

C.L.G. Laoise



Comhdháil Bhliantúil



Monday, 4th December, 2023
7.30 p.m.

Midlands Park Hotel

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Standing Orders

In order that the proceedings of the convention be carried out without delay the following Standing Orders will be observed: -

- 1. The Proposer of a Resolution, or Amendment thereto, may speak for 5 minutes but no longer.*
- 2. A Delegate speaking to a Resolution or Amendment shall not exceed 3 minutes.*
- 3. The Proposer of a Resolution, or Amendment, may speak a second time for 5 minutes, before a vote is taken, but no other Delegate may speak a second time to any Resolution or Amendment.*
- 4. The Chairman shall, at any time he considers a matter has been sufficiently discussed, call on the Proposer to reply, after which a vote will be taken.*
- 5. A Delegate may, with the consent of the Chairman, move "that the question be now put" after which, when the Proposer has spoken, a vote must be taken.*

An Clár

1. Adoption of Standing Orders
2. Minutes of 2022 Convention
3. Secretary & sub-Committee Reports
4. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement
5. Appointment of Tellers
6. Election of Officers
7. Coaching and Games Presentation - Shane Keegan
8. Motions
9. Strategic Review Presentation - Kieran Kego
10. Aon Ghnó Eile
11. Votes of Sympathy

The Annual Convention of Laois GAA was held in Midlands Park Hotel on Monday 5th December 2022

Cathaoirleach PS O Ceallaigh presided at County Convention on 05/12/22. The following Coiste Bainistí members were in attendance: Tomás O'Cleirigh, Mairtín O'Broin, Paschal Mac Fhiobhuí, Gearóid O'Caomhanach, Cainneach Mac Cartaigh, Briain O hAllúinn, Risteard O Cinnéide, Fergal O'Beirn, Gearóid O Sleibhín, Moncha Ní Dhubhsláinne, Maitiu O Coiléir, Ciaran Mac Eochaidh, Seosamh O Cuinneagáin agus Niall Mac Laitimh (Runaí).

Clubs were represented as follows:

N. O'Riain, Mainistir Laoise; C. O Dorchaí & M. Mac an Ghaill, Anach; P. Mac Lochlainn & N. O Ceallaigh Ard Lios Cilchrúis; L. O Braonáin & PS O Cinnéide, Ard Lios Cilín; S. Breatnach & L. O Seachnasaigh, Baile na Coille; N. O Cianáin, Baile Fionn; W. Hovendon, S. Hovendon & E. O Caollaí, Baile Uí Laigheanáin; M. Ní Fhaoláin & S. O Deá, Baile Píocas; P. O Faoláin, P. Geaghagáin & E. Peacóg, Mainistir Beal Atha Róin; A. O Langtúin, S. Daibhís & A. O Braonáin, Teach an Bhearra; M. O Dubhsláinne, C. O Sioráin & R. O Muirí, Buiríos Mór Osraí; A. Mhic Bharra, P. O Cuilleanáin & S. O Ceallaigh, Buiríos Mór Osraí Cill Choitín; T. O Deoráin, S. Ní Fhaoláin & U. Ní Dhonnchaidh, Camros; S. Ozenbrook, Baile an Chaisleáin; C. Ní Chonraoi, D. O Sioráin & P. Goode, Cluain Fada; D. Ní Chonraoi & D. O Ceallacháin, Cluain na Slí Naomh Meanmáin; O. Ní Mheachair, N. Ní Dhubhsláinne & A. Mac Cartaine, Cloch Balla Cholla; R. Moiféid & L. de Stacaphúil, Coillte; M. O Beirgin & A. O Riain, Coillte Seanchua; R. O Danachair, Coill na Cúirte; M. Mac Pheadair & S. de Búrca, Crochta Ard; S. O Ciarubháin & M. O Riain, Ioma; P. O Beirgin, M. de Cléir & P. O Deá, Eiréil; T. Brett & D. O Broin, Graig Chuilinn; R. O Connail, O Longargáin & S. de Faoite, Cill Cabháin; S. Mac an Ghaill, A. Nic Nhutlaigh & D. Mac Giodaire, Cill Choitín; G. Diring, Gleann Uiseann; T. O Caoineallain, SP O Cnaoimhín & M. O Dubhsláinne, Coill; T. O Mionacháin & S. Payne, Mointeach Mílic; M. Ní Middleton, T O Miach & C. O Greacháin, Maighean Rátha; U. O Dullaing, E. O Beacháin & B. O Braoin, Na Diomasaigh; B. O Rannacháin & S. O Ceallaigh, Pairc Raithín an Uisce; C. O Fingletain, Páirc Raithín an Uisce Tigh Mochua; M. O Leathlobhair & R. O Mainnín, Cúil an tSudaire; D. Mac Fhiobhuí, D. Mac Coisteala & E. O Fionnalaigh, Portlaoise; S. O Meachair & PS O Reachtair, Rath Domhnaigh; R. O Ceallaigh & T de Barra, Rathdomhnaigh Eiréil; S. Leathlobhair, S. O Dullaing & M. O'Leannáin, Ross Fhionnghlaise; T. O Cearbhúill & E de Bhailis, Seanchua; D. Caímpion, C. Ní Fhearail & R. O'Nualláin, Sliabh Bladhma; M. O Gormáin P. O Braonáin, An Spinc; M. O Mórdha, Naomh Seosamh; R. Ní Lhorcáin, T Ní Bhogaí & R. O Doinn, Sráidbahlé; S. O Duiginn, E. O Faoláin & R. Mac Cumascaigh, Ná Clairsigh; P. O Céin, S. Mac Craith & T. Mac Seoin, An Fraoch; S. O Murchú, S. O'hAllúinn & P Harding, An Charraig; N. O Coigligh & L. O'Rannacháin, Tigh Mochua; S. Mac Pearcín, G. Ni Chiarubháin & D. Donnchú, Tromaire.

S. Laibheartaigh (Childrens Officer); P. O Donnabháin (Handball); S. O’Meachair (Cumann an mBunscol); O. O’hAilche (Post Primary Schools) & L. Ní Chonraoi (Health and Wellbeing).

Leithscéil: L. O Rannacháin (Tigh Mochua).

1. **Standing Orders** adopted on the proposition of Seamas Lahart, seconded by Tomas Mac Seoin.
2. **Minutes of 2021 Convention** adopted on the proposition of Liam O Braonáin, seconded by Eamann Peacóg.
3. **Secretary’s Report** adopted on the proposition of Michéal O Riain, seconded by Niall O Riain.

Matters arising from Secretary Report:

- V. O Dullaing spoke on two occasions, arising from Secretary Report and Referee Administration Report, firstly in regard the escalating verbal and physical abuse towards our Referees and Match Officials, not alone in Laois but countrywide will have to stop before there is serious consequences to someone and secondly in outlining the responsibility on Clubs to source additional Referees to meet the ever increasing games programme within the County. S. Mac Craith, A. O Langtúin, T. O Cleirigh, T. Mac Seoin, S. O Cuinneagáin S. O Ceallaigh & C. O Greacháin all contributed to this discussion. An Cathaoirleach reiterated V O Dullaing comments.
4. **Treasurer’s Report** showing an operating surplus of €376,037 in County Committee A/c and a deficit of €10,530 in O’Moore Park A/c were adopted on the proposition of Eanna O Beacháin, seconded by Liam de Stacaphúil.

An Cisteoir gave a detailed explanation of our financial accounts, explaining both Income and Expenditure Accounts and Schedules to accounts. He stated that the increase in Gate Receipts were not a true reflection of our operating income, due to change in Financial year from October to September and the fact that it included a large proportion of 2021 Championship games. He informed delegates that this was an exceptional year on our finances and that we must continue to be prudent with the management of our finances. He acknowledged the co-operation and support of our Clubs in our main fundraiser, €130 All Club County Members Draw and appealed for their support again in 2023. He thanked our main sponsor MW Hire for their dedicated support since 2012 and welcomed our incoming sponsor Laois Hire. He thanked our other sponsors Magni Group, O’Neills, LOETB, Laois Shopping Centre, Midlands Park Hotel, ENVA, Glanbia, Tom Brennan for their continued support. He acknowledged LSM for their sponsorship of our Punchestown Race Day and our patrons who supported this fundraiser and finally Laois Gaels, under the stewardship of Bryan Breen and his committee, whose funds raised are ring fenced towards the support of Coaching and Games initiatives.

He informed Convention that after thirteen years in this position, he had taken the decision to step down from this role, outlining that whilst it had been onerous, he had enjoyed his term, his one regret the lack of success achieved by our Inter-county teams during that period. He noted that he had worked under four Chairpersons in his tenure, Brian Allen, Gerry Kavanagh, Peter O'Neill and PJ Kelly and was assisted during this time by the late Phil Duggan, Kieran Leavy and Paschal McEvoy, whom assumes this role this evening, thanking each for their support during that time. He thanked his fellow and past Executive members for their dedication and support, while also acknowledging our O'Moore Park stewards and gate staff, without whose availability we would be unable to function. Finally he thanked his family for their understanding in allowing him the time to fulfil this role.

5. **Chairperson's Address – PJ Kelly:** Ba mhaith lion fáilte mór a chur roimh gach duine go dtí an comhdháil bhliantúil agus míle buíochas do na clubanna faoi bhur ta-
caíocht.

Tonight we close another year in the history of the Gaelic Athletic Association in our County. In doing so, it is right and customary that we begin by remembering all those who have gone before us, and those who have gone to their eternal rest in the last twelve months.

Without offending or omitting any one person, it would be remis of me not to single out our former President in 'Sean Ramsbottom', Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

Twelve months ago, I was afforded the great honour of being elected Chairperson of Laois GAA. The year that has followed has been busy, containing some highs, some lows and everything in between as detailed in the reports contained in our Convention booklet. I don't propose to revisit all aspects of Laois GAA in my address but rather share my perspective on some of the year's events with an eye to the future. We come here as a family who share the ideals of our founding fathers: volunteerism, community and participation. To that list, I included respect in my acceptance speech in 2021. Respect for oneself, respect for others and respect and care for our reputation as a body of people. Sadly, if you read reports from all around the Country from recent times, you'll find that respect is not always prevalent in our Association.

That's not to say that it doesn't exist.

It does. We seldom see or hear about the good things which happen, day in, day out, but they are there, and we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we do have a special and unique Organisation.

However, during the 2022 fixture calendar, individual and sporadic instances of unsporting and downright thuggish behaviour presented, and in my view, these are unacceptable and indeed a major threat to what we stand for as a people.

Collectively as the elected delegates of Laois GAA, we need to ask ourselves, and others, some questions:

- Why am I involved in the GAA?
- Do I represent the ideals and aims of our founding fathers of 1884?
- What sort of Association and example do we want to provide for our children?

We all need to take a step back and have a reality check of sorts. As I said, the vast majority of games and events are wonderful examples of the outworking of our culture. We cannot stand back, however, and ignore instances where match officials and players, and indeed volunteers and certain members of Laois GAA staff are abused, either verbally or physically.

I want to urge everyone to reflect on this ahead of the 2023 season, particularly at underage games where impressionable children are present. We have a responsibility as a collective Organisation to ensure that we control the culture at our games.

Accordingly, I want to thank all the referees and other match officials who have made our games possible over the season just gone. It's a cliché at this point but without them, there would be no games. We have some of the leading officials in Laois, and it is vital that we utilise their experience in bringing forward a new generation of officials. However, we need a culture of respect for this to be as successful as it needs to be.

Laois Hire O'Moore Park & the LOETB Centre of Excellence.

Our LOETB COE here in Portlaoise has become a massive social hub of positivity within our County. As a Unit, it has enhanced not only our asset wealth but also our player participation and retention, it's a state-of-the-art training facility that can and is been utilised to its capacity, and perhaps beyond at times.

I firmly believe that the COE has become a conduit of unity within our County. The very strong sense of pride and satisfaction is palpable amongst our patrons and players alike that have attended games, training sessions or even practice matches this season. The LOETB COE is and always should be seen as an extension to our own local club facilities.

A lot of decisions have been made around this facility over the past few years and we have tried earnestly to be as pragmatic as possible with every decisive move.

To this end, I want to acknowledge the invaluable foresight and continued assistance of former Chairperson's Jerry Kavanagh (Peter O'Neill), Former treasurer, Martin Byrne, Ger Slevin and Niall Handy– all of whom have been a rock of support to ensure the delivery of what we all can witness there today.

Furthermore, Laois Hire O' Moore Park has undergone significant upgrade works regards installing a new TV gantry and seating upgrade in our stand. This newly refurbished stand can hopefully add to match day comfort for our spectators. Unlike others, we have not asked any of our units for extra monies towards upgrade works/ new projects during 2022 as clearly outlined in our Safety & Facilities report on page 90.

Our staffing structure has also been re-tweaked, to include the recent employment of Tom Hargrove's as Laois's Head of Athletic Development', I wish Tom all the best in his role. I believe the fruits of this appointment may only be seen in years ahead.

I want to thank everyone involved with maintaining these grounds and for offering their continued hard work, especially: Ger Slevin, Colm McEvoy & his subordinates & Mick Glynn. I want to acknowledge the work ethic and dedication of Ger Slevin throughout the last 3 five years. Ger brings a fresh perspective to all things GAA and has been key to a number of recent developments here at both LOETB COE & Laois Hire O'Moore Park.

Thank-you, Ger. Your work is very much acknowledged and appreciated.

County Teams

We had a good run to the O' Byrne Cup Final, creating a buzz of excitement and perhaps expectation around the County in the process. However, for a variety of reasons, the year ended disappointingly with relegation to Division 4 of our National League and a 1st round exit from the Championship proper at the hands of Wicklow, a very very disappointing day for All Laois Gaels. This was then followed by a defeat to Westmeath in the inaugural Tailteann Cup, our year was over.

However, now is the time to show leadership and also to review all aspects that go into our performances. We have a vibrant underage scene with strong and committed management teams in place. With continued hard work from our players and management at all levels, I remain confident that success will follow. I'm under no illusion that challenges lie ahead in regards gaining promotion to Division 3, BUT this is a challenge we cannot fail!!

I want to thank Billy Sheenan for all his efforts over the past year and also to wish him and his backroom team the very best of luck going forward in both league and championship for 2023.

Our U20 and possibly to a lesser degree our minor footballers will ultimately be unhappy with the results they garnered on the field but it is clear that both squads, including managements gave tremendous commitment to the Laois jersey this season. I felt the U20 championship structure did not afford our players to maximise their potential. Thanks to Eddie Kinsella, Conor Gorman and their respective management teams.

Our senior hurlers had similar fortunes to our footballers, with some players regrettably choosing not to commit to Seamus Plunket's cause, making Division 1 hurling all the harder to compete. However, there is a growing confidence within Laois hurling that the new management team, steered by Willie Maher can bestow some needed inspiration. No doubt similar challenges lie ahead again for the National League, with realistic optimism for success in the Joe McDonagh Cup.

Our thanks to Seamus Plunket and his backroom team for their services in 2021 & 2022.

In the years to come our Seniors will obviously be bolstered by the U20 and U17 teams who performed well this season. Who will ever forget the brilliant year our minors had, especially that evening in Laois OMP when these young men played out

their Leinster final in front of a packed house, something I have seldom witnessed before, well done to all involved and a particular mention for Declan Qualter who managed this team for a very young age.

It was encouraging to see our U20 hurling team compete with some of the best during the 2022 campaign. I believe our U20's took to the field with a genuine belief from within that they could match their opponents on any given day, this was refreshing to witness. Our appreciation to Ollie Hallie and Co. Progress is seldom a straight line. Continuing, I want to thank all players who have represented their club at and our County over the past year. I am fully aware of the sacrifices made by many.

Fixtures

The split season is innovative perhaps and has many advantages. For example, clubs were provided with some clarity which is to be welcomed of course. However, the split has also presented challenges which we had to acknowledge and overcome. Some Gaels argue that the GAA hierarchy have 'shot themselves in the foot' by giving up the All-Ireland Finals in the first and third Sunday's of September", two dates to celebrate our National sport and give them the special attention they deserve. How changing this is lost on me.

In Laois, I know our fixtures Secretary Niall Handy (and indeed all fixture committee members) endeavours each year to provide a clear vision and games programme which respects all the players who play our games at club and County level. There has been an inordinate number of walkovers this year, a culture that we do not want to see continue. It is incumbent on all of use to ensure that we do our utmost to fulfill fixtures. We recently facilitated both a hurling and football review forum, my first to be part of since becoming Chairperson. From a hurling perspective, representatives appeared satisfied with current formats, albeit some expressed an interest in exploring a 10 Team senior championship. This is something which will be discussed further at County Committee in 2023.

From a football perspective, current formats also received a general consensus of status quo remaining, albeit some views were expressed regards timing of certain adult County finals.

However, what really stood out for me was the lack of representation from senior football clubs, only 1 senior football team from our 2022 championship was in attendance. I think this speaks volumes. Year on year we hear on countless occasions how our senior football championship needs to be restructure due to lack of competitiveness however, when the platform for such deliberations is offered, only one club turns up!! It's very disappointing to learn that little or no interest is shown by clubs in this regard.

Nevertheless... with an even more condensed County season ahead, I look forward to the coming weeks when we work together to set our course for on-field activities in Laois for 2023

Sponsors

The sustainable financing of all our units is of paramount importance. We have a duty of care to see that our clubs and our County is on a sound financial footing at all times. Thankfully, our financial statements reflect this.

I want to pay a special tribute to our outgoing sponsor MW Hire for their long-standing support of Laois GAA. Many thanks and appreciation to Mattie Walsh and his team and I wish him every success in his ventures going forward.

To our new main sponsor Laois Hire, I want to express our deepest appreciation to Michael Killeen & Keith McCann who have committed to supporting Laois GAA for the coming 5 years. This is a significant pronouncement to Laois as we strive to achieve optimal outcomes.

Going forward Laois GAA must generate sufficient sponsors for us to maintain and enhance current structures and facilities. This would not be possible without the hard work and due diligence of Martin Byrne and his Finance Committee. In the true ethos of CLG, our largest single sponsor is in fact ourselves.

In addition, Laois Gaels through men and women give voluntary contributions, asking nothing in return, only to see their County continue to progress on and off the field. I want to thank each and every club, and member of Laois Gaels and in particular the hard-working committee members and in Particular Leo Turley and Brian Breen.

I always championed the very real benefits of club and county working in unison for the betterment of CLG in our County. I want to commend all our clubs on being extremely resolute and pragmatic during recent difficult times as we appear to be exiting from the worst of Covid.

The easiest thing in the world is to despair and become inward looking. However, our clubs have come through strongly and, in doing so, demonstrated their commitment to their local communities.

The developments going on at many clubs are an inspiration and showcase of just what an important focal point of the community our Association was and is. I want to acknowledge the work of our Safety and Facilities Officer Ger Slevin in this regard, Ger constantly liaises with clubs and is instrumental in helping them tap into sources of funding.

We have seen an exponential growth in the use of social media in the association. Social media is a wonderful tool for the promotion of our games, but it also has great destructive power when used recklessly.

I would urge all clubs and all coaches and managers within clubs to conduct training and awareness programmes around responsible use of social media for all your members and players, particularly younger players.

We need to create a responsible and considerate culture in this area going forward. We cannot ignore this challenge. To do so would be negligent in the protection of our youth. Your personal reputation is at stake and also that of our Association. Act in haste, repent at your leisure.”

Equally as important is the role of more traditional forms of media. In Laois, our games enjoy widespread exposure thanks to hard working and dedicated members of the local media. I want to thank all the reporters and photographers for their coverage of our Gaelic games in 2022. Our aim is to have an efficient and professional relationship with all forms of media.

Executive & County Committees

Over the years, many people have served diligently in different roles and on various County committees. This work is vital to the running of our County and I want to thank each and every one of them for their efforts.

I also want to urge caution. As you'll see here this evening, we have very few positions contested on our Management committee. It's very disappointing and it means one of two things: either everyone is entirely satisfied with everything that is being done, or there is a degree of apathy towards executive roles.

Neither is a healthy state of being in my view.

If we do not see more people coming forward into leadership and committee roles, then we will suffer collectively. Much of the good work which has been done at club and County level can quickly be lost if we do not start to develop a greater culture of collective responsibility. We have too many people too quick to criticise, yet slow to help out.

This isn't just at County level; it's an issue at club level too. In a way, I'm preaching to the converted here tonight. Volunteers are being squeezed with more and more demands on their time with an ever-increasing workload on serving at county board level or indeed club level. Make your clubs inclusive and welcoming places and also help to foster an awareness of the fact that county committees also need people to survive and function properly. I cannot stress that enough.

Integration of all Gaelic games

Efforts on the continued integration of all Gaelic games to include Ladies Football and Camogie within the wider GAA are currently underway at National Level. In many ways, we are ahead of the curve.

All codes enjoy and make use of the facilities here at LOETB COE & Laois HIRE OMP. Working together for the promotion of all Gaelic games is very much part of our overall ethos. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Laois Ladies foot-

ball, who under the stewardship of Donal Brennan, won the Intermediate All-Ireland football this year, well done to All involved.

Governance

A Governance Review undertaken with the Audit Department in Croke Park has identified key compliance areas, including establishing a Governance & Audit Committee, independent of our County Executive. This committee advises and supports our County Board regards operating to the necessary standards and good practices.

Accordingly, the main governance challenge facing the association from my own viewpoint is ‘volunteers’ being held to account in areas where they may not have adequate time to dedicate themselves to, or sufficient expertise.

The GAA has become more and more professional in how it’s operated and what is expected of its units, which is not a bad thing, but what County officers are now being asked to deal with is, possibly, going beyond the limit of what a volunteer can do. The workload and expectations of our volunteers, at all levels, has increased at an exponential rate. The challenge we face on foot of this is attracting and keeping good people involved. People must remember that the officers carry out their duties in a voluntary capacity and, while we don’t always do things right, we do do our best for Laois GAA.

I worry are we saying these are roles that can only be done by someone who is retired, somebody who has a less demanding job or, perhaps, someone who doesn’t have family commitments. There are so many ways we are excluding people from possibly becoming county board/club officers because of the demands placed on us.

Collectively as an Association, do we need to consider drafting a strategy as for how we function in the matter of our paid staff and volunteers?

Finally, as I assume the role of Chairman for 2023 on a personal note I’d like to thank my colleagues on the Management Committee and County Committee for their work and support all year and many others who have helped in various ways. We win together and we lose together.

A special word of thanks to our outgoing PRO Canice McCarthy who is not seeking re-election for 2023. A familiar sight wherever Laois play– thanks for your contribution Canice.

Similarly, our Coaching and Games Officer ‘Fergal Byron’ is stepping down from his role after serving his 5 years. Have no doubt that Fergal has vacated this role knowing he is leaving behind a stronger and healthier coaching and games division.

We don’t say thank-you enough in the GAA, but I want us ALL to collectively thank and acknowledge Gerry Kavanagh for his un-wavered dedication and loyalty to Laois GAA. The longevity of input from Gerry has served Laois well in the roles of Development Officer, Vice Chairperson, Chairperson and more recently, Central Council Delegate to Croke Park. Personally, I have Gerry to thank for getting me

involved in Laois GAA when he asked me to come on board as Safety Officer back in 2012.

Gerry, we salute you and just to say that we're unlikely to see that type of service in the future, what a legacy! Well done and thank you for all you have done for Laois GAA over the years.

There are so many people who give their best for Laois GAA throughout the year and their efforts are recognised and very much appreciated. I'd like to thank everyone who makes that effort – in your club, as a delegate, on a committee, preparing pitches, acting as a steward etc.

On a personal note, it has been a year tinged with sadness with my Mam passing away. I would like on behalf of our family to thank the GAA Community for all your support at that time. It meant so much.

I wish all our Club units, our County Teams, our staff, each and every friend and member of Laois GAA, a very peaceful Christmas, and a healthy sporting New Year. Míle buíchas arís, agus nollaig shona dhaoibh go léir.

