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Limerick sportsfile

Jubilant Ardscoil Rís now focus on All Ireland glory

By MAL KEAVENEY

MIGHTY Dr Harty Cup (Munster) winners Ardscoil Rís are justifiably upbeat about claiming even further silverware in the Colleges Hurling Arena before the season is done and dusted!

Derek Larkin's young guns eventually captured their first Harty when they

breezed past holders Thurles CBS in the second replay of the decider in front of another fine attendance at McDonagh Park in Nenagh.

Over two previous magical encounters, the teams were glued together but in the latest installment, Ardscoil reigned supreme and emerged handsome 3-15 to 0-14 victors in the 93rd edition of this famous competition.

"What people have witnessed here over three games has been nothing other than an exhibition of wonderful hurling involving two fantastic teams," enthused Munster Chairman Jimmy O'Gorman.

"Have little doubt but that history will record with relish the three Harty Cup Finals of 2010 as something very special. Those present will remember too to rever these great occasions," he said.

"Both sets of players can be very proud of themselves as they were a credit to their schools, families, clubs and counties. School days are the best days of one's life and for Ardscoil Rís these past few days will live with you always. On this latest evidence, Munster Hurling is in very safe hands with teams like Ardscoil around,"

O'Gorman added. In a lovely gesture, skipper Seán O'Brien invited his suspended co-captain Cathal McInerney to join him for the presentation. "Cathal has been fantastic for us all year," noted Larkin. "His red card the last day was probably the only card of any colour he ever picked-up, he was just unlucky. The team, however, are all good friends of Cathal and were never going to let him down, particularly at this stage of the championship."

In his acceptance speech, an emotional O'Brien said: "Three games probably tells its own story of how difficult it was to eventually come away with this win, the greatest win in the world for us. A lot of people deserve praise, but especially our excellent management team with Niall Moran involved, who must surely be one of the best readers of the game."

Now Ardscoil can set about negotiating their way through to All-Ireland glory. "Few teams find themselves in this position," noted mentor Natal O'Grady, Patrickswell. "We are worthy Munster Champions and are not going to shrug the responsibilities that go with that particular tag. There is no reason why we can't be All-Ireland Champions within a month, that is certainly our goal as of now."

Meanwhile, St Mary's/Sean

Finn's of Rathkeale will replay their All-Ireland Junior B Hurling Final with St. Martin's (Kilkenny) at Raheenagh on Sunday next, 2.30pm, after the sides ended level at 0-13 apiece after an exciting drawn encounter at the same venue over the weekend.

* IRELAND'S two-try hero from the RBS Six Nations win against Wales at Croke Park, Keith Earls (22), is a most appropriate choice as Grand Marshal for today's Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade through the streets of his proud native Limerick. Mayor Kevin Kiely said: "We're all very proud of Keith, he's a fantastic ambassador for Limerick which makes him a natural choice to lead our parade."



Ardscoil Rís captain, Sean O'Brien, receives the Dr Harty Cup at Nenagh last Thursday to a tumultuous reception from the team's supporters. Pictures: Keith Wiseman



GAA Focus

by MAL KEAVENEY

Harty Cup joy at last for Ardscoil Rís

ARDSKOIL Rís once more rubbished their underdogs tag to skip past defending champions Thurles CBS, 3-15 to 0-14, and clinch a historic first Dr. Harty Cup (Munster Schools Hurling) title at McDonagh Park, Nenagh.

"There were many out there who didn't give us a chance either today," commented Ardscoil supremo Derek Larkin. "We were without Cathal (McInerney) and they had Aiden McCormack back and it was reckoned that we had lost our chance, but that was never the case in the minds of our lads. They simply don't know what it is to lose and were more determined this time around to win and win it too for Cathal. And, at half-time (ahead 2-8 to 1-7) I had every confidence that we had it within us to hold on."

He added: "There's an unbelievable feeling around being Munster Champions. This team have served their apprenticeship and served it well in terms of Dean Ryan, Kinnane Cups and the rest. The character within this team is amazing - they simply never give up and there were many times during this championship that the cause appeared lost only for these guys to pull it out of the fire."

Ardscoil had as ever a full-cast of stars, including towering full-forward Kevin Downes of Na Piarraigh, who grabbed his now customary goal. "This must be the best feeling in the world," said an exhausted Downes. "We have been working away at this for the last six years and now finally it has all come good

for use, and I reckon we are deserving of this special reward. It has just been a roller-coaster of a year for us, a brilliant year and one that's not over just yet.

"We'll celebrate this particular win but there's also an All-Ireland title out there and we are going to give that a serious crack too."

It's taken more than three hours of intense hurling along with an astonishing 7-48 for Ardscoil Rís to reach the Holy Grail.

Ardscoil become the 17th school to have their name inscribed on the plinth of the prized trophy and are only the second Limerick side to annex the title, following in the footsteps of CBS Sexton Street who won the last of their ten titles back in 1993.

History makers Ardscoil Rís 2010: PJ Hall, Declan Hannon, Kevin Keane, Jody Hannon, John Fitzgibbon, Ronan Keane (all Adare); Eric Neville (Askeaton); Cathal McInerney (Cratloe); Fergal Carey (Crecora); Brendan O'Connor (Croagh/Kilfinny); Niall Kennedy (Granagh/Ballingarry); Sean O'Connor (Meelick); Eoghan McCarthy (Mungret); Alan Dempsey, Shane Dowling, Kevin Downes, David Sheppard, Adrian Breen, Mark Ryan, Claran Keogh, Kevin McNamara (all Na Piarraigh); Eamon Farrell (Newport); Shane Crehan (O'Callaghan Mills), Martin Moroney (Parteen); Sean O'Brien, Jack Kelliher, Mark Carmody, Kelvin Lynch (all Patrickswell), Jamie Shanahan (Sixmilebridge).

