

DECEMBER, 1976

THIRTY PENCE (TAX INCLUDED)

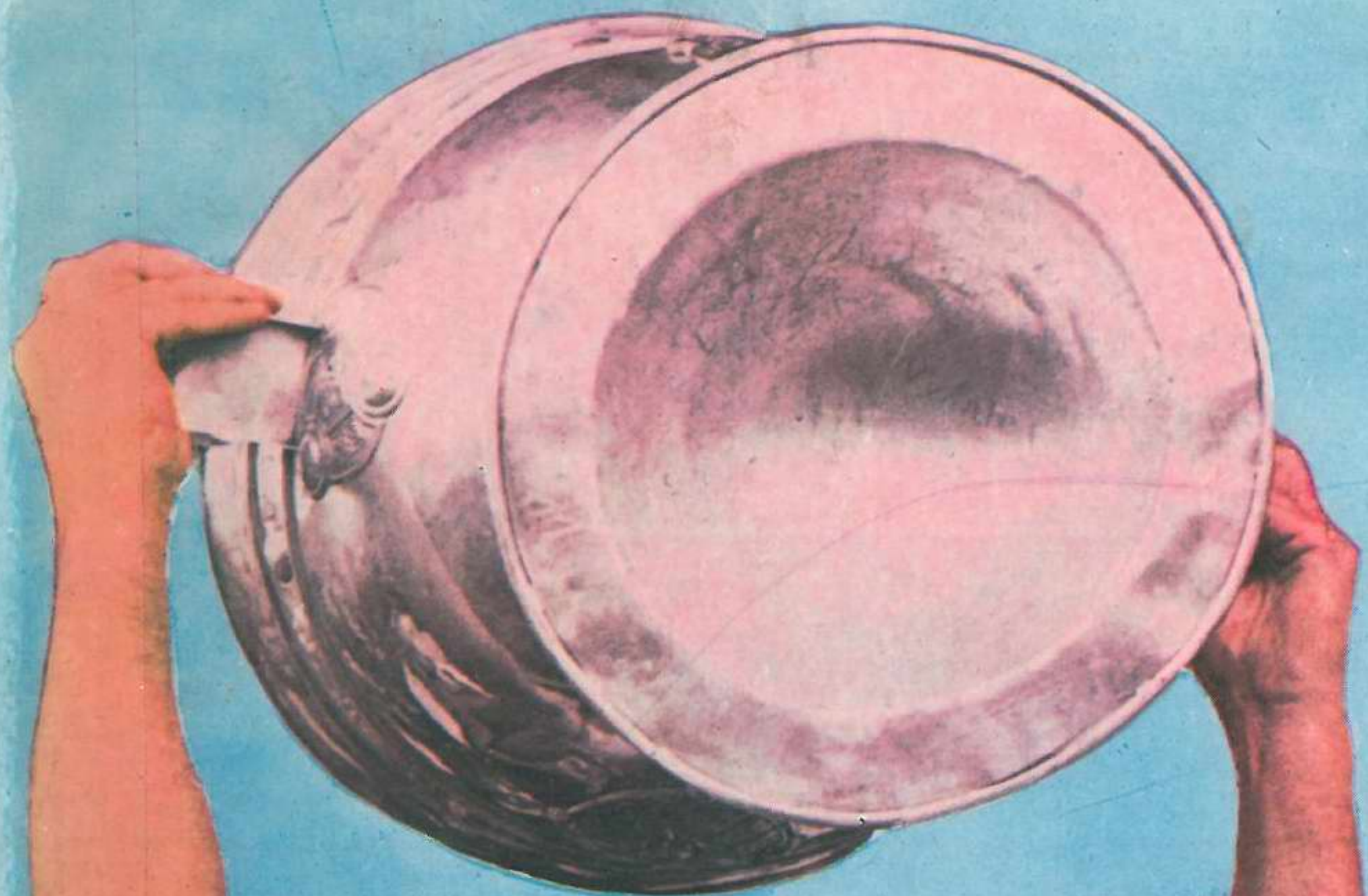
**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

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GAA

GAELIC SPORT

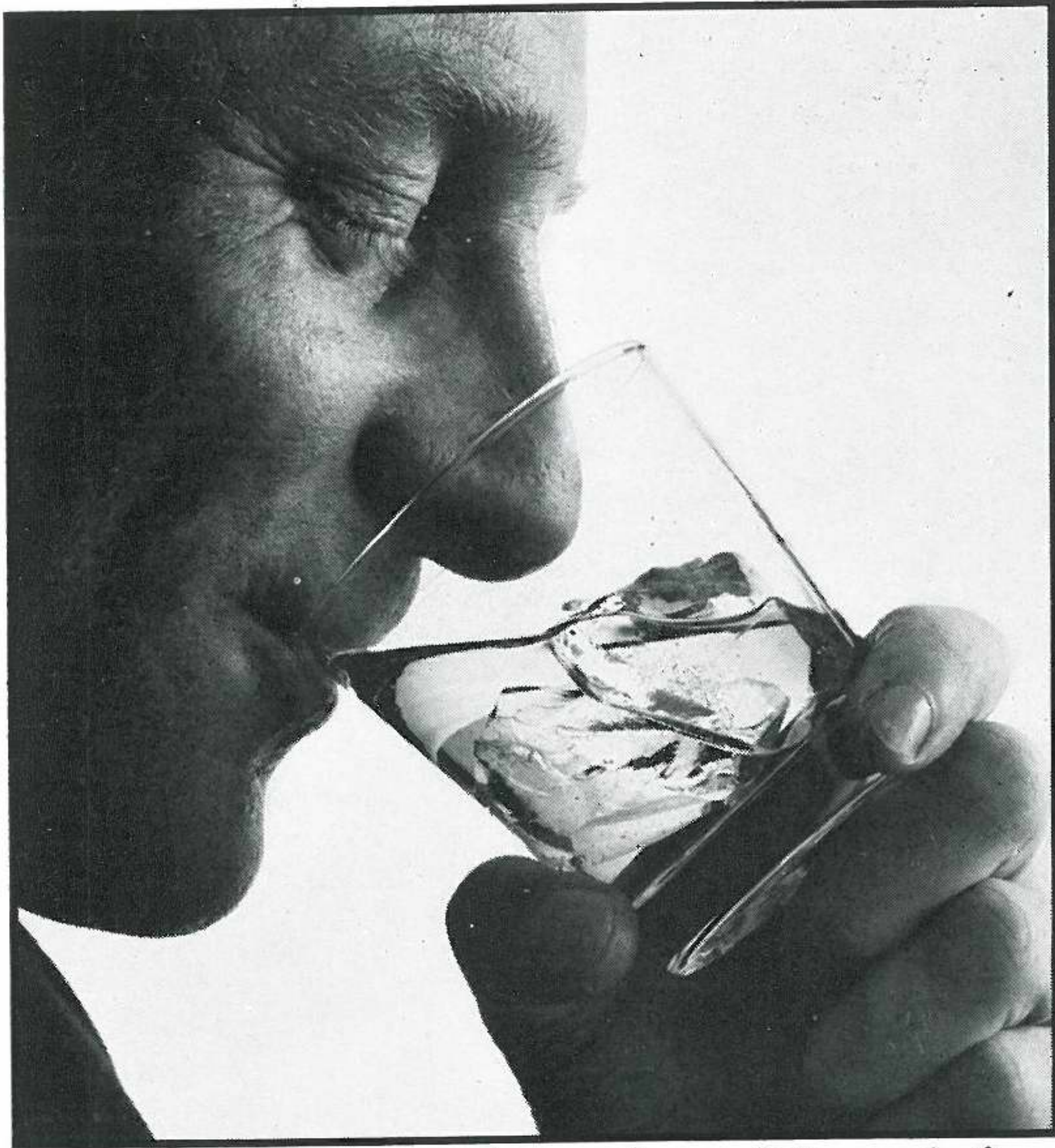
IRELAND'S LEADING GAELIC GAMES MAGAZINE PUBLISHED MONTHLY



**TONY
HANAHOE
TALKS
ABOUT
THE
GAME
HE
LOVES**

TO OWEN McCANN

INSIDE 



He switched to Paddy.
And saw the light.

Paddy
The Thoroughbred.



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Peil (Mionúir agus Sinsir):

1. Cill Dara v Cill Choinnigh
2. Ath Cliath v 1
3. Ua bhFáilí v Cill Mantáin
4. Loch Garman v 3
5. Iar Mhí v Luí
6. Laois v 5
7. Longhort v Ceatharloch
8. An Mhí v 7
9. 2 v 4
10. 6 v 8

Craobh: 9 v 10

Iomáint Sinsir:

1. Ua bhFáilí v Ath Cliath
2. Cill Dara v Iar Mhí
3. Cill Choinnigh v 1
4. Loch Garman v 2

Craobh: 3 v 4

Iomáint Mionúir:

1. Aontruim v Iar Mhí
2. Laois v Cill Dara
3. Ath Cliath v 1
4. Ua bhFáilí v 2
5. Loch Garman v 3
6. Cill Choinnigh v 4

Craobh: 5 v 6

Fé 21 bl. Iomáint (Spéis.):

1. Cill Mantáin v An Mhí
2. Iar Mhí v Ceatharloch
3. Cill Dara v 1

Craobh: 2 v 3

Club Iomáint Laighean '76/'77:

1. Ceatharloch v Cill Mantáin
2. Ua bhFáilí v 1
3. Laois v Ath Cliath
4. Luí v Iar Mhí
5. Cill Choinnigh v 4
6. An Mhí v Cill Dara
7. Loch Garman v 6
8. 2 v 3
9. 5 v 7

Craobh: 8 v 9

Fé 21 bl. Peil:

1. Longhort v Luí
2. Cill Dara v 1
3. Cill Mantáin v Laois
4. Ath Cliath v 3
5. Iar Mhí v Ceatharloch
6. Loch Garman v 5
7. Cill Choinnigh v An Mhí
8. Ua bhFáilí v 7
9. 2 v 4
10. 6 v 8

Craobh: 9 v 10

Fé 21 bl. Iomáint:

1. Laois v Buath. Spéis. '77
2. Loch Garman v 1
3. Ua bhFáilí v Ath Cliath
4. Cill Choinnigh v 3

Craobh: 2 v 4

Iomáint Mionúir (Spéis.):

1. Cill Mantáin v Ceatharloch
- Craobh:** An Mhí v 1

Club Peil Laighean '76/'77:

1. Iar Mhí v Cill Mantáin
2. Longhort v 1
3. Loch Garman v Laois
4. Ath Cliath v 3
5. Cill Choinnigh v Ua bhFáilí
6. Luí v 5
7. Ceatharloch v Cill Dara
8. An Mhí v 7
9. 2 v 4
10. 6 v 8

Craobh: 9 v 10

Gaelic Sport

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Offices:

80 Upper Drumcondra Road,
Dublin 9.

Telephone 374311.

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TONY Hanahoe, in an exclusive interview with GAELIC SPORT features writer Owen McCann, published elsewhere in this issue, makes the point that the Senior Championships drag on over too long a period. The new Dublin team manager maintains that a delay of six to seven weeks between the semi-finals and final places too great a strain, both on the players and officials-in-charge.

We go along with Hanahoe here. The present set-up, we feel, calls for a serious re-think.

After the excitement and build-up for the provincial championships and the All-Ireland semi-finals, it is not easy for the finalists to regain their momentum and drive after such a long period of competitive inactivity prior to the showpiece match.

Frankly, we don't see any valid reason why the football and the hurling championships could not be speeded up. Undoubtedly, the first and fourth Sundays of September have long been the traditional dates for the All-Ireland senior finals. But should tradition be maintained at the expense of what is best for the competing counties?

Some, of course, will argue that it is not possible to play the All-Ireland senior finals earlier in the year because of the heavy inter-county schedule, that dates have also to be found for other important categories — the All-Ireland under-21 championships to name but one.

Surely, however, it is a matter of getting our priorities right? The All-Ireland senior finals are the top attractions, not only of the G.A.A. season, but of the Irish sporting year in general and, as such, they should take priority above all else in fixtures planning.

Consider, for example, the 1976 situation that saw Kerry going into an All-Ireland under-21 football final engagement with Kildare just two weeks prior to their senior final game with Dublin.

A number of the Kerry senior team were in action with the under-21 team and we won't stress the obvious but some of the Kingdom's key men, through injury, could have missed out on the senior final.

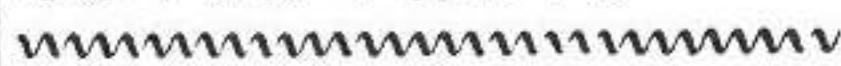
We readily concede that the fixture planners have a complex problem to fit in all the games. But problems are made to be overcome and the answer might well lie in a complete restructure of the G.A.A. year as we know it, with the Leagues starting in February and being suspended on certain dates in the summer to accommodate the Championships.

We could, of course, go on and spotlight the inequality of the present League and Championship set-up.

For example, by the middle of this month, the majority of teams will have kissed goodbye to their '76/'77 League aspirations and ironically these same teams are the ones most likely to have one, or at most two, games in the 1977 Championships.

But that's another day's work.

COVER PHOTO



ON our front cover this month we pay tribute to Dublin captain, Tony Hanahoe. A tribute, which Tony's efforts in Dublin's resurgence in the last three years, would alone justify. But when one considers that Tony, with colleagues Paddy Cullen, Gay O'Driscoll and Sean Doherty kept the Dublin flag flying in the lean years, when representing Dublin was more often a matter of derision than adulation, this tribute to the very popular Dubliner is greatly enhanced.

ANDY CROAK

The writer with the rasping comment

All-Star team is really a thundering disgrace!

WHAT a delicious row we've had over the Carrolls All-Stars football team! Maybe I've got a perverted sense of humour, but I can't help smiling when I think of the opprobrium that has been heaped on the selectors' pretty heads.

If I'd met anyone who'd cover my money I'd have laid a sizeable wager that the same selectors would make a cobbler of the job. And so it came to pass.

Imagine an All-Star team (that means a national team) without a single player from the province of Ulster! It's incredible, and it's no wonder that northern G.A.A. men have kicked up holy murder over such an insult.

To use a phrase lately coined by one P. S. Donegan, it was a thundering disgrace.

Let's not forget that the All-Stars selectors offered a similar insult to Connacht last year, when the western province also failed to receive even one place on the team.

Dermot Devlin, chairman of the Derry Co. Board, led the assault on the selectors when their team was announced and his criticism echoed the feelings of every G.A.A. man in the province.

★ ★ ★

I MUST SAY this about his remarks, however. While his criticism was fully justified, he shouldn't have blown his top as he did. He should have kept his cool.

To say that the selectors were motivated in their decisions by "Southern Catholic conservatism" was ridiculous and blunted some-

what the cutting edge of his censure.

Had he, instead, hammered them on the score of atrocious bad judgement and knowledge of footballers, I'd have dispatched a telegram of congratulations to him right away.

It is true, of course, that, aside from Derry, the standard of Ulster football has not been good in recent years. And we all know the reasons for that state of affairs.

Okay. Let us then boil it down to Derry as the only team who had players in the running for awards. Derry qualified for the National Football League final, and could have beaten Dublin at Croke Park. They retained the Ulster title.

After those performances is it possible, is it credible, that they didn't have one man worthy of a place on the All-Star team?

What about Anthony McGurk, who received an award in 1975,

when his qualifications were not at all as compelling as they were this year? McGurk was the outstanding centre half-back in the country right up until August. Yet, he was passed over in favour of Dublin's Kevin Moran, who got the nod on the strength of a couple of games.

★ ★ ★

Here again, we had an example of the undue emphasis placed by the selectors on displays in the All-Ireland finals and semi-finals. I'm saying nothing about Moran's ability: he is a fine player, but such a young man has plenty of time to pick up the honour of an All-Star award over the next few years.

Then there was Gerry McElhinney, whose wonderful display against Kerry in the All-Ireland semi-final surely staked his claim to a place — if the selectors were consistent in their bias towards championship performances.

Mickey Lynch was another strong Derry contender. Remember his marvellous exhibition, capped by six points, in the National League final?

Leaving Derry, there was one other Ulster footballer who should have been included. Steve Duggan of Cavan — one of the finest forwards on view during 1976.

There were other omissions just as crazy. How, in Pete's name, was Johnny Hughes of Galway preferred to Paudie O'Shea of Kerry at right half back? There is no doubt in my mind that the Kerryman was the best player in that position this year. He was better still last year, but he didn't

Unforgiveable Omissions



Jimmy Keaveney
(Dublin)



Paud O'Shea
(Kerry)

get an award in 1975 either. **What have my unesteemed colleagues, the Carrolls selectors, got in their noses against O'Shea?**

The All-Stars teams are now a very important part of the G.A.A. scene. And therefore a matter of keen public interest. The selectors, all of them journalists, should come out in their columns and tell the public why they pick certain players and omit others.

If Galway deserved a player this year, it wasn't Johnny Hughes, strictly in comparison with Paud O'Shea. I'd have given an award to another Galway man, Seamus McHugh, who had a better season than Ger Power at left half back.

★ ★ ★

ONE OF THE most thundering disgraces of the selection was the omission of Jimmy Keaveney, far and away the best full forward of 1976, and, in fact, of the past three years. Jimmy got an award in 1974 but was cold-shouldered last year because he was suspended for a fortnight for some minor offence committed when

playing hurling for St. Vincent's. How silly can our dear selectors get?

Now I'll give you the team I think should have been selected. It may not meet with the approval of all my readers, but I'm sure it's a damn sight better than the "official" selection.

