

## *Under 14 History Making Season 1998/99 -*

*By Leo Flynn*

No, I have not become a religious zealot, and this is not a chapter from the Bible or the Book of Exodus (which is what I will probably be asked to do when people read this article). Thirty eight goals and fifty nine points is the staggering total clocked up by the Naomh Olaf Under 14 team and for good measure, they also created another milestone by reaching the final of the Evening Herald Floodlit Cup and the semifinal of the Dublin Féile, but more of that later.

The league campaign opened on 5th September at home to our neighbours, Kilmacud Crokes, and after a very clean game, we ran out victors at 5-7 to 1-6. Jimmy Culligan was Man of the Match and Conor Kelly played very well (I wonder why!)

The following Saturday saw us in Kiltipper Road against an uncompromising Thomas Davis outfit and, after a very unsure first half, we pulled away to win 2-7 to 1-1. Tadhg Purcell was Man of the Match, and Seamas Kinsella (known all over as Shimbo) performed heroics with an injured hand. The next game against Ballyboden was a mirror image – a bad first half with a big surge in the final ten minutes to win 2-7 to 0-6. Both Nicky Fennell and Steven Duffy gave match-winning performances.

On a sunny Sunday in October, we travelled to play a fit sporting Sylvester's team in Malahide and, after a classic game of football on a huge pitch, we escaped with full points, score 1-7 to 0-6. Karl Naughton and Shane Kavanagh (who neutralised a very good Sylvester's full back) had great games. How often have football teams scored 17 points and gone home with one hand longer than the other? Not very often, I

would imagine, but that was the unfortunate fate of Pat Mulhern & Co. from Lucan who went down 5-5 to 2-11 in a cracking game in Wedgewood. Shane Cullen and Barry Thornton (whose two late goals clinched the game) gave rousing performances.

For those of us who may have often regretted missing out on historic events such as the Battle of Clontarf (no, I wasn't alive then, but Kevin Kavanagh probably knows the name of everyone who took part!), Sunday 17th October 1998 brought a dubious consolation – the Battle of Fairview Park (for Brian Boru, read Larry Kinsella who had the 'pleasure' of refereeing – I hope he got paid!). Craobh Chiaráin tested our mettle (and more) in a very tough, dour encounter in which our defence, particularly Donal Flynn and Sean Egan, were outstanding. When we departed with full points (score 3-3 to 0-11), the southside of the river looked very attractive, even to a refined country person like myself!

Six weeks later, we went rampaging on the north-side again, this time to St Vincent's in St Anne's No. 9. Both Dara Hayes and Dylan King had very good games, as we won 7-9 to 2-4.

Our first game of 1999 was home to a very weak St Jude's team. The sight of Shane Kavanagh and Barry Thornton galloping through the Jude's defence was like Moses going through the Red Sea. The Walsh twins, Kevin and David, both had good games on the day.

Then it was the time for a real game of football, the trip to Porterstown to visit old friends, St Brigid's.

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On the day when pre-match organization and strategy sailed out the window and into the M50 traffic, the team set its own agenda and served up a rousing performance. Two points adrift with eight minutes left, we clinched it with an injury time point. Senior Referee, Tony Clarke, described it as as good a game as he had ever officiated at! I am deliberately not singling out anybody as it was a team performance from start to finish, and it won the league for us.

The final game was won on 20th February at home to Craobh Chiaráin and was an equally 'pleasant' affair as Fairview Park but, on this occasion, we gave them a parting present of 5-7 to 1-5 in our favour. Newcomers Steven Brown and Hussein Yazdane gave good performances. Brian Rooney, Gregory Chester and Sean Early also started.

Who says goalkeepers are mad? Well, David Murray certainly isn't. Whoever came up with the phrase

'low profile' must have had David in mind, but while his profile may be low in the dressing room, it multiplies ten-fold on the field with consistent, rock-solid performances which was one of the features on which our success was built.

David, and a number of the U14 team, also made significant contributions to the success of the U15 team in winning their league. Congratulations to John, Vincent, Nick and the team. As I mentioned earlier, the U14 team also reached the Final of the Evening Herald Floodlit Cup. After comprehensive wins over Ballymun, Bray and St Brigid's, we succumbed to over-confidence and a better Ballyboden team.

The Féile was also disappointing as we were beaten by a point in the semi-finals by St Brigid's, having lead by nine points at half-time. All in all, it was a hectic season for a great team.



***Under 14 Football 1998/99-winners of All Dublin Premier League. Semi-Finalists in Dublin Féile, beaten only in Final of Evening Herald Floodlight Cup - Back row l to r: Seán Egan, Brian Rooney, Karl Naughton, David Murray, Stephen Brown, Donal Flynn, Barry Thornton, Shane Kavanagh, Jimmy Culligan. Front row l to r: Nicky Fennell, Stephen Duffy, Hussein Yazdane, David and Kevin Walsh, Shane Cullen, Conor Kelly, Dylan King, Niall Davis, Seamas Kinsella, Dara Hayes, Tadhg Purcell.***



## Naomh Olaf defeated in Juvenile Football Championship Final

*This report by Brendan McGlynn was published in Panorama in March 2000*

### **Craobh Chiaráin 0-7 - Naomh Olaf 0-6**

The U15 football team was defeated by the narrowest of margins in the Dublin Juvenile Football Championship Final in Parnell Park on February 27th. This defeat was a major disappointment to the players as well as to their mentors, Kevin Kavanagh, Leo Flynn and Larry Kinsella. In the Championship, they had beaten St James' Gaels in round one, St Vincent's in round two, Skerries Harps in the quarter-final and St Peregrine's in the semi-final. This was the first Naomh Olaf team to reach the final. For Craobh Chiaráin, it was their third championship final in ten years and it was their first victory.

Heavy rain had just stopped before the throw-in and a fair crowd had come to support their young heroes. Craobh Chiaráin dominated the first half leaving the half time score 0-5 to 0-2. Naomh Olaf had the better of the exchanges all through the second period. The sides were level after 52 minutes and a late point from a free for Craobh Chiaráin was enough to give them a narrow but sweet victory.

Points for Naomh Olaf came from Shane Kavanagh (2), Barry Thornton (1), Tadhg Purcell (2) and Stephen Duffy (1).

The club made a video recording of the game. Many thanks to Emmet O'Grady who did a brilliant commentary on the match.



**U15 Juvenile Championship Finalists and Winners of Division 1 of the All-Dublin League 2000 - Front row l to r: Daniel Kenny, Conor Kelly, Jimmy Culligan, Tadhg Purcell, Seamas Kinsella, Shane Cullen, Sean Geoghan, Nick Fennell, Brian Claffey, Niall Davis, David Walsh, Kevin Walsh. Back row l to r: Brian Rooney, Gregory Chester, Karl Naughton, Stephen Duffy, David Murray, Shane Kavanagh, Barry Thornton, Stephen Brown, Sean Egan, Donal Flynn, Stephen Maloney, Dara Hayes, Hussein Yazdane. Missing from photo: Dylan King and team mentors Kevin Kavanagh, Leo Flynn and Larry Kinsella.**

## *John Mahoney 1946-2009 - By Brendan McGlynn*

The sudden and untimely death of John Mahoney, at his workplace in the grounds of the Holy Family Residence, Roebuck Road, Clonskeagh, on the 5th June 09, came as a great shock to those privileged to know him. John, who was only sixty three years of age, was a son of the late Jeremiah and Bridget Mahoney of Direen, Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry and was one of a family of three girls and three boys.

Having completed his formal education John, who was reared on the family farm, emigrated to Birmingham, where he played Gaelic Football with the St. Brendan's and Kingdom clubs. In 1970, he moved to London where he starred on the Kingdom Gaels GAA Club's senior football team for a decade. During this period, the Mahoney brothers, Jerry, Jim and John, became legends of London and British football. John played with distinction at centre half forward on his club's team that won six back-to-back London Senior Football Championships, four provincial championships, several leagues, cups and seven-a-side competitions, including two Senior All Ireland Seven-A-Side titles in Kilmacud. He also won a Junior All Ireland Championship with London in 1971.

In 1975, he was part of the first London side to compete in the Connaught Senior Football Championship. He will best be remembered, however, for helping the Exiles to their only ever Connaught Championship win over Leitrim in 1977.

Many tributes have been paid to John since his passing. The Kerryman newspaper as well as some Lon-



don newspapers has paid glowing tributes to him. Former London Co. Board Chairman, Frank Sheehan, said "John would have got on any County team in Ireland in his prime", a comment endorsed by former Vice Chairman, Paddy Cowen, editor of the Irish World Newspaper, who also said "John was a great role model for anyone who wanted to play Gaelic football". John's Kingdom

Manager in the 1970s, Pat Griffin from Lispole, said "John was extremely dedicated and was very committed on the field. He always gave 100 per cent. He was very reliable and could score left or right. He was a very good player."

John had returned to live in Ireland when he met Frances Lynch from Cork City in Dublin in 1986. They were married in 1988 and since then, they had lived happily in their home in Wedgewood. John was a rather reserved character who was extremely kind and caring. He had a great sense of humour and a very hearty laugh. He had a smile for everybody. Having come to live in Wedgewood, John joined Naomh Olaf GAA Club. He also became a member of Westwood Gym and continued to maintain a high level of personal fitness. He loved swimming and walking. He lived for Gaelic Football and had a huge affinity with his native county. He also had a keen interest in nature and current affairs.

John's death has left a deep void in the lives of his beloved wife Frances and her family as well as in the lives of his own sisters and brothers. He will be remembered with fondness and respect by all who knew him. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.*

## Brendan Curtin 1974-2009 - By Brendan McGlynn

The sudden and untimely death of Brendan Curtin at Tallaght Hospital on 10th July, 09 came as a great shock to those privileged to know him. Brendan, who was only thirty four years of age, was the youngest member of John and the late Bernie Curtin's family of four boys and three girls.

Death is always sad but when it strikes at one in his prime, having such a promising future, it is particularly poignant. Though Brendan's life was relatively short, he lived it to the full and had achieved much.

When Brendan was born, his family lived in Capaghmore Estate in Clondalkin and he attended St. Joseph's Primary School there. As a juvenile, he played Gaelic games with the Round Towers Club. His family came to live in 15 Ardglas, off Sandyford Road, Dundrum in 1985 and Brendan attended Holy Cross National School in Dundrum. He attended St. Benildus Secondary School. Having secured a degree from U.C.D., he subsequently studied and qualified as a Chartered Accountant. He took up employment with KPMG and he also worked for O2, before moving to Meteor, where he was employed at the time of his death. Brendan married Gwendolyn Marks from Cooley, Co. Louth in December 2006 and they lived in Naas, Co. Kildare, having purchased a home there.

Having come to live in Ardglas, Brendan transferred to Naomh Olaf GAA Club where he became a valued and much loved member. He made a major contribution to the club, as a player, team mentor,



Senior Committee Member and Club Treasurer. While employed by O2, he secured valuable sponsorship from his company for the Naomh Olaf Senior Football team. As a mark of respect to Brendan, all Naomh Olaf GAA fixtures were called off on the weekend of his death.

Brendan was a man of honesty and integrity and this, together with his exceptional good looks, made him an ideal choice to represent his company, KPMG, as an independent observer of the National Lotto Draw live on RTE on many occasions.

Brendan had many interests. He was an avid reader. He played Gaelic games and supported the Dubs. He supported the Munster and Leinster Rugby teams. He was a good cyclist and raised money on several occasions cycling for his favourite charity, the "Welcome Home Foundation". If it's true that there's more joy in giving than in receiving, then Brendan must have enjoyed a very happy life indeed.

A person like Brendan, with so many diverse interests, made many friends, all of whom now have their own memories and stories. Many lives have been enriched by Brendan's life, none more so than that of his wife and his family. His passing has left heart-felt pain which will only ease with the passage of time. His funeral was a true reflection of the respect and affection in which he was held. A large number of people, all united in grief, travelled from far and wide to pay their prayerful respects.

*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.*



## *Christopher O'Shea 1949-2008 - By Brendan McGlynn*

The death took place in St Vincent's University Hospital on 11th September '08 of Christopher O'Shea, Clonard Drive. Aged 59 years, he died peacefully, surrounded by his wife and family, following a short illness. An accountant by profession, he was employed by Musgrave Cash & Carry in Cork until he was transferred to Dublin in 1987. It was then that he came to live in Clonard with his wife Bernadette and their five children. Christopher had attended the Presentation Brothers College in Cork where he played rugby. He won a Junior Cup in 1965 and a Senior Cup in 1966. He played club rugby with Sunday's Well.



Having come to Dublin, he soon became a life-long and valued member of Naomh Olaf GAA Club. He was probably best known locally for his love of dogs, and he could be seen regularly walking them in Ballawley Park. He was very proud of the fact that one of his Cavalier King Charles Spaniels became an Irish Champion and was shown in Crufts. Christopher's children are now mature and successful adults. His son James, who played for Naomh Olaf GAA club for a number of years, is now married and lives in London with his wife Carol and two children Aimée and Ross. His daughter Ruth is married to Aengus Hughes. They live in Ballintyre with their son, Harry. Pat is married and he and his wife Janet and children Caleb and Megan live in Belfast. Christopher Jnr., who also played for Naomh Olaf GAA Club, now lives in London with his wife

Joanne, and their son Joseph, while Rebecca who is a district nurse, lives in Kiltipper with her husband Declan McCarthy. There was a large representative attendance at Christopher's Funeral Mass in the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally. His remains were taken to Mount Jerome where a cremation ceremony was held. Later, his ashes were buried in the cremation plot in Kilmashogue. May his gentle soul rest in peace. To his wife Bernadette, family and friends, we extend our sincere sympathy.

## Brian Egan 1982-2000 - By Brendan McGlynn

The tragic and untimely death of 17 year old Brian Egan, eldest son of Jim and Catherine Egan, of Wesley Lawns, on Wednesday, 2nd February 2000, numbed and saddened the community. A handsome final year student in St Benildus College, he was due to sit his Leaving Cert exams later this year. Brian enjoyed the blessing of being brought up in a stable and loving family



environment. He had two older sisters, Andrea and Karen, and two younger brothers, Sean and Joey. He had many friends of his own age group. Brian enjoyed outdoor life and was an outstanding hurler. He won the Under-15 Hurler of the Year Award with Naomh Olaf GAA Club in 1998. On the 19th November last, Brian was presented with his last club trophy for assisting the Under-21 hurling team of 1999 win Division Two of the league. He also starred in hurling with St Benildus College, winning a Dublin Colleges B final in 1999.

Brian's remains were removed from Fanagan's Funeral Home in Dundrum to the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally on Friday 4th February. As the remains arrived at the church, Leaving Cert. students of St Benildus College, dressed in their neat uniforms, together with his hurling team-mates from Naomh Olaf GAA Club, formed a guard of honour. As the coffin, draped in the Naomh Olaf Club flag, was slowly carried by Brian's teenage friends into the church, I have never witnessed such an outpouring of grief by so many young people, many of whom wept openly.

Fr. Brian Edwards, who received the remains, preached a very simple and moving homily. The Chaplain of St. Benildus College, Fr. Martin Daly, together with teachers and pupils of St Benildus College, including the principal, Mr. Sean Mulvihill, performed Readings and Prayers of the Faithful. The Funeral Mass on Saturday morning was concelebrated by Fr. Edwards, Fr. Daly

and Fr. Ger Ahern, Chaplain of Carlow Institute of Technology. Fr. Edwards again preached the homily. The choir of St Olaf's N.S. conducted by Mr. Alex Hughes, sang during the Mass, accompanied by Josephine Boyle, organist. The Readings and Prayers of the Faithful were read by family members, including Brian's two grandmothers. Brian's hurling team mates from the club again formed a guard of honour as the remains were removed from the church on the way to Glasnevin Cemetery for cremation. On the 12th February, Brian's ashes were buried in a family plot in Donaghmore, Portlaoise.

Following the removal of the remains and also following the cremation, the Egan family invited all those present, many of whom had travelled from the country, to Naomh Olaf GAA Club where refreshments were provided.

The attendances at the Removal and Funeral were perhaps the largest ever seen in Balally as the whole community gathered to pray, to lend support and to, in some way, share in the grief of the heartbroken family. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.*

## *Football - The Golden Years - By Tom Brennan*

Sporting organisations very often provide focal points in communities and add to the sense of community in an area. These organisations depend on the voluntary efforts of a host of people to keep a club or organisation going. GAA clubs, in particular, are grounded in parishes and contribute, in a very real way, to the sense of community and the enhancement of a community. Naomh Olaf is no different and has made a real difference to the community it serves. Everyone shares a common goal: to provide Gaelic games and culture for children and adults in the area. This was done very well indeed and, in spite of the lack of facilities, the club was successful. The number of teams continued to grow and expectations increased. The next step was the building of a clubhouse and like everything else in Naomh Olaf at the time, this was done in a very professional manner. In what was a remarkable achievement, Naomh Olaf opened a clubhouse and had a senior football team within 12 years of its foundation. A few years earlier, I was asked to 'help out' with a minor team and ended up staying for 17 years! It was very easy to become caught up in the enthusiasm of so many volunteers. The vibrancy of all concerned was infectious. The years flew by but it was a memorable journey made with many great people. What follows is a synopsis of those years. I hope it brings back many fond memories and maybe triggers a few more.

### *1989 - The Breakthrough Year*

The U21 team of 1989 was comprised largely of the squad assembled by Bill O'Brien and Brendan McGlynn in the club's inaugural year. Bill and Brendan, both founder members of the club, gave unbeliev-

able service to the club over a great number of years. Bill was manager of this team and his selectors were Flan McCarthy and Tommy Brennan. The panel was bolstered by the addition of Gavin Flynn, Kevin Curtin, Caomhán Bermingham, Ger Maher, Aidan O'Malley, Eddie McCarthy, Niall McCabe and Johnny Mulvaney. The addition of a number of these players was testament to the great work being done at juvenile level in the club. This was to be a familiar trend for a good number of years, Minors graduating to the U21, Junior, Intermediate and Senior teams. The club really put marvellous work into the Juvenile section and this paid dividends for the more senior teams. This group of lads was very committed to training and made sacrifices to attend games. Some background information here - at the time, Dublin GAA was organised so that U21 games took place on Saturday afternoons and Minor and adult games all took place on Sundays. Quite a few of the players had Saturday jobs but made tremendous efforts to be available for games. One lasting memory from this period was of a young Paddy Feehan. Paddy, who played up to last year, was an apprentice carpenter at the time. He was working in Swords and used to cycle from Balally to Swords, work hard, cycle back to Balally, hop off the bike, tog out and play the game. He normally played very well too! The U21 panel was blessed with great footballers, fantastic leaders - Derek 'Dowser' Dowling, John O'Brien, Kevin Curtin, Paddy Feehan and David Roben to name but a few - and a desire to do well in every game. They were also ambitious and the drive to do well came from within the group. Our facilities at the time comprised of a leaking container for dressing rooms, no showers! It was what the play-



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ers were used to and they thought nothing about it. The league that year went pretty well and we had a top four finish but it was Championship that excited both the players and supporters.

We accounted for Na Fianna quite easily in the first round in Wedgewood but were drawn to play Thomas Davis in the second round. Thomas Davis was one of the leading senior clubs in the county at the time. We had home advantage for the game and, on a very wet and windy Saturday afternoon, played out a draw in a really fantastic game. The replay was in Tallaght the following week and we were quickly out of the blocks. Goals by Gavin Flynn and Gerry Maher helped us to a 2-3 to 0-4 half-time lead. On the restart, Davis seized the initiative and two goals gave them a one point lead with just a few minutes remaining. One of these goals was a fantastic individual effort by the great Paul Curran, who played

for many years with Dublin. This Olaf's team was not about to give in, though, and staged a great rally full of heart and determination. Olaf's fought back to level the game and then, with time almost up, we were awarded a free about 50 metres from the Davis goal. One of their players disagreed with the decision and argued his case with the referee. While this exchange was taking place, John O'Brien, with ball in hand, followed the referee, placed the ball in a more advantageous position and coolly slotted the ball over the bar from about 45 metres! It proved to be the winning score and the excitement among players and supporters at the final whistle was something to behold. We were through to the quarter-finals, where we were drawn to meet the fancied Naomh Barróg from Kilbarrack.

The game against Barróg took place in Wedgewood on Saturday, March 4th. It was played in excellent



*Naomh Olaf U21 team that beat Thomas Davis in the U21 2nd Championship Replay - Front row l to r: G. Flynn, A. O'Malley, D. Dowling, B. Shorten, S. Roe, C. McEnerney, M. Kinsella, E. McCarthy, D. Supple, D. Roben, M. Seery. Back row l to r: T. Brennan (Mentor), J. McCarthy, J. Mulvaney, P. Feehan, N. McCabe, G. Maher, P. Buggy, K. Curtin, J. O'Brien, K. Naughton, M. Gentile, R. Kenny, B. O'Brien (Mentor). Not in photograph: C. Bermingham.*

weather conditions and Olaf's took the game to our more vaunted opponents and, after a good display, lead by 0-5 to 0-1 at half-time. The second half was a far tighter contest and it took late frees - one of them a fabulous effort close to the right hand side-line - from Paddy Feehan to see us home. We had qualified for the semi-final where we were drawn to meet Craobh Chiaráin from Donnycarney. Craobh Chiaráin had beaten a much fancied St Brigid's outfit in their quarter-final and most pundits saw them as favourites to advance to the final. The semi-final was played on Saturday, May 13th in O'Toole Park. There was a downpour shortly before the throw-in, which left the pitch in a treacherous condition. Craobh Chiaráin had much the better of the first half exchanges and deservedly led by 1-4 to 1-1 at the break. Aidan O'Malley's goal gave us hope for the second half. On the resumption, a very determined Olaf's team scored a brilliant goal, Gavin Flynn finishing a brilliant left-footed shot high into the corner of the net. An equally good goal by the naturally gifted Eddie McCarthy put Naomh Olaf in the driving seat and points from John O'Brien and Ger Maher sealed victory, in what was a tremendous team performance. Naomh Olaf, founded in 1981, had qualified for an U21 county final. This, undoubtedly, brought the club widespread attention and certainly raised the profile of an emerging club.

