AGM Report 2019

October 2018 saw the creation of a nine person St Sylvester’s Football Committee.

The purpose of the committee was to oversee the management and strategy for men’s football across the club and not just at Adult level. For many years the consistent challenge for our club and all clubs in the GAA has been the transition from juvenile and minor level through to adult participation. The expansion of what was the “Adult Football Committee” into the “Football Committee” was at its core, an attempt to try to address any dislocation between juvenile football and adult football.

While this was the overall aim, the short term saw its own challenges with an immediate rebuilding required due to managerial vacancies at Senior, Intermediate, Junior (4ths) and u16 &U15s level. During the interim period before managers were installed, the committee organised open gym sessions for adult players with specific emphasis placed on attendance by 2018 minor players. We also organised preseason S&C programmes for the incoming U14 all the way through to Minor teams. Both players & mentors enjoyed and appreciated the benefits it brought. Many thanks to Evolution Fitness for co-ordinating and for the sponsors who enabled it’s provision.

A robust interviewing and recruitment drive saw managerial, coaching and selector positions filled in time for the new season.

During the year the committee spent a considerable amount of time developing a culture and values expectation which is now being rolled out among the juvenile section. The feedback the committee received from almost all club members who were consulted as part of this process was that the key principle to be placed at the centre of the juvenile teams should be that of participation and player development. Coaches are being encouraged to move away from a win at all costs mentality at the younger age groups within the juvenile section – with a greater emphasis on planning squad rotation between As Bs and Cs to ensure all players are participating at a suitable level for their ability and are getting proper game time every week.

The hugely successful Coach the Coaches programme was continued with a very high level of attendance and engagement from mentors of boys’ and girls’ teams of all ages. We had 4 events with players from U12-16 participating at least once. This programme will kick off again in January moving to monthly events. Other events organised included a Q&A with 1996 captain Brian Silke of Corofin and Galway, a Football Summer Camp for U13/14s and the inaugural Syls’ Super 8’s which saw over 100 players from U13-16 taking part in a Football Blitz in Broomfield. It was a fantastic night’s football hugely enjoyed by both players & parents. Great thanks go to the Senior/Inter/Minor players that managed the teams on the night and all seemed to get a great kick out of the experience. Also, many thanks to the mentors of each age group and the sponsors of the event.

The committee has also introduced a support structure for juvenile coaches which sees Panner McCarthy, Paul Clarke and Brian Talty attending sessions and mentoring coaches. This initiative will allow the club to develop a standard of coaching which should be consistent across all age groups. Its intention is to also develop and assist the coaches who give so much of their time to their teams.

While 2019 was a year of rebuilding, the aim of the committee in 2020 is to see progress across all teams from juvenile to adult level.

The Adult football section moves into 2020 with management teams already in place – a stability which has not been in place for a number of years. The outlook for 2020 is that the club will see a record number of minors (from 2019) commencing their adult football careers in January 2020 across the four adult teams. Over 30 players in this category have confirmed their commitment, have been profiled and an individual plan has been put in place for each player to see them find the right level that will most likely see them develop long playing careers with Syls.

The committee is undertaking to work closely with the four managerial teams to ensure that these players do not fall between the cracks and received enough game time to keep them playing with Syls throughout 2020 and beyond.

Regards

Football Committee

**Senior/AFL2 Football**

Overall 2019 could be viewed in hindsight as a new dawn for the senior football team. With a completely new management team the task at hand has been to (i) build a team culture to support the winning outcomes desired by the team and club (ii) enhance preparations and standards of same to reflect top level senior football. (iii) Identify & Responsibly introduce younger players with the talent and development potential to solve into senior footballers.

On the playing field our strong AFL2 showing was supported by a training attendance rate of 93%. This is exceptional and is not only reflective of high-achieving teams but also of the commitment and effort put in by the panel across 2019.

Our AFL2 performances in the main were very satisfying except for two losses to Ballyboughal and Round Towers Lusk; both away from home and against teams who would win their respective championships in 2019.

Unfortunately, our AFL promotion drive ended in failure as losses to both Clontarf and Naomh Mearnog meant that we will spend another season win AFL2 in 2020. However, our final points total was encouraging as in five of the last six seasons it would have meant instant promotion and/or winning AFL2.

