

Galway Youths bid to land third Inter League crown

■ Seven clubs represented in squad that faces Cork in national final this weekend

MIKE RAFFERTY
SOCCER WRAP



THE chance to play in a national final is a rare honour and for the Galway Youth squad this Saturday in Eamonn Deacy Park at 2pm presents an opportunity to secure victory in the FAI Youth Inter-League final when they face the Cork League.

The squad has come through their campaign unbeaten as they try and follow in the footsteps of household local names who have succeeded in previously winning this title. Under the management of Ollie Neary and Damien Brennan, they saw off the challenges of the Mayo League (2-0) and the Inishown League (4-0) in the qualifying rounds before securing a come-from-behind 2-1 win over the Wexford League in the last four at the beginning of February.

On that occasion, Hibernians' Alex Murphy scored direct from a corner for the equaliser, before Maree/Oranmore substitute Killian Bolly set up Knocknacarra's John Jordan for the late winner.

Speaking to City Sport this week, Neary acknowledged their performances to date in getting to the final and is looking forward to the occasion.

"Our semi-final win over Wexford was a real test of character in that we came from behind and kept working hard and were then rewarded with the late winner. Conditions were not good that day with the elements not allowing any free-flowing football.

"We have home advantage for the final and all the lads have played in Eamonn Deacy Park previously, so that is in our favour. We trained twice this week, and Damien and I have huge faith in the squad and just hope that they perform on the day.

"We are aware of the abilities of Cork, and they were pretty impressive in defeating Waterford 4-1 in their semi-final. We just hope that we can rise to the occasion and do the league proud," he said.

The Galway League have won this competition on two previous occasions. In 2010 under the management of Pat Turk



Renmore's Sam Omokua, who scored twice, is sent tumbling by Cian Greaney of Colga FC in last weekend's Division 1 clash in Drom.

and captained by Paul Scally they defeated the Wicklow League 3-1 in the final in Drom, with Mike Elwood, Pat Hoban, and Conor Murray getting the goals.

Some other notable players from that side include Daryl Horgan, Enda Curran, Brian Conlon, Brian Gaffney, Gary Kelly, Dan Cunningham, Ronan Forde, Jason Finn, Eric Holland, and Philip Ryan.

They repeated the feat in 2014 with Brian Laffey as manager when they were 1-0 away winners over Wexford Youths, with Pdraig Cunningham getting the match winner.

The Headford native was a real goal machine at the time and contributed the majority of their scores. Some of the other players involved in this win were Rob Carroll, Gary Kinneen, Antoine Ó Laoi, Andrew Connolly, and Peter and Paul Healy.

This year's squad features players from seven different clubs: Oisín Coyne, Finnian Coughlan, Conor French, Keane Griffin, Conor Keady, Jay Martin, Ethan McAuley, and Brian McLoughlin (Mervue United); Iffy Asogu, Killian Bolly, Aleksej Dugic, Max Hawksley, and Gavin Smith (Maree/Oranmore); Conor Fahy and Jack Mullen (Cregmore); Daragh Jennings and John Jordan (Knocknacarra); Oran Bines and Odhran Taylor (Salthill Devon); Alex Murphy (Hibernians)

PREMIER DIVISION

AFTER failing to win in their two previous games, Athenry got back to winning ways in the Premier Division with a 6-1 success over Loughrea in a game played on the all-weather in Kiltullagh.

The winners' opener up an early three goal margin, before Bruno Henrique pulled one back for the visitors as Athenry led 3-1 at the break. Ryan Shaughnessy struck a hat-

trick for Seamie Crowe's side, with Stephen Relihan (2) and Colm O'Donovan also finding the net for the second-placed side.

Recent games have proved to be very difficult for Loughrea as they have scored just two goals and picked up a single point from their last five games.

Table-toppers Salthill Devon were not in action as their away game against St Bernard's was called off, however third placed Mervue United were comfortable 4-0 winners over Colemanstown United with Aaron Molloy and Colin Kelly both scoring twice for the home side.

Maree/Oranmore are enjoying a very solid season to date and after a scoreless first-half, ran out 3-0 winners over Corrib Celtic in Maree. They opened their account courtesy of a Malachy Black finish as he got behind the cover following a Shane Cox delivery to score from close range.

Ciaran Black was the provider for the second as Liam McDonagh applied the finish, before Kody McCann slotted home from the penalty spot for the third after he was fouled in the box. In keeping a clean sheet and winning for the second game in succession, Martin O'Connor's side have consolidated their fifth place in the table.

DIVISION 1

Colga have set almost impossible standards in the lower regions of the local league for the last three seasons, but on Saturday in Drom they came unstuck for the first time when Renmore came from behind to secure a 4-1 win and in the process set up a real contest between the two of them for the Division 1 title.

While the two are almost certainly guaranteed promotion, as they have pulled well clear of the chasing pack, Colga looked

as if they were going to continue on their merry winning ways when they took an early lead through Boris Ajang as he latched on to a delivery over the top and finished past David McDonagh.

It did not take Renmore long to restore parity as Keith Fitzgerald converted a penalty after Sam Omokua was fouled in the box; before another spot kick provided the source for the second. On this occasion Harry Rogers was fouled, and while Mark Greaney made an excellent save to keep out Fitzgerald's effort, Omokua was following-up to fire home the rebound to give the city side a 2-1 lead at half-time.

A smart passing movement saw Nathan Healy set up Rogers for the third after the resumption, and while both goalkeepers were playing their part with some smart saves, it was the visitors who struck again for the fourth when Omokua notched his second, with Rogers providing the assist.

What an occasion it was for Shane May who was making his first appearance for the side alongside veterans Paddy Gannon and Keith Fitzgerald as they kept the normally very productive Colga attack very quiet.

Odhran Monaghan also played a huge part with an outstanding performance in midfield against a side that had scored 49 goals and conceded just eight in their previous 10 games.

After struggling in the early months of the season, an understrength Cois Fharrige have picked up four points from their last two games following a 4-1 success over third-placed Knocknacarra. The sides were level at the break as Malcolm Lally was on the mark for the visitors in a game played in Carraroe, while Chris Ó Biadhá (2), Aodán Ó Conaire and Eamon Ó Loinsigh responded for the winners, whose success has moved