

The 2019 County Senior Hurling Championship

By Seamus J. King

Borris-Ileigh won their seventh senior hurling title at Semple Stadium on November 3, when they defeated Kildangan by 1-15 to 1-12 in the final. In doing so they spanned a period of thirty-three years since their last win, which sent them on to capture the All-Ireland Club championship on St. Patrick's Day 1987, a feat not matched by any Tipperary club in the meantime. The return to winning ways recalled the two great eras in the club's history, the 1950s and the 1980s, when they were kingpins in the county.

Kildangan, seeking their first title, will rue a game of missed opportunities. Perhaps their biggest difficulty going into the final was the ease with which they defeated their opponents in the North final, when they triumphed by 2-13 to 1-8. Then in the course of the game the opportunities lost, at least three very gettable frees send wide, a penalty not converted and a certain goal, saved off the line. They will believe the gods were against them on the day.

The Dan Breen Cup

The teams for the Dan Breen Cup were the same as the previous year with the exception of the two relegated teams, Mullinahone and Carrick Swans, who were defeated by Portroe and Killenaule respectively. Burgess and Moycarkey-Borris were promoted from the O'Riain Cup

The sixteen teams taking part were Nenagh Eire Óg, Burgess, Upperchurch-Drombane, Loughmore-Castleiney, Toomevara, Moycarkey-Borris, Borris-Ileigh, Clonoulty-Rossmore, Eire Óg, Annacarty, Thurles Sarsfields, Kilruane MacDonaghs, Killenaule, Kildangan, Drom Inch, Portroe, Roscrea.

The teams were divided into groups of four. They played off on a league basis with the top two teams going forward to the play-off stage.

In Group 1 Nenagh Eire Óg and Loughmore-Castleiney came through with Burgess and Upperchurch-Drombane failing to qualify. In Group 2 Toomevara and Borris-Ileigh came out on top over Moycarkey-Borris and Clonoulty-Rossmore. In Group 3 Eire Óg, Annacarty and Kilruane MacDonaghs were successful over Thurles Sarsfields and Killenaule. In Group 4 Kildangan and Drom-Inch qualified with Portroe and Roscrea losing out.

Quarter-finals

Two preliminary quarter-finals were required because two teams, Mullinahone and Clonoulty-Rossmore, who had failed to qualify in the league stage, won their divisional finals in the South and West respectively. They played Toomevara and Loughmore-Castleiney, who were drawn from the runners-up in the group stage.