Our championship campaign was an uphill battle from the get-go. With Na Fianna, Ballymun and Kilmacud Croke in our group we were always going to find the going tough at this stage in our evolution. A significant loss on the opening day vs Na Fianna was followed by a more encouraging performance vs. Ballymun. Of course we ultimately lost this match however there were signs in accumulating 2-10 that the work we had been undertaking was beginning to take seed.

Our final championship group game vs Kilmacud Crokes ended in another loss and this meant we had a play-off vs. ST. OPER to maintain Senior1 status. On the day the greater experience of St. OPER was telling and a key ingredient in their victory. However, we also recognise that in many ways our own errors contributed to this result. These learnings will inform our 2020 preparations.

The St. OPER result and those in the final stages of AFL2 illustrates that whilst we have come a long way in terms of the development of a ‘new’ team (presently 7 U21s are seeing regular senior action) we have a long journey ahead of us. Our aim for 2020 is to set the bar high in terms of on-field achievement and what we have in place ‘off-field’ to support this. Across 2019 we had an unofficial ‘development squad’ of eight players who were second-year minors as well as some Intermediate footballers. These players would train with the senior team (when minor/Inter commitments allowed) and also play in selected fixtures. Our aim is to continue with the development of these players and, when it is appropriate and responsible, continue to advance their progress to senior football. Our aim is to gain promotion back to AFL1 in 2020 and to successfully navigate the Senior2 championship - these are lofty goals however the management team are of the firm belief that our development on the field can continue it’s upward trajectory assisted and supported by the training/preparation/off-field culture that is being fostered and developed by players and management alike. Preparations to enhance our 2020 prospects are already being finalised with specific focus on areas to directly impact player development e.g. S&C, analysis etc. Our commitment is to being relentless in pursuit of our goals.

It’s clear to everyone that although we have made good progress, we still have a long way to go with ref. to our senior football aspirations and, once again, becoming one of the most respected senior football teams in Dublin. Myself and the management team are completely focused and driven towards continual progress and making this happen. To that end we have received massive support from the club and in particular I’d like to thank Paddy Miskelly, Fergal McStay, Richard Aslett and Elaine Rooney for their constant support. The working relationship with minor football management made life easy with regard to development-players and my thanks here goes to Dave Ryan, Panner McCarthy and Ernie Brenner. Equally the working relationship with Shay Byrne and his management team was effective and efficient. Thanks also to Declan McGrath for his co-operation with dual players - I wish Declan well in his future coaching pursuits. Finally, my senior management colleagues Keith Galvin, Seamus Hynes, Conor Dunne and Mick Hoban have offered huge commitment, insights and experience to our support senior footballers and our aspirations. In these demanding roles they have been peerless, and I sincerely thank them for their unwavering commitment.

2020 will be a challenging year given our lofty goals and aims. Whilst patience should always be front-of-mind as we build and develop, our commitment is to produce a season that players, club management and all club members can be proud of.

Paul Clarke

Senior Football Manager.

**Inter/AFL4 Team 2019**

After being relegated in 2018 to AFL4 the intermediate team got off to a great start in 2019 winning their first five matches but after injury to a couple of key players that winning run couldn’t be sustained and they ended the season in mid table. We had the usual situation where we were strong in the early part of the season but struggled in the summer months when we were short on numbers. Unfortunately May, June and July are when most of the games are played and we had a few disappointing results around this period when we were unable to field our strongest team. On the head to head against the top two teams who were promoted we actually were very close to them, we lost away to St Judes by three points, this team actually finished the season unbeaten. We also drew away from home with Clanna Gael Fontenoy who only lost one game all season so this team is certainly capable of competing at the top end of the table and hopefully will be pushing for promotion next year. In the Intermediate All County Championship we lost to a very strong Kilmacud Crokes team in the quarter final. This team who operate in AFL2 actually went on to win this championship so I would think we would certainly need to gain promotion to AFL3 to be competitive in inter championship going forward.

The bulk of our intermediate team are all in their early 20’s so hopefully they will go on and improve next year and reach their full potential in the coming seasons. We had six players in the panel who were straight out of minor football from the previous year and most of them got plenty of game time this season to help with their development. It looks like some of our younger players will be promoted to the senior panel next season which is very positive and with plenty of good minor players coming through next season hopefully they will have the same work ethic as the other lads and can progress through to the senior team.

