

SPORT



LIMERICK FC LOSE TO LEAGUE LEADERS IN AIRTRICITY PREMIER DIVISION: PAGE 28

HISTORIC DAY AS CAREW PARK CLAIM FIRST PREMIER DIVISION TITLE: PAGE 27



What a feeling: Limerick players Niall Moran and Shane Dowling celebrate with supporters after Limerick's thrilling win over Tipperary in the Gaelic Grounds yesterday. See full coverage of the match on Pages 29, 30 and 31

GREEN DAY

Limerick shock Tipp to book Munster final place

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FASTEN the safety-belts for hurling fever - Limerick are back in the Munster SHC final

for the first time since the summer of 2007.

And the Munster final could be in the Gaelic Grounds, if Cork overcome Clare in the other semi-final in the Gaelic Grounds on June 23. If it's a Limerick v Clare final, Thurles would be the venue.

Regardless Limerick is now bracing itself for the July 14 decider after defying the odds yesterday to send the reigning Munster SHC champions crashing out with a 1-18 to 1-15 victory over Tipperary. "Limerick needed that victory," beamed Man of the

Match Richie McCarthy.

"To see the Limerick support after we won, it was like we were after winning the All-Ireland final - that was a monkey off our backs," said the Limerick full back.

"We were waiting for a long time to win a cham-

pionship game and to get to a Munster final but now that we are finally there we won't get carried away," he said.

It's a Munster final that could see Limerick manager John Allen face his native county. "It will be nice to be

able to come here in a fortnight and look at the other game (Cork v Clare) now that Limerick are in the final.

"I committed to Limerick last year and am very happy here and proud of the players."

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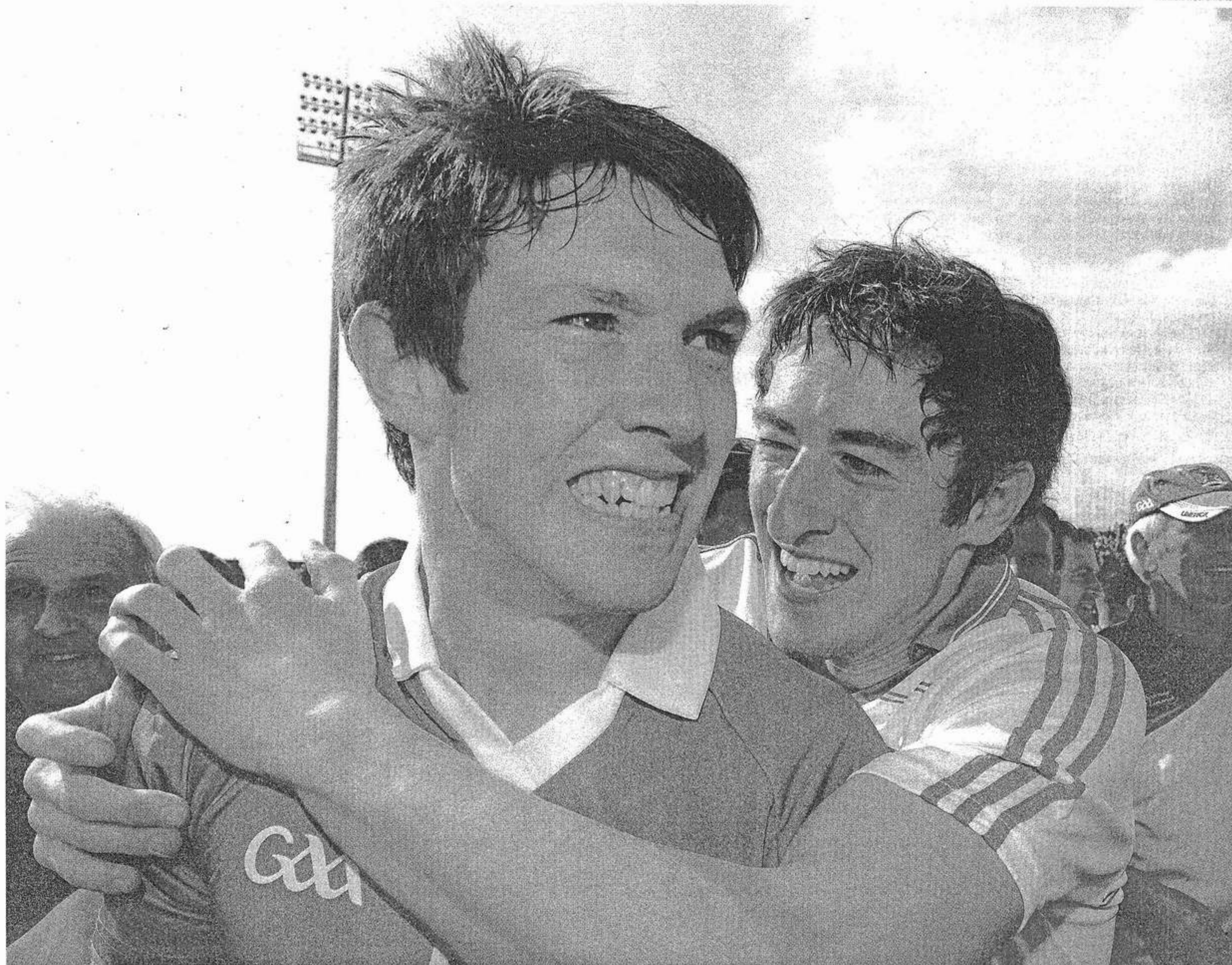


