



ARD MHACHA V AN DÚN

QUARTER-FINAL

THROW IN 3:30PM | Athletic Grounds, Armagh

ULSTER SENIOR HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

CRAOBH IOMÁNA ULADH 2015

QUARTER FINALS | 21Ú MEITHEAMH

#ULSTER2015



DOIRE V DÚN NA NGALL

QUARTER-FINAL

THROW IN 3:30PM | Celtic Park, Derry

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TODAY'S GAMES

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ULSTER GAA HURLING SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP QUARTER-FINAL

THROW IN 3:30PM
ATHLETIC GROUNDS, ARMAGH



**ARD MHACHA
V AN DÚN**

ULSTER GAA HURLING SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP QUARTER-FINAL

THROW IN 3:30PM
CELTIC PARK, DERRY



**DOIRE
V DÚN NA NGALL**

Referee: Eamonn Hassan (Doire)
Standby: Kevin Brady (An Lú)
Linesman: Stephen Masterson (An Mhí)
Sideline Official: Brian Brady (An Lú)
Umpires: R.A Quinn, Gerard Quinn,
Oisín Cassidy & Jude O'Kane

Referee: James Clarke (An Cabhán)
Standby: Brendan Sweeney (An Cabhán)
Linesman: John Doyle (Sligeach)
Sideline Official: Pat Maguire (Sligeach)
Umpires: Harry Byers, Paul Kearney,
Enda Sweeney & Brian Shields

Eamonn Hassan (Doire)

Eamonn is a member of Michael Davitt GAC, Swatragh. He has refereed various finals within his county, including the Senior Final in 2009, 2010 and 2011.



He also took charge of the Donegal Senior Final in 2009, 2011 and 2012, as well as the Armagh Senior Final in 2010.

Eamonn has been on the Ulster panel for a number of years where he has taken charge of various Ulster League Finals and the Intermediate Hurling Club Championship Final in 2008.

Eamonn took charge of the All Ireland Junior Club Final in 2011, while he refereed the 2013 Ulster Senior Hurling Club Championship Final and the 2014 Ulster Senior Club Championship Final.

James Clarke (An Cabhán)

James is a native of Cavan and a member of the Killinkere club. He entered the Ulster Referees Academy in 2009 and joined the National Panel in 2013.



James has refereed Senior Club Hurling Finals in Cavan, Longford and Fermanagh.

An accomplished football referee, taking charge of the Senior Football League Final in Cavan in 2013 is a personal highlight of James's refereeing career.

James has taken charge of Ulster Club Finals at Intermediate and Junior level. He also refereed the 2013 Ulster Minor Hurling Championship Final.

DISCLAIMER

All the information in the programme is reproduced in good faith. The publishers are not liable for any advertising or contribution in this issue. **BUÍOCHAS:** Comhairle Uladh would like to thank the County Boards and all other contributors for their assistance in the compilation of this programme. We'd also like to take this opportunity to thank all the players, management and backroom staff for their efforts today. Finally we thank all the supporters who have attended today's match, without you the championship just wouldn't be the same.

RÉAMHFHOICAL

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur roimh na foirne agus an lucht leanúna a tháinig go Páirc Luthchléas agus Páirc na gCeilteach inniu ó Ard Mhacha, ón Dún, ó Dhoire ó Dhún na nGall. Molaim go hard gach duine a chuidigh leis na himreoirí seo thar na blianta iad a ullmhú le himirt ag an ardchaighdeán spóirt seo.

It is a great honour to welcome all here today for the Ulster Senior Hurling Championship Quarter Finals between Ard Mhacha and An Dún in the Athletic Grounds and Doire v Dún na nGall in Celtic Park.

Also, this weekend we host Feile na nGael and I wish to express my sincere appreciation on behalf of Comhairle Uladh to all those who are involved in this massive event. I extend a warm welcome to all clubs. Feile na nGael is all about participation and all players were treated to a fun filled weekend of activity. A special mention to all the host clubs and families who prepared so diligently for what will be a lifelong memory of all those involved.

The ongoing development of hurling in our province is showing signs of some progress. Our Ulster Senior Hurling Táin Club Leagues are providing meaningful competitive games in the best time of the playing season. 23 clubs across 5 counties are playing regularly in 3 divisions. Whilst there remains room for improvement, the league has certainly provided additional hurling to clubs.

Fear Manach winning the Lory Meagher Cup is further evidence of real progress in Ulster hurling. Doire and Ard Mhacha were also defeated in the Christy Ring and Nicky Rackard Finals respectively and should be commended for their great effort. Our Ulster Hurling Championship is a central platform for development.

I congratulate and thank all involved with our teams today. I would also like to wish all teams, their County Boards and background teams every success in their respective outings today and indeed the match officials whose role should never be overlooked.

Whether it be in schools competitions, on the important platform that is Scór or in competitive club, county or Provincial activity our teams through their members and players exemplify the positive attributes which go hand in hand with our pride of place which remains central to all things GAA.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all the personnel involved in hosting today's games. Everyone plays their part; supporters and stewards, medics, match officials and players, sponsors and media, County Boards and Provincial Council.

Finally, to you the supporters; your attendance here today makes these summer Sundays the special events they have become. Your support, attendance and attention is highly valued and we hope the experience of today will encourage you to join us again.

