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Gaelic Sport

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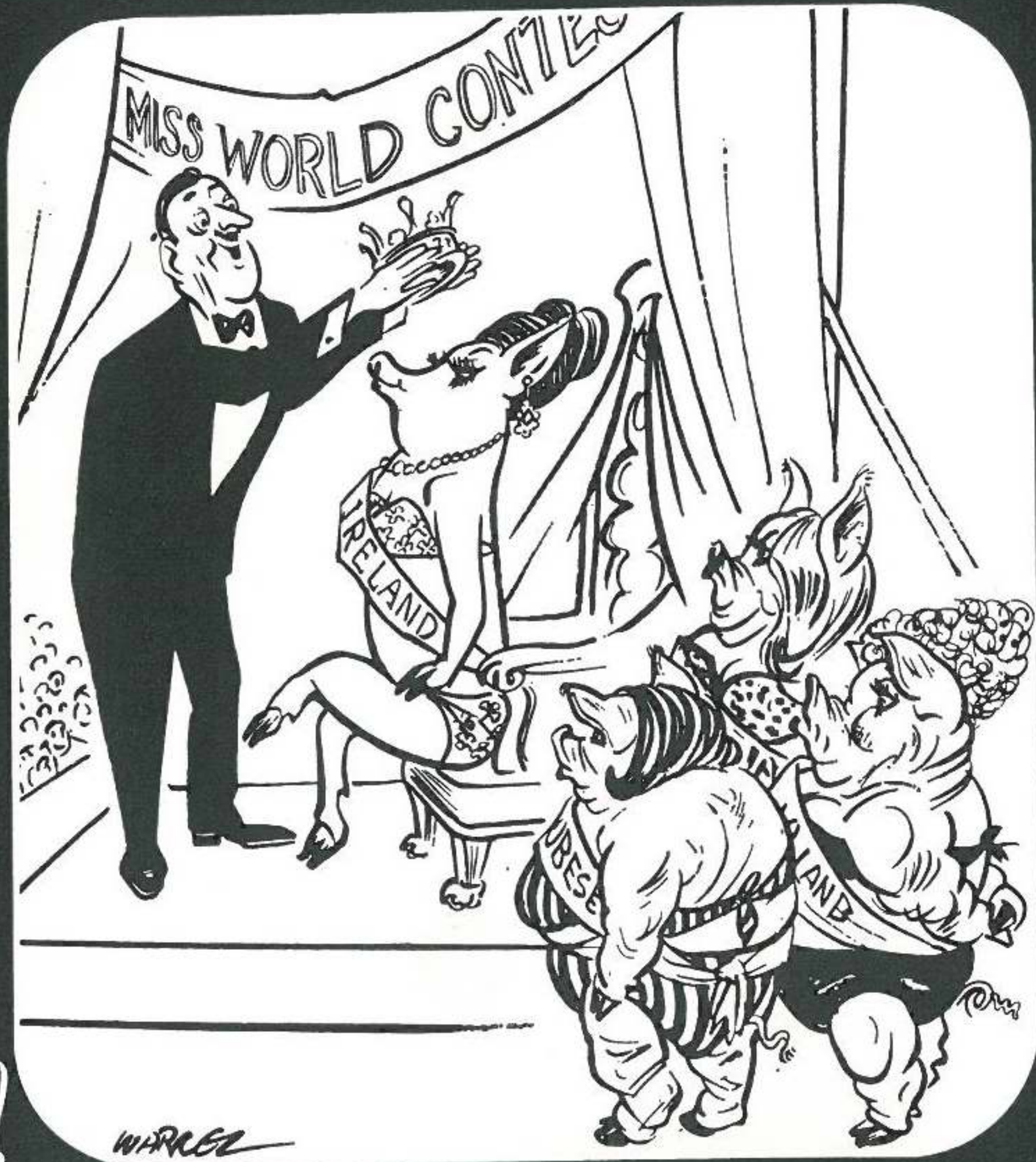
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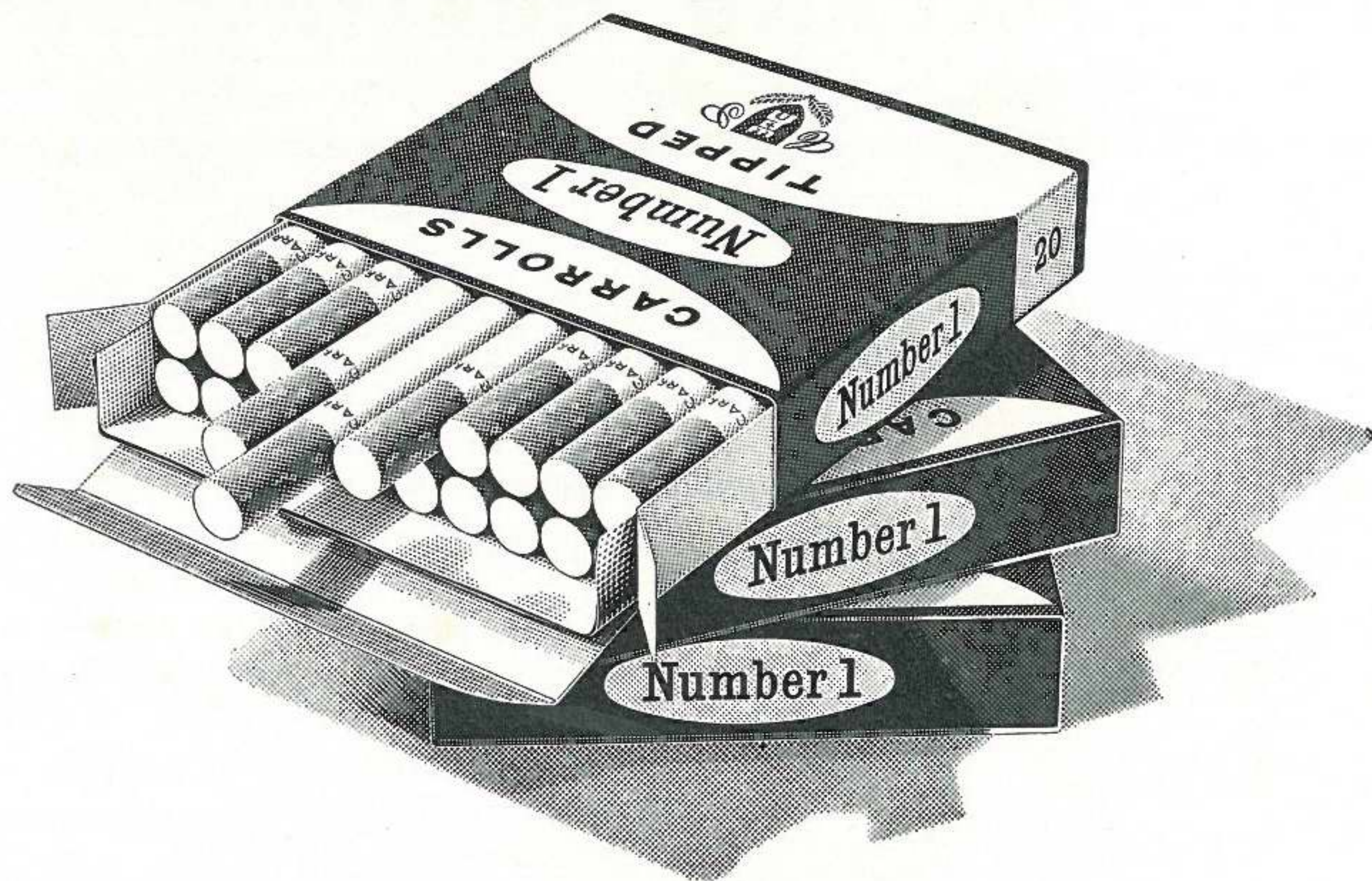
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Gaelic Sport

Vol. 10. No. 9. SEPTEMBER, 1967

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COVER PHOTO

FEATURED on our front cover this month are the Tipperary and Kilkenny Hurling teams as follows :—

TIPPERARY (standing from left) : Ossie Bennett (team trainer), John O'Donoghue, Noel O'Gorman, Kieran Carey, Sean McLoughlin, Mick Roche, John Doyle, Tony Wall, Michael Keating. Front row (from left) : Liam Devaney, Mick Burns, John McKenna, Theo English, Donie Nealon, Larry Kiely and Len Gaynor. (Photo by courtesy Cork Examiner.)

KILKENNY (standing from left) : Pa Dillon, Claus Dunne, Eddie Keher, Seamus Cleere, John Teehan, Jim Bennett, Jim Lynch, Pat Henderson. Front row (from left) : Martin Brennan, Tom Walsh, Martin Coogan, Dick Blanchfield, Jim Treacy, Paddy Moran and Ollie Walsh.

Comment

Familiar faces

THERE will be old familiar faces at Croke Park on September 3. Had we been told this a few months back the thought would have depressed us. "Oh, surely not another Tipperary-Kilkenny game," would have been our reaction. But now, strangely enough, we have come to view it differently.

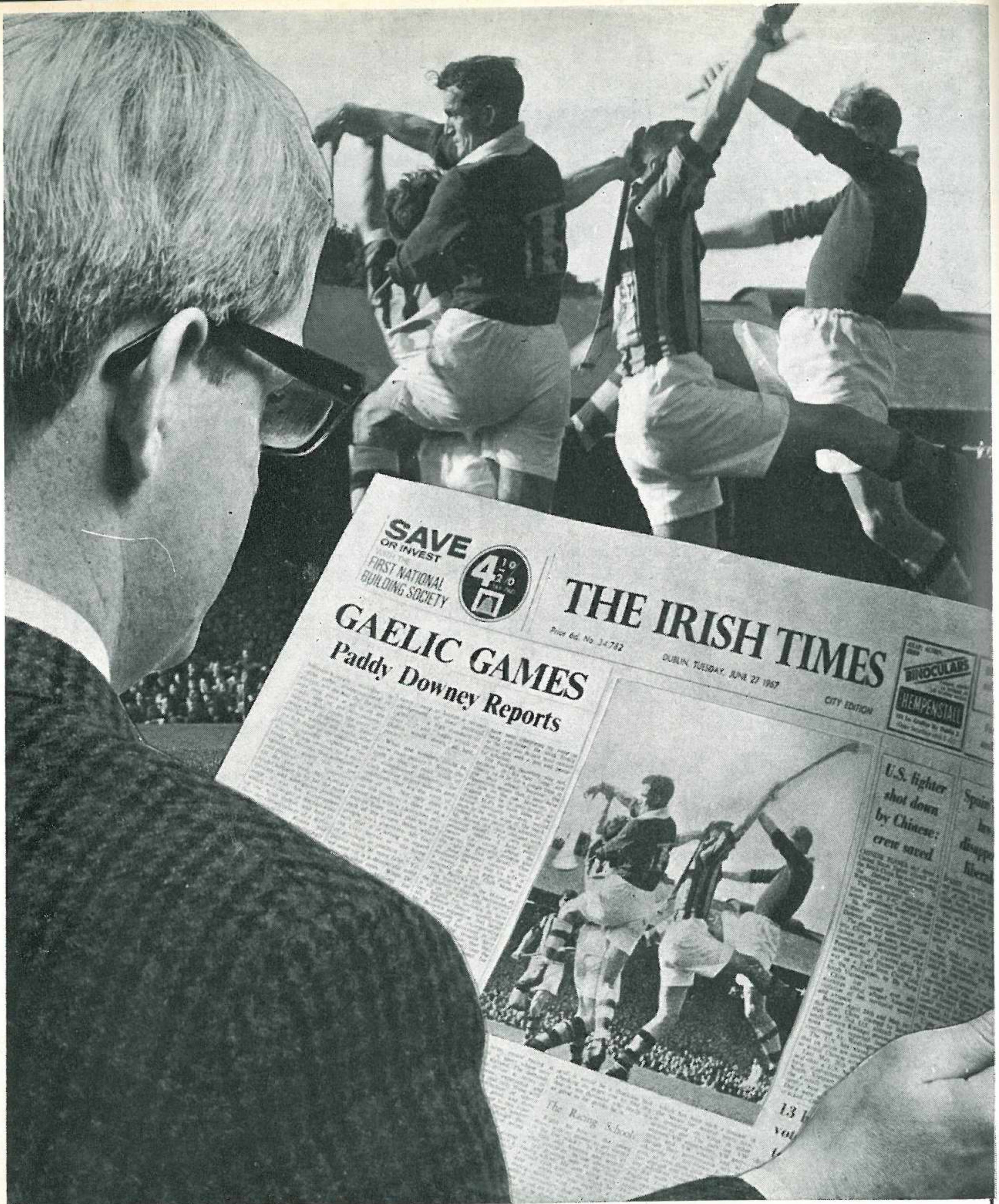
This is, in fact, a most intriguing clash. What is more, we can depend on it to produce an hour of splendid hurling.

All of this springs from the fact that this rejuvenated Tipperary team constitutes a great contradiction. Because of its age, it is the most craft-endowed and skilful side to appear in Croke Park for decades. Because of its age too, it is far from being invincible.

In victory or defeat Tipperary will provide hurling of a standard which we are not likely to see again for a very long time. But, despite providing this, Kilkenny could well beat them.

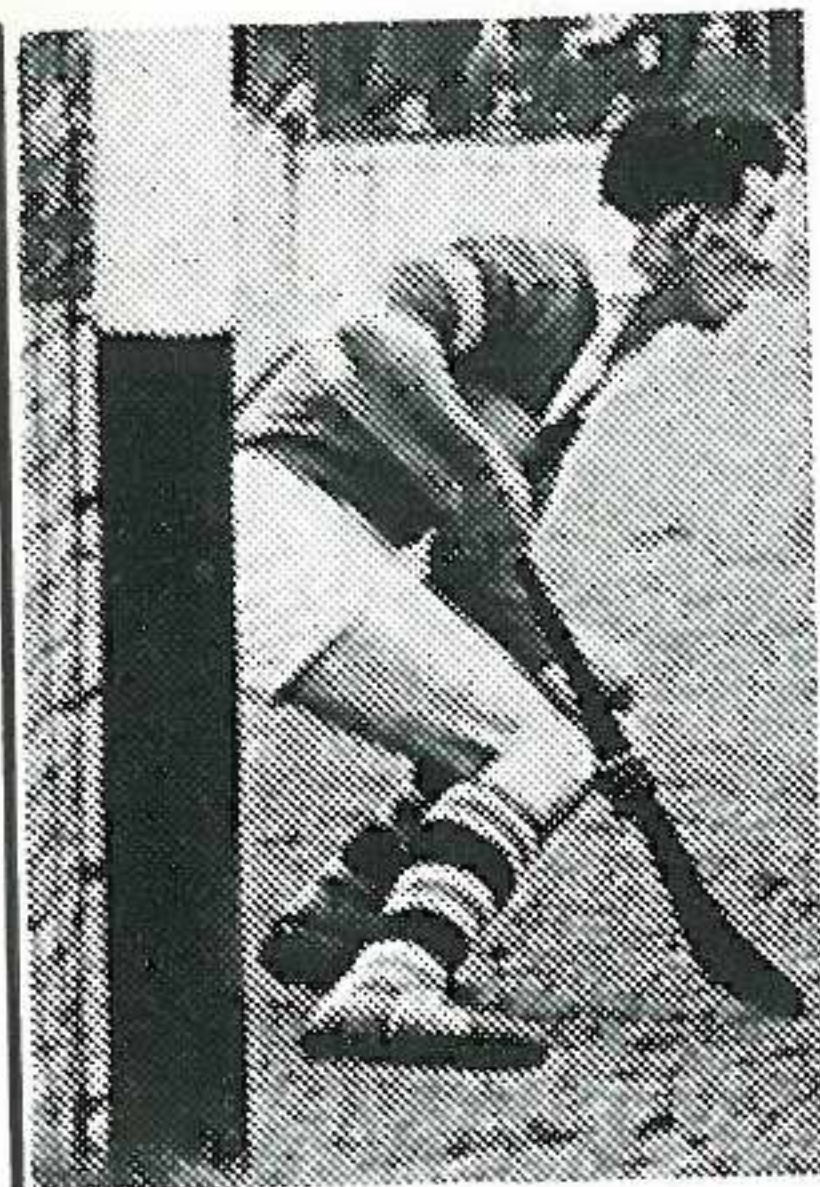
If Kilkenny play the type of game which Clare should have played in the Munster final, then they should score their first championship victory over Tipperary since 1922. It is well within the scope of Kilkenny to do this.

Yes, an intriguing game — with a built-in guarantee of magnificent hurling.



Gaelic Games—Paddy Downey Reports

Paddy Downey's articles on Gaelic Games appear in The Irish Times. They contain all the detail and background information because Paddy Downey really knows the game. As well as sport, The Irish Times gives a news service second to none, the finest photographs and really first-rate features. That's why more and more people are reading The Irish Times. Well balanced Well informed Well worth reading **THE IRISH TIMES**



John O'Donoghue

By
TERENCE ROYNANE

Legendary rivals meet again

KILKENNY and Tipperary once again in the All-Ireland senior hurling final! This is a pairing that will intrigue all genuine hurling followers, though some undiscerning members of the public may feel that Kilkenny and Tipperary have met all too often in recent years.

But, to the keen hurling follower it is the fact that these two counties **have** been so often in opposition in recent years that makes the tie so completely intriguing. After all, a great legend had grown up about clashes between those two counties based on the fact that Kilkenny had not beaten Tipperary in the senior championship since the All-Ireland final of 1922. As the years went by and Tipperary continued to dominate the League and cham-

pionship finals, the fans began to wonder if the victory of Tipperary in all those matches had reached the stage when Kilkenny would acquire a complete inferiority complex and would be beaten by the mere sight of the blue and gold jerseys. But that never happened.

The Tipperary men beat Kilkenny in the All-Irelands of 1937, 1945, 1951 and 1964, and in a number of League finals in the 'fifties and early 'sixties, but suddenly a change came, in the minor grade. In three successive years Kilkenny won the minor title, defeating Tipperary on each occasion, so that a generation of Kilkenny hurlers grew up who had been accustomed to victory over the Tipperary lads in minor ranks.

The result was that these newcomers were convinced that they

had the beating of Tipperary in a final, and remained unshaken in that belief even when Tipperary beat them convincingly in the All-Ireland final of 1964 and the League final of 1965. Tipperary went on to win the All-Ireland title that year too, and then met Kilkenny again in the "home" League final of 1966. This time the tide turned at last. Kilkenny won a grim struggle with two points to spare—their first win over Tipperary in the final of a senior competition for forty-three years.

Now it remains to be seen what the psychological effect of that victory has been.

Since then the teams have met only once in a competitive game. That was in Kilkenny in the League last spring when Kilkenny chalked up a resounding victory in a game that produced far too much needle and added nothing to the sporting reputation of either side. But we have come a long way now since the spring and the form of earlier in the year can be of no consequence at this stage. This is especially so in the case of Tipperary.

Immediately after that '66 League defeat by Kilkenny they went down unexpectedly to Limerick in the first round of the Munster championship. That meant men who had been constantly on the hurling "go" for years suddenly had a chance to rest. They took that chance gratefully, perhaps too gratefully, for they were a long time getting back to anything like their best form in the League and, in fact, failed to reach the League semi-finals for the first time under the new regulations.

However, when championship time came round the old campaigners, strengthened by the return of Tony Wall, girded them-

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Tom Walsh

● From page 5

selves again for the fray with much of their old fire.

They never looked in danger in their Munster semi-final outing against Waterford, who had so sensationally defeated All-Ireland champions Cork, but there was still something of a question mark hanging over them when they met Clare in the Munster final.

For thirty minutes of the hour Clare, against the breeze, seemed to have Tipperary on the run, but when it came to the crucial stages of the second half, the Tipperary men, playing hurling of power and purpose that Clare manifestly

could not match, marched on to a most convincing victory.

So convincing was it, in fact, that they were at once, and rightly so, installed as favourites to regain the title they had won so often in recent years. And certainly it was hard, in the second half, to see any weak link in their side at Limerick. John O'Donoghue proved himself once again the soundest goalkeeper in the game to-day. In front of him Kieran Carey and John Doyle showed no sign at all of the passage of the years, and were going better than ever in the last quarter.