Our opponents in the final were Round Towers, Clondalkin. Towers were the pre-championship favourites with the bulk of their U21 team playing senior football for the club. Nevertheless, Olaf's were determined to give it our best shot. The final took place in Parnell Park on Friday, May 19th. The first half was dominated largely by Towers, but despite this, we were well in contention at half-time. A tremendous goal by the ace poacher, Aidan

O'Malley, and a brace of points by John O'Brien, saw us down by just the minimum at the interval. Two incidents stand out in that first half. The first, a bone crunching shoulder by Gavin Flynn which sent his opponent tumbling backwards, and the second, a truly brilliant save by our goalie Colm McEnerney. A Towers' forward was sent clean through and unleashed a rocket, Colm threw himself to his right and in mid-air pulled off a spectacular save. These two incidents, as well as the scores, set down markers for the second half, that Olaf's would fight to the last. Olaf's started the second half in very determined mood and were level after five minutes. There followed a long period of tense, exciting football, with no quarter given or asked. With five minutes remaining John O'Brien, showing great leadership and nerves of steel, pointed a difficult enough free to give Olaf's a one point lead. Unfortunately, Towers levelled with the second last kick of the game. The replay, a week later, in O'Toole Park was a one sided game with Towers running out easy and deserving winners on the night. I think we all felt that we had missed our chance in the drawn game and though the team was very disappointed, there were many signs of hope for the future. A special mention here for Kevin Curtin. Kevin, a very cultured player, who has given fantastic service to the club as a player, treasurer and mentor, had been a member of this very successful Towers team before he transferred to Olaf's. It must have been difficult for Kevin to watch his former team-mates lift the cup. Kevin and Naomh Olaf, however, would not have to wait too long to taste success. Quite a number of the U21 team were playing for the Junior Team in Division 2 and performing very well indeed. The Junior Team, managed by Phil Monaghan, was promoted to Division 1. Indeed, the big Cavan man occasionally

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donned the gear to help out!

### *1990 - Treble Success*

The Junior squad was comprised mainly of the U21 panel and a few veterans. These veterans, Kevin Birrane and Kevin O'Malley, were wonderful additions to the panel. Kevin Birrane had played League of Ireland as a goalkeeper as well as playing for Kilmacud Crokes and Clann na nGael. Kevin was a wonderfully positive and encouraging influence on the younger players. He has given unbelievable service to the club as player, chairman, committee member, board delegate and to this day is still a mentor to the Division 3 team. Kevin O'Malley played inter-county football with his native Leitrim quite a few years before this. He also had spells with Beann Éadair and Crokes. Kevin's experience, toughness and boyish enthusiasm were of great benefit to all the emerging young players. Another notable inclusion in our first year Junior was Damian McDonnell. Damian, then a teacher in the local Scoil Olaf, was playing Senior football for Crumlin before transferring to Naomh Olaf. Damian was a great, great player for Olaf's over a number of years. He added strength, experience and a dogged determination to succeed. For the 1990 season, we gained a further two players. Mick Byrne, who had the distinction of being awarded one of the first soccer scholarships to UCD, decided to play with Olaf's for the next year at least. Mick was a fabulous footballer but, equally important, was his enthusiasm, his work rate and his constant encouragement of all round him. John Murphy transferred from our neighbours St John's, Ballinteer. John, a big strong man, was more accustomed to a midfield role but did a great job for us at full-forward and ended the season as one of our top scorers. A major loss through injury was John O'Brien.

Nevertheless we felt this particular squad was very balanced and well equipped for a successful season.

Indeed 1990 was to prove, perhaps, the most successful season Naomh Olaf has ever enjoyed. The Junior team won the treble - Junior Championship, Division 1 of the Junior League and the Conlon Cup. This was a feat not often achieved. There was only one Junior Championship, played among all the Junior teams in Dublin. It would be impractical to go through each game played that year, so maybe an account of the pivotal games that year might be a better way to proceed. Two games stand out in the league of 1990. The first was a home game against Ballyboden St Enda's. We had a first half to forget, Ballyboden lead by 6 or 7 points at the break. In the second half, Olaf's produced some fantastic football, full of passion and determination, to win by 3 or 4 points. The second game was an away game against St Anne's in Bohernabreena. Once again, the first half was utterly forgettable for Olaf's and Anne's led comfortably at the interval. The second half saw Olaf's turn in a powerhouse of fast, attacking football to win comfortably enough in the end. What these games reinforced was the absolute need to keep going, not to give in. The team showed remarkable resilience, self-belief and determination to win against the odds. This team trained incredibly hard and their fitness levels won many a game in the final ten minutes. Ger Maher, David Supple, Paddy Feehan, Diarmuid Crean, Brian Horgan, Dowser and Mick Byrne were among the fittest players I've encountered. We finished up winning the league easily enough.

Championship is what excites all GAA followers and Olaf's were no different. We accounted for AIB, Rosmini Gaels and St Brigid's in the earlier rounds.



The game against St Brigid's stands out among these three. This was a great game of football, tough, uncompromising but fair. One abiding memory from this game was the two oldest players on the field, our own Kevin O'Malley and St Brigid's Tony Hegarty, becoming embroiled in a bout of fisticuffs. We had been stressing the importance of discipline to the younger lads on the team during the week of the game! Our next game was against the famed St Vincent's. We welcomed Derek 'Dowser' Dowling back from injury for this game. Dowser was one of the bravest, hardest and toughest players I've ever met. He was one of the major reasons that Olaf's enjoyed the success they did. He never knew when he was beaten and always led by example. Vincent's were being managed by the legendary Kevin Heffernan. Heffo had managed Dublin to All-Ireland success in 1974 and 1976. He was also responsible for the 12 Apostles or the Dirty Dozen's win in 1983, depending on your perspective! On our way to the dressing rooms in Parnell Park, here was Heffo leaning against the door looking at our players on the way in. This was a very good game of football, a fast, ding-dong tussle. Dowser, starting in the unfamiliar position of corner-back, set the tone early on when he dived full length to make an incredible block. It was nip and tuck all the way but Vincent's went a point ahead with, maybe, 10 minutes remaining. We were playing well but couldn't finish and we felt we needed to make a change. It wasn't that anyone was playing badly but, sometimes in games, a fresh pair of legs can work wonders. David Supple was among those we considered substituting. Sorry David! Before we could make the substitution, we were awarded a 45. As the ball dropped in towards the goal, the same David Supple punched the ball to the net for what proved to be the winning score! So much for

inspired substitutions! The quarter-final saw us defeat a good Craobh Chiaráin team.

The team had built a good deal of momentum and allied to the winning feeling, confidence was high. It needed to be, as we were drawn to play one of the favourites, St Kevin's, in the semi-final. Kevin's were beaten finalists the previous year and were now playing in the Intermediate League. One of the anomalies in Dublin GAA at the time was that any team that hadn't won the Junior Championship could enter, irrespective of what league they were playing in. For the semi-final, we were without two very good backs, David Roben and Caomhán Bermingham, but we had very able deputies. Olaf's started slowly and we found ourselves trailing by 1-2 to 0-1 after less than 10 minutes play. Kevin's were powered by Dublin mid-fielder Paul Bealin. Slowly but surely, we clawed our way back into the game and when Brian Horgan was fouled for a penalty, captain Kevin Curtin hit one of his typical daisy-cutters to find the net. Further goals from Mick Byrne and Brian Horgan helped us to a 3-2 to 1-6 half-time lead. We outscored Kevin's by 0-3 to 0-1 in the third quarter and then we came under sustained and unrelenting pressure for the remainder of the game. In a real 'backs to the wall' scenario, Olaf's defended heroically and courageously. We conceded only three points in this period to win by the narrowest of margins. Each player worked himself to a standstill and it was a team performance to be proud of. We had a bit of luck also when Paul Bealin launched a huge booming kick from a line ball; it struck the crossbar and rebounded 25 metres from the goal. Kevin Birrane made a great save late on and Brian Horgan made a vital interception to deny Bealin possession from what proved to be the last kick-out of the game.



**Junior Football Panel that achieved a remarkable treble success in 1990 - Front row l to r: D. Dowling, C. McEnerney, M. Kinsella, G. Flynn, D. Supple, A. O'Malley, S. Roe, C. Bermingham, E. McCarthy, M. Byrne, K. Naughton. Back row l to r: P. Monaghan, B. O'Brien, D. McDonnell, J. Murphy, D. Roben, K. Curtin, K. Birrane, P. Feehan, B. Horgan, G. Maher, D. Crean, T. Brennan.**



Our opponents in the county final were to be Round Towers, Lusk. The game was played on July 27th in Parnell Park. There was a tremendous buzz in training leading up to the game and there was considerable excitement in the general area. The club laid on buses to bring juveniles to the game and there was a great crowd there on the night. The first half was a tense, nervous affair that finished all square on 0-4 each. Aidan O'Malley 0-3 and Ger Maher 0-1 were our scorers in that first period. We had missed a number of scores that we would normally convert. We just needed to calm the players down during the break. On the resumption, O'Malley worked his magic to score a fantastic goal. David Supple was introduced at half-time and played really well in the half-back line. The stand-out moment was when Paddy Feehan made a brave block 50 metres from the Towers goal, collected the ball and raced through to knock over an inspirational point. This seemed to galvanise Olaf's and deflate Towers. It was typical of Paddy. Paddy was one of those inspirational players, superbly fit, full of heart and honesty and always gave his best every time he took the field. He was, without doubt, one of the best players to ever represent the club. Damian McDonnell scored a fabulous long range effort to seal victory. Our backs were particularly miserly, conceding only two points from play during the course of the game. Derek Dowling was outstanding at centre-back, especially in the final quarter. Kevin Curtin, David Supple, Niall McCabe, David Roben and Caomhán Bermingham were all rock solid. Paddy Feehan and Damian McDonnell were on top in the middle of the pitch. The forwards, after a nervous opening, played really well. Aidan O'Malley and Ger Maher, just out of Minor grade and two gifted players, were the top scorers. Mick Byrne was

a livewire at centre forward and his distribution and overall contribution were a joy to behold. Eddie McCarthy, a wonderfully gifted footballer and hurler, played very well also. John Murphy and Ken Naughton battled all through and won some valuable frees. The final score was Olaf's 1-8 Towers 0-6. There were wild scenes of jubilation at the final whistle. Kevin Curtin, normally cool and calm, raised the cup with real passion. For so many of the players who had tasted defeat the previous season, this victory was particularly sweet. Maybe there is something in the saying that you have to lose one to really appreciate winning.

The final part of the treble was the Conlon Cup. Our opponents in the final were our neighbours, Stars of Erin, Glencullen. A number of Olaf's players had played with the Stars before we had our own team. There was a healthy rivalry between the clubs and the Conlon Cup final proved to be one of our toughest games of the year. It was a tough, uncompromising game and certainly no place for the faint-hearted. It was played on a dark, damp Sunday afternoon in October. We were losing by a point or two at half-time but displaying greater patience and composure in the second half, we came through in the end. The treble had been won! It was a remarkable achievement by a remarkable group of players. The team was managed by Phil Monaghan and selectors were Bill O'Brien and Tommy Brennan. Naomh Olaf had come a long way in a relatively short space of time. This group had ambitions though, and while they were looking forward to playing Intermediate football, their ultimate goal was to play Senior football.

#### *1991-1993 - The Intermediate Years*

In 1991, Derek Dowling captained the Dublin Junior football team. Other club members who lined out for



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this team were Paddy Feehan and Ger Maher. This year also saw Olaf's capture the All-Ireland seven-a-side title - another first for this bunch of players. Aidan Byrne and Brian de Veale were two notable additions to the squad and these two players were to contribute greatly to further success for the club. Joe Fitzpatrick took over from Kevin Birrane in goal, and what a 'keeper Joe proved to be. There is a subtle but noticeable difference in pace between Junior and Intermediate football but we managed the transition well enough in our first year. We won the Dublin South section of the league but were well beaten by a star-studded St Vincent's team in the league final. Lucan Sarsfields ended our interest in the Championship that same year. Nevertheless, it was a very promising first year in this grade. The Intermediate league and Championship were very competitive and very difficult to win. There was a number of clubs vying for top honours - Olaf's, St Mark's, St Jude's, Raheny and Lucan - and we had great jousts with all on our journey. Mark's and Jude's we knew well, as the clubs were all founded in or around the same time, and we competed against them in all grades throughout the years.

**1992** - Another good year. Kevin Curtin and Derek Dowling represented the club on the Dublin Junior football team. Justin Quinn transferred from Thomas Davis and added height and strength to our forward line. Having beaten Scoil Uí Chonaill, Olaf's advanced to meet Parnells in the next round of the Championship. This was a very experienced Parnells' outfit, many of whom had won back-to-back Senior titles in the recent past. Olaf's tore into them from the start, ably led by captain Damian McDonnell and with a tour de force from Dowser and Marsie at midfield, we led by 2-3 to 0-1 at half-time. Par-

nells, showing all their experience and guile, rallied to level the game 2-5 to 0-11 with just three minutes remaining. David Roben coolly slotted a 40 m free in the last minute to give us a narrow, but deserved, win. This win was very important for the club as it showed that the players were capable of withstanding great pressure and of winning tight games. This was a big step in the development of the team. This game also saw the debut of the great Eric Horgan. Eric, still a Minor, was an incredible talent and later represented Dublin in U21 and Senior. He also became a lynchpin for successive Olaf's teams and captained the club to AIB success in senior football. Eric still harbours hopes of playing this year with his beloved Olaf's!

The quarter-final saw Olaf's pitted against Craobh Chiaráin in O'Toole Park. The first half will be remembered for a truly stunning save by Olaf's Joe Fitzpatrick. It was generally agreed that it was among the best seen at the venue for many a long day. Despite this save, we still found ourselves in arrears by 1-4 to 0-5 at the break, O'Malley 2f, Dowling, Maher and McDonnell scoring for Olaf's in that half. Shortly into the second half, Eric Horgan was fouled for a penalty. Curtin, with one of his trademark piledrivers, gave the keeper no chance. We were back in business and not about to let this one slip. When Justin Quinn scored our second goal with 22 minutes left, Olaf's always looked like winners. O'Malley with two pointed frees and Ken Naughton completed the scoring. Final score was Olaf's 2-8 Craobh Chiaráin 1-6. We had qualified for the Intermediate semi-final and awaiting us there was Skerries Harps. It took two titanic struggles to overcome a strong, tenacious Skerries team.

We played St Brigid's in the final. Brigid's were

playing in Senior League Division 1 at the time, but since they hadn't won the Intermediate Championship, were quite entitled to enter. We were beaten by 0-11 to 0-8 after a replay. We probably should have won the first day and, indeed, had enough chances to push them even further in the replay. We showed small signs of inexperience but, again, there were far more positives to be taken from the Championship run. We were definitely learning at a fast rate. The season ended on a disappointing note when we were defeated by Raheny in a very tempestuous league play-off. Even though it was ultimately a disappointing season, we gained valuable experience, saw what it would take to be successful, and we knew that we were well capable of making the necessary improvements. Management team for the year was Phil Monaghan, Kevin Birrane and Tommy Brennan.

#### *1993 - The Promised Land*

While we trained hard in previous seasons, training was stepped up considerably for the 1993 season. We also had a few plusses, in terms of personnel. Alan O'Sullivan, more noted as a soccer goalie, joined the club. Sully had won a Leinster Minor medal with Dublin in 1986, and was a footballer of great skill and subtlety. Sully was incredibly strong, a great two-footed player, with great vision and accuracy. He would prove to be an ace for Olaf's throughout the season. John O'Brien, now injury free, was chomping at the bit to get back playing to his full potential. Mick Byrne was now able to give his full commitment after successfully passing his exams. Cathal Daughton made the step up from the underage grade to provide backup for Joe Fitzpatrick. Cathal is still playing for Olaf's and his dedication is something to behold. He has served Olaf's

through thick and thin for the past 18 years. That's some achievement. Cathal is a very modest person but this hides a steely determination to always do his best. Tony O'Brien, another product of the club's underage coaching system, also joined the panel. Stuart Tarleton, a great team player, was another addition that year. There was an air of expectancy in the club at the beginning of the season. The Championship began early that season. We were drawn to play Erin's Isle in the first round on Feb. 21st, 1993. Erin's Isle had a formidable team that year. A very experienced outfit, they had among their numbers P.J. Buckley. Buckley had won an All-Ireland Senior medal with Dublin in 1983, and always kept himself in peak condition. The game, played in ideal conditions, was a tight affair. Buckley kept Isles in the game with some long-range frees. Late in the game, with Isles leading by a point, they were awarded a free. Buckley delayed taking the free to waste valuable time, but the referee decided that he had wasted too much time. From the resultant throw-in, we gained possession and grabbed a very late equaliser. The replay, a fortnight later in Finglas, was an equally tight affair, and went to extra time. Throughout the game, there were rarely more than two points separating the sides, and indeed the teams were level on no less than six occasions. At the midway mark, Naomh Olaf were one point to the good, 1-3 to 0-5. The game finished level 1-5 to 0-8 at full-time. Olaf's took the lead in the seventh minute of extra time, a lead they never subsequently relinquished. Olaf's ran out 1-11 to 0-11 winners in a really good team performance. Standout performances were given by D. McDonnell, M. Byrne, P. Feehan, E. Horgan, A. O'Sullivan, D. Dowling and K. Curtin.

Next up were our old adversaries St Jude's. We had

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many great tussles with Jude's prior to this and this game was no exception. Olaf's dominated the early exchanges but squandered good chances. Jude's capitalised on these errors and lead by 0-9 to 0-3 at the break. Olaf's fought back and within six minutes of the restart, were back on level terms. During the next 15 minutes, Olaf's missed two scorable frees, as well as a penalty. Things looked bleak when Jude's went two up with just four minutes left on the clock. This Olaf's team had great heart, belief and determination and fought back bravely in these last few minutes. Jude's lead was reduced to a solitary point, when Alan O'Sullivan smashed a ball to the net to give Olaf's a two point lead, 2-7 to 0-11. This proved to be the final score of the game and Olaf's supporters breathed a collective sigh of relief at the final whistle. It was a rip-roaring game and deservedly won by Olaf's after a grandstand finish.

While it was a great team performance, M. Byrne, A. O'Sullivan, P. Feehan, E. Horgan, D. Dowling, K. Curtin, B. de Veale, J. O'Brien and G. Maher excelled.

Our quarter-final opponents were Crumlin. They had overcome a good Craobh Chiaráin team in the earlier round. This proved to be a very tough and uncompromising game that we were happy to finish 1-11 to 0-11 winners.

The famed St Vincent's were our semi-final opponents. They had beaten us comprehensively a year or so earlier in a league play-off, so we had a score to settle. The game was played in Bohernabreena on May 30th. This game had been postponed on quite a number of occasions, leading to frustration among the Olaf's players. A huge Olaf's contingent showed up to cheer their team on. Playing into a stiff breeze



*Naomh Olaf Intermediate Football Panel that won the Intermediate Championship - Back row l to r: K. Birrane, D. Dowling, J. O'Brien, D. Roben, C. Daughton, P. Feehan, K. Curtin, G. Maher; K. Naughton, J. Quinn, B. de Veale, J. Fitzpatrick, S. Tarleton, P. Monaghan, T. Brennan. Front row l to r: A. O'Sullivan, E. Horgan, D. Crean, C. Bermingham, M. Byrne, A. O'Malley, A. Byrne, D. McDonnell, G. Flynn, T. O'Brien, B. Horgan.*



in the first half, Olaf's displayed great character and maturity to lead 1-3 to 0-5 at half-time, in what was a powerful display of football. When Justin Quinn, playing his finest game yet for Olaf's, lashed home his second goal of the game after 44 minutes play, Olaf's had one foot in the final. Olaf's retained their lead with a measured, controlled game to finish winners on a scoreline of 2-9 to 1-7. The final whistle was greeted by scenes of celebration by supporters. The players however, while celebrating, were a little mooted. They had been in this position the previous year and were intent in going one better this year. Best for Olaf's were J. Quinn, who finished with a personal tally of 2-3, D. Roben, A. O'Sullivan, M. Byrne, and D. Dowling. However, this was a superb team display, we had hit a good vein of form and the panel wanted the final to be played as early as possible.

The final was not played until October 17th 1993 because of the Dublin Senior team's involvement in the Championship. Our opposition was to be St Mark's of Tallaght, who had earlier accounted for a much fancied St Kevin's. Below is the match report, written by Brendan McGlynn, which appeared in Panorama Magazine in November 1993.

#### *Match Report: Naomh Olaf go Senior*

Naomh Olaf had a difficult first round in this season's Championship, but succeeded in beating Erin's Isle in a replay, on the score of 1-11 to 0-11. The second round was against league winners, Saint Jude's, at home. Naomh Olaf fought back to win on the score of 2-7 to 0-11. In the quarter-final, they overcame Crumlin on the score of 1-11 to 0-11. On the 30th May, in the semi-final, the team had a comprehensive win over a much-fancied St Vincent's side on the score of 2-9 to 1-7. Because of Dublin's involve-

ment in the Senior Football Championship, the final was delayed until the 17th October. It would have suited the Naomh Olaf side that was playing well then if it was played earlier. However, the expert management planned their course well and rested the side for most of the month of August. Between the 24th August and the final, the team met on no fewer than twenty-eight occasions for training or matches. This gives some idea of the dedication and commitment involved. The final was played in Parnell Park in ideal weather conditions before a good attendance. Never before had Naomh Olaf so much support. The opposition was St Mark's of Tallaght. The game produced some excellent football, but lacked the nail-biting excitement which both sides had the pleasure of experiencing in earlier rounds of the Championship.

