

## **A Brief History of Mastergeeha FC**

### **1. The Early Years - 1979 to 1990**

Mastergeeha FC was formally launched as a soccer club in 1979 under the name of Mastergeeha Rangers AFC. This launch was facilitated by a number of sets of brothers from the townland of Mastergeeha and the surrounding area in Kilcummin, Killarney getting together in Devane's Field in Mastergeeha for a kick around. Early training sessions were also held in the school field in Anabla. The first competitive games were played in the Killarney Athletic 7-a-side competition in the Friary Field near the Aras Padraig. Also, in the first year Mastergeeha Rangers AFC took part in some cup competitions in the Kerry District League. In the season of 1980-81 the newly formed club entered the league with the first game away to Cullen which ended in a 2 – 2 draw. On this away trip the team was managed by Donie O Connor and John Kerins, and supported by long serving Treasurer Joe Doyle (RIP). The highlight for this season was the two draws against local rivals Anabla. The panel for the first season was Pats and John O Leary, Joe O Leary, Robert and John Kerins, Eoin Murphy, Pat and Denis Mc Sweeney, Billy and Micheal O Neill, Jimmy and Mike Devane.

In the first two seasons the club played all games away from home until a field was obtained for its competitive fixtures from Pat O'Connor in Mileen. During this time, training sessions were still based in Mc Sweeney's field in the townland of Mastergeeha with the nearby farmyard of Johnny O'Leary providing a base for meeting and togging out. In 1982 the club purchased its first set of jerseys in the colours red, white and black. So even though the club subsequently changed its name, the club colours remained the same. In 1983 Mastergeeha Rangers moved its training and playing facility a short distance to a field supplied by Dermot Brosnan with Jerry O Leary (RIP) supplying the power for lights and allowing the use of his garage to tog out for games. After that, the club played and trained in Mrs. Fleming's field beside Ryans Hotel on the Park Road, Killarney for a number of years before moving to Jimmy O Callaghan's fields on the Tralee road. The senior team was promoted from Division 4 in 1984 and then from Division 3 in 1988.

## **2. The Middle Years - 1990 to 2009**

The senior team was promoted from Division 2 in 1991 to reach the premier division of the Kerry District League 12 years after the formation of the club. After a couple years of mixed fortunes, the 1994/95 season saw the senior team winning the Division 1 title and promoted to the Premier B Division.

The years from 1990 to 2009 saw many changes in the structure of the club and its playing facilities. In the early 1990s a strategy for the development of the club's underage section was adopted and this was essentially the catalyst for other progressive changes.

In 1991, the year of its promotion to the KDL Premier Division, the Mastergeeha Rangers AFC was requested by the local Community Games committee to enter a team in its under 12 competition. This proved to be the start of a major transformation in the club's soccer activities and since then there have been successes on the field of play at all levels. From this first outing in the Community Games in 1991 it was clear there was a desire by local youngsters of all ages to play soccer and there was a huge interest to compete on the soccer field in organised competitions.

In those days Maurice Guilfoyle was the main driver of the underage strategy and he deserves huge credit for the development of the underage team structure at the club. It is testament to his dedication that he is still coaching with the Academy kids on Saturdays. Our first season in the Kerry Schoolboys and Girls league was 1992/93 when Maurice coached an u12 side. In those early years the underage game was greatly assisted by the proprietors of the Nursing Home in Kilcummin who allowed the club to play games in the field adjacent to the home. The development of the underage game continued with the club entering two teams in 1993/94 and three league teams the following season. Success was achieved in 1994/95 with double cup wins at u14 and u16 age groups. Mastergeeha Rangers AFC even reached the quarter final of the National Cup. Further success followed with the clubs u12 premier winners 2005 and u12 cup winners in 2008. Over the years we have had many successful girls' teams winning the Harmony Cup in Dublin and the Guilfoyle Cup in the Kerry league.

Reflecting the development of its soccer activities, the club also took a number of important steps during this period off the field of play. In 1997 Mastergeeha Rangers AFC purchased 7 acres of rough agricultural land at Kilbrean on the border of the Kilcummin and Killarney parishes. In the following years significant investments were made to transform the property into a top rate soccer venue. Furthermore, at its AGM in May 1999, the club changed its name to Mastergeeha FC. In 2004 the club designed and adopted its current club crest featuring a swan inspired by a couple of swans whose home at that time was the nearby Lacca Lake.

### **3. The Recent Years – 2010 to 2020**

In 2014/15 the club had its most successful Kerry District League season with the senior A team winning the Premier B League and the senior B team reaching their Division's league final and also the Tommy Healy Cup Final. In the same season the club won its first double with the U17 team victorious in the League and Cup competitions. It is a testament to the calibre of coaching and the ability of players at Mastergeeha FC that they now regularly represent their County at interleague and Kennedy Cup and Gaynor cup competitions. It was a great day of celebration when club players Dylan Murphy and Paul O Shea were part of the first Kerry team to win the Kennedy Cup in 2019. The icing on the cake was Dylan getting the goal to decide the final.

