

2011

Senior Football – Team manager: Jim McGuinness

Dr. Mc Kenna Cup.

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|------|-----------|------|
| 1 | 15 th Jan | MacCumhaill Park | Donegal | 0-14 | UUJ | 0-10 |
| 2 | 23 rd Jan | Healy Park | Tyrone | 1-13 | Donegal | 0-13 |
| 3 | 29 th Jan | MacCumhaill Park | Donegal | 0-07 | Fermanagh | 0-12 |
| | 29 th Jan Semi-final | Celtic Park | Derry | 2-14 | Antrim | 0-14 |
| | 9 th Feb Semi-final | Brewester Park | Tyrone | 2-11 | Cavan | 0-14 |
| | 5 th March Final | Morgan Athletic Grounds | Derry | 2-12 | Tyrone | 2-11 |

(Referee: Jimmy White)

Ulster Senior Football Championship

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|------------------|---------|------|---------|------|
| 4 | 15 th May | MacCumhaill Park | Donegal | 1-10 | Antrim | 0-07 |
| 5 | 12 th June | Cavan | Donegal | 2-14 | Cavan | 1-08 |
| 6 | 26 th June | Clones | Donegal | 2-06 | Tyrone | 0-09 |
| 7 | 17 th July Final | Clones | Donegal | 1-11 | Derry | 0-08 |
| 8 | 30 th July Qtr Final | Croke Park | Donegal | 1-12 | Kildare | 0-14 |
| | 21 st Aug. Semi-Final | Croke Park | Kerry | 1-20 | Mayo | 1-11 |
| 9 | 28 th Aug. Semi-Final | Croke Park | Dublin | 0-08 | Donegal | 0-06 |
| | 18 th Sept. All Ireland final | | Dublin | 1-12 | Kerry | 1-11 |

National League. Div 2

| | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------|------|---------|------|
| 10 | 5 th Feb | MacCumhaill Park | Donegal | 2-11 | Sligo | 1-14 |
| 11 | 19 th Feb | Omagh | Donegal | 1-10 | Tyrone | 0-06 |
| 12 | 27 th Feb | Letterkenny | Donegal | 0-08 | Kildare | 1-05 |
| 13 | 13 th March | Páirc Tailtean | Donegal | 0-15 | Meath | 0-09 |
| 14 | 19 th March | Celtic Park | Donegal | 2-18 | Derry | 2-12 |
| 15 | 3 rd April | Fr. Tierney Park | Donegal | 1-17 | Antrim | 1-08 |
| 16 | 10 th April | Portlaoise | Donegal | 1-11 | Laois | 1-15 |
| 17 | 24 th April Final | Croke Park | Donegal | 2-11 | Laois | 0-16 |

Final League Table: Division 2

| Pos | Team | P | W | L | D | F | A | Points |
|-----|----------------|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|--------|
| 1 | Donegal | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 111 | 87 | 10 |
| 2 | Laois | 7 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 116 | 93 | 10 |
| 3 | Derry | 7 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 108 | 110 | 10 |
| 4 | Tyrone | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 104 | 89 | 9 |
| 5 | Kildare | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 93 | 89 | 9 |
| 6 | Meath | 7 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 98 | 109 | 3 |
| 7 | Sligo | 7 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 101 | 111 | 3 |
| 8 | Antrim | 7 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 87 | 130 | 2 |

National League. Div 1

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------|------------|------|------|--------|------|
| 24 th April | Final | Croke Park | Cork | 0-21 | Dublin | 2-14 |
|------------------------|-------|------------|------|------|--------|------|

GAA - BARRETT SPORTS LIGHTING DR MCKENNA CUP SECTION A

Donegal get 2011 off to winning start

DONEGAL0-14
UUJ0-10

BY CHRIS MCNULTY IN BALLYBOFEY
PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

DONEGAL got both the defence of their Dr McKenna Cup title and the reign of Jim McGuinness as manager off to a winning start with a deserved four-point win over battling UUJ in a deluge at Sean MacCumhaill Park on Saturday night.

Heavy rain in the Twin Towns from Friday night and all day Saturday made for heavy going and with the driving rain and swirling wind in their faces for 70 minutes, conditions were far from ideal for this season-opening affair.

In fairness to the participants they served up a decent affair at a sparsely-populated MacCumhaill Park.

While it was hardly a contest that will live long in the memory, Donegal came out on top with a satisfactory display, in which Dermot Molloy's five points were the big difference.

Donegal led by three points at half-time (0-7 to 0-4) and with Leo McLoone, Karl Lacey and Adrian Hanlon all adding a brace of points to Molloy's handful, Donegal took the spoils.

While there were others to catch the eye, it was perhaps the performance of McLoone that warmed the

hearts most on a dreary night.

The Naomh Conaill man was named at centre-back, an unusual position for him of late given that he's been accustomed to playing in the forward lines, but a position in which, Jim McGuinness was quick to point out, he won two underage titles.

And in a Man of the Match display, McLoone - who pulled out of the county panel before last year's Championship - helped run the show from number six, his two points putting the icing on his cake.

McGuinness handed four players their first taste of senior intercounty football from the start with Peter Boyle (Aodh Ruadh), Kevin Mulhern (Cloughaneely), Luke Keeney (Four Masters) and Ryan McErlean (Naomh Colmcille) all in for a first senior start, while Conor Classon made his senior debut from the bench.

Goalkeeper Boyle, along with Mulhern was a member of last year's county U21 panel that reached the All Ireland final, while full forward McErlean helped Naomh Colmcille to Junior Championship glory in October and is one of this year's U21 squad to have been promoted to the senior ranks for the McKenna Cup, along with Keeney who started at wing-forward.

Mattie Donnelly and Ryan Bradley traded early frees before Donegal edged ahead through a sublime

score off Dermot Molloy's trusted left boot, the Glenties man excellently finishing after an intricate series of passes provided the chance.

The sides were level again soon after when Peter Hughes finished following a clever give-and-go between Ciaran McGinley and Diarmuid McNulty.

Karl Lacey clipped over neatly after getting on the end of Leo

McLoone's pass and debutant Luke Keeney made it a two-point game when he tapped over after latching onto a loose ball across his own defence by UUJ's Gerard McCartan.

Jason McAnulla, who is no stranger to Donegal having tagged out with Swilly Rovers in the Ulster Senior League a couple of seasons ago, brought the students to within the minimum with a fine 45-metre free against the breeze.

Four minutes later, Dermot Molloy restored Donegal's two-point advantage, tapping over a routine free, after Rory Kavanagh was brought down just when it looked as if the St Eunan's man might have got himself into a one-on-one scenario with Ciaran Boyce.

The margin was out to three when McErlean crowned his first start with a point, finishing well after Molloy's '45 dropped short, and Adrian Hanlon added another, polishing off a neat Donegal move from 30 metres.

In stoppage time at the end of the

half, Caolan O'Boyle curled over a free, after Rory Kavanagh magnificently plucked a Mattie Donnelly free out of the drizzling sky, the Eunan's man timing his leap to perfection to deny the Trillic man.

Donnelly reduced the arrears at the start of the second-half, but three on the spin - the first a brilliant score by McLoone that was quickly followed by a brace from Molloy - soon had Donegal five up.

Ben O'Reilly and McAnulla brought UUJ back again, only for Donegal to respond with Lacey finishing off a move involving Cassidy and Hanlon, who scored Donegal's next point when a goal seemed certain.

The tricky Dungloe man rattled over after being played in by Cassidy but with Molloy free on the edge of the square, one point could easily have become three.

O'Neill and McAnulla, with his third of the day from distance, sent a reminder that UUJ would fight to the end, only for Molloy and McLoone to effectively seal the deal, with a late O'Boyle free mere consolation for the visitors.

Donegal: Peter Boyle; Paddy McGrath, Nel McGee, Frank McGlynn; Kevin Mulhern, Leo McLoone (0-2), Karl Lacey (0-2); Rory Kavanagh, Ryan Bradley (0-1, 1f); David Walsh, Dermot Molloy (0-5, 2f), Luke Keeney (0-1); Adrian Hanlon (0-2), Ryan McErlean (0-1), Barry Dunning. **SUBS:** Conor Classon for Bradley (34 mins); Kevin Cassidy for McGlynn (half-time); Frank McGlynn for Walsh (59 mins).

UUJ: Ciaran Boyce; Conor Galligan, Brendan Donaghy, Donal Morgan; Jason McAnulla (0-3, 1f), Colm Murney, Gerard McCartan; Emmett McGuckin, Joe Diver; Ciaran McGinley, Diarmuid McNulty, Peter Hughes (0-1); Caolan O'Boyle (0-2, 2f), Jason O'Neill (0-1), Mattie Donnelly (0-2, 1f). **SUBS:** Ben O'Reilly (0-1) for Diver (28 mins); Christy Young for McGuckin (35 mins); Eugene McVerry for McNulty (57 mins); Ryan Pickering for O'Neill (60 mins).

Referee: Jimmy Galligan (Cavan)

SPORT

www.donegaldemocrat.com

Barrett Sports Lighting Dr. McKenna Cup Section A

Understrength Donegal put up strong showing

Tyrone 1-13
Donegal 0-13

Report: Tom Comack
Photos: Brian McDaid

Donegal went down to Tyrone by three points in their eagerly awaited Dr. McKenna Cup encounter in Edendork, on Sunday afternoon.

But this was far from a disaster for an experimental Donegal against a very strong Red Hand selection that fielded ten of last summer's championship team.

But while the football for the time of year was of a high quality, the main talking point at the final whistle was the straight red cards picked up by Tyrone's Colm Cavanagh and Donegal's Neil McGee in separate incidents.

The red cards marred what was an otherwise entertaining and at times competitive encounter that had a good edge to it for most of the 70 minutes with a youthful Donegal giving the experienced O'Neill County plenty to think about.

With the National League around the corner both Cavanagh and McGee now face automatic bans that rules them out of their county's opening games in the League which gets underway the weekend after

Despite the game having an edge to it, both sendings off seemed on the harsh side. Cavanagh, who was first to go, got his marching orders when he got involved in a melee among a number of players while McGee was sent for an early shower for what looked no more than a late shoulder charge on Brian McGuigan.

They both now face automatic four weeks bans though Jim McGuinness did confirm afterwards that Donegal are going to appeal the decision.

A first half Mark Donnelly goal that had a hint of good fortune about it was all that divided the sides at the final whistle. Donnelly's goal came on 11 minutes after a he first timed a Martin Penrose strike to the net when it broke in the Donegal goalmouth. Penrose's effort for a point came back off the upright.

The goal propelled a rampant Tyrone into a 1-4 to 0-1 advantage after early points from Sean Cavanagh, McGuigan, Donnelly and Penrose.

And while Dermot Molloy added Donegal's second shortly after, the Red Hands, with Sean Cavanagh and Brian McGuigan on the levers, moved seven clear (1-6 to 0-2) by the end of the first quarter, Cavanagh and Davy Harte adding to the Tyrone tally.

Things were looking ominous at this stage for the visitors but in a remarkable turnaround driven by Karl Lacey, Rory Kavanagh and Kevin Cassidy, points from Leo McLoone, Colm McFadden, Odhran MacNiallais, Karl Lacey and two aniece from Daniel McLaughlin and

Dermot Molloy had Donegal back in the contest and their noses in front at half time 0-10 to 1-6.

Passages of the Donegal play in this period was a sight to behold as they carved open the Red Hand rearguard with a fast moving, slick passing brand of football with Leo McLoone, Daniel McLaughlin and Luke Keaney also playing a key role in the revival.

Despite being down to 14 men, Tyrone broke from the blocks in whirlwind fashion on the resumption. In the space of seven minutes points from Sean Cavanagh, Aidan Cassidy, Donnelly and Ryan McMenamin they had forged back into a three point, 1-10 to 0-10, lead.

With the breakneck pace of the first half talking its toll and the tempo of the game slowing dramatically Dermot Molloy and Martin Penrose traded points to leave it still a three

point game going into the final quarter.

In one last push Donegal through Ryan McErlean and Colm McFadden cut the margin to a single point before Brian McGuigan and Aidan Cassidy rounded off the scoring to give the Red Hands their three point margin.

The game, which had been fixed for Healy Park, was moved to the East Tyrone venue when the Omagh ground was deemed unplayable due to frozen pitch following a noon pitch inspection.

The game also marked Mickey Harte's return to the Red Hands dugout six days after the funeral

of his daughter Michaela Harte McAreavey following her tragic murder while on her honeymoon in Mauritius.

The Tyrone boss was greeted by Jim McGuinness on his arrival on the pitch with a handshake and a warm round of applause from the 2,000 or so supporters in attendance.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee, Kevin Mulhern; Luke Keaney, Leo McLoone (0-1), Kevin Cassidy; Rory Kavanagh (0-1), Conor Classon; Daniel McLaughlin (0-2), Dermot Molloy (0-3, 3f), Odhran MacNiallais (0-1); Karl Lacey (0-2), Ryan McErlean (0-1), Colm McFadden

(0-2). Subs: Adrian Hanlon for O. MacNiallais (40); Frank McGlynn for R. Kavanagh inj (45); Odhran MacNiallais for D. McLaughlin (67).

Tyrone: Johnny Curran; Aidan McCrory, Cathal McCarron, Martin Swift; Davy Harte (0-1), Declan Carlin, Ryan McMenamin (0-1); Aidan Cassidy (0-2), Sean Cavanagh (0-3,3f); Colm Cavanagh, Brian McGuigan (0-2), Ciaran Girvan; Martin Penrose (0-2,1f), Enda McGinley, Mark Donnelly (1-2). Subs: Kevin Hughes for C. Girvan (h/t); Patrick McNiece for M. Donnelly (56).

Referee: Joe McQuillan (Cavan)

Dr McKenna Cup Section A

Donegal's youngsters down against Fermanagh

Donegal0-7
Fermanagh0-12

Alan Foley

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Photographs: Conor McGonagle

Donegal's grip on the Dr McKenna Cup slipped on Saturday night when their youthful side went down by five points to Fermanagh in Ballybofey but manager Jim McGuinness will not be losing sleep over the result.

Having won the competition in each of the last two seasons, Donegal went into the game requiring the minimum of a four-point winning margin to eliminate Cavan from the perch of best runners-up.

