

HERALD SPORT

Galway Under-21 Footballers failed narrowly to bring back Laois lead in All-Ireland semi-final

Laois 0-13 Galway 1-9
ONLY one point separated these two fiercely determined and totally committed teams at the final whistle, despite Laois playing the better football for fifty of the sixty minutes, so for Galway, for many reasons, it was a case of what might have been.

First of all, it was desperately disappointing to lose at Pearse Park, Longford on Saturday evening, for here was a hugely talented Galway team that at the start of the campaign rightly had high hopes of going all the way. However, it soon became clear that the team lacked natural midfielders and in the Connacht Final, against Leitrim, that problem was a glaring one. On that occasion too, of course, two key players, Tomás Meehan and Derek Reilly, were sent off and had to miss the All-Ireland semi-final. It all conspired to deflate expectations, and on Saturday our worst fears were realised.

The players, to their immense credit, gave it everything and their spirit in rallying from four points down in the last five

Report by JIM CARNEY

minutes was marvellous, so no criticism can be levelled at them, nor at manager John O'Mahony or his selectors, Stephen Joyce (Clonbur), Tom McManus (Milltown) and Seán Mac Dhomhnaigh (An Cheathrú Rua). They too were unlucky with the hand of cards dealt to them for this very stiff semi-final test, and I'm sure that all involved must have been shattered to lose.

Even accepting that Laois were a really good team and worthy winners, I still have no doubt but Galway would have seen off all challengers with a more orthodox, conventional midfield, although that, of course, is like saying the day would have been dry if it hadn't been raining. When these U-21s were county minors, their then manager Mickey Byrne of Tuam twice found himself lacking in big, high-fielding midfielders — only Aidan Donnellan of Corofin was a natural midfielder in the two Galway minor teams which won Connacht, but no All-Ireland, in the mid-'90s — so the deficiency is ongoing by nature, just as with Galway senior teams for most of the past two decades. Just think, for example, of the extent to which Galway seniors are now depending on Kevin Walsh to run the show at midfield, without a partner of equal stature and reliability.

In Longford, where there was a very large and enthusiastic attendance, Laois actually fielded without their No. 1 midfielder, 6ft. 5in. Larry Keenan who emigrated to the United States last week, but they were still very strong in this key area. Galway, on the other hand, had to improvise with Michael Donnellan — a natural forward — and a number of partners who were either forwards or backs, and it didn't really work out at any stage. The multi-talented Dunmore man Donnellan played his heart out, up and down the field, almost to a standstill, while at different times he enjoyed good support from Padraic Joyce, who started at full-forward, and Kevin Newell, who started at full-back. The other man selected at midfield, David Kinneavy, had a thin time of it in Carrick-on-Shannon a week earlier, so he operated on the right wing this time out, but the move didn't work and he gave way to Brian Moran after about twenty minutes. Moran, who was unusually subdued in the first two games of the Connacht championship, against Sligo and Roscommon, played some great football against Laois and finished with a very creditable tally of three points, all from play.

Donnellan and Joyce were particularly good for Galway, often brilliant in their running and power on the ball, as were

Derek Savage at right corner-forward and, in the second half especially, captain Richie Fahy in defence. That quartet matched and frequently surpassed the best efforts of most of the Laois men, with the notable exception of their top forward Ian Fitzgerald who was, overall, the outstanding player on the pitch, in my opinion.

Laois, after playing with the wind, led at half-time by 0-10 to 1-1, the Galway goal coming early, well taken from close range by Shane Conlisk, from a pass by Derek Savage after Séamus Cloherty made a high catch from a long drive by Michael Donnellan. Padraic Joyce (two frees off his hands and one from play) and Brian Moran kicked the Galway points.

Laois played near-exhibition football in the first half, sweeping through the field in devastating fashion, often threatening to overwhelm a hard-pressed Galway defence, and their half-time lead of three points would have been at least doubled if many Galway players weren't so brave and vigilant in covering, tackling and covering again. But with the gates open out the field and Laois men pouring through, there was only so much the Galway full-back line could do to repel the onslaught.

Surprisingly, Laois seemed to have shot their bolt by the interval and their second-half tally was a mere three points. For Galway, Jason Killeen went from right full-back to full-back and Kevin Newell moved out to lend some power and drive to the troubled area between centre half-back and midfield. Both Corofin men benefited from the switches. Up front, Christopher Donnellan landed a fine point from play, from the left-hand side, and Galway set about saving the day.

Cork referee Niall Barrett, who had a poor game (to put it mildly), made a couple of controversial decisions that went against Galway early in the last quarter, and from one of them, compounded by a lack of discipline by a Galway player who kicked the ball away, Ian Fitzgerald landed a free that was vital for his team.

