

CIARAN'S 1/2M EURO HAND

Passage West's trophy deluge

By HOWARD CROWDY
Carrigaline GAA

ST PETER'S Community School in Passage West had a year to remember with no less than six county and Munster titles to their name in hurling, football, camogie and soccer, with the teams duly honoured at a special function held in the school recently.

School principal Denis Aherne remarked that it had been 'a fantastic year of sporting success' and went on to congratulate the players, trainers and selectors who had brought unprecedented success to the school this past year.

He added that the school had considered winning a trophy during the year 'a success' with sometimes two trophies being won, which would have been considered as a 'tremendous achievement', but with six trophies in one year in four team codes showed real commitment, dedication and drive by the coaches and players, with St Peter's now considered a real force to be reckoned with in hurling, football, soccer and camogie, with the camogie team winning county, Munster and County Intermediate titles.

He added that it had been such a wonderful year for the school, that a special brochure was published showing the story of each teams success complete with photographs of teams and presentations which will no doubt be kept by many for years to come.

Present at the function were some of Cork's greatest camogie and hurling players, with Teddy McCarthy, Anna Geary and Sarah O'Donovan along with Justin McCarthy, Waterford senior hurling coach, in attendance. They presented medals to the players during the course of the evening.

Congratulations were also given to the teams by Michael O'Mahony of the Passage West GAA club who remarked that most of the GAA players played with the local Passage West club, which has been developing the club for the future with additional pitches, new clubhouse and caters for upwards of 30 teams.

Team coaches gave an outline of the teams' path to the finals and victory, with Finbarr Loftus on soccer; Una McCarthy (camogie) Joe O'Connor (hurling) and John Beechinor (Gaelic football).

Titles won by the school in 2006/07 were as follows: Camogie — Munster Colleges U16 ½ — Cork Colleges U16 ½ — Cork Colleges Intermediate champions Hurling — Cork Vocational Schools Senior Hurling champions Gaelic Football — Cork Vocational Schools Under 14 champions Soccer — Munster Under 14 soccer champions.



FLOP



COMMUNITY CARD



RIVER



CIARAN'S HAND



PAUL EVANS' HAND

TRIP KINGS: Ciaran went into the river card with three Kings and an 82% chance of winning, but Evans still had any spade left in the deck to keep him in the game. However, the odds stayed true, and no spade on the river, landed the Carrigaline man over €500k.

'You are something very, very special,' she said to me. 'You are going to travel, you are going to see more money than you ever imagined and you're going to be a terror with the women.' You can believe it or not but it's all come through so far, though the wife behind me is disagreeing with that last bit.

"I wouldn't be one for stepping under ladders either and if I spill salt I'd have to throw a bit over the shoulder. Which one though I can't remember."

Is there any particular hand you think is lucky then?

"Well I was playing Gus Hansen (one of the best players in the world) and here is a guy I really think made a pact with the devil some time, the way he plays himself out of the worst situations, and I had two aces and he had a 9-7 and he beat me.

"I always find myself sticking in that while extra with a 9-7 now and it rarely lets me down."

What advice would you give to aspiring players?

"I think you can learn to play poker well but I also think the best players have certain traits in their personality that you just can't teach.

"I missed a lot of school as a kid but I was always good at maths. I left after the inter certificate, but I was good with numbers and the teachers would be saying if I kept at it I would have done well.

"But I suppose one of the key things

is patience. You need to practice to get good of course. I play four times a week and a lot of my spare time is spent thinking about the game. Attention to detail is very important, reading people and figuring out odds."

Why did you share over a third of your winnings with friends?

"There are a group of us who enter these tournaments and if one fella wins something we have a deal to divide it up. But I think the others

CIARAN'S PATH TO GLORY

After some mammoth sessions of poker, Ciaran reached the final table of nine players at the Hotel Rio in Las Vegas. He was short-stacked (had a small amount of chips) coming in from the qualifying games and was placed fifth of the nine.

He started off cautiously and didn't play for the first 19 hands, getting dealt the likes of a two and a six or two and nine off pair, not much to tango with. "I was completely and utterly card dead," said Ciarán. "It was a matter of just being patient. I knew I was going to have to pick up a few hands, and I did."

By the time three players had been eliminated, he was down to the shortest stack of chips on the table. Then his fortune changed and he was playing big with what good hands he got. He went all-in five times on the final table, stepping away from the arena each time he did, not bearing to watch. The strategy worked well and eventually it was down to the last three players: the vastly experienced Alex Jacob (who had entered the final table as a huge chip leader with \$3m in

chips) and Paul Evans, a runner-up in the event in 2000. Ciaran's shrewd play though meant he now held a large chip lead over his two competitors.

Jacob was first to go. The flop showed an ace, a 6 and a 2. Jacob bet \$150,000 and "Big C" raised to \$600,000. A king was then turned and Ciaran went all in. Jacob called and the river card showed a 6. Jacob was holding a 9 and a 4, while Ciaran had two 7s.

He then only needed two hands to dispatch Evans. In the final one Ciaran was dealt a king of clubs and 10 of diamonds, and Evans was dealt a 6 of spades and 3 of spades. Strategic betting ensued resulting in both men going all-in after a flop of K-6-5. Ciaran had a pair of kings, but Evans had a pair of 6s. Another king showed up on the turn, but it was a spade, giving Evans a shot at a flush. Ciaran started shouting "Rebel red, Rebel red" at the dealer and so it was to be, as a 9 of diamonds was the river card, and the Corkman won his first World Series of Poker gold bracelet, the sport's biggest status symbol.

would admit they have been doing the better out of me recently.

What for the future?

"Next month is the World Series, the big one. There is a \$12m prize pot. I'm hoping that maybe one of the Irish bookmakers might come in and sponsor me for that. I'm getting a lot of coverage and my phone is on fire at the moment. Six televised interviews. I never imagined it would be so big.

"I won't be giving up the day job yet but it is something we'll have to sit down and think about.

"Something I have heard though is that when the poker game comes out on the X-box next year, I'll be featured on it."

What did it feel like to win?

"I'm not playing for bright lights and free drinks; I'm on a mission. The money is brilliant but I want to be the best. I would not be playing the game if I wasn't trying to be the best.

"Could I be the best player in the world? Put it this way: For those three days, I was the best player in the world."

Ciaran is not one to rest on his laurels. As you read this he is playing another high-ranking tournament prior to the World Series.

Next week he returns to Las Vegas to play in the WSOP main event, which figures to featuring upwards of 9,000 players this year.