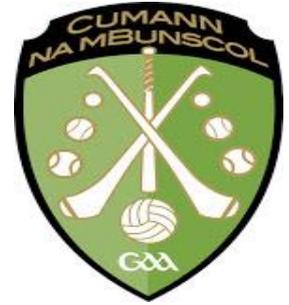


Mini 7's Report 2023



In life we can sometimes take things for granted. For years we celebrated and participated in Gaelic Games in our Primary Schools. The games were embedded in our annual school calendar – and win, lose or draw they were something to look forward and plan for. Likewise, our INTO Mini 7's. Our small sided, national competition has been a great part of our schools and games calendar. It is rare to have a competition that encourages all schools, no matter what side, to participate equally in. For the luck schools winning the County Mini 7's competition can be a historic event and the excitement of the school being represented in Croke Park during All Ireland semi-finals and finals is a huge honour for the school. What a shock Covid19 gave us all – not only was our freedom to move about taken but the joy of games in our schools was also taken away by this virus. A trip to visit Croke Park was more likely to be for a vaccine!

When we were given the green light to resume sports in our schools there was delight and hope of a more normal school life. It was then fantastic when I got the word from Gearoid O Maoilmhichíl that the GAA INTO Mini 7's would go ahead in the same format, with the same numbers, as it did before Covid19. To then receive confirmation from Deirdre O Connor in INTO Head Office that sponsorship would resume we knew we could get back to games in our schools. Last year was a short year for the Mini 7's competition. Rather than having two terms to plan for the games we had approximately 2 months.

Great tribute must be paid to county committees throughout the country who worked hard to get the Mini 7's games up and running. Well done to all the schools who braved training, coaching, games and buses to allow the children the opportunity to participate in games. Things that were so common place before Covid19 were now more than a little challenge. What a sign of the commitment our teachers have to promoting Gaelic Games in our schools.

I received the first completed excel document on 20th April. Despite having been involved in Mini 7's games or years nothing prepares you for the responsibility of minding these precious names which appear on the excel document. In schools we are used to collecting and monitoring data. However, this precious data is the Golden Ticket for so many pupils. I will admit I had the data saved many times to make sure I didn't manage to lose any name. The expectation to ensure those children get to Croke Park is all consuming until the Hurling Final is complete.

I want to thank all the county secretaries for collecting the data for the excel document. I would also like to thank the counties for completing the games to ensure we have children to represent us. For the 2023 school year county secretaries are asked to return a hurling and football excel document. There are some changes on the excel document to reflect challenges we had last year. I would ask all secretaries to have the documents returned by April 27th 2023 . Late arrivals delay the allocation of all places and are frustrating for other counties.

I would also like to remind committees of the following:

Please adhere to the allocation of places that was given out at the September meeting and emailed to counties following the September meeting.

Please include any provincial allocation on the excel sheet. I would ask provincial secretaries to inform me of the counties getting extra places.

Young Whistlers should be included on the excel documents.

Age limits should be adhered to – in all counties.

Please check that the emails and phone numbers provided are correct.

Please remember I cannot magic extra places for All Ireland Finals. Don't make promises to families that I can't follow through on!!

The children who are selected for these exhibition games have the most fantastic day. This year the children were playing at half time in the games and what a huge honour it was for them to play in front of a full stadium. From our early morning meeting, to getting their kit, getting photographs taken on pitch, enjoying lunch with new friends and lastly walking out on to the green grass of Croke Park! A lifetime of memories! There is huge collaboration to enable the children and their families have a great experience. I would like to thank Gearoid and Michelle in Croke Park for all their work with me during the year. They were patient and understanding over the many changes and challenges that occurred during the season. I would like to wish Gearoid health and happiness for his retirement and congratulate Michelle on her new role.

I would like to thank Uachtaran CLG Larry McCarthy, John Murphy, Michael Naughton and Hilda Breslin for joining us and making the day even more special for the children. My thanks also to John Boyle, John Driscoll and Joe McKeon (INTO) for attending our days – welcoming parents and children, making speeches and committing to the support of Gaelic Games in Primary schools.

I would also like to thank Gerry O Meara, Michael Smith and the Dublin teachers who work so hard on these days to make sure everything runs smoothly. Mile buiochas to the catering staff in Croke Park, Handball Centre and the Barbara Ward for ensuring that the children and their families are catered for on the day.

Lastly, I would like to our Uachtaran, Mairead O Callaghan for all her help in the planning and organising of the Mini 7's this year. Her help was invaluable. Thanks to Gerry for sharing his knowledge and work as Mini 7's co-ordinator which made my planning much easier. Mile buiochas to my fellow officers who came to support the games on each of the days.

Following the AGM we hope to have our review of Mini 7's. A subcommittee with representatives of National Committee and Provincial Officers will review the current guidelines. The findings will be presented at the September meeting for discussion. In keeping with our constitution the proposed changes will be voted on at AGM , and if successful come in to effect the following year.

The GAA INTO Mini 7's is one of the most unique and rewarding primary school sporting venture in the county and probably beyond. It represents a unique collaboration between GAA, teachers, the INTO and children. Placing our schools on the centre stage during the most exciting annual sporting event in our country helps us all to keep Gaelic Games to the fore in our schools. It is hugely appreciated by the children involved, their parents and families, their teachers and school communities, the local and county GAA clubs and lastly by me!

Bernadette Ryan

National Mini 7's Co-ordinator

All Ireland Dates 2023

Iomáint

Semi finals – 8th and 9th July

Final 23rd July

Peil

Semi Finals 15th and 16th July

Final 30th July