

LIMERICK LEADER

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LOOKING BACK IN PICTURES

1981



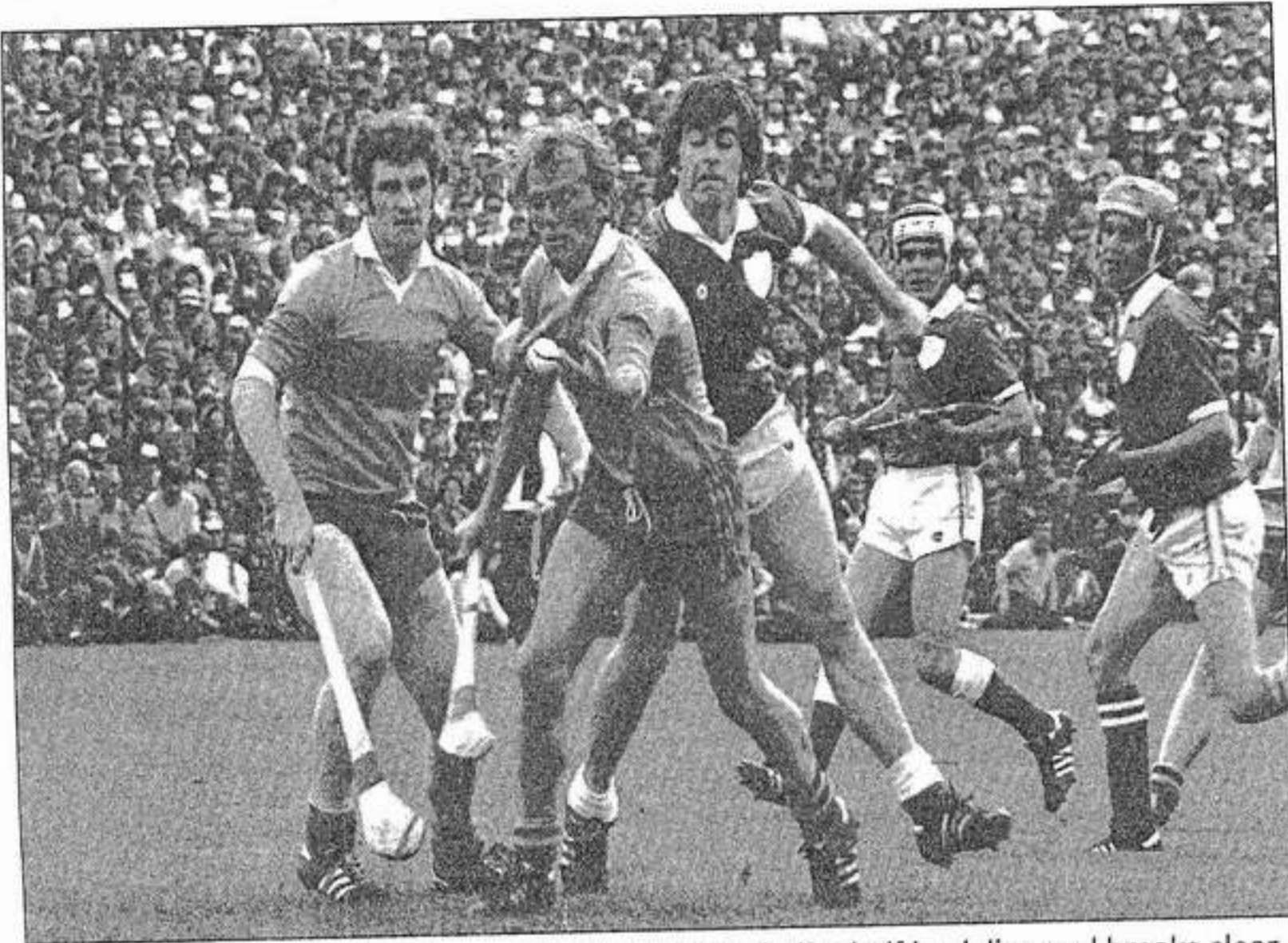
Celebration time: Limerick captain Paudie Fitzmaurice is carried shoulder high after Limerick defeated Clare to win the 1981 Munster senior hurling championship in Semple Stadium In Thurles, more action pictures from that memorable Shannonside victory on pages 14-15

