

2007

Team Manager: Brian McIver

Dr. Mc Kenna Cup.

Section C

1	7 th Jan	Fr. Tierney Park	Donegal	1-06	UUJ	1-04
2	14 th Jan	Casement Park	Donegal	0-09	Antrim	0-08
3	21 st Jan	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	2-11	Down	0-11
4	28 th Jan	Healy Park, Omagh	Donegal	0-09	Armagh	0-07
5	18 th Feb	Final	Donegal	0-05	Tyrone	2-09

Ulster Senior Football Championship

6	27 th May	Ballybofey	Donegal	1-09	Armagh	1-08
7	17 th June	Clones	Donegal	1-07	Tyrone	2-15
	15 th July	Ulster final	Tyrone	1-15	Monaghan	1-13

All Ireland Qualifiers 2007.

8	8 th June	Carrick on Shannon	Donegal	1-16	Leitrim	1-14
9	17 th June	Mullingar	Donegal	1-13	Westmeath	1-08
10	29 th July	Healy Park, Omagh	Donegal	1-07	Monaghan	2-12
	19 th Aug.	Semi Final Croke Park	Cork	1-16	Meath	0-09
	26 th Aug.	Semi Final Croke Park	Kerry	1-15	Dublin	0-16
	16 th Sept.	Final: Croke Park	Kerry	3-13	Cork	1-09

National Football League. - 2007 Allianz NFL Division 1

11	3 rd Feb	Páirc Uí Rinn	Cork	2-07	Donegal	1-12
12	11 th Feb	Ballybofey	Donegal	1-13	Mayo	1-10
13	25 th Feb	Fr. Tierney Park	Donegal	0-09	Dublin	0-05
14	10 th March	Healy Park	Tyrone	1-08	Donegal	2-11
15	25 th March	O'Donnell Park	Donegal	1-15	Kerry	0-13
16	31 st March	Gaelic Grounds	Limerick	2-12	Donegal	4-06
17	7 th April	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	1-13	Fermanagh	2-09
18	15 th April	Semi-Final Croke Park	Donegal	1-13	Kildare	1-11
19	22 nd April	Final Croke Park	Donegal	0-13	Mayo	0-10



Dr. McKenna Cup, Section C

**Tom Comack reports from
Fr. Tierney Park
Photos by Thomas Gallagher**

Donegal 1-6

UUJ 1-4

Donegal got the new season off to a winning start, but only just, with their victory over the University of Ulster, Jordanstown, at a rainswept Fr. Tierney Park, Ballyshannon, on Sunday afternoon.

It took the home team's greater craft and their greater sprinkling of experienced players to see them through in trying conditions on a day the Students gave as good as they got. One cannot but feel if Mickey Moran had the four Tyrone men - Peter Donnelly (injured), Colm Kavanagh, Brendan Boggs and Damian McCaul - they might have made life even more difficult for Donegal.

As it was it took a late scoring burst from the Tirconail men to see them collect all two points. Minor ace Michael Murphy, Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin and Brian Roper came up with the goods in the closing quarter hour when the game was in the melting pot. It was during this period that the experienced hand of Barry Monaghan, Paddy Campbell, second half substitute Kevin Cassidy and Roper - who had been consistently good throughout - came up trumps, and their influence on proceedings turned the tie in favour of the home team.

But it must be emphasised too that Donegal were very much in experimental mode as Brian McIver gave competitive starts to Ciaran Sharkey, in goals; Peter Witherow, at corner back; Johnny McLoone, Benny Byrne and Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin and Cloughaneely's Denis Boyle up front. Boyle was a late replacement for Adrian Sweeney, who cried off just before the game with a calf injury. And the number of new faces was up to eight by the time the game was over with the second half introductions of Michael Murphy and Martin McElhinney, members of last year's Ulster winning minor team. One other late change from the side selected earlier in the week saw Rory Kavanagh replace Christy Toye at midfield, who missed the game

with flu.

Conditions were atrocious in Ballyshannon, with constant rain throughout making underfoot and handling conditions almost impossible, and this combined with early season rustiness, especially Donegal, this was far from a spectacle and was littered with missed passes and a litany of handling errors.

Donegal looked very stale and off the pace in the opening quarter but still led by a point at the break, 1-2 to 1-1 and a little lucky to do so as UUJ were the better side for much of the first half. But after an opening flurry of a goal and a point inside the opening six minutes the Students failed to score again for the remainder of the half, and this, despite enjoying more than their fair share of possession through the good work of Derry's Jonathan Bradley and James Colgan from Down in the middle of the park.

The Students got off to the better start with a pointed free from Paddy Cunningham and a goal from Michael Herron after Donegal keeper Ciaran Sharkey failed to hold a Mark Lynch shot under his crossbar. The ball hit off the intruding Herron for a tonic score on five and a half minutes and a great start for the Students. Sharkey made amends three minutes later when he got down well to deny Raymond Mulgrew from close range.

Donegal's first effort should have been a three pointer too, Brian Roper failing to finish when straight through on goals after a great run through the heart of the UUJ defence.

That was on eight minutes. And Donegal had to wait another six minutes for their opening score, a pointed 20 metre free on 14 minutes from new boy Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin. The home team

were still struggling until Johnny McLoone blasted to the UUJ net on 22 minutes. The Naomh Conaill man polished off a great run from local favourite Brian Roper, but was a little fortunate when his shot took a deflection off a defender. However, for Roper's run alone and McLoone's support play, the move deserved a score. And boy did Donegal need it.

McMenamin added a second point before the break to give his side the slight edge going into the interval.

Despite the heavy going, the standard of play improved slightly in the second half, and while scoring was still proving an elusive art Jordanstown reeled of three points in the middle of the half - two pointed frees from Paddy Cunningham, and one from Paul Forker from play - to take the lead 1-4 to 1-3, by the end of the third quarter.

But a converted 45 metre free from minor ace Michael Murphy after Martin McElhinney was fouled tied up the game with just over 15 minutes remaining. Both sides fluffed chances before Kevin McMenamin edged Donegal back in front on 64 minutes and with the game still in the balance Brian Roper kicked over the insurance point, and the most popular point of the day in Fr. Tierney Park.

UUJ were reduced to fourteen men on the stroke of time when Rory Murray got his marching orders for a second yellow card offence.

Donegal: Ciaran Sharkey; Peter Witherow, Paddy Campbell, Frank McGlynn; Eamon McGee, Barry Monaghan, Barry Dunnion; Joe Friel, Rory Kavanagh; Ryan Bradley, Brian Roper (0-1), Johnny McLoone (1-0); Kevin McMenamin (0-3,2F), Benny Byrne, Denis Boyle. Subs: Kevin Cassidy for R. Kavanagh; Michael Murphy (0-1F) for D. Boyle; Martin McElhinney for R. Bradley; Neil McGee for J. Friel.

UUJ: Michael McAllister; Philip Mooney, James Conlan, Rory Murray; Daren Hughes, Paul Doherty, Eamon McConville; Jonathan Bradley, James Colgan; Declan Lavery, John Boyle, Raymond Mulgrew; Paddy Cunningham (0-3F), Michael Herron (1-0), Mark Lynch. Subs., Paul Forker (0-1) for D. Lavery; Shane O'Hagan for P. Doherty; Shane McAleer for J. Boyle; Bernard O'Brien for P. Cunningham; Rory McPory for R. Mulgrew.

Referee: Martin Higgins (Fermanagh).

SPORT

Dr. McKenna Cup, Section C

Donegal shade it in Casement

Tom Comack reports from Casement Park
Photos by Thomas Gallagher

Donegal . . . 0-9
Antrim . . . 0-8

For the second week in a row an experimental Donegal scraped through to bag the points and take a giant step towards a Dr. McKenna Cup semi-final spot.

While they had two points to spare last weekend over UUJ, in Ballyshannon, Brian McIver and his men had to be happy with a point victory this time around over Antrim at a cold and windy Casement Park on Sunday afternoon.

With four points from two games, a draw with Down next Sunday in Ballyhofey will be enough to see Donegal through to the last four and the guarantee of at least one more warm up ahead of the Allianz National Football League.

And given the experimental nature of the last two weekends, it is a good enough return and just what the doctor ordered.

Colin McCarron from Dungloe

and Noel Hegarty, Kilarc, both got their first taste of senior football, while Michael Murphy and Martin McElhinney made their first starts after cutting their teeth last weekend against Jordanstown. In all Brian McIver only fielded five recognised seniors - Michael Boyle, Paddy Campbell, Barry Dunion, Eamon McGee and Kevin Cassidy, while Brian Roper, Leon Thompson and Christy Toye were introduced in the course of the game. Toye, though named on Thursday night, did not start with Naomh Conaill's Johnny McLoone deputised for the Cresslough man.

As was the case last Sunday, this was not a game for the purists, but the closeness of the fare meant that nobody left their seats until the final whistle.

A scoring burst at the end of the first half, which yielded three points, and similar spurt again in the closing ten minutes were just about enough to see Donegal over the line. But only just, and they were clinging on at the finish, and had 'keeper Michael Boyle to thank for all two points, when the Termon man denied

Antrim in the closing seconds a clear goal chance. There was nothing spectacular about the save just good house keeping and being in the right place at the right time to deny Tomas McCann from the edge of the small square.

Antrim were the more potent outfit, even if a little extravagant, in the opening quarter hour, and deservedly led by two points, 0-4 to 0-2 after 17 minutes, Mickey McCann and Ciaran Close with a brace each. Kevin Cassidy and Martin McElhinney with two good individual efforts kept Donegal in touch, a Donegal side who lined out in their alternative strip of green with gold hoop.

Antrim twice took the lead through McCann; on two minutes from play, and Close from a 13 metre free on eight minutes. And twice Donegal drew level with Cassidy splitting the posts on five minutes and McElhinney clipping over four minutes later to tie up the game.

And despite losing corner back Laurence Higgins to a second yellow card on 20 minutes, the home team with the advantage of the wind extended their lead out to three

points on 23 minutes, thanks to another McCann free.

But three points in the closing eleven minutes of the half from Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin, Ryan Bradley and Michael Murphy was enough to see Donegal go in at the break all square 0-5 each. McMenamin and Murphy punished over zealous defending from placed ball with Bradley's strike from play.

Donegal led for the first time in the contest eight minutes into the second half when Ryan Bradley showed a glimpse of his 2005 form to land a brilliant point. But despite the assistance of the elements and the numerical advantage the visitors failed to pull away.

With both sides proving very shy in front of the posts, it was all square again on 21 minutes when substitute Paddy Logan landed the first of his and team's three second half scores.

If anything Antrim were making the greater shapes at this stage. But as they had done in the first half, the Tirconail boys upped a gear and by the 28th minute they were two up for the first time in the contest

with Brian Roper and Ryan Bradley knocking over crucial scores, both from long range.

Two up, 0-8 to 0-6, with seven minutes remaining Donegal were finally looking the flashier outfit, but it was soon a one point game again, Logan on 64 minutes once more raising a flag.

While McMenamin restored the two point lead on the stroke of normal time, Antrim still harboured notions and had a number of chances before Logan completed the scoring two minutes into injury time to set Donegal pulses racing. And Donegal hearts were in their mouths when Thomas McCann barged his way through a number of defenders only to be denied by Boyle.

Donegal: Michael Boyle; Peter Witherow, Paddy Campbell, Colin McCarron; Noel Hegarty, Eamon McGee, Barry Dunion; Joe Priel, Kevin Cassidy (0-1); Johnny McLoone;

Ryan Bradley (0-3), Michael Murphy (0-1f); Kevin McMenamin (0-2,2f), Benny Byrne, Martin McElhinney (0-1). Subs: Neil McGee for C. McCarron; Brian Roper (0-1) for J. McLoone; Frank McGlynn for N. Hegarty; Leon Thompson for B. Byrne;

Christy Toye for M. McElhinney.

Antrim: John Finnucane; Damian Gault, Colin Brady, Laurence Higgins; Sean McVeigh, Gavin Bell, Niall Ward; Joe Quinn, Darrell Martin; Aidan Gallagher, Michael McCann, Christy Lynch; Ciaran Close, Kevin Brady, Mickey Rea. Subs: Tomas McCann for M. Rea; Conor McGoldrick for D. Gault; Michael Magill for J. Quinn; Paddy Logan for D. Martin; Hugh McKay for C. Lynch.

Referee: Gavin Corrigan (Down);

Ref Watch

Down official, Gavin Corrigan, had a fine game. I did not see Laurence Higgins' second infringement, but the corner back had been booked minutes earlier for a clumsy challenge on Martin McElhinney after being previously ticked for sailing close to the wind a number of times. Corrigan was very consistent on the persistent fouling and after a number of tickings and yellow cards, the pulling and dragging more or less stopped.

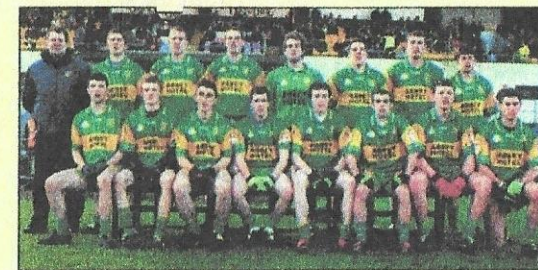
Man of the match

This was a pretty tough task because there were no real outstanding performances on either side. On a day forwards, with the exception of Ryan Bradley and Michael McCann, were more or less marked the award goes to a defender. It was a toss up between Barry Dunion and Gavin Bell. And while the Antrim man had a fine game, Dunion probably on the day proved the difference. Not alone did he sweep up at the back with great effect in his free role, but he always seemed to be back to help out a col-

league and crowd out the attacker in possession.



