

Tuarascáil an Choiste Forbairt Iomána

The Hurling Development Committee consists of the following personnel; Michael Hasson (Cathaoirleach), Jimmy Darragh (Rúnaí), Frank Smyth (Aontroim), Liam Ross (Ard Mhacha), Tom Reilly (An Cabhán), Michael McCracken (Doire), Naul McCole (Dún Na nGall), Gerard McShane (An Dún), Deirdre Donnelly (Fear Manach), Malachy Trainor (Muineachán) and Tony Faul (Tír Eoghain). The committee has met on eight occasions during the year; those meetings were generally well attended. Further meetings with the National Tutors took place on two occasions and the Cathaoirleach agus Runáí attended meetings of the National Hurling Development Committee also on two occasions. I commend the work and input of the members and in particular that of Rúnaí Jimmy Darragh who serviced the Committee in a most professional and dedicated manner. Tony Faul is our link with the National H.D.C. I also thank Tony for the work he does in that role.

Hurling Development

Hurling development within Ulster continues to be a challenge, one of our immediate challenges is to increase the number of club games we play. Hurling has to be played in the spring and summer months and on a regular basis if the standard of hurling is to reach higher levels in future years. As in past years the development year commences with the closed season and the raft of coach development initiatives throughout the Province. Ulster GAA continues to provide top quality coach development and sports science courses and will continue to be a support for all our counties.

Ulster Minor Hurling League

The Ulster Minor Hurling League was played during March. Division 1 involved Armagh, Donegal, Down and Antrim. It was disappointing that Derry withdrew from the competition at a late stage and

the final between Antrim and Down was not contested.

Three counties contested in Division 2, which was won by Monaghan who had a 7-10 to 3-12 victory over Cavan in the final at Kingspan Breffni Park. Again it was frustrating that Fermanagh failed to compete in this competition.

The rivalry for the talented minor is one of the longest running problems in the playing side of our Association. Our County Minor Hurling teams within Ulster suffer more than most from this problem. The need to have a reserved slot for our minor games in our congested calendar of events is essential to ensure the pathway of development for our young players.

Táin Senior Club Hurling League

While the Ulster Senior Club Hurling League underwent a complete revamp in 2012 with teams from Connacht and Leinster entering the competition and fixtures being fixed at National level to ensure there was no conflict with other competitions. However, 2013 saw further development in this competition with Connacht withdrawing to operate their own league and a number of Leinster clubs opting out of the Ulster section. Forty six teams remained and participated in the Ulster Táin Hurling League which provides an average of five games per year per player.

Full results can be obtained from the Ulster Council website at <http://ulster.gaa.ie/fixtures-and-results/> The keenly contested finals were played before the end of April with the following winners:

Division 1	Cuchulainns, Co. Antrim
Division 2	Tir na nÓg, Co. Antrim
Division 3	Shane O'Neill's, Co. Antrim
Division 4	St Eunan's, Co. Donegal
Division 5	St Fechin's, Co. Louth

Development Squads 2013

County Development Squad blitz competitions were held at Under 14 and Under 16 levels. Our counties continue to put a lot of effort into this area of development, however in some cases the number of players is low and there is a struggle to maintain teams in certain age groups.

Blitz competitions were held as follows:

20th April – Under 16 – Two competitions were organised; one at Downpatrick, where a total of nine teams participated. Antrim, Down and Derry brought two teams each, while Donegal, Armagh and a visiting team from Carlow also competed. The Carlow team won a terrific tournament going through the 'A' Section undefeated.

At Garvaghey in Tyrone; it was a different story as some of our teams struggled to get the number of players to make up a team. Tyrone had 29 players in attendance and Monaghan had 15, but Fermanagh (13) and Cavan (10) arrived short of a full panel. The event went ahead with Tyrone providing players to make up the numbers for Cavan and Fermanagh.

Given that our counties are funded from Croke Park for the Development Squad programme it is disappointing that when it comes to hurling some counties still cannot field a team.

3rd August – Produced an excellent day of hurling with teams competing in a total of 26 games at the following levels:

- U14 A – Antrim, Derry, Down & Donegal
- U14 B – Antrim 'B', Derry 'B', Armagh & Wicklow
- U14 C – Tyrone, Fermanagh & Cavan
- U16 A – Antrim, Down, Derry & Donegal



An Chomhdhail Bhliantúil 2014

Continued expansion of this programme saw the delivery of Development Squad summer camps by Ulster GAA staff. These camps were held mid week in preparation for the National Blitzes, which took place on the last Saturday in August.

