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IRELAND'S LEADING GAAELIC GAMES MAGAZINE SINCE 1958

SUMMER EDITION

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spotlight on
President
mick loftus

TO
DATE

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Vol. 28 No. 2. Summer 1985.

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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

As Dr. Mick Loftus settles into his term as President—ushered in at the recent Annual Congress in Ballina—the G.A.A. is fortunate in having such an able person in the top Executive post at the start of the organisation's second century. The new President from Mayo has already served the movement superbly as a player and referee, up to All-Ireland final level, and as a legislator in a number of important positions including Provincial Council Chairman and Chairman of the Centenary Year Committee.

Mick Loftus, then, can be depended on to provide the type of dynamic leadership needed to set the movement firmly on the road towards other major milestones in the years to come.

After the feverish activity leading up to the Centenary Year, and then during the season of celebrations in 1984, it would be understandable in a way if the next couple of years proved valley ones for the G.A.A. Understandable, but certainly not desirable.

No organisation can afford to stand still, or to be content merely in looking back smugly on past achievements and take the future for granted. Positions can only be maintained and improved by forward planning, and the will to tackle the problems.

The G.A.A. will have to compete in the future as never before with other sports, greater leisure time activity, not to mention satellite television, for players and supporters. Happily, the signs are already there that the G.A.A. is prepared to take up the challenges enthusiastically on a variety of fronts.

Improvements are in the pipeline for Croke Park, and these will give the organisation an even more imposing headquarters than is the case at present.

Facilities are being extended at other venues. Only the other week, new floodlights were switched on at Castleblayney, and Kerry and

Monaghan played a challenge game under the lights. A new era of floodlight games could yet be on the way.

The dream of full scale international competition between Ireland and Australia could still become a reality, despite what many would have us believe. The proposal will be actively considered in the coming months, and will inevitably receive a major thrust one way or another when Ireland returns the visit last year of the Australian Rules footballers to this country.

It would be a feather in the new President's cap if his term in the position was marked by the copperfasting of regular and full scale international games between this country and Australia.

The All Stars is another area that might profitably be looked at. The U.S. tour — as part of the promotion — is fast becoming prohibitive.

The All Stars trophies are major honours in themselves for the players and this is fully appreciated by the hurlers and footballers themselves. The awards would not lose any standing or prestige if the bonus of the U.S. tour was ended — welcome though this undoubtedly is as far as the lucky players are concerned. It will be remembered that there were some doubts for a time about the '85 tour.

The tours can also greatly upset the schedules at home for club and inter-county games because of the unavailability of so many key players.

Football continues to fail to realise anything like the potential the game has as an entertaining and free-flowing sport. Too many matches continue to be ruined by stoppages and unnecessary fouling.

Congress, as we saw at Ballina, continues to be conservative in approach with regard to changes in the playing rules. The resistance is also as strong as ever, apparently, to other changes, notably the open-draw for the championships, despite the experiments of the Ford

Centenary Cup games last year, and the Ford tests this season.

Changes for change sake is not necessarily progress. Those who advocate new ideas and new structures are not necessarily automatically right in their beliefs that their proposals will bring about the type of progress they maintain.

Similarly, those who argue that we should hold fast to old tried and tested systems because they have served the Association well in the past, have not a monopoly either of what is the right course for the organisation to pursue into the second century.

But there is no disgrace in compromise . . . nothing to be lost by trial and error.

Most will agree that while the G.A.A. is firmly and nationally based, there is room for improvement in hurling and football. The hurling code continues to be a minority sport in the country generally; in-roads have not been made in too many counties to any worthwhile degree, and only a few counties can now hope to win top honours.

We have already mentioned football, and here, too, the circle of counties capable of winning the League and Championship needs to be greatly broadened.

There is a case for giving new ideas and proposals a chance to prove their worth or otherwise by experimenting with playing rules and the open-draw in the championships over a few seasons. Nothing might be gained as a result; on the other hand a whole new dimension might well be opened up for the G.A.A.

Meantime, we congratulate Mick Loftus on his stepping up to the Presidency, and wish him well in his efforts to further advance the cause of the G.A.A.

Tommy McQuaid
EDITOR

NEW PRESIDENT, DR. MICK LOFTUS', INAUG

MY first words on taking up office must be an expression of appreciation for my election a year ago to succeed to a position which by any standard is both prestigious and demanding! During the year between I have been able to observe more clearly and give deeper consideration to the possibilities and scope of the office of Uachtarán. As a result, I have realised what a wise decision of Congress it was some years ago to elect its new president a year before he takes up office.

Is féidir liom a rá, gur mór a d'fhoghlaim mé i rith na bliana seo caite tré bheith i ngar don Uachtarán atá anois ag éirí as post, Pádraic Ó Bogaigh. I offer him, as Congress has already done, our warm tribute for the energy and commitment which he continued to give during his exciting and demanding period in office, agus cé go bhfuil scith tuillte go maith aige anois, is breá liomsa go mbeidh sé le mo ghuallainn i gcónaí go ceann bliana eile fós, nuair a bhéas comhairle éicint ag teastáil uaim ag an stiúir. During that demanding year in office he has, of course, been strengthened by a very close partner.

And I should like to put on record, on behalf of our Association our recognition and appreciation of the positive contribution made in a silent but nonetheless effective manner by that close partner, (Mrs.) Peggy Buggy. In complimenting and thanking her, I feel that I am in a way expressing our grateful tribute to the partners of many of our former presidents and (present) officials. Thar cheann na comhdhála seo agus thar ceann an Chumainn, guidhim luach saothair agus suaimhneas do Phádraic Ó Bogaigh agus dá bhean-chéile Peigí.

Visitors to Mayo for this Congress will, I hope, bear with me if I strike a note of local patriotism. I do it simply because

I feel I *should*. It is what the G.A.A. means in sport and action. It is no mere cliché to say that for my native Club and county this is an exceptionally proud and satisfying occasion. Perhaps a unique one. It is as a product of Crossmolina Club and of Mayo county that I have been chosen to take up the reins of office at the beginning of our second century. And as I begin my term as president I want to acknowledge that with pride and gratitude. I salute the memory of the club whose officials and members introduced me to the spirit and ethos of the remarkable association which I am now chosen to lead.

I salute too the past G.A.A. leaders and supporters of this county which I was honoured to represent at three levels of competition. I welcome to today's session many of my former colleagues who played with me for Mayo, or played against me in the Gaelic fields of the county. I can sense their feelings today as being a climax to a lifetime of their generous service. And I hope, that at the end of my term, they can be as truly proud of my contribution as I have been of them, whether as colleagues or as rivals in sport in the past.

This is not so much my day.

This is Mayo's day; This is Crossmolina's day.

I should perhaps make use of this first opportunity to give some outline of my view as to the present state of the Association and the challenges that appear to me to face us in the near future. Without any doubt the greatest undertaking in the term of the last presidency was the celebration of our centenary. Tá dóthain ráite faoin gcomóradh sin anois agus níl mé le tagairt ar bith a dhéanamh dhó. Sé an t-ómós is fearr is féidir a thabhairt anois dó, é a chur i gcúl ár gcuimhne, agus aghaidh a thabhairt go misniúil

ar an obair atá romhainn amach; agus dul ina bhun sin le fonn agus le díogras.

In a real sense I believe that we would do well not to regard the centenary and all its positive content as a *climax*. If we do, we will naturally condition ourselves for a coming anti-climax; and this we must not even mentally entertain. The year 1984 was not so much a peak, as a *plateau*: a high plateau on which we freely breathed the air of memory, and collected our history of the climb. From here on we address ourselves to the slopes that still beckon and challenge. The strength that we have gathered on the plateau must now be harnessed for the tests that are ahead.

In any realistic overview and plan we must recognise that, at least by way of numbers, there are two great pressure-areas confronting the Association now. One of these pressure areas, frequently noted, is the huge bulge in the graph of our young population. The other, which I think should be addressed with equal seriousness, is the pressure of population pattern centering on our towns and cities, especially along the eastern coast.

When these two pressure areas are set against the overall context of our problems of unemployment, of increased leisure hours, of a decreasing quotient of physical work even for those who are employed — and the consequent greater need for these people to have physical games, training and discipline to supplant physical work — we must realise that there is an urgent need to study again the present state of the G.A.A. and to plan for its role in an emerging modern society.

Questions must be asked and answered: Are the traditional county board units capable of dealing effectively with, and serving positively, the inflated

URAL ADDRESS

By SEAN O'GRADY



numbers in the densely populated areas? Should there now be a deliberately planned hiving-off of manageable areas, or even an actual division of some of the traditional units of town, city or even county? Do we need to further develop our youth policy and put further energy and resources into its implementation?

Planning must, I believe, be based firmly on a realisation of our recognised strengths, but also an awareness of our identified weaknesses. Our strengths in the past very often came from the local club in a rural setting. Our clubs must remain the building-blocks of any new development in the future as they have been in the foundation of our past. Indeed, the rural club will always, I believe, have a valuable and authentic contribution to make towards the vigour and well-being of the whole association as it grows into its second century. But both the club and the association are for *people*.

Our interpretation of patriotism is *the service of our people*. And wherever our people live, or migrate, or indeed *emigrate* it is the business, as it is indeed the *benefit*, of the association to be active there in their service. This will not mean reneging on the rural club, but it may well mean paying more attention in the coming years for the clubs that operate — or must yet be founded — in the built-up areas of our Irish towns and cities.

I would hope that our planning, during my period of office, would cater, not only for the indigenous population of these urban centres, but also, and particularly, for those whose life-style has taken them from the rural to the urban environment, and who may well feel deprived now in being separated from the life close to nature which they knew.

The second pressure area to which

I have referred is that of the relatively teeming numbers of our young people. In many senses it is a happy problem; one that other countries and organisations would envy. Nevertheless, it *is* a problem. Tá sé ina dhúshlán dúinne sa gCumann go bhfuil an oiread daoine óga in Éirinn anois; agus go bhfuil an oiread sin acu ag brath orainne le treoir agus tacaíocht a fháil uainn, le saol rathúil a chaitheamh amach anseo. Because our service to the young must not be a mere games therapy; merely a pleasant way of spending the leisure hours. It should properly also inculcate *ideals*; ideals of discipline, of fair play, of good social behaviour, of community spirit including a reasoned and practical love for and pride in the best traditions of our Irish people. It must therefore discount any easy theory that ours is an association for sport and for sport alone.

In a society which unfortunately has too many divisions among people I hope that our association can remove barriers and strengthen communities. It will, I hope, help in particular the family community in promoting games for both sexes, making both welcome as officers of our committees, welcoming the family as a community into its social activities and celebrations; and, in turn, benefitting from the natural energy and cohesion which comes from a family spirit.

The future also shows up the looming challenges which a fast-changing world must of necessity present to an association which is one hundred years old. I see two specific challenges which have already surfaced on our horizon and which should be faced soon.

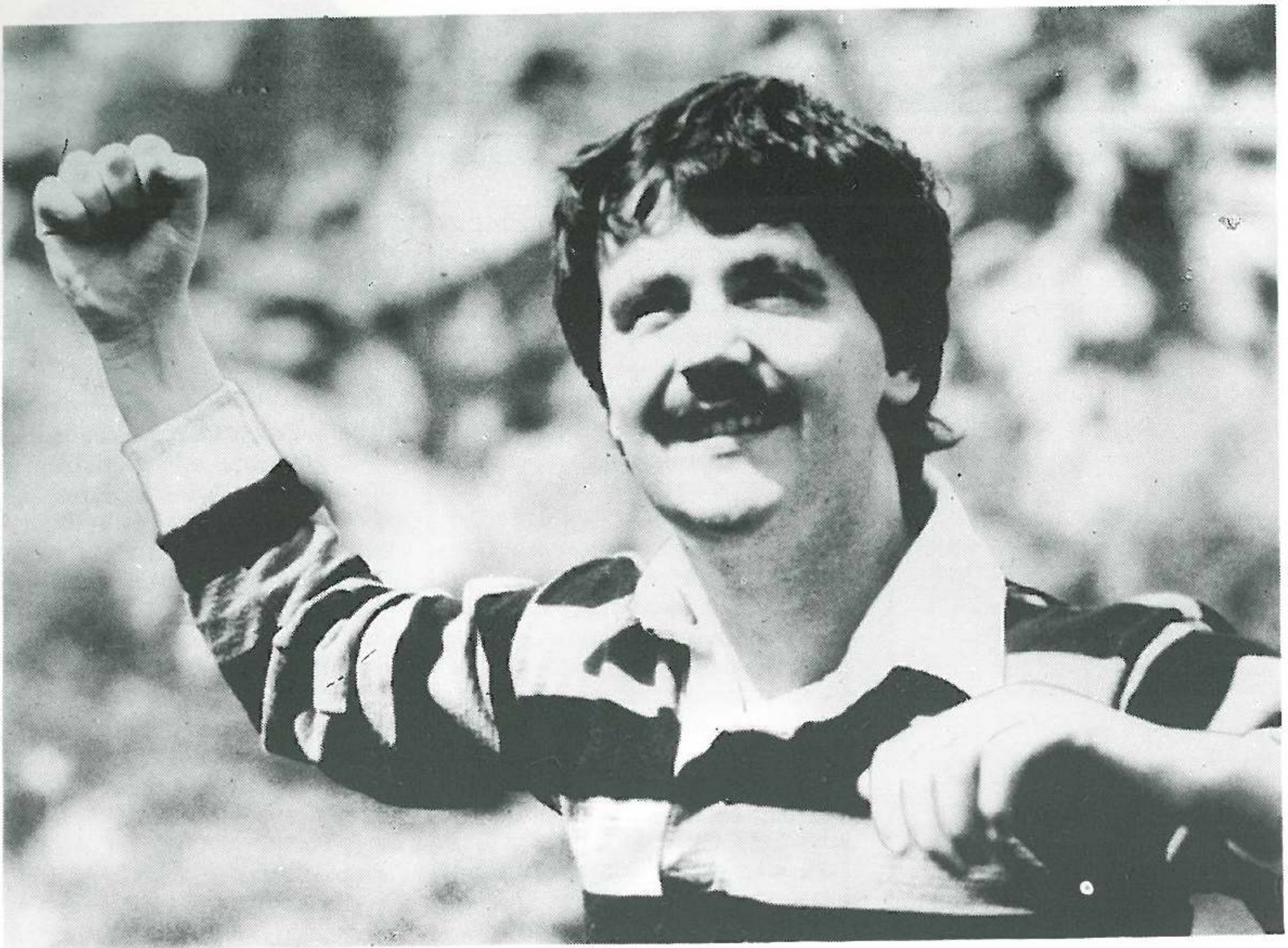
One is the challenge of materialism; the pursuit of wealth and of what wealth can provide. It is the growing danger of turning our backs on things of the Spirit — not just of the religious spirit, but of what one might call the spirit of excellence and of high-mindedness. Of sportsmanship, of idealism, of fair-play, of sacrifice, of justice, of good

behaviour, of discipline, of goodness. That challenge of materialism will often appear in the form of a question: "What am I going to get out of it?" and the answer will always be expected to be not in terms of what is ideal, but what is material. Especially in terms of *money*.

In that context we must forever beware the advance of creeping professionalism. The amateur status of our entire organisation has at once been the cause and the result of the magnificent voluntary spirit on which the G.A.A. thrives. Although out of sheer necessity there must be a minimum of professional staff, our amateur status should be guarded as one of our most precious resources — not merely for its genuine idealism, but because in practice, to lose it would imperil our entire voluntary spirit which could so well be the envy of any other organisation.

The *second* imminent challenge has to do with the standard of our games. It has to do specifically with the standard of the game of football. Hurling and handball present no great problems of standard at present; although even in these two areas we would be very unwise to rest on our oars! In football, however, we *have* a pressing problem which must be addressed at once. In my view our problem is to make the game so *positive* that it appeals to young Irish boys and girls; so that they, in turn, will find the skills and contest of such games a fitting challenge for their youthful energies. It is unrealistic to deny that we are in rivalry — friendly rivalry — with many other sporting bodies for the attention and commitment of our young people. And from that clear fact comes the

● TO PAGE 7



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● FROM PAGE 5

conclusion that our game of football must be so improved as to make a prior appeal to people who nowadays have the choice of a wide menu of games, and the leisure-time to engage in many of them.

Our game of football must be made so satisfying and so positive that it will appeal not only to players, but to enthusiastic referees and to thoughtful managers, coaches and trainers.

I want to conclude with a special word of encouragement and enthusiasm for a united effort by every unit and every member of the association. In the century we are now entering on, just as in the century we have ended, we have need for that unity of effort if we are to overcome the future problems — seen and unforeseen.

I make the appeal that I, as Úachtarán of the G.A.A. can henceforth be able to count on that loyalty, and on that voluntary spirit, which has made the G.A.A. unique.

Our differences of opinion can enrich the association. So do the difference of rivalry in our games. And just as our rivalries are contested on the field and are then laid aside, so in this very Congress we discuss our differences of opinion and then join forces for the common good.

It is inevitable too that in so large an organisation there will be differ-

ences of personality from time to time. My appeal is that these, too, be left aside. That, at whatever level we operate, we make it a *community* effort; a togetherness; a sharing of work, a shedding of difference, a shunning of any personal grudge. Let us really suppress what divides us and really promote what unites. even one

year of such a spirit of harmony is bound to bring abundant results.

Ní neart go cur-le-céile.

The past is over. The future must now be accosted. The past is ours now by virtue of memory. The future will be ours only if we win it for coming generations by planning, by endeavour, by service. Seo chuige in ainm Dé!

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR NEW PRESIDENT

DR. Micheál Ó Lochlainn, who became the 29th President of the Gaelic Athletic Association at the Annual Congress in Ballina on March 31, is married with four children and lives in Crossmolina, Co. Mayo.

The first Mayo man to be elected as President, Dr. Mick, a native of Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon, won Mayo County Championship medals at various grades with Crossmolina and also holds three Sigerson Cup medals. At inter-county level, he was wing forward on the Mayo team that defeated Derry in the 1950 All-Ireland Junior Football Final, was a sub on the Senior team that beat Louth to win the 1950 All-Ireland title and the team that retained the title the following year with a 2-8 to 0-9 win over Meath. In 1952 he was a

member of the Combined Universities team.

As a referee, Dr. Mick was in charge of All-Ireland Finals at Minor, Under-21, Junior, Colleges and Vocational Schools Finals and refereed the 1965 Galway v. Kerry and 1968 Down v. Kerry All-Ireland Senior Finals. He also refereed Connacht and Ulster provincial finals, N.F.L. and Railway Cup Finals and the 1968 St. Brendan's Cup game in New York.

He served as Chairman of Deel Rovers from 1964 to 1984 (when he asked not to be re-elected), as Chairman of the North Mayo Board from 1976 to 1979 when he was elected Chairman of the Connacht Council. He was Chairman of the National Referees' Advisory Council from 1976 to 1979 and the national Centenary Committee.