No let up in pressure for Justin McCarthy as County Board convenes for meeting

AN IMMINENT Special County Board Meeting will intensely discuss the position of embattled Limerick Senior Hurling Manager Justin McCarthy.

In the aftermath of last week's scheduled meeting at Cloughaun, the requisite five clubs - under-

stood to be Adare, Ahane, Croom, Garryspillane and Patrickswell - requested that a vote, presumably of confidence or no-confidence in McCarthy, be called at an emergency meeting that it should be taken. However, the Limerick Executive is believed to have rejected such correspondence as it does not comply with relevant rule guidelines.

The clubs are now expected to reissue a demand for a Special County Board Meeting to be arranged in the very near future.

Since this latest crisis on Shannonside came about many months back, several meetings have discussed the situation, with the Limerick Executive firmly behind McCarthy at all times. At two of those meetings, delegates reaffirmed their support for McCarthy and his selection committee of Brian Ryan, Liam Garvey and the recently appointed John Tuohy.

With the possible exception of James O'Brien, no other player from the disaffected two dozen from last season are willing to return while McCarthy is in charge, a stance categorically restated with the release of a second player statement the other weekend. "We've got to sort this out, and soon - this is going on for six months, do we realise that?" one clearly upset delegate remarked at the latest County Board meeting.

While new-look Limerick have de-

livered spirited displays in their opening Allianz Division One league games against Galway, Cork and most lately Waterford in Dungarvan on Sunday, the bottom line is that all have ended in sizeable defeats and the side is staring relegation in the face.

And, there is a general belief that this mostly experienced squad will not be able to hold their own in a championship environment, unless some key players are encouraged back into the fold.

'There's a view within the county board... that nothing can be done, and that this year will end with relegation in the league and getting well beaten in the championship, and only then will we be in a position to move on. I don't like it particularly - it's a defeatist attitude, but people seem to be accepting it.'

Former Limerick hurling boss, Eamon Cregan

Commenting on the stand-off, former Limerick boss Eamon Cregan said: "There's a view within the county board and elsewhere in the county that nothing can be done," says Cregan, "and that this year will end with relegation in the league and getting well beaten in the championship, and only then will we be in a position to move on."

"I don't like it particularly - it's a defeatist attitude, but people seem to be accepting it."

In Dungarvan, there was a wholly inappropriate 15-minute stoppage due to an injury to Limerick goalkeeper Tadhg Flynn in the opening-half. On examination, Dr. Dave Boylan summoned a stretcher that eventually did arrive but was inappropriate (a wheeled version). It was quite a while later before the on-site ambulance arrived on the scene.

Thankfully, Flynn was later given the all clear by medics.



Justin McCarthy, Limerick Senior Hurling manager pictured recently on the touchline. Picture: Keith Wiseman

Limerick on the cusp of U21 final appearance

MAURICE Horan's Limerick will bump into Tipperary in the semi-final of the Cadbury Munster U21 Football Championship semi-final under lights at Semple Stadium in Thurles on this Thursday (7.30pm), a reward for their gritty 1-10 to 0-10 opening round victory over Clare a week ago.

Limerick were scheduled to have home advantage against the Banner County, but part of the Gaelic Grounds was still frozen earlier in the day and the baffling decision was made to switch the fixture to Cooraclare as no other floodlit venue was available on Shannonside - it was astonishing that Limerick could not have sourced suitable salt or the like to have the Ennis Road pitch ready for nighttime action instead of coughing up an obvious plus.

At the unfamiliar West Clare grounds, Limerick were 0-6 to 0-2 in arrears at the break and fell even further behind at the outset of the new half. Even as

late as the closing quarter, the visitors appeared unlikely winners but then produced an awesome finishing spell to come away with a stunning victory. As Limerick trailed by a couple of points, Cormac Joyce-Power made a decisive contribution when he neatly tucked home the lead goal.

Seamus O'Carroll and Joyce-Power added extra points to seal a wonderful recovery at the expense of a stunned Clare.

A thigh injury stripped Limerick of the valuable services of top striker Ian Ryan, but the St. Senan's is likely to be available for the outing at The Field of Legends.

The outcome was a dramatic reversal on the happenings at the same venue 12 months back when Clare emerged the easiest of winners.

Limerick are given a sporting chance to come through their battle with Tipperary and progress to a rare Munster Final

outing against either Waterford or Kerry next month.

It's exactly a decade ago that Limerick won its only provincial crown at this grade with Liam Kearns at the helm.

Michael Collins of Cork will referee the tie.

Meanwhile, Limerick's aspirations for an immediate promotion from basement Division Four of the Allianz National Football League suffered a serious dent when Waterford emerged shock 1-12 to 1-11 winners from the weekend engagement at the Gaelic Grounds. On Sunday next, Mickey 'Ned' O'Sullivan will run-up against his old boss Mick O'Dwyer when Limerick meet Wicklow in Aughrim, a particularly difficult assignment.

O'Sullivan it will be recalled captained Kerry to All-Ireland success way back in 1975, but was unable to collect the Sam Maguire Cup having been hospitalised during the game after suffering serious concussion.



THE LONG AWAITED DAY: jubilant scenes as Dr Harty Cup champions 2010, Ardscoil Rís their victory over Thurles CBS in the second replay of the final at Nenagh last Thursday. Picture: Keith Wiseman