

Final Year

While 2008 may well be remembered for incessant bad weather and deepening recession, in Glanworth GAA circles the memories will be of a spate of North Cork finals contested with a good measure of success. The previous year had been something of a disappointment: it had been hoped to build on the long awaited Junior A Football championship win of 2006 but the realization that there are no certainties in sport was keenly felt.

The year began promisingly for the junior footballers and their new management and coaching regime, with an unbeaten run of five games in the Division 1 league by May when they took on Kilshannig in the first round of the championship. A 1-7 to 0-2 scoreline summed up Glanworth's superiority and brought a meeting with Mallow in July. Mallow were an unknown quantity but the team allayed any anxiety about the outcome with a master class in scoring with all but one point of 1-14 coming from play. The semi-final against Mitchelstown in early August was a different affair with Glanworth being

relieved to settle for a draw in the end. The replay a fortnight later saw a much improved performance from the locals and the result was convincing enough in the end, 2-6 to 0-5.

The North Cork final was played in mid September in Mitchelstown against Kilworth. In view of their poor showing against their neighbours in 2007 there was some apprehension about the outcome. The atrociously wet day did not help. Glanworth were ahead by half-time and stayed in front for the remainder of the game, but only just. A single goal separated the sides in the end but Brian Gallagher was happy to collect the coveted trophy on behalf of the Harbour and so set the scene for the county challenge.

The celebrations were short-lived as just six days later a meeting was set up with Urhan in Inchigeelagh. A rare sunny Saturday evening brought out the best in the Glanworth selection as they matched every move of the Beara side to be on level terms at the break. The second half was dominated by Glanworth as they pulled

away to win by five points in the end.

Hopes were high for further advancement but a physically superior Ballygarvan side coped better with the cold, wet and windy conditions at Mallow a fortnight later. A series of first half injuries did not help and there was no argument with the result: 1-6 to 1-12. The difficulty in achieving a county title is all too obvious to this team but there is a steely determination running right through the panel and the talk and planning for next year's campaign is already afoot. To underline this resolve the team went on to decisively take the Division 1 league title with a comprehensive victory over Churchtown at the end of October.

The winning of the DanJoe Ryan Memorial Cup for the first time was a particularly satisfying achievement also.

In parallel with the Junior A team the Junior B(2) footballers continued to provide an outlet for the extensive panel of adult players available to the club. Now in Division 2 of the league points were not easy to come by

but decent performances and a few successes augured well for the championship. This proved correct with a 2-8 to 0-12 win over a stern Mitchelstown challenge in the first round. The semi-final was played against Clyda Rovers and a 1-10 to 0-4 scoreline well reflected the local's dominance.

The final was played in Kilavullen at the end of June. Kilshannig provided the opposition and almost from the beginning Glanworth took control of the game. They restricted Kilshannig to one point in the first half and by the final whistle had accumulated 2-13 conceding only 1-3 during the hour. Liam Cotter was presented with the trophy which had been won by Glanworth for the first time in 2007. The depth of talent displayed during this campaign did much to contribute to the subsequent success of the A team.

The under 21 football championship is an early season competition and gives the young pretenders an opportunity to showcase their talents. Competing at A grade the Glanworth side had a first



round victory over Mitchelstown in mid March thus setting up a semi-final meeting with Kilshannig a week later. A much more mature opposition provided a substantial obstacle to the youthful Glanworth side who finally conceded by six points.

However keen observers of the under 21 side noted that it was largely powered by a core group of minor players and that at the under 18 level there was definite potential. Competing at A level the league was a compact competition with only four teams involved.

Glanworth earned a place in the final but once again Kilshannig spoiled the occasion but only just, 1-9 to 1-7.

The minors also competed in the non-examination county league and had wins over Bandon and Dunmanway, again strengthening the belief of many astute followers that success would come their way. The championship was ultimately a carbon copy of the league but this time Glanworth made no mistake with a 0-12 to 0-6 victory over Kilshannig. Team captain Michael Cremin was presented with the O'Brien cup and the county series beckoned.

A four week layoff did not seem to help the Glanworth side and Donoughmore's performance at Mallow at the end of September was chastening. Yet for many the minor football campaign was the highlight of the season—the youthful exuberance and breadth of skills in so many young players must surely bode well for the future of football in Glanworth.

The club records show that hurling was widely played in the Harbour from the beginning. While some would see Glanworth as predominantly a football club, the most recent county successes have all been in hurling. The promotion of the game in the club continues and steady progress at adult level has been evident over recent years, no less so in 2008.

The junior A hurling league saw Glanworth lose their first game against Clyda Rovers in March but thereafter they marched on through the competition being unbeaten over the next six games. The first round of the championship was played against a fancied Shanballymore side at the end of May but largely powered by their minor players the Rovers went on to a deserved win of

2-13 to 1-9. The next round saw a high scoring game against Liscarroll going the way of the Harbour by the narrowest of margins and so setting up a semi-final meeting with Doneraile. This resulted in a good win at Ballyhooly towards the end of August.

The stage was now set for the first ever Junior A Hurling final involving the Harbour. Played at Mallow a week later the clash with Ballyhooly preceded the Premier A final. Despite some decisions which went against them, the Glanworth side was only three points adrift at the break. Yet it wasn't to be their day and at the final whistle Ballyhooly had pulled away to take the title by five points.

In mid October the semi-final of the league saw Glanworth once again meet Ballyhooly and on the day Glanworth were rampant, earning the final berth by 4-10 to 2-8. It was a complete reversal of the championship result and exacerbated the sense of disappointment at what could have been. The final was not played until early November but by then Glanworth had run out of steam and Mallow took the laurels on a scoreline of 3-11 to 0-13.

On reflection the achievement of the junior hurlers in 2008 was in many ways remarkable especially so when one takes into account the very extensive overlap with the football panel. Despite the best efforts of the club officials the fixture programme was relentless throughout the year. The demands on players were mentally and physically sapping and unfortunately the hurlers seemed to pay the price of success.

The under 21 hurlers competed in the B grade competition but exited in the first round at the hands of Buttevant. The minors competed at A level in the league but had a poor run gaining no points. Likewise in the championship success was hard to come by.

While as always the main emphasis was on the playing field the club administration continued to steer a steady course. Recognition for this good work came their way when they secured substantial Lotto funding for club development. This €60,000 grant will do much for the modernization of the club facilities and underlines the background work that goes on, enabling success on the field.

So as 2008 draws to a close the statistics speak for themselves: seven North Cork competition finals reached and four won—surely the year of the finals.

North Cork Junior A Champions

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