

THE **Weekender**
sport

Proud day for Brian

Following his nine point haul, Seneschalstown corner forward Brian Clarke was the unanimous choice for the 'man of the match' award after his side's SFC final replay win over Navan O'Mahony



Nina suffers a fall

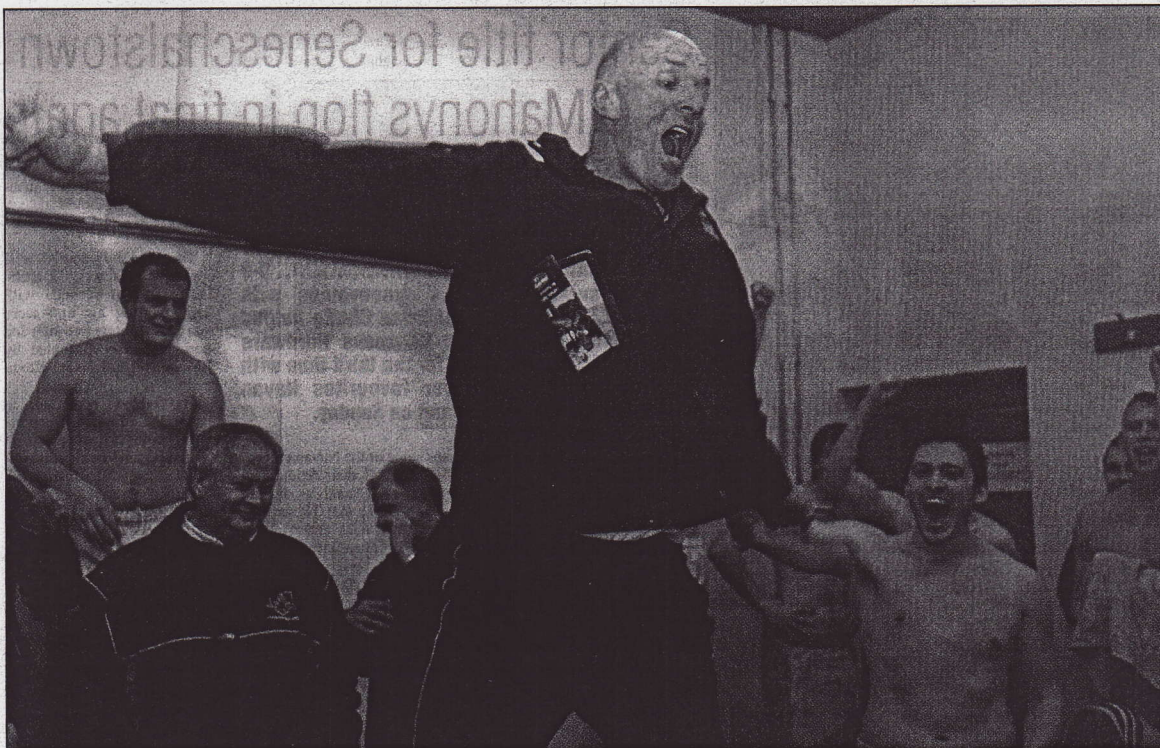
Meath's top amateur national hunt rider Nina Carberry has been put out of action after fracturing her left collar bone in a fall at Punchestown last Wednesday when she came off her mount Northern Command



Email: sportseditor@theweekender.ie

2,3,4,5&6

9



Flying high ... Seneschalstown boss Damien Sheridan jumps for joy while his charges celebrate their SFC final victory over Navan O'Mahonys on Sunday.

No Let-up for busy Furze side

IN FOCUS

FOLLOWING THEIR thrilling county final win over Navan O'Mahonys, Seneschalstown will try their luck in a bigger pond when meeting Dublin kingpins St Vincent's in the Leinster club SFC at Parnell Park next Sunday.

St Vincent's were supposed to meet the Wicklow winners on tonight (Tuesday) but the Garden County will not be represented in the provincial competition after their final between Balinglass and Rathnew at Aughrim on Sunday finished all square.

The previous Monday the Dublin title went to the famous Marino club for the first time since 1984 with a 0-12 to 1-7 final victory over St Brigid's with Gerald Brennan starring at centre back and Mossy Quinn and Diarmuid Connolly prominent up front.

After their fairytale county success, Seneschalstown will be keen to put further icing on the cake in what has been a remarkable year for them. They are also in the Division 1 League and Feis Cup finals against Skryne and Simonstown Gaels respectively.

When the Yellow Furze club previously lifted the Keegan Cup back in 1994 they got to the Leinster club decider where Kilmacud Crokes defeated them by the minimum margin, 0-12 to 1-8.

Damien Sheridan will be hoping that his players do not over celebrate in order to put up a decent showing against St Vincent's who have won out in Dublin for the 25th time and have a number of promising young footballers in their ranks.

One of Seneschalstown's winning side, forward Ciaran Macken, who returned from Australia ten days before the county final, is staying at home but Brian Sheridan, who made a late appearance, is a bit short of full health.

Meanwhile Meath IFC winners Donaghmore/Ashbourne, who defeated Gaels of Dundalk in their first Leinster outing last weekend, will be back in Parnell Park next Sunday for a game against Stratford from Wicklow.

That will be preceded by the deferred Division 4 FL final between Moynalvey and Moylagh and Drumbaragh and Ratoath will be in opposition in the Junior D FC final at Walterstown.

Triumph against all the odds is a victory for Kiltale's hard work

by Noel Coogan

THE OUTRIGHT triumph by Kiltale in this year's M. Donnelly Meath SHC proves that anything is possible once the groundwork is put in. It was a victory against all the odds and the fact that Kilmessan were defeated in the final made it all the sweeter.

Over the last few months the sports pages of this paper regularly carried betting lists on the local SFC and in the autumn the odds about the IFC contenders were also advertised. The fact that no odds about the race for the Jubilee Cup appeared is probably partly due to so many

people being so dismissive of that championship.

This writer does not know if any bookmaking firm had betting on the Meath SHC this year. If so, how many punters would have been tempted if 20/1 was put up against Kiltale back in early summer? Indeed they could have been offered at three or four to one in the week of the final and still have been ignored.

