

CONNACHT CLUB INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL SEMI-FINAL

Oughterard's overall class too much for Tusk rivals

■ Roving Monaghan chips in with 1-3

OUGHTERARD	2-16
TUSK	1-8

JOHN McINTYRE
AT HYDE PARK

OUGHTERARD'S first expedition into provincial club football proved a positive one when overcoming Tusk of Roscommon by double scores in the Connacht intermediate semi-final at Hyde Park on Saturday.

Steeled by their stirring county final battles against Micheál Breathnach, Tommy Finnerty's well-drilled squad impressively drove on against the Roscommon champions who ran badly out of steam in the final quarter.

To compound Tusk's woes late on, this period also coincided with Oughterard finding a devastating rhythm in assembling an unanswered 1-7 to set up a Connacht showdown with The Neale of Mayo.

In the context of the final scoreline, however, it's almost hard to credit that Oughterard didn't even look guaranteed winners - never mind so emphatically - when they were clinging onto a one-point lead 13 minutes into the second-half and battling against the strong wind.

Sure, Oughterard appeared to possess the more athletic and talented footballers, but Tusk were continuing to work hard and when they had points in quick succession from David Carleton and the lively Calum Fahey, they only trailed by 1-9 to 1-8 approaching the end of the third quarter.

But Oughterard were not prepared to concede any more ground and from there to the finish, they repeatedly carved open the opposition defensive cover, with the clinching score coming seven minutes from time when Patrick Walsh fired to the net after a Paul Walsh effort had rebounded off the

post.

The Galway champions' strong finish was in utter contrast to a barren opening quarter as all they could manage was a Mathew Tierney point and that came inside the opening minute. Tusk were no great shakes themselves in the scoring department, as they too were restricted to a solitary score, a Thomas O'Rourke pointed free.

Already, though, it was clear that the strong runs of Ronan Molloy had the potential to inflict trouble on Tusk and it was the wing back who did the spade work by cutting in from the left flank for Cian Monaghan to fire superbly to the net in the 15th minute.



THEIR LEVELS OF SELF-BELIEF HAVE SOARED AFTER WINNING THE GALWAY CHAMPIONSHIP AND THEY BETRAYED NO SENSE OF PANIC

Niall Lee, Patrick Walsh and Molloy tacked on points and with Matthew Tierney picking off quality scores from both play and a 50m free, Oughterard's sudden burst of scoring activity left them 1-6 to 0-3 in front by the 26th minute.

Tusk, however, were in no mood to roll over and they subsequently got a timely boost when David Coyne created the opening for Fahey to give Jordan Waller no chance from close range. Though Paul Walsh responded with a fine point after a lay-off from Brian Lambert, the 'home' team were still only three adrift (1-7 to 1-4) after wing back Ryan Galvin had split the posts.

Given the influence of the elements, Oughterard's half-time advantage was precarious and though Enda Tierney

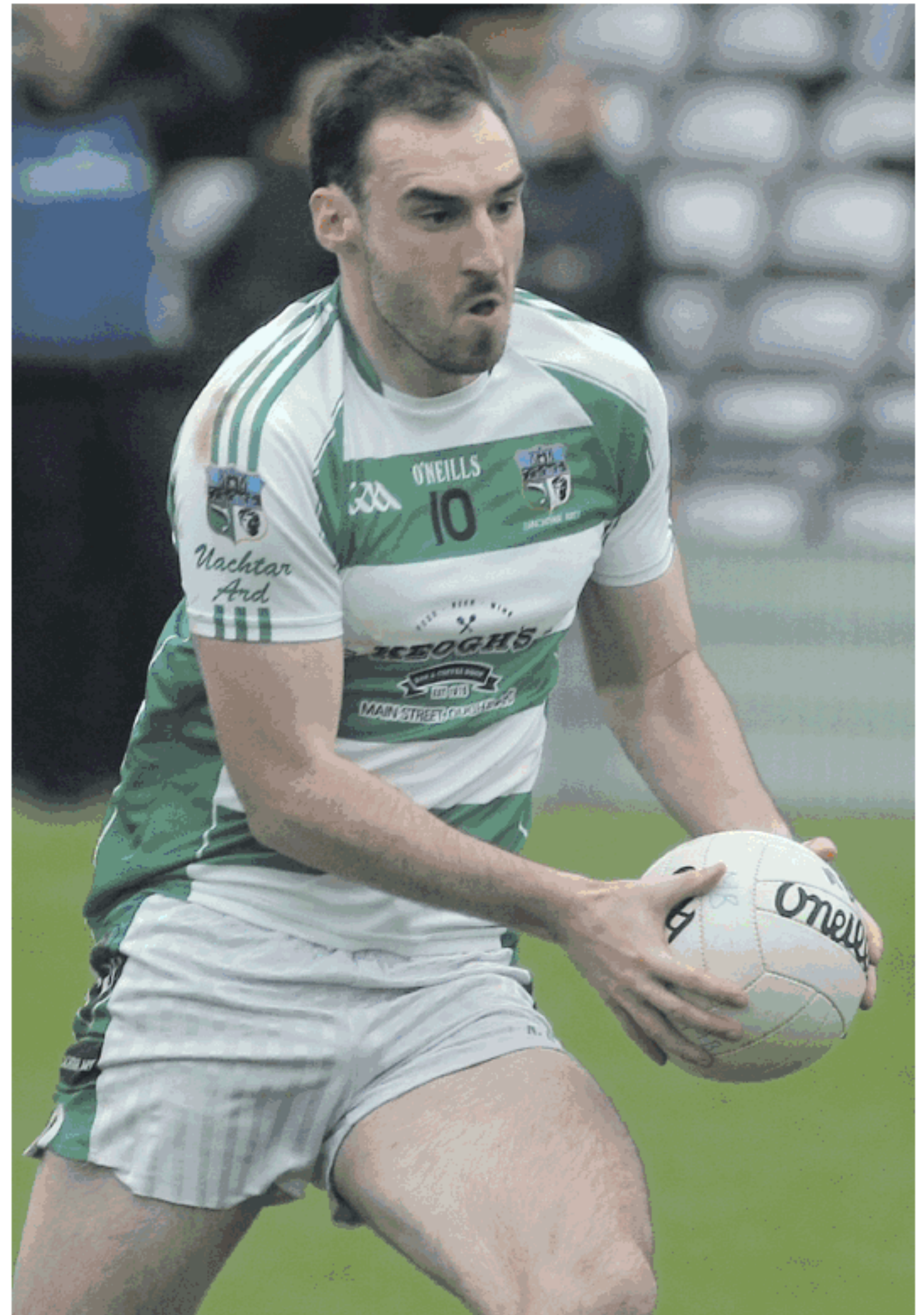
(free) and Niall Lee, after a strong run, pointed on the resumption, Tusk were about to enjoy their best period of the match with four points from Fahey (2), O'Rourke and Carleton to reduce the deficit to the minimum and the momentum behind them.

