

SPORT

GAA ALL-IRELAND INTERMEDIATE CLUB FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

Oughterard power over the line

• Dynamic display delivers All-Ireland club title to Galway

Oughterard 2-16

Magheracloone 0-12

By Paul Keane
At Croke Park

AT the final whistle, Tommy Finnerty turned to the Oughterard supporters and raised his fists in the air, holding the pose for what seemed like an age.

Despite being 10 points to the good and coasting home in the end, the game effectively over from the moment Conrad Clancy lobbed the goalkeeper for Oughterard's second goal, it wasn't something he'd thought about or rehearsed but a genuine and pure moment of spontaneous joy.

"Because I was born and reared on the square in Oughterard and that square to me is my home," explained Finnerty.

"We had no front garden, the square was our front garden. That was our playing field."

Croke Park was Oughterard's playing field on Saturday, a playground for all of their dynamism and effervescence to come flooding out.

They took their time to get going and appeared to gauge the temperature of the game for the first 20 minutes or so before turning up the heat and bringing a simmering affair to the boil.

Eric Lee's 20th minute solo goal was decisive, putting Oughterard in the clear and from there they never really looked like being reeled in despite Magheracloone's determined efforts.

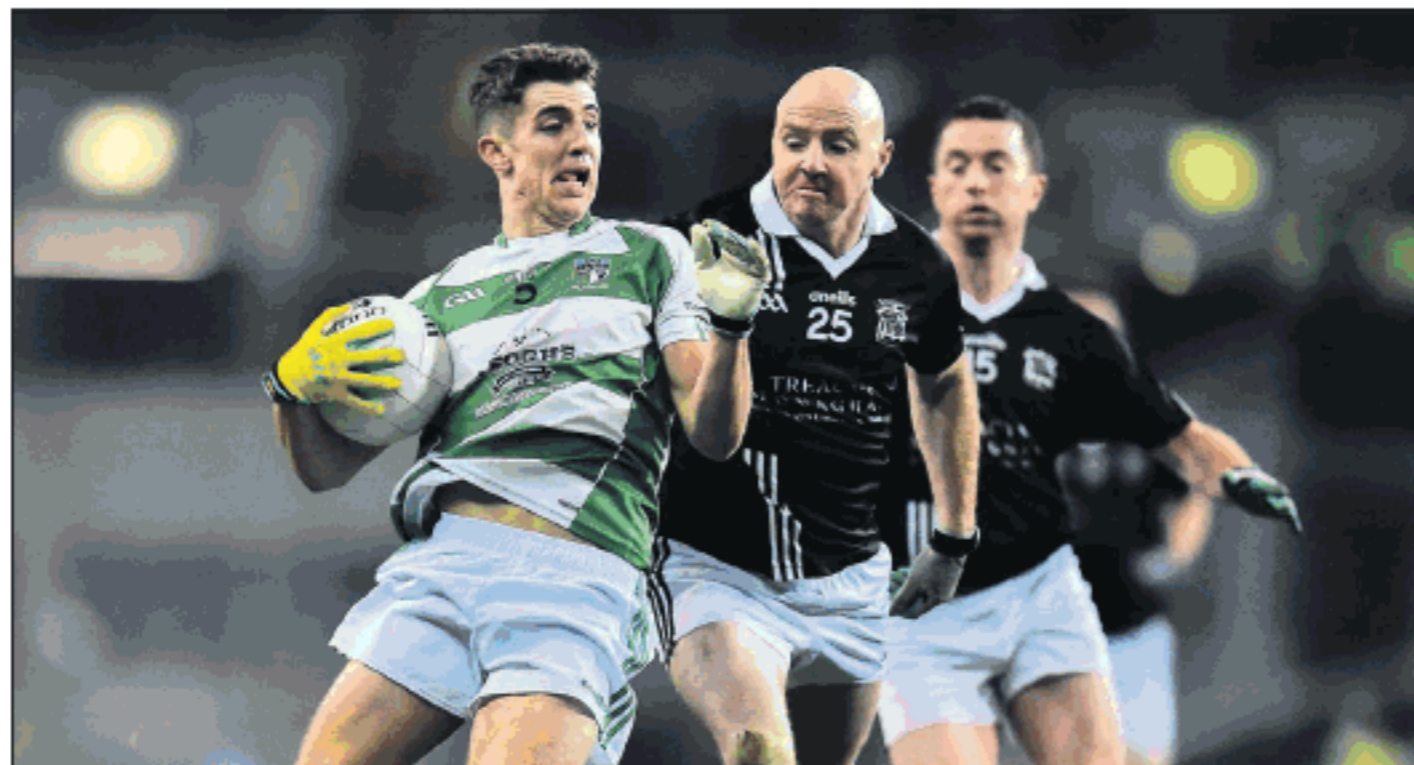
There was a turning point of sorts two-thirds of the way through when Hawk-Eye ruled out a Gavin Doogan point for the Monaghan men, and Cian Monaghan immediately scored at the other end for Oughterard, turning what had looked like being a three-point game into a five-point affair.

