

# 3-in-a-row after a 32 YEAR GAP

By: SEAMUS J. KING



**I**N WINNING the county senior hurling title of 1992, Toomevara ended a great famine that had lasted thirty-two years. They won the title in a replay with Thurles Sarsfields at Semple Stadium on November 8, the same opposition they had defeated in their previous, 1960 victory.

The celebrations were mighty immediately after the victory and later in the village. One of the speakers at the homecoming was Neil Williams, who had played a major part in the revival of hurling in the parish, and he had some prophetic words on the occasion: 'There was a warrant out for the arrest of Dan Breen and Toomevara executed the warrant. We'll keep him in captivity for quite some time. He's home to stay!'

The victory in 1992 was followed by two more in subsequent years to make it three-in-a-



Kevin Kennedy and Tommy Dunne celebrate after the 1992 County Final.

row. Nenagh Éire Óg, Boherlahan-Dualla and Clonoulty-Rossmore intervened during the next three years, but Toomevara came back with a bang in 1998 to win four-in-row and dominate the senior hurling scene in the county. Mullinahone spiked their guns in 2002 but they came back for a double in 2003 and 2004, and finished off a great period by winning again in 2006 and 2008, for a grand total of eleven victories in seventeen years, eliminating any vestiges of the famine.

## 1992

Having lost to Cashel King Cormacs in the 1991 county semi-final, Toomevara made the breakthrough in 1992. They started the year well by winning the league, with victory over Borrissilegh and this victory was to prove important as they had to rely on it to get into the knockout stages of the county championship.

They didn't do well in the North championship, losing to Borrissileigh in a replayed first-round game. This put them into the losers group. They beat Kilruane-MacDonoghs and Portroe to win the final and qualify for the semi-final proper. It took three games to decide the tie against Lorrha and Toomevara came out on the wrong side of the verdict.

This is where the league victory came into play. As winners Toomevara had earned the right of a play-off with the championship runners-up for the right to represent the division as the second team in the county championship. Ironically, Lorrha were again their opponents. After a very poor start Toomevara found themselves eleven points in arrears at the end of the first quarter. However, the team rose to the challenge and eventually won by four points and qualify for the county championship.

## County Championship

Four days after the victory over Lorrha on September 13 and won by 2-9 to 0-10., Toomevara played Ballingarry in the quarter-final at Semple Stadium. Four weeks later they played Loughmore-Castleiney in the semi-final. The mid side were hot favourites to win

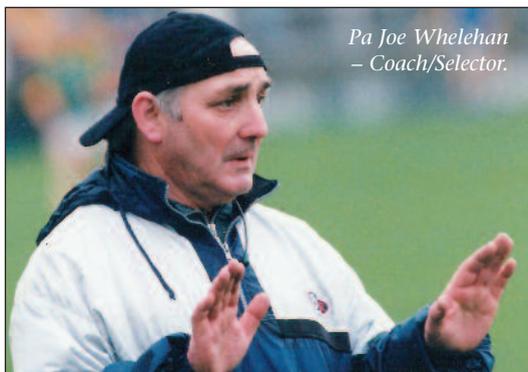


Back row (l.-r.): Sean Nolan, Michael Nolan, Mike Murphy, Pat Meagher, Pat King, Liam Flaherty, Tommy Dunne, Tommy Carroll, Kevin Kennedy, Liam Nolan. Middle row (l.-r.): Aidan Maxwell, Philip Shanahan, Tony Delaney, George Friend, Jodie Grace, Declan O'Meara, Michael O'Meara, Rory Brislane, John Ryan. Front row (l.-r.): Jimmy Dunne, Terry Dunne, Mike McCormack, Noel Kenneally, Michilin Delaney, Brendan Spillane, Kevin McCormack.

this encounter but Toomevara hung in and scored four points without reply in the final quarter to reach the county final for the first time since 1961 on a scoreline of 0-11 to 0-9.