This was crisis time for Oughterard, but their response was impressive. Clearly, their levels of self-belief have soared after winning the Galway championship and they betrayed no sense of panic; instead lifting their tempo considerably to ruthlessly finish off Tusk down the home stretch.

Matthew Tierney, an elegant footballer, Niall Lee and a brace of quality scores from the excellent Cian Monaghan, who was liable to pop up anywhere, pushed Oughterard clear and there was already a certain inevitability about the outcome when Walsh hit the net in the 53rd minute. For good measure, Oughterard tacked on further points from Monaghan, Enda Tierney and Niall Lee before the end.

Though their inside defensive line was occasionally under pressure, Oughterard possess a team of significant promise. Monaghan, Liam Moran, Matthew Tierney, Niall Lee, Ronan Molloy and Patrick Walsh may have been their stand out players on Saturday, but midfielder Enda Tierney had some good moments, while Ryan Monaghan proved an ideal link up outlet at centre back.

Team manager Tommy Finnerty was naturally delighted with Oughterard's ultimately convincing victory. "The goal Patrick Walsh got was a killer for them, while the work-rate and fitness of our team really told. The players were relaxed today as the pressure in trying to win a county final compared to a Connacht semi-final are poles apart. It would be great to round off the job now in the final."



Oughterard's Patrick Walsh who was one of their goal scorers in Sunday's Connacht semi-final win over Tusk.

Oughterard: J Waller; C Hanley, E O'Sullivan, L Moran; C Monaghan (1-3), R Monaghan, R Molloy (0-1); E Tierney (0-2, 0-1 free), PJ McGauley; B Lambert, Paul Walsh (0-1), E Lee; N Lee (0-4, 0-1 free), M Tierney (0-4, 0-2 frees), Patrick Walsh (1-1). Subs: C Harte for Lambert (34), P Gibbons

for Hanley (50), C Clancy for Patrick Walsh (57), D Gibbons for C Monaghan (59), T Finnerty for N Lee (59), J Fox for Paul Walsh (61). **Tusk:** R Fahey; G Galvin, E Flynn, S Lennon; F Moylan, D O'Rourke, R Galvin (0-1); Tadhg O'Rourke; D Coyne; L Cribbin, Thomas O'Rourke

(0-2, 0-1 free), C O'Rourke (0-1); P Scott (0-1); C Fahey (1-2), T Fitzmaurice. Subs: D Carleton (0-1) for Fitzmaurice (21), R Kelly for L Cribbin (half-time), N O'Connor for Moylan (43), and N McNamara for G Galvin (48). **Referee:** L Devenney (Mayo)

■■■ FINNERTY KNOWS ONLY OUGHTERARD'S BEST WILL DO

JOHN McINTYRE

OUGHTERARD may be facing a team from Mayo in the Connacht club intermediate football final at McHale Park, Castlebar on Saturday (5pm), but their opponents are only six miles away from them as the crow flies.

All that separates Oughterard from Saturday's rivals, The Neale, is Lough Corrib but despite the close proximity of the parishes, they have never even met in a challenge game before.

Like Oughterard, the Mayo champions were also successful by 11 points in their weekend semi-final win (4-13 to 1-11) over Geevagh of Sligo, with county U20 captain Tommy Conroy again their star man with a haul of 2-4 from play.

Oughterard manager Tommy Finnerty reports no injury concerns after their victory over Tusk at Hyde Park last Sunday and is looking forward to their big clash with The Neale.

"It's a great opportunity for our club to be

playing in a Connacht final and we will have to be at our maximum to carry the day. Any team that comes out of Mayo are usually top class."

Finnerty, however, is encouraged by An Spideal's feat in winning the Connacht title in 2018. "We led them by seven points last year before narrowly losing out and that is a good barometer for us. The two tough tests with Breathnachs recently are also standing to us. To win on Saturday would be massive for the club."