

# 2000

**Team Manager: Declan Bonner**

## **Dr. Mc Kenna Cup.**

1	27 <sup>th</sup> Feb	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	0-14	Antrim	0-10
2	5 <sup>th</sup> March	Qtr-final Celtic Park	Derry	2-11	Donegal	1-13

Winners:

## **Ulster Senior Football Championship**

3	11 <sup>th</sup> June	Ballybofey	Donegal	0-13	Fermanagh	1-12
	16 <sup>th</sup> July	Ulster Final:	Armagh	1-12	Derry	1-11
	20 <sup>th</sup> Aug	All Ireland Semi-final:	Kerry	2-11	Armagh	2-11
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept.	All Ireland Semi-final:	Kerry	2-15	Armagh	1-15 act.
	27 <sup>th</sup> Aug	All Ireland Semi-final:	Galway	0-15	Kildare	2-06
	24 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	All Ireland Final:	Kerry	0-14	Galway	0-14
	7 <sup>th</sup> Oct.	All Ireland Final:	Kerry	0-17	Galway	0-10

## **National Football League. – 1999/2000      Allianz NFL Division 1A**

4	24 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1999	Athletic Grounds	Armagh	0-09	Donegal	0-10
5	14 <sup>th</sup> Nov 1999	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	0-07	Galway	0-14
6	28 <sup>th</sup> Nov 1999	Páirc Uí Chaoimh	Cork	0-07	Donegal	2-12
7	13 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2000	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	0-10	Tyrone	0-10
8	5 <sup>th</sup> March	Parnell Park	Dublin	1-11	Donegal	0-11
9	26 <sup>th</sup> March	Fr. Tierney Park	Donegal	0-14	Kerry	2-16
10	9 <sup>th</sup> April	Dr. Hyde Park	Roscommon	0-14	Donegal	1-09

Semi-final:

Semi-final:

**Final:** Derry 1-08 Meath 0-09

Dr. McKenna Cup

# Donegal prove too good for Antrim

Donegal . . . . . 0-14 Antrim . . . . . 0-10

**DONEGAL HAD** a confidence boosting win in their preliminary round Dr. McKenna Cup clash with Antrim to earn a place in the first round proper against Derry.

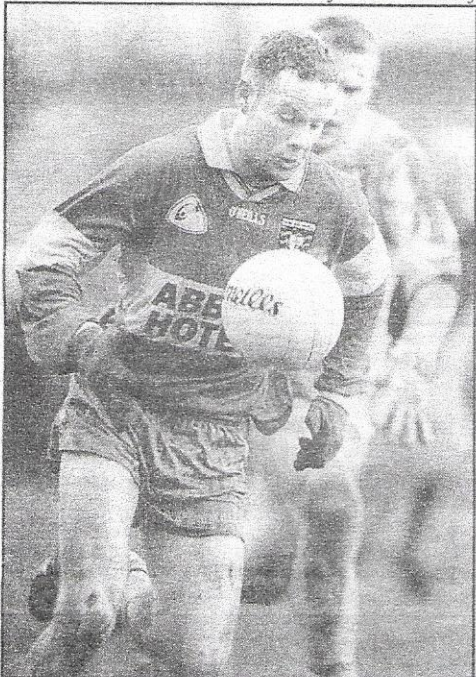
Fielding ten of his first choice players Declan Bonner's side won this tie, a little more easier than the final score line suggests. Three late Antrim points serving only to put a slightly better gloss on the final score sheet.

**Atrocious conditions**

Adapting better to the atrocious conditions Donegal opened as if they were going to brush

the Antrim challenge aside, firing over four points in the opening six minutes - James Gallagher, Brendan Devenney, Martin Caulfield and Brian McLaughlin all finding the target.

However, getting to grips with the heavy going the visitors, who were also in experimental mode, took control in the middle third of the half, registering five unanswered points, to edge into a one point lead by the twenty



Donegal forward Johnny McCafferty.

Tom Comack reports from Sean MacCumhaill's Park

Photograph: Thomas Gallagher

minute mark, midfielders Peter McCann and Sheeny McQuillan the scorers, McCann with two from play and McQuillan hitting three long range frees.

James Gallagher polished off a good three man move to tie up the match, before on the stroke of half-time full Adrian Sweeney restored the home side's advantage. First onto a long through ball the Dungloe man collected in front of goals turned and kicked, to send his side in at half-time 0-6 to Antrim's 0-5.

The opening exchanges of the second half were evenly contested with Martin Caulfield and Brendan Devenney trading points with Ronan Hamill and John Barr.

With the game delicately poised, Donegal found another gear. Brendan Devenney who was revelling in his new found freedom at centre forward, hit three fabulous points, Adrian Sweeney landed two, while James Gallagher chipped in with one. The Gweedore man made light of the heavy underfoot conditions to split the town end posts from forty metres for his side's only score from a free.

With Donegal seven points clear and pulling up, Antrim dangerman Kevin Madden pointed three frees in the closing three minutes to put a

look of respectability on the score sheet.

**Useful workout**

All in all this proved a useful workout for Donegal ahead of their make or break league tie with Dublin on Sunday next.

Declan Bonner and his back room team of Charlie Mulgrew and Sean Clerkin must be particularly pleased with a number of their fringe players who turned in useful performances.

Of the new boys Jonathan Scanlon and Martin Madden. Caulfield too was very busy, and he capped a fine performance with three well taken points.

On the evidence of this showing both Scanlon and Caulfield will have given the management food for thought, and certainly extra options in the coming weeks.

Brendan Devenney also looked comfortable at the hub of the attack, and must definitely be an option in the troublesome centre forward berth.

On the down side the fact they went twenty minutes without a score in the first half is an obvious cause for concern.

Donegal now play Derry in the next round of the Dr. McKenna Cup

on Sunday week the 12th. of March in Celtic Park.

**Donegal:** Tony Blake (St. Eunan's); Jonathan Scanlon (St. Eunan's, Raymond Sweeney (Dungloe), Damian Diver (Ardara); Michael Gurn (Aodh Ruadh), Eamonn Reddan (Muff), Niall McCreadie (Aodh Ruadh); James Ruane (Bundoran), John Gildea (Naomh Conall); J a m e s Gallagher (Gweedore) (0-3, 1F), Brendan Devenney (St. Eunan's) (0-5), Brian McLaughlin (St. Michael's) (0-1); Michael Hegarty (Kilcar), Adrian Sweeney (0-2) (Dungloe), Martin Caulfield (Na Rossa) (0-3); Subs: Johnny McCafferty (Termon) for M. Hegarty; Eamonn Doherty (Ardara) for D. Diver 50 min. inj. Don Monaghan (Four Master's for E. Reddan);

**Antrim** Paul Brogan, Brendan Elliot, Martin Mulholland, Anto Finnegan; Gearoid Adams, John Kelly, Anthony McGrath; Sheeny McQuillan (0-3F); Peter McCann (0-2); Con Coleman, John Barr (0-1), Eoin Doherty; Eamonn McCann, Ronan Hamill (0-1), Kevin Madden (0-3 F); Subs: Kevin Doyle for S. McQuillan inj. 45 min; Enda McKenna for C. Coleman 50 min.; Conor McKearney for Brendan Elliot 53 min.;

Dr. McKenna Cup:

# Controversial finish, Derry player hospitalised

**DES McCALLION reports from Celtic Park**

**Photographs by LORCAN DOHERTY**

**DERRY .....2-11**

**DONEGAL .....1-13**

Derry progressed to the semi-final of the Dr. McKenna Cup at Celtic Park on Sunday after a hard fought one point victory over Donegal. In a game which was closely contested, neither side found top gear in what was an entertaining affair.

The only disappointing factor was the hospitalising of Derry wing forward, Benny Murray, six minutes from time. The player body checked Jim McGuinness as he closed in on goal, and while Donegal were correctly awarded a free, it was surprising that referee Michael Hughes didn't take any action against the Donegal man. McGuinness clearly landed on the Derry man with a right hook. Murray was concussed, stretchered off and taken to hospital following the incident.

## DISAPPOINTING

It was the only disappointing aspect to the referee's performance. Mr. Hughes had a fine game throughout, but he was very close to the Murray-McGuinness incident and took no action.

Following the incident, McGuinness retreated back

outfield and rarely threatened in the closing minutes. He was fortunate to finish the game on the field of play, but it was a tribute to both sides that the incident didn't get out of control.

And, Derry finished the game with fourteen men following the dismissal of Jonathan Niblock. The Magherafelt man was sent to the line after picking up a second yellow card and that after he was replaced and then returned to the fray following the injury to Murray.

Donegal opened the game the brighter with points from two Adrian Sweeney frees and a James Gallagher point putting them 0-3 to no score in front after seven minutes.

With the wind at their backs, Donegal seemed likely to dominate but they failed to add to their early superiority as Derry fought back tenaciously.

