

1999

Team Manager: Declan Bonner

Dr. Mc Kenna Cup.

1	21 st March	Corrigan Park	Antrim	0-13	Donegal	1-07
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Winners: Derry

Ulster Senior Football Championship

2	6 th June	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	2-09	Armagh	1-12
3	13 th June	Clones	Donegal	0-12	Armagh	2-11

Ulster final:			Armagh	3-12	Down	0-10
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All Ireland Semi-final:			Cork	2-12	Mayo	0-12
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All Ireland Semi-final:			Meath	0-15	Armagh	2-05
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All Ireland final:			Meath	1-11	Cork	1-08
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National Football League. – 1998/1999

4	1 st Nov 1998	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	1-10	Armagh	0-06
5	15 th Nov 1998	Tuam	Galway	0-13	Donegal	0-12
6	29 th Nov 1998	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	0-10	Cork	1-08
7	14 th Feb 1999	Omagh	Tyrone	0-12	Donegal	0-11
8	28 th February	Fr. Tierney Park	Donegal	1-08	Dublin	0-09
9	14 th March	O'Connor Park	Offaly	1-07	Donegal	0-08
10	28 th March	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	2-11	Leitrim	1-09

Allianz NFL Division 1A

	25 th April	Semi-final	Cork	0-06	Meath	0-03
	25 th April	Semi-final	Dublin	0-11	Armagh	0-11
	2 nd May	Semi-final replay	Dublin	1-14	Armagh	0-12
	9 th May	Final Páirc Uí Chaoimh	Cork	0-12	Dublin	1-07

DOHERTY SENT OFF AS.....

Donegal dumped out of the McKenna Cup

DONEGAL.....1-7
ANTRIM.....0-13

DONEGAL'S recent tale of woe continued at Corrigan Park, Belfast on Sunday last when they were knocked out of the Dr McKenna Cup by Antrim after a hugely disappointing second half .

After losing four games in the league, three by just a single point, Donegal were hoping to bounce back after losing by two to Offaly the previous Sunday, but a hugely disappointing display left the Donegal mentors with plenty to think about as the countdown to the championship begins.

The visitors managed just two scores for the final half hour and to complete a dreadful

afternoon they had veteran full back, John Joe Doherty sent off in the last minute.

Doherty was ordered off by Derry official, Anthony O'Neill following an off the ball incident involving Antrim's Ronan Hamill. After the game the referee said Doherty had been sent off for kicking his opponent.

The player is automatically ineligible for Sunday's final league game against Leitrim in Ballybofey and

there could be doubts about his eligibility for the championship opener against Armagh in June.

Bonner dejected

Donegal boss, Declan Bonner was bitterly disappointed afterwards.

"If we play like that against Leitrim they will beat us. It was a terrible second half performance," Bonner said.

The sides were level on five occasions during the opening half and at half time the home team led 0-8 to 0-6. With a strong wind at their back in the second half it looked as if Donegal would sail to a win.

However it was Antrim who forged ahead and by the 41st minute led 0-11 to 0-7. A fortuitous goal from Tony Boyle after 48 minutes got Donegal back into the

game, against the run of play, and left Donegal trailing by just a point (0-11 to 1-7).

However Antrim stepped up a gear in the final ten minutes and inspired by Martin Mulholland, Aiden Donnelly, Kevin Madden, and Paddy Logan they forced a deserved win despite the fact they recorded a dozen wides over the hour.

Donegal were short six regulars including Ollie Reid, Noel Hegarty, and Brendan Devenney from their starting line-up and opted to play against the wind in the first half.

It gave the Donegal manager a chance to have a look at players like Martin Coll, Shane Carr, James Gallagher, and Pauric Gillespie but on the day few

players caught the attention.

Two points each from Tony Boyle and John Duffy kept Donegal in touch but in front of just 100 spectators it was the home side who held the advantage. Points by Gearóid Adams and Kevin Madden brought the sides level 0-5 apiece by the 23 rd minute and a tremendous 50 yard score from Madden put Antrim ahead at the interval.

Donegal were hugely disappointing in the second half and failed to manufacture scoring opportunities for long periods. Bonner and his mentors will be looking for major improvements against Leitrim this Sunday. Things can only get better.

Donegal; Tony Blake, Mark Crossan, John Joe

Doherty, Peter McGinley, Shane Carr Martin Coll, Niall McCready, James Ruane, Barry Ward, John Duffy (0-4), Adrian Sweeney, Pauric Gillespie, Brian McLaughlin, Tony Boyle (1-3), and James Gallagher.

Subs used; Brian Roper for McLaughlin (40 mins), Noel McGinley for Ruane (43 mins) and Noel Hegarty for Sweeney (50 mins).

Antrim; S McGreevy, M Mulholland, P Mulholland, L McGurdy, G Adams (0-1), C McKearney, B Elliot, J Murphy, G Flynn (0-1), P McCann, P Logan (0-2), K Brady (0-1), A Donnelly, R Hamill (0-1), and K Madden (0-5).

Subs used; J Quinn (0-2) for Flynn (injured-13 mins) and T Convery for McCann (59 mins).

Referee; A O'Neill (Derry).



**DONEGAL
PEOPLE'S
PRESS**

SPORTING PRESS

Donegal v. Armagh

Minute by minute

90 secs - Tony Boyle's run across the front of goal is picked out by Noel Hegarty's superb free. Boyle gathers ahead of Gerard Reid and goes on to blast his shot past Brendan Tierney for a dream start. Donegal 1-0, Armagh 0-0.

3 mins - James Ruane's blistering run down the right creates an opening for Devenney but he blasts wide. 7 mins - A second Donegal goal and again it comes from a clever pass in over the defence. This time Adrian Sweeney picks out Duffy who steadies himself before firing low to the bottom corner. 2-0, 0-0.

9 mins - With Donegal on fire, a brilliant move ends with a foul on Sweeney and Tony Boyle kicks the free from his hands. 2-1, 0-0.

10 mins - Armagh's Mark McNeill picks up the first booking of the contest after a deliberate trip on Roper. However Duffy kicks the relatively simple free wide. 2-1, 0-0.

12 mins - Oisín McConville opens Armagh's account off the left boot. 2-1, 0-1.

12 mins - Diarmaid Marsden enters the fray, replacing McNeill.

15 mins - A foul by Crossan on McConville and the Armagh No. 15 scores his second point. 2-1, 0-2.

17 mins - Duffy wastes another simple looking free from the right. 2-1, 0-2.

18 mins - Roper's effort is adjudged to have gone over by one of the umpires but referee, Mick Curley correctly over-rules the umpire.

21 mins - Devenney hauled down in front of goal by Enda McNulty and kicks the free over himself. 2-2, 0-2.

26 mins - O'Rourke wastes a free for Armagh.

28 mins - McConville points after O'Rourke takes a quick '45. 2-2, 0-3.

31 mins - The Armagh comeback continues with an O'Rourke free. 2-2, 0-4.

34 mins - McConville hits an excellent point off the right boot from out on the left. 2-2, 0-5.

35 mins - Tony has free brought forward but frustratingly, kicks it wide.

Half time, Donegal 2-2, Armagh 0-5.

36 mins - Paul McGrane is set up for a goal after a fine Armagh move. McGrane though blasted over although, from the main stand it looked wide of the post. 2-2, 0-6.

37 mins - Noel McGinley replaces Eamon Reddan.

39 mins - O'Rourke misses another easy free for Armagh.

40 mins - Marsden hits his first score after a pass by McCann. 2-2, 0-7.

42 mins - Duffy hits Donegal's first score in over 20 mins after Reid had hauled down Devenney in front of goal. 2-3, 0-7.

44 mins - A McConville free reduces the lead to just a point again. 2-3, 0-8.

48 mins - Barry Ward comes on for Duffy.

50 mins - McGuinness knocks over a free from the hands after foul on Roper. 2-4, 0-8.

51 mins - Devenney's ball in sees Boyle injured in a goal mouth scramble. Roper picks up the loose ball and steers it over from a difficult angle. 2-5, 0-8.

54 mins - David Wilson comes on for O'Rourke.

57 mins - McConville points a free. 2-5, 0-9.

60 mins - Noel Hegarty curls over a super free from the left. 2-6, 0-9.

61 mins - Blake pulls off a brilliant save to deny Paddy McKeever. Donegal immediately move into attack and Devenney points. 2-7, 0-9.

65 mins - McConville free after McGuinness' trip on McGrane. 2-7, 0-10.

66 mins - Michael Hegarty comes on for Sweeney.

67 mins - McConville's ball in results in a scramble in front of the Donegal goal. Blake is unfortunate not to collect and as the ball spills clear, McKeever toe-pokes it home. 2-7, 1-10.

68 mins - Armagh take the lead for the first time in the game through Marsden. 2-7, 1-11.

69 mins - Almost immediately Roper equalises with a brilliant score. 2-8, 1-11.

70 mins - McConville sets up McGrane for what appears to be the winning point. 2-8, 1-12.

71 mins - Gildea's hopeful free into the danger area is pounced on by Michael Hegarty who, with his back to goal, manages to steer the ball between the posts.

Donegal 2-9, Armagh 1-12.

Donegal earn a draw in MacCumhail Park thriller

Hegarty to the rescue

Donegal 2-9
Armagh 1-12

Nineteen year old Michael Hegarty is this week the toast of Donegal. The young Kilcar mans injury time point earned, Donegal a dramatic draw in Sunday's thrilling Ulster senior championship clash with Armagh in Ballybofey.

Tom Comack reports from Sean MacCumhail Park

Photographs: Conor McGonagle & Brian McDaid

Super sub Hegarty just in the game, kept his cool in a crowded goalmouth to slot over the equaliser with the last kick of the game. A score that sent the large Donegal following in the 19,000 supporters packed into Sean MacCumhail Park on Sunday afternoon into ecstasy

Supporters who minutes earlier, watched in horror, as Armagh unbelievably took the lead for the first time in the contest. It was heart stopping stuff in those spine tingling closing minutes, as twice the Orchard County men in full flow, struck the lead score, only for the home team on each occasion to draw level.

Even to the most ardent Armagh supporter could scarcely believe what they were witnessing, as only minutes earlier the game as a contest looked over.