Fresh from their semi-final victory over St Kevin's of Kilnamanagh, Mark's opened in fine style and were first to score with a point from a free by John Jameson inside two minutes. Olaf's were slow to settle and had missed two good chances before Damien McDonnell opened their account with a point from play in the sixth minute. Less than two minutes later, Olaf's took the lead for the first time, with a fine point from play by Michael Byrne. Mark's were playing very well at this stage and a point, from a long-range free by John Jameson, left the sides level after ten minutes. For the next five minutes, both sides battled for supremacy without reward until John O'Brien put Olaf's ahead with a point from play in the 15th minute. From then until the interval, Naomh Olaf played excellent football and scored four more points without reply. Gerard Maher had a point from play in the 18th minute. In the 20th minute, Aidan O'Malley was fouled and he

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scored the resultant free from his hands. Gerard Maher fisted over a point from his hands in the 22nd minute and Alan O'Sullivan finished the scoring with a point from play following a pass by Michael Byrne to leave the half-time score Naomh Olaf 0-7, St Mark's 0-2. Cathal Daughton, the Naomh Olaf goalkeeper, made two outstanding saves in this period. In the 34th minute, John Jameson narrowed the deficit to four points from a twenty yard free, but Gerard Maher added a point from play a minute later. In the 37th minute, Justin Quinn, who had deputised at mid-field for flu victim Eric Horgan before the game, finished a great move created by himself to crash home a goal. This score virtually finished the match as a contest. It was not until the 44th minute that Mark's replied with a point from a John Jameson free. Four minutes later, Peter McArdle reduced the arrears further with a similar score from play. In the 48th minute, Alan O'Sullivan pointed a free after Michael Byrne was pulled down. Five minutes later, the same player had a point from play. In the 50th minute, Mark Brady finished the scoring with a point from play for St Mark's, to leave the final score Naomh Olaf 1-10, St Mark's 0-6. Naomh Olaf lined out as follows: Cathal Daughton, Caomhán Bermingham, Kevin Curtin, David Roben (Captain), Aidan Byrne, Derek Dowling, Brian de Veale, Paddy Feehan, Justin Quinn, Gerard Maher, Alan O'Sullivan, Michael Byrne, John O'Brien, Damien McDonnell and Aidan O'Malley; Subs: Tony O'Brien, Diarmuid Crean, Gavin Flynn, Ken Naughton, Joe Fitzpatrick, Brian Horgan, Stuart Tarleton and Eric Horgan.

As a consequence of their victory, the Naomh Olaf team is promoted to Senior status. A special word of congratulations to each and every member of the

panel as well as to their mentors Tom Brennan, Phil Monaghan and Kevin Birrane. Your names have been written in indelible ink in the club's record books. The team by their preparation, appearance and sportsmanship, were a credit to themselves, to their mentors, and to the club. After the game, the team, mentors, and committee joined for a victory meal at the Goat Grill. It was a proud day for the club and, particularly, for the founder members of the club, some of whom are still actively involved. It was wonderful to have the facilities of the club premises to celebrate this historic victory and what is surely an important milestone in the club's development. It was a fine sporting gesture by the St Mark's club to join in our celebrations that night and in having our team and officials as their guests the following night. May their sportsmanship be an inspiration to all of us.

The success was fantastic and a testament to all the founders of the club, as well as all those who spent countless hours coaching and training juveniles. We all recall the great sandwiches, toast and tea made by Mary O'Shea, Nuala Byrne and Patsy McGlynn! Olaf's had, by then, one of the most vocal set of supporters in Dublin! It was a success for the club as a whole and the club celebrated together. It was tremendous to be a part of it but greater challenges awaited us, and so celebrations needed to be kept to the minimum. Our first senior game was fixed for October 31st.

#### ***The Promised Land - Senior Ranks!***

The Senior years were rollercoaster years. Some great times, great victories, heartbreaking defeats but always intriguing and exciting. I'll take you up to 2002; it's a long time to cover, so I'll concentrate on what I saw to be pivotal years, games and events.

A club's first year Senior is always critical. You're the new kids on the block and targets for the more experienced Senior teams. We approached our first year Senior with excitement and a great deal of anticipation. Our task was made a bit more difficult with the loss of Mick Byrne, Alan O'Sullivan and Brian de Veale. Mick returned to London to continue his studies in Chartered Accounting, Alan went to play soccer and Brian suffered a fracture in his arm in the Intermediate final. All three had played leading roles the previous year and our resources were going to be stretched. Our first Senior league game was played against St Maur's of Rush, before a huge crowd in Wedgewood on October 31st 1993. After a good first half, we led by 0-8 to 0-2. Unfortunately, we took our foot off the pedal and were forced to come from behind to scrape a draw. Our second game was against Round Towers, Clondalkin. They were favourites to be promoted to Division 1 and we played extremely well against them, only to be beaten by a very controversial point in injury time. Our injuries etc. were beginning to mount up and for a variety of reasons we were without Justin Quinn, Brian Horgan, Diarmuid Crean, Joe Fitzpatrick and Stuart Tarleton for most of the season. We arrived to play St Vincent's B with fifteen players and gained a very valuable draw with a tremendous display. Our next game didn't take place until March 1994 when we lost a tight game to St Sylvester's. This was Steven Dennehy's first league game for the club. Dennehy, from Waterville, was to prove to be a very valuable addition to the club. We beat Clontarf and our old adversaries St Jude's in May. The game against Jude's brought out all that was best in Olaf's. Niall Coughlan, a fast, accurate, two-footed player, played really well against Jude's and finished with 1-2 to his credit. Justin Quinn returned

and also finished with 1-2. Unfortunately, the victory came at a cost. Steven Dennehy, who was playing fantastic football for us, broke his collar bone. Our injuries grew to serious proportions - Dowser suffered a broken jaw against Whitehall; Dennehy, Gerry Maher, Aidan O'Malley, Aidan Byrne, Tony O'Brien and Gavin Flynn were to miss quite a few games between them. We lost our next six games and the situation was becoming critical. Four games left and we needed six points! A tall order, surely, but there were glimmers of hope. Eric Horgan, Ken Naughton, Caomhán Bermingham and David Roben were playing very well. Some of our players were beginning to return after injury but we got our biggest boost with the return of Alan O'Sullivan for our final four games. Sully's return visibly lifted everyone. We beat a much fancied St Pat's in a ding-dong game in Palmerstown by a point. Two scores stand out for me in this game - the first was a well-struck penalty from Kevin Curtin and the second, a very controversial point from the boot of Eric Horgan. Jack Horgan was doing umpire for us and his fellow umpire was an older man from Palmerstown. This man had a dog with him and was looking after the dog when Eric's shot appeared to go wide. Jack said to the other umpire 'that's a point' and the other man just raised his hand to signal a score. We beat Skerries Harps before a huge crowd in Wedgewood. We had all but Dowling and Dennehy back at this stage and we completed our Houdini act against Synge St. We won this game comfortably enough and it marked Niall McCaffrey's first Senior game for Olaf's. Niall was to prove a fabulous dual player for the club and indeed was the first Olaf's player to play both football and hurling for Dublin. We drew our final game and finished in mid-table. The sense of joy and relief was palpable. We learned some val-



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uable lessons in our first year and these were to stand us in good stead in the following years.

The following season went well enough. We finished in the top half of the league and won our first Senior Championship game, when we beat a Trevor Giles-led UCD. Unfortunately, we were very well beaten by an experienced Thomas Davis outfit in the second round. Conor McGauran, a Galway Senior footballer, had joined and he turned in some fantastic displays for us, especially towards the latter end of the season. The following season, 1996, was to prove our most successful Championship run. After a mediocre start to the year, we beat Division 1 outfit Parnells 1-8 to 0-8 in the first round. Steven Lynch, a recruit from neighbours Kilmacud Crokes, was outstanding in this game. Other notable contributors were Niall Coughlan, Steven Dennehy (before fracturing his arm) and Alan Lyons. Lyonsie was an

unbelievable goal poacher and came to our rescue often with late goals. St Jude's were our next opponents and again, we were underdogs. The game lived up to expectations and after a titanic struggle, finished all square. We had to come from behind with an equalizing goal from Gerry Maher. The replay was a dour, uncompromising battle. Olaf's came out on top in a low-scoring encounter. The crucial score was a goal from a free by Niall McCaffrey. Unbelievably, we were through to the quarter-final of the Senior Championship. We were drawn against St James Gaels and we won this game quite comfortably. Darragh Maxwell had made his Championship debut against Jude's and he continued to play very well indeed for the rest of the Championship. Darragh was a tremendous athlete, with unbelievable stamina. He went on to represent Dublin in U21 and Senior football. Damian Maher, Niall



*Naomh Olaf Senior Football Panel that contested the county semi-final against Erin's Isle - Front row l to r: D. Dowling, S. Dennehy, N. Coughlan, D. Roben, C. Bermingham, C. Daughton, A. O'Malley, R. Byrne, T. O'Brien, G. O'Malley, S. Tarleton. Back row l to r: J. O'Brien, D. McDonnell, K. Curtin, K. Naughton, K. Buggy, E. Horgan, S. Lynch, D. Maxwell, N. McCaffrey, P. Feehan, G. Maher, D. Maher. Missing from photograph: A. Byrne, A. Lyons, D. Naughton.*



*Naomh Olaf Senior Football Panel that won promotion to Division 1 - Back row l to r: P. Curran, M. Byrne, K. Birrane, D. Cronin, B. Sweeney, F. Purcell, K. Naughton, N. McCaffrey, D. Maxwell, R. Byrne, K. Curtin, A. Byrne, C. Purcell, E. Horgan. Back row l to r: D. Dowling, E. Leavy, N. Coughlan, C. Daughton, A. Lyons, K. Buggy, P. Feehan, J. Quinn, N. Savage. Missing from photograph: D. Roben.*

Coughlan, Aidan O'Malley, Tony O'Brien, Eric Horgan, Derek Dowling and Paddy Feehan were others who contributed handsomely in these games. We were drawn against Erin's Isle in the semi-final. Isles were one of the better club teams in Leinster at the time and it was going to be an uphill struggle for us. We were missing Aidan Byrne and Alan Lyons for this game. Isles were without the services of Keith Barr. Olaf's brought a huge crowd to Parnell Park and, in the early stages, we had two gilt-edged goal chances, which we failed to convert. We did, however, play some really good football but trailed at the break by 0-4 to 0-2. Steven Lynch and Charlie Redmond were sent off in the first half. The second half was nip and tuck and for the final ten minutes, we virtually laid siege to the Isles' goal. We had tons of possession and Damian Maher was very unlucky when his punched effort went narrowly wide. Aidan O'Malley's piledriver was just wide also. We had

our chances but failed narrowly 0-8 to 0-5. It was a tremendous achievement for the club to reach a semi-final. It was also a huge disappointment for the players and management because the game was there for the taking.

1997 saw Paul Curran join from Ballyboden St Enda's. Paul, from Valentia Island, was a fantastic footballer, a great fielder of the ball and accurate off left and right foot. We enjoyed another good Championship run, and reached the quarter-final, before failing to our near neighbours Kilmacud Crokes by a narrow margin. Along the way we had victories over Pat's of Palmerstown and Whitehall Colmcille. A memory of the game against St Pat's was a great move between Curran and Eric Horgan, which ended with Horgan unleashing a rocket from 30 metres to lift the net. The game against Whitehall ended in a nail-biting finish. Whitehall were a fancied team for the championship. They had Dublin players, Paul



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Clarke and Paddy Moran, Leo Turley from Laois and Colin McGlynn from Leitrim. Olaf's did well early on but three points in injury time left Whitehall leading by the minimum. The second half was a tight affair also but Clarke put Whitehall three up with one minute of normal time remaining. We were attacking and won a series of frees. We told Dambo to point them because at the end of the first half, the referee, Kevin Flanagan, played at least 4 minutes injury time and we expected him to do the same at the end of the second half. Then, with time virtually up, a speculative shot saw the 'keeper drop the ball in the path of Alan Lyons who calmly goaled. Another late goal for Lyonsie, another late win for Olaf's. Crokes beat us narrowly in the quarter-final, two goals from Mick Dillon being the crucial scores. Lyonsie took great pleasure in nutmeging Mick Pender in the Crokes' goal! Paul Curran was proving

to be a fantastic addition to the squad and his experience was to prove invaluable in the following season.

1998 was to be a very successful year for the team, ending with promotion to Division 1. The club's underage policy was proving to be very successful indeed. Fearghal and Cillian Purcell, Seán Gibbons and Eoin Kinsella made the step up to the Senior panel. These were a very talented bunch of young players and most of them represented Dublin in Minor, U21 or both. The Purcell brothers were blessed with height, pace and great athleticism. Indeed, Fearghal made his Senior debut in this play-off game. Eoin Kinsella, who is still playing for the club, had remarkable pace, courage and accuracy. Seán Gibbons, a great dual player, had tremendous skill in both codes and a very even temperament. Jim Quinn had joined the previous year and has since made a



**Naomh Olaf Senior Football Panel that won the AIB Cup - Front row l to r: E. Leavy, B. Lynch, D. Dowling, M. Murray, C. Daughton, E. Horgan, M. Byrne, J. Quinn, E. Kinsella, R. Hegarty. Back row l to r: T. Brennan, B. de Veale, P. Feehan, P. Curran, R. Byrne, E. Christian, C. Purcell, A. Byrne, F. Purcell, D. Maxwell, N. McCaffrey, E. Brennan, S. Gibbons, K. Birrane.**



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fantastic contribution to the club, in both football and hurling. Junior Cronin and Niall Savage joined from Tralee club Kerin's O'Rahilly's and both contributed handsomely for the year or so they were with us. We were doing well in the league but unfortunately suffered a heavy defeat to Ballyboden in the Championship. Nevertheless, we qualified for a promotion play-off against Parnells in Wedgewood on September 26th, 1998. The club pulled out all the stops and had the pitch looking immaculate. There was a huge crowd at the game. We missed a lot of scores in the first half and were level at four points apiece at the break. A much improved performance saw Olaf's win by 0-12 to 0-7. It was a very satisfying day, especially for the founders of the club, all the players and anyone who had coached any of these players on their journey through the club. For Paddy Feehan and Derek Dowling, who were on the first teams to represent Olaf's in the early years, it represented a dream come true. Other long-serving players, captain Aidan Byrne, David Roben, Kevin Curtin and Eric Horgan, savoured the achievement also, as indeed did everyone involved with the team. A very welcome addition to the Dublin GAA calendar around this time was the Floodlit Cup, hosted by the St James Gaels club in the Iveagh Grounds. This was an innovative and exciting tournament. It featured two referees and a converted free, sideline etc. was worth two points. This made for very open football and a competition that produced some great quality games. It was a tournament that Naomh Olaf did very well in and reached the semi-final stage twice. One great memory from this competition was of our Paul Curran giving an exhibition of long range point-taking against St Vincent's.

The 1999 season finished with the club winning its

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first piece of silverware when the Senior team won the AIB Cup. This was a competition for all Senior teams and in our last three games in the competition, we defeated St Brigid's, Ballyboden St Enda's and Erin's Isle. All three were formidable outfits and it was a great achievement for Naomh Olaf. We beat a very good Isle's team in the final and it was a great day for the club. It was matched by an equally good acceptance speech by captain Eric Horgan! Indeed, it was small consolation for a Championship defeat against Na Fianna. We had trained incredibly hard and had, what I believe to have been, our best balanced team ever. We had beaten our neighbours Crokes in the league and performed well in all our games. Na Fianna had beaten us by a point in a fabulous league game in Glasnevin. Na Fianna had a star-studded team and were one of the favourites for the Championship that year. Mick Murray, a former Wicklow footballer, joined us that year and was to prove a great addition to the club. We played Na Fianna in Parnell Park and what a game it was. They had virtually an inter-county team but we had prepared well and fancied our chances. The game turned on two or three incidents - just before half-time, Fearghal Purcell's rasper just turned round the post and immediately after the break, Dessie Farrell clearly over-carried the ball to finish to the net. Late in the game, Cillian Purcell was denied what many thought was a clear-cut penalty. We lost by a goal but contributed enormously to a fantastic game of football. Na Fianna reached the All-Ireland club final that year and it's on record that one of the hardest games they played all year was the game against Olaf's. We finished the league comfortably in mid-table. The following season saw us lose to St Vincent's in a second round Championship replay. We were short a number of players all year and after a

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bright start to the year, we struggled and had to beat Round Towers, in our final game, to survive in Division 1. Unfortunately, that was a sign of what was to come and in 2001, despite a late rally, we were relegated to Division 2. We got back on track the following year. We also had a number of younger players available, notably Shane Whyte, Kevin Birrane and Eoin Christian. We won the Brendan McHugh Cup in Bundoran and were going very well in the league. A few games stand out in that league campaign: the opening game versus St Anne's, and games against Garda and O'Toole's. The game against Anne's saw us play really fantastic football, one of those days when everything goes well. The O'Toole's game stands out for different reasons - it was a pretty abrasive game and, with a quite a few younger players, we needed to show a lot of courage and discipline to win a tough, uncompromising game. The game against Garda in Westmanstown, showed the true Olaf's spirit when we recovered from a bad start to fight our way back into the game and win it with some late scores. It was a very important win during that particular campaign. We qualified for a league final place against the same opposition in O'Toole Park in late 2002. The game was played on one of those dark, winter afternoons. The atmosphere was great and the two teams were evenly matched but Garda, with quite a few inter-county players in their team, led by two points late in the game. With time almost up, Naomh Olaf then put together a fantastic, sweeping movement the length of the pitch that ended with Alan Lyons finishing to the net to record yet another late win. The team had, once again, displayed their remarkable fighting qualities and 'never say die' attitude. It meant that Naomh Olaf were back in Division 1 after just one year in Division 2. Unfortunately, we were beaten by the minimum by

our near neighbours, Ballinteer St John's. It was definitely a game we should have won but Olaf's were back in the top flight and that was the goal from the start of the year.

I stepped down that year. I had been involved for 17 seasons and wanted a break. Involvement with a Senior team takes up so much time and energy. I felt that I had given all I could and that a new voice would be beneficial to the team. I look back on those years with affection and I have great memories of so many people that I was lucky to come in contact with. One great memory is of young people developing into great adults and many of them giving back to the club. Other memories include the dressing room atmosphere, the shared joy of a win and the collective disappointment of a defeat, the camaraderie and the determination of all concerned to do as well as possible all the time. The football team has seen a few tough years but the club has now embarked on an underage development policy that is beginning to pay dividends. Long may it continue and before we know it, Naomh Olaf will be back where it belongs, in the Senior ranks of Dublin football.

Finally, a sincere thank you to Brendan McGlynn. Brendan keeps meticulous records and he has archived all the articles he submitted to the local magazine 'Panorama'. His records helped greatly in the preparation of this article.

## *Under 14 Football Team wins the Club's first Dublin Football Féile 2000*

*This report by Trish Farrelly was published in Panorama Magazine in May 2000*

Féile Peil na nÓg was held on the weekend of 15th / 16th April. Naomh Olaf was in Division 3, Group B and our venue was Tymon North. Our group consisted of Thomas Davis, Clontarf, St Jude's and ourselves. Games were 15 minutes per half with a 5 minute break and unlimited substitutions from a panel of 24 players.

We assembled at the clubhouse on a beautiful sunny morning at 10 a.m. on Saturday 15th and headed off for Tymon North for an 11a.m. throw-in. Our first game was against St Jude's. We won the toss and opted to play with the wind at our backs. We led 2 – 4 to 2 – 1 at half time and went on to win 2 – 9 to 3 – 3. At 15 minutes per half, these games are played at a very fast pace where every score was vital and each player had to give 100% while on the pitch. Our next game was at 11.45 against Clontarf. We were down 2 – 1 to 3 – 2 at half-time but, with great fighting spirit, we went on to win 4 – 5 to 3 – 2, having held Clontarf scoreless in the second half. Straight on to the next game where we met Thomas Davis. This game was much tighter and playing against the wind we led 1 – 1 to 0 – 2 at half time, eventually winning 1 – 5 to 0 – 4. We were now in the semi-finals which were to be played in Ringsend at 3.30.

By now the troops were very hungry so we headed back to our clubhouse, collecting 25 singles of chips on the way. Suitably fed, we all headed off to Ringsend to meet the runners-up from Group A, namely Clann Mhuire/Ballyboughal. It was much colder and

windier here but with a place in the final at stake, we had everything to play for. We were down by a point at half- time 1 – 3 to 2 – 1, but again a strong second-half performance gave us a win by 3 – 6 to 2 – 2. We were now in the final which was to take place the next day. Tired but jubilant, we all headed home for a deserved rest.

