

SPORTS REVIEW – JANUARY



Donegal players Michael Murphy and Neil McGee had a birds eye view of the Dr. McKenna Cup game in MacCumhaill Park. Picture: Declan Doherty

BY RYAN FERRY

Carl McHugh enjoyed a magnificent January as he helped Bradford City progress to the Capital One League Cup final.

The gifted Lettermacaward defender scored against his fellow Donegal man, Shay Given in City's 3-1 win over Aston Villa at Valley Parade.

"It's unbelievable to score against Shay Given, with us coming from the same part of the world," said a shell-shocked McHugh, who starred from centre-back.

The Banthams were defeated 2-1 by Given's team in the second leg at Villa Park, but McHugh's crucial goal in the first game was enough to send his team through to the decider with Swansea City.

McHugh's excellent month was capped off with a call-up to Noel King's Republic of Ireland under 21 team for the friendlies against the Netherlands.

Everton star Seamus Coleman penned a five-and-a-half year contract at Goodison Park. Coleman enjoyed a resurgence of form at the start of the year, cementing his position as Giovanni Trapattoni's first choice right-back and scoring the winning goal as Everton advanced to the fourth round of the FA Cup.

Stephen McLaughlin, from the Isle of Doagh, completed his move to Nottingham Forest from Derry City. The move was welcomed by Finn Harps after it gave them a small windfall.

Lifford Celtic assumed top spot of the Donegal League, due in part to Glenea United's lack of activity in January. Kilmacrennan Celtic and Rathmullan Celtic were also beginning to mount a challenge for league glory.

The Donegal Youth League bowed out of the Youth Inter-League Challenge Cup at the group stages after they were defeated 1-0 by the Inishowen League.

In Gaelic football, Reigning All-Ireland senior football champions Donegal began their reign in unspectacular fashion as they lost their first two NI Power Dr McKenna Cup

games. None of Donegal's All-Ireland team featured in the McKenna Cup, with Donegal manager Jim McGuinness handing over the managerial reins to the county under 21 manager Maxi Curran for the pre-season competition.

Curran played the majority of his under 21 players, along with some fringe players and selected others, who were given an opportunity to impress.

The Tir Chonaill men lost by 2-15 to 2-7 to Fermanagh in Brewster Park, before going down to Monaghan three days later by 1-16 to 3-15. However, Donegal improved in their next game defeating St Mary's College by 1-14 to 2-10.

McGuinness explained his decision to rest the All-Ireland winners: "We didn't fire them into the McKenna Cup because we felt it would be too dangerous to do that with the prospect of injury. We're building it up slowly and steadily and our training will increase intensity wise over the next three weeks."

"Hopefully what we're doing will work for us," he added.

Gary McDaid returned to the role of Glenswilly senior team manager, replacing Manus McFadden in the managerial hotseat in Foxhall.

Carrick Vocational School maintained their dominance in schools football as they collected the Under 16 and Senior school titles.

Conor Doherty excelled as the under 16 team defeated Pobalscoil Gaoth Dobhair 1-10 to 3-3 in the county final. Doherty was also a prominent member of the senior team who convincingly defeated Carndonagh Community School in Carndonagh by 4-11 to 1-7.

There was joy for golfer Paul McGinley when he was appointed to be Europe's captain for the 2014 Ryder Cup at Gleneagles.

Badminton player Chloe Magee lost out to double Olympian Tzu Ying Tai in the Malaysian Open but the Raphoe women was happy with her performance.

Magee said: "I felt I played very well in the second set. The hall is very different to play in over here be-



Odhran Mac Niallais of Donegal against St Mary's James Duffy. Photo: Donna McBride

cause of the drift. Before I came out I was very apprehensive about playing, but I'm delighted to have come out and got a good performance out of myself."

Raphoe hockey club's drive for promotion the top flight of the Ulster Senior League was boosted by re-

sults over North Down and Queens. Right-back Matthew Lecky was rewarded for his stellar form with a call-up to the Ulster under 21 squad, for the Interprovincial championships in Lisnagarvey.

Twin Towns boxer Stephen O'Reilly was celebrating a provincial title

after he defeated Ryan Donnelly of Bishop Kelly 13-10 in the 81kg division in the Ulster Elite Boxing Championships at the Pilots Row Centre, Derry. O'Reilly moved up from the 75kg weight division to fight in the championships, and his decision paid off emphatically.