

## Canon Esler Trophies – Down P.S. Football Championship

The Canon Esler Cup and Shield were initiated to give all schools and pupils in our county the opportunity to participate in a meaningful competition in the first term of the school year. Played under Go Game Rules and allowing smaller schools to amalgamate to be competitive against the largest of schools in the community. The Shield Final proves the success of this format as both teams gained the scalps of larger schools on their way to the final while the Esler Cup brought together two of the largest schools. Our finals this year were played under lights in the St. Patrick's Mayobridge complex where the facilities mirror the success of this great club on the field of play. Although the conditions, all the four teams involved served up a delightful display of the rudiments of Gaelic games through their skilful and sporting approach throughout.

Shield Winners - Lower Mourne

Canon Esler Shield

Both teams started the game well but it was the Lower Mourne side which scored first with a point from Corey Higgins Forsythe. From the kick out the Saul/ Ballycruttle team won the ball which Jack Hazard moved quickly up the field and Shay McComiskey netted to make the score 1-0 to 0-1. After this the Lower Mourne defence found themselves under sustained pressure and but for a great save from Barry Beeks in goals Saul could have been further ahead. In one of their few attacks in this period Lower Mourne scored a great long range point from Daniel Sloan in midfield. Following a spectacular save from the Ballycruttle/Saul goalkeeper Ruairi Quinn, the East Down boys continued to pile on the pressure and added a further goal by Shay McComiskey and Ruairi O'Hare point. The first half ended with another wonderful point from Lower Mourne's Daniel Sloan to leave the half time score :

Ballycruttle & Saul 2-1

Lower Mourne 0-3

When the whistle blew for the second half it was the Lower Mourne boys who came out of the traps quickest. Daniel Sloan in midfield once again climbed higher than everyone else to pluck the ball from the skies. He hand-passed to the supporting Corey Higgins Forsythe who returned the ball to him and he drove it to the net. From the kick out Pdraig Stevenson caught the ball and sent it back over the bar. Finally Saul woke up and started to play like they had at the end of the first half. A good move up the left hand side of the field led to a converted free by McComiskey, which was quickly followed up with a long range effort from Ruairi O'Hare. The game was there for the taking by either team as we entered the final 5 minutes. A Corey Mahon goal and Adam Burke's point restored the lead for the Saul/ Ballcruttle team. From this point on Lower Mourne began to take control of the game. A goal from Dean Murray and a point from Pdraig Stevenson followed. However Ronan Harrison who had worked tirelessly in attack for Lower Mourne had to leave the field due to injury. He was replaced by Nathan Mills who within seconds of coming on scored a cracker of a goal which lifted the large crowd. Finn McElroy Banjo kept up the pressure for Lower Mourne by scoring a nice point to take them into a five point lead. Saul once again rallied and scored a goal from the kick out which was quickly followed by another goal. After all their hard work Lower Mourne found themselves a point in arrears. Saul continued to pressure and when they extended their lead with another point it looked all over for Lower Mourne. The game, however, was to have a dramatic finish when, with time running out, Joseph Young who had played in the Lower Mourne defence moved up the field and won a free. He took the free himself and rifled it to the net. When the keeper kicked the ball out the referee blew the final whistle to the delight of the large following from Mourne.

Final score :

Lower Mourne 4-2

Saul 3-4

This was a great game of football from both sides. The boys all displayed great skill and determination in what were very tricky, wet conditions.

After the game, Collie Bell Cathaoirleach Cumann na mBunscol an Dáirín praised both teams for the tremendous competitive skilful game in such atrocious conditions. Former Down star Mickey Linden presented the trophy to the representatives from the three schools.

## Beaten Shield Finalists - Ballycruttle & Saul

## St. Joseph's Carryduff win Canon Esler Cup

## St Joseph's Crowned County Champions

St Joseph's Carryduff defeated St Dallen's Warrenpoint 2-2 to 0-4 to win the Cumann na mBunscol Canon Esler Championship for the first time in the school's history. The match was played in atrocious conditions at Mayobridge on Monday 9th November 2009. A huge crowd turned out to support the boys despite the terrible weather conditions. It was wonderful to see so many parents, family members and members of Carryduff GAC on hand to witness this historic occasion for the school.

The first period of the match ended level at one point apiece but the low score line did not give a true picture of the enthralling contest that was unfolding. Indeed the commitment and skill levels on display matched anything that might be seen at many senior matches. The action intensified as the game entered its final stages with heroic efforts on both sides. Good teamwork and some slick passing moves paved the way for St Joseph's goals which proved to be the crucial scores.

This victory marked a momentous day for St Joseph's and parents, teachers and coaches can be extremely proud of this magnificent achievement. The boys are already looking forward to the new challenges which lie ahead.