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MOMENT IN TIME KILMALLOCK'S THREE-IN-A-ROW TEAM, 1973-75

Well do they remember Kilmallock's golden era

Kilmallock won three Limerick senior hurling titles in a row in the 1970s.

Jerome O'Connell talks to two of their players from that glorious era in the club's history

KILMALLOCK were chasing their third Limerick senior hurling title when they clashed with Patrickswell in the county final of 1970.

The Well were defending champions but with plenty of survivors from their victories in 1960 and '67, Kilmallock were quietly confident of overturning the champions.

Not so - Patrickswell handed out a 2-14 to 0-2 trouncing.

"Don't mention those two points to me," laughs Moss Dowling.

"In 1970 we were beat out the gate by The Well - it was ridiculous. That game still sticks in my mind," he explained.

That defeat was the foundation for what was to be the club's only three-in-a-row. All vowed never again to revisit a defeat like that. The following year they lost the South Final to great rivals Garryspillane.

But 1972 was to rekindle optimism. "We thought in '72 that we could have won it," recalled Dowling this week.

Bernie Savage played alongside Dowling in the Kilmallock attack of that era.

"Pat Heffernan and Tony Roche from Kilfinane were playing with us but in '72 they went to The Bouncers," recalled Savage.

"But in '72 we beat the Bouncers in the south final in a replay."

Kilmallock progressed to play Cloughaun

"We were up by five points with a few minutes to go in the quarter-final and they got two goals to beat us. But that gave us a fair idea that if we got it together that we were not too far away - all we needed was a bit of confidence," said Savage.

Fortunes were to change the following year. And, it all started with a players meeting, which was called by Mossie Dowling.

"It was my year to be captain and I was on the county team and maybe I thought we needed to encourage each other a bit more," he explained.

"Maybe there were a few of them slacking!"

Bernie Savage credits the meeting with a change of attitude towards training.

"It was the only players meeting that I was at in my whole career," he joked.

"Fellas just asked each other to do whatever was necessary to win the county title. Moss was the captain and I suppose was away with the county team and knew that we needed to work harder for each other."

And, so they did.

"In '73 we knuckled down to it - we trained harder than most and that is why I would say we won the three-in-a-row. We had the players but all we needed was the dedication," said Dowling.

"The year before we played Cloughaun up in Caherconlish and it was only a comedy of errors that stopped us from beating them - we knew that it was coming."

"We definitely upped in for '73," agreed Savage.

"When I became a selector with Limerick later with Tom Ryan and Dave Mahedy I remember saying

"Willie (O'Brien) was a total institution in his own lifetime. You would not find a person that would have a bad word about Willie and all the teams that he trained."

that we used to train harder with Kilmallock in the '70s. We would play backs and forwards for a half hour or more and then we would do more training for another hour," recalled Savage.

"We would go into the pub after training of course," added Dowling.

"We would have worked hard all day and then straight to training and after that we felt that we almost deserved a drink. And, sure it was all hurling talk."

But when training there was no slacking and that is credited to Willie O'Brien.



"Willie O'Brien was the trainer - he was an army man and had us in great shape. He brought this club to county titles in 1960, '67, '73, '74, '75 and '85 - he was a great man to talk and always made sure that he had a happy camp. I suppose you'd say that he had the gift of the gab," said Savage.

"He trained the club from 1960 to 1985 and not once did anyone say that we needed a new trainer."

Dowling describes O'Brien as an "institution".

"Willie was a total institution in his own lifetime. You would not find a person that would have a bad word about Willie and all the teams that he trained. He was one of those characters that you could not fall out with and still he got the results," said the captain of the '73 team.

Another trump card for Kilmallock was their willingness to travel to Cork for tournament games.

"We would always be going down to Cork and playing their best teams like The Bars, Blackrock and Glen Rovers," explained Savage.

Back in the '70s the county championship was run through the divisions with two finalists progressing to the county quarter-finals. Kilmallock went undefeated for the three years but had a couple of lucky escapes along the way.

"The south was always hard won - there was The Bouncers, Bruree and Bruff were always tough," explained Savage, who made his debut as a 16-year-old in 1962.

"The thing about those three wins was that in every match we played we nearly had the same players in all the years. Tony Smith came to us from Tipperary for two years and he was centre forward. He was a big strong man and I always remember he could score points from out in midfield. Jackie McCarthy was with us from Ardpatrick and he was

centre back," he outlined.

While there were some fresh faces like a teenage Paddy Kelly, the Kilmallock team of the '70s was far from 'green'.

"We had about half of the 1967 team and sure Tommy Hanley was still in goals since the 1960 win," recalls Savage.

Dowling illustrated the importance of their previous county title. "In '67 there were six or seven of them U-21 and they were all in their prime for the three-in-a-row - we really had a fabulous team in Kilmallock."

He recalled how Sean O'Donovan (father of current Clare defender Domhnaill) departed after the wins to take up residence in Clonlara.

