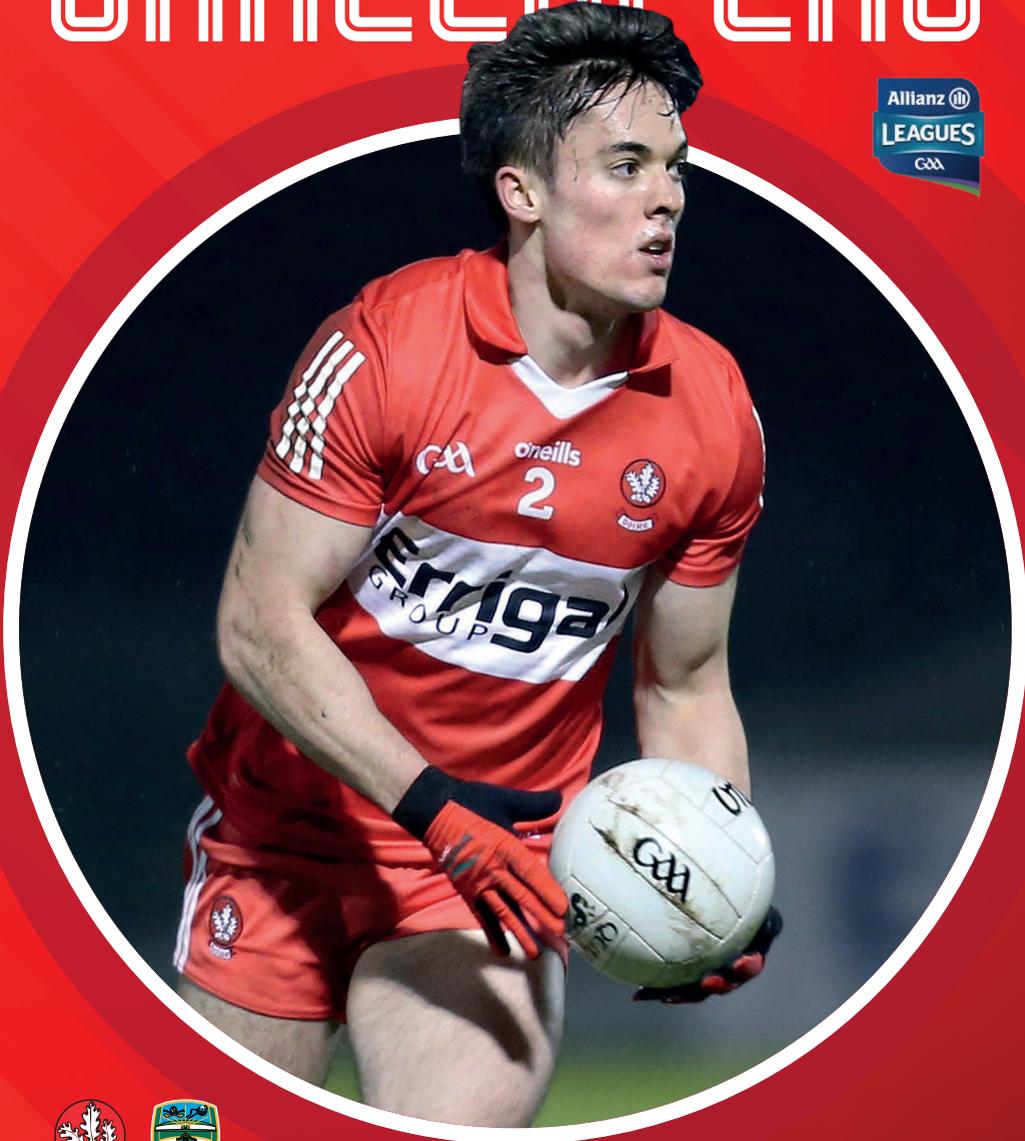


DERRY GAA OFFICIAL MATCH PROGRAMME

# OAKLEAFERS



## Doire v An Mhí

2023 National Football League  
Round 3 | Saturday 18 Feb | Owenbeg

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GAA

WHERE WE  
ALL BELONG



DERRY GAA ARE INDEBTED TO ALL OUR SPONSORS FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT



# Early Season Division Two Report Card

By Odhrán Crumley



## DERRY

The Oakleifers have four points on the board after two which would represent a decent start on anyone's card. Limerick were easily disposed off here in Owenbeg in the first round of the league. It was easy in reality but, it had the hallmarks of a banana skin with the discussion centred around Glen and replay or no replay rather than the game but, it ended in plus two. Louth, away, Ardee, winter, Mickey Harte. That's the true hallmarks of a potential banana skin and

Derry got out of it unscathed, just. That's the wins that they'll take heart from even if it doesn't seem like it yet but, winning ugly in a big trait and help on the march or hopeful to promotion. **GRADE - A - 2nd**



## MEATH

The Royal's are also two for two and can proudly boast wins over Cork (away) and Clare at home scoring eight goals in the process. Colm O'Rourke wanted their identity to be fast, flowing football getting it into the forwards early and

that's born true so far but, it may just play into Derry hands in Owenbeg this evening. **GRADE - A - 3rd**



## DUBLIN

In the eyes of many The Dubs are the surefire winners and the rest are playing for the other promotion places. They weren't great on the opening night in Croke against Kildare but, they got the job done. Mickey Harte famously said you don't win Sam out of division two and this year may be the closest he comes to



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being wrong. Limerick were hammered in the first quarter last time and a trip to Cork tomorrow should greater show where Dessie Farrell's men are at. They should be good enough to top the pile.

**GRADE - A - 1st**



**CORK**

The Rebels opened by conceding four goals in a high scoring thriller which ended in defeat at home to Meath. They bounced back last week with a big win in Newbridge which many would perceive as a tough place to go no matter how the men from Kildare are operating. That was an early stumble which could be difficult to bounce back from as a big blue machine roll into the second capital.

**GRADE - B - 4th**



**CLARE**

The Banner men opened with a narrow victory over Louth in Ennis before admirably kicking sixteen points in Navan but,

still losing the concession of the four goals proving to be killer. Boosted by a run to the All-Ireland quarters last summer they're a match for anyone and established in the second tier. Beat Kildare this weekend and you never know.

**GRADE - C - 5th**



**KILDARE**

A Lillywhite response is seriously needed this week as they sit pointless after two. An opening Croke Park defeat to Dublin was expected but, a hammering at home to Cork in the second game wasn't. Defeat would have proved to make promotion very difficult. The manner of it leaves an air of relegation looming large unless they can turn it around quickly. Cusack Park, Ennis is not the place to go looking a handy two points.

**GRADE - D - 6th**



**LOUTH**

The Wee County will be sore with the fact that they have no points on

the board through two. Giving away leads in both games and faltering to late scores. It was a one point reverse in Ennis firstly, a game that could have gone either way. They pushed Ulster Champions, Derry to the very pin of their collar and have enough to cause even the big boys bother. Should have too much for Limerick also.