Back in 1954 when Meath gained possession of the Sam Maguire Cup title for the second time the success was as sweet as Kiltale's the other Sunday. That was because Kerry were defeated in the final and at the time it was suggested that beating the Kingdom was as good as winning two All-Irelands.

It was the same with Kiltale and after upsetting the odds to take the title for only the third time, manager Paddy Kelly and

long-serving player Cathal Sheridan made no secret of how special getting one over their neighbours and 27 times past kingpins was.

While the attendance at the hurling final was about one third what went through the Parnell Park turnstiles for the 'football' equivalent, the atmosphere was much better than during the drawn O'Mahonys versus Seneschalstown drawn tie of seven days earlier.

While some hurling supporters would obviously disagree, we prefer the Jubilee Cup decider in the county ground. Some Meath caman swingers prefer the Trim pitch but last year at St Loman's Park reporters were put in a little hut behind one of the goals.

We survived the experience and actually enjoyed the afternoon as Rathmolyon had their day of glory. Mickey Cole was

one of the big stars then and he was in the Parnell Park press box as a radio analyst for the 2007 SHC final.

The need for more stands at GAA grounds in Meath has been mooted on these pages more than once over the years but maybe Trim will have such an erection in the near future. If modest League of Ireland clubs can have covered accommodation why not some Gaelic clubs, some of whom have as much support.

Getting back to the local SHC, many of those who chose not to attend the recent final would have been pleasantly surprised at the entertainment value of the contest. While the standard is not like what you'd see in Kilkenny or Cork, it was still quite a good game.

With all due respect to Kilmessan, Kiltale's victory is good for the game in the county. Just as Rathmolyon's suc-

cess was last year and the triumph by Killyon the year before. Perhaps it will be the turn of Kildalkey soon.

Kiltale have shown what can be achieved when the work is put in at underage level and with Paddy Kelly spearheading that drive, some fine hurlers came up to senior ranks and, game after game, the side captained by John Donoghue kept defying the tipsters who had predicted their exit.

Not surprising, the triumph by the men in maroon and green was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm and such a success can bring so much joy to a small rural community.

Afterwards Paddy Kelly said the memory of final day would last for a long time and one could not but feel happy for him and his troops.



Talisman Clarke puts



Seneschalstown top scorer Brian Clarke takes on O'Mahonys corner back Lee Russell in Sunday's SFC decider.



O'Mahonys midfielder Mark Ward on the run against Seneschalstown at Pairc Tailteann.

Senior title for Seneschalstown as O'Mahonys flop in final again

■ SFC final replay by Paul McCabe

SENESCHALSTOWN 0-15
NAVAN O'MAHONYS 0-9
WITH A surname that is synonymous with footwear, the right boot of Brian Clarke helped Seneschalstown land the Commons Hardware sponsored Meath SFC title for the third time with a replayed final win over favourites Navan O'Mahonys at Pairc Tailteann on Sunday.

Unsurprisingly on these occasions, the man of the match award was given to the top scorer on the day but the Seneschalstown forward thoroughly deserved it at the end of a game that had far more quality than the drawn encounter and in which the eventual winners made a mockery of their roles as underdogs.

In kicking nine points Clarke scored two more than in the first match and although all of his efforts came from placed balls (including one converted 45), his overall contribution was more than that of purely a free taker.

In winning a fair amount of possession and tormenting the O'Mahonys defence with his speed, the number 13 also showed courage and discipline and rose to his feet on a couple of occasions without complaint after shipping heavy knocks.

That was the story throughout the Seneschalstown team, their manager Damien Sheridan set the tone prior to the first whistle, sportingly shaking hands with his opposite number Mick Downes - who quit in the wake of the defeat - and then turning to acknowledge the O'Mahonys bench.

His charges didn't let him down on the pitch either, remaining focused and determined throughout before winning out with handsome margin and allowing a parish, upon which tragedy has visited in recent years, to afford itself a deserving smile.

Seneschalstown may not have had any representatives on the Meath team for August's All-Ireland semi-final meeting with Cork but the sum of their parts added up to a lot more than O'Mahonys, who lined out with six players that were on duty against the Leesiders, had to offer.

With a skip-load of underage successes to reflect on, per-

haps some of the Navan players are living off their reputations at this stage and, as in the drawn game, they were prepared to sit back and wait for things to happen instead of dictating their own destiny.

Of the disappointments that the club have endured over the past three years - their semi-final expulsion, loss to Wolfe Tones in the decider and the stalemate of the previous outing - this will be the most acutely felt and the most difficult from which to recover.

Before the final whistle they also had to endure the embarrassment of Seneschalstown stroking the ball around to cheers of 'olé' from the winning supporters.

There are unlikely to be any wholesale changes in terms of playing personnel but the rebuilding process at Brews Hill will be a mental one for a side that has shown to be psychologically brittle over their past three final appearances.

The warning signs had been there against the Tones last year and a fortnight ago against Seneschalstown and it was a similar story this time around with the men in blue and white hoops failing to live with the high level of expectation which made them feel, and play, like they had lead in their boots.

The feeling was that O'Mahonys, having struggled though the group stages, were starting to perform to their potential in the knockout victories over Dunsahaughlin and Dunboyne but perhaps those wins were the exception and that their real form had been on display in the early and late stages of the competition. Alternatively, maybe they had peaked too soon.

O'Mahonys were paralysed by a fear of losing whereas Seneschalstown were emboldened by a belief of having everything to gain and a mis-

sion statement from their manager that they should take a more positive approach to the replay.

They certainly started as if they meant business, taking the lead inside 40 seconds with Clarke posting his first score from a close range free after Joe Sheridan had been fouled by O'Mahonys full back Kevin Reilly.

The general perception is that Reilly did well to keep his county colleague scoreless in the first game and although Sheridan only did marginally better in the scoring stakes by registering twice this time around, he still gave his direct opponent a difficult time and won the majority of the battles for possession.