Here goes. **Paddy Cullen** (Dublin); **Gay O'Driscoll** (Dublin); **John O'Keeffe** (Kerry); **Robbie Kelleher** (Dublin); **Paud O'Shea** (Kerry); **Anthony McGurk** (Derry); **Seamus McHugh** (Galway); **Brian Mullins** (Dublin); **Dave McCarthy** (Cork); **Bobby Doyle** (Dublin); **Tony Hanahoe** (Dublin); **Pat Spillane** (Kerry); **Jimmy Barry-Murphy** (Cork); **Jimmy Keaveney** (Dublin); **Steve Duggan** (Cavan).

Having said all that, I sincerely hope that the Ulster counties will not boycott the All-Stars presentation dinner, as the Derry chairman suggested.

I suggest they should go to the function in force and at first hand tell the selectors what they think of the team!

If those selectors are such poor judges of football, the whole affair should be scrapped, or else the job of naming the team handed over to a group of men who would not make a hames of it.

If YOU have any suggestions as to how the thing should be done, write in to **Gaelic Sport** and let me know. I'll do my best to publish your letters.

★ ★ ★

I RESPECT Cork's right to look for a special Congress of the G.A.A. to abolish the handpass. But I disagree with their point of view.

The re-introduction of the pass, particularly as it is used by Dublin, has added a great deal to the spectacle of football. It is now up to other teams to devise means of countering it — legitimately.

In fact, the Cork team showed how it could be done, in their National League match with Dublin at Croke Park. By close marking and clever positional play enabling them to intercept the ball. Simple!

CROAKETTES

BY all accounts, the Wembley tournament was a flop, in the matter of attendance. A crowd of 12,000 spectators would be a respectable gathering for tournament matches at home, but in Britain, where the population of Irish-born men and women — the majority of them followers of Gaelic games — is well in excess of the million mark, that figure is insignificant.

Quite obviously, as the daily newspaper writers have been saying, the fault lies with the London Co. Board officials, who are promoting the fixtures in a slipshod manner.

And why are they not doing their job properly? Because they're getting £12,000 from

the sponsors, Allied Irish Banks, and so are sure of a profit from the Wembley gate receipts, no matter how small the attendance.

The London Board should rise off its backside and try to make the Wembley games what they were before AIB started to cough up that financial bonanza.

★ ★ ★

I'VE READ that Mick Morrissey, the Carlow-born former Wexford All-Ireland hurler, has been elected President of the New York G.A.A. Board for a third successive term.

From time to time I've heard whispers around the clubhouses that Mick is a John Kerry O'Donnell man.

The truth is, and I have this from reliable informants in New York, that Mick Morrissey is his own man. He runs New York G.A.A. affairs efficiently, in spite of the fact that the Gaels of that city now have an uphill struggle. Lack of players since emigration from Ireland practically ceased is the biggest problem facing senior clubs.

There is no doubt, of course, that John Kerry O'Donnell is still a very influential figure in G.A.A. circles over there. He was always in that position, in or out of office.

Without him, what would Gaelic Games in New York have been like over the past quarter of a century?

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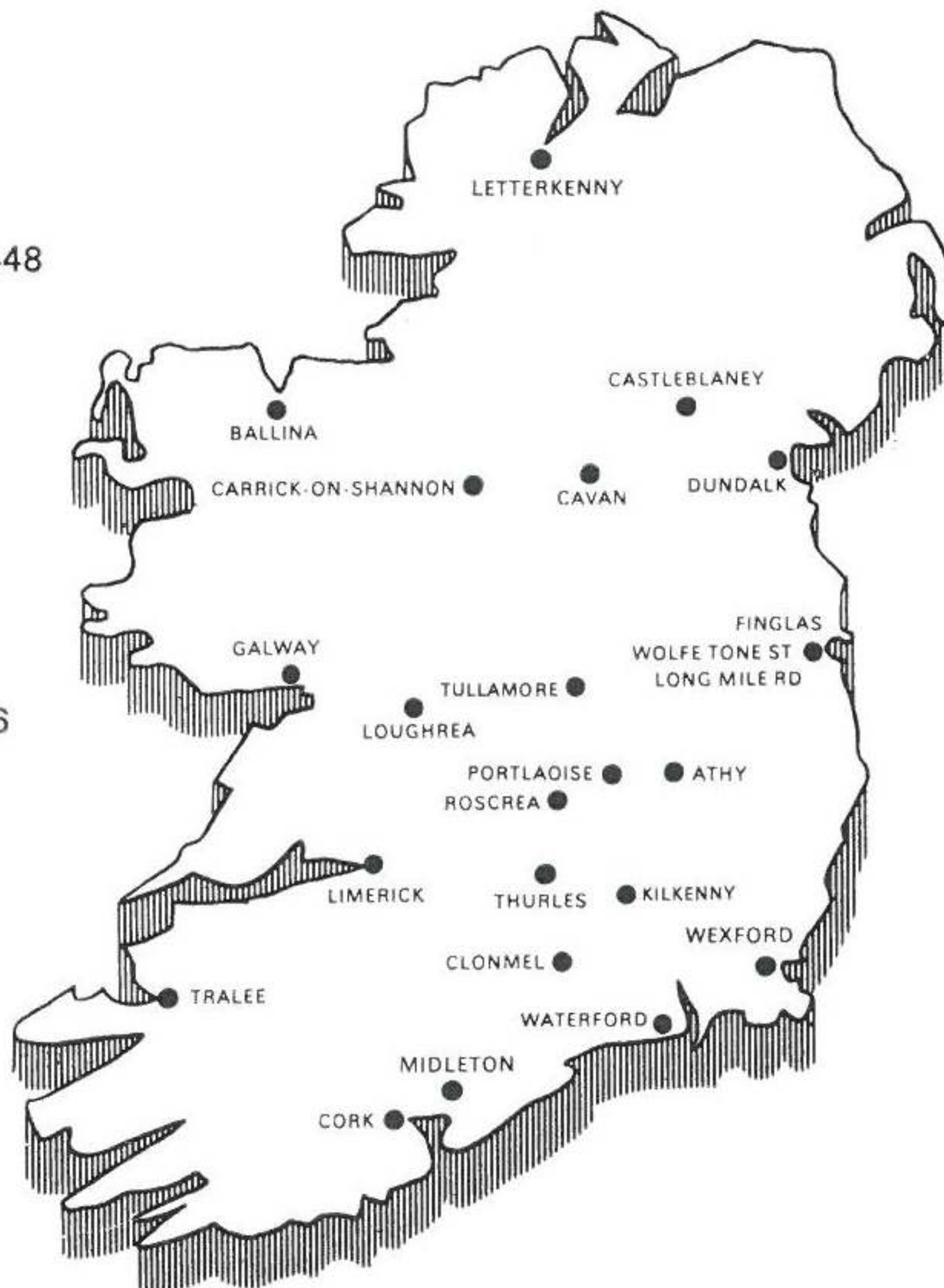
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Top Ten

TOP SPOT FOR MATT RUTH

AS the race for the premier placings in our Top Ten review, which will decide the GAELIC SPORT stars of 1976, moves into the home straight this month, a number of players come into the limelight for the first time this year, as a result of their displays during the current period under review — October 17 to November 7.

One of the most interesting of the debutants is Galway hurling newcomer **Tony Furey**, whose splendid marksmanship and good play played a big part in his county's Oireachtas Cup senior final win over Cork at Croke Park in October.

The young winger helped himself to eight points, and a week later he shot 1-4 in Galway's bright start, to their National League campaign, with a decisive win over Wicklow at Aughrim. Furey now wins his spurs in the Top Ten line-up on a seven points ranking.

Sean Murphy was another who did much to bring the Oireachtas Cup to Galway for the first time in 18 years, while a further feature of that game was the fine display of **Sean Silke**, which he capped with three points, one a superb score from a sideline cut of some 50 yards.

Murphy is bracketed with

Furey in second position, while Silke takes his place among a five-man group on six points, and brings his rating over-all this year to 15 points.

Dominating the hurling line-up, however, is **Matt Ruth**, who was outstanding for a much under-strength Kilkenny in their shock League win over Tipperary at Nowlan Park, and who again caught the eye when the Nore-siders continued their revival at Croke Park by making it three wins in three outings, in the 1976-77 series, at the expense of Dublin.

Ruth takes the premier position in hurling on nine points, and this brings his total to date to 15.

In football, some grand National League games ensured that competition was particularly keen this month. But the solid play of **John O'Keeffe** in Kerry's win over Dublin at Tralee in October, coupled with another fine showing when helping the Munster champions to their hard-earned draw with Cork at Paire Ui Chaoimh in November, gives the Austin Stacks club man a vital edge over all other contenders.

Surprisingly enough, in heading the December line-up in the football scene, O'Keeffe finds favour this year for only the first time.

Jack O'Shea, one of Kerry's bright new senior stars, was another who was very prominent in the win over Dublin. He showed up well, too, at Paire Ui Chaoimh, where **Dave McCarthy** had another first-rate game for Cork.

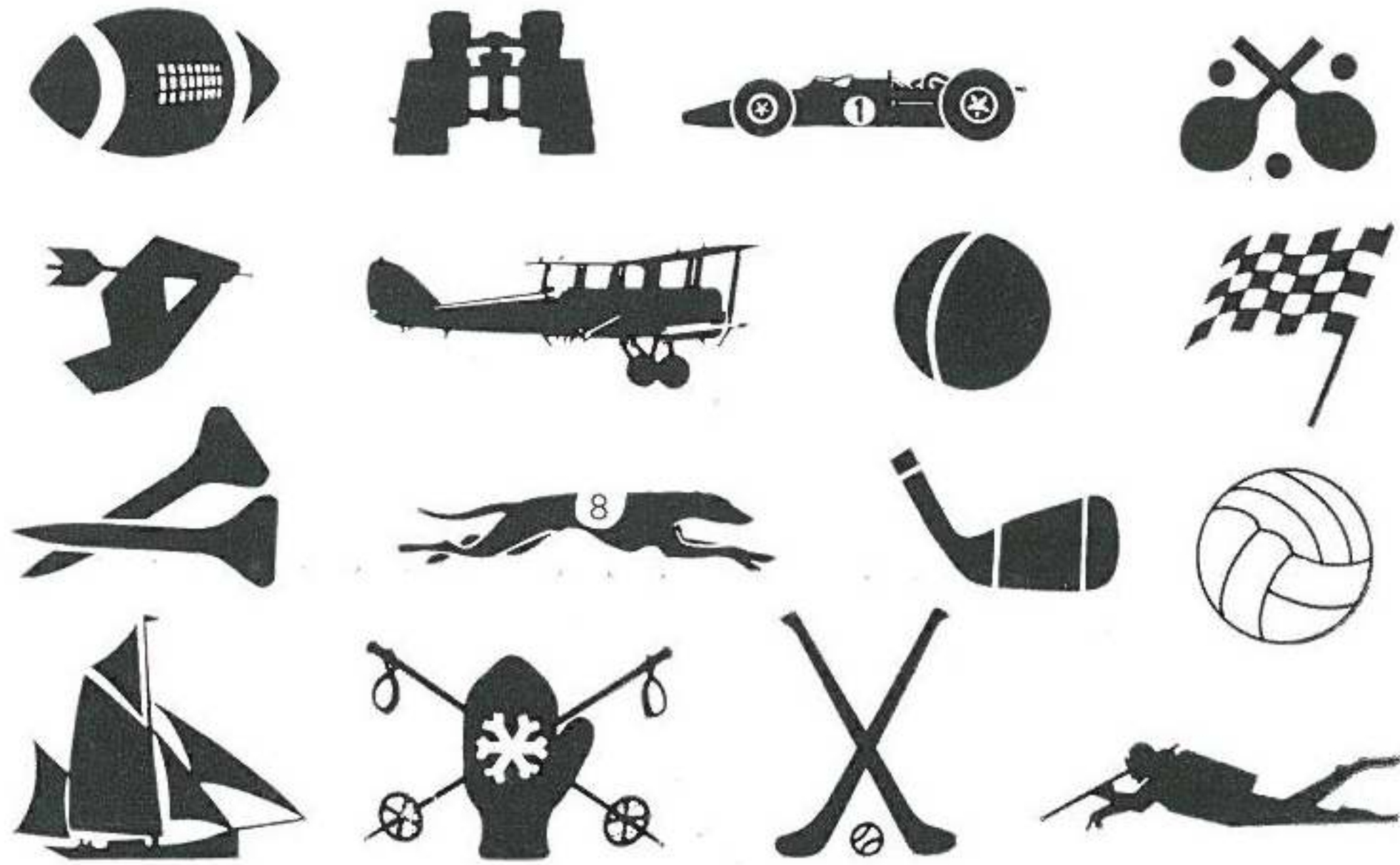
This pair share second place on eight points which means that McCarthy now moves up to 15 points over-all.

HURLING

9	M. Ruth (Kilkenny)	15
7	T. Furey (Galway)	7
7	S. Murphy (Galway)	7
6	J. Horgan (Cork)	20
6	L. O'Brien (Kilkenny)	19
6	S. Silke (Galway)	15
6	C. Honan (Clare)	13
6	S. Hehir (Clare)	6
5	P. Hartigan (Limerick)	21
5	N. O'Dwyer (Tipperary)	5

FOOTBALL

9	J. O'Keeffe (Kerry)	9
8	D. McCarthy (Cork)	15
8	J. O'Shea (Kerry)	8
7	W. Walsh (Down)	13
6	M. Carney (Donegal)	12
6	B. Kelly (Derry)	6
6	A. Hanahoe (Dublin)	6
6	E. McKenna (Tyrone)	6
6	J. Timoney (Mayo)	6
6	W. Bryan (Offaly)	6



**Here's to
enjoyment**



Slainte Mineral Waters 45 Montpelier Hill, Dublin 7.

These stars

left with

us abiding

memories

IT was a good year for hurling when all is considered. Beginning with that recovery of Galway in the New Year, their spirited display against Cork and their vindication of themselves in the Railway Cup, even in defeat. One recalls how bothersome was their slide away from form after the All-Ireland. But it had been a hard year and all the way under pressure once they forced themselves on our intentions early on with League quarter-final victory over Cork.

Many were saying then that they had told us so and with much wagging of heads pointed out that it was inevitable because it had all been a flash in the pan. Therefore, the rediscovery of their desire to win by Galway was vital and it gave the indications that they would, perhaps, make the championship interesting. They did, of course. The two games with Wexford were a highlight. And the victory in the Oireachtas at the end of the year was some tangible recognition of their status in the game now.

Joe McDonagh's display in the drawn semi-final against Wexford was one of the abiding memories of the year; so was the needed strength given to midfield by Frank Burke in a number of matches; and the cool, controlled

By
**JAY
DRENNAN**

● *Denis Coughlan
of Cork . . .
Drennan's best
hurler of the year.*

play of Niall McInerney in the full-backs. An awful lot of whole-hearted play by Michael Connolly at midfield went without due praise, I thought, and if Sean Silke was not so stunning as in 1975 that is no reason to forget his many fine displays and pinpoint free-taking.

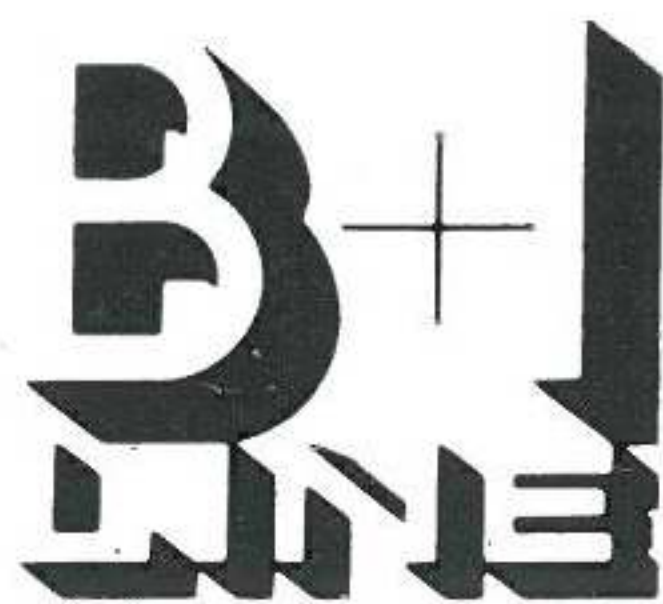
The second thrill of the year was, of course the game endeavours of Clare to emulate Galway and cause a second surprise in a row in the League. How close to success they were, and how sad, in many ways, that they did not have that one extra puck of the ball which would have given them victory over Kilkenny the

first day. After the traumatic experiences of that emotional League campaign it was, perhaps, not to be wondered at that they were drained for the championship.

Sean Stack, however, will not be soon forgotten, nor Ger Loughnane in the half-backs. Seamus Durack may have wilted a little in the very end, but he was a marvellously inspiring figure for so long. Colm Honan striding away at full speed was a memory to cherish and so was the consistent excellence of Jimmy McNamara. Like Galway, 1976 was a success year for Clare, and

● TO PAGE 11





*g.a.a. personality
of the month award*



Congratulations to recent award winners –
Pat Spillane (Kerry), Colm Honan (Clare),
Mickey Lynch (Derry), Mick Brennan (Kilkenny),
Tony Doran (Wexford), Willie Murphy (Wexford),
Kevin Moran (Dublin), Pat Moylan (Cork).

● FROM PAGE 9

how far they can eventually go is a matter that stands suspended in time. Given the same heart and an equal thirst for success they may be expected to get better next year or the year after.

The return of Wexford to the forefront was the other new factor in 1976. Their thorough victory over Kilkenny was the highlight, no doubt. But, what games they participated in with Galway and then with Cork in the final! And who will forget the precise, tidy and elegant hurling of Mick Jacob who returned after a serious leg injury the previous autumn as though he had never been absent? It was Wexford's ill-luck that they needed to have Jacob in two positions at once—centre-half-back and centre-field—and even he has not the power of multi-location.