Kevin McMenamin Donegal's skips away from Ciaran Close 1601TG88



Donegal who defeated Antrim in the Dr. McKenna Cup at Casment Park, Belfast on Sunday. 1601TG70

SPORT

Dr. McKenna Cup

Improved scoring rate puts Donegal into semi-final

Peter Campbell reports from Fr. Tierney Park, Ballyshannon

Photos by Conor McGonagle

DONEGAL 2-11
DOWN 0-11

Donegal, as expected, made it through to the semi-final of the Dr. McKenna Cup with an improved performance against Down in Fr. Tierney Park, Ballyshannon on Sunday.

The game was switched from MacCumhaill Park on Saturday as the Ballybofey venue was deemed unplayable and despite the heavy rain, the pitch in Ballyshannon held up reasonably well.

The conditions, however, were draining on players but Donegal improved considerably on their opening two performances, especially in the scoring stakes.

The return of the old guard of Adrian Sweeney and Brendan Devenney was a factor and this duo along with the success story from last year, Leon Thompson, accounted for 2-8 of their final tally.

There was also a good return to the Donegal shirt of Patrick McConigley, especially in the second half when he moved to the half-back line - his position for the last few years with London and Tironaill Gaels.

The margin at the end may have been comfortable but Donegal did not have it their own way in the second half as

Barry Doran gave an exhibition in free-taking to take Down within two points with sixteen minutes left.

Donegal put down their marker in the opening half with Leon Thompson putting them in the driving seat after twenty five minutes, cutting through the Down defence to find the net. The clinical finish ended a move that started deep in defence with Ciaran Bonner providing the final pass to put Thompson through. At that stage Donegal were 1-4 to 0-2 ahead with the other Donegal points coming from Ciaran Bonner, Leon Thompson and two from Brendan Devenney - all from play.

Bonner, Thompson and Devenney were impressive in the opening quarter, giving Donegal an edge that wasn't evident in the opening two games.

Aidan Burns (free) and Martin McClean hit the Down points but the Mourne men responded well to Thompson's goal with three points in-a-row from Burns, McClean and a pointed free from Barry Doran to leave just two between them after 30 minutes - 1-4 to 0-5.

Donegal finished the half well with Barry Monaghan starting the move which saw Brendan Devenney hit his third point of the half and they added a

second goal on 35 minutes. Adrian Sweeney converted from the penalty spot when Brendan Devenney was fouled in the act of shooting but the St. Eunan's man was lucky to get away with a push on his opponent as the ball arrived.

Leading by 2-5 to 0-5 at the break, Donegal went through a rough patch in the third quarter when Down dominated midfield. They started the half well with Brendan Devenney pointing after good approach work by Michael Hegarty and Ciaran Bonner, but Barry Doran hit four frees in-a-row for Down to reduce the margin to three points.

Ciaran Bonner won a free for Adrian Sweeney to point on 51 minutes but again Doran hit back with two more pointed frees to reduce the margin to two points by the 54th minute - 2-7 to 0-11.

Brian McIver introduced Christy Toye and Rory Kavanagh to augment his midfield and it had the desired effect as Down were held scoreless until the final whistle.

Toye put Donegal on their way in the 60th minute and Brendan Devenney converted a 13m free five minutes later after Rory Kavanagh was upended on his way to goal. Down were reduced to fourteen at the time with Colm Murtagh

dismissed for a second yellow for his part in the foul.

Before the end Devenney converted another free with substitute Ryan Bradley completing the score with a point from play.

Donegal: Michael Boyle; Barry Dunnion, Paddy Campbell, Patrick McConigley; Thomas Donoghue, Barry Monaghan, Frank McGlynn; Ciaran Bonner (0-1), Kevin Cassidy; Brendan McDyre, Michael Hegarty, Brian Roper; Brendan Devenney (0-6,2f), Adrian Sweeney (1-1,pen,f), Leon Thompson (1-1). Subs., Joe Friel for McDyre 44; Christy Toye (0-1) for Hegarty, Rory Kavanagh for Roper, both 55; Kevin McMenamin for Thompson 61; Ryan Bradley (0-1) for Bonner 69.

Down: Bernard Connell; Stephen Toner, Colm Murtagh, Ruairi McArdle; Joe Doran, Paul Shields, Kevin McGuigan; Martin McClean (0-2), Jack Lynch; Peter Turley, Mark Poland, Barry Doran (0-7,7f); Kevin Gracey, Aidan Burns (0-2,1f), Brendan Loughran. Subs. Eoin Henry for Toner 9; Darren Cunningham for McArdle 51; Declan Rooney for Shields 58; Colm McCrickard for Lynch, Brian Sweeney for Gracey, both 61.

Referee: Aidan McAlynn (Derry).



Barry Monaghan is first to the ball on this occasion during Sunday's clash with Down.

Dr McKenna Cup semi-final

Donegal stumble over weak Armagh

DONEGAL 0-9
ARMAGH 0-7

PETER CAMPBELL reports from Healy Park, Omagh
 Photos by THOMAS GALLAGHER

A less than convincing display saw Donegal struggle to a narrow win over a second-string Armagh in Healy Park, Omagh on Sunday which puts them into a Dr. McKenna Cup final.

The win came with a health warning attached. They lost one of their most impressive performers - Ciaran Bonner - after ten minutes with a damaged shoulder which will keep him out for the next two games.

After a good opening fifteen minutes they failed to score from the 13th minute until three minutes into the second half. The old failings such as dropping efforts into the 'keepers' hands as well as some poor decision making

when in possession were to the fore.

Among the positive things were the first win over the Orchard county in the new millennium, even if it was against a side that was hardly their strongest. The steadiness of Barry Monaghan and Neil McGee in defence were also noteworthy, as was the display of Barry Dunning when introduced at half-time.

There was also another good performance from Kevin 'Wappa' McMenemy in the front line, hitting four points and his general all-round workrate was top class.

The game was dominated more by referee, Barry Toland, than any of the players and his decision making was questionable throughout, both sides suffering at various stages.

As a spectacle, though, the game was mediocre for the 4,000 attendance. Donegal just about deserved their win and they showed

a reasonable appetite for the fight when they were reduced to fourteen men - Kevin Cassidy being dismissed for a second yellow offence midway through the second half. Cassidy escaped punishment for a heavy challenge on Paul Duffy before the break but was probably punished retrospectively in the second period as his misdemeanour for the second yellow card was very harsh.

The loss of the Gaith Dobhair man could have fatal for Donegal as he had his best period in the third quarter. However, Donegal finished reasonably well without ever looking like pulling away from the Armagh men.

Donegal had to line out without Paddy McConigley, but they dominated the opening quarter with Ciaran Bonner very lively. The Glenswilly man had the first score on the board after two minutes, finishing approach work by Kevin McMenemy and Christy Toye.

Less than a minute later Bonner combined with Rory Kavanagh to win a free which

McMenemy converted. In the tackle, however, Bonner picked up a damaged shoulder when two Armagh men landed on him on the ground. Although he played on for another seven minutes and contributed, he was replaced on ten minutes by Leon Thompson.

By that stage Kevin McMenemy had added another pointed free after Christy Toye was fouled and Toye was involved again on thirteen minutes, releasing Michael Hegarty to put Donegal four clear. It could have been better as Brendan Devenney picked out Rory Kavanagh with a great crossfield pass on eleven minutes but when the St. Eunan's man cut in for a goal chance, he was harshly called for overcarrying. Perhaps he should have taken his point initially.

Armagh were making little headway but they got a lucky call from the referee on 23 min-

utes, Joe Friel whistled for a bad pass and Peadar Toal had an easy task from a 13m free.

A minute later Toal hit a good score from play and in added time at the end of the first half Garret Swift from 50m and Kevin O'Rourke from a 13m free had Armagh in the lead at the break.

Half-time: Donegal 0-4, Armagh 0-5.

Brian Melver kept his charges in the dressing-room much longer than Armagh and they were on level terms within three minutes, Michael Hegarty winning a free and Brendan Devenney getting on the scoreboard with the 35m free.

Within a minute the Tirconail men were back in front with Rory Kavanagh releasing Kevin McMenemy with a quick pass and the Termon hooked one of the scores of the game from 25m.

Armagh were back on terms by the 40th minute and could have got a goal as a J. P. Donnelly effort from distance came back off the angle of upright and crossbar and Stefan Forker was on hand to point.

Five minutes later Kevin Cassidy did great work to dispossess Donnelly on the half-way line and he released Brendan Devenney on a run. Brian Roper, just on as a sub, made up the ground to support Devenney on the inside and from 20m he hit a point that went just over the crossbar.

Armagh had plenty of possession but were unable to penetrate the Donegal defence and even though the winners lost Kevin Cassidy to a second yellow card, they increased their lead to two points with a Brendan Devenney free on 62 minutes.

It looked as if they were safely home but Armagh made them sweat when Barry McKevitt pointed on 71 minutes but two minutes later it was fitting that Kevin McMenemy completed the scoring, converting a free from just inside the 45m line.

The Armagh line-up was almost unrecognisable from the normal Orchard side. Enda McNulty, Malachy Mackin and Paul Duffy were probably the only three used with any degree of consistency by Joe Kernan in recent years.

Donegal will have plenty to think about this week before heading south to Cork. Barry Monaghan's good form continues and Neil McGee was very good at full-back. However, it is at midfield and up front that most of Donegal problems lie. The win, especially over Armagh, will give them a lift but they will have to improve if they are to take League points home from the Lee next weekend.

Donegal: Ciaran Sharkey; Paddy Campbell, Neil McGee, Kevin McGlynn; Thomas Donoghue, Barry Monaghan, Eamon McGee; Kevin Cassidy, Joe Friel; Christy Toye, Michael Hegarty (0-1), Rory Kavanagh; Kevin McMenemy (0-4,3f), Brendan Devenney (0-2,2f), Ciaran Bonner (0-1). Subs., Leon Thompson for Bonner 10; Barry Dunning for McGlynn h.t.; Brian Roper (0-1) for Friel 41; Adrian Sweeney for Thompson 53; Ryan Bradley for Devenney 67.

Armagh: Ciaran McKinney; Gerard McCreesh, Enda McNulty, Paudie McCreesh; JP Donnelly, Tony McClelland, Paul Duffy; Gareth Swift (0-1), Kieran Toner; Peadar Toal (0-3,1f), Malachy Mackin, Martin Ferris; Kevin O'Rourke (0-1,f), Brendan Donaghey, Stefan Forker (0-1). Subs., Seamus Toner for Duffy 27; Barry McKevitt (0-1) for Swift 56; Neil McSharry for Donnelly 58; Jason O'Neill for Mackin 63.

Referee: Barry Toland (Derry).

Cavlan pulls the strings for Red Hand triumph

Tyrone 2-9

Donegal 0-5

Dr McKenna Cup final

HOLDERS Tyrone stormed to victory in the Dr McKenna Cup final on Saturday, picking up the trophy for the fourth successive season and stretching their unbeaten run in 2007 to seven games.

Second-half goals from Colm McCullagh and Seán Cavanagh steered the Red Hands to victory, despite the dismissal of Kevin Hughes 20 minutes from the end.

Man of the match was creative mastermind Gerald Cavlan who once more pulled the strings around midfield and was at the hub of most of the home team's most eye-catching attacking moments.

Target

Brendan Devenney scored both of Donegal's first half points, but it was Tyrone who led 0-4 to 0-2 at the break, with Davy Harte, Cathal McCarron, Cavlan and Christy Colhoun all finding the target.

The sending off of Hughes for a second yellow card offence threatened to disrupt the Red Hand momentum, but the opposite was the case.

After Devenney and Kevin McMenemy had slotted over Donegal frees, Cavanagh charged forward to hoist a fine score before a superb defence-splitting pass by Cavlan set Colm McCullagh clear to rifle a shot to the



Colm McCullagh celebrates after scoring Tyrone's first goal during Saturday night's Dr McKenna Cup Final at Healy Park in Omagh. OLIVER McVEIGH / SPORTSFILE

Donegal net in the 54th minute.

And Cavanagh completed the misery for Donegal in stoppage time when he surged forward again to blast the ball into the goal off the inside of Ciaran Sharkey's left-hand upright.

SCORERS — Tyrone scorers: C McCarron 0-4 (2f), C McCullagh 1-1, (1f), S Cavanagh 1-1, D Harte, C Colhoun, G Cavlan 0-1 each. Donegal: B Devenney 0-3 (2f), K McMenemy 0-1 (f), C McFadden 0-1.

TYRONE — P McConnell, P McGurk, C McGinley, D McCaul, D Harte, C Gormley, P Quinn, K Hughes, G Cavanagh, T McGuigan, S Cavanagh, C Colhoun, C McCarron, C McCullagh, D McDermott. Subs: D Carlin for C McGinley, S O'Neill

for Colhoun, O Mulligan for McGuigan, M McGee for McGurk.