The Seneschalstown number 14 was the only scorer from play among his team's starting forwards but right half back Mark Carey, the goalscorer in the drawn match, managed to steal forward twice and pop over in the opening period.

Carey was able to edge into attack possibly because he was marking a natural defender in Cormac McGuinness who had been squeezed out of his side's back line to accommodate the return of Niall McKeigue. There was a vacant attacking role as a result of Thomas Loughran's late withdrawal from the O'Mahonys' front line with a hamstring complaint.

In the end McGuinness didn't last the course of the match and the removal of his fellow county panelist, Stephen MacGabhann earlier in the contest must have been a huge psychological boost to the men from Yellow Furze.

MacGabhann may have been, to a degree, the hero of the drawn match with his levelling point but he struggled to get into this match and team mate Mark Ward didn't make the same impression that he had done in the first match either.

Damien Sheridan gave another impressive display in the middle but Robert Ruddy was the star in that sector, dictating the trend of the game especially in the opening period and coming strong again in the final quarter as Seneschalstown made the push for glory.

Of course, while Loughran was an obvious loss to the Navan men, Seneschalstown were without Stephen Finnegan from the first day but they were

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SPORT 3

his best foot forward

more than compensated by the return of Ciaran Macken, back from Australia and justifying his starting role with an energetic performance on the half forward line.

In defence centre back Cormac Quinn and full back Andrew Collins gave very little away while Stephen Sheridan can be more than happy at restricting county star Stephen Bray to a point in each half.

After Brian Clarke gave Seneschalstown that early lead, O'Mahonys did get back on terms with midfielder Ward collecting a poor kick out from David Lyons before driving forward and tapping over after ten minutes.

Prior to that the Seneschalstown goal had led something of a charmed life and only a last ditch clearance from Quinn denied Paddy Smyth from goaling after five minutes.

During that time O'Mahonys had plenty of the ball but wrong options were often taken and far too many shots, from their point of view, were dropping short of the intended target.

It was a sign of things to come and Ward's levelling score would be as good as it would get for the town men who were 0-1 to 0-2 down on 12 minutes and would remain in arrears from then on.

Clarke gave his side the lead for the second time, his somewhat unorthodox kicking style, which on the surface looks a little wild, allowing him to convert a "45" and two minutes later he popped over from similar range from a free after Reilly again fouled Sheridan.

The sequence of Brian Clarke points was broken on 16 minutes with Shane Clarke landing a free on the right and soon after Damien Sheridan almost goaled for the men in yellow and blue, racing onto a pass from Ruddy before dragging a shot to the left of the posts at the hospital end.

Seneschalstown were well on top at that point and on 27 minutes created their biggest lead of the opening half - 0-8 to 0-3 - when Brian Clarke added his fourth point following a foul on cousin Shane. Brothers Stephen and David Bray combined for the latter to leave O'Mahonys 0-4 to 0-8 behind at the break.

The lead was back to five within two minutes of the second period, another foul on Joe Sheridan by Reilly leading to Clarke accounting for his fifth score.

It was 0-10 to 0-6 after 41 minutes with Joe Sheridan kicking the score of the match, a wonderful point that he fired

over at the town end from under the Navan stand.

It was already slipping away from O'Mahonys but they put together back to back scores for only the second time in the contest when a Paul Quinn point was followed by a similar effort from Stephen Bray, leaving it 0-8 to 0-10.

This was the opportunity for Downes' men to kick on and show why they had been so hotly tipped for glory but chasing a lead in a tense and tight situations proved, once more, to be a bridge too far.

Seneschalstown kicked the next three points courtesy of Damien Sheridan, who had moved to full forward in a switch with brother Joe, and Brian Clarke (two) and any prospects of an O'Mahonys' comeback really required a goal which was never a real prospect.

The Navan side did create an opening with Stephen Bray setting up Gary O'Brien but his shot went over via a fingertip save from keeper David Lyons and the top of the bar to leave it 0-9 to 0-13 on 56 minutes.

There was still time for Clarke to add to an impressive tally and he sent over two late scores to emphasise the gulf that existed between the two teams on the day and bring Seneschalstown's 13 year wait for the Keegan Cup to an end.