6. **Election of Officers:** The following tellers were appointed – Risteard O Doinn (Returning Officer); Tomas Mac Seoin; Pam Ni Chuaináin & Elva Ní Cheallaigh on the proposition of S. Mac Craith and seconded by M. Mac an Ghaill. The following officers were elected –
- Cathaoirleach (Chairman): PS O'Ceallaigh was elected unopposed.
 - Leas Chathaoirleach (Vice Chairman): Ciarán Mac Eochaidh was elected unopposed
 - Cisteoir (Treasurer): Paschal Mac Fhiobhuí was elected unopposed.
 - Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer): Briain O Braoin was elected unopposed.
 - Ard Comhairle (Central Council) Delegate: Mairtín O Broin was elected unopposed.
 - Comhairle Laighean (Leinster Council) Delegates (2): Tomas O Cleirigh & Briain O hAlluinn were elected unopposed.
 - Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish): Nollaig Mac an Ghaill was elected unopposed.
 - Congress Delegates (6): PS O Ceallaigh & Niall Mac Laitinh automatically elected and Mairtín O Broin, Tomas O Cleirigh & Briain O hAlluinn were elected after defeating P. Mac Fhiobhuí in a vote.
 - Leinster Convention Delegates (7): Briain O hAllúinn, Risteard O Cinnéide, Mairtín O Broin, Tomas O Cleirigh, PS O Ceallaigh, Tomas Mac Seoin, Paschal Mac Fhiobhuí were deemed elected.
 - Oifigeach Oilíuna (Coaching): As nominee for this position had withdrawn. An Runai stated that election for this position be deferred to Special Convention in

January, where representation would be as at County Committee and nomination papers to be circulated later this week.

- Oifigeach Caidrimh Poibli (P.R.O.): As there was no nominee for this position. An Runai stated that election for this position be deferred to Special Convention in January, where representation would be as at County Committee and nomination papers to be circulated later this week.

7. Motions

1. To amend Laois GAA Byelaw No. 1 to reflect that Children's Officer is not subject to the maximum period of office of five years:

“Exception – In accordance with Rule 3.11 (b)(2), T.O. 2022, the Treasurer and Children's Officer are not subject to the maximum period of office of five years.”
(CLG Laoise)

The Motion was passed unanimously on a show of hands after being proposed by Gearóid O Caomhanach and seconded by Eoin de Bhailis.

2. To amend Laois GAA Byelaw No. 5 (Attachment to First Club) - To reflect that Laois CCC may no longer adjudicate on an application for Attachment to First Club as per Riail 6.4 T.O. 2022 and DRA decision to read as follows:

5. Attachment to First Club - In accordance with Riail 6.4 (c), T.O. 2022, a person seeking to become a member of the Association shall be restricted to joining a Club in the Catchment Area of their Permanent Residence or where they have Other Relevant Connection as below. (Catchment Areas as defined in Laois GAA Rules and Regulations as per Riail 6.3, TO 2022). Other Relevant Connection to assist Clubs when deciding an applicant's eligibility to join Club to be used in conjunction with an Treoraí Oifigiúil:
 - a) Parentage Rule – A player may apply to join a Club in the catchment area in which their Parent was a Player in Adult Competition or a Club Officer or Member, who over a reasonable period of time, made a proven contribution to that Club.
 - b) Primary School – A player may apply to join a Club in the catchment area where they are presently attending or have attended Primary School. The Primary School rule will only be taken into consideration where the player has been attending this school or has attended for at least one full school year. (CLG Laoise)

The Motion was passed unanimously on a show of hands after being proposed by Micheál O Leannáin and seconded by Liam de Stacaphúil.

3. To amend Laois GAA Byelaw No. 6 (Transfers) as follows:

6. Transfers

- A. A player shall be restricted to playing for a Club in the Catchment Area of their permanent residence as per Riail 6.5 (a) & (b), TO 2022 (Catchment

Areas as defined in Laois GAA Rules and Regulations as per Riail 6.3, TO 2022).

- B. There shall be two distinct Club “designations” – Urban and Rural. This will allow the CCC to distinguish between Transfers as follows: (i) Urban to Rural Clubs, (ii) Rural to Rural Clubs and (iii) Rural to Urban Clubs.
- C. Portlaoise GAA Club will be designated an “Urban” Club and all other Clubs in Laois will be designated “Rural”.
- D. Requests for transfer shall not be considered unless submitted to the County Secretary before January 31st in any year. Exception: In the case of an Urban to Rural Transfer, an application may be granted provided the player has not participated in Club Competition in the year in which the Transfer is sought.
- E. The C.C.C. shall process and make initial decisions on all applications for Transfer within the county, in a timely manner with consideration to the commencement of competitions (Riail 6.5, T.O. 2022). Such decisions shall reflect the ethos of the Association as outlined in Riail 6.1, T.O. 2022 and give due consideration to the negative effect, if any, it may have on the player’s First Club and/or Own Club.
- F. In exceptional circumstances the CCC may, after due consideration, approve the transfer application.

Other Relevant Connection to be used in conjunction with an Treoraí Oifigiúil to assist CCC in their deliberations:

(i). Urban to Rural Transfer

A player from a designated Urban Club may, at any time, transfer to, any Rural Club without the necessity of meeting any of the criteria and / or exceptions usually associated with such Transfers, provided the player has not participated in Club Competition in the year in which the Transfer.

(ii). Rural to Rural Transfer

- a) Permanent Residence - An adult player or juvenile player from a family moving to a new place of Permanent Residence, which is within the Catchment Area of the Club to which they wish to transfer. In such cases the onus of proof of new permanent residence shall be on the applicant for transfer (by provision of their/ their family’s ownership of the property or at least three utility bills in their name for the property), as outlined in Riail 6.3 T.O. 2022, that it has been their principal private residence for at least the previous twelve weeks and is likely for at least the ensuing year.
- b) Parentage Rule – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club in the catchment area in which their Parent was a Player in Adult Competition or a Club Officer or Member, who over

a reasonable period of time, made a proven contribution to that Club. Such criteria shall also apply for Transfer applications within Club catchment areas, and /or where other exceptional circumstances may be considered.

c) Primary School – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club in the catchment area where they are presently attending or have attended Primary School. The Primary School rule will only be taken into consideration where the player has been attending this school or has attended for at least one full school year.

(iii). Rural to Urban Transfer

- a) Permanent Residence - An adult player or juvenile player from a family moving to a new place of Permanent Residence, which is within the Catchment Area of the Club to which they wish to transfer. In such cases the onus of proof of new permanent residence shall be on the applicant for transfer (by provision of their/their family's ownership of the property or at least three utility bills in their name for the property), as outlined in Riail 6.3 T. O. 2022, that it has been their principal private residence for at least the previous twelve weeks and is likely for at least the ensuing year.
- b) Parentage Rule – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club in the catchment area in which their Parent was a player in adult competition, or in exceptional circumstances, a Club Officer or Member who, over a reasonable period of time, has made a proven contribution to that Club. Such criteria shall also apply for Transfer applications within Club catchment areas, and /or where other exceptional circumstances may be considered.

The Motion was passed unanimously on a show of hands after being proposed by Micheál O Leannáin and seconded by Liam de Stacaphúil.

4. *To amend "That Rule 6.17 - Games & Competitions - Age Grades - Official Guide – Part 1 be amended to read as follows:*

Club

Adult

A player shall have celebrated his 18th birthday prior to January 1st of the Championship Year.

Under - Age Grades

A county shall determine its internal Under-Age Grades for competition purposes within the parameter of Under 21 down to Under 11, subject to the stipulation that competitions at Under 14, Under 16 and Under 18 must take place within

each County together with one further underage competition above the Under 18 grade.

The rest of the Rule to remain unchanged.”

MAIN CHANGE – “subject to Central Council Policy” – is removed, and stipulation that competitions must take place at U14, U16 and U18 level.

For counties of larger populations, there is the provision to provide additional competitions at U15 and U17 if required within this rule change. (Na Clairsigh)

After a lengthy debate, the Motion was withdrawn by Cumann Na Clairsigh.

Votes of Sympathy

Votes of Sympathy were extended to the following families:

- Annanough Whearty, Luttrell, Ryan, Hennessy, Scully & Heffernan Families;
- Arles Kilcruise Conway (John), Kealy (Garry), McElroy (Brian) & Wheatley Families;
- Ballinakill Delaney (Jimmy & Willie) & Lacey (Paddy) Families;
- Ballylinan Renehan, McEvoy, Julian, Kaye, Whelan, Brennan, Loughman, Doyle, Coogan, O'Connor & Hickey Families;
- Ballypickas Bowe (Ger), O'Gorman (Billy), O'Gorman (Nancy), Miller (John), O'Connell (John), Delaney (Billy), Cruite (Peg), Fitzpatrick (Billy), Scully (Ger), Walsh (Brigid), Hennessy and Palmer Families;
- Ballyroan Abbey Cruite (Peg); Brennan (Shauna); Scully (Ger); Hennessy (Eilish) & Walsh (Bridget) Families;
- Borris in Ossory Kavanagh, Dooley, Campion, Sweeney, O'Brien, Hogan, Walsh, Kelly, Claxton/O'Brien, Egan, Delany (Main St), Quinlan, Phelan & Delaney (Moneymore) Families;
- Camross McCartney (Alan), Buckley (Arthur), Cuddy (Jim) & Cuddy (Jack) Families;
- Clonad Fennell, Fitzpatrick (Mick), Keyes (Pauline), Kelly (Peggy), Maher (Johnnie), Whelan, Doran (Mick), Looby (Tom) & Whelan (Catherine) Families;
- Clough Ballacolla Boyhan (Owen), Hoyne (Pat), Fitzpatrick (Susan), Maher (Seamus), McCormack (Mary), Broderick (Kathleen), Bergin (Mary) Mulhall (Mary) & Hayes (Joan) Families;
- Clonaslee St Manmans Comerford (PJ), Corcoran (Enda), Carroll (Phil), Horan (Tom), Maher (Anthony), Fallon (Attracta) & Lambe (Christy) Families;
- Colt Bowe, Guilfoyle, Lawlor, Ryan, Doogue, Murray, Scully, Lalor (Fr Eddie) & Mulhall Families;
- Courtwood Boland (Owen), Corocoan (Peter), Doohan (Johnny) & Doyle (George Sen.) Families;

Crettyard	Wheatley (Eamonn), Brophy (George), Patterson (Patrick), Fitzpatrick (Bill), Hughes (Bernadette), Brennan (Margaret) Jordan (Mary Jo) & Murphy (Paddy) Families;
Emo	Moore (Pat) & McEvoy (Tom) Families;
Graigucullen	Nelson, Murnane, Hurely & Nolan Families;
Kilcotton	Murphy (Michael), Fitzpatrick (Michael), Coss (Rita), Scott (Margaret) & Campion (Paddy) Families.
Kilcavan	Culleton (Rita), Dunne (Richard), Weston & Sanderson (Mary) Families;
Killeshin	Price (Sean), Scully & O'Reilly (John) Families;
Kyle	Heuston, Phelan, Kavanagh, Maher, Bergin & Delaney Families;
Mountmellick	McElwee, Rochford, Deffen, Murphy & Moss (Jimmy) Family;
O'Dempsey's	Kavanagh, Lalwor, O'Leary, O'Donnell & McElwee Families;
Portarlington	Carey, Leavy, Donagher, Lyons, Monagher, Callanan, Fallon, Smith, Downey, O'Shea, Shortall, Hargrove, Bolton, McCarthy/Leavy & Maher Families;
Park Ratheniska	Cahill Family;
Portlaoise	Fennell (Peter), Fitzpatrick (Paddy) & Kavanagh (Denis) Families;
Rathdowney Errill	Ryan, O'Dea, Kavanagh, Bowe (John), Cahill (Richard), Bannon & Williams Families;
Rosenallis	Lynam, Coffey, Hinch, Clear, Hyland, Wisely, Flanagan, Dooley, Lynch, Conroy, Ryan, Somers, Corr & Weston Families;
Shanahoe	Guilfoyle (Josephine), Bergin (Margaret) & Kirwan (Martin) Families;
Slieve Bloom	Heffernan (Jim) Family;
Spink: Miller (John), Gorman Spink (McDonnell Mick & Petty), Gorman Moate (Nancy) & Bowe (Ger) Families;	
St Joseph's	Brennan (Leo), Kealey (Hannah) & Murphy Families;
St Fintan's Mountrath	Moroney, Page, Phelan, Tobin, Byrne, Bergin & Seale Families;

- Stradbally Casey (Noel), McEvoy (Brendan), Farrelly (Paddy),
Moore (Jacinta nee Booth), Kehoe (Evelyn), Delaney
(Rita), Delaney (Karl), Delaney (Teddy) & Keenan
(Larry) Families;
- The Harps. Mahony, Dunphy, Dempsey, & Phelan Families;
- The Heath. O'Connor & Conway (Arles) Families;
- The Rock Lee, Reilly, Delaney, Storey, Carroll, Harding, Horan,
Casey, Joyce & Payne Families;
- Timahoe. Lowry (Denis), Scully (John), Mangan (Bill), Miller
(John), Kealey (Hannah), Kelly (Chrissie), Quigley
(Breda), Ramsbottom (Sean) & Ramsbottom (Noel)
Families;
- Trumera Kelly (Michael), Healy (Noel), Kavanagh (Michael)
& Parkinson (Patrick) Families;
- St Fintan's Mountrath: Rice, Williams, Byrne, Ryan, Wallace (Trevor), Casey,
Purcell, Fahey, Browne and Wallace (Betty) Families;
- Stradbally:. Delaeny, Keenan, Duggan, Casey, Mulhare, Nolan,
Lalor, Dalton, Moore and Kearns Families;
- The Harps: Muldowney, Townsend, Duggan, Kenna, Woods,
Barry, Collier, Walsh, McGree, McEvoy, Murphy,
Dunne, Mahoney, Moore, Fogarty, Monnelly, Shortall
and Conroy Families;
- The Rock: Lynch, Donogher, Davis, Dowling and Storey Families;
- Timahoe: Dalton Family
- Trumera: Dooley, Dowling, Farrell and Dunne Families;

Tuairisc an Runaí 2023

Once again I welcome you all to our annual Laois GAA Convention, whereby we all have the opportunity to analyse and reflect on Laois GAA affairs during the past year. My opinions and reflections on our GAA activities during the past year -

Senior Hurling

Walsh Cup – With a new management team and the unavailability of a number of previous senior panellists due to emigration, this competition was used to view new players and finalise panel for upcoming Allianz League competition. I must say displays were encouraging with a win over Wexford in Mountrath, competitive performance in defeat to Kilkenny in Rathdowney and a loss to our neighbours Offaly in Tullamore in a game we should really have won. This brought a conclusion to our Walsh Cup campaign and provided three games in a competitive environment prior to our Allianz League campaign.

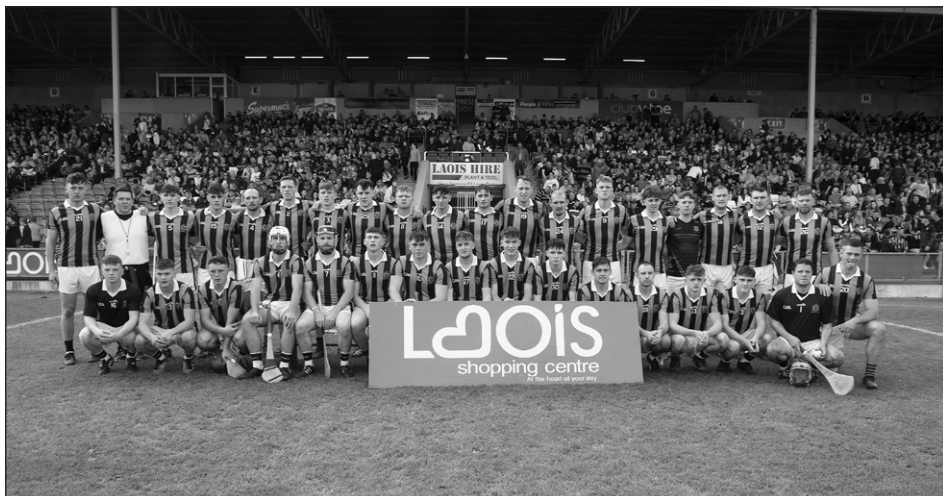
I find it difficult to understand GPA policy in recent press articles whereby they are canvassing to have these competitions removed from the Fixture calendar. Both Walsh Cup and O’Byrne Cup are “accident tournaments” which provide a valuable income resource to our Player Injury Fund and if we had not these tournaments, I am certain we would be replicating same with challenge games for the same purpose.

League – Our ultimate goal every year is to maintain our Division 1 League status, which we have consistently achieved since 2014. As I have previously stated in my report to Convention, I believe a review of Allianz Hurling League format is urgently

required. It is great to be competing at the “top table” but some of the defeats we have received in recent years have been demoralising and in my opinion are not conducive to the development of intercountry hurling in Laois. It is an issue we have canvassed National CCC on and consideration is being given to potentially reverting to 5 x Allianz Hurling League Divisions with 7 teams in each, based on 2024 standings. This would be very favourable to Laois, but unlikely to receive the approval of the elite hurling counties.

Unfortunately our league campaign was poor, performances not good enough and we suffered five consecutive defeats to Tipperary, Waterford, Kilkenny, Antrim and Dublin over a six week period, which drained confidence and allowed very little recovery time from the games which were played at a high intensity. As a result, we qualified for a relegation play-off against our old adversaries Westmeath, who suffered a similar faith in the other division. This game was played in FBD Semple Stadium where we had ample opportunities, but a more determined Westmeath side won out on the day, relegating us to Division 2 status for the 2024 campaign.

Championship – Our opening game in the Joe McDonagh Cup against Offaly in Tullamore was always going to have an influence on the outcome of this competition. In a competitive game, Offaly emerged deserving winners. This was followed by facile wins against Down and Kildare. Between these games a draw with Carlow, effectively left us depending on other results to qualify



Camross - Senior Hurling Champions



St. Joseph's - Senior Football Champions

for the final of this competition. In our final round robin game against Kerry in Tralee, we produced perhaps our best performance of the year to record an impressive success. However the decision by Offaly to field a weakened team in their final game against Carlow, ended our Joe McDonagh Cup aspirations for 2023.

Special Congress in September discussed motions in relation to proposed amendments to the Joe McDonagh Cup for future years. These motions included removal of All Ireland Preliminary quarter-final games and introduction of Joe McDonagh Cup semi-final game for second and third placed teams, which would have allowed more scope for the scheduling of games in this competition over a greater period of time, rather than the current five games in six weeks scenario. In light of what happened this year, there was a lot of merit to these motions, but they failed to gain the required support of Congress, resulting in the status quo continuing.

I believe for 2024 that there is a great opportunity of potential League and Joe McDonagh Cup success for our panel of players. I am encouraged with commitment to date and the introduction of a number of younger players to the panel will certainly increase competitiveness. However there is also a responsibility to being an inter-county player and the unofficial partying and socialising that has happened in the past is not acceptable in what is now a congested games schedule. I want to take this opportunity to compliment and thank all our players who did commit to our county for their dedication during the year and appeal

for a concerted effort again in the coming year.

My thanks to Willie Maher (Manager) and his backroom team, which included Dan Shanahan and Eamon Jackman (Selectors / Coaching); Christy O'Connor (Goalkeeping Coach); Cathal Murtagh (Strength and Conditioning); Shane O'Sullivan (Performance Coach); Alison Holmes and Sara Cuddy (Physiotherapy); Caoimhe Kenny (Nutrition); Michael Connolly and Sean Conroy (Stats and Performance Analysis), John Paul Campion (Doctor), Pat Delaney, Jack Harding and John Kealy (Kit), David O'Brien (Liaison & Servicing Secretary).

Willie Maher will continue at the helm for 2024, where he will be again be assisted by Eamon Jackman and where Dan Shanahan, Christy O'Connor and Cathal Murtagh will be replaced by Brian Horgan and Michael Connolly as Coach / Selectors, Paul Dermody Goalkeeping Coach and Dave Moriarty returns as Strength and Conditioning Coach.

Walsh Cup

Sun 8 Jan (Mountrath) – Round 1
Laois 0-20, Wexford 0-18

Sun 15 Jan (Rathdowney) – Round 2
Kilkenny 3-31, Laois 2-21

Sun 22 Jan (O'Connor Park) – Round 3
Offaly 2-21, Laois 1-23

Allianz Hurling League Division 1

Sat 4 Feb (Semple Stadium) Round 1
Tipperary 2-32, Laois 0-18



Portlaoise - Premier Intermediate Hurling Champions



Ballylinan - Intermediate Football Champions

Sat 11 Feb (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 2
Waterford 2-31, Laois 2-19

Sun 26 Feb (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 3
Kilkenny 0-34, Laois 1-18

Sun 12 Mar (Corrigan Park Belfast)
Round 4:
Antrim 3-18, Laois 1-18

Sun 19 Mar (Parnell Park) Round 5
Dublin 1-29 Laois 0-20

Sat 25 March (Semple Stadium)
Relegation Playoff:
Westmeath 3-24, Laois 1-26

Joe McDonagh Cup:
Sat 08 April (O'Connor Park) Round 1
Offaly 3-19, Laois 1-22

Sun 16 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 2
Laois 7-24, Down 0-14

Sat 22 April (Netwatch Cullen Park)
Round 3
Laois 1-22, Carlow 1-22

Sat 06 May (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 4
Laois 1-23, Kildare 0-11

Sat 13 May (Austin Stack Park Tralee)
Round 5
Laois 4-23, Kerry 0-21

Under 20 Hurling

Our opening game in this championship was against Kildare in Hawkfield on a

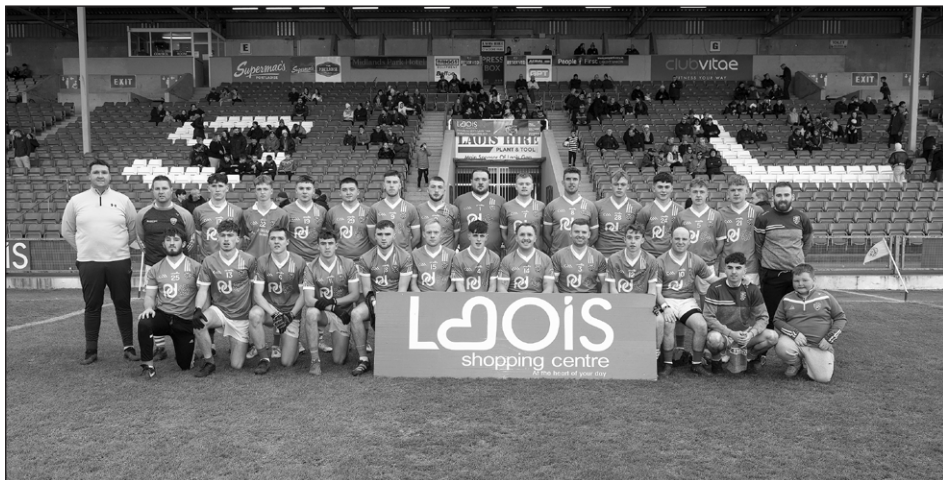
dreary Friday evening in March and whilst the home side were competitive, Laois finished the last quarter well to emerge deserving winners. Our next game against Carlow seen us run out facile winners against a disappointing Carlow side. The final game in the Group stage was Kerry here in their adopted underage hurling home in "Laois Hire" O'Moore Park, where we were put to the pin of our collar to get a result to qualify for a preliminary quarter-final. Again, we faced old adversaries Westmeath, in another home game. Here, I do not believe we played anywhere near our potential, with the game going to extra time and eventually losing out on penalties.

I have to admit our U20 hurling campaign was disappointing and particularly to exit the championship on penalties. Unfortunately this regulation is a result of the split-season and the pressure from counties for all inter county under-age competitions to be played on a league basis in an already condensed season and is likely here to stay. In reviewing our panel on paper, much more may have been expected, but as previously stated, I do not think this team played anywhere near their full potential. I want to take this opportunity to thank all panellists for their commitment to the development of Laois hurling and with so many available for selection again in 2024, I look forward to greater reward in the year ahead.

I want to thank Ollie Hally (Manager) along with his management team of Christy Coughlan, Andrew Kavanagh, Tadhg Doran (Selectors / Coach), Sean Conroy (Selector / Stats), Conor Shannon (Strength and Conditioning), Miriam



Colt-Shanaboe - Intermediate Hurling Champions



Stradbally - Senior "B" Football Champions

Harrison (Physio), Oonagh Maher (Team Secretary) and Conor McCausland (Kit) for their dedication and efforts with this panel. In particular, I wish to convey a special thanks to Ollie Hally for his time and input to Laois GAA in recent years, from academies to U20's, he really has put a huge effort and time into the development of Laois hurling and I wish him well in his future endeavours.

