

ALL-IRELAND CLUB INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL FINAL

Tierney leads the way as Oughterard men put seal on great campaign

OUGHTERARD	2-16
MAGHERACLOONE	0-12

PÁDRAIC Ó CIARDHA
AT CROKE PARK

IN years to come, those who weren't there might look back and think it was won easily enough. A ten-point winning margin, how hard could it have been? For those who were there to be a part of the most historic day in Oughterard's history, they can afford to laugh and smile. They'll know.

The final score in Croke Park last weekend only tells a part of this team's journey. To cover the All-Ireland final itself, you could probably fill a book. To tell the story of the season, you'd need volumes.

That story would probably start less than 18 months ago when a talented and well-fancied side had to win a relegation play-off to secure their status in the intermediate championship in Galway. Oughterard were within a whisker of crashing out at the group stage again in 2019 but instead of ending before it really began, this season kept going and going before finally ending in triumph on the steps of the Hogan Stand.

Club finals don't often mean much for those outside of the two parishes involved but for those lucky few who are a part of it, it means everything. The scenes in Croke Park on Saturday as family, friends and supporters all basked in the glory of Oughterard's achievement will never be forgotten.

This Oughterard side have so many of the elements which make these victories so special. A passionate manager who was raised smack-bang in the middle of the town. A veteran captain whose work takes him far and wide but who never misses a training session. And not to mention a raft of brothers, seven sets in fact, bringing the whole thing together.

Over the course of the season, everyone of them had their part to play but probably none more so than the Tierneys. Matthew was the star of the two epic county finals against Mícheál Breathnach last October, but last weekend was Enda's turn to lead the team to victory.

The midfielder was absolutely immense for Oughterard over the course of the evening. Tierney kicked three points of his own, directly assisted four more and dominated the middle of the field.

The 24-year-old had a hand in almost every key moment in the match.

Oughterard's opponents, Magheracloone, were no mugs. Senior county finalists as recently as 2017, they were considered one of the strongest sides in Monaghan in recent years.

The club suffered a disastrous 2018, losing their pitches and clubhouse to a sinkhole that September before they were then relegated from the senior ranks. They bounced back at the first opportunity, however, but while Magheracloone's journey to the All-Ireland final had the touch of a fairytale about it, there was to be no happy ending for them in Croke Park.

Tierney's virtuoso performance began from the throw-in. Having tipped the ball down to himself, Tierney scythed through the middle, making it as far as the 14m line before passing the ball off to Patrick Walsh who split the posts to get Oughterard off the mark after just 10 seconds. Start as you mean to continue, or so they hoped anyway.

The umpire had barely put down the flag after Walsh's opener when Tommy Freeman showed that, even at 38, he still has the talent that saw him win an All Star in 2007 as he came on the wraparound to fire over a beautiful effort from under the Cusack Stand. Further points from James Ward and Freeman again, this time from a free, saw Magheracloone open up a 0-3 to 0-1 lead after just four minutes and Oughterard looked in a spot of bother.

Wing back Ryan Monaghan got upfield to hit back for Oughterard but Magheracloone's response was again instantaneous, Jamie Kieran rising highest to claim the kick out before his midfield partner Gavin Doogan split the posts.

Oughterard eventually got to the pace of the game around the 10 minute mark and started to hold onto possession. Enda Tierney reduced the gap with a pointed free before his side drew level in the 12th minute following a move that went from one end of the pitch to the other. After 18 passes and eight different players involved, Patrick Walsh eventually kicked a lovely score from a narrow angle on the right wing.

Magheracloone had won all five of their kick outs up to this point, as well as two of Oughterard's four, but Enda Tierney soon made his presence felt in the air. The midfielder won two marks in



Oughterard's Patrick Walsh and Magheracloone's Peter Ward close in on the ball during Saturday's All-Ireland club intermediate football final at Croke Park. PHOTOS: JOE O'SHAUGHNESSY.



Oughterard's Matthew Tierney has the fabric of his togs tested by Jamie Kieran of Magheracloone at Croke Park on Saturday.

quick succession off Magheracloone's restarts with the second of those eventually resulting in Cian Monaghan putting the Galway side back in front, 0-5 to 0-4.

Credit to Magheracloone, they hit straight back with former county star Gavin Doogan again breaking forward from midfield to score. Enda Tierney responded with