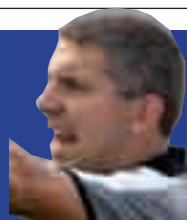


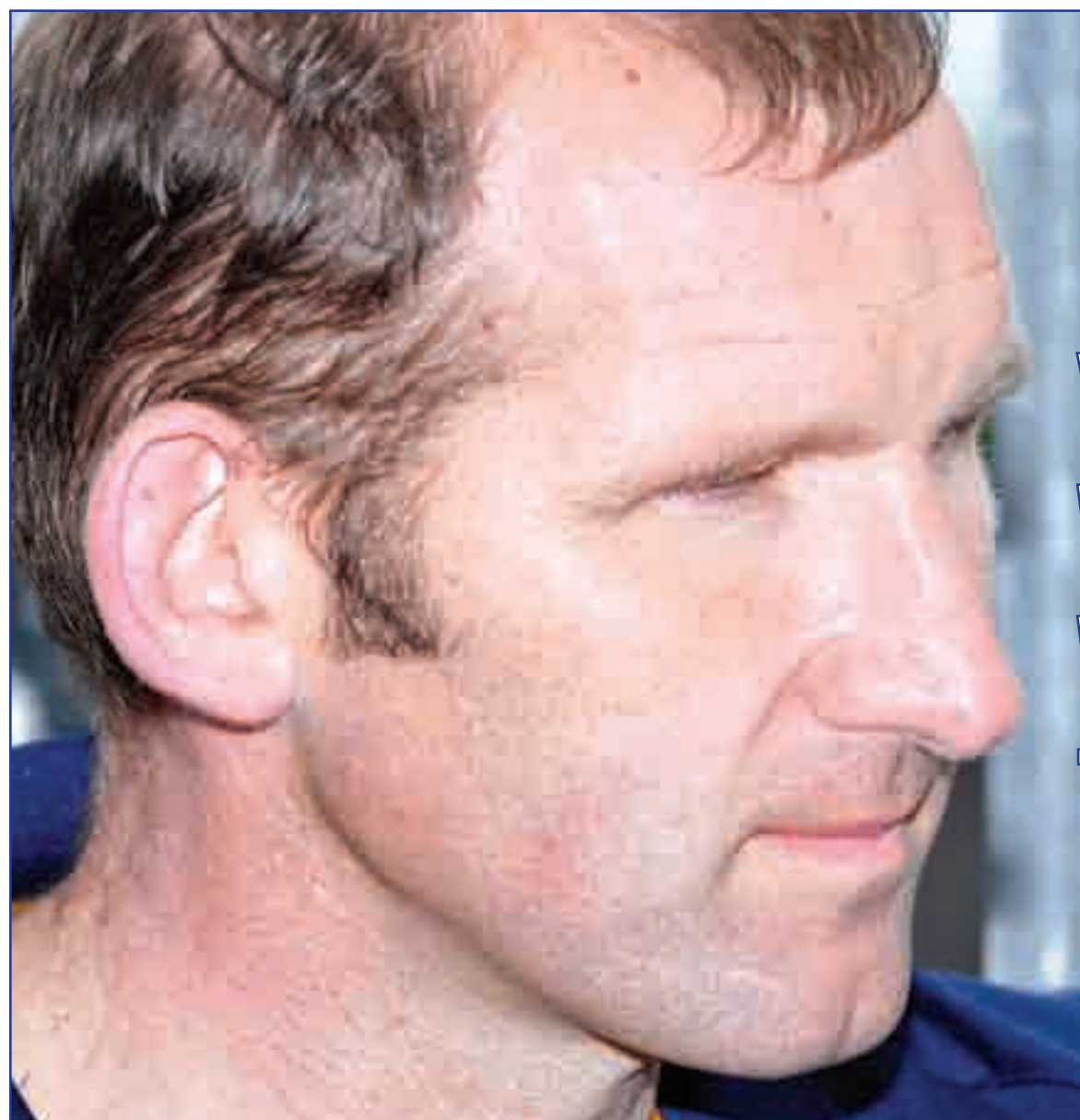


CONNACHT FINAL 2010

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



O'Donnell: 'It could be six years before we're back... we have to take this chance'



Fergal O'Donnell speaks to the press at a recent training session. Picture: Andrew Fox.