Their opponents in the final were Thurles Sarsfields and the sides clashed in Semples Stadium on November 1. An uninspiring game saw the sides level on a scoreline of Thurles Sarsfields 1-10, Toomevara 0-13 at the end of sixty minutes and the teams had to meet again a week later. On this occasion Toomevara came out on top by 0-12 to 1-6 in a great game to win their eleventh county senior hurling title.

The county champions were as follows: Jody Grace, Pat Meagher, Rory Brislane, Michael O'Meara (capt.), George Friend, Declan O'Meara, Philip Shanahan, Pat King, Tony Delaney, Tommy Dunne, Michael Murphy, Terry



Pa Joe Whelehan  
– Coach/Selector.

Dunne, Liam Flaherty, Liam Nolan, Tommy Carroll. Subs: Michael Nolan for Liam Flaherty, Kevin McCormack for Tommy Carroll. Also: Sean Nolan, Kenneth McDonnell, John Ryan, Jimmy Dunne, Brendan Spillane, Kevin Delaney, Owen Cuddihy.

Selectors: Fr. Michael Casey, Jim McDonald, Frank Ryan. Coach/selector: P. J. Whelehan.

Referee: Tommy Lonergan (Kilsheelan)

The win qualified Toomevara for the semi-final of the Munster Club championship. On a day on which they played great hurling but drove twenty-three wides, they lost by two points on a scoreline of 2-7 to 0-11.

## 1993

Toomevara failed once again to win the North championship. They came through the league when they defeated Roscrea in a replay

**By winning their three-in-a-row, Toomevara confirmed their domination in senior hurling in the county and established themselves as one of the great teams in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Not since the 1970s, when Kilruane MacDonaghs won the previous three-in-a-row, was there a team of equal dominance.**

**In winning the three-in-a-row Toomevara equalled a club record achieved in the period 1912-14.**



Brendan Carroll (Thurles Sarsfields) and Pat King (Toomevara) during the 1992 County Final.

by 1-11 to 1-7. They lost the first round of the championship to Nenagh Eire Óg by 1-9 to 1-8 on a day when Toomevara had two men sent off. Taking the losers group route, they defeated Newport and Borrisokane, before overcoming Borrisoleigh by 1-10 to 0-11 after a dramatic finish, during which they scored 1-1 to grab a semi-final spot.

Toomevara's opponents were Nenagh Eire Óg, who were in outstanding form on the day and their dominance was reflected in the scoreline of 5-13 to 1-10. Nenagh went on to defeat Moneygall in the final and Toomevara's entrée to the county championship depended on defeating the runners-up. They made easy work of the task, defeating Moneygall by 1-17 to 1-7 at Cloughjordan on August 29 and qualifying for the county championship.

### County Championship

Toomevara's opponents in the county quarter-final at Templemore on September 12 were Cashel King Cormacs. They gave a very impressive performance in hammering the West champions by 1-17 to 1-4. Their opponents in the semi-final on September 25 were Thurles

Sarsfields. This was a most disappointing game in which the champions outshone a poor Sarsfields performance and won by 0-18 to 0-9, having outscored their opponents by 0-6 to 0-1 in the final quarter.

Toomevara's opponents in the final were Nenagh Eire Óg, a team that had defeated them twice in the North championship. Yet, Toomevara went into the game as favourites on the basis that they hadn't their act together when they went down in defeat. They justified their favourites tag in the first half leading by 1-8 to 0-3 approaching the interval. While Michael Cleary hit three points to improve Nenagh's position just before the half-time whistle,

Toomevara were still favourites to win. However, Nenagh were transformed after the interval and midway through the second half they went into the lead by 1-11 to 1-9. Toomevara rallied again and with ten minutes to go it was anybody's game. In a very exciting ending Toomevara went ahead by two points,

Nenagh brought it back to one and in a welter of excitement Toomevara survived to win by 1-14 to 1-13 and produce a tremendous ending to a year that hadn't started off too promising.