## SURPRISING

Indeed it was surprising that Derry had ease in scoring in the first half in particular, as their full forward line throughout lacked sparkle, invention and any will to win possession.

As the first quarter progressed, Derry began to

find their feet and points from a brace of Tohill frees kept the gap at three as Brendan Devenney and Brian McLaughlin scored for Donegal.

However, the game took a major twist in a four minute period from the 18th minute when Derry found the Donegal net on two occasions.

To say the Donegal defending for these goals was slack would be an understatement as Derry scythed through them with ease and both goals came following chances which literally couldn't have been missed.

## CLINICAL GOAL

The first goal followed good work from Dermot Heaney. The Castledawson man held off a couple of challenges before fisting the ball through the middle of the Donegal defence to Dermot Dougan. The Newbridge man, with just Paul Callaghan to beat, drew the keeper and then punched the ball inside to the unmarked Stephen McLarnon to shoot to the empty net. It was a clinical goal well executed, albeit without a challenge.

## CUT THROUGH

Four minutes later, Derry again cut through the Donegal defence like a hot knife through butter. Dougan and Heaney linked to find Stephen

McLarnon. When the corner forward gathered, Niall McCready lost his footing and McLarnon fisted the ball to the unmarked Benny Murray who thumped the ball to the roof of the net past a helpless Callaghan.

Leading 2-2 to 0-5, Derry seemed to be in control, but Donegal retaliated with points from Tony Boyle (free) and Noel McGinley, before Tohill and John Gildea traded points.

Derry finished the first half the stronger and further points from an Eamonn Burns free and Gary Coleman gave the home side a 2-5 to 0-8 advantage at the interval.

An Eamonn Burns free in the first minute of the second half seemed to add to Donegal's woes, but they were back on level terms within five minutes.

## GALLAGHER GOAL

James Gallagher pointed a free following a foul on Brendan Devenney, and then in the 40th minute, they were back on terms when James Gallagher found the Derry net.

Tony Boyle had won possession 30 metres out and after being fouled, the Dungloe man looked up and took a quick free to Gallagher who was unmarked and in space behind the Derry defence. The Gweedore man wasted no time in steadying himself before blasting the

ball beyond Michael Conlon.

A McCafferty fisted point put Donegal in front and it seemed Derry, who had started the second half poorly, were on their way out of the competition.

An Eamonn Burns free restored parity, before a brace of Dermot Dougan points put Derry in control again.

## MURRAY-MCGUINNESS INCIDENT

Then came the incident which ended Murray's participation in the game. Donegal were pressing for a score and McGuinness tried to make ground through the heart of the Derry defence. He was blatantly body checked by Murray, but his actions in throwing an unnecessary punch have no place in the game. He was fortunate to remain on the field of play and from the subsequent free, Tony Boyle pointed.

Barry Gillis restored Derry's two points advantage as the game went into its closing stages.

Derry were then reduced to fourteen men when Niblock, who had had a very disappointing game, got himself yellow carded for the second time and was sent to the line.

A Tony Boyle free reduced the deficit to the minimum again in the first minute of stoppage time, but Johnny McBride settled Derry's nerves by converting

a free.

Adrian Sweeney's last gasp point from a free was too little, too late for Donegal and Derry secured their passage into the semi-final of the Dr. McKenna Cup.

Granted both sides were minus quite a few first choice players. On this performance those who were missing will not have too many nightmares. However, it was a well contested game and was entertaining for the 500 or so who turned up to spectate.

**DERRY** - Michael Conlon; Ryan Lynch, David O'Neill, Ryan Dougan; Cathal Diamond, Gary Coleman 0-1, Adrian Lagan; Anthony Tohill 0-3, Dermot Heaney; Benny Murray 1-0, Dermot Dougan 0-2, Barry Gillis 0-1; Jonathan Niblock, Eamonn Burns 0-3, Stephen McLarnon 1-0. Subs. Johnny McBride 0-1 for Niblock (53 mins); Jonathan Niblock for Murray (64 mins).

**DONEGAL** - Paul Callaghan; Noel McGinley 0-1, Raymond Sweeney, Niall McCready; Ollie Reid, Noel Hegarty, Shane Carr; Brian McLaughlin 0-1, John Gildea 0-1; Brian Roper, Tony Boyle 0-3, Brendan Devenney 0-1; Johnny McCafferty 0-1, Adrian Sweeney 0-3, James Gallagher 1-2. Sub. Jim McGuinness for Brian McLaughlin (half-time).

**REFEREE** - Michael Hughes (Tyrone).

## Bank of Ireland Ulster Football Championship

**Donegal. . . . .0-13 Fermanagh. . . . .1-12**

**The demise of Donegal was completed on Sunday last when they lost out in the first round of the Ulster Championship for the second year in-a-row, defeated by a much hungrier Fermanagh side at Ballybofey on Sunday.**

While just two points separated the sides at the finish and Donegal had their chances to win the game, it was Fermanagh who 'wanted' the victory most from the moment the ball was thrown in.

While Fermanagh were by far the better side on the day, they did not dominate the game. That role was won hands down by Galway referee, Des Joyce, who infuriated players, managers and spectators in equal measure with a fussy display which left the first half, in particular, without any pattern.

His display was summed up by Fermanagh captain, Tommy Callaghan, in an after-match interview when he said he would give him two out of ten assessment.

Among his most crazy decisions was to send Fermanagh centre-half back, Tony Collins to the line just before the break after what could be described as worst, a pushing match, with John Gildea.

In all he handed out seventeen yellow cards, including two for Collins and one for Donegal manager, Declan Bonner. He almost showed the yellow card for a second time to Tony Boyle in the first half but stopped himself as he realised he would have to send him off. Indeed, one felt that it was only because he recognised Boyle that the Dungloe man would also have ended up on the line.

Donegal were hit by injuries in the run-up to the game and started without Noel Hegarty due the death of his father-in-law, but from the early moments they were playing second fiddle in most areas of the pitch.

The pre-match talk was of how both defences would hold out against two potent attacks. As it turned out the Fermanagh defence proved much better than Donegal's and much of that was due to their dominance around the middle of the field where only John Gildea provided some respite for Donegal. From the throw-in Fermanagh dictated the pace in this area with Donegal seemingly exerting much energy on trying to get the marking arrangements in place.

With a midfield platform Fermanagh's man of the match, Rory Gallagher dictated everything that was good in the first half and ended with a personal tally of 1-5, the highlight of which was a deft lobbed goal in the 24th minute.

### LONG GAME

Donegal players, weaned on the short game, were trying out the new way - playing the ball in long, but Fermanagh were well aware of the plan and were waiting in the 'long' grass. The effectiveness of Adrian Sweeney at corner-forward was nullified, although Tony Boyle showed once again that if the right type of supply is provided, he would cause problems.

But because of the change of style most of the other Donegal forwards were redundant and with John Gildea needed to supplement the midfield, the forward thrust was

poor, especially in the first half.

At the other end of the field, every time Fermanagh got possession, they sought out Rory Gallagher. The Erne Gaels man gave his inside forwards some quality ball and especially in the first quarter, the Donegal defence was operating on the back foot.

Indeed but for five frees and a '45' Donegal only managed two points from play in the first half and were rather fortunate to be just three points adrift at the break, as well as being a man to the good.

### BEST PERIOD

Donegal's best period came in the third quarter when they drew level by the 49th minute. Just afterwards Fermanagh lost their spiritual leader on the field, Rory Gallagher with a knee injury and at that stage they were there for the taking.

Donegal took the lead with their best two scores of the game - points from distance from Ollie Reid and Michael Hegarty, and could have killed the game in the 55th minute when Brian Roper put Adrian Sweeney through on goal. When he was taken from behind when about to shoot, the opportunity was there to put Donegal five points in front from the penalty.

However, it was not to be as Tony Boyle's placed effort went outside the upright. Although still two points in front, Donegal were destined to play out the final sixteen minutes of play without raising a flag.

The penalty miss plus the substituting of Brian Roper and Jim McGuinness were the perfect lift for Fermanagh to again raise their game and it was the Maguire men who finished the stronger, scoring four points in that final period. Raymond Gallagher and super sub, Shane McDermott brought them back on terms. Shane King pointed them in front from a free, and McDermott sealed Donegal's fate with over a minute left of normal time.

Donegal's lack of leadership on the field was underlined with a minute to go when some desperate forward thrusts won a free, but instead of taking their point from 13m, Donegal took a quick free looking for a goal and the chance was cleared.

The big Fermanagh support in the estimated 14,000 erupted when the final whistle went. Referee Des Joyce's decisions were history and he was able to escape with everything intact. One wondered what the Fermanagh supporters would have felt if they had lost the game, especially in relation to the Collins' sending-off.