However, with more important matters looming, starting with the beginning of the National Football League against Sligo this coming Saturday, there were few tears spilt at a chilly MacCumhaill Park as Fermanagh took the points.

The Dr McKenna Cup has been frustrating one for the respective managers, both of whom are in their first year in charge. McGuinness had to make a plea to the Ulster Council to alter the complexion of their panel, while John O'Neill's Fermanagh endured four postponements before finally getting their campaign off with a draw against University of Ulster Jordanstown at the 3G facility at Cavan's Breffni Park last weekend. They followed that up with a 2-11 to 0-11 loss against Tyrone at Brewster Park on Wednesday.

McGuinness, having been granted something of a reprieve during the week when he was allowed to shuffle his pack, fielded an extremely young side. Double-jobbing the posts of senior and U-21 manager, only Kevin Cassidy, Frank McGlynn, Adrian Hanlon and Marty Boyle will not form part of the latter panel that begins the defence of the Ulster title in March against Antrim.

In all, there were seven starting debutants in the Donegal colours - Thomas McKinley, Eamonn Doherty, Danny Curran, Ollie Doherty, Peter McNelis, Jamie Doherty and Marty Boyle. And although McGuinness's tenure with the seniors is still only taking baby steps, he has worked longer with the younger generation. There was plenty of commitment in a claustrophobic first half.

"It was not a great performance and we made a lot of mistakes in the course of the game," McGuinness said. "But we had made a lot of changes from last week and fielded a very young

and experimental side. In fairness to some of the young lads they did well and I thought Jamie Doherty in particular was very good for a player having his first senior outing."

Paul McGrath gave Fermanagh the lead with a free, before Marty Boyle scored a fine point from an angle before Doherty from Letterkenny Gaels knocked over - after taking a couple of range-finders beforehand - from centre-forward. McGrath's second score of the evening tied things up, before James Connolly edged the visitors in front. Paul Ward scored twice, from a free and from play.

Although Donegal defended diligently, they were losing centre-field and without the likes of a Michael Murphy or a Dermot Molloy in the full-forward line, the ball in seldom stuck and that gave Fermanagh a base to work off.

Centre-back Barry Mulrone was the driving force and supplemented the attack with alarming frequency at a time in the game when Donegal's ventures forward were intermittent at best, although Adrian Hanlon did pull one back with the last kick of the half. But for poor shooting, though, Fermanagh would have been more than just the two points in front at 0-5 to 0-3.

Donegal, who lost Marty Boyle with what appeared to be a hamstring injury before half-time, which saw Karl Lacey introduced, added a little more experience at the interval when Ryan Bradley and Barry Dunion came in.

However, although Donegal looked a little sturdier, it was Fermanagh that continued in a more positive vein in a fruitful third quarter. They posted four of the first five second half points with Ward, McGrath and a brace from substitute Tomas Corrigan, all after Hanlon opened the scoring in the second 35 minutes and that left Fermanagh 0-9 to 0-4 in front.

The deficit, though, could have been even worse for Donegal when a slack square ball from Lacey was intercepted by Connolly, whose drive brought an excellent save from teenage goalkeeper Peter Boyle.

Donegal rallied a little as the clock bore down, with Jamie Doherty and Hanlon scoring points and Lacey too, but another Fermanagh replacement, Ciaran Flaherty gave O'Brien his first win as manager and Ward's point was at a stage when the scattered attendees were already headed for the gates.

For McGuinness and his panel, the early season sideshow is out of the way before the more serious business gets underway this week.

"It is not the end of the world that we lost but to run a fairly strong Fermanagh was not so bad either," McGuinness added. "But with so many injuries and knock we were not putting a lot of emphasis on this game. It was more a case of putting it behind us and moving on to next week and Sligo in the league. That is a far more important game and far more important to be right for it."

"We rested a number of the seniors at the start tonight like Karl Lacey and Neil McGee because they were carrying knocks and we did not risk Rory Kavanagh at all. But they all should be fine for next Saturday night and that is the important game."

Donegal: Peter Boyle; Thomas McKinley, Eamonn Doherty, Frank McGlynn; Luke Keaney, Danny Curran, Kevin Cassidy; Ollie Doherty, Conor Classon; Peter McNelis, Jamie Doherty (0-2), Odhran MacNiallais; Adrian Hanlon (0-3, 2f), Ryan McErlean, Marty Boyle (0-1). Subs: Karl Lacey (0-1) for M Boyle (21), Barry Dunion for McKinley, Ryan Bradley for O Doherty (36), Paddy McGrath for McGlynn (55), Neil McGee for Classon (57).

Fermanagh: Fegal Murphy; Peter Sherry, Barry Owens, Michael Jones; Paul McCusker, Barry Mulrone, Tommy McElroy; Hugh Brady, John Melarkey; Paul McGrath (0-3, 1f), Kevin Cosgrove, Niall Cassidy; Ciaran Leonard, Paul Ward (0-4, 1f), James Connolly (0-2). Subs: Conor Quigley for P Sherry (20), Thomas Corrigan (0-2, 1f) for Leonard (42), Ciaran Flaherty (0-1) for Cosgrove (47).

Referee: Martin McErlean (Derry).

Dull day delivers Ulster win

DONEGAL1-10
ANTRIM0-07

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY
AT MACCUMHAILL PARK
PHOTOS BY DECLAN DOHERTY

DONEGAL chalked up a first Ulster Championship win in four years, and finally laid to rest the ghosts of three previous home defeats in Ballybofey yesterday as Jim McGuinness' men came out on the right side of a drab contest with Antrim.

The home side never looked in danger of losing a scrappy affair that was in keeping with the atmosphere of the day.

Donegal were leading 0-6 to 0-3 after a poor first-half that had just two points on the board inside the first 22 minutes.

They hit four in a row after Antrim had got the first point of the second-half, but went 18 minutes without scoring until Mark McHugh's late, late goal took any remaining doubts out of the fixture.

Just 7,385 fans were in attendance for the first Championship game of 2011 on Irish soil, but the day lacked the buzz usually brought by Championship Sunday. From somewhere deep within the dark clouds that rested over the Finn, the paltry crowd waited for something to shine through. A chink of light that might have confirmed that Championship had arrived.

A strong crossfield wind did little to assist either team, but plenty to hinder both. A cautious approach by both teams, built on winning ball in their defence and breaking out in the counter-attack, made for a somewhat claustrophobic environment at times.

Right at the end, though, Donegal struck a dagger through the Saffrons. Kevin Rafferty fed Mark McHugh and the young Kilcar man breezed away from Tony Scullion before cracking a

Match Stats

DONEGAL/ANTRIM

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Goals | 1/0 |
| Points | 10/7 |
| Wides | 8/8 |
| 45s | 1/1 |
| Frees awarded | 19/22 |
| Frees scored | 4/3 |
| Short efforts | 2/1 |
| Yellow cards | 2/2 |
| Red cards | 0/1 |
| Attendance | 7,385 |

sweetly-struck low effort beyond Sean O'Neill.

Winning is the only aim in the cauldron of the Championship and a first Ulster win since a last-gasp win over Armagh four years ago was a welcomed one for the home followers, while Antrim failed to even come near their surprise win of two years ago and a late red card for Mark Dougan for what can best be described as a disgraceful elbow on Karl Lacey along with McHugh's goal sent them home with little to be cheerful about.

They managed to snuff out the threat of Colm McFadden and Michael Murphy for large periods, with the duo limited to four points one from play between them. Murphy was forced to forage deep for ball, but with a distinct lack of a cutting edge in their own attack, Antrim never looked likely victors.

Colm McFadden got Donegal off the board with a second-minute free, but Antrim were level when Kevin Niblock brilliantly curled over a free of his own.

Both sides squandered a few good chances and it wasn't until the 23rd minute that Donegal scored the game's next point, Ryan Bradley firing



Donegal supporters at Sunday's game against Antrim.

over a fine effort on the stand side.

Cunningham got his angles right with a free soon after, but Donegal hit four of the final five points of the half to move three ahead. Adrian Hanlon superbly found the range after Kavanagh and Cassidy combined following good defensive work by McGlynn and Lacey.

Another well-taken point by Bradley followed a Murphy free and after Cunningham reduced the arrears Dermot Molloy put Donegal three ahead (0-6 to 0-3) at the interval.

Tomas McCann scored the first point of the second-half just a minute after the re-start, but it would be the 64th minute before the visitors would next register. In that time, Donegal hit four of their own, with McFadden, McHugh and two Murphy frees on the mark.

Ten minutes into the half, a magnificent block by Neil McGee denied

Niblock a goal, with the Gaoth Dobhair man brilliantly diverting his effort away from goal.

Donegal introduced teenage sensation Patrick McBrearty for the final 17 minutes after he had played for the county minors earlier in the afternoon. Mark Dougan and McCann pulled Antrim back to with four just when it seemed as if Donegal might run away with it.

After sub Dougan was sent to the line for throwing a loose elbow at Lacey, McHugh pounced with a classy finish and give the scoreboard a look that seemed to accurately tell the afternoon's tale.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Karl Lacey, Neil McGee, Paddy McGrath; Frank McGlynn, Kevin Cassidy, Anthony Thompson; Rory Kavanagh, Martin McElhinney; Mark McHugh (1-1), Dermot Molloy (0-1), Ryan Bradley (0-2);

Adrian Hanlon (0-1), Michael Murphy (0-3, 3f), Colm McFadden (0-2, 1f). SUBS: Marty Boyle for Thompson (20 mins); Michael Hegarty for Molloy (53 mins); Patrick McBrearty (53 mins); Kevin Rafferty for McElhinney (57 mins); Daniel McLaughlin for Bradley (65 mins).

Antrim: Sean O'Neill; Kevin O'Boyle, Richard Johnson, Colin Brady; Tony Scullion, Justin Crozier, Anto Healey; Michael McCann, Aodhan Gallagher; Conor Murray, Tomas McCann (0-2), Mark Sweeney; Paddy Cunningham (0-2, 1f), Brendan Herron, Kevin Niblock (0-2, 2f). SUBS: Kevin Brady for M.McCann (41 mins); Terry O'Neill for Sweeney (46 mins); Sean Burke for Herron (48 mins); Mark Dougan (0-1) for Cunningham (57 mins).

Referee: Maurice Deegan (Loais)

GAA ULSTER SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP QUARTER FINAL

DONEGAL2-14
 CAVAN1-08

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY
 AT BREFFNI PARK
 PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

DONEGAL are 70 minutes away from their first Ulster final appearance in five years after blowing away Cavan in soaking conditions at Kingspan Breffni Park yesterday.

The gulf at the end of the game was nine-points, but if truth be told a bigger winning margin wouldn't have flattered Donegal.

Teenager Patrick McBrearty scored a goal and three points in his first senior start, while Rory Kavanagh netted goal number two in the second-half to cap a routine win that was earned without skipper Michael Murphy.

The full-forward was sent off just 16 minutes in after Cavan midfielder Ray Cullivan was given his marching orders on 8 minutes. Cullivan was sent to the line after catching Kevin Cassidy in the chest with studs, but the dismissal of Murphy came in for closer scrutiny after the game.

Damien Reilly went to ground after the pair jostled close to the sideline, but replays suggested that Murphy had caught the Cavan defender with a shoulder. An appeal is to be lodged and the Donegal management appeared confident that they'd have their marksmen for Sunday-week's semi final clash with Tyrone.

Yesterday's performance won't

Match Stats

Donegal/Cavan

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Goals | 2/1 |
| Points | 14/8 |
| Wides | 7/5 |
| 45s | 2/2 |
| Frees awarded | 20/22 |
| Frees scored | 4/3 |
| Short efforts | 3/1 |
| Yellow cards | 5/2 |
| Red cards | 1/1 |
| Attendance | 9,325 |

beat Tyrone, but still there was plenty from which to take confidence from a Donegal point if view. In Murphy's absence, McBrearty rose to the challenge, the 17-year old Carrick VS student scoring 1-3 and Colm McFadden landing five points.

With Murphy in tandem, the trio could forge a devastating partnership making the Glenswilly man's hopeful inclusion against the Red Hands all the more important.

Donegal wasted a lot of ball yesterday, but they were certainly more direct yesterday than they had been against Antrim. Cavan just didn't have the firepower to put Donegal under the cosh, and with Neil McGee and Karl Lacey in particular standing tall in defence the Tir Chonaill men never looked in trouble.

When Murphy was given red, a sense of panic swept over Breffni

Park. Just five minutes later, the game's youngest player popped up with the perfect tonic, McBrearty firing low past James Reilly after Mark McHugh's line ball put Donegal in for the first time.

The nerves that seemed apparent were calmed and after Niall McDermott scored a free for the home side Donegal closed out the first-half with four points in a row.

A brilliant first-time strike by McFadden started the purple patch and the St Michael's man added a free soon after following a move started by an excellent rob by Neil McGee off McDermott. Kevin Cassidy got up for a point and then McBrearty's raking effort had the desired accuracy to put Donegal six up at the interval (1-6 to 0-3).

9,325 spectators turned up on a June afternoon that felt it had been borrowed from a dreary National League Sunday in February, those who opted against the €27 admission for the covered stand huddled under a kalidascope of umbrellas on the terrace.

Cavan fielded seven debutants yesterday, but just 20 seconds in it was they who put the first mark on the game, Johnston scoring from a free, after he was fouled by Kavanagh. Murphy levelled thing up before the red mist descended and Cullivan was first to walk, just eight minutes in, before Murphy followed soon after with Cavan now leading thanks to a McDermott free.

Donegal commendably responded

to the loss of their captain, McBrearty's goal setting them up for six-point interval lead.

Cavan scored just once in the third quarter of the game and that was in the second minute of the second period through Gearoid McKiernan with their first point from play.

Points from Rafferty and McFadden, though, had Donegal seven in front and when Rory Kavanagh was put clear by McFadden following a good break out of defence by Anthony Thompson the St Eunan's man made no mistake in slotting home past the helpless Reilly.

McBrearty's blistering speed got him away for a fabulous point to make it an eleven-point game.

A Johnston free stemmed the tide, but only briefly. Leo McLoone was given a warm reception as his recovery from a bad ankle break earlier in the year was completed in the 53rd minute as a replacement for Kevin Cassidy. 70 seconds after coming in, he was on target with a well-taken score, polishing a move involving McHugh and Lacey.

