

Divisional conventions have their say

This week both Eastern and Western G.A.A. Boards hold their respective Annual Conventions. All the indications point to relatively quiet sessions, with little or no change in officer ships expected for 2008. The absence of motions either is an indication of apathy or simply waiting for County Convention on December 14th, while both Divisional Committees report a considerable increase in revenue, due to a massive upturn of interest in championship games in all the grades.

Secretary's Report

In his report coming before East Waterford Clubs at Tuesday's 62nd Annual East Waterford Convention Secretary Denis Hanrahan presented a detailed account of Divisional Board activities during the past twelve months. The report poses the question that while there is a considerable increase in the population of Waterford City, there has been no advances made in the number of affiliated new G.A.A. clubs. This is very disheartening considering the exceptional volume of under age activity and needs to be addressed.

The Secretary asks clubs to make their views known through their respective delegates in order that the Association in the Eastern Division can fulfill the role for which it was brought into being in the first place. Stating that the Club must remain the basic unit of the Association, the loyalty of club members must be of paramount importance, the Secretary also asks the members of the various county teams to equally play their part in the promotion of the aims and ideals of the G.A.A.

Denis Hanrahan also acknowledges that many clubs are experiencing great difficulty in finding adequate numbers of personnel to assist in the day to day running of affairs, and the increasing burden unfortunately keeps falling back on the shoulders of a diminishing few in many instances and members must become conscious of this deficiency and act accordingly.

The Eastern Secretary also calls for the provision of a more regular pattern of games for players, and that there should be a proper balance between club and county matches. He also made reference to the growing demands made annually on many of our young players, and 'the premature burn out of such people, is beginning to greater with each passing year.

The report continues: "I have long contended that players should be allowed to develop within their own age group and in their own time towards manhood. The alarming promotion of adult games having to be postponed or deferred because of minor players playing in the Intermediate and Junior grades, is surely a huge detriment to the overall success of our playing programme".

Stating that the club remains the basic nursery for our hurling and footballers of to-morrow, we must safeguard young players as they progress towards full participation, and seek to give priority to under age commitments at all times. In praising the work of Bord na nOg, the Secretary also calls for greater liaison between clubs and schools - very often we come across situations where very little contact between the two exists and this must surely be a source of deep concern, particularly given the large number of young boys who play in our Schools and Colleges competitions and loose interest afterwards 'unless the present trend is arrested and quickly' says the East Waterford officials, the future cannot be considered as secure.

Conduct and Discipline

In his Convention report Denis Hanrahan says - 'it is vitally important that the Association must continue to impose a good disciplinary code in which good order, self control and respect for opponents holds centre stage. All mentors should be fully aware of their responsibilities, not only to reprimand should defaulters, but all times show good example themselves. No longer can we tolerate field encroachment, the use of foul and improper language, which demeans our games and reveals scant regard for supporters, The report revealed that considering the huge volume of games played in 2007, breaches of mis-conduct proved few and far between, yet vigilance remains a key factor here.

Referee shortage

The Divisional secretary also reports that a very serious shortage of referees currently exists in East Waterford, and clubs for the most simply reveal scant interest or acceptance that a crisis really exists - indeed were it not for the small number of referees who constantly give of their time and energies, the problem would be well nigh catastrophic by this stage. In pressing for more support the Secretary says than other match officials i.e. umpires and linemen must be more vigilant in assisting referees in the pursuit of their duties.

Other aspects of the report as well details of Convention held over until next weeks issue .

The west awake

Western G.A.A clubs meet in Lawlors Hotel Dungarvan this Thursday evening when another successful year under the auspices of the G.A.A. comes up for review. In his wide ranging report to Convention Secretary Anthony Walsh is at one with his Eastern counterpart Denis Hanrahan in deploring the absence of new and additional clubs - failure on the part of some clubs to fulfill fixtures for the flimsiest of excuses can not be tolerated and walkovers continue to be a source of concern as well.

However the West Waterford G.A.A., official hit out at the structures surrounding the intercounty scene by declaring: "The current structures of the intercounty championships together with player involvement in examinations makes it nigh impossible to promote properly structured games for all our players. While I appreciate the high personal demands and commitments of all concerned with inter county teams, there is a major tendency in the height of all this intense activity, that we could well be doing some irreparable damage to our club structures as evidenced by the fact that clubs are denied the services of their top players for considerable periods of time during the peak part of the playing season. There must always be a greater appreciation of what the club is all about, and while there is always tremendous satisfaction when player is selected to represent the county in any grade, his duty to his club should not be diminished as a result. It would surely be a major

advancement if the top players were more readily available to their clubs than at present. Assurances given by Team Managers on re-appointment as a result of concerns expressed in the interest of the clubs, and increased co-operation between team managers and Divisional Boards resulted in most adult championships within the this division being completed at a relatively early stage . However, there is room for continued improvement ” he says.

Irish language

Regarding the promotion of the Irish language, the Western Secretary points out that is an area of culture very sadly neglected and should command far more attention than currently in vogue adding: “Are we content in fostering the national games and ignoring the promotion of ‘An Gaeilge?’ Would it be too much to ask that we cultivate the knowledge that each of us possess in order that the idea of promoting the language could be enhanced. With a number of willing language enthusiasts readily available, it should be possible to emulate the good work being done by a number of local organisations towards the restoration of the national language. There is no doubt that there exists many other worthwhile and tangible ways in which the membership at large can help in the great crusade towards restoring the native language to it’s rightful place. I am sure that the question of the Irish language and it’s future would surely gain a new impetus if we, as the leading sports organisation in the country, show a more positive willingness to play our part. The promotion and greater use of our national language can never be allowed to diminish”, the report says.

Further reflections on the Divisional reports, together with the appointment of Board officials for the coming year, will appear in next weeks issue.