

## Waterford Ladies Football History 1998

In 1998, Michael Ryan returned as County Board Chairman and former Waterford player Marie Crotty took up a position as Manager of the Westmeath ladies Gaelic football team. The Waterford senior team began the year with a team holiday in Gran Canaria in late January and this played a major part in team bonding and building team spirit.

Ironically Waterford's first league clash was a game against Westmeath at the Fraher field on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February which Waterford won and they followed this up with victory over Wexford with an incredible 8-13 to 0-05 score line, Aine Wall shot 3-02, Catriona Casey got 2-04 and Claire Ryan notched 1-03.

In a positional switch from the previous year goalkeeper, Annalisa Crotty and wingback Sarah Hickey had switched positions. Waterford Crystal provided valuable sponsorship to help teams prepare for the championship, this was organised by Senan Cooke, although Lawlors Hotel continued as the main sponsor. Waterford travelled to Graigcullen to play Laois and won, 4-12 to 2-04 Geraldine O Ryan (2), Mary O Donnell and Claire Ryan got the goals.

Ballymacarbry organised a function to present the previous years all Ireland club medals on the 28<sup>th</sup> March at the Hidden Inn, Kilmanahan and Kerry's all Ireland winning goal keeper Declan O Keeffe presented the medals. Waterford defeated Donegal 5-27 to 0-01 in a league game and followed this up with another big win over Monaghan.

In the minor B County final Clashmore defeated Ballymacarbry 4-09 to 0-04 and in the minor C final Tramore defeated Ardmore 3-05 to 3-02. By the 10<sup>th</sup> of May Waterford had qualified for the league final and they travelled to Naomh Barrog in Dublin and decisively beat Monaghan 3-17 to 1-05. Monaghan were the league champions in '96 & '97. Olivia Condon, who had an outstanding game at midfield, burst through and kicked the opening point in the fifth minute, Claire Ryan tacked on another but Margaret Kerins and Niamh Kindlon levelled it up. Claire Ryan and Julie Torpey nudged Waterford 2 points in front by the 16<sup>th</sup> minute. Then a blistering drive came back off the crossbar, Rebecca Hallahan reacted quicker than anybody else and deposited the ball in the Monaghan net. It triggered a vintage Waterford spell Claire Ryan (twice), Aine Wall, Fiona Crotty, Geraldine O Ryan and Olivia Condon larded a succession of points and at half time Waterford led 1-10 to 0-03, the opposite scenario to last years league final. Margaret Kerins and Geraldine O Ryan swapped points then Orla O Reilly drove a loose ball to the Waterford net but then Waterford took over Aine Wall goaled in the 39<sup>th</sup> minute then Olivia Condon lashed home another, Geraldine O Ryan, Mary O Donnell, Claire Ryan, Catriona Casey, O Donnell again and Julie Torpey all weighed in with points, to complete a rout and ensure an 18 point victory.

The league final took place 2 weeks later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> May at Tipperary Town. Waterford started where they finished against Monaghan Geraldine O Ryan shot 3

consecutive points, then Clare broke away and scored a good goal but Waterford recovered quickly, Aine Wall (2) and Catriona Casey points. With Olivia Condon and Catriona Casey outstanding at midfield, the forwards got a good supply of the ball and a Geraldine O Ryan goal helped Waterford to a 1-08 to 1-01 interval lead.

Clare had a strong wind in the second half but Waterford continued to dominate, Mary O Donnell pointed and Geraldine O Ryan got a brilliant goal. Claire Ryan and Martina O Ryan tacked on points and Geraldine O Ryan after a great run set up Mary O Donnell for a goal and Waterford were 15 points ahead with 50 minutes played. The next 13 minutes (including injury time) was incredible as Clare inspired by Eithne Morrissey and Annie Ryan stormed into the game and shot 3-04 without reply to reduce the deficit to a single point. Indeed their last point was a brilliant save as Sarah Hickey diverted a pile driver inches over the bar and the kick out brought the final whistle, relief for Waterford and a third league title since 1992.

