

HURLING FINAL: KILKENNY OVERPOWERED IN THRILLER

SUPER SHOW BY LIMERICK

Fitting Champions of All-Ireland

LIMERICK 1-21 (24); KILKENNY 1-14 (17)

SELDOM, IF EVER, can a team of champions have been battered to such total submission as were Kilkenny in Sunday's superb All-Ireland senior hurling championship final. A fantastic display thrilled thousands in what was surely one of the greatest sporting triumphs ever by any Limerick team in any code. The blistering pace set—and maintained by Limerick was a revelation as the side tore Kilkenny to shreds.

The ecstatic scenes at the finish were fitting evidence that Limerick were champions once again. That it had taken thirty-three years to regain the title made success all the sweeter. It was an occasion that will be remembered for ever by thousands who could hardly have anticipated such a classical performance in such conditions.

**BIG MATCH REPORT BY—
 CORMAC LIDDY**

Mist and rain could have ruined the game. But Limerick, principally, and Kilkenny also, by their total dedication and skill, made the thousands forget that they were drenched as they provided all the hoodies which makes hurling the greatest game in the world.

This surely was a performance that stunned many by its brilliance. Granted there were times when a great deal of messing and mis-hitting was given by both sides. But overall this was a superb final and Limerick were the champions. Kilkenny, too, deserve great credit for having their parts in making the game such a classic.

Other champions could have resorted to desperate tactics when their backs came crashing down. Kilkenny, to their great credit, battled as skillfully as they were allowed right up to the end. They proved once again that when it comes to sportsmanship they are tops.

But this was Limerick's day and the thousands who waited so long for the opportunity left all and sundry know just how they felt about being champions once again. The finish scenes marked the first time thousands raced on to the field to roar approval of a magnificent win.

Players who seemed supermen only minutes before were thrown into the air like confetti by their delighted supporters, and it was a considerable time before team captain, Eamonn Grimes, was able to receive the McCarthy Cup from G.A.A. President, Dr. Donal Keenan.

When he did so, the thousands went wild all over again in what must surely have been one of the most exciting victory scenes ever witnessed at the venue.

There were many who had dreamed and hoped for a Limerick win. But even the most confident could hardly have believed for such a convincing win. Every point of the winning margin was thoroughly deserved and, indeed, so utterly supreme, were scenes that Kilkenny, in the circumstances, got off lightly of Limerick's play.

was brilliant. More of it was splendid. Thrown in, too, was a degree of mediocrity as if to prove that this super display was, in fact, being given by men who had also to prove that it was hurling, not just a game, but a way of life.

Taken over the eighty minutes it was brilliant and when one considers the atrocious conditions. Those who thought the occasion would prove too much for Limerick must have been agreeably surprised at the manner which the team knocked down from the start. There was only the occasional sign of early nerves and this was understandable considering the inordinate delay in getting the game underway.

But once in action Limerick sparkled. From the very throw-in the team were into their stride and when Frankie Nolan shot the opening point after little over a minute, the stage was set for the great things that were to follow.

Hurling bursts will, no doubt, point to the spells of mis-hitting which afflicted both teams on occasions in their bid to lower the quality of the contest. But when the dies down all will agree that in all the circumstances, this was a game to rate with the very best of finals.

While Limerick won by a decisive seven-point margin in the finish the contest was a thrilling one for most of the time. Many times the sides were level—nine or all—and this all added up to make the occasion such a great one.

Throughout the odd, Limerick had their stars. Some were more prominent than others but basically this was a triumph for teamwork—including selectors and trainer Mick Cregan.

Selectors of maligned and criticised, this time must take a major share of the credit for this glorious triumph. They that were who made it all so possible... they gambled in converting Eamonn Rea from full-back into a superb full-back, too, for taking Eamonn Cregan from the attack, but the Claugnaun ban turned in a superb display at centre-back.

