

C.L.G. Laoise



Comhdháil Bhliantúil

**The Midlands Park Hotel
Port Laoise**

**Monday, 4th December, 2017
7.30 p.m.**

Laois

shopping centre

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C.L.G. Laoise



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 2016 Convention.
3. Secretary's Report.
4. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement.
5. Appointment of Tellers.
6. Election of Officers.
7. Motions.
8. Aon Ghnó Eile.
9. Votes of Sympathy.

The Annual Convention of Laois GAA was held in The Heritage Hotel on Monday 5th December 2016

Cathaoirleach Gearóid O'Caomhanaigh presided at County Convention in The Heritage Hotel on 05/12/16. The following Executive Members were also in attendance Peadar O Néil, Mairtín O'Broin, Ciarán O Consléibhe, Briain O hAlúinn, Tomas Mac Seoin, Pascal Mac Aodh Bhuí, Tomas O 'Cléirigh, PS O'Ceallaigh, Padraig O Suilleabháin, Seosamh O'Conbhuí, Seán O'Muireartaigh agus Niall Mac Laitimh (Runaí).

The following Clubs were represented as follows:

R. O'Cinnéide, D. O'Doinn & R. Mac Comhaill, Mainistir Laoise; L. O'Colmáin, C. Ní Cholmáin & C. Mac an Gahaill, Anach; SS. O'Conbhuí & P. Mac Lochlainn, Ard Lios Cilchrúis; L. O'Braonáin, D. O'Murnáin & C. O'hEosa, Ard Lios Cilín; S. Breatnach & M. Nhic Giolla Padraig, Baile na Coille; B. O'Conghaile & N. O'Cianáin, Baile Fionn; S. Hovendon, W. Hovendon & C. O'Loinín, Baile Laigheanáin; M. Mac Aodh Bhuí & M. Ní Fhaoláin, Baile Píocas; P. O'Faoláin & M. O'Scoláí, Mainistir Baile Atha Róine; S. Dáibhis, M. O'Murchú & A. O'Braonáin, Teach an Bhearra; C. O'Siacháin & S. O'Caollaí, Buiríos Mór Osraí; B. Ní Dhubhláinne & D. O'Beirgin, Buiríos Mór Osraí Coill Choitín; U. Ní Dhonnchaidh, T. Deoráin & M. Coiléir, Camros; D. O'Neachtáin, P. O'Cathail & S. O'Conraoi, Cluain Fhada; S. O'Maolmhuaidh, S. O'Gormáin & S. O'Floinn, Cluain na Slí Naomh Manmáin; D. O'hAnluain, S. O'Meachair

& M. O'Bruadau, Cloch Baile Cholla; A. O'Caomhanaigh, P. O'Duinn & L. De Stacphúil, Coillte; M. O'hOgáin, B. O'Nualláin & M. O'Beacháin, Coill na Cúirte; M. Mac Phaidín, J. O'Cianaigh & S. De Búrca, Crochta Ard; P. Bróithe, M. O'Leathlobhair & M. O'Riain, Ioma; P. Beirgin, M. de Cléir & P. O'Deá, Eiréil; M. Ní Fhaoláin, M. O'Leathlobhair & M. Boltún, Graig Chuillinn; T. O'Fiach, S. Mac Aodh Bhuí & R. O'Conaill, Cill Chabháin; D. Beirgin, S. Beirgin & C. O'Muineacháin, Coill Choitín; M. O'Braonáin & M. O'Gealagáin, Gleann Uisean; T. O'Caoinnealbháin, M. O'Dubhslainn & SP. Mac Cnaimhín, Coill; T. O'Mionacháin & S. O'Conghaile, Móinteach Mílic; A. O'Caomhanaigh, C. O'Sleibhín & L. O'Fionnalaigh, Na Diomasaigh; S. O'Ceallaigh, Páirc Raithín Uisce; C. Mac Cartaigh, N. O'Sliebhín & A. Mhic Chartaigh, Cúil an tSudaire; SP O'Cathaláin, S. O'hAinfaidh & O. O'Broin, Portlaoise; M. Mac Mathúna, S. O'Caomhanaigh & S. O'Reachtáir, Rath Domhnaigh; R. O'Ceallaigh & M. Mac Giolla Phadraig, Rath Domhnaigh Eiréil; P. O'Meachair, M. O'Leannáin & S. O'Dúlaoich, Ross Fhionnghlaise; T. O'Cearúill, T. O'Leacha & N. Mac Giolla Phóil, Seanchua; G. Caimpion, S. O'Braoin & S. O'hIfeárnáin, Sliabh Bladhma; M. Mac Gearailt, A. Ní Conchra & M. O'Loinín, Sliabh Margy; C. Mac Aodh Bhuí, R. O'Muilleoir & D. O'Duibhir, Spinc; S. Leathlobhair Mac Ghiolla Phadraig, M. Ní Mhideltáin & S. O'Cearbhúill, Maighean Rátha; M. O'Mórdha, M. O'Conaráin &

A. Mhic Gabhann, Naomh Seosamh; L. O'Dubhsláinne, S. O'Dubhsláinne & E. O'Dubhsláinne, Sráidbhaile; S. Caimpion, T. Breatnach & D. O'Fionnagáin, Na Clairisigh; S. O'Dúllaing, P. O'Céin & P. O'Céin, An Fraoch; P. Harding, S. O'Cronáin & D. O'Maonaigh, An Charraig; S. O'Daltúin, L. O'Rannacháin & M. O'Muilleoir, Tigh Mochua; S. Ní Dhubhuí, G. Ní Chiarubháin agus S. Mac Peaircín, Tromaire.

Antóin O'Meachair - Referee Administrator; Seamus Laibheartaigh – Childrens Officer; P. O'Donnabháin – Handball;

1. **Standing Orders** were adopted on the proposition of Seán O'Dubhsláinne, seconded by Pilib O'Céin.
2. **Minutes of 2015 Convention** was adopted on the proposition of S. Leathlobhair Mac Ghiolla Phadraig, seconded by M. Mac Giolla Phadraig.
 - An Runaí informed meeting of printing error in Election of Officers, whereby it should read Kieran Leavy, rather than Paschal McEvoy.
3. **Secretary's Report** was adopted on the proposition of Seán de Búrca, seconded by Liam de Stacaphúil.
4. **Treasurer's Report** showing a surplus of €70,879 in County Committee A/c and a deficit of €14,009 in O'Moore Park A/c was adopted on the proposition of Liam O'Rannacháin, seconded by Mairtín O'Gealagáin.
 - An Cisteoir gave a detailed explanation of our financial accounts, explaining both Income and

Expenditure Accounts and Schedules to accounts;

- Team Administration – D. O'Maonaigh asked what actually constituted team administration expenses, to which An Cisteoir replied;
 - Sports Medicare – P. O'Céin queried what this item comprised of, to which An Cisteoir replied;
 - An Cisteoir thanked his Assistant Ciaran Consléibhe and the Executive Committee, all the Clubs for their commitment and support to the County Board Draw, various Fundraising Committees, Gate and Office staff, Central and Leinster Council staff, voluntary Stewards who worked in O'Moore Park during the year and most importantly all our sponsors – MW Hire, Magni Group, Laois Shopping Centre, Portlaoise Heritage Hotel, People First Credit Union, Mochua Print and Crown Paints.
5. **Tellers** – the following were appointed and approved by Convention – Dónal O'Gormáin, Micheál O'Cearbhúill, Seamas O'Caomhanaigh agus Tomás O'Móra.
 6. **Election of Officers:** The following officers were elected –
 - Cathaoirleach (Chairman): Gearóid O Caomhanaigh was elected unopposed.
 - Leas Chathaoirleach (Vice Chairman): Seán O'Muireartaigh

was deemed elected after defeating Peadar O'Neil on a vote.

- Cisteoir (Treasurer): Mairtín O'Broin was elected unopposed.
- Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer): Ciarán Consléibhe was elected unopposed.
- Ard Comhairle (Central Council) Delegate: Briain O'hAlluinn was elected unopposed.
- Comhairle Laignean (Leinster Council) Delegates (2): Tomas Mac Seoin agus Paschal Mac Aodh Bhuí were elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Forbartha (Development): P.S. O'Ceallaigh was elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Oiliuma (Coaching): Padraig O'Suilleabháin was elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish): Seosamh O'Conbhú was elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Caidrimh Poibli (P.R.O.): Tomas O'Cléirigh was elected unopposed.
- Congress Delegates (5): Gearóid O Caomhanigh, Niall Mac Laitimh (both automatically elected); Mairtín O'Broin, Tomas Mac Seoin agus PS O'Ceallaigh were elected after vote.
- Leinster Convention Delegates (5): Gearóid O'Caomhanaigh, Mairtín O'Broin, Briain O'hAlúinn, Ciaran Consléibhe agus Padraig

O'Suilleabháin were elected after vote.

All elected candidates returned thanks.

7. Chairperson's Address

An Cathaoirleach Gearoid O Caomhanaigh addressed Convention, thanking both players and mentors involved in our Inter County panels and wishing incoming managements and panels at all grades the best of luck in coming year. He expressed his concerns in relation to the decline in volunteerism in the association and the difficulty in sourcing club officers and mentors at both club and county level. He acknowledged the difficulties some Clubs were experiencing in fielding teams due to population and availability of players. He complimented Club officers for their work ethic in keeping clubs going as a result of these experiences.

He highlighted the ever increasing reports of verbal abuse towards match officials from players, mentors and club officers and members, stating that it will not be tolerated and appealed for clubs co-operation in stamping out this behaviour. He stated his concern that the rules governing such infractions are far too lenient in their present guise and called for their review.

He expressed his satisfaction with the upgrade of O'Moore Park development and also the works on our Training Centre next door to O'Moore Park and hoped both developments would

enhance the progress and workings of Laois GAA in the very near future.

He congratulated all competition winners, acknowledging Rosenallis GAA in particular on their Leinster Junior Football Championship final success and their competitive run in Leinster Junior Hurling Championship.

He thanked his fellow executive Officers for their tireless endeavours within the Association in the County and also our Full time staff Niall Handy Secretary, Tomas Moore Office Administrator and our GDA's Ciaran Muldowney, Donal Brennan, Andrew Kavanagh, James Kelly and Colm Begley for their work. He concluded by thanking all for their co-operation during the year and wished everyone a peaceful Christmas and a successful 2017.

8. NA RÚIN

- (1). **That Rule 6.17 – Age Grades - Official Guide Part 1 (pages 86-88)** be amended as it relates to Age Restrictions in respect of participation in Adult Competitions to read as follows:-

“Adult

- **Club for non-Championship competitions – be over 16 years.**

- Club for Championship competitions – be over 17 years.

- Inter-County – be over 18 years.”

The rest of the Rule to remain unaltered.

Proposed amended Rule to become operative four weeks from the date of Annual Congress (Coill na Cúirte). *Motion was carried on a show of hands, after being proposed by Briain Nualláin and seconded by Micheál O’Leathlobhair.*

- (2). **That Rule 6.17 – Age Grades - Official Guide Part 1 (pages 86-88)** be amended as it relates to Age Restrictions in respect of participation in Adult Competitions to read as follows:-

(Note: Effective from January 1st. 2018, the above Section shall read:

Adult

- **Club - be over 16 years.**

- Inter-County – be over 18 years).

The rest of the Rule to remain unaltered.

Proposed amended Rule to become operative four weeks from the date of Annual Congress (Coill na Cúirte).

Motion was carried on a show of hands, after being proposed by Briain Nualláin and seconded by Ursula Ni Dhonnchaidh.

- (3). Subject to Riail 3.8 (T.O. 2016) and in the interest of promoting Football and hurling within the County, the CCC shall not accept amalgamations of more than three Clubs. (Camros) *Motion was ruled out of order.*

(4). Addition to Laois Byelaw 6 (e)

The CCC shall process and make initial decisions on all applications for Transfer and Permission to Play within the County “*in a timely manner with consideration to commencement of competitions*” (Riail 6.5, T.O. 2016). (Camross)

Motion was carried on a show of hands, after being proposed by Ursula Ni Dhonnchaidh and seconded by Seamas O’Leathlobhair Mac Giolla Phadraig.

(5). Subject to Riail 6.8 (T.O. 2016) and in accordance to Riail 3.19 (n) (T.O. 2016), Laois GAA Byelaws governing Riail 6.8 (Exceptions 2 (a) and (b) T.O.2016) will not allow players from more than three different clubs play with an Independent Under 21, Minor or younger grade team within the County, which shall not bear the name of an Adult Club within the County. (Camros)

Motion was ruled out of order.

(6). **Riail 6.28 Official Guide 2016 to be amended to read as follows:**

6.28: Organisation

The Championships shall be organised as follows:

(A) All-Ireland senior Football Championship

(i) Provincial Championships: These Championships shall be played on a Knock Out Format. A ‘Round Robin’

Format may not be used. The winners of the Provincial Championships shall qualify for separate All-Ireland Championship Quarter-Finals.

(ii) All Ireland Qualifier Series

Round 1 - This round will consist of a group stage contested by the sixteen counties that do not qualify for the provincial semi-finals. The group stage will be organised on a league basis with four groups of four with each team playing the other three teams once with the top two teams from each group qualifying for round two of the qualifiers.

A draw shall be made to decide groups

Round 2 - Each of the eight teams defeated in the provincial semi-finals shall play against one of the eight teams who qualify from round one. An open draw shall be made to determine the eight pairings

Round 3 - This round shall involve the eight winners from Round 2. Subject to the avoidance of repeat pairings where feasible a draw shall be made to determine the four pairings

Round 4 - Each of the four defeated provincial finalists shall play against one of the four winners of round 3. Subject to the avoidance of repeat

pairings where feasible a draw shall be made to determine the four pairings.

(iii) All Ireland Quarter Finals

Each of the four winners of the provincial championships shall play against

one of the four winners from round 4. Subject to the respective provincial champions not meeting the defeated finalists from their own province in this round and to the avoidance of repeat pairings where possible A draw shall be made to determine the four pairings.

(iv) All-Ireland Semi-Finals

A Provincial Rota system initially determined by Central Council, shall apply. If a Provincial

Championship winning team is defeated in its Quarter-Final, the team that defeats it shall take its place in the Semi-Final.

(v) All-Ireland Final.

Other matters related to the All-Ireland Qualifier series

(1) Scheduling - Qualifier Games shall be played on Saturdays/Sundays as deemed appropriate by the Central Competitions Control Committee, but the Schedule of Games shall avoid conflict with the Provincial Championships schedules (including Replays), and shall also allow sufficient dates for Club Championship fixtures. Consideration shall be given to the dual involvement of Counties in both Hurling and Football, and, where feasible, avoid the same weekend. Provincial Runners-Up shall be allowed, where feasible, a thirteen day gap between their Provincial Final and their participation in the All Ireland Qualifier Series.

All Games in Round 1 of All-Ireland Qualifier Series shall be played over not more than three consecutive weekends, with the final round of games to be played no later than the third weekend in June save in exceptional circumstances. All games in the rounds 2, 3 & 4 shall be played over not more than one weekend per round save in exceptional circumstances.

(2) Venues - Home Venues shall be used in Rounds 1 of the All-Ireland Qualifier Series with all teams in each group guaranteed at least one home game and the two teams with the lowest National Football League position in each group getting two home games. Home venues shall be used in Round 2 and 3 of the All Ireland Qualifiers with the first team drawn having home advantage.

Exceptions

(i) Where two teams who have already met in a provincial championship of the current year are drawn to meet in rounds 2 or 3 the winner of the provincial championship game shall have home advantage.

The above arrangements shall be conditional on Home Grounds being deemed to meet the criteria set down by the National Health and Safety Committee and the Central Competitions Control Committee. Venues in Round 4 shall be determined by the Central Competitions Control Committee. All-Ireland Quarter-Finals scheduling Save for replays and exceptional circumstances provided for

in Rule 6.29(a), all games in the All-Ireland Quarterfinals shall be played over not more than two consecutive weekends and shall be completed by the second weekend in August.”

Riail 6.29 Official Guide 2016 to be amended to read as follows

6.29 Provincial Championships

(a) Senior Provincial Championships in the Provinces that have to send forward Teams to compete in the All Ireland Championships shall begin no later than the third weekend in May and shall be decided during that month, June and July, unless deviation is allowed by the Central Council on the recommendation of the Central Competitions Control Committee.

Minor Provincial Championships shall commence not earlier than the second week of April and not later than May 1st, and shall be decided during the months of April, May, June (as authorised by Central Council, based on Second Level Schools’ examination dates) and July. In exceptional circumstances, Provincial Senior and Minor Finals may, by the sanction of the Central Competitions Control Committee, be played on the first Sunday in August. The Provincial Under 21 Football Championships shall be played in conjunction with the period of the National Football League. Provinces shall send forward Teams to compete in All Ireland Championships

on the dates required by the Central Council.

(b) A County failing to fulfil a Championship fixture shall be disqualified, and suspended for 48 weeks from date of default.

(c) A Province which has not completed its Championship shall, when required, nominate a team to compete in the All-Ireland Championship. Failure to do so shall involve disqualification of the Province from the competition.

(Naomh Seosamh)

Motion was carried on a show of hands, after being proposed by Micheál O’Mórdha and seconded by Micheál Mac Gearailt.

(7). Amend Byelaw 4, by including

Primary Schools’ Committee: It shall consist of: Chairperson as nominated by the County Chairperson for appointment by the County Committee, one representative each from the Management Committee, County Coaching & Games Development Committee, Youth Committee and a named representative from each affiliated Post-Primary School.

- Its membership shall constitute its C. C. C.
- It shall be responsible in conjunction with the Coaching and Games Development Committee, for the promotion and implementation of Football Games Development and

Hurling Games Development at Primary Schools level.

- Appeals against decisions of this Committee and requests for a Hearing shall be heard by the County Hearings Committee. (CLG Laoise)

Motion was withdrawn.

(8). Amend Byelaw 6, as follows

6. Transfers

There shall be two distinct Club “designations” – Urban and Rural. This will allow the CCC to distinguish between Transfers and Attachment to First Clubs to and from - (i) Urban to Rural Clubs, (ii) Rural to Rural Clubs and (iii) Rural to Urban Clubs.

Portlaoise GAA Club will be designated an “Urban” Club and all other Clubs in Laois will be designated “Rural”.

Normally, Transfers within the county shall be granted only in the event of a player moving to a new place of Permanent Residence which is within the Catchment Area of the club to which he wishes to transfer. In such cases the onus of proof of new permanent residence shall be on the applicant for transfer.

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 (including U12 Go Games) in the year

in which the Transfer / Attachment to First Clubs is sought.

The C.C.C. shall process and make initial decisions on all applications for Transfer and Permission to Play within the county (Riail 6.5, T.O. 2016). Such decisions shall reflect the ethos of the Association as outlined in Riail 6.1, T.O. 2016 and give due consideration to the negative effect, if any, it may have on the player’s First Club.

The Guidelines and Criteria which will assist the CCC in its deliberations and which shall constitute “other relevant connection” for the purposes of Bye-Law 5 and this Bye-Law are as follows–

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 (including U12 Go Games) in the year in which the Transfer / Attachment to First Clubs is sought.