Waterford: Sarah Hickey (Brickey Rangers), Paula Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Siobhan O Ryan (Captain, Ballymacarbry), Noirin Walsh (Ballymacarbry), Annlisa Crotty (Ballymacarbry), Deirdre O Rourke (Clashmore), Julie Torpey (Kill), Olivia Condon (Na Deise), Catriona Casey (0-01, Ballymacarbry), Rebecca Hallahan (Ballymacarbry), Mary O Donnell (1-01, Old Parish), Fiona Crotty (Ballymacarbry), Aine Wall (0-02, Ballymacarbry), Claire Ryan (0-01, Ballymacarbry), Geraldine O Ryan (2-04, Ballymacarbry), Subs: Martina O Ryan (0-01, Ballymacarbry), Deirdre Nagle.

In the Munster under 14 semi final Waterford defeated Cork 3-12 to 1-06 at Carrignavar and then played Kerry in the final at Buttevant. The game ended in a draw Waterford 1-11 Kerry 2-08. The reply was another thriller Waterford eventually winners 4-11 to 4-07, Kerry led 3-05 to 3-03 at the interval Waterford's goals scored by Mary O Rourke (2) and Noirin O Donnell. On the resumption, two O Rourke points levelled the scores and further goals by Marian Ryan and O Rourke again sealed victory. In the Community games, County final Stradbally defeated Ballymacarbry at Stradbally.

Waterford then played Galway in the U14 All Ireland semi final at Newmarket on Fergus and won an incredible game 11-10 to 7-01. On the 30<sup>th</sup> June, Ardmore beat St.Oliver's 5-11 to 4-06 in the u16 A County final. Old Parish scored 4-12 to 2-06 victory over Kilrossanty whilst St.Anne's won the minor A County final defeating Na Deise 2-06 to 1-05.

On Saturday July 18<sup>th</sup> the u14 team travelled to Dr.Cullen Park, Carlow for the All Ireland final and trailed at half time 2-04 to 0-05 with Mary O Rourke scoring all Waterford five points whilst Meath goals scored by Jackie Shields and Geraldine Doherty. Meath shot a quick point in the 31<sup>st</sup> minute but goals by Mary O Rourke and Marian Ryan levelled the game. Waterford had a penalty taken by Mary O Rourke saved by Meath Goalkeeper Lisa Moroney. Meath then lost key defender Mary Sheridan (injured) Waterford were awarded a second penalty which Aoife

Murphy goaled. But a late goal by Meath's Susan Sullivan levelled the game deep in injury time. Elaine Power shot the winning Waterford point and a first ever u14 title.

Waterford: Eimer Power, Natalie O Connor, Elaine McGrath, Sandy Walsh, Brid Hearn, Una Leahy, Aileen Barron, Mairead Hogan, Deirdre Breathnach (Captain), Karen Kelly, Aoife Murphy (1-00), Elaine Power (0-01), Mary Foley, Mary O Rourke (1-07), Marian Ryan (1-00).

The u14 All Ireland title safely in the bag there was a quick dash to Pairc Ui Rinn for a double header, in the Munster junior championship. Waterford scored a 6-13 to 2-06 victory over Cork helped by a hat trick of goals by Breda Morrissey. Playing at wing back, for the juniors was Triona Whyte a player who was to have a big say in the senior final 3 months later. In the senior match, Waterford destroyed Cork 3-18 to 1-00 with Aine Wall notching 2-05 and Catriona Casey 1-05. The u16 team defeated Kerry 7-08 to 5-06 to claim a fourth Provincial final in a row and on the 25<sup>th</sup> July, the juniors also won the Munster title defeating Clare 3-11 to 3-07 at Cooraclare. However, the minors narrowly lost to Kerry in the semi final by a single point, 2-07 to 1-09, their first defeat in the grade since 1995 and the chance of a 3<sup>rd</sup> successive minor and u16 double was gone.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> August, Waterford travelled to Birr to play Mayo in the u16 All Ireland semi final and they destroyed the Western champions 10-15 to 2-05 with full forward Lisa Prendergast scoring five goals and a week later the seniors played Clare in the Munster final at Fraher field. After the previous years cliff-hanger much was expected from the Banner but Waterford took the game by the scruff of the neck. Early goals by Geraldine O Ryan and Rebecca Hallahan put Waterford in the driving seat. Clare midfielder Annie Ryan hit the bar in the 14<sup>th</sup> minute a couple of minutes later Rebecca Hallahan struck the upright but Aine Wall drove the rebound to the net and Waterford led 3-07 to 0-04 at half time.