DONEGAL — C Sharkey, E McGee, P Campbell, F McGlynn, P McConigley, B Monaghan, B Dunnion, K Cassidy, N Gallagher, C Toye, C Bonner, B Roper, K McMenemy, B Devenney, R Bradley. Subs: C McFadden for Roper, I Thompson for McMenemy, T Donaghy for McGlynn, M Murphy for Bradley.

REF — J McQuillan (Cavan)

Ulster Championship Donegal strike late to overcome Armagh

DONEGAL.....1-09

ARMAGH.....1-08

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY

While this was far convincing it most certainly was very, very sweet. Donegal looked to be dead and buried in this nail-biting Ulster Championship clash in Ballybofey, before the Tir Chonaill men bit late on to send Armagh packing to the qualifiers and set up another mouth-watering tie in the semi final with Tyrone.

Brendan Devenney's teasing ball into the Armagh mixer appeared to have been dealt with by Armagh 'keeper Paul Harty. Under pressure from Kevin Cassidy, the ball squirmed into the back of the net.

Initially, it had been believed that the goal was Cassidy's, but television pictures later confirmed that the Gweedore man hadn't got a touch to the ball and the goal was in fact Devenney's.

This was Championship football at it's most intense and most rugged. None of us imagined Donegal clawing their way back into the game and we thought that Oisín McConville's 43rd minute goal was going to prove crucial.

Donegal lost the battle at midfield and for long periods they struggled in front of the posts and the fact that only three players had found the range before the goal shows that the forwards weren't at their most convincing.

These old foes had become well acquainted to one another in recent times with yesterday's clash being the eighth meeting of the two in eight years. In those clashes, Donegal's record had been less than inspiring as Armagh took victory in all of them bar the drawn games in '99 and '05.

However, after securing the National League crown back in April, Donegal entered yesterday's game in high spirits while Armagh came in on the back of an uninspiring League game and without four key players.

Francie Bellew, Ronan Clarke, JP Donnelly and Brian Mallon were all on the sick list meaning manager Joe Kernan was forced to hand Ulster Championship debuts to young hopefuls Kieran Toner and Brendan Donaghy.

The game also marked the return to Senior intercounty football of 31-year old Diarmuid Marsden, who decided to come out of retirement for this year's Championship.

Donegal boss Brian McIver, meanwhile, handed an Ulster Championship debut to Paddy McConigley. Termon's Kevin McManamin had been originally selected in the side, but he and Brendan Devenney missed out from the side that had been named at lunchtime on Friday.

Their places were taken by April player-of-the-month Brian Roper and Rory Kavanagh respectively.

The changes meant that the Donegal half-forward line

comprised Brian Roper, Claran Bonner and Rory Kavanagh with Christy Toye deployed at full forward flanked by Colm McFadden and Michael Hegarty.

The loss of Devenney, in particular, was evident in the early exchanges as Donegal struggled up front, although the hosts were a point in front after a tense first period with three Colm McFadden frees helping them to a 0-5 to 0-4 lead.

It took Donegal eleven minutes to register a point on the board, Colm McFadden's free after Brian Roper was fouled

These old foes had become well acquainted to one another in recent times with yesterday's clash being the eighth meeting of the two in eight years.

cancelled out Aaron Kernan's point from play that had opened the scoring.

It was typically intense affair in those early moments and tempers frayed for a period with Kevin Cassidy and Martin O'Rourke seeing yellow for clashing in the middle of the park and indeed O'Rourke also clashed with Donegal boss Brian McIver on the sideline.

Oisín McConville opened his account with a superb free out of his hands from the '45' but Donegal responded and they hit three without reply in the next three minutes to lead by two.

Paddy McConigley stroked over from play before Colm McFadden converted two frees after fouls on Neil McGee and Claran Bonner. The final point of the half fell the way of Donegal's Christy Toye after two in a row from Oisín McConville and Stevie McDonnell brought Armagh level.

Diarmuid Marsden struck just 15 seconds into the second half to level matters again before the Orchard men netted the game's opening goal. Paddy McKeever raced clear and saw Paul Durean pull off a save with his legs. The ball fell to Oisín McConville, though, and the veteran attacked pounced with deadly effect.

Colm McFadden and Stephen Kernan and then McFadden and McGeeney traded scores as Armagh continued to hold the vital three-point cushion. Stevie McDonnell then gave Armagh a four-point lead, but substitute Adrian Sweeney delightfully found the range with ten minutes remaining.

Ulster Championship

In the closing stages, Donegal wastefully kicked three wides with Toye, Sweeney and McFadden all off target, before a dramatic conclusion saw Colm McFadden (with a beautifully struck free) pull Donegal to within two.

Then came that dramatic goal and, although match referee John Bannon played almost five minutes of additional time, Donegal defended tenaciously and held firm to secure a sweet win that is long overdue.

Make no mistake about it. Donegal got out of jail yesterday, but the green and gold support can draw comfort from the fact that their side is unlikely to turn in another performance like this.

And they wouldn't want to. Tyrone await. The battle continues.

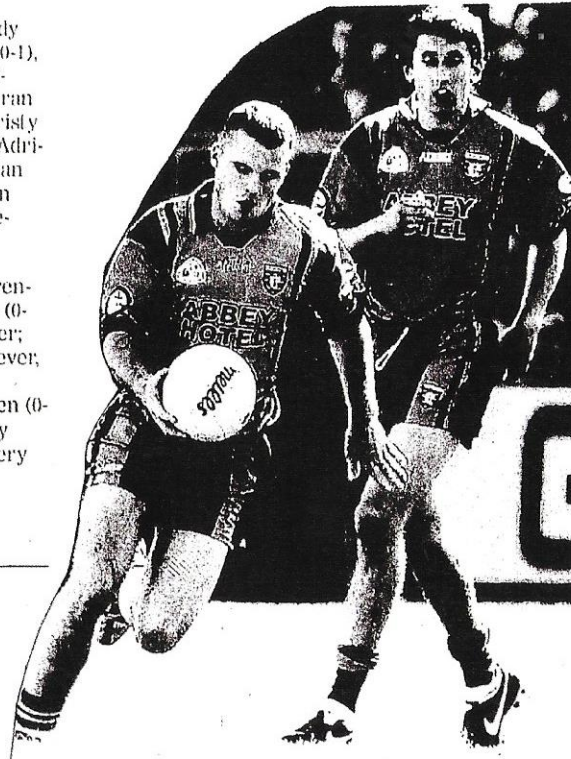
Donegal: Paul Durean; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Paddy McConigley (0-1), Barry Monaghan, Barry Dunnion; Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy; Rory Kavanagh, Ciaran Bonner, Brian Roper; Michael Hegarty, Christy Toye (0-1), Colm McFadden (0-6, 6f). Subs: Adrian Sweeney (for Roper, 49mins, 0-1); Brendan Devenney (for Hegarty, 53mins, 1-0); Eamon McGee (for Dunnion, 60mins); Kevin McMenamin (for Bonner, 67mins).

Armagh: Paul Hearty; Enda McNulty, Brendan Donaghy, Andy Mallon; Aaron Kernan (0-1), Kieran McGeeney (0-1), Ciaran McKeever; Kieran Toner, Paul McGrane; Paddy McKeever; Stephen Kernan (0-1), Martin O'Rourke; Stephen McDonnell (0-2), Diarmuid Marsden (0-1), Oisín McConville (1-2, 2f). Subs: Malachy Mackin (for O'Rourke, 59mins); James Lavery (for P. McKeever, 69mins).

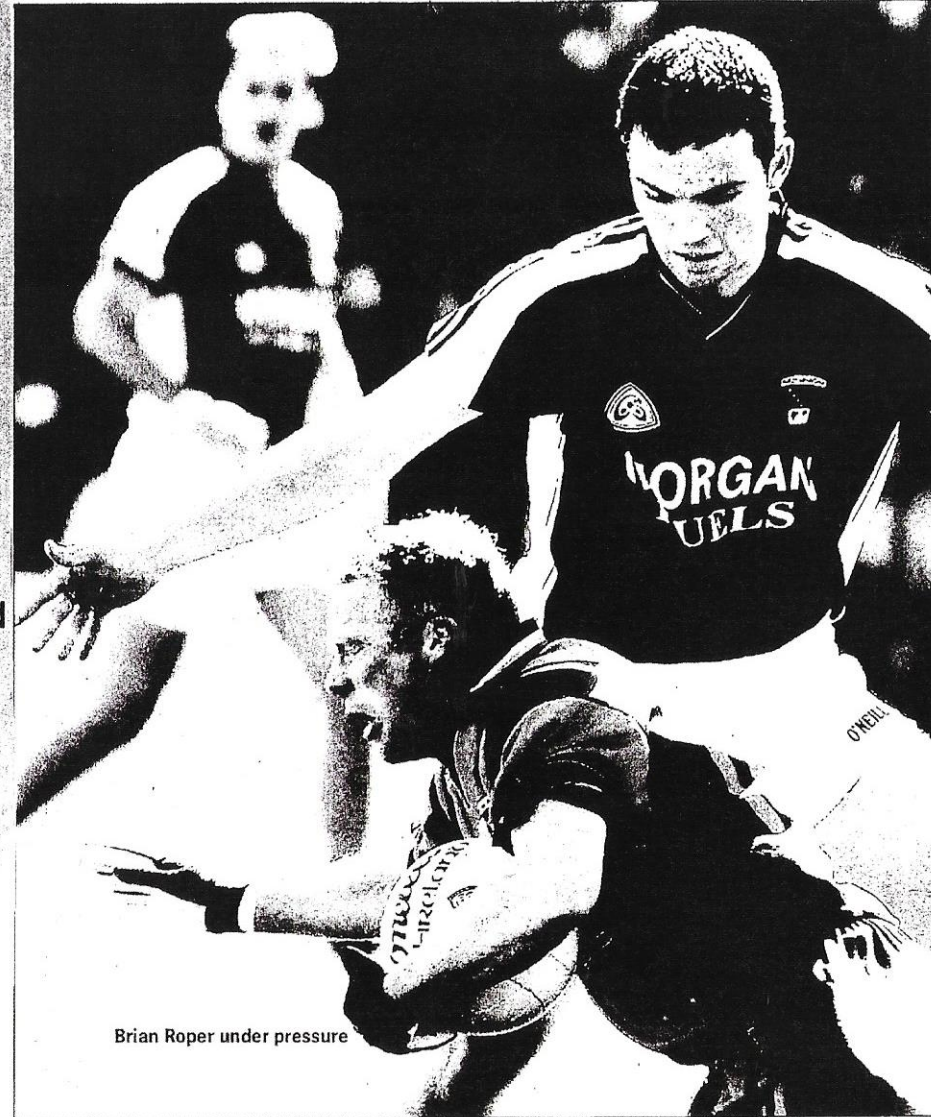
Referee: John Bannon (Longford).

Match Stats

DONEGAL ARMAGH		
Goals	1	1
Points	9	8
Wides	7	11
Frees awarded	28	22
Frees scored	6	2
45s	0	0
Yellow cards	6	3
Red cards	0	0
Attendance		19,870



These old foes had become well acquainted to one another in recent times with yesterday's clash being the eighth meeting of the two in eight years. In those clashes, Donegal's record had been less than inspiring as Armagh took victory in all of them bar the drawn games in '99 and '05.



Brian Roper under pressure

Ulster dream

Tuesday, 19th June, 2007

Bank of Ireland Senior Football Championship semi – final

shattered by Tyrone

BY TOM COMACK

PHOTOS BY BRIAN McDAID

Tyrone 2-15

Donegal 1-7

Donegal's great dream of a sixth Ulster Senior Championship title were well and truly scuppered by neighbours Tyrone on Sunday afternoon, in Clones. Bidding for a place in a their second Ulster final in-a-row, and a third in four years, Donegal were well and truly hammered by the Red Hands who were full value for their 11 point winning margin at the final whistle. For long periods in a lopsided contest they looked a class apart.

Except for a brief six minute period in the opening quarter hour, Donegal were well out of their depth. And with the exception of Rory Kavanagh, few other Donegal play'ers played up to scratch, though in fairness to Kevin Cassidy, he battled gamely to the death while Ciaran Bonner worked hard throughout. Adrian Sweeney and Colm McFadden also had good opening 20 minutes, but did not figure much thereafter.

Three points up at the half-time changeover, Tyrone took complete control in the second half as the Tírconnaill challenge totally evaporated, and the loss of Colm McFadden to a red card and Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin, for a second yellow, only served to add to a frustrating afternoon for the men in green and gold.

Donegal made two changes before the

throw in, Eamonn McGee replaced Barry Dunnion at wing back, and Adrian Sweeney came into the attack instead of Michael Hegarty. In the resultant reshuffle Sweeney played a centre half forward with Ciaran Bonner moving to the wing, and Brian Roper at left corner forward.

Tyrone settled the quicker, and had two points on the board inside six minutes with Brian Dooher posting the opener inside 20 seconds, and Owen Mulligan from a free.

But in a golden three minute spell, Donegal got their act together and by the ten minute mark they were in front after Kevin Cassidy found the Tyrone net. Colm McFadden and Ciaran Bonner kicked the Donegal points.

