

2010

Team Manager: John Joe Doherty
Dr. Mc Kenna Cup.

2010 - League table for McKenna Cup - Group B

Team	P	W	L	D	P+	P-	P+/-	Pts
Tyrone	3	2	0	1	72	40	32	5
Donegal	3	2	0	1	50	37	13	5
St. Marys	3	1	2	0	30	53	-23	2
Cavan	3	0	3	0	27	49	-22	0

1	16 th Jan	Round 3	Kingspan Breffni	Donegal	0-11	Cavan	0-09
2	20 th Jan	Round 2	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	2-17	Tyrone	4-11
3	23 rd Jan	Round 1	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	1-13	St. Mary's	0-05
4	27 th Jan	Semi-final	Brewster Park	Donegal	1-13	Down	1-12
5	30 th Jan	Final	Brewster Park	Donegal	1-11	Tyrone	0-13

Ulster Senior Football Championship

6	30 th May	Qtr-final	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	2-10	Down	1-15
	18 th July	Ulster final:		Tyrone	1-14	Monaghan	0-07

All Ireland Qualifiers 2010.

7	26 th June	Round 1	Crossmaglen	Armagh	2-14	Donegal	0-11
	22 nd Aug	Semi final		Cork	1-15	Dublin	1-14
	29 th Aug	Semi final		Down	1-16	Kildare	1-14
	19 th Sept.	All Ireland final		Cork	0-16	Down	0-15

National Football League. - 2010 Allianz NFL Division 2

8	2 nd Feb	Round 1	Cusack Park	Westmeath	0-09	Donegal	1-13
9	14 th Feb	Round 2	Fr. Tierney Park	Donegal	3-11	Laois	0-05
10	7 th March	Round 3	St. Conleth's Park	Kildare	1-17	Donegal	1-09
11	13 th March	Round 4	Mac Cumhaill Park	Donegal	0-11	Down	0-13
12	20 th March	Round 5	Semple Stadium	Tipperary	2-05	Donegal	1-09
13	27 th March	Round 6	MacCumhaill Park	Donegal	1-12	Meath	0-10
14	11 th April	Round 7	O'Donnell Park	Donegal	0-06	Armagh	2-16

Team	P	W	L	D	P+	P-	P+/-	Pts
Down	7	6	0	1	112	74	38	13
Armagh	7	5	2	0	112	75	37	10
Donegal	7	4	3	0	92	90	2	8
Meath	7	4	3	0	88	91	-3	8
Laois	7	3	4	0	98	103	-5	6
Kildare	7	3	4	0	89	95	-6	6
Tipperary	7	2	4	1	92	103	-11	5
Westmeath	7	0	7	0	82	134	-52	0

GAA - BARRETT SPORTS LIGHTING DR MCKENNA CUP, GROUP B

New look Donegal get McKenna Cup defence started with win



DONEGAL.....0-11
 CAVAN.....0-09



BY CHRIS MCNULTY
 AT BREFFNI PARK
 PHOTOS BY MICHAEL
 O'DONNELL

DONEGAL thawed out on Saturday night at last by getting the defence of their Dr McKenna Cup title off to a winning start, by overcoming Cavan by two points at Kingspan Breffni Park.

Both side were in typical experimental early-season mode, but it was John Joe Doherty's men who edged the tie in the end.

The home side had a 0-4 to 0-3 half-time lead, with newcomer Gareth Smith landing all of their points. Donegal, meanwhile, were quite wasteful in that opening period, kicking six wides, but the green and gold were more economical after the break and the introduction of Dara Gal-

lagher and Michael Murphy as second-half subs helped the cause.

After coming out of their hibernation a week behind schedule, due to the recent freeze-over that gripped the country, Donegal showed some notable changes in personnel, with some new faces given a go from the off.

While there was a recall to the midfield for Glenswilly midfielder Neil Gallagher, there were four players drafted into the starting XV for their first senior intercounty starts.

As well as Gallagher's partner in crime in the engine room, Eddie Kelly (Urris), goalkeeper Lee McFadden (Cloughaneely), defender James Keaney (Bundoran) and forward Gareth Concurr (Ardara) were the debutants in the Tir Chonaill line-up.

After a tepid opening, it was Donegal who raised the first white flag, with skipper Kevin Cassidy getting on the end of a clever through-ball from Colm McFadden to slot over with his right foot. That score came after the first 'mark' of the game when Neil

Gallagher caught cleanly from Lee McFadden's kick-out on six minutes.

The new rules have been a big talking point since their announcement and rookie keeper McFadden got an early welcome to the new rule that allows custodians to be challenged inside the square. But the Cloughaneely man did well to field a high ball into the mixer just three minutes in, despite coming under strong pressure.

Colm McFadden doubled Donegal's lead with a free won by Adrian Hannon, but by the end of the first quarter Tommy Carr's side had drawn level.

Gareth Smith, a former All Ireland Under 21 winner with Dublin, who was making his first appearance in the blue and white, got the Breffni men up and running by slotting over a free on 11 minutes after Paddy MeDaid was penalised for a foul on John McCabe.

Smith doubled his tally two minutes later when he converted another

Match Stats

Goals	0/0
Points	9/11
Wides	7/8
45s	0/1
Frees awarded	23/39
Frees scored	6/4
Yellow cards	3/2
Red cards	0/0

free and it was level pegging.

Gareth Smith then won a free off Neil Gallagher, but the big Glenswilly man made amends by saving a certain score, plucking the ball from the sky just as it was about to cross the black spot.

Six minutes from the interval, referee Gerry McCarron pulled up the first handpass, which has been outlawed under the experimental rules - and it came just in the nick of time for Donegal, as Eoin McGuigan would

have been baring down on goal, had Nicholas Walsh not been penalised.

Another pair of Smith frees, the second of which came with the last kick of the half, put Cavan 0-4 to 0-3 ahead as the teams parted for the refreshments.

Donegal swung the pendulum early in the second-half. Colm McFadden levelled with a free, after Hannon was penalised for a hand-pass on his own 20-metre line, before Ross Wherity did well to clip over from Concurr's pass and the lead was extended when Concurr swung over a free from the left side.

Donegal were denied what looked to be a penalty when David Walsh appeared to have been pulled down and Cavan were back level by the 48th minute. Eoin McGuigan scored his side's first point from play on 47 when he took a Smith pass to score. Smith added a free soon after to restore parity.

A - BARRETT SPORTS LIGHTING DR MCKENNA CUP, GROUP B

Gallagher fired over the bar when on-one with Fintan Reilly in a chance, while Murphy got on the back to put Donegal two ahead, before a Concarr free made it 0-9 to 0-6. Lee McFadden then dived full-length to save from Conor Smith, though captain Martin Cahill did get a point out of the move, only for Adrian Lonon to open his account soon after. Two frees by Smith set up a tense clash, in which Cavan had their moments and could have done something. But with the last kick of the game, Murphy - after collecting off McFadden - fired over to seal the win.

Cavan: Fintan Reilly; Michael Hanrahan; Thomas Corr; Eoin McPhillips; Eoin O'Dowd; John McCutcheon; Martin Cahill (0-1); Nicholas Walsh; Eoin McGuigan (0-1); Alan Clarke; Gareth Smith (0-7,6f); Mark McKeever; John McCabe; Eddie O'Reilly; Conor Smith. SUBS: Donal Thomas O'Reilly (43 mins); Niall Madden McCabe (43 mins).

Donegal: Lee McFadden; James Hanrahan; Neil McGee; Paddy McDaid; Frank McGlynn; Barry Monaghan; Kevin Cassidy (0-1); Neil Gallagher; Eddie Kelly; Oran Doherty; Colm McEldon (0-2, 2f); Ross Wherity (0-1); Gareth Concarr (0-3, 2f); Adrian Hanrahan (0-1); David Walsh. SUBS: Dara Gallagher (0-1) for Wherity (46 mins); Michael Murphy (0-2) for Doherty (46 mins); Charlie Byrne for Kelly. (67 mins).

Referee: Gerry McCarron (Monaghan).

The Game at a Glance

Man of the Match

Gareth Smith looked seven points, six of them frees, for Cavan, while Mark McKeever also had a good shift for the home side. For Donegal, Neil McGee was solid at full-back, Neil Gallagher did well on his return to the engine room and subs Dara Gallagher and Michael Murphy helped at a crucial stage. But it was some of the new faces who caught the eye most, with keeper Lee McFadden the pick. The Falcarragh native dealt with two early high balls into the square very well under pressure and in the second-half he made one fine save to deny Cavan, before recovering from a slight blip to save from Conor Smith. A good first day out for McFadden.

Turning Point

Dara Gallagher and Michael Murphy were introduced to add some spice to the Donegal attack on 48 minutes. Within three minutes of their introduction, both men were on target, while a point soon after from Gareth Concarr helped Donegal into a 0-9 to 0-6 lead - a lead they wouldn't give up for the remainder.

The Whistler

Gerry McCarron was in the middle for his first game with the experimental rules. While he applied common sense for the most part, Cavan manager Tommy Carr felt his side had been hard-done by the Monaghan whistler. Given that 16 more frees went their way, his theory could easily be binned, though.

Terrace Talk

The latest experimental rules to come into play were the main focus point for the decent crowd at Breffni Park on Saturday night. Donegal adapted pretty well to them: goalkeeper Lee McFadden dealt with being under pressure inside the square well; big Neil Gallagher won three of five 'marks' awarded to Donegal; while three Cavan handpasses were blown up to none for the visitors.

Overall, confusion still reigns on the new laws.

Perhaps next year we could experiment with leaving the game as it is?

Murphy brilliance earns Donegal hard-fought draw



DONEGAL.....2-17



TYRONE.....4-11

BY CHRIS MCNULTY.
PHOTOS DONNA MCBRIDE

MICHAEL Murphy and Martin Penrose turned an otherwise typical early-season McKenna Cup tie into an epic scoring-duel at Sean MacCumhaill Park on Wednesday night, with the Donegal man on top, though his side had to settle for a draw.

Aghyaran man Penrose scored a first-half hat-trick and ended the night with 3-3 to his name, while Murphy outlined his real clinicism with a deadly record-breaking 2-9 that earned Donegal a point.

The pair were in scintillating form in a game that had a decent Ballybofey crowd on edge throughout and rarely has the McKenna Cup seen such a feat of action on the scoreboard.

