

EIRE OG BATTLE BACK FOR THRILLING VICTORY

Sean Treacy Cup returns to Nenagh

Eire Og 2-5, Loughmore/Castleiney (holders) 0-10

If one thing more than any other paved the way for success for the Eire Og minor hurlers in regaining the county title after a lapse of eight years, it was their absolute refusal to accept a defeat which for three quarters of the game looked very like being their lot. Things looked reasonably happy for the North champions at half time when, having played against a strong wind, they found themselves but a point in arrears 0-7 to 2-0, but the strong Loughmore lads had no intention of handing over their title easily and for 20 minutes of the second half, they still held off the brave challenge of their opponents, being forced in the end to give way to the sheer persistence and smartness of the Nenagh boys who lofted over the scores that mattered and edged them home by just a point.

What a thrilling climax this was to the minor campaign. Two fine teams, expertly trained and coached, threw everything into it and provided spectators with an ideal pipe opener to the county's big hurling day. It was tough luck on Loughmore. They had a title to defend and they did everything possible to hold on to it. For them it was indeed galling to be caught but they will be the first to realise and appreciate that in Eire Og they came up against a side that had prepared equally well and whose opportunism when it was most needed came to the top.

So, the Sean Treacy Cup has returned to Nenagh, and in ousting the gallant champions, they repeated the dose they inflicted on the champions of '68 Moycarkey, when the first title came their way in 1969. But not to the same extent. This was a final that called for absolute all out effort to win and while the victory margin was only a point, the amount of satisfaction to be gleaned from it, was all the greater when one considers the stern fight Loughmore made.

MARKSMANSHIP

They were boosted considerably in their efforts by the marksmanship of mid fielder Pat McGrath who was responsible for seven of his side's points, all from placed balls. The attack though never got into the game with the same authority of previous outings and this was caused mainly by the stubborn, unyielding play of the Eire Og defence with the half back line in particular getting on top as the hour progressed and it was typical of this sector's performance that centre back Eugene Hackett should have been the one to send over the equalising point six minutes from the end, a point that was added to three minutes later by Brian Heffernan, from a free, the winning point.

Two Eire Og goals in the 7th and 10th minutes of the first half, turned out to be very vital scores indeed. While they did not add to these scores in the first half, they succeeded in keeping Loughmore's contribution down to relatively low proportions and must have been reasonably confident of their chances when play resumed. Yet, Loughmore continued to hold the upper hand as the second half got

under way and a sense of frustration seemed to work its way into the Nenagh make up as chances went abegging. The take over was not materialising and as Loughmore continued unruffled, the tall McGrath sent over a brace of long range points from frees to make Eire Og's task all the harder. Things eventually turned in their favour however and while they could not breathe easily until the final whistle sounded, their come back was just too much for the Mid champions who had to yield in the end.

HAD EVERYTHING

As a game it certainly had everything and the solid determination of all participants to give of their best made it a spectacular and memorable hour for spectators. All credit to Eire Og for their rally and for their refusal to be upset by instances of hard luck but credit too to Loughmore for their contribution to a final that must have repercussions later on as Tipperary's bid for prominence in the inter county field continues.

Playing into the town goal and aided by a strong wind, Loughmore went into the lead after five minutes, when Eamonn Brennan loften a line ball over the bar. Eire Og's corner back Denis Finnerty came to the rescue saving what seemed a certain goal when he daringly cut off a goal effort and when the ball eventually went out for a 70, Pat McGrath sent it straight between the posts. Eire Og then took up the running and a mid field free sent them attacking, only to have another free awarded. Michael Griffin took what appeared to be a rather lazy shot but it surprised the Lough-

more defenders and ended up in the net.

Eire Og had gone ahead and 3 minutes later Gerard Grace sent a fine ground shot to the net. Gradually though Loughmore began to regain the initiative. Pat Lynch pointed in the 11th minute and after Pat McGrath had sent over a 60 yard free, the Eire Og goal had a very narrow escape when a screaming shot from Ger Geehan, went the wrong side of the post. McGrath reduced the arrears further with a well taken free in the 19th minute and six minutes later he equalised, pointing a mid field free. Three minutes from the interval, Mike Walsh gave Loughmore the lead with a point to leave them 0-7 to 2-0 ahead at half time.

