

## BLAST FROM THE PAST- 1998 JUNIOR FOOTBALL ALL-IRELAND

1998 was a special year in our club as Kevin "George" Coonan led the Tipperary Junior Footballers to All Ireland success for the first time in 75 years. Kevin was joined on the panel by Jim McAuliffe and Chris Bonar while Galway man Martin Healy who was a member of Eire Og at the time was also a selector.

In the opening round Tipp took on Waterford and had an easy time of it winning 1-14 to 0-03. However the next day Limerick proved to be much tougher opponents winning 1-05 to 0-09. It appeared that Tipp were about to exit the

championship as they were a point down approaching the final whistle. It's at times like that that a team needs a leader and Coonan played a captains part to score two difficult frees to level and put us one point up and Tipp headed into the Munster final against Cork in Pairc Ui Rinn. Heading into that Munster final many things were against Tipp. Playing it in Corks home pitch for starters however the players were also aware that we hadn't won the Munster final since 1952 and Tipp had not beaten Cork in any grade since 1956. The "Cork Examiner"



*Tipperary junior football manager, Seamus McCarthy, photographed with his son, Niall, team captain, Kevin Coonan and the cup following Tipperary's victory over Offaly in the All-Ireland final at Portlaoise.*

of that day predicted a "win by a comfortable margin" for the Rebel County.

However despite what the score line suggests Tipp won an entertaining game with plenty of skill, determination and spirit by 0-06 to 0-05. Our own lads were to the fore in the win with Kevin Coonan getting two points and Jim McAuliffe adding another. Jim's point was Tipp's last score of the game and proved to be the decisive score.

In the All Ireland semi-final Tipperary took on the exiles from Warwickshire in Ardfinnan and had a comfortable 4-22 to 0-04 win. Things were not going according to plan for Tipp and the visitors were well in the game until Jim McAuliffe bagged a crucial goal which then opened the floodgates

and it was mere target practise for the Premier after that. At the final whistle Coonan had scored a personal tally of 0-04 while Jim bagged 1-01

Tipp headed to Portlaoise to take on neighbours Offaly in the final. Gerry Slevin described Tipp's performance as "a display of skilled, disciplined and confident football" that won Tipp's first title in 75 years as Tipp won 2-09 to 0-06. "An hour after the final whistle, Tipp players, mentors and fans were still savouring it all on and around the pitch" and "the winning of this title brought tears of joy to many eyes". Our own lads played no small role with Kevin contributing three points while Jim came on as a second half substitute.

In winning this title not only did Kevin Coonan win the Guardian Player of the Week but he also became the very first Nenagh man and the first player from North Tipperary to lead a Tipperary team to All Ireland glory. A very proud time for the club.