Another thing that made Jacob such a thrilling figure was that he did not estimate the circumstances of the game or the form of his colleagues in measuring his own performance: whether things were going well or ill for Wexford he was as commanding as ever. More impressive, I suppose, did his hurling seem because he is not a big man, nor even a 'hardy' one in the sense of whipping into the play. On the contrary, it all seems done by exquisite timing, dainty ball control, prophetic positioning, and persuasion. For his 70 or 80 yard strokes from defence are not things of violence and force, but snappy, crisp wrist-work or even gentle persuasion as though the ball was a friend and not to be ill-treated.

A League but no Championship for Kilkenny—a change, indeed. And a firm reminder that one defeat does not make an end of a great hurling team when they reappeared in the League in the autumn. Fan Larkin continued to amaze, Noel Skehan's eye does not lose its acuteness, Frank Cummins continues to pour on the



● Brian Mullins of Dublin (right) . . . top footballer of 1976, in Drennan's book.

power at midfield, Brennan and Crotty were irresistible in the early part of the year.

Eamonn Cregan had some exciting games at full-forward for Limerick; Joe Towell proved a nifty forward with Dublin; Nicky Cashin proved the most exciting newcomer of the year for Waterford with a towering first championship match against Clare. But, for the hurler of the year I have no doubt at all that the choice must fall on Denis Coughlan who played right through the whole year — big games and small, winning games and losing some — with total control and complete confidence.

Gerald McCarthy was almost as important to Cork; Pat Moylan played a few marvellous games; Ray Cummins, Charlie McCarthy, Sean O'Leary and the rest got vital scores; Jimmy Barry-Murphy was the man for the score when a score was most

needed; Martin Coleman seemed sometimes to carry a magic wand. But, they all had ups and downs while Denis Coughlan had none — only ups.

The All-Ireland final, the Munster final, in particular the Munster semi-final, were the star-games and found him at his best, but when others were having their spells in and out of touch in the spring, Denis was playing like a man who knew he couldn't go wrong. With special pleasure I recall the drawn League semi-final against Kilkenny when he was absolutely magnificent in breaking the heart in the Kilkenny attack on his wing, and moving to cover in other areas with such effect that the forwards must have thought they ought to take the pledge, for surely there were two of him.

It was the confidence of his hurling that made Denis so fine

● TO PAGE 13

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● FROM PAGE 11

in 1976; he knew what he could do and did it with a calm mind and no doubts. The other part of it was that he was so sure of his skills and form that he could always treat every ball on its merits: if it needed a first-time crack on the ground, he did that; if it needed catching and "canting" he did that; if it needed hitting off the air, he hit off the air; if it needed to be raced to and met, carried forward and lashed over the bar, he did that too. It is not so often nowadays that one sees a player able to treat every ball on its merits; too many are limited in skills, or afraid to chance some particular manoeuvre lest they miss. It must also be some comment on the obvious well-being of Coughlan in 1976, relieved of the inhuman burden of playing football and hurling at every level. Think of what hurling may have lost because he had not previously given it his sole attention!

In a year when there seemed to be more talk about what constituted a correct hand-pass than about the standards of play, it was hard to be so uplifted by the game of football as one so often felt about hurling. It was a year in which a Kerry team thought itself so good that it could play the game anyway it felt like and still be good enough to win. And, the ridiculous thing about it was that they almost were. Tim Kennelly and Ger Power were, maybe, the ones who came best of all out of the year, though, if one takes U-21 exploits as well as senior into account, Jack O'Shea and Sean Walsh could come into the reckoning.

Cork, who might have beaten Kerry in the Munster final, provided something a bit more classical in their centre half-back, Tom Creedon — also one of the best kickers of the ball at a time when few players anywhere seemed to be able to drive it any length. Midfield for Cork was one

of my favourite players in 1976— Dave McCarthy. A small man by midfield standards, he really had



● Mick Jacob (Wexford) ● Tim Kennelly (Kerry)

a few thundering games, going all-out until he dropped with exhaustion, taking a couple of most unpleasant knocks because he simply does not know anything about the meaning of the word "fear".

Yet, when it comes to selecting the footballer of the year it is hard to think that he was other than one of the team that won both League and Championship. If you also consider that he was the powerhouse of the All-Ireland Club champions and also that of the college which swept the boards in the Universities and Third Level Education competitions, coincidence alone will suggest Brian Mullins of Dublin, St. Vincent's and NCPE, Limerick.

It is, of course, more than the fact of being in all those successful sides and winning with them. Mostly it was the irresistible manner in which he dominated midfield and made his powerful incursions into attack to completely burst apart defences that were stretched tight already. Admittedly, Mullins had a spell in the early and mid-summer when he was just as good as the best midfielders around and no better. But, it should not be forgotten that he had a tough year and and that it would have been too much to expect of any man that he produce the kind of midfield play that annihilated Nemo Ran-

gers in the club championship, Cork in the League (both in Cork), and Kerry in the All-Ireland final.

That was the kind of standard which Mullins set himself and it was by that he was judged. Also it is probably no coincidence that this was one of the driest of summers and a big, articulated fellow like Brian must have found the hard, glassy grounds jarring; the big man always likes a little give in the ground.

The great long legs and the long arms seem to give Mullins a prehensile scope, whether in going for the ball in the air or in covering acres of ground. But, the most surprising thing about him when you see him for the first time is that he is not a great awkward harrow of a man as you might guess when he trudges to position. He does sometimes crumble away at the knees and buckle like a foal on its first trial steps; but be sure he has grabbed the ball first, and up he comes with it instantly to get it away to advantage.

Sometimes he receives a pass moving up in attack and you catch your breath as he seems to be going the wrong way with gangling strides or running straight into the defensive cover. Yet, just when he seems to be out of control, and usually at the last possible second, he manages to get himself turned on the correct course or swung away from the cover enough to hit his shot through. And his scoring testifies the success of his shooting and emphasises another surprising quality in one who, at first glance, seems awkward — the delicacy of his ball control. It adds up to a wonderfully effective midfielder — the key, when all's said and done, to the success of any team. When you have a fine centre-field others in the side may shine with great brilliance; when you haven't an adequate pair in the middle, nobody shines — or, if they do, it is only accidental and seldom in victory.

L★A★D★I★E★S P★L★E★A★S★E



Edited by KITTY MURPHY

LAST Thursday I made up my mind that I was going to have an early night. The idea wasn't really instantaneous since the thought of having that night free and all to myself had sustained me right through the week. I had been feeling extremely tired because of a succession of late nights. You know yourself what it's like at this time of year. Anyway I was beginning to show the signs of "mental fatigue" and my two eyes were the nearest semblance to two burned holes in a blanket that you're likely to get. No wonder then that I was looking forward to my good night's sleep. In fact the idea was so appealing I was quite cheerful getting out of bed that morning.

During the day I pleasantly pondered and deliberated on the merits of a good night's sleep. Nothing but good could come from it. After all doctors are forever stressing its importance. They say everyone who is active needs a minimum of eight hours sleep. Now I ask you — how could you live like that. Think of it this way—one third of your life gone without your knowing anything about it. As well as that I find that if I have two successive early nights I end up with either a bad dream or a nightmare. What's the choice in rotten rotten applies . . .

Anyway to get back to basics, I came home from work and had a good tea. I put down the fire because I decided I'd stay in

circulation for a few hours. I read the evening paper and found a feature therein on the benefits of a good night's sleep. Did you know that you should wake up completely refreshed and with an anxiety to meet the new day. Nothing can really deflate you, they say, if you are properly fortified with sleep. The senses will be extra keen and the mind open and receptive to all happenings. Now I began to realise what I'd been missing all those years. So why continue to miss out?

The doorbell rang. I didn't mind answering it — at least I was getting it over before going to bed. A young fellow of about ten was selling boxes of Christmas Cards. I looked at him and said "Who are they for". "You — if you want them", says he with an irresistible impish grin from ear to ear. I looked at the box to see if I could identify a cause but I failed. I decided this was neither the man nor the moment for further questions. There was nothing wrong with the price and so what if they fell off the back of a lorry . . .

I had scarcely a chance to examine my purchase when the doorbell rang again. This time 'twas a chap of about twenty trying to get sale for turkeys. He didn't have any samples but was giving every assurance that these birds were no mean chicks. "I'd never doubt you", I said, "but I don't want a turkey." He still persisted and told me a small deposit would

secure. Secure what I wondered but daren't ask. Anyway I eventually convinced him that a turkey, no matter the size, was too much for my dinner. As well as that I assured him that I had plenty of cargo going home on Christmas Eve, without the dead weight accompaniment of a member of the feathered flock.

That encounter took its toll so I decided here goes, I'll lie into the bed. I brought a mug of tea and a magazine with me. 'Twas a cold but beautiful night. The sky was navy and without a cloud. The stars twinkled and danced in the heavens. The moon kept a moving but perfect watch on our frosty planet. In the distance the church steeples pointed towards their God and the silence was broken every now and then by footsteps hurrying past. 'Twas the kind of night you'd like to walk on and on into the distance—that is if you hadn't planned a good night's sleep!

Being satisfied that all was well with the outside world I read my magazine for about half an hour. Reading in bed can be such a pleasant exercise. Little by little my eyelids began to droop. Soon they were quite leaden and I decided it was fast approaching time for the subconscious to take over. I was just about to drop into the realms of the unknown when something disturbed me. I listened — a dog was barking his head off. That wasn't too bad but within ten minutes every

dog in the locality was disturbing the peace. They say one dog barks at something and the rest bark at him. That may be so but here was I at the receiving end of the lot of them.

I blinked a few times, then closed my eyes tight. I told myself 'twas nothing more than a dog making a bit of noise. I concentrated on going to sleep. Still the penetrating barking continued. I pulled the blankets up over my head hoping that would drown the sound but it didn't. I got up out of bed, pulled down the window and looked out. There was the cause of the commotion, a little black and white shaggy terrier, sitting on his hind legs a few doors away. He was barking away and looking straight up at the moon. I thought there might have been a few cows jumping over it but no, there weren't. I tried to get his attention by calling him various names. He chose to ignore me. I went back to bed hoping he might just go away or at least get the message that enough is enough.

Suddenly I began to feel very sorry for him. I decided I'd go down to him and maybe I could figure out what was bothering him. Down the stairs with me. I opened the door and moved in his direction. Come here puppy, I said, clicking my fingers. Puppy stood up and fixed a green glassy eye on me. Come here, I said again, leaving the next move to him. With that he gave a yowl that reeled me back five paces. Still courage is not freedom from fear but being afraid and going on. Don't be like that, I said, as I did my best to win his confidence but he wasn't willing to gamble.

Maybe he's hungry. Back up the stairs with me. I got out a chunk of bread and buttered it.

This might do it I thought. Will I hold it now and let him come to me or will I throw it to him. I called him but he showed no signs of making a move. We reached a compromise — I left it at my feet. He stood up, walked up to me. He looked at the bread, sniffed twice and turned away. Maybe he wanted jam on it but this time he wasn't getting it.

Back to bed with me. This time I was freezing with the cold so I filled a hot water jar. I pulled the clothes up over my head again. Eventually, lo and behold, I fell asleep. The combination of mental and physical exhaustion must have brought on that happy state. Anyway, I should have known — 'twas too good to last. I was awakened bright and early when my friend decided he didn't like the milkman. The growling and barking began all over again. This time 'twas even worse and more shrill than that to which I'd been subjected. Anyway, I decided I might as well watch the milkman's tactics since he would have to effect delivery of the milk. Maybe I might find out where I had gone wrong.

The milkman whistled merrily away until he came as far as my friend. "There's a good dog," says he, as he tried to squeeze past with his four bottles of milk. Fair dues to puppy but he wasn't falling for that one. Anyway, following a brief encounter, the milkman was satisfied to leave the milk outside the gate. Puppy chalked up notch number two for his collar. I went back to my bed but I knew that was that. The postman was due any minute so any ideas I had of further sleep went out the window.

If you cannot be a star you needn't be a cloud, I told myself. I decided I'd make the best of the situation. I got up and made myself a good breakfast. That,

for me, is a rare treat and I enjoyed it. I turned on the radio but turned it off again—those cheerful Charlies overpower me at that hour of the morning. The day was bright and fresh so I decided I'd get out early and walk to work. I was looking forward to having a good look at my friend in daylight. Would you believe it, he was stretched out, full length, on the footpath and yes — he was fast asleep! I ignored him and walked past as if nothing had ever happened between us. Now I ask you, what's wrong with a dog's life?

Goodbye everyone and I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

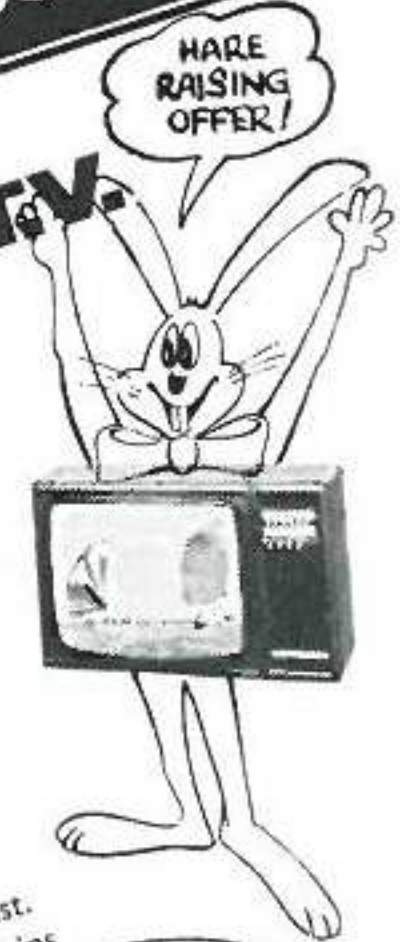
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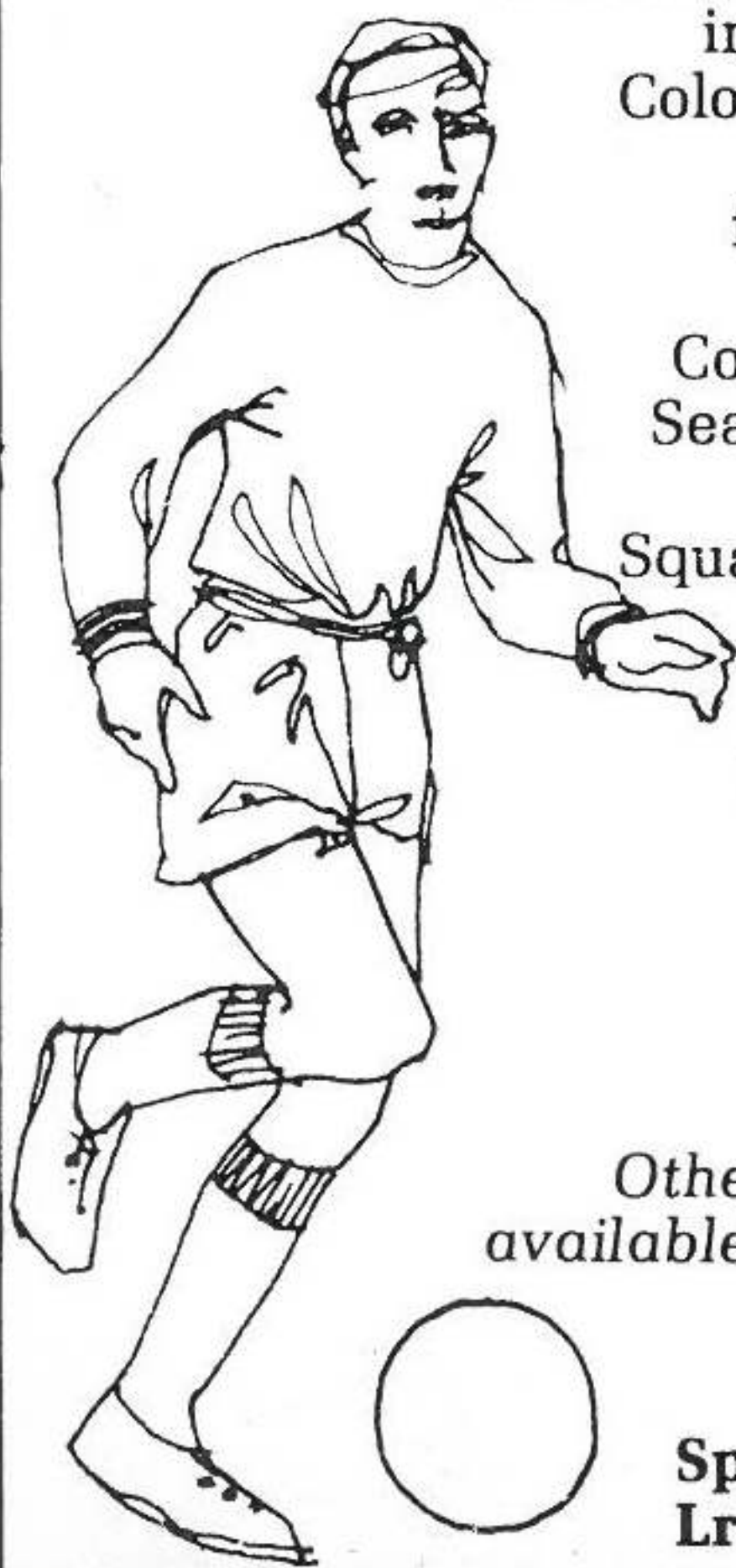
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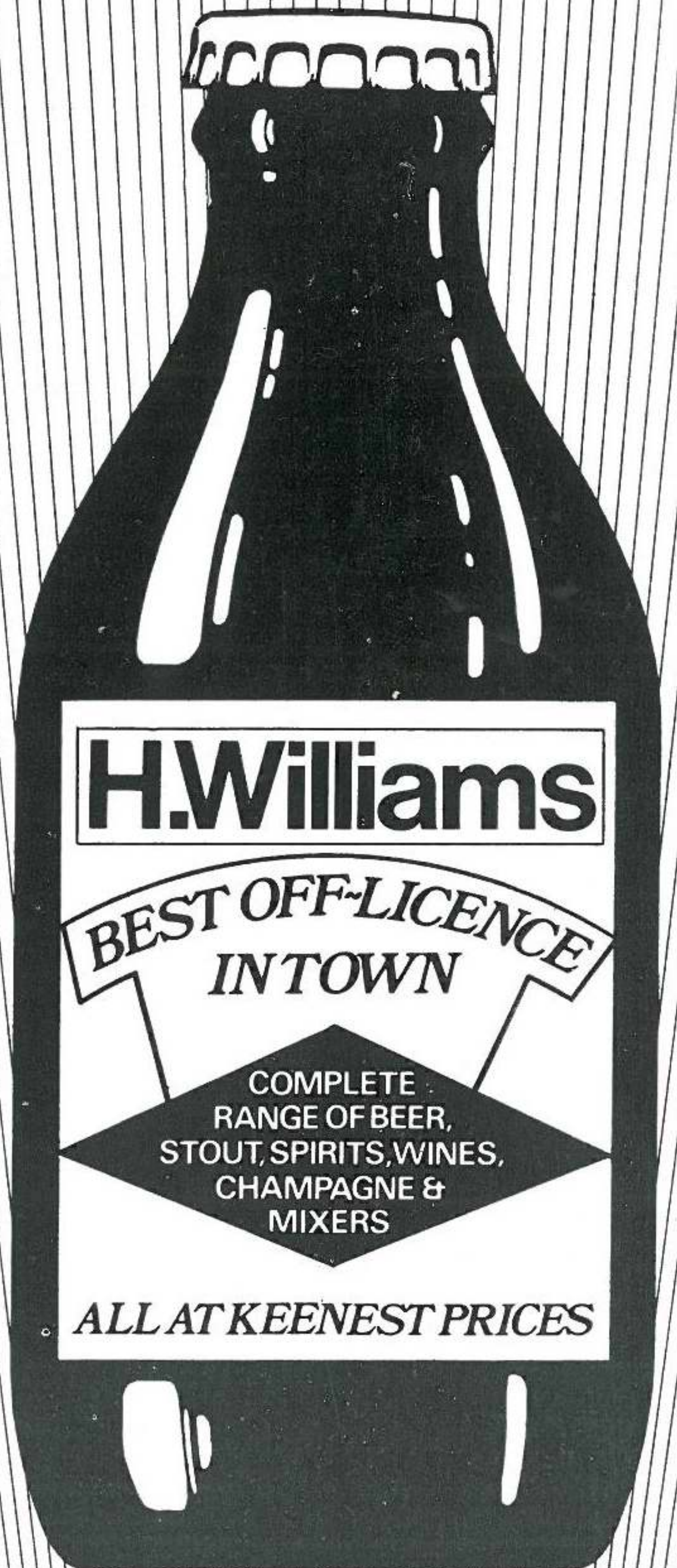
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HAS ULSTER SET A LEAD FOR OTHER PROVINCES?