Annie Ryan goaled for Clare in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute but Waterford settled with a Geraldine O Ryan goal. Aoife Healy shot two late Clare goals but Waterford were deserving 4-11 to 3-07 winners and secured a 5<sup>th</sup> Munster senior title in a row. The junior team were present at the match and then jumped on a bus and headed for Roscommon for an All Ireland quarter final the following day.

In Ballyleague Roscommon eventually got the better of stubborn Waterford resistance, Regina Carley and Lorraine Connon scored 2-02 each. Waterford had led 0-09 to 2-02 at half time the points coming from Deirdre Nagle (3), Lorena Mooney (3), Aine Ryan (2) and Marion Troy but despite second half goals by Marion Troy and Brigid Hannigan Roscommon won by 4 points, 4-08 to 2-10.

The u16 team then played old rivals Monaghan in the All Ireland final at Cashel. The Deise girls were going for an incredible four in a row. The old "Sean focal tosach maith leath na hoibre" was never seen to greater effect as Waterford went for the jugular. The team were fired up by the previous years "long count" and Niamh Barry cracked home 3 goals in the opening ten minutes. Monaghan were reeling and just

when they began to stage a comeback Mary O Donnell goaled again. The game was over as a contest when O Donnell shot her second goal in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute and although she left the field injured shortly afterwards Waterford ran out easy winners 6-08 to 3-06 whilst Kate O Sullivan outstanding in goal and team captain Brigid Hannigan winning the player of the match award. Waterford: Kate O Sullivan, Ciara Prendergast, Christine Keating, Donna Frost, Brigid Hannigan (Captain), Melissa Walsh, Fiona O Reilly, Mary O Donnell, Miriam Liston, Marion Troy, Cleona O Keeffe, Aine Ryan, Lisa Prendergast, Niamh Barry, Subs: Grace O Brien, Kate Maher, Mairead Liston, Amy Kiely, Leanne Walsh, Dolores Condon, Grainne Curran, Julie O Donnell, Helen Cliffe. Mentors: Johnny Kirwan, Sean Foley, June Whyte

The following day the seniors played Mayo in the All Ireland semi final at Fraher field. Mayo Keeper Denise Horan denied Aine Wall with a brilliant save in the 11<sup>th</sup> minute but 2 minutes later wing back Julie Torpey began a move deep in defence and half a dozen passes later Torpey was at the end of the move to crack home a great goal. By half time Waterford led 1-07 to 0-04 but were not impressive.

Mayo had a strong wind in the second half but Waterford put in a storming 32<sup>nd</sup> quarter and points by Catriona Casey (3) Aine Wall (2) and Claire Ryan put them in the driving seat. With Martina O Ryan and Olivia Condon outstanding at midfield and Deirdre O Rourke having a fine game at centre back. Mayo ran out of ideas and Waterford won 1-15 to 1-04, with Catriona Casey shooting 6 points.

In the other semi final also on the same day, Monaghan kept on course for three in a row overcoming a 1-06 to 0-02 interval deficit. The western side succeeded in missing 2 penalties but Edel Byrne hit 5 points as they eventually won 0-13 to set up the final the entire Country had been waiting for since the '97 overtime saga. When the news filtered through to the Fraher field that Monaghan had won, the Waterford players were happy, they really wanted to play Monaghan in the final, and time would tell if they could overturn the previous years result.

The round up to the final was electric, Waterford were flying in training but suffered a serious set back a week before the final when Annalisa Crotty twisted her ankle in training and was very unlikely to make the final. Waterford kept the injury quiet, sent Crotty for daily treatment and named her on the team to give her every chance. A fitness test was organised for the morning of the game at the St.Vincent's G.A.A Grounds at Marino.

Hard as she tried, she failed the test and both she and the team were devastated. Minutes before the game 16-year-old Mary O Donnell was told she was playing, Rebecca Hallahan moved back to wingback and O Donnell came in at wing forward. Waterford got off to a disastrous start in front of an attendance of 16,421 spectators. The game was televised live for the first time by R.T.E and the clock was introduced for the first time, after the previous year's controversy it was decided to take time keeping out of the referee's hands. Hardly a vote of confidence in the previous years referee and certainly Waterford had no complaints. The idea was that

the clock would count down from 30 minutes and would be stopped for breaks in play.