*The county champions were as follows:* Jody Grace (capt.), Pat Meagher, Rory Brislane, Declan O'Meara, George Frend, Michael O'Meara, Philip Shanahan, Tony Delaney, Pat King, Michael Nolan, Michael Murphy, Liam Flaherty, Tommy Carroll, Kevin Kennedy, Tommy Dunne. *Subs:* John Ryan for Michael Murphy. Also Kevin McCormack, Terry Dunne, Liam Nolan, Michael Delaney, Sean Nolan, Jimmy Dunne, Aidan Maxwell, Brendan Spillane, Noel Kenneally, Michael McCormack.

*Selectors:* Fr. Michael Casey, Jim McDonnell, Frank Ryan. *Coach/selector:* Sean Stack.

*Referee:* Paddy Lonergan (Galtee Rovers).

Toomevara went closer to winning a club All-Ireland in 1993 than in any other year as county

### Toomevara Club Officers 1992-1994

*President:* Matt Hassett  
*Vice-President:* Tom Shanahan  
*Chairman:* Fr. Michael Casey, C.C.  
*Secretary:* Matt O'Meara  
*Treasurer:* Bernard O'Neill  
*Registrar:* Neil Williams  
*P.R.O.:* Kieran Grace/Philip Shanahan

champions. Two weeks after winning their second senior championship in a row, they faced Patrickswell at home in the first round of the Munster championship. Before a large crowd they won a comprehensive victory on a scoreline of 5-15 to 1-10.. They also drew a home venue for their semi-final encounter with St. Finbarrs on November 7 and won again, this time by the much narrower margin of 1-10 to 0-12. The final was played at Limerick against Sixmilebridge, which had the awkward predicament that the Toomevara coach, Sean Stack, played centreback for Sixmilebridge. Toomevara came through by 0-15 to 0-7 to bring the Munster Club title to the parish for the first time. The All-Ireland semi-final against Ballycran was played at Croke Park on February 28, 1994 as a curtain-raiser to a NFL game between Dublin and Down and Toomevara came through by 1-13 to 1-5. They were now in the All-Ireland final and their opponents on St. Patrick's Day were the Galway champions, Sarsfields. Toomevara played with the wind in the first half and led by 2-4 to 0-4 at half-time. However, corner-back, Pat Meagher, was sent off in the twenty-third minute, which meant that the team had to play with fourteen men for most of the hour. It proved too great a task and they were beaten in the end by two points, on a scoreline of 1-14 to 3-6.

## 1994

Toomevara looked form horses for a third county final in 1994. They were the team to beat, Their performance in the club championship was a signal to all that they were a powerful hurling force once again. They won the league for the third year in a row, beating Nenagh Eire Óg by 0-13 to 0-11 in the final.

They also accounted for Nenagh in the first round of the championship, winning by the same margin of two points. They drew with Lorrha in the second round, but won the replay. They overcame Moneygall by 1-13 to 0-8 in the North semi-final and set up a meeting with Kilruane MacDonaghs in the final. This match was played at Nenagh on August 14 and Toomevara easily overcame the opposition by 1-16 to 0-7. The twelve-point margin of victory was a good indication of their superiority.

## County Championship.

Toomevara's opponents in the county quarter-final at Templemore on August 27 were Thurles Sarsfields. Two goals between the tenth and thirteenth minutes effectively killed off the



Sean Stack with selectors Fr Casey, Jim McDonnell and Frankie Ryan.

mid side's challenge and Toomevara went on to win by 2-16 to 0-9. They played Clonoulty-Rossmore in the semi-final and although Toomevara had a player sent off after only eight minutes, they went on to dominate the game in the second half and win by 4-17 to 1-12.