Tony Wall made a really

triumphant return to the first-class hurling scene, and his flankers, Mick Burns and Len Gaynor, improved steadily after an uncertain start. In the first half Tipperary, even with the wind, seemed to be in some trouble at centre-field, but once Theo English thundered into the game in the second half to give Mick Roche the assistance he needed, Tipperary defied both the wind and the Claremen in this area.

The Tipperary forwards would seem to be back to their best and now that Mackey McKenna is fully fit again their only problem would seem to be who to leave out rather than who to put in, and remember that Jimmy Doyle was sitting on the sideline at Limerick.

So Tipperary come back to Croke Park, a seasoned side whose all-round experience and strength is still unmatched. They will be all out to capture the All-Ireland title once more, with the added incentive this time of helping John Doyle to win that ninth All-Ireland medal. But I do not think that Kilkenny will be all that dismayed, even though the odds seem to be somewhat against them.

Unlike other Kilkenny sides of recent years, this present Black and Amber fifteen have beaten Tipperary in a final, and on average have beaten Tipperary more often than Tipperary have beaten them in recent years. In fact, their greatest worry is probably not Tipperary, but their own in-and-out form.

After that clear-cut victory over Tipperary in the League in the spring, they went into the League semi-final as the warmest of favourites, scored well over Clare, and then fell most unexpectedly to Wexford in the final.

Shortly afterwards they failed to Cork at Wembley but came back, like Tipperary, a powerful force in the championship. They routed Dublin at Carlow, and then staged

● To page 9



JOHN DOYLE . . . talking to SEAN MURPHY

ONE HOUR TO GO!

ON Sunday, September 3, one man will step on to the threshold of immortality. All eyes will be on him and the outcome of the great contest will relate more to him than to anything else. That man will, of course, be John Doyle.

Recently I interviewed the great Tipperary veteran:

Murphy—Whatever the outcome in the final, will you retire?

Doyle—Most definitely yes. I am packing in from both club and inter-county level after September 3. I will don the Tipp. jersey for one more hour and I hope to achieve my ambition of capturing that coveted ninth in that 60 minutes.

M.—Kilkenny are considered your bogey team. Do you fancy your chances against the Noremen?

D.—Well, to finish in a blaze of glory it has to be Kilkenny beaten in the final. Although they seem to have had our measure in recent outings I think we have the spirit and ability to emerge victorious.

M.—Having figured on Tipperary teams for 20 years, how do you rate the present selection?

D.—Simply great. Their second-half display against Clare was the best performance by a Tipperary team in ten years. There is great

spirit and comradeship in the camp and this must show dividends.

M.—What is your favourite position?

D.—Although I have enjoyed a successful spell at right corner back, I feel that left half-back was my favourite position.

M.—Who was the greatest player you encountered?

D.—Without a doubt, Paddy Barry of Cork. He was wily and tough and always dangerous.

M.—What game gave you your greatest thrill?

D.—The 1960 Munster final against Cork, but a close runner-up was our recent match with Clare. We were described as “a bit long in the tooth” but we came through with flying colours when the pressure was at its peak.

M.—Any rule you would like to see changed in the present G.A.A. rule-book?

D.—Well, having enjoyed playing for 20 years, why should I crib about changing, but there is one thing I would like to see and that is more man-to-man old-fashioned tackling allowed. Hurling is no parlour game; there is plenty of room for the shoulder-to-shoulder play.

M.—What do you think of the

social activities provided by the G.A.A.?

D.—I am quite satisfied with the present set-up. I feel it is a matter for each individual club to provide entertainment and activities to suit the needs of the particular area and their members' tastes.

M.—When you retire from playing the game do you intend continuing your association with G.A.A. activities?

D.—Although I will be kept busy with my duties as a farmer and county councillor, I will still be wholeheartedly behind my club, Holycross, with whom I won three county titles. I don't intend to be a parasite. I will give back something to the Association in return for many years of enjoyment.

M.—Any advice for young hurlers?

D.—Train hard. Concentrate on one game and success will eventually follow.

M.—Finally, what is your ambition now?

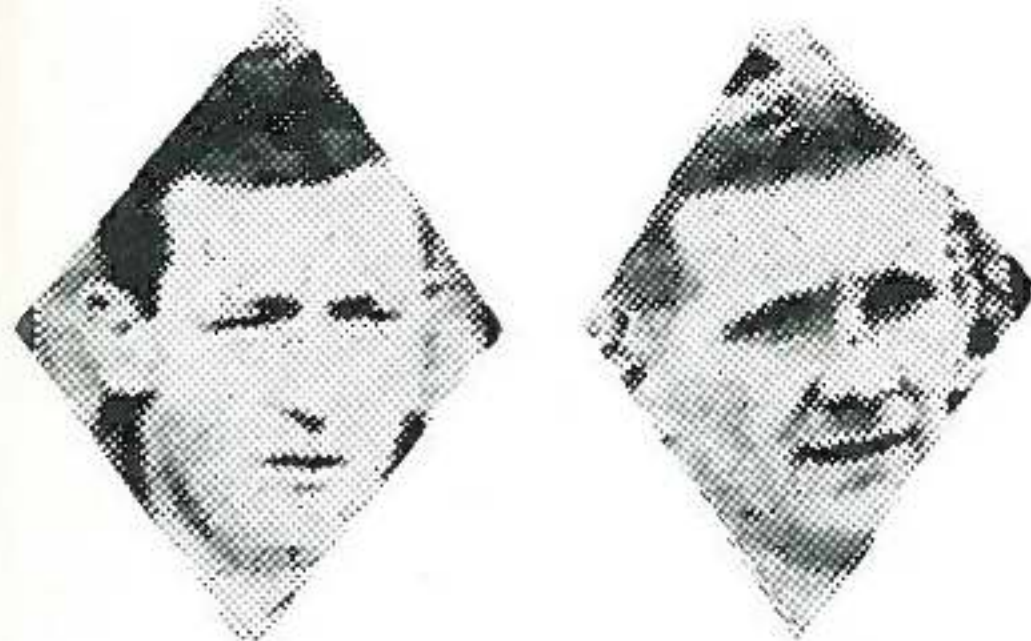
D.—Everybody already knows the answer. To win my ninth All-Ireland senior hurling medal, and with excellent support from my fellow team-mates I feel I will achieve it on September 3.

● From page 7

a great last-quarter rally to beat Wexford, though it must be admitted that the Slaneysiders sadly missed the services of Tom Neville and Willie Murphy.

The defence, with Ollie Walsh in goal, a sound full-back line and half-backs who are betimes brilliant, has held Tipperary before now. Whatever Kilkenny's mid-field pairing, and they have a number of possible partners for Paddy Moran, any could prove effective.

In attack, the hawklike swoops of Eddie Keher and Claus Dunne spelt disaster for Wexford in the



John McKenna

Mick Burns

Leinster final, while Tom Walsh has always proved something of a problem for Tipperary. But Kilkenny still have problems in attack, and converted defender Jim Lynch, despite his four goals against Dublin, was so well held against Wexford that one wonders if he is the solution to the full forward problem.

So the Kilkenny attack will need to improve if they are to score the county's first All-Ireland win over Tipperary since 1922, yet they are, I think, capable of improvement and we should see a really exciting game.

Tipperary must start favourites, but if Kilkenny, still smarting from two unexpected defeats in finals, by Cork last September and by Wexford last May, reach their very best form, they are going to take beating, and in the end, it may need all the incentive of that ninth medal for John Doyle to bring Tipperary through.

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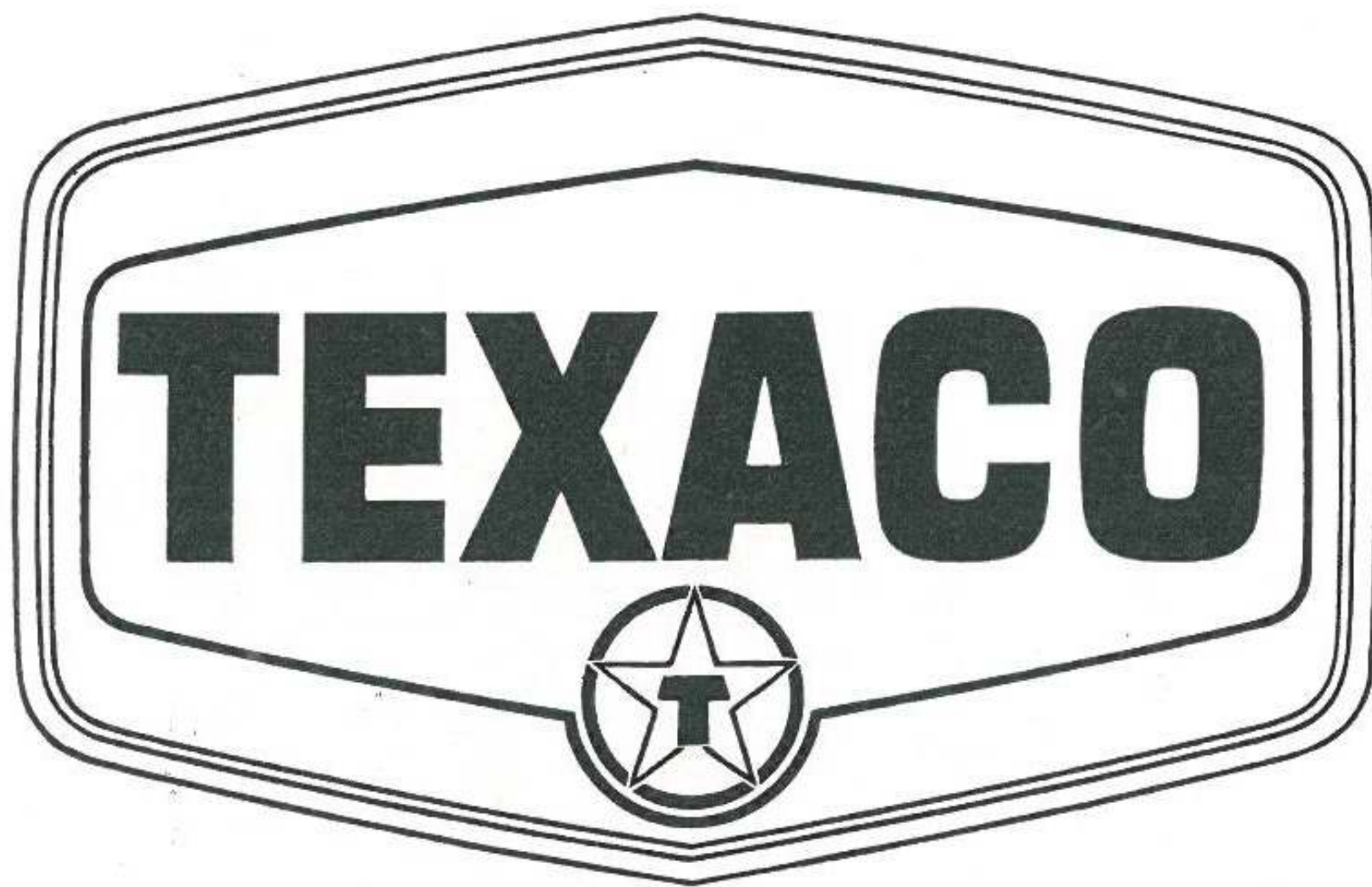
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Kieran Carey



John O'Donoghue



Larry Kiely

Come on the pensioners!

“**C**OME on the pensioners!” yelled a wag in the crowd in the Cork Athletic Grounds as Tipperary prepared for the throw-in of their first championship game of the year.

“Don’t ye be too hard on the ould fellows,” another chirped. More sober citizens were discussing among themselves the wisdom of recalling all available members of the great team of the first half of this decade. Tipperary folk, rather curiously, seemed most adamant that it would have been better to have leavened the good wheat with some youth.

So they were too old, were they? So they were pensioners, is that what they thought? All washed up, eh? Well, now we know that they were no such thing, but rather a very slightly slowed,

slightly less flexible version of the team of all the talents that we knew in the final of two years ago. They are especially formidable, too, because they have taken as personal insult the slurs on their ability cast by those who wrote them off to oblivion and said they were old worn-out hurling machines due for a trade-in in favour of something new and streamlined. But, it takes a lot of careful running-in to bring a machine to mature smooth-running; a long time to get the “bugs” out of new engines untried in conditions of stress; a lot of bother in developing and perfecting the road-holding qualities—especially on the rocky road to Croke Park.

Some day soon the old Tipperary motor will be traded-in, but

By JAY DRENNAN

only in a part exchange pattern and bit by bit—a new promising lad here and another there, surrounded by dignified and courteous V.I.P.s, who will tease all his ability out of the lad, and by prising openings for him, make him play his best in the hard-running, open-field type of play which is the forte of youth and the one fear of advancing years. See how they made young Flanagan play; he was like one of themselves, but, if he had been thrown in there with five colleagues of his own age and experience, he would have thrashed about energetically but uselessly, full of bright talent with none to polish its brightness until it shone.

Clare, of course, had advantages of youth and a turn of superior speed, but they used them badly, indeed, even in the first half. Whether it was because they were unsure of their ability to stroke the ball away first-time or not, I cannot say, but for some reason they were obsessed with the notion that the way to exploit their advantages was to carry the ball, or tip and follow, or run through the Tipperary men, instead of spreading it in all directions with immediate urgency—the more random the better—and then race the Tipp. men to it in the open field. They never did that, and that was the reason why they could not capitalise on their advantages.

Anyway, Tipperary gave an object lesson in tactics in the second-half, which leads one to believe that it will take a great team playing at the peak of its form to defeat them. First, when the waves of victory-hungry pres-

● To page 13



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sure engulfed them on the resumption, they stalled and stalled and stalled, clearing to touch as far out as possible to ensure that the returning attack would be funnelled into a massed defence and covered forwards. Eventually, as their know-how told them, enthusiasm would wane, and the main wave of pressure would have been deflected. Then, they set about building up their own counter, undermining the bulwark of Clare's first-half resistance—Cullinane — by switching the ball crisply along the wings before centering to the Tipperary strong-point—Keating.

Cullinane discredited, and the fury of the Clare onslaught turned, Clare beginning to doubt themselves as all will who have never known victory, Roche and English began to devour the opposition in the midfield. Roche was ranging everywhere, flourishing his hurley as he sent long and well-placed balls to the attack, a contrast to the wildness of Tom Ryan when he was dominant in the first-half. So Theo took up the cudgels to deliver the final deadly link in this chain of tactical moves, all coming from the heads of "old dogs" suddenly presented with a "hard road" indeed.

Roche's dominance had begun to drive back the half-backs and had addled the midfield; Ryan had paid the price of over-exertions in the first half. English began picking up the loose ones, and off he went on those curious little solos of his—probing here and there, carrying the ball right up towards the tiring half-back line, holding it on his stick while his eye flicked about looking for the uncovered goal-corner, or the forward moving loose, or waiting for the defender to draw. It was the most genteel, but the most cruelly torturous form of execution.

Someone rushed out, at last, and



John McKenna

fouled. The frees were turned into silver-plated points and gold-bodied goals. Theo, meantime, with the appearance of a well-groomed, well-fed, dapper surgeon retired as though from an operating theatre with a job well done,

ready to embark on a study of the next case history preparatory to renewing probings.

O'Donoghue was sharp and near his very best form in goal; the defence was a revelation of experienced skills once they succeeded in luring the Clare forwards into their lair in the tight. You could almost see a walrus-like tear in John Doyle's eye that such pretty, innocent, and promising youths had to be devoured (without pepper and salt) to obey nature's law of survival.

The Roche-English axis is formidable; Roche in the full-flower of fit manhood and bursting out all over with energy and hurling quality; and Theo, in the fullness of intellectual fruition. The forwards are potent and thorough; Keating is back to his best; Nealon as usual, can raise his game at any time and in any position; Devaney is cunning and accurate; Flanagan a revelation. Only McLoughlin is now expendable, for he has certainly gone over the hill. The team that beats them in this final will be good; Kilkenny, if they rise to the occasion with a spirit they seldom show, if they manage to steer clear of the notion that they are beaten before they start, could really be the poison to make them writhe. But, as the two teams stand, and on their recent records, it must be another All-Ireland for the blue-and-gold.

The Late Paudie Sheehy

MANY tributes have been paid to the late Paudie Sheehy since his tragic death at the beginning of August. "Gaelic Sport" adds its voice in salute to the memory of a great footballer and an unrivalled sportsman. We offer our sympathy to the Sheehy family.



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TOP TEN

THIS month's Top Ten lists are based on individual inter-county performances during the period Sunday, July 16, to Sunday, August 6, inclusive.

The Tipperary captain, Mick Roche, heads the hurling list while four more of his team-mates help to give the list a distinct Tipperary flavour.

In football, the ever-brilliant Jack Quinn takes the number one position, primarily as a result of his display in the Leinster final. Corkmen Frank Cogan and Mick Burke take second and third place respectively.

HURLING

1. Mick Roche (Tipperary).
2. John O'Donoghue (Tipperary).
3. Eddie Keher (Kilkenny).
4. John Flanagan (Tipperary).
5. Pat Nolan (Wexford).
6. Jim Cullinane (Clare).
7. Michael Keating (Tipperary).
8. Dan Quigley (Wexford).
9. Claus Dunne (Kilkenny).
10. Tony Wall (Tipperary).

FOOTBALL

1. Jack Quinn (Meath).
2. Frank Cogan (Cork).
3. Mick Burke (Cork).
4. Ray Carolan (Cavan).
5. John Morley (Mayo).
6. Charlie Gallagher (Cavan).
7. Eric Philpott (Cork).
8. Seanie Burrows (Kerry).
9. Mick McTiernan (Leitrim).
10. John Joe O'Reilly (Cavan).

The Editor Asks

Has Croke Park still got parking room for

THE BIG BLUE VAN?

IT'S been a year of records at Croke Park—low attendance records. The figure for the Cork-Cavan All-Ireland semi-final coupled with that of St. Patrick's Day were the lowest in many many years.

God be with the pre-television days! In 1959, 70,148 turned up to see Kerry and Dublin in their semi-final, while there were 62,688 there to see Galway play Down. It was even better in 1961—71,573 for Kerry v. Down and 64,112 for Offaly v. Roscommon.

And so the story went until they let in the big blue van with its cables and cameras in 1962. There were 28,370 there to see Cork and Cavan provide a truly exciting hour on August 6.

We are going to press prior to the Mayo-Meath game. In the pre-television days that game would go near setting a record for semi-finals. It would be in the 70,000 bracket for it has all the traditional ingredients—a well populated county near Croke Park and another well-populated one which has been denied glory for over a decade.

In the television era Meath and Mayo will draw, probably, 45,000. At least, that is our guess. You will know how far out we have been when you read these lines.

One way or another the hard, plain-as-day, facts are that All-Ireland semi-final attendances have been halved since the arrival

of live television. Precisely the same has been done with Railway Cup finals—from a 40,000 average prior to the arrival of television on March 17, 1962, to a current average of 22,000.

Last May we made a forecast that there will be less than 20,000 in Croke Park next St. Patrick's Day. We are now more confident than ever. If only 28,370 could be persuaded to travel to Croke Park for an All-Ireland semi-final anything could happen on March 17, 1968.

If Radio-Telefis Eireann were a public company (as are the I.T.V. companies in England) and the G.A.A. purchased shares with the countless thousands of pounds which the live coverage has cost it since 1962, it would now be a majority shareholder.

And what a pity it is not a majority shareholder. If it was, it could demand some sort of week to week coverage for its affairs.

But R.T.E. is not a public company and in return for the blue van, the cables and the cameras, the G.A.A. has got absolutely nothing in return . . . except that it no longer has the bother of catering for big crowds.

THE NEW LEAGUES

An immediate criticism which might be levied against the new National Leagues structure is that it provides no extra games for counties who need them—and there are many such counties.

For example, in 1966, Kilkenny had a total of three senior football games; Clare had four, Monaghan, Waterford and Wicklow had six each and so on.

No county can break out of the strait-jacket which has been the lot of Monaghan, Clare, Waterford, Wicklow and Co., unless they have competition. Only in competition can a team develop and there is absolutely no alternative.

Furthermore, it is virtually impossible for these weak counties to get challenge games. None of the stronger counties feel disposed to playing them.

However, we can, at the same time, appreciate that there is a problem in all of this. To provide a League which would involve all counties in, say six or seven games within their respective divisions would overload most of the strong counties.