For Donegal it is back to the drawing board. They will head into the choppy waters of life in Division 1 of the League with a new skipper as Declan Bonner stepped down from the position after the game. Whoever is chosen to follow in his footsteps has a difficult task as Donegal are at a low at the moment.

**Donegal:** Tony Blake; Mark Crossan, Raymond Sweeney, Noel McGinley; Noel Hegarty, Paddy Campbell, Ollie Reid (0-1); Brian McLaughlin (0-1), Jim McGuinness; Michael Hegarty (0-1), John Gildea (0-1), Brian Roper; Adrian Sweeney (0-3), Tony Boyle (0-5), Brendan Devenney (0-1). Subs., Noel Hegarty for R. Sweeney (41 mins.); James Gallagher for B. Roper (58 mins.); Joe Friel for J. McGuinness (63 mins.); James Ruane for B. McLoughlin (70 mins).

**Fermanagh:** Dermot Feely; Barry Carty, Paul Courtney, Paddy McGuinness; Tommy Callaghan, Tony Collins, Justin Gilheaney (0-1); Paul Brewster, Liam McBarron; Kieran Donnelly, Rory Gallagher (1-6), Raymond Johnston;

Raymond Gallagher (0-2), Stephen Maguire, Shane King (0-1). Subs., Tom Brewster for K. Donnelly (45 mins.); Michael Lilly for P. Courtney (47 mins.); Shane McDermott (0-2) for Rory Gallagher (51 mins.)

**Referee:** Des Joyce (Galway)

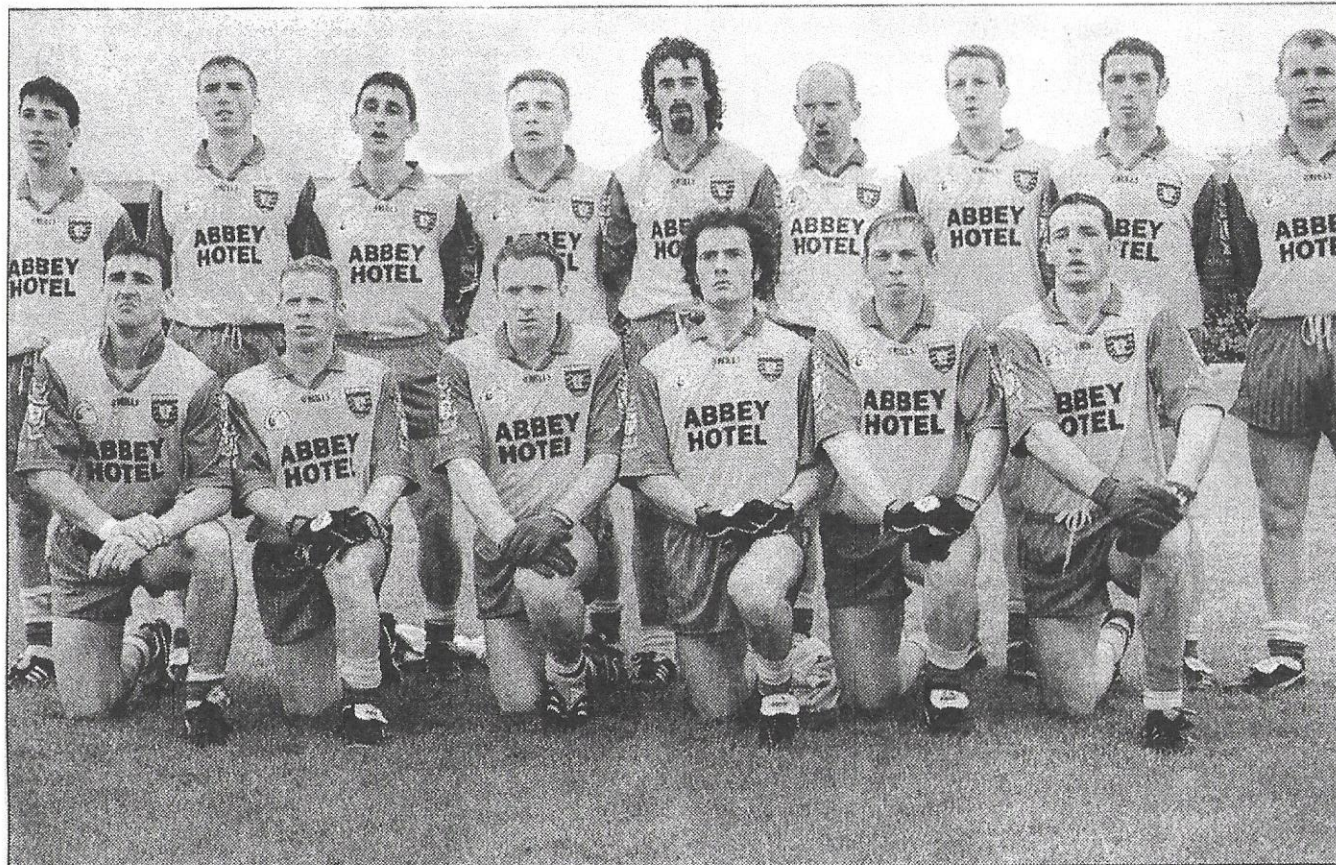
Peter Campbell reports from MacCumhail Park

Photos by Thomas Gallagher

## Bank of Ireland Ulster Football Championship

**Donegal.....0-13 Fermanagh.....1-12**

**T**he demise of Donegal was completed on Sunday last when they lost out in the first round of the Ulster Championship for the second year in-a-row, defeated by a much hungrier Fermanagh side at Ballybofey on Sunday.



Donegal who were defeated in the quarter final of the Ulster Championship by Fermanagh on Sunday in Ballybofey. (Photo Thomas Gallagher 15/6/00)

**Fermanagh:** Dermot Feely; Barry Carty, Paul Courtney, Paddy McGuinness; Tommy Callaghan, Tony Collins, Justin Gilheaney (0-1); Paul Brewster, Liam McBarron; Kieran Donnelly, Rory Gallagher (1-6), Raymond Johnston;

Raymond Gallagher (0-2), Stephen Maguire, Shane King (0-1). Subs., Tom Brewster for K. Donnelly (45 mins.); Michael Lilly for P. Courtney (47 mins.); Shane McDermott (0-2) for Rory Gallagher (51 mins.)

**Referee:** Des Joyce (Galway)

**Donegal:** Tony Blake; Mark Crossan, Raymond

Sweeney, Noel McGinley; Noel Hegarty, Paddy Campbell, Ollie Reid (0-1); Brian McLaughlin (0-1), Jim McGuinness; Michael Hegarty (0-1), John Gildea (0-1), Brian Roper; Adrian Sweeney (0-3), Tony Boyle (0-5), Brendan Devenney (0-1). Subs., Noel Hegarty for R. Sweeney (41 mins.); James Gallagher for B. Roper (58 mins.); Joe

Friel for J. McGuinness (63 mins.); James Ruane for B. McLoughlin (70 mins).

## CHURCH & GENERAL NFL, DIVISION 1A

# Banker John's late point....

**DONEGAL..... 0-10**

**ARMAGH..... 0-9**

**Michael Daly reports from the Athletic Grounds**

**Photos from Thomas Gallagher**

**John Gildea, an AIB employee in Letterkenny, helped Donegal to a snatch and grab victory over old foes Armagh at the wind whipped Athletic Grounds last Sunday.**

Gildea sent shivers down Armagh spines when he pulled the trigger from 50 metres to give Donegal a victory that could save them when all the calculators are clicking next spring in what is a high quality Division 1A of the NFL.

Gildea's point came in the final minute of a game Donegal led only once before over those 70 minutes. Armagh had led from the 17th to the 68th minute and at the very least would have felt a draw was on the cards.

However, despite some seasonal horror wides, Donegal kept their cool and Gildea, not having by any means his best ever game for Donegal, showed great character to take the responsibility and go for a score from long range. His ambition was rewarded, Donegal for sheer persistence and pluck, deserved no less. What goes around comes around and all that ..... remember last year's NFL where three times Donegal were on the wrong side of one point defeats.

A small contingent of Donegal supporters - just the hard core of about 400 made the trip - witnessed a dramatic climax to an otherwise forgettable game.

Armagh failed to score for the final 28 minutes of the second half, neither team hit a score in a 20 minute second half scoring desert where Donegal boss Declan Bonner must have been pulling his hair and teeth out

as eight wides in-a-row sailed either side of the Benny Tierney guarded Armagh uprights.

It was hard to watch. The near gale force wind had its say in some scoring efforts - Armagh only slightly less culpable with eight wides.

### HALF BACKS

Hard to watch perhaps but there were some very gritty individual displays too. Brian Roper, who will miss the Galway game due to holiday plans, was Donegal's most effective player, offering a mixture of hard grafting from defence to attack and some sublime finishing that ensured he emerged top Donegal scorer, with three points from play.

