

A Rosy Career

A profile of the career of Mark Matthews and his 'Five in a Row' All Irelands!

Few players have accumulated such a host of club and colleges honours as Clonduff footballer Mark Matthews. Known affectionately as 'Rosy' by his footballing colleagues, Mark was for many years a defensive rock whilst playing for Clonduff and St Colman's College. His maternal grandfather, Willie Mooney and great-uncle Tommy Mooney, both played for Monaghan while his paternal grandfather Barney Matthews played for Clonduff in the 1940s. His later mother Kathleen starred for the Clonduff Camogs and for years was an integral part of the Camogie Club Committee. His father Pat played both hurling and football for the club while his siblings have starred for Clonduff in football, hurling, handball and Camogie.

As a young footballer growing up in the Parish, Mark quickly became a mainstay in the defence of all the underage teams he played for. Operating at either corner back or half back he was always one of the first names onto the team sheet. He was a tough uncompromising defender and seldom did any of his opponents get the better of him. He was the rock on which many an attack perished. Quiet and unassuming off the field, he was a fierce competitor on it, never shirking a tackle nor giving an inch to his opponent. Playing for the club U12 and U14 teams his endeavours went unrewarded although he did pick up a winners medal in the U14 Special Hurling Championship in 1983. He starred for the U15 team which won the Down and Ulster Óg Spóirt Competition in 1984. A plethora of Down underage titles then followed. He was an integral part of the Clonduff teams that won two U16 Down Championships and two Down League titles in consecutive years. The same team went on to pick up three Minor Leagues and two Minor Championship titles. At the tender age of 15 he made his competitive debut for Clonduff Senior footballers, of the very few teenager to make a senior debut at such a young age. He was a virtual ever-present in the Clonduff Senior team for the next 15 years, picking up a Division 2 League title and was part of the double winning team in 2000.

Whilst competing for Clonduff at underage level he was also an influential and dominant figure for St Colman's College, Newry. He was part of the successful College team that won the Ben Dearg Shield in his first year. In his second year at the College, he played for the Dalton Cup and Corn na nÓg teams. He won one a Dalton Cup winners medal and a Corn na nÓg runners-up medal. Two more Corn na nÓg titles were picked up in 1984 and 1985 and in the All Ireland McGreevy Shield competition, Mark collected his first All Ireland winners medal with St Colman's. In the latter years at the College he picked up two All Ireland Hogan Cup medals, a Rannafast Cup medal and a MacRory Cup medal. In seven years playing for St Colman's, 1987 was the only year he did not pick up a winners medal.

Mark also played for Down U16s in the North Eastern Football League and was part of the Down Minor Panel that won the All Ireland title in 1987.

The Five in a Row

We have heard of the Kerry Four-in-a-Row but have you heard of the Matthews' Five-in-a-Row? For five consecutive years, 1985 to 1989 inclusive, Mark won an All Ireland title.

1985 All Ireland McGreevy Shield with St Colman's College

1986 All Ireland Hogan Cup with St Colman's College

1987 All Ireland Minor Football with Down Minors

1988 All Ireland Hogan Cup with St Colman's College

1989 All Ireland Freshers with University of Ulster (UUJ)

This was a truly remarkable achievement and few players throughout the country can lay claim to such a remarkable feat.

Mark was, first and foremost, an outstanding Gaelic footballer but he also played underage and senior hurling for Clonduff. He has also represented Clonduff Handball Club. He has a runners-up medal in the Minor Single competition and with his playing partner, Tony



Wilson, holds a County Minor Doubles Championship medal.

As of 2009 Mark is now a successful Accountant with his own practice in Belfast and he continues to play football for his adopted club Eire Óg in Division 4 of the Antrim County League.

The next generation is obviously following in his father's footsteps. The young lad on the left in the photo is Mark's son Daire who is pictured at the 'International Gaelic Football Academy' (local Cúl Camp) in Marbella in the Summer of 2009 which is run by some high profile Gaelic Football players such as Peter Canavan and Bernard Flynn (Former Meath player and current RTE pundit). (The other wee lad in the picture is Ben McConville with his Dad Paddy (Sid) and Bernard Flynn (left). The Matthews and McConville Families were on holiday in Marbella and the boys were willing participants in the camp.