

# BLACK & WHITE

SUMMER 2023

A NEWSLETTER FROM CLUB SLIGO



2,950

children across Sligo take part in summer's coolest camp!

## 20/20 VISION

PAUL HENRY ON THE JOURNEY OF THE U20S TO AN ALL-IRELAND FINAL

## DEVELOPING TALENT

*in our underage squads*

## MY CLUB SLIGO

*with Kieran Quinn*



Supporting Club,  
Supporting County

for all the latest news see [sligogaa.ie/ClubSligo](http://sligogaa.ie/ClubSligo)



**Séan Ó Cearbhaill**  
Chair, Sligo GAA

Welcome to the first edition of **Black & White** – a new newsletter from Club Sligo. We wanted to create a regular publication that would keep our valued Club Sligo members up to date on what is happening across the county and show you what is being achieved in the development of Sligo GAA – all thanks to your support. Club Sligo was first established in 2012 to help fund the development programme for Gaelic Games in Sligo. This allows supporters like you to assist the longer-term development of Sligo Gaelic Games – from supporting those children entering nursery programmes in clubs across the county to the emergence of elite players in our county squads.

In this edition of **Black & White**, we talk to a range of famous faces in Sligo GAA from U20 manager Paul Henry and senior player Seán Carrabine to Club Sligo member Kieran Quinn – in our 'My Club Sligo' slot – on why he supports Club Sligo and what Sligo GAA means to him. We also shine a light on our current underage development squads, introduce you to some new members of our coaching team and give an overview of another successful year of Cúl Camps.

We hope that you enjoy **Black & White** and welcome any feedback or suggestions of items – or Club Sligo members – to feature in future editions. Thanks for reading!

*Séan Ó Cearbhaill*

# MEET THE COACHES

A warm welcome to the newest members of our **Games Development Team**

## **James Mitchell** Ballaghaderreen

Games Development Coordinator

### **What do you love most about your role?**

Being given the opportunity to coach at various age levels in schools and clubs and my involvement with the U14 academy panel.

### **What do you want to bring to the role over the next few years?**

To keep improving the level of coaching in my various clubs at all age grades by sharing my coaching experience and knowledge, which I have grown over the last 20 years.

### **Sligo person you most admire and why?**

Paul Taylor. Having played against Paul at underage and managed him as a senior club footballer, I found him to be totally professional in his approach and preparation for training and games.



## **Conor Gormley** Bunninadden

Games Development Coordinator

### **What do you love most about your role?**

Helping young players improve as both players and individuals.

### **What do you want to bring to the role over the next few years?**

Enthusiasm, energy and the aim to continue the excellent work being done in Sligo GAA.

### **Favourite Sligo GAA moment?**

So many fantastic breakthrough moments over the years but travelling to see Sligo in the U20 All-Ireland Final was a great moment.

# MEMBER DRAW RESULTS



Pictured is Bernardine McGauran, Calry/St Josephs who won first prize of €5,000 in Club Sligo's Super Summer Draw, receiving her prize from County Board Chairperson, Sean Carroll. Pictured with Bernardine are her two nephews, Bríain McGauran (left) who is on the football U14 and hurling U15 development squads while Dualta McGauran (right) is on the U15 hurling development squad.

## APRIL

Prize.	Ticket No.	Name	Address
€500	1005	Apex Controls	Sligo
€100	1107	Joe Queenan	Enniscrone
€100	72	Darragh Healy	Sligo
€100	110	Gerard Higgins	Calry
€100	20	James Curran	Dublin
€100	210	Linda Donovan	Gurteen

## MAY

Prize.	Ticket No.	Name	Address
€500	398	Walter Murphy	Strandhill
€100	1054	Bunninadden GAA Club	
€100	1284	RSS Document Management	Collooney
€100	1212	Sligo Park Hotel	
€100	48	Paddy Watters	Collooney
€100	422	Kieran Mullen	Mullens Spar,

## JUNE

Prize.	Ticket No.	Name	Address
€5,000	1024	Bernardine McGauran	Calry
€500	1212	Sligo Park Hotel	
€100	1254	Vincent Hannon & Associates	
€100	446	Barry Gallagher	Curry
€100	37	Bernard Rafter	Easkey
€100	199	Niall Hession	Haywards, Heath, UK
€100	116	Larry Mullin	Ballinode