Toomevara were two to one favourites going into the final against Cashel King Cormacs. They got an early goal, led by 1-6 to 0-4 at the interval, were ahead by 2-9 to 0-6 entering the final quarter and in the end were worthy champions by 3-11 to 1-9

*The county, 3-in-a-row, champions were as follows: Jody Grace, Pat Meagher (capt.) Rory Brislane, Declan O'Meara, George Friend, Michael O'Meara, Phil Shanahan, Terry Duunne, Pat King, Kevin Kennedy, Michael Murphy, Tony Delaney, Liam Nolan, Tommy Dunne, Tommy Carroll. Subs: Liam Flaherty for Rory Brislane, Rory Brislane for Liam Nolan. Also: Justin Cottrell, Kevin McCormack, Aidan Maxwell, Joseph O'meara, Denis Kelly, Michael Bevans, Ray Hackett, Damien o'Meara, Ken Dunne.*

*Selectors: Fr. Michael Casey, Jim McDonald, Frankie Ryan. Coach/selector: Sean Stack*

*Referee: Michael Doyle (Holycross-Ballycahill).*

Toomevara set out to retain the Munaster Club title they had won for the first time the previous year. They easily overcame Ballyduff by 1-18 to 1-6 at home in the first round. They followed up with victory over Clarecastle at Ennis by the minimum of margins, 1-12 to 1-11 in the semi-final. Their final opponents were Kilmallock. Played at Thurles, Toomevara gave a rather flat performance before going down by 2-11 to 1-11.

# TOOMEVARA

## PLAYER PROFILES

**JODIE GRACE** (*Coolkereen*) was a commanding presence in the goals for the three county final victories and captain of the 1993 side that won the Munster Club title as well. He won junior & senior All-Irelands with Tipperary in 1989 and 1991 respectively.

**RORY BRISLANE** (*Ashgrove*) was Toomevara's ever-present fullback all through the nineties. He captained Toome to their breakthrough North final win in 1991. A winner of Harty and Croke Cup medals with St. Flannan's, he represented the county at minor and under-21 levels.

**PAT MEAGHER** (*Grennans-town*) was corner back on all three winning teams and was captain of the 1994 side that also won North senior league and championship.

**GEORGE FREND** (*Barnagrotty*) was a vital member of the defence on all three winning teams. He won an All-Ireland under-21 title with Tipperary in 1989 and captained the county to a National Hurling League title in 1995.

**MICHAEL O'MEARA** (*Ballintotty*) was captain of the team for the first of the three-in-a-row county titles. He won a senior All-Ireland with the county in 1991 and captained to county to Munster final glory in 1993.

**PAT KING** (*Killowney*) was a key centrefield player on the three teams. Earlier in his career he won county intermediate and under-21 titles. In 1995 he won a National Hurling League medal with Tipperary.

**TONY DELANEY** (*Chapel Street*) was one of the most versatile and durable players on the panel, successfully playing in many positions. A winner of county minor and under-21 medals, he is the holder of an astonishing eleven county senior medals.

**MICHAEL MURPHY** (*Millview*) was an aggressive centreback. He won a county intermediate medal in 1984 and county under-21 titles the following two years.

**PHILIP SHANAHAN** (*Coolederry*) was a classy and skilful defender. He won an All-Ireland under-21 medal with Tipperary in 1995 and, in 1998 captained Toome to a county senior title.

**TOMMY DUNNE** (*Curraheen*) won a North senior title with his father, Tony, in 1991. A winner of an All-Ireland under-21 title in 1995, he captained Tipperary to a senior All-Ireland in 2001. He has three All-Star awards and was named Texaco Hurler of the Year in 2001.

**TERRY DUNNE** (*Curraheen*) was a commanding presence

on the field. He won an All-Ireland under-21 medal in 1995 and a senior medal with Tipperary in 2001. He finished his career with eleven county senior hurling medals.

**KEN DUNNE** (*Curraheen*) was a notable free-taker and became the third member of his family to captain Toome to a North title in 2002. In 2006 he displayed nerves of steel to land the winning point in the Munster Club final.

**MICHAEL NOLAN** (*Kilnafinch*) was an accurate forward during this era. In 1986 he captained Toome to their first ever county minor title. He won an All-Ireland under-21 title with Tipperary in 1989.

**LIAM NOLAN** (*Kilnafinch*) was a forward with a devastating shot. He won county under-16, intermediate and under-21 titles, and scored a goal in the All-Ireland Club final in 1994.

**SEAN NOLAN** (*Kilnafinch*) was the oldest of the three Nolan brothers. He won a county intermediate title in 1981 and was fullback on the Toome team that won the breakthrough North final of 1991.

