

Sleacht Néill v Machaire Fíolta Baile Stíll v Grianloch











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## SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS

	Bellaghy	21	1956 1958 1959 1960 1972 1975 1979 1986
2	Ballinderry	13	1927 1974 1980 1981 2012 2013
3	Newbridge	10	1937 1940 1945 1948
4	Lavey	8	1938 1943 1954 1977
5	Dungiven	7	1947 1951 1983 1984
	Magherafelt	7	1939 1942 1944 1946
7	Slaughtneil	5	2004 2014 2015 2016
8	Ballinascreen	4	1934 1935 1941 1973
9	Glenullin	3	1928 1985 2007
	An Lúb	3	1936 2003 2009
11	Ballerin	2	1957 1976
	Éire Óg	2	1907 1952
	Eoghan Rua	2	2010 2018
15	Ballymaguigan	1	1962
	Clan Chonail		1914
	Sarsfield's*	1	1916
	St Patrick's	1	1917
	Emmett's	1	1918
	Derry Guilds	1	1921
	Buncrana	1	1930

Desertmartin



1961 1963 1964 1965 1968 1969 1971 1994 1996 1998 1999 2000 2005 1982 1995 2001 2002 2006 2008 2011 1950 1955 1966 1967 1970 1989 1988 1990 1992 1993 1987 1991 1997 1949 1978 2019 2017

## INTERMEDIATE CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS

1931

2019	Foreglen	2003	Ballymaguigan	1987	Craigbane
2018	Banagher	2002	Newbridge	1986	Craigbane
2017	Newbridge	2001	Ballymaguigan	1985	Foreglen
2016	Castledawson	2000	Craigbane	1984	Moneymore
2015	Greenlough	1999	Faughanvale	1983	Glen
2014	Castledawson	1998	Faughanvale	1982	Slaughtneil
2013	Foreglen	1997	Craigbane	1981	Faughanvale
2012	Swatragh	1996	Faughanvale	1980	Glen
2011	Craigbane	1995	Craigbane	1979	Swatragh
2010	Castledawson	1994	An Lúb	1978	Faughanvale
2009	Ballymaguigan	1993	Ballymaguigan	1977	Glenullin
2008	Greenlough	1992	Craigbane	1976	Greenlough
2007	Newbridge	1991	Drumsurn	1975	Kilrea
2006	Eoghan Rua	1990	Bellaghy	1974	Glack
2005	Claudy	1989	Limavady	1973	Ballinascreen III
2004	Foreglen*	1988	Slaughtmanus	1972	Swatragh





It's just over three years since the John McLaughlin Cup made its way along the Halfgain Road, over Roughan Bridge before Patsy Bradley carried it through Slaughtneil hall.

It was their last taste of senior football success, in what was Paul Bradley's last senior game for the Emmet's. This weekend, he heads a management team that attempting to wrestle it from the clutches of holders Magherafelt.

The last time the decider was played outside of Celtic Park, John Brennan managed Slaughtneil to their first ever title at a thronged Glen. Bradley played in that win over Bellaghy and current selector Padríg 'Togger' Kelly was man of the match.

That 2004 outpouring of emotion befitted the story of a first time winner. Like it did when they downed Ballinderry in 2014. Like Magherafelt did last year when they ended their famine from 1978 to land the title.

The scenes as Danny Heavron carried the cup off the bus at Rossa Park was the stuff of dreams. A goosebumps moment, when toil and persistence are introduced to sheer joy.

Adrian Cush, Paul 'QB' Quinn and James Slater have built a team that are near impossible to beat. Glen edged them out in the group stages earlier this year, Kilcoo knocked them out of Ulster and Slaughtneil beat them in 2018.

It became known as the 'Padraig Cassidy game', a sodden evening at Owenbeg, when Magherafelt retreated into themselves before half time, allowing Slaughtneil to own the ball. In front of almost 5,000 fans, Slaughtneil emerged 0-10 to 0-5 winners.

Magherafelt returned with a more refined version. When Michael McEvoy picked up an injury, Cush converted Conor Kearns into a playmaker at wing back. Since last year, Giuseppe Lupari and Simon McErlain have more championship experience. With the addition of Peter Quinn and Ryan Ferris to their ranks, Conor McCluskey has become another attacking weapon.

Magherafelt edged home against Lavey, but on another day the game would've been over by half time. They were fluid, but wasteful. And against Swatragh, they were in total control before allowing themselves to be dragged into a scrap.

The same can be said for Saturday's win over Loup. Leading by four points, they did something untoward – they conceded a soft goal.

Paul Bradley was in attendance at the game and will have noted the joy Loup got from kicking a direct ball into Marc Devlin. He will also be aware of how Glen aggressively attacked the Magherafelt kick-out in the group game this year.

When the quarter-final draw was made, this was one of two probable pairings. Slaughtneil stepped over Glen and Magherafelt kept up their share of the bargain on Saturday night.