## All Ireland Ticket Draw

Prize.	Ticket No.	Name	Address
Hurling	481	Easkey GAA Syndicate No 2	
Hurling	428	John & Ann McAndrew	Ballintogher
Football	181	Bernard Mulhern	Scarden Court, Sligo
Football	25	Sean Reynolds	Drumcliffe



## My Club Sligo

**NAME:** Kieran Quinn

**CLUB:** Coolera/Strandhill

**CLUB SLIGO MEMBER:** 3 years



### WHY DID YOU BECOME A MEMBER?

Some of my greatest memories are from my time with Sligo. As a player I never realised how much hard work and money went into giving my teammates and I the chance to be the best footballers we could be. As a supporter now it's easier to see the bigger picture and I would like to play a small part in doing the same for the current and future crop of Sligo players.

### FAVOURITE CLUB/COUNTY GAA MOMENT?

Easy. Winning the 2005 county championship with Coolera/Strandhill and the 2007 Connacht Championship with Sligo.

It is your support of Club Sligo that allows us to develop both players and infrastructure across the county. **This is Your Club Sligo.**

To renew your membership, go to [sligogaa.ie](http://sligogaa.ie)  
email [administrator.sligo@gaa.ie](mailto:administrator.sligo@gaa.ie)  
call **071 9168750**

# from UNDERDOGS to **BIG DOGS**

*We speak to Paul Henry about the journey of the current batch of U20s from their early days together to an All-Ireland Final.*

**A** hugely disruptive 2020 season, due to Covid-19 restrictions, meant that Paul Henry didn't have a normal run in to his reign as Sligo minor football manager.

Squads were unable to train together, games and competitions were cancelled and uncertainty still surrounded the upcoming season when he was appointed manager in January 2021. However, surprisingly, Paul says that the pandemic brought them closer.

"We set challenges for each other when we couldn't meet and used Teams calls to keep the group together. We played games, had quizzes, went through tactics, had a bit of craic. We even raised €3,500 by organising a socially-distanced 'Run for Pieta' across the county. No one left the team during the pandemic; in a way it helped us to really bond," Paul tells *Black & White*.

"At this stage, we knew we had a good bunch of lads that had the ability but also wanted to work hard and were coachable."

In early 2021, the team played some challenge games that were being arranged to replace the Ulster League which was not taking place

due to restrictions.

"We ended up beating Tyrone, Donegal and Fermanagh and losing to Kerry during a highly-competitive game in Ennis. It really gave them the belief that they could go and win things; that they were as good as the so-called 'big teams'. We knew then that we had a decent team."

That decent team went on to become Connacht Minor Football Champions for the first time since 1968 with a five-point win over favourites Roscommon at Dr. Hyde Park on August 6, 2021.

"It was such a huge lift to the team, their families and the county. They had to tog out in the stands as we couldn't use the dressing rooms so it was a strange time but it created a really deep bond between us all."

In the Autumn of 2021, Paul was appointed to look after the newly-established U18/U19 Development Squad with the aim of bringing that batch of players on a clear pathway from juvenile to U20s.

It was planned that Paul and his backroom team would take over the U20s in 2023 and 2024 after Dessie Sloyan and his team finished their three-year run with the U20s. Dessie's reign ended on a high with the U20s winning the Connacht Final; Sligo's first ever at this level.

When Paul took over the U20s, the panel of 43 was larger than normal to cope with the fact that many of the squad were playing for St Attracta's and Summerhill in schools competitions. They had a decent run in the Leo Murphy Cup

and challenge games along the way.

"We were a bit apprehensive starting the championship as, because of the schools competitions, we had been without the full squad for so long. All of them had to fight for their places when they came back and I didn't know how they were going to gel."

***"We were going in as underdogs but we did fancy our chances to win."***

"I was also really feeling the pressure as there was a lot expected of us following on from the Connacht title the year before. The lads were a bit nervous too but played really well in the first game against Roscommon. We were deserved winners and it was a huge confidence boost."