Last year, for example, Galway had 23 senior football games; Meath had 21; Mayo had 20; Dublin and Down had 18 each, and so on. These figures have been largely consistent over the past decade or so. In other words, the strong counties are always busy, and the weak counties are always virtually idle.

Twenty games is probably the maximum a county can engage in without greatly contracting club activity. So we, therefore, have

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THE more I consider the wonderful match-winning qualities of Eddie Keher, Tom Walsh and Ollie Walsh, the more I am at a loss to fathom why Kilkenny have not made a very much deeper imprint in the 1960's.

I am not going to sing here the praises of Keher's brilliance in the testing school of making and taking of scores, for the simple reason that I have more than once already spotlighted just what a tremendous asset he is to a team. Furthermore, those sudden flashes of sheer genius, and beautiful and superbly-timed scores that are the hallmark of a forward match-winner supreme, are just now fresh in the mind of all after the magnificent manner in which his pay-off punch in front of goal so superbly swung the game for Kilkenny in the Leinster final.

Instead, let's concentrate briefly on Keher's brilliant scoring record since arriving on the senior scene . . . and what food for thought his impressive figure provides! Totals like that 2-5 in the Leinster final, and 0-14 in Kilkenny's last All-Ireland final win in 1963 over Waterford, not only remind us so vividly of his ability to practically win a match himself off his own hurley, but have also helped regally to push his scoring record up to an impressive 91 goals and 504 points (777 points) in just eight years in the premier grade (he made his senior debut in the 1959 All-Ireland final replay).

The ever-vigilant and elusive Rower-Inistioge pulse-raiser chalked up that tally in 132 games. This means that, on paper at any rate, he means almost six points to Kilkenny even before a ball is pucked in the final? His match average is 5.88 minors.

Tom Walsh would doubtless be linked even more indelibly than

THE BIG THREE

he is at present in the minds of the majority of enthusiasts with the all-important match-winning score-getting art, but for the fact that as a senior he has had to share the limelight in the same team with such a talented exponent as Keher. In our understandable eagerness to savour to the full the skilled approach of a brilliant "professional" plying his superb arts and crafts efficiently in the highest of competition, many of us are inclined to concentrate mainly on this majestic unit of the Noreside striking force when Kilkenny are in action.

It is, therefore, undoubtedly all the more of a tribute to Walsh's outstanding qualities that he has time and again superbly snapped this "focus on the master" onto himself dramatically with his intelligent use of the ball, his dashing play, and his flair for notching a brilliant and majestic score. Indeed, surprising as it may appear, he is actually proving more successful than "King" Keher himself in this testing business of scoring goals!

After just under five years in the premier grade, the 23-year-old Thomastown man has caused the umpires to raise the green flag on only 17 times fewer than Keher at 73 goals. His points scoring record may not, accordingly, seem

quite as devastating at 141 minors.

Yet, that is still a sizeable total, and, when we consider that it all adds up to an over-all tally of 360 points from 83 games at a match average of 4.33 minors, it is obvious that Tom Walsh is already well established in his own right among the elite of scoring wizards.

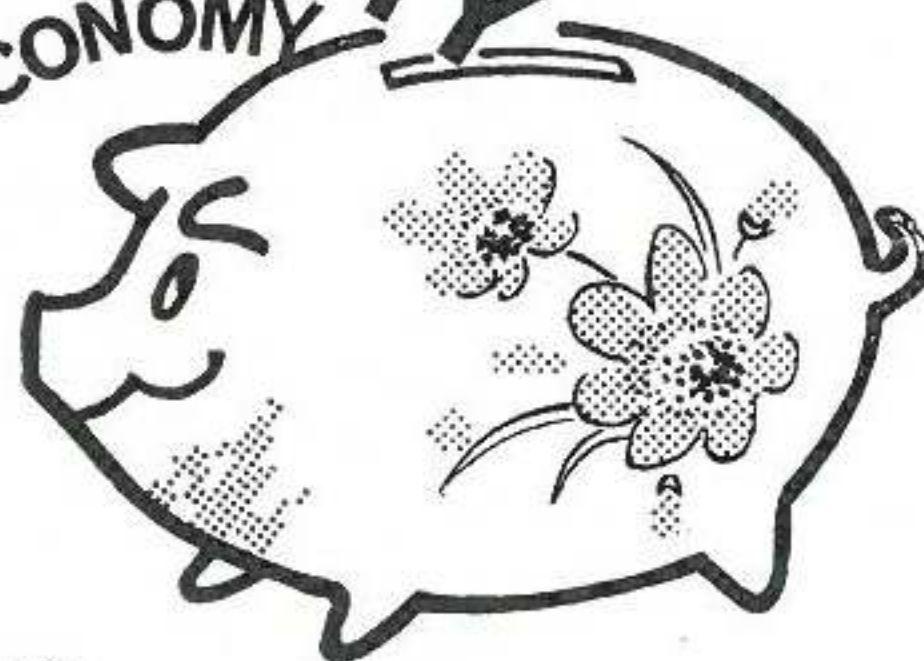
Now add to this powerful twin "scoring cylinder" that solid barrier that Ollie Walsh invariably puts up in goal, and one begins to see even more clearly what I mean when I say that the wonder is that Kilkenny have not dominated hurling much more so in recent years.

Invariably, when the Thomastown custodian colours a game with his brilliant saving, coolness, daring, safe-catching and swift, purposeful clearing, I feel that no man could do more, either to discourage the opposition, or to inspire his team-mates to even greater endeavours. But, these priceless assets in a goalkeeper's make-up, are, in the case of Ollie Walsh, complimented by another potentially great match-winning factor—that tremendous puck-out.

The length he gets into this now legendary puck means that in the instance his hurley comes in contact with the sliothar, there is very real danger, indeed, immediately

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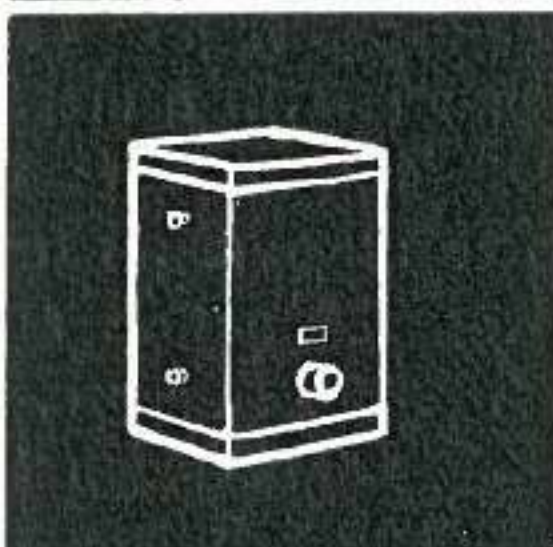
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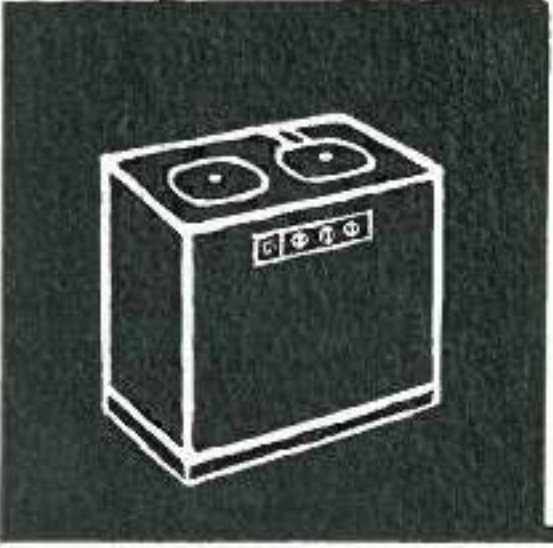
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Kilkenny refuse to swallow another bitter pill!

By **TIM HORGAN**



Tom Walsh



Martin Coogan



"Pa" Dillon

TWELVE months ago a fully fit Kilkenny team bounced on to the green sward of Croke Park, confident that the 1966 All-Ireland final would be a mere formality; that the challenge of the enthusiastic young Cork men would be brushed aside without much ado, and that the Liam McCarthy Cup would return to the banks of the Nore once again. Few wearers of the Black and Amber rosettes would even listen to suggestions that the hurlers from the Lee might be better than they imagined, that an overall improvement had been noted in the red-jereseved brigade, or that a Cork victory was not an impossibility.

Kilkenny were firm favourites to win, and the most expected from the Munster champions was a good showing before the inevitable collapse. Earlier in the year the Leinstermen had trounced the Rebel County in the League semi-final, and it was thought that only a miracle could reverse this decision in the major decider.

Cork were newcomers to Headquarters, and required to be broken-in before they could even hope to master Kilkenny in the stadium which the Noresiders, like the Galway footballers, were now beginning to call their own. Tradition favoured a close game, but current standards demanded

that the men in the striped jerseys would carry the day, as they had done in the League final against Tipperary five months earlier. As one observer put it, "Kilkenny believed they had only to come to Dublin to collect the medals."

Well, we all know what happened to the hurlers from the Marble City on that windy September day twelve months ago. They were stunned by the courage and effectiveness of a daring young Cork fifteen who feared nothing and hurled with all the zest and optimism of a veteran outfit. The Rebel footballers had just failed to create a major shock in their All-Ireland semi-final against Galway, but the county hurlers were a different kettle of fish altogether. Nothing could dampen their enthusiasm as they met the favourites blow for blow, score for score, until they had pushed themselves into such a position that the game seemed to be wound up ten minutes from the finish. A very subdued Kilkenny team headed for the dressing-rooms after the match, as hordes of delighted Cork supporters swarmed on to the pitch to congratulate their county's heroes. For the underdogs had overcome the favourites by the impressive score, 3-9 to 1-10, and in doing so had brought the Rebel County back into the hurling limelight in

a very big way after a lengthy absence.

Kilkenny were crestfallen and depressed after the defeat, but a valuable lesson had been learned from the experience. Never again would the Noresiders imagine that an All-Ireland title is easy to come by, or that a county like Cork is not worth its place in the final. That the victory was a fluke and that Kilkenny were affected by sleeping pills were suggestions which emerged in the subsequent post mortems on the game. But the latter ideas were dispelled by the players themselves, who accepted defeat in a very sporting manner, while Cork put paid to the "fluke" by repeating the dose in the Grounds and Wembley finals later on. It was obvious that the Leinster champions had underestimated their southern opponents, and the resultant overconfidence in their own prowess had cost them an All-Ireland title.

On Sunday, September 3, the caman wielders from Kilkenny will line out at Croke Park again, but little of that unbounded confidence so apparent last September will be seen this year. Their respected opponents from Munster are not a surprise package, as far as the Noresiders are concerned, but they will be respected as a team of the

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highest stature. Kilkenny have beaten them in Croke Park before, and quite recently too as far as big matches go, but "Remember Cork!" is their motto and they are not likely to make the same mistakes again.

Kilkenny are not a great team by the standards at the moment, but they are good enough to win another All-Ireland title and, if they can strike their best form, they could bring it off. Eddie Keher, who made his first appearance in a senior final when he came on as a substitute in the 1959 replay against Waterford, has well and truly established himself among the all-time greats in hurling. Kilkenny are fortunate to have such a brilliant and accurate marksman, for every top ranking county needs a supreme sharpshooter, and in recent times Keher has done for his county what Ring, Rackard and Mackey did for theirs so often in the past. It is a pity that the Noreside attack doesn't possess an effective "feeder" to keep Keher in regular supply, as John O'Halloran does for Seanie Barry, but the Inistioge man makes up for this by "fighting" for the ball himself.

Tom Walsh, the fair-haired dynamo from Thomastown is another man whose penchant for picking off scores is an invaluable asset to the Leinster champions. Unfortunately however, in recent months the Kilkenny attack seems to have sparked on two cylinders only, and unless Keher and Walsh are given more than a token

● Continued Next Page.

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◀ *Eddie Keher, Kilkenny's brilliant forward, will be the biggest threat to Tipperary's hopes of winning a 22nd All-Ireland senior hurling title this year.*  
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assistance by their colleagues in the final, the McCarthy Cup could be heading to Tipperary once again. Much more drive and a sense of urgency is needed in the front line of attack, and the Noresiders must step up on their form in the provincial decider, when out of a total of 4-10 the full-forwards notched only 1-2.

Ollie Walsh, the longest serving member of the Kilkenny team and holder of two All-Ireland medals, will be more determined than ever to gain his third this year, when he appears in what could be his last final. The 30-year-old Thomastown star has always brought a touch of glamour to the Kilkenny line-out, and should really make a supreme effort this time.

Players like Jim Treacy, the grey-haired 24-year-old from Bennetsbridge, staunch Pat Henderson from Johnstown, and the ever-reliable stylist Seamus Cleere also from Bennetsbridge, are three of the finest defenders in the game, and the Tipperary forwards are going to find it very difficult to get past them.

Midfielder Pat Moran did very well in the Leinster final and will be all out to give Kilkenny the edge in this vital sector again in the All-Ireland decider. But it is up to the players in the remaining positions, particularly in attack, to do their part. If they are capable of rising to the occasion, the coveted All-Ireland crown will be carried proudly back to the city by the Nore.

If not, Tipperary will once again wear the laurels.

Despite their impressive win over Clare in the Munster final, the Tipperary veterans have still to be put to the type of test that would tax their aged legs. Clare played the ball to them. If Kilkenny play it from them and use every yard of the field, they could well make amends for last year's shock defeat.



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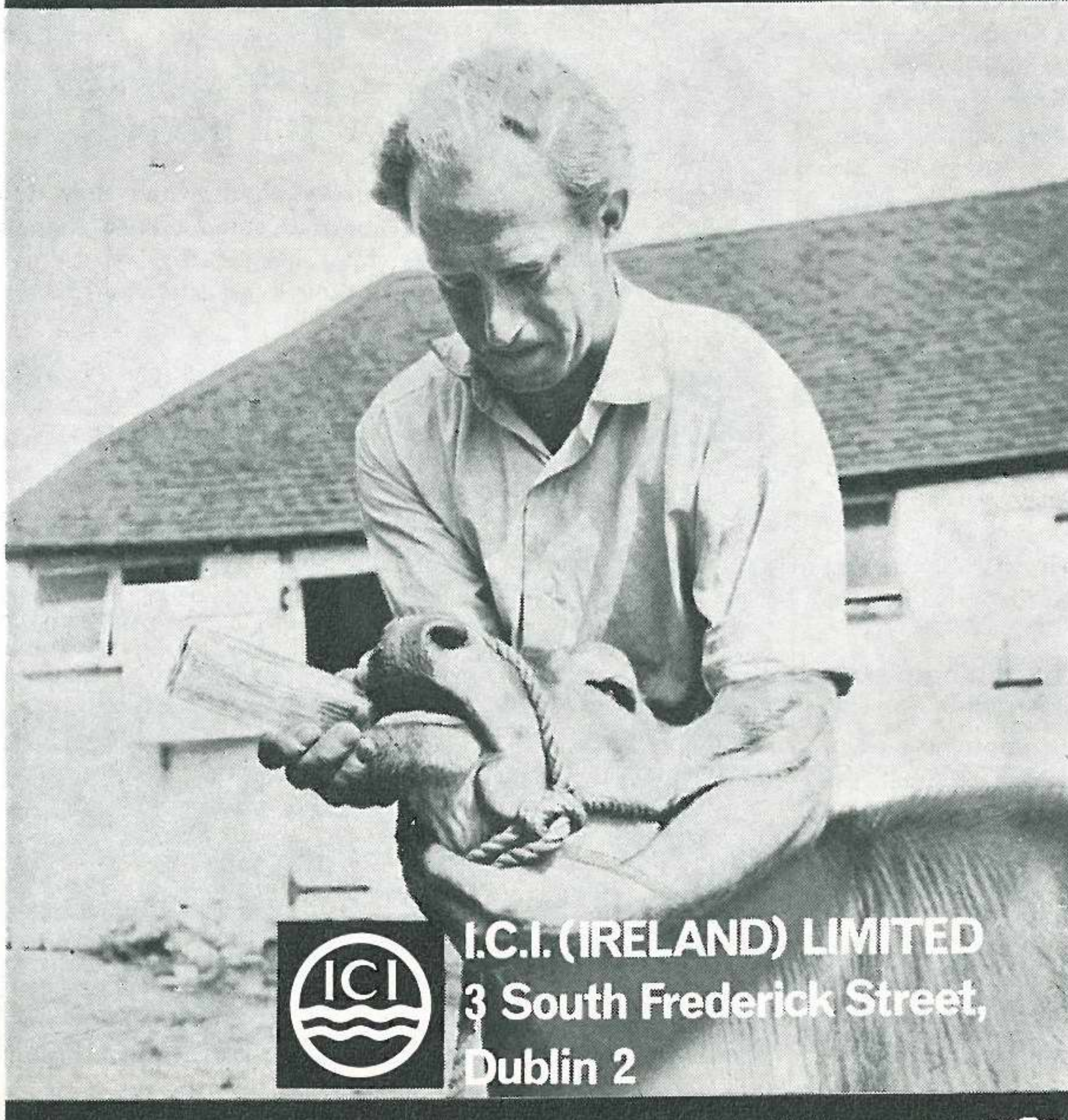
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PAT HENDERSON

Only big champion of recent years

By JAY DRENNAN

LAST month's GAELIC SPORT sang a sad song about the decline in hurling, more than one contributor pointing to the many symptoms of decline in its health. In this, I think it is fair to say, the magazine was mirroring the very real concern which all who have the interests of Gaelic games at heart feel. Some concrete results from the hurling plan which was already a little late in arriving though none the less praiseworthy in itself are awaited by all with uneasiness and with hope tempered with caution.

Is it really true, this decline? Of course, from the point of view of the counties who are outstanding among their fellows, it would not really be possible to make out a strong case for the decline. Tipperary, Kilkenny, Wexford and Cork have been the top teams in recent years; but, have they not also been the top teams as far back as most can remember? Wexford, indeed, since the '50s have been an added bonus, for they were for more than thirty years classed as outsiders. Dublin, of course, have lost their once great name in the game — that evens out the score with Wexford. And, then, there are Clare, Waterford, and Offaly, who have been better in the last decade than they had been for a long time.

Of course, Limerick are gone

from the lists, and it is a sad loss. But, in spite of Cork and Limerick being eliminated from the championship in the early rounds, I cannot agree, for instance, with Seamus O Ceallaigh that because of that the Munster championships were a financial disaster. Indeed, I saw the biggest crowd for years in Cork, there was a packed house in Waterford, and the final was not sparsely attended, nor were Clare's two earlier games against Limerick and Galway.

It is in the standards which the top counties are achieving that the difference lies; and here comparisons are difficult, yet all seem well agreed that things are not what they were or what they might be. I look at a different angle in estimating the decline of hurling. I consider the individual players themselves; and I consider them from two angles.

First, the qualities of genuine hard-learned skill which they possess; and second the number of real star quality players emerging in recent years. On the first score I must admit a very real and palpable decline: fewer players are masters of themselves and their hurleys, let alone masters of the ball. Overhead play has almost become a lost art; clean, powerful striking can nowadays be done only from hand, and from the

most advantageous positions; the double on the ground is so often grossly mistimed that one is led to wonder if players put in any training on the skills of the game, nowadays. The emphasis on fitness and speed is good, but, in many cases, it is only the means to cover up for the deficiency in hurling skill; and I miss more and more the first-time whip on the approaching ball by the inside forwards, which produced the sudden flyers that most goalies hated so much.

On the second point, nobody can deny that fewer stars are coming into the game of hurling—I mean, of course, not the build-up star of three lucky goals in a big match, but the man who looks a hurler when you see him—maybe among the minors—who shapes like a lad with a big future when he comes on the seniors, and who goes on steadily learning from his experience to become a commanding player of real class and compelling magnetism. Football can produce them with regularity and from many different counties at once; hurling produces less and less.

This long preamble, I hope, will be forgiven me, because I trust that you will consider it relevant, as I do, to the real subject of this piece—Kilkenny's Pat Henderson. In my mind he is one of the few, maybe the only real big hurling champion produced in recent years. The first time I saw him in a challenge game in Waterford, on an evening of few omens, a late start, and two disappointingly

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depleted teams. But, in spite of all that it was to me as exciting an evening as an All-Ireland final, for the absence of better known names afforded the opportunity for seeing young Henderson playing centre-half back in the Kilkenny colours.