The Féile finals (Divisions 1 to 8) were taking place in St Vincent's GAA Club from 11.00 a.m. to 2.45 p.m., games kicking off every half hour. We were to play at 1.30 p.m. against Templeogue. This was a daunting prospect as they had beaten us well the previous Sunday in the league. However, we had a psychological advantage over them as they expected to beat us again. It is much better to be the underdog than the favourite. The weather was the complete opposite to the previous day, driving rain, wind and extremely cold. It was a hard tough game from start to finish. Playing with the wind, we were 2 – 1 to 0 – 2 at half time. Everybody played brilliantly in the second half. Templeogue, with the wind at their backs, had numerous chances but failed to convert these to scores. Time after time, our backs cleared the ball and Ed Darcy brilliantly saved a penalty. With the clock ticking away, the tension was unbearable and as we led 2 – 3 to 1 – 3, the sound of the final whistle was music to our ears. Templeogue and their supporters were stunned. Naomh Olaf and their supporters were elated. The rain eased off in time for the presentation. With the teams lined up, the medals were awarded and it was with great pride that we watched captain Alec Hughes lift the cup in the



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air. This was the first time that Naomh Olaf won the Dublin Football Féile and the first major trophy for this particular team. Let's hope it's the first of many more to come over the next few years. All 24 of the

panel played and they were a credit to the club over the two days. Special thanks to the parents who gave transport. Congratulations and well done to everyone.



*Naomh Olaf U14 Football Team - Winners of Division 3, Dublin Football Féile 2000 - Back row l to r: Josh Dunford, Declan O'Dwyer, Patrick Doyle, Edward Darcy, Kevin Farrelly, Dean Huggard, David Frewen, Derek Keogh. Middle row l to r: Patricia Farrelly (Mentor), Michael Flynn, Niall Egan, Stephen O'Reilly, Patrick Mulhall, Alec Hughes, Kevin Brady, John Mulhall (Mentor). Front row l to r: Chris Dent, Chris Fennell, Donal Kinsella, John McGrath, Philip Farrelly, Zach Delaney. Missing from picture: Daniel Kenny (RIP), Kevin Davis, Colin Hughes, Stephen Browne and Team Coaches Ultan Carroll and Aaron Nolan.*

## *An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D., visited Naomh Olaf GAA Club on 28th September 2000 to launch plans for an extension to the clubhouse*

*Address by Chris O'Grady, Chairman, Naomh Olaf GAA Club on the occasion*

A Thaoisigh, ba mhaith liom Fáilte Uí Cheallaigh a chur romhat anseo anocht go Cumann Naomh Olaf. Tá ár gcumann thar a bheith buíoch díot as teacht anseo agus tú an-ghnóthach le cúrsaí Stáit.

Ba mhaith liom freisin fáilte a chur roimh na hAí, Séamus Brennan agus Tom Kitt agus roimh na Comhairleoirí Contae.

It is my great pleasure and honour on behalf of Naomh Olaf GAA Club to welcome An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. tonight to launch our plans for an extension of our clubhouse. It is the first time our club has had the honour of welcoming the Head of Government to our premises and we deeply appreciate the fact that you had fitted our club into such a busy schedule.

Naomh Olaf, in its short time, has been developed by people who dreamt dreams and rolled up their sleeves to bring their dreams to fruition. The founders of the club in 1981 set about developing a club which included not only the promotion of Gaelic Games, but also a reaching out to the wider community and the development of a true community spirit from which those who come after them will continue to benefit, for many years to come. Many community-based organizations use our facilities and this situation has had mutual benefits for all.

The popularity of the club led quickly to a huge ex-

pansion in the number of teams and the opening of the club house in 1994 was a wonderful achievement. Further expansion in team numbers and membership has meant that we have now decided to proceed with the building of more dressing rooms, a fitness room, kitchen and more facilities for social functions etc.

The financial cost of our plan is indeed great but we are convinced that not alone are they necessary but that, in time, the development will be of enormous benefit, not just to the youth of the area but also to numerous sports, cultural and community organizations. At Naomh Olaf we recognize and welcome the commitment of Government to spending on sport and recreation. We would like to pay sincere tribute to Minister Jim McDaid for his outstanding commitment to the development of sports facilities in the country. In particular, we are extremely grateful for the grant of £90,000 from the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation which has been granted to Naomh Olaf for our development. We would also like to thank Ministers Seamus Brennan, R.I.P. Tom Kitt and Liz O'Donnell and Deputies Olivia Mitchell and Alan Shatter as well as all our local councillors and representatives for their support for our applications for Lotto grants. Thanks also to the other local sporting bodies and organizations which supported us. This support is very much appreciated and I can assure you all that the money will be well spent for the benefit of the whole community.

In asking you, Taoiseach, to speak at the launch of



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our plans, we know that we are inviting someone whose interest and commitment to sport is legendary. Like most people, of course, your interest is not confined to any one sport. I read during the week that you were a season ticket holder at your beloved Drumcondra FC when you were at school. Drums, of course, no longer exists but I know that you have more than a passing interest in another team in red as well as the Boys in Blue. Unfortunately, Dublin has not been enjoying the best of fortune in recent years but the Red Devils, notwithstanding a little hiccup this week, have given you many happy days over the past few years. We all hope it won't be long until you will be celebrating with the Dubs as well.

I've gone on for long enough, Taoiseach. The people didn't come here tonight to hear me so without further ado I would like to invite you now to address our guests and members. A Chairde, I present to you An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D.



**Members of the Fundraising Committee taken with An Taoiseach: L to R:** Brian Collinge, An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern T.D., Audrey Dowling, Sheila Fagan, Carol Boland, Ursula Maher, Bill Sunderland, Mick Brown, Chairman of the Fundraising Committee and Ned Seery, Chairman of the Lotto Committee.

### *Address of An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D., on the occasion of his visit.*

Chris O'Grady, Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to visit your club tonight to view at first hand, your achievements to date and to hear from you of your plans for the future. It is always a pleasure for me to visit a community that has a sense of purpose, pride and passion, in itself, its youth and its future.

Little did Mick Brown suspect what the outcome of his actions would be when he felt in 1981 that there was a need for a GAA Club in this area. Like the Vikings of old, he launched his ship of ideas into uncharted waters. Club folklore has it, that Mick's first meeting was not well attended – in fact no one turned up! (sounds very much like a meeting or two that I can remember!). Undaunted, he rounded up a group of parents and persuaded them of the merits of his case. Word has it that one Kerryman from Keel didn't need much persuading. This committee, a mixture of Dubs and countrymen, fielded 6 teams in 1981 – adopting the name Naomh Olaf from the school which most of the then children attended. From their modest foundations, you have built a club that has established itself as one of the most successful and vibrant in the city. You now field 25 teams, 17 of which are juvenile level. Naomh Olaf is a name to be reckoned with in Dublin GAA circles – and rightly so. In my opinion, the success of clubs such as yours can best be measured by the sense of community and common identity you have forged. What happened here, as has happened in Ballinteer St John's, Kilmacud Crokes, Naomh Mearnog and in Ballyboden St Enda's, is that, by establishing and creating your club, you have brought together strangers in suburbia, to forge a new sense of community



and identity. The measure of your success is not that the children of this locality prefer to wear Claret and Blue, before Purple and Gold, but that a sense of identity, locality and common purpose embracing everybody – young and old – is manifestly apparent.

You, Naomh Olaf Club, are of the community, from the community and for the community. This was very apparent from your application form for the funding of your new extension. The support you were given by such a wide range of institutions such as the parish, schools, Gardaí and other sporting organizations is testament to the respect in which you are held. It is also another manifestation of the sense of community and common purpose evident in this area. I understand that if you add together the juvenile teams fielded by Balally Celtic and St Mary's soccer clubs, Meteors Basketball Club and yourselves, there are over 40 teams in total catering for the youth, both boys and girls, in this area. This is a truly outstanding achievement and speaks volumes about the volunteer ethic that underpins that effort. What this means, if you add up the number of mentors and helpers per team at an average of 4, is that over 150 adults are actively involved each weekend in nurturing sports in this locality, with this Clubhouse as focal point for three of these codes, i.e. Hurling, Gaelic and Basketball. I am sure, however, that there is room for more mentors, and I would like to take this opportunity to invite more people to get involved.

It is this volunteer ethic which we are celebrating here tonight. Anyone who gets up on a cold miserable Saturday or Sunday morning to take children to matches are the unsung heroes who fight against the boredom, drugs and crime. They are contributing much more than the love of games. They, you, are

fostering self-belief, discipline and respect in children that will be a steady influence all their lives. That is what is important.

I also wish to commend the coaching programme Naomh Olaf has put in place (at no cost to the schools concerned) in five primary schools in your area, i.e. Our Lady of the Wayside, St Mary's, Queen of Angels, St Olaf's and Holy Cross. With a Kilkenny man from Glenmore, Andy Gibbons, as your schools' coach, even the most die hard Cork or Tipp. man, of whom there are a few here tonight, can't complain about quality and commitment especially where hurling is concerned. Well done Andy!

Your commitment to the community at large is wider than just coaching. I understand that it is a matter of club policy that your splendid facilities are made available free of charge to the schools and parish organizations, including all political parties. (Talk about covering your bets!). In particular, the annual First Holy Communion Party and Santa Claus visits have become well established and are much appreciated.

The name Olaf refers to the last Viking King of Dublin, who had links with this area. Drawing upon that Viking heritage of voyaging into unknown waters, you made a well researched and cogent request for State funding for your new extension. The merits of your case were ably articulated by Seamus Brennan, Tom Kitt and Councillor Tony Kelly. Indeed, I understand that Tony was in Australia recently, not to watch the Olympics but to press Jim McDaid further in the matter.

Having regard to your application, I am delighted to announce that the Government is committed to the tune of £95,000 to support you in the next phase

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of your development. I am particularly pleased to note the focus you have given to the provision of facilities for girls. While there is no need to caution you about the road you are about to embark upon, I would urge you to put as much effort into maintaining panels as into building facilities. Showers are useless if they are not filled.

I have every belief in your ability to go forward.

You have a secure base from which to advance. Its foundations are not bricks and mortar but pride, perseverance, passion and, above all else, a sense of community. These are the forces that can never be beaten, either on or off the field.

*I thank you for coming tonight.*



***Under 14 and Under 15 Dublin Football Development Squads 98/99, 99/00. All seven were members of these squads both years - Back row l to r: Shane Kavanagh, Barry Thornton, Stephen Duffy, Karl Naughton. Front row l to r: Seamas Kinsella, Tadhg Purcell, Jimmy Culligan.***

Sunday November 4th 2001 was presentations night for the Juvenile Section of the Club. Joe Cooney the former Galway Hurling All Star made the presentations. Here Joe is seen with the Naomh Olaf U14 Hurling team captain John McGrath, proudly in possession of the Dublin Feile Division One Cup as well as the Dublin Division One League Cup.



# *Naomh Olaf Junior B Footballers 2001-2002 -*

## *By Andrew Kinsella*

<b>2002</b>	<b><i>Junior B Championship Winners</i></b>
<b>2002</b>	<b><i>Parson Cup Winners</i></b>
<b>2002</b>	<b><i>Mulligan Cup Winners</i></b>
<b>2001</b>	<b><i>Sheridan Cup Winners</i></b>
<b>2001</b>	<b><i>Belgard Cup Winners</i></b>



*Celebrating victory in the 2002 Junior B Champions - 1 to r: Ger O'Malley, Stephen Brown, Greg Naughton, Kevin Birrane, Carl Kavanagh, Mark Fitzachary (with the Championship Cup), Eoin Leavy, Mikey Denton, Eoin Hayes, Jimmy Culligan, Brian Murtagh, Darren Egan, Vinny Corley, Seamas Kinsella, Sean Colgan, Eoin McCaffrey.*

### ***Introduction***

Adult football in Naomh Olaf was in a strong position at the end of the nineties and at the turn of the millennium. Tommy Brennan's mighty team, built around club legends like Eric Horgan, Paddy Feehan, Derek Dowling, Paul Curran, Robbie Byrne and others, had begun to be supplemented by new talent. Alan Lyons, Niall McCaffrey, Barry Lynch and Darragh Maxwell were on board and the team reached the top tier of Dublin Club Football, competing in the Senior 1 football league.

A further strong crop of very talented players from the minors of 1997 and 1998 were soon poised to stake their claim, with Cillian Purcell, Eoin Christian and Dublin Minors, Eoin Kinsella and Fearghal Purcell, leading the charge and competing for places with established senior players. Reaching a Senior Football Championship semi-final against an Erin's Isle team that featured Keith Barr, Mick Galvin and Charlie Redmond was an incredible achievement for a developing club, established in 1981.

Junior Football was also thriving, thanks in no small part to the injection of footballing talent, passion and management skill that came with the merger of the Dundrum/Churchtown club with Naomh Olaf. Following the merger, the club fielded four adult football teams on a weekly basis at Senior, Junior 1, Junior 3 and Junior 7. At Junior 1 the club had a new team, under the leadership of John Garvey and Joe McGann, which was a viable option for those who could not break into the Senior ranks. New players like Mick DeVeale, Enda Holmes and Enda Duignan brought their own skills and competitive culture and the Junior 1 team continued to compete at the top end of the Junior A Championship and the Junior League over a number of years.

In 2000, Larry Kinsella was approached to take the reins of the club's third adult football team. Well respected as both an administrator and a player, Larry spent an enjoyable year mentoring this panel of players. However, in 2001 his commitment to the club's first hurling team, then competing at Inter-



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mediate level, was to grow as he transitioned from a selector to hurling team manager. At this point, it was understood that his primary commitment would be to hurling and I was approached to take on responsibilities with the Junior B footballers. Any initial hesitancy stemmed from my lack of experience and also having witnessed first-hand the amount of time required, week in, week out, to turn out a Junior football team. I was reassured by a commitment from Larry to remain as co-mentor with the team. Indeed his presence on the line, for the majority of games played by the team in 2001 and 2002, was perhaps the defining factor in establishing the discipline required to consistently win football games, as well as earning the loyalty of players required to fulfill over 35 fixtures a year. A further factor not underestimated by me when taking on the team, was the freely offered support of Junior A mentor John Garvey. As the weekends passed, my appreciation for his experience, generosity and counsel would only grow.

#### *Junior B Football in 2001*

In 2001 the team would be involved in three competitions: the Junior 3 Football League, the Sheridan Cup and the Belgard Cup, a small invitational tournament run by nearby St Mark's of Tallaght.

The Sheridan Cup was the pivotal competition in the development of the team that year. Building on the consistency and basic structures put in place by Larry Kinsella in 2000 – discipline, astute team selection and thorough preparation on the management side – required the team to develop more consistency on the field. The Sheridan Cup, in which Naomh Olaf had competed well in 2000, could provide a platform outside of the league. Garristown, Whitehall Colmcille and Trinity Gaels were the teams that

looked capable of winning the competition. It was also clear that the Naomh Olaf Junior B team had the players to challenge.

Although a number of the same teams competed in both competitions, the standard in the Junior 3 League was most certainly higher than what was encountered on Cup match-days. Developing a winning habit early on in the season in the Sheridan Cup provided momentum and confidence in the dressing room. By June 2001, Naomh Olaf would have 14 points from a possible 14 in the Sheridan Cup and had begun to develop the attacking style of play and goal-scoring habit that would carry them to greater successes in the future.

High-scoring Cup victories away to Geraldine Morans (4-9 to 1-6, with man-of-the-match Eoin 'Pony' McCaffrey finding the net from the left-half back position), St Christopher's Gaels (2-8 to 3-12, with Mick Donnelly providing the focal point for Olaf's efforts) and Naomh Barróg (0-1 to 2-15, man-of-the-match Greg Naughton with 1-5 from centre-forward) meant that players were enjoying the football and the team began to move forward.

At the same point in the 2001 Junior 3 league campaign, Naomh Olaf had accumulated 7 points from a possible 14. Wins had come in a miserable first day fixture away at Man O' War (0-6 to 0-5, with Enda 'the Whole Show' Brennan and Damien 'Dayo' McDonnell carrying the team through), against Park Rangers in Islandbridge (1-11 to 1-7, man-of-the-match Mikey Denton at corner-back, the brothers Brennan Eoin and Enda 0-3 each and a nice goal from Karl Kavanagh) and Kevins Killians (with Eric Doolan in typically tigerish form at corner-back and Cormac 'Doyler' Doyle contributing 1-5 from centre-forward).

The draw came against Ballinteer St John's at Ballyogan with our exceptional half-back line of Eoin McCaffrey, Barry 'Barryer' O'Brien and Pdraig 'Harro' Harrington all scoring and dragging Olaf's back from a goal down at half-time. Worth noting is that the Junior B team were never short of citeogs! This actually often presented some selection difficulties; reserve left-footers were required that day - with the usual left-sided scoring machine of Greg Naughton and Enda Brennan on a rare off-day, Karl 'Fiddler', 'O'Daighdeal' Kavanagh and Stephen Heaney came in at half-time, scoring 0-2 each.

This promising sequence was followed by a challenging month of May, losing three times in tough away fixtures at Ballyfermot De La Salle, Ballyboden St Enda's and St Jude's. Eleven of the Naomh Olaf players who were involved on the 7th May, 2001 at Tymon Park against a rising Jude's team would play a part on Championship Final day, 2002. Given that Naomh Olaf would lose only four games in the 2001 league and concede an average of 10 points a game, that encounter with St Jude's (2-13 to 1-4) stood out for all the wrong reasons.

As a measure of where the team was at the time, it was clear that a dominant full-back line, attacking half-backs and skillful forward play were too much for the opposition in the Sheridan Cup and for many teams in the Junior 3 league. However, the best teams also had strengths but were playing their football at a higher tempo and with more intensity. The best teams were fitter and faster.

In retrospect however, it also became apparent that Jude's would go on to dominate and win the 2001 Junior 3 league (and the 2002 Junior 2 league!) and that Ballyfermot DLS would win the Cup a grade above the Sheridan Cup (the 2001 Murphy Cup).

These two teams set bench-marks in early 2001. Naomh Olaf would get the chance the following year to test their progress against both, at the business end of the season.

In the mean-time, following this challenging patch in the league, the team continued to prosper in the Sheridan Cup. One hard-fought victory against Garristown away stands out as a pivotal game in that competition. According to Wikipedia, Garristown is 'a village in the rural part of Fingal, in the north-west corner of the former County Dublin, Ireland'. Does that mean it is in Meath? In short, yes it does. It is '25 km north-west of Dublin, 18 km from Swords and around 7 km north-east of Ashbourne'. These are the sorts of venues that can make or break a Junior football season. Getting 15 players to the distant recesses of Meath and North County Dublin, ready to compete at 7 pm after work during the week (or even at 10.30 am on a Sunday morning after a Saturday night for the more sociable panelists...) was always a major organisational and logistical challenge. Trips to grounds like Man O' War in Balbriggan or Fingal Ravens in Rolestown were sprinkled through the Junior football season like booby traps waiting to go off. (In my time playing or managing Junior football, I don't ever recall playing Man O' War at home....). This was particularly true in the early years of the century when the West-link toll-bridge still crippled the city at rush hour and 3-lane M50s, port tunnels, and a functioning national motorway network were a distant aspiration.

For these games, forty phone-calls three to four days before the game, thirty phone-calls the night before and another twenty phone-calls on the day of the game were the norm. One aspect of running the team that the managers took pride in was the fact that,

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in cooperation with John Garvey, the Junior B team never failed to field. If that meant Larry starting the game corner-forward, or taking the fourth sub from the Junior A panel, so be it.

So it was that a relatively luxurious nineteen men and a strong team reported for action in Meath on a sodden, grey June evening. From throw-in, it was clear that the referee was a local, with the Garristown players knowing him by name. This would be a tough day at the office. The challenge was further compounded when the Garristown intermediate squad (then trained by Charlie Redmond if I recall correctly) finished training during the first half of the game and made their way to the home side-line to offer their support to the Juniors.

A feature of the period was identified in my notes from the end of the season: “a number of talented adult players returned to play match-winning football...”. With the increased options across four football teams in the club, many quality footballers from the area who had drifted away over previous years returned to join friends, brothers, former team-mates, former school-mates playing football. One such talented adult player was Brendan Curtin. Joining the panel in May after a spell out of the game, from June 2001, onwards Brendan would be the rock on which the team built 14 wins from the remaining 17 games. A big man and an extremely tough competitor, his roaring to his team-mates, the opposition and himself, inspired Naomh Olaf in every game he played. Whoever his direct opponent was would have Brendan hitting, harrying, blocking and bellowing at him for an hour, making the noise of a steam-train as he ran after him, arms spread to clatter him with his body as soon as he got the ball. If he managed to get the ball. It wasn't clear whether

he made so much noise to psych himself up, scare his man or both. Either way it worked and he was a fearless leader on the pitch, encouraging and organising his defence and protecting any younger players around him. Decent, reliable and honest off the field, he was the sort of star player that was an absolute pleasure for any manager for work with.

Olaf's were a point down at half-time (1-2 to 0-4), following concession of a sloppy early goal and because the team was not retaining possession past the halfway line. The half-time team talk was delivered in the teeming rain and the message was simple: the referee was against us, the crowd was against us but it didn't matter - there was no way we were driving back to Sandyford from here with nothing.

In the second half, a fired-up Ger O'Malley led the line up front, adding 1-1 to his first half point. Greg Naughton, Cormac Doyle and Enda Brennan chipped in with big points. In defence, Brendan Curtin and Mikey Denton in the full-back line and Ronan Miley from centre-back closed up shop and the long journey home was taken with a very satisfying 1-9 to 1-6 win under our belts.

The team's only loss in the Sheridan Cup came the next weekend however, when, despite Cormac Doyle bagging 0-4 from midfield and a classy display from Michael Neill at centre-back, Junior Division 2 side Whitehall Colmcille's inflicted a narrow defeat at Wedgewood (1-11 to 0-12).

