## 1987 – Limerick end U-21 title wait



Champions: The Limerick Under 21 side who won both Munster and All Ireland titles in 1987, the later was a first for the county

By JEROME O'CONNELL e-mail: joconnell@limerickleader.ie Twitter: @JeromeSport

LIMERICK and Cork have met in 11 Munster U-21 hurling finals.

Cork won the first five meetings before Limerick's first ever provincial U-21 title in 1987.

That was a final played in Bruff on Wednesday May 27.

Similar to 2017, the U-21 team of 30 years ago was vastly experienced - Limerick had played in the Munster MHC finals of 1982-84 and the Munster U-21 final of 1986.

Of those five finals - Limerick had collected silverware with the '84 minors and '86 U-21s.

Corner forward in the '87 Munster U-21 final was Garryspillane's Brian Stapleton.

"I can still remember the

burning anger we had after losing the '86 All Ireland U-21 semi final to Galway. Galway went on win the All Ireland and it was one we felt we could have and should have won," recalled Stapleton this week.

Phil Bennis was Limerick
U-21 manager in '87, as he was
in '86 and previous to that
worked with this group of
players at minor level The
backroom team included Pat
O'Sullivan (Claughaun), Tom
Bulfin (Bruff), Paddy Shanahan (South Liberties) and
Gerry Molyneaux
(Rathkeale).

Limerick's journey to the '87 Munster final started with a quarter final win over Waterford. That set up a semi final meeting with Tipperary - who Limerick only beat by two points in the minor final of three years previous.

Like the final, that semi final was in Bruff.

"I remember Phil Bennis came up with the logic for Bruff. He felt back in '84 that if we were to win the minor that we would be doing it in Thurles and that Bruff was more similar in size and condition than the Gaelic Grounds. We continued to use Bruff then at U-21 level" recalled Stapleton.

"Ahead of the final we also knew that the Cork boys hated coming to Bruff," he laughed.

"In '84 we had beaten Cork in Cork and I can remember then that for that U-21 game we felt that if we could beat them in Cork, that we could beat them anywhere. We really felt that the Tipperary semi final would be the hardest - they would have been bigger physically," outlined the Garryspillane man, who scored the equalising point in the 1984 drawn All Ireland MHC final.

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"Once we had Tipp beaten we had no real fear of Cork. They had senior stars but so had we," he recalled of the likes of John Fitzgibbon, Mark Foley, Seanie McCarthy and Kieran McGuckian.

"There really was a lot of experience in our team of '87-we were a seasoned team even at that stage. Most of the lads would have being playing county senior championship with their clubs and we had lads off the Sexton Street Harty Cup teams."

The final was won 3-14 to 2-9 with blistering starts to both halves laying the foundation for victory.

Gary Kirby scored 10points from frees.

"Gary never left us down.

He was crucial at centre forward because centre backs didn't know how to mark a big awkward left hander. Firstly we knew that there would be breaking ball off

him and also his distribution was top class," recalled Stapleton, who is almost 25 years gone from Limerick and now the Managing Director of Periploi Aviation, based in Dublin.

"I was in the full forward line and we would have had others like Pat Barrett, Leo O'Connor, Joe O'Connor, Pat Davoren - plenty speed, strength and scoring."

Limerick were 2-7 to 1-6 ahead at half time and an early scoring return of 1-3 had

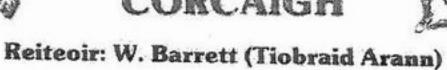
the home side 3-10 to 1-7 clear within minutes of the restart.

Limerick's first ever Munster U-21 title progressed them to an All Ireland semi final against Down in Croke Park.

On June 21 Limerick's wait for an All Ireland U-21 title ended in Cusack Park in Ennis when Galway were defeated 2-15 to 3-6 to gain revenge for the semi final loss of the previous year.

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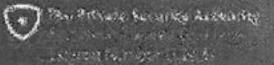


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## GAA - LIMERICK U/21 1987 CHAMPIONS





The Cork Team which defeated Clare in the Semi-Final Photo Courtesy: Kieran Clancy, "Cork Examiner"



LUIMNEACH DATHANNA: GLAS IS BA

The Linesick Trans which defeated Tipperary in the Semi-Final. Photo Courtesy: "Limetick Lender"

(Tracter) (2)Christy Connery Seamus U'leary (4) (Na Piersaigh) Kleran McGuckian (St. Fisbars) (Gien Rovers) Trevor Cooney (Captain) Pat Kermeally (Fermoy) Kieran Looney (Newcempun) (Sarsfields) A.N. Other Beelen Kenneally (Sarsfields) Michael Multins (11) (12) Sean M. Carthy (No Piamaigh) John Hitzibbon (Ballinh.usig) (Glen Rovers) (14) Mark Foley Michael O'Mahony (15) (Temoleague) Ger Muntey (Midleton) (16) Pat Barry (Blackrock), (17) John Power (Sarsfields), (18) Noel O'Leary (Blackrock), (19) John Murphy (Douglas), (20) Mick Crotty (Midleton), (21) Eein Cavanagh (Blackrock), (22) Dan O'Connell (Kilbrattan)

Roghnoiri Gerry Galvin (Fermoy) Manager, Paddy Barry (St. Vescents), Mick Malone (Sarsfields) Coach/Trainer, Brendan Barry (Tracton), Bertie Og Murphy (Sarsfields)

(1) Val Murnane (Caherline) Anthony Madden (4) Pat Carey (Beutf) Don Flynn (Patrickswell) (Kileecty) (5) Declan Nash Anthony O'Rlordan (Sooth Liberties) Ger Hegarty (Bruff) (Oid Christians) John O'Neill Mike Real (Kdfmane) (Brutt) (10) Anthony Carmody (12)Garry Kirby Gus Ryan (Captain) (Patrickswell) Patrickswell) (Claughaun) (1.3)(14) Pat Barrett (15)Joe O'Connor Brinn Stupleton (Bruff) (Ballybrown)

(16) Dan McKenna (Cappanone), (17) Nicky O'Farrell (Na Piarsaigh), (18) Declan Marron (Adare), (19) Sean Enright (Fedamore), (20) Brendan Heffernan (Adare), (21) Tony Dunne (Adare), (22) And Cunneen (Claughaum), (23) Joe O'Grady (Ahane), (24) Eoin Stapleton (Garryspillane), (25) Ray Doherts

Roghnofel Phil Bennis (Patricksweil) Manager, Pat Sullivan (Claughaun), Tom Bulfin (Bruff), Paddy Shanahan (South Liberties), Gerry Molyneaux (Rathkeale)

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f Cllr Emmett J. O'Brien ■ @EmmettOBrienIND

Best of Luck to Kyle Hayes and the Limerick U21 Hurling Team, in the Munster Final from Kildmo/Pallaskenry **GAA Club**