It could have been better for the boys in green and gold only for Tyrone keeper John Devine. Devine denied Colm McFadden from the penalty spot, after McFadden had a good goal ruled out and was called back by referee Dave Coldrick and awarded the penalty. For a five to six minute patch either side of Cassidy's goal, Donegal looked more than a match for Tyrone, but in reality that was as good as it got and they failed to score again for close on 27 minutes, when Devenney slotted over a 20 metre free two minutes from the break.

In-between Tyrone had posted 1-4 without reply, the goal ironically, from the penalty spot expertly executed by Colm McCullagh. McCullagh found the bottom corner of the Donegal net before half time after Paul Durcan was adjudged to have scooped the ball away

on the ground after pulling off a save from McCullagh.

Brian Dooher and Owen Mulligan (2), one from play, had raised white flags earlier for Tyrone. And while the penalty decision may have been harsh, a three point advantage - 1-6 to 1-3 - at the break scarcely reflected the O'Neill County's domination.

Tyrone really turned the screw after the break, with Brian Dooher, Kevin Hughes and Colm McCullagh all laying down markers in the opening 13 minutes. And not even inspirational points from Ciaran Bonner and Rory Kavanagh could raise the Donegal spirit. Bonner did well on 37 minutes after he worked his way out of the corner and through a forest of white and red jerseys to screw over from a tight angle and four minutes later Kavanagh landed a massive point from 40 metres to reduce the gap to five points, 1-10 to 1-5.

But Tyrone, who continued to squander gilt edged opportunities with Kevin Hughes the biggest culprit, picked up again in the closing ten minutes with Raymond Mulgrew getting on the end of a brilliant four man move to give Paul Durcan no chance from close range.

Leading 2-12 to 1-5, and with well over a quarter hour remaining Mickey Harte's men were in cruise control in the closing minutes and added to Tírconnaill misery with late points from Sean Cavanagh - his first of the afternoon - Stephen O'Neill and Raymond Mulgrew.

Kevin McMenamin, on 56 minutes and Brendan Devenney, on 58 minutes, added to the Donegal tally, but the game as a contest was well and truly over

when Colm McFadden was shown a straight red for striking to be followed shortly afterwards by Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin.

With their Ulster dream on the rocks Donegal must now turn their attention to the qualifiers route if they are to make an impression and live up to their All Ireland contender billing.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McMcGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Patrick McConigley, Barry Monaghan, Eamon McGee; Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy (1-0); Brian Roper, Ciaran Bonner (0-2), Rory Kavanagh (0-1); Colm McFadden (0-1), Brendan Devenney (0-2,1F).

Adrian Sweeney. Subs: Ryan Bradley for B. Roper; Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin (0-1) for Adrian Sweeney; Niall McCready for P. Campbell; Stephen McDermott for

Tyrone: John Devine; Ryan McMenamin, Cormac McGinley, Dermot Carlin; Davy Harte (0-1), Conor Gormely, Philip Jordan; Kevin Hughes (0-1), Sean Cavanagh (0-1), Brian Dooher (0-5), Raymond Mulgrew (1-0), Enda McGinley; Colm McCullagh (1penalty-1F), Colm Cavanagh, Owen Mulligan (0-3,2F). Subs: Joe McMahan for C. McGinley; Stephen O'Neill (0-2) for E. McGinley; Ryan Mellon for B. Dooher. **Referee:** David Coldrick (Meath).

BANK OF IRELAND ALL IRELAND FOOTBALL QUALIFIERS - ROUND ONE

Donegal need extra time

DONEGAL 1-16
LEITRIM 1-14

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY

PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

DONEGAL progressed to Round Two of the All Ireland Qualifiers, but they were made sweat for their victory by gallant Leitrim who pushed Brian Melvyr's men to the very brink at a tense Paire Sean MacDiarmada on Saturday evening.

Heading into the clash without several key players, this was always going to be a difficult assignment for Donegal given that they were coming off the back of a hammering to Tyrone.

Dessie Dolan's men had Donegal by the pin of the collar for long periods and indeed they led 0-6 to 0-2 after an opening 25 minutes in which the visitors just didn't get started.

They received a let off of the highest order when Paul Durcan saved Michael Foley's spot-kick three minutes from the interval and indeed they would lead at the break courtesy of a well worked goal from Michael Murphy in the final minute of the half.

The sides were score-for-score in the second half after Kevin McMenamin put Donegal three in front in the 39th minute and his side looked set for a win as they held the three-point advantage deep into stoppage time.

However, with the watch showing that some 77 minutes had elapsed, the sucker punch came when substitute James Glancy pounced on a breaking ball and blasted past Paul Durcan, who actually got a hand to his effort.

In extra time, Donegal had to dig deep into the reservoir to pull the victory out of the bag. Two Rory Kavanagh points and one from the boot of substitute Christy Toye had Donegal three up, but true to form Leitrim were back in the mix through two from Ciaran Duignan.

Stephen McDermott and Michael Duignan were next to trade the scores while Eamon McGee had the final say as he stroked over with relative ease after collecting Kevin McMenamin's crossfield ball.

Uncharacteristically, Brian Melvyr started with the team he had named at lunchtime on Friday, meaning the Donegal side showed five changes from the one that had capitulated against Tyrone three weeks ago.

Ciaran Bonner, Colm McFadden, Brian Roper, Adrian Sweeney and Eamon McGee were missing from that side as the Donegal team took a somewhat unfamiliar look about it.

First Championship starts were handed to Frank McGlynn at wing-back, Michael Murphy at wing-forward, Ryan Bradley at full forward and Kevin McMenamin at corner forward while Michael Hegarty was also brought into the line-up having recovered from a knee injury.

In front of the big home support, Leitrim burst from the traps against a jaded looking Donegal. Ciaran Duignan (free) and Fintan McBrien then put over from a Colin Regan pass before the Donegal account was opened by Michael Hegarty.

The Kilear man struck his second of the evening after Ciaran Duignan registered his second with a quite sublime effort from distance and the next three scores were all to the home side.

Ciaran Duignan (2) and Declan Maxwell stretched the Leitrim lead to four and, fearing for their lives, the Donegal management made positional changes that worked to great effect.

Ryan Bradley was taken out the field and Neil McGee was put on the ever-dangerous Maxwell as Donegal looked for a way back into the contest. Bradley, who was much more efficient in his new role, teed up Brendan Devenney for a point and then won a free which was converted by Kevin McMenamin.

The sizeable Donegal support then feared the worst as on the cards three minutes from the interval when the home side were awarded a spot kick after Maxwell went down under the challenge of Durcan.

Justice was done when the Donegal 'keeper saved with his foot from Michael Foley having been harshly penalised and on the stroke of half-time the Tir Chonaill men hit the front for the first time.

After Ryan Bradley brought Donegal to within a point, Rory Kavanagh began a move that concluded with Kevin McMenamin beautifully passing to teenager Michael Murphy in space.

The Glenswilly man burst through and beat Noel Gill with a thunderous effort that ensured his side was ahead by two (1-5 to 0-6) at the break and the momentum was with Donegal when Kevin McMenamin put three between them at the start of part two.

However, the sides were point-for-point as Leitrim never let Donegal out of sight. Each time Donegal led by three, the home side responded.

Ryan Bradley, Kevin McMenamin (free), Brendan Devenney (2) and Michael Murphy were on target for Donegal while Ciaran Duignan, Dermot Reynolds, James Glancy (2) and Michael Duignan hit the Leitrim points.

Right at the death, Glancy struck the back of the Donegal net meaning that another twenty minutes would decide who progressed to Round Two and in the end Donegal had enough in the tank to see off the Ridge County.

For the winners, Karl Lacey was outstanding while Neil McGee, Kevin McMenamin and Ryan Bradley were also to the fore while Shane Canning and Ciaran Duignan were best for

Leitrim.

Leitrim: Noel Gill; Dermot Reynolds (0-1), Michael McGuinness, Barry McWeeny; Ciaran Kennedy, John McKeon, Shane Foley; Gary McCloskey, Michael Duignan (0-2, 1'45); Colin Regan, Michael Foley, Declan Maxwell (0-1); Donal Brennan, Fintan McBrien (0-1), Ciaran Duignan (0-7, 4f). Subs: Barry Prior (for Regan, 25mins); Shane Canning (for Kennedy, h/t); James Glancy (for Brennan, 41mins, 1-2); Jimmy Guckian (for C. Duignan, 57mins); David O'Connor (for M. Foley, 71mins); Pat Gilmartin (for S. Foley, 77mins); Ciaran Duignan (for O'Connor, 80mins); Donal Brennan (for McBrien, 80mins).

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Frank McGlynn, Barry Monaghan, Paddy McConigley; Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy; Michael Murphy (1-1), Michael Hegarty (0-2), Rory Kavanagh (0-2); Kevin McMenamin (0-3, 2f), Ryan Bradley (0-2), Brendan Devenney (0-3). Subs: Niall McCreehy (for Campbell, 55mins); Eamon McGee (for McConigley, 64mins, 0-1); Christy Toye (for Hegarty, 66mins, 0-1); Martin McElhinney (for Murphy, 70mins); Stephen McDermott (for Devenney, 71mins, 0-1); Thomas Donoghue (for McGlynn, 71mins); Conall Dunne (for McElhinney, 82mins); Michael Hegarty (for Bradley, 84mins)

Referee: Gearoid O'Conamha (Galway).

Man-of-the-match: Karl Lacey (Donegal). One word - class. On an evening that Donegal needed their big players to step up to the mark, Karl showed the type of class that won him an All Star last term. A display right out of the top drawer, Karl gets the nod ahead of fellow defender Neil McGee.

Bank of Ireland Senior Football Championship Qualifier, Round Two

Rampant Donegal back in contention

TOM COMACK REPORTS
FROM CUSACK PARK,
MULLINGAR
PHOTOS BY BRIAN
McDAID

Donegal . . . 1-13
Westmeath . 1-8

Donegal are back in track and back in contention following their second round qualifier filtering of Midland hopefuls Westmeath in Mullingar on Saturday evening.

Make no mistake about it, Donegal hammered the home team in this unbelievably one sided encounter as Martin Flanagan's injury time goal only served to give the final score a slightly better gloss and eased home fans' pain. Such was their superiority on an evening that Brian McIver's men rediscovered their National League form, a ten point winning margin would not have flattered the visitors.

Leading by three points, 0-9 to 0-6 at the break, Kevin Cassidy and company shredded the script in the second period as they tore the Lakelanders to

shreds with Cassidy, Rory Kavanagh and Michael Murphy all doing the most damage and inflicting the most pain.

The result means that Donegal now go through to the last 12 and are one game away from an All Ireland quarter final and a possible outing back in Croke Park.

From the off Donegal were the better side in what was regarded by most wise followers as a tricky assignment. They laid down their marker from the opening seconds as they ran at the Westmeath defence at every opportunity. Ciaran Bonner - a late replacement for Michael Hegarty who pulled out with a hamstring twinge in the warm up - was the first to waltz through before being fouled in the small square inside the opening 30 seconds.

And while Gary Connaughton got down well to save Michael Murphy's penalty attempt, the boys from the North West were not to be deterred and they were 0-5 to 0-3 three up by the end of the first quarter. Murphy from play on two and a half minutes atoned for his earlier miss with a brilliant point, Rory Kavanagh, Brendan Devenney,

Murphy again and Kevin McMenamín also raised white flags. And but for another brilliant save from Connaughton, this time from McMenamín on 15 minutes, Donegal could have been already on their way. Veteran keeper Connaughton was the hero of the first half as he not alone denied Murphy and McMenamín, he also saved a certain point.

The first half and the opening 15 minutes in particular was Westmeath's best period as they more or less matched the visitors score for score and for a brief they lead by a point, 0-3 to

0-2. Alan Mangan, Dessie Dolan and Fergal Wilson all found the target.

But as Donegal turned up the heat and Ryan Bradley, Neil McCree and Ciaran Bonner got in on the scoring act, Brian McIver's men had their noses in front and deservedly so at the break.

With Kevin Cassidy taking complete control in midfield - it was easily the Gweedore man's best outing in the number nine shirt since moving from wing back - Donegal surged ahead early in the second half with pointed frees from Devenney

and McMenamín inside 13 minutes. And they were leading by four, 0-11 to 0-7 - James Glennon scored the Westmeath point within a minute of the restart - when Brendan Devenney pounced on 55 minutes for the Donegal goal.

Devenney got on the end of a good move that originated with Cassidy at midfield and went through Rory Kavanagh, who released his club colleague to slide the ball home under the advancing Connaughton from close range.

Now in front by seven points, 1-11 to 0-7, and completely on top and bossing the game all over the park, it was game set and match Donegal, with a quarter of the contest still remaining.

Rory Kavanagh, with back to back points, stretched the margin out to nine as the clocked ticked down, and while Gary Dolan blasted wide from a dubious penalty, and his brother Dessie pointed, the game as a contest was well and truly over when Martin Flanagan found the Donegal net with literally the last kick of the game four minutes into injury time.

Donegal were reduced to 13 players in the closing minutes as both Ciaran Bonner and Neil McCree got their marching orders for second yellow card offences.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Frank McGlynn, Barry Monaghan, Niall McCree (0-1); Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy; Ryan Bradley (0-1), Ciaran Bonner (0-1), Rory Kavanagh (0-3); Kevin McMenamín (0-2, 1f), Michael Murphy (0-2), Brendan Devenney (1-3, 2f). Subs., Adrian Sweeney for McMenamín 56; Christy Toye for Bradley 58; Eamon McGee for Campbell 68; Paddy McConigley for McGlynn 68; Michael Doherty for Devenney 70.

