and they hope to see everybody out on the weekend of February 26-28.

They hope that it will become a part of pre-season training or maybe a challenge nearest rivals to get involved.

County board chairperson Mairead Donovan is encouraging everybody to row.

"This is our first event of 2021 and while we are all apart in the current climate we are still very much part of Cork camogie, therefore this is a great way to be involved as a group and also support Jigsaw which provide superb services, we in Cork camogie are looking forward to the event and hope to see everybody taking part."

Board Pro Louise Weldon explained the entry fee is €15 per person and each entrant will receive a Camán Corcaigh T-shirt which they can wear on the day.

"There is also an option to donate to the fundraiser if people want to contribute but not take part.

"Families and individuals can walk the 5k, run, jog, crawl or even cycle, the important thing is to sign up and lend support."



SE Systems Junior A county camogie champions Newtownshandrum.

## Exciting contests in store in camogie junior championships

JUNIOR is the third grade of adult competitions catered for by the Cork Camogie board.

Such is the strength of the game in Cork, that there are no fewer than five grades of junior competitions.

This gives an indication of the huge strength of Cork club camogie and the huge number of players participating at all levels.

For many clubs, junior is their second grade of adult teams and in a bid to get a correct balance the board have an option for second teams to all participate at the same level.

This alleviates the situation where a club's second team may have to participate against another club's first choice adult team.

In some cases a club may make the choice not to participate in the second team's competition and just take their chances in the higher grade.

At Junior A level 12 teams entered the race for the league and championship but with Covid putting a stop to league competitions it was all systems go on July 24 for the first rounds of what was a hugely competitive championship.

Ballinhassig, who took the decision to re-grade to Junior A and they were unlucky to lose out to Ballinacorney in a thrilling 2-8 to 1-10 battle. Charleville were impressive as they overcame Sarsfields.

Mallow had a two point victory over a Barryroe side who had also taken the step down to Junior A. Tracton overcame Banter and St Vincent's had a four point win over Sliabh Rua in a high scoring 4-3 to 2-11 battle.

Ballinora got the upper hand on Newtownshandrum in the last of the round one games and it was onto the losers round for the six losing sides.

Newtownshandrum ended Barryroe's championship hopes, Sliabh Rua advanced at the expense of Sarsfields, and Banteer overcame Ballinhassig.

With nine sides remaining, Newtownshandrum and Sliabh Rua were the two sides who contested round three to bring us to quarter final stage and an impressive Newtownshandrum marched on to the quarter finals.

Ballinacorney overcame Banteer to book their semi-final spot. Newtownshandrum continued to impress as they marched on with a win over Mallow. Ballinora got the

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

upper hand on Charleville but the last of the quarter finals between Tracton and St Vincent's had to go to a replay after an injury to a St Vincent's player in added time saw the game held up and not restarted as the player awaited an ambulance to arrive.

In the replay, Tracton had too much strength and booked their place in the last four.

The semi-finals saw Newtownshandrum record a 5-12 to 1-13 win over Ballinora, whilst in a thrilling clash, Tracton edged out Ballinacorney 3-9 to 2-5.

The scene was now set for the final and Newtownshandrum who had welcomed back several of their former players turned in a blistering display to be crowned champions.

Newtownshandrum started well, opened up a six points to one lead, but it was in the second half that they really showed their class as they picked off vital scores with huge confidence to run out winners.

Cliona O'Callaghan, Mariah Reidy, Roisin Twohill, Katie Coughlan were superb for Newtownshandrum with Cliona O'Callaghan named as *The Echo* player of the match.

Castlelyons and Bride Roves battled it out in the SE Systems Junior B semi-final where Castlelyons advanced.

In the second semi-final, Iniscarra overcame Cobh to book their place in the final.

In the final, Castlelyons atoned for their defeat in the final of 2019 as they overcame Iniscarra to take the SE Systems Junior B title coached by former Cork hurling great Timmy McCarthy with Leah Hallinan Castlelyons named as *The Echo* player of the match.

After experiencing a lot of disappointment, it was third time lucky for Aghada as they banished the ghosts of losing two previous finals to take the SE Systems Junior C Championship as they overcame Kiltree.

Aoife Healy, Aghada taking home the *Echo* player of the match award.

Cloughduv took the junior second teams title with a win over Eire Og. Rockban defeated Dungourney to take the 13-a-side title as Elizabeth McGrath was *The Echo* player of the match.



The All-Star Awards. No Cork player is in the hunt for one this year.

Picture: INPHO/Oisín Keniry

# All-Stars to be named on night

IT'S been a long wait but the 2020 Camogie All-Stars teams will be announced at the 17th annual All-Stars awards sponsored by Liberty Insurance, at a virtual event on Saturday March 6.

The senior All-Stars team will be selected from the top performers in the 2020 championship, and the Soaring Stars team will be chosen from the All-Ireland Intermediate and Premier Junior Championships.

Due to the shortened nature of the 2020 Championships and the fact that there is no gathering there will be no nominees lists released for this year's awards.

The shortlists for the sixth camogie association/WGPA players' 'Player of the Year' awards, have been announced across the three award categories.

**This year's nominees are:**  
**Senior Player of the Year:** Denise Gaulo (Kilkenny), Grace Walsh (Kilkenny), Shauna Healy (Galway).  
**Intermediate Player of the Year:** Maeve Kelly (Antrim), Niamh Mallon (Down), Sara-Louise Graffin (Down).  
**Junior Player of the Year:** Ciara Donnelly (Armagh), Leanne Donnelly (Armagh), Roisin O'Keefe (Cavan).  
 Voting for the players' Player of the Year awards is now underway.

No Cork players are nominated as we were removed from the Intermediate championship due to restrictions and it being Cork's second adult team and from a senior perspective the nominees were always going to come from the All-Ireland finalists.

You'd need a top drawer stand out performance from a losing semi-finalist to sneak in.

As counties get structures in place for the 2020 season, albeit late, Adrian O'Sullivan has been appointed as the new Dublin senior camogie manager.

He replaces outgoing boss John Treacy (Cuala), who was in charge for just one campaign.

O'Sullivan led UL to back-to-back Ashbourne Cups in 2018 and 2019, while he worked as coach with Westmeath (2016, 2017) and Kildare (2019) hurlers in recent years.

He coached Thomastown to the senior Kilkenny camogie title in 2020 and was coach as Clonkill won the senior hurling championship crown in Westmeath the year before.

O'Sullivan also worked with the Limer-



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

ick minor and intermediate camogie teams that won All-Irelands in 2014, in addition to Kilkenny's All-Ireland intermediate win in 2016.

Former Galway and Dublin hurler Donie Fox will join his management team. I'm wondering how long it will be before we start seeing Dublin camogie becoming as strong as their footballers.

Despite the funding support they too enjoy through AIG I can't see it for a long while, until minor titles or at least strong competing minor teams become a regular occurrence.

With the success of the Dublin footballers I'd imagine it's harder for camogie there now too. The association are carrying out a study, collecting feedback from camogie players surrounding the issues of athlete burnout.

This is to help generate a comparable dataset of the opinions of the players and their experiences of athlete burnout.

The hope is that the fact sheet will give players and coaches a better understanding of what it means to be burned out and how it can be avoided.

By avoiding burnout, players can then focus more on enjoying their sport and not focusing on the negatives of their involvement in the sport as much, which is a much healthier situation to be in.

Meanwhile, GAA President John Horan was on RTE Radio 1 last weekend and the subject of integration between the GAA, LGFA and camogie association was raised.

John said that the three organisations only recently had a meeting with Kieran Mulvey and John Treacy from Sport Ireland and that was key to their conversation.

They made a presentation to Sport Ireland about the level of conversation that has gone on within the organisations in the last number of years.



The Echo Player of the Match in the SE Systems Junior B final Leah Hallihan, Castlelyons, is presented with her trophy by Sile Golden, vice chair Cork Camogie Board.

"There was a move a few years ago to actually integrate the three organisations fully," John said.

"But there was a timeframe set on it and I think that timeframe then caused a problem of trying to rush it and it actually knocked things further back.

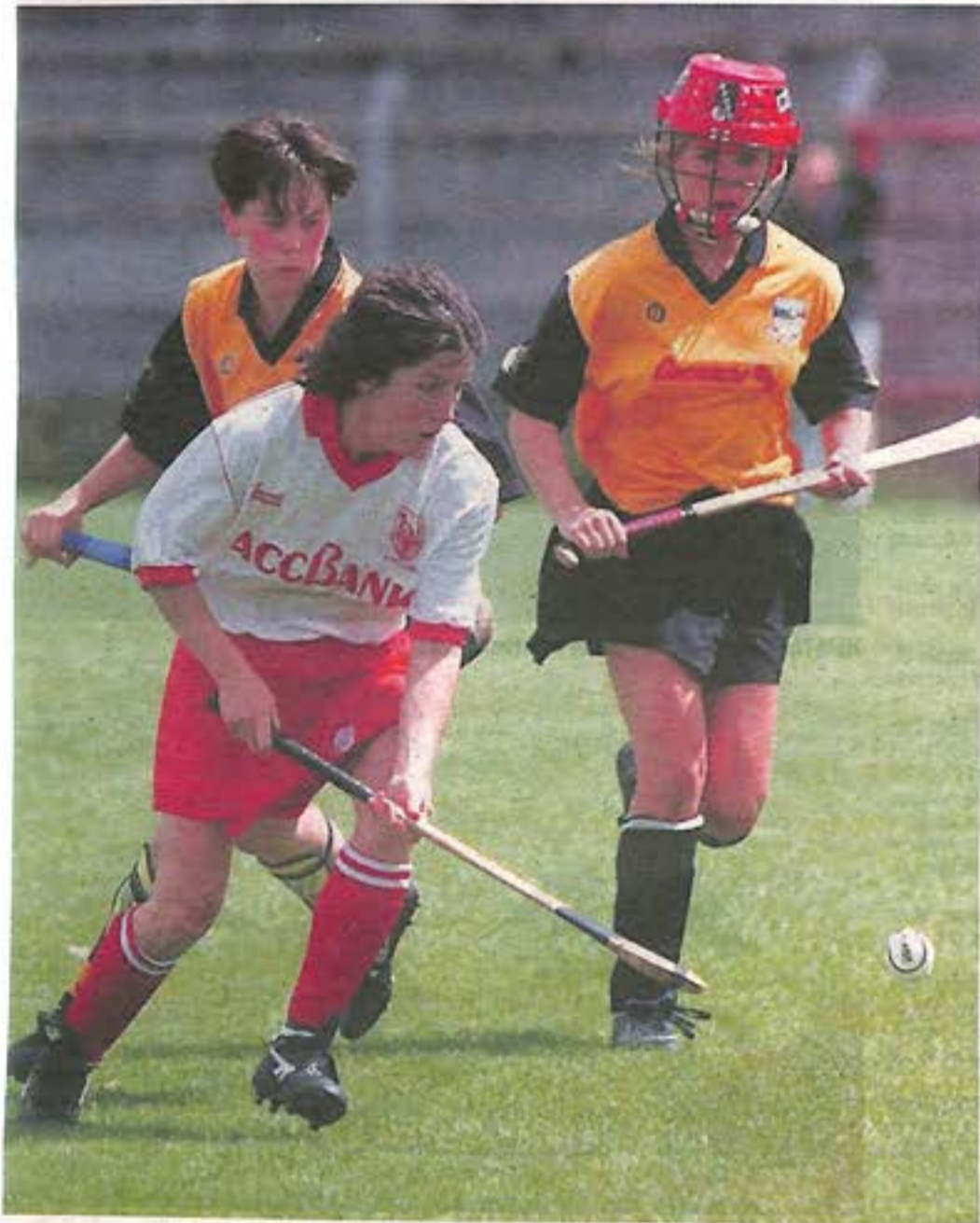
"In fairness to my predecessor Aoghan Ó Fearghail, he restarted the process and we did come to a memorandum of understanding with the two organisations.

"There's been a huge amount of progress in terms of co-operation between the three organisations. Next week there is a common player pathway for the three organisations that is going to be produced.

"Their two CEOs sit on our management committee and out of the conversation the other day with Sport Ireland we alluded to the fact that maybe similar to what we have in the GAA of Rounders and Handball having their own president and their own council, but are actually very much part of the GAA family, that we would actually pursue that federal model with camogie and ladies football and Sport Ireland have offered us help in actually pursuing that."

The Echo and Echolive are looking for your help in picking Cork's best sportsperson of the last

# Sandie ticks all the boxes to be a sporting legend



Cork's Sandie Fitzgibbon wins possession during a National League final against Kilkenny.



Sandie Fitzgibbon won four national league titles for Blarney and was capped 64 times for Ireland.

The sport of camogie has always been a relatively successful one for this county and the outstanding Sandie Fitzgibbon made a huge contribution to that success.

Sandie enjoyed a very successful career which included winning seven consecutive senior county medals with her beloved Glen Rovers.

She began playing with the Glen as a nine-year-old and won her first All-Ireland minor medal in 1978 at the age of 14.

Sandie was born in 1964 and was one of a sporting family of six sisters and one brother.

Her successes in camogie are nothing short of amazing and her most notable achievement was playing in 13 senior All-Ireland camogie finals with Cork.

At club level she won 10 Cork senior medals with Glen Rovers that included the seven-in-a-row between 1990 and 1996.

Fitzgibbon also has eight Munster Senior Championship medals and just to round off her club career she

■ Sandie won her first minor All-Ireland camogie medal with Cork at the age of 14.  
■ Fitzgibbon was on six consecutive losing Cork

teams in All-Ireland senior camogie finals up to 1991 but her dream was realised in 1992 when she captained the Rebels to win the title.

■ Sandie retired from inter-county camogie in 1997 and two years later did likewise at club level.  
■ Sandie played a total of 26

years at club level for Glen Rovers.  
■ Sandie Fitzgibbon won a total of 64 caps for Ireland at senior level.

## Sandie Fitzgibbon factfile

won four Senior All-Ireland medals in 1988, 1990, 1992, and 1993.

There is no doubting Sandie played with and against the best during her career and she looked back on it with mixed emotions.

"I would say losing six All-Ireland titles in a row was the most disappointing for me, but in a nutshell, it was the same for all my team-mates," she said.

At no stage did Sandie ever feel that she wouldn't reach the Holy Grail with the Rebels.

"Thank God our luck changed, and it was a dream come true when I captained Cork to win the All Ireland title in 1992."

## Camogie/basketball

■ Mark Woods

After playing at the top for 17 years Sandie decided to call it a day in 1997 at the age of 33.

"When you play at the top level for a long time it really does take a great deal of commitment and I felt at that time I could no longer give it the dedication that was required to play at inter-county level."

Two years later after giving Glen Rovers 26 years of incredible service she decided it was time to bow out. Sandie was also a top-class basket-

ball player and she helped the North Presentation School win the All-Ireland Cadet title in 1978.

At senior level she helped Blarney win four National League titles and three National Cups, and she also played with Lee Strand in Tralee where she helped them win national league and cup honours in her three years with the Kerry club.

Her basketball skills were dazzling and despite being only 5'-6" she had the ability to wreak havoc on court.

Indeed, Sandie's talent is still spoken about in basketball circles and to represent your country at the highest level of the sport speaks volumes of her skills.

Amazingly, throughout her playing career Sandie mixed camogie and basketball and was never fazed by the demands.

The busiest week of her career came in October 1990.

On Sunday she played an All-Ireland club camogie semi-final with Glen Rovers in Derry and immediately after the game travelled to Boston to play three senior internationals with Ireland.

Having returned to Ireland on Friday she had only two days to prepare before lining out with Glen Rovers in the All Ireland camogie final.

Sandie once again showed her incredible commitment and skills as the Glen defeated St Paul's in the decider.

In 2000 Sandie was presented with the Millennium award in Cork for her achievements in sport, an award she so richly deserved.

There are many legends in the sporting world on Leaside, but the name of Sandie Fitzgibbon will always be remembered with affection as one of Cork's finest.

HALL OF FAME... ANN AND ANGELA DOWNEY

# Kilkenny twins left an enduring imprint on the game of camogie

Downey sisters drove their county to unprecedented success for two decades with complementary skills



Colm Keys

**W**HEN Angela and Ann Downey were at boarding school in Callan, their father Shem, an All-Ireland winner with Kilkenny in 1947, would drive from their home in Ballyragget in the evenings, pick them up and drop them to a makeshift pitch, complete with temporary goalposts devised by one of the other player's fathers, on Kilkenny city's Dunmore Road to train with their club St Paul's.

Session complete, soup and sandwiches consumed, Shem would then whisk them back down to Callan and be back in Ballyragget without the girls' mother Brigid knowing a thing about it.

With a father's devotion, and with it the apparent requirement for a covert approach sometimes, and the girls' own willingness to make the most of their natural talent, prosperous camogie careers would inevitably follow.

### Graduating

By 15, Angela had played her first championship game for Kilkenny, against Cork in 1972. Two years later, with Ann graduating to the squad, the twins, now 17, were both involved as the county won its first All-Ireland senior camogie title.

Over the following 20 years, they would lay claim to the O'Duffy Cup 11 more times, their telepathy and understanding on the field the springboard for unprecedented Kilkenny dominance.

They rewrote the rules and pushed



out the parameters of a game that had trouble making an impression on the wider sporting public's psyche. But even if your interest in camogie was fleeting, there was still an awareness of who the Downeys were. They left that mark. To this day, with a new generation of stars in place, the Downey name remains instantly synonymous with the game.

Angela was the first real superstar, with her lightning speed and

assassin's instinct when the need was greatest. Her right to be considered camogie's greatest ever player is undisputed.

In the successful 1977 All-Ireland campaign she was unplayable, landing 6-3 against Tipperary, four goals against Dublin and then 2-3 against Wexford in the final. She was just 20.

"When you were in trouble you could nearly always depend on her to rescue you, get the score that was needed, regardless of whether it was a league game or an All-Ireland. She always performed," recalled Ann.

Ann herself brought steel and an engine as a midfielder that, in the words of her sister, often defied logic.

Her work ethic and devotion to her sport were unimpeachable, complementing Angela's dash and finesse.

Once, at a time when their reputation was beginning to circulate around the county, a customer in her father's butcher shop asked Shem of Ann as to whether she was 'the good one or the bad one'.

The distinction was crude as good or bad didn't come into the equation. They both elevated their games to different shades of greatness.

Yet, for all the success they enjoyed over those decades, for all the accolades they stockpiled, they both bring you back to a day in 1994, their careers ebbing towards the

twilight zone, for a high point and the perfect encapsulation of their storybook careers. By this time, they were playing with Lisdowney, a few miles from Ballyragget, having spent most of their career with city club St Paul's which drew players from all over the county who were unattached because their local parish didn't have an outlet.

But Kilkenny's success over two decades, driven by the Downeys, saw the club game in the county flourish, St Paul's lost too many players, disbanded and the girls moved back closer to home.

In the '94 final against Glen Rovers, the blue-riband Cork city team that

## The Croke Park – an oasis of comfort and convenience in the heart of Dublin

THE Croke Park, a Doyle Collection hotel, epitomises warmth of welcome and friendly service. Following significant investment last year the hotel offers a wonderful new restaurant, bar and lobby.

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### Frontline Sportstar of the Year

Vincent Hogan talks to Dawn Wallace, who accepts the award on behalf of frontline staff and their families

See News, P2-3



**Camogie legends:** Ann Downey (left) and her sister Angela accept their Irish Independent Sportstar Hall of Fame Award STEVE HUMPHREYS

**Top:** Angela celebrates Kilkenny's All-Ireland final victory over Cork in 1991; Ann lifts the O'Duffy Cup after the 1993 win against Wexford

had half-a-dozen county players to draw upon, was played in Ballyragget's GAA grounds, not far from the Downey homeplace.

That made it extra special and with so many locals around the perimeter, increasing the pressure. With just over 10 minutes remaining, though, they were 10 points down. As Ann recalls, the crowd was streaming out the gates. But a remarkable comeback saw them win by six points, Angela hitting 3-5 in total on a day that she still admits, years later, little went right for her.

"I had a nightmare," she confessed. "I remember rounding Sandy Fitzgibbon, I was being marked by her, and taking a strike. It hit the crossbar and came back. I caught it again, went to handpass it and it was deflected out. And I remember saying to myself, 'this is not my day, there is nothing going right here.'"

Ann, she recalls, was unbreakable throughout. "She had an engine on her. I'm not joking you, I don't know how she kept going. That day she covered more ground."

It was the year that they won their 12th and last All-Ireland title, marking the start of a 22-year spell without one for the county until 2016 when, with Ann back as manager and Angela a selector, they stamped their authority on the game again with the county's 13th title.

Ann didn't quit playing inter-county hurling until 1999, bowing out after an All-Ireland final that yielded

Tipperary's first-ever title. Then 42, she had outlasted Angela by a few years but they both played on with Lisdowney until 2004.

Their loyalty to each other has been unwavering through the years. To this day, nothing irks Ann more than the six-month suspension Angela was hit with after a club semi-final in 1998 that put her out of the subsequent final. St Paul's won it, beating Glenamaddy and Ann summoned everything to make sure they did that day, with a late goal, but her twin sister's absence lingered and has rankled since.

Even when we speak, she provides a reminder to prefix the word 'suspended' with 'wrongly'.

#### **Nominated**

Similarly, when Ann wasn't even nominated for a position on camogie's 'Team of the Century' in 2004, Angela - herself chosen at left corner-forward - took umbrage and didn't attend the ceremony.

Given that Ann had won three Player of the Year awards, a feat surpassed only by her sister with five (twice they won it together, in 1986 and '89), it was an unusual call, perhaps rooted in her capacity to speak her mind and point out flaws in the curation of the game.

Their lives remain intertwined. Ann works in Kilkenny city and every day she drops into Angela for lunch. The daily phone calls can get to five or six and when there was a Kilkenny

team to manage, that could increase significantly.

"She'd be forever on the phone talking hurling and would have an insight into it that I would never have," acknowledged Angela. "She'd be looking at the opposition, weighing up strength and weaknesses, whereas I would only be looking at our own team."

They see the game in a different place now. Ann makes the case that the camogie final in which Kilkenny reclaimed the title - with a dramatic win over Galway - surpassed the other three finals (football, hurling and ladies football) for entertainment.

"The 2016 semi-finals were played before the hurling games and that brought more people to the games. Needless to say, television coverage has been brilliant."

They have always pushed through glass ceilings, embracing gym work in their early years when many of their male counterparts had no inclination to squat or curl. Last year Ann took charge of the Ballyragget intermediate hurling team.

Thus, it is fitting that, in a year when Kilkenny were back on top in camogie and ladies sport thrived generally, they are recognised as the first-ever joint winners of the *Irish Independent* Hall of Fame award in association with The Croke Park Hotel.

Inseparable in life, inseparable in sport and inseparable now in recognition of two of the greatest careers camogie has known.





Cork Camogie team, sponsored by Blackbee, are linking up with Jigsaw.

## Jigsaw and Blackbee keep show on the road

IT is still not too late to put you best foot forward and hit the road in aid of Cork Camogie in association with sponsors Black Bee and Jigsaw Cork as Camán Corcaigh, the Virtual 5km is underway since the crack of dawn yesterday morning and will continue until sunset tomorrow, Sunday.

It's a great way to keep the camogie family and wider community's engaged and it also keeps the name of Cork Camogie in the mind's eye as everybody continues to observe the guidelines and sit and wait for the day we can all return to what we love doing best.

Jigsaw Cork is a free, non-judgemental and confidential mental health support service for young people aged 12 to 25 living, working or studying in Cork.

They provide guidance and support for young people who are going through a difficult or distressing time.

They also provide advice and guidance for anyone who is concerned about a young person in their life.

Proceedings got under way yesterday morning at 12 noon when Lord Mayor Cllr Joe Kavanagh and Lady Mayoress Stephanie took the first steps in the inaugural event outside City Hall.

Socially distancing they were accompanied by county camogie board officer's chairman Mairead Donovan, PRO Louise Weldon, Donie Daly representing board sponsors Blackbee and Alex O'Keefe representing Jigsaw Cork.

Getting the event under way Lord Mayor Kavanagh said he was thrilled to support the event.

"I am delighted to give my support to Cork camogie and jigsaw for their Virtual 5k and I am looking forward to taking part this weekend, getting out in the fresh air and lending support to Cork Camogie and Jigsaw."

The aim of this weekend is to get all camogie players, mentors and supporters, and friends to virtually re-connect with their club mates, families and friends.

This is a great idea while everybody is out of group training and in doing it we are also supporting Cork camogie and the fantastic service that Jigsaw provide.

It is still not too late to take part and take up the challenge and support the event. County board chairperson Mairead

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Donovan said yesterday she is encouraging everybody to row in behind the venture.

"We are delighted with the amount of people we have hitting the roads today and Sunday.

"This is our first event of 2021 and whilst we are all apart in the current climate we are still very much part of Cork camogie.

"This is a great way to be involved as a group and also support Jigsaw which provides superb services, we in Cork camogie are delighted to have been so involved and the feedback has been one of huge positivity.

"We hope to see everybody taking part and it is still not too late to register. If anybody has not registered yet please do and come out and walk."

The event has really caught the eye and received huge support from the GAA community and beyond, prominent stars such as Cork senior camogie captain Linda Collins posted a video asking everybody to take part.

Our own GAA reporter Rory Noonan has got the word out to all to get behind the event with his video clip as did All-Ireland winning Kerry senior football legend Tomas O'Se, who has rowed in behind the weekend event and he is out running the 5k today in support of Camán Corcaigh.

Jacqui Hurley, Marty Morrissey, Paudie Murray Jerry Wallace and Linda Mellerick are just a few of those who are playing their part in promoting and supporting what is sure to be a wonderful few days for Cork Camogie and Jigsaw.

Such was the excellent feedback from a lot of people who just wanted to donate there is now also an option to donate to if people want to just contribute but not take part and do 5km.

You can just go onto the Cork Camogie face book page and the link to make a donation is there.

You can still register to walk, run, jog, crawl, cycle, or even skate, do it today, tonight or tomorrow by simply going to Camán Corcaigh and you will get the link to sign up.

So now it's time to put my best foot forward as I am off to do my own 5km, I hope to see you all out and about for a great event.



Cork's Gemma O'Connor, after the defeat to Kilkenny in the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland senior camogie championship semi-final at Páirc Uí Chaoimh last year. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# Great player, better person

IT'S the end of a magnificent era: Gemma O'Connor retired from inter-county camogie during the week. We'll miss her tremendous leadership, her versatility, her athleticism, her work rate, her tough defending, and wonderful scores.

We'll never forget her magnificent, long-distance equaliser in the 2017 All-Ireland final in the closing minutes, before Julia White popped up with the injury-time winner for Cork to defeat Kilkenny.

We'll still see Gemma in the club championship (she'll continue to play for St Finbarr's) and hope that they can push on from their semi-final position of 2020.

"It was a tough decision. I never even want to say the words that I'm not going back or I'm retiring," Gemma said.

"I never envisaged myself saying it, but, I suppose, the last year has been hard in that respect.

"It was coming. I'm getting married on July 10 and, obviously, that's a priority.

"With inter-county, work, my club, and personal life, I just don't feel I have that energy anymore to juggle them all.

"When you want to play inter-county camogie, you want to give it your all and you ask yourself if you're mentally and physically up for it," Gemma said.

"I think I've spent so many years, in the last five years, I suppose over all of my career, double, triple, quadruple jobbing, and it just got a bit too hectic and I just thought, 'Look, I need to ultimately make the decision and go with it'.

"With another number of weeks' lockdown, I'd have to train alone almost as a professional athlete. I'm not in a position to relax a bit, as I don't have youth on my side.

"Going out for a small run lately, I've niggles and aches that I was fortunate enough never to have during my career, but now I'm starting to feel all of that, you do have to really go away and think," Gemma said. "It's easier if you're surrounded by a team and the support network to get you over the line when you get to the end stage of your career.

"We've all found ourselves, in these crazy times, where we don't have access to those things now. I think I just weighed up everything and went with the decision that I've been very fortunate in the last number of years.



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

"I've had a wonderful career. I've played with magnificent players and had some wonderful managers," Gemma said.

"I've had a great relationship with Paudie Murray and we've had some tremendous wins. I rang Paudie and thanked him. He's brought camogie to a different standard, with a professional set-up.

"Some of the players and the set-up I've played with have been excellent. I'm finishing not really wanting for anything. Of course, I'd love to have won another All-Ireland medal. I'd love to have 10, not nine, but if I had 10, I'd probably want 11 and that's the way it's always going to be. When you play at the top level, you always want more."

Has a weight been lifted now that the decision is made? "I suppose I'm really emotional about it. I spent most of my day probably crying about certain things.

"I'm happy that I've come to a decision. After the semi-final defeat last year in Páirc Uí Chaoimh, I was saying, 'Jeez, could I leave on this note?' but I could be saying that for ever."

Army sergeant Gemma will be kept busy, involved in the vaccination rollout when the call comes.

"That's all very exciting, too, because, at the end of the day, that's like the final phase of everything, so you're just hoping that we can get in there, get stuck in and help. However, we need to help and get everyone vaccinated," Gemma said.

"In terms of my retirement, that will free me up a bit for that."

Trying to pick out standout moments in a playing career is always hard, but Gemma's face breaks into a broad smile as she reflects on the one-point 2017 and 2018 victories over Kilkenny.

"Just because of the manner in how we won them. They brought such joy.

"To beat Kilkenny, those little moments of chance and, then again, the second year running, to do it all over again.



Cork's Gemma O'Connor with her parents, Geraldine and Donal, right, celebrating the 2014 win over Kilkenny in the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland camogie final. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

"It still makes me giddy and excited. It's those close games, where nobody wants to give each other an inch and it's like you have that little chance or luck and you take it and it works out and it's unbelievable," Gemma said.

"I'd like to also thank my club, Marian McCarthy, and the county board for the wonderful support they have given me, my teammates and managements, and I wish the girls every success for the future.

"I'd like to thank my family, my dad, Donal, my brother, Glenn, my aunts and my partner, Aoife."

"We've had great times."

Gemma's mother, Ger, was a constant at every game, but sadly passed away in 2015. Geraldine was Gemma's first mentor. She hailed from Glen Rovers and was keen to get Gemma enlisted with them.

Gemma attended one training session, but as the Glen's grounds were too far away from their home in Ballypheenane, she turned to St Finbarr's, her father's club. Ger played a key role throughout Gemma's career and they were exceptionally close.

She's smiling down at her daughter, proud of the wonderful career she had and even prouder of the wonderful person she is.

# O'Connor's ability to go off-script is part of what makes her one of the greats

**W**HEN I first encountered Gemma O'Connor, we were on opposing squads. It was the 2004 All-Ireland final — the camogie centenary, as it happened. She was lining out at number 9 for Cork; I was on the Tipp bench.

Tipperary won handsomely by 10 points that day, although Cork would beat Tipp on both subsequent occasions that we met in the final, in 2005 and 2006. More on that anon.

Over a decade later, we would wind up as clubmates when, after living in Cork city for a couple of years, I transferred from my club of origin, Moneygall, to the Barrs. The GAA is like that; it makes friends of enemies, enemies of friends. An ally on the county team might become a bitter club rival; your clubmate might break your heart in an Ashbourne match; your college team-

mate might mark you into oblivion in an intercounty game. The GAA feels infinite and epic to those who participate in it, but it's also a small world. And I can confirm that it's much better to be on the receiving end of a perfectly weighted Gemma O'Connor crossfield ball, than to be on the opposing team trying to figure out how to curb her influence.

Case in point: in 2005, O'Connor was central to Tipp's heart-break. Having started centre-forward, she and wing-back Brieghe Corkery moved to midfield at half-time, forming the



Eimear

engine that channelled the momentum of the game away from Tipp and towards Cork. From being behind by five points at the break, Cork came back to win by four, O'Connor chipping in with three vital scores.

It goes without saying O'Connor's inter-county career, all 19 years of it, is not lacking in such highlights. She played in — and won — her first All-Ireland in 2002 at the age of 17. Her most recent was in 2018, aged 33. She holds a record 11 All-Stars. Perhaps even more extraordinarily, she has appeared in all camogie finals. With those kinds of numbers, her retirement from inter-county camogie is more than earned.

There have been tough years along-side the victories, but O'Connor's All-Ireland final wins still outnumber her defeats nine to five. She's the epitome of consistent excellence over time — or, as Evanne Ni Chuilin put it on Twitter, when picking her for a fantasy team of all-time greats: "Gemma O'Connor. Power, pace, courage, versatility, longevity, humility."

I interviewed O'Connor last year for a book project, early in the first lockdown, and the slower pace and perspec-

tive of life in quarantine had made her philosophical. For the first time in years, she'd paused long enough to consider her lifestyle, and how frenetic life had become for her and for other inter-county players: Working, training, travelling, rinse, repeat.

**C**ORK'S exit in the previous year's All-Ireland semi-final at the hands of Galway had also hit her hard, an experience she described as having the rug pulled out from under her. Cork had been buzzing on the back of their All-Ireland wins in 2017 and 2018, and a three in a row looked within reach. It wasn't to be. That said, O'Connor's drive to play has never been about stats and milestones, like for example claiming a tenth All-Ireland medal. Her motivation has always been the challenge.

That hunger ebbed only once in her career: After the death of her mother Geraldine in 2015, just weeks after Cork's victory over Galway in the All-Ireland final. After the game, O'Connor gave an emotional interview in which she dedicated the win to her mother. It was one of the only matches she'd ever played that her mam hadn't

been able to attend. Geraldine, herself a camogie player and coach, was O'Connor's closest and most important mentor, and, for a time, camogie just didn't feel right without her mother there to discuss and analyse and enjoy the games. By O'Connor's admission, it wasn't until 2017 that she began to really relish the sport again.

She would need to muster all her focus and single-mindedness that year, when she tore her MCL in the 2017 All-Ireland semi-final against Galway in Semple Stadium. She recalled holing up alone in a B&B in Limerick after the match, continually icing her knee, allowing herself a cry because she felt there was no way she'd be able to play in the final three weeks later. She spent the intervening time frantically rehabilitating: icing, tiny movements, tentative runs. In a way she enjoyed it; she'd taken time off work to focus on her recovery and it was like being a full-time professional athlete. Her goal was to be able to tog out for the final at least. Not only did she tog, she started at centre-back — strapped up to the nines — and had an influential game, topped off by that iconic equaliser.

With the announcement of O'Connor's retirement, it's been nice to see the Point trending on Twitter again, a breathtaking score for its cool decisiveness as well as for its technical prowess. In the clip, Orla Cotter hits her a short hurley pass along the 65. In one smooth movement, O'Connor takes it and turns and strikes. No looking for options, no hesitation; just the knowledge that she could nail it. It looks almost zen.

Scoring points from the 65 doesn't happen too often in camogie. Many players wouldn't have the range, and even among those that do, it would be seen as slightly reckless to go for it — to risk a wide, or the ball dropping into the goalie's hand. Much safer to let the ball in to the inside forwards, or to create an option for someone else. O'Connor's ability to go off-script, to break with convention and do something unexpected, is part of what makes her one of the all-time greats. If I could add a few attributes to Evanne Ni Chuilin's string of superlatives, it would be decision-making and leadership.

An extraordinary inter-county career has come to a close. And now — all bias aside! — long may her Barrs career flourish. See page 17

# O'Connor still coming to terms with call to end Cork career

Eoghan Cormican

After 19 years representing her county at senior level, the reality that she is no longer a Cork camogie player has yet to sink in for Gemma O'Connor.

The nine-time All-Ireland winner pressed stop on a glittering inter-county career on Tuesday. It was a decision not easily made, but the correct one nonetheless, she feels.

Having first pulled on a red shirt at the age of 13 in the late 90s, O'Connor's Cork career — underage and senior — spanned four decades and saw her collect a record 11 All Stars. She was 17 when she won her first senior All-Ireland in 2002 and just 20 when named Player of the Year in 2005.

"It has been a long road of wearing the Cork jersey, but a great one," the 35-year-old said yesterday.

The fact that it is at an end will take time to get her head around, however. "It hasn't sunk in, not at all," she said. "I am quite an emotional person as it is, but definitely it has been an emotional 24 to 48 hours. I was sitting in work today and having a small bit of an outer-body experience.

"Sport has been a massive journey in my life. That journey affects everybody. It isn't just me, it is my family and friends. It affects all those people, going up the road together to games, meeting beforehand for a coffee, and meeting in

the pub afterwards to discuss the game and celebrate or commiserate. They are the things I have been thinking about throughout the day.

"And I know when I properly reflect, what'll come flooding back are certain moments in different games, coming down to Cork after you won or lost an All-Ireland, and going training early on a Saturday or Sunday morning. And you are thinking also of all the girls you are leaving behind.

"In one sense, you almost feel like you are kind of stepping away from it and leaving people down. It is almost like you are throwing the towel in.

"I'd hate to admit that, but every sports person or athlete, irrespective of what level you played at, there comes a time where you have to walk away. I have been very fortunate to have a fantastic career, so I am very grateful for that. For me, the time is right."

Injury meant the army sergeant played only one game in last year's shortened All-Ireland Championship and while she toyed with the idea of a 20th season in red, given the 2021 campaign will be similarly truncated, her mind and body said otherwise.

"I don't feel fresh, if I'm being honest — I feel a bit fatigued," the St Finbarr's clubwoman said.

"A small weight has lifted off my shoulders now that I have made the decision. I am very fortunate to be from



Cork's Gemma O'Connor has won nine All-Irelands and 11 All Stars. Picture: Inpho/Bryan Keane

Cork and to be born into that legacy of Cork camogie. I am so privileged to have been a part of it."

Her wish for the inter-county game as she departs is that the Camogie Association put the correct rules in place to "best showcase the ability and athleticism of the players they have".

"I say that in good faith," she said. "I just want the game of camogie to be in the best position possible."



Ballygarvan's Michaela Buckley pulls away from Milford's Nicole O'Connor in the SE Systems Senior Camogie Championship match at Castle Road. Picture: Howard Crowdy

# Icon Gemma calls time on intercounty career

CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

CORK'S legendary camogie star Gemma O'Connor has called time on her illustrious career after 19 years of wearing the red and white senior jersey for Cork. Holder of nine All-Ireland titles and 11 All-Stars in addition to National League and Munster championship titles Gemma is an icon of the game.

Her announcement wasn't entirely unexpected but a shock all the same. We'll miss her tremendous leadership on the field, her versatility, her incredible athleticism, her work rate, tough defending and wonderful scores. Here in Cork, we'll never forget her magnificent long distance

equaliser in the 2017 final in the closing minutes before Julia White popped up with the injury time winner to defeat Kilkenny.

An emotional Gemma speaking earlier said: "It was a tough decision. I never even want to say the words that I'm not going back or I'm retiring. I never envisaged myself saying it but I suppose the last year has been hard in that respect. It was coming. I'm getting married on the 10th of July and obviously that's a priority. But really I said to myself,

what am I waiting for? "I think I've spent so many years in the last five years, I suppose over all of my career, doubling, tripling, quadrupling jobbing and it just got a bit too hectic and I just thought look I need to ultimately make the decision and go with it. "I've had a wonderful career; I've played with magnificent players and had some wonderful managers. I've had a great relationship with Paudie Murray over the past number of years and we've had some tremendous wins".

Trying to pick out special moments is hard but Gemma does say that the 2017 and 2018 vic-

tories over Kilkenny, by a single point, in the finals was something special, the little bit of luck and that split second decision to grab it which saw them over the line. "I'd like to thank my club, Marian McCarthy and the county board for the wonderful support they have given me, my teammates and managements and I wish the girls every success for the future.

Cork are in a transitional period with a number of young players now coming through and with that and some of the older girls taking on a more leadership role they'll be coming strong".

# Cork Camogie team up with Jigsaw in virtual 5km fund-raiser

■ Breda Graham

THE people of Cork are being invited to put their best foot forward and hit the road in support of Cork Camogie and Jigsaw Cork as Camán Corcaigh, the virtual 5km gets under way.

Organisers are inviting people to sign up and get involved as a way of keeping the camogie family and wider community engaged, and keep the name of Cork Camogie in the mind's eye as everybody continues to observe current guidelines.

Proceedings got under way yesterday morning when Lord Mayor Joe Kavanagh and Lady Mayoress Stephanie Kavanagh took the first steps in the inaugural event outside City Hall.

Mr Kavanagh said he was "delighted" to give his support to Cork Camogie and Jigsaw and looked forward to "getting out in the fresh air" at the weekend.

County board chairperson Mairead Donovan encouraged people to get involved over the weekend.

"This is a great way to be involved as a group and also support Jigsaw, which provides superb services. We in Cork Camogie are delighted to have been so involved and the feedback has been one of huge positivity. We hope to see everybody taking part and it is still not too late to register. If anybody has not registered yet, please do and come out and walk," she said.

Those who cannot hit the road this weekend can also donate via the Camán Corcaigh website: [www.popupraces.ie/race/caman-corcaigh-virtual-5k/](http://www.popupraces.ie/race/caman-corcaigh-virtual-5k/).



Gemma O'Connor, Cork Camogie, with Lady Mayoress Stephanie Kavanagh and Lord Mayor Joe Kavanagh at the launch of the Cork Camogie and Jigsaw Virtual 5km, which is taking place over the weekend. Picture: Jim Coughlan

## Volunteer O'Connell gets her just reward

CAMOGIE

■ John Bohane

CARRIGTWOHILL Camogie Club club member Lorraine O'Connell was recently awarded the Camogie Associations Cork Volunteer of the Year award for 2020.

The dedicated club volunteer was awarded the prestigious award following years of remarkable and dedicated service in a variety of roles with the camogie club.

"It was a great moment for my family and I. It was a huge honour and a great achievement. I never knew I was nominated so when I received the email saying I had won this award I was in total shock.

"It was a nice surprise to get however. I was thrilled to accept this award on behalf of Carrigtwohill Camogie Club."

Lorraine, who hails from Kildare, initially got involved with the Carrigtwohill club when her daughters began to play camogie with their local club. Subsequently, she moved into coaching and helping out with the club.

"It is a great way to meet people and make contacts in a new community. I had moved to the area so I was thrilled to join the club.

"I played a bit with the club, before moving on to coaching underage teams and then advancing into administrative roles.

"It is good to give back. Our numbers were small from both a playing and administrative perspective at the start, but they have grown substantially in recent years."

Carrigtwohill currently field teams from U6 level up to the minor grade. This year, they are fielding a team in the minor grade for the first time in their history.

"Our numbers have increased significantly in recent years. We have invested a lot of time and effort into recruiting members and coaches.

"There is great coaching going on within the club. We had a very strong U16 team in the last few years who achieved great success. These players will now feature in the minor grade this year which is a great achievement.

"A big priority for us is to grow our members and ensure they keep progressing up along the age groups. A big target for us in the coming years is to field a junior team."

Lorraine is currently very active within the club trying to recruit more female coaches who can pass on their knowledge to the growing numbers of underage players.

"I am always looking to add more female coaches. The more numbers we have the better."

The award winner is confident the camogie club possess a bright future.

"We have great facilities, a very strong and united committee and growing playing numbers. The future is very bright."

## Inter-county 2022 panel target for Mackey

GAA

■ Paddy Hickey

CORK camogie player Pamela Mackey has revealed she is not yet ready to permanently close the door on her inter-county career.

Contrary to the belief in some circles, the five-time All-Ireland winner has not made a decision to exclusively focus on her career with Douglas for the remaining years of her playing days.

"I've chosen to take a break from playing with Cork in this year's campaign, but hopefully I'll be back playing with the county in next year's league and championship", said the long-serving defender, whose fellow Rebel Gemma O'Connor has announced her retirement in the wake of nine All-Ireland senior wins and 11 All-Star awards.

"I've been playing with the Cork senior team since I was 16 years of age, but I'm still only 28, and I would like to think that I'll still be playing inter-county camogie when I'm well into my 30s.

"Over this year, I intend to keep in very good physical shape and that will make it easier for me to make the transition back to inter-county camogie when next year comes around. Already, I've started to do a good of running, and because of my commitments with Cork and Douglas this was something I was unable to do for the last 13 years or so.

"I'm up to doing around 13km at the moment and my plan is to gradually build up my endurance and my speed to where I would be capable of running the distance of a marathon," said Mackey.

Her twin sister Katriona also lines out with the county and intends to play on this year with Paudie Murray's charges.

Unlike the campaigns of 2009, 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018 when Pamela and Katriona helped the Leesiders to All-Ireland glory, the Mackey twins had their hopes of O'Duffy Cup success dashed at the semi-final stage of the last two campaigns.

But Pamela, who, along with her team-mates, suffered penultimate disappointment at the hands of Kilkenny last year and Galway in 2019 (by agonising two-point and one-point margins) is very hopeful that Cork will increase its haul of All-Ireland camogie titles to 29 in this year's championship.

"There are a lot of very promising young players coming through from the Cork minor teams who won the All-Ireland in 2018 and 2019 and that has to be a big plus for the senior side this year, and also for future years", said the four-time All Star award winner who has played in every defensive position at inter-county level, the wing-back berths being her favourite roles.

"So I would be optimistic that, along with Kilkenny and Galway, Cork will be there or thereabouts in this year's championship."

## McGrath fears club games will go unplayed

Paul Keane

Galway and Sarsfields camogie star Siobhán McGrath is fearful outstanding All-Ireland club series games will be scrapped. McGrath scored 1-4 including the late match-winning goal to see off Slaughtneil in last March's All-Ireland senior club decider at Croke Park.

Sarsfields retained the Galway camogie title by defeating Ardahan in October though all club activities were halted shortly afterwards. The Munster club championship was down to the last two — Inagh Kilnamona (Clare) v Drom & Inch (Tipperary) — at that stage, with no fresh date as of yet.

