

# HOLYCROSS AFC – REBELS WITH A CAUSE!

By Michael Barry

## *Introduction*

**I**n 1965, Sean Lemass was Taoiseach and Eamon de Valera was President. Ireland entered the Eurovision song contest for the first time with Butch Moore singing, *Walking the Streets in the Rain*. The ‘Ban’ on playing soccer or rugby by members of the GAA, which had been in effect since 1901, was in full force and would not be removed for another six years, in 1971.

If a soccer club was to spring up in any locality at that time, it would need at least a few rebels to lead the way. There were very few clubs outside Limerick City in those days, and what clubs there were, operated in the West Limerick Desmond League. Indeed, at that time, country-based clubs were not allowed to join the city LDMC League (a different ban!).

The Grange/Holycross locality had a rebellious history, and many residents had a mindset perhaps that they lived in a mini ‘Independent Republic’ within the parish. Some still do! The 1960s also saw the return of a few locals from England, who had attended soccer matches on a regular weekly basis as recreational escape from the weekly grind.

A number of young men from Grange and Holycross often met for a soccer ‘kick about’ around that time and after a while other local groups joined in, the first being from the New Road area of Bruff. Seven-a-side games over time developed into eleven-a-side as interest and numbers increased, and in the autumn of 1967, a decision was made to form a local [club](#).

The first meeting to establish a few ground rules and put some names to positions was held in Margaret Hogan’s kitchen in Holycross, whose son, Sean, was one of the ‘leading lights’ in those early days. 1968 saw the club enter the Desmond League and, notwithstanding a four-year hiatus in the mid-1970s, the club has gone from strength to strength.

The formation of the club led to some initial local controversy. The ban by the GAA on the playing of ‘foreign’ games by its members was in full vogue at the time and resulted in some members of society, often in influential positions, being opposed to the playing of soccer. Indeed, this opposition by some who were of

such a mindset was felt by Holycross FC members for a time. Eventually, many of those who opposed local soccer would turn full circle.

Sr Mary Patrick, head of the FCJ Convent secondary school, was a big soccer fan and established a boys' team in the secondary school for the first time in the early 1970s. Brother Gerard Mulholland, originally from the 'soccer town' of Dundalk, had trials for Limerick and gave a huge amount of time to soccer coaching the children in his care in the national school, at the expense of all other sports it must be said. He didn't make the cut at Limerick, however, and he joined Holycross Club in their second season in the Desmond League instead. Many of his students went on to form the backbone of strong Holycross sides in future years.

### *In the beginning*

The England v Germany World Cup soccer final of 1966 ended with a piece of television sports commentary that has entered the annals of TV sporting commentary history. England was 3-2 ahead as the game entered the final seconds, and the English crowd started to spill onto the pitch. BBC game commentator Kenneth Wolstenholme then famously finished out his commentary as follows: "Some people are on the pitch. They think it's all over... [Geoff Hurst scores]... It is now. It's four!"

It's possible, or maybe even probable, that some of those first Holycross members back in the 1960s saw themselves doing a 'Geoff Hurst' for Ireland in future World Cups and becoming household names around the world. But the early days of forming the club and entering a formal league soon brought a reality check, far removed from bright lights and world fame.

For starters, the club had no nets. Nets were expensive and funds at the time were less than low, so the possibility of just ordering them from some sports shop in Limerick City was out of the question.

Necessity is the mother of invention, so the old adage goes. Enter John Enright and some rolls of string, normally used for tying down wynds of hay in a meadow. With the hands and fingers of a net 'maestro', Enright formed the very first set of nets used by the club, allowing games to take place.

The first club football was also a treasured possession and was treated like the club's 'crown jewels'. When the stitching came undone during one particular game, it was re-stitched later that week by the same John Enright using needle and thread, and it was like a new ball again ready for the next game.

The decision to form a club, as already mentioned, resulted in a meeting that took place at Margaret Hogan's kitchen in Holycross in late 1967. Recorded present on the night were John Maye, John Enright, Billy O'Connell, Pat Enright, Ned Conway, Billy Dineen, James Gennery and Mike Fitzgerald.

