

BLACK & WHITE

ISSUE 6 SPRING 2025

A NEWSLETTER FROM CLUB SLIGO

NEW JERSEY 2025

INSIDE

PLAYER WATCH

with *Evan Lyons*

BEHIND THE SCENES

with Sligo GAA's administrator
Eamonn McMunn

FOR CLUB & COUNTY

Sligo clubs succeed on national stage

for all the latest news see sligogaa.ie/ClubSligo

 **Club Sligo**
Supporting Club,
Supporting County

ADDITIONS TO SENIOR COUNTY

BACKROOM TEAMS

There have been a few additions to the backroom teams coaching Sligo's footballers and hurlers this season.

Tony McEntee has brought his Crossmaglen clubmate Aaron Kernan into the football set up as a defence coach. Kernan ended a 23-year playing career at the end of the 2023 season having won three All-Ireland club medals as well as four Ulster football championships and a National Football League title with Armagh. This will be his first inter-county coaching role. Colm McGee also joins to work with the squad's goalkeepers. The current senior team coach with Tubbercurry is a former Sligo player and he has seen success as a coach at inter-county underage and schools levels.



Former Armagh player Aaron Kernan

Sligo senior hurling team manager Stephen Sheil brought two new members into his management team for the 2025 season. Tom Hennessy, who was a member of the Tyrone staff when they won the Nicky Rackard Cup and an NHL Division 3A title, has come in as hurling coach. Joe Quinn, from Offaly, joins as strength and conditioning coach, having previously worked with Sligo and Offaly senior hurlers as well as Westmeath senior footballers, Galway camogie and, most recently, the Offaly U20 hurlers, who were crowned All-Ireland champions.

Exciting News!



Work is well underway on a new Astro training facility at the Sligo GAA Centre of Excellence in Scarden. We hope it will be completed before the end of March; more information to follow in the next issue of *Black & White*.

NEW JERSEY FOR 2025

Our new jersey got its first run out on Sunday, January 26th with the senior hurlers home to Wicklow in ATU Sligo and the senior footballers away to Offaly in Tullamore. Modelled above by Andrew Kilcullen, senior hurler, and on the front page by Paul McNamara, senior footballer, the O'Neills jersey is available to buy in John Kent Sports, Gillespies Tubbercurry and Elverys in Sligo or online at www.oneills.com

MEMBER DRAW RESULTS



Bernardine McGauran collecting her winnings from Seán Carroll

SEPTEMBER

Prize	Name	Address
€500	Declan O'Brien	Ballincar
€100	Sligo Southern Hotel	Sligo
€100	RSS Document Management	Collooney
€100	Padraig & Edel Hackett	Calry
€100	Martin Cannon & Alec Morley	Collooney
€100	R & M Utilities	Ballymote

OCTOBER

Prize	Name	Address
€500	Tom McMahan	Scardenmore
€100	Peter Regan	Enniscrone
€100	Mulhern Leonard Chartered Accountants	Sligo
€100	Cannings Spar	Sligo
€100	Gerry Maye	Cartron
€100	Alex Gilmore Ltd	Ballymote

NOVEMBER

Prize	Name	Address
€500	Michael Jacob	Enniscrone
€100	Tom Brouder	Tubbercurry
€100	Damian Tansey Solicitors	Sligo
€100	Louise Kilcullen	Castleconnor
€100	Eddie & Eileen Carr	Calry
€100	Conal O'Donnell	Dublin

DECEMBER

Prize	Name	Address
€5,000	Bernardine McGauran	Calry
€500	Bernardine McGauran	Calry
€100	Declan Bruen	Grange
€100	Barry O'Neill	Calry
€100	David Hosey	Achonry
€100	Curry GAA Club	
€100	Joe Queenan	Enniscrone



My Club Sligo



NAME: John Hughes

CLUB: Geevagh GAA Club

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

I've been a member from the start. I always support anything related to Sligo GAA!

WHY HAVE YOU BECOME A MEMBER?

The county team is the flagship for everything we do in Sligo GAA. It's very important that we have a good set-up and proper facilities at inter-county level so that our young players have something to aspire towards. Now, with so many choices and distractions, it's really important for children to see the value our county places on Gaelic games. This is reflected in the modern facilities provided.

FAVOURITE GAA MOMENT?