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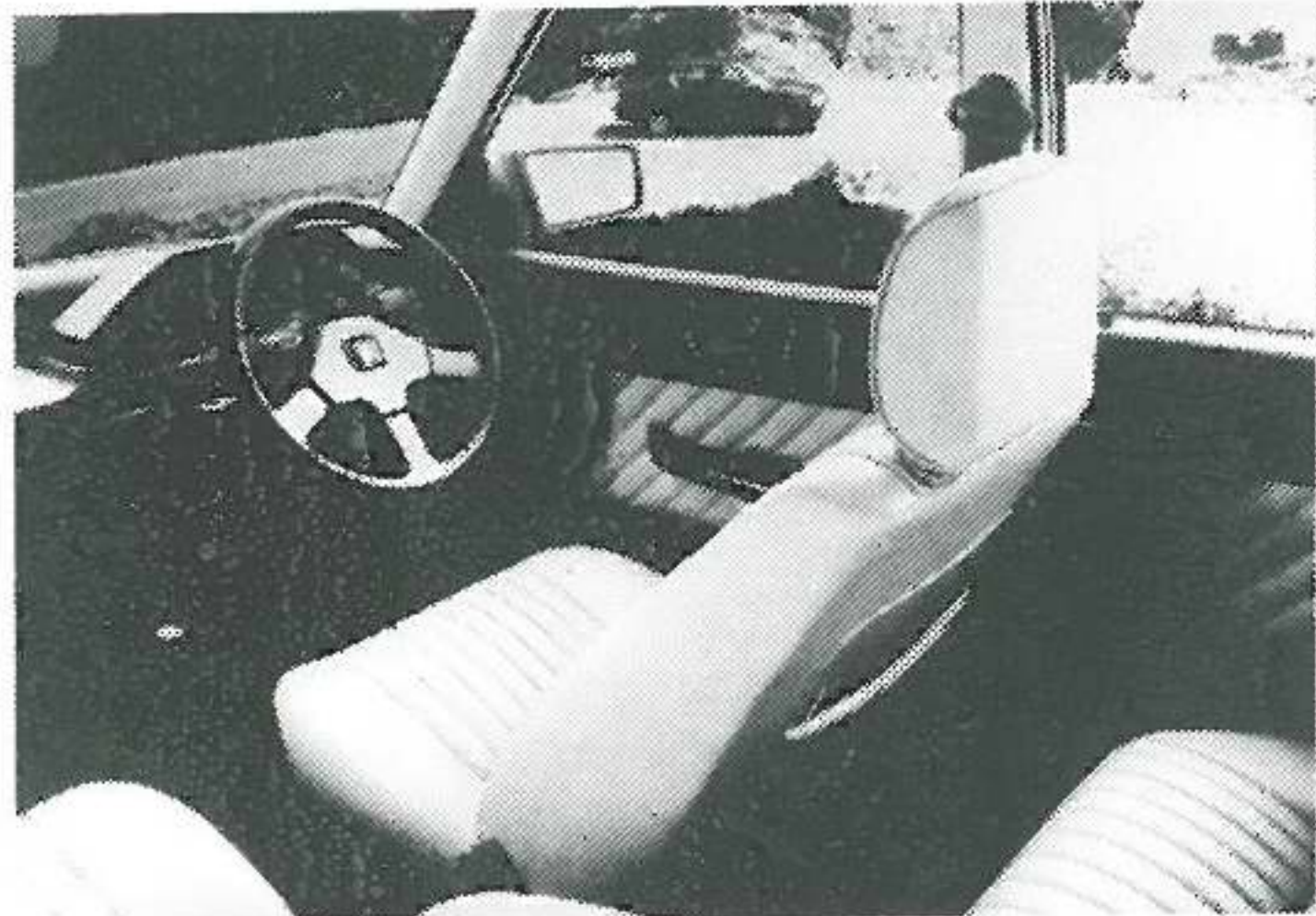
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all ireland hurling preview

OFFALY TO CONTEST ANOTHER FINAL—BUT CORK MAY NOT COME OUT OF MUNSTER

Says NOEL HORGAN

PRIOR to the commencement of the 1984 championships, few punters searching for the likely winners in the senior hurling race, were inclined to look beyond either Kilkenny, Limerick or Cork and the Noresiders, seeking three-in-a-row with Limerick fresh from an impressive league triumph, were warmly fancied to qualify for the Centenary final.

As it transpired, both Kilkenny and Limerick fell at the provincial semi-final stage and it was Cork and Offaly who made it to Thurles on the first Sunday in September. All of which served to underline the unpredictable, finely balanced and competitive nature of today's hurling world.

To forecast the outcome of this year's championship is an even more intimidating task as several of the contestants are entitled to feel that they possess a genuine chance of ultimate glory this time.

The Munster championship looks especially intriguing with all but Waterford — recently relegated to Division 3 in the league — looking reasonably well-equipped to mount a formidable bid for the laurels.

"I can see nothing to stop Cork this year," said Eamonn O'Donoghue former inter-county hurler, when I spoke to him recently. His comment is indicative of the optimistic attitude prevalent in the rebel county following their convincing All-Ireland win last year. Banished to the back of the memory of many Corkonians is the fact that their favourites were somewhat fortunate to account for both Limerick and

Tipperary in Munster when it was generally agreed, their opponents contributed considerably to their own demise on both occasions.

Neither are Cork folk unduly perturbed that the Leaside hurlers came extremely close to being relegated in the league this season and were eliminated early on by Wexford in the Ford Open Draw Cup. With most league games played in the winter months, it was fairly predictable that the subtle skills of this lightly built Cork squad would become submerged in the mud while Cork fans are quick to recall too the fact that the great side of the 'seventies dropped to the second division before completing the three-in-a-row in 1978.

The Centenary Cup served Cork well last year in that it helped to boost morale and enabled the selectors to sort out a few problem positions which proved vital to Cork's subsequent All-Ireland success.

Having been constantly active for

over a year, however, it is probably more beneficial to the Cork side, now a more settled team than this time last year, that the players and mentors can formulate their championship plans without the distractions of being involved in the race for a minor trophy.

GREATER IMPACT

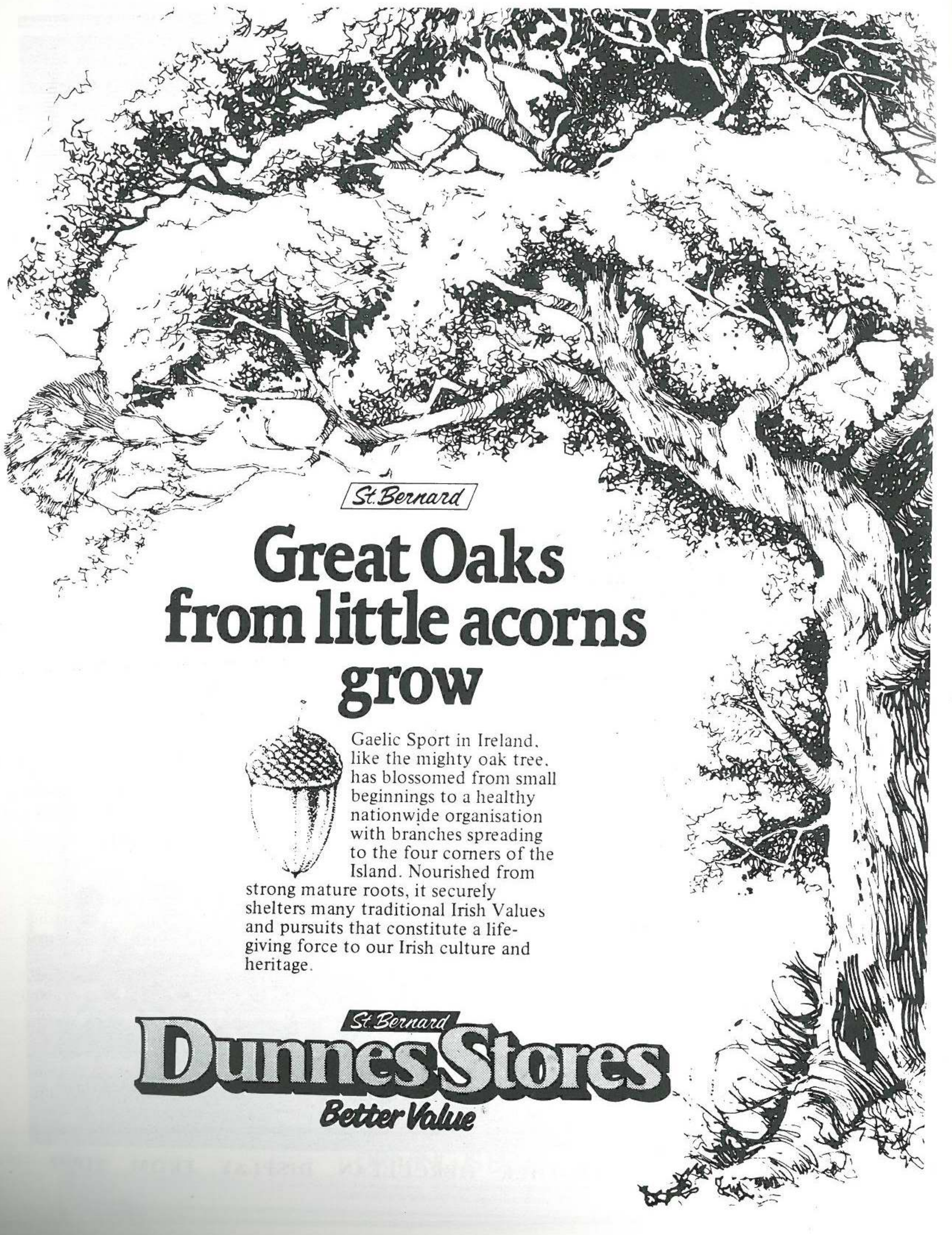
It is true that success last year will have worked wonders for the confidence of comparative newcomers like Pat Hartnett, Tony O'Sullivan, Tomas Mulcahy, John Hodgins and Denis Mulcahy. These players are likely to make an even greater impact this season.

It would be unwise, however, to suggest that there are no problems within the Cork camp at the moment. Wily veterans Sean O'Leary and Tim Crowley are, at the time of writing, undecided about the future and the loss of their vast experience would prove a severe blow to Cork's cause.

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ANOTHER HERCULEAN DISPLAY FROM TIPP?



St. Bernard

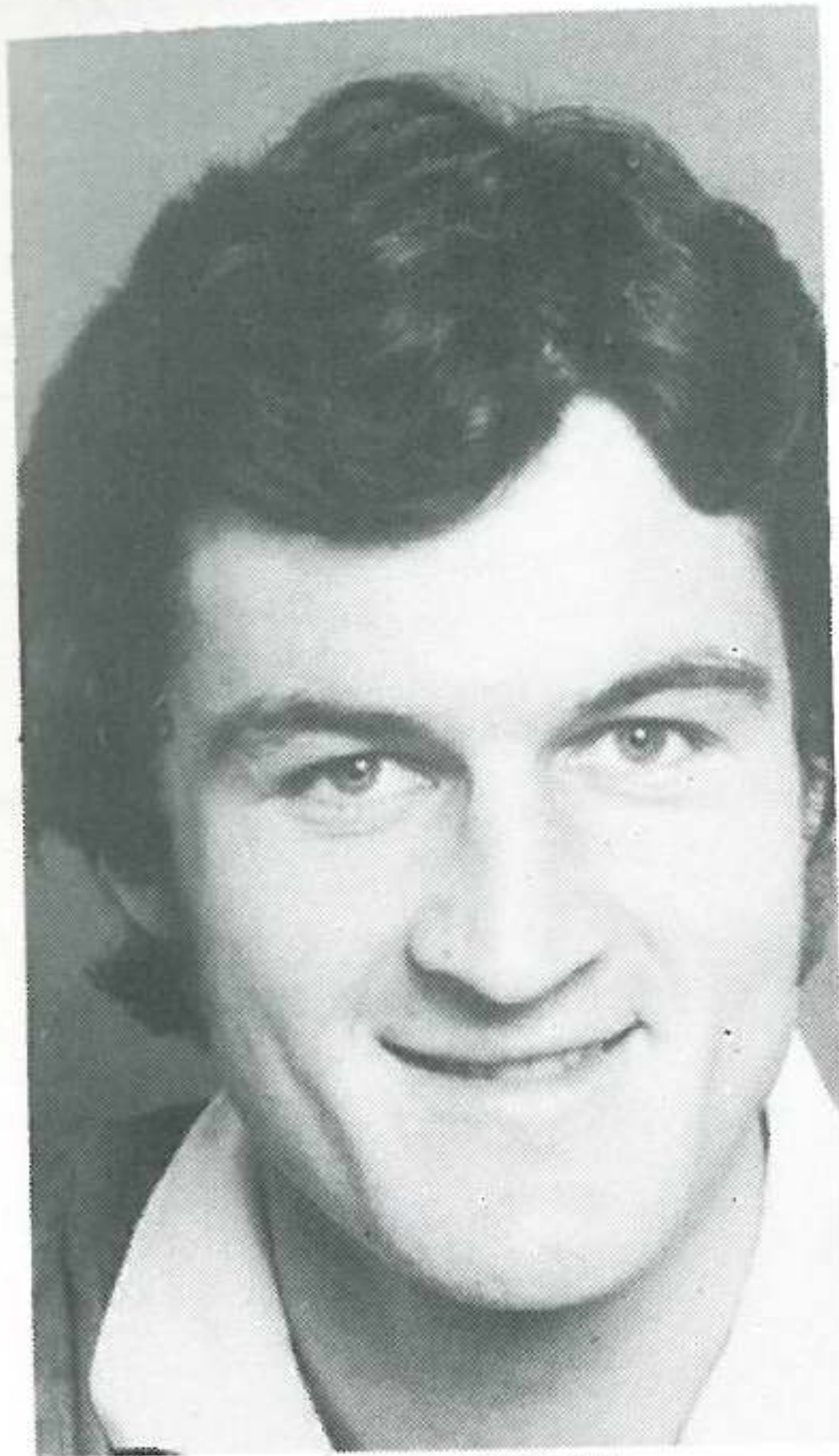
Great Oaks from little acorns grow



Gaelic Sport in Ireland, like the mighty oak tree, has blossomed from small beginnings to a healthy nationwide organisation with branches spreading to the four corners of the Island. Nourished from

strong mature roots, it securely shelters many traditional Irish Values and pursuits that constitute a life-giving force to our Irish culture and heritage.

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PAT FLEURY

● FROM PAGE 9

Even more disturbing is that Cork appear to be finding it difficult to fill the full-back slot. Like Crowley and O'Leary, Donal O'Grady is unsure about his future and, if the 'Barrs man opts out, it is likely that either John Crowley or Denis Mulcahy will be forced to move to the No. 3 position.

Some observers in Cork regard the versatile Pat Horgan, so unlucky not to make the first fifteen for last year's final, as the ideal man for that job.

In any event, it is essential that Cork solve the problem, especially if Joe McKenna decides to return to a Limerick team that must be fancied to dismiss Waterford and qualify for a Munster semi-final meeting with the champions. Although Pat McCarthy did quite well in the league there can be no disputing that Limerick's challenge would look much more imposing with McKenna on the mark.

Shivers run down the spines of Cork followers when they recall how Big Joe decimated the Cork defence in the replayed 1980 league final when pitted against John Crowley and others, and in the drawn championship match of 1982. Donal

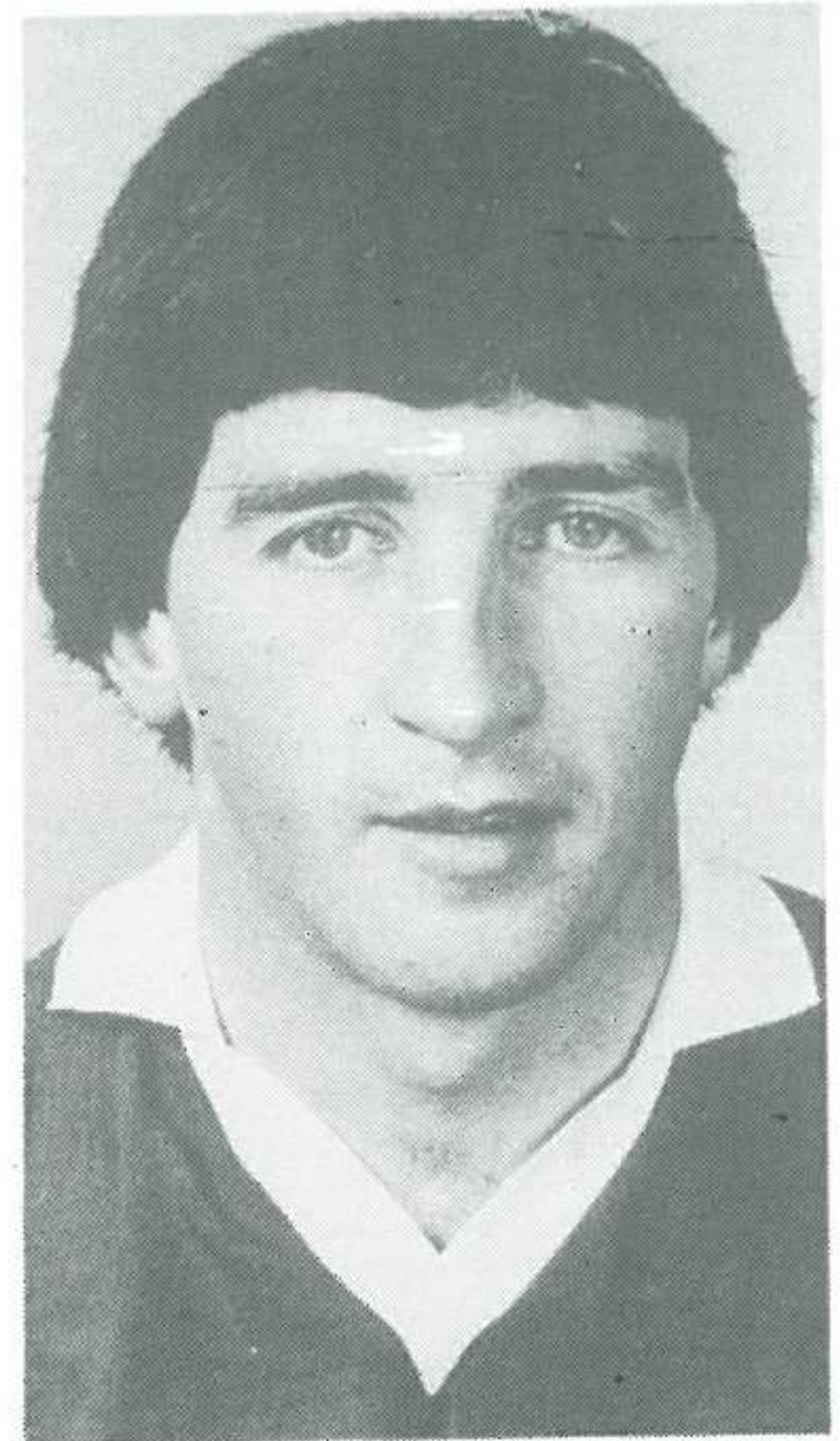
OPPOSING CAPTAINS IN LAST YEAR'S FINAL

O'Grady policed McKenna well last year and, although suspect in subsequent outings, could be pressed into service if the Limerick ace is coaxed out of retirement. Whatever happens, it seems likely that another stirring chapter will be added to the Cork-Limerick saga of the 'eighties and victory could go either way.

The Tipperary-Clare semi-final also promises to produce a cracking encounter. At the start of the season, many regarded this as an easy assignment for the Tippetmen although it had taken a last minute Liam Maher goal to earn Tipperary a single-point success over the Banner last year.

Tipp's exciting display against Cork, however, saw their rating soar and caused their fans to harbour strong hopes that 1985 would produce a championship breakthrough for the first time since 1971. But Tipp were relegated in the league following a string of mediocre performances which prompted Bobby Ryan to publicly express his disappointment at the team's failure to consolidate confidence.

Clare for their part, made a considerable impact in the league, under the guidance of former Limerick star Eamonn Cregan and they now appear to be ready to present a strong championship challenge. In fact Clare possess in John Callinan, Sean Hehir, Ger Loughnane and Sean Stack players who have consistently proved their ability over several seasons whereas one is inclined to wonder if Tipp's effort against Cork last year was a flash-in-the-pan. Admittedly Tipp had a handsome victory over Clare in the Ford Open Draw competition, but Championship fare is a com-



JOHN FENTON

pletely different kettle of fish.

