

Mary's Abú

Ava McSweeney, St Mary's Secondary School Macroom, Co.Cork.

It was a cold evening in December, I could see my own breath in the air. I was sick to the stomach with nerves, but at the same time excited. It was the eleventh of December, seven o'clock in the evening in Bishopstown 4G GAA pitch. Final Day. The day that had felt like an eternity away had finally arrived after the constant cancelling and re-arranging which had left a feeling of unease throughout the team. The nerves were high but we all knew what had to be done to beat this strong, confident Buttevant side. We were warming up for the County Intermediate final, all the girls ready for this game. We were in the zone. Finally the time came, throw in. All the nerves lifted as the whistle was blown and the sliotar thrown in.

It took us a few minutes to settle in and get our game going but we were on track. Steadily we were getting crucial points between the posts. By about the twenty minute mark we had about five points over the bar. By this point I had taken a blow to the ankle, but wasn't about to let that stop me from performing and giving my all in this game representing my school. I moved from wing forward, my favourite position into full forward to ease the pressure on my ankle.

'Phwwhht' the sound of the half time whistle blew. We had a few minutes to regroup and discuss our next plan of action to get ourselves back on track to where we needed to be. We were a few points down but were still in the game and knew we had the skill and courage to win this.

Back on we went, now the pressure was really on, we knew what had to be done. But could we do it? We had a slow start to this second half, not what we anticipated at all. I could see the girls' heads were dropping including my own as one by one Buttevant upped their score line. The game was very physical at this point and one by one we were dropping like flies. Injuries and knocks were happening to us left right and centre. Finally, something clicked. We got our heads back into gear with about ten minutes left on the clock. Yet again with a lot of effort and teamwork we were getting the crucial point between the posts. With this courage we went from seven points down to a draw.

Although my ankle had gone haywire by this point I was not about to let it stop me by doing what I needed to do. I darted over to one of our coaches, Ms Linehan "Ms can I go back out wing?" I said out of breath and I got the nod. With three minutes left on the clock to get our scores over and stop Buttevant from claiming victory. Finally we

won a free, this was our chance to finally be ahead, but wide it went. Our luck was running out. My mind went blank-all I knew was that we needed a score on the board and nothing was going to get in the way of that.

Finally Mary's won the ball. It was time.

One pass, another pass and it was my moment to make the run and so I did. The sliotar was pucked into me. I got it and fired it between the posts. It felt like the longest ten seconds of my life, praying it would go over the bar. And it did. Little did we know this score won us the match. 'Phwwwht', 'Phwwwht', 'Phwwwht' the ref blew the final whistle. "Who won?" came from the voices of many players on both sides. It was us, St. Marys, St. Mary's Macroom had won the final!

The crowd cheered with excitement and we were all in shock from coming from seven points down to winning by one. This was more than we could have imagined happening to us and we were overwhelmed with joy. We were a young side and supposedly the 'underdogs'. Against all odds we had won, leaving the opposition speechless.

Yet again our courage and passion for the games shone and yet again we got to say 'Mary's Abú'.