

No starting place for McDonald

MAYO star Kieran McDonald will not start for Crossmolina against Bellaghy in Sunday's All Ireland Club SFC semi-final. McDonald has made a full recovery from a troublesome foot injury and was thought to be a definite starter so his absence from the starting fifteen is a managerial decision.

"It was just a call we made" said Crossmolina manager Thomas Jordan yesterday. "While Kieran has been out injured, Michael Moffatt has been performing well in training and challenge matches and he merits his starting position."

The decision to drop McDonald comes as something of a shock. The Mayo senior footballer is seen as Crossmolina's star turn in attack and the source of much of their scores. The inside forward has been one of Mayo's most prolific scorers in recent championships and was in fine form for Crossmolina throughout the county and Connacht Club Championships. However, even if McDonald starts on the bench, he is practically certain to be introduced at some point.

"Oh, you can bet money on that" agreed manager Jordan.

"We know what Kieran is capable of and he'll definitely play at some stage on Sunday." McDonald's absence isn't the only talking point of Jordan's selection. Defender Gerard O'Malley returned on holidays from his tour in the Lebanon for the match but having just missed the Connacht final can't force his way back into the team.

"We have a fully fit panel for the first time this year so I had a couple of hard decisions to make," admitted Jordan. "In the end we simply decided to go with the players who have been playing and training well recently".

Despite starting on the bench O'Malley too will almost certainly have some part to play in Sunday's match. Crossmolina's only injury worry, captain Tom Nallen has proven his fitness and will start at fullback. "Tom had a slight shoulder injury but it was never going to be enough to keep him out. We're satisfied that he's fit to play."