**SENIOR HURLING**

2019 was a consolidation year for our hurlers. Having gained promotion to AHL2 last year the focus was on being competitive at the higher level and maintaining our senior status.

This was achieved on the last day of the season with a hard fought win away to St Olafs in a relegation playoff.

AHL2 proved to be a very competitive league this year with 7 of the 12 teams drawn into the relegation dogfight at the end.

There were some very good performances during the year particularly a win against Faughs who were to go on to gain promotion to Division 1.

Again Championship was disappointing existing at the quarter final stage to Clontarf after a below par performance.

To Play in AHL2 again next year is hugely important to the development of Hurling in the Club. Its time now to push on to the next level which will be secured with the input of a very healthy stream of young players coming through the Juvenile section.

I would like to thank Niall Clarke, Bernard Boran and Fergus Byrne for the huge commitment that they have given to the team over the last 3 years and wish the incoming management team every success.

Declan Mc Grath

**Junior A Hurling**

The 2019 management team consisted of Declan Byrne, Claude Scully, Jimmy Deneher and John Crosse.

We took over from Ronan Kennedy who left a solid foundation with a base of interested players

Ronan was facing into an operation – and it is good to see Ronan back hurling.

There was some continuity with Declan & John having supported Ronan in 2018.

Having sat with Danny & Jim, we brought the two junior teams together to play a number of challenge matches in January – these were on Friday nights, made possible by the excellent new AWP facility - these games were very useful pre-season in terms of getting to know players and getting some hurling into them.

We were boosted by the guys coming up from minors, with strong commitment from a number.

We started the league in February with some poor results, not helped by availability of players - a number of first year adult players were doing the Leaving Cert, others had injuries and college commitments – this was a very noticeable trend all year - specifically, we had numbers on paper, but availability was well below what we planned.

As we moved into March & April our league and championship performances started to improve, with results turning around a couple of matches after performances were upped – key to this was an increase in numbers, and some improvement in training numbers.

Throughout this, we received ongoing strong support from Danny & Jim and the Junior B hurlers, with a number of players stepping up at various times – the likes of Eoin Manning and Brian Walshe come to mind – we believe the stepping up also helped them, and this should be encouraged across grades and codes.

We had a number of prominent first year adults, including the likes of Joe Shannon, Aaron Walshe, Brian Murray, Sean O’Donnell and Gavin Hyde, David McCormack and Peter Murphy – these guys, the previous year’s crop, and the 2020 1st year adult crop are vital to the future of both hurling & football in the club.

We also saw returning hurlers like Niall Gilson, Brian Shalloe and Stephen Keogh – these players need to be managed, encouraged and mentored to keep them playing and to encourage others to return.

We had a rough moment in June in the championship due to exams unavailability, where an old folk’s home was raided to produce Byrne and Crosse to play in the full-forward line away to Erins Isle - incredibly the other 13 players produced a performance equal to anything seen in the GPO to unluckily lose by 3 points.

This was out of keeping with our generally improved performances from May to September

We finished the league in eighth place, just four points off a top four spot, with four wins in total.

Our form line had improved to such an extent that we would have climbed further with a couple of more matches - we had a number of players training with the seniors which had a major impact in improving our standards.

In championship despite a stirring performance in beating the league leaders, we ended with three points and in a relegation play-off.

We were determined not to fall back a grade in championship and away to St Brendan’s, the team played exceptionally well to win by seventeen points and demonstrated their entitlement to stay in the higher championship.

Jody Dunne was our captain and leader on the field this year and was a huge loss whilst absent for a number of months.

Two stalwarts were vitally important in our improvements during the year – firstly Enda O’Flaherty, who despite family commits led by example in training & on the field – we need experience with youth and look forward to Enda playing next year.

Martin Ormonde played his last game v Brendan’s after 13 years of service to Syls - he was a role model to the younger players and what a marksman, he will be sadly missed.

Anto Dunne, Sean Foley, Shane McSherra and Philly Ryan were stalwarts all through

We had great support from senior mgt in terms of making players available as much as possible to get them game time and to drive us on – Danny Harvey, Barry Crosse, Liam Shalloe & Kevin McLoughney

We lost Dave Casey to retirement and Eoin Kennedy to Canada – we wish both the best, and hope to see Eoin back in a year.