**GRADE - C - 7th**



**LIMERICK**

Derry away and Dublin home what a horrible two fixtures to open life in the second tier for Limerick. And as expected they have shifted two fairly heavy defeats and were out of both contests after the first quarter. Louth this weekend provides their best chance of points but, going on the early form, they won't get any there either.

**GRADE - E - 8th**

## 2023 Allianz Football League Divison Two Results & Fixtures

**Round One**

**Saturday January 28**  
Derry 0-16 Limerick 0-4  
Dublin 1-11 Kildare 0-13  
**Sunday January 29**  
Cork 0-19 Meath 3-14  
Clare 0-13 Louth 1-9

**Round Two**

**Sunday February 5**  
Meath 4-8 Clare 0-16  
Kildare 0-7 Cork 2-14  
Louth 1-11 Derry 2-11  
Limerick 1-11 Dublin 2-17

**Round Three**

**Saturday February 18**  
Derry vs Meath - 5pm

**Sunday February 19**

Louth vs Kildare - 2pm  
Clare vs Kildare - 2pm  
Cork vs Dublin - 3:45pm (TG4)

**Round Four**

**Saturday February 25**  
Dublin vs Clare 7pm  
**Sunday February 26**  
Kildare vs Derry - 2pm (BBCiPlayer)  
Meath vs Louth - 2pm  
Cork vs Limerick - 3:45pm

**Round Five**

**Saturday March 4**  
Derry vs Dublin - 5pm  
**Sunday March 5**  
Limerick vs Meath - 2pm

Louth vs Kildare - 2pm  
Clare vs Cork - 2pm

**Round Six**

**Saturday March 18**  
Meath vs Dublin - 3pm (RTE)  
**Sunday March 19**  
Derry vs Clare - 1pm (BBCiPlayer)  
Louth vs Cork - 1pm  
Limerick vs Kildare 3:45pm

**Round Seven**

**Sunday March 26**  
Cork vs Derry - 2pm  
Kildare vs Meath - 2pm

# Glen heads held high

By Orlagh Mullan

**When I think about victory in sport and all that it entails, my mind comes back to one well-known quote from basketball Hall of Famer, Michael Jordan.**

"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and

My mind went back to Celtic Park, October 20th 2019. Ciaran McFaul's attempt at a last gasp equaliser coming just a few seconds too late. Magherafelt were Derry champions, Glen's wait went on. 2020, Slaughtneil were the slayers. The Wattys were left to watch their neighbours live their dream.

Again. If you don't win, you better make sure you learn. 2021 rolls around and this time the men from Maghera have had enough. Malachy O'Rourke at the helm, time to deliver on the promises of underage. If you're making a team like Slaughtneil look average, you are some animal.

There was absolutely nothing that was stopping Connor Carville from hoisting JML that day. Not Slaughtneil, not the pressure, not the past, NOTHING.

Then comes the next blip. 19th December 2021. They fight with everything they

have but the maiden senior Ulster voyage ends in defeat to Kilcoo. Small margins, inexperience. Season over. As the Magpies go on to lift the Andy Merrigan Cup in HQ, the plotting is beginning in Maghera. If you don't win, you better make sure you learn.

The 2022 club championship season rolls around off the back of a magic summer for Derry. The only thing harder than winning JML is keeping him. The favourites tag was well and truly resting on Malachy's men now. Another new challenge. How do they deal with it? Well, much of the same in Derry it turns out. The feeling at full-time, having dispatched Slaughtneil for a second year, was very

missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

I'll confess that I'm far from a basketball expert. I know very little of the sport, but one of the things I do know is Michael Jordan is a player that'll be talked about long after all of us have gone. They'll talk about all his successes and the history that he made along the way, but few will talk about the experiences that got him there – all the lows.

When the full-time whistle went in Croke Park last month, the devastation across the faces of green and gold Glen men, women and children was clear to see. And who can blame them? 60 minutes away from the greatest glory in club football, fine margins (and some other issues), but just one step too far – this time around.



different to the emotions of 12 months before. That had felt like a breakthrough that was decades in the making. This felt like there was more to come, and more to do.

11th December 2022. Back to the Athletic Grounds. Back to Kilcoo. But this time, the silverware stood at the end of the hour. If you don't win, you better make sure you learn. An early lead, clawed back. Now where's your character? Teamwork, running, blocking, blood, sweat, tears, brotherhood. Carville lifted the tin. Kings of Ulster.

Another new peak reached. Stick or twist? Croke Park wasn't new territory for many of these players, with inter-county and/or schools' voyages. But this was different. This was club. This was everything. Moycullen proved hard to shake, but, once more,

that sheer desire to leave every sinew of themselves on the field dragged the Watty's to the biggest stage.

And that brought us to THAT day. Kilmacud Crokes – more club members than there are people in Maghera. And even a loanee from Galway. And a few added extras... The challenge was always going to be the greatest yet. The Dubliners were harbouring some serious hurt. The experience was a new one for the green and gold, but the Crokes men had seen the darkest side of it as recently as a year earlier.

Devastation at full-time. The what if's, the despair, the tears. That incredible day in Celtic Park in 2021 felt a million years ago. Much could be said about all that followed but I'll leave that to a writer much more intelligent and eloquent than me. But regardless, in time, the

lessons will be picked apart and used for fuel, just as they have been before. Success is earned – the hard way. To even be part of All-Ireland final day was an achievement borne from so many years of not quite getting there, of incredible Gaelic footballers finishing their Glen club careers with no senior championship silverware to show, of a community who were determined to drive change, of volunteer coaches and committee members doing everything they could to give the youth their best chance, of that underage work coming to fruition, of changing the entire mindset of Watty Graham's, of becoming Kings. If you don't win, you better make sure you learn. They'll be back.

## Today's Match Officials

**REFEREE:** Liam Devenney (Maigh Eo)

**STAND-BY:** Niall Cullen (Fear Manach)

**LINESMAN:** Micheal Moore (An Dún)

**SIDELINE:** Mark Dorrian (Dún na nGall)

**UMPIRES:** Kevin Cawley, Kevin Nolan, Declan O'Boyle, Grace O'Boyle



## Fogra

Margaret McLaughlin's photo on page 5 illustrates perfectly the paradigm shift our senior footballers have brought. After the McKenna Cup game in Ederney last month, young Derry supporters brought flags onto the pitch to meet their heroes. It has continued after every game. Our players

are role models and none more so than the pictured Derry captain, Conor Glass, who often stands patiently with young supporters long after the final whistle has sounded. The connection people have to each other through the medium of Gaelic games is explored throughout this production.

I would like to thank all of those who have contributed

to this match programme. We are very fortunate to have some of the most talented photographers and knowledgeable GAA writers underpinning this production. We hope you enjoy it and thank you for your support. Onwards and Upwards!

