

SPORTS REVIEW – MARCH

The Donegal Senior football team struggled in the Allianz NFL in March losing games to Tyrone, Cork and Mayo. They did manage to pick up a win over Kerry in MacCumhaill Park.

However, their poor form meant that they still hadn't secured safety in Division 1 ahead of their last round fixture with Dublin.

Jim McGuinness remained unfazed by his side's mixed fortunes in the league, and reiterated his stance that the team were concentrating on the championship.

"We know where we're at in terms of fitness, but we would've liked to get the job done here," said McGuinness after the defeat to Mayo in Castlebar.

The Donegal under 21s reached the semi-finals of the Ulster championship after they produced a splendid performance to beat Tyrone in Healy Park, Omagh.

Maxi Curran's team were underdogs going into the game, but seven points from Paddy McBrearty inspired them against a fancied Tyrone team.

"The team was written off from a long way out and I don't think anyone aside from ourselves gave us a chance," said a delighted Curran after the full-time whistle in Healy Park.

The Donegal ladies suffered a disappointing month, as they received a hammering away in Monaghan, with Hughie Molloy's side going down by 2-17 to 1-5.

The Donegal hurlers maintained their 100% record in Division 3A as they defeated Tyrone, Fermanagh and Louth in emphatic fashion.

There was disappointment for two Donegal Schools in the Ulster Vocational schools finals.

Carrick Vocational school's under 16 team lost heavily to St Mark's Warrenpoint, while the Abbey Vocational school went down narrowly to St Paul's Lurgan in the under 14 final.

In soccer, Finn Harps made an excellent start to the season, as they picked up seven points from a possible nine in their opening three games of the Airtricity League First Division.

Sean McCarron salvaged a draw in their first game against Waterford United, before they picked up home wins over Cobh Ramblers and Longford Town.

Speaking after the 1-0 victory over Longford Town, Finn Harps manager Peter Hutton said. "It's very, very early in the season. It's a good three points and there's a long road ahead of us yet, but we're slowly developing."

Seamus Coleman starred in Ireland's 0-0 draw with Sweden in Stockholm, but there was disappointment as a late goal from David Alaba gave Austria a two-all draw in the Aviva stadium.

In the Donegal League, Lifford Celtic breathed some fresh life into the title race by defeating Lifford Celtic 5-2 in Greenbrae. Donegal Town moved a step closer to securing the Division One title after they defeated rivals Cranford United 2-1 in a top-of-the-table clash.

Glenea United and Rathmullan Celtic made it through to the Brian McCormick's Sports Cup final, after they recorded semi-final victories over Donegal Town and Lifford Celtic respectively.

Letterkenny Rovers claimed back the Youth League title after beating Erne Wanderers 3-0 in a play-off in Donegal Town. Goals from Shane Porter, Kieran McPhearson and Marty Vance sealed the trophy for Anthony Gorman's men.

However, their hopes of making



Republic of Ireland defender Seamus Coleman.



Nora Stapleton.

the semi-finals of the Youth Challenge Cup were ended when Castlebar defeated them. Elsewhere, Finn Harps' under 19 team were relegated from the U19 Elite Division after Shelbourne thrashed them 5-0 in Tolka Park.

There was joy for the Ireland ladies rugby team after they secured their first ever Six Nations Grand slam in March, thanks to wins over France and Italy. Larrissa Muldoon and Nora Stapleton starred in the victories, and wrote themselves into Irish rugby history.

"We have surpassed any idea about how we'd get on this year. We knew we'd be better than any other year. It was all about how we implemented that and now we've just gone and won the thing," said Stapleton.

Raphoe hockey club secured the Ulster League Section one title after winning 2-1 away to Campbellians. However, their hopes of reaching the Irish Trophy final were dashed, when an unfortunate own goal saw them lose 3-4 to Portadown and they were sent crashing out at the semi-final stage.

Jason Quigley was on the medal hunt again in March and he claimed Ireland's only gold at the Usti nad Labem in Czech Republic. Quigley impressed in the final defeating Serbian Olympian Aleksandr Drenovak.

Brett McGinty continued his rise to prominence by winning the boys 63kg Ulster title. McGinty showed his sporting prowess by lining out for Maiden city in a soccer match before his fight.

In basketball, LYIT cruised through to the All-Ireland final, after they hammered Trinity College, Dublin in the An Danlann Sports Centre, Letterkenny.