more great pictures from the **leader** sport archives

inside



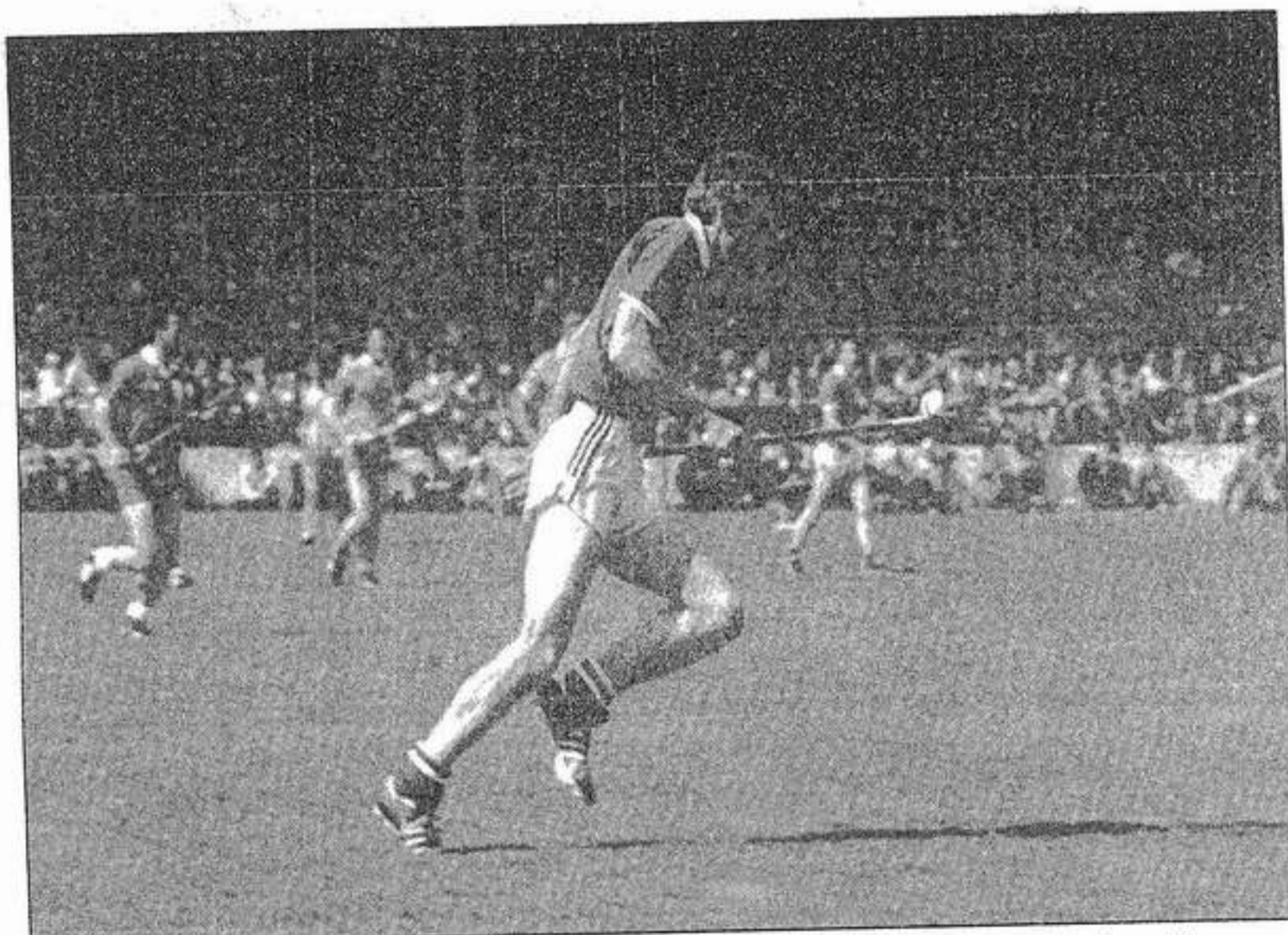
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Star Clare defender Ger Loughnane wins possession in the half back line and breaks clear of the Limerick cover