Míle buíochas  
**Diarmaid MacPéice**  
Ofigeach Caipreamh Poiblí  
Doire C.L.G.

# Belong

By Dermot McPeake

The students hadn't expected Daniel Corkery's question and some were still pondering on his answer many decades later.

"When man goes to the moon," posed the UCC professor of English, "how will people react?"

Corkery, a controversial figure in Irish Literature, counted Terence MacSwiney and Con O'Leary as acquaintances, with Sean O'Faoláin and Seán O'Tuama among his pupils. But it was another student, later one of Ireland's finest sportswriters, Con Houlihan, who revealed the master's answer in one of his Evening Press columns.

"They will think more and more about their own little parish," he recounted.

Since Corkery's fleeting assignment to his students, man has been to the moon many times, split the atom, peppered space with satellites and ushered in a world of digital connectivity. Yet, here we all are in county Derry, home of Hume and Heaney, where on any given day, grown adults will unleash guttural profanities at the sound of a whistle or engage in mass 'shemozzles', before litigiously arguing that none of it actually happened. And all of it, supposedly, for 'the little parish'.

The nativism which Corkery's critics used as an intellectual tool against his world view was a powerful ideology. But it was also dangerous and often misunderstood. The notion of an Irish-only Ireland, rooted in the Gaelic language, to the exclusion of all others, was the

arm wrestle that shaped most of 20th century Ireland.

Corkery's finest work "A Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster" illustrates the lost nation, the Ireland of three centuries previous where despite the poverty and hardship, a civilisation rich in culture and tribal in structure survived and was now hidden from the modern world.

One aspect remained. If cultural parochialism was the identity of choice, then 'the parish' was king. Which in turn necessitates the church to be a vehicle of power and control. As we now know, church and state combined in the early decades of twentieth century Ireland with some awful consequences for its people.

But what has this got to do with the GAA, you might ask?

Since the shadow of the 20th century church has lifted somewhat over Ireland it has coincided with the rise of the GAA, as it unfastened the straps on its own cultural and political baggage, leaving the ban on 'foreign games' and British security forces as footnotes in an historical journey. Replace the word 'parish' with 'community' and it offers up some interesting parallels.

Social media is awash daily with GAA clubs posting 'community' messages. 'We Are Community' is one of the official marketing slogans used.

The GAA is foremost a games-based sports organisation and should always be. Over recent decades, whether by design or by the recession of the church, the GAA appears to

have assumed the mantle of community leaders. This is not without hazard as our association is far from perfect. We need to be informed by history and be mindful of self-generated hype around our role in our community.

When our games stopped during the Covid-pandemic the 'community GAA' expanded to fill the vacuum of the 'games GAA'. It was a magnificent demonstration of self-help and togetherness. People's yearning for connectivity and togetherness found an outlet in GAA clubs. Medicines were delivered to the elderly and roadways cleared of litter. A sense of civic pride emerged, as so often happens during extraordinary times.

Gaelic games can consume our nation and our minds. Nevermind sport, they have the ability to overtake the weather as the main talking point in people's lives. Free trips to the moon would not have distracted the discourse of people during the recent controversy surrounding the All-Ireland club final. In Ukraine and Syria, wars raged. Energy companies continue to reap massive profits during a cost of living crisis yet we were absolutely consumed by the ending to a football match between two GAA communities. Corkery was not far wrong.

It all begs the question of Why?

It was a question the GAA asked itself a few years ago.

In early 2018, I got a phone call from the incoming GAA President, John Horan. He asked if I would join the

National Communications Committee for the three year term of his presidency. I didn't know what to say so asked for time to think it over. In the end I agreed, primarily because it would be a life experience and a chance to meet like minded people. I was unsure if I had anything to contribute but I knew I might learn something. It involved a monthly meeting in Croke Park and turned out to be an enjoyable experience. I didn't get a chance to achieve some of the things that I wanted. Covid intervened and life's priorities dominated. But I had one lasting satisfying memory.

Following months of market research, where GAA members and the general population were asked in detail about their motivations and perceptions of our association in 21st century Ireland, the results were collated and a new set of values woven into a mission statement for a new century.

The brilliant GAA copywriter Theresa Byrne started to read..."We all belong here. In this place. At this time..." It was a rare moment of clarity for all around the table. One of those was Damian Lawlor who went on to write a book 'After The Storm: The GAA, Covid and the Power of People' about what followed. You should check it out.

The number one reason why people get involved with the GAA is a sense of belonging. It has many forms and it is hardwired into us. Human beings need belonging like they need water or food. A recent study at MIT revealed that humans crave connections in the same part of the brain that craves food. They feel pain in the same part of the brain that is fired by social exclusion. The explosion and exploitation of social

media is due to precisely these neurological processes.

Emotional and mental well-being is directly linked to a sense of belonging. Of being part of a collective. Of a shared identity. The ability to identify as part of a group, whether a club officer, a parent who shares casual chat with their peers watching their children at play, or a man who once wore a club's colours as a boy, those links, whether currently weak or strong, are a vital part of our lives and consequently our well-being.

When tens of thousands of Derry people spilled onto the Clones turf last summer a million memories were made, hooking generations old and young together. The sea of Armagh orange or Dublin blue

is the exact same. Connections to our past, people no longer with us, are all wrapped up in the same yearning to belong. It transcends even life itself.

The GAA does not have a monopoly on belonging. You will find similar motives at work in schools, book clubs, tennis clubs or fishing clubs. The GAA is however the biggest show on the community stage. But it is not perfect and contains many of the same jealousies, pious and self-interest elements that can be destructive to any organisation. To any parish. To any community.

For now though it's the best we have. It is worth protecting. Our GAA. Where We All Belong.

## WE ALL BELONG HERE IN THIS PLACE. AT THIS TIME

**WE BELONG NOT BECAUSE OF WHO WE ARE OR WHERE WE COME FROM  
BEING HERE MEANS BELONGING  
BELONGING MEANS KNOWING YOU'RE PART OF A COMMUNITY  
A COMMUNITY THAT HAS A PLACE FOR ALL  
WHERE POTENTIAL IS NURTURED  
WHERE INDIVIDUALS BECOME TEAMS  
WHO HONOUR THE LEGACY OF THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE  
AND STRIVE TO BUILD A LEGACY OF THEIR OWN**

**SOME OF US PLAY  
SOME OF US USED TO PLAY. SOME OF US NEVER PLAYED**

**WE ALL BELONG**

**BELONGING MEANS HAVING A VOICE  
MEANS BEING ABLE TO SAY WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT**

**BEING LISTENED TO**

**BELONGING MEANS RESPECTING EACH OTHER  
MEANS BEING THERE FOR EACH OTHER  
ON THE PITCH. OFF THE PITCH**

**BELONGING MEANS ROLLING OUR SLEEVES UP AND DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE  
WE ALL BELONG WHETHER IT'S OUR FIRST DAY OR OUR HUNDRETH YEAR  
WE ALL BELONG HERE BECAUSE THIS PLACE BELONGS TO US ALL**