Galway had full-forward Séamus Cloherty sent off, seemingly for an off-the-ball incident, but it only served to intensify the effort and also to create more space for the likes of Derek Savage, Brian Moran and Padraic Joyce who shot a point apiece in the last five minutes.

One more would have earned a replay and it was on the cards when wing back Enda Daly burst up the right but the ball fell from his grasp and though he recovered it, he was deemed to have picked it off the ground before passing to Derek Savage. Seconds later, the final whistle was blown.

Laois: D. O'Mahony; J. Kehoe, M. Buggy, J. Higgins; N. Collins, D. Conroy, C. Parkinson; M. Delaney (0-1), N. Garvan; G. Ramsbottom, I. Fitzgerald, capt. (0-5, three frees), C. Conway (0-4); B. McDonald (0-2, one free), D. Doogue (0-1), K. Fitzpatrick. Sub., S. Kelly, for Conroy.

Galway: D. Corbett (Headford); J. Killeen (Corofin), K. Newell (Corofin), R. Fahy, capt. (Killanin); E. Daly (Kilkerin-Clonberne), J. Divilly (Kilkerin-Clonberne), N. Connolly (Cortoon Shamrocks); M. Donnellan (Dunmore MacHales), D. Kinneavy (Killanin); S. Conlisk (Corofin, 1-0), M. O Callarain (An Spideal), S. Cloherty (Carna-Caiséal); D. Savage (Cortoon, 0-1), P. Joyce (Killererin, 0-1, three frees), C. Donnellan (Dunmore, 0-1), Subs., B. Moran (Kilconly, 0-3), for Kinneavy; N. Meehan (Caltra), for O Callarain.

Referee: N. Barrett (Cork).
 Man of the Match: Ian Fitzgerald (Laois).



CUPS OF JOY ... for Athenry Vocational School, led by captain Joe Hession (centre), alongside team mentor Conrad Byrnes, school principal Séamus Cullinane (on right), the delighted players, some more of the teachers and team supporters.

Photo: Ray Ryan

Athenry V.S. 1-13 Roscrea V.S. 0-4
SELDOM has a Galway hurling team outclassed a Tipperary team as Athenry did last Sunday in winning their fourth All-Ireland Vocational Schools senior championship, at Banagher, Co. Offaly. In all grades, it was the Galway school's sixth national title in seven years.

This is a remarkable record, by any standards, reflecting great credit on the school whose Principal, Séamus Cullinane, was himself an outstanding hurler with Castlegar and Galway in the 1950s, and also of course the various teachers who've coached the successful teams of the 90s.

The new champions were guided to All-Ireland glory by Conrad Byrnes of Athenry and Liam Mac Dhomhnaigh, Headford, and earlier in the season Athenry V.S. won their first Ryan Cup, the competition for all Colleges and Vocational Schools in the county.

On Sunday, Athenry outclassed and outplayed their North Tipperary rivals who had come through Munster impressively. Indeed, the margin of victory might have been much wider, as the wides indicate: Athenry 13, Roscrea 6.

The only goal of the game came as early as the fourth minute, kicked home by Turloughmore's P. J. O'Brien from a long delivery by his clubmate Derrick Murphy. Athenry shot five wides in the first nine minutes, before Roscrea opened their account with a great point by Henry Beavans from 55 metres; it was to prove their only score from

play. For Athenry, Cathal Coen pointed after good work by captain Joe Hession and Michael Coughlan had a goal shot saved. The Turlough' lads Hession and Murphy were dominating midfield, with Diarmuid Cloonan, Seán Forde and Jamie Cannon excelling in defence. Conor Ryan pointed two frees to keep Roscrea in contention but after a barren spell Athenry had points by Cathal Coen and David Forde (two each), for a half-time lead of 1-5 to 0-3.

On the re-start, Michael Coughlan added a point to the Athenry tally, and three more in as many minutes, by Hession, Coughlan and goalscorer O'Brien, meant it was over as a contest by the 12th minute of the second half.

Michael John Quinn, star of the All-Ireland semi-final win over Ballyhale of Kilkenny, was less comfortable on the right wing, but he made a crucial stop when Roscrea's Michael O'Hara was going through in a bid to snatch a goal. They did get one consolation point in this half, a delightful sideline cut by Henry Beavans, but Athenry were in command, with David Forde and Donal Moore now doing particularly well and points by Cathal Coen (2), David Forde and Kevin Whyte closed the scoring.

In a fine gesture, the Athenry mentors gave a late All-Ireland Final Day run to three substitutes, Joe Fallon, Paul Coen and Keith Callanan, who came in for three forwards who had scored 1-7 between them.

Pride of place for Athenry went to their powerful "diamond" of Jamie Cannon at centre half-back, Joe Hession and Derrick Murphy at midfield, and David Forde when moved to centre half-forward, but every player on the team did his job and it was a well deserved victory.