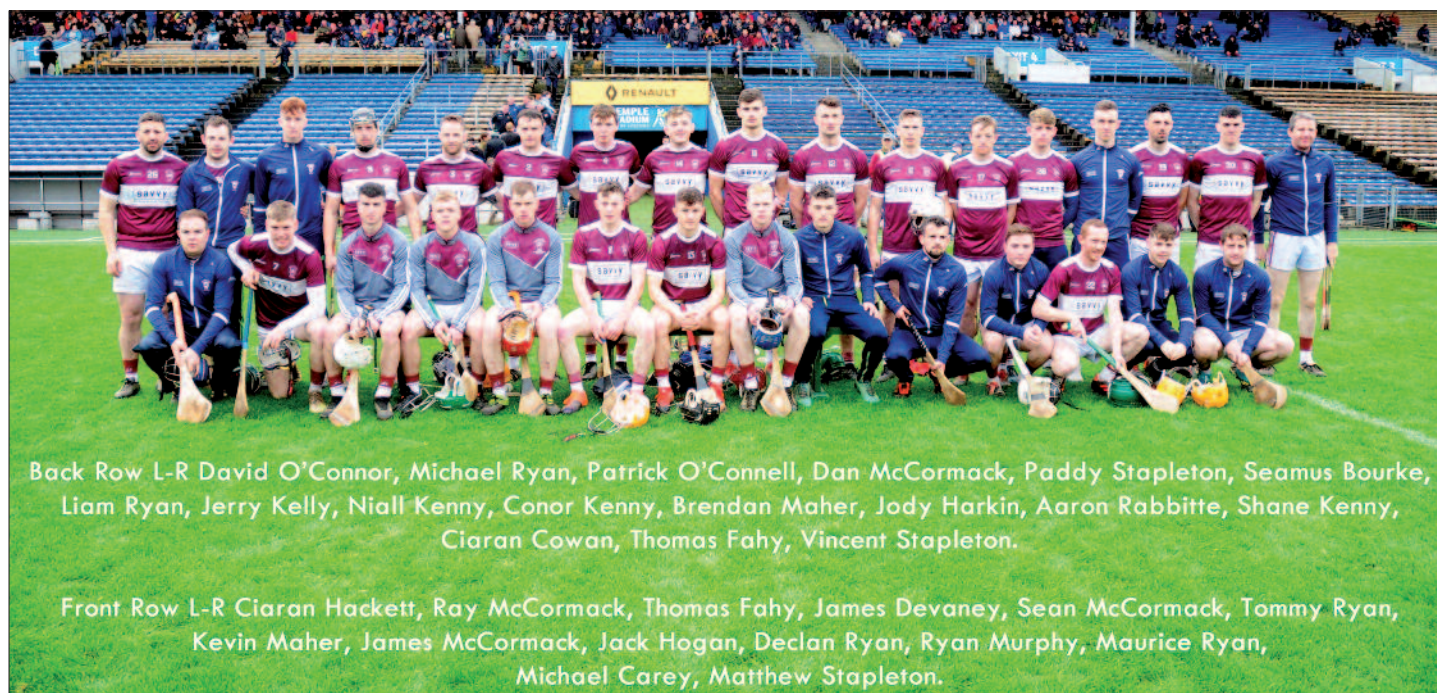
These games were played on October 6.. Toomevara defeated Mullinahone by 1-24 to 2-19 at Leahy Park, Cashel, while Clonoulty-Rossmore got the better of Loughmore-Castleiney by 1-33 to 3-22 at Littleton.

The quarter-finals were played on the weekend of 12/13 October. Two of the games were played on the 12th. The game between Kildangan and Toomevara at Cloughjordan was a thrilling encounter. With twenty minutes to go the sides were level, 2-7 to 1-10 but in a blistering finish Kildangan scored 1-5 to 0-2 to come through in dramatic fashion.

On the same day Nenagh Eire Óg were hugely impressive in their sixteen-point demolition of Eire Óg Annacarty. In spite of having the better of the first half exchanges, the winners enjoyed only a slender interval lead of 1-5 to 1-4. However, by the three-quarter mark they were in front by 2-10 to 1-6 and the game was as good as over. In the end they had accumulated 4-15 to their opponents 1-8.

On Sunday Borris-Ileigh and Drom-Inch met at Holycross and Borris-Ileigh proved the stronger outfit through their ability to get goals at vital stages. They led by 2-6 to 0-10 at half-time, were seven points in front entering the final quarter and hung on to win by 3-11 to 0-18, despite coming under intense pressure in the final period.

Kilruane-MacDonaghs were very impressive against Clonoulty-Rossmore at Templetuohy in the fourth of the quarter-finals. Clonoulty were expected to be strong challengers following their defeat of Loughmore-Castleiney the previous Sunday but they were far off the pace against an outfit that was sharp and focused and they well deserved their 1-23 to 1-10 victory, after leading by 0-13 to 0-2 at the interval.



Back Row L-R David O'Connor, Michael Ryan, Patrick O'Connell, Dan McCormack, Paddy Stapleton, Seamus Bourke, Liam Ryan, Jerry Kelly, Niall Kenny, Conor Kenny, Brendan Maher, Jody Harkin, Aaron Rabbitte, Shane Kenny, Ciaran Cowan, Thomas Fahy, Vincent Stapleton.

Front Row L-R Ciaran Hackett, Ray McCormack, Thomas Fahy, James Devaney, Sean McCormack, Tommy Ryan, Kevin Maher, James McCormack, Jack Hogan, Declan Ryan, Ryan Murphy, Maurice Ryan, Michael Carey, Matthew Stapleton.