The first game played by a formal Holycross team following the club's formation was a friendly at home to Kilfinny. The match was played at Martin Ryan's field at Árd Na Rí. The game finished 0-0.



Holycross Soccer Team c 1968. *Back row L-R:* Morty Hayes, John 'Bobbin' Brown, Danny Ryan, Jerry Butler, Jerry Buckley, Dan Collins, Mike Fitzgerald, Ned Conway, Denis Wrenn. *Front row:* Pat Enright, Pat Hartigan, Sean Hogan, Billy O'Connell, Ivan Ryan (Capt), Tony Brosnan, Mossy Wrenn, Pat Keogh.

A return fixture was also organised, and this game produced the first win in the club's history, an away win at that! Holycross won 0-2 with both goals scored by John Enright.

The players on that occasion still remember the announcement over the airwaves on the journey home, of the death of Limerick politician, Donogh O'Malley. They also remember being surprised by the presence of well-known Limerick hurler, Patrick 'Pa' Carey, on the opposition team that day, with the 'ban' being in force at the time. Pa's son, Ciaran, would captain Limerick hurling teams in future years, becoming one of the finest exponents of the code of hurling in the entire country. Ciaran was also a very accomplished soccer player as it happens, just like his dad, often playing against Holycross teams in the LDMC League in later years.

With the impossibility of joining the Limerick City League, the newly founded club decided to request permission from the West Limerick Desmond League to join its ranks. Four senior Holycross 'Sheikhs' were chosen to attend the league meeting in Newcastle West for the task. John Enright, Ivan Ryan, Sean Hogan and Billy O'Connell duly set off.

Desmond League Chairman, Mr McDaid, announced on the commencement of the meeting that only two club delegates would be allowed make the presentation, presumably because four men from Holycross in a single group just formed too frightening an ensemble. Ivan and Sean were chosen to enter the fray, while John and Billy headed to Cronin's Bar in the town square.

Cronin's Bar was a well-known soccer pub, which suited the two Holycross men rather well. Jerry Cronin, the proprietor, had played for Crystal Palace and



Holycross Soccer Team c 1981. *Back row L-R:* Johnny O'Connell, Joe Hourigan, Mike Barry, Tony Hourigan, Ger O'Connell, Paddy Haighney, Pat Murphy, Jimmy Brosnan, Liam Hourigan, Mike Hurley, Ger Higgins. *Front row:* Micheal Butler, Billy Irwin, Kevin Hourigan, Paul Ryan, Jim Leonard, Ger Barry, Pat Enright.

Limerick in his younger days, and John and Billy enjoyed the atmosphere like kids at Christmas as they imbibed at their leisure.

Meanwhile back at the meeting, the league committee quizzed Ivan and Sean about the new club from the central Limerick 'lakeland district'. Answers were provided and the formal request duly presented. The committee chairman informed them after some time that the club was too late to participate in the league competition which had already started, but they would be welcome to join the Shield competition later in the season. Holycross AFC was born!

#### *First Competition – The Desmond League Shield*

The Desmond League Shield competition started with a home fixture against the 'All Blacks' from Ferry Bridge, and the match referee was former League of Ireland referee, Bernie Spain. The pitch on the day had a thick covering of snow and Bernie received a 'warm' Holycross greeting on his arrival in the form of a snowball through his open window. As far as the club is aware, the incident was not reported in his match report (modern referees take note!), and he certainly refereed the game in exemplary manner. Holycross won a thriller 7-5, and the Holycross show was now very firmly on the road.

The impossible transpired as if it had been pre-written by the soccer gods. Holycross won the tournament in their first-ever season in competition, to much local joy and jubilation. But feathers were obviously ruffled 'back West' and what seemed like a pretty innocuous and trivial objection was lodged to an 'incorrect' Holycross name spelling on the referee's card.

The objection related specifically to the name "Mossy Wren", who was known then and still goes by the name "Mossy", rather than the more correct "Maurice".

His Registration form for the competition read “Maurice J Wrenn”. Unbelievably, and especially so in those days when the letter of the law was rarely followed to the extreme, the objection was upheld. Holycross was disqualified, and the trophy was presented instead to the West Limerick losers.