Trainer Mick Cregan, too, cannot be overpraised for never can a Limerick team have been so well prepared for a major occasion. It was a fantastic experience to see the side so bursting with passion and it was this all-out activity throughout the field which eventually beat Kilkenny into submission. But they were times, too, when it seemed that Limerick had taken a "breather" but while some of the players seemed to be out of there were others at the very precise time who were having their greatest moments.

Kilkenny's strong favourites were blighted by the wind. They had striven for all their worth to remain champions, but on Sunday's display, there was not a team in the country who would have beaten Limerick.

Some of the play of Limerick must rank with the greatest ever given by any team. Their teamwork was a revelation and it was stunning to watch the manner in which passes were picked up by colleagues. It was vintage stuff from a team who had all top often in the past been losers in unlucky circumstances.

It was the blend of youth and experience that won the day against a Kilkenny side that played very well and would, obviously, have done better if allowed to do so. But they were snuffed out of it by a truly memorable Limerick display.

By the interval, Limerick had edged into a two-point lead. Five minutes after the resumption the advantage was gone, and a minute later Kilkenny were back in front again. There were many who wrote off Limerick's chances then. The early flutter of action... the claiming over of some of the finest scores ever seen by Crick Park or anywhere else... seemed as if it were all in vain as Kilkenny cut loose. But they had edged in not near good enough and while many feared that Limerick would crumble the side only then began to show their true greatness.

Kilkenny had hardly time to realise they had drawn level when they were rocked utterly by a Limerick goal that Mosey Dowling almost certainly attempted to hit before finally working it over the line... with the considerable help of Eamonn Rea who hustled and hustled and generally spreadeagled the attacking Kilkenny defence. Those were a few great seconds as that goal became a score. It seemed like an eternity before the flag went up and even then there was the fear that somebody might have imagined the effort was illegal. It was not, of course, but it was the type of score that gave rise for doubt... such great pulling, pushing and enthusiasm went on.

That was a scene that typified the game. Full-blooded, wholehearted manly stuff and the type of stuff that hurling is all about.

But there was the pure wholesome, and brilliant stuff, too. Who will forget those superb points by Eamonn Rea? Who could not have marvelled at the individual moments of brilliance of certain players? But when all is said and done who is likely to forget the all-round brilliance of red-haired Richie Bennis. This truly was his day in the match in which he stamped his claim as being what I described him some few short years ago... "The Mackey of the Seventies."

Some of his scores were incredible. In such atrocious conditions it was amazing and breathtaking how he managed all those scores.

His display was truly superb... the points, the solo runs and his obvious, "anything you can do I can do better" reaction to Pat Delaney.



One of the big figures in the Limerick triumph, Sean Foley, awaits the arrival of a high ball.

Goalkeeper, Seamus Horan, made two superb saves when deflecting a Kilkenny goal-keeper over for points. These must have spurred on his colleagues, many of whom must, deep down, have been apprehensive about the occasion being a bit too much for him. But those nerves showed against Cregan were well and truly gone out of his system. Now, Limerick have again the greatest goalie in the land... following on the famous ops of Jim Hogan, Paddy Scallan and the others.

For thousands, the display of corner back, Jim O'Brien, will be the highlight. He was rampant and completely in control of the game's greatest corner attackers of the present time. His clearances were powerful, his close marking a feat of his overall steadiness and skill was a major contribution in the win.

A highlight of the game was the stirring duel between two of the greatest hurlers of modern time, Eamonn Cregan and Pat Delaney. Both were superb goal-deeds will-long remain a joyful memory. Cregan lashed out some tremendous clearances. He also found time to cover up momentarily gaps when his colleagues had done their work in other areas and his performance was that of the Cregan we all know but had not seen for a long time. He was a centre-back supreme and his clashes with Delaney were such to make one wonder and marvel at. How two men could have torn into each other and given and taken such hard knocks without an untoward or unsporting moment is amazing.

