

Waterford Ladies Football History 1997

1997 began with a league clash with Laois in Cappoquin and in very poor conditions Laois scored a 1-06 to 2-02 victory. Incredibly Waterford failed to score in the first half and Laois led by 3 points. Waterford were level with a minute of the restart with a Rebecca Hallahan goal and despite an Aine Wall goal Laois prevailed. Next up was Kerry and a much improved performance brought a 5-08 to 1-04 victory with Fiona Crotty scoring 3 goals.

At congress in Fermanagh Noel Murray took over as National President the 1st Waterford person to do so. Waterford then scored an easy 7-19 to 1-04 victory over Carlow with Aine Wall scoring 4-05. Next came a trip to Moyle Park, Clondalkin to play All Ireland champions Monaghan. Waterford lined out without Aine Wall, Marie Crotty and Claire Ryan but made light of the handicap and scored a deserved 3-10 to 1-08 victory with Catherine Walsh, a youthful Mary O'Donnell and substitute Sarah Hickey scoring the goals.

In the minor A County final Na Deise beat St. Anne's 2-05 to 2-04 and Killrossanty won the minor B defeating Clashmore 4-11 to 2-05. On Sunday the 27 April Waterford defeated Clare in Walsh Park, the game was played as a curtain raiser to a national hurling league game between Waterford and Dublin.

The u14 team bowed out of the Munster championship at Fraher field going under to Tipperary 2-07 to 2-06. A trip to Gracefield (Offaly) brought a 5-11 to 1-13 victory over Mayo as Claire Ryan returned for the first time since the cruciate injury she sustained the previous July against Cork.

By now Waterford were in the league quarter final, a home game to Meath where they really turned on the style, trashing Meath 10-14 to 1-05 with Aine Wall shooting 2-06 and Geraldine O'Ryan scoring 3-00. Na Deise won a thrilling u16 A final defeating St. Anne's 3-02 to 1-07, the margin just a single point, the same victory they enjoyed in the Minor A final. Ballymacarbry beat Clashmore 6-14 to 3-05 in the u16 B final.

The league semi final was in Duggan Park, Ballinasloe against Mayo. Early points by Cora Staunton and Christina Heffernan gave Mayo the lead but Aine Wall was on fire, she shot 1-02 in 3 minutes and ended with a personal tally of 2-06, Waterford won 3-20 to 1-10 the third goal scored by Sarah Hickey. On the same day Monaghan scored a late goal to defeat Clare 3-06 to 1-09 in the other semi final to set up an appetising league final. Jackie Murphy (Waterford) refereed the u14 championship game between Cork and Tipperary.

In the u16 championship Waterford began the defence of their All Ireland title with a 2-13 to 0-01 victory over Tipperary in Cahir and then defeated Clare 5-11 to 1-03 in junior. The u16 team then defeated Kerry comfortably 3-13 to 1-07 in the semi final and hammered Cork in the final, 4-12 to 1-01. On the 6th of July it was back to Duggan Park, Ballinasloe for the league final and what a game that turned out to be.

Waterford had the wind in the first half but only led 0-09 to 2-02 at half time, Monaghan goals scored by u16 players Niamh Kindlon and Edel Byrne. A Sarah Hickey goal in the 34th minute gave Waterford a boost and they led 1-12 to 2-04 after 47 minutes, however an Edel Byrne goal and a succession of points left Monaghan 2 points ahead after 58 minutes but late points from 15 year old Mary O Donnell and Claire Ryan made it a draw.

This meant fixture congestion, Waterford appealed to put back the league, but as usual with Waterford appeals it was unsuccessful so some players had to play 6 games in 16 days between adult and underage. Kerry were visitors to the Fraher field for the Munster semi final, Catriona Casey and Noirin Walsh were left on the bench but it made little difference as Waterford strolled to victory, 5-16 to 1-04 with Geraldine O Ryan scoring 2-04 and Aine Wall 2-03.