Club history records the following participants in that first epic season: Morty Hayes (Manager), Dan Collins, Ivan Ryan, John Maye, John Enright, Pat Hartigan, Danny Ryan, Sean Hogan, Mossy (Maurice J!) Wrenn, Denis Wrenn, Billy O’Connell, Mike Fitzgerald, Pat Enright.

The following season saw a welcome influx of new arrivals and the following is a list of many of the same: Rodger Brown, Tony, John and Ger Mulqueen, Pat Murphy, Mike Spellacy, Ned Quirke, Tony Brosnan, Declan, Brendan and Mike Madden, Jackie and Tommy O’Connell, John “Bobbin” Brown, Jerry Butler, Ger Mulholland (the aforementioned religious Brother with the De La Salle order in Bruff), Pat O’Brien (still involved in the game to this day as an LDMC referee), Pa Brown, John Leddin, Gerry O’Mahony and George Finch.

#### *Interest Waned*

The club played in subsequent Desmond League seasons but without hitting the heady heights of that first season. Maybe the unfair disqualification had an effect on morale. Interest started to wane until the club eventually had insufficient numbers to field a team in season 1973/74. A decision was made to withdraw from competition before the commencement of the following season.

Four seasons of soccer hibernation followed, but by this stage the LDMC (Limerick City) League had changed its rules to allow country-based teams to enter. Far shorter journeys to matches was a big factor in making the decision regarding which league to join and in season 1977/78, the club began a new soccer life, resuming competitive action in Division 4 of the LDMC League.

#### *Club Pitches*

The club has used eleven pitches during the course of its history as follows:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Hogan’s field, Ink Bottle House, Holycross    | 8 Carroll’s field, Ballingirlough, C’guillamore |
| 2 Martin Ryan’s field, Holycross                | 9 Tom Ryan’s field, Carrigal, Lough Gur         |
| 3 Jimmy Leo’s field, Ballingirlough             | 10 Reardon’s field, Lough Gur Road              |
| 4 Tivey’s Field, Corcass, Grange                | 11 Present Pitches at Reardons, Holycross       |
| 5 Tom O’Connell’s field, Grange                 |   |
| 6 Shinnors’s field, Ballynanty, Caherquillamore |   |
| 7 Austin Cregan’s field, Holycross              |   |

#### *Resurrection – LDMC Membership*

The flame hadn’t died. Many in the community hankered for a return to league soccer action and in the summer of 1977, a meeting was convened at the old

schoolhouse in Grange. No record exists of all who attended on the night but the following were amongst those present: Pat Purcell, Liam Hourigan, Tony Hourigan, Dan O'Donnell, Pat Enright, Declan Madden, Brendan Madden, Pat Hogan, Billy O'Connell, Jack Clancy and Jimmy Brosnan.

The decision was made to reform the club and to apply to join the Limerick City LDMC League. The following were some of those elected at the meeting: Pat Purcell (Chairman), Liam Hourigan (Treasurer), Dan O'Donnell, Séan Hogan and Liam Hourigan (team mentors). Funds were obviously non-existent on the club's resurrection as the new season approached, but a number of members willingly dipped into their own pockets to cover immediate expenses, to be repaid later from fund-raising efforts.

The treasurer's records from that first LDMC season indicate the following proof of the generosity of various individuals. (*Reference: Holycross Soccer Club – The Years, page 27*)

- Payment to Jack Clancy	£20.00	Jerseys
- Payment to Dan O'Donnell	£28.00	Nets
- Payment to Billy O'Connell	£11.00	Printing (dinner dance tickets)
- Payment to Pat Purcell	£5.00	Football

A dinner dance soon followed that raised the princely sum of £94.50, which immediately covered the league entry fee of £35.00. Other later expenses from that season included the following:

- 12th October	Two tracksuits plus gloves	£19.00
- 17th October	Fine to LDMC for Jimmy Brosnan	£1.00
- 4th November	Hospital fees for Tony Hourigan	£2.00
- 10th November	Contribution to Mike Madden for old-folks party at Grange	£5.00
- 11th December	Pitch unplayable, referees fee	£0.75
- 19th December	Christmas raffle	£61.20

The first match of the reformed club was played against Prospect B Team, and a 2-1 loss was recorded with the goal coming from Mike Hurley. In all, only three victories were recorded in the entire season, and they are recorded as follows: a 2-1 win against Charleville on 16th October (John Dineen and John Reardon), a 3-1 win over Pallas on 23rd October (Tom Moynihan 1, Tony Hourigan 2), and a 2-1 win over Newport on 15th January (John Reardon and John "Bobbin" Brown). The remainder of the season saw loss follow sorry loss.