Be There. All The Way!

Mairtín Mac Aibhne

Mairtín Mac Aibhne
Uachtarán Chomhairle Uladh



Amhrán na bhFiann

Sinne Fianna Fáil
A tá fé gheall ag Éirinn,
buion dár slua
Thar toinn do ráinig chugainn,
Fé mhóid bheith saor,
Sean tír ár sirsir feasta
Ní fhagfar fé'n tiorán ná fé'n tráil
Aocht a théam sa bhearna bhaoil,
Le gean ar Ghaeil chun báis nó saoil
Le guna screach fé lámhach na bpiléar
Seo libh canaídh Amhrán na bhFiann.

YOUR SAFETY

Please note the following regulations. We ask for your full co-operation with stewards and other volunteers who are doing their best to ensure you enjoy the match. If you fail to co-operate it may be necessary to refuse you entry or, if inside the stadium, to ask you to leave.

Please do not bring anything into the stadium that can be used as a weapon or that will cause interference with others. This includes fireworks, smoke canisters, bottles, flagpoles, banners. We do not allow alcohol in the ground. We ask you not to climb onto walls, stands and other buildings. Likewise, we ask you to refrain from making unnecessary noise that will annoy other spectators near you. That includes the likes of air horns or radios.

Please do not use foul, abusive or offensive language. There are families and children present. We ask you not to enter the field of play during or after the game for health and safety reasons. Occasionally we may be required

to search patrons entering the ground. If you refuse to be searched you may be refused entry. Please do not obstruct gangways or stairwells etc. Also, please do not engage in behaviour that may cause a fire or other dangerous event.

The Officers on duty reserve the right to remove you from the ground if you do not comply with these simple regulations. Our intention is simply to ensure that all our supporters can enjoy the match.

FIRST AID

First Aid is provided at today's venue, by Order of Malta Personnel with an ambulance located behind the main stand.

LOST CHILDREN

Children who have become separated from their parents/guardians should be brought to the designated First Aid Points.

SAFETY NOTICE

We have established this policy for health and safety reasons, to avoid serious injury or death. We thank you for your co-operation and hope you enjoy the match.



CLÀR AN LAE

Ulster GAA Hurling Senior Championship Quarter Final Ard Mhacha v An Dún at Athletic Grounds

- 15.02 Both County Secretaries to present Team Lists in Referees room
- 15.09 Doire amach ar an bPáirc
- 15.12 Dún na nGall amach ar an bPáirc
- 15.28 Amhrán na bhFiann
- 15.30 Tús an Cluiche: Doire v Dún na nGall
- 16.06 Half Time / Leath Am
- 16.21 Start of Second Half / Tús an dara leath
- 16.59 Críoch an Chluiche Shinsir

Ulster GAA Hurling Senior Championship Quarter Final Doire v Dún na nGall at Celtic Park

- 15.02 Both County Secretaries to present Team Lists in Referees room
- 15.09 An Dún amach ar an bPáirc
- 15.12 Ard Mhacha amach ar an bPáirc
- 15.28 Amhrán na bhFiann
- 15.30 Tús an Cluiche: Ard Mhacha v An Dún
- 16.06 Half Time / Leath Am
- 16.21 Start of Second Half / Tús an dara leath
- 16.59 Críoch an Chluiche Shinsir



COACHES & COACHES

YOUTH TEAM & 5 ADULT
COACHES GO FREE*

ULSTER GAA SENIOR HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP 2015

QUARTER-FINALS

Sunday 21st June

Doire v Dún na nGall at Celtic Park
Ard Mhacha v An Dún at Athletic Grounds

SEMI-FINAL

Sunday 28th June

Doire / Dún na nGall v
Ard Mhacha / An Dún
at Owenbeg

FINAL

Sunday 12th July

Antrim v
Semi-Final Winner

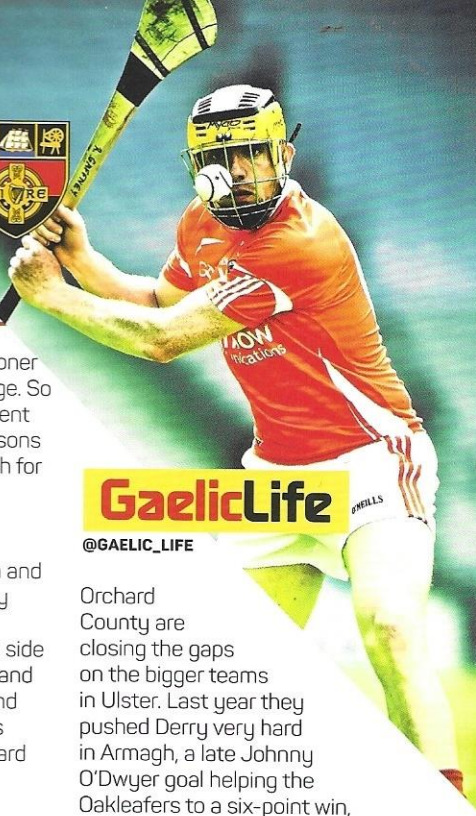


* YOUTH TEAM MUST BE UNDER 16 / OFFER APPLIES TO 1 TEAM PER CLUB

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SENIOR PREVIEW



GaelicLife

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Niall McCoy

THE mindsets of both Armagh and Down heading into today's game will go a long way to determining what sort of encounter we have. After a pretty dismal Division 2B showing, the Mourne County bounced back to reach the Semi-Final of the Christy Ring Cup.