Can John McIntyre, Jack Bergin, Seamus Power, Donie O'Connell and the rest, again scale the heights that they achieved on that occasion?

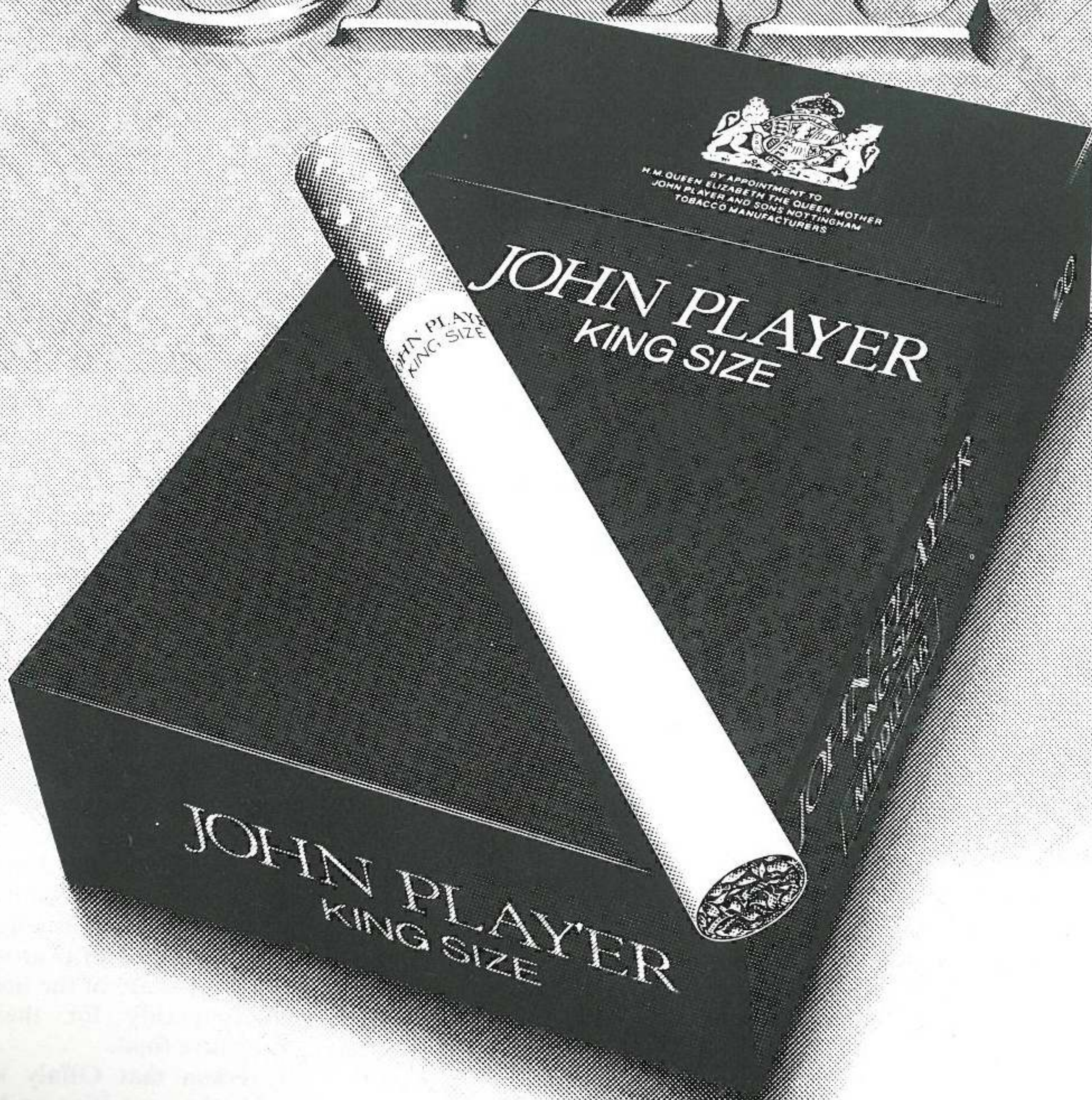
Defeat by Clare would be a severe setback for the future of Tipperary hurling. With that in mind, proud Tipp may produce another herculean effort which could shade the issue but this semi-final also looks most delicately balanced.

With hurlers of the calibre of Tom Cashman, Dermot McCurtain, John Fenton, Pat Hartnett, Jimmy Barry-Murphy and Tony O'Sullivan in their ranks, Cork are, potentially, the most accomplished outfit around and, given their share of the breaks, they should qualify for their fourth consecutive final.

I reckon that Offaly will again provide the opposition on All-Ireland day but will offer much sterner resistance than they did last year.

Certainly, Cork will need to employ every ounce of the valour, perseverance and indomitable spirit which proved invaluable throughout last year's campaign, if they are to retain their crown and record their 26th title success.

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MUNSTER NEWS

By THOMAS O'NEILL

CASTLEISLAND Desmonds the top club side in the country . . . another old firm clash of Kerry and Cork, but with the Ford Cup and not the Munster senior football championship as the prize . . . Waterford down to Division III hurling for next season's National League . . . Tipperary still struggling to regain old status . . . Limerick Hurling League champions yet again.

Yes, it has been a springtime of highs and lows for Munster.

Those of us who were at Tipperary Town for the All-Ireland club senior football final will not easily forget the drama and the glory of it all. St. Vincent's, with quite a few Dublin county players in their squad, started firm favourites, but down South we knew even before the ball was thrown-in that the Kerry team had a better chance than the experts predicted.

It was heart-stopping stuff, though, as St. Vincent's held on grimly to a point lead with time virtually up. Then, into the picture stepped Donie Buckley with as dramatic a goal as one is likely to see.

A sideline kick for Desmonds was expertly floated into the Dublin square by Willie O'Connor. It seemed for a moment as if the ball was to elude a Desmonds man, when Buckley emerged to send it to the net, and give the Kerry side a single point win and their first title — 2-2 to 0-7.

Full marks for Castleisland. They never gave up trying and had many bright stars. But the man who impressed me most of all was Dermot Hannifin, who had a superb game at midfield. It was no surprise that he celebrated his Ford Cup semi-final outing against Armagh at Croke Park with another first-class display.

Hannifin deputised for the legendary Jack O'Shea, and he made a great job of his task. He worked tirelessly all through, and his kicking

was excellent. He finished with three grand points, including the late winning score, and is undoubtedly a footballer who will repay watching.

Kerry's win over Armagh drove home the point that the county has some very promising young men on the way up. The same is true of Cork, whose young team raised much hope for the future with a fine win over Donegal's useful and more experienced outfit in the other Ford Cup semi-final. Average age of the team is only 21.

I am convinced Cork are now on the right track. It may take them a season or two yet to get an All-Ireland title winning team together, but the Leesiders could prove a real power later on in the 'Eighties.

That brings me to Waterford. I must confess that I have not seen the county's hurlers in action for some time. However, memories of past displays in Munster and All-Ireland finals make me very sad as a result of the county's drop to Division III of the National League for next season.

Shades of John Kiely, whom I first saw in the old Cork Athletic Grounds back in the 'Fifties, Tom Cheasty, Frankie Walsh, Phil Grimes, Martin Óg Morrissey and Mick Flannelly.

I was hoping that Waterford would get a good run in the Ford Cup to regroup their forces and regain confidence, but they were well-beaten by Kilkenny in a quarter-final tie and at Waterford.

I don't believe, however, that there is any cause for panic signals. Some would have us believe that the county will slip further back, like Dublin in recent times, but I doubt that. Hurling continues to enjoy much support in Waterford, and I believe time will soon make the events of this spring time an unhappy memory and nothing more.

Waterford should be capable of getting out of Division III after only one season, and wins under the belt,

even in a lower grade, can do wonders for morale and confidence.

So, I'm not too depressed by Waterford's low fortunes at present. They can only go one way now — up. They should do that in double-quick time, and in the process restore some of the old lost pride.

Talking of lost pride, when are we going to see Tipperary with a team of title winning standard? They looked on the brink of greatness again when they were only pipped on the post by Cork at Semple Stadium in a memorable Munster final last year, but somehow that promise has faded rather badly.

The League was a dismal affair for Tipperary ending with a demotion to Division II, and I must admit that I now wonder when the Premier County will again win an All-Ireland title. Their last was in 1971, and that was before my time.

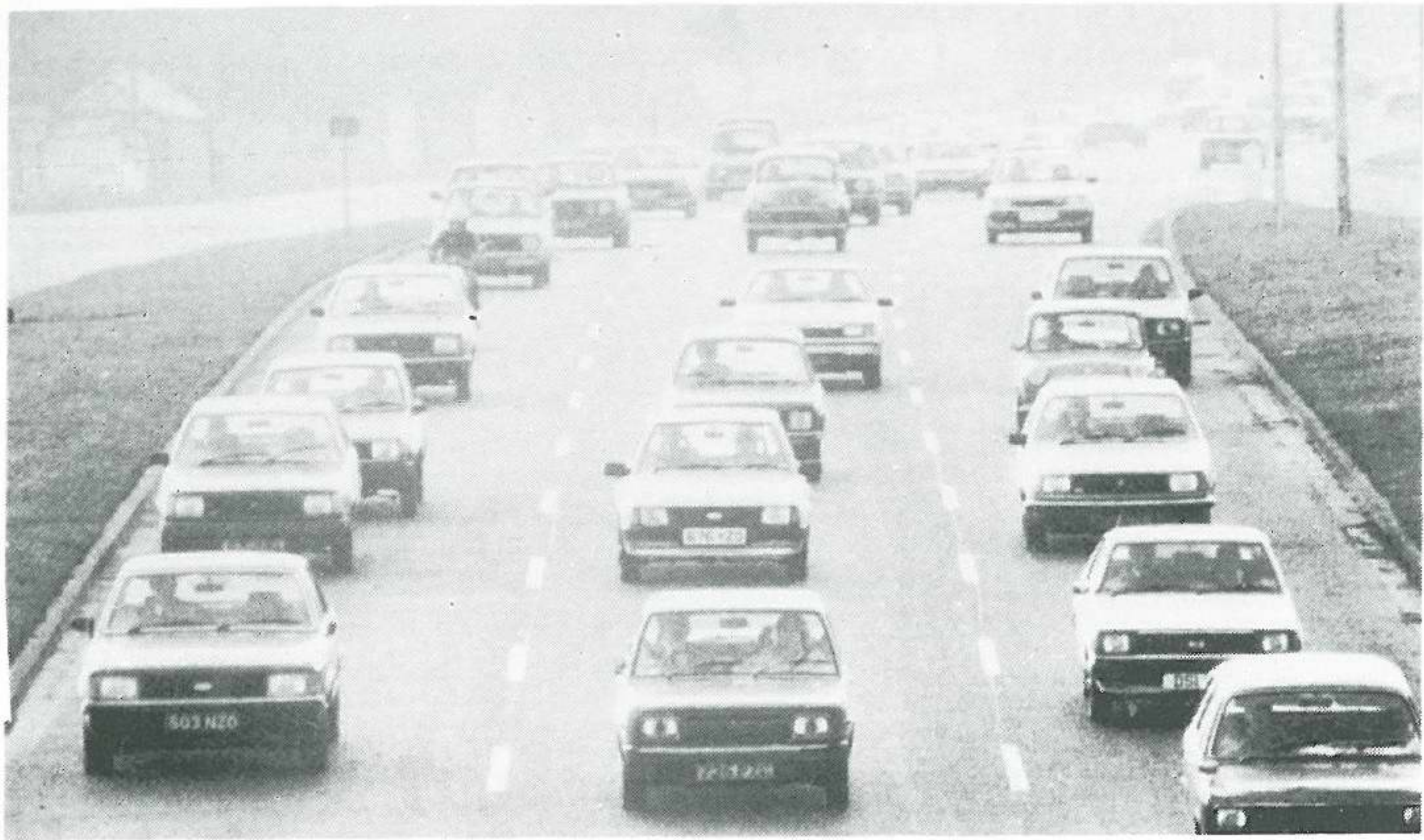
The strange part is that Tipperary have continued to produce hurlers as good as any in the game. Their present team includes some outstanding men, notably Nick English, an All-Star, Seamus Power, John McIntyre and Bobby Ryan, but the match-winning formula over game after game continues to prove an elusive quantity or quality.

I'm afraid we will have to wait a good deal longer now for the much hoped for return to the top by Tipperary.

It is not all doom and gloom in hurling here in Munster. Limerick and Clare did a good job in boosting standards by reaching the National League final, and if the game did not come up to expectations, we still have top class combinations in the province.

I'm impressed by the way this Limerick team has been blending together, and even better days may be ahead. Clare, too, have the hurlers to prove a power for a long time to come, despite that League final setback.

What price another Munster double in the All-Ireland championship? That would be something after the successes we have enjoyed so far. The double is undoubtedly very much a possibility.



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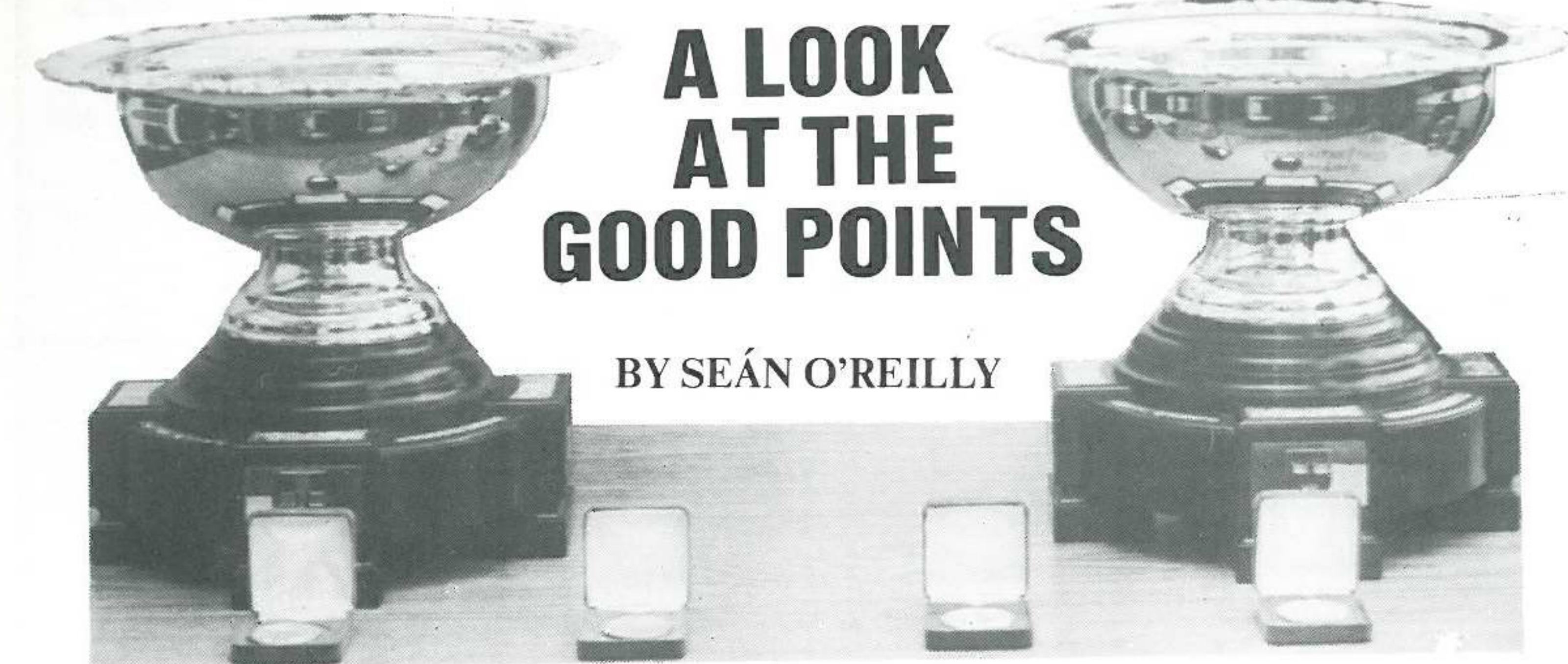
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THE FORD OPEN-DRAW COMPETITIONS

A LOOK AT THE GOOD POINTS

BY SEÁN O'REILLY



LOOK at the positive side of affairs. This is how I counter the criticism of those who have been so vocal in belittling the Ford Cup Open-Draw football and hurling competitions this year.

Some counties did not take part. Some officials described the tests as "fiascos", and other critics were to be heard bemoaning the fact that the open-draw tests disrupted local games in a big way. Really, we Irish seem to delight in the negative approach.

I agree that the Ford Open Draw tests did not exactly set the nation alight, but that is hardly surprising. The open-draw tests are new, and must still find their niche. In addition, the games this year had to compete with the concluding rounds of National Leagues that proved more stimulating than for some years.

Even so, the Ford Open Draw games still brought much needed variety to football and hurling. We had exciting and worthwhile matches as well, some major talking points, and valuable lessons were provided for the legislators into the bargain.

One of those lessons is the great merit in playing up competitions over a short period. For far too long now the G.A.A. has been bedevilled by long drawn out competitions.

We have all heard of county championships starting in April or

May and dragging out until the following year. The playing period for the All-Ireland senior championships — and the other grades as well — is also much too long. A county can, for instance, win an All-Ireland semi-final in early August, and then be faced with a wait of five weeks for the final.

Delays between rounds at under-21, particularly from provincial finals to national semi-finals, have often in the past been very lengthy.

Long delays between rounds hit spectator interest in any competition and prevent a test from reaching full potential as a worthwhile vehicle for the promotion of the game concerned.

The Ford Open Draw competitions were run-off over a comparatively short playing period. We had no postponements, extra time was played when required, and the inevitable result was that the momentum was kept going all the way.

Of course, some were critical of counties having to play matches on successive Sundays. So, what?

Players in other codes do not appear to have any worries in this regard. We even have had teams out on the Sunday prior to playing in a Cup final.

Is it suggested, then, that Gaelic players are not up to the same standard of fitness, commitment or

dedication as those in other codes? I, for one, will have none of that!

Then, there is the novel pairings that the Ford Open Draw games provided. If for no other reason but that the football series brought Cork and Donegal into opposition at Croke Park in April, I would argue that the Ford Cup was worthwhile.

Before the game there was much confusion as to whether or not these counties had met in the past in competitive football. As it was, we had to go back over 30 years-plus for the only other clash of Cork and Donegal in big-time football — a National League semi-final at Croke Park.

SMALL ISLAND

Just imagine, in such a small island as our home, Cork and Donegal have now clashed only twice competitively at senior in the annals of the G.A.A.! If the Ford Open Draw can give us such pairings as Antrim and Limerick, Cork and Donegal, or Fermanagh and Clare at Croke Park, then, I'm all for it.

Similarly, we had Kerry visiting Carlow for a second round game in the football open-draw, and that proved a big occasion in the Leinster county, and one that is bound to

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ARMAGH — LEAGUE FINALISTS '85



Pictured here are the Armagh team who had such a great run in this years National League campaign before being beaten by neighbours, Monaghan in an enthralling final. Many experts tip Armagh as the team to come out of Ulster in this year's championship.

● FROM PAGE 15

prove beneficial in the long-term for the advancement of the sport there.

The Ford Open-Draw competitions are tailor-made as well to provide valuable encouragement for the less fashionable counties. Take, for example, Limerick footballers.

Their achievements in beating Derry and Mayo in the early rounds helped to focus interest and the spotlight on football in the county to a degree that few there could have remembered. Limerick also made a great effort against Cork in a quarter-final, and those three games must do football by the Shannonside a world of good.

In hurling, the Ford Cup also provided Clare, Galway and Kilkenny worthwhile chances to pick up the pieces again after National League setbacks, and so prove a real bridge between the points competition and the start of the championship.