My proudest moment was the day that Sligo defeated Galway in Salthill in the championship in 2012. I'm a teacher and I had two past pupils in the team: Pat Hughes, my son (pictured above), and Shane McManus in the midfield. Both were very involved in the game. We were rank outsiders going to Salthill that day but we won in style.

Your support of Club Sligo allows us to develop players and infrastructure across the county. This is Your Club Sligo.

TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP:

go to sligogaa.ie
 email administrator.sligo@gaa.ie
 call 071 9168750

MEMBERSHIP 2025

Platinum Membership (€2,000 per year)

- Entitled to purchase two All-Ireland football final tickets
- Entitled to purchase two All-Ireland hurling final tickets
- Four entries each month to "Club Sligo" draw
- Official Sligo GAA O'Neills jersey
- Official Sligo GAA O'Neills jacket
- Annual car sticker
- Two free passes for Sligo Senior Championship final
- Season Pass to All Club Championship Games
- Photo publicity and media/social media promotion
- Name listed in home National League and county final match programmes

Standard Membership (€240 per year/€20 per month)

- Entry into 12 monthly "Club Sligo" draws per year
- Official Sligo GAA O'Neills jersey or O'Neills jacket (new membership only)
- Sligo Merchandise Gift for members renewing in 2025
- Annual car sticker
- Free pass to Sligo Senior Club Championship final.
- Bonus members draw for two All-Ireland football tickets
- Bonus members draw for two All-Ireland hurling tickets



To become a Club Sligo member, sign up on sligogaa.ie, contact Eamonn McMunn on 071 916 8750 or contact your local club.



Eamonn (far left) celebrates on the Croke Park pitch after Sligo's victory in the Division 4 National League final in 2023

DYNAMIC EAMONN IS SLIGO GAA'S SWISS ARMY KNIFE

Yeats County's only full-time administrator on the changing nature of his role and his hopes for future success on the field

Eamonn McMunn has been something of a Swiss army knife for Sligo football for more than three decades: dynamic, adaptable and capable of multiple functions.

Indeed, the Beltra native has occupied a host of influential roles inside the Yeats County changing rooms and beyond, beginning as a First Aid provider with Sligo's senior footballers in 1990, later serving as First Aid provider and kit man to minor and U21 teams before becoming involved with the Sligo Supporters' Club in the

early 2000s. In 2008, he accepted an approach from then-chairman John Murphy to join the county board executive as Assistant Secretary and CCC Secretary.

Now Sligo GAA's only full-time administrator, the Shamrock Gaels clubman admits to a certain nostalgia about the early days with the supporters' club.

"I'd been a First Aider with Sligo seniors, minors and U21s, and I've been a kit man as well. There was also a period when I was active with the supporters' club, helping to organise

trips to London or New York for people who wanted to follow the team," he says.

"Our first big trip was in 2002 when Sligo were drawn against New York for the first time in the Connacht Championship. The supporters club organised a package deal for members, including flights, accommodation, travel to the game, and so on. It was a great trip and set the template for later trips, including to London when we played them in the Championship." A talent for logistics and passion for Sligo GAA made Eamonn a natural

for an administrative role at the time of the job's creation. His range of responsibilities is broad, taking in the logistics for most of Sligo's senior and underage football and hurling teams, including travel, accommodation, food and playing gear; the general management of the Centre of Excellence at Scarden; the organisation of ticketing and programmes for fixtures for the club season; book-keeping; ticketing for inter-county games; assisting with organising sponsor launches, events and meetings; and the collection and filing of all referee reports from around the county after every weekend of GAA action.

The only consistent feature of his job over the past 15 years, he says, has been change, his role evolving and expanding with the growth and sophistication of the Sligo GAA operation, a key plank of which has been the opening of the Centre of Excellence.

"Every year is different, so much so that the role is unrecognisable to the one I took up in 2010. It was a completely new role at the time. There was no template to follow in the early days, so I had to forge my own way," he says.

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"Even my surroundings have changed. I started in our old offices in Tubbercurry. Then we moved to a place in Carraroe and now we're based in Scarden. Indeed, I was on the finance committee charged with planning and fundraising for the Centre of Excellence, which was a lot of work with 7am meetings among the volunteers to get things moving. Thankfully we got



Alongside then-GAA president Aogán Ó Fearghail at the official opening of the Centre of Excellence in Scarden in 2017



Overseeing the presentation of a donation to North West Hospice on behalf of Sligo GAA

it over the line – first with the pitches in 2015 and then the building and gym in 2016."