Their performances against Wicklow and London, victories built on lightening starts, brought positives a plenty while their semi-final defeat to an in-form Derry at Owenbeg was nothing to be ashamed of.

But Micheal Johnston's side wanted to win the competition, not play the role of gallant competitors.

Despite their manager dropping men back and clogging up the middle sector, especially against Kerry in their first game, Down managed to hit some impressive totals.

They managed 6-63 across the four games, an average of 20.25 per game, so it seems they have the balance between attack and defence worked out well.

They had 13 scorers in all with Gareth 'Magic' Johnson (2-19),

Chris Egan (2-5) and Danny Toner (1-8) leading the scoring charge. So although the season hasn't went fully to plan, there are still reasons to be optimistic as they search for a first Ulster title since 1997.

For Armagh the difference between an excellent season and a disappointing one ultimately came down to one shot. Sylvester McConnell's young side competed well in the league, and notable wins against Mayo and Meath brought confidence as they entered the Nicky Rackard Cup as favourites.

From day one, a return to the Christy Ring was the aim, and they seemed to be one game away from that goal as they led Roscommon by two points deep into injury time in the Nicky Rackard Final at Croke Park on June 6.

But up stepped Rossies' captain Michael Kelly to blast home one of the goals of the year, and a season's work came crashing down. The fact that Roscommon saw off Mayo in the play-off last week to secure their promotion would have only made matters worse.

But it's a new competition and another chance to show that the

Orchard County are closing the gaps on the bigger teams in Ulster. Last year they pushed Derry very hard in Armagh, a late Johnny O'Dwyer goal helping the Oakleifers to a six-point win, and they will want a repeat of that performance.

As the season has went on, Eoin McGuinness has become more effective as a target man, although he was quieter than normal in the Nicky Rackard final. Using the pace of Cahal Carvill, the accuracy of Declan Coulter and the power of Ryan Gaffney, Armagh will attempt to get as much ball as possible onto McGuinness, who will be playing against his old team today, as will his brother Artie who is sure to feature at some stage.

Down already have had fore-warning of Conor Corvan's goal threat too after he netted in their Conor McGurk Tournament win over the Mourne county back in January. The Keady man was on fire in that pre-season tournament, and he will be keen to run at the Down defence once more. And they will need goals if they are to pull off a surprise. Armagh are an improving side but not improved enough to get past Down.

Johnston's side possess that little bit more quality, and they should secure a semi-final spot. If their heads are in the right place, of course.



SYLVESTER McCONNELL

Armagh Manager

A huge amount of work has gone into Armagh hurling in recent years and this past few months have seen a concerted effort to build on that good work. Unfortunately, we received a setback a fortnight ago when we lost out on the Nicky Rackard championship to Ros Comáin from the last puck of the ball. Roscommon went on to beat Maigh Eo last weekend to move up to the Christy Ring level.

However, this weekend offers Armagh hurlers an opportunity to forget the loss in Croke Park and start building again for next year. Armagh and Down have indeed already met twice this year. An early meeting in the Conor McGurk tournament saw an Armagh victory and a tight Division 2B league game played in Páirc Esler in Newry saw Down pulling away in the final minutes.

Armagh's performance in that league game spurred on the team to gain a number of good results in their Allianz league campaign. If Armagh perform to their potential today, there is no reason why we can't close the game out and claim a place in the Ulster Championship semi-final.

Good luck to all of our hurling and camogie clubs who are representing Armagh in Féile na nGael, which is taking place this weekend throughout Ulster. Armagh hurlers hope to add to the current buzz surrounding our sport in the Orchard county this afternoon by defeating our neighbours to claim a place in the provincial semi-final.



HEAD TO HEAD

MICHAEL JOHNSTON

Down Manager

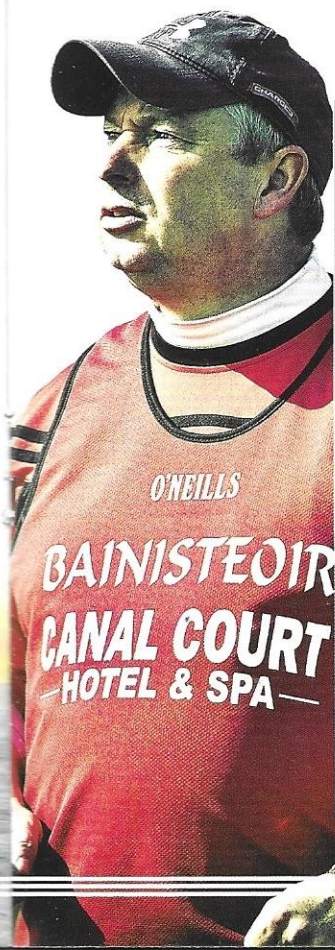
While it has been a challenging first season for me there have been enough positive signs to send us into this Ulster Championship campaign with optimism and some confidence. It has been frustrating not to have all players making themselves available to the County team but I have been able to introduce players like Michael McCullough, Chris Egan, John and Declan McManus; and they are starting to establish themselves.