It means Sarsfields could be denied the opportunity to retain their All-Ireland title, this year at least.

"It's a strange one, it's still up in the air really," said McGrath of the All-Ireland series. "The Camogie Association haven't come out and said it's cancelled so as a player you still have that small glimmer of hope but as the weeks are going on, it is harder to see when they can fit it in.

"You have to be of the mindset that it is going ahead until you get official confirmation. We're trying to stay ticking over at home. Before Christmas we had great hope for it, we thought everything would be fine. It's up in the air now and in fairness to the Camogie Association, it's hard for them to give a date. No-one knows what's happening."

University of Limerick student McGrath was speaking at the announcement that 100 inter-county players are to benefit from scholarship funding.

The Gaelic Players Association-supported initiative provides support for an extra 45 players this year, compared to 2020, and 31 of the 32 counties are represented.

"These sorts of scholarships are invaluable for camogie players because we don't get expenses the same as men and all of this can help keep us being able to play at a high level and to support ourselves through college," said McGrath.

An All-Ireland finalist with Galway at Croke Park last December, McGrath also urged the Camogie Association, LGFA and GAA to join forces sooner rather than later.

"It's 2021 and we're still three separate organisations, it really doesn't make sense," said McGrath. "But hopefully a lot more people are talking about it now and it's more of a conversation and you'd hope, you'd really, really hope that in the near future they can come together."

Speaking on International Women's Day, McGrath suggested there's still a distance to travel to secure greater respect for ladies games. "There's definitely more respect for us, that's 100% the case, but I also do think there is a massive journey still to go on. It clearly isn't really at the destination it needs to be at just yet."



The Fitzgibbon family at a recent function L to R: Denise, Cecilia, Micheal, Dolores, Patsy, Anna, Sandie, and Mary.



John Maher, Labour Party councillor, dropped into the Glen Rovers Camogie Academy and presented them with a First-Aid kit.

## Waiting game for clubs as date for return to play still undecided

AS sporting organisations await a decision as to when they can get back to training, and then playing, county committees have the dilemma of organising their season ahead and of also clearing the backlog from 2020.

It is a very difficult task: A huge amount of games will need to be played in a short time.

The league season usually begins in late March/early April, but it is hard to see leagues taking place this year.

Given that clubs will need pre-season preparation when the return to play is announced, we may have to go straight to championship, but it is just a waiting game, until we get some clarity on when activities can resume.

Last season was condensed and, to their credit, the county juvenile camogie committee got a huge number of games played in a short period, thanks, in the main, to the co-operation of the clubs.

There was little or no complaining about times, dates, or venues; it was simply all hands to the pumps and get the matches played.

The huge efforts made by all the clubs and by the county board and the juvenile committee cannot be underestimated: They dug in and got the championships under way.

The juvenile committee — Mairead Donovan, as lead co-ordinator, joined by Darina Foley, Eileen Healy, Eilish Nyhan, Eithne Allen, Hilda O'Mahony, Liam Ryan, Natascha Durity, and William Wallace — played their championships in groups, with the top teams progressing to the knockout stages of the championships and the second-placed teams going to the knockout stages of the plates.

All the adult championships were run on a back-door basis and this was a change in format for the intermediate and junior clubs, but it worked well.

All clubs were happy with the organisation of the championships, which were run off superbly.

The aim of the juvenile committee was to get all championship finals completed by the third weekend in October. Everything was running to plan, with eight U16 finals planned for that weekend, until Level-5 restrictions hit and all finals had to be cancelled.

It was a pity, given that one

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

more weekend would have seen the calendar done and dusted.

The juvenile board is now faced with a backlog to clear before they can even think about a new calendar of games, as it is only fair that competitions be completed.

For many of the young players involved, it may be their only opportunity to ever play in a county final and for a 16-year-old to miss out on this would be so unfair.

The U16 Premier championship has one semi-final to be played, between Aghabullogue and Aghada, with the winners playing the holders, Sarsfields, in the county final.

The U16 Premier plate final is ready to go, with Eire Óg down to meet Inniscarra.

All set and ready to play in the U16 A championship are Glen Rovers, who will be meeting Midleton.

The U16 A plate final will see Sarsfields 2 and St Finbarr's meet.

The U16 B championship final is ready to go, with Buttevant taking on BallinacCarthy, while in the U16 B plate final, Carrigaline 1 will meet Castlelyons.

One U16 C championship final was played, with Bandon taking the title at the expense of Kinsale in a thrilling contest.

There are also two outstanding U14 games to be played.

In the U14 B cup final, Barryroe are through to meet St Fanahan's and in the U14B Plate final, Banteer will meet Carrigaline 1.

So, again, it is simply a waiting game now, but chairperson Mairead Donovan has assured clubs that when the return to play is announced, the clubs involved in last year's finals will be given priority and all finals will be played.

It will be hard on clubs to prepare for these finals, given that most players have been inactive since December, but, at this stage, all everybody wants to do is get back out there, so let's hope it is sooner rather than later.

In the meantime, everybody stay safe and well.



Aedin McCarthy, the late Cork and Munster camogie official, is new GAA president Larry McCarthy's mother.

# McCarthy backs women in GAA



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

LARRY MCCARTHY, 66, is the new president of the GAA.

A native of Cork city, born in Bishopstown, he is a member of the Sligo football club in New York and has served with New York GAA in a number of capacities, including secretary, chairman and Central Council delegate.

A university lecturer McCarthy became the first overseas president of the GAA last week.

Of course, behind every great GAA man is a great GAA woman.

Larry is the son of the late Cork and Munster camogie official Aedin McCarthy.

Aedin was treasurer of the Cork board for three years and treasurer of Munster council for 18 years.

She won Cork schools championship medals with St Aloysius school and Cork senior championship medals with Old Als.

Aedin was a great character and would keep the whole company entertained.

Larry's sisters, of which he has six, played camogie for Mount Mercy and Bishopstown.

It's no surprise then that the president has already included woman on all of his committees with Mary Judge, Aoife Farrelly and Julie Galbraith appointed.

They will hold positions on the Central Competitions Control Committee (CCCC), the Central Hearings Committee (CHC) and the Central Appeals Committee (CAC) respectively.

This act argues well for the continuation of the good work done to date on the integration of the Camogie Association, LGFA and the GAA.

In his first address as president and in his many interviews afterwards Larry rounded on keyboard warriors, saying they discourage volunteerism within the association.



Uachtarán Tofa Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Larry McCarthy.

This applies to all entities under the GAA umbrella.

In his first address following the official handover from outgoing president John Horan at GAA Congress, McCarthy echoed comments made by his predecessor in his closing remarks in the role.

Hitting out at a "social media gang mentality", Horan said: "Many of our members, be they volunteers or officials, have been on the receiving end of this venom and bile which exposes social media not as a tool for betterment but as a dark and dangerous place that cannot be allowed to be a form of bullying that may act as a barrier to encouraging people to step up and make themselves available for volunteering or accepting positions."

McCarthy elaborated on that in his own address and made an indirect reference to the Donald Trump administration when emphasising the importance of choice of words.

He said: "One of the lessons that we might learn from the recent near collapse of democracy in the United States is that words matter. What one says matters, what one puts in the public domain matters."

"In that regard I would ask all of us to tone down the tenor of our public com-

mentary. Social media has wonderful aspects to it, but there is also a dark side. One of which is, in the words of sports commentator Bob Costas, 'a corrosive assault on civility'.

"Let's think about that, 'a corrosive assault on civility'.

"By all means let us express an opinion, but please let's do it in a manner that is respectful. There is no place for the type of abuse that many of our players, volunteers and officials have been subjected to in recent years.

"By all means argue the point in a public discussion but do so in a manner which does justice not only to yourself but to the GAA. If you are one of those keyboard warriors who, in cowardly fashion hides behind nom de plumes and aliases, and castigates our officials, players or referees, stop.

"Your behaviour not only has a corrosive effect on civility, it has a long term corrosive effect on the GAA as it discourages people from volunteering as members of our association."

McCarthy also referred to what he calls the "critics collective"; he explained: "It is a term that I loosely use to describe our members who have transitioned from the playing field to the role of commentator or prognosticator on the national airwaves. Their comments, sometimes well meaning, can have a huge negative impact on our players, referees, and officials."

"Nobody sets out to have a poor game, least of all the players, but it happens, and it happens on the big stage as often as not.

"Rest assured that the players and officials are the first people to know that they have not performed to their potential and added critique can have a distinctly negative impact not only on the player, referee or official, but on their extended families as well."

As incoming president McCarthy told delegates recently at their annual Connaught GAA convention that he supported measures suggested by the Connaught secretary John Prenty who wants limits placed on the amount spent on inter-county sides.

All very positive first steps from the new president, a lot of focus on important topics which will enhance the ladies associations as well.



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

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

Amongst the winners for the champions were full-back Claire Phelan, left half-back Davina Tobin, midfield Grace Walsh, left half-forward Denise Gaule, full-forward Miriam Walsh and left corner-forward Anne Dalton.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Speaking at the event Camogie Association President Kathleen Woods said:**

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

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

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

**2020 All-Stars team sponsored by Liberty Insurance:**

**Goalkeeper:** Áine Slattery (Tipperary) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Right Corner-Back:** Shauna Healy (Galway) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Full-Back:** Claire Phelan (Kilkenny) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Left Corner-Back:** Mary Ryan (Tipperary) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Right Half-Back:** Hannah Looney (Cork) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Centre Half-Back:** Karen Kennedy (Tipperary) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Left Half-Back:** Davina Tobin (Kilkenny) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Midfield:** Chloe Sigerson (Cork) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Midfield:** Grace Walsh (Kilkenny) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Right Half-Forward:** Niamh Rockett (Waterford) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Centre Half-Forward:** Orla Cronin (Cork) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Left Half-Forward:** Denise Gaule (Kilkenny) – 4<sup>th</sup> Time Winner

**Right Corner-Forward:** Orlaith McGrath (Galway) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Full-Forward:** Miriam Walsh (Kilkenny) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Left Corner-Forward:** Anne Dalton (Kilkenny) – 7<sup>th</sup> Time Winner

**2020 Soaring Stars sponsored by Liberty Insurance:**

**Goalkeeper:** Aedin Lowry (Laois) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Right Corner-Back:** Claire Coffey (Meath) – 3<sup>rd</sup> Time Winner

**Full-Back:** Dearbhla Magee (Down) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Left Corner-Back:** Chloe Drain (Antrim) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Right Half-Back:** Niamh Donnelly (Antrim) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Centre Half-Back:** Fionnuala Carr (Down) – 5<sup>th</sup> Time Winner

**Left Half-Back:** Clodagh Tynan (Laois) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Midfield:** Róisín O’Keeffe (Cavan) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Midfield:** Paula O’Hagan (Down) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Right Half-Forward:** Leanne Donnelly (Armagh) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Centre Half-Forward:** Sara-Louise Graffin (Down) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Left Half-Forward:** Maeve Kelly (Antrim) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Right Corner-Forward:** Niamh Mallon (Down) – 5<sup>th</sup> Time Winner

**Full-Forward:** Ciara Donnelly (Armagh) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Left Corner-Forward:** Sorcha McCartan (Down) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**2020 Manager of the Year sponsored by Liberty Insurance:**

Brian Dowling, Kilkenny – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**2020 Camogie Association/WGPA Players’ Player of the Year sponsored by Liberty Insurance:**

**Senior Players’ Player of the Year:** Denise Gaule (Kilkenny) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Time Winner

**Intermediate Players’ Player of the Year:** Niamh Mallon (Down) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

**Junior Players’ Player of the Year:** Ciara Donnelly (Armagh) – 1<sup>st</sup> Time Winner

# Virtual All Stars for Looney, Sigerson, and Cronin

CORK'S Hannah Looney, Chloe Sigerson and Orla Cronin have been honoured at the virtual All-Star ceremony. It was a first award for free-taking centre-forward Cronin, and a second each for attacking wing-back Looney and midfielder Sigerson.

Naturally, All-Ireland champions Kilkenny dominate the 2020 Camogie All-Stars sponsored by Liberty Insurance, taking six places on this year's selection.

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

Amongst the winners for the champions were full-back Claire Phelan, left half-back Davina Tobin, midfielder Grace Walsh, left half-forward Denise Gaule, full-forward Miriam Walsh and left corner-forward Anne Dalton.

All-Ireland runners-up Galway are represented

## CAMOGIE

### Éamonn Murphy

with right corner-back Shauna Healy and right corner-forward Orlaith McGrath.

Tipperary players Aine Slattery (goalkeeper), Mary Ryan (left corner-back) and Karen Kennedy (centre half-back) receive their first All-Stars. Waterford captain and right half-forward Niamh Rockett completes this year's winning selection.

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

Kilkenny's Denise Gaule also collected the Camogie Association/WGPA Senior Players' Player of the Year award following on from her match-winning performance in the All-Ireland Senior decider.

### All-Stars team sponsored by Liberty Insurance:

- Goalkeeper: Aine Slattery (Tipperary) – 1st.
- Right corner-back: Shauna Healy (Galway) – 2nd.
- Full-back: Claire Phelan (Kilkenny) – 2nd.
- Left corner-back: Mary Ryan (Tipperary) – 1st.
- Right half-back: Hannah Looney (Cork) – 2nd.
- Centre half-back: Karen Kennedy (Tipp) – 1st.
- Left half-back: Davina Tobin (Kilkenny) – 1st.
- Midfield: Chloe Sigerson (Cork) – 2nd Midfield: Grace Walsh (Kilkenny) – 2nd.
- Right half-forward: Niamh Rockett (Waterford) – 1st.
- Centre half-forward: Orla Cronin (Cork) – 1st.
- Left half-forward: Denise Gaule (Kilkenny) – 4th.
- Right corner-forward: Orlaith McGrath (Galway) – 1st.
- Full-forward: Miriam Walsh (Kilkenny) – 2nd, Left corner-forward: Anne Dalton (Kilkenny) – 7th.

# Kilkenny sweep the boards at Camogie All Star awards

All-Ireland senior camogie champions Kilkenny have six players on the All Stars team which was announced during a virtual awards ceremony on Saturday evening.

And there were further celebrations for the Cats as Denise Gaule was named the Camogie Association/WGPA Senior Players' Player of the Year while Brian Dowling was named as Manager of the Year for the first time after guiding his team to glory in December.

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

Full-back Claire Phelan, left half-back Davina Tobin, midfielder Grace Walsh, left half-forward Gaule, full-forward Miriam Walsh, and left corner-forward Anne Dalton all collected awards on the back of their All-Ireland-winning season.

Galway's right corner-back Shauna Healy and right corner-forward Orlaith McGrath were honoured, as



Kilkenny's Denise Gaule was named Players' Player of the Year at Saturday night's Camogie All Stars. Picture: James Crombie/Inpho

were Tipperary players Aine Slattery (goalkeeper), Mary Ryan (left corner-back), and Karen Kennedy (centre half-back).

Cork trio Hannah Looney (right half-back), Chloe Sigerson (midfield), and Orla Cronin (centre half-forward) along with Waterford captain and right half-forward Niamh

Rockett completed this year's winning selection.

Meanwhile, All-Ireland Intermediate champions Down led the 2020 Soaring Stars Awards with six players.

2020 All Stars team sponsored by Liberty Insurance: Goalkeeper: Aine Slattery (Tipperary); Right Corner-Back: Shauna Healy (Galway); Full-Back: Claire Phelan (Kilkenny); Left Corner-Back:

Mary Ryan (Tipperary); Right Half-Back: Hannah Looney (Cork); Centre Half-Back: Karen Kennedy (Tipperary); Left Half-Back: Davina Tobin (Kilkenny); Midfield: Chloe Sigerson (Cork); Midfield: Grace Walsh (Kilkenny); Right Half-Forward: Niamh Rockett (Waterford); Centre Half-Forward: Orla Cronin (Cork); Left Half-Forward: Denise Gaule (Kilkenny); Right Corner-Forward: Orlaith McGrath (Galway); Full-Forward: Miriam Walsh (Kilkenny); Left Corner-Forward: Anne Dalton (Kilkenny).

2020 Soaring Stars sponsored by Liberty Insurance: Goalkeeper: Aedin Lowry (Laois); Right Corner-Back: Claire Coffey (Meath); Full-Back: Dearbhla Magee (Down); Left Corner-Back: Chloe Drain (Antrim); Right Half-Back: Niamh Donnelly (Antrim); Centre Half-Back: Fionnuala Carr (Down); Left Half-Back: Clodagh Tynan (Laois); Midfield: Roisin O'Keefe (Cavan); Midfield: Paula O'Hagan (Down); Right Half-Forward: Leanne Donnelly (Armagh); Centre Half-Forward: Sara-Louise Griffin (Down); Left Half-Forward: Maeve Kelly (Antrim); Right Corner-Forward: Niamh Mallon (Down); Full-Forward: Ciara Donnelly (Armagh); Left Corner-Forward: Sorcha McCartan (Down).

2020 Manager of the Year: Brian Dowling, Kilkenny.

2020 Camogie Association/WGPA Senior Players' Player of the Year: Denise Gaule (Kilkenny).

Intermediate Players' Player of the Year: Niamh Mallon (Down).

Junior Players' Player of the Year: Ciara Donnelly (Armagh).

# Camogie chiefs set to tackle tackling

## Eoghan Cormican

Camogie's experimental playing rules will be voted on at next month's virtual Congress, with incoming president Hilda Breslin describing as "very positive" the feedback to the rules trialled last year.

Camogie Congress will take place on Saturday, April 10, and unlike the recent GAA and LGFA Congresses, there will be no deferral of contentious motions to an in-person Special Congress.

There are six proposed playing rules delegates will vote on, one of which, if passed, would permit a player to shoulder an opponent. Most of the proposed rules require two-thirds backing if they are to come into effect at club and inter-county level for the 2021 season.

At present, the Camogie Association rulebook states that a player may tackle an opponent by "shadowing the player without deliberately interfering with

"There was always physicality within the game, I don't accept there wasn't physicality. This [proposed change], maybe, has brought consistency to the application of the rule and it has probably clarified it a little. It is not full contact, it is minimal and it can't be dangerous play," said Breslin. "In our feedback and in any of the surveys we have done, that is coming back as probably the most positive trial rule."

The other proposed changes include allowing a quick puckout after a wide; a player deemed to be persistently fouling (two deliberate fouls) will be given a 'tick' by the referee, followed by a yellow card if they commit another foul after receiving said tick; allowing a free be taken from the hand if the player is fouled inside their own 45-metre line; outlawing the intentional dropping of the hurley and hand-passed goals; and only one person may stand on the goalline for a penalty.

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At present, the Camogie Association rulebook states that a player may tackle an opponent by "shadowing the player without deliberating interfering with the hurley or body of an opponent".

The rulebook also says a camogie player cannot "deliberately shoulder an opponent".

This lack of permitted physical contact is expected to be done away with at Congress, with the proposal that "a player may use minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on, once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the ball" likely to achieve the necessary 66% support.

Hilda Breslin, who will take over from Kathleen Woods as Camogie Association president at next month's Congress, said the feedback to the trialling of this rule during last year's League and All-Ireland Championship had been "exceptionally positive".

"There was always physicality within the game, I don't accept there wasn't physicality. This [proposed change], maybe, has brought consistency to the application of the rule and it has probably clarified it a little. It is not full contact, it is minimal and it can't be dangerous play," said Breslin. "In our feedback and in any of the surveys we have done, that is coming back as probably the most positive trial rule."

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"Under Camogie Association rules, we can only take playing rules to Congress every three years. 2021 is a playing rules year. We have had very positive feedback so we are going to Congress with the trial rules. An in-person Congress wouldn't happen until Autumn and that for us would be too late. We'd miss another whole season, which we didn't want to do. They will be voted on individually, one by one, in the hope that we would get them all through."

Any of the proposed playing rules passed at Congress will come into effect 30 days later on May 10. If inter-county competitions throw-in earlier than May 10, Ard Chomhairle has the power to make any new playing rule operational before this date.



Shirley Moloney's Zoom sessions with county champions Courcey Rovers are the stuff of legend

# 'When we log off Zoom sessions now everyone says goodbye champions!'

BY GER MCCARTHY

IN the final moments of the 2020 county senior camogie championship decider, Courcey Rovers, closing in on an historic triumph, were in pole position. They led Inniscarra by 5-12 to 1-12.

They were minutes from the club's first-ever county senior championship title. Defending champions Inniscarra were on the ropes.

That was also the moment when Courcey Rovers selector Joey Gallagher decided to pick up his fellow selector Shirley Moloney and throw her over his shoulder.

She didn't know what was happening until the pitch appeared upside down. Moloney told him that the game was far from over. Gallagher carefully placed her back on the ground before pointing to his watch and then to the scoreboard.

'I didn't care,' Moloney says. 'Even with a four-goal lead, I was pleading for that final whistle.'

'When it went, I couldn't believe we had finally done it. It was a pinch-me moment: Courcey Rovers were county champions for the first time. I ran on to the pitch to find my sister Ashling. All I could say was we have done it, we have done it. It took about a week for it to sink in. Even today, it still feels a bit surreal.'

'A first senior county title is what Courcey Rovers had been aiming to achieve for over 21 years. The squad had come close on a few occasions but only because they never reached their full potential.'

Who or what was the X-factor that got Rovers over the line? Surely, Moloney's now-legendary lockdown Zoom sessions played a role.

\*\*\*  
'I remember thinking after my first Courcey Rovers training session that Shirley was a bit of a lunatic, but in a good way,' Cork senior Saoirse McCarthy laughs.

Courcey's captain Karyn Keohane is another who sings her praises.

'Shirley is a straight talker, but players appreciate that. Even now when I go for a run near

**'You'd hear the odd voice shouting back at you saying, "Jesus, Shirley, are you losing your mind or what?"'**  
— Shirley Moloney

home, I can hear Shirley in my head saying "Karyn, your head will give up long before your body", Keohane says.

A well-respected former Cork camogie PRO and long-serving Courcey Rovers player and coach, she got on board with the senior management team last year, adding her knowledge and experience to that of Mike Boland (manager), and selectors, Kevin Hannon and Joey Gallagher.

Rovers were coming off a disappointing 2019 and had lost the 2018 county senior decider to Inniscarra. The raw material was there for a positive season. Then Covid-19 struck and changed everything.

'I came on board in 2020 and we started training in CIT,' Moloney explains.

'Next, we began running in the ball alley at home and had a few sessions under our belt before word started filtering through about Covid. That's when everything ground to a halt.'

'That's also when my Zoom sessions began and kept the senior panel going through April, May and June. We did two sessions a week but they were more an opportunity to touch base as a group. Working hard, yes, but having an interaction with each other and a bit of fun was more important than anything else.'



Shirley Moloney played an important role in Courcey Rovers' historic 2020 county senior camogie championship success.

(Photo: David Ribeiro)

'You'd hear the odd voice shouting back at you saying, "Jesus, Shirley, are you losing your mind or what?" The banter and the craic were a good distraction from what was going on.'

\*\*\*  
It is worth noting that most GAA clubs were in the same boat during that first lockdown in 2020. Each club was running Zoom training sessions but the difference with Courcey Rovers was Moloney's organisation, delivery and after-effects.

'Shirley's training sessions were a contributing factor to Courcey Rovers winning the county because they were so intense,' Saoirse McCarthy says.

Yes, Shirley is a taskmaster

and won't take any excuses. The club is absolutely everything to her. I have so much respect for her because of that. There is an edge to Shirley. Make no mistake, she'd go through you rather than around you. There are no prisoners taken.

'But the fact Shirley took on the training sessions, drew them up, organised, and ran them herself was important. If someone asks you to do something, then it is a lot easier to do if they are willing to do it with you. That's Shirley.'

Karyn Keohane takes on the story.

'Initially, the main reason behind Shirley's Zoom sessions was for people's mental health and to help them through lockdown,' Keohane says.

'Shirley jumped at the opportunity to organise and run the Zoom sessions with the Courceys' senior panel every Tuesday and Saturday. She facilitated the whole thing and did everything for us including posting the workouts on our group chat for anyone that couldn't attend.'

'Most importantly of all, Shirley was able to explain every exercise down to a tee. That's why we got so much

out of them. She is a brilliant leader and made the players put in that extra work because she, as a member of our senior management team, was willing to put in all that time and work herself.'

\*\*\*  
The GAA history books will show that in 2020, and despite a global pandemic, Courcey Rovers claimed their first-ever senior camogie championship title. There were many contributory factors but ask anyone involved with Courceys how that goal was achieved and invariably, Shirley Moloney's name crops up.

True, the foundations had been laid during previous campaigns and under different management but Moloney's attention to detail and dedication in the most trying circumstances won over her players.

'I remember talking to Joey Gallagher early in the year and just after we got back out on the pitches. I said to him that this isn't going to be Courcey's year. No-one knows how things will pan out but I wouldn't have winning a county on my mind at all. "Ah yeah, Joey replied, but if you got one, you'd take it." Lit-

tle did we know,' Moloney says.

'Fast forward to the county final against Inniscarra and, my God, we got off to a bad start. You could see people asking the same question: is this going to be a repeat of the 2018 county final defeat to them (Inniscarra) all over again?'

'The girls decided to unleash the beast and grabbed that county final by the scruff of the neck. That was it. There was no need to coach them from the side-lines that day. They began to express themselves. All the work had been put in but it was county final day when it finally all came together for Courcey Rovers. I was so proud of them.'

'That's why when we log off our Zoom training sessions now, everyone says goodbye champions! That means a lot even though it is still such a novelty to hear.'

LEFT: This picture of Shirley Moloney celebrating with her sister Ashling after Courcey Rovers won the 2020 county senior final features in the GAA book, *The Toughest Season*.



# And the winner is Sandie Fitzgibbon



Camogie and basketball star wins The Echo Rebel Legends final — see Echo Sport

## Fitzgibbon thrilled to be voted ahead of sports legends

■ Mary Newman

HONOURED and thrilled were just two of the words used by our *Echo Rebel Legends* winner Sandie Fitzgibbon after hearing the news that she beat 32 of Cork's most loved sports stars to win this event.

The tournament, which captured the hearts and minds of the city and county over the past month, drew almost 20,000 votes online with Fitzgibbon drawing 54.7% of the vote in the final against Rena Buckley.

That two female competitors reached the decider shows how strong women's sport is in Cork, with former All-Ireland camogie winner with Cork and Glen Rovers, who was also a brilliant basketballer for Blarney and Ireland, coming up trumps.

"I am honoured and thrilled to win this competition," Fitzgibbon said.

"Just to have been picked as one of the 32 entrants was incredible. When you look at the quality of the field, I am a little shocked and very humbled that the people of Cork still remember my name.

"I was very lucky to play with some great players and great teams during my time as an athlete. Without their help and success, I would not have achieved what I did both on the pitch and on the basketball court.

"I would like to thank *The Echo* who gave us all a big boost during a time when we all are starved of our beloved sports."

Hugely skillful, Fitzgibbon was also a warrior on the pitch or hardwood.

"The Glen were a great team at the time and Blarney were also a super basketball team. I gave it everything I had each day I played and I'm glad the people of Cork have remembered that.

"It was a great thrill to represent Cork and win All-Ireland titles and likewise I was lucky to play for my country and do well there too. I want to thank all those who voted for me over the past few weeks."

Her family, friends and club colleagues were out in force across each round, with Sandie getting the better of Billy Morgan, Denis Irwin, Rob Hefferman, Roy Keane and Rena.

"I can't believe I beat Roy Keane in the semi-final. He is an icon of Irish sport, but my sisters, my family and my clubs, the Glen and Brunell have been incredible in campaigning for me and getting people to support my cause.

"This is very emotional for me. It's a great honour and it means so much to me, just to know people appreciated how I played and what I did in my career so many years after I played, means a huge amount to me."

Runner-up Rena Buckley, always a class act on and off the field, paid tribute to Sandie on her win.

"I am delighted to have reached the final, but there is no shame in losing to Sandie. She was an amazing camogie player and a great person. She was actually an idol of mine growing up, so fair play to her!

"I didn't think I would reach the final. There were some incredible players and athletes in this competition and it was great fun voting for others every day.

"I am very happy that people thought highly enough of me to vote for me throughout the competition and I want to thank them all for their support, especially those people who organised it for others to vote for me."

■ See pages 34, 35 for more.

# Sandie is the best of the best

Sandie Fitzgibbon in action for Cork senior camogie team against Galway at Croke Park in 1998.  
Picture: SPORTSFILE



Sandie Fitzgibbon had lots of success with Blarney Basketball club and was capped for Ireland.



Sandie Fitzgibbon in action for Glen Rovers against Granagh-Ballingarry in a Munster Club Senior Championship game.



Blarney basketballer Sandie Fitzgibbon shows off some of her basketball skills

Picture: Denis Minihane

# Sandie gets the readers' nod for Legend honour



SPORT

Éamonn Murphy

THE best champions do it the hard way, and there were no easy match-ups for Sandie Fitzgibbon on her path to being voted *The Echo Rebel Legends* winner.

Billy Morgan, Denis Irwin, Rob Heffernan, Roy Keane and Rena Buckley, which would be some five-a-side line-up in any sport, all fell as the northsider's supporters backed her in large numbers.

The former Glen Rovers and Cork camogie ace, who shone as a basketballer and soccer player too, got the backing of her former team-mates, the basketball community in Cork and the sporting public as she polled 54.7% in the final.

While the likes of Keane, Irwin, Sonia O'Sullivan or Jimmy Barry-Murphy would have been obvious candidates to prevail it was up to our readers to vote online and decide the victor in each of the 31 pairings.

Sandie Fitzgibbon's ultimate success reminded the county what an incredible athlete she was, a multiple All-Ireland champion for club and Cork, picked on the camogie team of the 20th century, and a wizard on the hardwood too, for Blarney and Ireland.

Rena Buckley, who had defeated Jonjo O'Neill, Derval O'Rourke, JBM and former team-mate Briega Corkery, to reach the last stage of the tournament had significant backing all through as well and would of course have been a more than worthy winner too.

It shows the strength of female sport on Leeside that there were two women left standing, while Claire Coughlan and Linda Mellerick lost to Roy Keane and



Sandie Fitzgibbon in action for Glen Rovers camogie team.

Rob Heffernan respectively by very narrow margins.

It started with 32 stunning sports people and we still need your help to pick your favourite Cork sports person since 1970, which will be decided in the final on March 11. Every time you vote you are entered into a draw for a €200 shopping voucher.

Rob Heffernan, Juliet Murphy, Keane, Rena, JBM, Briega Corkery, Sandie and Sonia O'Sullivan were the elite eight in the quarter-finals, which reflected the calibre of the long-list in the first place.

## How did we decide who was eligible?

This is Cork we're talking about, not just your run-of-the-mill county, so even shortening it to 32 candidates was a challenge for *The Echo* crew.

Sonia, Roy, Jimmy, O'Gara, Irwin, Briega, Rena, Rob, Seán Óg, Stringer... those sporting stars identifiable by just one part of their name are obvious options.

Our team of contributors used a few criteria to nominate some more contenders.

The likes of Larry Tompkins and John Caulfield didn't spend their formative years in Cork so they weren't considered for this exercise. However, Seán Óg O hAilpín, who moved to Cork at the age of 10, was, along with Ronan O'Gara, who was born in the US.

We looked at former players or athletes, in terms of being retired from the elite level of their chosen sport, which meant Rena Buckley and Briega Corkery were in, but Simon Zebo, Denise O'Sullivan, Patrick Horgan, Davy Russell and Peter O'Mahony weren't.

There were a host of brilliant sports people who just missed out, this time around, including Mark Carroll, Pat Morley, Tom O'Sullivan, Ray Cummins, Colin Healy, Valerie Mulcahy and many more. They may all get their chance in future battles. Our 32 contenders, nominated by our panel of writers, were placed in alphabetical order, with number one paired with 32, number two with 31, and so on.

## Top half of the draw

1. Dave Barry v 32. Peter Stringer.
2. Orla Barry v 31. Sonia O'Sullivan.
3. Jimmy Barry-Murphy v 30. Marcus O'Sullivan.
4. Alan Bennett v 29. Derval O'Rourke.
5. Rena Buckley v 28. Jonjo O'Neill.
6. Billy Coleman v 27. Ronan O'Gara.
7. Brian Corcoran v 26. Mary O'Connor.
8. Briega Corkery v 25. Seán Óg O hAilpín.

## Bottom half of the draw

9. Claire Coughlan v 24. Ray Murphy.
10. Damien Delaney v 23. Juliet Murphy.
11. Sandie Fitzgibbon v 22. Billy Morgan.
12. Caroline Forde v 21. Linda Mellerick.
13. Rob Heffernan v 20. Teddy McCarthy.
14. Denis Irwin v 19. Olive Loughnane.
15. Kieran Joyce v 18. Donal Lenihan.
16. Roy Keane v 17. Rachel Kohler.

# Anna designs a jersey and wins a kit for her U14 Blackrock team

## CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman



Anna Kearney with her winning jersey design which will be worn by the Blackrock U14 team.

AS underage camogie players wait patiently to return to playing a lot of them are finding ways and means to keep occupied. Some are hitting the ball off the gable end wall, using portable goal posts or just doing drills at home to keep occupied.

One young lady in the Blackrock camogie club kept herself occupied by entering a competition to design a new jersey for her club and to her delight young Anna Kearney's design took first place. As a result herself and the under 14 team will proudly wear a new jersey when activities resume. The idea behind the competition came from a company called ID Sports who are based between Mitchelstown and Kildorrey in an area known as Killee. Thomas Tattan is the man who heads up the business and he told me how it came about and how Anna was the winner.

"We are a company that does custom made school and sports wear, predominantly we have been involved for year in doing school wear but in recent year as we are also doing sportswear. "Every year we run a competition to design something and we then give the person whose design wins a chance to nominate a school or in this case a club to get that design and item for their chosen group." This is the fourth year that Thomas has run a competition, last year it was a design a hurling glove, the year before it was a club or school hat but the response this year exceeded all his expectations; "We were blown away by the amount of entries we received to design a jersey for your club. We had one thousand one hundred designs entered across huge variety of sports, from GAA, camogie, ladies football, hockey, soccer, rugby, etc. and each and every one was superb."

The huge task of witting it down was not left to Thomas, he got three independent people to pore over each and every entry and asked them to get it down to five, these people had the hard task of making what proved a difficult choice and Thomas explained they did not know who are where the entries came from; "All they got were the drawings nothing else, the job was enormous and I think they will run the next time I ask them do a favour as no way did we ever imagine the amount of interest this would bring. "Every design was superb but in the end we got it down to five and then the fun began, these were posted on social media and we put them out there for people to vote and make their choice and there was some fun going on, the voting was neck and neck all through." As the five finalists battled it out there were 22,999 votes

recorded, in the end just 34 votes separated Anna Kearney from Lily Codd who co-incidentally also designed a camogie jersey for her club Butlerstown in Waterford. In a wonderful gesture Thomas decided as it was so close he would also give Lily a set of jerseys for her club so Anna and Lily and their clubs will be looking well when the season begins. Anna is a youngster who loves camogie and sport, a pupil in Ursulines Convent Blackrock she comes from a very strong Blackrock GAA background. She is the fourth generation of her family to play camogie with the club, her mother Ann was a former player, her grandmother Mary McCarthy and her great grandmother Annie Dorney all lined out with the club. Her great grandmother was a first cousin of the great hurler Eudie Coughlan so it is easy to see Anna's love for a club that her brother Jack and Dad Colin are also very involved in. The completion was brought to her attention by club PRO Orla O'Regan who spotted it on face book and a lot of the children decided to have a go. Anna told me where she got her inspiration for her design. "Blackrock Castle is on the crest of the hurlers jersey and I thought it would be nice to have a jersey with the castle displayed prominently on the front, it is so much part of the club history so it was something I was inspired by." Anna does art in school and her teacher Sarah Louise Conway can be very proud of her pupil. As to what the future holds for the 14-year-old Rockie, well this was her reply. "Maybe I might do something involving design." What's the bet she will one day design a jersey to be proudly worn by our Cork teams. Well done Anna and to ID Sports for encouraging our younger generation in these hard times for us all.



Cork's Hannah Looney: I was no surprise she was selected for an All-Star.

# Cork trio's pick well deserved



## CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

All-Ireland Senior champions Kilkenny dominated the 2020 Camogie All-Stars team sponsored by Liberty Insurance taking six places in what was a virtually held event last Saturday evening.

All-Ireland runners-up Galway received two awards which seemed pretty low for All Ireland finalists with Tipperary and Cork receiving three awards each and Waterford completing the line-up with one.

For Kilkenny, full back Claire Phelan, left half-back Davina Tobin, midfielder Grace Walsh, left half-forward Denise Gaule, full-forward Miriam Walsh and left corner-forward Anne Dalton were the six selected.

I think Michelle Teehan at right corner back can be disappointed at not picking up a gong. I thought she was excellent last season. Grace Walsh was picked at midfield and I suppose the selectors can get away with that now such is the roaming nature of the game. But Walsh was tremendous at left half back throughout. Midfield was a bit of a stretch.

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

Three places for Tipperary is a huge return and a signal of their progression. Aine Slattery (goalkeeper), Mary Ryan (left corner-back) and Karen Kennedy (centre half-back) received their first All-Stars awards. It's a pity that this year there wasn't 45 nominees listed as Amy Lee had an excellent season and would have been nominated I feel.

It was no surprise that Hannah Looney (right half-back), Chloe Sigerson (midfield) and Orla Cronin (centre half-forward) were selected.

All three were well deserved. Hannah has proved so powerful as an attacking right half back. For Chloe to pick an All



Cork's Orla Cronin.

Star up at midfield rather than in the half back line endorses her versatility while Orla Cronin has been Cork's most consistent forward for a while now and is a true leader. It's an overdue first award.

It goes to show when one looks through the award winners and their number of All Stars that a lot of the players are relatively young. Outside of Kilkenny's Anne Dalton and Denise Gaule most were picking up their first or second award.

Waterford captain and right half-forward Niamh Rockett completed the selection for her first award and it's always wonderful to see players get their first, particularly when they're outside the typical top four counties.

Kilkenny manager Brian Dowling was named as Manager of the Year for the first time. No surprise there and also well deserved. After the disappointment of losing another final in 2019 he picked his players back up and the work done defensively with this team who had leaked three goals in the '19 final was clearly evident. They turned around a 0-17 to 3-14 defeat to Galway into a 1-14 to 1-11 victory against the same opposition.

Kilkenny's Denise Gaule also collected the Camogie Association/WGPA Senior Players' Player of the Year award. Niamh

Mallon of Down was the recipient of the Intermediate accolade whilst Armagh's Ciara Donnelly was chosen as the Junior Players' Player of the Year. All three were selected after voting by intercounty players through the WGPA.

All-Ireland Intermediate champions Down led the 2020 Soaring Stars Awards, represented by six players. I still think this competition was a bit of a sham with six counties omitted due to Covid, which didn't make any sense at all. Intermediate runners-up Antrim had three players.

Laois got two and Meath one. All-Ireland Premier Junior Champions Armagh received two awards while the remaining position was taken by Nancy Murray Cup champion Róisín O'Keeffe from Cavan.

### 2020 All-Stars team

Goalkeeper: Aine Slattery (Tipperary) - 1st Time Winner Right Corner-Back: Shauna Healy (Galway) - 2nd Time Winner Full-Back: Claire Phelan (Kilkenny) - 2nd Time Winner Left Corner-Back: Mary Ryan (Tipperary) - 1st Time Winner Right Half-Back: Hannah Looney (Cork) - 2nd Time Winner Centre Half-Back: Karen Kennedy (Tipperary) - 1st Time Winner Left Half-Back: Davina Tobin (Kilkenny) - 1st Time Winner Midfield: Chloe Sigerson (Cork) - 2nd Time Winner Right Half-Forward: Grace Walsh (Kilkenny) - 2nd Time Winner Right Half-Forward: Niamh Rockett (Waterford) - 1st Time Winner Centre Half-Forward: Orla Cronin (Cork) - 1st Time Winner Left Half-Forward: Denise Gaule (Kilkenny) - 4th Time Winner Right Corner-Forward: Orlaith McGrath (Galway) - 1st Time Winner Full-Forward: Miriam Walsh (Kilkenny) - 2nd Time Winner Left Corner-Forward: Anne Dalton (Kilkenny) - 7th Time Winner

### 2020 Soaring Stars

Goalkeeper: Aedin Lowry (Laois) - 1st Time Winner Right Corner-Back: Claire Coffey (Meath) - 3rd Time Winner Full-Back: Deshbha Magee (Down) - 1st Time Winner Left Corner-Back: Chloe Drain (Antrim) - 1st Time Winner Right Half-Back: Niamh Donnelly (Antrim) - 1st Time Winner Centre Half-Back: Fionnuala Carr (Down) - 5th Time Winner Left Half-Back: Clodagh Tynan (Laois) - 1st Time Winner Midfield: Róisín O'Keeffe (Cavan) - 1st Time Winner Midfield: Paula O'Hagan (Down) - 1st Time Winner Right Half-Forward: Leanne Donnelly (Armagh) - 1st Time Winner Centre Half-Forward: Sara-Louise Griffin (Down) - 2nd Time Winner Left Half-Forward: Maeve Kelly (Antrim) - 1st Time Winner Right Corner-Forward: Niamh Mallon (Down) - 5th Time Winner Full-Forward: Ciara Donnelly (Armagh) - 2nd Time Winner Left Corner-Forward: Scéachá McCartan (Down) - 1st Time Winner 2020 Manager of the Year: Brian Dowling, Kilkenny - 1st Time Winner. 2020 Camogie Association/WGPA Players' Player of the Year

Senior Players' Player of the Year: Denise Gaule (Kilkenny) - 2nd Time Winner Intermediate Players' Player of the Year: Niamh Mallon (Down) - 1st Time Winner Junior Players' Player of the Year: Ciara Donnelly (Armagh) - 1st Time Winner

# All-Star Orla has taken her game to the next level

Cork star Orla Cronin picked up her first All-Star award last weekend.



## The stats highlight Cronin's influence

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

ORLA Cronin was a central figure in Cork's march to the 2020 All-Ireland senior camogie championship semi-final – and the stats back this up.

The Enniskeane woman played at centre forward in all four championship games – against Wexford, Galway, Clare and Kilkenny – and finished the campaign as the Rebels' top scorer.

She racked up 0-23 in total and was also the fifth top overall scorer in the championship. Having taken over as Cork's free-taker, Cronin showed nerves of steel and scored 0-20 from 23 attempts, and was the second highest scoring free-taker in the championship. Looking at Cork's 2020 national league games, before the competition stopped, her conversion rate against Waterford was 83% and it was 100% in the win against Kilkenny. Impressive stats.

From play in the 2020 All-Ireland championship, she scored three points from seven attempts. To highlight her growing influence, the Cork centre forward was involved in 28 of Cork's 7-50 total in the championship, while she was also fouled eight times and had 64 possessions of the ball across the four matches. In total, Cronin played four hours 34 minutes and 45 seconds in the 2020 senior championship.

Last year we highlighted how the Enniskeane woman was evolving into a key player for the Rebels, with Cork boss Paudie Murray referring to her as 'our quarterback.'

'She has a great brain and she knows how to make herself available to the "out ball" coming out of defence. Her spatial awareness from there, to bring other players into the game, is top class. Orla knows where to move to and when to move – and they are two different things,' Murray said.

Throughout 2020 Cronin continued to improve her overall game and impact matches. She's now getting on the ball more per game, she's averaging more possessions per game, she's involved in more Cork scores, she's retaining more of her possessions and she's helping the Rebels to purr. And the feeling is there's even more to come.

## Enniskeane ace joins an elite club after winning first Camogie All-Star Award

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

THERE'S more to come from Camogie All-Star Orla Cronin, insists Cork boss Paudie Murray.

Coming off the back of her best-ever season for the Rebels, the Enniskeane star's impressive form was recognised when the 2020 Camogie All-Stars team was revealed last Saturday night.

This is the 25-year-old's first All-Star, and it's well deserved. What's more, Paudie Murray feels Cronin will get even better.

'If you look back at her 2020 campaign she has got to be happy with it. We as a management team were very happy with it. To me, she has taken her game to the next level,' Murray says.

'Her All-Star award, I think, is recognition for what she has done over the last number of years.

'We will keep pushing Orla because I feel there is more in her. She can go up another level this year and she is capable of that.'

'Orla is coming into a period now, from 25 years old to 29, where she can lay down a marker and be up there with the very best of them.'

High praise indeed from the Cork boss, who saw three of his players selected on the

**'We will keep pushing Orla because I feel there is more in her. She can go up another level this year' – Paudie Murray, Cork camogie manager**

2020 Camogie All-Stars team as Hannah Looney (right half-back) and Chloe Sigerson (midfield) were also picked.

The Rebels' interest in the 2020 championship was ended

at the All-Ireland semi-final stage by Kilkenny last November, and to break back into the top two and dislodge Kilkenny and Galway, Cork will need players like Cronin to lead the charge. She's capable of that, Murray feels, and he can see her moving her game to the next level, which is an ominous proposition for defences all across the country.

Closer to home, Cronin's All-Star recognition means West Cork has its newest Camogie All-Star – and the Knockaneady woman is following in very famous footsteps. Barryroe GAA great Jennifer O'Leary is the greatest camogie player West Cork has had and she racked up a stunning eight All-Stars during her inter-county career, her last coming in 2014.

The wait for a next local Camogie All-Star is now over, and there's a knock-on effect too as young girls all across West Cork can see how Cronin, who plays her club camogie with Enniskeane, has risen to become one of the best players in the country, and that will inspire the next generation. Libby Coppinger of St Colum's is another

**Orla Cronin with her player of the match award from the 2020 county intermediate final.**

Cork senior camogie regular, while in this season's senior county camogie championship, Enniskeane and Newcestown will line up at the start, as will the Carbery divisional team. Camogie is getting stronger all across the region.