With just eight minutes left to play, a finger tip save from Tony Blake seemed to have denied the Armagh men their last throw of the dice. The Donegal keepers flying save from Paddy McKeever came back off the post, and was cleared up field to Brendan Devenney who split the town end post for a point. Devenney's strike restoring a four points margin once more. This surely was the insurance point. A four point turn around in less than a minute.

The men from the Orchard county had made a bold bid for it. Recovering from a disastrous start to come within a point of Declan Bonner's side midway through the second half. After all they had hauled themselves back into contention in a game that they seemed out of their reach as early as the



Donegal's Brian Roper heads towards goal during Sunday's Ulster Championship clash in Ballybofey.

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Gasping for oxygen they refused to lie down an keel over. Oisín McConville landed a point to give them hope.

Paddy McKeever threw them a life line when he crashed the ball to the Donegal net for the all important goal. Tony Blake failing to hold the ball as it bobbed in front

of him. The in rushing McKeever taking advantage of the keepers error, first timed blasted the ball to the back of the net, to draw the sides level with just for minutes of play remaining.

Inside a minute Diarmaid Marsden had the Armagh men in front for the first time in the game. All of a sudden it was Donegal who looked in trouble. But like their opponents Declan Bonner's side had too

much invested in the contest to buckle. Man of the match Brian Roper came to the rescue with a fantastic effort from 35 metres that sailed high and through and straight between the posts.

On the stroke of full time danger man Paddy McKeever struck again this time for what had all the appearance of the winning point, before in sensational fashion Michael Hegarty in a that crowded rectangle somehow landed the equaliser. To mighty relief all round referee Michael Curly called for the ball as Brendan Tierney shaped up to the kick out. Game over.

What a turn around. Donegal getting off to a blistering start with two goals in the opening seven minutes. It looked in those early exchanges as if Donegal were in a different class, seven points up and barely ten minutes gone.

Tony Boyle with his sides second attack, had Brendan Tierney plucking the ball out of the Armagh net after just one minute and thirty seconds. Noel Hegarty's quick free finding Boyle in behind his marker Ger Reid, and in clinical fashion the fullforward gave the Armagh custodian no chance from close range.

The dust had barely settled in the Armagh goalmouth when Adrian

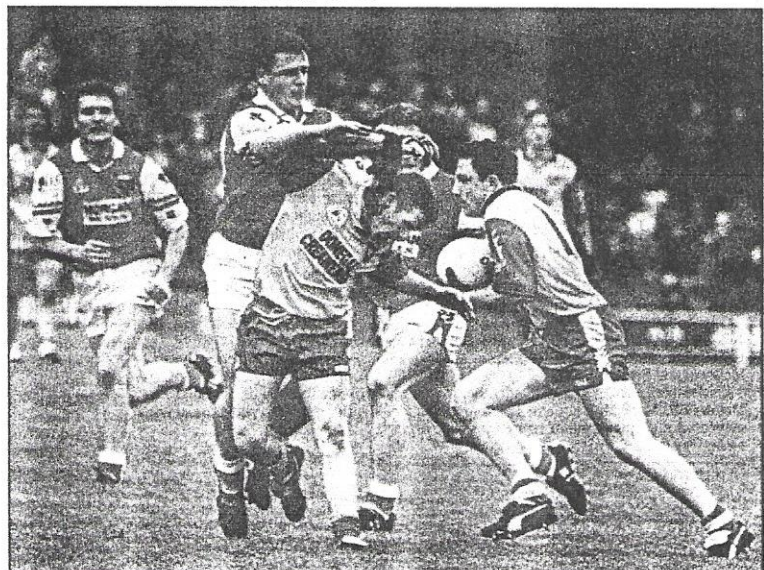
Sweeney with an inch perfect pass released John Duffy for goal number two. Duffy doing well to squeeze ball past the diving Tierney, having momentarily seemed to have fluffed the chance. Tony Boyle added a point before Oisín McConville opened his sides account.

With Diarmaid Marsden drafted into the forward line, releasing Paul McGrane to midfield Armagh began to take a grip at midfield. And with Crossmaglen star McConville really buzzing at full forward they gradually pulled back the Donegal advantage, hitting five points to Donegal's for the rest of the half. Brendan Devenney with a converted free from fourteen metres the sole marksmen for the home side in that period.

By the time John Duffy landed Donegal's next score a pointed free twenty minutes after Devenney's strike, seven minutes into second half, the Armagh men had reduced the margin to the minimum.

Having weathered the early second half Armagh onslaught, Donegal had pulled three points clear before Blakes finger nail save and Devenney point with just eight minutes remaining set up that four point margin.

In the end it was not enough and so its to St.Tiernachs Park Clones



Action from MacCumhail Park, Ballybofey, during Sunday's Ulster Football Championship.



**DONEGAL
PEOPLE'S
PRESS**

BANK OF IRELAND ULSTER CHAMPIONSHIP

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next Sunday for the replay. And on Sundays performance an opportunity to redeem and restore quiet a few lofty reputations.

Teams & scorers:
Donegal: Tony Boyle (1-1F); John Duffy (1-1F); Brendan Devenney (0-2)1F; Brian Roper (0-2); Jim McGuinness (0-1)1F; Noel Hegarty (0-1)1F; Michael Hegarty (0-1);

Armagh: Oisín McConville (0-7) 4F; Paddy McKeever (1-1); Diarmuid Marsden (0-2); Paul McGrane (0-1); Cathal O'Rourke (0-1F);

Donegal: Tony Blake; Damian Diver. Mark Crossan, Eamonn Reddan; Noel Hegarty, Martin Coll, Niall McCreadie; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness; John Duffy, Adrian Sweeney, John Gildea; Brian Roper, Tony Boyle, Brendan Devenney; Subs: Noel McGinley for E. Reddan 37 minutes; Barry Ward for J. Duffy 47 minutes; Michael Hegarty for A. Sweeney 65 minutes.

Armagh: Brendan Tierney; Enda McNulty, Gerard Reid, Mark McNeill; Kieran Hughes, Kieran McGeeney, Andrew McCann; Jarlath Burns, Justin McNulty; Paddy McKeever, Paul

McGrane, John Rafferty; Peter Loughran, Cathal O'Rourke, Oisín McConville; Subs: Diarmuid Marsden for M. McNeill 13 minutes; John McEntee for P. Loughran 37 minutes; David Wilson for C. O'Rourke 54 minutes. Referee Michael Curly, Galway.

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**DONEGAL
PEOPLE'S
PRESS**

Donegal caught with late goals

Armagh 2-11
Donegal 0-12

FOR DONEGAL footballers it was a case of deja vue in their championship replay with Armagh in St.Tiernach's Park, Clones on Sunday last. Donegal got off to a blistering start, only to be caught with a late Armagh sucker punch as the Orchard county came from one point down in the closing seven minutes to win by five points.

In a carbon copy opening to that of the drawn encounter (without the goals) seven days earlier, Donegal began with a flourish and were 0-3 up in the opening eight minutes. Such was the Donegal superiority in the opening exchanges Armagh did not get their first score until the eleventh minute.

Tom Comack reports from St. Tiernach's Park Clones
Photographs: Conor McGonagle

Even though the Orchard county men did come more and more into the game as the half progressed Donegal were still three points clear at the half-time change over. Declan Bonner's side accuracy in the art of scoring proving decisive in that first half and at half time they were 0-7 to 0-4 ahead.

Michael Hegarty Tony Boyle and Brian Roper were on fire up front in the first half. Boyle with 0-4, Hegarty 0-2 and McGuinness with 0-1 were the Donegal marksmen. Oisín McConville 0-2 Paddy McKeever and John McEntee 0-1 each were the Armagh scorers.

Donegal's good performances in the first half were not just confined to the forward line. The fullback line of Damian Diver, Mark Crossan, Niall McCreadie were very impressive as well. Crossan and McCreadie in particular had the measure of dangermen Paddy McKeever and Oisín McConville.

It was McCreadie's close attention which finally saw the Crossmaglen man McConville see red. He got his marching orders on twenty nine minutes, when his shoulder charge into the back McCreadie was reported by the umpire to referee Michael Curly.

It seemed a little harsh as it was very much a case of six of one and half a dozen of the other. Losing goalkeeper Tony Blake after just thirteen minutes also seemed to have no great effect on the Donegal, as they continued keep the Armagh men at bay.

Indeed while Armagh came more and more into the game as the first half progressed they couldn't peg back the three point lead Donegal had built in the first half.

On the resumption of action at the start of the second half Brendan Devenney got on the end of a four man sweeping move to extend Donegal's lead to four points. Despite territorial and possession advantage it took seventeen minutes for Armagh to draw level but Mark Crossan temporarily restored Donegal's lead once more with a massive long range point.

A Cathal O'Rourke goal followed in rapid succession by a John McEntee point sent the Armagh two points clear, with a little over fifteen minutes left on the clock.

Donegal response was swift and true, three rapid fire points from Adrian Sweeney, Tony Boyle and John Gildea and Donegal were back in the driving seat holding a one point lead with just eight minutes remaining.

However it was then disaster struck with Diarmuid Marsden ghosting in behind the defence beat Paul Callaghan with a delicate flick for the crucial second goal.

There was no way back for Donegal as Armagh rattled over a further three points to run out easy winners in the end.

The loss of Martin Coll early in the second half for two bookable offences was a cruel blow to Donegal. The Gweedore man was playing well at the time of his dismissal. His physical presence at the heart of the defence was sorely missed.

This was an all round much improved performance from Donegal, and if they had played as well for the seventy minutes in the drawn game as they played on Sunday they would now be looking forward to an Ulster semi final meeting with either Derry or Cavan.

However, on the day Armagh were deserving winners, their midfield diamond Ciaran McGeeney, Jarlath Burns, Paul McGrane and John McEntee proved the launching pad for this success.