Gareth Johnson has led by example in his return from a career threatening injury and has made steady progress throughout the campaign. Consistency has been our problem during the last four months with a mixed bag of performances in the National League. Gaining promotion was our prime objective but we fell short. Then in the Christy Ring Cup we would have beaten Kerry on their home pitch if we had taken our chances.

We followed that with a convincing win over another Div 2A team in London and a very creditable performance against Derry from the same division. By the time of the Derry game our small panel was creaking and was pretty patched up. Hopefully the players have been able to freshen up in the last few weeks and we will go into this game in better physical shape.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my backroom team and physios/medical staff for all their efforts and to acknowledge the Down County Board for their commitment to Down hurling. The efforts made by some clubs are obvious but when we have such a small pool of clubs everyone needs to commit.

I'm looking forward to this game and to meeting some very good friends at the Athletic Grounds. It is important for Ulster hurling that Armagh start to make progress again but also that Down re-establish themselves as genuine championship contenders.



ARD MHACHA

ARMAGH SENIOR TEAM

Manager: Sylvester McConnell



FÍR IONAIÐ/SUBSTITUTES

16. Padraig Moan, Na Fianna 17. Liam Woods, Na Fianna 18. Peter McKearney, Doire Núis
19. Connor Hannaway, Naomh Moininne 20. Pauric Hughes, Na Fianna 21. Tiarnan Nevin, Na Fianna
22. Odhrán Curry, Na Fianna 23. Artie McGuinness, Na Seamrógaí 24. Joe O'Connor, Craobh Rua
25. Conor McKee, Lámh Dhearg 26. Pádraig Lappin, Na Fianna

	Cúil	Cúilíní	Seachtai	45	Saor	Ciceanna
2AD Le...						
lomián						
NOTES						



AN DÚN

DOWN SENIOR TEAM

Manager: Michael Johnston



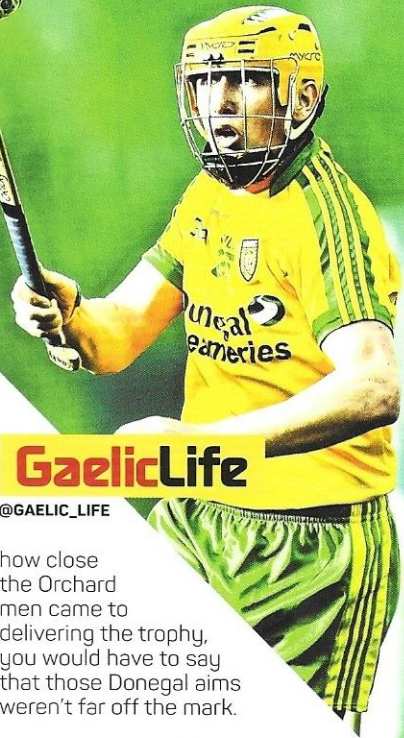
FÍR IONAID/SUBSTITUTES

16. Gary McMullan, Baile Aileach 17. Scott Nicholson, Baile Crann 18. Caolan Bailie, Baile Mhic Uileagoid
 19. Brett Nicholson, Baile Crann 20. Myles Nicholson, Baile Crann 21. Michael Turley, Rossa
 22. Conall Early, Bredach 23. Conall Fitzsimmons, Port an Pheire 24. Brook Byers, Baile Mhic Uileagoid
 25. Ryan McCusker, Baile Aileach 26. Michael Ennis, Baile Crann

	Cúil	Cúilíní	Seachai	45	Scor	Ciceanna
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SENIOR PREVIEW



Ciaran Woods

With the heartache of that Christy Ring Cup Final defeat still fresh in their minds, we can expect to see one of two Derry teams turn up today.

It will either be a team who are just coasting out the remainder of the season having missed out on the biggest prize on the biggest stage, or it will be a team determined to vent their frustrations and disappointments on an opponent, any opponent will do.

It was a fantastic Christy Ring Cup adventure for Tom McLean's

men, but it ended in the ultimate disappointment at Croke Park. On a day where little went right for them, the Oak Leaf's outing was probably encapsulated by the cruciate injury suffered by Paddy McCloskey just five minutes into the final.

They returned to training for the first time on Tuesday night having been allowed a little time away to let off some steam with their clubs, so they should be back with an increased hunger and motivation for today's clash. For Donegal meanwhile, it's a somewhat unusual situation. Their manager, Ray Durack, has already announced that he will be stepping down as the county senior manager, but is seeing out Donegal's Ulster Championship campaign before vacating the hot-seat.

The Tir Chonnail men had a hugely disappointing early season, primarily due to the absence of a host of first-team players due to injury, but all were back on board by the time the business end of the season came around.