'It's brilliant to have role models in whatever sport you are in, be it camogie, ladies football or whatever. To have a role medal that you can really relate to and aspire to be like is important,' former Kilkenny senior camogie star – and current Enniskeane resident – Elaine Aylward notes.

'If you can look at Orla, see her coming to your local school, that's a real tangible aspiration for a young girl. They see someone from their own locality put on the Cork jersey and they watch her on TV – and that's someone that they can really aspire to emulate.'

Aylward was part of the Enniskeane backroom team last season as the club, inspired by Orla Cronin, won the county intermediate camogie championship to also earn promotion to the senior ranks for 2021. Cronin led by example for her club. She was player of the match in the county final win against Aghabullogue and hit 0-13. She scored 1-11 against Ballyhea, 0-10 against Blackrock and 0-7 against Fr O'Neills en route to the final. The Covid pandemic resulted in a defined club window last season, and

both Enniskeane and Cronin benefitted.

'When you look at the Cork team she is a real leader there and she brings that to Enniskeane every day,' Aylward explains.

'The girls were lucky enough to have her from the start of last season compared to other years when she was involved with the Cork team and was in and out of training. It's hard to build team work and team spirit around her when she is not there the whole time, so we were lucky she was there from the get-go. It was great to see all the other players stand up beside her and make it a real team effort.'

The end result was glory for Enniskeane with Cronin pulling the strings, just as she does for Cork, too. And now the Rebels' influential quarter-back has been honoured with her first Camogie All-Star. And there's more to come.

**The 2020 All-Stars team sponsored by Liberty Insurance is:** Aine Slattery (Tipperary); Shauna Healy (Galway); Claire Phelan (Kilkenny); Mary Ryan (Tipperary); **Hannah Looney (Cork)**; Karen Kennedy (Tipperary); Davina Tobin (Kilkenny); **Chloe Sigerson (Cork)**; Grace Walsh (Kilkenny); Niamh Rockett (Waterford); **Orla Cronin (Cork)**; Denise Gaule (Kilkenny); Orlaith McGrath (Galway); Miriam Walsh (Kilkenny); Anne Dalton (Kilkenny).



# Closing the funding gender gap will raise the bar for our games

**Y**OU love to see it. The week gone by, Dublin camogie player Ali Twomey performed the sort of PR high-wire act that has become second nature to female GAA players whenever they are invited to the launch of an app, jersey, or sponsorship deal. They show up, gamely pose for photos, and then talk to the media about systemic inequalities and the frustrations of being a female inter-county player. Never mind what the presser is ostensibly about; the goal is to maximise the platform to talk about bread and butter issues.

And Twomey did. At the launch of an AIG virtual gym for club players in Dublin, she expounded on the lack of expenses for female players compared to their male counterparts: no mileage, no consistency when it comes to food or gear, and — perhaps most gallingly — not a sniff of a government grant.

Since 2019, male inter-county players have been awarded sums of €1,000 to €2,400 by the government, depending on how far they get in championship; there's no equivalent of this state-sponsored bounty for camogie players or ladies footballers. Twomey memorably characterised this omission as "a kick in the teeth".

I had made a lot of assumptions about the conditions of Dublin's female players. That AIG logo emblazoned across all four jerseys — hurling, football, camogie, and ladies football — projects a sense of equity, of resources shared equally. It was a model for other counties to emulate, I thought. I also assumed that Dublin players would escape much of the travel costs that other inter-county players, who might have to leave their county of origin for work or study, incur on a weekly basis. But as Twomey pointed out, before the pandemic, she paid €100 a month just for tolls to get to training. None of that can be claimed back.

Twomey's words reminded me of a similar interview with Amy O'Connor at the launch of the national

league a couple of years ago, in which she lamented the fact that the multi-All Ireland-winning Cork camogie setup had to fundraise for a short team holiday in Spain, while the Cork hurlers — markedly less successful — got a free junket to the Fenway Classic. "It would make your blood boil," said O'Connor cheerfully. There have been many more besides.

It always delights me and makes me wince in equal measure, these frank admissions from high-performing female players. Doing their promo duty, smiling for the camera, then talking about kicks in the teeth and blood boiling. It speaks to a very particular kind of resilience: how to keep turning up, year after year, to a sport that you love but which is also plainly unfair. How to manage your justifiable anger.

When writing an essay years ago about my experience of being involved with the Tipp camogie panel, I wrote — erroneously now, I think — that "expenses were plentiful". I'd assumed, given the amount of free gear that was handed to us, that there was money in a kitty somewhere for players' expenses. Personally, I spent a fairly modest amount — a tenner a week — getting buses and Luases out of Dublin city centre to meet my teammate Deirdre at the Red Cow roundabout for lifts to Thurles, but I wasn't keeping those receipts. I can't remember asking Deirdre if she got any reimbursement for the weekly tank of petrol she would have used driving from Dublin to Tipp for training. I doubt she did.

It's true that it's not so long ago that inter-county hurlers and footballers received little in the way of financial supports. It's very much a feature of the last 20 years or so.

But as expectations and professional standards for



Dublin Camogie star Ali Twomey at the launch of the AIG virtual gym for club players. Twomey revealed that before the pandemic she was paying €100 a month on tolls to get to training. Picture: Seb Daly/Sportsfile

male players rose, so too did supports to help them achieve the best in terms of fitness, nutrition, and lifestyle. The women's codes have had a similar steep rise in profes-

sional standards, particularly over the past decade — but they haven't had that proportional increase in resources. This gap is becoming increasingly difficult for female

players to manage, and allows for frustrations to seep in.

Trying to have these debates online does little (astonishingly enough) to abate said frustrations. The men's game

is profitable, that's why they get expenses, goes one version of the argument. People are more interested in the men's games, that's why they get more media coverage and funding, goes another. But trying to apply free-market values to our national games, which are (a) amateur and (b) heavily subsidised by the government, is questionable.

While the women's codes need funding for a wide range of initiatives, relieving players of the financial burden of representing their county is arguably the simplest single stroke you could make to improve the conditions of female inter-county players. The oft-floated tax credit is not a bad idea either. If there can be an artists' exemption, why not one for Gaelic players?

I can't speak for them, but I suspect that female inter-county players don't really mind where the money for expenses comes from — gate receipts, county boards, or government grants — as long as they are relieved of the financial stress incurred by simply excelling at their sport.

The WPGA's 'Levelling the Field' report from last October shone a light on this issue, revealing that some players were spending up to €200 a week to travel to training, but only 7% reported being in receipt of travel expenses. The majority also paid for their own physio and gym fees. Basic things, but think of the mental space and stress that would be freed up if these things were taken care of; mental space that could then be focused on sport.

Money can't buy talent, some might say — and that is true, but it can buy standards. It can buy excellence. A funding gulf has created a crisis in men's football, and the penny is dropping for many commentators that actually, resources do impact on quality and results. Better supports and resources for female players will raise the bar and lead to more competitive championships and more exciting games.

And that way, we're all winners.

**Eimear Ryan**

**Eoghan Cormican**

Female inter-county players being paid travel expenses is the next step in correcting gender imbalance within the Gaelic games family, according to Kilkenny camogie player Davina Tobin.

A WPGA report, published last October, highlighted that 93% of female inter-county players received no travel expenses over the previous four years. The report also revealed some players are forking out up to €200 per week on fuel to get to and from inter-county training.

The LGFA did reimburse female inter-county footballers for matchday travel costs during last year's All-Ireland

## Tobin: Expenses next step on road to equality

championship, but it remains to be seen if this practice will continue in 2021.

The Kilkenny camogie board covered players' fuel expenses for last November's All-Ireland semi-final against Cork at Páirc Uí Chaoimh, and while Tobin and her teammates were appreciative, the recent All-Star winner cites a need for a more sustainable model to be put in place.

At present, the annual Government grant of €700,000 towards female inter-county activity is a team rather than an individual grant, differing from the €3m directly allo-

cated to male inter-county players.

"With travelling to matches, we don't get expenses and your male counterparts do. Hopefully, down the line, that will come," said two-time All-Ireland medal winner Tobin.

"There are girls coming down from Dublin to training in Kilkenny, from Cork, Galway, coming from college. One of the girls is a nurse in Dublin. There isn't any mileage for them and they are obviously travelling a lot further than girls based in Kilkenny. You would like equality on that front.

"There's always something to improve on and that [travelling expenses] could be the next step on that grant scheme."

Commenting on the player pathway launched this week by the GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association, Tobin stressed the importance of coaches and managers making training as enjoyable as possible for players of all ability levels as her own experience is that girls are dropping out in their teenage years because they find the game is becoming "too competitive".

"At U16, there is a big drop-

out. I don't know if it does get too competitive, but girls just like the social aspect of it and they just can't deal with every manager who wants to just win at that age.

"Every coach should understand that every player is at a different level and to try and keep players coming back. And if it is getting too serious, maybe have a few sessions that are fun, make it enjoyable for everyone. This pathway is really looking at the subject of looking after your players. Without the players, it is very hard to have a team. You are just trying to make it to suit

everyone and keep everyone active no matter what level they are at."

Tobin is a hairdresser by trade, but with such personal services under lock and key since Christmas, she admits the days are "really long".

"It is hard. The last two times we went back to work, I thought 'this is it, we'll never have a lockdown again.' I should have enjoyed the last lockdown more and took the time to rest, but I suppose when we do get back in May or June, you are hoping we won't be locked down again. It has been a very hard year."



Echo camogie reporter Mary Newman is one of the busiest and most active PROs in Cork for her club Glen Rovers. Picture: David Keane

## Cork camogie getting the message across

THE PROMOTION of sport is vital for all clubs.

To get their message across to their members is an important aspect that helps to keep them updated on all that is happening in their club and community. The role of the PRO within organisations is without doubt the most important position and after the chairman, secretary and treasurer, is the person who communicates and delivers the vital information in whatever platform the club or board decides. The PRO is the face of the club or county board, the person the public get to know and associate with the club.

Very often if there is a problem the PRO is the person gets the call as the person responsible for the clubs social media accounts so it is vital every organisation has a PRO who is on the ball and alert.

The role of the PRO has grown over the last number of years as it has expanded to include social media hand alongside print media, radio and television. All too often now it is too much for one person to cover all bases and in many clubs and county boards the lead PRO has a network of a few people who take photographs, organise the underage section info slots and updates and update the various channels used by the club or board.

The PR-Óg programme is an initiative that was introduced as a pilot schemes by the Camogie Association in 2020 and the idea is to introduce young aspiring PROs in camogie clubs and counties in an effort to keep camogie out there and to also ensure up to date and appealing news is spread to all age groups. The association wants to encourage young people to get involved, learn the skills behind public relations and hopefully take on the roles in the future at club and county levels.

The advantage that young people will have is that they have grown up with social media and find it easy to keep their feeds fresh, original and innovative and as an association they want to encourage young people to use their skills to promote their sport.

PR-Óg was open to anyone between the ages of 15 to 21 who were interested in promoting, you didn't need to have played the camogie but just be interested being involved in the PR side of it.

The initiative was particularly interesting to those who use social media and like posting on popular platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

### CAMOGIE

#### Mary Newman

It is envisaged that the PR-Ógs role would be to work along with and learn from their club or county PRO.

Training on using social media, writing match reports, using graphic design software and much more is all part of the course that those involved will be doing. Tasks and challenges will be set and participants will post on their club or county social media accounts.

The skills the PR-Ógs will learn as part of this programme will stand to them in school or college, communication, teamwork and leadership skills, they will also build a network of like-minded camogie enthusiasts. This year there has been a great response from Cork clubs, Pamela Frizelle in the Camogie Association in Croke Park along with Cork PRO Louise Weldon will be working to support the clubs and young members.

The training will be launched at different points of the year and be packaged as short online modules. The workshops that they intend to run include, Social Media Training, writing Match Reports, conducting Interviews, How best to give live updates from matches, how to get more 'likes'/followers on social media posts, how to keep posts interesting/stimulating/motivating/appealing during off-season. Cork clubs Bandon, Blackrock, Bride Rovers, Carrigaline, Charleville, Rockban, Sliabh Rua, Sarsfields and St Vincent's will all take part this year.

Separately, the Cork board are organising their own PRO course on March 24 and already 20 PRO'S have signed up to participate.

This it will be a one evening course held on line with interaction from all those involved and the course will cover all the basis aspects of the job of a club PRO. David Keely will do an intro and demo of social media graphics and Emma Flanagan will touch on the differences between Social Media Apps Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

We will then go on to doing match reports and the information that we need when the PRO is sending us their match day information for publication. I am delighted to be helping out with this part of the course and looking forward to helping our PRO's understand what goes on behind the scenes and the information we need to help get their stories into print.



Cork camogie All-Star Hannah Looney 'was in a rut' in 2019, but has since 'learned a lot'.

Picture: INPHO/Bryan Keane

# Hannah back in swing of it

### CAMOGIE

#### Linda Mellerick

CORK camogie All-Star Hannah Looney felt out of sorts in 2019.

In an interview with Eoghan Cormican last October, Hannah recalled how she was feeling.

"I felt I was in a bit of a rut, in a hole, and I kept digging down further and further," Hannah said.

"It got to a stage where I wasn't seeing the life in things I normally would, like going out with friends.

"That seemed to bring more anxiety than good. All the things that normally brought joy into my life weren't enjoyed as much. I just felt pretty anxious around people," she said.

I chatted with Hannah about how life is for her today.

"I'm grand: Struggling a bit with lockdown, but its affecting everyone that way. I think," Hannah said.

"I'm living in Kilkenny, at the moment, and working with MSD in Carlow.

"I graduated in 2019, as a chemical engineer, and went on a leadership-development programme in MSD.

"The goal is that, over three years, you do three rotations in three different sites, working on different programmes, one of which is an international site.

"I worked in Brinny for a year and my intention was to go to the Netherlands for a year, but that halted with Covid.

"So, I landed in Carlow, one way or another," Hannah said.

"I'm here until September and hoping then to go international again, but it's hard to know. I hope to play the season and then head off, but it's hard to plan anything, at the moment. I'm trying not to think too much about it.

"I think I'm very good on my mental-health side of things. I think I learned a lot from my experiences and was fortunate to get help and have good support.

"I'm in a good place, maybe matured a



Hannah Looney is 'in a good place' again. Picture: Brendan Moran/Sportsfile

bit, as well, got to grips with how the real world worked. Overall, I'm good. The college lifestyle was probably at the root of a lot of things," Hannah said.

"I don't think I regret it. I had my fun and I'm happy enough now to move on, having learned a lot. In 2020, I really enjoyed the club season. I haven't had that time with my club since U12, just having the craic with the girls: I really enjoyed it.

"Getting back into inter-county took a bit of time for me. We're in a transitional period with the team and losing out on the pre-season work with that younger group had a big effect on us.

"When the pressure comes on, its knowing what to do in those situations.

"The talent and skill is there; gelling everyone together, on and off the field, takes time."

Hannah picked up her second All Star at right half-back and she was thrilled.

"It was nice to have something to celebrate with the family," Hannah said. "It was a very disappointing year and, obviously, it doesn't replace an All-Ireland medal in any sense, but it's a nice boost."

Hannah felt there was a specific turning point, where she learned a lot about herself.

"Where I learned the most about myself was during the UCC O'Connor Cup weekend and the camogie league semi-final in

2018. Cork had a league semi-final against Limerick and the O'Connor Cup was on the same weekend," Hannah said.

"We were threatened with various things if we didn't play with Cork.

"I played the league semi-final. I played well. I was really sad I didn't play the O'Connor Cup (UCC lost) and I was probably a bigger loss to UCC.

"Looking back, I should have played. I really struggled with that. I found it tough. I remember the league final came around against Kilkenny and I was dropped on the day.

"I was told all the reasons afterwards and they can make sense, but I just felt, 'flip all this' and I stepped away for a couple of weeks.

"And it was probably there that I learned the most about myself.

"During that time, I was asked to go back onto the Cork football panel, which was great."

So, what did she learn about herself?

"I just kind of thought that I need to put myself first in any of these situations and not succumb to the pressure, to do what's best for me no matter what, and then live with that decision, even if it's selfish," Hannah said.

"But if it's right for me, it's probably the thing to do. I was proud of myself that I went back to the camogie set-up after that.

"I'm at a place now where I can have those chats with Paudie (Murray) and Ephia (Fitzgerald).

"For example, if I need a rest from camogie, to recognise that and take it, but still do something like work on my first touch. To just know, not in a cocky way, but to understand what my body and I need. So, that was a turning point for me and I've been building since."

Hannah feels now is the time to step up as a leader on the team.

"Yeah, I suppose this year is probably the first year I've felt that, particularly when Gemma retired recently.

"I was emotional over that. It's going to be very important for us now, over the next couple of years, to step into those shoes.

"I'm fortunate that I've matured over the years and watched those players. They just got the job done.

"I must do the same now."

# 'Let's build a Gaelic games family' - incoming camogie chief's call for equity

**Eoghan Cormican**



**M**ERGING the GAA, Camogie Association, and the LGFA will deliver "equity of opportunity" and bring an end to the unequal treatment of male and female players, incoming Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin has said.

Athy native Breslin will succeed Kathleen Woods as Camogie Association president next month and is determined during her three-year term in office to play a leading role in bringing about one association for Gaelic games.

Breslin is firmly in favour of the three governing bodies joining forces and it is her intention to secure from the membership of the Camogie Association a "very strong mandate" for such a merger.

It is up to the other associations, she added, to outline their respective positions and whether or not they want to come under one roof.

Breslin said some of the arguments against a one association model "don't stand up". She also refuted the oft-repeated remark that top-ranking officials within the association are fearful of ceding power if a larger, more encompassing governing structure is delivered. From a Camogie Association perspective, this is patently untrue, she stressed.

"People say that the people around the top table don't want it, they think they'll lose power. I wouldn't speak for any other association, but certainly around the camogie table, that is not the view." Breslin told the *Irish Examiner*.

"But it is very important that any one association is done in a fair manner where everybody is treated with fairness and equality."

The latter is a theme which runs right through our conversation.

She noted how many clubs across the country already operate as one unit, where there is no separate camogie or ladies football club, "but then as we move up the ranks, we replicate structures, we have double structures, and



Ballyboden St Endas ladies footballer Emily Flanagan, camogie player Rachel Ruddy, and former Dublin footballer Michael Darragh Macauley at the launch of the One Club Guidelines at Croke Park back in 2017. Incoming Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin (inset) says the GAA must 'treat all of our members and all of our players the same. I don't see any association as having something to fear from that.'

we start to see that maybe our members are treated differently or our players are treated differently as they move up the ranks and get older".

For Breslin, that has to stop. "If we are treating everybody the same, then we have got to be one association, one family, and treat all of our members and all of our players the same. I don't see any association as having something to fear from that."

Back in 2018, the GAA, Camogie As-

sociation, and LGFA agreed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen links between the associations, and while last year's return-to-play protocols and the more recent player pathway initiative offer examples of cooperation and collaboration between the three, no clear path or timeline towards one single association has been outlined.

"If we are saying it is about equity of opportunity for all members of the

Gaelic games family, which to me it is, then one association is the logical conclusion of that. That, to me, is the end goal.

"If we were being founded now, we would be one association, so what is stopping us being one association or what is stopping us moving down that road to being one association?"

"I'd like somebody to tell me why they don't want it, rather than us constantly saying why it should happen.

Maybe people should actually be saying why it shouldn't happen and then we can address those arguments as leaders and put to rest some of those arguments, because they don't stand up, in my book."

As for the next step in achieving full integration, Breslin continued: "As leaders around the table, we have to be very brave and we have to say, this is what we want. If it is not what we want, then we need to come out and say this is

not the format that we are heading towards. But we have got to be very honest and very realistic on what we are looking for.

"[A merger] is a benefit to everybody within the Gaelic games family. We are one community. We have been built by communities and families over generations and we are without doubt one family, so if it just means us putting in place a mechanism that we formally become that, then the leaders need to step forward and put that in place and put a timeline on that.

"We are the same volunteers, the same communities, the same families. We are the same people hopping into a car driving up to the club, but yet when we get out of the car, we are different associations. That doesn't make sense. So it would seem as if the logical thing is that we share resources, we look to expand, and build a Gaelic games family. And if we do that as a shared family then we are much stronger."

**B**RESLIN returns to the theme of equality when addressing the Government grant allocations to male and female inter-county players. At present, male inter-county players receive an annual grant of €3m, over four times greater than the €700,000 team grant distributed among female inter-county set-ups.

"I absolutely believe Government funding should not be based on gender. I do not believe that there should be a difference between funding male and female players, that is quite unfair. Government funding should be based on equity, and we have got to move towards that."

The incoming president said a chief focus over the next two months is getting young girls back out on the field. She expressed concern that the shutdown of sport in recent months will lead to increased dropout rates among teenage girls.

"We have to get them back out, give them some sort of support so they have a purpose."

"The lockdown has probably affected our teenagers disproportionately and I would certainly say we would be naive to think it hasn't affected teenage girls at a greater expense than teenage boys because females always drop out of sport quicker. And it is so much harder to get them back than it is to retain them."





# Courceys' huge win was worth the wait

## Courceys thrilled with 2020 Special Achievement Award

BY KIERAN MCCARTHY

CHRISTINE O'Neill had to wait a long time to revel in county senior camogie championship glory with Courcey Rovers.

She was 14 years old when she made her first appearance with her beloved Courceys and in 2020, as a 30-year-old, the Ballinadee woman finally reached the Promised Land when they won the Cork senior camogie championship title for the first time ever.

That historic success was recognised at last Sunday night's Celtic Ross Hotel West Cork Sports Star Awards when Courcey Rovers picked up the 2020 Special Achievement Award.

'Winning this award is absolutely fantastic and a huge honour for the club,' O'Neill told this week's *Star Sport Podcast*.

'2020, being the year that it was, when it came to celebrating a county there wasn't much time. We went into lockdown three pretty much after we won the county so there wasn't that much time for celebrations so receiving an award like this is fantastic.

It's a lovely way to honour

the year and the girls as well.'

As one of the most experienced players on the Courceys panel, O'Neill has seen the good times and the bad times, and played through the lean years, but she never stopped believing that their time would come – and it did in 2020 when they beat Inniscarra in the county senior final.

'I toggled out for the Courceys seniors when I was U14 so that's when I started my career with the senior team. I was playing with stalwarts that time, like Sarah Hayes and Rachel Moloney, and they believed (our time would come),' O'Neill says.

'That belief has always been there and in the last few years we have had great mentors and management come in, the likes of Jon Hynes and Brian Hayes who are constantly instilling belief, that the girls are there, that our time will come.

'Being part of the group that did the county was luck, it was going to happen at some stage, and I am honoured and delighted that I was part of the set-up and that I didn't hang up my boots.

'We had been banging on the door for a long time and for us

**'We had been banging on the door for a long time and for us to finally get through the door was unbelievable'**

to finally get through the door was unbelievable.'

Courceys' 5-12 to 1-12 county final win against Inniscarra in September 2020 will live long in the memory. That's the day O'Neill and her team-mates came of age and took that final step. They had lost the 2018 final to Inniscarra, but lessons were learned and they bounced back better and stronger.

'Toggling out for the 2020 final, we couldn't wait. We knew beforehand that we were going to win, we had that belief – that came from our management and from within our own camp. It was just a matter of going out, playing, putting up the scores and finishing out the match,' O'Neill says.

'We were down five points at one stage and it took us 15 minutes to get going. But Jacinta (Crowley), Linda (Collins), real leaders stood up and took the game by the scruff of the neck. Lorraine Collins had an unbelievable county final, she was class, she just bossed it.



Christine O'Neill was a key player for Courcey Rovers in their historic 2020 campaign. (Photo: David Ribeiro)

'I came off for the last 15 minutes and was on the sideline. When the final whistle went I ran straight to Sinead (O'Reilly), we couldn't talk, we would be the two biggest chatterboxes

around, but there wasn't a word said.'

Now, in 2021, Courceys are the team to beat. It's a new challenge for this group. O'Neill is relishing it.

'We are ready for it, Shirley (Moloney) says we have the mark on our back, but we are setting standards for ourselves and we are driving on,' O'Neill adds.



Courcey Rovers' Karyn Keohane pictured with the 2020 Special Achievement Award.



Dual star Libby Coppinger operates at the highest levels for the Cork senior camogie and football teams.



Briege Corkery of Cork celebrates with son Tadhg Scannel after winning her last senior All-Ireland in 2018. Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

## Briege Corkery among GAA greats featured in Laochra Gael series

ONE of the absolute icons of women's sport in the modern era and a true Rebel Legend features in the 19th series of Laochra Gael.

Briege Corkery, with 18 senior All-Ireland medals and 16 All-Stars to her name, takes centre stage on Thursday, April 8 on TG4. Geraldine O'Flynn, Fiona O'Driscoll and Rena Buckley are among those interviewed for the documentary.

The series, produced by NemetonTV from An Rinn in the Waterford Gaeltacht, has expanded to an hour-long format since 2018, to allow a deeper dive into the careers of the GAA stars.

Earlier this year, Kevin Cassidy, Ryan O'Dwyer, Therese Maher, Shane Curran, Johnny Pilkington and Dermot Earley were showcased in the first half of season 19, and those episodes are still viewable on the TG4 Player.

The first series in 2001 included Cork's Con Murphy, and since then Jack Lynch, Billy Morgan, Justin McCarthy, Dinny Allen, Tomás Mulcahy, Ray Cummins, Teddy McCarthy, Jimmy Barry-Murphy, Juliet Murphy, Gerald McCarthy, Brian Corcoran, Larry Tompkins, Seán Ó hAilpín, John Allen, Donal Óg Cusack, Ashling Thompson and Rena Buckley have all followed suit.

**EOIN LARKIN (Tomorrow, 9.30pm)**

He won eight All-Ireland medals and Hurler of the Year. But in the background he was struggling.

**PETE McGRATH (Thursday, April 1, 9.30pm)**

As a teacher and trainer, he instilled in young people that sport was the best way to express their nationalism. As



Briege Corkery in action against Finola Keeley, Galway in 2015.

GAA

### Éamonn Murphy

manager of Down, he brought the Sam Maguire across the border for the first time since the 1960s, inspiring an Ulster Takeover in football.

**BRIEGE CORKERY (Thursday, April 8, 9.30pm)**

She accepted two Sports-woman of the Year awards with humility and shyness. She was the ultimate team player. The life and soul of the dressing room, the lynchpin on the field, Briege collected her last All-Ireland six months after giving birth to her son Tadhg.

**BERNARD FLYNN (Thursday, April 15, 9.30pm)**

As part of a legendary full-forward line, Bernard provided some of the greatest individual displays of any forward in his era. Unbeknownst to anyone, he was struggling the whole time. He paid dearly for it in retirement when his body completely gave up.

**SEÁN CAVANAGH (Thursday, April 22, 9.30pm)**

Seán overcame his early challenges with nutrition to become one of the most accomplished athletes of his era. Insecurity became a driving force, and he came through the tragedies that were visited upon the team to win three All-Ireland titles.

**LIAM GRIFFIN (Thursday, April 29, 9.30pm)**

In his second year as manager, unbeknownst to anyone he would be stepping down as soon as Wexford were out of the championship because of his wife Mary's illness. As it happened, they went all the way in 1996.

## McCarthy praises O'Connor legacy

CAMOGIE

### John Bohane

ST Finbarr's senior camogie selector Marian McCarthy has praised the considerable impact Gemma O'Connor made with the Cork senior team during her illustrious inter-county career.

During her 16-year career with the Rebels, the Barrs ace won nine All-Ireland titles and 11 All-Stars in addition to National League and Munster championship titles. She has left behind a huge legacy.

"She will go down as one of the best ever. She had it all. She had skill and heart. She was a superb player.

"That equalising score in Croke Park in 2017 will live long in the memory. She made a huge contribution to all the success Cork enjoyed. She achieved everything in the game. She owes Cork nothing."

Gemma decided to step away from her inter-county career at the start of this year. The former county board chairperson always knew Gemma was destined for a bright future.

"As a Barr's club person, we all watched on with so much pride as she enjoyed so much success with Cork. She was a great ambassador for the club. She had such a natural talent.

"She joined the Barrs when she was 10. She was a standout even at that age. We all knew from the very start that she was going to be a top player.

"She thrived under the great coaching she received from so many good coaches within the club."

The experienced star will still continue to line out for her beloved Barrs much to the delight of Marian.

"We are delighted she will continue playing for us. The split season last year meant that she trained with us on a regular basis last year which was so beneficial.

"She is a great role model for all the younger players. We are hoping that one day she might go into a coaching capacity with the club. Gemma was a key player in our only senior county final success to date in 2006.

"We have suffered a lot of heartache since, but hopefully now she will lead us to more success."

The Barrs have had a good bit of success in the underage ranks in recent years which augurs well for the club.

"We have a lot of very good young players. We have very good coaches and a good committee driving the club on.

"We have been beaten in the semi-final stages in the last two years. We are hopeful of a good run in this year's senior championship.

"It is a very competitive grade with all 15 teams harbouring dreams of county glory. The club is in a very strong place. The future is bright."

# Might a post-pandemic GAA world see a rural revival?

weekend commute, or got involved with a city club when their kids came along. If the great rural migration goes on indefinitely, how long until Dublin begin to dominate the hurling field to the extent they have the football?

I've witnessed the rural drain firsthand: I've been part of it. Where I grew up in Co Tipperary, almost everyone had to move away for college. As a result, our camogie team wasn't able to train midweek, since almost all the players were scattered to the winds in Dublin, Galway, Cork, Mayo or Limerick.

After college, many of us found work in the cities in which we studied, making coming home to play for the club a costly and time-consuming undertaking. It's so different for city clubs, whose young players can study and find work locally, keeping teams together and making training schedules much more manageable.

Dublin's vibrant grassroots GAA, particularly at underage, is brilliant to see and is clearly paying dividends, but has had an inevitable knock-on effect on rural clubs. In the brave new post-pandemic world, let's hope for a rural revival.

EWBS broke in early March that former Mayo player Enda Varley is transferring back to his home club of Garrymore, after five years spent working in Dublin and playing with St Vincent's. Dublin has long been a poisoned chalice for rural graduates; it's a great city in which to socialise and it's where most of the jobs are, but rents and house prices are oppressive (I myself was priced out of my Ranelagh box room in 2013). Those that stuck it out transferred to a Dublin club in many cases, to save themselves the

trauma of a factory floor. Office workers opt to keep working remotely once we're all vaccinated, it could bring about an organic decentralisation. But if even a proportion of office workers opt to keep working remotely once we're all vaccinated, it could bring about an organic decentralisation.

It has been equally interesting to see how quickly and easily many offices pivoted to working from home as soon as they had no other choice. For years, disabled people, parents of small children, and plain old introverts had been asking for flexible work-from-home arrangements; but it's only now, when their hand was forced, that many employers have to admit that it was doable all along. As technology has developed to the point where many people's personal devices are as powerful as office machines, it no longer makes sense to

having happened before, during, or after the camogie season. It is one of the few clearly defined signposts in an otherwise blurry year. In 2021, we're still a little unclear on when we'll be back. Like the vaccine, we know it's coming; we're just not quite sure when. (It's been frustrating, to say the least, to see my peers in the US and the UK on social media getting their first shots, while many of our parents and grandparents are still waiting for this week, however, with news that we are opening up again — albeit with cautionary words like 'gradual' and 'staggered' sprinkled liberally through the discourse. Inter-county training starts from April 19, and underage training will be back underway towards the end of the month. Still no definite word on adult club teams, but it's just a matter of sitting tight for another couple of weeks and waiting for the go-ahead. Clubs across the border — including Niamh Donnelly's McQuillan — will be back in action even sooner.

Hopefully, this has been the last big lockdown. And maybe this coming winter, with another season behind us, we'll have time to reflect on how the

body clocks are telling us we should be back out on the pitch. We are gasping for the field. In a way, those of us involved in the GAA had a relatively easy go of it last year. We went back training by July, just as we were coming into perfect hurling weather. My own season lasted until mid-September. That was more than three months of routine and regular life in the midst of 2020, a plank of normality that I know not everyone got to experience. Even looking back on the hazy sameness of 2020, the entire year shrouded in brain-fog, I know I am loosely locating events as

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Eimear Ryan

# Small town girl on the big stage

## CAMOGIE

John Cashman

POTENTIAL is a word that is regularly mentioned when we talk about young sports stars, but in many cases fulfillment isn't achieved.

For one reason or another, the promise shown can fail to materialise as the teenage years turn to adulthood.

In the case of Ballinacurra native Chloe Sigerson, nothing is further from the truth. In the green of Killeagh and more significantly in the red of Cork the small town girl has shone on the biggest camogie stage thanks to a series of outstanding individual performances. Along with inter county colleagues Hannah Looney and Orla Cronin, Chloe was recently selected on the 2020 Camogie All Star team, her second such accolade.

The name of Chloe Sigerson was first lit up in lights in 2016. Despite Cork losing to Kilkenny in the All Ireland Intermediate Final, she was a standout performer in the number 8 jersey, which incidentally she quickly swapped for the number 18 jersey, as she was also named as substitute on the senior team, which unfortunately also lost to Kilkenny.

"It was a day of mixed emotions" recalls Chloe. To play in Croke Park in a Final and then to be involved with the senior panel with all the big name stars was an unbelievable experience, but sadly both results went the wrong way.

By the time Chloe and Cork returned to Croke Park 12 months later, she had been honoured by the Camogie Association with a "Rising Star" award and her displays for the intermediate team had parachuted her into the Cork number 7 jersey at senior level. Kilkenny again awaited as the ladies in red went on a revenge mission on what was a very special occasion for the young East Cork star who saw all her childhood dreams come true.

"I've had a hurley in my hand for as long as I can remember - my father Brian - who everybody calls "rasher" locally is very well known and was a great hurler with Ballinacurra. He was always pucking the slotar with me at home and every time he went to the Ballinacurra pitch, I was always there with him. Nowadays he is definitely somebody I look up to a lot and after every match we have our post mortem as to what went right and indeed what went wrong. Back in 2017 it was amazing to be looking forward to going to Croke Park and starting my first senior All Ireland Final. Being honest, nerves were replaced by excitement - I just could not wait for the big day to come".

As it transpired excitement was at a premium in that 2017 Final. Cork dramatically won back the O'Duffy Cup on a 0-10 to 0-9 scoreline courtesy of a late point from Julia White.

"It was only afterwards that I realised I had been part of such a dramatic and exciting match", admits Chloe.

A year down the road lighting hit twice as Cork and Kilkenny again renewed acquaintances and the Leaside ladies again obliged with Orla Cotter's late winning point meaning Cork finished winners by one point. The game was hugely significant for Chloe who took over the long range frees and registered 3 points. It highlighted her out-



Cork's Chloe Sigerson scores a point against Kilkenny in their Liberty Insurance All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship semi-final in Páirc Uí Chaoimh last year. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo



Aisling Egan, St Finbarr's, challenges Chloe Sigerson of Killeagh in their Cork Camogie Senior Club Championship at Castle Road last September. Picture: Jim Coughlan

standing individual contribution to Cork's successful season and ultimately resulted in a first All Star Award.

"That All Star banquet was an unbelievable night for me but also for my family who are all so interested in sport. They all enjoyed the fact that I got the award so much".

Family and friends in Ballinacurra are very important to Chloe. She is very much a personality, but enjoys so much the local chat with family and neighbours.

"They gave me some memorable "send offs" on my way to Croke Park and are always right behind me all the time", commented Chloe who actually lined out with her home village team at a young age.

"Initially we didn't have a team in Ballinacurra, so I moved to play with Killeagh at Under 10 level. Then we formed a team at home and I returned for a few years, whilst the team was there, before returning to Killeagh. They are such a great club with great tradition - it's wonderful to be part of the team. We have just fallen short in the last few years, maybe because our team is a very young one. Now I think we have bonded and are ready to perform. John O'Connor and Cairan O'Brien our management team are putting in huge effort, so I would be very optimistic that we can deliver".

Chloe will also be hoping that 2021 will see Cork be back on top of the camogie tree come autumn. "I just want to keep playing at the top level for as

“That All Star banquet was an unbelievable night for me but also for my family who are all so interested in sport. They all enjoyed the fact that I got the award so much”.

long as possible and take inspiration from all the great players that have won so much. When I came into the team we won 2 All Ireland titles in a row so I was very lucky. Losing to Galway in the 2019 semi final was a new experience after enjoying 2 brilliant years.

"It really hurt and hit home to me how fortunate I was to have those 2 previous wins. After losing the semi to Kilkenny last November, all you want to do is to get back to Croke Park and another Final. Gemma O'Connor recent retirement makes us stand up and see what a remarkable career she enjoyed. We all want to win more and take a lead from her" concluded Chloe, who herself looks set for many more years of success.



Mary O'Sullivan, volunteer, Brian Dillon's Camogie Club and Mayfield Community Games, with Megan Hennessy, Ria Whyte, and Aine O'Hara.

## GAA volunteer safety stewards being trained ahead of return to play

Volunteering is vital to sporting organisations, but the volunteer is sometimes forgotten. The volunteer is the go-to person in the club, the person who does all the hard work and who still gets the grief, but ask any volunteer, in any club or sport the length and breadth of the country, why they do it.

Week in, week out, year in, year out, the volunteers give it their all and they will tell you they do it for the love of the club or for the love of the game.

A few years ago, AIB had a fantastic poster to advertise the All-Ireland club championships. They had an elderly gentleman standing at the pitch-side railing, with his arm around a young boy looking out towards a goalpost, and the caption was, 'You don't choose your club, you inherit it.'

This is true. For many, their club is a way of life and it is in the blood, be it hurling, camogie football, soccer, boxing, or any other sport: It is something that they just love.

Many players become coaches and mentors when they retire, and, after that, they become committee members and officials and go on to greater things in their associations, while many just like to keep in touch and call to the club or go to the occasional game.

A lot of people have endured a lot in the last year and they will be hoping to return to outdoor activities shortly and while some may feel they don't have anything to contribute on the playing or coaching fields, or in the committee rooms, there is still plenty for them to do.

The Camogie Association have announced a new initiative and they are seeking people to become voluntary safety stewards. Full training will be provided.

Those applying must be aged from 18 years upwards and must be available at weekends, be active and enthusiastic and customer-focused, and be part of the match-day action.

An interest in camogie and GAA would be beneficial, as most of the volunteer-safety-steward roles will be around match-day events, so these people also need to be problem solvers.

The main role of a volunteer safety steward will be to maintain a safe and secure environ-

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

ment in their given area and to be familiar with stadium and ground regulations; they will need to ensure that any breach of these regulations is brought to a safe conclusion.

They will be trained in crowd control, sideline duty, stand vomitories, crowd management, and reporting of any actual or potential incidents to the relevant supervisor.

The volunteers will assist with stadium evacuation, be trained to assist patrons, have disability awareness, and direct patrons to smoking areas, to catering units, to stadium facilities, and to recycling banks.

The role will also include assisting the media photographers and reporters pitch-side, as well as match-day miscellaneous duties around the dressing rooms and the tunnels.

Stewards will be trained and accredited by the GAA national facilities health-and-safety committee.

Voluntary stewards are not paid. For the volunteer to be officially accredited as a steward and receive their NHSC stewarding card, they must complete and pass the NHSC/Europlan stewards training course online.

There are four modules, each approximately one hour, that must be completed within 10 days and the online course materials are accessible on a 24-hour basis.

The volunteers must be GAA/garda vetted and complete an on-site induction programme and they must steward at a minimum of two matches, under the supervision of a chief steward, safety officer, or a supervisory steward.

The Camogie Association requires that each volunteer stewards at a minimum of 10 games per season at county, provincial, and national level.

If you would like to be considered for training to become a camogie safety steward, please complete the volunteer safety registration form or contact [pamela.fitzell@camogie.ie](mailto:pamela.fitzell@camogie.ie).

It's a great time to do a course, as we all wait to return to the playing fields and look forward to assisting and lending a hand in Castle Road in the summer.



Cork's Saoirse McCarthy is tackled by Kilkenny's Niamh Deely during the 2020 Liberty Insurance All Ireland semi-final at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. There is still questions when full intercounty action will return this year. Picture: Eddie O'Han

# Return to play a step closer

### CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

OBVIOUSLY, with the camogie and LGFA associations on the Covid 19 advisory board alongside their GAA counterparts, their inter-county teams can return to training on April 19, with non-contact underage training in pods of 15 permitted from April 26.

A statement explained: "As you will appreciate, we need to receive further clarity on aspects of what was announced before finalising our plans for a return to training and ultimately games. We also need to finalise competition structures and dates for the up-coming inter-county season, as well as ensuring advice is provided for all clubs in relation to how they can safely recommence underage activity (and in the case of the six counties, adult club training from April 12).

"At this point, we can only confirm that senior inter-county teams both north and south are likely to be permitted to return to collective training from Monday, April 19. We hope to be in a position to confirm the fixture calendar and competition structures for inter county by the end of next week. We also hope to have finalised updated versions of our Return to Play documents for both inter-county and club activity ahead of the stated dates for resumption north and south of the border.

"In the interim, we would ask for your patience while we complete this work, and we look forward to communicating in detail with you all again next week in relation to the resumption of camogie activity."

At this stage I'm wondering if the leagues will be cancelled as was the case in 2020 and we run right through with the championships. The draft fixtures that were circulating back in January had our national leagues running from March to May and the All-Ireland series from July to September.

To cancel the leagues would be the easiest of options and a route the association



Cork minor camogie manager Jerry Wallace issuing instructions. Picture: INPHO/Ryan Byrne

might take. And I think that's what they should do if it means giving a bit of space to the minor and U16 teams to play their championships.

Cork lost out on their All-Ireland three-in-a-row bid last year as the championship was surprisingly cancelled despite most of it having already been played. It was a huge blow to so many young players across the country.

Cork minor camogie manager Jerry Wallace lodged an appeal to the camogie association against the decision, but it failed to gain traction due to a rule in the association that states decisions of the Ard Chomhairle cannot be questioned.

The camogie association had explained that one of the motivating factors in their decision to axe the minor championship for 2020 was the crossover of players in this age-group who are also part of their county's junior, intermediate, or senior squad. The adult and minor All-Ireland championships are typically run at different times of the year, but the lockdown meant they would have to run concurrently when inter-county action resumed in October.

The association maintained that was not possible. I'm sure if you asked any

minor player they'd have selected to play in their own championship and forfeit their adult contribution.

Minor is so special, and the window is short. I really hope that 2021 doesn't repeat itself in this regard.

Likewise, with the intermediate championship, where six counties whose intermediate team was not their first team because they had a senior inter-county team, were removed from the intermediate championship. That was an unnecessary act and an awful blow.

Most of those girls will never play senior inter-county camogie so the fact that those counties had such a team should be irrelevant if we're just looking at the players themselves and what's best for them.

We're in a far clearer position this time. Not that the roadmap has been very clear to date, but we can, I hope, expect that a large chunk of the country will be vaccinated by the end of June and we should be on the home stretch with regards our roadmap.

Will the fact that U18s being one of the last groups to be vaccinated go against them on the field of play? I'd be surprised if that was the case.

## Vital backroom staff keep the camogie show on the road

FOLLOWING on from our piece last week about volunteers, it is interesting to see this week that the Camogie Association are advertising a full-time paid post for a player welfare and inclusion co-ordinator to join their staff.

Gone are the days when there was one person in Croke Park headquarters who ran the show and kept us all up to date with all the happenings. Sheila Wallace was a wonderful camogie administrator who was 22 years at the helm of the Camogie Association before she retired from the position in 2008.

Since then the association has had a lot of changes and now employs 16 people in various roles.

When you consider the huge workload club officers do day in day out on a voluntary capacity to keep their clubs afloat it will come as a surprise to a lot of these club people that there are so many people employed by the association.

Let's take a look at the various roles and meet and introduce the people who currently work within the association.

Sinead McNulty is ard stiúrthóir and heads the association and the person who liaises closely with the president of the association.

Louise Conlon is technical development and participation manager and her role refers to the development of technical aspects of the game including coaching, refereeing, umpiring, improving the standard of play, technical analysis, playing rules, competition formats for meaningful and age-appropriate games programmes from grassroots to inter county levels, the instigation and overseeing of activity, and special projects for young people and adults.

Brendan McCabe is the finance manager his primary responsibilities include management and control of the association's financial resources and supporting the ard stiúrthóir and the ard chomhairle's resource management committee to carry out financial decisionmaking.

Alan Malone is operations co-ordinator and the role includes leading operations and staff and running of office and national activities and events. As the association's national children's officer his responsibility includes the promotion of the association's child protection and safeguarding policies.

Sarah Stanley is office and communications administrator. In her role she reports to the operations co-ordinator and links in with all departments within the organisation.

Primary responsibilities are dealing with all correspondence and calls to and from the association, she provide advice and assistance on a daily basis to people with queries on administrative aspects of the official guide.

Caroline Halton is the fixtures administrator and without doubt has one of the most important roles in the association. She has to plan and work out the inter-county fixtures that are played for at national level.

Lizzy McGuinness is the finance administrator and her role includes the management of all financial controls within the association.



Sinead McNulty: Key role.

### CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

She also looks after development and maintenance of accounting systems within the association and the sourcing of public funding from local, national and European bodies.

Roberta Farrell is national safeguarding officer. This is another hugely important role. She is the first point of contact for all safeguarding enquiries.

James Heffernan works in the area of youth development co-ordinator. The key purpose of the youth development co-ordinator is to develop, manage and support initiatives that support young people's development.

Aideen Howlin is participation and retention co-ordinator and she has the Munster, Leinster and Connacht participation and growth co-ordinators Kildare/Meath project co-ordinator and the Belfast/Derry co-ordinator, reporting to her directly.

