Q&A WITH FIONA KEATING

Courcey Rovers' All-Ireland camogie winner *Fiona Keating* has set her sights on back-to-back titles in 2024!

If you could relive one sporting moment from the past year, what would it be?
When the final whistle sounded in the All-Ireland camogie final in Croke Park on August 6th. The moments after that were something special. After losing the past two finals it was great to get over the line this time, and win my first senior All-Ireland medal.

Help needed: We are short two members of our 4x100m relay team and need two more locals to run with sisters Phil and Joan Healy – pick two West Cork sportspeople to make this relay team unbeatable?
Darragh McElhinney would definitely add to the quality of this team. It wouldn't be a bother to him. Jane Buckley would also be a great addition, too. She's an up-and-coming star.

What will you miss most about 2023?
Matthew Twomey and Teddy O'Donovan. These two men have put so much work into Cork camogie over the past decade. They're going to be a huge loss to us. The hard work and commitment they've given over the years has been exceptional.

What was the best present you ever received from Santa?
A Pulseroll Percussion Massage Gun. I use it after every game and match.

Who do you think is West Cork's biggest sports star?
Jack Crowley. He played a big role in Ireland's World Cup campaign, and it's great to see him flying the West Cork flag on the big stage.

West Cork is gone rugby-mad, but who would win a 100m race between Gavin Coombes, John Hodnett and Fineen Wycherley?
That would be a close race, but I'd have to back Gavin Coombes.

If you could go for New Year's drinks with three sports people – local, national or international – who would you pick?
Limerick hurling boss John Kiely – he is a great manager, has a great relationship with his players and I'd love to see his thought process behind it all. Sonia O'Sullivan – I'd love to see what she has to say about all her experiences. After that I would say the Cork camogie team because you'd get to witness Meabh Cahalane's rendition of 'I think we're alone now'. Singing is her hidden talent!

What local sports star should we keep an eye on next year?
Millie Condon. She's a little dinger and, no doubt, will be featuring in the 2025 Cork senior camogie panel. She'll be well able for it.

Those January blues are almost upon us, what's your advice to survive the month?
Just stay active, set yourself a goal and work towards it. Use the month to reset and focus on yourself. Get out of the house and meet up with friends; it's a great way to brighten up your day.

Finish this sentence: In 2024 I want to ...
Win another senior All-Ireland camogie title. After getting a taste of success this year it will definitely motivate us even more to keep up the winning streak.

Cork camogie star Meabh Cahalane has a hidden talent – she's a great singer, says Fiona Keating!

FROM CROKE PARK TO KENYA

Libby Coppinger travelled to Kenya in November for Plant the Planet Games 2023.

BY GER McCARTHY

FROM winning an All-Ireland camogie senior medal, a second All-Star award and helping plant one million trees in Africa, Libby Coppinger has lived the fastest 12 months of her life.

It's August 6th, 2023. All-Ireland final day. The Cork camogie panel are back at Croke Park for the third year in a row and searching for a first senior title since 2018.

Waterford are Matthew Twomey's team's surprise opponents but the plan remains unchanged: bring the O'Duffy Cup back to Leeside.

Libby's recollections of those last few moments before taking the field on All-Ireland final day remain as vivid as when she experienced them. The next hour will either represent the culmination of over three year's preparations or an unthinkable third consecutive All-Ireland final loss.

'There is always a bit of nervousness before an All-Ireland final but for me, I like having that,' the Kealkill woman says.

'You have to balance it with not being too nervous and being fully focussed. We had a lot of close games in the build-up to that final and knew we needed to perform for a full 60 minutes.

'Suffering the heartache of losing an All-Ireland (final) and knowing what that feels like, it was a case of do or die that day against Waterford, to be honest.

'I felt, after everything we had been through, that if we weren't ready there and then inside that Croke Park dressing room then we would never be.

'Thankfully, it all came together for us on that day.'

***

YOU'RE UNBELIEVABLE

From the moment the sliotar was thrown in, Cork proved they were more than ready. Taking the game to Waterford, Twomey's team played like a team possessed and emerged the most convincing of 5-13 to 0-9 winners.

It took a full team effort to become All-Ireland champions but Libby, like every Cork player and supporter, was appreciative of their captain's role in that success. Amy O'Connor stole all the following week's headlines with a personal haul of 3-7.

Clodagh O'Donovan, Clare Mullins and Kate Fennessy, looking glamorous at the Reardens All-Stars awards presentation evening on Washington Street. Picture: David Keane

'I am still in awe of every person we met over in Kenya,' says All-Ireland winning Cork camogie star Libby Coppinger.

'Seeing the smiles on the children's faces when you sing and dance with them is something I will never forget'

The three goals O'Connor netted in 119 devastating seconds will go down in camogie and Croke Park history. Libby was grateful to have a front row seat.

Having marked her captain throughout the year in practice games, Libby was in no doubt that Amy O'Connor's new nickname, Amy 3:7, is a merited moniker.

'That woman (Amy O'Connor) is unbelievable,' the St Colum's dual star admits.

'Amy personifies everything you would want in a captain. She puts in all the hard work but also delivers out on the pitch when it matters most. Typical of her, she didn't want to take any individual credit afterwards and was more interested in the whole Cork squad getting all the praise.

'There are a lot of leaders in the Cork camogie senior dressing-room but to witness what Amy did, on the biggest day of the year, was something special.

'I am sick of marking or just running after her in training (laughs)! Amy is one of Cork's best ever players and scoring that 3-7 in the All-Ireland final couldn't have happened at a better time for her either. She deserved it for all the hard work she put in.

'I was so delighted for her. We had a great time bringing the O'Duffy Cup back to her club, St Vincent's as well. We had a great night out there.'

***

HEY NOW, YOU'RE AN ALL-STAR

2023 ended with Libby picking up her second camogie All-Star award to add to her 2022 accolade. It proved a memorable evening for the Cork seniors with Matthew Twomey winning Manager of the Year and eight of the All-Ireland winning Cork team also receiving All-Star trophies. Amy O'Connor, Katrina Mackey, Hannah Looney, Meabh Cahalane, Laura Treacy, Amy Lee and Saoirse McCarthy were the Cork All-Stars on stage with the Carbery camogie trailblazer that evening.

'Winning an All-Star the previous year was a massive shock,' she admits.

'It is a massive honour to win but what we (Cork) wanted more than anything coming into this year were All-Ireland medals.

'It made this year extra sweet and I am hugely grateful to have won another All-Star. I was delighted to be in attendance this year as well and get to experience the event with my family and the other Cork girls. I was in Africa 12 months ago.

'These are lovely individual accolades and you are never going to turn one down! Camogie is a team game though and I enjoy sharing any Cork successes with my team as much as anything else.

'My throat was sore from roaring all the Cork winners on that night!'

***

SOWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE

Libby is only a few days removed from returning from her second trip to Africa, as she chats to us about her busy year. She, along with a group of inter-county GAA, LGFA and camogie players as part of Plant the Planet Games 2023 – a fundraising campaign organised by Warriors for Humanity, Self Help Africa and the Gaelic Players Association – travelled to Kenya in November. The aim of the annual trips is to plant one million trees to help local communities as well as take part in an exhibition GAA game and visit cultural and climate-related projects.

Although still recovering from her tiring exertions, the St Colum's star was delighted to have made the trip to Kenya.

'Even though it was my second trip, I still struggle to put into words what an amazing experience it was,' she says.

'I knew a bit more of what to expect going over this year. The goal of the trip was still the same, to raise enough money to plant a million trees. What we did over there this time was slightly different.

'I am still in awe of every person we met over in Kenya. They are the nicest people you will ever meet. They welcome you with open arms. Maybe we get to see a different version of their lives when we are over there but they have so little yet would give you everything they have. It is amazing.

'The Kenyans are so grateful for all the little things we are doing for them. That's why it is so important to see first-hand the positive impact it will have on those families and to get to know them as well.

'Seeing the smiles on the children's faces when you sing and dance with them is something I will never forget. The group you travel over with is very special as are the bonds you build with them. It is great to get the opportunity to get to know those players off the field.'

Libby Coppinger and Sorcha McCartan celebrate Cork's All-Ireland camogie final win.

Camogie team players along with Reardens owner Margaret Kenneally, front left, and general manager John Styles, front third left, with former Cork Senior Camogie team manager Matthew Twomey, front second left, at the Reardens All-Stars awards presentation evening on Washington Street. Pictures: David Keane

Camogie team players Clare Mullins and Niamh O'Regan, after receiving their awards at the Reardens All-Stars awards.

O'Sullivan is new minor manager

GAA

Mary Newman

THE Cork Camogie Board are appointing Maurice O'Sullivan as the minor manager for 2024.

O'Sullivan will succeed Jerry Wallace, who had an extremely successful stint in the role from 2018 until this season, landing four All-Ireland title, before stepping away and taking over the Waterford senior side.

The board will be putting the Ballyhea club man forward as the new minor manager for a two-year term, with the possibility of an extension, pending ratification at their upcoming county board meeting.

O'Sullivan brings a wealth to the role and his dedication to Cork's development through his involvement with the Cork Development Hub has made a valuable contribution to Cork Camogie.

His tenure included multiple titles at club and colleges level and he contributed to Cork teams from U16 to minor over the last five years.

He had an integral role with the Cork U16 team, winning three consecutive All-Ireland and Munster titles.

Maurice commented: "I am eagerly anticipating the challenge of managing the Cork minor camogie team.

"My aim is to build upon the excellent foundation laid at both the minor and U16 levels. I am committed to fostering a culture of competition and nurturing a winning mindset among the players."

The Cork Camogie Board extended its best wishes to O'Sullivan and his management team in a statement: "The board are thrilled to have Maurice dedicated to furthering his progression with Cork camogie.

"Additionally, the board acknowledges the great work by Jerry Wallace and his team."

Cork recently appointed Ger Manley as the new senior manager, moving from a role as coach in Matthew Twomey's All-Ireland winning setup. The Rebels landed U16, minor and senior titles in a really terrific 2023 for Cork camogie.

Helen and Tim Buckley with daughters, Mary (captain) and Rena, after Inniscarra's success in 2017. Picture: Mike English

Buckley named Cork Camogie Volunteer of the Year for 2023

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

THE Cork Camogie Board named Tim Buckley from the Inniscarra club as the Cork Camogie Volunteer of the Year for 2023.

The hard-working Inniscarra club man was nominated by his club and was chosen by a panel of judges as the recipient of the prestigious honour in recognition of his work for camogie in his club and for the selfless nature of the way he goes about his tasks. The time and resources he has given to camogie at all levels for more than 20 years are considerable.

With his daughters Rena and Mary active playing members of the Inniscarra camogie club it was only natural that Tim would get involved in the game and he has held various positions in the club.

During his term as chairperson from 2015 to 2018, Scarra saw huge growth in size and success, both on and off the pitch. It was under his chair that the first fundraising golf classic took place in May 2015 and since then Tim has been involved every year in the organisation of the event, securing sponsorship, teams and arranging the logistics for the day. These successful golf classics spearheaded by him, have generated funds for investment.

Tim also previously held other executive positions such as PRO, treasurer and delegate to the County Board for very many years. During his time as the Scarra delegate, he was a member of the General Purpose Committee of the board.

He was part of the Inniscarra Club Pitch Development Committee which purchased and developed a pitch which meant they were the first camogie club in Cork to have their own pitch, in 2004.

He is currently the chair of the club facilities, maintenance and development group and his day-to-day work includes pitch maintenance such as lining the pitch, organising hedge cutting, fertilizing, spiking and more. He oversaw the installation of new ball stop nets in 2023 and is currently leading the project on the purchase and installation of a robotic lawnmower which includes bringing electricity to the pitch.

Grant applications are another are he manages and the club has been very successful in securing grants under his stewardship.

As well as off-the-pitch activities Tim has also been a member of the senior and junior team management groups for many years and has looked after team sheets, referees and other logistics for both the teams.

Through his many years of involvement with camogie, Tim has furthered and positively impacted the development of camogie in the Muskerry region.

Also very much a community person, he is involved in the Community Centre's Actively Retired Group and also assists at all community events.

Above all, Tim Buckley is a guiding light and a huge source of knowledge and advice to the executive, coaches and mentors of Inniscarra Camogie Club. He is available and willing to take on any task or give advice on any matter arising and the club is hugely proud of all he does for them.

Inniscarra club members, including Tim Buckley, then chairman, at a Cork All-Ireland celebration. Picture: Mike English.

Youghal's O'Regan takes over U16 girls

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

CORK will appoint Anthony O'Regan as their new U16 camogie manager.

The Youghal club man will step into the role as the Rebels complete their appointments for 2024, which include Ger Manley at the helm of the seniors and Mossie O'Sullivan in charge of the minors.

Cork had a superb season across the board, landing All-Irelands at their three primary levels. U16 is a key stage of development for female players in camogie and ladies football.

O'Regan's appointment is pending ratification at the next Cork County Camogie Board meeting.

With a background encompassing six years with Imokilly development teams and four years with Cork U14 and U15 development teams, he will bring a wealth of relevant experience to the role.

In their announcing the appointment the board said: "Anthony aims to foster an expansive, free-flowing style of camogie, prioritizing player expression. His nomination for a two-year term, with the option to extend, marks a strategic step forward.

"The board expressed gratitude to the outgoing management team for their unwavering dedication and extended best wishes to Anthony and his team, anticipating a successful tenure under his leadership."

In other camogie news, the Camogie Association has agreed a Minimum Player Charter, which will set out the minimum conditions provided, in terms of support and expenses, for an inter-county player.

The GPA had reportedly imposed a deadline of December 31 for an agreement on minimum conditions, or it was set to prepare a protest involving male and female players.

Earlier this year, the GPA, Camogie Association, and LGFA agreed to deliver a charter for female inter-county players ahead of the 2024 season, bringing to an end matchday protests which had been carried out during last year's championships.

Cork athletes in contention for Her Sport Awards

Stephen O'Leary

Alison Bergin, Amy O'Connor, and the Cork camogie team are among the nominees for the Her Sport Awards, which take place on 27 January at University College Dublin.

Corkonians can vote for their local sportswomen until Sunday 19 January at awards.hersport.ie.

The Her Sport Awards celebrate the achievements of Irish women in sport, and these Cork athletes have been right at the heart of some of 2023's greatest successes.

The Cork camogie team's momentous 2023 has been recognised with a place on the shortlist for Team of the Year. The Rebelettes claimed a record 29th O'Duffy Cup, defeating Waterford in the All-Ireland Final on a scoreline of 5-13 to 0-09.

It was a mixture of ecstasy and relief for Cork, having narrowly lost out against Galway and Kilkenny, respectively, in the 2021 and 2022 All-Ireland deciders.

Having led the team throughout the year, the 2023 final saw captain Amy O'Connor deliver an individual performance for the ages, contributing 3-7 of Cork's tally, before the St Vincent's club player raised the trophy herself in front of a 30,191 strong crowd.

In attendance during the RTÉ Sports Awards 2023 at RTÉ studios in Donnybrook, Dublin, are Cork camogie players Laura Treacy, Amy O'Connor, and Hannah Looney, with the O'Duffy Cup. PHOTO: SEB DALY/SPORTSFILE

Cork hurler Ger Mellerick, footballer Libby Coppinger, camogie player Fiona Keating, and footballer Rory Maguire at Páirc Uí Caoimh as Cork GAA and PepsiCo announced their official Positive Action partnership. Picture: Michael O'Sullivan

O'Connor's achievements have been acknowledged with a nomination for Her Sport Athlete of the Year.

The camogie team will face stiff competition for the Team of the Year Award even from within the county.

Fermoy rower Alison Bergin is in the same category, nominated with her teammate Zoe Hyde following their 4th place finish in the W2x event at the World Rowing Championships in Belgrade, a result that qualified the pair for the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

It completed a successful stellar year for 22 year old Bergin, who also won silver in the BW1x in the U23 World Rowing Championships in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Others shortlisted for Team of the Year include the Irish soccer team, following their first FIFA World Cup appearance in Australia, the Dublin team that won the All-Ireland Football Championship last year, as well as the paracycling tandem bike team of Katie George Dunleavy and Linda Kelly who won gold in the World Cycling Championships in Glasgow.

Nominated alongside Amy O'Connor for Athlete of the Year, among others, are world boxing champion Katie Taylor, Ireland and Arsenal footballer Katie McCabe, and middle-distance runner Ciara Mageean. Also included is Paralympic gold medalist, Ellen Keane.

Her Sport is also accepting nominations for their Community Award, which celebrates individuals who have had a significant sporting impact on their community.

This can include volunteers, supporters and other individuals who contribute to the Irish sporting community, from grassroots to high performance level.

People can nominate their local sporting contributors at awards.hersport.ie.

The event will be aired on TG4, with details to follow on Her Sport's various social channels.

ORLA STEPS BACK

Five-time All-Ireland camogie winner feels the time is right to take inter-county break

BY KIERAN McCARTHY

FIVE-TIME All-Ireland senior camogie winner Orla Cronin has decided to step back from the Cork panel for the 2024 season.

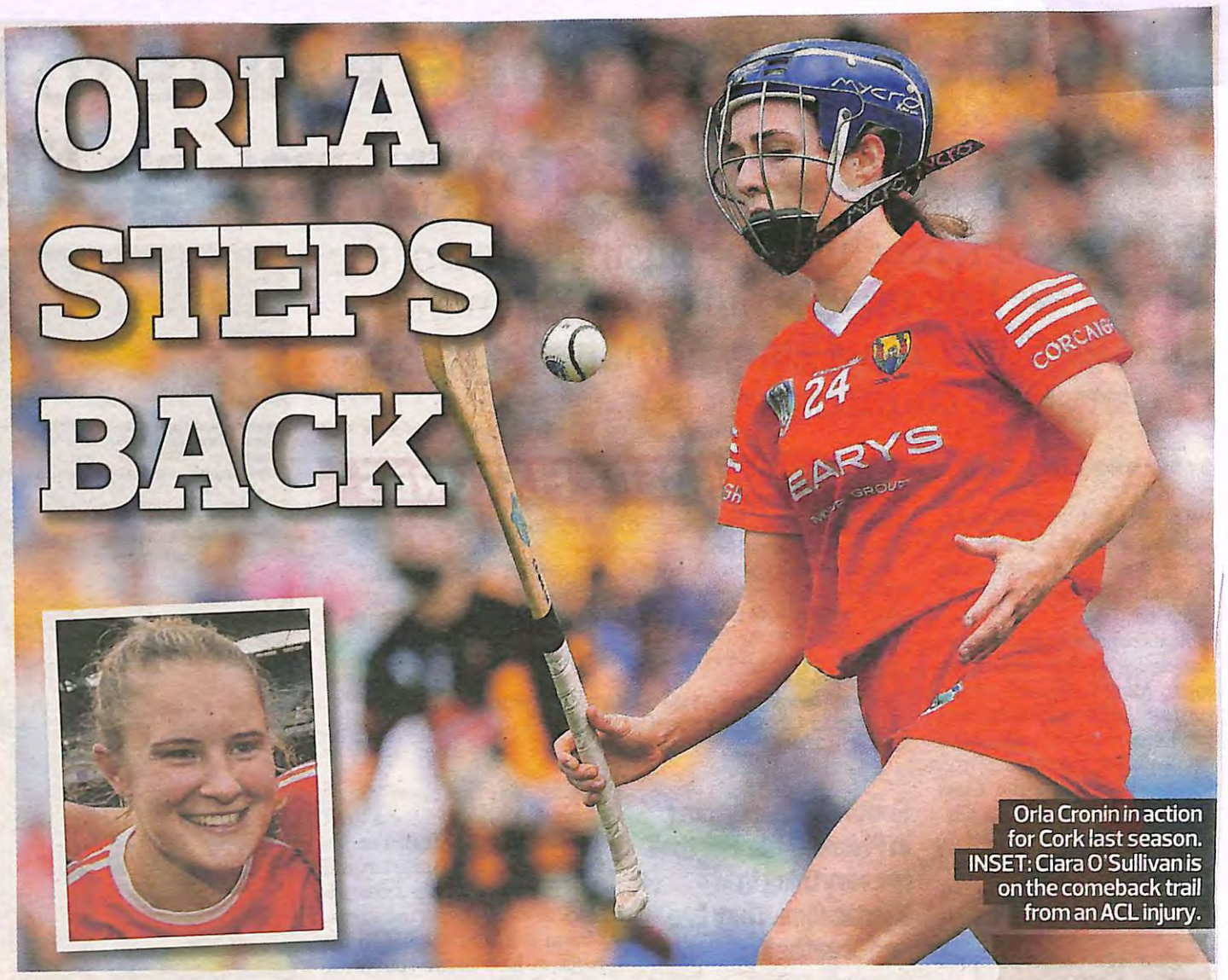
The Enniskeane woman has emerged as one of Carbery's finest and most decorated camogie players, picking up an All-Star after the 2020 season, but the 27-year-old has struggled with injuries in recent years, reducing her role with the Rebels.

In 2022 Cronin missed the entire league campaign and played in three championship games before stepping away from the Cork panel ahead of the All-Ireland semi-final; her woes traced back to a muscle issue in her hip. Injuries held Cronin back again in the Rebels' 2023 All-Ireland winning campaign, though she did come off the bench in the quarter-final, semi-final and final victories.

'On her day, Orla is probably one of the best players in the country,' former Cork boss Matthew Twomey said of the 2017 All-Ireland final player of the match, but new manager Ger Manley will plan without the classy Enniskeane forward this season. The persistent injuries took their toll and given she has been involved in the Cork senior set-up since 2014, she feels it's the right time to step back.

Meanwhile, Newcestown's Ciara O'Sullivan has not been included in the Cork senior panel for the upcoming season, as she focuses on her comeback from the ACL injury that sidelined her for the entire 2023 campaign.

Having started the 2022 All-Ireland senior final, O'Sullivan had hoped to nail down a regular spot in '23, but then ruptured her ACL in action for UCC in an Ashbourne Cup semi-final. She is closing in on her comeback, returned to non-contact training in December and is building towards a return to contact and games next month.



Orla Cronin in action for Cork last season. INSET: Ciara O'Sullivan is on the comeback trail from an ACL injury.

Ballincollig's O'Sullivan announced as minor manager

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

MOSSIE O'SULLIVAN from the Ballincollig club was formally ratified as the minor manager at a specially convened county board meeting along with his backroom team which includes new faces to inter-county camogie amongst them.

Liam O'Connor from the Na Piarsaigh club will be the side's head coach. This will be his first involvement at inter-county level but he has huge experience in camogie having been involved with Na Piarsaigh intermediate camogie teams in 2022 and 2023.

He has also previously been involved as a mentor with the club senior hurling team.

The backroom includes selector Clodagh Deasy from the Valley Rovers club, a former Cork intermediate player. She is joined by Joey Gallagher from Courcey Rovers. They both have huge experience in selectorial roles.

They will be joined by a selector from Premier Minor county champions Sarsfields.

Stephen O'Mahony from Kinsale is the side's strength and conditioning coach.

He has worked at inter-county level with the Cork U16 sides since 2019 and was closely involved with Mossie in the development squad set-up at U16.

Deirdre Looney from Millstreet is the group's female liaison officer while county board registrar Eileen O'Brien will be the County Board liaison officer with the side.

The statistician is Finbarr Bradley, from the Laochra Óg club, who was a mentor for a number of years with Ballincollig camogie club and has been involved in camogie for a long time.

Cork will be out earlier than normal with the Munster campaign set to begin on January 20 when they travel to meet Tipperary in the Munster semi-final with the winners not out again until February 18.

In previous years, the provincial competitions were held after the All-Ireland series but that's changed this year.

The bid for three in a row of minor titles gets underway on March 3 when Cork meet Antrim and on March 10 they will be at home to meet Waterford.

On March 24, it's a trip away to meet Galway and on April 7 Cork are away to Tipperary. The last game in the group will see them host Kilkenny on April 14.

The semi-finals are scheduled to take place on April 21 with the final down for decision a week later on April 27-28.

The specially convened meeting also formally ratified the appointment of Anthony Cashman form the Youghal club as U16 manager and he will announce his backroom team shortly.

Members of Cork camogie's senior, minor, and U16, All-Ireland winning teams and U16 B Munster champions with the Mayor of County Cork Frank O'Flynn at the Victory Dinner in their honour held recently at the Rochestown Park Hotel. Picture: Jim Coughlan

Aoife and Aine Mullins, enjoying the Reardens All-Stars awards presentation evening on Washington Street. Picture: David Keane

Cork camogie had a superb 2023, winning three All-Ireland titles

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

2023 was a superb year for Cork camogie.

Three All-Ireland titles captured with the O'Duffy Cup returning Leeside after an absence of five years.

The minors and U16s retained their titles, with the U16s making it three in a row, and the minors securing back to back titles.

2023 will go down as one of the best in history.

Manager Matthew Twomey in his second year at the helm showed huge determination as his senior sides were crowned All-Ireland champions.

Having lost out in the national league final to Galway on a 2-13 to 1-12 scoreline, they showed huge resolve to go on and take the title. Two week after losing the league final Cork went crashing out of the Munster championship when they lost to Waterford in Pairc Uí Chaoimh 1-18 to 1-15, but it was possibly the best thing that happened and with championship looming, hard work needed to be done.

Matthew Twomey never one to shy away from hard work set about getting it right and taking one game at a time, his side showed steady improvement.

The group stages of championship saw Cork lose out to Galway but defeating Down and Clare they emerged out of the group as runners up, their reward, a meeting with All-Ireland champions Kilkenny in Croke Park.

Cork answered the call superbly as knocked out the champions 2-14 to 2-13 but another stiff test awaited.

A meeting with a Galway side they had lost out to on three occasions during the year.

In fiercely fought contest Cork held the upper hand for most of the game but found it hard, a point separate the sides at half time but with a strong bench to call on Matthew Twomey's side pushed for the finishing line and made it on a 0-15 to 2-6 scoreline.

All the pre final hype surrounded Waterford and a very calm Cork took to Croke Park and turning in a flawless performance they coasted to victory. All over the pitch Cork were on top and from the throw in they played with huge intensity as they banishing all the hurt from the previous year they were worthily crowned champions with captain Amy O'Connor named Player of the Match.

Well done to manager Matthew Twomey who never doubted his side's ability.

Matthew announced his retirement shortly after and picked up the Manager of the Year award.

The baton has been handed on to Ger Manley, who served on Matthews's back room team and no doubt the determination will be as big as ever.

The minor team under the guidance of Jerry Wallace topped their group with three victories, a draw and one loss the focus switched to the semi-final against Galway where Cork just about got over the line with two points to spare and Waterford they only sides to have defeated them in the group stage awaited.

The final lived up to expectations Cork set the pace of the game as they opened up a five points interval lead.

Waterford started the second half well but despite pressure the Cork defence held and extending their lead they led by six points with two minutes remaining a goal on sixty four minutes cut the lead but with the puck out came the full time whistle.

Cork's Emily O'Donoghue named as Player of The Match after a wonderful performance.

John Moloney took over as manager of the under 16s and losing out in the Munster final to Limerick in mid-April the road ahead looked tough but all credit to them they knuckled down and topping their group they booked a final meeting with Galway.

In a close contest Cork were behind at the interval 0-6 to 0-4 and as Galway opened up a five point lead mid-way through the second half Cork had to dig deep and the response was magnificent as they hit seven points without reply with Rachel Murphy named Player of the as the three in a row was achieved.

Orlaith Mullins and Joseph O'Riordan, attending the recent Reardens All-Stars awards presentation evening. Picture: David Keane

Another successful camogie campaign

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

A BUSY season of camogie at club level saw a huge amount of games played in adult and underage grades.

At adult level, 87 clubs teams and three divisions contested championship competitions.

Aghabullogue made the step up to senior, Ballinhassig to intermediate; Aghada to junior A, Dungourney went to junior B from 13-a-side and Douglas and Ballincollig went from senior to the intermediate grades.

The senior championship was a round-robin format with 17 teams participating, 14 club teams and three divisional teams in two groups of five, and one group of four, with divisional teams in their own group, with the 2022 semi-finalists seeded in each group.

Twenty round-robin matches were played, with the top two club teams in each group, along with the best third-placed team, in the quarter-finals where Sarsfields overcame Inniscarra, Seandun defeated Courcey Rovers, St Catherine's got the upper hand on Éire Óg with the surprise of the campaign, the defeat of hotly-tipped St Finbarr's to determined Cloughduv side.

Two cracking semi-finals saw Sarsfields overcome St Catherine's but only just, as a second half St Catherine's rally just fell short, while Seandún got out of a tight corner after trailing Cloughduv for the entire game until a late, late goal heartbreakingly denied a Cloughduv side that looked to have had their final spot secured.

The final on October 22 failed to reach the expected intensity as Sars won 1-11 to 0-9, denying Seandún a three-in- row, with *The Echo* Player of the Match Claire Mullins leading the way.

The SE Systems Intermediate Championship was run on a round-robin basis with 15 teams participating.

It was divided into three groups of five teams and that ensured clubs had a minimum of four championship games, with one team from the first place in each group drawn to play in a quarter-final, while the other two top teams progressed straight to the semis.

The second-placed teams, along with drawn first-placed teams, played in the quarter finals.

The quarter-finals saw Watergrashill win, Blackrock beat Clonakilty to reach the semi-finals where Blackrock ended Ballincollig's campaign and Watergrashill defeated Ballyhea.

Blackrock ran out winners on a 2-11 to 1-5 scoreline, and having lost the 2022 final, Blackrock were determined but huge credit to underdogs Watergrashill, who made them fight all the way for victory with Blackrock's Aishling Hegarty, who had an outstanding game in the heart of their defence, named *The Echo* Player of the Match.

Ballinora defeated Tracton to take the SE Systems Junior A Championship title on a 4-12 to 1-5 scoreline.

Louise O'Neill was *The Echo* Player Of The Match.

Midleton took the junior B crown with Vivienne Gleeson winning *The Echo* Player of the Match award.

The junior C title was won by Buttevant with St Fanahan's Thea Coleman taking *The Echo* Player of the Match award.

Ballinora captured the Lily Grant title with their second adult team defeating Tracton as Caoimhe Murphy took the Player of the Match award.

St Finbarr's second team, with Liz O' Donovan *The Echo* player of the Match, defeated Enniskeane to take the Lillie O'Sullivan Championship.

Amy Barry-Murphy and John O'Callaghan, enjoying the recent Reardens All-Stars awards presentation evening. Picture: David Keane

O'Driscoll joins up with senior camogie set-up

CAMOGIE

Therese O'Callaghan

MULTIPLE All-Ireland senior camogie winner Fiona O'Driscoll has joined Ger Manley's Cork senior camogie backroom team as coach/selector.

The sharp-shooting dual star is already a winning coach/trainer with Cork in the mid-noughties.

Manley, who was formally ratified as the Rebels senior camogie manager in November along with head coach Liam Cronin, is also assisted by coach/selector Brendan O'Driscoll (Carrigaline).

Dave O'Connell is Strength and Conditioning Coach.

The reigning All-Ireland champions will commence their Division 1A league campaign away to Kilkenny on February 17, followed a week later by a repeat of the 2023 All-Ireland final when they travel to Waterford where former Cork minor manager Jerry Wallace is now in charge.

It is confirmed that Orla Cronin and Chloe Sigerson will not be part of Manley's squad this year, as both players have opted to step away.

There are a number of new additions to the panel including sisters Orlaith and Clare Mullins, and Niamh O'Callaghan from senior county champions Sarsfields.