Tyrone built up a big lead on a few occasions during the game - leading by six points at one stage in the first-half, by five at half-time and by five again when Kyle Coney scored their fourth goal 13 minutes from the end - but each time Donegal fought back from the embers.

John Joe Doherty will again have been heartened with the battling displays with the showings of Murphy and Colm McFadden, who landed a couple of masterful second-half points, the real plusses on the night.

Still in experimental mode, of course, Donegal made seven changes to the fifteen that started

against Cavan on Saturday night. The entire half-back line of Eoin Waide, Karl Lacey and Michael Maguire was a different unit, while Paul Durcan, Colin McCarron, Dara Gallagher and Michael Murphy came in for their first starts of the year.

Later in the game Cornelius Gallagher of Gaoth Dobhair was brought on for his first senior county appearance while there was a similar debut for Fergal McNulty, who ironically plays his club football in Tyrone with Urney.

Mickey Harte, meanwhile, had a pretty strong line-up with him in Ballybofey, with Justin McMahan, Joe McMahan, Conor Gormley, Kevin Hughes, Enda McGinley, Brian McGuigan and Tommy McGuigan among the established names who came off the bus.

Tommy McGuigan and Michael Murphy traded early frees, before Tyrone stamped their mark on proceedings with the opening goal of the contest just four minutes in, as Martin Penrose got away from Neil McGee before thundering to the net, past the despairing Paul Durcan.

Niall Gormley added a point, but in the eighth minute Donegal were back on track as Dara Gallagher's delivery into the mixer from a free on the stand side was cleverly flicked to the net by Murphy.

Frees by Murphy and McFadden, as well as a point from play by the St Michael's man had Donegal to within a point by the 17th minute, while scores from Penrose (2) and Tommy McGuigan kept Tyrone in command.

By the half-hour Tyrone had rocketed into a six-point lead. Goal number two arrived on 20 minutes when Niall Gormley got past Colin McCarron to feed Penrose and the Aghyaran man, despite a tight angle, found his spot to perfection.

Gareth Devlin scored a brilliant point off his left foot four minutes later, but a lengthy delay ensued after the forward injured himself in the process, with Matthew Donnelly taking his place.

Gormley was on the end of the next Tyrone move as he got between Keeney and Lacey to score, and open up a six-point advantage for the O'Neill County, with just five first-half minutes left.

Donegal were looking vulnerable and it looked as if Tyrone might dish out more of the same, just three days on from their 16-point demolition job of St Mary's College on Sunday.

But three superbly executed placed kicks from Murphy in as many minutes cut the margin in half. The Glenswilly man landed two frees from just inside the '45' and in between times he nailed a '45' awarded when McFadden's free was touched behind off a Tyrone defender.

Gareth Concarr watched a rather ambitious goal attempt go wide, before Eddie Kelly started and finished a move. The Urris man did well to first the ball from Michael O'Neill's kick-out into the path of Concarr, before taking the return to fire over the bar.

Murphy won, and pointed a 20-metre free and there was just a point in it, only for Tyrone to strike it lucky deep in added time. Aidan Cassidy won a free that was pointed by Tommy McGuigan, but with the four added minutes already played referee Cleary allowed the kick-out to be taken. Under the new rules, the ball must go dead before half-time or full-time can be blown and it was as a result that Donegal would concede with the last kick of part one. With six minutes extra on the clock, Gavin Teague released Penrose and he shot powerfully home to complete the hat-trick in style.

That made it 3-8 to 1-9 in favour of the visitors, but Donegal were in determined tune and four points on the spin from McFadden, Gallagher, Walsh and Murphy reduced the margin to the minimum again.

Penrose added to his growing tally with Tyrone's first point of the second-half on 42 minutes and a minute later he was denied a fourth goal as Durcan stretched full-length to his left to turn Penrose's goal-bound effort round the post.

Colm McFadden sent over a majestic point from the stand side, which was followed by an-

other Murphy free to level it up - only for Gavin Teague and Tommy McGuigan to restore the two-point lead in the next ten minute.

The last quarter began with Tyrone sending in Minor All Ireland winner Kyle Coney and within a minute the young star took a pass from Cassidy and with Donegal's rearguard caught out, leaving the Ardboe man one-on-one with Durcan, he made no mistake in finishing goal number four.

Murphy scored a second '45' of the evening and on 63 minutes he scored a brilliant goal to tee-up a frenetic finish. Dara Gallagher was provider and Murphy made hay as the sun shone, fielding strongly and spinning around his man on the edge of the square before planting the ball past O'Neill.

In the final minute of stoppage time, McFadden levelled it up for the final time when a quick, short free by Cassidy found the St Michael's man and he clipped over with panache from the right side to seal the share of the spoils.

DONEGAL: Paul Durcan; James Keeney, Neil McGee, Colm McCarron; Eoin Waide, Karl Lacey, Michael Maguire; Neil Gallagher, Kevin Cassidy; Eddie Kelly (0-1), Colm McFadden (0-5, 2f), Dara Gallagher (0-1); Adrian Hanlon, Michael Murphy (2-9, 6f, 2 '45'), Gareth Concarr. **SUBS:** David Walsh (0-1) for McCarron (half-time); Fergal McNulty for Gallagher (65 mins); Cornelius Gallagher for Hanlon (65 mins).

TYRONE: Michael O'Neill; Martin Swift, Justin McMahan, Joe McMahan; Gavin Teague (0-1), Conor Gormley, Sean O'Neill; Aidan Cassidy, Kevin Hughes; Enda McGinley, Brian McGuigan, Tommy McGuigan (0-4, 4f); Niall Gormley (0-2), Martin Penrose (3-3, 1f), Gareth Devlin (0-1). **SUBS:** Matthew Donnelly for Devlin (26 mins); Kyle Coney (1-0) for T.McGuigan (56 mins); Eoin McCusker for C.Gormley (59 mins); Ronan McNabb for N.Gormley (59 mins); Peter Harte for B.McGuigan (70 mins).

REFEREE: JJ Cleary (Derry).

Unimpressive Donegal finish well to book a semi final berth

DONEGAL 1-13
ST MARY'S 0-05

BY CHRIS MCNUITY IN BALLYBOFEY
PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

DONEGAL kept up the defence of their McKenna Cup title as a nine-point win over St Mary's in Ballybofey on Saturday night was enough to book a semi final spot with John Joe Doherty's men advancing to the semi finals as the best runners-up.

Three days after an epic struggle with Tyrone at the same venue, Saturday's game never reached those excitement levels and indeed the overall standard was less than impressive from both sides.

Donegal had a decent first-half, after which they led 0-5 to 0-2, but the home team went an entire 20 minutes without scoring in the second-half, before finishing with a flourish to spare the blushes.

A goal by substitute Adrian Hanlon on 59 minutes propelled Donegal into an unassailable six-point lead and was the big score on a very foggy night by the Finn.

The heavy mist that descended on Sean MacCumhaill Park looked for a while as if it could put the game, or certainly the concluding of it, in jeopardy, but thankfully for those who braved a chilled Ballybofey evening the contest was played to a close.

It was always going to be hard to match the entertainment value that was served up in the mid-week draw with Tyrone and while Donegal weren't overly good on Saturday night, manager Doherty will still take heart from a number of performances - like those from the industrious David Walsh and Colm McFadden.

Donegal's experimental early-season policy continued with some seven changes made to the starting XV. Malin's Charlie Byrne, Gaoth Dobhair's Cornelius Gallagher and Fergal McNulty of Urney came in to make their first starts of 2010 (in the case of the latter pair, it was a first ever senior intercounty start), while Lee McFadden, Paddy McDaid, David Walsh and Ross Wherity were the others elevated into the side.

Michael Murphy, whose huge 2-9 tally mid-week helped Donegal to a draw with Tyrone, was among the players rested, but Tir Chonaill had just enough to come good without him and see off the boys from The Ranch.

Leading 0-5 to 0-2 at the interval, Donegal took a long time to find their feet again on the resumption. St Mary's, as a result, grew in confidence and with Donegal failing to trouble the scoreboard for the first 20 minutes of part two the students came to within a point.

Forty seconds after the re-start, Brian Doyle just managed to fire over Lee McFadden's crossbar for St Mary's third point. It was a low-action beginning to the second half as it was a further 14 minutes before a Kevin Mossey point from play punctuated the lack of scores.

And St Mary's reduced the arrears

Match Stats

Donegal/St Mary's

Goals	1/0
Points	13/5
Wides	10/7
45s	1/0
Frees awarded	25/28
Frees scored	4/2
Short efforts	5/1
Yellow cards	0/1
Red cards	0/0

to the minimum three minutes later when Darren Carson added his name to the scoring list - the Tyrone native fisting over after a Niblock free dropped into the mixer.

Niblock wasted a chance to level when he dropped a shot into McFadden's hands and Donegal then got the kick they needed. Eddie Kelly played a quick off-load to Colm McFadden, who turned his man to fire over Donegal's first point of the half.

Adrian Hanlon added another when he collected a long-ball close to the end line, before cutting in and slotting between the uprights.

With the clock showing 59 minutes, the Dungleo man then pounced for the killer goal that put the final nail into St Mary's.

David Walsh started the move after winning the ball out the field. Fergal McNulty was also involved, but it was

Gareth Concarr who played the final ball to Hanlon, who clinically dispatched to the top corner when one-on-one with Tim Harney.

Seven minutes from time, Colm McFadden swept over a brilliant score from close to the left flank and the St Michael's man added another three frees before the close of business to extend Donegal's advantage, which was concluded when, with the game's final act, Gareth Concarr chipped over.

Dara Gallagher had opened proceedings by firing over a fifth minute point having been set up by Walsh and the Naomh Conaill man doubled the tally on ten minutes, finishing off a move that involved Eddie Kelly and Fergal McNulty.

Kevin Niblock got St Mary's first point in a low-scoring start to the game with an eleventh-minute free, out a free from McFadden restored Donegal's two-point advantage on 17.

That came after Ross Wherity missed a goal chance for the home side after he was first to get to Cornelius Gallagher's ball into the danger zone, the St Eunan's man seeing an effort come back off an upright. And another goal chance from Wherity was fired wide on 20 minutes, this time from McFadden's free.

Dara Gallagher took his tally to three points with a fine effort on 21, but a second Niblock free, this one a well-struck effort from 35 metres, responded for St Mary's after McFadden fired off target with another good Donegal opening.

But McFadden scored a brilliant point from distance on the half-hour while Dara Gallagher closed off the first-half with the point of the game off his left foot, from Eddie Kelly's off-load.