Her role includes overseeing the implementation and facilitation of a co-ordinated programme of activities and events and other resources to support player retention within clubs.

Lizzie Flynn is referee education and development co-ordinator and again this is a hugely important role with the association's referees.

Niall Williams is coach education and development co-ordinator and he will co-ordinate recruitment, education and development of camogie coaches and coach tutors.

Sabrina Larkin is Leinster participation and growth co-ordinator whilst Stuart Reid fills the same role in Munster and they plan and organise the coaching courses and development initiatives that take place and they work closely with county development officers.

Liam Clancy is club and education support co-ordinator and his role is to develop and manage initiatives to support best practice in governance, planning, implementation and administration of camogie within clubs, schools and colleges.

Pamela Frizelle is learning and development co-ordinator and the key purpose of the learning and development co-ordinator is to focus on building and strengthening the capacity of all units to develop the game at all levels.

All of the above are busy roles in an ever-growing sporting organisation that's going from strength to strength.



Cork's Brieger Corkery lifts the Brendan Martin Cup after winning the TG4 ladies' All-Ireland senior football final, Croke Park, Dublin, in 2015.

Picture credit: Ramsey Cardy/Sportsfile

# Brieger talks career on TV

THERE was little fanfare when one of the most decorated GAA players retired at the end of 2019.

Brieger Corkery shimmied around interviews as good as she ran circles around opponents by leaving the door slightly ajar, even if she knew herself that it was firmly closed.

Her escape route was, "I don't know, I'll see," the typically vague response she offered whenever anyone made inquiries.

In an interview with The42 sports website last week, Brieger spoke about being featured on TG4's *Laochra Gael* television show on Thursday night.

This column will be submitted before the programme airs and you'll have watched it by the time you read this article. I'll bet you enjoyed it and were in awe of such a great player and character.

I say that knowing Brieger all these years.

Even now, Brieger shies away from being the centre of attention.

"I was humming and hawing a long time about doing it," Corkery told The42 about her initial reluctance to do the programme.

"I suppose, when I was finished, I was finished, and I was happy enough.

"I suppose, Mairéad and Catherine, my sisters, they were like, 'do it for mam and dad, it'd be nice for them to watch it.'

"And in years to come, maybe for my own family to watch, as well.

"That was really the turning point. I'm cringing every minute I see the word *Laochra Gael* come up," Corkery said.

"So, I'm not looking forward to it, but it's done, and it'll be nice for my parents and my aunts and uncles, and people who supported me all the way.

"It was a nice way to thank people for all their support and I hope it comes across that way."

The *Laochra Gael* episodes allow viewers to see more than just the on-field persona.

People formed misconceptions about Corkery based on what they saw when she was on the pitch.

"I remember being at an All-Stars one time and one of the girls came up to me and said, 'You're nothing but a fitness freak, I bet you'," Corkery said.

"And, thankfully, Nollaig Cleary was



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

beside me and she was like, 'you definitely have the wrong Brieger.'

"I gave everything when I was on the pitch. I always trained and trained as hard as I could.

"But once I'm off it, that's it. You're a totally different person on the pitch than you are off it and I've always said that about myself."

Corkery's last official games in a Cork jersey were the 2016 All-Ireland ladies' football final, against Dublin, and the 2019 All-Ireland camogie semi-final defeat to Galway.

In 2017, she informed Cork camogie manager, Paudie Murray, that she was committed to playing that season.

A few days later, she discovered she was pregnant with her son, Tadhg.

She returned to the panel in 2018, featuring in their All-Ireland semi-final win over Tipperary and was an unused sub in their decider win, against Kilkenny.

2019 proved to be her final campaign with Cork camogie. But nothing official ever followed to confirm her departure.

"I thought I was done in 2017," Corkery said.

"I genuinely never thought I would go back.

"There's a small bit of regret that I went back in 2019, because I was disappointed with how I finished.

"And it wasn't because we lost, it was more that I didn't perform. My year went against me.

"I got injured, things went against me, and it kind of left me in limbo land. In 2017, I was done, and I was happy to be done. Part of me was saying, 'I should have just stayed done'."

Eamonn Ryan got a special dedication from Corkery, too.

"Now that he's passed away, you'd be thinking, 'God, we were really lucky to have him in our lives.' You appreciate those kinds of things," Corkery said.



Brieger Corkery will be featured on the 'Laochra Gael' television show this week.

"I spoke to him around Christmas, he was looking for a number for someone. We were chatting on the phone for a bit," Corkery said.

"I'd have rung him a couple of times over the lockdown to see how he was doing.

"They're the things you like, that you can pick up the phone to them all the time and it's a great to have those times with them.

"He did so much for so many people and held everyone in such high regard. It was lovely looking back at what people said about him and stuff."

Corkery said that there's no one left in either Cork camp from when she started out.

Time moves on as new waves of talent pour in.

But life is still busy for Corkery. She gave birth to a second child recently, with the arrival of little Nonie.

Farming life is busy, too, as calving season continues.

"We won those medals because there was a gang of us together," Corkery said.

"I didn't want to make anything out of it. I was happy enough to slip away and say nothing.

"If they remember you, they remember you, if they don't, that suits me just fine. I'm happier if they wouldn't."



# OFF CENTRE CIRCLE

By Ger McCarthy

LEGEND | Cork GAA dual star Briege Corkery has won 18 All-Ireland senior medals

## Briege reminded us that sport is about much more than winning

**Y**OU know you are getting old when your research reveals that TG4's Laochra Gael series was first broadcast on May 28th, 2001.

The show profiles and celebrates the careers of the country's greatest GAA football, hurling, ladies football and camogie players using archival footage and interviews with the subject as well as their former team mates or managers.

Like a fine wine, Laochra Gael has improved with age.

Twenty years on and there have been many memorable episodes including such luminaries as Mick O'Dwyer, Cora Staunton, Juliet Murphy, Peter Canavan and Jimmy Barry-Murphy.

Up until last Thursday night, my personal favourite was the episode that focused on Offaly's Johnny Pilkington. Known as a 'maverick' off-the-cuff player, Pilkington was a terrific hurler and someone who enjoyed the social aspect of GAA as much as the competitive side.

Much to his many managers chagrin, training was never the be all and end all for Johnny. More often than not, the mercurial hurler managed to get the job done.

Briege Corkery might be cut from the same cloth as Pilkington except the former went on to become one of the most successful dual ladies football and camogie players of all time.

Hopes were high that Corkery's Laochra Gael episode would deliver something special and the show's producers didn't disappoint. Stories of Corkery enjoying a drink – or two, she laughed – the night before a big championship match or stinging skittles and Mars bars in her camogie skort will not have surprised those



Cork GAA great Briege Corkery was named the LGFA Senior Player of the Year in 2012.

who know her best.

But Corkery's achievements far outweighed the unconventional

manner in which she achieved them. Maybe it was milking close to 600 cows every morning or possibly

### One tweet suggested a Netflix series dedicated to the Corkerys would be an instant hit

working as a stonemason that helped develop the All-Star's incredible fitness levels. Footage used in last week's TG4 episode included multiple clips of Corkery scoring at one end of the pitch before producing incredible blocks at the opposite end.

Adored by her team mates and respected by her opponents, Corkery blazed a successful trail with Cork's football and camogie squads throughout a trophy-laden career. Always up for a laugh and a joke, she was able to balance the seriousness of inter-county training with making sure everyone enjoyed a bit of craic too.

It was telling that when asked about her greatest achievement, she picked a team rather than an individual accolade. The Cork ladies football team won the 2014 RTE Team of the Year award. Voted for by the public, Cork's ninth All-Ireland title in ten years saw Corkery and her team-mates elevate ladies football to the nation's attention. That award meant more to Corkery than any All-Ireland medal.

Some of the most interesting scenes in this Laochra Gael episode were those that included her husband Diarmuid, children Tadgh and Nonie plus mother Kitty and father Michael Joe. Family is and always has been the most important thing in Corkery's life. One of nine children, she grew up in the parish of Aghinagh and, by her own admission, enjoyed plenty laughs and the odd argument with

her brothers and sisters. Clearly, her happy childhood prepared her for dealing with the demands and pressures of competing at inter-county level.

The overwhelmingly positive social media reaction to Corkery's Laochra Gael appearance encapsulated why the 18-time All-Ireland winner is loved by so many people both inside and outside Cork. One tweet suggested a Netflix series dedicated to the Corkerys would be an instant hit.

Corkery's honest and down-to-earth approach to life plus her admission that the medals never mattered as much as the friendships and bonds formed during her time with Cork was refreshing to hear.

At a time everyone is clambering to get back out on a pitch, a decorated ladies football and camogie All-Star reminded us of what's really important when it comes to sport. Medals, cups and championships come and go. The people you meet, the friends you make and the memories you create are what the GAA should be all about.

It took a Laochra Gael episode with Corkery to remind us of that.

Fitting then, that my new favourite episode of the TG4 production concluded with Corkery and the only other GAA player to match her for inter-county medals, Rena Buckley, together on a pitch. Two of the GAA's greatest ever players casually pucking a sliotar back and forth and all the time laughing and joking. Two giants of their respective disciplines yet the humblest people you could meet.

There will be many more TG4 Laochra Gael episodes but none will touch Corkery's for honesty, sheer fun and a reminder that sport is about so much more than winning.

## Sports funding 'heavily skewed' against females

### Camogie

Eoghan Cormican

New Camogie president Hilda Breslin has said the distribution of government funding to sport is heavily skewed against encouraging female participation.

In her opening address as Camogie Association president at Saturday's congress, the Kildare native said the distribution of taxpayers money across genders in sport is not fair.

She called on the Government to ensure public funding supports equity of opportunity.

Female inter-county players receive less than a

quarter of the Government funding pocketed by their male counterparts – €700,000 versus €3m. Moreover, the latter figure is a player grant paid directly to male inter-county players, whereas the €700,000 figure is more team focused.

"What would our founders say if we could tell them that today, almost 120 years after the association was formed, we are still actively seeking equity of opportunity for women's sports? Would they be happy to learn that the distribution of public funding for sport is heavily skewed against the encouragement of female participation? As much as four times to one. "It is long past time for gov-

ernments and the sports councils to monitor the gender distribution of public funding between and within sporting organisations and ensure that public funding supports equity of opportunity," Breslin told the congress.

"I appreciate those in leadership today have inherited the current funding position. But the conventions and funding schemes they have inherited utterly fail the test of equity. We are not engaged in special pleading for an exception to these rules. Regrettably, these rules still echo the outmoded stereotypes that our founders confronted in 1904.

"Instead, we are seeking new rules and funding

schemes. We are looking to today's political leaders and sports administrators to introduce change that embraces how we should think about women's participation in sport now and into the future."

Breslin said the media must continue to redress the balance in their coverage of male and female sports, particularly public service broadcasters, which are funded from the public purse.

"If companies want to have credibility with women consumers and to be genuine in their corporate social responsibility, they need to demonstrate how their sports sponsorship promotes equity.

"The gap in male and fe-

male sports participation is narrowing, but remains significant. Such participation plays a vital role in promoting individual health and social engagement in our communities.

"As an association, we remain standard bearers. But it is now time for the Government, the media and sponsors to play a fuller part in addressing equity in opportunity for women's sport."

The new president revealed her intention to establish a fixtures review committee. It will be invited to provide "strong and perhaps difficult recommendations" that will form a new national competitions structure for 2022 and beyond.

Elsewhere during Satur-

day's congress, all experimental playing rules trialled during the 2020 season – including players being allowed to shoulder one another in the tackle and outlawing the handpass goal – were passed.

Over 80% of delegates supported a motion proposing "the association, in partnership with the LGFA, will endeavour to facilitate as far as is practicable the dual player".

Fixture clashes involving dual players again caused problems during the 2020 season, with Cahir pulling out of the Tipperary junior camogie final last September after their dual cohort were asked to play two county finals in the space of 26 hours.

# The differences between camogie and hurling are being flattened out, why not go the whole hog?

**A**t the Camogie Association's annual congress last weekend, they made it official. New rules which were trialled in last year's league and championship, and which proved popular with players and spectators alike, have been formally adopted, meaning that it'll be a new-look game when the league starts back in a month's time.

I say 'new rules' but we are really talking about the elimination of old rules; all the differences between camogie and hurling are being flattened out over time.

When I first began playing camogie, the differences between the two games were legion — from being able to catch the ball three times in possession, to the number of players on the pitch, to being able to drop the hurley and handpass a goal. But over the last two decades, camogie has come more and more in line with its fraternal twin. If this trend continues to develop over the coming years, the wearing of the skort will be the only distinction of note between the two games.

Perhaps the most welcome new rule is to do with physicality, a change that has been called for by players for years now. Until very recently, the camogie rulebook said that a player could not 'deliberately shoulder an opponent'; for a game predicated on physicality and competing for the ball, this was near impossible in practical terms. Now, a player is allowed to 'use minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the sliotar.' Hallelujah!

To be fair, it's fantastic that camogie is finally acknowledging the physicality in the game, even if the wording of the motion itself is a bit ambiguous and frustrating. What is 'minimal con-

**Eimear Ryan**

tact' anyway? How to define a 'reasonable effort to gain possession'? Cork star Amy O'Connor was broadly positive about the rule changes recently, but pointed out that the wording on the shouldering rule needs to be clarified. One person's 'minimal contact' is another person's haymaker. Its meaning will vary from player to player, and — more to the point — from ref to ref. As unrealistic as the old rule was, at least it was unambiguous. It's easy for those of us watching from the sidelines to call for more physicality, but the players on the pitch just need to know the parameters in which they're operating.

If only there was a guideline or a template out there for shoulder tackles! Funny you should ask. The hurling rule reads as follows: 'Provided that he has at least one foot on the ground, a player may make a shoulder-to-shoulder charge on an opponent (a) who is in possession of the ball, or (b) who is playing the ball, or (c) when both players are moving in the direction of the ball to play it.' Sounds reasonable, right?

This is the mystery to me: All the trends of recent years have shown that camogie is coming more and more in line with hurling. This is what most spectators and players want. Why not just go the whole hog? All progress is to be welcomed, but at this rate Congress will be making incremental changes every year, when they could just make the necessary changes in one fell swoop.

Phrases like 'minimal contact' feel like a hangover from a daintier era, when the spectacle of women competing physically with each other was unseemly. But we're now in the age of Katie Taylor, AFLW, and a thriving international women's rugby scene. One has to wonder — who are these 'minimal contact' rules designed to protect us from? Each other? Ourselves? It is not as if camogie players are, Rachael Blackmore-like, competing directly against men — in which case we would be flattened, due to not having an abundance of testosterone flowing through our veins.

Show me the player that applies 'minimal contact' when trying to win the ball. Go big or go home.

All nit-picking aside, the recent raft of rule changes will be good for the game. Quick puckouts are now sanctioned, penalties are now the same as in hurling, and —



Galway's Carrie Dolan is tackled by Cork's Laura Hayes and Izzy O'Regan in the All-Ireland Senior Championship clash at Pearse Stadium in Galway last year. Phrases like 'minimal contact' feel like a hangover from a daintier era, when the spectacle of women competing physically with each other was unseemly, says Eimear Ryan. Picture: Inpho/Lorraine O'Sullivan

perhaps most intriguingly — players can now take a quick indirect free from the hand inside the 45, mark-style.

Hilda Breslin has been making positive and progressive statements at the outset of her presidency, highlighting the funding imbalance between men's and women's codes, and announcing her support for camogie and ladies football to eventually come under the GAA umbrella. Importantly, a motion was also passed last weekend for dual players to be accommodated "as far as

practical", but without similar action on the part of the LGFA, one wonders how effective this will be.

It will be interesting to see how the new rules play out when the league starts back on 15 May. Perhaps camogie's most distinctive difference from hurling — the ability to drop the hurley and handpass a goal — has now also been done away with, although interestingly, handpassed points are still allowed. This seemed to me to be a strange one to keep on the books, since

handpassed points are such a rare occurrence. In fact, I couldn't think of a single instance.

When I consulted the GAA hive mind — i.e. my Tipperary-based family — my dad got back to me instantly: "Nicky in Killarney in '87. Levelled the match." I looked it up and, happily, the game in question is available to watch in full on the GAA website.

In the Munster final replay against Cork, Nicky English burst through the defence in injury time with three

Corkmen on his tail. Knowing he'd be hooked, he dodged it onto his hurley and handpassed it over. When the game went to extra time, Tipp won, thanks in no small part to two handpassed goals from Michael Doyle and Donie O'Connell, scores that would be impossible today.

It's fascinating to watch back and reflect on how the game has evolved — but you can be sure that as soon as pitches reopen, I'll be up at the goals by myself, practising that Nicky move.

# Camogie chiefs vote for greater physicality in game

CAMOGIE chiefs voted overwhelmingly on Saturday in favour of a motion allowing greater physicality in the game.

The amendment, which will allow a player to "use minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the sliotar" was supported by 84% of delegates. A similar motion at congress last year was defeated overwhelmingly.

There was a total of 35 motions up for discussion, 20 of which related to the playing rules, which can only be discussed every three years. Of those 20 motions, voted on by more than 100 remote delegates across Ireland and internationally, 19 went through.

The other notable motion on the clár, one which endeavours "to facilitate as far as practical the dual player", was also passed. This motion, which received 81% support, is a step towards ending the stand-offs and controversies which have arisen in

## CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

recent years, involving players who are also involved in ladies' football.

Delegates also voted to end the hand-passed goal, with 68% voting to consign it to history, though a hand-passed point is still allowed.

Other changes include that a player taking a free cannot cross the 20m line to strike the sliotar, while a quick free from the hand inside the 45 is now allowed. It is also now written into the rules around playing uniforms, that short socks may be worn.

Hilda Breslin from Kildare has taken up the office of uachtarán and will lead the association for the next three years. Geraldine McGrath (Galway) was selected as PR and communications representative, while Cormac Ginty (Offaly) was voted in as

coaching and games representative, and Patsy O'Keefe (Waterford) as treasurer.

The annual Sighle Nic an Ultaigh Award for outstanding service to the association by an administrator was presented to Phyllis Breslin of Dublin.

The National Leagues are set to resume on May 15 and second teams in stronger counties have been cleared to participate. This will be welcomed by Cork intermediate manager Mark McCarthy and fellow selectors as those competitions were called off in 2020. Inter-county training starts from April 19.

The association recorded a surplus of €536,000 for 2020, despite gate-receipt income collapsing by 82%.

Sport Ireland grants totalling €1.56m meant the Camogie Association's overall income of €2.63m for 2020 was greater than the 2019 figure of €2.56m. With expenditure for 2020 falling by €200,000, the Camogie Association surplus of €536,000 was more than double the €257,000 end-of-year surplus for 2019.

# Killeagh aiming for more silverware

## CAMOGIE

■ John Cashman

KILLEAGH is renowned as a sporting hotbed.

Locals love their sport and through the time tunnel, they have had many reasons to celebrate the accomplishments of individuals and teams. Founded in 1973, Killeagh camogie club were crowned All-Ireland senior club champions just seven years later and this year marks the 40-year landmark of the club winning back-to-back county and provincial titles. Subsequently falling on slightly leaner times in the decades that followed, the outstanding individual achievements of players such as Mary O'Connor and Angela Walsh kept the club name very much to the fore.

Now they are on the march again, having reached the SE Systems County Senior semi-final in 2019 only to lose to Iniscarra. Boosted by the presence of Cork stars Laura Treacy, Chloe Sigerson and Hannah Looney coupled the rise of some quality young players, Killeagh have a right to feel that they will be there or thereabouts come the climax of the championship.

But, following on the pathway of tradition can sometimes be a tough challenge.

John O'Connor, brother of Mary is the current team boss, having shared the role in 2020. He says he hopes his side can feed off the club's great history.

"We take that as a positive and not a pressure point. Tradition is a plus. We have players involved now whose mothers were playing in the past, so there is always a bit of bragging going on.

"It's also great to have Sheila Spillane around to inspire the players - she has been there since the very first day the club was formed.

"Last year we lost to St Finbarr's. We had high expectations starting out, but the Barrs wanted it more.

"The loss of Laura Treacy due to a hand injury was obviously a big blow. With Covid last year it was fairly unique in that we had our inter-county players training with us all the time. Ideally, I would like to see a split-season happening again. Overall we feel we have a nice balance of experience and youth that we hope will bond together. Going on the last few years though, we will certainly have to knuckle down and improve."

So in 2021, many eyes will watch how Killeagh perform. In two years, the club will celebrate its golden jubilee. In the year they were founded, Cork footballers and Limerick hurlers were both winning All-Ireland gold, in both cases ending a long barren spell.

For Killeagh the adventure was just beginning.

Now in 2021, Killeagh are dreaming again and hoping they can capture county silverware to put them back on their perch as champions.

# Camogie action for Cork senior teams to resume in May

THE 2021 Littlewoods Ireland Camogie Leagues fixtures have been released ahead of a much anticipated and welcome return to inter-county games.

From next Monday, inter-county panels will be gathering to prepare and they will have four weeks until the league get up and running on May 15.

All the fixtures are subject to change, pending further Government announcements, but fingers crossed the plan will see games in all four divisions commence on Saturday, May 15 with all finals scheduled for the weekend of June 19/20.

Great news for counties with second adult teams is that they will be allowed to resume activity and also participate in league competitions.

Minister for Sport Jack Chambers recently confirmed that the April 19 resumption would include all county teams who previously competed in the National Leagues.

This means that the second camogie teams of Gal-

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■ Mary Newman

way, Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, and Tipperary who missed out on the All-Ireland Intermediate Championship last year, and those of Offaly, Wexford, Waterford, Limerick, and Clare who were not allowed to compete in the All-Ireland Junior Championship will be free to train and participate in competitions.

The counties' second teams lost out under Level 5 restrictions which dictated that each county could enter only one side into competition, a move which was made to limit congregation and travel.

This impacted only camogie players as the football, hurling and Ladies football All-Ireland competitions contain second teams and it causes a lot of upset in the counties involved.

In Division 1, there are three groups of three; two of the group winners will be drawn to advance directly to the semi-finals, while the other will play in the quarter-finals alongside the three teams who finished second.

The opening round of games is scheduled for Saturday May 15, with Division 1 champions Galway set to host Clare in Group 1. All-Ireland champions Kilkenny open with a home game against Dublin in Group 3. The other Division 1 fixture on the first weekend of action will see Cork hosting Tipperary in Group 2.

In Division 2 league there are four groups, two groups of three and two groups of four. The top two in each group go to the quarter-finals; the bottom four play in relegation play-offs with losers playing in relegation final. Cork travel to take on Tipperary in round one, with Antrim hosting Down, Kilkenny travel to Wexford and Westmeath head to Dublin.

# Ward hopes for speedy resolution to schedule row

## Camogie

Paul Keane

Two-time All-Ireland winning Galway camogie manager Tony Ward is confident peace will break out to allow the Littlewoods Ireland camogie leagues to begin as planned this month.

Over 630 of 752 camogie players told the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) at the weekend that they would not participate in the leagues should the Camogie Association persist with their proposed schedule for the season.

Players were left furious by the announcement that the season will begin with the national leagues before shifting to club activity and then back to the inter-county championships.

One of the "key considerations" for this programme of events, according to the Camogie Association, was the fact that "most club activity had ceased in August/September 2020, so to consider running the inter-county championship directly after the Littlewoods Ireland camogie leagues would mean that club players would miss out on almost a full year of camogie".

Now following 'disquiet from the GPA and our inter-county players', the Camogie Association has promised to review the schedule and the threat of a boycott will naturally focus minds.

Ward, who guided Galway to All-Ireland success in 1996 and 2013, is confident that it won't get to the point of strike action.

"I don't think so, I'd be very disappointed if it did," said Ward, who remains in charge of 2020 Limerick SHC finalists Doon. "I couldn't see that happening because players are just so

anxious to get back playing, they've been waiting so long to play, my own daughter is on the Galway panel. They're raging to get going and to have to stand back and boycott games would be a really terrible development.

"We've put up with so much through the lockdowns without having a boycott now. I think if something like that happens then it just leaves a sour taste for everyone. The Association needs the players and the players need the Association so I'd hate to see a gap coming between them. I think people will get their heads together over this and find a way forward that works, I'd be very surprised if that didn't happen."

Ward believes it's important that the camogie schedule mirrors that drawn up by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association this year. The LGFA are expected to outline their plans for the 2021 season this week with a split season of inter-county and then club activity favoured by the majority of players.

Differing schedules for camogie and ladies football competitions would heap pressure on dual players and increase the likelihood of players having to choose between club and county at certain stages.

"I do feel that whatever the ladies footballers are doing, for the sake of the dual player, that camogie should be doing as well, that the two seasons are basically running alongside each other," said Ward.

"Players are only human at the end of the day. I've seen firsthand plenty of instances of dual players being messed around and forced to play games in the morning and evenings with different teams and it's just not right. Those days should be gone."



Sr. Eileen O'Donnell (Stan)

PRESENTATION CONVENT, FARRANREE, CORK and DONERAILE, CO CORK  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT and FIRST ANNIVERSARY  
23RD APRIL 2020

Sr EILEEN is lovingly remembered and sadly missed by her family and Community. We wish to thank most sincerely all those who sympathised with us. For those who paid their respects by watching the Funeral Mass online, to those who stood on the roadside and at the graveside to acknowledge Eileen on her final journey, we deeply appreciate the support. To her relatives, Sisters, co-workers, past pupils, staff and friends who wanted to be with us but could not due to the circumstances, thank you for sending cards, Mass bouquets, letters, messages on rip.ie and sharing wonderful memories of Eileen in North Presentation, Farranree and Crosshaven. Special thanks to Fr John Walsh PP who celebrated the Mass and to those who participated in readings, prayers, offertory gifts and choir. This meaningful liturgy was a fitting way to celebrate Eileen's full life. Thanks to O'Connor's Funeral Directors, Coburg Street, Cork and the gravediggers for your kindness and professionalism. To the National Ambulance Service, Dr Darragh Matthews, Professor Conor Deasy, Dr Norma Harnedy and nursing staff at University Hospital Cork. We are very grateful for all you did for Eileen in her final days. We thank God for the gift that was Eileen. Please accept this acknowledgement as a token of our sincere appreciation. Mass will be celebrated for your intentions.





Galway's Orlaith McGrath and Laura Treacy of Cork in action last winter. Picture: INPHO/Lorraine O'Sullivan

## Teams can start their plans for the season with return to training

ADULT inter-county players welcomed the news that the Littlewoods National Leagues will start on the weekend of May 15. Cork teams are set to return to the training grounds on Monday next it will be all systems go as they prepare for throw-in.

The return to inter-county action was welcomed by all counties and most especially by counties with second adult teams as they will be allowed to resume activity and also participate in league competitions. Minister for Sport, Jack Chambers recently confirmed that the April 19 resumption to training would include all county teams who previously competed in the National Leagues.

This means that the second camogie teams of Galway, Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny and Tipperary who missed out on the All-Ireland Intermediate Championship late last year, and those of Offaly, Wexford, Waterford, Limerick and Clare who were not allowed to compete in the All-Ireland Junior championship will be free to train and participate in competitions.

Counties' second teams lost out under Level 5 Covid-19 restrictions which were put in place for last year's championship which dictated that each county could enter only one side into competition, a move which was made to limit congregation and travel.

This impacted only camogie players as the Gaelic football, hurling and ladies football All-Ireland competitions contain second teams and it causes a lot of upset in the counties involved.

This is huge news for Cork and manager Mark McCarthy will have a busy few weeks as he strives to get this squad together. When one considers these girls have not participated in inter-county competitions since their last game national league game on October 18 last year McCarthy and his backroom team will be busy with just three weeks to prepare.

Likewise for Paudie Murray with the senior side but he has the advantage that his charges were in action up to the senior All Ireland semi-final on November 28. In the Littlewoods Division 1 League 2021 there are three groups of three, two of the three group winners will be drawn to advance directly to the semi-finals, while the other will have to play in the quarter-finals alongside the three teams who finished second. The opening round of games is scheduled for Saturday, May 15 and on the first weekend of action Cork who

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

have home advantage, taking on Tipperary in Group 2. Reigning Division 1 champions Galway set to host Clare in Group 1. All-Ireland champions Kilkenny will start with a home game against Dublin in Group 3.

In the Littlewoods Division 2 league there are four groups, two groups of three and two groups of four. The top two in each group go to the quarter-finals whilst the bottom four play in relegation playoffs with losers playing in relegation final. In Group 1 there are just three teams Antrim, Down and Derry, Group 2 features Cork, Tipperary, Kerry and Galway, Group 3 Wexford, Kilkenny and Laois, and Group 4 Westmeath, Dublin, Kildare and Meath.

Cork will travel to take on Tipperary in round one on May 15; round two on May 22 will see Cork host Kerry on what will be a historic day for the Kerry sides when they meet Cork for the first time at Division 2 level. Having been scheduled to meet in the championship last year before the second teams were removed from competing this is a clash that will be eagerly awaited by both counties.

Saturday, May 29 will see Cork make the long journey to Galway, it's worth a mention that in league and championship through the years when there are three games to be played Cork always seem to draw the short straw and always only have one game at home.

Looking at the schedule of both divisions Cork and Tipperary are meeting in Division 1 and Division 2 opening game on May 15, Cork are home for the Division 1 game and Tipperary home for the Division 2 game, surely it would have made sense to have both games fixed for the same county.

Granted it may have been to avoid big groups at games in the same county but if these games were played in Cork or Tipperary on the same day at three-hour intervals and at two different venues it would give the county executives of both counties an opportunity to be on hand to organise and lend a hand.

Given the work that will have to go into ensuring games are played safely all hands on deck will be needed with county executives split between two counties on the same day it does not make sense.



Cork's Fiona Keating shoots from Wexford's Sarah O'Connor and Laura Dempsey at Páirc Uí Rinn. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# Playing by the rules: Changes coming May 10

THE focus of last weekend's annual congress was the trial playing rules, which were motions for voting; all passed with high percentages.

The following rules will come into effect on May 10, ahead of the leagues starting on May 15.

The goalkeeper may use a quick puckout after a wide ball is signalled by the referee. She must stay within the small parallelogram. Any player deliberately obstructing the goalkeeper's quick puckout will be dealt with under another rule. Players do not need to be outside the 20m line for a quick puckout.

The referee will have discretion to stop play. If a goalkeeper chooses a normal puckout, she must wait for the referee's whistle and normal rules apply.

Rule 11.2 (a): A player may take a quick free from their hand, if they are fouled inside their own 45m line. Only the player that is fouled can take it from the hand and it's an indirect free.

Rule 9.7 was amended to allow more contact into the game, although I find the rule change marginal and too discretionary. A section reads: A player may tackle an opponent who is in the act of playing, or in possession of the sliotar, by using minimal contact on an opponent's body from side-on, once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the sliotar.

Minimal contact is described as 'contact made while making a reasonable attempt to gain possession of the sliotar'. Contact must not be in an aggressive or cynical manner. I suggest smiling while making the tackle.

I concede that it's a start, but, unfortunately some referees will allow far more contact than others and the inconsistency will still leave a lot of managers and



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

players frustrated.

Thankfully, motion 10.1 passed, which now makes it a technical foul if a player intentionally drops their hurley. I was desperate for that to go.

Another rule that came into play — and which many, particularly goalkeepers, are grateful for — is that you can no longer score a goal with a handpass. A player can use a handpass to score a point.

Only one player can stand on the goal line for a penalty and the penalty cannot be taken inside the 20m line.

One area to note is 11.1: The advantage rule. The rule states that the advantage time allotted is up to five seconds, if it becomes clear that no advantage has accrued. I think we've all seen way above that, with several passes allowed before the referee deems 'no advantage' and awards a free to the team from the spot where the foul was committed.

A new non-trial motion: The playing of an opponent's hurley with a flick in the air or on the ground was narrowly defeated, 51% to 49%. Pity, because I like seeing the ball and play run on from doing that.

After both the Ladies' Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) and Camogie Association defeated a motion last year to each recognise the dual player, a new rule was passed by 81% to 19%, which reads, 'The Association recognises the role of the dual player. The Association, in partnership with the LGFA, will endeavour to facili-

tate, as far as is practicable, the dual player'.

Great to see this, after too much negative publicity surrounding clashes in recent times. Hopefully, we won't see any of that in the season ahead.

All Cork teams go back training next Monday and yet they don't have an idea of when their championships will be played. The GAA made their 2021 fixtures available on April 8, but the Camogie Association have yet to announce theirs and they really need to make the dates known immediately.

Club and inter-county players are in no-man's land. Will there be a club/inter-county split-season, like 2020? I truly hope there will be. You'd struggle to find any inter-county player that didn't thoroughly enjoy, and prefer, the split season, with club first, in 2020.

I have my doubts 2021 will follow the same route, even though it was a tremendous success across the board. Clubs won't have their inter-county players again for the whole summer, if we revert.

Cork's national league in both divisions starts on May 15. The seniors are at home to Tipperary, while the intermediates travel to Tipperary. I can never get my head around this. With both panels crossing over, it's a headache. Why, when this occurs, there isn't an 'every other year' scenario agreed between counties, I don't know.

The seniors' second outing is an away game to Waterford, with the quarter-finals down for the weekend of June 5, the semi-finals June 12, and the finals the weekend of June 19. If the championships throw in in July, the clubs are really taking a complete back seat until possibly late September, if Cork reach the senior and/or intermediate finals.

# Collins to lead from the front



Linda Collins will lead the Cork camogie team from the front this season.

## Eight subs per game in camogie league

Eoghan Cormican

Counties will be permitted to make eight substitutions per game in the upcoming National Camogie League.

At a time when various inter-county GAA managers are calling for more than five substitutions to be allowed in this year's Allianz Leagues, the Camogie Association has confirmed that teams will again be permitted to make eight substitutions per game in next month's National Camogie League.

The rule, exclusive to camogie, means managers can replace over half their starting team during a League fixture when games resume in mid-May.

Laois and Mayo football managers Mike Quirke and James Horan, in yesterday's *Irish Examiner*, backed the idea of allowing more substitutes in this year's Allianz Leagues.

Both managers gave support in principle to increasing the number of substitutes from five so as to prevent injury after a lengthy layoff from games activity and to fully assess their panel.

"I never understood the logic of reducing the six to five. I think it's the other way we should be going," said Quirke. "In these exceptional circumstances, I think it's a huge opportunity to have unlimited substitutes when lads are under pressure to stay playing and then pick up some injury that was probably avoidable if you were able to take him off the field."

Cork U20 football manager Keith Ricken is another advocate of increasing the limit on substitutions to ensure players can be phased back into match action after five-plus months without a game. "It wouldn't be the worst use of common sense if the GAA allowed more subs to be used — especially for the league — to minimise injuries and allow players to get accustomed to the match play tempo," he told this newspaper on Monday.

The rule allowing more substitutions in camogie league fixtures was introduced in the middle of the last decade and is applicable at club as well as inter-county level. "A maximum of eight substitutions may be made in under 14, under 16, under 18 and adult league competitions at all levels. This does not apply to championships at all levels regardless of competition structure or format," the rule reads.

The National Camogie League throws in on May 15. Division 1 has been split into three groups of three. The quarter-finals, semi-finals, and final will be played across the opening three weekends of June.

There is still no word on the format of the 2021 All-Ireland camogie championship, or when it will commence. Inter-county camogie players returned to training last Monday, but remain in the dark as to what the camogie championship will look like or when it will be played. Similarly, the LGFA has not released their Championship plans.

## New Cork camogie captain ready to spearhead Rebels' return to the top

BY GER MCCARTHY

NEW Cork camogie captain Linda Collins is determined to lead from the front this season. The Courcey Rovers forward — a familiar face in the Rebels'

attack in recent years — doesn't feel her new role will add extra pressure as Cork look to wrestle the league and championship titles off Galway and Kilkenny respectively.

"I don't feel any added pressure because I am still going to work as hard as I ever have and try to put my best foot forward on behalf of the team," Collins told this week's *Star Sport Podcast*. "At the end of the day, camogie is a team game. Everyone has to pull together. I don't feel a sense of pressure and I hope the other girls can learn from me, if there is anything to learn from me. The thing I am looking forward to the most

this season is just getting back playing camogie, working hard, training hard and having the craic with the girls before and after training. That's what you enjoy the most about playing inter-county."

Collins is coming off the back of a memorable club year after Courceys won their first county senior camogie championship title last season. Cork ace Collins scored 1-5 in that historic county final win against Inniscarra — and that success saw her nominated to captain her county this year.

"Being captain of the Cork senior camogie team is never something I thought I would end up being and I am really looking forward to the year ahead," says Collins, who works as a teacher at Summercove National School in Kinsale.

"Just thinking of all the Cork captains that have gone before me and all the captains I would have played under, it is a great achievement to be amongst those names."

"Courcey Rovers put my name forward as (Cork) captain for 2021. It is an honour for me to be able to represent my club and my family. The group of girls I play with have been together over the last number of years. Bringing everyone together, after such a tough time of it last year, will be special. Hopefully, Cork will enjoy a positive year."

The Cork camogie team returned to training this week as preparations ramp up ahead of the national league campaign that throws in next month. It's all systems go now for Paudie Murray and his new-look man-

agement team.

"Credit where credit is due, Paudie has put so many years and so much time into Cork camogie," Collins says.

"Paudie always wants to get the best out of his team. He always wants to bring in the best people for his management set-up and constantly talks about how we, as players, can improve. That's why Cork camogie has done so well in the past few years."

"This year, we want to lay down a marker. Cork has a new management team with Kevin Murray in, a new strength and conditioning coach in Kevin Dunne, Matthew Twomey and Teddy O'Donovan are back as well. Paudie has put together that management team so the players want to do them justice by representing ourselves as best we can out on the pitch."

Collins and Cork will begin their Division 1 national league campaign with a home Group 2 clash against Tipperary on May 15th before an away trip to Waterford on May 29th. Cork need to finish in the top two to qualify for the knock-out stages.

"To be honest, you can never predict the outcome of a game against either Waterford or Tipperary," Collins says.

"They are two physical teams so it is a constant battle whenever we play them. I think what will be really important because it is such a condensed season, that Cork uses not just 15 but 20 players (as often as we can). The players that will come on during those games will be vital. There is a nice little bit of rivalry there as well. Hopefully, we will be able to get off to a

**'I don't feel any added pressure because I am still going to work as hard as I ever have' — Linda Collins**

good start.

Not one for looking back, Collins does admit that last year's All-Ireland semi-final loss to Kilkenny still rankles. How much is that defeat a motivating factor heading into the 2021 season?

"There are two sides to last year's semi-final defeat to Kilkenny," Collins explains.

"You don't want to dwell on it too much and focus on the disappointment. We want to try and start the year afresh. On the other hand, that loss to Kilkenny is hard to forget."

"I was talking to Libby Coppinger recently about that semi-final. We were doing a bit of analysis and still getting frustrated about losing the game. It would nearly annoy us to talk about it too much. It will definitely be a motivating factor heading into the national league and championship."

"We knew Cork could have played better that day against Kilkenny so now everyone wants to improve. Cork camogie hasn't been successful over the last two years so we just need to get back to training. We need to enjoy the training too but everyone on the panel wants to do better in 2021. It is a new year and we need to focus on what's ahead of us. We need to drive on."

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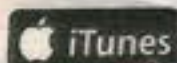


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Carrigaline camogie squad during training last June at Carrigaline GAA grounds. Picture: Jim Coughlan

## Looking forward to getting back training

AS children in clubs all over the county countdown to the returning to the pitches, the Camogie Association, in a joint announcement with the GAA and LGFA and the Covid-19 advisory group, prepared a guidance document and recommendations to advise clubs about the safe resumption of activities. It's been a long wait for children who have been through so much, the thing they have in their favour is that they have done this previously and they know the drill.

Children are very resilient and they have seen how the last return to play worked, they are also now back in school and this is a huge help to club volunteers as they strive to have a safe training environment.

In my own club our younger brigade amazed me and I have to say they were superb when we returned from lockdown one, it was wonderful to see them arrive and go to their respective stations and as a matter of course sanitize their hands and have their hurleys and helmets sprayed before they entered the training area.

The support from the parents many of whom stepped up and were team Covid officials helped the coaches enormously and I'm sure it was and will be the same in every club around the county as we all put in the effort to keep our players safe.

A repeat of that extraordinary commitment will be equally important this year in ensuring a safe and enjoyable year for everyone involved in camogie regardless of level or ability. The priority at all times must be to protect the health and welfare of all those involved and to minimise the risk of transmission within our communities.

Safe return to sports is the responsibility of each player and backroom member and a few of the pointers are worth looking at again.

Prior to the first training session players, parents/guardians and backroom personnel must complete the standard risk assessment health questionnaire which each club will issue them with or they may do this on line.

Symptoms will be identified on the form and any player/mentor with these is advised to not participate or return to training.

For each session a parent will check in their child via the on line method or with the teams Covid person who will keep a record of everybody in attendance at each session.

Every team in the club must have

### CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

someone with responsibility for Covid supervision presents at each training session these nominees must complete the on-line module which outlines their exact role.

Covid persons will be on duty and will be clearly identifiable at all times, the main duties of the Covid persons for a team will include: Ensuring players and backroom personnel complete the health questionnaire, ensure sanitising of facilities is completed before and after each training session, maintaining records of attendees.

The Covid persons of each team and the clubs Covid supervisor will ensure that the record of everybody attending each training session will be available in the event that contact tracing is required.

Before a mentor or player hits the training pitch there are a few basic things that will help keep them safe, wash your hands frequently regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub.

Dressing rooms, club gyms and social areas in clubs will remain closed until further notice, toilets will be available to use but ventilation is important, doors and windows should remain open in so far as is reasonable and appropriate.

Appropriate signage should be placed at the entrance of club facilities, these signs should be clearly visible and easy to understand.

Hand dispensers should be provided in all areas and especially at the entrance to pitch and pitch side.

Only players and team personnel should gain access and medical personnel and physios should wear masks and a facility for disinfecting balls, sliotars, hurleys, helmets should be used regularly.

In the event that a player becomes unwell during a training session facilities should be in place for immediate isolation in a designated room this could be a dressing room as they will not be in.

There will be a clearly defined protocol for linking up with the appropriate medical service or a parent if the player is under age. It seems like a lot of work but

"We have been there before and we have this under control." Enjoy the return to the training pitches everybody and stay safe



Cork camogie manager Paudie Murray will be happy to have his players back training.

Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

# Big decision for juvenile players

### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

THERE'S a buzz in the air as people's expectations of a lockdown exit are increasing on an almost daily basis.

The hospitalisations and positive tests are coming down with the number of vaccinations on a nice trajectory.

For inter-county players returned to training there's a spring in their step. On Monday, our juveniles are back and that is so important.

However, for those juveniles, they have a decision to make.

The camogie association sent out the following notification last week.

"We are very conscious of managing the potential risks associated with returning to play and on the need to minimise engagements and contacts between groups at all levels.

"To this end, as a national governing body, we direct that players train and play with one team or squad only under current restriction levels.

"For example: In 26 counties, for players who are selected as part of an inter-county squad, who are under 18 years, must declare for either their inter-county adult team — meaning they would not be eligible to return to underage training with their club team under current restrictions, or their juvenile club team, which would mean that they are no longer eligible to train/ play with their county team under current restrictions, ie, players would declare and train with one group only.

"In Northern Ireland, for players who are selected as part of an inter-county squad, of any age, must declare for either their inter-county adult team — meaning that they would not be eligible to return to underage training with their club team under current restrictions, or their relevant club team only, which would mean that they are no longer eligible to train/



Inagh Kilnamona's Fiona Lafferty and Courcey Rovers' Aishling Moloney in action last season. Picture: Eamon Ward

play with their county team under current restrictions.

With Northern Ireland fully back club training this is the variant to the set-up down south.

"This will help to ensure a safe return to sport, minimise interaction between players, and enable our county teams to field as planned, particularly at the junior levels.

"We are aware that will be challenging for players and team management. Our priority remains the ongoing health and safety of all involved in our sport."

This doesn't seem to affect mentors that cross over club juvenile and inter-county teams and you would hope that once all clubs fully return to action, this rule will be removed.

Although that's not the case up north, so it will depend on what restrictions are lifted over the coming weeks. We are hopeful of a return to widespread club training in May.

But we'll have to see what the Government permits next week and how the associations will follow suit.

The Cork intermediates and seniors took to the fields last Monday and Tues-

day respectively and I'll bet that was a joy. Thirty-six players make up the intermediate squad which will be reduced to 30 and 26 make up the senior panel.

That's a small enough panel for a senior side. There's been a lot of rotation in the squad this past three years and it's going to take time to build again.

Other players were approached to join the squad but passed it up for one reason or another. Cork's league outings will no doubt give every player a run.

With only two group games, they'll want to make the quarter-finals at the very least to ensure they get as many competitive games as possible. There are three groups of three.

A draw will take place between the top counties to emerge from each group. First two drawn will advance to the semi-final. The third county will enter a quarter-final with the three group runners-up.

Cork have Tipperary and Waterford. Not so easy anymore. Tipperary have improved greatly, and it'll depend on who lines out for them this season as to how strong they'll be.

If dual player Aishling Moloney makes herself available, she'll be a huge addition. Away to Waterford will be a battle. However, you would still expect Cork to have it over them.

The association kept their eight subs rule for the National League and Paudie Murray will be very pleased with that as he is sure to try out several formations.

We still don't have word on when inter-county and club championships will commence. That's frustrating at this stage.

The rumours alternate from club first and inter-county second to vice versa.

I can appreciate how difficult it would be for inter-county managers to try and prepare a team for the championship if like last year club comes first and they are forbidden to interfere with club activity and only get a few weeks to prepare as a group for the All-Ireland series.