Borris-Ileigh - County senior hurling championship winners

Semi-finals

The semi-finals were played at Semple Stadium on October 20. Kildangan faced Nenagh Eire Óg in the first of the encounters. Nenagh got off to a flying start and had three points on the board before Kildangan had their first score in the ninth minute. Nenagh continued to dominate but Kildangan gradually got a grip on things and came within a point of the opposition before a well-taken goal by Joe Gallagher sent them into the lead. However, Nenagh replied in style and after Jake Morris turned the ball into the Kildangan net in the twenty-eighth minute, they went ahead to lead by 1-11 to 1-7 at the interval.

Nenagh still had their four-point lead at the end of the third quarter. But the game was about to change. A Paul Flynn goal for Kildangan in the twentieth minute, followed by a point, wiped out the deficit. Moments later the ball was in the Nenagh net again, when sub Sean Hayes's effort deceived the Nenagh goalkeeper. In the time remaining the sides exchanged points and try as they might Nenagh couldn't get the equalising goal to leave the final score 3-12 to 1-15 in favour of Kildangan.

The second semi-final between Borris-ileigh and Kilruane MacDonaghs was a funeral affair until the final minutes, when the closeness of the encounter generated some excitement as the verdict remained in doubt. Kilruane were the better side in the first half but were only a point ahead, 0-7 to 0-6, at the break. Borris-ileigh had to contend with the dismissal of Liam Ryan in the forty-third minute for a second yellow card. The sides were level entering the final quarter but Borris-ileigh were greatly helped by Conor Kenny's three points in six minutes, which put them ahead by 0-14 to 0-11 with eight minutes to play. Kilruane did all in their power to overcome the deficit in the closing minutes. They came within a point but Borris-ileigh held out for their 0-16 to 0-15 victory.

Final

The final pairing had a novel look, Borris-ileigh, who were going for their first in thirty-three years, and Kildangan, who were going for their first title. Borris-ileigh were at the final stage in 2017, when they lost out to Thurles Sarsfields, and Kildangan suffered the same fate against the same opposition in 2016. An intriguing aspect of the contest was that the two teams were coached by Portumna coaches. Sean Treacy (Kildangan) and Johnny Kelly (Borris-ileigh) were life-long friends and lived a mile from each other in Boulea, Portumna. In the end it was difficult to pick a winner though Kildangan shaded it slightly on the basis of their unbeaten run through the season, plus the fact that they had a comfortable victory over the same opponents in the North final.

The final was played at Semple Stadium on November 3 with



Borris-ileigh's Dan McCormack gets away from Kiladangan's Paul Flynn.



Kiladangan's Jack Loughnane gets away from Borris-ileigh's Tommy Ryan and James Devaney in the county final.

Fergal Horgan as referee and over seven thousand spectators in attendance. Borris-ileigh sowed the seeds of their victory in the first half when they built up a five-point lead chiefly due to the fine display by one of the youngest players on the field, JD Devaney. His goal in the twenty-eighth minute put daylight between the sides at the break on a scoreline of 1-9 to 0-7. The contrast between the sides was reflected in the respective scoring tallies: Borris-ileigh had 1-7 from play during that period, while Kildangan had managed only three points.

Kildangan got a much needed lift when Dan O'Meara netted soon after the resumption, but it just didn't happen for the team and they were still four adrift, 1-9 to 1-13, after forty-five minutes. They appeared to get a lifeline soon after this when Sean Hayes was brought down and the referee signalled a penalty but the resultant shot by goalkeeper, Barry Hogan was stopped by Borris goalkeeper, James McCormack. Not long after Kildangan looked certain to register a goal but the ball was taken off his own goal line by Borris-ileigh's, Tommy Ryan. During the closing minutes the points were shared and Borris-ileigh were county champions on a scoreline of 1-15 to 1-12.