Donegal were twelve points ahead in the dying seconds, after McFadden, two by sub Dermot Molloy and a free by McBrearty kept the board ticking.

Scant consolation as it was, Cavan got a late goal, Michael Brennan blasting home after Durcan saved a penalty from the now frustrated Johnston, but by the time Marty Duffy awarded the penalty droves of Cavan folk were already filtering in-

to the drizzle, wondering where last evening's qualifier draw would send them.

Donegal fans mightn't been singing in the rain just yet, but it was a contented away support that drifted off, Clones jotted down in the destination book.

Cavan: James Reilly; Dermot Sheridan, Patrick Carroll, Dane O'Dowd; Niall Murray, John McCutcheon, Damien Reilly; Ray Cullivan, David Givney; Gearoid McKiernan (0-1), Michael Lyng, Fergal Flanagan (0-1); Niall McDermott (0-3, 2f), Eugene Keating, Sean Johnston (0-2, 2f). SUBS: Garrett Smith for Michael Lyng (40 mins); Mark McKeever for Reilly (42 mins); Thomas Corr for Sheridan (51 mins); Cian Mackey for Murray (57 mins); Michael Brennan (1-1) for Keating (62 mins).

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Karl Lacey, Neil McGee, Paddy McGrath; Marty Boyle, Anthony Thompson, Kevin Cassidy (0-1); Rory Kavanagh (1-0), Kevin Rafferty (0-1); Mark McHugh, Martin McElhinney, Ryan Bradley; Patrick McBrearty (1-3, 1f), Michael Murphy (0-1, 1f), Colm McFadden (0-5, 2f). SUBS: Michael Hegarty for McElhinney (30 mins); Leo McLoone (0-1) for Cassidy (53 mins); Dermot Molloy (0-2) for Bradley (56 mins); Neil Gallagher for Rafferty (59 mins); David Walsh for McHugh (66 mins).

Referee: Marty Duffy (Sligo).

SPORT

www.donegaldemocrat.com

Ulster Senior Championship semi-final

Donegal.....2-6
Tyrone0-9

Report: Peter Campbell

Photos: Conor McGonagle

Again it wasn't pretty but Donegal are back in an Ulster final after a five year absence thanks to a gritty performance against Tyrone in St. Tiernach's Park, Clones.

They had to call on all their reserves to get over the line with two goals in the final quarter turning a game that looked to be slipping from their grasp.

Those two scores were their only scores in the final 22 minutes of the semi-final and they know that they will have to improve considerably before they meet Derry on July 17th.

While the goals - from Colm Mc-

Fadden and Dermot 'Brick' Molloy - were well constructed and finished, Donegal are in the final thanks to a magnificent defensive display which saw all six defenders plus Paul Durcan in tremendous form.

Allied to that Mark McHugh had his best game in a Donegal shirt as extra cover, taking the ball out of defence time and time again.

But when the Donegal management do the video analysis of this game, they will be relieved that Tyrone did not take their shooting boots to Clones on Sunday. Otherwise, it would have been the Red Hands who would be preparing for the Ulster final. Martin Penrose was unable to start because of a 'flu bug and replacement freetaker Peter Harte had a bad day at the office.

The loss of Joe McMahon, through injury, 14 minutes into the second half was also a decisive factor as McMahon had the upper hand on a subdued Michael Murphy, who seemed to have the wrong studs as he slipped many times when gaining possession. Despite not being at his best, Murphy created both Don-

egal goals and also hit an inspirational point just after half-time.

AT SEA

Donegal seemed all at sea for most of the opening half, their tactical ploy of pulling men back leaving the front men out of touch. Their game plan was not working. Michael Murphy started at half-forward and even when moved to full-forward just couldn't get into the match.

Tyrone had four points on the board inside 12 minutes, the fourth a gift as Donegal allowed Brian Dooher acres of room to take a Sean Cavanagh free and fire over.

It took the intervention of Neil McGee to provide the surge to give Donegal their opening score with Patrick McBrearty finding the range on 14 minutes.

The score did not garner Donegal as Tyrone continued to dominate and but for some very poor shooting (they had six first half wides), the margin could have been pushed out to unmanageable proportions.

They added two more points from Sean Cavanagh and Stephen O'Neill (as Michael Hegarty was caught waiting for the ball) by the 26th minute.

But then, as if someone found the password, the Tir Chonaill men found their feet in the final minutes of the half. Conor Gormley, uncharacteristically, gave away possession and Colm McFadden set up Kevin Rafferty to score.

Mark McHugh, one of Donegal's best in the opening half, stated the move which saw McFadden add another after Michael Hegarty was pulled down.

Donegal were tearing forward at this stage but were almost punished as a misplaced pass from Anthony Thompson saw Tyrone counter-attack with pace but Thompson made up for his error by getting back to make a last ditch block on Stephen O'Neill as he pulled the trigger in front of Paul Durcan.

There was even better to come as Donegal worked the ball upfield and Kevin Cassidy hit the point of the half from just inside the 45m line to leave just two between them at the break - Donegal 0-4, Tyrone 0-6.

The second half was not much bet-

ter as a spectacle despite Kevin Cassidy taking up where he left off just before the break, finding Michael Murphy with a superb ball and the Glenswilly man found the range.

Peter Harte at last found the range for his only score of the game before Michael Hegarty generated a free at the other end for Murphy to point on 50 minutes - their last point of the contest.

Stephen O'Neill replied with a good score before Donegal got their first goal on 55 minutes. Mark McHugh found Michael Murphy on the '40' and his measured fisted pass to Karl Lacey at speed opened the Tyrone defence. Lacey found Colm McFadden and he showed composure to turn onto his right and lose half of the Tyrone defence before firing to the net.

Tyrone lost Kevin Hughes to a second yellow with nine minutes left while Harte failed to punish on two occasions, once when the ball was moved on to the 30m line, Kevin Rafferty fielding his effort on the goal line.

However, it looked as if the game was headed for a replay when substitute Martin Penrose fired over on the 70th minute.

But two minutes later Donegal sealed their place in the Ulster final when Karl Lacey and Michael Hegarty combined to break up a Tyrone attack and the ball came downfield to Patrick McBrearty. His pass to Michael Murphy was wayward but Murphy dispossessed Martin Swift to send Dermot Molloy clear and he made no mistake from close range.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Frank McGlynn, Neil McGee, Paddy McGrath; Anthony Thompson, Karl Lacey, Kevin Cassidy (0-1); Rory Kavanagh, Kevin Rafferty (0-1); Mark McHugh, Martin McElhinney, Ryan Bradley; Patrick McBrearty (0-1), Michael Murphy (0-2,1f), Colm McFadden (1-1,1f). Subs., Michael Hegarty for McElhinney 24; Leo McLoone for Bradley 44; Dermot Molloy (1-0) for McLoone 62.

Tyrone: Pascal McConnell; Martin Swift, Joe McMahon, Ryan McMenamin; Davy Harte, Conor Gormley, Philip Jordan (0-1); Kevin Hughes, Sean Cavanagh (0-2,1f); Brian Dooher (0-1), Brian McGuigan, Peter

Harte (0-1,f); Owen Mulligan (0-1), Stephen O'Neill (0-2), Mark Donnelly. Subs., Justin McMahon for Joe McMahon 49; Martin Penrose (0-1) for Mulligan 51; Tommy McGuigan for B McGuigan, Aidan Cassidy for S O'Neill, both 62; Sean Cavanagh for Dooher 69.

Referee: Joe McQuillan (Cavan)

Man of the match

Sean Cavanagh was Tyrone's best player while Mark McHugh and the entire Donegal defence were in the running. Anthony Thompson would surely have got the award with his fearless blocking, which denied Tyrone a goal (Stephen O'Neill) and point (Sean Cavanagh), but he gave the ball away a number of times. The award goes to Mark McHugh for his tireless running from start to finish.

Turning point

The block by Anthony Thompson on Stephen O'Neill in first half added time which was followed by the point of the game by Stephen Cassidy was the first big turning point, while Michael Murphy's pass to Karl Lacey which opened the Tyrone defence for Colm McFadden to find the net was the other big turning point.

Ref watch

Joe McQuillan would not have been popular in Donegal if they had lost this game. After the Kevin Hughes red card, he gave a number of decisions to Tyrone which they didn't avail of. Also he was harsh on Neil McGee and Rory Kavanagh for overcarrying, the latter which saw the St. Eunan's man point with minutes remaining and Donegal leading by one.

Match Stats

| | G | Pts | Frees | Wides | 45s |
|--------------------|---|-----|-------|-------|-----|
| First half | | | | | |
| Donegal | 0 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| Tyrone | 0 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 1 |
| Second half | | | | | |
| Donegal | 2 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 0 |
| Tyrone | 0 | 3 | 22 | 3 | 0 |
| Totals | | | | | |
| Donegal | 2 | 6 | 20 | 5 | 0 |
| Tyrone | 0 | 9 | 28 | 9 | 1 |



Mark McHugh under pressure from Brian Dooher on Sunday. Pic Conor McGonagle. 2806cg41

Donegal write new chapter

NINETEEN years of hard-luck stories. Nineteen years of bitter disappointment, heavily seasoned each summer with stinging criticism and endless recriminations about their soft centre.

It all ended in Clones yesterday afternoon. A new chapter was written into Anglo-Celt folklore.

The long-suffering Donegal supporters had been held captive behind the wire fences of St Tiernach's Park for far too long.

This was their liberation day.

At the final whistle, the man with the laptop, Jim McGuinness, hugged members of his backroom team, and photographers snapped and framed the moment that meant everything to the big Glenties man.

Within minutes, a sea of green and gold rushed to the foot of the Gerry Arthurs Stand to watch Glenswilly's finest, Michael Murphy, lift the Anglo-Celt Cup.

It was a genuinely strange feeling not to see either Tyrone or Armagh fans on this famous sod for the first time in 13 years.

Yesterday's final was a tetchy, disjointed, nervy affair – but a certain mushy romance returned to the old ballroom of the Ulster Championship again.

Throughout this summer's provincial series, John Brennan's Derry team certainly played their part.

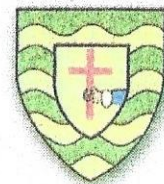
Once the Lavey man walked into the Derry changing room at the start of the year, the wily coach sprinkled some star-dust and Derry were reborn.

The Oak Leafers played some wonderful football to reach their first Ulster final in 11 years, but they will rue two crucial decisions that



Ulster Senior Football Championship final:
Donegal..... 1-11
Derry..... 0-8

From Brendan Crossan at St Tiernach's Park



cost them their chance of provincial glory.

From 50 yards away, referee Maurice Deegan awarded Donegal a controversial penalty soon after the restart which Michael Murphy rammed home to leave the score 1-5 to 0-5.

The incident that led to the penalty award appeared to be a collision rather than a foul involving Derry 'keeper Danny Devlin and Murphy.

And the fact that Deegan took an eternity to make the call was probably more infuriating for the Derry supporters. The referee's interminable delay suggested indecision.

Moments after Murphy's successful spot-kick, Dermot McBride was lucky to escape with a yellow card after aiming an arm into Patrick McBrearty's head.

And with time running out and Derry trailing by five points, Deegan resisted the temptation to signal for another penalty when Oak Leaf substitute Emmett McGuckin was flattened by Donegal full-back Neil McGee.

No wonder Brennan scowled at Deegan as the Laois man walked stoically towards the Gerry Arthurs tunnel at the end.

Those pair of perceived injustices certainly hurt Derry, but few could

deny that Donegal fully deserved their victory.

Derry mustered just five points from open play which was not nearly enough to claim supremacy.

Without the injured Eoin Bradley, the Oak Leaf attack struggled to find a way past Donegal's heavily fortified defence.

With the Tir Chonaill men fashioning a 0-5 to 0-2 lead after 22 minutes thanks to scores from Murphy, Colm McFadden, Ryan Bradley and Anthony Thompson (0-2), from enforced distances the Derry players persisted in slicing and hooking wide of Paul Duran's posts.

Two wonder points from centre-back Charlie Kielt kept Derry in touch and as the first half neared to a close the Oak Leaf midfield started to get on top.

Big final nerves soon left Brennan's players and their decision-making in attack improved. They rattled off the last three scores of the half, with 28th minute substitute Martin Donaghy hitting the equaliser (0-5 each) and putting the brakes on Thompson's forays forward.

But the very essence of Donegal's gameplan is patience.

Just when the doubts began to resurface over their ultra-conservative approach and inability to link defence and attack,

Donegal didn't change a thing.

They trusted the signposts their manager had erected way back in January.

They kept funnelling back and never once left themselves exposed. And – just like they did against Antrim, Cavan and Tyrone – Donegal produced a strong second half display and were again more economical when scoring chances presented themselves.

They, of course, relied heavily on the two crucial penalty calls – but it was hard to see where the Derry inspiration would come from.

Both brilliant against Armagh in their semi-final, Derry attackers Mark Lynch and Conleth Gilligan were completely swamped by the Donegal defence.

Sean Leo McGoldrick tried to inject pace and enterprise into Derry's attack and Joe Diver asked a few questions, and while it wasn't pretty, Donegal kept coming up with the answers.

Too often Derry players coughed up possession in opposition territory, which in turn allowed marksmen Michael Hegarty, McFadden and Murphy to hurt them on the counter-attack.

James Kielt offered some resistance with three second half scores (0-1 free) but Derry never

MATCH STATS

Derry: D Devlin; SL McGoldrick, K McGuckin, D McBride; C Mullan, C Kielt (0-2), M Bateson; J Diver, M Friel; M Lynch, C O'Boyle, B McGoldrick; E Muldoon, J Kielt (0-4, 0-2 frees), C Gilligan (0-1 free).

Subs: M Donaghy (0-1) for M Bateson (28), K McCloy for C Mullan (46), E McGuckin for C Gilligan (59), G O'Kane for B McGoldrick (61), PJ McCloskey for E Muldoon (61).

Yellow cards: M Bateson (26), J Diver (35), D Devlin (37), D McBride (43), M Friel (65).

Donegal: P Durcan; F McGlynn, N McGee, P McGrath; A Thompson (0-2), K Lacey, K Cassidy; R Kavanagh, N Gallagher; M McHugh, M Hegarty (0-2), R Bradley (0-1); P McBrearty, M Murphy (1-2, 1-0 pen), C McFadden (0-4, 0-2 frees).