In their half backs Donegal had a winning platform.

Niall McCready, Noel McGinley and Damien Diver were able to control Armagh's second half attacks well and Ollie Reid, forced forward, fired over an all important point.

While both teams were short some regulars, Donegal did have a more experienced side on view, eleven of the side which started against Armagh in the Ulster championship replay again starting this encounter.

Armagh started seven of that side and crucially, in attack they were much changed. Oisín McConville, top scorer in the Ulster championship, (remember his 2-7

against Down) was a massive loss to Armagh, so too Diarmuid Marsden.

From the championship team only one starting forward, Paddy McKeever remained, and it's fair to say that with more of their big guns available, Armagh will trouble any team in the remaining NFL fixtures.

### BONNER

"We were all over the place, loads of ball, tearing here and there, at times it was hard to watch but let's face it, you have to admire our persistence," Donegal boss Declan Bonner enthused when he spoke immediately after the game.

Joint Armagh boss, Brian Canavan, thought his side just a shade unlucky not to share the spoils, and gain "at least a league point".

The Poyntzpass shop owner was to the point: "They seemed to be kicking everything wide, we went nearly half an hour without a score in the second half, but I sort of felt that Donegal were going to settle for the draw. Fair play, they took their last point well but it came from a bit of a mistake at our end. I thought we deserved at least a draw but Donegal's fitness I think told in the end."

### NEW RULES

Played under yet more new rules - the game's duration has now stretched to 70 minutes - it was interesting to note Donegal's performance in the final 'extra' minutes of both halves. With 25 minutes played the visitors were five points in arrears but by half time a superb close quarters save from Tony Blake and three excellent points without reply from James Gallagher and two from Brendan Devenney (one of those a brilliant score from a very tight angle on the wing) had cut the margin to just two points, 0-7 to 0-5.

Donegal certainly took what if any advantage going from the new rules, finishing both halves very strongly and using four

of the new quota of five subs allowed for the league.

Paddy McKeever and league regular Stephen McDonnell were Armagh's best forwards on view. McKeever (two frees) and McDonnell points gave Armagh the early advantage 0-3 to 0-2, James Gallagher and Brian Roper Donegal's scorers.

In the final ten minutes of the half Donegal regained their composure and their chances for a victory were considerably enhanced when Tony Blake did well to save from a well hit angled drive by Paddy McKeever.

Brendan Devenney, not having much joy in the first 30 minutes, finally got a few breaks and he hit the second best score of the game on 31 minutes, a marvellous angled point. Just before that James Gallagher knocked over a 20 metre free and Devenney ended the half with a close in free, the ball brought forward after Armagh dissent.

Against the wind Armagh's McDonnell scored a very quick point but it was to be only one of two second half Armagh scores, McDonnell again scoring on 42 minutes - Armagh failing to hit another score in the final 28 minutes of the game.

Eamon Reddin, the Muff club man, came in for Mark Crossan after nine minutes while Brian Roper punished a short kick out with a point on his left foot. Donegal failed to score again for 20 minutes and with six minutes left Brian Roper scored his third point of the afternoon.

Armagh cracked under incessant Donegal pressure, Adrian Sweeney levelling the sides on 33 minutes and John Gildea scoring the vital winning point, moments from the final whistle.

Brian Roper's hard grafting and point scoring made him my man of the match, Adrian Sweeney, for sheer endeavour wasn't far behind while defenders McCready, McGinley and Diver all played very well.

In a very competitive division these league points have to be looked upon as a nice bonus for Donegal and they could just prove priceless.

**ARMAGH:** Brendan Tierney; Enda McNulty, Gerard Reid, Mark McNeill; John Toal, Kieran McGeeney 0-1, Andrew McCann; James Byrne 0-1, Paul McGrane; Paddy McKeever 0-2, both frees, Paul Watters, Mark McCrory; Stephen McDonnell 0-4, 1 free, Des Mackin 0-1, David Wilson. Subs: Brendan Skelton (49) for Wilson; Mark Murray (55) for Watters.

**DONEGAL:** Tony Blake; Mark Crossan, Raymond Sweeney, Niall McCready; Damien Diver, Ollie Reid 0-1, Noel McGinley; Shane Carr, Jim McGuinness; Michael Hegarty, John Gildea 0-1, Brian Roper 0-3; James Gallagher 0-2, both frees, Adrian Sweeney 0-1, Brendan Devenney 0-2, one free. Subs: Eamon Reddin (44) for Crossan; Barry Ward (51) for Carr; Michael Gurn (64) for Hegarty; Johnny McCafferty (67) for Gallagher.

Referee: Mickey Convery (Derry).

### Match Facts:

Donegal kicked ten wides, all in the second half. Armagh had eight wides, six in the first half.

Four Donegal players were yellow carded, Ollie Reid, John Gildea, Brendan Devenney and Michael Gurn. Armagh had one player yellow carded, Kieran McGeeney.

Donegal scored seven of their ten points from play; Armagh scored six of their nine points from play.

Conditions: Marvellous playing surface, dry and firm

Weather: Very strong wind, very cold but dry

Attendance: 2,500  
Best Player(s): Brian Roper/Kieran McGeeney  
Turning Point(s): Blake's first half save from McKeever and two Armagh mistakes in defence near the finish punished by Sweeney and Gildea points.

## CHURCH & GENERAL NFL DIVISION 1A

Michael Daly reports  
from MacCumhaill park

Photos by Conor McGonagle

**DONEGAL..... 0-7**  
**GALWAY..... 0-14**

**Dire Donegal shooting handed Galway an easy win at Ballybofey where the visitors' double scores victory reflected their accuracy on a woeful day for Donegal forwards who struck an almost criminal 21 wides.**

No surprise then that Donegal entered a 38 minute scoring wilderness, failing to add to their third point scored on 17 minutes until the 55th minute when young Termon substitute, Johnny McCafferty finally gave Donegal supporters something to cheer about.

In certain circles they might use the term ironic but there was an 'about bloody time' ring to the muted applause, indeed some supporters were seen to leave long before McCafferty's excellent effort, his first competitive point for Donegal at senior level and he did it with his first kick of the game.

By that stage Galway were galloping down football's equivalent of the N17, leading by seven points 0-11 to 0-4. The game was over as a contest, Donegal's embarrassing wides tally having sucked away ebbing confidence.

### FORWARDS

Only two of Donegal's starting six forwards scored from play, John Gildea and Adrian Sweeney. However, their four subs. accounted for more than half their final tally, Martin Caulfield with two points while Eamon Sweeney and McCafferty scored a point apiece. With those returns to mull over, it may well be the very new players who make the cut when Donegal make another difficult journey down south in two weeks' time to play Cork, the defending NFL champions.

The introduction of Eamon Sweeney was an interesting aside to an otherwise forgettable Donegal display. A minor this year for Donegal, Sweeney, at 18, becomes one of the youngest ever players to play at competitive inter-county level, although the record I believe remains with Letterkenny's Paul Carr, who at 16, was introduced to senior inter-county football by then manager Sean O'Donnell.

However, it wasn't a day for the history books. Were this a book it would be found in the horror stories section of an self respecting library - although Donegal's 21 wides may well be a record too.

### CONTRAST

Galway's football was in stark contrast to Donegal's short, often meandering passing which often ended with the opposition winning frees as Donegal players either over-carried or simply lost their way in a maze of their own making.

Add to that the 'shoot to miss' issue. While Donegal peppered both sides of the posts, the Tribesmen played no frills 'winter' football, sending the ball long and lean, few moves involving more than four passes. Not for them the ten passes forward and five back routine. By the finish they had hit 11 of their 14 points from play and in sheer contrast to their opponents, hit a miserly four wides to Donegal's 21.

Those simple facts ensured that the All Ireland champions of 1998 had never to reach the dizzy heights of that red-letter day against Kildare. Inevitably, the game suffered.

With little or no wind and a drying sod which held well, those avenues often favoured to explain poor performances, cannot be offered: Indeed for the time of year the benign conditions were quite remarkable. Yet neither side set the world on fire, although the game's competitive edge was most evident in the first half.

### IN CHARGE

Assertive, committed. Donegal bossed

the first half. Yet they ended it one point in arrears, 0-4 to 0-3. The sides were level three times. Adrian Sweeney, James Gallagher and John Gildea scored by the 17th minute, Gallagher from a free.

Donegal gifted three points to Galway, each time they made a mistake with a poor pass or lost possession there was a velvet tide to sweep the ball quickly upfield.

A mistake by John Gildea led to a John Donnellan pass, another error saw Pádraig Joyce point while Paul Clancy made it 0-3 each by the 18th minute.

Niall Finnegan gave Galway an improbable 0-4 to 0-3 lead by the break, despite almost incessant Donegal pressure which yielded a crop of incredible wides, 12 in total by half time.