Athenry: P. Cannon; S. Forde, D. Cloonan, I. Daniels; T. Kelly, J. Cannon, M. J. Quinn; J.

Hession, capt. (0-1), D. Murphy; C. Coen (0-5), K. Whyte (0-1), D. Moore; P. J. O'Brien (1-1), M. Coughlan (0-2), D. Forde (0-3). Subs., J. Fallon, P. Coen and K. Callanan, for O'Brien, C. Coen and Whyte.

Roscrea: J. Ryan; G. Egan, K. Mullahey, D. King; J. Brady, M. O'Hara, P. Whelan; W. Comerford, H. Beavans (0-2); C. Ryan (0-2), G. Whyte, J. Moloughney; T. Fletcher, G. Holohan, M. Bourke. Subs., B. Keeshan, for Holohan; T. Harney, for Bourke; M. Cordial, for Moloughney.

Referee: Pat Horan (Offaly).
 Man of the Match: Jamie Cannon (Athenry).

— FRANK KEARNEY

Turlough' too good for Abbey first time out

Turloughmore 2-15 Abbeyknockmoy 1-8
THIS Group D County Cup clash at Kenny Park, Athenry last Sunday went very much according to the predictions as Turloughmore powered their way to a comfortable ten-point win over an Abbeyknockmoy side that faded after a promising opening quarter.

By NOEL CARNEY

On this evidence, Turlough' have a great chance of qualifying for the knockout stages provided they make a few adjustments, but the losers again look destined to struggle, although they do look capable of hanging on to their cherished senior status, if they can turn some of their occasional rousing spells into periods of longer duration.

There was little to choose between them in the opening quarter until Cathal Moore, who had already driven over an excellent point within seconds of the start, burst through a cluster of defenders and passed to teenager Niall Lawlor who confidently blasted to the net to put Turlough' 1-5 to 0-3 ahead and on the road to victory.

Abbey, admittedly, fought back well and thanks to a well struck goal by newcomer Declan Molloy, who pulled to the net after Tomas Mannion's drive was stopped and partially cleared by goalkeeper John Garrett, were only 1-6 to 1-3 behind after twenty minutes. Indeed, had they not shot seven wides, many of them from easy enough positions, during that period, things might have been very different.

Their wastefulness was punished further when Francis

Forde, who had already shot three excellent long range points, burst through and kicked an opportunistic goal eight minutes from the break and although Michael Coleman replied with a point after collecting a John Culklin free, Niall Lawlor drove over two lovely points at the end of the half.

Earlier, in a lively and eventful opening, Gary Hurney put Turlough' two up following Cathal Moore's first minute score but Declan Molloy responded with a sweetly struck effort after taking a Michael Coleman pass and although a Darren O'Shaughnessy free from the right wing made it 0-3 to 0-1, a Kieran Flaherty 65 and a superb effort from play by Pat Blade made it level, 0-3 to 0-3.

Then came Forde's three points, and Lawlor's goal followed by the aforementioned sequence of scores that put Turloughmore in the driving seat, 2-8 to 1-4 ahead at the interval. County players Francis Forde, Cathal Moore and Michael Coleman dominated the scoring in the third quarter with Forde notching three pointed frees, Moore adding one from play

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Now St. Cuan's go for All-Ireland glory

A small mid-Galway second-level school is making the colleges hurling scene sit up and take notice as they march proudly towards All-Ireland glory.