In the coming year, Damien Carter will step up from his minor role to take charge of a management team that greatly resembles the minor set up of 2022, which includes Declan Qualter, Chris Murray and Kevin Power (Selectors / Coach), Tomas Hassett (Strength and Conditioning) Laura Langton (Physio), Johnny Fitzpatrick (Kit) and it is hoped that Derek McGrath may also be available for some coaching sessions at times during the season. Laois GAA took a decision to enter a combined schools team in the Leinster Post Primary Schools Senior Hurling competition as preparation for their 2024 campaign and success in their opening game against Dublin South, sees them qualify for the final of the combined schools section of this competition.

Leinster Under 20 Hurling Championship

Fri 31 Mar (Hawkfield) Round 1
Laois 1-16, Kildare 0-11

Thurs 06 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 2
Laois 3-27, Carlow 0-15

Sat 15 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 3
Laois 2-16, Kerry 1-15

Fri 21 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Prel Q-Final
Laois 3-19, Westmeath 3-19
(AET Lost on Penalties)

Minor Hurling

Due to our exploits in 2022, by reaching a Leinster Minor Hurling final, Laois were designated a Tier 1 county for 2023 Leinster Minor Hurling championship. Further difficulty accrued when GAA Congress last February passed a motion to allow Galway participate in Leinster Minor Hurling championship. This was a motion that our county did not support, nor I believe did many other Leinster counties, but a passionate plea from an Iar Uachtaráin swung the Congress delegation, who democratically voted to allow Galway participate in Leinster Minor Hurling championship. It will certainly make life more difficult for Laois teams at this grade in the future.

Whilst there may not have been the same expectation as the previous year for this team, there was a hope that we would be at least competitive. The commitment, preparation and training of the panel was encouraging. Our opening championship games against Kilkenny and Galway resulted in facile wins for the opposition. Our final game in the group was against Antrim in Abbottstown. In this game, our team showed something we had not seen from them earlier in their campaign, where they displayed heart and determination in abundance to overcome a dogged Antrim team, to qualify for a preliminary quarter-final against Kildare. This was a game one would normally expect to win, but hurling in Kildare is under a resurgence at present and they again had to battle against



Park Ratheniska Timahoe - Junior Hurling Champions



Annanough - Junior Football Champions

a far more physically conditioned side. It was only in the final quarter that they did get on top to emerge deserving winners. Our quarter-final against Dublin was in O'Moore Park, where we will certainly rue missed opportunities in the opening half, which would have seen us with a comfortable lead at half-time. In the second half our opposition took all their chances to run out narrow but deserving winners. Again I wish to thank all panel members for their commitment to Laois Hurling. This was an extremely difficult year for them in losing one of their fellow panellists David Brown in such tragic circumstances. I certainly admire their courage and only hope that the experience gained in their defeat to Dublin will go on to serve these lads so much better in the future as they progress to U20 and adult grades.

I wish to thank our management team for their endeavours with this panel – Damien Carter (Manager), Eddie Downey, Kevin Power and Chris Murray (Selectors / Coach), Tomas Hassett (Strength and Conditioning), Laura Langton (Physio) and Conor Doran and Darren Young (Kit). With Damien moving to U20 grade, Glen McEvoy has been appointed to oversee our Minor Hurling preparation for 2024, where he will be ably assisted by Dermot McGill, Mark Dunne, Ger Cuddy and Martin Fallon (Selectors / Coach), (Strength and Conditioning) and Rachel Walsh (Physio) and we wish them well in their endeavours with this incoming panel.

Leinster Minor Hurling Championship

Sat 25 March (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)

Round 1:

Kilkenny 3-17, Laois 1-12

Sat 01 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)

Round 2:

Galway 4-28, Laois 0-11

Fri 7 April (Abbottstown) Round 3:

Laois 4-14, Antrim 1-19

Sun 16 April (Clane) Prel. Q/Final:

Laois 4-15, Kildare 2-13

Mon 24 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)

Q/Final:

Dublin 1-20, Laois 0-17

Senior Football

O'Byrne Cup – As normal this competition was used to view and trial some new panel-lists. Our opening game against Longford in McCann Park, certainly did not provide any optimism, with a disappointing loss to the travelling team. Next up, Meath in Páirc Tailteann, where a much improved display seen us share the spoils. Our final game in the series was against Carlow in Stradbally was postponed due to weather, with Carlow conceding the re-fixtured.

It was disappointing the manner in which a number of counties treated this competition, after all the schedule was well documented for every county prior to entering the competition. From our own experience the previous year, advancing to the knock-out stages does involve a hectic schedule prior to an important league campaign and I think a revised format for 2024 will be more beneficial to all concerned.



The Harps - Junior "B" Hurling Champions



Killeslin - Junior "B" Football Champions

League – Further to last year’s relegation to Division 4, the ultimate goal was promotion back to Division 3. At the outset this looked very achievable, but from our previous experience here, every game in this Division was going to be a dogfight and not easily won.

Our opening game was Sligo in Markievicz Park and a deserved win against a fancied home side made the long journey home all the more enjoyable. Next up Wexford at home and again a hard fought win. In our next game away to Carlow, we had another battle, but a deserving win, which came at a heavy price with two straight red cards, one of which I believe was extremely harsh. Next up Wicklow at home as we tried to avenge that hugely disappointing championship defeat of the previous year. In a game where we had plenty of opportunities, it was Wicklow who ran out two point winners. This was followed by a facile success against Waterford. However, a narrow defeat to Leitrim in Carrick on Shannon meant our destiny was out of our hands and dependent on other results. Whilst success against London in McGovern Park Ruislip was celebrated by the large travelling Laois contingent. The victory was not enough, as we lost out on the head to head rule with Wicklow for a place in the Allianz Division 4 League final and promotion to Division 3. I must say a very disappointing campaign, where I have no hesitation in stating that a moment of madness in the Carlow game probably costing us promotion.

Championship / Tailteann Cup – In our opening game in the Leinster Championship, we again played Wexford in “Laois Hire” O’Moore Park, where we battled to a narrow victory. This success

resulted in a game against Dublin in our home ground, where a stadium full of fans created a tremendous championship atmosphere. Unfortunately that was as good as it got, with perhaps a little naivety in the manner in which we set up, the Dubs were relentless in attack and had the game well and truly put to bed before half time. It is worth noting that Dublin did go onto become Leinster and All Ireland champions, but the margin of defeat also showed the real gulf in class between the teams. If ever there was a reason for why a Tailteann Cup competition was required, this was it!

I will give credit to team and management as they gathered to prepare for the Tailteann Cup in its new format in enthusiastic manner. Our opening game was against Cavan in Breffni Park. This was an encouraging display, where I thought the award of a controversial penalty against us changed the course of the game and it was only in the final quarter that the home side come out on top. In our next game against Offaly, we were by far the better team but failed to put them away and in typical Offaly fashion they fought back to earn a draw. Success in our final group game, London in Parnell Park, would assure us of a place in the knockout series. In a game that looked in safe-keeping at half-time, but a worrying trend that we are becoming accustomed to continued as we left London in the game and a huge second half revival on their behalf almost succeeded, but for a late Niall Corbett score well into injury time securing a draw.

On scoring difference, we qualified for the final preliminary quarter-final position and were drawn to play Fermanagh in Brewster



Ballyfin - Junior "C" Hurling Champions



Clonaslee St Manmans - Junior "C" Football Champions

Park. In a dour game we availed of our chances and emerged deserving albeit narrow winners. Our quarter-final opposition was Limerick in the Gaelic Grounds and in a more entertaining game, we produced another encouraging performance to gain another victory. Our semi-final opposition was Down in Croke Park and there was a quiet optimism in the camp that we were more than capable of extending our winning run. It also captured the imagination of our supporters, whom had been sadly missing for most of the year, but turned out in massive numbers for our Tailteann Cup semi-final game. In the game itself, Down blitzed us with early goals from which there was no return and a disappointing end to another campaign. I would like to acknowledge GAA authorities for their organisation and promotion of the Tailteann Cup, which was particularly pleasing to our sponsor, Laois Hire, and more of the same in other competitions would be greatly appreciated.

I wish to take this opportunity to compliment all our players who committed to our county during the year for their dedication and efforts. I am aware a number of players are unavailable this year due to their desire to travel and whilst disappointing from a Club and County perspective, I do wish them well and hope they enjoy. There loss, I believe is an opportunity for some of our more exiting young players to excel in a Laois jersey.

Our outgoing management and back-room team are also deserving of our thanks – Billy Sheehan (Manager); Chris Conway, Gerry McGill, Tommy Mulligan and Paddy Dunne (Selectors /

Coach); Tom Hargroves and Mick Maher (Strength and Conditioning Coach); Gavin Deering (Liaison Officer); Paul Dargan, Martin Corrigan and Ian Bradley (Stats / Performance Analysis); Dr Simon Honan; Johnny Lalor (Physio) and of course both our Kit personnel Ollie Byrne and Martin Kelly.

This incoming year sees the welcome return of Justin McNulty. The Armagh native has a proven track record with our county and whilst he may not have the same talent available to him as in his previous regime, I am confident he will bring some much needed stability to our panel and build a team capable of challenging for League and Championship or Tailteann Cup honours. He will be assisted by Ross Munnely and Diarmuid Carroll as Coach / Selectors. I wish to acknowledge our appointments committee PJ Kelly, Kieran Kehoe, Tony Bambrick, Colm Begley and Pat Gilroy for their endeavours in this appointment process.

O'Byrne Cup

Wed 4 Jan (Portarlinton) Round 1:
Longford 3-18, Laois 0-13

Sat 7 Jan (Páirc Tailteann Navan) Round 2:
Laois 2-10, Meath 0-16

Wed 11 Jan (Stradbally) Round 3:
Laois & Carlow postponed

Allianz Football League Division 4:

Sun 29 Jan (Markievicz Park) Round 1:
Sligo 0-11, Laois 2-11

Sun 5 Feb (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 2:
Wexford 1-13, Laois 1-18

Sun 19 Feb (Netwatch Cullen Park)
Round 3:
Carlow 2-08, Laois 1-17

Sat 25 Feb (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 4:
Wicklow 2-12, Laois 2-10

Sat 4 Mar (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 5:
Laois 2-13, Waterford 1-05

Sun 19 Mar (Carrick on Shannon)
Round 6:
Leitrim 2-14, Laois 0-18

Sun 26 Mar (Ruislip) Round 7:
Laois 6-06, London 2-08

Leinster Senior Football Championship:

Sun 09 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 1:
Laois 2-17, Wexford 2-13

Sun 23 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Q/final:
Dublin 4-30, Laois 2-09

Tailteann Cup:

Sat 13 May (Breffni Park) Round 1:
Cavan 2-20, Laois 1-14

Sat 20 May (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 2:

Laois 1-11, Offaly 1-11

Sat 03 June (Parnell Park) Round 3:
Laois 1-17, London 2-14

Sat 10 June (Brewster Park) Prel Q/final:
Laois 1-11, Fermanagh 1-09

Sat 17 June (Gaelic Grounds) Q/final:
Laois 1-14, Limerick 0-14

Sun 25 June (Croke Park) S/final:
Down 8-16, Laois 2-12

Under 20 Football

The year commenced with the John Kerins U20 Football Development League an All Ireland league competition, which provided valuable games in a competitive environment prior to our Leinster U20 Football championship campaign. The potential within this panel is perhaps judged on their results in this competition whereby they drew with Cork and Roscommon, prior to a one point loss to eventual winners Galway. Sadly this league has been removed from the calendar, with preference for a league based championship.

For the first time, the Leinster Championship was organised on a league basis and commenced with a narrow victory over Carlow in Carlow, followed by another success against Longford at home. The final game in the round robin series saw us face Meath again in "Laois Hire" O'Moore Park, where a terrific second half performance saw Laois run out convincing winners. As a result we qualified for a home semi-final game against neighbours Kildare. Whilst there was an air of confidence entering this game, our team never

performed to their potential and Kildare ran out deserving winners. This Kildare team would proceed to both Leinster and All Ireland Championship success.

I wish to thank all players who committed to this grade during the last year. Needless to say, the Kildare result was a disappointing end to the campaign, however I honestly believe if our fortunes at adult level are to better, it is the players from this panel and the previous year's panel that must step up to the mark, where I am confident they have the ability to progress our fortunes at senior grade in time.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Tom Byrne and Sean O'Shea (Joint Managers); Paul Cahilane (Selector/Coach); Eoghan Keogh (Goalkeeping Coach); Pauraic McEvoy (Strength and Condition); Eoghan Mealey (Physio); Liam Delaney (Performance Analysis) and Johnny Ramsbottom (Kit) for their efforts. Tom "Milky" Byrne has been an integral member of our U20 management teams for the past five years and his coaching input to the development of our players at this grade has been invaluable and I wish him well in his future endeavours. Both he and his management team have decided not to seek another term and they will be replaced by Kieran Kelly (Manager), who will be assisted by Brian McCormack, Kieran Delaney and Billy Delaney (Selectors), Pauraic McEvoy (Strength and Condition); Eoghan Mealey (Physio) and Johnny Ramsbottom (Kit).

John Kerins Cup U20 Football Development League

Sat 11 Feb (Páirc Uí Chaoimh) Round 1:
Laois 1-11, Cork 1-11

Sat 18 Feb (LOETB CoE) Round 2:
Laois 0-08, Roscommon 0-08

Sat 04 March (Tuam Stadium) Round 3:
Galway 1-12, Laois 1-11

Leinster U20 Football Championship
Tues 21 March (Netwatch Cullen Park)
Round 1:
Laois 1-12, Carlow 1-10

Tues 28 March (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 2:
Laois 2-12, Longford 2-09

Tues 04 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 3:
Laois 1-12, Meath 1-07

Tues 18 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
LU20FC S/Final:
Kildare 1-20, Laois 0-09

Minor Football

Our minor campaign commenced with a big win against Longford in "Laois Hire" O'Moore Park. Unfortunately that was as good as it got, with disappointing defeats and performances against Offaly and Kildare to follow, albeit in difficult circumstances. Our opening round victory ensured qualification for a preliminary quarter-final game away to Wexford, which resulted in another heavy defeat. As a result, we participated in the Seamus Heaney Cup, a subsidiary competition for counties that do not reach their provincial quarter-

finals. Here we played Wicklow at home and yet another defeat.

I want to thank all players for their commitment and efforts to this panel. For a county that once prided ourselves on our production of minor football panels, our results at this grade in recent years have been disappointing and is worrying. Our academy system has been in place for a number of years now and performances should be better. It is an area that our Coaching and Games department are concentrating and working on, whilst our athlete development programme is now up and running and will benefit our panels in the long-term. It is an ongoing struggle however to entice quality personnel with requisite coaching skills to get involved with our panels and this is a major problem.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank our management team for their endeavours over the past two years – Conor Gorman (Manager), Billy Delaney and Eamon O’Connell (Selectors) and Colm Kelly (Coach); Jason Coffey and Rachel Guinane (Strength and Conditioning); Richie Hitchcock (Physio); Tony Bambrick (Stats) and Peter Kealy (Kit). For 2024, Ger Slevin takes charge, where he will be assisted by Adrian Slevin, John Connolly, Michael Lenihan and Brian O’Sullivan (Selectors), Fergal Byron (Goalkeeping Coach), Donie Brennan (Coach), Cathal Murtagh and Brian Ging (Strength and Conditioning), Richie Hitchcock (Physio), Tom Conroy (Performance Coach), John Murphy (Match Analysis) and Paddy O’Connor (Kit).

Leinster Minor Football Championship

Wed 05 April (Laois Hire O’Moore Park)

Round 1:

Laois 2-12, Longford 1-02

Wed 12 April (O’Connor Park) Round 2:

Offaly 2-10, Laois 0-09

Wed 26 April (Laois Hire O’Moore Park)

Round 3:

Kildare 0-18, Laois 0-10

Wed 03 May (Wexford Park) LMFC Prel Q/final:

Wexford 6-10, Laois 0-09

Wed 17 May (Laois Hire O’Moore Park)

Seamus Heaney Cup:

Wicklow 2-11, Laois 1-08

Local Championships

As I write this article, our entire schedule is complete with exception of U20 Football competitions and I want to take this opportunity to thank all Club Officers for their patience and co-operation in completing this mammoth fixture programme.

I want to congratulate all our competition winners, whom are listed in the roll of honour at the end of this report. On writing this report all our representatives have disappointingly exited Leinster Club championships, which similar to Inter-county, is perhaps a reflection on where present standards are within our county and any attempts to increase numbers in respective grades of championship in either code will certainly dilute our competitiveness outside the senior grades even further.

Briefly some of my observations on our club competitions –

Hurling Championship – During the year, there has been some debate to extending the number of teams in the Senior Hurling Championship, which has since come by means of recommendation via our Fixture Analysts survey review. The powers to be in some of our hurling hierarchies in the county argue that the development of hurling in some clubs is not being progressed due to their exclusion from competing in the Senior Hurling championship. In my opinion, there are two sides to that debate, but if there is a democratic mood for change, certainly the twelve team proposal is more palatable than the ten teams. CCC opposed the proposal in early 2023, for the simple reason that extending the championship by an additional two rounds did not fit our current club championship fixture schedule and would have serious impact on our dual players and clubs. If the clubs at our November County Committee meeting decide to increase the number of teams in our Hurling championships, then two additional weekends may be found, which will likely return to an undefined fixture calendar. This effectively means club championships will commence on the conclusion of our inter county activities. This is the most likely scenario, unless there is change to Leinster Club championship calendar. I think the defined Fixture Calendar is one of the mainstays of our Fixture schedule, particularly in the area of Club and Player planning. On review of our recent results in Leinster Club Hurling, another area of concern is that we would be seriously diluting our competitiveness in these competitions.

Football Championship – I think my thoughts on the number of teams in our Senior Championship has been well documented and I see little point in discussing further as there is absolutely no appetite for change among our Senior Football Clubs. For our 2023 Senior and Intermediate championships, CCC on the recommendation of our Fixture Analysts, tweaked both championships by including a “B” championship for teams exiting the competition at quarter and semi-final stage respectively, which importantly incorporated relegation from both these championships. I think the Senior “B”, named in honour of the late John Conway, worked extremely well with a buy in from all clubs, whilst the only disappointing aspect of the Intermediate “B” was that there was no final played in this competition.

Underage – I want to acknowledge the work of Joe Cunningham, Tony Bambrick and their Coiste na nOg committee in their underage schedule of games. I don’t believe there were ever as many underage games played in a calendar year, with the incorporation of shield competitions at all grades ensuring all our young players got additional games. Their championship programme culminated with 32 different finals in various grades from U13 to U17 in both codes during September and October, all of which were played in our LOETB Centre of Excellence or Laois Hire O’Moore Park. The return to the playing of our U17 Championship finals prior to our Senior Championship finals was also well received. I am aware of the controversies surrounding our Development Competitions, which were organised for second teams of Clubs or Independent

Teams and this is an issue Coiste na nÓg will bring clarity to before the new season commences.

“Decoupling” is the term given to the age grade whereby an underage player is ineligible to play at the Adult grade. This reverted to Under 17 a number of years ago, possibly without the required research and has been the topic of considerable debate since, with many counties preference to revert back to Under 18. It has been the motion of several debate at recent Congresses, where National Development CCC have brought forward several proposals, but none ever receiving unanimous approval. As a result, Special Congress last September passed a motion to allow each County to determine this minimum eligibility age grade by means of Competition regulation. Our CCC has made recommendation to our County Committee that we continue to decouple at U17 grade and that this remain in place for three years for the purpose of giving clarity to club planning. Our reasons for this proposal were as follows:

- Age grade progression in place from U13, U15, U17 & U20;
- All Clubs with Adult grades have requisite teams in place to provide players exiting the U17 grade with sufficient games;
- Impact on our rural Clubs, many suffering with player availability, would have players available exiting U17 grade, rather than wait until exiting U18 grade;
- Inter-county competitions will continue at U17 and U20 grade, so better alignment with same.

“Split Season” is now in operation whereby our Inter-county season commences in January and conclude with our All Ireland Finals scheduled for the final two weekends in July, with the remainder of the year designated to Club activity, although this is presently restricted with commencement of Leinster Club championships in October. It is another topic that provokes debate, with many traditionalists unable to come to terms with our All Ireland Finals being played in July rather than September. There is also the question of surrendering so much of our prime GAA Inter-county activity by not utilising the months of August and September for our showpiece games. Due to the fact, that almost all underage Inter-county championships are now played on a league basis and with consideration to the calendar for Allianz Leagues, Leinster Championship, Joe McDonagh Cup and Tailteann Cup, it is a very condensed season. It has however been endorsed by players and the now defunct Club Players Association and is likely to remain.

The reason for including this paragraph is to give some insight into the organisation of our own internal Club calendar for our football and hurling championships as a result of the split season:

- The first two areas that we prioritise are alternative weekends for football and hurling and secondly providing a definitive weekend date for each round of championship;
- As 35 of our 48 Clubs, are either a dual club or have dual players, we therefore consider all our Clubs to be dual for the purpose of outlining a master club fixture programme;
- Our schedule is then based on the number of weekends for each of our

senior championships, which is to facilitate that the senior grade is played prior to intermediate and junior. This schedule at present entails senior hurling championship x 6 rounds, senior football championship x 6 rounds and Electric Picnic weekend, giving a total of 13 weekends required.

- As a CCC, we work our calendar back from the commencement of the Leinster Club championship, which is normally the Leinster Club Football championship towards end of October, this year that date was 21st. October.
- Our preferred commencement date is the anticipated date that our inter-county teams (which is also treated as dual) are likely to exit their respective inter-county competition, which this year was based on Tailteann Cup final on Sat 15th. July. Our Senior Hurling championship commenced the following week, entailing the 13 weekends and concluding with Senior Football final on Sunday 15th. October.

Game of Gaelic Football

Gaelic Football is one of two of our association's primary products and is in my opinion in a state of crisis. The manner in which the game at inter-county level is being coached and played is resulting in it becoming unwatchable, predictable and repetitive. This is now being replicated at club level where teams operate the slow, monotonous, defensive styles of our inter-county teams. It is probably unfair to categorise all our football games in this manner, but an increasing number of our games at adult level are being played in this mode. I witnessed certain club games this year where there was an exodus of spectators at half-time, as a re-

sult of the spectacle being so poor and unwatchable. I am aware our playing rules are being constantly reviewed by the Standing Committee on Playing Rules and I understand that new rules place additional pressure on our match officials in having to deal with the increasing number of rules that have been introduced in recent years, but change is required. Portlaoise Club have tabled a motion to Convention this evening in an effort to address these deficiencies in our game. The motion has been put together by Cyril Duggan, who has informed me he has trialled this proposal successfully at primary school level, with the outcome a greater satisfaction from the players in playing a more attacking style of football. I believe there is merit in the proposal and honestly fear if we do not address this crisis shortly, people are not going to continue to attend or watch the spectacle as it is now being played.

Referees and Disciplinary Issues

I want to thank our Referees and our Match Officials for their assistance and cooperation in completing our Fixture programme. Our referees have a thankless job, but without them, we simply would not have any games.

Admittedly, referees do make mistakes, but so do players, managers, club officers, we all do. They do not so deliberately, they call it as they see it, and in real time, often in high pressure situations and under intense scrutiny. But if we're honest, considering the environment, referees do get things right time after time. Occasionally they do not, but the challenge for us all is to learn from their mistakes rather than to be defined by them. I would recommend the re-introduc-

tion of referee assessment and mentoring in an effort to try improve standards among our younger match officials. One other area of concern is the increasing number of clubs trying to influence who or who doesn't officiate their games. In my opinion this completely undermines the integrity of our match officials which I believe is a very dangerous practice and should not be entertained.

Unfortunately, during the year several of our referees and match officials received unwarranted abuse from players, mentors, officials and supporters. In February, Congress passed an array of disciplinary measures designed as deterrents against abuse and violent misbehaviour on GAA pitches, which were initiated in response to concerns about the targeting of match officials and other outbreaks of disorder during controversial club matches last autumn twelve months. Ranging from increasing the maximum sanction for an individual from 96 weeks to 240 weeks to doubling a ban for any frivolous or over-technical cases brought to a hearings committee, the recommendations are aimed at fortifying the disciplinary system and ensuring greater respect for match officials. Other motions include preventing team officials who serve suspensions from preparing their teams outside of match day and penalties for infractions by team officials at under-age games to be doubled. Our CCC has implemented these suspensions for all reported incidents of indiscipline against our match officials during the year and will continue to do so for all future reported breaches of discipline.

As the numbers of our games continue to increase, our reliance upon a small pool of referees is reaching crisis point and there is a real worry starting, that we will struggle to have sufficient referees available to fulfil our fixture programme. Referee recruitment and retention is the responsibility of all units of our Association, so I again appeal for your support in sourcing a suitable candidate within your Club environs that may be willing to take on such an onerous task. While I make this appeal annually, I would like to acknowledge the few Clubs that did actually source a new Referees during the year, all of whom have shown promise in their officiating at our games during the year.