Cork camogie management: Manager Ger Manley; Assistant Manager & Player Liaison Jennifer Mehigan; Head Coach Liam Cronin; Coach / Selectors: Fiona O Driscoll, Brendan O Driscoll (Carrigaline); Strength & Conditioning Dave O'Connell; Sports Psychologist Michelle O'Connor; County Board Liaison Marian McCarthy; Physio TBA.

Meanwhile, Cork Minor Camogie Manager Mossie O'Sullivan from the Ballincollig club has been formally ratified as manager at a specially convened county board meeting and the announced his back room team which includes new faces to intercounty camogie amongst them Liam O'Connor from the Na Piarsaigh club, who will be the sides head coach.

The backroom includes selectors Clodagh Deasy from the Valley Rovers club, a former Cork intermediate player, she is joined by Joey Gallagher from Courcey and both has huge involvement and experience in the roles and they will be joined by a selector from the premier minor county champions Sarsfields.

Stephen O' Mahony from Kinsale is the side's strength and conditioning coach and having been involved at intercounty camogie with the Cork U16 sides since 2019.

Deirdre Looney from Millstreet is the side's female liason officer, while county board registrar Eileen O'Brien will be county board liason officer with the side.

The statistician is Finbarr Bradley who from the Laochra Óg club.

1

2

3

4

Cork Camogie toast All-Ireland successes

AT the Cork Camogie victory dinner, celebrating senior, minor and U16 All-Ireland wins were:

- 1. Sinead Hurley, minor captain with her parents, Tanya and Alan Hurley.
- 2. Deirdre Twomey, Cork U16 management, Izzy O'Regan and Amy Lee, and Mairead Lynch, Cork Camogie Development Officer.
- 3. Aoife Cottrell, Saoirse Cunningham, Anna Kearney, Grainne O'Neill, Caoilainn Ryan, Lily O'Shea, Emma Honohan.
- 4. Eimear Duignan, Amy Sheppard, Kate Fennessy, Laura Dunlea, Lucy O'Connell, Orlaith Cremin, Aoibhe Daly, Meadhbh de Burca, Grainne Finn and Chloe Lane.
- 5. Sisters Meabh and Orlaith Cahalane.
- 6. Aoife Barrett, Emma Murphy, Olivia McAllen and Mèabh Murphy.
- 7. Izzy O'Regan, Cliona Healy, Hayley Ryan and Aoife Healy.
- 8. Sinead Hurley, Amy O'Connor, Aoife Cottrell, and Maeve Lonergan.
- 9. Matthew Twomey, senior winning manager and Amy O'Connor, senior captain.

Pictures: Jim Coughlan

5

6

7

8

9

Daly set for intermediate Cork camogie role; Staunton joins Stephenites coaching ticket

Cork Camogie Board has announced that Donie Daly has been nominated for the role of Cork intermediate manager. Daly has a vast amount of experience which he will bring to the role, with an initial two-year term with an option to extend pending ratification at the upcoming county board meeting.

Daly hails from Youghal Camogie Club, has dedicated over a decade to coaching underage players and has actively contributed to various committee positions from 2006-2019. Daly was manager of the Cork Juniors where he led them to Munster Championship victories in 2016, 2018 and 2019.

He also has an impressive record with Cork U16s, leading them to Munster titles in 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022 and clinching three All-Ireland titles in 2019, 2021, and 2022. In a statement on Facebook, the Cork Camogie Board wished Daly and his management team success.

Meanwhile, Cora Staunton has been appointed as a coach/selector with the Mayo senior club football

At the the victory dance at the Rochestown park Hotel were Cork winning camogie captains, Sinead Hurley, minor All-Ireland, Amy O'Connor, senior All-Ireland, Aoife Cotrell, U16 All-Ireland, and Maeve Lonergan, U16 B Munster Championship. Picture: Jim Coughlan

Daly takes over as Cork manager

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

DONIE DALY is the new Cork intermediate camogie manager.

The experienced Youghal clubman takes over from Na Piarsaigh's Trevor Coleman, who was at the helm for two seasons.

Coleman guided Cork's second team to Croke Park in 2022, where they lost out in the All-Ireland final to Galway. Last year, the Munster title and Division 2 B league were won, but a place in the closing stages of the All-Ireland championship eluded them.

Daly brings a strong camogie background to the position. He was in charge of the Cork junior team in 2016, securing the Munster crown. In 2019, he was at the helm as the Cork U16s who enjoyed a hugely successful season, winning the All-Ireland for the first time in 15 years.

Covid saw the 2020 championship cancelled, but he was at the helm again as the title was retained. Daly also landed an All-Ireland with the U16s in 2022 when the Rebels beat Tipperary.

Daly has also been involved at U17 development level and a well-known referee as well. He comes from a strong camogie background, as his late mother Mary Jo (nee Ryan) was a prominent Cork player, winning senior All-Irelands.

Cork get their league off to a start on January 27 when they travel to Tipperary.

It's all change across the board in Cork camogie with Mossie O'Sullivan the new minor boss, while another Youghal clubman, Anthony O'Regan, has succeeded Daly at U16 level. The Rebel senior set-up is under the guidance of Ger Manley after Matthew Twomey stepped down.

FIONA KEATING
CAMOGIE

The **Pulseroll percussion massage gun** offers numerous benefits for people seeking relief from muscle soreness, tension, and fatigue. The massage gun enhances flexibility and range of motion by increasing blood flow to the muscles. It's very useful during a sporting season when training loads are high and you have little recovery time. It is a quick and efficient way to recover and it requires minimal time. I would highly recommend the Pulseroll percussion massage gun in particular to anyone who is considering buying one.

NEWCESTOWN

Celebration

There was huge turnout in the parish hall last Sunday afternoon to celebrate 40 years of Newcestown camogie club. Founding members Josephine Murphy (O'Callaghan), Aileen Walsh (O'Sullivan) and Caroline Lordan attended as well as other past and present members. Both Hilda O'Mahony (Kenneally) and Finbarr O'Callaghan were presented with lifetime achievement awards for their continuous contribution to the club. The first chairperson of the club, Anne O'Donovan, was presented with flowers by the current chairperson and her daughter-in-law, Jennifer O'Donovan. Well done to everyone involved in organising the event.

Chairperson of Newcestown camogie club, Jennifer O'Donovan, made a presentation of a bouquet of flowers to the first ever chairperson of the club, Ann O'Donovan, who is in fact also her mother-in-law. The event was held to mark 40 years of the club at a special celebration in the parish hall last Sunday.

Minor side setting their sights on completing the three in a row now

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

THE recently appointed Cork minor and U16 camogie managers Mossie O'Sullivan and Anthony O'Regan have had a busy few weeks as they got to work putting their panels together for what they hope will be another successful underage season for Cork camogie.

The minor side will be hoping to make it three in a row of All-Ireland titles, whilst the U16's are chasing four in a row and what would be a fifth title since 2019. Just two counties have done four in a row at U16 level.

2005 to 2008 were great years for Kilkenny U16s, with Galway matching them from 2015 to 2018 and were it not for Covid, Cork could very well be now going for five in a row.

Both sides have an earlier start than previous year's with Munster fixtures getting underway earlier this year.

The minor side are first into action on today, Saturday, as they take on Tipperary in the Munster championship semi-final in the Ragg at 1.30pm.

The final is down for decision on 18th February.

Championship is earlier as well and on March 3, Cork will play Antrim in Abbottstown.

On March 10, in a repeat of last year's final, Cork will host Waterford, on April 7, Cork are at home on March 24 when they take on Galway.

They are on the road again with a trip to meet Tipperary on April 7 and they complete their group round of games on April 14th with a home game versus Kilkenny.

The semi-finals are on April 21 with the final scheduled for April 27/28.

The U16A Munster camogie championship gets underway in March with Tipperary playing Limerick on March 16 in a preliminary round tie.

The semi-finals are down for March 31 when Cork travel to meet Clare and Waterford meet the winners of Tipperary versus Limerick.

The final is down for decision on April 20.

The All-Ireland U16 championship gets underway on the weekend of May 4/5 when Cork host Galway.

On Saturday May 11 /12 Cork are at home for their meeting with Tipperary and it's onto May 18/19 and a trip to Limerick.

It a break for exams until June 30.

Cork travel to meet Kilkenny on July 7.

On July 13/14, the semi-finals are down to be played, with the final a week later on July 20.

Cork will also participate in the Munster U16B camogie championship and here the preliminary round on March 16 has Tipperary meeting Limerick, with the winners playing Kerry in the semi-final on March 31 when Cork meet Clare in the second semi-final.

Both managers have named their panels as follows:

Minor panel: Tara Goulding (Ballincollig), Aoife Cottrell (Ballinhassig), Ava Fitzgerald (Sarsfields), Rachael Murphy (Ballinora), Ellie McAuliffe ((Ballinora), Jessica Murphy (Blackrock), Lucy O'Connell (Blarney), Ava McAuliffe (Castlemartyr), Amy McCarthy(Clonakilty), Emma O'Sullivan (Cloughduv) , Amy O'Riordan (Ballinora), Rachael Roche (Sarsfields), Allish Scanlon (Ballincollig), Amy Sheppard((Cloughduv), Orlaith Cremin (Eire Og) Saoirse Cunningham (Erins Own) , Sarah Murphy (Glen Rovers), Louise O'Neil ((Ballinora), Adele Lotty (Inniscarra), Shauna O'Driscoll (Kilworth), Catherine Murphy (Kinsale), Emma Honohan (Inniscarra), Kate O'Sullivan(Midleton), Blaithin O'Connor (Newtownshandrum) Keeley Goulding (Rockban),), Sinead Hurley (Sarsfields),), Kate Fennessy (Sarsfields), Laura Dunlea (Sarsfields), Eve O'Dwyer (Valley rovers), Aoibhe Daly (Youghal).

U16 A panel: Eanna Duff (Aghabullogue), Kelly Crowley (Aghada), Rebecca Hannigan (Ballincollig), Millie Lombard (Ballinhassig),) Erin Healy (Eire Og), Grainne O'Neill (Banteer), Maria O'Donovan (Barryroe), Kate Somers (Bishopstown), Sophie Donohoe (Blarney), Mia Smith (Douglas) ,Clara Murphy (Eire Og) , Eimear Barrett (Aghabullogue), Gemma Classen (Erins Own), Tara O'Neill (Fr O' Neill's), Maeve O'Shea (Douglas),Sophie O'Sullivan (Glen Rovers), Niamh O'Mahony, (Kilbrittain-Timoleague), Ava Ashman (Killeagh), Darcy O'Brien (Laochra Og), Aoife Treacy (Sarsfields), Laura Walsh (Mallow), Roisin McManus (Midleton), Caoilainn Ryan (Newtownshandrum), Aoife Collins (Sarsfields), Caoimhe O'Donnell (Sliabh Rua), Holly Fitzpatrick (St Finbarr's), Laura Kenneally(St. Catherine's), Evie Kelleher (Sarsfields) , Eimear Fouhy (St Fanahan's), Taylor Aherne (Youghal).

The Cork minor camogie team, overall winners at the Rebel Óg annual awards banquet, sponsored by Clayton Hotel, Silver Springs, with Cummins Sports award sponsors and media partners 'The Echo' and 'RedFM'. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Mairead O'Callaghan, 'Hall of Fame' winner with from left: Norina O'Callaghan, Clayton Hotel Silversprings; Mick Evans judging panel; GAA president Larry McCarthy; Grainne Murnane, RedFM; The Lord Mayor Cllr Kieran McCarthy; Grainne McGuinness, editor 'The Echo', Kevin Cummins, Cummins Sports and Michael O'Mahony, chairman Rebel Óg, at the Rebel Óg annual awards banquet, sponsored by Clayton Hotel, Silver Springs, with Cummins Sports award sponsors and media partners 'The Echo' and 'RedFM'. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Cork minor camogie team win Rebel Óg overall award

REBEL ÓG AWARDS

Rory Noonan

IT WAS a night of celebration as more than 400 people attended the annual Rebel Óg awards banquet at the Clayton Hotel, Silver Springs.

Michael O'Mahony spoke on behalf of Rebel Óg and he thanked the hotel, the sponsors of both the annual and monthly awards for their continued support.

He also thanked Cummins Sports, trophy sponsors, and the two media partners, *The Echo* and Red FM for their support over the years.

From the monthly winners the judging panel, chaired by Michael Evans, picked an overall winner which was the Cork minor camogie team, who made it two in a row of All-Ireland titles and three in the last five years.

Jerry Wallace, manager of the team who has gone on to take over the Waterford senior side this season, thanked Rebel Óg for honouring the squad and praised the players and management for all their hard work to ensure they won the All-Ireland title.

With U16 and senior camogie titles on Leeside it was a great year for Cork camogie, one they will be hoping to repeat in 2024.

Also honoured with the Hall of Fame award was Mairead O'Callaghan for her service to Sciath na Scol.

She has been involved for many years and was also a teacher at Glenville NS for more than 40 years.

Away from Sciath na Scol she was a selector with the Cork senior camogie team and was also a member of the management of the Cork ladies football team.

Mairead won numerous titles with Watergrasshill Camogie Club, including a club All-Ireland title in 1982.

She was the first female officer of Sciath na Scol in Cork when she was elected secretary and went on to become treasurer of Cumann na mBunscoil in Munster.

She is the current president of Cumann na mBunscoil and for her many years of service Mairead was inducted into the Hall of Fame on Friday night.

GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association merger soon?

Eoghan Cormican

The incoming president of the Camogie Association has said there is nothing to stop the administrative wings of the GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association from merging right away.

Brian Molloy, who will succeed Hilda Breslin as Camogie president this spring, believes a single, integrated administrative team, working out of Croke Park, could be delivered "in the morning".

Such a move, he added, would put "a marker down" that integration is happening.

In a wide-ranging interview on *Galway Bay FM*, Molloy said integration of the three bodies can happen "an awful lot faster" than many seem to think.

"On the staffing side, you have Tom Ryan (GAA), Sinead McNulty (Camogie), and Helen O'Rourke (Ladies football). They are the three chief executives, and they have three teams. In the morning, you could combine those teams into one team," Molloy told Galway Bay FM.

"You could have it ratified by Congress at the end of February that you have then one single administration team in the GAA.

"I am not saying combine the three associations that quickly, but you have one single administrative head office operating out of Croke Park and operating across the provinces from that point forward, and they would provide the services to the LGFA and Camogie Association.

"A shared services model is used up and down the country and all across the world, so there is no difficulty whatsoever in bringing those teams into one team. You can do it on a joint-chiefs basis, if there is any issue with regard to the three people as to who is in charge."

During the recent GAA convention season, many county and provincial chiefs voiced their concerns regarding the implications of integration for the GAA side of the house.

Kerry chairman Patrick O'Sullivan estimates integration will mean the county needs a minimum of five extra pitches to service the needs of the LGFA and camogie.

"The financial burden (of integration) will be great on the board and the clubs of Kerry. Without a proper financial plan by the association and Government, the merger will be dead in the water," said O'Sullivan.

In his outgoing address as Tipperary chairman, Joe Kennedy similarly warned of the financial stress integration will put on the county.

"We are just about able to cater for our county teams with all our facilities in Dr Morris Park. If all three were to join, it would require significant funding from Government to fund all three associations and provide facilities."

Outgoing Connacht chairman John Murphy described integration as a "mammoth task" that will take years to complete.

When asked about the difficulties that might delay the merger, Molloy replied that he has heard the concerns around potential pitch scarcity.

"Integration isn't going to create a pitch and it's not going to lose a pitch anywhere in the country. The day after we're integrated, there will not be one extra pitch or there'll not be one less pitch available.

"So those pitches currently being used by ladies football, camogie, and GAA at the moment, those pitches have been built and maintained by donations and work done on the ground by women and men all across this country.

"For me, the imperative is to get to a single governing body and then work together on what improvements need to be done to make sure that the girls and the boys have an equal and equitable playing field the whole way forward.

"It is time that the three national associations come together, recognise the fact that we are all part of a Gaelic games family, put the administration in under one organisation, and from that point on we then work together and make sure we can get more coordinated in terms of avoiding dual players running into difficulty; that we can get more coordinated in terms of raising funds and attracting funding and attracting sponsorship. Because we will be a much more attractive proposition when we are a single organisation.

"I don't subscribe to the view that it is 10 or 15 years away. This is going to happen, and it will happen in the short term."

Elsewhere, the format for the 2024 All-Ireland camogie championship has changed from the model of three four-team groups used last year to two six-team groups.

The top three in each progress to the knockout stages.

Dublin's Claire Kirwan is stopped in her tracks by Kerry duo Aishling O'Connell, left, and Lorraine Scanlon in Saturday's Ladies National Football League Division 1 clash at Parnell Park. Picture: Stephen Marken/Sportsfile

How All-Ireland camogie groups will line up

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Championship:
Group 1: Waterford, Tipperary, Limerick, Derry, Antrim, Kilkenny
Group 2: Cork, Galway, Down, Wexford, Clare, Dublin.

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Intermediate Championship:
Group 1: Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford, Galway, Cork, Clare
Group 2: Meath, Kilkenny, Carlow, Kildare, Kerry, Dublin, Antrim.

Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Premier Junior Championship:
Group 1: Tipperary, Armagh, Tyrone, Down, Wicklow
Group 2: Laois, Roscommon, Cavan, Louth, Mayo, Limerick.

Cork to face Galway in opener

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

CORK will begin the defence of the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Camogie Championship against Galway in what will be a a tough opener for the Rebels.
The draws for this year's championships were made yesterday as Cork were drawn in group two.
They will also need to overcome Clare, Down, Dublin, and Wexford who will all be looking to make an impact in the 2024 championships.
Group 1 of the senior championship promises to be an interesting one as well, with last year's beaten finalists Waterford meeting 2022 winners Kilkenny and the newly promoted intermediate champions Derry.
Waterford, now managed by former Cork All-Ireland winning minor manager Jerry Wallace, will also meet close rivals Tipperary again after a hugely exciting 2023 semi-final which saw Waterford steal a place in the final by overcoming their powerful opposition by just one point.
Antrim and Limerick will also look to build upon their 2023 campaign by making their mark in the group.
The Glen Dimplex Intermediate Championship should also provide some entertaining games with Cork drawn in group one. They will face Clare, who will be looking to impress after their promotion from the premier junior grade, as well as Wexford and 2022 intermediate champions Galway.
The championships will commence on Saturday, May 25, with the All-Ireland Premier Junior, Intermediate and Senior Championships finals at Croke Park on Sunday, August 11.
Hilda Breslin, president of the Camogie Association said: "The anticipation surrounding the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Championship draws never fails to deliver exciting match-ups and discussions, and this year is certainly no exception.

"I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our esteemed sponsors, Glen Dimplex, for their unwavering support as we embark on the third year of our partnership."
"To all our players and counties, I extend my best wishes for success in what is sure to be an exhilarating championship, following a momentous 2023 campaign which resulted in our highest ever attendance of 30,151 at our Glen Dimplex All Ireland Championship finals in Croke Park."

Glen Dimplex Camogie All-Ireland Senior Championships

Group 1: Waterford, Tipperary, Limerick, Derry, Antrim, Kilkenny.
Group 2: Cork, Galway, Down, Wexford, Clare, Dublin.

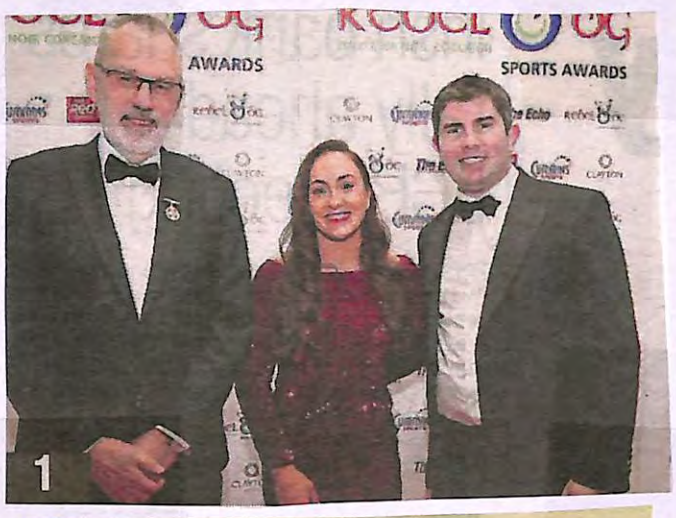
Glen Dimplex Camogie All-Ireland Intermediate Championships

Group 1: Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford, Galway, Cork, Clare.
Group 2: Meath, Kilkenny, Carlow, Kildare, Kerry, Dublin, Antrim.

Glen Dimplex Camogie All-Ireland Premier Junior Championships:

Group 1: Tipperary, Armagh, Tyrone, Down, Wicklow.
Group 2: Laois, Roscommon, Cavan, Louth, Mayo, Limerick.

■ 3. Caoilainn Ryan, Nikki Hosford and Natalia Golka, all Cork U16 camogie players.



■ 1. GAA president, Larry McCarthy, Amy O'Connor, Cork senior camogie player and guest of honour, and Danny Morrissey.

■ 7. Aoibhe Daly and Maedhbh de Burca, both Cork minor camogie All-Ireland winners, with Adam Hayfield and Ethan Hyde, both Éire Óg minor footballers.

SPORTING CALENDAR 2024

All-Ireland winners dazzle at Rebel Óg banquet

Cork Minor Camogie All-Ireland winners Chloe Lane, Sinead Hurley, Amy O'Sullivan, Maedhbh de Burca, Aoibhe Daly, Amy O'Riordan, and Millie Condon at the Rebel Óg annual awards banquet at Clayton Hotel Silver Springs last night.

Camogie

APRIL
13-14 National League finals

JULY
20-21 All-Ireland Senior Championship semi-finals

AUGUST
11 All-Ireland Championship finals

NOVEMBER
30-1.12 All-Ireland Club semi-finals
14-15 All-Ireland Club finals

Rare win a welcome tonic for Tipp minors

Michael Dundon
sport@tipperarystar.ie

MUNSTER MINOR CAMOGIE CHAMPIONSHIP SEMI-FINAL

TIPPERARY	0-9
CORK	0-6

Saturday saw a huge boost for Tipperary camogie as the county's minor squad saw off the challenge of Cork in the Munster semi-final at The Ragg, the first time in a long number of years that the Premier girls have done so at this level.

Following on the colleges A final a week earlier between two Thurles schools, this is a further affirmation of the great work being done at the under-age level in the county and while there is no silverware on the table yet, all the indications are that there is a bright future ahead for the county.

Cork were hotly fancied to advance but they came up against a fiercely competitive Tipperary contingent who were well prepared by manager John Ryan of Upperchurch, and his backroom team. From the very start they had Cork on the backfoot going 0-5 to 0-1 clear after 19 minutes, and playing into the fresh breeze at that.

Danielle Ryan got Tipp off the mark inside thirty seconds, with the Sarsfields duo Lucy Purcell and Caoimhe Stakelum each hitting two points as Tipp enjoyed much the better of the early exchanges. Caoimh Stakelum had a goal chance after 14 minutes but saw her effort skid across the goals.

Cork gradually settled with points from Ava Fitzgerald and Louise O'Connell but Tipp saw a further goal chance for Emer Dwan foiled in the 25th minute as Cork continued to have the upper hand. The Rebel ladies finished the half with a brace of points from Louise O'Connell and Kate Fennessy to be on equal terms at the break.

Despite the strong Cork finish to the half, Tipp were in a positive situation facing into the second half with the fresh breeze to help them but six minutes after resuming Cork hit the front for the only time in the game. Questions were being asked of the Tipp character and they responded magnificently.

Fresh legs helped the Tipp cause and they held Cork scoreless in the last quarter. Danielle Ryan levelled for Tipp in the 41st minute. Caoimhe Stakelum put them ahead from a free after 46 minutes to which Danielle Ryan added another a minute later for a two-point advantage facing into the closing stages.

Cork needed a goal and they went after it but some excellent defensive work by Sarah Corcoran and Aoife Mellerick at the heart of the Tipp defence denied them a path to goal and Caoimhe Stakelum sealed a great Tipp win with an injury time point from a free.

So Tipp are through to the final and buoyed by taking the scalp of the championship favourites should go forward with confidence. While the difficult conditions did not lend themselves to quality play, the Tipp girls adapted very well but what was particularly admirable was the commitment and determination shown by all of the squad.

No one personified this more than centre halfback Sarah Corcoran whose influence grew more and more as the game progressed. Likewise, Aoife Mellerick and Ellie Franklin in a tenacious rearguard. Danielle Ryan and Lucy Purcell took their scores well on a difficult day while Ciara Shelley also worked extremely hard.

Cork can have no complaint about the outcome though they had ten wides – many of which were due to Tipp pressure. But for a ten minute spell before half-time and the early stages of the second half, they were playing second fiddle despite the best efforts of Saoirse Cunningham, Rachel Roche, Kate Fennessy, Lucy O'Connell and Ava McAuliffe.

Tipperary: Danielle Kelly (Éire Óg Annacarty); Paula Quirke (Boherlahan Dualla), Aoife Mellerick (Newport) Ellie Franklin (Moyle Rovers); Eabha Dolan (Moyle Rovers), Sarah Corcoran (Moycarkey Borris), Caithlyn Treacy (Moneygall); Lucy Heffernan (Éire Óg Annacarty), Ava Wall (Moyle Rovers); Lucy Purcell (Thurles Sarsfields, 0-2), Danielle Ryan (Éire Óg Annacarty, 0-3), Emer Dwan (Cashel King Cormacs); Amy Bevans (Borris-Ileigh), Caoimhe Stakelum (Sarsfields, 0-4f), Ciara Shelly (Moycarkey Borris).

Subs used: Ava Gaynor (Kilruane MacDonaghs) for Wall (HT); Nicola Kelly (Shannon Rovers) for Dwan (53); Elanna McGrath (Holycross Ballycahill) for Heffernan (58); Leanna Coppinger (Thurles Sarsfields) for Ryan (63).

Cork: Emma O'Sullivan; Blaithin O'Connor, Sinead Hurley, Saoirse Cunningham; Orlaith Cremin, Laura Dunlea, Keeley Goulding; Ava Fitzgerald (0-1), Rachel Roche (0-1); Ava McAuliffe, Kate Fennessy (0-2, 0-1f), Amy Sheppard; Lucy O'Connell (0-2), Rachel Murphy, Ailish Scanlon.

Subs used: Louise O'Neill for Murphy (23); Amy McCarthy for Fennessy (38); Amy O'Riordan for Roche (50); Sarah Murphy for Scanlon (54). **Referee:** Philip Dee (Limerick)

Action from Saturday's semi-final between Tipperary and Cork. Paula Quirke of Tipperary chases a Cork attacker during the game in The Ragg Camogie Grounds. PICTURES: MARTY RYAN/SPORTSFOCUS

Fixtures made for 2024 senior and premier junior championships

Tipperary's senior and junior camogie teams have learned their paths ahead of the 2024 championships.

The Senior Championship will see Cork look to defend their crown and make it back-to-back titles in Group 2 as they take on 2021 champions Galway.

They will also need to overcome Clare, Down, Dublin and Wexford who will be looking to make an impact in the 2024 Championships.

Group 1 of the Senior Championship promises to be an exhilarating one, with beaten 2023 finalists Waterford meeting 2022 winners Kilkenny and the newly promoted Intermediate champions Derry. Waterford will also meet close rivals Tipperary again after a hugely exciting 2023 semi-final which saw Waterford steal a place in the final by overcoming their powerful opposition by just one point. Antrim and Limerick will also look to build upon their 2023 campaign by making their mark in the group.

The Glen Dimplex Premier Junior Championship features two groups. Group 1 is set to be an exciting one, with five counties competing: Tipperary, Armagh, Tyrone, Down and Wicklow.

Tipperary and Armagh both came close to Championship success in 2023 and will be looking to build on their campaigns this year. Wicklow will enter the competition with a new-found confidence after their Nancy Murray Cup success in 2023.

Group 2 sees Laois, Roscommon, Cavan, Louth, Mayo and Limerick compete for Premier Junior success.

The group sees four teams who qualified for the knockout stages in their respective 2023 competitions and three teams who continue to make great progress in their counties. Both groups promise to provide some exhilarating and competitive games throughout the season.

As in previous years, six teams will qualify for the knockout stages of the Glen Dimplex Senior All-Ireland Championships, three from each group. The group winners will progress straight to the All-Ireland semi-finals on Saturday 27th July in UPMC Nowlan Park, Kilkenny. The second and third placed teams will progress to the All-Ireland quarter-finals which will take place in Croke Park, ahead of the GAA All-Ireland Senior Hurling semi-finals on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th July. The top two teams in each group will qualify for the Glen Dimplex Premier Junior Championship semi-finals on Saturday 20th July.

Glen Dimplex Camogie All-Ireland Senior Championships: Group 1: Waterford, Tipperary, Limerick, Derry, Antrim, Kilkenny.

Group 2: Cork, Galway, Down, Wexford, Clare, Dublin.

Glen Dimplex Camogie All-Ireland Premier Junior Championships: Group 1: Tipperary, Armagh, Tyrone, Down, Wicklow.

Group 2: Laois, Roscommon, Cavan, Louth, Mayo, Limerick.

Caoimhe Stakelum in action for the Tipperary minors. The Thurles Sarsfields player scored four points in the win.

Cork's Lauren Homan hit 1-4 against Tipp. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Homan goal key as Cork intermediates beat Tipp in opener

Tipperary	0-9
Cork	1-10

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

A GOOD start to the Very Division 2B national league for a Cork intermediate side showing 12 changes to last season's league-winning panel; under the guidance of new manager Donie Daly they overcame Tipperary at The Ragg.

Having played with the aid of the very strong wind in the opening half Cork led by five points at the break and a goal 32 seconds into the second half. It proved vital as it helped give Cork a cushion through a period where Tipperary came at them and battled hard.

It was 21 minutes into the game before Tipperary were on the scoreboard Eva O'Dwyer opened the account with a long-range strike. Cliona Dooley had pointed to put Cork ahead before Lauren Homan converted a free to stretch the lead.

Underfoot conditions were good but heavy but it didn't impede on play as both sides worked hard and with some excellent passages of play from both it was a lively contest. Cork enjoyed a lot of possession and with Hannah O'Leary firing over three points without reply from play it was 0-5 to no score before Tipperary registered their first score.

Jenny Grace and Niamh O'Regan swapped points before Homan converted a free to leave Cork 0-7 to 0-2 in front at the break.

From the restart, Laura Doyle won possession and outpacing the Tipperary defence off-loaded to Lauren Homan who finished to the net to fire Cork eight points clear. The goal was a wake-up call for Tipperary and they hit the next four points with Jenny Grace unerring from play and frees.

With the wind to their backs, Tipperary took the fight to Cork and now winning a lot of possession they kept the Cork defence busy. Cliona Dooley relieved the pressure with a Cork point again Tipperary responded with Sinead Maher striking an excellent effort.

Twice the sides swapped points as still a goal stood between them, Lauren Homan pointed to make it four before Molly Lynch denied Tipperary a goal with an excellent save.

Cork head to Galway next weekend for a meeting with the home side who defeated Kilkenny in their opening game 0-14 to 1-8.

Scorers for Tipperary: J Grace 0-6 (0-4 f), C Brennan, S Maher, E O 'Dwyer 0-1 each.

Cork: L Homan 1-4 (0-4 f), H O'Leary 0-3, C Dooley 0-2, N O'Regan 0-1.

TIPPERARY: A O'Brien; E Carey, M Murphy, C Ryan; E Kelly, G Fox, S Pembroke; H Brennan, C Shanahan; J Grace, S Meagher, C Brennan; A Quinlisk, L Leenane, E O'Dwyer.