By JOHN O'SHEA (*Evening Press*)

ARE Ulster poised to mount a meaningful assault on the Railway Cup? That's the question being asked following the appointment of Sean O'Neill as sole manager and selector.

O'Neill, the most experienced player in the history of the Railway Cup, has already warmed to the job by selecting a 40 member panel. The players in Ulster are impressed with his attitude, and the feeling there is one of quiet confidence for the future.

We thought you would like to hear the opinions of some personalities on this Ulster initiative.

FRANKIE KEARNEY:

Ulster are lucky to have someone of the calibre of Sean O'Neill for the position. He has no other commitments, is enthusiastic and knows what the game is about.

If Ulster fail to impress in the Railway Cup, it will be through no lack of effort on Sean's part. As far as I can see it's a significant step forward by Ulster. The Committee system was open to abuse, and often players were played out of position to accommodate others.

If the other provinces have such individuals as Sean O'Neill available, then by all means, they should go ahead and change their approach.

LESLIE DEEGAN:

It had to come sometime, and I'm delighted that it has. One man for one team has always

been a sporting philosophy which I have admired.

It seems to work okay with English soccer, where the manager runs the show. Why not in the G.A.A.?

You could not get a better qualified man for the job than Sean O'Neill. I will be surprised if Ulster don't do well this season. By appointing one man a team gets the benefit of one man's ideas, and for my money that's a lot better, provided the man is qualified for the task, than a confused mixture of four or five selectors' thoughts.

I think the other provinces could follow Ulster's example with profit.

ANTHONY MCGURK:

When the man chosen is totally dedicated to the job, then of course it must be a wonderful move. Furthermore it cuts out the "political selection." This type of action is not fair on the counties who are represented on the selection committee or the ones who are not.

Also the more people involved with selection, generally one finds, the less interest is shown in the players. The players usually derive substantially greater benefit from one individual in charge.

Sean O'Neill has the attributes to make a sizeable contribution. Could anyone possibly see him being biased. He will ensure that the best fifteen players in Ulster

take the field on Railway Cup day. A revival of our fortunes in this competition might not be too far away.

JOHN O'GARA:

If experience counts for anything then Sean O'Neill should lead Ulster to success within a short period. He should do a terrific job.

However before advocating that the other provinces follow Ulster's lead, I would like to see how Sean gets on. The idea is a fine one in principle. Let's hope it works out. It has many good points to recommend it, the obvious one, I suppose being that favouritism will not enter the selection.

I can see no reason why it shouldn't be successful but as I say let's wait and see.

BENNY GAUGHRAN:

I was never in favour of the king sized selection committee—too many ideas, too many mistakes. I recall listening to Sean O'Neill when he was in charge of a Combined Universities side some years back, and I was very impressed.

He will command the respect and admiration of the players. He has the interest, the ability, the technical know-how. He must be a success.

I would like to see the idea adopted in each province, with the provision that each supremo be given a limited number of advisers.



A family picnic near the ESB hydro-electric station at Leixlip.

A Question of Caring

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Kilkenny poised for some more conquests

AFTER the feast . . . comes the famine. Or so it must have seemed to Kilkenny by the middle of September when they were suffering pangs of starvation in direct contrast to the way they had been satiated with success during the championships of 1975. When autumn finished they had relinquished the three All-Ireland titles won the previous year.

The deprivation was all the more painful because it came at the end of a summer which seemed to hold out promise of even more plentiful nourishment for their appetites. The sparkling performance in the June replay of the National League final suggested that there was still an abundance of goodies to come in the championship ahead.

However, the Leinster final brought the first shock when Wexford successfully raided their store of titles. Next the Tipperary minors and then the Cork under-21s continued the drain until all the Kilkenny supplies had disappeared.

The lean times have not lasted long, though, and in recent months there have been indications that the Kilkenny cupboard will not be bare for too long. Indeed, they have already made a very significant start to the League with a string of victories over Cork, Tipperary and Dublin

suggesting that they will fiercely resist all challengers for the League title, which took them ten years to regain.

It would be unreasonable if we had been surprised by the manner in which Kilkenny rebounded so quickly from that championship disappointment. Anyone caught off guard must surely have been ignorant of the rich depth of talent at the county's disposal.

Kilkenny have been blessed with many brilliant young hurlers in latter times, but — unlike so many counties who have been similarly endowed — they never made the mistake of waiting too long to introduce them into the senior side. In so many cases the enthusiasm of promising young players has been dampened by a protracted sojourn on the sidelines awaiting the big opportunity when established stars would eventually retire.

Not in Kilkenny where the selectors made it their business over the past three years to bring in the younger talent gradually and carefully. So the likes of John Marnell, Ger Henderson, Ger and Kevin Fennelly, Dick O'Hara, John Lyng and Joe Hennessy were given their chances in league ties or during the American tour last May.

It speaks volumes for the amount of talent available that Kilkenny were able to release Fan Larkin, Brian Cody, Liam O'Brien, Mick Crotty and Eddie Keher, in addition to being without Carrolls All Star right corner forward Mick Brennan, last October and still have a decisive league victory over Tipperary.

Nobody doubted the ability of Jim Moran, Dick O'Hara, Kieran and Terry Brennan or Kevin Fennelly, who proved against Tipp. that he is as accomplished a corner forward as he was a brilliant goalkeeper with the under-21s. We had seen them display their skills in the under-age grades over recent years. But what strikingly underlined the great wealth of Kilkenny's young talent was the advent — unheralded because they had not appeared on any of the successful under-21 sides — of Jack Morrissey, the young left half-back from Muckalee and Sean Connery, the St. Lachtain's (Freshford) clubman, who proved such an excellent midfield partner for Frank Cummins.

With so many players of this calibre available — and with Pat Henderson, who has given the county such wonderful service at centre half-back, showing signs that he can become just as celebrated a full back — there is no doubt about Kilkenny being strongly back in contention in 1977.



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Where are the hungry hurlers today?

TOPIC OF
THE MONTH
by
JIM
BENNETT

CORK won the All-Ireland in 1976, right enough, but it did not make any major change in the opinion of those who look askance at Munster hurling and consider it has fallen drastically in recent years. Their view, briefly, goes something like this:

Cork won in 1976 and they deserved to win even though there was no great gap between themselves and Wexford; but, what did Cork beat in Munster—a Tipp team which looked good enough on the day but has since shown itself to be fallible, and a Limerick side which had too many weaknesses to be really credible contenders?

And were Wexford as great as many made them out to be after their big victory over Kilkenny? Did they not show their shortcomings in taking two tight games to overcome Galway in the semi-final and again more recently at Wembley and in failing to beat Tipperary in the League?

Some fuel has been added to the fire by Cork's own rather unconvincing form since the All-Ireland. Admittedly, they have been somewhat under-strength, yet that does not completely cover over the suspicion that they are vulnerable, too. Kilkenny have given them a sound beating; they have lost their Oireachtas title to Galway; Limerick have tightened them to a point at Paire Ui Chaoimh.

These are the facts and these we must have at hand to consider the issue although, to be honest, most supporters of hurling and critics of the game will prefer to rely on memory to make comparisons with teams and players of the past.

It is not to-day or yesterday we have heard talk of declining standards in hurling—Munster hurling most of all. The subject has been with us for years. And there is much truth in it I think. But you have to differentiate between two aspects of the declension: one is the changing and probably declining standards in hurling generally which applies (if it applies) throughout Munster and not alone in Munster; the second is the actual disimprovement in each individual county related to some norm of performance selected from the past.

The first may be the more basic and, in the long term, the more crucial consideration for the game of hurling in general. The old-timers tell you it is an insult to their generation to suggest comparison with modern hurling. They say they run faster nowadays, but that is the only thing they do either faster or better. Eudie Coughlan, interviewed and televised extensively around All-Ireland time 1976, was forthright in his comments. The gist of what he had to say was that the modern player has no conception of what it demands to make the completely skilful hurler—hours, weeks, years living with the game and practising unremittingly. "Practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays", he exclaimed, "That means they spend the greater part of the week without touching a hurley." That seemed like heresy to him.

That statement reminded us of one made to us by the late John Keane whose early death a little over a year ago deprived the game of one of its great thinkers. "To have any hope of being a great hurler you must never leave the hurley out of your hand." Spoken in the context of debate about players taking a complete rest from the game and putting their hurleys away for a couple of months, it might seem exaggeration, but the meaning is clear enough.

Coughlan was making the same point when he said that, in his day, they were in the training field every night and every Sunday when there was no match. And you daren't miss a night, because you might lose your place and might not get it back because there were plenty of others as keen as you were and as good.

Also, he emphasised, it was essential to get whatever work you could on the ball with the minimum of delay, because every player was skilled in all aspects of the play, and if you didn't make use of it when the opportunity arose, you wouldn't have it long. So players had to be first and foremost able to strike first-time, on the ground or on the flying

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WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS LINGUS



GAA Reporting by Paddy Downey in THE IRISH TIMES



Paddy Downey, Gaelic Games correspondent, writes with knowledge, insight, sound judgement and a flair for capturing the colour and thrills of the big occasion and big occasions are many in Gaelic Games. His reports and comments are balanced and fair but then, you'd expect all that from a writer who has won the **Gallagher Award** for the best National Sports Story of the Year — not once but twice in succession — and that's the highest prize there is in Irish Sports journalism. Read **The Irish Times** and judge for yourself. Of course it's not just a one-man team. You'll like the rest of them too.

THE IRISH TIMES

● FROM PAGE 21

ball and be able to achieve what you wanted that way, because if you couldn't you might get few enough opportunities of lifting and steadying.

Perhaps, it may be said that the speed of the players to-day is some of the cause for the greater indulgence in lifting, manoeuvring, solo-running, etc., and that this is a greater point in their favour than the old-timers would concede. But, it is impossible not to concede the point that the amount of good ground hurling and air-doubling is sadly decreased.

The argument may be made that first-timing the ball may be a "blind" approach to the game and that the calculating method of the modern player is more effective. The answer to that must be, of course, that it depends on whether the player is skilful enough to be able to achieve what he wants first-time, or whether he just hits the ball willy-nilly to get rid of it. That, unhappily, is what much of the first-time hurling in the modern game has come to. Yet one should never forget occasions when we saw Christy Ring or some other of the greats of hurling decide deliberately to take the ball first-time rather than pick and handle to try and make sure: the point being, no doubt, that they were as sure of lashing the ball to the net with a ground whip as they would have been had they lifted to hand. And, since the quicker grounder gave more time and guaranteed they would not be caught and blocked while picking and angling, they hit first-time.

It does not appear that such freedom of choice is available to many of to-day's hurlers because they have not the mastery of the range of skills of the game which their predecessors had.

Time, however, is of the essence here, and it cannot be thought possible that to-day's players could possibly give the time to the practice of the game that old-stagers did. Indeed, it may be that many of them have so many games to play that they have little time at all for practice. In any event, it is a different age, a fast-changing world, and a social milieu which allows only a fraction of the time for perfecting the skills that Eudie Coughlan and Ring and their contemporaries used to give to it.

It may be that we shall have to settle for something less perfect than the standards the veterans would demand. Yet, even when that reservation has been made, it is still true that we are falling well short of what should and must be achieved. Too much sloppy striking, too much unintended play, too little control of the skills.

Yet, applying that to the modern scene, there was no doubt that this year's Tipperary minor team was a revelation in that they were highly skilful,

and also in that they showed a decent discrimination as to what particular ploy was required for each individual situation. They may have been more impressive in the All-Ireland final than at any other stage of the year, but it always seemed to be in them.

In other words, the role of the hurling directors in each county is more vital than ever. There will nearly always be famous hurlers of the past who have the ability and the personality to convey the message to the youngsters. Perhaps some counties are not getting the return they should from their retired stars of other years. Perhaps, in other cases, the directors are there, all right, but cannot really communicate. That is where the role of coaching comes in at its most urgent aspect—teaching the local hurling leaders how to get their message across



● Three of Munster's outstanding hurlers in recent times . . . Pat Moylan and Gerald McCarthy (Cork) and Seán Foley (Limerick).

to their charges; understanding what needs to be said, what needs to be demonstrated, what motivations will inspire, etc.

On the narrower aspect of Munster hurling at the moment, it cannot be said that it measures up to the game as it was in the 30s, 40s or 50s, or, indeed, the 60s. Tipperary have gone down, and many people think that the nub of the story. It is important to have Tipperary in good order because they add a focus and a standard to be aimed at for all the others. But, it should not be fatal in itself—there were periods in which Tipperary fell away for a number of years before now. And as they came back then, they will come back now, last year's minors providing a good guarantee of that. But, while Clare are having one of their better periods, the same is not true of the other Munster counties. Limerick, though they have a handful of class players are limited by the absence of enough to make a championship team. Yet, they are, in the last year or two, among the top championship favourites. With teams that were as good as they have now they were mere outsiders in the late 40s, most of the 50s and the 60s.

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Hanahoe well equipped succeed Heffernan

by OWEN McCANN

IT is obvious, from the progressive and imaginative football of Tony Hanahoe at club and inter-county level, that he puts plenty of deep thought into his approach to the game. That fact was also brought home to me, time and again, during the course of our recent wide-ranging interview, when I talked with the new Dublin team manager about some aspects of football, Dublin's rise to the top and the prospects for the future.

Such is the depth of Hanahoe's vision, in fact, that one of the first points he made concerned not football, directly as such, but the championship structure. The friendly St. Vincent's club man feels that these tests drag on over far too long a period. A delay of six or seven weeks between the football semi-finals and final, Tony maintains, is too long.

"It is particularly hard on the team that wins the first semi-final. Obviously, the contestants have to be very fit for the game and it is not easy for the winners to regain top form again after such a long wait for the final — this applies equally to physical and mental fitness, indeed the latter state can be more energy-consuming than the former." Tony believes that it would be better if the championships were speeded up and added, "a late September date for the football final tempts the elements."

As for the game of football itself, I was anxious to learn the views of the talented but unassuming forward on the much talked about handpass.

"The handpass has improved football and anything that improves the mobility of the game is to be encouraged."

When I mentioned that I felt it was a difficult rule for the referees to interpret, particularly in view of the speed of the game, the Dublin captain commented:

"Some of the rules are more difficult to apply than others — certainly the handpass is one of the more difficult but surely that is no justification to have it revoked."

With Kevin Heffernan, now a legend in his own lifetime, I wondered if any man stepping into his shoes as team manager could hope to command the same respect and commitment from the Dubs as Heffo had fostered in his three-year term?

Hanahoe, who is a busy solicitor, took up the theme: "It would be a foolish man who would try to step into Kevin Heffernan's shoes."