While Devaney deserved the Man of the Match award, Borris-ileigh had other stalwarts on the day. Brendan Maher was a steadying force all through. Paddy Stapleton policed the fullback line and Jerry Kelly, Liam Ryan and James McCormack made significant contributions to the victory.

Kildangan came up short on such an important day.. They never got moving with their usual fluency and, while they remained always within striking distance, they never appeared capable of catching up. Probably the best of an under-performing side were Alan Flynn, Dan O'Meara, James Quigley and Paul Flynn.

Borris-ileigh: James McCormack, Seamus Burke, Paddy Stapleton, Liam Ryan, Sean McCormack, Brendan Maher, Ray McCormack, Tommy Ryan, Dan McCormack, Kieran Maher (0-1), Niall Kenny (0-1), Conor Kenny, Kevin Maher (0-3), Jerry Kelly (0-3), James 'JD' Devaney (1-4). Subs: Jack Hogan for Tommy Ryan. Also: Ciaran Hackett, Jody Harkin, Ciaran Cowan, Thomas Fahy, Matthew Stapleton, Maurice Ryan, Micheál Carey, Ryan Murphy, Vincent Stapleton, David O'Connor, Declan Ryan, Aaron Rabbitte, Patrick O'Connell, Michael Ryan.

Manager: Johnny Kelly, Selectors, Philip Kenny, Martin Maher, Philip Maher, Athletic Performance Coach, Angelo Walsh, Physio, John Butler, Doctor, Kevin Delargy.

Kiladangan: Barry Hogan, David Sweeney, James Quigley, Fergal Hayes, Declan McGrath, Alan Flynn, Darren Moran, Jack Loughnane (0-1), Johnny Horan, Dan O'Meara (1-1), Willie Connors (0-7), Joe Gallagher, Tadgh Gallagher, Paul Flynn, (0-2) Billy Seymour. Subs: Martin Minehan for Declan McGrath, Sean Hayes for Jack Loughnane, Andy Loughnane (0-1) for Joe Gallagher, Bryan McLoughney for Tadgh Gallagher. Also:

Darragh Egan, Ruari Gleeson, Matthew Cleary. Darragh Flannery, Paddy Gallagher, Shane Seymour, Tom O'Meara, Hugh Flannery, Tommy Connors, Eoin Gleeson, Paddy Coen.

Manager Brain Lawlor, Selectors, Martin Nolan, James Flannery, Coach, Sean Treacy, Physio, Eoin Higginbottom, Kitmen, Jim Ryan, Michael Carmody.

Man of the Match: James 'JD' Devaney.

Referee: Fergal Horgan (Kickhams. Standby Referee: John McCormack (Kickhams) 4th Official: Mark Dunne (Moyne-Templetuohy). Umpires: Sean Bradshaw, Michael Butler, Alan Horgan (Kickhams, John Ryan (B) Cashel King Cormacs.

The O'Riain Cup

J. K. Brackens won their first county senior hurling title in dramatic fashion at Semple Stadium on November 3, when Lyndon Fairbrother rattled the Holycross-Ballycahill net deep in injury time to give his side victory on a scoreline of 1-15 to 0-17. At the time it appeared as if Holycross were heading for victory after they came from behind to score three points in succession and go two points up. Fairbrother's goal came from a free which many believed should have gone to Holycross, when their goalkeeper was taken out as he emerged with the ball shortly before.

The O'Riain Cup was contested by 14 teams. It included two teams relegated from the Dan Breen Cup, Mullinahone and Carrick Swans, and two teams promoted from intermediate, Thurles Sarsfields and Cashel King Cormacs. Two teams from the previous year, Burgess and Moycarkey-Borris were promoted. The fourteen teams were divided into two groups of four and two groups of three and they played off on a league basis..

In Group 1 Templederry Kenyons and Carrick Swans qualified to the exclusion of Lorrha and Thurles Sarsfields. In Group 2 Silvermines and Holycross-Ballycahill came through, with Newport losing out. In Group 3. Mullinahone and Ballingary qualified in Group 3 with Ballina failing to qualify. In Group 4 J. K. Brackens and Cashel King Cormacs qualified with Clonakenny and St. Mary's eliminated.

