

## 2010 Connacht SFC Final

# CHAMPIONS!

## MCHALE AND HEARTY!

### match at a glance

#### Man of the Match: Donie Shine (Roscommon)

There were several contenders on the Roscommon side. Stephen Ormsby, Seanie McDermott, Michael Finneran and Cathal Cregg all had legitimate claims while for Sligo, Charlie Harrison and Alan Costello were excellent on the day. However Donie Shine is now the most important player on the Roscommon team. Not only is he a deadly free-taker but he is now a superb target man who can score from play with either foot. And the good news is that he is improving all the time. Ten points in a Connacht final is some return.

#### Crowd Watch

Almost 23,000 people were present, which was a great crowd and they certainly generated a mighty atmosphere throughout. There was a huge Sligo following but a very big Roscommon following too and they gave vent to their emotions on the field when the presentation took place.

#### Entertainment Value

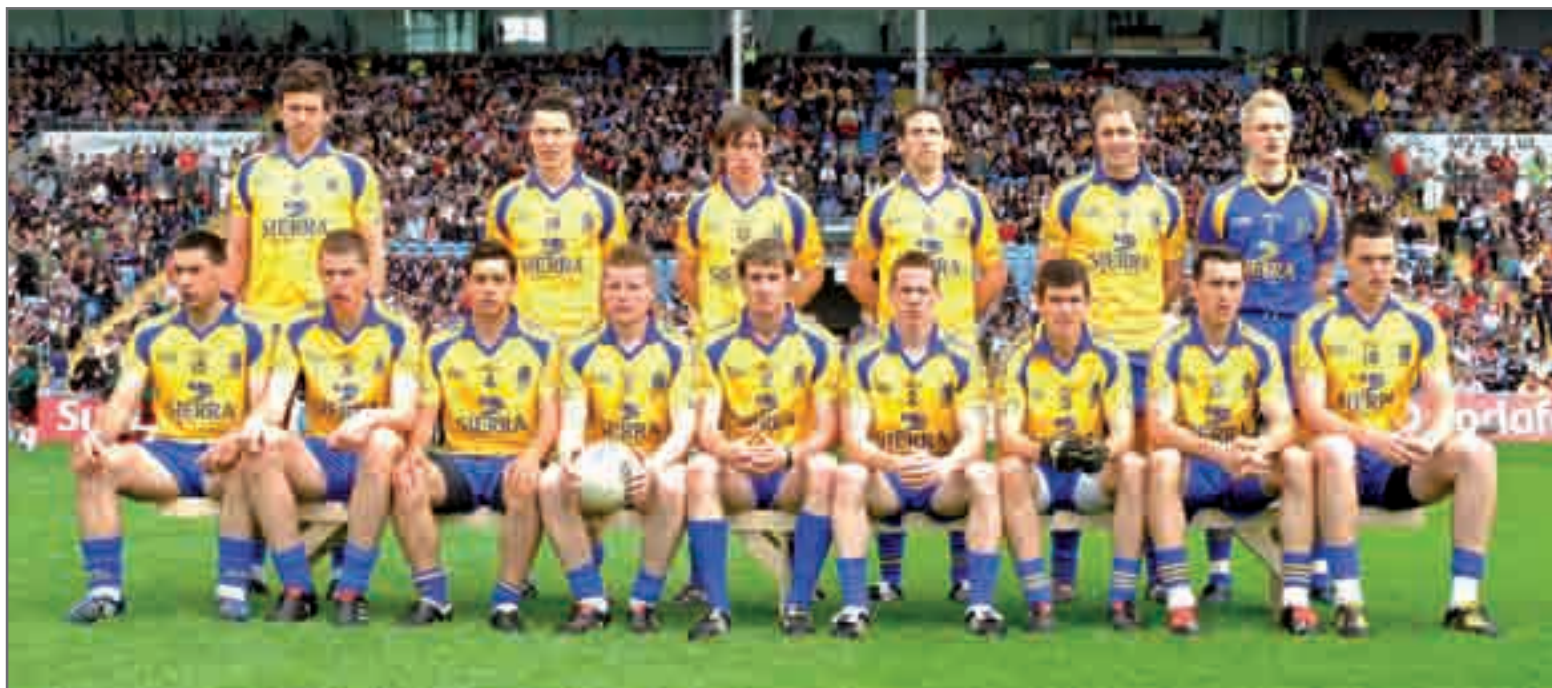
A superb game of championship football with two highly motivated sides going at it hammer and tongs. There were some mighty scores taken by both sides and there wasn't a dirty stroke in the whole game. A great advertisement for Connacht football.

