



## **Underage Report 2011**

## **Underage Report 2011**

### **Secretary's Report**

A Cháirde Gael go léir, welcome to yet another End of Year Report from the underage section of Blackhall Gaels.

The enthusiasm and dedication of the mentors and children who participate in the nursery should be experienced by all members of Blackhall Gaels as it would give us all great encouragement about the future of BHG. In excess of 50 children can be found on the field in Batterstown on a Saturday morning, in all weathers, taking part in well organised drills and games from the ages of 4 to 10 years of age. The popularity of this training session is due to the mentors and our gratitude is extended to them for their continued commitment.

Limited numbers of underage players has reduced the numbers of teams wearing the BHG colours this season and success on the field was not as plentiful as in previous years. Our u10s, led by Roger Tobin, participated in several tournaments and achieved modest success. However, our u12 were this year's star performers, under the guidance of Dermot Kealy and Gerry Nally who were ably assisted by Pdraig Pearl. The u12 competition was played under the go-games rules, nonetheless, BHG defeated Clonard after a very competitive u12 league final replay in Navan. The same team were unluckily beaten by the eventual winners in a play off in the u12 summer league. Many of the members of this team were also successful with Rathregan National School who recently won Divison 5 of the Schools competition, for the first time in nearly 30 years.

The u14 team were beaten in a thrilling u14 championship final by Inny Gaels after extra time. Many thanks are expressed to Ambrose O'Brien, Noel Farrell, Jimmy McGovern, Sean Kelly and Liam Keane for the efforts with the team.

It was extremely difficult to get sufficient numbers to field teams in the u16 and minor level. However the players and mentors did their best and in fact the minors reached (Div 7) championship shield final in which a strong Bru na Boinne (Slane & St Marys) team were better on the day. The 2012 minors have a bit more to look forward to as a result of a planned amalgamation with Moynalvey. Both clubs have agreed but obviously the CO Board must give its blessing to the proposal.

Another event that we successfully held this year was the Camp Gaeilge where over 35 children between the ages of 6 & 13 participated in a week long camp 'as gaeilge' playing hurling and football. Many children who do not regularly play hurling and football participated in this camp and the feedback at the end of each day and week was very positive. At a cost of €65 per child it was excellent value when compared to other sporting camps.

Following the success of the indoor hurling at the beginning of the year, Fergus Smyth & Pdraig Pearl commenced outdoor training and a team was entered in the u12 league. There was much pride and enthusiasm when the team took the field against Donaghmore/ Ashbourne and although the team was ultimately defeated, there was great encouragement for the future. Unfortunately numbers

subsequently dwindled and despite Fergus's best efforts, the team had to withdraw from the summer league.

Some players at this age level want to play hurling and the club will endeavour to facilitate this. Five BHG u14 hurlers competed in Feile this year with Kiltale, an experience they thoroughly enjoyed and we hope will give them fond memories for years to come. In 2011 two minor hurlers played with Dunboyne and one with Drumree and the club looks forward to them play hurling again this year with BHG.

We are blessed in Blackhall to have so many interested and motivated parents and mentors involved with the club, and of course it makes the job of the committee so much easier when the attention is focused on matters arising on the pitch. Many thanks to all the mentors who have given of their time so generously during the year. Also a special thanks to Dave Kennedy for the sponsorship by Hankook Tyres of a complete new kit comprising of (hooped) jerseys, togs and socks.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the many people who assist the club through sponsorship and other forms of support. The benefits to the club, and particularly to the underage players in Blackhall Gaels are immeasurable, and fully appreciated.

Carol Pearl,  
Juvenile Secretary

## ***Nursery Report 2011***

“Yo



That is surely a phrase that'll haunt Mr. Hansen throughout his career as a BBC soccer pundit and probably long after. It is certainly one that any of the coaches at the BHG nursery, or indeed anyone who has coached kids, can relate to. The patience involved in shepherding small children with varying attention spans through another training drill cannot be underestimated. You see, at the end of the drill, they are often no closer to mastering the difficult art of “toe first, then hand” in picking up a round ball! There are often times you may feel the urge to scream. But you don't. You persevere for reasons you may not quite understand, not least because someone you remember positively coached you, as you “fondly” recall turning different shades of blue in a muddy field on a bleak February day more years ago than you care to admit to. You feel a sense of pride or civic duty or something less tangible that you need to return the compliment to the next generation because that is, after all, what makes the GAA great. The road that leads to a full Croke Park in September starts in local GAA fields, like Batterstown pitch at 11 on a Saturday morning, throughout the country.

Rob (and Emily!) and Tom normally take the kids aged 3/4 to 6, split into two groups; Barry and Gary (with some U-10 and U-12 players helping out and keeping an eye on their younger siblings) usually look after the 7 and 8 year olds, with Conor Delaney recently bringing third-level expertise to bear and raising the bar considerably for us amateur coaches. We were thrilled recently, on a bright mild November morning, to have a 15-a-side U-8 practice match to end training, with spectator parents and participant children alike urging the ref to keep it going longer as the craic was good and the skill levels competed with the banter for attention. Meanwhile, almost two dozen of the smaller kids were going through their drills/games with their coaches. Upwards of 50 kids was an unusually good turnout for a small parish but it has been at least 40 every week since we started back in early October and, hopefully, will stay at those levels in the New Year. But it can only continue to work if as many parents as possible bring their kids down and let them play for the hour or so, during which they learn all sorts of life skills much broader than GAA skills, as well as, in these times of increasingly sedentary lifestyles, all parties involved (adult and child) experiencing old-fashioned concepts like fresh air and exercise. As numbers hopefully continue to grow, we also need as many

parents as possible to help out in the New Year – no particular skills are required other than patience, good humour and getting stuck in.