Some have made the point that the attendances were not extra large at the games up to the finals. One must balance that, however, against the fact that over all the games, the crowds were quite good, and for the competition overall, the aggregate attendances will prove very encouraging.

Some say that the Ford Cup competitions have not helped the cause of the open-draw principle for the Championships. Don't you believe it! These tests have proven that the open-draw is feasible in Championship play, even in these days of high travelling expenses. More than that, people are beginning to learn from experience that the open-draw is a fairer way to decide the championship race.

Take championship specialists Kerry. They had to play four games to qualify for the Ford Cup final. That's a contrast with the set-up in the championship, under which it is possible for the Kingdom to win the

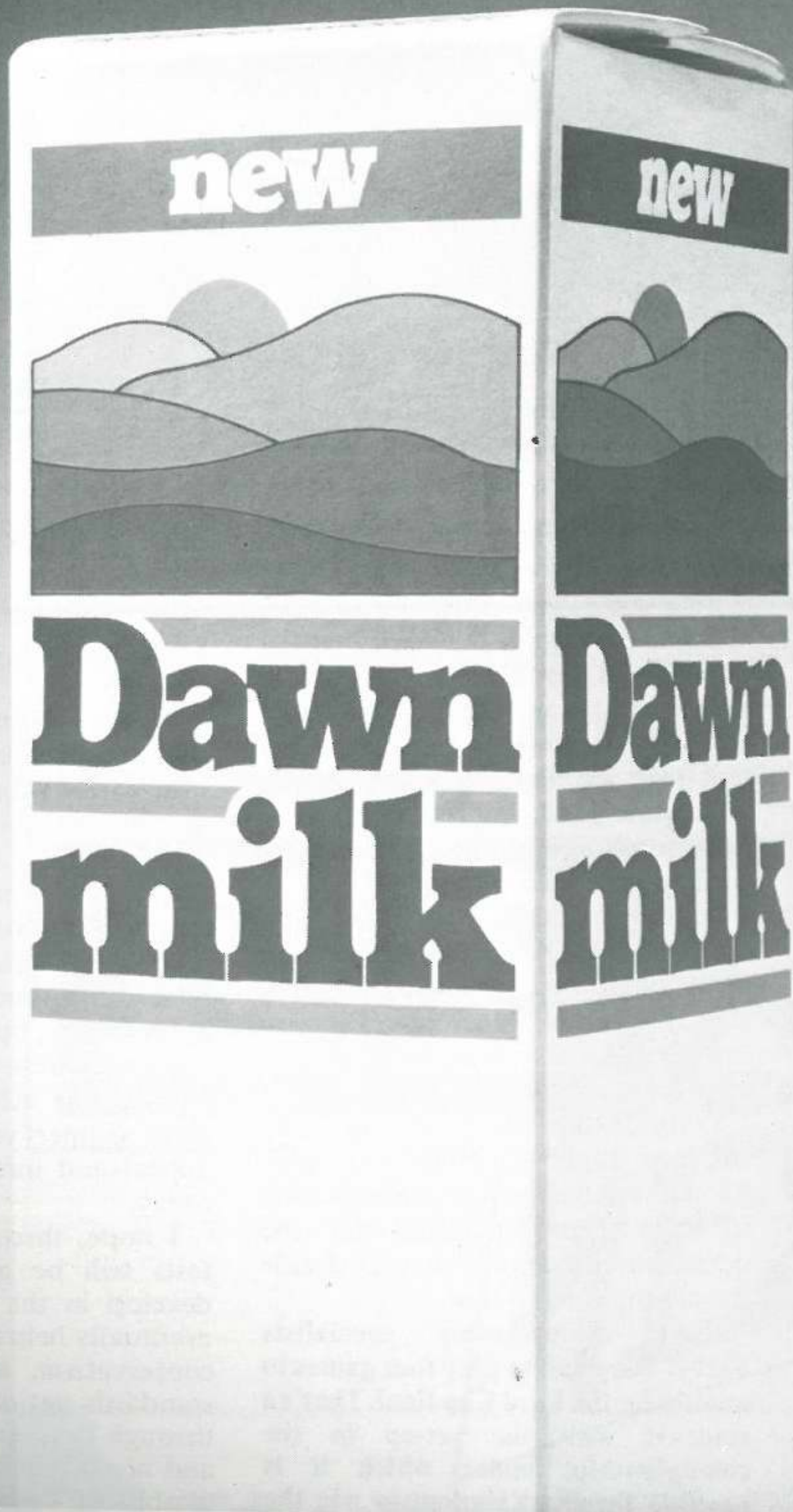
Sam Maguire Cup after only four matches.

As against that, Donegal or Down would need to win four games before even earning the right to win the title in Ulster this year. Equality how are you!

No, the Ford Cup Open-draw competitions have been worthwhile. They have great potential for the advancement of football and hurling in the future, but it will take time for them to achieve that potential. Just as it took the All-Ireland championships proper years to generate the appeal and interest they command today.

I hope, then, that the Ford Cup tests will be given the chance to develop in the future. They could eventually help to break the bonds of conservatism, as well as boosting standards nationwide in both codes through new contacts, new pairings and new encouragement for the less established counties.

Good morning!



BY SEAMUS
HOURIGAN

"The North Began
The North Held On
God Bless
The Northern Land".

YES, indeed, the smiles have been broad in the North in recent times. Four Ulster teams in the National League semi-finals gave football in the province the best possible boost and just when it was needed most. Northern pride had been restored; the Northern Iron was again making an impact.

"Ah, but what about the Ford Cup open-draw?" That's the sly dig the non-Ulster folk have been quick to deliver as a result of the failures of Donegal and Armagh to keep the Ulster banner fluttering proudly at the top of the mast-head in their semi-finals with Cork and Kerry.

Well, what about the Ford Cup semi-finals? Donegal SHOULD have beaten Cork. They had the chances, especially in the first half, but failed to take them, and paid the penalty. As it was, the men from the Ulster outpost on the West coast only lost by a point, and there is no doubt — despite that setback — that this Donegal side has plenty of potential for the future.

Armagh continue to have to settle for "so near but no further". Yet, in losing by just a point to Kerry they put up an encouraging enough show, and once again had they made better use of their chances they might well have at least brought the semi-final to extra time.

Despite those defeats of Donegal and Armagh, the outlook for a more competitive Ulster championship than in many years must be very bright, indeed.

Looking at the state of football up here in Ulster, one can only come to the conclusion that it would be foolish to write off any team. Even

Antrim, who have been so very much the poor relation of Ulster football for far too long, and Fermanagh, still without a senior provincial crown.

The Glensmen had a Dr. McKenna Cup — that's the always competitive All-Ulster pre-championship knock-out test — win over Fermanagh just a week after Peter McGinnity and his merry men beat Wexford in the Ford Cup competition. Then, Fermanagh had a great effort against Donegal in a Ford Cup quarter-final ending in a somewhat unlucky point defeat.

It could be, therefore, that these counties will provide some upsets. One would particularly like to see Antrim back in the top bracket. They have been one of the Cinderella counties for so long now that an entire generation has grown up almost unaware of the fact that Antrim were once one of the leading powers in Ulster.

Mickey Darragh is an Antrim sharp-shooter whom I have admired for some time. Stephen Mulvenna at midfield is another who may help to fuel an Antrim revival in the not too distant future. This Queen's University student is an accomplished player, and Eddie McToal and Fergus Donnelly are others I have a high regard for in the "Glens" combination.

THE SHADOW

One can only hope, too, that Eugene McGee will quickly have Cavan back as a power in the North. There was a time when we used to think that Cavan just could not be beaten in the Ulster championship, but that day has long passed.

I would not like to see a return to the old days when Cavan won the Ulster title year after year, almost by right, but it would be nice to have the Breffni Blue back in the limelight from time to time. The game in Ulster has suffered, I hold, with the Cavan decline, and a strong Cavan side with genuine title winning potential, would liven up the scene.

Believe it or not, Cavan have not won the Ulster crown since 1969. How the mighty have fallen!

Tyrone must be regarded as the unluckiest county in the province just now. The loss of such a gifted

twosome as Frank McGuigan and Patsy Kerlin is a tremendous blow, and, in addition, Eugene McKenna has, of course, been inactive for some time with a hip injury.

I frankly doubt if Tyrone will retain the Ulster crown they won so superbly last July, when Frank McGuigan thrilled us all with one of the best individual performances of all time in any province as he scored eleven classic points in the final triumph over Armagh.

Overall, of course, must loom the Monaghan shadow. I have watched every one of the nine Ulster counties at least once — and some many more times than that — since the dawn of the year, and Monaghan is the team that has impressed me above all others.

I can't think of any team in the past twenty years or so that has had so much going for it at the dawn of a new Ulster title race than the Monaghan outfit that won the National League title.

Take any yardstick you like, and Monaghan measure up. They have the players capable of winning the title — the League break-through proves that. They have a maturity, burnished in the unnerving atmosphere that is Croke Park in big games, and the confidence that winning brings. But more than that they have the up-and-at-them approach from first to final whistle that is so important.

Many Ulster counties have failed in modern times because they did not back up their strong points by ceaseless and tireless effort right through the 60 or 70 minutes. No team can hope to win top honours by playing merely in fits and starts; the effort must be consistent and determined all the way.

The Eugene Sherry-led crew from the county of the Little Hills put in the effort from first to last, and backed up their fierce resolve with tons of skill to reap a rich harvest. But, strangely enough, many to my knowledge, still do not rate Monaghan as an Ulster title winning team.

We hear talk about Down, and that great tradition for delivering the goods in the championship. But the

● OVERLEAF

● FROM OVERLEAF

facts are that Down have not been delivering the goods in the Ulster series, and I thought their display when losing out to Armagh in the National League semi-final was very poor.

No doubt the two Paddys, Kennedy and O'Rourke in the heart of the defence, Brendan McGovern, big Liam Austin in midfield and darting corner forwards Mickey Linden and Brendan Mason and their colleagues will step up on that showing. To my way of thinking, Down have a lot of ground to make up.

Donegal, I feel, have missed the boat. Remember, they were only beaten by Galway by a point in an All-Ireland semi-final nearly two years ago, but they have not really built on that performance. Their basic problem as I see it is a lack of scoring power. Take Martin McHugh out of their attack, and they have no one else with the ability to slot home the scores regularly.

Armagh have failed so often in the crunch games that faith in their

ability has worn thin. They still have some good footballers, and one will certainly watch the future development of Joey Cunningham, who was only a minor last season, Des Seeley, the best acquisition to the attack in a long time, and newcomer Liam McCorry, son of a famous father, who stepped into the full forward post for the Ford Cup for the first time.

Nevertheless, I think it will take something out of the ordinary for Armagh, something they have not shown any signs of producing — if they are to win out.

At the same time, one must not lose sight of the fact that the championship evokes an extra special response from the Ulster men. Every county in the province has its sight firmly set on the provincial crown this year. Never, in fact, have so many counties held the conviction that each has an equal chance of going all the way.

All of which should make for exciting fare for followers, with keen games, full of enthusiasm and competitive spirit. At the end of it all,

my view is that Monaghan will survive.

They have great workers in defence, with McCarville, Sherry and the Murray brothers, Ciaran and Brendan mighty giants. Midfield is good, and Eugene Hughes, Eamonn McEaney and Ray McCarron will help to pressurise the best of defences.

In fact, I hope that Monaghan win. I say this, even though I have no allegiance to the county, coming from elsewhere in the province.

If they did get through they would prove the best equipped team from Ulster for an All-Ireland title bid in years, thanks to that Croke Park know-how, and the confidence of the League title win.

But if Monaghan make it, then, look out the rest of Ireland. The draw brings the North and Munster into opposition in the semi-final.

That's another day's work, however. For now, let's keenly anticipate the Ulster championship and hope that all our expectations will be realised with a great competition, and a great team to carry the banner into the national chase.



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WELL DONE, MONAGHAN!

SALUTE TO AN HISTORIC VICTORY

By DAVID O'REILLY

IT is amazing how some people delight in jumping in to loudly damn with faint praise any worthwhile achievement, whether it is in sport or in life in general. A case in point is provided by Monaghan's superb feat in winning the National Football League title recently for the first time in their history.

An outstanding feat that by Monaghan. They have delivered another worthwhile and timely blow against elitism — the cult of the major titles in Gaelic games being the preserve of the few. Monaghan have shown that any county with the players, the necessary dedication and the determination, can get to the top.

No sooner, however, had they chalked up their historic win over Armagh in the rain at Croke Park than many of the knowing ones were off looking for anyone at all to listen to their comments.

"Nice to see a new county like Monaghan take the title". Then came the inevitable "But".

"But they didn't beat 'anything'. If Kerry or Dublin had been there Monaghan would have been beaten 'out of sight'."

What a warped outlook! Kerry and Dublin were there, or to be more accurate, they started out in the National League campaign back in October. In fact, Dublin beat Monaghan in the first round and in Monaghan. It is a tribute, then, to Monaghan that they were able to recover from that dismal start and go on to win the League, whereas Dublin spluttered along after that win, and eventually had to settle for a place down the Division II table.

As for Kerry, they had as good a chance as any side at the start, but failed to finish in a prominent place in

Division I. Those cynics I have just mentioned will say that the Kingdom were not interested in the League. I will have none of that.

Besides, those same cynics were to be heard last September forecasting that Kerry had such a depth of talent that they would follow up the Centenary Year final win over Dublin with another run in the All-Ireland championship to match the near record of five titles in a row that was spiked by Offaly in 1982. Where was that talent in the League run.

No, let's forget about the sniping, the talk about a hollow win because Kerry and Dublin were not beaten in the campaign. Instead, look objectively at the Monaghan title win, and give credit unstintingly where it is due.

Take Monaghan's refusal to accept second best. It would have been easy for the team to have forgotten about League ambitions after the loss to Dublin, but the footballers showed the right spirit in battling back.

Consistency was another vital factor. Monaghan played eleven games in the campaign, and did not lose a single one after that first round meeting with Dublin. That says a lot for the efforts put in by the players both on the actual playing field, and in training for matches.

A team that comes successfully through a long, hard haul like that and in such a grand fashion, can unquestionably be described as true champions. Indeed, the League is more a test of a champion combination than the All-Ireland championships.

The Sam Maguire Cup can be won by some counties — Kerry is a case in point — after only three serious games. As a test of dedication, heart

and stamina, the championship, then, hardly compares with the League, which furthermore is played for the most part in the poorest weather conditions.

EXTRA EFFORT

While the National League lacks the glamour of the championship, it still takes that extra effort all round to win the winter test. Monaghan proved the best in the 1984-85 series, coming from the unfashionable Division II as well to get to the top, and deserve nothing but the height of praise for the title win. To try and diminish the success story because the final win was not at the expense of such as Kerry, Dublin or Meath is grossly unfair to Monaghan.

The Ulster players did what they had to do, and finished the most worthy of winners.

Those who would try and take from Monaghan's success also overlook many of the fine qualities in the team.

Monaghan have footballers second to none in the game. We knew that even before the National League began. After all, most of the players who helped to bring the Cup to the county were in action in the great if unavailing effort against Meath in last year's Ford Centenary Cup final.

Monaghan played some excellent football in that game. One recalls the excellence of Gerry McCarville at full back, the tireless play of Eugene "Nudie" Hughes, and the finishing of Ray McCarron from the Centenary Cup competition, for instance.

McCarville was excellent in the League final, and in earlier ties. He has shown against a variety of opposition that he is one of the best

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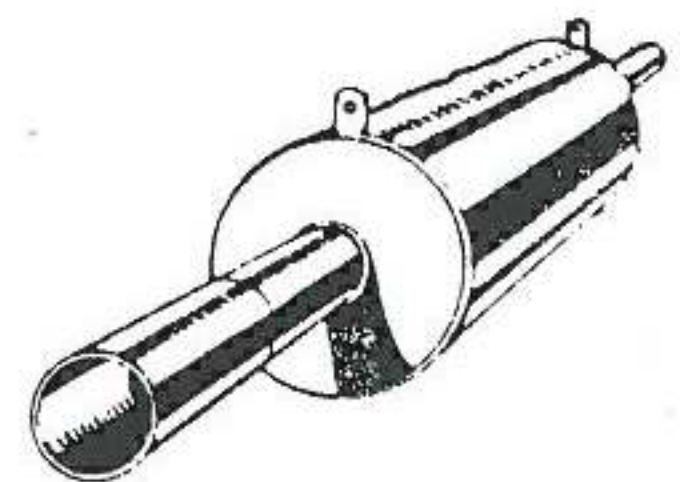
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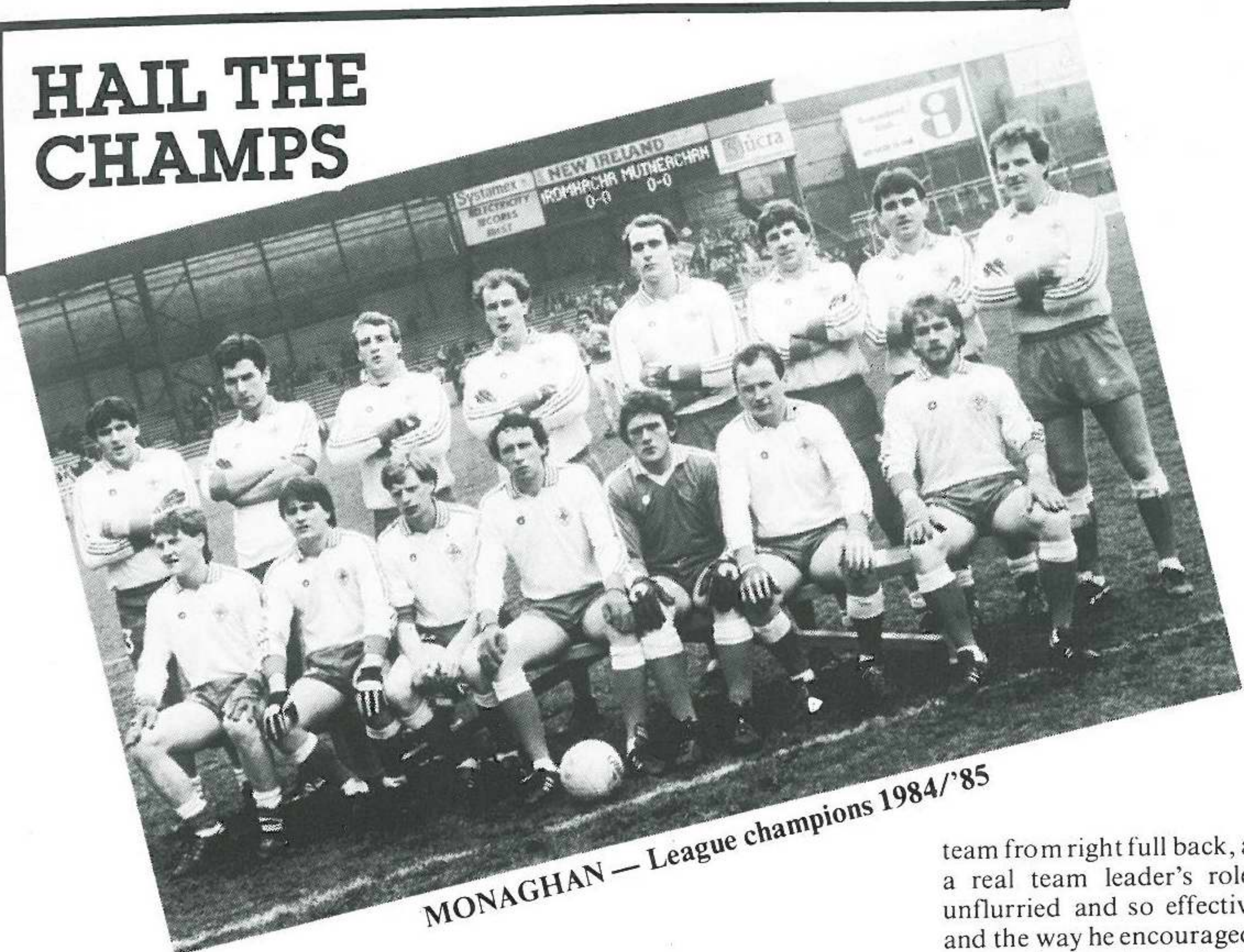


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HAIL THE CHAMPS



MONAGHAN — League champions 1984/'85

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full backs in the game. Many would argue that he was Monaghan's "man of the League run overall". Certainly the Scotstown club man can look back with delight on his own contribution to the success story.