On the flip side, clubs have been pushed to the back of the line so much over the past decade that they are starting to make themselves heard. We can only wait and see.

# Strong West Cork interest in Cork intermediates

BY GER MCCARTHY

THERE will be plenty of West Cork interest in this year's Cork intermediate camogie panel ahead of the Littlewoods National League Division 2 campaign.

Mark McCarthy is in charge of Cork's intermediate camogie set-up once again this year. Yet to finalise his squad, the Inniscarra club man has a quality management team in place ahead of the build-up to the opening league fixture on May 15th.

Casting his eye over all the eligible individuals throughout the county, McCarthy is impressed with the quality of camogie players emerging from West Cork.

'We are still developing our current pool of players having recruited from the Cork minor squad and other players we saw during the 2020 club championships,' McCarthy explained.

'The squad will be narrowed down before a final panel of 30 is selected but only after each player has been involved in eight Cork training sessions. That gives everyone a fair crack at making the 2021 panel.'

There are plenty of West Cork players in the frame for selection. From Ballinascorthy, Claire Kingston and Moira Barrett will be training with us. Enniskeane's Tara Sheehan and



Ballinascorthy camogie players Moira Barrett and Claire Kingston are currently involved with the Cork intermediate camogie panel.

Danielle Carroll, Kilbrittain/Timoleague's Aine Crowley, Kate Wall and Hannah Sexton are some of the other Carbery division players we will be looking at.

'Jerry Ryan from Ballinascorthy is one of our selectors for the coming year as well. He joins Kevin Hannon (Coursey Rovers), Tom Harrington (Fr O'Neill's) Tadhg O'Riordan (player analysis), Laura McCarthy (player liaison officer) and Daragh O'Callaghan (coach).

'I've been involved with the Cork intermediates since 2019

**'Jerry Ryan from Ballinascorthy is one of our selectors for the coming year as well'**

and was delighted to accept an offer to take up the managerial role last year. Unfortunately, we ended up playing only a handful of league matches but I have a fantastic management team with me heading into year three. I get a bit of slugging for being the only manager yet to

lose a championship match!

'The whole idea behind having an intermediate grade is to bridge the gap for minor players coming through and offer a chance to club players that may not have previously featured on senior inter-county panels. We are talking to Paudie (Murray) in the senior set-up all the time.'

'Having said that, Cork is always looking to be as successful as we can when it comes to the intermediate grade. We are playing some county's senior (first) teams which makes it quite competitive and we want

to be successful.'

While a decision made off the field last year meant that the Cork intermediates couldn't compete in the All-Ireland championship, McCarthy is looking forward now, not back. The Littlewoods Division 2 National League starts on May 15th. Guaranteed a minimum of three matches, McCarthy's side begin away to Munster rivals Tipperary in Group 2. Next up is another local derby at home to Kerry before Cork finish off their group phase with a testing trip to Galway. The top two in each qualifying group progress while the bottom-placed teams enter relegation play-offs.

It is straight knockout after that with Cork looking at a maximum of six matches to claim a national league title. This year's other Division 2 groups are made of Antrim, Down and Derry in Group 1, Wexford, Kilkenny and Laois in Group 2 plus Westmeath, Meath, Dublin and Kildare in Group 4. The national league final is pencilled in for the weekend of June 26th/27th.

There is still a question mark surrounding what happens with this year's intermediate camogie championships.

Cork intermediate camogie manager Mark McCarthy.



Talks of a possible split season, playing inter-county league first, reverting to club after that before returning for the All-Ireland intermediate championships, are ongoing.

'Everything is up in the air in terms of a 2021 All-Ireland intermediate championship and we are waiting for the Camogie Association to make a decision on that,' McCarthy said.

'We don't know if camogie will revert to a split-season with club and inter-county championships completely separate. Cork is like every other county involved in that we don't know where we stand at the minute.'

'Having spoken to our players, most of them are in favour of a split-season. They enjoyed the camogie club campaign last year without the distraction of inter-county training or multiple setups demanding their time. A lot of our squad play ladies football as well.'

# Boycott threatened by players as Camogie Association fluffs lines

**T**he upcoming 2021 Littlewoods National Camogie League remains in doubt as many inter-county players threaten to boycott the competition.

How has it come to this? Every camogie player, manager, supporter and sports journalist in the country was keenly anticipating the return of their favourite sport.

That was before the Camogie Association dropped a bombshell late last Friday evening at an emergency meeting by deciding to run their upcoming fixtures calendar as inter-county league first, club championships second and finally their All-Ireland inter-county series.

That surprising ruling contradicted the majority of inter-county players' wishes (82%) for a split-season approach, inter-county league and championship first followed by club championships, similar to what the GAA and LGFA are expected to run in 2021.

Worse still, the Camogie Association's decision was leaked prior to issuing a formal statement which quickly drew the ire of the sport's community on social media. Current Cork camogie captain Linda Collins tweeted: 'SPLIT THE SEASON!!!! Listen to the players. 82% want it split. Opportunity to give equal time to both club and county. Camogie bring the negative headlines on themselves again.'

The Camogie Association attempted to placate a severely negative online backlash by issuing a detailed statement explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Yet, a second statement, less than 24 hours later, promised to poll members, about what fixtures-calendar format was best to use going forward, and announce the results of that poll within seven days.

That second statement went public



New Cork captain Linda Collins voiced her displeasure with the Camogie Association's plans tweeting: 'SPLIT THE SEASON!!!! Listen to the players. 82% want it split...'

after the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) intervened.

The GPA's response included: 'We (GPA) are willing to work with them (Camogie Assoc.) towards finding a satisfactory resolution to allow all players, both club and county, get back on to pitches across the country without any further controversy. Players have overwhelmingly voted (84% of 752 GPA players who responded in last 24 hours) that they will not participate in the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie Leagues should the current season structure be retained. The GPA will represent this view from our members to the Camogie

Association.'

So, what happens now? The Camogie Association will have their members responses compiled before the end of the week. Should that vote favour the association's wish to run inter-county league, club and inter-county championship, then 84% of the GPA's membership will boycott the upcoming Littlewoods National League. Whatever happens, this whole sorry mess does not portray camogie in a positive light.

Modern-day women's sport has to fight their male counterparts for every newspaper column inch, TV and radio slot. In that regard, it

is unfortunate that people will be reading mostly negative camogie-related headlines for the foreseeable future.

Even more disappointing is that the Camogie Association made such a PR disaster on the same weekend young girls all over the country got to marvel at Katie Taylor and Phil Healy's latest sporting achievements.

Girls need heroes and thousands look up to their club and inter-county camogie players as much as they do with Taylor and Healy. Linda Collins, Orla Cronin, Libby Coppinger, Saoirse McCarthy and Katrina Mackey are just some of the Cork

players young girls watch on TV and at matches, aspiring to become just like them.

So, when those same young girls hear that their inter-county heroes are not being listened to by their association and are having to resort to a possible strike, what will they think?

Whether you agree or disagree with the Camogie Association's stance on a split-season, their recent actions and the manner in which they went about it have only served to further alienate themselves from grassroots level.

Irrespective of what transpires over the coming weeks, the trust that has been lost between the association and the majority of their inter-county and club players will take a long time to heal. That, more than anything else is the most upsetting aspect of what's occurred between the association and the players they were elected to represent.

Camogie is such a terrific team sport and something that is unique to Irish culture. I've witnessed firsthand the positive effect it can have on young girl's lives, how it can empower a squad of players and the simple joy it brings to players living in both rural and urban areas.

The next few days should not be about who has the power in camogie, the sport's association or the GPA. It should be about welcoming the return of the National League and an opportunity for camogie to remind the country what a fantastic sport has to offer the viewing public and its sponsors.

It should also be about what is best for the individuals who play the game and the ones ultimately responsible for inspiring the next generation of camogie players to come through.

Let's hope we are talking about on-field rather than off-field camogie matters in the next couple of weeks.

# Camogie set for landmark year

Therese O'Callaghan

**C**AMOGIE certainly isn't coming into a new season under the radar.

The backlash over the proposed playing calendar has generated plenty of debate and division since the weekend.

Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain: 2021 will be a landmark year for the sport.

Last month, Congress voted to introduce new playing rules. The changes are largely seen as a game enhancer and should improve it as a spectacle. Some of these playing rules were trialled last year and the feedback was positive.

They include taking a quick free from the hand, more contact is permitted, dropping the hurley is not allowed while the hand-passed goal is no more.

All are seen as a significant step in the right direction.

Nine teams, divided into three groups, vie for honours when the Littlewoods Ireland National Camogie League Division 1 gets underway next weekend. Four of these have new managers — Dublin, Limerick, Offaly, and Waterford — and all will be looking to make their mark.

One of those is Susan Earner, who became the first female manager of the Offaly senior camogie team. Her appointment makes her the only female boss in the top division. An All-Ireland senior winner with Galway in 2013, the former goalkeeper is looking forward to the challenge and to see how the new rules pan out.

"The girls are training at a completely different level," she says of the contact rule.

"They are concentrating a lot on building their physicality, building their speed and building their strength.

"The previous rule didn't really allow for them to ex-

**TRAILBLAZING:** Former Galway star Susan Earner was appointed as the first female manager of the Offaly senior camogie team.

Picture: Inpho/James Crombie



press themselves to their full capacity, so definitely I am in huge favour of that new rule and I think also it will help to give the game a bit more flow because the game is under a lot of criticism at the moment with the amount of frees.

"It is one thing that is differentiating the hurling and the camogie. The hurling is a lot more free-flowing, a bit more heavier tackles. If you are watching a camogie match and you count the amount of frees, it slows down the game

completely. It makes a mockery of what the girls have trained for."

Admittedly, there is a fear the rule might be open to different interpretations.

"A lot of players are wondering what minimum contact really means. We are really hoping that consistency is key here, that referees will all be on the same wavelength. I know they will all be coached but people's interpretation can be different. I just have a fear that one referee's mini-

mal contact will be different to another one. But clearly, everyone knows a malicious foul from the other and I just hope they let a bit more flow to the game."

One rule, in particular, gets a warm welcome from the former goalkeeper.

"I'm delighted to see the hand-passed goal gone," she laughs. "But it is a great one to score and a really good skill to have. We won an All-Ireland with one."

"Ailish O'Reilly scored a

hand-passed goal that won us the 2013 All-Ireland. But as a goalkeeper, it is impossible to defend.

"I do notice the girls now who are brought up for 10 or 15 years and coached to drop the hurl, I think they are finding that one a little bit tricky to adjust to. At training you see them doing it and you say, 'nope — you are not allowed to do that.'" Earner brings plenty of experience as a coach, so what is different in her job now?

"I'm manager, so this is very much a new role for me. I would be more used to coaching teams. It is a very daunting task for me to try and gather the best players in Offaly and bring them to the highest level they can."

"I am enjoying it. I did find it tough enough during lockdown to try and motivate the girls."

"They did the best they could. The girls are buying in and they seem to be enjoying it now that we are back."

"We have a bye the first weekend. We are in a group with Dublin and Kilkenny and we are trying to instil some confidence and for the girls to believe in themselves. We are hoping we can build a bit of momentum through the league."

"Dublin are a very competitive team and Kilkenny are obviously All-Ireland champions. All we can do is compete, see how it goes and learn from it."

"I'll never forget the hammering we got off Galway last year but you learn from the best. You are never going to improve playing the weaker teams. So that is what the league is for, to try out a couple of different positions and players. It is just a bit unfortunate it is short."

The formation of the league is based on geography with Clare, Limerick and Galway in Group 1. Cork, Tipperary and Waterford make up Group 2 while Group C comprises of Dublin, Kilkenny and Offaly. The games will be spread over three weekends in May. The final is pencilled in for June 19/20.

The action throws in on May 15 with All-Ireland champions Kilkenny up against Dublin. All-Ireland finalists Galway meet Clare whilst Cork and Tipperary lock horns.

**KATRINA PARROCK, WEXFORD**

What a coup by Wexford boss Kevin Tattan to coax four-time All-Ireland winner and three-time All-Star Parrock out of retirement. After stepping away from the inter-county game in 2017, Parrock joined local soccer side Wexford Youths. She scored the winning goal in the 2018 FAI Cup final and also tasted league success with the club. But her recent decision to return to her camogie roots for the season ahead is a significant boost to a county that has endured a turbulent few years and failed to reach the knock-out stages of the All-Ireland championship since 2017.

It'll be interesting to see where Parrock is deployed — one would imagine she'll be stationed at either full or corner-forward — and to what extent she can rekindle her form of old. Irrespective, Wexford will be a more difficult proposition with Parrock back in the fold.

**MARY O'CONNELL, KILKENNY**

The young PE and biology teacher in Presentation Kil-

kenny will look to build on a hugely positive 2020 campaign, during which she broke onto the starting team and was among the scorers during Kilkenny's All-Ireland semi-final and final wins.

Anne Dalton's retirement during the off season is a significant loss to the Kilkenny attack and while they will be boosted by the return from injury of Katie Power, O'Connell is one of the players, along with Aoife Doyle and Katie

Nolan, who will be tasked with keeping their graph on an upward trajectory.

**SIOBHAN MCGRATH, GALWAY**

Another young corner-forward capable of leaving a sizable imprint on the 2021 season. The youngest of the McGrath sisters on the Galway panel, Siobhan rejoined the set-up in 2020 and was the sole Galway forward to register two points or more from play during last December's All-Ireland final defeat.

Her pace, strength, and creativity is what sets her apart, while her link-up play with sister Orlaith adds an extra element to Galway's inside threat. Such was the disappointing nature of Galway's 2020 final display, management are certain to experiment during the League.

While there may be changes to Galway's starting line-up come Championship, expect McGrath to be ever-present in the corner.

**Laura Hayes, Cork**

The decision of

experienced centre-back Pamela Mackey to sit out the 2021 inter-county season means Cork manager Paudie Murray will have to reconstruct his half-back line during the League. Finding and bedding in a new centre-back in place of five-time All-Ireland winner Mackey will increase

responsibility on the pair of half-backs either side of the new number six, one of whom is young Laura Hayes from St Catherine's.

An All-Ireland minor and intermediate winner in 2018, Hayes graduated to the senior team in 2019 where she lined out at corner-back before moving out to the wing last year. She held her

own in the games against Galway and Kilkenny in last year's Championship and will look to contribute further to the collective effort in the months ahead as Cork try to marry All-Ireland ambitions with a period of transition.

**KAREN KENNEDY, TIPPERARY**

She's still in her early 20s and yet Kennedy is the centrepiece of the Tipperary team. Not alone was she Tipperary's outstanding player last year, Kennedy was one of the game's top performers during the winter Championship and her endeavours were rightly acknowledged when named at centre-back on the All-Star team. She possesses a ferocious turn of pace with ball in hand.

Tipperary are the team closest to breaking the stranglehold of Cork, Galway, and Kilkenny. If they are to make the breakthrough and reach a first All-Ireland final since 2006, it will be with Kennedy, either at centre-back, midfield, or centre-forward, leading the way.

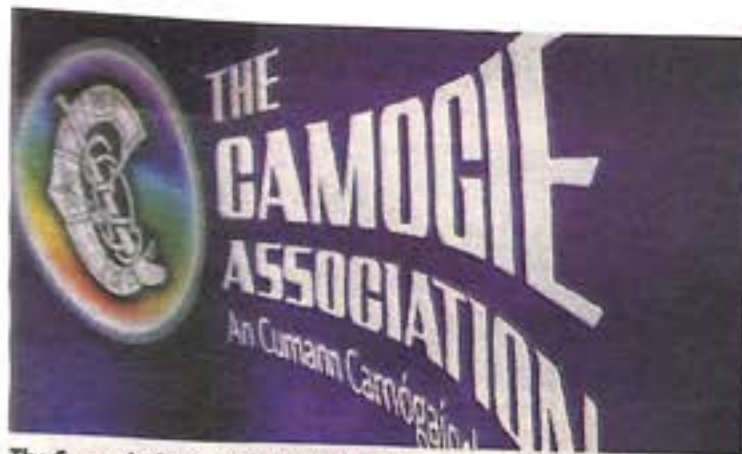
Words: Eoghan Cormican

## Five to watch in 2021



Mary O'Connell, left, will be looking to build on an excellent 2020 season for Kilkenny, while Siobhan McGrath could make a big impression this year for Galway.





The Camogie Association, The Post-Primary Camogie Council, and Tesco combined to present the Post-Primary School Camogie Competition 2021 which is aimed at second level students across Ireland.

## Competition looks at what game means to young camogie players

TWO years ago Tesco came on board with the Camogie Association to sponsor the Minor and Post Primary championships. Last year, due to Covid restrictions several of these championships didn't take place but hopefully, there may be light at the end of the tunnel and we wait to see if there will be some camogie activities at inter-county underage and post primary levels this Summer.

Even though the the Academic Year of 2020/21 saw limited camogie activity across Post Primary school pitches all over the country, students, coaches, and teachers have been keeping active in new ways.

A lot of inter-action has been taking place with fellow students, club and county teammates through the various camogie related challenges that went on across social medias and beyond.

As we returned to the training pitch in the last two weeks, The Camogie Association, The Post-Primary Camogie Council, and Tesco have come together to present the Post-Primary School Camogie Competition 2021 which is aimed at second level students across Ireland.

The competition is spread across two sections; A which is for the 11 to 12 year olds, and B which is aimed at the 13 to 14 year olds.

These competitions can be entered by individuals or groups of up to four individuals.

The formats for entry span across three areas and a selection of five topics offer an opportunity for those taking part a chance to engage with an area of camogie which they feel is most relevant or unique to themselves.

Entrants can pick one of the five topics, including Camogie in your own words and context and what camogie is and what it is all about?

The next topic wants entrants to tell them what it means to be a camogie player?

Very often children come along and join a club and go training and play games but we never really ask them what it means to them to be part of a team in a club or school, so now is their chance in their own words to tell us.

They can send in their entry under the topic of a camogie occasion and this is one that a lot of the young entrants will have a lot to write or speak about.

Occasions such as when they went to Croke Park for the first time, their trip to see their club's senior team play in Castle Road

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

in a big game or the Cul Camp where the inter-county stars came along and gave of their time to teach them how to hold a hurley.

There will be many occasions to look back on where they had memorable events in their own clubs and days that are in the memory bank forever.

The topic camogie and mental health is one I think may not be a topic a lot of the children will pick as it may be an area a little bit above the age group the competition is aimed at, but it will be interesting to see just how many pick this topic.

The topic, if I was not involved in camogie what would I or my friends miss, this is one that I look forward to seeing as sometimes parents tell us that when their children first join sport they have to drag them away from play stations and television but gradually they get to love sport and forget the sitting at home so hopefully not many of our young entrants will tell us the are missing the sitting at home.

There are three entry formats to choose from there is a written essay or poem to a maximum of one thousand words.

You can do your entry in the art depiction category and it can be in various ways, ie: painting, crayon, montage, charcole, ect, and it must be A3 size.

There is a format to enter via audio/visual and this is a maximum of three minutes.

Entries will be adjudicated over by a representative of the Post-Primary Camogie Council, Tesco Ireland and The Camogie Association staff team.

Entries will be judged in light of individuality and relevance to school's/team's own unique context.

There are some great prizes on offer and they will no doubt prove a huge incentive to all, the winners school will get a set of jerseys for their school, second placed will get camogie equipment to the value of €200 for their schools and there is two dozen sliotars for the third placed entrants school.

Closing date for entries is Friday May 14, 2021 and can be emailed to liam.clancy@camogie.ie or they can be sent by post to Post Primary Competition 2021, The Camogie Association, Westward House, Russell Street, Dublin, D01 F300.

The Winners will be Announced on Friday, May 21.



Cork's Amy O'Connor after the defeat to Kilkenny in the All Ireland senior camogie semi-final at Pairc Ui Chaoimh.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# Camogie chiefs' hearts are in the right place

ONCE again, there was significant unrest among some camogie members last weekend after a decision taken by the camogie association surrounding this year's inter-county and club fixtures.

In this case I have to say that I felt sorry for the association.

Their heart was in the right place in what they were trying to achieve ie, giving the majority of their members, which are club only players, the opportunity to get game time as soon as possible and to play during the summer months.

The association said: "Having lost four months from the normal playing calendar due to Covid-19 restrictions, the priority for the association was confirmed as "providing as much camogie to as many girls as possible in the remaining eight months of the year."

"This mirrors the approach taken in 2020 — participation is a priority for the camogie association."

All players want a split season. The thing is, their proposal isn't a split season and it isn't the same as 2020, as inter-county managements were forbidden from pulling players from club training or challenge games last year.

With the proposed scenario of inter-county league, then club championship and then inter-county championship for 2021, clubs won't have their inter-county players training with them at all as they would spend the entire summer in full training mode for an autumn inter-county championship.

Inter-county panels are in collective training for the past couple of weeks.

They'll play the national league and to then tell them to disband and go back to their clubs is understandably too disruptive from any manager's point of view.

One of the considerations when making the decision to play the suggested way was: "Given the fact that most club activity had ceased in August / September

### CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

2020, to consider running the inter-county championship directly after the Littlewoods Ireland camogie leagues would mean that club players would miss out on almost a full year of camogie."

The thing is that for the past decade most players go through almost 12 months of no club championship action as it is.

Clubs might get a first round played in July and then everything goes on hold until Cork exits the All-Ireland series.

If round 2 gets played in August and you're beaten, then you're out until next July again.

If it's September, players would have had just one championship game in 12 months anyway.

But in between that, clubs would have their league to play and Cork had introduced a summer cup competition for clubs, which excluded inter-county players and gave clubs great games on summer evenings.

So, to rush in and tell clubs that they are to go straight to championship in late June when they're not back training yet isn't ideal.

Then again, the players polled initially were the WGPA and they are all inter-county players so of course they were going to vote for inter-county summer hurling.

Club members may equally want that, even though if they take what I've just said into consideration, it isn't the ideal way to prepare for championship if you've an eye on winning it.

The association has now paused and is reaching out to all club members for their response, so we continue to wait with bated breath for the outcome of that.

Inter-county players just might get a push-back on their disquiet and league boycott threat.

At this stage it's just dragging on too long.

The LGFA have announced their fixtures in line with the GAA. That's another thing; I thought both the camogie and LGFA were to harmonise more.

You can imagine that club camogie and football would be seriously impacted during the other codes inter-county season if they are on opposite ends of the calendar.

Games would have clashed, and no inter-county manager is going to want his players playing a club game even a week before a championship game.

The harmonisation needs to filter down to all levels.

What is key here is that we must have a split season. This year may be a bit manic, but certainly for 2022 and onwards, club camogie needs to begin sooner than the third or fourth week in September.

The All-Ireland hurling final this year is set for August 22.

If camogie does go inter-county first, I hope the camogie finals are August 21 or at least the 28th (day before the football final) and free up the whole of September.

The LGFA have taken the September 5 slot in what was typically the hurling final.

The camogie finals were always the second Sunday in September. There is no need to hold that date now.

It's too far out. Start the inter-county championship week on July 1 and have the finals on August 28.

And in 2022 let's have the inter-county season finished by the end of July and let the clubs have the run of August, September and October.

# Mullaney hopes Tipp can continue upward curve

Camogie

Therese O'Callaghan

Bill Mullaney hopes Tipperary camogie's upward curve continues its trajectory in the 2021 season.

Defeated in the last three All-Ireland semi-finals, Mullaney's side are eager to build on a campaign that saw goalkeeper Aine Slattery along with defenders Mary Ryan and Karen Kennedy secure All-Stars in 2020.

Mullaney couldn't have

asked for a better opening test: a Littlewoods Ireland League Division 1 Group 2 tie against Cork in Páirc Uí Chaoimh today.

He reasoned: "It is the pick of the first rounds. I'd say every manager in the country at the minute thinks we are all going well but we haven't met anybody yet. We are looking forward."

"I don't know are we looking forward to getting a game or getting out on a field. We are like new calves being let out. We are trying to move on.

Move on in the development sense, improve our hurling and definitely improve our finishing. Overall we are trying to progress and trying to mature and develop our game and panel for the championship."

These are changing — and exciting times for camogie with new rules in play while playing the game in one of the country's top venues is another step in the right direction for the sport.

"Obviously coming from Tipp, you want to play in

Semple Stadium. Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Croke Park, Gaelic Grounds, Semple Stadium — these are the fields you want to be playing on.

"Going to Cork, it is an honour. You know how good Cork are. We will respect them. But we won't fear them. We are going down to play our own game and try and get the win out of it."

With referees ready to implement the new rules, he says consistency is key.

"We have adapted them. But is it four steps today and five

steps the next day? How much shoulder-to-shoulder contact it really is? I suppose the referees are still learning the new rules themselves.

"I'm sure Liz (referee Liz Dempsey) will put us to the pin of our collar on Saturday. Once the game is reffed consistently, that is all you can ask for."

There is mixed news on the availability of dual stars Aishling Moloney and Aussie Rules AFLW Premiership winner Orla O'Dwyer. "Aishling won't be back with us this

year, she is concentrating on football. Orla isn't back yet, she won't be back until the end of May or early June.

"Ereena Fryday and Nicole Walsh are alright (recovered from injury that kept them out of last season's championship semi-final), they are back in full training. We have a few other injuries at the minute as well."

**TIPPERARY (v Cork):** A Slattery; J Bourke, M Ryan, C Quirke; M Eviston, K Kennedy; A McGrath; E Fryday, K Blair; C Hennessy, N Walsh, G O'Brien; J Kelly, C Devane, C McIntyre.

## LITTLEWOODS IRELAND CAMOGIE LEAGUE DIVISION 1 Cork v Tipperary

Tough-tackling Coppinger excited for season ahead

BY GER MCCARTHY

DUAL-STAR Libby Coppinger is raring to go ahead of the return of the Littlewoods Camogie National League and says she has no injuries to report after overcoming an ankle issue.

"The ankle is fine at the moment, touch wood," Coppinger told *The Southern Star*.

"The extra couple of weeks off didn't do them (ankles) any harm. So, as of now, I have no injuries to report but I don't want to jinx myself so I won't say any more about the ankles."

This year's shortened league programme begins with two tough tests against Tipperary (on Saturday and 2pm in Páirc Uí Chaoimh) and Waterford for a Cork team eager to get off to the best possible start.

As a tough-tackling defender, Libby Coppinger made her presence felt in last year's run to the All-Ireland semi-finals. The St Colum's and West Cork stalwart is delighted that the lifting of Covid-19 level 5 restrictions means games should come thick and fast over the coming weeks.

"Nothing beats playing a full 15 v 15 league or championship camogie match," Coppinger



# Injury-free and ready for action

The Cork starting team is not an easy one to get into so that's why I'll play wherever they tell me to

"The Cork starting team is not an easy one to get into so that's why I'll play wherever they tell me to," Coppinger said.

"As long as I'm in that starting 15, I don't care where Paudie (Murray) puts me!"

As a dual player, Coppinger has a schedule more hectic than most and though she's happy to be back in action now, the lockdowns have given her some time to rest.

"Like everyone else, I was open to a bit of time off at the start of the pandemic," the St Colum's player said.

"While I welcomed a bit of a break at the start, I found it very hard training on my own. Last year was a weird one alright and seemed to go on for ever. In the beginning, you had to train by yourself, then we (Cork) were allowed train together but the championship went on for so long, it became a slog.

"Luckily, I had both sisters, Maggie and Katie, around and I managed to repeatedly drag them out. It was good to have someone like that around as I found it hard on my own."

Here's hoping Coppinger enjoys an uninterrupted season as Cork camogie will require the versatile player's talents as they go in search of National League glory, beginning with Tipperary this weekend.

said.

"Our first game will be in Páirc Uí Chaoimh against Tipperary as well and that is something I and the other Cork players have been looking forward to.

"The other bonus is the fact we will be playing in good weather and on good pitches throughout the summer."

Despite her young age (24),

Coppinger is one of the more experienced players on a new-look Cork senior panel.

"I still feel like a newbie but it is important we have Paudie (Murray) bringing new, young Cork players through over the last couple of years," Coppinger said.

"We will miss the big names who have stepped away and retired for sure but there is a

very young core to the Cork team now which is good. That's why it will definitely be a case of taking it one game at a time with Cork this year. We have to focus in on Tipperary and the first round of the league. We will only start to think about the next game against Waterford once that first one is completed. That's got to be the way Cork approaches both the

league and championship."

A dual player, Coppinger has made her name in the club colours of St Colum's and divisional jersey of West Cork. The camogie and ladies football inter-county star's versatility in both codes is underpinned by her ability to play effectively in the forwards for Cork's footballers and at the back for Paudie Murray's camogie side.

# Murray hoping new players can emerge during league campaign

BY GER MCCARTHY

PAUDIE Murray intends to use the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League to unearth new talent as Cork prepare to face Tipperary (this weekend) and Waterford.

"I have always looked at the league as a case of coming out of that competition with a couple of new players emerging and looking to force their way on to the starting line-up. This year will be no different," Murray told *The Southern Star*.

"Obviously, you like to win every match you play however if we finish this year's National League without having won a game but are sure that we have three of four new players out of it, I would consider that to be a success.

Clearly, Murray has left no stone unturned as Cork go in

**Does winning a league title give us more confidence? Of course it does**

search of their first All-Ireland senior championship since 2018.

An impressive management team has been assembled for the 2021 campaign including Kevin Murray (lead coach), Damien Murray and Anthony O'Neill (logistics), Matthew Twomey and Teddy O'Donovan (coaches), Niall Collins and Conor Weir (performance analysts), Barry Corkery (performance coach), Dr Paul O'Keefe, Marian McCarthy (Board liaison officer) and David Niblock (physio).

Add to that, Cork City FC's Mark McNulty as goalkeeping coach, last year's Tipperary U20 strength and conditioning coach Kevin Dunne, nutritionist Eoin Galvin and performance coach Eimear McCarthy.

And how has the pandemic effected preparations?

"I've been quite relaxed about everything in terms of all the restrictions," Murray said.

"The girls got their strength and conditioning programmes at the beginning of the year and have been in touch with our coaches on a regular basis. I was quite cool about whenever we were going to be allowed back out on a pitch but, yes, at the same time, it is great to spend the last couple of weeks training as a group together."

"This year, everyone is going into the league with no chal-

lenge games (still prohibited) played. That's a concern but it is the same for everyone. We are all heading into the unknown.

"Cork has a very young squad but I used the word 'developing' a lot last year. A quick glance at our senior panel and it is very, very young, albeit with some promising players on board. Their attitude is good. If that is there then you have a chance."

Murray has plenty of respect for Cork's two opponents in the National League and will not be taking Tipperary or Waterford for granted.

"They are two up and coming teams," Murray noted.

"Tipperary are probably that little bit more advanced than Waterford right now. Tipp have had the same management team in place for the last number of years so they are quite comfortable with each

other. They are a strong team who always hurl well during the league.

"Waterford will be just as tough an assignment, especially with a new management team on board so we will have to be ready to meet both challenges."

A developing Cork team may not have gotten the credit they deserved after losing an All-Ireland semi-final to Kilkenny last year.

"The All-Ireland title is Cork's main objective every year," Murray concluded.

"Once players and management don't lose track of where we want to go, that's the key thing for me. Does win-

ning a league title give us more confidence? Of course it does.

"Yet, we never won the league in the four years we claimed All-Ireland titles. At the end of the day, the league will be about progressing as a team, finding new players and understanding the principles of our play and how we want to play."

Cork senior camogie boss Paudie Murray.



# Cork girls to return after 14 months by heading to Tipp for league clash

**TOMORROW:** Littlewoods Division 2 National League: Cork v Tipperary, Drom Inch GAA Club, 2pm.

THE Littlewoods National League gets under way this weekend. It's a tough one for the Cork Division Two side, as they head to Tipperary.

For these girls, it is a return to the inter-county stage 14 months after they last lined out in their counties' colours.

Last season, they contested three rounds of the league, before restrictions forced the abandonment of their last game. Subsequently, the decision not to allow a county's second team to participate in the All-Ireland series left hundreds of players without any championship inter-county competition in 2020.

All that is not forgotten, as we look forward to what we hope will be a meaningful season. Looking back at last season's league, Tipperary were in a superb position, having won all of their games. They were joint top of their section, with Antrim, and poised to make it to the concluding stages.

Cork were going into their last game in their group knowing that a win might not be enough to get them a place in the final, but they were looking ahead with huge confidence to the championship, having had a reasonably good league campaign.

Manager Mark McCarthy has remained on board and he has worked hard to ensure his players have kept in touch and stayed motivated.

Since training resumed, he has gathered his panel of 30 players and, with Aisling Moloney named as captain, they are ready to go.

In the Littlewoods Division 2 league, there are four groups: Two groups of three and two groups of four.

The top two in each group go to the quarter-finals, while the bottom four play in relegation play-offs, with the losers playing in a relegation final.

In group one, there are just three teams: Antrim, Down, and Derry. Group two is Cork, Tipperary, Kerry, and Galway, group three is Wexford, Kilkenny, and Laois, and group four Westmeath, Dublin, Kildare, and Meath.

In round two, on May 22, Cork will host Kerry on what will be a historic day for the Kerry side, meeting Cork for the first time at Division 2 level.

Having been scheduled to meet in the championship last year, before the second teams were removed from competing, this is a clash that will be eagerly



Inagh Kilnamona's Fiona Lafferty and Courcey Rovers's Aisling Moloney, Jacinta Crowley, and Ellen Maguire in action at Inagh, Co Clare. Moloney is the Cork captain for the season. Picture: Eamon Ward

## CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

awaited by both counties. Saturday, May 29 will see Cork make the long journey to Galway and Cork, once again, have drawn the short straw, with two games away and just one at home.

The management team in Tipperary is new and, in a change of format this season, they have two separate managements for senior and intermediate.

In recent years, the intermediate side had been overseen by the senior management team, but a change of direction was decided for the 2021 season.

The new manager is Cian Treacy, of Thurles Sarsfields, a previous member of the senior management backroom team and former county minor manager. He brings huge experience to the job.

He has a strong backroom team that includes Matthew McGrath, Ailis Maher, Brian Stakelum, Aaron Whelahan, and Caitlin Donnelly.

Whelahan is son of former Offaly hurling great, Brian, while Brian Stakelum was previously involved with the Tipperary hurling set-up with Mike Ryan and Liam Sheedy, during their successful runs from 2016 to 2019.

They have a lot of player changes to last year's panel, with lots of last season's minors coming up: Laura Heffernan, Gill Ann Quirke, Clara Duane, Leah Heffernan, and Eimear Bourke are among the new players in their squad.

Gone up to join the senior panel are Claire Stakelum, Mary Bourke, Clodagh McIntyre, and Sarah Delaney, while Caoimhe Perdue is playing international hockey.

A new season and all to play for, so let's hope it's long and enjoyable.

**Cork Panel:** All Smith (Aghada), Aoife Hurley (St Catherine's), Aoife Nic A Bhaird (Ballinora), Aoife O'Callaghan (Eire Og), Aisling Moloney (Courcey Rovers), Clara Daly (Killeagh), Claire Kingston (Ballinascarthy), Cliona O'Callaghan (Newtownshandrum), Cliona O'Leary (Ballygarvan), Clodagh Finn (Fr O'Neill's), Danielle Carroll (Ennis-keane), Emma Flanagan (Aghabullogue), Finola Neville (St Catherine's), Grainne Hannon (Courcey Rovers), Hannah Sexton (Kilbrittain/Timoleague), Hayley Ryan (Blackrock), Jillian O'Leary (Siabh Rua), Kate Kilcommins (Ballyhea), Kate O'Keefe (Millstreet), Kate Wall, (Kilbrittain/Timoleague), Katie Walsh (Glen Rovers), Lauren Callanan (Glen Rovers), Michelle Murphy (Blackrock), Moira Barrett (Ballinascarthy), Niamh O'Leary, (Brian Dillon's), Rachel Hartly (Ballyhea), Rachel Sheehan (Killeagh), Sarah Ahern (Ballygarvan), Stefanie Beusang (Killeagh), Aine Crowley Kilbrittain/Timoleague.



Cork manager, Paudie Murray: His team will play Tipperary at Páirc Uí Chaoimh on Saturday.

Picture: Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile

# Tipp are keen to 'get going'

## CAMOGIE



Linda Mellerick

**Littlewoods Division 1 national league, first round: Cork v Tipperary, Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Saturday, 2pm**

AS the 2021 season finally gets under way, it's a clash of a Munster pairing, Cork and Tipp, at Páirc Uí Chaoimh on Saturday afternoon.

Tipperary, still developing, will again utilise the league, as will Cork, to find their championship team. The Premier county have played in the past three All-Ireland semi-finals, but have not reached a decider since 2006.

They were without four key players when they lost to Galway in last year's All-Ireland semi-final and two of them remain absent.

Aisling Moloney hasn't made herself available for this year's national league and that is a huge disappointment to Tipp. She may yet appear for championship.

"She's a quality player and a big loss. No county can afford to lose any players," said Tipp manager, Bill Mullaney.

Orla O'Dwyer is another player that Tipp will miss on Saturday. She is still in Australia, due home late May. What a year she had in the AFLW, with the Brisbane Lions winning the grand final and being named Irish player of the AFL. She'll be highly conditioned, when she returns, and it'll just be a case of getting her eye back in.

"Other than Aisling and Orla, we've no other losses from last year," said Mullaney. "Last year, we had four or five injuries in the All-Ireland semi-final. Nicole Walsh is back, Eirena Friday is back, all fit and rearing to go, like the rest of them. "I'm sure Cork are the same. All they want to do is get back playing.

"Look, we're delighted with where we are. We're as fit as we are three weeks in with a couple of months of a training programme done on their own.

"We don't know what to expect:



Tipperary manager Bill Mullaney is not sure if the team will be "on the pace or off the pace".

Picture: Laszlo Geczo, Inpho

Whether we're fit enough or on the pace or off the pace.

"We just hope it'll be a cracking match and we'll come out happy, in that we'll have found some players or developed some players; we tested some new system or found out some weaknesses we need to work on," Mullaney said.

"Look, the thing is, throw the ball in and let's get going. It's been long enough."

Mullaney added to his backroom team this year, with Denis Kelly and Angelo Walsh.

"Yes, we did," Mullaney said. "Both men are from Borrisholeigh. Angelo is S&C, but is also a huge help on the camogie side and was a key part of the Borrisholeigh senior hurlers that got to the All-Ireland club final, losing narrowly last January. Denis has been involved with camogie before and has vast experience. They're a great addition to the set-up.

"It's whether we have the players, at the end of the day. We're not too far away.

"To be fair, we're trying to develop and bring them in (players) and play a certain style of play, without being stuck to positions.

"Our hurling has to come up a bit more. I think we had fitness problems for years and we've got over that.

"It's our hurling — that last pass or last strike — that isn't quite there and we've been working on that and trying to improve it, make the right decision at the right time," Mullaney said.

"We can battle anybody; we give teams great battles. We got into the top four. I really think, if we had everybody last year, we could have beaten Galway.

"But when you're missing Nicole, Eirena, Aisling, and Orla, you're digging deep into your panel from the start, and they might not have the required experience to be in an All-Ireland semi-final.

"We're trying to get enough games into players. So, we're going to have loads of changes on Saturday," Mullaney said.

"We're going to trial out everybody, if we can, during the league, give everyone the opportunity, find out what we can work on, and see what we can develop.

"We did it last year and we got through the league carrying two or three new players in every match and I think it's the only opportunity you get to develop them and see if they'll be good enough.

"And I always give a new player two matches, as they could get lucky or unlucky in the first one. You have to be patient. It's high risk, but you have to be patient."





Leah Long, Glen Rovers' camogie U14s, with coach, Kieran O'Halloran. Picture: Jim Coughlan

## Camogie unveils player-centric development pathway for underage teams

THE Camogie Association held an online workshop for those involved in the organisation of development squads.

Most counties had at least one representative in attendance. The night began with a short presentation by camogie youth development co-ordinator, James Heffernan, who introduced attendees to a new resource that is to be used in the recruitment of development-squad mentors. The first speaker was Grace McNamara, who has worked for 20 years in fitness, tech, and leadership and is the Limerick Camogie County Board chairperson.

Grace spoke about development structure and planning and gave insights into how to approach this professionally and purposefully, while also challenging traditional norms.

Grace was followed by Liam Sheedy, who spoke about recruitment of a mentor team (Liam was an All-Ireland hurling winning manager in 2010 and 2019).

His insight into working with development squads was thought-provoking.

The final speaker was Dr Paul Donnelly, who talked about managing the mentor team.

Paul is a lecturer/researcher in sports development and coaching at Ulster University.

Paul gave great ideas and insight around the four areas he had identified as being important: Lead and inspire, guide and provide, educate and motivate, and recognise and provide.

The night was rounded off by Stuart Reid, Munster, who hosted a questions-and-answers session with the three guests.

This session will be followed up with a workshop for development-squad mentors.

Recently, the Cork board unveiled plans around development and they are working on a plan that they hope will be hugely beneficial to the young players.

The purpose of the policy will be to ensure a structured, standardised, and unified approach to the development of the inter-county U14, U15, and U17 academy player.

The long-term aim of this structure is the exposure of talented players to a development pathway of appropriate games, high-level coaching, and a positive learning environment.

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

Their vision is to have an engaged, vibrant, and successful underage development academy and the main objective would be a player-centric approach, based on enjoyment, skill development, and sense of belonging in a safe and friendly environment, in which each player strives to reach their full potential.

Clubs and divisions will play a big part, as the main places where preparation of young players for a future with club and the county occurs.

Already, in the county, we have hugely successful development squads in all the divisions.

And it is from here that the players for the development-academy squads would be selected.

The camogie player pathway refers to the journey that a player starts on when she joins an underage development or inter-county squad, from the U14 age grade up until minor.

This journey may not be the same for every player and this is something that has to be recognised. Some players will join the pathway at U14 development in their hubs and will play at each step of the underage development/inter-county squad pathway to finish at minor. Some of these players will then continue along this pathway to inter-county adult camogie.

Some players will enter the underage development/inter-county squad pathway later than U14 and this can occur for a variety of reasons. Often, a player has performed outstandingly at club level, but was overlooked for selection previously, because of height, skill set, game sense, not performing at trials, did not show interest in playing at development/inter-county level previously, had opted to play another code only.

Some players will start off on the pathway, leave the pathway, and then return at a later date and, here again, there are reasons this can occur, such as school-work, exams, work, other sports, injury, and not choosing to play at development/inter-county level.

Exciting times ahead, as camogie continues to grow and develop.



Cork's Amy O'Connor celebrates the first of her two goals against Clare during the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland senior camogie championship quarter-final at Pairc Ui Chaoimh. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# Starting season with inter-county is right decision

FINALLY, we can get down to business on the pitch now that the side-line activity has been sorted.

The association gave all clubs their opportunity to vote on Option 1 or Option 2 as to whether club or inter-county championships would take place first in 2021.

With Option 2, inter-county championship, having been chosen, former Limerick player and RTE analyst Aoife Sheehan felt on *Morning Ireland* sport during the week that the club player was the big loser in the decision.

"From a camogie association point of view, the result of the club poll was the best possible result for them PR wise.

"It avoided the inter-county players going on strike, so from that point of view I suppose it helps.

"It's unfortunate for the club player, I think really. The vote wasn't a resounding yes by any means, 53% to 47%; 38% of clubs didn't turn up to vote. How frustrating is that!

"I really feel for the club player in what should be an exciting week. May 10 was marked as return to play, to get back training and, at the time, there was probably a promise of summer camogie and summer championship.

"I think the format of last year's championship worked really well.

"The club championship going before the inter-county championship from an advertisement point of view for camogie, it was excellent last year I felt.

"And this year if it went ahead in that guise, I think camogie would have been the sole billing.

"Ladies' football and GAA would have gone as previous, and they would have had hopefully a little bit more space for coverage and promotion of the game.

"But now I suppose the club player it's

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Linda Mellerick

going to be possibly about 20 weeks before they have a championship game.

"I suppose the main fall guy in all this is the 2020 club championships.

"Hopefully talks might resume that championship might take place during the same timeframe as the inter-county league that's going on so maybe June might be a good time to play it.

"A lot of people are feeling a little bit just downbeat from the whole thing."

Option 2 was my preference and that was with a club hat on.

This wasn't the same as 2020 when clubs had 100% of their inter-county players for the duration.

I do believe that, for clubs to head straight into championship with minimal collective training behind them wasn't the ideal preparation.

I feel they have much more game time going down this route. If the club championship started two weeks after the league finished i.e., July 3, a club could be out of championship within three weeks if they lose two games.

Where was the good in that?

At least now they'll have time to train, play challenges and compete in a league, giving plenty of summer nights on the pitch.

They won't have their inter-county players, though, if the county remains in the All-Ireland series.

So even though the new term 'split sea-

son' is being bantered about it's more of the same traditional route.

What is needed, and I hope it's straight forward next year and we don't have this messing around again, is that inter-county finishes earlier in the summer, clubs have their players back and get championship hurling on good pitches.

Another issue with option 1 was that it would have been a nightmare for dual players — both codes would have to choose between club and county if their seasons were on opposite ends of the calendar and that isn't fair to them.

So, it looks like a strike was avoided.

Although I think if inter-county players did go on strike, had the vote gone against them, it would have been awful.

It was a democratic vote, and you can't go on strike when the outcome isn't how you wanted it to go.

If that was the case, decisions / elections / referendums would never be made or passed.

What would them striking have said to the club player? Thankfully, we won't find out if that would have played out.

I don't think the 2020 club championships will finish now. There are still provincial finals to be played.

At least our association has welcomed back minor championship this year.

What are the LGFA thinking leaving out such an important age group for the second year in a row?

Both associations are too often in the limelight for the wrong reason. I think the camogie association did the right thing by putting their original decision to a nationwide club vote and respecting the changed outcome.