"At the same time someone has to follow. If one is not determined to get the respect and performance from the players then I don't think one should accept the position in the first place. Kevin Heffernan has made his own place in G.A.A. history and there is no question of anyone stepping into his shoes. There can be only one Kevin Heffernan."

Tony Hanahoe, who is 31, made his senior inter-county debut in 1964. He has always had a great enthusiasm for the game; in fact, it comes second only to his profession.

Highlighting some of the outstanding recollections of his career, Tony singled out Dublin's win over Offaly, by a point, in the 1974 Leinster semi-final as the turning point in the county's fortunes.

"That was our first real break-through. After that win we began to regard ourselves as serious championship contenders."

One of the greatest setbacks in the Dublin glory era was the failure to Kerry in the 1975 All-Ireland final.

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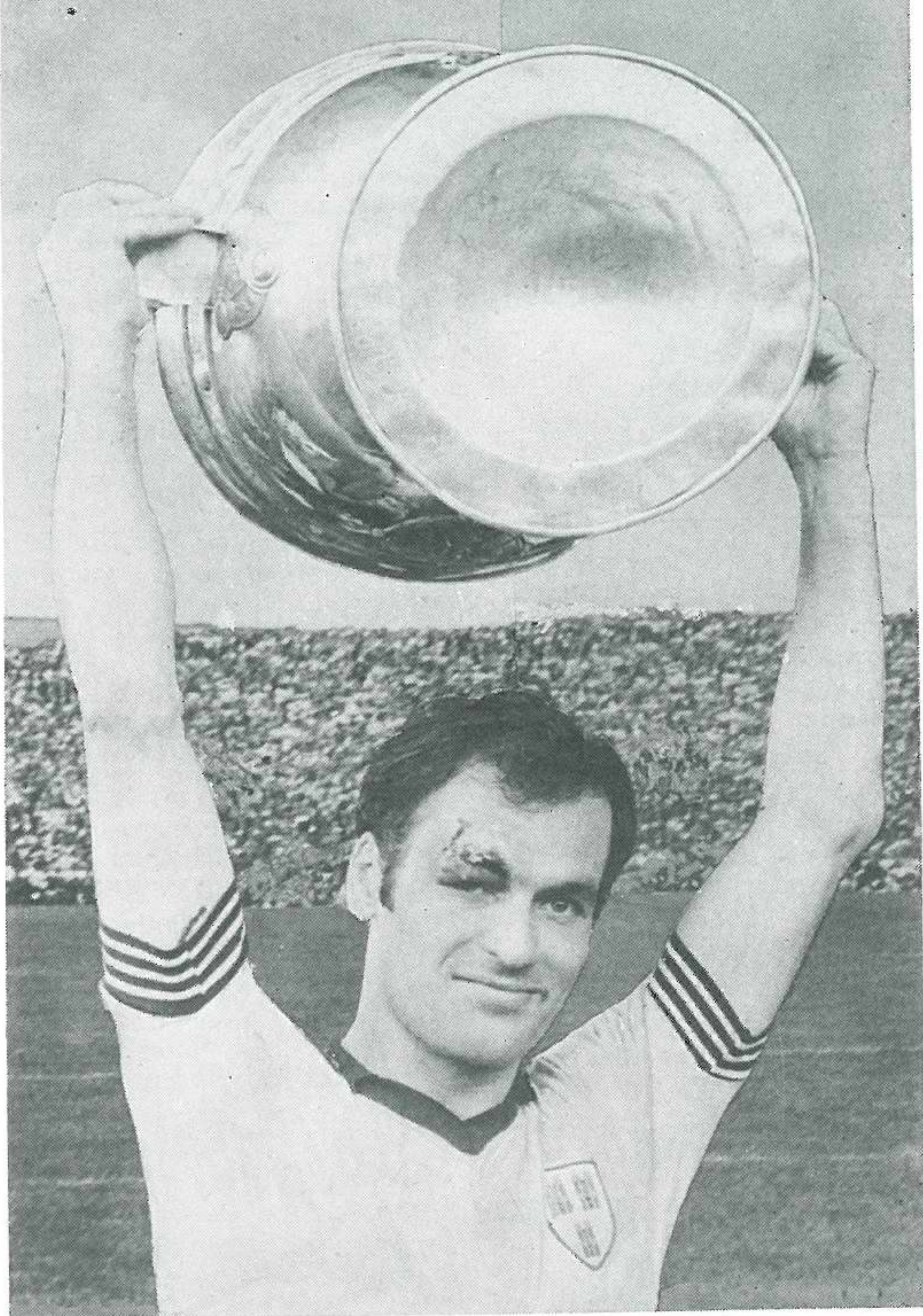
"Had the Munster men caught Dublin on an 'off day' in that game?" I asked.

Hanahoe, who has won every major honour in the game, other than a Railway Cup medal, would have none of that.

"We were beaten by the better team on the day and there is nothing more to be said. Dublin did not offer any excuses for that defeat."

Even at this late stage the celebrations still continue after that great Sam Maguire Cup win over Kerry last September. The Dublin captain understands and appreciates the calls on the players to attend the various functions. However, at the same time, he feels that this is an over-done aspect of the victory celebrations—too many demands are made on the players in this regard.

On a somewhat similar vein, he added that he sides with those who believe that the odds are now against a successful defence of the All-Ireland title by any team. He instanced for me the fact that Dublin will open their championship campaign in 1977 against Kildare or Kilkenny on May 29th; just a matter of days after they return from their American tour. Despite all that, the young



● Tony Hanahoe, Dublin's captain, holds aloft the Sam Maguire Cup after his team's most convincing defeat of Kerry in this year's All-Ireland final.

solicitor is looking forward to a very successful year ahead for Dublin.

"We have an abundance of talent in our present panel" says the clever and incisive forward, "and the potential of talent among the younger players on the threshold of their senior debuts, leaves little cause for concern."

The man who led Dublin to their League and All-Ireland

senior final wins earlier this year has cut such a dash in football in recent times that many are inclined to forget that he is also a hurler of the highest calibre, having won a number of county senior hurling medals with St. Vincents and has also represented his county at senior level. I could not allow the occasion to pass without asking if he had any views on what steps are needed to get Dublin back on top in the ancient game.

"I would not presume to answer that question. Great strides are being made by many dedi-

● OVERLEAF

● FROM PAGE 25

cated people in the county. With the right application, cooperation and determination, they will reach the top."

When I hinted that the Dublin hurlers might possibly suffer from an inferiority complex, Hanahoe strongly disagreed.

"Why should they? After all they did well in the National League last season," he coun-

tered, "and their opening game against Kilkenny recently gave further cause for optimism."

Back to football and mindful of Dublin's rise from Division 2 National League status to such a proud ranking in such a short time and of the possible lessons here for other counties, I asked the Dubliner what factors are needed to get any team to the top.

"Try and find a Kevin Hefernan", he joked. Then, in more serious vein, he mentioned the "old reliables"—hard work, application and determination — "There's really no magic formula", he said.

There has been some talk of late that counties with large centres of population, such as Dublin, Cork, Kerry and Galway, are likely to dominate the championships in the years ahead. This was something on which I was anxious to get the views of the Dubs' new manager.

"It would appear that some counties have a greater advantage in some respects. However, the problem is a complex one. There are not many answers readily available." Tony replied.

Finally, the quiet spoken and courteous Dublin man left me in no doubt with regard to his future plans as a player — whatever about his other commitments.

"I intend to continue playing for some time to come. I still get a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction from the game."

In his latest assignments as team manager and co-selector, Tony Hanahoe adds a further important dimension to his already exciting career. The impact he has created on the football scene and the deep thought that he brings to the game clearly indicates that he is superbly equipped to face up successfully to the new challenges ahead.

Needless to remark, we wish him every success. Irrespective of his future fortunes with his beloved Dubs, by his bearing both on and off the field, Tony Hanahoe has already earned the respect of his own team colleagues and also of those opponents that he has come in contact with, through playing the game he loves.



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LUDLOW



PANTILE

**By
Dan
McAreavy**

McGrattan fills the role of De Gaulle!

IT was De Gaulle, I think, who justified a massive financial injection into French sport by saying that if the country could not WIN Olympic medals it would have to BUY them.

Could it be that, however unintentionally, the Ulster hurling authorities are thinking along the same lines as we read of that cool £68,000 revival boost which is coming the game's way in the Province?

Needless to say I welcome the move which should provide a much-needed incentive to those who have ploughed the lonely furrow for far too long and who, in many instances, might have been forgiven for yielding to despair.

It will be for the Ulster Council to supervise the funnelling of the money now available into promotional activities over the next year. Coinciding with the appointment of Seamus McGrattan as hurling supremo on a full-time basis the financial windfall could not have come at a more appropriate time. If dedicated enthusiasm—as reflected in McGrattan—coupled with material assistance cannot work the miracle, surely nothing will.

The bulk of the £68,000 cash infusion will, I understand, be met by the Northern Sports Council while the Association's Council will, itself, underwrite the cost of promotional activities outside the area of jurisdiction of the Sports Council.

Seamus McGrattan has always emphasised the importance of developing the game at youth level and not unexpectedly he is already training his sights on this vital area.

Can the Portaferry man do for Ulster hurling what De Gaulle did for French sport? Let's hope he can. One thing is certain, he'll

not fail through the lack of effort.

And it is encouraging to see, too, that our football Supremo Sean O'Neill has got to grips with his job so early by nominating an initial panel from which he hopes to draw the side capable of bringing back the Railway Cup.

With Paddy O'Hara, Brian McEniff and Frank Kearney as advisers, Sean has spread a wide net in nominating his 40-strong squad and so far I have heard little dissent about the selection which embraces all nine counties.

Of course, this is very much a preliminary panel and there could well be additions or deletions as the form-guide fluctuates especially in the current National League campaign.

Speaking of the National League, I am afraid that so far this season our Northern counties have had mixed fortunes with not too much evidence at this stage that we will be in at the shake-up for major honours. But maybe it's early days yet.

However I can report that, as usual, the Ulster club championship is well advanced. At the time of writing Armagh champions Clan na Gael have qualified for the final against either Ballerin (Derry) or Enniskillen Gaels (Fermanagh) who meet in the second semi-final in a week's time.

Perhaps the real shock in the competition so far was the eclipse of holders St. Joseph's (Donegal) by Ballerin. The Derry champions, making their debut at this level and with Sean O'Connell masterminding the attack, ran out thoroughly deserving winners.

★ ★ ★

Finally I am afraid I must end on a rather disappointing note. It was with a deep sense of regret that I learned of Gerry Fagan's decision to retire from the inter-county refereeing scene, after the recent Tyrone-Sligo National League tie at Omagh. The popular county secretary has made an enormous contribution to the administrative side of the game and not least as a referee at all levels, club, school and county. Indeed, I will never understand why the recognition which came in a rush near the end of his career was denied him so long.

However, the highest honour did eventually come to Fagan from the Ulster Council together with many National League clashes, an All-Ireland semi-final, an under-21 final and, of course, the All Stars trip to America last year. An All-Ireland senior decider was in fact, the only "big-one" to elude him.

There will be general relief that his retirement does not extend to club games or, perhaps, more importantly, to his position as county secretary. They say that no man is indispensable but so far as Armagh is concerned Gerry Fagan falls into that category.

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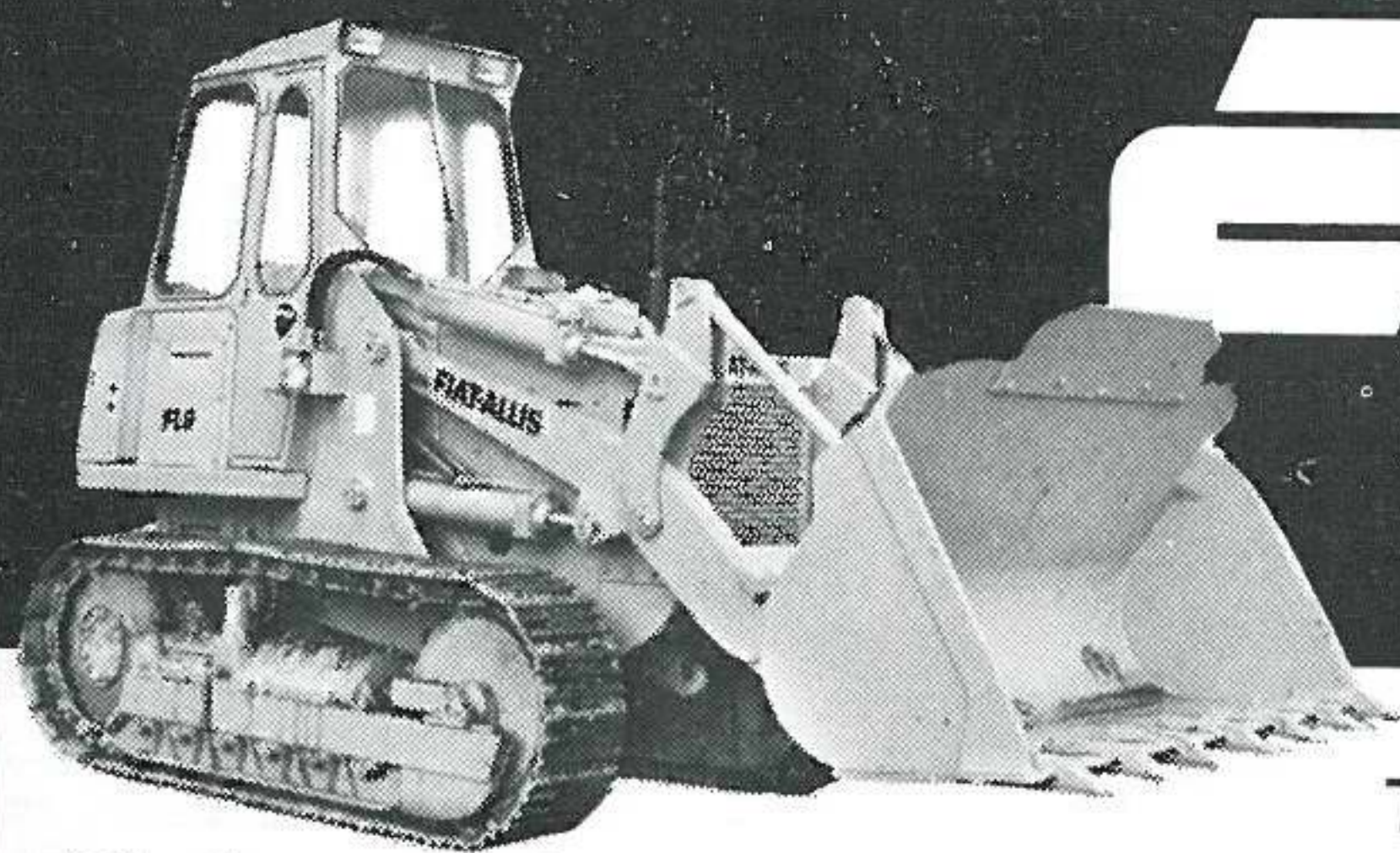
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GREAT YEAR, BY ANY STANDARD

WHEN the future historian of the G.A.A. comes to write about 1976, he will have no option but to acknowledge that it was a great year by any standards, both off and on the playing fields. Maybe the long, warm and dry Spring and Summer had a great deal to do with the entertainment provided and the enthusiasm engendered, but, remember these same conditions did not add to the crowds or the interest engendered by other field sports.

It was a year that saw the Association acquire a new President in the very able Corkman Con Murphy, who has already made a considerable impact, and whose influence is bound to be even more evident during the months and years ahead.

Above all, of course, it was a tremendous year for hurling, and that was not entirely dependent on the weather, because early in the season we saw some wonderful games in the All-Ireland Club championship, even in January and February.

Indeed the final, though played in wind and rain at Thurles in mid-March, was a memorable occasion before James Stephens got the better of Cork's Blackrock and thus enabled that diminutive but dauntless character Fan Larkin to bring the title and the

trophy, not alone to the City and the County of Kilkenny, but to Leinster, for the first time. But that was only the start to a whole series of wonderful hurling days at Semple Stadium, all of them thereafter on Sunday after Sunday of blazing sunshine.

It began for me with a sparkling quarter-final between All-Ireland champions Kilkenny and Limerick, followed by those heart-stirring semi-final draws and replays between Wexford and Clare, and Cork and Kilkenny.

It was almost too much to expect that the League final, back again at Thurles, would reach the standard of the thrill-packed games that had gone before, but, if anything, it surpassed everything we had already seen. Almost unbelievably the hurlers of Clare and Kilkenny produced another exciting draw.

Due to the American tour the replay was delayed until late June, but though Kilkenny had run a very undistinguished course on the other side of the Atlantic, the crowds came thronging back to Thurles and if the result was disappointing, especially for Clare followers since Kilkenny were far ahead at the finish, yet the hurling was again magnificent to watch and from that aspect, a wonderful climax

to the greatest ever National League campaign.

The hurling championship did not, at first, measure up to the League standards, although it was heartening to see Kerry come up to win the Senior B title. But the series began to liven up with the Munster semi-finals, in which resurgent Limerick ousted Clare and Cork were somewhat lucky to snatch victory from Tipperary.

