

# BADMINTON IN OFFALY

## National Schools on Court

The noise was deafening, the excitement was palatable, and administrators and coaches could not hear each other when they tried to talk when Offaly National Schools' badminton players took to the courts in Mucklagh Community Centre. Seven Over-10 teams and three 10 and Under teams competed for top honours in National Schools badminton. Some schools had only 1 or 2 players from their school, so several amalgamated schools took to the courts.

**10 and Under:** Ballyboy and Coolanarney were each able to field a full team, but to compete against them, an amalgamated team of Mount Bolus-Gortnamona-Rahan, MGR, entered the competition. Ballyboy, represented by Ben Doolan, Gearóid Molloy, Katie Lambe, and Bláthnaid Collins met Coolanarney, Emma Hanlon, Lucy Hanlon, Layla Kenny, Katelyn Guinan, and Ronan Lambe. Because each team only played two matches, 6 games of doubles were played in 10 and Under. Coolanarney won the first, second, fourth and fifth games, while Ballyboy triumphed in the third and sixth. Coolanarney, with 4 wins and 60 points got a bye in the second round while Ballyboy with two wins and 48 points went on to play MGR, represented by Ava Dunne, Mountbolus, Kate Doyle and Lisa-Marie Newton, Gortnamona, and Conor McEvoy, Rahan. Ballyboy got off to a flying start, winning first doubles, but then they stuttered, losing the next three games, before finishing ahead in the fifth game, but MGR finished strongly, winning the last game. The final score finished MGR 4 wins and 60 points against 2 wins and 35 points for Ballyboy. With 4 wins and 60 points apiece, the match between Coolanarney and MGR became a final. Emma and Lucy won first doubles for Coolanarney. Lisa-Marie and Kate replied for MGR with a win in second doubles. Katelyn and Lucy won third for Coolanarney, But Conor and Kate levelled with a win for MGR. In the fifth game, Ava and Kate scored the win for MGR. The 10 and Under title depended on the sixth game. Conor and Lisa-Marie were not found wanting for MGR. In the final tally, Mountbolus-Gortnamona-Rahan won the match and the title 4-2 and 62 points to 49. Coolanarney finished Runners-up and Ballyboy finished Third.

**Over 10:** With seven teams in Over 10, playing in one pool, only four games were played in a match. Coolanarney, Pullough/St. Cynoc's, Clara 1, Mountbolus-Kilcormac-Kinnitty, Ballyboy 1, Clara 2 and Ballyboy 2 played for top honours.

With seven teams, the outcome of O10 generated more suspense than was felt in the 10 and Over. Ballyboy 2 and Pullough/St. Cynoc's were the first teams on court. Ballyboy 2 fielded a very strong team of AJ Bracken, Lochlann Fletcher, Daniel Lambe and Theo Kilmartin and swept all four games against the Pullough/St. Cynoc's team of Katie Kidney, Jade Callaghan, Ciarán Farrelly, Pullough, and Tadhg Dempsey, St. Cynoc's. Ciarán is a very brave U10 playing in the older age group to make up a team for his school. Clara 1 versus Clara 2 was the second game in O10. Clara 1, Scott Mannerings, Frank Scanlon, Eric Brady, and Eoin Carroll stayed level with Ballyboy 2, winning all 4 games against Tristan Malone, Jake Cornally, Cian Egan and Cormac Fitzpatrick. Ballyboy 2's second match was against MKK, Aisling Mooney and Alison Meacle, Mountbolus, Siún Joyce, Kinnitty, and Aoife Feighery, Kilcormac. Ballyboy 2 repeated their performance against Pullough/St. Cynoc's, 4 wins. MKK got on the scoreboard with 17 points. Coolanarney finally took to the court in 4<sup>th</sup> game, having sat out a bye in the first round of games. Joe Leonard, Aaron Maher, Reece Kenny, and Millie Mae Feighery, represented Coolanarney. They were helped by Erin Mahon, Gortnamona, when Aaron have to leave for a soccer match. Coolanarney finished with 3 wins and 38 points to 1 win and 19 points for Ballyboy 1. Pullough/St. Cynoc's against Ballyboy 1 resulted in a 2-all draw, with one point making all the difference when P/SC won third doubles 11/10. P/SC finished 2 wins 31 points and Ballyboy 1, 2 wins and 40 points.

