

2003

Team Manager: Brian McEniff

Dr. Mc Kenna Cup.

1 12th Jan Fr. Tierney Park Donegal 2-09 Cavan 1-13

Ulster Senior Football Championship

2 1st June Brewester Park Donegal 0-06 Fermanagh 0-10

20th July Ulster final: Tyrone 0-23 Down 1-05

All Ireland Qualifiers 2003

3 8th June MacCumhaill Park Donegal 1-17 Longford 1-11

4 22nd June MacCumhaill Park Donegal 0-16 Sligo 0-11

5 5th July Croke Park Donegal 2-19 Tipperary 0-15

6 26th July Donegal 3-15 Down 2-10

7 4th Aug Croke Park Donegal 0-14 Galway 1-11

8 11th Aug Qtr Final Castlebar Donegal 0-14 Galway 0-11

9 31st Aug Semi Final Croke Park Donegal 1-09 Armagh 2-10

24th Aug. Semi Final Croke Park Tyrone 0-13 Kerry 0-06

28th Sept. **All Ireland final** Tyrone 0-12 Armagh 0-09

National Football League. - 2003 Allianz NFL Division 1

10 2nd Feb Tuam Galway 1-16 Donegal 1-08

11 9th Feb Fr. Tierney Park Donegal 0-09 Dublin 1-10

12 16th Feb MacCumhaill Park Donegal 1-06 Armagh 2-09

13 2nd March Healy Park Tyrone 1-14 Donegal 0-10

14 9th March Fr. Tierney Park Donegal 0-08 Kerry 1-12

15 23rd March Páirc Uí Chaoimh Cork 3-08 Donegal 0-10

16 6th April MacCumhaill Park Donegal 2-10 Roscommon 1-10

Final Tyrone 0-21 Laois 1-08

Dr. McKenna Cup action

Cavan deny Donegal a winning start

Cavan1-13
Donegal2-9

Cavan proved to be real party poopers in this Dr. McKenna Cup clash in Fr. Tierney Park - the Breffni county coming from behind with a late flourish to sneak the victory.

And in the process they consigned Donegal to defeat in their first competitive outing under new manager Brian McEniff.

Just when it seemed All Ireland winning manager McEniff was going to get his fifth term in the hot seat off to a winning start, Cavan struck a late goal and point to seal the win and a quarter final meeting with Tyrone.

Corner forward Jason Reilly got the all important goal, while midfielder John Tierney clinched it with an injury time point.

And at the finish, it was no more than the reigning McKenna Cup champions deserved.

Donegal who were chasing the game for long periods looked to be in the driving seat when they struck for two goals inside a minute at the beginning of the third quarter

GOALS

The goals from Adrian Sweeney and Brian McLaughlin propelled the Tirchonail men into a three point lead. But they were not able to sustain the pressure and it was Cavan who finished the stronger.

On top at midfield for long periods thanks to Dermot McCabe and Tierney, and with Larry and Jason Reilly carving the openings, Cavan looked more dangerous when they attacked. This was especially so in the first half when playing with the aid of a stiff breeze, they looked a potent force.

But for a number of top class saves from Tony Blake, one in particular from Mickey Graham which was out of the top drawer and a goal line clearance from Raymond Sweeney, Cavan could have had more than a three point half-time lead, 0-7 to 0-4.

Damian Diver, Michael Hegarty and Adrian Sweeney the Donegal scorers in the first period, just about kept the home team in touch.

And with the second half going very much along the lines of the first, Donegal were just about still in touch thanks in no small way to Damian Diver, Michael Hegarty and Jim McGuinness. McGuinness who was beginning to make an impression at midfield, posted two excellent points to leave just three points between the sides as the game entered the

final quarter.

Yet, despite this Cavan were looking comfortable. Not even that old McEniff magic could deny them. Though it looked very much as if the old maestro had waved the magic wand when Sweeney and McLaughlin struck for those rapid fire goals.

STAMP OF CLASS

Sweeney's strike had the stamp of class written all over it. Winning possession forty metres from the Cavan post, the full forward shrugged off his marker Colm Hannon, drove forward and from twenty metres rattled the rigging with his lethal left footed drive.

And the umpire had scarcely lowered the green flag when Michael Hegarty who won possession from the kick out found Brian McLaughlin on the edge of the area and from close range the corner forward made no mistake. And from being three points down the home team found themselves three in front for the first time, with a little under nine minutes left on the clock.

All of a sudden Donegal who had lived dangerously in the first half found themselves in the driving seat. But driven on by Peter Reilly, Anthony Forde and Dermot McCabe, Cavan showed their true metal when it was put up to them. And it was the industry of that trio that set Jason Reilly up for their goal. Reilly, rising highest in a

crowded goal mouth, flicked the ball past Tony Blake for the crucial goal that had eluded them all afternoon to edge the Breffni side back in front by the minimum margin.

Jim McGuinness tied up the game once more and with the draw looming both sides had the opportunity for the winner in the closing seven minutes. But it was Tierney that stepped into the breach and the midfielder polishing

off a sweeping move in injury time to land the winning point.

Cavan: James Reilly; Barry McGahon, Colm Hannon, Mark McKeever; Paul Galligan, Peter Reilly, Anthony Forde; Dermot McCabe (0-7), John Tierney (0-2); Paul Brady (0-1), Larry Reilly (0-1), Sean Maguire; Jason Reilly (1-2), Michael Graham, Gerald Pearson. Subs: Thomas Prior for B.McGahon, Keith Fannin for S. Maguire both at half-time; Enda King for M.Graham.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Shane Carr, Eamon Doherty, Noel McGinely; Damian Diver (0-2), Raymond Sweeney, Niall McCready; Jim McGuinness (0-3,1F), Paul McGonagle; Christy Toye, Michael Hegarty (0-2), Kevin Rafferty; James Gallagher, Adrian Sweeney (1-2,1F), Brian McLaughlin (1-0). Subs: James Ruane for P. McGonagle; Johnny McCafferty for J. Gallagher; Brian Roper for C. Toye.

Referee, Darren Ward (Monaghan).

Michael Hegarty: Another top class display from the Kilcar man who foraged far and wide and was the real play maker in attack. And as well as hitting two points himself, he also provided the final ball for both goals. 9

Bank of Ireland Ulster Senior Football Championship

Pathetic Donegal

crash out



FERMANAGH.....0-10 DONEGAL.....0-6

Donegal's dark horse rating turned a whiter shade of pale in the rain on Sunday afternoon in Brewster Park, as Fermanagh ended the Tir Chonaill 2003 Ulster Championship dream.

Tom Comack reports from Brewster Park

Photos by Thomas Gallagher

There have been bad Donegal performances before in the championship but this one must rank up there with the worst of them. From the first whistle to the last they lacked cohesion and purpose and simply were but a shadow of the team that had the county dreaming the dream again last summer.

Okay the loss of Brendan Devenney eleven minutes into the tie was a fatal blow, but they were not playing the All Ireland champions or, for that matter contenders, for that honour. No disrespect to Fermanagh, and while accepting they are no longer the whipping boys of Ulster, they are not world beaters. And to be brutally honest they showed that on Sunday, as they struggled to fall over the line, their sheer hunger and determination eventually seeing them through.

Fermanagh fans must be still coming to terms with the fact that despite dominating the exchanges from start to finish they only finally closed the

door in the closing five minutes with the two late points. For believe it or not Donegal were still hanging in there as the clock crossed the sixty five minute mark, just two points adrift.

The only consolation for the Erneside faithful as they look ahead to an Ulster semi final showdown with the winners of next weekend's clash between Monaghan and Down is that they will have Justin Gilheaney, Tom Brewster and Kieran Donnelly back in action. Brewster and Donnelly were their top scorers in the National Football League while Gilheaney was their regular centre half back. The loss of three such pivotal players is a blow to any team but in Fermanagh's case it weakened them considerably.

It probably does go some way in explaining why the defeat and, in particular, the margin was not a whole lot more embarrassing for Donegal.

I have no doubt that Fermanagh boss Dominic Corrigan will do a fair share of tossing and turning when he reflects on this game and the fact that his team had only four points to spare at the finish.

Statistics

Statistics never lie, and the numbers from this game just about paint the true picture. Fermanagh hit six points in the first half, Donegal four, and the Maguire county added four more to their tally in the second period while Donegal added two. And to complete the canopy a quick glance at the wides tally may be even

more enlightening. In the course of the seventy five minutes the winners shot thirteen wides to Donegal's seven. Eight of Fermanagh's total were clocked up in the first period while Donegal missed the target just once in that first half - Brian Roper driving wide two minutes into injury time. As the saying goes every picture tells a story.

Double the winning margin would not have flattered they Maguire county who showed a greater appetite and made up for their weaknesses with sheer grit and determination. And while they have room for improvement they looked by far the better drilled outfit and had much more variety to the play.

The ghosts of last summer's replay collapse to the Dubs hangs like a dark cloud over this Donegal team. And while there is always the back door Brian McEniff has his hands full to resurrect his troops in six days after failing to turn things around in six weeks after a disastrous league showing. That end of campaign league win over Roscommon may yet prove to be the dreaded one swallow summer.

Sunday night's qualifier draw may have been kind enough but newly promoted Longford will not be easy nut to crack, even on home soil.

Despite the fact that Paul Brewster and Marty McGrath lorded the midfield area from the off, the opening ten minutes were Donegal's best. In fact they lead on nine minutes when Brian Roper kicked a brilliant point after a great run from John Haran. Adrian Sweeney had twice levelled proceedings to cancel out the earlier strikes from Ronan McCabe and Stephen Maguire.

The sides were level for the third and last time on ten minutes, when McCabe split the posts after being set

up by Stephen Maguire.

But despite proving very extravagant in the second quarter Fermanagh were in front 0-6 to 0-4 at the break - Raymond Gallagher and McCabe finding the target while Adrian Sweeney kept Donegal in touch with a pointed free.

And with Brewster and McGrath still holding their vice like grip on the game at midfield, the second half was very much a repeat of the first with the quality of the play deteriorating to an alarmingly poor level. Brewster must have been very lucky to stay on the park after his swipe at John Gildea at the second half throw-in.

Stephen Maguire, Raymond Gallagher and Ronan McCabe did the damage in the first half and it was this trio that again turned the screw in the second though McCabe was a little less effective.

Fermanagh were reduced to fourteen men fifteen minutes from time when Colm Bradley picked up his second yellow of the afternoon for a late challenge on Damien Diver and Brian Roper joined him in the sin bin on the stroke of time.

Maguire and Gallagher hit all of Fermanagh's second half scores and it was fitting that that this duo should finally close the door with two late strikes. Gallagher's from a free and Maguire which was the score of the match from play.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Damien Diver, Eamonn Reddin, Niall McCready; Raymond Sweeney, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy; John Gildea, Jim McGuinness; Christy Toye, Michael Hegarty, John Haran; Adrian Sweeney 0-4, three frees), Brendan Devenney, Brian Roper (0-1). Subs: James Ruane for J. McCafferty 34 min.; Noel McGinley for K. Cassidy, 54 min.; Colm McFadden (0-1) for C. Toye, 54 min.; Stephen McDermott for J. Haran 60 min..

Fermanagh: Ronan Gallagher; Neil Cox, Barry Owens, Michael Lilley; Ryan McCloskey, Kieran Gallagher, Shane McDermott; Paul Brewster, Marty McGrath; Colm Bradley, Raymond Gallagher (0-4,2F), Raymond Johnson; Ronan McCabe (0-3,1F), Stephen Maguire (0-3,1F), Ryan Keenan. Subs: James Sherry for R. Johnson 65 min.; Ciaran O Reilly for Ryan Keenan, 70 min.

Referee: Seamus McCormick (Meath)

B.O.I. All Ireland Qualifiers 1st. round

Donegal.....	1-17
Longford.....	1-11

Donegal footballers are walking tall this week again following Saturday evenings victory over Longford in Sean MacCumhail Park, Ballybofey.

And quiet rightly too. After the disappointing Ulster championship showing against Fermanagh six days earlier in Brewster Park, they turned it around big time in this All Ireland Qualifier first round tie. Billed as a do or die game, Brian McEniff and his charges most definitely redeemed themselves in front of the bigger than anticipated Donegal faithful that turned out to support them on the day.

While the margin of the victory might be a little flattering in the end, it was nonetheless thoroughly deserved. And all concerned can now look forward to the next round with renewed confidence.

A season that looked doomed following last weeks capitulation to Fermanagh and a disastrous league campaign could at long last be showing some promise.