He was a fine cut of a young fellow; as well as being big; he played big—in other words he gave the impression of being in all three half-back positions at once,—unhurrying, as the great half-backs always were. And he could hit, and was unafraid to hit, the ball from any position and wherever it had to be hit. Furthermore, when he hit it he banished it from his presence with the gesture of majesty the Rackards used to have

—far and hard as though to some outpost of his empire. I said to my friends that I had spotted a great centre-half of the future.

The Kilkenny selectors were not so brave as I would have liked them to be: they tried him at wing-half, like asking a bishop to sweep the church. He was good, and I was delighted. Later he was sent back to corner back, and I was horrified. This was the sort of position which could cramp all his fine talents, and make him over cautious, and cause him to forget, through lack of opportunity to use them, his many open-field skills.

At last, he came into his kingdom, and has reigned there with dignity and no little grandeur. I am prepared to admit that the

selectors were wise, for what he has learned of the open hurling at wing-half and the close game of corner-back will all the more complement his other gifts now at centre-half.

Physical power is not necessary to be a hurling giant—think of tiny tots like Frankie Walsh—but, in a centre-half it adds greatly to his ability to thrill and in his worth in breaking through to intercept or clear. Henderson is powerfully made; he shows the abandon without which centre-halves may be splendid hurlers but cannot capture the imagination. His capacity to impose his will on the game will play a big part in the All-Ireland final. The more he succeeds the harder it will be to beat Kilkenny.



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Tipperary

are in

the mood

By RAYMOND SMITH

TIPPERARY have never been beaten when a match of major importance carried an American trip as an additional prize.

Which goes to show that when the chips are really down the Premier County men have the ability to rise to new heights and can call up on all their natural hurling talent.

Not alone is there a trip to the States going with this year's All-Ireland, but John Doyle can go ahead of Christy Ring by winning his ninth medal and there is the added incentive that some of the veterans on the Tipperary team know that this is their chance to retire in a blaze of glory.

So, in effect, there are three major reasons why Tipperary owe it to their supporters to win this game—and, of course, on top of all that there is the traditional rivalry with Kilkenny. They never like to concede victory to the Noresiders.

Bearing in mind all these factors, I must straightaway go for a Tipperary victory. I have a tremendous respect for the way Tipperary can lift their game to a new plane of brilliance when the target they have to aim for makes them say deep down: "This is it; we cannot afford to lose this one."

I recall Tommy Doyle, the great Tipperary half-back, telling me that when they had beaten Kilkenny in the League Final of 1950

DONIE NEALON, a key man in Tipperary's powerful forward division.



and knew they were bound for the States, they decided that they must go as All-Ireland champions. And go as champions they did, coming out on top in a thrill-packed finish with the black and amber men.

Early in 1965 John Doyle said to me in his home in Holycross: "We will win the League no matter who our opponents are." And he added with a smile: "We have some unfinished business on Broadway."

And John was true to his word—Kilkenny being forced to bow the knee to the Premier County once again.

Now don't assume that I think it is a cake-walk for Tipperary. What I am trying to prove is that when their sights are set really high, Tipperary become a far different proposition altogether in

League or championship and it takes almost a super team to prevent them attaining what they set out to achieve.

In 1960 after Tipperary had beaten Cork in a titanic Munster Final at Thurles — "one of the greatest of all the Cork-Tipperary games I have played in" was how John Doyle described it to me—there were those who imagined that Tipperary had only to travel up to Dublin to collect their All-Ireland medals.

Wexford were almost written off and, meanwhile as the complacency that had descended on their supporters affected the Tipperary players as well, the shrewd Model County mentors were calling Tim Flood out of retirement—and Flood, one of the finest corner-forwards of them all, did the dam-

● Continued Page 27.



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age, splitting the left flank of the Tipperary defence time and again with searing runs and Wexford upset all the odds that day.

So now seven years later, Tipperary with four more All-Irelands in the bag since that day, are red-hot favourites to beat Kilkenny and to judge by the confidence of some Tipp. supporters the odds are as much as 5/2 on and 3/1 on in a two-horse race.

I know from talking to the Tipperary players that they are anything but complacent—they have a very healthy respect indeed for Kilkenny. “Babs” Keating, whose three brilliant goals shattered Clare in the Munster Final, said to me earlier this season, before Kilkenny had even met Wexford in the Leinster Final that “Kilkenny are still the second-best team in the land.”

“Babs”, of course, meant by this that Kilkenny must beat Tipperary in the championship before they can claim the honour of being “tops”.

Since Tipperary beat them in the 1964 All-Ireland and confirmed the victory in the 1965 League Final, Kilkenny have twice beaten the Premier County. They won a really fine victory in the 1966 League decider, showing real fighting qualities right through the last quarter. Indeed, after that success they looked good for last year's All-Ireland crown.

Earlier this year, in the League at Kilkenny, the Noresiders again beat Tipperary but it must be remembered that Liam Devaney was at centre-back instead of Tony Wall and much as I admire the natural brilliance of Liam Devaney's hurling and often as I recall how he switched back to centre-back in the 1961 All-Ireland and won the day for Tipperary, he is not a regular centre-back in the Tony Wall mould, so that the result of that Kilkenny game cannot be taken as a true criterion.

But the fact remains that Kilkenny have twice beaten Tipperary since the 1964 All-Ireland and these victories will have given them new confidence and showed them that they can beat the Premier County.

Of course students of hurling history will make Tipp. their choice. The records show that

or two forwards to pull it off for them, Tipperary have six scoring forwards and when the six click into top gear it takes a really great defence to stop the machine—for a veritable machine it can be.

Clare played it for speed in the first half of the Munster Final and had the Tipp. defence in difficulties. But Clare made the mistake

●
A
TIPP.
TRIO
●



Liam Devaney



John Doyle



Len Gaynor

Kilkenny have not conquered Tipperary in the championship since the 1922 All-Ireland and that is there before Kilkenny every time they come out at Croke Park in an All-Ireland day against Tipperary.

The way I look at it, Tipperary are not the super team they were in 1964-'65 and Kilkenny, if anything, are every bit as good, if not better, for they have strengthened their attack.

Their main hopes must be pinned on Eddie Keher. He is their match-winner as he proved against Wexford and, with luck, and quicker thinking by a few of the other forwards in taking the passes he laid on, he would have been the match-winner too against Cork last year.

Tom Walsh has had some unhappy experiences against Tipperary and it remains to be seen how he will play this time—even away from the attentions of the full-back line.

Tipperary's great advantage is that any one of their six forwards can be a match-winner. John Keane, the great Waterford hurler, said to me after Tipperary had beaten Waterford in Cork that this is what makes Tipperary such a powerful combination. Where other counties are looking to one

of playing themselves into the ground.

Kilkenny could pace it better but Tipperary know from long years of experience how to tie down the Noreside stylists.

Mick Roche can give Tipperary the advantage at midfield—and if Theo English strikes the form he showed in the second half against Clare, this pair could take the brunt of the work off the Tipp. defence. Ollie Walsh's long puck-outs could, of course, cut out much of the midfield work and the real decisive battle, I feel, will be between the Tipp. backs and the Kilkenny attack.

I expect a thrilling game, better than the 1964 All-Ireland which was very exciting for forty-five minutes. Kilkenny may have made heavy weather of beating a handicapped Wexford in the Leinster Final but, remember, an All-Ireland Final is a law unto itself. Anything can happen in a tight finish.

But you cannot escape the fact that Tipperary have a lot to hurl for this time—and when they are in the mood I know they are in at present I, for one, cannot visualise any other result only a Tipperary win

MOONDHARRIG'S DIARY

THE first time I saw an All-Ireland hurling final I was not too sure what it was all about. But I always offer as an excuse that I was extremely young at the time. The occasion was the delayed 1921 final between Limerick and Dublin which was played shortly before Easter, 1923. I should not have been there at all, but my father, who was then a chairman of the local branch of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, had to go to Dublin for the week-end, and, for some reason or other that I cannot now recall, brought me along with him.

Now, I see from the record-books that Limerick won that game easily and would have won more easily still had not Tommy Daly, God be merciful to him, given a great display between the Dublin posts.

But, to be perfectly honest, that hurling game made no impression on me at all. I have a vague memory of the crowd cheering, and an even more indistinct picture of brightly-clad hurlers dashing around on the green sward beyond the crowd.

I do remember, however, amusing myself by running in and out between the legs of the spectators, which would seem to prove that Croke Park was far from being crowded out that day.

I have only a vague recollection of a couple of structures on the ground, where the corner stand and the Hogan Stand were to be found in after years, but, at least, I can always boast that I was in Croke Park the day the Liam McCarthy Cup was played for and won for the first time. And there are not all that many of us left

who can make that proud boast nowadays, whether we can remember anything about the match or not.

The following September I was back in Croke Park when Kilkenny beat Tipperary in the 1922 final, also delayed, but this time I was to all intents and purposes lost in the crowd, although I do claim to have seen the ball in the air on several occasions.

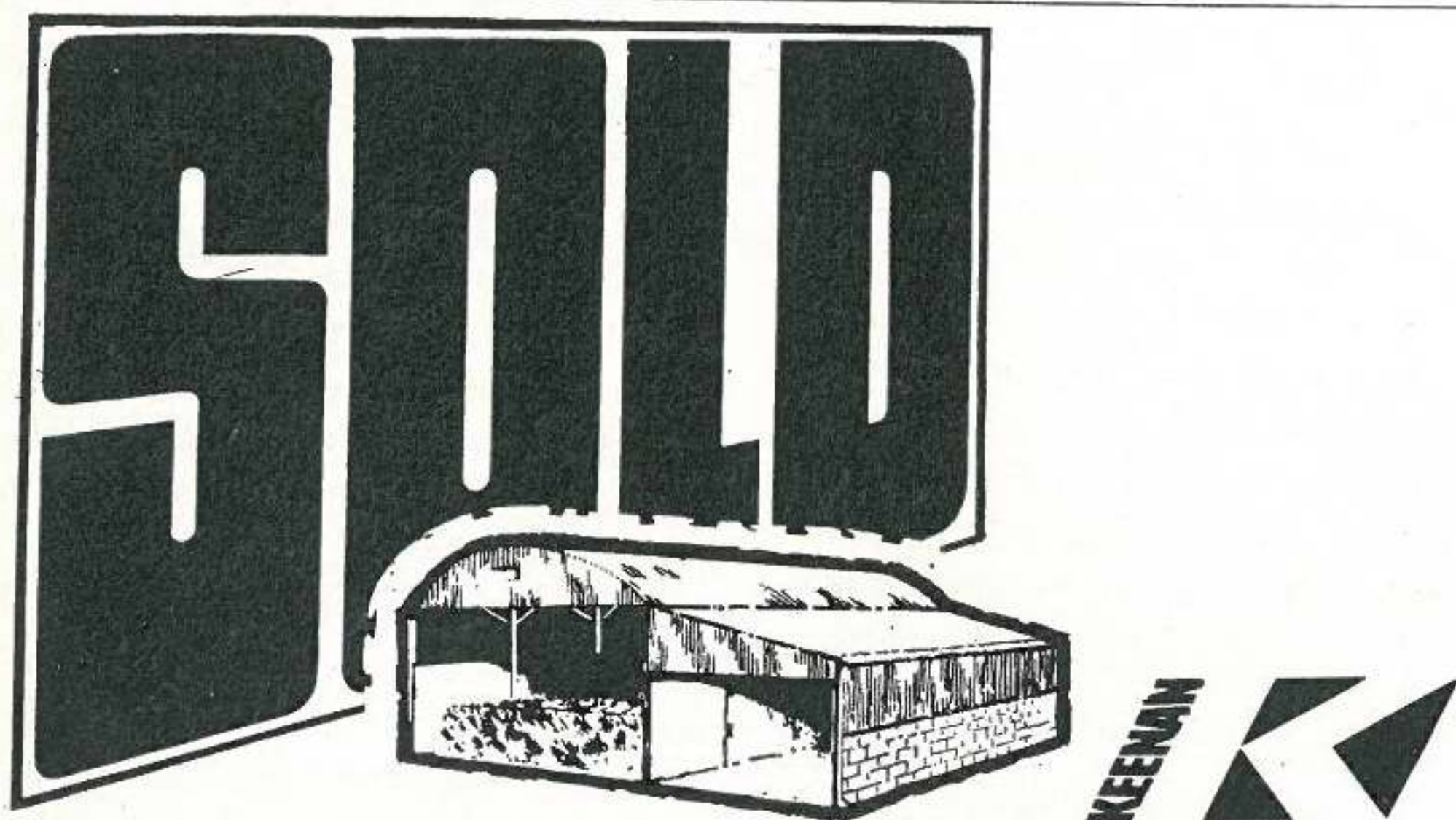
So, in the end of all, the first All-Ireland senior hurling final I have a real recollection of was the 1926 final, in which Cork scored an easy enough win over Kilkenny. I was an independent gentleman, by that time, even though I was not yet in my 'teens. I had a few shillings of my own and paid my way onto the side-line. I haven't a clue now as to what it cost me, but it can't have been all that much, or I would remember.

Two things I remember well. The side-line benches were mainly set on the asphalt cycling track that ran round the outside of the playing pitch, and they weren't very pleasant to sit on, for it was a drizzly day.

I might also mention that I was at about the 40 yards mark, towards the Canal end of the side-line, and the 'population' on the seats beyond me was very thin indeed. One other thing that has always remained in my memory and I may have mentioned it here before.

When the band played the National Anthem just prior to the start of the game, some of the spectators remained seated, presumably because fervent Republicans at that time felt that the "Soldier's Song" was the Anthem of the Free State. Anyway, Cork won the game easily, and I trudged out of Croke Park a very disappointed young man indeed.

Came 1931 and those three



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great games between Cork and Kilkenny provided me with more than enough of the thrills that previous All-Ireland hurling finals had singularly failed to give me up to then.

I watched all those games from the sideline seats—there did not seem to be any great difficulty in getting onto the sideline at that time. I still think that the first of those three games provided the most spectacular hurling.

The greatest enthusiasm I had yet seen at a hurling final was provided by the thousands of Clare supporters who turned up for the 1932 final against Kilkenny. That day might have been won for Clare had Tull Considine been able to get in his shot when the Claremen, in a great rally, had cut the Noremens' lead to two points.

A legend has been perpetrated since that the famed Ennisman missed his stroke. That is not so. His stroke was blocked by Kilkenny centre-back Podge Byrne, who cleared upfield to his cousin Mattie Power, who promptly whipped over the clinching point in a really thrilling finish to a see-saw game.

The final of 1933 was one out of the ordinary for me, as I was not on the sideline. I was high up on what was then popularly known as the Long Stand. From there I saw Kilkenny foil the best efforts of Mick Mackey and his young Limerick side. I thought Limerick had enough of the play to have carried the day, but their lack of experience was sadly evident against the seasoned Kilkenny defence.

When Limerick did take the title in 1934, however, after a drawn game with Dublin, I was back on the sideline and I was on the sideline once again, and had cause to regret it, for that thrilling Kilkenny v. Limerick final of 1935.

The rain that fell through most of that game had to be seen to be believed and when the match was

● Continued Page 68.

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CRESTED TEN

by JAMESON

SEAMUS McFERRAN

(1955—1958)

By **TERENCE ROYNANE**

AFTER the long reign of teachers in the Presidency of the Association a change came in 1955 when Seamus McFerran, a postal official in Belfast, was elected to the highest office in the G.A.A.

It was a well-deserved honour for a young man who, through the previous decade, had been very much to the fore in the administration of the Association's affairs in the North.

A great enthusiast for the native games and the native language from his early youth, Seamus McFerran quickly came to the front in his native Antrim when, through the years of World War II, the G.A.A. in the North was faced with unprecedented difficulties.

Under the chairmanship of Seamus McFerran the Antrim Board made very remarkable advances and a reawakened enthusiasm was quickly evident at every level. Antrim hurlers reached the senior All-Ireland hurling final of 1943 and the Antrim senior footballers were decidedly unlucky not to reach the All-Ireland football final of 1946.

Meanwhile, at home in Antrim, one of the most remarkable efforts ever made by a G.A.A. body was being concentrated on a drive to provide Belfast with a fitting Gaelic stadium of its own. Years of tremendously hard work, and careful organisation, resulted at last in the acquisition, construction and opening of Casement Park, an achievement in which

Seamus McFerran played a leading part.

Nor, during his ten busy years as the energetic and effective chairman of Antrim County Board, was Seamus unmindful of his other kindred interests, for at the same time he also did much good work for the Gaelic League in the North.

Moreover, all his life he has done a great deal to foster the love of our native music, and here he is at an advantage, for he is a singer far above the ordinary and has made several concert tours in America. After his Antrim years, Seamus McFerran moved on to the Chair of Ulster Council, and there, too, continued his hard work and progressive policies.

The Association, as a whole, was by now well acquainted with the Antrim man's worth and he was elected President in 1955, a very popular choice. He was the first Antrim man and second Ulsterman to hold the office.

Always looking to the future, he strongly supported the extension of the Grounds Scheme and during his term of office the building of the great new Hogan Stand was begun. In addition he was the first to suggest ways and means whereby the G.A.A. might be ready to face the coming challenge of television.

Still a young man when his Presidency ended, Seamus McFerran has since then continued to play an active part in the advancement not alone of the G.A.A. but of all things National in the North.

