

Mayo ratings

By Eamon Donoghue

1 David Clarke (Ballina Stephenites)



7 Until late on Mayo had won all but one of their kickouts, and he pulled off a terrific save to deny Paul Mannion a goal. Yet Mayo lost three of their last five restarts with him kicking the final one over the sideline

2 Brendan Harrison (Aghamore)



8 Last year's All Star corner back picked up Eoghan O'Gara with the Dubliner taken off at half-time after an ineffectual 35 minutes. In the second half he continued to get out in front and sneak a hand in, time after time.

3 Donal Vaughan (Ballinrobe)



5 A moment of madness cost his team dearly. Mayo could have been a man up for the final 20 minutes, and then who knows? Before that he'd scored a point and ran himself into the ground.

4 Keith Higgins (Ballyhaunis)



7 Started well but did tire and looked gassed coming off in injury time. Made a brilliant block on Bernard Brogan and another interception just before then. Some lovely surges upfield in the first half.

5 Lee Keegan (Westport)



8 Adds Ciarán Kilkenny to his list of man marking victims. Not only did he nullify Dublin's playmaker, but drove forward himself and buried a brilliant goal. Also looked to have been fouled for a penalty shout.

6 Chris Barrett (Belmullet)



9 The experienced defender made turnover after turnover after turnover. A contender for man of the match in what was his best ever performance for Mayo

7 Colm Boyle (Davitts)



6 As always gave everything for the cause, driving into every contest and offering himself time and again on the overlap. Scored a lovely point before the interval, but did struggle early on with Con O'Callaghan.

8 Seamus O'Shea (Breaffy)



6 Some sloppy passes, but as ever O'Shea battled for everything and worked his way around the field making himself an outlet. Came off on 51 minutes with the tank emptied.

9 Tom Parsons (Charlestown)



7 One great mark in the first half, off Cluxton's kickout, and made a massive first-half turnover on James McCarthy. Linked the play well and covered a huge amount of ground at midfield in an end to end encounter.

10 Kevin McLoughlin (Knockmore)



8 Worked his socks off and won one high ball in particular in the second half that he had no right to. Scored two points and won some key frees

11 Aidan O'Shea (Breaffy)



8 Had an outstanding first half, catching ball, covering his defence and linking the play all over the field. Continued to impress in the second half although James McCarthy cancelled him out.

12 Paddy Durcan (Castlebar Mitchels)



6 Ideally Mayo would've loved to have been able to bring him in off the bench. Struggled with Paul Mannion at times, and shot a poor wide. Only his second game this summer not to score in.

13 Jason Doherty (Burrishoole)



7 Scored two first half points, continuing his fine form this summer, but failed to keep his cool and missed a key goal opportunity on 43 minutes

14 Cillian O'Connor (Ballintubber)



7 Scored three points from play but Mayo's main man up top made some uncharacteristic loose passes and he missed a few frees that you'd normally expect him to nail. He has set the bar very high for himself

15 Andy Moran (Ballaghaderreen)



8 Created the goal and scored 0-3; bringing his in-play total to 3-24. A man on a mission, showing and fighting for every ball and had a real bite about him

Substitutes

5 Diarmuid O'Connor had some bright moments when he came on, but otherwise the Mayo bench failed to lift the team late on when they needed a spark

Manager - Stephen Rochford

7 His team were focused for the big day. His match-ups were on point again. Aidan O'Shea had a fine game at 11, Lee Keegan did his job on Kilkenny. Was quick to reshuffle a few things early on and Eoghan O'Gara made no impact



Champions are the benchmark for a final 15 minutes of fame



Malachy Clerkin at Croke Park

Six of Dublin's 12 second-half points against Mayo come via substitutes

It's often a shyster's trick, this. Taking something as vast and multilayered as what Dublin and Mayo produced here and boiling it right the way down, like a chef turning a stock into a sauce. There's no guarantee you'll always come up with the right flavour, that's for sure.

