**Where’s Wally? On the winning team that’s where!**

It is every hurlers dream to play for their county. It is every hurlers dream to play in an All-Ireland final. It is every hurlers dream to score for their county in a major match. However, for Wally Walsh these are not dreams: these are reality. But the icing on the cake was achieving all of these dreams on his debut performance for his county. None were more shocked as Wally was when he heard the news of being selected to start in this years all Ireland final replay. “I was instantly shocked with the news that I was to play when the team was named in a meeting the Friday before the All Ireland final. I couldn’t believe it as I had never played a match for Kilkenny seniors before”. This honour didn’t sway Wally in the slightest and he didn’t get over excited about the match- he just took it as another match “I prepared for the game as I always do by trying to drink a lot of water to keep hydrated and to eat fruit and nothing that might upset my stomach. I also made sure I had a good night sleep Friday and Saturday before the match”.

Wally’s rigorous routine for match preparation stems from many years spent playing the game. Wally is a typical GAA ‘head’ playing the sport since he was a wee nipper “I would have started hitting the ball off the wall when I was four or five years of age. I started playing hurling with my local club Tullagher Rosbercon when I was six years of age, playing in the under eight category”. Wally’s interest in the sport was also a result of his families love for the sport and for a certain Kilkenny hurler “I was inspired by my family as all my uncles on both sides of my family and my father hurled with our local club. My favourite hurler when I was growing up was DJ Carey and I always wanted to play for Kilkenny as he was a great role model for a lot of young hurlers like myself”.

Indeed this passion and drive to succeed has stood to Wally and has undoubtfully led to his recent selection for the Kilkenny team. Like most players, Wally was slightly overcome with the situation of playing in an All-Ireland final and it is a day that he will always remember. “It all seems like a blur now but I remember just being blown away by the noise as we ran out. I was trying to take it as another match and not be too nervous”.

However, playing in an All-Ireland final can be a nerve wracking experience particularly for someone who is only experiencing it for the first time and Wally was no exception “I felt my first point really settled my nerves as there was a few balls after coming in that hopped out of my hand as I was maybe over anxious to impress but the point helped get rid of the nerves”. It certainly worked as he went on to score the goal that would by pivotal to the games result “getting the goal was a great feeling because it put a big gap between the sides and scoring in front of hill 16 was really special for me”. Wally’s contribution to the game was so important that he defied all expectations by earning the much desired title of man of the match. However this doesn’t seem to phase Wally as he just thoroughly enjoyed the experience “obviously I was very anxious before the game but days like that are the reason I started playing hurling and put in such hard training for”.

So Wally Walsh is turning heads in all the right directions. He is paving a career for himself that will no doubt leave him well known in the sporting world. Wally Walsh has the potential to go down in hurling history like his idol DJ Carey and it is a prospect that the Kilkenny people are relishing.