



CONNACHT FINAL 2010

• Roscommon v Sligo • McHale Park, Castlebar • Throw-in: 4pm



Dermot's spirit can help inspire Roscommon in glory quest



■ Paul Healy

I have watched the World Cup with a sense of disappointment; as I write this, the final has still to be played, and unless it proved to be the classic of classics, I think the extravaganza in South Africa has been less than enthralling. Mind you, it's still a glorious event – one to be enjoyed, even when the football might disappoint. There is almost always enough drama and action on and off the field to maintain the interest of the fans.

This time around one of the main talking points was the relatively early exit of Brazil and Argentina; the Brazilian colours were at half-mast in Roscommon town after the Orange Order from Holland silenced the samba.

The elimination of Argentina and Brazil long before the day of prize-giving reminds one of this year's unusual Connacht Football Championship tale.

The Connacht Championship story, 2010 version, has had its own dramatic twists – and the audacious directors of this drama have been Sligo. It would almost be bad manners now, just as the final frontier is reached, to snatch the ultimate prize from them; mind you, if Roscommon do cause a shock and defeat the favourites, we will wear the 'party poopers' tag without much blushing.

Yes, the Yeats County have truly stamped their presence all over this year's provincial championship out west; just as Argentina and Brazil fell before the final in the World Cup, Mayo and Galway were taken out prematurely in Connacht.

It was a stupendous double-mugging by Sligo. It makes them overwhelming favourites on Sunday. They have played three games in total against the big two in Connacht, and lost none; they have beaten both Mayo and Galway in the one season for the first time in their history.

Sligo deserve to be every fan's favourite other team. I – and probably every other Rossie – would rejoice if they were to win the All-Ireland. In recent years they have consistently played with style and purpose, a thoroughly refreshing and honest county team who on their day can live with the very best.

This year they are advancing with the confidence of an army that does not expect to be put on the back foot any time soon.

And what of the Rossies? It is wonderful that we are back in a Connacht final (our first since 2004). These are seeds of recovery that we see before us. There have been many barren years for Roscommon football, but we are learning to walk again, even if there are falls along the way.

Championship wins over London and Leitrim – even if more workmanlike than polished – surely speak of a work in progress and act as an important confidence boost to our primarily young squad.

We all hope that our players will perform without fear on Sunday and that they do themselves justice. They are wearing great jerseys,

stepping into the shadows of giants. These are the jerseys of Harry Keegan, Tony Mc, Pat Doorey, John Newton and others. Our players should never underestimate the privilege of playing in a Connacht final for Roscommon. There was a time when we would have been strong favourites to beat Sligo in a championship match. The road back to such times need not be that long. Perhaps on Sunday the sight of the famed Roscommon jersey will sow doubts in Sligo minds.

Everything points to a Sligo win because of current form and the realities of where both squads are in progression terms. But when fifteen take fifteen on, there is always hope there to be grasped. Roscommon's players, who beat Leitrim and played some good football in the process, should have no fears. Their destiny is in their own hands. Better days are ahead for Roscommon football. The men we send out on Sunday can write their own glorious story and perhaps thwart our rightly highly-rated Sligo friends.

I have no doubt that the spirit of the great and so greatly lamented



The late Dermot Earley pictured in action.

Dermot Earley will be with Roscommon on Sunday. It was an emotional experience to read Fr. Liam Devine's description of a meeting with Dermot a few weeks before

his recent death. Though unable to speak due to his illness, Dermot raised his two fists in a gesture of defiance as Liam departed. Let's bring the indomitable spirit of the

great Dermot to the stage on Sunday and at the final whistle we will well know that, win, lose or draw, we will have left the field as proud Rossies who have given it our all.

Best wishes to Roscommon in the Connacht Final from your local full time Public Representative

CONTACT ME AT ANY TIME ON (087) 7617300

Cllr. Martin Connaughton

Best wishes to Roscommon in the Connacht Final

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