Rural to Rural Transfer

Parentage Rule – A player may apply for Permission to play for an Independent Team or Transfer to a Club in the catchment area in which his Parent was a Player in Adult Competition or, in exceptional circumstances, 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 appli-

cations within Club catchment areas, and /or where other exceptional circumstances may be considered.

Primary School – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club / Independent Team where he is presently attending or has 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.

Proximity to Club Base - A player may apply for a Transfer to the Club / Independent Team based on proximity to Club Ground.

Rural to Urban Transfer

Parentage Rule – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club in the catchment area in which his 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.

A family moving residence into Portlaoise Catchment area from a different Catchment area in the County, with players that have already played with a Rural club, may apply for a Transfer to an Urban club. (CLG Laoise)

Motion was lost on a show of hands, after being proposed by Gearóid O’Caomhاناigh and seconded by Sean O’Dúllaing.

(9). Any Other Business

- **National Anthem and Flag** – Micheál O’Boltúin expressed his disappointment at Uachtaráin Aodháin O’Fearghail comments in relation to reviewing the playing of our National Anthem and displaying our National Flag at our games. An Cathaoirleach agreed with these sentiments.



Votes of Sympathy

Votes of Sympathy were extended to the following families:

- Abbeyleix Carroll, Casserly and Lalor Families;
Annanough Scully, Maloney, Shortall and O'Toole Families;
Arles Killeen Brennan and Byrne Families;
Barrowhouse Daly, Mulhare and O'Connor Families;
Ballylinan Gleeson and Brennan Families;
Ballypickas Murray, Barry, Scully, Mulhall, Delaney and Whelan Families;
Ballyroan Abbey Murray, Barry, Scully, Mulhall, Delaney, Whelan, Carroll, O'Dea,
Carroll, Fitzgibbon and Dunne Families;
Borris in Ossory Kilcotton Ryan, McKelvey, Maher and Bergin Families;
Camross Hyland, Delaney, Phelan, Nuaghton, Bergin and Abbott Families;
Clonad Fitzgibbon Family;
Clonaslee St Manmans Dunne family;
Colt Grant, Murray and Brennan Families;
Courtwood Boland, O'Halloran and Hogan Families;
Crettyard Breenan, Hughes and Buggy Families;
Emo Dunne and Green Families;
Errill Doheny, Stanley and Grogan Families;
Graiguecullen Walsh, O'Neill, Kealy and Dooley / O'Grady Families;
Kilcavan Dunne Family;
Killeshin Lacey and Ronan Families;
Kyle Byrnes and Rigney Families;
Mountmellick Mullen, Bentley, Gorman, Payne, Conroy, Westman, Smith, Culliton,
Flaherty, Jordan, Conroy and O'Loughlin Families;
O'Dempseys Dunne and Whelehan Families;
Park Ratheniska Ramsbottom and Brennan Families;
Portarlington O'Flaherty Family;
Portlaoise Keogh Family;
Rathdowney Creagh, Cahill and Tracy Families;

Rosenallis Conroy, Creagh and Dunne Families;
 Shanahoe Bergin and Ryan Families;
 Slieve Bloom Conroy, Breen and Delaney Families;
 Spink Gorman Family;
 St. Fintans Mounrath Fitzpatrick, McGrath and Coyne Families;
 St. Josephs Fingleton, Delaney, Malone, Doyle, Dempsey, Stapleton, Knowles and
 Moore Families;
 Stradbally Ramsbottom, Larkin, Handy, Byrne, Fenlon, Smith and Lawlor
 Families;
 The Heath Keyes, McEvoy, Lewis, Kirby, Boyle, Hyland and McGrath Families;
 The Rock Cronin, Ging, Condron, Bentley, Mullan and Mooney Families;
 Timahoe Ramsbottom, Stapleton and Delaney Families;
 Trumera Kirwan, Lalor, Delaney and Hosey Families;

Tuairisc an Runaí 2017

I welcome all delegates to our County Convention and sincerely hope we have a healthy discussion on the affairs of Laois GAA and our Clubs.

I would have to say 2017 was a challenging year in several different aspects, as I briefly reflect my thoughts on the year past -

Senior Football

As usual, our season commenced with the O’Byrne Cup and our new Management team used this competition to give all panellists some game time, in an effort to finalise their League panel. We had facile wins over DIT and Wicklow and a draw with Meath in the final round robin game, saw us exiting this competition on scoring difference.

Following our demise and relegation to Allianz Football League Division 3 the previous year, hopes and expectations were high that this team were capable of being strong contenders for promotion back to Division 2. However after our opening game defeat to Louth in O’Moore Park, we were under no illusions of the task before us. Our next game, a trip up north and an opportunistic win over Armagh, with some hope emerging. However that was as good as it got, with defeats to Tipperary, Sligo, Antrim and Offaly, and our only solace in our remaining games being a win over Longford. Our performances in defeat resulted in our relegation to Division 4, for the first time in most people’s memories. Personally I don’t believe our team to be of Division 4 calibre, but one must be realistic insofar as results over seven games should be a fair reflection on where you are. Whilst

a number of our established players were not available for our league campaign due to injury and we can use all the excuses of being unlucky in some narrow defeats and but for the “width of the post” we wouldn’t have been relegated. Whilst poor performances and inept defending all contributed, I have no hesitation in stating that player indiscipline conspired to relegate us to the bottom tier of league football, with a total of eight players during our league campaign failing to complete their games for a culmination of Category 3 Infractions, Cynical Behaviour Infractions and Second Cautionable Infractions.

At the conclusion of the league, review meetings were held with team management and player representatives in an effort to revitalise our championship campaign. As a result, there were several agreed changes to management roles and with the return of a host of players from injury there was optimism and willingness there for a renewed commitment for a successful championship run.

In our Leinster Championship opener, we played Longford at home and in fairness emerged comfortable winners, with a goal blitz either side of half time ending Longford’s Leinster ambitions. The prize was a Leinster Championship quarter final



Portlaoise Senior Football Championship 2017 Winners



Camross Senior Hurling Championship 2017 Winners

against our neighbours and rivals Kildare in Tullamore. Having been competitive with them on occasions in recent years, there was a glimmer of hope that we may be capable of getting a result, however a performance that was devoid of any passion and pride in a Laois jersey, resulted in an embarrassing 14 point defeat. The Qualifier route saw us travel to Aughrim and what appeared was going to be a comfortable victory for ourselves, resulted in us wishing for the final whistle, as we struggled to withstand a late Wicklow rally. For the second time in two years, we again drew Clare, this time in O'Moore Park and following another very poor performance and moment of indiscipline, our championship aspirations for 2017 ended.

There has been much speculation as to the demise of Laois Senior Football, I have to say the attendance and commitment from our players in recent years to training has been excellent, unfortunately performances and results do not reflect this. The rumours of a "culture" not befitting to an Inter County player is worrying, and whilst there is never smoke without fire, it is of course mere speculation. There were some disciplinary issues that arose during the year and were dealt with internally by management. Our disciplinary record on the field of play for the year was unacceptable. GPS records prove our fitness levels must improve, if we wish to compete with counties of any aspiration. The age profile of our present senior panel is increasing, with a large number now the wrong side of 30 and a rebuilding process will be required in the coming years. There are several young players coming through who are more than capable of performing at this level and with

their commitment, I am sure they will be given that opportunity. For 2018, Allianz League Division 4 will be competitive and will be a dogfight encountering teams who are used to grinding out and getting results at this level. No doubt it will be difficult, but our ultimate goal must be promotion from this Division, which would prove the ideal preparation for the challenges that await us in what looks a favourable Leinster championship draw. I know some players are hurting from our poor performances and the accusations and allegations that were associated with these and I honestly believe this panel has the potential to be competitive and progress further than their results have in recent years and with their renewed commitment I believe this can happen.

The Congress decision to bring changes to the All Ireland Football series, with the introduction of what has been now heralded the "Super 8's", where the eight teams which qualify for the All Ireland quarter-finals will be now divided into two group of 4 and played on a round robin system to determine the four semi-finalists, has been well debated. Whilst the decision will hopefully increase the number of far more entertaining games and generate greater revenue, I have my reservations in regard to the promotion of our games in the counties who fail to qualify for this elite eight and believe a round robin series at the outset of the provincial championships, similar to the St Joseph's motion passed at last year's County Convention, which I believe would prove far more beneficial on both a development and promotional basis for those such counties.



Emo IFC Winners



Trumera IHC Winners

Our Management and backroom team are also deserving of our thanks for their endeavours and the professional approach they undertook with both our Senior and Under 21 panels in what was a difficult year – Peter Creedon (Manager); Gary Kavanagh and Tom McKettrick (Selector); Michael O’Loughlin and Tommy Toomey (Coach / Statistician / Selector); Andrew Morrissey (GPS), Noel Flynn (Strength and Conditioning Coach); Dr Sean Montague; Sean Gaffney (Physiotherapist) and of course Servicing Secretary Ollie Byrne, who was ably assisted by Pat O’Sullivan. Further to a “turbulent” County Committee meeting in September, Peter Creedon and his team declined to commit for another campaign at the helm, resulting in a search commencing for our fourth manager in five years.

This process resulted in the ratification of Laois domiciled Kerry native, John Sugrue, as Senior Football Manager for 2018, where he will be joined in his backroom team by Brendan Delaney (Park Ratheniska) and Eoin Kearns (Ballyroan Abbey) (Selectors), Jerome Stack (Coach) and Robbie Cannon (Strength and Conditioning) Dr Sean Montague and Sean Gaffney (Physiotherapist). I wish our incoming management the very best of luck in their role and I appeal to the general Laois GAA public for their patience in their attempt to restore pride and passion into our Senior Football performances. Our thanks to Fergal Byron, Michael Murphy and Donal Norton for their role in the appointment process.

BORD NA MONA O’BYRNE CUP SENIOR FOOTBALL

Round 1: 8th. January – Crettyard
Laois 1-15, DIT 0-08

Round 2: 11th January – Greystones
Laois 2-17, Wicklow 1-08

Round 3: 14th January - Stradbally
Meath 2-13, Laois 1-16

ALLIANZ FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Round 1: 4th. February – O’Moore Park
Laois 2-16, Louth 0-10

Round 2: 6th February – Athletic
Grounds
Laois 2-11, Armagh 0-16

Round 3: 28th February – O’Moore Park
Tipperary 1-16, Laois 1-10

Round 4: 5th March – Markievic Park
Sligo 0-18, Laois 2-10

Round 5: 19th March
Antrim 1-10, Laois 0-11

Round 6: 27th March – O’Moore Park
Laois 1-13, Longford 0-13

Round 7: 2nd. April – O’Connor Park
Offaly 3-15, Laois 4-11

LEINSTER SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 1: 21st. May – O’Moore Park
Laois 4-15, Longford 0-16



St Joseph's JFC Winners



Ballypickas JHC Winners

Quarter-Final: 4th June – Tullamore
Kildare 1-21, Laois 1-07

ALL IRELAND SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS

Round 1: 17th June – Aughrim
Laois 2-16, Wicklow 3-10

Round 2: 1st. July – O’Moore Park
Clare 2-18, Laois 0-14

Under 21 Football

Further to the many difficulties incurred at this grade in previous years, involving the logistical difficulties of panelists in third level colleges throughout the country and their commitment to Sigerson and Fitzgibbon teams, it was agreed with the incoming senior management that they would also take this panel under their wings, with a view to preparing a rebuilding process at senior level. Gary Kavanagh was assigned responsibility for management of this panel and I have to say the commitment displayed by a number of these young players was excellent and very encouraging. The process was a success, insofar as all players were introduced to the expectations and requirements of a senior intercounty footballer, with a number of these players going on to make their debut in league and championship and acquitting themselves quite well. The one disappointment was at the conclusion of the U21 championship, a small number of these players declining the invitation to remain on the senior panel for championship.

The McNulty Cup once again was a valuable preparation by provision of a number of competitive games pre-championship. Our opening game in the U21

Championship was against Louth, where an impressive display of attacking football, saw us emerge facile winners and raised expectation of what this panel might achieve. However this was short lived in our semi-final game versus Offaly in Netwatch Cullen Park, where our neighbours were more opportunistic, resulting in the narrowest of wins. I’m sure many of our players will look back in hindsight wondering how they left this game behind!

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Gary and senior management for their excellent work with this panel. As a result of the decision taken by management with our senior panel, we are now seeking a new backroom team at this grade, the process not complete at the time of penning this report.

Incidentally this grade now reverts to U20 grade for 2018 and will be played on a round robin basis during the months of May, June and July. The initiative will certainly take some pressure off players with Third Level commitments, but the rule prohibiting U20 players named on senior championship panels from participating in this is definitely prejudicial to our most talented players and a distinct disadvantage to counties with a small population base similar to Laois. For next year, our panel will consist of players from our last two minor panels and is hopefully a grade we can be competitive in over the next couple of years.

PETER MCNULTY UNDER-21 FOOTBALL INTER-COUNTY TOURNAMENT

Round 1: 6th January
Laois 2-13, Carlow 1-12



Portarlington MFC Winners



Camross Gaels Under-17 HC Winners

Round 2: 14th January
Laois 2-15, Tipperary 1-11

Round 3: 21st January
Galway 3-8, Laois 0-7

Semi Final: 25th January
Limerick 1-8, Laois 0-6

EIRGRID UNDER-21 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Quarter-Final: 8th March – O’Moore Park
Laois 2-13, Louth 1-08

Semi-Final: 19th March – Netwatch Cullen Park
Offaly 2-09, Laois 2-08

Minor (U18) & U17 Football

The reason for the introduction of an U17 grade in 2017 was to compensate players who would lose out on the opportunity of playing Minor (U18) grade in 2018, due to the change in age grade rule. It was decided on the appointment of management, that both panels would be combined and trained as the one unit. Our reason for this was that there was a talented bunch of players, with a huge crossover from the U17 grade who would be more than capable of making our U18 team. There would of course be additional costs to this decision, but it was considered to be worth the investment and whilst there were difficulties in managing such a large panel in trying to keep everyone happy with game time, I must say management handled it well.

Our league campaign had mixed fortunes with a facile success over Wexford and a lesson from Cork, with all preparations

geared towards our opening U18 championship game against Louth in O’Moore Park. Unfortunately things didn’t go to plan and Louth emerged victors after extra time. In understanding difficulties endured by match officials, I am loathe to criticise anyone in this area in their decisions or the handling of our games, and all I will say is that his officiating of this game is perhaps best reflected in that he has received no further Inter County games to date. Fortunately there was a qualifier route and the chaps faced the unenviable task of a trip to Navan to play Meath, where character was shown in abundance to seal a narrow success, finishing the game with 11 lads still only in the U17 grade. Back now in the championship quarter final and facing our neighbours Kildare, the team were well on top early on and it was only in the final quarter that a physically stronger Kildare side got on top of this young Laois team and ended our Minor championship dreams.

Our Minor campaign gave us plenty of optimism for a successful U17 campaign and this was reflected in facile victories over both Louth and Longford in the opening rounds, qualifying them for a home championship semi-final against Dublin. In this game the team again displayed great character and commitment and went down fighting to a more opportunistic Dublin side. This is a talented bunch of players, who unfortunately lose out on minor u18 grade due to the change, and who with the correct development and preparation will go onto to become Laois senior players of the future.

I wish to thank Noel Delaney (Manager), Billy Delaney and Seamus Lawlor (Selectors), Ger Slevin (Logistics),



Ballyfin Gaels SHC A Winners



Errill JFC B Winners

Donal Brennan (Coach), Tom Quinn (Strength and Conditioning Coach), Ria Breen (Physio), Liam Delaney and Richard Dunne (Stats) and Martin Kelly (Kitman) for all their efforts and work over the past year.

Noel was unfortunately unable to commit for 2018, so in the coming year the side will be managed by Donncha Phelan, with his backroom team only being finalised at the time of writing this article.

LEINSTER MINOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Round 1: 11th February – Ferns COE
Laois 4-15, Wexford 0-06

Round 2: 26th February – Stradbally
Cork 6-13, Laois 0-9

ELECTRIC IRELAND MINOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 1: 22nd. April – O’Moore Park
-AET
Louth 2-11, Laois 0-15

Round 2 Qualifiers: 6th. May – Navan
Laois 0-11, Meath 0-10

Quarter-Final: 20th. May – Newbridge
Kildare 1-14, Laois 2-06

LEINSTER U17 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 1: 28th. June – O’Moore Park
Laois 7-15, Louth 0-03

Quarter-Final: 12th. July – O’Moore Park
Laois 2-15, Longford 0-10

Semi-Final: 18th. July – O’Moore Park
Dublin 1-16, Laois 1-14

Senior Hurling

Our management incurred several difficulties due to the lateness in the finalisation of the appointment and ratification process, which included assembling a panel comprising mainly of U21 players, due to the non-committal and retirement of some more experienced players and pre-season fitness training also suffered to a certain extent with competitions fast approaching. The season commenced with the Walsh Cup, which was used by incoming management as a get to know you exercise and resulted in wins against NUI Galway and UCD, with a defeat to Galway, culminating in our exit from this competition.

At the outset, the ultimate goal was to maintain our Division 1B status and best possibilities here were success in either or both our opening games. Our loss to Kerry in our opening game was disappointing, particularly as we were well in control for large periods of the game, however success against Offaly in our next game got us back on track. Unfortunately our following two games to both Galway and Limerick resulted in heavy defeats, proving to be hugely disappointing and our commitment and some inept defending were certainly open to question. In fairness both players and management rallied and a certain amount of pride was restored in our final game defeat to Wexford, with the home side only coming out on top in injury time. As a result we qualified for a relegation play-off with Kerry, once again in Tralee and in an open game of hurling we emerged victorious by a point to ensure our Division 1B status for 2018.

This year saw us back in the Leinster Round Robin series and following wins



The Heath MFC B Winners



Clough Ballacolla MHC B Winners

against Westmeath, Meath and Kerry in fiercely competitive games, we emerged unbeaten and qualified for a Leinster quarter-final against Wexford in O'Moore Park. Whilst competitive for most of the first half and all to play for at half time, we were totally outplayed by Wexford in the second half, who were deserving winners at the final whistle. The Qualifier route paired us away to Dublin, where we were bereft of at least seven regular team players due to injury and suspension. After a brave and committed performance in the opening half, we were completely outplayed in the second half by a far more skilful Dublin team, so ending our hurling aspirations for 2017.

I wish to praise the entire panel and management for their outstanding dedication to Laois hurling during the past year. The loss of such experienced regular team players who have retired and not committed over the past two years is a detrimental blow to any panel. In a county of our population we do not have readymade replacements and huge responsibility is placed on young and inexperienced shoulders. In time, these players with the proper commitment and development will represent our county with honour and pride. I believe progress can be made, but it must be remembered that a rebuilding process is in place and stress that patience must be a virtue and that further progress will only happen with an even greater commitment and effort from both our Clubs and players.