The following Sunday July 20th and back to Ballinasloe again for the league final replay and another thriller. A total of 35 scores, this time Monaghan had the wind in the first half and led 3-11 to 0-02 at half time, there seemed no way back. With 38 minutes gone there was still 18 points between the teams, Geraldine O Ryan pointed, and Catriona Casey's penalty was tipped over the bar by Martina Grey. Martina O Ryan, Aine Wall and Geraldine O Ryan all pointed before Wall hammered home a 47th minute goal. Then Martina O Ryan goaled and Monaghan were on the rack despite an Angela Larkin point, Aine Wall goaled again, Martina O Ryan, Julie Torpey and Claire Ryan pointed. Then Claire Ryan goaled but the referee gave a free out and Edel Byrne sealed a Monaghan victory with an injury time goal 4-15 to 3-13. Waterford almost pulled off the impossible and it certainly whet the appetite for the championship, where even more drama was about to unfold.

In the minor semi final Waterford beat Cork and the juniors faced Limerick in the Munster final at Bansha. Former senior players Ann Dunford and June Whyte were very prominent. Sinead Kirwin shot Waterford's 1st goal and there was no stopping them. Paula Walsh added a 2nd and the Deise girls led 2-04 to 0-02 at half time. A third goal by Breda Morrissey sealed a 3-11 to 1-08 victory, Limericks goal scored by Carmel Kirby, wife of intercounty hurler Gary Kirby who was present at the match.

Waterford lined out as follows: Nuala Hearn (Kill), June Whyte (Killrossanty), Denise Nugent (St.Pat's), Triona Whyte (Killrossanty), Helen Fitzpatrick (Ballymacarbry), Ann Dunford (Ballymacarbry), Sinead Kirwin (1-03, Killrossanty), Tanya Kirwin (Killrossanty), Paula Walsh (1-02, Ballymacarbry), Carolyn Ahern (0-02, Kill), Marion Troy (Na Deise), Breda Morrissey (1-00, Na Deise), Lorena Mooney (0-01, Kill), Monica Power (0-03, Brickey Rangers), Subs: Angie Walsh (Na Deise), Shirley Condon (Ballymacarbry), Martina Walsh (Killrossanty), Helen O Neill (Clashmore), Fiona Power (Killrossanty)

Mentors: Johnny Kirwin (Killrossanty), Ger Mooney (Kill) & Nicky Sheehan (Dungarvan). This was the 1st of 4 successive Munster junior titles for Waterford.

The u16 team then played Longford in the All Ireland semi final at Stradbally Laois and had to fight hard to get a 6-11 to 5-04 victory, Niamh Barry (2), Annette Raheer (2) and Noeleen Crowley scored the goals. A couple of days later several of the players lined out in the Munster minor final against Clare in Cappamore and they won comfortably with Niamh Barry and Sharon Foley scoring first half goals. The Munster senior final saw Waterford travel to Cusack Park, Ennis, in truth this game shouldn't have been played the pitch was covered in water was definitely dangerous. Why Clare didn't win this match they will never know and the fact that they didn't had much to do with a brilliant display by Waterford keeper Annalisa Crotty. The game had just 9 scores in total but 2 were goals, both scored by Waterford. In fact only 1 Waterford forward Geraldine O Ryan, scored, the other goal scored by defender Julie Torpey. The teams were level at half time 0-02 each.

Clare were awarded a penalty in the 32nd minute but Annalisa Crotty saved brilliantly from Claire Daly's risen shot. Clare had the wind and rain at their back, Carmel Bohannon gave Clare the lead. Martina O Ryan and Eithne Morrissey were having a real battle at midfield. Fiona Crotty moved to wing forward and had much to do with this victory. A defence splitting pass by Mary O Donnell picked out Geraldine O Ryan and she drove a ferocious shot past Clare keeper Mary Keane. In the 50th minute Morrissey shot the equalising point and Waterford were under intense pressure. Three consecutive saves by Crotty proved decisive. A rare break out of defence saw Julie Torpey move up field and she calmly lobbed the ball over Clare keeper Keane to give Waterford a 3 point lead in the dying moments. Clare had the last chance but a great late ditch tackle by Regina Byrne saved the day and Waterford completed the great escape.

In the Mary Walsh 7 a side tournament Ballymacarbry A team won the cup and the B team won the plate. In the minor All Ireland semi final Waterford played Laois in Tipperary Town and this was another thriller. Breda Morrissey shot 3 Waterford goals but Laois battled on, indeed the Leinster champions missed a second half penalty and after that and it took a super save by keeper Nuala Hearn to secure a 3 point victory, 3-06 to 2-06.

