

Shoulder To Shoulder



It was another great rugby weekend for Waterford duo Niamh Briggs and Jack O'Donoghue. | Photos: Ken Sutton and Sportsfile

Briggs and O'Donoghue star during a great rugby weekend

While one established Waterford rugby superstar was captaining her country to Six Nations victory over World Champions England, another outstanding prospect continues to impress in the red of Munster.

Abbeyside's Niamh Briggs kicked Ireland's winning penalty four minutes from time in Ashbourne last Friday as the Irish women saw off another World Cup holder, recording only their second ever victory over England in so doing.

Twenty-four hours later, Woodstown native and Waterpark RFC alumnus Jack O'Donoghue scored his third try in three successive outings as Munster's post Champions Cup recovery continued with a 22-10 win over Glasgow at Musgrave Park.

A season-ending injury to fellow number eight Robin Copeland has propelled O'Donoghue up Anthony Foley's pecking order, and there's been no denying the Munster 'A' captain's impact since graduating to the matchday 23.

Tries against Cardiff, the Scarlets and Glasgow have earned the former Munster and Ireland Under-20 skipper several merited headlines, and illustrates the faith those in the know have in Jack's abilities.



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His leadership attributes have already been well established: captaining his country to last summer's World Junior Championship semi-finals in New Zealand and being appointed skipper of a Munster 'A' side not short on players with massive club and test experience.

And when you consider that 'Jacko' made his Munster 'A' debut at the age of 18, it's clear that a great deal of faith and confidence has been invested in his precocious talent, underlined by the three-year contract he recently signed with the province.

And it's even clearer that such faith is being rewarded by the quality of O'Donoghue's performances and his eye for the try-line!

Having turned 21 in February, Jack looks set to feature in quite a few more matchday squads between now and the end of a season, with Munster determined to wrestle the Pro 12 title from Leinster's grasp.

"It is always rewarding when securing up and coming home-grown talent such as (Jack) O'Donoghue, and is a testament to what we have to offer here in Munster," said Head Coach Anthony Foley.

“We have guys that are highly sought after in a competitive environment and it’s great for our squad to know that these guys want to contribute to their home province and compete for the jersey. We have only seen glimpses of what these young players can do and we look forward to guiding their development.”

As for Niamh Briggs? Well, the superlative department is beginning to run dry such is her consistency and match-winning ability in the green shirt.

Despite sustaining a calf injury, the Irish skipper landed the all-important penalty to not only exact some revenge for last year’s World Cup semi-final defeat, but to maintain Ireland’s Championship hopes.

“You grow up wanting to play in the biggest games and you want to pit yourself against them,” said Niamh in the build-up to last Friday’s match. “This is it, the perfect opportunity for us to right the wrongs against France.” Job done then, and what a brilliant job both Niamh and Jack are doing when it comes to flying the Waterford flag in the union game currently.