Subs: A Fahie for H Brennan (h-t), JA Quirke for E O'Dwyer (h-t), L Fahie for L Leenane (46), L Ryan for E Kelly (52), E Fogarty for C Shanahan (56), A Callanan for J Grace (inj 60).

CORK: M Lynch; M De Burca, N O'Leary, G Cahalane; L Doyle, C O' Donoghue, C Ring A Cashman, E Duignan; C Morrison, L Homan, L Hallihan; C Dooley, N O'Regan, H O'Leary.

Subs:
G Hannon for C Ring (26), E Flanagan for E Duignan (h-t), F Nelligan for C Morrison (h-t), K Walsh for L Hallihan (43), E O'Donoghue for N O'Regan (43), T McCarthy for A Cashman(50), A Egan for C O'Donoghue (56).

Referee: Ciaran Goff (Wicklow).

Cork's Hannah O'Leary in action against Galway.

Cork intermediate camogie team manager Donie Daly.

Donie's debut sees Cork travel to take on Tipp for campaign opener

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

AN EARLIER start than in previous years as the Very Division 2B National league gets underway this weekend with a full programme.

Cork will open their campaign with an away game on Saturday against Tipperary at The Ragg

On February 3, Cork will make the journey to Galway for round two before their first home game, on February 17, when they meet Kilkenny.

They are at home for their meeting with Wexford, on March 2, and again, on March 9, when they meet Clare.

With the two top teams coming out of the group to contest the final, on March 23, every game is vital if hopes of making it to the final are to be achieved.

It's a new Cork set up with manager Trevor Coleman having stepped aside and the new management team is led by Donie Daly and he will be looking forward to the challenges adult inter-county competition will bring following his successful tenure with Cork U16s sides.

Donie's back room team is joined by John Moloney, Newtownshandrum, who will act as selector, with Stephen McCormack, Inniscarra and Mark O'Sullivan, Midleton in the role of coaches.

Goalkeeper Stephanie Beausang, Killeagh, who has retired from inter-county camogie, will be the team's goalkeeping coach.

Mark Eaton will look after the strength and conditioning.

Brian O'Regan, Douglas, will look after the statistics and analysis.

Colette O'Neill, Erins Own, is player liaison offiver, while Lillian Zinkant, Sarsfields, continues in her role as the team's county board liaison officer with Kevin Goulding, Rockban, the maor caman/uisce.

Cork won last season's Munster intermediate championship but it was followed up with a disappointing All-Ireland championship campaign.

This season, with several of last season's players opting out of the panel, will be a tough one, however experienced campaigners Lauren Homan, Grainne Hannon, Niamh O'Leary and Emma Flanagan are amongst those who remain.

Cork having had huge success at minor and U16 level since 2019, we can expect to see a lot of these players making their mark at Intermediate level.

The sides met in the opening league game last year with Cork recording a big win.

Tipperary participated in the All-Ireland junior championship and went all the way to the final, losing out narrowly to Clare.

Former Tipperary senior manager Bill Mullaney has taken over from David Sullivan and a number of key players from last year's team are currently on the county senior panel, while they are currently without experienced players including last year's joint captains, Ciannait Walsh and Claire Stakelum.

Aoife O'Brien, Ciara Ryan, Ciara Brennan and Amy Callanan will be players to watch out for as the campaign opens.

Very Division 2B National League: Cork v Tipperary, January 27, The Ragg, 2pm.

Lauren Homan, Seandun, and Julie Verling, Cloughduv.

Cork minors lose to Tipp in championship opening tie

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Tipperary	0-9
Cork	0-6

NOT the best of starts to the inter-county championship camogie season as the Cork minors came up short in a closely fought game as Tipperary dug out a three-point victory in a low-scoring battle.

Cork had the advantage of the strong wind in the first half, but Tipperary settled fast with a Danielle Ryan point.

Kate Fennessy levelled with a 45 before Tipperary took over and enjoying a spell of dominance hit four unanswered points.

Lucy Purcell led the way as she pointed to put her side back in front, Caoimhe Stakelum added a point from a free, before Purcell was again on the end of strong attacking play which saw her score her second point.

Stakelum pointed a free to put Tipperary five points to one ahead as Cork struggled to find their way, despite playing with the strong wind.

Cork began to settle and found a response. Ava Fitzgerald pointed before two points in a row from Lucy O'Connell and a late Fennessy point levelled the game before the break where it was five points each at the short whistle.

Cork took the lead for the first time Six minutes into the second half thanks to a Rachael Roche point, but this was to be Cork's only score in the half as they struggled to break down the Tipperary defence.

Sarah Corcoran and Eabha Dolan were hugely influential in defence for Tipperary and while scores were at a premium in the second half, there was no shortage of determination as both sides battled hard, with Tipperary continuing to hold the upper hand.

Ryan pointed in the 41st minute for Tipperary's first score of the half to level the game before Stakelum pointed to put Tipperary back in front.

Continuing to use the wind to their advantage, Tipperary pressed and Ryan added to their tally to put them two clear in the 47th minute.

Cork badly needed a score, but it failed to materialise against a resolute Tipperary rear-guard who were solid all game.

With full-time approaching Stakelum scored her fourth free to give her side a three-point lead that they held until full-time. Tipperary will now face Waterford in Munster final on February 18.

A huge disappointment for Cork, given that they will not have any championship games until the All-Ireland opener against Antrim on March 3.

TIPPERARY: D Butler; P Quirke, A Mellerick, E Franklin; E Dolan, S Corcoran, C Treacy; L Heffernan, A Wall; L Purcell , D Ryan, E Dwan; A Bevans, C Stakelum, C Shelly.

Subs: A Gaynor for A Wall, E McGrath for L Heffernan, N Kelly for E Dwan, L Coppinger for D Ryan.

CORK: E O'Sullivan; B O'Connor, S Hurley, S Cunningham; O Cremin, L Dunlea, K Goulding; A Fitzgerald, R Roche, A McAuliffe, K Fennessy, A Sheppard, L O'Connell, R Murphy, A Scanlon.

Subs: L O'Neill for R Murphy, A McCarthy for K Fennessy, S Murphy for A Scanlon, A O'Riordan for R Roche.

Very Ireland and the Camogie Association announced the launch of the 2024 Very Camogie Leagues at Croke Park yesterday with Áine Keane (Galway), Lorraine Bray (Waterford), Norette Casey (Kerry), Molly Lynch (Cork), Eleanor Treacy (Carlow), Aine O'Loughlin (Clare), and Siohbán Donnelly (Tyrone). Division 2B of the Very Camogie Leagues kicks off on Saturday with 2023 league champions Cork facing Tipperary, Wexford taking on Clare, and Galway going head-to-head with Kilkenny.
Picture: Tom Maher/Inpho

Cork senior camogie captain Amy O'Connor, guest of honour, who celebrated her birthday at the Rebel Óg annual awards banquet.

Sarah Corcoran in action against Cork during Tipperary's brilliant win over the Rebelettes in The Ragg last Saturday. PIC: MARTY

Caoilainn Ryan, Nikki Hosford and Natalia Golka, all Cork Under 16 Camogie. 2023 Rebel Og Annual Awards Banquet, at Clayton Hotel Silver Springs. Pictures: Jim Coughlan

New formats proposed for adult club camogie

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

IN what will be a major restructuring of all adult competition in Cork, clubs will vote on proposals put forward by the county executive, at the county board meeting on Tuesday.

Clubs were issued four formats and have been asked to grade them in accordance to their preference; the top two will then be put to the floor to be voted on and the chosen format will be put in place.

For championship the options open to the clubs are as follows:

OPTION 1: Promotion and relegation at all grades.

In the senior grade, following the group stages, the top club teams and divisional winners go to the QF, with the non QF teams going into a second competition.

In the intermediate grade, following the group stages, the top teams go to the QF with the non QF teams going into a second competition.

Placing of all second and third teams in their own grades (remove from junior A/junior B).

Top graded Lillie O'Sullivan, second-graded Lily Grant and new third-graded competition to be established. Reorganise junior grades and 13–a-side grades based on entries (possibly premier junior, junior A, B, and C).

OPTION 2: Promotion and relegation at all grades.

Establish a premier intermediate grade, divide current senior and intermediate grades into senior/premier intermediate/intermediate.

Placing of all second/third teams in their own grades (remove from junior A/junior B).

Top graded Lillie O'Sullivan, second-graded Lily Grant and new third-graded competition to be established.

Reorganise Junior Grades and 13–a- side grades based on entries (possibly premier junior, junior A, B and C).

OPTION 3: Promotion and relegation at all grades.

In senior grade, no change, in intermediate grade no change.

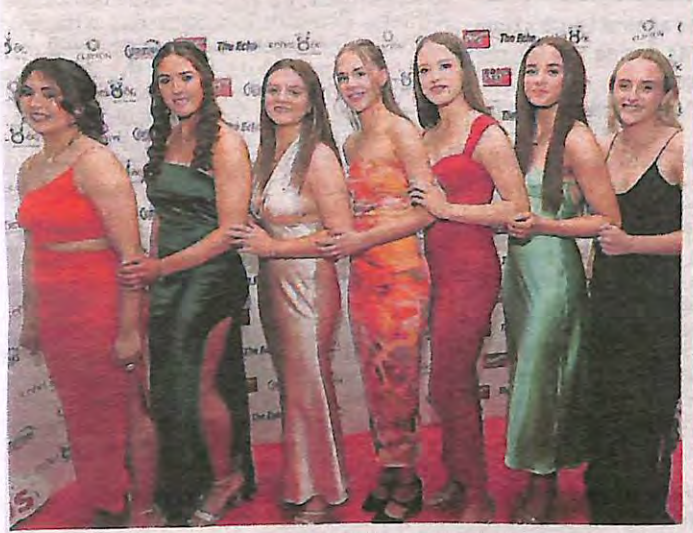
Placing of all second/third teams in their own grade (remove from junior A/junior B).

Top graded Lillie O'Sullivan, second-graded Lily Grant and new third-graded competition to be established.

Reorganise junior grades and 13–a-side grades based on entries (possibly premier junior, junior A, B, and C)

OPTION 4: Key points.

- This option for 2024 only as interim to option 2 in 2025.
- Promotion and relegation at all grades.
- In senior grade, no change, in intermediate grade, no change.
- Placing of all second/third teams in their own grades (remove from junior A/junior B).
- Top graded Lillie O'Sullivan, second-graded Lily Grant and new third-graded competition to be established reorganise junior grades and 13–a-side grades based on entries (possibly premier junior, junior A, B, and C).



Chloe Lane, Sinead Hurley, Amy O'Sullivan, Maedhbh de Burca, Aoibhe Daly, Amy O'Riordan and Millie Condon, all Cork minor camogie AllIreland Winners. at the Rebel Óg annual awards Banquet, at Clayton Hotel Silver Springs. Picture: Jim Coughlan.

Amy O'Connor who was the overall winner at the 96FM/C103 GAA Sports Star of The Year with (from left) Pat Horgan, Finbarr McCarthy, Hilda Breslin, John Lehane, and Kieran McGeary. Picture: Tony O'Connell

Top sports prize for Amy

Denis Hurley

IT'S RARE that the presenter of an awards ceremony is themselves presented with an award, but the fact that it happened at the 96FM/C103 GAA Sports Star of The Year ceremony spoke volumes.

Last Friday week's gala ceremony at Rochestown Park Hotel — which has been a loyal sponsor of the scheme — is now 20 years old.

Camogie star Amy O'Connor, who scored 3-7 as she captained Cork to victory in the All-Ireland camogie final, was the overall winner, while the legendary Jimmy Barry-Murphy was the recipient of the Donal Lehane Distinguished Career Award.

Cork's All-Ireland U20-winning captain Micheál Mullins was the winner of the Kieran O'Driscoll Youth Award and there was time for one other special presentation. To mark the achievement of reaching two decades, the MC and instigator of the awards, the "voice of Cork" Finbarr McCarthy was honoured with a presentation from 96FM/C103 chief executive Kieran McGeary.

Kieran paid tribute to the great job done by Finbarr, as evidenced by the success of yet another annual occasion, though it remains to be seen whether Finbarr's hopes of a payrise will prove successful.

McGeary also paid tribute to all who have ensured that the awards are going from strength to strength and said the support from all in Rochestown Park Hotel is a key element in this.

Cork County Board chairman Pat Horgan also addressed the invited guests and he noted that "these are very prestigious awards and I compliment both the Rochestown Park Hotel and 96FM/C103 for their promotion of them while the coverage the radio station give our games at all levels is greatly appreciated".

Thirteen monthly winners were in the running for the overall award and any of them would have been a worthy victor, such was the strength of the field.

Jimmy Barry-Murphy was the recipient Donal Lehane Distinguished Career Award.

Nobody could quibble with the selection of St Vincent's attacker O'Connor, who lifted the O'Duffy Cup following Cork's win over Waterford, ending a five-year wait that included defeat in the previous two deciders.

Amy was thrilled to be honoured and paid tribute to all who helped make it possible. She felt that Cork's Munster championship defeat at home to Waterford proved to be a turning point in the season.

"In a strange way, it probably was," she said, "as we had a good chat after that and never really looked back after that game."

She also paid tribute to former manager Matthew Twomey and looked forward to the year ahead under new boss Ger Manley, with both men in attendance.

Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin, who presented Amy with the O'Duffy Cup in August, was on hand to perform a similar feat to a rousing acclaim from the capacity attendance.

Micheál Mullins, an inspirational captain as Cork won the All-Ireland U20 title, was the winner of the youth award. Unfortunately, illness prevented the Whitechurch player — who has been named in Cork's panel for the Allianz Hurling League — from attending and his father, former Cork hurler Michael, accepted on his behalf.

Another popular recipient was Cork and St Finbarr's icon Jimmy Barry-Murphy, who was presented with the Donal Lehane Distinguished Career award by John Lehane, the managing director of Rochestown Park Hotel.

Modesty personified, Jimmy reflected on his career by saying: "I was privileged to play with some great teams and great players and enjoyed it all."

There were a few regrets, he said, "but overall more good days than bad days."

JBM will be back on the sideline this year as part of Brian Roche's set-up with the Barrs senior footballers and he is really looking forward to it.

"It's been a good few years for the club and hopefully we can have a run in the championship but it's a tough one to win," he said.

In attendance were previous winners of the Distinguished Career Award, including Jimmy's Barrs and Cork team-mates Charlie McCarthy and Gerald McCarthy, along with Millstreet's, John Coleman, with whom Barry-Murphy won the 1973 All-Ireland football title.

Newcestown camogie celebrates its success

Club hits milestone moment with its 40th anniversary celebrations

NEWCESTOWN Camogie Club has celebrated a milestone moment in its history – the club is now 40 years old, and going from strength to strength.

Past and present members gathered together recently at the parish hall in Newcestown to mark the 40th anniversary and the journey the club has been on.

'The success of Newcestown camogie is self-evident with the number of players that have played for both club and county over the 40 years,' chairperson Jennifer O'Donovan outlined, noting the club held its first AGM on October 14th 1983. Officers selected on the night were chairperson Anne O'Donovan, secretary Josephine O'Callaghan and treasurer Caroline Lordan. A lot has happened since.

Newcestown fielded its first U14 and junior B teams in 1984, with Raymond Crowley a key figure who ensured the club got off to a great start.

'Newcestown won its first county title at junior B level in 1989 and from there the club moved up to junior A. Newcestown then reached the junior A county final three years in a row but it was the third year in 1993 that proved successful for this young club,' Jennifer O'Donovan outlined.

'Not satisfied to settle for junior A, Newcestown reached the intermediate county final in 1994 and 1995, winning in 1995. For the first time in this club's short history, the adult team was up with the big guns at senior level in 1996.'

The underage section at Newcestown Camogie Club has also grown over the years; in 1999 the club won its first underage camogie title in the U16B county championship final.

'Over the next few years, the club struggled to perform successfully at the higher grade and opted to regrade down to junior A and minor D to give the club an opportunity to rebuild. The decision by Newcestown to regrade at minor level proved fruitful in the long term, winning the minor D county final in 2014 and progressing from there up to minor A county by 2017,' O'Donovan explained.

In 2015, Newcestown won the junior A county league and championship. Two years later, the club won the intermediate county league and championship. After an amalgamation of the county senior and intermediate competitions, in 2019 Newcestown won the intermediate county championship to hit the senior ranks again – and that's where the adult team competes now.

'We are so proud of you all and very grateful to you for your unparalleled commitment in your training and participation and immense contribution to our wonderful sport, making so many sacrifices to be the very best,' Jennifer O'Donovan added, as Newcestown marked this milestone in style.

Chairperson Jennifer O'Donovan, Ann O'Donovan and Josephine O'Callaghan cutting the cake to mark Newcestown Camogie Club's 40th anniversary.

Finbarr O'Callaghan and Hilda (Kenneally) O'Mahony receive lifetime awards from chairperson Jennifer O'Donovan.

Sarah Borrows, member of the Cork U16 team that won the All-Ireland, and All-Ireland senior winner Ciara O'Sullivan with the O'Duffy Cup.

Newcestown Camogie Club officers for 2024, from left, Elma Barry, treasurer; Jennifer O'Donovan, chairperson; Mary Burrows, Carbery Board representative, and Mary B Manning, secretary.

Josephine O'Callaghan, Ann O'Donovan, Raymond Crowley and Caroline Lordan. Raymond helped the then club officers to set-up the club in 1983.

County Mayor Cllr Frank O'Flynn; GAA President Larry McCarthy; Guest of honour Amy O'Connor, Cork senior camogie captain and Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr Kieran McCarthy at the Rebel Óg annual awards banquet at the Clayton Hotel, Silversprings. Picture: Jim Coughlan

A Very good start for Rebels

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

IT was a winning start for Donie Daly and his management team in the Very Division 2B Camogie League.

They made the trip to The Ragg in Tipperary where they got the better of the home side by 1-10 to 0-9.

Daly only took over as manager in the last few weeks and has brought in John Moloney, who led Cork to U16 All-Ireland glory last year and Mark O'Sullivan, who led Courcey Rovers to a county title in the last few years, as two of his team.

Add in Stephen McCormack, Kevin Goulding, Stephanie Beausang, Colette O'Neill and Brian O'Regan to show that Daly has put a strong management team together.

Have no doubt Cork will only get better in the coming weeks, but huge credit is due to them, and the players, considering the very short time they have been training.

There was plenty for Cork to be positive about, with impressive displays all over the pitch. One of them was captain on the day, Lauren Homan.

The Brian Dillons player hit several points but also the all-important goal just after half-time to see her side come out on top.

She certainly led by example all through and afterward was delighted with the winning start.

"We only started training two weeks or so ago and more or less have a brand-new team. We've lost loads of girls, but we've gained lots of minors," said Lauren, "So we're a very young team and it's good to start off with a win and get the ball rolling.

"I think that shows the character as well, from the girls that have come into the team and the girls are here from last year and the year before.

"I think it took us about 20 minutes to get into the first half really and we built up a bit of lead by half-time. You always expect a good team like Tipp to come back at you. But again, it shows the character that we had in the second half to push on win the game."

Talking about the new management and the changes from last year: "We're trying to get to know them and they're trying to get to know us still. They're trying to find their feet a bit, but like, as I said, great to bet off to a winning start. The vibes are good and we're a very positive bunch."

Next weekend they head to Galway, in what will be another tough game for the Rebels.

"It will probably be a different team next week as we have 40-odd girls on the panel. So, we're trying lots of players out and who knows it could be 15 completely different players next Saturday. But it's good to have a big panel and hopefully we can put another good performance in against Galway."

Cork camogie manager Donie Daly.

Cork head to Galway on the back of a good win over Tipperary

TOMORROW: Very Division 2B National League: Cork v Galway, Kinvara, 2pm

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

THE Cork camogie team head to Galway tomorrow for round two of the Very Division 2B national camogie league on the back of a good opening round victory over Tipperary last weekend.

They take on a Galway side who lost out to Kilkenny in their opening game last weekend. Last season Conor Dolan took over as manager of a Galway side who were building a new panel having won the 2022 All-Ireland championship and with a year together, his panel is now a settled one and the aim is to go as far as they can and make their mark in the Intermediate grade in 2024.

They opened their campaign with a 0-14 to 1-8 win over Kilkenny last weekend in a game where they were lucky in the finish to hang on having led by elven points at the interval, 0-12 to 0-1.

They were pinned to their collars to get over the line after Kilkenny staged a massive second-half come back and Dolan will not be happy with a return of just two points in a second half where they were held scoreless from play.

Despite his side not progressing in the National league last season, Dolan was relatively happy given that a lot of the players on his panel are playing in their first year at this level and he is looking take the his charges on a step further this season with an eye to championship. Captained again this season by the experienced Ava Lynskey, amongst the players in his squad are Katie Donoghue, Ciara Dolan, Zoe Rodgers, Aoibheann Barr and Niamh Spellman.

Galway captain Ava Lynskey is looking ahead to a good season and said recently that the aim is to build on the experience of 2023 and get into the habit of winning games.

"Last year we were a completely new squad and together for the first time.

"2024 is a year when we hope to push on further and with plenty of league game we will take it one game at a time."

This is a new Cork Intermediate side and Donie Daly is in his first year in charge is finding his feet with a new group of players.

The performance last weekend was a positive one from a Cork side that applied themselves superbly and battled to the finish to hold onto their lead as Tipperary came at them.

Cork have a big panel and the aim is to give every player an opportunity to make it onto the championship panel of 30, with this in mind the management will be bringing different player to every league game.

Added to last Saturday's panel they have introduced another 10 players who they will be looking at and before they announce their championship panel. They will be rotating their captain for league games before a captain is picked for championship.

Cork's Lauren Homan hammers a point against Galway during the Glen Dimplex All Ireland intermediate camogie championship at Ballinlough. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Cork's Edel Sheehan in action against Galway's Niamh Spellman. Picture: Ray Ryan

Cork finish strong as late O'Donoghue goal snatches win in Galway

Galway	0-9
Cork	1-10

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

CORK made the journey to Kinvara in the Very Division 2 B National League where a strong finish ensured they came away with a victory that put them top of the group.

The all-important goal came from Emily O'Donoghue five minutes from time.

In what was a low-scoring opening half, Galway, aided by the very strong wind. led 0-6 to 0-2 thanks in the main to the accuracy of their free-taker Niamh Spellman. Katie Donoghue and Ava Lynskey found the range from play as Galway enjoyed a lot of possession.

Cork started well with a Cliona Dooley point from play, but Spellman quickly cancelled it out. Cliona O'Callaghan slotted over a Cork free on 12 minutes to level. Spellman was on target either side of Katie O'Donoghue's score from play and the Rebels worked hard, and having contained Galway to just two scores from play they were in a good position at the break.

The second half was again dominated by scores from frees and despite playing with the aid of the strong elements Cork found it hard to break down the Tribe. It was point for point as Galway held their lead, with Spellman again showing her accuracy.

Grainne O'Neill and Chloe Broderick also split the posts from play as the visitors were relying on frees from O'Callaghan, Emily O'Donoghue, and Laura Doyle.

With six minutes remaining two points separated the sides and, battling with all their might, Cork finally grabbed the game by the neck with Emily O'Donoghue hitting the game's only goal.

It edged them into a one-point lead and boosted by this they began to turn the screw.

O'Callaghan stretched the lead to two points before an Emily O'Donoghue free and an Edel Sheehan point from play saw Cork over the line.

In the other game in the group, Tipperary had a 2-7 to 0-12 win over Clare while Wexford defeated Kilkenny 3-9 to 1-8

Scorers for Galway: N Spellman 0-5 f, A Lynskey, K O'Donoghue, C Broderick, G O'Neill 0-1 each.

Cork: E O'Donoghue 1-3 (0-2 f), C O'Callaghan 0-4 (0-3 f), L Doyle (f), C Dooley, E Sheehan 0-1each.

GALWAY: C Hickey; E Burke, S Lyons, R Kelly; P Finnerty, R McPhilbin, J Daly; Z Rodgers, L Ní Dhonncha; K Donohue, A Lynskey, N Spellman; A Joyce, C Broderick, G O'Neill.

Subs: K Madden for A Joyce (23), C Allen for Z Rodgers (43), C O'Meara for K Donoghue (53), A Kelly for G O'Neill (53), C Lawless for N Spellman (58).

CORK: C Buckley; M de Burca, A Egan, E Flanagan; E Sheehan, N O'Leary, L Buttimer; G Hannon, E O'Donovan; C O'Callaghan, T McCarthy, N O'Regan; F Nelligan, C Dooley, E O'Donoghue.

Subs: L Doyle for E O'Donovan (21), M Ring for L Buttimer (h-t), C Morrison for N O'Regan (h-t), A O'Sullivan for T McCarthy (40), C O'Donoghue for C Dooley (62).

Referee: Shane Foley (Carlow).

Cork's Laura Doyle takes on Galway's Katie Donohue. Picture: Ray Ryan

Amy O'Connor wins overall GAA award

Finbarr McCarthy

Cork camogie captain Amy O'Connor whose hat-trick of goals in record time sealed another O'Duffy Cup for a Cork team that put the heartbreak of previous defeats firmly behind them was named the 96FM/C103 GAA Sports Star of the Year last Friday night.

The 20th gala banquet for the awards was held in the Rochestown Park Hotel, who are also the joint sponsors. The 13 monthly winners - all of whom were genuine contenders in a year of so many outstanding displays made choosing the overall winner a difficult task.

"The draw pitted them against Kilkenny in the QF and Galway in the SF and Amy laughingly recalled the trip to Croke Park for the Kilkenny game. "It was funny; we had to get off the train in Thurles and then we had a Garda escort, but it relaxed us and we got the job done."

Amy was thrilled to be honoured and paid tribute to all who helped make it possible. In her opinion, the turning point of the season came after a defeat to Waterford in the Munster Championship in Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

"In a strange way it probably was, as we had a good chat after that and never really looked back after that game."

At the Rochestown Park Hotel for the Cork 96FM/C103 20th Annual GAA Sports Star of the Year Awards were overall winner Amy O'Connor with Pat Horgan, Chairman Cork County Board; Finbarr McCarthy 96FM; Hilda Breslin, President Camogie Association; John Lehane MD, Rochestown Park Hotel and Kieran McGeary CEO Cork 96FM/C103. PHOTOS: TONY O'CONNELL

GAA president Larry McCarthy presents the Cahalanes of Cork, Castlehaven, Éire Óg, and St Finbarr's with the Dermot Earley Family Award at the Gradaim an Uachtaráin yesterday. Picture: Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile

GREAT START: Cork's Molly Lynch was at the launch of the 2024 Very Camogie Leagues which started last weekend. Cork beat Tipperary by 1-10 to 0-09 in Tipperary on Saturday. Very aims to honour the achievements of our players both on and off the field, while illuminating the unique magic that defines our beloved sport. PHOTO:INPHO/TOM MAHER

Molly Lynch will captain Cork this season. Picture: INPHO/Tom Maher

Molly honoured to captain Cork as they get league underway

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

ROUND one of the Very Camogie League Division 1 gets underway on Saturday, February 17.

Cork will get their campaign underway with a tough tie away to Kilkenny.

The All-Ireland champions know they have a target on their back, and it won't get much tougher than to have to take on the Cats in their first game since the final last year.

The other opening-round ties see Clare at home to Galway and Tipperary up against Waterford.

This season Sarsfields Molly Lynch will captain the Rebels, and speaking ahead of the league start she said it was an honour to take over the armband from Amy O'Connor.

"It's a massive honour for me and for the club. When you win the county you get to nominate the captain. So it's such an honour to represent ours," said Molly.

"And it's lovely for my family as well. It's a great team, they're lovely girls. So I'm privileged to be the captain.

"It's like having 30 plus sisters is how I'd describe it. They're a brilliant bunch and work very hard in training."

Cork will be the side that all will want to beat this year and it won't come much tougher than a trip to Kilkenny, who will be looking to remind all they are still a top side.

Nothing would give them more pleasure than knocking Cork off their perch and you can bet they will be determined to do so on the 17th.

"Yeah, definitely they will be looking to pick up the points at home. I suppose we have a target on our backs, but it's a good target to have too," added Molly.

"We have to raise it again. We have to just keep looking at ourselves and keep improving and working on what we did last year.

"There are always areas you can improve on.

"Our management are brilliant. With every training session, there is something new to help try to bring us up to the next level.

"So that's our aim for the league, to push on and keep going. But yeah, I suppose a lot of the others are watching and targeting us, but as I said it's a good target to have."

The panel is starting to take shape. with a couple of new faces coming in and others either back or on the way back from injury.

This is leading to not only a challenge to start but also to be named on the matchday panel, which Molly said is driving them all on in training.

"We do put each under pressure in training to try and get one of those 15 jerseys that start. A few new players add to that, and it's brilliant. So, in every training session, you're fighting for a jersey. So there's an aim every time you go out into the pitch. Others are coming back from injury too. They're so driven to get back on the pitch.

"So even watching them will drive you on, they're inspirational people. Players like Ashling Thompson worked so hard off the pitch to get back on it. Even to get the opportunity to train with her is incredible. She's an athlete and inspirational to all around her.

"I would have grown up looking up to her. So to get the chance to play with her is brilliant. She's just so much knowledge. You could ask her about anything, but yes, definitely a great person to be around.

"The way she went about her rehab from injury, she was like a professional athlete coming back from that."

That spirit in the Cork camogie camp is evident across various teams, and such the togetherness that Molly turned out for the intermediate team in their opening league game. A superb save from her late on ensured that Cork travelled home from The Ragg with the points, and they added a second win away to Galway last Saturday.

"It was nice to get a runout today. I didn't play in the championship last year, so you can regrade and play at intermediate level. Anytime you get to play for Cork you take it. So I was delighted to be up here at The Ragg and to come away with the win made it even better."

"Any time you play Kilkenny it's tough, especially when you're playing them away. We're looking forward to it and hopefully, we can get the league off to a winning start," concluded Molly.

Echo's sportswoman of the year for 2023 to be revealed tonight

GAA

Éamonn Murphy

THE 17th overall winner of the Echo Women in Sport awards will be revealed tonight at The Metropole Hotel.

The prestigious awards scheme has recognised the most talented female athletes from a variety of sports since 2007.

There are 13 contenders this time for the 2023 honour, as Olympic-bound rowers Margaret Cremin and Aoife Casey were picked for the September monthly prize.

There will also be a new member of the Hall of Fame and a Special Achievement winner.

Joanne O'Riordan is the guest speaker for the event.

Last year's Cork camogie captain Amy O'Connor was selected as the 2022 Sportswoman of the Year at a ceremony held in Páirc Uí Chaoimh 12 months ago, and after her hat-trick at Croke Park last August, she is in the mix again. The previous overall winners of the Echo Women in Sport prize include some of the greatest Rebels of all-time with boxer Christina Desmond and rower Sanita Puspure both collecting the coveted trophy twice.

Irish soccer legend Denise O'Sullivan, who impressed at the World Cup last summer and is considered one of the most gifted midfielders in the game, was picked in 2014.

■ **See pages 34 & 35 for more.**

2023 Echo Women in Sport monthly award recipients

- Deirbhile Nic A Bháird (Rugby).
- Saoirse McCarthy (camogie).
- Claire O'Sullivan (basketball).
- Mairéad O'Mahony (Transplant Games).
- Doireann O'Sullivan (ladies football).
- Isabel Kidney (swimming).
- Sophie O'Sullivan (athletics).
- Amy O'Connor (camogie).
- Margaret Cremin and Aoife Casey (rowing).
- Clare Mullins (camogie).
- Linda Desmond (boxing).
- Orlaith Roche (ladies football).

