

# Teenage star O'Brien leads Limerick to two-in-a-row

LIMERICK 0-17  
WEXFORD 2-10

LIMERICK fingers were trembling nervously near the end of yesterday's All-Ireland U-21 hurling final in Thurles, but the delicate brush strokes which had been applied earlier were enough to add a dramatic splash of colour to the county's rapidly expanding canvass.

The disappointment of defeat by Wexford in their senior All-Ireland quarter-final evaporated on a glorious autumn afternoon as Limerick players created their own history by becoming the first team from the county to win consecutive All-Ireland U-21 titles.

They did it with an impressive mixture of flamboyant point scoring through the first 45 minutes, and a spiky defiance over the closing stages as Wexford surged at them in powerful waves in an attempt to complete the recovery mission they launched so effectively between the 47th and 53rd minutes.

Limerick also enjoyed a sprinkling of luck as Wexford had a last minute chance to draw level, but Barry Lambert, who had earlier landed two long range points, watched sadly as his 75 yard free was carried wide by the swirling wind.

It was Wexford's final chance, although they were somewhat disappointed that Dublin referee, Aodán MacSuibhne, chose to add just 40 seconds of stoppage time as momentum was very much with them at that stage.

Limerick scored just one point in the final 16 minutes, but had made such a big investment earlier on they could afford to live off their savings. They led 0-16 to 1-5 at the three-quarter mark, and seemed to be heading for a big win, but Wexford staged a heroic fightback which yielded 1-4 in six minutes.

Paul Carley, who had come on as a sub in the 48th minute, scored 1-2 while Barry Lambert and Michael Jacob chipped in



MARTIN BREHENY

with a point each to cut the margin to one before Mark Keane lifted the siege for Limerick with a pointed free in the 54th minute. Ger Coleman pared it back to a point in the 58th minute but Wexford just couldn't land the equaliser.

"There is no worse feeling than to lose an All-Ireland final by a point, but we left ourselves with too much to do," said Wexford manager Seamus Murphy.

"We conceded far too many scores in the first-half, and while I always felt the lads would come back, it was asking an awful lot to pull back such a big lead. They deserve great credit for nearly doing it, but our luck ran out in the end."

Limerick were mighty relieved to hear the final whistle, as they were very much on the back foot and a wan shadow of the powerful force which had hurled at a higher pace and intensity than Wexford for so long.

Nobody did it better than 17-year-old left half-back Maurice O'Brien, who delivered a truly majestic performance.

Strong and assured under the high ball, quick to the breaks and ultra-calm in the tightest situations, he even had the composure to scoop the ball over an opponent's head on one occasion before reclaiming possession and getting in a lengthy clearance.

"I was in a tight corner, it was the only thing I could do," said the Garryspillane teenager rather modestly afterwards. The truth is it was skill at its highest by a youngster who has three more U-21 seasons ahead of him.

If O'Brien showed consistent levels of skill, there were some delightful flashes too from other players on both sides in a high-quality game, watched by an attendance of 31,413, a turnout which underlined the nonsense of the original decision to fix the game for Nowlan Park, Kilkenny.

Limerick fans were in full voice from early on as their side settled quickly into an enterprising routine which brought them four points clear, 0-5 to 0-1 after 14 minutes.

Wexford retaliated with a splendid goal from Michael Jacob in the 15th minute, followed by a point from his brother, Rory, to bring the sides level.

However, Limerick quickly regained the initiative, and led 0-11 to 1-3 at the interval. They shot three wides in four minutes on the re-start, but once they re-located their accuracy, they piled on the points to lead by eight before Wexford broke free of their lethargy to launch a comeback mission which ultimately fell just short.

Paul Carley, Nicky Lambert, once he moved into an attack, the Jacobs and Ger Coleman were central to the Wexford revival while Darren Stamp, David O'Connor and Rory Mallon also had their moments.

Limerick improvised well without suspended senior star Sean O'Connor on a day when they had also impressive responsibility carriers in Damien Reale, Brian Geary, Peter Lawlor, Stephen Lucey, Eoin Foley, Kevin Tobin, Conor Fitzgerald, Niall Moran and Mark Keane.

**MAN-OF-THE-MATCH** — Maurice O'Brien (Limerick).  
**SCORERS** — Limerick: M Keane 0-7 (5f, 1-6S), C Fitzgerald 0-3, K Tobin, E Foley, N Moran 0-2 each, S Lucey 0-1. Wexford: P Carley 1-2 (0-1 F), M Jacob 1-1, R Jacob 0-3 (2f), B Lambert 0-2 (2f), G Coleman 0-2.

**LIMERICK** — T Houlihan, D Reale, B Carroll, E Mulcahy, M O'Riordan, B Geary, M O'Brien, P Lawlor, S Lucey, E Foley, K Tobin, P Tobin, C Fitzgerald, N Moran, M Keane. Sub: A O'Shaughnessy for P Tobin (50).  
**WEXFORD** — M White, N Maguire, D O'Connor, R Kirwan, R Mallon, B McGee, T Kelly, N Lambert, D Stamp, R Barry, G Coleman, R Jacob, B Lambert, M Jacob, D Lyng. Subs: P Donoghue for Kirwan (30), P Carley for N Lambert (48), N Lambert for Barry (52).  
**REF** — A MacSuibhne (Dublin).