The junior team were away to Longford in the All Ireland semi final and this game was fixed for Pearse Park, Longford. Longford played with the wind in the first half and led 0-03 to 0-00 after 10 minutes. A Monica Power point and a Lorena Mooney goal gave Waterford the lead but the Waterford defence were caught napping in the 25th minute and Longford corner forward Kate O'Brien goaled and they led 1-05 to 1-02 at half time. Waterford had the breeze in the second half but never got going and despite late points by Monica Power, Paula Walsh and Sinead Kirwin, Longford won deservedly 2-10 to 1-07. The u16 All Ireland final brought another clash with Monaghan on the 6th of September at Hogan Park, Moate.

Waterford were bidding for 3 in a row, rain fell throughout the game and early points by Niamh Barry and Mary O Donnell gave them the lead but senior players Niamh Kindlon and Edel Byrne levelled it up for Monaghan. Another O Donnell point

and Niamh Barry shot to the net after taking a pass from Annette Raheer and a point by Noeleen Crowley gave Waterford a 1-04 to 0-02 interval lead.

The first 20 minutes of the second half were scoreless then Ciara McGuinness got a Monaghan goal and a Niamh Kindlon point reduced the deficit to the minimum. Then team captain Marion Troy took the game by the scruff of the neck when she raced through the Monaghan defence and blazed the ball to the back of the net. Mary O'Donnell added two points and Julie Mai Keane made the game safe when she poached a goal. Monaghan did score 1-01 late in injury time but Waterford were home and though not exactly dry and were deserving All Ireland u16 champions. Team: Leigh Mulhearn (Killrossanty), Bridget Hannigan (Kill), Karen Barry (Dunhill/Fenor), Catherine Fitzgerald (Na Deise), Ann Morrissey (St.Pat's), Tanya Kirwin (Killrossanty), Melissa Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Mary O'Donnell (0-04, Old Parish), Marion Troy (1-00, Captain, Na Deise), Niamh Barry (1-01, Dunhill/Fenor), Angie Walsh (Na Deise), Julie Mai Keane (1-00, Kill), Aine Ryan (Ballymacarbry), Noeleen Crowley (0-01, Kill), Annette Raheer (Dunhill/Fenor), Subs: Deirdre Power (Killrossanty), Sari Flynn (Dunhill/Fenor), Grace O'Brien (Old Parish), Karen Kelly (Kill), Christine Keating (Killrossanty), Ciara Power (Clashmore), Lisa Prendergast (Old Parish), Kate O'Sullivan (Kilmacthomas)

Mentors: Brigid Grant (Ballymacarbry), Nicky Sheehan (Dungarvan), Brian Wall (Dungarvan)

National President Noel Murray presented the cup to Waterford captain Marion Troy.

The All Ireland senior semi final saw Waterford draw away to Meath. At a challenge match at Lismore v Dublin two weeks before the game Aine Wall picked up an injury that ruled her out of the semi final on the 31st August. On the morning of the game the news broke that Lady Diane Spencer had been killed in a road accident in France. The game was played in Pairc Tailtean (Navan) in heavy rain, after ten minutes the teams were level, as Catriona Casey and Christine O'Brien (Meath) swapped points, Casey and Mary O'Donnell (2) added points before Julie Torpey made a great run through the Meath defence and placed Rebecca Hallahan for a goal. Claire Ryan and Catriona Casey edged Waterford into a 1-06 to 0-01 lead after 20 minutes before Noirin Walsh carried the ball over her own goal line to give Meath a lifeline. A brace of points by Mary O'Donnell gave Waterford an 8 point interval lead. Any hopes of a Meath come back were dashed in the 32nd minute when Catriona Casey broke through and drew a defender before placing Geraldine O'Ryan for a goal. Within 3 minutes wing back Sarah Hickey was fouled and Catriona Casey drove home the resultant penalty and further goals by Martina O'Ryan and Rebecca Hallahan sealed a 5-11 to 2-06 victory.

On Saturday the 21 September the minors travelled to Moneygall (Tipperary) to play Mayo in the All Ireland semi final. Mayo had a bad record against Waterford but seemed set to rectify this with a great first half display. Cora Staunton goaled and the westerners led 1-05 to 0-02 at the stroke of half time, and then against the run

of play Breda Morrissey scored her customary goal and completely changed the course of the game. An early second half goal by Annette Raheer and a defensive switch which saw Sarah Hickey move to corner back to mark Cora Staunton curbed Mayo and a succession of points brought a surprisingly easy second half victory 2-14 to 1-06.