Subs: M McElhinney for R Kavanagh (33), D Molloy for P McBrearty (53), D Walsh for R Bradley (59)

Yellow cards: M Murphy (43), M Hegarty (72), M McHugh (70)

Referee: M Deegan (Laois)

looked like pegging back Donegal's lead that stretched to six when McFadden clipped over a beauty in injury-time.

The photographers were already stalking big Jim before Maurice Deegan sounded his whistle for the final time. Cue bedlam.

The Derry players will awake this morning and wince at the prospect of facing Kildare next weekend. Another injustice bestowed on them by Congress.

The whole of Donegal, meanwhile, will be groggy from excesses of the night before. It's been long overdue. There will be a happy contentment among Jim McGuinness and his players as they ponder the bonus territory of an All-Ireland quarter-final berth.

ALL-IRELAND CHAMPIONSHIP QUARTER-FINAL GLORY

Donegal in dreamland

Donegal..... 1-12
 Kildare..... 0-14
 (after extra-time).

Report: Peter Campbell

Photos: Thomas Gallagher and Inpho

Donegal's victory over Kildare in the All-Ireland quarter-final was the stuff of dreams. In a fairy-tale finish Kevin Cassidy swung over the winner from fully 50m to send Donegal to their seventh ever All-Ireland semi-final.

In a game that included every emotion that ever existed, Donegal had to go the depths of their reserves to finally prevail, coming from three points down on two occasions in extra-time to finally prevail with Cassidy's winner.

Donegal were two points down after a forgettable first half, but then came storming back in the second half and led by three points after Christy Toye found the net with his first touch just 20 seconds after coming in.

It looked as if Donegal would then hold on for victory, but a few bad wides and an upright depriving Anthony Thompson allowed Kildare the chance to hit back and they got level with the lack attack of the game.

In extra-time Kildare always looked the more likely, but Donegal just refused to die and they eventually wore the Lilywhites down before Toye drew them level and Cassidy clinched victory.

There were so many stories built around the game apart from Kevin Cassidy's winner. The return of Christy Toye to a Donegal side and he ended up as the side's top scorer; the tackling of Neil McGee; the workrate of Karl Lacey.

But it was the great resolve which Jim McGuinness has built into this group of players that was the difference between the sides.

Donegal had to line out without Michael Murphy after he cried off due to a hamstring injury just prior to the throw-in, having taken part in the pre-match parade. David Walsh replaced the full-forward.

Murphy's absence may not have been felt in the first ten minutes, but it gradually became a major factor as Donegal found it difficult to win anything from a dominant Kildare full-back line.

Donegal did very well in the opening quarter creating quite a few openings, but it was Kildare who got on the scoreboard first.

A Johnny Doyle free was going wide but was kept in and the ball was worked back to Eoghan O'Flaherty to hook over.

Donegal responded well with Patrick McBrearty starting and finishing their first score. McBrearty found Kevin Cassidy and the Gaoth Dobhair man did great work to force his way through and then find McBrearty to hook over from inside the 13m line on six minutes.

Donegal went ahead on nine minutes when McBrearty was involved again before Rory Kavanagh fired over from distance.

But then Kildare took firm grip on the game. While they had difficulty breaking the Donegal defence, they were back level on 11 minutes with an O'Flaherty free.

Colm McFadden almost put David Walsh in for a goal but Kildare went ahead on 20 minutes with Pdraig O'Neill finding the range from 45m.

A untypical Neil McGee error saw O'Flaherty push Kildare two clear a minute later. It was McGee's only slip in an opening half when he kept very close tabs on Tomas O'Connor.

Donegal had the best goal chance of the

half on 25 minutes when David Walsh with a great flick, put Mark McHugh through but with only 'keeper Shane Connolly to beat, his low effort was saved by the Kildare 'keeper and a great chance was gone.

Donegal brought in Michael Murphy (who was said to be suffering from a hamstring strain) and Eamonn McGee on 26 minutes but Kildare went three clear as half-time approached, Eamonn Callaghan punishing a poor kick out from Paul Durcan.

But with virtually the last attack of the half on 38 minutes the Donegal men reduced the margin to two when a Michael Hegarty effort for a point was kept in play by Mark McHugh and he found the range.

Half-time: Donegal 0-3, Kildare 0-5.

The second half was a completely different and compelling affair as Donegal finally found the freedom to express themselves. They went three behind from an O'Flaherty free on 38 minutes. They could have been further behind as a Johnny Doyle free came back off an upright and Tomas O'Connor finished to the net but it was disallowed, probably harshly, for a square ball. But Donegal then rose to the occasion with points from Michael Murphy, Ryan Bradley and Dermot Molloy to draw level.

Alan Smith put Kildare back ahead on 48 minutes but a great effort from Kevin Cassidy levelled and Christy Toye, just on the field seconds, got on the end of a great run from Frank McGlynn to fire to the Kildare net.

Donegal had chances to stretch the lead with Dermot Molloy twice just off target

and Anthony Thompson was denied by a post before Kildare showed their fighting qualities.

Eoghan O'Flaherty hit a free from near the sideline and James Kavanagh hit an outrageous point with his left with two minutes left.

But it seemed as if Donegal had done enough as they defended like demons, but with virtually the last play of normal time Kildare turned the ball over twice inside the Donegal 13m line and drew a foul for O'Flaherty to send the game to extra time.

Extra-time

Kildare went three points clear during the first period of extra-time with Ronan Sweeney from play, Gary Whyte from a free and Alan Smith from play but Karl Lacey had the final point of the first period to leave just two in it.

It looked gone for Donegal when Emmet Bolton put Kildare three ahead but the Tirconail men just wouldn't settle for defeat. Michael Murphy pulled two back. Kevin Cassidy had a chance but saw his effort wide but then Christy Toye nailed one and in the dying seconds Kevin Cassidy hit a point that was worthy of winning such a game.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Frank McGlynn, Neil McGee, Paddy McGrath; Anthony Thompson, Karl Lacey, Kevin Cassidy (0-2); Neil Gallagher, Rory Kavanagh (0-1); Mark McHugh (0-1), Michael Hegarty, Ryan Bradley (0-1); Patrick McBrearty (0-1), David Walsh, Colm McFadden. Subs., Michael Murphy (0-3,1f) for McBrearty; Eamonn McGee for McGrath, both 26; Martin McElhinney for Gallagher ht; Dermot Molloy (0-1) for Hegarty 41; Christy Toye (1-1) for McFadden 57. Extra-time: Kevin Rafferty for McElhinney; Colm McFadden for D Molloy; D Molloy for McFadden 10; Patrick McBrearty for Bradley 17

Kildare: Shane Connolly; Aindriú McLochlainn, Michael Foley, Hugó McGrillen; Brian Flanagan, Morgan O'Flaherty, Emmet Bolton (0-1); John Doyle, Daryl Flynn; Pdraig O'Neill (0-1), Eoghan O'Flaherty (0-6,4f), Eamonn Callaghan (0-1); Robert Kelly, Tomas O'Connor, James Kavanagh (0-1). Subs., Alan Smith (0-2) for O'Connor 41; Ronan Sweeney (0-1) for Flanagan 62; Mikey Conway for O'Neill 65. Extra-time: Gary White (0-1,f) for J Doyle; Fionn Dowlíng for Kavanagh 4; John Doyle for O'Flaherty 7; Brian Flanagan for Kelly 15

Referee: David Coldrick (Meath)

Man of the match

Neil McGee and Karl Lacey were simply superb and just can't be separated for the award. If both don't get All-Stars this year, then there is something wrong with the system. Both have been superb in all five games this year.

Ref watch

Meath official David Coldrick added to the occasion. He only blew when he had to and both sides would have little complaint.

GAA - ALL-IRELAND SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SEMI-FINAL

Donegal denied final berth by Dublin

DUBLIN0-08
 DONEGAL0-06

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY
 AT CROKE PARK
 PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

DONEGAL awakes this morning left to reflect on the one that got away. The hard work in yesterday's All-Ireland semi-final appeared to have been done with Donegal having the tactical battle sewn up and having a three-point lead on the scoreboard, which read 0-6 to 0-3 in their favour with 44 minutes gone.

When Dublin had full-forward Diarmuid Connolly sent off on 58 minutes, though, Pat Gilroy's charges found a new gear - and it was they who kicked the final five scores of a dour contest to advance to a final meeting with Kerry.

Yesterday's was a game that will have had the statisticians pondering for some time. Dublin had averaged nearly 20 points in their championship games so far and came into the contest on the back of a 0-22 to 0-15 blitz of Tyrone in the quarter-final. Few gave Donegal hope and yet after a first-half that they forced the Dubs to play on their terms it was Jim McGuinness's men who held a 0-4 to 0-2 interval lead.

Colm McFadden had to settle for a point when a goal seemed certain just 33 seconds into the second-half and when Karl Lacey was forced off with 42 minutes played, Donegal lost their way somewhat. From play, Dublin scored just two points - the first of those hit by sub Kevin McManamon ten minutes from time - while Donegal hit four from play.

Donegal showed three changes from the team that started the quarter-final against Kildare with Christy Toye, Eamon McGee and captain Michael Murphy all coming in to the starting line-up. Murphy suffered at the hands of the merciless Hill 16 in the first-half, the big Glenswill uncharacteristically off-cue with four first-half frees kicked into the massed blue terrace.

Donegal had kept the Hill quiet for long periods and in a frustrating first-half for them Gilroy's team kicked nine wides and dropped two balls into the arms of Paul Durcan. With Frank McGlynn and Lacey helping drive them out from deep, Donegal had a slender lead on the scoreboard and for the fifteen minutes of the interval the green and gold clad supporters dared to dream.

With the boos whistling in his ears, Murphy knocked a fourth minute free wide and had a similar result from a 55-metre placed ball soon after. Donegal did get the game's first point on nine minutes

when Colm McFadden successfully took over free-taking duties, striking between the sticks after Toye was caught high by McCarthy. Bernard Brogan stole in behind Neil McGee momentarily on 10 minutes, but he rolled his shot wide of the far post. Brogan tapped over a free he won off McGee two minutes later to get the Dubs off and running. Two more Donegal wides followed, a Murphy free and McFadden '45, but a splendid score off the boot of Ryan Bradley put them ahead on 24 minutes. A second Brogan free levelled things up again, but Donegal finished the half with two points - Kevin Cassidy fired over superbly off the outside of the left boot and then McFadden prodded over from play after excellently linking up with David Walsh. Karl Lacey was then felled unceremoniously by Barry Cahill and Murphy agonised over two more

missed frees before Dublin 'keeper Stephen Cluxton spurned a chance to get his side back in the mix with a free late in the half.

Just over thirty seconds into the second-half, Colm McFadden had a sight of the Canal End goals following a superb move involving Cassidy, McGrath and Murphy. McFadden dummied well onto the left foot and got his shot away - but it rose high over the crossbar when a goal seemed a certainty. A goal at this

stage would have put Donegal five up and would surely have the shell-shocked Dubs searching for even deeper answers than they already were.

With Donegal up for the fight, Dublin were rattled and the famed Hill was beginning to turn.

From their first attack of the half, Paul Flynn shot wide and then a wayward pass from sub Philip McMahon to fellow replacement Kevin McManamon failed to make its target and the unease around the old ground was palpable.

Cluxton came out to take a free in the shadows of the Cusack stand and he nailed it into the Hill to raise the cheers. Just three minutes later, McFadden did likewise at the other and Donegal were three ahead again.

That was with 26 minutes left on the watch - yet, crucially, Donegal had lost Karl Lacey three minutes

earlier. From that set-back they never recovered and indeed would fail to score for the remainder of the game.

Eamon McGee intercepted a ball across goal by Bernard Brogan and tempers boiled for a time as Rory Kavanagh was caught late by Cian O'Sullivan.

On 52 minutes, Brogan knicked over his third free and Cluxton brought Dublin back into the mix with a '45 a minute later. Dublin thought they'd found a goal two min-

Dublin: Stephen Cluxton (0-2, 1f, 1'45); Cian O'Sullivan, Rory O'Carroll, Michael Fitzpatrick; James McCarthy, Ger Brennan, Kevin Nolan; Denis Bastick, Michael Darragh Macauley; Paul Flynn, Barry Cahill, Bryan Cullen (0-1); Alan Brogan, Diarmuid Connolly, Bernard Brogan (0-4, 4f). SUBS: Philip McMahon for O'Carroll (26 mins); Kevin McManamon (0-1) for Cahill (half-time); Eoghan O'Gara for McCarthy (61 mins); Eamon Fennell for Bastick (64 mins); Ross McConnell for Flynn (67 mins).

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee, Eamon McGee; Frank McGlynn, Karl Lacey, Kevin Cassidy (0-1); Rory Kavanagh, Christy Toye; Anthony Thompson, Mark McHugh, Ryan Bradley (0-1); David Walsh, Michael Murphy, Colm McFadden (0-4, 2f). SUBS: Michael Hegarty for Toye (half-time); Marty Boyle for Lacey (42 mins); Martin McElhinney for Hegarty (64 mins); Patrick McBrearty for Boyle (66 mins).

Referee: Maurice Deegan (Laois).

utes later when McManamon got ahead of Durcan to a high ball and rolled home - but he was penalised for a foul on the Donegal 'keeper.

Donegal were handed a numerical advantage when Connolly saw red for a clash with Marty Boyle, yet Dublin were energised and the momentum was beginning to swing their way.

With their first score from play, 30 seconds away from the hour marker, McManamon levelled it up and then captain Bryan Cullen fired them ahead after O'Gara was thwarted by a brilliant Paddy McGrath block. That was the first time they led, but it was enough to edge them into a final with another added by Brogan from a free soon after.

Try as they might, Donegal couldn't breach the barrier again and it's the Dubs who head for the September 18th final meeting with Kerry.

Donegal could walk away with the heads held high after a campaign that has re-ignited the long lost spark in the county side.