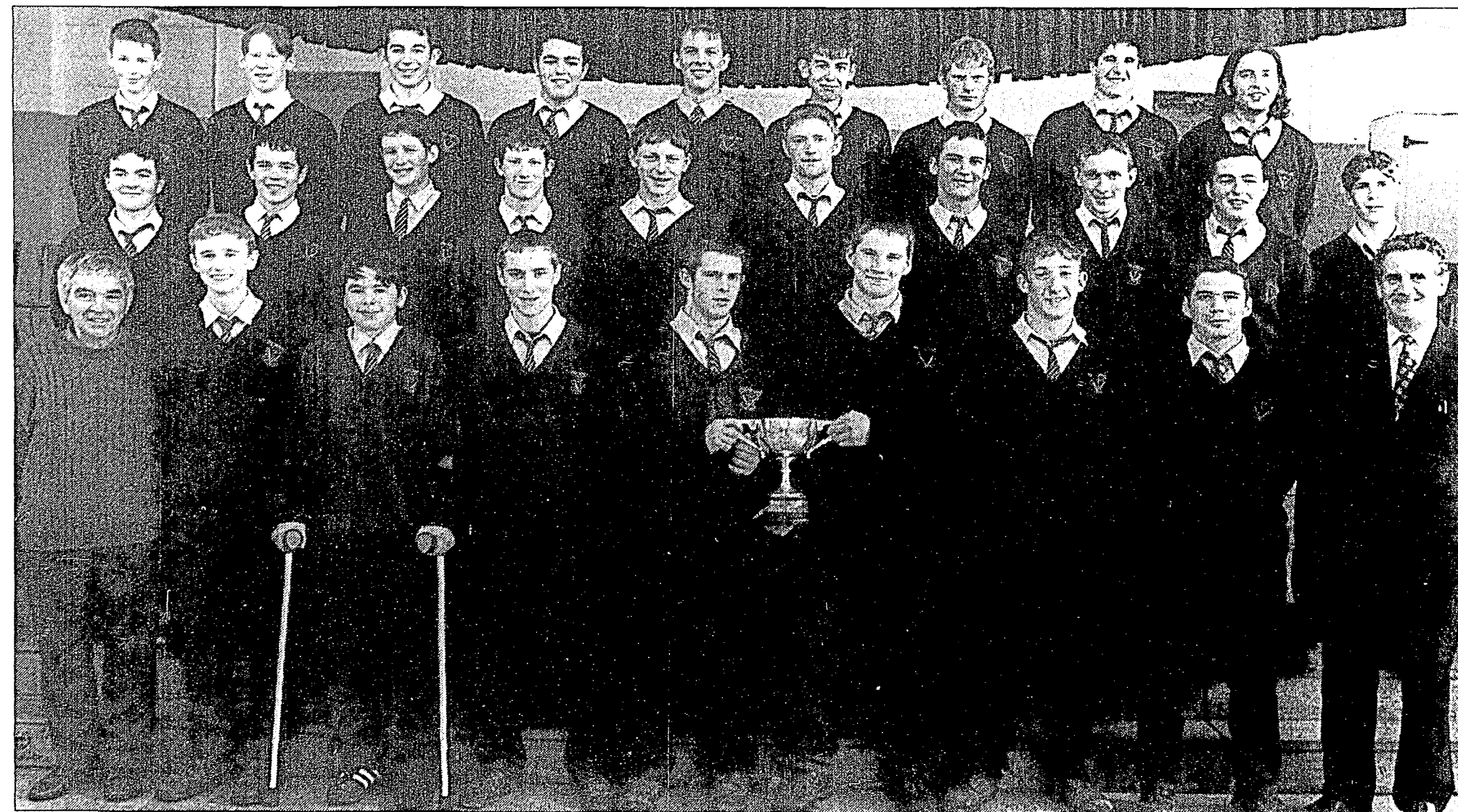
St. Cuan's, Castleblakeney will contest the All-Ireland Colleges Senior B hurling final at Croke Park next Saturday, against Portlaoise C.B.S., at 1.30, followed by the Senior A final between St. Raphael's, Loughrea and St. Flannan's, Ennis.

Coached by Colette Kennedy-Walsh, a very successful camogie team manager, St. Cuan's burst into the limelight with two wonderful displays (drawn game and replay) against the famed Derry college St. Patrick's, Maghera in the All-Ireland semi-final, and hopes are high that they can now go all the way.

Seven clubs are represented in the St. Cuan's panel, and yesterday College Principal Eamonn O'Donoghue paid tribute to the clubs for their magnificent support.

"Everyone here and in the surrounding parishes has been very keen to get behind the team and that's great for morale," he added.

"The build-up is very exciting and we're very proud of the team and their mentors."



THEY'VE already won the Connacht Cup and the "big one" is only an hour away! The St. Cuan's panel, pictured at school yesterday. Front row: Tim Byrnes, joint-manager; Michael Reynolds (Cappataggle), Shane Connolly (Ahascragh), Colm Kennedy (Fohenagh), Cathal Lohan (Fohenagh), Noel Kelly, capt. (Cappataggle), Barry Dolan (Ahascragh), Patrick Hartigan (Ahascragh) and Eamonn O'Donoghue, Principal. Middle row: John Lynch-Lally (Ahascragh), David Kelly (Cappataggle), Aidan Beatty (Loughrea), Joe Hennelly (Ahascragh), Gary Finnerty (Ahascragh), Declan O'Dea (Padraig Pearse's), Trevor Kennedy (Ahascragh), Shane Ruane (Padraig Pearse's), Mark Ryan (Ahascragh) and Anthony Griffin (Ahascragh). Back row: Niall Bannerton (Ahascragh), Paul Gately (Ahascragh), Brian Lynskey (Fohenagh), John Ryan (Ahascragh), Eoin Kenny (Padraig Pearse's), Owen Lynskey (Fohenagh), Brendan Geraghty (Fohenagh), Brian Laffey (Ahascragh) and Joe Skehill (Abbeyknockmoy). Not in picture are star forward Joe Fitzgerald (Ahascragh) and joint-manager Colette Walsh.

Photo: Ray Ryan

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