Waterford began with 13 of the '97 team, the newcomers being Mary O Donnell and Paula Walsh replacing Regina Byrne and the injured Crotty. Against the breeze Catriona Casey opened Waterford's account with a point but the first warning that all was not well in the Waterford defence came 2 minutes later when Edel Byrnes drive went over the bar off the cross bar and Niamh Kindlon 13<sup>th</sup> minute goal gave Monaghan a 2-03 to 0-04 lead.

Brenda McAnespie produced a fantastic 24<sup>th</sup> minute save to deny Aine Wall but three successive points reduced the deficit to manageable proportions, 3-04 to 0-07 with Waterford to have the wind at their backs in the second half. Waterford came out like a team inspired in the second half, two quick Catriona Casey points two more from Geraldine O Ryan, and Aine Wall reduced the deficit to 2 points with 34 minutes played. Waterford continued to dominate and it was no surprise when Rebecca Hallahan scored a great goal to edge them into the lead. The introduction of Triona Whyte and Deirdre Nagle was paying off.

With the game slipping away from Monaghan they introduced Ciara McGuinness and then a high lob came back off the Waterford bar and Ciara McGuinness stepped around keeper Sarah Hickey and slotted the equalising goal. Now the momentum was with Monaghan. Waterford keeper Hickey produced a great save from Kindlon and with the clock ticking down Martina O Ryan's drive drifted wide of the upright. A draw, "Beidh la eile"

The following day's headings paid tribute to two gallant teams. Ladies Gaelic football the real winner, the mother of all battles, archrivals cannot be separated. Ladies day is a Croker thriller, Byrne runs out of luck, Monaghan saved by goal rush, pulsating all Ireland football final, to name but a few.

But the real question was who would win the replay. Waterford left headquarters a very happy band despite having victory snatched from them. The news that the replay could not take place for three weeks was a major boost. It meant that Annalisa Crotty would almost certainly be fit for the replay. Crotty was a huge loss and would certainly improve a porous defence.

Meanwhile there was club matches to be played, Clashmore qualified for the Munster junior club final on Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> of October they played Naomh Abán at Ovens (Cork) but were well beaten 5-11 to 1-05, their goal punched to the net by Helen O Neill. They fielded a very young team and although they fought to the end, were well beaten.

Clashmore: B. Lombard, C. Power, S. O Rourke, A. Barron, M. Casey, H. O Neill, D. O Rourke, M. Foley, A. M Casey, M. O Rourke, M Casey, L. O Brien, A. Beresford, C. O Keeffe, M Beausang, Subs: A Sweeney, L. Hallah, F. O Rourke, M Hickey.

On the same day, Ballymacarbry took on Donoughmore (Cork) in the Munster senior club championship final. The sides had met in the previous years final and Ballymacarbry won by 10 points, this time the signs were different. By virtue of the system of the time the champions of the other five Counties played a B championship with the winner to play Ballymacarbry in the A final. Donoughmore club won that B competition and the omens looked good when the Cork champions led 2-06 to 0-10 at half time. However, Ballymacarbry stepped up several gears in the second half and scored an incredible 1-21 in 30 minutes. Aine Wall ended with a total of 0-10, Catriona Casey and Fiona Crotty both scored 0-04 each whilst Rebecca Hallahan shot 1-02 as Ballymacarbry ran out winners 1-31 to 3-09.

In the intermediate league, final Brickey Rangers defeated Kill 3-12 to 0-10. Meanwhile Annalisa Crotty continued to undergo extensive treatment on her leg injury, Physio Billy Kelly treated her virtually every day. Brother Lennon (St. Agustines) played a big part in the fitness preparations and on the Saturday evening week before the match the team did a light training session at St. Agustines followed by Mass in the college and a video analysis session to round off a great evening.