Our Referee Administrator Vincent Dowling and his Committee consisting of Danny Gorman, Ann Barry and Tom Donohoe are also deserving of our thanks for their efforts and I have no hesitation in admitting that this is the most difficult and thankless position in Laois GAA administration.

“Laois Hire” O’Moore Park and “LOETB” Centre of Excellence

“Laois Hire” O’Moore Park is one of our main sources of revenue due to the income received from our internal club gate receipts and rental income from Leinster and Central Council games. In 2023, our venue was again chosen to host numerous inter-county and club games, although there was disappointment that we were overlooked for some more. We are thankful to Central and Leinster Councils for placing their trust in us to host such games and the stadiums exposure for such matches

certainly supports Laois Hire sponsorship input and our other pitch-side advertisers.

With the pending development of other stadium in the province, it is imperative that we continue to upgrade our facilities in the grounds to ensure that we can continue to provide spectator friendly facilities. Thanks to our financial surplus over the past two years, we have replaced and installed in excess of 4,700 new seats in our stand, at a cost of €270k; erected a new tv gantry and press-box on the main terrace, at a cost of €20k and irrigation system has been installed in the stadium grounds in recent weeks at a cost of €68k. In the coming months we intend to upgrade our disability area and replace our scoreboard at an expected cost of €50k.

Our “LOETB” Centre of Excellence continues to be used on a daily basis by our Intercounty panels, our Academies, our Clubs, our Primary and Post Primary schools, Camogie, LGFA and for internal Club games. In reality, we do not have enough pitches to meet demand and rely heavily on our partnership with Heywood CS for their facilities almost on a weekly basis. With the inclement weather we have endured in recent months, all pitches are standing up to the hardship, but due to demand they are being over-used. We are presently exploring replacing our pitch 3 with a synthetic surface, which would greatly help in the management of the centre. We have also continued to develop our facilities in CoE, with the erection of a Ball Wall this year, which was supported by Sports Capital grant funding.

I wish to acknowledge the support of our local Gardai when required on match days, our Event Controller Tom Jones, Safety Officer PJ Kelly and our frontline Stewards Gerry Kavanagh, Connie Dunne, Andrew Broderick, Danny Gorman, Mick Holohan, Billy Behan, Ann Churchouse, Jim Morrin, Pat Gorman, Joe Nolan, Tom Donoher, Paddy Dowling, Mick Kelly, Ollie Byrne and our numerous other voluntary stewards, without whose co-operation and support we wouldn't be able to host such games.

I must pay tribute to our Groundsman Colm McEvoy for his continued upkeep of our pitches in both the stadium and training centre. It has been a difficult year with the issues with the pitch surface in the stadium, Colm has spent countless hours prior to every game preparing it for the next day and the next game.

Our Caretakers are deserving of our recognition and thanks, Willie Stackpool for ensuring both OMP and CoE grounds are opened and closed for games and training, whilst Mick Glynn supervises the organisation of meetings and cleaning of CoE on a daily basis. I wish to acknowledge the work of our TUS and PCE Group Scheme team, consisting Dan Sinnott, Eddie Kinsella, Roger McEvoy for their continued upkeep of the stadium during the year. Our Safety and Facility Officer John Kelly is also “hands on” in his role and liaises with our Event Management team on a weekly basis.

Finance

Our financial year-end accounts I am pleased to say will again show a surplus for the year. I was made aware of a report

during the year that had the audacity to state that our management committee were more concerned in provision of surplus financial accounts than the affairs of our intercountry teams at County Convention. While I accept that even mentioning this statement in this context, I am in some way lending credibility to this view. I can honestly state that there does be nobody more disappointed and frustrated at times with our intercountry team performances than our employees and members of our Management Committee, all of whom give their time and service on a voluntary basis. Many of this committee were involved in the redevelopment of our Centre of Excellence at a cost of €3.5 million, a debt we continue to service with annual loan repayments of €120,000 per annum, for a facility that is now recognised nationally as state of the art for the preparation of our intercountry panels. Our accounts will also show an expenditure of in excess of €860,000 on the administration of our intercountry panels for 2023, which is a huge commitment to provide the requisite resources for our teams. In my opinion our county has to be on sound financial footing, if we are to advance or progress any our intercountry teams.

Briefly, I wish to highlight a number of our fundraising initiatives, which we have concentrated on in recent years. My thanks to all those involved for their contribution to these events –

- Club County Board Draw continues to be our primary fundraising activity and is essential to both our County and Clubs wellbeing. In 2023 Clubs benefited to the tune of €890,000, while the County profited to almost €140,000. I

wish to express a huge thanks to Clubs and their members for their support of this Draw, which will continue in 2024. Again I appeal for your cooperation in making this your Clubs primary fundraiser for the year;

- Our “LSM Race Day” at the Punchestown Racing Festival in April continues to grow and proved to be very successful in selling 27 tables in 2023, with all guests thoroughly enjoying the Punchestown “corporate” experience. Our thanks to John Cummins and his company LSM for their sponsorship of this event. For 2024, we have been allocated 37 tables to sell for this fundraising event, so I would ask Clubs to canvass their racing enthusiast members or members just looking for a good day out to support this fundraising venture. I would like to mention Paschal McEvoy, Bryan Breen and Kieran Leavy for their efforts with this fundraiser;
- “Laois Gaels” is the fundraising arm, that effectively replaced the old “Club Laois” initiative which was revitalised in 2021, thanks to the trojan efforts of “Laois Gaels” committee consisting of Leo Turley, Bryan Breen, Seamus Dooley, Paul Dargan and Oonagh Maher, whose endeavours have seen membership increase for 2023. The proceeds from “Laois Gaels” provides valuable support for our academy squads that would not have been available to them heretofore and is an important fundraiser in that regard. I wish to acknowledge the tremendous input of Leo Turley into the success of this fundraiser, who has stepped down in recent weeks. He has been replaced by another enthusiastic “gael” in Colm Begley.

Ticketmaster is now our new provider for tickets for Intercounty games, with their software “Universe”, allowing us to use and manage a ticketing system for Club events. This year we have signed up to a ticketing partnership with this company up to and including 2025. Laois GAA use this system for all gate collections under the auspices of Laois GAA. This means no cash will be accepted on admittance. From a Laois GAA perspective this eliminates all the associated risks with this cash collections and also provides a full accountability and transparency on ticket sales for all our club fixtures. To facilitate our Senior Citizens, we will continue to operate our annual 2024 Senior Citizen Pass and for those patrons whom attend our championship games on a regular basis, we will have annual 2024 Club Championship Pass.

Governance has become a central theme in the GAA and in that regard Special Congress in October 2021 established in rule the necessity for Audit and Risk Committees at County level. The purpose of this committee is to provide guidance and oversight to our Management Committee to fulfil their ever-growing responsibility to deliver and promote good governance, clear financial reporting and risk management oversight within Laois GAA. This is further supported by Michelle McAleer in leading this initiative through her Internal Audit office in Croke Park. Richard Dunne has been appointed Chairperson of our Audit and Risk Committee and with his committee comprising of David Dwyer, John Connolly and Maeve Conroy are tasked with challenging, in a constructive way, the decisions of our Management Committee that impact the financial, reputational and

other risk profiles of Laois GAA. The work programme this year included an initial review and assessment of governance practices and controls in our county.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our Treasurer Paschal McEvoy for his time and efforts in this important role, his responsibility in overseeing gate collection at our games on a weekly basis does not go unnoticed. Likewise his assistant Bryan Breen and our former Treasurer Martin Byrne for his assistance and professionalism in preparing our accounts.

Lá na gClub

Next year marks the 140th anniversary of the foundation of the GAA in 1884. As part of the events that will mark this significant milestone, the Association plans to hold a Lá na gClub that will be marked by the 1,600 clubs throughout Ireland and the near 500 in existence in World GAA. From a recent national survey, there is a belief that there is a need for the Association to partake in more active outreach by promoting accessible entry points to our clubs for new members. It is hoped that this occasion can be promoted for this purpose. Whilst a date has not yet been finalised, it is anticipated that this will be scheduled for a Bank Holiday Monday in the spring or early summer.

Local Media

All our games in the county got more than their fair share of coverage during the year and for this I thank the local GAA correspondents in our local editions of Laois Today, Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express and the various commentators in Midlands 103. Although I may not always

be in favour of everything they print, I think once all articles have been researched and are accurate, that we are indeed fortunate to have press personnel, who are passionate about Gaelic games and play a role in spreading our message and promoting our games. Denis Byrne does a magnificent job on photographs and enhance the work of our scribes while our former PRO Paul Dargan further compliments this with his match day photo albums, which are also very well received.

There is one area of concern I have with our local press and that is the refusal of some of our press to carry and/or mention our sponsors name on our competitions to reflect that partnership. It is unfair to brand all our press units in this manner, but it is blatantly exploited in one our online editions. I know it is not realistic that every time they are referenced that the sponsor is mentioned, but I believe that all articles should carry the title sponsor or banner and all our fixtures and results should carry the competition name and sponsor. All our press use the content of our games for “free” in their paid editions, with the exposure they provide very welcome. I am informed that the reason for this blatant omission is that the respective sponsors do not pay advertisement with these relevant press units. As you are all aware, sponsorship is difficult to secure, they deserve value for their money and for our sponsors to be treated in such a manner is selfish and unacceptable. I have been liaising with the communications department in Croke Park on the matter and I would hope some resolution to the matter will be found prior to the issuing of media accreditation for 2024 games.

Since Covid, we have successfully streamed our internal club games with the support of John Moynihan All Rounder Sport, Laois tv and a number of local volunteers. Unfortunately, this facility was unavailable to us this year, so after exploring alternative resources, we have signed a two year contract with Clubber TV for streaming 22 of our games. I would like to thank our PRO Richard Kennedy for his negotiation with this company. Reports to date on the service provided have been excellent and hopefully it is a partnership we can continue to grow in the promotion of our games.

In October, our website was redesigned and now has better functionality for the in excess of 30,000 visits it receives on a monthly basis. We continue to embrace social media with Twitter/X, Facebook and Instagram. I believe almost all our Inter County and local Senior Championship games are carried live on Twitter/X. In recent weeks, we have engaged Alison O’Kelly from AOK Mentoring, who will plan, organise and monitor all our social media accounts in an effort to better promote Laois GAA and our sponsors. Whilst the benefits of social media are huge with so many people now interacting online, it too can unfortunately be undermined and become detrimental when it is a place that is hijacked by those looking to target individuals after matches. For referees, coaches, volunteers, and amateur players the vitriol that can be directed at them after matches is simply unacceptable. I am aware that when our Uachtaráin Larry McCarthy addressed Seanád Eireann earlier this year he did make reference to this by stating - “Given that we are at heart a sport organisation, I believe that a protection of amateur athletes and officials,

in particular GAA, LGFA and Camogie players, through legislation should be investigated. The legislation would penalise severe, personal, and excessive criticism of amateur athletes and volunteers. A Protection of Volunteers in Amateur Sport Act might be considered by the Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media". Comments I whole heartedly agree with.

Our PR and Communications committee, headed by our PRO Richard Kennedy, are also deserving of our thanks and recognition. The position of PRO is expanding every year and the role would not be able to function without the assistance of his team which included Eoin Culliton, James Culliton, Canice McCarthy, Conor McCarthy, Aoife McEvoy and Pat McEvoy. Richard has announced his intention not to seek re-election to this position and I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his time and the professional approach he brought to the position. He was also instrumental in sourcing and negotiating some valuable sponsorship packages during his tenure on management and will hopefully return some time in the near future.

Coaching and Games

The promotion and development of our games is the single most important activity that we undertake and I am aware that this sector will be dealt with more comprehensively later in this report by our Coaching Officer Brian Quinn and our County Head of Games Shane Keegan.

This department has seen much change, in what has been a difficult year for the sector. Our outgoing Games Manager Mike

Henchy has moved to greener pastures and is now employed in the Coaching and Games sector in Croke Park, whilst our two Games Development Officers Jason Coffey and Conor Shannon have also moved to other employment. I want to take this opportunity to thank the three lads for their work and their input to the development of our games during their tenure and wish them well in their future employment. It was disappointing to hear some of the unfounded allegations and rumours that were circulating prior to their departure, which were completely untrue and did cause a certain amount of reputational damage to Laois GAA.

In recent month's Shane Keegan has been appointed to the now titled County Head of Games, with Donie Brennan and Ross Young assuming the roles of Games Development Co-ordinator in Football and Hurling respectively. Brian Ging has been appointed Performance Games Development Co-ordinator and will also assist our Head of Athletic Development Tom Hargroves, who will continue to be responsible for the development and execution of an athletic development plan up to and including our senior intercountry teams. We are continuing to grow our Games Promotion Officers staff with the following all working in our clubs - Cian Moffit (Borris in Ossory Kilcotton, Mountrath & Clonaslee St Manmans); Jamie Moriarty (Portlaoise); Martin O'Connell (Clonad, Ballinakill & Ballypickas); Paul Whelan (O'Dempsey's & The Heath) and Daniel Butler (St Lazerian's Abbeyleix, Ballyroan Abbey & Ballyfin). I know there are further applications from Clubs seeking a GPO and it is hoped that we will be in a position

to fill these roles in the coming months. I want to thank all the aforementioned for their work and dedication to coaching and games, our academies and our intercountry teams and I am confident under the guidance of Shane Keegan and the strategy of Tom Hargroves they will deliver an excellent service to our Clubs and County.

All our coaching and games employees have been briefed and undertaken the recent HR review by the GAA where employment conditions and practices, which included pay structures and contracts, job description and structures, reporting structures and accountability, skills competencies, learning and development were explained and implemented. This review has been welcome and certainly gives our staff more peace of mind and security. Earlier this year, National Coaching and Games issued a new Coaching and Games funding model for each County for 2023 – 2026. This new four-year commitment is designed to realign Coaching and Games funding across the 32 Counties. The new funding model permits for the reallocation of new and existing grant funding and is subject to the acceptance of terms and conditions as part of a broader financial and governance framework that will be introduced. While this will increase the gross Coaching and Games funding income to our county, we will now also be responsible for GDC and GPO salaries from this same funding.

The schools of Laois both Primary and Post Primary deserve our thanks for the work they do to promote our games within their jurisdictions. We have developed an excellent relationship with Cumann na mBunscol who do tremendous work in

our primary schools and thankfully our relationship with the Post Primary sector, whereby we now have a presence in almost every school, continues to grow on a yearly basis.

I also want to acknowledge Laois County Council for their generous financial contribution towards the employment of our GDA's.

Sponsors

I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to Michael Killeen and his company Laois Hire for their generous sponsorship, which includes all our adult Inter-county teams and the naming rights for O'Moore Park stadium. I want to acknowledge Keith McCann's input to this sponsorship package and with whom we liaise with on an almost weekly basis. I sincerely hope Laois Hire will get the exposure they deserve and desire from our association with them.

Our thanks to Ted Berry and his company The Magni Group for their continued support as our associate jersey sponsor.

Our Championships and Leagues are kindly sponsored by Laois Shopping Centre, which will also continue for 2024. We are entirely appreciative of Kevin Doyle and his company for their generous sponsorship.

Midland Park Hotel is sponsor of all our Juvenile Championship and Leagues and our thanks are extended to Colm Neville and Dara Cruise for this sponsorship. This sponsorship package has been extended for another three years.

Our appreciation and thanks are also extended to –

- O'Neill's, our official gear sponsors, and my thanks to Tony Towell and Carol Carr for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the year;
- LOETB (Laois Offaly Educational Training Board), sponsors of our Centre of Excellence;
- Downey's Autostop, suppliers of our kit vans in both Football and Hurling and hurling courtesy car and will continue for 2023;
- ENVA, local company who will carry their brand on our Talent Academies and Underage Divisional Competitions and I wish to acknowledge Richard Kennedy for his support in sourcing this sponsorship;
- John Cummins LSM for their generous sponsorship of our Punchestown Corporate Race Day last April;
- Mochua Print and Design, our Awards Night sponsor;
- Tirlán, for their Training Pitch Sponsorship;
- Tom Brennan, for his Training Pitch Sponsorship;
- Dwyer Transport for their "Man of the Match" sponsorship and our appreciation to PJ and Elva Kelly for this sponsorship;
- Gerry Browne Jewellers and Colm McEvoy Pitch Maintenance for their respective Scoreboard sponsorship in O'Moore Park stadium and Centre of Excellence.

and finally to all companies and persons who contributed to Laois GAA in some type of sponsorship during the past year.

I would appeal to all our GAA patrons to support our various sponsors in whatever means they can and hopefully their faith in Laois GAA will be justifiably rewarded with the success their investment deserves.

Strategic Review 2024-2026

Our current Vice Chairperson Kieran Kehoe ably assisted by Adrainne McCarthy are working to create a strategic plan for the period 2024-2026.

This review will incorporate the following themes - Maximising Participation & Review of County Demographics; Coaching and Games Development; Inter-County Teams; Facilities & Infrastructure Development; Communications, Promotion & Branding; Financing the Plan and our Laois GAA Community.

They will be engaging with our Clubs in coming months to understand their views and ambitions around where our County should focus over in the coming years. Hopefully this strategy will give our Club units and members direction on where the Association wants to be by 2026 and how we plan to get there.

Laois Camogie and LGFA

I want to acknowledge the role of our sister organisations Ladies Football and Camogie in the promotion of our games. Both organisations continue to use our facilities for club and county teams when available and also use our annual awards ceremony to present their awards.

Our failure however to facilitate Ladies Football finals in O'Moore Park resulted in a share of criticism being aimed in our direction. I just wish to clarify when the request for O'Moore Park was made in late May, to play their three finals Senior,

Intermediate and Junior, the application was refused on the grounds that our Premier Intermediate and Intermediate Hurling finals were already scheduled for the stadium on that date, which was also the eve of our Senior and Minor Hurling finals. It was decided that it would be detrimental to potentially play five games in the stadium on the day prior to our club hurling showpiece. Similar application for Camogie finals was refused on the weekend of the football championship finals, but when the development works in the stadium were delayed a week, they were offered the opportunity to play their games on that weekend, but declined. Our CCC has no issue sitting down with both organisations at the beginning of the year and planning a means to incorporating their finals into what is a condensed fixture programme.

The potential merger of the GAA, the Camogie Association, and the Ladies Gaelic Football Association you would imagine shouldn't be that difficult to achieve. After all we are all part of the one GAA family, largely using all the same facilities, pitches, and stadia while personnel in terms of coaches and administrators move seamlessly between all three. Indeed a statistic worth noting is that women represent over 30% of officers of our GAA clubs. In my opinion, the "One Club" model will be far easier implement at Club level, in comparison to County level.

From a County perspective, my greatest concern is the availability of Association infrastructure to support both LGFA and Camogie teams at Inter-county level. In Laois for example it is not sustainable for our present facilities to cater for additional

teams. We will need the collective cooperation and support of planners, local authorities, politicians, and sport organisations to ensure that our communities are provided with the green space and infrastructure that is necessary for them to be able to play and train. This is a matter that must be prioritised in the integration process, as it is the one area that is likely to cause friction whereby the three associations merge and find we are unable to cater for all parties.

When the integration process is complete, the main beneficiaries will be Camogie and the LGFA as they will be able to delve in the same pot of funds as the GAA which dwarfs what they have at the moment. Our financial accounts show an expenditure on our inter-county team administration of €840,000, much of this outlay is due to GPA commitments for our inter-county panels brokered by headquarters. With a full integration process and presumably both LGFA and Camogie coming under the one model, with the same GPA commitments, will our expenditure now double to €1.68 million and one has to ask as to how this will be financed. I am aware that there will be more scope for greater commercial benefit to all and whilst it is acknowledged that this may be significant, it will certainly present financial challenges. The present impasse arising from the failure of the GAA, LGFA and Camogie to implement a "player charter" which is to seek assurances around expenses, playing gear and access to pitches and medical services, amongst other issues for our LGFA and Camogie players. I am fully in favour of all players being recompensed for their endeavours, but I cannot see at this stage of the process how the GPA think it is the

GAA's responsibility to pay another organisation's expenses.

I would reiterate that Laois GAA see integration as a positive move for all associations, but we do require a structured road map with appropriate timelines. I would suggest that perhaps an integration of both LGFA and Camogie themselves prior to any full integration with GAA would be short term progress. At the moment, there seems to be pressure for an immediate integration, which is not something that is entirely acceptable, seen as we are the party that would bring most to the table.

Na Mairbh

Every year sees the passing of some great GAA people and this year has been no exception. Our GAA family suffered more than most this year, as we remember in our prayers the tragic accidents that brought about the bereavements within our community of - Sean Clear, Clough Ballacolla (Clough Ballacolla player and son of our Leinster Council delegate Tom Clear); Adam Kirwan, Trumera (Trumera player and member of Laois U20 Hurling panel 2022); David Brown Portlaoise (Portlaoise player and member of Laois U16 and Minor Hurling panel 2023); Eoin & Dylan Fitzpatrick Portlaoise (Eoin, former Portlaoise hurler); Rory Deegan The Harps (member of The Harps JHC "C" winning panel in 2022) and Ronan McNamara Timahoe (member of Stradbally Parish Gaels minor football panel 2023).

On behalf of Laois GAA I would like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest sympathy to other families who contributed so much to our association at

both club and county and readily come to mind – Tom Murphy, Bridget Deegan, Oliver Deegan, Annanough; Richard O'Connor, Annanough & Courtwood; John McDonald, Arles Kilcruise; John Moran, Jim McDonald, Arles Killeen; Cormac Lally, St Lazerian's Abbeyleix; Jim Kelly, Mary Delaney, Willie Delaney, Ballinakill; Eamon Dunne, Denis "Hector" Phelan, Ronan Culleton, Ballyfin; Fintan Walsh Michael "Slippy" Walsh, Pat Julian, Ballylinan; Mick Scully (former Chairperson Coiste Iomána), Dinny Dowling, Jackie Cuddy, Donal Mortimer, Camross; Eugene Young, Clonaslee St Manmans; Mick Byrne, Clough Ballacolla; Bosco Grant, Colt; Tess O'Connell, Courtwood; Pat Moore, Emo (former Laois GAA PRO); Ger O'Mahony, Eoin Coss, Mountmellick; Philip "Chilly" Ward, Tommy Dunne, Jonathon "Micko" McGowan, Rose McCann, Portarlinton; Jim Hughes, Paddy Brennan, Pat Hoban, Dick Sydes, John "Farney" Walsh, Portlaoise; Paddy Ramsbottom, Park Ratheniska & Stradbally; Pdraig Walshe, The Harps; Donal Kirwan, Johnny Callaghan, Fr Kevin O'Neill, Trumera; former Laois Senior Football Manager Liam Kearns and Laois Senior Hurling Manager Teddy McCarthy and also to the families of the wider GAA community whom have been bereaved during the year by the loss of those dear to them.

Go ndeanfaidh Dia trocaire ar a nanama-cha.

Congratulations

I wish to acknowledge some achievements by our members in other sectors of the association during the year:

- Enda Rowland, Stephen Maher, Paddy Purcell and Ryan Mullaney who were members of the successful Irish Shinty team who defeated Scotland in the recent Shinty International in Páirc Esler October 2023;
- Stephen Maher on his GAA Champion 15 Award and selection on the Joe McDonagh Cup team of the year in recognition of his outstanding displays for the county during the year, which was presented at a gala function in Croke Park on Friday 27th. October.
- Martin Byrne, our former Treasurer on his election to Leas Cathaoirleach Comhairle Laighean CLG last January and will be the provinces next Chairman in two years time, becoming the fourth Laois man to ascend to this role.

Buíochas

As I conclude my review of 2023 and my observations about the state and structures of our games, I want thank all Club Officers, Players and Voluntary workers who have assisted Laois GAA during the year and who continue to keep our organisation in the County on sound footing through their hard work, co-operation and goodwill during this pandemic.

I wish to thank my fellow Executive Members, CCC, Hearings and our other sub Committees for their advice, help and cooperation during the year, each in their own right through their tireless effort and work ethic greatly contribute to the smooth running of the Association within the County. All sub Committee reports are outlined later in this booklet.

Our Office Administrator, Pam Cooney, joined us prior to last Convention and deserves special praise for the efficient manner she carries out her duties. She has an excellent relationship with our Club Secretaries, and her administration and routine work in dealing with Referee appointments and reports and her many other administrative duties greatly reduces the work of yours truly.