No honours were recorded up to season 1981/82, but results were improving, and younger players were beginning to emerge onto the scene. The following season would see some footballing green shoots, as the club made it to a first-ever cup final at Priory Park (or Jackman Park as it is called today). A loss to Southend United was recorded, but the game would prove a real stimulus for the coming seasons.

Following the cup final loss, Holycross won the Division 4 League title two seasons later (1983/84), which whetted the appetites of all those involved for further success. And seven incredible seasons later, in season 1990/91, the club would finish one of the most historic promotion runs in the entire LDMC history with promotion to Premier League status, passing through five divisions in that time. Numerous cup competitions were also won during that era.

There have been many ups and downs since then. Division 1B is the present home of the club's A-team, and with the recent emergence of many players who have gone through the club's underage system, performances are once more returning to the high standards of the past. Hopes are high that a return to the highest league levels will be achieved in the not-too-distant future.

### *Underage*

The club's past history is primarily that of an adult junior club with U18 teams also participating in the same LDMC League at various times. But if you are a more recent arrival to the locality you could be forgiven for assuming that the club's focus was and is primarily its underage teams.

Currently, Holycross has approximately two hundred and fifty underage members playing in some fifteen different teams of varying ages, making it one of the largest sports clubs in the entire region. Boys' and girls' teams play in underage squads from U6 to U16, whilst U17 and U18 teams also participate in the LDMC League. As already referred to, the club's adult sides are now beginning to reap the rewards of the underage production line structure. Any 18 or 19-year-old joining the club's adult sides at the present time already has some ten to twelve years playing experience under his belt.

Holycross underage teams memorably played in international tournaments in Holland during Easter weekend in 2006 and 2007, with great distinction it must be stated. The exploits and fun had by all still live in the memory and are discussed to this day by those who attended. In similar vein, the club's U9s and U10s played an end-of-season tournament in Galway in the season just past, and it is hoped that many more such trips and experiences will be a feature of the underage seasons ahead.

Holycross, like all other clubs with underage teams, has had to adopt a more professional approach to coaching, and to that end the club has numerous team coaches and mentors who hold at least a first-level FAI/FIFA accredited coaching badge (Kick Start 1). Further badge progression for all involved is planned by the club committee, which in turn will further contribute to underage player development and overall player enjoyment.

The club's underage section has already had some notable successes in its relatively short time in operation. In recent years, club U15, Andrew Moloney, played two tournaments for the Irish Development Squad, and Dean Coughlan was called

up for training sessions for the Irish team over a number of months, also at U15 level. Numerous Holycross players have also been selected for league representative sides and have played in the prestigious national U14 Kennedy Cup competition, which is attended by many of the scouts from the top clubs in Britain as they search for the next crop of professional players.

Whilst the club cannot yet boast that any players have made it 'across channel', the club is hugely proud of the progress of a young Spaniard from Madrid who went to school locally and played for the Holycross U13s and U14s five seasons back, for managers, Con O'Regan and Johnny Walsh, respectively. Last season (2013/2014), playing for Osasuna second squad in Spain's La Liga, Jorge Gomez Sanchez was called up to the first team for a full La Liga game against Elche, while still only 18 years old. At U17 level, Jorge was one of the top scorers in the entire Spanish U17 League. Hopes are obviously high that Jorge's soccer star will continue to rise.