A return to winning ways came just three days later in the 2001 Junior B Championship with a convincing victory over Binn Éadair 2-14 to 0-9. The team that lined out was: GK Ger O'Malley, RCB Andrew Kinsella, FB Brendan Curtin, LCB David O'Brien, RHB Kevin Doolan, CB Pdraig Harrington, LHB



Eoin McCaffrey MF Eoin Brennan, Mick Donnelly, RHF Brian Murtagh, CF Cormac Doyle, LHF Páraic Bermingham, RCF Greg Naughton, FF Enda Brennan, LCF Ray Naughton (S: Shane O'Connor, Gordon Hamilton, Barry Kirwan, Darren Egan). As ever, Greg (0-4) and Cormac (0-4) kept the scoreboard moving, while the defence was too strong for opponents who only managed 0-4 in the second half. Eoin 'Yosser' Brennan was impressive at midfield but man-of-the-match was Ray Naughton, scoring 2-1 from a roaming corner-forward role.

The 2001 Championship journey was cut short just three days later against an in-form Fingallians in O'Toole Park on 23rd June 2001. Despite first-choice centre-back Barry O'Brien returning to join Eoin McCaffrey and Pdraig Harrington in the half-backs and Eric Doolan and Darren 'Bones' Egan coming into the full-back line, Olaf's could not resist the pace and strong-running of the team in red, eventually going down 2-12 to 0-12. Fingallians went on to compete in the Final and it was clear that Naomh Olaf were just lacking a little pace and fitness to compete at the top of the Junior B Championship.

Within a week, the Sheridan Cup victory against St Joseph's OCB in Fairview Park (1-11 to 1-8, man of the match Brendan Curtin, good scoring returns from Mick Donnelly (0-2) and Barry 'Bo Selecta', 'Silver Fox' Kirwan (1-1)) saw the emergence of Ray 'Rayzor' Naughton as a strong option for the team at midfield. The Joseph's team that day featured well-known Dublin soccer pundit Roddy Collins at centre-back and a very fast, handy League of Ireland professional soccer player at midfield (identified by Joe Jackson who was helping to run the line on that

particular evening and knew more about these things than I did!). The guy ran riot for the first twenty minutes, until Ray was switched into the middle to curtail the threat. In Ray Naughton and Eoin McCaffrey, the team had two masterful exponents of the skills of Gaelic football. As well as fielding, soloing at pace, and foot-passing, both were masters of the legal tackle – dispossession, shouldering and blocking. Countless opposition players coughed up possession or saw their shot or pass blocked by those two Olaf's players. On this particular day, Ray shut down the opposition midfield threat with his tenacity, defensive skills and work-rate. The performance demanded attention and indeed Ray proved himself to be vital at midfield on the way to the 2002 Championship final, where he wore Number 8.

At this stage, with Whitehall having lost a game and drawn one, the destination of the Sheridan Cup was in the hands of Naomh Olaf, who had only dropped points against Whitehall.

Following a challenging May, the league campaign went from strength to strength in July and August. In July, two victories were recorded at home against St Brigid's and away to Na Fianna (0-10 to 0-5, Lorcán Kinsella and Damien McDonnell dominated the scoring, kicking 0-4 and 0-3 respectively. This was one of the first games that Damien moved from midfield to Number 14, a ploy that would often be extremely effective for the team).

In the drawn-out end to the season (a pattern that will be familiar to all associated with adult club games in Dublin, Junior through Senior) the final nine games somehow managed to stretch from August through November.

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Although the team beat Ballymun Kickhams in the league at home (2-9 to 1-11), the main focus in August and early September was taking three wins from the final three games in the Sheridan Cup. Doing so would bring the trophy to Sandyford. With a summer of winning football played at that point, Olaf's had a lot of momentum and stormed over the finishing line, posting high-scoring wins over St Margaret's at ALSAA (1-14 to 0-7), Scoil Uí Chonaill in Wedgewood (3-12 to 1-4) and finishing at Wedgewood with victory over Round Towers of Lusk (1-16 to 0-6, with Eoin Brennan insisting that he had a hand in all seventeen scores!) In those last three games Doyler, Enda, Greg and Sean McGinn all pitched in a lot of scoring power. Also notable was the finishing of Barry Kirwan (2-8 in those three games). He supplied fitness, intelligent running and ball-winning ability throughout the season, as well as commitment (he played more games in the Cup for Olaf's than anyone else in 2001). Barry finished with 4-12 in the Sheridan Cup competition.

The actual Sheridan Cup was 'missing in action' at the time of the victory, so a stand-in was presented to the team. Either way, the whole group celebrated in the club bar, happy with any silverware after a strong campaign.

The league campaign stuttered to a conclusion September through November with wins against Erin Go Bragh away (1-11 to 0-1, including 0-3 for Brian 'H', 'Harry' Murtagh), St Pat's of Palmerstown in Wedgewood (4-12 to 4-3, with great showings from Sean McGinn (1-4) and Mark Fitzachary (2-2) in the half-forwards) and St Mark's, also at home (3-9 to 1-8, Brian Murtagh 2-1 and Lorcan Kinsella 1-1). Over the course of the last few games of the season, it was my privilege to wear the club jersey with two

of my brothers: Lorcan, who was just out of Minor and Seamas, who was U16. Both had been brought onto the panel, with some persuasion from their older brother (oh, and their father too...), late in the year at the end of the underage competitions. Like many players on the Junior B team, they would go on to play at higher grades, but on a personal note, I was pleased to have had those few games playing football with both.

The Naomh Olaf Annual Player Awards were held towards the end of 2001. The official Sheridan Cup had been located and duly presented by the county board and by this stage, there were polo shirts to match. The team had also beaten St Mark's in the final of a small invitational tournament and so the Belgard Cup was also on display. The mentors were tasked with selecting an overall Junior B Player of the Year. The team had used 46 players (35 appearing more than twice in all competitions) so selection of the most outstanding was a difficult task. To recognize performance in long campaigns over the year, Player of the League and Player of the Sheridan Cup campaigns were also selected.

Ray Naughton was our Player of the League for the 2001 campaign. Reliable and a gentleman off the field, Ray displayed a superb level of consistency and skill in his performances during the league, mainly from half-forward but also at corner-forward or midfield. League top-scorer was Sean McGinn with 2-13, followed by Brian Murtagh on 4-6.

Cormac Doyle was selected as the Player of the Sheridan Cup. With his high-fielding abilities, long-range point-scoring, free taking and link play into the full-forward line, Cormac was a stylish footballer. Whether operating at midfield or in the half-forward line, he scored 0-17 in the eight cup games

he played in and was vital to the Sheridan Cup run. Greg Naughton finished as Sheridan Cup top-scorer, his cultured left foot kicking 3-21. It never ceased to amaze how a man could be talking to the referee, remonstrating with his brother Derek, holding running conversations with his team-mates on how to get him the ball, engaging in tactical discussions with the managers, talking to his man about what adventures he had had the night before and still seem to kick the ball over the bar from anywhere, just about every time he got it. Next on the scoring chart were Barry Kirwan with 4-12 and Ger O'Malley with 5-7.

Overall top scorers for the year were Greg Naughton (4-38 in 19 games), Cormac Doyle (1-35 in 16 games), Sean McGinn (4-23 in 13 games), Brian Murtagh (5-15 in 27 games), Barry Kirwan (5-15 in 27 games), Eoin Brennan (3-20 in 13 games) and Enda Brennan (0-29 in 26 games).

### ***2001 Junior B Player of the Year was awarded to Brendan Curtin.***

In my notes for the few words to be said at the Players' Awards: "*Observing the number of good footballers that played for us this year, and after cup-winning success, we can be optimistic and will aim higher next year.*" As a statement of intent, this merely reiterated the enjoyment of being part of a winning team at the time.

### ***Junior B Football in 2002***

Some of the panel would indeed 'aim higher' in 2002 by joining the Junior A team and competing at a higher standard of football. Included among those who took a step up were core players Eoin Brennan and Brendan Curtin, along with Lorcan Kinsella, Sean McGinn and later in the year, Paddy Roe. 2002 also saw leading players from the team, Cormac Doyle, Mick Donnelly (in January) and Enda

Brennan (in June), all depart the Emerald Isle for a year in Australia.

Furthermore, the first half of 2002 also saw Barry O'Brien fully focus his considerable talent and energies to great effect on hurling, the game he loved most. Competing with the Naomh Olaf intermediates (despite being based in Limerick as a student; his team-mates in Limerick would poke fun that he got withdrawal symptoms if he was away from Dublin for longer than three hours!), captaining the Dublin U21 Hurling panel from midfield in a Leinster final and winning a Fitzgibbon Cup medal with University of Limerick (UL), his passion and commitment to hurling brought Barry to the top that year. His team-mates in the Junior football ranks, as well as his friends and supporters in the club at large, were full of pride and admiration for his achievements.

It became clear in January as we began to plan for the 2002 season, that we would need to supplement the panel and develop a new team to challenge for honours.

The Minor team of that year, managed by Kevin Kavanagh, was competing well in Division 2 and had some talented young footballers. Following some conversations with Kevin and attendance at a few games, it seemed that Seamas 'Shimbo' Kinsella (who would go on to win a Leinster medal with Dublin in 2003), Karl Naughton (also a future Dublin Minor panelist and younger brother of Ray, Greg and Derek), Stephen 'Browner' Brown (Dublin U16 in 2001), Shane Kavanagh and Jimmy Culligan all had the potential to make a jump to adult football. Kevin also mentioned Vinny Corley, who was just gone from Minor, as a player worth a call.

As with any good second or third team, one objective



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was to give younger talent the experience of playing adult football and facilitate their progression up the ranks. At that point in time, John Garvey's Junior A team had had a decent run in both the Junior 1 League and the Junior A Championship in 2001, using an established panel of excellent footballers. For 2002, they would also be supplemented by a few proven performers from the 2001 Junior B panel. This left the door open for the Junior B team to work with the unproven potential of these younger players. In retrospect, it was a clear measure of how competitive the adult football panels were around that time that the club's third adult team had the pick of a very good crop of young Minors.

The first chance to see these young players in action was in early season friendlies against the Junior A team and against St Mark's and the results were promising. Having lost our lynchpin, Brendan Curtin, at full-back, it was a big ask for young Karl Naughton to step in at Number 3, yet he performed admirably. Also exceeding expectations, Stephen Brown and Vinny Corley showed pace, confidence and skill, kicking 0-7 from play between them, flanking the soon-to-depart Enda Brennan in the half-forward line. Although these players would not always be available to the team throughout the year, it was clear that they had a lot to offer if their interest in adult football could be developed.

Important in 2002 was the commitment of players, whose 'first' game was hurling, such as Paddy Roe, Derek 'Del-boy' Naughton, Páraic 'Packer' Birmingham, David 'Dobbsy' O'Brien, Darren Egan and Shane 'Shiner' O'Connor to the panel. Having won the Sheridan Cup, the team found itself promoted by two grades into the Parson Cup. Gone would be the days of high-scoring demolitions of the

opposition. 'Hurling weekends' (where dual players would play hurling league while football cup games were played) would get significantly more challenging.

With all of the changes in key personnel, it was perhaps not surprising that the Naomh Olaf Junior B team endured a disappointing and frustrating start to the 2002 season. In March, following a couple of false starts, the season proper began. Fears that the standard in the Parson Cup might prove a step too far for the developing squad seemed to hold true when a flying Sarsfields beat us in Lucan 0-17 to 1-10. Our lack of significant pre-season training as a coherent panel, against a pacey and young Lucan team, really told. More disappointing was a dismal Junior 3 league display against St Vincent's at Páirc Naomh Uinseann in the league (2-9 to 3-2), where our unsettled full-back line worked against us. A real positive from those two games, however, was the form of former child prodigy Karl Kavanagh, who scored 3-0. He was beginning to enjoy life in the full-forward line with Damien McDonnell, supported by some fast runners like Shane Kavanagh (who scored 1-1 vs. 'Boden) and Stephen Brown. Following this good start, Karl was a talented and committed panelist in 2002, appearing in 24 of the 31 games played.

The first points of 2002 came in the Parson Cup, with wins over Na Fianna in Wedgewood (2-11 to 2-5, Browner scoring 1-1 coming off the bench to supplement another goal from Karl and two nice scores from Damien McDonnell) and quick retaliation against Vincent's, again at Páirc Naomh Uinseann (2-7 to 1-6, with Mikey Denton becoming the fourth player in five games to wear Number 3, another goal for Carl and some accurate free-taking from Paddy

Roe (0-4) who was showing good form at midfield). A low-scoring draw and poor performance against St Mark's (0-7 to 0-7) in Tallaght showed that things had not come fully right just yet, however. Incredibly, given the shaky start to the season, this result would prove to be the last point dropped in the Parson Cup for the rest of the year.

Meanwhile in the league, a couple of defeats in early May effectively ended any aspirations of success in that competition. Losing at home to Ballyboden (1-7 to 1-12, with 1-1 from Vinny the only real highlight) and away to Ballymun Kickhams (1-6 to 0-8), was really an indication of problem positions needing to be filled. Having also dropped four points in the Parson Cup out of four games, the prospects for silverware at this point in the season were not looking promising.

Building on the positives - including the scoring threat and variety of the Minor footballers in attack when they were available (particularly when working with the experience of Damien McDonnell and poaching instincts of Karl Kavanagh) and consistent form of Mark Fitzachary, Mikey Denton and Eric Doolan in defence, the team looked to turn things around.

League victories over weaker Division 3 teams, St Pat's of Palmerstown (featuring good attacking play from a half-back line of Andrew Kinsella, Karl Naughton and Mark Fitzachary, as well as big points hauls for Damien McDonnell (0-5) and Ger O'Malley (0-4); Shane Kavanagh scored 1-1 coming off the bench), Erin Go Bragh (3-8 to 2-6, ever-present stalwart Paul Buggy manfully taking on the Number 3 shirt for this one, marshaling the square in front of Seamas Kinsella who made a cameo appearance as goalkeeper for the day; Kevin Doolan and

Browner took home 0-3 each alongside goals from Karl and (man-of-the-match from midfield) Brian Murtagh) and Man O'War, away of course, (1-14 to 0-2) helped restore some much needed confidence at this point in the season.

The return of Tony O'Brien to the fold, following time spent travelling in 2001, was, undoubtedly, a huge boost to the team. His composure and class brought a serious platform to the team in defence and inspired confidence in the players around him. After working his way back into action with a few games at corner-back, Tony assumed command of the full-back position, and when he was available for selection no-one else was considered for the Number 3 shirt.

A league win over Fingal Ravens in Ballyogan stands out as a turning point in the season. This was the game where the younger players really cemented their arrival on the panel and proved that they could compete against the best quality opposition in the league. Ravens were sitting top of the division at that point at the end of May 2002, but Olaf's ruthlessly dismantled them 2-12 to 1-6, playing fast, attacking football. With scores from Seamas (0-1), Browner (1-3), Vinny (0-3) combined with a goal from Karl Kavanagh, points from Enda (0-2) and Mark Fitzachary (0-2) and powerful shifts from Karl and Derek Naughton (centre-back and midfield respectively), this was a win to savour and build on. Away league wins over Mark's (0-12 to 1-7, with Ger O'Malley and Paddy Roe leading the scoring) and Kevins Killians were quickly tacked on. The Kevins Killians game saw Fitzachary and Shimbo, with 0-4 each, following a rare posting for both in the half-forwards and also the return of two Naughtons to the panel, Greg after a tour of duty with the army

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and Ray following the completion of his exam commitments. Greg duly marked the occasion with 1-1!

Parson Cup victories over a Ballinteer St John's team, weakened without their hurling contingent (1-13 to 0-5, Vinnie 0-3, Karl 1-3), Na Fianna and two wins against teams we had slipped up against earlier in the season, Kickhams in Ballymun (0-8 to 0-7) and Ballyboden (1-12 to 0-11), brought the Junior B team to 10 wins in a row in May and June.

On 30th June, we had an opportunity to measure ourselves against another quality team in Ballyfermot DLS. Having been beaten convincingly by Ballyfermot in 2001, this was the first of what would turn out to be three tight contests in 2002 against this physical and competitive team in green. Karl Naughton partnered Mick Neill in midfield and Brian Murtagh posted 1-1 to inflict a first Parson Cup defeat of 2002 on Ballyfermot (1-11 to 1-8). Four days later, the tables were turned in the league, with Ballyfermot coming to Sandyford to claim the points with a 1-11 to 1-8 defeat of Naomh Olaf. It would be December before the teams met again, this time with a trophy at stake.

In Griffith Park mid-week in July against Lucan Sarsfields, we were soundly beaten 1-10 to 0-6, making the 2001 Junior B Championship-winning Sarsfields the only team that we could not beat in 2002.

While Tony had solved any problems at full-back, it is notable the number of different midfield pairings and goalkeepers which were used by the Junior B Footballers in 2002. In July, Eoin Hayes came onto the panel and nailed down a position as our Number 1.

In early August the club and the community were

devastated to learn of the tragic passing of Barry O'Brien while on holidays in the northwest of Ireland. Clearly apparent at the time was the sincerity and volume of tributes from all areas of Barry's social, sporting and professional life. Barry was a big personality, a man in his prime and it was hard to understand that we would not see him again.

It was not lost on the managers or players who had been involved in 2001 that the last time the Junior B Team was playing championship football, Barry had started centre-back. On Friday 22nd August, there were 19 players present in Wedgewood for the evening training session before the opening game of the Junior B Championship. Although there was very little talk of the match, it was good to be together as a team to play and participate in the camaraderie of football. When the team lined out against Binn Éadair on the 24th August, it was a big ask for many of the panel to focus on the task at hand. In the end, it was a credit to the team and the supporters from the club who came to Wedgewood, that they worked their way through a 1-10 to 0-4 win against a poor Binn Éadair side.

Team vs. Binn Éadair, Wedgewood 24 August 2002  
GK Eoin Hayes, RCB Eric Doolan, FB Rory Kennelly, LCB Darren Egan, RHB Jason Gilligan, CB Mikey Denton, LHB Seamas Kinsella (1-0) MF Paddy Roe, Karl Naughton, RHF Brian Murtagh, CF Vinny Corley, RHF Kevin Doolan, LCF Greg Naughton, FF Karl Kavanagh, RCF Barry Kirwan (S: Shane O'Connor, Sean Colgan, Eoin McCaffrey, Stephen Brown, Páraic Bermingham, Paul Buggy, Andrew Kinsella).

Next up in Championship were Ballinteer St John's, top of the Junior 3 league at the time the teams met at the end of August. The match was played in Loreto



Park with a decent-sized turn out for the local derby. The game marked the return to competitive football of Kevin Birrane, who had been out of action for well over a year with a series of injuries. Naomh Olaf started very slowly and trailed throughout. Seven points down at one stage in the game, it took late goals from Stephen Brown and Ger O'Malley to drag the scores level at 3-5 to 1-11 at the final whistle and force a replay in Wedgewood.

Team vs. Ballinteer St John's, Loreto Park 31 August 2002. GK Eoin Hayes, RCB Shane O'Connor, FB Rory Kennelly, LCB Darren Egan, RHB Jimmy Culligan, CB Mikey Denton, LHB Mark Fitzachary (0-1) MF Kevin Birrane, Karl Naughton, RHF Brian Murtagh (1-2), CF Damien McDonnell (0-1), RHF Kevin Doolan, LCF Karl Kavanagh, FF Ger O'Malley (1-1), RCF Barry Kirwan (S: Eric Doolan, Sean Colgan, Stephen Brown (1-0), Páraic Bermingham, Eoin McCaffrey, Shane Kavanagh, Paul Buggy, Eoin Leavy).

Two Parson Cup games had to be taken care of before there would be an opportunity to put the poor performance against John's to rights. In fact these games had become crucial, because Lucan had drawn with Ballyfermot in the Cup. Because Naomh Olaf had beaten Ballyfermot, both sides were in the position of having dropped four points with three games to go. With Lucan Sarsfields having surprisingly lost twice, victory in the three remaining games meant that at the least a play-off for the Parson Cup trophy was on offer. Firstly Kevins Killians were dispatched 1-13 to 2-8 (Karl Kavanagh bounced back from a below par performance against John's with 1-2; 0-4 from Greg and an excellent display from Ray Naughton at midfield saw them pushing for inclusion come Championship). Secondly a 3-15 to

0-7 victory over Erin Go Bragh saw a first start for Eoin Leavy, who took home a classy 2-3 from play wearing Number 14. This well-timed performance saw him stake his claim for a start against John's in the replay. Brian Murtagh continued his excellent form with 0-5 from midfield and Browner (0-3) and Páraic Bermingham (1-1) were also showing well.

A good crowd watched Naomh Olaf defeat John's 1-9 to 1-7 in another tough Championship derby against the eventual Division 3 league winners. As ever with the home fixtures, Joe Jackson had done tremendous work in making sure the pitch, goals and facilities were in top shape for the game. His support of this team, and indeed other teams in the club, was always much appreciated by the managers.

Defensively the team around Tony O'Brien was superb, with the starting wing-backs (and Eric Doolan who came in for an injured Seamas Kinsella) also contributing in attack. Bringing in Shane Kavanagh and Páraic Bermingham at half-time increased the tempo in the second half and in truth Olaf's looked good throughout for their third victory over this opposition in 2002.

Team vs. Ballinteer St John's, Wedgewood 21 Sept 2002. GK John Whealans, RCB Shane O'Connor, FB Tony O'Brien, LCB Eoin McCaffrey, RHB Seamas Kinsella, CB Mikey Denton, LHB Mark Fitzachary (0-3) MF Kevin Birrane, Karl Naughton (0-1), RHF Brian Murtagh (0-3), CF Damien McDonnell (0-1), RHF Stephen Brown, LCF Karl Kavanagh (1-0), FF Eoin Leavy (0-2), RCF Ger O'Malley (S: Eric Doolan, Darren Egan, Sean Colgan, Páraic Bermingham, Shane Kavanagh, Barry Kirwan, Jimmy Culligan).