Came good

After dicing with death in the first half, Donegal really came good in the second period posting 0-11 to Longford's 1-3. Now there's a statistic that tells its own story.

While Adrian Sweeney stole the show in that second period with five fabulous points to add the three he scored in the opening thirty five minutes, goalkeeper Tony Blake was his sides saviour. The St. Eunan's man

pulled off two top class saves one in each half, and in no small way made a telling contribution in what must rank up there with his finest games in the county's colours.

He first came to his sides rescue in the middle of the first half to deny Paul Barden with a full length dive. With the game delicately poised on seventeen minutes and the Midlander's who were enjoying a good spell trailing by a point this was a crucial stop. And again three minutes into the second half, he was off his line like a greyhound to dive at the feet of Trevor Smullen just as the wing forward was about to pull the trigger.

A goal in either of those occasions would have propelled Longford into the lead and who knows how a low in confidence home team would have responded.

Less you would think this was a two man show far from it. Stephen McDermott may have tired in the closing quarter but he clocked up a lot of miles up and down MacCumahill Park and polished off his home debut and first full start with a goal and a point. The goal a real gem coming as it did on four minutes and was a real shot in the arm to the team.

Noel McGinley adopted well to the full back role and restricted danger man Niall Sheridan to a goal. Damian Diver did well at corner back Shane Carr, Raymond Sweeney and late call up Barry Monaghan also did well in defence. John Gildea worked hard throughout helping out at the back and he also got through some good work in the middle of the park.

Up front Brian Roper worked his socks off and it was his doggedness that set up McDermott for the goal. Kevin Rafferty showed in flashes, while Colum McFadden did not set the world alight from play, he did convert three long range frees. Jim McGuinness produced an illuminating display and showed that when it comes to it, its hard to beat experience in a tight corner.

Under pressure

Despite being under pressure for long periods in the first half Donegal were in front at the break 1-6 to 0-8. Michael Hegarty (2), Adrian Sweeney (3) and Brian Roper (1) with the points.

Pauric Davis who opened the scoring, and Liam Keenan with two each, Paul Barden and Trevor Smullen the Longford marksmen. Smullen strike on twenty three minutes giving his side the lead for only the second time in the game.

But that was as good as it was to get for the visitors as Donegal spurred on by Blake's great second half save turned the screw with two converted frees from Adrian Sweeney and Colm McFadden to stretch their lead out to four points. And while Davis reduced the margin to two points again 1-9 to 0-10, Donegal pulled away again and were five points clear 1-12 to 0-10 as the clock ticked into the last quarter.

Niall Sheridan's super goal with seventeen minutes remaining threw the visitors a lifeline. In a real wham bang and wallop, Sheridan grabbed the ball high above Noel McGinley and with his back to the goal, he had turned and the ball was in the net before he hit the ground.

But with the scent of victory in their nostrils Donegal were not going to be denied and they sealed the win with five points to Longford's one in the closing exchanges. Sweeney with three, Brian Roper and Stephen McDermott with one each.

While this was not a flawless performance it was a marked improvement in the Fermanagh one. And one achieved without top forward and international rules star Brendan Devenney and All Star defender Kevin Cassidy. Devenney was sidelined with the injury while Cassidy was dropped just before the game for a breach of discipline.

DONEGAL: Tony Blake; Niall McCready, Noel McGinley, Damian Diver; Shane Carr, Raymond Sweeney.

Barry Monaghan; John Gildea, Stephen McDermott (1-1); Kevin Rafferty, Michael Hegarty (0-2,1F), John Haran; Colm McFadden (0-3,F), Adrian Sweeney (0-8,1F), Brian Roper (0-2); Subs: Jim McGuinness for J. Haran, 39 min, J. McCafferty (0-1,F) for M. Hegarty, 45 min.; C. Toye for K. Rafferty 70 min.:

LONGFORD: Gavin Tonra; Dermot Brady, John Kenny, Fintan Coyle; Martin

Mulleady, Enda Ledwith, Arthur O' Connor; John O' Callaghan, Liam Keenan (0-4); Trevor Smullen (0-1), Paul Barden (0-1), Mark Lennon; Jamesie Martin, Niall Sheridan (1-0) Pauric Davis (0-5,2F); Subs: Pauric Shanley for M. Kenny 33 min. Mark Kenny for J. O., Callaghan (halftime), Colin Hanniffy for P. Martin, 62 min, Michael Kelly for P. Shanley, 66 min:

REFEREE: D. Joyce (Galway)

Key Moment

This game had a number of twists and turns Stephen McDermott's goal on four minutes was a key score. Tony Blake's first half save to deny Paul Barden was another key moment as was Blake's save just after the start of the second half. But when it came down to it for me the real turning point was Donegal two points before half time. Brian Roper hit the first on the half hour mark to tie the game up 1-5 to 0-8 and Adrian Sweeney struck the second on the stroke of half-time. It must have been a real heartbreak for Longford go go in a point down having played so well.

Man of Match

Adrian Sweeney gets the nod just ahead of Tony Blake who pulled off two brilliant match winning saves, one in each half.

Captain Sweeney lead from the front with eight glorious points seven of them from play. After a quiet opening thirty five minutes he really sprang to life in the second half and was first out to every ball to give his marker a torrid time. He also landed five magical points in this period to break Longford hearts

Democrat Sport

All-Ireland Football Qualifier

DONEGAL 0-16
SLIGO 0-11

A wonderful midfield display along with scoring machine, Adrian Sweeney, eased Donegal into the next round of the Qualifiers at MacCumhaill Park, Ballybofey on Sunday.

Peter Campbell reports from MacCumhaill Park

Photos by Michael O'Donnell

Before a huge crowd of approximately 15,000 Donegal answered some of the questions that were asked last week. Their hunger and resolve was much too strong for a Sligo side that were leaderless at times. Indeed, the result was followed by the resignation of manager, Peter Ford, later on Sunday evening.

The platform for the Donegal victory was laid at midfield where, after a shaky opening, young Stephen McDermott excelled while John Gildea seems to have taken his cue from the Glenfin man to rediscover his best form.

McDermott kicked three wonderful points - two of them after great runs through the middle in the first half - while Gildea worked tirelessly. He retired to the sideline minutes from the end and was nursing a bruised shoulder, a legacy of the many challenges he had been involved in during the game.

Young McDermott is a breath of fresh air to the side. His swashbuckling running and accuracy has given the side a new string to their bow, and by the end of the game many of the players were taking their cue from them and the confidence - so clearly missing for most of the 2003 - was beginning to show once more.

What may be a worry for the Donegal side is that they were very dependant on Adrian Sweeney for their scores. The Dungloe man is beginning to find his feet again after injury and had the Sligo full-back line in real trouble. However, his accomplishments in the front line were less than impressive in the scoring stakes.

Fifty five minutes had elapsed before any other forward scored from play - substitute John Haran being set

up well by Brian Roper.

In the next seven minutes Roper and Jim McGuinness also chipped in, but that was when the game was in the bag. Sweeney will need more help in this regard as the opposition gets tighter.

The dependance on Sweeney was very clear in the first half. The second half saw an improvement with Jim McGuinness getting through a good half at centre-half forward.

At the other end of the field Donegal can be happy with their performance. Raymond Sweeney slotted in well at full-back and although he was knocked off the ball on a couple of occasions, he had a steady game.

Elsewhere when the pressure came on in the second half the Donegal defence stood firm with Shane Carr having a really good second half.

Wasteful

The opening minutes were dominated by Sligo but their inaccuracy really let them down. There was almost a repeat of last year's Ulster final opening with a high ball troubling Tony Blake and the crossbar. Luckily Gerry McGowan was unable to hold possession from the rebound and the chance was gone.

Donegal were ahead after nine minutes, Adrian Sweeney scoring from a free and from play to cancel out Dessie Sloyan's early free.

Sligo were ahead again with points from Michael McNamara and another Sloyan free, but two wonderful points from midfielder Stephen McDermott put Donegal back into a lead by the 22nd minute, a lead they were never to relinquish.

Adrian Sweeney increased the lead to 0-5 to 0-3 and it could have been extended much further in the next five minutes. Both John Gildea

and Stephen Cassidy broke through, but both finishing efforts were wide of the goal. Cassidy's chance was probably not a goal chance and he probably should have taken a point.

Before half-time Dessie Sloyan and Gerry McGowan traded points with Michael Hegarty (free) and a brilliantly worked Adrian Sweeney point from play, while in added time John McPartland had the final Sligo point to leave the half-time score: Donegal 0-8, Sligo 0-6.

Sligo, obviously feeling under pressure, made two changes at half-time, Kieran Quinn and Patrick Naughton replacing Karol O'Neill and Brendan Phillips.

They had a great chance to reduce the leeway with Nigel Clancy blazed wide. Donegal availed of an 'soft' free at the other end with Adrian Sweeney pointing. However, Sligo hit back with Sloyan pointing a free and David Durkin coming through to leave just a point between the sides after 40 minutes.

However, the next ten minutes saw Donegal open the gap to four points with Michael Hegarty (free), Adrian Sweeney and then Stephen McDermott again firing over from distance.

Although Sligo pulled a point back through Kieran Quinn, further points from John Haran (2), Brian Roper and Jim McGuinness had Donegal out of sight by 0-16 to 0-9 with just eight minutes left.

Donegal did not register again but they limited Sligo to just two points, both from 13m frees which they fired for goals, Dessie Sloyan and

Eamon O'Hara pointing.

O'Hara was clearly struggling with injury even though he completed the game. There were flashes of his brilliance and he won a number of frees, but his free running and presence around the middle of the field robbed Sligo of their biggest threat.

The win gives Donegal another lift in their rehabilitation. This win will make it easy for them to train hard for the next outing in two weeks time and they can look forward to the draw on Sunday next.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Niall McCready, Raymond Sweeney, Damien Diver; Shane Carr, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy; John Gildea, Stephen McDermott (0-3); Christy Toye, Brian Roper (0-1), Jim McGuinness (0-1); Colm McFadden, Adrian Sweeney (0-7, three frees), Michael Hegarty (0-2, frees). Subs., John Haran (0-2) for Toye (49 mins.); John McCafferty for McFadden (63 mins.); James Ruane for Gildea (68 mins.) Blood sub., Noel McGinley for B. Monaghan.

Sligo: James Curran; Philip Gallagher, Neil Carew, Brendan Phillips; David Durkin (0-1), Padraig Doohan, Noel McGuire; Paul Durcan, Nigel Clancy; Karol O'Neill, John McPartland (0-1), Eamon O'Hara (0-1, free); Dessie Sloyan (0-5, all frees), Michael McNamara (0-1), Gerry McGowan (0-1). Subs., Kieran Quinn (0-1) for O'Neill; Patrick Naughton for Phillips (both half-time); Mark Brehony for McPartland (56 mins.)

Referee: Brian White (Wexford).

Turning Point

It is difficult to know where the real turning point in this game was. Sligo were making a comeback early in the second half when Gerry McGowan blazed wide from no more than 20m. Donegal then hit three points without reply in one of their best periods of the game.

The four point gap gave them the confidence to go on and win the game comfortably.

Man of the match

There were three main contenders on the Donegal side - midfielders McDermott and Gildea and full-forward Sweeney. McDermott is a breath of fresh air to the side with his free-running, while Gildea worked his socks off throughout.

However, Adrian Sweeney was magnificent, scoring seven points. One of his scores came from a McDermott pass which he picked up of his ankles, swivelled and pointed. His display edges the decision and the award goes to Adrian Sweeney.

Ref watch

It was a long journey from Wexford for Brian White and he would not be regarded as one of Donegal's luckiest referees. Indeed, I cannot remember Donegal winning a game in which he was in charge.

In this game he stamped his authority on the game early on with five first half bookings. Overall he had a good game in what was a game where the spotlight was always on playing football.

All-Ireland Qualifier, Round 3

by Peter Campbell

Donegal head to Croke Park on Saturday to play Tipperary (2.15) but their biggest threat may come from within.

The draw has been kind to them and the biggest worry for the manager and mentors this week will be that the players will succumb to the belief that Tipperary may not present the stiffest of challenges.

The Munster county have been on the fringes of the province for much of their footballing lives, although they were a force in football in the early years of the GAA, winning four All-Ireland titles, the last being in 1920.

However, in recent times their days in the footballing limelight have been few, reaching Munster finals mostly whenever Cork and Kerry were drawn in early rounds. You have to go back to 1935 to find their last Munster title - a year in which Donegal and Tipperary met in an All-Ireland minor semi-final.