After decades of churning out underage titles and players who were dotted through county teams, Magherafelt didn't see themselves as contenders until they took down one of the big boys. They ousted the champions last season and won a final few fancied them for.

The odds of 9/1 on them retaining the John McLaughlin Cup was puzzling. As their winning run continued, they seemed



Wing man v Wing man

It is unlikely Adrian Cush will sacrifice Conor McCluskey's attacking and breaking ball value to perform a damage limitation exercise on Shane McGuigan – if the Slaughtneil dangerman plays inside. Meehaul McGrath and Sean Cassidy, who had a half on Jack Doherty against Glen, will need to impose themselves on McCluskey and Kearns on the wings.

COVERAGE, PHOTOS AND
ANALYSIS OF THE 2020 DERRY SFC FINAL
IN TUESDAY'S COUNTY DERRY POST

to get a kick out proving people wrong. Without dismantling anyone, or looking like surrendering the coveted piece of silverware. they are back in the final.

Sunday is a contrast of styles. The kicking game of Slaughtneil, against a Magherafelt side playing a counter-attacking brand of football.

Emmett McGuckin has played closer to goals this year, like he did in their 2018 defeat to Slaughtneil. He has Shane Heavron up beside him, with last year's duo of Cormac Murphy and Antone McElhone reduced to impact men, inflicting energy on the limbs of tiring defenders.

Jared Monaghan is very much the dedicated sweeper and he will be needed more than ever this weekend to plug the gap in front of Shane McGuigan. It will be interesting to see if Paul Bradley stationed his prize asset on the edge of the square, or utilised him away from goal.

Darren O'Neill could be tasked with picking him up, with Fergal Duffin on Christopher Bradley and either the ever improving Giuseppe Lupari and Simon McErlain on Brian Cassidy. Lupari's ability to work through the zones could see him paired with Cormac O'Doherty, who tends to pull deep to leave space

At midfield, Padraig Cassidy and Danny Heavron will be expected to match-up, but it will be interesting to see how Magherafelt approach Slaughtneil's kick-outs. They exploited Glen's lack of movement in last year's final and made it a testing hour for Callum Mullan-Young.

Antóin McMullan, like Odhrán Lynch, has always been

comfortable going short and Magherafelt will need to close him down if they are to stop the Emmet's building from defence. It's easier said than done, with Slaughtneil's corner-backs peeling

A hall make of the Loup game was how they seemed to own the breaking ball anytime the ball was humped down the middle.

In defence, Slaughtneil are likely to put Brendan Rogers on Emmett McGuckin, with Paul McNeill across on Shane Heavron. If Michael McEvoy is not tasked with a defensive role, then he is likely to be pushed up on Chrissy McKaigue to prevent him from dictating the game.

The duels on the wings will perhaps be the most telling. Conor McCluskey and Conor Kearns have consistently been Magherafelt's most influential players this season. Sean Cassidy and Meehaul McGrath's engines will be tested to the max to dictate the direction of the game.

Magherafelt's defence hasn't been tested like it will be on Sunday and the Emmet's attack won't be afforded the room Coleraine, Glen and Ballinderry gave them. Tight games come down to efficiency in front of goal and Slaughtneil have the men to point them over the line.

VERDICT: Slaughtneil



## WHEN THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN SENT OFF THE COUNTY SECRETARY

#### Seamus McRory remembers Magherafelt's Paddy MacFlynn

In 2013 GAA delegates from every county in Ireland and from every unit of the Association abroad attended the Annual GAA Congress that was held in Derry for the first time. This was a splendid opportunity for the Gaels of our native County to showcase all that is good and much that is great about the GAA in our native place. As an occasion of brilliant organisation, informed debate, spectacular entertainment and pure unadulterated enjoyment those three days will live long in the memory, especially for those who visited our city and county for the first time. For this everyone concerned but especially the organising Committee of the County Board deserve tremendous credit and the heartfelt thanks of all of us who were privileged to be in Derry City for this

historic event. Amongst the gathering of three hundred and fifty delegates was a young-at-heart, ninety four year old man who has surely created a national record for the most Congresses attended. Almost seventy years previously, in the mid 1940's, he attended his first Congress in Dublin and he has missed very few in the interim. To put the enormity of that achievement into perspective the vast percentage of those who attended the 2013 event were not even born when our legendary personality made his Congress debut.

Paddy MacFlynn was born in Magherafelt in 1918 and became a founder member of the local O'Donovan Rossa's club as well as its first secretary, at the tender age of sixteen, in 1934. As a player Paddy was also a member of Derry's first County Minor team and he won a Senior County Championship medal with Magherafelt in 1942. After representing Derry, in an administrative capacity, at Ulster and Central Council levels he moved to Ballynahinch in Down to take up a Primary teaching post in the late forties. In 1953 he was appointed Principal of Gilford Primary School in the parish of Tullylish, which was the home place of the famed McCartan brothers of the 1960s Down Senior All - Ireland winning teams.