They had serious Nicky Rackard Cup aspirations, but were left bitterly disappointed as they came up short against their Ulster rivals Armagh at the Semi-Final stage. And given

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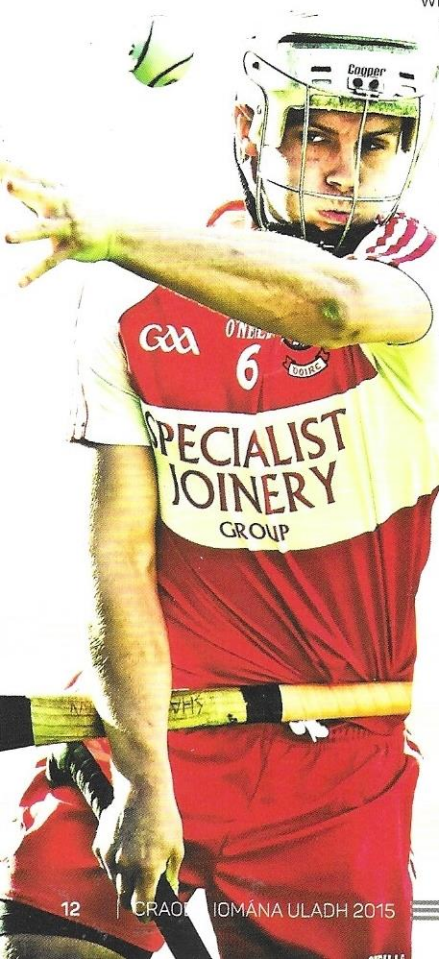
@GAELIC_LIFE

how close the Orchard men came to delivering the trophy, you would have to say that those Donegal aims weren't far off the mark.

There is no question that they face an uphill task this weekend. They are the minnows in this Ulster Championship pool, and no matter how much Derry may claim otherwise, the Oak Leaf will be expecting nothing other than a win, and a comfortable one at that, when the two sides meet this weekend.

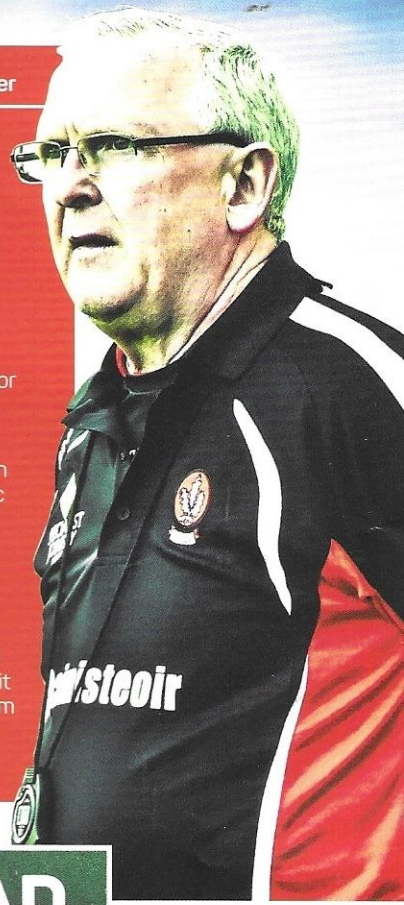
Celtic Park hasn't exactly been an out-and-out home venue for Derry, the Oak Leaf county having divided their games between the city venue and Owenbeg, the centre of excellence having played host to both National League and Christy Ring group games already this term.

Everything points towards a Derry win, and Donegal will have to brace themselves for a bit of a backlash. However, the Tir Chonnail men have proven themselves to be a well organised and skilled outfit themselves, and with absolutely nothing to lose, that makes them a dangerous opponent for Derry to have to contend with. In the end, it could be Derry's greater experience and resources which allow them to finally shake off a plucky Donegal challenge in the closing quarter.



TOM McLEAN

Derry Manager



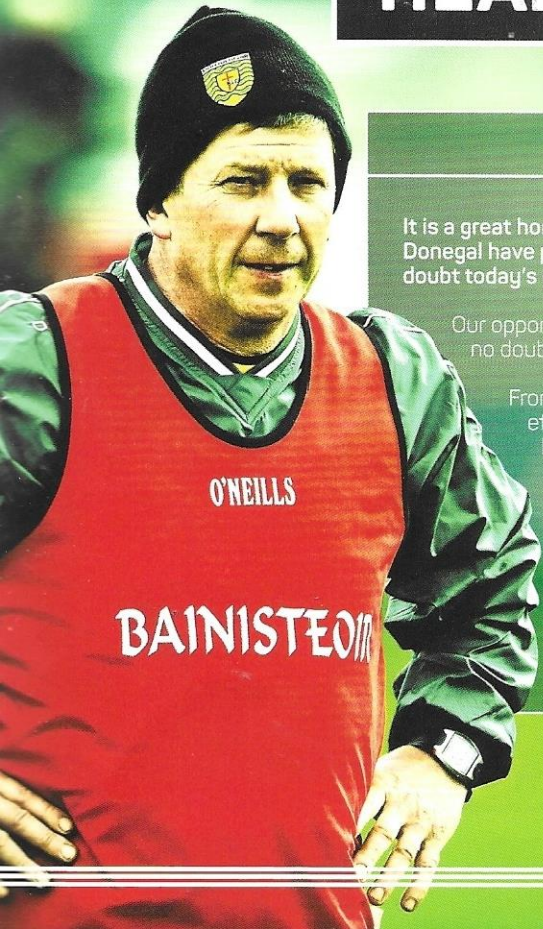
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the panel of players who worked so hard to make it to the Christy Ring Final in Croke Park. On the day, we just come up short against a good Kerry team who were in their third final in a row. Kerry may have got the breaks on the day to win the match but the Croke Park experience has been a valuable source of learning for our squad as they move forward into the Ulster Championship.

