

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



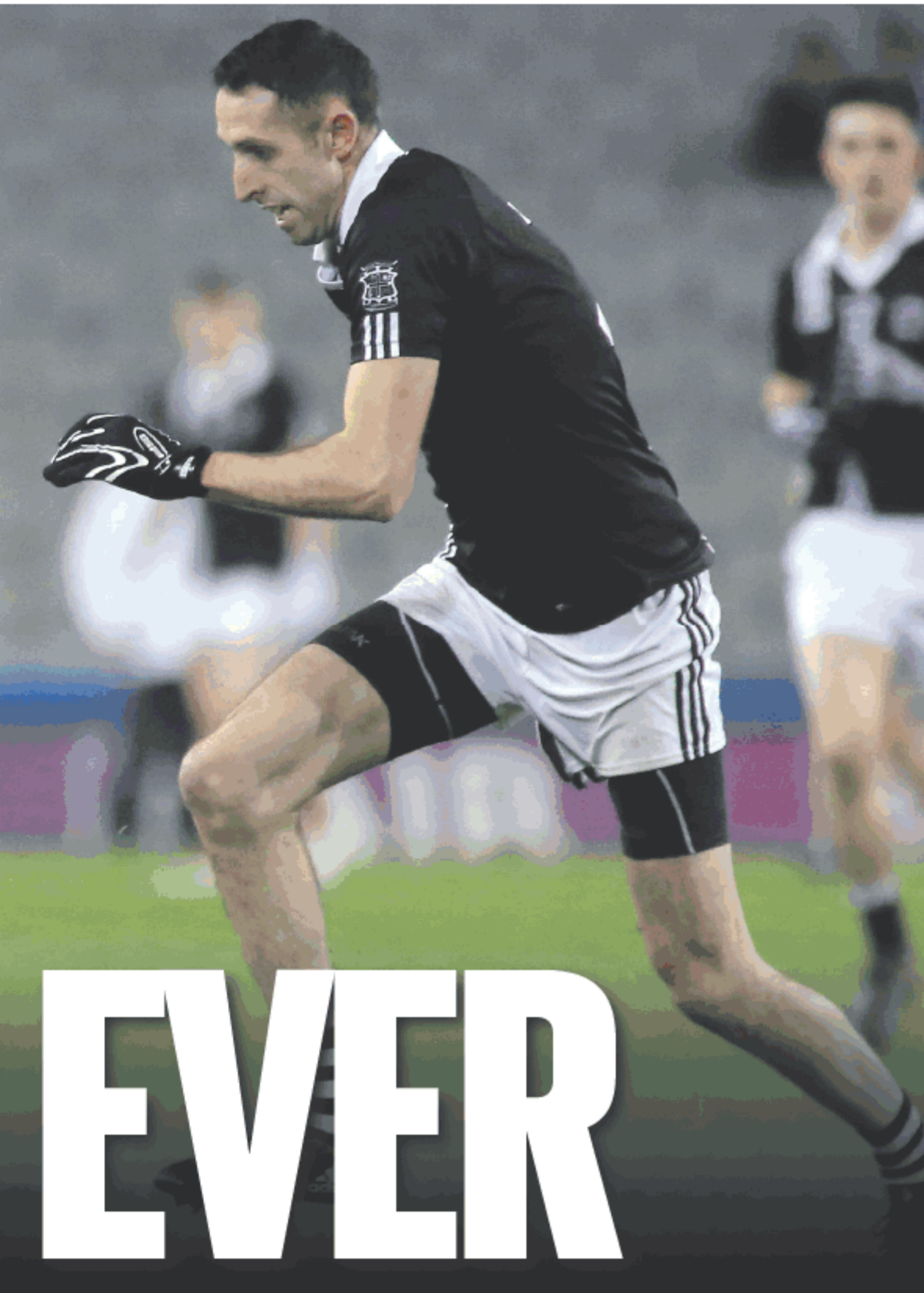
Oughterard's Patrick Walsh and Magheracloone's Peter Ward close in on the ball during Saturday's All-Ireland club intermediate football final at Croke Park. PHOTOS: JOE O'SHAUGHNESSY.



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



Oughterard's PJ McGauley puts in a strong challenge on Gavin Doogan of Magheraclone.

his second point of the game, when Farrelly blazed over zger. It was a miss that they but Magheraclone saw a from close-range after being would regret. great goal chance go abegging picked out by Michael Metzger full forward

Niall Lee opened his account in the 20th minute before his brother struck for a decisive goal. The attack started with another Enda Tierney steal in midfield but, in truth, there didn't look to be much on when Patrick Walsh passed the ball to Eric Lee, who was 10m in from the Hogan Stand sideline and 45m from goal. Lee obviously saw otherwise.

Squaring up his man, the Oughterard attacker feinted right before dropping his left shoulder and leaving Killian Rudden for dead. Suddenly, there was no one between Lee and the Magheraclone goal and he raced in before slotting the ball past 'keeper David Kirk. David Clifford wowed Croke Park with a great goal for Kerry against Dublin later that same evening. Lee's was every bit as good.

Now four points ahead after 20 minutes, 1-7 to 0-6, Oughterard were in command. Another point from Enda Tierney extended the gap between the sides before his brother, Matthew, showcased his ability, kicking an excellent free from distance. Niall Lee's second of the game left Oughterard seven points clear heading into injury time, but they nearly saw that lead wiped out in the four minutes before the break.

The Connemara men had Matthew Tierney to thank for a crucial goal line clearance when Allan Kieran looked sure to fist the ball to the net. The danger didn't end there for Oughterard. Jordan Waller was then forced to make a great save from a Michael Metzger flick, the ball bouncing twice on top of the crossbar before dropping over. That left Oughterard six points ahead at the break, 1-10 to 0-7, but they could be in no doubt that this game was far from done.