In quick succession he became Chairman of the East Down District Board as well as the Mourne County's representative on the Ulster GAA Council, becoming its Chairman between 1961 and 1963. For the eighteen years between 1955 and 1973, the multi talented South Derry native served as treasurer of the Down County Board. In 1964 he was selected as Down's representative on the Central Council and he remained in that position until he was chosen as the first Presidentelect of the Association in 1978. The following year saw him assume the illustrious office of President of the GAA. This most quiet and unassuming of Gaels has given over three quarters of a century of total commitment to every facet of Ireland's premier organisation. He really epitomised what lovalty to the ideals of the founding fathers of the GAA is all about.

However, lest some people might think that I am about to bestow on Paddy an honour only befitting the GAA's first candidate for Sainthood, I must now recall, for posterity, some of the more human and should I say endearing qualities which he has shared with many of us. Before I explain the implications of what our erstwhile saint did I must confess that I have a vested interest in the great man's one time errant behaviour! Paddy and I have known each other for many years. We have met at many gatherings, including the official opening of my adopted Longford Slashers club complex, during his GAA Presidency, More pertinent, however, one of his longest established and closest GAA acquaintances, the late Paddy Larkin, lived in my native parish of Lissan in South Derry for many years. The latter's wife, Cassie, was the much admired and respected school Principal in our local Primary School. But I digress somewhat. Now to the kernel of the story!

As I stated earlier Paddy played for his club in the 1942 Derry County final. The referee appointed for the game was his County Board colleague, the County Chairman Paddy Larkin – a fellow teacher and friend of MacFlynn's. To add novelty to the scenario, MacFlynn was also County Secretary at the time. Both being natives of South Derry and transport being scarce in wartime, they naturally travelled together, northwards, to the game in Dungiven.

Though the Rossa's were winning a lot of possession in the match

itself, their small forwards could not cope with the tall, stronger Glenullin defenders. To counteract this forward fragility the commanding figure of centre half back MacFlynn was switched to full forward. Nearing the end of the game MacFlynn gave a full-blooded charge to the Glenullin full back, putting him



not only over the end line but also into the railing surrounding the pitch. Referee Larkin immediately took MacFlynn's name and sent him off. In a totally dispassionate manner the County Chairman had dismissed the County Secretary!

After the game, the two friends "togged in", gathered their belongings and drove home together. There was no bitterness, no rancour, just two GAA aficionados recalling the merits of the Rossa's victory and the demerits of Glenullin's performance. Both acted completely oblivious to anything remotely untoward having occurred on the field of play. Each one, instinctively, knew that the rules of the game were greater than personal prejudices or camaraderie. Those parameters were confined to an hour on the football field.

Ten days later Larkin and MacFlynn travelled together again for a meeting of the then Disciplinary Committee of the County Board. As his sending off was the main subject of the evening's business, MacFlynn had to obey proper protocol and sit outside the decision - making room when his case was being heard. But as the Magherafelt man was the only Board member who really knew the rules regarding proposed suspensions, the Chairman left the meeting every

so often to check with the errant County Secretary to ensure that he was properly suspended under the appropriate rule. It was agreed on the advice of Paddy the County Secretary that Paddy the County Chairman should propose that under the Rules of the then Official Guide that the correct decision had been

applied in the game i.e. the referee was entitled to send off MacFlynn under Rule 105c i.e. for a player indulging in dangerous play. Accordingly it was mutually agreed between the two officials that the Magherafelt centre half back should be suspended under Rule 64 for the term of one Lunar month! This was done and accepted in a spirit of mutual trust and complete integrity. There were no further appeals or any CHC hearings or friends, legal or otherwise, pleading

for clemency! The friendship of the two Paddys endured for over fifty years until Paddy Larkin died in the latter half of the 1990s.

At this 2013 Congress I met Paddy MacFlynn for the last time. Before I left him I asked him to confirm again the authenticity of that famous story which had occurred 71 years earlier in 1942."Seamus it is a long time since I told you that story for the first time and it is as true now as it was then. Anyway I might never see you again so I'd better tell the truth!" he jokingly remarked.

Sadly I never did see him again as he passed away seven months later in September of the same year. One can say for certain that no one in heaven rejoiced more in October 2019, than the redoubtable Paddy MacFlynn, when Magherafelt O'Donovan Rossa under inspirational captain Danny Heavron won their first County Derry Senior Championship title in 41 years and 77 years since Paddy's famous win in the Blue Riband of Derry football, This man of unusual integrity and impeccable honesty was truly a person whose love of Gaelic Games surpassed the selfishness and bias of many others. He was indeed a man who always put the ideals of the whole Association before the personal interests of any individual unit or single person.

#### A TOWN AND COUNTRY FINAL

Today the country men from around Carntogher will take on the men from the famed town of Magherafelt. It shows that clubs can be successful irrespective of their geographical location.

Both are named in honour of famous Irishmen. Magherafelt are the O'Donavan Rossas. Jeremiah O'Donavan Rossa was born Rossarbery County Cork on 20th September 1831. He died in Staten Island, New York at the age of 83 on 29th June 1915. His life was spent attempting to make Ireland free and died less than a year before the rising he dreamed about took place. He had been very active in the Fenian movement.