Our sincerest thanks go to Michael Reynolds and his staff in Comhairle Laighean CLG for their constant courtesy, support and accessibility. Similarly, Tom Ryan and his staff in Croke Park headquarters are also deserving of our thanks.

In conclusion, I wish you all an enjoyable and successful 2023.

Le meas

Niall Mac Laitimh

Runaí CLG Laoise Nollaig 2022

2023

**LAOIS SHOPPING CENTRE
ADULT FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP & LEAGUES**

Laois Shopping Centre Senior Football Championship Final on Sun 15 October:
St Joseph's 0-07, Portlaoise 0-06
Relegated: Park Ratheniska

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate Football Championship Final on Sat 30 September:
Ballylinan 1-20, Crettyard 2-10
Relegated: O'Dempsey's

Laois Shopping Centre Senior "B" Football Championship Final on Sat 14 October:
Stradbally 3-10, The Heath 0-05

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate "B" Football Championship Final on Thurs 28 September:
Timahoe W/O Ballyroan Abbey
Conceded

Laois Shopping Centre Junior Football Championship Final on Sat 14 October:
Annanough 3-06, The Harps 1-03
Relegated: Portarlinton

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "B" Football Competition Final on Thurs 05 October:
Killeshin 3-08, Rathdowney 2-09
Relegated: Graiguecullen

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "C" Football Competition Final on Thurs 14 September:
Clonaslee St Manmans 0-10,
Arles Kicruise 0-04

Laois Shopping Centre Under 20 Football Championship Final on Sun 26 November
Ballyroan Abbey v St Joseph's

Laois Shopping Centre Under 20 "B" Football Championship Final on Fri 02 December
Killeshin or Mountmellick Parish Gaels v Clonaslee St Manmans or Na Fianna og

Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Div 1 Final on Sat 08 July:
Portarlinton 0-17, St Joseph's 1-12
Relegated: O'Dempsey's & Killeshin.

Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Div 2 Final on Sat 08 July:
Courtwood 2-13, Ballyfin 0-11
Promoted: Ballyfin & Courtwood;
Relegated: Clonaslee St Manmans & Ballylinan.

Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Div 3 Final on Thurs 06 July:
Mountmellick 3-10, Arles Killeen 0-12
Promoted: Arles Killeen & Mountmellick;
Relegated: Portarlinton.

Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division**4 Final** on Fri 23 June:

Kilcavan 2-07, Barrowhouse 0-11

Promoted: Kilcavan; Relegated:

O'Dempsey's

Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division**5 Final** on Fri 23 June:

Rosenallis 1-11, The Harps 0-10

Promoted: Rosenallis; Relegated:

Portlaoise

Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division**6 Final** on Thurs 22 June:

Spink 5-11, O'Dempsey's 3-12

Promoted: Spink; Relegated: Camross

Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division**7 Final** on Thurs 22 June:

Clonaslee St Manmans 5-08, St Joseph's 3-10

Promoted: Clonaslee St Manmans

**LAOIS SHOPPING CENTRE
ADULT HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP & LEAGUES****Laois Shopping Centre Senior Hurling****Championship Final** on Sun 08 October:

Camross 4-18, St Lazerian's Abbeyleix 0-14

Relegated: Borris in Ossory Kilcotton

**Laois Shopping Centre Premier
Intermediate Hurling Championship****Final** Sun 22 October:

Portlaoise 0-19, Ballyfin 0-10

Relegated: Slieve Bloom

**Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate
Hurling Championship Final** on Sat 07

October:

Colt-Shanahoe 1-19, Trumera 2-16

Replay on Sat 21 October

Colt-Shanahoe 4-15, Trumera 0-14

Relegated: Borris in Ossory Kilcotton

**Laois Shopping Centre Junior Hurling
Championship Final** on Fri 22

September:

Park Ratheniska Timahoe 3-18, Camross 2-12

Relegated: Colt-Shanahoe

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "B"**Hurling Competition Final** on Thurs 7

September:

The Harps 1-16, Clough Ballacolla 0-19

(The Harps won 5-4 on penalties)

Relegated: Rathdowney Errill

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "C"**Hurling Competition Final** on Wed 6

September:

Ballyfin 1-11, Park Ratheniska Timahoe

0-13

Laois Shopping Centre Under 20**Hurling Championship Final** on Fri 10

November

The Harps 5-16, St Lazerian's Abbeyleix

1-10

Laois Shopping Centre Under 20 "B"**Hurling Championship Final** on Sat 11

November

Ballinakill Ballypickas 1-16, Castletown

0-10

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division
1 Final on Fri 07 July:
Camross 2-20, Clough Ballacolla 0-19
Relegated: Castletown

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division
2 Final on Sun 02 July:
Portlaoise 3-20, Ballinakill 1-21
Promoted: Portlaoise; Relegated: Clough
Ballacolla

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division
3 Final on Sat 01 July:
Clonaslee St Manmans 1-12, St Fintan's
Mountrath 1-09
Promoted: Clonaslee St Manmans;
Relegated: Mountmellick

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division
4 Final on Sat 24 June:
Castletown 1-16, Park Ratheniska
Timahoe 1-15
Promoted: Castletown; Relegated: Colt-
Shanahoe

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division
5 Final on Sat 08 July:
Rosenallis 3-24 (aet), Clough Ballacolla
4-17
Promoted: Rosenallis; Winner; Relegated:
Castletown (tbc)

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division
6 Final on Tues 27 June:
St Fintan's Mountrath 7-04, Ballyfin 0-15
Promoted: St Fintan's Mountrath

MIDLANDS PARK HOTEL LEAGUES UNDERAGE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS & LEAGUES

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football
Championship Final on 15-10-2023
(Sun)
Stradbally Parish Gaels 2-11,
St Joseph's 3-07

Midlands Park Hotel U17 "B" Football
Competition Final on 12-10-2023
(Thurs)
Ballyfin 2-09, O'Dempsey's 1-08

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football
Competition Shield Final on 12-10-2023
(Thurs)
Killeshin 2-14, Portlaoise 1-16

Midlands Park Hotel U17 "B" Football
Competition Shield Final on 28-09-2023
(Thurs)
Park Ratheniska 4-09, The Heath 3-07

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
Championship Final on 21-10-2023 (Sat)
St Joseph's 5-10, O'Dempsey's 1-11

Midlands Park Hotel U15 "B" Football
Competition Final on 21-10-2023 (Sat)
Crettyard Spink 5-07, The Harps 5-02

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
Development Competition Final on 07-
10-2023 (Sat)
Portlaoise 3-05,
Mountmellick Parish Gaels 2-07

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
Competition Shield Final on 07-10-2023
(Sat)
Mountmellick Parish Gaels 0-09,
Na Fianna Og 1-05

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 “B” Football
Competition Shield Final** on 07-10-2023
(Sat)
Colt-Shanahoe 3-09, The Heath 1-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
Championship Final** on 16-09-2023 (Sat)
Crettyard Spink 2-11, Ballyfin 3-03

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Football
Competition Final** on 16-09-2023 (Sat)
Killeshin 0-12, Camross 2-02

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
Development Competition Final** on 16-
09-2023 (Sat)
Stradbally Parish Gaels - Declared Winner
on Objection Portlaoise

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
Competition Shield Final** on 16-09-2023
(Sat)
O’Dempsey’s 5-03, The Harps 0-08

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Football
Competition Shield Final** on 27-08-2023
(Sun)
Mountmellick 2-05, Colt-Shanahoe 1-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football
League Div 1 Final** on 21-05-2023 (Sun)
Portarlington 5-12, St Joseph’s 2-15

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football
League Div 2 Final** on 29-05-2023
(Mon)
O’Dempseys 5-07, Graiguecullen 1-14

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football
League Div 1 Plate Final** on 19-05-2023
(Fri)
Killeshin 1-15, Ballyroan Abbey 1-06

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
League Div 1 Final** 01-06-2023 (Thu)
Portarlington 4-15, St Joseph’s 3-14

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
League Div 2 Final** on 01-06-2023 (Thu)
Crettyard Spink 3-08, Rosenallis 3-06

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
Development League Final** on 15-06-
2023 (Wed)
Mountmellick Parish Gaels 6-17,
Portarlington 2-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Div 1 Final** on 04-06-2023 (Sun)
Portlaoise 4-06, Portarlington 4-03

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Div 2 Final** on 28-05-2023 (Sun)
Crettyard/Spink 3-17,
Kilcavan The Rock 2-06

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Div 3 Final** on 28-05-2023 (Sun)
St Pauls 2-09, Camross 1-02

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
Development League Final** on 29-05-
2023 (Mon)
Portarlington 3-08, Portlaoise 3-05

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Div 1 Plate Final** on 29-05-2023
(Mon)
Ballyfin 2-13, The Harps 0-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Div 2 Plate Final** on 29-05-2023
(Mon)
Graiguecullen 3-11,
Ballyroan Abbey 3-08

MIDLANDS PARK HOTEL LEAGUES UNDERAGE HURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS & LEAGUES

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Hurling
Championship Final** on 08-10-2023
(Sun)
The Harps 7-15,
St Lazerian's Abbeyleix 4-12

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 "B" Hurling
Competition Final** on 07-10-2023 (Sat)
Raheen Parish Gaels 2-10, Na Fianna 1-12

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Hurling
Competition Shield Final** on 10-10-2023
(Tues)
St Fintan's Mountrath 1-15 Clough,
Ballacolla 0-15

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 "B" Hurling
Competition Shield Final** on 06-10-2023
(Fri)
Portarlinton 3-09, Camross 1-10

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
Championship Final** on 14-10-2023 (Sat)
The Harps 3-09,
Park Ratheniska Timahoe 2-08

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 "B" Hurling
Competition Final** on 14-10-2023 (Sat)
Borris in Ossory Kilcotton 5-18,
St Lazerian's Abbeyleix 0-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 "C" Hurling
Competition Final** on 14-10-2023 (Sat)
Ballyfin 3-05,
Mountmellick Clonaslee 1-04

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
Competition Shield Final** on 16-10-2023
(Mon)
Clough Ballacolla 1-12,
Rathdowney Errill 0-14

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 "B" Hurling
Championship Shield Final** on 16-10-
2023 (Mon)
Rosenallis 7-06, Clonad Trumera 1-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
Championship Final** on 23-09-2023
(Sat)
Camross 3-04,
Ballinakill Ballypickas 1-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 "B" Hurling
Championship Final** on 23-09-2023
(Sat)
Ballyfin 1-07 Rosenallis 0-10
Replay 07-10-2023 (Sat)
Ballyfin 3-10, Rosenallis 2-04

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 "C" Hurling
Championship Final** on 23-09-2023
(Sat)
Park Ratheniska Timahoe
1-05, Mountmellick 0-01

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
Development Competition Final** on 10-
09-2023 (Sun)
The Harps 3-13,
Ballinakill Ballypickas 0-03

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
Championship Shield Final** on 23-09-
2023 (Sat)
The Harps 0-07,
Clough Ballacolla 0-06

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Hurling
Championship Shield Final** on 23-09-
2023 (Sat)
St Pauls 2-11, Portlaoise 2-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Hurling
Championship Shield Final** on 23-09-
2023 (Sat)
Colt-Shanahoe 1-07, Portarlington 1-04

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Hurling
League Division 1 Final** on 22-05-2023
(Mon)
Castletown 2-17, Rathdowney Errill 1-09

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Hurling
League Division 2 Final** on 28-05-2023
(Sun)
Portarlington 0-19, Clough-Ballacolla 1-16
(Portarlington won on Penalties)

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
League Div 1 Final** on 24-05-2023
(Wed)
Castletown 4-13, Rathdowney Errill 3-10

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
League Div 2 Final** on 24-05-2023
(Wed)
Rosenallis 1-21, Portarlington 2-03

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
League Div 1 Plate Final** on 24-05-2023
(Wed)
The Harps 1-21, Clough-Ballacolla 2-14

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Div 1 Final** on 26-05-2023 (Fri)
Camross 3-08,
Ballinakill Ballypickas 1-11

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Div 2 Final** on 10-06-2023 (Sat)
Rosenallis 7-08, St Pauls 2-03

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
Development League Final** on 09-06-
2023 (Fri)
The Harps 0-07,
Ballinakill Ballypickas 0-04

AIB LEINSTER CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

AIB Club Senior Football Championship

Sat 21 October in Netwatch Cullen Park
Eire Og (CW) 2-18, St Joseph's (LS) 3-13

AIB Club Intermediate Football Championship

Sat 21 October
in Stradbally GAA Grounds
Ballylinan (LS) 1-14,
Mullinavat (KK) 0-07

Sat 04 November in LOETB CoE
Ballylinan (LS) 5-16,
Barndarrig (WW) 1-10

Semi-final: Sat 18 November
in Laois Hire O'Moore Park
Ballylinan (LS) 1-09
Allenwood (KE) 2-17 (AET)

AIB Club Junior Football Championship

Sat 21 October in SETU Carlow
Annanough (LS) 1-11,
Naomh Molling (CW) 1-08

Sat 04 November in Stradbally
Annanough (LS) 2-09,
Glyde Rangers (LH) 2-11 (AET)

AIB Club Senior Hurling Championship

Sat 12 November
in Laois Hire O'Moore Park
Camross (LS) 1-17, Naas (KE) 2-17

AIB Club Intermediate Hurling Championship

Sat 25 November in Aughrim
Portlaoise (LS) 0-16,
Bray Emmets (WW) 0-18

AIB Club Junior Hurling Championship

Sat 28 October in Laois LOETB CoE
Colt-Shanahoe (LS) 1-13,
Amsterdam (Eur) 0-09

Sat 11 November in Laois LOETB CoE
Colt-Shanahoe (LS) 1-01,
Tullagher Rosbercon (KK) 5-26

Sub - Committees Reports

COISTE PEIL 2023

INTRODUCTION

It would be fair to say that 2023 was not a good year for our county football teams. Can we improve on this in 2024? I passionately believe that we can, but realistically it will take time and a collective effort from all stakeholders in Laois to get back into the top 16 teams at senior level, where we have plied our trade for most of the last 25 years.

While we remain somewhat competitive at U20 level, it is worrying to see our u17 team fall further behind in Leinster, where we have traditionally been strong.

SENIOR FOOTBALL

For our Senior Football Team, failure to gain promotion from Division 4 of the National Football League, (all be it by the slimmest of margins) along with ignominious defeats at the hands of Dublin to exit the Leinster Championship and to Down in the semi-final of the Tailteann Cup, can only be seen with bitter disappointment by all Laois Gaels.

Although there were some good results and performances throughout the year, (in particular against Sligo in the National League opener along with wins against Limerick and Fermanagh in the Tailteann Cup), ultimately these could not mask a poor return for the undoubted efforts our senior management team and players.

National Football League Division 4

Fine margins often dictate success in sport and so it was for Laois in the 2023 League campaign. Injury and ill-discipline left us without key players at crucial times during the league, for the Wicklow game in particular, where a win could have all but guaranteed promotion.

Defeat in this game and then away against Leitrim left us depending on the results of other teams going into the final round of games to advance to Division 3 in 2024, and so it came to pass that we lost out on the head-to-head rule with Wicklow (despite a superior scoring difference) when Leitrim gave up a lead in the last minutes of their final round game versus Sligo.

Leinster Championship

Our championship campaign began at home to Wexford where we came through a tight battle to advance to the Leinster Quarter final, setting up a date with Dublin.

It is hard to put into words how disappointing our performance against Dublin was. In reality to be competitive with this all-conquering Dublin team was always going to be a hard task, but even the most pessimistic of us could not have seen us down by a 23-point margin at half time with the game over as a contest. Although we rallied somewhat in the second half Dublin had a 27-point cushion as the final whistle blew, and Laois were out of

the Leinster Championship and into the Tailteann Cup.

Tailteann Cup

Group Games

The Tailteann Cup draw saw us pitted against Cavan, Offaly, and London in the group stage of the competition. The campaign started away against Cavan and hopes were high after good preparations in the lead up to the game. A good first half for Laois was followed by a third quarter blitz from Cavan that saw them increase their halftime lead from 2 to 9 points providing them with a platform to see them run out 5-point winners on the day.

Next up was traditional rivals Offaly. Although Laois were the better team and up by 6 points with only 3 minutes remaining in normal time, we let slip this lead with the game ending in a draw. After a dominant performance for the majority of the game this result felt like a loss and left us needing a result against London to progress.

A draw or a win against London would see us progress to the next phase of the competition and truth be told we were lucky to get a result against a plucky London team. Although up by 7 points to no score early on we again let our opponents back into the game to lead by 2 points as fulltime approached, only for two late scores in injury time ensuring a draw and with it, progression in the competition.

Preliminary Quarter Final

Fermanagh were our next opponents, in an away game where very few supporters

made the trip, understandable, after a disappointing campaign heretofore. In a tight game Laois produced one of the better performances of the season against a fancied Fermanagh side. We took a 2-point advantage into half time and although Fermanagh pushed hard and led by 2 points midway through the second half, we showed grit and determination to take the win with 2 points to spare.

Quarter Final

Limerick provided the opposition in the quarter finals with a big Laois contingent travelling to the Treaty County for the game. In what was a very entertaining game Laois put in another very good away performance. A tit for tat first half left Limerick a point up at half time. They then gained a 4-point lead midway through the second half, but good defensive work to keep them scoreless for the remainder of the game laid the foundations for a memorable Laois victory, with Laois kicking 1-4 unanswered to again win by 2.

Semi-Final

After two exceptionally good away victories against good Division 2 / Division 3 teams, hopes were high that an improving Laois team would prevail against another Division 3 team, Down, to reach a Tailteann Cup final.

Again, Laois fans turned out in numbers at Croke Park with an expectation of at least a good performance. Unfortunately, the concession of four quick first half goals put any chance of getting a result and the game was over as a contest after the first quarter. The result from any perspective

cannot be seen as anything other than a humiliation. That it happened on live television and in Croke Park only intensified that feeling, ending our season on a very sour note.

Having seen first-hand the time and effort both management and players put into 2023, I am still at a loss as to why the capitulation against Down happened. Although we had six tough games in the space of seven weeks in the lead up to the game, spirits and confidence were high, with everyone pulling together.

Extra rehab resources were requested by management and put into place to aid player recovery so as they could have every chance to perform on the day. Some players took time off work to help their recovery.

From a coaching and performance analysis point of view, players have told me all bases were covered by team management with regards to preparation with the Down game plan and individual Down player strengths highlighted in detail in the week before the game. Despite this we were blitzed on a score of 8-16 to 2-12 by a tuned in Down team who played at a far higher level than ourselves.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Billy Sheehan and his selectors Chris Conway, Brian Mulligan, Gerry McGill and Paul Dunne for their hard work, dedication and professionalism over the last few years, the effort that each of you put into the Senior Football Team was in my opinion not

reflected on the field of play, and with a bit of luck promotion to Division 3 was a distinct possibility this year.

The fact that the players remained on board with you for the year despite some considerable setbacks is testament to your commitment to the players and Laois Football.

In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their contribution and commitment to the Laois Senior Football team in 2023, Tom Hargroves (S&C), Johnny Lawlor (Physio), Caoimhe Kenny (Nutritionist), Gavin Deering (Logistics), Ollie Byrne (Team Secretary). Martin Kelly and Conor McCausland (Team Kit), Paul Dargan and Ian Bradley (Videography), Martin Corrigan (Match Analysis), Simon Honan (Doctor), and Austin O'Malley (Performance Coach). Thank you all for your dedication and expertise.

U20 FOOTBALL

U20 has been a grade where Laois have been competitive over the last number of years and there were high hopes that this year would be no different.

John Kerins Cup

Our U20 team started the year well with good results in the John Kerins Cup drawing against Cork away, Roscommon at home with a narrow defeat away to Galway denying them a place in the final of the competition.

Leinster Championship

MINOR FOOTBALL

A first round win in a rain drenched Carlow started the campaign, while a strong finish after a slow start saw us through against Longford to set up a clash with Meath in Round Three to decide who would take a place in the semi-finals.

On a memorable night in O'Moore Park, Laois came from behind to record a well-earned and deserved victory against a highly fancied Meath Team who had been All Ireland Champions at minor level.

Semi Final

Kildare who are strong in this grade and have overcome Laois in a number of tight battles over the last few years awaited in the Leinster Semi-Final. On this occasion it would not be a tight game, although only down by 3 points at half time, we could not capitalise on playing with the wind in the second half losing out on a score of 1-20 to 0-9 points to the eventual All-Ireland Champions.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank joint managers Tom Byrne and Sean O'Shea and their Coach/Selectors Paul Cahillane and Eoghan Keogh for their hard work and diligence in preparing the U20 Team.

In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their contribution and commitment to the u20 Team, Pauric McEvoy (S&C), Eoghan Mealey (Physio), Liam Delaney (Videography / Match Analysis), Caoimhe Kenny (Nutritionist) and Johnny Ramsbottom (Logistics / Team Kit) Thank you all for your dedication and commitment.

Preparation

As part of preparation for the Leinster championship the Minor team played a number of challenge games throughout February and March against Wicklow, Limerick, Armagh, Tipperary (twice) and Clare, winning all but one with that being a one-point loss away to Armagh.

Leinster Championship

Confidence was high entering the Leinster Championship in a group that contained Longford, Offaly and Kildare.

Group Games

A good first round win all be it against a mis-firing Longford team on a scoreline of 2-12 to 1-02 bode well for the following rounds. However, this was as good as it got for this group.

In the second round against Offaly, a game where the elements played a part, Laois playing with a strong wind in the first half went in 5 points up at half time only conceding a point. Offaly used the wind to their full advantage in the second half to score 2-9 against Laois's 0-3 to run out comfortable winners.

Again, our next game against Kildare was a game of two halves with Laois possibly playing their best football of the year to lead 0-7 to 0-6 at the half time break. The second half saw Kildare come out a different side out-scoring Laois by 12 points to three. This meant a trip away to Wexford to keep our Leinster Championship hopes alive in the quarter final preliminary round.

Failure to cope with a well drilled, physical Wexford team who sat deep and countered quickly with strong runners saw Wexford ahead by 2-06 to 0-4 at half time. It was more of the same in the second half with Wexford running out comprehensive winners, fulltime score 6-10 to 0-9.

Seamus Heaney Cup

The season ended with a loss in the Seamus Heaney Cup to a Wicklow team we had beaten on a score of 4-14 to 1-4 in our first game of the year. But this was a much more competitive Wicklow 15, the game ebbed and flowed from the first minute to the final quarter when Wicklow took over, scoring 1-3 with no reply from Laois. This was surely a most disappointing end to the season for this young team.

Looking back over the season the failure of a number of our most talented club players to commit to the minor setup in 2023 along with a couple of long-term injuries certainly weakened the playing panel.

Leinster GAA do not provide an organised League competition prior to Championship this possibly did not help preparation and could have exposed the team to higher quality opposition. I know management found it difficult to arrange games against “the traditional stronger counties” which probably left the team under cooked going into the championship. The organisation of a proper Leinster League competition at minor level should be a priority going forward.

The wisdom of playing championship games midweek on a school night also has to be addressed by Leinster GAA, no

player this age can be expected to perform having to leave for a two-hour trip directly after school to play a championship match and then not arrive home until near midnight and be straight into school again the next morning. This is unacceptable practice; minor championship games should be scheduled for the weekend where players and their families have a chance to go and enjoy our games and perform at their best. I know a good few of this playing group are available for selection next year and I wish them all the best for 2024.

Finally, I would also like to thank the parents of the players, who travelled far and wide to support these dedicated young men they are a credit to you and your families.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Conor Gorman, Colm Kelly (Coach) along with selectors Eamonn O’Connell and Billy Delaney for their hard work and dedication in preparing our young minor team.

In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their contribution and commitment to the Minor Team in 2023, Jason Coffey assisted by Rachel Guinane (S&C), Richie Hitchcock (Physio), Tony Bambrick Snr. and Darragh Sinnott (Match Analysis), Caoimhe Kenny (Nutritionist) and Peter Kealy (Team Kit). Thank you all for your commitment and expertise.

SUPPORTERS

To our supporters I would like to thank you for supporting the team through thick and thin throughout the year. I share your disappointment with results this year and would urge you to stay the course with all our teams. I know you are hungry for success and eager to get behind our teams once the opportunity arises.