**OUR GAA  
WHERE WE ALL BELONG**



# DOIRE DERRY



	<b>1</b> <b>Odhran Lynch</b> Odhran Ó Lionsigh <i>Machaire Fiolta</i>	
<b>2</b> <b>Chrissy McKaigue</b> Cristóir Mac Taidhg <i>Sleacht Néill</i>	<b>3</b> <b>Eoin McEvoy</b> Eoin Mac an Fhiobui <i>Machaire Fiolta</i>	<b>4</b> <b>Conor McCluskey</b> Conchuir Mac Bhloscaidh <i>Machaire Fiolta</i>
<b>5</b> <b>Conor Doherty</b> Conchuir Ó Dochairtaigh <i>Droichead Nua</i>	<b>6</b> <b>Padraig McGrogan</b> Padraig Mac Gruagáin <i>Droichead Nua</i>	<b>7</b> <b>Padraig Cassidy</b> Padráig Ó Caiside <i>Sleacht Néill</i>
<b>8</b> <b>Conor Glass</b> Conchuir Glas <i>An Gleann</i>	<b>9</b> <b>Brendan Rogers</b> Breandan Mac Ruairi <i>Sleacht Neill</i>	
<b>10</b> <b>Niall Toner</b> Néill Ó Tomhnair <i>Leamhaigh</i>	<b>11</b> <b>Paul Cassidy</b> Pól Ó Caiside <i>Baile Eachaidh</i>	<b>12</b> <b>Ethan Doherty</b> Éatan O'Dochartaigh <i>An Gleann</i>
<b>13</b> <b>Benny Heron</b> Bearnárd O hEachthigheirn <i>Baile na Scrine</i>	<b>14</b> <b>Shane McGuigan</b> Seán Mag Uigáinn <i>Sleacht Néill</i>	<b>15</b> <b>Niall Loughlin</b> Néill O' Lochlain <i>Grian Loch</i>

**FIR ÍONAID:**

16 Ryan Scullion	Rian Ó Scolláin	Baile na Scrine
17 Paul McNeill	Pól MacNeill	Sleacht Neill
18 Shea Downey	Shea Mac Giolla-Domhnaigh	Leamhaigh
19 Oisín McWilliams	Oisín MacUilinn	Suaitreach
20 Conleth McGuckian	Connlaodh Mag Eocháin	An Gleann
21 Ben McCarron	Bearnárd MacCarrghamhna	Baile Stíl
22 Laclan Murray	Laclan Ó Muir	Diseart Mhártain
23 Niall O'Donnell	Néill O'Domhnaill	Baile an Doire
24 Matthew Downey	Maitiu Mac Giolla-Domhnaigh	Leamhaigh
25 Declan Cassidy	Deaglán Ó Caiside	Baile Eachaidh
26 Mark Doherty	Marc Ó Dochairtaigh	Droichead Nua

**BAINISTÍOCHT:**

Bainisteoir: **Rory Gallagher** Roghnóirí: **Ciaran Meenagh, Enda Muldoon, Peter Hughes**



# AN MHÍ MEATH



	<b>1</b> <b>Harry Hogan</b> Anraí Ó hÓgáin <i>Maigh Dearmhaí</i>	
<b>2</b> <b>Adam O'Neill</b> Ádam Ó Néill <i>Bhulf Tón</i>	<b>3</b> <b>Michael Flood</b> Michéal Ó Maoltuille <i>Naomh Brid</i>	<b>4</b> <b>Harry O'Higgins</b> Anraí Ó hUiginn <i>Emmet Druim Bhearradh</i>
<b>5</b> <b>Jack O'Connor</b> Sean Ó Conchúir <i>Currach Átha</i>	<b>6</b> <b>Donal Keogan</b> Dónall Mac Eochagáin <i>Rath Coinnig</i>	<b>7</b> <b>Cathal Hickey</b> Cathal Ó hÍcí <i>Baile Sencaill</i>
<b>8</b> <b>Ronan Jones</b> Rónan Seoin <i>Naomh Peadar Dún Bóinne</i>	<b>9</b> <b>Daithí McGowan</b> Daithí Mac Gabhann <i>Rath Tó</i>	
<b>10</b> <b>Cillian O'Sullivan</b> Cillian Ó Súilleabháin <i>Magh nAilbhe</i>	<b>11</b> <b>Jason Scully</b> Íason Ó Scoláí <i>Sean Chaisleán</i>	<b>12</b> <b>Darragh Campion</b> Dáire Caimpion <i>Scrín</i>
<b>13</b> <b>Jordan Morris</b> Jordon Ó Muirís <i>Réaltaí Dún a Ri</i>	<b>14</b> <b>Donal Lenihan</b> Dónall Ó Loingeacháin <i>Naomh Peadar Dún Bóinne</i>	<b>15</b> <b>Shane Walsh</b> Seán Breatnach <i>Na Fianna</i>

**FIR ÍONAID:**

16 <b>Seán Brennan</b>	Seán Ó Braonáin	Dún Doire
17 <b>James O'Hare</b>	Seamus Ó hÍr	Rath Coinnig
18 <b>Daniel O'Neill</b>	Dónaill Ó Néill	Bhulf Tón
19 <b>Shane Crosby</b>	Seán Mac an Chrosáin	Damhliag Baile an Bheileogaigh
20 <b>Robin Clarke</b>	Roibín Ó Cléirigh	Damhliag Baile an Bheileogaigh
21 <b>Brian Conlon</b>	Briain Ó Caoinleáin	Gaeil Baile Shiomóin
22 <b>Shane McEntee</b>	Seán Mac an tSaoi	Naomh Peadar Dún Bóinne
23 <b>Eoin Harkin</b>	Eoin Ó hEarcáin	Dún Samhna
24 <b>Diarmuid Moriarty</b>	Diarmuid Ó Muireartaigh	Currach Átha
25 <b>Thomas O'Reilly</b>	Tomas Ó Raghallaigh	Bhulf Tón
26 <b>Aaron Lynch</b>	Arron Ó Loingsigh	Átha Troim

**BAINISTÍOCHT:**

Bainisteoir: **Colm O'Rourke** Roghnóirí: **Barry Callaghan, Stephen Bray, Paul Garrigan, Seán Boylan**

# Dignified Glen Did Nothing Wrong

By Declan Bogue

WHEN the GAA's decision-making body felt it was appropriate, indeed the only course of action open to them, they ordered a replay of the All-Ireland club final.

Not to go over it all once more, but given that winners Kilmacud Crokes had an extra player on the pitch for the closing play of the final against Glen, they were in clear breach of rules.

Glen made the appeal, but the Kilmacud response was to object to this process. Much like Alan Partridge said as he was having an argument with a former teacher who struck him; "See you in Strasbourg!"

Kilmacud's response is typical of how these things play out in the GAA now, where everyone is the victim and nobody accepts responsibility.