Despite occasional frustrations, along the way there are little moments of magic that make it all worthwhile as you see uncoordinated tots slowly but surely transform into eight-year olds that can kick a point with relative ease and utter joy. You'll win nothing with kids? Rubbish. You win everything with kids. Don't believe me? Come along and see for yourself some Saturday morning at 11. In addition to a field full of happy kids that will hopefully be members of Blackhall Gaels for years to come, you might even see a future Meath player, or an all-Ireland winner...

GOM

## ***U21 'B' FC 2011 Report***

**Management Team: Paddy Snee, Owen Creevey, Paul Regan**

As part of our management team proposal we set out the following objectives:

- To win the U-21 B Championship.
- Put the structures and environment in place to attract back players, who have not been involved in any football teams this year, to the U21 panel.

Preparations for the 2011 U21 championship started with training on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September. On the first night we had 14 players present and attendance varied between a low of 8 at a midweek session (college commitments), to a high of 17 on a Friday at the end of September. Overall we were relatively happy with the commitment shown both to attendance at training and attitude to work during training.

The low number of players who had played football during the year did however result in significant differences in fitness and 'sharpness' between players. This in itself presents practical difficulties in preparing a team for championship football within 5 weeks.

Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the championship on 15<sup>th</sup> October we had 8 training sessions and played 3 challenge matches. The objective of the training sessions was to:

- Bring all players to a 'base' level of fitness,
- Focus on 'High Intensity' type training – everything done at speed,
- Implement a simple game plan based on the basic skills of the game and utilising the strengths of the players available by concentrating on 'key messages'
- Create a strong 'team spirit', belief in ability to win and a positive squad atmosphere.

The purpose of the three challenge matches we played (listed below) was to get players comfortable playing with each other, familiar with the game plan in a match situation and gain match sharpness.

### U21 Challenge Matches 2011

- 24th September vs BHG Seniors in Kilcloon
- 1<sup>st</sup> October vs Na Fianna in Enfield
- 8<sup>th</sup> October vs Trim in Trim

Although beaten in all 3 games these did afford us the opportunity to try players in different positions, give all members of the squad game time and put into practise the work we had done at training.

### **U21 B FC 1<sup>st</sup> Round Vs Castletown in Bective 15<sup>th</sup> October**

Our first Championship match pitted us against Castletown who had reached the semi final of this competition in 2010. We had anticipated a tough match but while the opposition did match us physically they had neither the fitness nor the skill level within their team to compete with us over the full 60 minutes. At half time BHG led 1-07 to 0-04 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> half turned into a rout with final

score finishing 8-15 to 1-07. While a win of this magnitude allowed us to gain confidence, have plenty of scoring practise and use our full 5 substitutes, a much stiffer test would have been more welcome.

### **U21 B FC Quarter Final Vs Ballinabrackey in Summerhill 29<sup>th</sup> October**

The quarter final draw resulted in us playing Ballinabrackey who had beaten Inny Gales in the first round. Again we expected a tough game and this time that's exactly what we got. Our lads were quick out of the blocks with 3 points in the first 12 minutes only matched by one in reply from the opposition. After that however Ballinabrackey dominated the next 30 minutes of the game and scored 8 points with only 1 pointed response from us. This left us 5 points down with less than 20 minutes to go. From that point on we rallied strongly and slowly but surely got back into the game, eventually drawing level just a few minutes before full time, and that even with a debatable BHG goal disallowed by the Umpire.

At that stage we were also down to 12 men after one of our players had been dismissed for 2 bookable offences but with extra time looming we would have been back up to our full compliment. Unfortunately the referee somehow found almost 8 minutes of injury time and although we felt we had a strong case for a 21 yard free at the start of injury time it was not given by the referee who blew the final whistle immediately after Ballinabrackey scored what was ultimately the winning point late in injury time.

While we were disappointed with some of the decisions that went against us, the most disappointing aspect of the game was that we didn't play to anything near our potential and overall Ballinabrackey were the better team on the day. They went on to win the championship.

### **Summary**

While we didn't achieve our stated aim of winning the championship we were very encouraged by the enthusiasm showed by the 22 players who were part of the squad. Hopefully the club will be able to retain these players for future seasons.

### **Recommendations:**

1. For an U21 competition that takes place at the back end of the season it's essential that players have been playing during the year. It's very difficult to get lads to Championship level in 5 weeks. The club should review internal Juvenile and Adult structures to ensure they are fit for the purpose of integrating players into the adult set up at the start of the season, at an age where many players are lost to the club and game.
2. Many of the players involved in the 2011 U21 team have been playing in the lower divisions of juvenile football. Clearly it is then difficult for them to get to the pace of playing U21 where they come up against a mix of lads who play senior/intermediate/junior football. This is especially true of those who haven't played all year.

Our recommendation is that the club reviews all potential strategies for players to play at as high a level as possible at underage level; we believe this would allow them to develop into better players and be better equipped to play adult football.