Roscommon People Sports Editor Seamus Duke speaks to Roscommon manager Fergal O'Donnell....

SD: It's a few weeks now since Roscommon qualified for the Connacht Final and you have had a chance to have a look at Sligo playing twice now. Would it be fair to say that it is not a bad position to be in?

FOD: Yeah it was good to be there (in the final) a few weeks ago. We had club championship games too, so it gave us a great chance to take a look at the whole panel – so it was good that way. A lot of people thought that we would be playing Galway after the drawn game (against Sligo) but we felt ourselves all along that we would be playing Sligo. They are the form team all year. When we played them in the league earlier on this year we said that we would probably be playing them in the final and that's the way it turned out. It's great to be in the final.

SD: Would you agree that the team showed a big improvement in their display against Leitrim?

FOD: We did improve, but it's all relative. We knew that if we didn't up our performance seriously from the London game we would not have had a chance. But we did improve. Having said that we will have to improve as much again for this final if we want to have any chance. We are making progress, but it's slow. We are improving but we have to continue that improvement.

SD: What's the story in the panel with regard to injuries?

FOD: We are looking at how everyone comes out of the club games last weekend and it looks pretty good on that score at this stage. It's good to have some of the lads back. Enda Kenny is back training hard, Fintan Cregg is back playing a bit more too, which is good. There are other lads getting more football too. But there is a big difference between playing club football and county football. But at least there are guys on the way back.

SD: What's your view of this Sligo team?

FOD: This is a good Sligo team. They have some super pace in their team and we have seen over the past few weeks that they have some serious forward players. They are on a roll too. They have been promoted in the league the past two years on the trot and they just haven't come out of nowhere. Remember too that Sligo won the Connacht title in 2007 so they have a load of players there who have won this title before. It's nothing new to them. They are a top class team and they are full of confidence.

SD: Roscommon and Sligo have no championship final form to go by, so in that regard it should be interesting at least. It's the first time since 1947 that Mayo or Galway have not been in the final, so it's a unique pairing. Does that have any bearing on the game?

FOD: I don't think so really, but there is plenty of other recent form. In 2007 Roscommon were beaten by Sligo and they went on to win the championship that year. Earlier this year in the league Sligo beat us well, but remember that day we were relegated already and they had to win and put up a big score so this game on Sunday will be a totally different one. They will be favourites and deservedly so. But I don't think that our

lads will be fazed by going to Castlebar and playing Sligo as opposed to going there and playing Mayo. Our lads will be quietly confident going into Sunday's game.

SD: The Roscommon crowd will have a part to play too.....

FOD: Of course, but it is interesting that Sligo have a huge following at the moment too. The day we played Sligo in the league there wasn't 100 Roscommon supporters there but there will be huge crowds there on Sunday and we will need the Roscommon supporters to get behind us. There has been a lot of criticism of this team and it's time for people to get behind us now. These lads are putting in a massive effort for Roscommon football and they deserve every bit of support that they get.

SD: Roscommon have not been in too many finals in recent years, so it's a great chance to win a Connacht title. I'm sure you would agree?

FOD: The bottom line is that it is 2004 since Roscommon played in a Connacht final. The players have to realise that it might be six years again before we get to a final. I won't be here in six years' time and neither will some of the players. We are getting the chance now on Sunday and we have to try and take that chance.

Best wishes to Roscommon in the Connacht Final from

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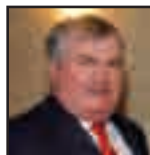
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Best wishes to Roscommon in the Connacht Final from

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Castlecoote,
Co. Roscommon



Best wishes to Roscommon in the Connacht Final on Sunday from

**Denis Naughten
T.D.
& FAMILY**

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FINE GAEL