Semi-Finals

The semi-finals were played on October 19. Holycross/Ballycahill got the better of Templederry-Kenyons in a high scoring game at Borris-ileigh. The major turning point in this game was in the 16th minute of the second half when Templederry's Matthew Hogan, got a straight red card. Holycross went on to score 0-11 to Templederry's single point following the dismissal. A feature of the game was the outstanding tally of 0-20 scored by the winner's, Dara Woods.

In the second semi-final J. K. Bracken's staged a great

comeback against Mullinahone at Littleton. Seven points down at half-time, 0-9 to 2-10, they got their act together in the third quarter to draw level by the end of the period. The final quarter was an exciting period in which the lead changed sides until J. K. Brackens came out on top with three points to spare on a scoreline of 1-20 to 2-14.

Final

The final was played at Semple Stadium as a curtain-raiser to the Dan Breen final on November 3. In a low key first half there was never very much between the sides but Holycross-Ballycahill had the edge at half-time as they lead by 0-10 to 0-8. They continued to lead during the third quarter but Brackens came back to go one in front before Holycross had a succession of three points to put them two in front. Then came the final play as Brackens came in search of a goal. It appeared that the Holycross goalkeeper was well and truly fouled when coming out with the ball, but the referee waived play on and gave Brackens the 25 metre free which Lyndon Fairbrother struck to the net for a last gasp Bracken's victory by 1-15 to 0-17.

J. K. Brackens: Darren Russell, Keith Kennedy, Tom Murphy, Martin Delaney, Eanna McBride, Neil Quinlan, Lorcan Egan, Paddy Cadell, Cathal Scully, Shane Doyle (0-1), Lyndon Fairbrother (1-6), Dean McEnroe (0-1), Shane Scully, Andrew Ormonde (0-2), Shane Bourke (0-2). Subs: David O'Shea for Shane Doyle, Eoin Fitzpatrick for Shane Scully. Also: Nick Keane, James Bergin, Michael Egan, Adrian Bourke, Tommy Kennedy, Jack Kennedy, Lorcan Roche, Radek Natkaniec, Dylan Moloney, Paddy Delaney, Jack Fogarty, Jordan Moloney Jack Bergin.

Manager: Paudie Bourke, selectors, Peter Maher, Padraic Keely, S&C Coach, Stephen Butler, equipment, Andy Maher, Murty Kennedy, first aid, Joe Keating.

Holycross-Ballycahill: Dinny Ferncombe, Gavin Dunne, Philip Fogarty, Jimmy Ryan, Michael Doyle, Bryan O'Mara, Conor Ryan, Cathal Barrett (0-2), Jamie Woods (0-1), Eanna Ryan (0-1), Paraic Russell (0-1), Tony Leahy (0-1), Luke O'Mara (0-1), Darragh Woods (0-9), Seanie Nally. Subs: Liam Moloney (0-1) for Tony Leahy, Shane Ryan for Jamie Woods, Jack Skehan for Luke O'Mara, Stephen Flanagan for Seanie Nally, Aidan Stakelum for Eanna Ryan. Also: Ewan Bourke, Kieran O'Dwyer, Jack Ryan, Raymie Nally, Tossy Comerford, Pa O'Dwyer, Piierce Stakelum, Patrick Stakelum, Frank Hanifan, Donnacha Duggan.

Manager: Michael Ryan, coach, Brendan Ryan, selectors, Paul Galvin, John Ferncombe, Liam McCullagh.

Referee: Peter Carroll (Burgess), standby referee, Paddy Ivors (Ballingarry), linesman, Kieran Delaney (Toomevara), 4th Official, Mike Murphy (Toomevara), umpires, Denis McAuliffe, Johnny Flynn, Paddy McMahon, Tom Bourke.



Borris-Ileigh's Brendan Maher gathers possession.