Limerick's Eamonn Cregan battles to win the sliothar in this tight encounter in Semple Stadium in Thurles

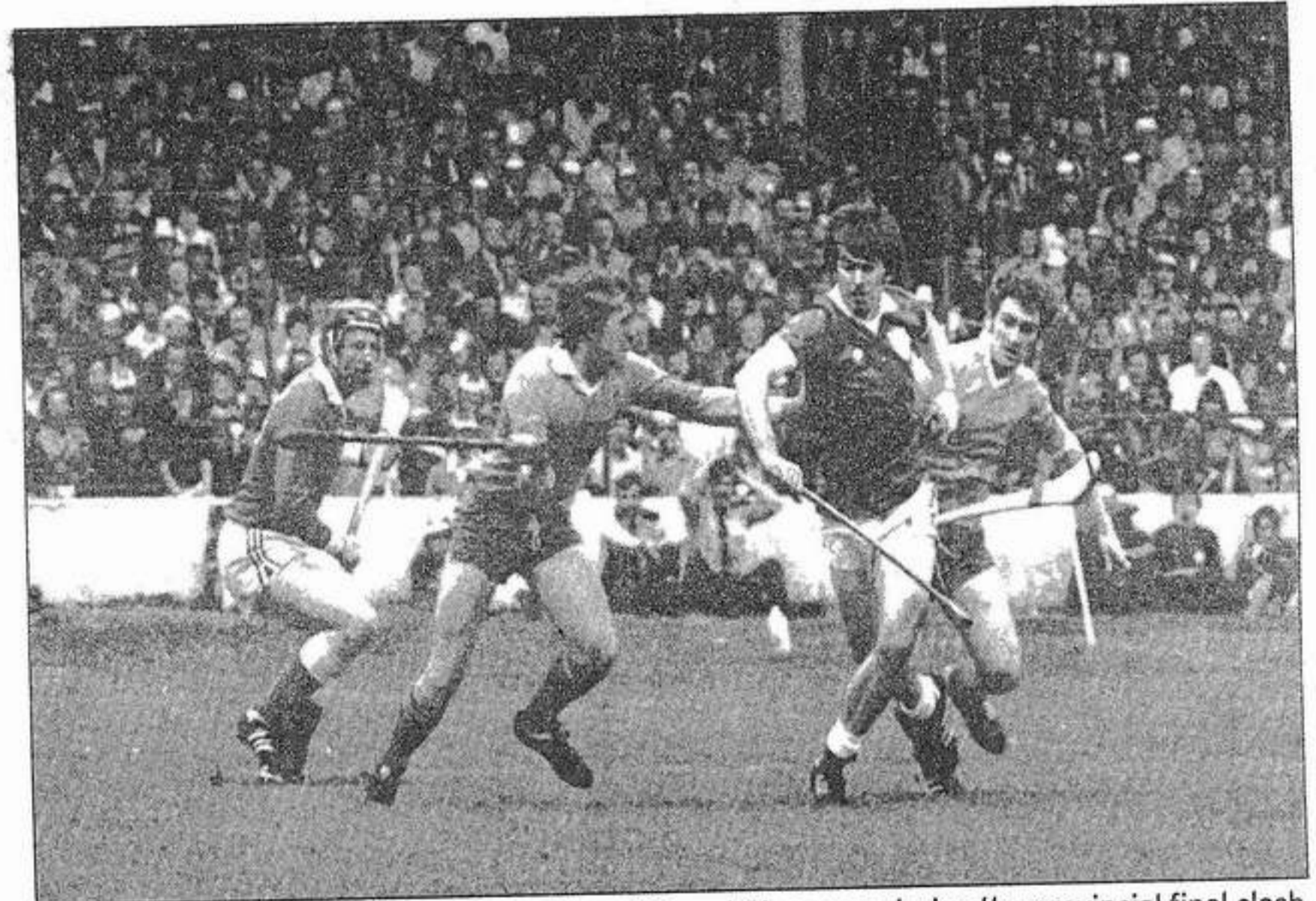


Limerick captain Paudie Fitzmaurice solos out of defence to launch an attack on the Clare goal

