

All-Ireland Senior Ladies Football Quarter-Final

Waterford v Galway

(Saturday, Pearse Park, Longford, 2.45pm)

Waterford make the three-hour journey to Pearse Park in Longford on Saturday next for the last of this year's All-Ireland Senior quarter finals where their opponents will be a fancied Galway side.

This is the second meeting of the two teams in just over 12 months, having faced each other in the final game in the round robin section of the Championship where the Connacht side ran out convincing 3-12 to 0-5 winners in Birr. The recently crowned Connacht champions will once again go into this game as the favourites to advance but Ciaran Curran's side can do much better this time around and maybe even reverse last year's result.



Waterford's Maria Delahunty will be hoping to take her excellent form into next Saturday's quarter-final against Galway

The Tribes Ladies will not be an easy side to beat. They come into the game on the back of a replayed 3-7 to 0-9 win over Mayo in the Connacht final in Limerick after the sides had drawn 1-12 to 3-6 at McHale Park. Since then Galway recorded a 1-14 to 1-10 win over Kerry in the first of their games in the group stages of the competition and last time out they had an excellent 2-13 to 1-3 win over Westmeath.

Having played each other last year Waterford will know all about this Galway side who earlier this year ran Cork close in the National League Division One final, losing out 1-12 to 2-7 at Parnell Park on the same day that Waterford recorded a big win over Kerry in the division two decider.

Tracey Leonard is Galway's key player in their attack having scored 2-20 in their four championship games to date.

But no team can compete with just the one player, and the westerners have the likes of Róisín Leonard, Megan Glynn, Sarah Connelly, Áine McDonagh and Olivia Divilly, to name but a few that have impressed in front of goal in the championship. If Galway have impressed so far this year the same could be said of Waterford. Ciaran Curran came in late over the team before the league and will have needed time to get to know his players and to instil in them the way that he feels the game should be played.

They had a terrific league campaign reaching the Division two semi-final for the second year in a row where they beat Cavan and went on to have a very impressive win over Kerry in the final.

The same two sides clashed in the first round of the Munster Championship in Ennis where Waterford had another win, even if this time the margin of victory was much closer.

While Waterford suffered a heavy defeat to Cork in the second of their round robin games, they turned in a much-improved performance in the Munster Final at Fraher Field where Cork, with wind advantage, only pulled away in the second half. Players like Maria Delahunty, Eimear Fennell, Michelle Ryan, Chloe Fennell, Aileen Wall and Kelly Anne Hogan have impressed in front of goal this year and will hope to take that form into this game. But it is not only in attack that Waterford has impressed. Rosie Landers, in her debut season, has been outstanding while in defence Caoimhe McGrath is her usual self in the full back position as is Karen McGrath at centre back.

Players of the calibre of Kate McGrath, Róisín Tobin, Aisling Mullally, Mairead Wall and the Murray sisters Emma, Katie and Cora have all impressed and whatever Galway player they take up to mark on Saturday afternoon will know they will not have things easy. Throw in players like Kelly Moroney, Shauna Dunphy, Emma Gildea, Lauren McGregor, Denise Curran, Aoife Kennedy, Jodie Tuohy, Mary Kate Curran and Claire Murphy, some of whom were drafted into the panel after the league, and you have a Waterford side more than capable of advancing to the semi-final of this year's competition. Will this happen? You have to believe it can. Who would have thought that Laois would have beaten Dublin in the All-Ireland Hurling Championship and then to push Tipperary hard in the quarter finals? Who would have said that All-Ireland Champions Limerick would have lost to Kilkenny in the recent All-Ireland semi-final? Can Waterford beat a fancied Galway side on Saturday evening? Of course they can.