Their reaction was to produce a lengthy document that attempted to obfuscate the situation. The GAA's Central Competition Controls Committee heard them out patiently like a frazzled parent when their child asks them the 487th question of the day, before ordering the replay.

Their response? To appeal again.

Glen decided at that point that they wanted no

more to do with the process and therefore pulled out of proceedings.

You cannot blame them. If an opposition team breaks the rules and has no interest in playing you to the rules of the game, then what can you do?

And yet, the backlash from some quarters has been astonishing, with the view that somehow Glen were culpable for the farce that has unfolded since the final.

Here's the thing. Many people were at fault on All-Ireland final day. Referee Derek O'Mahoney was at fault for not running the final play again, as requested by Glen management.

O'Mahoney compounded his faults by not detailing this mistake in his referee's report.

Kilmacud were at fault, for not ensuring they had the correct number of players on the pitch.

The only party that did not commit a mistake, or indulge in cute-hoorery, or bend the rules, or conveniently forget anything, was Glen. They are completely innocent in all of this.

Now, there are a couple of argument offshoots that are puzzling. Kilmacud's efforts in reaching the All-Ireland final after they lost it in dramatic

circumstances the previous year to Kilcoo, were admirable. It showed great character and resilience.

It did not, however, entitle them to have another man on the line for the final play of the game.

Those arguing that the numerical supremacy only happened for a short period of time also miss the point. The argument is paper-thin when you consider how Kilmacud lost the previous year's decider – a goal in injury-time of extra-time, to Jerome Johnston.

And earlier that day, the hurling final was decided by a goal from Ballygunnar's Harry Ruddle in the final play of the game.

Goals are scored in the blink of an eye.

And when O'Mahoney's officials indicated that there were to be four minutes left to play, you might have felt that was plenty of time for a last roll of the dice or two.

How long was the ball in play for that last four minutes? 48 seconds.

It was 48 seconds, because of the usual mess that the conclusion of games has become, with multiple subs and lying on the ball and kicking balls away.

This low-grade irritating

behaviour is almost universally accepted, because our tolerance of cheating has been stretched to accommodate it.

But again, Glen did nothing wrong here either.

In the days to follow, there was no appetite from the GAA to make any kind of comment.

Eventually, they did.

But only

because Director-General Tom Ryan was asked directly about it after the publication of his annual report.

Ryan's reasoning for the sudden turn of Greta Garbo syndrome was to reason that the process of all of this was key. And no, there would be no exception just because it was the All-Ireland final.

"No is the answer because to my mind if you're playing junior D football in west Kerry or are an All-Star from Antrim it's the same disciplinary system and people are entitled to have the same rigour applied to irrespective of how good you are or the level you're playing at," he said.

But this is wrong. A dispute over a Junior D football game in west Kerry would be dealt with by the officers of the Kerry county board. Saying nothing of consequence was the handy way out.

A striking element of the process was actually how

well the wider club of Glen conducted themselves in all of this. While manager Malachy O'Rourke initially felt there would be no appeal, the players had to have their voice in all of this.

Trying to marry that all in with the view of the committee, and indeed the club membership, would have been torturous. This thing was big, perhaps the biggest thing to affect the club ever. Marty

The former GAA journalist Paddy Heaney is from the town. He would always maintained that Glen were a great club, even though too many are inclined to look at the Roll of Honour of senior Championship as the only measure of greatness, as if the GAA was some infantile form of Top Trumps.

"For a long time we were a great club without a great senior team," he said yesterday. "Winning the Championship was the last box that had to be ticked."

They had indefatigable club volunteers such as Jim McGuigan, John J McKenna, John Tunney and Enda Gormley. Christmas night in their clubhouse hoovered up everyone in the surrounding parishes for festive fun. Long before any club had a minibus, Glen had one.

In quieter times, games of 45 in the member's bar helped stave off loneliness for the elderly and James Devlin's Sunday night quizzes were another staple.

"First and foremost, it's about preserving the unity of a great club," he said of their actions, and subsequent withdrawal of the process.

"I'm not in the committee, but looking at how this has all played out, I would imagine that was the guiding ethos of the men and women who led the club through this."

In the meantime, Lotto continues every Monday night. The jackpot is up to £7,500.



photo: Margaret McLaughlin



## The Master

By Paddy Heaney

**During my 48-years on this earthy soil I've been blessed to come under the orbit of some great teachers, coaches and managers.**

None was better or more inspiring than Sean Smith who died in 2020.

I played under Sean on the Jordanstown Freshers team that won the All-Ireland title in 1993. (Sean took various Jordanstown teams to nine finals and won all nine of them).

This column is not going to be an elegy to Sean Smith. No. My mission here is different. By the time you have finished this article, I just want you to know with complete certainty that Sean Smith was an exceptional football manager who was light years ahead of his time.

I will prove this to you with

plain, old simple facts.

### THE BLANKET DEFENCE

The back pitch at Jordanstown. 1992. It's one of our first games with Sean. Coming up to half-time, we are leading by a few points, but we get a man sent off. At half-time, Sean asks us if we know what to do when playing with 14-men. None of us has a clue. In about five minutes, he outlines our tactics for the second half with basic language that everyone understands. When we don't have possession, the midfield and the half-forward line will retreat inside our own half. We will clog up the central channel. If we don't concede goals, we will win. If the opposition go to the wings, we will not chase them. We

will hold our positions. If they want to shoot from the wings, we will let them. As Sean explained: "They might score one or two but they'll start missing. And when they start missing, they'll lose heart." So that's what we did, and it worked, exactly as Sean said it would. In fact it worked so well I often wondered afterwards why teams didn't just play like that all the time. About two decades later – they did.

### MONEYBALL

In 2004, a book called Moneyball led to a global revolution in how team sports are analysed. Moneyball shone a light on the major failings of big money baseball teams. Chief among these flaws is that fact that coaches are often quite literally blinded by

beauty. Their admiration for a player's style, elegance and yes, good looks, blinds them to the fact that he's not actually doing that much.

On that Jordanstown Freshers team, we were in awe of one particular prodigy who just seemed to have it all. Not only was he tall, strong, two-footed, fast, accurate and skilful – he looked like a movie-star as well.

In an early season challenge game our High School quarterback seemed to confirm his legendary status after he took possession inside his own half, soloed half the length of the pitch and casually knocked the ball over the bar.

I felt more like a fan than a team-mate. At least I did until Sean spoke to us at half-time.

During the break Sean gently pointed out that our star's incredible solo-effort was actually the only thing he had done in the first half. Urging this ultra-talented player to get more involved, he pointed to our nippy corner-forward who was adept at winning lots and lots of frees. "The points we get from the free-kicks he wins are exactly the same value as the point you scored," said Sean.

That way of analysing a football match completely floored me. But it was just Moneyball – which floored the world when it was published more than a decade later.

By the time we started the second half, I was no longer in awe of our super star. I was completely in awe of Sean Smith.