Towards the latter part of the tournament when results mattered, points became very important, so required a careful recording. Clara 1 and MKK played another 2-all draw. Clara won first and fourth doubles and scored 35 points, while MKK won second and third doubles and scored 29 points. Coolanarney pulled out all stops against Clara 2 and won all 4 games scoring 44 points to 14 for Clara 2. Ballyboy 2 swept all 4 games against Ballyboy 1, scoring 44 points and allowing 20 for Ballyboy 1. Four-nil was becoming a common results as the teams began to divide in candidates for Championship awards and candidates for Plate awards. Clara 1 scored 4 wins against Pullough/St. Cynoc's. P/SC managed 15 points to 44. Neither Coolanarney nor Ballyboy 2 reigned supreme in their head-to-head. Coolanarney scored 11 in the first three games, Ballyboy 2 pulled off a big win in the fourth. Final score, 3-37, 1-31. This match started a string of 3-1 victories. MKK outscored Clara 2, winning the first 3 games. Clara 2 scored their win in the fourth games. Final score, MKK the winner 3-38 to 1-23. Clara 1 scored 3 wins against Ballyboy 1 and scored 42 points in the 4 games. Ballyboy scored a total of 31 points including their win. MKK had no answer to Coolanarney when the two teams met. Coolanarney captured the full 44 points with 4 wins. MKK managed 20 points in defeat. Ballyboy 2 and Clara 1 played out a 2-all draw, but the difference was the scoring. In third doubles, Clara 1

got the last shuttle to the floor for an 11/10 win, but Ballyboy 2 scored a huge win in fourth doubles. Final scores, 2-40 to 2-26 in favour of Ballyboy 2. Pullough/St. Cynoc's and Clara 2 played another 3-1 match with Clara 2 ahead 3-42 to 1-23. P/SC won second doubles. One point made a huge difference in the Coolanarney-Clara 1 match. Coolanarney won third doubles 11/10 and outscored Clara 1 37-34 points in their 2-all draw. If that point had gone the other way, Clara 1 would have won the match 3-1 but would still have been behind on points 36-35. Pullough/St. Cynoc's scored their best results against MKK. Although MKK won all 4 games, P/SC scored 30 points, losing one game 9/11 and another 10/11. Final score, MKK 4-44, P/SC 0-30. Clara 2 and Ballyboy 1 was another 2-all draw between two schools that would finish among the Plate teams. Clara 2 had narrow 11/10, 11/9 wins in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> doubles, but Ballyboy 1 wins in 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> were more decisive and reflected in the final scores of C 2, 2-32, BB1, 2-41. Coolanarney was another tough match for Pullough/St. Cynoc's, Coolanarney scored wins in all four games, 44 points, allowing P/SC only 16 points.

Mountbolus/Kinnitty/ Kilcormac v. Ballyboy 1 was another game that could have gone either way. MKK won 1<sup>st</sup> doubles, BB 1 levelled in 2<sup>nd</sup>, MKK won 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> was an even back and forth match, with MKK scoring the final point 11/10. MKK finished 3-39, BB 1, 1-31. Ballyboy 2 stepped up to the mark in their final game against Clara 2. Ballyboy 2 scored 4 wins, the only game that was close being 1<sup>st</sup> doubles with an 11/9 scoreline. The match finished BB 2 4-44, Clara 2, 24 points. When games won were totalled, Coolanarney 10 and Under team, Joe Leonard, Aaron Maher, Reece Kenny, Millie Mae Feighery, and Erin Mahon, finished with 20 wins to claim the Championship Trophy and the gold medals. Ballyboy 2, AJ Bracken, Loughlann Fletcher, Daniel Lambe, and Theo Kilmartin, were close behind with 19 wins to claim the Silver Medal.

Ironically, BB2 outscored Coolanarney by 3 scores in 6 matches-24 games altogether-247-244, but games won counts over points scored. Clara 1, Scott Mannerings, Frank Scanlon, Eric Brady, and Eoin Carroll, finished Championship Bronze Medal winners with 17 wins. Mountbolus/Kinnitty/Kilcormac, Aisling Mooney, Alison Meacle, Siún Joyce and Aoife Feighery, finished well ahead of the remainder of the pool too win the Plate award and the Plate Gold Medal. Ballyboy 1, Gearóid Molloy, MJ Hynes, Anna Doolan and Sean Lambe, finished marginally ahead of Clara 2, Jake Cornally, Cormac Fitzpatrick, Cian Egan, and Tristan Malone, to win the Silver Medals, leaving Clara 2 with the Bronze Medals.