

# **The Game of a Lifetime**



**By Ella**

# Chapter 1

Éabha was anxiously waiting beside the phone. All sixteen years of her life had waited for this phone call. She had been staring at the phone ever since she came home from trials. She had been to many team trials before this but these trials were way more important than the others—These were Mayo Senior Ladies trials.

Éabha had been playing football since she was four. On her first day of under sixes training she knew that this was the sport for her. From soloing the ball up the field at training to scoring the winning goal and victoriously running into the crowd with the cup, she loved it all. This phone call would either make or break her.

She sat beside the phone all evening. Seven o' clock, no call. Eight o' clock, no call. Nine o' clock, no call. Ten o' clock, still nothing. Eleven o' clock still no call, but her dad came out of bed shouting about her making a racket. So Éabha un willingly went to bed in the hope that tomorrow would be her day.

The next morning Éabha woke up deflated and begged her mom to let her stay at home beside the phone.

“NO!! Are you mad , to sit beside the phone for a thirty second phone call, I think not!”. So Éabha dragged herself out of her comfy bed and got ready for school.

# Chapter 2

That day at school Éabha couldn't concentrate. Her mind was completely focused on the Mayo trials results, not on the square route of sixty four was. Éabha's friend Cora also tried out for the team aswell. Both Cora and Éabha loved football, and they are best friends because of this. But when they were playing, training or even just messing around with a ball, they were like Mayo and Dublin. In case you've been living under a rock for the past fifty years, that means that they are VERY, VERY, VERY ( like EXTREMELY) competitive. Which means if one of them got on the team and the other didn't I can guarantee you that there would be WAR!

At lunchtime Cora and Éabha meet up with other friends. The girls talked for a while, but as the saying goes good things don't last forever because after only half an hour the girls had to go their separate ways. Cora went to her Tec Graph class while Éabha went to her favourite class, P.E.

During her P.E class the trials results were put to the back of her mind because they were doing football for P.E . All the lads in her class wanted to do boys versus girls, so did Éabha because when it was boys versus girls she ALWAYS got the ball loads and scored. Even though she protested Mrs. Mullarkey, the P.E teacher, said and I quote, “Éabha you know well that won’t happen, for heavens sake child stop annoying me and do as I say”. Éabha decided she would give in to angry Mrs. Mullarkey, this time.

Mrs. Mullarkey started to make teams. Éabha was hoping to be put on a good team. She wasn't. Éabha was put on a team with Johnny, Jimmy and Timmy, who were so bad at football it wasn't even funny!

After the match ( which they obviously lost ) Éabha went to her Spanish class. Éabha liked Spanish because it was one of her only two classes with Cora. During the class Cora and Éabha started talking about the results of the trials again. They promised each other no matter what the results were they would still be best friends. They didn't they didn't get to talk much after because Mr Inestia told them if they kept talking that they would get extra homework

# Chapter 3

After school Cora went to Éabha's house so they could find out who got on the team or if either of them got on the team at all. The girls sat and did their home work quietly for about an hour or so, until Éabha's phone rang. The caller ID said the number was from Castlebar, County Mayo so it must be the Mayo LGAF board. Éabha picked up her phone with no hesitation and put it on speaker so Cora could also hear. "Hello is this Éabha Mercer speaking?", the voice said. "Yes it is", she replied. "Hi Éabha, this is Lorraine speaking. I'm calling in reference to the Mayo Senior Ladies team trials". Éabha and Cora screamed silently. Then Lorraine spoke again. The girls clung on to every word. "I would like to tell you that our coaches would love to see you on the panel this year!". "Yes, yes please", Éabha responded. "Good to hear, I will send on more information in the next few days, goodbye!". "Wait", Éabha said, "just out of curiosity is Cora McGloughlin apart of the panel this year?". "Umm, hold

on a second let me see now”, Lorraine spoke, “ umm, yes, yes Cora McGloughlin is also on the panel this year. Is that all now?”. “Yes, thank you, goodbye”, Éabha blurted out excitedly.

The girls were ecstatic. No words could describe how happy they were. They started jumping up and down and calling their friends and family. All of them were very excited and happy but Cora’s dad was nearly more excited than them!

