

McDonald relishes burying Mayo hoodoo

CROSSMOLINA'S scoring hero Kieran McDonald clutched the match ball closely to his chest and proudly said: "Now I think we've well and truly buried the hoodoo for Mayo teams."

Victory in an All-Ireland club final is always sweet, but Crossmolina's 0-16 to 1-12 victory over Nemo Rangers was the first Mayo success at this level after three final defeats in the 90s and one in the 80s.

"I think the vital difference between ourselves and previous Mayo sides in All Ireland club finals was that we didn't lack the all-important belief in our own ability to come through," stressed McDonald, who scored seven points.

"Even when we were three points down at half-time we still felt that we had a great chance of lifting the title. We knew that we hadn't played to our ability in the first half, and thankfully we played much smarter football in the second half.

"The fact that we've beaten such a great club as Nemo, who have six All-Irelands, makes the achievement even more satisfying for us."

McDonald's Mayo team-mate James Nallen, who played at midfield and earned lavish praise from Nemo manager Billy Morgan, argued that a marked change in Crossmolina's game-plan in the second half was a key factor in their victory.

"Our first half play was very one-dimensional, with the emphasis mainly on route one balls into our full-forward Liam Moffatt," explained Nallen.

"This didn't have the desired effect, but in the second half we based our game more on the short ball, and support play by as many players as possible. Everybody started working that bit harder and taking on more responsibility.

"And things could hardly have worked out better with us pulling back Nemo's three point lead after about five minutes, and then scoring another three points on the trot in the next few minutes."

Nallen had particular words of praise for McDonald and right half-back Peadar Gardiner.

"Kieran was a real inspiration for us. As well as his seven points, his general play was superb and he was always ready to take on responsibility, whether to try for a point or to attempt a long pass.

"His reverse pass to our left half back, Patrick McAndrew, for a point from over 50 yards was really terrific."

A disappointed Nemo manager Billy Morgan slammed the performance of match referee John Bannon.

"He seems to be one of those referees who tries to make a match as even as possible," fumed Morgan.

"When we were four points up he gave a ridiculous decision against Martin Cronin. As well, he often allowed the Crossmolina players to over-carry the ball and overlooked a push on Larry Kavanagh."

On his side's performance Morgan said, "We played very well in the first half and I was very pleased with the way things went. But in the second half, Crossmolina really upped their game, and James Nallen came strongly into the game for them at midfield while Kevin Cahill tired a bit for us in that area.

"Crossmolina got six points on the trot and it was always going to be difficult for us to recover from that situation."

Paddy Hickey