Westmeath: Gary Connaughton; Francis Boyle, Dermot O'Donoghue, John Keane; Damian Healy, Michael Ennis (0-1), Gary Glennon; David Duffy, Martin Flanagan (1-0); Fergal Wilson (0-1), John Smyth, Denis Glennon (0-2); Alan Mangan (0-1), Gary Dolan, Dessie Dolan (0-3, 2f). Subs., John Connellan for Mangan 33; Kieran Gavin for Healy 41; David O'Shaughnessy for Wilson 46; Alan Rigney for G. Glennon 51; Peter Tormey for Duffy 60.

Referee: A Mangan (Kerry)

Bank of Ireland All SFC Round Three

Wind taken out of Donegal sails

REPORT BY TOM **COMACK**
PHOTOS BY BRIAN **McDAID**

Donegal 1-7
Monaghan 2-12

The wind was well and truly taken out of Donegal's championship sails in Omagh on Saturday night as Monaghan put the National League champions to the sword in no uncertain fashion.

Displaying a far greater appetite and hunger the defeated Ulster finalists were in no way flattered by their eight point winning margin.

With the exception of Kevin Cassidy and Rory Kavanagh, Donegal failed to fire. In a way it was Clones and Tyrone in the Ulster semi-final all over again with the big difference that Monaghan are no Tyrone and despite their good Ulster final showing against the O'Neill county, they are still a good way off the big guns.

But they certainly had enough on Saturday to see off Donegal. They deservedly led by three points, 1-5 to 0-5 at half time, having held a five point advantage at one stage in the first period. And while they were rocked by Rory Kavanagh's goal early in the second half they showed their true grit and determination in the same period to run out worthy winners. At the final whistle Donegal should have no complaints. Monaghan's greater hunger and ability left them into the quarter-final.

Playing with the breeze in the first half Monaghan played direct, no nonsense, football right from the start but it was Donegal who got off the mark first with Rory Kavanagh, raising the game's first white flag on 20 seconds after being sent through by Michael Murphy. But two minutes later disaster struck for Donegal as Paul Durcan hesitated to come for a Tommy Freeman centre and Vinny Corey slipped in to punch into the net.

Monaghan followed up with a Paul Finlay point after a neat lay off from Tommy Freeman. Brendan Devenney pointed for Donegal in the 18th minute following a foul on Michael Murphy, but a minute later Monaghan restored their two point advantage when Thomas Freeman pointed from a free.

Finlay and Freeman fired over further points to extend the Monaghan lead out to five points 1-4 to 0-2. But mainly through the prompting of Kevin Cassidy, Donegal enjoyed their best period in the game before the half time break and with points from Rory Kavanagh and Cassidy himself, and Colm McFadden from a free to one from Freeman. Because of that they were within striking distance at the break, 1-5 to 0-5 behind.

The fat was back in the fire as Donegal opened the second half in style. With the breeze at their back and working more as a unit, the Tir Conaill men put Monaghan under severe pressure four minutes into the half when Rory Kavanagh ghosted in and rattled the Farney net after St Michael's club mates Colm McFadden and Christy Toyne combined to send him through. The sides were level for only two minutes however as Paul Finlay put Monaghan back in front from a free after Ciaran Hanratty was upended. Thomas Freeman, a constant thorn in the Donegal side, added to their woes when he found the net after Karl Lacey and Neil McGee got in a tangle at the back to leave it 2-6 to 1-5. Monaghan went further ahead moments later when Ciaran Hanratty curled

over a fine score after excellent work by that man Freeman.

Things appeared to be slipping away from the Donegal side as they seemed to have no answer to Monaghan's direct approach and no matter what combinations they tried, they never seemed to be able to keep up. Paul Finlay in the 20th and Vinny Corey two minutes later stretched their lead.

It took until three minutes from the end of normal time for Donegal to register their next score, a point from sub Eamon McGee. Thomas Freeman and sub Shane Smith added points near the end while Kevin Wappa McMenamin added Donegal's last score of this year's championship. The second half collapse, and it was nothing but a collapse, was disappointing on an evening the lights went out on Donegal's 2007 championship prospects.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Niall McCready, Barry Monaghan, Frank McGlynn; Kevin Cassidy (0-1), Neil Gallagher; Rory Kavanagh (1-2), Ciaran Bonner, Ryan Bradley; Colm McFadden (0-1F), Michael Murphy, Brendan Devenney (0-1F). Subs: Barry Dunnion for Campbell, Christy Toyne for Bradley, Michael Hegarty for Michael Murphy, Kevin McMenamin (0-1) for Brendan Devenney, Eamon McGee (0-1) for Frank McGlynn.

Monaghan: Shane Duffy; Declan Mone, Vinny Corey (1-1), Dermot McArdle; Colm Flanagan, Gary McQuaid, J.P. Mone; Eoin Lennon, Dick Clerkin; Stephen Gallogly, Rory Woods, Damian Freeman; Colm McManus, Paul Finlay (0-4,2F), Tommy Freeman (1-5,2F). Subs: Ciaran Hanratty (0-1) for Gallogly, Darren Hughes for J P Mone, Paul Meegan for Colm McManus Hugh McElroy for Damian Freeman, Shane Smith (0-1) for Rory Woods.

Referee: Jimmy McKee (Armagh).

Man of the Match

Unfortunately most of the contenders were in the blue and white of Monaghan and while Tommy Freeman and Vinny Corry wreaked the most havoc on the scoreboard and Paul Finlay kicked a couple of class points, my man of the match was the Monaghan centre back Gary McQuaid. He was simply outstanding throughout and not only halted Donegal in their tracks time after time but he also drove forward at every opportunity and was one of the main providers to Corry and Freeman. Kevin Cassidy and Rory Kavanagh were the only Donegal men to be even considered.

Turning Point

While Tommy Freeman's goal ten minutes into the second half probably will go down in the eyes of most as the turning point, for me this game turned in the early minutes of the second half and after Rory Kavanagh tied up the game with his goal. In the minutes that followed Kavanagh kicked three wides and Frank McGlynn one while Paul Finlay converted from a free in Monaghan's only real chance of the period.

Ref Watch

There were no great complaints afterwards and the Armagh official has not been mentioned in any of the post mortems I have attended which is always a good sign of a referee. Overall Jimmy McKee was by and large unnoticed which is another good sign and had an excellent game.

Cork cry foul over referee's decisions

Donegal 1-12**Cork** 2-7

Edward Newman

CORK selector John Corcoran expressed annoyance with referee Syl Doyle for red-carding two Cork players at a crucial juncture in Saturday night's bruising Division 1A tie at Páirc Uí Rinn.

James Masters and Nicholas Murphy were sent off in the 53rd and 57th minutes respectively, while Donegal's Brendan Devenney also given his marching orders in the 71st minute of a heated encounter that saw 15 yellow cards dispensed by the Wexford referee.

"Obviously the referees have been told to clamp down on foul play," said Corcoran, "but ye saw what I saw and it beggars belief that we were reduced to thirteen and they had fifteen (until the 71st minute) when in a lot of people's eyes, they were the aggressors."

However, Donegal selector Paul Callaghan saw differently. "It was a very physical game and Cork had a lot of big men out there, but we stood up to them," he said.

The visitors gained some measure of revenge for last year's All-Ireland quarter-final exit to the Rebels and can thank the excellent play of Barry Monaghan, Rory Kavanagh, Brian Roper and Kevin McMenamin for this victory.

The Rebels started impressively and had two goals inside 20 minutes. Kevin O'Sullivan took a sweet pass from James Masters to finish clinically, and then keeper Paul Durcan failed to hold a high dropping ball and Don-

Dense fog hits Limerick clash

FERMANAGH'S clash with Limerick in Division 1A was postponed yesterday due to dense fog at Clones.

The referee called off the match because he felt the safety of the players would be compromised by the poor visibility at the Co Monaghan venue. No new date has been fixed for the match.

nacha O'Connor pounced.

Kevin McMenamin replied for Donegal, winning a high ball on the edge of the square and netted with aplomb to leave it at 2-4 to 1-6 at the break.

The second half was a heated affair and Barry Monaghan shot Donegal into a 1-11 to 2-6 lead with ten minutes left.

Although the Ulster side lost the services of Devenney in the 71st minute and Cork's most lethal attacker O'Connor reduced the margin down to the minimum, substitute Colm McFadden popped up to land the insurance score five minutes into injury-time.

SCORERS — Donegal: K McMenamin 1-3 (0-2f); B Roper and C Toye 0-2 each; B Devenney, C Bonner, K Cassidy, B Monaghan, C McFadden 0-1 each. **Cork:** D O'Connor 1-2 (0-1f); K O'Sullivan 1-0; J Masters (0-2f); C McCarthy, S O'Brien and D Goulding 0-1 each.

DONEGAL — P Durcan; T Donoghue, N McGee, K Lacey, E McGee, B Monaghan, B Dunnion; K Cassidy, R Kavanagh; C Toye, C Bonner, B Roper; K McMenamin, B Devenney, M Doherty. **Subs:** C McFadden for Doherty (ht); L Thompson for Roper (61); MP Witherow for N McGee (65); N Gallagher for Bonner (70).

CORK — P O'Shea; M Shields, D Coughlan, K O'Connor; N O'Leary, G Spillane, E Cadogan; L Murphy, D Kavanagh; S O'Brien, P O'Neill, C McCarthy; J Masters, D O'Connor, K O'Sullivan. **Subs:** M Prout for Coughlan (25); D Goulding for McCarthy (31); A Cronin for O'Brien (56).

REF — S Doyle (Wexford)

ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 1A

Donegal sit at the top

Donegal.....1-13
Mayo.....1-10

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNUITY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DECLAN DOHERTY

Donegal continued their excellent start to 2007 yesterday afternoon in Ballybofey as a determined performance saw them overcome All-Ireland finalists Mayo with three points to spare.

The win ensures that Donegal now sit proudly at the summit of Division 1A and they go into this weekend's Gaelic Life Dr McKenna Cup final in confident tune after coming away victorious from a lively encounter that was, at times, played at a pace that wouldn't have been out of place in the Championship.

Trailing by a point at the interval, Donegal hit the front 12 minutes into the second half with Ryan Bradley finding the back of the net. A freak own goal by skipper Neil Gallagher had Donegal followers fearing the worst, but two late scores from Kevin McMenamin and a superb post-splitter from Colm McFadden ensured that it was the green and gold clad followers who were singing in the Ballybofey rain.

Both sides entered yesterday's clash on the back of impressive results on the opening weekend with Donegal defeating Cork by two-points and Mayo exacting revenge on Kerry for the defeat in the All-Ireland final by defeating The Kingdom at McHale Park.

Brian McIver made three changes to the side that had tasted victory against Cork in Paire Uí Rinn last Saturday evening with Paddy Campbell - who returned from suspension - Neil Gallagher and Ryan Bradley coming in for Neil McGee, Rory Kavanagh and Michael Doherty.

His opposite number, John O'Mahony, kept faith with the 15 that had beaten Kerry seven days earlier with James Kilcullen shaking off a virus that had been bugging him in the lead-up to yesterday's game.

Donegal came into yesterday's MacCumhaill Park clash with a good record against Mayo in the league, with their previous meeting (a 2-10 to 1-11 loss in Ballina) their only defeat from four outings.

Donegal were out of the traps quickest in what was a lively opening for the 8,000 patrons in attendance at Sean MacCumhaill Park with the hosts 0-5 to 0-2 ahead after 20 minutes, but it was Mayo who led at the break, 0-7 to 0-6.

In the early stage, frees from McMenamin and Devenney were intersected by Ryan Bradley miscuing from close range after finding himself clear after Christy Toye's probing ball forward found the Buncrana man.

Conor Mortimer posted Mayo's first point on nine minutes, but Devenney restored the two-point advantage with a neat effort from the left side of the posts after dancing inside his man.

Mortimer and Devenney traded frees before Ciaran Bonner opened his account with a fine right-footed kick after Kevin McMenamin did well to release Eamonn McGee.

Christy Toye was on hand to restore the three-point margin after Mortimer knocked over his third point of the afternoon.

The score from the St Michael's man was Donegal's last of the half however and points from O'Malley (twice), Dillon and Moran gave John O'Mahony's men a one-point lead at the break.

A point from play by Barry Dunnion and a Kevin McMenamin free twice hauled Donegal's deficit back to a single point after Pat Harte and Mortimer had found the range for the Mayo men after the change of ends.

On 47 minutes, Donegal moved in front when Buncrana's Ryan Bradley found the back of the Mayo net for the game's opening goal.

A teasing punt into the mixer by Brian Roper saw Mayo netminder Clarke spill the ball into Bradley's path and the number 15 slammed home to the delight of the home support.

A fantastic score from Ciaran Bonner was followed by the scintillating Brendan Devenney stroking over his fourth of the day, while Alan Dillon sent over a free at the other end.

Disaster struck seven minutes from time however when Neil Gallagher somehow managed to put through his own goal after contesting a long ball into the danger zone by David Brady.