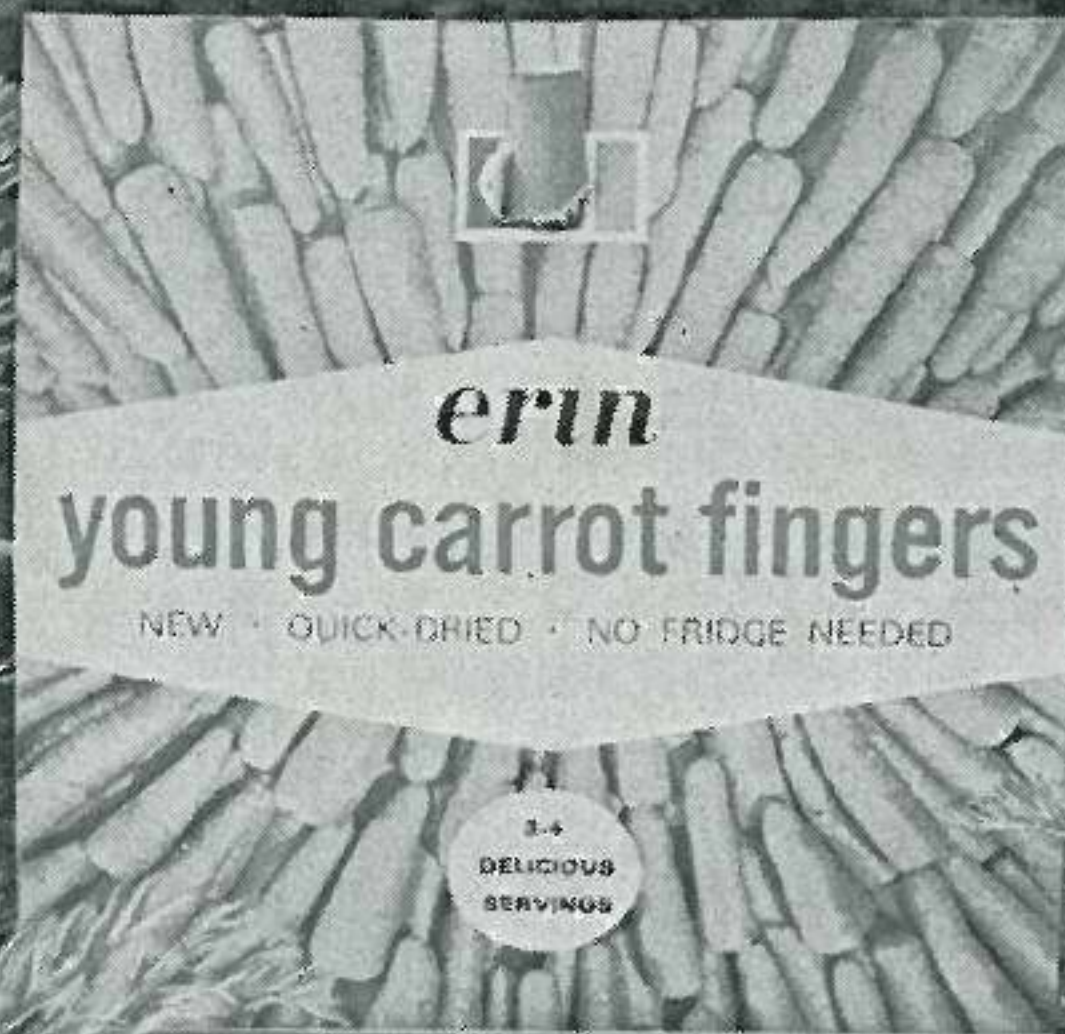
Presidents of the G.A.A. (18)

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KILKENNY LOOK

FOR A BREAK

IN THE CLOUDS

By MICHEÁL Ó BRIAIN

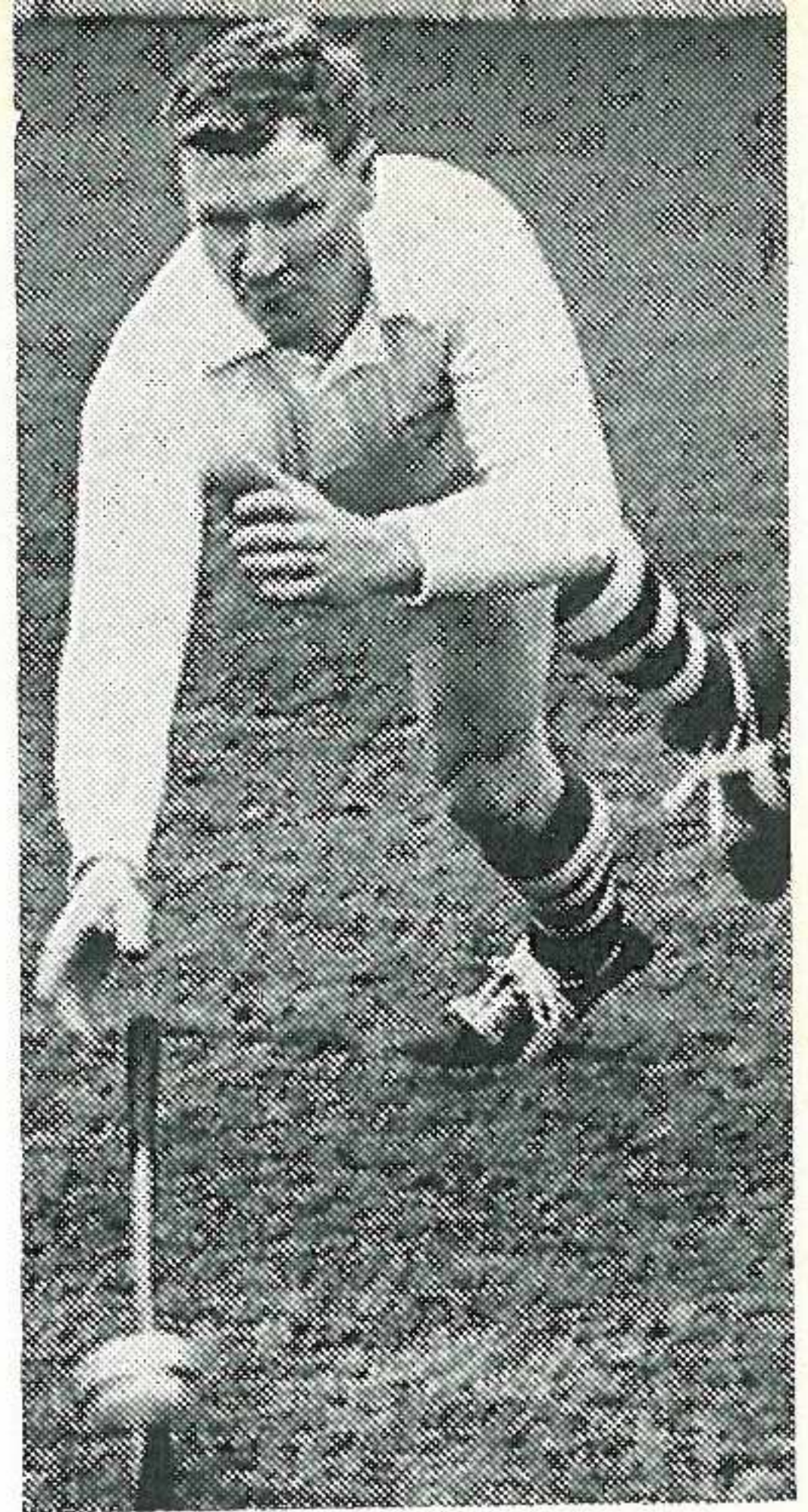
WHAT a small margin separates success from failure, and how true that the darkest hour is that before the dawn. Kilkenny stand to-day on the threshold of achieving what they have been unable to do in many far more promising seasons, in seasons when their followers rejoiced in their form right through the year, and still found the All-Ireland too much for them. This year, on the contrary, Kilkenny people have been tossed about on waves of troubled sea: a time or two on the crest; often in the slough of despondency.

It was a promising start to the year, right enough, and the smashing win over Tipperary in the new Nowlan Park was hailed as an occasion of great significance. It was all the more stirring when it was remembered that this Tipperary team had earlier thrashed Wexford with the venom of men who had been underestimated and written off before their time, and meant to show their virile strength and hurling skill was not dimmed by the years.

Some tokens, perhaps, of un-

certainty were already showing in their earlier ability to gain no mastery over Cork, who themselves had been unable, also to vindicate their claim to All-Ireland stature. But, the League final was the real blast: Wexford were far and away the better team, and even though they played very well and very spiritedly, their display could not whitewash the fact that Kilkenny were wretched. The half-back line, so long vaunted, fell to pieces of a sudden, the midfield could not get a grip, the full-backs were beaten through lack of reactive speed and carelessness in tight play, and the forwards were back into the worst sort of unpenetration. Poor Eddie Keher was alone in a class of champions.

A week or so after this Waterford wiped the Walsh Park grass with Kilkenny, though some time previously the exact reverse had been the case. At that time Waterford were not considered much to talk about. Then followed Wembley, where, in spite of the freedom of the field for the first twenty minutes during



OLLIE WALSH.

which Cork seemed to be sleepwalking, they crashed again, showing tissue-paper resistance to pressure, and little spirit to fortify their out-of-form ability. That Cork lost in the championship to Waterford was little consolation, since even that victory had not raised Waterford's rating beyond respectability.

So Kilkenny folk were justifiably in a state of deep despair before the start of the Leinster championships. Better form against Dublin was a limited consolation, for Dublin were no test in a year when they were at their poorest. And so to the Leinster final, and a victory in a game which almost everyone thinks would have been won by Wexford, were it not for their crippling toll of injuries.

Discredited but unbowed, Kilkenny come to the All-Ireland final. And whatever may be said about their form in the last four months, at least it must be acknowledged that no team reaches this stage without something of the

● Continued Page 48.

HOLIDAY MUSINGS

By DAN MCAREAVY



“WHAT single development would you most like to see for the better working of the Association in your area?”

During my recent “holiday” from G.A.A. affairs in Armagh I took the opportunity of conducting a kind of Gallup poll through several neighbouring counties posing this single question and if the answers I received were more or less along the expected lines, regret at the decrease in club activity in face of the continuing over-dose of inter-county fare coupled with an appeal for more publicity for our games at grass-root level emerged as the outstanding factors in the consistent pattern of replies.

The “old reliables” were of course trotted out as well—there was the demand for an open draw in the All-Ireland championship, majority opinion (but perhaps this was wishful thinking on my part) seemed to favour the abolition of automatic suspension, I was told

The fact clearly emerged that regulations which, after all, have been made by the clubs themselves will only be respected if they are enforced.

But perhaps even more interesting was the discussion on publicity which clearly revealed an almost insatiable desire—again by the younger players and followers as well as the older supporters—for reading about our games.

Due credit was given to the National Press for its coverage of big matches but I am afraid the local press in many areas came in for well-directed brick-bats for its neglect of club activities. In many homes the jealousy with which “minors” and “juveniles” preserve those sketchy clippings describing their “finest hour” was a clear indication of the tremendous demand for newspaper coverage.

Editors may say that their columns are open if copy is supplied; club secretaries claim that they are already over-worked

the impregnable position which the Association continues to hold in every generation of the Irish people.



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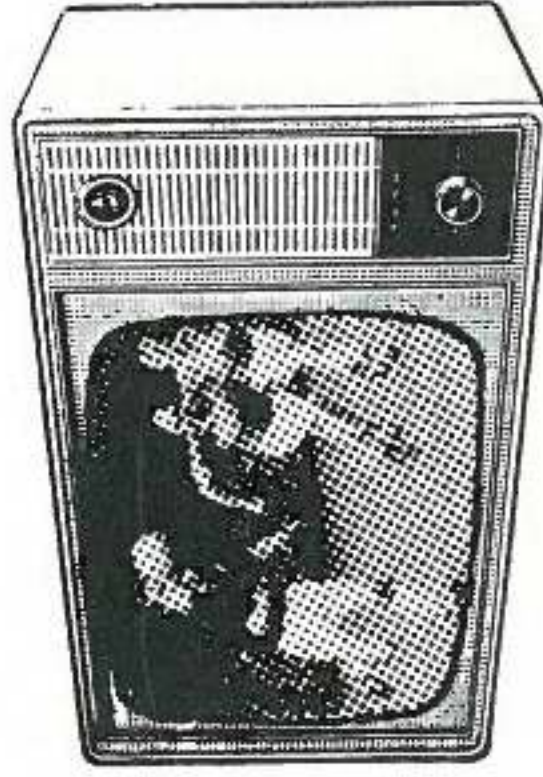
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and that they are already over-worked and that it is the duty of a paper to have its own correspondents. It would appear that until some compromise solution is reached there seems little chance of a better press service unless "the stuff is sent in".

"Gaelic Weekly" was criticised as not being comprehensive enough—"a complete 32-county service is what we want"—whilst "Gaelic Sport" and the Annuals were praised "as being definitely along the right lines but unfortunately backed by poor salesmanship".

Grave exception was of course taken to the treatment of Gaelic Games by R.T.E. on both sound and vision with comparisons being drawn to the time allowed in England on B.B.C. and I.T.V. to their major sporting events.

"We are foisted off with 15 or 20 minutes by Telefis Eireann and Radio Eireann on Sundays when an hour-long programme on each medium would obviously send the TAM ratings soaring" was the plea which I confess defied rebuttal.

I know negotiations have taken place and will, I presume, continue between the Central Council and R.T.E. on the question of coverage of our games and it is earnestly to be hoped that the Association will get a more equitable share of the Sunday evening programmes than hitherto. The Authority can rest assured of a ready market for such a change.

As is the case in every discussion on the G.A.A., the debate could have gone on "till the cows come home", indicating once again

that elusive something" would have to be done for our referees, and the hurling fraternity were understandably frustrated at the difficulties being encountered in having pitches properly mown for the game.

But it was the "big two" in this random check which seemed to be causing most concern particularly—and this was a significant and heartening sign—among the younger age groups.

"We haven't played a match for over a month now because the county team is doing well" was an oft-repeated cry.

When I suggested that in my own experience clubs seemed to write off matches for the flimsiest of grounds I was stumped with the "because we are allowed to do it" answer.

Players were emphatic that a far more professional approach was needed from county and divisional legislators in the running of their league and championship programmes.

"If clubs find that the regulations can be flouted in the matter of fixtures then human nature being what it is the easy way out will be taken" a young club secretary said. "Look at how willing teams are to fulfil tournament engagements even at serious inconvenience."

And about the haphazard time-keeping in many of our league games the same case was advanced.

"We realise we will probably get away with it but look at the championships. Teams field on time because the law is clearly against the defaulter."

The Colour Question

A MUNSTER
MEDLEY
by
Seamus
O Ceallaigh

COUNTY colours are again causing a bit of a fuss, and it is certainly high time that proper steps were taken to ensure distinctive markings for all counties, and so avoid the clashes that occasionally occur, and sometimes cause dissatisfaction and even ill-feeling.

The blow-up over the Munster hurling final was childish, and the strange thing is that those entitled to most consideration in this matter—the spectators—got least. Surely they deserve the opportunity of enjoying the game in comfort by being able to distin-

guish between the teams, which is an almost impossible task if both wear jerseys of almost similar colouring.

There are only six counties in Munster and it is extraordinary that six colours cannot be found to avoid clashes of this nature. The use of a bit of ordinary commonsense is all that is needed.

Looking up the last published list of County colours, I find those for the Southern counties stated as under:—

Clare—Saffron and Blue.

Cork—Red and White.

Kerry—Green and Gold.

Limerick—Green and White.

Tipperary—Blue and Gold.

Waterford—White and Blue.

Rule 45 of the Official Guide which deals with the matter says:

“The distinctive county colours to be worn in all intercounty matches shall be registered with and approved by the Central Council. No two counties shall have similar markings.”

Two years ago, when Limerick met Kerry in the Munster senior football final, the Shannonsiders of their own accord, changed to a distinctive jersey of all white, with green markings, so as not to cause any confusion over colours.

For a number of years Clare wore an all saffron jersey with blue waist band and the only confusion then, when they met Tipperary, arose from the fact that both sets of supporters sported the same colours. On the field the teams were easily distinguished.

A few years ago, Clare altered their jersey to a Blue with Gold



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markings, which brought it very close to the Tipperary pattern and certainly very difficult to tell apart by persons not fully conversant with such matters. Why it was allowed in the first instance is hard to tell, for all must agree that the Blue and Gold colours traditionally belong to Tipperary.

* * *

A fact that has to be faced is that public support for the games is dwindling, if one is to judge by attendances at matches over the past few seasons. Nothing near approaching the record figures of some years ago has been achieved at any Munster games this season, and a similar trend is noticeable elsewhere, particularly in hurling.

If this decline is to be arrested the spectators must be encouraged back by making both matches and conditions as attractive as possible.

Gone are the days when fans flocked to the big games hours before the advertised starting time and were content to sit, sometimes in the rain and on uncomfortable seats, for long periods. They want something better now — and are prepared to pay for it — so the venue that comes up with comfortable reserved accommodation is the one that is going to score.

More and more stiles will have to be provided also, for with the bulk of the crowd leaving it to the last minute quicker entry must be guaranteed.

In this respect most venues



BERNIE O'CALLAGHAN.

could profitably consider the question of providing stewards or Gardaí to arrange orderly approach to the turnstiles. The pushing and jostling that is all too common at some centres is definitely keeping people away, and it is not only women and children who are not prepared to face the milling crowds.

* * *

Clare's only All-Ireland senior hurling success was recalled recently by the death of one of the leading players of that great team—John Fox of Newmarket-on-Fergus—a striking figure of a man and a magnificent hurler, who used his height and fine physique with great effect.

* * *

Maurice Lynch, ex-N.T., who was for forty-five years the Prin-

cipal of Rathea National School, had the distinction of witnessing almost every game in which the Kerry footballers were engaged for almost half a century. He collapsed and died at the recent Munster senior football final at Cork Athletic Grounds.

* * *

Moyvane-born Bernie O'Callaghan, one of Kerry's best football forwards, has opened the Cliff House as an ultra-modern hotel in Ballybunion.

Bernie, who also hurled for Listowel, won six Munster football championship medals in the Kerry jersey—four in senior, one each in junior and minor. He also played for Munster in Railway Cup football. At 27, he is one of the youngest hotel proprietors in the "Kingdom."

* * *

Very considerable progress has been made with the work of leveling the pitch at the new grounds recently acquired by the Gaels of Scariff. When the job is completed the venue should be one of the best equipped in Clare.

* * *

Paddy Moclair presented to Mil-town Malbay club a very nice set of medals for the parish football league. The winning team, captained by M. Malone, got them from former Clare and Munster footballer, George Comerford, at a very successful Ceili held on the completion of the competition.



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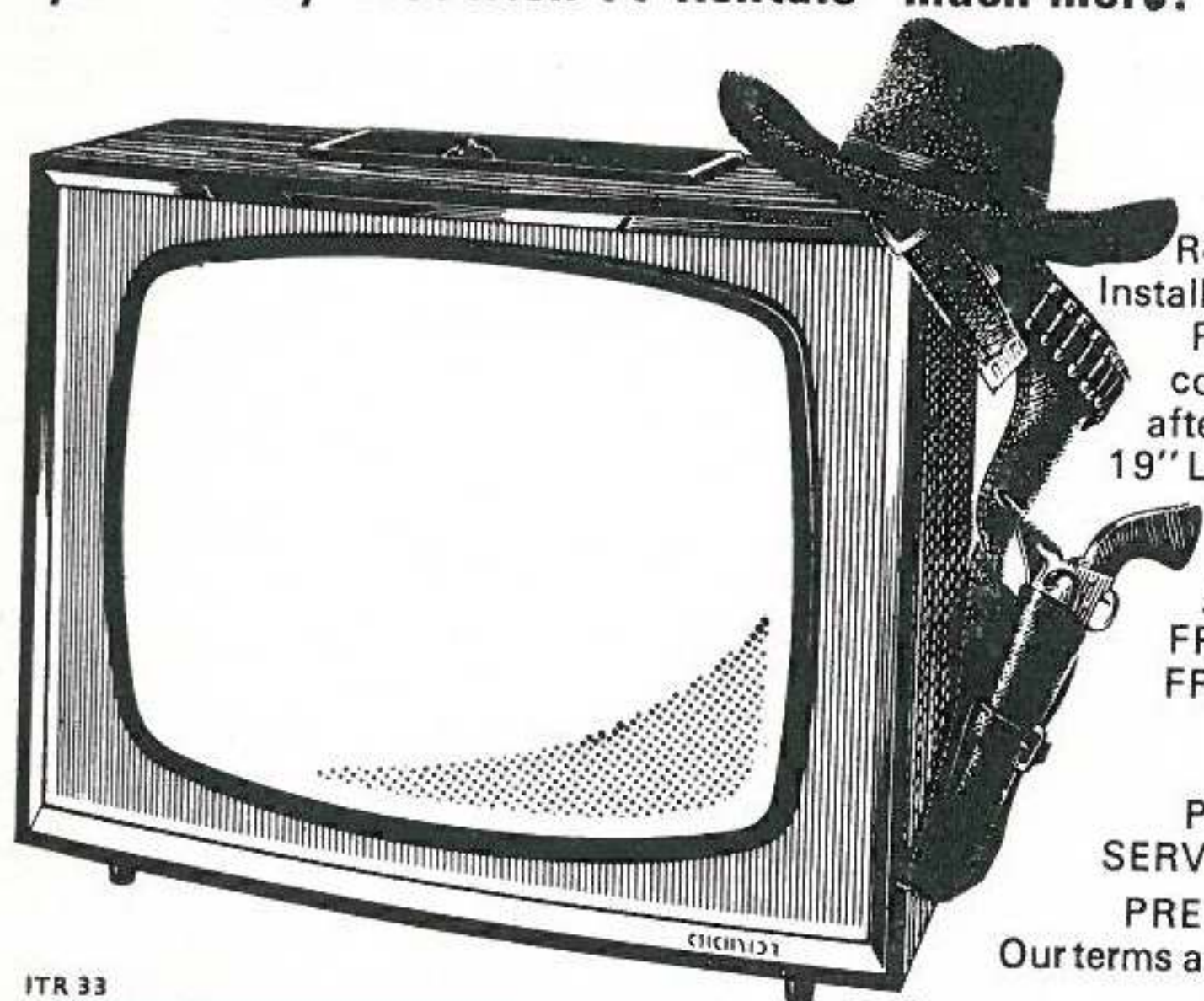
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N.F.A. LEADER WILL BE THERE

THE new leader of the National Farmers' Association, 42-years-old Thomas J. Maher of Boherlahan, Co. Tipperary, will be amongst the attendance at the All-Ireland final, accompanied by his brother, Father Michael Maher, a former Dublin hurler, who returned recently from Nigeria.

Mr. Maher is a keen hurling enthusiast, and this is not surprising as the area from which he hails gave to Tipperary hurling and to the G.A.A. the fabulous Tubberadora side, captained by the legendary Mikey Maher.

The new N.F.A. leader seldom misses a big game and, even though the demands on his time will be much greater from this on, he will continue to try and attend as many matches as he can.