Teams and scorers; **Donegal:** Tony Boyle (0-5, 3F), Michael Hegarty (0-2); Jim McGuinness (0-1F); Brendan Devenney (0-1); Mark Crossan (0-1); Adrian Sweeney (0-1); John Gildea (0-1); **Armagh:** Cathal O'Rourke (1-1F); Diarmuid Marsden (1-0); John McEntee (0-3); Oisín McConville (0-2F); Paddy McKeever (0-2); Alan O'Neill (0-1), Andrew McCann (0-1); Paul McGrane (0-1); **Donegal:** Tony Blake; Niall McCreadie, Mark Crossan, Damian Diver; Shane Carr, Martin Coll, Noel Hegarty; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness; Michael Hegarty, Adrian Sweeney, John Gildea; Brian Roper, Tony Boyle, Brendan Devenney; Subs: Paul Callaghan for T. Blake inj. 14 minutes; John Duffy for M. Hegarty, 58 min. Barry Ward for J. Ruane 65 min. **Armagh:** Brendan Tierney; Enda McNulty, Gerard Reid, Justin McNulty; Kieran Hughes, Kieran McGeeney, Andrew McCann; Jarlath Burns, Paul McGrane; Alan O'Neill, John McEntee, John Rafferty; David Wilson, Paddy McKeever, Oisín McConville; Subs: Peter Loughran for D. Wilson; Diarmuid Marsden for J. Rafferty 48 min. Cathal O'Rourke for P. Loughlin for 55 min.

Referee Michael Curly, Galway.

Marsden magic seals bruising Armagh win

By Keith Duggan

IT WAS strangely fitting that a replay which was mostly scarred by the sort of bruising ugliness and painful error so often associated with Ulster championship football should be finally shaped by a beautiful sleight of hand.

In the 63rd minute, Armagh substitute Cathal O'Rourke pitched a ball behind Donegal's last line of defence. Fellow substitute Diarmuid Marsden raced onto it as Donegal's (substitute) goalkeeper Paul Callaghan stood frozen in petrified indecision. Marsden tapped the ball past the keeper with the swiftest touch and the entire matter was settled. Donegal, never less than brave, wilted instantaneously and Armagh dominated in the remaining five minutes.

For the second consecutive Sunday, these two sides threw up a downright weird game of football, with horribly long periods of wayward kicking and over-elaboration.

Ultimately, Armagh had both the physique and dash to place their stamp of authority on the match, but they sparked way too infrequently for a side with serious designs on the Ulster title.

"Maybe that's down to inexperience," offered Cathal O'Rourke, who had a devastating impact on the game after his late introduction. "We haven't had a serious run in the championship since 1990 in all fairness, so the pedigree hasn't been there. The more games we get the more dangerous we'll be."

Armagh had looked anything but dangerous in the opening quarter of the match, utterly outplayed in every sector until Oisín McConville was sent off after 20 minutes for

striking Niall McCready. Up until then the Crossmaglen forward had been their lone scorer, popping over two elementary frees.

Donegal, though, were rampant, with Jim McGuinness, Martin Coll and Noel Hegarty firing ball which the live wire Brian Roper, debutant Michael Hegarty and old hand Tony Boyle were inevitably first onto.

They had fashioned a 0-6 to 0-2 lead after 22 minutes and looked the more comfortable in a curiously dead affair.

McConville's walk though, heated Armagh blood again and John McEntee cut loose for their first score after 24 minutes.

Donegal seemed at a loss as to how to deploy their spare man and although Armagh virtually owned possession over the last seven minutes, they added just one more score and trotted off at the break down 0-4 to 0-7.

Referee Michael Curley belatedly booked Donegal's Martin Coll before the second-half throw in, after the Armagh management remonstrated with him about a late tackle on Paddy McKeever just before half-time.

It was to have a crucial bearing on things. With the Armagh half-backs beginning to knife through the heart of Donegal's defence, Coll tripped Paul McGrane and followed the same path as McConville with a full 25 minutes left.

Paddy McKeever missed the resultant free but although the next seven minutes went without a score, Armagh began to palpably fizz and an eruption looked increasingly likely.

McGane and Jarlath Burns gradually muscled their way to control the

midfield, while Kieran McGeeney and both his half-back partners were again imperious.

After 57 minutes, half-back Kieran Hughes over-lapped and burst forward, drawing half the Donegal defence before spilling the ball back for Cathal O'Rourke to toe poke it across the line.

"I don't think I could have scored it if I didn't miss hit it. My initial thought was that it was a penalty so I reacted slowly. It was good fortune. It's the throw of a dice and we got the bit of luck at the right time," he said afterwards.

Armagh were typically streaky after that — McEntee hammered a marvellous point from the kick-out but still Donegal didn't fade.

Adrian Sweeney and John Gildea again stepped up in the white hot moments, both firing gutsy scores and Tony Boyle, well marshalled overall by Gerard Reid, converted a point to leave matters at 1-8 to 0-12 with seven minutes remaining.

At that moment, it was still anyone's game, but Donegal were leaving fatal pockets of space for Armagh to exploit.

Eventually it told, with O'Rourke having both the time and vision to free the lethal Marsden.

So for the second year running, Donegal's Ulster campaign ended in seconds of spellbinding improvisation and Marsden's goal may well provide the epitaph for Declan Bonner's gallant, if ultimately, luckless two-year tenure.

Afterwards, the Armagh faithful carried Jarlath Burns like a god and their faces burned with the zeal of visionaries. Right now, their team is flawed if talented, but they will stride more certainly after this troublesome round. But how far, well, who can say?

THE SUN.

Friday, June 18, 1999

Donegal appeal after ref's Coll-amity

By PHILIP LANIGAN

DONEGAL are poised to appeal against their 2-11 to 0-12 Ulster championship defeat by Armagh.

Declan Bonner's side crashed out at Clones last Sunday but are now looking for a second chance after the wrongful dismissal of centre-back Martin Coll.

The GAA's Games Administration Committee ruled yesterday that both Coll and Armagh attacker Oisín McConville had been incorrectly sent off by ref Michael Curley.

An emergency meeting of the County Board Executive was called last night to decide whether they would appeal to the

Ulster Council. County Secretary Noreen Doherty feels they have a case.

She said: "Losing Martin Coll had a big bearing on the match. The referee made an error and Croke Park have admitted that."

But Armagh joint boss Brian Canavan rubbished any talk of a replay. He said: "If anything, we're the ones who are entitled to feel aggrieved. We had a man sent off well

before they did so I don't see their argument. We're through and that's it."

CAVAN boss Val Andrews names an unchanged side for Sunday's championship rematch with Derry at Breffni Park. But Anthony Forde, Patrick Shiels, Peter Reilly and Bernard Morris all switch positions.

ANTRIM include three championship newcomers for their clash with Down

at Newry on Sunday. Full-back Conor McKearney makes his debut at full-back and there are two new faces up front, Paddy Logan lining out at centre half-forward and Declan Gallagher in the right corner.

WEXFORD have All-Star centre-forward Martin Storey fit in time for Sunday's Leinster SHC semi-final against Offaly.

Storey had been suffering with a bout of flu.

After Match Quotes

Armagh centre half back Kieran McGeeney

"It was only when we lost Oisín that we seemed realise we were in a match. At that stage we began to knuckle down and play a bit of football. Up to that we seemed to be giving the ball away too easy. But once we went the man down, we realised we had to keep possession a little more. And it seems to have worked, though in the second half we had enough chances to win two or three games."

Donegal manager Declan Bonner

"I am bitterly disappointed. We got off to a good enough start again. I think the sending off of Oisín McConville just before half-time had a big bearing on the game. I felt after that

the referee was always going to try and even things up at the first opportunity.

We lost Martin Coll at centre back. Martin was playing well he was holding the centre for us. I thought the two sendings off were quite harsh. The first booking for Martin was crazy. I saw the incident before half-time, and so did the referee, yet he took no action.

Quite simply they ball was played in Martin rose to it and somebody ran on him, basically it was a third man tackle. I cannot understand why he was not booked at the time. It was not as if he did not see it. It happened right in front of him. He refereed the match sensibly for the first twenty five minutes. Once he sent Oisín McConville off he was only waiting to even things up.

At the end of the day the two goals were the turning point, they came at a terrible time. And while we recovered from the first one the second goal was a disaster. An absolute disaster."

..... The Marksman

Tony Blake: Forced out of the game through injury after just thirteen minutes, had very little to do in that period.

Neill McCreadie: Snuffed out danger man Oisín McConville. Not in the game to the same extent after that incident. A little disappointed in his negative approach to his marking job. Otherwise did well - 6

Damian Diver: A good first half not as effective in the second period - 6

Mark Crossan: Played well throughout went forward to land a massive point - 8

Noel Hegarty: Had a good first half at wing back. Played well when given free role second half. Only blemish on his performance was that he got caught going forward in the closing minutes when he might have been better holding the middle - 7

Martin Coll: A much improved performance on last week. Held the middle well. His power and strength was sorely missed when he got his marching

orders nine and a half minutes into the second half - 5

Shane Carr: Had a good first half. Not as conspicuous in the second half - 6

Jim Mc Guinness: Except for the first ten minutes never really figured in the game. Kicked one point from a free - 5

James Ruane: A very disappointing performance from the big Bundoran man. Substituted midway through second half - 4

Michael Hegarty: Played well. Won a lot of broken ball around midfield scored two good points. Not as effective after the break but it was still surprising to see him taken off - 7

Adrian Sweeney: Except for one or two darting runs never really got into the game. Allowed his marker Kieran McGeeney to much room to set up attack after attack in the second half. Scored one brilliant point - 5

John Gildea: Like Adrian Sweeney except for one point and one or two good fetches in the first

half never really got into the game - 4

Brian Roper: Looked lively in the first half. Suffered from lack of supply in second half - 7

Tony Boyle: Really back to his best form in the first half both from general play and from frees. Finished the game with a personal tally of five points - 8

Brendan Devenney: Found the going tough obviously seen as a major threat was closely marked. On the few occasions he got away from his marker found some body else covering him. Scored just one point - 5

Paul Callaghan: Introduced into the action after only thirteen minutes. Could not be faulted for the first goal and a little unfairly criticised for Marsden goal - 6

John Duffy: Introduced for Michael Hegarty with seventeen minutes to go. Never really got into the game - 4

Barry Ward: Introduced into the action with a little over ten minutes to go for James Ruane with limited success - 4

CHURCH & GENERAL NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE, DIVISION 1A

Great start for Donegal

DONEGAL	1-10
ARMAGH	0-6

Donegal got off to a great start at Ballybofey winning comfortably against a surprisingly poor Armagh side.