There was some confusion at half-time: The majority inside MacCumhaill Park thought Donegal were 0-6 to 0-2 ahead, but the scoreboard noted it was 0-5 to 0-2 - a score confirmed by referee Stephen McNamee, with what seemed to be a perfectly good score by Eddie Kelly on 25 minutes not included.

Donegal: Lee McFadden; Colin McCarron, Neil McGee, Paddy McDaid; Charlie Byrne, Karl Lacey, Eoin Waide; Neil Gallagher, Edward Kelly; Fergal McNulty, Cornelius Gallagher, Dara Gallagher (0-4); David Walsh, Colm McFadden (0-7, 4f), Ross Wherity. SUBS: Gareth Concarr (0-1) for C.Gallagher (42 mins); James Keeney for McCarron (46 mins); Michael Maguire for Byrne (46 mins); Adrian Hanlon (1-1) for Wherity (48 mins); Oran Doherty for D.Gallagher (63 mins).

St Mary's: Tim Harney; Michael Slane, Kevin O'Boyle, Mark Digney; Ciaran Campbell, Barry Canavan, Brian Óg Maguire; John Kelly, Mark McKenna; Oisín McIvor, Kevin Mossey (0-1), Michael Began; Paul McAleer, Kevin Niblock (0-2, 2f), Darren Carson (0-1). SUBS: Lee McQuaid for McIvor (24 mins); Brian Doyle (0-1) for Campbell (29 mins); Simon O'Neill for Began (48 mins); Gareth Johnston for Carson (60 mins); Ryan Dolan for Digney (67 mins).

Referee: Stephen McNamee (Tyrone)

Final Group B Table

	P	W	D	L	Pts	For	Against	Score avg
Tyrone	3	2	1	0	5	4-54	3-31	1.65
Donegal	3	2	1	0	5	3-41	4-25	1.35
St Mary's	3	1	0	2	2	1-27	2-47	0.57
Cavan	3	0	0	1	0	2-21	3-40	0.55

GAA - BARRETT SPORTS LIGHTING DR MCKENNA CUP FINAL

Walsh goal clinches victory for Donegal



DONEGAL.....1-11
TYRONE.....0-13



**BY CHRIS MCNULTY
IN ENNISKILLEN
PHOTOS BY
DAVY RALSTON**

DAVID Walsh netted the game-winning goal as the clock ticked toward the 80th minute of Saturday night's Dr McKenna Cup final at Brewster Park to ensure that Donegal retained their title with a victory over Tyrone.

The game was held up for almost ten minutes when Tyrone star Stephen O'Neill sustained a dislocated elbow following a collision in the second-half.

After the resumption, Tyrone's sting was halted. They had led by four points (0-11 to 0-7), but Donegal hit back to draw level and although Niall Gormley restored Tyrone's lead, the soccer skills of Walsh were honed to perfection right at the death.

The Naomh Brid man, who was on the books of Luton Town some years back, was quickest to react when the ball spilled on the edge of the square from James Keeney's 'Hail Mary' into the mixer.

Colm McFadden was on the end of it, but he was put off balance by Conor Gormley and the ball spilled. Cool as a cucumber, Walsh stroked the ball into the corner, slotting past Jonathan Curran with ease.

Although Aidan Cassidy did pull a point back for Tyrone, it was Donegal's night and for the second year in a row John Joe Doherty's men have come out tops in the pre-season competition.

For Saturday night's game, Doherty had Michael Murphy back on board, while Paul Durcan reclaimed his starting spot from the team that had beaten Down in Wednesday's semi final.

Murphy hit 2-9 against the Red Hands in a high-octane Group B clash between the teams in Ballybofey two weeks ago, so it came as no surprise that Mickey Harte had the shackles firmly placed on the bustling Glenswilly man.

While the supply-line was well cut off by Tyrone, Joe McMahon had him firmly curtailed for the most part, though the Donegal forward did have an off night by his lofty standards.

Colm McFadden and Conor Gormley enjoyed a frantic struggle throughout a contest played in a chilly Enniskillen air, while Neil McGee, James Keeney, Frank McGlynn, Kevin Cassidy, Neil Gallagher

and David Walsh played starring roles in Donegal's win.

An O'Neill free and a Penrose point from play, after robbing Eddie Kelly of possession, put Tyrone two up early on, but Donegal were level by the eighth minute as Neil Gallagher drove over a long punt and Murphy tapped over a free.

Donegal were ahead when Leo McLoone was knocked off balance as he lined up the target and McFadden swung over the free.

The sides were level on six occasions during a first-half that saw

them hit five wides apiece. O'Neill converted a free to level it for a second time, while Penrose and Peter Harte restored parity for the Ulster Champions after points from Murphy (free) and the again lively David Walsh.

The warning signs were posted in front of the Tir Chonaill rearguard on 22 minutes when O'Neill's deft ball over the top put Joe McMahon in the clear and he drove over the crossbar.

But it was all aboard again when Adrian Hanlon, who has been showing good promise during the McKenna Cup, sped away from Colm McGurk to score.

From another turnover, Tyrone moved ahead again though, as Penrose fed O'Neill who scored.

Hanlon watched an enterprising effort strike the bar soon after, but Donegal did get on terms six minutes from the interval. Kevin Cassidy won a 'mark' and his quick thinking fed Leo McLoone, who slotted over under pressure.

Donegal should have taken the initiative then, but wastefully missed two good chances - misses that they were made pay for as Tommy McGuigan and Kyle Coney shot Tyrone into a 0-9 to 0-7 half-time lead.

Within six minutes of the re-start, Donegal found themselves trailing by four. A delightful point by Penrose, after he got free off Paddy McDaid out the left, was followed by O'Neill firing over a free won by Enda McGinley.

Those scores were after Donegal found an opening, when Hanlon and

Walsh combined to provide the spadework for Murphy, who aimed for the top corner, but blasted wide of the far post.

That O'Neill free would be the Clann na nGael man's last act of the game. With 44 minutes gone, he clashed with team-mate Kevin Hughes and after falling awkwardly on the rapidly freezing ground he suffered a suspected dislocated elbow.

Hughes hit a bad wide that could have stretched the Tyrone lead to five points, but Donegal got their first score of the half when Waide's

Match Stats

Donegal/Tyrone

Goals	1/0
Points	11/13
Wides	11/13
45s	0/0
Frees awarded	35/31
Frees scored	4/3
Short efforts	1/3
Yellow cards	3/3
Red cards	0/0

long ball was perfect for Hanlon to fetch and hit his second of the evening.

McFadden pointed a free, won by Murphy off McMahon, and Leo McLoone then atoned for a bad wide by winning the subsequent kick-out and providing the assist for Murphy to bring Donegal to within a point.

McLoone then won a 'mark' and after a move that had Neil Gallagher at the fulcrum David Walsh levelled it up. Niall Gormley looked like he'd won it for Tyrone, but Walsh's instinctive goal gave the title to Donegal.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; James Keeney, Neil McGee, Paddy McDaid; Eoin Waide, Frank McGlynn, Kevin Cassidy; Edward Kelly, Neil Gallagher (0-1); Fergal McNulty, David Walsh (1-2), Leo McLoone (0-1); Adrian Hanlon (0-2), Colm McFadden (0-2, 2f), Michael Murphy (0-3, 2f). SUBS: Mark McGowan for Kelly (46 mins); Michael Maguire for McNulty (71 mins).

Tyrone: Jonathan Curran; Colm McGurk, Justin McMahon, Martin Swift; Joe McMahon (0-1), Conor Gormley, Dermot Carlin; Kevin Hughes, Enda McGinley; Kyle Coney (0-1), Tommy McGuigan (0-1), Peter Harte (0-1); Martin Penrose (0-3), Stephen O'Neill (0-4, 3f), Niall McKeever. SUBS: Brian McGuigan for McGurk (half-time); Aidan Cassidy (0-1) for Justin McMahon (half-time); Niall Gormley (0-1) for McKenna (69 mins); Matthew Donnelly for T. McGuigan (69 mins).

Referee: Jimmy McKee (Armagh)

GAA - ULSTER SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP QUARTER FINAL

Donegal 'Down' and out to Coulter inspired Mournes



**DONEGAL.....2-10
DOWN.....1-15**



**BY CHRIS MCNUITY
AT SEAN MACCUMHAILL
PARK
PHOTOS BY
DONNA MCBRIDE**

THE long-standing dream harboured by Donegal gael of the county landing its first Anglo Celt since the halcyon days of 1992 will be parked for another 12 months, at least, after Down captain Benny Coulter stole the show in Ballybofey yesterday as Donegal let a glorious chance of progression slip from their clutches.

Leading by two points at half-time, Donegal were wasteful in the second-half and allowed Down to come back at them and although James McCartan's side only led for the first time in the closing seconds, Donegal forced extra-time.

The home side failed to score in the first-half of the additional period, but rallied to level in the first three minutes of the second - only for Coulter to knife a dagger through the Tír Chonaill veins four minutes from time.

Debutant Dermot 'Brick' Molloy had a golden start to his debut, blasting home a 12th minute goal that was followed by Conall Dunne bagging a second seven minutes later to hand Donegal the advantage.

It was one they held until the dying moments of the contest, only for Coulter to come deep in the final quarter to raise Down from the ashes. Martin Clarke calmly knocked over a '45' to hand them the lead, but Rory Kavanagh secured extra-time for John Joe Doherty's men with a late, late score.

Old failings came back to haunt Donegal yesterday, as they lost an opening Championship game on home soil for the third year running.

Eighteen years ago, before even the thought of Sam had crossed his brow, Brian McEniff spoke after Donegal lost a National League game to Dublin and mentioned 'it's always dangerous to try and defend a lead in Gaelic football. It's better to keep your shape, particularly in midfield and the half-forward areas.'

Yesterday, Donegal surrendered the advantage when Down began to get a stranglehold around the midfield, while they gifted four points to the visitors with stray passes that were picked up by Down men.

Berily, Donegal posted a staggering seventeen wides aside their name - a replica from the horror show of last year, when the same tally wrote the obituary of the 2009 Ulster Championship clash with Antrim. In the second-half Donegal scored just four times, twice in the third quarter, after which they still led 2-5 to 0-8. However, Coulter was about to take centre stage.