The most recent encounter between the counties came in the Spring of 1993 when Donegal, as All-Ireland champions, travelled to Semple Stadium, Thurles for a League encounter. Despite Donegal's

lofty position, Tipperary made them fight all the way that day with Donegal winning by 1-12 to 1-9 in the finish and glad to escape with the points.

Another memorable encounter between the sides took place in late 1980 when the Tipperary men came to Ballyshannon on the occasion of Martin McHugh's intercounty debut with Donegal winning by 1-15 to 0-5.

When you talk about Tipperary of the present, you remember their exploits last year when they almost toppled Cork in the Munster decider. Indeed, they probably should have been awarded the crown as Cork had transgressed in the number of substitutes used.

With the element of surprise gone, they were hammered in the replay, but they had put themselves on the footballing map.

TALENT

There was no surprise, however, about the talent which they have in the form of lethal

forward, Declan Browne, the main reason why Tipperary are still involved in the All-Ireland football championship.

To date he has almost single-handedly disposed of both Waterford in the Munster Championship and Carlow in the Qualifier, scoring 0-11 and 1-9 in the respective matches.

In between he contributed 1-5 to his side's 1-10 total as they were outclassed by Kerry in the Munster semi-final. Put together, that is a total of 2-25 or thirty one points, an average of over TEN points per game!

Browne, an All-Star corner forward in 1998, has proved himself to be a real star and he is looking forward to playing his first senior match in Croke Park.

"In Tipperary, we don't set our dreams too high. Getting to play in Croke Park would be right up there with a Munster final or title. And we are going to go out and do ourselves justice. We will probably never get this opportunity again."

Browne, who has played at GAA headquarters on four occasions as a minor, admitted that he had been resigned to playing the game at a midlands venue.

"I have been eight years playing on the senior team without getting a sniff of Croke

Park, so this is amazing. I think the GAA have to be commended for giving us this venue.

"It is a recognition that we put in the same amount of commitment into our football as anyone else, and this has been the reward for the effort that we have put in over the last few years," he notes.

BIG DAY

Browne, however, bemoans the fact that some of Tipperary's more established players will miss the game through injury. "It is a shame that the likes of Peter Lambert and Sean Maher are going to miss this. They have been as responsible as anyone else for getting us there. But, whatever happens, it's going to be a great day for Tipperary football."

It will also be a big day for Donegal - they might have had three days in Croker last year, but those visits have been few and far between in the last five or six years.

They can also learn from last year's experience and the experience gained should be of great benefit to them.

Who would have believed in Brewster Park on Sunday, June 1st that we would be making this trip on Saturday? Who would have believed that we would have unearthed a new talent at

midfield in Stephen McDermott, and Saturday's game for him will surely be the stuff of dreams.

Being part of a brilliant double header with Dublin and Armagh should also add to the occasion. Getting the team to train this week should be the easiest task in the world for Anthony Harkin.

Manager, Brian McEniff said he was looking forward to getting the side together on Tuesday evening: "We are probably training harder than other teams because we started late. However, it should not be difficult to get them working this week," he said.

The manager said that they would probably have to plan without Noel McGinley, who was unfortunate to pick up a hamstring injury in training last week.

RUANE BACK

It is hoped that James Ruane will be back on the bench after injuring his ankle in a Dublin league match.

"The only cover we have in defence at the moment is Michael Gurn and Dessie McNamara, while Brendan Boyle is beginning to challenge at midfield," said McEniff.

The manager said he was getting some background

material on Tipperary this week as he had not seen them play in the flesh. He agreed that Browne presents a very big challenge for the county.

"He's the Peter Canavan of Tipperary," he said.

The manager felt that Donegal would start Brendan Devenney but he was not sure what the line-up would be up front.

"We have a few selection problems. We will be trying to factor in the way Tipperary play and the way we would like to play. They are a big strong side," he said.

While Donegal can be happy with their opponents, the same could be said about Tipperary. I'm sure prior to Sunday night's draw, Tipperary would have been hoping to avoid Armagh, Dublin and Meath. They will be looking at Saturday's game with a degree of confidence. It will be their first game in Croke Park in over twenty years and they have nothing to lose.

Donegal, on the other hand, must carry the tag of being strong favourites. They should be capable of the task, but they might learn a little more about themselves as a result. It surely will be the first time they have carried that tag going into Croke Park!

DONEGAL ONE

Donegal 2-19, Tipperary 0-15

OF THE DOZEN!

by Peter Campbell

Tuesday, 8th July, 2003 -

Democrat Sport

Donegal are into the final dozen in the All-Ireland Championship but they will need to improve to go further.

Donegal squeezed into Round 4 of the Qualifiers with a flattering ten point victory over Tipperary that asked as many questions as it answered.

In the end Donegal won comfortably but they survived a couple of scares in the second half as the Munster side in the shape of Declan Browne, opened up the Donegal defence and they can thank Tony Blake for a marvellous stop to keep them on track.

Donegal mixed some very good play with some woeful shooting in a game played in a surreal atmosphere. There were less than 10,000 in GAA headquarters for the opening contest of a double header, most of them from Donegal.

Donegal enjoyed dominance in most areas and opened brightly with three points in five minutes. But poor shooting saw them hit nine first half wides. Those misses kept Tipperary in a game which could have been out of sight by the interval.

The main Tipperary threat came, as expected, from Declan Browne, who had four first half points and a few misses as well.

When Donegal reached half-time just a point in front (0-8 to 0-7) you knew it was going to be one of those days when nerve ends were going to be stretched.

That was certainly the case as Tipperary edged a point in front on two occasions before eleven minutes of the second half had elapsed.

Even when Donegal edged two points back in front Tipperary refused to throw in the towel, Declan Browne just failing to get on the end of a goal chance and then creating a gilt-edged chance for his corner-forward colleague, Damian O'Brien. Donegal can be thankful that he elected to take possession as it gave Tony Blake the time to make a great stop.

With ten minutes left the margin was just two points before Brendan Devenney sealed victory with a well-taken goal.

Compared to the second contest between Armagh and Dublin, Donegal's game was more like a challenge game. The intensity was not the same, although Donegal did

raise their game when needed. They had seven more wides in the second half to add to their first half tally of nine. Most of those, especially in the first half, were reasonable chances.

The nature of the game is best told in the fact that there were just two yellow cards issued - Adrian Sweeney getting one for Donegal, while Aidan Fitzgerald was booked for a high challenge on Damien Diver.

It was evident early on that Adrian Sweeney and Brendan Devenney were able to win ball off their markers, but Donegal persisted in carrying the ball through midfield and right up to the 20m line. The result was that Adrian Sweeney was starved of possession and had to come looking for the ball, well away from the danger area.

Tipperary were very well organised, taking quick kick outs and free kicks. Their main plan was to isolate Browne up front and they must have been really happy to go in at the break just a point adrift, after getting about 30% of the first half possession.

Inspiration

In truth Donegal's inability to put them away gave them inspiration and Browne showed that he is a class act, ending with a total of 0-9, kicking points of his left and right and also fisting one near the end.

It wasn't as if the Donegal defence were playing badly. Raymond Sweeney had a good game on Browne - probably as good as any defender could do. Damien Diver was superb.

The main Donegal problem was in translating their huge amount of possession into scores. In the end they engineered a goal and suddenly they were able to score a will.

Donegal could learn a lot from the Tipperary organisation. They had limited ability - Browne being their ace; two big midfielders, but they played to their maximum. Donegal did a lot of good things and certainly carried the ball well, but there has to

be some organisation at the end of these forays, especially getting Adrian Sweeney on the ball more often.

There were positive aspects of the game also from a Donegal perspective. Michael Hegarty showed a return to form and was instrumental in many of the match-winning moves in the second half. He also fired over three points although he also had a few bad misses.

The return of Brendan Devenney was also significant, although it was the goal which put his stamp on the game. Stephen McDermott again contributed three points after a couple of first half misses to prove that he has character, especially playing in Croke Park for the first time.

The win puts Donegal into the last twelve in the All-Ireland Championships. They have improved a little with every game but they must know that they will have to improve significantly to reach the quarter-finals.

The display would not have set the world on fire and they will probably be rated as outsiders no matter who they draw in the final round of Qualifiers. However, they are getting stronger and they showed some resolve when it was put up to them in the second half on Saturday last.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Niall McCready, Raymond Sweeney, Damien Diver; Shane Carr, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy; John Gildea, Stephen McDermott (0-3); Jim McGuinness, Michael Hegarty (0-3), Brian Roper (1-2); Johnny McCafferty (0-1), Adrian Sweeney (0-5, one free), Brendan Devenney (1-4, three frees). Subs., Colm McFadden (0-1) for McCafferty (47 mins.); John Haran for McGuinness (52 mins.); Dessie McNamara for Devenney (70 mins.)

Tipperary: Philly Ryan; Robbie Costigan, Sean Collum, Liam Cronin; Patrick Hally, Declan Fanning, Niall Fitzgerald (0-1); Fergal O'Callaghan (0-1), Eamon Hanrahan (0-2); Aidan Fitzgerald, Kevin Mulryan, Paul Cahill; Damian O'Brien (0-2), Declan Browne (0-9, four frees), Benny Hickey. Subs., John Shanahan for Hickey (27 mins.); James Williams for Shanahan (56 mins.); Bernard Hahessy for N. Fitzgerald (70 mins.)

Referee: P. Fox (Westmeath).

Man of Match

There was one obvious candidate - Declan Browne of Tipperary was a joy to watch, with his lovely balance and accuracy. Damien Diver was Donegal's best while John Gildea and Tony Blake were also in the running. However, Browne was an easy choice.

Turning Point

The main turning point came when Declan Browne got inside Raymond Sweeney nineteen minutes into the second half. Donegal were ahead by 0-14 to 0-12 at the time. Browne unselfishly laid on a great chance for Damian O'Brien. He could have palmed the ball to the net but decided to make sure and took possession. Tony Blake advanced and made a great save. You could have only imagined what would have happened if it had been Browne on the end of the move.

Ref Watch

It was an easy game for Westmeath referee Pat Fox as both teams concentrated on playing football. He had a reasonable good game in the circumstances.

Michael Hegarty: Started at centre-forward but found it hard to hit the target. Blossomed when moved to wing-forward in the second half. 7

DONEGAL ONE

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Donegal are into the final dozen in the All-Ireland Championship but they will need to improve to go further.



SPORT 3

Bank of Ireland All-Ireland Fourth Round Qualifier

DONEGAL3-15
DOWN2-10

Donegal are back exactly where they were this time last year - in the All Ireland quarter-final with another crack at a place in the last four in the country.

Tom Comack reports from Clones
Photos by Conor McGonagle

Not bad for a team that came away from Brewster Park in Enniskillen with their heads hanging low and morale down at their boots. Now, whether they have what it takes to get past Connacht champions Galway remains to be seen.

Despite Saturday evening's comprehensive eight point victory, there still remains a doubt about this team.

But one thing for sure, Saturday's game once again proved, if proof was needed, that Donegal have an attacking unit as good as is around. And in particular the twin threat of Adrian Sweeney and Brendan Devenney is a very potent one.

Devenney and Sweeney tore Down's hopes of football redemption to shreds, as they hit 0-10 between them and had a hand in everything that was good about Donegal. They also combined to set up two of the three goals.

Devenney injury

Little wonder then, there was an audible gasp from the green-and-gold decked army when Devenney hit the deck six minutes from time. He limped out of the action shortly afterwards with a knee injury. No surprise either, that Brian McEniff looked a worried man as he headed for the dressing room at the finish to inquire as to the extent of the damage.

With Sweeney and Devenney on song, and last year's playmaker Michael Hegarty re-discovering his 2002 form, Donegal were looking good from very early. Hegarty, especially in the first half, was back to his brilliant best, as he prodded and probed and delivered good quality ball to the inside men. And not happy with that, he was always willing to make himself available to help out near goals.

It was on one such foray that he coolly slotted past Michael McVeigh to give

Donegal the dream start six minutes into the game. John Gildea, too, was back to something approaching his excellent best. His long, raking deliveries were manna from heaven for the bang in-form Devenney and Sweeney.

Concern

While things worked a treat up front, the concession of 2-10 is a cause of some concern and the reason why the jury is still out.

The Down attack may have a number of good individual forwards, but their problem is that they played as individuals and not as a team. Yet, despite all of this, they ran up a score that on another day could have seen them get the result.

In defence of the Donegal rearguard, they were for a good part of the game playing behind a struggling midfield sector. Hard to believe given the contributions of John Gildea and Stephen McDermott. But Gildea, whether by order or of his own choice, is playing deep and therefore leaving McDermott to man the pumps alone at midfield.