Our participation in Division 1B of the Allianz League for 2017 will be challenging and to retain this status must be a priority. The recent decision of Special Congress, where it was decided "democratically" to place us, in an as of yet "unnamed" Tier 2 Championship for 2018, has been well

documented. I have huge difficulty with this unprecedented decision to place our county in this competition based on our present standing, without ever having been made aware prior to the 2017 championship commencing, that our results would determine as to whether we would have an opportunity of playing in the 2018 Leinster Championship series. For this reason and the fact that we were being denied access to participate in our own Leinster Senior Hurling Championship in 2018, Laois opposed this Motion. I have reservations to these changes, I think we have rushed into a decision based on the amendment to the All Ireland Football series and the "Super 8's" and would have been better served to wait and see how these work out before making any hasty decisions. Whilst disappointed our players don't have access to our own Leinster Championship like the previous Round Robin series, I do welcome the fact that it has been decided to play this championship prior to the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship Final in Croke Park. It certainly will give the competition some status and the realistic opportunity of silverware. We will however again face the intricacies and pressure of this new competition with a Round Robin series involving Westmeath (H), Kerry (A), Antrim (A), Carlow (H) and Meath (A) with the goal being to qualify and win the final and secure Leinster Championship status for 2019.

I wish to acknowledge and congratulate Enda Rowland, Ross King and Ben Conroy (Senior) and Ryan Mullaney and Aaron Dunphy (Under 21) on their selection on the respective Ireland Shinty teams this autumn. It is worthy of mention of mention to see three Laois players, Dwane Palmer, Stephen Maher and Enda Rowland hon-



Castletown JFC C Winners



Mountmellick JHC C Winners

oured in the 2017 Independent.ie Rising Star Fitzgibbon Cup team for their excursions with IT Carlow and encouraging to see so many of our young players involved in the latter stages of this competition.

Our thanks to Eamonn Kelly and his backroom team for their dedication to Laois Hurling in 2017, which include Owen Coss and John Taylor (Selectors), Conor Gleeson and Ollie Moran (Coaching), Dr Sharon McDonald, John Sugrue and Enda Lyons (Physiotherapy), Jack Harding, David O'Brien and Brian O'Sullivan (Stats and Analysis), Pat Delaney (Kit) and John Kealy (Servicing Secretary). Eamonn will continue in charge of our hurling fortunes for the coming year, with some minor amendments, which include Davy Hogan replacing Ollie Moran in a coaching role, John Taylor also being unable to commit and is in the process of being replaced by a Laois based selector at the time of writing, while Alison Holmes will also take over physio duties for the year. My thanks to our Chairperson Gerry Kavanagh, Michael Dempsey, Paul Cuddy and Tommy Fitzgerald who were all involved in the initial appointment process for this management team.

BORD NA MONA WALSH CUP SENIOR HURLING

Round 1: 8th. January - Rathdowney
Laois 3-18, NUI Galway 0-22

Round 2: 15th January – Rathdowney
Laois 4-27, UCD 1-17

Round 3: 22nd. January – O'Moore Park
Galway 1-19, Laois 0-16

ALLIANZ HURLING LEAGUE DIVISION 1B

Round 1: 14th February – Tralee
Kerry 3-14, Laois 0-19

Round 2: 21st February – O'Moore Park
Laois 1-26, Offaly 1-20

Round 3: 5th March – Pearce Stadium
Galway 3-31, Laois 1-11

Round 4: 11th March – O'Moore Park
Limerick 6-33, Laois 1-19

Round 5: 26th March – Wexford Park
Wexford 2-24, Laois 2-20

Relegation Play-Off: 1st. April – Tralee
Laois 1-30, Kerry 4-20

LEINSTER SENIOR HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIER

Round 1 – 23rd. April - O'Moore Park
Laois 1-23, Westmeath 2-17

Round 2 – 30th. April - Navan
Laois 3-25, Meath 2-13

Round 3 – 14th. May - Tralee
Laois 2-21, Kerry 3-15

LEINSTER SENIOR HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Quarter-Final: 28th. May – O'Moore Park
Wexford 3-25, Laois 1-17

ALL-IRELAND SENIOR HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS

Round 1: 1st. July – Parnell Park
Dublin 2-28, Laois 1-15

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- Murtola Duggan

(All-Ireland Senior Football Final Referee 2008, 2013, 2015)



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Under 21 Hurling

Our Under 21 panel whilst under their own independent management team, predominantly trained with our Senior panel. This only made sense as with a crossover of approximately ten players, anything else would have been lunacy and detrimental to both panels. It is perhaps somewhat unfortunate that there is such a turnover of U21's involved at Senior level, and it should be put on record that this is primarily down to retirements and players not wishing to commit to Laois hurling over the past two years.

With such a large number of senior panellists involved and preparations having gone very well, there were high hopes that this was a competition we could progress well in. Our opening game was against Westmeath in Mullingar and whilst a venue never easy to get a result in, for fifty five minutes Laois were in total control of this game and on route to a comfortable victory. What happened next is difficult explain, with Westmeath snatching a draw in injury time and with our team seemingly "shell shocked" with what had just happened, Westmeath proved more opportunistic in extra time and emerging deserving winners in the end.

I wish to thank Shane Corby (Manager), Fran Hogan and Anthony Coffey (Selectors), Michael Boyhan (Strength and Conditioning), Miriam Harrison (Physio) and Tom Clear (Servicing Secretary) for all their work with this panel during the year. Shane declined to commit for another year and with this competition, unlike the football, remaining at U21 for 2018, it has been decided with again such a large turnover of

players being involved at Senior level, that Senior management will look after the affairs of this panel for 2018.

BORD GAIS LEINSTER UNDER-21 HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Quarter-Final: 31st. May

Mullingar -AET

Westmeath 1-20, Laois 0-21

Minor Hurling

Similar to football, there was an U17 Competition also, however we decided to enter Minor (U18) grade only, as there was a National Celtic Challenge developmental hurling competition which we were competing in and it was believed we wouldn't have sufficient numbers to participate in all competitions.

Our League campaign got off to a successful start in Heywood CS, with a win against Dublin, however defeat to Antrim saw us exit this competition. Our opening championship game was against Offaly in O'Moore Park, where we produced a marvellous display of hurling to outgun a well fancied Offaly side. For Round 2, we travelled to Parnell Park to face Dublin and following a committed display we emerged narrow losers. As a result we faced Meath in O'Moore Park in a Quarter-final fixture with victory qualifying us for a Semi-final showdown with Kilkenny, again in O'Moore Park. Whilst we proved no match for the eventual Leinster Champions, the manner of the defeat, albeit with 14 men, for almost the entire second half was disappointing.

It does be difficult remain silent at time when you listen and hear criticism of management and players in defeat of Laois teams through the various media channels



Mountmellick JHC B Winner

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and supporters forums and I wish to put on record the difficulties the various appointment committees have in sourcing suitable and committed personnel to give their time and efforts to these positions. In regard to this minor panel, when the individual who was initially appointed in charge of this team withdrew from the position, there was in excess of a dozen more than capable Laois hurling men asked to look after the development of this minor panel and all declined. I don't think our Cathaoirleach will mind me saying that it was out of desperation to find a manager that he contacted our National Director of Hurling Martin Fogarty for help and it was he who sourced Christy. Although the end result was disappointing, the fact that this panel may not have been considered at the outset to be the most talented the county has ever produced, what they accomplished and the manner of their performances were hugely encouraging and a credit to their management team.

I wish to compliment this entire panel of players for their efforts and also their parents and clubs for encouraging them to commit to the Laois Hurling cause. In particular I want to thank Christy Walsh (Manager), Ollie Hally and Patrick Phelan (Selectors), Michael Boyhan (Strength and Conditioning Coach), Alison Holmes (Physiotherapy), David O'Brien (Kitman) and servicing Secretary Ann Barry for in the first instance in taking on these jobs and for their tremendous work with this panel during the year.

For 2018, our Minor (U17) panel will be managed by Enda Lyons, with Ollie Hally, Chris Hartnett, Sean Conroy and JJ McHugh (Selector), Dermot McGill (Strength and Conditioning), Miriam Harrison (Physio) and David O'Brien (Team Secretary). This group have been in-

involved in great work with our talent academies for a good number of years and are certainly deserving of this opportunity and I wish them well in their endeavours.

LEINSTER MINOR HURLING LEAGUE

Round 1: 4th. March – Heywood CS
Laois 2-13, Dublin 1-13

Round 2: 18th. March – Training Centre
Antrim 4-10, Laois 0-08

ELECTRIC IRELAND MINOR HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Round 1: 8th April – O'Moore Park
Laois 2-22, Offaly 0-14

Round 2: 15th. April – Parnell Park
Dublin 1-11, Laois 1-08

Quarter-Final: 30th April – O'Moore Park
Laois 1-19, Meath 1-14

Semi-Final: 13th. May – O'Moore Park
Kilkenny 6-21, Laois 0-09

Local Championships

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Camross on their success in a competitive Senior Hurling Championship, whilst our Senior Football Championship resumed more predictable lines with Portlaoise regaining their title, a remarkable tenth in eleven years. All our other winners are outlined in the Roll of Honour at the end of my report and whilst not wishing to go through each competition, I congratulate all winners on their championship and league success.

LEINSTER CROSS-COUNTY LEAGUES

U-13 / U-15 HURLING & FOOTBALL



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SATURDAY 3rd MARCH
HURLING ROUND 2 • U-13 + U-15
SATURDAY 10th MARCH
HURLING ROUND 3 • U-13 + U-15
MONDAY 19th MARCH
FOOTBALL FINALS FESTIVALS
SATURDAY 24th MARCH
HURLING FINALS FESTIVALS

All our Competitions thankfully are in the process of running to finish on Schedule. Our Fixture Programme consisted of 1,904 games (excluding U10 & 12 Go Games) and I wish to compliment all our Club Officers for their co-operation in achieving and completing this mammoth programme.

Just a small couple of observations over the past year, firstly I must express my disappointment with the fact that we had six different teams withdraw from league competitions immediately prior to the commencement of these competitions, this was completely unfair to other competing teams and accounted for a huge disproportionate number of walkovers in our league calendar. With some of these clubs, it was just poor planning, whilst others are repeat offenders and I would suggest a significant fine be introduced in our regulations to cut out this practice. Another issue which has arisen in IHC and JHC is the seven week break for Round 2 Winners and their next game in the competition, which can be resolved by simply delaying commencement of these championships by a fortnight and will also resolve problem for exclusive junior and intermediate clubs, insofar as all Senior clubs will have completed one full round of Senior championship prior to their participation in both Intermediate and Junior.

The number of applications for Group Senior or Intermediate teams for participation in Senior and Intermediate, particularly non-traditional alliances, is increasing annually. In my opinion such Group teams will provide no long term viability or stability for any of the clubs, who feel the need to enter into such alliances and would perhaps encourage greater consideration to be given to the introduction of a Divisional competition, along the line of the Kerry model, to

be played in tandem with our traditional competitions.

It has become apparent that a number of our Clubs are having difficulty in fielding second teams in league competitions and as a result CCC have put forward a motion on behalf of County Committee to introduce two different grading lists for league (15) and championship (17), which if passed will help in some way.

The changes to our underage grades comes into effect from 1st. January and whilst the difficulties incurred by many of our rural clubs in fielding adult teams without the services of U17's has been highlighted at previous conventions, the change will allow for a necessary provision of a far greater evenly distributed and planned schedule of club matches throughout the year for our U13 to 17 players. However it is important that CCC's proposal for an U19 competition on a league championship is implemented to supplement player's in the U17 to 19 grades fixture programme.

I am a firm believer in that if we are to raise standards at club level, greater cross county activity and participation is required for our clubs. Last year saw the inaugural Leinster U13 and 15 football and hurling cross county competitions, with over 250 teams over all grades and codes participating. Disappointingly Laois clubs were poorly represented. The aim is to provide more games, more games of a similar standard for teams and also to lengthen the playing season around the province, therefore giving players more exposure to GAA for longer each year. In doing this we aim to increase participation, combat drop off and improve standards. Leinster Games Development committee working on feedback from last year's competitions have decided this year to divide all teams into divisions in the

North and South of the Province based on grading's advice from County Coiste na nÓgs. Each division will be made up of groups of four, therefore giving each club three games at their own standard in their region before advancing to a full provincial semi-final and finals day. This will cut down on travel and try to provide games of a similar standard throughout the competition. I would encourage all Laois Clubs to consider participation in these leagues.

The recent Special Congress passed several motions to bring about an opportunity to design a more condensed inter-county season in order to create a greater calendar for our clubs and their players. For example Laois Senior Hurlers will commence their championship on the weekend of 5 May and complete their Tier 2 Round Robin series on weekend of 9 June, which is five games in six weekends. Our Senior Footballers calendar is something similar, with a game every fortnight pending advancement. In 2018, there will be a minimum of 24 weeks available for club activity in Laois, unless Laois advance to an All Ireland Hurling Final or Football Semi-final, with our recent record there is likely to be more.

Some of the other measures introduced to ensure this calendar is not impeded on include the restriction of Inter County Challenge games to be played only on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday after the conclusion of the Allianz Leagues and also that if a game in the All-Ireland Football Qualifiers, Knock-Out games in the Allianz Leagues and Provincial Club Championships end in a draw after extra time, that two additional periods of extra time of five minutes each shall be played and if still level after the additional extra time the result will be determined by a free-taking competition. I can imagine

the furore of Laois exiting the All Ireland Football Qualifier or a Laois Club exiting the Leinster Club Championship, after losing a free-taking competition!!

I believe the changes will have very little bearing on our own proposed championship fixture calendar for 2018 and it will be very similar to other years, whilst the April calendar will free up weekends for Clubs to have availability of their Inter County players for league games.

Referees and Disciplinary Issues

I wish to take this opportunity to thank our Referees and our Match Officials for their assistance and co-operation in completing our Fixture programme. Referees have an onerous task and it is as simple as this without them, we wouldn't have any games.

I don't think any Club Official really understands the difficulties incurred and time spent in trying to ensure there is a Referee in attendance at every Fixture we schedule, in excess of 1,900 Fixtures in 2017 over a 9 month period works out at approximately 50 referees required per week. In working from a pool of less than 50 referees, it is not rocket science to understand the problems we have. This year we did not appoint Referees for our U12 Go Games schedule and requested Home Club to officiate, a decision not taken lightly, but out of necessity to ensure we had a Referee in attendance at all Adult and Juvenile games. We have appealed and warned of this impending crisis every year, it seems to have fallen on deaf ears. During the opening rounds of Intermediate and Junior championships, I received numerous complaints as to why we didn't appoint linesmen for these games and answer is very simple there was

no one available to do them. So rather than continuously complain at meetings about appointments and the standard of refereeing in our Club games, I am requesting each Club in the coming year to provide at least one Referee, who they believe to be both competent and suitable for training next January.

Unfortunately, CCC saw an increasing level of reports of verbal abuse towards our match officials from players, mentors, club officials and supporters during the year. This conduct certainly does not help Referee recruitment. While suspensions have been imposed for all reported infractions, I'm afraid continued reports of this behaviour seem to be in the ascendancy and would certainly call for a review for stiffer sanctions in tackling reports of this nature.

Whilst I was an advocate of the introduction of match suspensions at the time, from my experience on CCC, there are discrepancies in the application of the rule and a leniency at club level insofar as it is specifically competition based, with league and championship not linked as they are at Inter County level. I think some consideration should be at least given to preparing a motion to Congress to have the same application of rule applied at Club level, as there is at Inter County level, where league and championship are considered to be the same competition combination and Category 3 or 4 Infraction Suspension is applicable in either. Another discrepancy between Club and Inter County, is where a penalty for accumulation of three orderings off for a Category 2 Infraction merits a One Match Suspension at Inter County, whereas at Club level, the repeat offender in this category escapes without any penalty. Just my thoughts!

Admittedly the standard of refereeing in all our games over all grades is not as consistent as you would wish it to be, and our Referee Administration committee do continue to make efforts to try and improve refereeing standards and bring consistency at all levels, with all our Adult Referees having to complete Inservice training, on-line Rules questionnaire and Fitness testing at the beginning of each year. The problem is that our pool of officials is so small, that there is no real penalty as such, except for the grade you may be refereeing, for not reaching the required standards in these exams or training.

I wish to thank our Referee Administrator Danny Gorman and his committee, and serviced by our Office Administrator Tomas Moore for their endeavours with refereeing matters and particularly appointments, which I have no hesitation in admitting is the most difficult and thankless position in Laois GAA administration. Tony Maher is also deserving of our thanks for his continued role as sideline official for games in O'Moore Park.

Páirc Uí Mhórdha

During the 2017 season, Pairc Uí Mhórdha hosted 27 Inter County and Inter Club games, including both Leinster Senior Club Hurling and Football finals, Leinster U21 Football final and Leinster Senior Hurling Championship Semi-final and was predominantly used for almost all our local Senior Championship fixtures. As I have stated in previous reports to Convention, the stadium is now our main source of revenue from rental income received from Leinster and Central Council games, as well as our local gate receipts.

Further to the completion of terrace developmental works in 2016, the stadium capacity has increased from 18,200 to almost 22,000, which I expect to increase further on the completion of the training centre complex and project. I cannot stress the importance and the necessity to improve our organisation of big match days in the stadium. There is competition from other venues now in Leinster for all games, so the good work must continue if we wish to continue to attract high calibre games to the stadium.

I wish to acknowledge the support of our local Gardai for their help on match days, our Event Controller Tom Jones, Safety Officer PJ Kelly, Chief Stewards Jody Conway and Jim Morrin and our numerous voluntary stewards.

I must pay tribute to our Groundsman Colm McEvoy for the pristine condition in which he continues to keep our pitches in both the stadium and training centre. During the year Colm purchased pitch maintenance equipment and his O'Moore Park contract has been renewed and extended to include this work and upkeep of both O'Moore Park and our Training Centre. Our Caretaker Willie Stackpool is also deserving of our thanks for ensuring the grounds are opened when required and also our TUS workers and PCE Group Scheme team for their continued upkeep of the stadium during the year.

Laois GAA Training Centre - Project Development – Progress Report

For those who have visited O'Moore Park during the year, one can see that this development is progressing satisfactorily and the following is a brief summary of the

development to date and what will be happening into the future:

Phase 1 – Completed

- Development of 3 Pitches (145m x 90m)
- Pitch 1 – Gravel Raft Pitch (145 x 90m) with pop up irrigation
- Pitch 2 – Pipe and Slit Drained Pitch (145m x 90m) with pop up irrigation
- Pitch 3 – Pipe and Slit Drained Pitch (145 x 90m)
- Install drainage infrastructure for entire site;
- Development of running hills and training areas;
- Acquisition of mower for ongoing and extra maintenance.

Phase 2 – Completed

- Erect Floodlighting on Pitches 1, 2 and 3 (to a minimum of 350lux) and install Generator;
- Erect Goalposts and Ballcatch Nets on Pitches 1, 2 and 3;
- Construct “machinery” shed.

Phase 3 – Completed

- Erect perimeter boundary fence and build pathway on Pitch 1 & 2;
- Replace boundary walls with “Paladin” Fence on Fr. Browne Avenue and O'Moore Park, incorporating new entrance and additional turnstiles;
- Install Amenity lighting;

Phase 4 – In Progress

- Building of new Complex, which is planned in the following phases:

Phase 4A - In process with a completion date of May 2018;

- 4 modern dressing rooms with shower facilities and ice baths;
- Physio / Medical Room;
- Storage Rooms;
- Referees Dressing Room (also accessible to O'Moore Park);
- Public Toilets (Ladies, Gents and Disabled);
- Kitchen and Catering Area;
- Reception / Foyer Area;

Phase 4B – Dependent on Sports Capital Funding allocation;

- Gym / Training Hall;

Phase 4C – Dependent on Sale of present Offices for Cost of Fitout;

- Office Area and Meeting Rooms (This development will be included in Phase 4A as a shell);

Phase 5 – Autumn 2018 & On

- Car Parking Areas – tarmacadam and mark;
- Ball Wall;

The total cost of the project will be somewhere in the region of approximately €3.1 million for the first four phases. This figure excludes the purchase of the site, which was borne by Central Council GAA and is held in Laois GAA ownership in the new Corporate Trusteeship. This of course means that all of the funding secured can be directed towards the development of the Centre and makes delivery of such an ambitious project realistic.

