

**Mile Buiochas A O Dobhilin 1992-2015**

A Chairde

Following the tragic loss of Aaron Devlin (RIP) last Thursday preceded by his last days in Intensive Care Unit in Antrim Area Hospital the members, players, management and officers of Ballinderry Shamrocks GAC wish to place on record our eternal appreciation for the support from the entire GAA family during this awful time.

The hundreds of messages of support, tens of thousands of social media posts and the vast numbers of visitors to Ballinderry to visit the Devlin home spoke volumes about Aaron and his character but also about the generous and caring people at so many levels who populate the GAA in our Clubs, County Committees, Provincially and Nationally.

The site of visiting club teams from Derry, Ulster and well beyond arriving in our tiny parish in their full club regalia, travelling together as a team to pay their individual and collective respects to Aaron’s skills and personality was a statement of respect and humility that no words from us could ever do justice to.

During our heartbreak these visitors, our rivals past and present carried us on their shoulders and ensures that as a tribute to Aaron we recognise them all as friends.  The images from our National Stadium in Croke Park at the All-Ireland Football Quarter Finals on Saturday and Sunday honouring Aaron’s contribution to CLG and the impromptu ‘applause’ that echoed around the stadium invoked a deep sense of pride in all of us despite our despair.

The GAA as an organisation has been maligned at times over the years.  On occasions even our most ardent supporters might admit perhaps deservingly so…What the people of Ballinderry, Lough Neagh and Ireland witnessed this week past was the GAA at its very best.  United in grief, together we all demonstrated what is so special about our organisation, our members and our communities.

On Sunday we said goodbye to Aaron Devlin and we celebrated his life with the most fitting tribute we could stage in the midst of our grief. Ballinderry Shamrocks GAC has lost the brightest of shining lights as a footballer and a young man.  We know that all of the kindness, prayers and support offered to the Devlin family have been of immense support and comfort to them in these dark days and they are extremely grateful to everyone for that.

For Eugene, Carmel, Ronan, Coilin , Anna, sister in law Pamela and nephews Jude and Matthew Ballinderry Shamrock’s will be there to continue to support them in their grief.

To conclude as described courageously and eloquently by Ronan at the end of Sunday’s Funeral Mass Aaron was ‘ more than just my wee brother, he’s my friend, he’s my hero’. So say all of us!

May the soft green sod of our beloved Ballinderry rest gently on his soul.

Le gach dea-ghui

**Stephen McGeehan, Cathoirleach CLG Seamroga Baile an Doire**