In the opening verse, it was Coulter's opposite number, Dermot Molloy, who was under the microscope. In for his first ever senior start following positive showings, both at U21 level and in senior training, and with much of the talk pre-match centring on him taking the mantle of Colm McFadden, the Naomh Conaill man didn't shy away.

His eighth minute point, from Conall Dunne's pass shot Donegal in-

to the lead and five minutes later the Glenties man was celebrating greater heights. Neil Gallagher's raking delivery was plucked neatly between McArdle and Colgan by Murphy, who cleverly found Molloy and he neatly shot home under McVeigh for a dream start.

By the 16th minute, Coulter, Poland (free) and John Clarke had Down to within the minimum, but when a Molloy cannoned off an upright, Conall Dunne was on hand to fire home a second Donegal goal.

Former Aussie Rules star Martin Clarke and the impressive Danny Hughes responded, but Molloy fired over a free, after Paul Durcan somehow kept a rasping shot from Coulter out.

Poland and Molloy (free) traded scores and in stoppage time Hughes fired over to leave just two between them at the break (2-3 to 0-7).

Michael Murphy had been rather isolated for much of the opening chapter, but the Glenswilly man fired over a free six minutes into the sec-

ond-half, only for Poland to respond at the other end from a placed ball.

Adrian Hanlon clipped over at the other end, but the next three scores belonged to Down as they drew level ten minutes from time. Hughes, Martin Clarke and Coulter all found the range to place the tie in the melting pot.

David Walsh stemmed the flow when he put Donegal ahead, but it looked gone when a majestic Coulter effort from 50 metres sailed over the black spot and Clarke did the trick with a '45', only for Kavanagh to level it deep into stoppage time. The play that led to Clarke's score could have been the deathknell as the '45' came from Durcan superbly turning the ball round the post after Dan Gordan flicked a Clarke free towards goal.

Three bad wides characterised Donegal's first-half in extra-time, with Coulter and Hughes on the mark for Down. The lively Mark McHugh and McFadden (free) levelled it up, but Coulter had the decisive say as he got on the end of a move that started with Conor Maginn prising away from Gallagher. Hughes took receipt and sent Coulter away. The Mayo-bridge man had only one target in mind and he weaved round Durcan before finishing in style.

Donegal desperately tried to get back, but their efforts were in vain as a solitary Eoin Waide point was all they could muster, as a couple of half chances fizzled out late on and the hopes of a lasting sojourn in Ulster faded familiarly into the Ballybofey skyline.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Frank McGlynn, Neil McGee, Karl Lacey; Michael Maguire, Barry Monaghan, Barry Dunnion; Neil Gallagher, Rory

Kavanagh (0-1); Kevin Cassidy, Christy Toye, David Walsh (0-1); Dermot Molloy (1-3, 2f), Michael Murphy (0-1, 1f), Conall Dunne (1-0). SUBS: Adrian Hanlon (0-1) for Toye (44 mins); Anthony Thompson for Monaghan (53 mins); Mark McHugh (0-1) for Gallagher (62 mins); Colm McFadden (0-1, 1f) for Molloy (66 mins); Neil Gallagher for Dunne (70 mins); Paddy McGrath for McGlynn (79 mins); Eoin Waide (0-1) for Maguire (half-time, extra-time).

Down: Brendan McVeigh; Brendan McArdle, Declan Rooney, Damian Rafferty; Kevin McKernan, James Colgan, Conor Garvey; Dan Gordon, Callum King; Daniel Hughes (0-4), Mark Poland (0-3, 2f), Paul McComiskey; Benny Coulter (1-4), John Clarke (0-1), Martin Clarke (0-3, 1'45'). SUBS: Conor Maginn for J. Clarke (47 mins); Peter Fitzpatrick for McComiskey (55 mins); Darren O'Hagan for McKernan (62 mins); Conor Laverty for Poland (79 mins); Ronan Murtagh for Garvey (85 mins).

Referee: Joe McQuillan (Cavan)

All-Ireland Qualifiers, first round

Dismal Donegal bow out

Armagh 2-14
Donegal 0-11

Report: Peter Campbell

Photos: PressEye

Donegal have experienced bad moments in the past but Saturday's dismal exit at the hands of Armagh must rank as one of the lowest points in recent times.

With just seven minutes on the clock in Crossmaglen, Donegal were a beaten docket as they had conceded a second goal at that stage, both goals being given away tamely.

In the last eleven years Armagh have handed more drubbings to Donegal than any other county, but while there may have been some resistance in the past, on Saturday there was just token resistance with just a handful of Donegal players emerging with credit. Having conceded two early goals and trailing by eight points at half-time, it was torture for the small Donegal band of supporters to keep the faith in the second half.

The most notable difference between the sides was the physical stature. The Donegal panel as presently constituted just don't have the physical make-up to compete at this level and some others just don't have the stomach for the battle.

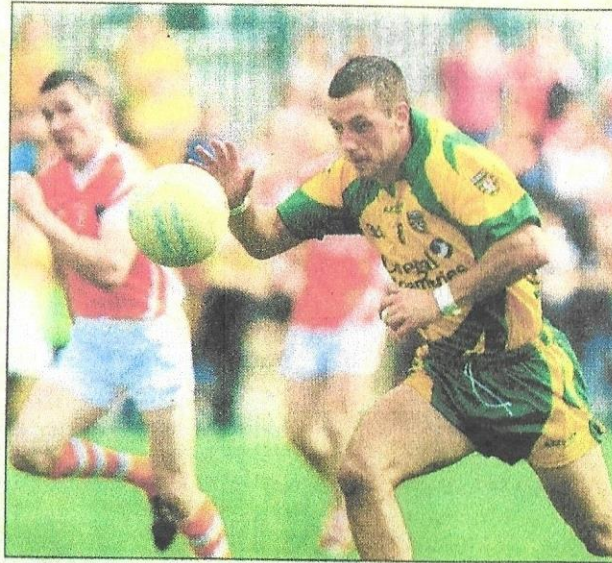
On Saturday the likes of Neil McGee, Paul Durcan and Barry Dunnion (throughout) and Neil Gallagher and Rory Kavanagh (in the second half) fought to the end, there just wasn't the team spirit and fight necessary to make a real game of it.

For Armagh's Jamie Clarke, it must have seemed that all his birthdays came on Saturday - two days short of his 21st. He was given the space to round Paddy McGrath for the first goal inside 75 seconds and then was allowed to take a ball on seven minutes with two Donegal players close by and still be able to slide home the second goal.

Donegal had started with Kevin Cassidy at full-forward but the captain looked all at sea in his new position and was switched back out to centre forward after ten minutes.

Michael Murphy did have a second point for Donegal but then Armagh hit points at will from Jamie Clarke, Gareth Swift, Joe Feeney and Aaron Kernan to lead by 2-5 to 0-2 after 28 minutes.

Donegal were just being taken apart and even though Murphy and Colm McFadden had late points in the half, Jamie Clarke made it 2-2 and Paul Durcan had to make a great stop from Aaron Kernan to keep the scoreboard down.



Donegal's Barry Dunnion on the attack.

Picture Credit Mark Pearce/ Presseye.com

Half-time: Armagh 2-6, Donegal 0-4.

If a point from Michael Murphy inside of a minute of the restart was a rallying call, it didn't materialise as Stevie McDonnell had his points of the game from a free and play and Gareth Swift also added a double. In between Paul Durcan was called upon again as Jamie Clarke tried to put Andy Mallon through for a goal.

Leading by 2-10 to 0-5, the final quarter was nothing more than damage limitation. Murphy added a point but Aaron Kernan replied from a free before Adrian Hanlon fired over.

Armagh were just responding to anything Donegal threw at

them with Stevie McDonnell and Joe Feeney cancelling Murphy and Neil Gallagher points.

In the final ten minutes Mark McHugh and Murphy had Donegal's final points while Aaron Kernan wrapped up the scoring a minute from time.

In those final minutes Donegal were down to 14 men as substitute Eamonn McGee was reported by an umpire and picked up a second yellow card.

It was a very impressive Armagh performance with Brendan Donaghy solid at full-back; Paul Duffy, Aaron Kernan, Gareth Swift, Stevie McDonnell and Jamie Clarke outstanding.

The corner-forwards in particular, Swift and Clarke, were really impressive throughout and even the substitute Joe Feeney did his part.

Armagh: Paul Hearty; Andy Mallon, Brendan Donaghy, Vincent Martin; Paul Duffy, Ciaran McKeever, Kevin Dyas; Charlie Vernon (0-1), Malachy Mackin; Anto Duffy, Aaron Kernan 0-3,1), Francis Hanratty; Gareth Swift (0-3), Steven McDonnell (0-3,1f), Jamie Clarke (2-2). Subs., Joe Feeney (0-2) for A Duffy 20; Paul McKeown for A Mallon 64; Tony Kernan for Hanratty 69

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee, Karl Lacey; Michael Maguire, Barry Dunnion, Frank McGlynn; Neil Gallagher (0-1), Kevin Cassidy; Mark McHugh (0-1), Rory Kavanagh, David Walsh; Colm McFadden (0-1), Michael Murphy (0-7,4f), Conal Dunne. Subs., Eoin Waide for McGrath 10; Eamonn McGee for Maguire 29; Christy Tove for Dunne ht; Adrian Hanlon (0-1) for McFadden 47.

Referee: Michael Duffy (Sligo)

GAA - ALL IRELAND SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP, ROUND ONE QUALIFIER

Dreadful Donegal's summer crushed by Armagh



DONEGAL.....11
 ARMAGH.....2-14



BY CHRIS MCNULTY
 AT CROSSMAGLEN
 PHOTOS BY OLIVER
 MCVEIGH/SPORTSFILE

DONEGAL players had long since taken to the solace of the dressing rooms at Oliver Plunkett Park when their conquerors, Armagh, who once again dished out a hammering to them, gathered in a circle in the middle of the park.

In between the stretches and their warm-down routine, the Orchard men poured scorn upon their counterparts from Donegal, openly name-checking, laughing off a various list of names from the opposition, mocking and deriding their efforts over the previous 70 minutes.



Donegal manager, John Joe Doherty, left, along with selectors Tony Boyle and Tommy Ryan.

'The signs were there' says John Joe Doherty

Allianz National Football League Division Two

Cassidy goal needed to kick-start Donegal

Westmeath 0-9
Donegal 1-13

Report: Peter Campbell
Photos: Conor McGonagle

A goal from Kevin Cassidy to mark his 99th game in a Donegal jersey proved the vital score in this opening league game at Cusack Park, Mullingar, on Sunday.