Donegal went into the game with concerns over the fitness of Jim McGuinness, Noel McGinley and Adrian Sweeney but all three players played important roles in carving out this seven point win, Sweeney particularly prominent at centre half forward where he scored two points.

Report: Michael Daly
Photos: Conor McGonagle

With Niall McCreeady and Damien Diver the stars of a very slick defence, Armagh rarely troubled Donegal apart from the first ten minutes when they did create several good openings and scored two points.

Raymond Sweeney at full back and Eamon Reddin to his left at corner back settled well after a nervous opening, both outplaying their immediate opponents long before the half time whistle sounded.

For up to an hour after the match the Armagh dressing room door remained closed as co-managers Brian Canavan and Brian McAlinden conducted their own post mortem on an Armagh effort which was so tame it beggared belief.

Armagh seemed to throw in the towel very early in the second half and lacked the usual drive and fire so typical of Orchard County sides. It was one of their most insipid displays ever.

Even so, credit must go to a rejigged Donegal side whose 'wannabe' senior stars showed Declan Bonner that they can fill the void left by the retirement of such notables as Manus Boyle.

A moderate game with some excellent scores taken by the winners, it was entertaining in the sense that some new and many previously untried Donegal players were given their chance to prove themselves.

The contribution of second half sub Michael Hegarty was one of the most pleasing aspects, Hegarty showing the poise of a veteran in his first senior inter county game for Donegal.

A low scoring first half saw Donegal recover from a two point deficit to go in two points ahead, 0-4 to 0-2 at half-time, one of the key moments coming after 16 minutes when Noel Hegarty lifted the Donegal support in a crowd of 3,000 with one of his dynamic upfield sorties from centre half back.

Hegarty started the move and involved John Gildea in a one two passing movement before slipping the ball to

Sweeney who tied the sides at 0-2 each with a well taken point.

Barry Ward lost the Armagh defence completely when he drove a 40 metre pass back the way from the Armagh endline, Jim McGuinness his intended target steaming forward to collect unmarked and shunt over a leading point. Brendan Devenney skipped past two tackles to hug the endline before fisting over a point that gave Donegal a double scores 0-4 to 0-2 half time lead.

Brian Roper was very fortunate not to suffer a serious injury late in the half when John Rafferty used both feet in a dangerous tackle which yielded a deserved yellow card.

Armagh's midfielders Burns and McGeeney never enjoyed any great dominance at midfield and their centre half back Gerard Reid came under increasing pressure as the game progressed with John Gildea coming more into it while Brendan Devenney, quiet by his standards, was to deliver the match deciding goal nine minutes into the second half.

Without their Crossmaglen players Armagh were in trouble long before Devenney's exquisite 20 metre left footed goal put the game beyond doubt.

That goal was packaged in the centre of a ten minute 1-4 scoring blitz from Donegal. Armagh had cut Donegal's lead to one point within a minute of the resumption after half time but then Donegal unloaded the telling scores.

Jim McGuinness, moved from the half forward line to midfield after 20 minutes, scored from a free but Armagh's best passing movement ended with a Martin McQuillan point to leave the minimum between the sides.

Donegal almost found the net when half-time sub Michael Hegarty crashed a shot off the angle between crossbar and upright, John Gildea following up to score a point.

But the goal that seemed certain to decide this game did arrive, John Gildea flicking a high centre down for Brendan Devenney. Devenney took the ball past two Armagh defenders and with a third closing him down he surprised the Armagh men by electing to hit the ball with his 'weaker' left foot.

Mark Campbell could do little with the shot, Armagh slumping after that goal as Donegal grew in confidence.

Adrian Sweeney used the ball well to find Michael Hegarty who had slipped unmarked upfield and the young Kilcar lad, playing his first senior game for the county, swung over a marvellous point, curling the ball inside the right upright from 35 metres.

A 44th minute long range point from another Donegal sub, Brian McLaughlin, suggested Declan Bonner has ample in reserve, even with 13 of his 1998 championship

panel either retired, injured or dropped.

Armagh showed little appetite for the contest thereafter, Donegal doing pretty much as they pleased with McCreeady and Diver particularly prominent when the Armagh forwards did threaten.

Jim McGuinness scored his third free and Adrian Sweeney used his right boot to slide over a nice point four minutes from the finish to confirm Donegal's superiority.

Donegal, fielding only eight from the side which lost the Ulster Championship final to Derry, made light of those changes with Muff's Eamon Reddin at corner back, Niall McCreeady and Barry Ward the best of the 'new' players brought into the Donegal team.

Armagh, with seven of their championship starting side, were without any of the Crossmaglen Rangers players who contest this Sunday's refixed Ulster Club championship semi-final, but some of the players they did use looked less than ready for the 'joys' of winter football.

Picking a man of the match is difficult, Niall McCreeady, Damien Diver, Jim McGuinness and Adrian Sweeney all doing particularly well while Eamon Reddin had a fine, no-nonsense game at corner back where little went past him. Michael Hegarty used his time on the field to make a case for first team selection but the overall display by the entire 18 used by Donegal was a welcome boost for the management as they face their next opponents, all Ireland champions Galway.

SCORERS:

Donegal: Brendan Devenney 1-1; Jim McGuinness 0-4, 3 frees; Adrian Sweeney 0-2; John Gildea, Michael Hegarty, Brian McLaughlin 0-1 each.

Armagh: Diarmaid Marsden 0-2, frees; John Rafferty, Martin McQuillan, Barry O'Hagen, Des Mackin 0-1 each.

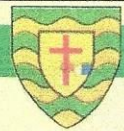
TEAMS:

Donegal: Tony Blake; Damien Diver, Raymond Sweeney, Eamon Reddin; Noel McGinley, Noel Hegarty, Niall McCreeady; James Ruane, Barry Ward; Jim McGuinness, Adrian Sweeney, John Gildea; Brian Roper, Brendan Devenney, Michael Ward. Subs: Michael Hegarty for M. Ward (h/t); Brian McLaughlin for B. Ward (42 mins); Shane Carr for McGinley (57 mins.)

Armagh: Mark Campbell; Enda McNulty, Mark McNeill, John Rafferty; Justin McNulty, Gerard Reid, Martin McQuillan; Jarlath Burns, Kieran McGeeney; Paddy McKeever, Barry O'Hagen, Paul McGrane; James Byrne, Des Mackin, Diarmaid Marsden. Subs: Kieran Hughes for McQuillan (44 mins); Peter Loughran for McKeever and Ger Houlahan for Byrne (both 47 mins).

Referee: Martin McBrien (Fermanagh).

CHURCH & GENERAL NFL, DIVISION 1A, 2ND ROUND



Donegal denied by injury time winner



REPORT BY
MICHAEL DALY

PHOTOS BY THOMAS
GALLAGHER

GALWAY..... 0-13
DONEGAL..... 0-12

Twice in 12 months Donegal have played in magnificent games only to end up on the losing side and that "is little consolation" team boss Declan Bonner admitted after the second of those cliff hangers went wrong for his young side.

In this year's NFL semi final against Offaly it was Donegal who ended up on the wrong side of the fence, losing by two points after one of the finest games seen in Croke Park in some time.

Last Sunday, in bitterly cold Tuam, the entertainment value was again red hot, Donegal and Galway providing some 10,000 spectators with a game to remember, 21 of 25 scores coming from play, Galway stealing victory with an injury time winner from the impish Derek Savage who admitted afterwards "I was running out of room, there was nothing for it so I hit it with my fist and thank God it went between the sticks".

Barely 30 seconds later Donegal's Jim McGuinness - not for the first time - was pulled, hauled and buffeted by three Galway players and by the time he went to deliver the pass (to a Galway man) he was not far short of punch drunk, but to the amazement of the massive Donegal contingent in Tuam there was no free. It did seem to this reporter that there was a better chance of Saddam Hussein making Bill Clinton's Christmas card list than Donegal getting frees in 'the scoring zone'.

Declan Bonner filled the tabloids after the game when he was asked to comment on that particular incident involving McGuinness. Meath football is renowned for being tough but the referee from the Royal County, Seamus McCormack, was giving Donegal few frees anywhere from 45 metres in.

Sour grapes you say? It was a marvellous game but, consider this.

Donegal were awarded one close range free in 61 minutes and they converted it, their 11 other scores, some of them rattling efforts, all coming from play.

Galway scored three of their 13 total from frees and it was their inside forwards, Derek Savage, Padraic Joyce and Niall Finnegan, all in their All Ireland final starting positions, who wreaked first quarter havoc that suggested Galway would stroll through this one.

But by half time Galway knew this was anything but a stroll. They led by a point, 0-7 to 0-6 and their struggling midfield had been realigned, Kevin Walsh making way for Fergal Gavin as Donegal's McGuinness and Ruane took control.

FALLON INTRODUCED

Midway through the second half Galway's problems were further underlined by the very necessary introduction of Ja Fallon, recently acclaimed as Player of the Year and Ray Silke who captained Galway to their All Ireland title. Starting with eight of their All Ireland side the fact that Galway finished with 11 of that September winning combination gives the very best indication of how good Donegal, a team rebuilding, were.

On a pitch that looked like it had seen too much football recently Galway's forwards started at a withering pace. But Donegal's defence gradually got clued into the pace of the inside trio - although by the finish they accounted for all but two of Galway's scores - while Adrian Sweeney and Brendan Devenney began to cause problems at the other end.

In a game where the sides were level seven times Donegal led by two points with two minutes to play and they appeared to have done enough to pull off the shock result of the day. However, Galway's residue of fitness from the All Ireland championship, their undoubted brilliance when going forward and the absence of tight marking Damien Diver in those final minutes proved crucial - Diver sustaining a serious jaw injury.

GREAT PACE

Exciting all through, the pace of the game belied its winter setting. Donegal in the initial stages overplayed the ball with short passes, Galway were more direct. However, by the third quarter, and in some instances long before that, Donegal had dispensed largely with the short game and were finding the quick ball to Adrian Sweeney a very effective ploy. Sweeney had one of his finest games yet in a no. 11 shirt while Jim McGuinness's workrate was phenomenal, putting a variety of Galway midfield combinations into the shade. James Ruane was at his best too, giving McGuinness excellent support.