**MICILIN DELANEY** (*Chapel Street*) won a county minor medal with Toome in 1986 and an All-Ireland Colleges B medal with Nenagh CBS. A year later he won another county minor medal, and a Munster minor medal with Tipperary

**KEVIN McCORMACK** (*Church Street*) was a very fine goalkeeper, but he also

played out the field. He won an All-Ireland Vocational Schools title in 1988, when he scored three goals in the final at Croke Park. He also won a Munster under-21 medal in 1990.

**KEVIN DELANEY** (*Clonolea*) won a North minor hurling title in 1985, and North and county minor titles the following year. He also has junior A and junior B North titles to his credit.

**OWEN CUDDIHY** (*Grawn*) was a highly regarded goalkeeper. He won a North junior A title in 1991 and North and county junior B titles in 1995.

**JOE O'MEARA** (*Roscordagh*) won the Corn Mhic Ruain with St. Joseph's, Borrisoleigh in 1992, a North minor title in 1993, and North and county under-21 titles in 1995.

**DENIS KELLY** (*Borrisofarney*) won North minor titles in 1993, 1994 and 1995, when he captained the side. He won an All-Ireland Colleges B title with Our Lady's, Templemore, and North and county under-21 titles in 1995.

**NOEL KENNEALLY** (*Millview*) won North and county junior B titles in 1995, and North and county junior A titles in 1997. In 2000 he won North and county junior B titles.

**JUSTIN COTTRELL** (*Temple-downey*) was an able goalkeeper, who played for the county at under-21 and senior level. He won North and county under-21 titles in 1995. In 2001 he captained

the first Toome team to win four county senior titles in a row.

**RAY HACKETT** (*Grawn*) won North minor titles in 1993 and 1994. He won North and county under-21 titles in 1995 and North and county junior A titles in 1997.

**AIDAN MAXWELL** (*Glenaguile*) was a fine defender. He won North and county titles at under-12, under-14 and under-16 levels. In 1995 he captained the Toome under-21 team to North and county titles.

**MIKEY BEVANS** (*Ballymackey*) captained Toome to county senior final wins in 2003 and 2008. In 1995 he won North and county under-21 titles. In 1999 and 2000 he won Fitzgibbon Cup medals with Waterford IT

**JIMMY DUNNE** (*Curraheen*) RIP, the younger brother of Tony, won a North junior football title in 1982, and North and county intermediate titles in 1984. He captained Toome to North and county junior A titles in 1997.

**BRENDAN SPILLANE** (*Lissaniskey*), a tight marking corner back, he won North and county intermediate titles in 1984, North and county under-21 titles in 1985 and also has junior A and junior B titles to his credit.

**KEVIN KENNEDY** (*Chapel Street*) was a very effective full forward. He won North and county minor medals in 1987, and North and county under-21 medals in 1990, and

a championship medal in New York.

**JOHN RYAN** (*Curraheen*) was a fast and elusive forward, who won North and county under-21 titles in 1985 and 1986

**LIAM FLAHERTY** (*Barnagrotty*) was a hard working forward, who won North and county under-21 titles in 1985, and North and county junior A titles in 1997.

**KENNETH McDONNELL** (*Blakefield*) captained Toome to a North minor title in 1985 and was a member of the county under-21 panel in 1988.

**TOMMY CARROLL** (*Blean*) was an astute corner forward who won North and county minor titles in 1987, and a county under-21 medal in 1990.

**DECLAN O'MEARA** (*Ballintotty*) won Noirth and county minor medals in 1986 and 1987 and was a superb defender on the three-in-a-row teams. He won a Munster minor medal in 1987 and captained the Tipperary minor team in 1988.

**MICHAEL McCORMACK** (*Church Street*) won North and county intermediate medals in 1984 and a North junior A title in 1991.

**DAMIAN O'MEARA** (*Woodlands*) was one of the minors drafted into the senior panel in 1994. He captained the minor team to a North title that year, and added North and county under-21 titles, as well as another minor title the following year.