It was the first time Donegal were ahead but they never looked back after that in a disappointing game. They were given a reality check in the first half as they found that McKenna Cup form mattered for little as Westmeath tore into them and led by 0-5 to 0-0 after 13 minutes.

Denis Glennon was tormentor in chief of the Donegal defence as he accounted for three of those points. Their other scorers in that opening quarter were Gavin Hoey and a Paul Greville free.

Donegal were completely out of sorts at that stage and the Westmeath front men were getting quality ball.

It took a Michael Murphy free to get Donegal off the mark with almost 18 minutes gone but they did get their act together a little better in the second quarter with Colm McFadden and Adrian Hanlon among their scorers.

Hanlon had a great goal chance on 21 minutes after Murphy made the break and when he was bottled up, he got a good pass across to Hanlon but his effort with his weaker right boot was easily saved by Gary Connaughton.

The management were forced to make early changes, bringing in Conall Dunne for Paddy McDaid and re-locating Cassidy back in defence, while Stephen Griffin replaced an out-of-sorts Leo McLoone, who had a valid excuse after playing extra-time in the club under-21 championship on Saturday.

The changes worked with Dunne, in particular, playing a prominent role

from there to the end. He made a point for Hanlon in the 26th minute before Colm McFadden played Leo McLoone in but he blazed wide.

Dunne then hit Donegal's third point after good work by David Walsh and Owen Waide and after Walsh was fouled, McFadden brought Donegal within a point four minutes from the break.

Glennon struck for his fourth point, this time from a free, in the last minute of the half but two minutes into added time a late tackle on Neil Gallagher allowed McFadden to leave just a point between the sides at the break.

Half-time: Donegal 0-5, Westmeath 0-6.

Two minutes into the second half the game turned with Karl Lacey providing the the initial pass. When it broke from McFadden, Murphy picked it up and found Cassidy on the run and he drove it to the net from 20 yards.

The goal proved to be the killer blow and while it took Donegal a little while to build on the score, they were never again troubled by Westmeath. Indeed,

Donegal almost had a second goal a minute later but they were whistled for a foul pass with Griffin sent clear on his way to goal.

They went three clear on 46 minutes when a Gallagher effort was deflected for a '45' and Murphy converted. They can thank James Keaney for a last gasp intervention to stop Gavin Hoey as he was on his way to goal while Paul Greville pointed a free for the Midlanders when Keaney fouled Lynam on 51 minutes.

However, Donegal took complete control in the final quarter with Barry Monaghan and Walsh setting up Hanlon or a great score on 56 minutes. McFadden tried for a point from an outrageous angle but Dunne kept it in play and won a free for McFadden to point the free, while a Gallagher break in midfield was latched onto by Walsh to put Donegal 1-9 to 0-7 clear with 58 minutes gone.

McFadden, from play, and Michael Murphy winning and pointing a free pushed Donegal seven clear with six minutes left before Ronan Doolin had Westmeath's penultimate score in the 68th minute.

In the final minute McFadden struck twice, from play and a free, to close out the deal and give the scoreboard a rather flattering look.

Westmeath were not helped by an injury to Glennon eight minutes into the second half and the full-forward returned to the action in the final minutes to add their last point.

Overall it was a mediocre display by

Donegal, but they will be happy to have got the two points and can look forward to gaining another brace when Laois come to Ballyshannon on Sunday.

Apart from the introduction of Dunne, they can thank the likes of Lacey, Gallagher, Walsh, Murphy and Cassidy for giving them the leadership when it was necessary

Westmeath: Gary Connaughton; Damien Healy, Michael Ennis, John Gaffey; Ger Egan, Donal O'Donoghue, Doran Harte; David Duffy, Stephen Bracken; Tommy Warburton, Paul Greville (0-2,2f), John Smyth; Gavin Hoey (0-1), Denis Glennon (0-5,1f), Conor Lynam. Subs.: Aidan Finnan for

Warburton 31; Paul Bannon for Glennon 43; Willie Murtagh for Gaffey; Ronan Doolin (0-1) for Bracken both 65; Denis Glennon for Hoey-68

Donegal: Paul Durcan; James Keaney, Neil McGee, Paddy McDaid; Owen Waide, Frank McGlynn, Karl Lacey; Kevin Cassidy (1-0), Neil Gallagher; Fergal McNulty, David Walsh (0-1), Leo McLoone; Adrian Hanlon (0-2), Colm McFadden (0-6,4f), Michael Murphy (0-3,2f, 45). Subs: Conall Dunne (0-1) for McDaid 22; Stephen Griffin for McLoone 32; Anthony Thompson for Waide 43; Barry Monaghan for McNulty 48

Referee: Cormac Reilly (Meath)

Man of the match

Denis Glennon was a real contender and might have got the award had been able to stay on the field. For Donegal Karl Lacey, David Walsh, Michael Murphy, Conall Dunne and Kevin Cassidy did well but the award goes to Neil Gallagher, who got through a power of work and kept Donegal on the front foot

Turning point

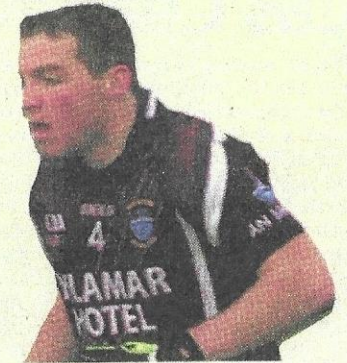
That goal from Kevin Cassidy was certainly the big turning point in the game. Donegal were beginning to find their feet just before the break but the goal, expertly finished by the captain, put them on their way and they never really looked like losing after that.

Ref watch

Donegal would not have been totally happy with Cormac Reilly had they lost this game. He was very harsh on them with the handpass and overall Westmeath seemed to get their frees much easier than the Tirconaill men.

Match Facts

	Frees	Wides	Marks	45s
First Half				
Donegal	12	3	2	0
Westmeath	14	4	1	0
Second Half				
Donegal	12	3	1	1
Westmeath	9	5	1	0



GAA - ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Stroll in the park for Donegal against Laois



DONEGAL.....3-11

LAOIS.....0-05



BY CHRIS McNULTY
AT FR TIERNEY PARK
PHOTOS BY DONNA
MCBRIDE

AS strolls in the park go, this was as easy as they come, as Donegal marched to a fifteen-point win over Laois at Fr Tierney Park yesterday afternoon.

Last week, Donegal had it easy enough in the end, as they overcame a slow start to defeat Westmeath by seven points but yesterday John Joe Doherty's men were out of the traps early.

A tenth minute goal from Conall Dunne helped Donegal into an eight-point lead (1-5 to 0-0) before Laois even troubled the scoreboard operator and second-half three-pointers from James Keaney and Michael Murphy pressed the margin out to a landslide home win.

Laois boss Sean Dempsey travelled with a well-weakened outfit with Dennis Booth, Billy Sheehan, Kevin Meaney and Peter O'Leary still suspended from their infamous O'Byrne Cup scrap with Kildare. As if that wasn't bad enough, former All Star Tom Kelly has bid farewell to the Laois

panel, so it was a skeleton side that Dempsey had in tow yesterday.

And they were no match for Donegal, who didn't need to get into the high gears and won at a relative canter.

With Eoin Waide and Leo McLoone on Ulster Club U21 duty with Naomh Conaill, Donegal manager John Joe Doherty was forced into two alterations from the team that beat Westmeath last weekend. In all, the Naomh Columba man showed four changes to his starting XV.

Anthony Thompson and Conall Dunne came into the side in place of Waide and McLoone, while Barry Monaghan and Stephen Griffin were also elevated, with Fergal McNulty and Paddy McDaid dropping to the bench.

Michael Murphy won, and pointed a sixth minute free to open the scoring and four minutes later Donegal worked a very good opening goal.

Kevin Cassidy was lining out for the 100th time for the Donegal senior team yesterday and it was from the Gaoth Dobhair man's arrowed delivery into the mixer that the strike arrived.

Cassidy's ball in was excellently flicked down by Murphy into the path of the roaving Conall Dunne. The St Eunan's man shimmied to the left and tucked the ball past 'keeper Conor Gorman at the near post.

Two more free from Murphy confirmed a complete transformation from a week ago - at the quarter-hour mark Donegal led by five, where they had trailed by the handful in Mullingar.

David Walsh stepped up for Donegal's first point from play on 18 minutes when he did well to beat Mark Timmons and delightfully stroked over after a move involving McFadden, Murphy and Griffin.

On 20 minutes, the ending was being readied for the script when Barry Monaghan put the margin out to eight points with the score of the game. The Four Masters man got receipt of possession from his midfield partner Neil Gallagher and he drilled over from distance.

MJ Tierney knocked a free over via the inside of the upright for Laois' first score on 22 minutes - but it was a score that wasn't confirmed until the interval, as confusion reigned when it was flagged wide despite it being a clear point.

Donal Kingston popped over the visitors' second point of the day, but Donegal led by seven at the break. Stephen Griffin won a 'mark' and fed Colm McFadden, who brilliantly spun onto his left foot to apply the finish.

Donegal came within a whisker of adding a second goal late in the half, but Adrian Hanlon saw his first-time

effort go wide of the far post after he raced onto a loose ball in Laois territory.

Stephen Griffin put Donegal eight up with the first score of the second-half, but with Donal Miller introduced at half-time beginning to exert some worth to proceedings, Laois hit three on the spin.

Colm Begley, Kingston and Daithi Carroll all converted to reduce Laois' arrears to five points, but the scoreboard didn't tick for the men in blue in the last 23 minutes as Donegal powered on.

Colm McFadden scored three of Donegal's next four points, two from frees, while GMIT's Sigerson star Stephen Griffin also pointed as Donegal moved 1-11 to 0-5 ahead.

On 57 minutes, Donegal got their second goal. James Keaney was called ashore by the stadium announcer with Michael Maguire to enter the fray, but with play waved on by referee Michael Duffy the Bundoran man got his name in lights by getting the second three-pointer.

Murphy and Keaney put big pressure on Laois 'keeper Conor Gorman and when he spilled possession Keaney dinked the ball into the net off the underside of the crossbar.

It was the corner back's last act of the game and he departed to a warm reception.

Just ninety seconds later, Michael Murphy beat Gorman to a high ball from Hanlon to bat home Donegal's third - netting the goal would also be the Glenswilly man's final part of the game as he made way for Eddie Kelly.

