

## HURLING &gt; INTERMEDIATE CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL PREVIEW

# Dual mandate for Taaffe and Tubber

Eamonn Taaffe will be looking to impact on both sides of the white lines in finals this weekend as he lines out for Tubber's juniors on Saturday before managing their flagship side in the intermediate decider 24 hours later, writes Eoin Brennan.

WEEKEND'S don't come any bigger than this for Tubber, even more so for 1995 All-Ireland hero Eamonn Taaffe who embarks on an influential dual role for his native club in the space of 24 hours.

On Saturday, he will take to the field in the Junior B Final against last year's finalists Newmarket-on-Fergus in Gurteen before swapping the Black and Amber jersey for the Baineisteoir bib on Sunday as he attempts to topple Kilmaley in the intermediate version in Cusack Park.

The last time Tubber were presented with such a welcome headache was in 2012 when they followed up a Junior B title with a Senior B crown against O'Callaghan's Mills on the same weekend. However, in terms of significance for the future of the club, reclaiming their senior status after a two year gap certainly tops that one in terms of sheer priority.

"It's a massive weekend for Tubber, of course it is as we have small numbers and are just about able to put out two adult teams. We don't have too many subs on either side so everyone in the village is going to pull behind us and we'll go out and do our best in both finals.

"It's just a massive weekend and unprecedented really to be in two championship finals on the same weekend so hopefully we can come out on the right side of some bit of it.

"No matter what final you're competing in, it's nice to be there. Going down to intermediate two years ago, it was tough for us and we found it hard to take it as we had been senior for a very long time.

"Now we did put in a big effort last year and were probably got caught by Broadford in the semi-final but thank God things have gone right this year, lads have tuned in well and we've made the breakthrough to the final."

A place in Sunday's Intermediate decider seemed merely a dream last May when they were unceremoniously humbled by Scariff in the opening round in Tulla but inadvertently that

wake-up only benefitted Tubber in refocusing the minds and attitudes for the remainder of the season.

"In hindsight, perhaps we went into the Scariff game too lighthearted. Now Scariff played very well on the day and really put it up to us even though we missed a few chances but that defeat definitely did refocus us.

"Even in the dressing room afterwards, everyone agreed that more had to be done and everyone had to knuckle down and to be fair to them, they did and have now benefited from that and have come out on the right side of it.

"So looking back now, it was no harm in the world that we got that early little kick in the behind.

"We have been tested plenty since though. We faced Killanena who are neighbours on one side and then Corofin who are neighbours on the other side so neither of them were going to lie down too handy. And we struggled a small bit at times with them as well before eventually getting over the line.

"Broadford in the quarter-final was a big game for us I suppose given what happened the previous year and there was a big focus on that

game to make sure that we weren't going to leave that one behind. The lads played well and were really up for that game and once you get into a winning pattern, it helps training and confidence and we brought that into the Smith O'Brien's game the last day.

"We weren't really sure what to expect really in the semi-final but we felt that if we could stay with them for 35 or 40 minutes that we had the hurling to win out in the end. We got some vital scores midway through the second half that we drove on from and that has been a feature of

our recent games, that ability to drive on coming down the final straight and hopefully the same can happen on Sunday."

Taking on the might of clear championship favourites Kilmaley means that Tubber will revert to their more accustomed role as underdogs for Sunday's showdown, a position that saw them unassumingly catch plenty of senior sides in the past, with Taaffe looking for one more rousing performance and hopefully even another big scalp.

"We know Kilmaley are hot favourites and probably shouldn't be down here in intermediate in the first place. And it's also a pity that they are in our line of fire that we have the task of taking them on but look, that's the way it is. They are competing in the top level of the Clare Cup and are always near the top of it and they have some fabulous players, the likes of Daire Keane and Mikey O'Malley and so on that have played for the county.

"It's a big task for us as Kilmaley are a great side but at the same time, Tubber have never shied away from any challenge and we'll certainly have a go at it.

"We have players of real experience ourselves and it isn't so long ago that we played senior and when we were up there, we were putting it up to a lot of the teams.

"And even in this year's Clare Cup, we got a good run in it. There were a couple of teams to go down for the new format next year but we were still well up the table.

"So I won't say that we won't be afraid of Kilmaley but what I can tell you is that we will give it our all and a hell of a lash and we'll see what happens on Sunday."



