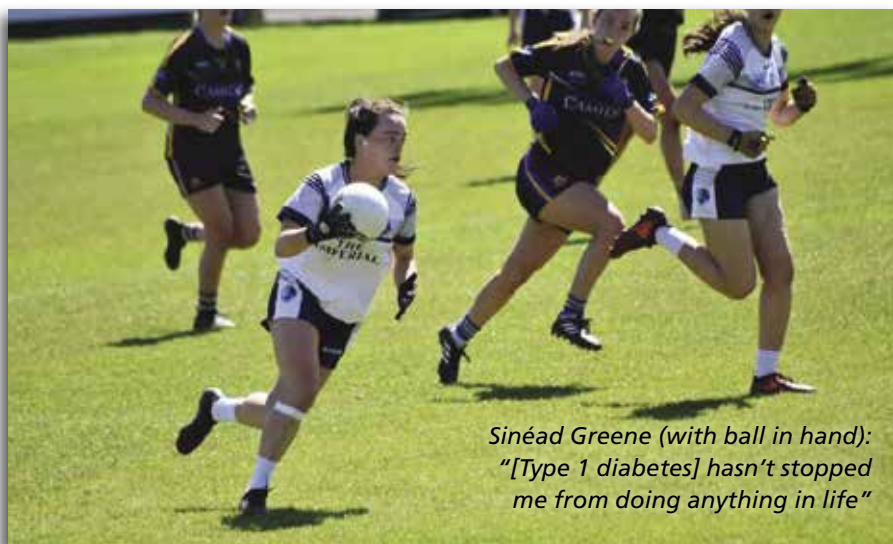


'Don't let diabetes get in the way of life'

Deborah Condon speaks to Sinéad Greene, a Cavan Gaelic footballer whose Type 1 diagnosis has done little to slow her down



Sinéad Greene (with ball in hand): "[Type 1 diabetes] hasn't stopped me from doing anything in life"

Cavan Gaelic footballer Sinéad Greene has a very simply message for people with Type 1 diabetes – the condition should never stop you from doing anything you want to in life.

Now aged 28 and a secondary school teacher, Sinéad was diagnosed shortly after her 13th birthday when she was in first year of secondary school.

"I distinctly remember the thirst," she recalls. "I was probably drinking three litres of water by 11am but still felt parched. I was also using the bathroom all the time and I had lost a lot of weight and was quite fatigued."

After she had been off school for a few days feeling unwell, Sinéad's parents brought her to a GP, who recommended she be taken straight to the emergency department. After arriving at Cavan General Hospital, she was very quickly diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes and was admitted straight away.

"I didn't think it was a big deal at the time. I remember my mam was a bit upset and I couldn't understand why, but I fairly quickly copped on that it was me

that would have to control it," she says.

Initially, Sinéad only had to inject herself twice a day, in the morning and at night, but she then moved to four injections a day, which meant having to inject in school and later, in college. However, she has always been completely open about having diabetes.

Everyone knows

"Everyone who knew me knew I had diabetes and it is still the same now. I think it's important that as many people know as possible," she points out.

Every September, she tells the classes she teaches that she has the condition.

"I have always done that. It's just so my students know that if I get a hypo, I might have to take a five-minute break and have some jellies or Lucozade. Also, we have a few students with diabetes in the school and I want them to know they are not the only one," she explains.

While she doesn't mind injecting so has not opted for a pump, Sinéad started using a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) last April and says the results have been "phenomenal",

with her HbA1c already "drastically improved".

GAA football

Sinéad has played GAA since she was four or five and currently plays for the Cavan women's football team. She admits that diabetes can be tricky to manage when training or playing a match. She has to watch her blood glucose levels closely to ensure they do not go too low or too high, however she always has Lucozade and insulin on the sideline should either happen.

"I just can't ever remember thinking that diabetes was going to stop me from doing something, although my mam and dad may have had that worry. While there is no good age to develop diabetes, I was old enough that I could manage it myself and young enough to think that it wasn't going to stop me from doing anything," she notes.

Sinéad acknowledges that having diabetes can make some things more difficult. She recalls that she struggled a bit when she went to college.

"I was living out of home for the first

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time, cooking for myself and socialising. My diabetes control was probably at its worst at that time," she says.

However, she believes the key to good diabetes management is lots of planning and accepting that some days will be harder than others.

"It hasn't stopped me from doing anything in life. Some things are going to be harder, there is no point in saying that they are not, but diabetes is so, so manageable. It takes high levels of organisation and planning, but it shouldn't stop you from doing anything.

"There will be bad days when you will get annoyed with it, but you just have to accept that is the way it is going to be. Sometimes you might be in a bubble where you think you have to have perfect control 24/7, but that's not realistic. It's OK to have good days and bad days."

Sinéad finds following people with diabetes on Instagram and listening to podcasts help her because "those people talk about bad days as well as good".

However, Sinéad emphasises that anything she has wanted to do or anything her friends have done, "I have been able to do it right there with them – it has made no difference".

Sinéad Greene (right) pictured with teammate Donna English (left) when picking up their Lidl National Football League Team of the year awards in 2019



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