

Waterford Ladies Football History 1985

Noel Murray took over as Chairperson of the County Board and Waterford made a serious effort at underage football and Michael Ryan took over as Manager of the under 16 and minor teams. The under 16 team played Cork away and won by a single point. Much to the amazement of everybody the referee declared the game a draw and the replay was scheduled for Ballymacarbry on the 6th of July.

Two early points by Helen Walsh and a third from her sister Sinead gave Waterford an early lead but Cork were level by the 15th minute. Some outstanding football was served up by both teams. Colette Whyte and Ann Fitzpatrick gradually gained control at midfield and Waterford applied the pressure, Aine Wall and Helen Walsh on four occasions pointed for Waterford and Corks only reply was a Linda Ahearn goal to leave Waterford 0-08 to 1-03 ahead at half time.

Linda Aherne landed two magnificent points to level the scores before Waterford half back line of Siobhan Quinn, Frances Wall and Jenny Maher began to get the measure of their opponents. Waterford hit the Cork crossbar twice before the turning point came in the 50th minute Claire Fitzgerald shot through a crowded goalmouth and into the Cork net and Waterford shot two further points to seal victory on a 1-10 to 1-06 score line. The team that scored a significant Waterford win was: Caroline Morrissey (Ballinameela), Bridget Foley (Ardmore), Helen Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Deirdre O Ryan (Ballymacarbry), Siobhan Quinn (Ballinameela), Frances Wall (Ballymacarbry), Jenny Maher (Ballinameela), Ann Fitzpatrick (Capt), (Ballymacarbry), Colette Whyte (Killrossanty), Regina Morrissey (Ballinameela), Mona Fitzpatrick (Ballymacarbry), Claire Fitzgerald (Ballinameela), Helen Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Aine Wall (Ballymacarbry) Cork were the reigning All Ireland champions and the result was a shock but Waterford had prepared well and played well and deserved victory.

Noel Murray refereed the All Ireland senior Ladies football final at Pairc Ui Chaoimh between Kerry and Wexford. Kerry won the title for the fourth year in a row.

For Ballymacarbry the goal was still the Munster club championship. They faced old foes St Enda's at Rathcormack in early November and at last got the better of their great rivals on a 1-05 to 1-03 score line. There was great jubilation in the parish when the score was read out on Radio Eireann.

It was back to Rathcormac for the Munster final in late November against Castleisland. Ballymacarbry had beaten Castleisland the previous year but the Kerry champions had a number of the all conquering Kerry side who won 9 All Ireland senior titles in a row. Castleisland began well and were awarded a 5th minute penalty which they shot wide.

Ballymacarbry's defence was outstanding with Margaret Phelan, Betty Ryan, Ann Fitzpatrick and Dolores Hallinan particularly prominent and gradually they stemmed the tide. Marie Crotty pointed a free but Castleisland equalised in the 20th minute

with what was to be their only score and Helen Walsh pointed to give Ballymacarbry a 0-02 to 0-01 interval lead. As the second half progressed it was obvious that Ballymacarbry were the fitter side, after a series of near misses Mona Fitzpatrick landed a magnificent point and a great passing movement saw Ann Barron add another. With 2 minutes to go Marie Crotty pointed a free to secure a 0-05 to 0-01 victory and Ballymacarbry at last were Munster senior club champions. The panel of players which achieved a historic win and the start of an era was : Brigid McGrath, Betty Ryan, Margaret Phelan, Patricia Butler, Dolores Hallinan, Frances Fitzpatrick, Ann Fitzpatrick, Bernie Ryan, Mari O Ryan, Mary Fitzpatrick, Marie Crotty (Capt), Ann Meehan, Una McNamara, Ann Barry, Eileen McGrath, Helen Walsh, Helen Condon, Deirdre O Ryan, Helen Walsh and Catherine Ryan.

After the game Munster ladies Gaelic President Tony Riordan, who had refereed the controversial Munster final the previous year, presented the cup to Ballymacarbry captain Marie Crotty and this triggered off wild celebrations which lasted until Christmas.

However Ballymacarbry still had an All Ireland series to play and that meant the training continued through the winter of 1985/1986. If the previous 4 years had been a test of character with definite progress made, 1986 was the year in which it definitely started to all come together as far as Waterford were concerned.