Delaney showed that he is a forward supreme. His cheeky solo runs when the tide was running against him were wonderful and it was no fault of Delaney's that Kilkenny parted with their title.

The other Kilkenny forwards had individual happy moments but generally their attack was well mastered. Pat Harty was outstanding at full-back and completely dominated his area. His lengthy clearances frequently turned threatening danger into peaceful attacks at the other end of the field where Kilkenny were over-worked throughout.



Bernie Hartigan races away from Paddy Lawlor as Eamonn Grimes looks on anxiously.

and Liam O'Brien's similar efforts for Kilkenny were the gems that delighted the thousands.

Take, too, the utter and positive brilliance of the man of the match, Jackie Foley. His crisp striking, his speed in winning the race for possession, his catching and his supreme length clearances stamped his display as one to rate with the finest ever given by a Limerick half-back... and that is some praise when one remembers the brilliant half-backs down the years.

Granted, the switch also, in one way deprived McKenna of achieving more wonders in the corner but the fact that he subdued Henderson and still managed to be quite a force as an attacker put McKenna high on the list of Limerick heroes.

Phil Bennis got through a great amount of work in the Limerick defence. He found Paddy Broderick and others quite a force but generally he emerged on the credit side.

It would be remiss of me were I not to compliment Willie Moore, also, on what was a solid overall display. Occasionally, he was pounded by Mick Brennan and a few gripped every Limerick supporter as Kilkenny's men, as a result, raced towards goal. But most times a colleague was present to cut off or blunt the danger, and on occasion, points were conceded when goals looked sure for Kilkenny.

Richie Bennis had his greatest day. But Eamonn Grimes, too, hurled himself into history with some great striking. He must have covered miles of ground by his striking around play was often a feature, and while there were occasions on which he missed too much, generally his overall performance was in keeping with the high standard which he has set himself.

Kilkenny midfielders, Liam O'Brien and Frank Cummins, both, hardly bargained for the strength of the Limerick pair, and while the two Kilkenny men also signed, the Limerick two achieved most to a far more obvious degree. It was the ability of Bennis and Grimes to always be in the thick of things that overpowered Kilkenny down.

It was truly astonishing how Kilkenny had so little to offer in the closing stages. At that stage, Limerick did just what they pleased and they picked off a succession of delightful scores.

Sunday was a day apart for Limerick in another sense. All too often in the past big games have been lost through failure to make an essential switch. This time, however, Joe McKenna was facing brilliantly against Fran Larkin but inside Pat Henderson was hitting a sterner at centre-back for the champions. But whereas in the past things run their course they took positive and decisive action this time. They moved McKenna in on top of Henderson and this considerably reduced the effectiveness of the centre-back. Now he had to cope with McKenna instead of bursting out of defence and making light of the Limerick hopes.

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of the attack was without question the sturdy Eamonn Rea. His full-forward display was again a revelation and was easily on a par with the brilliance shown against Tipperary in the Munster final. In retrospect one can only wonder at how a player who was easily on a par with