Sometimes we are hardest on our own and it is easy to be negative and point the finger of blame when results are not at a level we expect, but there is a lot of good work going on at all levels in the County and there is reason for optimism going forward, for example;

- In the Centre of Excellence, we have some of the best training and gym facilities in the country. This is acknowledged by our own players and the many teams who visit our facilities over the course of the year. These facilities are being put to good use by our county players throughout the year.
- There is huge investment in our permanent County coaching staff who are fiercely committed to improving the playing and coaching standards within the County at Club and Development Team Level.
- The uptake in Games Participation Officers at club level demonstrates the commitment of our Clubs to raising coaching and playing standards also.

This can and will only bear fruit in the coming years, yes, we are playing catch up

but we have to start somewhere. We can only improve if we pull together as one county and your continued support is a vital component of this.

OUR COUNTY PLAYERS

To play county football at any level is an honour, but it comes with a cost, to your family time, social life, work-life balance, education, holidays, the list goes on.

The commitment, time, dedication, and sacrifice that each of our players give to be part of our Minor, U20 and Senior teams is to be commended and appreciated by all Laois Gaels young and old. I would like to acknowledge the players contribution to Laois Football in 2023, and thank you all for your commitment to Laois GAA.

COISTE PEIL

Thank you to Coiste Peil members Pat O'Connell (Secretary), Kieran Kehoe, David Murphy, John O'Loughlin, and Eamonn Delaney, we met on four occasions throughout the year, bringing forward the following initiatives:

- Meeting with Second Level Schools in late May to discuss GAA participation and supports available from Laois GAA for the coming school year. Although the turn out from the schools invited was disappointing, those who attended gave the committee plenty of ideas and food for thought and we hope to engage with the schools on a more regular basis going forward. Thank you to the representatives of St Marys,

Knockbeg, St Fergal's, Rathdowney and Mountrath Community School for their attendance and contribution.

- Addition of Coaching and Games and Coiste na nÓg representatives to Coiste Peil so as to keep each other up-to-date with initiatives across all three committees.
- Provision of performance analysis courses to development squads.
- Re-introduction of Laois Schools Teams to provide access to Senior A Schools football with the aim of providing coaching and exposure to high level competition to those in the 18-19 years age group where there is a perceived fall off in participation.
- Members provided support to management appointment committees for the appointment of management of our three county teams over the summer.

In addition, I would like to thank Chairperson PJ Kelly, Secretary Niall Handy, Administrator Pam Cooney along with Brian Quinn, Martin Byrne, Shane Keegan, Colm Begley and Joe Cunningham for your assistance and advice throughout the year.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish our incoming management teams headed by Justin McNulty, Kieran Kelly and Ger Slevin all the best for 2024.

Is mise

Antaine Ó'Baimbric

Cathaoirleach, Coiste Peil.

COISTE IOMÁNA 2023

Senior: The year started on a positive note with victory over Wexford, in Mountrath, in the first round of the Walsh Cup. We subsequently lost to Kilkenny and Offaly in that competition.

Despite being competitive at times we struggled in the NHL and losses to Tipperary, Waterford, Kilkenny, Antrim and Dublin put us in a relegation play off with Westmeath. In Thurles we lost to Westmeath by 3.24 to 1.26 which relegated us to Division 2 for 2024.

In the Joe Mc Donagh Cup losing to Offaly in the first round in Tullamore by 3.19 to 1.22 put us under pressure. A draw with Carlow took matters out of our hands. Victories over Down and Kildare gave us a chance of reaching the final and, I felt, we played really well in the last game against Kerry, recording a 14 point win. But when Offaly put out their second team against Carlow, we were effectively out of the Joe McDonagh final. Laois Senior hurlers shouldn't lack motivation in 2024!

I want to congratulate Stephen Maher on being selected on the Joe McDonagh team of the year. Also, congratulations to Enda Rowland, Paddy Purcell, Ryan Mullaney and Stephen Maher on being selected on the Irish team who were victorious in the recent Shinty International match against Scotland.

U.20: Our U.20 team started off the year with a hard-fought win over Kildare. We then beat Carlow and Kerry to qualify

for a preliminary quarter final against Westmeath. Despite not playing to our potential, we were unlucky to lose on penalties after extra time. Personally, I think this was very hard on players and management. I know the split season and the group stages have put enormous pressure on fixtures, but I still believe there has to be a better way and, now that we have effectively done away with the dual player at inter county level, there should be time for replays.

I want to thank Ollie Hally for all the time and effort he has put into Laois underage teams over the past number of years. On behalf of Coiste Iomána I want to wish him and his family all the best for the future.

Minor: The minors had a difficult opening to their campaign with defeats to Kilkenny and Galway, who were parachuted into the Leinster Championship at the last minute. However, the panel and management showed great resilience to regroup and record good wins over Antrim and Kildare, before running Dublin close in the Leinster quarter final. In my opinion this team exceeded expectation and showed great improvement throughout the year.

I strongly disagree with Galway being allowed into the Leinster minor championship. This has greatly decreased the chances of counties like Laois ever reaching or winning a Leinster minor hurling final. In 2022 the Leinster minor hurling

final in O'Moore Park between Laois and Offaly was one of the greatest hurling occasions of my lifetime and did enormous good in promoting hurling in the two counties. The chances of Laois and Offaly ever playing in a Leinster minor hurling final again are now quite slim. I believe Galway, if they needed more matches, should have been accommodated in the Munster Championship.

I would like to wish the players and the respective management teams at Senior, U.20 and Minor, all the best for 2024 and hopefully we will have success.

I want to thank Brendan Phelan, Liam Ahern and the Setanta committee for successfully completing Year 2 of the programme. We will need even more help from the clubs in providing coaches as we embark on Year 3 in 2024.

I would like to wish Shane Keegan all the best in his role as Head of Coaching and

Games and I encourage everyone to give him your full support.

I would like to congratulate all those who were successful in our Leagues and Championships at all levels, Juvenile and Adult, and wish our representatives in the Leinster Championships the best of luck.

I want to thank the clubs, coaches and volunteers for all their work in promoting hurling throughout Laois. Anyone who was at our Juvenile hurling finals this year would certainly have hope for the future with the skills and standard of play displayed.

Finally I would like to thank the members of the Hurling Committee for their help and ideas as we try to have a positive influence on the promotion of hurling in Laois.

Is mise,

Maitiú Ó Coiléir

COISTE NA NÓG REPORT 2023

The planning for 2023 commenced in late autumn 2022 where a meeting with clubs was held to review the competition formats for the season just completed. While many clubs wished to see the self-grading format continue, the majority favoured a return to league and Championship competitions where Coiste na nÓg would carry out the grading. Clubs praised the organisation of the competitions, were strong in their support for the development competitions for second teams, and requested competitions for 2023 continue into late September/early October.

Coiste na nÓg reviewed the feedback and proposed League and Championship competitions at all age grades in both codes to the Competitions Control Committee (CCC) and for subsequent ratification by County Committee. Coiste na nÓg graded the teams for the league and assigned the teams to groups with a geographical focus where the aim was to give a similar number of games to all teams. It also included a development league at U17 to cater for club players while Laois minor teams competed in inter-county competitions. All league competitions culminated in finals at the LOETB Centre of Excellence in later May and early June.

The Féile competitions at U15 took place in late April and early May with two divisions in each code and county winners progressing to represent Laois at regional and national finals. Thanks to the clubs that hosted the round robin group games in a well-organised manner and the

semi-finals and finals were played at the LOETB Centre of Excellence. It was great to see the winners represent the county at the regional and national events and a special mention to Borris-in-Ossory/Kilcotton for hosting a very successful regional event.

Coiste na nÓg committed to reviewing the league results to inform grading of teams for the Championships. In tandem, the committee decided to rotate teams in groups to ensure as many teams as possible got to play one another in the group stages of League and Championship rather than relying on the vagaries of an open draw. In response to the wish of clubs to see as many teams as possible still in competition late into the season, the committee introduced Cup and Shield knockout formats for the Championship. The competitions progressed well over the summer and finals for both Cup and Shield competitions took place throughout September starting with U13 and concluding with U15 in mid-October. Coiste na nÓg was pleased to be in a position to hold all A grade finals in O'Moore Park where every effort was made to give the players, coaches, and supporters a real sense of occasion to mark the achievement of teams reaching an A final. All other finals were held at the Centre of Excellence. The clubs expressed a strong desire at our review meeting to see the Minor A hurling and football finals played as the 'curtain-raiser' on county final day and it was great to be in a position to do so and give all those players the

opportunity to showcase their talents on the two biggest days in our calendar.

Competitions cannot go ahead without match officials and the need for additional referees in the system continues to put pressure on the delivery of a programme of games for our players. Good work is ongoing, led by Coaching and Games, to encourage 'young whistlers' to officiate at Go Games (U11) and a number of young referees successfully completed training this season and officiated at U13 games. It was great to see a number of new adult referees on the roster and hopefully that trend will continue. Respect for match officials at all grades is of paramount importance and it is a source of frustration that, at times, the required standard was not in evidence at some of our juvenile fixtures. The onus is on us all to show leadership and set good example for all our young players.

A review process is underway on the 2023 competitions and the committee looks forward to working with clubs to provide a suitable programme of competitions in 2024. It is worth noting that the number of games provided at each age grade was above the average as set out in the recent GAA report on juvenile competitions. That said, there were difficulties faced by clubs in fielding teams at certain age grades and there is an onus on us all to find solutions so that all players continue to have the opportunity to play in our competitions. Trying to manage the load on U15 players is a challenge that needs consideration and cooperation, mindful that many players at that grade are needed by clubs for U17 teams and some of those

same players are also on Laois Academy squads.

Development competitions are a great way to ensure access to competitive game time for all players, particularly at U13 and U15 where player retention can be a challenge. There is an onus on us all to remember that players develop at different rates through their teenage years, both in terms of physical growth and skills acquisition, and that keeping the true spirit of development competitions foremost in our mind will be to the greater benefit of players and clubs over the longer term. Coiste na nÓg is committed to working with clubs to ensure development competitions continue to be an important element of our fixture schedule for 2024.

I would like to thank colleagues on Coiste na nÓg for their support and insight during the season; Tony Bambrick (Portarlinton), Colm Clear (Portlaoise), Declan Conroy (Rosenallis), Dave McGrath (Arles Killeen), Enda Whelan (The Harps), and Sean Connolly (Mountmellick). The Coiste na nÓg competition booklets are a great resource for clubs during the season and I would like to thank Tony Bambrick (Secretary) for his great work in this regard. Thanks to all the volunteers, stewards, and other county board officers, without whose help we could not have organised our finals in O'Moore Park and the Centre of Excellence. The Championships alone saw 32 finals take place over 5 weeks which is testament to the commitment of all concerned to the development of our young players. I would also like to thank PJ Kelly and Niall Handy for their

advice and guidance throughout the year and Pam Cooney (Office Administrator) deserves special mention for her assistance in organising communications to match officials and clubs throughout the season and for helping make the arrangements for our finals.

It takes a team effort to successfully organise and run the juvenile competitions. Thanks to the clubs for their cooperation, the coaches for their dedication, the match officials for their commitment, and, most especially, the players for the great enjoyment they have given us all.

Joe Cunningham

Cathaoirleach, Coiste na nÓg

COISTE ÉISTEACHTA LAOISE (LAOIS HEARINGS COMMITTEE) REPORT 2023

As I submit this report, I am able to account that we had a very busy year to date with 22 meetings inclusive of 4 Teams calls where required. 2023 was my maiden voyage with the Hearings Committee and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and have met some remarkable and committed Laois GAA people along the journey.

For the 2023 Hearings Committee (C.H.C), the last hearing to date was the 20th of October at the time of this report being prepared. The newly formed 2023 Committee led by our Chairman Micheál Condrón commenced their duties on the 7th of March 2023 to hear the appeals to decisions on Transfers issued by the Competitions Control Committee (C.C.C.). A total of 3 Transfer appeals were heard in early March 2023. appeals which we could uphold, overrule, or refer back to the C.C.C. Two of these were overruled and one sent back to the C.C.C.

Our first disciplinary hearing took place in May 2023 and the requests gradually increased as the leagues and championships in both codes and all levels commenced. In all cases, we were not aware what penalty had been proposed by the C.C.C. and any sanctions imposed by the C.H.C. were based solely on the evidence presented in accordance with the applicable rule.

To all club officials please note that, a referee's decision can only be overturned in accordance with Rule 7.3 (aa) (vi) "A referee's report, including any Clarification thereto, shall be presumed correct in all factual matters and may only be rebutted where unedited video or other compelling evidence contradicts it. We understand that there are times when individuals are disappointed with the outcome of their hearings but hope they will agree that they are always treated fairly and with respect and understand that decisions reached are always in accordance with an Treoraí Oifigiúil.

On 7 occasions in 2023 video footage has been utilised as evidence and only in 3 of those cases was the C.C.C decision overturned. On 10 separate cases, clarification was sought from the referee about infractions that occurred. The decisions by the C.H.C are not a personal attack on a referee nor do they in any way disrespect the referee. We understand the role of the referee is already very difficult and the committee has the utmost respect for our referees. The below table outlines the number of cases heard to date in 2023 and where sanctions were imposed, worryingly, there were 14 sanctions issued to team mentors and club officials.

Year	Hearings Requested	Out of Order	Withdrawn before Hearing	Player Sanctions Imposed	Club Official/ Mentor Sanction Imposed	Video Evidence used	Appeals to Leinster Council
2023	27	2	3	8	14	7 cases. 3 of the 7 sanctions overturned	3 cases. All 3 Lost appeal.

In August this year, the C.H.C had a review of the number of hearings requests being sought and being lost on a point of rule along with no compelling evidence to overturn the initial C.C.C sanction imposed. The C.H.C asked the County Secretary to reissue the Hearing Guidelines to all clubs that were initially issued it in 2022. This was done to remind club officials and players of the procedures in place and how the C.H.C is guided in their decision making. Unfortunately, Hearings were being requested with no evidence of a rule being misused or compelling evidence to overturn the initial C.C.C sanction imposed. The C.H.C would ask all club officials to revisit these guidelines before a Hearing request is sought, this is to ensure that unnecessary hearings discontinue, and it also gives club officers clarification and guidance of the procedures before they come to a hearing. If at any time, there is a question or clarification requested please feel free to contact any member of the committee.

I would like to thank all the individual players and club representatives for their courteous co-operation in their dealings with the C.H.C. this year. My thanks to

the representatives of the C.C.C. for their courtesy and consideration in their attendance at these hearings. I would also like to sincerely thank and acknowledge the role of our County Secretary, Niall Handy and our Administrator, Pam Cooney, in the preparation of paperwork and for liaising with referees when clarification of their reports was requested. Their assistance in this regard is very much appreciated. My gratitude goes to the members of this year's C.H.C, Micheal Condron, Tom Jones, Michael Lennon, John Scanlon, Walter Hovenden, Alex Stenson, and Glen Brennan who gave so generously of their time whenever they were called upon, at very short in some instances.

I would like to take the opportunity to make a few personal thanks, firstly to the outgoing secretary Adrainne McCarthy who gave generously of her time to do a handover with me and for taking several calls and What's App messages to get me up and running. Adrainne you set an unbelievably high standard in your diligent work that I can only hope to ever emulate. To PJ Kelly for inviting me to take up the role in 2023, thank you for having the confidence in me to take on this role. To

C.H.C chairman Micheál Condron for his knowledge, support and advice throughout this year and for always answering my many calls and texts anytime of the day or night.

To every member of Laois GAA who I have had the opportunity to meet during 2023 in this role, thank you for the courtesy you have shown me and the C.H.C, I hope we have always done our best to be fair and supportive to everyone that we engaged with.

I wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas and all the very best in 2024.

Le meas,

Leonard O Mordha

Rúnaí, Coiste Éisteachta Laoise 2023

2023 COACHING AND GAMES REPORT

Introduction

Coaching and Games are delighted to present our 2023 report, in which we review the year past and look forward to our plans for 2024.

Our new County Head of Games Shane Keegan, in conjunction with our County Coaching Officer Brian Quinn, have collaborated to set out an ambitious vision:

“To Become One of the Best Coaching Counties in Ireland”

Our attempts to achieve our vision will be guided by the following strategic pillars:

1. Best Practise Coaching from Nursery to Minor
2. Develop Competitive Underage County Teams
3. Skills Based Foundation
4. Highly Collaborative with our Key Stakeholders
5. Maximise Meaningful Participation for our Underage Players

To achieve our targets in the short, medium and long term, the Coaching & Games department are massively reliant on the help and assistance of the outstanding volunteers at all levels of Laois GAA.

I hope that we can build a fruitful and lasting relationship with those volunteers as we all look to achieve our shared aim

of bettering all aspects of GAA activity in our county.

REPORT

1) Coaching & Games Team

This year has seen a lot of change in the make up of our Coaching & Games team.

Our new team is as follows:

Shane Keegan – County Head of Games
shane.keegan.chg.laois@gaa.ie

Donie Brennan – Football GDC (Games Development Coordinator) donal.brennan.gdc.laois@gaa.ie

Ross Young – Hurling GDC ross.young.gdc.laois@gaa.ie

Brian Ging – Performance GDC brian.ging.gdc.laois@gaa.ie

Having settled in and found their feet, our new Coaching & Games team will now endeavour to work hard across a multiple of facets in the year ahead in an effort to do everything they can to help take Laois GAA in a forward direction.

All members of staff are readily contactable and would greatly welcome the input and suggestions of club members as to what we can do to help you in the development of your club and what we can do to progress as a county.

2) GPOs (Games Promotion Officers)

This year saw a lot of change within our GPO team. Some members of staff moved into new positions while we also welcomed two new additions in Paul Whelan & Daniel Butler.

Our current structure is as follows:

Cian Moffit – Borris Kilcotton,
Mountrath & Clonaslee

Jamie Moriarty – Portlaoise

Martin O’Connell – Clonad, Ballinakill
& Ballypickas

Paul Whelan – O’Dempsey’s & The Heath

Daniel Butler – Abbeyleix & Ballyroan
Abbey

Our GPO’s continue to work hard in the areas of Primary School Coaching, Post Primary Coaching, Club & Coach Development, Club Camps and Physical Development.

We would like to thank the many club volunteers who have worked alongside our GPO’s to help steer and guide them based on their clubs key requirements.

We are currently undertaking another round of interviews which we hope will unearth some new candidates as we are well aware that the current demand for GPO’s from our clubs far outweighs supply.

To this end, can I encourage all clubs to consider whether they may have some suitable GPO candidates amongst their own

club members, and if so, please contact me with your recommendations.

3) Formal Coach Education

Introduction to Coaching Gaelic Games (ICGG)

We will be running 6 ICGG courses from the Centre of Excellence in the first quarter of the 2024. These dates will be publicised in early December and registration is open to all club members.

We are also more than happy to come to your club to put on an ICGG course at a club’s facilities, provided they can assure us of 10 or more sign ups.

It is worth remembering that the ICGG course is a mandatory award that must be held by all members of your club who are involved in a coaching capacity.

We attempt to make this course as practical and enjoyable as possible in the hope that it will be seen as just the first steps on a new coach’s journey.

Award 1 Football & Hurling

We will be running one Award 1 football course and one Award 1 hurling course in the first quarter of 2024. Again, these dates will be publicised in early December and registration is open to all club members who have already completed the ICGG course.

The Award 1 course has been designed to take account of the different playing capacities that exist between children (up to 12 years), youths (age 13-18) and Adults

(age 19+) and the competencies that a coach is required to display when working with each of the playing populations. Therefore, coaches can specialise in coaching the particular players that they are involved with.

4) Informal Coach Education

Informal Coach Education will be divided into two sections for 2024.

A) Club Workshops

Our Club Workshops will be delivered by our GPO's and GDC's at the club's venue and will cover the following areas:

- 1) Season Planning
- 2) Session Planning
- 3) Nursery Programmes
- 4) Player Pathway Development
- 5) Go Games
- 6) Youth Games
- 7) TURAS
- 8) Athletic Development Programmes
- 9) End of Year Reviews

These workshops will run right throughout 2024.

B) County Workshops

Our County Workshops will be delivered by guest speakers at the LOETB Centre of Excellence and will cover the following areas:

- 1) Football Coaching Conference
- 2) Hurling Coaching Conference
- 3) Nursery Coaching

- 4) Go Games Coaching
- 5) Football Goalkeeping
- 6) Hurling Goalkeeping
- 7) County Development Squads Coaches
- 8) Athletic Development & Nutrition
- 9) Primary School Coaching
- 10) Future Leaders (Transition Years)

These workshops will run right throughout 2024 but will be front loaded towards the first half of the year.

We are also setting up a mechanism whereby the vast array of coaching content that currently exists within the GAA actually gets to those who most require it; the volunteer coaches are tasked with delivering their clubs sessions on a weekly basis.

In addition to this, knowledge sharing of 'best practice' amongst our clubs, with guidance provided around implementation has the potential to have major benefits for all.

5) Go Games

Our Go Games model continued to be broadly successful in 2023, providing a regular programme of games for kids, in a non-competitive setting.

That said, I believe there is still large scope for improving the Go Games experience for our clubs, coaches and, most importantly, our young players.

A review document has recently been circulated to clubs and we are currently processing the feedback and recommendations.

Some ideas that will be discussed for the year ahead include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) Odd & even age groups in the same calendar year
- b) A reduction in 'per side' playing numbers, as recommended by Croke Park
- c) How best to pair up clubs to create enjoyable games for all.
- d) Splitting of older and younger players within an age bracket to better match up levels
- e) Set agreed rules rather than the home team dictating.

A positive Go Games experience is vital in the journey of our young players, so it is imperative that we do all that we can to facilitate this outcome.

6) Academy Squads

The Academy Squads continue to be a key corner stone in the development of both our future county players, and the young players that we hope will go on to form the bedrock of our adult club sides.

Our summer training programme, which saw all Academy players involved in morning gym & pitch sessions during their holidays, was, for the most part, a big success.

As part of this programme, our U16 football & hurling panels also received weekly educational talks in areas such as nutrition, goal setting, lifestyle and further education.

Buy-in from our clubs is crucial to the success of our academy structure. Without

clubs encouraging both their young players and their coaches to get involved in our academies, then the whole thing falls down.

Coach and mentor recruitment is particularly challenging, and I understand the need to make it more appealing for club coaches to get involved at Academy level.

To that end, we will work closely with our 2024 Academy coaches on an ongoing basis to help them develop their skillset so that we are able to deliver the highest standard set ups that we can possibly can for our young county players.

Improvements in our recent trials process has already been favourably commented on and I hope that lots more examples of advancements in our Academy structure will be evident throughout 2024.

7) Setanta & Ó'Mórdha Óg Programmes

The Setanta programme continued to go from strength to strength in 2023, now taking in both the U10 and U11 age brackets.

The U10 group had over 100 kids involved while the U11 group had over 120 involved.

The kids were brilliantly coached by a group of over 40 volunteer coaches across both age groups, with Brendan Phelan again overseeing the U10 group while Liam Aherne took on the U11 organisation.

A massive thank you to Clonad GAA club for the use of their facilities for the U11 group.

The Ó'Mórdha Óg Programme, in its first year, received a fantastic response with almost 200 U11's kids taking part.

They were coached by over 30 volunteer coaches who did a superb job in ensuring both skill development and enjoyment on a weekly basis.

The Setanta and Ó'Mórdha Óg Programmes can play a vital role in sufficiently developing our young players core skills before they reach the age at which they may be hoping to enter our Academy squads.

In 2024, it is our aim to run both programmes at the U10, U11 & U12 age groups.

As you can imagine, this will require a huge amount of planning and personnel, but based on the fantastic volunteer support the programme has received to date, I believe it is achievable.

8) Primary Schools

Driving participation in our GAA Clubs by engaging with kids through our Primary Schools continues to be a key focus for us. The roles played by our GPO's here in helping to develop a love of Gaelic Games at a young age cannot be underestimated.

For those clubs still without a GPO, the club school link offers an excellent alterna-

tive. Any clubs looking to explore this option further can contact Shane Keegan for more details.

2024 will see the launch of our Primary Schools Flag/Award initiative. The aim of this initiative to help drive the GAA culture in our primary schools. Participating schools will be asked to fulfil certain criteria such as:

- a) Setting up a pupil's GAA committee
- b) Running a GAA notice board & scrapbook
- c) Each class receiving a minimum 6-week block of training.
- d) Teachers engaging in a coaching workshop.
- e) Pupils completing a GAA skills homework programme.

In return each school will receive a Laois GAA Flag or Award at the end of the school year.

We are also going to look to play a role in increasing the games programme at primary school level. Cumann na mBunscol have been doing an outstanding job in Laois and we will look to work with them by helping to provide a games programme for 3rd & 4th class students as a precursor to the Cumann na mBunscol competitions.