Thereafter, it was just a matter of running the clock down. Laois hit ten wides on the second-half and while John Joe Doherty mightn't have been overly pleased with his side's overall display the win leaves them with maximum points from their opening two games.

They now have a three week wait before heading for Kildare on March 7th.

GAA - ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Donegal: Paul Durcan; James Keaney (1-0); Neil McGee; Karl Lacey; Anthony Thompson; Frank McGlynn; Kevin Cassidy; Neil Gallagher; Barry Monaghan (0-1); Conall Dunne (1-0); David Walsh (0-1); Stephen Griffin (0-2); Colm McFadden (0-4, 2f); Michael Murphy (1-3, 3f); Adrian Hanlon. SUBS: Michael Maguire for Keaney (57 mins); Eddie Kelly for Murphy (59 mins); Fergal McNulty for Dunne (63 mins); Gareth Concarr for Hanlon (63 mins); Mark McGowan for McGlynn (67 mins).

Laois: Conor Gorman; John Scully; Cathal Ryan; Padraig McMahon; Darren Strong; Mark Timmons; Colm Begley (0-1); Brendan Quigley; Cathal Óg Greene; Colm Coss; Paul Lawlor; Niall Donohoe; MJ Tierney (0-1, 1f); Donal Kingston (0-2); Daithi Carroll (0-1). SUBS: Donal Miller for Coss (half-time); Ross Munnely for Carroll (50 mins); Diarmuid O'Flaherty for Lawlor (62 mins); Marty Dowling for Gorman (63 mins).

Referee: Michael Duffy (Sligo).

Match Stats

Donegal/Laois

Goals	3/0
Points	11/5
Wides	7/10
45s	1/1
Short Efforts	2/1
Frees awarded	33/25
Frees scored	5/1
Yellow cards	3/2
Red cards	0/0

Division 2 Results

SATURDAY

Down 0-12 Meath 0-08
Tipperary 0-08 Kildare 1-17

SUNDAY

Donegal 3-11 Laois 0-05
Armagh 2-19 Westmeath 0-08

The Game at a Glance

MAN OF THE MATCH

Contenders all in green and gold with Laois largely anonymous in a one-sided game. Karl Lacey, Barry Monaghan, Conall Dunne and Michael Murphy all worked hard for the cause. Captain Kevin Cassidy was making his 100th appearance in the county colours yesterday and with the added limelight of his big landmark the Gaith Dobhair man didn't disappoint.

TURNING POINT

Such was the one-way procession that it was, the game didn't 'turn', though Conall Dunne's tenth minute goal appeared to knock whatever stuffing they had out of Laois before they could even get going.

THE WHISTLER

Michael Duffy and his umpires provided a few comedic and peculiar calls yesterday, with MJ Tierney's clear first-half point being waved wide before being confirmed as a score at the break. In the second-half, an umpire signalled Laois point that was well wide, but it wasn't given.

In general play, Duffy was pretty fussy and the Sligo official drew a degree of frustration from the home support over the 70 minutes.

TERRACE TALK

Donegal are in a decent place right now, with an unbeaten start to 2010, a McKenna Cup and two wins from two in the League to their name.

But manager John Joe Doherty was keen to stress that the bigger days are to come - and with Kildare, Meath, Armagh and Down on the horizon in the League, it remains to be seen how successful Division 2 will prove to be for Tir Chonaill.

Kildare in Newbridge will be a big test in their next outing, and maybe real assessment of the team and squad can begin in March, with little to be read into so far this year

GAA - ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Kildare prove too strong for lacklustre Donegal

DONEGAL 1-17
KILDARE 1-09

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY AT ST CONLETH'S PARK PHOTOS BY DAVID MAHER/SPORTSFILE

DONEGAL crashed to a first defeat of 2010 in emphatic style yesterday, as John Joe Doherty's men were on the wrong-end of an eight-point margin in a one-sided affair at chilly Newbridge.

From start to finish, Donegal were second best in all the key sectors as Kildare marched to a vital two points and send Donegal back to the drawing board ahead of a meeting with Down on Saturday night.

Kildare led by six after a disappointing first-half, with the Kieran McGeeney - that old nemesis of the green and gold from Armagh - managed outfit unlucky not to be more ahead having come close to rattling the Donegal net again.

Donegal's goal had more than a stroke of good fortune about it. Stephen Griffin's attempt at a point fell short of the target, but Kildare keeper Thomas Corley made a hash of the catch, with David Walsh haring into the squad. While the Naomh Brid didn't appear to get a touch at first glance from the stand, it was said in the Donegal camp after that the credit for the strike went to the centre forward.

That had brought Donegal back into the game, but really only on the scoreboard. On the field, Kildare still controlled and the Leinster men fin-

ished the first-half well to lead by six.

In the second-half they continued to assert their physical presence, strong running and a good work ethic against something of a lethargic looking Donegal, with the return of John Doyle key to the win.

The Allenwood clubman was back in the frame yesterday having served a suspension for his part in an ugly altercation in an ill-tempered O'Byrne Cup game against Laois in January.

Sigerson Cup winner Michael Boyle was included in the Donegal starting XV, a week on from his triumph in the

prized College's competition with DCU. The Termon man was in for a first start in the county colours for 2010, while the inclusion of Urney's Fergal McNulty was the second switch made by John Joe Doherty from the team that beat Laois in Ballyshannon three weeks' ago.

Though Michael Murphy got Donegal off the mark, with a first minute free he won off Damien Hendy, the visitors struggled greatly with the pace of the game in the first-half, as Kildare began much the brighter - and Murphy's early score was the only time Donegal were ahead over the 70 minutes.

The roaming James Kavanagh levelled matters up with a lovely sweeping point in the third minute and from there the Lilywhites began to gradually up the tempo and take control of things.

Two each from John Doyle and Karl Ennis had the hosts 0-5 to 0-1 ahead by the 18th minute and two minutes lat-

er things got even worse for the Tir Chonaill men as Kildare broke for the opening goal.

Doyle made the initial break from centrefield, feeding Ennis, who got the better of Neil McGee before delivering a dangerous ball across the edge of the Donegal square, where Gary White was lurking. White took possession and firmly rolled the ball low into Michael Boyle's net.

Match Stats

Donegal/Kildare

Goals	1/1
Points	9/17
Wides	11/9
45s	3/1
Frees awarded	26/22
Frees scored	4/4
Short efforts	3/2
Yellow cards	2/1
Red cards	0/0

pulled straight out of the fortuitous drawer. Stephen Griffin's pop at the posts dropped short and looked to be a routine catch for Thomas Corley in the Kildare goal, but with David Walsh racing into his path the ball slipped through his grasp and into the net - it was noted later that Walsh had got a deft touch just to make the score certain.

Kildare finished the half the stronger, though, with a point by sub Leo McLoone their only other Donegal score of the half. Two from the returned and refreshed John Doyle and Pdraig O'Neill's first of the afternoon left Kildare 1-8 to 1-2 leaders at the break and left the Donegal bench with quite a bit of pondering to do at the interval.

Colm McFadden reduced the margin early in the second-half, but Doyle and Dermot Earley extended the Kildare lead - one that would have been greater only for Boyle denying Earley with a fine reflex save.

Two in a row for Donegal followed with Walsh and Murphy (free) on target, only for Kildare to really seize the initiative in the final 20 minutes. McGeeney's men hit four in a row, with Doyle, O'Neill, Daryl Flynn and Donnelly all on target as the gap widened to nine.

Murphy was denied a goal after Adrian Hanlon's quick thinking put him in. However, Corley made up for his first-half misdemeanour by making a fine stop.

By that stage the game was over as a contest though, and while McFadden, Hanlon and Murphy, twice, regis-

tered for Donegal in the final ten minutes, Kildare saw Donnelly, Heffernan and Lynch split the sticks.

While Doyle was the star of the show for the hard-working hosts, Dermot Earley, Daryl Flynn and Pdraig O'Neill were among the others to impress and on a day to forget for Donegal Gaoth Dobhair duo Neil McGee and Kevin Cassidy were the better performers.

Donegal: Michael Boyle; James Keeney, Neil McGee, Karl Lacey; Anthony Thompson, Frank McGlynn, Kevin Cassidy; Neil Gallagher, Barry Monaghan; Fergal McNulty, David Walsh (0-1), Stephen Griffin (1-0); Colm McFadden (0-2, 1f), Michael Murphy (0-4, 3f), Conall Dunne. SUBS: Leo McLoone (0-1) for McNulty (25 mins); Eoin Waide for Keeney (47 mins); Adrian Hanlon (0-1) for Walsh (54 mins); Barry Dunnion for McGlynn (61 mins).

Kildare: Thomas Corley; Hugh McGrillen, Damien Hendy, Emmett Bolton; Keith Cribben, Mark Scanlon, Gary White (1-0); Daryl Flynn (0-1), Dermot Earley (0-1); David Whyte, Pdraig O'Neill (0-2), John Doyle (0-6, 2f); Ken Donnelly (0-3), James Kavanagh, Karl Ennis (0-2, 2f). SUBS: Willie Heffernan (0-1) for Ennis (58 mins); Ronan Sweeney for Whyte (59 mins); Hugh Lynch (0-1) for Earley (63 mins); Cillian Brennan for Doyle (65 mins); Michael Foley for Whyte (70 mins).

Referee: Michael Collins (Cork).

GAA - ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Late points seal it for Down, as Donegal slip to second loss

DONEGAL 0-11
DOWN 0-13

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY
AT SEAN MACCUMHAILL PARK
PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

INJURY-TIME points from John Clarke and sub Peter Fitzpatrick consigned Donegal to a second defeat in a row, as table-toppers Down departed Sean MacCumhail Park with the points on Saturday night.

The Mourne County had overturned a slender deficit at the interval to put in a big shift in the third quarter to lead by four points as the game headed for its final fifteen minutes.

With the tie slipping rapidly from their grasp, Donegal hit back with Colm McFadden (3) and Anthony Thompson raising the flags to leave it coolly poised at 0-11 apiece in the dying moments.

It was there that Down stole the show, however, biting late to bag the win. The impressive Danny Hughes won a throw-up at centrefield and the ball was worked to the equally impressive John Clarke to find the angles from out the left.

There was still time for another go, but it was Down who cracked the whip, with Stephen Kearney feeding sub Peter Fitzpatrick for the insurance point that stretched their lead at the summit.