Despite their many commitments both playing and exam-wise, we had a good relationship with minor management – we saw Conor Hoyne mainly, but also Daragh McLoughney getting game-time.

So solid year – what’s next?

* Promotion from League 6 to 5 – this is vital to reduce the gap to the seniors and allow guys to step up - we need co-ordination between the club, senior mgt and junior mgt to plan to make this happen -
* Serious plan to reach at minimum championship semi-final , stretch objective – win in Year 1

What’s required at minimum?
* Close co-ordination between all four hurling management teams
* Focused effort to secure as many re-grades at possible in time to meet closing date for submissions
* Strength & Conditioning programme for juniors aligned to seniors – does not have to be the same gym
* Seniors and Junior A’s must train together – we saw big improvements in the guys who were, we improved the numbers for matches, the juniors saw higher standards and speed of movement, higher skills levels, the senior management saw the juniors – one senior league game – five junior A’s played on the night – senior’s won! - There is no chance of achieving the stated aims above with 6/11 at Junior training
* Full encouragement of guys to play both codes - this is a GAA Club not a HC or a GFC

**Junior B**

Team managed by Danny O Connor and Jim Wardick. (founded 1985). A third adult hurling team was first entered in 2012 and following a break in 2013-14, it has been promoted to Division 8 of the league in 2015 and after first entering Junior F Championship in 2016, were promoted to Junior E in 2018. In 2019 the team played 5 challenge games, 12 league and 5 championship games. The team finished 5th of 14 in the league and reached the quarter-final of the championship, losing to Na Fianna.

The all-weather pitch was particularly beneficial in the pre-season with good turn-outs for games and training with Junior A team. Training was patchy later in the year, partly due to the clustering of matches involved in the schedule which saw the season finish on 8th September. To try to bridge the gap a challenge was arranged with Ballycastle Mc Quillans on 12th October which involved an overnight in the Marine Hotel in Ballycastle. A return game involving our Senior team has been proposed by Ballycastle for 2020.

The playing squad for 2019 was 43, which included support from 7 minors. While 11 of the remaining 36 are over 40, most of the older players were regulars on the first team during the 1990’s and 2000’s. A particular stand out statistic this year which should be specifically recorded by the club is that 5 of the current players who turned 40 this year started with Syls and were part of the 1989 under 10 team. This statistic is unlikely to be repeated for many years and is quite remarkable.

We don’t get too many spectators at games, but those who have seen the team play will confirm that it is not a makeshift “pub” social team but play attractive hurling and also fulfil the role of bringing on younger players before they move up to the 2nd team.

Ballycastle 12th October 2019. Jun B plus a few Senior players

Last League match v Realt Dearg 25th August 2019 --Syls 1-22, Realt Dearg 1-15

**Minor Hurling**

Minor hurling team this year competed again in Division 2 of the league and B division of the championship.

Division 2 was a really good division this year, well graded and really competitive, with a lot of good hard matches all through, many of which went down to the wire. We ended up finishing 6th (out of 12) ultimately, winning 5, drawing 2, and losing 4 of the matches.

Like last year, our championship got off to a great start with a comprehensive 17 point win against Commercials in Broomfield on 1st day out. The 2nd match away to Kilmacud could very easily gone against us as we underperformed on the day, but the lads really dug in to come from 4 down with few minutes to go to get a draw. An excellent hard-working performance by us in the final round away to Naomh Barrog earned us a 16 point win and meant we qualified for quarter finals as group winners. Unfortunately however the quarter final was the end of the journey for us this year as a well drilled Na Fianna team beat us by 4 points on the day.

The panel worked really hard this year, with the respective 2001 and 2002 age groups integrating really well and playing some great hurling in most matches. A lot of them, along with 2000 born lads from last year’s minors, also made up the successful Leinster title winning Scoil Iosa senior team. I expect, and look forward to, a relatively large amount from this crop to graduate to our adult hurling ranks over next year or two and continue to make the same positive contribution to the club and hurling there that they have made since they first started out with the club as juveniles.

Thanks to Eoin Farquharson, Gregg Hannon & Eddie McLoughney on the management team, plus our football counterparts Super, Mike et al for all their co-operation during the year.

Regards

Pat