### STATS-BASED TRAINING

I have a pathological hatred of footballers who don't run to the cones during drills. The players who cheats in training will cheat on his team. By cheating, I mean he will not give everything he has for the team effort. Sean Smith also had no time for lazy, dishonest footballers and he had his own

polite, clinical way of flushing out the bluffers.

A lot of Sean's training drills were done against the clock. He would have loved satellite technology.

For one particular passing drill where you had to run almost the full length of the pitch, he was able to tell us the exact time his beloved Bryansford players could do it in. (He took Bryanford out of junior football, guiding them to three Down Championships (1969, 1970 and 1971) and two Ulster titles (1969 and 1970). Also with Sean, there was no screaming or histrionics. He just stood with his stopwatch and called out the times. The clock weeded out the chaff.

Please understand this is only a highlights reel. Nowadays, good strength and conditioning programmes will all contain a power-based component. Resistance-based running with a sled or a prowler is now standard practice. Sean had grasped the benefits of power training and was doing it when no-one else had even heard of it. He used harnesses. Again, he wasn't years ahead, he was decades ahead of his time.

He was also a great manager. Without ever raising

his voice, you would have run through a wall for him.

Before we played Queen's in the All-Ireland final, I was given the job of marking their best player. I was nervous.

As I walked out of the changing room, Sean pulled me aside. Looking at me directly, he said: "This guy is a good footballer, but you are a better athlete than him and you can do this."

By that stage, I was a Sean Smith disciple. I could have marked two players that day.

We won. It was Sean's last game as a manager.

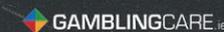
Sean was 88 when he passed away on February 5 of 2020. In the excellent article written about him in the Irish News by Andy Watters, several of his former players paid fitting tributes to a man they clearly loved.

To the Bryansford full-back, Oliver Burns who Sean taught as a nine-year-old at Burrenreagh Primary School he was and always will be, 'The Master'. Ross Carr described him as a "wonderful human being".

Master tactician. Master coach. Master manager. And a wonderful human being. I couldn't agree more.

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# The Foundations of '22

By Michael McMullan

GaelicLife

**WE'LL always talk about the summer of '22, a 10-week spell of Derry hype we'd not been used to.**

From the Benny Heron cult hero status to Aidan McLaughlin's tweets urging Derry fans to book the Skylon well before Croke Park was even on the radar.

Conor Glass and Brendan Rogers ran Donegal an extra lap they couldn't match.

You couldn't turn a sweet in your mouth on the same thronged St Tiernach's Park pitch minutes later.

From wire to wire, there was a sea of red and white. It was packed with glee and hugs and back slaps and smiles that were hidden for far too long.

I remember driving to Derry's crunch relegation game with Sligo in March 2018. Looking on towards the iconic slopes of Benbulbin, my father and I ran our eyes over Derry's summer.

At the foot of Division Three, that Sunday was Derry's championship. Shane McGuigan's first ever goal at senior inter-county level wasn't enough to prevent the Oakleafers from dropping to football's bottom rung.

At that point, Chrissy McKaigue hoisting the Anglo Celt Cup into the Clones air

wasn't even on the radar.

Of the 19 players used that day in Sligo, only seven will jog down the Owenbeg tunnel this afternoon.

So much has changed. The Derry young guns are gradually becoming men.

And if the past two league games this season are anything to go by, it'll be a packed house today. The press box was full to the throat nearly an hour before the opening win over Limerick. Before that, the hard shoulders were filling up on the way back towards Dungiven. That's what being Ulster champions has done.

Add in a penalty shoot-out with Down. The return of the Derry/Tyrone rivalry has helped ramp up the hype again. Throw in Armagh and we've now more beating hearts on the Ulster scene now.

Two weeks ago in Ardee was a very different occasion. There was another generous portion of Derry fans squeezed into a tight ground with Louth fans coming out in their numbers.

On his LouthandProud podcast days earlier, host Dan Bannon spoke of the enthusiasm a first home game would bring to the Wee County. The fact the Ulster champions were coming to



town added to the attraction, with locals getting the chance to see Shane McGuigan in the flesh.

When McGuigan curled a beauty from outside Mickey Harte and Gavin Devlin's perfectly choreographed packed middle channel, Dan nudged me. "That's what I meant, it's great for them to see that," he suggested of Derry's star attraction.

Derry did push their own self-destruct button on occasions to turn their 1-4 to 0-2 lead into a war of attrition.

"This is a team worth believing in," Chrissy McKaigue said in his post Ulster final speech last summer. He stressed that Derry fans should stick them in good days and bad.

This was one of the sticky ones. When Louth went two points ahead, there was still plenty of time for Derry to

stage a comeback but this was a test of the Oakleaf underbelly. Louth were well-marshalled and Sam Mulroy was pulling the strings at the other end.

Every time Derry coughed up possession or Louth hovered up a breaking ball, the home fans turned their enthusiasm up another notch. Taking two league points home from Ardee was the only show in town for Derry, but an upset wasn't out of the question.

There was no sign of panic. Derry's level of conditioning was always going to last the pace. The pressure cooker of an extra-time arm wrestle with Donegal was a great lesson in searching for inches.

Paul Cassidy kept running. Lachlan Murray kept showing and Conor McCluskey's width was continuing to keep enough Louth defenders with

one eye outside their shield at the back.

Enter Niall Toner. The question has always been asked of the Oakleaf threat outside of Shane McGuigan.

When Niall Loughlin's dropped shot left rookie 'keeper Peter McStravick struggling to decide between a catch and a punch, he did the latter, but not with enough venom to take the ball away from Toner's path. The Lavey man's finish was emphatic, helping take his tally from play this season to 1-10 - level with McGuigan's 0-13. Another inch of progress.

Today, Derry will be tested on two fronts as they aim to take another step in the promotion race. Of their six games so far, they've only kept two clean sheets and face a Meath team who have averaged two goals a game across their five unbeaten