Last week, Donegal's stock was considerably dented as Kieran McGeeney's Kildare ran out eight-point winners on a disastrous afternoon in Newbridge. And having called

on his men to up the ante during the week, Tir Chonaill manager John Joe Doherty showed five changes to his starting line-up for Saturday night's visit of the Mourne.

Killybegs man Shane Boyle was handed a first ever senior intercounty start. The Sligo IT student had been named on the McKenna Cup panel, but was college tied in January - but the 2006 Ulster Minor winning full-back replaced James Keeney at corner back on Saturday for his senior debut.

Michael Maguire of Naomh Columba came in for Frank McGlynn allowing for a re-jig of the half-back line that saw Anthony Thompson move in to centre-back, while Paul Durcan reclaimed the number one shirt, as Edward Kelly and Adrian Hanlon returned to the attack.

James McCartan brought his table toppers to the Twin Towns on the back of a stalemate with Tipperary six days earlier and the Mourne boss made two switches in personnel - Danny Hughes and Stephen Kearney were both drafted into the forward line.

However, the visitors blasted four wides in the first ten minutes and indeed took 18 minutes to open their account. By that stage Donegal were two points to the good. Michael Murphy got Donegal off and running with a sixth-minutes free won by Adrian Hanlon and big Neil Gallagher doubled the home side's tally six minutes later when he drove over from 20 metres.

Former Australian Rules player Martin Clarke, who has just returned from a spell Down Under with the oval ball game, ended Down's early famine with a well-struck free off the ground in the 18th minute.

But within a minute, Donegal restored their two-point advantage as to-fist over from the end-line. Murphy threatened to wreck havoc soon after when he was on the end of a McFadden ball into the mixer - but Daniel McCartan punted clear as the Glenswilly man sized up the target.

Adrian Hanlon was next to find himself in an advanced position, but after being freed by Karl Lacey down the left flank, the Dungloe man opted to have a pop rather than look for the ball inside to the open Murphy, though he saw his shot deflect off a defender for a '45'.

Down reeled off three points on the spin by the half-hour to move ahead. The Clarke brothers combined to set up Benny Coulter for his first of the day and parity was restored when Danny Hughes took receipt from Kalum King and swung over.

Down hit the front when Ambrose Rodgers got his angles to perfection from way out the stand side, but by the changeover Donegal had moved ahead again.

Colm McFadden got Donegal back on level terms with a brilliantly-executed 45-metre free and in the dying seconds of the half wing-back Michael Maguire sweetly struck over from distance to make it 0-5 to 0-4 in the hosts' favour as they parted for the refreshments.

In a lively third quarter, Donegal were second best and it was here that Down perhaps won the game. Wing-back Kevin McKernan from play and a 45-metre free nonchalantly knocked over by Clarke turned the tide their way within five minutes of the restart.

Murphy converted a free, but quick-fire points off the boots of Coulter and McComiskey (free) put Down two up. Although Neil Gallagher fired over his second of the day, Down blasted three in as many minutes to take command.

John Clake led the way with a fantastic individual score, that was followed by Clarke and Coulter doing their stuff. To their credit, Donegal hit back with McFadden hitting three to compliment a good score by Thompson.

The hosts also had a goal chance in that spell, but sub Gareth Concarr was denied by a good stop by McVeigh having been teed up by Murphy, while at the other end Paul Durcan did well to pluck from the clutches of Coulter on the edge of the square to deny the Mayobridge man a certain goal.

But Down wouldn't be denied at the finish as Clarke and Fitzpatrick ensured they departed with the maximum rewards.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Shane Boyle, Neil McGee, Karl Lacey; Michael Maguire (0-1), Anthony Thompson (0-1), Kevin Cassidy; Neil Gallagher (0-2), Barry Monaghan; David Walsh, Conall Dunne, Edward Kelly; Colm McFadden (0-4, 2f), Michael Murphy (0-3, 1f), Adrian Hanlon. **SUBS:** Gareth Concarr for Hanlon (51 mins); Leo McLoone for Kelly (51 mins); Barry Dunnington for Dunne (65 mins).

Down: Brendan McVeigh; Daniel McCartan, Brendan McArdle, Damien Rafferty; Kevin McKernan (0-1), James Colgan, Conor Garvey; Ambrose Rodgers (0-1), Kalum King; Danny Hughes (0-1), Martin Clarke (0-3, 2f), Paul McComiskey (0-1, 1f); Stephen Kearney, John Clarke (0-2), Brendan Coulter (0-3). **SUBS:** Peter Fitzpatrick (0-1) for King (64 mins); Conor Lavery for McComiskey (66 mins)

Referee: Pat McEnaney (Monaghan).

Match Stats

Donegal/Down

Goals	0/0
Points	11/13
Wides	8/11
45s	2/0
Frees awarded	20/19
Frees scored	3/3
Short efforts	4/1
Yellow cards	2/4
Red cards	0/0

GAA - ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Far from convincing, as Donegal do just enough in Tipp



DONEGAL.....1-09
TIPPERARY.....2-05



BY CHRIS MCNULTY
AT SEMPLE STADIUM
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL
O'DONNELL

IT'S BILLED as the 'Stadium of Legends' but it was far from legendary stuff on Saturday night at Semple Stadium, as Donegal just did enough to see off Tipperary, get back to winning ways and stave off the cold hand of relegation.

Seven points from the deadly Michael Murphy and a second-half goal from sub Stephen Griffin helped Donegal to victory, but it was far from either convincing or impressive.

Donegal's decision making was again called into question throughout the contest, while Tipp could have got more on another night, with eleven wides marked beside their name on the night.

Donegal weren't cruising, but were well on their way when they led 0-5 to 0-1 after 20 minutes, with four early Murphy points key - only for a gift-wrapped present being delivered to the hosts as Stephen Hahessy's '45' was allowed sail all the way to the net on 22 minutes.

Griffin's goal arrived on 48, but Donegal failed to register in the final quarter and when a second Tipp goal came 13 minutes from time it made for a neat finish - one in which Donegal just held out.

The win brings Donegal back into contention at the top end of Division Two and saves their fears over making the drop to Division Three - though with games against Meath and Armagh on the immediate horizon, that won't be easy on current form, which is suggesting trouble ahead for the green and gold.

With defeats in each of their last two games leaving Donegal glancing slightly over their shoulders, a 'must-win' air had crept into the thoughts during the week.

From the side that was beaten in the dying minutes of last week's contest with Championship opponents Down in Ballybofey, John Joe Doherty posted two changes.

Brendan Boyle and Barry Dunnion's respective paths back from injury had been laboured, but the duo were among the starting fifteen heartily welcomed into the eerily-quiet Semple Stadium on Saturday night Boyle replacing Barry Monaghan at centrefield and Barry Dunnion taking up station at wing-forward in place of Edward Kelly.

Just three minutes in, the collective heart of the travelling support was in the mouth when a free from George Hannigan (a nephew of former St Eunan's and Donegal star, John Hannigan) found the somewhat disbelieving Barry Grogan in acres of space after Karl Lacey totally lost flight of the ball. One-on-one with Paul Durcan, Grogan should have done better than draw a good save from the Donegal netminder.

From the resulting Donegal attack, the visitors went ahead with Michael Murphy knocking over after getting the better of Curran.

The Glenswilly man curled over a free six minutes later to restore the Donegal advantage after centre-forward Philip Austin levelled it up, though his hit from 30 metres was al-

Match Stats

Tipperary/Donegal

Goals	2/1
Points	5/9
Wides	11/6
45s	1/1
Frees awarded	30/27
Frees scored	2/6
Short efforts	2/3
Yellow cards	2/3
Red cards	0/0

most saved by Durcan.

By the quarter-hour mark Murphy, and Donegal, were 0-4 to 0-1 up. After doing well to power past Curran and slot over from Barry Dunnion's arrowed delivery, the young Glenswilly man won and pointed a 20-metre free.

David Walsh and Anthony Thompson combined to set up Colm McFadden who did well to swing over off the trusted left peg to put Donegal four ahead - only for disaster to strike on 22 minutes.

Tipp were awarded a '45' and the hosts were right back in the mix as corner forward Stephen Hahessy's effort sailed in over the head of Durcan - who opted to come from his line, only to misjudge the situation and be left stranded, watching in horror as the ball bounced over the line.

The Four Masters man almost had another blip when he met a free from Hahessy, though this time he recovered to knock it to safety and Donegal led by two (0-6 to 1-1) at the break thanks to a stoppage-time free from McFadden.

Michael Murphy stretched what was a two-point lead, when he fired over his sixth point of the day with an early free in the second-half, but the growing nerves were evident as Donegal appeared to lose their way - and points from Costigan and Coen brought Tipp back to within a point.

But Donegal got the goal they craved on 48 minutes. Gallagher made the initial break, threading it to Murphy, who did well to win the ball and find McFadden.

The St Michael's man might have been expected to shoot, but instead a fine angled chip picked out Stephen Griffin, and the half-time sub danced past Fitzgerald and slotted into the net.

Two frees by Murphy pulled Donegal six clear, but Tipp managed to haul themselves back again with another three-pointer on 57 minutes. Sub John Cagney's effort at the sticks was falling short of its intended target, but Robbie Costigan raced forward from centre-back and beat Durcan to the dropping ball to palm home.

Barry Grogan curled over a free soon after and Tipp's tails were up, as a big final ten minutes was teed up. Grogan scored another free in stoppage time to bring it to the minimum, but Donegal nervously clung by their fingertips to the close.

Tipperary: Paul Fitzgerald; Ciaran McDonald, Niall Curran, Paddy Codd; Christopher Aylward, Robbie Costigan (1-1), Ciaran McGrath; George Hannigan, Hugh Coghlan; Peter Acheson, Philip Austin (0-1), Brian Mulvihill; Stephen Hahessy (1-0, 1 '45'), Brian Coen (0-1), Barry Grogan (0-2, 2f)
SUBS: Sean Carey for Mulvihill (half-time) John Cagney for Hahessy (48 mins) Ryan O'Dwyer for Austin (63 mins) Derek Bourke for McGrath (64 mins) Alan Rockett for Coghlan (66 mins)

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Shane Boyle, Neil McGee, Karl Lacey; Michael Maguire, Anthony Thompson, Kevin Cassidy; Neil Gallagher, Brendan Boyle; David Walsh, Conall Dunne, Barry Dunnion; Colm McFadden (0-2, 1f), Michael Murphy (0-7, 5f), Adrian Hanlon. **SUBS:** Frank McGlynn for Maguire (half-time); Stephen Griffin (1-0) for Hanlon (half-time); Eoin Waide for B.Boyle (44 mins); Leo McLoone for Dunnion (64 mins).