The Donegal full-back line in particular had a torrid afternoon, and looked very uncomfortable under the high ball. And the half line was only marginally better. Down may have been playing as individuals and with a leg weariness that comes with three highly-charged games in as many weeks, but still they could have punished Donegal even further. They missed a number of chances that on another day they would have scored.

Even at that, but for Stephen McDermott's third goal nine minutes into the second half it could have been anxious closing ten minutes or so for the Donegal faithful.

To be fair though, Donegal always

seemed to be able to pull away again any time Down threatened. This was especially evident in the closing minutes of the first half.

Just before this, Down hit a purple patch to post 1-2 without reply and cut Donegal's six point advantage to single score with ten minutes left to the break. But Donegal just seemed to hit another gear again and by half-time they were well out of sight again, as they led 2-9 to 1-4.

That second Donegal goal was a gift, Down keeper McVeigh failing to hold a Christy Toye attempt for a point. Even so, and without the keeper's clanger, Donegal had already clipped over four points in a three minute spell to show who were the masters.

And, while Down gave as good as they got in the opening minutes of the second period, it looked game set and match to Donegal when Stephen McDermott strolled through from fifty metres to plant the ball in the back of McVeigh's net within nine minutes of the restart. The score was now Donegal 3-11 to Down's 1-7.

A second down goal from Brendan Coulter, two minutes into the second quarter of the half, did raise Mourne hopes and spirits and reduce the margin down to six points.

But all Donegal had to do was to match them score for score until the finish and that they did until John Gildea and Michael Hegarty popped up to hit a late brace to stretch the margin out to eight.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Niall McCready, Raymond Sweeney, Mark Crossan; Shane Carr, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy; John Gildea (0-1), Stephen McDermott (1-1); Christy Toye (1-1), Michael Hegarty (1-1), Brian Roper (0-1); Jim McGuinness, Adrian Sweeney (0-6,2F), Brendan Devenney (0-4,2F): Subs: John Haran for J. McGuinness, 43 min.; Brendan Boyle for M. Crossan inj. 63 min.; Johnny McCafferty for B. Devenney inj. 64 min.;

Down: Michael McVeigh; Martin Cole, Brian Burns, John Clarke; Brendan Grant (0-3), Sean Ward, John Lavery; Alan Molloy, Liam Doyle (0-2F); Ronan Sexton (0-1), Michael Walsh (0-1), Brendan Coulter (1-1); Shane Ward (1-0), Aidan O'Prey, Ronan Murtagh (0-1): Subs: Daniel Hughes (0-1) for R. Murtagh 22 min.; Aidan Scullion for S. Ward, 37 min.; Shane Mullholland for John Clarke, 48 min.; Michael Higgins A.O' Prey, 50 min.; James McCartan for M. Walsh, 55 min.: **Referee:** Gerry Kinneavy (Roscommon).

Michael Hegarty: An excellent game from the Kilcar man and it is looking very much like when Hegarty plays well, Donegal play well. He won loads of breaking ball out around midfield and made very good use of all the possession. He did well to score the goal as he had a lot of work to do when Sweeney set him on his way and he polished of the day with a superb point at the finish. 8

All-Ireland Football quarter-final

DONEGAL0-14
GALWAY1-11

REPORT: DIARMAID DOHERTY
 PHOTOS: CONOR MC GONAGLE

Donegal and Galway must meet again this Saturday after yesterday afternoon's thrilling All Ireland quarter final ended level at Croke Park.

This was an epic struggle that served up yet another memorable championship cliff-hanger. A year to the day from last year's draw with Dublin, Donegal produced another hugely impressive performance that probably should have earned them what would have been a famous championship scalp.

And as was the case 12 months ago, Donegal will feel they should have won this game - even though they fought back after trailing by four points late on.

They matched Galway for passion and commitment in all areas of the park and the ploy of utilising Paul McGonigle as a third midfielder once again worked a treat. For once Donegal hadn't to rely on their front paring of Sweeney and Devenney for all the scores with McGonigle, Roper, Michael Hegarty and Kevin Cassidy all chipping in with important points.

The defence also played their part. The Galway frontline, such a lethal force, were forced to feed on scraps throughout and for long periods of the game, Galway struggled to find their range. Niall McCreeady, Raymond Sweeney and Kevin Cassidy were particularly impressive at the back.

Donegal, after a blistering start, allowed Galway back into the contest by giving away a nightmare goal.

And while they trailed for long periods in the second half, Donegal showed a steely resolve to keep in touch with their opponents before eventually drawing level in the dying minutes.

Substitute John Haran kicked a wonderful point two minutes before the end of normal time to put Donegal in front but a minute into injury time, Kevin Walsh lofted over an almighty score to ensure the game would finish level.

Goal

Galway's goal, which came ten minutes before half time, brought the 'Tribesmen' back level after they were totally outplayed by Donegal in the opening quarter. The Donegal scores had come in quick succession with four of the six forwards on the mark and Kevin Cassidy popping over a wonderful score from half back.

Galway looked completely at sea but they were gifted a goal when John Gildea's loose handpass in front of goal was pounced on by an opponent and Michael Donnellan's pass found Michael Meehan who shot past Tony Blake.

It was a costly error but Donegal had their chances to go in at the break ahead. However, some wayward kicking at goal - Donegal

kicked six bad wides in a row - ensured that Galway led at half time, 1-5 to 0-7.

Paul McGonigle, who was a revelation at centre field, kicked the sides level less than a minute after the re-start. But Donegal were never able to get their noses in front and Galway took the chances that came their way - Padraig Joyce hitting two second half frees and Declan Meehan kicking a wonderful point from wide on the right.

Midway through the second half, Galway stretched their lead out to four points for the first time and the pressure appeared to be mounting for Donegal.

But McEniff's men responded well and two quick frees from Brendan Devenney brought them right back into the contest once again. Adrian Sweeney then kicked a glorious point from wide on the left before McGonigle showed class and confidence to calmly stroke over the equalising score with just four minutes of normal time remaining.

Haran point

Both teams made a string of substitutions in the closing period and it was one of those replacements, John Haran, who looked to have won the match when he drove over from close range.

Almost immediately the same player was through on goal again but chose to pass when a point appeared to be on and the chance was wasted.

Within the space of two minutes, Galway had drawn level thanks to Kevin Walsh's long range point and despite three minutes of injury time, the sides could not be separated.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Niall McCreeady, Raymond Sweeney, Mark Crossan; Shane Carr, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy (0-1); John Gildea, Stephen McDermott; Christy Toye, Michael Hegarty (0-1), Paul McGonigle (0-2); Brian Roper (0-1), Adrian Sweeney (0-3, 2f), Brendan Devenney (0-5, 2f). SUB: Jim McGuinness for McDermott (half time), Damien Diver for Crossan (42 mins), Brendan Boyle for Hegarty (56 mins), John Haran (0-1) for McGuinness (62 mins) Colm McFadden for Roper (66 mins).

Galway: Brian Donoghue; Kieran Fitzgerald, Gary Fahey, Michael Comer; Declan Meehan (0-1), Richard Fahey, Kevin Brady; Kevin Walsh (0-2), Joe Bergin; Paul Clancy (0-2), Matthew Clancy, Michael Donnellan; Derek Savage (0-1), Padraig Joyce (0-4, 4 f), Michael Meehan (1-1). Ja Fallon for M. Clancy (52 mins), Tommy Joyce for Meehan (55 mins), Nicholas Joyce for Donnellan (67 mins).

Referee: Michael Collins (Cork)

Turning Point

Adrian Sweeney's glorious point seven minutes from the end. The Donegal captain kicked two wides from the same position earlier but this kick drifted over the bar to reduce Galway's lead to one point.

Ref. Watch

Referee Michael Collins drew a chorus of boos from the Donegal supporters in the crowds of 56,296, towards the end of the first half. He seemed to give Galway a few easy frees while Donegal had to work harder for theirs.

Man of Match

In his first start of the year, Paul McGonigle was magnificent. Won a massive amount of second phase possession, tackled well and kicked two important second half points.



DONEGAL



Heroic Donegal

DONEGAL NEWS

Friday, August 15, 2003

Famous victory leaves county just one step from All-Ireland final

Donegal.....0-14

Galway.....0-11

BY COLIN REGAN

When the sun shines on Donegal football it is an infectious thing. From the dark days of the league campaign Brian McEniff's charges have broken through the clouds, and finally brought the temperatures in the county to boiling point last Sunday with a win that secured an All-Ireland semi-final place against Armagh on August 31st.

Concentration and exhaustion, burned into faces reddened by a pulsating match, turned into expressions of genuine joy and exaltation as the final whistle blew in McHale Park - and that was just the supporters! For the players the ghosts of 2002 vanished, while hopes and possibilities raced to take their place.

The team started and finished the game like men with something to prove. A quarter-final place was not enough this year, and the replay with Galway was about more than reaching the semi-final. It was about righting a wrong.

"Men died out there today," was Brian McEniff's immediate reaction to the win. Normally an over-statement, not one who witnessed the match would contradict him.

As Donegal took to McHale Park a roar erupted that reverberated around the ground with an air of expectation. The supporters had travelled in their thousands to Castlebar, despite the distance, to cheer on their team to victory. (Reportedly, of the 30,000 in attendance, just short of 20,000 were Donegal fans).

FATE

From the off, the game had the distinct feel of fate about it. Donegal were the epitome of economy while Galway looked out of sorts once they entered the Donegal half. Ironically, Donegal had played better football in the first half in Croke Park, and went in behind at half time. On Sunday they didn't play as well as in the opening period of the drawn game, but left the field with a 0-9 to 0-6 cushion at the break.

A Galway onslaught was expected from the restart with the wind at their backs, but it was Donegal who once more showed greater confidence and accuracy, starting where they had left off, hitting four unanswered points.

Certainly things went their way, but as McEniff quite rightly conceded after the game, you need those things to win. Pdraig Joyce would normally have netted his late first half opportunity which rebounded to safety off the base of the post, and too with his second half chance, dealt with well by Tony Blake. Declan Meehan rarely shows such little composure in front of goal as he did in the first half, shooting wide from the edge of the square with a real goal chance on for Paul Clancy in support. Blake also somehow got a foot to Michael Meehan's goal-bound effort in the second half, while the keeper will remain eternally indebted to Shane Carr for his incredible goal line clearance, this time from Matthew Clancy, moments later.

But these were Galway's mistakes, not Donegal's. The Tir Conaill men imposed a work rate and energy onto the game that forced Galway into rushed decisions and poor executions. The nature of Donegal's team effort is evident in the allocation of the man-of-the-match award by the various elements of the media.

Shane Carr, Barry Monaghan, and Brian Roper all received the accolade from different pundits, and you couldn't fault any their choices. John Gildea, Kevin Cassidy and Christy Toye could just as easily have been the recipients. Personally I would have to hand it to Niall McCreeady, one of the most consistent championship performer to date in 2003. His energy and willingness to put his body on the line broke up countless Galway attacks, and upset their entire forward line by keeping, first Derek Savage, and then Ja Fallon, out of the game. But this really was a team effort.

Brendan Devenney opened the scoring with a free in the first minute, with Kevin Walsh equalising on nine minutes after some very wasteful play by Galway in the final third of the field.

A sharp and focused Devenney added two more (one free) giving Donegal a lead they would not relinquish for the remainder of the game, as Galway struggled to cope with the movement and quality ball coming in to the Donegal forwards.

Michael Meehan fisted a fine point for the Tribesmen on 14 minutes before Adrian Sweeney emphasised Donegal's efficiency of play with two points (one free), to give Donegal a 0-5 to 0-2 lead with 16 minutes played.

Points from Derek Savage and Michael Donnellan closed the gap to the minimum before Devenney and Paul Clancy exchanged points as the game grew in intensity.

Again Donegal broke Galway hearts by turning defence immediately into productive attack with Christy Toye getting a deserved point after some fine build-up work by John Gildea, Brendan Boyle and Paul McGonigle, followed quickly by another from Adrian Sweeney.

With Donegal 0-8 to 0-5 ahead it looked like Galway were about to repeat the dose of the drawn game with a first half goal, but Pdraig Joyce, having broken through the last of the cover, saw his low drive rebound off the base of Tony Blake's left post to safety.

On 33 minutes Michael Donnellan finally opened his shoulders to hare past Damien Diver down the left before opting to fist his point, while at the other end the influential Michael Hegarty kicked a wonderful point to leave the half time score 0-9 to 0-6 in Donegal's favour.