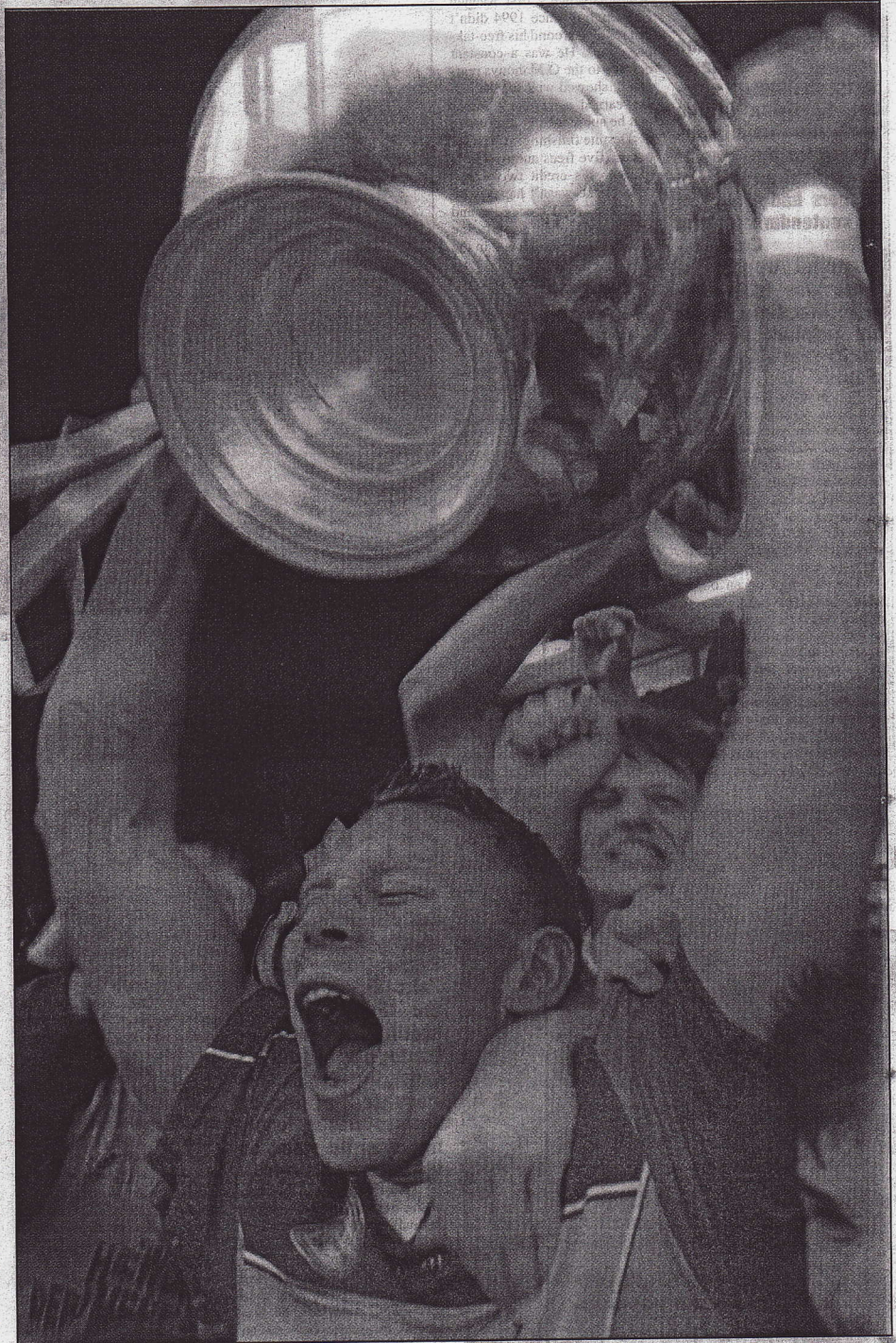
Two final and one semi-final appearance in three years is a proud enough record for any manager but it wasn't enough for O'Mahonys' Mick Downes and it proved to be the end of the line for him.

Seneschalstown boss Damien Sheridan has garnered local football's biggest prize at the first attempt and such was the vigour and passion that his side put into this victory, it may well signal the start of an era.

Seneschalstown - D. Lyons; S. Sheridan, A. Collins, C. Clarke, M. Carey (0-2), T. Quinn, C. Gleeson; R. Ruddy, D. Sheridan (0-1); C. Macken, A. McCann, J. Cowley; B. Clarke (0-9, 8 frees, 1 45), J. Sheridan (0-2), S. Clarke (0-1, 1 free). Subs - D. Byrne for S. Clarke (45 mins), B. Sheridan for Cowley (57 mins), J. Byrne for C. Clarke (60 mins).

Navan O'Mahonys - K. Lane; I. Matthews, K. Reilly, L. Russell; P. Quinn (0-1), R. Hogan, N. McKeigue; S. MacGabhann, M. Ward (0-2); G. O'Brien (0-1), P. Smyth (0-1), C. McGuinness; D. Bray (0-2), B. Regan, S. Bray (0-2). Subs - N. Dunne for MacGabhann (43 mins), D. O'Toole for McGuinness.

Referee - D. Coldrick (Blackhall).



Seneschalstown captain Cormac Quinn lifts the Keegan Cup after his side's SFC final victory over O'Mahonys at Pairc Tailteann on Sunday.



Proud day in the life of Brian

by Shane O'Brien

FOLLOWING HIS nine point haul, Seneschalstown number 13 Brian Clarke was the unanimous choice for the 'man of the match' award. The winners had a number of contenders for the Colum Cromwell Memorial trophy but there was little surprise that the individual accolade went to the 21 year old electrician.

Son of well-known referee Pat, Brian was successful from eight frees and one 45. He punished O'Mahonys' indiscretions with sublime accuracy from placed balls. One of the highlights was a free from all of 50 metres out three minutes from the end of normal time which left the scoreboard reading 0-14 to 0-9.

The only blot on an otherwise perfect record was a missed free which was relatively straight forward by his high standards in the 23rd minute of the second half. Fears that that miss may return to haunt Clarke and Seneschalstown proved unfounded and the corner-forward made amends with three further points to ensure victory for the Yellow Furze parish outfit.

Clarke's contribution to Seneschalstown's first Keegan Cup triumph since 1994 didn't just revolve around his free-taking duties. He was a constant menace to the O Mahonys rear-guard, showed well for the ball and earned a number of frees that he subsequently converted.

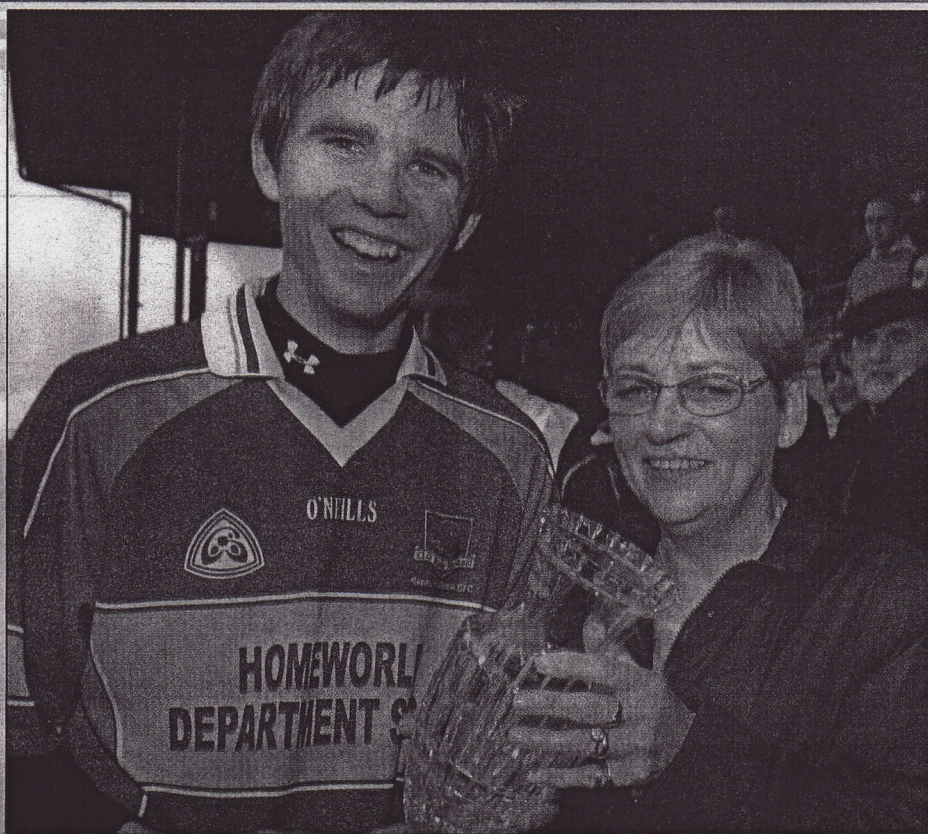
Despite finishing with seven points (five frees and two from play) to his credit two weeks ago, Clarke wasn't happy with his display on that occasion and that provided him with the motivation to up the ante in the replay.

