

# Nolan shows lots of pride in Jersey

## BASKETBALL

■ Kieran Doherty

LAINNEY NOLAN, a product of the Fr Mathew's Basketball Club, just finished Prep School with Hun School at Princeton New Jersey in the US.

This was a superb experience for this young lady as she got a chance to study for a year, before she made a decision where she will go to college next year.

It also gave her a chance to play at a very good basketball level in the Mid Athletic Prep League in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut regions.

Lainey spoke to the *Echo*, recently to talk about her career thus far.

"I joined Fr Mathew's Basketball Club in 2010, at the age of 9, which was a great start that ensured I would make good progress in my chosen sport," said Lainey.

"From the outset of my training at Fr Mathew's, the excellent coaching, encouragement and support provided by my coaches equipped me with the skills and confidence to make good progress in basketball, as I progressed through the various age levels.

"I was most fortunate to play on a Fr Mathew's underage team that achieved a lot of local league and championship successes over those years.

"More recently, I was a member of the Fr Mathew's senior women's team that has won three titles at national level.

"All of my coaches at Fr Mathew's encouraged and guided me in developing my basketball skills, for which I am extremely grateful.

"Their contribution to my development opened the way to achieving success at provincial and national levels, culminating in me being selected for the Irish U16 team.

"Having the opportunity to represent my country also provided me with the opportunity to visit and play in eight different countries, meet new people at home and abroad, have teammates who will now be lifelong friends, learn the importance of team-work, experience the highs and lows of sport (which prepare you for similar experiences in life), and appreciate how commitment and dedication to the task are crucial if an objective is to be achieved.

"I was fortunate and privileged to be awarded a scholarship to the Hun School, a private, co-educational, secondary boarding school located in Princeton, New Jersey, United States. "The school provides education for students from sixth through twelfth grades.

"The criteria for the award of my scholarship included the ability to play at a high standard in basketball, which I was able to satisfy by being picked to play on the Ireland U16 team, and also playing at a high level with Fr Mathew's.

"It also included a requirement of achieving a high standard in my secondary school studies, and in the grades I was awarded in the Leaving Certificate examination.

"Indeed, this scholarship is a testimony to the excellent progress the Fr Mathew's club is making, and the fine contribution it makes to the lives of so many people in this city.

"Playing with Fr Mathew's Basketball Club has been a wonderful experi-



Lainey Nolan with her brother Ryan, and her father Diarmuid at her senior night before she played for Hun Prep School in New Jersey recently.



Lainey Nolan about to shoot the basketball at a recent game with Hun Prep School in New Jersey.

ence, and without their help I would not have been awarded this scholarship."

In the course of its basketball programme, the Hun School Team played against teams from New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut, as well as competing in the Mid Atlantic Prep League.

"Coming from a schedule of training twice a week with my club teams it took a while to adjust to having team practice six days a week, as well as regular strength and conditioning sessions.

"It was also a very condensed season with 25 games taking place over a three-month period.

"Adjusting to this new regime was helped greatly by the great coach at Hun School, where the facilities are exceptional.

"The programme of studies was both interesting and challenging, thanks

mainly to the inspiring teachers.

"Living away from home for the year was a new and exciting experience, which also provided a special opportunity to foster lifelong friendships, and to enjoy the many new and interesting aspects of a different environment and culture.

"Our team had a very good season with an 18-7 record and we finished runners-up in the State Championships, which was a significant achievement for Hun School, which pleased the team coach and back-up staff.

"I was very satisfied with my own personal performance and the contribution I made to the team's success.

"I averaged 10 points, seven rebounds, three assists and two blocks per game for the season.

"I also got an opportunity to further develop my game by adapting to the playing style that the Hun School coach sought to establish for the team.

“This scholarship is a testimony to the excellent progress Fr Mathew's club is making, and the contribution it makes to the city”

"I am making the most of this wonderful opportunity at the Hun School of Princeton.

"After completing my basketball and academic programmes there, I plan to return home and commence my third-level studies at university in Ireland.

"My Leaving Cert results have presented me with a number of interesting options in this regard, and I'm sure my academic experience over the coming months at Hun School will be a strong influencing factor in shaping my course selection at university when I return.

"For the 2020-21 season, my aim is to resume playing with Fr Mathew's," added Lainey.

The experience of this year will stand to Lainey and to her Fr Mathew's team for the future, and I would like to wish her the very best in her career and sport.

## McCarthy: Being focused will be key

### SOCCER

■ John O'Shea

AS A consequence of the coronavirus crisis, Conor McCarthy is back on Leaside and has been given a fitness programme while waiting for the football season to get back under way.

The 21-year-old made the move from Cork City to Scottish Premier League side St Mirren back in January.

In a time of uncertainty and not knowing when football will resume, McCarthy feels being focused will be key.

McCarthy said: "I'm actually really disciplined. We know we have to look after ourselves and that's part of the job.

"I have to thank my mother for that. She realised I can't be eating tins of biscuits so she generally doesn't bring them into the house.

"Whatever I say I can't eat, she has been really on top of her game so I have to thank her. If I was on my own in Scotland I think it would be different!

"There is no set day for when the season starts up but I think most footballers will be disciplined in that respect."

Prior to last season's disappointing season, McCarthy was used to challenging at the top and for honours with Cork City.

McCarthy signed for City at underage level in 2014 from Blarney United and worked his way up the ranks, making 50 appearances over the last two years and ending the 2019 season as captain.

During his time at City, he was in a setup which was successful in securing League Of Ireland and FAI Cup honours.

That is not the case in Scotland where St Mirren sit fourth from bottom. The recent defeat away to Celtic was a reality of where McCarthy's new side are at, but it was an experience at Parkhead which he hopes to learn from.

"It was strange going to Celtic knowing that you weren't expected to get anything from the game," McCarthy said to PA Sport.

"One minute you are fighting for leagues in Ireland and then in a couple of months, you see that these lads are away ahead of you.

"There is no doubt that Celtic are the best team in the league and the quality of players was at a different level.

"I watched the game back and there was stuff that the Celtic players did that I can take into my game.

"It was a tough watch but these are the things you need to do. You have to learn, that is the only way you are going to improve."

McCarthy is not the only Leaside to line out for St Mirren in recent times.

Former City defender Sean McLoughlin also spent six months at St Mirren, going there on loan after signing for Hull.