Slaughtneil's patron is Robert Emmett who lived a very short life but with similar ideals to O'Donavan Rossa. He was born into a wealthy Church of Ireland family at Stephen's Green, Dublin on 4th March 1778. He was executed on 20th September 1803 for 'treason' a word used to execute those fighting for the liberty of their own country.

He was a leader of the United Irishmen in 1798, after the salughter he attempted along with Thomas Russell(The Man From God Knows Where) and Jeremy Hope two Ulster men to rise again in 1803. Unfortunately he was arrested. His speech from the dock when condemned to execution is widely known. It starts of with "let no man write my epitaph" He was just 25 when executed in Dublin on 20th September 1803.

In 1824 a British House of Commons committee recommended a townland survey of Ireland. Not for the good of the country but for taxation purposes, not fort he good of Ireland but for their own Treasury! Colonel Thomas Colby of the Royal Engineers and three companies of sappers and miners plus civil assistants were also recruited.

The starting point was Magilligan in 1831. Derry and Antrim were the only two counties completely surveyed.

Magilligan was chosen because of its proximity to sea level. The survey gives a great insight to the sports and customs of our county 170 years ago.

It indicates that the country folk were the more active in both sport and drinking than the urban dwellers. In reference to Magherafelt it states "There are however three idle days at Christmas but there are no particular amusements. Football and commons (an early form of hurling) which were formally the amusements proper to that season being now given up."

Slaughtneil produced two notable poets James 'The Miller' Kane and Mick McAtamney both born in the 1800's. O'Kane wrote the famous ditty about how both sides of the community met in Maghera to support the Land League. One line reads 'There were O'Lagan's, O'Haqan's and stout Presbyterians'.

Mick McAtamney spent many years in America and often was a 'hobo' travelling illegally on trains. In winter he would head south. It is said that on his deathbed he said to a neighbour 'Just tell them Mick has gone south for the winter'

Pre 1884 cricket was played widely in the country areas and rugby in the towns. Sports meetings were held but no Irish national games were played. Anglo English landlords seemed to have a big say in these events.

The founders of the GAA decided that it was time to put our own games out to the country. It has its ups and downs but what a success it has been. That is why we are here in Bellaghy today.

Imagine your area without a GAA club!. We would have to go back to that era where, in Magilligan the main pastimes were card playing, dog fighting, horse racing and cock fighting. Throwing the stone, leaping and ball playing was practised after working hours in the summer. The landlords controlled peoples lives.

County final day is a special occasion for the clubs involved. From great grand parents to toddlers they will proudly wear the club colours. Gone are the days of the paper hats! It will be the best O'Neill's our championship sponsors have in their shops.

The Derry club football championship is of the highest quality. We have seven different clubs who have won Ulster and three who have won the All Ireland title. No other county has produced seven different provincial football champions.

In the 52 years of the Ulster club the title has come to Derry fifteen times. Bellaghy have won four, Ballinderry

and Slaughtneil three each, Lavey two, Dungiven, Loup and Ballerin one each.

The Andy Merrigan Cup, the ultimate trophy in club football has been won by Bellaghy, Lavey and Ballinderry. For the record Bellaghy beat University College Cork 0-15 to 1-11 in 1972, Lavey beat Salthill/Knocknacarra of Galway by 2-9 to 0-10 in 1992 and Ballinderry beat the mighty Nemo Rangers of Cork by 2-10 to 0-9 in 2001. Nemo hold the record with seven titles. Slaughtneil lost in the 2015 and 2017 finals, Bellaghy came close to a second title in 1995 and Ballerin went under by three points to Austin Stacks of Kerry in 1977.

Unfortunately our winners today cannot go any further due to the 'new normal' which has nothing normal about it.

Last year close on ten thousand people were in Celtic Park when the two town teams met in the county final. Maghera and Magherafelt were virtually deserted as the fans came out in force. The preceding game between Foregen and Claudy no doubt helped to boost the attendance which was twice the size of the Dublin county final.

Today will be a totally different scenario here in Bellaghy due to Covid-19 but health must come before sport. Thankfully fans can now watch their teams on live stream.

On 13th October 1884 Maurice Davin one of the GAA founders wrote 'Irish football is a great game and worth going a long way to see when played on fairly laid out ground and under proper rules. Many old people say just hurling exceeded it as a trial of men. I would not care to see either game now, as the rules stand at present. I may say there are no rules, and therefore those games are often dangerous. I am anxious to see both games revived under regular rules. I can gladly lend a hand if I can be of any use' If Davin was around today I have no doubt he would ban the water break and forward mark!

Today we have a pristine surface at Pairc Sean de Brun and rules that control the game. We will have seven officials involved to control matters but no doubt these two sporting teams will make I easy for them!

Good luck to both teams today in our annual showpiece and remember how you all celebrate. It would be awful in your community if Covid regulations were not observed and someone became ill. We live in dangerous times.



meeting with Slaughtneil in 2018.

