

Senior Runner-Up
Sean Conway
Athlone Community College, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Teacher – Sarah Golding



GAA Wars: Revenge of the Dubs

The All-Ireland is in full swing. MAYO's newest player, AIDAN BALLKICKER, has taken Ireland by storm, and has caught the attention of Dublin manager, PAUL-PUTÍN. Who will win the final? What are PAUL-PUTÍN's dastardly goals? Whatever the outcome, it is sure to go down in GAA legend...

In the final minutes of the semi-final between Mayo and Kerry, Aidan had an opposing player cornered. "Good, Aidan, good!" cheered Paul-Putín, "Tackle him, tackle him now". "I shouldn't", replied Aidan hesitantly. "Do it!", pressured Paul-Putín. Aidan's decision was made, and he tackled the Kerry player without mercy. "You did well, Aidan", Paul-Putín called, "He was too skilled to be left with the ball". "I shouldn't have done that. It's not the Mayo way", Aidan replied remorsefully. "It's only natural. He clipped your ankle, you wanted revenge...", Paul-Putín said solemnly. Aidan then scored, with slight reluctance, and secured a place in the final for Mayo. As Aidan went towards the Mayo changing rooms, he ran into his captain, Odh-Ran Camogie. "We're having a party to celebrate our win and to discuss our strategy, are you coming Mr. Camogie?" asked Aidan. "Oh no, I'm not brave enough for strategy talks", replied Camogie. "Hold on, this whole operation was your idea", Aidan argued, "You planned our strategy, you should take the bows this time". Camogie shook his head, "Aidan, let's be fair. Today, you are the man of the match, and you deserve your glorious day with the lads". Eventually, Aidan gave in, "All right, but you

owe me, and not for saving Mayo's skin for the tenth time". "Ninth time... that business against Donegal, that doesn't count", laughed Camogie.

Their manager, Mike Wyllow, raised his glass, "To Mayo!". "TO MAYO!", cheered the rest of team. They continued through the night, drinking to their success. "Now, strategy" Wyllow began, "Dublin is a powerful team, so we will need our best players, therefore...". Wyllow looks to Aidan, "You will be on the team for the All-Ireland Final". "I will try my best to uphold the reputation of the Mayo team". "Also", Wyllow added, "You are on this team, but we do not grant you the rank of permanent". A silence falls upon the squad. "What?", Aidan replied angrily, "How can you do this? It's outrageous, it's unfair... I'm the best player on this team! How can you be on the team, and not be permanent!". "Take a drink, young Ballkicker",

said Wyllow sternly, as he handed Aidan a pint of Guinness. "Forgive me, Mr. Wyllow", apologized Aidan.

That night Aidan, with great surprise, found the Dublin manager, Paul-Putín, watching a hurling match. "Ah, young Ballkicker, it's nice to see you", said Paul-Putín. "The pleasure is all mine sir", Aidan replied, "I'm looking forward to facing your team in the final". Aidan sat down beside him to watch the match. "I couldn't help but overhear your conversation with the team", Paul-Putín said slyly. "What?" Aidan gasped. "Oh no, I didn't hear anything to do with your plans for the final", reassured Paul-Putín, "I did, however, overhear their ruling on your status", he added, "It is cruel, a young man of your skill, and not to be made permanent, they fear that you will outshine them, Aidan". Aidan pondered on this thought for a moment. "Did you ever hear the tragedy of Dub Pad-Guinness the Wise?" Paul-Putín asked. Aidan shook his head. "I didn't think so, it's not a story the Mayo squad would tell you. He was a Dub legend. Pad-Guinness was a Dublin player so skilled and so wise that he could predict the ball and influence the opposition to guarantee... saves. He had such skill that he could even keep the worst teams from losing". "He could keep terrible teams from losing?" Aidan cut in. "The Dublin training of Gaelic is a source of many players some consider to be... overpowered", Paul-Putín continued, "He became so skilled, the only thing he feared was losing his skill, which eventually, of course, he did. Unfortunately, he taught his son everything he knew, and his son surpassed him soon enough. Ironical. He could save the ball, but not himself". Aidan was intrigued by this tale. "Is it possible to learn these skills?" asked Aidan. "Not from Mayo", answered Paul-Putín.

The day of the All-Ireland Final came soon, and the Aidan tried his hardest to keep his anger toward Wyllow beneath the surface. All that mattered now was the game.

