

## A Look back at the 1995 All-Ireland 4-Wall Championship

*By Paul Fitzpatrick*

The 1995 All-Ireland 4-Wall Championship season saw a number of major breakthroughs, with Louth's Peter McAuley emerging as the best player in the country.



The Drogheda man surprised Michael 'Duckysy' Walsh in the Leinster Senior Singles final and then saw off Connaught champion Francis McCann of Sligo 21-9, 21-20 in the All-Ireland semi-final to book his place in the decider.

"The Brookville-based McAuley has a number of top titles to his name but would love to secure the 40x20 after such a terrific run – but he knows the class of Corbett, who has claimed the crown for the past two seasons," noted McAuley's local paper, the Drogheda Independent, on the eve of the match.

"However, Corbett has never beaten McAuley in a tournament game and that will provide the present Irish handball singles champion with a degree of confidence."

The final took place in the new court at Nenagh, Co Tipperary and saw McAuley (25) edge it in a two and a half hour marathon.

"It will take me a week to recover!" McAuley told the Drogheda Independent after the game.

"Eddie went into a 7-1 lead in the first set but I came back to square it at 10 all, then he he went 18-15 ahead again but I managed to steal it 21-19."

Corbett won the second 21-16 and in the third, McAuley was 20-12 ahead but squandered two serves at game ball as the holder clawed his way to 19 before McAuley finished it 21-19.

The Senior Doubles final, meanwhile, was played at Croke Park on Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> and saw Michael 'Ducksy' Walsh and DJ Carey retain their title after a stern test from Antrim's Paddy Crothers and John McGarry.

The Cats led 18-5 in game one before the Belfast men pulled it back to 17 but Kilkenny finished the game 21-17. The second followed a similar script; the Leinster duo held a slender 18-17 lead but three excellent serves from Carey saw them seal the deal.

Two days later, Carey lined out for Kilkenny senior hurlers at the same venue as they defeated Clare in the National Hurling League final.

The Minor Singles title went to Cork for the first time when Tony Healy defeated Wexford's Barry Goff in the final. Healy had beaten Kerry's Dominick Lynch and Antrim's Sean Devine in the previous rounds and would go on to add the U17 title at the Irish Open a couple of weeks later, again getting the better of Goff in the final.

Healy would also pair up with cousin Ger to claim the Minor Doubles title.

Both of the intermediate titles went to Ulster, as did both U21 crowns. Tyrone's Ciaran Curran (21) won the inaugural All-Ireland Intermediate Singles competition, seeing off Tipp's Noel Ryan in three in the semi and Wexford's Tommy Hynes in the final, again in a third game.

The Intermediate Doubles title went to Antrim pair Joe McAllister and Stevie Madden, who defeated Hynes and Ned Buggy 21-15, 20-21, 21-17 in the final. Michael Finnegan of Cavan had a clean sweep in the U21 grade, defeating Mayo's Ollie Cassidy in the singles final and pairing with Dwayne Leggett to see off Offaly's Conor O'Brien and Martin Ryan in the doubles.

The Junior Singles went to Joseph O'Brien from Tipperary; Fergal Coughlan and Darragh Kirby won the Junior Doubles.

The Junior B titles, meanwhile, went to Sean McCorry of Antrim (singles) and Tom and Billy O'Brien of Limerick (doubles).

The only ladies grades completed in 1995 were Minor Singles and Doubles, both won by Antrim's Fiona McKenna, the doubles in tandem with Maureen Barry.