Holycross Under 14s, Netherlands Cup, Rotterdam, Holland, May 2007. *Back row L-R:* Denis Flavin, Sean Flavin, John Casey, Jason Lenihan, Eamon Houlihan, Mike Ryan, Andrew Moloney, Sarah Storan, Patrick O'Rourke, Shane Aldridge, Joe Lenihan, Adam Murphy, Davey Glynn, Brendan O'Connell, Johnny Walsh, Anthony O'Connell. *Front row L-R:* David Storan, Ryan Glynn, James Houlihan, Robert Wallace, David Lenihan, Jack Flavin, Jerry Flavin, Alan Cronin, John Paul Guiney, Mikey Walsh

Development of club facilities in the coming seasons is now very much on the club agenda and a club priority, driven in large part by the club's underage success. Player numbers now require that the club thinks far beyond the present set-up and plans are already afoot for much-needed investment in the season and seasons ahead.

The club takes great pride in the participation and dedication of all underage players and mentors and appreciates very much the efforts of all involved.

The club's website [www.holycrossafc.com](http://www.holycrossafc.com) is regularly updated with fixtures, results and team photos of the underage squads. It also records the successes of the club at all levels over past seasons.



### *Those who are Gone*

A number of early club members have passed to their eternal reward. They include Declan Madden, Tony Brosnan, Billy O’Connell, Ivan Ryan, Sean Hogan, Dan O’Donnell and Pat Purcell. The aforementioned list is, in all probability, not exhaustive, as the club has attracted in the past and still does, members from far and near. Obviously in such scenario some contacts wane and disappear over time.

The above-listed were residents of the immediate Grange or Holycross locality and are especially remembered. The club owes each and every one a debt of gratitude for their enthusiasm, energy and efforts that got the club up and running in the earlier times, and which is continued with much pride and joy to this day by those who have followed in their footsteps. Gone. But not forgotten.

### *A Story or Two*

***PP the Salesman*** Pat Purcell from the Old Road in Grange should have written a book on sales and marketing for Harvard University or some of the other great institutions of world learning. He could sell oil to Arabs or wool to sheep! For each and every draw or raffle that the club ever ran in the earlier days of LDMC participation, Pat would invariably win the bottle of whiskey for ‘top seller’.

Tommy O’Connell, no mean salesman himself, was astounded on one occasion to realise that he had just bought some tickets from “PP” (as Pat was known to all) – for a raffle that Tommy himself was also selling tickets. To this day, Tommy marvels incredulously at “PP” managing to pull the wool over his eyes and extract the price of the book of tickets without Tommy actually realising what was going on. Unbelievable. A true, true sales master!

***Paddy Haighney – Supersub!*** Paddy Haighney from Caherguillamore was one of the most consistent players for the club throughout the 1980s and 1990s as the club progressed from the bottom Division 4 to Premier League status in seven incredible seasons. He possessed a heading technique that many professional players would have given their fortunes for and was almost unbeatable in the air, a fact often commented upon by visiting referees, amongst others. His ability to ‘hang’ in the air for what seemed like an eternity defied all the known laws of physics, and one could reasonably describe the Caherguillamore man in his playing days as living breathing ‘antigravity’. He was rarely a substitute, but on one particularly cold wet windy miserable winter morning, Paddy found himself wearing the number 12.

Manager Tommy O’Connell had left the medicine bag opposite the halfway line. It contained the usual rubs and cold sprays, and an accoutrement of bandages and plasters. But it also contained Tommy’s famous tonic, a ‘cure-for-all-injuries-and-ailments-known-to-mankind’. It was considered by those few in the know to be one of the secrets of the Holycross success of that era.

Tommy's tonic was actually a closely guarded secret that was unknown outside of player members and a small number of trusted personnel on the club committee. Said liquid was clear in colour and had a hugely high alcohol content, 100% or thereabouts. To many, it resembled the illicit and well known Irish Poitín. That's probably because that's exactly what it was. Allegedly.

Anyway, as the morning was cold and wet and windy and miserable, and as Paddy was in the know as to the contents of the magic bottle, he allowed manager Tommy to drift down the sideline following the play, before quickly extracting bottle from bag. Over the ensuing first half and some of the second, the contents of the entire bottle were consumed and to Paddy the climatic conditions suddenly took on an altogether more 'Caribbean' feel.