Before embarking on a project of this scale, Laois GAA has worked hard to se-

cure funding commitments from Central Council GAA €1 million and Leinster Council GAA €225,000. Laois GAA has committed its own funding of €750,000, derived from sale of lands and the “FAI / IRFU” Croke Park funding, to this project. Laois GAA has already received €45,000 from Sports Capital Regional funding and has applied for additional Sports Capital Regional funding and is hopeful of a further allocation this year. This will leave approximately €1 million to be raised by Laois GAA through fundraising and loan facilities.

In order to fund this project, Laois GAA has secured a loan facility of €1.23 million from AIB, which includes the transfer of our existing stand loan from Ulster Bank. This is a major commitment from our County and will require the full support of our Clubs and prudent management of our finances.

The family of Gaelic Games in Laois will benefit from this centralised centre. Laois GAA Football and Hurling Development Squads from Under 13 to Senior panels will use the centre. In addition, the centre will also be used for schools competitions, underage county blitzes, club teams preparing for Leinster Club championships etc., alleviating a variety of over used club grounds currently providing for all of the above activities.

Finance

Thankfully our finances continue to return in a satisfactory state, particularly as we have achieved budget in most sectors. Our expenditure in excess of €600,000 on Inter County teams continues to be the major drain on our resources and is an area we closely monitor. It would be prudent

to achieve further savings here, but many of the expenses incurred here are obligatory and have increased again this year due to agreements in place between Central Council and GPA regarding player entitlements.

Whilst present fundraising meets our current demands, our new loan repayments will require additional fundraising, with a €100,000 annual surplus now required to meet AIB repayments, which is an increase in excess of €40,000 on our present liabilities. There are a number of areas of increasing revenue being explored, including stadium naming rights, availability as a concert venue, advertising in training centre and O'Moore Park, pitch and dressing room sponsorship, patron contribution to club wall etc. It is hoped additional revenue can be raised through some of these areas, failure to do so will merit consideration to some small increase in club levies.

Our Cisteoir Martin Byrne will outline in more detail our income and expenditure in our Financial Accounts in his presentation to Convention.

Briefly I wish to highlight a number of our fundraising initiatives and thanks 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 2017 Clubs benefitted to the tune of €575,000, while the County profited to almost €106,000. This Draw continues for 2018 and I would again appeal for your co-operation in making this your Clubs primary fundraiser for the year;

- Our “Race Day” at the Punchestown Racing Festival in April continues to grow and proved to be very successful in selling 21 tables, with all guests thoroughly enjoying the Punchestown “corporate” experience. Our thanks to Glanbia / GAIN for their continued sponsorship of this event, and mention to Leas Cisteoir Kieran Leavy for his input into the organisation of the event;
- Our “Night at the Dogs & Buster Draw” in Newbridge Greyhound Stadium, appears twice in this years accounts and was kindly sponsored by O’Loughlins Hotel and Manhattan Mixer last November 2016 and Brady Signs and Colm McEvoy Pitch Maintenance in October 2017, all of whom sponsorship is gratefully appreciated. This is an excellent fundraiser for our County and I wish to thank our fundraising committee Chairperson Paschal McEvoy for his efforts here, where he was ably assisted by all our Executive members, Canice Sheeran, John Hyland, Sheila Devoy, Donie Brennan, our talent academy panellists and not least all our Clubs;

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our Treasurer Martin Byrne for his continued expertise and professionalism in this area and also for his commitment and dedication to Laois GAA.

Beko “Club Bua” Awards Scheme

Earlier this year, Beko came on board to generously sponsor this new initiative by Leinster Council GAA, which rewards Clubs for their efforts both on and off the field.



Park Ratheniska's Brian Ramsbottom presented with the Beko Club Bua Award



Alex Stenson and Michael Cleere (Rathdowney Errill) presented with gear from Leinster GAA in the new Beko Club Bua Awards

Bua is the Gaelige for Win and to win consistently on the field a Club must be able to win off the field too. The “Bua Award” is the benchmark for Clubs carrying out a self assessment to see if they are meeting or aspiring to the criteria necessary to not only receive special recognition, but also maximise their potential promoting Gaelic Games in their locality.

By participating in the Bua Award programme, Clubs are encouraged to identify areas where they currently excel and meet targets but also recognise important areas they may need to address.

Just log into the “Club Bua” section on the homepage of leinstergaa.ie to find out more.

Our congratulations to Park Ratheniska GAA and Rathdowney Errill GAA, both of whom participated in this scheme and go home with prizes of €1,500 each, thanks to the Beko “Club Bua” Awards scheme.

Coaching and Games

The amount of activity involved in Coaching and Games Development is immense. It is at the core of our association and the importance and seriousness in which Laois GAA view our Coaching and Games Development can be seen by our ever increasing financial investment in this area, whether it is a prudent spend or we are achieving value for money is often a question that is often posed. There is a lot of excellent work happening in this sector, some of which will only bear fruition in coming years and I believe that we now have a team best assembled to capitalise and progress this work and pathways in both our clubs and talent academies.

During the year, Andrew Kavanagh was promoted to the role of Lead G.D.A., a welcome and worthy appointment and I am confident he will build on the work of both Pat Critchley and Colm Browne, his predecessors in this role, whilst yours truly will continue to assist in the financial and certain administrative areas of the role. I wish to take this opportunity to thank James Kelly for his efforts with Laois Coaching and Games for the past few years. James employment was on a part time basis, and when the position was upgraded to a full time position, Peter Hally was the successful candidate. Peter is a welcome addition to the team and comes with a big reputation having being redeployed from Wexford Coaching and Games. Colm Begley continues with us in a part time role, whilst completing his Masters in IT Carlow, whilst Ciaran Muldowney and Donal Brennan make up the final members of the team. Both Peter Hally and Colm Begley are involved in an athlete development programme with our present U14 and 15 Talent Academy footballers and hurlers and they are being assisted with this by local interns Danny Luttrell and Robert Dowling with this process.

There is an expectancy out there from Club personnel, that it is the duty of the full time G.D.A. to complete all the duties and roles of the Club volunteer. Unfortunately this was never the case and is not feasible, but they are expected to engage with their allocated Clubs and advise, assist and mentor that volunteer in his role as Club Coach. I must reiterate that there is expectancy on the club to engage also and is an area where some of our Clubs are sadly lacking. Another area of concern in this sphere, is the increasing lack of volunteerism, while I’m aware Clubs struggle in recruiting capable coached, it is almost impossible at County level in sourcing suitable mentors

for our Talent Academies and Inter County teams and a lot of this coaching is becoming the remit of our fulltime staff, which is a worrying trend that has developed in recent years.

Our Coaching Officer Pat O’Sullivan tenure in this role concludes tonight at Convention and whilst he outlines in detail all Coaching and Games activity involved during the year in his report to Convention, I wish to thank him for all his work in this sector. Likewise I wish to take this opportunity to thank all our Coaching and Games staff – Andrew Kavanagh, Ciaran Muldowney, Colm Begley, Donal Brennan and Peter Hally for their efforts during the year. Laois County Council also deserve mention and our thanks for their significant contribution to the employment of coaching staff members and it is a partnership which we can hopefully better foster into the future.

Corporate Trusteeship

The Corporate Trustee is now an option for Clubs, when considering appointment of Trustees of Clubs. The Corporate Trustee is a separate legal entity, a Trust Company, called “Iontaobhas Corparáideach Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Teoranta”, set up by the GAA. The Trust Company holds the property for and on behalf of the Club. Clubs can now opt to hold property through the Corporate Trustee. Holding property through the Corporate Trustee does not affect the ownership in any way but can have advantages in the way of continuous amendments to the title is avoided when trustees die or retire. This will save on Legal costs to the Club. This also takes the pressure off of individual Trustees and avoids the publish-

ing of names should court proceedings take place. The Corporate Trustee is optional.

Our new Training Centre is held in this Trust Company and as part of compliance with our A.I.B. loan, O’Moore Park trusteeship is also being transferred into this Trust Company. In future where there is a requirement for change to Club Declaration of Trusts, Provincial and County representation will also be through this Corporate Trust Company.

There are three options available to clubs:

OPTION 1 - Clubs may elect to do nothing and to continue to hold Club property through personal Trustees.

OPTION 2 - Clubs may elect to introduce a partial change in that case property is held by a combination of personal trustees and the Corporate Trustee.

OPTION 3 - Clubs may elect to have property held only through the Corporate Trustee.

Should Clubs want to know more information or wish to appoint the Corporate Trustee, they should contact the National Finance Department of Croke Park, Tel: 01 8363222.

GAA Injury Benefit Fund – Preferred Medical Provider Initiative

The GAA has entered into Preferred Medical Provider Agreements with a network of hospitals and clinics countrywide with effect from the 1st October 2017. The key aim is to help reduce medical costs and to deliver quality healthcare to our regis-

tered members through the GAA Injury Benefit Fund.

Through the operation of the GAA Injury Benefit Fund, which costs Cumann Lúthchleas Gael €9,000,000 to fund per year, medical expenses make up over 70% of the claims payments issued. Given this significant cost, Cumann Lúthchleas Gael approached hospitals and clinics countrywide with a view to agreeing preferred prices for our registered members who present at these hospitals/clinics following an accidental bodily injury sustained while playing in an official competitive match/sanctioned challenge match or taking part in an official supervised training session on a team registered under the Fund and for which full payment of registration fees has been received in Croke Park. Furthermore, Cumann Lúthchleas Gael has also obtained service commitments from the Preferred Medical Providers which will help in delivering quality healthcare to our registered members and enhance our commitment to Player Medical Welfare. The full list of Preferred Medical Providers who have agreed to work with the GAA on this initiative has been previously circulated to all Clubs.

I know Sinead Leavy and her department in Croke Park have been working for some time in putting this initiative in place and they must be commended for their efforts. The agreed prices will reflect a 5 - 10% saving against prices charged to players' prior to the introduction of this initiative and both players and club officers can now contact the relevant medical providers as regards obtaining the agreed price for a surgery that a player may require.

Whilst on this subject, it is imperative that our Club Officers remind all our players, that the playing of Gaelic Football,

Hurling, Handball and Rounders' involves the risk of Injury and it is each individual registered player's responsibility to familiarise themselves with the terms and benefits of the GAA Injury Benefit Fund. Each player needs to ensure that they have adequate cover in place to meet their own individual needs and personal circumstances. The GAA Injury Benefit Fund is only in place to cover benefits which cannot be claimed elsewhere and is a benefit cover only. Members should not use the fund as their only recourse or be dependent on the fund to compensate them fully for any losses associated with the injury sustained.

Data Protection Legislation

There are some significant changes to Data Protection legislation coming into effect next year which will have an impact for every GAA club. It is important that clubs are aware of how these changes in the law will affect the ways in which members' personal information can be collected and used for GAA purposes. Over the last number of months, the key points relating to Data Protection have been outlined in previous GAA correspondence to Clubs and can be found on the website www.gaa.ie/dataprotection. In November this year Croke Park also hosted a seminar to assist GAA clubs to understand specifically what they must do to comply with the legislation and what is changing in the law in regard to the process of collecting, processing and storing information relating to members over the coming months.

As a result it is intended to organise a similar seminar for our Clubs in January and provide a more detailed examination of the new legislation and its implications for the GAA will be covered, as well as

the specific actions to be taken by clubs to comply. Templates and tools to assist clubs, such as Privacy Statements for inclusion on membership applications, will be provided at this meeting.

Local Media

Our games in Laois got more than their fair share of coverage during the year and for this I thank our local press Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express and their various correspondents; Midlands Radio 103 and their various reporters; whilst a further addition to our media ranks this year was LaoisToday.ie, an online multimedia news service and to Stephen Miller and his team we are also grateful for their support. I wish to thank Alf Harvey and Denis Byrne who both do a magnificent job on photographs and enhance the work of the scribes. Although we may not always be in favour of everything they produce and state, we are fortunate to have press personnel, who are passionate about Gaelic games and play a role in spreading our message and promoting our games.

Laois TV was an initiative from Michael Egan and endorsed by Laois GAA, which greatly enhanced and promoted our championships by way of highlight coverage of the games online, after each game and which has built up a huge online following. The initiative was intended to be a revenue earner for both parties, which for 2017 did not come to fruition, but we are exploring further possible revenue income streams for 2018. .

Our website, www.laoisgaa.ie , and our Laois GAA Iphone App, both require an urgent upgrade and it is an area we will be exploring in the coming months. The popularity of both is highlighted by the fact that we had 660,932 Website Pageviews in the past 12 months. We continue to embrace social media with 23,200 Twitter Followers and 8,362 Facebook Fans. Almost all our Inter County and local Senior Championship games are carried live on Twitter. All our website and social media work is a tribute to the tremendous work of principally Tomas Moore and of course PRO Tom Clear and his PR Committee.

Laois GAA Bible

During the year, the much anticipated and long awaited Laois GAA Bible containing a detailed record of all Laois GAA activity from 1888 to 2016 was published. This project was undertaken by John Phelan (Borris in Ossory) in 2010, who during this interim period, tirelessly researched our history records and compiled this wonderful publication. This was not an easy undertaking as records in many instances in Clubs were not meticulously kept and at the time were not perhaps of high priority. The same applies to Laois GAA, where some of our local records were incorrect and missing. Hopefully through this publication most of these will have been rectified, some unfortunately cannot, as no records of these are in existence. I wish to sincerely thank John for his endeavours with this welcome addition to the archives of Laois GAA.

Laois GAA has purchased the copyright of this publication and it is intended that the records content in this publication

will be displayed on our website during the coming year.

Sponsors

I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to Mattie Walsh and his company MW Hire Group for their generous sponsorship of all our County teams. MW Hire has been part and parcel of Laois GAA now since 2010 and has been renewed up to and including 2019. I sincerely hope his company 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 and again 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.

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, even at short notice;
- People First Credit Union, sponsors of our Football and Hurling Talent Academies;
- Mochua Print and Design, our Awards Night sponsor;

- Colgan Sports, for their support of "Club Laois" shop;
- Browne Jeweller's, Scoreboard sponsorship;
- GAIN / Glanbia, main sponsor of our Punchestown Race Day;
- Brady Signs and Colm McEvoy Pitch Maintenance, main sponsor of our Race Night in Newbridge Greyhound Stadium;
- Freesoul, our Man of the Match Awards

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

During the course of the year, our Chairperson Gerry Kavanagh suggested that we should undertake a Strategic Review of our association's affairs with a target of having a new strategy document launched for Convention. Our last Strategic and Action plan expired in 2015 and it was agreed it was important we plan for the future. Nickey Brennan was approached in relation to chairing the committee and thankfully agreed, and thus commenced the most extensive and thorough review of the association within our county to date.

Whilst acknowledging there is a lot of good about the GAA in Laois, there are a

number of areas that must be improved, particularly in view of the many challenges being encountered by Laois GAA and most importantly our Clubs. The strategic review is an opportunity to assess every aspect of the GAA in our county and identify those areas that need to be changed or set in a different direction. The report will now not be published in January 2018 and will set identifiable targets for Laois GAA, its Clubs and all other stakeholders over the next three years.

Implementing the recommendations in the report will be the responsibility of every GAA stakeholder in Laois and not just Laois GAA and its executive officers. The report will be especially relevant to clubs, as ultimately it is their commitment or otherwise which will determine whether the report's recommendations are successfully implemented.

The review process to date has included the completion of a club questionnaire and a direct consultation process with our Clubs, along with other stakeholders, which will assist the review committee in determining some of the report's recommendations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Clubs who engaged in the review process for their cooperation and input.

One can only be impressed with the enthusiasm and energy Nickey has brought to the entire review process and I wish to sincerely thank him for the huge amount of time and effort he has given to date and eagerly await the end product in January. Likewise I want express our gratitude to the other team members, whom have all contributed to the review in their own areas of expertise - David O'Brien (Secretary), Kieran Kehoe, Richard Kennedy, John Kelly, Shane Maher, Ger Slevin, Eamonn

Jackman, Stephen Miller, Maurice Deegan, Liam Delaney, Michael Dempsey, Niall Collins, Ross Munnelly and Tommy Lanigan.

Na Mairbh

Every year sees the passing of some great GAA people and this year has been no exception. On behalf of Laois GAA I would like to extend sympathy of Laois GAA in particular to the following families that contributed so much to our association at both club and county and readily come to mind –Dinny Carroll, St Fintan's Mountrath; Denis Cahill and John Kelly, Park Ratheniska; Mary Barry, long serving steward in O'Moore Park from Borris in Ossory Club; Michael "Maggie" Walsh, Ballinakill GAA; Bill Dooley, Graiguecullen Club; Tim Keenan, Camross GAA; Louis Harkin and Phil O'Keefe, Portlaoise Club; Tom Irwin and Matt McDonald, Ballyroan Club; John Challoner, Mountmellick Club; Joe Dempsey, The Harps; Billy Hennessy, The Heath; Dan Lalor, Timahoe; former Laois Senior Hurling Manager Georgie Leahy, Kilkenny; Paddy McCormack, Rathdowney Club, last surviving member of Laois 1949 Hurling team; Tom Flynn, The Rock; Jack O'Brien, Kilcavan; Jack Delaney, Crettyard 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 nan-amacha.

Buíochas

As I conclude my review of 2017 and my observations about the state and struc-

tures 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.

Our Cathaoirleach Gerry Kavanagh concludes his five year term of leadership of our Association in the County this evening. I wish to personally thank him for his friendship, loyalty and support during this period. Whilst results on the field unfortunately did not favour him during his tenure, it was not the fault of the efforts he made in putting a professional management team in place for all our panels. In Coaching and Games, he has worked effortlessly in securing additional coaching staff and assembling the present team, whose work I am confident will bear fruition in the years to come. He secured 100% funding and overseen the complete terrace development and toilet refurbishment of O'Moore Park. His greatest legacy will without doubt be the procurement and development of our new training centre adjacent to O'Moore Park. I can safely say that without his commitment and determination this would not have happened. On behalf of the gaeils of Laois I say sincere thanks for your efforts for the past five years.

Pat O'Sullivan, Coaching and Games Officer and Jody Conway, Irish Cultural Officer also complete their five year terms this evening and I want to express my sincere thanks to both for their excellent work in what are difficult officer roles.

Likewise my fellow Executive Members, CCC, Hearings and our other sub Committees for their support and advice 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.

Our Office Administrator, Tomas Moore, deserves special praise for the efficient manner he carries out his duties. He has an excellent relationship with our Club Secretaries, and his routinely work in dealing with Referee appointments and reports, handling Ticket Sales, recording Coach Education courses, Programme editing and PR role greatly reduces the work of yours truly.

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 the promotion of our games in primary schools.

Thanks to our sister organisations in their promotion of our games, Ladies Football and Camogie. Our congratulations to Laois U16 Camogie team on their tremendous success in the All Ireland Camogie Final.