Waterford: Nuala Hearn (Kill), Bridget Hannigan (Kill), Sarah Hickey (Brickey Rangers), Honor O'Brien (St.Pat's), Ann Morrissey (St.Pat's), Tanya Kirwin (Killrossanty), Margaret Foley (Clashmore), Mary O'Donnell (Old Parish), Marion Troy (Na Deise), Niamh Barry (Dunhill/Fenor), Paula Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Margaret Foley (Clashmore), Angie Walsh (Na Deise), Breda Morrissey (Na Deise), Annette Raheer (1-02, Dunhill/Fenor) Subs: Sharon Foley (0-01, Brickey Rangers), Julie Mai Keane (Kill), Catherine Fitzgerald (Na Deise), Karen Barry (Dunhill/Fenor), Aine Ryan (Ballymacarbry), Helen O'Neill (Clashmore), Martina Walsh (Killrossanty), Claire Dee (Killrossanty), Fiona Power (Killrossanty), Claire Morrissey (St.Garbhans)

Management: Jimmy O'Rourke (Clashmore), Brigid Grant (Ballymacarbry)

Now that the u16 and minor double had been captured Waterford went in search of the treble. Aine Wall was slowly recovering from injury and the All Ireland senior final was fixed for Croke Park on Sunday 12 October. This time the roles of previous years was reversed, Monaghan were the reigning champions, Waterford the challengers. For the first time Waterford would have to line out without Marie Crotty whose career was cut short by injury. For years the Dublin based players were trained by Biddy Butler but in 1997 Marie took over the role and also joined the Waterford back room team.

Monaghan included a pair of 15 year olds Edel Byrne and Niamh Kindlon in attack and it was these two young ladies that took the game by the scruff of the neck. Diane Dempsey kicked a lovely Monaghan point and then Byrne crashed home a goal and a point. Waterford were struggling but Geraldine O'Ryan took a pass from Olivia Condon and scored a goal. Monaghan's reply was instant and Niamh Kindlon scored the goal of the year to help Monaghan to a 9 point interval lead. Some harsh words were said in the Waterford dressing room at half time and the players responded. Bit by bit they whittled down the lead Catriona Casey shot points and Aine Wall, Claire Ryan, Geraldine O'Ryan and Fiona Crotty were all on target and by the 50th minute the teams were level.

Thus Geraldine O'Ryan put Waterford into the lead and Catriona Casey gave them a two point cushion. The game went into injury time but the battle went on. Monaghan hit back with a point with 4 minutes of injury time played out then Jenny Greenan shot the equaliser. There was 36 minutes on the clock when Monaghan took the lead with an Edel Byrne point. Time played there was a premature pitch invasion but referee Finbar O'Driscoll played on and Byrne shot another point before O'Driscoll finally called time after 11 ½ minutes of added time.

To say that Waterford were furious was an understatement particularly with O'Driscoll attempting to justify his actions. The newspaper headlines the following day

read – Heartbreak at Croke Park- Holders Monaghan steal epic- Edel (15) star of the show for Monaghan. Con Houlihan wrote “Ladies reach untold heights, last weeks final was the best yet”

Waterford: Annalisa Crotty (Ballymacarbry), Regina Byrne (Ballymacarbry), Siobhan O Ryan (Ballymacarbry), Deirdre O Rourke (Clashmore), Sarah Hickey (Brickey Rangers), Olivia Condon (Na Deise), Julie Torpey (Kill), Martina O Ryan (Ballymacarbry), Noirin Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Fiona Crotty (0-02, Ballymacarbry), Rebecca Hallahan (0-02, Ballymacarbry), Catriona Casey (0-02, Ballymacarbry), Geraldine O Ryan (1-03, Ballymacarbry), Aine Wall (0-01, Ballymacarbry), Claire Ryan (0-03, Ballymacarbry), Subs: Sinead Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Catherine Walsh (St.Pat's), Mary O Donnell (Old Parish), Deirdre Nagle (Brickey Rangers), Paula Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Helen Fitzpatrick (Ballymacarbry), Lorena Mooney (Kill)

Management: Michael Ryan (Ballymacarbry), Brigid Grant (Ballymacarbry), Marie Crotty (Ballymacarbry).

Monaghan's Margaret Kerins commented after the game “I said after last years win that the only challenge left was to beat Waterford in a Croke Park final, before the game I thought it might have been my last. But winning is such a great feeling I'll probably stick around for another year”.