This win took Naomh Olaf into the Championship quarter-final stage against a fancied Fingal Ravens

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side. With their Intermediates making big strides towards Senior and representation on Dublin Minor and Junior football panels, there was a lot of confidence around the Rolestown Club at that time. Ravens would finish runners up in the Junior Division 3 league. Selection for these games was becoming increasingly difficult. The panel had widened and attendance at training was growing. While Tony was outstanding at full-back, corner-back was always a tough call with Sean Colgan, Shane O'Connor, Darren Egan and Eoin McCaffrey all fighting for two jerseys in each game. The half-back line was an easier call. Mikey Denton was totally dependable at centre-back, performing any man-marking duties required but also owning the space and offering safe fielding and distribution of possession. This was crucial to the sort of game we wanted to play, with a solid centre and aggressive, fit, attacking wing-backs. Seamas Kinsella and Mark Fitzachary were those wing-backs and both were in explosive form, tackling, blocking, dispossessing, scoring in games, linking with the half-forward line and running the legs off the men they were supposed to be marking. Padraig Harrington and Jimmy Culligan manned the line eager for an opportunity to come in and show what they could do.

At midfield Karl Naughton was in impressive form, with his work-rate and defensive play a good foil for the fielding and long-ball delivery of Kevin Birrane. Derek Naughton was available to come in and do a job and Ray was also a good option to move to the middle if required.

Up front selection was even more difficult. Vinny and Greg were two of our most potent attackers, yet neither had been freely available for games and training due to work commitments. Given the recent

form of Ray Naughton and Páraic Bermingham, both Vinny and Greg would have to settle for a place on the bench. Likewise Shane Kavanagh and Barry Kirwan offered pace and movement up front but Ger and Karl were on scoring form and held their places.

Naomh Olaf did not start well and Ravens had come to win. They brought a large group of supporters who were rewarded early on with some direct football by the men in black and white. Clever movement and pace up front were stretching Olaf's and the pressure told with the concession of an early goal. A couple of frees from Fitzachary steadied the ship and at half-time Naomh Olaf were just two points down. Vinnie Corley came on at centre-forward after the break with immediate impact as Olaf's played into the club-house goal at Páirc Uí Bhriain. His first contribution was a great fetch, turn and score from distance off his right foot. Into the last five minutes with Ravens a point to the good and the atmosphere was electric. Olaf's cleared good ball to Damien McDonnell at midfield. He picked out Seamas Kinsella steaming past on a typical rampaging run down the right wing and laid the ball off. With one hop, a curled shot from 40 yards out on the right wing and a roar to the side-line, Shimbo had brought the sides level and the momentum was firmly with Naomh Olaf. Up stepped Vinny to seal the deal with another brilliant long range point to put Naomh Olaf in the lead at the finish by 2-7 to 1-9. Not for the first time, this team had surged late to take the spoils and were thrilled to come through a tight encounter against such a good team. The traditional few words in the opposition dressing room did not go too well, with the Ravens manager venting his frustration and claiming that second-half substitute Vinny was a 'banger'. Had he been watching Naomh Olaf

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beat his team by 2-12 to 1-6 in Ballyogan earlier in the year however, he would have noticed the same player had scored 0-3 in that Cup fixture. That did not stop us having a sandwich and a few drinks with the Fingal men in the clubhouse afterwards, talking about the game and wondering who we would face in the semi-finals.

Team vs. Fingal Ravens, Wedgewood 29 Sept 2002. GK Eoin Hayes, RCB Shane O'Connor, FB Tony O'Brien, LCB Darren Egan, RHB Seamas Kinsella (0-1), CB Mikey Denton, LHB Mark Fitzachary (0-3) MF Kevin Birrane, Karl Naughton, RHF Damien McDonnell, CF Ray Naughton, LHF Páraic Birmingham LCF Karl Kavanagh, FF Stephen Brown, RCF Ger O'Malley (S: Sean Colgan, Shane Kavanagh, Barry Kirwan, Derek Naughton, Vinny Corley (0-2), Greg Naughton, Jimmy Culligan, Pdraig Harrington).

A routine had been established for these games by this stage; however a few differences arose for the Championship Semi-Final against St Vincent's. Firstly, as a semi-final it was to be played on neutral territory. Inisfail's ground in Balgriffin is an excellent pitch, but it was certainly not too close to Sandymount. Secondly the game was fixed for Sunday morning, in contrast to the previous championship fixtures, which had been played on Saturday evenings. Lastly, Larry Kinsella would be in holidays in Spain for the fixture.

At that point football was paramount. Every detail for each game, every aspect of preparation was run through many times. The team was picked and re-picked. Phone-calls were made and re-made. Training was organised just to have the team playing together, kicking around, and getting their hands on a football.

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Because of the distance to the game, a coach to go out from the club was hired. The usual rations of Capri-suns, water, breakfast bars and bananas would be even more important and a trip to Tesco was made to stock up on Saturday. With the early start it would be important to provide some fuel in case guys had not had time to sort things out before swinging the bag over the shoulder and heading out the door. Also, Kevin Kavanagh performed his usual duty of getting Browner, Vinny and Shane in a car and getting them to the club for the match.

In Larry's absence, it was felt that some additional presence on the line would be beneficial for such a big game, so old friends, Brendan Curtin and Eoin Brennan, were lined up to support the players. In the dressing room and all through the game, Joe Jackson was a big help keeping things organised.

In the days before higher levels of professionalism and organisation were routine at all levels of the game, we felt that the drills and preparation we had in place for the Olaf's Junior B team were of a good quality and ahead of the curve. Getting players warmed up, getting their hands on the ball, getting them working with each other, getting the mental focus right and keeping a routine before the games were all carefully measured parts of our approach. Ensuring that the right guys like Ger, Damien and Mark Fitzachary led those activities and said their few words established leaders in the team, even before the game started.

Vincent's in the Championship were, and are always, a dangerous proposition at any level, considering the resources and player population they can draw on for the big games. So it proved, with up to 35 guys fully toggled in club tracksuits doing all sorts of warm-up patterns across the pitch. If the aim



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was to send a message that they were well-drilled and ready for action, it worked. As if to underline the point, Kevin ‘Heffo’ Heffernan was loitering around the dressing-room entrance. Fortunately for Olaf’s, the younger guys had no idea who he was so any chance that his presence might add to the nerves did not materialise! To disarm the situation, Joe engaged him in some polite banter and moved him on so that the team could get ready.

With Seamas Kinsella injured, Karl Naughton moved back to right-half back and his brother Ray took the Number 8 shirt. This brought Vinny Corley back into a starting position at centre-forward. Damien moved into the inside line to accommodate the return of Brian Murtagh.

This was tight, knock-out football. Space was at a premium and scores were hard-fought and well-earned. In truth Olaf’s were finding it tough to win possession down the wings, with our wing-backs tied up on defensive duties and a game Vincent’s side closing down the routes to half-forward. With the hits coming in hard and fast, all five subs were used, with Eoin Leavy coming in for Brian Murtagh before half-time. Excellent individual scores were required and both Stephen Brown and Vinny Corley responded, taking points after turning their men and kicking over from distance on the run. Carl Kavanagh cleverly finished a poacher’s goal chance to put Olaf’s a couple up. The concession of a penalty in the second half threatened to turn the match. Vincent’s converted the spot-kick and with Olaf’s struggling to gain traction, scores from Greg Naughton and Mark Fitzachary were just about keeping the score-board moving. A serious defensive effort was manfully keeping Vincent’s at bay, with Shane O’Connor and Derek Naughton now in to add fresh

legs. But Vincent’s pegged back the lead and drew level with just a few minutes to go.

Damien McDonnell had an outstanding game, putting in his best performance of the year when it mattered most. His ball-winning and retention from full-forward, and later centre-forward, were the main outlet to relieve pressure on our defence. The game still hung in the balance, however, when he was replaced by Ger O’Malley, due to a knee injury. In the tense final few minutes, neither team wanted to lose and it looked as though a replay was the likely outcome. Up stepped Karl Naughton to launch one from around midfield. It was dropping dangerously into a packed square and the Vinnie’s keeper stretched and could only get a touch to push it over the bar.

I understand that one Larry Kinsella was sitting in a café in Spain, driven to distraction awaiting the result to be texted or phone through. It was a nice moment to be able to make that call and tell him that Naomh Olaf would contest the Junior B Championship Final, having fought their way over the line against Vincent’s, 1-7 to 1-6.

*Team vs. St Vincent’s, Balgriffin 06 Oct 2002.*

GK Eoin Hayes, RCB Darren Egan, FB Tony O’Brien, LCB Sean Colgan, RHB Karl Naughton (0-1), CB Mikey Denton, LHB Mark Fitzachary (0-2), MF Kevin Birrane, Ray Naughton, RHF Brian Murtagh, CF Vinny Corley (0-2), LHF Páraic Birmingham, LCF Carl Kavanagh (1-0), FF Damien McDonnell, RCF Stephen Brown (0-1) (S: Shane O’Connor, Shane Kavanagh, Barry Kirwan, Derek Naughton, Greg Naughton (0-1), Ger O’Malley, Eoin Leavy).

### *The Junior B Championship Final*

St Jude’s were understandably favourites for the tie.

A look at the league table positions would show that Jude's had won all of their matches on their way to claiming the 2002 Junior Division 2 title, while Naomh Olaf finished fifth in Junior Division 3. However, a closer look would show that following a poor start to season, Olafs had won 21 of their previous 24 games leading to the final. The atmosphere in the O'Toole Park dressing room was tense. There was a seriousness and focus about the players that was keeping a lid on the nerves though. The main selection calls were around how to handle the return of Seamas Kinsella to wing-back. With Ray performing so well at midfield in the semi-final, how to accommodate Karl, Ray and Seamas was interesting. Shane O'Connor had also played well when brought into the fray against Vincent's, pushing himself into consideration for the final. Although wary of missing him outfield, Karl was located at corner-back for this first time in the campaign, where it was hoped his strength, skill and reliability would complement Tony in the full-back line. The form and fitness of Darren Egan, who had been travelling up and down from college in Waterford for games and training, saw him get the nod in the other corner.

Larry went out and said the few words to the reporter from the Evening Herald, giving him the team listing and a few other details. Because it was not permitted to access the pitch area, the warm-up began on the spectators' hill in an attempt to maintain the routine. The rain started and a healthy crowd of supporters on both hills was getting soaked before throw-in. Once the teams were allowed onto the pitch, the senior players led the warm-ups and stretching and prepared for a battle against the elements, the pitch and St Jude's. Captain Mark Fitzachary gave his speech and guidance before the game; when it came

to leadership he delivered a towering all-action performance over 75 minutes. It was the words from Damien McDonnell, a vital contributor on the way to the final but unable to play due to injury, which set the tone and focused the players for the task ahead. He spoke about the team and how they owed it to those present and those who were not present to deliver a performance.

And perform they did. Naomh Olaf got to grips with the conditions early and expressed themselves as they had done throughout the campaign. Ger O'Malley and Karl Kavanagh showed well initially but with the torrential rain, scores were proving hard to come by for either team. On the 11th minute, Mark Fitzachary nudged the scorekeeper into action for the first time with a pointed free. Three minutes later, disaster struck when Brian Murtagh was shown his second yellow. Nothing dirty, just a case of 'irrational exuberance', to borrow a phrase. Brian was just too fired up for the contest. Even with his excellent form in the competition and the team down to 14 men, Olaf's dug in for the long slog without breaking stride.

In defence, the tackling was relentless as, time and time again, Jude's players were second to the ball or pressurised into mistakes. With their high-flying forwards being kept completely subdued, the only chances offered up were difficult frees from distance, which they could not convert. The first score from play came as Karl Naughton burst from half-back to win the ball between two Jude's men and hand-pass to an attacking Mikey Denton. His foot-pass picked out Vinny Corley who soloed with his left and then turned to point with his right from 25 yards out. This fine score put Naomh Olaf 0-2 to 0-0 up at the break. With six wides in the first half and

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a number of frees dropped short, Olaf's dominance was not reflected on the scoreboard and the contest was there for the taking by either team.

In the second half, Jude's started brightly and were quickly in on goal, forcing a good stop from Eoin Hayes to keep out a low snapshot from their full-forward. They also finally found their range with their first point of the game. At the other end, Vinny Corley capitalized on another surging run from Seamas Kinsella by converting a free with his left foot but Jude's came straight back to make it 0-3 to 0-2. The tide was turning and Olaf's looked like they might come to regret those missed opportunities in the first half as Jude's notched up a spell of serious pressure. During this period, Tony O'Brien was immense, dominating at full-back and marshaling his team. Further out the field, the tenacious man-marking of Seamas Kinsella and Mark Fitzachary was proving too much for their men. With only a couple of wides from frees to show for their efforts, Jude's looked for answers on the bench, with three replacements coming into their forward line. This only served to galvanise the Olaf's backs as Darren Egan, Shimbo and Mark took plaudits from their team-mates as their men were substituted.

The fielding of Kevin Birrane and the work-rate and distribution of Ray Naughton were again a feature as Olaf's resumed control of the midfield area. Wave after wave of attack from a superb half-backline saw scorable frees created by the industrious Páraic Birmingham, Seamas and substitute Greg Naughton. No different to St Jude's marksman, Vinnie was enduring a tough day from dead-balls in the abysmal conditions, with three in a row dropping short from the right wing. Finally the pressure resulted in reward, as second-half substitute Eoin Leavy timed

his run to perfection to challenge under another Corley free dropping dangerously into the square. As the ball popped loose, Leavy stuck it in the back of the net with his right fist and wheeled away in celebration, leaving the score Olaf's 1-3 to 0-2.



*Junior B Championship Final vs. St Jude's: Stephen Brown takes on his man.*

With 14-man Naomh Olaf continuing to play all the football, Kevin Birrane sent one long down the right wing from midfield. A clever run from Stephen Brown, who was probably the pick of the Olaf's forwards on the day, saw him strike a shot from a tight angle on the right. The Jude's keeper could only parry and Leavy pounced again to side-foot home and seal the tie with his second goal. With Derek coming into the match there were four Naughton brothers in action, not to mention a fifth Naughton, Ven, performing linesman duties.

In the final minutes, with chants of "there's only one Chubby Baby" ringing out in praise of the goal-scor-



er, Kevin Birrane delighted the Olaf's crowd with a long-range point from play to give a final score of 2-4 to 0-2 and truly reflect Olaf's dominance on the scoreboard. Captain Mark Fitzachary collected the cup and the team celebrated in the rain. Following the game, the St Jude's captain spoke extremely well in the Naomh Olaf dressing room, offering some kind words of tribute to Barry O'Brien and a genuine congratulations and best wishes to the Naomh Olaf players.

A good crowd gathered back at Naomh Olaf clubhouse to view the video of the game, complete with commentary from Emmet O'Grady, and celebrate the Championship success.

Team vs. St Jude's, O'Toole Park 22 Oct 2002.

GK Eoin Hayes, RCB Darren Egan, FB Tony O'Brien, LCB Karl Naughton, RHB Seamas Kinsella, CB Mikey Denton, LHB Mark Fitzachary (0-1), MF Kevin Birrane (0-1), Ray Naughton, RHF Stephen Brown, CF Vinny Corley (0-2), LHF Páraic Bermingham, LCF Karl Kavanagh, FF Brian Murtagh, RCF Ger O'Malley (S: Shane O'Connor, Shane Kavanagh, Barry Kirwan, Derek Naughton, Greg Naughton, Eoin Leavy (2-0), Jimmy Culligan). (injured: Sean Colgan, Damien McDonnell, Eoin McCaffrey, David O'Brien).

With a taste for silverware and a strong camaraderie built up, it was not hard to keep the squad together training for the Parson Cup showdown with Ballyfermot DLS. In fact, close neighbours Stars of Erin asked Naomh Olaf to play for their Mulligan Cup invitational trophy in late November, providing an excellent opportunity for competitive games and a further chance to win some silverware. Having gotten past a semi-final with St Anne's, a fine day greeted the team at Stars' ground just beside Johnny Fox's

pub in Glencullen. Both teams served up a hard, fast game of good quality football with plenty of scores for the time of year. In spite of some serious attention from all comers, Glencullen man Mark Fitzachary was the key difference between the teams, scoring 1-7 (0-3f) from wing-forward as Olaf's took the cup on a scoreline of 1-17 to 2-9. Following the game, the group socialised with the Stars of Erin crew at the now-demolished Mountain View in Stepside.

After losing their first game and drawing their second, Naomh Olaf had won nine-in-a-row to force this play-off for the Parson Cup. While the teams had shared twenty-one scores and a win a-piece in each of the two hard-fought games in the middle of summer, this was December football. In terrible conditions and on a pitch in very poor shape in Newcastle, a battle-hardened Olaf's side needed all of their know-how and a last minute point to defeat Ballyfermot DLS 0-6 to 1-2. Eleven months after a first pre-season game against the Junior A team in Wedgewood, Naomh Olaf Junior Bs had claimed their second big trophy of the year.

A record of played 36 competitive games, won 28, drawn 2, lost 6 across eleven months had left Naomh Olaf Junior B team as Mulligan Cup, Parson Cup and Junior B Championship winners for 2002.

Some achievements of the players in 2002, including awards presented at the Naomh Olaf Annual Player Awards night...

*Championship:* The only players to start in all six championship outings were Karl Naughton, Karl Kavanagh and Mikey Denton. Championship Top-Scorers were Mark Fitzachary with 1-11, Eoin Leavy with 2-4, Vinnie Corley with 1-6 and Brian Murtagh with 1-5. *Player of the Championship:* Tony O'Brien

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Best Attendance - League: Mikey Denton (followed by Mark Fitzachary, Damien McDonnell and David O'Brien).

Best Attendance - Cup: Barry Kirwan (followed by Damien McDonnell and Karl Kavanagh).

Player of the League and Cup: Mark Fitzachary

*Overall Top-Scorers 2002:* Carl Kavanagh with 13-12 in 24 games. Other notable scoring feats: Paddy Roe 0-32 in 15 games, Vinnie Corley 2-16 in 11 games, Mark Fitzachary 2-37 in 25 games, Brian Murtagh 4-19 in 22 games, Stephen Browne 3-12 in 16 games, Ger O'Malley 2-13 in 13 games.

#### ***Player of the Year 2002: Mikey Denton***

It was a great experience to work with Larry managing this team. I know we both found it thoroughly rewarding being around the large group of players

involved over these few seasons of football. The quality of this championship-winning panel would serve the club well for next few years with Mark Fitzachary, Kevin Birrane, Seamas Kinsella and Darren Egan all going on to make a contribution to the Senior football team over the next ten years. Many others continued to enjoy Junior football, many under the guidance of John Garvey with his Junior 1 team.

We have sadly lost some of our brightest and boldest in recent years and it is still hard to believe that Barry, Brendan and Greg are no longer with us. One small comfort that I take, and hopefully those who were around this team will share, is that we will never forget the times we had when we lined out for Naomh Olaf with our neighbours, friends and brothers to win trophies for the club and for each other.



***Naomh Olaf Junior B Footballers, O'Toole Park 20th October 2002, Championship Final vs. St Jude's - Standing:*** Paul Buggy, Shane O'Connor, Ger O'Malley, Karl Naughton, Karl Kavanagh, Brian Murtagh, Kevin Birrane, Eoin Hayes, Eoin Leavy, Mikey Denton, Ray Naughton, David O'Brien, Damien McDonnell, Derek Naughton, Sean Colgan. ***Kneeling:*** Padraig Harrington, Stephen Brown, Vinnie Corley, Barry Kirwan, Jimmy Culligan, Seamas Kinsella, Darren Egan, Mark Fitzachary (C), Páraic Bermingham, Greg Naughton, Eoin McCaffrey, Tony O'Brien.



*Naomh Olaf Junior B Footballers with Junior B Championship Cup, Parson Cup and the Mulligan Cup in Naomh Olaf GAA Club Sports Hall, 2002 - Back row l to r: Jimmy Culligan, Seamas Kinsella, Barry Kirwan, Páraic Bermingham, Shane O'Connor, Darren Egan, Eric Doolan, Greg Naughton. Middle row: Karl Naughton, Brian Murtagh, Rory Kennelly, Eoin Hayes, Kevin Birrane, Eoin Brennan, David O'Brien, Ger O'Malley. Front row: Tony O'Brien, Stephen Brown, Vinny Corley, Mark Fitzachary, Eoin McCaffrey, Derek Naughton.*



## *The Féile Hurling Team - By A Special Féile Correspondent*



**Naomh Olaf Under-14 Hurling Team. Winners Dublin Féile Division 1 2001 and Dublin League Division 1 2001 - Back row l to r:** Gavin Stapleton, Fin Máirtín (mentor), David Howley, Luke Fitzgerald, Barry O'Brien (mentor), Niall Healy, Shane Kelly, Declan O'Dwyer, Asafa Ingram, Chris Fennell, Josh Dunford, Fran O'Dwyer (mentor), Eoin Stafford. **Front row l to r:** Dónal Kinsella, Feargal Máirtín, Ross Melody, Eoin Lumsden, Johnny McGrath (capt.), Colm Fox, Paddy Byrne, Steve Mahon. Missing from photo: William McGrath, Sean Scott, Adam Moore, Tom Dunford (mentor).R.I.P.

Féile na nGael was inaugurated in Tipperary in 1971 as a competition designed to promote hurling among juvenile players at under 14 level. The brainchild of Séamus Ó Riain, grandfather of Dublin hurler and footballer Shane Ryan, and Uachtarán Cumann Lúthchleas Gael 1967 - 1970, it has become the first serious competition in championship format to which juvenile hurlers are exposed. Played in various divisions at county level, the winners of Division 1 qualify for an all Ireland competition held yearly in different counties. Participation in Féile has become a rite of passage for juvenile hurlers and

success at this level is an accolade to which club teams and mentors aspire. The winning of a Féile is the pinnacle of the early years of hurling and football endeavour in GAA clubs and requires a strong foundation in the skills of the games.