Referee: Michael Collins (Cork).

Allianz National Football League

Another win for Donegal but work to be done

Donegal 1-12
 Meath 0-10

Report: Peter Campbell
 Photos: Conor McGonagle

Donegal kept their promotion hopes on track with a fourth win of the campaign, this time against Meath in MacCumhail Park, Ballybofey on Saturday night.

They again can thank Michael Murphy for a five-star performance, finishing with a tally of 1-6 and it was his goal early in the second half that put them on their way.

Donegal hit four points in the first seven minutes and four in the final six but in the 60 minutes in between they managed just four more in a performance that was like the curate's egg.

They were helped by a Meath side who were indisciplined and they finished with just thirteen players and were even lucky not to have a third player send off near the end.

After a good initial ten minutes they reverted to lateral short passing and at times in the final quarter it looked as if Meath had the extra men.

Donegal got off to a whirlwind start with three points inside five minutes, Colm McFadden pointing a free after a minute when Stephen Griffin was fouled. Michael Murphy added a second with a lovely dummy and then converted a free after a Meath player touched the ball on the ground.

Kevin Cassidy added a fourth, doing well initially in his new role in the half-forward line. Joe Sheridan pulled a point back for Meath but Michael Murphy won and pointed another free to increase the lead to four with just nine minutes

gone.

But then Donegal went back to their old ways, far too ponderous on the ball and apart from a good point from raiding Michael Maguire, Meath got into the game with points from Sheridan, Michael Burke and substitute Peadar Byrne.

Shane O'Rourke hit the point of the half four minutes from the break as the yellow card accumulation continued and Meath suffered the loss of a man on the break as Peadar Byrne received a second yellow (for a second foul on Karl Lacey).

However, they made little of the decision for Cian Ward to tie up the game with the final kick of the half from a free to leave it Donegal 0-6, Meath 0-6.

Just like the first half Donegal started the second period better with Michael Murphy cunningly winning a free after a minute for Colm McFadden to point.

It got better for the home side on 41 when a long ball from Brendan Boyle was fielded by Murphy and he turned and fired past Paddy O'Rourke in the Meath goal.

Referee Martin Sludden attracted the ire of the Donegal support when he blew for a mark for Neil Gallagher but then penalised him when he decided to play on.

Murphy was on the end of another pass from Lacey and pushed Donegal five clear with ten minutes gone in the second half.

However, Meath, never a team to give in, hit back with two points from corner-back Chris O'Connor and Mark Ward by the 49th minute. They were reduced to thirteen with eleven minutes left when a very high challenge by Brian Meade on Michael Murphy left referee Martin Sludden with little option.

Meath still kept going and points from James Queaney and Michael Burke had them back within a point but Donegal then came good in the final minutes with Michael Murphy easing the

worry and late points from

Conall Dunne, Murphy and David Walsh left them easy enough winners.

However, it could have been different had a Joe Sheridan fisted effort just go wide of the posts.

"I was impressed with a lot of things tonight. But obviously there would be loads of things also that we would not be happy with," said Donegal manager, John Joe Doherty.

We will go for the win (against Armagh) in our final game. We want to finish the league on a high

note and take whatever that means," said Doherty, who has had an eye on the championship for much of the year.

"At the end of the day, the league is the league. When the last ball is kicked there will not be a word about it. It's a matter of getting the best players ready for the championship," said Doherty.

Donegal: P Durcan; S Boyle, N McGee, K Lacey; M Maguire (0-1), A Thompson, F McGlynn; N Gallagher, B Boyle; B Dunnion, C Dunne (0-1), K Cassidy (0-1); C McFadden (0-2,2f), M Murphy (1-6,2f), S Griffin. Subs., D Walsh (0-1) for Dunnion 47; A Hanlon for Griffin 56; L McLoone for B Boyle 64

Meath: P O'Rourke; C O'Connor (0-1), N McKeigue, E Harrington; A Moyles, C McGuinness, M Burke (0-2); N Crawford, M Ward (0-1); S Kenny, S O'Rourke (0-1), O Lewis; C Ward (0-1), J Sheridan (0-2), S Bray. Subs., P Byrne (0-1) for McKeigue 12; G O'Brien for Bray ht; J Queaney (0-1,f) for C Ward 48

Referee: M Sludden (Tyrone)

Man of the match

Not for the first time this year Michael Murphy was Donegal's best player. He was impressive in the first half and his goal early in the second period put them on their way. Joe Sheridan had a good game for Meath while Neil McGee, Karl Lacey and Michael Maguire also did well for the winners.

Turning Point

The goal from Michael Murphy, superbly taken early in the second half, put Donegal on their way. Meath did get back within a point but by that stage they were down two men and struggled in the final ten minutes.

Ref watch

Not a good night for Tyrone official, Martin Sludden, who was much too fussy and was showing yellow cards at will. He flashed 11 in all as well as two reds for Meath. The reds were deserved but some of the yellow cards were harsh.

Allianz National Football League

Donegal given a footballing lesson by Armagh

Donegal 0-6
Armagh 2-16

Report: Peter Campbell
Photos: Conor McGonagle

Donegal were given a footballing lesson by Armagh as they romped to victory to clinch promotion to the top flight in perfect conditions at O'Donnell Park, Letterkenny.

The gap between the sides on the scoreboard was full measure as the Orchard county tore Donegal to shred, especially around midfield.

After experiencing the high of winning an Ulster U-21 title a few days earlier, the Donegal supporters left O'Donnell Park completely downcast. The red faces could have been attributed to the wonderful sunshine, but was more likely due to the embarrassment that they had witnessed.

Donegal will have to spend another year in Division Two and on the basis of this performance, they will have to improve greatly to remain in that Division next year, especially as they will have Derry, Tyrone, Sligo and Antrim as competitors, as well as Kildare, Meath and Laois.

The game was delayed by ten minutes to allow the big crowd get into the ground and it was obvious from very early that there was going to be only one outcome.

As it was some of the supporters were leaving inside minutes of the restart of the second half as Stevie McDonnell pointed 11 seconds into the new half.

They had watched an Armagh side outplay Donegal in the opening half to lead by 1-10 to 0-2, and but for some last gasp defending, it could have been much worse.

"We didn't expect it to be that easy and we should have been further ahead after the first ten minutes," said Armagh manager Paddy O'Rourke.

"The scores came today and we had a big spread of scores and that was the most pleasing thing for me. Too often in the league we have been relying on Stevie McDonnell for the scores, but today he played well but we had a big spread of scorers through the team.

Their superior fitness and hunger of the visitors was evident from the first whistle as they brushed aside a Donegal side that will have to a revamp if they are to make any headway in the forthcoming Ulster Championship.

The first Armagh goal came on 23 minutes, Steven McDonnell beating Paul Durcan to the punch from a Tony Kernan centre, came after Durcan and Neil McGee had deprived Brian Mallon of very good goal chances.

The home side had limited the damage in the first twenty minutes, trailing by 0-3 to 0-2, but after McDonnell's goal, the floodgates opened with seven different players getting on the scoresheet, among them defenders Andy Mallon, Paul Duffy and Ciaran McKeever.

Even on the stroke of half-time Kieran Toner had another goal chance, deprived by a last ditch save by Paul Durcan. Throughout the game half-forwards Aaron Kernan and Charlie Vernon were central to everything that Armagh did.

The Orchard men completely dominated the middle of the field, with four 'marks' in the opening half and Donegal U-21 star Michael Murphy looked a lonely figure up front, deprived of any form of supply.

The second-half brought no comfort to the home side as Armagh began to play with a swagger. Stevie McDonnell added a point

inside 11 seconds and they had five more different scorers before the final whistle was blown.

Donegal had brought in Rory Kavanagh at half-time but it would have taken a change of miraculous proportions to have turned the tide.

The second goal arrived on 44 minutes, Finian Moriarty running some 60m before planting the ball in the net.

From there to the finish it was a non-even and substitutes Ryan Henderson, Ronan Clarke, Joe Feeney and Malachy Mackin all got their names on the scoresheet, while Charlie Vernon spurned an open goal midway through the half.

For Donegal manager, John Joe Doherty, there was little to take out of the game. "Physically we were blown out of it. After the first ten minutes, Armagh blew us out of the water.

"We asked them at half-time to battle on and show some pride in the jersey. There was a different level of fitness in both camps and we'll have to look at that," said John Joe Doherty.

Donegal: P Durcan; F McGlynn, N McGee, K Lacey; M Maguire, A Thompson, K Cassidy; N Gallagher, E Kelly; R Wherity, C Dunne, B Dunnion; C McFadden, M Murphy (0-2,2f), A Hanlon (0-2,1f). Subs: D Walsh for Kelly 28; R Kavanagh (0-1) for McFadden; F McNulty for Wherity, both ht; S Griffin (0-1,f) for Murphy 46.

Armagh: P Hearty; A Mallon (0-1), B Donaghey, B Shannon; P Duffy (0-1), C McKeever (0-1), F Moriarty (1-0); J Lavery, K Toner; G Swift, A Kernan (0-1,f), C Vernon (0-2); B Mallon (0-2), S McDonnell (1-4,1f), T Kernan. Subs., M Mackin (0-1) for Lavery 45; J Feeney (0-1) for Swift 50; R Henderson (0-1) for T Kernan 56; R Clarke (0-1,f) for A Kernan 61; C Watters for B Mallon 65

Referee: J McQuillan (Cavan).

Man of the match

All the candidates had Armagh jerseys with Ciaran McKeever, Charlie Vernon, Aaron Kernan, Stevie McDonnell and Brian Mallon outstanding. The award goes to McDonnell who looked lively from start to finish and apart from his scoring, his distribution of the ball was a joy to watch.

Turning point

There weren't many that mattered. I suppose the opening goal from Stevie McDonnell when he beat Paul Durcan to the punch put them on their way, but one felt that the goal could have arrived at any time. After that score the result was never in doubt.

Ref watch

Donegal could hardly blame Joe McQuillan for the result but they would have been unhappy with the Cavan official in the first half, especially in the opening quarter when he seemed to penalise them harshly for illegal handpasses and also turned away some good shouts for frees. But overall, they will have to look elsewhere for some comfort as regards the performance.