MUNSTER CHAMPIONS OF 30 YEARS AGO IN THURLES



Limerick players and supporters celebrate on the playing field in Semple Stadium in Thurles after Limerick's victory



Joe McKenna holds off the challenge of two different Clare men during the provincial final clash in Thurles

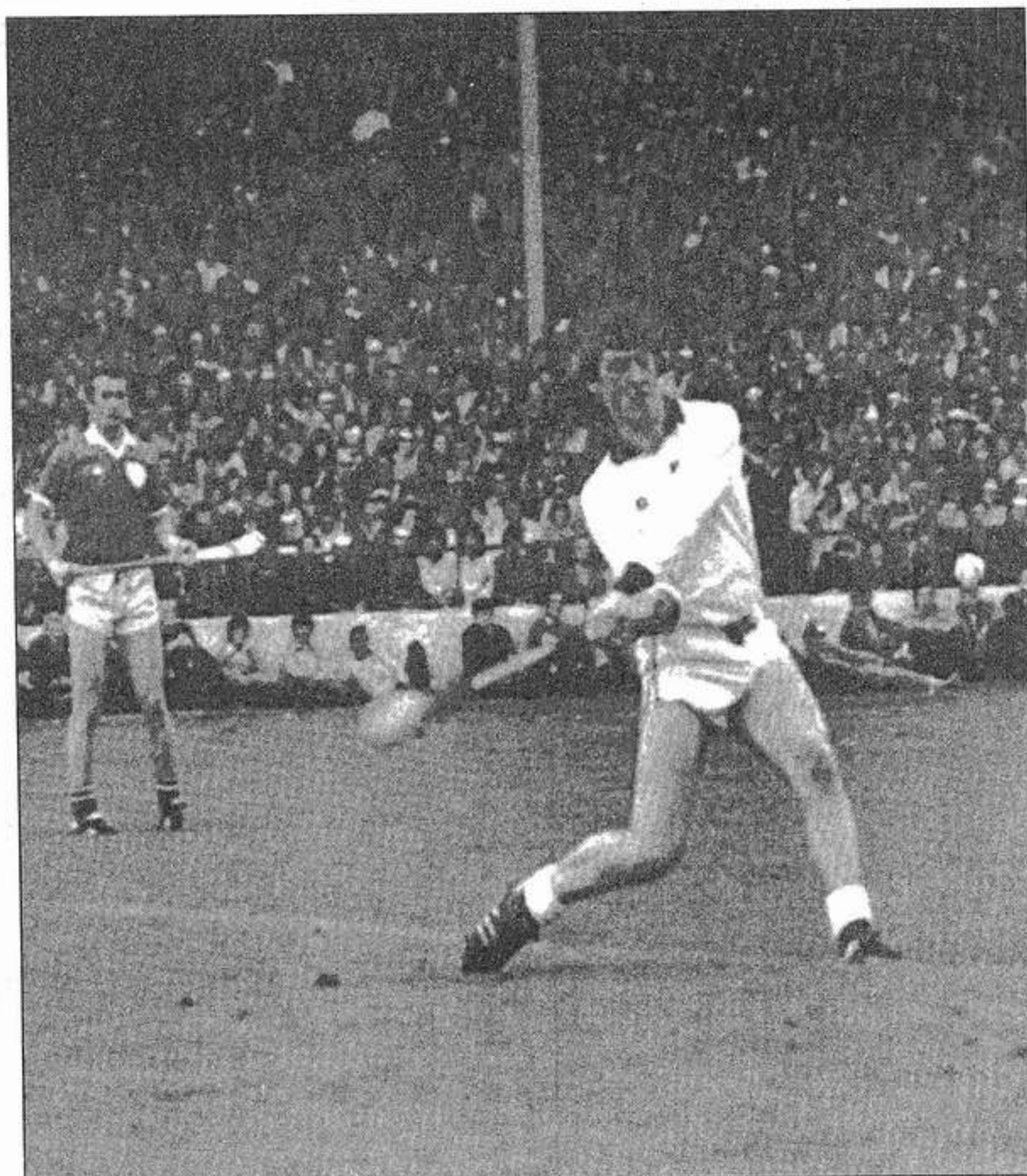
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1981