Close to half time, Donegal's Brendan Devenney broke through for a certain goal. Keeping the ball on the surface Devenney seemed to trip and having rounded the keeper couldn't finish to the empty net.

Their confidence in front of the posts seriously shaken, Donegal's enthusiasm waned as Galway continued to profit from virtually every attacking opportunity they created.

Contrast four Galway to 21 Donegal wides and a clearer picture emerges. Crestfallen by their wastefulness, Donegal failed to score for 38 minutes, their third point on 17 minutes, their fourth on 55.

By then the game was up. Galway, unflappable, knocked over second half points from Pádraig Joyce (three), John Donnellan (two), Declan Meehan and Paul Clancy to lead 0-11 to 0-3.

### SUBSTITUTES

Tellingly, it was one of four Donegal substitutes, Johnny McCafferty who had to remind more experienced players just how to score when he pointed with his first kick of the game, Donegal finally

emerging from that 38 minute scoring desert. Fellow subs Martin Caulfield (two) and Eamon Sweeney also hit late face saving points for a truly by now despondent Donegal.

The optimists can offer that it takes a reasonable side to create 21 scoring chances but the reality remains that Donegal badly lack direction and maybe two or three players who can take control and decide a definite pattern of play. At the moment it's all very honest, very frantic and a little bit pointless. Maybe tomorrow they could score 21 cracking points instead of 21 wides but the overall impression remains that Donegal are far from sure of themselves. They need to get their confidence back and soon.

Beaten double scores by a Galway side who started just five of their All Ireland final winning side from 1998,

Donegal continue to search for a midfield replacement for Anthony Molloy. For 35 minutes Jim McGuinness, John Gildea, Martin Coll kept Galway's vaunted duo of O Domhnaill and Bergin in the shade but Coll's injury and Gildea's fade out coincided with the visitors best spell, early in the second half.

At 6'4" 18 year old Eamon Sweeney, a second half substitute for Donegal, may offer a long term midfield solution, but surely he needs loads of time. In the shorter term Donegal's lack of clean ball winners at midfield and an horrendous day at the office for their first choice forwards, left Galway easy winners having played ordinary, albeit accurate football. They will have learned little from a game that they won without ever having to play anything like exceptional football.

For Donegal Adrian Sweeney continues to work double time but the lack of leaders and a more direct approach was almost as disappointing as Donegal's abysmal failure in front of the posts. Donegal's half back line did well all through, with midfield they created the platform for so many chances. Donegal 'won' midfield in the first half but Galway improved there and in all other sectors in the second half. Some very young players continue to get competitive experience, Eamon Sweeney the latest 18 year old to join the scene while Martin Caulfield acquitted himself reasonably well too.

For Galway Pádraig Joyce, Declan Meehan and towering Sean O'Domhnaill were particularly impressive.

**DONEGAL:** Tony Blake; Mark Crossan, Raymond Sweeney, Damien

Diver; Niall McCready, Ollie Reid, Noel McGinley; Martin Coll, Jim McGuinness; Michael Hegarty, John Gildea 0-1, Shane Carr; James Gallagher 0-1, f, Adrian Sweeney 0-1, Brendan Devenney. Subs: Martin Caulfield 0-2 for Gallagher; Brian McLaughlin for Hegarty (both h/t); Eamon Sweeney (0-1) for Coll injd. 54 mins; Johnny McCafferty 0-1 for Devenney (60 mins).

**GALWAY:** Pádraig Lally; Tomás Meehan, Karl Donnellan, Richie Fahy; Declan Meehan 0-2, John Divilly, Enda Daly; Joe Bergin, Séan O Domhnaill;

Paul Clancy 0-2, Kieran Comer, Lorcan Colleran; John Donnellan 0-3, Pádraig Joyce 0-4, 2fs, Niall Finnegan 0-2, if. Subs: Michael Colleran for Comer (38 mins.); Seamus Mitchell 0-1 for Finnegan (67 mins); Robin Doyle for T Meehan (68 mins).  
**Referee:** John Bannon (Longford).

Division 1A: Cork 0-7 Donegal 2-12

# Two-goal Gallagher gets Donegal glory

**D**ONEGAL made the long journey south a winning one when they defeated defending champions Cork in the last of the Church & General National football league before the winter recess at Pairc Ui Chaoimh yesterday.

The Northerners looked extremely sharp in most sectors of a heavy pitch which cut up badly following torrential overnight rain which threatened to cancel the game and will be happy with four points out of a possible six going into the break.

Backed by the very strong wind which blew from end to end Donegal looked in trouble when they lost the services of full-back Ray Sweeney after only four minutes with an eye injury following an off the ball incident with the Cork full-forward.

Their cause wasn't helped by some dreadful finishing by their forwards who kicked eight wides and for all their territorial advantage Donegal were on level terms at 0-3 each after 20 minutes play.

However in a devastating last 10 minutes before half-time they ripped the Cork defence apart playing some delightful football and scored seven points without reply to lead 0-10 to 0-3 at half-time.

In their opening 30 minutes Donegal owed much to the excellence of centre-back Shane Carr, midfielders Jim McGuinness and John Gildea and lively forwards James Gallagher, Brian Roper and Brendan Devenney who led the Cork defence a merry dance with their slick interpassing.

Donegal continued to dictate play on the change over and after Brian Roper stretched their lead with a point they killed off the Cork challenge with two goals in a minute.

The first came in the 38th minute following great work by Michael Hegarty. He had his shot well saved by Cork goalkeeper Alan Kirk but in the ensuing goalmouth melee James Gallagher hit the rebound to the net. On the kick out Donegal were back for a second goal when Brendan Devenney's shot came back off the cross bar and Gallagher again was on hand to apply the finish. These two goals gave Donegal a 2-11 to 0-3 lead and while Cork continued to have more of the play helped by the strong wind they never threatened a goal due to the excellence of the Donegal defence.

Understandably Donegal manager Declan Bonner was in jovial mood at the final whis-

tle.

"We came down the full intention of winning the two points and credit to the lads for achieving that" he said.

"There was a hunger among the players today that I haven't seen in a while and their commitment was excellent. It's never easy coming to Cork and winning but he lads battled hard threw themselves about and overall I have to be please with this display.

"We now have four points in three games played and I would have settled for that at the beginning of this league. We will now enjoy a bit of a rest in the run up to Christmas but we still have a lot of work to do if we are to make the play-offs in the spring," he added.

**Donegal:** T Blake, M Crossan, R Sweeney, N McGinley, D Diver, S Carr, O Reid, J Gildea, J McGuinness (0-2), N McCready, M Hegarty (0-2), J Gallagher (2-2), B Roper (0-3), A Sweeney (0-1), B Devenney (0-2).

**Subs:** E Reddin (for Sweeney), B McLoughlin (for McGinley), J McCafferty (for Gallagher).

**Cork:** A Kirk, M O'Donovan, S O'hAlpin, A Lynch, R McCarthy, O Sexton, D Creedon, M O'Sullivan, N Murphy (0-1), T Deasy, J Canty (0-1), B O'Sullivan (0-1), P Clifford (0-2), B Collins, M Lewis (0-2). Subs: P Murphy (for N Murphy), S Murray (for Deasy), C Crolly (for M O'Sullivan).

**Referee:** P McCann (Weastmeath).



# James scores 2-2, but whose boots was he wearing?

By Michael Daly

James Gallagher scored two goals and two points for Donegal in their comprehensive win over Cork last Sunday at Pairc Ui Chaoimh and since then the Democrat has been tracking down an exclusive involving the boots worn by James.

A usually impeccable source assured the Democrat last Monday night in Gaoth Dobhair that there was a "bigger story" behind James's two goals.

The source recalled how, two weeks ago, Donegal kicked no less than 21 wides against Galway at Ballybofey, also in the NFL.

Well, returning to his Gaoth Dobhair home on the evening of the match, James, corner forward against Galway, was met by his dad, the legendary Neilly Gallagher, who was a sharp-shooter without equal when he donned the county colours.

Hardly a word was spoken but Neilly motioned to his son James to give him his

kit-bag and the obliging son handed over the rain-soaked gear.

But Neilly was after his son's boots and when he retrieved them from the bag he duly threw them in the nearby bin. Both father and son went into house but Neilly headed for the attic where, for over 25 years, the last pair of boots he ever wore for Donegal were carefully stored.

He handed James the boots saying he would hit the target with them and the young man from Gaoth Dobhair was wearing Neilly's boots last Sunday in wet and windy Pairc Ui Chaoimh, his father's boots out of retirement after over 25 years and helping James to score 2-2!

What a great story. Indeed I thought so good I have decided to relate it here but I made a fatal mistake this week. I checked it out.