**Left:** Tubber's Domhnall McMahon celebrates scoring a goal against Broadford in the Intermediate Championship Quarter-Final. Natasha Barton

## PATH TO THE FINAL > TUBBER

**Round 1 (Saturday, May 13)**  
**Scariff 3-10 Tubber 0-15**  
at Dr. Daly Park, Tulla

### Tubber

Ronan Taaffe; John O'Connor; David O'Donoghue; Fergal O'Grady; Ronan Monahan; Patrick O'Connor; Darragh O'Connor; Frank McCormack; John Fawle (0-1); Lorcan O'Grady (0-2 1f); Domhnall McMahon; Evan O'Donoghue; Clive Earley (0-1); Paddy O'Connor (0-1); Blaine Earley (0-9, 4f, 2'65) **Subs** Mark Earley (0-1) for McCormack (44); McCormack for J. O'Connor (57)

**Round 2 (Saturday, August 12)**  
**Tubber 1-24 Killanena 2-07**  
at Gurteen

### Tubber

Ronan Taaffe; Emmet Quinn; Fergal O'Grady; Declan Ryan; John O'Connor; Patrick O'Connor; Lorcan O'Grady; John Fawle; Clive Earley (0-1); James Howard,

Domhnall McMahon (0-4); Paddy O'Connor; Frank McCormack (1-5); Ronan Monahan (0-4); Blaine Earley (0-10 5f, 1'65)

**Sub** Shane O'Connor for Howard

**Round 3 (Saturday, August 26)**  
**Tubber 1-20 Corofin 1-15**  
at Cusack Park, Ennis

### Tubber

Ronan Taaffe; Emmet Quinn; Fergal O'Grady; Declan Ryan; Lorcan O'Grady; Patrick O'Connor; John O'Connor; John Fawle; Clive Earley (0-2); James Howard (0-1); Domhnall McMahon (0-1); Paddy O'Connor (0-1); Frank McCormack (0-5); Ronan Monahan (0-2); Blaine Earley (1-8 4f) **Subs** Mark Earley for Paddy O'Connor (50); Evan O'Donoghue for J. O'Connor (57)

**Quarter-Final (Saturday, September 9)**  
**Tubber 1-18 Broadford 2-10**  
at Dr Daly Park, Tulla

**Tubber** Ronan Taaffe (0-2f); John O'Connor; Mark Earley; Declan Ryan; Fergal O'Grady; Patrick O'Connor; Lorcan O'Grady; Clive Earley (0-1); John Fawle; James Howard; Domhnall McMahon; Paddy O'Connor; Frank McCormack; Ronan Monahan (1-4); Blaine Earley (0-1, 8f) **Subs** Shane O'Connor for Paddy O'Connor (22); David O'Donoghue for McCormack (57)

**Semi-Final (Sunday, September 24)**  
**Tubber 1-18 Smith O'Briens 0-12**  
at O'Garney Park, Sixmilebridge

**Tubber** Ronan Taaffe (0-1f); John O'Connor; Mark Earley; Declan Ryan (0-1); Fergal O'Grady; Patrick O'Connor; Lorcan O'Grady (0-1); Clive Earley (0-1); John Fawle; James Howard (0-1); Domhnall McMahon (0-4); Shane O'Connor; Frank McCormack; Ronan Mo-

nahan (0-2); Blaine Earley (1-7, 1-0 pen, 2f) **Subs** David O'Donoghue for S. O'Connor (33); Paddy O'Connor (6) for McCormack (44)

**Played 5 - Won 4 - Drew 0 - Lost 1**  
**Scored 4-95 - Conceded 8-54 - Average Scored 1-18**  
**Average Conceded 2-10**

### Scorers

**Blaine Earley 2-45 (1-0 Pen, 23f, 3'65)**  
**Ronan Monahan 1-12**  
**Frank McCormack 1-10**  
**Domhnall McMahon 0-9**  
**Clive Earley 0-6**  
**Lorcan O'Grady 0-3 (1f)**  
**Ronan Taaffe 0-3 (3f)**  
**James Howard 0-2**  
**Paddy O'Connor 0-2**  
**Mark Earley 0-1**  
**John Fawle 0-1**  
**Declan Ryan 0-1**

HURLING > INTERMEDIATE CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL PREVIEW

# Banishing the ghosts of championship past

Last year's relegation from senior was a seismic shock to the system but now only 60 minutes away from an immediate return, manager Conor Clancy is hoping that Kilmaley can redress the balance and reclaim their top flight status this Sunday

WITHIN touching distance of a county senior final appearance in 2015, that Kilmaley find themselves in the intermediate version two years later simply re-emphasises the mantra that no club is too big to go down.

However, instead of wallowing in self-pity, Kilmaley instead got on with the task of rectifying that blip, starting with a hugely encouraging Clare Cup Division 1A campaign that kept up the senior standards as they easily negotiated their way through the intermediate championship, a reaction that has pleased manager Conor Clancy.

"We're very happy with how the year has gone so far. At the start of the season, there was obviously a lot of disappointment there among the players that we had gone down but we had to put that firmly behind us, accept that we were an intermediate team and we were extremely happy with how the Clare Cup went as we were down a lot of players. We've worked really hard throughout the year and have made our way to the final this weekend. It's a big game but one that we are really looking forward to."

It's hasn't been all plain sailing for Clancy and Co. though with injuries to key players Mikey O'Neill, Aidan McGuane and Brian Cahill hampering their preparations for the business end of the championship. But one man's loss is another's gain as it has also allowed others to take up the mantle according to the double All-Ireland winner.