Year after year new records were created for county final attendances with Limerick hurling on a high.

"Oh we had great crowds at our games. There was a Kilmallockman's Association in London and they would all come home for the finals," recalled Savage. But no one was getting carried away.

"We got stockings one year and we were all delighted and that was about it," said Savage.

For Dowling, 1973 will always be his year of the double as the only Kilmallock man on Limerick last's All-Ireland winning panel.

"To do them both was great."

It will be 40 years next September since an All-Ireland senior medal returned to Kilmallock but before all that Dowling is hoping for the return of the Daly Cup to his small townland on the outskirts of Kilmallock.

"Paudie O'Brien is of course the captain and he only lives over the road from me.

"There are three houses in the townland of Proonts and wouldn't it be great to bring back a second county cup."

LIMERICK SHC FINAL - KILMALLOCK V ADARE



Kilmallock won the first of their three-in-a-row on November 25, 1973, in the Gaelic Grounds. Pictured left (back row, l-r); Aidan Carroll, Tony Moloney, Seanie Donovan, Tommy Hanley, Dom Hayes, Dan Connolly, Mike Carroll, John Fitzgerald, Mossie Finn, Nicholas Hayes, Willie O'Brien; (front row, l-r); Davy O'Riordan, Bernie Savage, Donie Burke, Mossie Dowling, Jackie McCarthy, Eamon Dowling, Tony Smith; (front), mascot Johnny Brazil, Jimmy O'Keefe, Paddy Kelly.

TEAMS THAT WON THE THREE-IN-A-ROW

1973 - Kilmallock 2-12, Killeedy 2-4
Tommy Hanley; John Fitzgerald, Dominic Hsayes, Nicholas Hayes; Mike Carroll, John McCarthy, Sean O'Donovan; Tony Moloney, Dan Connolly; Paddy Kelly, Tony Smith, Moss Finn; Davy O'Riordan, Moss Dowling (capt), Bernie Savage.

1974 - Kilmallock 2-9, Patrickswell 3-5
Tommy Hanley; John Fitzgerald, Dominic Hayes, Nicholas Hayes; Mike Carroll, John McCarthy, Sean O'Donovan; Tony Moloney (capt), Dan Connolly; Paddy Kelly, Tony Smith, Moss Finn; Dave O'Riordan, Bernie Savage, Mossie Dowling.

1975 - Kilmallock 3-14, Patrickswell 3-7
Tommy Hanley; John Fitzgerald, Dominic Hayes (capt), Nicholas Hayes; Mike Carroll, John McCarthy, Tony Moloney; Dan Connolly, Paddy Kelly; Johnny O'Riordan, Moss Finn, Dave O'Riordan; Bernie Savage, Mossie Dowling, Sean O'Donovan.

MOMENT IN TIME ADARE WIN THEIR FIRST TITLE, 2001

The day Adare reached their promised land at last

Jerome O'Connell talks to Mike Alfred about the day Adare finally made the breakthrough in 2001

UNTIL the last decade the greatest day in the history of Adare GAA club was the 1964 county junior hurling championship success.

That brought the club into the senior ranks but for the next three decades there was only to be senior heartache.

But all the time they continued to work at underage level.

Just four years after the JHC win, they lost the senior final to Claughaun but it was Bord na nOg work in the 1980s and 1990s that saw Adare finally lift the Daly Cup in 2001.

They won top grade minor championships in 1990, '98 and '99 and U-21's in 1999 and 2000.

But all the time they were falling at the final hurdle in the senior championship.

