

Football Finals 2009

Cumann na mBunscol an Dúin – Allianz Finals Day

All roads led to St. Malachy's Park Castlewellan on Saturday 13th June as Cumann na mBunscol an Dúin celebrated the culmination of the 2009 Allianz Football Leagues for Primary Schools with the annual Finals Day. These leagues are based on the size of school and played under the Go Games rules which encourages maximum participation by all pupils. There were three titles at stake based on pupil numbers in schools viz :7 aside teams for the smallest of schools 9 aside teams for medium sized schools 11 aside for the larger schools. Throughout the leagues, the games have been employing the Go Games strategy of three periods of play with the use all available children to ensure all those wishing to be involved in our national games have the opportunity to play. In order to retain some competitive element, the middle period scores are not recorded. On this sun drenched Saturday morning, the school children and their followers from the qualifying schools descended on St. Malachy's Park to enjoy the spectacle of the annual county finals. Those involved were as follows: 7 aside St. Michael's Finnis v Holy Cross Attical Macartan's Loughinisland v Holy Family Teconnaught 11 aside St. Patrick's Hilltown Warrenpoint The 7 aside final has always been one of the most exciting fixtures and this year's game lived well up to expectations. St. Michael's Finnis coached by principal Colm McAlarney, returning to the venue where he won so much glory, were facing an unknown quantity in the boys from the Mournes. Finnis opened brightly and having the advantage in height one feared for the Attical boys as they quickly opened the scoring with a long range point from their number 9, Luke Savage. However the Holy Cross team were not here just to make up the numbers and a points from Michael Grant and Shane Murphy and a wonderful goal from Shane Murphy made the Finnis team sit up and take notice. Although the Finnis No. 6 Liam Kelly converted two goals, points from Holy Cross's Jack Gilroy, Shane Murphy, Daniel Sloan and Dan Sloan left them in the lead at halftime. Halftime St. Michael's Finnis 2-1 Holy Cross Attical 1-7 Into the second half and the Attical team employed a new strategy by crowding the midfield area and so preventing the much stronger Finnis team from bearing down on goals. They soon increased their lead with points from Michael Grant, Dan Sloan and Jack Gilroy which set them on the road to victory and a Down county title. Throughout the game the work rate of the boys from Attical was outstanding with everyone covering all areas of the field and no one found wanting when fearless blocking was essential. For the Finnis boys, their goalkeeper Bernard McElroy was superb, their best player was Mark Branniff while Michael Doyle, Liam Kelly and Martin Rogan excelled. However, scores win matches and the failure of the St. Michael's team to convert their chances left them trailing at the final whistle. Final Score St. Michael's Finnis 2-2 Holy Cross Attical 1-15 After the match, Collie Bell Cathaoirleach Cumann na mBunscol an Dúin presented the trophy to the winning team. He praised all the players for such a wonderful display of skilful football and congratulated the Holy Cross team on winning this year's Down County 7 aside championship. 9 aside St. Macartan's Loughinisland v Holy Family Teconnaught This pairing of neighbouring schools was a novelty in this section which has been dominated in the recent past by teams from Kilcoo and Ballyholland, although Teconnaught were unsuccessful in last year's final. Bearing the title as favourites due to their performance to date, the Holy Family boys immediately bore down on the Loughinisland goal but wayward shooting from captain Caolán Magee left them scoreless. At the other end, a point from Declan McClements opened the scoring before an opportunist goal from Ruairi Mahon gave them a healthy lead. Up popped captain Caolán Magee to make amends with a great point before two from the Loughinisland's no. 7, Christopher Noade, increased the lead just before the halftime whistle. Halftime Holy Family Teconnaught 0-1 St. Macartan's Loughinisland 3-3 In the second half, the pattern of the game remained the same with the St. Macartan's boys creating havoc in the Teconnaught defence and picking up scores at will. While captain Caolán Magee tried vainly to rally his team who appeared most lethargic, his efforts were not rewarded and the team failed to reduce the margin. However, the defending and blocking skills of both Daniel Napier and Niall Forrest and the endless running of Caolán Magee were a treat to watch. For Loughinisland it was the supreme team effort. The high fielding, deft touches, swift hand passing, mazy solo runs and opportunist scoring left the result in no doubt from early in the second half. Fulltime Holy Family Teconnaught 0-5 St. Macartan's Loughinisland 4-6 In his post match remarks, Collie Bell thanked both teams for an excellent display of attacking football, commented how the defensive skills of the Loughinisland boys denied Teconnaught many scoring chances and marvelled at overall performance of this talented St. Macartan's outfit. 11 aside St. Patrick's Hilltown v St. Dallan's Warrenpoint So to the final game of the day which brought defending champions St. Dallan's Warrenpoint into action against the boys from St. Patrick's Hilltown. These two neighbouring teams always produce a highly competitive encounter and the large crowd in attendance were not disappointed. St. Patrick's opened their account with a well taken point from Darragh McPolin which brought a swift reply from St. Dallan's Blain McGrath. However great combination play from captain Aaron D'Arcy, Blain McGrath and Patrick Murdock brought several scores including a goal and two points from the captain and while Shane McGarry and Michael Mulholland had points for St. Patrick's and they were denied a certain goal by Ryan Austin, the 'Point boys were well in front at halftime. Halftime St. Patrick's Hilltown 0-3 St. Dallan's Warrenpoint 2-8 During the interval, the substitutes from both teams were involved in an exciting exhibition which all those present appreciated. Into the second half and now the Hilltown team decided to move the ball swiftly into the forward line where Peter McLeavey was battling hard. But St. Dallan's were not going to relinquish either their lead or the Down title without a battle and now the defensive

skills came to the fore as all and sundry ensured that scores and particularly goals did not come cheaply. Joseph O'Loughlin, Conor McParland and Sean McGivern now proved their worth while forward Patrick Murdock was on hand to deny the Hilltown full forward when he seemed destined to find the back of the net. For St. Patrick's Michael Mulholland, Charlie Carr, Ryan McGreevey, Noel Grant, Darragh McPolin and Colm Fearon never gave up, overall the St. Dallon's team were too strong. All the Warrenpoint boys played extremely well but led by captain Aaron D'Arcy and ably supported by Ryan Austin in goals, Conor McParland and Joe O'Loughlin in defence, great combination play from Blain McGrath, Rurai McCormick, Tomas Magill and Adam Lynch this well balanced St. Dallon's team were well worthy of their victory. Fulltime St. Patrick's Hilltown 0-5 St. Dallon's Warrenpoint 3-11 After the final whistle and when the celebrations had subsided in the St. Dallon's camp, Conor O'Toole, county Down's newly appointed Games Development Officer presented the trophy to Aaron D'Arcy captain of the victorious St. Dallon's team. In his concluding remarks, Collie Bell as Cathaoirleach thanked both teams for their sporting efforts, he commiserated with the deflated St. Patrick's team while congratulating the boys from St. Dallon's. He also took the opportunity to thank both the referees, the overall sponsors Allianz, the hard working committee for organising all the year's events and all those schools who participated throughout the school year. Castlewellan GAC were particularly thanked for the use of their excellent facilities, the preparation of the playing area and refreshments during the day's programme. Disclaimer. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of these reports but if some players don't wear numbered jerseys which correspond to the team sheets submitted by the schools, it may cause discrepancies.