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

In conclusion, I wish you all an enjoyable and successful 2018.

Le meas

Niall Mac Laitimh

Runaí CLG Laoise, Nollaig 2017

2017 Football Championship and League Results

ADULT FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP & LEAGUE

“Laois Shopping Centre” SFC Final (15/10/17)

Portlaoise 3-13 Ballylinan 0-10

“Laois Shopping Centre” IFC Final (30/09/17)

Emo 3-06 Portlaoise 1-12;

“Laois Shopping Centre” IFC Final Replay (06/10/17)

Emo 3-11 Portlaoise 3-04

“Laois Shopping Centre” JFC Final (30/09/17)

St Joseph’s 2-14 Kilcavan 1-05

“Laois Shopping Centre” JFC “B” Final (09/08/17)

Errill 4-07 Rosenallis 0-07

“Laois Shopping Centre” JFC “C” Final (28/08/17)

Castletown 1-13 Rathdowney 1-06

“Laois Shopping Centre” MFC Final (18/08/17)

Portarlinton 1-10
Emo Courtwood The Rock 1-06

“Laois Shopping Centre” MFC “B” Final (21/08/17)

The Heath 6-18 O’Dempseys 1-11

“Laois Shopping Centre” U21FC Final (18/11/17)

Portarlinton 2-17 . . . Graiguecullen 0-08

“Laois Shopping Centre” U21FC “B” Final (18/11/17)

Ballylinan 1-08 Na Fianna Og 1-05

Kelly Cup (01/06/17)

St Joseph’s 1-12 Emo 0-11

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACFL Div 1A Final (09/07/17)

O’Dempsey’s 1-11 St Joseph’s 0-10

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACFL Div 1B Final (07/07/17)

Ballylinan 1-08 Portarlinton 1-07

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACFL Div 2 Final (09/07/17)

Mountmellick 1-10 Courtwood 0-09

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACFL Div 3 Final (08/07/17)

Graiguecullen 2-10 O’Dempsey’s 1-10

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACFL Div 4 Final (25/06/17)

O’Dempsey’s 1-08 Ballyroan Abbey 0-15

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACFL Div 5 Final (07/07/17)

Camross 4-12 Rosenallis 1-17

“Laois Shopping Centre” Minor Football League Final (03/07/17)

Portarlinton 6-10 Ballyroan Abbey 1-12

“Laois Shopping Centre” Minor “B” Football League Final (19/05/17)

Killeshin Crettyard 6-15
Clonaslee St Manmans 3-11

ADULT HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP & LEAGUE

“Laois Shopping Centre” SHC Final (24/09/17)

Camross 3-14 Clough Ballacolla 1-19

“Laois Shopping Centre” SHC “A” Final (24/09/17)

Ballyfin Gaels 0-15 Colt Gaels 0-12

“Laois Shopping Centre” IHC Final (08/10/17)

Trumera 0-15 Rathdowney Errill 0-14

“Laois Shopping Centre” JHC Final (08/10/17)

Ballypickas 2-10 . Rathdowney Errill 2-09

“Laois Shopping Centre” JHC “B” Final (19/08/17)

Mountmellick 4-18 Camross 1-09

“Laois Shopping Centre” JHC “C” Final (29/08/17)

Mountmellick 2-06 Rosenallis 1-08

“Laois Shopping Centre” MHC Final (22/08/17)

Camross 2-15 . . Castletown Slieve Bloom 0-16

“Laois Shopping Centre” MHC “B” Final (17/09/17)

Clough-Ballacolla 3-15

Ballinakill Gaels 0-09

“Laois Shopping Centre” U21HC Final (11/11/17)

Clough Ballacolla 3-13

Rathdowney Errill 2-16

“Laois Shopping Centre” U21HC Final Replay (18/11/17)

Clough Ballacolla 2-15

Rathdowney Errill 1-19

Palmer Cup (15/04/17)

Camross 0-15 Shanahoe Gaels 0-11

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACHL Div 1 Final (07/07/17)

Camross 4-17 Clough Ballacolla 0-08

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACHL Div 1A Final (06/07/17)

The Harps W/O Colt

(Colt did not fulfil Fixture)

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACHL Div 2 Final (02/07/17)

Ballyfin 3-19 Clough Ballacolla 1-11

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACHL Div 3 Final (22/10/17)

Mountmellick 2-13 Ballypickas 1-13

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACHL Div 4 Final (02/07/17)

Camross 3-12 Colt 1-10

“Laois Shopping Centre” ACHL Div 5 Final (30/06/17)

Rathdowney Errill 2-10 . . . Camross 1-07

“Laois Shopping Centre” Minor Hurling League Final (02/07/17)

Castletown Slieve Bloom 1-15

The Harps 1-14

“Laois Shopping Centre” Minor “B” Hurling League Final (23/06/17)

Ballinakill Park Ratheniska Gaels 3-13

Clough Ballacolla 0-13

JUVENILE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP & LEAGUES

“Midlands Park Hotel” U13FC Final (17/11/17)

Ballyroan Abbey 0-03. Portlaoise 2-12

“Midlands Park Hotel” U13FC Shield Final (29/10/17)

Portarlinton 5-15. Ballylinan 1-05

“Midlands Park Hotel” U13FC “B” Final (04/11/17)

Stradbally Parish Gaels 4-05. Spink 1-04

“Midlands Park Hotel” U13FC “B” Shield Final (29/10/17)

Railyard (Kk) 5-04. Na Fianna Og 2-06

“Midlands Park Hotel” U14FC Final (09/09/17)

Ballyroan Abbey 3-07. Portlaoise 1-07

“Midlands Park Hotel” U14FC Shield Final (28/09/17)

Portarlinton 4-10. St Joseph’s 5-05

“Midlands Park Hotel” U14FC “B” Final (09/09/17)

Graiguecullen 2-12. Na Fianna Og 2-06

“Midlands Park Hotel” U14FC “B” Shield Final (09/09/17)

Park Ratheniska Spink 4-1. Kilcavan 1-03

“Midlands Park Hotel” U14FC “C” Final (31/08/17)

Castletown Slieve Bloom 2-08

Portlaoise B 2-05

“Midlands Park Hotel” U15FC Division 1 Final (17/11/17)

Ballyroan Abbey 3-11. St Joseph’s 0-08

“Midlands Park Hotel” U15FC Final Division 1 Shield (17/11/17)

Stradbally Parish Gaels 7-15

St Broughans (OY) 0-07

“Midlands Park Hotel” U15FC Division 2 Final (17/11/17)

Clonmore (CW) 2-12. Na Fianna Og 3-03

“Midlands Park Hotel” U15FC Division 2 Shield Final (10/11/17)

Graiguecullen 4-13. Castlemitchell (KE) 2-07

“Midlands Park Hotel” U14FC “C” Shield Final

The Rock W/O St Fintans Mountrath

SCR

“Midlands Park Hotel” U16FC Final (30/09/17)

St Paul’s The Rock 2-11

Ballyroan Abbey 1-12

“Midlands Park Hotel” U16FC Shield Final (22/09/17)

Sarsfields 5-13. Stradbally Parish Gaels 1-13

“Midlands Park Hotel” U16FC Plate Final (07/09/17)

St Joseph’s 5-11. Spink 2-10

“Midlands Park Hotel” U16FC “B” Final (23/09/17)

Clonaslee St Manmans 3-08. The Harps 1-05

“Midlands Park Hotel” U17FC Final (15/10/17)

Emo Courtwood The Rock 3-15

Stradbally Parish Gaels 2-03

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U17FC “B”
Final (15/10/17)**

Park Ratheniska Spink 5-11
Clonaslee St Manmans 0-07

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U17FC “B”
Shield Final (11/10/17)**

Graigucullen 4-09 The Harps 2-10

**Feile Peil U14 Football Competition
(09/04/17)**

Portlaoise 1-04 Ballyroan Abbey 0-04

**Feile Peil U14 “B” Football
Competition (09/04/17)**

Graigucullen 4-03
Clonaslee St Manmans 1-02

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14 Football
League Final (19/06/17)**

Ballyroan Abbey 5-10 . . . St Joseph’s 0-11

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14 “B”
Football League Final (26/07/17)**

Rosenallis 3-10 Graigucullen 3-04

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14 “C”
Football League Final (14/06/17)**

Clough Ballacolla 4-10 . . . Portlaoise B 4-06

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U16 Football
League Final (24/05/17)**

Ballyroan Abbey 3-10
Killeshin Crettyard 2-08

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U16 “B”
Football League Final (24/05/17)**

Clonaslee St Manmans 5-12 . . . The Harps 2-09

**JUVENILE HURLING
CHAMPIONSHIP & LEAGUES**

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U13HC Final
(11/11/17)**

Camross 3-07 Castletown 2-07

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U13HC Shield
Final (04/11/17)**

Clough Ballacolla 3-08
Rathdowney Errill 2-06

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U13HC “B”
Final (05/11/17)**

St Lazerian’s Abbeyleix 3-06
Park Ratheniska 2-06

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U13HC “B”
Shield Final (04/11/17)**

Na Fianna 7-04 . . . Raheen Parish Gaels 1-05

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14HC Final
(16/09/17)**

Borris in Ossory Kilcotton 3-15
Clough Ballacolla 3-11

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14HC Shield
Final (16/09/17)**

The Harps 3-11 Portlaoise 1-03

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14HC Plate
Final (06/09/17)**

Castletown Slieve Bloom 3-06
Raheen Parish Gaels 1-01

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14HC “B”
Final (16/09/17)**

Clonaslee St Manmans 1-14 . . Na Fianna 2-06

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14HC “B”
Shield Final (16/09/17)**

St Fintans Mountrath 3-09 . . Ballinakill 2-06

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U16HC Final
(30/09/17)**

Clough Ballacolla Mountrath 2-12
The Harps 3-06

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U16HC Shield
Final (30/09/17)**

Rathdowney Errill 8-20
Castletown Slieve Bloom 0-04

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U16HC “B”
Final (30/08/17)**

Rosenallis 1-14 . . Castletown Slieve Bloom 2-08

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U17HC Final
(24/09/17)**

Camross Gaels 2-14
Castletown Slieve Bloom 1-14

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U17HC Shield
Final (04/10/17)**

St Lazerians Abbeyleix 4-18
Clough Ballacolla 3-18

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U17HC “B”
Final (26/09/17)**

Clonaslee St Manmans 4-17 . . . Rosenallis 3-18

**Feile na nGael U14 Hurling
Competition (02/04/17)**

Rosenallis 2-09 The Harps 2-03

**Feile na nGael U14 “B” Hurling
Competition (02/04/17)**

Clonaslee St Manmans 3-04 . . . Na Fianna 1-03

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14 Hurling
League Final (24/06/17)**

Rathdowney Errill 5-09 . . The Harps 5-03

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U14 “B”
Hurling League Final (12/06/17)**

Clonaslee St Manmans 7-06 . . . St Fintans
Mountrath 3-06

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U16 Hurling
League Final (16/05/17)**

St Lazerians Abbeyleix 2-13 . . . The Harps 1-11

**“Midlands Park Hotel” U16 “B”
Hurling League Champions –**

Castletown Slieve Bloom

**UNDER 12 FOOTBALL &
HURLING COMPETITIONS**

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 1 Cup
Final (02/09/17)**

Portarlington 5-09 St Pauls 4-07

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 1
Shield Final (02/09/17)**

St Joseph’s 2-07 . . . Ballyroan/Abbey 2-04

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 2
Cup Final (02/09/17)**

Kilcavan 1-06 Killeshin 1-04

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 2
Shield Final (02/09/17)**

The Heath 1-11 Graiguecullen 1-04

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 3
Cup Final (02/09/17)**

O Dempseys 2-12 Rosenallis 3-05

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 3
Shield Final (02/09/17)**

Clonaslee St Manmans 7-07 . . . Na Fianna Og 3-07

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 4
Cup Final (02/09/17)**
Camross 2-06 The Harps 1-01

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 4
Shield Final (02/09/17)**
Spink 2-06 Timahoe 2-03

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 5
Cup Final (28/09/17)**
Portlaoise B 3-10
Castletown Slieve Bloom 3-04

**Laois GAA U12 Football Division 5
Shield Final (23/09/17)**
Ballyroan/Abbey B 3-12
Na Fianna Og B 0-08

**Laois GAA U12 Hurling Division 1 Cup
Final (31/08/17)**
Camross (Black) 3-12
Borris in Ossory/Kilcotton 1-02

**Laois GAA U12 Hurling Division 1
Shield Final (31/08/17)**
Rathdowney Errill 2-05 . . . Portlaoise 0-08

**Laois GAA U12 Hurling Division 2
Cup Final (08/09/17)**
St Fintans Mountrath 1-02 . . . Na Fianna 0-03

**Laois GAA U12 Hurling Division 2
Shield Final (26/08/17)**
Rosenallis 4-03
Park Ratheniska Timahoe 0-02

**Laois GAA U12 Hurling Division 3
Cup Final (08/09/17)**
The Harps 3-04 Abbeyleix 0-03

**Laois GAA U12 Hurling Division 3
Shield Final (08/09/17)**
St Pauls 1-06 Camross (Amber) 1-05

**LEINSTER CLUB
CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS
AIB LEINSTER CLUB SFC**

Round 1 (29/10/17) *Tullamore*
Portlaoise 1-10. Rhode (Oy) 0-10

Quarter Final (12/11/17) *O'Moore Park*
Moorefield (Ke) 1-09 Portlaoise 0-11

**AIB Leinster Club IFC
Round 1 (21/10/17)** *Aughrim*
Emo 3-09 Hollywood (Ww) 1-13

Quarter Final (04/11/17) *Emo*
Emo 2-17 Ballyboughal (Dub) 3-14

Quarter Final (11/11/17) Replay
Ballyboughal
Ballyboughal (Dub) 1-12 Emo 0-13

**AIB Leinster Club JFC
Quarter Final (07/10/17)** *Aughrim*
Laragh (Ww) 1-09 Kilcavan 1-08

**AIB Leinster SHC
Quarter Final (05/11/17)** *O'Moore Park*
Mount Leinster Rangers (Cw) 0-19
Camross 0-13

**AIB Leinster IHC
Quarter Final (04/11/17)** *Navan*
Kiltale (Mh) 1-22 The Harps 1-15

**AIB Leinster Club JHC
Quarter Final (28/10/17)** *O'Toole Park*
Erins Isle (Dub) 2-11. Trumera 2-07

Sub - Committees Reports

Coiste Na nÓg Laoise Annual Report 2017

2017 was again another successful year for Laois GAA Juvenile Programmes. Over the course of 9 months, commencing on March 12th with the first round of the Under 16 Hurling League and we finished up on November 11th with our last U13 Football Final. Supported as always by CLG Laois, this year we ran leagues and championships in both hurling and football for all grades from U12 to U17. On behalf of the County Juvenile Committee I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the people who helped us and made it possible to fulfil our fixtures throughout that time.

Firstly I'd like to thank the Senior County Secretary Niall Handy, from day one he accommodated, advised and helped the Juvenile Board in whatever way possible and without his support, and the support of the Laois GAA Board it would be impossible to run our underage programmes. A special thanks to Tomas Moore in the County Board Office, once again this year he was a great asset to the Juvenile Board and very accommodating to our administrative needs.

We extend our gratitude to all these volunteers and in particular the Juvenile Club Secretaries in Laois GAA, for their cooperation and communication throughout the year. To clubs who made their facilities available to host games, it is always duly noted that your grounds and dressing rooms were always presented to the highest standard. It is a difficult task to run such a high volume of fixtures across so many grades.

GAA Officials, Referees, Linesmen and Umpires, were as ever committed to the cause this year as with every other year, and without their dedication and commitment

it would not be possible to have the smooth running of our games.

Again this year, we held our Juvenile Finals at O'Moore Park, a huge thanks needs to go to the grounds staff there and in particular Wille Stackpool and Joe Dooley and Caretaker Colm McEvoy. They volunteer their time to Laois GAA year in year out. On behalf of the County Juvenile Committee I'd like to commend them for their dedication to Laois GAA.

To the Midlands Park Hotel Portlaoise who sponsor all our Juvenile Championship and Leagues, we appreciate your continued support. Recognition must also go to all the Laois Development Squads, Setanta and O'Mórdha Og as well as Cumann na mBunscol and their management teams and committees, these programmes are very successful with our youngest players, and we hope to see their continuation in 2018 as their success keeps our young players in the Gaelic Games Circle.

To the Laois GAA Youth Committee, specifically, our Chairperson Brian Allen. The time, effort, work load and dedication they have put in throughout the year doesn't go unnoticed and it is greatly appreciated.

Finally, to congratulate all our young sporting athletes on an exceptional year and in particular to our winning finalists, and wish them all every success for the future.

Is Mise Le Meas

Dónall Ó Gormáin

Rúnaí

Coiste Na nÓg Laoise

Planning, Physical Development & Health and Safety Report 2017

As County Development Officer of C.L.G. Laoise, it gives me great pleasure to present my annual report to County Convention 2017.

It has been a busy year for The Planning, Physical Development and Health & Safety Committee as they continued the trend of previous years. The Committee's responsibilities for 2017 included; assisting and supporting Clubs with their Club Development Grant Applications, Strategic Club Planning Programmes, Club Leadership Development Programme (CLDP) and facilitating Safety Inspections & Stewards Training.

Club Development Grant Applications

2017 - The year under review again has seen continuous growth in physical development both at Club and County Grounds. It is expected that 12 GAA clubs will receive Leinster Council grant aid, an increase of 3 clubs on 2016. In addition, I envisage St Bridgid's Monavea Handball Club to be successful with their application. These applications have been processed and submitted to Leinster Council with appropriate recommendations.

Obtained from receipts submitted by the participating clubs, the total spend in Laois for physical development in 2017 was in the region of €550,000.00. At the time of this report going to print, Leinster Council had not finalised a percentage for which clubs will be given on receipts submitted. However, it is anticipated that this percentage will be in the region of between 7 & 9 percent.

In relation to the provision of additional playing areas, one Club received circa €20,000 in Leinster Council land acquisition funding.

At this juncture I would like to acknowledge and thank the volunteers and staff of Comhairle Laighean, in particular Michael Reynolds (CEO), Jim Bolger (Chathaoirleach) and Patricia Clear for their continued advice, help and support.

In the present economic climate I am acutely aware of the limited grant aid available to clubs. G.A.A. grant aid to all counties is again in line with the previous year allocation. However, the Sports Capital Funding announced for Laois, brought joy to some of our Clubs and disappointment for others. A number of clubs submitted, what I considered were worthy applications only to be disappointed and I can only empathise with their sense of disappointment and frustration.

Well done to all the successful applicants. These funds will add to the already impressive facilities dotted around our county.

Club Strategic Development Plan

There are Clubs presently in the process of developing their Club Strategic Plans while others already have plans in place and are progressing same. This is a time to reflect on the structures and development of our Club units as they approach their Annual General Meetings. Some Clubs are still suffering from the effects of emigration and some are in financial difficulties. The Club Development Planning process will help Clubs focus on what they are presently do-

ing and what is required to move forward. I would strongly urge each and every club to put a 'Club Development Plan' in place over the coming months. There are still Club Development Packs available on request.