"I went out to play as best I could," he said after the final whistle. "I was disappointed with my performance the first day as I knew I had more in me. A lot of the other players had more in them too and we were keen to prove that today."

Self-belief and hunger were the key ingredients of Seneschalstown's winning formula according to their top marksman while the scale of their achievement had yet to register with him.

"We've been on the losing side to O'Mahonys so many times that it just hasn't sunk in yet. It is an unbelievable feeling to finally get one over them."

"A lot of people were of the opinion that we had left it behind us the first day but we never believed that. We regrouped at training the following Tuesday evening and talked about that. We were determined to win. We wanted it more," he concluded before re-joining the celebrations.



Seneschalstown forward Brian Clarke received the Colum Cromwell 'man of the match' award following Sunday's SFC final win over O'Mahonys from the late Colum's wife, Kay.

Downes and out for Mick after second final defeat

THERE IS usually joy and despondency after county finals and last Sunday evening at Pairc Tailteann while the Seneschalstown contingent began celebrating a wonderful triumph, O'Mahonys manager Mickey Downes was a lonely figure as he stood on the pitch on his own.

After three years at the helm of the Brews Hill club's senior football team, the former Clare and Meath forward had presided over his last O'Mahonys game. Having helped them to no less than seven SFC successes, he was unable to guide them to an overdue title from the sideline.

In 2005 there was the semi-final debacle against Dunboyne

and last year the narrow final defeat to Wolfe Tones. Now the frustration suffered then is replaced by disgust following a display in which a number of players failed to 'appear'.

"We just didn't perform today, we didn't have the same will to win they had and that is very disappointing."

"We tried hard but we missed a lot of opportunities of scores, both from play and frees, in the first half. We could have been a bit closer at half-time, they took their scores better than us and that's why they're going home with the trophy and they fully deserve that."

"They got some great scores and Brian Clarke was in great form, he hardly missed a shot all day. Our forwards were unable to match Seneschalstown. All of the Seneschalstown players were on their game while a number of our lads weren't," said the

losers' manager.

Following the near misses of the previous two campaigns, Downes' side carried a lot of expectation this year and it is difficult to understand why the latest title bid ended so tamely.

"There is always expectation about O'Mahonys teams. There was expectation in the past and we won but it was different today but we have no excuses," he said.

When asked if he would be back in charge next, the reply was "no, that was my last game, I gave it three years and it's time for someone else to take over."

Navan O'Mahonys midfielder Mark Ward struggled to put the disappointment of losing a second county final in a row into words in the immediate aftermath of Sunday's defeat to Seneschalstown.

The county man battled gamely throughout but was unable to prevent his side from

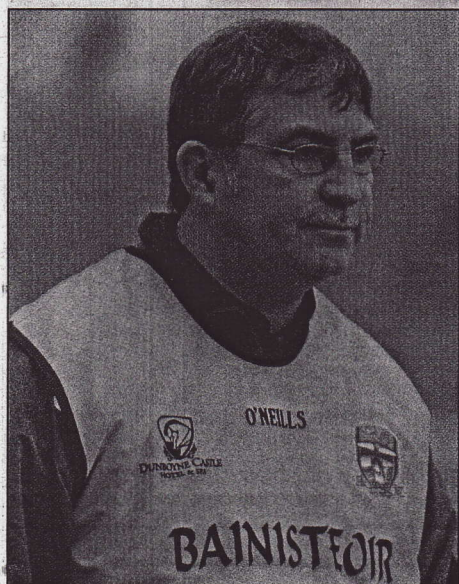
finishing on the wrong end of the 0-15 to 0-9 scoreline.

"Words can't describe how disappointed we are," commented the 23 year old. "If we had come off the pitch having played well and having done ourselves justice then that would have been some consolation but we were just terrible today, terrible."

While lamenting the lacklustre nature of his own side's performance, Ward was gracious in defeat and paid tribute to the victors.

"I don't want to take anything away from Seneschalstown. They were unbelievably organised, they had a game plan and stuck to it. They played very well and fair play to them. They were fully-deserving winners on the day."

"We knew how tough it was going to be, we knew how good they were but to underperform on county final day is gutting from our point of view."



Disconsolate Mick Downes following the final whistle on Sunday.

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SPORT 5

Our name was on the cup - Sheridan

by Liam O'Rourke

AFTER THE drawn SFC final, Seneschalstown manager Damien Sheridan insisted his side had scope for improvement and they delivered on Sunday.

The winning manager also pointed out that this success would serve as a boost of kinds for a parish that has experienced an amount of tragedy in recent times.

Sheridan began by sparing a thought for his former team mate Mick Downes and the club with whom he won four SFC titles as a player. "I'm sorry it had to be Mick Downes and Navan O'Mahonys that we beat. But I'm afraid our name was on the championship from the start of the year.

"I knew we were going to win the championship from the 27th of December last year because of the spirit of the lads, because of the amount of sadness there has been in the parish," he remarked moments after the final whistle.