As the scores came

with Charlie Mulqueen

First half
 1 minute: Frankie Nolan moved his way in from the right wing to flash over a glorious left-handed point. The best possible start for Limerick.
 2 minutes: Kilkenny on terms; close-range free by Claus Dunne.
 3 minutes: Kilkenny in front; another free by Dunne.
 4 minutes: Richie Bennis makes his first impact, pointing a placed ball.
 5 minutes: Bennis's class apparent as Richie Bennis faced his captain, and Grimes takes Limerick cheers and hopes with a beautiful shot from a tight angle.
 6 minutes: There is little in the Limerick defence can do as Kilkenny's corner-forward, Mick Brennan, clutches a high ball, whistles, quickly and sends over the bar.
 7 minutes: Big Ned Rea plays surprise agility for one of his side as he gets in front of the defence, crabs the ball and sends it flashing, left-handed over the crossbar.
 8 minutes: Joe McKenna, having a "blinder" on Fran Larkin, stretches Limerick's lead to two with a fine point.
 9 minutes: A five minute gap now without a score and Kilkenny's grab at vital goal. Dunne's 21 yard free is blocked, but the rebound comes to Pat Delaney via Mick Crotty and the Johnstown star pulls first time to the net.
 10 minutes: Kilkenny, looking ahead, take their point from a close-in free through Claus Dunne.
 11 minutes: Bennis postures Limerick's heart with a close-in free. Dunne's 21 yard free is blocked, but the rebound comes to Pat Delaney via Mick Crotty and the Johnstown star pulls first time to the net.
 12 minutes: Kilkenny, looking ahead, take their point from a close-in free through Claus Dunne.
 13 minutes: Bennis postures Limerick's heart with a close-in free. Dunne's 21 yard free is blocked, but the rebound comes to Pat Delaney via Mick Crotty and the Johnstown star pulls first time to the net.
 14 minutes: Calm and cool, Bennis sends over a free from a good fifty yards.
 15 minutes: Limerick have recovered from the shock of the goal; they force another free, and again Bennis taps a goal.
 16 minutes: Mick Crotty places Delaney, and over the bar it goes.
 17 minutes: The admirable Bennis, sends a 65 yard free all the way between the posts.
 18 minutes: But Kilkenny are quickly on terms; Crotty this time popping over a point from a good pass by Frank Cummins.
 19 minutes: It's dead-eye Jick Hennessy's sixteenth point from placed ball.
 20 minutes: Limerick are swinging now, and Rea shows his style in sending over a fine point.
 21 minutes: Dunne points a short free.
 22 minutes: Noel Skehan saves superbly from Eamonn Cregan, but Eamonn Grimes bumps over the rebound, to give Limerick a two point interval lead: 0-12 to 1-7.