All I want to do now is to head to Pairc Ui Chaoimh today and enjoy the first round of this year's division 1 league.

# Strength in numbers

Cooney believes unifying associations is next vital step for female games

Seán McGoldrick

*"There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen."*  
— Vladimir Lenin

It has been that kind of week in camogie. Firstly, Sports Minister Jack Chambers announced female Gaelic games players would receive the same government funding as their male counterparts. Then the Camogie Association bowed to a players' revolt and agreed to a split season.

"It is great that we are now getting the same (grant) that the men are getting," said Galway All-Ireland winner Heather Cooney.

For her, the long overdue equalisation of government funding was personal. She was acutely aware of how much camogie players lost out because her brothers Conor and Shane have been the recipients of the male grant since joining the Galway hurling squad. "It just seemed bizarre to me. We were putting our best efforts into what we were doing and getting women's sport out there, getting women's sport into the media and giving people the opportunity to see it and make the connection with it," she said.

"I always thought it funny that we would be seen as different from a public funding perspective, so I think it is brilliant what the GPA has been doing."

A survey published by the Women's Gaelic Players Association (WGPA) last October was a stark reminder of the plight of elite female Gaelic players. The survey, completed by 534 players, showed that although they put in similar hours in training to their male counterparts, financially they were lagging way behind.

As well as the shortfall in government funding — €700,000 versus €3m in 2019 — most female players had to pay their own physio costs, gym membership and even medical bills. Furthermore, 93pc received no travel expenses, with the cost of fuel averaging €55 per week.

A new agreement was put in place for last season which saw an amount paid towards players' mileage, but due to Covid restrictions players can no longer car-pool for training and games.

"Getting expenses will be huge," said Cooney. "If I totted up the amount of diesel I put into the car down the years to go to training it would be something. But, look, that was never going to stop us going to training."

The new deal will be particularly beneficial for students, she believes.

"When you are in college you are just putting your pennies together as you don't have the disposal income to be travelling here,

there and everywhere. It is going to be big for us, but it is going to be huge for them."

Since Cooney, a teacher in Killeen National School in her native county, joined the senior squad in 2020 there have been incremental improvements, though nothing compared with the latest funding leap.

"These days we get plenty of gear at the start of the year, which is great, but it is also only right because we are training every second day and we need it. We are in a good position because we have a lot more now than we had before — food after training, good stocks of gear — but the expenses were the one big thing and this week has helped that."

She believes that ultimately unifying the GAA, the Camogie Association and the Ladies Gaelic Football Association will benefit everyone.

"I think there is great strength in numbers, whereas when you are in different associations it becomes that much more difficult to fight your corner," she said.

As for the controversy over the scheduling of the season, Cooney says she is glad the issue was resolved satisfactorily.

"It has been going on for a while and it is not what you want because everyone was so excited to be back training. It was an unwelcome distraction for a while, but we are just glad it was resolved."

Had the Camogie Association not backed down and agreed to a split season, the dispute could have escalated into a players' boycott of the league, which began yesterday.

"The big thing was that despite the rivalry there is between the counties that we stayed together, and the GPA were with us. We came together because it was something we believed in."

Cooney felt the split season worked well last year, adding: "I loved being at every single training session with my club St Thomas' last year. Then when that was finished I was able to move on and give 100pc to Galway."

Club players won't miss out she insists. In Galway, for example, there are plans for a summer league and teams will play without their county players.

Cooney grew up in a hurling-mad household. Her parents and three brothers, Conor, Shane and Donal, were all involved in St Thomas', which is situated between Loughrea and Gort. Their senior team has been the dominant force in Galway hurling in this decade: they are the current county champions and have won five titles since 2012 as well as the All-Ireland club championship in 2013.

Heather, though, still has the bragging rights at inter-county level. Her brother Conor is aiming to add to the Celtic Cross he won in 2017, while Shane joined the panel a year later. For Heather, the target now is to bag a third All-Ireland senior medal after her wins in 2013 and 2019.



Heather Cooney says the split season has worked extremely well

# Rebelettes power home

A brace of goals from Amy O'Connor allied to a power-packed performance by Chloe Sigerson enabled Cork to keep Tipperary at bay in their opening Division 1 Group 2 tie at Páirc Uí Chaoimh, as the Littlewoods Camogie League got under way.

All-Ireland champions Kilkenny were workmanlike in overcoming a Dublin side under new manager Adrian O'Sullivan in Group 3 in Callan, while Group 1's Atlantic Coast derby saw Clare give League titleholders Galway a huge fright before winning 3-11 to 0-15 in Athenry.

Tipp had booked a place in the League decider last year before the competition unfortunately fell foul of Covid-19 and after following up by reaching the All-Ireland semi-final once again, Bill Mullaney's crew represented a major challenge to the hosts.

Paudie Murray named a very strong side but Tipperary possessed a significant level of experience too and started well with Cáit Devane splitting the posts a couple of times, before O'Connor billowed the net in the seventh minute.

The St Vincent's star hooked Tipp goalie Áine Slattery and after Linda Collins gathered possession, was in position to take the pass and finish to the unguarded net. Three points followed but Tipp steadied the ship

and trailed by just two at the water break.

Disaster struck All-Star netminder Slattery a second time just before the interval when she was unable to control a tame shot by Fiona Keating that dipped late, deflecting off the Borrisokane custodian's hurley for a goal to make it 2-7 to 0-6 at half-time.

It was nip and tuck after the resumption but the visitors were exposed by Hannah Looney, whose powerful run after taking a pass from Laura Treacy around midfield opened oceans of space for O'Connor, who gleefully drove to the net just before the final water break, after her team-mate had drawn the last defender.

Tipp finished strongly as Devane brought her tally to 10 points. Cork had reason to thank goalie Amy Lee for her alertness in coming off her line to save a shot from Grace O'Toole in extra-time before adding late points themselves to leave it 3-14 to 0-16.

Kilkenny will have been pleased to get their year off to a winning start (1-08; 0-6) but they were made to work very hard by a gritty Dublin unit in a dour affair at John Locke Park.

In Division 2, the result of the day was undoubtedly Kerry's 0-14 to 0-8 defeat of Galway, and there were wins too for Antrim, Cork, Wexford, Westmeath, Meath, Armagh, Limerick and Carlow.

## Camogie is built on trailblazers and legends

However, 89% of the population cannot name a current Camogie player.

Littlewoods Ireland is 100% committed to changing that.



By Daragh Ó Conchúir

**A** brace of goals from Amy O'Connor backed up by a power-packed performance from Chloe Sigerson helped Cork keep Tipperary at bay in their opening Littlewoods Camogie League Division 1 Group 2 tie at Páirc Uí Chaoimh yesterday.

Meanwhile, All-Ireland champions Kilkenny just about did enough to overcome a Dublin side under new manager Adrian O'Sullivan in Group 3 in Callan. The top flight's west coast derby saw Clare give league title holders Galway a huge fright before losing out in Athenry.

Tipp had booked a place in the league decider last year before the competition fell foul of Covid-19 and after following that up by reaching the All-Ireland semi-final once again, Bill Mullaney's crew pushed their Leeside hosts all the way.

Paudie Murray named a strong side but Tipperary possessed a significant level of experience too and started well with Cáit Devane splitting the posts a couple of times before O'Connor shot to the net in the seventh minute.

The St Vincent's star hooked Tipp goalie Aine Slattery and after Linda Collins gathered possession, she was in position to take the pass and finish to the unguarded net. Three points followed but Tipp steadied the ship and trailed by just two at the water break.

Disaster struck All-Star net-minder Slattery a second time just before the interval when she was unable to control a tame shot by Fiona Keating that dipped late, deflecting off the Borrisokane player's hurley for a goal to make it 2-7 to 0-6 at half-time.

It was closely contested after the resumption but the visitors were exposed by Hannah Looney, whose powerful run after taking a pass from Laura Treacy around midfield opened for O'Connor, who drove to the net just before the final water break.

Tipp finished strongly as Devane brought her tally to ten points. Cork had reason to thank goalie, Amy Lee for her alertness in coming off her line to save a ground shot at goal from Grace O'Toole in injury time before adding a couple of late points to leave it 3-14 to 0-16.

Kilkenny will have been pleased to get their year off to a winning start but they were made to work very hard by a resolute Dublin unit in a dour affair at John Locke Park.

The home side laid the foundation for their success in the opening seven minutes, at the end of which they led by 1-2 to 0-0 after points from Denise Gaule and Michaela Kennelly as well as a goal by Aoife Doyle, after Faye McCarthy was deceived by the bouncing sliotar.

That latter score came after the Dubs threatened a major at the other end and they matched their vaunted opponents for the remainder of the game.



**EYES ON PRIZE:** Kate Kilcommins of Cork tackles Anne Quirke (main); Sinead Meagher of Tipp and Ashling Moloney (below) face off

**Rebelletes on top while Galway and Kilkenny also carve out victories**

# O'Connor on the double as Cork edge past Tipp

Aisling Maher and Jody Couch raised white flags to make it 1-5 to 0-3 at the interval and scores were at even more of a premium after the resumption. Gaule and Maher slotted placed balls for their sides, while McCarthy was forced into a smart stop by Grace Walsh in the closing minutes.

It was Dublin that needed the green flag but it wasn't forthcoming and so the women in stripes prevailed by 1-8 to 0-6.

Clare offered stern resistance to Galway too, the Tribeswomen leaning on their goal threat to see out a first half in which they were clearly first best. However, Galway took the spoils by 3-11 to 0-15 against last year's improving All-Ireland quarter-finalists.

The opening major arrived after just two minutes and it was a classy finish by Siobhán McGrath, who

won possession on the endline before making her way goalwards and batting the sliotar to the net from a tight angle.

Clare were undeterred, however, and with Zi Yan Spillane prominent, accelerated into a four-point lead with Chloe Morey landing a booming free from distance. When Máire McGrath and Aine O'Loughlin also found the target, it was 0-8 to 1-1.

Once more, it was Siobhán McGrath that came up with the vital riposte, grabbing her second goal just before the water break. Ailish O'Reilly raised another green flag in the dying stages of the first half. However, Eimear Kelly slotted her fourth point, edging Clare ahead by just one, 0-12 to 3-2 at the change of ends, when they should have had much more in hand.

Galway were much improved

after the restart, no doubt spurred on by stern words from Cathal Murray. Aoife Donohue and McGrath were scoring freely while Ger O'Connell's charges could only supplement their first-half contribution by three and that left them beaten by 3-11 to 0-15.

In Division 2, the result of the day was undoubtedly Kerry's 0-14 to 0-8 defeat of Galway, and there were wins too for Antrim, Cork, Wexford, Westmeath and Meath.

Armagh, Limerick and Carlow claimed the points in Division 3 while Tyrone, Cavan, Kildare and Roscommon were victorious in Division 4.



## GAELIC GAMES RESULTS

### Camogie

LITTLEWOODS IRELAND CAMOGIE LEAGUES	
DIVISION 1, GROUP 1	
Galway 3-11	Clare 0-15
DIVISION 1, GROUP 2	
Cork 3-14	Tipperary 0-16
DIVISION 1, GROUP 3	
Kilkenny 1-8	Dublin 0-6
LITTLEWOODS IRELAND CAMOGIE LEAGUES	
DIVISION 2, GROUP 1	
Antrim 1-13	Down 0-13
DIVISION 2, GROUP 2	
Cork 2-13	Tipperary 0-14
Kerry 0-14	Galway 0-8
DIVISION 2, GROUP 3	
Wexford 1-18	Kilkenny 0-14
DIVISION 2, GROUP 4	
Westmeath 1-10	Dublin 2-5
Kildare 3-7	Meath 1-19
LITTLEWOODS IRELAND CAMOGIE LEAGUES	
DIVISION 3, GROUP 1	
Armagh 5-9	Down 0-11
Limerick 2-16	Clare 2-10
Carlow 1-14	Waterford 0-8
LITTLEWOODS IRELAND CAMOGIE LEAGUES	
DIVISION 4, GROUP 1	
Tyrone 3-11	Antrim 0-13
Cavan 5-28	Wicklow 0-2
DIVISION 4, GROUP 2	
Kildare 2-10	Louth 0-4
Roscommon 2-11	Mayo 2-2

# Cooney always determined to fight her corner

## Galway star reflects on momentous week

In a momentous week, Heather Cooney is likely to have taken her greatest pleasure from getting back on the field yesterday afternoon.

This is her 12th season as a Galway senior but yesterday's opening round Littlewoods Camogie league clash against Clare was approached with as much enthusiasm by the St Thomas's veteran as if it was her first.

That is in part down to one of the legacies of lockdown, a greater appreciation for small freedoms, but spirits have also been lifted by the fact that the voice of female GAA players is finally being heard in the corridors of power.

Inside 48 hours this week, the ground finally shifted beneath their feet with two seismic decisions that were long overdue.

On Monday, Minister of State for Sport Jack Chambers finally confirmed that female inter-county players would achieve equity through State funding with their male counterparts. Even more dramatically, the Camogie Association did a U-turn, after consultation with their entire membership, to get in line with the GAA and LGFA, and opted for a split-season model.

If the move on the Government funding was the response to intensive lobbying, the Camogie Association was forced to blink primarily by the defiance of its elite players with 82 per cent of

By Micheal Clifford



them indicating through the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) that they wanted a split season.

The Camogie Association had proposed that club action would be sandwiched between the inter-county league and championship but the wider membership rejected the plan, which was just as well as

**'MONEY WAS NEVER GOING TO STOP ME GOING TO TRAINING'**

Cork had indicated they were considering a boycott of the league if there was no shift.

Cooney is in the sport to play it rather than to picket it, but her relief this week was palpable as was her pride that the players, as a collective, had been heard.

"The big thing was that despite the rivalry there is between the counties, that we stayed together and the GPA were with us. We came together because it was something

we believed in. It was clear really when there was an 82 per cent vote from inter-county players for the split season so I was surprised at the beginning but they (Camogie Association) had their thoughts on it.

"I am just glad it has been resolved because it was a distraction we did not really want prior to the start of the league campaign."

The equality in funding was as much about respect as the money.

"Absolutely, it is really important we get the same public funding as the men. We are putting in the same amount of effort. Our sport is still growing in the media but in relation to public funding I can't see why we would not get equal funding."

"I think it is great, it is important that we are seen to have levelled the playing field for females."

"It just seemed bizarre to me. We were putting our best efforts into what we were doing. I always thought it funny that we would be seen as different from a public funding perspective so I think it is brilliant what the GPA has been doing on that front for us," added the two-time All-Star.

But the funding will also have a real impact on the lives of the players who have had to invest more than just time and effort to play for their counties.

"If I totted up the amount of diesel I put into the car down the years to



**MOMENTUM:** Galway's Heather Cooney is excited about new season

go to training, it would be something. I could not even tell you how much money I put into my car but, look, that was never going to stop us going to training."

"I am lucky in that I am working and I am putting my own money into my car and I don't have to worry about where I am getting it."

"But when you are in college you are just putting your pennies together because you simply don't have the disposable income to be

travelling here, there and everywhere."

With momentum at their back, the next step for women in Gaelic games may be to come together as one within the GAA.

"I can only see benefits from all of us being under the one umbrella. I think there is great strength in numbers whereas when you are in different associations it becomes that much more difficult to fight your corner," added Cooney

## Strike averted as Camogie Association opts for

Eoghan Cormican

The Littlewoods Ireland National Camogie League will proceed as scheduled this Saturday as the threat of strike action was withdrawn following the Camogie Association's decision to opt for a split season calendar this year.

Confirmation from the Camogie Association that a split season would be implemented was prompted by the result of a nationwide poll of camogie clubs which showed a slim majority in favour of the clear separation of club and inter-county activity.

Just over 60% of camogie clubs participated in the online poll conducted by the association, with 53% backing a split season and

47% plumping for a National League-club championship-All-Ireland championship schedule.

The latter was the approach initially favoured by camogie top brass, but a review of this decision was undertaken following strong criticism from the inter-county playing body, of whom 82% support a split season.

Yesterday's U-turn means there will be no boycotting of National League games, which had been threatened by players if the National League-club championship-All-Ireland championship schedule was persisted with.

The Gaelic Players Association welcomed the Camogie Association decision and said "inter-county squads will now proceed

with their games in the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie Leagues which are due to get underway this coming Saturday".

The GPA statement added: "We thank the Camogie Association for taking the time to pause and reflect on the fixtures schedule and for their constructive engagement with us in the last ten days. We look forward to games getting underway."

The All-Ireland Camogie Championship will now directly follow the conclusion of the National League, throwing-in on the weekend of July 3/4. The All-Ireland finals will take place on the weekend of September 11/12. Fourteen weekends of club championship activity will then run from

mid-September to mid-December.

The unfinished 2020 All-Ireland club series, which had been factored into the National League-club championship-All-Ireland championship schedule, will not be completed under the split-season format.

"We would like to thank all of our members who carefully considered the two options and participated in this process," said a Camogie Association statement.

"We have a result and a mandate from our members, which we will respect and implement. Planning will start immediately at national and county level to maximise camogie activity for all players throughout 2021."

"The next steps for the Camogie

Association are to detail the fixtures structure, collaborate with our colleagues in the GPA in relation to the feedback from our clubs, and work with broadcast partners to try and ensure maximum coverage possible for all of our camogie in 2021.

"This comes on the back of welcome news from the Government yesterday that female inter-county camogie players will receive the same amount of funding as their male counterparts from 2021 onwards."

"The Camogie Association welcome this decision, and the formal acknowledgement of the contributions that the Camogie Association, camogie volunteers, and players across the club network

## split season

and at inter-county level make to Irish sport, society, culture, and heritage. We will work with the Government and Sport Ireland in relation to the roll-out of this funding."

Elsewhere, adult and juvenile GAA club teams are not permitted to play challenge games until June 7.

Correspondence yesterday from Croke Park stated that club games — at adult and juvenile level — cannot take place until June 7. Inter-county minor and U20 challenge games are also off-limits until early June.

Club teams — both adult and juvenile — can now train on a full-contact basis, but still in pods of 15.



Cork's Finola Neville scores her side's first goal during the Littlewoods Ireland National Camogie League Division 2 match. Picture: Sportsfile

## Goals tip the balance the Rebel girls' way in intermediate opener

Cork 2-13  
Tipperary 0-13

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

A WELL-DESERVED but hard-earned victory for Cork in this Littlewood's Division 2 League clash in Drom-Inch as they got their campaign off to a perfect start.

With their midfield pairing of Lauren Callanan and Rachel Harty on top in the early stages, they enjoyed the better of the opening half exchanges and a Rachel Harty point settled Cork. Both sides had first-half goal chances, but it was Cork who availed of their opportunity with Finola Neville finishing a Hayley Ryan free to the net on 20 minutes.

From the puck-out Tipperary attacked and Cork were let off the hook as Niamh Loughnane's shot on goal hit the butt of the upright and hopped wide. Having dominated the opening half, Cork led 1-10 to 0-5 at the break, but they were pinned to their collars in the third quarter as Tipperary took control and, pushing Cork into their own half, they held them scoreless for 20 minutes as they cut the Cork lead to a goal.

Emptying their bench, Cork upped the pace again and they grabbed a vital goal with Clodagh Finn sending a superb groundstroke to the net, a score that upset the Tipp momentum and settled Cork's nerves.

Cork dominated the opening half and, showing huge hunger, tore into the game from the off. Harty's point was replied to by Jill Ann Quirke with a point from play. With Aoife Hurley, and Ali Smith pointing Tipperary's reply was a Jenny Grace pointed free. Twice the sides swapped points.

Finola Neville showing her strength and experience at full-forward proving a handful for the Tipp defence and when Ryan's long delivery from a free hung in the air Neville showed her craft flicking it to the net to stretch Cork's advantage 1-7 to 0-3 with 10 minutes to the break.

Grace and Ryan exchanged pointed frees, but Cork finished the half stronger to lead by eight at the short whistle; Hurley and Smith on target.

On the resumption Tipperary were a different side, switching Grace to midfield and introducing Leah Heffernan and Gemma Fox they took control with Grace driving them forward.

Inside two minutes of the half, Cork had a goal chance go wide but from then on Tipp took over; twice Grace converted frees before Cork left them off the hook with a penalty sent wide by Neville. Quirke, Fox and Grace had Tipperary within a goal as they kept the pressure on but a superb move saw Hurley take on the Tipp defence and part to Finn who grabbed the score of the day an absolute gem of a ground shot that flew along the wet surface to the net.

Granted a lifeline, Cork upped the pace Smith, Finn, and Neville had points as Grace replied with two, Sinead Maher and Grace had late Tipperary points but goals win games and on the day two were enough for Cork.

Scorers for Cork: F Neville 1-3, C Finn 1-1, A Smith 0-4, A Hurley 0-2, H Ryan 0-2, R Harty 0-1.

Tipperary: J Grace 0-9 f, J A Quirke 0-3, G Fox, S Maher 0-1 each.

CORK: S Beausang, E Flanagan, N O'Leary, A Crowley, A Moloney (c), A O'Callaghan, N Kilcommins, L Callanan, R Harty, C O'Callaghan, H Ryan, M Barrett, A Smith, F Neville, A Hurley.

Subs: M Murphy for C O'Callaghan (38), C Finn for M Barrett (42), K Walsh for H Ryan (53), C Daly for E Flanagan (57), K O'Keefe for A Smith (58), H Sexton for A O'Callaghan (62).

TIPPERARY: S Quigley, L Heffernan, C Brennan, C Ryan, M Quigley, M Ryan, E Carey, C Ryan, C Browne, C Dwan, J Grace, N Loughnane, J A Quirke, S Meagher, C Hogan.

Subs: L Heffernan for C Dwan (h-t), G Fox for N Loughnane (39), N Long for L Heffernan (44), E Bourke for C Browne (45).

Referee: Barry Nea (Westmeath).



Cork's Ashling Thompson and Sarah Fryday of Tipperary in action at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

# Cork have too much firepower for Tipperary



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

Cork 3-14  
Tipperary 0-16

AN impressive opening win for Cork in the Littlewoods National League at Páirc Uí Chaoimh on Saturday.

Paudie Murray will be happy with the performance; his charges were lively and fluid with good passages of interplay and in those situations, they easily split Tipperary. Cork's half-back line of Hannah Looney, Laura Treacy and Laura Hayes were well on top, giving a good supply to Ashling Thompson and Katrina Mackey whose running and offloads to their half-forward line had Tipperary at sixes and sevens while trying to stop the onslaught.

Cork led 2-7 to 0-6 at half-time and while both of Cork's goals came from errors by Tipp goalkeeper Aine Slattery, albeit a good finish by Amy O'Connor for their first, Cork were full value for their advantage and, on the run of play, should have been further ahead.

Cork varied their game; their speed and short passing had Tipperary not knowing which way to turn, but at the same time, they attempted several shots from distance. Five had dropped short into the goalkeeper's hands in the first quarter, but that's not overly concerning so early in the season and they were willing to take the chance.

Thompson scored three lovely points from out around the 45 as Cork looked in complete control of the game. Tipperary, on the other hand, were getting short-



Cork's Fiona Keating scores a goal despite Clodagh Quirke of Tipperary closing in. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

change from their attacks. They tried to pull Cork out, but the Rebels held firm with their midfield also falling back to assist and Tipp's passing wasn't pinpoint accurate enough to break Cork down.

Four of Tipp's opening six points came from frees and the stick of Cáit Devane as they struggled to make progress, looking very rushed and panicky on the ball in that forward division. Amy Lee when required was fast off her line and a goal was never a threat.

As the second half got underway, Tipperary attempted to push up more on Cork, but Mackey and Thompson's support was exceptional; helping their defence and minutes later striking points over the bar. As Thompson's and Mackey's work rate continued, scoring five points between them, Chloe Sigerson was getting the space and shots in, even though the striking didn't always go her

way. The game was over on 45 minutes after great work by Treacy and a strong run by Looney led to O'Connor blasting the net for Cork's third goal.

Tipp did hit a purple patch with five points on the trot bringing the gap down to five and Lee again was off her line fast to deny what could have developed into a goal, but it wasn't enough.

Cork are now straight through to a quarter-final after this win and it's what Murray would have wanted at the start of the day.

Cork may be without a national league title since 2013, but they've been dominant in the championship since then, with four titles, as they continuously used the league to develop new players. He has no option but to travel that path this time around due to several retirements over the past few seasons.

On the pitch he has 10 seasoned players, after that the average age is 20. Five subs were introduced, some making their debut. For that reason, Saturday's league victory over Tipperary was a good start.

Good for players to get back out there. All the training in the world doesn't compare to competition intensity.

Scorers for Cork: A O'Connor 2-1, F Keating 1-2, A Thompson 0-3, O Cronin, C Sigerson 0-3 (0-1f) each, K Mackey 0-2.

Tipperary: C Devane 0-10 (0-7f), N Walsh 0-2, E Fryday 0-2, C McIntyre, G O'Brien 0-1 each.

CORK: A Lee, L Coppinger, A Egan, M Cahalane; H Looney, L Treacy, L Hayes; K Mackey, A Thompson; C Sigerson, O Cronin, C O'Sullivan; F Keating, A O'Connor, L Collins.

Subs: I O'Regan for L Collins, S McCarthy for C O'Sullivan (41), C Healy for O Cronin (45), C Dooley for M Cahalane (53), I Sheehan for F Keating (58).

TIPPERARY: A Slattery, J Bourke, M Ryan, C Quirke; M Eviston, K Kennedy, A McGrath; E Fryday, S Fryday; C Hennessy, N Walsh, G O'Brien, J Kelly, C Devane, C McIntyre.

Subs: E Loughnane for C Hennessy (31), E Heffernan for M Eviston, E McGrath for C McIntyre (45), G O'Toole for S Fryday (48).

Referee: Liz Dempsey (Kilkenny).



Cork's Ali Smith of Cork in action against Clara Ryan of Tipperary. Picture: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile

# Murray is happy with Cork's win



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

PAUDIE Murray took positives and negatives from Cork's 3-14-to-0-16 league win over Tipperary on Saturday.

"You'd have to be happy with that," Murray said. "I thought our movement was good. To concede the level of scores we did was probably disappointing, but a lot of them were from frees and that's something we'll work on."

Cork conceded five points in a row deep into the second half. "Yeah, they played around with their forward line a small bit and crowded the middle of the field and we probably found it hard to transition the ball through that section," Murray said. "We were under pressure for that period, but other than that, I thought we were quite comfortable throughout."

Cork should have been further ahead at the break, but several shot attempts fell short.

"What we spoke about at half time was that leaving the ball short like that kills us on the counter," Murray said. "Look, I suppose, our first day out; we played a challenge match last week and, obviously, this ground is far bigger, so just to get our range in. But, as I said to you, overall, have to be happy. We're a small, young, light team, so we've got to play to our strengths. Obviously, we've got a lot of pace in the side, so I think it's key that we keep working on those."

Laura Treacy had a strong game at centre-back. "Yes, it's obviously a position that we're going to try out during the year," Murray said. "Ashling Egan coming in full-back, I thought, for her first day out, she did very well; she's a lot of learning in front of her. It remains to be seen how things develop."

Cork introduced five subs, some new faces. "A couple of girls, Cliona Dooly, Isabelle Sheehan, from last year's minor team, I thought it was important that they get a run out here and they're good players. We've 25 on the panel and it will be competitive for places."

Cork travel to Waterford in two weeks. "Today was important, as it means that we qualify for the quarter-final, so it might put us in the position



Cork's Fiona Keating keeps her eye on the ball as Tipperary's Clodagh Quirke closes her down at Páirc Uí Chaoimh last weekend.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczi

that we can look at a couple of other players. It was brilliant to be in Páirc Uí Chaoimh. I said to the girls that 10 years ago this wasn't possible. Things have changed dramatically in those 10 years."

When put to Tipperary manager, Bill Mullaney, that his side finished well, despite the game being out of their reach, he said: "To answer directly, we have to be happy with the way we finished, but if you're saying the game was gone at that stage, then you'd have to say that Cork stopped hurling for the last 15 minutes, but I don't think so."

"I think we won it genuinely. The last 15 minutes, we started turning up, getting into our rhythm, putting pressure on Cork, pressurised the puck-out."

"I thought, if we were to win anything, we were to win the last 15, but, as you know, it's 60 minutes and we left ourselves with too much to do. We weren't up to the pace of the game, but that's the point of the league: See where you are."



Tipperary's Cait Devane congratulates Cork's Laura Hayes after the game.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczi

## McCarthy hails a winning Cork start to Division 2

A GOOD day at the office, as Cork got their Division 2 National League campaign off to a winning start, with a victory over Tipperary, in Drom Inch, on Saturday.

Heavy rain before throw-in made little difference to the underfoot conditions, as both sides showed few indications of the long layoff they endured since their last competitive outings, in March 2020.

For Cork manager, Mark McCarthy, it was the perfect start.

"Overall, very happy with the result; it's our first day out and a win is what is important, to get the result," McCarthy said.

"We will take it, but, certainly, we have a lot of things we need to work on, but we will sit down and take a look at the game and see where we need to pick things up."

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Having led by 10 points at the interval, Cork were overpowered in the third quarter by a resurgent Tipperary and seemed to have lost their concentration.

"I suppose, at the start of the second half, we were a bit sloppy and missed the chance to put 2-2 on the scoreboard and then we allowed Tipperary get the upper hand," McCarthy said.

"You have to credit them, they came out full of determination and, trailing by 10 points, they pegged us back to three, so huge credit to them."

Cork brought on five substitutes and it showed the importance of a strong bench.

"We brought on fresh legs today and they were im-

portant. Clodagh Finn took her chance and finished the ball to the net for our first score of the second half, 22 minutes in," McCarthy said. "It gave us a cushion again and we drove on from there."

Next week, Cork face Kerry in Cork, with Kerry having defeated Galway 0-14 to 1-8 in their opening game.

Victory next weekend would leave Cork in a good place regarding qualification, but McCarthy knows it will be a tough test.

"A great result for Kerry, beating Galway, and they will come to Cork for the first time meeting at intermediate level and they will really be determined," McCarthy said.

"Again, we will concentrate on our self and what we need to do and we will be ready for the challenge on Saturday next."



Tipperary's Julieanne Bourke comes under pressure from Cork's Linda Collins in the Camogie League Division 1 clash at Páirc Uí Chaoimh on Saturday. Picture: Inpho/Laszlo Geczo

## O'Connor delivers a masterclass for Rebels

### Camogie

#### Daragh Ó Conchúir

A brace of goals from Amy O'Connor allied to a power-packed performance by Chloe Sigerson enabled Cork to keep Tipperary at bay in their opening Division 1 Group 2 tie at Páirc Uí Chaoimh, on the opening day of the Littlewoods Camogie League.

Tipp had booked a place in the League decider last year before the competition, unfortunately, fell foul of Covid-19 and after reaching the All-Ireland semi-final once again, Bill Mullaney's crew represented a major challenge to the hosts.

Paudie Murray named a very strong side but Tipperary possessed a significant level of experience too and started well, with Cáit Devane splitting the posts a couple of times before O'Connor billowed the net in the seventh minute. The St Vincent's star hooked Tipp goalie Aine Slattery, and after Linda Collins gathered possession, was in position to take the pass and finish to the unguarded net. Three points followed but Tipp steadied the ship and trailed by just two at the water break.

Disaster struck All-Star net-minder Slattery a second time just before the interval when she was unable to control a tame shot by Fiona Keating that dipped late, deflecting off the Borrisokane custodian's hurley for a goal to make it 2-7 to 0-6 at half-time.

It was nip and tuck after the resumption, but the visitors were exposed by Hannah Looney, whose powerful run opened oceans of space for O'Connor, who gleefully finished to the net just before the final water break, after her teammate had drawn the last defender.

Tipp finished strongly with Devane bringing her tally to 10 points and Cork had reason to thank goalie, Amy Lee for her alertness in coming off her line to save a ground shot at goal from Grace O'Toole before adding a couple of late points themselves to leave it 3-14 to 0-16.

Kilkenny will have been pleased to get their year off to a winning start but they were made to work very hard by a gritty Dublin in a dour affair at John Locke Park.

The hosts laid the foundation for their success in the opening seven minutes, at the end of which they led by 1-2 to 0-0 after points from Denise Gaule and Michaela Kennelly and a fortuitous goal by Aoife Doyle, after Faye McCarthy was deceived by the bouncing sliotar.

Aisling Maher and Jody Couch raised white flags to make it 1-5 to 0-3 at the interval and scores remained at a premium after the resumption, Gaule and Maher slotting placed balls for their sides, while McCarthy was forced into a smart stop by Grace Walsh in the closing minutes and the Stripecy women prevailed by 1-8 to 0-6.

Clare offered stern resistance to Galway too, the Tribeswomen leaning on their goal threat to overcome a first half in which they were clear second best, to take the spoils by 3-11 to 0-15 against last year's improving All-Ireland quarter-finalists.

The opening goal arrived after just two minutes and it was a classy finish by Siobhán McGrath, who won possession on the end line before goaling from a very tight angle.

Clare were undeterred and with Zi Yan Spillane prominent, accelerated into a four-point lead, Chloe Morey landing a free from distance. When Máire McGrath and Aine O'Loughlin also found the target, it was 0-8 to 1-1.

Once more, it was Siobhán McGrath that came up with the vital riposte, grabbing her second goal just before the water break. Ailish O'Reilly raised another green flag late in the first half but Eimear Kelly slotted her fourth point, edging Clare ahead by just one, 0-12 to 3-2 at the change of ends, when they should have had much more in hand.

Galway improved after the restart. Aoife Donohue and McGrath were multiple point scorers, while Ger O'Connell's charges only managed three scores after the interval as they lost 3-11 to 0-15.

In Division 2, the result of the day was undoubtedly Kerry's 0-14 to 0-8 win over Galway, and there were wins too for Antrim, Cork, Wexford, Westmeath, and Meath.



Cork's Amy O'Connor at the launch of the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie Leagues. Picture: Ramsey Cardy/Sportsfile

## Amy O'Connor talks Páirc life and playing soccer for Ireland

THE new Littlewoods Camogie League campaign was launched under the tagline 'style and substance' and in Amy O'Connor they have the ideal ambassador. A skilful, quick, and goal-hungry forward, the northsider is intelligent, bubbly, and positive, always representing her club, St Vincent's, and Cork, with class. Last weekend, she hit 2-1 at Páirc Uí Chaoimh, as the Rebels beat Tipp in the league opener. "The One Cork initiative means all the senior inter-county teams get to play their home games in Páirc Uí Chaoimh and that's huge for female players," O'Connor said. "We played there in the past, but not as frequently as the male teams, so we were delighted with that."

Of course, Paudie Murray's side were in the Páirc last November, for the All-Ireland semi-final, a defeat that haunted O'Connor across the winter.

"Usually, you'd switch on to something else, even going back playing with your club team, but because the gap was so long, you couldn't help but think about it," O'Connor said.

"We analysed it, individually and as a group, to see what we can do going forward. We did look like we were going to win and were 1-3 to no score up at one stage. We should have won, but we can only blame ourselves."

While they were able to return to collective inter-county training in April, Cork players had a tailored conditioning programme in February and March.

"We'd great structure," O'Connor said. "Kevin Dunne came in as strength-and-conditioning coach and we've an app to check in on, with everyone's sessions tailored. Midfielders, say, would be doing more running and we're able to identify where we wanted to improve ourselves, too."

"It gave us structure. I knew, on a Tuesday, say, I'd my running session, mobility on a Wednesday, and so on. I was working from home, so I was glad to have that training programme."

"I found it much easier this time, where, in the first lockdown, it was difficult to get motivated, because we didn't know if there was only going to a championship," O'Connor said.

"We were all Zoomed out of it, so it was a good call by the management not to do that. We met online, as a group, a few times, when it got closer to coming back training properly, but we took a step back in a way."

### CAMOGIE

#### Éamonn Murphy

Communication is at the heart of O'Connor's working life, too. A pharmacist, she is now employed by Workvivo. "John Goulding and Joe Lennon founded the company and I started with them last March," O'Connor said. "It's a Cork company. John is originally from St Vincent's and living in Ballincollig, so they're great to work for. The GAA is known for those connections through your club." As well as operating as their lethal weapon up front, O'Connor's active across the St Vincent's club, helping out any age group she can. They remain on a mission to collect the junior A title, with Cork U20 manager, Keith Ricken, helping in the background for 2021.

"Last year, we were playing against Tracton and I got knocked out and I wasn't able to play, so it was a total disaster for us," O'Connor said. "Every year, you'd say we should be giving it a right go, but it hasn't worked out so far. They say junior is the hardest to get out of and I can definitely vouch for that."

Camogie is O'Connor's passion, but, as a teen, she was a superb ladies' footballer and soccer player. Indeed, having first toggled out for Templed United's boys' teams, and then shining for Wilton, she helped the Ireland U19s make the European semi-finals in Norway seven years ago.

"Katie McCabe and Clare Shine were a year older than me and were very prominent," O'Connor said. "Still are. Megan Connolly was around, too, and I think she's the most underrated player. She doesn't get the credit she deserves. Denise [O'Sullivan] is a few years older than me and I was lucky enough to play with her when I was U14. She's flying. Such a talent."

"Sarah Rowe went on to become a successful ladies' footballer and in Aussie Rules. I was lucky with the players involved and to get to go to the Euros with them is a special memory." She still follows soccer, the local women's scene, and the Premier League. "I'm a Liverpool supporter, much to the dismay of my boyfriend, who is an Arsenal supporter."



CORK 3-14  
TIPPERARY 0-16

GER MCCARTHY REPORTS

CORK have started the season as they mean to continue: on the front foot and with a win.

This was far from perfect but as opening matches go Cork boss Paudie Murray will have been pleased to see his side start their Littlewoods Camogie National League Division 1 campaign with a win over Tipperary at Páirc Uí Chaoimh last Saturday.

Young gun Fiona Keating and the experienced Amy O'Connor combined for 3-3, and that gave the Rebels enough of a cushion to withstand a late Tipperary comeback.

Cork will travel to Waterford on May 29th with a league quarter-final berth already secured.

'First of all, a win means we have qualified for a national league quarter-final which is very important,' Paudie Murray said.

'We got a good score, we had good movement and the attitude was good. Overall, you would have to be happy. We always looked comfortable. They crowded midfield and it took us a small while to adjust to that.'

'This is only our 11th day out so we haven't much done from a hurling point of view. You expect some mistakes the first day.'

Tipperary started without the services of two important players, Ashling Moloney and Orla O'Dwyer. As for Cork, the hosts began life without Gemma O'Connor (retired) and struggled to get going.

Two defensive errors were punished by a pair of Cáit Devane frees before Cork found their feet. Amy O'Connor was closely marked throughout the game but capitalised on an Áine Slattery error to find the net after eight minutes.

That score settled Cork with Ashling Thompson, Fiona Keating and Orla Cronin (free)

# Rebels off to ideal start



Cork forward Fiona Keating gets away from Tipperary's Julieanne Bourke during their Division 1 tie at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. (Photo: Laszlo Geczo/INPHO)

## Cork boss pleased as charges open their 2021 league campaign with home win

scores making it 1-3 to 0-2. Tipperary recovered from a poor spell with Nicole Walsh and Clodagh McIntyre splitting the posts to trail by a point at the first water break.

A scrappy second quarter was highlighted by two superb long-range Ashling Thompson scores. Cáit Devane took advantage of more sloppy Cork defending by converting frees either side of another Keating point.

Orla Cronin extended Cork's lead prior to a major turning point. Fiona Keating's attempt at a point deceived Áine Slattery and rebounded off the goalkeeper's hurley into the back of the net on 29 minutes.

Leading 2-7 to 0-6 at the interval, Cork were guilty of dropping

a host of long-range efforts short. That didn't deter the impressive midfield combination of Ashling Thompson and Katrina Mackey thundering into the game. The latter added two points to help edge Cork 2-11 to 0-10 in front before Hannah Looney set up Amy O'Connor for her second goal.

Credit to Tipperary who regrouped during the final water break and tore into their opponents. Five unanswered points made it 3-11 to 0-15 with eight minutes to go.

Amy O'Connor and the excellent Cáit Devane – she finished with 0-10 – exchanged scores in a frenetic closing period in which goalkeeper Áine Slattery atoned for her earlier mistakes with a couple of marvellous

saves. It was left to Chloe Sigerson to score twice in injury-time to cement Cork's win.

### Scorers

**Cork:** Amy O'Connor 2-1; Fiona Keating 1-2; Orla Cronin (1f); Ashling Thompson, Chloe Sigerson (1f) 0-3 each; Katrina Mackey 0-2.

**Tipperary:** Cáit Devane 0-10 (7f); Nicole Walsh, Eirena Fryday 0-2 each; Clodagh McIntyre, Grace O'Brien 0-1 each.

**Cork:** Amy Lee; Libby Coppinger, Aisling Egan, Meabh Cahalane; Hannah Looney, Laura Treacy, Laura Hayes; Katrina Mackey, Ashling Thompson; Chloe Sigerson, Orla Cronin, Clara O'Sullivan; Fiona Keating, Amy O'Connor, Linda Collins.

**Subs:** Izzy O'Regan for Collins (40), Saoirse McCarthy for O'Sullivan

## ★ THE HIGHLIGHTS

**Our Star:** Fiona Keating had a good afternoon, as did Katrina Mackey, Amy O'Connor and Laura Treacy, but Ashling Thompson gets the nod for her all-action display in midfield and she also scored 0-3.

**Star Moment:** Amy O'Connor's second goal. The Cork full-forward gave her team an important ten-point cushion after 45 minutes.

**Talking Point:** The start to the league that Cork needed against a Tipp team that contested an All-Ireland semi-final last year.

**What's next?** Tipperary host Waterford this weekend. Cork are away to the Dêise in the final group game on May 29th.

(40), Cliona Healy for Cronin (45), C Dooley for Cahalane (53), Isobel Sheehan for Keating (58).

**Tipperary:** Áine Slattery; Julieanne Bourke; Mary Ryan, Clodagh Quirk; Mairead Eviston; Karen Kennedy, Aoife McGrath; Eirena Fryday, Sarah Fryday; Casey Hennessy, Nicole Walsh, Grace

O'Brien; Jean Kelly, Cáit Devane, Clodagh McIntyre.

**Subs:** Caoimhe McCarthy for Kelly (HT), Emer Loughman for Hennessy (41), Eimear Heffernan for Eviston (45), Eimear McGrath for McIntyre (45), Grace O'Toole for S Fryday (48).

**Referee:** Liz Dempsey (Kilkenny).

# Collins: Entire squad has role to play this season

BY GER MCCARTHY

COUNTY senior camogie champions Courcye Rovers played an important role as Cork got off to a winning start in this year's Littlewoods National Camogie League.

The Courcye duo of Linda Collins and Fiona Keating were to the fore, as Collins is captain this season while Keating scored 1-2 from corner forward.

'I felt a bit rusty as it was our first game of the year,' Keating says.

'We have such great leaders out on the pitch like Ashling (Thompson), Linda (Collins)

**'It is really important that we make use of our bench' – Linda Collins**

and Amy (O'Connor). They make a big difference on days like today, especially for the less experienced players like myself; hearing a word of encouragement from them means a lot.

'Any day you get to play in Páirc Uí Chaoimh is a great day as it is such a

privilege to play here. The ground was in great

**Cork captain Linda Collins.**



condition and we were happy enough with our performance but there are still loads of things to work on in training. It was a good run out and we will go back to drawing board during the week and practice on the things we can improve on.

'We made a lot of changes in the second half and it was good for some of our younger players to get a run. That will stand to us as the year goes on.'

Cork captain Linda Collins made a point of saying it was Cork's first day out and that they had not played a competitive fixture since last December. She also says that it

is going to take an entire squad effort for Cork to be successful during a shortened 2021 campaign.

'You would forget that it is only May and our first league game so we are happy enough to come away with the win,' Collins said.

'Basically, we are just building at the moment and will hopefully improve from here. I think a big goal for the league is for Cork to use as many players as we can because it is going to be such a short season. We don't want to tire anyone out so it is really important that we make use of our bench and use

all of our substitutes. Everyone is fighting for a position so it is great to have such good competition within the camp.

'We haven't played since last December. The league is a learning curve and hopefully we can build from here, learn from the win over Tipperary and from our mistakes as well.'

'It took a bit of getting used to being back out on the pitch and dealing with the intensity of things. Once you got your second wind, it wasn't too bad. We have been training hard under Kevin Murray and Kevin Dunne so our preparation has been really good.'



# Cork in good spirits as Kerry come to town

## DIVISION 2 CAMOGIE

BY GER MCCARTHY

THE Cork intermediate camogie team – captained by Courcey Rovers' Ashling Moloney – heads into this Saturday's Littlewoods Division 2 Munster derby with Kerry in positive mood.

Cork overcame Tipperary by 2-13 to 0-13 in the opening round of the Division 2 league at Drom-Inch last Saturday. Goals in either half from Finola Neville and Clodagh Finn proved decisive, and Cork manager Mark McCarthy was content with his team's efforts.

'It being so early in the year, we were very happy with the overall performance,' McCarthy said.

'Going up to Tipperary so early in the season was a daunting task. Tipp camogie has a proud tradition and we can see how they are looking to

utilise their intermediate team as a platform going forward. We knew that it was going to be a difficult task and, thankfully, we got the result.

'There were momentary lapses and we went 22 minutes without scoring. The girls know themselves we should have been more clinical in that time, having wasted the chance to score 2-2. We also missed a penalty but we showed great character in coming back from that.

'The performance was excellent and we move on to Kerry this weekend, knowing that if we win, Cork automatically qualifies for the next stage of the league'

Defeating Kerry at the Cork Camogie Grounds in Castle Road (2pm throw-in) will be no easy task, especially following the Kingdom's eye-catching 0-14 to 1-8 defeat of Galway in

Lixnaw last weekend.