Sheridan went on to pay tribute to the spirit and dedication of his charges. "The lads are unreal as a team. I've won eight senior championships and this is the best group of lads I've ever been involved with, without a shadow of a doubt.

"Their attitude and the way they think about the game is second to none. There was more to today than football. I'm sorry for Navan O'Mahonys that it had to be done, but there was more to today than football. It was about a community that needed lifting. Today, thanks be to God, they have been lifted," he added.

Seneschalstown struggled in the early stages of the championship, losing two of their first three games in Group C, generally regarded as being the weakest of the three sections in the championship.

However, Sheridan never wavered in his belief in his players' potential. "We never been beaten in a game this year that mattered. We were beaten in two championship matches but even if we won those we would still have been in a quarter-final."

"So we didn't lose anything or gain anything. We were beaten in two league matches when we were already in the final. So this team had gone undefeated

so far all year in my books," he pointed out.

The victory was made all the sweeter by his family's big involvement with the team and with Brian Sheridan - who couldn't start through injury - joining brothers Damien and Joe on the field near the end, Seneschalstown finished with three of the manager's sons on the field.

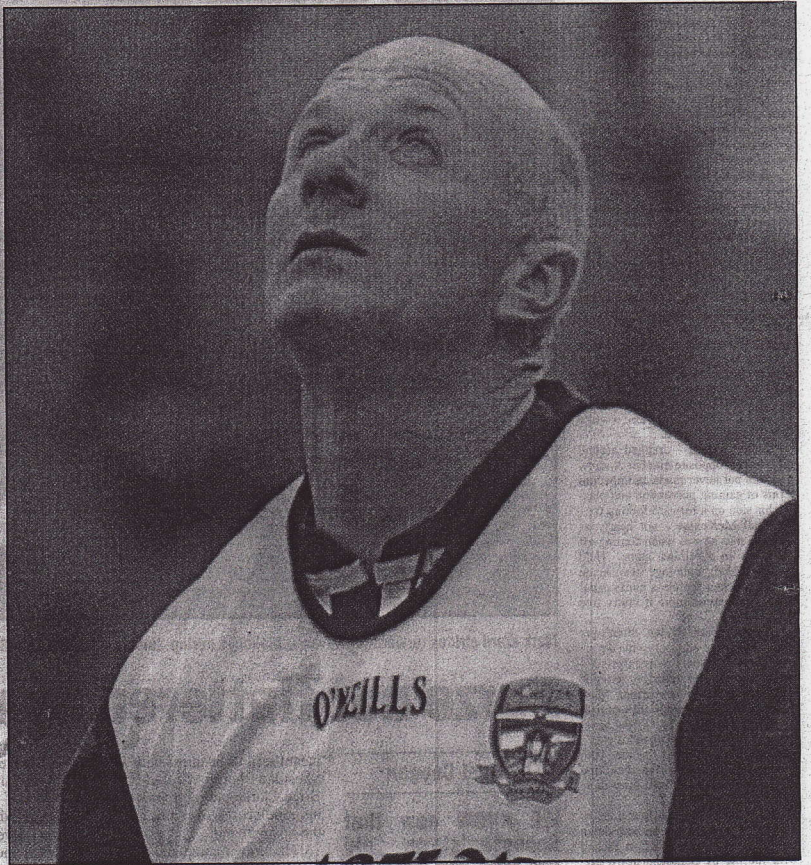
"I'm as proud as punch. I'm lost for words. Every emotion you could possibly think of is running through me at this moment," he enthused.

In the aftermath of the drawn final, Sheridan also felt his charges were a bit cagey and hoped they wouldn't be afraid to step it up in the replay.

"We took that step today and we're delighted we did take it. Winning midfield was crucial. But our defence was great and Brian Clarke hit some brilliant frees. Joe was back up and he gave Kevin (Reilly) a handful today.

"We got crucial breaks at crucial times. In fairness, O'Mahonys hit a few bad wides at the beginning of the second half. That was the time O'Mahonys needed to pull it back against us and it didn't happen.

"The second half was a worry for us, because we have been weak in second halves. We played it cool today. We proved we could play as senior champions," he concluded.



Seneschalstown manager Damien Sheridan takes inspiration from the heavens.

Winners hungry for more success

by Liam O'Rourke

APART FROM the obvious delight at winning a senior football title, the self-belief of the Seneschalstown players was palpable in the immediate aftermath of their decisive win over O'Mahonys in the SFC final.

Even Joe Sheridan, who endured a crisis of confidence at county level earlier in the year, was lifted by this enthusiasm. The last time he was this close to the Keegan Cup he was sitting in it as a baby after his father captained O'Mahonys to victory in 1985.

"We had the belief. The last day we were a bit wary about whether we could put it up to O'Mahonys. We showed

the last day we could and today we proved we are the best team in the county.

"You see from the lads that it means so much for everyone. We put in so much effort through the year. It's unbelievable.

"We knew we could do it. In the first ten minutes we were still a bit nervy but after that there was no stopping us. The heart was there and these lads deserve all the credit they

can get," he beamed.

He also paid tribute to his father and selectors Tommy McDonnell and Ian Maguire and pointed out that it was a great day for the whole parish. He also admitted that although the players were disappointed at not winning the drawn match they knew they had time to improve matters.

"Everyone doubted us all year and didn't give us a chance coming into this final. We showed everyone and we proved it to ourselves - especially. We're here to stay for a few years," he added.

Team captain Cormac Quinn echoed the spirit of confidence in the side and pointed out that Seneschalstown were much more relaxed than they were in the drawn game and was never wor-

ried about the outcome at any stage.

"We knew that was in us. We didn't play as we could that last day and we knew if we played as a team that we could give that performance. We were more relaxed to day. We knew what it was about. It showed in the end.

"We weren't worried. That's the confidence. Damien Sheridan instills in us. We knew we could keep going until the end," Quinn commented.

Robert Ruddy was understandably delighted to win his first championship medal in a Seneschalstown shirt after enduring more than his share of final disappointment at under 21 level. He also pointed to the contribution of sports psychologist Declan Coyle,

who spoke to the players early in the year before a competitive ball was kicked.