Under 16 Elite Camp

The annual Under 16 residential 'Elite Camp' was once again held at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown. In total 45 young hurlers from across Ulster attended the camp. The camp lasted two days and the players were treated to an intensive programme of hurling developmental games and skill development challenges.

Ulster Hurling Inter-Provincial Challenges

Following on from the elite camp for Under-16 hurlers, at the beginning of July, two teams were selected to play Connacht teams in two challenge games to promote hurling for the province's talented young players. The squads were brought together for a couple of training sessions before welcoming our visitors from Connacht to the Athletic Grounds in Armagh.

The first game was between an Ulster Under 16 team who played out a 2-15 to 2-15 draw in a fantastic game of hurling against the Galway Under 15 squad. Ulster's second squad then went on to record a win over a Connacht second string in another fine display of hurling. The day was wrapped up with the Down Under 16 team playing against the Galway Under 15 second string. This is a great initiative which will be followed up with other cross Provincial opportunities between Ulster and Connacht at various age levels.

Cross Community Hurling

Ulster GAA continues to bring our games to people from the protestant community who wouldn't normally get the opportunity to play Gaelic games. The annual 'Cuchulainns Tournament' attracted seven teams who played one

half of hurling followed by a half of Gaelic football with the aggregate scores added together.

Poc Fada

After seven years of Póc Fada competitions bathed in sunshine, the O'Neill's Póc Fada Uladh event went ahead on Divis Mountain on Friday 21st July in wet and misty conditions. Due to an unfortunate injury, reigning champion Ruairi Convery was unable to compete in the competition, which featured the county champions from eight Ulster counties.

This was a unique year with the National Poc Fada Committee encouraging all counties to hold their own county event in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a total of 31 counties took up the challenge.

The competition was fierce and all competitors found the going tough, with visibility on the upper sections of the course poor at times. After a terrific battle Derry Champion Sean McBride, from the Ballinascreen club powered his way to victory with a narrow winning margin over Tyrone's Patrick McKillion. Both competitors finished with 40 pucks but McBride's final puck finished 30 yards

ahead, giving McBride his first O'Neill's Ulster Póc Fada title. Karol Keating from Down was a close third on 41 pucks. In the Under 16 competition, we had five competitors who were all new to the location. Again this was a closely fought contest with the winner Donal McKernan from Antrim, on a winning score of 44, four shots better than runner-up, Ciaran Mohan from Down. In the Camogie events Catriona McCrickard (54) won the Senior event, while Amy Freer also from Down (54) won the Under 16 title.

O'Neill's Poc Fada Uladh Winners 2013

Senior Hurling	Sean McBride (Derry) 40 Pucks
Under 16 Hurling	Donal McKernan (Antrim) 44 Pucks
Senior Camogie	Catriona McCrickard (Down) 54 Pucks
Under 16 Camogie	Amy Freer (Down) 54 Pucks

The formation of Poc Fada committees at provisional and county level, the introduction of college competitions from 2014 will further increase the participation level in this very unique competition



Annual Convention 2014

Feile Uladh 2013

Congratulations to all participants in this year's Feile Uladh, which was played throughout Ulster on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd June. Each year Ulster GAA is indebted to the support given by our clubs and County Boards, who unselfishly give up their facilities to help deliver this event. On Saturday 22nd June we had the event going on in 20 different venues with 51 Hurling and 25 Camogie teams taking part. All in all a total of 90 hurling games were played during the tournament. We also appreciate the assistance from the

many referees that officiate at our games, the club mentors and the parents, who in many cases ferry the players to the event, and the venue co-ordinators and stewards who ensure the competition runs smoothly. This year it was great to see winners coming from Antrim, Down, Derry, Donegal and Monaghan.

County Derry provided their excellent facilities at Owenbeg for the 10 finals. Games were played on two of their pitches including the new stadium. This was an excellent facility for our

finals and Derry County Board are to be congratulated for setting the standard that we will aspire to in future years for the running of the finals of Feile Uladh. Feile Uladh 2013 was a huge success with parents and management teams full of praise for the weekend event and also the venue for the finals.

