

Hurlers Fly High



Austin Gleeson brilliantly fends off the intentions of Galway's Jonathan Glynn during Sunday's NHL Quarter-Final win at Walsh Park. See Sport 2-4 for more. | Photo: Sean Byrne

Waterford send Galway packing to advance to NHL semi-final

A delighted, albeit even tempered Derek McGrath is relishing the prospect of taking on Tipperary in the National Hurling League semi-final on April 19th following Sunday's impressive dismissal of Galway at Walsh Park.

"Getting to a semi-final is a massive stimulation for June 7th," said McGrath, referring to the Munster Championship clash with Cork.

"Last year's semis ended up being a double-header so we'll see how the fixtures work in terms of going to Thurles or not. But it's great preparation for June 7 because you'd be acutely aware that that's what you'd be judged on. But irrespective of the League semi-final and June 7, we just feel we're progressing nicely."

Leading by nine points at the break having played with a strong wind in their favour, Waterford weathered both the conditions and the Galway resistance excellently after the break. In fact, Galway only managed to shave a point off Waterford's lead come Brian Gavin's full-time whistle.

"There was probably going to be a stage where Galway came at us and they did at the start of the second half," McGrath reflected.

“The key was when the lads settled and got a few scores against the head which settled us. Galway cam onto us then and left a good bit of space for Maurice (Shanahan) inside near the end, and he was a great outlet because Galway were pushed up on top of us. There was an amount of space, we worked it well, and I’m very happy with the lads.”

The De La Salle man admitted he had no great temptation to tamper with what had worked so well against Wexford the previous Sunday.

“No because with the breeze against Wexford, we used the same game plan in the first half as well. The period just before half-time last week where we reeled five or six points, we just felt we had to play that way today, we stuck with it. There was no real deviation from last week so we might have to go have a different plan against Tipperary for going forward.”

The difference in 12 months was stark on Sunday last, given that defeat to Dublin at the same venue a year ago had condemned Waterford to Division 1B hurling. But that has been immediately and impressively rectified by this impressing young Deise side.

“It’s a lot different feeling from last year, I have to say,” McGrath added.

“A detailed analysis of that game last year, we were five or six up when Shane O’Sullivan was sent off...but of course we were crestfallen because there’s an amount of pressure that goes with being in 1A and that’ll be there next year.

“We’ll be relegation candidates next year and that’s the reality. Clare will be in 1B next year but if I was to name All-Ireland contenders, they’d be up there. We’ll see it as the summer goes on, 1B or 1A...albeit Limerick didn’t perform against Dublin on Saturday night.

“But in general, game to game, people should take more notice of (the difference between 1A and 1B hurling) and that might be seen in our semi against Tipp.

“We might underperform and people might overanalyse but we just think we’re on a good curve, an upper curve.” And that curve may yet have some ascending to do from a Deise perspective.