"It's amazing what the man did for us. We walked out of that dressing room and you wouldn't believe how high our heads were held. We were talking about where we wanted to be come the end of the year and we said 'senior champions'."

Ruddy remarked. Ciaran Macken followed the drawn game on the internet in Australia where he has been based since January. On his return he was impressed by the progress made by his team mates in his absence.

"The hunger and desire from Damien Sheridan the manager is something else. He's had a massive influence on the team. We

had the hunger and various reasons to win it.

"It's been brilliant and it's going to give the whole community a lift and I think we deserved it.

O'Mahonys are a good team, but we didn't let them play and Brian Clarke was brilliant with his frees," he concluded.

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O'Mahonys ratings

Keith Lane - not required to make a save of any significance. Involved in a mix-up with Cormac McGuinness in the 15th minute which resulted in the concession of a 14 metre free and a point for Brian Clarke 6.

Lee Russell - endured a torrid time attempting to put the shackles on Brian Clarke who would have provided most corner backs with an afternoon best to be forgotten 5.

Kevin Reilly - had his hands full marking former county colleague Joe Sheridan with the Seneschalstown man coming out on top in that duel 6.

Ian Matthews - held his direct opponent Shane Clarke scoreless from play and the Seneschalstown man was replaced in the 18th minute of the second half. Unlike many of his team-mates can be happy with his individual performance 6.

Paul Quinn - another O'Mahonys player who can be reasonably satisfied from a personal point of view. His man Joe Cowley was also replaced in the second half while Quinn raided forward to raise a white flag after 41 minutes 6.

Richie Hogan - dragged around the pitch by opposite number Andrew McCann but never made an impact in terms of gaining possession and placing his side on a forward footing 6.

Niall McKeigue - not nearly as influential as he was when coming off the bench in the drawn game. Held former Meath underage team-mate Ciaran Macken scoreless but is capable of a whole lot more if injury free 6.

Stephen MacGabhann - didn't get into the game at all prior to his departure after 42 minutes. Was surprisingly ineffective and failed to provide sufficient back-up to partner Mark Ward in the crucial midfield sector 4.

Mark Ward - was O'Mahonys' best player and even opened his side's account with a point in the 10th minute while also scoring their first of the second half. Could have done with more support 8.

Gary O'Brien - with four minutes remaining on the clock he bore down on goal only to see his effort flicked over the bar by Seneschalstown net-minder David Lyons. A goal at that stage would have brought his side to within two points of their opponents 5.

Paddy Smyth - scored a point from play in the first half but will be disappointed he didn't find the net four minutes into the contest when his effort was cleared off the line by Seneschalstown captain Cormac Quinn. Moved into the full-forward line in the second half 5.

Cormac McGuinness - deployed in the unfamiliar territory of the half-forward line due to Tommy Loughran's withdrawal but didn't enjoy the best of days as direct opponent Mark Carey scored two points 4.

David Bray - wasn't his usual reliable self with his free-taking responsibilities and confidence seemed to suffer as a result. Only successful with one placed ball and also scored a point from play 5.

Barry Regan - was switched to the centre-forward position in the second half to try to improve O'Mahonys' percentage in the possession stakes. Gained more possession further out the field but dropped a couple of scoring opportunities short 5.

Stephen Bray - Scored two points from play but will be disappointed with a performance that fell some way short of the high standards he has set himself 6.

Neville Dunne - was introduced for Stephen MacGabhann in the third quarter in an attempt to stem the tide at midfield but had little impact 6.

Darren O'Toole - didn't make much of an impression after replacing McGuinness in the last quarter 6. (Shane O'Brien)



Mark Ward strides forward for Navan O'Mahonys during Sunday's decider with Seneschalstown forward Ciaran Macken closing in.

Furze not flattered by winning margin

by Noel Coogan

WE KNOW now that Seneschalstown did not miss the boat the first day. While many felt that O'Mahonys would take the second chance with open arms and turn it into a 17th title, that was not to be and the new champions were far from flattered by the winning margin of six points.

Like the Kiltale hurlers, the footballers from the Yellow Furze area just kept on proving those who continued to predict their exit wrong. In the days leading up to the replay, there seemed to be an amount of confidence that Damien Sheridan's men could finish the job and that they did with some style.

The statistic that ten of their scores came from frees and a 45 does not take one bit from what was a splendid victory. After going so close a fortnight earlier, the Seneschalstown players and especially their manager obviously felt they were well capable of completing the job.

After David Coldrick threw in the ball we did not have to wait long to know that they

meant serious business with Joe Sheridan being fouled and Brian Clarke putting the first of his nine scores over the bar at the hospital end.

The drawn game and replay gave further credence to the oft-mentioned theory that games are not won on paper. With six members of Colm Coyle's Meath 2007 squad aboard, it was difficult to go for any team other than O'Mahonys, who appeared to have strong prospect of raising the Keegan Cup in triumph for the 17th time.

But seeing two of the sextet being called ashore in the second half provided some ammunition for those who might feel that Coyle and his assistants had not the best of those available to them on the county panel.

While Mark Ward and Niall McKeigue were not shy in 'getting stuck in' some of the other Navan players did not seem to want to know and lacked the passion and will to win of the men in blue and yellow.

O'Mahonys were not just beaten - they were humiliated and the six points losing margin far from flattered Seneschalstown.

After opting out of the county squad in June, Joe Sheridan has certainly regained his appetite for football. After failing to register in the drawn tie, the big full forward hit a point in each half and his effort

from 40 metres near the right sideline ten minutes into the second half was the one of the best of the day.

But there was no disputing the entitlement of Brian Clarke to join a list which includes a number of notables. The corner forward was the 'man of the match' both days and some of his frees were fine efforts from long range.

Some of the disappointed O'Mahonys supporters had good reason to ask why so many fouls were given away in the scoring zone. Last year there was criticism of the Navan mentors along the line for not making substitutions and this time only two were introduced despite the fact that the opposition were comfortably in pole position a long way from the winning post.