This is a Cork panel that is rich in quality, however, and with plenty of West Cork players involved. Kilbrittain/Timoleague's Aine Crowley started corner back against Tipperary with Ballinascorthy's Moira Barrett lining out at half forward.

Kilbrittain/Timoleague's Hannah Sexton was a late substitute in a panel where Ballinascorthy's Claire Kingston, Enniskeane's Tara Sheehan and Danielle Carroll plus Kilbrittain/Timoleague's Kate Wall are all involved.

This will also be a notable year for county senior champions Courcey Rovers. Linda Collins captains the senior team and Ashling Moloney has been named as Cork intermediate captain.

'It was a tough game but we knew Tipp were a good side and we are very happy to have gotten a win under our belt on the first day out,' Moloney commented.

A reduced league campaign means any slip-ups have to be kept to a minimum. Gaining a victory on the first day out was a positive outcome ahead of the clash with Kerry this weekend.

'There are only three matches in our group where the top team goes through to the league quarter-finals,' Moloney explained.

'It was important to get off to a good start as there is little margin for error. Having that strength in depth within our panel will be important. There is a great opportunity to blood new players in the league this year.

'Kerry beat Galway which seemed like a bit of shock so we will have another tough match on our hands. It is great to get the victory in the first round but winning one match isn't going to win you a league or build much towards championship. It was a case of back to basics in training to get ourselves recovered and prepared for Kerry.'



Ashling Moloney is Cork intermediate camogie captain.

# Waterford blown away by Tipperary

By Daragh Ó Conchúir

TIPPERARY blew Waterford away with a stunning first-half performance in Clonmel to put one foot in the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League Division 1 quarter-final.

The Déise girls, who were getting their Group 2 campaign under way, improved in the second half but the damage had been done as they trailed by 14 points at the interval.

They lost in the end by 2-16 to 0-11 with goals from Clodagh McIntyre and Eimear McGrath, while Cáit Devane top scored with 12 points.

Waterford only managed three points in that opening period whereas Tipp were clinical, the forwards capitalising on outfield dominance and the resultant quality and quantity of supply.

McIntyre got them off to the best possible start with a scintillating goal after 16 seconds.

It really was a thing of beauty, and simplicity, as the indefatigable Eireana Fryday gathered possession from the throw-in and immediately fired into space.

McIntyre gathered tight to the right sideline around 25m out, rounded her marker and with her colleagues' clever movement creating welcome space, carried into the danger zone before unleashing an unstoppable shot to the far corner of the Waterford net.

The second goal arrived in the second minute of first-half injury time.

Keeley Corbett Barrett failed to pick up the sliotar on the run and McGrath pounced to gather quickly, giving Brianna O'Regan no chance from close range.

With Devane splitting the posts nine times, that made it 2-11 to 0-3 at half-time.

Derek Lyons must have had some strong words at half time as his charges were better after the resumption, Lor-



BATTLE: Tipperary's Clodagh Quirke and Niamh Rockett of Waterford

raine Bray offering stout resistance, but his counterpart Bill Mullaney had made some changes and the verdict was assured.

After defeat to Cork last weekend, Tipp's group programme is now complete and if the Rebels get the better of Waterford next week, they will be through to the knockout stages, though the positions will be decided on score difference if the Suirsideers can cause a shock.

Gráinne Egan shot 3-5 as Offaly recorded their most significant victory in a number of years when getting their season off to a dream start with a 4-7 to 1-14 triumph over a Dublin team that troubled All-Ireland champions Kilkenny seven days previously.

Former Galway All-Ireland-winning goalkeeper, Susan Earner has clearly had a positive impact on the Faithful since her appointment as manager, and they are now assured of a place in the business end of the competition, the clash with the Cats deciding the top two in Group 3.

Limerick also booked their berth in at least the quarters, as a result of their Shannon derby defeat of Clare by 2-14 to 1-11 at Fr McNamara Park in Ennis.

The home team had created a good impression against Galway the previous week but were not able to contend with the speed and thrust of their youthful neighbours' attack, while their own threatening offensive unit failed to spark.

### CAMOGIE

#### NL Division 1

GROUP 1: CLARE 11 LIMERICK 2/4  
GROUP 2: TIPPERARY 2-16 WATERFORD 0-11  
GROUP 3: DUBLIN 11-4 OFFALY 4-7

#### NL Division 2

GROUP 1: DOWN 3-16 BERRY 0-10  
GROUP 2: GALWAY 2-14 TIPPERARY 2-1 CORK 2-14 KERRY 0-5  
GROUP 3: KILKENNY 1-16 LADS 0-7  
GROUP 4: KILDARE 4-10 DUBLIN 2-11 WESTMEATH 3-7  
MEATH 0-10

#### NL Division 3

GROUP 1: WEXFORD 1-11 DOWN 1-5  
GROUP 2: CARLOW 2-10 LIMERICK 1-6 CLARE 3-11 WATERFORD 1-8

#### NL Division 4

GROUP 1: THONE 4-15 WICKLOW 2-10 CHAIN 5-22 ANTRIM 3-4  
GROUP 2: MAYO 1-14 KILDARE 0-4 ROSCOMMON 4-10  
LOUTH 0-1



Kate Kilcommins, of Cork, clears the ball during the Littlewoods Ireland National Camogie League Division 2 match in Tipperary.

Picture: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile

## Camogie Association committed to including players of all abilities

EARLIER this year, the Camogie Association launched its first disability-inclusion policy, in conjunction with Cara, the national sport-inclusion organisation for people with disabilities.

They will work with all camogie units to increase the accessibility of the sport to people with disabilities, in particular through the Cara Sport Inclusion Disability Charter and Disability Policy.

The policy aims to value the ability and individuality of all people with disabilities, by providing them with opportunities, on and off the field, to take part in the association and to reach their full potential within an inclusive environment.

The association aims to achieve this by continually reviewing the approach towards the inclusion at all levels of people with disabilities, and by working in partnership with clubs and inclusion services.

As a specific aim of the Camogie Association's new national development plan, this policy will attract, welcome, and retain players and volunteers of all abilities.

The association is committed to developing other inclusion policies with the Gaelic games family and to continuing to work closely with the GAA diversity-and-inclusion department to make camogie as open as possible to anyone who wishes to play their part in Gaelic games.

The association said it was delighted to launch this very important policy, which will ensure that it remains inclusive and supports much of the great work being done at grassroots level to involve people with a disability in camogie.

The association said it hoped that this will have a practical impact and ensure that there is a role, either on or off the pitch, for anyone with a disability who wishes to take part in camogie.

Brenda O'Donnell, strategic operations manager with Cara, welcomed the announcement.

"Cara are delighted to have supported the Camogie Association on their development of their disability-inclusion policy and to their commitment to the signing of the sports-inclusion charter," Ms O'Donnell said.

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

"The policy has been built using the values of the charter and is one that will provide huge support and guidance to the staff, coaches, volunteers, and, most importantly, their participants with disabilities.

"We look forward to our continued work with the Camogie Association in the delivery of their policy."

As part of the commitment to including people with disabilities in their sporting community, the Camogie Association will aim to have trained staff who can help and support at all levels within the association, and provide sport inclusion and disability-awareness training and development opportunities to staff and board members.

The association is committed to creating an awareness of disability inclusion in sport and showcasing good-practice examples, to inspire others by encouraging units to engage with their local sports-partnership inclusion development officers, who can provide local support.

They are encouraging all units to sign up to, and live by, the Cara sport-inclusion charter and to be proactive in ensuring the promotion of disability inclusion within the association.

The hugely successful, wheelchair hurling and camogie involves a six-a-side version of the sport, which is suitable for all ages and abilities.

The game encompasses a range of fundamental skills in hurling and camogie and it aims to enable individuals to grow and maintain participation.

Wheelchair hurling was devised by Kerry's Tim Maher, who conceived the idea 20 years ago, while teaching in Dublin in a school for children with disabilities.

Since then, its popularity has soared and there are inter-provincial leagues during the year, and they are hosted in different counties to spread the game and help it grow.

Well done to the Camogie Association on launching their inclusion policy. Here's hoping it ensures continued enjoyment and participation for all.



COMMITTED: Tipperary's Nicole Walsh and Cork's Laura Hayes battle for the sliotar at Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Gecze

# Camogie the new hurling?



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

IT'S amusing that camogie players have been screaming for years to allow more contact to stop the excess of frees, which, at times, reached the mid-40s per game.

Just as the GAA introduce more contact, they seem to be taking a step backwards. Sylvie Linnane, former Galway player, said, in last Wednesday's *Irish Examiner*, that he sees camogie now as more physical than hurling. I think that's a stretch — let's see how this season plays out.

I agree with many sentiments regarding hurling. I've been saying it for the past couple of years that hurling is getting boring. I don't get any thrill out of seeing a player score from 60-80 yards. If it were a rare moment, it would raise the rafters, but it is all too familiar now. You win a puck-out, with a bit of space, and it's over the bar.

I miss the 15-on-15, the win-your-own-battle scenario, the ground strokes, the high fielding. I'm not a fan of the short-hand-passing game. To me, you should use it only to get out of trouble.

But the game has changed so much. It's all about fitness, speed, and recycling, or attempting point after point from anywhere on the pitch: If you have 15 wides out of 40 attempts, 25 points wins you a game!

I was happy with Cork's win over Tipperary, last Saturday in Páirc Uí Chaoimh, even though Tipp were poor. They're far off the pace and will need to work hard.

Cork looked slick, with some good, fast play. Ashling Thompson and Katrina Mackey could make a great partnership at midfield and Mackey should be left there, rather than moving in and out. Laura Treacy was strong at centre-back. Cork have a good, solid half-back line. I'm delighted to see Laura hold such a pivotal position, as she reads the game well and is



Tempers flare between Tipperary's Sinead Meagher and Cork's Ashling Moloney in the Division 2 game at Drom-Inch.

Picture: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile

a leader. Debuts for Ashling Egan, Newcestown's Ciara O'Sullivan, and substitutes Cliona Doolley, of Ballinora, and Isabel Sheehan, of Eire Óg. What an honour for Ballinora and Newcestown. With the league condensed into three groups and just two games each, Cork, by virtue of their win over Tipp, are through to the quarter-final and games are important for a developing squad.

In group 3, Kilkenny, as expected, triumphed over Dublin, but they were made to work hard in a dour affair at John Locke Park, Kilkenny. The home side laid the foundation in the opening seven minutes, leading 1-2 to 0-0, after points from Denise Gaule and Michaela Kennelly and a fortuitous goal by Aoife Doyle.

That latter score came after the Dubs threatened a goal at the other end and they matched their opponents for the remainder of the game.

Dublin needed the green flag, but it wasn't forthcoming and so the Cats prevailed by 1-8 to 0-6.

Clare offered stern resistance to Galway, too, in group 1, the Tribeswomen leaning on their goal threat to rally from a first half in which they were second best, to take the spoils by 3-11 to 0-15 against last year's All-Ireland quarter-finalists.

The opening goal arrived after just two minutes and it was a classy finish by Siobhán McGrath, who won possession on the end-line, before making her way goalward and, from a tight angle, batting the sliotar to the net.

Clare were undeterred and with Zi Yan Spillane very prominent, accelerated into a four-point lead, Chloe Morey landing a free from distance. When Máire McGrath and Aine O'Loughlin also found the target, it was 0-8 to 1-1.

Once more, it was Siobhán McGrath who came up with the vital reply, grabbing her second goal just before the water break. Alish O'Reilly raised another green flag in the dying embers of the first half, but Eimear Kelly slotted her fourth point, edging Clare ahead by just one, 0-12 to 3-2, at the change of ends, but they should have had much more in hand.

Galway were much improved after the restart. Aoife Donohue and McGrath were multiple point scorers, while Ger O'Connell's charges could add to their interval lead with three points and that let them win 3-11 to 0-15.

In Division 2, Cork also beat Tipperary and face Kerry today, in Castle Road, after Kerry's impressive, 0-14-to-0-8 win over Galway last weekend.



Waterford's Niamh Rockett and Tipp's Clodagh Quirke in action yesterday

# Waterford left stunned by Tipperary's blistering start

Premier have one foot in the quarter-finals after magnificent display

**Daragh Ó Conchúir**

**T**ipperary blew Waterford away with a stunning first-half performance in Clonmel to put one foot in the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League Division 1 quarter-final.

The Déise girls, who were getting their Group 2 campaign underway, improved in the second half but the damage had been done as they trailed by 14 points at the interval, losing in the end by 2-16 to 0-11 with goals from Clodagh McIntyre and Eimear McGrath, while Cáit Devane top scored with 12 points.

Waterford only managed three points in that opening period whereas Tipp were clinical, the forwards capitalising on outfield dominance and the resultant quality and quantity of supply.

McIntyre got them off to the best possible start with a scintillating goal after 16 seconds. It was a thing of beauty, and simplicity, as the indefatigable Eirena Fryday gathered possession from the throw-in and immediately fired into space. McIntyre gathered tight to the right sideline around 25m out, rounded her marker and with her colleagues' clever movement creating welcome space, carried into the danger zone before unleashing an unstoppable shot to the far corner of the Waterford net.

The second goal arrived in the second minute of first-half injury time when Keeley Corbett Barrett failed to pick up the sliotar on the run and McGrath pounced to gather quickly, giving Brianna O'Regan no chance from close range. With Devane splitting the posts nine times, that made it 2-11 to 0-3 at half-time.

Derek Lyons' charges were better after the resumption, Lorraine Bray offering stout resistance, but his counterpart Bill Mullaney had made some changes and the verdict was assured.

After defeat to Cork last weekend, Tipp's group programme is now complete and if the Rebels get the better of Waterford next week, they will be through to the knockout stages, though the positions will be decided on score difference if the Suiriders can cause a shock.

Gráinne Egan shot 3-5 as Offaly recorded their most significant victory in a number of years when getting their season off to a dream start with a 4-7 to 1-14 triumph over a Dublin team that troubled All-Ireland champions Kilkenny seven days previously.

Former Galway All-Ireland-winning goalkeeper, Susan Earner has clearly had a positive impact on the Faithful since her appointment as manager, and they are now assured of a place in the business end of the competition, the clash with the Cats deciding the top two in Group 3.

Three points from Aisling Maher had edged the hosts ahead — Gráinne Egan having only

pointed from a penalty at the other end — when Emma Mulrooney goaled but Maher and Jody Couch pointed and the teams went in at the break level 0-7 to 1-4.

Niamh Gannon had been showing well for the Dubs and when she supplemented her two points with a goal, it was looking good for the Blues as they moved six points clear. Their joy was shortlived, however, as the outstanding Egan rifled home a pair of goals to draw the teams level entering the final quarter.

Sarah Harding edged the visitors ahead but the crucial score came when Egan completed her hat-trick in the 56th minute. Couch and Maher halved the deficit but time ran out for Dublin and they must now turn their attentions to the championship.

Limerick also booked their berth in at least the quarters, as a result of their Shannon derby defeat of Clare by 2-14 to 1-11 at Fr McNamara Park in Ennis.

The home team had created a good impression against Galway the previous week but were not able to contend with the speed and thrust of their youthful neighbours' attack, while their own threatening offensive unit failed to spark.

Caoimhe Costelloe and Caoimhe Lyons had pointed on the double for Limerick when Costelloe doubled on a Doireann Murphy clearance for a magnificent goal. Chloe Morey brought her tally to five points to keep the Bannerwomen in touch, but they were in deep trouble when Limerick were awarded a penalty and Costelloe blasted to the net to open up a nine-point gap.

That's how it was at the change of ends, 2-10 to 0-7, and though Ger O'Connell's crew could not be faulted for their endeavour in the second period, they had left themselves too much to do.

Eimear Kelly, who had caused such consternation in the Galway defence last week, sparked into life and gave her side a glimmer of hope with a goal in the 54th minute, finishing from a tight angle after doing well initially to gather Alannah Ryan's delivery, but Limerick saw it out comfortably.

**AMY O'CONNOR**

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LITTLEWOODS IRELAND CAMOGIE LEAGUES

## Tipp back in business

**Daragh Ó Conchúir**

**Camogie**

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Limerick also booked their berth in at least the quarters, as a result of their Shannon derby defeat of Clare by 2-14 to 1-11 at Fr McNamara Park in Ennis.

Two first-half goals from Caoimhe Costelloe proved pivotal for the visitors.

# Cork intermediate squad head to Galway in good form

JOB done for the Cork camogie team after a 2-14 to 0-5 win over Kerry in the Littlewoods Division 2 League at Castle Road on Saturday.

It was the second victory in a row for the Rebels, following on from beating Tipp on the road, but manager Mark McCarthy feels there's more to come.

"We are happy with two wins out of two, but performance-wise again it wasn't a full 60-minute performance. Last day against Tipperary, we dropped off for 22 minutes and here we didn't adapt well to Kerry's formation. In terms of communication, we were caught a few times but at the water-break we utilised those two minutes and got the communication and structure right."

They outscored Kerry 0-4 to 0-1 in that period, laying the foundation for victory.

"We went in at half-time leading 0-8 to 0-4 and turning around with the wind in our favour, we knew we could push up and go 15 on 15 and knew that Kerry

## CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

would have adapt and throw more players forward. "We knew we had the players in defence to handle them and up front we needed to click and to make sure as soon as the ball was breaking we had the players up front to get the score."

The goals were vital. "We got two quick goals at the right time and in effect, they put the game out of Kerry's reach."

Cork head to Galway next weekend content in the knowledge that they are qualified and they are looking forward to the last game in the group as they battle to hold onto the top spot.

"We are going up to Galway next weekend and again we will be hoping to keep the momentum going and get another win. We have huge strength in depth

and it is great to be able to bring on eight subs and you have to credit the Camogie Association for affording management the opportunity to take a look at everybody on the panel.

"At this stage, we have been able to give all-out players game time and there is plenty talent in the panel."

Kerry manager Ian Brick was disappointed at the result.

"We came to Cork on the back of a great win over Galway last weekend and we had expectations of winning it end but in the end, Cork were stronger. They are a really good side and our girls tried to the finish and the experienced gained is invaluable to be playing against a side like Cork and games like these are good for us."

Next weekend Kerry travel to Tipperary and with two points on the board, they will be determined to up the pace again.



Tipperary's Jill Ann Quirke in action against Cork's Kate Kilcommins during the Littlewoods Ireland National Camogie League at Drom-Inch in Tipperary. Picture: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile

## Cork should provide improving Kerry with a much tougher test

### SATURDAY

Littlewoods Division 2 National League: Cork v Kerry, Castle Road, 2pm.

ANY meeting between Cork and Kerry always generates excitement and tomorrow it will be an historic first meeting in the Division 2 of the Littlewoods national league as Cork welcome the Kingdom to Castle Road for the first time at this level.

The sides were to meet in the first round of last year's championship before the association made the decision that second teams were not allowed participate, so almost 12 months on, the sides finally get to meet. Kerry confidently participated in the division two league and championship last season, having gained promotion as junior champions in 2019 and, working hard, they found their feet as they mixed it with the best.

### Improved

They showed how much they have improved last weekend as they took a huge scalp defeating Galway in Hermitage Park Lixnaw to get their campaign off to a superb start against a side who last year kept them scoreless in their opening league encounter. It was a great start for manager Ian Brick and his management team and it was an all-round team performance of determination and belief in their own ability.

The huge work that has gone on in to develop the game in Kerry is paying off and the confidence is growing with every game they play. Last Saturday, in a tight opening half, Kerry stood up and were counted and despite trailing at the break by two points, they dominated the third quarter with Patrice Diggin, Katie Lynch, Jackie Horgan, Caoimhe Spillane, Aoife Fitzgerald, and Jessica Fitzell were much to the fore as they ran out impressive 0-14 to 1-8 winners.

The victory will see them travel with confidence, but they know

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

that Cork will provide another strong test.

Cork travelled to Drom Inch and came away with the points with an impressive display against a Tipperary side that rallied in the third quarter and really put the pressure on Cork.

Again, Cork's experience shone through, and with Finola Neville operating at full-forward, they had an excellent leader up front. She showed her craft as she flicked a dropping shot to the net for the game's opening goal and she will prove a handful for any full-back.

At midfield Lauren Callanan was superb; she broke up play and drove forward. Ali Smith helped herself to four points and was a threat up front, while Aoife Hurley was another who worked hard all through as Cork battled to hold their lead.

Mark McCarthy was pleased with the victory, but stressed his side has a lot of work to do and to his credit he wasn't slow to empty his bench.

Clodagh Finn announced her arrival with a goal and a point; the goal came at a vital stage as Tipp were gaining the upper hand. A concern for Cork's management team will be that, for 22 minutes of the second half, Cork were held scoreless and it took Finn's goal to break the deadlock.

In those 22 minutes Tipperary notched up five points on the trot and had Cork under enormous pressure. On the positive side, Cork held their composure and weathered the storm and McCarthy will be hoping that on Saturday they will up the pace another notch and take the points on offer.

With the top two in each group advancing to the quarter-finals, a win for either side would see them nicely poised with one game to go for both.



Cork's Kate O'Keeffe is tackled by Kerry's Aine O'Connor during the Littlewoods National Camogie League Division 2 game at Castle Road. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

## Rebels push on as Kerry have no answer to Cork firepower

Cork 2-14  
Kerry 0-5

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

CORK went top of their section with an excellent victory over Kerry in this Littlewoods Division 2 clash in Castle Road on Saturday.

Kerry came to Cork on the back of a fine victory over Galway but despite playing with the wind they went 0-8 to 0-4 down. The Kingdom had an extra player in defence and this suited Cork.

The Rebels lay the foundation with two early points from Ali Smith. Kate O'Keeffe did all the hard work before setting up Clodagh Finn to put Cork three ahead though Kerry responded with two in row from Patrice Diggin.

Cork stretched their lead through Rachel Harty, Kate Kilcommins and Smith finding the range, with Jackie Horgan and Diggin responding. Aoife Hurley and Harty gave Cork a four-point advantage turning around with the wind.

Cork totally dominate the second half, goals from Finola Neville and Smith six minutes apart gave Kerry a mountain to climb. Such was their dominance Kerry could only manage a point in the second half that coming from Jackie Horgan on 56 minutes.

All over the pitch, Cork were on top and with Aoife Hurley, Finola Neville, Ali

Smith, Katie Walsh, Hayley Ryan, and Kate Wall helping themselves to points, so the result was never in doubt and Mark McCarthy emptied the bench as he brought on fresh legs.

Cork will head to Galway next weekend for a meeting with the home side who recorded a huge victory on Saturday over Tipperary, 2-10 to 1-4. The victory over Kerry ensures Cork of a qualification spot but the push will be on to top the group.

Scorers for Cork: A Smith 1-4 (0-3 f) F Neville 1-1, R Harty, A Hurley 0-2 each, K Kilcommins, C Finn, K Walsh, K Wall H Ryan (f) 0-1 each.  
Kerry: P Diggin 0-4 (0-2 f), J Horgan 0-2.

CORK: S Beausang; C Daly, D Carroll, G Hannon; A Moloney (c), A O'Callaghan, C Kingston; L Callaghan, K Kilcommins; K O'Keeffe, A Smith, R Harty, C Finn, F Neville, A Hurley.

Subs: H Ryan for C Kingston (39), K Walsh for C Finn (41), K Wall for F Neville (45), J O'Leary for L Callaghan (inj 49), A Nic A Bhaird for R Harty (56), H Sexton for A Moloney (57), M Murphy for A Smith (57).

KERRY: A Fitzgerald; E Ryall, S Murphy, M Costello; A O'Connor (c), N Leen, A Behan; P Diggin, K Lynch; R Mc McCarthy, J Horgan, L Collins; AM Leen, J Fitzell, C Spillane.

Subs: E Statterly for S Murphy (40), A Whelan for A M Leen (47), B Horan for J Fitzell (42), S Walsh for C Spillane (58), S Lawlor for K Walsh (58), S Mc McCarthy for N Leen (inj 63).

Referee: Kevin O'Brien (Limerick).



Cork's Ali Smith in action against Tipp's Ciara Ryan during last week's National League at Drom-Inch. Picture: David Fitzgerald/SportsfileBMS



Cork's Ali Smith shoots over a point against Kerry. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

BY GER MCCARTHY

CORK intermediate camogie captain Ashling Moloney wants the Rebels to make it three wins from three Division 2 league games when they travel to Galway this Saturday, as it carries an extra prize in the knock-out stages.

After wins against Tipperary and Kerry already, Cork have started the league well and are eager to maintain their winning run.

'We will secure home advantage for the knockout stages if we win up in Galway so that's something we will definitely be targeting,' Moloney said.

'Galway are a good side as they beat Tipperary so it's going to be another battle. Galway will have home advantage so we will need to be ready.'

'Things are going well for us so far and we are happy. The squad has plenty of experience but there are a lot of younger girls making their presence felt. It is good to have so many young players and the league is a great opportunity for them to show what they can do,' the Courcy Rovers player added.

Meanwhile, Cork manager Mark McCarthy is also pleased with his side's Division 2 pro-



Cork captain Ashling Moloney. (Photo: David Ribeiro)

# Moloney wants home advantage

**'We will secure home advantage for the knockout stages if we win up in Galway'**

gress ahead of the clash in Galway.

'Overall, beating Kerry (last weekend) was a positive win but

regarding the first-half performance, we weren't happy with it,' McCarthy said.

'We failed to adapt to their strategy of dropping players back. We said it to the girls during the water break, they needed to communicate better, get into better positions and get our structures right. Once we found our feet, adapted to their shape and running game,

we upped our performance accordingly.'

Cork fielded a changed line-up from their previous win in the league away to Tipperary. McCarthy also utilised his substitutes bench to good effect and was pleased with the results.

'Every member of our squad has seen some form of game time now at this stage,' the

Cork boss said.

'Rotation-wise, we are pleased with how it worked out against Kerry. With the

strength in depth that we now have, every player in the Cork squad is well able to slot into a position.'

## DIVISION 2 CAMOGIE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cork	2	2	0	0	391	9	+206
Galway	2	1	0	1	31	27	+43
Kerry	2	1	0	1	19	31	-123
Tipperary	2	0	0	2	27	39	-120

# Cork star Ali lands knockout blow

## DIVISION 2 CAMOGIE

CORK	2-14
KERRY	0-5

### GER MCCARTHY REPORTS

A STRONG second-half display saw Cork defeat Kerry to secure their place in the knockout stages of the Division 2 national camogie league at Church Road last Saturday.

Mark McCarthy's Cork team struggled at times playing into a strong wind during the opening half but managed to build a four-point lead thanks, in part, to Ali Smith's accuracy. The second period was a different story as a much-improved Cork held Kerry scoreless for 22 minutes while Smith and Finola Neville added goals to see off the Kingdom.

Cork are away to Galway in their final Division 2 fixture this Saturday. Avoiding defeat would cement a home draw for an improving Cork in the knockout phase.

There were plenty of changes to the host's starting line-up following the previous weekend's victory away to Tipperary. Ennisekeane's Danielle Carroll began at full-back with Ballinascahy's Claire Kingston added to the half-back line. Both players acquitted themselves well. Kilbrittain/Timoleague's Hannah Sexton and Kate Wall were sprung from the bench with the

latter getting her name on the scoresheet.

A determined Cork start reaped immediate dividends with Ali Smith twice splitting the posts. In between, Aoife Hurley fired wide of the net after an initial shot rebounded off a post.

Kerry utilised an extra player in defence but were unable to prevent Clodagh Finn from stretching Cork's lead to three points after six minutes. Playing with the aid of a strengthening wind, Kerry enjoyed a purple patch with the excellent Patrice Diggin firing over two quick-fire points, including one free.

A scrappy spell preceded the first water-break in which Ballyhea's Rachel Harty pucked over her team's first score in ten minutes.

The home team were quickly into their stride on the resumption however, with Kate Kilcommins and Ali Smith scores making it 0-6 to 0-2 on 21 minutes. A free-flowing end to the first period saw each team add two points, as Cork led 0-8 to 0-4 at the interval.

Cork completely dominated the second half with Lauren Callanan and Rachel Harty controlling midfield and Aoife O'Callaghan and Kate Kilcommins giving nothing away at the back. Superb Finola Neville and Aoife Hurley efforts



Cork's Kate Wall tries to force the ball over the line during the Rebels' Division 2 win against Kerry.

(Photo: David Ribeiro)

extended Cork's advantage to six points and the game was over as a contest once the hosts found the net after 38 minutes. Finola Neville gained possession and squeezed her shot past goalkeeper Aoife Fitzgerald to make it 1-10 to 0-4.

Despite a gallant effort, Kerry were being beaten in every sector of the pitch and an Ali Smith free preceded a 49th minute goal from the stylish Aghada player.

Mark McCarthy emptied his bench as Jackie Horgan floated over Kerry's only point of the second half.

The closing stages saw Cork add three additional scores as Katie Walsh, Kate Wall and Hayley Ryan (free) found their

range to copper fasten a 2-14 to 0-6 win.

### Scorers

Cork: A Smith 1-4 (2f); F Neville 1-1; R Harty, A Hurley 0-2 each; K Kilcommins, C Finn, K Wall, H Ryan (1f), K Walsh 0-1 each.

Kerry: P Diggin 0-3 (2f); J Horgan 0-2.

Cork: S Beausang; C Daly, D Carroll, G Hannon; A Moloney (captain), A O'Callaghan, C Kingston; K Kilcommins, L Callanan; K O'Keefe, A Smith, R Harty; C Finn, F Neville, A Hurley.

Subs: H Ryan for C Kingston (37), K Walsh for C Finn (41), K Wall for F Neville (44), C O'Leary for L Callanan (inj, 49), A Nic A Bhaire for R Harty (54), H Sexton for A

Moloney (56), M Murphy for A Smith (57).

Kerry: A Fitzgerald; E Ryall, S Murphy, M Costello; A O'Connor, N Leen, A Behan; P Diggin, K Lynch; R McCarthy, J Horgan, L Collins; AM Leen, J Fitzell, C Spillane.

Subs: E Slattery for S Murphy (inj, 39), A Whelan for A M Leen (47), B Horan for J Fitzell (50), S Walsh for C Spillane (56), S Lawlor for K Lynch (58), A O'Sullivan for N Leen (inj, 63).

Referee: K O'Brien (Limerick).

## ★ THE HIGHLIGHTS

**Our Star:** Lauren Callanan, Rachel Harty and Aoife O'Callaghan all impressed but Aghada's **Ali Smith** shone the brightest and scored 1-4 of Cork's winning total.

**Star moment:** There were six points between the sides early in the second half when Cork full forward Finola Neville's shot evaded Aoife Fitzgerald. Cork never looked back and kicked for home.

**Talking Point:** The wind was a factor during both halves but a more clinical Cork handled the elements better.

**What's next?** Cork travel to Galway and Tipperary host Kerry in the final round of Division 2 Group 2 matches this Saturday, May 29th.

## Draws for county camogie leagues

THE draws for the 2021 Cork Camogie Leagues took place earlier this week, and there's plenty of local interest with Courcey Rovers, Enniskeane and Newcestown all drawn in different groups in the senior league.

Clonakilty and Kilbrittain/Timoleague will compete in the intermediate league while Ballinascarthy will be in action in the junior A league. Fixtures will follow.

### Senior League:

**Group A** – Cloughduv, Courcey Rovers, Ballygarvan, Killeagh, Glen Rovers.

**Group B** – St Catherine's, Enniskeane, Sarsfields, Ballincollig, Eire Óg.

**Group C** – St Finbarr's, Newcestown, Douglas, Milford, Inniscarra.

### Intermediate League:

**Group A** – Newtownshandrum, Ballyhea, Brian Dillons, Carrigaline, Na Piaras, Clonakilty.

**Group B** – Fr O'Neills, Blackrock, Valley Rovers, Kilbrittain/Timoleague, Aghabullogue, Watergrasshill.

### Junior A League:

**Group A** – Ballinhassig, Banteer, Mallow, Ballinora, Sarsfields 2, Castlelyons.

**Group B** – Ballinascarthy, Charleville, Tracton, Sliabh Rua, St Vincent's, Cloughduv 2.

### Junior B League:

**Group A** – Rockbán, Blarney, Youghal, Fr O'Neills 2, Inniscarra 2, Killeagh 2, Barryroe.

**Group B** – Bishopstown, Ballincollig 2, Millstreet, Bride Rovers, Cobh, Aghada.

### Junior C League:

**Group A** – Kilworth, Castlelyons 2, Castlemartyr, Laochra Óg, Bandon, Kinsale, Carrigtwohill.

**Group B** – Kilbree, Cobh 2, Middleton, St Fanahans, Buttevant, Aghabullogue 3, Mallow 2.

### Junior 13-a-side League:

– St Colum's, Grenagh, St Vincent's 2, Erin's Own, Tracton 2, Aghada 2, Dungourney, Nemo Rangers.

### Junior 2nd Teams League:

**Group A** – Eire Óg 2, Na Piaras 2, Inniscarra 3, Glen Rovers 2, St Finbarr's 2, Sliabh Rua 2.

**Group B** – Douglas 2, St Catherine's 2, Newtownshandrum 2, Clonakilty 2, Sars 3, Enniskeane 2.

**Group C** – Kilbrittain/Timoleague 2, Aghabullogue 2, Brian Dillons 2, Banteer 2, Blackrock 2, Valley Rovers 2.

# Carbery trio selected on Cork U16 camogie panel

BY GER MCCARTHY

MORE evidence, if needed, that camogie is growing in West Cork is that three Carbery players have been named on this season's Cork camogie U16 inter-county panel.

Ballinascarthy all-rounder Millie Condon returns for a second year at the age-grade and will be joined on manager Donie Daly's Cork U16 panel by Clonakilty duo Amy McCarthy and Kate Nolan.

Competition for places was as fierce as ever to make the U16 inter-county panel that contains girls from 19 camogie clubs. But the dedicated work undertaken at grassroots level by Ballinascarthy, Clonakilty, Barryroe, Enniskeane, Newcestown, Kilbrittain-Timoleague, St Colum's and all the other Carbery clubs is beginning to bear fruit.

To underline the point, this year's Cork senior panel includes Libby Coppinger (St Colum's), Orla Cronin and Danielle Carroll (Enniskeane) and Ciara O'Sullivan (Newcestown) while Áine Crowley, Katie Wall and Hannah Sexton (Kilbrittain-Timoleague), Moria Barrett and Claire Kingston (Ballinascarthy) are part of Mark McCarthy's 2021 Cork intermediate set-up.

The increasing presence of West Cork players at various Cork underage and adult levels comes as little surprise to Donie Daly.

'Anyone that makes the Cork U16 camogie panel means they are amongst the elite players in the county,' Daly told *The Southern Star*.

'West Cork camogie is very

**'West Cork camogie is very strong right now'**  
– Donie Daly, Cork U16 camogie manager

strong right now and has been over the last number of years. After Sarsfields, Clonakilty would have had the largest representation at this year's U16 Cork trials. That's testament to the work that is being done there. It is not just Clon because there are other clubs down that direction doing outstanding work.

'Amy McCarthy was on last year's Cork U14 panel and I would have come across her a number of times. Kate Nolan is someone I have seen playing on a number of occasions for both her club and division.

'As for Ballinascarthy's Millie Condon, everyone already knows how good a player she is and this is her second year on the Cork U16 panel. I have a DVD of Youghal playing Ballinascarthy in a U14 county final from about four years ago and Millie was on that team. She has certainly lit up West Cork with her ladies' football and camogie skills. Millie always brings work rate and a real intensity to her game. We are delighted to have all three on this year's Cork U16 panel.

'As with the Clon girls, Millie's progression is down to all the hard work and coaching being done at underage level in Ballinascarthy camogie. It is great for West Cork, for Carbery camogie and the players



The West Cork trio of Millie Condon, Amy McCarthy and Kate Nolan have been named on the Cork U16 camogie panel.

themselves. There is strength in depth in West Cork and right now it is one of the strongest camogie divisions at underage level in Cork.'

Now that the Cork U16 panel has been finalised, the next few weeks will be extremely busy as Daly and his management team intensify preparations for the All-Ireland U16 camogie championship. 'We only trained as a squad for the first time with all 30 girls last week,' Daly said.

'I have to say that we were delighted with both the fitness and skill levels of the girls even though many of them wouldn't have played with a while. There were two options available to the Camogie Association which they sought a vote on recently. At the moment, the All-Ireland U16 camogie series is due to

start on June 11th/12th and run for a total of six weeks.

'In the normal course of events that would involve group games with the top two in each progressing to the All-Ireland semi-finals and then a final. All things being equal, we could be starting in early June and, if things go to plan, play in an All-Ireland final on July 19th. There is no official word on our provincial championships yet as they might have to be pushed back to (possibly) the end of July or even later.'

The 2021 Cork U16 camogie panel includes Millie Condon (Ballinascarthy), Jennifer Sheehy (Ballygarvan), Caoimhe O'Donoghue (Bishopstown), Emily O'Donoghue (Bishopstown), Bronagh O'Shaughnessy (Blackrock), Maedhbh De Bur-

ca (Carrigtwohill), Amy McCarthy (Clonakilty), Kate Nolan (Clonakilty), Amy Sheppard (Cloughduv), Emma Cantillon (Douglas), Edel Sheehan (Eire Óg), Grainne O'Mahony (Eire Óg), Shauna Sheehan (Eire Óg), Aoibhinn O'Neill (Erins Own), Grainne Finn (Fr O'Neills), Grainne O'Neill (Fr O'Neills), Andrea Brislane (Inniscarra), Ellen Crowley (Inniscarra), Amy O'Sullivan (Mallow), Eimear Duignan (Mallow), Jill Connaughton (Midleton), Caoimhe Sheehan (Milford), Keeley Goulding (Rockbán), Ava Fitzgerald (Sarsfields), Kate Fennessy (Sarsfields), Rachel Roche (Sarsfields), Sinead Hurley (Sarsfields), Fiona Twohig (Valley Rovers), Alex Cashman (Youghal) and Aoibhe Daly (Youghal).

## Potential in Thompson and Mackey midfield combination, says Murray

THE midfield pairing of Ashling Thompson and Katrina Mackey was one of the plus points from Cork's opening Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League Division 1 win against Tipperary – and it's a combination that Cork boss Paudie Murray wants to see more of.

Cork hope to make it two Division 1 victories in as many outings away to Waterford this Saturday, and it's another chance to see Thompson and Mackey in action together.

'That pairing was something we were looking at in 2020 but Katrina was troubled

by injuries over the last two years,' Cork manager Murray explained.

'I think this is the first year Katrina has been able to complete a full pre-season. It is the first year she is coming in fully fit with no injuries. Playing Ashling and Katrina together is something we will look to develop.

'Offensively, both of them are exceptionally good. Defensively, there are probably a few areas they need to improve upon and we just hope we can tidy up those areas over the next couple of games.'

Cork head to Waterford on the back of an encouraging win against Tipperary in their league opener a fortnight ago. That 3-14 to 0-16 victory has secured a quarter-final berth before taking to the field against Waterford this weekend. A second consecutive league win would cement home advantage in the last eight.

'Looking back on the Tipp performance, we were happy enough with it but there are always areas you would like to improve on,' Murray said.

'Obviously, against Waterford, you would like to see the

performance improve a bit. That will be key for this weekend's game, making another step up. Preparations have been much the same as the lead up to the Tipperary game. An improvement in the weather would have helped but we have been training very well.'

Tipp rebounded from that loss by inflicting a 2-16 to 0-11 defeat on Waterford. Nothing but a win will suffice for the Deise which makes them potentially dangerous opponents, especially on their home pitch.

Cork star Ashling Thompson.





All Smith, of Cork, in action against Ciara Ryan, of Tipperary, during the Littlewoods league Division 2, group 2 match at Drom-Inch in Tipperary. Picture: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile

## Unbeaten Cork on top as they travel to Galway for final group game

**TOMORROW:** Littlewoods Division 2 National League; Cork v Galway; Gort, 1.30pm  
CORK are top of their group as they travel to Galway tomorrow for their final group game in the Littlewoods Division 2 national league.

Having beaten Tipperary and Galway, they are the only side of the four that is undefeated. Kerry shocked Galway in round one, but lost to Cork last weekend; Galway got their bid for a place in the quarter-finals back on track, with a 2-10-to-2-4 victory over Tipperary.

Cork seem to be safe and through to the quarter-finals, but a slip-up against Galway would put the home sides on four points and were Kerry to defeat Tipperary, three teams could end up on four points each.

If this were to happen, the side with the best scoring average would go through and Cork are ahead of Galway and Kerry on scoring averages.

Cork, in a bid to get it right, have introduced all of their panel and ensured game time for players. On Saturday last, there were five changes to the side that defeated Tipperary the first day out and manager, Mark McCarthy, and his back-room team will have a few changes again for the clash with Galway.

After the game, while he expressed delight at his side's victory, McCarthy said that this is very much a squad and any player, on any day, can expect to start or be called into action.

So far, everybody has performed well, which will, no doubt, give McCarthy headaches when he comes to nailing down a starting 15 for championship, but it is a headache I am sure he is happy to have.

Last Saturday, we again had several standout performances: All Smith continued to impress up front, as did Finola Neville; Lauren Callanan again covered acres of ground in the midfield berth

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■ Mary Newman

and got through a huge amount of work; while, in defence, Aisling Moloney and Aoife O'Callaghan impressed.

Rachel Harty, Laura Hayes, Kate Kilcommins, and Clodagh Finn all got on the score sheet, as did Katie Walsh and Kate Wall, when introduced off the bench.

Again, in his post-match interview, Mark McCarthy emphasised the importance of Kerry causing a big upset (they defeated Galway in round one, but Galway rallied and turned in a strong performance to get the show back on the road with an excellent victory over a tough Tipperary side).

There is a lot of experience in the Galway lineout and Galway are always hard to beat on home soil, in any grade. Having watched their clash with Tipperary, they are a strong, physical side and they looked very sharp.

Among the players who have caught the eye are Mairead Dillon, Cora Kenny, Aine Keane, Niamh Niland, Ava Lynskey, Molly Mannion, and the hugely experienced Tara Rutledge, and with eight of their starting 15 getting on the score sheet against Tipperary, they will certainly test the Cork defence.

Cathal Murray is manager to both the senior and intermediate teams and this is sure to be causing headaches, as both teams are out on the same day. Tomorrow, the Galway seniors play Limerick away from home, but, on the plus side for Cathal Murray and his back-room staff, they, like Cork, have two separate panels, so other than it being a clash for the manager, it should work out fine.

A must-win game for Galway and a tough tester for Cork, it promises to be a cracker.



Tipperary's Nicole Walsh takes a tumble in the tackle from Laura Hayes of Cork during their Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League Division 1 clash at Páirc Uí Chaoimh earlier this month. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Gezo

# Rebels head to Waterford in a confident mood

**TOMORROW:** Littlewoods Ireland League Division 1: Round 2, Waterford v Cork, Walsh Park, 2pm

CORK head to Walsh Park tomorrow confident of topping their group after already defeating Tipperary in the Littlewoods Ireland National Division 1 league.

With Waterford suffering a 2-16 to 0-11 defeat to Tipp last Saturday, it's a must win game for them but Cork will go into the game as favourites, despite trialling several players.

With the Cork ladies' footballers also out this weekend against All-Ireland champions Dublin, Paudie Murray is expected to release his dual players.

Izzy O'Regan, Cliona Dooley, Isobel Sheehan, Saoirse McCarthy, and Cliona Healy came off the bench against Tipp and it's expected that some will be handed a starting position here.

There are other substitutes which Murray will want to give game time to but with the competition shortened due to Covid and just three teams per group we're almost at knockout stage so it will be steady as she goes.

Hannah O'Leary, Ellen Murphy, Emma Murphy, and Aoife O'Neill are other players that need that time.

St Finbarr's Aisling Egan at full back held her own for her first outing against Tipp.

She'll need time to develop at intercounty level. Ciara O'Sullivan at half forward works hard and again is a player where time is needed.

While it's early days and Tipperary were a poor reflection of what they were last year Cork still impressed with their own intent in Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

They looked hungry, were surprisingly very fit, for three quarters of the game anyway, and importantly seemed to be en-

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Linda Mellerick

joying themselves.

They alternated between a short passing game to attempting scores from distance and while that was one area which was somewhat off, with several shots landing into the keepers' hands, the idea was right, and the distance will come.

It was Cork's first competitive outing since last November.

With the quality of Walsh Park, despite missing the dual players, we can expect more of the same.

It's important that Cork don't overdo the passing, which can happen when you play weaker teams. This needs to be another opportunity to play it fast, open the shoulders and drive for scores.

With Katrina Mackey now operating in the middle of the park, we need to see players other than Amy O'Connor hit the net.

Fiona Keating struck one against Tipp and hit three in Courcsey Rover's senior championship final last year, so she isn't afraid to go for the jugular and we need to enhance that.

Derek Lyons is the new senior manager of Waterford for 2021 after the departure of Fergal O'Brien and his management team before Christmas after just one year in charge.

That turnaround of management is never good and certainly based on how Waterford performed against Tipperary last weekend they need more time to settle

to get close to where they were last October where they lost narrowly to Tipp in the All-Ireland quarter final, 1-12 to 0-10.

Last weekend the defeat was 11 points. Lyons from Dungarvan comes with considerable intercounty hurling experience having previously managed the Deise's minor and U-21 hurling teams.

Joining him in his backroom team is hurling coach John Burns, former Waterford senior goalkeeper Iggy O'Regan of Mount Sion, Catherine O'Donnell and Jimmy and David Payne from Peak Fitness, in charge of strength and conditioning, who have worked with several intercounty hurling teams in recent years.

Waterford were slow to get moving last weekend. They improved in the second half, but the damage had been done as they trailed by 14 points at the break.

