

# Ladies' Gaelic Football Overview 2022

## By Mike Barnett

### Ladies' Gaelic Coordinator/LGFA PRO



This year saw a return to the age cohorts of 2020. The decision was taken by the county executive to move back to even numbered age groups, following an overwhelming vote at county board, at the start of the year.

With almost 120 registered players in 2022, the club was able to field ladies' Gaelic football teams at U12, U14, U16, U18 & senior levels. The U12s had particularly good numbers, so the panel was split into two teams for match days, based primarily upon age. In late 2021, the club joined the Gaelic for Mothers & Others initiative & become a recognised & fully LGFA registered club, for G4MO.

At the youngest age groups, we've had really good numbers turning up on a consistent basis. The girls have enjoyed both training sessions & blitzes organised by the coaches.

The U12s were managed by Kevin Fitzpatrick, with assistance from Johnny Rooney, Lisa O'Loughlin, Adrian Lunny, Simon O'Hare, Triona McCarthy & Patricia Keenan. The U12s took part in the non-competitive league games, organised by county. With two teams, there was always something happening with the U12s. The girls had a very full season of league matches, playing 22 in total between the two teams. The girls also attended four blitzes & finished off their season in excellent fashion, bringing back the shield from their final blitz, which was held in Clonduff. It was very clear to see that the young Blues very much enjoyed themselves.

Damian Doyle took charge of the U14s, in his second season as a team manager. Damian was very ably assisted by Annette Elmore, Paul Grant, Kevin Fitzpatrick & Lisa O'Loughlin. Due to the change of age cohorts, the U14 panel was the same as the U13s from the previous year, so the girls had already had a full season to help them adjust to fully competitive Gaelic football. The girls were placed in section D for the initial phase of the league, getting a mixed bag of results. Mid-way through the season, the leagues were adjusted & the girls began their summer league. The girls had a very competitive second half of the league season, finishing as runners up in the league.

The girls began their championship campaign with a trip to Ballymartin, where they had a comfortable victory. This was followed by a home semi-final against neighbours Burren B, where, in a tight encounter, the girls were again victorious. Due to delays in the other semi-final, the U14 D championship final has been delayed until the weekend of October 29<sup>th</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup>, after submission of this report. I'd like to wish the girls all the very best for the final!

The girls at U16 had a rather challenging year. Martin Carr took charge of the team, for his first management position, supported by Declan Carvill, Ronan Magee, Kate Kelly & Ciara Downey. The season started with reasonable numbers, but for various reasons a number of girls dropped out as the season progressed, leading to the U16s being reliant upon U14 players playing up, in order to fulfil their fixtures. Initially the U16s were placed in section D, based on results of previous years, however they were moved into section C, at the request of the management. The girls had a tough league campaign, struggling to field in a number of

games & having to field only 12 players in one match. Unfortunately, the girls were defeated in their opening championship match, bringing their season to a conclusion.

The U18s, had the very experienced management duo of Paula Howlett & Killian Quinn, in charge. Paula & Killian were assisted by Liam Howlett, Martin McGreevy & Niamh McNally. At the start of the season, it was touch & go whether or not the U18s would be able to enter into competition, having only 9 registered minor players. Following much discussion, the decision was made to go with a minor team, relying upon the support of the U16 players. The ladies were placed in section B, along with Rostrevor, Castlewellan, Mayobridge, Ballymartin & Clonduff, who joined the section late in season, dropping down from section A. The ladies had a good league campaign, finishing second to a very strong Castlewellan team.

There was a long break from the end of the league campaign, to the start of the championship, to allow senior championship to be played, with the majority of the minor panel involved. The ladies were drawn at home against Ballymartin, in the first round of the championship. They managed to progress & were then drawn against Clonduff in the semi-final. In a match played in horrendous conditions, the ladies took Clonduff, who had dropped down a section, into extra time, but were ultimately defeated.

The senior team was once again under the management of Ronan Magee, supported by Noreen Farrell, Declan Carvill, Pauline Cunningham & Martin Carr. The ladies saw reasonable numbers throughout the season, with some new additions & some dropping away. The senior panel was very much bolstered by the majority of the minor panel, who regularly attended both training sessions & matches. There is no doubt that the minor players had a major influence on the success of the senior ladies' team, throughout the year. The ladies had a strong junior league campaign, reaching the league final, where they faced Bredagh B. Despite their best efforts, the ladies were unable to overcome Bredagh B, but it was certainly not for want of trying.

The ladies had a strong championship campaign, which saw them reach the junior A final, where they faced a now familiar competitor, in Saul. A hard fought & tight match, eventually saw Saul run out winners. The disappointment among the ladies was clear for all to see, however they should all be very proud of the hard work that they put in throughout the season.

Towards the end of the season, the ladies finished off with a couple of 7s tournaments, one in Lisburn, in which they were the overall winners & one hosted by the club. A lot of hard work went into the organisation of the Warrenpoint 7s tournament, which was a credit to all of those involved.

This year, the club started a new team, with the introduction of Gaelic for Mothers & Others (G4MO). The first training session actually took place at the end of 2021 & it has grown in popularity since. The team started with the drive of Roisin Keenan, taking up the role of administrator, with Killian Quinn & myself as coaches. The ladies have enjoyed a very eventful year, from their first match at home against Mayobridge, to blitzes in Bosco, Annaclone & Mayobridge, as well as the Ulster blitz in Silverbridge & the national blitz in Portmarnock, north Dublin. It has been a wonderful experience working with the G4MO crew & I very much hope that the ladies continue to enjoy the experience.

At county level, the club had representation at U14, U18 & senior. At U14, Lucy Elmore was selected for the county panel, at U18, the club was represented by Cara Bradley, Caoimhe Quinn, Enya Quinn, Anna Craven & Katie Howlett. For the first time, the club had

representation at senior county level with the ladies, with Caoimhe Shannon being selected for the panel. Congratulations to all of our county players, doing the club proud!

I would like to conclude by thanking a number of people for their important contributions throughout the year. Noreen Kelly, Anne McCormack & Paul McKibben, have been wonderful for their advice & guidance, as always. No matter what challenges are presented throughout the season, I can be sure that with the help of Noreen, Anne & Paul, the challenge can be overcome.

To finish, I would like to thank all of the coaches & mentors who have worked so tirelessly throughout the season, to give our players the opportunity to represent their club.

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