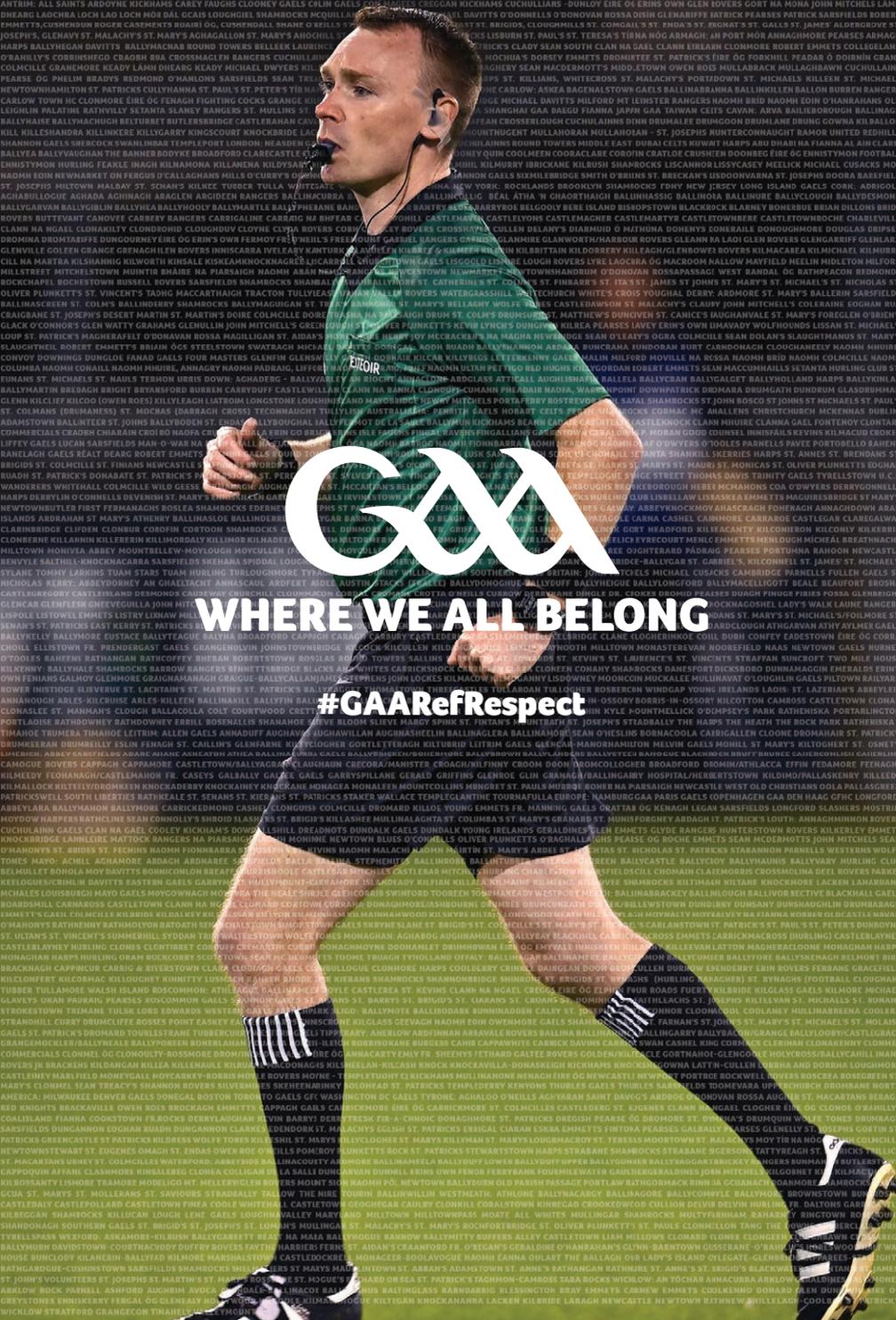
outings in 2023.

Defensively, despite having started nine different defenders in those two league games, Meath have not conceded a goal in 327 minutes of action since Carlow's Darragh Foley hit the net in the first game of the Royals' life under Colm O'Rourke.

A lean sheet today will take Derry a long way towards stretching their unbeaten run to seven games, another prize in a season of incremental gains.

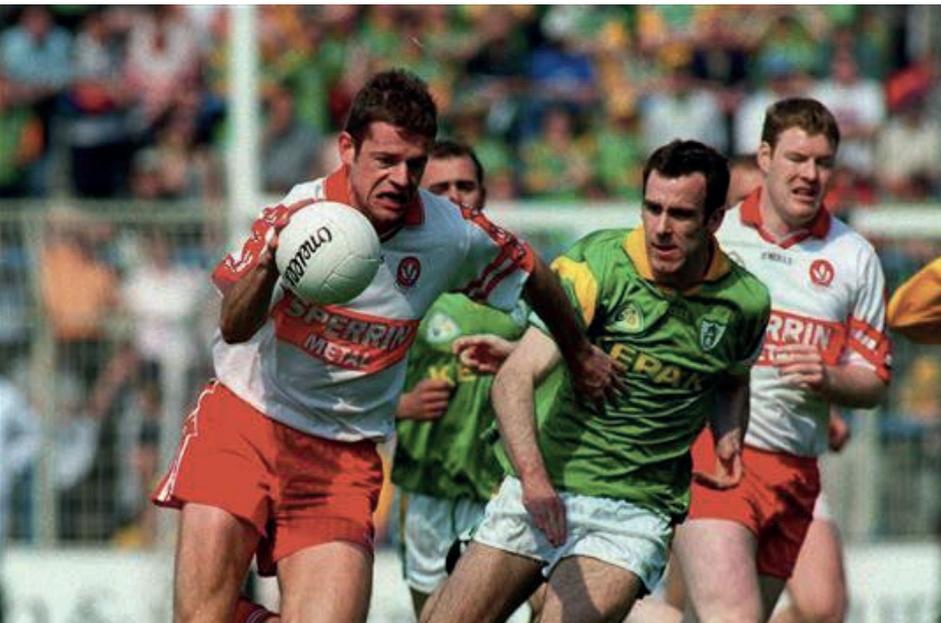
The carrot of Dublin coming to Celtic Park early next month is thankfully a million miles from Division Four.

Winning an All-Ireland, well that's a long way down the track but the summer of 22 has laid a considerable foundation.



# WHERE WE ALL BELONG

## #GAARefRespect



# When Derry ruled the Royals

By Ciaran McRory

Clones on a grey Saturday evening in the middle of May is not the most appetising of places in which to find yourself.

To compound things, if the reason you've travelled to Monaghan's famous border-town is to watch a National League game, then you're quite possibly in dire straits. But this is exactly what Derry fans found themselves doing in May 2000, when the Oak Leavers took on All-Ireland champions Meath in an NFL Final replay.

The game came a week after Derry had opened up their Ulster Championship campaign with a facile victory over Cavan, and it's intriguing to think how we might have approached this Final if defeat had befallen us on at Breffni Park.

Imagine playing a league game after you've been knocked out of the

Championship. Imagine smiling for photos on a Church & General podium knowing that the NFL game you've just won would be your last inter-county outing until the following January.

Would any Derry fans have even made the trip? Lucky enough, we were spared finding out how fans, management and players might have treated such a unique scenario and instead were able to look forward to attempting to pick up another National title safe in the knowledge that the summer that was yet to truly start, was not already over.

The drawn NFL Final at Croke Park may have lacked quality but it was a memorable encounter, primarily for Anthony Tohill's spectacular first half goal.

The Swatragh-man rose highest to field a Meath

kickout before passing the ball on and making his way into the forward line, from where he collected possession back again and drove the ball to the net, off the post. Tohill at his best.

And he would reach those heights again in the replay at Clones when he raced onto an inch-perfect, defence dissecting pass from teenager Paddy Bradley and smashed the ball to the net.