9) Post Primary Schools

The Post Primary School sector is an area in which Laois as a county, with the exception of one or two outliers, has fallen way back in.

We understand the challenges schools face in terms of getting students and teachers onboard at schools' level and with that in mind the Coaching & Games department are offering their assistance in whatever way we can.

We have looked to increase the games programme available to schools, putting particular focus on 1st and 2nd year, by running blitz days and mini leagues in the hope getting the students to buy in to the idea of representing their school as early as possible.

Our Coaching & Games staff are now directly involved in delivering coaching sessions in the schools at their request and we have also looked to help facilitate requests for extra coaching equipment wherever possible.

We are also looking to help facilitate the Future Leader transition programme in our schools. This is a fantastic programme which has the potential to generate young coaches and referees, two areas I'm sure all clubs will agree we are badly in need of more bodies in.

10) Athletic Development

We are delighted that Brian Ging has joined our Coaching and Games team in the role of Performance Coach. Brian, working under County Head of Games Shane Keegan and Head of Athletic Development Tom Hargroves, will be primarily tasked with the following duties:

a) Delivering the athletic development plan for our Academy players

- b) Testing and data collection of our Academy players
- c) Delivering a range of athletic development workshops for club coaches
- d) Assisting clubs in creating their own athletic development plans

We have also gone through the process of interviewing and recruiting four college interns who will assist Tom and Brian in delivering the athletic development programmes to the academy squads as well as getting involved in the primary schools coaching programme.

11) Promotion

The battle for the hearts and minds of our young players is a greater challenge than ever. It is vital that we are always looking for opportunities that we can use to help grow their love of Gaelic games and promote their involvement in football and hurling, every boy in Laois should get the chance to play our games.

With the in mind, we are looking at the following areas, but we are also welcome further suggestions.

- a) Increased social media presence of our Academy teams, and our 'Coaching and games' activities.
- b) Mascots for county games.
- c) Mini matches at half time in county games for clubs/schools' teams
- d) Competitions for kids in our schools and clubs.
- e) Engaging county and ex-county players to promote and coach.

SAFETY & FACILITIES REPORT 2023

Delegates and all in attendance, I am pleased to present my first report as Laois CLG Safety & Facilities Officer for 2023. The opening months of the year was very much a learning period for me to get to know the workings and responsibilities associated with the role. I'd like to thank all members of the 2023 the County Board for supporting me during the year including the staff at the Centre of Excellence.

The Safety & Facilities officer role can be reported on from two main areas: Support to clubs and development of O'Moore Park including Centre of Excellence.

Support to Clubs

Firstly, dealing with support to clubs, it was a very busy year as a number of the grant schemes were fully back up and running after COVID disruption. The Leinster Council Development Grant scheme opened for applications, and I was pleased to help all clubs in their application process. In all 15 clubs progressed with applications which involved quite an amount of paperwork and correspondence. The club officers involved have done a great job for their clubs in getting grant support for the capital works carried out between Summer 2022 and Summer 2023. I am very hopeful of a positive outcome from Leinster Council by the end of 2023 in this regard.

The Gaa Development Loan application and subsequent approval to draw down

loans was another positive opportunity for clubs during 2023. While the terms and conditions were quite restrictive a number of clubs were approved in the application process and subsequently drew down loans between €30 – 80k at low interest rates. Again, this was a learning experience for myself and the clubs involved but I am pleased to report a positive outcome for a number of clubs. It was unfortunate the clubs seeking a higher amount, closer to €100k, didn't reach this higher amount but the volume of applications to the scheme made this impossible. I want to thank Stephen and others in the Gaa National Finance Department for their helpfulness also.

Land purchase is another area where support is given to clubs and I was pleased to help Mountrath Gaa in particular in this regard. Mountrath Gaa club have an excellent plan to develop their club and I was pleased to assist where I could. With all land purchases, the passing of time can be a challenge but Mountrath Gaa will benefit from the persistence of their club officers to secure this land for many years to come.

Finally in relation to interactions and support for clubs, the national Sports Capital Programme 2023 was opened for applications in August. With a closing date in early September this was a very busy time for club officers alongside other applications. I want to congratulate all clubs making applications and wish them the best in the award process in 2024.

Many Laois Gaa clubs are very progressive and have plans to add to the already excellent facilities in many cases. The quality of facilities provided to players, members and supporters across the county is very impressive. The excellent facilities result in a high level of safety across our club grounds which is so important for the association also.

I want to thank Michael Reynolds, Patricia Clear and John Browne in Comhairle Laighean for their constant support and advice during the year.

Development of O'Moore Park & Centre of Excellence

The opening months of the year was really about learning and reviewing the current status of Laois headquarters. I want to thank PJ Kelly and Niall Handy in particular for their constant support during the year in this regard.

O'Moore Park stadium is in good shape overall but a few areas are in need of attention, particularly viewing area for disabled patrons and the aging scoreboard. I am pleased to have progressed the disabled area upgrade project including a grant application to Laois Leader which I am hopeful for support for the project being confirmed by year end. The construction of this important project will be carried out in the opening months of 2024 which I believe will be a good addition to the stadium facilities. I want to thank Jenny Collier, Laois Development Association for her assistance and advice during the year regarding the grant application process.

I want to thank Richard Kennedy for his work around the upgrade of the scoreboard. Pricing has been received and again a plan is in place to purchase a new digital scoreboard in early 2024 which will modernise the scoreboard in the stadium. These two projects will require substantial capital expenditure in early 2024 which has the full support of the management Committee. While the 2023 accounts do show a healthy surplus, an amount of this surplus has been assigned to these capital works in 2024. I want to thank Pascal McEvoy for his support in this regard.

The Centre of Excellence is a fantastic facility for all our county players and clubs. The level of demand for the pitches is an ongoing challenge, whereby additional pitches are needed. This is a real challenge for Laois Gaa, but one I believe will have to be addressed in some form over the coming years. I have commenced an energy review of the facility which will develop further into 2024. The transition to a lower carbon footprint will be an important part of the CoE complex development into the future.

Finally, I would like to recognise the work of Colm McEvoy and all the grounds staff. Pitches are kept in excellent condition throughout the year. Capital works support from Croke Park was received following excellent work by Niall for the installation of an irrigation system for the O'Moore Park pitch. The contractor completed its work during October and November. This will be a great addition to the pitch quality during the summer months when temperatures rise to high

levels. Colm brings a high degree of expertise to the upkeep of the grounds.

Stewarding & Safe hosting of games

Following COVID, steward training was required which was completed early in 2023. All clubs were contacted and close to 30 stewards were trained. However, it was disappointing that several clubs did not send forward a steward to be trained and as a result are without a trained steward within their club for hosting games outside of O'Moore Park/CoE. This is an area which will be returned to in 2024.

The area of stewarding and hosting of games was a big eye opener for me. I am extremely impressed with the dedication of all stewards and others who help during games. I want to sincerely thank Tom Jones in particular for his support and time during 2023. As Events Coordinator, Tom runs match days in a very professional and welcoming way. PJ Kelly as Safety Officer is a constant support also in this regard.

I want to give a special mention to all stewards who helped out during 2023. These are the unsung heroes who give generously of their time to Laois Gaa and its patrons. I thank one and all of them for their dedication. Dealing with the public can always throw up issues, but all stewards that I have come across during the year are very courteous to patrons which gives a very positive reflection of Laois Gaa.

I want to thank Pamela, Willie and Michael for their support during 2023 also. The workers in O'Moore Park kept the stadium clean, painted and very presentable during 2023 which I want to recognise in closing.

Le Meas,

John Kelly

County Safety & Facilities Officer

PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT 2023

Coming into the position of County PRO in January 2023, I set about building on the great work undertaken and completed by Canice McCarthy in 2022. The following set outs a brief review of the work undertaken by the PRO Committee over the course of 2023 and included also some aspirations I would have for the function within CLG Laois into the future.

Social Media

The world now lives on Social Media and our presence across the main Social Media platforms of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter/X is widespread and consistent. Over the course of 2023, we grew our followers across all Social Media platforms by approximately 8 - 10%. However, with the use of stories from our website etc, and regular posts we have also significantly increased the coverage our posts receive across all social media platforms especially in relation to match reports and notices. Providing realtime updates of intercounty and club games via Twitter feed is difficult (and stressful at times!) however I'm proud of the level of coverage we were able to provide our intercounty and club games this year, albeit with a skeleton crew of dedicated people to provide assistance with the quantity of games in question.

Live broadcasting on Facebook of County Draws and presentations continued to draw large viewership during the year. For next year, we have implemented structures

to better coordinate our planning around when and how we post to Social Media and to better coordinate how we post across our different social media platforms. This will make social media management more streamlined and efficient for years to come.

Website

The Laois GAA website is the primary outlet for information on our activities that is available to our members and consistently has approximately 35,000 site visits per month. Quite early in 2023 it was apparent the website needed a facelift, and I'm happy to say this redesign was completed in October 2023 with further work to be undertaken in streamlining our content over the coming months.

The new design now offers greater functionality and ease of use to our patrons and offers the opportunity for greater enhancements in 2024 aswell as a new fixtures/results section that is better suited to access on mobile devices (approx. 90% of our source traffic to the website). I hope the website can be developed further in 2024 to possibly include campaign features (for ticket and merchandise sales) and also possibly an extended club and county role of honour archive to safeguard the database of historical archives compiled, maintained and updated by Eoin Culliton for so many years.

Match Programmes

Laois GAA continues to pride itself on producing top quality programs at all times and I hope 2023 saw no change in standards compared to previous years. Many thanks to Niall Handy and County Administrator Pam Cooney for their work in compiling and assisting on programmes and also to Mochua Print. As is always the case, National League Programmes give the host counties some flexibility in terms of content and many thanks to Eoin Culliton and especially to the absolute legend that is Pat Delaney for their contributions over the year on both intercounty and club programmes when asked.

Laois Hire O'Moore Park

CLG Laois are one of the few remaining counties where scoreboard and public address within the County Grounds fall under the remit of County PRO activities. This will need to change in the future once the responsibilities/activities of the role are reviewed and reallocated amongst existing or newly created roles (*Reference: GAA Communications Plan 2023 – 2026*). Big (and small!) match-days in Laois Hire O'Moore are what sell CLG Laois to the next generation. I hope we can ensure that we keep on top of this user experience into the future and are not afraid to invest in our “stadium experience” in relation to scoreboard, sound and spectator amenities. Analysing where other counties are moving with their County Grounds, I would love to see support and investment to develop a “Laois Hire O'Moore Park Stadium Tour” available for locals, schools

and the diaspora to visit and learn more about the focal point for the majority of the community across Laois (see Armagh GAA...).

Clubber

Departing from Laois TV was not an easy decision to make, but realistically the resources required to operate a standalone Laois GAA streaming service to the standard required would not have been feasible. With that, Clubber TV coming on board in 2023 with CLG Laois on a 2-year deal has offered us marvellous opportunity. The quality of service we receive from Clubber has surpassed all expectations and I sincerely hope for the extended promotion of Gaelic Games within Laois that this relationship can be extended and enhanced in years to come. My thanks to all the Team at Clubber for the service provided during 2023.

Media Relations

My interactions with all elements of the national and local media have been an experience, all of which is positive. A sincere word of thanks to members of the national but in particular our local media outlets including The Leinster Express, The Nationalist, Midlands 103, LaoisToday and Clubber. The hard work and dedication you provide in order to give our games, clubs and players the level and quality of coverage that is so richly deserved can only be commended and appreciated. Many thanks for your valued

input and assistance in choosing the 2023 Award recipients also. I hope in 2023 I have made the service you provide to CLG Laois a little easier, and I hope this relationship can be built on further into 2024 and beyond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been an extremely busy 12-months but I have enjoyed the experience that the role of County PRO has given me. I have taken the decision not to seek re-election and to step away from all County Board activities in order to focus on now other priorities. The PRO function within Co. Board is quickly evolving and the role and requirements need immediate review in order to secure volunteers whom are willing (and have the capacity) to commit long-term to the function.

Sincere thanks to Niall Handy and Pam Cooney within CLG Laois for all your help and support during 2023. Pam has been a great help to me throughout the year and her dedication and service to Laois GAA is to be commended. The commitment that Niall Handy makes to CLG Laois especially cannot be highlighted enough and deservedly so. He is one of the most experienced Sports Executives in the Country, and we simply must progress in finding ways to ensure he has the capacity so that Laois GAA can best utilise his expertise and knowledge in moving us strategically and progressively forward into the future.

Many thanks to County Chairperson PJ Kelly and the wider management com-

mittee during the year, but especially to Joe Cunningham and Tony Bambrick from Coiste na nOg for your assistance in ensuring the PRO function had the best chance possible to publicise the activities of our 2023 juvenile competitions.

The PRO function can only operate with the assistance of a wider operations team. To that end, I sincerely thank Eoin Culliton, James Culliton, Canice McCarthy, Conor McCarthy, Aoife McEvoy and Pat McEvoy for all their help and support on match-days whether in Laois Hire O'Moore Park both on scoreboard and twitter duty or on twitter duty at away games. Many thanks also to Oonagh Maher for her help on twitter feeds for inter-county games. Thanks also to Vinny Dowling, Brochan Reilly and to Tom Jones for their support on match days in Laois Hire O'Moore Park along with those who work behind the scenes in Laois GAA, programme sellers, stewards, caretakers and to our caterer Bosco Ramsbottom looking after our valued guests in the media box especially for intercounty League and Championship games in Laois Hire O'Moore Park.

On our website and social media activities, many thanks to Aoife McEvoy for all her hard work during the year. Aoife was a great support to the county throughout the year, and her match previews on the Laois GAA website and score updates were always eagerly anticipated! I wish her the very best on her future studies and her enthusiasm for sports marketing combined with her interest and support of all things Laois GAA will hopefully continue to serve us into the future.

Thanks to Paul Dargan, Pat O’Sullivan and of course (again!) Canice McCarthy for any help and support you were able to provide me during the year, greatly appreciated.

Special word of thanks to all sponsors of CLG Laois for your continued support of Gaelic Games in our County. I sincerely hope, the representation you gained from our activities has reaped the benefits and rewards you hoped.

Many thanks to all referees and to Vinny Dowling in particular for his assistance during the year. The professionalism with which our team of referees conduct themselves in preparation on match-days is to be commended and the assistance you provide is appreciated combined with the great service you all provide to the players and clubs of Laois GAA.

Thanks in particular to the clubs and members of Laois GAA for allowing me

the privilege to represent you all in serving on Laois County Board for the last four years.

Finally, a sincere word of thanks to my wife Sarah and the lads - Jack, Danny and Joe Kennedy. I look forward to great days (Hopefully!!) supporting Club and County in Laois Hire O’Moore Park and across the clubs of Laois with you all for many years to come!!

It has been an honour to hold the role of County PRO in 2023. In moving on, I’m satisfied that I have served the Clubs and Members of Laois GAA to the best of my ability and I wish the very best to everyone in 2024.

Is Mise

Risteaird O’Cinneide

Laois GAA PRO

LAOIS GAA “MOCHUA PRINT & DESIGN” AWARD WINNERS 2023

Senior Football - James Kelly (St Joseph's)

Senior “B” Football - Tom Shiel (Stradbally)

Intermediate Football - Gary Walsh (Ballylinan)

Intermediate “B” Football – Conor Whelehan (Timahoe)

Junior Football - John Scully (Annanough)

Minor Football - David Donohue (Stradbally Parish Gaels)

Under 20 Football – to be confirmed.

Senior Hurling - Tomas Keyes (Camross)

Premier Intermediate Hurling - Eoin O'Connor (Portlaoise)

Intermediate Hurling - Nathan Dunne (Colt-Shanahoe)

Junior Hurling - Michael Brennan (Park Ratheniska Timahoe)

Under 20 Hurling – Justin Duggan (The Harps)

Minor Hurling - Eoghan Murphy (The Harps)

Laois Inter County Senior Football - Mark Timmons (Graiguecullen)

Laois Inter County Senior Hurling - Stephen Maher (Clough Ballacolla)

Scor – Courtwood Quiz Team (Pat O'Connell, Brian Nolan, John Boland & PJ Kelly)

Referee – JJ Kirby (The Heath)

Handball – Kevin Brennan (Clough Ballacolla)

Rounders – Danielle Moore (The Heath)

Hall of Fame – Martin Cuddy (Camross)

Camogie

Minor Camogie - Eimear Hassett (St. Brigids)

Junior Camogie - Louise Mahony (Harps)

Intermediate Camogie - Sarah Ann Fitzgerald (Camross)

Laois Inter County Camogie - Fiona Scully (Camross)

LGFA

Junior LGFA – Roisín Allen (Crettyard)

Intermediate LGFA – Emily Lacey (St Joseph's)

Senior LGFA – Fiona Dooley (Portlaoise)

Laois Inter County LGFA – Clodagh Dunne

TUAIRISC OIFIGEACH CULTÚR & GAEILGE CLG LAOISE - CRUINNIÚ CHINN BHLIANA CLG LAOISE 2023

Ba mhór an onóir dom bheith tofa arís mar Oifigeach Cultúr & Gaeilge Laoise don bhliain 2023.

2023 Scór activities were back to normal and our first event was Scór na nÓg taking place in the Centre of Excellence with a great competition in most events, the venue was full to capacity! Our representatives then proceeded to the Leinster semi finals in Carnew in late March. They did us immensely proud, with Jack Higgins of Camross GAA qualifying for the Leinster final in the Aithriseoireacht competition and the Camross Ceol Uirlise team qualifying for same. Next event was Scór na bPáistí held in Mountrath's St Fintan's Hall at the end of May. This was a great evening with competitors and talent aplenty. A special word of thanks to Mountrath and especially Monica Middleton for helping to organise this event. Doireann O'Connor was our adjudicator and commented on the wealth of talent in our primary school aged children.

As previously mentioned Scór na nÓg and Scór na bPáistí competitions are alive and well in Laois but adult completion Scór is unfortunately not, with only one Laois club entering the 2023 Scór Sinsir competition. At the Laois final in LOETB in October we had one entrant in Solo singing, one Ballad Group and two teams in the Quiz. That said our representatives, the Courtwood GAA Quiz Team A, their

ballad group, and Pauric Dunne in solo singing represented us admirably in the Leinster competition. As a result of the Courtwood quiz team's continued support and participation in Scór Sinsir over the last 9 years, the Cultural Committee have decided to nominate them for the Laois GAA Scór award.

Regarding progress in promoting An Ghaeilge in the GAA, an Irish-Language event was held in Kavanagh's Portlaoise for Seachtain na Gaeilge, but despite our best efforts to promote it, there was a poor turnout at the event. However we will continue to try and promote an Chultúr agus an Ghaeilge sa CLG in the coming year!

I would like to thank my Committee; Michael Martin (Runai), Monica Delaney, Martin Stapleton, John-Paul Nevin, Shóna Nevin, Tina Cuddy, and Monica Middleton.

As is my annual request to you, the clubs of Laois please try to promote the use of our native language in the day to day business of your club. Please make your club signage and road signs at least, bilingual. I am reminding you again in the run up to your club's "Crinniú chinn bhliana" to present a little of all reports 'as Gaeilge'.

I look forward to hopefully working with you all again in the coming year, and I hope to continue promoting an Chultúr agus an Ghaeilge in the GAA!

Thank you to my fellow County Board Officers, Officers of the clubs of Laois agus an foireann san Oifig.

Nollaig Mac an Ghail 7/11/2023



The Courtwood Team

PLANNING & TRAINING OFFICER REPORT 2023

Most club teams began their preparation for the year in January 2023, whilst most people in the clubs are concerned with the teams that would be taking to the pitch; there is a need to be focussed on the team that is running the club, of course that team is the Club Committee.

In January the latest round of Club Officer Training began to assist the committee to excel in their roles, there was several online training courses provided for both members who were new to the roles as well as to those who have been in the role for a few years. The purpose of these courses is to aid members of the committee with their role for the year, these courses included help with being a Club Chairperson, Club Secretary, Club Treasurer and Club Pro. Feedback from club members who attended these online courses has been positive and everybody who attended came away with a better understanding of their role.

Although these online courses are optional to attend, I would encourage all Club & County Officers to attend the course, when possible, as they play an important part in the evolution of you as an Officer of the Club or County.

These courses are of course open to all club members to attend if they wish to; if there is a member who is thinking of taking up a role in the future but is unsure of 'What's involved?', then these courses are a good way for them to get an idea of the role requirements and in turn might lead to them saying 'Yes, I'll take on that role'.

This year saw the roll out of the 'Club Compás' programme on Foireann. The Club Compás is a self-assessment tool that your Club can use to access how well you are performing off the field based on the standards set by the Gaelic Games Associations. Upon completion of the assessment, your Club will receive a report that scores your performance and gives direction on what could be done to move to the next level.

The Club Compás aims to encourage Club planning, improve governance standards, streamline administration for volunteers and recognise Clubs for their commitment to excellence. The priority is to ensure that this programme streamlines what Clubs are being asked to do, rather than increase volunteer workload, and reduce the number of requests for information because everything will be stored in Foireann. I believe the Club Compás can be used to allow clubs see what they're doing well, but also to show clubs different aspects that they can improve upon.

This year saw some clubs come together as a community and develop a Club Strategic Plan, a document like this is paramount for Clubs to aid in the forward movement of their club and to ensure that they don't become stagnant and rely only on their current setup. The only constant is change, be that change in your club grounds or club policies this plan will be there to help. I would encourage clubs that do not have a current active Club Strategic Plan in place to contact me to start the process. What

has become evident over the last few years is that a club with an active plan is in a better position to secure grant aid as opposed to clubs who do not have a plan.

I would like to thank all clubs who completed the online surveys throughout the year, without your input it's difficult to obtain the information required to meet the training needs of our club officers. This training goes a long way towards helping our current officer but also in preparing for a change of officer at a Club AGM.

Is Mise le Meas,

Pilib O'Catháin

AUDIT & RISK REPORT 2023

This year saw a significant level of progress in the rolling out the Audit & Risk function.

The aim of the Committee is to provide guidance and oversight to the Management Committee to deliver and promote good governance across all functions of Laois GAA.

Risk Management is at the cornerstone of the committees remit. The identification of “inherent risks” allows the Committee to address same with a view to reducing these to “residual risks” which in turn improves overall governance.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the sub committees who met with the committee during the year and provided significant insights to both the opportunities & risks across their roles.

A summary of the overview and initiatives recommended to the Management Committee in 2023 were as follows:

Club Financial Review

An assessment of Financial Year End 10/2022 accounts of every club in Laois was undertaken by the committee with each club being assigned a level of risk depending on the clubs current financial performance and their overall financial position.

The overriding finding was that the financial position in a large no. of clubs was

difficult to establish in the absence of a Balance Sheet.

The recommendation to the Management Committee was to circulate a standard account template which has been circulated to all clubs for mandatory completion on FYE 10/2023 accounts. This will drive improved governance across the club population and standardise the approach.

Children’s Officer

Following consultation with Seamus Lahart the committee recommended a number of initiatives detailed below, to the Management Committee, to minimise risks identified in the areas of safeguarding children and improving the culture of supporter behaviour across our games.

(I) It has been recommended that all clubs keep a “live” register of members / team management and backroom staff confirming status for (i) membership fee paid (ii) Garda vetting (iii) Child Safeguarding and; (iv) coaching level status. Compliance is imperative to mitigate any potential risks, particularly where u-18 players are eligible to be involved with all teams from nursery to senior level.

(II) Secondly, the Committee recommended that when club secretaries submit team lists for the season, they must include confirmation that all “management / selectors / coaches” are fully compliant and have required courses completed. This is

to mitigate risk where there is an annual turnover of management / coaching staff particularly where outside management / coaches are appointed.

(III) The final recommendation under the review of Children’s Officer remit is to launch an annual “Laois GAA Community Education Day” where club members are invited to O’Moore Park

for an interactive and informal session with all referees in the county to discuss rule changes and how same will be implemented in the upcoming season. The aim of this initiative is to drive a change in culture of supporter attitudes towards officials.

Safety & Facilities

In a similar vein, the Committee consulted with John Kelly on the remit of Safety & Facilities which resulted in the following recommendations to the Management Committee.

(I) Mandatory for all Laois clubs to complete a Strategic Review for a period of 5 years. Strategic Reviews to be submitted by June 2024 for review by the Audit & Risk Committee in conjunction with the Management Committee. The availability of Leinster Council support in completion of same to be actively advertised to clubs. Strategic Reviews will afford clubs the opportunity to determine the direction of their club over the medium term and establish objectives for the period.

