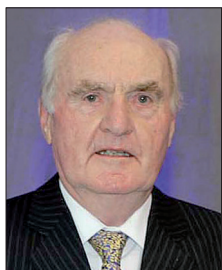


County Senior Hurling Championship 2022



by Seamus J. King

Kilruane MacDonaghs ended a thirty-seven year long famine at FBD Semple Stadium on October 30th when they won the county senior hurling championship for the sixth time, beating a disappointing Kiladangan, champions in 2020, who were suffering a third final defeat in seven seasons. It was a great victory for a team not rated highly at the beginning of the season, a team that had to bear the trauma of Dillon Quirke's death in their group match against Clonoulty-Rossmore in August, suffer the loss of one of their brightest stars, Craig Morgan, with a cruciate injury, perform so poorly in opening half, when their forwards failed to score from play, and face the second half five points in arrears against a team that appeared to have much more to offer, scored more freely and defended more efficiently. But, nothing daunted, they came out transformed in the second half and converted a half-time deficit of 1-9 to 0-7 into a stunning full time tally of 2-20 to 1-16.

The sixteen teams that took part in the senior hurling championship for the Dan Breen Cup were divided into four groups. Group 1 included Kilruane MacDonaghs, Moycarkey/Borris, Nenagh Eire Óg and Clonoulty-Rossmore. In Group 2 were Drom-Inch Templederry Kenyons, Thurles Sarsfields and Borris-Ileigh. Group 3 had Upperchurch-Drombane, Holycross/Ballycahill, Mullinahone and Toomevara and Group 4 had Kiladangan, Loughmore/Castleiney. Eire Óg Annacarty and J. K. Brackens.

All the first round games were played on the weekend of July 23. Most second round games were completed on the weekend of August 20/21. The exceptions were the Group 1 game between Moycarkey/Borris v Nenagh Eire Óg, and the Group 3 game between Upperchurch/Drombane and Mullinahone, which were played at the earlier date of August 5. The other game between Kilruane MacDonaghs and Clonoulty/Rossmore, which was played on August 5, had a tragic ending. 'In or around the 27th minute, disaster struck when Clonoulty player, Dillon Quirke, fell to the ground. The match was held up for a long period while medical staff worked tirelessly to try to save him. The seriousness



Drom & Inch's John Champion pictured in action against Loughmore Castleiney's Tomás McCormack during the FBD Insurance County Quarter Final.



County Board Chairperson Joe Kennedy presents the Dan Breen Cup to Kilruane MacDonaghs captain Jerome Cahill.

of the situation was evident to all and the match was abandoned. He was eventually transferred to South Tipperary General Hospital and all hoped and prayed for his survival. Alas, it wasn't meant to be and later that evening while many were gathered back home in Clonoulty in the clubhouse, the dreaded phone call arrived that Dillon has passed to his eternal reward.'

The game was eventually replayed at Templetuohy on September 9 with victory going to Kilruane by 3-15 to 1-20.

The third rounds of the league section were played on the weekend of September 3/4, with the exception of the two games in Group 1, Nenagh Eire Óg v Kilruane MacDonaghs and Clonoulty/Rossmore v Moycarkey/Borris which were played on August 21.

Preliminary Quarter-finals

The eight teams that came through were as follows: Kilruane MacDonaghs, Clonoulty/Rossmore, Thurles Sarsfields, Drom-Inch, Nenagh Eire Óg, Toomevara, Loughmore/Castleiney, Kiladangan, Upperchurch/Drombane.

Because of the stipulation that divisional winners would get a second chance to qualify if they failed to do so in the league section, Clonoulty Rossmore and J. K. Brackens, as West and Mid champions respectively, got the chance to qualify in a preliminary quarter final.

They were drawn against Thurles Sarsfields and Nenagh Eire Óg, who were the teams with the lowest number of points in the qualifying stage despite Nenagh winning the North title.

Both divisional champions came out of top. Clonoulty Rossmore defeated Thurles Sarsfields by 1-18 to 1-16 at Holycross on September 11, and J. K. Brackens got the better of Nenagh Eire Óg by 3-17 to 1-19 at FBD Semple Stadium on the same date.

Quarter Finals

The quarter-finals were played on the weekend of 24/25 September. On Saturday at FBD Semple Stadium Drom-Inch got the better of Loughmore-Castleiney 0-21 to 0-18. Hampered by injuries to key players John McGrath and Ciaran Connolly and losing John Meagher after thirteen minutes, county champions Loughmore/Castleiney relinquished their title to their improving opponents.