In supporting the above, Croke Park have recently identified and provided training for appropriate persons (i.e. Club Planners) to deliver and assist clubs in drafting same. The role of GAA Club Planner is to engage with Clubs on an individual basis to facilitate the development of 3-year Club Plans.

Comhairle Laighean has assured all County Development Officer's that they will not consider future grant applications unless a Club Strategic Development Plan is in place.

Congratulations to all Club(s) who officially launched their 5 year Club Strategic Development Plan.

Please note, going forward the Club Strategic Development Plan will be changing to a **3 Year Club Plan**.

Pairc Ui Mhordha/ Centre of Excellence

It is heartening to see the upgrade works completed in Pairc Ui Mhordha and the ongoing development of the centre of excellence co-located next to Pairc Ui Mhordha. The development of the centre of excellence will incorporate, in addition to the playing pitches for intercounty teams, state of the art changing areas, gymnasium, medical, meeting and catering facilities.

Personnel involved in these projects have shown great drive and vision in steps taken to develop and improve our facilities and hopefully this will bear fruit in the years ahead.

Once again we were to the forefront in hosting inter-county games. They all ran smoothly and without any major incident. This is a reflection on the organisation and management of the events and the availability of voluntary stewards. The hosting of such games is an onerous task and it is important that we maintain our high standards and continue providing comfort for spectators and all others involved in order to enhance their 'match day experience'.

I would sincerely like to thank all the voluntary stewards, who helped and made themselves available during the year. Without their support and dedication on a weekly basis, it would have been impossible to stage our games. Once again, thank you.

My sincere thanks also to Tom Jones, Event Controller and to our Chief Steward, Jody Conway for all their help and dedication during the year. Thanks also to Joe Dooley, Andrew Broderick and the gate staff, Mick Kelly, Willie Stackpool and James Lawlor Fitzpatrick who stewarded in O'Moore Park at every match. It would be remiss of me not to give a special mention to Colm McEvoy and the personnel employed on both the C.E. Group Scheme and Tús Programme, who continue to keep and maintain our grounds to a very high standard.

I want to record and acknowledge the co-operation, help and good will I received from Gerry Kavanagh, Niall Handy and Thomas Moore and the other members of the executive, together with the representatives of Comhairle Chontae Laoise and An Garda Siochana, when organising and planning all major fixtures and other pertinent projects.

Health & Safety

Members of the Safety Committee and the County Development Officer visited a number of clubs during the year. Advice on Health & Safety and other relevant issues was given.

Most clubs appointed a Club Safety Co-ordinator on receipt of the Willis Safety Statement and it is anticipated that the balance will do so during the coming year.

Training

Club Officers Training – The new Club Leadership Development Programme was rolled out for all Principal Club Officers in February 2016. The Principal Officers in each club were given the opportunity to:

- Gain a better understanding of what their role involves
- Develop basic leadership, management and communication skills
- Experience increased role satisfaction
- Have an awareness of where to access resources and supports
- Be able to share ideas and solve problems with fellow officers
- Be better prepared for future roles in the Association
- Receive a Certificate of Achievement

26 Clubs, 70 Club Officers circa have already benefited from the programme in Laois in 2016. It is envisaged that this training will take place again in 2018.

Steward Training

Additional stewards are required for the forthcoming season and any assistance from your Club in this regard would be greatly appreciated. It is now mandatory that all stewards are competent and accredited by The Portobello Institute hence, training will be provided accordingly. Croke Park will also facilitate any training requirements for new stewards as required.

Croke Park will also be providing refresher training in the coming months for stewards in Laois who have already completed this training back in 2013/2014.

Conclusion

I want to sincerely thank my committee of Tom Jones, Tommy Smith, Michael Lennon, Danny Hanlon and Rory O'Connell, club officers and fellow executive members for their courtesy, help and support during the year. To Niall, Tomas and all the staff in Parkside including the GDA's, it was a pleasure working and dealing with you.

Go raibh maith agaibh.

Le Meas,

Pádraig Seosamh Ó Ceallaigh

Development Officer
C.L.G. Laoise

Leinster GAA Club Development Grants

Laois GAA wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of Leinster GAA and their Infrastructure and Safety Sub-committee for their financial assistance to our Clubs for their developmental works in 2016 & 2017. The following Clubs received grant support from Leinster GAA -

2016/17	2017/18
Borris In Ossory GAA €10,000.00	Ballyroan Abbey GAA €3,150.00
Crettyard GAA €1,000.00	Borris-In-Ossory GAA €1,500.00
Kilcavan GAA €5,000.00	Camross GAA €5,500.00
Portlaoise GAA €5,000.00	Clonaslee St. Manman's GAA . . . €20,000.00 <i>(Purchase)</i>
Rathdowney GAA €30,000.00 <i>(Purchase)</i>	Colt GAA €3,000.00
Rosenallis GAA €10,000.00	Courtwood GAA €10,700.00
Stradbally GAA €10,000.00	O'Dempsey's GAA €1,600.00
St Fintan's Mountrath GAA . . . €15,000.00	Park Ratheniska GAA €4,000.00
Timahoe GAA €4,000.00	Rosenallis GAA €2,600.00
The Harps GAA €15,000.00	Shanahoe GAA €3,000.00
The Heath GAA €500.00	St. Brigid's Monavea H.C. €1,250.00
	Stradbally GAA €3,200.00
TOTAL €105,500.00	St Fintan's Mountrath GAA . . . €4,000.00
	The Heath GAA €500.00
	Timahoe GAA €3,000.00
	TOTAL €67,000.00

County Hearings Committee (C.H.C.) Report 2017

This year 2017 was the tenth year that saw the operation of the G.A.A's disciplinary procedures. The situation has changed some what since it was first introduced in 2007 in that once a club or a player sought a hearing the proposed penalty proposed by the County Controls Committee is not made known to the County Hearings Committee (C.H.C), and any individual or club attending a hearing are advised accordingly of this.

So penalties handed down if any to an individual player or club is now at the discretion of the County Hearings committee (C.H.C).

As was pointed out since this procedure began, and a decade on some individuals or clubs are still uncertain of the disciplinary procedures and more often than not are still of the opinion that the process still is an appeal process.

During some of the cases the defendants or individuals are reminded that their case is a hearing and not an appeal.

On the hearings themselves it is the policy that any member of the county hearings committee (C.H.C) if they have any conflict of interest what so ever disqualifies themselves from such a hearing. All units who seek a hearing are given an opportunity to lodge an objection to any person sitting on the committee or the CCC. Many individuals players or clubs may be disappointed with the result of the hearing, and some are pleased although those are few and far, but all decisions are taken after long deliberation and consideration with due regard to the procedures and ultimately an Treoraí Oifigiúil.

In thanking the members of the committee (names listed below) for their commitment and dedication often attend meetings at very short notice in order to accommodate individual players or clubs and at all times acting impartially and been fair to all parties when they present them self's for such a hearing. The task of the C.H.C is not an easy one and their role in the disciplinary process is very important. We believe that the workings of this committee have enhanced the process over the last number of years.

In 2017 a total of 17 appeal cases came before our committee with regard to transfers, permission to play etc. Nine of those appeals were lost. Six were upheld. One was with drawn and one ruled out of order. Subsequently two cases went to the dra for arbitration, and to our amazement was sent back to Laois for re processing under an new constituted ccc and chc made up by members of Leinster council.

On disciplinary matters which included hurling and football and other related matters. The committee heard 14 cases, Three which was carried over from 2016 . A break down of those cases is a follows. One received an eight week suspension. One case had a game forfeited and awarded to the opposition. Three cases received a two match suspension, Three cases were with drawn, and six cases had no case to answer because of compelling evidence.

It is worth bearing in mind with regard to an individual or club seeking a hearing and the request is received out side the three days allowed the committee has zero tolerance in this regard and will not accom-

modate any such hearings outside the time frame allowed.

The committee was chaired by Mick Bolton, Secretary Willie Stackpool, committee members are Tom Dunne, Monica Delaney, J.P Cahillane, David Bergin, Willie Ramsbottom and Andrew Broderick.

Finally on behalf of the committee we thank all the individual players and clubs and the members of the C.C.C that we had

dealings with over the last twelve months. Despite the out come every one treated us with courtesy and respect. We wish the new County Hearings Committee and the county controls committee the very best of luck in 2018.

Liam Stacphuil
Runáí
Coiste Eisteachta

Public Relations & Marketing Committee Report

Good evening and welcome to the 2017 Laois GAA convention. Below we outline the role of the Public Relation and Marketing Committee.

Social Media

As we all know in today's world, social media plays a big part in everyone's life and it's no different for Laois GAA. Our social media sites give great service to people who can't come to our games and especially people who have moved abroad, it allows them to follow our county and club teams over the year and they can feel that they are a part of it all. Facebook, Twitter and our web site are great tools that our clubs can use to help promote themselves and advertise events they are holding. I would like to thank Tomas Moore, office administrator for running this section. We had a new addition to our Social Media this year that its of Laois TV giving high lights of our club games, I would like to thank Michael Egan for his great work in this area.

Match Programmes

The match programme plays a big part of the County and club games that are held in O Moore Park. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Inter County secretaries and club secretaries for having their match panels in on time, to allow us to produce a high quality match programme. Our programme is also a great way to get different types of information out to our supporters and keep everyone up to speed on what is going on in Laois GAA. A big thanks to Tomas Moore, Pat Delaney and

Mochua Print & Design for all their hard work and time in this area.

Local Media

As you all know without the support and help from our local newspapers and radio, the word about our County and club teams would not get to a lot of people around the county. It's great to have local running commentary on our County and club games. It's great that we have a club sports notes section in both local newspapers to help clubs promote themselves. I would like to thank Midlands Radio 103, Leinster Express and Laois Nationalist for their services also to Denis Byrne, Alf Harvey, Canice McCarthy and Paul Dargan, photographers. This year, Laois Today a new web base media company was set up and have been a great addition to Laois GAA another avenue that gives our games great coverage throughout the year.

Awards Night

It's always the last big event before convention to allow us honour the men and women that give us so much joy in the games we love throughout the year. Congratulations to all the award winners and best of luck for 2018. Thanks to Mochua Print & Design for their sponsorship for this event, Mochua are great supports of Laois GAA and give us great value and service throughout the year. A big thanks to Will O' Callaghan from Midlands Radio 103 for doing MC on the night and to Midlands Park Hotel for looking after us on the night.

Conclusion

I would like to thank my committee for their support throughout the year Canice McCarty (Secretary), Paul Dargan, Tomas Moore and Pat Delaney, it's been a pleasure working with you all. I would also like to thank Gerry Kavanagh (Laois Chairman) and the Executive for their help and support.

Thanks to all involved in Laois GAA and best the luck for 2018.

Is mise,

Tomas O Cleirigh,
P.R.O.

2017 Players of the Year Recipients

Ladies Junior Player of the Year:	Ciara Langton (<i>St Joseph's</i>)
Ladies Intermediate Player of the Year:	Anna Healy (<i>Park Ratheniska</i>)
Ladies Senior Player of the Year:	Mags McEvoy (<i>Sarsfields</i>)
Ladies County Player of the Year:	Martha Kirwan (<i>Shanahoe</i>)
Rounders:	Damien Keane (<i>The Heath</i>)
Camogie:	Ashling Burke (<i>Camross</i>)
Handball:	Molly O'Connor (<i>Cullohill</i>)
Scor:	Borris/Kilcotton Instrumental Group
Special Merit:	Laois – Under-16 All Ireland Camogie winners
Referee:	John Lalor (<i>Shanahoe</i>)
Minor Football:	Ronan Coffey (<i>Portarlington</i>)
Minor Hurling:	Eoin Gaughan (<i>Camross</i>)
Under-17 Football:	Niall Dunne (<i>Emo Courtwood The Rock</i>)
Under-17 Hurling:	Eoin Dowling (<i>Camross Gaels</i>)
Under-21 Football:	Patrick O'Sullivan (<i>Portarlington</i>)
Under-21 Hurling:	Eric Killeen (<i>Rathdowney Errill</i>)
Junior B Football:	Jack Kelly (<i>Errill</i>)
Junior B Hurling:	Michael Bermingham (<i>Mountmellick</i>)
Junior Football:	Tom Kelly (<i>St Joseph's</i>)
Junior Hurling:	MJ Lalor (<i>Ballypickas</i>)
Intermediate Football:	Nigel Murphy (<i>Emo</i>)
Intermediate Hurling:	Paul McSpadden (<i>Trumera</i>)
Senior A Hurling:	Gareth Dunphy (<i>Ballyfin Gaels</i>)
Senior Football:	Gareth Dillon (<i>Portlaoise</i>)
Senior Hurling:	Joseph Phelan (<i>Camross</i>)
Hall of Fame:	Michael Delaney (<i>Camross</i>)

Coaching and Games Report

Convention 2017

This is my final year as Coaching and Games Officer, I would like to thank everyone who has supported me over my 5 year term. I strongly believe that the structures that are now in place are such that our young players want to experience and be part of. We all need to ensure that the enthusiasm to wear “The Blue and White” is fostered and maintained. This has been achieved by the quality of coaching and the introduction of the player pathway and the clubs of Laois insisting that their club coaches are trained and receive accreditation to carry out their work. I would like to wish the new incoming coaching and Games officer all the best and offer any assistance required. This year has been exceptionally busy and a lot of clubs and players got to experience our coaching and games. This is what has to be built on and developed even more but this cannot be achieved without the goodwill and the involvement of all our clubs who have the best interests of their kids to the forefront. The level of volunteerism at both club and county level is unequalled in any other sporting organisation and only for our volunteers this level of coaching and games could not have been achieved. Again I want to personally thank all the development squad mentors who gave us their time and expertise selflessly throughout the year. Also sincere thanks to the parents and guardians of our young players who have brought them to all the sessions and encouraged them along the way. As our centre of excellence develops at a fast pace the playing surfaces are already

paying dividends and you can easily sense the pleasure our young players are experiencing training and playing there. I wish all our development squad players both past and present all the best and thank them for their participation and hope both they and their clubs have benefitted. Challenge to both this year and all future players is the quick movement now of players from a Development squad structure to the Minor competitive grade of young men who are still only developing will have to be acknowledged by us all and they should be afforded both the time and support to make this adjustment.

Thanks to our GDAs for their planning foresight and expertise shown again this year. The areas of our coaching and games will be covered in the report later on but again personal thanks to lead GDA Andrew Kavanagh, Ciaran Muldowney, Donie Brennan, Colm Begley and Peter Hally who we welcome to Laois this year who comes with great credentials and already has had a huge impact. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge James Kelly whose contract finished this year and who has moved on we wish him all the best and thank him for all his work with Laois GAA. It was a very busy year covering both codes and the tables provided will reflect that. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Games manager Niall Handy for keeping the plans to both time and financial guidelines.

1. “Peoples first Credit Union” Development squads:

A good year for all our squads with Development and games for all our under-age squads as indicated below by our table. Development squads ethos is to provide the opportunity for as many of our players to develop their skills and overall wellbeing , get them familiar with the requirements needed particularly when they start at county minor level and onwards to senior and to introduce them to athletic development , nutrition , appropriate strength and conditioning and expert coaching . While results of matches are important they are not the overall goal of our development squads, what is our goal is to best develop our young players both on and off the pitch. However saying that some of our squads really competed at high levels and were successful, In particular our U14 Hurling squad who took on and beat perceived higher level counties, the mentors of this team would also say that it is no coincidence that this year’s U14 Club championship was very competitive and skilful. Noticeable also this year has been the increase of players turning up for trials and being well coached and have the skill level to compete for inclusion in these squads. Cuman Na Bunscoil started an initiative last year where a county panel of 6th class pupils was put together after a series of trials and this group then met and trained with the help of the GDAs and competed in organised blitzes with other counties. This was a tremendous success and met these players were familiar with each other when the when they had trials for the Setanta or O Mhordha Og U13 panels, Well done to Shane Maher and Liam Aherne and their

colleagues for their time and work. This year as well at last we held an information evening for both parents/Guardians which was to let everyone know about what their son was going to be doing regarding programmes and schedules and also to allay any fears or misconceptions they may have. The feedback was very positive about the content and delivery on the night unfortunately it also coincided with a few other events so wasn’t as well attended as previous year. Again thanks to Ross Munnelly for his very informative presentation of advice to our young players and as a great role model both on and off of the field this was a very well received part of the night. As this year closes preparations for next year are already underway with some squads completed trials and panels in place and they will be participating in the winter age appropriate strength and conditioning and mobility programmes. Year around participation for our players in either preparation programmes or competitive games structures is now the norm. I strongly believe the opportunities we now provide for our aspiring future senior Laois players are top class and if they do decide to take up other sports we wish them the best of luck but we are confident in our mind that it wouldn’t be because what we offered was an inferior standard.

Once again huge thanks to our volunteer mentors without whom it wouldn’t have been possible to provide such a high level of development. I would like to thank the following for their help and expertise and time as a volunteer.

Development Squads	No of Players	No of Sessions	No of Blitzes	No of Volunteers
Setanta Hurling	90	12	3	8
U-14 Hurling	27	25	11	4
U-15 Hurling	40	22	10	4
U-16 Hurling	30	20	11	5
U-17 Hurling	30	3	7	2
O'Mordha Og Football	110	12	3	6
U-14 Football	45	20	8	4
U-15 Football	32	20	8	4
U-16 Football	34	25	12	3
U-17 Football	35	4	3	3

Football Mentors 2017

- U14 Football – Willie Hooney, Pdraig Dunne, Mossy O'Connor, Adrian White and Colm Begley;
- U15 Football – PJ Kelly, Terry Swayne, Tom Whelan and Donal Brennan;
- U16 Football – Pat Galvin, Kieran Delaney, Daniel O'Neill and Paddy O'Connor;

Hurling Mentors 2017

- U14 Hurling – Seamus Dooley, Liam Dunne, Ollie Quinlan, Ciaran Muldowney;
- U15 Hurling – Lorcan Mahoney, Noel Delaney, Enda Lyons, Paul Naughton;
- U16 Hurling – Tim Fahy, Johnny Fitzpatrick, Fergal Cuddy, Gerry Williams and Andrew Kavanagh;

2. Camps

Another busy year for the Cul camps with increases in participation with some clubs hosting camps this year. Congratulations to all involved and thanks to the clubs that

	2017	2016	DIFF
Rathdowney/Errill	106	122	-16
Abbeyleix	132	134	-2
Portarlinton	59	47	12
Portlaoise	96	70	26
Killeshin	68	58	10
Park/Ratheniska	124	130	-6
Ballinakill	43	0	43
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	112	109	3
Barrowhouse	78	68	10
Ballyroan 1	110	149	-39
Emo	57	41	16
Raheen Parish Gaels (Colt)	62	39	23
Borris in Ossory/Kilcotton	67	71	-4
The Harps H	120	112	8
Stradbally	146	142	4
O'Dempseys	92	100	-8
Ballylinan	98	97	1
The Rock	94	78	16
Rosenallis	115	117	-2
Camross	134	130	4
Clonad	37	33	4
Mountrath	69	64	5
Graigucullen	33	53	-20
The Heath	110	84	26
Arles/Killeen	54	57	-3
Kilcavan	81	82	-1
Timahoe	84	0	84
Portlaoise 2	105	90	15
Clough/Ballacolla	70	61	9
Park/Ratheniska 2	50	0	50
Ballyroan 2	28	0	28
The Harps F	34	0	34
Mountmellick	83	76	7
Clonaslee	0	19	-19
Ballyfin	0	31	-31
	2751	2464	287

made their facilities available again this year and thanks to the very good coaches. The high quality kit on offer was a good success again this year with no difficulties reported in fact it ran very well with on-line pre booking being used away more it allowed us manage allot better and predict numbers beforehand and ensure enough coaches were available with some camps closed and walk ins not allowed mainly due to health and safety issues. Thanks to the GDAs for their work on this and in particular Ciaran Muldowney overall coordinator. Also ran was 2 Easter camps and 2 Development squads camps.