Cora and Éabha then cycled up to the shop and bought Pringles, chocolate, jellies, chips, Coke, crisps and all the other things you’d think footballers wouldn’t eat. That night was a night to remember because if you haven’t guessed yet the Cora and Éabha had a party, not a big party because they were the only ones there, but it was still a party.

The next day Éabha got a message from her new coach James Lyons. It was the training timetable for the season!!

This is what really said to Éabha “ Wow I’m actually on the Mayo Senior Ladies Panel!”

Monday	Tuesday	Wednes- day	Thurs- day	Friday	Satur- day	Sunday
Training @	Day off	Training @ 6:00	Day off	Training @ 7:00	Day off	Training @ 6:00
Day off	Training @ 6:00	Day off	Training @ 7:00	Day off	Training @ 6:00	Day off

# Chapter 4

It was a week later. Tomorrow was Éabha and Cora's first training session with the Mayo Ladies. They were both beyond excited and nervous. It was 3:00pm and training was at 7:00pm. Cora and Éabha were in Home Ec which was the second of the two classes they had together. This was Éabha's second favourite class but today she couldn't enjoy it because the thoughts of Mayo training wouldn't leave her head. Her Home Ec teacher Mrs Cronin started getting a bit annoyed at her because instead of measuring out sugar for her cupcakes she was measuring out salt! YUCK!!

When school was over she raced down to her Mam's as if her life depended on it. She pushed and shoved through the crowded halls of the school, luckily not spotted by a teacher!

At home Éabha jotted down her homework as fast as lightning. When she finished her homework she was very stressed about training and couldn't get her head around simple tasks like emptying the dishwasher, so she decided

to draw up a list of things she had to do before training. So at five o' clock until half five she watched television. After that she ate her dinner, Spaghetti Bolognese. Then at 6 o' clock as planned she changed in to her football gear. After that she got her gum shield, gloves and filled up her water bottle in case the coaches didn't bring water to training, and then she went outside to stretch and practise a bit for 5 minutes. Finally at twenty past 6 Éabha and her Dad went pick up Cora and set off to McHale park for training.

5:00—5:30 = Watch television

5:30—6:00 = Eat Dinner

6:00—6:15 = Get changed and ready

6:15—6:20 = Stretch and practise

6:20 = GO TO TRAINING!!

When they arrived the two girls raced inside shouting 'Goodbye' and 'Thanks' over their shoulders to Éabha's Dad. Once inside their coach James Lyons greeted them and welcomed them to the team. They then proceeded to the dressing room to find three members of their new team. Cora and Éabha quickly put on their boots and made sure that they had their gloves and gum shields, and waited for everyone else to come because now there were only five people there.

Slowly people started to arrive, but no one was late. After the last two people arrived ( Niamh and Grace Kelly )

James then came into the dressing room and said, “Hello everyone, my name is James Lyons for those of you who don't know me. First of all I'd like to welcome all our new players, I hope ye all enjoy your time with the Mayo Ladies and back all of you on the panel last year”. Cora and Éabha were listening to every word of his speech, but in their heads wish he'd rap it up because they couldn't wait to get training! “Now this year we came back to training a bit late”, he spoke again, “So that means longer, tougher and more frequent training sessions because we need to get a move on if we're playing Cork four weeks from next Saturday!”

The whole team was in shock and murmurs like ‘WHAT!’ and ‘God that's not a long time to prepare’ went around the dressing room. Now they were even more eager to go out and play, and they did just that.

# Chapter 5

Once everyone was outside they started doing a warm up, then sprints and after that they did basic skills like so- loing, handpassing, kicking, shooting and picking up the ball fast. After that they did a bit of work on defence and offence, and finally a bit of a game.

After training James brought them back into the dressing room and said, “now girls we have a lot of work to do before we face Cork ok?”, he said, “oh and also our next training session will be up in the gym upstairs”. “Bye see ye in two days time” and “see you then” chorused the girls.

When Cora’s Mom picked up the girls she asked them about training , in which they responded in exhausted voices, “Good, very tired, gym training in two days time”. As you could imagine the car was EXTREMELY quiet on the car trip home.