The Echo Sportswoman of the Year winners

- **2007:** Jessica Scannell.
- **2008:** Briege Corkery.
- **2009:** Olive Loughnane.
- **2010:** Derval O'Rourke.
- **2011:** Juliet Murphy.
- **2012:** Orla Barry.
- **2013:** Christina Desmond.
- **2014:** Denise O'Sullivan.
- **2015:** Lizzie Lee.
- **2016:** Rena Buckley.
- **2017:** Saoirse Noonan.
- **2018:** Sanita Puspure.
- **2019:** Christina Desmond.
- **2020:** Sanita Puspure.
- **2021:** Emily Hegarty
- **2022:** Amy O'Connor.
- See inside for full details of all monthly winners from 2023.

Leeside legends Briege Corkery, Gemma O'Connor and Lizzie Lee.

The Echo Women in Sport Awards

February
Saoirse McCarthy

COURCEY ROVERS' camogie star Saoirse McCarthy was chosen as *The Echo* Women in Sport award winner for the month of February after captaining MTU to Purcell Cup success.

Picking up the Player of the Match award in the final, the Cork senior was one of MTU's standout players in their Purcell Cup win, and added to her exceptional season when Cork were crowned All-Ireland champions later in the year after defeating Waterford.

August
Amy O'Connor

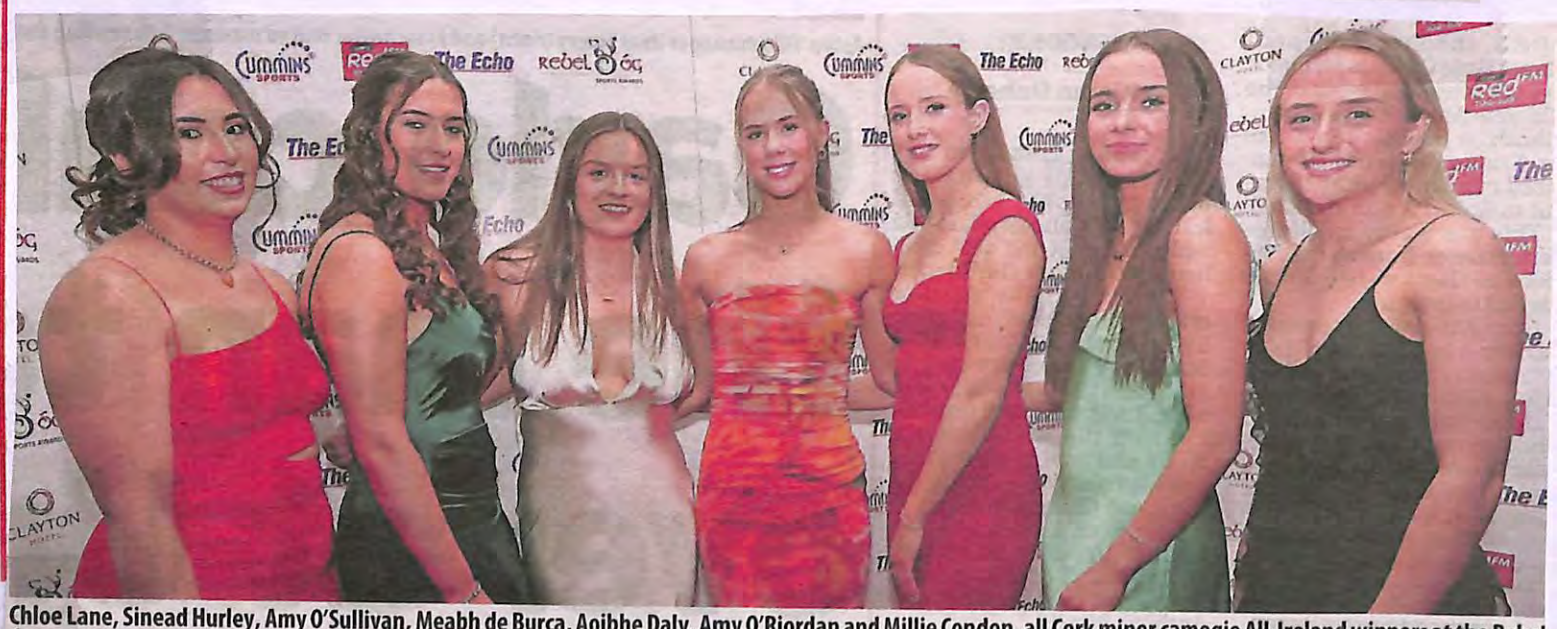
CAPTAINING Cork to All-Ireland glory, in a game were O'Connor scored 3-7, there was no recipient more fitting for *The Echo* Women in Sport award for August.

Her display in the final was remarkable. Returning to the pitch after the half-time break, O'Connor scored three goals in a five-minute period at the start of the second half, ensuring Cork would secure the O'Duffy Cup once more, for the first time since 2018.

October
Clare Mullins

SARSFIELDS' Clare Mullins received *The Echo* Women in Sport award for October, after her outstanding performance in their senior camogie final with Seandún, as she scored 1-2.

The forward also scored 1-1 in the semi-final and was one of their key players throughout the championship campaign.



Chloe Lane, Sinead Hurley, Amy O'Sullivan, Meabh de Burca, Aoibhe Daly, Amy O'Riordan and Millie Condon, all Cork minor camogie All-Ireland winners at the Rebel Óg annual awards banquet at the Clayton Hotel, Silversprings. Picture: Jim Coughlan

Cahalane dynasty receives presidential salute

Huge honour for Cahalane clan who received Dermot Earley Family Award at the GAA President's Awards

BY KIERAN McCARTHY

GAA President Larry McCarthy presents the Cahalane family of Castlehaven, Éire Óg and St Finbarr's GAA clubs with the Dermot Earley Family Award. Back from left, Jack, Grainne, Damien, Meabh and Conor Cahalane. Front from left, Kate and Orlaith Cahalane, GAA President Larry McCarthy, and Ailish and Niall Cahalane. (Photo: Stephen McCarthy/ Sportsfile) **INSET: The Cahalanes making headlines in The Southern Star in 1991.**

Castlehaven GAA

All congratulate Niall and Ailish

A HUGE congregation was present when Niall Cahalane and Ailish Cleary were married in Castlehaven Church. to the net. John Maguire added a point and then we saw a beautiful passing movement which culminated in a very 'confident' goal by Francie Cahalane. Edmund

WHEN Ailish Cleary and Niall Cahalane got married in 1991 it made the headlines in *The Southern Star*. This was the joining of two Castlehaven strongholds, the Clearys and the Cahalanes, two clans central to the success of their local GAA club. Together, this DNA would strengthen the club even more and also create their own Cahalane empire.

Ailish hails from Cleary stock. Her late father Ned, from Mayo, has been hailed as the greatest man to ever arrive in the parish, such was his transformative effect on Castlehaven GAA. Ailish is one of eight siblings – and the oldest of the five girls. The genes are strong. Her oldest brother, John, is the current Cork football manager. Her youngest sister, Nollaig, is a nine-time All-Ireland football winner.

The Cahalane brothers – Patsy, Niall, Denis, John and Fra – have made their mark locally, too. All-Star Niall hit the highest of heights, winning back-to-back All-Ireland football titles with Cork (1989 and 90); his legendary status is secured, for club and county. There is a Cahalane and Cleary link to all of the club's six senior football triumphs, going back to the breakthrough in 1989.

'There were three Clearys and five Cahalanes on the Castlehaven panel that won the first county senior title in '89, Dinny and Fra would have been a bit younger,' explains current Haven senior manager James McCarthy. The families' connection to Castlehaven is strong, and it endures to this day.

When Haven won the 2023 county and Munster senior football titles, Ailish and Niall's three sons – Damien, Conor and Jack – all started, and three more cousins were involved too – Cathal, Rory and Micheál Maguire (sons of Ailish's sister, Deirdre). The Cahalane connection to the Haven is one of the pillars the club's success is built on.

This incredible sporting family took centre stage at the GAA President's Awards on Friday night when they received the prestigious Dermot Earley Family Award, recognition of their contribution to the GAA.

Ailish and Niall have seven children who are carrying the Cahalane torch: Cork hurler and 2023 All-Star nominee Damien (31), All-Ireland camogie winner and All-Star Meabh (28), county hurler Conor (26), Cork camogie player Grainne (24), Rebels' footballer Jack (21), All-Ireland camogie winner Orlaith (20) and rising star Kate (17). The oldest six are all involved with various senior inter-county Cork squads this season.

Though Ailish and Niall live in the city, their connection to home has never waned, and they were always keen on maintaining this link to Castlehaven – and Damien, Conor and Jack are all starters for the county football champions.

'Their commitment to Castlehaven is second to none,' James McCarthy adds.

'I am the nearest person living to the pitch in Castlehaven. I would be one of the last to leave it after training, apart from the local ladies who sort out our food, but the three Cahalanes would be the last three pulling out – and they have the journey back to Cork. They are either talking to someone, getting physio, but their commitment is incredible.'

All seven Cahalane siblings tog out with St Finbarr's in hurling and camogie. Maebh, Orlaith and Kate play club football with Éire Óg, and Gráinne lines out with the Barrs. Castlehaven, however, also plays a huge part in all their lives. Look at how much the epic Munster club senior final win against Dingle in December meant to them, Damien emerging as the penalty shoot-out hero.

'Their commitment to Castlehaven GAA Club is second to none'

'They grew up with Castlehaven, they just moved to the city but their heart is here,' McCarthy says. 'They are down here in the summer, down here at Christmas, I'd meet them more than some of my neighbours! Every chance they get, they are here. It is a big, big commitment.

'This is the third generation now. We had Niall's father and my father and that gang, they were all great friends, then Niall of course, and now the next generation are keeping this going, all great friends again. It takes a parish to keep that going, and to have the pull back to the place.'

So what is the secret to the Cahalanes' success? Well, it's Ailish's pancakes!

'Mom makes pancakes for all of us,' Grainne explained, with Niall adding, 'If they were pancakes made for me in my time, I might still be playing!'

With their recipe for success, the current Cahalane trailblazers will continue to keep their famous surname in the headlines.

Keating targets back-to-back All-Irelands

Cork camogie star confident Rebels can build on their 2023 success

BY SEÁN HOLLAND

Courcey Rovers team-mates Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy celebrate Cork's 2023 All-Ireland senior camogie final win.

WITH her first All-Ireland senior camogie medal added to her collection, Courcey Rovers' county star Fiona Keating has her sights set on more success in 2024.

'Definitely, we're hoping to go back-to-back now this year and bring the O'Duffy Cup home to Cork again,' Keating told *The Southern Star* at the recent West Cork Sports Awards where she was honoured as one of the monthly winners in 2023.

'These awards mean so much. When you see the big sporting names in West Cork and then to be amongst those names, it means a lot,' Keating said.

'I know Libby (Coppinger) and Saoirse (McCarthy) were here last year and I was here a few years ago winning the youth award so now that I'm playing senior and to be nominated for a senior award, it means the world to me.'.

Having lost their two previous All-Ireland finals in 2021 and '22, it was a case of unfinished business for the Rebels when they met Waterford in the All-Ireland final in August 2023. Cork made sure they would get their hands on the O'Duffy Cup this time, triumphing by 5-13 to 0-9.

'When we woke up that morning, we never thought we'd come out of Croke Park after winning by that much,' Keating said.

'I remember RTÉ News were down with us that week and one of the little boys from Courceys was asked "how much do you think we'll win by?" And he said, four goals. We were all laughing and were like, Jesus, we wish! But to go and win by what we did, it was a dream come true.'

With the draws for the group stage of the 2024 All-Ireland camogie series released, Cork – under new manager Ger Manley – will face Galway, Down, Wexford, Clare and Dublin. Having turned a corner last year as a group, this Cork team is now looking to kick on and add to its 2023 success.

'Losing the two finals in 2021 and '22 was tough but to finally go and win it last year was huge. Definitely, we're hoping to go back to back now this year and bring the O'Duffy Cup home to Cork again,' she said.

The group stage format means a lot more frequent meetings for the country's best, but as Keating explains, it won't matter when they play them.

'You can't really avoid the big teams so we just have to take things as they come. Every team is different. We'll just go away and prepare tactics on how we face each team. At the end of the day, you're going to have to play them all at some stage, so you may as well play them in the group stages,' Keating said.

'For the likes of me, Laura Hayes, Saoirse McCarthy, Emma Murphy, Molly Lynch, there are loads of us that came up winning minor All-Irelands, but we'd never won a senior All-Ireland until last September. We're nearly looked at like the middle-aged girls now; we used to be the young ones, but we're not that young anymore. Definitely, we have to step up now and realise what our role is on the team. But, yeah, 100 percent, there's a big job ahead,' Keating added.

Cork camogie star Fiona Keating.

Can UCC break the 20- year Ashbourne Cup drought?

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

IT'S a big weekend for students as the University of Galway hosts camogie's oldest competition, the Ashbourne Cup.

It will be a busy one for the CCAO organising committee as also up for decision are the Purcell, the Fr Meaghair, and Ashling Murphy Cup competitions.

It's a novel setting this year with the indoor Connacht GAA Dome the venue, and it a huge feat for University College Cork to have two teams participating, with their first team contesting the Ashbourne cup semi-final and their second team in the Purcell Cup semi-final.

The Ashbourne Cup is camogie's most prestigious competition. It's hugely competitive and is the highlight of college sporting life for camogie-playing students.

Huge preparations will have been made by all concerned since term began and the scene is now set for what promises to be feast of colleges camogie.

In the Ashbourne semi-finals, UCC will meet University of Limerick in the first semi-final today at 2pm.

They will be fielding a strong side that will feature a host of Cork players. Jerry Wallace is the team manager with Donal O'Grady, Catriona Foley, and Criostoir Ó Cathasaigh as selectors.

The panel includes Aoife Hurley, Maebh Murphy, Emma Murphy, Molly Lynch, Aoife Healy, Cliona Dooley, Aisling Egan, and Clodagh Finn. UCC lost out to Technological University Dublin in last year's final which went to extra time, but they will be hoping to go all the way this year.

The holders TUD take on Dublin City University in the second semi-final at 4pm. The final is scheduled for 4pm on Sunday.

In the Purcell Cup semi-finals, UCC take on Setu Carlow and UG meet Mary Immaculate, both games at 3pm today with the final on Sunday at 2pm.

The competition was the brainchild of Agnes O'Farrell, founder member and president of the University College Dublin camogie club who later served as president of the Camogie Association. In 1915 she persuaded Lord Ashbourne to donate a trophy for the camogie intervarsity competition.

Since 2010, the Purcell Cup has been staged alongside the Ashbourne Cup, which has been contested for since 1977.

Saoirse McCarthy lifting the Purcell Cup.

This was donated by Camogie Association president Una Purcell. Her husband Padraig was the Gaelic games correspondent for the *Irish Press*.

The format is similar to the Ashbourne Cup.

In the final stages of the competition, six teams are divided into two groups of three, in which each team plays two matches.

The top two in each group goes through to the cup semi-finals while the bottom team in each group plays in the final of the Purcell Shield. The Purcell Cup winners play the Ashbourne Shield runners-up the following year to determine promotion and relegation.

Having initially been established for non-university colleges in 1977, the standard of the team rather than the type of university determined if colleges should participate in the Ashbourne Cup or the Purcell Cup.

Colleges who do not compete in the Ashbourne and Purcell Cups play for the Fr Meaghair Cup.

It was inaugurated in 1986 and the format is similar to the Ashbourne and Purcell.

Almost 400 camogie players will descend on the complex for the semi-finals. Many of the players in action are already involved in inter-county camogie players while for a lot of players it will be a huge privilege to represent their college.

Down through the years many players have made the break through to inter-county camogie thanks to their efforts in Ashbourne and inter-county managers will be out in force keeping an eye to proceedings.

It's been 20 years since UCC last won the Ashbourne Cup.

Let's hope they can go a step further this year and bring the title home.

Saoirse McCarthy is an inter-county player who also previously won The Echo Women in sport award. Pictures: Eddie O'Hare and Inpho/Ryan Byrne

UP FOR GRABS: University of Limerick joint captain Sinead O'Keeffe raises the Electric Ireland Ashbourne Cup with her team-mates after they defeated Technological University Dublin at University of Galway Connacht GAA AirDome. See Page 16. Picture: Sam Barnes/Sportsfile

Camogie

It's hard to believe given their rich tradition in the competition, it is all of 20 years since UCC last won the famed Ashbourne Cup; yes they have come close on a few occasions without actually getting over the line.

They go again next Saturday in the Connacht GAA Dome in Mayo when they play UL in the semi-final at 2pm.

Manager Jerry Wallis has put in a huge effort and with Donal O'Grady among his backroom team, they have plenty of experience to guide the group.

There is also a lot of quality players within the squad: Molly Lynch, Meabh Murphy, Cliona Dooley, Aofie Healy, Emma Murphy, Orlaith Mullins, Clodagh Finn and Maura Barrett are vastly experienced at various levels and that just might give them an edge.

It's a busy weekend all round for the camogie section of the college as their 2nd team are also travelling west. They play SETU in the Purcell Cup semi-final with a 3pm start in this game.

Clare haul back Rossies; Ashbourne joy for UL

Ladies NFL

John Fallon

It couldn't be tighter at the top of Division 3 in the Lidl Ladies NFL with Clare, Roscommon, and Offaly level after three rounds.

Clare and Roscommon shared the spoils in Ennis. Roscommon led by 1-6 to 0-2 at the break after Aisling Hanly found the net but Clare hit back on the resumption with Fidelma Marrinan's goal crucial in the 1-7 each draw.

Offaly trailed 2-7 to 1-4 against Louth in the Darver Centre of Excellence, Niamh Rice and Kate Flood finding the net for Louth. Offaly got on top after the restart and a goal from a penalty by Róisín Cockram and another goal from Ciara Walsh secured a 3-9 to 2-11 win.

Wexford beat Antrim, with a Catríona Murray goal key in the 1-3 to 0-5 win. Down, who led 0-6 to 1-2 at the break, got their first win, beating Sligo 1-10 to 1-9, with Natasha Ferris shooting the winner with a late free after Niamh McGrath had earlier found the net.

In Division 4 Fermanagh got the better of Leitrim to occupy top spot. Eimear Smyth struck the only goal in a 1-9 to 0-9 win.

Wicklow, leading 1-4 to 1-2 at the interval after Sinead McGettigan found the net, secured their first win, edging out Derry by 1-8 to 2-4.

Andrea O'Sullivan and Cathy Mee struck in the first half for Limerick to lead 2-3 to 0-6 at the break, but Longford hit back and goals from Clodagh Lohan and Niamh Brady secured a 2-7 apiece draw.

Carlow, with goals from Roisín Bailey, Emma Coogan, and Sara Doyle, earned a 3-13 to 0-0 win over Kilkenny.

In camogie's Ashbourne Cup final, UL enjoyed a 6-11 to 1-12 win over TUD. Eimear McGrath (2-3) and Mairead O'Brien (2-1) scoring for UL.

New boss Manley wants to hit the ground running

BY GER McCARTHY

Cork's Saoirse McCarthy gets away from Kilkenny's Kellyann Doyle and Julianne Malone during their 2023 All-Ireland quarter-final at Croke Park.

GER Manley's first test as Cork's new senior camogie manager is a daunting trip to Kilkenny in the opening round of the 2024 Very Camogie National League this Saturday.

A point separated arch-rivals Cork and Kilkenny in their 2023 All-Ireland championship quarter-final, as the Rebels emerged 2-14 to 2-13 winners and went on to become All-Ireland champions.

That clash is also remembered for the throw-in being put back by quarter of an hour. The Cork panel had to abandon their train and transfer to a bus, receiving a Garda escort from Naas to Croke Park. Unsurprisingly, Manley is hoping for a less stressful build-up to Saturday's Division 1 opener with Kilkenny.

'We came back a small bit later than normal this year, not until after Christmas, but Kilkenny is a tough opener,' Manley told *The Southern Star*.

'Our big thing for the league is to try and win every game. I don't like losing matches'
– Ger Manley

'The Cork players have four hard years put down playing in the league and All-Ireland finals. We have been ramping things up over the last three weeks. Things are going well and we have a few challenge games played.

'Away to Kilkenny, we were up there as well last year in the league. I thought we would be at home this time but fixtures are funny in the camogie world. It is a tough one and then we have Waterford the following week. It's a tough start for us.'

Manley knows full well that he has big shoes to fill. Previous Cork manager Matthew Twomey walked away having delivered All-Ireland success with Manley an important member of the Rebels' management team.

'I am still in contact with Matthew quite a bit,' Manley said.

'He was a super manager for Cork and I still have a very good relationship with him. He has given me plenty of advice.

'It is a different role alright. When you are a manager, you have to look at a lot of other things. We are still getting a few bits and pieces together. Losing Teddy O'Donovan and Anthony O'Neill, very important members of last year's backroom team, means new people have had to come in.

'Inter-county requires a huge commitment because of all the work that goes on behind the scenes. Luckily enough, I have a lot of good people working with me this year including Jennifer O'Regan, Marion McCarthy, Fiona O'Driscoll, Brendan O'Driscoll and Liam Cronin.'

By Manley's own admission, Cork must improve and cannot afford to stand still this year. Starting with Kilkenny in Saturday's Division 1 opener, Cork are eager to get a new campaign off to the best possible start albeit slightly behind in their preparations.

'All the other counties are probably back six to eight weeks ahead of us,' the Cork boss stated.

'Everyone is looking forward to the challenge even though we may be only back a couple of weeks ourselves. Cork is going to use the league to get some game time into players to see if they are able for senior inter-county level. Unless they get games at this level then they will never get a chance to show what they can do.

'It is pressure and a big step playing senior camogie. I think the overall standard is getting better too. Fitness, strength and conditioning, analysis, it has all moved on over the last couple of years.

'Our big thing for the league is to try and win every game. I don't like losing matches. The important thing is that Cork gets a winning run and our aim is to get back to Croke Park next April.'

Revving to go again

Cork senior camogie manager Ger Manley, along with his players Amy O'Connor, Meabh Cahalane, and Molly Lynch, and kitman Kieran McCarthy, joined Kearys Motor Group CEO Kieran McCarthy as the company launched year three of its sponsorship at SuperValu Páirc Uí Chaoimh. Picture: Jim Coughlan.

Blarney NS team celebrate their victory in the Premier Camogie at the Allianz Sciath na Scol finals at Na Piarsaigh GAA.

CAMOGIE CHAMPIONSHIP: Scoil Mhairtin, Kilworth got the vital goal to edge out Glenville in the final with Siun Dingivan as captain.

Berrings and Barryroe were gallant performers in this group also.

The Sciath na Scol committee thanked all who helped make this year's competition a success, it being the first since the covid lock down.

Special thanks to the referees who officiated at the finals, Paddy O'Neill, Sean Forde, John O'Connell, and Trevor Lyons

Camogie chosen for novel sports project

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

THE Camogie Association has been chosen as a suitable sports body to run an exciting pilot project titled ICOACHGIRLS.

This is a Sport Ireland-drafted initiative which aims to recruit and retain young girls and female coaches in sport.

The association has been chosen as a suitable body to run the project and are delighted to share the opportunity to become a pilot club with their members.

The project will comprise a series of coach education and up-skilling and the delivery of 10 fun training sessions.

In order to be best placed to run the project, clubs would ideally need to have a training facility (hall/astro turf pitch/grass pitch) and equipment; be able to recruit 12-15, 6-8-year-old or 9-11-year-old girls; and identify two head coaches and identify 8-10 assistant coaches.

They would also need to commit to the online coach education which will take place as follows:

- Monday, February 26:Workshop 1: ICOACHGIRLS and coaching girls (co-ordinators, head coaches and assistant coaches).
- Monday, March 4: Workshop 2: Coaching and mentoring (head coaches and assistant coaches).
- Monday, March 11: Workshop 3: Understanding difference and setting the environment (head coaches and assistant coaches).
- Tuesday, March 19: Workshop 4: Setting up and evaluating the play centres (co-ordinators and head coaches).
- Thursday March 21: Safeguarding.

ICOACHGIRLS aims to promote and increase physical activity and sport among primary school age girls through the creation of girls play centres in local communities across six countries (Ireland, Hungary, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Special Olympics — country to be decided).

The centres will be aimed at girls that have never taken part in organised sport or that have tried and dropped out.

Each centre will be staffed by two female head coaches to provide the girls with friendly, relatable role models.

The head coaches will work with the girls to co-create a 10-session programme of activities which meets their social, psychological and physical needs, gives them a sense of ownership, and allows them to build positive relationships with sport and physical activity.

After the 10 sessions the girls will be signposted to a series of sport clubs and active leisure activities in order to support their continuous involvement.

ICOACHGIRLS will also aim to address the current lack of female coaches and it will develop a "Come into Coaching" programme for newly qualified or new-to-coaching teenage girls and women.

This will allow them to gain basic coaching knowledge and skills and have an opportunity to apply them in girls play centres while mentored by the two female head coaches.

Overall, ICOACHGIRLS will set up a minimum of 35 girls play centres reaching a minimum of 1,050 girls, and supporting the development of 420 female coaches.

On completion of the programme, it is expected that local authorities, and national and international federations will use the template provided by ICOACHGIRLS to create additional girls play centres and multiply the impact of the project.

Among the objectives are increasing physical activity and sport, increasing the number, competence, and confidence of female coaches.

Those interested in becoming a pilot club can get more information from the Camogie Association.

Stunning second half helps UL to Ashbourne title

Ashbourne Cup

THE UNIVERSITY of Limerick won their 11th ever Ashbourne Cup after a 6-11 to 1-12 win over TU Dublin in Sunday's final.

It was a sweet victory for the UL side following the controversy that saw them dumped out of the 2023 competition.

Managed by former Limerick camogie boss Declan Nash, UL dominated the game throughout with two goals each from Eimear McGrath and Mairead O'Brien sending them on their way.

Three Limerick players were part of the victorious UL team. Ailbhe Larkin (Mungret St Paul's) started the game, while Stephanie Woulfe (Templeglantine) and Caoimhe Lyons (Monaleen) came off the bench.

It is the first Ashbourne victories for Larkin and Woulfe, while it's a fifth title for Lyons. Nash had Limerick representation as part of his management team with Sile Moynihan, Muireann Creamer and Dearbhla Egan all involved. Former UL winning Ashbourne captain Marian Quaid was also involved as the teams' physio.

Nash's side held a one-point lead at the break but blitzed their opponents in the second half to earn a stunning victory and another title. The UL Ashbourne Cup team and subs for the game were as follows.

UL: Sinead Farrell; Sharon Shanahan, Claire Kingston, Eimear Loughman; Rachael Walsh, Aine Keane, Sarah McCartan; Ailbhe Larkin (Mungret St Paul's), Sarah Madden; Caoimhe Cahill, Zi Yan Spillane, Mairead O'Brien; Susie Delaney, Eimear McGrath, Casey Hennessy. **SUBS** used: Stephanie Woulfe (Templeglantine) for Kingston (33 mins); Lorna McNamara for Delaney (39 mins); Caoimhe Lyons (Monaleen) for Cahill (40 mins); Aoibheann Barry for Larkin (51 mins).

The University of Limerick panel of players that won the Ashbourne Cup after victory over TU Dublin PICTURE: SPORTSFILE

Waterford captain Lorraine Bray at the launch of the Very National Camogie Leagues at Croke Park. Picture: Tom Maher/Inpho

Lorraine: Jerry has brought a great buzz to Waterford setup

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

Cork will take on Waterford in round two of the Very Division 1 Camogie League on Saturday, February 24, after their clash with Kilkenny this weekend.

Last year was a mixed one for the Rebels against Waterford who knocked them out of the Munster championship. However, Cork did avenge that loss as they defeated the Deise in the All-Ireland final later in the season.

One of the players that was outstanding for Waterford all season was half-forward and captain Lorraine Bray. She was confirmed as their captain again for this season.

Like Cork they have a new management team in place with Seán Power and his selectors stepping down. And when they face Cork on Saturday week it will be familiar faces up against each other as Jerry Wallace is now their manager.

He will know Ger Manley well as both are Midleton GAA Club men and would know each other from the Cork setup over the last few years.

Jerry led Cork to back-to-back minor titles in the last two seasons and no doubt will be hoping to lead Waterford to success this year.

Waterford were promoted to the top league last season and will start their campaign with a tough game against Tipperary this Saturday.

Looking ahead to the game against Cork and the season in general Lorraine said: "We had two major battles with Cork last year, one turned out well for us and the other didn't.

"You take the learnings from every game you play, whether you win or lose. You look at areas you can improve on and try to implement them in the next game. We are delighted to be up in the top division as that's where all teams want to be.

"We know there are no easy games at this level and it's going to be tough. It's nice to be back up playing at the top level and it is the best preparation for the Münster and All-Ireland championships later in the year. But we are just taking it game by game for now and we know Cork are going to be another tough challenge on Saturday week."

Any change of management always takes a bit of time to settle and Lorraine said they are still getting used to what Jerry wants, but it has been very positive so far.

"We had Seán and his management team in last year and first thanks to them for all their hard work. We have Jerry now and it's been brilliant so far.

"It has brought a great buzz and excitement to the camp, he's up for a bit of craic, which is good. But then there is the serious side as well when we are getting the work done.

"It took a bit of time to get our management sorted so we are probably a little bit behind other teams when we got started, but he has a great team around him as well.

"So look we are delighted and looking forward to what the year will bring for us," concluded Lorraine.

Cleere 'couldn't refuse' opportunity to manage Kilkenny

Peter 'Chap' Cleere admitted he couldn't turn down the opportunity to manage the Kilkenny senior camogie team after fellow county man Brian Dowling stepped away last year.

Cleere, an All-Ireland senior hurling winner with the Cats in 2006 and 2007 and now a Kilkenny county councillor, took over the reins last October and will get his first taste of competitive action in UPMC Nowlan Park this afternoon against great rivals and All-Ireland champions Cork.

It was the Rebels who ended Kilkenny's All-Ireland title defence last July.

This opening round of the Very National League Division 1A will give the Blacks and Whites clubman, who guided Carlow camogie to promotion in 2023, a good indication of their progress.

"Brian departed and the opportunity came to go to Kilkenny and it was an opportunity I couldn't refuse. It's a new challenge, new approach, everything is fresh", he said.

"The backroom team is completely different. Former Kilkenny goalkeeper PJ Ryan, U21 All-Ireland winner John O'Neill, and Michael Farrell who is heavily involved in development squads in Kilkenny, are my coaches.

"Séamus Kelly is the intermediate manager and he is a link between senior and intermediate.

"The intermediates are actually playing Cork in Cork on the same day in Division 2B.

"On the panel side, we have a lot of new girls in. We've a nice group that have been working together for the last two months. Over the league, we want to test girls and see who can compete and can drive on for us later in the year.

"But we are very conscious of who we are facing on Saturday. We know Cork will be coming with serious firepower.

"They are the best team in the country at the moment. It will be really good to see where we are at, what we need to do and keep doing."

The new manager confirmed he will be without a number of key performers, including Windgap legend Denise Gaule.

"Denise is gone to Australia, flew out in December. Claire Phelan is another big name player and Michaela Kenneally not with us. They would be three who started last year's quarter-final loss to Cork.

"Injury wise, Miriam Walsh and Grace Walsh are coming back from injury, but not available at the moment.

'It's brilliant for the panel because we get to test what we have."

Being a county councillor is a busy job at the best of times. With the local elections scheduled around the same time as the championship, his hands will be full.

"I've a busy life, no more than any of the players. I am a Fianna Fáil county councillor, Micheál Martin would be my man.

"There are loads of examples of politicians and councillors being involved with GAA clubs — John Hegarty is the manager of the Wexford football team. Justin McNulty is manager of Laois. And there are more.