The Association realised that there was a problem with time keeping and after much debate it was decided to introduce the clock to look after same. Finbar O Driscoll's controversial decision led to a mile stone in the Association.

Ballymacarbry still had a club championship to play, Donoughmore, an up and coming Cork club were the Munster final opponents at Ballyhooly. Ballymacarbry started well and Rebecca Hallahan goal in the 13th minute gave them a five point interval lead, leading 1-07 to 0-03. Aine Wall's 43rd minute goal put them on the way to a 2-13 to 0-09 victory and regained the Munster club title.

Five Waterford players won All Star awards, Annalisa Crotty 3rd award in Goal, Siobhan O Ryan 1st award at full back, Julie Torpey 3rd award at left half back, while Catriona Casey and Geraldine O Ryan won their 3rd awards in the corner forward positions. Fund raising began for a team holiday in the Canary Islands.

The All Ireland club semi final saw Ballymacarbry travel to the Blackrock club grounds in Cork City where they recorded a 4-20 to 1-04 victory over Parnell's (London) Former Waterford minor Ann Harney played at centre back for Parnell's, Michelle Walsh who won several adult club medals with Ballymacarbry played at wing back for Parnell's whilst Helen Fitzpatrick played at left corner back for Ballymacarbry and her sister Marie was at left corner back for Parnell's. Another Waterford girl Suzanne Nagle was a sub on the Parnell's team. Aine Wall scored 3-03, Catriona Casey 0-05 and Ballymacarbry's fourth goal was scored by substitute Shirley Condon.

A mock wedding, to help fund a team holiday, was held at the Hidden Inn, Kilmanahan on the 28 November. Tipperary Inter County hurlers Paul Shelley and John Leahy acted as groom and best man and the huge crowd enjoyed a great night and raised fifteen hundred pounds for the holiday fund.

Kill beat Brickey Rangers 2-06 to 0-10 in the intermediate County final at Lemybrien. Another fund raiser was to produce a ladies Gaelic football calendar. A Leinster firm had tried to bring out a Waterford calendar at the same time without compensating Waterford but this was nipped in the bud. A league fixture was played on the 30th of November and Waterford beat Clare 5-11 to 4-03 at Cusack Park, Ennis, Aine Wall (2), Catriona Casey, Claire Ryan and Julie Torpey got the goals.

On Sunday the 7th December Ballymacarbry travelled to O Kennedy Park, New Ross and took on Shelmaliers, the reigning champions in the All Ireland club final. A huge crowd turned up in anticipation. Both teams and their subs paraded behind the local pipe band the first quarter was even then Aine Wall crashed home a goal, Catriona Casey tacked on two points and a Mairead Ryan goal in the 30th minute saw Ballymacarbry lead 2-03 to 0-01 at half time.

Within two minutes of the restart the game was over, Mairead Ryan pointed then Aine Wall and Rebecca Hallahan shot goals. Ballymacarbry tacked on the points, and Mairead Ryan goaled again in the 46th minute as the Waterford and Munster champions ran out easy 5-10 to 0-03 winners. Claire Ryan won player of the final and Shelmaliers sportingly formed a guard of honour as the Ballymacarbry players left the pitch.

Ballymacarbry: Annalisa Crotty, Ann Dunford, Siobhan O Ryan, Helen Fitzpatrick, Sinead Walsh, Noirin Walsh, Paula Walsh, Catriona Casey (0-04), Rebecca Hallahan (1-00), Fiona Crotty, Aine Wall (2-02), Geraldine O Ryan (0-01), Mairead Ryan (2-01), Claire Ryan (0-02), Aine Ryan Subs: Martina O Ryan, Amy Fahey, Shirley Condon, Melissa Walsh, Patricia Butler
Management: Manager/Trainer/Coach Michael Ryan, Assistant Coach Brigid Grant,

Honours:

Waterford Munster senior champions

Waterford Munster & All Ireland u16 champions

Waterford Munster & All Ireland minor champions

Ballymacarbry Munster & All Ireland senior club champions

All Stars: Annalisa Crotty, Ballymacarbry (Goalkeeper), Siobhan O Ryan Ballymacarbry, (full back), Julie Torpey Kill, (left half back), while Catriona Casey and Geraldine O Ryan both Ballymacarbry, took the corner forward positions