That freak own goal by the captain tied the game up, 1-10 apiece, and at this point it looked as if the Mayo men might just sneak the win.

However, Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin stepped up to the mark with one of the points of the game in the final minute. Adrian Sweeney's smart ball

into McMenamin was collected by the Termon man and, in one swift move, he had turned his man and found the centre of the posts.

'Wappa' extended his own personal tally to four points with a free soon after before the final score arrived courtesy of sub Colm McFadden with Adrian Sweeney again the architect.

Donegal now look forward to this weekend's Gaelic Life Dr McKenna Cup where they will play the winners of tomorrow night's semi-final meeting of Tyrone and Monaghan.

With a 100% record to their name so far in 2007, Donegal are sure fancy their chances and on the back of yesterday's showing who could blame them.

Brendan Devenney looked like he could well have recaptured his form of old with a fine display while there were encouraging showings from Ciaran Bonner and Barry Monaghan gave a typically sound display at half-back.

Match Stats

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Thomas Donoghue, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Eamonn McGee, Barry Monaghan, Barry Dunnion (0-1); Kevin Cassidy; Neil Gallagher; Christy Toye (0-1), Ciaran Bonner (0-2), Brian Roper; Kevin McMenamin (0-4, 3f), Brendan Devenney (0-4, 3f), Ryan Bradley (1-0). Subs: Paddy McConnigley (for McGee, h/t); Frank McGlynn (for Donoghue, 40mins); Adrian Sweeney (for Toye, 51 mins); Colm McFadden (for Roper, 65mins, 0-1).

Mayo: David Clarke; Liam O'Malley, James Kilcullen, Keith Higgins; David Heaney, Billy Joe Padden, Peadar Gardiner; David Brady, Pat Harte (0-1), Andy Moran (0-1), Trevor Mortimer, Alan Dillon (0-2, 2f); Conor Mortimer (0-4, 3f), Kevin O'Neill, Austin O'Malley (0-2). Subs: James Nallen (for Heaney, 47mins); Michael Conroy (for O'Neill, 49mins); Marty McNicholas (for O'Neill, 50mins); Ger Brady (for Moran, 59mins); Mark Ronaldson (for O'Malley, 59mins).

Referee: Joe McQuillan (Cavan)

SPORT

Allianz National Football League Division 1A

Donegal put the Dubs to the sword

Tom Comack reports from Fr. Tierney Park
Photos by Thomas Gallagher

Donegal 0-9
Dublin 0-5

Donegal went to the head of the Division 1A table when putting a lack lustre Dublin to the sword at a windswept Fr. Tierney Park, Ballyshannon, on Sunday afternoon.

It may not have been pretty with good football in short supply, but then again the conditions did not help. A driving wind drove down Fr. Tierney Park towards Belleek, and a heavy winter shower in the first half did not help either, making handling a nightmare and underfoot conditions tricky.

But nobody in the Donegal camp is complaining this week, and with All Ireland champions Kerry and Fermanagh still to come, at home, and Tyrone and Limerick away, thoughts are turning not only to retaining top flight status, but a knock-out spot.

While slick moves and precision passes may have been few and far between, this victory was all about rolling up the sleeves and getting stuck in. It was for that reason that Donegal were celebrating the two precious league points at Brian

Crowe's final whistle. The home team hustled and harried at the back and the Dublin attacking unit - which was altered quite considerably in the course of the game - a pretty dishevelled and dispirited bunch from a long way out.

The loss through 'flu of All Star Karl Lacey did not weaken the Donegal rearguard with his replacement Thomas Donoghue a more than capable deputy. One thing for sure this triumph exorcised last weekend's Dr. McKenna Cup hammering by Tyrone. As they did against Cork on opening day, and again against Mayo two

weeks ago, Donegal worked their socks off over the seventy minutes.

Dublin on the other hand should have no complaints. The Sky Blues scored three points in the first half and only raised two more white flags in the second half. And except for a brief period at the end of the first half they did look anything like a match for the hungrier and more focused home side.

Not even the introduction of the talismanic Ciaran Whelan late in the second half could lift Paul Caffery's side that lacked invention and penetration up front.

Reeled off

Playing with the benefit of a strong wind Donegal took full advantage and reeled off three points in the opening nine minutes from Rory Kavanagh, Brendan Devenney and Ciaran Bonner. Hunting in packs, they had Dublin on the back foot from very early, and when Colm McFadden stroked over two excellent strikes - one from play - added to the Metropolitan blues and pushed his team's lead out to five points with the Dubs still to score and 23 minutes gone on the clock.

Donegal were also denied an almost certain goal on 11 minutes when Niall O'Shea took a Brendan Devenney bound strike off the line in a crowded goalmouth with Stephen Cluxton beaten.

But with the introduction of Colin Moran into the half forward line and with Ross McConnell beginning to exert himself around the middle, Dublin upped their game. Conal Keaney finally got his side off the mark seven minutes from the break. They quickly added two more from Kevin Bonner and Darren McGee to cut the margin to just two, before Devenney hit his second of the half from a 13 metre free to send his side in three up at the break, 0-6 to 0-3

And in the space of four minutes of the restart the Donegal margin was back out to five points 0-8 to 0-3, thanks to Colm McFadden from a free and fisted effort from Brendan Devenney.

David Callaghan and Kevin Bonner with two quick fire points at the start of the final quarter raised Dublin hopes, but that was as good as it got to the travelling support. Bonner's strike on 54 minutes was their final curtain call. And while Donegal did not light up the scoreboard in the closing half hour either, Johnny McLoone landed a 45 into the breeze, with a quarter hour remaining with the game's last score.

Dublin had a few late chances but a combination of wayward shooting and dogged defending they made no further progress on the scoreboard.

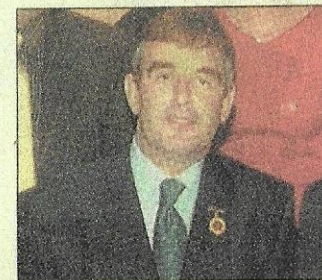
Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Tomas Donoghue; Paddy McConigley, Barry Monaghan, Barry Dunnion; Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy; Rory Kavanagh (0-1), Brian Roper, Johnny McLoone (0-1,45); Colm McFadden (0-3,2F), Brendan Devenney (0-3,2F), Ciaran Bonner (0-1). Subs: Christy Toyne for C. Bonner; Eamon McGee for P. McConigley; Adrian Sweeney for B. Roper; Joe Friel for K. Cassidy.

Dublin: Stephen Cluxton; David Henry, Niall O'Shea, Paul Griffin; Barry Cahill, Bryan Cullen, Ger Brennan; Darren Magee (0-1), Ross McConnell; Conal Keaney (0-1), Thomas Quinn, Derek Murray; David Callaghan (0-1), Kevin Bonner (0-2), Alan Brogan. Subs: Colin Moran for D. Murray; Paul Casey for N.O'Shea; Diarmaid Connolly for T. Quinn; Bernard Brogan for C. Keaney; Ciaran Whelan for R. McConnell.
Referee: Brian Crowe (Cavan).

Daly elected Ulster President

It was a good all-round weekend for Donegal GAA with Tom Daly of Aoch Ruadh being elected Ulster President, bridging a gap which goes back to Harry Carey in the early 1960s.

The new President was guest of honour at the GAA Banquet in the Abbey Hotel the previous night after being elected to Ulster's highest office earlier in the afternoon in Toomebridge.



Allianz NFL Division 1A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Score	Pts
Donegal	3	3	0	0	2-34	3-22	9	6
Mayo	3	2	0	1	3-28	1-27	7	4
Kerry	3	2	0	1	1-34	3-21	7	4
Tyrone	3	2	0	1	0-32	0-33	-1	4
Cork	3	1	0	2	4-24	1-30	3	2
Limerick	3	1	0	2	3-23	2-29	-3	2
Dublin	3	1	0	2	0-29	1-30	-4	2
Fermanagh	3	0	0	3	1-24	3-36	-18	0

Allianz National Football League Division 1A

Donegal master Tyrone to stay top



Christy Toye grapples with Davy Harte in Saturday night's clash at Healy Park, Omagh.

**Donegal 2-11
Tyrone 1-8**

It was a case of lesson learned for Donegal as they mastered Tyrone to bag the two league points in Healy Park, Omagh on Saturday night.

In the process of copperfastening their place at the top of Division 1A, they also turned a ten point defeat from three weeks earlier at the same ground in the Dr. McKenna Cup final to a fully merited six point winning margin. With just three games remaining - Kerry at home, Limerick away and Fermanagh at home - Brian McIver and his charges have almost assured division one football for next season and another win would put them in prime position for a league semi-final spot.

"We came here tonight hoping to have learned a few lessons and from our last visit and I think it is fair to say that we most definitely did, and against a Tyrone team all fired up after their defeat to Cork," said Brian McIver.

And this was despite giving the O'Neill County a head start with a goal and a point to two points in the open-

ing eight minutes. Enda McGinley sliced open the Donegal defence to place the ball wide of Paul Durcan after eight minutes to send Tyrone into 1-1 to 0-2 lead. McGinley's three pointer separated the sides by the quarter hour mark thanks to a Stephen O'Neill free.

But Donegal refused to buckle. Colm McFadden and Brendan Devenney - who had hit the Donegal opener - along with the rampaging Rory Kavanagh added to their tally to tie up the game 0-6 to 1-3 by the middle of the second quarter.

"We let them get off to a good start with the early goal. But we recovered well and hit a number of great points and then scored our own goal; it was a crucial score and set us up well for the second half," said McIver. Christy Toye bagged the all-important goal on 28 minutes to propel his side into the lead for the first time in the contest. Minutes after coming off the bench, last year's skipper snapped up a misdirected pass in front of the posts to drill past the lunging Pascal McConnell.

Leading 1-6 to 1-3 at the break the script began to turn green and gold when

Brendan Devenney was hauled down for a penalty within four minutes of the restart and Colm McFadden with the conversion had McConnell grasping at air.

"Colm (McFadden) stuck the penalty well and from the moment it left his boot it was always going in. That score really set is up, and I felt we worked tremendously hard to make sure they did not score a second goal and we also hit a number of great points in the second half," insisted McIver.

Stephen O'Neill, Ciaran Bonner and Paul Quinn traded scores in the middle of the second period to see Donegal maintain a seven points advantage 2-9 to 1-5, before Rory Kavanagh capped off a great team and personal performance with a brilliant strike fifteen minutes from the end.

With Donegal 2-10 to 1-5 ahead, Gerard Cavlan and Davy Harte added a modicum of respectability for the home team with late points. They may not have hit the target again in the final quarter hour, but the men from Tirconail were not to be denied and the lesson was complete when Dave Coldrick called time.

"It's a great feeling to be sitting on the top of the table on eight points and the All Ireland champions Kerry, next up, in a few weeks," concluded the Donegal boss.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Paddy McConigley, Kevin Cassidy, Barry Dunnion; Neil Gallagher, Barry Monaghan; Johnny McLoone, Brian Roper; Rory Kavanagh (0-3); Colm McFadden (1-4, 3F, 1.45), Brendan Devenney (0-3F), Ciaran Bonner (0-1). Subs: Christy Toye (1-0) for J. McLoone; Michael Doherty for B. Roper; Leon Thompson for Colm McFadden; Adrian Sweeney for C. Bonner.

Tyrone: Pascal McConnell; Ryan McMenamin, Cormac McGinley, Michael McGee; Davy Harte (0-1), Conor Gormley, Dermot Carlin; Peter Donnelly (0-1), Kelvin Hughes; Brian Doohar (0-2, 1F), Enda McGinley (1-0), Declan Treanor; Martin Penrose, Stephen O'Neill (0-2F), Colm McCullagh. Subs: Justin McMahon for M. McGee; Paul Quinn (0-1) for C. McGinley inj.; Paul Rouse for D. Treanor; Gerard Cavlan (0-1) for C. McCullagh.



Devenney drives Donegal to victory

Donegal... 1-15

Kerry.... 0-13

Report by Peter
CAMPBELL
Photos by Thomas
GALLAGHER
and John
McCONNELL

Donegal all but secured their place in the League semi-final with a magnificent display against Kerry in O'Donnell Park, Letterkenny on Sunday. For true grit and determination as well as some great scores - especially from full-forward Brendan Devenney - Donegal recovered from a poor start to be very worthy winners.

Kerry started well and led by 0-8 to 0-3 after twenty minutes but they lost full-forward Kieran Donaghy to injury and thereafter Donegal began to find their feet to be just a point adrift at the break. In the opening quarter Donegal seemed all at sea trying to cope with Donaghy, pulling players back to cover and in doing so gave Kerry so much space.

In the second half Donegal just took over

with Brendan Devenney giving a virtuoso display at full-forward and by the final whistle he had tacked on six points alongside his one from the first half.

Kerry had three points on the board by seven minutes with Declan Quill and Mike Frank Russell causing problems for Neil McGee and Karl Lacey. Colm McFadden showed the way for Donegal with two good points but Dara O Se, Quill and Bryan Sheehan edged Kerry five clear.

Donegal had a number of goal chances between the 26th and 30th minute. Ciaran Bonner put Brian Roper through but his effort was blocked by Diarmuid Murphy and the Kerry 'keeper did the same two minutes later when Rory Kavanagh released Roper. On both occasions

Brendan Devenney was available for a pass which could have provided a goal. It looked as if Donegal just couldn't beat the Kerry custodian as he denied Brendan Devenney on 30 minutes but three minutes the goal that Donegal

needed arrived.