Were you there?



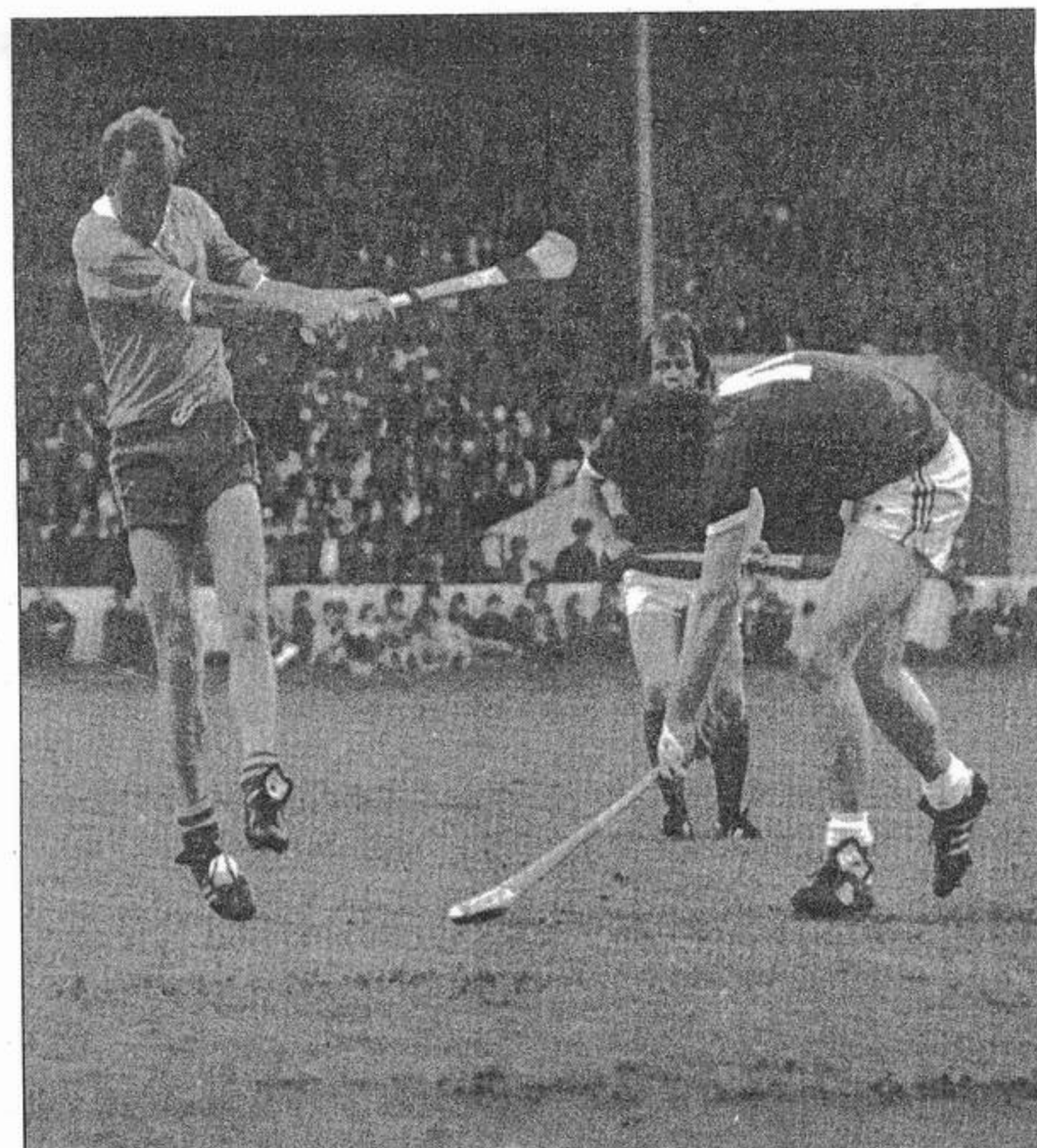
Limerick defeated Clare in the 1981 Munster senior hurling championship final