"A lot of our girls would be doing heavy exams in terms of masters and finishing off thesis and have professional commitments around that time as well.

"Camogie for me is my release."

Camogie fixtures

TODAY

Very National League Division 1A:

2pm: Clare v Galway, Cusack Park, Ennis; Tipperary v Waterford, Tipperary Camogie Grounds, The Ragg; Kilkenny v Cork, UPMC Nowlan Park.

REAL PEDIGREE: As a player, Peter 'Chap' Cleere enjoyed All-Ireland success with Kilkenny in 2006 and 2007. Picture: Cathal McOscar/Inpho

Kilkenny face All-Ireland champions in camogie league opener

The Kilkenny senior camogie team will kick-start their season when playing host to Cork in the opening round of the Very Camogie League at UPMC Nowlan Park on Saturday afternoon (2pm).

It will be a new era of sorts for the Cats as after four very successful years in charge, Brian Dowling has moved on and been replaced as manager by Peter 'Chap Cleere.

Dowling leaves very large boots to fill after he led the county to All-Ireland victories in 2020 and 2022 but Cleere will be eager to help the team make up for a disappointing 2023 campaign.

Cleere takes charge of the side on an initial one year term and he managed near neighbours Carlow to league glory last term.

The Blacks and Whites man will have to cope without all-star forward Denise Gaule who has gone travelling for the next few months.

Gaule has been a tremendous asset to the Kilkenny cause over the last decade or so and replacing her in the team will be a very difficult one.

Gaule's loss coupled with Miriam Walsh still recovering from a cruciate ligament injury means experimentation will play a big role in team selection over the next few weeks.

While 2023 was a disappointing one from an inter-county point of view, the success of Dicksboro in becoming the first Kilkenny club to win a senior All-Ireland title in 17 years will be a big positive and a number of their players are bound to make an impact.

Aoife Prendergast excelled on the placed balls for the Boro and after being re-positioned to the forward line during county duty last year, her game has gone on a few levels.

She looks to be in pole position to take on Gaule's responsibility on the frees and with clubmate Asha McHardy also excelling, Kilkenny look to be in good hands.

The Cats main aim for the year will be to try and reclaim the O'Duffy Cup and our first sight of them in action is on Saturday when they take on the team that eliminated them form last year's championship.

VERY CAMOGIE LEAGUE DIVISION 1A

Round 1- Kilkenny v Cork, Saturday February 17
Round 2- Kilkenny v Clare, Saturday February 24
Round 3- Galway v Kilkenny, Saturday March 9
Round 4- Kilkenny v Tipperary, Saturday March 23
Round 5- Waterford v Kilkenny, Saturday March 30

Peter 'Chap' Cleere

Late charge helps Loreto reach final

Students pass test: All-Ireland decider with Ursuline Thurles is next challenge for Kilkenny side

ALL-IRELAND COLLEGES SENIOR ROINN A CAMOGIE CHAMPIONSHIP

LORETO KILKENNY	2-14
ST PAT'S MAGHERA	1-12

AFTER EXTRA-TIME

Trevor Spillane
tspillane@kilkennypeople.ie

The Loreto had to endure a tough battle before seeing off St Patrick's Maghera in the All-Ireland semi-final in Dunmore

The calibre of champions came to the fore as the Loreto came through the toughest of tests to book their place in the senior camogie schools All-Ireland final.

The defending champs had their work cut out to see off a dogged St Patrick's Maghera, but showed their composure when it mattered most.

In a game that was a real battle from the start, the Loreto's spirit shone through when the tie was in the melting pot. Wednesday's clash at a chilly Dunmore looked to be slipping away from the home side when a fast and physical Maghera outfit rallied to take the lead inside the last 15 minutes. Having closed the gap with a series of solid points, the Derry girls stormed ahead when captain Carla Collins gathered a Katie McCloskey pass and drilled the sliotar to the net from close range (1-10 to 1-8).

With the lead and momentum in their favour, Maghera looked like a side on their way to victory - but the Loreto weren't about to yield.

Digging deep, they clawed their way back into the game. They were helped by the influential Rachel Dowling, who knocked a point off the deficit with a free after sub Eleanor Doheny was fouled. Dowling struck again from another placed ball, this time via a 45, after her first effort - a free - was beaten away to safety by Derry goalkeeper Maria Hughes, leaving the sides all square with the game going into the final minute of normal time (1-10 to 1-10).

The Loreto went agonisingly close to finding a winner before the finish. Spurred on by their late run they pressed for another score and thought they had it when another Dowling attempt was beaten out.

The sliotar fell in front of Doheny, who pulled first time, but she couldn't get the purchase needed to send the sliotar home. Extra-time beckoned!

The Loreto will probably wonder how they ended up needing that late charge given the way they took control from early on.

With captain Emma Corr and Anna Doheny leading the way in defence and midfielders Ambar Laherty and Sarah Kehoe dominant in midfield they shut down the Derry attack from early on.

It also helped that the Loreto had some sharp offensive weapons too. By the 12th minute they were six points in front and cruising, early points from Dowling (0-3) and Laherty followed by an instinctive goal from Tara McGrath, who rose highest to flick Aoife Shealy's cross to the net (1-4 to 0-1).

At that stage there seemed to be the only side in the game but St Pat's, who travelled to the Kilkenny venue with a huge support, fought their way back.

Led by the speed and strength of the likes of Katie McCloskey, Collins and the pacy Aoibh Mulholland they stormed back into the reckoning. Two huge Emma Quinn frees edged them closer, before Caoimhe Chambers picked off a minor score from the right.

Panic then spread in the Loreto ranks when netminder Ali Kennedy stopped a McCloskey shot late on - Collins raced in to trouble the 'keeper, winning a free she converted. It was Maghera's third score in succession, their best run to date. From six points down they were now just two behind at the break (1-5 to 0-6).

The game swung this way and that after the break, but that two point gap remained until St Pat's found an extra gear approaching the final quarter. That late Loreto charge was required in the closing stages, sending the game to extra-time.

DETERMINED

The Ulster side were determined to see the game out in additional time and took control in the first period thanks to two pointed frees from Carla Collins.

The Loreto had their hands full dealing with the strength of the Maghera attack, but found enough space to pick off a point via a Rachel Dowling free to trail by the bare minimum at half-time (1-12 to 1-11).

Having survived a testing time the Loreto were a different prospect after the restart. Much like the first half of normal time they took control of the game again.

While their pressure didn't yield the number of scores they wanted they did hit three points, all coming from Dowling, to get ahead again.

Strength in defence was also key as they shut down the St Pat's attack, holding them scoreless in the second half of additional time.

The confidence was flowing through the Loreto ranks before they applied the killer blow when Ciara Dunne finished to the net in added time, goaling after a clever pass from sub Lucy Boyd.

Best for the Loreto, who will now look forward to a final against the Ursuline Thurles on February 24., were Emma Corr, Anna Doheny and Rachel Dowling. For Maghera, Katie McCloskey, Carla Collins and Aoibh Mulholland impressed the most. Special mention must also go to the Maghera support who travelled in large numbers to the game - many left their Derry base that morning. They made great noise and added to the occasion, far outnumbering their Kilkenny counterparts.

TEAMS AND SCORERS

Loreto Kilkenny - Rachel Dowling (0-10, 0-5 frees, 0-1 45); Tara McGrath (1-1); Ciara Dunne (1-0); Ambar Laherty, Aoife Shealy, Aisling Browne (0-1 each).

St Patrick's Maghera - Carla Collins (1-5, 0-5 frees); Emma Quinn (0-3 frees); Caoimhe Chambers (0-2, 0-1 free); Grace Kelly, Katie McCloskey (0-1 each).

Loreto Kilkenny - Ali Kennedy (Windgap); Marie O'Keeffe (Young Irelands), Angela Carroll (Dicksboro), Orlaith Kirwan (Thomastown); Emma Corr (Clara), Anna Doheny (Tullaroan), Emily Smith (James Stephens); Ambar Laherty (Mullinavat), Sarah Kehoe (Mount Leinster Rangers); Rachel Dowling (Dicksboro), Caoimhe Keher-Murtagh (Rower-Inistioge), Aisling Browne (Dicksboro); Aoife Shealy (O'Loughlin Gaels), Ciara Dunne (Tullaroan), Tara McGrath (Dicksboro). Subs: Louisa Gilmore (Dicksboro) for Laherty (inj), 45 mins; Eleanor Doheny (Tullaroan) for Corr, 53 mins; Jenna Larkin (James Stephens) for Shealy, 80 mins; Lucy Boyd (Clara) for Keher-Murtagh, 80 mins.

St Patrick's Maghera - Maria Hughes; Aoife McWilliams, Eimear Doherty, Brannagh Brolly; Rhianna Doherty, Eimear Murray, Ellie Griffin; Orla Hull, Emma Quinn; Grace Kelly, Katie McCloskey, Leah Cassidy; Caoimhe Chambers, Carla Collins, Aoibh Mulholland. Subs: Marie Therese McCullagh for Cassidy, 43 mins; Eimear Conway for Quinn, 76 mins.

Referee - Alan Lagrue (Kildare).

New Cork camogie manager Donie Daly will be pleased with how his Division 2B side has been going so far.

Fixing two Cork v Kilkenny games in different counties sees fans miss out

TOMORROW
Very Division 2B National League: Cork v Kilkenny, Castle Road, 2pm

WITH two wins from two games under their belts, Cork take on visitors Kilkenny in a good position, sitting on top of their group in the Very Division 2B League.

With two games remaining after tomorrow's match, when they host Clare and Wexford, a win would see them positioned nicely for the defence of their title.

With just the top two progressing to the league final, it's tight on all sides to make it through, but if Cork can maintain their position at the top with another win tomorrow, they will be within touching distance of going through.

It's another crazy situation tomorrow with the seniors heading up to Kilkenny to open their league campaign, while the counties meet in Division 2B in Cork.

Surely, both games should have been scheduled for the same county.

Granted, a lot of venues might not be able to take two games at this time of year, but surely a little bit of balancing with regard to throw-in times would have enabled supporters to see both games if scheduled in the same county.

As a new manager, and with a lot of changes to last year's team, Donie Daly is finding his feet and is pleased with the way things have gone so far with two good performances from a side he is currently in the process of building.

With over 40 players currently on a training panel, the aim is to give every player a chance of making the championship panel; therefore for each game they are rotating players and giving everyone an opportunity to make the championship squad.

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

For each game, management are bringing different players, they are also rotating their captain for league games before one is announced for the championship.

The two performances to date have been hugely positive. Cork have applied themselves superbly and battled to the finish to hold on to their lead against Tipperary in their opening game. It was similar story against Galway. Trailing at the interval by four points, their defence put in an excellent opening half, containing the home side to just two scores from play.

The second half performance was one of determination as slowly Cork clawed their way back, and with six minutes remaining Emily O'Donoghue hit the game's only goal to edge Cork into the lead.

Kilkenny know they have to win this one to stay in contention.

They lost to Galway and Wexford, but they were in both games to the finish, and they will provide a strong test for Cork.

They have a lot of experienced campaigners in a side that has a lot of players from last season's squad.

Afton Grace, Ellen Gunner, Aisling Prendergast, and Caroline Kennedy have been to the fore in both of their outings to date and they will push Cork to the limits to get a result to keep them in the hunt as a defeat tomorrow would most certainly knock them out.

In the other group game, Wexford, who lost to Clare before defeating Kilkenny, take on a Tipperary side that had an excellent round two win over Clare, while Galway will make the trip to Clare.

Manley is ready for a new Cork challenge with trip to Cats

Ger Manley has taken over as Cork manager this season, having been involved with the panel for the last two seasons. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

TOMORROW
Very Division 1 National League: Kilkenny v Cork, UPMC Nowlan Park, 2pm

CORK will get their Very Division 1 National League campaign underway tomorrow and they couldn't have asked for a tougher start.

Nothing would give the Cats more satisfaction than getting the better of the All-Ireland champions.

At the same time, Cork's Division 2 side will be face Kilkenny at Castle Road, as Donie Daly's squad look to keep their winning run going.

Cork and Kilkenny have enjoyed many battles over the years and tomorrow's game at Nowlan Park will be no different.

For one person it will be slightly different as Ger Manley is now the Cork manager after Matthew Twomey stepped down following their All-Ireland victory.

While being manager is new to Manley, the Cork set-up isn't as he had been part of Twomey's management team for the last two years.

"I was involved with Matthew for the last few years and maybe a lot of people didn't know that, but it's a very good set-up," Manley said.

"Liam Cronin (coach) and I get on very well and a lot of people, players, and others, were pushing us towards it and I'm happy I got it.

"Plenty of headaches in a good way already and I don't know how Matthew did it for 10 years to be honest. But look, we have a great squad, a good backroom team and we are just waiting now for the league to get going tomorrow.

"Being involved for several years is a great help and we had a very good year last season winning the All-Ireland; a very disappointing one the year before and before that again.

Ashling Thompson will make her first start for Cork in more than a year against Kilkenny tomorrow. Picture: Piaras Ó Mídheach/Sportsfile

"But I think we brought coaching up to a good standard with Liam and Fiona O'Driscoll and a few more, with a few others around from last year which makes a huge difference.

"We brought in Dave O'Connell for strength and conditioning from UCC and I think that S&C is the way you need to go. Wesley O'Brien did a great job for the last few years, but he's just busy now and hopefully we'll get him back in later in the year.

"We're just trying to improve the standards and the players push it. They're unbelievable really, elite sports women as they call them, but I call them elite people because they put in as much as the lads do.

"I've seen it, the quality is improving, their skills level, their fitness levels, what they do from off time to peak time. They're just so good you know, and I'm not saying it's easy.

"We have quality players and we've been involved in All-Ireland finals for a good few years. It was nice to be involved in a winning team last year. There are tonnes of coaches out there who don't win anything, and I have been lucky enough to win a few things as well as losing a lot.

"It's the players who really make a difference, and it was a no-brainer really to get involved with them."

Being All-Ireland champions, Manley understands that everybody will be out to beat them, but he also said it's the same every season and it's nothing new for Cork to be in that position.

"We've revamped the squad a bit, looked at a lot of players during the club championships. We've brought in a few girls who we thought deserved a chance. We're trying to make it more competitive because if we don't make it competitive, we will fall behind the others.

"Tipperary are coming, Waterford did very well last year, Kilkenny lost a few players, but they have some players stepping up from strong underage squads. Galway are strong too and Dublin are putting in a lot of effort too.

"The target is there, but I think it's there every year for Cork. If you go back over the history of Cork, they are there or thereabouts most years and sides always like to beat Cork.

"I said that to the girls, there is a target on our backs and we can't be complacent. But we only came back after Christmas and have played a few challenge games and hopefully we might hit the ground running.

"Kilkenny are probably a few weeks ahead of us fitness wise, but with the players we have I'm hoping we will do okay.

"Kilkenny are the hardest games, we played them in the All-Ireland final two seasons ago and they are just so competitive physically.

"It doesn't matter if it's league or championship they are very difficult to beat and going up there tomorrow is going to be a huge challenge and hopefully one we can start off in a positive way.

Meanwhile, Cork's Division 2B team manager Donie Daly will be determined to make it three from three against the Cats on the back of two good away wins over Tipperary and Galway.

They had a break last week because of college games, but Daly has named a strong quad for their tie at Castle Road (2pm), including the likes of Millie Condon, Aisling Egan, Lauren Homan, Olivia McAllen, and Katie Walsh.

Galway's Black standing on the shoulders of giants

Daragh Ó Conchúir

For the past four years, Róisín Black has been a teacher at Scoil Mhuire, the same primary school she attended in her home town of Oranmore.

It might have been a tiny bit weird at first, being a colleague of some people who taught her as a child, but she loves everything about it. The profession, of course, but the familiarity of the surroundings and its denizens, who have been welcoming and encouraging.

They threw a party when she concluded last season with a deserved All-Star. They might have another after yesterday's announcement that the Oranmore-Maree bulwark would be captain of the Galway camogie squad for 2024, starting off with the launch of their Very Camogie League Division 1A title defence against neighbours Clare at Cusack Park today (2pm throw-in).

She succeeds Shauna Healy and before her, Sarah Dervan, in the role and the similarities are impossible to resist.

However, last week's call from Cathal Murray about the captaincy came out of the blue.

"I was surprised as there are so many other great leaders on the team but I was delighted," said Black.

"It's a great honour for myself, my family, and my club. I've two great vice-captains as well in Carrie Dolan and Siobhán McGrath. I've played with them all the way up, they're the same age as me and they'll be able to help me out as will the other leaders around the panel."

She has always stood out as possessing the leadership gene and apart from the minors, wore the armband for the club too.

Meanwhile, you could not have had better role models than the iconic duo of Healy and Dervan.

"Shauna and Sarah have been pivotal to Galway camogie for so many years. You learn on the pitch from them and you learn off the pitch as well from them. I've definitely big boots to fill!"

Black has no doubts about why she was a slow burner rather than an overnight sensation. There is no finger-pointing here.

"I suppose I gave it my all for the last two years. I left no stone unturned with the gym and the training, left it all out on the field. Maybe that came with a bit of maturity. I understood what it was to be up there. You have to give 100%.

"Watching the girls too that had won All-Irelands and All-Stars, the likes of Shauna and Sarah and Niamh Kilkenny. I learned from them and understood what you had to do to get on the starting team because the competition is so fierce.

"You want to be going into an All-Ireland semi-final or final knowing that you've done everything you can. It's just always about giving it your all, in training and then on match day."

Róisín Black: 'It's just always about giving it your all.'

UNDER PRESSURE: Cork's Amy O'Connor fights for possession in Kilkenny yesterday

Mackey's magic leaves Kilkenny under her spell

By **Daragh Ó Conchúir**

EIGHT points from Katrina Mackey helped All-Ireland champions Cork to a hard-earned 1-17 to 1-16 win over a much-changed Kilkenny outfit in yesterday's pulsating Very Camogie League Division 1A opening round clash at UPMC Nowlan Park.

Both sides are under new management since the Rebels overcame the then reigning All-Ireland title holders in last year's quarter-final, with Ger Manley, who served as coach under Matthew Twomey, stepping into the Cork vacancy left by the Douglas clubman, while Peter Cleere was appointed after Brian Dowling brought his successful term to a conclusion.

There was a far more familiar look to the Cork team but Kilkenny gave every bit as much as they got and led at the end of the first half by 1-9 to 1-8.

Aoife Doyle opened the scoring for Cleere's crew from the first attack and though Mackey equalised soon after, a fired-up Kilkenny soon established a three-point advantage thanks to scores from Asha McHardy, Sophie O'Dwyer (free) and Katie Power.

'Kilkenny's response was super as Doyle netted from a tight angle'

The advantage had stretched to four by the end of the first quarter but after Mackey split the posts for the first time, Claire Mullins continued the goal-scoring form with Sarsfields that earned her a call-up at this grade, with a smart finish after a trademark solo run by Hannah Looney and assist by Mackey who exhibited her trademark vision.

That brought the sides level and a Looney point in the 29th minute edged the visitors in front for the first time. The Kilkenny response was excellent, however, with Doyle goaling from the restart with a rifled finish from a tight angle after Power had pounced on an error by Ashling Thompson, to ensure they the Leinster side held marginal sway at the break.

Manley's players bounced out with the first three points of the second half including another two from the outstanding Mackey, who was excelling in general play as well as converting placed balls, and when the evergreen attacker brought her individual tally to eight points from a free after 46 minutes, Cork had moved three ahead.

But you never write off Kilkenny and they hit the next three points themselves, the equaliser coming from an O'Dwyer penalty that rose over the crossbar.

Cork's All-Ireland-winning captain and three-goal hero in that game, Amy O'Connor came on as a substitue and worked a pocket of space before snapping her side into the lead.

O'Dwyer responded with her eighth point but Emma Murphy drove over an excellent score to restore Cork's advantage.

The Glen Rovers flier followed up with another neat finish, which was vital as the lively Katie Nolan reduced it to the minimum before the final whistle sounded.

Galway have been in the last four league finals, winning three of them and got their bid for a three-in-row under way with a 0-17 to 0-8 win over Clare at Cusack Park.

Five points from vice-captain Carrie Dolan, including two from play, enabled the Maroons to establish a 0-10 to 0-4 half-time lead in very difficult conditions.

Niamh McPeake and Niamh Niland were among the other scorers for Galway, with the more experienced duo Aoife Donohue and Ailish O'Reilly also on the mark, while Áine O'Loughlin and Caoimhe Carmody were on target for Clare.

The Banner girls couldn't make inroads on a resolute defence well organised by new Galway captain Róisín Black, and although O'Loughlin, Ellen Casey and Lorna McNamara raised white flags for the home team, the impressive Niland doubled her first-half tally to finish with four points form play and Dolan also kept the scoreboard ticking over to ensure the verdict was never in doubt.

In the last game of the division, Waterford repeated their victory in last year's dramatic All-Ireland

'Galway's bid for three-in-row got going with a 0-17 to 0-8 win over Clare'

semi-final over Tipperary, a first-half Beth Carton goal proving the difference at the end of an evenly contetsted tussle that finished with a 1-10 to 0-10 scoreline at the Sean Treacy's club grounds in Kilcommon.

These teams will meet in the group stages of the 2024 championship but with only the top two teams qualifying for the league decider and perhaps more pertinently, the bottom side of a competitive division to be relegated, there was plenty at stake here.

The Déise led by 1-5 to 0-6 at the end of their first half of competitive camogie under Jerry Wallace, Niamh Rockett slotting a couple of points to supplement the Carton goal. Points from Eimear McGrath and Eimear Heffernan had settled Tipp after Carton's 14th minute major.

Denis Kelly's charges battled away and were well in the game but once Carton ensured that there was more than a score between them – the margin got to five points at one stage – Tipp's chance had passed although they did get it back to three at the death thanks to Róisín Howard.

Cork's Katrina Mackey shakes hands with Michelle Teehan of Kilkenny after the match. Picture: INPHO/Leah Scholes

'Any time you get a win in Nowlan Park is always good'

ANY time you travel back from Kilkenny with a win, it's always a good day.

It was that little bit extra special for new Cork senior manager Ger Manley who watched his side battle to the end to secure a deserved win over the Cats.

Naturally, he was delighted with the win considering it was their first outing in the Very Camogie League, but he was also well aware it was only that — their first game and there is a lot of work to do yet.

"It's great to take the points, any time you come up here and win it's always great," Manley said.

"It was a very tough game and you could see we are only back three or four weeks.

"But give the girls credit, they fought hard which, look, up here you have to and we said that beforehand. We told them you have to match their intensity and I thought we did that.

"We made mistakes and it is only our first competitive game since the All-Ireland final last year you would expect that. But to win up here is never easy and I don't care whether it's by 10 points or one point, a win is a win and we will take that."

It took two late points from Emma Murphy to secure Cork's win as the five subs who came on all played their part in the win. Two others, Amy O'Connor and Orlaith Mullins, also scored late on to ensure Cork came out on top.

REACTION

■ Rory Noonan

"Yes the subs all made a difference and you need them and they play a crucial part in all games now. Emma Murphy has great potential and that's what we want, people who do the business when they come on and make it more competitive for everyone.

"As I said at the start of the season, we're trying to make the panel more competitive so that everybody is pushing for a place. And look, we took off a few today and we brought a few on and I think that's the way you have to play now. That's where the modern game is gone and I'm delighted with them now, to be honest."

Cork had a slow start, but Manley said that it didn't concern him or his fellow selectors at half-time.

"Not really, Liam (Cronin, coach) was talking to them and we just went in and said we had a slow start, but it didn't affect us. We got on top, but then we gave away a soft goal but managed to get back on top again. We probably missed a few chances and our conversion rate was not as high as we would like, it was only fair today.

"Look, as I said we are only back a few weeks and are still rusty, so overall we are delighted to get the win and get the league off to a winning start."

Cork's Aoife Healy is presented with the Player of the Match award by Darren Kelly. Picture: INPHO/Leah Scholes

Kilkenny's Aoife Doyle blocks a ball from Cork's Libby Coppinger at UMPC Nowlan Park. Picture: INPHO/Leah Scholes

Murphy points seal win

Kilkenny's Asha McHardy tackles Ashling Thompson of Cork. Picture: INPHO/Leah Scholes

Kilkenny	1-16
Cork	1-17

IT was a winning start for new Cork manager Ger Manley in their Very Division 1 camogie league clash with Kilkenny at UPMC Nowlan Park.

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

Cork made two changes from the team named which saw Niamh O'Callaghan and Clare Mullins come in for Hayley Ryan and Amy O'Connor respectively.

Once the sliothar was thrown in, the changes saw Ashling Thompson go to midfield, Aoife Healy to centre-back, and O'Callaghan at right-back. Mullins started in the corner as O'Connor would have.

The All-Ireland champions will be delighted with the win, with Katrina Mackey, Meabh Murphy, Aoife Healy, and Laura Hayes the pick of their side

Aoife Doyle opened the scoring for the home side in the second minute with Katrina Mackey getting Cork off the mark a minute later.

Asha McHardy put Kilkenny back in front and a free from Sophie O'Dwyer had them 0-3 to 0-1 up after 10 minutes.

Katie Power stretched their lead as Kilkenny made more of their chances, with Cork guilty of several wides at this stage.

Saoirse McCarthy made it a two-point game before another free from O'Dwyer had Kilkenny 0-5 to 0-2 up with 15 minutes played.

O'Dwyer was on target from another free as they restored their four-point lead.

A good Cork move, involving several players, saw Mackey raise a white flag, but Kilkenny worked the ball straight down the pitch to do the same, making it 0-7 to 0-3.

The first real goal chance came after 23 minutes, but Fiona Keating's effort was well saved by Kilkenny keeper Aoife Norris.

But the referee was playing advantage and Mackey slotted over the free. A minute later, the sides were level when Hannah Looney took on the Cats defence, bursting past several players.

Her cross was picked up by Mullins who gave Norris no chance and made it 1-4 to 0-7.

Power and Mackey exchanged points to see the sides remain level as half-time approached.

Looney put Cork in front for the first time, but a defensive mistake let Doyle in for a goal to put the Cats back in front.

McCarthy got her second before another free from O'Dwyer had Kilkenny two to the good again. With the last shot of the half Keating split the posts to see the home side 1-9 to 1-8 in front at the break.

Keating started the second half as she finished the first, with a post-splitting point to see Cork back on level terms.

A Mackey free put the visitors in front for only the second time as Cork were now playing the better camogie.

Another Mackey point stretched their lead before O'Dwyer had the Cork lead down to one. Mackey made it three in a row for her, with Nolan replying for the Cats and after 40 minutes it was 1-12 to 11 in the Rebels' favour.

Orlaith Mullins, younger sister of Clare, restored Cork's two-point lead before a free from Mackey made it 1-14 to 1-11, with 15 minutes remaining.

O'Dwyer was keeping Kilkenny in the game with her frees and she put two between the sides with another. Sarah Barcoe had the Cork lead down to one before another free from O'Dwyer had the sides level, 1-14 each, with seven minutes remaining.

O'Connor put Cork back in front but another free from O'Dwyer made it 1-15 apiece with four minutes left, but two late points from Emma Murphy saw Cork run out winners.

Scorers for Kilkenny: S O'Dwyer 0-8 f, A Doyle 1-1, K Nolan 0-3, K Power 0-2, A McHardy, S Barcoe 0-1 each.

Cork: K Mackey 0-8 (0-4 f), C Mullins 1-0, E Murphy, F Keating, S McCarthy 0-2 each, H Looney, O Mullins, A O'Connor 0-1 each

KILKENNY: A Norris; M Teehan, K A Doyle, R Phelan; T Fitzgerald, M Bambrick, N Deely; L Murphy, L Norris; S Fitzgerald, K Power, A McHardy; A Doyle, K Nolan, S O'Dwyer.

Subs: K Byrne for R Phelan (ht), J Malone for L Norris (39), S Barcoe for T Fitzgerald (47), C Keher for A McHardy (54),

CORK: A Lee; M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; N O'Callaghan, A Healy, I O'Regan; H Looney, A Thompson; L Hayes, F Keating, S McCarthy; C Mullins, K Mackey, O Cahalane.

Subs: A O'Connor for C Mullins (35), O Mullins for A Thompson (39), H Ryan for H Looney (45), E Murphy for L Hayes (53), S McCartan for O Cahalane (55).

Referee: Gavin Donegan, Dublin.

VERY CAMOGIE LEAGUE DIVISION 1A
Kilkenny 1-16 Cork 1-17
Clare 0-8 Galway 0-17
Tipperary 0-10 Waterford 1-10
FITZGIBBON CUP FINAL

'Any time you get a win in Nowlan Park is always good'

REACTION

Rory Noonan

ANY time you travel back from Kilkenny with a win, it's always a good day.

It was that little bit extra special for new Cork senior manager Ger Manley who watched his side battle to the end to secure a deserved win over the Cats.

Naturally, he was delighted with the win considering it was their first outing in the Very Camogie League, but he was also well aware it was only that — their first game and there is a lot of work to do yet.

"It's great to take the points, any time you come up here and win it's always great," Manley said.

"It was a very tough game and you could see we are only back three or four weeks.

"But give the girls credit, they fought hard which, look, up here you have to and we said that beforehand. We told them you have to match their intensity and I thought we did that.

"We made mistakes and it is only our first competitive game since the All-Ireland final last year you would expect that. But to win up here is never easy and I don't care whether it's by 10 points or one point, a win is a win and we will take that."

It took two late points from Emma Murphy to secure Cork's win as the five subs who came on all played their part in the win. Two others, Amy O'Connor and Orlaith Mullins, also scored late on to ensure Cork came out on top.

"Yes the subs all made a difference and you need them and they play a crucial part in all games now. Emma Murphy has great potential and that's what we want, people who do the business when they come on and make it more competitive for everyone.

"As I said at the start of the season, we're trying to make the panel more competitive so that everybody is pushing for a place. And look, we took off a few today and we brought a few on and I think that's the way you have to play now. That's where the modern game is gone and I'm delighted with them now, to be honest."

Cork had a slow start, but Manley said that it didn't concern him or his fellow selectors at half-time.

"Not really, Liam (Cronin, coach) was talking to them and we just went in and said we had a slow start, but it didn't affect us. We got on top, but then we gave away a soft goal but managed to get back on top again. We probably missed a few chances and our conversion rate was not as high as we would like, it was only fair today.

"Look, as I said we are only back a few weeks and are still rusty, so overall we are delighted to get the win and get the league off to a winning start."

Cork's Aoife Healy is presented with the Player of the Match award by Darren Kelly. Picture: INPHO/Leah Scholes

The Cork team exit the pitch after beating Kilkenny on Saturday. Picture: Inpho/Leah Scholes

Good day for Cork camogie with two wins over the Cats

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

IT was a good day for the Cork senior camogie teams on Saturday when both beat Kilkenny.

The division one side made the trip to UPMC Nowlan Park for their opening Very League tie and came away with a 1-17 to 1-16 win, with Clare Mullins getting the goal and Katrina Mackey hitting eight of their points.

Meanwhile, at Castle Road the division two side were 2-14 to 1-12 winners over the Cats, their goals coming from Lauren Homan and Cliona O'Callaghan.

That win keeps Donie Daly's side on top of the table after winning their opening three games, all tough ties.

The first two were on the road and they travelled home with wins over Tipperary and Galway, before Saturday's home victory.

This team has become a vital part of the Cork set-up over the years as players now recognise that it is a great opportunity to represent your county and potentially win league and championship titles.

It can also be used as a stepping stone to the Division 1 squad as it allows players gain experience at inter-county level.