With the huge Donegal contingency bracing themselves for a Galway onslaught following the restart, they couldn't have wished for a better opening ten minutes of the second half.

Toye rose highest on the edge of the small square, to fist over a Roper effort that had fallen just short, before Sweeney pointed a free followed quickly by a huge effort by Brendan Boyle, giving Donegal a six point cushion, 0-12 to 0-6.

A rattled Galway struggled not only with Donegal's work rate all over the pitch, but also with their continued efficiency, and they wasted numerous opportunities at the other end as the Donegal backs hunted in packs.

Michael Hegarty added another to the delight of the Donegal support, before a Kevin Walsh free bounced over Blake's cross-bar to make it 0-13 to 0-7 on 50 minutes.

Devenney then added to his tally, before something of a Tribesmen resurgence began as Donegal's work-rate finally started to take its toll on their legs. Two Pdraig Joyce frees

brought Galway back into contention and only a last ditch save by Tony Blake prevented Michael Meehan from netting a crucial goal.

Again Galway surged forward, and when Tony Blake could only manage to palm away an intended handpass on the edge of the square to Matthew Clancy, it seemed Galway would finally raise the green flag, only for Shane Carr to appear from nowhere and clear the ball from the line to safety. It was going to be Donegal's day, and there was nothing further points from Michael Meehan and Michael Donnellan could do about it.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Niall McCreeady, Damien Diver, Raymond Sweeney; Shane Carr, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy; John Gildea, Brendan Boyle (0-1); Christy Toye (0-2), Michael Hegarty (0-2), Paul McGonigle; Brian Roper, Adrian Sweeney (0-4, 2f), Brendan Devenney (0-5, 3f).

Subs: John Haran for McGonigle (58 mins), Colm McFadden for Devenney (64 mins), Kevin Rafferty for Hegarty (68 mins), Jim McGuinness for Toye (71 mins).

Galway: Alan Keane; Kieran Fitzgerald, Gary Fahey, Michael Comer; Declan Meehan, Richard Fahey, Kevin Brady; Kevin Walsh (0-2, 1f), Joe Bergin; M Donnellan (0-3, 1f), Paul Clancy (0-1), Matthew Clancy; Derek Savage (0-1), Pdraig Joyce (0-2, 1f), Michael Meehan (0-2, 1 45).

Subs: Sean Og de Paor for Brady (40 mins); Ja Fallon for Savage (45 mins), Nicholas Joyce for P Clancy (69 mins)

Donegal turn the tide in Castlebar

Keith Duggan in McHale Park

Donegal 0-14 Galway 0-11:

All-Ireland SFC Quarter-final replay: They said it could not happen twice. And in a way, they were half-right. This time, on beautiful evening in Castlebar, Donegal, the great puzzle of the 2003 All-Ireland championship, did not look back.

With their unique bag of thrifty play, unorthodox beauty and heart-stopping, heroic defence, Donegal stretched and finally defeated one of the finest Galway teams to have emerged in four decades. It has to rank as Brian McEniff's finest managerial achievement since 1992 and the stunning manner in which this season has turned gold for the hotelier possibly makes yesterday evening in Castlebar even sweeter.

McEniff's return to management is fast becoming the best GAA story of the summer. Content for almost a decade to enjoy Donegal games as the most famous peaked cap in the crowd, McEniff, a grandfather and balladeer, found himself thrown in with the county's hip-hop generation in the bitter months of January. They knew him as a fabled name from the past; he knew about two of their names.

It is safe to say, as they rolled back up the sunny roads from Castlebar to what promised to be an emotional homecoming, that they know each other a little better now.

The reward for this tense and pulsating victory is a date against the All-Ireland champions Armagh, a team as fastidious and stern as Donegal are cavalier and expressive. The more Donegal keep winning, the less the pundits seem to believe in them and so Joe Kernan's team will enter into this game as staggeringly heavy favourites. It will make no difference to McEniff, who is coyly delighted that his team has been so firmly locked outside the gates of fashion.

It has been a tough beginning to John O'Mahony's new term as manager. If, as has been widely anticipated, Galway's old guard elects to depart, then next year will be one of delicate balancing. However, this loss gives a team fancied by many the impetus to close in on a third All-Ireland with a new sense of motivation. Those who decry O'Mahony's Galway as finished after this will almost certainly be proven wrong over the next 12 months.

It is true, however, that the furnace has dimmed since the vintage year of 2001. If this is a permanent state the precise reason why is something only the Galway team can answer. On other days, they would have won this match.

Down 0-9 to 0-6 at the break, they teetered on the brink of a black hole as Donegal established an - 0-13 to 0-6 lead with 20 minutes remaining, before mounting a gallant if futile comeback. Padhraic Joyce, maligned over the past six days, hit a free and his only point from play; Micheál Meehan landed a 50 and then Michael Donnellan pitched another free to leave just a goal between the sides. The Donegal team existed on heart alone during this slow, steady comeback.

The last 10 minutes seemed to pass in slow motion for the massive Donegal support that filled the gallery in scorching Mayo. As is their way, Donegal lived on the edge. A high Seán De Paor shot clipped off the post and slipped through Micheál Meehan's hands with 20 minutes to go. Tony Blake threw his body to smother a Meehan shot that looked destined for the goal with 10 minutes left. Five minutes later, Blake raced out to try to deny Matt Clancy. The Galway man fired a clean and true shot that met Shane Carr's diving body just as it was about to cross the goalline.

By this stage, McEniff must have been seeing ghosts of 1983, with maroon men pouring forward in search of a goal. But he is managing a team too young to remember 1983. Again and again, the Donegal men lifted the siege but at this stage were too tired and nerve-racked to build the kind of attacks that enabled them to lead from the start. For the last 21 minutes, Donegal did not score. It is not a statistic that will bother them. The most sobering passage in the game from their perspective came late in the first half, when Galway repeatedly opened them up. Kevin Walsh, grand and admirable once more, was untouchable for a period at midfield, with Joe Bergin a close second.

In 90 seconds alone, they might have had 1-2, with Padhraic Joyce so unlucky when a delightfully weighted low shot clipped the wrong side of the post. Forwards thrive on confidence and for all the criticism Joyce has suffered, never once did he hide here. The prodigious Donnellan responded with three points, including one dynamic burst along Donegal's left wing that carried with it a poignant afterglow. Late on, however, the Dunmore legend ran out of steam.

With time running out, O'Mahony turned to names that lit up yesteryear. Ja Fallon went in to try his luck on the human blot of fly-paper that is Niall McCready and found him as sticky as Derek Savage before him. McCready had a splendid game, along with Barry Monaghan in the heart of the Donegal defence and Kevin Cassidy.

There was no secret to Donegal's plan. They worked like demons to hurry Galway into poor decisions and then wove pretty and frantic patterns forward to allow Brendan Devenney and Adrian Sweeney work the magic. Again, the front two hit 0-9 between them but the game's key scores came from the elegant Michael Hegarty, a classy and under-stated player. Brian Roper ran himself to the point of exhaustion and John Gildea was ever wise and calm during a number of horribly tense situations.

Galway departed the All-Ireland with exceptional grace. Part of their annoyance stemmed from the fact that this quarter-final occasion in general was so casually derided and there was a sense that they would take vicarious pleasure if Donegal tilt onwards, boats against the tide.

DONEGAL: 1. T Blake; 2. N McCready, 3. R Sweeney, 29. D Diver; 5. S Carr, 6. B Monaghan, 7. K Cassidy; 8. J Gildea, 20. B Boyle; C Toye (0-2), 13. B Roper, 12. P McGonigle; 11. M Hegarty (0-2), 14. A Sweeney (0-4, 2 frees), 15. B Devenney (0-5, 3 frees). Subs: J Haran for P McGonigle (58 mins), C McFadden for B Devenney (63 mins), K Rafferty for M Hegarty (67 mins), J McGuinness for C Toye (70 mins).

GALWAY: 16. A Keane; 2. K Fitzgerald, 3. G Fahey, 4. M Comer; 5. M Meehan, 6. R Fahey, 7. K Brady; 8. K Walsh (0-2), 9. J Bergin; 10. P Clancy (0-1), 14. P Joyce (0-2, 1 free), 13. D Savage (0-1), 12. M Donnellan (0-3, 1 free), 15. M Meehan (0-2, 1 50), 11. M Clancy. Subs: 19. S De Paor for 7. G Brady (40 mins), J Fallon for D Savage (45 mins), N Joyce for P Clancy (68 mins).

Bank of Ireland All-Ireland Football semi-final

Heartbreak for 14-man Donegal

■ Armagh.....2-10 Donegal.....1-9

Donegal's championship dream came to an abrupt and disappointing end against the battle hardened Armagh in a tough hard semi final on the hallowed Croke Park turf on Sunday afternoon.

Tom Comack reports from Croke Park

Photos: Brian McDaid and Thomas Gallagher

In a robust and uncompromising affair the champions were made to fight all the way. And it took an injury time point and a penalty goal to finally book a second successive All-Ireland appearance for the Orchard county.

While this was not one of Donegal's better shows in the campaign they were looking good for a draw as the clock ticked into injury time.

But with the sides locked on 1-9 each midfielder Philip Loughran and half forward Oisín McConville broke Donegal hearts.

One minute into time added Loughran found himself in space in front of the posts to kick his side into the lead for only the second time in the game. And McConville put the icing on the with literally the last kick of the game, converting from the penalty spot after Paddy McKeever was fouled

Though in fairness to the champions if they had their shooting boots on, they would have won this one pulling up. In the course of the game they posted twenty one wides, twelve in the first half. And they were twice denied by the upright while they also dropped a number of efforts short into the grateful arms of Tony Blake.

Donegal on the other hand were much more economical in front of the posts as they were only wide of the target on four occasions over the seventy seven minutes and did not hit their first until thirty minutes into the contest. Statistics that tell their own tale.

While Donegal were in the tie right up to the closing minutes, in truth the game was up for Brian McEniff's men when they were reduced to fourteen

men four minutes into the second half with the dismissal of full back Raymond Sweeney.

Tough call

Sweeney was harshly sin binned by referee Michael Monahan for persisting fouling on Diarmaid Marsden. A tough call in game that the faint hearted bagged the fiddle and went home early, and at least one or two Armagh players Kieran McGeeney, Francie Bellew and John McEntee must be thanking their lucky stars to day for the Kildare officials inconsistency.

Leading by four points 1-5 to Armagh's 0-4 at the time it was rearguard action from all the way top the finish. But with the Orchard County continuing to be wayward in front of the posts, it was not until Stephen McDonnell struck for their first goal did the All Ireland champions have the look of winners. And while the score only tied up the game on 1-9 each, once it went in Armagh were the more likely to emerge.

While under pressure in the possession stakes Donegal did well in the first half and were ahead at the break. A brilliant goal from Christy Toye just before half time put them very much in the driving seat as they

lead 1-4 to 0-3. Toye did well to take the ball on the run from Stephen McDermott to hammer home. Toye himself, Adrian Sweeney, Brian Roper and Brendan Devenney had hit the early scores. The accurate boot of Oisín McConville from frees just about kept the champions in touch.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Niall McCreehy, Raymond Sweeney, Damian Diver; Shane Carr, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy; John Gildea, Stephen McDermott; Christy Toye (1-1), Michael Hegarty, Paul McGonigle; Brian Roper (0-1), Adrian Sweeney (0-4, IF, I 45.), Brendan Devenney (0-3F):

Subs: Brendan Boyle for S. McDermott, 43 min.; J. McGuinness for P. McGonagle, 48 min.; Colum McFadden for and John Haran for J. Gildea, both 67 min.:

Armagh: Paul Hearty, Andy Mallon, Enda McNulty, Francie Bellew; Aidan O'Rourke, Kiernan McGeeney, Andrew McCann; Phillip Loughran (0-1), Paul McGrane (0-1); Ronan Clarke, John McEntee, Oisín McConville (1-5F, 1-0 from penalty; Stephen McDonnell (1-1), Diarmaid Marsden (0-1), Tony McEntee; Subs: Paddy McKeever for R. Clarke 57 min.; Justin McNulty for F. Bellew, 60 min.

Referee: Michael Monahan (Kildare).

Michael Hegarty: Had a brief good spell in the second half but was generally bullied into submission by Armagh. 6

Allianz National Football League

Disastrous start for Donegal in Tuam

GALWAY1-16
DONEGAL1-8

Donegal's start to the National League ended in a comprehensive defeat at the hands of Galway in Tuam on Sunday.