Limerick goalkeeper Tommy Quaid clears his lines during the Munster final win over Clare in 1981 in Semple Stadium in Thurles



Limerick's Brian 'Bomber' Carroll wins the race to this sliothar



Clare's Ger Loughnane, gets in a clearance despite the close attentions of Joe McKenna, the Limerick full forward

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my sporting life

Limerick people look back on their days of playing for local clubs ... and reveal their sporting interests now

Lowering the Banner in style

No 10 Eamonn Cregan

INTERVIEWED BY OWEN HICKEY

LINING out at corner-forward that day, Eamonn Cregan played an important role in creating space for man of the match Joe McKenna.

McKenna scored 3-3 in the final, but it was the movement of Cregan which helped Limerick to unsettle the Clare rearguard.

"Clare were saying that we used a particular tactic that day, where Ollie O' Connor moved out the field, but it wasn't planned. Ollie roamed, and Joe and myself were left inside in the square.

"Joe would go out about 25 yards and I'd go in behind him, bringing the corner-back with me. When Joe caught the ball then, he had open space. (The whole movement) was an instinctive thing, it wasn't planned," he said.

Limerick went in to the match as underdogs; a surprise really, considering they were the reigning Munster champions. Cregan knew the Treaty men were in for a tough game.

"Clare had done extremely well in 77 and 78. Our main problem would have been to counteract the Clare half-back line of Loughnane, Sean Stack and Sean Hehir. They were an outstanding trio.

"We felt that Clare were flying and our job was to try and contain them. But, Joe hit a purple patch that day. He had this ability to be able to catch the ball and hold off his man. Once he got the ball in his hands seven or eight yards out, there was very little to stop him."

Cregan is not taking much credit for the victory, and puts the triumph down to the performance of one man.

"I played okay, but in comparison to Joe, he really stole the show that day. It was basically his final."

Fourteen years earlier, Limerick faced Tipperary in the first round of the Munster Championship. Cregan scored 3-5 on the day, in a 4-12 to 2-9 win. According to Cregan, it was his best game in a Limerick jersey.

"We were thought of as cannon fodder that day, Tipperary were All-Ireland champions at the time. Our objective was to keep the ball moving as fast as possible and try and run these guys.

"They wouldn't have been that fast, but they were very strong. The tactic worked very effectively and I would put that down as one of my better performances.

"But, it was a team effort. There was very effective, fast ball coming in to the forwards from the half-back line. Everything is a team effort. It's not only the 15 on the team, it's the whole panel. You're only as strong as your weakest link."

Many people are unaware that Cregan also had a football career for Limerick. He won eight county medals with his club Claughan, but decided to concentrate solely on hurling for his county early on in his inter-county exploits.

"We played Galway, who beat us by three points and Roscommon beat us by four, so we were always able to com-



On the attack: Key Limerick forward Eamonn Cregan gets a shot in at goal during the 1981 Munster senior hurling championship final against Clare, which was played in Semple Stadium in Thurles - Limerick won 3-12 to 2-9 in front of an attendance of 40,205