Morale was high for the rest of the week and by Thursday Annalisa Crotty was declared fit. Triona Whyte did enough when coming on as a second half substitute in the drawn game and held her place. Waterford headed for Dublin on the Saturday evening and on the morning of the replay trained at the St. Vincents club grounds. After a light session Br Lennon declared "I can't see them being beaten" The replay Sunday October 25<sup>th</sup> attracted a crowd of 13,551 spectators, over 3,000 down on the drawn game. The newspapers had different opinions on the out come. "Expect the unexpected" "They have a lot to live up to" declared Sean McGoldrick. Jackie Cahill wrote "Crotty can win it for Waterford" Kevin Carney wrote in the Hogan Stand "An improved defence display should see Waterford through" celebrated journalist Tom O Riordan wrote "Waterford have the final edge" David Kelly worded "can their possibly be any more drama left as we arrive at this latest instalment between these two teams" and noted that 7 different players had scored for each side in the drawn game.

The game was again televised live and Colm O Rourke declared that Monaghan would win because of their greater ability to score goals. Waterford made positional switches, indeed only two defenders started in the same position this time round, Annalisa Crotty started at number 2, Noirin Walsh at full back and team captain Siobhan O Ryan moved to number 4 to mark Edel Byrne, whilst Triona Whyte started at number 5.

The referee again was Christy Haughney (Carlow). A bitter chilly wind blew down towards the railway goal but Monaghan started well and Waterford seemed in trouble after 20 minutes as they had failed to take advantage of the wind. Then they had a stroke of good fortune as Mary O Donnell's lob from out near the Hogan Stand dropped in under the crossbar to raise the green flag. Further points by Julie Torpey

and Martina O Ryan gave Waterford a 1-08 to 0-05 interval lead, exactly the same margin that Monaghan enjoyed 3 weeks previously.

The second half was going to be a real test for Waterford's defence, the Deise girls began the second half with a bang as Aine Wall, Catriona Casey, and Rebecca Hallahan pointed. The Brendan Martin cup seemed destined for Suirside after 45 minutes when the O Ryan twins combined to put attacking wing back Julie Torpey through and she lobbed the ball over Brenda McAnespie to give Waterford what seemed an unassailable lead.

However there was to be another twist in the tale, Jenny Greenan and Angela Larkin combined and Linda Farrelly squeezed home a goal. Margaret Kerins pointed from the kick out. Geraldine O Ryan popped over a welcome point and back came Monaghan and Diane Dempsey goaled from Larkin's pass. Now Waterford were on the rack and after a fine Sarah Hickey save, Niamh Kindlon blasted to the net to reduce the deficit to a single point with 10 minutes left. With the wind behind them Monaghan seemed certain winners but incredibly they were not to score again. In those final 10 minutes the Waterford defence was absolutely magnificent Deirdre O Rourke got the better of Larkin, Claire Ryan moved back as an extra defender and Waterford had a little bit of the luck that deserted them in '97.

For the umpteenth time Julie Torpey broke from defence to kick a priceless point and Catriona Casey kicked a difficult right wing free into the teeth of the breeze for a three point cushion. Still Monaghan came forward, Sarah Hickey with two great saves and both the post and crossbar denied them before the hooter sounded. Waterford were champions and what was the possibly the greatest final that was ever played.

National President Noel Murray a native of Waterford delivered the speech, ironically he lived next door to Waterford captain Siobhan O Ryan but just as he prepared to lift the cup to make the presentation, O Ryan grabbed it much to the amazement of Bertie Ahern and G.A.A president Joe McDonagh. There was one final act and Deirdre Nagle who came on as a second half substitute rendered "Dungarvan my home town", the perfect end to a great game and a fantastic day.

Waterford woke up to the following newspaper headlines on Monday morning. "Wonders of Waterford", "Can't beat the blues", "Waterford make a thrilling point", "Torpey's a Deise delight", "Ladies day a Croker thriller", "Waterford show their girl power", "Waterford crowned champions after a classic".

Wingback Julie Torpey won both the player of the match award and the Irish Independent sport star of the week award. The homecoming was memorable as a crowd of estimated 5,000 people packed into Grattan Square in Dungarvan on Monday. The donor of the cup Brendan Martin travelled down to be part of the celebrations as the All Ireland winning teams at Senior, U16, U14 and the Munster junior champions were driven into the town centre on an open top bus with Tom Keith, along with Council officials, again the organisers of a superb event.

