

Crossmolina to edge closer to retaining honours

By Ivan Neill

County and Connacht Club senior football champions Crossmolina return to the competitive arena on Sunday (2.30), when they play Sligo champions Bunninadden in the Connacht Club semi-final at St. Tiernan's Park, Crossmolina.

The other semi-final involving Leitrim kingpins, Aughavas, and the yet-to-be decided Galway champions had also been arranged for next Sunday, but as the Galway county final is down for decision on Sunday next, it would appear that Aughavas will go straight into the final two weeks later via a walkover.

Talks are still going on to try and reach a compromise, but if all fails and there is no shock result at St. Tiernan's Park, on Sunday, than Crossmolina would be meeting a third championship debutant in Aughavas.

The Connacht Council received a request from Galway Football Board to postpone the semi-final for a few weeks to allow them complete their championship and the winners to contest the Connacht championship.

Galway have stated they would not be nominating a club to represent them and would have no problem opting out of the championship.

For a county progressing to the All-Ireland senior football final usually holds up that county's senior championship and, more often than not, the club championship is not completed in time for the provincial campaign.

Crossmolina's opponents are competing in the championship for the first time and emerged the Yeates County's champions for the first time since 1891, beating Coolera-Strandhill by 2-7 to 0-11 in the final, thanks to an injury time goal.

But like Crossmolina's preliminary round championship opponents, deputants Kilbride, Bunninadden would have also wished for a less daunting task in their first outing at this level.

The Sligo champions are looking forward to meeting the champions, however, and make no secret of the fact that they intend to push the homeside all the way.

However, anything less than a six points win for the champions would come as a surprise to everyone.

The Sligo representatives are not boosted by senior intercounty players but have, nevertheless, players of a high calibre, particularly David Killoran, Liam Og Gormley, Fergal O'Flaherty, Pdraig Doohan, Derek Gormley, and Shane Gormley who played at minor level for the county this season.

In the county final Bunninadden displayed true grit and buckets of enthusiasm in coming from a point adrift at the break to win by two points.

While the bookies have the defending champions odds on to advance to the showdown, the Deel Rovers are too experienced to fall into the trap of complacency and will be treating their visitors with the utmost respect.

But the Deel Rovers inability to capitalise on the 90% possession they enjoyed in the opening half against Kilbride caused some concern to the team management, but there was a big improvement all round after the restart.

Crossmolina, defeated in the All-Ireland semi-final last season by Leinster champions, Na Fianna, displayed their determination to regain the title when the five members of the county panel-James Nallen, Tom Nallen, Kieran McDonald, Michael Moyles and Peadar Gardiner- requested to county team manager Pat Holmes not to include them in the team to New York.

Crossmolina should be back training for the Connacht final on the Tuesday night after Sunday's game.