Paddy's turn came to play. "Throw 'em off" shouted Tommy from distance, and Paddy duly removed the substitute's tracksuit top and bottoms, with some difficulty it must be said. Paddy duly wobbled onto the pitch, replacing one of the sober members of the starting eleven. There then followed the most inept alcohol-influenced thirty-minute performance in the club's entire history, as Paddy failed to get a kick or a header on the ball up to the final whistle, and at all times running about as if his legs were made of a very wobbly jelly.

Word reached the sideline that there was "a serious whiff of the hard stuff" from the freshly introduced Holycross substitute. The penny dropped with manager Tommy, who had his suspicions confirmed after a quick inspection of the (by now) much lighter medicine bag. Only the great efforts of PH over seasons past and the great friendship that existed, regardless, prevented a more serious response from the exasperated Tommy, who could only laugh in the end at the whole saga. And still laughs about it to this day!

*Two International Referees – at two different codes!*

There cannot be a single soccer club in Ireland or elsewhere that has produced two international referees at two different codes – with the exception of Holycross AFC, that is.

Dermot Broughton from Meanus played at underage and adult level for the club before turning his hand to refereeing. He is currently a FIFA qualified international referee and is a rising star in his field, having officiated at numerous national and international competitions.

George Clancy from the Old Road in Grange, who played for a brief spell with the Holycross U18 team, is currently one of the highest ranked international rugby referees in the world and includes the 2015 Rugby World Cup on his CV amongst a long string of other international matches and tournaments.

Holycross AFC salutes its two 'men in black'!

*Memories are Made of This*

The club has had thousands of registered players and members over its almost fifty years of existence. They have come from all walks of life and from near and far. Very far in some cases, as foreign students at Bruff and other local schools have, on occasion, played with the club's underage teams. Polish and other immigrants have also played with the junior squads. In all probability, the non-association with any particular city, town or other sporting code is an attraction in itself to many, who do not feel other allegiances under threat when they arrive at Holycross. That great mixture of people from near and far one encounters at the club is certainly an aspect that sets the club apart from many others.

The following recollections recount local and non-local involvement with the club in seasons past. Both are reflective of the club's warm welcome and general ethos.

*Jorge Gomez Sanchez Remembers*

"In 2009, I started a really amazing experience for my life when I was 13 years old. I did an exchange with an Irish family who lived near Bruff village, in a house called Maidstown House in Dromin. At the beginning of the experience, I felt really sad because I was too young, and I missed my parents, but in a few weeks I adapted, and I passed a really great time there.

"One of the factors that made me feel good was the soccer. Con O'Regan, the father of the family, was coach for the U13s in a club called Holycross, and I started playing at his team. At first I was a little shy because I did not know my teammates, but after a few weeks I began to know them and to stand out! The chairman of the club, who had a really good relationship with me, wanted me to play for older age teams, and I played for the U14s who had a great manager called Johnny Walsh. I did a really good job for them also, I think!

"At the end of the season we won the league at my age, and I played good for the older team. Individually I scored many goals for the two teams, and I felt really good for the season I stayed there.

"After playing well at Holycross, I came back to Spain and kept standing out when I played. The scout of Osasuna, which was in the Spain first division at that time took notice of me and decided to sign me up for the U17 team. After two years scoring many goals for the U17s of Osasuna, the coach of the first team decided to call me up for a full La Liga League game against Elche where we won 2-0. At the end of the season, Osasuna descended to the Spanish second league, and they got into some financial problems, so I had to move to another club. Nowadays, I am 19 years old, and I am playing in the third league of Spain with Puerta Bonita, scoring goals and trying my best to get to a major league.

Overall, I want to say *muchas gracias* to Holycross club, the O'Regan family where I lived, and Mike Barry, Chairman of Holycross at that time, for the opportunity they gave me, and the great time they made me pass at Ireland.



Former Holycross U13 & U14 Jorge Gomez Sanchez (*centre photo*) playing for Osasuna (v Elche) in Spain's La Liga Premier Division during the 2013/14 season.

*Jorge Gomez Sanchez  
Madrid 13th May 2015*

*Dermot Broughton Remembers*

“As I write this recollection I find myself in the Leonard Johansson room in UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland; this the room where the draws for the Champions League and Europa Leagues are made, a room of great importance in European football and one that is steeped in football history. I find myself looking back on where I first started in football to where I find myself now, and what an amazing journey it has been to date.