Overall the management team are disappointed not to have at least reached a playoff spot this year, especially after such a good start. Hopefully we can put that right next season and although we are not too long finished the 2019 campaign we will be back training in the gym next week in preparation for 2020. We are also delighted to welcome Dave Super Ryan to the management team for next season and as he has been involved with the minor teams for the last few years I am sure it will be a great help to the young lads now entering adult football.

I would like to thank Mick McLaverty and Chris Ryan for all their hard work in looking after the team this year along with our kit man Paddy Quinn. A big thank you to all the people who came out to support us and to Leonard O Carroll and James Lavelle are trusted umpires. I would also like to thank the club executives for all their support this year and a special thanks to all the players for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

Shay Byrne

**Junior A /AFL 7 Team 2019**

The AFL 7 team had a disappointing season this year and ended up being relegated after losing a playoff match away to St James Gaels. We lost a number of key players who moved up to the intermediate team this year and this really left the group struggling all season. In fairness even though the lads lost key players and suffered a fair few defeats throughout the year they never stopped battling all the way until the end of the season. They always turned up in numbers for training and games and showed a great spirit when a lot of other teams might have thrown in the towel. Hopefully this spirit and work ethic will continue into next year and hopefully with a few new faces their new manager Aido Mahon will get them back to winning ways in 2020.

Despite our poor league form we still managed to reach the quarter finals of The All County Junior 3 Championship where we lost out by just 2 points to St Pats of Donabate after playing with 14 players when we had a man sent off midway through the first half. Again the players showed great spirit and determination and almost dug out the win in a game played in dreadful conditions.

I would like to thank Mick McLaverty for all his help with the team throughout the year as well as Ciaran Meehan who was an inspiration on the sideline and put a lot of time and effort into this team. A special thanks also to Cian Tobin who captained the team but also did so much work behind the scenes and also has been very generous with his sponsorship over the years.

I wish all the lads the best of luck for 2020 and hope Aido gets as much enjoyment out of this team as we have over the last few years.

Shay Byrne

**Junior B/ AFL9**

After winning promotion from division 10 the previous year the 4th team got to a flying start winning their first match.

After that it all went downhill. We conceded on 2 occasions due to the inability to field a team.

This despite having 65 members on our whats app group.

We lost our first 2 championship games and again conceded another walk over for the third scheduled match.

Overall it was a very disappointing and difficult year devoid of commitment from some quarters.

The lesson to be taken from last season is unless the players are going to commit to the team for the season, with respect to matches and training, it will end up be a pointless and possible insidious exercise.

Aidan Mahon

**Division 1 Minor Football**

A season bookended by defeats by a Ballyboden. We lost our first league game to them by 4 points, they got 2 early goals and then fouled us every time we crossed the halfway line. We ended up scoring 17 points, 15 from frees. We had a good league thereafter and despite missing players with holidays we went into the final game with the possibility of winning the league if we won away to Clontarf and other matches went our way. Unfortunately, a walkover to Ballyboden rendered our result irrelevant.

Championship started full of optimism despite being drawn in a tough group with all Division 1 teams. 12 minutes left at home to Skerries we were 5 points up and cruising but stopped playing, eventually losing by 1 point. It was therefore knockout for us after that and a big display away to Clontarf kept us alive. While we won, a serious injury to our captain, Sean Guiden, would come back to haunt us later. In our third game at home to Ballinteer we played well despite making in characteristic errors and needed late scores to get us over the line. That win gave us an away Quarter in Ballyboden. We were the better team for most of the game but poor finishing cost us dear. A disappointing end to our season.

While it was ultimately disappointing, it is also very successful in that 31 second year players across our minor squads are going forward to adult football next season.

Ernie Brenner

**Div 5 Minor**

* Won Division 5 North League winning 8/9 matches and with a plus 133 points difference. Played a nice direct attacking style of football. Trained one per week.
* Win County Division 5 playoff vs Lucan in August
* Failed to get out of our group D championship group with one win, and 2 losses of 4 points. This was disappointing as we had a goal to win the league and champo this year.
* We had 29 different players during the league, all will be given medals on 7th Dec presentation.
* Players and management bonded well and there was a good dynamic in the group.
* The vast majority of players want to go forward to adult football.
* Thank you to Paul Curran and Darren Darcy for helping out this season and the players who were a great bunch to work with!