He continues: "Now, my workload is much greater. You could have up to eight inter-county teams using Scarden during the season. I look after the logistics of their gym and training bookings. If they're travelling to a game, you need to ensure that buses are organised along with their meals and accommodation, if they're overnighing. On top of that, too, you have Club Sligo, which is something that's always going in the background. There's a lot to do, and it changes later in the year as we move into the club season."

Eamonn is optimistic about the county's future, especially as he's seen first-hand recent developments pay dividends on the field.

"Sligo had success during my first few years in the job. When I started, in 2010, our senior footballers reached the Connacht final, and then did the same in 2012. We had won a Division 4 League final in 2009 and Division 3 in 2010 and won the Connacht title in 2007, so there was a feeling that

things would continue in that line, but it didn't work out like that," he says.

"There have been barren years, but Scarden changed that. The minor team from 2015, the first year that the Centre of Excellence opened, reached the Connacht final and a lot of that cohort have gone on to form the current senior team. The minor and U20 teams that won Connacht titles and reached the U20 All-Ireland final began as development squad players in Scarden. The Centre of Excellence gave them a base, a place to develop along with all the coaching they received."

As for the footballing year immediately ahead, Eamonn's optimism is somewhat tempered by the variable of the game's new rules. "It's unknown how teams will adapt to the new rules. I think it's going to be an unusual season. It could be that you have some unlikely provincial winners this year – if one team adapts to the new rules better than everyone else. We just have to wait and see," he says.



Eamonn with Keith Raymond holding the Nicky Rackard Cup after Sligo's win in 2019

'IT'S DREAMS COME TRUE STUFF' FOR COOLERA-STRANDHILL



The Coolera-Strandhill panel and management team pictured before their AIB Connacht Senior club final victory over Padraig Pearses of Roscommon in December

Coolera-Strandhill's epic achievements in winning back-to-back county titles followed by beating Padraig Pearses in the Connacht SFC final resounded across the county and beyond, but what did it mean to the club and community?

"It's dreams come true stuff," says Coolera-Strandhill chairperson Stephen Carty. "Before this you might dream it, but you'd never believe it would happen. It has galvanised every area and person in the club and will be an inspiration for multiple generations to come. The dream has become a reality."

Stephen also believes their success strengthens the belief of other clubs and the county squads. "When you look at it, we won two county titles back-to-back but just about got over the line in them. That has to create a strong belief in other clubs. And if you add our success to recent county successes at underage and senior you would have to believe that Sligo belong at the top table at minor, U20 and senior and can be justified in having All-Ireland ambitions," he says.

"We have players now who have never lost a Connacht final and never been beaten by Mayo, that has to give you belief."

He adds that just as the club's achievements can boost the county, Club Sligo's development squads boosted the club. "Without doubt they have had a major impact. I know first-hand from talking to some of the guys that the development squads' work has been phenomenal. We owe a huge amount to it. Just as an example, two of our lads, Ross Doherty and Mark McDaniel, have benefitted hugely from it. They have been very important in our



Niall Murphy, Coolera-Strandhill's top scorer in this year's championship, points against Padraig Pearses in the Connacht final



Coolera-Strandhill players celebrate their provincial title victory over Padraig Pearses at Markievicz Park in December

success." With Ballymote also contesting the Connacht Club junior final, it is clear that the investment in coaching over the past decade is now having a benefit throughout the county.

EASKEY FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AS KINGS OF CONNACHT

Easkey captain Joe McHugh with the Connacht JHC



The Easkey panel before their AIB Connacht Junior club hurling final victory over Galway's Ballinasloe at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence in November



Another excellent year for Easkey hurlers saw them win their third Connacht JHC title in a row after beating Ballinasloe in the final. Their All-Ireland semi-final against Kilkenny's St Lachtain's proved a step too far but the Sligo side have firmly established themselves as Kings of Connacht.



Fionn Connolly makes a break against Ballinasloe



Finnian Cawley gives the St. Lachtain's (Kilkenny) defence plenty to think about in the All Ireland Club Junior hurling semi-final played in Ballinasloe in mid December



NAME: Evan Lyons AGE: 24

POSITION: Left Corner Back CLUB: Shamrock Gaels

Evan Lyons has a clear memory of being "dragged" to U6 training at Shamrock Gaels by his mother and not enjoying it one bit! "I disliked it, and it wasn't until I was 11 or 12 that I started to enjoy it," he says. Fortunately for Sligo and Shamrock Gaels, when Evan was 9 or 10 it was discovered that he had poor eyesight. Sorting that problem changed his relationship with the game.