Big Match Stats

DUBLIN/DONEGAL

| | |
|--------|------|
| Goals | 0/0 |
| Points | 8/6 |
| Wides | 11/9 |
| 45s | 2/0 |

SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP**LEINSTER****FIRST ROUND**

May 22 Kildare 0-12 Wicklow 0-5
 May 22 Laois 0-10 Longford 0-9
 May 28 Wexford 2-16 Offaly 0-8

QUARTER-FINALS

June 5 Kildare 0-16 Meath 0-10
 Dublin 1-16 Laois 0-11

June 12 Wexford 1-24 Westmeath 0-15
 Carlow 0-14 Louth 0-13

SEMI-FINALS

June 26 Kildare 1-11 Dublin 1-12
 Wexford 4-12 Carlow 0-10

FINAL

July 10 Dublin 2-12 Wexford 1-12

MUNSTER**QUARTER-FINALS**

May 22 Kerry 2-16 Tipperary 0-11
 May 22 Cork 1-23 Clare 0-11

SEMI-FINALS

June 4 Kerry 1-26 Limerick 3-9
 June 5 Cork 5-17 Waterford 2-8

FINAL

July 3 Kerry 1-15 Cork 1-12

CONNACHT**QUARTER-FINALS**

May 1 Roscommon 3-21 New York 1-11
 May 22 Leitrim 1-10 Sligo 0-10
 May 29 Mayo 0-19 London 2-10 (after extra-time)

SEMI-FINALS

June 12 Roscommon 2-12 Leitrim 0-6
 June 26 Mayo 1-12 Galway 1-06

FINAL

July 17 Mayo 0-13 Roscommon 0-11

ULSTER**FIRST ROUND**

May 15 Donegal 1-10 Antrim 0-7

QUARTER-FINALS

May 22 Derry 1-18 Fermanagh 1-10
 May 28 Armagh 1-15 Down 1-10
 June 5 Tyrone 1-13 Monaghan 1-11
 June 12 Donegal 2-14 Cavan 1-8

SEMI-FINALS

June 19 Derry 3-14 Armagh 1-11
 June 26 Donegal 2-06 Tyrone 0-9

FINAL

July 17 Donegal 1-11 Derry 0-8

QUALIFIERS**ROUND 1**

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Down 1-13 Clare 1-12 | Laois 2-16 Tipperary 0-11 |
| Westmeath 1-07 Antrim 0-16 | Louth 2-08 Meath 5-08 |
| London 0-15 Fermanagh 0-9 | Cavan 0-11 Longford 2-16 |
| Wicklow 1-18 Sligo 0-16 | Offaly 1-18 Monaghan 1-10 |

ROUND 2

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Limerick 3-13 Offaly 0-15 | Armagh 0-19 Wicklow 2-13 (aet)* |
| Down 1-16 Leitrim 1-8 | Meath 0-11 Galway 0-10 |
| Kildare 3-16 Laois 0-10 | Antrim 1-13 Carlow 2-9 |
| Tyrone 1-17 Longford 0-15 | Waterford 1-17 London 0-13 |

*Replay – Armagh 2-9 Wicklow 0-10

ROUND 3

July 16 Limerick 0-14 Waterford 0-9; Down 3-13 Antrim 0-10;
 Kildare 2-11 Meath 0-14

July 23 Tyrone 2-13 Armagh 0-13

ROUND 4

July 23 Limerick 1-18 Wexford 1-17
 Cork 2-20 Down 0-14
 Kildare 0-19 Derry 0-13

July 30 Tyrone 3-19 Roscommon 1-14

QUARTER-FINALS

July 30 Donegal 1-12 Kildare 0-14 (aet)
 July 31 Kerry 1-20 Limerick 0-10
 Mayo 1-13 Cork 2-6

August 6 Dublin 0-22 Tyrone 0-15

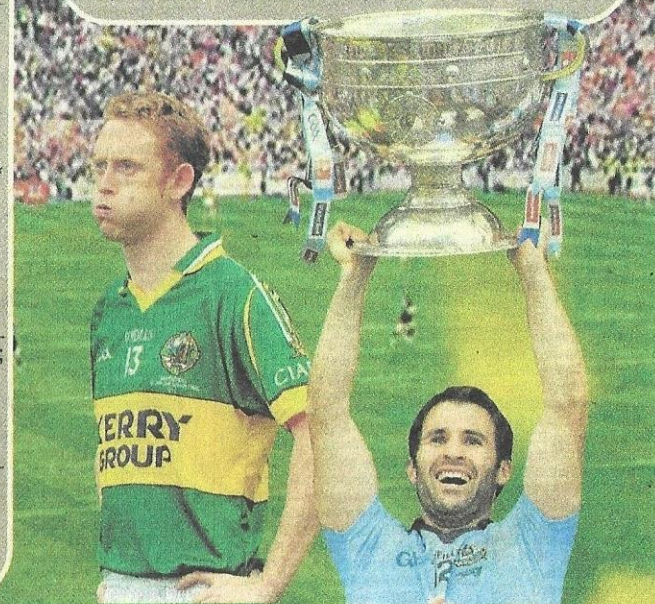
SEMI-FINALS

(Provincial winners or teams that beat them in quarter-finals)

August 21 Kerry 1-20 Mayo 1-11
 August 28 Dublin 0-8 Donegal 0-6

ALL-IRELAND FINAL

September 18 Dublin 1-12 Kerry 1-11



GAA - ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Late drama sees Donegal draw with Sligo

DONEGAL2-11
SLIGO1-14

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY AT
MACCUMHAILL PARK PHOTOS BY
DONNA MCBRIDE

DONEGAL somehow managed to pull themselves from the brink on Saturday night as Jim McGuinness' team fought back from eight points down, with 14 men, to draw with Sligo in a lively National League opener in Ballybofey.

Corner back Kevin Mulhern was sent off late in the first-half for a second bookable offence and ten minutes into the second-half Sligo appeared in cruise control as they led by eight points.

Gradually, Donegal hit back, but even a Michael Murphy goal on 54 minutes didn't seem enough as Sligo were three ahead as the clocked headed for the 70th minute. In the dying minutes, full-back Neil McGee came up the field to strike a second Donegal goal, and yet it still needed a late, late point from Stephen Griffin to tie it up for the final time after Tony Taylor edged Sligo ahead once more.

It was certainly a case of the 'one that got away' for Kevin Walsh and Sligo, while Jim McGuinness might well have more questions than he has answers after a game that will have the managerial team pondering quite a bit.

For the first time since his tenure began, the new Donegal boss had something resembling a strong team at his disposal on Saturday night. Although Neil Gallagher and Michael Hegarty continue to sit out through injury, new skipper Michael Murphy was among those to return to a panel that was depleted by 'flu, injury and college commitments during the McKenna Cup.

Saturday night perhaps signalled a new beginning for several players, with Peter Boyle, Kevin Mulhern, Mark McHugh, Dermot Molloy and Paddy McGrath elevated from last year's U21 team (though the latter trio featured for Donegal in the 2010 Championship) for first League starts, while subs Conor Classon and Daniel McLaughlin were also making first appearances for the county in League football.

Boyle survived an early scare when he lost his footing and David Kelly was presented with a chance to score, but Donegal eventually cleared the danger.

Tony Taylor put the visitors ahead, but three in a row from Donegal had them in front by the quarter-hour mark. Colm McFadden hit Donegal's first point on 11 minutes and they were in the driving seat through a brace of frees from Murphy and Molloy.

Kevin Mulhern was carded for the first time on 16 minutes when he tossed Adrian Marren to the ground

and Mark Breheny superbly curled the resulting free between the sticks.

Murphy, though, restored the two-point cushion when he tapped over a free, awarded after Mark McHugh was fouled when he did well to fetch a high ball from Kavanagh ahead of 'keeper Greene.

A Molloy free did likewise after centre-back Mark Quinn fired over from 20 metres, when he was fed by Keelan Cawley, who majestically caught a sideline delivery from Breheny over the head of Karl Lacey.

It was from here that Sligo grew, with the next five points scored by the men in black and two minutes from the interval, Donegal were dealt a further blow when Kevin Mulhern got his marching orders. Already on a yellow card from the 16th minute, the Cloughaneely man was sent to the line for a foolish hit on Francis Quinn, right under the nose of the linesman.

Two points from livewire full forward Adrian Marren - the second of them when he could possibly have gone for goal after being played in by Quinn - had Sligo three in front, but a brilliant point by McFadden in stoppage time cut the deficit.

Sligo wasted no time in extending their advantage with just 71 seconds gone in the second-half when they found the perfect recipe. Breheny cut a path right through the heart of the Tir Chonaill defence and while he was thwarted by a fine stop by Peter

Boyle, there would be no denying David Kelly, who blasted home the rebound.

Breheny got clear of McLoone to put Sligo six clear and the Yeats County men had the ball in the net for a second time on 44 minutes, only for the referee to, harshly it looked, pull up a fine move for a throw-ball offence. Keelan Cawley had finished a superb passage by firing into the bottom corner, but Donegal were let off the hook.

Sligo were eight up by the tenth minute of the half, Marren and Kelly clipping points that sparked a Donegal revival.

Kavanagh, McLoone and McFadden were on the mark as they set about attempting to get back into the contest.

On 54 minutes, Donegal were given a path back into the game when they were awarded a penalty after full-back Davey lifted the ball off the ground. Michael Murphy stepped up and saw Greene save his effort, but the Glenswilly man reacted to prod home the rebound.

Sean Davey's first contribution to the game after his introduction was to fire Sligo three ahead, but a magnificent point by Leo McLoone - after a strong and determined surge upfield - brought Donegal to within two again.

Breheny cleverly punched over the bar to stretch it to three, but Donegal full-back Neil McGee - after being

played by Murphy - got in to strike an equalising goal.

Donegal needed a Stephen Griffin point in stoppage time to secure the draw, after midfielder Taylor again gave Sligo the edge.

Donegal Peter Boyle; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee (1-0), Kevin Mulhern; Anthony Thompson, Leo McLoone (0-2), Kevin Cassidy; Rory Kavanagh (0-1), Ryan Bradley; Martin McElhinney, Dermot Molloy (0-2, 2f), Mark McHugh; Colm McFadden (0-3), Michael Murphy (1-2, 2f), Karl Lacey. **SUBS:** Daniel McLaughlin for McElhinney (31 mins); Barry Dunnon for Thompson (40 mins); Stephen Griffin (0-1) for Molloy (48 mins); Conor Classon for Murphy (48 mins); David Walsh for McLaughlin (63 mins).

Sligo: Philip Greene; Charlie Harrison, Conor Davey, Ross Donovan; Keelan Cawley, Mark Quinn (0-1), Paul McGovern; Tony Taylor (0-2), Stephen Gilmartin (0-1); Mark Breheny (0-4, 2f), Eamon O'Hara, Francis Quinn; David Maye, Adrian Marren (0-4), David Kelly (1-1). **SUBS:** Stephen Coen for Maye (47 mins); Sean Davey (0-1) for M.Quinn (60 mins).

Referee: Padraig Hughes (Armagh).

Allianz National Football League Division Two

Tyrone 0-6
Donegal 1-10

Report: Alan Foley

Photos: Press Eye

Rather peculiarly, the more you read into the psyche of Donegal football the more difficult it becomes to understand.

Every so often in recent years under whoever was in charge they were capable of producing something along the lines of what they mustered in Omagh against Tyrone on Saturday, when, after a slow start, they dissected the three-time All-Ireland winners with an excellent display. But by using past experiences as a yardstick, football followers in the north-west might well be forgiven for being just a touch tentative.

Jim McGuinness, though, isn't a one step forward and two steps back type of guy. The Donegal manager, while understandably more than content after a seven-point Healy Park win, was still a touch cautious when assessing his progress to date.

"It's great," he said afterwards. "There was a good second half performance from a lot of the younger lads there and Tyrone were a wee bit flat on themselves with a lot of key men out. That has to be taken into consideration as well of course. But we're more than happy to pick up the two points, so it's a big plus for us."

Tyrone endured a horrendous winter and before the game there was a minute's silence for Paddy Harte, manager Mickey's late brother, who passed away the day after his daughter Michaela McAravey's month's mind. On the field, Tyrone were not at full-strength but there was a healthy sprinkling of the men who had served Harte well for the best part of a decade, although with an aging panel, perhaps therein lies the problem.

The only statistic that really counts in football is the final score, but by wiping the dust off the surface, a measure of Donegal's dominance can be given by the fact that Tyrone's second half rendered a single point, from a free, and they posted just one wide. But if Donegal's conclusion was perfect reward for their meticulousness, it didn't look so promising at the start.

For 20 minutes or so, Tyrone came in waves and at speed with runners from deep finding little corridors of opportunity between the yellow and green lines as Donegal's full-forward line became isolated. Martin Penrose knocked over a couple of frees, before Peter Harte's curler was adjudged by the umpires to have crept inside the upright and Enda McGinley scored the point of the first half.

Injuries and absenteeism meant the conventional centre-field elements like Rory Kavanagh, Neil Gallagher and Kevin Cassidy were unavailable, so with Ryan Bradley and Martin McElhinney named there to begin with; Donegal took a little time to find their rhythm.

Trailing 0-4 to 0-1 after 22 minutes, McGuinness was proactive in addressing the problem at that point when Donegal sides of old would've folded.

Frank McGlynn offered a little more experience than Kevin Mulhern from the bench and Dermot Molloy was restored to the forward line at David Walsh's expense.

McGuinness has had to listen to a few criticisms of the blanket defence of late, but as the half bore on men streamed in support and Donegal looked a much more fluid outfit as a result. The oil had loosened the nuts and bolts and Donegal profited offensively as a consequence.

Four unanswered points with two from Michael Murphy, and one apiece Colm McFadden and the excellent roaming centre-back Leo McLoone gave Donegal the lead. And although Penrose popped over his third free of the evening right before half-time, five points apiece meant Donegal's heartbeat was firmer at the end of the first period than it seemed to be two-thirds of the way through it.

"I wouldn't say struggle but it took us time to settle at the start," McGuinness added. "We're very young and quite inexperienced and the early deficit could have went from bad to worse very easily and it's good to learn these things."

"We tagged on a few points to keep it close at half-time and then added a few more at the start of the second half. The game can take a slant and we're happy to have hung in there when things aren't going well. It's important to have that resoluteness."

With McGuinness's directions still ringing in their ears, Donegal continued the second half as they concluded the first. McLoone pick-pocketed Sean Cavanagh, and set off before Murphy, McFadden and Stephen Griffin were involved as Anthony Thompson peeled around the outside.