And speaking to James, a butcher in the Gallagher emporium in Gaoth Dobhair on Tuesday, even he agreed it was a great story. He hadn't heard it himself, he confided. Alas then another great story spoiled by the truth. James was wearing his

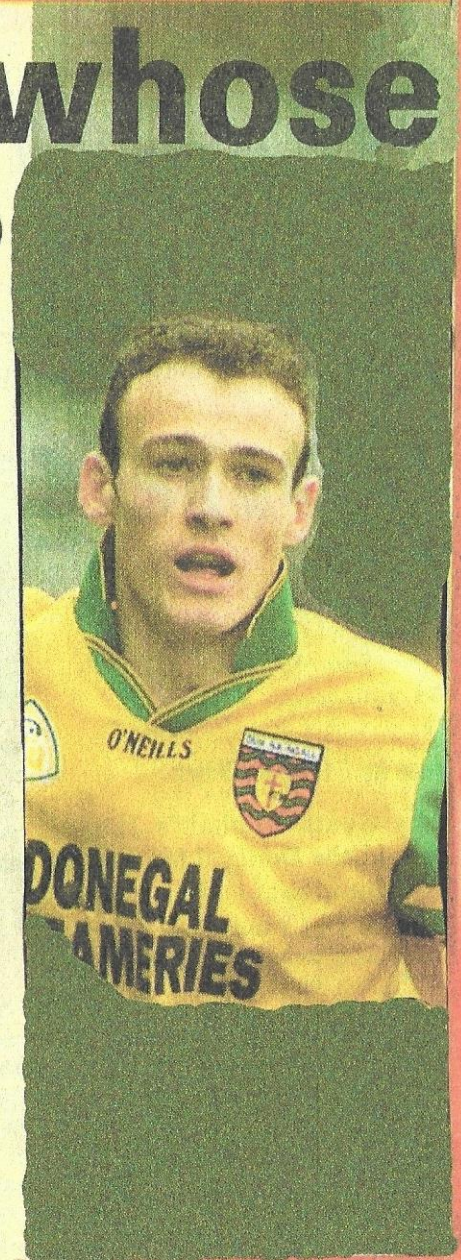
own boots, recently supplied, I presume, by the County Board.

Regardless, James was happy with the outcome from Cork: "I never played minor, I did get on the under 21 county team and I have played all three games so far. It's a great feeling and here in Gaoth Dobhair people have been very supportive and have talked to me about how to approach the whole thing.

"With my background, I suppose my father will always be famous because of the '67 penalty incident in Croke Park and referee Eamon Moules, but there has always been football here."

He likes the set-up and agrees there is no shortage of young players. "At 22 I'm one of the older ones. We had an 18 year old and two 19 year olds playing or coming in as subs already, it's different, but I think the whole trip to Cork and the win has helped us all. It was great, hope it continues," the butcher boy enthuses.

And the boots? "Sorry Michael, Neilly's boots are in the attic, safe and sound".



## Church & General N.F.L. Div.1A

# Donegal let big lead slip

**BY LETTING** a five point lead evaporate in the last quarter, Donegal missed a glorious opportunity to go joint top of Division 1A of the Church & General National Football League.

Tom Comack reports

Photographs: Thomas Gallagher.

Failing to score in the last twenty minutes of this highly entertaining tie, Declan Bonner's side left themselves clinging on for a share of the points at the finish.

Yet again, this team's inability to kill off the opposition when presented with the opportunity, was once more their Achilles heel. And while Tyrone ended the game on a high, make no mistake about it, for up to three quarters of the clash, Donegal were on top in both the territorial and possession stakes.

### No way flattered

Leading 0-10 to Tyrone's 0-5 as the game entered the final quarter, the home side were no way flattered by their double score margin. But for a number of missed opportunities at a crucial stage, they could have easily been out of reach by the time the O'Neill county staged their dramatic fightback.

In truth, a combination of those missed opportunities, and a key tactical change by the Tyrone management team turned this game on its head.

With Donegal leading 0-10 to Tyrone's 0-6, Brendan Devenney had the misfortune to see his thirty metre free from dead straight in front of the target, come back off the upright and away to safety.

And second half substitute Michael Gurn twice displayed a distinct lack of confidence

in front of the posts to restore the advantage to Donegal.

However, it would be unfair to single out Devenney and Gurn for their side's last quarter collapse. James Gallagher, who on the day was possibly his side's most consistent performer and Adrian Sweeney too, were guilty of taking wrong options at crucial stages late in the contest.

Persisting with the tactic of playing just two upfront long after Tyrone had got to grips with the twin threat of Brendan Devenney and Brian Roper, the sideline was not blameless either.

On the other hand, the Tyrone management team of Art McRory and Eugene McKenna turned to plan B, when plan A was not working.

With Peter Canavan by and large ineffective at centre forward, in a last throw of the dice, he was switched to fullforward, with man of the match Eoin Gormley moving out the field.

This change proved critical as Gormley started to win clean possession in the middle of the park, and for the first time in the contest the Tyrone forwards began to enjoy a liberal supply of possession.

The fact that Tyrone's change of fortune also coincided with the withdrawal of Donegal midfielder, James Ruane, must also not be

Donegal .....	0-10
Tyrone .....	0-10

overlooked. The Bundoran man, a replacement for team captain Jim McGuinness at midfield, had an impressive return to competitive action.

With the Donegal defence buckling under pressure, Tyrone struck for five unanswered points in the last fifteen minutes.

And while it took a late late point from Gormley to earn the draw, in truth it was no more than the O'Neill county deserved.

### Save

Indeed but for a brilliant block by Tony Blake from Peter Canavan. Donegal fans could well be lamenting the loss of not one, but two precious league points.

The closing twenty minutes were a far cry from the opening exchanges as far as Donegal was concerned. Beginning in whirlwind fashion the home side had three points on the scoreboard before the visitors found their bearings, with Adrian Sweeney, scoring two points, and Brendan Devenney, the third.

Thoughts of the Galway game surfaced as a rampant homeside hit three bad wides in as many minutes, before Tyrone actually got in on the scoring act.

Two quick points from Ciaran McBride and Eoin Gormley brought their side back into the contest. Donegal edged two points clear again by the half-time mark, James Gallagher twice and Adrian Sweeney again finding the range. Ciaran McBride kept his side in touch with two delightful points.

As they did in the first half Donegal opened with a flurry, Brendan Devenney and Brian Roper extending the lead to four points. That lead was extended to five points by the midway point in the second period, James Gallagher finding the target with a super solo effort. However, Gallagher's strike proved to be Donegal last score, as Tyrone finished on a high to claim a precious away point.

In one last desperate attack, Damian Diver's shot on goal was deflected on to the crossbar by Tyrone keeper, Martin Conway to deny Damain Diver a dramatic winning score.

Donegal: Tony Blake, Mark Crossan, Raymond Sweeney, Noel McGinley; Ollie Reid, Shane Carr, Damian Diver (Capt.); John Gildea, James Ruane; James Gallagher (0-3), Michael Hegarty, Niall McCreadie; Brendan Devenney (0-2F), Adrian Sweeney (0-4,3F), Brian Roper; Subs: Michael Gurn for J. Ruane 57 minutes; Martin Caulfield for M. Hegarty 62 minutes;

Tyrone: Martin Conway; Ciaran Gourley, Chris Lawn, Paul McGurk; Paul Devlin, Cormac McAnallen, Sean McLaughlin; Pascal Canavan (C), Colin Holmes; Brian Dooher (0-1), Peter Canavan, Damian Gormley; Ciaran McBride (0-3), Richard Thornton, Eoin Gormley (0-5,3F); Subs: Brendan McLaughlin for Richard Thornton 50 minutes; Paul McLaughlin for C. Holmes, 51 minutes; Stephen Lawn (0-1) for P. Gormley 63 minutes; Referee: Pat McEneaney (Monaghan).

# Donegal the Dismal

**DONEGAL** ..... 0-11  
**DUBLIN** ..... 1-11

**DONEGAL plunged into the lower regions of Division One (A) after their feeble challenge was forcibly brushed aside by superior Dublin in this competitive league outing at Parnell Park on Sunday.**

The visitors were physically no match for their robust opponents who thoroughly deserved their three points win. Were it not for some wasteful finishing in the latter stages by the home side the margin of defeat would have been much greater.

Donegal need a win from either of their remaining games against league leaders, Kerry (March 19) or Roscommon (April 9-away) to guarantee their top flight status next season. They still have an outside chance of making the semi-finals but after Sunday's disappointing display it looks doubtful.

After a sprightly first half hour, Donegal led 0-7 to 0-5 at the break but when half forward, Colin Moran, struck for the all important goal four minutes into the second half, following a mistake by corner back, Mark Crossan, Donegal's weak challenge completely caved in.

The lack of leaders, particularly in central areas, was blatantly obvious in the final half hour and Donegal's physical deficiency is something that the management team must have a serious look at in the build up to the

championship.