MUNSTER SENIOR HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP SEMI-FINAL

Limerick upset the odds with a thrilling and inspirational win over Tipperary in the Gaelic Grounds to book Munster final place against Cork or Clare on July 14

Beautiful day as Tipp toppled by Limerick

PAT MURPHY/SPORTSFILE



That winning feeling: Seamus Hickey and Nickie Quaid celebrate after the game in the Gaelic Grounds; Quaid's two saves in the first half were crucial in keeping Limerick in contention

SPORT

LIMERICK	1-18
TIPPERARY	1-15

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An rud is annamh is iontach. The scenes at the final whistle told the story. June 9 will be remembered for the day that the summer came alive.

It was everything that dreams are made of - the temperatures reached 26 degrees, almost 20,000 supporters rocked the Gaelic Grounds and Tipperary, Limerick's great rivals and the reigning Munster champions, were sent packing.

The Limerick public came more in hope than belief but out on the field the Limerick players displayed an inner confidence that only those closest to the panel knew was possible.

All known form suggested that a Limerick win wasn't possible. As Limerick went in search of a first Munster SHC win since 2007, they were the bookies' 7/2 outsiders against the second favourites to lift the Liam McCarthy next September.

But it was Limerick that hurled like real contenders - setting the tempo from the start to dispel any fears that playing league hurling in the second tier would be a disadvantage.

Supporters wanted a display of passion and spirit and that was certainly at the foundation of this unbelievable win.