1987 and 1988 were fruitful years in the parishes of Sandyford and Balally with the birth of a highly talented group of footballers and hurlers. They were introduced to the games at home and encouraged to play them at school and club level where highly motivated teachers and mentors developed their interest

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and their skills. Under the tutelage of John O'Brien and Ray Howley they learned the basics of football at the Saturday morning nursery in the Naomh Olaf sports' hall. At this time leagues were formed for teams at under-9 level in football but the higher level of skill needed meant that no hurling was played at league level until under-11. O'Brien and Howley's footballers did very well at under-9 and under-10 competing successfully in Division 1 Dublin South.

The encouragement of the local primary schools was an important factor in the development of the players and the influence of Andy Gibbons, who was employed as a coach by the Naomh Olaf Club to work with the local schools, cannot be overstated. Born in Kilkenny, Andy's hurling pedigree was guaranteed, but he also had a natural ability to imbue children with a genuine love of hurling. This was obvious in his ability to control large numbers of players of primary school age wielding hurleys in the Naomh Olaf hall after school without ever raising his voice.

The thirst of the 1987 and 1988 year groups for hurling action led to some of them playing their first competitive hurling league match in an under-11 eleven-a-side league in 1995 while still only seven years of age. The team, managed by Mary Hayes and Fin Máirtín, progressed to the final of that league losing only to O'Toole's in the final. Further experience was gained in 1996 where many of the players played in an under-11 fifteen-a-side hurling league while also finishing runners-up to Ballyboden St. Enda's in the under-9 Dublin South football league. 1997 was another fruitful footballing year when the under-10s were crowned South Dublin league winners, finishing ahead of their old rivals from Ballyboden. More of the under-9 and under-10 players also competed with the 1986 cohort in 15-a-side

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hurling at under-11. This contributed in no small way to laying the foundation for success at their own age in the years to come.

#### *1998*

Mentors Fran O'Dwyer and Fin Máirtín instituted an indoor hurling competition in the Naomh Olaf hall for players born in 1997 and subsequent years. This built on the wonderful work of Andy Gibbons at school level and attracted young boys and girls to the club in the evening time. The competition, played in a mini all Ireland format, created great enthusiasm among the players and inspired them to become involved in outdoor hurling. The final, played on a Sunday afternoon, was very well attended by both children and parents and saw a Dublin team captained by Declan O'Dwyer lifted the Terry Byrne Cup. Dónal Kinsella was named Player of the Tournament. Naomh Olaf also entered teams in the county indoor hurling league where they competed well due to the invaluable experience gained in their own hall.

The 1987 cohort had long looked forward to the opportunity to compete in hurling league competition with their own age group. Unlike football, which was played on a regional basis, hurling competition at under-11 was played in an all-county format. To ensure clubs competed in balanced leagues, the County Board involved them in grading games to assess their ability. The Naomh Olaf lads, on the basis of their natural ability and on the skills they had developed playing with their older counterparts in previous years, were well prepared for these games.

They were victorious in the three grading matches, including beating Ballyboden St. Enda's, and were placed in Division 1 where no previous Naomh Olaf underage hurling team had played. A good competi-





**Naomh Olaf Under-11 Hurling Team. Winners Dublin League Division 1 1998 - Back row l to r:** Fin Máirtín (mentor), Joey Egan, Luke Fitzgerald, David Howley, Eoin Lumsden, Ross Melody, Declan O'Dwyer, Eoin Stafford, John Doyle, Patrick Kavanagh, Fran O'Dwyer (mentor). **Front row l to r:** Chris Fennell, Feargal Máirtín, Colm Fox, Dónal Kinsella, Catherine Cotter, Josh Dunford, Cathy Whyte, Simon Hickey, Johnny McGrath, Shane Gill, Steve Mahon.

tive league followed and a strong run by the Naomh Olaf team saw them crowned under-11 Division 1 league champions in 1998. It is interesting to note that Queen of Angels Primary school reached the Dublin Primary Schools Final in Croke Park that year also, the first team from the school to do so.

### 1999

The success at under-11 level had the players looking forward with anticipation to the under-12 league in 1999. That success also meant that Naomh Olaf were the team to beat and clubs with a strong pedigree in Dublin hurling, like Ballyboden St. Enda's and O'Tooles, were not anxious to let their reputations slip at the hands of a relatively unknown hurling club from Sandyford.

Team manager Fran O'Dwyer hails from Tipperary and as part of the team's preparation for the under-12 league he arranged a trip to Tipp for the lads where they would take part in a weekend tournament in

this home club of Clonoulty-Rossmore. The opposition were big names in Tipperary club hurling – the home club, Holycross-Ballycahill and Borrisoleigh. This was an enjoyable and important weekend in that it built a terrific team spirit among the Naomh Olaf boys. The value of this team spirit was visible that weekend when the Naomh Olaf team beat each of the three Tipperary teams in turn. Indeed in a series of challenges over the following years the team were never beaten by Clonoulty-Rossmore.

In Dublin the under-12 league was again very competitive and a very high standard of hurling was to be seen. The three main powers were Olaf's, Ballyboden and O'Tooles. After a slow start the clash with Ballyboden resulted in an emphatic win for Olaf's on a scoreline 7 – 4 to 1 – 0. Ultimately, the destination of the league title hinged on a summer evening's league match against O'Tooles. An extremely wet evening in Páirc Uí Thuathail in Ay-





**Naomh Olaf Under-12 Hurling Team. Winners Dublin League Division 1 1999 - Back row l to r:** Fran O'Dwyer (mentor), John Doyle, Patrick Kavanagh, Cathy Whyte, Josh Dunford, Declan O'Dwyer, David Howley, Tim Harding, Stevie Mahon, Will Byrne, Eoin Stafford, Niall Healy, Fin Máirtín (mentor). **Front row l to r:** Luke Fitzgerald, Simon Hickey, Dónal Kinsella, Ross Melody, Johnny McGrath, Chis Fennell, Fergal Máirtín, Shane Gill, Joey Egan. Missing from photo: Tom Dunford (mentor).R.I.P.

refield saw the Naomh Olaf team, without the services of Asafa Ingram, five points down in the final minutes against the home team. However, the spirit among this group of Naomh Olaf players would never be questioned, and Ross Melody who was switched from wing back to corner forward in the final minutes buried two goal chances to ensure victory by the narrowest of margins and the retention of league honours in the Sandyford club.

### **2000**

The turn of the century in 2000 saw the team preparing for the under-13 hurling league and P.J. Troy trophy competition. To cement the success at under -11 and under-12 level, the team mentors were on the lookout for additional hurlers to strengthen their squad. Andy Gibbons's work with the primary schools produced dividends and with the support of Tipperary man Séimí O'Neill who was principal of Queen of Angels National School together with the

talent developed through the indoor hurling league, some important additions from that school were made to the squad. These included Shane Kelly, Asafa Ingram, William McGrath and James Berry. However, Ballyboden St. Enda's exacted some revenge for previous results and two losses to the Rathfarnham team meant that Naomh Olaf could only finish as runners-up that year. The P.J. Troy tournament, played in memory of a Whitehall Colmcille's stalwart, is played at under-13 level over one weekend. It is a blitz of short games where ground hurling only is permitted for half of each game. For once, the Naomh Olaf lads did not come to terms with the format and lost all three matches to exit the tournament tamely.

### **2001**

2001 was Féile year and for all under-14 teams in the county a good performance in this competition was their primary goal. However, the league at that

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age was also an important target. Naomh Olaf got off to a good start to the league winning their early matches.

In preparing for the Féile the management decided to seek a coach to help prepare the team. Barry O'Brien a young committed and skilful Naomh Olaf senior hurler who was captain of that year's Dublin under-21 team came on board. Barry was a student of Physical Education and Chemistry in the University of Limerick at the time and a better choice could not have been made. Barry was reasonably close to the players in age. He related extremely well to the players on and off the pitch and commanded their respect. His training sessions were well thought out, brought the best out of the players and improved their skill level greatly.

The influence of club on school and vice versa was reflected in St. Benildus College reaching their first under-14 A colleges final this year and this was in no small way due to the strength of the Naomh Olaf club at this age group.

Mid-May brought the Dublin Féile weekend and all teams were well prepared. Naomh Olaf were grouped with Kilmacud Crokes, O'Tooles and Ballyboden St. Enda's for the preliminary group games on Friday and Saturday. Teams who qualified were to play semi-finals in each division on Saturday afternoon with the final down for decision on Sunday in Parnell Park.

Naomh Olaf's opening game was against Kilmacud Crokes. Although not previously troubled by their Stillorgan neighbours, Naomh Olaf were made to fight all the way. Shane O'Rorke produced an inspired performance for Crokes who scored a late goal to lead by a point. Declan O'Dwyer, who was

showing the mettle which would soon make him a part of successful Dublin minor, under-21 and senior teams, then stepped up to land a long free which tied the game. Naomh Olaf were lucky to escape with a draw but this still gave them all to play for the following day.

On Saturday morning Naomh Olaf were back to themselves and came home comfortable winners against O'Tooles. This left them needing at least a draw against their old adversaries Ballyboden St. Enda's to progress to the semi-final stage of the competition. This match was to be played on Ballyboden's home ground and the home team would have dearly liked to see home advantage pay and eliminate the Olaf's boys from the competition. A nervous Olaf's fifteen started slowly but gradually came into the game. A titanic struggle ensued and, perhaps fittingly, ended in another draw which ensured both teams progressed to the evening semi-finals.

Naomh Olaf crossed the city to the famed St. Vincent's ground in Marino to face a big St. Brigid's team who had qualified at the head of their group. A beautiful evening setting with both teams enjoying good support was to produce what was undoubtedly the match of the Féile. This was a fine St. Brigid's team and they started strongly allowing the Olaf's lads very little opportunity. Many fine performances by players on both teams kept the onlookers entertained. As the game came into the final five minutes St. Brigid's held a five point lead and looked secure. Then Declan O'Dwyer pushed forward at the behest of his father and with the outstanding ability which he possesses he burst through the Blanchardstown defence on two occasions to score two memorable goals. A Dónal Kinsella point finished the scoring

and left Olaf's to meet Ballyboden St. Enda's in the following day's final. No Olaf's supporter who witnessed that semi-final will ever forget it.

The Dublin Féile final on Sunday in Parnell Park was well supported. The Olaf's team felt that they would not be denied. Chris Fennell completely dominated danger man Shane Durkin and a comfortable win ensued. What a proud sight it was to see captain Johnny McGrath raise the trophy and to see Naomh Olaf at the pinnacle of under-14 hurling in Dublin. Interestingly, Naomh Olaf were only the fourth club to have their name engraved on the coveted trophy. 2001 will be remembered as the year when foot and mouth disease struck Ireland and Britain. The National Féile was due to be played in Belfast in June but travel restrictions brought in to curtail the spread of the disease meant that this would not be possible. For the first time ever it looked as though the Féile would have to be cancelled. A generous Cork County Board stepped in at a late stage and offered to host the tournament. The Naomh Olaf's lads and many under-14 hurlers the length and breadth of the country breathed a sigh of relief and went about preparations for the tournament. John McGrath undertook fundraising and with generous support from all parts of the community a well kitted out team and a large band of supporters travelled by coach to host club Douglas.

Olaf's found themselves in a group with Douglas, Youghal and the Clare champions St. Joseph's Doora-Barefield. Naomh Olaf did not play to expectations in the first match against Douglas and were well beaten. The second match in east Cork against Youghal produced a much better performance and Olaf's were very unlucky to be beaten by a narrow margin. This meant that progression to the

final stages of the competition was now out of the question. The pride of the players had been dented by two losses. They re-gathered and their fighting spirit ensured that a third loss was out of the question. They finished with a comfortable victory over Doora-Barefield who had their Clare senior stars Jamesie O'Connor and Seánie McMahon watching from the sideline.

The boys returned to Dublin after a wonderful experience but with the under-14 league still to be completed. Despite serious tests from Naomh Fionnbarra, O'Toole's and Ballyboden the lads finished off the year on a high note by adding the under-14 Division 1 title to the Féile crown.

#### *2002*

The under-15 championship is regarded as the first full championship for juveniles in Dublin and the Olaf's hurling management set out in 2002 with victory in this competition as their prime target for the year. It must be remembered that most of these players were dual players and part of a very able footballing team who had set themselves the same target.

A good league run, beating Erin's Isle, Kilmacud Crokes, Cuala and O'Toole's, was marred by a loss to Na Fianna in Mobhi Road. Ballyboden gained a measure of revenge for the previous year's Féile final by also defeating the Olaf's lads and this saw them take the league honours.

The under-15 A championship preliminaries took the form of a round robin competition in which Olaf's were grouped with St. Brigid's, Cuala, Naomh Fionnbarra and O'Toole's. Victories against O'Toole's, Naomh Fionnbarra and Cuala were followed by a comprehensive defeat of St. Brigid's at home and meant Naomh Olaf would meet Na Fianna





**Naomh Olaf Under-15 Hurling Team. Runners up Dublin Juvenile Championship and League 2002 - Back row l to r:** Asafa Ingram, David Howley, Declan O'Dwyer, Terence Carroll, Chris Fennell, Shane Kelly, James Berry, William McGrath, Gavin Stapleton. **Front row l to r:** Feargal Máirtín, Dónal Kinsella, Eoin Stafford, Stevie Mahon, Johnny McGrath, Eoin Lumsden.

in the semi-final in Parnell Park. Two well-supported teams played a tight competitive match which Naomh Olaf eventually won to meet St. Brigid's in the final. An extremely wet day was not conducive to good hurling and St. Brigid's emerged victorious. The same two sides also contested the A football final with St. Brigid's also victorious to give them the double and to leave Olaf's disappointed as double losers.

All thoughts of hurling were put aside in August of that year with the extremely sad and shocking news of the premature death of Barry O'Brien in a drowning tragedy off Achill Island in County Mayo. A fine person, coach, hurler and role model who left an indelible imprint on the lives of the Féile team by his

leadership, commitment and honesty will never be forgotten by those who knew him, particularly that group of young players. *Ar dheis lámh Dé go raibh a anam.*

### 2003

2003 was this team's final year in the juvenile ranks prior to hurling in the Minor grade. The Celtic Tiger was in full health and this led to some of the players taking up part-time employment. There is no doubt but that this had a harmful effect in that some players gave up hurling and some others could not give the same commitment as heretofore. In a small club, without a continuous stream of quality hurlers coming through, this would make the standards of previous years difficult to sustain.

The team competed well in the under-16 league but a couple of poor results left title aspirations out of their grasp. The championship was again the main focus. In the round robin stages Olaf's beat Cuala away and Craobh Chiaráin at home to qualify for the quarter final. They met Erin's Isle in that match and produced a good win in Finglas to go forward to meet Lucan Sarsfield's in the semi-final. Lucan had come up from Division 2 the previous year with notable future minor Dublin stars John McCaffrey, Kevin O'Reilly and Peter O'Callaghan to the fore. A very competitive semi-final in O'Toole Park in front of a good crowd saw Olaf's concede too many frees. They were heavily punished for this and O'Reilly's seven points from placed balls ultimately consigned them to defeat.

This was the end of a glorious period at the very top in juvenile hurling in Dublin for this team. They did their club proud on every occasion on which they took the field and their performances lit up many an evening's conversation in the Naomh Olaf clubhouse. Fran O'Dwyer and Fin Máirtín retired as managers of the team to be replaced by Tommy Brown and Brendan McGlynn and this was to be the start of another great period at Minor and under-21 level for this band of hurlers.

### ***Individual Honours***

In individual terms there some notable successes for some of these players. Declan O'Dwyer, Josh Dunford, Eoin Stafford, Asafa Ingram, Shane Kelly and Johnny McGrath were selected on Dublin development squads from under-15.

Declan was the outstanding player and became part of the Dublin Minor team which defeated Kilkenny in the Leinster Final in 2005, scoring the decisive goal in that final. He progressed to further honours

## ***30 Year History of Naomh Olaf GAA Club***

as a member of the Dublin under-21 team which won the Leinster title in 2008 and was beaten by Galway in the all-Ireland final in September of that year. He is currently a member of the Dublin Senior Hurling panel.

Luke Fitzgerald, a very good footballer and hurler, followed in his father's rugby footsteps. After a glittering career in schools' rugby he was a member of the Irish rugby team which won Championship, Triple Crown and Grand Slam in 2009 for the first time since 1948. He was also selected on the Lions team which toured South Africa that year.



***Naomh Olaf Millennium Committee - Front row l to r: Mary O'Shea, R.I.P. Carol Boland, Chris O'Grady (Chairman), Mary Hayes (Secretary), Patricia Farrelly (Registrar) and Jerry Kelleher***  
***Back row l to r: John McGrath (Vice Chairman), Peter O'Brien, Jerome Hogan, Jack Horgan, Brendan McGlynn (P.R.O.), Paddy Kiernan (Treasurer), John Garvey and Larry Kinsella.***



## *A History of the 2nd Class Inter-School Annual Blitz - By Andy Gibbons*

### *Plus 'The Naomh Olaf /O'Brien Corn Craic agus Bumper Competition'*

John O'Brien had a very keen interest in the 2nd class age group playing the game of hurling. He proposed that a tournament should be set up especially for them. John, a native of County Wexford, had the game of hurling always on his mind, with an extraordinary burning ambition to see hurling fostered in the Naomh Olaf GAA Club. John O'Brien passed on all his hurling ambitions to his son, Barry. Together, they plotted and planned to create a juvenile hurling structure in the Naomh Olaf Club. Due to John's prompting, Barry became a leading light in coaching at all juvenile ages, while he had not yet become a minor (Under 18) player himself.

Barry's drive and enthusiasm, particularly as Captain of the Dublin hurlers (Under 21) permeated the juvenile section of the Club, and indeed, right up to senior level. Barry's proudest claim to fame was when he became a young mentor of the brilliant U14 Juvenile Team that played in Co. Cork in the Féile na nGael Finals Div. 1 representing Dublin in 2001. Barry also played a major part in the organization of the Naomh Olaf Summer Camps for many years.

To quote Barry's own words of delight in the last camp he presided over, as he surveyed the scene, he looked across the new playing pitches (ironically now known as Páirc Uí Bhriain) and said, "There are 85 children out on the pitch with hurleys in their hands, skilled and not yet skilled; the survival of hurling is in safe hands."

In order to repay the deep faith his father had in his ability to both play and organize the game of hurling, Barry played the master stroke: he organized a 2nd Class Blitz Competition in 1998 with the co-operation of the schools. This competition, set up by Barry, started from humble beginnings with only four schools participating, namely St. Olaf's, Queen of Angels, Wayside and Oatlands.

The logic behind Barry's enthusiasm was, firstly, for 2nd classes to play with plenty of "craic" to the fore. Secondly, his father, John, always advised him to get boys and girls playing hurling at a very young age. Thirdly, the blitz competition would be a platform for the same players in the Autumn 3rd Class Inter-Schools Tournament. Both activities in the same year would be their grooming up to 4th class, by which time they would be capable of playing for both Naomh Olaf and the schools.

The prizes for winners and losers for the first two years of the 2nd Class Blitz were normally crisps, chocolate bars and fizzy drinks. Then Naomh Olaf Juvenile Committee decided to recruit more schools in the club's catchment area. St Mary's were next to come on stream, Gaelscoil Thaobh na Coille followed suit.

The latest recruits are Oakhill, Our Lady's National School of Clonskeagh Parish, and Holy Cross, Dundrum. Holy Cross, Dundrum have remarkably become the best equipped hurling school in the area in just over a year.



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### *30 Year History of Naomh Olaf GAA Club*

Barry O'Brien often spent weeks of his holidays coaching in many of the aforementioned schools. In June 2001, John O'Brien went to his eternal reward. The O'Brien family then donated a trophy to the memory of John, to be used exclusively for the 2nd Class Blitz annually.

Barry then created a more competitive structure with winners and runner-up medals to accompany the John O'Brien trophy, while still retaining the "craic" element of the competition. It was a proud occasion for Mrs. Brenda O'Brien, with Barry and the family, to present the trophy for the first time in June 2002.

In August 2002, tragedy struck again. Barry lost his young life in a swimming accident. Barry's passing was a deep-felt shock to his family, to Naomh Olaf GAA Club, to schools' GAA in Dublin and indeed nationally. The local Sandyford/Balally community was numb with grief.

In appreciation from Naomh Olaf GAA Club, the greatest honour that could be bestowed to the memory of Barry O'Brien, for his spirit and dedication, the name Páirc Uí Bhriain will live forever.

At the entrance to Páirc Uí Bhriain is a granite memorial, a fitting tribute to a man made of steel. The present 2nd classes, many of whom will not have a memory of Barry O'Brien, can make themselves aware of his inspiration and hurling presence by visiting the Photograph Gallery upstairs in the Naomh Olaf GAA clubhouse. Barry's photograph takes pride of place alongside his most treasured possession, his favourite well-used hurley.

The 2nd classes will assemble once again this year to play hurling on the sod of Páirc Uí Bhriain and do battle for the Barry O'Brien Trophy presented by the Naomh Olaf GAA Club.

The two men who started it all, John and Barry O'Brien – they are assured in their heavenly hurling ground, that the endeavour, skill and enthusiasm which they left in their legacy to the boys and girls of the Naomh Olaf Club and elsewhere, will satisfy and entertain them.

John and Barry O'Brien were models of what a real GAA club member should be. Finally, it is very important that the "craic" in the "bumper" competition will be carried out to both John and Barry's specifications.