Yet the conventional wisdom turned out to be right on the money. How many previews in the past fortnight said it would come down to the last 15 minutes and Dublin's bench would make all the difference? Lo, it was written, and, lo, it came to pass.

Dublin had three subs on the field by the time Joe McQuillan threw the ball in for the second half. They were a point down and hadn't been allowed to play at anything like their usual level,

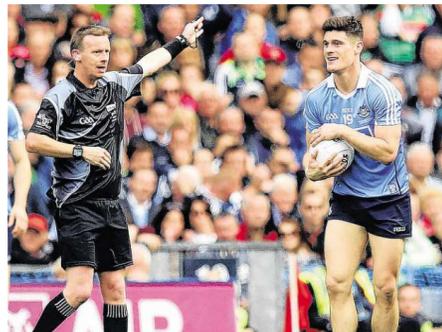
so it was brass-tacks time. If Dublin were going to get out the other end of this their bench was going to have to do some heavy lifting.

And although the contribution off the sidelines wasn't as spectacular as in the replay last year, it did its bit. There was no three-score gift from the gods by Cormac Costello, but they more than paid their way, with Diarmuid Connolly and Kevin McManamon good for a point each. Of Dublin's 12 points in the second half, six came directly from a last pass by a Dublin substitute and Connolly was fouled for Dean Rock's free that carried the day.

More to the point they comfortably outweighed what came from the Mayo sideline. Mayo scored 1-7 in the second half. The only direct contributions from their bench were Diarmuid O'Connor winning a free for his brother to cash in and Stephen Coen feeding Kevin McLoughlin for a gorgeous score. No Mayo sub took a shot at the posts.

Pace, power, accuracy There is really nothing between these two teams. Except for this. Dublin routinely bring pace, power, accuracy and coolness of the bench. Mayo bring youth, legs and vim. They don't bring match-winners.

Scoring can be a crude enough metric, but consider that Mayo and Dublin have played five times in the past three seasons and that on each



occasion the Dublin bench has outscored the Mayo one. Cumulatively, they've outstripped them by 2-11 to 0-5 over those five games. Including the drawn game and replay last year, the teams have been separated by a total of two points: over the three games the scoreline from the bench has been Dublin 0-8, Mayo 0-1.

"I think with the bench that we had we needed to play them quickly, because obviously they're all quality players," said Declan Darcy, the Dublin selector, afterwards. "There's fellas who didn't get on today who could have gone on. We needed to use the bench today - that's a strength of ours. We needed to use that. It was no problem. We talked about taking them on before half-time even. We needed to play to our strengths, and ob-

viously a key strength was our bench. "At this level of competition you can see the fatigue of players. High-level players breaking down in the last five minutes - who's going to break first? I suppose we just have that level of quality on the bench. They have quality, too, but we have some very strong players, and it was a key asset for us going into the game, and it was how we were going to play that card was going to be really, really important when it comes to the outcome. Because it's very fine lines."

Leaving Diarmuid Connolly sitting in the Hogan stand looked like a gamble that had backfired throughout the first half. The bare truth of the day is that Mayo didn't make enough hay in that period. If they'd ex-

pressed their superiority in the baleful coldness of the scoreboard rather than the intangible currency of dominance, the Dublin bench could have been coming in on a fool's errand. Darcy agreed that it was a risk to go with Eoghan O'Gara but made out that they really had no choice. The winners get to say that, of course.

Honesty

"We just watch and see what's in front of our eyes. And if Diarmuid Connolly is playing well he gets a slot, and if he doesn't he doesn't. We don't play to the reputation. We watch what we see, and if Diarmuid is producing the goods we play Diarmuid Connolly. So that's the honesty we have within the group.

"That's the way the group operates. It's an honesty kind of a thing, and the performance piece is really important. How your attitude is coming up to training reflects in whether you get the slot or not.

"Absolutely, it was a risk. The safe bet would have been not to start Eoghan, to go traditional, maybe start Niall [Scully] and Paul [Flynn]. But then you have to take chances to get across the line sometimes."