Christy Toye delivered long and when the ball broke Colm McFadden worked it in along 13m line and found Kevin Cassidy on his shoulder and he thundered the ball to the roof of the net from 12 yards. Points were shared by Dara O Se and Colm McFadden in the remaining minutes as Kerry led by 0-9 to 1-5 at the break. Indeed the McFadden free after he was fouled by Tom O'Sullivan, could well have been a penalty as the St. Michaels man seemed to well inside the area when fouled.

Brendan Devenney put Donegal on terms inside thirty seconds of the restart and Declan Quill and Ciaran Bonner traded scores before Tomas O Se struck twice to put Kerry two clear with 46 minutes gone. It was then that Donegal got their game together with Devenney pointing and sub. Michael Hegarty levelling before Devenney turned Mark O Se inside out to put Donegal into the lead for the first time with one of the points of the game.

Devenney added to the lead before Declan Quill had Kerry's final point with seven minutes left. But Donegal finished very strongly with Devenney hitting two more points in the 32nd and 38th minutes while in between Ciaran Bonner also struck two to leave Donegal very convincing winners at the end. The only trouble the Donegal defence had to deal with in the final quarter was a deflection off Neil Gallagher's knee which saw Paul Durcan saving well.

Donegal now have a full complement of ten points from their five games and they travel to Limerick next week while they have Fermanagh at home in the final game in two weeks time.

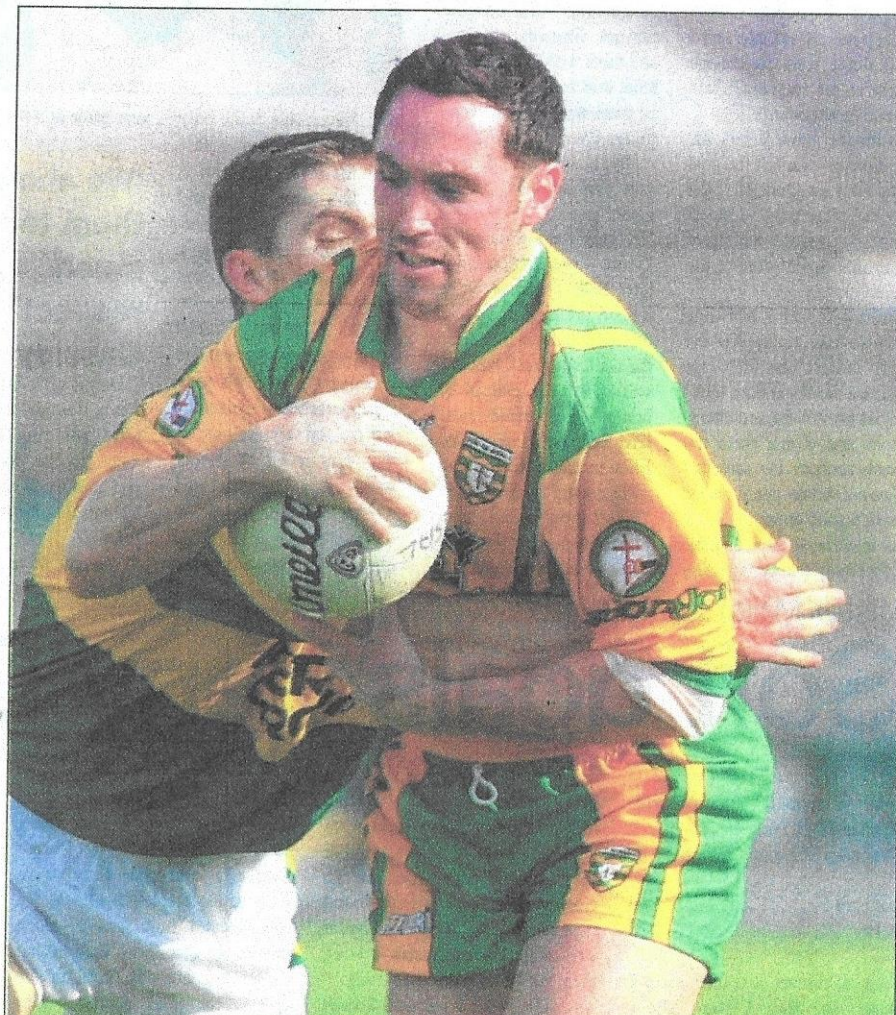
Apart from man of the match Devenney, Donegal had excellent performers in Paddy Campbell, Paddy McConigley, Rory Kavanagh, Ciaran Bonner and Colm McFadden. Dara O Se did everything he could for the Kerry cause while Declan Quill and Aidan O'Mahony also played

well.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Paddy McConigley, Barry Monaghan, Barry Dunning; Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy (1-0); Christy Toye, Rory Kavanagh (0-1), Brian Roper; Colm McFadden (0-3,1f), Brendan Devenney (0-7,3f), Ciaran Bonner (0-3). Subs., Michael Hegarty (0-1) for Roper; Kevin McMenamin for McFadden; Adrian Sweeney for Toye; Eamon McGee for Monaghan.

Kerry: Diarmuid Murphy; Mark O Se, Tom O'Sullivan, Mossie Lyons (0-1); Tomas O Se (0-2), Aidan O'Mahony, Padraig Reidy; Dara O Se (0-2), Tommy Griffin; Bryan Sheehan (0-1,f), Seamus Scanlon, Donncha Walsh; Declan Quill (0-4,2f), Kieran Donaghy, Mike Frank Russell (0-3). Subs., Sean O'Sullivan for Donaghy; Paul Galvin for Walsh; Darren O'Sullivan for S O'Sullivan; Brendan Guiney for T O Se.

Referee: Vincent Neary (Mayo).



Donegal's Brendan Devenney tries to get away from Kerry's Marc O'Se at O'Donnell Park during the NFL game in Letterkenny on Sunday. Photo Thomas Gallagher 2703TG94

Allianz National Football League Division 1 A

TOM COMACK reports from Gaelic Grounds

Limerick . . .2-12

Donegal . . .4-6

Donegal picked up the points they needed to guarantee a Division One league semi-final spot after their clash with Limerick ended up all square at the Gaelic Grounds, in Limerick, on Sunday afternoon.

In a strange game that had more twists and turns than a Steven Spielberg blockbuster, Brian McIver's men seemed to have done enough to claim all two points, but they were hit with a sucker punch in the closing minutes when Stephen Lavin hammered home a second goal for the home team. Lavin's goal came on 72 minutes in a crowded goalmouth and was no less than the home team deserved as they refused to buckle under a barrage of Donegal goals.

The visitors scored four goals, two in each half, with Leon Thompson, Michael Doherty in the first and Christy Toye and Adrian Sweeney in the second. And in truth, they needed the three pointers against a luckless Limerick, who if they had taken all their chances might have bagged all two points. The draw means that the Shannonsiders are still in with a chance of Division 2 football next season - a victory against Cork next weekend is all that is now required.

Donegal showed seven changes from the team that had five points to spare over All-Ireland champions Kerry, seven days earlier in O'Donnell Park. Thomas Donoghue, Eamon McGee, came into the defence, Joe Friel joined Kevin Cassidy in midfield, while Michael Hegarty, Ryan Bradley, Leon Thompson, and Adrian Sweeney were added to the attack. They replaced Neil McGee, Barry Dunnion (injured), Neil Gallagher (injured) Rory Kavanagh, Ciaran Bonner, Colm McFadden (injured) and Brian Roper.

Despite being understrength, Donegal looked as if they had the game in the bag as early the 18th minute when Michael Doherty found the Limerick net to propel his team into a five point lead, 2-1 to 0-2. Leon Thompson opened the Donegal account on nine minutes when he polished off a sweeping move after Christy Toye had robbed John Galvin at the other end. Unfortunately for Thompson, he picked a knock in his effort to steer the ball under the advancing Sean Kelly, and was forced out of the game.

But this did not seem to disrupt the Donegal momentum. Michael Hegarty knocked over to extend the lead out to six points before Ryan Bradley and Adrian Sweeney combined to set up Doherty who made no mistake from close range.

But instead of driving on in the Ennis Road sunshine, Donegal eased back and allowed Limerick - who seemed to be really up for the contest - back into the game. And with John Galvin lording the midfield exchanges, the Shannonsiders hit 1-5 with-

out reply in a glorious 11 minutes to edge 1-7 to 2-1 ahead. Midfielder Thomas Cahill banged home the goal after racing onto possession on 20 metres from the Donegal posts, while Galvin (2), Michael Reidy (2), and Diarmuid Carroll were the point scorers.

Christy Toye struck for the third goal within two minutes of the restart to restore his side's advantage, and when Brendan Devenney intercepted a short Kelly kick out to release Adrian Sweeney for goal number four on 47 minutes, Donegal were six up again, 4-2 to 1-8, and in the driving seat. And while Reidy kept the door ajar with two pointed frees, Kevin Cassidy, with two points on 56 and 59 minutes, followed by one from Brendan Devenney, Donegal looked home and hosed, four up with under ten minutes remaining.

But as they had done in the closing minutes of the first period, Limerick rallied and had hit two points to one from Patrick McConigley in the closing minutes before Lavin struck to tie up the game.

But despite the late setback, it is onwards and upwards for Donegal, in what has been a hugely successful campaign. And with one game still to go - Fermanagh next Sunday, in Ballybofey - they are now looking forward to a plum semi-final meeting with either the winners or the runners up in Division 1B; that depends on whether Donegal finish on top or in second place to Mayo, who are the other side from Division 1A to make the last four. As things stand Donegal are one point ahead of Mayo, with one round of games remaining. A victory over Charlie Mulgrew's Fermanagh will set up a semi-final meeting with the second placed 1B team. Given Donegal's scoring advantage over the Connacht champions a draw may be even enough against the Erne County.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Thomas Donoghue, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Patrick McGonigley (0-1) Barry Monaghan, Eamon McGee; Kevin Cassidy (0-2), Joe Friel; Christy Toye (1-0) Michael Hegarty(0-1), Ryan Bradley; Leon Thompson (1-0), Brendan Devenney (0-2, 1F), Adrian Sweeney (1-0). Subs: Michael Doherty (1-0) for L. Thompson inj.; Johnny McLoone for C.Toye.

Limerick: Sean Kelly; Diarmuid Carroll (0-2), Johnny McCarthy, Shane Gallagher; Pat Ahern, Padraigh Browne, Pa Ranahan; Thomas Cahill (1-0), John Galvin (0-2); Stephen Lavin (1-0), James Ryan, Seanie Buckley; John Cooke (0-1), Darren Horan (0-1), Michael Reidy (0-5,2F). Subs: Ger Collins(0-1) for J. Cooke; Jason O'Brien for S. Buckley.

Referee: Ger Lynch (Kerry).

ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 1A

Late rally gives Donegal a sixth victory

Donegal 1-13
Fermanagh 2-09

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY

PHOTOS BY DECLAN DOHERTY

A late rally from Donegal at Sean MacCumhail Park yesterday afternoon ensured that Brian McIver's men go into the National Football League semi-finals on a winning note as they overcame Fermanagh by the narrowest of margins.

It was Charlie Mulgrew's Fermanagh who looked to be heading for what would have been a first win of the campaign as they held a four-point advantage going into the closing five minutes of play.

However, Kevin Cassidy struck a goal five minutes from the end to lead the Donegal revival, although the hosts needed a last-ditch free from Kevin McMenamin to take the points after Tom Brewster had levelled in stoppage time.

Continuing in his recent experimentation process, Brian McIver made eight changes from the side that had drawn with Limerick last week. Into the side came Michael Boyle, Peter Witherow, Neil McGee, Frank McGlynn, Denis Boyle, Johnny McLoone, Michael Doherty and Benny Byrne.

In a late change to the starting 15 that had been named on Friday afternoon with Adrian Sweeney coming in for the injured Rory Kavanagh. The change meant Ryan Bradley dropped back to midfield with Sweeney starting in the half-forward line.

Not until the introduction of some of the big guns did Donegal get to grips with their opponents as it was the visitors who grabbed the early initiative.

Eamon Maguire pointed a third-minute free after a foul on Colm Bradley and by the sixth minute the Erne men were four to the good after the back of Michael Boyle's net was rattled for the first time.

A lack of communication between Karl Lacey and Frank McGlynn allowed Mark Little in on goal. Little took control, rounded keeper Michael Boyle and gleefully tapped into the net.

Michael Hegarty opened the Donegal account with a stylish left-footed kick from the left flank and the Kilecar man was on target with his right foot on the quarter-hour mark to bring his side to within two points.

An Adrian Sweeney free followed scores at the other end from Tom Brewster and Colm Bradley before disaster struck for the hosts when a second Fermanagh goal arrived on 25 minutes.

A probing ball from Tom Brewster caught Karl Lacey napping and Eamon Maguire slammed powerfully past Michael Boyle.

Colm Bradley then punished some indecisiveness from Peter Witherow as he cut in from the left flank to slot over and put seven points in it.

Donegal finished the half the stronger though. After Denis Boyle slotted over from Ryan Bradley's pass, Adrian Sweeney tried to rally the troops with a splendid free from beyond the 45. Michael Hegarty had the last say of the half, putting a curling right-footed effort between the sticks.

