

# No splitting of hairs when Pat 'wheeled' to glory

Sean Murphy talks to Pat Stapleton

TODAY he may be masquerading under the self proclaimed title (BBITW) (The Best Barber in the World) but during the '50's and 60's, he was the most dreaded cyclist on the track or road in Munster.

Pat Stapleton, with his wife Brigid (nee Ryan), from Ballysimon, operate a hairdressing salon at 27 O'Connell Street, Limerick.

Brigid's brother Donie Ryan, was a cyclist of much ability in the early 70's. They have two daughters, Natalie and Nicola, both educated at Laurel Hill Colaiste.

Natalie is currently studying for her PHD in Mechanical Engineering at UL while Nicola, a medical doctor, is doing locum GP in Dublin.

Pat has 30 championship medals for cycling. They include two Irish championships won at Ardfinnan and Currow, four Tipperary county championships won during his stint with Thurles CC and 24 Limerick County championships won with Limerick RC and Herbertstown ACC over distances ranging from 1/2 mile to 50 miles. Surely the pedigree of a great cyclist!

Pat recalls with pride, the great wheelmen of his era, Frank O'Sullivan, Mick Twomey and Tom Pratt (Fermoy CC), Tom O'Neill (Cappoquin), Johnny and Joe Lonergan (Ardfinnan).

Martin Maher (Youghal), Jack Drumm and Dan Aherne (Castleisland), Tom Lavin (Glanmire), Barry Dorgan (Blarney) and Limerick men Pat Barragry (Oola), the Ryan's of Cappamore, the late Mick Fogarty, Ronnie Long, Mickey Martin, Jim Mangan (Phoenix), the Heddermans and John Houllihan (Herbertstown) and many others too numerous to mention.

Nowadays Pat is more involved in show jumping and horse training. One of his charges, Final Cut ridden by Clarina youth



Pat Stapleton with his dog Dodo wearing her Diaper garment

(LL)

Gerry Cusack, has enjoyed much success on the circuit at various shows and Gymkhana throughout the length and breadth of Ireland.

Indeed, his salon is emblazoned with rosettes spotlighting the successes of Final Cut.

A spectacular picture of the horse and young Cusack in full flight at Millstreet, is the focus of much attention.

In the 60's Pat Stapleton was awarded the "Limerick Leader" Sportstar of the year for his amazing feats on bicycle and appear

For his training in

cycling, Pat often undertook a cycling trip to his native Navan, a journey of 300 miles return or a quarter of a million revolutions! In 1958 he was confined to a hospital bed and told he would never ride competitive cycling again. However, the resilient barber retained his County Tipperary championship at Cahir a week later.

He likes recalling his "Rags to Riches" story. From 7/6 weekly to riding for three seasons with the County Limerick Foxhounds.

He remembers too, his days as Journeyman Bar-

ber in Dundrum and Golden in West Tipperary and Doon and Cappamore in East Limerick. "They were great days" said Pat, "The people were extremely decent and kind in hard times".

Pat has been shaving with the "Cuthroat" razor since 1946. "A clean shave is like a clean soul. It is heavenly" smiles Pat.

He is considered to be an expert when it comes to honing and edging the razor. "If you have a perfect edge, you should be able to split a hair in two" according to Pat.

He keeps a diary of all his well known customers like Raymond Roche, MD of Roches Stores, John Bruton, former leader of Fine Gael, Dr. Eamonn Casey, former Bishop of Kerry and Galway, Fr. Dominic Johnson, Head of Glenstal Abbey, Dr. Carol, Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe, Eamonn Grimes and Bernie Hartigan of Limerick Hurling fame, Brendan Halligan, editor, Limerick Leader, Donal Fitzgibbon, former chairman Limerick County GAA Board, Ronnie Long, Paul O'Connell and many others.

His advertising boards are always the focal point of much attention and controversy.

An American tourist last week said: "If it is good for God, its good enough for me. I like confidence in a man".

He has many strange requests, like a customer who told him "I want to wear my hair long, but, I want you to cut it short", and he was deadly serious!

Pat feels that the demise of rural sports meeting was the death knell for rural Ireland.

"They provided great entertainment for the local community at a cheap rate, today, unless you are a Sean Kelly, Stephen Roche, Frank O'Mara or Sonia O'Sullivan, you are not wanted. There is no place for the average man or athlete. There is no outlet at all. So my message is "Bring back the rural sports meetings".

Will we ever see the likes of Dromkeen where one race attracted 26 competitors, Glenroe, Currow, Donoughmore or Moyvane again? The tracks may have been bumpy and uneven but we had great excitement" said the ageless barber.

## Mixed luck for Limerick ladies football teams

Limerick	6-08
Derry	1-15

Limerick advanced to the semi-final of the Suzuki Ladies National Football League. They went in at the interval 1-5 to 0-6 in front.

In the second half Limerick dominated and hit the Northerners for five goals. Louise Higgins increased her personal tally to 4-4 with a goal when she capitalised on a rebounded shot.

Limerick now meet Dublin (B) who defeated Fermanagh in their quarter final.

Limerick	0-7
Clare	1-9

Clare led from start to finish and at half time were in front 0-7 to 0-1. The decision taken this year to start this competition prior to exams is proving costly for Limerick as they were without the services of several key players.

Limerick now play Waterford in the next round.

Munster U14 Championship: Limerick 0-07, Cork 7-12.

As anticipated the All-Ireland Champions proved far too good for Limerick in the opening round of their championship campaign played in Paris Uí Rinn. The half time score of 1-9 to 0-4 in favour of Cork certainly didn't do justice to Limerick's efforts. In the second half the flood gates opened and Cork ran riot, putting six goals in the Limerick net.

15/04/04 Munster U16 C/Ship Play-off Limerick v. Tipperary (7pm) at a Tipperary venue to be confirmed (if Limerick win this they will play Clare in the Munster semi-final on Saturday at a Limerick venue) 17/04/04 Munster U14 C/Ship - Round 2 Limerick v. Clare in Mungret (5.30)



St Mary's under 18 relay team: Martin Davis, Keith Wilmot, Pat O'Reilly, Dave Wilmot and John Shanahan

Limerick  
Cusack  
17/4/04