As a neighbour of John Doyle and a fellow-farmer, Mr. Maher will be hoping to see John realise his great ambition of winning his ninth All-Ireland medal.

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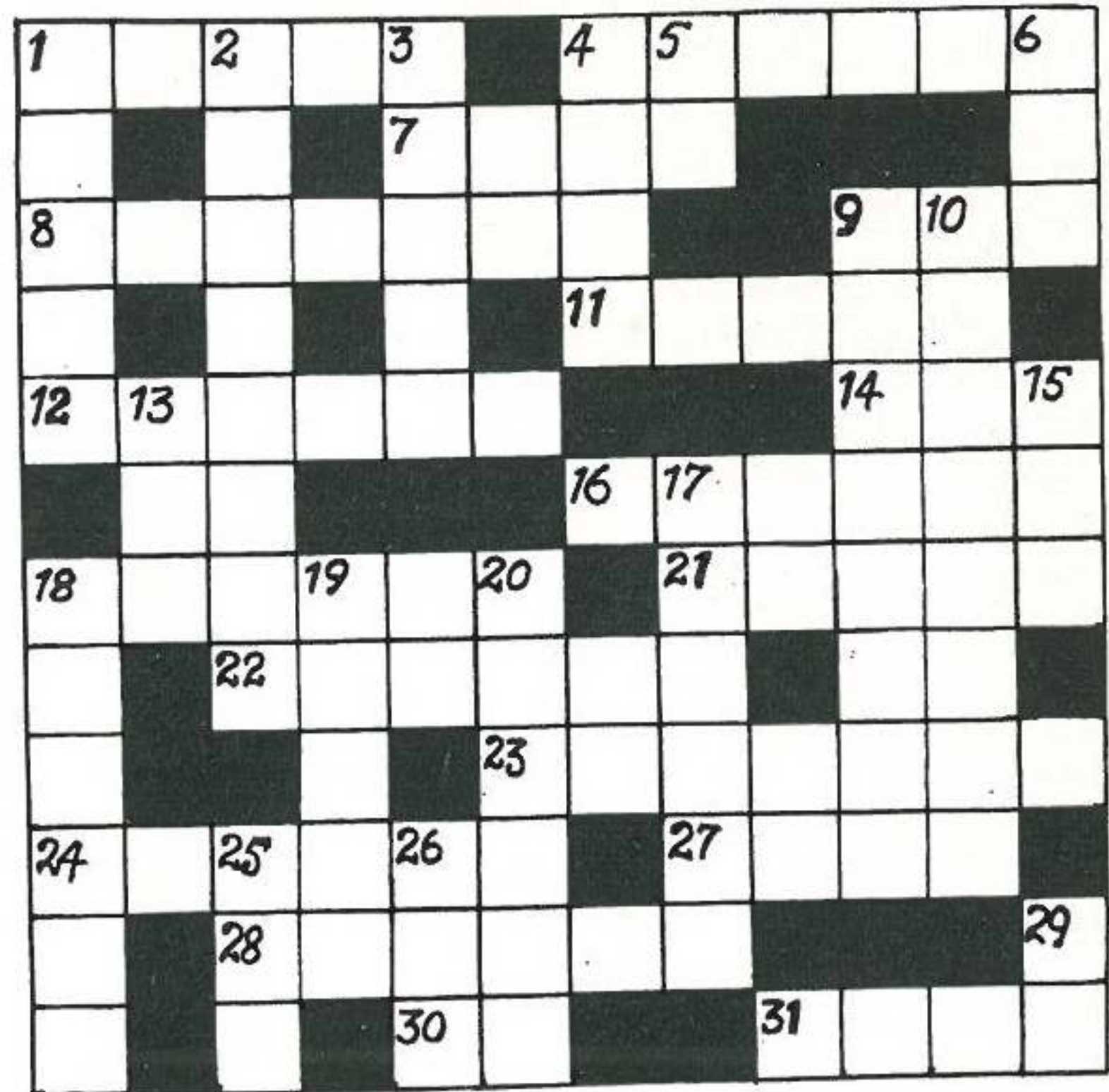
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4. Captain of 1957 All-Ireland football champions : "A Merry Ploughboy", too. (6)
7. Dawe is a Tipperary and Dublin hurler of the '30's and '40's. (4)
8. Run diet for unproven newcomer on the team. (7)
9. John Willie Martin. (1, 1, 1)
11. N.F.A. stalwart who was a Kerry midfield star. (5)
12. One of a Limerick half-back line of the 'twenties, which many fancy as the best ever. (1, 5)
14. Irish food scrambled. (3)
16. Centre-forward for Mayo at turn of the 'fifties. Injury in final against Louth put an end to his career. (1, 5)
18. In big games you are playing for high _____. (6)
21. Another of the line in 12 across. (5)
22. See 2 Down.
23. Kilkenny All-Irelander of 1922 and Central Council man of to-day are a lay draw. (7)
24. 1967 Galway captain. (6)
27. Jim Walsh of Dunamaggin was always known as "The _____". (4)
28. John plays centre-field and in various forward positions for Waterford. (6)
30. Dash. (2)
31. A deliberate one means instant dismissal. (4)

CLUES DOWN :

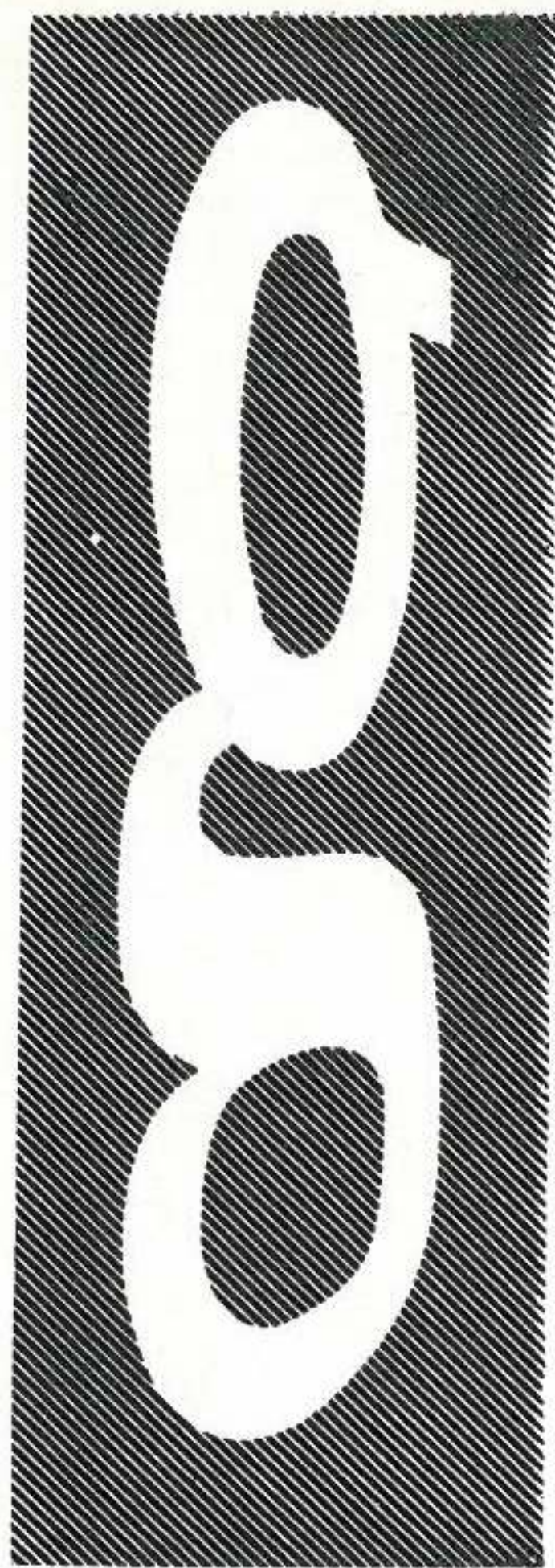
1. Scores that make a draw. (5)
2. (and 22 across). A competition designed to show the most consistent in the land. (8, 6)
3. Wings needed to pull properly on the ball. (5)
4. Chances of victory as the bookmakers would put them. (4)
5. An engineer, it seems. (1, 1)
6. Man turns his back and only gives part of his name. (3)



9. Is a wagon able to make a Galway forward of early 40's ? (1, 7)
10. The Kerry skipper in their first replay defeat. (1, 7)
13. The sort of shot a goalie might drop or handle gingerly. (3)
15. Free pass to next round. (3)
17. Top-scoring young Kildare forward. (1, 5)
18. Limerick doctor, star hurler, recently associated with Western hurling revival. (6)
19. One of the game's best centre-backs, he won an All-Ireland at last in 1948 at centre-forward. (5)
20. No snag in naming Sligo defender except that he lacks the final letter. (1, 5)
25. Moe enters team in Laois championships ? (3)
26. Cumann Luth Chleas Gael—inverted. (1, 1, 1)
29. Many recent seasons at centre-forward for Dublin. Initials. (1, 1)

SOLUTION : PAGE 68.





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Camogie

By AGNES HOURIGAN

NOW that the All-Ireland camogie final has got a fixed date for itself at Croke Park in mid-September the event has at last a chance to establish itself in the sporting calendar, and about time too, for the Camogie final has been played at many strange times and places since first it was established in 1932.

The first two camogie finals of all were between Dublin and Galway. One of them was played in Dublin, the other at Galway, and Dublin won both. Then Cork came into the reckoning and were tops of the camogie world for a time. At about the same period Louth came to the forefront in Leinster, and we had some All-Ireland finals in Cork, and some in Croke Park.

Then in 1939, the Camogie Association divided and there was a period of confusion. In fact, in more than one year, there was more than one final, and it was none too easy at the time to figure out which was the proper final and which was not. During that period I remember a 'final' being played in County Meath and another in Croke Park in the same year.

Eventually a measure of unity was restored, and we had some great finals at Croke Park again. I think it was this period, in the middle 'forties, that the record attendance was set up at a Croke Park final between Dublin and Cork.

But then internal troubles beset the Association once more. Antrim were very much to the fore at this period. There were a couple of All-Irelands played at this stage in Belfast, and there was even a final played in Cappoquin, in which Antrim defeated Waterford.

It was not until the late 'forties that we had a fully united Association again, but by this time organisation, for obvious reasons, had become a bit haphazard, and for some years thereafter the camogie final became very much a movable feast. It might be played in early August, yet sometimes it did not take place until November and even, on one occasion, it went back into December.

No wonder, in these circumstances, that attendances fell off and that public interest waned. Indeed, there were occasions when there was an interval of two months between the semi-finals and the final.

That was not the fault of the

Camogie Association. It had been fixed by Congress that the final should be played at Croke Park, and the camogie people had to wait until Croke Park was available. And, if unforeseen circumstances cropped up for the G.A.A. itself, in the way of draws and replays particularly, it meant that the Camogie final had to be put back.

However, in more recent years that problem has been solved to the satisfaction of all concerned and now with a fixed date we in the Camogie Association have the chance of building up our own All-Ireland final.

The All-Ireland final is the

● Continued Page 42.

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WILSON HARTNELL

● From Page 41.

annual showpiece and in fact has well lived up to that high-ranking in recent years. All the finals of the past half-dozen years or thereabouts have provided fine exhibitions of the game, but the attendance has still been far from what it should have been.

The chief reason for this to my mind has been the continued supremacy of Dublin, because the average games' follower now takes it for granted that the Dublin girls will win the final every year. And this despite the fact that Dublin had little or nothing to spare over Antrim in recent seasons. But near-misses are not sufficient to draw the crowds. Antrim will have to beat Dublin to bring the crowds back to an Antrim-Dublin game.

But I feel that, irrespective of what teams are actually in the final, a much bigger crowd could be

brought to the camogie final by a little more support from the County Boards. I believe that all County Boards should try and organise a little excursion from their county to the final. Local clubs could consider holding their annual outing to Dublin on that day, and could even arrange for a challenge match in Dublin in the morning if they felt that way inclined. I also feel that school and college teams, most of whom will be already preparing for their local competitions, should be given a day out by their coaches and teachers at the final. It would benefit them immensely by allowing them to see the top stars in action.

Indeed, I feel that a schools' match between, say, the champions of Leinster and the champions of Ulster would prove an ideal curtain-raiser. Of course next season this particular problem of

providing a curtain raiser that will help draw the crowd is unlikely to arise because we will have a junior All-Ireland championship, and I presume that the junior All-Ireland final will be played in conjunction with the senior decider. That should almost double the interest and should certainly increase the attendance.

But, at the same time, the other methods of crowd-pulling that I have mentioned should not be forgotten. An attendance of ten thousand within the next five years is the mark we must aim at, especially as Central Council depends on the takings at the All-Ireland final to finance all its other activities throughout the year.



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THE WEXFORD MINORS

By OWEN McCANN

IT is no reflection on the other counties whatever to say that Wexford in an All-Ireland hurling final in any grade is a doubly appealing prospect for the rank and file of enthusiasts. The Model County's emergence from ranking as one of the "Little People" of the game to a place among the elite has that fairy-tale quality about it that has given Wexford a glamour all their own . . . an appeal that in rallying non-natives enthusiastically to their support is unmatched by any other county in the game.

Then, Wexford have further gained the admiration of supporters of the code by their cavalier and colourful hurling, and their "never-say-die" spirit. Time and again nowadays when Wexford's prospects in an important game are being discussed one hears the remark: "You can always depend on Wexford, anyway, to give you value for money". And, this 37th All-Ireland minor final should see this latest national title chasing outfit from the Model County live up nobly to this proud heritage.

There was much to admire in the team's passage to the final, particularly in a 16 point (6-7 to 2-3) Leinster final win over fancied Dublin. All departments looked strong in a well-drilled side that moved well and displayed ability and class; a team, in fact, well equipped for this bid to maintain an unbeaten record for Wexford in the final.

It was not until as recently as 1963 that Wexford won through to their first decider. And, it proved a case of first time lucky, the final whistle finding the Slaney-siders ahead of Limerick by 6-12 to 5-9. Their only other final appearance was last year when, after having played a draw, 6-7 all, with Cork, they won the replay 4-1 to 1-8. Waterford, who won in 1929 and 1948, are the only county, other than Wexford, with an unbeaten record in the final.

Last year's was the first drawn final since the initial decider, when Cork beat Dublin at the second attempt. But, Wexford's single point is not, surprisingly, unique in a final. Indeed, Tipperary won the 1930 title with exactly the same score as recorded in the 1966 replay by Wexford—4-1. A year earlier Waterford scored 5-0—the only team to win the title without scoring a single point.

A forward in Wexford's history-making 1963 team was Pat Quigley, whose younger brother, John, was, of course, such a dynamic match-winner in last year's minor title achievement. The Quigley family was again represented in another unique chapter in Wexford teenage hurling history in July when that win over Dublin gave the county two successive Leinster titles; the first time Wexford achieved this feat. Jim Quigley was right full back, and Martin centre half forward.

Three of Wexford's 1967 Leinster title winning team, left full

back Eddie McDonald, midfielder Pat Byrne and forward Mick Butler, won All-Ireland medals last year.

A remarkable change in favour of Leinster has come over the pattern of minor final results this decade. If Wexford win, the East will have gained since 1960 exactly the same number of titles as the Province won in the 26 years period 1928-54! Leinster has six titles since 1960, the odd year being 1964, when Cork were champions. Prior to 1960, Kilkenny won titles in 1931-35-36, '50 and Dublin in 1945-46-54. Kilkenny were champions in this decade in 1960-61-62, and Dublin in 1965.

Moreover, since the "Irish Press" Cup was awarded for this competition in 1949, and won initially by Tipperary, the South has taken the trophy only on two occasions more than Leinster: 10 to 8.

Can Wexford improve the score for Leinster? Time alone will tell, but the inflexible defensive spirit of Jim Quigley, Eddie McDonald and Larry Byrne, the class of midfielder Pat Byrne, and the opportunism up front of Martin Quigley, Mick Butler and John B. Murphy, will, allied to good all round balance, ability and that great fighting heart so typical of Wexford, ensure that Cork have their work cut out to end Wexford's unbeaten record.

It should be a classic to rival last year's encounters.



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Handball's debt to the G.A.A.

DURING the past eighty years the Gaelic Athletic Association has shown a phenomenal development in every sphere. It is my pleasure this month to examine the expansion of handball.

When the G.A.A. was founded in 1884 it did not in fact, herald the birth of handball, but merely set out to bring it under its wing.

Indeed if we delve into the archives of handball we find, that it is as old as time itself, originated perhaps by the Celts, who appear to have left imprints of the game everywhere they settled. The Annals of Ireland record its introduction to the country more than a thousand years prior to the Christian era. But, whether the method of play was much different from that as practised nowadays is not really known.

However, as there is no mention of a playing court or alley, the only conclusion one can draw is that it was practised on an open court, with the ball being tossed from hand to hand by the players.

In the Tailteann Games of old it occupied a most important position when the sports heroes of inhabited Europe travelled thousands of miles to vie for the title of champion player.

Coming to modern times, we read of the feats, a century ago, of such exponents as William Baggs, David Browning of Limerick and John Lawlor from Dublin. In those days the emphasis was on professionalism with the side-stake between the players and supporters a major issue.

The game, to ensure country-wide development, required changes for, though the few top-match players of those times were possibly on a par with, or better than those of the present day, the game was not widely played throughout the country.

In 1884 there came Most Rev. Dr. Croke's reference to the game, when he wrote, accepting patronage of the newly established Gaelic Athletic Association.

Between then and 1924, the

game, as played under the new rules drafted by the G.A.A., made commendable progress and various championships were completed satisfactorily.

In that period too internationalism made its appearance with the oft-spoken about games between John Lawlor and Phil Casey, the American champion, who had built his own court in Brooklyn. It was in 1924, however, that the real influence of the G.A.A. had its effect, when, for the first time, it was decided to establish handball on a regular championship basis.

A handball council was formed and John Lawlor, elected to the office of President, became the vital link between the old and the new.

And what of handball since then. Well, I think it is hardly necessary for me to elaborate for, in reality, it is an understatement to say that it has made great strides. Championships, as regular as clock-work, are played at club, county, provincial and Central Council level. Schools and colleges have in recent years chipped in with their contributions, while the Gardai, and the Army authorities have long since recognised the benefit of handball to their men.

Courts spring up throughout the country at regular intervals while, just now, a new era is dawning with the initiation of floodlit handball. Every year the pace is increasing, the competitive element becomes keener, and the possibility of a player being called on to play consecutive Sundays for three months is now a distinct possibility.

To-day, the game is played in practically every town and village in Ireland and for this happy state of affairs, the G.A.A. must take its bow.

