

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	6 th April 2011
Location	Noel's home, near Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Noel Cooney
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1947 Home County: Offaly
Education	Primary: Pullagh NS, Co. Offaly Secondary: Ferbane Secondary School, Co. Offaly
Family	Siblings: 3 sisters & 4 brothers Current Family if Different: Wife, 3 daughters & 1 son
Club(s)	Erin Rovers GAA, Pullagh [Offaly]
Occupation	Irish Dairy Services Employee
Parents' Occupation	Housewife [Mother]; Farmer [Father]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	None
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	None

REFERENCE NO. OY/1/8

Date of Report	18 th June 2012
Period Covered	1969 - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Offaly, Longford, Tipperary, Cavan, Antrim, Carlow, Clare, Cork, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Mayo, Meath, Wexford
Key Themes Covered	Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Refereeing, Religion, Role of Teachers, Irish Language, Culture, Scor, All-Ireland, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Purchase of Grounds
Interview Summary	<p>Noel tells of his early days as a child playing football with his brothers. He goes on to discuss playing for Pullough with his two brothers one of whom, Seán, went on to play for Offaly, winning two All-Ireland medals and playing as an All-Star. He talks of playing football in school and the religious medals that his mother made the children wear while playing. Noel speaks about Bord na Móna and what they brought to the area. He talks about local rivalries and school rivalries. He discusses his style of playing and the players he has admired over the years. He talks about the Ban on foreign sports and how he played soccer. He goes on to discuss his time refereeing and some of the abuse he has had to endure as well as the decisions he has made. He talks about Scór and attending many enjoyable evening watching talented acts. He discusses the pride felt when a family member wins an All-Ireland final. He then sings and recites two of his own compositions one about the abuse referees take and the other about Offaly's journey to the All-Ireland in 1998. He finishes by talking about what the GAA means to him and his family and their continued involvement.</p> <p>00:24 Talks of his early days, as one of eight, growing up in Pullough between Tullamore and Ferbane. Mentions playing football next to the Grand Canal and learning to swim.</p> <p>01:58 Tells of his father playing for Pullough, now Erin Rovers and how injury put an end to his career.</p> <p>02:20 Speak of playing with his two brothers on the Pullough team that contested the 1969 county final and how his brother Seán went on to win two All-Ireland medals for Offaly in 1971 and 1972 and played as an All-Star in 1971 and 1973.</p> <p>02:36 Talks about his other brother Paddy who was a better footballer but was 'too fond of the women' and wouldn't train.</p>