Photography by Margaret McLaughlin

## SENIOR FOOTBALL FINAL 2020

Paul McNeil

Paul Mac Néill

5

Francis McEldowney

Prionséis Mac Giolla Domhnaigh

Sean Cassidy

Séan Ó Caiside

13

**Christopher Bradley** 

Críostóir Ó Brolcháin



### **SLAUGHTNEIL**

Antóin McMullan Antóin Mac Mullan

3

Brendan Rogers Breandán Mac Ruairí

6

Christopher McKaigue Críostóir Mac Thaidgh 4

Conor McAllister

7

Keelan Feeney Caolan Feeney

8

Patsy Bradley Padraig Ó Brolcháin

Cormac O Doherty Cormac Ó Dochartaigh

14

Shane McGuigan Seán Mag Uiginn 12

Meehaul McGrath Micheal Mac Graith

15

Brian Cassidy Brian Ó Caiside

#### FIR ÍONAID:

- 16 Séan Ó Caiside
- 17 Peadar Kearney
- 18 Se McGuigan
- 19 Padraig McGuigan
- 20 Ronan Bradley
- 21 Barry McGuigan
- 22 Fergal Bradley
- 23 Gerard Bradley
- 24 Brendan McEldowney
- 25 Mark McGuigan
- 26 James McCloskey
- 27 Jerome McGuigan

#### BAINISTÍOCHT:

Bainisteoir

Padraig Cassidy

Padraig Ó Caiside

Paul Bradley

Gavin Devlin

Damian Doherty (Physio)

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## **MAGHERAFELT**

1 Odhran Lynch Órán Ó Lionsigh

Simon McErlain
Síomón Mac Fhirléinn

Conor McCluskey
Conchúr Mac Bhloscaidh

8
Jared Monaghan
Gearóid Ó Manacháin

Patrick McLarnon
Pádraig Mac Giolla Earnáin

Michael McEvoy Micheal Mac Fhíodhbhuidhe Darren O'Neill Dáire Ó Néill

6
Fergal Duffin
Fearghal Ó Duifinn

9 Daniel Heavror

Shane Heavron

14
Emmett McGuckin
Eiméid Mac Eochainn

9 Daniel Heavron (C) Dónall O hÉimhrín

> John Young Seán Ó hÓgáin

Guisseppe Lupari

Guisseppe Lupari

Conor Kearns
Conchúr Ó Ciaráin

Ryan Ferris Rian Mac Feargusa

#### FIR (ONAID:

- 16 Conor McLarnon
- 17 Peter Ouinn
- 18 Antonne McElhone
- 19 Cormac Murphy
- 20 Niall Higgins
- 21 Ronan Young22 Joe Keenan
- 22 14 11 11
- 23 Matthew Higgins
- 24 Paul O'Kane

- 25 Declan Martin
- 26 Sean Óg Monaghan
- 27 Johnny McErlain
- 28 Shea McGuckin
- 29 Aidan McCluskey
- 30 Jack Barton

#### BAINISTÍOCHT:

Bainisteoir Adrian Cush



## The Mc Feely Group

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#### **DERRY INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL**

#### CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL: STEELSTOWN V GREENLOUGH

### Nerves of steel needed for Ógs

A common topic when it comes to a championship final is how many years it has been since the two clubs involved last won one.

Just look at last year – so many previews of the senior final detailed that Glen had not only never won a senior championship but had never reached the final, and when the Rossas got over the line the headlines involved 'the end of a 41-year wait' having last



captured the John McLaughlin in 1978.

Similarly, at junior level, when Glack emerged victors so much focus was on 38 years of disappointment ended with Niall McGowan hoisting the trophy in the air.

And so naturally the same process has taken place with this year's intermediate final. Two very different club stories.

On one hand there is a Greenlough team with three intermediate titles under their belt (and three junior) – the most recent of which came in 2015 with the same manager, Joe Cassidy, and many of the same players that will take to Bellaghy today.

On the other you have Steelstown Brian Og's. While they did spend a stint in senior football, often the bridesmaid but never the bride seems the tale of their championship exploits, particularly more recently, as the club's men's team still await their first ever championship title.

In 2010 and 2016 they were narrowly

denied by Castledawson – two crushing defeats – and perhaps some of them will be glad that Greenlough emerged victorious from a titanic battle with the Brough men in the semi-finals.

Every championship is a special one, but that feeling of the first in a long time – or the first ever – is pure ecstasy.

I enjoyed some great reading during the week thanks to the Greenlough media team who uploaded some fascinating facts, figures and details about their championship history and their past meetings with Steelstown. It stated that the clubs have met four times – three league and one championship – with Greenlough victorious each time, but only once by more than a single point.

So, there's another streak Steelstown will have to break if they want to get their hands on the trophy come 2.30pm.

When it comes down to it these are two very good footballing teams with top quality players all over the pitch.

