

Crossmolina given a boost as fighting wing-back is given leave from tour of duty

by Jim O'Sullivan

CROSSMOLINA have been given a boost in advance of their AIB All Ireland club football championship semi-final against Bellaghy in Enniskillen next Sunday.

Wing back Gerard O'Malley, who missed the Connacht final because of Army duties in the Lebanon, is available to play after having made arrangements to travel home for the game. Manager Tom Jordan pointed out yesterday that they would be able to pick from a full panel for the first time in the campaign.

O'Malley left for the Lebanon the week before the Connacht final against Corofin. He is still in the middle of his tour of duty, but was able to arrange his leave around this week end's game. "He has been a driving force. He has been playing very well for us (at wing back)," Jordan commented.

He said that the management and players are delighted to get a second opportunity to challenge for the All Ireland title.

"We would have felt we didn't do ourselves justice last year. We were disappointed with our performance. We felt we were capable of playing an awful lot better than we did against Na Fianna. That would have been the biggest disappointment to us last year."

The Mayo champions' boss appreciates that they are meeting a very experienced Bellaghy side. "The Ulster championship is very competitive. Bellaghy would have been involved for the fourth time last year and lost in one (Ulster) final to Crossmaglen Rangers and in the semi final another year. The fact that they were coming up against a team of the calibre of Crossmaglen meant that they were kept in the shadows a little bit. But, they have been there before." On the way to the Connacht decider, Crossmolina knocked out the Roscommon champions Kilbride and Sligo side Bunninadden. Jordan says that they could very well have faltered in the first round of their own championship.

"It wasn't so much that we were tired after last year's campaign. We were playing a West Mayo combination and were lucky enough to come from behind and win. "Once you lose in championship football you don't get a second chance. For that reason we would not have taken any game less seriously than any other." With three members of the current Mayo team Michael Moyles, James Nallen and Kieran McDonald Crossmolina are well equipped to make it though to the final on St. Patrick's Day. For Sunday's game it's not a question of hoping for the best, the manager insists. "I would say we are past the 'hoping' stage! If your level is hoping you are not really doing yourselves justice.

"We have to expect that we are capable of doing well. We will see what happens after that." "We are very determined to create our own bit of history"