On behalf of the Derry senior hurling management, I would like to thank all the supporters who travelled to Dublin to support the team in the Christy Ring final in Croke Park, the County Board and sponsors, Specialist Joiner Group, for their continued support. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the local press for their coverage during the Christy Ring campaign.

The Ulster hurling championship got a great lift last year with a really good competitive final between Derry and Antrim in front of a big crowd at Owenbeg. In our first game today, we will be meeting a Donegal team who will come to Celtic Park feeling they have nothing to lose and who will give it a real go. We know we have to be on top of our game today and be ready for the challenge if we are to achieve the result we are looking for.

I would like to mention Patrick McCloskey, who suffered a serious knee injury five minutes into the Christy Ring final in Croke Park. Just over two and a half years ago, Patrick received a serious knee injury which, after surgery, he needed eighteen months rehab to get back full fitness and playing again. Unfortunately, it is the same knee again which Patrick has injured (cruciate). I would like to wish him all the best for his surgery and rehab, and to say that we will all be behind him to support and encourage him in any way we can in his journey back to full fitness.

HEAD TO HEAD



RAY DURACK

Donegal Manager

It is a great honour for me today to lead Donegal into Ulster Championship action. Donegal have played a number of games over the years in Celtic Park and I have no doubt today's game will have a great atmosphere.

Our opponents today, will come in to today's game full of confidence and will no doubt provide us with a very difficult challenge.

From our own perspective I would like to thank the players for all the effort and commitment they have shown up to this point. They have represented Donegal hurling well and will continue to do so. Remaining in Division 2B despite the number of injuries to key players shows the determination these players have.

A word of thanks also to the backroom team, the county board, our sponsors Donegal Creameries, the clubs who have given up their facilities and players so freely this past few months, and we look forward to your continued support.

DOIRE

DERRY SENIOR TEAM

Manager: Tom McLean



FÍR IONAID/SUBSTITUTES

16. Barry Robinson, Na Magha 17. Eugene McGuckin, An Suaitreach 18. Tiarnan McCloskey, Beannchar
 19. Brendan Douban, Na Magha 20. Déaglán Foley, Na Magha 21. Michael Conway, An Suaitreach
 22. Diarmuid Shiels, Na Magha 23. Malachai O'Hagan, An Suaitreach 24. Sean McNicholl, An Suaitreach
 25. John McCloskey, Baile Na Scríne 26. Dean Flanagan, Baile Na Scríne

Cúil	Cúilíní	Seachai	45	Saor	Ciceanna
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DÚN NA NGALL

DONEGAL SENIOR TEAM

Manager: Ray Durack



FÍR IONAIÐ/SUBSTITUTES

16. Dylan Laverty, Sean MacCumhails 17. Brendan Tourish, Setanta 18. Bernard Lafferty, Setanta
 19. Stephen Gillespie, Beart 20. Ciaran Kilgannon, Aodh Ruadh 21. Donal McLoughlin, Bun Cranncha
 22. Jack O'Loughlin, Bun Cranncha 23. Sean Curran, Sean MacCumhails

	Cúil	Cúilíní	Seachai	45	Seor	Ciceanna
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BLOOD SUB CAMPAIGN



Ulster GAA's 'Blood Sub' Campaign Launched on World Blood Donor Day

For GAA patrons attending the Armagh v Donegal championship match on Sunday 14th June, the action on the pitch wasn't the only thing to grab their attention. The Senior Football match was preceded by a balloon release to mark World Blood Donor Day, and to launch the Ulster GAA's 'Blood Sub' campaign.

The momentous occasion was celebrated by the release of 300 red balloons in the middle

of the Athletic Grounds pitch. Ulster GAA Vice President Michael Hasson was joined by Emma Sloan from the NI Blood Transfusion Service who, alongside the Irish Blood Transfusion Service, are the professional services which the GAA family can support through their response to this campaign.

The message is of the Blood Sub Campaign is simple - support blood donation and help save lives. Each year throughout Ireland, nearly 100,000 people receive a transfusion but less

than 4% of the population across the island give blood regularly.

Ulster GAA are calling on its membership to be aware of the importance of blood donation by promoting awareness of public donation sessions, supporting and encouraging those who can give blood to do so, and for a limited number of clubs who may be able to, host a blood donation session in their area.

For more information on this campaign, visit www.ulster.gaa.ie/health/blood-sub



WORKING AS A TEAM

ULSTER GAA & OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS



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ULSTER GAA TO HOST FÉILE NA nGAEL 2015

Following the hosting of a successful Féile na nGael tournament in 2014, Ulster GAA has been given the honour of hosting the event again over this weekend of 19th to 21st June 2015.

The event will bring a total of 192 teams together for a fun weekend of competition in Hurling and Camogie. A further 60 Handball clubs will also play in a tournament on Saturday 21st June. This will bring approximately 4,800 young people together over the weekend.

The event was officially launched on Monday 18th May at Navan Fort, Armagh, when the Presidents of the GAA, the Camogie Association and the Handball Association took a break from a three day primary schools visitation programme throughout Ulster.