Limerick's Mark O'Riordan is congratulated by Peter O'Reilly following their victory over Wexford in yesterday's All-Ireland U-21 hurling final. Picture: Damien Eagers

## Ballymun battle back

ST BRIGID'S 0-11  
BALLYMUN KICKHAMS 1-8

STRONG BALLYMUN'S improved second half-showing earned them a draw in yesterday's *Evening Herald* Dublin SFC semi-final at Parnell Park.

Brigid's dictated the early stages to lead at the break, 0-7 to 0-4.

On 46 minutes, a foul on Stephen Condon, saw Ballymun's Paddy Christie convert from the penalty spot to level the contest for the first time. Team-mate David O'Hanlon's free ensured a replay.

**SCORERS** — St Brigid's: D Darcy 0-3 (2f), P Andrews, K Kilmurray 0-2 each, D Cahill, D Lally, A Briody, P Molloy 0-1 each. Ballymun Kickhams: N O'Donoghue 0-4 (1f), P Christie 1-0 (pen), D O'Hanlon 0-3 (3f), S Condon 0-1.  
**ST BRIGID'S** — C Boyle, M Cahill, D Cahill, C O'Sullivan, K Keane, P Andrews, B Cahill, K Darcy, J Ward, D Fitzgerald, D Darcy, D Lally, A Briody, C McGlynn, K

Kilmurray. Subs: C O Muirheartaigh for McGlynn, C Kilmurray for Fitzgerald; P Molloy for Lally.  
**BALLYMUN KICKHAMS** — D Byrne, E Dolan, P Christie, J Nolan, E Long, D Duce, D Kearns, I Robertson, D Martin, K Brady, N O'Donoghue, S Condon, D O'Hanlon, A Whelan, T Dunne. Subs: M Shelly for Nolan, G Brogan for Dunne, J McCann for Brady (inj), L Finnerty for O'Donoghue.

NA FIANNA 0-11  
LUCAN SARSFIELDS 1-7

CHAMPIONS Na Fianna survived a late fright to progress to the Dublin SFC final at Parnell Park last evening.

Na Fianna trailed at half-time, 0-6 to 0-4.

Two points apiece from Jason Sherlock and Senan Connell looked like easing the holders through, but a superb lobbed goal from John Doyle provided a compelling conclusion.

**SCORERS** — Na Fianna: D Mackin 0-3 (2f), S Connell, J Foley (1f), J Sherlock 0-2 each, K McGeeney, D Farrell 0-1 each. Lucan: J Doyle 1-1, B Kavanagh, D

O'Brien 0-2 each, D Herlihy, J Sheedy 0-1 each.

**NA FIANNA** — S Gray, N O Murchu, N Clancy, B McManus, T Lynch, S McGlinchey, M Foley, K McGeeney, S Connell, P McCarthy, D Farrell, K Donnelly, J Foley, J Sherlock, D Mackin. Sub: P McGeeney for M Foley.

**LUCAN** — R Doolin, B Whelan, D Sheehy, S Corrigan, S Shaughnessy, M Casey, K Wade, C Hickey, F O'Hare, P Casey, D Herlihy, B Kavanagh, J Doyle, D O'Brien, J Sheedy. Subs: D Carr, for Kavanagh; C Bresnan for Hickey.

BALLYBODEN 0-15  
O'TOOLE'S 0-11

DAVID SWEENEY kicked 0-5 to inspire Ballyboden St Enda's to their first county final since 1988 with a second-half comeback in yesterday's *Evening Herald* Dublin SHC A semi-final at Parnell Park.

**SCORERS** — Ballyboden St Enda's: D Sweeney 0-5, E Carroll 0-3, D Curtin 0-2 (2f), C Keaney, T Riordan, J Kenny, S Hiney, A Reilly 0-1 each. O'Toole's: P O'Donoghue, K Flynn (3f) 0-3 each, B McLoughlin 0-2 (1f), S Kearns, K Horgan, D McLoughlin 0-1 each.

## MAYO SE Cawl force

CHARLESTOWN  
KNOCKMORE

Paddy Hickey

FORMER All-Star O'Neill returned mayhem of Mar gatsy Knockmo dramatic draw fans at Castleba

O'Neill was d from New York day, but his flight delayed until S and he only ar lin Airport at 7 morning before al drove him plus journey to where the Am at half-mast ar silence was ob

"I didn't get the plane and wrecked out t pitch due to t of the jet lag a ness," explain nevertheless s points of his s

But it was a mixed emotio All-Star, who started a two with Bank of York, as he r card 13 minu after being sl cards by Will

As well five players — Gr Declan Swee Staunton, D and Jason C booked in c Charlestown yellow cards

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## LOUT Blu

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EXPERIE  
Newtown Joe Ward Grounds day.

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With 2 half elap were on to 0-4 d majority But t points b the Dro