1999–A YEAR OF SUCCESS FOR ALLEN GAELS & ST FRANCIS

Stephanie J Gibbons sent us this report from Drunshanbo

Allen Gaels as a senior club in Leitrim has been successful in the 1990's by winning the Senior Championship three times. Unfortunately success has eluded them at underage level. 1999 proved to be the year of change and achievment. This is significant due the fact that it is the last year of the millennium and bodes well for the future

The most successful of these teams was the U14 team. They achieved the double, winning the championship and the league. In fact, the record of this team is tremendous in that they won 17 matches out of 17 played. Firstly, victory arrived with the Championship, they overcame every opponent convincingly. Manorhamilton was the team to beat in the final and this was done in St Hugh's park at Ballinaglera. The team was captained by Sean McGourty in the championship, an inspirational figure at centre back.Nothing got past him. Declan Gillooly at midfield was tireless and scored the vital points from play and from a dead ball. Denys Gibbons was a scoring forward right throughout the championship.

The league was tougher but Allen Gaels were more than a match for their opponents. Dromahaire and Aughavas came up from the 1st division. Aughavas was reckoned to be one of the best teams in the league, thus our main opposition. We beat them twice in friendlies so Allen Gaels were confident of victory in any league game. The nearest this team came to defeat was against Dromahaire, but a win by a point brought victory to Allen Gaels. Ballinamore, St Mary's, Manorhamilton also fell in the face of the onslaught from Drumshanbo. The

St Francis Minor tea. Donal Scollan, Andrew Canning, Derek McGourty, Francis McManus, Ciaran Gilhooly, Colm McGovern, Shane Gilroy, John Keane, John Gilbane, Hugh Gibbons, Vincent Mcpartland, Jim McGourty, Richard Wynne, Brian Gilroy, Donal Heron. Subs: Keith Healy, Shane Dolan, Alan McGovern, Enda Monaghan, Frankie McPartland, Patrick McKenna, Hugh Gilmartin, Tony Tighe, Kevin McTiernan, Oisin O'Dwyer, Micahel Mcmanus.Managers:Fergal McPartland and Paul McGovern

U16 Donal Scollan, Keith Healy, Shane Gilroy, Feargal Cull, Sean McGourty, Ciaran Gilhooly, Eoin Keane,Michael McManus, Oisin O'Dwyer, Denys Gibbons, Declan Gilhooly, Sean McGovern, Hugh Gibbons, Jim McGourty, Sean Mulvey Subs:Paul Arnold, Brian Wynne, Sean O'Dwyer, Dermot Doherty, Managers: Martin McGowan & Patrick McManus

final was against Aughavas. Despite predictions, Allen Gaels easily overran Aughavas and were worthy winners of the league. The double was achieved at under 14 level.

The under 16 team, captained by a very resolute and determined Ciaran Gilhooly, brought the Championship to Allen Gaels. In a final against St Mary's, the result was a draw but in the replay, the Drumshanbo side beat Carrick in a tightly fought contest, that could have gone either way. Martin McGowan and Patrick McManus's unique style of management was the key to the success of this team. They instilled confidence and a self belief in the players that saw them through to the final. They had a total football approach and this was evident in the final, with the forwards mesmerising the St Mary's defence. With the draw there was despondency but Martin reassured the team that they would win the replay. They succeeded in bonding the team together as a unit and forging a great team spirit. The league was a repeat of the Championship but on this occasion the spoils went to St Mary's.

Success was not confined to these levels. The minors brought off the triple by winning out the Championship. This is the most prestigious underage competition and Drumshanbo and Ballinaglera in the St Francis colours had a hard fought trail to the final. Once again, management made the difference. Paul McGovern and Feargal McPartland carefully brought the team along. At the begining, there was a some lack of confidence, but the managers instilled a magnificent team spirit. It was encapsulated in the words of Paul McGovern, whenever there was a surge in opposition.....
"We may lose a battle, but we win the war"
They instilled a sense of determination in the players that was awesome.Mohill had beaten St Francis on a number of occasions and there were dire predictions that Lough Allen siders would once again fall before the Mohill onslaught. Most commentators believed that Mohill would succeed. However on the 3rd September 1999, the day of the County Championship, St Francis played brilliantly and overwhelmed a shocked Mohill side. They could not understand how St Francis had improved so much in such a short time. The victory was all the more remarkable in that the Mohill were unbeaten competitively since U14 level. Paul McGovern and Feargal McPartland managed to weld some star players into a cohesive team that broughtvictory led by Captain, Colm McGovern. Brian Gilroy (1-2) was an unstoppable full forward and merited the Man of the Match award. Who could forget Andrew Canning's amazing tackle. It got a headline of its own in the Leitrim Observer report. Donal Heron (1-1) put away a penalty that was caused by a foul on the irrepressible Jim McGourty. John Keane (0-2) was brilliantin midfield with John Gilbane and the forwards Vincent McPartland(0-1), Hugh Gibbons (0-1) and Richard Wynne created and put away the scores when it mattered.

Drumshanbo, Ballinaglera and Dowra acclaimed the victors. Celebrations went on into the early hours. Video's of the match were in great demand and the sense of joy and confidence that was engendered by these victories was magnificent. In the course of a short article like this, it is difficult to do justice to all the players involved, each and every one of them committed themselves to the team and victory. It means that in the new millennium the footballers from Drumshanbo,Dowra and Ballinaglera will want to follow on with more success.