For Ballymacarbry there was still a club championship to be played. St. Eunans of Letterkenny were visitors to the Mill field a week later. The Donegal side were out of their depth a Geraldine O Ryan goal gave Ballymacarbry a 1-06 to 0-02 interval lead, they eventually ran out 3-15 to 0-02 winners and Geraldine O Ryan shooting 2-05.

Next up was a tricky senior final away to Carnacon deep in west Mayo. Carnacon requested that Ballymacarbry bring the Brendan Martin cup with them which they did and for the first time the All Ireland senior cup was in Mayo territory. Within twelve months, the cup was to be back again as Mayo won the title at Waterford's expense.

Ballymacarbry scored an easy 4-21 to 0-03 victory over Carnacon and on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> November travelled to Birr to play Dublin champions Portobello in the All Ireland club final. Ballymacarbry had a new Manager, Bridget Grant had taken over from Michael Ryan and she did a great job getting the players focused after the victory over Monaghan.

Claire Ryan opened the scoring with a point but former Kerry player Fionnula Ruane equalised for Portobello. In the 11<sup>th</sup> minute, Annalisa Crotty put Geraldine O Ryan in for a goal. Claire Ryan (2), Aine Wall and Fiona Crotty pointed before Ballymacarbry struck a mortal blow in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute as Annalisa Crotty goaled. Further points by Aine Wall (2), Claire Ryan and Fiona Crotty to a single reply by Christine McGinnitty left Ballymacarbry virtually out of sight leaders 2-09 to 0-03 at the interval.

The second half saw Portobello make a determined effort with 5 consecutive points by Marie Gallagher (2), McGinnitty, Mary Brennan and Marie Breheny, but the Waterford champions finished strongly and reeled off 6 further points by Rebecca Hallahan (3), Claire Ryan, Catriona Casey and Geraldine O Ryan to win the All Ireland senior club title for an incredible 10<sup>th</sup> time in 12 seasons.

Ballymacarbry: Aine Ryan, Paula Walsh, Siobhan O Ryan, Helen Fitzpatrick, Sinead Walsh, Noirin Walsh, Regina Byrne, Martina O Ryan (0-01), Catriona Casey (0-02), Annalisa Crotty (1-00), Rebecca Hallahan (0-03), Fiona Crotty (0-01), Aine Wall (0-03), Claire Ryan (0-05), Geraldine O Ryan (1-01), Subs: Amy Fahey, Ann Dunford, Melissa Walsh, Leanne Walsh, Linda Wall, Shirley Condon, Patricia Butler.

For County players the season still wasn't finished as Waterford played Laois in the opening round of the '99 league at Ballymacarbry the following Sunday December 6<sup>th</sup> Waterford scored an incredible 15-24 to 1-01 victory with Corner forward Aine Wall scoring 7-06, full forward Claire Ryan shot 1-06 and the other corner forward Geraldine O Ryan notched 3-03 giving a combined total of 11-15 for the full forward line.

Tracy Lawlor got Laois total 1-01 also playing that day were Margaret Phelan, Mary Kirwin, Claire and Mary Casey and within three years the team that lost by 65 points

at the Mill field were All Ireland senior champions whilst Waterford haven't since reached the dizzy heights of 1998.

Honours:

Waterford Munster & All Ireland senior champions

Waterford Division 1 National league champions

Waterford Munster & All Ireland u16 champions

Waterford Munster & All Ireland u14 champions

Ballymacarbry Munster & All Ireland senior club champions

Deirdre Breathnach Old Parish All Ireland u14 Feile skills champion

Aine Wall Ballymacarbry was named Munster Footballer of the year.

All Stars: Siobhan O' Ryan, Ballymacarbry, (Full Back), Noirin Walsh, Ballymacarbry,

(Left Corner Back), Annalisa Crotty, Ballymacarbry, (Right Half Back), Rebecca

Hallahan, Ballymacarbry, (Right Corner forward), Aine Wall, Ballymacarbry, (Full

Forward), Geraldine O Ryan Ballymacarbry at (Left Corner Forward)

Waterford played the All Star selection at Lemybrien and won easily 6-14 to 3-10.