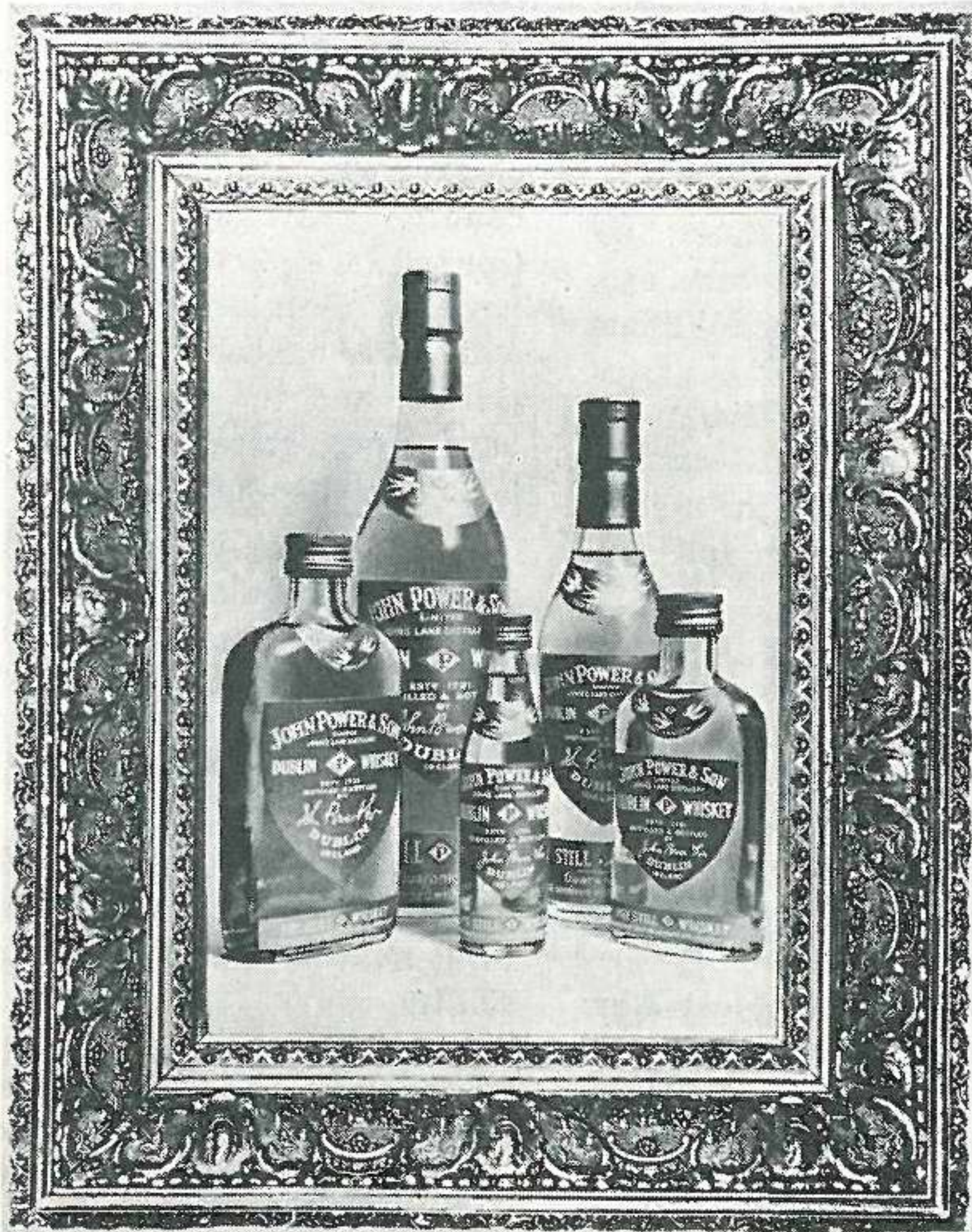
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By **BERNIE POWER**

“WITH Theo English doing well, and two such crafty score-takers as Donie Nealon and Seán McLoughlin, we are going to take beating”, remarked my Tipperary neighbour as he went happily on his way after the Munster final.

English, Nealon and McLoughlin? Why, I thought, single out this trio particularly in a team that, if it showed anything in that big win over Clare, it was that it again has the class, ability and power in all positions. Yet, on reflection . . .

English—what an amazing man he is! After almost 14 years duty with the Tipperary squad, he still has that fierce dedication, stamina and speed that marks him out as a major threat to any opposition. And, this in the demanding role of midfielder! Some argue, of course, that puck-outs tend to make the midfield exchanges less important, but the tremendous amount of effective work English invariably puts in during each hour, underlines that a hurler of his skill, drive and consistency at centre-field is an outstanding unit in any team’s make-up.

Then, when this long-serving Marlfield hurler swings into top gear it is frequently the spark that propels Tipperary along on all cylinders with a smooth fluency

that few teams in the game can really match. We had further evidence of this as recently as the Munster final, when English thundered into the match in a big way in the second half . . . and that, in effect, really marked the beginning of the end of Clare’s hopes for another year at least.

This latest performance points to only one conclusion—that Theo English, midfielder par-excellence with the scoring touch, “steeled” in the white-heat of six All-Ireland senior finals, holder of five medals, and who, like others of his colleagues in this team, appears to have been ignored by “Father Time”, may be a particularly decisive influence for Tipperary in this quest for a 22nd title.

Nealon—the quiet man of scoring. When we think nowadays of scoring forwards from Tipperary, we immediately conjure up memories of some big individual totals per game by Jimmy Doyle, and his impressive figures over a full year’s campaign, or of Seán McLoughlin’s flair for poaching goals.

Yet, in his own quiet and unobtrusive manner, Donie Nealon invariably exercises his particular talents in a way that clearly indicates that he has nothing whatever to learn from either, or from

any other forward in the game, for that matter. In fact, he is an original in his own right — and, outside of the Premier County, this is probably appreciated better in Kilkenny than any other county. As they look back to their last All-Ireland final with Tipperary in 1964, they ruefully recall how Nealon did much to shatter their hopes of a first win in four finals with Tipperary since a 1922 success, by highlighting a good all round performance with three golden goals.

He is making such effective use of his finishing powers in front of goal that he is leading the way in both teams in the role of out-smarting goalkeepers. He starts the final with 96 goals to his credit, one more than Jimmy Doyle has as a senior, and five majors ahead of Kilkenny’s goal-getter Eddie Keher.

Points scoring? I confidently forecast that in this match he will raise the white flag for at least the 200th time. He only needs two minors. This combined total of 486 points in 138 engagements gives Nealon the good match average of 3.52 minors.

This smooth and potent finishing technique, and his hurling craft, skill and big-match temperament, mark Donie Nealon, who is also chasing his sixth national championship senior medal, as a hurler with what it takes to pose many problems for the Noreside defence.

McLoughlin—the specialist of the palmed goal. His ability to palm the ball to the net, even when being very closely marked, is now part and parcel of hurling lore. It is an asset that has served Tipperary well—like in their last All-Ireland final win in 1965. In the 15th minute, less than a minute after he had scored Tipperary’s opening goal, he collected a centre from that man, Theo English, and brilliantly palmed the

● To page 53

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A familiar goalmouth sight in recent years—Ollie Walsh under heavy pressure from Sean McLoughlin.

● **From page 51**
 ball past Pat Nolan to the net—a score that set Tipperary well on the way to a 2-16 to 0-10 win over Wexford.

This Thurles Sarsfields six-footer is ever alert, ever-ready to make the most of any scoring opportunity that presents itself. Typical was the Munster semi-final with Waterford, when one of his palmed efforts at goal

rebounded off an upright, and he immediately kicked the ball home. And, oh yes, he can also set the net singing a merry tune with a stinging puck from his hurley! After 75 games in the top-flight, McLoughlin, who won the first of his four All-Ireland souvenirs in 1961, when he went in as a substitute against Dublin, boasts 67-18 (219 pts.), or 9.92 points an hour.

English, the consistent one; Nealon, the green-flag specialist, McLoughlin, the all-Ireland champion at his own particularly effective brand of score-taking . . . yes, my Tipperary friend was right! Here, unquestionably, is the guile, the spirit, technical ability and the ceaseless concentration that over and above anything else, may well open up the way to yet another title for Tipperary.

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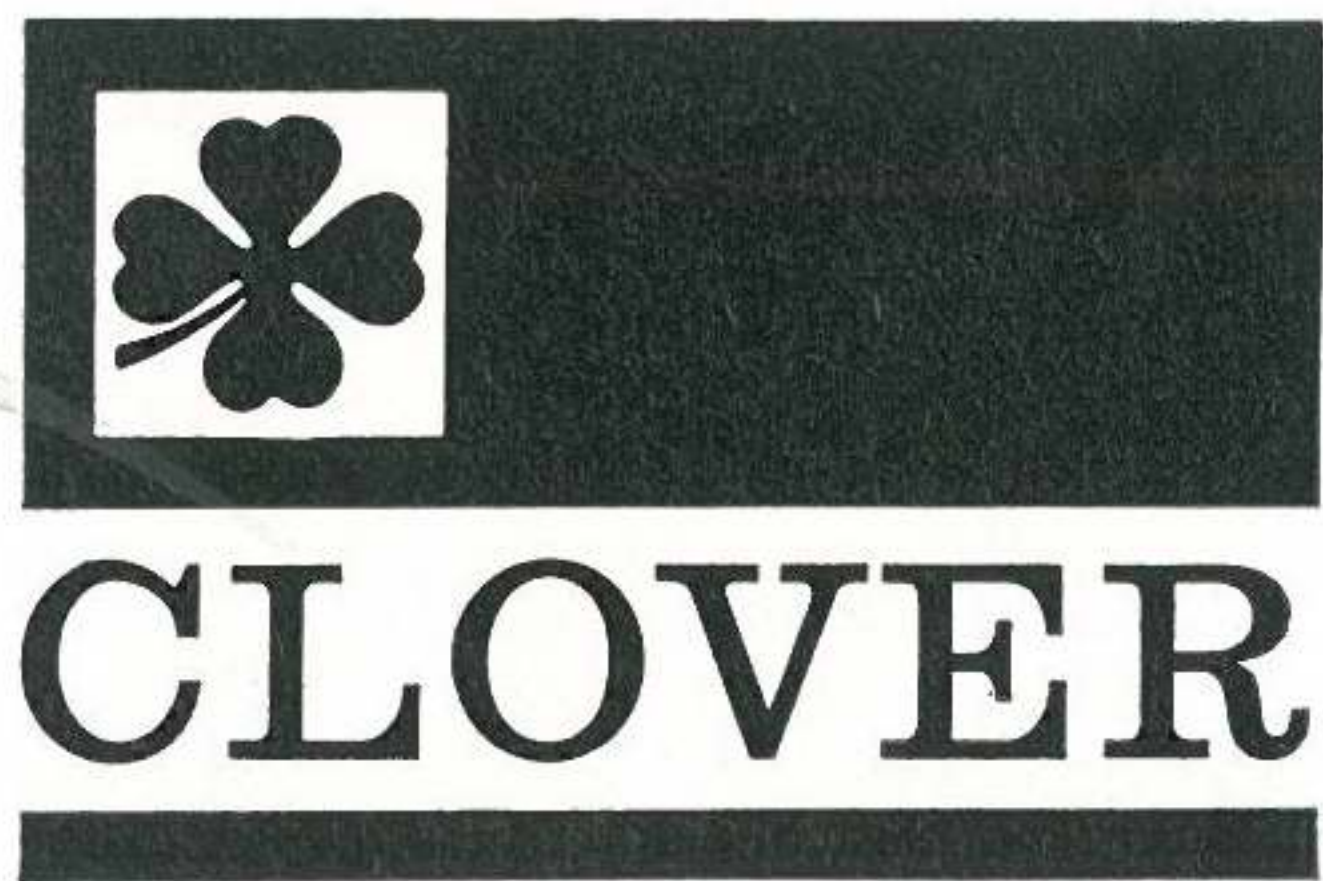
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THE BIG BLUE VAN

● From page 15

the position whereby an increase in League games would overload the strong.

What then could have been done—a different League set-up for the weak whereby they would have more games? This would be difficult to arrange. For example a division involving Clare, Monaghan and Wicklow would be impractical from the point of view of travel and certain to lose money.

Furthermore, to segregate the weak from the strong would probably defeat the basic objective of helping these weak counties improve themselves.

Whatever the solution is to this problem—and we don't claim to have it—it should be sought—not alone within the National League but also in other areas as well.

Unless it is found somewhere the weak will remain weak.

THE BIG THREE

● From page 17

looming up for the opposing defence. The backs come right under severe pressure, and one can recall, offhand, instances like the Jim Bennett score in the 21st minute of the Leinster final following a long Walsh puck-out that gave the Noresiders just the tonic they needed by dramatically pulling back a Wexford goal recorded just merely seconds before.

Yes, while no one appreciates better than I that Kilkenny are, indeed, really well served in all other sectors by hurlers of real class and ability, Ollie Walsh's capacity for the incredible, and the scoring expertise of Eddie Keher and Tom Walsh put them down in my book as unquestionably the chief weapons in the Kilkenny armoury for this latest title bid.

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MICHAEL KEATING



IT is three years ago since Michael Keating made his name stand out in lights, and his display in the All-Ireland final of that year was at once a blessing and a curse. After all, by any standards, he was only a boy then, big and powerfully built, but a boy all the same, whose physical development had not completed, and whose head could not but be turned by the things people were saying and writing about him.

His play in the final of 1964 was, indeed, superb, in a superb Tipperary team which made it easy for him. But, he was a boy, with all the careless disregard for his elders and betters of any boy, and so he played with complete lack of inhibition. After the final he was a man to mark, a dangerous customer to whom no rope must be allowed; rather than using it to hang himself, he had proved that he would use it—and quickly—to hang the opposition. So things got tougher, and the elders who seemed to know nothing of hurling a few weeks or months before, suddenly appeared to have learned an enormous amount in the meantime.

Then fitness problems began to rear their heads; always heavily built as a youth—it was his strong point then—he began to put on weight rapidly, so that sturdiness became fatness, and pace and fitness suffered. Least of all counties, at that time, Tipperary could not afford a passenger; the selectors were fair but ruthless. I am sure they must have seemed harsh and unfair to Keating, but he knows better now.

There was a year or more when

Crisis overcome

By MICHEÁL O BRIAIN

it looked as though he would never realise his potential; when he was called in for occasional games he looked slow, unfit, and even his beautifully grooved hurling swing seemed to have deserted him with his accuracy. One thing stood in good stead: his football. All the time that his hurling name was being taken in vain, he kept on playing football, and began to put more into the football as he found it harder and more tasteless to put the effort into hurling.

Gradually, with effort, he began to get back to fighting fitness, as he began to get his weight under control, and the degree to which the Tipperary under-21 and senior teams depended on him in football kept him playing hard, and getting his physique once again into conformity with the dictates of his brain. The sage Tipperary selectors began to call on him regularly again for hurling. Last year was not the most favourable, as Tipp. slumped after their tiring time astride the hurling world. But, this year, Keating is fulfilling his potential, and contributing the

great amount that was expected of him to the Tipperary attack. Curiously, at 22, he seems to be lumped in the same category as the veterans in the present team; I suppose it is the final seal on his play that he should seem no less mature, now, than the Devaneys, Nealons and McLoughlins.

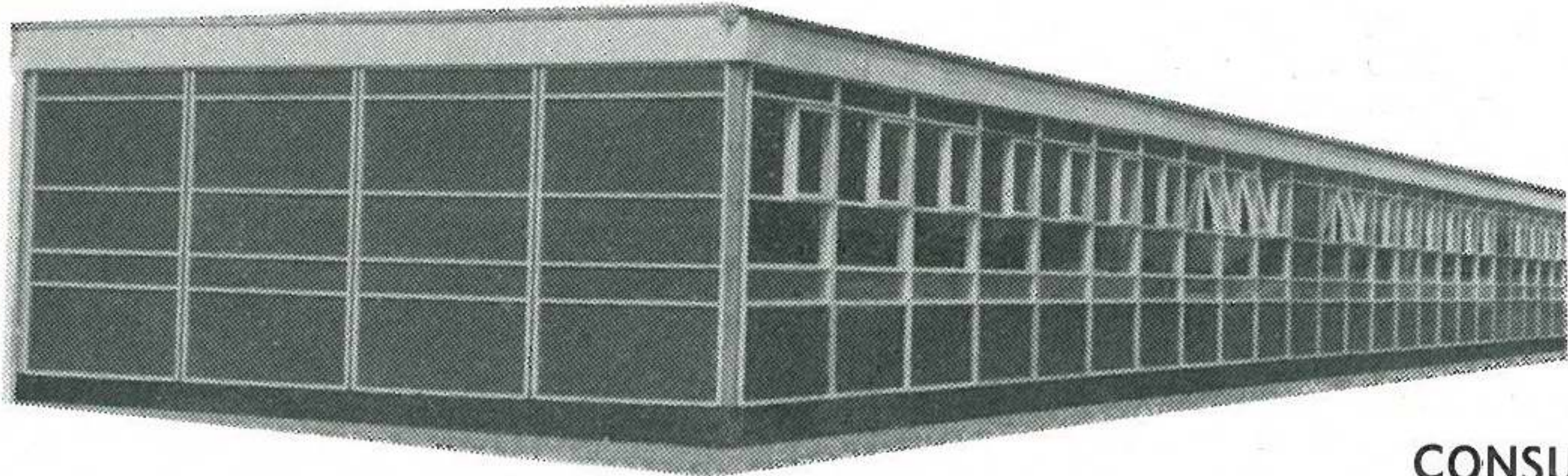
Essentially a forward, both in football and hurling, Keating surely can never have conceived of being a defender. He has chiselled all his skills in the mould of a forward; everything is shaped towards making scores. In football as in hurling he has a thousand little ways of chipping over a point when in the direst difficulties; a whole plethora of possible passes in his mind, a complete command of how to gain those few inches to swing his stick in a crowded goalmouth. It is the mastery of these forward skills, and the obvious constant pre-occupation with them which now makes him such a huge success in the full-forward position. Some

● To page 59

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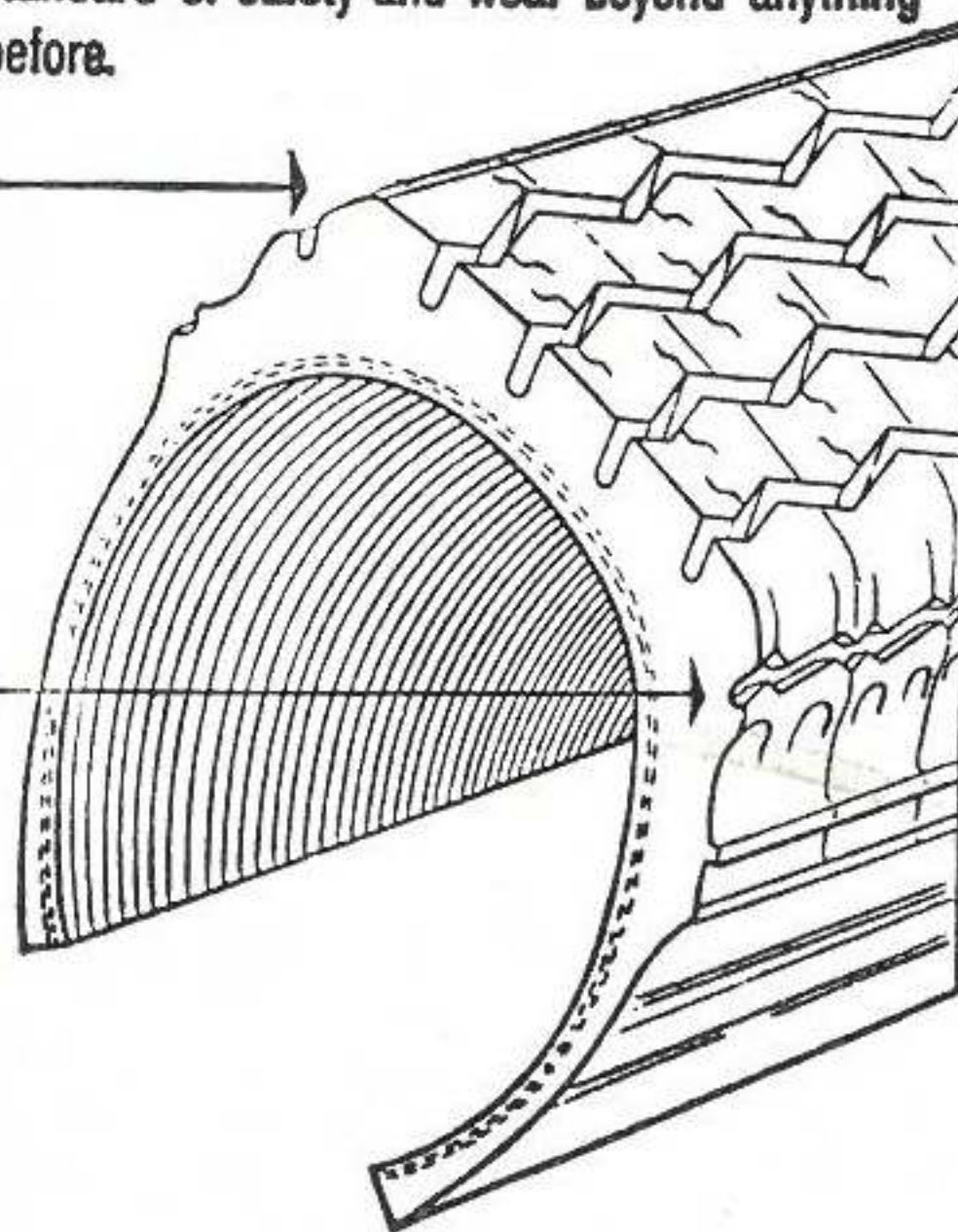
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SEAMUS CLEERE



talks to Sean O'Donnell

BE it victory or defeat for Kilkenny on Sunday, September 3, there is one thing we can depend upon—yet another display of the finer qualities of hurling from Seamus Cleere. No man in recent years has so consistently produced truly classical stick-work to compare with the modest Kilkenny half-back, and it was my pleasure to recently have this conversation with him.

