



# House of Pain: Through the Rooms of Mayo Football

*Keith Duggan*

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## **House of Pain: Through the Rooms of Mayo Football** Keith Duggan

No Gaelic Athletic Association football county has endured more anguish and disappointment in the quest for the Sam Maguire Cup than Mayo. More than half a century has passed since Mayo were the All-Ireland football champions in 1951. That year has become a bright and poignant touchstone, and while the county has produced glittering football players and achieved many days of glory since, the grand prize has eluded them.

From the bleak 1970s, when Mayo failed to win even a provincial championship, to the soul-wrenching defeat against Meath in 1996, not to mention the numbing September losses to Kerry in recent years, Mayo supporters might be forgiven for thinking that the gods enjoy toying with them. Five All-Ireland-final losses sum up a modern period of near-glory and ultimate despair.

But for all that, there is an abiding magnificence to Mayo football. They keep pressing and have never compromised the open, often flamboyant, style of play for which the county has been celebrated, while the passionate Mayo public has stayed loyal and loud through the setbacks. In the wake of a season when cult hero John O'Mahony finally returned to manage his native county, award-winning sportswriter Keith Duggan presents an unforgettable account of Mayo's grand obsession.

*House of Pain* is an entertaining, moving book about the people who have put their souls into the fight for All-Ireland glory. Packed with memorable anecdotes and behind-the-scenes stories about the quest for success, it is a tribute to those who refuse to be daunted by the fact that fifty years of trying have brought no redemption.

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