	Camps	Players
Easter Camps	2	185
Development Squad Camps	2	70

3. Coach Education

This year again saw a good increase in the number of club coaches availing of one of the many opportunities to advance their skills and up skill themselves. It is always encouraging to see the participation increase and this can only benefit you the clubs and in particular your players to give them the skills to develop both their hurling and football abilities. The Player Pathway sessions were carried out by the GDAs who held cluster workshops where the theoretical and practical elements of the pathway were discussed and shown. Attendance was good at these sessions and thanks to the host clubs for the use of your facilities and your squads. This was promised and delivered as a follow on from last year’s launch of the Player Pathway. Thanks again for the commitment from our clubs

who endeavour to get the best coaches and provide them with the best training possible. Also ran this year was a young referee’s course with 40 participants, they are a vital component of our games and need to be supported and encouraged. Thanks to Tomas Moore for organising and delivering this vital course.

Coach Education	No of Courses	Participants
Award One Courses	7 total, Hurling x 4, football x 3	88
Foundation Courses	8 total, Hurling x 4, Football x 4	157
Assimilation Courses	Ongoing	Ongoing
Pathway Workshops	12	100
Guest Speaker Workshops	5	160
Club/School Link Coaches Course	2	20
Club Mentoring Visits	25	75
Referee Education Courses	1	40
Information Nights	1	240
Secondary School Information Evening	1	25
Secondary School Transition Year Coach Education Courses	1	25
Resistance Training Workshop	5	60

4. Go Games/Cross Border leagues

Cross border league competitions were taken up by seventeen clubs this year and the feedback has been very positive and a welcome challenge to all the clubs and a benefit to them in the development of their teams. Our Go games programme continues however it still requires all clubs to participate in it in the spirit it was intended which is to encourage participation of as many players as possible and to eliminate the competitive aspects. Unfortunately we do not have the available personnel to police this and some worrying stories have been relayed to me. Saying that thanks to all the clubs that do give the opportunities to as many of their young players as possible. All u12 finals were played in O Moore Park or the Centre of Excellence the standard of skills on view was very high. Our O Moore Park experience nights were again a huge success and a great experience for all your young players with the presentations and parade all added to the experience.

Go Games	No of Players	No of Clubs
Go Games Blitzes	2800	50
Go Games Mini League Games	20	10
Cross-Border League Matches	120	17
County Blitzes	295	22
O'Moore Park Experience Nights	950	50
Half Time Exhibition Games	80	4

5. Schools Primary and Secondary

In September of this year we conducted an information evening for secondary school Principals and Deputies to let them know of the wide range of competitions and

Primary Schools	Amount	No of Children Coaches
Coaches working in local school	51	1300
3 rd /4 th Class Blitzes	300	1000
Schools receiving GDA Coaching	18	–
County Representative Teams	1	40

Secondary Schools	No of Players Involved	Number	No of Volunteers Involved
Internal Blitzes & Competitions	320	3	15
Teams Coached by GDA'S	280	8	10
No of GDA Sessions	280	150	0
Combined College Teams	50	5	0

courses available, it was attended by all schools and a worthwhile discussion also took place regarding the challenges faced by them. Guest speaker on the night was Ross Munnely who explained the approach now by Third level Education institutes where participation in Development squads is seen in a very positive light and something that employers are now looking towards as well as academic achievements. Thanks to Ross for his time and expertise. On the night each school were presented with the essential hurling and football equipment to assist them back in their schools. Our GDAs continue to support schools with both teams and the organisation of blitzes. Thanks to all the school principals and teachers that have welcomed us into their schools and continue to promote our

games. We will continue to strengthen our relationship so that all primary school kids get an opportunity to experience our games, they may or may not stay at them but they all must have had the opportunity to play and participate. The large number of competitions continue to be available and we hope schools will participate in as many as possible.

6. Other projects

School for learning with disabilities day was a tremendous success and a group in our community we shouldn't forget and this initiative was a very welcome and rewarding project to have been part of. Games on the Green another initiative to reach to potential players who wouldn't have the opportunity to attend their nearest clubs. Table below shows other new initiatives that took place year gone by.

Other Projects	No of Players	No of Sessions
Games on the Green	150	20
Super Games Centres	320	8

Thanks

Our Centre of Excellence at O Moore Park has benefitted our squads greatly with the excellent playing pitches the envy of most. It is great to see the next phase the construction of the facilities building started and progressing well. Again thanks to chairman Gerry Kavanagh and the Executive members for their foresight and vision for the benefit in the future of all Laois teams.

Again thanks to our sponsors "**Peoples First Credit Union**" for their continued support to our development squads.

Thanks to Willie Stackpool and Colm Mc Evoy for their hard work this year in ensuring nothing was left to chance and the facilities were always available and in tip top condition in particular when we welcomed squads from other counties.

Thanks to all the clubs for your support and the coaching of your players. It is noted this year again the increase in the skills level by players attending Development trials, well done to all.

Thanks to all the referees who officiate at our games and Development squad games also. Thanks to Bosco Ramsbottom for the support and food supplied to our teams. Thanks to the Leinster Express and Nationalist newspapers who run the coaching corner. Thanks to Laois today for their support in acknowledging everything we do. Thanks to Laois GAA for his continued coverage of all our activities on social media and in the match programmes. Personal thanks from myself to Laois GAA administrator Tomas Moore for all his support and help without his organisation skills alot of things wouldn't have been possible. Thanks to my fellow executive members for their continued support. I am certain the publication of The Strategic Review will present some new challenges for us all next year but it is something we will have to embrace.

Finally thanks to my wife and my 2 daughters for their encouragement to continue to do what I love to do on a voluntary basis.

Best of luck to all clubs next year.

Yours in sport

Pat O Sullivan

Coaching and Games Officer

Coiste Peil Report 2017

Full result lists are available in Secretary's report.

MINOR

Thanks to Noel Delaney, Billy Delaney, Seamus Lalor, Ger Slevin and Donie Brennan. Thanks also to Liam Delaney, Richard Dunne & Niall Creery for Stats & Video, Martin Kelly Kit and Ria Breen Physio. This year saw Minor Football changes being introduced from Congress with the Minor becoming Under 17 and an Under 18 championship being ran simultaneously. Our under 17 team were probably the ray of light for the future and under the same management performed very well and if properly looked after and monitored the County will gain some very good Senior players from this group. This management team was responsible for minor and Under 18 panels in 2017.

For 2018 Congratulations to Donncha Phelan who is the new Minor manager and is currently putting a management team in place

UNDER 21

Under 21 grades is a very difficult grade to manage due to the tremendous time constraints on players. College, Senior and Club teams are all pulling from the one group. With the changes in our structures we had merged Under 21 and Senior together under the one management. Gary Kavanagh,

Stradbally had been tasked with the responsibility of the Under 21 team with Michael O Loughlin in a coaching capacity under the Senior Manager Peter Creedon. This implementation seemed to work well with all players training together and benefiting for the full sessions available to our Senior Squad. Everything seemed to be going well in all games prior to our Championship match v Offaly in Carlow. The team started well and we probably should have been out the door in the first 15 minutes but having failed to capitalize on our possession Offaly got a grip on the game and came out winners. A lot of these players saw senior game time with the County and this can only help going forward.

Next year will see the introduction of an Under 20 competition instead of Under 21, at the present time a standalone Management team is being put in place.

SENIOR

I would like to thank all our Senior County management and panel under manager Peter Creedon for their commitment to play football for Laois. The time and effort required to play Senior Inter County football is unbelievable and almost unsustainable.

The results are in the Secretary's report and tell their own story; to say we would be disappointed with results would be an understatement. In the League we were relegated to Division 4 for the first time in decades

while in the championship Kildare beat us in Tullamore. In the qualifiers Clare came to O Moore Park and went home easy winners. Finishing games with less than 15 on the field can be partly responsible for some of these losses but only part. With a full debate haven taken place at County Committee which was well publicised the Management team decided to part ways.

A new Management team have been appointed after a review committee chaired by Fergal Byron and including Donal Norton and Michael Murphy steering the process. I want to thank them for their diligence and being so generous with their time.

Manager	John Sugrue
Selectors	Brendan Delaney and Eoin Kearns
Coach	Jerome Stack
Physio	Sean Gaffney
Doctor	Sean Montaque
S and C	Robbie Cannon
Backroom	Ollie Byrne and Pat O Sullivan

I wish them the very best and would urge all Gaels of Laois to get behind our Senior Footballers and drive them on for the coming season. We have very difficult league campaign going into a battling Division 4 and must hit the ground running and will need our players fully motivated and supported to get us out of this division and get a good run in the Championship.

CLUB

Congratulations to all clubs that fielded in any grade, a special congratulations to all our championship and league winners.

Congratulations to Portlaoise on winning the Senior Championship defeating a very promising Ballylinan team and wish them well on their progress in Leinster.

Special Congratulations to Rosenallis on the fantastic year on the playing field and Leinster success.

Congrats to Emo on their Intermediate success and while at the time of doing this report are having great success in the Leinster Club Championship.

In reference to the Club Championship there is an annual review being conducted and all clubs can submit a contribution by contacting Committee Chairman Liam Delaney.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all our referees, Umpires and Linesmen that officiated at all games and without your help there would be no games. In particular I must congratulate our Inter County referees once again on a successful season.

I want to congratulate all our award winners for Football Players of the year.

On a final note I am looking forward to the continued development of our centre of excellence and improvement at our County Grounds. These facilities provide every assistance to our players young and old going forward and will allow them to compete at the highest level.

I want to thank the members of the football steering group while in a difficult year came forward with positive and constructive proposals to try and benefit our Counties fortunes,

I can say that some of these suggestions are presently in place.

We are delighted to have had the services of Danny Luttrell as Strength and conditioning Coach to our Development squads.

There is also a plan in place that our senior S and C coach will implement a programme for our Minors and Under 21s and monitor that programme.

We are also maintaining contact with 2017 Minors and Under 17s on a Football programme to have them ready for Under20s and Senior.

I wish to thank all referees for officiating in our games and urge clubs to try and get more people involved, we are getting to crisis stage in refereeing our games and without some more in place games will have to be curtailed. I would also encourage club people to come forward and train up as

Assessors so that we can continuously help our referees and properly grade them.

I want to thank County Secretary, Niall Handy, and Administrator, Tomas Moore, for all their help and assistance and finally to thank the outgoing Chairman Gerry Kavanagh for his services to Laois over the past number of years but in particular as Chairman of the County Board.

I wish to thank the media, print, radio and digital for in the most part positive coverage of our games and would ask them to continue to promote our National games within our Clubs and County in the positive manner in which they are participated in.

To our schools and teachers Go raibh mile maith agat for all your help and co-operation in promoting and coaching of our games.

Peadar O' Neill

Chairman

Football Steering Committee

Report of Children's Officer 2017

This year in Laois 432 applications for “E-Vetting” were made through the GAA portal. 332 were completed on time and 100 had to reapply with some re-applying 3 times. Currently there are 64 people who applied for E-Vetting who did not complete the process on time and therefore they are NOT vetted and should not be working with the GAA in any coaching capacity (decision making with juveniles) even if they have (had) a paper vetting. We, Laois GAA and GAA National require that these people are re-vetted before they start any work in 2018.

Throughout 2017, a constant issue that arose was “Do Gardaí need to be vetted?” The answer to this question is YES. All persons who work for the GAA where young people (under 18 years of age) are involved need to be vetted without exception.

I remind those who choose our coaches that work with children in our Clubs / County that our Code highlights three mandatory requirements before coaches commence their work with children;

1. They must have attended the Gaelic Games Child Safeguarding Workshop,
2. They must be satisfactorily vetted through the National Vetting Bureau,
3. They must possess a minimum coaching qualification received from one of the Gaelic Games Associations.

In 2018, I will be requesting a copy of the above requirements from all mentors (including GDA's) who work with Laois GAA before they begin their work in January.

In 2017 we agreed a protocol with the Catholic Primary Schools Association (CPSMA) for coaches from our clubs to attend and assist schools with Gaelic Games Coaching during the school year. What is required here is for all coaches to provide / show a copy of their vetting disclosure and acceptance letter and sign a self-declaration form to the school. In Laois, going forward we will be requesting the school to confirm that they have received this prior to payments been made to the club / coach. This protects the coach, School, Students and Club.

In 2018, the GAA are completing a national review of all coaches and require that all coaches are “E-Vetted”. The old vetting (paper) will no longer be valid. Laois will be given a time scale for this process. I recommend that clubs begin this process now with AGM and the appointment of coaches for 2018. I feel it is important that we begin this process as soon as possible and begin with Referee's in January 2018. Therefore for a referee to be appointed to referee a game in 2018 they need to be E-Vetted and be able to provide a copy of their copy of their vetting disclosure and acceptance letter before their first match.

In 2017 we trained 342 coaches in Code of Best Practice / Behaviour from 23 clubs. This number includes the number trained

for Cul – Camps. This course needs to be updated every three years. For coaches who completed this course prior to 2015 (not in 2016, 2017) they need to re-do this course. For Example, if you completed your course in April 2015 then you are due to re-do this course in April 2018 or sooner. This is compulsory in order to coach in the GAA.

For Cul – Camps in 2018 all our coaches will be required to provide a copy of their vetting disclosure and acceptance letter with their application. Any coach who does not provide this will not be accepted for a coaching role.

Séamus Lahart
Laois Children's Officer

Laois Handball Year 2017

With Handball now being played in three clubs St Brigid's Monavea in Crettyard, Cullohill, and Clough Ballacolla, and memberships growing Laois was well represented in a large number of grades at Provincial and National level in 2017.

Clough Ballacolla now has three One Wall courts, St Brigid's and Cullohill both have 40 x 20 courts, while Cullohill also has a One Wall court.

There is no 60 x 30 court in the County which means travelling to Kilkenny, Carlow, and Tipperary for training in the 60 x 30 game.

Pride of place for 2017 goes to Molly O Connor of Cullohill Molly played excellently all through the All Ireland series to become the Under 17 Girls 40 x 20 Champion when she defeated Aoife Hurley Cork 21-10 12-21 11-0 after wins over Kilkenny and Westmeath in Leinster.

Other notable successes in the 40 x 20 court at juvenile level were by Una Brophy of Cullohill Under 13 Singles Leinster Champion. At Under 15 Doubles Emer Fitzpatrick and Lucy O Connor also of Cullohill took a Leinster title.

While in the 60 x 30 court at Under 15 Doubles two more Cullohill girls Lauren McGuigan and Aoife Brophy took the Leinster title defeating Kilkenny and Wexford along the way. This was a remarkable achievement by the Cullohill club and their Juvenile system when four different players took Leinster titles at Under 15 grade.

Niamh Dunne also of Cullohill now playing at Intermediate and Senior level had quite a good first year in both grades, where the standard of the Ladies game is truly remarkable.

At Masters overage level Laois were also successful when Joe Brennan and James Doyle both of St Brigid's won the Golden Masters O50 B provincial title in 40 x 20.

Kevin Brennan Clough Ballacolla gave that club its first Leinster title when he defeated Declan Kilmurray Offaly in the Master's O40 One Wall Championships. Indeed special mention must be given to Kevin who narrowly missed out on an All Ireland final place when he was beaten in the semi final 13-15 15-14 11-8 by Graham Cashburn Galway.

RESULTS

Girls U17 Singles 40 x 20

Molly O'Connor Cullohill dft Aoibhlin Duggan (Kk) 21-1 21-10

Leinster Final: Molly O'Connor dft Roisin Foy (Wm)

All Ireland Semi Final: Molly O'Connor dft Caitriona Heneghan (Mayo) 21-4 21-5

All Ireland Final: Molly O'Connor dft Aoife Hurley (Cork) 21-10 12-21 11-0

Golden Master B Doubles

Joe Brennan/Jas Doyle St Brigid's dft Brendan/Billy Higginbotham (Ke) 21-10 21-13

Leinster Final: Joe Brennan/James Doyle
dft Brian Gardner/Joe Warren (D) 18-21
21-14 21-13

All Ireland Semi Final: George Miller/
John Coyne (Mayo) dft Joe Brennan/
James Doyle 21-14 21-18

Junior Doubles 40 x 20

Tomás Lennon/Pauric Buggy St Brigid's
dft Chris Doyle/James Gregan (Ww) 21-
19 21-11

Tomás Lennon/Pauric Buggy dft Noel
Holohan/Mal Whelan (Wx) 19-21 21-3
21-7

Leinster Final: Peter Reilly/Joe Cummins
Meath dft Tomás Lennon/Pauric Buggy
21-12 21-19

Golden Master B Singles

Joe Brennan St Brigid's dft Billy
Higginbotham (Ke) 21-10 19-21 21-4

Joe Brennan dft Phil Coleman (Wx) 21-7
21-12

Leinster Final: Brendan Higginbotham
(Ke) dft Joe Brennan 21-18 21-19

Juvenile Results 40 x 20

Girls U13 Singles

Una Brophy Cullohill dft Lauren Power
(Kk) 15-7 11-15 15-2

Leinster Final: Una Brophy dft Ellie
Murphy O'Gorman (Wx) 8-15 15-3 15-10

Girls U15 Doubles

Emer Fitzpatrick/Lucy O'Connor
Cullohill dft Olivia Mahon/Kelly Ann
Ryan (Kk) 15-1 14-15 15-7

Leinster Final: Emer Fitzpatrick/Lucy
O'Connor dft Hannah Cullen/Niamh
Millar (Wx) 2-0

All Ireland Semi Final: Emer Fitzpatrick/
Lucy O'Connor dft Eadaoin Nic
Dhonncha/Skylan Ni Mhaille (G) 15-2
15-14

All Ireland Final: Siobhan Prentice/Isabel
Farnan (Tipperary) dft Emer Fitzpatrick/
Lucy O'Connor 15-5 2-15 15-7

Juvenile Results 60x30

Girls U15 Doubles

Lauren McGuigan/Aoife Brophy dft
Nicole Dowling/Rachel Doherty (Kk)
15-6 15-2

Leinster Final: Lauren McGuigan/Aoife
Brophy dft Hannah/Niamh Millar(Wx)
15-4 15-7

One Wall Results

Leinster Masters Final: Kevin Brennan
Clough Ballacolla dft Declan Kilmurray
(Oy) 13-15 15-14 11-8

All Ireland Semi Final: Graham
Cashburn (Galway) dft Kevin Brennan
3-15 15-12 11-10

Ladies Open Final: Niamh Dunne
Cullohill dft Ciara Mahon (Kk) 15-10
15-11

All Ireland Semi Final: Pauline Gallagher
(Mayo) dft Niamh Dunne 15-8 15-12

Laois Juvenile One Wall
tournament 05/11/17

Girls All Cullohill

Girls U11 Final Eadaoin Whyte defeated
Aoife Kirby 17-14

Girls U12 Final Lisa Kirby defeated Eva
Dunphy

Girls U13 Final Lucy O Connor defeated
Una Brophy 19-7

Girls U14 Final Roisin Fitzpatrick defeated
Rosa Dooley

Girls U15 Final Lauren McGuigan
defeated Aoife Brophy 17-13

Boys C = Cullohill. C/B = Clough/
Ballacolla

Boys U11 Final Justin Duggan C defeated
Colm Brennan C/B 22-7

Boys U12 Final Kevin Hyland C/B
defeated Tommy Brennan C/B 11-9

Boys U13 Final Rory Dunne C defeated
Cody Comerford C 15-13

Boys U14 Final Jim O Connor C defeated
Luke Dunphy C

Boys U15 Final Tiernach Doheny C
defeated Darren O Neill C 14-11

Boys U16 Padraic Walsh

Boys U17 Eoghan Doheny

AGM

The AGM for the 2017/18 year took place on Thursday, September 7th 2017, in the Laois GAA offices.