Many others played superbly, Noel Hegarty a most obvious cornerstone for all that was good while Brian Roper's appetite for work was insatiable. Niall McCready, drawing the short straw in marking speed merchant Michael Donnellan, did very well, holding the Dunmore man to a point but Donnellan still presented problems throughout.

Galway led 0-4 to no score by the eight minute, Joyce, Finnegan, Joyce again and Savage on target. Declan Bonner ran onto the field to protest that John Gildea had been fouled but was rebuked by the Meath official.

A run from defence by Niall McCready almost resulted in a goal, McCready getting to the ball but his momentum brought him too far and the chance for a

goal was lost.

SERIES OF FOULS

A series of fouls on Donegal players, none of them dirty but all of them fouls went without a whistle. Donegal finally got off the blocks with a long ball ploy that saw Brendan Devenney score the first of two points within 60 seconds, the second one an excellent effort after he shrugged off two defenders.

Donegal were really moving well now and a scintillating move was pulled by referee McCormack as Adrian Sweeney broke through. But the momentum wasn't lost and three points from Jim McGuinness, two from play, put Donegal 0-5 to 0-4 in front by the 21st minute.

Galway displayed their class in attack as Joyce took a long ball from centre back Damien Mitchell. With a goal a real possibility the full forward tried a cheeky lob finish, his effort just going over the crossbar for a point. A poor pass from defence gave Michael Donnellan his only score over the hour, that point cancelled out when Adrian Sweeney took a point with his right foot, the pass coming all of 40 metres from a John Gildea sideline. Indeed, had the Dungloe forward been able to move to his left foot he might well have found the net but at that stage a score was important.

Well marked by Niall McCready, Donnellan did enough to create a score finished by Savage and with it Galway led 0-7 to 0-6 at half time.

Twice in the second minute Brian Roper's finish failed to match his wonderful build up work, the Ballyshannon man unlucky not to get something for his efforts.

Galway extended their lead with a 13 metre Joyce free. A sweeping move involving James Ruane, Noel Hegarty and John Gildea saw the latter point and one minute later Adrian Sweeney showed great power and poise as he levelled the game again.

WENT AHEAD

Inside 60 seconds Donegal went ahead, Brian Roper rising high to flick a McGuinness free towards Brendan Devenney who took his score well.

With 20 minutes remaining, Galway boss John O'Mahony made a telling change, Jarlath Fallon introduced for centre forward Shay Walsh. Galway won a questionable free on the 20 metre line, Niall McCready appearing to have made a text book tackle on Joyce, Niall Finnegan scoring the easy free.

Declan Bonner, clearly unhappy with some of the decisions from Walterstown referee Seamus McCormack, had his name noted as the game entered a phase of exceptional endeavour as the decibel level grew. Fast attacking moves, heroic last ditch defending and a parcel of scores from elegant forwards were hatched with mesmerising consistency from both teams. It was the essence of excitement and a sting in the tail was hardly surprising. A thriller in every sense.

Donegal lost Damien Diver after a clash with Sean O Donaill who was also hurt but continued. Brian Roper made a vital block as Derek Savage went for a score and play shifted quickly upfield but Donegal fired wide.

Moving into the final ten minutes 19-year-old Michael Hegarty put Donegal ahead but a free on Fallon saw Joyce score again from close range.

Galway's All Ireland winning captain Ray Silke came in for the final eight minutes but Donegal appeared to have made the break for victory when a superb Brian Roper score and another Devenney point gave Donegal a two point lead with four minutes left.

Two minutes later Fallon scored a great point and a sweeping move ended with a Joyce point to level the sides in the 60th minute.

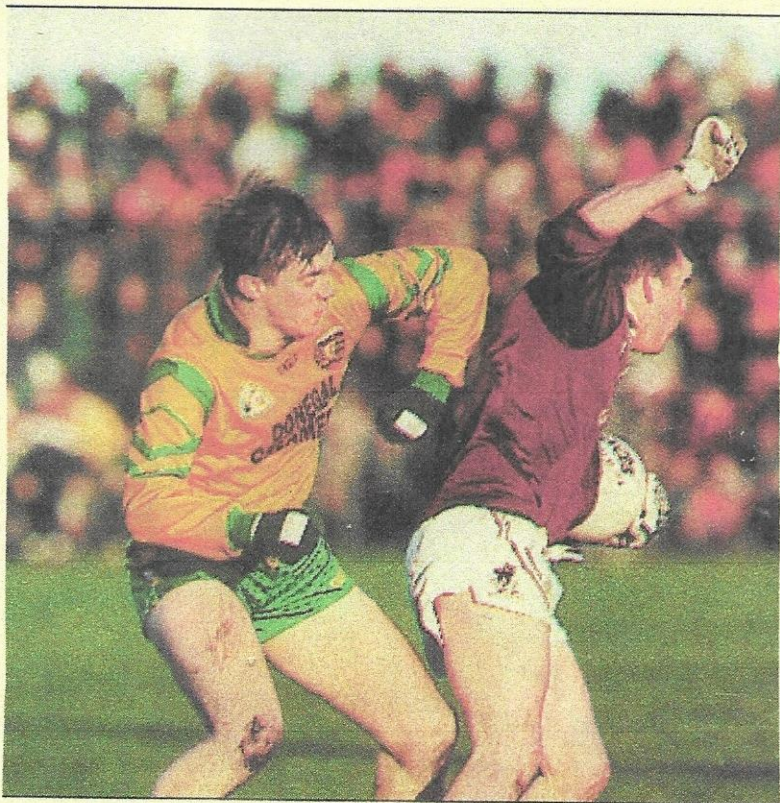
Louder than a crowd at a Boyzone concert, supporters locked into the final seconds with screams of abuse and encouragement. Players and fans aged together as Galway swooped upfield and stole the show and the points with an injury time winner finished from the fist by Derek Savage, Donegal unable to find a forward in those frantic final seconds.

RTE's Micheal O Muircheartaigh suggested to this reporter that despite defeat this game will have done Donegal a great deal of good. Certainly it was disappointing to lose in such circumstances after the heartache of late defeats by Offaly and Derry in key games this year but Donegal, with many new players, are showing the kind of promise that suggests they will make the latter stages of the league and go into the championship against Armagh in a very strong position.

GALWAY: Pat Comer; Richie Fahy, Gary Fahy, Brian Silke; Kevin Fallon, Damien Mitchell, Sean Og de Paor; Kevin Walsh, Sean O Donaill; Paul Clancy, Shay Walsh, Michael Donnellan 0-1; Derek Savage 0-3, Padraic Joyce 0-6, two frees, Niall Finnegan 0-2, one free. Subs: Fergal Gavin for K. Walsh (20 mins); Jarlath Fallon 0-1 for S. Walsh (40 mins.); Ray Silke for Mitchell (50 mins).

DONEGAL: Paul Callaghan; Damien Diver, Raymond Sweeney, Eamon Reddin; Noel McGinley, Noel Hegarty, Niall McCready; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness 0-3, one free; Michael Hegarty 0-1, Adrian Sweeney 0-2, Barry Ward; Brian Roper 0-1, John Gildea 0-1, Brendan Devenney 0-4. Subs: Ollie Reid for Diver (injd.) (46 mins.); Brian McLaughlin for Gildea (50 mins.); Shane Carr for M. Hegarty (58 mins.).

Referee: Seamus McCormack (Meath).



James Ruane working hard at midfield for Donegal against Galway.

CHURCH & GENERAL NFL, DIVISION 1A, ROUND 3



Relegation fears

DONEGAL 0-10
 CORK 1-8



REPORT:
Michael Daly
PHOTOS:
Conor McGonagle

After the promise shown against the All Ireland champions Galway, Donegal again lost by the minimum margin but this time there can be arguments as victory was no more than Cork deserved.

Playing poorly against a well motivated but unexceptional Cork outfit, Donegal were short the necessary guile to salvage something from this disappointing league encounter before 4,000 spectators at Ballybofey.

Although opportunities arose for a late point to level matters they were not taken and in the end Cork were worth their win, even if by just one point.

Cork's superior midfield and a generally less complicated approach to football on a soft surface made great sense and worked well most of the time. Donegal, by contrast, got little return from their short game and matters were not helped by some poor use of possession from frees and general play.

Added to that was an indifferent first outing

at senior level by referee Michael Convery. By half time his failure to spot some fouls and his penchant for punishing others left him with his ears ringing to the sound of cat calls and boos from the mainly Donegal supporters in attendance.

In the second half Donegal certainly did better from the referee, you couldn't help but wonder were they getting more than they should. Either way it was probably a game the Bellaghy official, who has done well at minor level, might do well to forget.

Refereeing apart the game was disappointing, only six of 18 points coming from play while the ref's whistle sounded for

59 frees.

Reduced to 14 men when Brian Roper was red carded for an off the ball offence Donegal huffed and puffed but it was all a bit haphazard by then.

Certainly the final few minutes added a sense of excitement, Donegal scoring a magnificent 45 from an acute angle through their captain Jim McGuinness. That score left them one point behind, 0-10 to Cork's 1-8 but a sense of panic invaded much of their final third football as Brendan Devenney fired wide from play while Brian McLaughlin, having done well to win a free then sent it wide. There was an earlier opportunity for a possible point from a free but the free was taken quickly and eventually yielded another angled free which went wide.

Had Donegal snatched a draw many of the failings made obvious by Cork's basic footballing style could have gone unnoticed in the euphoria of getting a draw.

However, the defeat, a second now in-a-row by just one point, puts Donegal in a demanding but not impossible position when the league resumes in February against Tyrone.

What seems fairly obvious now is that, good as the new crop of players are, in tight situations they really miss the cool heads of such as John Joe Doherty, Barry McGowan and Tony Boyle in particular.