Seneschalstown did not give the Navan players much time on the ball and all over the pitch they had players who were willing to give their all in the attempt to bridge the gap of 13 years.

It is quite remarkable that they have done so well despite losing so many players from last year. The most famous of them, Graham Geraghty, had his day of glory four weeks earlier and he was out on the pitch afterwards congratulating his former team mates.

While the replay was much more exciting than the drawn tie, O'Mahonys supporters did

not have a lot to shout about and they are not the only people puzzled by the loss of form suffered by Stephen Bray.

Younger brother David also had a less than impressive outing and put a couple of shots wide at a time when scores were badly needed. Paddy Smyth was another to fail to get into the game in a meaningful manner.

Seneschalstown's ploy of getting a number of players back behind midfield made it more difficult for O'Mahonys and the two Ulster-natives, team captain Cormac Quinn and All-Ireland winner of five years ago Andrew McCann were among the stumbling blocks with young full back Andrew Collins bringing off some vital clearances.

After getting to within two points of the leaders 12 minutes into the second period, O'Mahonys strangely only scored once more. In the last quarter the winners outscored their opponents by 0-4 to 0-1 and Seneschalstown's six wides to one in the second half is another interesting statistic.

After receiving the Keegan Cup, captain Quinn said Damien Sheridan told the players early in the year that they would win the SFC. Not many would have believed him but there was no fluke about the manner in which the dream came true.

Seneschalstown ratings

David Lyons - wasn't getting the required distance from his kick-outs in the early stages but sorted it out and helped give his side the required platform at midfield. Denied David Bray a goal in the early stages and deflected a Gary O'Brien drive over his own bar in the 56th minute. Had it found the net the gap would have been down to two points 8.

Stephen Sheridan - limited Stephen Bray to a two points from play and linked well with his fellow defenders 7.

Andrew Collins - didn't allow Barry Regan settle and kept him scoreless from play 8.

Colin Clarke - not a prominent as in the drawn game but his immediate opponents David Bray only managed one point from play 7.

Mark Carey - won his duel with Cormac McGuinness and pushed forward to score two first half points 8.

Cormac Quinn - the team captain led by example and restricted Paddy Smyth to a single point from play as well as clearing a goal attempt by the same player off his own goal line in the opening minutes 8.

Colin Gleeson - won a few vital breaks for his side and restricted Gary O'Brien to a solitary point 7.

Robert Ruddy - was the outstanding performer at midfield, especially in the opening half. Endured a bit of lull in the third quarter but came good again in the latter stages and was a contender for the 'man of the match' award 9.

Damien Sheridan - offered great support to his midfield partner and scored a point. Took up good attacking positions 8.

Ciaran Macken - the gamble of bringing him back from Australia paid dividends and the experienced player won an amount of breaking ball while not allowing Niall McKeigue to make the same impression as he did in the drawn game 9.

Andrew McCann - was particularly effective when dropping deep to gain possession in the opening half. Impact lessened as the hour wore on 7.

Joe Cowley - didn't have the same impact as some of his fellow forwards and was replaced by Brian Sheridan in the 56th minute 5.

Brian Clarke - punished O'Mahonys' indiscipline by landing eight frees and was unperturbed by the couple of wides he chalked up in the second half when the opposition was threatening a comeback 9.

Joe Sheridan - had a much bigger impact than in the drawn game. Gave Kevin Reilly a difficult afternoon and the second of his two points from play, in the 40th minute, was a magnificent effort and a tonic to his side as their lead had just been cut to three points. He moved outfield in the latter stages and won a couple of possessions in front of his own goal near the end 9.

Shane Clarke - started in place of the injured Stephen Finnegan. Pointed a free in the 16th minute and was yellow carded about ten minutes later. Provided the assist for Damien Sheridan's second half point 6.

David Byrne - made way for Ciaran Macken on the starting fifteen. Replaced Shane Clarke in the 49th minute and didn't have much of an impact 5.

Brian Sheridan - replaced Joe Cowley but wasn't on long enough to be rated.

James Byrne - replaced Colin Clarke in stoppage time at the end of the game and was not on long enough to be rated. (Liam O'Rourke)

The Tiles!



with
Katie
McGowan



Sensational Seneschalstown!



Brian, Shane and Colin Clarke



Mark Carey, Joe Sheridan and James Byrne holding the Keegan Cup



Mark, Colin and Emma Gleeson



David Byrne toasts his team's success!



Manager Damien Sheridan gets carried away!



Paul Carey gets into the spirit of things!



Brian and Gerry Sheridan with cousin Kieran and uncle Frank McGowan

IT WAS A MEMORABLE OCCASION FOR THE SENESCHALSTOWN GFC TEAM AND COMMUNITY ALIKE ON SUNDAY LAST, AS THEY CELEBRATED THEIR SPORTING SUCCESS IN MAGUIRES PUB, KENTSTOWN.

The Keegan Cup winners, who defeated Navan D'Mahonys, were crowned county champions and partied well into the early hours of Monday morning. The Keegan Cup, which was filled to the brim with a concoction fit for a champion - or should I say panel of champions - was passed around the pub for the whole community to take a momentous mouthful from the long-awaited prize.

Seneschalstown player Gerry Sheridan was more than happy to grace the stage once again with his Overdue band-mates and got

the celebrations into full flow. The band's version of Queen's We Are The Champions seemed to go down particularly well with the crowd. Manager Damien Sheridan aka My Uncle Dame, not only the life and soul of the team, was also life and soul of the party as he belted out a champions rendition of The Fields Of Athenry and was then air-lifted off stage by his proud and over-joyed players.

In true Seneschalstown fashion, the team and management put on a united front and showed everyone what a truly amazing and talented group of people they really are. I think it's safe to say, on behalf of the whole community, you did us proud, boys!

Next stop Leinster! Come on the town!



Robert, 'Daddy' and Connor Ruddy



Joe Cowley and Cathy-Ann McManmon

The Palace Nightclub

Ludlow St., Navan



The Piano Bar

www.thepalace.ie