Once at home Éabha told her Dad about training the same was Cora told her Mom, briefly. She also told him

about the game four weeks from next Saturday. He was more shocked than her, “Éabha”, he said, “do everything that man tells you to do, go to every training and stay back afterwards to help bring in all the stuff off the pitch, practise at home and always be on time if you want to be in the starting fifteen Saturday four weeks time”, he told her. As crazy as it sounds Éabha took all of her Dad’s advice and did everything her Dad told her to do.

So for the next four weeks Éabha did everything James told her to do, went to every single training and helped clean up afterwards, she practised every single day and sure enough was one of the starting fifteen for Mayo versus Cork!



# Chapter 6

It was finally match day. Éabha was the most excited she'd ever been! Cora and her talked on the phone all morning. Éabha was told at their training session on Thursday that she would be starting in forwards and if they were finding it hard to get past the Cork defenders she would swap with Sarah Rowe and play midfield.

Cora however wasn't starting but James told her to stay warmed up as he was planning to play her at some time in the game. At eleven o' clock Cora and Éabha wrapped up the call so they could get ready.

At twelve o' clock Cora and Éabha met up outside McHale park and walked into the dressing room together. In there about half the team were nervously putting on their jerseys, so Éabha put on number thirteen as she'd been told at the last training session and Cora put on number seventeen as she had also been told at training.

Once everyone had their jerseys on James entered the dressing room to give the team talk, he went over tactics and told them to do their best. Then Cora Staunton, the

captain spoke, she said, “Look girls, the amount of hours ye’ve given to this team is amazing, now lets go and do our best”. All the girls ran out of the dressing room excited and pumped up for the match. After fifteen minutes of the game the score was seven points to Cork six points to Mayo. At half time the score was 1-6 to Mayo and 1-10 to Cork it was time for Éabha and Sarah to swap. Fifteen minutes into the second half 2-10 to Mayo and 1-11 to Cork. Then finally at full time it was 2-14 to Mayo and 1-15 to Cork. Mayo had won!! This put them in a great position in the league!!



# Chapter 7

## 5 MONTHS LATER

After loosing the division 1 league final to Kerry the girls were determined to win the All - Ireland Final. The team was training for two and a half hours five days a week. James was determined to win the final even if it was the last thing he'd do as manager of the Mayo Ladies.