Peter Campbell reports from Tuam
 Pictures by Michael O'Donnell

From the opening minutes the Donegal defence were subjected to a torrent of attack, thanks to an unlimited supply of ball in the middle third of the field.

Donegal looked sluggish and were made pay dearly. When two mistakes left Derek Savage clear in the 4th minute, he set up very impressive newcomer Michael Meehan to fire to the Donegal net.

1-2 to no score in arrears, a mixture of some doggedness and luck allowed Donegal to keep the final 66 plus minutes relatively even on the scoreboard - but not on the field. They were helped by a fortunate rebound falling into the hands of Johnny McCafferty five minutes from the break, which the Termon man planted in the net from five yards.

However, the gulf between the teams in the opening half was not reflected in the half-time score of 1-9 to 1-4. The visitors fumbled and lost possession easily and the fitness gulf saw Galway close them down

before they reached the half-way line.

On the other hand the Tribesmen were able to break out of defence at ease and Savage and Meehan were served with an *A La Carte* service and they duly repaid their teammates, kicking 1-8 of their final total between them.

The Donegal defence had a trying afternoon, being switched at different intervals to try and curb Savage and Meehan, but the sharpness gained in five FBD games in the last few weeks was way ahead of the Donegal men.

Donegal did have the chance of reducing the leeway to just two points seconds into the second half, but Galway 'keeper Alan Keane made a brilliant stop at the feet of Jim McGuinness.

That was the only time that Donegal threatened although they did fight to the end and avoid an annihilation that was always on the cards.

SLOW START

With Donegal slow to start, Galway were devastating, Savage winning and pointing a free and Michael Meehan twisting and turning to point a second.

Then, after four minutes, came two Donegal mistakes - firstly John Gildea misplaced a pass and when Donegal attacked Noel McGinley came to intercept but dropped the ball and Derek Savage was free inside and he easily picked out Michael Meehan to blast to the Donegal net.

Adrian Sweeney won and pointed a free at the other end but Galway's dominance saw Meehan and Savage add to their tally and Kieran Comer strolled through from midfield to fist a point with his left.

Good work by Raymond Sweeney and John Haran set up Adrian Sweeney to point and Colm McFadden squeezed over another.

However, Galway kept coming in waves and Kieran Comer strolled through the middle again to point and the same player pointed after a foul on Michael Meehan.

Seven points down, Donegal came again with McFadden hitting a brilliant score from distance and then after 30 minutes, a quick sideline saw Damien Diver drive forward and his effort came back off an upright into the hands of Johnny McCafferty to fire home.

The deficit was down to three points and seemingly manageable given that it seemed Donegal were playing against the swirling breeze,

but before the break Galway had tacked on two more points from

Matthew Clancy and another Kieran Comer free - both scores coming from Donegal mistakes.

After a half-time downpour, Donegal had a goal chance after thirty seconds of the new half, John Gildea putting Jim McGuinness through but Alan Keane saved brilliantly.

Galway then turned the screw at the other end, Meehan winning a free for Comer to point and then Meehan himself hit the score of the game from out on the left.

Johnny McCafferty (free) and Matthew Clancy traded points before Donegal introduced Kevin Cassidy and Michael Gurn. Galway almost had a second goal on 52 minutes when Derek Savage got inside Noel McGinley only to be pulled back and the Galway man pointed the free.

By this stage Donegal were being sucked back into their own half with Adrian Sweeney at one stage on his own 13m line.

Points were swapped between Comer (free), McGuinness, Savage and McCafferty as the game entered the final quarter, and it then fizzled out with substitutions on both sides and a further point apiece from Michael Meehan and John Gildea.

An inglorious start for Donegal, things can only get better. They are a better side than they showed on Sunday last, but with Dublin due in Ballyshannon on Sunday, they will have to improve very quickly.

Galway: Alan Keane; Kieran Fitzgerald, Gary Fahey, Richie Fahey; Michael Comer, John Divilly, Sean Og de Paor; Joe Bergin, Kieran Comer (0-6, four frees); Paul Clancy, Matthew Clancy (0-2), Alan Kerins, Michael Meehan (1-4), Derek Savage (0-4, three frees), Tommy Joyce. Subs., Derry O'Brien for P. Clancy; Lorcan Colliery for A. Kerins; Nick Joyce for Savage; Diarmuid Blake for Divilly.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Eamon Doherty, Shane Carr, Noel McGinley; Damien Diver, Raymond Sweeney, Niall McCready; John Gildea (0-1), Jim McGuinness (0-1); Christy Toye, Michael Hegarty, John Haran; Colm McFadden (0-3), Adrian Sweeney (0-2, one free), John McCafferty (1-2, one free). Subs., Kevin Cassidy for S. Carr; Michael Gurn for Toye (48 mins.); James Ruane for McGuinness (63 mins.); James Gallagher for Hegarty (66 mins.)

Referee: Paddy Russell (Tipperary).

Allianz National Football League Division 1

Dublin1-10
Donegal0-9



Tom Comack reports from Ballyshannon
Photos by Conor McGonagle

Football is a funny old game as followers of Donegal were reminded once more in Fr. Tierney Park, Ballyshannon as their favourites slumped to their second defeat inside eight days, this time put to the sword by fourteen man Dublin.

This defeat really places Brian McEniff's men in deep trouble and even at this early stage with just two games played, they are now prime candidates for relegation. And with All Ireland champions Armagh next up at home followed by Tyrone (away), Kerry (home), Cork (away) and Roscommon (home), those precious points to take them out of the drop zone may be hard to come by.

While it may be a little early to sound the alarm bells the finger must be mighty close to the button. They were well in this tie for well over three quarters an hour there was little evidence that they had the stomach to slug it out when the going got tough. And this must surely be a worry for Brian McEniff and his management team.

LOST THE FAITH

They got a great opportunity to take this game by the scruff of the neck when they drew level eleven minutes into the second half 0-8 each having just about kept in touch with the Dubs in the first half.

But after Adrian Sweeney set up Christy Toye for that equalising point they lost the faith on the edge of the Promised Land and paid the ultimate price.

And yet for all their faults and failings if Brian McLaughlin's last minute effort that shaved the up right had gone in, we would be now moaning a number of
gilt edged

went the way of the team reduced to fourteen men. Seconds after Christy Toye had tied up the contest for the sixth time Dublin's Jonathan McGee got his marching orders, the centre back picking up a second yellow card in as many minutes for a silly push on James Ruane after Ruane had been fouled.

However, despite this setback it was Tommy Lyons' men that gritted the teeth and in the space of three minutes they were in the driving seat with two quick points from Senan Connell and Tomas Quinn, and a goal from Quinn 16 minutes into the new half to give Dublin a five point cushion 1-10 to 0-8.

FAILED TO SCORE

Amazingly the Dubs failed to score again in the remaining 23 minutes. But even if they did, the home team despite a number of opportunities did not make them pay, a point from Christy Toye their solitary response. And surely not satisfactory playing on home soil against an opposition, who, despite this victory, were nothing to write home about.

The first half though tame enough was evenly contested with the sides level on five occasions, the Dubs only pulling away in the closing minutes to take a two point 0-7 to 0-5 lead to the dressing room at half-time.

Adrian Sweeney who kicked the game's opening point, Colm McFadden, Johnny McCafferty, Jim McGuinness and Michael Hegarty the Donegal scorers, while Tomas Quinn (3), Brian Cullen (2), Darren McGee and Senan Connell one each, were the Dublin scorers. The highlight of the half from a Donegal point of view were two sweetly struck points from Jim McGuinness and Michael Hegarty, Hegarty's strike coming just after he had taken up station in the left corner forward berth.

And while Quinn drew first blood in the second half with a pointed free to extend his side's lead out to three points, the Donegal response was swift and true. Colm McFadden roving way out from the right corner got the comeback under way with a brilliant point on the run on 39 minutes. And the margin was down to the minimum four minutes later when Hegarty split the hospital end posts before we had that great strike from Toye, to draw the sides level after some good work from Adrian Sweeney. It was game on, and definitely advantage Donegal.

But then all hell broke loose first with the sending off of McGee followed by that rapid fire goal and two points from the Dubs to seal the victory.

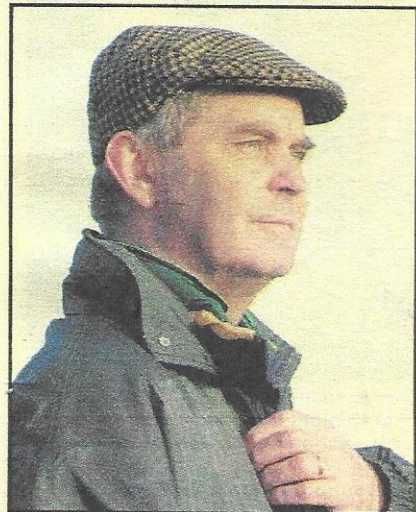
And in the closing minutes to add to the madness All Star Kevin Cassidy got a late and harsh straight red card for a

hefty challenge on Dublin corner back Barry Cahill. This was a harsh call by the referee and Cassidy now has an anxious wait for the referee's report, but with an automatic four week ban he is going to miss next weekend's clash with Armagh and the away tie to Tyrone.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Damian Diver, Raymond Sweeney, Eamonn Doherty; Michael Gurn, Kevin Cassidy, Noel McGinley; Jim McGuinness (0-1), James Ruane; Michael Hegarty (0-2,1F), John Gildea, John Haran; Colm McFadden (0-2,1F), Adrian Sweeney (0-1), Johnny McCafferty (0-1F): Subs: Christy Toye for J. McCafferty 30 min.; Kevin Rafferty for J. Ruane 59 min.; Brian McLaughlin for C. McFadden 67 min.

Dublin: Brian Murphy; Barry Cahill, Paddy Christie, David Henry; Paul Casey, Jonathan McGee (0-1), Shane Ryan; Ciaran Whelan, Darren McGee (0-1); Enda Crennan, Brian Cullen (0-2), Senan Connell (0-2); Alan Brogan, John McNally, Tomas Quinn (1-5, 3F); Colin Moran for E. Crennan 60 mins.; Darren Homan for S. Connell 64 mins.; Peadar Andrews for P. Casey 65 min.

Referee: Michael Monaghan (Kildare).



Donegal boss Brian McEniff keeping a close eye on his team at Ballyshannon. (1102cg56)

opportunities that were not put away earlier. It must not be forgotten either that Dublin came mighty close to adding two more goals in the closing quarter.

As is often the case this game turned on a sending off and not unusually, it

Armagh too powerful for Donegal

ARMAGH	2-9
DONEGAL	1-6

ARMAGH continued on their merry way at the top of Division 1A with another win against Donegal in MacCumhaill Park, Ballybofey yesterday.

The All-Ireland champions were given a run for their money in the first half, but they showed their true worth after the break when they proved much too strong for the home side.

Armagh's confidence was underlined when they got their second goal eight minutes in the second half - working the ball the length of the field to find full-back Justin McNulty overlapping to finish to the Donegal net.

Four minutes earlier they had gone four points in arrears following an Adrian Sweeney penalty when John Haran was hauled down.

However, once McNulty pulled the All-Ireland champions back within a point, the game swung completely in their favour despite the fact that Armagh had just eight of the All-Ireland winning side in the starting line-up and were without manager, Joe Kernan, who was at a family function.

Donegal had the better of the first half, showing good spirit - especially in defence and around midfield, two areas where they had difficulties in their earlier encounters with Galway and Dublin.

They were 0-3 to 0-2 up after 24 minutes when Armagh were awarded a controversial penalty by Cavan referee, Brian Crowe.

Paddy McKeever took possession going forward and seemed to barge his way into two Donegal players. However, Oisín McCon-

ville was unable to beat Tony Blake from the spot.

Donegal increased the lead to two points and then saw an Adrian Sweeney effort come back off an upright, only for Armagh to break upfield. Paul McGrane found Oisín McConville with a magnificent pass and he did the rest with his left, firing home from close range.

After playing with the breeze, it was obvious that the one point half-time lead - 0-6 to 1-2 - would not be enough for Donegal. Once Armagh overcame the early second half penalty setback they began to pick off points with ease - Paddy McKeever was superb from placed balls and in general play.

While this performance marked an improvement for Donegal their short-passing game once again let them down.

Armagh, however, seem to be going from strength to strength.

They continue to play with a swagger that is reserved for All-Ireland champions and given that they had only about half their first team on duty, they are formidable opponents for any team.

MAN OF THE MATCH — Paddy McKeever (Armagh).