It was those two moments that would define the 2000 NFL Final, and are sitting pride of place in a packed Tohill highlight reel. But they were out of keeping with the remainder of that decider.

At Clones, Derry really only played well for about ten minutes, scoring 1-5 without reply in the first half. Meath brought themselves back into contention before the break with Trevor Giles pulling the



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strings from centre half-forward and Ollie Murphy in dangerous poaching form at full-forward.

All-Star Graham Geraghty however, was sitting in the Gerry Arthurs Stand. Geraghty had got into an altercation with Derry goalkeeper Eoin McCloskey in the drawn match at Croke Park and both players were suspended for the replay.

So with Tohill outplaying John McDermott at midfield and the combined threat of Enda Muldoon and Bradley in the forward line, the Oak Leafers had put themselves into a decent position at half-time, leading the Royals by two points.

And then, in the second half - almost without any warning - Derry gave a defensive masterclass.

A rather terse, online post-game report from RTÉ claimed that Derry "looked at times as though they did not wish to score". The Italians have a great word for it: *catenaccio*. A proper footballing concept. A vision. They give it the respect it deserves.

Unfortunately, back home,

some of our more verbally-challenged GAA pundits would label it 'puke football'. Doesn't quite have the same ring to it.

Call it what you like, that performance by the Oak Leafers was an exercise in total pragmatism and a similar tactic helped defeat Tyrone in an All-Ireland quarter-final in 2001.

Only four points were scored in the entire second half of that replay (two apiece). Almost every red and white shirt got behind the ball as Derry manager Eamon Coleman decided that only a goal could win it for Meath. They never came close.

If you ever get your hands on a copy of that match, watch in awe as the second-half clock just drains. It's a thing of beauty.

This was the blanket defence before it had even been invented. Another masterstroke from Coleman that helped capture his second NFL title as Oak Leaf manager.

They would have their swansong in 2001, but on that dark Saturday night in Clones the great Derry team of the

1990s - and their illustrious manager - captured one last national title.

And best of all? This wasn't just any old Meath team. These were the current All-Ireland champions, managed by the great Seán Boylan. This was Seán Boylan's Meath team.

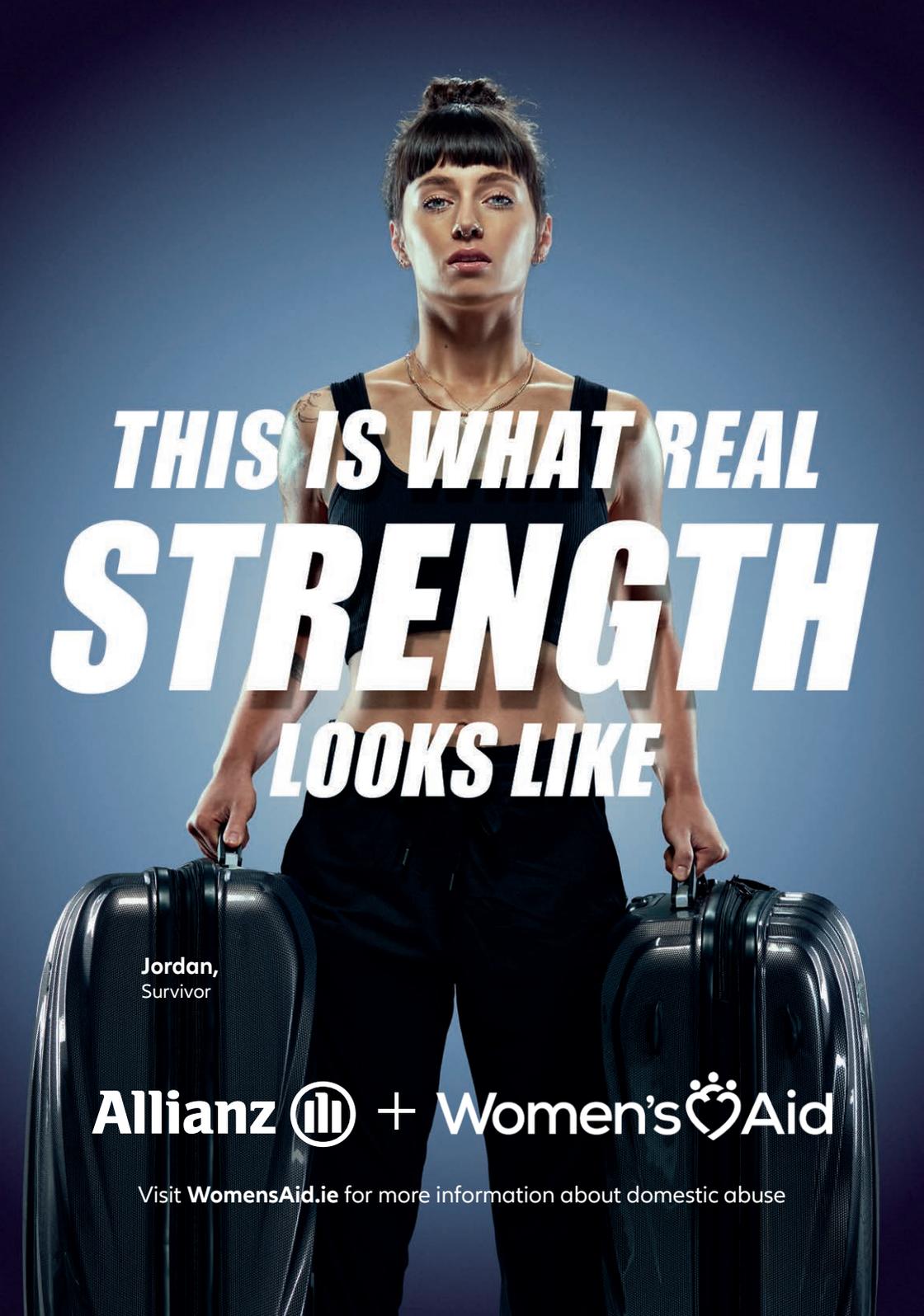
And they couldn't find a way past Derry.

**NFL Final Replay (May 20th 2000, Clones): Derry 1-8 Meath 0-9**

**Derry:** M Conlon; K McKeever, S Lockhart, D O'Neill; G Coleman, H Downey, P McFlynn; A Tohill (1-3, 0-2 frees) D Heaney; N McCusker (0-1), D Dougan (0-1), R Rocks; P Bradley (0-1, free), E Muldoon (0-1), J McBride (0-1). Subs: C Gilligan for Rocks, S McLarnon for Gilligan.

**Meath:** C Sullivan; M O'Reilly, D Fay, C Murphy; N Nestor, A Moyles, R Kealy; N Crawford, J McDermott; E Kelly, T Giles (0-6, 0-5 frees), D Curtis; O Murphy (0-2), R Fitzsimons, J Devine. Subs: B Callaghan (0-1) for Devine, T Dowd for Curtis, S Dillon for Kelly.





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