

GAA County Representation 2013 from Balyna – Population isn't everything.....

"The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark."

Michelangelo

Our parish has one of the sparsest populations in the country relative to its land area, however for some reason we punch well above our weight in terms of county representation at various levels, and indeed all GAA codes. This piece poses more questions than gives answers, but if nothing else gives a short appreciation of our success with limited resources in terms of player numbers. We all know players in the parish who are playing in the honorary white of the county, but when you actually see the list, it beggar's belief. It must be noted that only players who played at minor level and above in 2013 are mentioned as the list would get out of control if all our development players in the younger categories were also included!

Kildare Minor Football

Leinster winning Kildare team;

Cein McMonagle, Daniel Pyke (Balyna & Clogherinkoe), Luke Flynn (Balyna & Johnstownbridge)

Kildare Junior Football

Leinster winning Kildare team and All-Ireland Finalists;

Daniel Grehan (Clogherinkoe), Jamsie O'Connor, Keith Cribben, Cathal McNally (Johnstownbridge)

Kildare U21 Football

Leinster winning Kildare team;

Daniel Grehan (Clogherinkoe), Paul Cribben, Daniel Flynn (recently signed 2 year contract with AFL Team Port Adelaide) and Seán Hurley (Johnstownbridge) Seán is going to Australia for trials as this is being written)

Kildare Senior Football

O'Byrne Cup Champions this year with Kildare;

Brian Flanagan, Cathal McNally and Daniel Flynn (Johnstownbridge)

Division 1 Football with Kildare this year;

Brian Flanagan, Cathal McNally, Daniel Flynn, Seán Hurley and Paul Cribben (Johnstownbridge).

Senior Inter-County Championship Football;

Daniel Flynn, Seán Hurley and Paul Cribben (Johnstownbridge) (Cathal and Keith making the panel also).

Kildare Minor Ladies Football

Ruth Bergin, Orla Keoghan, Rachel Cribben (Balyna Ladies).

Kildare Senior Ladies Football

Aisling Holton, (twice an All-Star nominee), Caoimhe Keoghan, Siobhán Hurley, Jane O'Donoghue, (all Balyna Ladies).

Kildare U21 Hurlers

Cian Farrell from Johnstownbridge (plays his hurling in Coill Dubh) Leinster Champions and All Ireland B Finalist.

Kildare Senior Camogie

Clodagh Flanagan – Captain of Kildare and soaring star award (equivalent of all-star), Jane O'Donoghue, Siobhán Hurley – Player of the Match in All-Ireland and soaring star award, Aoife Trant, receiving a soaring star award, Roisin O'Connell, Eimear Hurley and Tanya Johnson all who play with Johnstownbridge Camogie who won the Camogie Premier Junior All-Ireland this year.

As we are all aware, many of these players come from historically strong lines of family representation and indeed brothers and sisters are included in this formidable list. There are those too who are

beginning their family tradition, to which we hope will carry on into the future; but why are we as a parish producing such players of distinction?

Is it because we make the best with the limited numbers of players we have and put the very best into them by encouragement and motivation?

Is it the passion that exists within the coaches and not just blind faith that is transferred into the players?

Is it the fact that we border Offaly, Meath and Westmeath, giving us an edge or even fear to strive beyond our neighbouring counties?

Is the foundation and legacy of success which has been left to us from our previous generations?

Is it the fact that we as a parish don't believe we are performing beyond expectation and is our birth right to be competing at the highest levels, by enabling our kids to demonstrate their capabilities?

Is it the community drive that maintains momentum and provides the steering and direction that ensures the effort does not miss the mark?

Is it because we still feel that we can improve on current frameworks to build even further into the future (the GAA Nurseries are testament to this prerequisite)?

Is it the importance of purpose, tradition, passion, teamwork, trust, personal stability?

Is it the stability within the clubs from committees to coaches, maintaining improvement and continuity?

Is it the fight of the underdog?

Do our players understand their responsibility or even obligation to do their best for their parish as well as themselves?

Is it their deep appreciation for the opportunity and the determination to pass it on to those coming behind them?

Is it that the clubs are very inclusive, with a community feel, where everyone's welcome and feels a part of something special?

"Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world."

Nelson Mandela, inaugural speech, 1994

Many will read this and agree with some of the questions and sentiment posed, and disagree with others, but even if we provoke thoughts towards something which we maybe take for granted at times, this piece was worth it.

This is a commendation to the structures and the players we currently have representing us at inter-county level and indeed the ones coming up through the ranks.

Congratulations to all the players firstly and to the coaches of past, present and future of all age categories. Keep doing what you're doing; you are admired by all from within the parish and beyond. And for those who are just about to go back up the page to count the players, there are 24, two of which are dual-stars!

Is mise,

Seáníe Bennett