Daly is a shrewd operator, and even though he only came in after Christmas you can already see his stamp on the team and have no doubt, they will only get better as the season goes on.

Meanwhile in Kilkenny Ger Manley was getting his first taste of action since he taking over as Cork manager this year, having been involved with the squad for several years, and no doubt he was delighted to get off to a winning start.

It was a battle from start to finish and Cork stood up to the challenge and all played their part in the win.

One of them, Saoirse McCarthy, hit two points over the hour and was happy to be heading home with the points in the bag.

"It's good to get off to a winning start, especially up here as you never get it easy against Kilkenny," McCarthy said.

"It's a positive start to the league and we just have to use this game to see where we're at and push on from here.

"The panel are all pushing each other and you saw today how important the subs were when they came on. They made a huge difference and Eamma Murphy got two vital scores at the end.

"I think our bench is growing stronger and stronger year on year. So yeah, it's good to have the subs coming on and making an impact.

"The competition for places is huge and it's good for the starting 15 as well to know that there's someone there to push them on and help us up our standards and we need to do that going forward for the season.

"There is still a lot of work for us to do and we will get back to that in training during the week," concluded Saoirse.

Kilkenny's Katie Power tackles Libby Coppinger of Cork.

Newcomer Niland shines for Galway

Camogie

Daragh Ó Conchúir

Galway manager, Cathal Murray revealed the delicate balancing act faced by teams as they commence the Very Camogie Leagues but admitted to being pleased that many of the boxes had been ticked as his side got the defence of their Division 1A title under way with a 0-17 to 0-8 defeat of Clare in Ennis.

Niamh Niland shone brightly on her first competitive start for the Tribeswomen, shooting four points from play.

"We're happy with the performance," Murray said on Galway Bay FM after the game. "There was some really good play, other things we need to improve on but overall, a really good start. (We're) very happy that four girls made their League debut today and how they went. A lot of players put their hand up and that's what we want out of the League.

"Okay, we want to be competitive and we obviously want to win games but it's really important that we find five or six players for the championship as well."

Niland has been exhibiting her talent with Clarinbridge, Pres Athenry and various Galway representative teams in recent years and indicated she is ready to make the step up with an excellent performance. "It was nice to get the opportunity to start today and all the experienced girls around me helped me along," Niland noted. "When you get your opportunity, you have to try and take it.

"From a young age, I've always wanted to play for my senior team so I was just delighted to get the opportunity."

In the other two games, All-Ireland champions Cork just got the better of old rivals Kilkenny in a thriller at UPMC Nowlan Park by 1-17 to 1-16.

Katrina Mackey top scored for Ger Manley's outfit with eight points, with Sophie O'Dwyer hitting the same tally for Kilkenny.

Claire Mullins goaled for Cork but Aoife Doyle responded for the Cats, who fought all the way to the line. In the end, two points from Emma Murphy enabled the Rebels to squeeze home but new Kilkenny boss Peter Cleere is likely to be very heartened by what he saw, despite the reverse.

Meanwhile, Waterford repeated their All-Ireland semi-final victory over Tipperary at the Sean Treacy's pitch in Kilcommon. An early goal from Beth Carton separated the pair at the end of a tight encounter that finished 1-10 to 0-10.

Jerry Wallace's unit led by 1-5 to 0-6 at the end of the first half and with Carton keeping the scoreboard ticking over, the margin extended to five, which was enough to hold the Premier at bay.

Little detail but end date for integration confirmed

John Fogarty

A day short of detail where the end was announced but not the means.

GAA director general Tom Ryan had warned in his annual report earlier this month that there wouldn't be much detail about the pathway for integration of the GAA, Ladies Gaelic Football, and Camogie Association and so it transpired.

At least we know the name won't be changing: It will be the GAA. And there is a date. Whether achieving amalgamation by 2027 is a pipedream remains to be seen and there is an understanding that it is a most complex process especially for the GAA whose facility occupancy is full as it is. The other Fs, finance and fixtures, glare too.

Nevertheless, if the goodwill expressed by steering committee chairperson Mary McAleese and the three presidents is anything to go by, it might just be possible to make the mandate they have been given a reality.

Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin was absolutely certain there will be one uachtarán covering the three organisations in three years' time — "I wouldn't say 2027 is the target. 2027 is when it's going to happen."

It is envisaged there will be one Congress encompassing the three strands with a convention for each of the sports (football and hurling together), deputy presidents and possibly one director general.

GAA president Larry McCarthy is due to finish his term at Congress in Newry on Saturday while Breslin steps down in April. There will also be a general election in the next 13 months and support for integration from the Government has to keep that in mind.

While acknowledging costs will make integration difficult, the process will take time and there will be "resistance in pockets" to it, McCarthy maintained: "No, it's not built on sand. It's built on the basis that we were asked to do it and we're going to do it.

"Given the commitment of government, albeit that may change in the interim, we'll still have those conversations. The expectation is that they will be there when we need them. This (steering) group is going to continue, it doesn't really matter who the faces are. The offices will still be represented."

McAleese, who intends staying involved, accepted finance is an issue but the idea of uniting the GAA family strengthens the argument for Government funding for capital projects.

"In a sense the question exists whether we have integration or whether we haven't. But integration does give us a very powerful argument because of course Government now wants to encourage gender balance.

"It wants to encourage the inclusion of women in sport. It wants to encourage what has been a phenomena in recent times, the growth of women's sport across many, many codes, not just camogie and Gaelic football, so we want to be part of that.

"When we went to government to talk about the facilities that we would need, one of the things we have in our working group was to look at the facilities we have, a really granular and detailed account of what we have and what we need.

GAA president Larry McCarthy, Camogie Association president Hilda Breslin, steering committee chairperson Mary McAleese, and LGFA president Mícheál Naughton at Croke Park yesterday. Picture: Morgan Treacy/Inpho

"To be able to provide right across all our three codes what, not just the three codes, but the other two that are covered by the GAA, would be needed. It is interesting.

"When we went to talk to government, we said, 'Look, we are not looking for a load of money just for the GAA. We are looking for facilities that can be shared with other sporting organisations, other sporting institutions.'"

One thing that won't be happening is the LGFA and CA combining before full integration. That has been sought by some GAA county chairmen but is not on the agenda and would have seemed sensible in light of their annual fixture clashes.

"The three associations are going to integrate and we are going to do that together as three associations," maintained Breslin.

"I think the beauty of this is that when we are one association, those issues that do come up will be easier to overcome."

LGFA president Micheál Naughton appeared to indicate the ladies football and camogie inter-county seasons may not run concurrently.

"If you look at especially the split season at the moment and there are so many games going on, that will be all up for discussion. Do we look at six months or do we look at the whole thing? Because we are going to have a lot more people looking for the same facilities, a lot more games, so it's all open for discussion."

In his opening remarks, McCarthy spoke of "parity of esteem" being an objective but at inter-county level that too will carry a large price tag, while the appointment of deputy director generals and the combining of the three bodies' departments doesn't sound like it will make savings either.

"All the staff from both those (LGFA and CA) organisations will move over to work within the GAA," said McAleese, who confirmed there would be no job losses.

"That will happen relatively quickly over the coming months, or coming years. We haven't got a fixed date for that but certainly very rapidly we will begin to see that happen."

The Gaelic Players Association (GPA), who represent all senior inter-county male and female players, welcomed the 2027 date.

"There is now a clear deadline in place which allows all relevant stakeholders to focus on achieving one, united association where there is equality of treatment of female and male players and members."

Picture Diary

Blackrock camogie players who received their Intermediate Championship and Intermediate League medals at a celebration function at Páirc Uí Chaoimh in Cork city recently. Picture: George Hatchell

All Ireland Senior A Camogie Final Report

Admin

25-February-24

All Ireland Senior A Camogie Final

Ursuline Thurles 2-06 Loreto Kilkenny 2-14

Win some, lose some, so the saying goes. But no number of clichés can do justice to the achievement of the Ursuline Thurles being the second best senior camogie team in the country. Neither can any amount of plaudits dull the heartache of being the second best senior camogie team in the country. Ursuline Thurles lost to Loreto Kilkenny in Rathdowney on Saturday, 24 February by 0-8 points. The Tipp side were hoping to capture their maiden Senior All Ireland title while the Loreto cats were chasing their ninth. Kate Ferncombe, opened proceedings by sending the first ball of the game flying up the Kilkenny end against a very strong breeze. Quickly Loreto regained possession making the UCT backs work hard to keep danger at bay. A point from play was the first score of the game, coming off the stick of Loreto mid-field, Sarah Kehoe. Team mate Rachel Dowling got the second for Loreto from a free, all within three minutes. With the action now happening down around the Ursuline goalmouth right corner back Rachel Phelan was on the case with two clearances on the trot, aided and abetted by left corner back Caoimhe Fitzgibbon. UCT got on the scoreboard thanks to a lovely Lucy Purcell point from play. A well-deserved outcome, considering her accurately taken line ball, just moments before, had failed to convert due to staunch defending from Loreto goalie Ali Kennedy. The amber and black girls were quick to bounce back and looked like raising the green after slicing through the Ursuline centre but UCT goalie Orla Ryan, supported by her full backs, put it out for a 45. An easy conversion for Rachel Dowling who sent it flying over the bar to edge Loreto two in front, 0-3 to Ursuline's 0-1. Ciara Dunne, scored on the run, adding another to the Loreto tally, followed a few minutes later by yet another Rachel Dowling point, from play this time, her third of the day for her side. Midway into the opening half and Ursuline had only managed a single score while Loreto had settled in comfortably, Rachel Dowling, their top scorer, was making her presence felt with four of their six points. The first Kilkenny goal happened when Orla Ryan braced herself against a cracking shot by Caoimhe Kerr Murtagh, blocking it in spectacular fashion, only for Tara McGrath to get it past on the rebound. Loreto were eight ahead now, 1-08 to Ursuline's 0-1. The Thurles girls were playing well but Kilkenny had overshadowed them on the scoreboard. A foul on Danielle Ryan gave Ursuline's Caoimhe Stakelum a golden opportunity to get her team another point and she duly delivered. Loreto scored again and Ursuline centre-forward, Robbyn Fitzgerald responded with a sweet point from play. In the twentieth minute Caoimhe Stakelum stepped up to the mark with a to go before the half time whistle Ursuline were six points down but were challenging Kilkenny in all positions. Rachel Dowling sent a penalty to the left and wide, which was a gift for Ursuline but Kilkenny managed one final hurrah with a Tara McGrath point to leave it 1-08 Loreto 0-4 Ursuline.

Sport | Music

Issy Carr came on in the second half and immediately made her presence felt in the forwards. There was some switching around in the back line in an effort to contain the threats posed by Caoimhe Kerr Murtagh and Rachel Dowling. Kilkenny were first out of the traps with a Dowling point from play set up by Sarah Kehoe. Sarah Corcoran's free down the left hand side found Ava Bevans who made it all look so easy, bagging her opening score, a point off her left. Ursuline's first goal was soon to follow, a combined effort from a Caoimhe Stakelum catch in the air, which was finished by Ava Bevans with Lucy Purcell, Maria Ralph and Kate Ferncombe supporting up front. A second Loreto goal opportunity was prevented with Ursuline backs piling in to stop this menace in its tracks. UCT succeeded in securing a free out instead of conceding anything and Caoimhe Stakelum found the uprights with a well taken free. Ursuline were creeping up on Loreto with now only four between them 1-10 to Kilkenny, 1-6 to Tipp. The next goal of the game came from Ava Bevans who scorched the sliothar past Ali Kennedy to bring Thurles to within a point of their rivals. Their legendary status as 'come back kids' was seeming to be more and more likely as all the momentum of the game was going their way. But with a Ciara Dunne free Kilkenny began to pull away and that single point difference in the fortieth minute would be as close as UCT would get to their opponents on this big occasion. Orla Ryan had another massive save to keep UCT in contention, proving herself to be one of the heroes of the day. Ursuline did not capitalize enough on their second half boost. The lull in scoring after Bevan's second goal had more to do the with the strength of the Loreto half back line in closing down their efforts than any lack of effort on the part of the girls in blue. Another Loreto chance on goal, this time with Tara McGrath making the break, was staunchly safeguarded by Orla Ryan keeping Ursuline All Ireland dreams alive. Further vital Kilkenny scores, a Rachel Dowling 45, an unstoppable goal by Coaimhe Dunne coming five minutes before the end and one last over the bar again from Dowling, Loreto's top scorer of the day, would see them take home the Corn Sceilge cup. The final score was Ursuline 2-6 Loreto 2-14. Ursuline played so well and huge credit is due to all the squad, especially Orla Ryan who batted down, away and across to make crucial saves at crunch moments in the game and in doing so she kept UCT contesting and not allowing Loreto to have it all their own way. A huge thank you to the Sixth Years on the panel, Rachel Phelan, Caoimhe Fitzgibbon, Paula Quirke, Kate Ferncombe, Sarah Corcoran, Aoife Bourke, Alison Fitzgerald, Robbyn Fitzgerald, Aoife Kavanagh, Tara Gleeson, Andrea Quirke, Anna Wynne, Miah Bourke, Danielle Ryan, Alisha Kearney and Ella Minogue, who have been outstanding and given so much to colleges camogie during their time in the Ursuline.

COACHING HIGHLIGHT: Pa Finn guided Cork to All-Ireland final victory over Tipperary in 2002. Picture: Denis Minihane

Cork look forward to All-Ireland opener at home to Wexford

■ Mary Newman

DATES have been announced for the Glen Dimplex All-Ireland Senior Championships.

The structure of the senior championship will see 12 teams battle it out for the O'Duffy Cup in two groups of six.

The top team in each group goes straight to the semi-finals, with the second and third in each group going straight to the quarter-finals.

Cork are in Group 2 with Galway, Down, Wexford, Clare and Dublin.

Cork get underway on May 25 at home to Wexford. Down will provide the opposition on June 1. On June 8, they travel to take on Clare. Then it's on to June 22 with Cork hosting Dublin.

The final game in the group is sure to the one of the games of the championship as Cork host Galway on June 25.

DEAR FRIENDS

It was a week of sadness off the camogie playing fields with the deaths of two people who gave so much to the game here in Cork.

Pa Finn was renowned as a GAA man, but he was also a hugely successful camogie coach and manager, while Mel Cummins-Clinton was a superb player for her club South Presentation Past Pupils and Cork.

Pa Finn joined the Cork camogie setup as manager of the senior team in 2001.

In 2002 he guided Cork to an All-Ireland final victory over Tipperary and he made no secret of the fact that it was one of the two biggest highlights in his coaching career, the other one was when he coached his beloved Barrs to All-Ireland senior club hurling success in 1977/78.

Pa was simply a joy to work with and at that time I was PRO of the county board and nothing was too much trouble for Pa.

He was always available and ready to do anything he could to help promote the team and camogie, and we had some great days and wonderful times with Pa and his beloved wife Nora. He was a gentleman to his fingertips.

Rest In Peace, dear Pa.

Mel Cummins was the holder of two All-Ireland senior championship medals won in 1970 and 1971. In 1970, as Cork bridged a 29-year gap to lift the O'Duffy Cup amid great scenes of jubilation, Mel was to the fore as Cork made huge strides to first capture the provincial crown with a victory over Tipperary before they went on to defeat Kilkenny to be crowned champions.

The holder of three Cork senior county championship medals with her South Pres Past Pupils team as well as a Munster club championship, Mel was a goalkeeper of superb ability. She was always in the thick of the action and was not shy to leave her goal line under pressure to stop an incoming forward.

Her agility saw her cover and patrol her goal area with huge authority and she commanded her defence well, as she brought off tremendous saves for both club and county in her career.

RIP Mel. Heaven has gained a superb goalkeeper this week.

Nora Newman, Marian McCarthy, Mel Cummins-Clinton and Mary McSweeney. Mel Cummins-Clinton was a goalkeeper of superb ability and brought off great saves for club and county. Picture: Tony O'Connell

Dual players very important to us, says Cork boss Manley

New Rebels camogie manager hails the importance of county's dual stars

CORK	1-17
KILKENNY	1-16

BY DARAGH Ó CONCHÚIR

NEW Cork camogie boss Ger Manley has outlined his position on the county's dual players: he's happy to work with the Cork football management team to find the ideal middle ground for the Rebel stars.

St Colum's Libby Coppinger, as well as Hannah Looney and Aoife Healy will juggle both codes again this season, and all three started in Cork's Division 1A Very Camogie League opener away to Kilkenny on Saturday. The trio also started the Cork footballers' league loss to Waterford the following day.

'Libby, Hannah and Aoife are three very important players for us. They are as good as camogie players as you will find anywhere,' Manley said.

'I have no issue with dual players and it's about managing them. For us, we need them. (Cork football manager) Shane (Ronayne) needs them, and we have a good agreement. As you saw today, they have the hurling and they want to play, which is a big thing for us.'

The Rebels enjoyed the ideal start last weekend, winning away in Kilkenny to get their league campaign up and running.

'We want to get to the end stages because those games make a big difference, to give players competitive games. We all want to play in Croke Park and that's our aim, to get to the league final,' Manley said after watching his team win away at Nowlan Park.

Eight points from Katrina Mackey was one of the features as the All-Ireland champions began 2024 with a hard-earned win over a much-changed Kilkenny unit.

Both sides are under new management since the Rebels overcame the then reigning All-Ireland titleholders in last year's quarter-final, with Manley, who served as coach under Matthew Twomey, stepping into the vacancy left by the Douglas clubman, while Peter Cleere was appointed after Brian Dowling brought his successful term to a conclusion.

Kilkenny's Katie Byrne tackles Cork forward Orlaith Cahalane during their Very Camogie League Division 1 tie at UMPC Nowlan Park. (Photos: Leah Scholes/INPHO

There was a far more familiar look to the Cork team but Kilkenny gave every bit as much as they got and led at the end of the first half by 1-9 to 1-8.

Aoife Doyle opened the scoring for Cleere's crew from the first attack and though Mackey equalised soon after, a fired-up Kilkenny soon established a three-point advantage thanks to scores from Asha McHardy, Sophie O'Dwyer (free) and Katie Power.

The advantage had stretched to four by the end of the first quarter but after Mackey split the posts for the first time, Claire Mullins continued the goal-scoring form with Sarsfields that earned her a call-up at this grade, with a smart finish after a trademark solo run by Hannah Looney and assist by Mackey, exhibiting her customary 360-degree awareness.

That brought the sides level and a Looney point in the 29th minute edged the visitors in front for the first time. The Kilkenny response was excellent however, with Doyle goaling from the restart with a rifled finish from a tight enough angle after Power had pounced on an error by Ashling Thompson, to ensure the Stripeywomen held marginal sway at the break.

Manley's players bounced out with the first three points of the second half including another two from the outstanding Mackey, who was excelling in general play as well as converting placed balls. When the evergreen attacker brought her individual tally to eight points from a free after 46 minutes, Cork had moved three ahead.

Kilkenny's Aoife Doyle tries to block a ball from Cork defender Libby Coppinger.

But you never write off Kilkenny and they hit the next three points themselves, the equaliser coming from an O'Dwyer penalty that rose over the crossbar rather than under.

Cork's All-Ireland-winning captain and three-goal hero in that game Amy O'Connor came on as a sub and worked a pocket of space before snapping her side into the lead. O'Dwyer responded with her eighth point but Emma Murphy drove over an excellent score to restore Cork's advantage.

The Glen Rovers flier followed up with another neat finish, which was vital as the lively Katie Nolan reduced it to the minimum before the final whistle sounded. Next up is an away trip to Waterford this Saturday, a repeat of last year's All-Ireland final that Cork won.

Scorers

Kilkenny: S O'Dwyer 0-8f; A Doyle 1-1; K Nolan 0-3; K Power 0-2; A McHardy, S Barcoe 0-1 each.

Cork: K Mackey 0-8 (4f); C Mullins 1-0; E Murphy, F Keating, S McCarthy 0-2 each; H Looney, O Mullins, A O'Connor 0-1 each.

Kilkenny: A Norris; M Teehan, K A Doyle, R Phelan; T Fitzgerald, M Bambrick, N Deely; L Murphy, L Norris; S Fitzgerald, K Power, A McHardy; A Doyle, K Nolan, S O'Dwyer.

Subs: K Byrne for R Phelan (ht), J Malone for L Norris (39), S Barcoe for T Fitzgerald (47), C Keher for A McHardy (54),

Cork: A Lee; M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; N O'Callaghan, A Healy, I O'Regan; H Looney, A Thompson; L Hayes, F Keating, S McCarthy; C Mullins, K Mackey, O Cahalane.

Subs: A O'Connor for C Mullins (35), O Mullins for A Thompson (39), H Ryan for H Looney (45), E Murphy for L Hayes (ht), S McCarthy for O Cahalane (55).

Referee: G Donegan (Dublin).

GAA, Camogie Association, and LGFA to merge by 2027

GAA

Rory Noonan

THE Camogie Association, the GAA and the LGFA have revealed 2027 as the proposed date for their plans for full integration between the three organisations.

Over the past 18 months the views of members and officials across all three associations have been sought and following detailed discussions in the period since, 2027 has been earmarked as the proposed date for completion of the process.

The Steering Group for Integration, chaired by former President of Ireland Mary McAleese, has been charged with devising proposals which will be put to the membership of the three organisations with a view to full integration.

In the coming weeks the annual congresses of the three bodies will be updated on the work of the last year and a half and plans for the next 36 months. With detailed feedback gained from the extensive listening process which, among other elements, involved 30,000 respondents to Ireland's largest ever survey, cross-organisational working groups, representing both staff and the volunteer base of the organisations, were established in November of 2023.

Tasked with addressing areas highlighted throughout the listening process such as facilities, finance, fixtures, human resources, membership and player welfare, these groups worked through the finer details and considerations of how each of these areas could operate in an integrated organisation. Proposals from these working groups, coupled with feedback from the consultative process with county boards, provincial councils, player representatives, staff, and members provided the basis on which the pathway to Integration has been developed.

Among these proposals there were specific recommendations around alignment of membership, the development of models to facilitate facility management and opportunities to review fixtures throughout 2024.

Mary McAleese said: "The Steering Group on Integration, after 18 months of intense listening and discussion, has now a recommended pathway to what will be the most historic development in Gaelic games and that is one association for all of Gaelic games by 2027. Gaelic games are about to enter a new era. We are at a point where the will of the members of the associations on integration can be delivered if our recommendations are followed and acted upon and made real."

Camogie Association President Hilda Breslin said: "Today marks a significant milestone for the association, signifying a thrilling new chapter in our journey. Today is filled with excitement as we embark on a path of progress, merging to become one club, one county, one province, one congress, one association.

"This momentous step towards unity, equality and inclusivity is a testament to our shared goal of creating an environment that champions excellence and supports the holistic development of our players."

President of the GAA Larry McCarthy said: "One of the biggest ever sports surveys of its kind, with more than 30,000 responses, produced an overwhelming majority in favour of integration. That gave the SGI the mandate to make the dream of One Association a reality. We now have a roadmap to deliver an exciting future for all three Associations that will benefit all of our players, our clubs and the communities they represent."

Mícheál Naughton, LGFA president said: "We have come a long way since the formation of the LGFA in 1974 and as we prepare to celebrate our 50th anniversary in July, it's time now to embrace the next chapter in the development of our game. "We are rightly proud of our progress and, as a strong and vibrant sport, ladies football will only be strengthened and enhanced through integration. I have been proud to work on the steering group and our work will continue as we move forward with renewed purpose and focus."

Members of the three organisations can expect to see progress across the following areas in the three-year window ahead: Joint fixtures review workgroup; a detailed audit of existing facilities; facilities equal access policy implementation; national childrens office; updated one club guidance and support and significant adoption of this model; one membership; one injury benefit fund and one staffing structure.

Monthly award winners Saoirse McCarthy and Clare Mullins at The Echo Women In Sport awards at the Metropole Hotel. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Cork aim for two from two

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

IT'S clubmate against clubmate as Cork are away to Waterford in the Very Division 1 camogie league tomorrow, with a 2pm throw-in at the SETU Arena, Waterford.

Midleton's Ger Manley is now at the helm for Cork, and Jerry Wallace, also Midleton, has taken over the top job in Waterford.

These two have known each other for many years, but all club loyalty or friendship will be put aside for the 60 minutes plus as both teams aim to make it two out of two in the league.

Cork got off to a great start with a tough away win over Kilkenny and will need to show the same resilience if they are to get the better of Waterford.

The clash with the Cats at UPMC Nowlan Park was in the balance right to the end and it took two late points from Emma Murphy to secure their 1-17 to 1-16 win.

It was a win they deserved overall and one that will have them in confident form ahead of tomorrow's game. Cork haven't been back training long and are probably a few weeks behind some of the other sides but the confidence they have gained from winning the All-Ireland title could be seen last weekend.

They never panicked when they went behind and stuck to the game plan, but will also be well aware they have plenty of work to do in the weeks ahead.

Manley was also able to get game time into players like Clare Mullins and Niamh O'Callaghan, who both impressed. He also had the luxury of being able to bring the likes of Amy O'Connor and Sorcha McCartan off the bench, along with Orlaith Mullins and Murphy, all playing their part.

Hayley Ryan was also introduced and put in another good shift in the middle of the pitch. Aoife Healy and Meabh Murphy were rock solid in defence as was the ever-dependable Libby Coppinger.

Cork's Amy O'Connor tackles Niamh Deely of Kilkenny. Picture: INPHO/Leah Scholes

With others like Laura Tracey on the way back from injury Manley will have the type of selection headaches any manager wants going forward.

But for now, he will only be thinking about the Waterford game and the points on offer.

Last season Cork and Waterford clashed in two big games, with the Rebels too strong for the Deise in the All-Ireland final. But they will also be well aware of their loss to Waterford in the Munster championship.

Have no doubt the Deise will be aiming to repeat that Munster win and Wallace would only love to get one over on Cork.

They started with a good win over Tipperary last weekend and with home advantage will fancy their chances of maintaining their 100% record.

Speaking ahead of the game Manley said: "It's another tough away game, but I suppose it builds up bit of bonding that we need for these tough matches.

"Like the Kilkenny game, a tough game like this is worth two or three training sessions and this one is going to be even harder again after their win over Tipperary.

"I don't know how we are getting all these tough away games and we would do with a home one. They beat us in the Munster championship last year and then we beat them in the All-Ireland final and they will be looking to change that.

"We're looking to keep building but and it will be another tough game for us, but that's what you want," concluded Ger.

One of the players who would know the Waterford manager well is Saoirse McCarthy.

The Cork star would have been coached at minor level by Jerry and she is well aware of how good he is and how he will have his side primed to beat the Rebels.

"It'll be interesting as a lot of us have had Jerry as minor manager, but there will be no love lost on the day," said Saoirse.

"They got to the All-Ireland final last year so they will make it difficult for us, especially up there. Two tough games to start the league and hopefully we can build on the Kilkenny result tomorrow," concluded Saoirse.

Taking on old Cork friends is all white with Wallace

Eoghan Cormican

'I will be emotional. The girls on the Cork side, I have huge respect for each and every one of them. But on Saturday I will be 100% behind Waterford,' says Jerry Holland. Picture: Evan Treacy/Inpho

JERRY WALLACE went into the off-season hoping to become the next Cork senior camogie manager. He came out the far side of it as the new manager of the county that Cork comprehensively clipped in last year's All-Ireland final.

Waterford welcome Cork to Carriganore this Saturday in Round 2 of the camogie league's top flight. It should be a rematch of last August's desperately one-sided All-Ireland decider. Off-season events mean it is that and so much more.

Matthew Twomey and Seán Power were the respective managers patrolling the Hogan Stand sideline when the latter's charges were flaked by the former's on a 5-13 to 0-9 scoreline.

Twomey was the first of the two men to depart, the All-Ireland-winning Cork boss stepping down four weeks after overseeing the end of the county's five-year wait for an O'Duffy Cup reunion.

Two months further on, Power pulled the plug on his short time with Waterford.

This Saturday in Carriganore, Jerry Wallace and Ger Manley will patrol the sideline. One is a four-time All-Ireland minor-winning manager with Cork, the other is the county's new senior boss.

When Twomey stepped away last September, Jerry Wallace sought to step up. He had been Cork minor manager since 2018. Excluding 2020 when no minor championship was played because of covid, he delivered four All-Ireland titles in five years.

Of the 20 Cork players to see game-time at Croke Park last August, seven — Laura Hayes, Saoirse McCarthy, Fiona Keating, Cliona Healy, Aoife Healy, Meabh Murphy, and Orlaith Cahalane — had been managed by Wallace at minor level. It was a natural progression that he would throw his hat into the ring when the senior post became vacant.

"I went and interviewed with Cork. I had thought about (the Cork senior job) when Matthew got appointed first in 2021, but I said I would stay with the minors for a couple more years and then the door might open.

"Look, the selection committee went with people from within the outgoing management. That is a decision we all respect and we get on with life. But I certainly would love sometime to come back again maybe and manage Cork, if the opportunity did present itself."

A different opportunity presented itself little over a month after Ger Manley — an integral member of Twomey's backroom team — got the nod in the Cork race.

Waterford knocked on Wallace's door with an offer to manage their senior camogie women.

He didn't need to be asked twice.

But were there reservations knowing he would be coming up against not only his native county, but the aforementioned players who he had helped to nurture on their path to senior?

"No," comes the reply, followed by the explainer. "If you go back through the recent history of the relationship between Cork and Waterford in the men's and now in the ladies game, Cork have always been very generous towards Waterford in the sense that you had the two McCarthys, Justin and Gerald, going over there for years. There has always been a great sporting relationship between both counties.

"I think it was a natural progression for me to learn about the senior game with a county that is aspiring to try and maintain themselves at the top table.

"And having been involved with the development of Cork camogie players for six years and before that I had worked in the Limerick hurling academy, I would have a good understanding of transitioning players that are already in the process and then the next generation of players that are trying to breakthrough."

WALLACE'S Waterford appointment was announced on December 14.

The Midleton clubman met the Déise panel for the first time the week before Christmas. A year filled with progress for the county was wrapping up.

Promotion to the league's top tier. A Munster quarter-final victory over Cork. A first-ever All-Ireland minor final appearance, against Wallace's Cork. And a first All-Ireland senior final appearance in 78 years.

The latter, of course, could have gone better. Way better. Their new manager says they have not discussed the difficult events of August 6. Those events will come bubbling back to the surface when Waterford are confronted with their final tormentors at Carriganore this Saturday.

"I suppose if we come within five or six points of them, or if we can make the game competitive for as long as we can, that's a positive for us."

For Wallace, Saturday will be strange. He never thought he'd see the day when he'd be in the opposite corner to a Cork camogie team.

"We played a challenge there two weeks ago. I opened the bag of jerseys, looked in, and I had to stop for a moment because I wasn't looking at red anymore, I was looking at white jerseys.

"I will be emotional. The girls on the Cork side, I have huge respect for each and every one of them.

"I have developed great friendships with those players since 2018. But on Saturday, I will be 100 per cent behind Waterford."

Mary McAleese: 'We are going to set a modern new agenda where there is no differentiation across gender.' *Picture by Sam Barnes*

We have much to gain in a brave new world

GAA's financial muscle will ease woes of female codes

Nadine Doherty

When the idea of integrating the GAA, the Camogie Association and the Ladies' Gaelic Football Association started to gather pace two years ago, I felt the latter had the most to lose.

The LGFA had massively grown the sport and built up a strong business model over a short period of time and would perhaps be reluctant to agree to a radical overhaul that would threaten their autonomy.