In Limerick over the National Feile na nGael weekend many notable performances took place with O'Donovan's Rossa winning Division Two, St.Colm's Ballinascreen winning Division

Féile Hurling Final Results

Div 1	Antrim - Rossa	1 - 11	v	0 - 5	Antrim - Ruairi Og Cushendall
Div 2	Down - Portaferry	4 - 3	v	1 - 6	Antrim - Cuchullains Dunloy
Div 3	Antrim - St Endas	2 - 7	v	1 - 0	Antrim - Glenshesk
Div 4	Monaghan - Carrick Emmets	3 - 2	v	1 - 3	Antrim - All Saints Ballymena
Div 5	Antrim - Brid Og	2 - 4	v	3 - 3	Derry - Lavey
Div 6	Derry - Eoghan Rua Coleraine	0 - 5	v	1 - 0	Donegal - Sean MacChumhalls

Féile Camogie Final Results

Div 1	Antrim - Ballycastle	2 - 11	v	1 - 0	Derry - Newbridge
Div 2	Antrim - Cushendall	3 - 2	v	1 - 3	Derry - Watty Grahams, Glen
Div 3	Derry - Dungiven	2 - 0	v	2 - 0	Derry - Eoghan Rua Coleraine
Div 4	Donegal - Sean MacCumhalls	6 - 2	v	0 - 0	Monaghan - Castleblayney



An Chomhdhail Bhliantúil 2014

Three in a most disciplined performance in the final, Buncrana's two point defeat in the Division Four final and Monaghan Harp's win over Lisbellaw in Division Five, all augur well for the future. 2013 saw the tenth annual Ulster Feile na nGael, this event is certainly a contributing factor to this year's success in the National Competition.

Under-10 Provincial Blitz

The 5th Ulster Provincial U-10 Indoor Hurling Blitz took place on Saturday 18th February, in the Meadowbank Sports Arena, Magherafelt. This year we had 756 players playing on 90 teams from 43 Clubs from across the Province which participated in a 'FUN' Centred Blitz. There were a total of 220 games played over the 3hrs with all teams showing great skill and commitment.

A series of indoor tournaments at U.10, U.12 & U.13 were also organised by Regional Hurling staff in all Ulster counties. These tournaments were played both as ground hurling and 'airborne' events.



Colleges Hurling

Ulster hurling staff were instrumental in assisting the amalgamated college teams in Down, Belfast and Tyrone and in 2013 these teams have continued to play in the Ulster College's Mageean and Casement Cups. A further development of this initiative saw the formation of an Ulster Schools team to compete in the

All-Ireland Colleges 'A' Championship. The team was selected and trained extensively in preparation for the competition, with a number of quality training games also played against top college teams from Kilkenny and Tipperary. The initiative proved to be a success despite the team coming up just short, being piped by a late winning point by Connacht Mercy Colleges in the All-Ireland Quarterfinal on a 2-12 to 1-14 score line.

The input from the Post Primary Schools to the development of hurling within the province is substantial with the College sector playing 500 games over 18 competitions and the Vocational sector also providing valuable Competitions. Our sincere thanks to the committee and teachers of the Post Primary Schools. Ulster GAA will continue to give support to our schools as we strive to improve the performance of all our young players.



Annual Convention 2014



Ulster Adult Hurling League

An acceptable format for increasing the number adult hurling club games we play within the province has eluded us for some time. This is the case with the exception of those clubs who play in the Antrim leagues who can be assured of 25 games per year. The Comhairle Uladh's strategy 2009 / 2015 calls for at least 15 games per club per year. My two predecessors noted the need to significantly increase the number of hurling games we play at club level in order to make sustained progress in National Competitions. The Tain Leagues played in the early part of the year provide on average to 5 games per club. Our HDC

have again proposed an Ulster Hurling Club League, on this occasion this league will cater for all clubs except those who opt for the Antrim leagues. The league will be played during the late spring to early summer and is likely to be based on an 11 team league played on a single round basis giving 10 games per club. The full co-operation of the participating clubs and counties is required to ensure the success of this league.

Conclusion

In an overall context Ulster Hurling has made progress during 2013:

Down's achievement in winning the Christy Ring Cup; Donegal's win in the

Nicky Rackard Cup; Robert Emmett's Slaughtneil performance in the Club final against Shamrock's Loughgiel. An Ulster Schools team being competitive in the All-Ireland Colleges 'A' Championship; Antrim's win against Wexford in the All-Ireland U21 Hurling Semi Final; The success of Ulster teams at the National Feile na nGael in Limerick; The ever increasing activity at juvenile level including the indoor opportunities.

Our challenges for the year ahead include: Strengthen the school / club link and in particular the larger urban areas; Increase the clubs playing hurling via amalgamations or consent for a player to play hurling for a hurling club only; improve the minor county hurling league.

My thanks for all their support and assistance to Uachtaran Comhairle Uladh Martin McAviney; Runai Comhairle Uladh Danny Murphy; my fellow officers Oliver Galligan and John Connolly; The Head of Coaching and Games Development Eugene Young; Hurling Development Manager Jimmy Darragh; Hurling Development Officer Kevin Kelly; The Ulster Hurling Development Committee and the Coaching staff within Ulster GAA.

Bealtaine ár ndul chun cinn dúbailte i 2014

Micheál Ó hOsain Cathaoirleach