SCORERS - Donegal: A Sweeney 1-2 (pen, 1f); M Hegarty 0-2 (2f); J Ruane, P McGonigle 0-1 each. **Armagh:** O McConville 1-2 (1f); P McKeever 0-4 (3f); J McNulty 1-0, P McGrane, J McEntee, P Duffy 0-1 each.

DONEGAL — T Blake; E Reddan, R Sweeney, N McGinley; N McCreedy, S Carr, D Diver; J McGuinness, J Ruane; P McGonigle, M Hegarty, John Haran; B Roper, A Sweeney, A Gallagher. **Subs:** C McFadden for A Gallagher (11), R Kavanagh for M Hegarty (35), B McLaughlin for Haran (50).

ARMAGH — P Hearty; A Mallon, J McNulty, F Bellew, K Hughes, A O'Rourke, P McCormack; P McGrane, P Loughran; P McKeever, J McEntee, O McConville; P Duffy, B Duffy, T McEntee. **Subs:** B O'Hagan for B Duffy (49), M O'Rourke for P Duffy (60), D Turley for J McEntee (70).

REF — B Crowe (Cavan).



Donegal's Michael Hegarty in action for Donegal against Armagh in Ballybofey yesterday.

Michael Hegarty: Back in his rightful place at centre-forward, he was playing well when he picked up what looked like a hamstring injury and was unable to field for the second half. 7

Allianz National Football League Division 1A

Tyrone 1-14
 Donegal 0-10

A tale of two midfielders, of two contrasting halves and the introduction of sheer class just about describes this division one A, Allianz league clash in Fr. Peter Campbell Park, Coalisland.

A game which saw Donegal despite playing their best football of the season for thirty five minutes slump to their fourth defeat on the trot. And the result now sees them perilously close, if not at the point of no return in retaining their division one status.

Yet, for thirty five minutes in the Coalisland sunshine it looked as if Brian McEniff had finally worked the oracle and the team had turned the corner. And thoughts of twelve months earlier and the start of a glorious run.

Played like champions

In the opening half McEniff's men played like the reigning champions and Tyrone like the team firmly anchored to the foot of the table and chasing their first win. A three point half time lead 0-7 to 0-3 in no way flattered the visitors.

Here is where the first of those midfielders come in. From the moment referee Seamus McCormack threw up the ball between Jim McGuinness, James Ruane, Ryan Mellon and Kevin Hughes, big Jim took control and lorded the sector for most of the half. At times in that opening period he made it look simple, and the term man and boys sprung to mind.

But how all that changed in the second half, cue boy to man Tyrone minor star of just years ago Sean Kavanagh. Kavanagh

who had been operating at corner forward in the first half, began the second period in the middle of the park.

This and the introduction of the maestro himself Peter Canavan turned the tide very much in favour of the home county. Canavan, sprung from the bench three minutes into the new half to replace Kevin Hughes, was in awesome form and as well as hitting 1-2 he also had a hand in at least seven other scores.

Cranked into gear

Herein lies the difference between the teams. While Donegal played well in the first half they really had to work hard for their seven scores. But once Canavan arrived and Kavanagh turned on the supply, the O Neill county attack that stuttered in the first half cranked into gear to hit a goal and ten splendid points. And in truth the game was long over before referee McCormack blew his final long whistle.

Despite early Tyrone bluster, Donegal settled well to the task. From the moment Adrian Sweeney opened their account four minutes into the contest they more or less held the upper hand. Sweeney's strike from a free cancelling out Brian Dooher's opener. Within a minute Donegal were ahead. Sweeney again doing the business, this time from play. Moving out from goal and after shrugging off the attentions of Colin Holmes, the Dungloe ace

split the posts with a delightful strike from about forty metres.

Kevin Cassidy

With All Star Kevin Cassidy coming in for Shane Carr who was forced out of the game through injury and Jim McGuinness beginning to rule the roost at midfield, Donegal were 0-3 to 0-1 in front inside twelve minutes, McGuinness scoring the third with a brilliant point on the run.

And while Owen Mulligan and bustling Sean Kavanagh temporarily halted the run with two superb points from play, Donegal were soon back in the driving seat.

Two points in the space of two minutes from Sweeney and James Gallagher, saw the visitors go two up, and despite some wayward shooting from Kevin Rafferty and James Gallagher the visitors had raced four clear on the stroke of half-time with further points from Sweeney and Niall McCready. McCready's strike a truly inspirational score, the wee man surging forward to find the target from forty metres. And while Owen Mulligan pointed an injury time free Donegal were still in control and in front at the changeover 0-7 to 0-4. All smiles in the green and gold corner.

Restart

However, within six minutes of the restart that smile began to fade as first Canavan from a 13 metre free from with his first touch, followed by a glorious effort from Kavanagh who rounded off a sweeping move started by himself to reduce the margin down to a single point 0-7 to 0-6.

While Brian Roper split the posts at the other end on eight minutes with a delightful point, the cavalry charge had already

begun as Kavanagh and play-anywhere Brian Dooher landed two quick points to tie up the game 0-8 each, by the forty five minute mark.

And with the alarm bells ringing things got even worse when Kavanagh and Dooher combined to set up Canavan for the goal that turned the game on its head.

All of a sudden ordinary Tyrone were like a team possessed and with Kavanagh calling the shots around the middle and Canavan orchestrating things up front the scores began to flow.

Dooher and Adrian Sweeney traded scores on the midway mark in the half before Canavan and Co., turned the screw with five unanswered points from Mulligan, Canavan, McGuigan, Kavanagh to pull eight points clear with just under five minutes remaining. With the clock counting down Jim McGuinness and Brian Dooher struck for late scores, but by that stage the horse had well and truly bolted as far as Donegal was concerned.

Donegal: Tony Blake; Eamonn Reddin, Raymond Sweeney, Noel McGinley; Damian Diver, Shane Carr, Niall McCready; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness (0-2); Christy Tote, Kevin Rafferty, Brian Roper; James Gallagher (0-1), Adrian Sweeney (0-5,3F), Andrew Gallagher. Subs: Kevin Cassidy for S. Carr inj., 7 min; Colm McFadden for A. Gallagher, 34 min.; Eamonn Sweeney for J. Ruane, 46 min; Rory Kavanagh for K. Rafferty, 52 min.; Conal Dunne for J. Gallagher, 69 min.;

Tyrone: John Devine; Ryan McMenamin, Colin Holmes, Conor Gormley; Philip Gordan, Gavin Devlin, Declan McCrossan; Ryan Mellon, Kevin Hughes; Seamus Mulgrew, Brian McGuigan (0-2), Brian Dooher (0-3); Frank McGuigan, Owen Mulligan (0-3, 1F), Sean Kavanagh (0-4). Subs: Michael McGee for D. McCrossan inj., 18 min.; Peter Canavan for K. Hughes inj., 38 min.; Enda McGinley for S. Mulgrew, and Mark Harte for F. McGuigan both on 55 min.; Brian Robson for C. Gormely 70 min.

Referee: Seamus McCormack (Meath).

Donegal0-8
 Kerry1-12

Donegal's fifteen year tenure in the top flight ended after another dismal display against a far from full-strength Kerry side at Ballyshannon on Sunday.

Peter Campbell reports from Fr. Tierney Park
 Photos by Thomas Gallagher

The defeat - the fifth League defeat in a row - creates an unwanted record and further damages confidence and morale, both of which are already in short supply.

There was plenty of effort from the Donegal players but there was also an inevitability about the result. Two early points were cancelled with the concession of a 'soft' goal and the low level of confidence was reflected in some very poor shooting from reasonably good opportunities.

Points were also 'handed' to Kerry with poor clearances out of defence, while accurate free-taking, something that was never a worry, deprived the home side of three or four extra points.

After this defeat there is a need for an overhaul and regrouping of the panel - they travel to Cork in two weeks time and that trip has to be the focal point for getting their season back on track, especially with Fermanagh (their championship opponents) showing good form in Division 1B.

I'm sure if someone was keeping a stopwatch on possession statistics Donegal would have fared quite well on Sunday. But in the matter of teamwork they were miles behind a Kerry team that were fielding only two of their forward line from last year and only nine of their All-Ireland final team.

Once again the quality of ball to the Donegal forward line was poor. Added to this a number of Donegal players are suffering from a big dip in form - the likes

of captain Adrian Sweeney and former captain, Damien Diver.

With this defeat, Donegal have now lost their last seven competitive games - Dublin in the Championship in August; Cavan in the Dr. McKenna Cup and now five League games.

BRIGHT OPENING

Playing with the advantage of a fairly strong breeze, Donegal opened brightly with Adrian Sweeney pointing after a sharp move yielded a foul on Barry Monaghan.

Sweeney, who had early success against Michael McCarthy, created another opening, finding Brian Roper, who put Christy Toye through to point in the fifth minute.

However, after that Sweeney got little change from McCarthy and subsequently Donegal relied almost totally on Brian Roper for any success in the front line possession stakes.

Disaster struck after eight minutes when Paul Galvin was allowed through the middle rather easily and when his shot for goal was blocked, it fell kindly for full-forward Declan O'Sullivan to sidefoot home.

Donegal hit back with Christy Toye making a 60m run, but he was unable to offload and was bottled up and whistled for overcarrying. Donegal were level in the 10th minute with Eamon Reddin finding Barry Monaghan to point.

Kerry, as they did whenever they were threatened, responded with Seamus Moynihan carrying over 40 metres before setting up Declan O'Sullivan, who with a goal



■ OUT IN FRONT . . . Donegal's Rory Kavanagh gets to the ball ahead of Kerry's Eamon Fitzmaurice in Ballyshannon on Sunday. 1103TG35

chance on, but the big fullforward opted to take his point.

Donegal had a great goal chance on fifteen minutes with Jim McGuinness breaking through. He had Toye alongside but opted to fist a point, but his effort went wide.

CONFIDENCE LEVELS

The contrasting confidence levels were underlined two minutes later when Damien Diver gave the ball away coming out of defence and Declan Quill had an easy point chance.

Donegal hauled themselves back level by the 34th minute. Firstly Brian Roper found Rory Kavanagh to point and Roper

was fouled for Sweeney to point the free.

But just as happened earlier Kerry struck back with two points inside a minute, both from Declan Quill, one a free. Half-time: Donegal 0-5, Kerry 1-4.

Brendan Devenney, who had just returned from his holidays on Saturday night, was brought into the action in the second half and posed a few problems, but it was Kerry who started sharper with Quill pointing after twenty four seconds and he added a second after a foul on O'Sullivan.

PENALTY CLAIM

Donegal had claims for penalty after four minutes of the half as Christy Toye seemed to

be impeded as he ran onto a pass from Rory Kavanagh.

Adrian Sweeney missed two very pointable frees for Brian Roper won another free from which Brendan Devenney pointed in the 42nd minute.

Again Kerry hit back with Paul Galvin pointing and then Sean O'Sullivan of another Diver mistake to hit a glorious point from near the sideline.

Adrian Sweeney pointed another free after a foul on Brendan Devenney on 51 minutes but again the Donegal defence gave the ball away and Declan Quill opted to take a point when another goal chance was on.

Donal Daly added another point to open a six point gape

and although there was plenty of Donegal effort, they were making little headway. Brian Roper set up a great chance for James Ruane but he shot too early and his effort was easily saved. Amazingly Roper was substituted immediately after this even though he was still the most industrious of the front line.

As the game drew to an inevitable conclusion Adrian Sweeney pointed a free but Kerry responded with points from Billy Sheehin and a Declan Quill free.

For Kerry it was really an easy victory with their defence on top; Dara O Se and Donal Daly were able to stroll through the game while up front Paul Galvin, Declan Quill and Declan O'Sullivan - three players challenging for championship places - were excellent.

For Donegal there were few bright spots. Brian Roper was by far the most lively forward on view, while Noel McGinley and Kevin Cassidy never stopped trying.

TEAMS AND SCORERS

Donegal: T. Blake; N. McGinley, R. Sweeney, N. McCready; D. Diver, E. Reddin, K. Cassidy; J. Ruane, J. McGuinness; C. Toye (0-1), B. Monaghan (0-1), R. Kavanagh (0-1); B. Roper, A. Sweeney (0-4, 4f), C. Dunne. Subs., B. Devenney (0-1,f) for B. Monaghan (35); J. Gildea for Dunne (53), M. Hegarty for Toye (55); J. McCafferty for Roper (65).

Kerry: D. Murphy; T. O Se, M. McCarthy, M. Lyons; E. Fitzmaurice, S. Moynihan, J. Sheehin; D. O Se, D. Daly (0-1); L. Hassett, E. Brosnan, P. Galvin (0-1); D. Quill (0-7, 3f), D. O'Sullivan (1-1), R. O'Connor. Subs., S. O'Sullivan (0-1) for O'Connor (31); T. O'Sullivan for Fitzmaurice (46); S. Scanlon for Hassett (54); B. Sheehin (0-1) for Brosnan (65).