SECOND HALF

Less than a minute into the second half, Pat McGrath increased Loughmore's lead with a point from a free. Eire Og now began to become more urgent in their approach and Ml. Griffin had to be hauled down illegally to be prevented from getting through in the 34th minute. He took the free himself but it was saved and in the scramble around the goal-mouth, a free out was awarded. Then after 40 minutes Sean Minogue received a perfect pass and in his attempt to palm the ball to the net, he found the cross bar coming between him and what seemed a certain goal. Michael Griffin had a golden opportunity to make some amends for that slip, but he sent a scorable free wide.

Still Eire Og kept up the pressure and Brian Heffernan came up to take a semi penalty at the three quarter stage. His hard shot went too high however and over the bar. Relieved by this series of let offs, Loughmore came back and Pat McGrath did their cause a lot of good by pointing two frees in the 47th and 50th minutes. With the game entering its final ten minutes, Eire Og well realised that they would have to throw everything into it if they were to dethrone the champions. Roger Coffey coolly sent over a point and Brian Heffernan pointed a 70. With six minutes remaining, Eugene Hackett sent over the equaliser from mid field and Eire Og with their backs now up and urged on by their supporters fought for the score that would surely give them the title. It came with three minutes remaining and Brian Heffernan did the honours when he pointed a free. Eire Og were still attacking when Jimmy Collins ended a thrilling game and Eire Og captain Michael Kennedy went to the stand to receive the trophy from County Board Chairman, Mr Hubie Hogan.

BALANCE

Overall balance is the hallmark of this Eire Og side. They have no one who could be said to be one on whom most depends and it was truly a team effort that

brought them their second title. In the defence, all played with a cohesion and a sturdiness that gave very little scope to the Loughmore attack. The half forward line was totally blotted out by the rampant hurling of Gerard O'Brien, Eugene Hackett and John O'Gorman while behind them. Denis Finnerty excelled in the corner and Conor Ryan and Chris Halloran also played their part manfully.

Michael MacGrath in goals was the least busy of the two keepers but his good reading of situations and a few timely saves went a long way towards keeping his line intact for the hour.

Despite the strong play of Pat McGrath at midfield, the Eire Og pair of Brian Heffernan and Ml. Kennedy overall, had the advantage and this was more pronounced in the second half. The strong tackling of the Loughmore defence like that of their counterparts, gave little scope to the op-

posing attack. Roger Coffey led the Eire Og attack with skill while his wingers, Jim O'Sullivan and Phillip Kennedy, made several raids and played intelligently throughout. Michael Griffin at full forward came up against a very fine hurler in Peter Brennan—his county minor colleague—and was unfortunate not to have added to his first half goal. Gerard Grace took his goal beautifully and Sean Minogue was most industrious throughout and with a bit more luck might have figured on the score sheet.

NINE OF '76 TEAM

With nine of the '76 championship winning team in action, Loughmore gave their supporters plenty to cheer about. Peter Brennan was their outstanding defender, with James Maher, Pat Cormack also very prominent. Pat McGrath, in addition to his accurate frees, played with great strength and verve at midfield while of the attack, Pat Lynch and Ger Geehan were the most dangerous.

Scorers for Eire Og were: M. Griffin (free) and G. Grace 1-0 each; B. Heffernan 0-3 (2 frees

and 70), R. Coffey and E. Hackett 0-1 each.

Loughmore's replies came from P. McGrath 0-7 (one 70 and six frees), E. Brennan (line ball), M. Walsh and P. Lynch 0-1 each.

Eire Og had 11 wides in the hour, seven of them in the second half with Loughmore's total coming to eight, seven of which were in the first half. Loughmore were awarded 19 frees, 13 of them in the first half, with Eire Og's total at nine, six of which were in the second half. Each side forced two 70s, Loughmore's two in the first half and Eire Og's in the second.

Eire Og: Michael MacGrath, Denis Finnerty, Conor Ryan, Chris O'Halloran, Gerard O'Brien, Eugene Hackett, John O'Gorman, Brian Heffernan, Michael Kennedy (capt.), Jim O'Sullivan, Roger Coffey, Phillip Kennedy, Gerard Grace, Michael Griffin, Sean Minogue.