Mastergeeha FC's underage teams have also had success at a national level by achieving many excellent victories in the National Cup and at an international level by winning the Hurth Cup in Germany and Brukein Cup in Belgium.

The game has developed greatly at Mastergeeha Fc under the dedicated and wonderful work of the many volunteers and the hard-working coaches. Now the club runs an Academy every Saturday morning during the season with more than 70 kids up to 9 years of age braving the elements at Kilbrean Park. In the season 2019/2020 the club fielded two teams at u10s, u11s, u12s, u13s and u14 with one team in each of the u15 and u16 age levels playing in the Kerry Schoolboys and Girls league and Cup competitions.

In the current season the club also has an U17, U18 and senior side competing in the Kerry District League and Cup competitions.

#### 4. Mastergeeha FC - Roll of Honour

<b>Kerry District League</b>	
<b>Season</b>	<b>Title</b>
1983/84	Division 4 Winner
1987/88	Division 3 Winner
1990/91	Division 2 Winner
2004/05	Division 1 Winner
2014/15	Premier B Winner Seniors U17 League Winner U17 Cup
<b>Kerry Schoolboys and Girls</b>	
<b>Season</b>	<b>Title</b>
1994/95	U14 & U16 Kerry Cup
2005/06	U12 Premier Title
2006/07	U16 Girls Cup
2007/08	U12 Cup

#### 5. Development of Kilbrean Park

In 1997 the club purchased 7 acres at Knockinane West now known as Kilbrean Park. In the following years two sand-based pitches and a floodlit training pitch were developed. The next development milestone came in 2001 with the building of two fully equipped dressing rooms and a utility/meeting room with the aid of grants from the FAI and the Government. Mastergeeha FC was delighted to welcome one of the stars of Irish soccer Packie Bonner to officially open the new dressing rooms and grounds at Kilbrean Park in 2003.

Due to increasing club membership, the clubhouse was significantly extended in 2009 with two further dressing rooms, a referees' room, a large utility room and catering area added in 2009. In 2016 the car park and access road were tarred and pitch side fencing erected. The club continues to invest in the pitches on a yearly basis by sanding, aerating, weed control and fertilizing to ensure excellent playing and training surface for all members and the community to use and enjoy. The

grounds are a credit to all involved from grounds workers and volunteers, to players, parents, supporters and coaches for their hard work and time involved with the club.

In addition to its members, the club also makes Kilbrean Park available to a wide range of organisations. Kilbrean Park has hosted Kerry Schoolboys and Girls Interleague games and cup finals. The Kerry Community Games hold its hugely successful U12 boys, and u13 and u15 girls competitions at Kilbrean Park on an annual basis. Kerry Stars and local schools have also used the club's facilities for their events. Kilbrean Park also hosts the annual FAI Summer Camps with over 100 kids of all ages attending, including many who are not club members.

One of the proudest days for the club was the hosting of the FAI's National Junior Cup Semi-final in 2017 which enabled the club's excellent facilities to be visited and seen by a wide audience.

## **6. Fundraising**

The Government's Sports Capital Programme has made it possible for Mastergeeha FC to develop Kilbrean Park. In this regard the club is very grateful for the excellent support it has received over very many years from local politicians, Jackie Healy Rea (RIP), John O'Donoghue and, more recently, Brendan Griffin who have all displayed considerable interest in the activities of the club.

While the very welcome Government goes part of the way in funding the development of the club's grounds and the purchase of its machinery and soccer equipment, there are still substantial operating costs that can only be met from local fundraising. More than a quarter of a century ago, the club started its Lotto draw which has been one of its main income streams and is still going strongly today. The time and effort by the lotto teams over the years has enabled the club to reach its goals. Indeed, for many years, the late Jackie Healy Rae was ever present to draw the numbers out of the drum at the club's weekly draws in the local Village Inn.

Since 1990, Mastergeeha FC has held a huge variety of fundraising ventures including, Easter Egg Hunts and Raffles, Health and Leisure Fairs, Novelty Soccer Games, Video Horse Racing, Camel Races, Nights at the Tralee Greyhound Stadium, Table Quizzes, Once-off Draws/Raffles and, the latest venture, Bingo. Also, in 2019 the club ran the inaugural Joe Doyle Over-35 Memorial Tournament in

honour of our long serving treasurer. All of these events have been well supported by the club's membership, the local community and by the generosity of local sponsors who have made a significant contribution to the club's continued development.

## **7. Social and Charitable Events**

Mastergeeha FC has also been involved in many social events over the years. Driven by our active Social Committee, the club has participated in St. Patrick's Day and other Parish parades. The club has also held Socials and end of season BBQ's incorporating award presentations. In the past the club has raised a lot of money for many charities, including, Telethon, Cancer Care & Research and Share A Dream Foundation. Currently the social committee organises annual coffee mornings in the three local schools in aid of the Kerry Hospice Foundation.