Although his rasper was saved by Pascal McConnell, his clubmate Molloy was on hand to bundle home the rebound for a Donegal goal from a couple of yards out. Donegal were four points to the good, 1-6 to 0-5, eight minutes into part two and in total control with the team's shape moving in and out like an accordion, compressing when in defence and springing opening in attack. They inhaled confidence the longer the game went on.

Tyrone were fortunate to maintain their full quota when Ryan McMenamin kicked out at Paddy McGrath after an initial foul by the Ardara defender. Referee Pat Fox, though, deemed the offences worthy of similar punishment in the form of a yellow card apiece despite crimes that seemed on face value to be considerably different.

In a game that wasn't particularly dirty, McMenamin's act apart, there were 13 bookings, nine of which were Donegal's.

McFadden popped over another free during a fruitful third quarter for Donegal and when Cavanagh scored a free for Tyrone at the other end, it was their first score on 19 long minutes. But Murphy and McFadden from straightforward and angled placed balls respectively inflated the cushion out to six points, before Molloy on the turn, completed the remarkable turnaround.

"Donegal down the years have been criticised for giving up the ghost, but tonight they showed their fight," McGuinness added. "There's no point getting too despondent or too excited as it's still very much a work-in-progress."

"We're making progress when we're learning and there will be ups and downs as we started to bed, but we're very happy with this display. Our attention now is next Sunday and Kildare but tonight was encouraging."

"Kildare is a really big game for us. It's a home game and we've been targeting our home games. This is a bonus for us in a way I suppose. We're back training on Tuesday night and we'll start preparing all over again."

Tyrone: Pascal McConnell; Aidan McCrory, Cathal McCarron, Ryan Menamin; David Harte, Conor Gormley; Dermot Carlin; Kevin Hughes, Niall McKenna; Peter Harte (0-1), Brian McGuigan, Sean Cavanagh; Martin Penrose (0-3, 3f), Stephen O'Neill, Enda McGinley (0-1). Subs: Owen Mulligan for McKenna (47), Aidan Cassidy for McGuigan (53), Damian McCaul for McCarron (63)

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee, Kevin Mulhern; Karl Lacey, Leo McLoone (0-1), Anthony Thompson; Martin McElhinney, Ryan Bradley; David Walsh, Mark McHugh, Daniel McLaughlin; Stephen Griffin, Michael Murphy (0-3, 2f), Colm McFadden (0-4, 3f). Subs: Frank McGlynn for Mulhern (22), Dermot Molloy (1-2) for Walsh (33), Michael Hegarty for McLaughlin (52), Conor Clason for Bradley (55), Adrian Hanlon for Griffin (66)

Referee: Pat Fox (Westmeath).

GAA - ALLIANZ NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Last-gasp drama as Kildare goal denies Donegal

DONEGAL0-08
KILDARE1-05

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY
AT O'DONNELL PARK
PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

DONEGAL were denied a second National League victory right at the death yesterday as full-back Michael Foley scored a late, late goal to earn Kildare a share of the spoils at O'Donnell Park yesterday.

In a sluggish and scrappy contest, Donegal went four points ahead with just two minutes remaining, with Foley blasting to the net when the home defence fell asleep for a brief moment to deny them a victory.

In a very stop-start affair, in which a free a minute was awarded in a frustrating first-half, Donegal looked to have done enough when they scored five on the spin in a 15-minute spell in the second-half to move four clear. But in the last two minutes, Kieran McGeeney's side came back to bag a point.

Eamonn Callaghan popped over a point to leave a goal between them and with the clocking heading for its conclusion a Johnny Doyle free caused havoc in the Donegal rear-guard and full-back Foley found a way to the bottom corner past Paul Durcan to stun the O'Donnell Park crowd.

Yesterday's was a poor contest - and a long way away from the impressiveness of the Donegal play last weekend in their seven-point win over

Match Stats

Donegal/Kildare

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Goals | 0/1 |
| Points | 8/5 |
| Wides | 12/6 |
| 45s | 0/0 |
| Frees awarded | 35/29 |
| Frees scored | 4/2 |
| Short efforts | 2/2 |
| Yellow cards | 4/6 |
| Red cards | 0/0 |

Tyrone - but with four points bagged from their first three games Jim McGuinness' men are still well poised in second spot in the table.

Michael Murphy came within a whisker of hitting a seventh-minute Donegal goal, but the Glenswilly man's soccer-style shot, after a brilliant speed burst took him away to

latch onto a loose ball, trickling just wide of the far post.

Donegal were denied a tenth-minute penalty, when Murphy was hauled down by Michael Foley after fetching Colm McFadden's raking delivery. Referee Michael Duffy merely shook the head at the Donegal calls.

Four minutes later, and after Eoghan O'Flaherty had doubled the Kildare lead, referee Duffy drew the ire of the hosts when he let Kildare midfielder Hugh Lynch escape with only a yellow card for a cynical head-

high challenge on Paddy McGrath.

Just ten minutes later, the Ardara man was withdrawn concussed.

It was the 17th minute before Donegal registered, with Colm McFadden stroking over a free won by Mark McHcHugh.

John Doyle saw an earlier free plucked from the Letterkenny clouds by Paul Durcan, but Fionn Dowling had better luck with a 22nd minute free he won himself.

Durcan had to be at his best to deny Dowling a goal two minutes later. The corner forward got on the end of a clever flick by Eoghan O'Flaherty, but from point-blank range he was

thwarted by an excellent save by the Four Masters man.

Donegal were level at the changeover. In stoppage-time, Rory Kavanagh - back from injury as a 17th minute sub for McLaughlin - prised over from a tight angle before Murphy levelled it up from a free with the closing attack of the half.

Former All Star Kevin Cassidy, who missed the impressive win over Tyrone last weekend, was back in the Donegal XV yesterday having been on holidays for the game in Omagh.

Cassidy was in for Kevin Mulhern in one of three changes to the Tir Chonaill line-up, with Conor Classon handed a first National League start at centrefield - the Ardara man in for David Walsh, with Ryan Bradley switching to the half-forward line - and Dermot Molloy, scorer of 1-2 in Omagh, replacing Stephen Griffin.

With Karl Lacey selected for a man-to-man on John Doyle, Anthony Thompson commenced in a somewhat unorthodox corner-back slot, though the Naomh Conaill man wasn't long in moving out the field.

The home side were very wasteful in the opening ten minutes of the second period, kicking six wides in a frustrating show, in which much of the ball going inside gave Murphy and

McFadden little to live off.

Donegal took 17 minutes to score in the first-half and, as he had done in the first, Colm McFadden broke Donegal's second-half duck 17 minutes in, when he tapped over a free, won by Murphy.

Kildare had taken the lead eight minutes into the second-half when Dowling converted a free, awarded for a foul on Cribbin by Cassidy.

On 56 minutes, Donegal hit the front for the first time when Murphy fired over a trademark free and nine minutes from time Michael Hegarty stretched the lead when he clipped over after combining well with McLoone.

From another delivery by Bradley, Donegal worked a three-point advantage with McFadden teeing up Murphy who finished well.

With two minutes left, captain Murphy showed his class to put four between them. The Glenswilly man collected possession well inside his own half and surged forward in the stand's shadows, before playing a clever give-and-go with DCU colleague McElhinney - finish in style.

That looked to have sealed the deal, only for McGeeney's men to stike a late sucker-punch - as they did in March 2008 when they struck late to

win in Newbridge in a game Donegal also thought they'd won.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath; Neil McGee; Anthony Thompson; Kevin Cassidy; Karl Lacey; Leo McLoone; Conor Classon; Martin McElhinney; Daniel McLaughlin; Mark McHugh; Ryan Bradley; Dermot Molloy; Michael Murphy (0-4, 2f), Colm McFadden (0-2, 2f). SUBS: Rory Kavanagh (0-1) for McLaughlin (18 mins); Frank McGlynn for McGrath (24 mins); Michael Hegarty (0-1) for Classon (half-time); Adrian Hanlon for Molloy (57 mins); Marty Boyle for Bradley (66 mins).

Kildare: Shane McCormack; Hugh McGrillen; Michael Foley (1-0), Andriú MacLochlainn; David Whyte; Brian Flanagan; Emmet Bolton; Hugh Lynch; Pdraig O'Neill; Ronan Sweeney; John Doyle; Eoghan O'Flaherty (0-1); Fionn Dowling (0-2, 2f), Alan Smith; Keith Cribbin (0-1). SUBS: Ross Kelly for Lynch (19 mins); James Kavanagh for Smith (half-time); Eamonn Callaghan (0-1) for Dowling (44 mins); Gary White for Bolton (60 mins); Tommy Moolick for Kelly (63 mins).

Referee: Michael Duffy (Kildare)

SPORT

www.donegaldemocrat.com

Allianz National Football League, Division 2

DONEGAL'S UNBEATEN RUN

Meath 0-9
 Donegal 0-15

Report: Peter Campbell

Photos: Gerry O'Donnell

The best display by a Donegal side in a long time saw them completely overwhelm Meath in Pairc Tailteann, Navan, on Sunday.

Another top class away display with a host of Donegal players playing at a consistently high level left it a very pleasing journey home for the small band of Donegal followers.

Paul Durcan, Neil McGee, Karl Lacey, Anthony Thompson, Rory Kavanagh, Mark McHugh, Ryan Bradley and Michael Murphy all had five-star performances and any one of them could have got the man of the match award. All of the others performed well with manager Jim McGuinness having to wait until near the end before having to glance towards the substitutes bench.

The workrate of the team was top class and the scoretaking excellent with points coming from all angles. The only thing missing was a goal, but that would be taking a negative attitude.

The win puts them joint top of Division Two and if they could garner four points from their three remaining games, it would surely put them in line for promotion. They are the only unbeaten team in the Division and if they can maintain their great away form, then anything is possible.

At times early on in the game it seemed like a role reversal with Meath playing in the Donegal style of short passing. Maybe the Ulster influence of Seamus McEnaney and Paul Grimley is confusing the Royals, who normally adopt a catch and kick style.

Donegal were on top for much of the opening half thanks to great industry throughout the field and a marvellous display from Ryan Bradley, who was at the heart of everything that was good.

A late tackle on Mark McHugh enabled Michael Murphy to open their account inside a minute. Meath levelled through a Shane O'Rourke free but Rory Kavanagh won the kick out and was on the end of the move involving Mark McHugh and Karl Lacey to fire Donegal back in front.

Brian Meade levelled again for Meath in the eighth minute but they were not to score again until four minutes from the break.

In between Donegal took a firm grip with Ryan Bradley starting and finishing a great move on 10 minutes and after a Michael Murphy free from 35m dropped short, he availed of good work by Rory Kavanagh to open a two point gap on 17 minutes.

A minute later Bradley broke up a Meath attack on his own 13m line and Donegal went the full length of the field with Anthony Thompson and Colm McFadden involved before Dermot Molloy hit the point of the half.

Bradley was involved twice again on 20 minutes and when a Dermot Molloy effort was partially blocked the Buncrana man fired over with his left.

On 28 minutes Colm McFadden fired over a free after a foul on Michael Murphy to put Donegal ahead by five, but later in the half Brian Sheridan found the range with two frees to leave the half-time score, Donegal 0-7, Meath 0-4.

Donegal were out of the blocks early in the second half with Mark McHugh setting up Michael Murphy to point after just 38 seconds.

They had their best goal chance three minutes later when Anthony Thompson showed great vision to find Rory Kavanagh in acres of space with a great cross-field ball. Kavanagh bore down on goal but elected to take a fisted point.

A minute later Neil McGee started a move in the full-back line which finished with Michael Murphy pointing on the turn and putting his side six clear.

Meath made a triple substitution and Shane O'Rourke pulled a point back from a free but Murphy, from a 46m free after David Walsh

was fouled, cancelled the score.

Colm McFadden almost chipped the Meath keeper on 55 minutes when put through by Murphy, his effort going just over as he eyed Cormac Murphy off his line.

Brian Farrell pointed a free for Meath but Michael Murphy with a wonderful score kept Donegal comfortably ahead 0-13 to 0-6 with 57 minutes gone.

Joe Sheridan had his first (and only) point of the game with a '45' while Colm McFadden punished for a foul on Murphy at the other end and from another '45' Nigel Crawford flicked over the bar.

With four minutes left Mark McHugh and Paddy McGrath were involved before Michael Murphy closed the Donegal scoring while Terry Skelly had Meath's final score.

In the closing minutes Joe Sheridan put Paddy Gilsean through and he hit a Donegal post while in added time Meath were reduced to 14 when Terry Skelly was shown a straight red card for a nasty foul on David Walsh, which really angered the Donegal players. Walsh had been fouled already and was on his knees when Skelly came from behind and connected with his head.

Overall, it was a top class Donegal display and while the Meath performance was poor, it should not take away from a good win. Roll on Derry, Antrim and Laois.

Ref watch

Donegal would have little complaint with Martin Higgins. He certainly wasn't a home town referee. Overall he had a good game and Meath can have little complaint about the red card at the end. The yellow card count was 7-3 in favour of Meath.

Meath: Brendan Murphy; Alan Nestor, Brian Menton, Caoimhin King; Gary O'Brien, Cormac McGuinness, Anthony Moyles; Brian Meade (0-1), Nigel Crawford (0-1); Shane McAnarney, Brian Sheridan (0-2,2f), Seamus Kenny; David Morgan, Joe Sheridan (0-1,45), Shane O'Rourke (0-2,2f) Subs., Terry Skelly (0-1) for O'Brien; Paddy Gilsean for Kenny; Eoghan Harrington for Moyles, all 48; Mark Ward for Menton; Brian Farrell (0-1,f) for B Sheridan, both 52

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee, Frank McGlynn; Anthony Thompson, Karl Lacey, Kevin Cassidy; Rory Kavanagh (0-2), Martin McElhinney; Ryan Bradley (0-3), Michael Hegarty, Dermot Molloy (0-1); Mark McHugh, Michael Murphy (0-6,2f), Colm McFadden (0-3,2f) Subs., David Walsh for Hegarty 48; Neil Gallagher for McElhinney; Adrian Hanlon for McFadden, both 68; Stephen Griffin for McHugh 69

Referee: Martin Higgins (Fermanagh)

Man of the match

It is a very difficult choice. If it was given at half-time Ryan Bradley would have been so far in front, it would have been no contest. In the second half Rory Kavanagh, Neil McGee and Michael Murphy put in a serious shift, but given that the ground work was done in the opening half, the award remains with Bradley.

