

Portumna a proud parish

■ Jamie O'Keeffe

Portumna, meaning 'the landing place of the oak', is situated in the southeast corner of County Galway, on the border with Tipperary, west of where the River Shannon enters Lough Derg. Served with a five-span road bridge over the river, this small town (population circa 2,500) is a well-known tourist retreat for boaters, golfers and anglers.

Portumna GAA Club was founded in 1888 but didn't reach their first senior county hurling final until 1995. They've made up for it this decade of course, reaching six and winning four – 2003, '05, '07 and '08 – and are seeking third All-Ireland club title in four years.

Their captain Ollie Canning says the achievements of fellow Galway clubs Sarsfields and Athenry inspired them to aim for greater heights. "They weren't prepared to accept one win, they had no problem motivating themselves to go through hard winter training and go on and win more."

He wouldn't say otherwise, but the veteran three-time All Star,



The Portumna team that defeated Ballyhale Shamrocks in the All-Ireland semi-final in Semple Stadium, Thurles, on February 22nd. Front, from left: Niall Hayes, Aidan Donnelly, Martin Dolphin, Ollie Canning, Eoin Lynch, Eugene McEntee, Andrew Smith. Back: Leo Smith, Ciaran Ryan, Michael Ryan, Ivan Canning, Damien Hayes, Garret Heagney, Kevin Hayes, Joe Canning.

man-of-the-match in the semi-final, believes De La Salle will put them to the pin of their collar next Tuesday as they attempt to retain the Tommy Moore Cup

"I'm sure De La Salle will be coming with all guns blazing... It shouldn't take too much to motivate you for an All-Ireland final. De La Salle are on a great run, they'll be coming into this one on a high, they'll have the belief as well, so we're under no illusions."

Maurice Aylward, who has stepped down as Ballyhale Shamrocks manager following their semi-final defeat, says they're much more than a full-forward plus 14 others. "For me Joe Canning was not the man who beat us. It was their overall team from their goalkeeper right through... Joe is an outstanding talent, but there are other outstanding talents in that side: Damien Hayes, Kevin Hayes, Ollie Canning and Eoin Lynch all had great games. You don't win anything with a one-man team."

However, though he works for the Bank of Ireland in Waterford, Henry Shefflin says you'd have to put your money on Portumna. "To be fair, Portumna have experience of the final, for De La Salle it's new to them. They're favourites, I would think they will do it but I think it'll be a tough game. De La Salle will have their homework done. Portumna started so fast against us that De La Salle will be wary."

Champions' likely XV

The team selected against the Kilkenny champions is also expected to start the final on St Patrick's Day, namely:

- Ivan Canning: Goalkeeper, Age 27, Carpenter
- Martin Dolphin: Right corner-back, Age 18, Student
- Eugene McEntee: Full-back, Age 29, Butcher
- Ollie Canning (Capt): Left corner-back, Age 32, Engineer
- Gareth Heagney: Right half-back, Age 24, Teacher
- Micheal Ryan: Centre-back, Age 30, Sales Rep.
- Aidan O'Donnell: Left half-back, Age 28, Sales Rep.
- Eoin Lynch: Midfielder, Age 25, Hardware Merchant

- Leo Smith: Midfielder, Age 27, Teacher
- Niall Hayes: Right half-forward, Age 31, Service Mgr.
- Kevin Hayes: Centre-forward, Age 25, H&S Officer
- Andrew Smith: Left half-forward, Age 25, Planner
- Damien Hayes: Right corner-forward, Age 24, Sales Rep.
- Joe Canning: Full-forward, Age 20,
- Ciaran Ryan: Left corner-forward, Age 27, Software Dev.

Reserves: Peter Smith (25), Eoin McKeigue (22), Conor O'Hare (20), Ivan Canning (27), Eamon Lynch (27), Paddy Dolphin (18), Darragh Heagney (22), Mike Gill (34), Tomas Quinn (22), Johnny Keane (27), David Canning (34), John O'Flaherty (21), Pierce Treacy (35), Gerard Kelly (18), Joe Keane (19), Ronan Royston (18), Micheal Ryan (30), Conor Broder (18).

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**Wish the Best of Luck to
 De La Salle
 in this Tuesday's All-Ireland Final**

From Geraldine and ALL the staff

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