#### Talking Point

The almost total lack of coverage given to Roscommon in the run-up to the game by the national media. They were not given a prayer by anyone. The comments of Bernard Flynn on RTE Radio on Saturday were especially hurtful. He got his answer on Sunday.

#### Referee Watch

Jimmy White did a reasonable job although I thought that he gave Roscommon very little throughout the game. The Sligo mentors were annoyed that he didn't play more than two minutes' injury-time at the end of the game.



Connacht Champions 2010 ... The winning Roscommon team. Picture: Andrew Fox.

#### 2010 Connacht SFC Final Roscommon 0-14 Sligo 0-13



■ Seamus Duke

A fantastic display of controlled, skilful and determined football saw Roscommon sweep to their 20<sup>th</sup> Connacht senior football title in this thrilling final played at McHale Park in Castlebar last Sunday in front of 22,172 spectators.

Fergal O'Donnell's team made light of their underdogs tag and banished memories of a wretched league campaign to turn in a powerful display and defeat a Sligo side who arrived at McHale Park as the 4-1 on favourites to lift the Nestor Cup.

As someone who has followed Roscommon football all my life, I didn't think that I would ever see anything to rival the excitement generated by the All-Ireland minor win in Ennis in 2006, but last Sunday came close.

The mighty Rossie from Gortaganny, the late Dermot Earley, would surely have approved as Roscommon emerged from the darkness and Division Four football to light up the championship with a display that was as good as we have seen from them in at least five years at senior level. Huge credit must be given to man-

ager Fergal O'Donnell. He stuck doggedly to his guns all year and remained fiercely loyal to his players, and how they rewarded that loyalty last Sunday. Even when Sligo came back to level the game with eight minutes left The Rossies showed resolve and determination to forge ahead and keep their noses in front at the final whistle.

The loyalty between Fergal and his players was very evident at the final whistle when the players ran to Fergal to embrace him. The celebrations that followed were some of the most intense that this writer has ever seen and it was a game and a victory that will live long in the memory.

Roscommon went to Castlebar with

a game-plan and they carried it out to perfection. Not only that, but several Roscommon players chose this game to turn in the best displays of their careers for the Primrose and Blue.

This win was built on hard work, superb teamwork and the fantastic score-taking ability of Donie Shine. Roscommon dominated midfield, denied Sligo's two most potent attackers, Mark Breheny and David Kelly any space and Roscommon also kept the ball, brilliantly mixing the long and the short game in just the right measure.

It all added up to a great display and a thoroughly deserved win and now the team can await what lies ahead in the All-Ireland quarter-final in Croke Park at the end of this month.

It would be unfair to pick out any Roscommon players because this was a real team display in which every single player contributed. However there were some really impressive individual displays.

Geoffrey Claffey was superb between the posts. His kick-outs were accurate and clever, finding David Casey and Cathal Cregg many times. But his biggest contribution was a blinding save from Sligo dangerman David Kelly in the 55<sup>th</sup> minute when the Sligo corner-forward was clean through on goal. It was a match-winning save.

Seanie McDermott was charged with marking Sligo's dangerman David Kelly and he did a brilliant job. He harried and followed the Tubbercurry ace everywhere and he held him scoreless. A superb display.



Paul Earley congratulates Roscommon senior manager, Fergal O'Donnell. Picture: Andrew Fox.

Continued overleaf ->>