

It's time to 'Deel'

The waiting is nearly over and the biggest day in the history of Crossmolina Deel Rovers GAA Club is now just a matter of days away.

On Monday next, at Croke Park, they will attempt to become the first team from Mayo to win the All-Ireland Club Championship when they meet the Munster champions, Nemo Rangers.

The two teams have been waiting patiently for this game to be played after the Foot and Mouth scare forced its cancellation from its original date on St. Patrick's Day. Crossmolina put the final touches to their preparations at the weekend. They trained lightly on Friday evening, Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

They have a few niggly injury worries in the build-up, Francis Costello, didn't participate in training on Friday night, but the selectors expect to have a fully fit squad to choose from.

The club series, benefitting from some clever marketing by its sponsors, has really captured the imagination of the public in the last few years, and it is now second only to the All-Ireland inter-county championship in terms of prestige.

Indeed, there are players who have won both who testify that the club victory meant as much as the county, because of the life-long links that they had with the club and the

realisation of what it meant to the people of their area.

It is with that ringing endorsement of the competition that Crossmolina will set foot in Croke Park for the first time next Monday.

They will be up against it, that can't be argued with. Nemo Rangers are six times champions and they carry the aces going into the final.

They have some of the biggest names in the game in their line-up with players like Stephen O'Brien, Joe Kavanagh, Larry Kavanagh and Colin Corkery while their manager, Billy Morgan has guided Cork to All-Ireland success.

But to rule out Crossmolina on the grounds that their opponents have big names would be doing them a major dis-service.

The Mayo team have been practically unbeatable in their own county in the past three years and they have been gradually building to an appearance in Croke Park on final day.

They recovered remarkably well from losing at the penultimate stage last year to Na Fianna and their march to the final this year has been marked by a steely determination to take care of some unfinished business.

Mind you, it could all have ended before it had hardly started in the first round of the championship when the champions trailed to West Mayo with five minutes remaining.

That it didn't spoke volumes for the attitude of the players and their desire. From there on in there was only one team ever going to win the county championship.

They carried their domestic form into the provincial and on a soft day in November they easily got the better of a tired looking Corofin team.

Bellaghy from Derry were next to fall to Crossmolina when they met in February and ever since it's been all about final day in Croke Park.

They will travel in their thousands to support Crossmolina on Monday.

Supporters are travelling home from all parts of the world for the club's biggest day

and local rivalries will be put to one side as players and supporters from all over Mayo will get behind the Deel Rovers.

The players and management are all too well aware however that victory will require a supreme level of performance.

“They haven’t won six titles without having some very good players. They are a top class team and we have the utmost of respect for them.

“But we’re not afraid and there’d be little point in us turning up in Croke Park if we were.

“We’re going there to win and we firmly believe that we will do that”, said centre-half back, Damian Mulligan.

At around 5p.m. on Monday next we’ll all know whether they have done it or not. Our money is on a first ever title for a Mayo club.