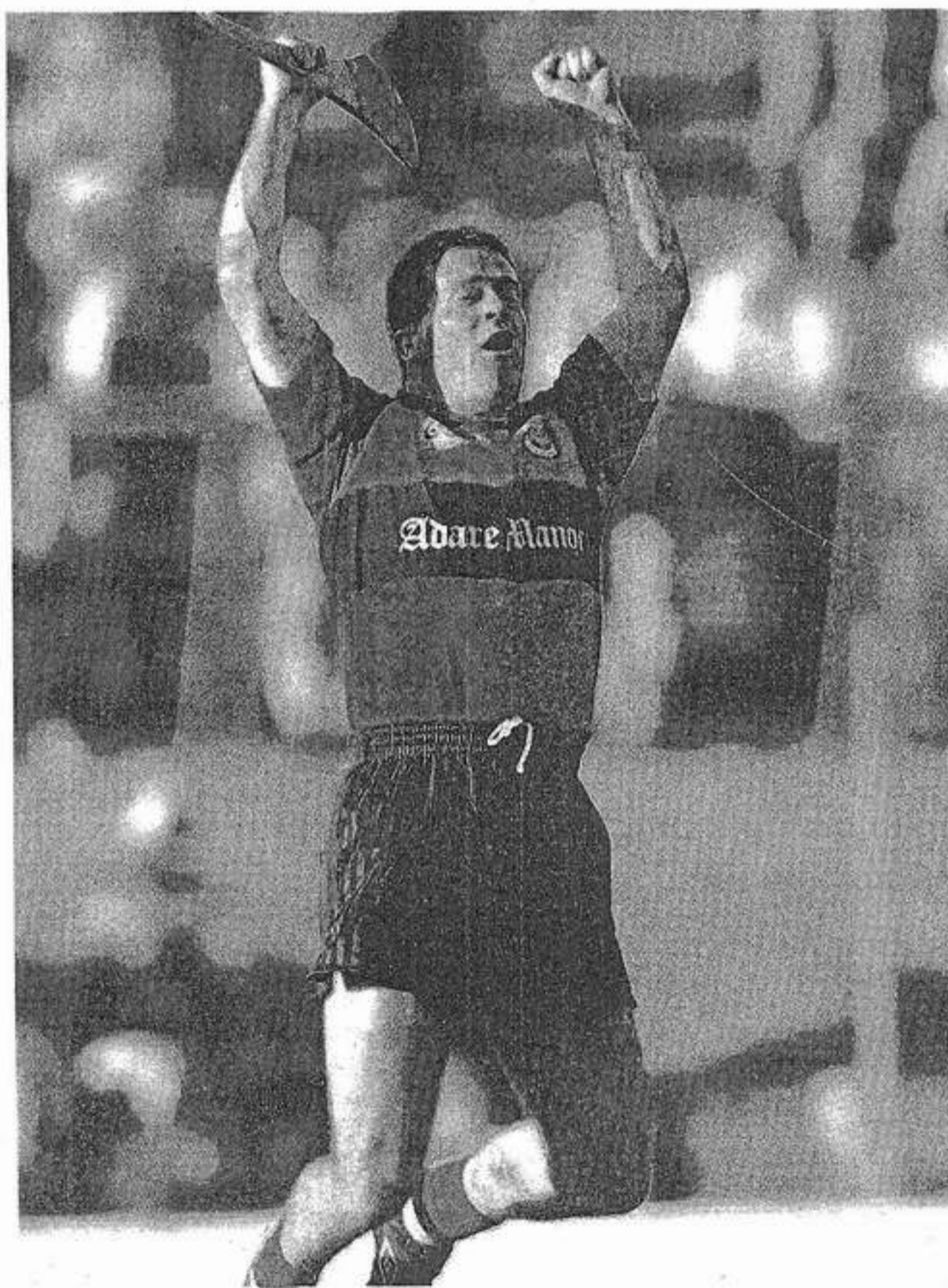
Defeat was their lot in the county finals of 1986, '90, '93 and '96.

Central to all that heartache was Mike Alfred.

"I remember losing in '86 to Claughaun and fellas often said if we won that one we'd have won a lot more, but I suppose things don't work like that," recalled Alfred this week.

Alfred, Joey O'Brien, Tom Healy and Con Murphy were among those that soldiered for years.

"I was a bit older than them alright," laughed Alfred.



"Everyone thought after we lost in '86 that we were getting closer to winning one but then we kept meeting Patrickswell in finals and we just couldn't beat them," explained the defender.

"It was one of those days when everything went right. It was nearly over at half time and we won by eight or nine points in the end."

"Patrickswell were fierce strong in those years and there was Kilmallock and Ahane. We were often close enough but didn't do it on county final day. We never had 10 or more lads playing to their best and you need that in finals," he said.

In 1999 Alfred was part of the club's management team at U-21 grade.

The claimed county honours. They retained their title the following year and this group have backboned the senior side ever since.

"I remember we used to play a very much catch and kick style. But with that U-21 team we used to do more passing and running in support. When we started to bring that into the senior team we were winning," he recalled.

"The likes of Conor Fitzgerald, Aidan O'Rahilly were in about eight or nine of that team that played senior and mixed with Con Murphy,

Joey O'Brien and Tom Healy."

Dave Keane combined his historic Limerick U-21 duties with club management in 2001 and Adare were on the brink of glory.

Joining him were Pat Lavin and Pat McDonnell.

"I remember Dave Moriarty came in mid-season. Up until that it was looking like another season of quarter-final or semi-final for us but Moriarty was very good," he outlined.

"We beat Kilmallock in that semi-final and then in the final against Patrickswell it was one of those days when everything went right."

He continued: "It was nearly over at half time and I think we won by eight or nine points in the end. Everyone of the 15 players just clicked on the day."

"It was nice that it was Patrickswell as well!"

Twelve months later they retained their title.

"When we reached the final again it was Ahane in the final and we should never have won that one. But winning is a habit and knowing how to win is half of the battle when you are in finals," said Alfred.

"We have done well since making the breakthrough in 2001 and it just shows how hard it is to win the first one and that's the way it was for Na Piarasigh. It took us a long time but we have five won now and on Sunday we are going for number six."

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>>> Left - Joe O'Brien celebrates Adare's Limerick SHC final win over Patrickswell in the 2001 final