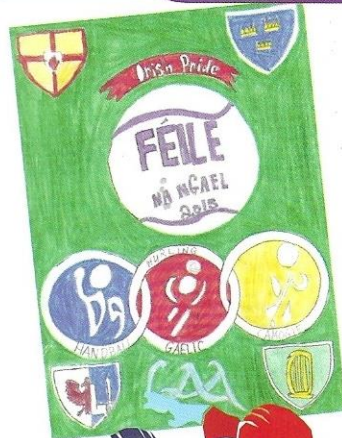
A fun art competition has been organised with primary schools throughout Ulster with the winning design for the front cover of the Féile na nGael programme being shown here.

The draw to match the visiting clubs with their hosts and the fixtures for the 2015 Féile na nGael has been completed.

The draw identifies both the Hurling and Camogie sides involved in the Irish Pride Féile na nGael. As the visiting teams become identified, the draw will be updated reflecting all participating teams.

This can be viewed at:
<http://ulster.gaa.ie/2015/04/feile-na-ngael-2015-draw/>

Ulster GAA looks forward to welcoming the teams, and their families and supporters, from across Ireland, to our province for the weekend and hope that all participants leave with wonderful memories of their time at Féile na nGael 2015.



“Why just improve on what’s been done before,
when you can totally reimagine it.”



The Residence

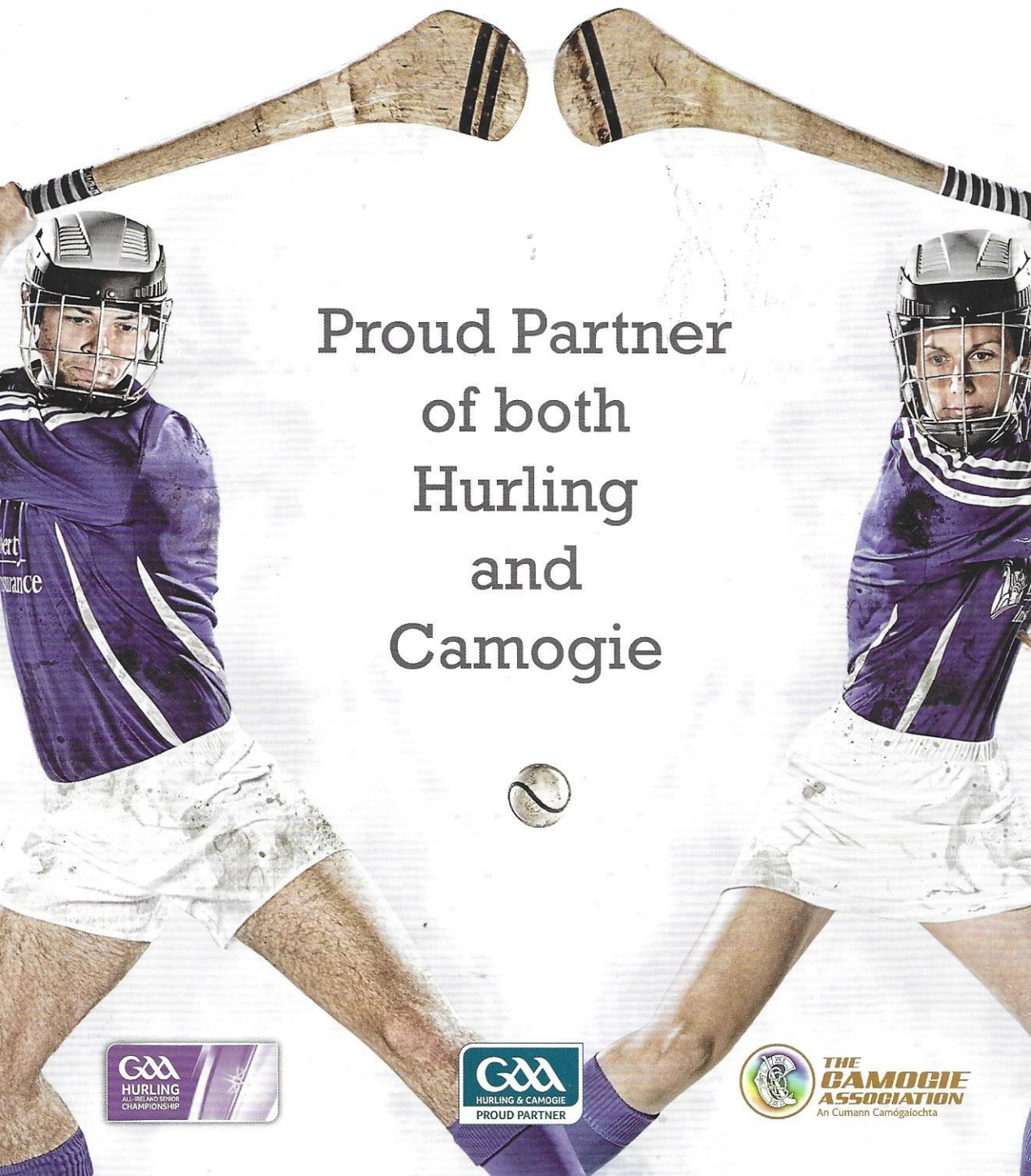
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Gritty Donegal lose to unimpressive Derry

DERRY3-17
 DONEGAL5-7

BY GERRY MCLAUGHLIN

THERE is one nagging question that will haunt Donegal after this slightly bizarre encounter against a Derry side who looked like men whose mind's were mostly elsewhere in Celtic Park, yesterday.