Even the introduction of 1992 All-Ireland veteran, Noel Hegarty for the first time in this league campaign, failed to spark any life into a listless second half Donegal display.

However as one Donegal follower remarked on the way out of the ground- "its a while yet to the championship- league games in March tend to be deceiving. Donegal manager, Declan Bonner will be hoping this is the case.

Both sides opted for two man full forward lines- this reducing the play to a battle in the centre of the pitch. Donegal made a number of positional switches- at the start Mark Crossan dropping back to the full back line and Brendan Devenney moving to the half forward line the most notable. John Gildea was deployed as a third midfielder for the early stages of the game.

Lively full forward, Adrian Sweeney floated over two frees to give Donegal the early advantage and by the 10th minute the visitors held a 0-3 to 0-1 lead. In between James Ruane had his name taken for a late swing at Brian Stynes and then John Scanlon and Jim Gavin were spoken to by match official, Pat McEaney. The injection of needle to the game seemed to work in Dublin's favour and by the 14th minute they were level following scores from Jim Gavin and

*The lack of leaders, particularly in central areas, was blatantly obvious in the final half hour and Donegal's physical deficiency is something that the management team must have a serious look at in the build up to the championship.*

impressive corner forward, Declan Darcy.

The sides were level again 0-4 apiece by the 20th minute and again for the third time after twenty-eight but it was Donegal who finished the half with a late flurry.

Two points inside a minute from James Gallagher and Brendan Devenney gave Donegal a 0-7 to 0-5 at the break and their travelling supporters were more than optimistic at the interval. Their hopes for a memorable away win were dashed inside the first six minutes of the resumption after Dublin hit 1-3 without reply. Air Corps pilot, Jim Gavin, hauled Dublin on level terms for the fourth time in the 38th minute with a well executed from a difficult angle.

A minute later the game was effectively killed off as a contest. Following an excellent interception, Donegal defender, Mark Crossan mis-directed a fisted pass and it fell kindly for Declan Darcy.

He combined with Brian Stynes and the big half forward unselfishly set up Colin Moran who fired the ball to the net from close range. The strike gave Dublin a 1-7 to 0-7 lead. Donegal were shell shocked and they never recovered from the blow.

Midway through the second the visitors had managed to cut the deficit to a two points margin but Dublin were always able to pick up a gear and edged three points clear on two occasions between the 50th and 56th minutes.

Donegal went in search of a late equalising goal. Brendan Devenney went close on the stroke

of full time- his effort was blocked down by several Dublin defenders and the home side and the home team held out for a deserved win.

For the winners, Man of the Match, Shane Ryan, Ciaran Whelan, Declan Darcy, Paddy Christie and Brian Stynes were the pick.

With the exception of hard-working full forward, Adrian Sweeney and to a lesser extent, his brother Raymond at full back, this was a second half performance that Donegal would care to forget very quickly.

**DONEGAL:** Tony Blake, John Scanlon, Raymond Sweeney, Eamon Reddin, Mark Crossan, Shane Carr, Niall McCreedy, James Ruane, Jim McGuinness, James Gallagher (0-2 frees), John Gildea, Brian Roper (0-1), Adrian Sweeney (0-6 five frees), Brendan Devenney (0-2) and Martin Caulfield.

Subs used: Johnny McCafferty for Ruane (27mins), Michael Hegarty for Caulfield (Half-time), Noel Hegarty for Crossan (41mins), Noel McGinley for Reddin (49 mins) and Brian McLaughlin for Gallagher (64 mins).

**DUBLIN:** David Byrne, Declan Conlon (0-1), Paddy Christie, Keith Galvin, Paul Curran, Shane Ryan, Peadar Andrews, Ciaran Whelan (0-2), John McGee, Jason Ward, Brian Stynes, Colin Moran (1-0), Jim Gavin (0-4 frees), Ian Robertson, and Declan Darcy (0-4).

Subs used: Paul Croft, for Moran (56mins), Enda Sheehy for Conlon (58 mins) and Brendan O'Brien for McGee (65mins).

**REFEREE:** Pat McEaney (Monaghan)

DONEGAL team manager, Declan Bonner has sharply criticised his team's disappointing performance against Dublin. Speaking after the game, Bonner said his side could have no excuses for their defeat.

"We didn't deserve anything from the game. Our overall display was very poor. Dublin were much sharper and physically they won almost every battle on the field," he said.

Despite the fact his side led 0-7 to 0-5 at half-time Bonner said the warning signs were evident in the first half.

"We were beat all day at midfield and also lost out at centre half back and centre half forward. Our ball handling is usually fairly good but I counted at least four times in the first half where we gave the ball possession in defence. We made too many basic mistakes - their goal came from an error by Mark Crossan," Bonner added.

The Donegal manager said he withdrew midfielder James Ruane after twenty-seven minutes because the Bundoran player was suffering a recurrence of a hamstring injury. Martin Caulfield was unable to come out in the second half because of a back injury.

"James had also been booked inside the

first five minutes and was lucky he didn't get the line. We felt it was wise to bring him ashore. I made five substitutions in all and if I could have made ten I would have done that. We only had three or four players who played up to scratch," he said.

"We have to get on with it because we haven't got many players who are physically strong. I thought Noel Hegarty was one of our best defenders when he came on early in the second half and Noel McGinley done alright. We have Damien Diver to come back as well. We have a lot of soul searching to do in the next few weeks," he said.

This Sunday Bonner's squad have a chance to redeem themselves somewhat with a McKenna Cup match against Derry in Ballinascreen.

"It's an opportunity for some lads to get the poor show in Dublin out of the system. Our more influential players like Mark Crossan, Jim McGuinness and Brendan Devenney who have played for Ulster this year didn't show against Dublin. Sunday is a chance to put things right again," he said.

## The shape we're in

	P	W	L	D	Pts
Kerry.....	5	4	0	1	8
Galway.....	5	3	1	1	7
Roscommon ..	5	3	0	2	6
Dublin.....	5	3	0	2	6
Donegal.....	5	2	1	2	5
Tyrone.....	5	1	1	3	3
Cork.....	5	1	1	3	3
Armagh.....	5	0	2	3	2

**Remaining Games: March 19: Roscommon v Armagh, Donegal v Kerry, Cork v Tyrone, Galway v Dublin.**  
**April 9: Tyrone v Armagh, Roscommon v Donegal, Kerry v Galway, Dublin v Cork**

Reports: C.J. McGinley  
 Photos: Declan Doherty

# Donegal outclassed by Kerry

A Noel Kenneally goal in the early minutes of the second half, set Kerry on the road to victory and sent Donegal crashing to their second successive defeat in the league and third of the current campaign.

Kerry .....	2-16
Donegal .....	0-14

Tom Comack reports from Fr. Tierney Park  
Photographs: Thomas Gallagher

Donegal had just bounced back from a nightmare start, to forge two points ahead, when the Kerry ace struck for the decisive score.

This strike proved a killer blow, as it propelled Kerry back into single point lead. It was a lead they were never to surrender



Donegal's Shane Carr is out numbered by two Kerry players in the NFL game in Ballyshannon on Sunday. (Photo Thomas Gallagher 29/3/00 G22)

as the Donegal challenge totally disintegrated in the second period. In the remaining thirty minutes, Kerry posted eleven points all from play, to just four from the home-side.

### Recovered

Despite that shaky start, Donegal recovered well to play the better football and deserved to be 0-8 to 1-4 ahead at the half-time changeover.

A brilliant point blank Tony Blake save just minutes after Mike Frank Russell had found the net for the visitors' first goal, seemed to be the spark that ignited the Donegal challenge. Blake was off his line like a flash to deny Russell who was clean through on goal.

Taking up the fight, Brian Roper who shone like a beacon all afternoon in the attack, got the cavalry charge underway with a delightful point off his left foot. With Adrian Sweeney and Brendan Devenney beginning to create panic in the Kerry defence, the scores began to flow.

By the 32nd minute mark with points from Roper (2) Adrian Sweeney (2) and a Tony Boyle free, Donegal had drawn level. Sweeney, who was now being shadowed by Seamus Moynihan, combined with Noel Hegarty on the stroke of half-time to cap a truly remarkable come back with the lead point.

Indeed but for a top drawer save by Declan O'Keeffe to deny Devenney, Donegal's half-time margin could have been greater. O'Keeffe, not to be outshone by Blake at the other end, did well in his one-on-one with the St. Eunan's man to keep his goal intact.

Brian Roper resumed where he left off before the break to edge his team two points ahead. Tony Boyle missed an opportunity to make the margin three points, when his 20 metre free from out on the left hand side went badly wide.

### Killer goal

Almost instantly Kerry were back in front, Kenneally polishing off a sweeping three-man

move to crash the ball past Blake for goal number two.

Aodhan Mac Gearalt, Michael Frances Russell, Enda Galvin (now playing in the half-forward line) and Liam Hassett found the range to give the Kerrymen a four point cushion with just 12 minutes gone in the new half.