“My journey began as an 11-year-old playing for Holycross AFC with the U12s team of 1997. I have always been addicted to football, so I was delighted as an 11-year-old to finally get a chance to play with an actual team in an actual league, so much so I remember sleeping with my football boots on the night before my first ever game.

“Holycross was a brilliant club to be involved with as a young child starting his path into football, it had facilities like dressing rooms, two pitches, floodlights, structured training, good coaches, and even age groups above me to try and play with; things we take for granted for now but back then very few clubs had anything like them.

“I think my coaches, Dermot Horan, Dom Kiely and Mike Barry from U12 to U18s instilled the fundamentals that have helped me to where I find myself today. They taught us about teamwork, the importance of fitness, fair play and self-discipline.

I vividly remember Mike Barry preaching to us regularly to remember “The referee is always right even when he’s wrong”, a brilliant mind frame to get children into, to be focussed on our own games and not the referees, something I hope is still practised in Holycross today.

“To those coaches all I can say is thank you! Little did I know at the time, that these fundamentals would be the solid foundation that helped me become an international referee.

“During my time with Holycross I made many friends, was part of many great games and most of all had great fun during all my time with the club. What more could you want, or any parent want from a club for their child.

“I also played with Holycross at junior football level for a period of time even while still playing underage, so when I decided to hang up my boots and take up the whistle at the age of 22, it was a difficult decision to take, due to all the fond memories I had of playing.

“Since I have taken up refereeing I have been very fortunate to have progressed so quickly. I started off by completing the FAI School of Excellence programme for referees in 2008 and became a member of the League of Ireland Referees panel at the age of 23, in 2009. Since then I never looked back. I soon decided that I wanted to be an



Dermot Broughton at FC Bayern Munich’s Allianz Arena prior to Champions League Group stage match v Viktoria Pizen (Czech), 23 October 2013.

assistant referee and in 2011, I completed the UEFA CORE programme, which is the Centre of Refereeing Excellence in Switzerland. That year, I was assistant referee in both the FAI League Cup Final and the FAI Senior Cup Final in the Aviva.

“In January 2012, I was lucky enough to be named as one of Ireland’s FIFA Assistant Referees.

“Since being on the FIFA list I have refereed in and seen thirty-five different countries to date. Yes, it is demanding both mentally and physically but it certainly is rewarding. Apart from the glamorous side of things like the 5-star hotels and business class flights everywhere, being involved in high profile matches entails a challenge each and every time.

“I refereed in the UEFA U19s European Championship Final, and Europa League

and Champions League group stage matches. I have been on the same pitch with the likes of the Bayern Munich stars Arjen Robben and Frank Ribery; World Cup winners Manuel Neuer, Bastian Schweinstiger, Thomas Muller and Mario Gotze; some Premiership stars like Bratislav Ivanovic, Njama Matic of Chelsea, Edin Dzeko and Samir Nasri of Manchester City; and lined up for the Champions League anthem in front of a crowd of 71,000 people at the Allianz Arena, the home of FC Bayern Munich.

“I always think back to where my journey in football began and only have fond memories. I am proud to say to anyone I meet in Europe who asks did I play – ‘I played with Holycross AFC.’”

### *Thank You*

Thanks to anyone and everyone who has helped the club in any manner whatsoever since its foundation. It has become a local institution of almost fifty years existence through your efforts and has been and continues to be a social focal point for many. Some contributions have been huge in terms of giving of members’ personal time and resources.

But regardless of the extent of assistance or support provided: to all committee members and officers, sponsors, sideline supporters, pitch liners, net hangers, hedge trimmers, grass cutters, grass collectors, flood lighting erectors and maintainers, drain diggers, jersey washers, ticket sellers, ticket buyers, managers, coaches, parents who drive kids to matches every week and shout ‘Come on the Cross’, those who have given their land over the years for the club’s playing pitches (particularly the Reardon family of Holycross) and to many others who may not find inclusion in the aforementioned list but have supported Holycross AFC in innumerable different or other ways – THANK YOU.

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