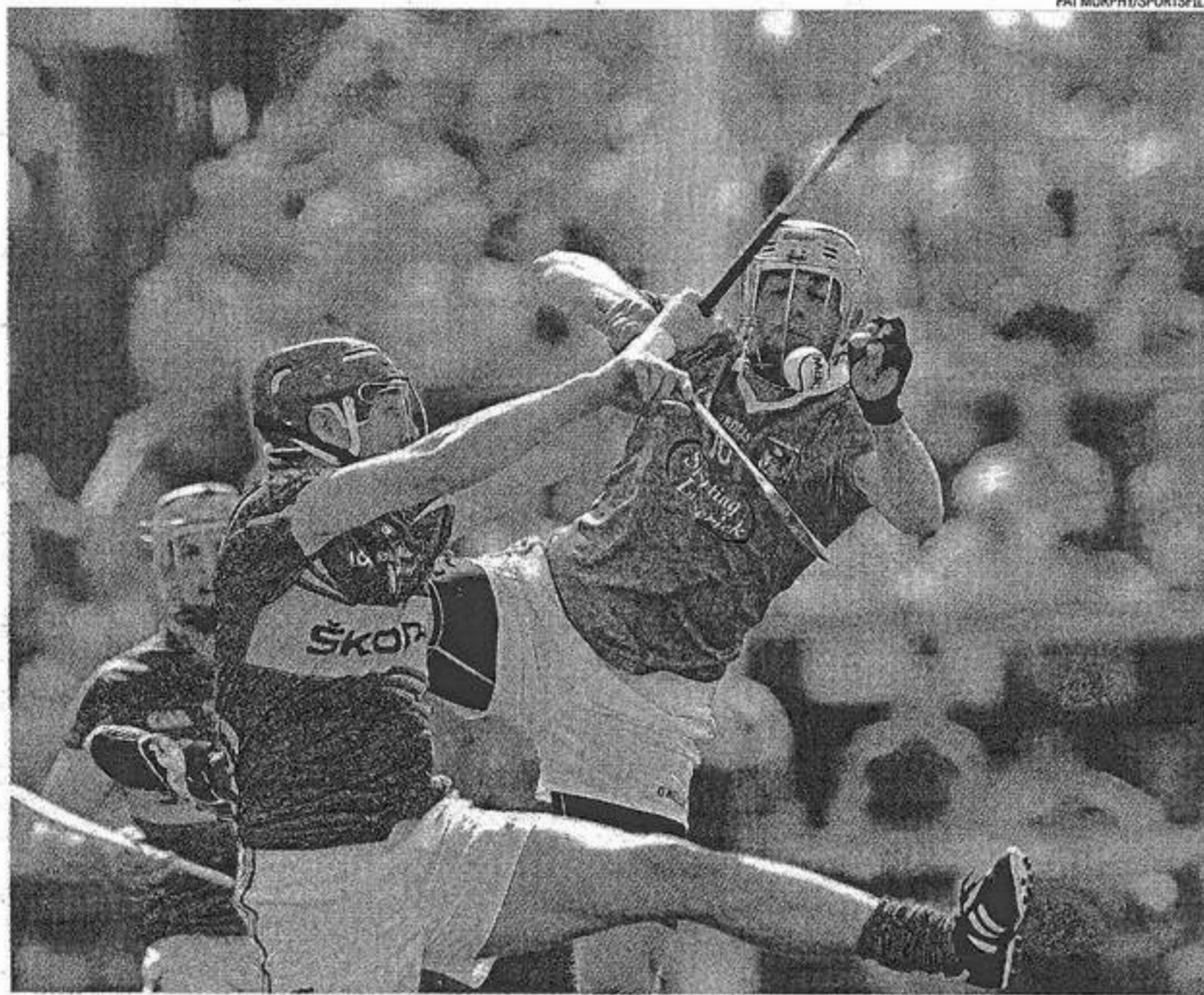
Credit to John Allen, Donach O'Donnell, Eamon Meskill, John Kiely and Mark Lyons, Limerick came with a plan and it worked.

They played with a two-man full forward line and then out the field set about dominating all individual roles and especially attempting to stop the Tipperary launchpad of their half back line.

Then when the game opened up Limerick rang the changes and two subs Shane Dowling and Niall Moran chipped in with some of the clinching scores.

In the sweltering conditions it appeared strange that Limerick went through a 30-minute warm-up but it worked a treat and they dominated from the off with a huge work rate of hooking, blocking and tackling.

And the forwards were revelling in the space with Donal O'Grady, James Ryan and Declan Hannon all scoring from play as Limerick led 0-4 to 0-2 after 11 minutes.



PAT MURPHY/SPORTSFILE

At the other end there were scares but Nickie Quaid pulled off two superb saves to keep Tipp at bay.

Then the net was rattled and it came from Seanie Tobin. Nineteen minutes had elapsed when he pounced to pull first time after an initial David Breen flick was cleared off the line.

The goal had Limerick 1-6 to 0-4 clear and the Gaelic Grounds was filling with optimism.

John O'Brien was the one Tipperary forward winning his duel and his points steadied their ship.

Nonetheless Limerick went back to the interval dressing room 1-7 to 0-7 clear and with the cheers of the crowd in their ears.

The expected Tipp backlash came on the resumption with half time sub John O'Dwyer wreaking havoc with three successive points inside four minutes.

Donal O'Grady eased Limerick back into the contest with his second point but Tipp kept coming and their half back line were now evident.

John O'Brien tied up the game for the first time in the 46th minute - 1-9 to 0-12.

Then Brendan Maher had Tipp ahead.

Worse was to follow when O'Dwyer crashed home a goal for a 1-13 to 1-9 lead with exactly 20 minutes to play.

The expected script would be that Limerick would not crumble. But not so.

Indeed Limerick outscored Tipp 0-9 to 0-2 in the final 20 minutes to erase the memories of last year's final quarter collapse when they were seven points clear only to lose by five.

The response was incred-

ible and within eight minutes of the goal Limerick were back level 1-14 each.

Crucially Limerick then went ahead with Dowling coming deep into his own half to point a free.

Moran then shot on the turn to point and Limerick were ahead and supporters were beginning to allow themselves to dream.

With Man of the match Richie McCarthy, Wayne McNamara and Stephen Walsh leading a huge defensive charge there was no way through for Tipp.