Two pointed Adrian Sweeney frees and one from play from second half substitute, Johnny McCafferty temporarily halted the slide.

But Páidí O'Se's men piled on the pressure to hit further points from Aodhan MacGearalt, Mike Hasset, Liam Brosnan, Enda Galvin to win at a canter.

With one series of games left, Kerry have already booked their place in the last four of the league. And while Donegal may be safe from the drop they need a point from their last game away to Roscommon to be absolutely sure of remaining in the top flight.

**Kerry:** Declan O'Keeffe; Michael McCarty, Tom Sullivan, Enda Galvin (0-3); Seamus Moynihan (0-1), Eamonn Fitzmaurice, Mike Hassett (0-1); Dara O'Se, Donal Daly (0-1); Noel Kenneally (1-1), Dara O' Cinneide (0-1), Aodhan Mac Gearalt (0-3); Mike Frank Russell (1-2), Liam Hassett (0-1), Liam Murphy; Subs: Tomas O'Se for T. Sullivan; Stephen O Sullivan for Liam Murphy (half-time); Liam Brosnan (0-2) for M.F. Russell (57 min.); Tommy Griffin for Liam Hassett

**Donegal:** Tony Blake; Mark Crossan, Raymond Sweeney, Damian Diver; Niall McCreadie, Shane Carr, Noel McGinley; Jim McGuinness, John Gildea; James Gallagher, Tony Boyle (0-1F), Brian Roper (0-5); Noel Hegarty, Brendan Devenney, Adrian Sweeney (0-7, 6F); SUBS: James Ruane for D. Diver (38 min.); Eamonn Reddan for N. McGinley (65 min); Jonathan Scanlon for N. Hegarty (68 mins).

**Referee: John Bannon(Longford):**

## Church &amp; General N.F.L.

**T**HE NEW millennium has not been kind to Donegal with just one point to show for four league games as they went down again on Sunday to Roscommon at Dr. Hyde Park.

Sunday's defeat, however, was different to their last two games as they showed a lot more spirit and fight against a Roscommon team that had League semi-final qualification on their mind.

The game and top flight status seemed to be slipping away from them after fourteen minutes of the second half, trailing by four points. With news that Cork were ahead at this point against Dublin, their Division One survival was very much in doubt. However, it was then that Donegal showed their true spirit, getting back level and then going ahead.

With the crowd getting behind the home side, they responded to get the scores necessary to see them into the semi-final. News from Parnell Park improved for Donegal with Dublin getting back in front to ensure that it was Cork and not Donegal who make the drop to Division 2.

In the end Roscommon deserved their victory but it is difficult to see either team having a long summer in front of them. Donegal, with Tony Boyle back at full-forward, had a certain focus to them which was missing of late.

However, they are struggling in vital positions and a lot of effort has to be expended just to stay with opposition. A refreshing part of the display was the delivery of Brian McLaughlin from midfield, sending long ball forward which proved very fruitful.

Brian Roper was given the inside berth along with Tony Boyle in the second and his time there was fruitful, especially when Michael Hegarty was able to get on the ball around the middle. Hegarty showed a welcome return to the sort of form which we have come to expect from him.

McLaughlin proved that the long ball is difficult to defend against, if delivered early. However, over the seventy minutes Donegal were playing second best in the midfield sector despite the best efforts of Jim McGuinness.

Because of our lack of power in that sector at the moment the Donegal defence is almost guaranteed to be under pressure, and they were once more on Sunday. Raymond Sweeney had a busy afternoon on Stephen Lohan and Nigel Dineen, while Shane Carr found the going tough against Dermot Duggan.

Perhaps Donegal's man of the match was Noel McGinley who worked tirelessly for the entire game and made some very strong forward runs.

The first half was very stop-start with three long stoppages for injury. After falling two points behind, Donegal had a purple patch with five points in a row between the 11th and 16th minutes but thereafter only added one point deep in injury time.

#### GOAL CHANCE

Donegal almost had the perfect opening when an Adrian Sweeney free saw Tony Boyle break through in the second minute and hit the butt of the upright. A clash of heads saw Ollie Reid receiving treatment two minutes later.

A bad sideline call which went against Donegal in the 8th minute resulted in Roscommon's opening point, Stephen Lohan turning well to score. Almost immediately midfielder Donal Casserly overlapped to score a very good point for the home side.

The third long delivery from Brian McLaughlin yielded Donegal's first point in the 11th minute, Adrian Sweeney finishing. The score saw Donegal begin a purple patch with Brian Roper pointing after a Devenney break; Noel McGinley coming forward well to combine with Tony Boyle and Roper. Tony was fouled for Adrian Sweeney to point. Another long McLaughlin ball yielded a foul on Devenney and Sweeney again pointed, and then Michael Hegarty got on the end of a good move to put Donegal 0-5 to 0-2 ahead.

With a lengthy stoppage for a serious ankle injury to Stephen Lohan, Donegal's momentum was broken.

Roscommon.....0-14  
Donegal.....1-9

*Peter Campbell reports from Dr. Hyde Park, Roscommon*

*Photos by Thomas Gallagher*

From the 27th to the 40th minutes Roscommon hit back with four points to go back in front, scores from Derek Duggan (free), Nigel Dineen, Sean Casey and Duggan again from a free.

Donegal had their final point of the half when Brian Roper won a free for Sweeney to point, but in the 43rd minute of the half Donegal went to sleep at a Roscommon free, and Derek Duggan found the unmarked Sean Casey to leave the half-time score: Roscommon 0-7, Donegal 0-6.

Roscommon opened the second half in storming fashion with points from Duggan (free), Frankie Dolan and Casey. In between Tony Boyle won a 13m free but lost it when he lashed out in dissent after being hauled back.

A bad wide by Martin Caulfield added to Donegal's woes. They themselves back into contention by placing Brian Roper inside with Tony Boyle. A quick free by Boyle found Roper to reduce the margin in the 49th minute and within a minute they were level. A high lob by McGuinness was broken in the 'square' and Roper was in bravely to pick up, but was taken down for a penalty. Adrian Sweeney drove low to the corner and the sides were level.

Four minutes later Donegal were in front, Michael Hegarty finding Tony Boyle who sent Roper through. The Ballyshannon man's effort for goal was tipped over the bar by Derek Thompson.

Roscommon's response was good with the excellent Frankie Dolan pointing from 40m and Derek Duggan put them ahead again, somewhat fortuitously, in the 61st minute from a free - Frankie Dolan falling over Noel McGinley but referee Russell seeing it as a foul.

Eddie Lohan increased the lead two minutes later but a great run through the middle by Michael Hegarty yielded a free for Sweeney to reduce the deficit to the minimum with six minutes left. With tension high, Roscommon got the insurance point in injury time from Eddie Lohan.

Donegal will now turn their attention to preparing for the Ulster Championship, and there is plenty to trouble the minds of the management team. The reliance on Adrian Sweeney and Brian Roper for scores over a number of games is a problem; Brendan Devenney has not scored in a number of games and only troubled the defence on a couple of occasions.

However, the biggest need is still in the central roles where bigger men are required - perhaps the U-21 midfield pairing might need to be looked at.

**ROSCOMMON:** Derek Thompson; Denis Gavin, John Whyte, Ronan Owens; Basil Mannion, Brendan Bourke, Clifford McDonald; Fergal O'Donnell, Donal Casserly 0-1; Derek Duggan 0-4, all fs, Francie Grehan, Sean Casey 0-3; Gerry Lohan, Stephen Lohan 0-1, Frankie Dolan 0-2. Subs: Eddie Lohan 0-2 for Grehan (injd.) 23 mins; Nigel Dineen 0-1 for S. Lohan (injd.) 27 mins; Enon Gavin for Whyte half time; Mike Ryan for Mannion 56 mins.

**DONEGAL:** Tony Blake; Mark Crossan, Raymond Sweeney, Noel McGinley; Damien Diver, Shane Carr, Ollie Reid; Brian McLaughlin, Jim McGuinness; Michael Hegarty 0-1, Adrian Sweeney 1-5, pen. 4 fs, Brian Roper 0-3; Brendan Devenney, Tony Boyle, James Gallagher. Subs: Martin Caulfield for Gallagher, 31 mins; Paddy Campbell for Crossan, 60 mins; James Ruane for Caulfield, 61 mins.

**Referee:** Paddy Russell (Tipperary).

**Match Facts:** Donegal had 28 frees, fourteen in each half; they had eleven wides, six in first half. They had three players booked, McLaughlin, Crossan and Boyle.

Roscommon had nine wides, six in first half. They were awarded 27 frees, thirteen in first half. They also had three players booked, Whyte, O'Donnell and Dineen.

Roscommon scored ten of their points from play, while Donegal scored five.