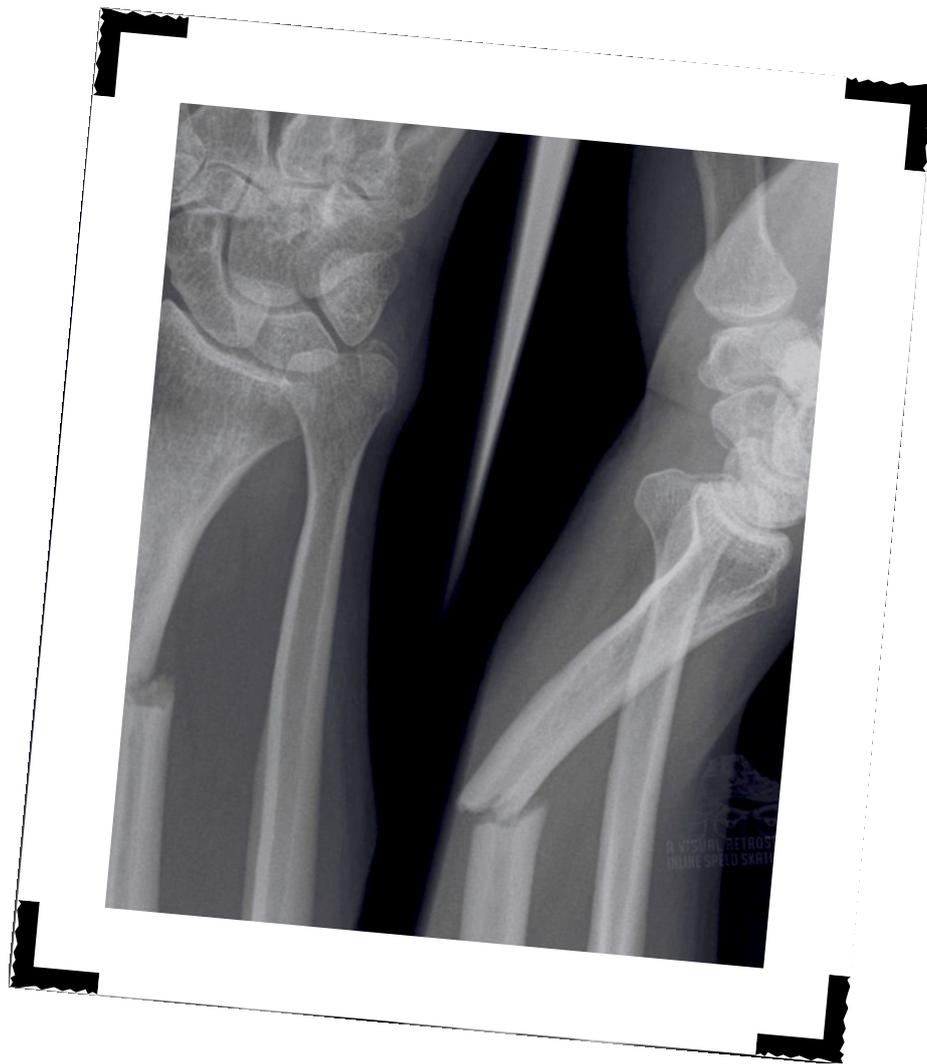
The final was on the seventeenth of August and they had their last training session tomorrow, the fifteenth of August and on the sixteenth of August they were going up to Dublin and staying in the Croke Park Hotel. It was currently the fourteenth of August and Éabha and Cora were in Mr Inestia's Spanish class watching Dora the Explorer because that's what sixteen year old TY's do in Spanish, at least that's what they do in Mr Inestia's Spanish class. Again Cora and Éabha were talking about football. Also again Mr Inestia threatened them with extra homework. After another seven minutes of secretly whispering the class was over. So the girls left school to get a few more hours of training in at home before the official last

training of the season.

After school the next day Éabha and Cora set off to their last training session of the season. At training the team did a twenty minute warm up, basic skills for ten minutes and sprints for five minutes. Then they worked on a few tactics for twenty minutes and finally a practise match for an hour.

With five minute to go in the practise match Éabha's team, the red team, were tied 1-13 to 1-13 with Cora's team, the green team. But then the ball lobbed over Éabha's markers head and into Éabha's hands, this was it she had a clear view of the goal. She quickly ran towards the goal, but she wasn't fast enough. Her marker tackled her from behind and sent Éabha fling across the field. Éabha was in agony. The game immediately stopped and everyone crowded around her. James called the ambulance and ten minutes Éabha was in the ambulance with Cora and James on their way to the hospital.

Once they got to the hospital Éabha was seen by a doctor straight away and went to the x-ray room for a x-ray. After the x-ray an osteopath took a look at the images from the x-ray and said, "by the looks of things Éabha you have fractured your arm". This was the worst day of her life.



Éabha's broken arm

# Chapter 8

For Éabha the next day and a half was a blur. All she ever wanted to do just about to happen and it was taken away from her at what felt like the last second.

She went from lying down on a hospital bed to toggging out in the dressing room at Croke Park (because James was determined that she'd be part of the panel even though she had fractured her arm) in a kit that she knew wouldn't get the slightest bit dirty, well not if James had anything to do with it.

Once all the girls were ready James gave a team talk then they ran out and did a warm up. After the warm up they lined up and the national anthem, *Ámhrán na bhFiann*, then all the other things that needed to be done were done and the game began.

# Chapter 9

There were 5 minutes left in the game and James was getting worried because the score was 1-13 to 1-12 and Dublin were winning. He didn't want to have to resort to this but it was his last hope, and that was to play Éabha. When he told Éabha the news she was over joyed. With three minutes to go the Dublin corner forward scored a point. Mayo was becoming hopeless. But the Sarah Rowe got the kickout, passed it off to Éabha ( thirty seconds to go!! ). Éabha ran passed her marker and aimed for the goal, kicked the ball and SCORED. PHEWWWW went the whistle. Mayo had won the All - Ireland Final. This was the best day of their lives!!



**BY ELLA  
MOONEY**