Hughes missed some of the earlier games as he was in America. On returning to the attack earlier this year he brought all his old flair and drive, and Monaghan were all the more powerful as a result.

McCarron was outshone at times in the scoring by Eamonn McEaney — his penalty goal in the final will become part of the folklore of Monaghan football — but the right full-forward still contributed in rich measure to the victory march with some superb scores, not to mention his good work in general play.

THE BROTHERS

I was greatly taken as well by the Murray brothers, Ciaran, who is 22

and Brendan 19, from Clones, in the half back line.

Ciaran, in the demanding pivotal role, "tamed" some of the best centre half forwards in the country during the League run, and Brendan pulled his weight to the best possible effect at No. 7.

I made David Byrne, from Inniskeen at midfield, another of the successes of a team that backed up the skills and ability of the players with a fierce "will to win" that reminded me of the determined approach that we have long associated with Down teams.

Monaghan just refused to accept defeat, particularly after that so sad start against Dublin, and that was one of the real reasons why they were able to turn the skills and by now considerable Croke Park experience in the side, into such a power-packed and unstoppable force.

Here, too, one must pay tribute to Eugene Sherry, who captained the

team from right full back, and played a real team leader's role with his unflurried and so effective football and the way he encouraged the team.

No, forget about the begrudgers (we will always have them anyway). Monaghan are as good National League champions as we have seen in years. They won the title the hard way, over a long and testing campaign; they produced a high standard of play, showed a refreshing willingness to work for one another, and time and again over the run they had the men to step into the picture and colour games with their own individual brilliance, and so steer the course to a new milestone in the annals of Gaelic Games.

I salute Monaghan! Not merely because they are National League Champions but in taking the title they proved the doubters wrong, and in the process showed that where there is a will, backed up by hard work and commitment, the counties that we like to term the "less fashionable ones" can show those regularly among the titles of Gaelic football that they cannot take anything for granted.



ALL-IRELAND FOOTBALL C

“WE MAY SEE A GALWAY- COUNTIES HOPING TO SEE T

BY EAMON

‘Give us an idea of the All-Ireland football championship this year’ says Tommy McQuaid, so here I go, peering with tired, aged eyes into the crystal ball so often clouded and quite often also over the years showing with beautiful clarity the wrong picture. So after tearing out the phone and locking both doors I fan the flames of dying courage and begin.

TO suggest that Kerry won’t win the Munster football championship in July is an open invitation to have one’s head examined. That was the cruel news a great friend of mine gave me the other day. Hard to blame him and he from West Kerry. Indeed there are a lot of chaps not similarly privileged, who agree with him.

Though I couldn’t help hearing a fine Kerry player say to a comrade after the defeat of Munster in the Railway Cup that the great days are over, I’m certain there are enough good men in the Kingdom to put it up, honest, skilful and square to the best in the land IF they get out of Munster.

Kerry will play Limerick or Waterford and while as always I have the greatest affection for the men who organise the football in the “weak” counties of Munster a defeat of Kerry by either would indeed be a surprise. Limerick and Waterford with the scalps of Derry, Mayo and Louth on their belts are as good as many of our counties but then there is only one Kerry.

On the other side of the Munster draw Cork will play Clare or Tipp at a venue favourable to these counties. Cork, nosedived into Division Two of the League, are in no position to look down on anybody and indeed if we’re not careful we’ll be among the weak counties ourselves. The team is quite young (average age at this moment is twenty-one which is probably the youngest in the country) and though it has shown some merit of late with wins over Armagh, Tir

Eoghain, Kildare, Cavan, Limerick and Donegal, the mercurial form of young players gives little reason for flights of optimism.

Tipp and Clare both can play quite well and at home, are always very useful. I won’t forget the day in Ennis when goalie Billy Morgan, was flexing his muscles and waiting for the penalty, when a young lad threw a fist of sand in his eyes. Morgan saved the shot.

I’m not telling that story to discredit Claremen, who are among my favourite sportsmen, and the incident could just as easily have happened in Cork (where once we stoned Johnny Culloty from behind the goal). It is just that home venues can indeed become very formidable. Still Cork are favourites just now to meet the Kingdom by the Lee in July and to glance back at the opening lines, I’m not making an appointment with a psychologist for the moment. In Ulster anything could happen.

I talked with many men up there recently when Cork footballers played Tir Eoghain in Omagh. Let me digress for a moment to salute the men who built that splendid St. Enda’s G.A.A. club house there, an edifice where tasty brick has provided a large hall, dressing-rooms and areas of relaxation that are a credit to our community.

Ulster has three outsider counties Fermanagh, Derry and Antrim. Either of the other six could win the Ulster

championship and obviously the three are not banished either.

Donegal have Down in Ballybofey on May 19 and the winners meet Monaghan in Castleblayney or Newry. Cavan are home to Antrim a week later and the winners meet Derry or Tir Eoghain. If Tir Eoghain survive the joust with Derry in Ballinascreen they may come out of the four but anything could happen on the other side where Armagh or Fermanagh meet Donegal, Down or Monaghan.

At this moment Monaghan claim public favour but there are several good horses in this race. Art Mac Rory the Tir Eoghain manager rested ten of his men in that recent Ford Cup game with Cork and probably did a wise thing in testing many of the reserves whom he had been carrying on the panel for some months. Michael Burns of Monaghan, a quiet realist, knows well the merit of his rivals in the North and so I think while we give his county the nod here, just anything could happen.

GREAT SON

In the West the race doesn’t hold so many runners and consequently there isn’t the same area of doubt. Roscommon start off by playing London and while an exiles’ win would bring a cheer it is indeed unlikely. All the Connacht teams have played over there on the Whit weekend in recent years without losing. The big date for Roscommon (if they win in London) will be June 9 at home to Galway, Connacht

CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

V. KERRY FINAL WITH 30 THE CUP GO TO THE WEST"

N YOUNG



champions for the last three years. This is almost the same Roscommon team for the last few years and that truly great son of Roscommon Dermot Earley and his friends Tony and Eamonn MacManus, Harry Keegan, Tom Lindsay and the rest are trained by the Derryman Sean Young who works in the bank in Boyle and trained them for the League final a few years ago.

Galway have been up and down like the bucket in the well but had a good game recently when beaten by Kerry in Tralee. They are trained by Cyril Dunne and with Willie Joyce in charge of the juniors and Martin Newell guiding the U-21 there will be a high grade of skill and spirit on tap for the sides, while Jack Mahon the football chairman will infuse, as always, the firm determination, reliability and manliness that were essential facets of his own game. Brian O'Donnell, Tom Tierney, Barry Brennan, Pdraic Kelly, Seamus MacHugh and Pat O'Neill are only a few of the good men there.

Sligo led by Sean Kent and Martin MacCarrick take on Leitrim where Micky Martin in form plays terrific running football. Anything could happen here. Mayo await the winners and if Dermot Flanagan, son of that fine player Sean, the very skilful MacStay who kicks accurately with either foot, Tom Byrne the big corner forward, Sean Maher the young centre-fielder, whose fetching delights the old-timers, all play well then the side stands a good chance of getting through to the final. Could it be a Galway-Mayo tussle this time in Castlebar? That's the way it looks, though, as stated, there are many obvious suggestions.

Jack Mahon says with a smile "We are as good as any of them. The team that will beat Galway will get out of Connacht and I'm looking forward to Croke Park in September with maroon jerseys to liven it up".

Leinster with its twelve counties is more unpredictable even than the North. Wexford and Carlow have come out rather well in the League; Meath are always very sound; Laois are improving enough to make anybody worry about trying to beat them and that bunch from Offaly can be so grim and determined when the chips are down that all past performances, some of which were not great, must be forgotten.

Wicklow, Louth, Longford and Westmeath may not be great just now but one can never ignore the possibility that somewhere tonight there's a small bunch of men huddled together to talk and plan football knowing that work and shrewdness are paving stones on the roadway to success.

Kildare have a fine very capable side but just how unreliable can they be? I think they're just as good as anybody and indeed they have proved it, but what happens when the last fierce effort is needed? I don't know and all we do know is that the Leinster title has not travelled to the plains of Kildare as often as Matt Goff, Larry Stanley and Paul Doyle might have expected.

Dublin had a bad League and have lost two grand footballers in Tommy Drumm who has gone abroad (I hope not for good) and that splendid veteran Anton O'Toole who has retired. Barney Rock will probably come back into form after that unsporting injury in the Australian tour and Ciaran Duff is in top form,

while Brian Mullins is moving and thinking with the same durability he has shown before now.

Tony Hanahoe is using his good head behind the team and when I asked Kevin Heffernan he was as usual sensible and realistic.

"Take Kerry out of the championship and it's ten to one on any other team. In Ulster any of four could come out and there are at least three in Connacht. If we can get over the first round against the winners of Longford and Wexford we stand a chance because we'll improve. The trouble all over the country, apart from Kerry, is in the forward line. If our men can improve a little here, and some of them are moving fairly well, we'll be hard enough to beat in Leinster. After that only God knows."

The crystal ball is a sphere of frustrating opacity just now. I just can't see anything, and must return to the dreadful world of realism I try so hard to escape.

Will Monaghan or Armagh get out of Ulster? What are Galway's chances of slipping out of the west. Will Dublin be just a little too tough and tight at the last moment in Leinster and will the Kingdom have their usual good luck against a young Cork side by the Lee? Galway and Dublin would make a good semi-final and this might go west this time.

Kerry (if they escape) should still finish a point ahead of the North and we may see a Galway-Kerry All-Ireland with thirty counties hoping either openly or secretly that the cup will go west.

After all that, what say you to a magnificent All-Ireland football final watched by 80,000 between Monaghan and — of course — Cork?????????

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BY BROTHER PERKINS

I would like to see a man like that great "Gaeilgeoir" and historian Br. Liam P. Ó Caithnia undertake a work like "The GAA and the Christian Brothers."

His outstanding book "Scéal na h-Iomána" will live forever. I have only a few hours to put this small essay together. So please excuse the inexperience of one who is more interested in the hurling field and the "Clash of the Ash."

In the famous Diary (Cinn Lae) of Amhlaoibh Ó Súilleabháin, he gives a few accounts of hurling being played in the "Fair Green of Callan." Hurling was not always well received by the clergy there on account of rowdiness that often followed it. Under the date of 6/6/1928 he tells of boys running away from the field where they were hurling (probably "The Green") when they saw the Parish Priest coming.

Brother Edmund Rice was born in the early Sixties of the eighteenth century. There were nine children in the family and all were much respected in the locality for their culture and generosity — especially during the Penal times. "Edmund Rice grew up, full of life and fun. He and his brothers were keen sportsmen. Fishing, hunting and the national game of hurling were but some of their recreations." From "Steadfast in Giving."

Life was tough for the Christian Brothers in the early years of the order's foundation. They not only taught the boys but oft times fed and clothed them. Our national games had almost disappeared in the poor towns where the Brothers were sent to teach.

If one were to judge by the "Christian Brothers Books" their development of the whole man, body, soul and mind and the great nationalists and enthusiasts they produced, they must have sown rich

seeds of nationalism and love of the Gaelic way of life. Pádraig and Willie Pearse went to the CBS in Westland Row and many of the members of Conradh na Gaeilge and our Irish Civil Service had got a good all-round education in the many Christian Brothers' Schools throughout the country.

The spirit of Nationalism was always strong in the schools and rather than receive money from an alien government that wanted their kind of books, religion and way of teaching, the Brothers did not receive any government pay 'till 1925.

Hurling and football was readily received in the Christian Brother's Schools. The Rules of the Order were very strict at this time and even on Sundays Christian Doctrine was taught and a strict time-table had to be adhered to.

Gradually hurling and football was played on the half-day and after the half-day on Saturday the boys stayed on to train or play leagues or matches. In 1918 Dr. Harty presented the Dr. Harty Cup to the schools. Rockwell College won it in 1918 but the North Mon (1919) and Limerick (1920) brought it home on the two following years. Thurles won this cup three times in the Thirties and three times in the Fifties. Even very small schools took part in this competition and brought honour to their town and club with some excellent displays. We saw Mount Sion (1953), Tipperary CBS (1959), Ennis CBS (1962) and Templemore CBS (1978) win with teams that later laid the foundations of fine County teams.

Rugby was the traditional game in Limerick at the beginning of this century. In fact they won the Rugby Cup and the Harty Cup on the same year. However, it was Gaelic games that took over in the CBS of the City of the Treaty Stone after this, and has



BROTHER EDMUND RICE

been one of the strongholds of our Gaelic games up to the present day. In the Primary Schools the old *Ola Cup* competition brought crowds to all its matches.

The founders of the Mount Sion club were Br. L. O'Connor and An Br. S. Ó Maoileoin. How many GAA men are grateful to the *Mon.* and O'Sullivan's Quay, to Tralee, to Scoil Mhuire and St. Joseph's (cradle of the St. Vincent's Club), to O'Connell Schools and Synge St., to Kilkenny CBS and Thurles and to the many other schools that now have a strong club and a Gaelic spirit, thanks to the many Christian Brothers — some still well-known, others seldom spoken of, who laid many a solid foundation for great teams and disciplined players.

Will we ever forget that great Kerryman, Br. Larry O'Shea, whose love for hurling was infectious, who made hurleys and in fact sent two miniature hurleys to Pope Pius XII. Brother D. Murray, Chairman of the Munster Colleges for so long, died only a few weeks ago. The Br. White Corn Ui Mhuiri (Munster Colleges called after him) Cup is for under 15 hurling in Munster. The cup for the All-Ireland Senior Football Colleges competition is in memory of Br. W. Hogan, a brother of Michael Hogan from Grangemockler, who fell in the

TO PAGE 29

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FROM PAGE 27

Tipperary colours mortally wounded on Bloody Sunday in Croke Park (1921).

Br. J.V. Hutton revived the Rural Schools Competition (1940) in County Tipperary. The Br. Doody Cup is for the u/14 Rural winners in the same county.

The Br. Rice Cup was originally for schools in the Diocese of Cashel. Twenty Christian Brothers schools from Wexford, to Midleton, to Ennis now take part in this great u/14 hurling competition.

In Belfast, Derry and in the other Northern Counties, Gaelic games are being played with great enthusiasm and the spirit of a United Ireland burns through the veins of the Brothers and the boys who love to play hurling and football beneath the banner of the Red Hand of Ulster. The spirit of Setanta and Cuchulainn lives on keeping alive the great traditions of the past that united all our brothers, our schools and our people together, through music, song, dance and the playing of the games of the Gael among many people who are oft times more Irish than the Irish themselves.

In Dublin, where Cusack himself played hurling in the 1880's, the Christian Brothers Schools from the biggest school down to the smallest Primary, had nearly all their pupils playing Gaelic games.

It would be a history worth writing, to tell of the fortunes of the many famed schools of the Christian Brothers, the cups they won, the competitions in which they took part, and the finals in Croke Park when the whole school went to see them play or take part in the sports and athletic contests.

Phoenix Park was chock-full in the evenings and on Saturdays. Many a Brother's voice was heard throughout this level plain, and much sweat and blood was lost when urging on their pupils, from all over the city. Here were they coached, here they got their first love for the games. Were it not for those same Brothers who sacrificed meals and rest, for the thrills of Phoenix Park and other less extensive parks in Dublin many a Dublin boy would never have played

our games. The Brother from the broad county and the boy from narrow streets became fellow brothers, as they thought of nothing else but hurling and Gaelic football. The whole county was united here and played as if all were for the same county.

Sunday was not a day of rest at all, if a Brother could not get to Páirc an Chrócaigh. Here the Brothers met in groups. Not always had they the money to get in under the Cusack Stand. The G.A.A. knew their worth to the Association and they were issued with "Aon Bráthair amháin" tickets which were much appreciated, especially if an enthusiastic Brother wanted to attend more than one venue on the same day. Some were able to be in Parnell Park in the morning, Croke Park at 3 p.m. and visit O'Toole Park in the evening.

The Brothers also picked teams from amongst their own young stalwarts at a time when they could not play with a club. They played teams from North and South of the city or other school teams and Religious Orders.

Oh! how much we looked forward to going on holidays to the seaside, when we could hurl all day. In the evening time the local club were glad of the opportunity of a challenge-match against the Brothers, where some really outstanding material was to be seen on the Brothers team.

Kilkee, Tramore, Youghal, Gorey, Wexford, Ardmore, Castlegregory, and the Gaeltacht areas remember with pride these stirring and often hectic matches against the Brothers, whose lungs were free from nicotine and whose breath knew not the dangers of alcohol.

Yes, we can remember great Brothers who trained great teams and whose names were heard of in more than one county. The list would be long and worthy of the Order that gave so much to the Gaelic Athletic Association.

It was not the GAA they were thinking of during their times of training and coaching. They were thinking of those boys they helped to have an interest in life. The spirit of freedom, the love they bore for Ireland



was in their souls. They loved the games. For them the language and the Gaelic games were the soul of Ireland and their enthusiasm knew no bounds. They needed no reward but to see more young people playing the games every young Irish boy should play.

Those Brothers, I would like to be remembered, are those men who never hit the headlines — the Brothers who took out their own class or classes, who in second, third, fourth and fifth class prepared the boys for keener competition — the men who built up a nice team in first year and laid the foundation for, maybe, a Harty or a Hogan Cup. These are the men who gave the young adults a love for the game, who insisted on the "three D's" — **Discipline, Dedication and Determination.**

The work still goes on surely and sincerely. We thank all the good teachers who have been with them in the great work they undertook down the long years. Much needed help has come to the schools and the G.A.A. fully appreciates the enormous work of promoting our games in the schools and among the clubs.

May their work continue as enthusiastically as of yore. Let us give each boy, as is his right, the chance to play our own National Games — the greatest games in the world.

Decline of Connacht is most depressing aspect of football in 'Eighties

By TOM HORAN

THE most depressing aspect of football in the 'Eighties in my view has been the steady decline of the game in Connacht. It might be too harsh to say that Western football lies in "slumbers deep", but certainly things have come to a sorry state when all the counties are being dismissed as serious contenders for the All-Ireland series.

A low water-mark was surely reached in March, when Mayo travelled to Askeaton and not only lost to Limerick in the Ford Open Draw knock-out competition, but finished as many as ten points in arrears!

Well done, Limerick. I have no intention of belittling their great feat one iota, but let's be honest, the Shannonsiders have not been a power in the game for as long as most of us can remember. Mayo have slipped badly as a power themselves in modern times, but even so this was one game that most expected they would not only win, but win comfortably.

That they were humiliated — and I don't think that is too strong a word to use — is a further indication of the steady decline in Connacht standards.

It is difficult to know what has gone wrong in the West. Mayo, themselves, are a case in point. Indeed, one might say that they mirror the Western scene perfectly.

Even though one has to go back to the early 'Fifties for the last All-Ireland triumphs by Mayo, the county still proved a formidable power up until some years back. However, there has been a bad slump

in the present decade, and it is not easy to pinpoint a solid reason for the decline.