Next up was Mayo at Began; a last minute switch from McHale Park due to the weather. Sligo completely dominated and came away with a great win to put them in the final to defend their title against Galway in Tuam. "We were going in as underdogs but we did fancy our chances to win. We had a number of injury problems before and during the game so it was never going to be easy," says Paul.



But the Connacht Final turned out to be a thriller with birthday boy and super sub Dillon Walsh coming up with the match-winning point deep into injury time. The dramatic ending led to scenes of celebration across the county with no one able to forget captain Canice Mulligan's speech where he declared Sligo to be the new 'big dogs' on the GAA scene.

The All-Ireland Semi Finals were to be in Pearse Stadium against the traditional 'big dogs' of Kerry.

Leading up to the game, Dillon Walsh was taken into hospital with meningitis. "It had been one setback after another for these lads. They had gone through a lot of tough times together but it only brought them closer," says Paul.

"We felt that the boys were at a new level now and everyone was looking forward to playing Kerry. This was a real opportunity to show everyone how good they were and, after the performance in the Connacht Final, we felt we deserved it."

Despite an early blow when Canice Mulligan was forced off by injury in the ninth minute, Sligo went on to score a first ever championship underage win over Kerry witnessed by a huge crowd of supporters at Salthill.

The win brought them to Sligo's first ever U20 or U21 All-Ireland Final which was against Kildare in Cavan. And while there was no fairy-tale finish, and the team suffered a series of injuries during the first 40 minutes of the game, they did themselves proud.

"The team was very excited once they had beaten Kerry and they felt they had a chance to win the All Ireland. But, on the day, Kildare

were the better team. They were a physically stronger team and, having lost last year's final, were out to prove themselves.

"The lads were disappointed in the dressing room but when we sat down, took a step back and looked at what we had done – not just over the year – but over the years since these lads started playing together, they realised what they had achieved and were proud of themselves.

**"We took a step back, looked at what we had achieved and were proud."**

"We went to O'Connell Street where Sligo GAA had arranged music, facilitated by Sligo County Council, and so many people turned out to support us; it was fantastic. It was a culmination of the great support we had received all year. But the journey had ended."

However, Paul is already looking forward to 2024 and defending the Connacht Championship. Again some 100 lads, including around 26 of last year's squad, will be fighting for their place on the panel of around 35. The journey continues.

## U20 BACKROOM TEAM 2023

**Enda Mitchell** (Coolera-Strandhill)

**Ross Donovan** (Eastern Harps)

**John Paul Carden** (Enniscrone-Kilglass)

**Aran McGowan** (Sligo GPO)

**Sean Taylor (S&C)** (Coolera-Strandhill)

**Kelly Ann Henry (Physio)** (Curry)

**Paul McNamara (Nutritionist)** (St. John's)

**Curry GAA** is in Paul's blood. His father, Frank Henry, and his uncles played for Curry so it was a natural progression that when, aged around seven, he first donned the green and white of his local club.

All through his time at Curry N.S. and St Joseph's Charlestown, he played with Curry and progressed on to play for Sligo at U16 and Minor level before heading off to Dublin to college at DIT, Bolton Street where he studied structural engineering.

After college, in 2002, he got a job at CHH Consulting Engineers in Sligo town and 12 years later, he took over the company. The start of his coaching career came with underage teams at Curry level where his children, Lucy (now 15) and Jack (now 12), were involved. He started assisting his friend Adrian Donoghue with Curry as well as a number of senior clubs in Roscommon and Mayo before moving onto the U14 Sligo development squad where his career in Sligo coaching and management began.



# OUR DEVELOPMENT SQUADS



*U15 football squad in new Club Sligo gear*

Developing our underage talent starts at U13, all driven by our Head of Games Development Liam Óg Gormley. We outline below how the yearly programme for each age group works. The athletic development element of the programme is run by Seán Boyle, our lead in this area. But it's not all about on the field, we also have team-building days and performance nutritionist Paul McNamara provides nutritional advice for the teams with workshops throughout the year. We also run grinds for those who are sitting the Junior Cert including an eight-week programme of Maths grinds.