For Steelstown, Marty Dunne, Mickey McKinney, Kevin Lindsay, Darren McDaid, captain Neil Forester and others provide serious experience – not to mention the return of Stephen Cleary.

There is also that youthful exuberance, pace and fearlessness that has taken the Og's to another level – Ben McCarron, Diarmuid Baker, Eoghan Concannon, Cahir McMonagle and Eoghan Bradley just a handful of names.

Then there is the strength in depth of the squad – not only has Stephen Cleary been available off the bench, but having players like Liam Heffernan, Shane O'Connor and sharp up and coming forwards like Jacob Duffy and Rory Maguire to call upon is a huge asset.

The pattern is very similar on the

other side, however. In Enda Lynn, Brian McCallion, Niall Bradley, Paul Quinn and Christopher Lagan there are players who know exactly what it takes to be championship winners – multiple times.

When you have a forward like Niall Loughlin you always have to be confident, and then there is Stephen Bradley, Ryan Tohill, Enda McNally, Connor Mullan, Zak Lynn. Quality all over the field.

I could try and guess the game plans of each team and come out with a million ways but I'm looking forward to some titanic battles between the likes of Loughlin and Lindsay, Lynn and Concannon, Quinn and McMonagle, Deane and Bradley – the list goes on.



Both teams have more than one trick up their sleeve so there may be more than a few surprises sprung.

No doubt about it, these are two exceptional football teams. Two clubs with very different histories but with a mutual respect. Greenlough know exactly what it takes to win the intermediate title, Steelstown have yet to taste it.

Here's to a great game, and may the best team win.

#### INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL **FINAL 2020**



## **STEELSTOWN**

Martin Dunne Máirtín Ó Doinn

Jason McAleer Deasún Mac Giolla Fhinnéin

**Eoghan Concannon** Eoghan Ó Concheannainn

**Rvan Devine** Rian Ó Daimhín

Gareth Loque Gearóid Ó Laoghóg

Ben McCarron Beircheart Mac Cearáin 3

**Kevin Lindsay** Caoimhín Mac Giolla Iontóg

**Neil Forester Niall Forester** 

Ryan McCloskey Rian Mac Bhloscaidh

Diarmuid Baker Diarmuid Baicir

Mickey McKinney

Mícheál Mac Coinnigh

**Eoghan Bradley** Eoghan Ó Brolcháin

14

Cahir McMonagle Cathair Mac Maongail

Rory Maguire Ruairí Mag Uidhir

Mark Folev Marcas Ó Foghlú

#### FIR ÍONAID:

- 16 Eoghan Heraghty
- 18 C | Martin
- 19 Liam Heffernan
- 20 Darren McDaid
- 21 Emmett Deane
- 22 Stephen McCauley
- 23 Jacob Duffy
- 24 Stephen Cleary
- 25 Oran Sweeney

- 26 Seb Crudden
- 27 Cahir O'Doherty
- 28 Shane O'Connor
- 29 Morgan Murray
- 30 Cormac Mooney
- 31 Oran McMenamin

#### **BAINISTÍOCHT:**

Bainisteoir

Famon Gibson

Raymond Tracey

Katy Holly (Physio)





### The Mc Feely Group

### **GREENLOUGH**

1

Kevin Mullan

2

Brian McCallion
Brian Mc Callion

5

Christopher Kearney Críostóir Ó Cearnaigh

8

Enda McNally Éanna Mac an Fhailí

10

Conal McErlean

13

Christopher Lagan Críostóir Ó Leogáin 3

Jack McCann Seán Mac Cana

6

Zak Lynn Zak Ó Loinn 1

Paul Quinn Pól Ó Coinne

7

Conor Mullan Conchúr Ó Maoláin

9

Niall Bradley Niall Ó Brolcháin

Ryan Tohill Rian Ó Tuathail

14

Niall Loughlin Niall Ó Lochlainn 12

Enda Lynn Éanna Ó Loinn

15

Stephen Bradley Stiofán Ó Brolcháin

#### FIR ÍONAID:

- 16 Brian Henry
- 17 Martin McPeake
- 18 Damien McTeague
- 19 Michael McDonnell
- 20 Christopher Lynn
- 21 Kevin McCann
- 22 Caolan Diamond
- 23 Caolan Tohill
- 24 Connor Madden
- 25 Ruairi Henry
- 26 Patrick McPeake
- 27 Matthew Bradley

#### **BAINISTÍOCHT:**

Bainisteoir Paul Downey

Fergal Scullion



by MICHAEL MCMULLAN

#### **IFC Final Preview**





If Greenlough are to land their fourth intermediate title on Sunday afternoon, they will have to match the desire Steelstown carry as they search for their elusive first adult championship.

Ten years ago, they were undone by Castledawson and in 2016 they faced the men from the Broagh again, only to be nipped again in the closing stages.

Steelstown will need to be wary of Greenlough's ability to deliver on the big day, when it matters most.

Current boss Joe Cassidy was at the helm when the Plunkett's annexed their 2015 title. They blitzed Craigbane in the final, after Claudy took them to extra time in the quarter-final.