Ref: E. Murtagh (Longford).

Allianz NFL Division 1A

Cork3-8
Donegal0-10

When it rains it pours. And that was very much the story of this Division 1A Allianz National Football League tie in ideal climatic conditions under the lights in Pairc Ui Rinn on Saturday night.

Tom Comack reports from Pairc Ui Rinn

But sadly for down on their luck Donegal it was the goals that rained down as they conceded three to Cork. And even more disappointing all three were gift wrapped.

Centre back Eoin Sexton must have thought all his birthdays had come together as he found a tackle free corridor through the left side of the Donegal defence to score the Rebels first two minutes before half-time.

The second, four minutes into the second period, again had the touch of Christmas about it when Niall McCreehy pulled Jim Donoghue inside the large rectangle. And Brendan Ger O'Sullivan duly despatched the spot kick, while Colin Corkery's late fisted effort should have been dealt with.

Take away all three and the scoreboard would have had a better look about it, though in fairness to the Leesiders they did not play with the same urgency once they took control on the scoreboard.

Dice loaded

The dice may have been always loaded against a depleted Donegal but the two Cork three pointers either side of half-time really took the wind out of a game Donegal sails.

A Donegal side that was without All Star Kevin Cassidy, team captain and star forward Adrian Sweeney, midfield admirals from last year John Gildea and Paul McGonagle; U21's Christy Toye, Colm McFadden, Rory Kavanagh, Conal Dunne and Brendan Boyle who were all excused from making the trip due to next weekend's Ulster championship clash with Derry

In all Brian McEniff had nineteen players toggled in Cork on Saturday night which included James Ruane, struggling with an ankle injury, and Michael Hegarty, complaining of flu symptoms, in the first

fifteen. And yet this makeshift Donegal side put in a battling display and were a little lucky that the final margin was not a little narrower.

While Cork played the fancier football and wove pretty patterns all over the park, Donegal more than matched them for long periods. This was especially true in the first half and to a lesser extent in the second. It might have been a case of winners taking the foot off the pedal in the closing exchanges this could not be said of the first half.

Despite Cork opening at 90 miles per hour, Donegal, gave as good as they got in the first half and in fact were in front 0-4 to 0-3 with just seven minutes remaining in the half.

Brendan Devenney created pandemonium up front with Jim McGuinness and Michael Hegarty the providers. They may have lived dangerously on more than one occasion but with Eamon Reddin, Niall McCreehy, Ray Sweeney and Barry Monaghan working well Cork found scores hard to come by.

By the end of the first quarter Devenney had accounted for three of his sides opening scores and was on his second marker. The St. Eunan's ace got Donegal off the mark on six minutes when he converted from 20 metres after he was unceremoniously pulled back by fullback Alan O'Connor. One minute later he set up Jim McGuinness for the lead point after he once more skinned O'Connor and was bearing down on the posts when the full-back pulled him back. McGuinness pointed the resultant free after O'Connor got a finger wagging from the referee and the game's first yellow card.

Larry Tompkins took the cue from the official and re-assigned O'Connor to follow Shane Carr with Seanie O'Brien, the only Nemo Rangers player to start, taking up duty alongside Devenney.

And the Rebels were made pay for a little wayward shooting with a Michael Cronin pointed free their only return from a number good chances. And battling Donegal got their noses back in front when Michael Hegarty, pointed to edge Tirchonail into a 0-4 to 0-3 lead ten minutes from the break. Even though Michael Miskella tied up the game for the fourth time minutes later, Brian McEniff, and the hardy band of Donegal followers that made the long trip south were quiet happy the way things were shaping up.

But it all went terribly wrong in the closing five minutes of the first period as Cork struck 1-2 to go in at the break 1-6 to 0-4 in front. In between two pointed frees from Michael Cronin, Eoin Sexton blasted to the back of Gerard McGill's net to break Donegal hearts.

Winning possession about thirty metre out from the endline and close to the sideline, Sexton waltzed through to find the top corner of the rigging.

And it did not get any better for the visitors. Seven minutes into the new half the Rebels had stretched their lead out to nine points courtesy of a goal and a point from Brendan Ger O'Sullivan. The goal from the penalty spot on five minutes really was the final nail in Donegal's hopes.

Spot kick

The second goal was a huge psychological blow to a side down on its luck and running low on confidence. What ever chance Brian McEniff's men had at making a bold bid for victory, it went with Sullivan sweetly struck spot kick.

And what made it an even more telling blow was that minutes later Brendan Devenney missed a gilt edge chance at the other end, his first touch letting him down

with the goal gaping.

Despite this setback they soldiered on and, in fact, outscored the home side by six scores to two for the remainder of the game. The only difference was that one of Cork scores was a goal from second half substitute Colin Corkery, who also struck a massive long range point.

Three unanswered points from Brian Roper, Devenney and McGuinness reduced the gap to six points.

The scoreline (2-8 to 0-9) had an air of respectability thanks to further points from Hegarty and Devenney when Corkery pounced for Cork's third goal on the stroke of full-time. The Nemo Rangers ace getting his fist to an Alan Cronin cross to really rub the visitors noses in it. Brian Roper brought the curtain down on the scoring with a sweetly struck point.

Cork: Kevin O Dwyer; Noel O Donovan, Alan O'Connor, Seanie O'Brien; Sean Levis, Eoin Sexton (1-0), Noel O Leary; Nicholas Murphy, Graham Canty; Jim O'Donoghue, Brendan J. O'Sullivan, (1-2, pen), John Miskella (0-1); James O'Shea, Michael Cronin (0-3), Colin Crowley (0-1). Subs: Derek Kavanagh for E. Sexton half-time; Colin Corkery (1-1) for C. Crowley, Alan Cronin for J. Miskella, (both on 48 min.); Tom Kenny for N. Murphy, 63 min.; Maurice McCarthy for B. G. O'Sullivan, 64 min.:

Donegal: Gerard McGill; Noel McGinley, Eamon Reddin, Niall McCreehy; Raymond Sweeney, Barry Monaghan, Damian Diver; James Ruane, Jim McGuinness (0-2, frees); Dessie McNamara, Michael Hegarty (0-2), Brian Roper (0-2); Johnny McCafferty, Brendan Devenney (0-4, four frees), Shane Carr. Sub., Brian McLaughlin for J. McCafferty 54 min.

Referee: M. Ryan (Limerick)

After match Reaction

Donegal manager Brian McEniff was more disappointed with the margin of the defeat rather than the defeat itself as he felt it did not truly reflect his sides over all performance.

"I am disappointed, because I don't think the final score totally reflected how well we played over the seventy minutes. We lost it in that five six minute period before half time where we went from being level to actually going in at the break five points down.

"Cork may have had the better of the first half but we showed a bit of spirit and played some good sensible football. And then again at the start of the second half they hit us for six, when they scored from the penalty spot just minutes after Brendan (Devenney) missed a great chance of a goal. Once they scored the second goal there was no way back for us.

"Though in fairness to the lads they battled on and we hit a number of good scores in the closing quarter. While the third Cork goal was only academic I would have preferred if we had not conceded it as I felt it did give the final score a slightly lopsided look about it. A three four point difference would have been a better reflection of the way we played," said McEniff.

Michael Hegarty: A sound game from the Kilcar man was the main provider of quality ball for Devenney, though he tended to drift in and out of the game. He also managed to post two points from play, the big black mark against him was that he was no where to be seen when Eoin Sexton rattled the net. 7

Donegal restore their pride

After six defeats McEniff gets a win

DONEGAL.....2-10
ROSCOMMON.....1-10

BRIAN McEniff's painful return as Donegal boss ended with his sides first league win in seven outings at Ballybofey.

Relegated to Division Two football after their worst league run in history Donegal's richly deserved victory also condemned Roscommon to the lower ranks next season.

The midlanders had to win to maintain their struggle to remain in the top flight but on the day played second fiddle to the home side.

SUPER DEVENNEY

Man of the Match Brendan Devenney was the star of the show for Donegal scoring 1-6 in a super display from the full forward berth. He tormented the Roscommon rearguard and his 24th minute goal was one of the best seen at the venue for many years.

The sides were level three times in an enjoyable encounter but Donegal always held the upper hand and never looked in trouble after leading 2-5 to 1-6 at the break.

However, sharpshooter Frankie Dolan must be kicking himself after squandering three gilt edged goal scoring chances for Roscommon during the opening half.

Roscommon laid siege on the Donegal goal in the dying minute as they struggled to get a win to keep them in

Division One but the home side held firm in the face of adversity. Tommy Carr's men will need to improve ten fold if they are to stand against Galway in the Connacht championship.

Donegal boss Brian McEniff was delighted to have broken his duck.

"I'm delighted to get a win after a dismal league run. The boys showed great spirit and character today that we'd lacked for a while. Roscommon didn't play as well as they can but we're not complaining," said the man who has guided Donegal to five Ulster titles and an historic All-Ireland in 1992.

"We kicked thirteen wides but we worked hard hard for one another. I think we're starting to turn the corner in time for the championship opener against Fermanagh in June," he added.

For the home side Devenney was majestic in a steady team display. Others to impress included defenders Shane Carr, Eamon Reddan, Kevin Cassidy and Barry Monaghan, midfielder Jim McGuinness and the lively Johnny McCafferty.

After an indifferent start pint sized Brian Roper also stifled the threat posed by Roscommon's playmaker Francie Grehan while goalkeeper Sean Sweeney had a solid debut.

For the midlanders it was a below par display. They relied too heavily on ace score taker Frankie Dolan. He finished with a personal tally of seven points to his credit but the fact Tommy Carr's side went seventeen minutes



Tempers flare during the big match last Sunday as several players get involved in a minor scuffle.

without a score in the second half underlined the depth of their offensive frailties.

Points from James Ruane and Devenney got Donegal off to a flying start but they were rocked back on their heels when Paul Noone rattled the net after fine work by Karl Mannion to give the midlanders a 1-0 to 0-2 lead after five minutes.

THREAT

Mannion was a constant threat in the early stages as Roscommon's tactic of kicking high balls into the square unsettled a nervous looking Donegal defence.

As the half wore on and Dolan missed two super goal chances it was the home side who seized the initiative. A fortitious Kevin Rafferty 19th minute goal following a mistake by defender Andy McPadden put his side 1-3 to 1-2 clear.

They continued to dominate as the game wore on and Devenney's 24th minute goal strike was worthy of win-

ning any game. He got the ball 30 metres from goal, brushed aside the challenges of three players before unleashing an unstoppable shot to the roof of the net from 21 metres. The goal delighted the home supporters in the crowd of around 2,500 people and gave Donegal a 2-3 to 1-3 lead and were never behind thereafter.

Dolan kept Roscommon in touch with a well executed free from 40 metres but scores without reply from Jim McGuinness and Colm McFadden left the home side 2-5 to 1-6 ahead at the break.

Any remote hopes of a Roscommon comeback were dashed in the early stages of the second half. Points without reply from McGuinness and two from Devenney put Donegal 2-9 to 1-6 ahead.

Frankie Dolan ended a barren 22 minutes period without a score for Roscommon but try as they did in the latter stages with points from Dolan (2) and substitute Ronan Cox it wasn't enough to keep them in the top flight.

Donegal: Sean Sweeney, Damien Diver, Eamon Reddan, Shane Carr, Raymond Sweeney, Barry Monaghan, Kevin Cassidy, James Ruane (0-1), Jim McGuinness (captain, 0-2), Christy Toye, Brian Roper, Kevin Rafferty (1-0), Colm McFadden (0-1), Brendan Devenney (1-6, five frees) and Johnny McCafferty. Subs used: John Gildea for Rafferty (63mins) and Conal Dunne for McFadden (64 mins).

Roscommon: Shane Curran, Don Nolan, Dave Casey, Raymond Cox, Andy McPadden, Francie Grehan, Paul Noone (1-0), Seamus O'Neill, Stephen Lohan, John Tierman (0-1), Gary Cox (0-1), Brian Higgins, Nigel Dineen (captain), Karl Mannion and Frankie Dolan (0-7, five frees).

Subs used: Ronan Cox (0-1) for Higgins (40 mins) Morgan Byrne for Lohan (49 mins), Gerry Lohan for Dineen (58 mins) and John Dunning for John Tierman (60 mins).

Referee: E Whelan (Laois).