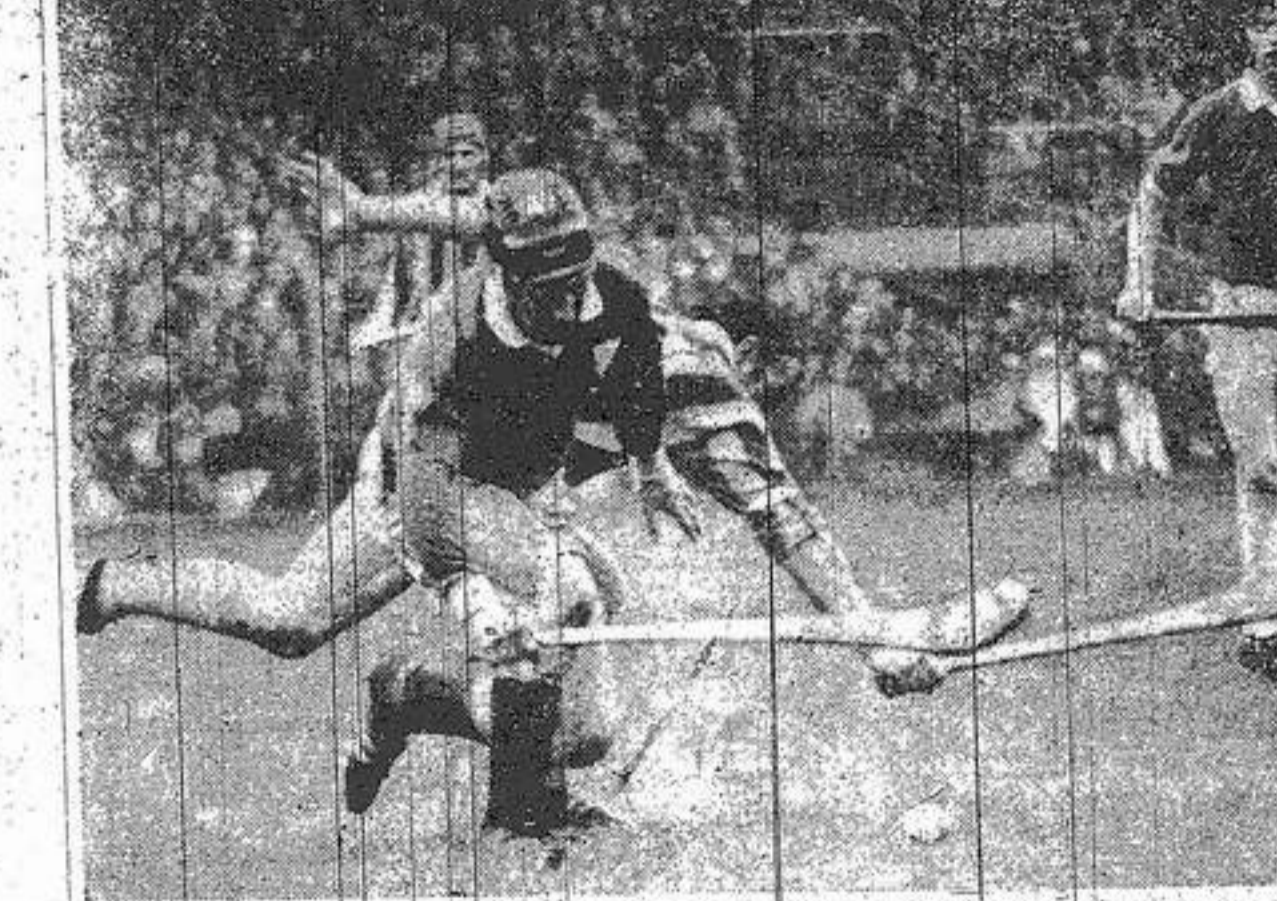
Second half
 23 minutes: Limerick, dreadfully slow to settle, as Dunne cuts the deficit to a free.
 24 minutes: Midfielder Liam O'Brien levels it with a point from the right.
 25 minutes: Oh, Limerick, where are you? Why, says Seamus Horgan left so governing as Crotty, hopped on him; but the Traillian, man arguably swung the score back by brilliantly using Crotty's pifmed effort over the bar.
 26 minutes: Limerick are slow now, and Bennis restores equality with a point from free.
 27 minutes: A vital moment in the goal we wanted so much to see. Skehan saves superbly from Moss Dowling, the forward as on him, a dash. The three full-backs were all there, but Dowling gets the credit.
 28 minutes: The Limerick crowd sing now, as Bonnie Hartigan stretches to four with a line point.
 29 minutes: Dating from Kilkenny's.
 30 minutes: A six minute lapse without a score, but Dunne closes it to two points with another free.
 31 minutes: But Limerick weigh in, going to loosen it again. Bennis again on him with another free.
 32 minutes: A magnificent point by Bennis from the right wing, under pressure, and about 60 yards out.
 33 minutes: Grimes a glorious point for Limerick, as Limerick 1-17; Kilkenny 1-11.
 34 minutes: Delaney a point for Kilkenny, for whom this is now running out.
 35 minutes: Limerick enter their glory, as Grimes points.
 36 minutes: Bennis, gathering the goal, is superb point.
 37 minutes: A magnificent point by Bennis from the right wing, under pressure, and about 60 yards out.
 38 minutes: Grimes a glorious point for Limerick, as Limerick 1-21 and 1-13; and Limerick has, and fired.
 39 minutes: A final gesture from the Traillian, as Kilkenny point from Liam O'Brien.
 40 minutes: The goal is whistled in a sea of green and white. The 33 minutes was bridged: Limerick 2-21; Kilkenny 1-14.

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Mossy Dowling wins this duel with Nicky Orr as Joe McKenna looks on.



As the rain lashes down, Joe McKenna and Frankie Nolan lay siege on the Kilkenny goal.



Eamonn Rea tries to prevent Nick Orr from booting the ball clear as Kilkenny's Phil Cullen moves in to help.