In the second game, Kilruane MacDonaghs edged past Toomevara by 2-17 to 2-15 in a gripping contest. Toomevara led by two points, 1-7 to 0-8, at the interval after a poor first half by the eventual winners. Kilruane started well in the second half, scoring



Kilruane MacDonaghs senior hurlers - County and North champions.

Back l-r: Paddy Ryan, Carl Williams, Ross Austin, Óisín O'Meara, Eoin Hogan, James Cleary, William Cleary, Conor Cleary, Conor Doheny, Rob Austin, Aaron Morgan, Kieran Cahill, Kian O'Kelly, Seamus Hennessy, Rory Grace, Craig Morgan, Eoin Carroll. Front: Niall O'Meara, Conor Austin, Thomas Cleary, Jerome Cahill (captain), Paidí Williams, Jack Peters, Sean McAdams, Mark O'Neill, Cian Darcy, Liam O'Kelly (manager), Cronin Casey (admin.), Brian O'Meara.

1-2 without reply and that gave them a sufficient cushion to keep ahead of their opponents and win by two points in the end.

At the same venue on Sunday, Upperchurch/Drombane defeated J.K. Brackens 2-21 to 1-21 in a dramatic finish. Five points down with ten minutes to play, they produced a winning surge to defeat a J. K. Brackens team that looked set for victory. Upperchurch led by a point, 1-9 to 0-11 at half-time but J. K. Brackens had a fine third quarter to be in front by 1-17 to 2-9 after forty minutes. However, it was Upperchurch who surged ahead in the end to win an historical victory by three points.

In the final game Kiladangan got the better of Clonoulty-Rossmore by 1-14 to 0-12. The loser's traumatic championship came to a disappointing end when reduced to fourteen men following the dismissal of Aaron Ryan, who had a second yellow card after nineteen minutes. This tilted the game in Kiladangan's favour. In spite of this Clonoulty led by 0-8 to 0-5 at half-time but lost their best player, Jack Ryan, through injury at half-time. As well, Kiladangan lifted their game in the second half and there was never any doubt about the outcome and they extended their advantage as the game progressed and had five points to spare at the final whistle.

Semi-Finals

The semi-finals were played at FBD Semple Stadium on October 10 with Kilruane MacDonaghs facing Upperchurch/Drombane and Kiladangan taking on Drom-Inch.

The Kilruane-Upperchurch clash was difficult to call beforehand but the North side turned out to be much better on the day. In very wet conditions they played well and might have won by a greater score but for poor finishing. They had more match winners than Upperchurch and, as the game progressed, they were the difference between the sides Jerome Cahill gave an outstanding performance, scoring 1-4 from play and he also contributed to Cian Darcy's goal just before half-time, which gave Kilruane a lead of 2-9 to 1-7 which they never relinquished. The winners were also helped by a good backline, which stymied any chance of an Upperchurch recovery in the second half.

Kiladangan had four points to spare, 1-21 to 1-17, at the end of the second semi-final. A Dan O'Meara goal in the last minute of the game sealed their progress to another final. They had to resist a late Drom Inch fightback, which almost forced extra time. Drom made the early running and led 0-4 to 0-1 after ten minutes, but Kiladangan got into their strike and led by 0-14 to 0-10 at half-time. It was a much improved performance by Kiladangan and in spite of the best efforts of Callanan, Nolan, Collins and Johnny Ryan for Drom Inch during the second half, which brought them to within a point of the eventual winners, Kiladangan deserved their win.

County Final

The county final between Kiladangan and Kilruane MacDonaghs was played at FBD Semple Stadium on October 23. Kiladangan had started their season well in the North championship with good wins over Kilruane and Toomevara. However, their form slipped a bit after that and they were finding it difficult to get it back. In contrast Kilruane had started off poorly but had begun to improve under the tutelage of Liam Kelly, who had done much to improve team spirit since he took over the team the previous year. It was to take two games to decide on a winner.

The drawn game was a very moderate affair, almost boring in fact, before it suddenly came alive in the closing minutes and served up a fantastic climax the result of which depended on whether or not Kilruane's, Willie Cleary, would point a free in the final minutes to force a replay, which he did in scoring his tenth point in the contest.