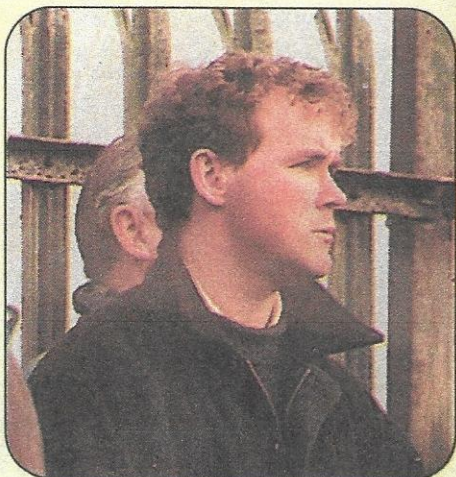
A lack of experience was palpable and with it a lack of scoring penetration. Brendan Devenney scored 2-2 on his Croke Park debut against Cork but this time out the Cork men were well aware of his love for taking on the man.

They double teamed him and generally pushed him away from goal. Supply became limited and more than Devenney suffered from that. Brian Roper might have had a goal near half time when his pace brought him clear but Cork also missed at least two goal scoring chances.

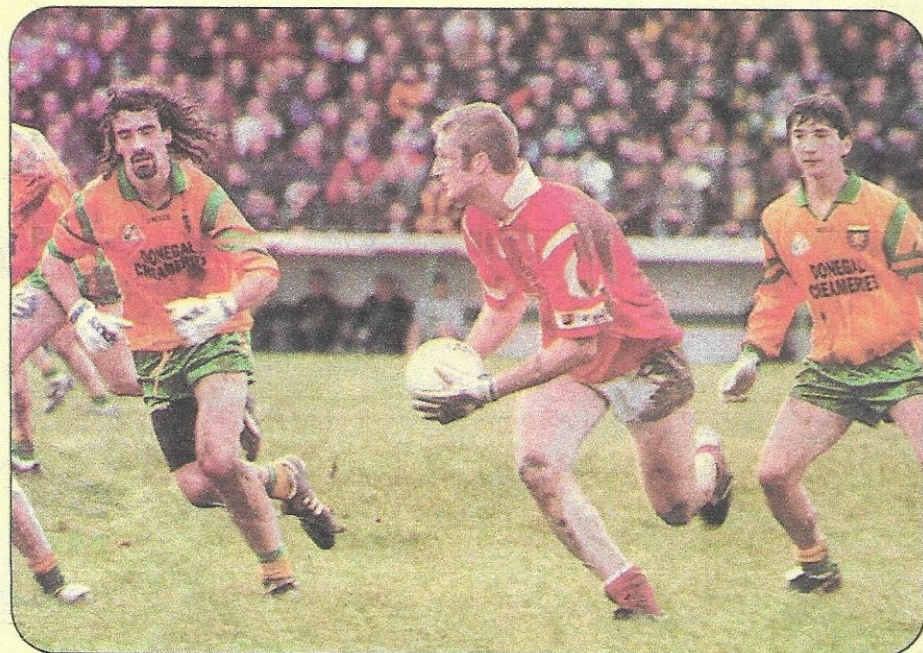
In defence Donegal's final line never looked comfortable but Niall McCreehy did do well on a variety of opponents. Noel Hegarty undid earlier good work by some wasteful passing in the second half, not like him to waste a ball.

Elsewhere there were 'bit' performances but in general no player stood out for Donegal with the exception of McCreehy and his best work was as a stopper. Creativity in general was scarce on the ground and Cork had big players up their central spine who kept the ball moving with Padraig O'Mahoney and Joe Kavanagh impressive.

Kavanagh hit a sublime long ball with his first touch of the ball. The weighted pass hung perfectly and Alan O'Regan slipped past two tackles before blasting a game turning goal to the Donegal net -- and that just ten seconds into the second half. Cork went ahead 1-5 to 0-7 with that goal and Donegal never saw the lead again although they did get on level terms with a Brendan Devenney free two



Interested spectator... The injured Tony Boyle can only watch from the wings.



Cork's Nicholas Murphy in possession with Jim McGuinness and Michael Hegarty close by.

minutes into the second half.

The impressive Pdraig O'Mahoney restored Cork's lead from a Kavanagh pass and the Rebels remained in front to the finish.

Donegal led by two points at half time and were lucky to be in front 0-7 to 0-5 as Cork were the better team with chances going wide on six occasions when scores looked on.

Donegal looked good in the early stages, they led 0-4 to 0-2 after 17 minutes but Cork should have had a goal on 9 minutes, O'Regan and Philip Clifford getting in each others way before O'Regan blasted a real chance well wide.

Donegal too had their moments. Leading by double scores when Brian McLaughlin kicked their first point from play after 21 minutes they finally unlocked the Cork defence with brilliant initiative shown by one player in particular.

Brian Roper, just back from Holland for this game, torched the Cork defence as he raided down the right wing but unluckily his final shot with just the keeper to beat, sailed

over the bar with a goal at his mercy.

Donegal were caught cold as the second half started and new man Kavanagh did the damage, his perfect pass and O'Regan's finish to the net turning this game on it's head.

"It was a suicidal goal to give away and we just couldn't get back into it even though the scores between the teams were never that far apart," Donegal boss Declan Bonner said and he added that at times his side had played "stupid football".

With a superb point from a Jim McGuinness 45 taking Donegal to within a point with three minutes left the mainly Donegal support in a crowd of 4,000 was willing Donegal on to a levelling score.

But the lack of experience told in those final three minutes with chances missed by Donegal.

Two defeats in-a-row by just one point suggests Donegal are not all that far off the pace but it does appear that the new players can only do so much and the return of experienced players from injury is something

that will be looked and hoped for by the resumption of the league on February 14th next.

DONEGAL: Tony Blake; Mark Crossan, Raymond Sweeney, Eamon Reddin; Niall McCready, Noel Hegarty, Noel McGinley; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness 0-5, 4 frees one 45; Michael Hegarty, Adrian Sweeney, Brian McLaughlin 0-1; Brian Roper 0-1, Barry Ward, Brendan Devenney 0-3, 3 frees. Subs: John Gildea for Ruane, inj. (h/t); Shane Carr for A. Sweeney (42 mins); Daireann Gibson for Ward (55 mins).

CORK: Michael Maguire; Michael O'Donovan, Ronan McCarthy, Anthony Lynch; Neil McCarthy, Owen Sexton, Martin Cronin; Nicholas Murphy, Liam Honohan 0-2; Brendan Walsh, Pdraig O'Mahoney 0-5, four frees, Brendan O'Sullivan; Philip Clifford, Colin Crowley, Alan O'Regan 1-0. Subs: Fachtina Collins (0-1) for Walsh (27 mins.); Joe Kavanagh for O'Sullivan (h/t); M. O'Donovan for Sexton (60 mins).

Referee: Michael Convery (Derry).



Great start but Donegal fade away

TYRONE 0-12
DONEGAL 0-11

Donegal led by five points to nil after ten minutes, Devenney, Ollie Reid, McGuinness (frees) and Duffy (two frees) giving them that advantage but they might (should) have had a goal after just 60 seconds, writes Michael Daly

The high ball - not the only one - caused Finbar McConnell some trouble and as it came back off the woodwork John Duffy was lurking but McConnell made amends and covered the danger.

At this stage James Ruane and Jim McGuinness were giving a commanding performance with McGuinness doing some great work. But Tyrone's Pascal Canavan and Ciaran McBride started to make an impact. McBride in particular proving useful in the second quarter where Tyrone almost by stealth whipped over five points without reply to level the sides by the 20th minute.

Ciaran Loughran and two each from the now impressive Cush and (Peter) Canavan undid Donegal's early lead and this against a very stiff breeze blowing in Donegal's favour.

By half time Donegal had re-established a two point lead with two points from Jim McGuinness and one superb individual effort from a very keen Brendan Devenney. Tony Boyle, who had spent the final ten minutes of the half warming up, was expected to come on at half time but neither side made any changes as Tyrone took advantage of the breeze for the second half.

Within 20 seconds Donegal's lead was down to one point, 0-8 to 0-7, Ciaran Loughran, a joiner by

trade, carving Donegal open for a fine score. But Donegal proved stubborn in their resistance, Barry Ward scoring an excellent point, Tyrone though were level for a second time, Canavan (free) and Adrian Cush with a fine point from the wing making it 0-9 each with 38 minutes played.

BOYLE COMES ON

John Duffy was replaced by Tony Boyle on 39 minutes, and again Brendan Devenney led by example with another fine point to edge the visitors ahead 0-10 to 0-9. The introduction of the experienced Gerard Cavan for hard working Niall McSorley gave an indication of Tyrone's thinking as the game turned into the final quarter. A bad miss from a free by Boyle gave Tyrone breathing space and Ciaran McBride hoisted a splendid point to level it once again.

With six minutes remaining Tyrone hit the front for the first time, Cush converting from a free.

Two minutes from the end of normal time Brendan Devenney appeared to have opened a path to goal and as he pulled the trigger there seemed little chance that his shot would go anywhere but the net. But, out of nowhere came The Rock's Ciaran Gourley to make a most magnificent block, the ball hammering off his leg as he slid in to block Devenney's rasping drive.

COUNTER ATTACK

Tyrone countered, simple direct passing leading to possession for Peter Canavan who put the 7,000 Healy Park crowd in full voice as he hit the score of the day, a left footed point, high and centre between

the Donegal posts.

Donegal continued to press, looking now for a goal. Tony Boyle went close, his shot brilliantly saved by McConnell.

Despite 7 minutes 40 seconds injury time (some of it due to an injury sustained by Ollie Reid who was stretchered off the field), Donegal were unable to make significant inroads on a now packed Tyrone defence, Boyle pointing a free and in the final moments Adrian Sweeney firing for a point but his effort going well wide.

Jim McGuinness and Brendan Devenney were Donegal's best players, Damien Diver and Ollie Reid did some good work also. Adrian Cush and Peter Canavan were Tyrone's top two with a very strong supporting cast where McGleenan, Gourley, Gormley and Loughran rarely put a foot wrong.

TYRONE: Finbar McConnell; Paul Devlin, Chris Lawn, Paul McGurk; Brian Doohar, Colin Holmes, Ciaran Gourley; Pascal Canavan, Ciaran McBride 0-1; Niall McSorley, Eoin Gormley, Ciaran Loughran 0-2; Adrian Cush 0-4, 2 frees, Mattie McGleenan 0-1, Peter Canavan 0-4, 3 frees. Subs: Gerard Cavan for McSorley (40 mins.).