And that is how would they have done if Jamesie Donnelly, Mark Callaghan, Paul Sheridan, Ciaran Matthewson, Christopher McDermott and Lee Henderson had been available for selection in this extraordinary affair at Celtic Park?

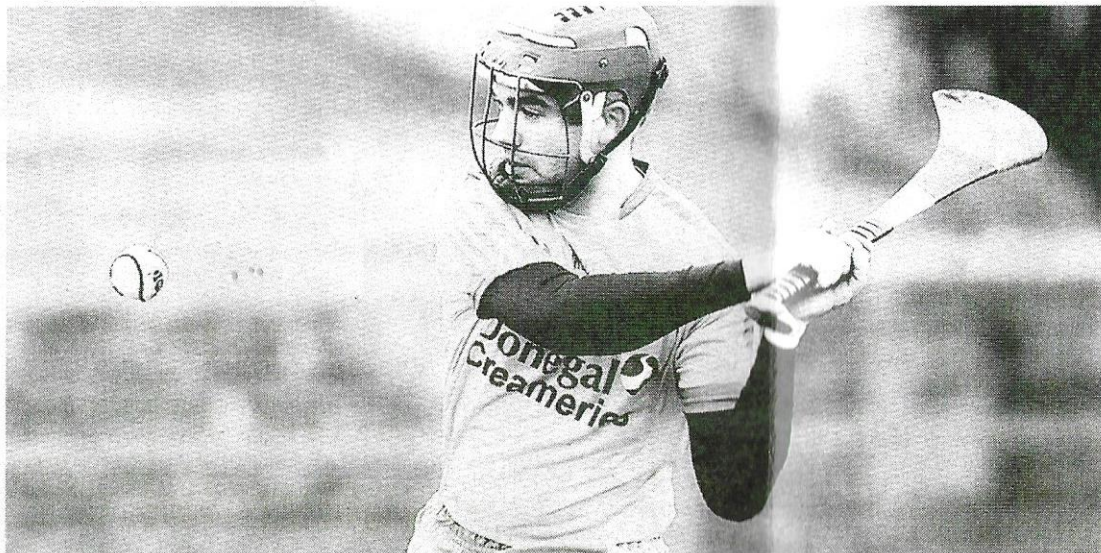
For decimated Donegal banged in five goals against a Derry side who played like gents who were out for an afternoon stroll.

Brendan Tourish, Jack O'Loughlin, Sean Curran, Stephen Gillespie and Bernard Gillespie stepped into the breach and played heroically against a team that were operating in a much higher division.

But Donegal never let their much vaunted opponents get too far in front, and Ronan McDermott in particular hauled back Derry on a number of occasions.

Tir Conaill came desperately close to causing what would have been a cataclysmic upset against really tall odds.

But this gritty side just came up short against a most unimpressive



Kevin Campbell of Donegal. DP04

Derry got off to a nifty start with three crisply struck early points from towering marksman Ruairi Convery. It looked like the beginnings of an early rout until Donegal's outstanding centre forward Sean McVeigh ran through the centre of the Derry defence and was hauled down for a penalty.

Kevin Campbell smashed a magnificent shot to the roof of the net to bring Tir Conaill right back into the picture. And that set the scene for a well-contested opening half phase.

pulling clear, they were hauled back by a most gritty Donegal.

Derry looked to be cruising to a 1-11 to 1-4 half time lead after Kevin Hinphay smacked the sliothar to the net from an Alan Grant.

But classy Campbell reduced the deficit when he smacked a 21 metre free to the Derry net to leave the winners in front by 1-11 to 2-4.

And it looked like the floodgates were about to open when Derry found the net after just 17 seconds of the second half.

was in acres of space and easily found the net to leave Derry leading by 2-11 to 2-4.

But Ronan McDermott got the first of his hat-trick of goals in the 42nd minute to leave matters interesting.

Derry always looked dangerous in attack but their full-backline was as wide open as Bundoran on a Twelfth Weekend, on occasions.

It looked like the home side had really settled matters when substitute Brendan Douban ghosted through for a well-converted goal to

But Tir Conaill hit back through a similar cleverly converted goal from the inevitable Ronan McDermott to set up an interesting finish.

And Kevin Campbell, who had a fine game otherwise, missed a few vital late frees.

Derry just about deserved their victory but this truly decimated Donegal side stood up and was counted when it really mattered.

For they showed their absent colleagues that there is loads of steel as well as skill in these hurlers.

So hopefully they will take it to the next level next year, as the potential is definitely there for real success with a full squad.

Derry: D McDermott, M Warnock (0-1) C Quinn, S McCullagh; A Raftery, L Hinphay, R McCloskey; K Hinphay (1-4) B Quigley (0-1); S McGuigan, R Convery (0-21f) P Henry (0-3f); J O'Dwyer (0-1), A Grant (1-1) A Kelly (0-1). Subs; B Douban (1-0), for A Kelly (50), D Foley (0-2) for P Henry (56), E McGuckin (0-1) for R McCloskey (64), M Conway for K Hinphay (65).

Donegal: P Burns, B Tourish, J O'Loughlin; P Doherty, J Boyle, N Cleary; D Cullen, S Curran; S Gillespie S McVeigh (0-2), E McDermott (0-1); K Campbell (2-2,165) R McDermott (3-2) B Lafferty. Subs; D McLaughlin for S Curran (50)