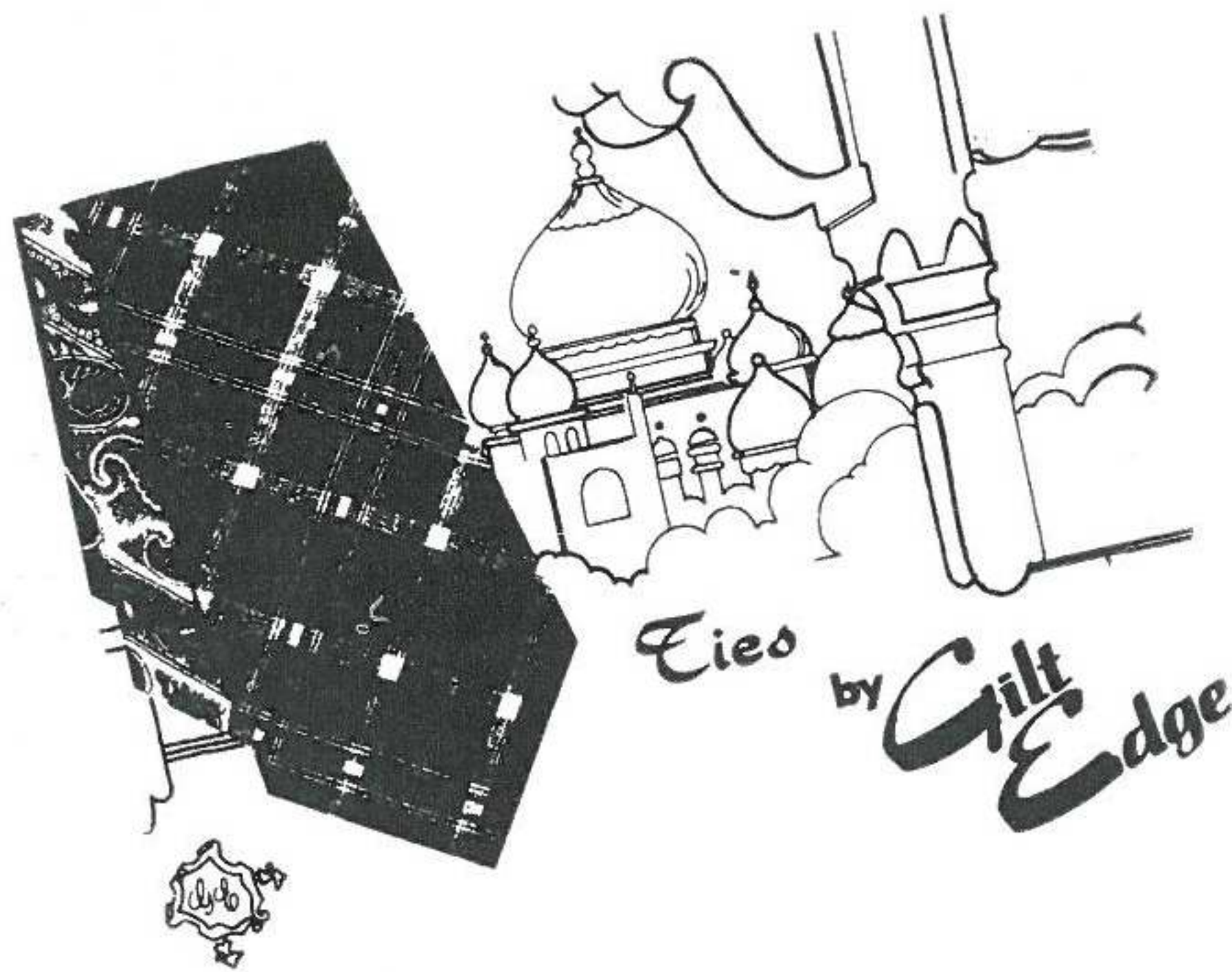
For a long time it looked as though Kildare would spring the big surprise of the year, when they ran Wexford hard in the Leinster semi-final, but the big Leinster shock was to come in the provincial final, when Wexford not alone defeated All-Ireland champions Kilkenny, who had held the title for five years, but fairly swept the Noremen from the field.

That gave an entirely new dimension to the remaining games in the championship. Cork were first into the final when, thanks mainly to a very effective opening twenty minutes, they disposed of the Limerick challenge to retain their Munster crown. Then Galway and Wexford also travelled to Páirc Uí Chaoimh for their semi-final and kept up the high drama and tense excitement. We had yet another draw, after a game that Galway had chances enough to win. The replay was no less thrilling and, though Wexford came through, there was still scarcely a puck of the ball between them.

The final was yet another thrill-a-minute encounter in which Cork held on to win, but a game in which one felt Wexford did not avail of their second half chances.

As compared to hurling, the football scene was, for long,

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● FROM PAGE 29

neither as exciting nor as spectacular. Despite a prolonged struggle for Munster supremacy, between Nemo Rangers (Cork) and Austin Stacks (Kerry), the Club football championships, which Dublin St. Vincent's eventually won well, did not engender the same excitement or enthusiasm as its hurling counterpart.

The National League campaign was also a trifle pedestrian until the semi-final stages when Dublin looked a trifle uncertain when defeating Galway in one semi-final, while Derry looked competent when disposing of Cork in the other.

The final was closely contested, but Derry failed to capitalise on a late rally and ultimately went down narrowly to the Dubliners.

As in hurling, the football championship did not really warm up until the closing stages, and then the customers certainly got thrills galore with three of the four provincial finals ending in draws, and Dublin scraping

past Meath by a couple of points in the fourth.

In Ulster, Derry got the better of Cavan at the second attempt, Galway did likewise in their Western replay against Roscommon, while only in extra time did holders Kerry shake off the Cork challenge at Pairc Ui Chaoimh.

The semi-finals were very different in quality. Kerry, well held for half the journey by the Derrymen, swept their Northern rivals aside after the interval, while Dublin first contained and then conquered Galway in a very negative type of encounter.

In the final, however, we saw a direct reversal of the 1975 decider. This time Dublin always seemed the faster, stronger and more purposeful and amply avenged their defeat by the Kerry men just twelve months before.

So Kevin Heffernan went out on a triumphant note, while it marked the close of a remarkable season for a quintet of Dublin players — Gay O'Driscoll, Brian Mullins, Tony Hanahoe,

Bobby Doyle and Jimmy Keaveney who won club championship, League and All-Ireland medals, a really remarkable treble.

My hurlers of the year were Denis Coughlan (Cork), Mick Jacob (Wexford) and Fan Larkin (Kilkenny). On the football fields the man who really caught the public imagination was Dublin's Kevin Moran, a youngster completely unknown at the start of the season who finished with League and All-Ireland medals and an All Star award, and even in that short spell he played for his county in four different positions! Next after him I would rate veteran Dublin goalkeeper Paddy Cullen, just narrowly ahead of that talented Corkman, Dave McCarthy.

And who do I expect to see in contention next year? In hurling Cork again, with Limerick, Tipperary and Kilkenny the most dangerous. In football Kerry will be back with Cork, Dublin and Galway very much in contention again, and Cavan the dark horses.

WHERE ARE THE HUNGRY HURLERS?

● FROM PAGE 23

Waterford have fallen away a lot in the last ten years; they seem to have settled into a kind of mediocre rut from which they could always emerge to create a surprise or two, but without real hope of ultimate championship success. Cork have set themselves as potential champions again in the last decade after being in a low state for the decade before that. And the reason why Munster hurling seems to be in a dangerous state is because, with Tipperary on the lower grade, there is no alternative to them to create that great championship to-do.

At other times when Tipperary were down, Limerick or Waterford or, sometimes Clare, and maybe two or all three of those counties were shouldering into their place. In the last couple of years it was a question of: "Is there any chance any one can beat Cork?"

As to the likelihood of some of the counties bursting forward to reinvigorate the Munster scene,

there is one aspect that is not reassuring. The absence of players with the star quality. Too much egalitarianism these days, it seems; hundreds of players not notably different except in some minor degree.

Where is the heavenly fire that raised Mackey, Ring, Doyle and many dozens of others (even if to a lesser degree) above the normal tide of men? They disturbed the comfortable anonymity of the masses, raised ideals to be emulated or totems to be torn down. At least, they denied players the complacency they so easily find nowadays in the comfortable surroundings of hundreds no better or worse than themselves.

In boxing they used to say that the improved social security standards and the greater success in fighting hardship in more socially concerned states was the beginning of the end of the great prize-fighting ages. The hungry fighter of legend is now so much harder to come by. Is it possible that some damping down of ambition has also followed the betterment of living standards in Ireland? Where are the hungry hurlers?

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GIFT TIME

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SHOPS and stores throughout the country are already reporting on how Christmas shopping trends are developing and one of the most interesting points to arise is that this year people aren't buying gimmicky way-out presents but are concentrating on practical gifts.

To anybody under ten, this is a tragedy but then most people in that age group will find that Daidi na Nollag has valiantly stepped into the breach and given them what they wanted anyway. For the rest of us, whether over ten or over seventy, there is a lot to be said for getting something for Christmas which is really going to prove a useful, wanted gift.

If you're interested in sports as most of our readers are, or if you want to buy a present for a sports enthusiast (Grannies and Grandas can be included in that category) then the task of choosing becomes simplified. It helps to look for your gifts in places which have a really wide selection to offer, because this sparks off ideas. When Dublin goalkeeper Paddy Cullen visited Dublin's famed Arnotts' lower ground floor sports and leisure department recently — to the great delight of staff and customers—one of his comments was that it was a gift-giver's paradise, which indeed it is.

We asked the man who buys all the stocks for the department, Joe McGann, for a few Christmas

suggestions and he reeled off a list as long as your arm, starting with track suits which Arnotts stock in sizes from age six upwards to chest 44. All generations wear track suits now and the modern grandmother might prefer one of these to a bedjacket for her Christmas present.

Hurling balls, handballs, all Gaelic gear including the increasingly popular hurling helmets are in stock at Arnotts where one can also buy sports bags, football sets, football boots, scarves and socks, and hooded windcheaters.

Next to a gift which caters to somebody's special interest, the most welcome present is food or drinks and H. Williams have been telling us of the special efforts they have made this year to ensure that the off-licence counters at their various branches carry the sort of bottles that everybody is going to want for Christmas. Their range of wines has never been wider nor more popular. The Irish palate is finally beginning to appreciate a good table wine and demand has quadrupled for wines at Williams over the last couple of seasons. They've got everything — French, German and Italian wines and a wide price range too. You could pay under a pound for a bottle, or treat somebody to something special at up to £3 a bottle.

Looking for an unusual gift? If the recipient you have in mind is someone who enjoys a good read, the Capuchin Annual might

prove just the thing. It is genuinely the sort of book one can enjoy dipping into throughout the entire year. There are pieces to suit every mood from the reflective and thoughtful to the light-hearted. Also there is every indication that the new Capuchin Annuals are going to prove excellent investments financially, as were the original annuals. This year's annual costs £3.50 + 50p extra if you want it posted.

If you smoke cigarettes you might as well be civilised about it and light up with a Colibri. Apart from being one of the most reliable lighters on the market, with a famous name to live up to, some Colibri models are so well designed that they almost qualify as works of art. Somehow a lighter remains a very personalised, 'from me to you' sort of present, and need cost no more than the sort of ephemeral gift which is forgotten by New Year's Day.

And though many of us are getting afraid to look into the future, it still helps to know the time of day. With an Omega you can be sure the time your watch tells you is the right time, accurate to the second. This range of watches from Switzerland is much more varied than most people realise. There are literally hundreds of models and styles to choose from, all with their own particular refinements. Stylewise some of the ladies' watches are a knockout, beautiful items in their

● TO PAGE 41

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SEAN CLERKIN TAKES A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT THE HANDBALL GAME AND FEELS IT'S BEEN

A GOOD DECADE

IT is, by no means, an overstatement to say that handball has made phenomenal progress, particularly in the last decade.

Obviously, such a situation has evolved from a combination of factors, though, in the final analysis, progress can usually be attributed to the initiative of a few individuals.

It is in that context, the name of Joe Lynch is highlighted as one of the pioneers in the promotion of modern handball.

At present, Secretary Administrator of the Irish Handball Council, Joe has been involved in the administration of the game for close on thirty years and has literally "stuck with it" even when the grey clouds did not appear to have a silver lining.

Involved in Gaelic games from an early age, Joe played handball extensively with the James' Gate Club, later serving as Secretary of the Leinster Handball Council from 1950 to 1967 and then had a two year term as Chairman.

For good measure Joe has represented handball on the G.A.A. Central Council for twenty years and has been Secretary of the Irish Handball Council since 1954.

Although Joe Lynch has, through the years, been the game's ablest apostle, he would be the first to admit that there were many contributory factors in the progress of handball.

World Championships

In a place of priority are the World Championships of 1970, for it could be justifiably argued

that they were the precursors of the present expansion of our ancient game.

For with the championships came the modern court at Croke Park, the advent of sponsorship, and a new awareness by R.T.E. of the relevance of handball in the Irish sporting world.

Intertwined with these has emerged the new conception by those who administer the game of the need to provide "grade A" facilities in the construction of courts.

Thus, during the past year we had the pleasure of seeing so many different type courts opened at various centres through the country.

Internationalism in handball has also begun to have its effect, in that the 40' x 20' court is now the most popular playing area and, this, in turn, has many advantages.

On the domestic front the small court tends to project a good image for the game, a fact which can be analysed under a couple of headings.

On the one hand it is much easier to provide complete ancillary facilities with the small court and this is having the effect of attracting an ever-increasing number of participants to the game.

The introduction of the small court into this country has also brought about the situation whereby our players can compete with the Americans on a more equitable basis.

RTE—A Tribute

It is opportune, at this time, to also pay tribute to R.T.E., for its

contribution in helping to popularise the game.

The Annual "Top Ace" Tournament, which is so excellently handled by Michael O'Carroll and Mick Dunne, has proved a tremendous boost to the game.

And, finally, the creditable status of handball to-day owes much to the advent of sponsorship.

With a steady stream of money forthcoming from various sources of commercial life, it means that the Handball Council can now utilise its own resources for capital investment.

It would be remiss of me not to pay deserved tribute to a man who over the years has also played no small part in promoting handball — Tommy McQuaid, Editor of Gaelic Sport.

Since Tommy first introduced our magazine to the Irish market, way back in 1958, he has always ensured that the magazine carried an article on handball, and he is also the donor of a magnificent trophy to the Handball Council to perpetuate the memory of his departed friend and hero, Larry Roe.

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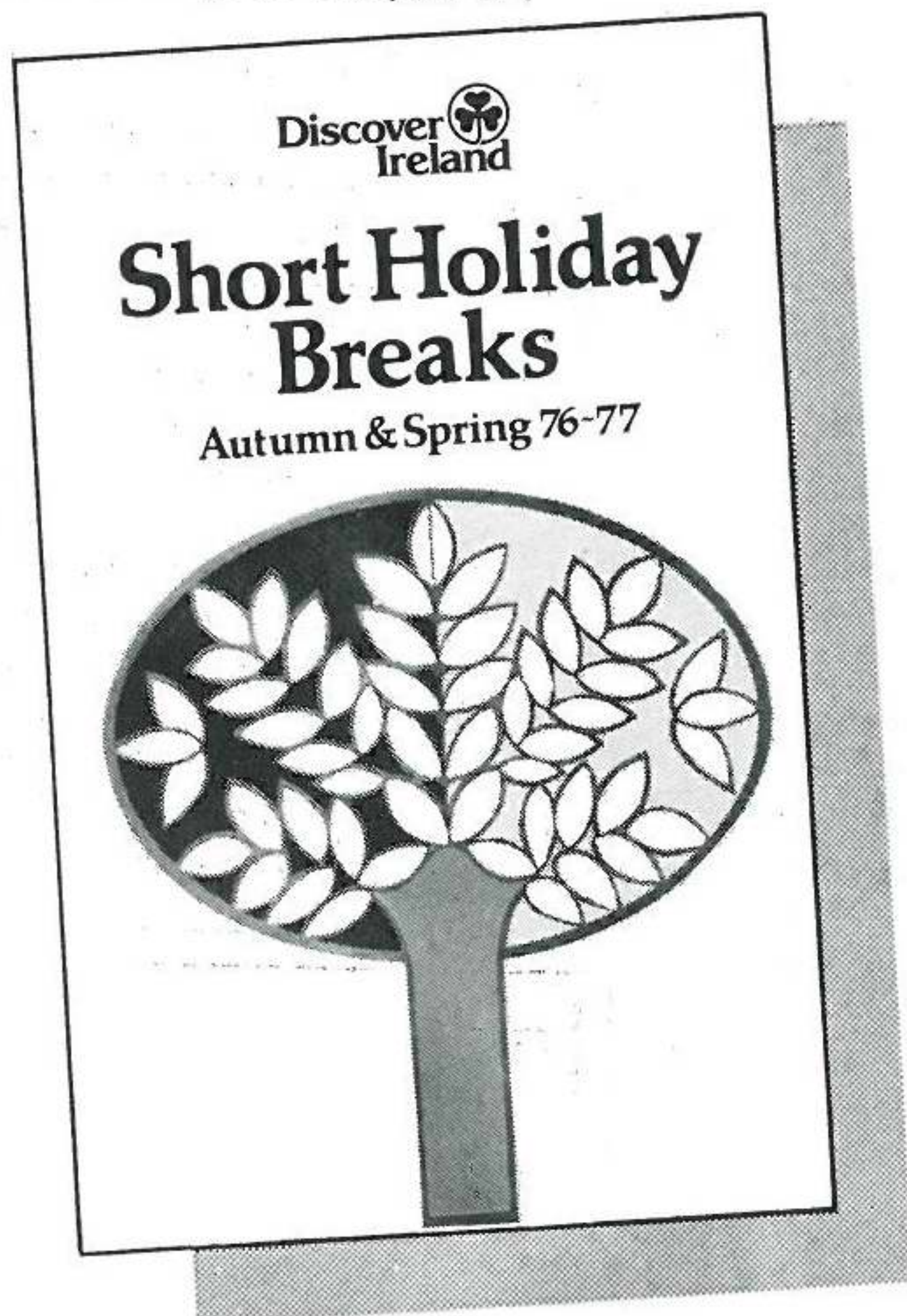
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Please, leave the handpass alone — please!

