

# Na Gaeil Notes Monday January 27<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Croke Park** What a journey it has been for the Na Gaeil Club to the capital and Croke Park last weekend. There was nobody left in Killeen and the greater Oakpark area as every man woman and child made their way to Dublin to support their beloved Na Gaeil in their historic first ever All Ireland Junior Final. Over thirty rooms were booked in the Croke Park Hotel the night before the match where the Na Gaeil diaspora from far and wide gathered to support their team the following day. A great night was had by all and rumour has it that the sing song carried on to the wee hours of the morning. Two buses of enthusiastic fans travelled on the day of the match with many more making their way by car and by train to ensure that the players on the pitch could clearly hear the Na Gaeil roar loud and clear.

**All Ireland Final** What a feeling it must have been for the players and management to run out on the hallowed turf of Croke Park to the roars and cheers of their huge band of supporters. Conditions were near perfect for this All Ireland Junior Final and it was played on a beautifully manicured Croke Park surface. Rathgarogue-Cushinstown were first off the mark with a point from their right corner forward Jason Dunne after a minute of play. A Dara Devine free for Na Gaeil restored parity five minutes later followed by a good point from full forward Mike Griffin. Daniel Martin Carroll levelled matters on ten minutes with a fine point for the Wexford side. Na Gaeil players were winning all the possession but were failing to make it count on the scoreboard with many misplaced passes and block downs. Dara Devine scored a point from distance for the Tralee side but this was cancelled out with a pointed free from Rathgarogue-Cushintown's star player Daire Bolger heading into the second quarter. On twenty minutes Na Gaeil Captain Eoin Doody pointed a free from out on the right wing. From the kick out the ball falls to the same player and he coolly slots it over the bar. After two poor Na Gaeil wides up steps Eoin Doody again to fire over from close range after being put through by Ian McCarthy.

After 26 minutes of play a poor kick out was intercepted by Na Gaeil's Dara Devine. He quickly off loaded it to the inrushing Ian McCarthy and he crashed it to the roof of the net for a brilliant goal. Ian followed up with the next point to put Na Gaeil seven points clear and firmly in the driving seat with half time fast approaching. Ryan O'Neill comes up from corner back to fist over a point for Na Gaeil in injury time. Ratharogue-Cushinstown worked the ball up the field for one last attack and Tadhg Cody who was at the end of the move found himself in the Na Gaeil square. Tipperary referee Seán Lonergan deemed that he had been fouled by a Na Gaeil defender and awarded a penalty to the Wexford side. Up steps their goalkeeper Nicky Sinnott and he crashed the ball low to the right corner of the Na Gaeil net. Half time score: Na Gaeil: 1-08; Rathgarogue-Cushinstown: 1-04.

Whatever was said in the Na Gaeil dressing room at half time worked because they came out a different team and quickly set about dismantling the Wexford side. Mike Griffin scored within a minute followed by a good point from Diarmaid Herlihy. Six minutes into the half Na Gaeil scored their 2<sup>nd</sup> goal. Jack Barry sent a long ball into to Diarmaid Herlihy who was in acres of space. He soloed thirty metres and unleashed a pile driver which rebounded off the crossbar and into the path of Ian McCarthy. Ian took one side step and clinically placed it into right the corner of the Wexford net for his second goal of the afternoon. As in the first half he followed up with a point a minute later. Dan Goggin then chipped in with a lovely point followed

by another point from Mike Griffin, his third of the game. Diarmaid Herlihy scored the next two points for Na Gaeil, one with his left and one with the outside of his right boot. Na Gaeil were firmly in the driving seat now with Jack Barry and Diarmuid O'Connor lording it at midfield, the defence snuffing out any attack and the forwards scoring at every opportunity. Kieran Dineen made a great block on 45 minutes to deny the Wexford side a score. Their number 11 Daire Bolger did point a free for them moments later, their first of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The game was well and truly over at this stage and Na Gaeil management ran their bench. Dara Devine pointed a free on 53 minutes for a foul on Eoin Walsh. Darragh Reen, the youngest Na Gaeil player pointed on 59 minutes followed by a great point from teak tough corner back Damien Bourke. Paul Daly, the oldest man on the field pointed a free with his left leg two minutes into injury time. What a great moment for him, a man that has given years of service to the club and a man that was born before the club was founded in 1978. The last score of the day fell to Ian McCarthy. He was put through on goal and calmly put it past Rathgarogue-Cushinstown sub keeper Jonathan Kelly for a hat trick. What a day it was for Ian. He could not have dreamed of a better outing on the hallowed turf ending up with a personal tally of 3-02. Moments later the final whistle blew. Final score: Na Gaeil: 3-20; Rathgarogue-Cushinstown: 1-05. It was total elation for all the Na Gaeil players, management and their large group of supporters. The Rose of Tralee was played over the airwaves as players, supporters and their families were not afraid to show their emotions, hugged each other with some shedding tears of joy. What an occasion for the club and everybody associated with it. Eoin Doody climbed the steps of the Hogan Stand where he was presented the cup by GAA President James Horan to rapturous applause from all the Na Gaeil supporters. Eoin made a wonderful speech and thanked everybody in the club for all they have done to make this dream come true. Mary Ellen's Na Gaeil song "We're On the One Road" was now played over the airwaves as every player lifted the cup one by one.