DONEGAL: Paul Callaghan; Niall McCready, Eamon Reddin, Mark Crossan; Ollie Reid 0-1, Noel Hegarty, Damien Diver; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness 0-3, all frees; Brian Roper, Adrian Sweeney, Barry Ward 0-1; John Duffy 0-2, two frees, Brian McLoughlin, Brendan Devenney 0-3. Subs: Tony Boyle 0-1, free for Duffy (39 mins); Shane Carr for Ruane (43 mins); Noel McGinley for Reid, (injd. 50 mins.)

Referee: Brian Crowe (Cavan).

Democrat Sport

Match arrangements

Donegal v Dublin, Fr. Tierney Park, Ballyshannon

Sunday 28th February, 1999

- Throw-in at 3.00 p.m.
- Please come early and co-operate with stewards.
- Entry v stiles at main entrance. Reserved stiles for students and OAPs.
- Admission £5.
- Full match programme on sale.

DIVISION 1A TABLE

	P.	W.	D.	L.	For	Ag.	Pts.
Dublin	4	3	1	0	4-59	3-39	7
Cork	4	3	1	0	5-40	3-36	7
Armagh	4	2	1	1	5-35	3-41	5
Galway	4	2	0	2	8-43	4-38	4
Tyrone	4	1	2	1	2-37	3-39	4
Donegal	4	1	0	3	1-43	1-39	2
Offaly	4	0	3	1	2-38	4-39	2
Leitrim	4	0	1	3	4-28	10-51	1

Games to come:

Feb. 28th: Donegal v Dublin; Galway v Tyrone; Leitrim v Offaly; Cork v Armagh.

Mar. 14: Offaly v Donegal; Dublin v Galway; Tyrone v Cork; Armagh v Leitrim.

Mar. 28: Donegal v Leitrim; Galway v Offaly; Cork v Dublin; Armagh v Tyrone.

How they have fared so far

Round 1

Dublin 1-15, Tyrone 1-9

Scorers - Ciaran Whelan 1-2, Declan Darcy 0-5, Ray Cosgrove 0-3, Mick O'Keeffe 0-2, Dessie Farrell 0-2, Jim Gavin 0-1.

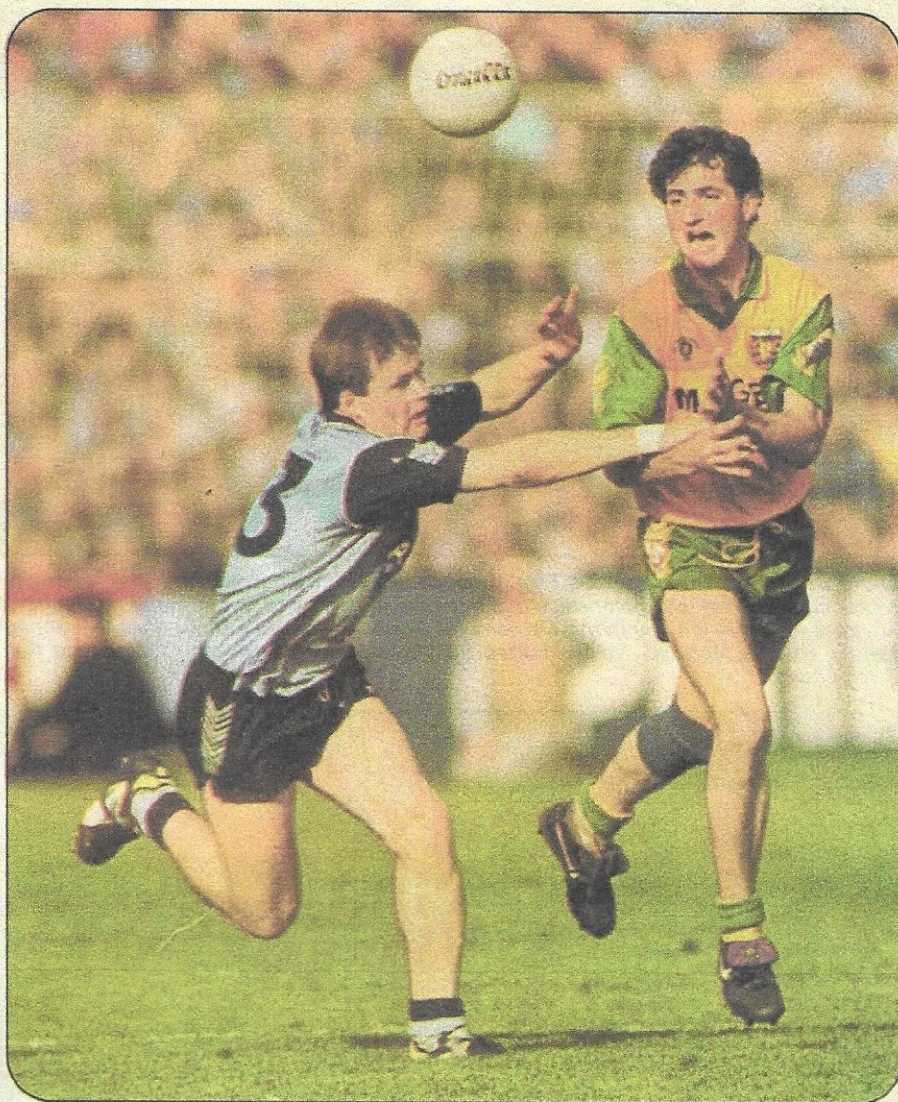
Donegal 1-10, Armagh 0-6

Scorers: Brendan Devenney 1-1, Jim McGuinness 0-4, Adrian Sweeney 0-2, John Gildea 0-1, Michael Hegarty 0-1, Brian McLaughlin 0-1.

Round 2

Armagh 1-11, Dublin 0-14

Scorers: Jim Gavin 0-5, Brian Stynes 0-3, Ray



Noel Hegarty and Dessie Farrell who are destined to renew rivalry on Sunday.

Cosgrove 0-2, Ciaran Whelan 0-1, Mick O'Keeffe 0-1, Ian Roberston 0-1, Declan Darcy 0-1.

Galway 0-12, Donegal 0-12

Scorers: Brendan Devenney 0-4, Jim McGuinness 0-3, Adrian Sweeney 0-2, Brian Roper 0-1, John Gildea 0-1, Michael Hegarty 0-1.

Round 3

Offaly 0-13, Dublin 2-11

Scorers: Dessie Farrell 1-3, Ciaran Whelan 1-0, Jim Gavin 0-2, Senan Connell 0-2, Enda Sheehy 0-1, Declan Darcy 0-1, Brian Stynes 0-1, Brendan O'Brien 0-1.

Donegal 0-10, Cork 1-8

Scorers: Jim McGuinness 0-5, Brendan Devenney

0-3, Brian McLaughlin 0-1, Brian Roper 0-1.

Round 4:

Dublin 1-19, Leitrim 0-6

Scorers: Brian Stynes 0-6, Dessie Farrell 1-. Ciaran Whelan 0-3, Jim Gavin 0-3, Declan Darcy 0-2, Paul Curran 0-1, Niall O'Donoghue 0-1, Eamon Crennan 0-1.

Tyrone 0-12, Donegal 0-11

Jim McGuinness 0-3, Brendan Devenney 0-3, John Duffy 0-2, Ollie Reid 0-1, Barry Ward 0-1, Tony Boyle 0-1.

Donegal have scored 1-43 and conceded 1-39, while Dublin have scored 4-59 and conceded 2-39.

Donegal halt Dubs revival

DONEGAL..... 1-8
DUBLIN..... 0-9
BALLYSHANNON was just the place to be yesterday afternoon if you wanted to see some early-season preconceptions shattered.

Preconception No 1: the Dubs are back. On this evidence, there is still plenty of work ahead for Tom Carr & Co as they endeavour to remould Dublin into a serious championship force this summer.

Preconception No 2: Donegal, after all the promise of last season, are on the slippery slope. Not so fast; yesterday's crucial two-point victory suggests that rumours of their demise have been greatly exaggerated.

On a day of surprises in Division 1A of the Church & General National Football League, this result coupled with the outcomes in Cork and Galway mean that it is suddenly all play for.

Beforehand throw-in time, it appeared as if Dublin and Cork were heading serenely towards the play-offs. Now, nothing can be taken for granted.

BONNER GLAD

One of the three quarter-final places may ultimately prove beyond Donegal, but manager Declan Bonner was simply glad to see his charges win again after three consecutive one-point league defeats.

"A lot of people have us written off already, but we knew within the camp that there's more in this side," said Bonner. "Dublin were extremely fit and organised, but we needed the points more badly."

His opposite number did not question Dublin's hunger but he was



perturbed by a lacklustre attacking display. "When you replace three forwards it is a concern. We had too many non-performers and we didn't get a result from the forward line, because we had a fair deal of possession," Carr reflected.

So where did Donegal win it? You can list a variety of reasons — the timing of Brian Roper's goal shortly before half-time, which ensured the home side were on level terms at the break having played against the elements; two vital saves from 'keeper Tony Blake at a time when Dublin were pressing early in the second half; or an effervescent performance from corner-forward Brendan Devenney.

But it all boils down to one incapable fact: when the game was there to be won, in the 28th minute, Donegal grabbed it by the throat. For that alone, their victory was deserved.

For Dublin, this defeat could have raised more questions than answers. The full-back line, as yet, still lacks the authority that the manager must crave. Shane Ryan, the gifted footballer and made some telling last-ditch interceptions, but he still looks to be coming to terms with the positional requirements of the full back.

The half-backs were generally solid but midfield ceded control to Jimmy McGuinness in the fourth quarter. And up front, only Dessie Farrell rose above the average.

From a Donegal perspective, yesterday's game also marked the full

return of John Joe Doherty and Tony Boyle. Both have been out for several months and their ring-rustiness showed at times. Both were replaced during the second half but Declan Bonner will be glad to have them back.

Some 7,000 fans, including many Dubs, had converged on Fr Tierney Park and they saw the visitors get quickly into their stride with points from Declan Darcy (free) and Stynes. But with the elements in their favour, they never established the kind of lead required.

And so Dublin led by 0-5 to 0-3 when 'wee' Roper pounced for the only goal in the 28th minute. Noel Hegarty's astute pass fed Brian McLaughlin near the end-line, and his low centre was met by Roper who drove the ball under David Byrne's body.