Dublin is a formidable opponent, and Aidan would need to play his best, with no distractions. But the thought of improving his skills, like in the Dub legend, kept

returning into his mind, and following Wyllow disregarding his power, he felt very tempted to leave the Mayo squad altogether. As he was having these thoughts, his friend, Odh-Ran Camogie, approached him. "Are you alright, Aidan?" he asked. Aidan simply ignored him. "Aidan, I know how you feel about not being made permanent, but to be on the squad at all at your age is unbelievable, it's never happened before, you should see it as an honour". "You're right, I apologize, I should be grateful", Aidan said. Aidan swallowed his feelings for now, and joined his teammates on the pitch, for a match that would change his life forever.

The great match between Mayo and Dublin commenced, and Dublin led a devastating lead. They stopped Mayo at every turn, anticipated their every attack, and broke through their every defense. Eventually, Mayo had to sub on Odh-Ran Camogie. He ran on the pitch and approached the member of the opposition who had the ball. "Hello there", said Camogie, confidently. "Captain Camogie", replied Dublin's star player, Gearoid Gormlaith, "You are a bold one". Gormlaith went in for a swift tackle, which Camogie dodged, following quickly with a goal. "So uncivilized", he retorted. The half time whistle sounded soon, and the Mayo team had to figure out how they would come back from this.

Just before half time concluded, Paul-Putín approached Aidan at the side of the pitch. "You must be curious about Dublin's mind-blowing lead", he said, "It is interesting, the things you overhear in a pub". This caught Aidan's attention. "You did overhear our strategies!" Aidan exclaimed, catching the attention of Wyllow. "Join me, Aidan, and you will become more skilled than any gaelic player has ever dreamed of", Paul-Putín said, temptingly, "Ah, Manager Wyllow, great game, isn't it?". "On behalf of the sportsmanship of the All-Ireland, you are disqualified", Wyllow declared threateningly. "Are you threatening me, Mayo manager?", Paul-Putín asked. "The GAA will decide your fate", Wyllow replied. "I AM the GAA!", claimed Paul-Putín. "Not yet", said Wyllow sternly, as he began to drag Paul-Putín away. "No please, don't do this, I need this team, it's my life", begged Paul-Putín, "Aidan, please, join my team, it's the only way to achieve your true potential!". Paul-Putín gave a Dublin jersey to Aidan, and his choice was made. "Stop, I need him!" cried Aidan, causing Wyllow to stop. This was the opportunity Paul-Putín needed, and he tripped Wyllow up, twisting Wyllow's ankle in the process. The teams began to play

again. “How do you expect to win like this, a cheater!”, Wyllow said, wincing in pain. “With my...” Paul-Putín began, as Dublin scored another goal., “POWER! UNLIMITED POWER!”. Paul-Putín turned to Aidan, “Now, Aidan, continue this match without me, I must go to the president of the GAA”.

Paul-Putín received a private talk with the GAA president, where he recalled a hyperbolized account of the recent events. “Sir, the actions of Manager Wyllow have

left me mentally scarred, and we must do something to deter this amateurish behavior”, Paul-Putín demanded. “What do you suggest we do, Mr. Putín?” the GAA president asked. “I suggest, the reorganization of the Association into the first Gaelic Empire!”, answered Paul-Putín dramatically. “What would that entail?” the president questioned. “In short, sir”, Paul-Putín said, “It will keep the strong and weed out the weak in our great game”. Paul-Putín began to explain his scheme. Meanwhile...

Following a surprise comeback from Mayo, there is only one point in the difference, and a vicious strategy from Dublin in the 66th minute left many Mayo players injured. Eventually, it was just Aidan against his old captain, Camogie. “I have failed you Aidan, I have failed you”, he apologized. They began a tough fight for the ball, ending in Camogie’s possession. “It’s over Aidan, I have the ball now!”, he declared. “You underestimate my skill”, replied Aidan. “Don’t try it!”. But Aidan ignored his friend’s warning, and got injured by Camogie’s tackle. “You were the chosen one! It was said that you would defeat the Dubs, not join them!”, Camogie cried, “bring victory to Mayo, not leave it in darkness!”. “I HATE YOU”, screamed Aidan with all his might. “You were my brother, Aidan”, said Camogie, with great sorrow, “I loved you”. Camogie went on to score the winning point, winning Mayo the All-Ireland, and leaving Aidan lost and alone...