Connolly was terrific, scoring an unbelievable point that took him around four Mayo tackles/fouls, laying on the last pass for two more points and drawing the foul for Rock's swinging free. McManamon busted in for a fine score of his own and

Dublin's Kevin McManamon celebrates at the final whistle while left Diarmuid Connolly after he won Dean Rock's late free.

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES CROMBIE/INPHO

sent James McCarthy away for the first of his two points. Bernard Brogan played his part, too, collecting under pressure and feeding McCarthy for the equalising score. Dublin scored six points from the 57th minute on; their subs were directly involved in four of them.

"We would have felt that there's no point in having talent on the bench if you're not going to bring intelligence and energy on to the park," said McManamon afterwards. "Certainly, that's what we did. Diarmuid was really cool under pressure today. There were a couple of times he held up the ball really well, and he won the free for Dean at the end, which was a great response to the wide he hit just before that.

"That's what Diarmuid brings, and he hasn't done that role for us before. There were probably question marks over whether he could do it, and of course don't doubt the man. He really controlled the game when he got on the ball."

The game was about more than the respective benches. Far, far more. But it was a battleground that Dublin needed and held and won. And it made all the difference.

Blue Sunday The five moments that decided the All-Ireland final

Eamon Donoghue



Jason Doherty's shot is saved by Stephen Cluxton

RIGHT CALL?

Mayo were two points to the good as we approached the break having reacted brilliantly to the early goal concession and been on top for the remainder of the half.

Then Ciarán Kilkenny and Paddy Andrews collided into one another, before Lee Keegan led a Mayo swarm. It looked like over-carrying on the part of the Dublin forwards but Joe McQuillan thought otherwise and

awarded a free in. Dean Rock nailed the kick to leave just the minimum between the teams at the interval. A big call that didn't go Mayo's way.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

In the 43rd minute Mayo had a golden opportunity for a three-pointer. Andy Moran showed the kind of soft hands that any All Black would be proud of to take two men out of the game and pop the ball to



Dean Rock kicks a free just before half-time

Jason Doherty

If Mayo were to pick anyone to be closing in on goal with only Cluxton ahead of him and time to pick his corner, their number 13 would be one of the names at the top of the list. But his shot was a nice height for a goalkeeper and Cluxton batted it away.

COMETH THE HOUR

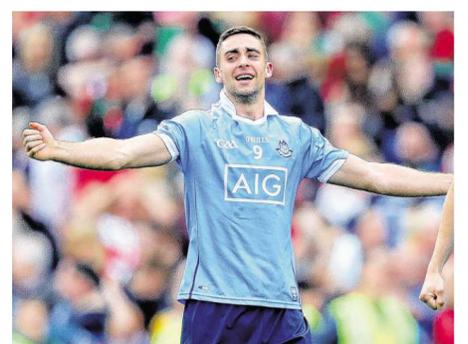
Approaching the hour mark Aidan O'Shea hit a wide as Mayo continued to pile the pressure on

after Lee Keegan's goal. The next score was key and up popped Diarmuid Connolly to evade a number of tacklers before ghosting inside and curling over a beauty.

That levelled matters. Connolly made a big impact off the bench and also won the match-winning free.

SO NEAR, YET SO FAR

Last year Cillian O'Connor had a chance to level matters in the



James McCarthy took a late crucial mark for Dublin

dying moments with a free to the left of the posts. It was a far from an easy angle or distance and it tailed wide to leave Dublin as champions.

In the 70th minute he had a free in a similar area, struck it sweetly, but it came back off the upright. Mayo didn't have a single further shot on goal as Dublin owned the ball.

MAKING HIS MARK

Mayo had ruled the skies for

much of the game - in all they won 13 of the 18 long kickouts - but with the teams level in the dying minutes James McCarthy was first to react to a slightly underhit long kickout to Aidan O'Shea.

He was under the ball to pluck it down before the Breaffy man had even adjusted. The ball was quickly worked inside to Connolly who was fouled.

Up stepped Dean Rock and the rest is history.