Loughmore - Castleiney: Francis McGrath, Tom Ryan, Peter Brennan, Pat Cormack, Stephen Maher, Richard Stapleton, James Maher, Pat McGrath, Eamonn Brennan (capt.), Joe Sweeney, Pat Gleeson, Michael Sheehan, Ger Geehan, Pat Lynch, Mike Walsh. Referee: Jimmy Collins, St Mary's, Clonmel.

LITTLE GAELS TALES

All hail to Nenagh's, Eire Og Who won the Minor Crown Likewise, the boys, from famed Loughmore, Ye, too, have won renown.

One great hurling judge described it as "the best minor final for years" and I agree. Right through the game the hurling was fast and crisp. It could have gone anyway in the end. Nenagh had the more even team and played well all through. Loughmore with ten of that team eligible again next year and most of the subs, fought with their customary coolness and dedication and made this final an historic occasion for all of us. We hope now that both will strive for further honours and go on to win a senior championship. Too often, we see our minors forgetting about the duty they owe the people who coached, trained and looked after them—and their supporters—who flocked to support them. Don't let them down boys, don't!

To the senior teams we say Well Done. Kilruane who won so many under age competitions are not letting their supporters down now. Neither are the Borris boys who starred in Templemore CBS and elsewhere. Tipperary's traditional hurling is still alive. The fire, the fury, the fierceness of the clash, the first-time pulling and the fun is not dead yet. Knocknagow lives on!

The survey on the state of hurling in the primary schools in Munster has been carried out and an analysis of the Questionnaires has been published and circulated to the County Boards and to Coiste Iomana. A Questionnaire was sent to each of the 880 schools in Mun-

come up against many problems, not the least of which would be "comments from cynical club members." Another course would consolidate and refresh them.

The first of the North Tipperary Minor hurling trials was held in the spacious Moneygall field on Saturday. Ballinahinch, Newport, Shannon Rovers, Moneygall, Roscrea Clubs were present and we had a chance to see some fine prospects in action. The mistake is often made of not paying enough attention (even at senior level) to those solid rural clubs that never reach even the quarter-final stage and these lads are "made for hurling". We do not see enough of them. Earlier in the day all the under 12 and under 14's from Moneygall were training. Up on the Notice Board in the Gaelic Centre I noticed in neat writing (I'd recognise Paddy Maher's writing anywhere) the names of 31 players u/12 and 28 players u/14 (yes, I counted them). They are travelling to Dublin to play the Flanna in Moibhi Rd. at 11.30 a.m. on Sunday—the day Kerry are playing Dublin in the NFL. Oh, you lucky ones. That's a match I'd like to see—and they are looking for ten cars to bring them up. What a wonderful Club—for a small club. Go neiri on bothar libh!

My deep sympathy and indeed I can express the sympathy of all Gaels to that great journalist and sportswriter in the Nenagh Guardian, Gerry Slevin, on the death of his father last week. He was a man who loved all things Gaelic

RUGBY

Nenagh win at Abbeyfeale

Nenagh Ormond 14, Abbeyfeale 4. Nenagh opened the defence of their Junior League North title with a resounding win against Abbeyfeale in Abbeyfeale last Sunday. It was a good display by the Ormonds considering they were short several regulars either through injury or otherwise.

A feature of the game was the goal kicking of Billy Morgan at full back. He contributed 11 points through two penalties, a conversion and a drop goal. The other Nenagh score was chalked up by M. Ryan.

There was a teneacy on the Nenagh side however to have too many scrumhalves with both forwards and backs indulging in this play. Indeed Nenagh's tally could have been a lot more but for several missed chances.

However for so early in the season and considering it was only the second game played, Nenagh can be well satisfied with their performance. Outstanding for Nenagh in the pack was Billy White who got good support from Tom Starr and M. McNamara. S. Burns and B. Hobba were best of the backs.

Nenagh Ormond: B. Shoer; B. Morgan, S. Burns, B. Hobba, N. Corbett; M. Ryan, B. Creed; B. White, M. McNamara, S. Harty, T. Starr, R. Kelly, D. Costello, R. McMahon.

Referee: John Shoer.

NENAGH AT HOME TO NEWCASTLEWEST

On Sunday next Nenagh play Newcastlewest. This is a very important fixture for Nenagh as they play Bohemians in the League on the following Sunday. It is also the first opportunity for the home supporters to see how the team has shaped after the summer recess.