A feature of the Gaelic Games scene in recent times has been a dramatic switch in emphasis regarding the merits of football as a spectator sport. Only a few months ago, following some sub-standard matches in the championships, there were many loudly trumpeting the cause of a restructure of the playing rules to ensure that the game would "survive" as a drawing card.

Not for the first time the critics were answered in the best possible way with a splendid All-Ireland senior final, and some cracking matches in the opening rounds of the 1976-77 National League which proved just what a great game we have here. But, far from bringing football's many fine qualities more strikingly into the spotlight as a result, we have had these pushed aside by a chorus of adverse comments about the handpass in particular.

"The handpass is ruining football". "It is reducing the game to something that is more

like basketball than football" How often have we heard comments on these lines over the past few months?

Let's get the record straight at the start. I am not opposed to change. More than that, I'm prepared to argue that football and hurling—indeed any sport—needs to evolve and change from time to time. Only in this way will any game develop and achieve its genuine potential.

But having said that, I must also say that I don't think there is a case now for changing the new handpass regulation. Perhaps the gambit is open to abuse (what relegation is not?), but sometimes I think that the critics are too strongly opposed to the handpass to see any merit whatever in this feature of the game.

And, merit the handpass undoubtedly has. It helps to speed up football, and leads to more fluent and intelligent play.

Take Dublin, for example. I don't want to be accused of flying a kite for the Metropolitans

at the expense of any other county, but few will now seriously dispute the fact that they are one of the most attractive teams in the country.

More than that, the manner in which they have perfected their own fluent, co-ordinated football, under the shrewd generalship of Kevin Heffernan, has helped to breathe new life into the game, and has also won a new status for the Gaelic code from many who were openly hostile and critical of the game in the past.

Mastery of the handpass has been one of the factors in the Dublin climb back to the top. In fact, one could say that Dublin really excel in this field.

But the point must still be made that this remains but ONE facet in their make-up. In fielding, an area we usually associate immediately with Kerry footballers, the Dubliners were more than a match for the Southerners in the All-Ireland final.

Indeed, there must have been many a Kerry man who sighed with envy as he watched the brilliant fielding of some of the Dubliners, and Brian Mullins in particular, in the Sam Maguire Cup match.

Then, again, there was the clever way that Dublin exploited the kick ahead in their win over Cork in a rousing National League tie at Croke Park in October that showed just what a great and fluent game Gaelic football is at present — even with the much criticised handpass. So much for the gambit ruining football, or resulting in its outstanding features being overshadowed by a basketball type of general approach.

No, I think that we need less

● TO PAGE 42

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Doney O'Donovan's views on Gaelic football

Recorded by EAMONN YOUNG

Though I've known Doney Donovan for only a little more than thirty of his fifty years it seems we might have been toddlers together. And yet one thing I can never quite fathom is how such vigorous and hot-headed playing determination became encased in the quite tolerant amiability of the trainer-coach to-day, without any decrease in the manly spirit which drove the player. I suppose it's the job. As contract manager with Sisk's Doney is responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of various-sized jobs in different locations. Close contact with a site-foreman will ensure carpenters aren't standing by with their hands hanging to them, while masons finish a job. Proprietors are happy when the job is finished in time, and so is everybody. The job obviously asks for judgement, timing, management, diplomatic supervision, all combining to mould a thing called leadership.

"I try to talk to the workman in his own language, to the boss in his, and to the reverend mother in hers," Doney says. Candidly I suggest it doesn't cause O'Donovan any real strain and as a result, handling twenty-five young men anxious to win honour on the playing field comes easy.

"Generally football is going ahead well. I don't agree with everything that's happening on the field but still it's a good game. Our own team just now is losing a lot of the ball between the half backs and the half forwards simply because players are trying to find the man all the

time. While it is obviously the correct thing to send the ball to an unmarked man and so keep possession, it is not always possible to do this and the half back who tries to get the ball to his comrade thirty yards away very often has only a fifty-fifty chance of succeeding. If he drives a long accurate ball upfield his teammates have still an even chance of getting it with the added advantage that you're far deeper into your opponent's territory. In our recent game against Galway in the League we tried too hard to keep possession and trusted little to the long kick. In the Kerry game however this was remedied to some extent as a result of some talking."

"I'm not sure if the hand-pass has added much to the game but certainly one must work to beat it. In '46 they took it up and down the field slinging it around and the efforts to beat it drew a lot of critical comment. The way to beat it to-day is to mark closely man for man; field the ball well and drive it accurately fifty-five yards. When a man is surrounded, the hand-pass is a great asset and not to practise it is madness. I'm not sure we could limit it to one pass, for the ref has already enough to do without giving him more. Of course he has to watch for more than one hop on the ground."

"I'm rather unhappy about the ball which is punched into the net from the vicinity of the small square. The present rule was drawn up to stop the man who poached around the square but it has succeeded in penalising also the man who comes in with perfect timing, to punch a high

one clean to the net from the edge of the square, as Declan Barron did in the replayed Munster final."

"Now that we have forbidden players to touch the goalie, I'm wondering if the small square is necessary at all? I would like people to think about it. Are we punishing skill and taking out of the game some of its tension and excitement? I smile when I hear men run down coaching and say that it destroys a man's natural style. To-day when the public demands that the top teams produce skills on a level with the professional only sensible coaching from early years and regular sustained practice will meet the need."

I hope that we continue our efforts to spread coaching further and if our men become more skilful not only will the games become even more attractive but the lads will get more pleasure from playing them."

"People wonder are there three or four teams in the country, say Dublin, Kerry, Galway and Cork drawing away from the pack. I don't think so. Without a doubt those four should beat Carlow, Waterford or Leitrim but any neglect in preparation will very likely see even the top teams fall to the less prominent ones. There are about ten county sides out in front all right but among that ten there is no great difference in standard. In fact every county in Ireland can put out a fair football side."

"How happy we would be if the hurling position were similar."

● OVERLEAF

● FROM OVERLEAF

"Something which always upsets me a little when playing most of the other counties is the number of subs they have on the line. I know that only fifteen of them can play but their managers have a greater choice in an emergency and also the extra number builds up a greater team morale. We notify about twenty-five for training but on the day, only twenty-one can travel in the party. If there is a draw or a win you go back to the twenty-five again for training and of course the lads will turn up, for it's a great honour to be on the panel. The reward of being on the panel on the day however is one I'd like to give to twenty-five and it wouldn't cost a lot more. Also there is the matter of the late selection."

"In Cork we have dual players who decide to concentrate on one game and there are many sound arguments for doing so. In the league if a man goes for one game he isn't over-taxed and if he's a good dual performer I like to think that he might be available for one vital game in the championship. If a man like that can be brought on to the panel of twenty-five he won't dispossess anyone of the formal twenty-one and you have him for perhaps ten vital minutes during the game when the right opening may occur."

"I am thinking particularly of Ray Cummins this year, who was captain of the Cork hurling team and wanted to concentrate on that. Though he wasn't playing up to his best perhaps we could have got a vital fifteen minutes from him on the second day against Kerry."

"I am one of five selectors and we want to win back that Munster championship for a start. Last year we trained every Wednesday night in the Mayfield School gym from October to March. We had a game every

fortnight and a training session on the idle Saturday. In addition we had a practice on the day before each game to allow the boys to do a spot of kicking, talking and generally relax. We will try to keep the present panel together and add to it if possible, and I hope that around May next we will have a team which picks itself for the semi-final of the Munster championship."

"The morale among the players is good and I think they'll be hard to beat in '77. I am disappointed that we went down to Galway but we may be able to come back. It was no help to have ten of our players playing with their clubs on the day before that Galway game."

"I enjoy working with the Cork football side and my only regret is that we didn't follow up that '73 win. I think we could have. Anyway I'll be doing my level best to help them win another and of course I am thinking of a successor as trainer-coach. After five or six years of working together with countless discussions, formal and otherwise, there are several who could take over very competently. Billy Morgan and Kevin Kehilly both


of whom have Physical Education qualifications are obvious choices while Dave McCarthy, Denis Long and Frank Cogan are very sound men who have a lot of thinking done on football."

"Meanwhile our ambition is to get back up there and stay for a bit. Oh yes! there's one more thing could help us a lot and that's the strength of the club teams. Sides like Clonakilty, Macroom, Dunmanway, Bantry, Fermoy, Millstreet, Bandon have all made a fine contribution to Cork football over the years but in several cases the club sides have been weakened by the fact that good players, within a few miles, play with their own junior clubs and then with the divisions which are picked from these clubs. The club is very important and we all want their good players to play with them but if we could work out a scheme whereby the good junior player can turn out with the senior club side also, then we'll have more of the strong town sides as we had in years gone by. I would rather have strong club teams than great divisional sides. Maybe someone will work out a scheme. I hope so!"

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Christmas Gifts

● FROM PAGE 33

own right and deserving to be classed as lovely jewellery as well as top class watches. In the men's ranges there is also everything you might look for — from the chunky to the slim and understated.

Chunky? Slim? Tall? Short? We're talking about Irishmen in general now. Whatever the weight, height or shape of today's Irishman, Ideal Menswear are confident that they can provide a suit to fit him, straight off the rack. And if you don't like things that way, and still insist on having your suit made to measure, Ideal Menswear can do that too.

Through their network of retailers around the country you can order a suit and be wearing it on your back, a perfect fit, in as little as three weeks. Ideal suits are mostly made in pure new wool, as are their sports jackets and casuals. Manufactured in Cork, they are worn by some of Europe's best dressed men — Ideal's first consignment to Germany was recently exported. The Ideal look for men will not date you after a season or two: company policy is to produce fashionable clothes which follow the

classic look, no gimmicks allowed. And now that the classic, conservative look in menswear is sweeping the world of fashion at the moment, Ideal are style leaders in any case. You can't lose, can you, especially when it's Guaranteed Irish too?

New from E.M.I. is an L.P. entitled '50 Years of Irish Radio' which will make an excellent present at the very reasonable price of £2.75 including V.A.T. As the name suggests, this features drama, comedy, snatches of music and excerpts from speeches at public occasions during the past fifty years in Ireland. Of special interest to G.A.A. fans should be segments of commentaries by Michael O'Hehir on All-Ireland finals between Cavan and Meath in 1952, Down and Kerry in 1960 and Cork and Wexford in 1956. One of the highlights of the record is a commentary on Ronnie Delaney winning the 1956 1,500 metres at the Melbourne Olympics.

The ideal gift for father, brother, husband, is a tie. John McMenamin of The Central Tie Company tells us that he has a full range of ties to choose from with hundreds of designs to suit all occasions. This family company, which has been in existence for 67 years, has picked the market of Europe for designs very carefully. All are Irish made in

a modern factory and are of the very highest quality. They are available in all mens' outfitters throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. No matter how small the town, John assures us that it will have C.T.C. ties available.

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● FROM PAGE 37

talk just now about modifying or changing the handpass, and more and more attention to mastering this skill—or perfecting and polishing up all the skills of the game, for that matter.

Frankly, I think we Irish are too prone in all walks of life to settle for the lowest common denominator. One has only to note in football at the way we are reminded time and again that if the pick-up was abolished completely there would be less frees and stoppages.

That's a fair enough point — as far as it goes. But surely the correct way to approach this situation is to strive to bring all players up to scratch in the skill — instead of doing away with the skill. After all, there is little to be said for making any sport less skilful.

Dublin have given us an outstanding example of what can be achieved with dedication, training and the will to succeed. And, apart from the honours they have won for themselves, the Metropolitans have shown that the potential is there to establish Gaelic football as one of the best spectator sports of them all.

So, instead of arguing about the merits or otherwise of any playing rule at this juncture, I feel that the other counties (not all, but generally speaking) would be better involved in taking a leaf out of Dublin's book.

After all, if we even had twelve counties playing football of a class and appeal that we have seen from Dublin over the past few seasons, then, what wonderful competitions we would have. And, what a great base, too, from which to charter forward with new moves and skills to make Gaelic football even more sophisticated.

ON CAMOGIE FIELDS

By AGNES HOURIGAN

ALTHOUGH Camogie has no All-Star Awards, and although the only outside recognition players get is from the B+I, which allots one of its twelve monthly Awards to a Camogie player, recognition for which we are very grateful, every keen follower of the game will have her, or his, personal set of All-Stars at the end of any particular season. And 1976 will be no exception.

Down Limerick way they will give pride of place to the girls from Croagh - Kilfinny who won the All-Ireland club championship, a great triumph for a rural club.

On the College fields there must be, first of all, a special word of praise for St. Aloysius of Cork for bringing the All-Ireland senior trophy South for the first time, and to Presentation Athenry for the remarkable achievement of reaching both finals for the second time even though the double eluded them on this occasion. But reaching the final stage of both senior and junior competitions speaks volumes for the strength of the game in the County Galway town.

On the inter-county fields, Kilkenny came storming back into the limelight when they recaptured the All-Ireland senior title at Dublin's expense in a unique all-Leinster final. This was a very, very tight game of close marking, which militated against spectacular Camogie. But, narrow though the final margin was there could be no doubts but that the Kilkenny girls deserved their victory.

Indeed Kilkenny set a new record of their own as this was the first season in which they managed to capture both the Leinster and the All-Ireland

senior titles. The county also won the Leinster minor title for the third successive year, but again failed to reach the final of the grade. The Cork minors kept the Leaside flag flying by retaining the title in this grade, while Down recaptured the junior All-Ireland by a slightly lucky victory over Wexford in the final.

Incidentally, the best match I saw this year was comparatively recently, a Leinster club championship game between St. Paul's of Kilkenny and Buffer's Alley of Wexford. Admitting that the vast majority of both teams were made up of inter-county and All-Ireland stars, the standard was magnificent and the score-lines, St. Paul's 2-9, Buffer's Alley 2-7, tells its own tale about the closeness of the scoring and the ability of the players.

There were two noteworthy achievements. Helena O'Neill, playing possibly the most outstanding game of a brilliant career, scored eight of St. Paul's

nine points, and the ninth was scored by Ann Downey from a free seventy-five yards out!

But while it is the teams and the players who always make the headlines, and rightly so, because players and teams are what any game is all about, the people who rarely make the limelight are the people who really keep any Association rolling, and thank heaven, we have plenty of them in Camogie.

They are the devoted people who keep the wheels turning at schools and colleges and club level. The people who run, and who attend, County Board meetings, who selflessly serve the Association and the game they love in any and every capacity. If I had the handing out of Awards and Oscars I would give one each to everyone of those devoted and dedicated people, whose names never make a headline, but without whom no amateur organisation such as ours could exist for a single week.

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DUBLIN '77

By LIAM RIORDUN

IN 1975 Dublin lost out to Kerry in the All-Ireland final. This fact is well-known to all Dublin followers only too well. But what may not be so well known among the "Hill 16" men is that their county year book, "Dublin '76", won the award for the outstanding G.A.A. publication of the year.

Now if Editor Tommy McQuaid and his merry band of contributors could turn out a winning publication in a "losing" year one presumed that they would produce an even better publication in a year that saw the Dubs achieve the "Big Double" — League and Championship.

Looking through a copy of "Dublin '77", which I have here in front of me as I write, I can say without hesitation that this year's publication is, by far and away, the best G.A.A. production that I have come up against in my long association with our National games.

There are so many outstanding features about "Dublin '77" that one doesn't know where to begin to comment.

The all-colour cover spread sets the trend, for what turns out to be a publication that will not alone win applause for the Dublin County Board but will enhance the image of the G.A.A. both at home and overseas.

The front cover features the All-Ireland winning team with insets of Captain Tony Hanahoe holding aloft the National Football League trophy and the "Sam Maguire" respectively. On the

back cover is one of the best action pictures to be featured in any publication, national or international — captioned "The Killer Goal", it depicts Jimmy Keaveney scoring Dublin's all-important second goal in the final.

The centre-spread is another very imaginative "eye-catcher" featuring a double spread of the All-Ireland finalists, fully illustrated.

Space just does not permit any deep comment on the 34 articles, running over 104 pages, but the names of some of the contributors will be sufficient recommendation to what awaits the lucky reader: Mick Dunne, Donal Carroll, Eamonn Young, John Comyn, David Guiney, Bob Hyland, Con Houlihan, Michael O'Hehir, Paul Kelly, Micheal Ó Muircheartaigh, Paddy Purcell, John O'Shea, Seamus Ó Braonáin, Owen McCann and Charlie Perry.

However there is one article that I feel will take precedence over all others, it is "A Tribute to Kevin Heffernan" written by County Board Chairman, Jimmy Gray.

Incidentally Kevin himself was invited to contribute an article but, typical of the man, in declining the invitation, he commented: "I was chosen to do a job, I did it the best way I knew how and that's it." "Remember I couldn't have achieved what I did without the wholehearted cooperation of the entire panel of players and, of course, my colleagues Lorcan Redmond and

Donal Colfer," Kevin added. As Tony Hanahoe says, elsewhere in this issue of *Gaelic Sport*, "There can only be one Kevin Heffernan."

"Dublin '77" was again edited by Tommy McQuaid and the layout of the magazine was in the ever-capable hands of Paddy Downey.

Priced at 50p, this must be, without doubt, the best value ever offered to readers in G.A.A. history.

Dublin '77, official publication of G.A.A. Dublin County Board and published by GAELIC SPORT Publications, 80 Upper Drumcondra Road, Dublin 9. Price 50p.

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FIXTURES

1977

SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

May 29—Donegal v Derry
(Ballybofey)
Monaghan v Antrim
(Castleblayney)

June 5—Armagh v Cavan
(Armagh)

June 12—Down v Fermanagh
(Newry)

June 19—Tyrone v Donegal or
Derry

If Tyrone v Donegal:
Irvinestown

If Tyrone v Derry: Lurgan

June 26—SEMI-FINAL "A"
Armagh or Cavan v
Monaghan or Antrim

July 3—SEMI-FINAL "B"
Down or Fermanagh
v Donegal or Derry
or Tyrone

July 24—FINAL

JUNIOR DESK



By
**JACK
MAHON**

BELIEVE it or not we are back again to the **Junior Desk Awards for 1976**. This is our **FIFTH YEAR** and the award which is a specially designed scroll containing the photos of the awardees, etc., has been presented to the following.