But overall, this was a resounding team performance for Donegal, always backing each other up and the team spirit seems to be top class.

Turning point

A great period in the middle of the first half probably sealed victory for Donegal. One great catch by Ryan Bradley in front of his own goal to cut out a Meath attack ended with Dermot Molloy pointing at the other end. The move typified what Donegal were about on a good day at the office.

13

Brilliant Donegal withers the Oak Leaf

DERRY2-12
DONEGAL2-18

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY AT CELTIC
PARK PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE

THE Oak Leaf was left floundering in a Tir Chonaill gale on Saturday night as deadly Donegal preserved their unbeaten run to go out on their own at the top of Division Two thanks to this splendid performance that stunned Derry.

The home side had roared into an early four-point lead, but a Michael Murphy-inspired Donegal bit back to record a deserved six-point win, following a hugely encouraging performance by Jim McGuinness' team over an exciting hour in a chilly Celtic Park.

Captain Murphy led the line with a brilliant 1-7, while he was ably helped by full-forward line comrades Colm McFadden (1-3 from play) and Dermot Molloy (five frees) as the Donegal top line landed 2-15 between them. Murphy's display was central to proceedings, with his free-taking right out of the top drawer and a quite magnificent 57th minute goal sinking Derry and outlining his real class, while Derry full-back Kevin McCloy's miserable evening was compounded when he was sent off in the second-half.

Saturday's was Donegal's first NFL game at the 'new' Celtic Park the local observers confirmed and it was an outing to be remembered for the green and gold fans in the 2,200 crowd,

as their side's promotion chances were handed a real shot in the arm.

Jim McGuinness deployed the same starting line-up that had beaten Meath in fine style a week earlier, but an early goal and a point from Caolan O'Boyle, a late, late replacement for Paddy Bradley, whose strange absence from the start John Brennan would only put down to the player 'not feeling up to it.'

Colm McFadden's goal late in the first-half gave Donegal a two-point half-time lead, but a penalty from

O'Boyle and the introduction of Oak Leaf skipper Bradley appeared to signal a Derry resurgence. But Murphy tore up the script as a brilliant 57th minute goal withered the home challenge.

Dermot Molloy's precise delivery was plucked from the Creggan sky by Murphy, who left McCloy in his slipstream and gave Danny Devlin in the Derry goals no chance of blocking a thundering effort.

McCloy then saw red for picking up a second yellow card for a trip on Murphy, having walked on eggshells for long periods after a first-half yellow for a foul on the Donegal number 14. Murphy tapped over the free and while Enda Muldoon and Conleth Gilligan brought Derry to within three again, Donegal closed in style.

Murphy knocked over a free and after Karl Lacey squeezed in a curling effort the Donegal captain had a fitting final say, with a marvellous free from underneath the stand's shadows

close to the sideline confirming a six-point win that had seemed an unlikely outcome following a dramatic start to the evening.

The Derry team showed three changes from the side that beat Sligo a week earlier including a surprise late change to the side named on Friday by John Brennan with star man Paddy Bradley an absentee.

His replacement, Caolan O'Boyle, had Donegal shell-shocked, the Lavey man hitting a goal and a point inside the opening two minutes. After posting the first score of the game from a route one Derry attack, O'Boyle stunned Donegal 45 seconds later. A long ball into the danger zone was broken down by Enda Muldoon and O'Boyle forced home an early sucker punch to Tir Chonaill's hopes.

A shaken Donegal picked up the

pieces with Martin McElhinney scoring their first point in style in the tenth minute, which was quickly followed by Murphy scraping over a free.

A pair of Conleth Gilligan frees came either side of a McFadden point from play, with O'Boyle's early goal all that was between them at the quarter-hour mark.

Frees from Molloy and Murphy brought Donegal back to within a point, only for a Gilligan free and a fine sweeping point from Gerard O'Kane to put the goal in it again.

Three points in as many minutes from Kavanagh, McFadden and Molloy (free) levelled it up for Donegal for the first time, but Ciaran McGoldrick

and another free from Gilligan, this time from the '45, had Derry two ahead again inside the next two minutes.

Molloy brought Donegal back to within a point and four minutes from the break Donegal turned the game on its head. From Rory Kavanagh's diagonal ball, Kevin McCloy failed to cut out the danger, allowing Colm McFadden to force his way in and the St Michael's man prodded past Danny Devlin.

Donegal were two ahead at the break, as points from Murphy and Molloy (free) came either way of a fifth Gilligan free, while sub Charlie Kielt sent Derry to the interval with spirits lifted as his marvellous score from 45 metres on the right flank drew a curtain down on the first period.

Neil McGee was forced off injured early in the second-half, forcing Donegal into a rejig that saw Kevin Cassidy go to the edge of the square and Jason Noctor sprung from the bench for his senior debut.

McFadden smartly fisted over after an excellent pass from Frank McGlynn provided an opening for Anthony Thompson, and after Gerard O'Kane reduced the arrears Murphy responded in style with a 45-metre free out on the left touchline. Derry gave themselves a life-line on 53 minutes, though, as referee Padraig Hughes awarded a penalty for a foul on Gilligan by Kavanagh. O'Boyle stepped up to fire past Paul Durcan and level the sides up.

With Bradley now in the mix (having Karl Lacey for close company) Donegal could have panicked. Instead, their response was perfect with Molloy putting them ahead, before Murphy's major sent them on their way to another fantastic win.

Derry: Danny Devlin; Ciaran Mullan, Kevin McCloy, Dermot McBride; Gerard O'Kane (0-2), Joe O'Kane, Aidan McAlynn; PJ McCloskey, Michael Friel; Ciaran McGoldrick (0-1), Sean Leo McGoldrick, Martin Donaghy; Enda Muldoon (0-1), Caolan O'Boyle (2-1, 1-0 pen), Conleth Gilligan (0-6, 6f). SUBS: Charlie Kielt (0-1) for McAlynn (28 mins); Barry McGoldrick for Mullan (half-time); Mark Lynch for C.McGoldrick (44 mins); Paddy Bradley for McCloskey (49 mins); James Kielt for Donaghy (62 mins).

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee, Kevin Cassidy; Anthony Thompson, Karl Lacey (0-1) Frank McGlynn; Rory Kavanagh (0-1), Martin McElhinney (0-1); Michael Hegarty, Mark McHugh, Dermot Molloy (0-5, 5f); Ryan Bradley, Michael Murphy (1-7, 6f), Colm McFadden (1-3). SUBS: Jason Noctor for McGee (39 mins); Neil Gallagher for Hegarty (55 mins); David Walsh for McElhinney (55 mins).

Referee: Padraig Hughes (Armagh)

GAA ALL COUNTY FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Comfortable win as Donegal edge closer to promotion

DONEGAL1-17
ANTRIM1-08

REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY
AT FR TIERNEY PARK
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL O'DONNELL

DONEGAL have their fingertips on a place back in Division 1 of the NFL, but haven't quite got it in their grasp for certain after shooting to a comfortable nine-point win over Antrim in Ballyshannon yesterday.

Colm McFadden top scored for Donegal with 1-5, as Jim McGuinness' charges edged ever-closer to a return to the top flight. With an away game against Laois to close the group stages this Sunday, their place in Division 1 isn't guaranteed mathematically just yet, though yesterday's big win over their Championship opponents saw them take a big leap towards promotion.

The Tir Chonaill men are no unbeaten from six League outings and without being impressive yesterday they coasted to a nine-point win over a team they meet in the Championship in six weeks time, when the Saffrons could have the likes of CJ McGourty, Andy McClean and Paddy Cunningham back in the frame.

Donegal did what they had to though and a nine-point win and another big scoreline was a satisfactory afternoon at the office.

Promisingly for Donegal, they had eight different players on the score-sheet and with McFadden's good form continuing there are plenty of

positives to be gleaned from a contest, though sharp in their minds is that a much-improved Antrim will be in town next month, when yesterday's game will be but a distant memory that will have little meaning or bearing.

Jim McGuinness gave a first start to Killybegs man Jason Noctor, who deputised for the injured Paddy McGrath, but that switch aside it was a case of as you were from the side that started the previous two games against Meath and Derry.

With a stiff wind in their faces, Donegal breezed out of the starting blocks and were five points ahead after just seven minutes. With 40 seconds gone, Ryan Bradley popped over the game's opening point after McFadden knocked down Cassidy's early delivery.

Cassidy himself got on the scoreboard with a curling effort after Michael Murphy tapped over a free. McFadden superbly collected Karl Lacey's raking ball in to put four between them and a sweetly-struck Molloy free off the ground added to Antrim's early woes.

Donegal went to sleep though and allowed the visitors back into the contest, with Liam Bradley's side getting back on level terms by the 23rd minute. Antrim offered little in the way of meaningful threats early on, but most of what they did have came from Thomas McCann. The Cargin man hit four points, two of them frees and Terry O'Neill scored another after fetching well above Kavanagh, as the Saffrons got back on an even-keel.

McFadden finished off a good Donegal move with a score from a tight angle, and after McCann registered another free, Donegal finished the half well. They moved two ahead at the short whistle (0-8 to 0-6) thanks to a beautiful effort by McFadden that was followed by a smart score by Michael Hegarty, after Murphy played a '45 short to McFadden.

Having concluded the scoring in the first-half, the experienced Hegarty wasted no time in adding to the tally, as he thumped over just 50 seconds into the second-half, following a move that stemmed from a superb block by Neil McGee at the other end.

Molloy extended the lead with a free he won himself after latching onto a clever pass infield by Murphy following good play at the back by Frank McGlynn and it was a five-point game when a brilliant effort by Karl Lacey from out the right sailed between the sticks.

Antrim took seventeen minutes to score in part two, with Terry O'Neill the man on the mark.

But two minutes later, Donegal led by double scores when McFadden rattled the back of Sean O'Neill's net. Lacey played a quick free to Anthony Thompson, who played a well-worked one-two with Adrian Hanlon before playing to McFadden. Despite the ball not bouncing for him, the St Michael's man expertly drilled home.

The joy was short-lived, though. Two minutes later, a sweeping Antrim move involving O'Neill and

Tony Scullion concluded with sub Brian Neeson riffling to the top corner of Paul Durcan's net in some style from a seemingly impossible angle.

It failed to rattle Donegal and six points in the final ten minutes saw them coast home. Murphy led the purple patch with a free, before a smart fisted effort by Kavanagh put six between them with McFadden stretching his tally from a placed ball.

A superb free by Neeson stemmed the flow, but only briefly as Donegal hit three points in the final two minutes, through Murphy, McFadden and Cassidy to edge ever-closer to a return to the top flight. Victory or a draw in Laois will clinch it; a defeat and the sums will start.

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Anthony Thompson, Neil McGee, Jason Noctor; Frank McGlynn, Karl Lacey (0-1), Kevin Cassidy (0-2); Rory Kavanagh (0-1), Martin McElhinney; Ryan Bradley, Michael Hegarty (0-2), Dermot Molloy (0-2, 2f); Mark McHugh, Michael Murphy (0-3, 2f), Colm McFadden (1-5, 2f). **SUBS:** Neil Gallagher for McElhinney (48 mins); Adrian Hanlon for Molloy (50 mins); David Walsh for Noctor (60 mins).

Antrim: Sean O'Neill; Colin Brady, Ricky Johnston, Aaron Douglas; Tony Scullion, Conor Murray, Anto Healy; Aodhan Gallagher, Sean Burke; Terry O'Neill (0-2), Mark Sweeney, Mark McAleese; Kevin Brady, Brendan Heron, Thomas McCann (0-5, 3f). **SUBS:** Brian Neeson (1-1, 1f) for McAleese (51 mins); Dara Edwards for Gallagher (64 mins); Colm Fleming for McCann (68 mins).

Referee: Marty Duffy (Sligo).

Match Stats

Donegal/Antrim

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Goals | 1/1 |
| Points | 17/8 |
| Wides | 7/10 |
| 45s | 1/0 |
| Frees awarded | 20/22 |
| Frees scored | 6/4 |
| Short efforts | 6/5 |
| Yellow cards | 1/2 |
| Red cards | 0/0 |

SPORT

www.donegaldemocrat.com

Allianz National Football League Division Two

Sluggish Donegal do enough

Laois..... 1-15
Donegal..... 1-11

Report: Tom Comack

Photos: Gerry O'Donnell

Donegal are back in Division One football and also on their way back to Croke Park for another Division Two League final meeting with their conquerers on Sunday, Laois.

Jim McGuinness took his men to Portlaoise needing keep their noses in front to claim promotion to the top division. And it was mission accomplished even if it was one of their less inspiring performances in the seven game campaign.

In many ways Sunday's performance was a carbon copy of the opening night display against Sligo in Ballybofey.

This was certainly the case in the first half when they struggled against the power and pace of Laois, who also troubled the Donegal rearguard with their diagonal ball to the front men in attack.

Laois led 0-9 to 0-3 at half-time and were full value for their six point margin even if they were the benefactors of a number of frees of the softish variety.

To Donegal's credit and despite going eight down and losing Michael Hegarty to a second yellow in the middle of the second half, they dug deep to turn in a battling performance.

They, in fact, won the second half on the scoreboard as they hit 1-8 to Laois's 1-6, with their goal and all but three of their points coming from play. Laois, on the other hand, scored four of their points from frees off the trusty white boot of Micheal John Tierney.

Laois opened in whirlwind fashion with two points inside three minutes with Colm Begley firing over inside 20 seconds with Tierney converting the first of his seven opening half points.

Anthony Thompson got Donegal off the mark on five minutes when he polished off a good move involving Rory Kavanagh, Michael Murphy and Michael Hegarty.

But with the locals winning the bulk of possession around midfield Tierney from another free and the powerful John O'Loughlin (from play) extended the Laois lead out to three points 0-4 to 0-1.

Murphy struck for Donegal's second on 14 minutes from a quick free and swift transfer from Hegarty.

Tierney and Martin McElhinney traded points, McElhinney just back in the fray after a time out for running repairs on a hand injury. The closing first half exchanges were dominated by Laois and they punished on the scoreboard courtesy of a number of softish frees

Tierney split the posts three more times in the closing five minutes of the half to give his side a 0-9 to 0-3 half-time lead.