	<p>03:03 Speaks of working the bog and walking miles across it to play a game before coming back to work. Mentions that if it was an important game his father would take thirty or forty players there by tractor and trailer.</p> <p>03:40 Tells how there was no other sports in the area and there were no pubs or dances only football.</p> <p>04:00 Talks about Bord na Móna bringing workers to the area and mentions Mayo men playing for Pullough in Junior County Finals such as Johnny Dunachan and Clerkin from Roscommon.</p> <p>04:45 Talks of the basic home set up of his youth and sitting with friends and neighbours listening to Michael O'Hehir on the wet battery radio.</p> <p>05:09 Tells of his other brothers and the various levels of involvement they had in Gaelic games.</p> <p>05:53 Talks of going to Pullough National School and going on to Saint Sarins in Ferbane with Tony McTeagan and Seán Grogan.</p> <p>06:17 Talks about a teacher Conleth Hanlon who encouraged the boys to play football. Mentions the routine of playing after school</p> <p>07:22 Recalls having a Saint Martin's medal sown into his football shorts and having to wear scafflers to protect them.</p> <p>07:52 Tells of taking part in the Under 14 school championships and the politics involved selecting the local teams.</p> <p>08:30 Speaks of his first or second evening playing with John Daly and the rest of the "adults". Mentions Joe Devrey, Paddy Carroll and his brother Seán.</p> <p>10:20 Recalls Peter Moore who trained the team in 1968 and 1969. Talks of the Mill House Cup and their parish rivalries with Ballycumber and Cloghan Saint Rynaghs, Greg Hughes' club.</p> <p>12:35 Speaks of the 1969 Championship match against Ballycumber.</p> <p>13:58 Talks of playing in Saint Sarins and Tony McTeague and his free taking.</p> <p>15:30 Speaks of Seán and Michael Grogans, Tony McTeague and Brendan Clarke and their involvement in school and</p>
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	<p>county football. Mentions Father Reynolds, from Longford, who looked after Saint Sarins.</p> <p>16:55 Talks of the rivals such as the vocational school in Ferbane and the technical school in Banagher. Mentions primary schools players facing each other at secondary school level. Also mentions the number of county minor players on the Sarins team.</p> <p>18:00 Recalls the players that he admired, Tony McTeague, Gerry O'Malley of Roscommon, Willie Bryan, Jack O'Shea of Kerry, Matt Connor, Mick O'Connell and Dermot Healy.</p> <p>19:43 Talks of his own time playing and his dogged style. Also mentions his brothers' positions and the others on the team including four sets of three brothers, themselves, the Buckley's, the Rosneys and the Laverys.</p> <p>21:18 Tells of playing football with his brothers and the constant talk of football and of prayers in the house. Mentions the parish priest, who was Chairman of the Ballycumber team, praying for both teams to win. The same priest later became Chairman of the Pullough club.</p> <p>24:40 Speaks of his mother and how she worried whenever the boys played. Mentions how she would go for a walk when Seán's matches were on television.</p> <p>26:21 Discusses the facilities available now in Pullough including an all weather pitch and social centre and compares it to his days playing.</p> <p>27:04 Talks about the support of his sisters at matches. Tells of his sister Theresa who played football for a short time. Mentions how a football match in Pullough would empty the village because of the level of support.</p> <p>28:24 Speaks about playing football when young with a rag ball or turf or a can.</p> <p>29:00 Tells of getting his first football, which was very heavy when it got wet, which it did playing close to the canal. Talks of getting into the canal and not being able to swim.</p> <p>30:42 Speaks of the pressure that young players are under when in his youth you just played for fun.</p> <p>31:00 Talks about his days playing wing back and being player of the year in 1969 when they played in the county final. Mentions travelling to Castledaly About fifteen miles away from Pullough in a tractor and trailer (30 people in the</p>
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	<p>trailer).</p> <p>32:13 Tells of trying to fit in the training when working in Nenagh, an hour and a quarter drive each way.</p> <p>33:05 Speaks of getting married and his work in the mines where he played for the Silvermine's team that won a Munster inter firms football championship. Mentions players such as, Jack Dunlea, Noel O'Dwyer who played hurling for Tipperary and Tommy Dwyer who played football for Tipperary.</p> <p>33:45 Talks of playing Tynagh Mines and the pitch being flooded but having to play on.</p> <p>34:20 Tells of the great social group in the mines with GAA and soccer being played and his first attempt at playing soccer.</p> <p>35:34 Speaks of playing Pitch and Putt in Nenagh and winning a Tipperary Intermediate championship.</p> <p>35:49 Tells of stepping out of team photographs, in the Midland Tribune, when playing illegally for Silvermines. Mentions playing in the North Tipperary Junior Football final against Greg Hughes who was playing for Lurragh and then meeting him again playing for Rynagh's in the first round of the Senior Championship. Greg Hughes also played for Offaly.</p> <p>37:10 Speaks of football being in the blood and how his wife was not impressed with the amount of time he spent on football. Mentions playing, refereeing at local and inter-county level and moving on to assessing.</p> <p>37:30 Talks about refereeing and the abuse they take. Mentions Paul Rouse and the 'discussions' they would have about refereeing.</p> <p>38:05 Recalls his brother Seán, his fitness and his part in the 1971 and 1972 All-Irelands and the All-Stars. Mentions his other brother Paddy and John Dowling asking him to try out for Offaly. Also mentions Tony McTeague being unable to score against Paddy.</p> <p>39:36 Recalls a story about Seán breaking his collar bone in a match against Kerry in the replay of the All-Ireland final and the family visiting him in hospital and Paddy's attitude to the situation. Mentions Eugene Mulligan being hurt also.</p> <p>40:54 Talks of the pride in having a family member winning an All-Ireland medal but also the worry involved if they were</p>