O'Donnell—Seamus, how do you think the final will go?

Cleere—It is difficult to say. The only thing I am sure about is that we will be the most determined Kilkenny team for a very long time. We really do want to win this one and we will do or die.

O'D.—Will there be anything special about Kilkenny's training programme this year?

C.—I don't expect that there will. It is possible, of course, that our trainers, Father Maher and Mick Lanigan, may have something special up their sleeves, but our normal programme will probably be maintained. We always play plenty of club hurling prior to the final and then, of course, there will be the usual training sessions. I would add that Kilkenny's training has always been first-class.

O'D.—Will there be an inferiority complex with regard to Tipperary?

C.—Why should there be? Have we not beaten them in all our recent meetings, including last year's National League "home" final?

O'D.—What sort of a game do you expect it to be?

C.—It should be a great game. Tipperary are obviously back to their

best, while Kilkenny should reach their peak on final day.

O'D.—Do you think Tipperary are now as good as they were in 1964-'65?

C.—In some respects they are probably better and in other respects they cannot be as good. Clare played the type of game which allowed Tipp. to perform at their best. I expect that we won't do that.

O'D.—Do you expect Kilkenny to win?

C.—I would prefer not to make any firm forecast, but I do believe that this Tipperary team can be beaten if the right type of game is played against them. We will try to play that type of game.

O'D.—Has the standard of hurling gone down since you first came on the scene?

C.—The game has changed some-

what. It is faster now and the main emphasis is on speed. There is less concentration on the basic skills.

O'D.—What players have given you your hardest games?

C.—Phil Wilson in particular, but I still enjoy playing on him. He is a grand clean hurler and a credit to Wexford. Frankie Walsh of Waterford is another who has given me many a hard hour.

O'D.—Who was your idol when you were growing up?

C.—I am glad you asked me that for I would like to pay tribute to the man from whom I have learned so much and whose play I have tried to emulate — Johnny McGovern. Johnny was my idol, and what a loyal club and county man he has always been—together with, of course, being the best half-back of my time.

MICHAEL KEATING

● From page 57

full-forwards depend for action on rugged, flat-out endeavour, hoping by physical effort rather than skilful manoeuvring and snappy striking at just the right moment and just the right angle to gain results.

Keating, in a way, has the best of both worlds: he has the close skills and the various imagination of the true forward, and he has the bulk, too, that causes so many full-backs to wake up in the night screaming that they cannot see the ball. When Keating places his broad hips four-square in the way, it is no mean business rounding

him; the smaller full-backs would have quite a time even seeing what is happening on the other side.

I do not know that I would like to see him play the rest of his career in the full-forward line; I think that he has a great deal to contribute out the field. No doubt he will play in the half-line if the need should arise, and return again later to the full-line. At any rate, I am sure that the crisis of fitness and confidence which proved such a trial and a test of character during the last few years, has been overcome once and for all. He will be a far better hurler because of it.

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Chomh maith leis sin pléann an túdar na ceisteanna ar fad a thóg scoláirí faoi chúrsaí Cholm Cille.

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POOR PAT RING

By JOE KAVANAGH

I HAVE seen Cork minors in their three Munster championship outings this year. In the first round, in Fermoy, in one of those early round games which are often fixed for evenings in May, to convenience boys still in the throes of examinations, they just barely got through against Waterford. Many excellent games are missed because of this, probably necessary, arrangement, but I think there is only one suitable place for a minor game, and that is a curtain raiser to the equivalent senior game. The Cork-Waterford Fermoy match was, by far, the best game in the championship so far, that I saw, and there was just a moderate crowd. Thousands who would have enjoyed it, were not there.

In the second round against Tipperary at Cork, the home team ran up a cricket score, against one of the poorest Tipperary minor teams since this competition began. In spite of the opposition, however, Cork looked most impressive; I was not surprised to see them capture the Munster crown against Limerick with some ease.

Physically, these Cork boys are an imposing lot. I cannot see their centre-field pair being curbed by any minor combination; their forwards, though, may be the least balanced section of the team, and tend to work on the compensation principle, so that one pair are devastating one day; another pair another day; and the third pair the third day. The defence, marshalled round a powerful and

strong centre-half back, will not be so easy to pierce.

You will remember, perhaps, from last year's great games against Wexford, the dashing interceptions and long clearances of a dare-devil nature, by a blond youngster named John Horgan. This year he is a far more strongly built lad and his head of hair marks all he does for everyone to remark on it. This year young Horgan is, indeed, a powerful hurler, disregardless of his own safety, who is so full of confidence in this grade that he treats opponents and colleagues alike in the manner of a schoolmaster playing with his boys in the lunch hour.

This kind of thing can produce high blood pressure in Cork followers, for there are times when his confidence in his own ability, his timing and his easy going over-elaborate approach can seem to get him into the most horribly tight corners. But, he seldom seems to get caught; and with the excitement of the big day, when he speeds up his play a little in the tense atmosphere, he should be an impossible stumbling block to the Wexford forwards, and a dire plague to their defence with his punishingly long clearances. Seventies come easy to Horgan—I saw him point two, maybe three, in a row during the second half against Tipperary. There was a breeze, but it was impressive striking all the same.

It is not a one man team, however, even in defence, for the full-back line looks fairly tight though

not water-proof entirely. Wing halves can feel great freedom and ease in backing up in attack with Horgan so dominant in the centre. Poor Pat Ring, in attack, to me is a sad figure who deserves more sympathy than even fair criticism: for he has the dire misfortune of being the nephew of Christy Ring. I am sure he is inordinately proud of it, but whatever he does on the hurling field is estimated mercilessly in terms of his great uncle. When he does good things, as he often does, for he is a boy of some talent, it is placed in the perspective of history, and he is, at once, damned with the shouts of men who say he is another Christy in the making.

How could any boy live up to that. And when he commits the errors which all minors are entitled to commit by right of their youth and inexperience, he is damned by the brutal opinions of those who say: "He'll never be any good", measuring him against the inhuman standards of his uncle.

Cork people see mystical patterns in Pat Ring's presence in this team; this is a year with a seven in it; it was a year with a seven—exactly thirty years ago—that the supreme master first was noted winning a minor title for Cork. They expect the same to happen again, and their expectations are only beginning there, for they see in the mists of their "rigged" crystal ball, all the things that followed 1937 coming again after 1967. Poor Pat Ring. Please give him a break.

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DOUBLE FOR MUNSTER?

By TOM McGRATH

CORK battling for an All-Ireland hurling title! How the memories crowd one on top of the other down the years of those famed red jerseys flashing brilliantly across the Croke Park scene in many a titanic struggle for the Blue Riband of the game . . . of the genius of many sons of the Rebel County in the arts and crafts of this most national of all games!

We naturally tend to think mainly of senior finals, but Cork, of this splendid tradition of class, skill and sure-striking that is the hallmark of Leaside hurling in all grades, have also, as is only to be expected, made a deep imprint on the minor championship. They were there when the first All-Ireland under-18 championship reached its climax in 1928, and, although they had to settle for a draw that day against Dublin—they scored 1-8 to the Liffesiders' 3-2—they were decisive 7-6 to 4-0 winners in the replay.

Eight years later they lost their second final by a point to Kilkenny, but the following year gained full revenge by taking title No. 2 at the expense of the Nore-siders. That was Cork's only final failure up to meeting Wexford a year ago in their ninth appearance in a decider, and, since those two outings in a row against the Nore-siders, the Rebel County has had to wait until this latest tilt with Wexford for two successive battles in the concluding round with the same county.

Will history repeat itself for Cork? They are set a sizeable task against this gifted Wexford team, but the quality of their

play on the way to the decider, the strength in all departments that was evident in their earlier games, and the dynamic promptings of brilliant centre half John Horgan, talented midfielder Pat Moylan, and forwards Paddy Ring and Simon Murphy, of last year's team, should add up to a tremendous bid to avenge that 1966 final replay defeat by Wexford.

That defeat in their only battle so far with Wexford for the championship also carved out another unique chapter in hurling lore for Cork. They are the only county to figure in all drawn minor finals—last year's was the only one since 1928 to go to a second meeting—and the only county to have both won and lost a replay.

Cork share second place with Kilkenny in the Roll of Honour with seven titles. They were successful in 1928, '37, '38, '39, '41, '51 and '64. Leading the way with 12 titles between 1930 and 1959, are Tipperary, whose 20 finals appearances is the record for this series.

If the Leesiders jump into undisputed second place in the chart, the odds are that Tipperary will follow on with a win. Cork and Tipperary won out in minor and senior respectively in 1937, 1951 and 1964, and each year both national titles went South. Kilkenny were on the losing end at senior in 1937 and in 1964. But, then, even if Cork lose, it can still hardly be regarded as a lucky omen for Kilkenny! After Cork's two failures, Kilkenny lost to Limerick (1936) and Cork seniors last year!

That 1964 Cork-Tipperary double is the last by any province,

and, surprisingly, we have to go back to 1949 for the last time both minor and senior titles went to the same county—Tipperary.

Cork have a flair for high-scoring in the concluding round. Their 10-7 against Laois in 1964 is the highest yet by a winning team, and except in the 1928 draw, their 1936 defeat (2-3) and last season's replay (1-8) they have scored 17 points or more. The present team is maintaining this high-scoring trend, having chalked up an impressive 13-35 (74 pts.) in a three-match march to the Munster title alone.

The present decade is proving the leanest ever for Munster, with only that 1964 win by Cork in the last seven minor finals, compared with eight titles from 1950 to 1959 inclusive. What is more, Cork and Tipperary have between them won more national titles than all the counties in Leinster combined! The only other Munster counties to take the championship are Waterford, king-pins in 1929 and 1948, and Limerick, 1940 and 1958.

In the face of this present-day Leinster supremacy, then, Munster fans have more than the usual reason for provincial pride to enthusiastically support Cork in this bid to regain some of the South's lost glory in this particular championship. And, this combination of talented, skilled, clever and wholehearted boys from the banks of the Lee, can be depended on to respond with a heart and a half—an effort, in fact, that should contribute to a great final, and a tremendous bid to make it once again Munster's day.



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BITS and PIECES

By **VINCENT MURRIHY**

THERE is much dissatisfaction, and deservedly so, in the provinces at the moment at the decisions of three Provincial Councils to "import" outside referees for the provincial finals.

Wicklow's Jimmy Hatton was in charge of both the Connacht and Ulster deciders while Tyrone's Jimmy Martin covered the Munster final. Leinster did opt for Dublin's Jim Shannon—a Mayo-man living in the city for the past number of years.

Apart from this latter appointment, it is surely a sad commentary on the respective provinces' own referees. It is certainly no great encouragement to them to keep on making the sacrifices that their onerous position demands, all the year round.

It is surely about time counties woke up to their responsibilities in this regard and I have a feeling that their unexplainable attitude contributes to the present dearth of really good referees.

LONELY LEITRIM

Poor Leitrim! The licking that Mayo dished out to them in the Connacht final undid all the good that was done by beating Roscommon in the first round of the championship. It now looks as if their seemingly ageless veteran Packy McGarty will never get that medal he so richly deserves for devoted service.

But Leitrim will rise again. And with officials of the calibre of Co.

Secretary Tommy O'Riordan, Fr. Barney Doyle and George O'Toole (the brains behind the new pitch at Carrick-on-Shannon) they will be back. All of Ireland wishes them well.

MAYO GIRLS TOO

This year Mayo defeated Galway in the four grades of football senior, junior, minor and under-21—all at Galway venues. It was hailed in the county as a wonderful achievement, but another victory was nearly forgotten in the excitement.

It was that of the little fancied camogie team, who brought off the biggest surprise of all by "robbing" Galway of their crown, which they have held without a break since 1960.

It was a particularly gratifying win for Mayo as at the beginning of the year there was quite an amount of disharmony within the county, sparked off by the indoor-football controversy.

UNRULY COUNTIES ?

Reading the various provincial papers, one can often draw up a reasonably accurate picture of the conduct at games all over the country. I may be wrong but as far as I can see there seems to be quite an amount of unruly scenes in Sligo, Limerick and Louth. And on the other hand the counties with the best conducted games appear to be Mayo, Galway, Laois and Waterford. Or can it be that the local press reports such events

in the former and avoids doing so in the latter ?

DUBLIN HURLING

Watching the Dublin senior hurling final recently between St. Vincents and St. Columbas and the often fiery nature of the exchanges, I wondered why the players in action could not produce the same brand of enthusiasm and appetite for the game when they pull on a county jersey.

Certainly if Dublin officials can transfer even a share of the spirit that I saw being displayed so prominently on that day, they will have gone a long way to solving the problems that are affecting Dublin hurling at the moment.

GALWAY VETERANS

Has Gaelic football seen the last of the great Galway team that is rated by many as the best ever to grace Gaelic fields ?

I think not. I have a feeling that many of the old guard will be back when the National League appears. The reason? Simply because their other teams don't appear to have the material needed for top-class football to-day. Their junior and under-21 teams were very poor this year so it seems that team building will be delayed for some time. Like Tipperary, the Galway mentors are virtually certain to stick by the 'old guard'.

DOWN IRISH

From the "Frontier Sentinel":

● To page 67

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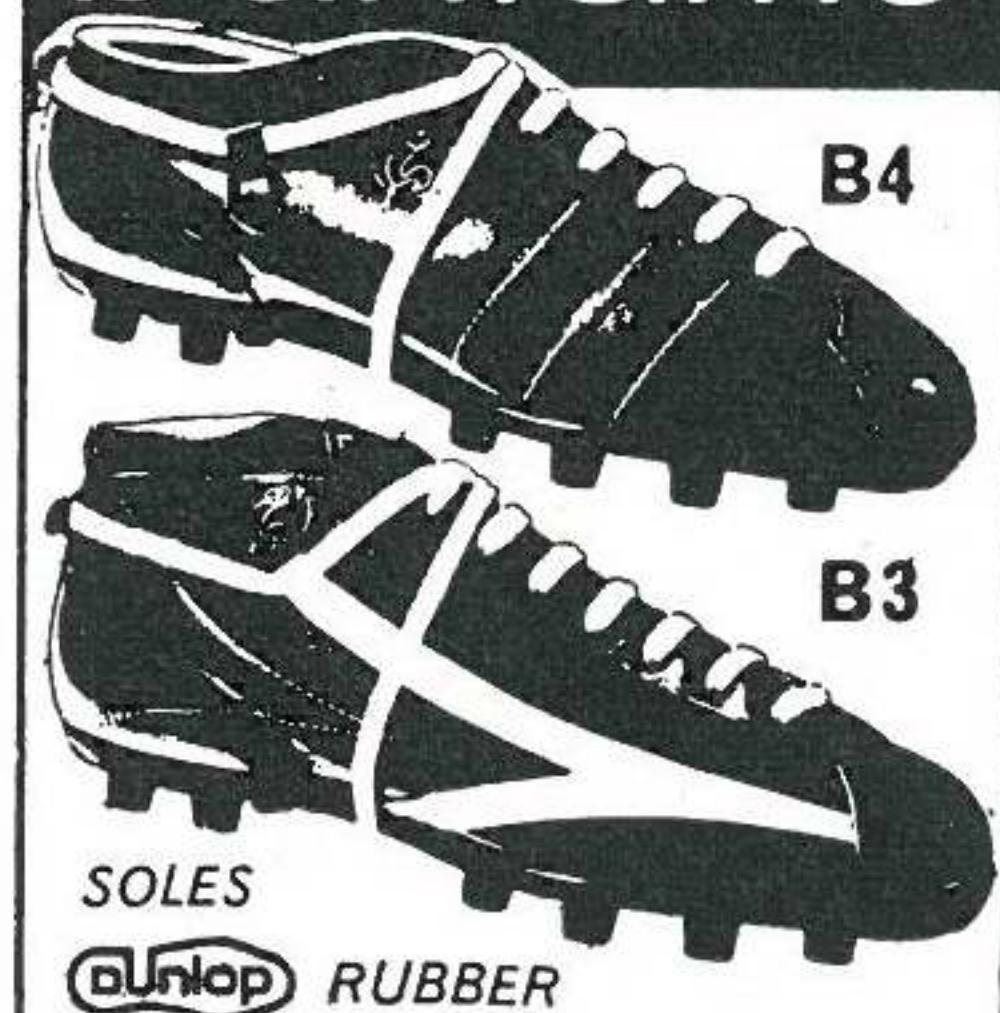
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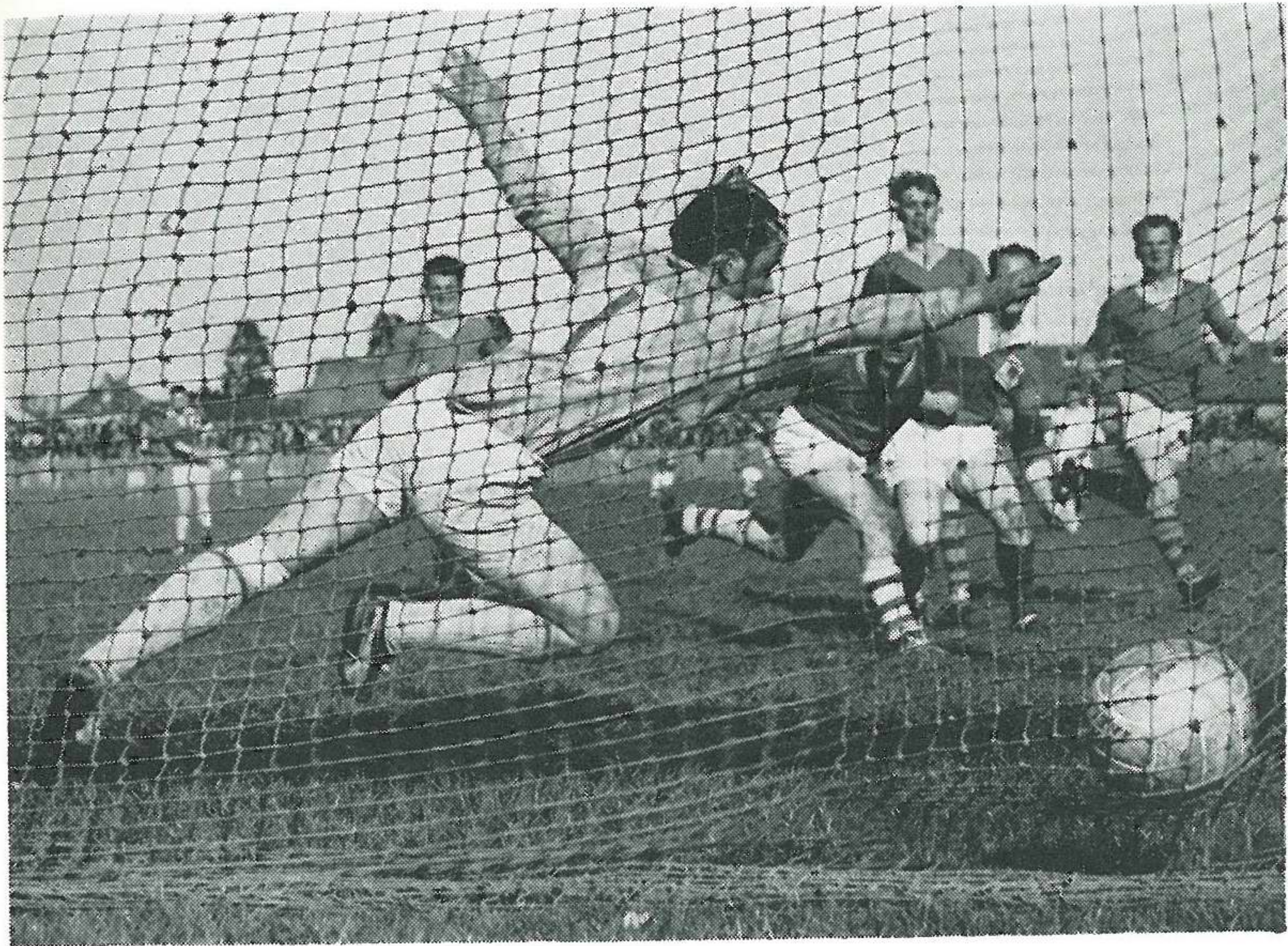


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