In February 2022, GPA CEO Tom Parsons said: "The outcome players want to see is a road map that sets out clear actions and timelines." A lot has happened since, and we are now on the verge of having that map in place for a merger by 2027. I no longer feel the LGFA has the most to lose — in fact, they are set to gain a substantial amount.

Yes, the timeline announced last week by Mary McAleese, the chair of the Steering Group for Integration, is extremely ambitious. As yet, we don't have the details of how this will happen, but there is a commitment that members of the three organisations can expect to see progress across many areas. The next phase will be facilitated through a Joint Fixtures Review Workgroup, a detailed audit of existing facilities, the implementation of a Facilities Equal Access Policy, a National Children's Office, an updated One Club Guidance and Support and significant adoption of this model. There will also be work on a single membership model, an injury benefit fund and a restructuring of staffing to combine three workforces.

Over the last week, the focus has been on the perceived difficulties an amalgamation of fixtures, finances and facilities will present. There is no denying aspects of the transition will be difficult. However, we should acknowledge the positive foundations and practices already in place.

The One Club model that successfully operates in most clubs is the template to be replicated at all levels.

There is also a very high calibre of GAA-owned facilities and pitches developed with Government aid and community fundraising that far surpass the quality available to other sports. The growth in membership across all Gaelic games, combined with integration, means more facilities are needed. But we must acknowledge that, even now, matches and training are currently being facilitated in an incredibly organised manner.

There are exceptions, of course, whereby teams, especially women's, find themselves without a pitch or having to pay for the use of GAA facilities. This will be extinct by 2027, meaning the LGFA have a huge amount to gain in that regard. The planned audit of existing facilities and the implementation of an equal access policy will further strengthen the position of the women's teams.

In relation to the scheduling of fixtures, it cannot get much worse than it is at present in terms of some high-profile clashes between LGFA and Camogie Association competitions. The men's games have made dual players all but extinct, but we don't have to go down the same route with women.

"Before you talk about the GAA or anything to do with that Association, our main issue, in my opinion, at the moment is the communication between the LGFA and the Camogie Association," said All-Ireland-winning former Meath captain and club dual player Shauna Ennis. In December, her club Na Fianna were still forced to play their camogie and football All-Ireland semi-finals 23 hours apart with a journey of 300km between the venues.

The two women's codes do not appear to have an appetite to work collaboratively to avoid fixture clashes. Many underage Saturday morning academies in clubs insist that every child plays both codes, but when females reach competitive levels, there is little to no provision by county boards to ensure they are able to continue to play both. There are exceptions in certain counties, whereby football and camogie fixtures committees work together, but unfortunately, they make up the minority. The Joint Fixtures Review Workgroup is an opportunity for the creation of a new template to cater for dual players.

> *It would be no surprise to see Helen O'Rourke as the first president of the integrated GAA.*

Financially, the biggest challenge will be on the GAA, who will inevitably be sharing their average annual revenue of €100m with the LGFA and Camogie Association, who generate approximately €10m between them per year. The LGFA have been very clear on understanding that the same level of funding and support available for their players is not the same as what is available to playing members of the GAA and have identified the financial constraints their county boards are under.

LGFA reserves of €7m for the year ending 2023 should ensure that no county will be unable to compete in LGFA competitions due to financial difficulties between now and 2027. The agreed players' charter will be fulfilled, and when integration does present itself in 2027, the financial woes of the female codes will be eased.

"What we have worked on for the last 18 months is a pathway to bringing those three organisations into one, and when it is one, it will be a formidable one, a formidable voluntary organisation of amateur sports right across the island of Ireland and the world where Gaelic games are played," said McAleese. "We are going to set a modern new agenda where there is no differentiation across gender."

When asked if the female codes will lose their power or independence, she said the opposite would happen. "I believe they have earned the right to an increase in power, a formidable increase in power that will come from working in one association where they will have an enormous profile."

In that interview with RTÉ's Marty Morrissey, it was suggested that there is now a realistic possibility the first president of the 'new' GAA will be a woman. "Why not?" said McAleese. "The chances of this happening are now increased because now we have the two female codes fully integrated into the GAA, they will have huge power and presence and they will have huge impact, not just at their own conventions but at Congress, and they will have the opportunity to put their members forward for election as president of the GAA. Bring it on."

While I have changed my outlook on the majority of possible outcomes that integration may present, I remain firm in my opinion that the LGFA will not be swayed into agreeing to any changes unless the outcome is to the benefit of its members. They will take a firm stance where necessary over the next three years. And it would come as no surprise if Helen O'Rourke were to become the first president of the integrated GAA in 2027.

McGrath's hat-trick fires Tipp past Tribe

DARAGH Ó CONCHÚIR

Galway's bid for a third consecutive Very National League Division 1A camogie title has been dealt a blow after an Eimear McGrath-inspired Tipperary recorded a 3-10 to 1-13 victory over the Tribeswomen in a rip-roaring Round 2 encounter at The Ragg.

McGrath contributed a whopping 3-7 of the winning side's tally and Denis Kelly's charges were worthy victors. Carrie Dolan shot 0-8 for Galway but every time the Maroons looked like getting themselves back into the game, they conceded a goal to leave themselves with a mountain to climb.

Tipp, who lost their opening tie to Waterford last week and are minus the services of multiple All Star Cáit Devane, have given themselves a chance of making the final.

Niamh Niland lofted a monumental equaliser for Galway in the 12th minute after a lively start by both teams, but McGrath had her first goal on the board 27 seconds later. Eimear Heffernan gathered possession from Nicole Walsh's puck-out and offloaded to Tess Ryan, who rampaged through the middle before finding McGrath, whose low shot beat Fiona Ryan.

Dolan kept Galway ticking over as she finished the first half with six points but McGrath raised a second green flag on her way to registering 2-4 in the first half alone, to leave it 2-6 to 0-8 at the break.

McGrath claimed her hat-track in the 42nd minute with a delightful finish after a fantastic move started by Clodagh McIntyre and with eight points between the teams, Galway were up against it.

Cathal Murray's outfit gave it a good go but Siobhán Gardiner's injury-time goal came too late.

The rematch of last August's All-Ireland ended with Cork victorious over Waterford once more and they are now the only team with full points in the division but it was a far more competitive affair this time around at a windy Setu Arena, finishing 1-6 to 0-6.

An Orlaith Cahalane goal pushed the visitors into a five-point lead after ten minutes but three converted frees by Beth Carton brought the Déise, with Rebel native Jerry Wallace in charge, to within that green flag of the Rebels at half-time, trailing by 1-5 to 0-5.

Kilkenny got off the mark and kept their hopes alive as they defeated Clare 1-19 to 0-9 at UPMC Nowlan Park. The Bannerwomen began well and fought valiantly throughout but could not recover the deficit after being rocked back on their heels by an eighth-minute Aoife Doyle goal as Kilkenny led by 1-9 to 0-4 at the interval.

A brace of points from Lorna McNamara gave the visitors an early lead but Doyle's second major in a week signalled a period of complete dominance by Kilkenny.

LEADING THE CHARGE: Tipp's Eimear McGrath takes on Galway

McGrath magic jolts Tribe's bid for a third title

By **Daragh Ó Conchúir**

GALWAY'S bid for a third consecutive Camogie National League Division 1A title has been dealt a blow after an Eimear McGrath-inspired Tipperary recorded a 3-10 to 1-13 victory over the Tribeswomen in an entertaining second round encounter at The Ragg yesterday.

McGrath contributed a whopping 3-7 of the winning side's tally and Denis Kelly's charges were worthy victors.

Carrie Dolan shot eight points for Galway but every time the Maroons looked like getting themselves back into the game, they conceded a goal to leave themselves with a mountain to climb.

Of course Tipp, who lost their opening tie to Waterford last week and are minus the services of multiple All-Star and more-than-a-decade-long leading scorer Cáit Devane, have given themselves a chance of making the final as a result of this huge effort.

Niamh Niland lofted a brilliant equaliser for Galway in the 12th minute after a lively start by both teams, but McGrath had her first goal on the board 27 seconds later.

Eimear Heffernan gathered possession from Nicole Walsh's puck-out and offloaded to Tess Ryan, who raced through the middle before finding McGrath, whose low shot beat Fiona Ryan.

Dolan kept Galway ticking over as she finished the first half with six points but McGrath raised a second green flag on her way to registering 2-4 in the first half alone, benefiting from the massive workrate of her forward colleagues to crash beyond Ryan and make it 2-6 to 0-8 at the change of ends.

McGrath claimed her hat-track in the 42nd minute with a delightful finish after a fantastic move started by Clodagh McIntyre and with eight points between the teams. Galway were already up against it with more than a quarter of the game remaining.

Cathal Murray's outfit gave it a good go but Siobhán Gardiner's injury-time goal came too late.

The rematch of last August's All-Ireland ended with Cork victorious over Waterford once more and now the only team with full points in the division but it was a far more competitive affair this time around at a windy SETU Arena, finishing 1-6 to 0-6.

An Orlaith Cahalane goal pushed the visitors into a five-point lead after ten minutes but three converted frees by Beth Carton brought the Déise, with Rebel native Jerry Wallace in charge, to within that green flag of Corkat half-time, trailing by 1-5 to 0-5.

The Leesiders had the wind in their favour in the second half but in truth, the conditions made it difficult for both sets of forwards, while defences also held sway, with Libby Coppinger excelling for Cork and Clodagh Carroll equally influential at the other end.

Remarkably, that second half only yielded two scores, Laura Hayes splitting the posts at the three-quarter mark, and Sarah Lacey doing the honours for Waterford with time running out.

Kilkenny got off the mark and kept their hopes alive as they defeated Clare 1-19 to 0-9 at UPMC Nowlan Park.

The Bannerwomen began well and fought valiantly throughout but could not recover the deficit after being rocked back on their heels by an eighth minute Aoife Doyle goal.

A brace of points from Lorna McNamara gave the visitors an early lead but when Doyle grabbed her second major in a week, it signalled a period of complete dominance by Kilkenny.

Peter Cleere's crew shot the seven points in a row in ten minutes after Doyle's intervention, Steffi Fitzgerald providing three and Katie Nolan a pair before McNamara stopped the rot.

It was 1-9 to 0-4 at the interval but Clare received a huge boost when McNamara slammed to the net from a penalty four minutes after the restart.

Former All-Ireland winning captain Aoife Prendergast, fresh from propelling Dicksboro to ultimate glory at club level, slotted a couple of points to ensure that the Cats always had enough in hand, however.

CAMOGIE

Division 1A: Waterford 0-6 Cork 1-6, Tipperary 3-10 Galway 1-13, Kilkenny 1-19 Clare 1-9; Division 1B: Down 1-8 Antrim 2-9, Wexford 2-15 Dublin 0-17, Kerry 1-4 Limerick 3-23; Division 2A: Carlow 1-7 Offaly 5-13, Cavan 1-2 Derry 3-20, Meath 0-13 Westmeath 2-7; Division 3A: Armagh 5-15 Roscommon 4-10, Kildare 2-12 Laois 3-14; Division 3B: Dublin 2-28 Antrim 0-1, Limerick 4-20 Down 0-4; Division 4: Wicklow 2-17 Louth 0-2, Tyrone 5-18 Mayo 0-13.

Financial equality will pose most thorny task

County boards will not vote themselves into liquidation

Seán McGoldrick

The planned integration of the GAA, the Camogie Association, and the Ladies' Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) reminds me of the campaign to combat global warming.

Nearly everybody thinks it is a great idea but far fewer are prepared to make the sacrifices to allow it to happen.

The Steering Group for Integration, chaired by the former President of Ireland Mary McAleese, hosted a press conference in Croke Park on Tuesday. I went along in the expectation of being presented with a weighty document detailing how this ambitious project will be achieved.

Instead, the only real news from the four-page press release was the announcement that 2027 had been set as the proposed date for full integration of the three organisations.

It is an ambitious deadline as the detailed work involving cross-organisational working groups representing both staff and volunteers began in November. In fairness, I suppose, unless a target was set the odds are the process would drag on interminably.

How the three Fs — finances, facilities and fixtures — are dealt with will determine whether the three organisations can ever be successfully integrated. It will also require a change of attitude by mid-ranking GAA office holders, most of whom are male.

Much will depend on the priority new GAA president Jarlath Burns gives the project. His in-tray is overflowing already, and many GAA members contend he has a lot more urgent issues to deal with than integration.

On the other hand, McAleese is highly respected as well as being a force of nature. So long as she remains at the helm of the Steering Group it will be very difficult for Burns to let the project slip down his to do list.

The one club model is the blueprint for integration at grassroots level. It has worked well but it gets more complicated at county, provincial and national level.

Those of us who write primarily about Gaelic games are perhaps guilty of not appreciating the fear that the distinct identities of the Camogie Association and the LGFA have that they are in danger of being lost when they merge with Big Brother.

The LGFA, for example, have been far more nimble in terms of rule changes such as the introduction of the time clock than the GAA. Will they be allowed to continue to

Cork manager Ger Manley and Waterford manager Jerry Wallace during the Very National Camogie League game at the SETU Arena.
Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Manley: We got the battle we expected

REACTION

Rory Noonan

PRIOR to of Saturday's clash with Waterford, Cork manager Ger Manley was well aware that this was going to be a battle for his side.

It turned out that it was and they had to fight to the end against a resilient Deise team who showed they were determined to amend the margin of last year's All-Ireland defeat to Cork.

But after a close tie, the Rebels came out on the right side of the result and Manley was happy to take the points and keep their winning start to the league going.

"We were talking about it during the week and we knew it was going to be a battle and, aside from the All-Ireland final, if you look at games between the two sides they were always close," Manley said.

"We knew it was going to be close today and Waterford always give you a hard game and that's what we got from them.

"I felt we were on top in the first half into the wind, well on top really, and we probably should have had more scores.

"Then, in the second half, we just didn't get going, but saying that they only got a couple of points from play and that was down to a great defensive display by us.

"They all played well, Ashling Thompson, Aoife Healy, all of them and sometimes you have to battle it out and we did that.

"That's what makes the team really, a tough game like that in what will be a tough season so you are always happy to come out on the right side of the result."

Only two games in and Manley is trying to give players games and bring on a few from the bench.

"We gave a few more their chance today, Orlaith Mullins started for the first time, and then you have others like Cliona Healy, Laura Tracey, and Pamela Mackey all to return yet.

"So we're trying to get the balance right, in giving players a chance, you know Chloe Mullins got a goal against Kilkenny and didn't get a game.

"So it's trying to get that balance right between experienced players and giving others a chance. That was going to be tough against Waterford."

Especially with their new boss in place, Jerry Wallace, the former Cork minor manager.

"The big crowd here supporting them and I suppose the Jerry factor, made a difference, but look I thought we were the better team.

"You could see we're not back long and I suppose the fitness wasn't there maybe at the end. But the senior players stood up when we needed leaders to keep us on top.

"Up front, we're probably a bit disappointed the ball didn't stick as well as we would have liked, but look the pitch was very bad and didn't help us.

"It's two good wins on the road and we have two weeks now to work on a few things before we play at home.

"Hopefully, the supporters will come out and get behind the team."

Cork's Orlaith Cahalane breaking through the Waterford defence.
Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Cork's Katrina Mackey gathers the sliotar from Waterford's Clodagh Carroll and Beth Carton during the Very National Camogie League tie at the SETU Arena.
Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Cork grind out a league win in tight All-Ireland repeat

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

Waterford	0-6
Cork	1-6

CORK made it two from two in Division 1 of the Very Camogie League after their win over Waterford at the SETU Arena.

This was always going to be a tough challenge for the Rebels as any side trained by Jerry Wallace is never easy to beat. He would be well known by the Cork players, having coached some of them at minor level and is also a fellow Midleton clubmate of Cork manager Ger Manley.

Cork certainly got the test they expected as Waterford battled to the end and made it difficult all through.

But the experience that Cork have in the side made a difference as they kept their heads and defended superbly late on when Waterford tried to play the ball long in search of a goal.

There were many quality performances for Cork, with Amy Lee making several good saves, while Meabh Murphy was in top form at corner-back.

Hannah Looney and Laura Hayes put in a big shift at midfield with the likes of Fiona Keating and Saoirse McCarthy leading by example in attack, and Orlaith Mullins made her first senior start and did enough to ensure that she will play her part in the coming months.

Above all on the day was Ashling Thompson who would have won the Player of the Game award had there been one.

She was everywhere and was instrumental in ensuring Cork made it two from two in the league. It was the type of display you expect from Thompson and she will only get better as the season goes on as her cruciate injury is well behind her at this stage.

Cork's Meabh Cahalane clears from Waterford's Niamh Rockett. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Saoirse McCarthy shoots from Waterford's Orla Hickey. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Lorraine Bray scored for Waterford in the first minute after they won possession from the throw-in, but it didn't take Cork long to get back on level terms when Katrina Mackey got her first of the half.

McCarthy added a second from a free and Thompson made it 0-3 to 0-1 after some good work by Mullins. Cork raised the only green flag of the tie when Orlaith Cahalane found the net after 10 minutes.

Waterford keeper, Brianna O'Regan, saved Sorcha McCartan's initial effort, but Cahalane was quickest to the breaking ball to make it 1-3 to 0-1. Beth Carton pulled a point back for Waterford from a free, with Aoife Healy replying at the other end.

Laoise Forrest got on the score sheet for the hosts and another Carton free made it 1-4 to 0-5 after 30 minutes, but in injury-time Mackey got her second, this time from a free, to see Cork in front by 1-5 to 0-5, and in a strong position as they turned to play with the wind in the second half.

However, credit to Waterford they didn't make it easy for Cork as both sides only scored once over the 30 minutes. It took until the 42nd minute for the first score to arrive when Laura Hayes pointed for Cork. The next score came with five minutes to go when Sarah Lacey scored for Waterford.

In between, Lee made two great saves, from Orla Hickey and Mairead O'Brien to deny Waterford a goal to ensure Cork travelled home with the points secured.

Scorers for Waterford: B Carton 0-3 f, L Bray, L Forrest, S Lacey 0-1 each.

Cork: O Cahalane 1-0, K Mackey 0-2 (0-1 f), S McCarthy, A Thompson, A Healy, L Hayes 0-1 each.

WATERFORD: B O'Regan; I Heffernan, A Power, K Corbett Barry; C Carroll, O Hickey M O'Brien; B Carton, L Bray; N Rockett, R Walsh, L Forrest; B Bowdren, A McNulty, T Power.

Subs: R Kirwan for L Forrest (41), K Lynch for I Heffernen (42), A Flynn for A Power (45), S Lacey for M O'Brien (55), C O'Sullivan for R Walsh (57).

CORK: A Lee; M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; A Healy, A Thompson, I O'Regan; H Looney, L Hayes; S McCartan, F Keating, S McCarthy; O Mullins, K Mackey, O Cahalane.

Subs: A O'Connor for S McCartan (36), A Smith for O Cahalane, E Murphy for O Mullins (both 41), C Finn for K Mackey (45).

Referee: Ray Kelly (Kildare).

Cork senior camogie manager Ger Manley.
(Photo: Leah Scholes/INPHO)

Cahalane goal is crucial as Rebels lead Division 1

BY DARAGH Ó CONCHÚIR

CORK are the only Division 1A team with a 100 percent record after two rounds of the Very National League.

After defeating Kilkenny in their league opener Ger Manley's team got the better of Waterford last weekend in a rematch of last August's All-Ireland final, but this time only three points separated the teams, 1-6 to 0-6.

It was a far more competitive affair this time around at a windy SETU Arena, compared to the All-Ireland final mismatch last year. An Orlaith Cahalane goal pushed the visitors into a five-point lead after ten minutes. 1-3 to 0-1, with Katrina Mackey, Saoirse McCarthy and the influential Ashling Thompson all on target.

Three converted frees by Beth Carton brought the Déise, with Rebel native Jerry Wallace in charge, to within that green flag of the Rebels at half-time, trailing by 1-5 to 0-5. Aoife Healy and Katrina Mackey, again, added the further points for the Rebels in that opening half.

Cork had the elements in their favour in the second half but in truth, the wind made it very difficult for both sets of forwards, while defences also held sway, with St Colum's Libby Coppinger excelling for Cork and Clodagh Carroll equally influential at the other end. Remarkably, that second half only yielded two scores, Laura Hayes splitting the posts at the three-quarter mark, and Sarah Lacey doing the honours for Waterford with time running out.

Next up for Cork is a home tie against Tipperary on Saturday, March 9th, with the Premier County coming off a 3-10 to 1-13 victory over league champions Galway; Eimear McGrath contributed a whopping 3-7 of the winning side's tally.

Scorers

Waterford: B Carton 0-3f; L Bray, L Forrest, S Lacey 0-1 each.
Cork: O Cahalane 1-0; K Mackey 0-2 (1f); S McCarthy, A Thompson, A Healy, L Hayes 0-1 each.
Waterford: B O'Regan; I Heffernan, A Power, K Corbett Barry; C Carroll, O Hickey M O'Brien; B Carton, L Bray; N Rockett, R Walsh, L Forrest; B Bowdren, A McNulty, T Power.
Subs: R Kirwan for L Forrest (40), K Lynch for I Heffernen (41), A Flynn for A Power (46), S Lacey for M O'Brien (54), C O'Sullivan for R Walsh (57).
Cork: A Lee; M Murphy, L Coppinger, M Cahalane; A Healy, A Thompson, I O'Regan; H Looney, L Hayes; S McCartan, F Keating, S McCarthy; O Mullins, K Mackey, O Cahalane.
Subs: A O'Connor for S McCartan (36), A Smith for O Cahalane (40), E Murphy for O Mullins (40), C Finn for K Mackey (46).
Referee: R Kelly (Kildare).

CAMOGIE DIVISION 1A

	P	W	D	L	DIFF	PTS
Cork	***2***	***2***	***0***	***0***	***4***	***4***
Kilkenny	2	1	0	1	9	2
Galway	2	1	0	1	9	2
Tipperary	2	1	0	1	0	2
Waterford	2	1	0	1	0	2
Clare	2	0	0	2	-22	0

Cork's Orlaith Mullins shoots from Waterford's Mairead O'Brien in Saturday's league win. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Manley pays tribute to the late Pa Finn for his contribution to camogie

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

CORK made it two from two in the Very Camogie Division 1 League on Saturday after a hard-fought win over Waterford.

In a battle, from start to finish, at the SETU Arena in Waterford the Rebels came out on top, 1-6 to 0-6.

The all-important goal came after 10 minutes when Orlaith Cahalane netted and Cork now have two home games after two tough away ties.

As well as praising his players afterwards Cork manager Ger Manley had a special mention for St Finbarr's Pa Finn.

Pa was involved in Gaelic games all his life and Manley paid tribute to him for the work he did for camogie over the years.

"We lost a good man in Pa Finn last week, a good camogie man," Manley said.

"I knew him for a long time and we were just talking about him coming down on the bus and the changes he made when he got involved in camogie.

"I think it's people like him who helped make camogie what it is now. We have others involved as well like Marian McCarthy, but I would like to pay tribute to Pa for all his work.

One of the players who knew all about the battle that Cork were in was defender Meabh Cahalane.

It was a game dominated by defences and it showed in the second half in particular when both sides only scored a point.

"We knew that we were going to come down to Waterford here for a tough battle and you know, they challenged us," Cahalane said.

"There were times, especially when putting us under pressure for scores, when it was a great battle until the end. I'm sure we'll be meeting them again and it'll be another battle.

"Games like this bring you on and even from last week, you know, every single day we go out it is a physical battle.

"Waterford made us work hard there from the start and it's good to be getting those games at this time of year. It'll really benefit us as the year goes on.

"Amy (Lee) made a few great saves there at the end. She read them well, but I felt we were composed in the last five minutes.

"They probably could have had a few chances to get points, but we held our composure.

"Also, we probably just didn't get shots off ourselves and hopefully that's something we'll learn from before our next game in two weeks.

"We'll go back to the drawing board in training on Wednesday and learn from what we missed and didn't do well today and hopefully put right against Tipperary."

Cork manager Ger Manley was full of praise for the work that the late Pa Finn did for camogie. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

McGrath delivers tour de force

Camogie

Daragh Ó Conchúir

The day did not begin well for Eimear McGrath but it got a whole lot better, after she ran riot at The Ragg to provide all bar three points of Tipperary's tally, as Denis Kelly's side defeated champions Galway for the second season in a row in Division 1A's Very National Camogie League, by 3-10 to 1-13.

The home team played most of the second half with 14 players after Róisín Howard was sent off for a second yellow card offence but having plundered 2-4 in the first half, McGrath's third goal was crucial and Siobhán Gardiner's injury time major came too late for Galway.

McGrath arrived at The Ragg directly from the All-Ireland senior A Corn na Sceilge post-primary schools' final, having watched the Ursuline Thurles squad she is a selector and coach of, lose to Loreto Kilkenny.

Entrusted with the responsibility of leading the attack in the absence of the totemic Cáit Devane, who is getting married next month, the Drom-Inch star was on fire.

"In fairness, a lot of the hard work is done out the field," said the Very player of the match. "I was on the end of them to finish them. They're going in today but hopefully it stays going. Hopefully they don't dry up!

"We were very disappointed with our performance last week (in the loss to Waterford).

"We didn't perform at all and we just wanted to come out today and rectify some of them wrongs from last week."

Kelly was very pleased with the manner in which his players responded to last week's loss to Waterford and then to Howard's dismissal. And with Cork the only team with full points, it is all to play for when the action resumes the weekend after next.

"We felt that bit of a buzz during the week in training," said Kelly. "We gave them a fair bit of stick after last weekend but we got a great response and we had a few extra bodies on the field that helped us as well."

Cork are on top of the table as they repeated their All-Ireland final triumph over Waterford but new Déise manager Jerry Wallace, who was plotting against his native county and many of the players he stewarded to four All-Ireland minor titles, will have been pleased with the competitiveness of his charges in a 1-6 to 0-6 loss at SETU Arena.

A first-half Orlaith Cahalane goal was the key score in a game made extremely difficult by the wind, and during which defences held the upper hand.

Kilkenny registered their first victory to keep their League hopes alive as they defeated Clare by 1-19 to 1-9 at UPMC Nowlan Park.

A goal from Aoife Doyle set them on their way.

Cliona O'Callaghan, Cork getting her shot away watched by Hannah Scott, Kilkenny during their intermediate Very 2B league match at Castle Road. Picture Dan Linehan

Another win should see Cork reach 2B final

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

Very Division 2B National League: Cork Wexford: Castle Road, Saturday, 2pm

ROUND four of the Very Division 2B League has Cork taking on Wexford in Castle Road tomorrow.

It's a second home game for Donie Daly's side, one where a win will almost certainly ensure Cork's place in the final scheduled for March 23.

Cork the group with three wins from three, while Galway, Tipperary, and Clare are hot on their heels with two wins from three, Wexford have one win with Kilkenny struggling, having lost all three games.

As has been the case in the last three games, Cork will rotate players as they continue to give everyone an opportunity to make the championship panel of 30.

The management have been bringing different players to every league game and before they announce their championship panel, Daly explained he will also have a few players who have been involved with the seniors to come coming on to his intermediate championship panel.

In their three games to date, Cork have had three goalkeepers and have given them all an opportunity to stake a claim to a place on the championship panel.

Molly Lynch lined out against Tipperary, with Caoimhe Buckley taking the number one jersey against Galway, while Ciara Hurley was between the posts for the Kilkenny game.

A lot of players have featured in the games to date and for this week's clash there are 11 changes to the side that lined out against Kilkenny with Caoimhe Buckley, Ciara Morrison, Edel Sheehan, Tara McCarthy, Amy O'Sullivan, Hannah O'Leary, Katie Walsh, and Niamh O'Regan among Daly's starting 15 this time out.

For Wexford, manager Alan Brennan this is a must win game if his side are to have any hope of making it to the final.

Having lost to Clare in round one and securing a comprehensive win in round two against Kilkenny they lost out to Tipperary in a round three clash where four points separated the sides at the full time whistle.

Galway will provide their opposition in their last game and they also need to win this to have any hope of making it through.

They trailed Tipperary by three points at the interval in their last game having conceded two first-half goals and it was nip and tuck to the full time whistle.

They will look to Sal Doyle, Emma Dempsey, Caoimhe Byrne, and Clodagh Fitzhenry to get the result that will keep their hope alive.

Clare host Kilkenny and a win would see the home side nicely placed heading their last game next weekend against Cork.

Galway travel to meet a steadily improving Tipperary side where a victory for both is crucial.

CORK MINORS GET THEIR SHOW ON THE ROAD

Cork will get the defence of the All-Ireland minor camogie underway on Sunday when Cork travel to Abbotstown to face Antrim (2pm) in the opening game of the round robin series.

Having surprisingly lost to Tipperary in the Munster semi-final new minor manager Mossie O'Sullivan will be determined to get their three-in-a-row bid off to a good start.

Antrim return to the minor A grade following their successful campaign last season when they won the minor A shield defeating Limerick.

A lot of excellent work is going on in Antrim with clubs such as Loughgiel producing excellent players and they will relish a meeting with the reigning champions.

With games to follow against Waterford, Galway, Tipperary, and Kilkenny Cork will be determined to get off to the best possible start.

Katie Walsh, Cork under pressure from Carlise Comerford, Kilkenny during their intermediate league match at Castle Road. Picture Dan Linehan

Camogie star Ciara O'Sullivan is keen to kick on this year after making her comeback from an ACL injury

BY KIERAN McCARTHY

'I FELT fairly broken the next morning,' Ciara O'Sullivan admits, but it was a small price to pay after playing her first camogie game in over 12 months.

She played 42 minutes for the Cork intermediate team in their 2-14 to 1-12 Division 2B National League win against Kilkenny on February 17th last – it was her first game in 371 days, since rupturing her ACL in action for UCC in an Ashbourne Cup semi-final on February 11th, 2023.

The Newcestown woman knew instantly it was a bad injury – and her hunch was spot on. She damaged her ACL, MCL and meniscus in her right knee.

'I felt the bone shifting in my knee – that's how I describe the feeling,' she says.

'I had the ball, but I wasn't turning or twisting, I was just running forward. I wasn't doing any dramatic sidestep!

'I knew straightaway it wasn't good, and I had a fair idea it was my cruciate – I couldn't move my leg that evening.

'Orla Coughlan, my physio, was at the game and she did a test afterwards to see if my ACL was intact, and she could tell it wasn't.'

A subsequent scan confirmed the bad news: O'Sullivan's 2023 season was over before it had really started. Having started Cork's All-Ireland senior camogie finals in 2021 and '22 she was positioning herself as an important player for the Rebels; the two-time All-Ireland minor winner (2018 and '19) has been involved in the senior set-up since 2020.

'I had started the last two All-Ireland finals and I had felt like all my hard work was paying off, that I was really breaking onto the team, so to have to do it all over again will be difficult. That's the challenge,' the 22-year-old says, but in those weeks after suffering the season-ending injury those thoughts weren't on her mind.

'I couldn't look that far ahead, or worry about losing my place and worry about trying to win it back; it was just too far away. My priority was to make sure I did everything right, do my rehab and make sure I would return.'

Important note: O'Sullivan is infectiously positive. Instead of feeling sorry for herself she found positives and opportunities.

'What helped put my mind at ease was it was going to be this one season out; I got injured in February and I knew all going well I'd be back for the next season. It wasn't like I'd be missing half of one season and half of the next. I felt I was still young, it was only one season and it might open the door for other opportunities,' she says.

And that's when O'Sullivan planned a summer adventure that would not have been possible if she was lining out with Cork last season.

'A lot of my friends were going to America for the summer so I decided to join them for a few weeks. I booked that trip not long after the injury, so I knew then I had three weeks in the States to look forward to – we went travelling around California for three weeks, to San Francisco, Lake Tahoe, San Diego, LA and a few more places,' she says.