"Before that, I would follow the man in games because I couldn't see the ball," he says.

Evan joined county development squads at age 14 and was with every squad up to making the senior panel in 2020. However, he says he didn't take it seriously until he was 17.

"I think at 17 I wanted it a bit more and I grew into realising what I could and couldn't do. So, I focused on what I knew I could do. After that I began starting every game," he says.

He says the highlights of his career to date with Shamrock Gaels were winning the Intermediate Championship in 2018 and the Senior League in 2023.

Winning Division 4 in 2023 is one of the highlights of his time with Sligo, though he prefers to focus on how the team is progressing.

"I came into it at a time when we were losing a lot of older players, so we were a young and inexperienced squad. We're getting better every year, and I get a buzz out of seeing the strides we are making," he says.

He made the Tailteann Cup Team of the Year in 2022 and 2024, but has mixed feelings about the two achievements. "I was over the moon the first time. I had a savage season and thought I genuinely deserved to be on it. Last year, I thought differently and felt there were one or two lads who were unlucky," he says.

Evan says he has an unusual playing style – characterised in part by never having taken a single shot in 50 games for Sligo. He draws most satisfaction from football when beating the man he is marking. "If we were to win a game and I played badly, my man scoring a few points, I'd feel worse than if we lost but I played well," he says.

MOVIE: The Lord of the Rings trilogy

SONG: Caledonia by Dolores Keane



SLIGO PLAYER DEVELOPMENT REAPS THE BENEFITS OF **STRONG RELATIONSHIPS** BETWEEN CLUBS, SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND COUNTY



Strong relationships between clubs, schools, third-level institutions and Sligo GAA in recent years have seen all benefit in terms of player development.

Second-level and Higher Education football and hurling competitions give players an opportunity to compete at a high-level against quality opposition that brings benefits to their clubs and the county, and in turn the players bring the benefits of their work with club and county back to their schools and colleges.

The fact that 24 Sligo players were involved at the outset of this year's Sigerson Cup, which is the Tier One championship in university football, means seasoned and fringe county players were being tested in intense competitive fixtures. Luke Marren (Bunninadden) was a key player for the DCU side that won the competition.



Luke Marren (right) in action for DCU

The same is true in hurling where two of Stephen Sheil's senior players, Daragh Cawley (Naomh Eoin) and Jaime Walsh (Coolera-Strandhill), and three of the U20s, Marc Gray (Calry St Joseph's), Conor Golden (Naomh Eoin) and Conor White (St Molaise Gaels) were part of the ATU Sligo squad that won the Fergal Maher Cup recently. In addition, Robert O'Kelly Lynch (Naomh Eoin) competed for UCD in the Fitzgibbon Cup.

That hones their skills and decision-making under pressure and sharpens their match fitness, thereby bringing a significant bonus to their clubs and their

county squads.

Of course, a key reason why those players got to compete in the Higher Education championships is down to the work of their schools, their clubs and county development squads.

Joe Neary, who coaches the Sligo minor team and at Summerhill College, where he has been teaching since 2007, says a good relationship between schools, clubs and county is essential.

"It's very important. We've a good working relationship there. It's been very strong the last number of years. We start off in September when the club season is coming to an end, and we have six months then when we are trying to improve the players, building on what the clubs and development squads have done," he says.

He believes that strength and conditioning are among the benefits of Colleges GAA for the county squads. "It's a high standard of football that all the players are getting. They're exposed to good quality trainings, and they're tested in a lot of game situations so when it comes to the step up to the county level, they have good experience," he says.

Summerhill has been dining at the top table for a number of years now in both the Connacht Colleges SFC and the Hogan Cup, and Joe puts their ability to compete with the best down to a number of factors – the support of Development Officers from Sligo GAA, great work by the clubs in the last ten years and the commitment of teachers, many of whom coach at inter-county level.

"The ethos of the school is to keep as many players involved as you can for as long as possible. We'd have up on 14 teachers involved, and they are very committed, high-level coaches," he says.

Joe Neary (left) pictured with Mark Breheny when they were joint managers of the Summerhill College team that reached the Hogan Cup final in 2023



NEXT ISSUE

We speak to former Sligo GAA Chairperson and Sligo Ard Comhairle delegate **Joe Taaffe** who is also a founding member of St. Michael's GAA Club.