A Kelly free left it 1-16 to 1-15 with five minutes to play but Limerick had enough of hard luck stories.

O'Grady pointed his third and his with his clinched first the Ennis Road erupted.

Only a goal could deny Limerick now and even the introduction of Lar Corbett couldn't help Tipp as Hannon sealed a famous win with his ninth of the day.

Up for it: David Breen battles for possession against Tipperary's John O'Brien

TEAMS AND SCORERS

SCORERS - LIMERICK: Declan Hannon 0-9 (six frees, one '65), Sean Tobin 1-1, Donal O'Grady 0-3, Shane Dowling 0-2 (one free), David Breen, James Ryan, Niall Moran 0-1 each. **TIPPERARY:** John O'Dwyer 1-3, John O'Brien, Seamus Callanan (all frees) 0-4 each, Eoin Kelly 0-2 (one free), Noel McGrath, Brendan Maher 0-1 each.

LIMERICK: Nickie Quaid, Stephen Walsh, Richie McCarthy, Tom Condon, Paudie O'Brien, Wayne McNamara, Gavin O'Mahony, Paul Browne, Donal O'Grady, David Breen, James Ryan, Seamus Hickey, Sean Tobin, Declan Hannon, Graeme Mulcahy. Subs: Conor Allis for David Breen (42mins), Shane Dowling for Seamus Hickey (48mins), Niall Moran for Sean Tobin (64mins), Cathal King for Paul Browne (65mins), Kevin Downes for James Ryan (68mins).

TIPPERARY: Brendan Cummins, Paddy Stapleton, Paul Curran, Michael Cahill, Kieran Bergin, Conor O'Mahony, Padraic Maher, Brendan Maher, Shane McGrath, Pa Burke, Patrick Maher, John O'Brien, Shane Bourke, Seamus Callanan, Noel McGrath. Subs: John O'Dwyer for Shane Bourke (44mins), Eoin Kelly for Pa Burke (44mins), Brian O'Meara for Seamus Callanan (49mins), Conor O'Brien for Shane McGrath (64mins), Lar Corbett for Brendan Maher, inj (67mins).

REFEREE: Brian Gavin (Offaly)



Winners alright: Goalscorer Seanie Tobin celebrates with second-half sub Cathal King on a joyous day for Limerick hurling at the Gaelic Grounds

Allen very proud of his battling Limerick heroes

REACTION

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IT was 45 minutes after the final whistle and Limerick hurlers were still out on the Gaelic Grounds pitch accepting congratulations and signing autographs.

No one wanted to leave the scene of Limerick's greatest win since the Tipp trilogy of 2007.

It was over an hour after Brian Gavin's whistle signalled a pitch invasion that Limerick manager John Allen spoke to media.

Despite the apathy and a lack of supporter confidence, Allen had told all that Limerick were ready for the battle prior to the clash with the Munster champions.

Now, vindicated Allen was in no mood for grandstanding.

"I have the utmost belief in the players and the utmost trust, they have huge qualities," said Allen in praise of his players.

"I know what they put in and I wanted to make it clear that this group of players are putting in a huge amount of time - they put their lives on hold to play inter-county hurling and I am very proud of them," said the man who guided Cork to All-Ireland glory.

"The Cork team of 2003-2006 were a very special group of players and having being involved with them I have some measure of knowledge of what is needed.

"This year everyone is a year further down

the line - everyone knows they have to hydrate, that they have to eat properly, that they do have to do the gym work and there are no shortcuts taken," he explained of Limerick's turnaround since they let a seven point lead slip in the corresponding game last year.

"I was obviously very pleased by performance and there were things I wasn't overly pleased about - overall it was a very hard working, committed performance and results will come if you work that hard."

Limerick set the early pace but when Tipp hit the front many expected the home side to falter.

"Their first quarter of an hour was their dominance in the second half but they didn't score enough and we outscored them 9-2 after that - we kept at it and made substitutions and every won that came in made a contribution," he outlined.

The extra strength in depth was key to the Limerick gameplan, according to the manager.

"We were a goal up at half time and if we were to win this game we had to stop their half back line from ping ball passes all over the place. Our half forward line might not have stood out but they worked so hard and that was very important. Ideally we all want more than 15 top class players and they brought on Bonner Maher and Shane McGrath last year - two very big players and this year we used our five players and that had a big bearing," he said.



Clap on the back: Paudie O'Brien is congratulated after the game