The sides were point for point for the first fifteen minutes of the second half with four scores registered at either end. Johnny McLoone, Adrian Sweeney (free), Ryan Bradley and another Sweeney free followed scores from Tommy McElroy, James Sherry, Tom Brewster and Eamon Maguire.

Each time Donegal looked like they were on the comeback trail, Fermanagh responded and indeed both sides failed to raise a single white flag between the 45th and 60th minutes.

During that spell, the crowd at Sean MacCumhail Park were somewhat confused with what appeared a perfectly good point from Michael Hegarty being ruled wide by Pat McEneaney.

The scoreboard at the venue showed the effort as a point for a spell before being corrected.

The next score was going to be crucial and cometh the hour, cometh Kevin Cassidy. The Gaoh Dobhair man led Donegal by example against Kerry two weeks ago and bagged a crucial goal against the Kingdom. Yesterday, he repeated that feat as he netted with just four minutes left on the clock.

Kevin McMenamin fed Christy Toye whose attempt for goal was blocked by a Fermanagh defender. On hand for the loose ball was Cassidy, who drove a typical thunderbolt to the back of the net.

Kevin McMenamin levelled the tie for the first time soon after, while Cassidy sent a cool effort from 20 metres between the posts to edge Donegal in front. Tom Brewster looked to have given Fermanagh a share of the spoils, but it wasn't to be.

Kevin McMenamin assumed responsibility for a late free won by Christy Toye and the diminutive Termon native sent his effort over the bar to send Donegal into the semi finals with six wins from their seven games to date.

Match Stats

Donegal: Michael Boyle; Peter Witherow, Neil McGee, Thomas Donoghue; Frank McGlynn, Karl Lacey, Eamon McGee; Joe Friel, Ryan Bradley (0-1); Johnny McLoone, Michael Hegarty (0-3), Adrian Sweeney (0-4, 2f); Denis Boyle (0-2), Benny Byrne, Michael Doherty. Subs: Barry Dunnion (for Witherow, 29mins); Kevin Cassidy (for Friel, h/t, 1-1); Barry Monaghan (for Byrne, h/t); Christy Toye (for McLoone, 43mins); Kevin McMenamin (for Boyle, 52mins, 0-2).

Fermanagh: Chris Breen; Shane Goan, Shane McDermott, Niall Bogue; Shane Lyons, Martin McGrath, Tommy McElroy (0-1); Barry Owens, Tom Brewster (0-3, 3f); Ciaran McElroy, James Sherry (0-1), Mark Little (1-0); Eamon Maguire (1-2, 2f), Jonathan McGurn, Colm Bradley (0-2). Subs: Peter Sherry (for Lyons, h/t); Ciaran O'Reilly (for Bradley 52mins); Brian O'G Maguire (for McElroy, 58mins); Ryan Keenan (for Maguire, 60mins).

Referee: Pat McEneaney (Monaghan)

Donegal book final spot in cliff-hanger

Tom COMACK reports from Croke Park
Photos by Thomas GALLAGHER

Donegal 1-13
Kildare 1-11

Donegal are gearing up for another tilt at a National League title following Sunday's narrow two point Croke Park victory over Kildare.

And now the team of 2007 are hoping to go where the great team of the 1990's failed in four attempts - in 1993, a draw and replay with Dublin, and again in 1994 and '95 against Derry - to bring a first league title back to the county.

On the evidence of Sunday's showing against a mediocre Kildare, the current Donegal have a fair bit of work to do if they are to overcome Mayo in the decider. That's because in truth, last Sunday's performance was sub-standard for long periods - possibly the worst of the campaign - and will not do against what's been probably the best side Brian McIver and his men have faced to date in the competition.

However, the important thing about Sunday's triumph is that McIver's charges have maintained that unbeaten run, with seven victories and one draw from eight outings in the league - that in any language reads consistency.

It was very much a case of two Donegals on Sunday, the old and the new. When they were good they were very good, and looked a potent force. This was especially the case at the start of both halves when they cut the Lilywhites to shreds posting four points to one in the opening quarter hour, and again after the break when they hit a goal and two to just one solitary Kildare strike in the space of ten minutes.

Kevin 'Wappa' McMenamin bagged the goal to propel his side into a six point lead and when Michael Hegarty added his second point one minute later, the advantage was out to seven points and Donegal were looking good.

But just as they had done at the end of first half, Donegal took the foot off the gas and allowed Kildare back into the game. With the Lilywhites throwing caution to the wind and chasing a lost cause, the margin was down to a point with just over ten minutes remaining, ensuring an anxious finish to a game that should have been done and dusted long

before the finish.

Kildare bounced back courtesy of points from Pdraig O'Neill, Tadhg Fennin and Michael Conway and a goal from a rather soft penalty from the boot of John Doyle.

Both sides suffered early setbacks in the game. Kildare lost their experienced and influential midfielder Killian Brennan with an ankle injury after just five minutes while Brendan Devenney limped out of the game on 20 minutes having aggravated a knee injury.

Christy Toyne also replaced Rory Kavanagh before the throw in, Kavanagh having failed to shake off the effects of an injury that had him doubtful all week.

Donegal opened as if they were going to live up to their favourites billing with two points in two minutes. The first came off the boot of Paddy McConigley on 56 seconds, the wing back finding himself in acres of space in front of the Kildare posts. Just over one minute later Colm McFadden had the umpire bending for the white flag after good work from Brian Roper and Ciaran Bonner.

Kildare fluffed a number of chances at the other end and then suffered a hammer blow with the loss of midfielder Brennan on five minutes. And the Lilywhites were three down on 11 minutes when Michael

Hegarty ghosted in on the left wing to extend the lead out to 0-3 to 0-0.

And while Doyle, with two pointed frees, the first on 13 minutes and Tadhg Fennin kept Kildare hopes alive, Donegal still had three points to spare, 0-7 to 0-4 at half-time - the red hot McFadden with three more, two from play and Brian Roper the Donegal marksmen.

With a lightening start to the second period, Donegal had all the appearances of a side on a mission with Adrian Sweeney with his first touch, firing over and with his second finding McMenamin who turned his marker before drilling to the roof of the net. All of a sudden Donegal had doubled their half-time advantage and were six up. And when Hegarty made it seven, thoughts were turning to Mayo and the final.

But in fairness to Kildare, they showed a degree of pluckiness and refused to go away. They kept plugging away and three points in the space of four minutes in the middle of the second quarter gave them a degree of hope.

But still five points up, Donegal did not look in much bother until Pdraig O'Neill was impeded in the large rectangle by Barry Monaghan and from the resultant penalty, Doyle cut the margin to two, 1-10 to 1-8. All of a sudden it was game on all over again with over 15 minutes remaining and when Doyle struck the second of his points from play, the gap was down to the minimum.

Kevin Cassidy and Doyle traded scores before Cassidy got his marching orders for a second yellow card offence. McFadden and Hegarty eased the pressure to restore a three point advantage with time running out, before O'Neill brought down the curtain on the scoring on 70 minutes.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Neil McGee, Paddy Campbell, Karl Lacey; Paddy McConigley (0-1), Barry Monaghan, Barry Dunnion; Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy (0-1); Ciaran Bonner, Brian Roper (0-1), Christy Toyne; Colm McFadden (0-6,1F), Brendan Devenney, Michael Hegarty (0-3). Subs: Kevin McMenamin (1-0) for B. Devenney inj.; Eamon McGee for P. McConigley; Adrian Sweeney (0-1) for B. Roper; Frank McGlynn for N. McGee inj.; Thomas Donoghue for B. Monaghan.

Kildare: Enda Murphy; Eamon O'Callaghan, David Lyons, Andrew McLaughlin; Anthony Rainbow, Mark Hogarty, Emmet Bolton; Killian Brennan, Kevin O'Neill; James Kavanagh, John Doyle (1-6, 1-3 F), Ken Donnelly;

Brennan; Michael Conway (0-1) for K. Donnelly; Martin Donnelly for T. Fennin.

Tadhg Fennin (0-2,1F), Jason Philips, Pdraig O'Neil (0-2). Subs: Tomas O'Connor for K.

Donegal subs sink Westerners' ship

WITH 14-and-a-half years of waiting for senior success already endured, Donegal could handle a few more minutes to get their hands on a trophy – and they certainly needed them.

The three scores that separated them from Mayo at the end of this pulsating final all came during eight-and-a-half minutes of added time, after the Westerners had battled back to level at last in the closing quarter.

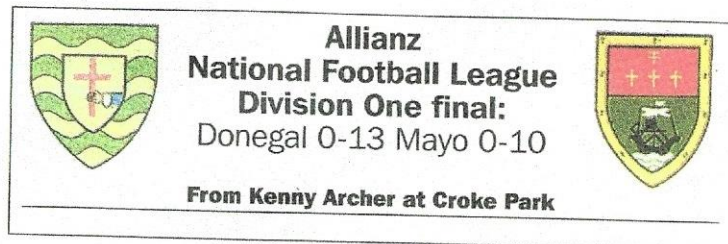
The Tir Chonaill men's strength in depth proved too much for Mayo in the end, with the four scores that made the difference between winning and losing all coming from men brought off the bench.

Kevin McMenamin started the trend, putting Donegal back in front with a lovely left-footed point after Mayo had equalised for the first time in the match, but the trio of scores that came in additional time, following another leveller by Andy Moran just before the hour mark, were even better.

Rory Kavanagh, introduced at midfield after captain Neil Gallagher was forced off with a head wound, cut in for a fine right-footed effort from the left wing. Then defender Eamonn McGee powered up the same flank before swinging over a huge score off his left boot.

Finally, in the 77th minute, veteran Adrian Sweeney fumbled possession, but re-gathered the ball and instantly swept it over on the turn.

Prior to that fabulous final



flurry, it had seemed that Donegal might let silverware slip through their grasp yet again, as they had done in so many senior finals since being crowned All-Ireland champions in 1992, but Brian McIver's men showed character and class to claim their first ever League crown. The Tir Chonaill county had lost three League Division One deciders, in 1993 to Dublin and then twice to Derry, in 1995 and 1996, and also last year's Division Two final to Louth, but they refused to accept even a replay on this occasion.

Donegal led for the bulk of the game, from the third minute to the 54th, inspired by man of the match Brian Roper, who kicked the opening two scores from his right wing role. Inside forward Colm McFadden and midfielder Kevin Cassidy doubled the advantage to a 0-4 to no score lead, but gradually Mayo worked their way back into this contest.

Conor Mortimer got them going, spinning to open their account in the 14th minute and adding a free five minutes later, and with Donegal failing to turn their superiority into sufficient scores, there was little between the sides at the break, the Ulstermen only ahead by 0-7 to 0-5.

They might even have been in arrears, but Ger Brady shot straight at goalkeeper Paul Durcan in the 29th minute. Instead, Mayo had to thank an unexpected name for keeping them in contention.

Pat Harte, normally a midfielder, had drifted in from his new right half-forward slot to score twice from play.

Strangely, despite playing better in the second period, Mayo became increasingly reliant on the free-taking of Mortimer. Indeed, their first four scores after the interval came from that source, even if several of the awards annoyed the Donegal majority in the crowd.

Yet justified or not, John O'Mahony's men were on level terms with 15 minutes of normal time remaining. In fact, although McMenamin restored Donegal's lead, Mayo might have gone in front for the first time through their best player Moran – but when substitute Thomas Donoghue failed to cut out a kick pass from Ger Brady, the Ballaghaderreen player blazed over the bar with only big Durcan to beat.

That proved to be Mayo's only score from play in the second

half, only their fourth overall, and – worse still – their last of this final.

In contrast, only two of Donegal's scores came from placed balls, a '45' and free both converted by McFadden, and when the hard questions were asked from them, they had more than enough scoring power to come up with all the right answers.

Those three tremendous points in added time brought an end to their agonising wait for serious silverware.

So Donegal subs sank Mayo – and you can be sure that there'll have been more than a few pints sunk in 'The Hills of Donegal' last night and into the early hours of this morning to celebrate this fully deserved success.

MATCH STATS

Donegal: P Durcan; N McGee, P Campbell, K Lacey; P McConigley, B Monaghan, B Dunnington, N Gallagher (capt.), K Cassidy (0-1); C Bonner (0-2), B Roper (0-3), C Toye; B Devenney, C McFadden (0-3, 0-1 '45, 0-1 free), M Hegarty.

Substitutes: K McMenamin (0-1) for Devenney (30); T Donoghue for McConigley (47); E McGee (0-1) for N McGee (47); R Kavanagh (0-1) for Gallagher (59, inj.); A Sweeney (0-1) for Bonner (64, inj.).

Mayo: D Clarke; K Higgins, J Kilcullen, L O'Malley; E Devenney, B J Padden, P Gardiner (capt.); J Nallen, D Heaney; P Harte (0-2), G Brady, A Dillon (0-1 free); A Moran (0-1), C Mortimer (0-6, 0-5 frees), M Conroy.

Substitutes: A Higgins for Kilcullen (19, inj.); K O'Neill for Conroy (42); A Kilcoyne for Dillon (71); T Howley for A Higgins (71); A Campbell for Nallen (75).

Referee: John Bannon (Longford).