Relegated from the senior ranks just two years ago, the same year a sinkhole linked to an old gypsum mine opened up on the club grounds and forced them to take up residence elsewhere, over the border in Louth as it happens, Magheracloone did get the margin down to three points



HISTORY MAKERS: Eddie O'Sullivan (left) and Ronan Molloy lift the cup following Oughterard's win over Magheracloone Mitchells of Monaghan in the AIB All-Ireland Intermediate Club Football Championship final at Croke Park on Saturday.

PHOTOS: RAMSEY CARDY & BEN MCSHANE | SPORTSFILE



IN CONTROL: Oughterard half-back Cian Monaghan holds off Peter Tuite of Magheracloone during Saturday's All-Ireland final.

after 55 minutes.

Yet it never felt like a real coup and when Clancy audaciously lobbed the 'keeper a minute later, having gathered back up possession after failing with an initial attempt to flick the ball to the net, that was pretty much that.

Oughterard fully deserved their All-Ireland triumph, capping an 11-game intermediate voyage that began with surviving a local group of death by emerging victorious at GAA headquarters with broad smiles and fist pumps to the strains of Galway Girl over loudspeakers.

The sense of connection between the club and its support was strong with every Oughterard score, tackle and dash on the afternoon greeted with a giant roar, the busloads of fans that made their way to Dublin clearly outnumbering that of the opposition.

Whilst goalscorer Lee was named the official man of the match, it could have gone to any of half a dozen players. The Tierney brothers, Enda and Matthew, were terrific again. They struck four points between them and had a huge effect on the game with Enda giving a powerhouse midfield

display and Matthew wearing number 11 ahead of him. Enda kicked three points, two from frees, though won the 10th minute free that he converted himself as well as two other frees that Niall Lee chipped over.

Matthew's finest moment? Strangely, it occurred back inside his own defence when he rose up to claim a high fetch out under the Cusack Stand despite being sandwiched by two Magheracloone players. It looked a nasty fall and that he might need treatment, but he sprung back to his feet and trotted off to his position.



STAR MAN: Eric Lee receives the official man of the match award from Claire Liston, AIB Sponsorship Brand Manager.

Afterwards, the two Tierneys went off to celebrate with their Dad, Matthew Senior, in the crowd, another huge figure in the history of a club that has now etched its name in history. Before last weekend, just one Galway club had won the intermediate club football title, Moycullen, back in 2008.

Avoiding the concession of goals has been key to Oughterard's success and since exiting Galway they have leaked just one goal, to Tusk in the provincial semi-finals. Since then they've denied The Neale, Templeoe and Magheracloone, three clubs

that all possess marquee forward talents.

There were a couple of nervous moments admittedly last weekend, like when Ryan Farrelly fisted to the net for Magheracloone in the 15th minute only for the referee to intervene with a square ball ruling. Closer to half-time, former Monaghan All-Star Tommy Freeman dropped a free in from the right just short and Allan Kieran redirected it goalwards with a strong punch that was cleared off the line.

Moments later again, another high ball in, this time from a central position