Mayo — like Connacht in general — continues to produce good players, but they appear unable to blend together a full squad of accomplished footballers capable of moulding into a combination to test the best.

A reason might well be the fact that the county has not enjoyed any worthwhile success for a long time. It is difficult for young men to live on the glory of the past, especially as that past is becoming dimmer and dimmer as the 'Eighties grind on. Mayo has lost the habit of winning major games, and without the stimulus of regular title wins young men are sapped of the incentive for making the extra special efforts that are required for glory at the highest level.

Mayo badly need an All-Ireland senior title win to restore the old pride, and to rekindle the long lost tradition as a football power. The question is: How can they forge out that championship break-through? I honestly cannot offer an answer.

The same situation can be said of Galway. How we sigh for the days when men like goalkeeper extraordinary Johnny Geraghty, Enda Colleran, John Donnellan, the mighty and inspiring figure, Mattie McDonagh, and Cyril Dunne, one of the greatest scoring "machines" ever to emerge from the West, blazed such a glorious trail with three All-Ireland senior football titles in succession from 1964 to 1966 inclusive.

Not many who delighted in the sparkling football produced by the

Galway men in that era could then have believed that come 1985 the county would still be striving to add a single All-Ireland senior title to that treble. Or that Galway could have by then acquired something of a reputation of being "always the best man, never the groom", with unsuccessful outings in four All-Ireland finals in the meantime.

The heart seems to have gone out of Galway football since the defeat by Dublin in the controversial Sam Maguire Cup game of 1983. They had a poor enough League run last season, and did not cut much of a dash either in the Ford Centenary Cup.

A steady stream of good players continues to be produced by the county. Men like Seamus McHugh, Pat O'Neill, Brian Talty, Stephen Joyce and Barry Brennan spring immediately to mind for recent years only, but the old flair, the old enthusiasm and drive, and above all the scoring skills exhibited to such an exciting degree by the men of the 'Sixties and earlier, has been sadly missing.

Remember Galway's dismal display when crashing to Kerry in last year's All-Ireland semi-final? Some said after that twelve points defeat that it would take decades for Galway football to recover, and I am beginning to believe there may be some truth in that.

Roscommon continue to flatter to deceive. Their form is in-and-out, and after a bright enough start to the decade with an All-Ireland final outing against Kerry in 1980 — a game I maintain they could have won — they have not accomplished much.

The pity of it is that such a great footballer and outstanding sportsman as Dermot Earley, whose senior inter-county career goes right back if I am not mistaken to the days of Galway's last All-Ireland title win of 1966, when he was a teenager in the premier grade, now will almost certainly bow out of the game without the most coveted medal of them all.

Roscommon did better than the other Connacht teams in the Ford Cup, and were only pipped at the post

by a late Eoin Liston point for Kerry at Tralee in the quarter-finals. The other side of the coin, though, is that Roscommon scored only eight points in that low scoring game, and that has long been a problem for the county. A dearth of scoring forwards, and without consistent marksmen Roscommon have been doomed to walk in the shadows in their quest to add to their only All-Ireland title wins at senior of the 'Forties.

Sadly, although perhaps not unexpectedly, Leitrim and Sligo have not been able to take advantage of the decline in standards in what one might call the "Big Three" of Connacht football. It would have been something to crow about had either county stepped in with a couple of Connacht title wins, but that has not happened.

Indeed, as the standard has declined in Galway, Mayo and

Roscommon, the same thing has happened it would appear in Leitrim and Sligo.

LATE STAGE

Yes, Connacht football is in a sorry mess, and I'm not looking forward with any relish to the Western championship. Competition may prove keen, but I suggest that this will be due to moderate standards, rather than what we would all like to see — a provincial championship between teams of equal strength, and with each, or at least two or three displaying the form to suggest that the eventual winners would go on to enter the All-Ireland series with a genuine chance of outright victory.

Alas, this will not prove the case. There is little that can be done at this late stage for the 1985 All-Ireland series, but after the Connacht bid for

glory in the Sam Maguire Cup race has petered out, it might be well worthwhile if officials in all Western counties got together for an in-depth look at the position, and to make plans to try and improve matters on a provincial basis.

Football needs strong Connacht champions in the All-Ireland series. And, wouldn't it be nice if after the long barren spell, the period in office of Dr. Mick Loftus as President was marked by the return of the Sam Maguire Cup to the West?

But that will not happen the way things are going at present. So, this is not the time to stand still and allow matters to drift as they have for years; rather is it a time for concentrated efforts to get Connacht, as the old ballad would have it, "awake" again in a football sense.

'THREE IN A ROW' HISTORY MAKERS . . .



Pictured here are the Galway three-in-a row team of the 'Sixties. Not many who delighted in the sparkling football produced by the Galway men in that era could then have believed that come 1985 the county would still be striving to add a single All-Ireland title to that treble.

JOEY'S of FAIRVIEW

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HANDBALL ROUND-UP

By SEAN CLERKIN

THE Senior Singles 60 × 30 Championship which is promoted annually by Coca-Cola is still the glamour event of Irish Handball and at this time of year evokes considerable attention, both from participants and fans of the game.

Attention is again being focussed on Kildareman, Tom O'Rourke, who won the title in magnificent style last year and subsequently received the B + I Handballer of the Year Award.

He, like the list of other participants is ready for the "off" and for a number of months, up to the eves of the All-Ireland Finals, will provide abundant entertainment in various courts through the country.

An early prediction would certainly install O'Rourke as champion for another year, but cognisance must also be taken of the many young players who are straining at the 'bit' to wrench the title from him.

Amongst these one finds former champions Tony Ryan from Tipperary and Ollie Harold from Kilkenny, John Fleming (Wexford) and Billy Burke (Kilkenny), the latter two having taken the junior singles titles in recent years and of course the fabled Quish brothers from Limerick.

Though I am of the opinion that the Quish brothers will again be in pursuit of honours in the doubles code, having completely monopolised it last season.

U.S. TESTS

A matter of more immediate concern to handballers is the USHA Championships which are being held in Tucson in mid-June. Ireland will be represented in the Under-23 and Open Championship and, in line with the trends of recent years, our players

will give a good account of themselves.

Indeed, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that we could take the honours in the under-23 event,

Clare's John Duggan led the way in this regard when he annexed the under-19 title at the USHA Junior Championships in Cincinnati, last December.

This victory was a watershed in the context of Irish handball, breaching, as it did, the barrier between juvenile and adult levels, relative to our participation at international level.

Now we wait in great expectation for a victory at under-23 level.

Meantime, it is interesting to note that the Irish Handball Council is in the process of making plans for the 1986 World Championships, which will be held in Kelowna, near Vancouver, Canada.

It would appear that there will be an official playing party of six, three of whom will take part in the Open events and a single representative in the under-23, Masters and Golden Masters Championships.

NOVEL ASPECT

The Handball Council will be organising trials at the end of this year and these will certainly prove to be very competitive.

A novel aspect of these trials is that they will only be brought to the semi-final stages and then suspended for a couple of months.

During this time, the players still involved will be invited to participate in special fitness training and coaching programmes. When the trials are resumed it is on the cards that we will witness the fittest players ever to compete in the semi-finals of competitions staged in this country.

In turn, the ultimate winners will

form the strongest team ever to leave these shores.

One of the most encouraging aspects of handball in recent times has been the resurgence of the game for women.

Under the administration of President Brídín Uí Mhaolagáin from Dublin and Secretary Mary Connolly from Belfast, the girls are back in great numbers and there is a renewed enthusiasm abroad.

In a recent inter-club competition over one hundred competitors turned up and the ensuing fare was of the highest order.

Like their male counterparts, who are making their competitive presence felt, the girls from Belfast were very much to the fore. The young St. Pauls squad hit the headlines in earnest with a great win in the Juvenile grade, while Rossa, also from Belfast and powered by Secretary, Mary Connolly, went to the final, where they were beaten by Oldtown.

The consistency of Oldtown over a long number of years has been a life line for ladies handball and reflects tremendous credit on those administrators in the club, who strive to promote it.

An interesting award at these games was made by Mick Dunne of RTE to the lady, who had been the greatest exponent of ladies handball over twenty years.

This award originated from a donation received by Mick on his RTE Sports programme for the promotion of the ladies game.

A stipulation was that part of it should go towards honouring the top exponent of the game over twenty years.

On a country-wide vote of clubs it went to President Uí Mhaolagáin.

Another major boost for the Ladies Council is that Dublin players Liz Nichol and Susan Carey will be participating in the USHA Championships in Tucson.

It shows tremendous dedication on the part of these two players that they will be travelling to the games at their own expense.

Such example provides the life blood for any sport.

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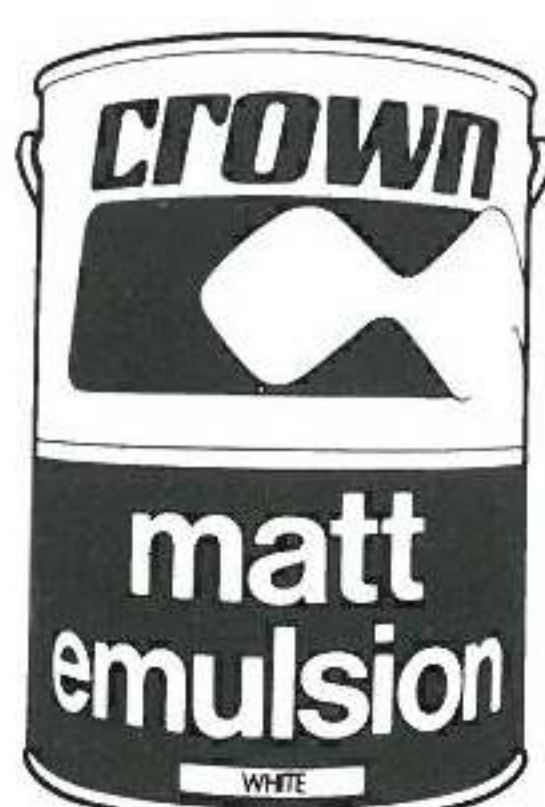
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MARY LYNCH IS ELECTED 20th PRESIDENT

By MARY MORAN

MARY Lynch became the twentieth Uachtarán of Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael at Annual Congress in Ballinasloe. A native of Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, she is the first lady from her county and the fifth from Ulster to take over the prestigious position.

Mary's association with camogie goes back to her school days. As Mary Kelly she learned the basics of the game in the local secondary and adapted so quickly that she made the county team while still a schoolgirl.

Mary took up an appointment in the Civil Service and was placed in the Office of the Land Commission in Dublin. She joined the Celtic Camogie Club and immediately made the first team. It is worth noting that this famous club numbers five Presidents from the ranks of its former players.

The Dublin Selectors recognised Mary's playing ability and named her at left-wing on a Dublin side which won Leinster and All-Ireland medals. She brings to eight the number of All-Ireland senior medal holders who have become Uachtarán.

On the occasion of her marriage to Willie Lynch, a Carrickmacross hurler, Mary settled in the Co. Monaghan town. Family commitments curtailed her camogie involvement for the next few years. However, she did find time to coach the local schoolgirls.

Mary passed on her love of Gaelic games to her children. Her three boys, Brendan, Bill and Tony have hurled for Monaghan. Her only daughter, Marion is well-known in camogie circles. She played Ashbourne Cup with U.C.C., fielded with Monaghan and now coaches in St. Columba's College, Stranolar.

Camogie in County Monaghan fell away in the fifties. In 1962, a determined effort to revive the game was made and to establish it on a firm footing. Mary stepped forward to fill



Bridget Linden, Assistant Secretary of Monaghan Camogie Board presenting a bouquet of flowers to Mary Lynch following her election as President of the Camogie Association.

the role of County Chairman and guided the revival successfully. She acted as trainer-manager to the county teams putting her own inter-county experience to good use.

Her initial connection with Ulster Council was as a Monaghan delegate but she progressed to hold each position on the Council in turn. She served as a member of Árd Comhairle and sat on the Fixtures and Referees Committees. When the All-Ireland Primary Schools Council was established, Mary was named as a member.

COMMUNITY WORK

It is perhaps as a referee that Mary is best known. She has officiated at minor, junior and senior All-Ireland Finals. She finds time also for community work. She has assisted the local Social Services, Care of the Aged, Youth and Recreational Organisations and Girl Guides.

Mary hopes to see an improvement in the standard of refereeing, better team management and greater attention to administration during her period in office. The manner in which she took over Congress, dealing efficiently with the remaining business, suggests that she will see her aspirations to fruition.

Congress in Ballinasloe will be remembered more for the friendly welcome and meticulous attention to

detail of Galway officials than for the decisions which were taken over the weekend. However, players will show interest in the new look Gael-Linn Competitions. Like the Railway Cups, the inter-provincial camogie championships have been on the wane.

For the next two years at least, the eight teams will assemble at the central venue. Four semi-finals will be staged on the Saturday followed by the senior and junior finals on the Sunday. This move will bring the best players in the country together and provide an opportunity to see and meet one another.

The wide gulf between the junior and senior inter-county grades was another matter which had the attention of the delegates. Hitherto the winners of the All-Ireland Junior Championship automatically moved up to the senior grade. Some counties experienced great difficulty in finding their feet in the higher grade.

A motion passed at Congress will upgrade players from a junior county who have won medals in consecutive years. This will allow these players to become established and to prepare for promotion. An award for the referee of the All-Ireland minor final, an adult membership fee and an earlier date in the year for National Camogie Day were other matters sanctioned.

GAA Reporting by Paddy Downey



Paddy Downey has been Gaelic games correspondent of *The Irish Times* for more than twenty years.

In that time he has earned a nationwide reputation for his knowledgeable and perceptive reporting of hurling and Gaelic football . . . for his sound judgement and the flair with which he captures the colour and thrills of the big occasion—and big occasions are many in Gaelic games.

His reports and comments, his criticism when that is necessary, are always balanced and fair. But then, you'd expect no less from a writer who has won the Gallaher and Benson & Hedges awards as Sports Journalist of the Year four times in all in the past fourteen years.

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LEINSTER NEWS

By PAUL RYAN

HURLING and football in Leinster have been overshadowed to such an extent by events in Munster and Ulster particularly that many followers from the East would be hard-put to recall that their province holds the Railway Cup for the big ball game. Not only that, in recording wins over defending champions Ulster and Munster, the Brian Mullins-led outfit brought the trophy back to Leinster after a lengthy interval of eleven years.

But the "pickings" have been pretty lean for the province in the meantime. No Leinster team reached the semi-finals of the National Football League or the Ford Open Draw Cup in the code, and Offaly alone carried the Eastern banner through the last four in the Hurling League.

A disappointing enough spring-time, then, for Leinster, that rare Railway Cup football title win notwithstanding. At the same time, I think we can look forward to interesting days in the championships. There are many skilled players in both codes in Leinster, and there is nothing like the championships for bringing out the best in hurlers and footballers, and teams in general.

What I would dearly like to see is a return to the top in hurling by Wexford. I'm not old enough to remember the days of the Rackard brothers, and Nick O'Donnell, Padge Kehoe and Tim Flood, but I heard so much about those big-hearted teams of the 'Fifties, that I have always had a special grá for Wexford.

In my own time I have thrilled to the exploits of such as Tony Doran — what an exciting goal-poacher he proved — Mick Jacob, Willie Murphy, Liam Bennett, Colm Doran and Ned Buggy, as Wexford have promised so much without fully realising their potential.

The All-Ireland senior hurling final that I remember most — I will

admit that I have not attended all that many yet — is the 1976 clash in which the Slaneysiders blazed into an eight points lead in the first few minutes, but were eventually beaten by Cork.

It seems to me that Wexford have an appeal all their own. I am by no means the only non-native of the county who earns an extra special thrill when going to Croke Park to see the Slaneysiders in action in a big game, and the sporting scene — in my opinion anyway — is all the more alive and exciting when Wexford are motoring well.

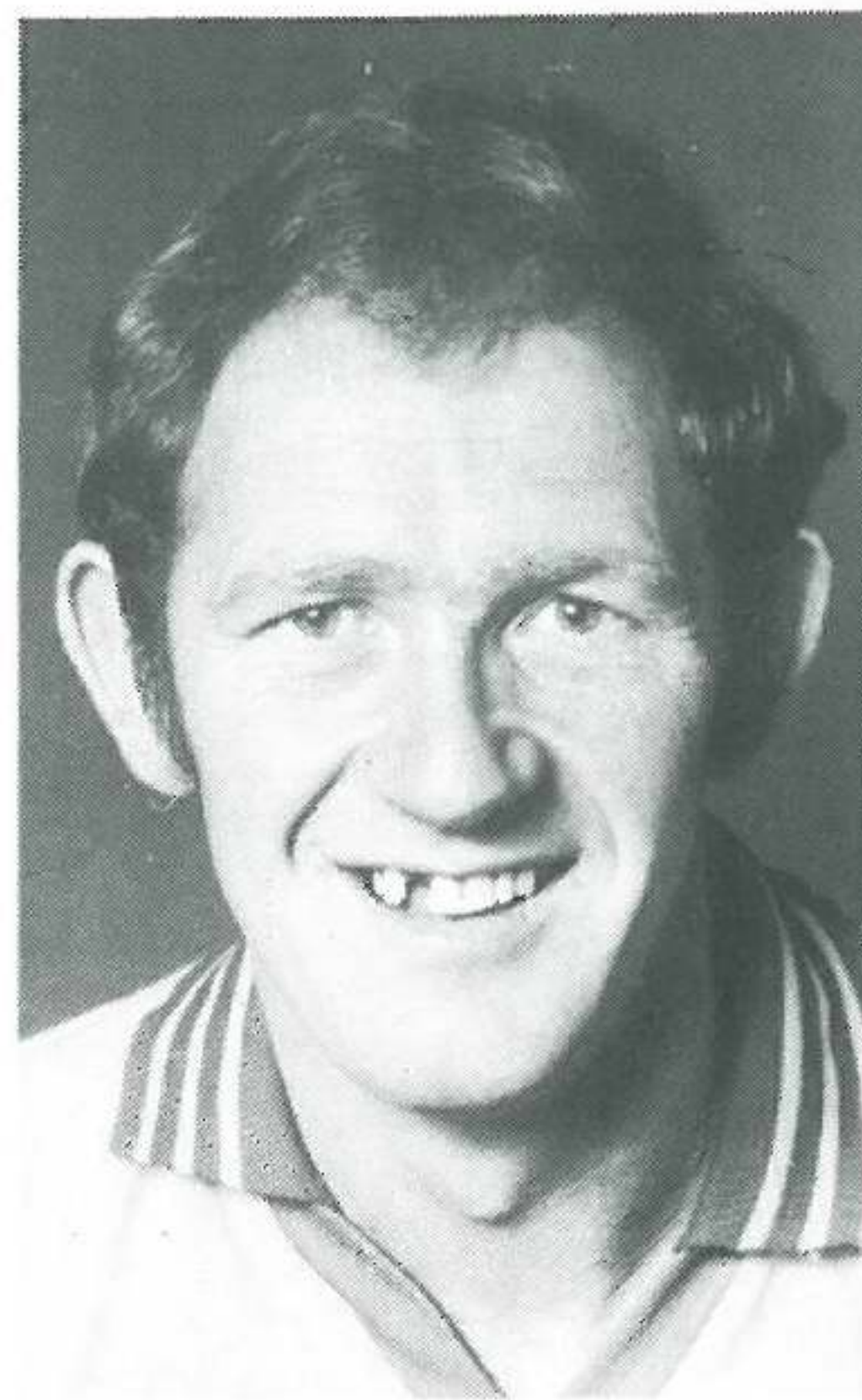
I felt a real pang of regret when the county lost to Laois last March in the National League, and thus crashed to Division II for next season. The heart-break was eased somewhat when Wexford bounced back with a Ford Open-Draw win in the first round over Cork in a cracker at New Ross in March in as good a game as I have seen this year. Then, just when I believed that Wexford were ready for a good run in the series they were shocked by Tipperary by as many as seven points — again at New Ross in round two.