(II) Laois GAA to seek clarification from Croke Park in advance of Central Grant

roll outs as to who has responsibility for “review and decision” of Grants to clubs who have submitted requests for funding, after ambiguity was identified by the committee in this area

(III) Steward Training: clubs who fail to provide the requisite number of stewards for formal training to be excluded from hosting championship games from 2024 onwards

Management Committee

The Audit & Risk Committee met with the County Secretary and County Treasurer to review Laois GAA financial performance during the year vs. budgets furnished to Croke Park.

The Committee found there to be a strong performance vs. budget and significant cost controls and monitoring in place which is satisfactory.

It is also a function of the Committee to review external Auditors findings on the Laois GAA accounts. Following review with Management Committee, we were satisfied that all points raised by the external auditors, Mazars, are being actively addressed with controls and measures implemented to satisfy same.

The committee will also be meeting with Mazars independently to discuss the financial performance during their audit.

Finally, I would like to thank committee members Maeve Conroy, John Connolly and David Dwyer for their time, guidance, enthusiasm and initiative they brought to

this important function during the year. We are looking forward to 2024 where we are aiming to meet with the sub committees we have yet to meet and to further enhance strong governance in Laois GAA.

Mise le meas

Richard Dunne

Cathaoirleach, Audit & Risk Committee

REFEREES ADMINISTRATOR REPORT 2023

2023 has been without doubt our busiest year ever for referee appointments and recruitment.

This year saw up to 52 referees trained and available to officiate at our games at both juvenile and adult level. All our referees and umpires had to complete the 'Child Safeguarding 1 Course' for the first time this year which allowed them to officiate juvenile games. Our referees also completed the Croke Park Referee Course and Rules Test.

Over the last 12 months, our clubs would have met a number of new faces who have come on board as referees, with a total of 5 new referees recruited during the year. It is very important that we continue our recruitment drive, as we will always unfortunately lose 1 or 2 referees on a yearly basis.

My thanks to the members on the Referees Administration committee for all their time and effort for the past year. Also my thanks to Pam, our office administrator, for all her help.

I wish to thank all our referees for their time and commitment to Laois GAA in 2023. We held a large number of meetings in the past year to ensure referees were appointed to cover all our games. This, at times, was very time consuming and for most of the year was a seven-day a week job.

At last year's Convention and at our earlier County Committee meetings I highlighted the need to recruit referees from clubs

whom at the time, did not have a referee in their club. At that time there was 16 clubs in this bracket, we are now down to 15 clubs. This is something that clubs really need to look at early next year. So again I ask if clubs could recruit a suitable person to do the Referees Course and then after that let that person decide if they wish to go further.

Vincent Dowling

Referee Administrator

CHILDREN'S OFFICER REPORT 2023

This was a very successful year and Deirdre Hurley was always available to all clubs and to the county board to facilitate this Safeguarding training, sometimes at short notice. She was also available to clubs throughout the year for discussion around what is acceptable behaviour and what is not acceptable. The safeguarding training is only valid for three years. This is either renewed through face-to-face training or on-line training.

In 2023, Deirdre also successfully completed training module in Designated Liaison Person. This has allowed Laois GAA to organise its own training through 2023.

In 2023 all clubs successfully completed the Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment, (last completed in 2021). This assessment is completed every two years. It is important to remember that without an updated approved statement on show in every club grounds, that club will not be able to host games and/or training. This statement is a Legal Requirement as defined in 2015 Children First Act and is not an opt in opt out requirement.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all clubs of the requirement for up-to-date vetting certificated in 2024. Only vetting approved in 2021 & 2021 & 2023 is valid for the 2024 season. Only vetting letters provided by the GAA, LGFA and or Camogie are acceptable. This vetting and safeguarding is also valid for work within primary schools where there is no GPO

available to the school. I would encourage all clubs to ensure that the coach assigned to relevant primary school has a valid vetting, safe guarding cert and a coaching qualification.

For 2023, it is now in rule that no coach can be appointed to a club or county without having first completed all relevant paperwork and training central to role. It is essential that all clubs who participate in Independent teams have open communication with the lead club and ensure that only suitably approved coaches / officials are in place for all games and training sessions. In the same way where an official is recruited from outside the club(s), each executive is responsible for ensure that all officials (coaches / mentors / referees / umpires etc) are suitably vetted and trained. For all adult teams where there is at least one under 18 player in training with the panel, the safeguarding requirements apply without exception.

It is essential (as part of legislation) that all clubs have appointed a Children's Officer and a Designated Liaison Officer. These are not optional appointments.

We have also secured a Children's Officer email address and this should be used by all clubs, as this is the only method of approved communication in line with good governance and GDPR rule for communication especially of person's personal data. I want to take this opportunity to request that all clubs change email passwords when a new officer is appointed, so

that the old officer no longer has access to the email associated with the role. This is not a personal email instead it is a “work email” and should only be used in such circumstances.

A disappointing aspect of 2023 for me is the increased use of negative / abusive language on the side-lines and in games in Laois by supporters, players, game officials and appointed officials. In 2023, the incidence of physical violence in our games increased. This is an unacceptable behaviour and I would encourage all clubs not to accept this behaviour. This activity has resulted in the cancelling of games mid-game. We need to remember that we are playing our games with either young people playing and or watching and we are role models for all our young players and supporters.

I would implore all clubs to ensure that this behaviour is not accepted and that any club where this behaviour occurs manage it in accordance with the Safeguarding protocols. We need to remember that our players / mentors / official's do not deserve / expect to be a recipient of any abuse (verbal or physical) and it is not necessary. As a parent would you accept your child being verbally abused? Would you allow them to be in the environment where verbal aggression is ok? If no is the answer to these questions then we need to better manage our behaviour at games, training sessions and stop this negative behaviour. There is no place in the GAA (and our sister organisations or any other sporting environment or society) for this behaviour. If this behaviour is not accepted in normal

everyday society, it is not accepted within the GAA in any circumstances.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the club children's officers for their diligent work in their own clubs and with independent teams this year. The conversations we are having locally are a positive reassurance to me that the role within each club is held in high regard and is viewed as essential to good club governance. Within Laois County Board the role of the children's officer has now evolved to supporting the clubs and ensuring the county development structures / teams are compliant with all safe-guarding rules. I wish to thank Deirdre Hurley for her work in Laois GAA and her excellence in delivering safe-guarding training.

HEALTH & WELLBEING REPORT 2023

The Health & Wellbeing Committee would like to take this opportunity to convey its appreciation to all of the county's clubs for their outstanding and continuous efforts in supporting our members' growing requirements. The wonderful feeling of community that penetrates every club in the county is demonstrated by the work that you have carried out to assist and enhance the well-being of our members.

Healthy Club Project

We are delighted that three additional clubs that participated in Phase 5 of the GAA's Healthy Club Project have successfully completed their 18month journey and were officially awarded their Healthy

Club Status at an awards event in October. The successful Laois clubs are:

O'Dempsey's GAA
Portarlington GAA
St. Joseph's GAA

At the award ceremony, 3 other clubs who previously completed these steps (**Annanough GAA, Clonad GAA, Kilcavan GAA & Park/Rathineska GAA**) retained their Healthy Club status. This brings to a total of 6 clubs in Laois who are officially recognised by the GAA as Healthy Clubs.

In addition to improving the preventative components required for optimal health and wellbeing, we hope that the proactive work of the Healthy Club project will



lessen some of the detrimental effects that challenges our communities. If we want to support each other on and off the pitch, we need to build every member up. Sincere efforts on our part will improve our clubs, which will help our communities. It will be our duty as a committee to assist the Laois clubs in achieving this objective and putting into place health-improving initiatives and policies that will benefit our members of all ages.

HEED - Drugs Educational Awareness Talks

The GAA community is increasingly concerned about the prevalence of drug abuse among young individuals, which poses a serious threat to their well-being, academic performance, and overall development. We believe educational and awareness programmes will play a vital role in addressing this issue and empowering our players and members to make healthy choices.

Earlier in the year, Laois GAA in partnership with An Garda Síochána and the Midland Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force successfully delivered a pilot drugs educational awareness talk to our u16s development squad earlier in the year. The pilot talk was a success, and we now will work towards delivering this programme along with the GAA's Substance Misuse Training to all interested clubs in 2024.

In the meantime, all clubs are urged to adopt the GAA's Substance Use Policy. This policy will help put the supports and structures in place for clubs when dealing with issues relating to this issue. A copy of

this policy template can be downloaded from our website.

Critical Incidents

Laois GAA has faced several difficult challenges this year, including multiple devastating critical incidents that resulted in the heart-breaking loss of much loved and valued club members. These clubs and communities have faced adversity but have persevered through tragedy together with strength and unity, providing unwavering support to their members. Together, we honour their memory and move forward, forging a resilient and compassionate community.

The Health & Wellbeing Committee supported these clubs in the immediate aftermath of these tragic circumstances in helping them respond appropriately to these critical incidents. It is imperative that all clubs within Laois create and adopt a Critical Incident Plan. Clubs must have a Critical Incident Plan in place to ensure they can respond appropriately in the aftermath of tragic and challenging events. A copy of this policy template can be downloaded from our website.

The Year Ahead

In 2024, the H&W Committee will continue to encourage and support our clubs in putting health-improving initiatives into action within their clubs and communities. We will continue to deepen our ties to the national and local support ser-



VICES as well as the dedicated Healthy Club Officers within our clubs.

Some of our plans for 2024 include:

- 1) Ensuring there is a dedicated Healthy Club Officer in every club within Laois.
- 2) All clubs to adopt a critical incident plan and a substance abuse policy.
- 3) All clubs within Laois to adopt the 'Clean Air Around Us' initiative which encourages as many clubs as possible to go 'Smoke Free'.
- 4) Roll-out of the HEED & Substance Misuse educational and awareness programme to all interested clubs and coaches/mentors
- 5) Promote the 'Give Respect Get Respect' initiative.
- 6) Launching educational programs and efforts related to good mental health, awareness of drugs, alcohol, and gambling, diversity, and inclusion among other topics.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us during the year and in particular our County Board Executive. We also thank the Croke Park National Health & Wellbeing Committee and the Healthy Club Officers in Laois. We plan to keep expanding on this effort in order to give health and wellness a higher priority in all we do as a sporting organisation.

The Committee continued to be: Leona Conroy (Chairperson), G Tom Jones, Ciara Conroy, Paul Harding, PJ Kelly, Seamus Lahart, Martina Murphy

Leona Conroy

Chairperson - Laois GAA
Health & Wellbeing Committee

FIXTURES REVIEW 2023

The role of the fixture analysts is to review the adult fixtures programme, carry out a consultation process with the clubs and make recommendations to the Laois CCC for onward consideration by the County Committee.

An analysis of the current fixtures indicates that:

- championship fixtures are broadly working well aided by dedicated weeks for codes
- the league schedule is very compressed particularly for dual clubs
- walkovers are not a major concern though there is room for improvement
- 3 and 5 team groups pose challenges including a bye in every round and also that one club is at the mercy of the last round results
- the introduction of the senior B football championship is positive but it is questionable whether there is a need for an intermediate B football final.

Clubs were asked to complete a questionnaire with the responses summarised as follows:

- only a 3rd of clubs actively engaged with the process
- 5 clubs expressed the view that the SHC should be increased from 8 to 10 teams

- no appetite for any changes to the SFC format
- there was also a submission from the hurling committee chairman
- only one club suggested a reduction of matches in the adult football leagues.

The following recommendations were made to the Laois CCC for 2024:

- 4 teams in the Intermediate football championship continue to play off to avoid relegation but no need for an intermediate B final
- junior football formats need to be reviewed as the current formats are unwieldy
- promotion/relegation should be consistent across all leagues
- consider the merit of increasing the number of teams in the SHC taking cognisance of the likely impact for intermediate and junior clubs.

Seán O Conghaile *agus*
Micheál O Conaráin

AINMNIÚCHÁIN (NOMINATIONS)

Cathaoirleach (Chairperson):

PJ Kelly (Outgoing)

Cisteoir (Treasurer):

Paschal McEvoy (Outgoing)

Leas Cathaoirleach (Vice Chairperson):

Kieran Kehoe (Outgoing)

Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer):

Bryan Breen (Outgoing)

Oifigeach Oiliúna (Coaching Officer):

Brian Quinn (Outgoing)

Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish Officer):

Noel Stapleton (Outgoing)

Oifigeach Caidrimh Poiblí (P.R.O.):

No nominee

Ard Comhairle (Central Council Delegate):

Martin Byrne (Outgoing)

Comhairle Laighean (Leinster Council Delegate)(2):

Brian Allen & Tom Clear (Outgoing)

Congress Delegates (3 to be elected):

Cathaoirleach, Runaí & Ard Comhairle delegate automatically attend:

Brian Allen, Tom Clear, Tom Jones

Leinster Convention Delegates (5 to be elected):

Outgoing Comhairle Laighean delegates automatically attend: No nominees

NA RÚIN (MOTIONS)

1. That a Clubs second or additional team can go forward to the Leinster Club championship if they win their County championship at that grade (**The Harps GAA**)
2. In accordance with the Official Guide 2023, Part 1, Appendix 4, Club Constitution, Executive Committee, 7.19 and Official Guide 2023, Part 1, Chapter 3, Organisational Structure, The County, Convention, Rule 3.12 Motions. I wish to propose the following for consideration and submission to Annual Congress (Playing Rules Motions); Official Guide 2023, Part 1, Chapter 3, National, Congress, 3.38 Motions (d) Motions to revise Playing Rules may be tabled only in years divisible by five. Any such motion shall be submitted by the date required for submission of motions for the previous year's Congress and shall be referred to the Standing Committee on the Playing Rules for evaluation.

Background: It is widely accepted that Gaelic Football games have become very boring, lacking in skill, devoid of progressive play and generally poor to watch. I believe that part of the problem contributing to this deterioration is the “blanket defence” and the playing of the ball backwards even as far back as to the goalkeeper.

Purpose of Motion: To alter the rules of Gaelic Football so that the ball must always be played FORWARD (i.e. NO back passes allowed) BETWEEN the two 20 metre lines. I believe this will greatly change the dynamic of Gaelic Football for the better forcing teams and players to be positive and progressive in their play.

Motion: The ball may only be played forward between the 20m lines. Horizontal or “square” play will be permitted but play that is behind the Player playing the ball shall not be permitted. Once the ball has been played into the area between the two 20m lines it may not be carried or played back behind the 20m line by the Defending Team. Penalty for a “Backwards Pass/Play” between the two 20m lines shall be a free kick from where the ball is received/lands OR where the ball was played from if that is the more advantageous spot to the Attacking Team. If the ball is received or lands inside the 13m line, then the free kick shall be taken from the 13m line at the point closest to the centre of the goals.

Other Rules Affected: (* This is suggested and not authoritative and subject to review by the Standing Committee on the Playing Rules in accordance with rule).

It is suggested that this Motion, if adopted, be considered a “new rule” to be inserted into the Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rule 1, The Play as Rule 1.11.

- (a) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 1.2, Exceptions (ii) Any player who falls or is knocked to the ground while in possession of the ball may fist or palm the ball away on the ground, and may score by so doing. *In the event that the player who falls or is knocked to the ground while in possession is between the two 20 metre lines he may only play the*

ball forward, or square, i.e. in the direction of the Opposition's goals. He may not play the ball backwards, i.e. towards his own goals.

- (b) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 1.3, When the ball is not on the ground, it may be played by any part of the body. In the event that the player who is playing the ball is between the two 20 metre lines he may only play the ball forward, or square, i.e. in the direction of the Opposition's goals. He may not play the ball backwards, i.e. towards his own goals. *In the event that the ball is accidentally played off any part of the player's body by a Team Mate and it ends up travelling backwards as a result it shall be deemed to be a backwards pass and therefore a free kick to the Opposition. "Accidental Backpass".*
- (c) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 1.4, When a player is in possession of the ball, it may be:- (a) carried for a maximum of four consecutive steps or held in the hand(s) for no longer than the time needed to take four steps; (b) played from the foot to the hand(s) -toe- tapped; (c) bounced once, and once after each toe-tap; (d) changed from one hand to the other once, with the original holding hand maintaining contact until the change is completed; *[In the event of (a), (b), (c) and (d) above occurring between the two 20m lines the ball MAY be carried backwards by the Player without penalty, however the ball may not be carried back over the 20m line by the Defending Team];* (e) played away with: (i) a fist (ii) an open hand-in which instance there shall be a definite underhand striking action *[In this event – (e) – occurring between the two 20m lines the ball may only be played forwards, or square. It may not be played backwards.]* (f) released for a kick, a toe-tap or a pass with a fist or an open hand. The ball may be knocked from an opponent's hand(s) by flicking it with the open hand. *[In the event of the ball being knocked from an opponent's hand between the two 20m lines the ball may only be played forwards, or square. It may not be played backwards.]*
- (d) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 2.9; When a team plays the ball over the sideline, a free kick from the hand(s) shall be awarded to the opposing team from outside the boundary line from the place where the ball crossed the sideline. If that place is between the two 20m lines then the Player taking the sideline kick must play the ball forward. If opposing players play the ball simultaneously over the sideline, or if the officials are not sure which team played the ball last, the Referee, facing the players, shall throw in the ball between one player from each team 13m from the sideline and directly infield from where the ball crossed the sideline. A ball that strikes a sideline or corner flag shall be treated as having crossed the sideline. All players except the player taking the sideline kick, or the two players contesting the throw-in, shall be at least 13m from the ball until it has been kicked or thrown in.
- (e) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, Important Terms and Definitions – Football and Hurling; introducing the definition of “Forward, Square/Horizontal and Backwards”;

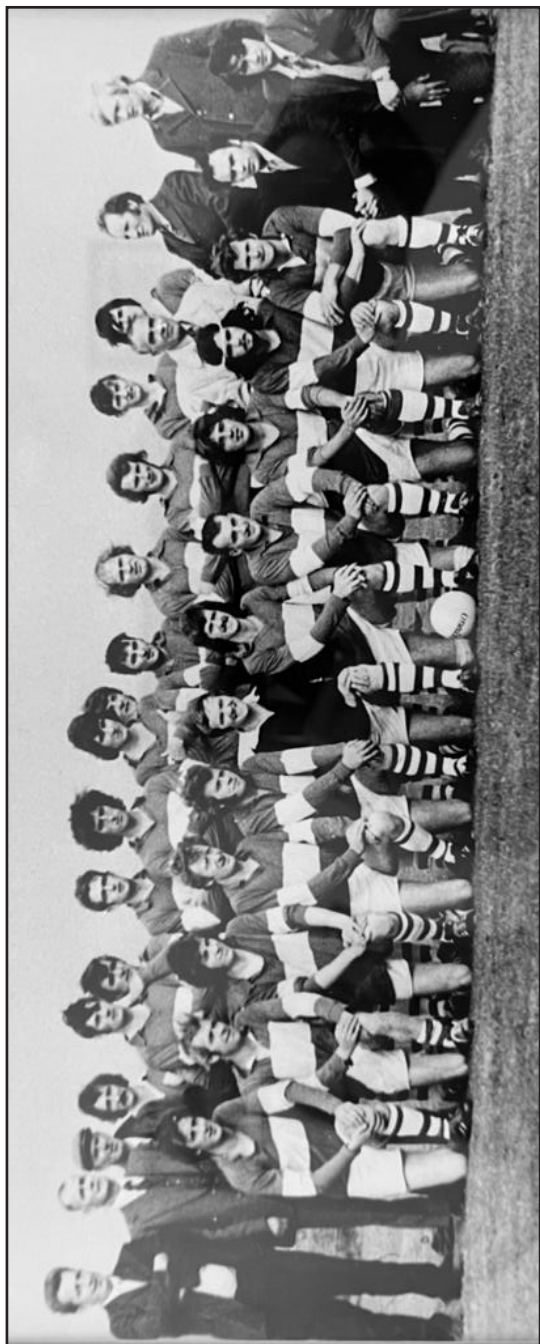
- 24. Forward When playing the ball , the ball moves in the direction of the Opposition's end of the pitch.
- 25. Square/Horizontal When playing the ball, the ball moves in a direction that is parallel to the end lines. i.e. across the pitch, neither towards the Opposition's end of the pitch nor the Defender's end of the pitch.
- 26. Backwards/Backpass When playing the ball, the ball moves in the direction of the Defender's end of the pitch.

(Portlaoise GAA)

2023 Club Membership Summary

Club Name	Association	Full	Youth	Honourary	Social	Total
Abbeyleix St Lazarians	GAA	96	124	0	1	221
Annanough	GAA	84	89	0	0	173
Arles Kilcruise	GAA	5	7	0	0	12
Arles Killeen	GAA	173	130	0	0	303
Ballinakill	GAA	97	50	0	0	147
Ballyfin	GAA	243	221	0	0	464
Ballylinan	GAA	77	113	0	30	220
Ballypickas	GAA	84	72	0	0	156
Ballyroan Abbey	GAA	219	284	0	0	503
Barrowhouse	GAA	55	0	0	0	55
Borris In Ossory	GAA	111	0	4	0	115
Borris in Ossory Kilcotton	GAA, LGFA	0	148	0	0	148
Camross	GAA	180	121	0	5	306
Castletown	GAA	125	132	0	11	268
Clonad	GAA	87	143	0	6	236
Clonaslee St Manmans	GAA	229	94	0	0	323
Clough Ballacolla	GAA	119	105	0	0	224
Colt	GAA	41	2	0	0	43
Courtwood	GAA	50	56	0	0	106
Crettyard	GAA	55	63	0	37	155
Emo	GAA, Rounders	79	113	0	2	194
Errill	GAA	66	0	0	29	95
Graiguecullen	GAA	91	217	0	20	328
Kilcavan	GAA	278	124	0	0	402
Kilcotton	GAA	45	0	4	42	91
Killeshin	GAA	84	174	0	13	271
Kyle	GAA	51	22	0	16	89
Mountmellick	GAA	111	77	1	0	189
Mountrath St Fintan's	GAA	230	288	16	87	621
O'Dempseys	GAA	171	228	0	95	494
Park Ratheniska	GAA	133	161	3	17	314
Park Ratheniska-Timahoe	GAA	85	136	0	0	221
Portarlinton	GAA	208	220	7	0	435
Portlaoise	GAA, LGFA, Camogie	364	394	0	65	823
Rathdowney	GAA	166	0	0	2	168
Rathdowney Errill	GAA	100	145	0	100	345
Rosenallis	GAA	163	157	0	0	320
Shanahoe	GAA	44	8	0	3	55
Slieve Bloom	GAA	51	4	0	0	55
Spink	GAA	259	174	0	0	433
St Joseph's	GAA, LGFA	111	72	0	0	183
Stradbally	GAA	99	76	0	0	175
The Harps	GAA	128	138	0	0	266
The Heath	GAA, LGFA, Rounders	206	178	0	0	384
The Rock	GAA	136	148	0	7	291
Timahoe	GAA	122	166	0	0	288
Trumera	GAA	94	82	0	0	176
TOTAL		5,805	5,456	35	588	11,884

LAOIS ALL IRELAND JUNIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS 1973



Back Row Left – Right

Gabriel Lawlor (Emo), Frank McCague – Selector (Portarlinton), Din Murphy – Sec. Laois Football Board, Brian Fenlon (Emo), Tim Clancy (Timahoe), Tommy Dowling (Emo), Jim Miller (Annanough), Andy Fennell (Graiguecullen), Brian Nerney (O'Dempsey's), Noel Behan (O'Dempsey's), Seamus Fleming (St. Joseph's), Eddie Harre (Graiguecullen), Danny Luttrall (Courtwood), Mick Dooley (Portlaoise), Jimmy Cotter – Selector (Portlaoise), Terry McCague (Portarlinton), Sean Ramsbottom – Chairman Laois Co. Board, Chris Miller – Selector (Annanough)

Front Row Left – Right

Jim Mangan (Portarlinton), Mattie Bergin (The Heath), Denis Booth (The Heath), Paddy Dunne (Courtwood), Ned Flynn (Courtwood), Sean Whelan (The Heath), Eamonn Whelan Captain (Portlaoise), Paddy Lalor (Emo), Danny Doogue (Graiguecullen), Larry O'Loughlin (Mountmellick), Pat Miller (Annanough), Danny Delaney – Selector Trainer (Stradbally), Tom O'Loughlin – Selector (Mountmellick)



Laois All Ireland Junior Football Champions 1973

Players, Management, Officials and representatives celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the occasion in September this year.



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