In the semi-final, a man of the match performance from Enda Lynn saw them hold on by the skin of their teeth against Steelstown. After leading 1-7 to 0-3 and later 1-9 to 1-6, they had to hang on at the end.

"They (Steelstown) are a better team now," offered Cassidy, after Sunday's win over Castledawson, a game he told his side they used their 'get out of jail card' to edge home.

after surrendering from a position of dominance.

"They have a few players who how players who the group that have added real quality. The likes of (Ben) McCarron and young Cahir McMonagle, who is an absolute cracker of a player. Eoghan Concannon and

Eoghan Bradley have come

in, so they have added a lot of youth."

Steelstown hammered Glenullin in their first game this season, were forced to grind their way to victory in Limavady and put on a performance of power and panache to get past a fancied Drumsurn in the quarter-final.

Cassidy was at their win over Glenullin and in Banagher on Saturday evening. He was impressed with their battling qualities in Saturday's semi-final win over Faughanvale. Ben McCarron was taken off late in the game after picking up a few knocks, but is expected to be fit for this weekend. In the Greenlough camp, Brian McCallion was replaced with an ankle injury and wasn't walking all that freely.

Cassidy and Steelstown boss Eamon Gibson will need their key players to pick from this week. The new format this season, brings three championship games inside 15 days.

One of the Brian Ógs' key calling cards this season has been their panel. While any manager can only put 15 on the pitch, Steelstown's panel is certainly the strongest it's ever been.

Gareth Logue, man of the match, against Glenullin wasn't in the panel on Saturday night. He tweaked a hamstring injury in training before the Drumsurn game.

They missed Ryan Devine due to suspension and were able to call on Stephen Cleary, Rory Maguire and Jacob Duffy on Saturday night to help them squeeze out the 'Vale. They also have Shane O'Connor as an option in defence, while former county minor Oran McMenamin is on the injured list.

In their semi-finals, both teams opted for similar formats. Enda Lynn and Ben

McCarron play free roles

almost.
Both
managers
have used
noted
midfielders
across the
middle.
Greenlough's
trio of
McCallion,
Enda McNally
and Niall
Bradley came

out on top of



Castledawson's three-man midfield on Sunday. They will likely face Emmett Deane, Darren McDaid and Ryan Devine on Sunday, with Mickey McKinney also looking lean and fresh in the central area.

Greenlough have played with Niall Loughlin and Stephen Bradley as their front two and they could expect Kevin Lindsay and Jason McAleer for company. The more attack minded Ryan McCloskey could pull out the field or play as a sweeper.

Ideally Greenlough, would push up Chrissy Lagan on McCloskey. But, when they ponder their options, Lagan might be detailed to follow McCarron. It's hard to see Enda Lynn being used as a shadow on the Steelstown talisman, but McCarron's running power will be a concern.

If Mark Foley retains his place, and he will

be under pressure from Gareth Logue, the towering Jack McCann would be suited to pick him up. Paul Quinn is the marquee man marker and he will more than likely pick up McMonagle.

There was a Steelstown delegation in Lavey on Sunday and they will have seen how little ball Castledawson were able to get their hands on to test the Greenlough defence.

The first few moments of this game will be a tactical battle. Lynn, McCarron, Forester and Loughlin will all need to be picked up, with decisions on who they leave free. Christopher Kearney is a central player and could be used by Greenlough as the sweeper. Castledawson's failure to occupy him and Connor Mullan was the beginning of their downfall.

Does Joe Cassidy push Conall McErlean up on Neil Forester? Does he use Enda Lynn on McCarron? Where does Eamon Gibson use McKinney at?

"At the start of the season, most people would've been predicting us (Greenlough and Steelstown) to be in a county final, if the draw allowed them to," Cassidy stated.

"They will be coming with a serious hunger, a relatively new club looking to make their mark on Derry football and over the past number of years, they have certainly been making a mark.

"They are going to be a tough nut to crack, but we have got to get ourselves sorted and get men fresh and ready," he added.

There are match winners on both sides. The one lingering worry will be Steelstown having the burden of not getting over the line in a final and the doubt that carries.

Greenlough will need to get on top of them early. Just ask Drumsurn? The game was over before it even began as Steelstown ran riot.

Niall Loughlin is the best forward in intermediate football. Steelstown need to make it their business to keep him quiet. Greenlough have the experience and they have Lynn, who has the potential to boss this game.

Nobody quite has the same hunger as someone who has starved and watched others dine at the banquet of champions. If Steelstown can channel their desire and not let it overwhelm them, they could have the players come off the bench and see them home. But it will be the mother and father of all battles.

**VERDICT: Steelstown** 

#### DERRY INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL FINAL 2020

#### FORESTER HOPING FOR THIRD TIME LUCKY

In 2010, 20-year-old Neil Forester consoled himself in the aftermath of a heartbreaking Intermediate Championship final defeat to Castledawson by telling himself there would be other chances to win with his beloved Brian Ógs.