What a cruel let-down! Still, Wexford have some accomplished hurlers, including John McDonald, a fine marksman, Martin Fitzhenry, who can also take a score, Billy Byrne and George O'Connor at midfield, and Eddie Cleary and John Conran in defence, and they might well give us something to cheer about yet.

As for Kilkenny, I suppose it was only natural that, having sipped so well at the sweet cup of success for so long, they would reach a low plateau like the one they have been experiencing more or less since the shock last minute defeat by Wexford in the 1984 Leinster semi-final.

WORTHY SUCCESSOR

It will take some time to become adjusted to the sight of seeing



TONY DORAN, WEXFORD

Kilkenny in action without the flamboyant style and heart-stirring excellence in goal of Noel Skehan. What a remarkable goalkeeper he proved to be over such a long, long period. Kilkenny will not look the same for most of us without Skehan.

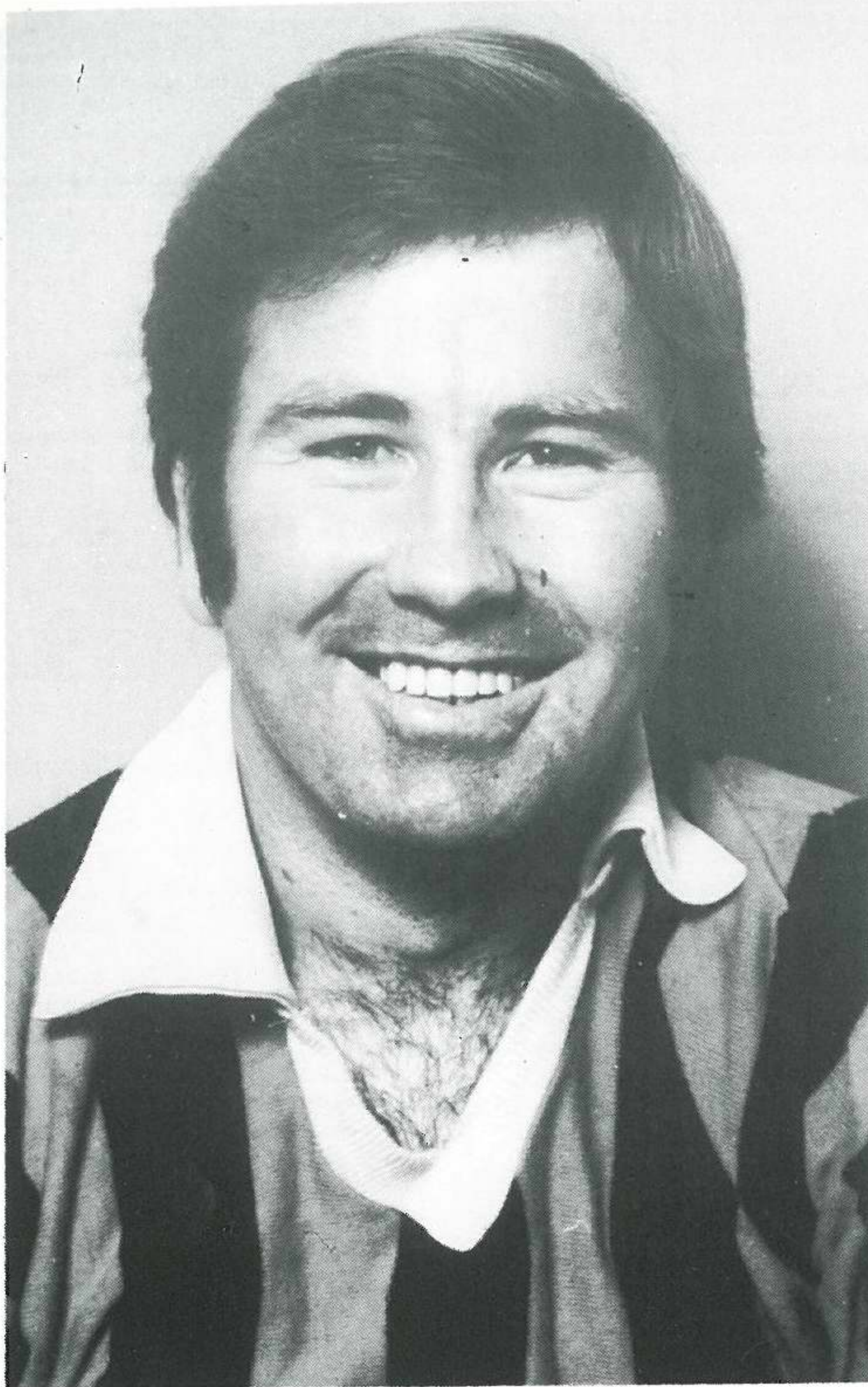
He is the only man I ever saw between the sticks in the Black and Amber, and his retirement is the end of an era.

By all accounts they have a very worthy successor to the great Skehan in David Burke. I have still to see the 21-year-old in action, but from what I have been told he is a goalkeeper well above the average, so the Noresiders will continue to have plenty going for them in the last line of defence.

Clare's crash to Limerick in the National Hurling League final puts an outsize mark against Kilkenny. Keen followers of the game will remember that the Leinster county lost to Clare in a replay in the quarter-final, and the Banner County crash in the final is not a good advertisement for Kilkenny.

What is a good advertisement though, is the continued good scoring form of Kieran Brennan, who is proving one of the best finishers in the game. The Henderson brothers, John

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NOEL SKEHAN — *Kilkenny will not look the same without him.*

● FROM PAGE 37

and Ger, the Heffernans', Ray and Christy, are among the other assets in the team. Then, there is that great Kilkenny tradition. There was a time when I belittled tradition, but in the past few years I have come around more to the belief that there is something to be said positively on this score.

We can't overlook either the fact that St. Martin's brought the All-

Ireland club title to Kilkenny in March, so that despite the recent lack of success at national level in inter-county games, hurling is alive and well in the Leinster county.

At the same time, I think it may take Kilkenny beyond this year to hone their team and get the combination, the confidence and strength from goal to left full-forward to relive the great days of the 'Seventies and early 'Eighties.

What a surprising situation in Dublin — the senior hurlers have won Division I status in the National League for next season, the footballers still ranking as a Division II team.

I'm delighted that Dublin hurlers are back in the top bracket. I think the game will benefit greatly as a result, but there is a wide gulf between Division I and Division II — Dublin learned that lesson themselves in their quarter-final with Limerick, when they were well beaten.

It will take an extra special effort from Dublin, then, if they are to go places in the championship, although one should not overlook the fact that they gave Offaly a tremendous fright last year when they were only beaten by three points.

Vinny Holden, John Twomey, Eamonn O'Shea, Joe Towell, Maurice Hurley and their colleagues did a good job in boosting Dublin standards in that game. Unfortunately, Towell has since retired, and his flair for poaching goals will be sadly missed this year — all the more so as the Dubs are not rich in accurate finishing forwards.

So, to Offaly. I don't believe they did themselves justice in the Centenary Year final at Thurles, and their form when giving Limerick a real run in the League semi-final at Thurles at the end of March, when they lost by three points, suggests the Midlanders are the best in the East.

WAY BACK

Men like Aidan Fogarty, Pat Delaney, Joachim Kelly, Pat Carroll, Pdraig Horan, all members of the history-making team of 1981 that won the All-Ireland, have still plenty to offer. Joe Dooley and Paddy Corrigan are bright lights among the younger brigade who will also help to fuel the Offaly effort this year.

What of the football scene? I doubt if the position appeared so unexciting as it is at present — despite the Railway Cup title win. After the Ford Centenary Cup win by Meath last year, I thought the county was on the way back, but I'm a little pessimistic about the game in this once great

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AFTER THE EMPHATIC LEAGUE VICTORY
LIMERICK FOLK ARE CONFIDENTLY SAYING . . .

Now For The One!

NOW for the big one! That is the reaction in Limerick with the National Hurling League having — to the surprise of many non-natives of the county — been successfully retained.

The final win over Clare in April at Thurles was an unexpectedly comfortable one with as many as eleven



A proud Leonard Enright holds the National Hurling League trophy aloft, after leading Limerick to victory over neighbours, Clare, at Thurles on 14th April last.

By PAUL RIORDAN

points between the sides at the finish, but Limerick folk are hard-headed enough not to be lulled into a false sense of security as a result. Sure, it was great to prove many of the doubters way off the mark by lifting the title for the ninth time. It was a very encouraging performance for the future, coming as the win did at the end of a long campaign that started under the clouds of the shock loss to Cork in last year's Munster championship semi-final, and the subsequent retirement of Joe McKenna.

But no one in Limerick is going to talk glibly about a golden September — at least not just yet. The memories of that crash to Cork in last year's semi-final in the knock-out competition, coming as it did following a first National League final win in years, and at the Gaelic Grounds as well, are still too deep. Officials, hurlers and supporters in the county appreciate full well that, despite the achievements in the League, Limerick have mountains to climb before they can hope to anticipate a Liam McCarthy Cup triumph in September.

The lesson was learned the hard way last season. And, realists that they are, Limerick folk will also concede that Clare did not do themselves justice in the League final. The Banner County men are capable of much better things than we saw in that game. Limerick, then, may not be as powerful a force as they appeared at Thurles.

No doubt the League final experience will stand Clare to good stead.

They have many talented hurlers as well, and all in all, he would be a foolish man who would lightly dismiss the League runners-up in the reckoning for the Blue Riband title.

Then, of course, there is Cork, always a mighty power in the championship. It will be Limerick's tough luck that if they get over their opening hurdle against Waterford — and, no disrespect to Waterford, that's one game the League champions should win — they will have to take on the All-Ireland title-holders at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. No easy task that at the best of time.

So, it will be time enough to start talking in terms of a first All-Ireland senior championship for Limerick since 1973 after they get a few wins under their belt in the premier competition.

Having said that, one must also look at the positive side of affairs . . . and there are many positive features that augur well for Limerick as they build-up for the mighty tests ahead. One, of course, is that they will have Joe McKenna on hand again, and this will prove a real bonus.

The Offaly-born hurler, who has given such wonderful service to Limerick over the years, was injured in last year's Munster semi-final, and subsequently retired from the game. However, he has been back in action of late, and there can be little doubt that this one-time goal-getter supreme has still plenty to offer the side.

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THE NEW BOYS

Not that there is much wrong with the Limerick attack this season. New boys Ray Sampson, who won All-Ireland Colleges' senior hurling medals with St. Flannan's, Ennis, in 1982 and 1983, Pat McCarthy and Shane Fitzgibbon have injected new flair, drive and scoring power up front.

This is especially true of McCarthy, who succeeded McKenna at full forward at the start of the League and can, by no stretch of the imagination, be described now as the under-study to the former great ace in the No. 14 jersey.

McCarthy, who is only 22, has

"come of age" in recent months, and his goal-getting flair in the League rivalled McKenna in his best days.

Sampson and Fitzgibbon are showing as well that the young men of today are just as good as the heroes of the past, and with Paddy Kelly sending over the points with silken skills, and Ollie O'Connor working solidly as well, Limerick's attack is going to prove a problem for the best rearguards around.

Nor are we likely to see the Shannonsiders give much away in defence. Tommy Quaid is back where he belongs in goal. Granted, he showed some nice touches as a forward during a brief stint in the attack during the League, but the goalkeeping post is the correct job for Quaid. He will not let many past him.

There is tremendous outfield cover as well for the net-minder. Leonard Enright, who captained the team to the League title win, is one of the veterans of the side at 34, but there has been nothing jaded about his play so far this year. He remains a full-back as good as any around.

The other divisions at the back are capably manned, and with a solid midfield to link defence and attack, Limerick are certainly well-armed for their championship bid.

But can they succeed where they failed last year? If they had Cork at any other venue than Pairc Uí Chaoimh — and apologies to Waterford for dismissing their chances in round one, but I feel I am a realist — I would be strongly tempted to row in with Limerick for the Munster title at least.

HARD LESSON

Not simply because they are League champions. But because they showed that they have moulded together a pretty powerful combination over the past nine months or so.

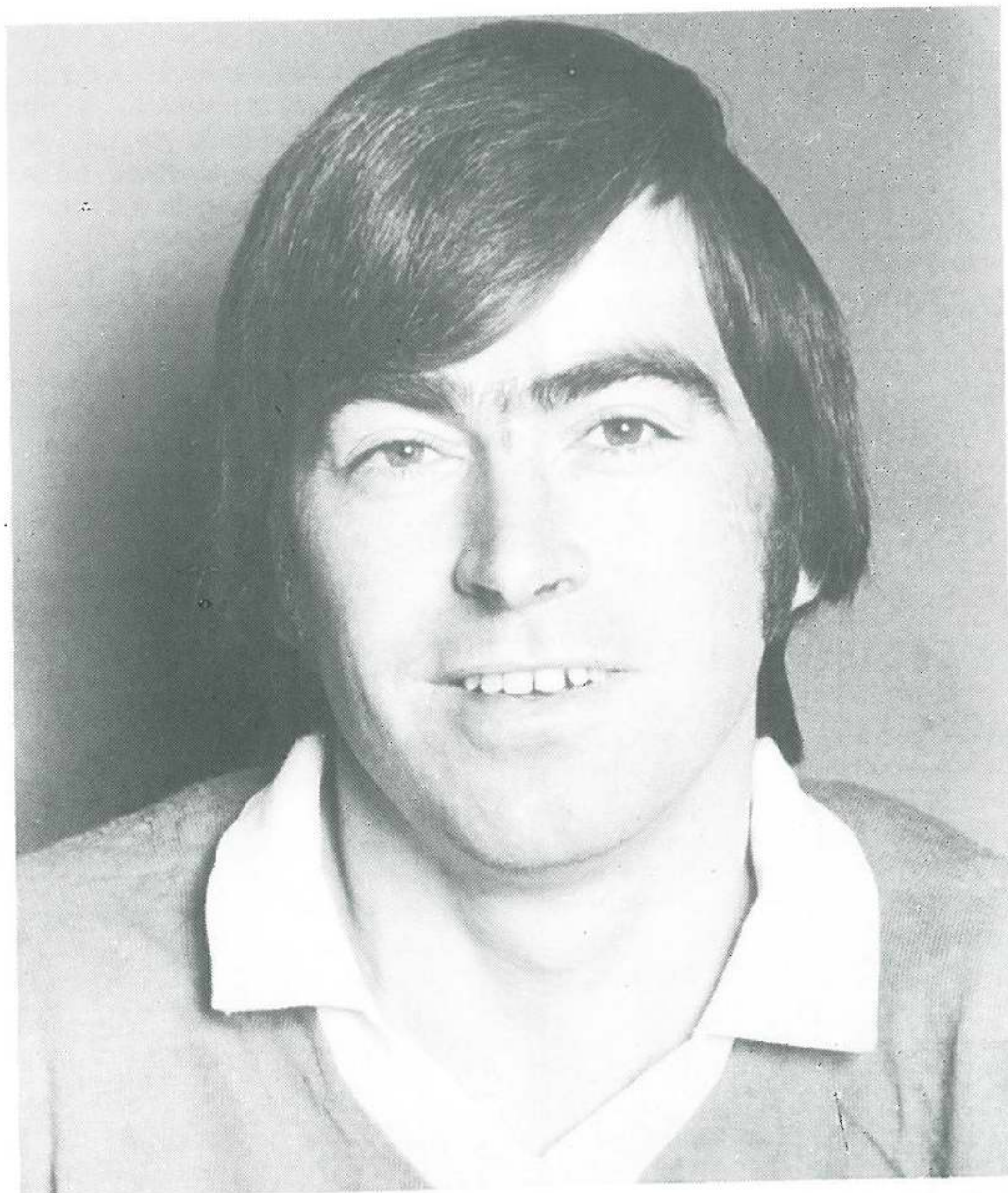
Moreover, the hard lesson from last year that there is many a slip between the League title and the All-Ireland championship in the one year will surely prove a powerful incentive to Limerick this time.

However, Pairc Uí Chaoimh will be worth a few scores to Cork, who have not, of course, been enjoying much success of late, but can always be depended on for a special effort in the Championship.

Still, I believe that Limerick are capable of taking the hurdles in the championship on the way to the final quietly in their stride, and the more I look at things, the more I feel they will reach the concluding round.

And, in the other half of the draw, I look to Clare to prove what I have said — that they are a better team than the League final defeat suggests — and earn their place in the show-piece game of the year in the South. If this double forecast of mine proves correct, then, what a crowd-packer we would have in the Munster final.

Beyond plumping for a Limerick-Clare game, however, I am not prepared to go at this stage.



Limerick ace forward Joe McKenna on hand again for the championship which should prove a real bonus for the county.

JUNIOR DESK



By
**JACK
MAHON**

OUR Cut-Out this month is Offaly's Joachim Kelly, a man who has been in the van of maintaining Offaly's presence at the top of Irish hurling. A fit and sporting player, his greatest display was in the All Ireland S.H. semi-final v. Galway in Thurles last year. Towards the end of that game he could almost make the ball talk.

COACHING COURSE

I was a panellist for a forum at the National Coaching Course in Galway just after Easter. It was a very enjoyable occasion. Excellently chaired by Jim Carney, our panel included Sean Purcell, John Connolly and Eddie Keher. One of the social evenings later that week was most enjoyable. With Tommy Riordan our M.C. the highlight of a famous night was Eddie Keher on his guitar accompanying former Wexford star, Martin Codd, singing "BooLavogue".

Another highlight was the singing of the song about Nicky Rackard by Mrs. Martin Jacob. And this reminded me of another night in the same *Sacre Coeur Hotel* in Salthill (this really is the home of the Gaels in

Galway) when on the occasion of the Scór na n-Óg Finals, a lady singer from Ballinamore sang at my request the lovely tributes to John Joe O'Reilly and Phil Duke from Stradone. (These stars will never be forgotten).

Later on in Junior Desk I have included some G.A.A. book reviews. But here is one I received at Congress in Ballina — *Crossmolina G.A.A. Year Book 1984* (Costs £2 without postage from John Harkin, Crossmolina, Co. Mayo). This is Mickey Loftus's club and he has always been its staunchest member. In fact he was chairman of the club in 1984 and there was not a thing he wouldn't do for his club.

He has been a great motivator too and the club is ticking along beautifully as one of the finest units in the G.A.A. Get this Yearbook and you'll see how the club is everything in Crossmolina. **And it really is.**

MORE BOOK REVIEWS

The Blues - St. Finbarrs of Cork by Sean Beecher — a history of the famous Barrs is a mammoth publication of 500 pages and is littered with photos old and new. Some as old as

1890. As you'd expect it abounds with famous names like Jimmy Barry Murphy, Charlie McCarthy, Con Roche, Tony Maher, Gerald McCarthy, Mick Kennefick, Sean Condon . . . the names that glitter from this book are too numerous to mention. The Barrs are a fine club. This club history so well bound and printed does them proud.

Enquiries to Goldy Angel Press, Avoca, South Douglas Road, Cork.

Centenary Tribute to G.A.A. in Wexford is a superb 112 page magazine published jointly by the Wexford Co. Board Centenary Committee and issued free with *The People Newspapers Ltd., Wexford*. Very well illustrated with photos, nicely laid out, good captions, all-embracing. The People Newspapers Ltd., Wexford, deserve credit for their free production. Many provincial papers produced supplements. Some didn't. This one is a county history. Write to the People Newspapers Ltd., Wexford and you might be lucky enough to get a free copy. Send on £1.00 to cover postage.