Dermot Molloy reduced the margin within a minute of the restart while 60 seconds later Peter O'Leary charged up the left wing to shave the top of Paul Durcan's crossbar.

With Donegal looking a little hesitant and

leaden legged, Paul Durcan did well to deny Tierney from point blank range before Rory Kavanagh made it a four point game once again taking a good lay off from Colm McFadden.

Shortly afterwards Molloy missed a glorious opportunity for a goal. With Marty Boyle free to his right Molloy, following a charging run by Neil McGee and inch perfect pass from McFadden, drew a good save from Eoin Culleton.

To make matters worse 30 seconds later Durcan was taking the ball out of the Donegal net. The Four Masters man was beaten by Tierney who was set free by an exquisite diagonal ball from Ross Munnelly.

Trailling by eight points and Tyrone winning in Navan meant it was jangled nerve time for the green and gold clad supporters in the O'Moore Park sunshine.

But two rapid fire strikes from Murphy from a 35 metre free and McFadden from play followed by a Molloy goal had the visitors smack back in the tie by the 47-minute mark.

The margin was down to two by the end of the third quarter courtesy of a superb Kavanagh strike on the run.

Mark Timmons and McElhinney, now operating at full-forward in a direct swap with Murphy, kept the scoreboard ticking.

The margin was still two with McFadden and Tierney trading scores before Tierney posted two late frees to secure victory for the O'Moore County.

Laois: Eoin Culleton; Denis Booth, Kevin Meaney, Mark Timmons (0-1); Darren Strong (0-1), Shane O'Sullivan, Peter O'Leary (0-1); Pdraig Clancy, Brendan Quigley; Colm Begley (0-1), John O'Loughlin (0-1), Niall Dooner; Ross Munnelly, Billy Sheehan, Michael John Tierney(1-10,7f). Subs: Donal Kingston for B. Sheehan (52); Pal Cahillane for R. Munnelly

(67).

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee, Frank McGlynn; Marty Boyle Kevin Cassidy, Anthony Thompson (0-1); Rory Kavanagh (0-2), Martin McElhinney (0-2); Mark McHugh, Michael Hegarty, Ryan Bradley; Colm McFadden(0-3,2f), Michael Murphy (0-2,1f), Dermot Molloy (1-1). Sub: Adrian Hanlon for M. McElhinney (59)

Referee: Martin Higgins (Fermoy)

Determined Donegal bag the Division 2 crown

DONEGAL2-11
LAOIS0-16

**REPORT BY CHRIS MCNULTY
AT CROKE PARK
PHOTOS BY DONNA MCBRIDE**

DONEGAL are Division 2 Champions for 2011 after they managed to edge out Laois in a tense decider at sparsely-populated Croke Park yesterday.

Jim McGuinness' had to put up a strong show of resistance in the second-half. Leading by eight points after a quick-fire start to the second half saw them roar seven ahead, Adrian Hanlon's 40th minute dismissal coincided with the carriage coming off the rails for a time.

A 19th-minute Michael Murphy penalty had Donegal 1-5 to 0-5 ahead at the break. And within 44 seconds of the re-start it looked like Donegal had the issue sealed. A magnificent point by Murphy was followed by Colm McFadden rattling home a second Donegal goal to put seven between them.

With Hanlon trundling off after picking up a second yellow, Murphy tapped over a free and the margin was at eight. But with the numerical disadvantage, the wind calmed from Donegal's sails and Laois found a new lease of life.

Justin McNulty's men staged a stunning comeback to come within a point, only for Colm McFadden's free to settle the jangling Donegal nerves. Rory Kavanagh and a massive Kevin

Cassidy effort, as well as a point by sub David Walsh meant the silverware was Donegal's but not before a heart-stopping conclusion.

"Every day is different and you have to try and find a way to win every day. Thankfully today, the boys wanted to win the game and when it was in the melting pot they found that way to win and that's the encouraging thing," observed Jim McGuinness in the bowels of Croke Park following the win.

The Donegal rumour mill spun wildly all week with the Tir Chonaill dressing room resembling a small medical ward such was the level of injury worries faced by boss Jim McGuinness.

By throw-in, Paddy McGrath, Neil McGee and Michael Hegarty had failed in their bids to be fit. Crucially, however, Karl Lacey, Kevin Cassidy, Mark McHugh and skipper Michael Murphy all lined out from the off. It was a Donegal team that had a little of an unfamiliar feel to it, though not as much as had been feared.

Adrian Hanlon and Marty Boyle were both included, while there was a first intercounty start since January 2009 for St Eunan's midfielder Kevin Rafferty, who has recently been re-drafted into the squad.

In a new departure, McFadden and Murphy rotated coming out the field and playing inside. They hit 1-3 apiece on another good outing for the Donegal full-forward line.

"We were trying to avoid kicking the ball to Colm Begley and Pádraig Clancy," McGuinness explained.

"I think it worked well for us. Peter O'Leary has been their best player getting up the field and they then had to make a decision at that stage, were they going to send him out to mark Michael and they went with him. He couldn't get up the field as a result of that. We were happy with how that worked, and Michael's fetching ability and the balls he was sending into Colm." Murphy (45) and Niall Donohoe traded scores in the opening three minutes, before Donegal came within inches of stamping a big mark on proceedings. Adrain Hanlon fed Molloy with a superb pass and the Glenties man watched as his drilled effort cannoned back off the base of Eoin Culliton's post.

Rory Kavanagh fetched for a rebound, but he was denied by a double block. Mark McHugh put Donegal

ahead again on 12 minutes with what was his first point of the 2011 League - and after John O'Loughlin levelled it up again, Donegal got the big score of the half just after the mid-way point in part one.

Hanlon showed superb sight and awareness to pick out the darting run of Murphy into the dangerzone. The big Glenswilly man went to ground under the challenge of a Laois defender and Marty Duffy's outstretched arms signalled a penalty. Murphy stepped forth and blasted past Culliton to some authority at the Canal End.

The Donegal captain was provider soon after as Donegal's lead was extended. From a magnificent piece of defending by Frank McGlynn in the

corner, Donegal burst forward and Murphy delivered from deep for McFadden to split the sticks.

Four minutes from the break, Murphy majestically leapt to win a

kick-out and tee up Ryan Bradley for a five-point Donegal lead. As the sides headed for the solace of the Cusack Stand and the half-time interval, Tierney's first free of the day and a point by Donohoe had Laois within striking distance, 1-5 to 0-5 Donegal led.

Murphy, magnificently, added to it before the crucial second arrived seconds later. Murphy pulled away and fed McFadden, who made no mistake in rolling home.

Already on a yellow, Adrian Hanlon was then sent to the line for his part in a tangle on 40 minutes and after Murphy clipped over a free, Laois came charging back into the tie. Donegal's short passing game was taken over by Laois' direct passages of play and with seven points in a row Croke Park sensed a dramatic comeback was about to be complete.

Enter Donegal's old guard to steady the rocking ship. Colm McFadden delivered a free into Hill 16 before Rory Kavanagh put three in it again and a massive point by Cassidy from all of 40 metres was the perfect tonic.

David Walsh added another after Kingston pulled one back and Donegal survived a late rally with Laois restricted to three points 'keeper Paul Durcan brilliantly turning an effort by Kingston over the crossbar to keep them out of the winners enclosure

In the enclosure was Donegal, though minds were already sharply turning to May 15th and Antrim when the battle becomes a war..

Donegal: Paul Durcan; Frank McGlynn, Kevin Cassidy (0-1), Karl Lacey; Marty Boyle, Anthony Thompson, Martin McElhinney; Rory Kavanagh (0-1), Kevin Rafferty; Ryan Bradley (0-1), Mark McHugh (0-1), Dermot Molloy; Adrain Hanlon, Michael Murphy (1-3, 1-0pen, 1f, 1'45), Colm McFadden (1-3, 1f). **SUBS:** Neil Gallagher for Rafferty (43 mins); Daniel McLaughlin for Molloy (54 mins); David Walsh (0-1) for McElhinney (59 mins).

Laois: Eoin Culliton; Denis Booth, Kevin Meaney, Mark Timmons; Darren Strong (0-1), Shane Julian, Peter O'Leary; Pádraig Clancy, Brendan Quigley; Colm Begley (0-1), John O'Loughlin (0-1), Niall Donohoe (0-2); Ross Munnelly (0-2), Billy Sheehan, MJ Tierney (0-1, 1f). **SUBS:** Cahir Healy for Booth (29 mins); Paul Cahillane (0-2) for Clancy (half-time); Donal Kingston (0-3, 1f) for Tierney (43 mins); Kieran Lillis for Sheehan (65 mins).

Referee: Marty Duffy (Sligo).

SPORT GAELIC GAMES



DONNCHADH BOYLE

DONEGAL 2-11

LAOIS 0-16

ALLIANZ NFL DIVISION 2 FINAL

NOT for the first time, Donegal enter a summer full of promise.

In the aftermath of yesterday's league success, manager Jim McGuinness and forward Colm McFadden were at pains to point out that the annexing of a league title was a step on what they hope will be a longer journey.

Back in 2007, Donegal won the league's top division, their first national title since the Sam Maguire in 1992. Hopes were high that the Donegal men could deliver. They didn't.

But yesterday's victory was carved from different stuff. Down to 14 men after 39 minutes when Adrian Hanlon picked up his second yellow card, they had to battle hard as Laois went about eating into an eight-point deficit.

Seven scores on the bounce brought resilient Laois to within touching distance - substitute Donie Kingston hit four while another replacement, Paul Cahillane, hit three points on a day when his former club Celtic drew a blank in Ibrox.

But just as Donegal seemed ready to capitulate, with their defence creaking, their senior players did the necessary. McFadden pointed a pressure free to steady the ship.

Thirty seconds later Rory Kavanagh also found his range before Kevin Cassidy, who retired from inter-county football after last year's embarrassing defeat to Armagh in Crossmaglen before reconsidering, raided forward to put four points left on the clock.

"They have been on the back end of a hard couple of seasons but I would feel that I am in a good place with a lot of these players," McGuinness said afterwards. "Colm, Rory, Christy

Murphy's law points way for Donegal glory

Toye and Kevin Cassidy all have over a hundred games played for Donegal, but they are around 26 years of age. That's a lot of experience to have in your locker and to still be relatively young."

Donegal started brighter and were 1-2 to 0-2 up after 19 minutes when Michael Murphy converted the most spectacular penalty Croke Park has seen in a long time. A clever flick across the square from Hanlon had given the Glenswilly man a sight of goal before he was felled by Darren Strong.

The award seemed generous but Murphy smashed it in off the underside of the crossbar.

It was a cagey affair in the opening 35 minutes. In truth, the game looked more like a rugby league match, with the mass of bodies lining up on the 45-metre line, with both sides effectively allowing each other possession in their own half.

LESSON

After seeing MJ Tierney kick 10 frees in their league encounter, Donegal had learned their lesson, with the Parnells man reduced to attempts from beyond the '45'. But his kicking was off and he saw just seven minutes of the second half before he was called ashore.

Already a goal down at the break (1-5 to 0-5), the restart could hardly have gone any worse for Laois.

Murphy, switching between the half and full-forward lines, pointed an outrageous free from the touchline and another from play and, a few seconds later he was sending McFadden - his former teacher in St Eunan's College, Letterkenny - through on goal for a simple finish and suddenly Laois were eight points down.

Donegal were cruising, but things would change when Hanlon was dis-

missed and Tierney made way for Kingston. Laois showed admirable fight and landed those seven successive scores, with Kingston's physical presence causing Donegal problems.

"We always knew Donie would be a great man to have - that didn't just become apparent to us today," manager Justin McNulty said. "That fact of the matter is that he's coming back from a long time out through injury. He's coming close to the form and fitness level needed to contend for a starting place."

Donegal were punch drunk at that stage before their experienced heads popped up. Laois came yet again and driven on by the likes of Colm Begley and Brendan Quigley, they outscored the Ulster side by four points to one in the closing stages.

However, the finish line came just in time for Donegal, leaving McNulty to rue their poor start to the second half.

"It was two teams playing a very similar style and cancelling each other out in the first half. It opened up a good bit in the second half and I think it was quite exciting," said the

Armagh man. "We fought back well after they started the second half with 60 seconds of mayhem.

"We're disappointed, but the guys have shown great character throughout this year. They've conceded sucker punches of goals at times and still come back from them. I think that's a true sign of their resilience.

"They've shown true courage to come back and if they keep fighting right to the bitter end, that's all I'll ask of them."

Both sides will be in Division 1 next season but of more immediate concern is their championship summer and for Donegal, it can't come quickly enough.

SCORERS - Donegal: M Murphy (ft, 1'45, 1-0 pen), C McFadden (ft) 1-3 each, K Cassidy, R McAvanagh, R Bradley, M McHugh, D Walsh 0-1 each. Laois: D Kingston 0-4 (ft), P Cahillane 0-3, R Munnally, J O'Loughlin, N Donohoe 0-2 each, C Begley, D Strong, MJ Tierney (ft) 0-1 each.
DONEGAL - P Durcan 7, K Lacey 8, K Cassidy 8, F McGlynn 7, M Boyle 6, A Thompson 7, K Rafferty 6, R Kavanagh 7, M McElhinney 6, D Molloy 6, M McHugh 7, M Murphy 8, R Bradley 7, A Hanlon 5, C McFadden 8. Subs: N Gallagher 6 for Rafferty (43), D McLaughlin 6 for Molloy (53), D Walsh 7 for McElhinney (58).
LAOIS - E Culliton 6, P O'Leary 7, M Timmons 7, D Booth 6, D Strong 7, S Julian 6, K Meaney 7, P Clancy 5, B Quigley 7, C Begley 8, J O'Loughlin 7, N Donohoe 8, R Munnally 7, B Sheehan 5, MJ Tierney 5. Subs: C Healy 6 for Booth (29), P Cahillane 8 for Clancy (h-t), D Kingston 8 for MJ Tierney (42), K Lillis for Sheehan (65).
REF - M Duffy (Sligo).



Michael Murphy scores with an emphatic strike from the penalty spot as he leads Donegal to the Allianz NFL Division 2 title against Laois at Croke Park yesterday. DAVID MAHER & STEPHEN MCCARTHY / SPORTSFILE