1972

Football: Willie Bryan (Offaly).
Hurling: Eddie Keher (Kilkenny).
Camogie: Hannah Dineen (Cork).

Referee: Patsy Devlin (Tyrone).
G.A.A. Official: Pádraig Ó Fainín (Portlárige).
Journalist: Paddy Downey (*The Irish Times*).

1973

Football: Billy Morgan (Cork).
Hurling: Richie Bennis (Limerick).
Camogie: Cally Riordan (Cork).
Handball: Joey Maher (Louth).
Referee: Michael Slattery (Clare).

G.A.A. Official: Dr. Donal Keenan (Roscommon).
Journalist: Paddy Downey (*The Irish Times*).

1974

Football: Paddy Cullen (Dublin).
Hurling: Eddie Keher (Kilkenny).
Camogie: Helena O'Neill (Kilkenny).
Handball: Pat Kirby (Clare).
Referee: John Moloney (Tipperary).
G.A.A. Official: Kevin Heffernan (Dublin).
Journalist: Paddy Downey (*The Irish Times*).

1975

Football: John O'Keeffe (Kerry).
Hurling: Liam O'Brien (Kilkenny).
Camogie: Bridget Doyle (Wexford).
Handball: Pat Kirby (Clare).
Referee: John Moloney (Tipperary).
Journalist: Paddy Downey (*The Irish Times*).
G.A.A. Official: Séan Ó Siocháin, Mick O'Dwyer (Kerry).
Score of the Year: John Egan (Kerry).

Since we started in 1972, Paddy Downey has won the **TOP G.A.A. JOURNALIST AWARD** every year, while John Moloney has won the **TOP REFEREE AWARD TWICE** and Eddie Keher the **TOP HURLER** twice. Only those under 21 on 1/1/'77 are eligible to vote and one vote in each category is allowed. Junior Desk fans are asked to fill in the **ENTRY COUPON** and send it to me at address at bottom of

● **OVERLEAF**

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● FROM OVERLEAF

COUPON not later than January 1st, 1977.

We are retaining the same AWARDS AS LAST YEAR. This year again we will present our own specially prepared JUNIOR DESK SCROLLS to the eight CHOSEN AWARDEES and a COPY of the scroll to EVERY Junior Desk fan who VOTES. So readers please vote and you will get one of these beautiful scrolls which will add a touch of COLOUR to the walls of your BEDROOM. Vote to-night. DON'T WAIT TILL TO-MORROW.

STEVE ALLEN

At last we have a LAOIS CUT-OUT. Sometimes I'm told that we always HONOUR the PROMINENT COUNTIES. So it's nice to see LAOIS HONoured. I played against LAOIS many times and had great opponents in NOEL DELANEY, FINTAN WALSH and JACK KENNA to name THREE. To-day LAOIS still have a fine football team and of the current squad STEVE ALLEN of PORTARLINGTON, who played for LEINSTER in 1974 and who won a LEINSTER MINOR MEDAL in 1967, is one of the keymen. In honouring STEVE we honour the great LAOIS football tradition carved out by MEN like TOMMY MURPHY, the DELANEYS and DANNY DOUGLAS.

PEN PALS

Seamus J. Murphy (age 19), Shamrock Bridge, Ballydaly, Lr. Rathmore, Co. Kerry; Gerald Molloy (age 16), Tullokyne, Moycullen, Co. Galway; Pat Kennedy (age 15), Mongfune, Murroe, Co. Limerick; Michael O'Hara (age 12), Patrick St., Mountrath, Co. Laois; John Paul Murray (age 18), Cornboy, Carratigue, Ballina, Co. Mayo, all want Pen Pals in Kerry.

FAVOURITE STARS

In the Provincial Champions Competition coupon I asked competitors to nominate their favourite footballer and hurler.

The hurling spotlight was shared by Eddie Keher and Pat Hartigan. In football the honour was shared by Mickey O'Sullivan and Gerry McElhinney. If you asked me to nominate my stars of the year in hurling and football I'd nominate Mick Jacob, Jimmy Barry-Murphy, David Hickey, Pat Spillane, Tony Doran, Frank Burke and Brian Mullins of course.

NOTES

I still haven't heard from the reader in Barna, Pallasgreen, Co. Limerick who forgot to send on his name or from John W. Meehan, Tottenham, London, who didn't send me on his correct address.

Have to hold over some letters from Muredach Noone, Ballina, G. O'Connell, Hillingdon, Middlesex and Cathal Ó Tórna, Glasnevin. G. O'Connell complains about the Cork Co. Board not replying to two of his letters concerning the G.A.A. commemorative programme, *A Man and a Stadium*. Perhaps at this stage a copy of same has been sent to our G.A.A. friend in Middlesex.

OUR GAMES

Our Games Annual 1977 will be out this month. I have no details of it yet but be sure to buy it when you see it. I'll review it next month. In the meantime don't eat too much turkey!

MAILBAG

Mary Cullinane, Cockhill, Kilmcummin, Killarney, Co. Kerry writes for the first time to this column. She was very disappointed at Kerry's All-Ireland display. "Pat Spillane is Kerry's best forward and I do not like the handpass which is changing football to basketball. Dublin seldom kick the ball and they cannot kick long-range points. Cork are my favourite hurlers. I am a great admirer of Jimmy Barry-Murphy. He is a great player and I think he should concentrate on one game. Hurling

is his game if he has to choose. Cork is a great county and has great supporters who can take a beating very well. The Munster football finals were great. Kerry will be back."

● *Mary, what a fine letter. You win a prize of a Kerry scarf. Keep writing. (J.M.)*

Terry Doyle, Ballymorris, Aughrim, Arklow, Co. Wicklow is very critical of players who feign injury and feels the umpires and sideline men would be of great help to referees regarding incidents during a game. Terry wants a Cut-Out of Tony Doran or Kevin Moran.

● *It's time we honoured Tony, who has given great service. I'm glad he got an All-Star. Kevin is a great young prospect. (J.M.)*

John Murphy, St. Olives, Rathmore, Co. Kerry wants a page of Gaelic Sport given over to a comic strip. He wants a Cut-Out of Pat Spillane, Ogie Moran, Sean Walsh, or any other young or promising player. "Kerry will make it 24 next year."

● *You must be pleased with the League win over Dublin. We might include John Long and Jack O'Shea in your list, too. (J.M.)*

I have a host of letters from boys in Ballygarry N.S., Belgooly, Co. Cork, all of whom pay tribute to their teacher, Miss Buckley, who buys GAELIC SPORT in Kinsale. David Barry is in fifth class, loves hurling and football, nominates Ray Cummins, John Connolly, Noel Skehan and Ned Buggy as his favourites and wants a Cut-Out of Martin Coleman. Peter O'Regan's father played for Cork hurlers and he hopes to line out for Cork some day himself. He wants a Cut-Out of Ray Cummins. Peter is 12 years old and plays for Ballymantle U-12 hurlers as a corner forward. His favourites are Ray Cummins, Pat Moylan, Jimmy Barry-Murphy, Eddie Keher, Tony Doran and Sean Silke. Anthony Dwyer also wants a Cut-Out of Ray Cummins and Tony Doran, John Connolly and Iggy Clarke. Richard Cowhig is

in sixth class, likes John Connolly, Ray Cummins, Gerald McCarthy and Sean Silke and wants a Cut-Out of Martin Coleman. Finally, Emmanuel Barry lives in Ballinhassig and is proud of the fact that his school at Ballingarry was built in 1884, the year the G.A.A. was founded.

● Obviously, boys, you have a very fine teacher in Miss Buckley, who introduced this column to you. Please tell us more about your father, Peter O'Regan. If I'm ever near Ballingarry N.S. during a school day I'll call. A pity you hadn't written a few months ago, as I was in Cork during school time recently. (J.M.)

Christopher Hannon, 1879, Kill, West Naas, Co. Kildare wants to know when the Jack Mahon Gaelic Games Quizbook No. 2 is coming out and asks where he can get copies of the Ulster final programmes.

● The second Quizbook isn't ready yet. But I haven't forgotten about it. I'll have details regarding the Ulster final programme later. (J.M.)

The Bonner family of Derryhenny, Doochary, Lifford, Co. Donegal are as loyal as ever. Donal wants Cut-Outs of Gay Mitchell, Seamus Bonner, Seamus McHugh, John Tobin, Tom Naughton, Paul McGettigan or Frank McGuigan. Michael's All-Ireland man of the match was Kevin Moran, while in his opinion Ogie Moran was Kerry's best player. "Galway minors were brilliant." Another brother, Sean, is high in his praise for Brian Mullins.

Tim O'Donoghue, Gurraneigh, Lissarda, Co. Cork thinks Pat Spillane and Ogie Moran are the best players in Ireland. "I also think John Crowley of Cork is a fine hurler. When he was a small little lad he used to come up the road to meet our pony cart on the way to the creamery for a spin as far as his own home. Mammy says she'd like a Cut-Out of him".

● For that letter, Tim, you win a Cork bob-cap. It's the Editor who

has the final say on Cut-Outs, but it is hard to refuse a mammy. (J.M.)

Last but not least, we have a late letter from Norman Rochford, The Square, Gort, Co. Galway. He tells us that he is a great lover of GAELIC SPORT and has been buying it for a long time. He thought the September issue was fabulous and his favourite star is Jimmy Barry-Murphy of

Cork.

That ends the Mailbag. Don't forget to enter your nomination for the Junior Desk Awards 1976.

Finally, "Nollaig shona fé mhaise dhíobh go léir".

Write about anything to:—

Junior Desk,
Gaelic Sport,
80 Upper Drumcondra Road,
Dublin 9.

JUNIOR DESK SPECIAL INTERVIEW with Carlow referee Brendan Hayden



Q. What honours have you received to date?

A. Two Railway Cup Medals and one Intermediate and one Junior All-Ireland Hurling medal with Carlow. Within the county I have won four Senior Football Championship medals and four Senior Hurling Championship medals. I have also won nine Factory League medals.

What are the most important matches you have refereed?

Four Leinster Senior Football finals, an All-Ireland Under-21 and an All-Ireland Colleges final were the most important. I have also refereed county finals in Offaly, Wexford and Kilkenny and all Under Age finals in Leinster.

What was your greatest thrill as a player?

Winning the Senior Football Championship with my club, Tinryland, after playing for 17 years.

What was your greatest thrill as a referee?

The Leinster Senior Football Championship final of 1970 between Offaly and Meath. Meath won by a point after 80 minutes

of tremendously exciting play. The final score was: Meath 2-22; Offaly 5-12.

Who was your greatest opponent?

Without a doubt Cathal O'Leary of Dublin.

Who were the greatest players that you have seen in action?

Paddy Cullen and Kevin Hefernan (Dublin); Paddy Prendergast (Mayo); Mick O'Dwyer and Mick O'Connell (Kerry); Peenie Whelan and the late Ned Doogue (Carlow); and Sean O'Neill (Down).

What is your greatest G.A.A. memory?

Watching, as a schoolboy, Carlow winning their only Leinster Football Championship in 1944.

Who is the man you most admire in the G.A.A.?

Martin O'Neill of Wexford, the former Leinster Secretary, is the man for whom I have the greatest admiration.

What ambitions have you got?

I would like to referee an All-Ireland Senior Football final and also to see Carlow win an All-Ireland at Senior level.



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**STEVE
ALLEN
(Laois)**

Age: 25
Height: 6 ft.
Weight: 13st. 7lb.
Club:

Portarlinton
Position: Centre
Half Forward
Senior Inter-
County Debut:
1969.

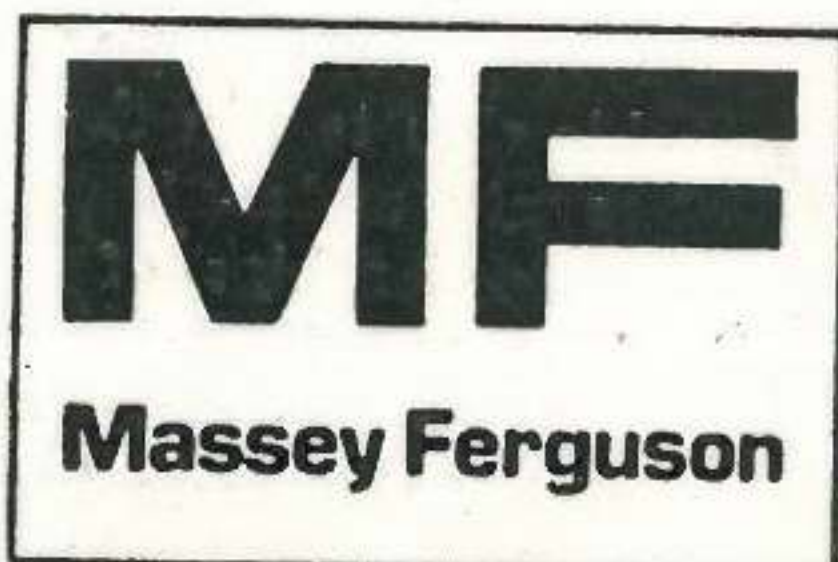
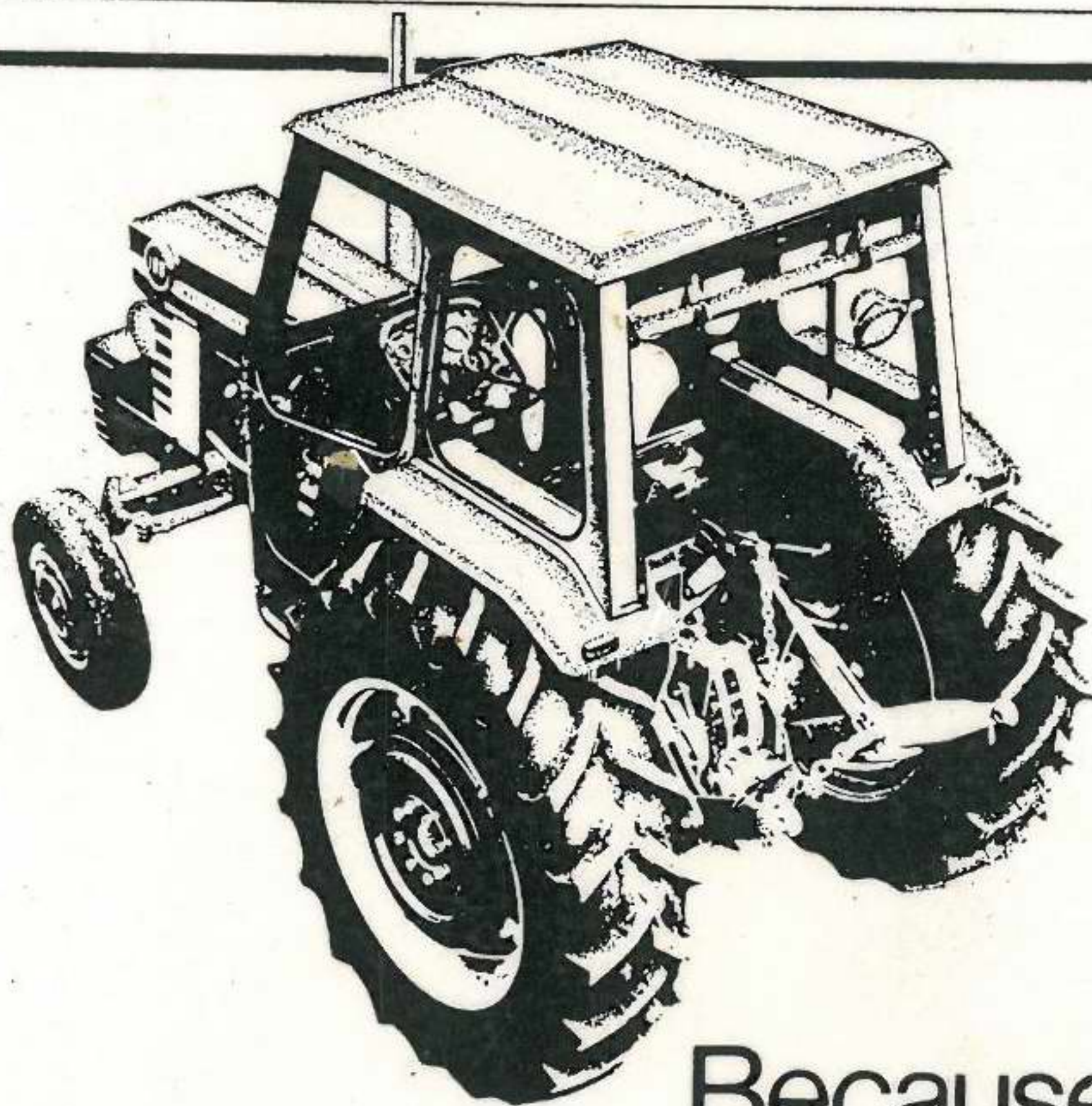
**CAREER
HIGHLIGHTS**

Steve was an outstanding score-getter with the Laois team that finished runners-up for the 1967 All-Ireland minor football title, and was also in the side that lost the Leinster Under-18 final a year later to Dublin.

He won a Leinster junior medal in 1968 and added a provincial under-21 championship souvenir to his collection the following season. A former star with C.B.S., Portarlinton, and the local Vocational School team, Steve helped his club to win the county under-21 championships of 1971 and 1972.

Steve has appeared with Leinster in the Railway Cup, and was at centre half forward when the province last won the title in 1974.

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