

# SPORTS REVIEW – FEBRUARY



Fireworks at Croke park celebrating its 100th year in ownership by the GAA, where Donegal were defeated in the National League opener against Kildare. Photo: Donna McBride

Jason Quigley was crowned Irish Senior Middleweight champion in February after he defeated Ray Sheehan by 15 points to six in the National Stadium in Dublin.

It was the first time that the Finn Valley ABC starlet's won the senior title. He led from the start in a tough encounter with Sheehan, and the Ballybofey ace cruised to the title after a solid third round.

Quigley came through an extremely difficult route to make the final defeating 2012 London Olympian Darren O'Neill and Conrad Cummings in the quarter-finals and semi-finals respectively.

"To be the national senior champion in your country in this sort of weight division is just unreal. I'm buzzing to lift this title... it's a man's title. I've won an under 18 and an under 23 European title, but this is a senior man's title," said the jubilant boxer after the fight.

However, Illies Golden Gloves boxer William McLaughlin suffered a 22-13 defeat to Olympian Adam Nolan in the Welterweight final. McLaughlin had been at the top of his game as he made his way to the final, but the experienced Nolan had too much class for him in the decider.

In athletics, Mark English stormed to a gold medal in the 800 metre final of the Woodie's DIY Senior Athletic championships at Athlone IT International Arena.

English ran an impressive race and his time was inside the qualifying standard for the European championships. The Letterkenny AC athlete was pushed all the way by his clubmate Darren McBrearty, who finished in second position.

Mary McLoone from Tirconaill AC won gold in the championships in the triple jump, and she also picked up a silver medal in the long jump on the same day. Lifford AC athlete Ann Marie McGlynn performed admirably in Athlone, and she deservedly won a silver medal.

Donegal's first game in the Allianz National League Division 1 ended in



Jonathan Martin in action during the butterfly at the Swilly Seals ASC end of season gala in the Aura Leisure Centre, Letterkenny. Photo: Declan Doherty

disappointment, when Kildare withstood a late fightback from Jim McGuinness' men to take the points.

However, Donegal bounced back in their next game with Michael Murphy inspiring them to a comfortable win over Down in MacCumhaill Park. Murphy was in tremendous form in February as he starred for his county, his college DCU in the Sigerson Cup and for his province Ulster in the M Donnelly Interprovincial championships.

Mark McHugh and the McGee brothers, Eamon and Neil, joined Murphy in Joe Kernan's Ulster team and they won the Interprovincial crown defeating Leinster by 3-12 to 0-17 in the final.

The Donegal Ladies enjoyed mixed fortunes in the opening rounds of the league. They lost their first game to Laois, recorded a good home win

against Dublin, before tasting defeat in their third game to Mayo in Claremorris. The Donegal hurlers also made a strong start to their Division 3A league campaign when they hammered Monaghan.

The Radio na Gaeltachata Senior Championship draw pitted 2012's winners St Eunan's in Group 1 with beaten finalists Naomh Conaill. Group 4 was instantly called the 'group of death' as Kilcar, Glenswilly, St Michael's and Bundoran were drawn together.

Abbey Vocational school and Carrick Vocational school both registered narrow one-point wins to reach the Under 14 and under 16 Vocational schools finals respectively.

Carrick's senior team advanced to the semi-finals of the Ulster competition following a win over SRC of Newry.

In soccer, Carl McHugh's dream of cup glory came to a disappointing halt when his Bradford City team were defeated by Swansea City in the capital One cup final in Wembley. The Welsh team proved too strong for Bradford and won easily.

"On the day it just didn't happen for us. They took their chances and we weren't good enough on the day," said McHugh, who remained upbeat despite the result.

"Playing in front of a crowd like that in a cup final is something nobody can take away from us," he added.

Finn Harps concluded a very positive pre-season at the end of February. The club went nine games unbeaten, including a win over Drogeda United, and a draw against Sligo Rovers, before falling to neighbours Derry City in their last warm-up

game before the start of the new season. Glenea United finished February four points ahead at the top of the Donegal League, after they picked up 10 points from a possible 12 in their four games.

Raphoe Hockey club won promotion to the first division of the Ulster Senior League in sublime fashion. Raphoe recorded victories over Bangor, before securing promotion with a 10-1 away win over Omagh.

Two Donegal women starred for the Ireland women's team as they clinched the Triple Crown after victory over Wales, England and Scotland.

Larissa Muldoon from Ballybofey, and Fahan's Nora Stapleton were integral members of the team, and their triumph also rubber-stamped their qualification for the 2014 Women's Rugby World Cup.