O'Donoghue restored parity before the interval but Dublin still looked on shaky enough terrain.

On the resumption they were again quickly out of the traps. What followed played a pivotal role in the eventual outcome. After 35 seconds, O'Donoghue released Enda Sheehy on the charge but his point-blank effort was superbly repulsed by Blake.

Perhaps Sheehy should have scored; certainly, Cosgrove should not have dragged the rebound wide.

Farrell pointed a free and then another Dublin goal chance came and went after 39 minutes. Robertson's pass picked out Farrell, the Dublin skipper left Doherty trailing in his wake but Blake raced out to save.

REVIVAL

The revival began with a 42nd minute point from Adrian Sweeney, who bustled past Stynes to kick a levelling score.

And in the closing ten minutes, Donegal upped the ante. John Duffy converted a free, Hegarty kicked a monster free from over 50 yards, and Roper put three points between the sides. Dublin needed a goal, but all they got was an injury time free converted by Farrell. That, and a salutary lesson.

MAN OF THE MATCH — Brendan Devenney (Donegal).

SCORERS — Donegal: B Roper 1-1, T Boyle 0-2f, J McGuinness, A Sweeney, B Devenney 0-1 each, J Duffy, N Hegarty 0-1f each. Dublin: D Farrell 0-3 (2f), B Stynes 0-2, D Darcy 0-2f, N O'Donoghue, K Galvin 0-1 each.

DONEGAL — T Blake; D Diver, JJ Doherty, N McGinley; O Reid, N Hegarty, N McCreeady, J Ruane, J McGuinness; B Roper, A Sweeney, B Ward; B Devenney, T Boyle, B McLaughlin. Subs: J Duffy for Boyle 41 mins, M Crossan for Doherty 43, P Gillespie for McLaughlin 53.

DUBLIN — D Byrne; L Walsh, S Ryan, T Lynch; P Croft, P Curran, K Galvin; E Sheehy, C Whelan; S Connell, D Darcy, B Stynes; R Cosgrove, D Farrell, N O'Donoghue. Subs: I Robertson for Connell 30, J Sherlock for O'Donoghue 45, M O'Keefe for Cosgrove 54. REF — M McBrien (Fermanagh).

THE GAME: NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE, DIV. 1A



Donegal stunned by late Offaly goal

Offaly1-7
Donegal0-8

A stunning Vinny Claffey goal 59 minutes and 50 seconds into this, at all times entertaining contest, served to break Donegal hearts at Tullamore's O'Connor Park on Sunday.

Claffey, contained to a point until that stage always looked capable of a major score and the momentum gained by an all dominant Offaly in the second half finally paid dividends when the stylish Doon clubman slipped through the Donegal defence to crack home a top quality goal.

The sides were level 0-7 each going into the final seconds of the game. They had been joined at the hip for much of the previous hour, parity enjoyed after 14 minutes (0-3 each), 21 minutes (0-4 each) and 50 minutes (0-7 each).

Unable to score from the 31st to the 62nd minute, Donegal were at their best in the first half. A dry pitch, little or no wind and two teams whose previous most recent meeting at Croke Park was a spectacle, got quickly down to business.

It was entertaining, end to end football. Donegal using the short ball, Offaly opting for the long and the longer ball! Contrasting styles made for interesting viewing.

John Duffy, from a free and Brian Roper from play gave Donegal a confident start. Tony Boyle took a Jim McGuinness high centre and turned in one movement to hit a memorable left foot point.

Connolly (two frees) and Claffey points, had Offaly back level and O'Brien and

Sweeney traded points. Shortly after Duffy converted a difficult angled free Brian Roper made a break but his half chance for a goal was smothered by Finbar Cullen while at the other end Grennan missed a scoring chance for Offaly. Donegal led 0-6 to 0-4 at half time. Adrian Sweeney yellow carded earlier, was apparently going for an early shower after a head high tackle, but referee Prior had a rethink and decided that the challenge looked worse than it actually was.

In the second half, despite seeing his goal bound effort cleared off the line, John Duffy was still in scoring mode, from a 30 metre free which put his side three points ahead with 22 minutes to play.

Two long range Ciaran McManus frees and a Donie Ryan point after a mistake by James Ruane, brought the sides level by the 50th minute.

Offaly missed a relatively easy free, Claffey fouled and Connolly off target but right at the finish Claffey made no mistake, scoring the match winning goal.

Donegal's Tony Boyle pointed a free but time caught up with Donegal, another disappointing defeat from a game where they might have salvaged a league point.

OFFALY: Padraig Kelly; Cathal Daly, John Ryan, David Foley; John Kenny, Finbar Cullen, Tom Coffey; Paul Mulvihill, Ciaran McManus 0-2, f,45; Colm Quinn, Bernard O'Brien 0-1, Vinny Claffey 1-1; Peter Brady, Sean Grennan, David Connolly 0-2, frees. Subs: Ronan Mooney for Mulvihill



A magnificent catch as Jim McGuinness wins the high ball in Tullamore.

(inj.); Pascal Kelleghan for Mooney; Donie Ryan 0-1 for Quinn

DONEGAL: Paul Callaghan; Damien Diver, John Joe Doherty, Noel McGinley; Raymond Sweeney, Ollie Reid, Niall McCready; Jim McGuinness, James Ruane; Brian Roper 0-1, Adrian Sweeney, Barry Ward; Brendan Devenney, Tony Boyle 0-4, 3 frees., John Duffy 0-3. Subs: Brian McLaughlin for Ward; Noel Hegarty for R Sweeney; Pauric Gillespie for Devenney.

Referee: Seamus Prior (Leitrim)



Young Donegal supporters pictured at the match

Bonniers men produce late revival

Donegal retain their Div. 1 status

Donegal 2 - 11

Leitrim 1 - 9

It was relief all round at Sean MacCumhaill Park on Sunday evening as Donegal emerged victorious over Leitrim in the last throw of their National football league dice for the season.

There was relief that Donegal had come back from three points down midway through the second half when all seemed lost to win with five points to spare.

Tom Comack
reports

Photographs:
Thomas Gallagher

There was relief that the five point winning target set by the mathematicians for Declan Bonner's side to retain their divisional status was achieved on what was described as 'Calculator Sunday'.

With the driving wind and rain threatening to turn the tie into a lottery and Sean MacCumhaill Park into a mud bath, Donegal raced into a 1-3 to 0-0 lead in the opening fourteen minutes. Such was the home-sides superiority in the opening exchanges, a 4-3 to 0-0 score sheet by the midway mark of

the first half, would have been in no way flattering.

Declan Bonner's side threatened to run riot against a Leitrim side struggling to come to terms with the pace and power of their hosts.

Jim McGuinness and John Duffy combined to set up Brendan Devenney, who fisted over Donegal's opening point on six minutes. John Duffy was the architect once more with Tony Boyle providing the finishing touch for Donegal's second point. The Donegal attack were really buzzing at this stage, making little of the heavy going to stretch the Leitrim defence to the limit.

Brendan Devenney pounced for his first goal on eleven minutes, sent clear by Adrian Sweeney. Two minutes later Devenney and Sweeney were the engineers as Boyle split the town end

post for another point, the Dungloe man having seconds earlier blazed wide of the advancing Gareth Phelan in the Leitrim goals.

But not for the first time this season Donegal lost their way and their focus. And if the first quarter belonged to Donegal, it was all Leitrim in the second fifteen minutes.

Pat Farrell and Aidan Rooney, with two points each, and one each from Jason Ward and Donal Brennan and Leitrim were on level terms as the half-time whistle beckoned. Tony Boyle restored the Donegal lead in injury time to leave it Donegal 0-7 Leitrim 0-6 at the break.

Within a minute of the resumption, Donal Brennan had gained parity for the Connacht men. But once more Brendan Devenney struck, restoring the margin to three points with a truly brilliant individual goal giving Gareth Phelan no chance from twenty metres.

The home side's advantage was short lived, an Aidan Rooney converted penalty bringing the sides level for the third time. Drawing inspiration from Rooney's strike, the visitors pulled two points clear, Colin McGlynn and Pat Farrell splitting the posts.

Backs to the wall, staring demotion in the face, Donegal found the character and spirit which had deserted them for most of their league campaign to haul themselves back into a game that was drifting away.

Man of the match Brendan Devenney getting the cavalry charge underway with a delightful point. Tony Boyle then converted a close-in free, to bring the sides level with ten minutes remaining.

Two massive long-range points from Jim McGuinness and Adrian Sweeney set Donegal on the road to victory. Tony Boyle, Noel Hegarty and Shane Carr ending the Leitrim challenge with a further three points, Donegal finishing off as they started in clinical fashion.

With Galway beating Offaly down in Balinasloe there was no need for the calculators after all. Donegal's much superior score average over Offaly ensured it was very much mission accomplished for under pressure Declan Bonner and his charges.

Scorers Donegal:
Brendan Devenney (2-2), Tony Boyle (0-5,3F), Jim McGuinness (0-1), Adrian Sweeney (0-1), Noel Hegarty (0-1), Shane Carr (0-1).

Leitrim: Pat Farrell (0-3,2F), Aidan Rooney (1-1), Jason Ward (0-2), Donal Brennan (0-2), Colin McGlynn (0-1).

Donegal: Tony Blake; Damian Diver, Eamonn Reddan, Noel McGinley; Ollie Reid, Noel Hegarty, Niall McCreadie; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness; John Duffy, Adrian Sweeney, Barry Ward; Brian Roper, Tony Boyle, Brendan Devenney; Subs: Mark Crossan for O.Reid; Shane Carr for B. Ward; Brian McLaughlin for B. Roper;

Leitrim: Gareth Phelan; James Phelan Seamus Quinn, Pdraigh Flynn; Colin Regan, Ciaran Murray, Gareth Foley; Jason Ward, Christopher Carroll; Pat Farrell, David McNulty, Adrian Charles; Brendan McGuickian, Colin McGlynn, Aidan Rooney; Subs: Fintan McBrien for G. Phelan; Donal Brennan for F. McBrien inj; Aengus Fee for P. Flynn.

Referee Pat O'Toole,
Longford