*God, grant them peace.*

## Barry O'Brien 1981-2002 - By Chris O'Grady

News of Barry O'Brien's tragic death, in a diving accident in Achill, reached me on Hill 16 some minutes before the start of the Dublin v Donegal match. At the back of the Hill after the match, scores of Naomh Olaf GAA Club members gathered as the news spread and the shock and pain completely shut out the joy of seeing Dublin's great win. It was a scene of devastated young people. The loss of a young man who was admired by so many, and the thought that his family were now suffering the incalculable loss of a family member for the second time in two months, numbed us all.

It is impossible to speak about Barry without being emotional. Barry was a man of unparalleled enthusiasm and passion for any activity in which he was involved. This passion was evidenced in the way he applied himself, and gave his all, down through the years for school, club, college and county in football, and more especially, in hurling. For us at Naomh Olaf, his unique hair-raising roar of "C'mon Olafs" was a trade mark call that would shake any of his hurling or football mates out of their complacency. On the field, he gave his last ounce of energy whether the match was championship, league, cup or challenge. Barry did not believe in half-measures. Never cowardly, never mean, he personified all that is best in the GAA. His infectious enthusiasm and passion, together with his absolute commitment to fair play, marked him out always as a man of honesty and integrity. These qualities were recognized and recounted by the numerous colleagues, friends and admirers who have paid generous tribute to Barry via the Dublin GAA Official website.



His contribution to Naomh Olaf GAA Club was enormous and I can honestly say that no other person of his age has ever contributed as much as Barry has. As a juvenile and minor, as well as playing for his own age group, he also played for teams well above his age on a very regular basis. Despite the fact that he was in college in the University of Limerick, with whom he won a

Fitzgibbon medal this year, he travelled home weekends, and even on weekdays, to play for his club. He never once complained of burnout, even though he was involved in an incredible number of teams at club, college and county level. Barry played on through the pain barrier many times, and paid no attention or sought no sympathy for bloodied knuckles or any other serious injury.

At twenty years of age, Barry was coach of the Naomh Olaf hurling team which won the Dublin Féile na nÓg competition and went on to perform so well at the National Finals in Cork. Barry's devotion to those young hurlers was a joy to behold and they would stand on their heads for Barry if he were to ask them. A few weeks ago, Barry ran what were excellently organised, and for the children most enjoyable, summer camps in hurling and football. These children were privileged to have such a brilliant coach as Barry to brighten those first few weeks of their holidays. There seemed to be no limit to his willingness to give his time, his energy and his talents. If it's true that there's more joy in giving than receiving, Barry must have been the happiest soul on earth.

## *John O'Brien 1937-2002 - By Brendan McGlynn*

The community was saddened at the news of the death of John O'Brien, Clonard Grove, which occurred at St Vincent's Private Nursing Home, Elm Park, on Saturday, 8th of June, 2002. Born in Enniscorthy, Co., Wexford in October 1937, John was an accountant by profession. He was employed for a time by Ericsson, and subsequently by Johnson Brother in Ballymount, Walkinstown, until he retired in 1999.



When I visited John in hospital five days before his death, the only concern that he expressed was that I would thank, on his behalf, all those who had visited him, as well as the many people who had sent cards and messages of goodwill to himself and his family. I think that this speaks volumes about the sort of man John was, always placing the needs of others before his own.

John was, truly, one of nature's gentlemen. His quiet, pleasant manner and ready smile endeared him to all of us who had the pleasure of knowing him. He was, above all else, an outstanding family man. While his wife Brenda and his three sons John, Tony and David, will miss him sorely, he has left them many very pleasant memories to treasure.

John had a great love of sport, particularly hurling and Gaelic football. He rarely missed attending a game when one or more of his sons were playing, and he could always be relied on to provide transport. It gave him great pleasure when his youngest son, the late Barry, R.I.P. was selected on the Dublin Under 21 and Senior hurling panels this year.

It was only last September that John was asked to serve on the Executive Committee of Naomh Olaf GAA Club, as treasurer. As usual, he was willing to oblige. It was a particularly busy time in the club, as the Development Draw was in progress. John carried out his function quietly and efficiently, creating a lasting impression in a relatively short period of time.

There was a large and representative attendance at the removal of John's remains from his home to the Church of the Ascension of the Lord, Balally, on Monday, 10th of June. Naomh Olaf GAA Club provided a guard of honour, as John's four sons carried the coffin, draped in the Naomh Olaf Club flag, into the church. Father Brian Edwards officiated. Following the Removal, the O'Brien family invited everyone present to Naomh Olaf GAA Club for refreshments.

The Funeral Mass was celebrated by Father Brian Edwards assisted by Father Charles Archer, of the Salesian College, Celbridge, where John's brother, Jim, had taught until he retired recently. John's wife, Brenda, read the first Reading, while his brother, Jim, read the second Reading. His four sons said the Prayers of the Faithful. Father Edwards preached a most appropriate homily. The offertory gifts included a family photograph, a hurley and the jersey of John's beloved county Wexford. The singing of the adult choir was much appreciated. Following the ceremony, the remains were taken to Mount Jerome Cemetery for cremation.



## A Year of Mixed Emotions

*The following article, written by Brendan McGlynn, was published in the Dublin Year Book 2003*

2002 was a year when grief overshadowed all the club's activities. The club was devastated by the tragic death of 21 year old Barry O'Brien in a swimming accident on Achill Island on Saturday August 17th, 2002. The loss of Barry, so soon after the death of his father John O'Brien, who was club treasurer and who had died following a short illness only two months earlier, was a shocking blow to the club and an incalculable loss for the O'Brien family. Barry, who had qualified as a P.E. instructor in Limerick University in the summer of 2002, had secured a teaching post in St Benildus College where he had attended secondary school. Because of his involvement in the club, Barry was very well known and a much-loved club member. He played hurling with the club's Under 21 and Intermediate hurling teams. He was the club's Minor Hurler of the Year in 1998. In 1999, he was selected on the Dublin Minor Hurling panel. His hurling career really blossomed in 2002 when, having won a Fitzgibbon Cup medal with Limerick University, he played at midfield for the Dublin Under 21 hurling team that defeated Offaly in the Leinster Championship. He was captain of the Dublin Under 21 hurling team that was narrowly defeated by Wexford in the Leinster Final, after extra time had been played. He was also a member of the Dublin Senior Panel in 2002.

While Barry was an outstanding hurler, he was also a useful footballer. With two of his brothers, Tony and David, they once formed the halfback line of the club's Junior Division 3 football team. Barry represented his club as a hurling and football referee at

juvenile level. For a time, he assisted with coaching beginners in the club sports hall on Saturday mornings. During his summer holidays, he coached children in a number of the local primary schools in the skills of hurling and football. He coached the club's Under 14 hurling team that won the Dublin Féile in 2001. In the summer of 2002, with Eoin Kinsella, he conducted one of the most enjoyable Summer Camps ever held in the club. The club's social members knew and loved Barry also, because of the service he gave them while working behind the bar from time to time. Small wonder then that his funeral was one of the largest and most representative ever seen in the parish. Seldom, if ever, has one seen such outpouring of grief by so many young people as was witnessed on that sad occasion. Several of his classmates from Limerick University, as well as members of the Fitzgibbon Cup team, travelled from various parts of the country. The players of the Dublin Under 21 hurling team were well represented in the County colours. Some Naomh Olaf members, who had only commenced their holidays in Europe, returned immediately to be present and to assist in whatever way they could, if only to be part of the impressive Guard of Honour that was provided for Barry. The attendance included many public representatives. The Dublin County Board was represented by the Chairman John Baily, Vice-Chairman Gerry Harrington and Secretary John Costello. Most of the Dublin GAA Boards, as well as many of the Dublin GAA clubs, were also represented. Following Mass, the coffin, draped in the Dublin and Naomh Olaf flags and the Number 9 Dublin jersey, was taken to Shanganagh Cemetery for burial.



**Naomh Olaf Under 11 Football Team Hanrahan Shield Winners 2002** - Front row l to r: Sean O'Malley, Rory Lawlor, Garret Davis, Colin Kyne-Delaney, Blaine Begley, Karl Peacock, Shane Butler (Captain), Conor Butler, David Tinton, Rowan Noonan. Back row l to r: Lorcan Gray, Alan Lane, Thomas Downes, Jason Cooney, Robert McCarthy, Mark Quinlivan, Gavin Gunning, Daniel Coppinger, Luke Kelly, Declan Coppinger - Team Mentor. Missing from photograph: Storme Willows, Conor Rochford, Stephen Peters and Team Mentor John Garvey.



**Naomh Olaf U11 Football Team - Hanrahan Shield Winners 2002** - Back row l to r: Team Mentors John O'Hara, Paul Sullivan, Barry Byrne and Richard Elliot with former Galway All Star hurler Joe Cooney (in centre). Middle row l to r: Darragh Byrne, Matthew Gill, Conor Butler, Tim Courtney, Donal Butler, David Byrne, Peter Gillan, James Egan, Conor Murphy, Graham Elliot, Michael O'Connor. Front row l to r: Stuart Kyne-Delaney, Sean Sullivan, Robert Doyle, Anthony O'Hara, Dermot Frewen, Aiden Neeson, Jordan Lacken and Farhad Patel.



**Naomh Olaf Players of the year 2001** - Back row: Footballers l to r: Jim Quinn - Senior Div. 1, John Davitt - Junior Div. 1, Ailish Flynn - Ladies Football, Brendan Curtin R.I.P. - junior Div. 3, Sean Gibbons - Under 21 and Shane Whyte - Minor. Front row: Hurlers - l to R: Caomhan Bermingham - Intermediate, Patrick McGuire - Junior and Darren Egan - Minor. Missing from photograph: Caolan Cotter - Under 21 hurling and Eugene McHugh - Junior 7 Football.



## *The Extension to Naomh Olaf Clubhouse -*

### *By Mary Hayes*

***Club House and Bar - opened in 1994***

***Plans for extension unveiled - August 2000***

***Launch of Development Draw - June 26th 2001***

***Draw - March 17th 2002***

***Building commenced - June 2002***

***Extension opened doors - December 2002***

Having completed a much needed clubhouse in 1994, Naomh Olaf Club now was very proud of the modern facilities available to its members, players and much wider community. A new enthusiasm emerged from both its playing and social membership. This, of course, was very evident from the numbers becoming involved at juvenile level, in particular. We now had a large sports hall. This facility attracted large interest, both from our own players and from other sporting organisations in the community. Many large functions were held here. While these were very successful, both from a financial and social point of view, staging each one demanded a huge effort. Teams of people were needed to set up and dismantle/clean up after each function. While there was great enthusiasm at the beginning, it became very apparent that this would not continue and that a smaller function room/hall was necessary to accommodate the regular social events like quizzes, parties, dinner dances, Christmas functions etc. Because of the expansion of our playing membership, we needed more dressing rooms, a fitness room and a kitchen to facilitate functions. So, at Committee level began the research into what other clubs had done. Many clubs were visited during this process. The Building Committee, comprising of

Chris O'Grady, Dermot Irwin, Paddy Kiernan, Paddy Maguire and Sean Ryan, spent many long nights working on plans and preparations. The question of how this could be financed also became a live issue. Committees were set up to examine how this finance could be raised. A Development Draw Committee, chaired by Mick Brown, set about organising a big draw.



***Launch of Naomh Olaf Development Draw - Left to right:***  
*Fran O'Dwyer and Paddy Kiernan (Fundraising Committee),*  
*Michael Keenan of Overseas Property Investments, Babs Keating*  
*with Michael Brown and John Mulhall, (Fundraising Committee).*

Plans for the extension were launched by An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, at the club in August 2000. A huge crowd attended. We received a National Lottery grant of £90,000. Our local Ministers, Seamus Brennan, R.I.P. Tom Kitt and Liz O'Donnell, and deputies Olivia Mitchell and Alan Shatter, as well as all of our local councillors and representatives, supported us in our application for this grant. Other sporting bodies and organisations also gave their support. Having been awarded this grant, our plans for raising further finance now moved forward.



### *30 Year History of Naomh Olaf GAA Club*

Mick Brown and his committee organised a draw with the aim of raising something in the region of €200,000. This draw was launched in the Clubhouse on June 26th 2001 with Babs Keating as star guest. Tickets were priced at €100 each and everybody was asked to make a special effort to make this draw a success. Prizes were worth in excess of €120,000. After many months of very hard work and walking the roads selling these tickets, the night of the draw arrived. A total of 2,373 tickets were sold, leaving a profit to the club of €140,000. A good crowd attended the function on the night and the legendary Jack O'Shea pulled the winning tickets. There was great cheering when Noelle and Pat Connolly of Wedgewood won the first prize, a two bedroomed apartment in Spain. Mick Brown and his committee are to be commended for the hard work they put into this fundraising effort. With this deposit plus a Lottery grant, it was possible to borrow to cover the remaining cost of the project.

The extension included a function room to accommodate 150 people. This room is in constant use for all sorts of functions including christenings, weddings and funeral receptions. A lift was installed from the foyer to the function room. A kitchen and a committee room were also included. Downstairs, a cold room and plenty of storage room as well as an invalid toilet were also built. A second set of showers were added. This extension to the original clubhouse was a very necessary development and this has been proved over the years. Members have their own private lounge and are not discommoded when functions are held. When numbers dwindled from the bar for various reasons, the function room continued to operate and provided a much needed source of income to enable the club to operate. Trish

Farrelly, the former Club Manager, did Trojan work ensuring that this function room is utilised, both during the day and at night. The extra dressing room of course is essential, particularly with the increase in numbers participating in the Ladies' Football and Camogie sections. The extra storage space is much needed for storing all the equipment relating to sport and also for the chairs and tables required for the function room.



*Club Development Draw Winners - Left to right: Pat and Noelle Connolly, Wedgewood, who won First Prize (2 bedroom apartment in Spain) with Jack O'Shea who drew the winning tickets, Chris O'Grady, Club Chairman, Paul Hughes, who had sold the winning ticket, and Mick Brown, Chairman of the Development Draw Committee.*



*Mary Hayes, Club Secretary, presents a Renault, a prize won in the Naomh Olaf Development Draw 2002, to Richard and Carmel King.*

## *Naomh Olaf Corporate Lunch - By Jim Quinn*

In November 2002, when the new club executive was elected, a renewed focus was put on the Juvenile side of the club. At that stage, the club was having difficulty in fielding teams at every second age group in hurling and at each age group in football for boys. For girls, there was no camogie and only football teams at every second age grouping.

At the time, the Dublin County Board were putting a lot of effort into Juvenile games within the county. One of their initiatives was where they piloted a scheme whereby they would supply Games Promotional Officers (GPO) / coaches to the clubs and would pay 50% of the costs.

The Juvenile committee within the club felt that it would be a good idea to try and get one of these GPOs for ourselves as this would help strengthen the Juvenile section and help to recruit new players to Naomh Olaf. In July 2003, Naomh Olaf applied to the County Board for a GPO; unfortunately the application was unsuccessful. However, despite that set back, it was felt that it would still be a very good idea if we could appoint a club coach.

Later that year, John O'Brien, through one of his many contacts, sourced Pat Stephens, to fulfil this role within the club. The club went to the County Board and asked would the County Board give a contribution towards his cost, if Naomh Olaf were to employ Pat. Fortunately, they agreed. The flip side was that Naomh Olaf now needed to raise funds to pay the coach's salary. From this, the Corporate Lunch was born.

In March 2004, John O'Brien originally approached a number of members within the club with a sug-

gestion as to how to pay for our new found coach. A small committee was formed and work commenced. The idea was simple. Hire a function room, sell tables and pull in the money. The reality was very different.



*Naomh Olaf's first full-time coach, Pat Stephens.*

Getting a location and a date were the first items to be organised. We were all aware of a number of other functions / fundraising events like this that were occurring at the time. There were trips to the dogs, trips to the races and fashion shows. However, none of these really seemed to hit the right note. John then suggested that Croke Park would be an ideal venue as it was only newly completed and would cater for the numbers we would be hoping for. That was agreed upon pretty quickly. The date was next. It had to be around some major event. Timescales dictated that it would have to be later on in the year. The Friday before the Football All Ireland final was agreed upon. However, when we went to look into this date, we were told that the venue would not be available.

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In the same breath, we were advised that the Friday before the Hurling final was available. We decided that it would be as good a date as any other.

That was the easy bit. We knew that selling the tables would be very difficult so we did our best to make the lunch as attractive as possible to prospective purchasers. All kinds of items were suggested, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Eventually a number of items were decided. These included that we would need a recognised face as the MC for the day, that some form of entertainment was required and that some special guests were required. John O'Brien contacted Mícheál Ó Muirheartaigh and he agreed to do MC. John also organised entertainment for the



*Andy Gibbons receiving his presentation from Mícheál Ó Muirheartaigh.*

day, Packie O'Callaghan was decided upon. As Kilkenny was playing Cork in the Final on the Sunday, Kieran Brennan asked a number of former Kilkenny greats to the event. Fortunately a number of them were able to attend including Eamonn Morrissey, Fran Larkin, Ger Henderson, Andy Comerford and Bill Walsh.

The next job was to start selling the tables. Although there were a number of months left to the big day, the selling started immediately. Posters were created, emails sent, letters posted and phone calls made. Everybody in the club was asked to see if they could locate somebody to purchase a table. The cost of the table was set at £1,000 for a table of ten. Seats could be sold individually also. Fortunately for the club a few of the members came up trumps. Paddy Kieran, Brendan Curtin (RIP), Cathal Daughton and of course John O'Brien were the main people selling but the efforts of many others as well ensured that, on the day, all tables were sold.

A number of additional items were also organised. These included decorating the room. Janice Dowling organised balloons in the Naomh Olaf colours to be placed on all of the tables. As Guinness was sponsoring the All-Ireland Final on the Sunday, they asked if we would mind if they put up some of their banners in the room. No objections were raised. Programmes for the match on the Sunday were available for people also. All of this would add to the atmosphere on the day.

As this was going to be a special day in the history of the club, it was decided to make a presentation to Andy Gibbons. This was to recognise the efforts and contribution that Andy had made to the development of hurling in Naomh Olaf.



### *30 Year History of Naomh Olaf GAA Club*

Last but not least, it was decided that we should hold both a raffle and an auction on the day. Jim Quinn organised for jerseys from both of the participating teams to be autographed. These were the main part of the auction. Two tickets for the match on the Sunday were donated by the club.

Eventually Friday 10th of September arrived. Hearts were all of a flutter hoping that things would go well. The fact that the tables had effectively sold out was a great relief. However, there were still a lot of nerves.

When we arrived in Croke Park, it was great to see the whole room decorated. I think it was only then that the enormity of the occasion got to us. “How did we do this?” was the question on our lips! Soon the crowds starting coming in and questions of “Where is my table?” and “What’s the itinerary for the day?” needed to be answered. The dreaded “Table 4 won’t be coming” didn’t happen, much to everybody’s delight. Fortunately we knew in advance that, while one or two companies purchased tables, they would not be sending any guests. We used these tables to invite the local teachers and members of the Executive within the club.

At 1:30 pm, Mícheál called for everybody to take their seats and the show was on the road. Jim Quinn spoke first and thanked everybody for supporting the club. He gave a brief history of the club and gave the reasons and benefits behind the day’s events. Following this, the food was served and a few drinks were had. During the course of the meal, Mícheál had a few words for the guests. He told some of his stories and interviewed a few of the guests attending.

Following the meal, the presentation was made to Andy Gibbons by Bill Walsh. Packie O’Callaghan then went through his entertainment routine and had



*Left to right: Eoin McCaffrey, Alan Lyons, Philip Funge, Niall McCaffrey, Barry Lynch and Shane O’Connor.*

all of the guests in knots of laughter. When the entertainment was over, envelopes were passed around, so that people could enter the raffle. The auction was held after this and great sums were raised for the club. Mícheál then closed out the event. However, some people were slow to leave, others could not find their way out and some people including Bill O’Brien were spotted running across the pitch trying to escape. All in all, a great day was had.



*Members of the Naomh Olaf Executive 2004 pictured at the lunch - Front row l to r: Kevin Curtin, Mary Shivnan, Patricia Farrelly, Tommy Brown. Back row l to r: Jim Quinn, Chris O’Grady, Paddy Kiernan, John O’Brien and Cathal Daughton.*

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Following the day, payment for the tables was tracked down, raffle and auction figures were totalled up and bills were paid. In the end, a tidy sum was raised which would go towards paying most of the coaching fees for the club for the year.

After the success of the first event, it was then decided to run the event in subsequent years. These have all proved to be outstanding successes with one event surpassing the next. Guests on the day have included An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern (2005), President of the GAA, Nicky Brennan (2007), Ard Stiúrthóir, Pádraig Duffy (2009), Mick Galwey, Nicky English, Paul Caffrey (Dublin Manager), the captains of the Dublin Minor Hurlers 2005 (Leinster Champions), the Dublin U-21 Team of 2007 (Leinster Champions), the Dublin teams of '83 and '95, John Bailey and Gerry Harrington (Chairmen of Dublin County Board) and John Costello (CEO, Dublin County Board).

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Special presentations under the banner of “Hall of Fame” have been made to Andy Gibbons (2004), Brendan McGlynn, Mick Brown and Bill O’Brien (2005), Kevin Birrane (2006), Mary Hayes (2007), Paddy Kiernan (2008), Larry Kinsella (2009), Dermot Irwin (2010), and Mary Shivanan, 2011.



*Left to right: Eoin Brennan (Naomh Olaf), Bill Walsh, Andy Comerford, Eamon Morrissey and Liam O’Brien (All former Kilkenny All-Ireland Winners).*