"All three are unlikely to play this Sunday and are obviously massive losses for us. We do have a strong panel of players but to lose the players of the calibre of Mikey, Aidan and Brian from any squad would be a huge blow. It's unlikely that any will be available although Brian [Cahill] does have an outside chance with a sprained AC joint but in saying that there have been others that have filled the gaps superbly.

"Our second team have gone quite well this year, they won the intermediate league and were very unlucky to lose to Bodyke in the quarter-final of the Junior A Championship.



We've trained together all year and along with that, a lot of those guys impressed throughout the Clare Cup when we were short six or seven players for most of the matches. And with the injuries, those guys have really stepped up and that has been the positive I suppose that others have come to the fore when required."

And far from the average winning margin of 12 points that Kilmaley have enjoyed in their four championship outings to date, Clancy is antici-

pating their greatest evaluation from a Tubber team that have plenty of senior experience themselves, having only dropped from the top flight in 2015.

"I went to see them playing a number of times and have been very impressed with them particularly in the manner that they beat Broadford and Smith O'Brien's. We are fully aware of the challenge that is ahead of us on Sunday as a few years ago when they were playing at senior level, they

were always a team that we capable of taking a scalp against the bigger teams. So we know it's going to be our biggest game of the year and realistically we'll have to perform at our best if we are going to get over them.

"Tubber, based on the performances that they have turned in, will be a massive challenge for us so we're hoping that we can produce a good performance at the weekend and come through.

"All that we can say from our side is that the players have done everything that have been asked of them this year in terms of training and the effort that they have put in so we're just hoping on Sunday that we can turn that into a winning performance."

Above: Kilmaley's Conor Cleary is first to ball ahead of Parteen's Eoin Kelly when the sides met in the Intermediate Championship Semi-Final.

Natasha Barton

## PATH TO THE FINAL > KILMALEY

### Round 1 (Sunday, May 14)

Kilmaley 4-26 Inagh-Kilnamona 0-8 at Éire Óg

**Kilmaley** Bryan O'Loughlin; Martin O'Connor; Colin McGuane, Conor McMahon; Aidan McGuane, Conor Cleary; Noel Casey; Eoin Enright, Michael O'Malley (0-6); Brian Cahill (1-5), Eamonn Bracken (1-2), Ken Kennedy (0-2); Cian Moloney (0-6, 4f, 1'65), Mikey O'Neill (0-2), Daire Keane (2-3)

### Round 2 (Sunday, August 13)

Kilmaley 4-19 Smith O'Brien's 1-13 at O'Garney Park, Sixmilebridge

**Kilmaley** Bryan O'Loughlin; Martin O'Connor; Colin McGuane, Eoin Enright; Sean Kennedy (0-3), Conor Cleary, Conor McMahon; Michael O'Malley (0-3), Brian Cahill (0-1); Ken Kennedy (0-1), Eamonn Bracken (0-1), Cian Moloney (0-5 4f); Sean O'Loughlin (1-1), Daire Keane (1-2), Mikey O'Neill (2-2) **Subs** Noel Casey for Bracken (44, inj), Shane Lynch for McMahon (53), Paudie McNamara for Keane (58)

### Quarter-Final

(Sunday, September 10)  
Kilmaley 3-12 Sixmilebridge 1-10 at Shanon

**Kilmaley** Bryan O'Loughlin; Eoin Enright, Colin McGuane, Martin O'Connor; Sean Kennedy, Conor Cleary, Conor McMahon; Michael O'Malley (0-1), Brian Cahill; Ken Kennedy (0-2), Eamonn Bracken (1-2), Cian Moloney (0-4f); Paudie McNamara (1-0), Daire Keane (1-2), Sean O'Loughlin (0-1) **Subs** Shane Lynch for Enright (inj), Noel Casey for O'Connor

### Semi-Final

(Saturday, September 23)  
Kilmaley 1-17 Parteen 0-11 at O'Garney Park, Sixmilebridge

**Kilmaley** Bryan O'Loughlin; Shane Lynch, Colin McGuane, Martin O'Connor; Conor McMahon, Conor Cleary, Sean Kennedy; Eoin Enright (0-1), Michael O'Malley (0-5); Ken Kennedy (0-1), Eamonn Bracken (0-2), Cian Moloney (0-4 3f); Paudie McNamara (1-1), Daire Keane (0-2), Sean O'Loughlin (0-1) **Sub** Alan Markham for Bracken (54)

Played 4 - Won 4 - Drew 0 - Lost 0  
Scored 12-74

Conceded 2-42 - Average Scored 3-19  
Average Conceded 1-09

### Scorers

Daire Keane	4-9
Cian Moloney	0-19 (15f, 1-65)
Michael O'Malley	0-15
Eamonn Bracken	2-7
Mikey O'Neill	2-4
Brian Cahill	1-6
Paudie McNamara	2-1
Ken Kennedy	0-6
Sean O'Loughlin	1-3
Sean Kennedy	0-3
Eoin Enright	0-1