Ten years on, there have been chances, but Forester is still waiting.

On Sunday in Bellaghy, opportunity knocks once more. The heady optimism has been replaced by a realism that championship finals are the exception rather than the rule but Forester's desire to finally know those seconds after a referee's whistle declares you champions burns brighter than ever.

"At this point, and I think a lot of the older boys are the same, we don't fear losing any more." explained Forester, "We've been there and know how it feels so it's no longer a fear of losing which we might have had in some of the other games. Now all that's left is that determination to try and get it done. I want to experience how it feels. I am no longer afraid of losing but I'm determined to do all I can to win."

Paddy Campbell's 2010 vintage was backboned by the likes of Paul O'Hea, Aidan Cleary, Tony Ling, Gary Cunningham and current senior manager, Eamon Gibson, and it still under pins the present squad. Keeper Marty Dunne, Mickey McKinney, Darren McDaid, Kevin Lindsay, Ryan Devine, Mark Foley and the recently return Stephen Cleary have all given sterling service to Steelstown but, like Forester, they remain empty handed in terms of championship medals at senior level.

Twice losing out to Castledawson by a point in Intermediate finals (2016 & 2016), defeat to Greenlough in the 2015 semi-final, and a junior final defeat during their rapid rise through the Derry divisions have all left

"2010 was my first final at senior level," adds Forester, "A lot of us were still Under 21, but it was a very frustrating game. You do tend to think finals will just arrive every other season. At that stage we were playing in Under 21 finals as well and even at minor level we had been getting to All County finals so you start to believe those days are all part of it

"I suppose we thought we'd just push on and get our championship victory but football doesn't work like that. It didn't come in 2010 when we lost by a point, we reached senior football through the promotion playoff so we have managed to avoid winning silverware one way or another.

silverware one way or another.
"We have knocked on the door for so long and you have to remind the young lads, the build up to any final is exciting, there are lots

of distractions but try to enjoy it as much as you can because you're never guaranteed it in football, especially for a player at my age.

"For example, this will be Marty's (Dunne) fourth county final. To try and win it for boys who have been there so long - and you can



say about

deserving it all you want, you have to earn it on the day - but boys like that who have given so much to the club, you want to pay them back for everything they have given but no one hands you anything for free."

It would be hard to find even an opponent with a bad word to say about Forester. A dyed in the wool Gael with the sort of determined but sunny disposition critical in any dressing room, Forester's quest for the elusive medal has taken him from rising star, learning from the likes of Campbell and O'Hea in 2010, to experienced campaigner and steadying influence for the new generation like Ben McCarron, Eoghan Concannon, Eoghan Bradley, Jacob Duffy, Oran McMenamin and Cahir McMonagle.

"It is going to sound crazy but the coronavirus lockdown was actually a positive for us because boys were all in Derry. Boys who would normally be working away in Dublin, Belfast or other places were all working from home. When things eased, we were all training together, no one was going away on holidays or off to America. So, we trained and we worked hard but having everyone the younger players brought such energy.

"Some of us older boys can get grumpy and cynical. We have had defeats in these games and can be negative at times whereas the young lads bring an energy and a positivity. Even trying things in training, it keeps things fresh and competition high." "Everyone, including the more experienced players like myself, we're all looking behind us at talented players ready to take your shirt. That's a big reason I think we are getting that bit more out of ourselves at the minute."

That competition for places have been evident throughout a swashbuckling run to Sunday's final where their biggest obstacle yet awaits in the form of championship favourites, Greenlough.

"Greenlough have been fantastic throughout this championship." admitted Forester, "I've been watching their games on the #wearederry (which is class by the way!). We both play very similar styles so it's probably going to come down to mental toughness in the last 10 minutes because it is going to be blow for blow and who can take their chances.

"It will be about who is going to keep the cool head with 10 minutes to go and who is not going to make something happen. It is going to be very tight, I don't think even the bookies can't separate the two sides but we know how strong Greenlough are and anything we get we'll have to work very hard for it."

Both clubs employ a similar counterattacking style that sees their half-forward lines drop deep to instigate play through hard running out of the half-back line and both boast marquee forwards in the form for Niall Loughlin and Enda Lynn for Greenlough with Ben McCarron, Cahir McMonagle and Eoghan Bradley hogging the headlines for the Brian Ogs.

Despite that arsenal of forward talent, however, Forester believes Sunday could see an unsung hero.

"In finals like this there is never going to be much in it. Your big game players are going to be well marked. It's going to be nip and tuck. They will target our key men and we will target theirs so it could come down to others in the squad. When the game is in the melting pot, which players can make the right decisions more often than not?

"Boys who have been flying under the radar in the championship, they are probably the players who are going to have the biggest impact with the decisions they make when the game is in the melting pot. It could come down to depth of panel and who has the strongest mental attitude."

Ten years on from that 2010, no one could doubt Forester's resolve. On Sunday he'll hope to discover if the wait has been worthwhile.



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