57 schools took part in Cumann Na mBunscol Laoise competitions throughout the year with forty-four schools present at the AGM.

Leagues 2017

Hurling and camogie competitions were arranged for April and May with fifty-three teams entering the hurling and forty-two entering the camogie.

We arranged football leagues for the months of September and October. Fifty-seven teams entered our boys football and forty-six teams entered our girls football.

- Each team received a minimum of four games.
- The finals of all our football, hurling, and camogie divisions were played in O' Moore Park, Portlaoise.

Rounders

Our Rounders blitzes continue to grow from strength to strength with an incredible fifty teams from over twenty schools taking part last May and June.

Table Quiz

Our annual Table Quiz again took place in Stradbally.

Handball

Only one school (Cullohill NS) participated in Handball this year. As a result they selected competitors to represent Laois at provincial level.

INTO Mini-7s Skills Days

We organized INTO Skills Days for Football and Hurling/Camogie last May. In total, over 150 boys and girls from 5th Class attended and 6 pupils were selected to represent Laois during All-Ireland hurling/football semi-finals and finals in Croke Park.

Representative Games

We sent representative teams to Carlow (Hurling- Lift & Strike) and Kilkenny (Football). Both squads were very successful. On behalf of Cumann na mBunscol Laighin we hosted an inter county camogie blitz in Portlaoise GAA Grounds. This will become an annual event now.

Development Squad

Development squads were selected for Hurling, Boys' Football and Camogie. These teams played at several half time games in May and June. Each child chosen received a Laois jersey kindly sponsored by a wide range of businesses around the county. The process of assembling squads for the coming year has begun already in earnest for Boys Football and Hurling. We will be selecting Girls Football and Camogie squads in the New Year.

Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Laois GAA and the many clubs throughout the county for use of their facilities and continued support throughout the year.

Paudie Bourke

Rúnaí Cumann na mBunscol Laoise

Laois Membership Registration Report 2017

Club	Registered Members	Full Members	Youth Members	Honorary Members	Social Members	Adult Player	U21 Player	Minor Player	Juvenile Player
Abbeyleix St Lazarians	299	122	146	8	23	88	29	23	123
Annanough	184	81	97	2	4	49	12	11	84
Arles/Kilcruise	112	64	48	0	0	36	11	4	44
Arles/Killeen	136	78	58	0	0	42	2	1	56
Ballinakill	215	93	122	0	0	62	13	10	111
Ballyfin	545	219	224	2	100	110	26	25	195
Ballylinan	186	59	103	0	24	30	7	5	80
Ballypickas	193	92	95	4	2	57	10	7	88
Ballyroan Abbey	402	200	200	0	2	84	64	31	167
Barrowhouse	222	132	81	4	5	43	10	6	57
Borris In Ossory	81	66	6	9	0	36	3	5	0
Borris in Ossory Kilcotton	94	4	90	0	0	0	0	1	87
Camross	297	148	133	13	3	76	11	26	106
Castletown	226	115	111	0	0	45	10	6	88
Clonad	281	100	153	0	28	54	14	20	132
Clonaslee St Manmans	249	115	129	4	1	71	9	14	113
Clough-Ballacolla	248	133	115	0	0	73	22	14	101
Colt/St Fintan's	171	89	28	8	46	48	5	10	16
Courtwood	220	111	107	2	0	62	15	19	88
Crettyard	270	78	115	0	77	41	7	6	96
Emo	255	225	30	0	0	45	19	12	18
Errill	94	89	0	0	5	52	9	0	0
Graiguecullen	436	161	209	27	39	61	23	16	189
Kilcavan	347	147	180	5	15	60	11	20	160
Kilcotton	74	68	1	5	0	41	9	1	0
Killeshin	175	100	69	0	6	50	23	13	55
Kyle	76	60	4	0	12	34	2	1	1
Mountmellick	277	128	137	11	1	67	20	19	115
O'Dempseys	443	171	251	0	21	74	18	15	169
Park Ratheniska	346	156	189	1	0	44	35	21	167
Portarlinton	458	171	244	41	2	42	28	23	199
Portlaoise	789	321	459	2	7	102	41	42	406
Rathdowney	152	152	0	0	0	39	18	0	0
Rathdowney Errill	151	0	151	0	0	0	0	20	130
Rosenallis	417	172	243	0	2	76	30	16	224
Shanahoe	93	78	15	0	0	45	11	7	8
Slieve Bloom	135	84	50	1	0	36	13	8	39
Slieve Margy	133	50	83	0	0	18	21	28	55
Spink	295	82	193	10	10	58	11	16	177
St Fintan's	66	60	6	0	0	42	12	6	0
St Fintan's Mountrath	208	60	102	2	44	37	17	14	78
St Joseph's	347	140	184	0	23	52	21	31	150
Stradbally	253	133	111	9	0	46	13	5	99
The Harps	239	62	140	34	3	46	11	13	125
The Heath	307	160	147	0	0	63	15	9	93
The Rock	235	133	98	0	4	69	15	13	85
Timahoe	293	105	178	0	10	69	9	14	164
Trumera	75	43	31	0	1	23	2	4	24
Totals	11,800	5,410	5,666	204	520	2,498	737	631	4,762

Irish Cultural Officer Report

I am pleased to report a successful year in Scór competitions.

At Scór a bPaiste we saw a great competition in Mountmellick with an increase in competitors and audience, and a great night's entertainment was enjoyed by all. This competition is now well established and looked forward to as an Annual Event by the children and their parents and the wider community.

In Scór na nOg again we had a good competition with a high standard in each section and welcomed participation of singers and musicians in the traditional style due to the promotion of the competition within Comhaltas branches for joint members. Continued promotion of Scór na nOg is required as it brings the youth of the various Clubs together for an enjoyable evening.

Scór at senior level I would like to see promoted more. While the quality of the competitors was excellent the quantity of competitors has plenty of room to increase especially in the drama and dancing sections.

I would like to thank our Quiz Teams who represented us well over the last number of years at All Ireland Level.

As this is my last year as Irish Cultural Officer I would like to thank the Secretary, Treasurer and hard working committee for all their help and assistance over the last number of years, and to thank the County Board for their support. I also extend thanks to the competitors and their Clubs.

I feel Scór at every age group is becoming more established in Laois with success in recent years at Provincial and All Ireland Level, with All Ireland wins for Camross in Singing, and Mountmellick for instrumental, and Leinster wins for Borris Kilcotton instrumental who played to the highest level and were unlucky not to place on the day. I would encourage each Club to promote Scór as it brings a great sense of pride to the competitors, their Clubs and their communities.

We were pleased to grant aid €100 in Gealteacht Scholarships to 20 Laois G.A.A. student members this year for the promotion of the Irish Language.

Go raibh maith agaibh

Seosamh Mac Conbhuí

Referee Administrator Report

The 2017 referee panel for Laois GAA lists a total of 53 referees on the panel. 27 Football only, 20 Hurling only and 6 certified to referee both Hurling and Football. The Referee Administration Committee are responsible for the Administration and Development of Refereeing in the County, including the recruitment, training, assessment and classification of referees.

During 2017, we facilitated the Referees In-Service Training Course and Fitness Tests ran in conjunction with Comhairle Laighean. It is compulsory that all referees attend these courses on a yearly basis to remain listed as certified referees and to enable them to officiate at our games. The Referees Administration Committee also hosted training for Newly Recruited Referees in 2017. Referee Assessors travelled county wide to assess our panel of referees and we thank them for their time and dedication to the education of our panel.

Whilst it may appear to an untrained eye that a total of 53 referees is considerably high, there is a major shortage of referees here in Laois and it's a growing concern. We cannot help but link the torrent of negative verbal abuse towards referees, linesmen, umpires and fourth officials from players, team mentors, supporters and club officials towards these officials as a link to the shortcoming in recruitment of new referees. Laois GAA run in excess of 1900 games across the county at Juvenile and Senior level in any given GAA Calendar year, without our referees and their officials none of these games would be possible. We are well served by the body of people who are willing to step up and offer themselves as Referees and Match Officials. We ask the

wider GAA community to be mindful of attitudes towards our refereeing officials. The shortage will only worsen within our county if these attitudes are not addressed.

As has been the case for the past number of years, Laois GAA and the Referee Administration Committee are appealing for clubs to put forward potential referees for the 2018 season.

The Referee Administration Committee for 2017 included: Tomas Moore (Secretary), Seán Mortimer (Coiste Iomána Rep), Peter O'Neill (Coiste Peil Rep) and Referee Representatives Arthur O'Connor, Maurice Deegan, Anthony Stapleton and Eddie Kinsella. I wish to thank all members of the committee for their continued support throughout the year, in particular Tomas in the Laois GAA Offices who, as always, carried out immeasurable work for this particular committee and Laois GAA as a whole.

We wish to congratulate our new referees recruited this year, a small total of 5, but we hope they stay committed to the cause. To Maurice Deegan, congratulations on your appointment during 2017 to referee that All Ireland Club Finals in March and the All Ireland Football Championship Semi-Finals in August. I'd also like to congratulate Seamus Mulhare for making the National Panel, while Alan Doheny represented the county on the national scene in Camogie.

Le Meas,

Dónall Ó Gormáin

For and on behalf of Referees Committee

Ainmniúcháin (Nominations)

Cathaoirleach (Chairperson):

Brian Allen, Kieran Leavy, Sean Mortimer, Peter O'Neill.

Leas Cathaoirleach (Vice Chairperson):

Sean Mortimer (Outgoing), Tom Clear, Kieran Leavy, Pat O'Sullivan.

Cisteoir (Treasurer):

Martin Byrne (Outgoing).

Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer):

Kieran Leavy (Outgoing).

Ard Comhairle (Central Council Delegate):

Brian Allen (Outgoing), Gerry Kavanagh, Kieran Leavy.

Comhairle Laighean (Leinster Council Delegate) (2):

Tom Jones & Paschal McEvoy (Both Outgoing).

Oifigeach Forbartha (Development Officer):

PJ Kelly (Outgoing).

Oifigeach Oiliúna (Coaching Officer):

Fergal Byron, Jody Conway

Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish Officer):

Monica Delaney.

Oifigeach Caidrimh Poiblí (P.R.O.):

Tom Clear (Outgoing), Canice McCarthy, Pat O'Sullivan.

Congress Delegates (5):

Cathaoirleach agus Runaí automatically attend; Martin Byrne, Tom Clear, Monica Delaney, Tom Jones, Gerry Kavanagh, PJ Kelly, Pat O'Sullivan.

Leinster Convention Delegates (5):

Brian Allen, Martin Byrne, Tom Clear, Monica Delaney, Gerry Kavanagh, Peter O'Neill, Pat O'Sullivan.

Na Rúin (Motions)

1. **Laois GAA Byelaw No. 8 – Grading** be amended as follows (Amendment in bold italic) -

All Clubs, competing in more than one grade in each code, shall name and list a minimum of ~~17~~ **15** players for each grade of *Championship League* excluding the Club's lowest grade before 28 February each year **and list a minimum of 17 players specifically for each grade of Championship before 14 May each year.** The names for each grade of league and championship must correspond in most instances to their previous year's championship status, except where a team is relegated or promoted or where a Club use in excess of 17 players in a championship grade. Only in exceptional circumstances, which must be submitted in detail, may a Club's Championship panel vary from that approved by County Committee for League. All players subject to the aforementioned exceptions and wishing to play at a lower grade, must be named at that grade, in order for them to be officially regraded to play at that that lower grade. Each Clubs list is subject to examination by the CCC, who may at their discretion make additions or amendments to the names listed. Grading is subject Riail 6.14 and 6.20, T.O. 2017. (CLG Laoise).

2. **Rules 3.19 & 6.25, T.O. 2017** be amended as follows (Amendment in bold italic) -
Riail 3.19 Powers

A County Committee shall be the governing and controlling body of all the affairs of the Association within the County, excepting those functions reserved to the Provincial Council and Central Council under this Official Guide. The following shall be the powers of the County Committee:

- (m) (i) To allow players of Junior and Intermediate Clubs, including players of Clubs that are unable to field Junior and/or Intermediate Teams, to play for Divisional or Group Senior Teams.
- (ii) To allow players of Junior Clubs, and the players of Intermediate Clubs that are unable to field in that grade, to play for Group Intermediate Teams.
- (iii) To allow a maximum of three players of a Junior or Intermediate Club to play with a Senior Club for Divisional or Group Senior Team**

Arrangements shall be subject to annual review by the County Committee. Players by so playing in these Divisional or Group teams shall not lose their Championship status.

Riail 6.25 Organisation (Provincial and All-Ireland)

Provincial and All-Ireland Club Championship shall be organised in Senior, Intermediate and Junior Grades.

The following Eligibility Rules shall apply:

A Divisional or Group Team winning a County Championship shall not participate, exception being a Divisional or Group Senior Team compliant with Rule 3.19 (m)

(iii) TO 2017.

(ii) The Intermediate and Junior Grades shall be confined to Clubs whose top grade is respectively Intermediate or Junior save in circumstances where a Club is nominated by a County Committee, recommended by the Competitions Control Committee of Provincial Council, and prior approval is given by the Central Competitions Control Committee for that Club to compete in the Provincial and All Ireland Club Championships in a lower grade than its grade status within its County.

If a County Championship winning team is ineligible as a result of (i) or (ii) above or alternatively ineligible by reason of Debarment, Suspension or as a result of any Disciplinary Action whatsoever, the County Committee concerned shall nominate an eligible Club of the appropriate Championship status to represent it.

Similarly, in the event of a County Championship not being completed but only one remaining team in that championship is eligible to participate in the Provincial Championship, the County Committee shall nominate that Club to represent it. Nominations in any other circumstances are not allowed.

Except as provided above, in the event of a County or Provincial Championship not being completed, the respective Provincial or All Ireland Championship shall continue without a representative of the County or Province concerned. The County, Provincial and All-Ireland Stages of the respective Club Senior, Intermediate and Junior Football and Hurling Championships constitute the one Competition.

(b) Where a player's Own Club and College Club win their respective County Championships in the same grade, the player shall be eligible to play only with his Own Club in the Provincial and All-Ireland Championship in that grade.

If a Player's Own Club and College Club win County Championships in two different grades, the player shall be eligible to play with both Clubs in the Provincial and All-Ireland Championships in their respective grades. (Na Coille)

3. That the Central Fixtures Analysis Committee (as defined in the Official Guide 2017, Chapter 3, Organisational Structures, National, Central Committees, Rule 3.52) shall become "The Central Fixtures Committee" and that it shall, before the 1st. January each year, prepare and present an overall Master Plan for the entire fixtures programme of every Inter-County and County Club game, Leagues and Championships, to be applied at National, Provincial and County level simultaneously. (Portlaoise).
4. That One (1) Players Representative (i.e. a Member who has participated as a player for their Club within the previous 48 weeks) shall be added as a delegate to (i) a Club's delegation to Annual County Convention, (ii) a County's delegation to Annual Provincial Convention and (iii) a County's delegation to Annual Congress and the following Rules be amended as follows (Amendment in bold italic) –
Rule 3.10 Convention – An Annual County Convention shall be held before 18th December. It shall consist of the Officers and Members of the outgoing Committee (voting rights as on the Committee) and *three* delegates from each Club which competed in a Junior or higher grade Championship of the current year, *one of whom shall be a Players Representative. The Players' Representative shall have participated as a player for the Club within the previous 48 weeks.* A newly elected

Officer, unless a member of the outgoing County Committee or a delegate, shall not have the right to vote at any stage of the Convention. In special circumstances, a County Committee may summon a Special Convention. Representation and Notice shall be determined by the County Committee.

Rule 3.12 Delegates - County Convention shall elect or authorise selection and/ or election of:

(a) Delegates to attend Annual Congress, who shall include the Chairperson and County Secretary, when available, ***and it shall also include a Players Representative. The Players' Representative shall have participated as a player for the Club within the previous 48 weeks.***

(b) Delegates to attend the Provincial Convention, ***one of whom shall be a Players' Representative. The Players' Representative shall have participated as a player for the Club within the previous 48 weeks.*** (Portlaoise).

The following "Motions" were also received but were deemed, by Coiste Bainisti, not to be the remit of Convention and have been referred to Fixture Review Committee and County Committee:

- A. That all championships, Football and Hurling senior teams play championship first round before Junior Championship, thus having a level playing pitch and fairer competition for weaker clubs. (Anach)
- B. A look at how Kerry allow their junior and intermediate players play at senior level by having divisional teams as opposed to our "gaels". (Anach)
- C. Explore the possibility of joining with neighbouring counties to create a larger group of impartial and quality referees for club championships. (Sraidbhaile).
- D. We propose a change to the current rule with regard to the number of players to play per team in the U.14 & U.16 B competitions and leagues.

The current rule states:

"13-a-side with unlimited substitutions will be allowed in all Under 14 B and 16 B Competitions and Leagues... In the interests of sportsmanship where Clubs have sufficient players at these grades, it is recommended that 15-a-side be played. This is permissible once there has been agreement between both Clubs and the Referee has been notified."

Current rule with proposed addition caveat:

"13-a-side with unlimited substitutions will be allowed in all Under 14 B and 16 B Competitions and Leagues... In the interests of sportsmanship where Clubs have sufficient players at these grades, it is recommended that 15-a-side be played. This is permissible once there has been agreement between both Clubs and the Referee has been notified. Furthermore where Clubs have 18 players or more on match day, 15-a-side must be played." (Ard Lios Cilchrúis)

- E. County players should be available to play with their clubs for at least 75-80% of league matches. The absence of county players from league matches causes a disconnect between county and club and the county players can end up playing very little football in the spring of each year. This disconnection is particularly problematic for smaller clubs where panel numbers are limited. We believe that the involvement of county players in league matches would be for the betterment of both clubs and county as payers are playing more football at this early stage of the year. In addition to this motion, we would ask that once this agreement has been made and passed by the County Executive that the county management team cannot seek to revoke any decision made by the County Executive into the future. *(Ard Lios Cilchrúis)*
- F. Two plays of the ball to be implemented in Laois Football up to Under 15 level. (Cúl an tSudaire).
- G. With the advent of the Super 8 and in an effort to give more exposure to lesser counties we would recommend that in the football championship we forego the qualifiers and instead revert to all counties playing home and away matches. (Cúl an tSudaire).

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