Waterford only managed three points in that opening period whereas Tipp were clinical, the forwards capitalising on out-field dominance and the resultant quality and quantity of ball.

McIntyre got them off to the best possible start with a dazzling goal after 16 seconds.

The second goal arrived in the second minute of first-half injury time when Keeley Corbett Barrett failed to pick up the sliotar on the run and McGrath pounced to gather quickly, giving Brianna O'Regan no chance from close range.

With Devane splitting the posts nine times, that made it 2-11 to 0-3 at half-time.

Derek Lyons' charges were better after the resumption, Lorraine Bray offering stout resistance, but his counterpart Bill Mullaney made some changes and Waterford couldn't get close.

A strong performance tomorrow, a good win and Cork enter the quarter final.

They'll be happy with that. Game time is key as the team develops.



Jill Ann Quirke, of Tipperary, and Kate Kilcommins, of Cork, during the Littlewoods league Division 2 match. Picture: David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile



A new format awaits camogie players over the coming while and it's one to keep players busy until the championship. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

## New format awaits players as Cork County Camogie Board confirms fixture lists

THE Cork County Camogie Board is ready to go with all their league competitions. It's a new format this year and one to keep players busy until the championship.

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

#### SENIOR

There are three groups of five with last year's intermediate champions Enniskeane making their senior debut in Group B.

In Group A it's Cloughdub, Courcsey Rovers, Ballygarvan, Killeagh, Glen Rovers. Group B is St Catherine's, Enniskeane, Sarsfields, Ballincollig, Éire Óg. Group C: St Finbarr's, Newcestown, Douglas, Milford.

#### INTERMEDIATE

There are two groups of six. In Group A last year's Junior champions Newtownshandrum are paired with Ballyhea, Brian Dillon's, Carrigaline, Na Piarasaigh Clonakilty.

In Group B it will be Fr O'Neill's, Blackrock, Valley Rovers, Kilbrittain/Timoleague, Aghabullogue, Watergrasshill.

#### JUNIOR A

Two groups of six with Ballinascorthy, last year's B championship winners, promoted to A.

Group A: Ballinhassig, Banteer, Mallow, Ballinora, Sarsfields 2, Castlelyons.

Group B: Ballinascorthy, Charleville, Tracton, Sliabh Rua, St Vincent's, Cloughdub 2.

#### JUNIOR B

The Junior B league has 13 teams with a group of seven and a group of six. Group A: Rockban, Blarney, Youghal, Fr O'Neill's 2, Inniscarra 2, Killeagh 2 Barryroe. Group B: Bishopstown, Ballincollig 2 Millstreet, Bride Rovers, Cobh, Aghada.

#### JUNIOR C

14 teams in two groups of seven make up the junior C league. Group A: Kilworth, Castlelyons 2, Castlemartyr, Laochra Óg, Bandon Kinsale, Carrigrohilly. Group B: Kilbree, Cobh 2, Middleton, St Fanahans, Buttevant, Aghabullogue 3, Mallow 2.

#### JUNIOR 13 A SIDE

The Junior 13-a-side has seven teams and they will play in one group, the teams are St Colum's, Grenagh, St Vincent's 2, Erins Own, Tracton 2, Aghada 2, Dungourney and Nemo Rangers

#### JUNIOR SECOND TEAMS

18 teams in three groups of six. Group A: Éire Óg, Na Piarasaigh, Inniscarra 3, Glen Rovers, St Finbarrs, Sliabh Rua. Group B: Douglas, St Catherine's, Newtownshandrum, Clonakilty, Sarsfields, Enniskeane. Group C Kilbrittain/Timoleague, Aghabullogue, Brian Dillon's, Banteer, Blackrock, Valley Rovers

In U14 Premier there are four groups. Group A: St Catherine's, Blackrock, Castlemartyr, Aghabullogue. Group B is Sarsfields, Inniscarra, St Finbarrs, and Ballincollig. Group C: Éire Óg, Newcestown, Milford and Ballinhassig and in Group D we have Ballinora, Erins Own, Enniskeane and Valley Rovers.

In the U14 A, Group A is Douglas, Castlelyons, Banteer, Killeagh. In Group B Cloughdub, Glen Rovers, Middleton, Courcsey Rovers; in Group C it's Cobh, Mallow, Kilbrittain/Timoleague, Clonakilty. In Group D: Bishopstown, Ballyhea, Watergrasshill, Rockban.

In U14 B, there are five groups and in Group A it's Tracton, Na Piarasaigh, Youghal, Dungourney. Group B: Millstreet, Bandon, Sliabh Rua Aghada. Group C: Blarney, Barryroe, St Colum's, and Ballygarvan and in Group D: St Vincent's, St Fanahans, Carrigrohilly and Fr O'Neill's.

Group E is Carrigaline, Laochra Óg, Kinsale and Group F: Inniscarra, Newtownshandrum and Charleville.

#### U16

Four groups of four. In Group A it's Inniscarra, Fr O'Neill's, Valley Rovers, Ballygarvan. Group B: Clonakilty, Blackrock, Erin's Own, Glen Rovers. In Group C: Aghabullogue, Middleton, Cobh, Éire Óg. In Group D Rockban, Cloughdub, Sarsfields and Ballinora.

#### U16 A

Four groups of four. In Groups A: Laochra Óg, Sarsfields 2, St Finbarr's, Blarney. In Group B: Carrigrohilly, Youghal, Mallow, Bishopstown. In Group C: Ballinascorthy, Douglas, Ballinhassig, Newcestown. In Group D: Castlemartyr Ballincollig, Enniskeane and Na Piarasaigh.

#### U16 B

There are six groups. In Group A we have Milford, Grenagh, Newtownshandrum, and Buttevant. Group B is Barryroe, Sliabh Rua, Clonakilty 2, and Carrigaline. Group C is St Fanahans, Bride Rovers, Bandon, Courcsey Rovers and Group D is Tracton, Millstreet, Blackrock 2, Kilbrittain/Timoleague. Group E is Douglas 2, Killeagh, Castlelyons. Group F is Aghada, Aghabullogue 2, St Catherine's.

#### U16 C

There are four groups. In Group A: St Vincent's, Charleville, Fermoy, Nemo Rangers. Group B: Kilworth, Ballyhea, Kinsale. Group C: Dungourney, Watergrasshill, and Brian Dillons. In Group D: St Colm's, Kilbree and Banteer.



Cork's Kate O'Keeffe tackled by Kerry's Aine O'Connor during a Division 2 clash at Castle Road.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# Match dates finally here

THE inter-county championship dates have finally been released, with the All-Ireland senior and intermediate finals on Sunday, September 12.

I'm a little disappointed that this date hasn't been brought forward, but the association have given themselves a buffer for games that could be postponed due to Covid, and you can understand that approach. I live in hope for an earlier 2022 season so clubs can be in full flow by September 1.

I'm assuming the water-break clock situation is 100% clear to all before championship throws in. Last year, if you recall, there was disquiet after the All-Ireland semi-final between Cork and Kilkenny after the referee declared additional time, and for those watching at home the game seemed to finish two minutes short. What occurred was the referee Owen Elliot did not stop his watch for water breaks (as is the rule), but RTE did.

Rule 2.7 stated: "One water break will take place between the 15th and 20th minute in each half. The breaks should last no longer than a minute, with players coming to the area in front of their team zone and clearly-marked personal bottles or single-use bottles should be used for fluid intake."

"The referee and any match day clocks shall be stopped for the duration of the water break. The referee shall signal when they restart their watch."

However, after the semi-final confusion, the following was released: "A spokesperson for the association has told The42 that the reason for the difference in the timekeeping was caused by the RTE clock being stopped during the water breaks. Owen Elliot, along with Ray Kelly who was the referee for the clash between Galway and Tipperary, did not stop their watches during the stoppage. The Camogie Association are satisfied that both officials recorded the time accurately in both



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Linda Mellerick

games." That's a strange one. How could they have recorded the time accurately when the rule states the opposite?

The same rule applies for 2021, so let's hope all referees are clear on it. Two minutes is a long time in camogie.

If you're ahead or behind and expecting two minutes remaining, critical decisions can be made, and all of a sudden the whistle blows? Well, you can imagine the anger and frustration there.

The Cork board have released the groups for senior, intermediate, and junior leagues. Full credit to them for the prompt response to the final decision less than two weeks ago that club championships would not start until after the All-Ireland inter-county series.

Clubs will be happy with a round-robin league which will give a total of 92 teams across those grades several games during a six-week period. The league is expected to start June 21 and run until the first week of August.

A big surprise in last weekend's intercounty league round two game. Gráinne Egan shot 3-5 as Offaly recorded their most significant victory in years with a 4-7 to 1-14 triumph over Dublin. Former Galway All-Ireland-winning goalkeeper Susan Eamer has clearly had a positive impact on Offaly since becoming manager, and they are now assured of a place in the business end of the competition, the clash with the Cats deciding the top two in Group 3.

Three points from Aisling Maher had edged Dublin ahead, Egan hav-



Cork's Orla Cronin runs at the Tipp defence. Picture: INPHO

ing only pointed from a penalty at the other end. Emma Mulrooney goaled, but Maher and Jody Couch pointed, and the teams went in at the break level 0-7 to 1-4.

Niamh Gannon had been showing well for the Dubs, and when she extended her two points with a goal, it was looking good for the home side as they moved six points clear. Their joy was short-lived however, as the outstanding Egan rifled home a pair of goals to draw the teams level entering the final quarter.

Sarah Harding edged the visitors ahead, but the crucial score came when Egan completed her hat-trick in the 56th minute. Couch and Maher halved the deficit, but time ran out on Dublin and they must now turn their attentions to the championship.

Limerick also booked their berth in at least the quarter-finals, as a result of their Shannon derby defeat of Clare by 2-14 to 1-11 at Fr McNamara Park in Ennis.





Members of the Blackrock Camogie team took part in Pieta House's Darkness Into Light walk, including Katie and Louise Weldon.

Picture: George Hatchell

# Better promotion of Cork camogie

CORK County Camogie Board public relations officer (PRO) Louise Weldon says that a major effort will be made to promote the game in the months ahead.

Camogie has been in the spotlight for a number of reasons in recent weeks, with questions also being asked about the public's awareness of the game's highest profile players.

In fact, recent research conducted by Littlewoods Ireland revealed that 89% of the Irish population cannot name a current camogie player. Although a lot of progress has been made in recent times, the gap between men's and women's GAA still appears to be a major one.

"We have to go back to the drawing board and see how we can bridge the

## CAMOGIE

■ John Cashman

gap", Ms Weldon said.

"There are some incredible players in camogie and, whilst in some houses they are everyday names, that's not the case overall.

"We have to get this awareness into the schools and start at grassroots level. Hopefully once the restrictions are lifted, we will have greater support at our matches. It's up to us as an association to drive the game forward.

"Here in Cork for the first time this year, we have a public relations team working together.

"Their job is a big one... to get the

message out there. The team we have are going to bring the message around the county.

"There is an awful lot of ground work already done whilst we were in lockdown. We are lucky that there are a lot of talented people around us to get the ball rolling in this area.

"I am really looking forward to the challenge ahead, whilst very much relying on the great support of the previous people who held the office of PRO."

In the past few weeks, financial parity was reached with male players and Louise sees this is a huge boost.

"We have all to do everything we can to support our members and acknowledge the hours and years of service that they give us as a county and give

to their clubs. Getting that financial recognition is a significant move"

On a wider note, the recent fixtures controversy has now blown over and Ms Weldon feels that great credit is due to the Camogie Association for taking a step back and talking to clubs.

"They talked to the players to see what was needed to make things right.

"It's important that we give both the inter-county and club player every opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.

"We need to give the county players a proper run into the championship by holding the National League as we are now and also give all the clubs the opportunity to have their players prepare again before the club championship begins."

## Impressive Cork join Galway in semis

### Camogie

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Cork joined Galway in the semi-finals of the Littlewoods Camogie League Division 1 following their 3-15 to 1-13 triumph over 14-player Waterford at Walsh Park.

The other weekend fixtures served only to determine the finishing positions in the other groups, with the four teams in the quarter-finals already qualified.

All-Ireland champions Kilkenny trounced Offaly by 4-24 to 0-8 at St

Brendan's Park to secure number one seeding from Group 3 while defending champions Galway were impressive too in dispensing with Limerick by 3-13 to 0-7 in Kilmallock to claim top spot in Group 1.

Two goals within a minute after the early second-half dismissal of full-back Kate Lynch left the Déise outfit dead and buried, their scoring of the game's last goal and five points notwithstanding.

Orla Cronin shot seven points while Chloe Sigerson relished a more advanced role and contributed 1-3 and Amy O'Connor repeated her two-

goal show of the previous round.

The one concern for Paudie Murray will be the head injury that forced the early departure of Laura Treacy but she was able to take her place with the rest of the subs later in proceedings.

A stunning solo goal by Sigerson in the 43rd minute was followed by O'Connor's second just over a minute later, after Aishling Thompson had found Sigerson. The Killeagh woman in turn put it on a plate for her ever-threatening teammate O'Connor and that was curtains.

There was a consolation goal for

Waterford when captain Niamh Rockett lived up to her name with a stunning finish to the roof of the Cork net after taking delivery of a quick free from Carton, following some admirable work by Falconer.

Kilkenny stepped forward considerably from their hard-working display against Dublin to dispense with an Offaly outfit that had also beaten the Metropolitan, with ease.

In the day's evening throw-in at Kilmallock, Galway came out on top of an open and fast-paced affair.

### CAMOGIE

#### NL Division 1

GROUP 1: GALWAY 3-13 LIMERICK 0-7

GROUP 2: CORK 3-15 WATERFORD 1-13

GROUP 3: KILKENNY 4-20 OFFALY 0-8

#### NL Division 2

GROUP 1: ANTRIM 2-15 GERRY 2-7

GROUP 2: GALWAY 0-15 CORK 1-8 KERRY 3-10 TIPPERARY 0-1

GROUP 3: WEXFORD 7-10 LADS 1-3

GROUP 4: KILDARE 3-10 WESTMEATH 0-12 MEATH 0-12

DUBLIN 0-8

#### NL Division 3

GROUP 1: WEXFORD 1-4 ARMAUGH 0-5

GROUP 2: CARLOW 2-17 CLARE 3-8 LIMERICK 1-10

WATERFORD 0-5

#### NL Division 4

GROUP 1: ANTRIM 3-7 WICKLOW 1-17 CAHILL 0-12 THRENE 0-8

GROUP 2: MAYO 7-14 LOUTH 1-1 ROSCOMMON 2-17 KILDARE 0-4

# Cork confirm finals place with big win in Waterford

Denise Gaule fires 1-7 for Kilkenny as Galway claim top in Group 1

## Daragh Ó Conchúir

**C**ork confirmed their place in the final Littlewoods Camogie League Division 1 sextet following their 3-15 to 1-13 triumph over 14-woman Waterford at Walsh Park. The table toppers will be joined from Group 2 by Tipperary, who had done enough by defeating the Déise in the previous round.

The other two ties served only to determine the finishing positions in the other groups, with the four teams in question already qualified.

All-Ireland champions Kilkenny trounced Offaly by 4-21 to 0-8 at St Brendan's Park to secure number one seeding from Group 3 while League title holders Galway were impressive too in dispensing with Limerick by 3-13 to 0-7 in Kilmal-

lock to claim top spot in Group 1.

Kilkenny stepped forward considerably from their workmanlike display against Dublin to dispense with an Offaly outfit that had also beaten the Metropolitan, with ease. Denise Gaule shot 1-7 and Mary O'Connell five points but there were outstanding operators throughout the field, not least Davina Tobin in an obdurate defence.

By the time Kate Kenny landed a fantastic wind-assisted point from distance towards the end of the 10th minute to get Offaly off the mark, the visitors already had a goal and four points on the board.

**O'Connell flew out of the traps with the first three points from play and after Gaule converted a placed ball, Miriam Walsh poached an eighth-minute goal to put the All-Ireland champions in the box seat.**

The full-forward was in very quickly as Michaela Kenneally's shot at point dropped short, flicking the sliotar away from goalkeeper Mairéad Jennings before lifting sharply and creating sufficient space under pressure to rifle to the net from close range.

Susan Earner's outfit settled and were more competitive for a period. Dual star Gráinne Egan slotted two frees but Gaule added four points to make it 1-9 to 0-4 at half-time.

Their hopes were extinguished very early in the second half however by virtue of a goal three minutes after the restart from Aoife Doyle, after tremendous work by Gaule, O'Connell and Grace Walsh who supplied the final pass.

Katie Nolan registered the third goal mid-way through the second half, when first-timing to the net after Jennings had saved Gaule's drive, and Gaule provided the coup de grace in injury time.

An explosive start by clinical Cork laid the foundation for Cork's 3-15 to 1-13 success over Waterford at Walsh Park, and two goals within

a minute after the early second-half dismissal of full-back Kate Lynch left the Déise outfit dead and buried, their scoring of the game's last goal and five points notwithstanding.

Orla Cronin shot seven points while Chloe Sigerson relished a more advanced role and contributed 1-3 and Amy O'Connor repeated her two-goal show of the previous round. The one concern for Paudie Murray will be the head injury that forced the early departure of Laura Treacy but she was able to take her place with the rest of the subs later in proceedings.

A fantastic point from Laura Hayes was among the first-half highlights, the half-back taking a pass from Ashling Thompson, who was among the scorers herself in a commanding midfield performance alongside Katrina Mackey.

O'Connor pounced on an error under pressure by Brianna O'Regan to nab her first major but a couple of points from difficult frees by Beth Carton calmed the hosts and with Vikki Falconer an eye-catcher with a pair of scores from play, they only trailed by 1-13 to 0-7 at the change of ends, having been ten points in arrears at one juncture.

Disaster struck for Derek Lyons and his side soon after the restart however, when Kate Lynch gave referee John Dermody no option, but to issue a red card for a wild pull on O'Connor.

A stunning solo goal by Sigerson in the 43rd minute was followed by O'Connor's second just over 60 seconds later, after Thompson had found the Killeagh woman, who in turn put it on a plate for her ever-threatening teammate and that was curtains.

There was a consolation goal for Waterford when captain Niamh Rockett lived up to her name with a stunning finish to the roof of the Cork net after taking delivery of a quick free from Carton, following some admirable work by Falconer.



Kilkenny's Denise Gaule is congratulated by Offaly's Lorraine Keena



Niamh Rockett



IMPACT: Grace Walsh of Kilkenny holds off Offaly's Róisín Egan



Lauren Callanan drives clear for Cork against Niamh Horan for Galway.

## Galway dig deep to qualify for quarter-finals along with the Rebels

Galway	0-15
Cork	1-8

### CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

GALWAY got the upper hand on Cork and ensured they made it to the quarter-finals as they qualify with Cork for the latter stages of the Littlewoods Division 2 League.

However, Cork top the group on scoring difference and sealing a home venue next weekend.

Galway were full value for their victory in a tough physical encounter in Gort GAA grounds on Saturday as they put Cork under constant pressure. They led by four points 0-8 to 0-6 at the interval and were full value for their lead.

Playing with the aid of the slight breeze, the home sides trailed from the throw-in as Kate Wall hit the first score, pointing inside 40 seconds. Cliona O'Callaghan converted a free to give Cork a two-point advantage but Galway came storming into the game and they settled with Molly Mannion pointing before the water break and on the resumption they began to gain a grip.

Ava Lynskey was unlucky not to grab the opening goal on 19 minutes as her pile-driving shot flew across the face of the goal and wide but five points without reply saw them finish the half stronger Cork's sole reply a Cliona O'Callaghan point as Galway led 0-8 to 0-3 at the interval.

Galway kept the pressure on from the start of the second half with points from the excellent Cora Kenny (2) and Niamh Kenny, Cork having introduced four substitutes at the break worked hard and points from Finola Neville and Ali Smith cut the deficit to six points by the second water break.



Cork's Molra Barrett and Kate O'Keefe close in on Rachael Hanniffy for Galway.



Cork's Cliona Healy and Waterford's Sibeal Harney in league action at Walsh Park.

Picture: Patrick Browne

# Cork cruise to win in comfort



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

Cork	3-15
Waterford	1-13

CORK made light work of Waterford in their national league division 1 second round clash in Walsh Park on Saturday. Played in glorious conditions on an immaculate pitch, it suited Cork. They led 1-7 to 0-2 at the first water break on 16 minutes, Waterford having got the last two scores before the stoppage, two Beth Carton frees.

Waterford seemed to get to grips with Cork after that, outscoring Cork a further three points to two, but it didn't last long. It was women against girls, epitomised when a mis-struck Waterford free went straight to Chloe Sigerson and she coolly pointed from 55 yards to give Cork a 1-13 to 0-7 lead at half time, Amy O'Connor again hitting the net with a great strike through the narrowest of gaps.

Cork lost Laura Treacy to a high challenge on nine minutes. She was replaced by Aoife O'Neill who came in at right corner-back with Meabh Cahalane switching to hold the centre.

Cork again looked impressive despite the weak opposition. Their fitness, off the shoulder support, contrasting with their ability to spread the ball either side and split the opposition is giving defences a torrid time.

They are also picking off lovely scores from angles and distance. Laura Hayes' strong run up the wing to score on 10 minutes characterising. Ashling Thompson and Katrina Mackey were again on the scoresheet, so Cork are a scoring machine from their half back line forward.

Waterford were finding it hard to get up the field and their short puckouts left them too much to do in that regard. Lorraine Bray was battling hard around the middle of the field with Beth Carton shows moments of brilliance. Vikki Fal-



Cork's Amy O'Connor hit two goals in Waterford.

Picture: Patrick Browne

coner was a handful in the corner but outside of that Waterford struggled all over.

Ashling Thompson played deep to assist a relatively inexperienced Cork defence. Ballinora's Cliona Dooley, St Finbarr's Ashling Egan and Sarsfields' Ellen Murphy completed Cork's full back line and with the loss of Treacy so early in the game Thompson played mother goose. Defensively Cork coped admirably.

The sending off of Kate Lynch six minutes into the second half for a strike on Amy O'Connor didn't help Waterford's cause as they started to lose a bit of discipline. Shona Curran was lucky to stay on the field after a strike with the hand and Waterford must have felt likewise as they substituted her minutes later.

It became damage limitation after Chloe Sigerson and Amy O'Connor goaled inside a minute on forty-one and it was no surprise that Cork then started to pile on the substitutes.

Waterford put a somewhat better perspective on the outlook as the game became scrappy and they picked of 1-3 without reply to bring the game to 3-15 to 1-11 entering the final five minutes. They struck another two as the game lacked the flair of the opening half and 50-50 frees went the home side's way.

Cork didn't score from the 42nd minute which won't really be a concern. The job was done, eight substitutes figured, and they have topped their group.

Referee John Dermody could have played the advantage rule more which would have added to the quality of the game, which was very good from a Cork perspective.

**Scorers for Cork:** O Cronin 0-7 (0-4 f), A O'Connor 2-0, C Sigerson 1-3 (0-1 f), L Collins 1-2, K Mackey, L Hayes, A Thompson 0-1 each.

**Waterford:** B Carton 0-6 (0-5 f), N Rockett 1-3 (0-1 f), V Falconer 0-2, S Lacey, A Flynn 0-1 each.

**CORK:** A Lee; C Dooley, A Egan, E Murphy, M Cahalane, L Treacy, L Hayes, K Mackey, A Thompson; C Sigerson, O Cronin, S McCarthy; L Collins, A O'Connor, I O'Regan.

**Subs:** A O'Neill for L Treacy (9, inj), E Murphy for S McCarthy (42), H O'Leary for K Mackey (42), I Sheehan for O Cronin (49), F Keating for A O'Connor, I O'Regan for L Collins (50), M Lynch for A Lee (51), C O'Sullivan for A Thompson (60).

**WATERFORD:** B O'Regan; K Corbett-Barry, K Lynch, C Whyte; C Griffin, S Curran, L Bray; B Carton, S Lacey; O Hickey, N Rockett, S Fitzgerald; C O'Sullivan, A Flynn, V Falconer.

**Subs:** A Corcoran for S Fitzgerald (h-t), S Harney for O Hickey (h-t), I Hoffmann for C Griffin (39), C Carroll for S Curran (45), F Moriarty for V Falconer (56).

Referee: John Dermody - Wexford.

# Mixed feelings after Cork victory



CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

BOTH Cork manager Paudie Murray and player Chloe Sigerson had mixed emotions after their win over Waterford in Walsh Park on Saturday.

While coasting to victory, Cork failed to score from the 42nd minute and even though the outcome wasn't in doubt, both would like to see Cork maintain their momentum for the entire 60 minutes.

"The first 35 minutes were some of the best I've seen," Murray said.

"But the last piece I'd rather forgot to be honest. We took our foot off the pedal and the attitude was wrong and when the attitude isn't right, well, you get 25 minutes like that."

Cork started well, scoring 1-7 from play, with some quality scores and they were moving the ball quickly which pleased the manager.

"Yeah, they played a lot of the game behind their own half-back line, so they didn't want us to create scores, but I think we found a way around it very quickly. I suppose the most disappointing thing for me was that we didn't keep that going. We want to put down a marker."

Two goals just after half-time, a sending off, and it became ragged after that, a point with which Murray agrees.

"I suppose they were lucky that there was only one sent off there today, it probably destroyed the game with some of the tackles that were flying in."

"We'd like better protection. Laura Treacy got a desperate knock off the ball and that it not being picked up was disappointing."

"Physicality is okay, but when you start using the hurley the way it was used here today, it's dangerous."

Cork emptied the bench which possibly caused disruption to the team, but that was to be expected.

"Yeah, but players need to put down a marker too when they come in. We've given everyone on our panel a run and that was our aim for the first two games. I hope everyone feels they're in with a chance of playing the next day."

Sigerson re-iterated her managers' words.



Waterford's Keely Corbett-Barry and Ciara O'Sullivan challenge with Cork's Chloe Sigerson during their National League game at Walsh Park. Picture: Patrick Browne

"It's lovely today in Walsh Park, the grass is immaculate so it's nice to be playing the league in summer rather than January."

"We're actually disappointed. We would have been happy going home 40 minutes into the game."

"I thought we were doing quite well; we were following our principles of play and then it all went out the window there towards the end. The main thing we'll take away from today is that we've to work on that."

"There's going to be championship games that will come down to the wire and we can't drop off like that if we want to go far in this competition."

"We were off the shoulder, putting pressure on their puck-outs. I think we got 1-2 from their puck-outs in the first half so that's definitely something we're happy with."

"We were working on that, to put the pressure on as we have the strikers out the field so that was a great start."

"Maintaining that now for 60 minutes is the target. We're in the draw now to see if we go to the quarter final or semi-final. The quarter final would give us another game which we'd also be happy with that if it happens."



Cork manager Paudie Murray wasn't pleased with a number of aspects of yesterday's league game against Waterford. Picture: Inpho/Laszlo Geczo

## McCarthy is so very happy to still be in contention

CORK Division 2 camogie manager Mark McCarthy was disappointed with the result but was looking very much at the positives after the Rebels' trip to Gort on Saturday.

Despite suffering defeat to Galway - on a scoreline of 0-15 to 1-08 - in a very tight and eagerly contested encounter, Cork secured a home quarter-final next weekend on scoring difference.

Speaking after the match, he said: "We are very disappointed to have lost out today after having two good wins over Tipperary and Kerry."

"At the start of the league our main aim was to qualify for the latter stages so mission accomplished on that score."

"We knew coming up here that unless Galway beat us by 14 points we would take the top spot in the group on score difference."

"So whilst we lost out it has been a day when we have learned a lot and every day you learn is a good

Division Two Camogie

Mary Newman

day."

Again McCarthy put the emphasis on the benefits of having a squad and being able to give all his players games.

"We set out to look at all the players on the squad and give them all game time and a chance to put up their hands and stake a claim for a starting place on the team."

"Every player has featured at some stage during the league."

"We had 11 changes to the sides that defeated Tipperary and eight changes to the side that beat Kerry."

"Every player deserves a chance and we have been doing that so over all we are pleased with how the campaign has gone so far."

McCarthy felt his backroom team have learned a lot about a strong Galway side.

"Galway were at their best today, they had to win and from the off they showed they meant business, while we had the luxury of being able to rotate our team they had their strongest 15 out there."

"It was good to get a look at them as going forward I have no doubt we will meet again be in the latter stages of this league or in championship."

Looking at the campaign overall, he is pleased with the games every week and having been out three weeks in a row hasn't been of huge concern to him.

He continued: "We are just delighted to be back playing and to now be able to play matches and we again being able to bring on eight substitutes is great."

"We look forward to next weekend and are just happy to be still in contention and we will drive on."

## Star turn: Wedding bells for Rena Buckley and Páidí Collins



■ Echo Reporter

THERE were plenty of smiles in the sunshine in Berrings on Saturday afternoon as former Cork footballer and camogie star Rena Buckley married Freemount player Páidí Collins.

The couple got a guard of honour from Cork players and members of Donoughmore, Inniscarra, and Freemount GAA clubs. Footballs and hurleys were in evidence on the special day of one of Cork's greatest ever players.

The happy couple were joined by socially distanced well-wishers, including former teammates, as they posed for photos after the ceremony at St Mary's Church.

By the time she finished at inter-county level, Rena had amassed 18 senior All-Ireland medals, 11 in football and seven for camogie, making her the most successful player in the game, male or female.

She has represented Munster in the Gael Linn Cup and Ireland at international rules.

In 2012, she captained Cork when they won the All-Ireland senior ladies football championship and, in 2017, she captained Cork when they won the All-Ireland senior camogie championship.

Cork dual star Rena Buckley and Freemount player Páidí Collins, who were married at St Mary's Church in Berrings, receive a guard of honour from Cork players and members of Donoughmore, Inniscarra, and Freemount GAA clubs. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

## Double delight



Former Cork dual player Rena Buckley and Páidí Collins, Freemount, who were married at St Mary's Church in Berrings, Co Cork, get a guard of honour from Cork players and Donoughmore, Inniscarra, and Freemount GAA clubs. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

# Faithfuls' Teehan hoping to face old Tipp teammates

Camogie

Daragh Ó Conchúir

There is a sense of respair around the Offaly Gaelic games community over the last month and camogie is a part of that.

The Faithfuls go into Sunday's Littlewoods Ireland Camogie League Division 1 quarter-final against neighbours Tipperary (2.30pm, John Lockes GAA, Callan) with optimism after an eye-catching opening-round victory over Dublin.

Kilkenny knocked them back on their hocks in no uncertain fashion last weekend but the journey of improvement is rarely without a setback.

It will be strange in a number of ways for Mairéad Teehan. For a start, she isn't

sure if she will be able to contribute due to the damaged medial and lateral ligaments suffered during the first week of training and aggravated upon her return against the All-Ireland champions.

Then there is the fact that she spent a number of years shining in the blue and gold, from U14 to senior, winning All-Irelands at U16 and minor in 2011.

Teehan's situation is an unusual one. Every molecule of her make-up is Offaly but Moneygall is her club and so it was Tipp selectors that were in a position to note her talent.

Therefore, tomorrow, not just will former teammates from the All-Ireland successes including Julie Ann Bourke, Róisín Howard, and Mairéad Eviston be in the opposite corner, along with more recent compadres such as Cáit

Devane, Karen Kennedy, Nicole Walsh, and Tipp manager Bill Mullaney, but if she is passed fit to play some part, the 24-year-old could well have lifelong clubmate and current All-Star Mary Ryan attempting to neutralise her threat.

"It's weird," she concurs. "We played them in a couple of practice matches since I started playing with Offaly. But we haven't come up against them in a competitive game. It's weird in one sense but I play against all those girls anyway in club championship. So I am used to playing against them. Obviously not really used to playing against Moll (Ryan)."

The separation from Tipp occurred through burnout, of the mind more than anything, so she opted to take a year out. Current Dublin manager Ad-



Mairéad Teehan: Offaly star aggravated damaged ligaments against champions. Pic: Ryan Byrne

rian O'Sullivan was coaching Offaly at the time and knew Teehan from his time with Mary I, where she did her teacher training. He got in touch but she held firm.

Mike Wall returned to her door the following season. So too did Tipp but for all that she appreciated her time with the Premier County, there was only one possible decision.

"I am from Offaly. I live in Offaly and have always been from Offaly. I live just outside Dunkerrin, Moneygall would be our parish team. Moneygall play in Tipp. When I was U14 I was sent to Tipp trials. That is where everyone was sent. There wasn't an option to go to Offaly... I went to Tipp trials at that age and was lucky enough to get on the teams up along.

"Four years ago, I was playing senior with Tipp and I took a break for a year, just sick of camogie. I had been playing for a long time up along. I wanted a break from the pressure of inter-county camogie. I was approached by the Offaly management if I would be interested in playing with Offaly.

"I wasn't expecting it. It is something that when I was asked, I couldn't really turn it

down. When you are small, that is all you want to do, play for your county. Offaly is my county, I didn't think I would ever get that opportunity with how it lies, that your club plays in a certain county and that is where you are sent for trials. When I got the opportunity, I couldn't turn it down." Teehan is in her third season now and such was her immediate impact in the dressing room, that she was appointed joint captain with her Coolderry cousin, Grace last year.

"I do believe we have a good enough squad with Offaly that we can get there. And you never know, next week we could be in a league semi-final which would be brilliant. But I do think we are going in the right direction anyway. Hopefully, we will stay going in the right direction."



LITTLEWOODS IRELAND CAMOGIE LEAGUE DIVISION 1 Cork v Waterford



# Murray: League semi-final will tell us where we stand

**CORK** 3-15  
**WATERFORD** 1-13

BY GER MCCARTHY

CORK are through to the Littlewoods Camogie League Division 1 semi-finals by virtue of a deserved victory over Waterford last weekend.

The Rebels' eight point defeat of the Déise in Walsh Park earned the winners a bye into the semi-finals.

The result saw Cork finish top of Group 2 so they, along with Galway, await the outcome of this weekend's quarter-finals to determine their opponents in the last four of the competition.

Manager Paudie Murray was pleased with his team's application and clinical finishing following a hard-hitting contest.

'Some of our hurling was very good and we got some good scores,' the Cork senior manager said.

'We were able to give everyone on the panel a run out over the previous two league games which was important. Hopefully, we have escaped without any serious injuries as well.'

Murray wasn't happy, however, with some of the Waterford tackles during the game, with Laura Treacy coming off injured early in the first half with a head injury but she was able to take her place with the rest of the subs later in proceedings.

'Laura received a very bad knock to the head. Looking back at it on video afterwards, I just can't understand what officials are doing when they cannot see those kind of things,' Murray said.

'No one has any problem with physicality (in camogie) but when you are using a hurley either across someone's hand



Cork forward Orla Cronin scored 0-7 against Waterford.

or head then there is going to be trouble.

'I've spoken about this issue before. You can have a full-back chopping away at a full-forward all day long and umpires do nothing about it. I'm as puzzled about these things as much as anyone on my management team at this stage.'

An explosive start by clinical Cork laid the foundation for this win, and two goals within a minute after the early second-half dismissal of full-back Kate Lynch left the Déise outfit dead and buried, their scoring of the game's last goal and five points notwithstanding.

Orla Cronin shot seven points while Chloe Sigerson relished a more advanced role

and contributed 1-3 and Amy O'Connor repeated her two-goal show of the previous round.

A fantastic point from Laura Hayes was among the first-half highlights, the half-back taking a pass from Ashling Thompson, who was among the scorers herself in a commanding midfield performance alongside Katrina Mackey.

O'Connor pounced on an error under pressure by Brianna O'Regan to nab her first goal but a couple of points from difficult frees by Beth Carton calmed the hosts. With Vikki Falconer an eye-catcher with a pair of scores from play, they only trailed by 1-13 to 0-7 at the change of ends, having been ten points in arrears at one juncture.

Disaster struck for Derek Lyons and his side soon after the restart however, when Kate Lynch gave referee John Dermody no option but to issue a red card for a wild pull on Amy O'Connor. A stunning solo goal by Sigerson in the 43rd minute was followed by O'Connor's second just over 60 seconds later, after Thompson had found the Killeagh woman, who in turn put it on a plate for her ever-threatening teammate and that was curtains.

There was a consolation goal for Waterford when captain Niamh Rockett lived up to her name with a stunning finish to the roof of the Cork net.

**'I just can't understand what officials are doing when they cannot see those kind of things' – Paudie Murray**

first two league games.'

#### Scorers

**Cork:** Orla Cronin 0-7 (4f); Amy O'Connor 2-0; Chloe Sigerson 1-3 (1f); Linda Collins 1-2; Katrina Mackey, Laura Hayes, Ashling Thompson 0-1 each.

**Waterford:** Beth Carton 0-6 (5f); Niamh Rockett 1-3 (1f); Vikki Falconer 0-2; Sarah Lacey, Abby Flynn 0-1 each.

**Cork:** Amy Lee; Cliona Dooley, Aisling Egan, Ellen Murphy; Meabh Cahalane, Laura Treacy, Laura Hayes; Katrina Mackey, Ashling Thompson; Chloe Sigerson, Orla Cronin, Saoirse McCarthy; Linda Collins, Amy O'Connor, Izzy O'Regan.

**Subs:** Aoife O'Neill for L. Treacy (10, inj), Emma Murphy for S. McCarthy (42), Hannah O'Leary for K. Mackey (42), Isobel Sheehan for O. Cronin (50), Fiona Keating for A. O'Connor (52), Molly Lynch for A. Lee (52), Clara O'Sullivan for A. Thompson (60).

**Waterford:** Brianna O'Regan; Keeley Corbett-Barry, Kate Lynch, Claire Whyte; Clara Griffin, Shona Curran, Loraine Bray; Beth Carton, Sarah Lacey; Orla Hickey, Niamh Rockett, Shauna Fitzgerald; Clara O'Sullivan, Abby Flynn, Vikki Falconer.

**Subs:** Anne Corcoran for S. Fitzgerald (ht), Sibeal Harney for O. Hickey (ht), Iona Heffernan for C. Griffin (40), Clodagh Carroll for S. Curran (46), Fiona Morrissey for V. Falconer (57).

**Referee:** John Dermody (Wexford).



Cork defender Laura Treacy came off injured in the win against Waterford last weekend.

## FAN-TASTIC FINALS

The Cork senior camogie team is one game away from booking their place in the national league final in Croke Park on June 20th, and an extra incentive is that this decider will be a test event for the safe return of spectators to sport. So, if Cork book their place in the final, they will get the chance to play in front of fans again. It's the same for the Cork senior ladies' football team after the LGFA confirmed that the Lidl National League Division 1 and 2 finals will form the basis of a Government-approved test event for spectators at Croke Park on Saturday, June 26th.

## DIVISION 1 GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	SD	Pts
Cork	2	2	0	0	6-29	1-29	+15	6
Tipperary	2	1	0	1	2-32	3-25	+4	3
Waterford	2	0	0	2	1-24	5-31	-19	0



Cliona O'Callanan for Cork and Sarah McCartin for Galway

## Cork hit the road to take on intermediate champions Down

**TOMORROW**  
Littlewoods Division 2 National League quarter-final: Cork v Down, MW Hire O'Moore Park, Portlaoise, 5pm

THE reward for Cork topping their group and qualifying for the quarter-final of the Division 2 Littlewoods National League is an evening trip to Portlaoise tomorrow and it doesn't come any tougher as they have been drawn to face the 2020 Intermediate All-Ireland champions Down.

Originally, it was assumed that the top teams in each group would have a home quarter-final but this is now not the case so for the third time this year Cork hit the road again.

5pm is an unusual time for a game of this stature, in previous years, the Association have insisted on all league and championship game being played at the same time and we can remember in the not too distant past a Cork manager who managed both sides having to make a choice if he would go with the seniors or intermediate championship semi-final as they refused to facilitate a time change. Given that the other three quarter-finals are in the afternoon it seems ridiculous on a bank holiday weekend to expect players to sit around all day and wait for a 5pm throw in but that's the cards Cork are dealt and they have to just get on with it.

Down are a county on the rise and they will play in the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland senior camogie championship later this year for the first time in more than two decades after their request to upgrade was accepted. The Association had passed a motion last summer that there would be no automatic promotion and relegation in 2020.

This was brought in principally as a measure to protect counties who may not have been able to field at full-strength through the curtailed season and in the draft fixture programme they were to remain in the intermediate championship and division two league even though they had taken the All-Ireland title beating Antrim.

They got a further boost when last year's successful team manager Derek Dunne reversed his decision to step away from the team after three years involvement, shortly after the All-Ireland win Laois native Dunne had informed the County Board and players of his decision to step down following the county's most successful spell in more than two decades.

This decision was due to busi-

### CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

ness commitments, however it is believed that pressure from both players and the board had persuaded him to have a re-think with the incentive to guide the county into senior competition a big factor in his decision to stay. Down had a slightly easier path to tomorrow's quarter final as they participated in Group 1 where they are were just three teams.

They received a wakeup call an ever improving Antrim a side they had over powered in last December's All-Ireland final. In their recent league clash Antrim were full value for their 1-13 to 0-13 victory, a week later they got their campaign back on track as they overcame Derry 3-16 to 0-19 and the win was enough to see them go through as group runners up with Antrim topping the group going on to defeat Derry.

Niamh Mallon is without doubt one of their most outstanding ever players and in a well-balanced she led the way as they captured the All-Ireland title for the first time in twenty two years. Holding a role in their half-forward line she usually moves to the full forward position and it was here that she contributed 2-3 to the Down tally in Croke Park last December.

Whilst they have had a few retirements following on their success they are still backboned by plenty of experienced players. Catherine Mc Gourty, Karen McMullen Danielle Harrison, Beth Fitzpatrick Niamh Mallon Sarah Louise Graffin, Amy McAlleenan and Laura Clarke have been to the fore as they advanced to this weekend's quarter final.

Cork topped group 3 on scoring difference over Galway having got their campaign off to a great start with victories over Tipperary and Kerry they lost out to Galway last weekend but manager Mark McCarthy was happy with his sides displays and has given game time to all the players on his panel with eleven changes last weekend for the trip to Galway he has given players an opportunity to win a place on the starting fifteen.

He has plenty of options but we will expect to see the side backboned by experienced campaigners such as Finola Neville, Lauren Callanan and captain Aisling Moloney whilst other expected to feature in the starting fifteen are Ali Smith, Rachel Harty and Stephanie Beausang.



Tipperary's Cait Devane congratulates Laura Treacy of Cork after their league game.

Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Gecco

# Cork impress but don't read too much into league



### CAMOGIE

Linda Mellerick

CORK will be a little disappointed that they were drawn straight through to the semi-final of this year's league; they would have preferred to go down the quarter-final route and avail of another game.

Galway, Kilkenny, and Cork topped their respective groups, and a draw was made to determine which two would advance to the semi-final and the third would be paired with the three runners-up and enter a quarter-final stage.

So, it's Kilkenny v Limerick and Offaly v Tipperary. I believe it's Cork v Galway in one semi and the quarter-final winners in the other.

I have to say that I've been impressed with a lot of Cork's play after just two games.

The disappointing aspect regards camogie is how far ahead of the rest Cork, Galway, and Kilkenny are.

I felt that Tipp and Waterford would kick on from last year, but they were very poor in their games against Cork.

We keep saying it's early days and yes, six weeks is a long time to get yourselves in order, but these teams have a lot to do and I think, at this stage, for the next few years, it's beyond them.

Tipp manager Bill Mullally is trying to build a strong panel, but unless you have it coming through the ranks you won't succeed.

Cork are the only county where that differs. We have so many clubs and a wide pick that if underage success doesn't come our way, we can still challenge for senior honours.

It does help massively though, and with



Waterford's Iona Heffernan challenges Cork's Amy O'Connor during their game at Walsh Park.

Picture: Patrick Browne

Cork bidding for three-in-a-row of minor All-Ireland titles last year, before Covid put a stop to it, the future remains strong for us.

The only weak link I can currently spot in Cork's set-up is their full-back line.

That's not being disrespectful to those that have lined out here in the past few weeks.

Those that have are relatively new to the panel and it goes without saying that it has to be a weak spot, experience wise.

Taking Laura Treacy out of full-back is a risky move, yet I do feel she is well suited to the centre-back role and will lord it there.

However, if Cork have troubles at full-back, they may have to shift Treacy back and have a plan B for who will anchor the defence in the centre.

It all depends on how the opposition approach their attack as to whether Cork's vulnerability is exposed.

The game has turned into a movements

game where half-forward lines play deep, Cork included, and try a one or two-player full-forward line. Cork's full-back and half-back lines will only go so far, hence their defence will outnumber the opposition every time, and in that scenario the numerical advantage will prevail, regardless of a lack of experience.

In turn, Cork are playing deep from their forward division and running at teams, creating space by delivering fast ball, faster than they have at times in the past, and switching the play if an opening is on.

The ability of the side to take long distance scores has had a big impact on the success of this tactic.

That's what weaker opposition lack. You drag your players away from goal then you have to be assured they'll pick off scores from distance and when a break comes, go for it.

Otherwise, you'll hit a brick wall. Cork are good at that and Amy O'Connor got two good goals again last Saturday.

Her first was excellent, where she found, possibly, the only gap available to bury a shot.

She has a goal mentality and, as mentioned last week, I'd like to see Fiona Keating get more game time as I feel she has it too.

The current table is interesting to read even though it is early in the league. Cork, Kilkenny, and Galway all finished with two wins from two; six points.

Kilkenny topped the scoring average with 30 points (5-29 to 0-14 against).

Next was Galway on 20 points (6-24 to 0-22 against) and Cork came in with 15 (6-29 v 1-29).

You can argue any way you wish regarding who had the stronger or weaker group and if Cork hadn't taken their foot off the pedal against Waterford, they'd have another 10 points to play with.

But it doesn't matter really and reading too much into it as this stage won't unearth much at all.