

SOCCER - AWARD FOR AL FINUCANE

Record holder Al is honoured by PFAI

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LIMERICK soccer legend Al Finucane was honoured for holding the record number of League of Ireland appearances by the Professional Footballers' Association of Ireland (PFAI) at their recent annual awards in Dublin.

Finucane made a record 634 appearances in the League of Ireland between December 1960 and April 1988.

In 27 seasons playing League of Ireland football, Finucane was never sent off and was booked only three times. He captained both Limerick AFC and Waterford Utd to FAI Cup glory.

Finucane is one of only two League of Ireland players to captain the Republic of Ireland at senior level.

The three-time FAI Cup medal winner won 11 senior captains for Ireland, captaining his country against Austria in Linz. Finucane also played in two uncapped internationals against West Germany's Olympic team and Australia and played in an U-23 game against France.

The Limerick central defender's League of Ireland career began with Limerick in a 2-2 draw against Shamrock Rovers at Miltown on December 4, 1960 as a 17-year-old.

Finucane, from Quins Cottages, in Rosbrien, moved to Waterford United in the 1973-'74 season where he remained until the start of the 1981-'82 season when he returned to Limerick Utd. Finucane's final two sea-



Above - PFAI Chairman Aidan Price presenting Limerick's Al Finucane with his 400+ League Appearance Club glass piece at the recent PFAI Awards in Dublin; left - Finucane in his playing days. Pictures: Denis Cruise and Sportsfile

son's in the League of Ireland were with Waterford Utd in 1986-'87 and Newcastle West in 1987-'88. The stylish defender made his final appearance in senior football for Newcastle West in their First Division tie with UCD at Ballygowan Park on April 10, 1988.

The star defender was renowned for his sense of positioning, composure and distribution skills.

Finucane's tally of League of Ireland appearances 634 is 69 greater than the second-placed Owen Heary.

Al Finucane said: "I am very proud of my number of League of Ireland appearances. It includes league appearances only, so if the

games I played in the various Cup competitions was included it would have been greater.

"I was asked on the night of the awards how I managed to keep playing for so long and I said I was fortunate with the genes I inherited from my parents and I trained assiduously.

"I played League of Ireland football until I was 43 and I rarely missed a training session.

"I never smoked and I didn't drink much. I used to have two pints after training on a Thursday night and two pints after a game on a Sunday.

"After I finished playing I was involved with coaching the UL Collingwood Cup team."

Al Finucane's talents as a soccer player were evident from a very young age. He was snapped up by Jack Tuohy to play with Reds United when he was only eight and played at U-13 level in the local schoolboy leagues. He joined Limerick as a 17-year-old under manager Ewan Fenton.

While Finucane spent the majority of his career playing with Limerick teams, his eight seasons with Waterford Utd included an FAI Cup win in 1980 when, at the age of 37, he captained them to their first Cup success in 43 years.

As a result, Finucane became the second player to skipper two clubs to success in the competition as he captained Limerick to their 1971 Cup win over Drogheda.

Finucane added a third FAI Cup medal in 1982.

Limerick cross country goes centre stage this Sunday

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ATHLETICS

Sunday next the blue riband of Limerick Cross Country takes place in Tournafulla, the County Senior Championships.

It is also supported by the Senior Womens and Junior Mens and Womans.

The mens event is the most

competitive in the calendar, especially by Limerick AC and West Limerick, the city club the present holders. The West have been building and at the moment look favourites, but Dooneen AC should not be overlooked. Dooneen are favourites for the women.

Junior women should have Amy O'Donoghue as favourite.

At the weekend Amy competed in the National Junior in Santry. For someone who

missed most of the past season due to injury, she did very well to finish fourth.

Later this week, Ronnie Long is being honoured with a lifetime award for service to sport. Also nominated for other awards are Noelle Morrissey for coaching and Sarah Lavin for constantly setting new PBs and her silver medal in the European Junior Championships.

The Limerick Leader 8k on December 15 in aid of the

Daughters of Charity in Lisnagry goes ahead but the course is somewhat in doubt.

Prizes are pouring in and there are two hams donated by Connolly Meats. There are six turkeys and in all 40 prizes, all Christmas fare. There will be sponsorshop cards available shortly.

The very popular Christmas run from the Hunt Museum will be set on the road by Mayor Leddin at 10.30

GREYHOUNDS

with **Jerome O'Connell**



Charlie and Bill Chawke carry local hopes in St Leger final

YOUNG Bill Chawke will carry the local hopes in Saturday's final of the 2013 Kerry Agribusiness Irish St. Leger.

The showpiece of the Limerick Greyhound Stadium year comes to an end this Saturday - with TG4 providing live coverage of the 550 yards classic.

Saturday brings an end to the 70th running of the Irish St. Leger, and the fourth year the event has been staged at the redeveloped Limerick Greyhound Stadium located on the Dock Road.

The 72 entries have battled down to the final six and teenage Bill Chawke - a son of Dublin based Adare native Charlie Chawke - has Locnamon Bridie as the big local favourite.

Saturday's 12-cards final night will be a red carpet event with a glass of champagne ready to welcome the first 100 spectators through the turnstiles. The Unity Gospel Choir from Limerick will be serenading patrons at the entrance to the stadium.

On the track, while Locnamon Bridie will be cheered home by many locals, it's Jaytee Hellcat that heads the betting. The new track record holder is the 5/2 favourite to claim the €25,000 first prize.

Tyrur Sugar Ray and Skywalker Farloe are both listed at 7/2. Next in the betting is the local hope at 4/1, while Rockview Turbo is 9/2 and General Wolf available at 8/1.

Last Saturday's semi-final saw favourite Roxholm Bully crash out with a broken leg. That was in the first of the semi-finals, which was won by Locnamon Bridie. Trained by Paul Hennessy, the winner's time was 29.62. Three quarters of a length back in second was Skywalker Farloe for Frances O'Donnell and the Patterson, Bryne, O'Donnell syndicate. In third was Tyrur Sugar Ray for Galway's PJ Fahy.

Paul Hennessy also trained the winner of the second semi-final, with Jaytee Hellcat winning in 29.82 for owner John Turner.

The winner had four lengths to spare on the line from General Wolf for Graham Holland and Alison Coxon. Third was Peter Cronin trained Rockview Turbo for Clive and Catherine Taylor.

Also on the card last Saturday in Limerick were the semi-finals of the Kerry Agribusiness A1 525.

Fastest into this weekend's final was Glorious George for the A Leg Each syndicate from Oola. Trained by Bridie Moore, the winner's time was 28.80. Five lengths back in second place was Let Me Be Lucky for Joan Allen of Ballyduff.

The second semi-final was won in 29.14 by Brookville Dash for Pdraig Ward of Ennis. Half a length back in second was Scart Warrior for Brendan O'Mahony.

The third semi-final was won in 28.88 by Movealong Bob for Kilmallock's William Barry. The winner had two lengths to spare on the line from Blackabbey Bud for Mairead Horan of Adare.

While the Leger dominates, Limerick GAA also have a fund-raising night in the Greyhound Stadium this Friday.

Tickets are still on sale and those wishing to support the fundraiser can either purchase a table in the restaurant or buy general admission tickets. For all general admission tickets there will be a buster race, with €500 going to the person with the winning combination. Tickets must be purchased in advance from John Cregan, chairman of Club Limerick on 086-7836591. For restaurant tables contact Breda Hayes 087-8923884.

Jaytee Hellcat is the 5/2 favourite to collect the €25,000 prize