In fact Kilruane looked to have secured victory when, as the game went into injury time, Cian Darcy put them ahead with a point. They were dragged back to reality when Kiladangan



Upperchurch Drombane's Jack Butler in a race for possession with JK Brackens Jordan Moloney in the county quarter-final.



Dillon Quirke attempts to kick the ball to the net and is challenged by Kieran Cahill and goalie Páidi Williams in the early stages of the County SHC game at Semple Stadium.

responded with points from Declan McGrath and Bryan McLoughney, which put them one point in front and looking certain of victory until Cleary put the sides level.

Kilruane were superior in the first half but it wasn't reflected on the scoreboard as the side led by 1-9 to 0-9, the goal coming from Jerome Cahill in the fifteenth minute. Kiladangan levelled the game, 0-14 to 1-11 after forty-five minutes and seemed to be in control. However, Jerome Cahill's second goal from a Niall O'Meara free a minute later rocked Kiladangan, but they responded with a couple of points and then a goal by Paul Flynn put them ahead by 1-16 to 2-12 in the fifty-first minute.

The battle really began at this stage. Kilruane drew level, 2-5 to 1-18 after fifth-seven minutes. Kiladangan went ahead with a point, Kilruane countered with two points, Kiladangan levelled again and went ahead in the sixth-third minute to leave it all in the hands of Willie Cleary with his free to draw level once again, just before the final whistle.

In the end on reflection it was agreed that each side had chances to win but that each could have lost also.

Replay

The replay was a week later at FBD Semple Stadium and it was a much better game. Any notion that Kilruane would be underdogs was dissipated as they played the better hurling and were deserving winners in the end. However; Kiladangan had the better of the exchanges in the first half and deserved their five-point advantage, 1-9 to 0-7, at the interval, but they ran into a transformed Kilruane in the second half. They drew level after nine minutes and then pushed ahead with a Cian Darcy point to lead by 0-14 to 1-9. In the other camp scoreable opportunities weren't taken. Kilruane had a deciding score in the forty-seventh minute when Cian Darcy netted. Leading by four points, 1-15 to 1-11 they were on their way to victory. Points were exchanged until injury time when Darcy sealed the deal with his second goal and Kilruane's first senior victory since 1985 on a score line of 2-20 to 1-16.

It was a great team victory after which Niall O'Meara was named Man of the Match, but there were outstanding performances from others also, particularly Cian Darcy who scored 2-2, while Willie Cleary's free-taking was vital on many occasions in the game.

Kilruane MacDonaghs – Páidi Williams, James Cleary (0-1)

Jack Peters, Kieran Cahill, Conor Austin (0-1), Niall O'Meara, Eoin Hogan, Sean McAdams (0-2) Mark O'Neill (0-1) Willie Cleary (0-10), Jerome Cahill, Aaron Morgan (0-1), Thomas Cleary, Kian O'Kelly (0-1), Cian Darcy (2-2). Subs: Seamus Hennessy for Jack Peters, Brian O'Meara for Conor Austin. Also: Conor Doheny, Rob Austin, Paddy Ryan, Eoin Carroll, Ross Austin, Martin Grace, Carl Williams, Conor Cleary, Oisín O'Meara, Rory Grace, Eanna Hogan, Craig Morgan.

Manager, Liam O'Kelly, Coach, Christy Morgan, Selectors, Brian O'Meara, Pat Murphy.

Kiladangan - Barry Hogan, Daragh Butler, James Quigley, Darren Moran, David Sweeney, Alan Flynn, Declan McGrath, Tadhg Gallagher (0-1), Tom O'Meara (1-1), Sean Hayes, Joe Gallagher, Dan O'Meara, Bryan McLoughney (0-8), Paul Flynn (0-3), Willie Connors. Subs: Billy Seymour (0-2) for Willie Connors, Jack Loughnane for Tom O'Meara, Ruairi Gleeson for Sean Hayes, Matthew Cleary for Dan O'Meara. Also: Darragh Egan, Jack Loughnane, Conor Byrne, Fergal Hayes, Jonathon Horan, Martin Minihan, Darragh Flannery, Shane Gleeson, Eoghan Sharkey, D. J. McGrath, Ciaran Kelly,

Management: Dan Hackett, Darragh Egan, Sean O'Meara, George Hannigan, Sean Treacy.

Referee: Conor Doyle (Silvermines).

Man of the Match: Niall O'Meara.



Sean McAdams (Kilruane) kept the ball moving with Joe Gallagher in close pursuit.