Congratulations to all the players and management on a wonderful performance and for bringing us on such a wonderful journey all the way from Oakpark to Croke Park. It all began on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2019 with a win over Firies and ended in the best possible way on 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 with victory over Wexford side Rathgarogue-Cushinstown. It will take a while for the magnitude of this achievement to sink in. Players will have to pinch themselves to realise that they have won an All Ireland medal in Croke Park, a dream that every player in the country aspires to and to win it with the friends that you grew up with even makes it more special. Ian McCarthy's 3-02 is the largest return in a junior club final and he now becomes the top scorer since the competition began. He was deservedly awarded man of the match by TG4. He is also the 2<sup>nd</sup> Na Gaeil player to score a goal in Croke Park, Diarmuid O'Connor being the first. But every player from no. 1 to no. 37 has to be commended for the amount of effort they have put in along with the management team of Donie Rooney, Richie Barrett, Kieran O'Shea, Eoin Joy and Niall O'Meara.

**Team:** Timmy Culloty, Ryan O'Neil(0-01), Eoin O'Neill, Damien Bourke(0-01), Kieran O'Donovan, Andrew Barry, Eoin Doody(0-03), Diarmuid O'Connor, Jack Barry(0-01), Dan O'Connor, Dan Goggin(0-01), Ian McCarthy(3-02), Dara Devine(0-03), Mike Griffin(0-03), Diarmaid Herlihy(0-03). Subs: Kieran Dineen for Dan O'Connor; Eoin Walsh for Eoin O'Neill; Darragh Reen(0-01) for Dan Goggin; Jamie Lowham for Mike Griffin; James O'Connor for Kieran O'Donovan; Paul Daly(0-01) for Eoin Doody.

**Homecoming** What a rapturous welcome the Na Gaeil team and management received when they arrived in Tralee. They received a garda escort from the Earl of Desmond and were led into Tralee with a pick-up truck festooned in Na Gaeil flags and banners. Bonfires were lighting along the way. The players alighted from the bus at the corner of the Oakpark road and the All Ireland Champions made their way to the clubhouse. What a welcome awaited them. Hundreds and hundreds of their loyal supporters were there to greet them as they walked with both sides of the road lined with members yielding lighted sods of turf on pikes and bonfires burning. The players made their way on to an open trailer much to the delight of their supporters. Club chairperson Tim Lynch Jnr. addressed the huge gathering and thanked all the players and management for their commitment and dedication to the cause and spoke of the vision the founding members had for this club over forty years ago. This achievement is for everyone that has worked tirelessly for the good of club over the last four decades he said. Managers Donal Rooney and Richie Barrett also spoke and said what the amazing support in Croke Park meant to all his players and management. Mary Ellen O'Connor sang the Na Gaeil song, "We're On the One Road" with the whole crowd joining in and Jennie Sheehy recited her well penned poem "Na Gaeil Abú". Donie Rooney, Richie Barrett, Kieran O'Shea, Eoin Joy and Niall O'Meara have guided this team to the promised land. Take a bow on a job well done. Everybody adjourned to the clubhouse where the celebration continued into the small hours of the morning. A weekend that will live long in the memory.

**Stepping Down** The Na Gaeil management team of Donie Rooney, Richie Barrett, Kieran O'Shea and Eoin Joy have announced that they are stepping down. And in truth it is understandable as it is a huge commitment to give to any club especially with most of them having young families. Donie and Richie have been there for four years and their contribution has been immense. We thank all four for what they have brought to this group of players in guiding them to the ultimate prize and indeed a just reward for all their efforts. What a way to bow out. We wish them well in the future. Go raibh míle maith agaibh arís.

**Match DVD** A set of three DVD's covering the build up, the match itself, dressing room celebrations, the homecoming and much more will be available for purchase in the clubhouse early in the week. Anyone involved with Na Gaeil will want to add this to their collection. Enquiries at the clubhouse.

**Na Gaeil Ladies** Congratulations to Mary O'Connell who played a starring role on winning the PPS Interprovincial All Ireland Tournament with Munster Ladies GAA on Saturday in Kinnegad. Well done to the Kerry Senior Ladies and our own Laura Fitzgerald, Maria Quirke and Megan O'Connor on their win in Cavan.

**Good Luck** Best of luck to Na Gaeil's Devon Burns and Darragh Reen who will line out with The Green CBS in the Corn Uí Mhuirí Munster semi final against Rathmore at the weekend.

**Lotto** The draw for the jackpot of €3,500 took place on Monday evening last. Numbers drawn were 4, 6, 14, 20. There was no winner. €50 winners were Evan Confrey, Derrylea and Patricia O'Neill, Derrylea. €25 winners were Phil, C/O Dancing, Trina Hussey, C/O Hussey's Shop, Jeremy Burke, Castleisland and Colm

Lyons, Blackrock, Cork. Next week's jackpot is €3,600. All are welcome for the draw in the club each Tuesday night at 10.30pm.