The frantic end to the first half wasn't matched by the start of the second period as both sides struggled to get going after the restart. It was Magheraclone who finally ended that lull period when Pádraig McMahon kicked a sweet score in the 38th minute.

When wing back Jack Doogan landed an inspirational score seconds later, momentum was well and truly with the Monaghan side. Gavin Doogan had a great chance to reduce the gap to three points soon after but he couldn't hit the target from 14m. While there were still 20 minutes, it looked like a pivotal moment and the next play confirmed that.

Enda Tierney broke the kick out to his brother Matthew, he passed to Eric Lee who, in turn, set Cian Monaghan charging through. Monaghan settled himself before directing his right-footed effort through the posts to extend the gap to five, 1-11 to 0-9, and swing momentum back in Oughterard's favour.

The Galway side were guilty of wasting a few opportunities over the next 10 minutes but while Tommy Freeman did narrow the gap, things were starting to unravel quickly for Magheraclone. They were dealt a big blow in the 45th minute when corner back Michael Jones was shown his second yellow card and when Ryan Farrelly received his marching orders a little over seven minutes later, Magheraclone were suddenly down to 13 men.

Despite all that, another Tommy Freeman free meant there were just three points between the side with five minutes remaining, 1-11 to 0-11. At this point, a goal clear and two men up in an All-Ireland final, Oughterard could have retreated into their shell but instead went for the jugular and were rewarded.

Conrad Clancy was only on the field 35 seconds before he got the score that killed off the contest. Having seen an initial effort saved, Clancy looked to be aiming for a point when he gathered the rebound but his left-footed effort lobbed perfectly over David Kirk and Jamie Kieran and finished in the net. The goal put Oughterard 2-11 to 0-11 ahead.



“THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY LED BY THE SUPERB ENDA TIERNEY BUT EVERYONE IN THEIR RANKS PLAYED THEIR PART”

Three points in as many minutes from Ryan Monaghan and Niall Lee (2) left Oughterard on the verge of history and while Tommy Freeman kicked Magheraclone's final score, there was still time for Conrad Clancy and Ian Gibbons to add to Oughterard's tally, capping off a momentous performance and starting the celebrations.

It was a cruel way for it to end for Magheraclone, whose efforts did not deserve the drubbing the scoreline suggests and many of their players gave fine performances. Jack Doogan, James Ward, Jamie Kieran, Gavin Doogan, Allan Kieran, Pádraig McMahon, Ryan Farrelly, Michael Metzger and Tommy Freeman could all be proud of their efforts but, as a whole, they just couldn't link it together consistently.

While Oughterard also struggled at times, they hit a higher level of performance for longer. They were obviously led by the superb Enda Tierney but everyone in their ranks played their part, starting with Jordan Waller, who recovered from any early nerves

to provide a solid platform from the kick out while his first half save from Michael Metzger was hugely important.

Ciarán Hanley and Liam Moran were tenacious in the full-back line with Moran in particular coming up with some big turnovers in the second half. Eddie O'Sullivan played a captain's role throughout, using all his experience to restrict Freeman's influence from play.

Ryan and Cian Monaghan have been brilliant attacking outlets for Oughterard all season and they continued that form in Croke Park, kicking 0-2 each. Ronan Molloy was unfortunate to have been forced off with injury early on but his replacement Cian Harte deputised well.

PJ McGauley, Paul Walsh and Brian Lambert got through a lot of work around the middle of the field and were heavily involved during Oughterard's dominant spell in the first half. Patrick Walsh deserves special mention for his contribution at that stage. Not only did he pick up two points but Walsh was a constant outlet for his teammates, which was especially important during Oughterard's slow start.

While Matthew Tierney didn't have his best day in front of the posts, he continued looking for the ball and made some important catches in the middle third. His goal-line clearance was also crucial. Niall and Eric Lee picked up some of the slack in the scoring stakes, kicking 1-4 between them. Eric's goal was the standout score of the game but his contributions at the other end of the field were as important with his strong ball-carrying getting Oughterard on the front foot time after time.

Oughterard also got a notable contribution from their bench with Conrad Clancy kicking 1-1, Ian Gibbons notching a point and Daniel Kenny, Donal Gibbons and Phillip Gibbons all playing their part in bringing an All-Ireland title back over the Corrib.

Oughterard: J. Waller; C. Hanley, E. O'Sullivan, L. Moran; C. Monaghan (0-2), R. Molloy, R. Monaghan (0-2); E. Tierney (0-3, 2fs), PJ McGauley; Patrick Walsh (0-2), M. Tierney (0-1, 1f), E. Lee (1-0); B. Lambert, N. Lee (0-4, 2fs), Paul Walsh. Subs: C. Harte for R. Molloy (14 mins), D. Kenny for B. Lambert (HT), C. Clancy for D. Kenny (44-49 mins, Blood), C. Clancy (1-1) for PJ McGauley (55 mins), Phillip Gibbons for Patrick Walsh (59 mins), D. Gibbons for R. Monaghan (60 mins, Black card) I. Gibbons (0-1, 1f) for N. Lee (61 mins). **Magheraclone:** D. Kirk, M. Jone, P. Ward, P. McArdle; J. Doogan (0-1), J. Ward (0-1), K. Rudden; J. Kieran, G. Doogan (0-2); B. Kieran, A. Kieran, P. McMahon (0-1); R. Farrelly, T. Freeman (0-5, 3fs), M. Metzger (0-1). Subs: C. McKeown for K. Rudden (HT), L. Murray for M. Metzger (39 mins), A. McCahey for J. Doogan (44 mins), P. Tuite for B. Kieran (49 mins), N. Marron for A. Kieran (60 mins).

Referee: Seán Lavery.