Doire - A History Of The G.A.A. in Derry is a beautifully bound history of 250 pages. Different page size from

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the usual. Lends itself to good photos. Much easier to read than the history of the Barrs for instance. I loved Paddy McFlynn's reminiscences of his days in his native Derry and his lovely tribute to Paddy O'Keeffe. Also Jim McKeever's pages on his days with Derry. You must get a copy and it is well worth £11 (incl. postage) from Sean Bradley, Chairman Derry Co. Board of the G.A.A. or from Bernie Mullan, 146, Ringsend Road, Drumrammer, Limavady, Co. Derry.

A superb production as I said.

KILKENNY G.A.A. Yearbook 1984. As always great value for £1.50 (not including postage). Plenty of colour on cover and elsewhere. Michael O'Neill, Kilkenny Chairman is not for the Open Draw. Who is apart from some of the "with it" journalists who would have us believe they (the journalists) would be able to run the G.A.A. (indeed anything) far better than the people in charge. Jim Langton would like to see a closed season. Who wouldn't Jim? But when and what competitions do we get rid of (The Ford Open Draw and the Railway Cups for two). There is a fine profile too of former ace goalkeeper Ollie Walsh, that man of the amazing reflexes. Diarmuid Healy (Offaly coach) asks is the G.A.A. turning into an old men's Association — it is and it isn't! A tribute of course also to the late Paddy Grace. A centrepiece colour photo of new All-Ireland S.H. club champions St. Martins with Tom Neville (coach) and Billy Brett (trainer). I love the results section at the end. All in all a great Yearbook. Must have been close to McNamee Award Winners place (congrats to Down once again). Credit to editor John Knox. Copies from Kilkenny People, Kilkenny (send £2 to include postage).

Limerick G.A.A. Yearbook '85 (Costs £3.00 without postage from Sean Murphy, Editor, "Villa Maria", Lower Park, Limerick).

As always big, bulky and bulging with club news and activities of the year before. This is where this

Yearbook scores. It gives every club in Limerick its space and they all respond well. Well produced as always, the photographs are A1 and well-captioned. Séamus O'Ceallaigh's Diary is as always well done. What a great communicator over the years. Sean Murphy in his Editorial "has a go" at the downgrading of the McNamee Award Scheme and rightly so. Croke Park it would seem don't care much about these prestigious Awards anymore. Maybe Croke Park will think again.

"Over the Bar" by Breandán Ó hEithir (£4.95 without postage from Ward River Press, Knocksedan House, Swords, Co. Dublin), is really an autobiography of part of the life of Breandán and a delightfully written one at that. Full of little stories about the G.A.A., Inis Mór (Aran Islands) where he grew up, his uncle Liam O'Flaherty (Famine) and his early years in Galway and in his travels around Ireland as a sales represen-

tative, this is compulsive reading — lively, racy, witty and so descriptive. I couldn't leave it down and the launching of the book down in Kennys of Galway was an event in itself.

"Matt Connor" (Souvenir Booklet on the occasion of the Matt Connor Benefit games of Easter Monday, April 8th), is a fantastic tribute to the Offaly man. Beautifully produced by Eugene McGee, it is full of articles, photos of excellent quality, 5 in colour and so many excellent statistical surveys of this unique footballer whose loss to the game is incalculable. On behalf of Junior Desk Matt we wish you well and hope to have you as our guest writer for all of your Junior Desk fans in the All-Ireland football final issue of Gaelic Sport. This beautiful souvenir memento can be had for £1.50 from Eugene Mulligan, F.B.D.

OVERLEAF

CHRISTIAN BRO'S ARD SCOIL RÍS

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Ard Scoil Rís Limerick is proud to be associated with the Gaelic Athletic Association and hopes to continue promoting Hurling and Football in the years ahead.

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE
Offices, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. It is something to be cherished.

MAILBAG

We had no **Mailbag** last issue. So it has tended to accumulate. I have had a few letters from my old friend **Dermot McCarthy** of Bath. Here is a brief summary of his letters.

"We had a very enjoyable Centenary Dinner and Dance in Gloucestershire a few weeks ago and I met Liam Mulvihill for the first time. I look forward immensely to Pat Griffin's History of the London G.A.A. which should be out soon. (*I met Pat in Dunmanway last September. J.M.*) I have got 1984 Co. S.H.C. and S.F.C. final programmes from about 25 of the 32 counties. The best in my opinion are Monaghan, Down and Meath. Next in line Cavan, Louth and Kerry in football and Limerick, hurling. I was disappointed with Cork and Dublin. Some counties made a special effort for Centenary Year. Others didn't. Congrats on your **Quizbook No. 3**. I'm delighted you included so many questions relating to the G.A.A. in Britain. I shall treasure the book. Another one I shall treasure is **Centenary of Service**, the All Ireland Final programmes were excellent. Glad, also, to see Cork and Kerry win the All Irelands. Seanie O'Leary's goal was a real gem. (*So it was. J.M.*) A Co. Laois schoolteacher is among those who kindly sent me Centenary Co. Final programmes. He is building up a G.A.A. Library at his school. Such people are worthy of the highest praise. Hopefully his gesture will encourage other teachers to do likewise.

The Laois schoolteacher is Liam O'Neill, Bawnaree, Kilbracken, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Dermot, who asked me not to mention the name will, I'm sure, be glad if I ask readers to send on items for Liam's library. Liam's work is an example for all Primary schools. Perhaps our good editor, Tommy McQuaid will send on some past issues of *Gaelic Sport*. J.M.

Old friend, Denis Sweeney, Meenagaish, Letterbarrow P.O., Co. Donegal, still wants the following All Ireland Final programmes.

F — 1957, (Louth v Cork), 1954 (Kerry v Meath), 1951 (Mayo v Meath), 1952 (Meath v Cavan draw and replay) and any before '51.

H — 1959 (Kilkenny v Waterford draw and replay), 1958 (Galway v Tipperary), 1952 (Cork v Dublin) and any before '52.

Denis you must be glad to see Donegal win the Vocational School All Ireland in football for the second year in succession. I note another Bonnar in the team. Yet another Junior Desk youngster from the past. Well done. J.M.

Frank Keane, Jnr., 56 Booth Road, Clondalkin, Co. Dublin, was disappointed with the standard of the official programmes for last year's - All Ireland Final. No statistics on either. Frank enjoyed the final at Thurles as a great day out. (*I spent the entire weekend in Thurles and had a marvellous time. It was all so much more personal than Dublin. J.M.*) **Glóir Ní Muirceataigh, Rúnaí, Coiste Cumarsáide, Co. Down, 64 Upper Dromore Road, Warrenpoint, Co. Down.**


"Enclosed find copies of the Down Co. Final programmes for your personal use as we felt that in Centenary Year you may like a copy from each county."


As always Down G.A.A. does the right thing. I think that Down is one of the best organised units in the G.A.A. I had the pleasure of meeting some of the Mayobridge contingent including the great Tom O'Hare and Mickey Linden on their Easter weekend visit to the St. Patrick's Coldwood club here in Galway. J.M.

John Martin O'Sullivan, Middle Barrow, Ardfert, Tralee, Co. Kerry sent me on the Kerry County Final programmes and wants the following Connacht F. Final programmes '81, '76 Draw, '73 and '71 (replay). "Any chance of a '59 or '65 All Ireland F. Final programme?" (*Over to you collectors J.M.*)

Tim Murphy, Shamrock Bridge, Rathmore, Co. Kerry, wishes Galway (H and F) good luck in '85. He mixes up Tom Lally of Garrafrauns the programme collector with the man of the same name who plays for Galway United. (*No relation at all. J.M.*)

Paddy McEvoy, Mourne Observer Ltd., Newry, Co. Down sent me on the








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special G.A.A. supplement on the above paper for centenary year. (*A very fine supplement too. J.M.*)

Kieran Rosney, 181 Grotto View, The Batteries, Athlone, Co. Westmeath will never forget the colour and excitement of Thurles at the Hurling Final in '84. He hopes Offaly can come back in '85. "The Australian v Ireland games were rough but enjoyable to watch. I would have Kevin Heffernan or Mick O'Dwyer in charge of the Ireland team". Kieran didn't think much of the R.T.E. documentary on the G.A.A., **Green Fields**. He is anxious to buy all the club history possible for Centenary Year for clubs in Offaly and Westmeath. He wants the following programmes, All Ireland Football Final, 1961, '69; Leinster Football Final — '60, '61, '67, '69, '70, '71, '72 and '73. Also park openings involving Offaly and any copies of Westmeath G.A.A. Yearbooks.

Liam Cross, Lallymore, Rathgar, Co. Kildare (age 10) wants copies of the All Ireland Football Final programmes. "My favourite player is Pat Spillane" (*Great to see Pat back on the playing fields again. J.M.*)

Tom Ryall, Michaelschurch, Ballycallan, Kilkenny, usually writes to me enclosing the Kilkenny G.A.A. Yearbook. Tom is the Kilkenny

G.A.A. P.R.O. and the author of the very fine G.A.A. history of Kilkenny published last year. Tom laments the passing of such great G.A.A. writers as John D. Hickey and Padharic Puirseál in recent years. "Some of the new breed of G.A.A. writers are so negative".

You're so right Tom. This is especially true of some of the Sunday papers. We have far too much sniping. Martin Breheny (Sunday Press) is almost always at it. J.M.

Oliver O'Neill, Holywood Rath, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15, wrote to Junior Desk for any information on the G.A.A. as he was doing a project on that theme. (*Buy Gaelic Sport regularly Oliver. J.M.*)

Edward Cusack, Árd Mhuire, Rathangan, Co. Kildare, wants the Centenary All Ireland Final programmes. **Alan Cummins, Rossenarra, Blarney Road, Clogheen, Co. Cork**, plays a lot of hurling in Bishopstown but is a real Kilkenny fan. He was at the Ireland v Australia game in Cork and thought it a tough game. "Jack O'Shea, Tom Spillane and Eoin Liston played well". Writing of Kilkenny again Alan says "I like going out on the side-line with the Kilkenny team. I was very disappointed when Wexford beat Kilkenny in the Leinster semi-final. I hope Kilkenny

win the All-Ireland in 1985. My favourite players are Frank Cummins, Christy Heffernan, Liam Fennelly, Joe Hennessy and Tom Cashman of Cork. I was very happy when Ger Fennelly scored a point from a side-line cut in the Leinster final against Offaly".

Alan, would I be right in thinking you are Frank Cummin's son? Anyhow you win a Kilkenny G.A.A. scarf and keep going out on the sideline with the Kilkenny team. They are great hurlers and as for Frank, he seems eternal. J.M.

Jerry Pender, Ballymorris Upper, Aughrim, Arklow, Co. Wicklow, one of our oldest friends laments the retirement of Mick Jacob and Joe McKenna from hurling (*Joe may be back soon J.M.*) Gerry remembers Joe McKenna's fabulous goals year after year. (*What a lovely tribute to two great sporting hurlers. J.M.*)

Tony Maher, 20 Páirc Mhuire, Tullow, Co. Carlow sent in the following swaps and wants:

SWAPS

I have the following programmes for swaps, Kildare, 1984 final (F) and (H); Kilkenny, 1984 final (H); Carlow, 1984 final (F and H); Wexford, 1984 final (H); Limerick, 1984 final (H); Sligo, 1984 final (F); Wicklow, 1984 final (F and H);

OVERLEAF

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FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Leitrim, 1984 Final, (F); Cavan, 1984 final, (F); Connacht S.F. Champs, Galway v London at South Ruislip 3/6/84, Éire Óg Carlow official opening of Páirc Uí Bhriain 30/6/84; Official opening of Semple Stadium, 31/5/84; All Ireland Football and Hurling Finals '84.

WANTS

In exchange for any of the above, I want 1984 county final programmes from Antrim, Down (F), Derry, Fermanagh, Monaghan, Galway (H), Clare, Tipperary (H,F). I would exchange 1959 hurling final programme for the 1961 hurling final programme.

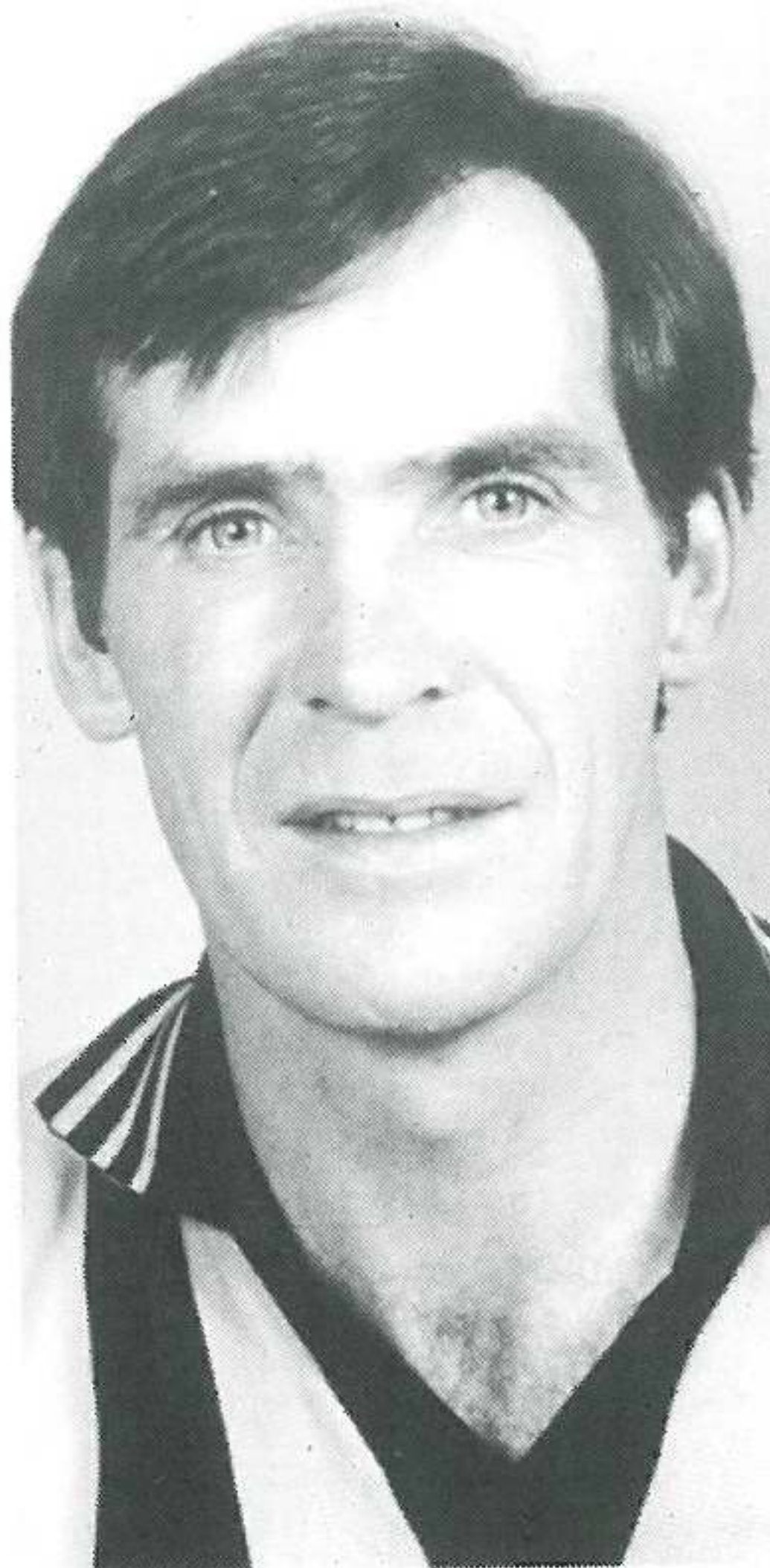
Finally another letter from **Kieran Rosney** wishes Matt Connor the best. He describes Matt as an outstanding sportsman. *(And so say all of us. J.M.)*

Tim Murphy, Tureen, Knocknagree, Mallow, Co. Cork, liked the games between Ireland and Australia. "The quick kick-out speeded up the game". *(We shouldn't forget the great excitement generated by these games despite the rough-house tactics of the visitors in two of the three internationals. J.M.)*

John Ryan, 49 Leixlip Park, Leixlip, Co. Kildare sent me in a typed project done by 3 young 10 year olds on the G.A.A. The three youngsters were Gerald Ryan, David Matthews and Craig Kearns from 4th class of Scoil Eoin Phóil. The project is excellent dealing with the G.A.A. as a whole and with the history of the Leixlip club. Well done lads. You must be glad to have Jack O'Shea and Barry Brennan playing with you. Keep up your interest.

Finally, a letter from **John Prendergast, Flat 2, 230 Queen's Parade, North Fitzroy, Melbourne, 3068, Australia**, who wanted G.A.A. books galore for Centenary Year which I duly sent on. So much for this Mailbag. It is championship time again. So get out you young folk on the long evenings and play away. Tell

A FAMILY CONNECTION?



Young Alan Cummins writes in saying that one of his favourite players is Kilkenny stalwart, Frank Cummins, (pictured above) but J.M. feels the Association is a little deeper! Keep writing Alan.

me about your own games, who are your favourites. Write about "The Sunday Game" or indeed anything and send your letters to me at:

**Junior Desk,
80 Upper Drumcondra Road,
Dublin 9.**

Be seeing you and don't forget, get your pens out and like Alan Cummins, get on to the sideline if you can with your favourite teams.

JACK MAHON

JUST RECEIVED

Richard Nolan, Campile, New Ross, Co. Wexford, sent me on the programme of their park opening. He wants the following All Ireland Final Programmes. F. 1965, 1950 to '54, '55, '57.

H. 1940-'59 incl.

His swaps are H. '59, '66-'74 incl.

Alan Aherne, 44 Pinewood Est, Wexford, tells me he has Br. O'Grady, the well known hurling coach, as principal of his school, Wexford C.B.S. "Already he is making his presence felt". Please have players from the weaker counties as CUT OUTS." *(Sorry I had to keep your letter so brief. J.M.)*

Tiarnán Ó Dincín, Aois 11, 3 Bóthar an Ghleanna, Muineacháin wonders why the G.A.A. doesn't promote the Irish language. *(It could do more for it. J.M.)*

Thomas White, Ardcahan, Dunmanway, Co. Cork, thinks the Australians were very rough. *(Don't we all. J.M.)*

Gerald Traynor, 893 Francis Street, Edenderry, Co. Offaly, is delighted to see Junior Desk still going strong. "I used to write to it years ago and I remember being excited writing to see would my letter be published. I treasure the Offaly tie I won."

Your letter makes Junior Desk so worthwhile. J.M.

Christopher Hannon, 1879 Kill West, Kill, Naas, Co. Kildare, wants to let Junior Desk know he has over 700 G.A.A. books and 300 programmes going back to the 50s for sale. *(Now that's an offer. J.M.)*

I'm holding over another letter from Tony Maher re misprints on programmes etc. Goodbye agus slán agaigh arís. Phew.



JOACHIM KELLY
Offaly

WHEN Offaly made an historic break-through in 1981 by winning their only All-Ireland senior hurling title so far, Joachim Kelly's tireless and progressive midfield play

made him a key figure in the success story. The previous year he helped the county to a first Leinster senior hurling final win, and some months later won a Bank of Ireland All Stars award.

A former Colleges' star, Kelly was 29 last December, and he plays club fare with Lusnagh. This six-footer, who is a Garda, highlighted a number of outings with Leinster by winning his

only Railway Cup medal in 1979—the province's last final victory.

A gifted worker, who helps out both in defence and attack in addition to his midfield duties, Joachim won a third Leinster senior medal last July and was in the Offaly team beaten by Cork in the Centenary All-Ireland final. But his excellence at midfield brought him reward with a second All Stars trophy last March.

A few encouraging words from Texaco.

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