## **U13 Football & Hurling**

We start introducing the players to county football and hurling at U13 level and run four regional squads across an eight to 10-week programme from September to October/November.

## **U14 Football**

At U14 level, we invite anyone at this age group to train throughout the year with us, every Saturday morning at the Sligo GAA Centre of Excellence in Scarden. This year, we have 95 children at this age group – with representatives from all our clubs – who have been training since the beginning of March and will continue right up to October. The group is split into two squads, and we play in blitzes; this level is a really great opportunity for the young people to see what county football is all about.

## **U15 Football & Hurling**

When we get to U15, we open it out again across the clubs – not just to those who were with us at U14. We cut the squad down to 50 players and have two panels. But all the squad don't come to us directly from the clubs; Academy coaches would spend a lot of time going to club games seeing who has potential; this is where we can spot the late developers. This is the benefit of the county being small, we can get around to games at all clubs. This group

play from March to October as well, playing in challenge games, Connacht blitzes and five Academy Days. Our hurlers train on Sunday mornings while the footballers stick to Saturday.

## **U16 Football**

The U16 panel follow the same path as the U15s in terms of playing games and competing in Connacht blitzes, challenges, and Academy Days. However, at this age group, we cut the panel down again to around 42. We are still not focused on competitive football at this age group; we are very much still in the development phase and competition isn't our focus.

## **U17 Football & Hurling**

This is where competitive football and hurling starts for the underage players at county level. We have a panel of 32 for both codes and they compete in the minor competitions. Both hurlers and footballers continue to receive nutritional and athletic development as they finish their years in underage.



*Maths Grinds for U15 and U16 squad*



**New Games Development Coordinators Conor Gormley and James Mitchell**



**Nutrition workshop for U15 with Paul Mc Namara**



**U14 blitz against Longford and Leitrim**



**Thomas O'Brien Sligo U15 captain v Tyrone**



**Player Watch**

**NAME:** Seán Carrabine  
**POSITION:** Midfield/Forward  
**CLUB:** Castleconnor **AGE:** 24

If it wasn't for the intervention of his U14 coach at Castleconnor, Seán Carrabine might have gone down the route of show jumping rather than GAA.

The night before he was due at his first day of training with the U14 development squad, he decided not to go. "I was too busy with the horses and to be honest wasn't that interested in going," Seán tells *Black & White*. "Frank Barrett – now secretary of the club – was my u14 manager at the time. He said it to me the night before at club training and encouraged me to go; he even brought me into Cleveragh himself and then I went all the way up through the academy.

"At 15, I had to decide between show jumping or football and I picked football. Myself and my father are still involved in breeding horses at our farm." The Carrabine farm is in Castleconnor and all his family are heavily involved in the local club, including his parents Breege and Tony.

"They were a huge influence growing up, as were my siblings. There is eight years between myself and David and I have another three older sisters, Michelle, Lorraine and Nicola." All four represented Sligo at underage, with David playing Minor and U21 before moving to London. "One of my fondest memories was making my debut for Sligo against my brother in London in 2018."

Seán also counts winning promotion to Division 3 and being made vice-captain this year ("such a privilege for me") among his favourite moments. "There's lots of others like the U21 and Minor Connacht Finals, winning the Fr. Manning Cup. Winning and collecting trophies as a team means more to me than individual awards. These have all been big moments but I really feel there are bigger ones to come."

**Favourite movie:** Remember the Titans, The Wolf of Wallstreet **Favourite musicians:** Coldplay

# Cúl Camps



It's been a great summer of activity across the county with our Cúl Camps running across all our clubs. We've had large numbers at the camps this year and here is just a selection of some of the images we have from across the county.

**25** WEEK-LONG CAMPS  
**24** CLUBS INVOLVED  
**2,950** CHILDREN AT SLIGO CÚL CAMPS 2023

CÚL CAMPS IN NUMBERS

**NEXT ISSUE**



A massive achievement for Sligo GAA this year was the senior football team's victory in the Division 4 League and promotion to Division 3. It has just been confirmed that **Tony McEntee** will continue on as manager for 2024 and he speaks to us in the next edition of *Black & White* about the story so far and the year ahead.