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	<p>beaten. Mentions going to Mullingar and Offaly playing Longford and John Daly stating that if they won that match they would go on to win the All-Ireland, which they did.</p> <p>42:13 Talks about the importance of football to the youth.</p> <p>42:48 Speaks of always being able to field a team over the years and winning Junior and Intermediate Championships. Mentions the stature of those playing and the conditions they played in.</p> <p>44:12 Talks of moving into refereeing at a match in Ballycumber with a broken wrist.</p> <p>45:00 Tells of John Dowling getting him to referee matches in 1980 and then moving on to the minor final in 1982 and seven county finals at all levels to Junior in 1983. In 1984 refereed the Centenary final. Mentions having no training and just sticking to the rules as he had learned them.</p> <p>46:11 Talks of sticking to the rules too rigidly in the county final in 1982 as he awarded 62 frees in the 60 minute game.</p> <p>46:32 Speaks of his development as a referee and curbing his temper over time. John Dowling taught him to have patience when refereeing and not to react to taunts from the crowd.</p> <p>48:34 Recalls being abused by one individual in O'Connor Park and taking a swing at him and breaking his knuckle on a post. Mentions one woman who he thought was going to congratulate him but instead accused him of being unfair to her team, and his reply to her. John Dowling told him to simply smile at those who abused him.</p> <p>50:59 Talks about the Laois/Carlow game, a Leinster quarter final, when there was a close call on a Michael Turley point that Laois native Bobby Miller the manager of Carlow questioned. Mentions the umpires Eamon Cooney and Michael Buckley from Pullough and Tom Hienz.</p> <p>52:20 Tells of Laois agreeing to a replay and how he was unable to referee the match as he injured in a quarter final senior championship prior to the replay. Mentions the worst comment said of him by Tommy Carr in the Irish Independent that it was an act of God that he had broken his wrist.</p> <p>53:50 Tells of this being the most hurtful comment he has endured and how it has followed him since then. Mentions Scór and the Meath/Louth game 2011. Talks of his children</p>
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	<p>reading this in the papers.</p> <p>55:25 Speaks of being in favour of the video umpire for deciding close calls for scores.</p> <p>55:57 Tells of asking the Martin Turley who took the kick if it was a point or not and being told he couldn't miss from that distance, even though he had.</p> <p>56:17 Tells of players and how they don't tend to give referees abuse. Although Mentions refereeing a Walsh Island game and Ritchie Connor telling him to deal with a player who had done something and Matt Connor telling Ritchie to play and let Noel referee.</p> <p>57:55 Tells of the difficulty in putting off players. Mentions an Under 21 Championship and Brian Whelahan and Johnny Dooley fighting and being put off and Ken Hogan, Tipperary.</p> <p>59:19 Speaks of writing his reports promptly and sending it immediately before the callers could ask him to change it.</p> <p>59:58 Talks of the buzz he gets out of refereeing. Mentions a college match in 2010 and the reputation of a particular teacher and how he dealt with him.</p> <p>01:02:11 Tells of a match between Ballyfin and Portlaoise and two players fighting and him sending them off.</p> <p>01:05:27 Talks of his umpires and the banter between them. Mentions a college hurling match in Kilcormack in which the umpire was felling under the weather after a party the night before.</p> <p>01:06:49 Tells of how he works with the umpires and their relationships. Mentions one match in Galway with Galway and Roscommon playing and Frank McLoughlin.</p> <p>01:08:34 Recalls a story surrounding a twenty pound note received as payment for refereeing in Tullamore which turned out to be fake. Mentions Andy Gallaher, Mick Dunne, Kevin Corrigan, Pat Cleary and Claffey's of Moate.</p> <p>01:10:18 Talks of some of the decisions that are held against him and how he deals with it. Mentions the Minor final in 1982 Tullamore and Clara and Larry Molloy's point.</p> <p>01:11:33 Speaks about getting involved in assessing referees and what it involves. Mentions the type of games he assessed such as Munster hurling final, Leinster Under 21 final, All-Ireland Minor final and All-Ireland Senior final. Also mentions games between Longford and Cavan hurling and</p>
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	<p>Tipperary and Cork.</p> <p>01:12:51 Talks of being asked to train clubs and how his time is taken up set dancing, sean-nós dancing and old time traditional step dancing.</p> <p>01:13:19 Speaks of still being involved in Érin Rovers and how they are still going in football and hurling. Mentions their hurling wins at Junior A and Junior B and Intermediate levels.</p> <p>Also mentions they have players on the Offaly Under 21 Hurling team and on the Junior football team.</p> <p>01:14:29 Talks of going to Scór and enjoying it. Although it is going down somewhat in some areas in Offaly.</p> <p>01:17:16 Sings a song of his about the abuse that referees and umpires endure on the field.</p> <p>01:20:29 Explains the background to his song about Offaly's path to the 1998 All-Ireland final, and goes on to recite it. Mentions Meath, Wexford, Johnny Dooley, Michael Bond Antrim, Clare, Kilkenny and Hubert Rigley.</p> <p>01:25:40 Talks of how important the GAA is to him in his life, coming a close second to his family. Tells of his pride for his club.</p> <p>01:27:23 Tells of the craic in playing and refereeing over the years. Mentions John Daly, Cooneys, Dalys.</p> <p>01:28:43 Speaks of cycling to Ferbane for the batteries for the radio on Sunday as a young boy.</p> <p>01:29:36 Talks of his son Patrick who played for Offaly while his daughters wouldn't have the same interest although they do go to dances together.</p> <p>01:31:06 Talks about the GAA and its place in Irish culture.</p> <p>01:32:14 Speaks of his families involvement with Seán training teams, Eamonn as secretary and chairman of a club and Mickey and Paddy still involved.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p>

REFERENCE NO. OY/1/8

	<input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played football with Erin Rovers, 1957 – 1980 at all levels. Played junior football in Nenagh and won Tipperary Junior Football medal in 1968.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Erin Rovers: Secretary (5 years) Referee assessor for Croke Park
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:33:07
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

I hereby assign the copyright of the content of the above to the GAA Oral History Project on the understanding that the content will not be used in a derogatory manner. I understand that I am giving the GAA Oral History Project the right to use and make available to the public the content of this interview.

Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 18th June 2012