'That holiday was a huge help. Even though it was com-

Ciara O'Sullivan in action in her comeback game for Cork against Kilkenny in the Division 2B national league earlier this month. (Photo: David Ribeiro)

Niamh O'Sullivan, Conor O'Sullivan, Hollie Herlihy, Aaron Myers and Maeve McCarthy at the Sarsfields hurling and camogie victory dinner at the Vienna Woods Hotel. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

'I felt the bone shifting in my knee'

pletely unrelated to my rehab I set it as a goal to work towards; it was nice to have that opportunity that I would never have taken if I was still playing camogie.'

When her friends came calling earlier this month to ask about her plans for the summer ahead, O'Sullivan's reply was instant: I'll be playing camogie with Cork. That was always the end goal: get back on the pitch. She had to wait until the start of December to get the all-clear to return to non-contact training, and had to come through a few stickier times, too.

'There were two moments during the rehab that I felt were very tough,' she admits.

'One was when I came home from America, I hit a wall mentally as I was still going to the gym whereas my team was preparing for the All-Ireland senior final. There was such a good buzz in the camp, I was so grateful to be part of the set-up, but then I had to leave the girls after their session and go and do my own thing; that part was hard.

'Not long after that I got a small setback in my own recovery, I got tendinopathy in the front of my knee. All of a sudden I was doing half the amount of training, lifting half the weights, and I felt I was going backwards instead of forwards.'

O'Sullivan stuck to the plan, and her reward was her comeback game for the Cork intermediate team against Kilkenny.

'Game time is key now, to get minutes under my belt. Hopefully with the Cork intermediates I will get game time and will prove myself there; whatever happens after that will happen. Getting back playing is the most important thing, and hopefully the year will progress from here,' she says, and the eventual goal is to earn her place back in the All-Ireland winning Cork senior squad.

'Game time is key now, to get minutes under my belt'

'That would be a goal. I had a chat with (manager) Ger Manley, it was about going down to the intermediates, getting the confidence up and getting minutes under my belt, so I am delighted to be part of that set-up. If things go well and I play well, my goal would be to break back onto the senior team.'

O'Sullivan is also halfway through her final year as a finance student at UCC so there's college work and exams to factor in as well, but she's taking it all in her stride. She is focussed on and off the pitch – and eagle-eyed photographer David Ribeiro spotted O'Sullivan had the word 'win' written on her left hand during her comeback game. The background?

'In the middle of a game and in the height of emotions and competitiveness, it's just to ground myself, to think about what's the most important thing that is happening here now and what's happening next – the most important thing on match-day is to win the match,' the Cork star says.

'Sometimes you can get caught up with "Jesus, I missed the ball" or "Jesus, I gave a bad pass", but the most important thing is to try and win the next ball, and try and win the next battle, and overall win the match.'

The league victory over Kilkenny was a win-win for O'Sullivan – Cork triumphed and she was back in action, and is ready to kick on again and show why she started the biggest camogie game of the calendar for two years in a row.

Cork camogie star Ciara O'Sullivan with the O'Duffy Cup the Rebels won last season.

Kinsale Community School bidding for All-Ireland camogie glory

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

KINSALE Community School's camogie team are hoping to be crowned All-Ireland junior schools champions when they take on St Mary's from Magherafelt, Derry, in the final at Edenderry, Offaly (2pm).

The school's seniors tasted All-Ireland glory in 2012 and there is a link between the two teams.

One of the coaches, now a teacher at the school, Amy Harrington played in that final.

These young players have been impressive throughout their campaign and are hoping to end their season on a high.

They know it won't be easy, but it's a challenge that Harrington and fellow coach Catherine Helbrow have said the girls are up for and one they are looking forward to.

En route to the final they won the Munster Championship, starting with a high-scoring clash with Mount Mercy at Riverstick where they won 10-11 to 9-6 after a tremendous tussle.

The Kinsale Community College camogie team who are playing St. Mary's Grammar School in the All-Ireland junior camogie final this weekend in Co Offaly. Picture: Dan Linehan

In the quarter-final they faced St Camin's Community School from Clare. Again the Cork girls showed their class as the Banner side had no answer in a superb 8-10 to 3-2 winning display.

The semi-final saw them make their way to Charleville to face St Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla.

Kinsale were never in any danger and won 6-12 to 0-3.

If they were starting to get carried away, they were brought down to earth by St Flannan's College, Clare in the Munster final at Mallow, but the confidence gained from their earlier games saw Kinsale win the Munster title by the tightest of margins, 2-8 to 2-7.

Celebrating their Munster success they also knew they had an All-Ireland title to chase and a tough semi-final to come against Holy Rosary College from Mountbellew in Galway, and another close tie ensued.

Again the Kinsale players kept their composure to win 2-5 to 2-3 and seal their place in the final.

Reflecting on their campaign, in particular the Munster final and All-Ireland semi-final, Harrington said she hopes that those games will stand to them.

"They had to fight until the very end in those games. There was no time where they could just sit back and relax," she said.

"Their opponents were strong, they were fast and they really put pressure on us for the full 60 minutes in both games. They were nail-biting games at times, but we had faith in them all the way through.

"They never gave up and got over the line, and I think those two games will stand to the girls, moreso than breezing through and beating other teams by so much.

"It's good to have a test for them leading into this weekend."

Helbrow thanked the principal, Fergal McCarthy; , fellow teachers, students, and parents for all their support over the season.

She also thanked past pupil, Cork and Courcey Rovers star Saoirse McCarthy for her help after she took a training session with the squad ahead of the final.

The team comprises players from Kinsale, Courcey Rovers, Tracton, Sliabh Rua, and Ballinhassig, with a several on Cork squads.

Catherine Murphy and Caoimhe O'Donnell are on the Cork camogie and football panels, at minor and U16 respectively. Hannah Deasy, Áine Ní Chearnaigh, and Anna Kelleher are on the Cork football panel.

The school is expecting supporters to travel in numbers, and is organising a bus, while parents and club members are heading to Offaly for what hopefully will be a great day for all.

Kilkenny vs Cork: Cork's Amy O'Connor shakes hands with Michelle Teehan of Kilkenny after the match. Picture: INPHO/Leah Scholes

New system league competition introduces relegation into mix

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

THE draws were made for all adult league competitions recently.

This year it's going to be very much a new system with relegation coming into play for all league competitions.

With three senior clubs having dropped down a grade, there are now only 12 senior teams in the county.

The county board have introduced a Premier Intermediate grade and also have changed the names of the grades down along the list, in effect the Premier Intermediate replaces the Intermediate, and the new Intermediate is effectively the old Junior A and down along the line it continues. With just six teams in the Intermediate grade and six teams in the Premier junior, these are two small groups, it may have been better to put both together in one group and make it more competitive.

Twelve senior team for a county the size of Cork is something that just does not sit right with me.

A county as big as Cork should have more than 12 of its clubs playing at the top level, but that was the decision that was made and effectively three clubs were allowed drop down to the new Premier intermediate grade.

Fr O'Neill's, after just two seasons at senior level, having won the Intermediate championship now taking a step back down.

Enniskeane, having won the Intermediate title in 2020 made the step up to senior in 2021, but are back down after just three years.

Ballygarvan won what was then the second competition, the Senior B championship, and have had senior status ever since and to their credit they have always acquitted themselves well, but they are now stepped down to Premier Intermediate level as well.

Several clubs who were in the second tier last year are now gone down to Intermediate which is now the third grade.

Carrigaline, Charleville, Kilbrittain / Timoleague, Newtownshandrum and Valley Rovers are all going down and they are joined by Sliabh Rua, who were in Junior A last year, which was the third tier.

Two clubs who have also dropped down are Milford, who last year were Intermediate and now will this year be down two grades, and will play at Premier Junior level, whilst St Vincent's will move down from the third graded competition to the fifth grade which is still called Junior A.

The leagues are earmarked to start the first week in April and the draws are as follows:

SENIOR

Twelve teams in two groups of six; Group 1: Eire Og, Sarsfields, Aghabullogue, Blackrock, Inniscarra, St Catherine's.

Group 2: Glen Rovers, Courcey Rovers, Killeagh, St Finbarr's, Cloughduv, Newcestown.

PREMIER INTERMEDIATE

Twelve teams in two groups of six. Group 1: Fr O'Neill's, Ballinhassig, Watergrashill, Enniskeane, Brian Dillon's, Na Piarsaigh.

Group 2: Ballinora, Ballincollig, Ballyhea, Douglas, Clonakilty, Ballygarvan.

INTERMEDIATE

Six teams and they will all participate in one group. Carrigaline, Charleville, Kilbrittain/ Timoleague, Newtownshandrum, Sliabh Rua, Valley Rovers.

PREMIER JUNIOR

Again here there are just six teams and they will all participate in one group; Midleton, Ballinascarthy, Aghada, Castlelyons, Cobh, Tracton.

JUNIOR A

Two groups of six. Group 1: Kildorrey, Erins own, Youghal, Blarney, Bishopstown, St Vincent's.

Group 2: Banteer, Mallow, Buttevant, Barryroe, Rockban, Bride Rovers.

JUNIOR B

One group of seven teams. Grenagh, Kilbree, Millstreet, Kilworth, Kinsale, Castlemartyr, St Fanahan's.

JUNIOR C

One group of six teams. Fermoy, Laochra Og, St Colm's, Nemo Rangers, Carrigtwohill, Dungourney.

JUNIOR B2

This group is only for clubs with second teams and it's one group of seven clubs. Eire Og, Sarsfields, Inniscarra, Blackrock, Cloughduv, Aghabullogue, St Finbarr's.

LILLIE GRANT LEAGUE

For clubs with second adult teams and here we have 14 clubs in two groups of seven. Group 1: Ballygarvan, Brian Dillon's, St Fanahan's, Cobh, Na Piarsaigh, Watergrashill, Kilworth.

Group 2: Bishopstown, Midleton, Valley Rovers, Tracton, Courcey Rovers, Castlelyons, Sliabh Rua.

CAMOGIE

Very Leagues Division 1B: Kerry 0-8 Dublin 2-14, Wexford 4-7 Antrim 2-8, Limerick 3-19 Down 0-6; **Division 2B:** Clare 0-8 Kilkenny 1-8, Tipperary 0-10 Galway 0-6, Cork 2-8 Wexford 4-7; **Division 3A:** Laois 3-12 Armagh 0-12, Roscommon 1-10 Kildare 2-6; **Division 3B:** Down 0-3 Dublin 5-14, Antrim 1-5 Limerick 5-16; **Division 4:** Tyrone 4-11 Wicklow 2-11, Mayo 3-13 Louth 1-1.

Katie Walsh, Cork, tries to gather the sliothar under pressure from Wexford in the Very Camogie Leagues Division 2B clash at Castle Road. Picture: Larry Cummins

Cork miss out on chance to seal league final place after defeat

Cork	**2-8**
Wexford	**4-7**

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

CORK'S unbeaten run in the Very Division 2B League was brought to an end at windswept Castle Road by a determined Wexford side that needed a result to keep their qualification hopes alive.

Cork played with the gale-force wind in the opening half and led at the break 1-7 to 1-1 but they failed to score from play in the second half, only converting a penalty and a free.

Wexford were physically stronger and in the second half, they used the wind to their advantage as they drove long ball into their two-woman forward line and won a lot of possession.

With eight minutes remaining Cork were hanging onto a one-point lead but in a flash, they found themselves in arrears.

Sarah Doyle crashed the ball to the net to put Wexford ahead for the first time in the game before grabbing her second goal eight minutes later.

Cork started well. Lauren Homan with a free and Ciara Morrison a point from play before Ciara O'Sullivan hit a goal. Wexford took 15 to score but it was a goal, after Grace Roche's close-in free hit a Cork defender on the line.

Homan was clinical from frees so Cork turned around six in front.

Doyle hit a free on the restart but Cork stretched their lead when Emma Flanagan was brought down and Homan's penalty finished in the net, even though Wexford keeper Lizzie Dempsey managed to get her hurley to it.

The Wexford response was superb, a Ciara Butler goal from the restart.

Wexford were steadily getting a grip around the middle and two frees cut the gap to three.

Homan pointed a Cork free on 45 minutes but it was to be their last score as Wexford took over. Three points without reply had them within a point of Cork before Doyle struck the killer blows with two goals.

Cork meet Clare next weekend in a game they will be hoping to win to ensure qualification for the final.

Scorers for Cork: L Homan 1-7 (0-6 f), C O'Sullivan 1-0, C Morrison 0-1.

Wexford: S Doyle 2-1 (0-1 f), G Roche 1-1 f, C Butler 1-1, N Doyle 0-3 f, E Dempsey 0-1 f.

CORK: C Buckley (Inniscarra); C O'Donoghue (Bishopstown), C Ring (Inniscarra), A O'Sullivan (Mallow); L Doyle (Charleville), G Hannon (Courcey Rovers), L Buttimer (Cloughduv); E Sheehan (Éire Óg), C Morrison (Castlelyons); C O'Sullivan (Newcestown), T McCarthy (Glen Rovers), C O'Callaghan (Blackrock); K Walsh (Glen Rovers), E Flanagan (Aghabullogue), L Homan (Brian Dillon's).

Subs: C Dooley (Ballinora) for T McCarthy (48), N O'Leary (Brian Dillon's) for E Sheehan (48), A Egan (St Finbarr's) for C Ring (50), A Cashman (Youghal) for L Buttimer (50), O Keating (Ballincollig) for C Morrison (51), M de Burca (Carrigtwohill) for C O'Donoghue (52).

WEXFORD: L Dempsey; M C Morrissey, A Cahill, K Dempsey; L Fortune, M Fitzpatrick, L Nolan; G Roche, C Fitzhenry; E Dempsey, N Higgins, L Furlong; C Butler, S Doyle, O Redmond.

Subs: C Byrne for L Furlong (42), L Firman for E Dempsey (42), C Bridges for G Roche (50), S Butler for C Butler (60), E Hunt for S Doyle (61).

Referee: Joseph Mullins (Clare).

Laura Doyle is pursued by Grace Roche, Wexford. Picture: Larry Cummins

Cork's Lauren Homan in action against Wexford in the Very Camogie Leagues Division 2B clash at Castle Road. Picture: Larry Cummins

It's all to play but Cork's destiny is in their own hands

SATURDAY: Very Division 2B National League: Cork v Clare: Castle Road, 2pm

THE last game in the group stages of the Very Division 2B league campaign and it's all to play for as the battle for the places in the final remains up for grabs.

Cork control their own destiny coming into their meeting with Clare, a side who have one win to their credit and have no chance of making it to the final. A defeat for Cork would leave them vulnerable and dependent on results elsewhere.

Cork and Tipperary are joint top of the group each with three wins to their credit.

Tipperary meet Kilkenny this weekend and, on form should, take the points here.

Kilkenny have just one victory to their credit, over Clare last weekend, and having just lost one game to Cork, Tipperary have made steady improvements with wins over Galway, Wexford, and Clare, so they would be expected to finish strong and secure their place in the final.

As with Cork, however, it's very much in their own hands to get a result and finish strong; otherwise they also will be looking over their shoulder at results in the hope of making it through.

Galway and Wexford will be hoping that Clare can get the better of Cork and open the door for either of them to slip through.

If it ends up that Cork, Tipperary Galway, or Wexford all finish with three wins to their credit, it will go to scoring difference to decide who makes it to the final.

A draw would be enough to see Tipperary and Cork in the final as neither could be caught by the chasing group, but no doubt all will be hoping to finish their campaigns on a winning note as championship preparations loom.

CAMOGIE

Mary Newman

If it comes down to scoring averages it will be very tight. Cork are on a plus eight, with Galway on their heels on a plus six, Tipperary are on a plus five, with Wexford on plus five.

Wexford, boosted by their victory over Cork last weekend are at home to Galway and will battle to get a result here.

Cork will need to up the ante significantly for this last game.

On Saturday they caved to Wexford in the second half and, coming under huge pressure, they were not able to handle the physically stronger Wexford side, who carved the Cork defence open and hit three goals that put the game out of reach.

Donie Daly and his management made 11 changes for that game and he certainly was not happy with the result.

He has made changes to the starting 15 this week with 10 players coming in, among them goalkeeper Ciara O'Leary, Maedhbh De Burca, Olivia McAllen, Eimear Duignan, Fiona Nelligan and Emma Flanagan.

SUNDAY: All-Ireland Minor Championship, Cork v Waterford, 2pm

Fresh from their win over Antrim last weekend, Cork head straight into round two and a meeting with Waterford in Castle Road on Sunday (2pm) in a repeat of last year's All-Ireland final which Cork won with impressive displays from Rachel Murphy, Louise O'Neill, Orlaith Cremin, and Sarah Murphy.

Waterford will be battling to get points on the board after they lost to Galway last weekend, eight points the margin.

Tipperary got their campaign off to a great start with a 3-10 to 2-7 win over Kilkenny.

Katie Walsh, Cork in action against defender Kellyanne Dempsey, Wexford ,in the League Division 2B clash. Picture: Larry Cummins

Cork's Ashling Thompson takes on Kilkenny's Asha McHardy during their Very Camogie League Division 1 clash at UMPC Nowlan Park, Kilkenny Thompson has been outstanding for Cork in their two league games so far this season. Picture: INPHO/Leah Schole

Cork hope to make it three out of three

Sarsfield's Lucy Allen with her award after she was named on the AIB GAA Club Camogie Team of the Year at a reception at Croke Park.

CORK will be hoping to make it three from three when they take on Tipperary in the Very Camogie League Division 1 at Páirc Uí Rinn tomorrow, throw in noon.

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

This is Cork's first home game since they won the All-Ireland title, and they will be hoping that supporters will turn out in numbers to show their appreciation.

It's the least they deserve after their superb win in the final and it's the first real opportunity for fans to acknowledge that victory.

But Ger Manley and his players won't be thinking about last year; that is a distant memory now as he bids to keep their winning run going, after two good away wins over Kilkenny and Waterford.

Neither were easy, and Cork had to work hard and dig deep to ensure they took the points, and put one foot in the league final.

A win tomorrow should see them in a good position with two games remaining — at home to Clare and away to Galway in their final game.

They have impressed in the wins over the Cats and Waterford, which were two very different types of games.

Against Kilkenny, they had use all the experience they have built up over the last few seasons.

Cork weren't long back training at that stage and it showed at times, but in the end they had too much for Kilkenny, with Ashling Thompson playing a prominent role. Thompson's return to full fitness from injury will be a huge boost to Cork this season.

She did play a role it the All-Ireland win and like any player who suffered a cruciate ligament injury, Thompson deserves massive credot for her determination to come back better than ever.

Go back just over a year when Cork played Tipperary early in the season at The Ragg.

Before, at half-time, and after the game Thompson was on the pitch working hard with a series of exercises on the long road back to fitness.

This is the unseen work that players do to get back, and none were more determined and dedicated than Thompsono.

She has been outstanding in the first two league games and is already showing the form that has made her one of the top players in the country for many years.

Had there been a Player of the Game award for Cork's win over Waterford, Thompson would have won easily.

That said, there is far more to this Cork side than Thompson with Aoife Healy also putting in two impressive displays.

Meabh Cahalane and Saoirse McCarthy were also prominent, with the latter getting important scores in both ties.

Katrina Mackey has been her usual self, tormenting defences, and will be another key player tomorrow.

But Manley has also been giving new players a chance and will continue that tomorrow.

Clare Mullins started against Kilkenny and got a great goal, and her sister, Orlaith, was in the line up for the Waterford tie.

Emma Murphy and Hayley Ryan were others to impress when were sprung from the bench.

Add in others like Meabh Murphy, Libby Coppinger, Fiona Keating, and Orlaith Cahalane, and Cork should be too strong for Tipp tomorrow and put one foot in the league final.

Manley said that they know it will be another tough challenge for his side and would appeal to supporters to come out and cheer them on in their first game at home since the All-Ireland final.

The Division 2B side will be looking to get back to winning ways when they take on Clare at Castle Road (2pm) on a busy day for Cork sides.

On Sunday the minors are in action against Waterford, also at Castle Road, with a 2pm throw-in.

On a separate note, congratulations to Lucy Allen, the Sarsfields forward, who was named on the AIB GAA Club Camogie Team of the Year, the only Cork player on the 15.

Good start for Cork but a bigger test lies ahead

CAMOGIE

■ Mary Newman

CORK minors had a good start to their All-Ireland camogie campaign last weekend when they recorded a 21 points winning margin over Antrim in Abbottstown.

From the throw-in, Cork set about gaining a grip and at the interval they led 1-9 to 0-2.

A goal 15 minutes in, stretched their advantage to five points as Antrim were battling to get a grip on the strong Cork attack.

Throughout the second half Cork took control and, picking off excellent scores, they maintained the upper hand to the finish to record an impressive 3-17 to 0-5 victory.

On target for Cork were Rachel Murphy with 2-2, Orlaith Cremin with 1-4 and Louise O'Neill with 0-4.

Eve O'Dwyer added two points, while Cork had a point each from Shauna O'Driscoll, Amy McCarthy, Lucy O'Connell, Jess Murphy, and Amy Sheppard.

Antrim, in their first year at minor A championship grade, are no doubt finding their feet and it is a big step up from them having won the minor A shield last season.

Waterford will provide much stiffer opposition for Cork in Castle Road tomorrow.

With their campaign up and running and a good win under their belts, it's all systems got for round two and Mossie O'Sullivan will no doubt have his side prepared for a tougher test.

In the other games in the group, Galway had a good win over Waterford, while Tipperary overcame Kilkenny.

MINOR GRADING

The minor grading was decided at last Monday's county board meeting with games scheduled to begin on the first week of April and with the grading ratified the groups were draw and are as follows:

PREMIER MINOR: There are ten clubs in two groups of five as follows:

Group 1: Aghabullogue, Kilbrittain/ Timoleague, Newtownshandrum, Ballinora, Inniscarra.

Group 2: Erin's Own, Sarsfields, Cloughduv, Ballinhassig, Eire Og.

MINOR A: There are three groups with two groups of five and one group of four:

Group 1: Sarsfields 2, Ballygarvan, Laochra Og, Clonakilty, Midleton.

Group 2: Glen Rovers, Newcestown, Ballyhea, Na Piarsaigh, Enniskeane.

Group 3: Douglas, Ballincollig, Rockban, Blackrock.

MINOR B: Twenty four teams in six groups of four:

Group 1: Kinsale, Kilworth, Carrigaline, St. Finbarr's.

Group 2: Valley Rovers, Youghal, Nemo, Millstreet.

Group 3: St Catherine's, Barryroe, Mallow, Cobh, Group 4: Castlemartyr, Courcey Rovers, St.. Fanahan's, Bishopstown.

Group 5: Milford, Blarney, Killeagh, Castlelyons.

Group 6: Sliabh Rua, Tracton, Fr O' Neills, Dungourney.

MINOR C: Fifteen teams in three groups one group of five and two groups of six.

Group 1: Watergrashill, St Vincent's, St Colm's, Kilbree, Fermoy.

Group 2: Buttevant, Charleville, Banteer, Bride Rovers, Aghada.

Group 3: Ballinhassig 2, Carrigtwohill, Grenagh, Brian Dillon's, Bandon.

LILLIE O' SULLIVAN LEAGUE: The junior Lillie O'Sullivan league groups were inadvertently omitted from last week's column.

This is a competition for club with second adult teams and here we have twelve teams in two groups of six:

Group 1: St Catherine's, Glen Rovers, Inniscarra3, Sarsfields 3, Killeagh, Ballincollig

Group 2: Enniskeane, Kilbrittain/ Timoleague, Ballinora, Aghabullogue, Newcestown, Douglas.

The Cork minor camogie team of 2024

The Cork intermediate camogie team who lined out against kilkenny recently.

CLUB HEROES: Lucy Allen of Sarsfields, Cork, alongside Caitrin Dobbin of Antrim's Loughgiel Shamrocks with their Team of the Year awards at the AIB Camogie Club Player Awards at Croke Park on Saturday. Picture: Seb Daly/Sportsfile

CAMOGIE

Very Camogie Leagues Division 1A: Cork 1-10 Tipperary 2-10, Galway 1-12 Kilkenny 0-9, Waterford 2-16 Clare 0-8; **Div 1B:** Dublin 1-14 Limerick 0-9, Antrim 2-15 Kerry 0-11, Down 0-5 Wexford 2-11; **Div 2A:** Cavan 0-5 Offaly 3-22, Derry 1-12 Meath 0-7, Westmeath 2-9 Carlow 0-7; **Div 2B:** Cork 2-12 Clare 0-7, Galway 0-13 Wexford 0-8, Kilkenny 2-10 Tipperary 0-16; **Div 3A:** Armagh 0-11 Kildare 1-3, Roscommon 0-7 Laois 2-9.

Electric Ireland Minor Championships: Minor A: Antrim 1-5 Kilkenny 1-11, Galway 1-10 Tipperary 0-18, Cork 1-9 Waterford 1-9; **Minor A Shield:** Wexford 2-5 Derry 0-14, Dublin 2-11 Laois 2-6, Clare 1-7 Offaly 0-7, Roscommon 0-10 Limerick 0-16; **Minor B:** Kerry 0-7 Kildare 1-13, Down 1-7 Carlow 0-7, Meath 2-4 Armagh 4-15; **Minor C:** Cavan 0-5 Wicklow 4-7, Tyrone 3-12 Mayo 3-12.

What's become of Antrim?

■ Only three points separated the sides in last year's league clash, but this past weekend the Very Camogie League Division 1B meeting of Wexford and Antrim was anything but touch and go, with the Model County dishing out a 52-point hammering to the northerners, scoring an astonishing 12-20 to Antrim's four points. Beset by off-field shenanigans (Antrim are on their third coaching ticket since November), the Belfast-based outfit actually won their league opener against Down. This reversal will undoubtedly prompt a steward's inquiry from inside the county.

Late goals see Cork lose to Tipp

Manley: I thought we were very poor

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

CORK senior camogie team lost to Tipperary in their Very Division 1 league game at Páirc Ui Rinn on Saturday.

It was their first home game since they won the All-Ireland title, but Tipp spoiled the party as late goals saw them win by 2-10 to 1-10.

Cork manager Ger Manley, wasn't happy with their performance and felt they were very poor on the day.

"We're very disappointed to lose, and I thought the team's performance was very poor there really," he said.

"We didn't start well; a lot of shots missed in the first half that you can't miss. But Tipp were better than us and we can't have any qualms about that.

"They got two late goals, we were ahead for most of the second half and I supposed they finished better and they got the scores that mattered.

"We lost possession twice and they got two goals from it. That happens, but we were exposed when it did. We walked out with the ball a little bit and you have to be perfect when you do that, but Tipp deserve the credit.

"They worked hard, they closed us down and deserved the result. It was a frustrating day and it makes it a bit harder now to qualify for the league final because we must beat Clare and then Galway away.

"Tipp are back in it now as well and every team is back in it after today. It could come down to the head to head and we are in trouble if we are up against Tipp in that because they would go through.

"But look, in general things are going okay. I suppose we came back very late and probably our fitness levels aren't what they should be, but you take that into account. But I'm very disappointed with the performance.

"We will be looking for a reaction now in training, you need nine or 10 players to play well to win the match and I think we had four or five today that played up the standards required.

"We'll go through it during the week and give a bit of feedback and prepare for the Clare game."

CAMOGIE

Rory Noonan

Cork	1-10
Tipperary	2-10

CORK lost their first game of the Very Division 1 camogie league as two late goals at Páirc Uí Rinn ensured Tipperary travelled home with the points in the bag.

Credit to Tipp they made Cork work all through and were the better side on the day, particularly in the first half, helped by the strong wind.

But credit to Cork they upped their game in the second half, with Laura Hayes, Sorcha McCartan and Libby Coppinger in top form for the Rebels.

They also had the added bonus of welcoming back Laura Tracey from injury for her first outing of the season.

But the late goals were killer blows for the Rebels, coming in the 59th minute and in injury time giving Cork no real chance to recover.

Clodagh McIntyre opened the scoring for Tipperary after three minutes after she intercepted a Cork pass.

Cork had a number of wides before Mary Bourke picked herself up after being injured to double Tipperary's lead, with 11 minutes gone.

Cork eventually got off the mark after 13 minutes when Orlaith Mullins scored from distance, to make it 0-2 to 0-1, in a low-scoring start.

Cork had a chance to equalise but a free from Amy O'Connor dropped short and was half-cleared. She got on the breaking ball again and found Hayes in front of goal.

But her effort was well saved by Nicole Walsh before O'Connor scored from the resulting 45 to see the sides level. Caoimhe Maher, who was playing in a sweeper role for Tipp, burst forward to put them back in front, before Cork again missed a chance to draw level, with their fifth wide.

Sorcha McCartan got Cork's third point, from a free, to see the sides level for the third time, with Cork again missing chances to go in front as a number of shots dropped short as they played against the slight wind.

Caoimhe McCarthy put Tipp back in front and Roisin Howard stretched their lead to two with 28 minutes gone.

A free from Eimear McGrath made it double scores before Cork had Molly Lynch to thank when she saved superbly to deny McGrath a goal.

Neither side added to their tally before half time as the visitors led by 0-6 to 0-3 at the break.

Amy O'Connor pulled a point back for Cork at the start of the second half and two minutes in they went in front for the first time.

O'Connor picked up a puc out and played the ball into the danger zone. Unfortunately for Walsh, she dropped it onto the post and it went over the line, to make it 1-4 to 0-6.

A McGrath free had the sides level again before O'Connor put the Rebels back in front, as they were not playing much better camogie than their first-half display.

Clodagh Finn, not long on as a sub, increased Cork's lead, to make it 1-6 to 0-7 with 42 minutes gone.

Two from O'Connor, with McGrath and Maher replying made it 1-8 to 0-9 with two minutes to go.

A mistake by the Cork defence saw Howard play McGrath in to blast to the back of the net and the same played picked up the ball to add a point, as Tipp now led by 1-10 to 1-8.

Niamh Tracey's injury time goal ensured there was no chance of Cork getting back on level terms as the Rebels now face Clare in two weeks.

Scorers for Cork: A O'Connor 1-6 (0-3 f, 0-1 45), S McCartan 0-2 f, O Mullins, C Finn 0-1 each.

Tipperary: E McGrath 1-4 (0-3 f), N Tracey 1-0, C Maher 0-2, C McIntyre, N Bourke, C McCarthy, R Howard 0-1 each.

CORK: M Lynch; M Murphy, L Coppinger, A Barrett; I O'Regan, A Thompson, M Cahalane; H Looney, L Hayes; C Healy, F Keating, E Murphy; A O'Connor, O Mullins, S McCartan.

Subs: K Mackey for C Healy, L Tracey for A Barrett (both ht), C Finn for O Mullins (38), N O'Callaghan for E Murphy (48),

TIPPERARY: N Walsh; K Blair, M Eviston, E Loughman; C McCarthy, E Cunneen, C McIntyre; T Ryan, C Hennessy; R Howard, C Maher, G Moloney; M Bourke, E McGrath, E Heffernan.

Subs: K Kennedy for E Heffernan (ht), N Tracey for G Moloney (44), C Perdue for M Bourke (48), C Maher for C Hennessy (52), E Carey for C McIntyre (58).

Referee: Barry Nea, Westmeath.

Tipperary's Eimear McGrath celebrates scoring a goal with Caoimhe Perdue of Tipperary. Picture: INPHO/Laszlo Geczo

Cork's Fiona Keating and Ellen Cuneen of Tipperary in action at Páirc Uí Rinn.

Tipperary's Casey Hennessy is blocked by Meabh Cahalane of Cork.