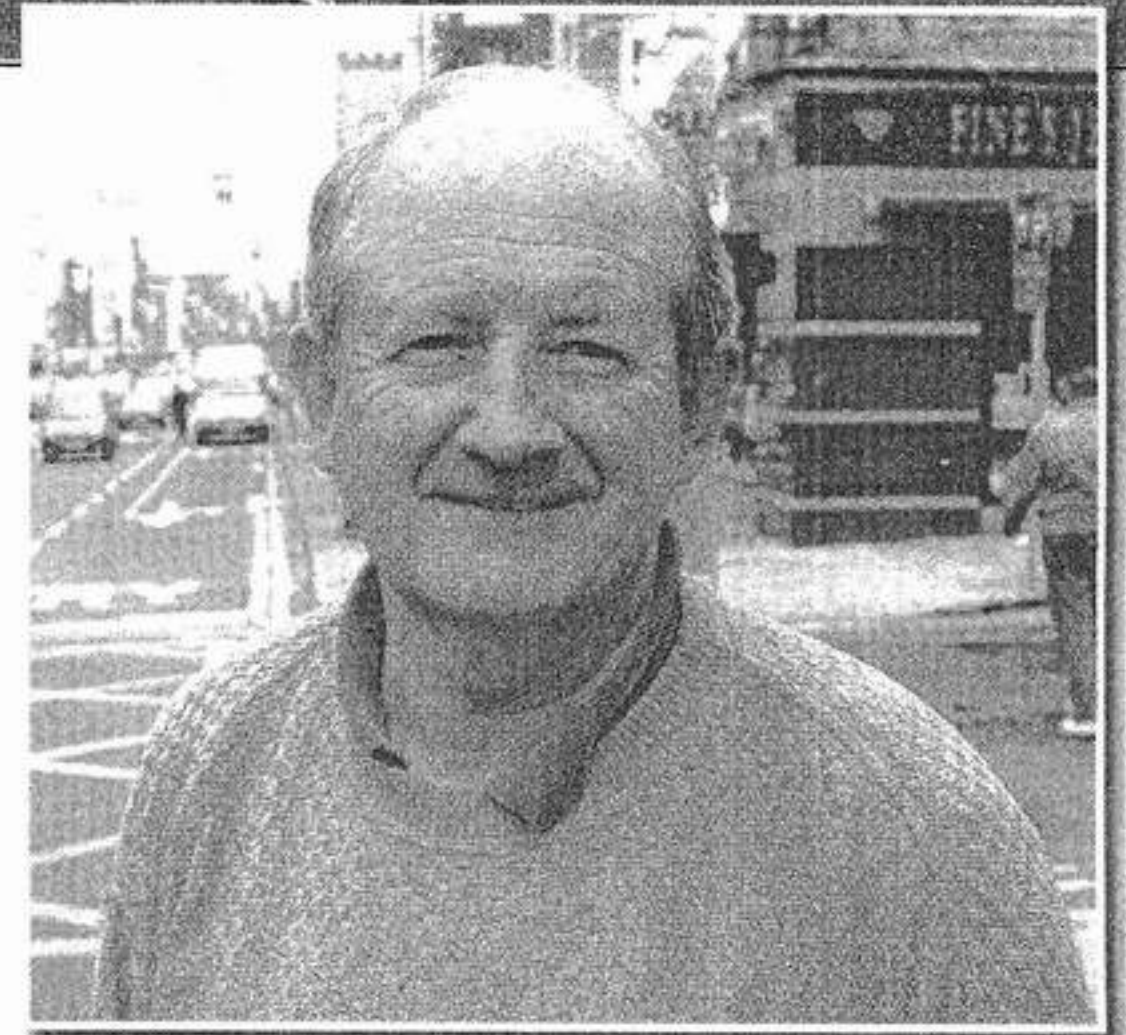
pete.

"I enjoyed the football, but it came to the stage where you were playing every second Sunday and it was a lot to take on. I don't think anyone - and I repeat that - anyone can play both games at the top level."

The recent U-21 success has provided cause for optimism among fans, but Cregan was keen to stress that there must be patience when it comes to young players.

"It doesn't necessarily follow that your U-21s team will go on to become good seniors. They must mature and adapt to that level.

"Clare have found that out with their U-21s team. There has been a plan in place in Limerick for the past five years and it's becoming to come through now."



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ON MONDAY**

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