

SOCCER LIMERICK FC V MANCHESTER CITY

Foley up close and personal with old team-mate Lescott

Limerick FC's Dominic Foley once shared a dressing room with Joleon Lescott at Wolves and on Saturday he caught up with his old team-mate in an unusual setting.

Colm Kinsella reports

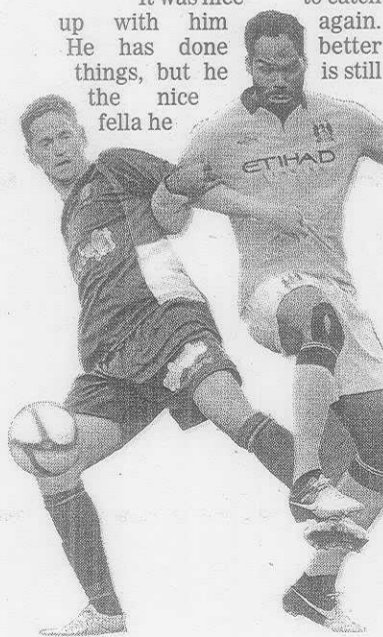
LIMERICK FC striker Dominic Foley must have had a sense of déjà vu when lining out against Manchester City in the clubs' glamour friendly at Thomond Park on Sunday night.

During his time at Wolves, Foley had regularly marked City's England centre half Joleon Lescott in training. And now some 14 years on, the pair were back in opposition once again.

Foley, who was invited for trials at Man City in his teenage years, enthused: "Joleon and I were two years together at Wolves in our younger days. We marked each other in training.

"I was about 22 at the time. Joleon was coming from the youth team into the first team. It was nice to play against him tonight.

"It was nice to catch up with him again. He has done things, but he is still the nice fella he is better than I am."



always was.

"He always had the capability to go to the top, especially with his size and power. He was always a good defender and his skills on the ball have improved since then too.

"He has gone right to the top, winning the Premier League and playing for City. He looked after me with a jersey.

"I loved being involved in a game like this, being out there playing on a very good pitch. You are playing against quality opposition. It is what we dream about and what we want to do.

"It was a pity we had the EA Sports Cup game with Shamrock Rovers a day after and players would have gotten more game-time against City. But that was the way the cookie crumbles and we have to get on with it.

"I have been here at Thomond Park for rugby games. Unfortunately, the one Heineken Cup match I was here for was the quarter-final against Ulster this year. I have been banned by the Charleville guys and am not allowed come any more!"

Former Wolves and Watford star Foley, who also boasts six international caps, joined promotion-chasing Limerick FC this season from Belgian club Cercle Brugge.

Thirty six-year-old Foley said the players were determined to secure their number one priority this season, promotion to the Premier Division.

"At the start of the season our main aim was promotion and it still is. We won't mind if we achieve it by a point or goal difference," Foley said.

"The Cup competitions are nice, but the focus is on Wexford in the League on Friday night. That is our main aim.

"Keeping a clean sheet against Longford on Friday night was key. We were unlucky not to score a couple of goals. I think the boys were magnificent at the back.

"When you are top of the League, you know that everywhere you go, everyone wants to beat you. There are no such things as easy games whether you are bottom of the Division or second from top. We have to be on our

guard and 100% concentrated."

Limerick FC captain, Pat Purcell said he was very proud to have the opportunity to play against the reigning Premier League champions.

Purcell said: "This was genuinely a night upon which dreams are made for the club. From a players' perspective, it doesn't come any bigger than this,

"When you look at where the club has come from - four years ago it was on its knees - to now where we're challenging for the League and playing Man City, it's the stuff of dreams."

to play Manchester City at Thomond Park in front of 20,000 people.

"To think where the club has come from over the past number of years, it is a very proud moment for me personally as a player to be involved in and captain of the club.

"I hadn't allow myself think about it enough because we had such a big game against Longford and a Cup semi-final with Shamrock Rovers.

"You watch these guys on tele' week in and week out and you don't realise how physically fit they are, how strong there are and how technically good they are at what they do.

"To see it in Limerick, in Thomond Park, is a phenomenal thing to happen.

"When you look at where the club has come from - four years ago it was on its knees - to now where we are challenging for the League and playing Man City, it's the stuff of dreams. If the club can keep progressing, it will be a huge feat.

Purcell received a special memento from the game when England

defender, Joleon Lescott presented him with his jersey.

"I said it to Joleon on the pitch about getting his jersey. In fairness, he came looking for me after the match," Purcell said.

"He is a top man in that respect. I am delighted with that as well.

"The club can build on this. Potentially, there are another eight of these fixtures available to them in Thomond Park.

"You can expect to see similar games next season and in the years to come.

"Hopefully the club can keep progressing and we can make the Premier League, trying to get into Europe and maybe in three or four years playing European matches here."

Purcell believes Limerick 'have to win the League' this season in order to continue the club's upward curve.

He said: "It's literally do-or-die in the League this season.

"We have to win the First Division, for ourselves first and foremost, but for everyone involved in the club and the work which has been done over the past number of years.

"In the game with Longford last Friday, we may not have taken the three points, but everyone walked off knowing they had performed. That's the main thing.

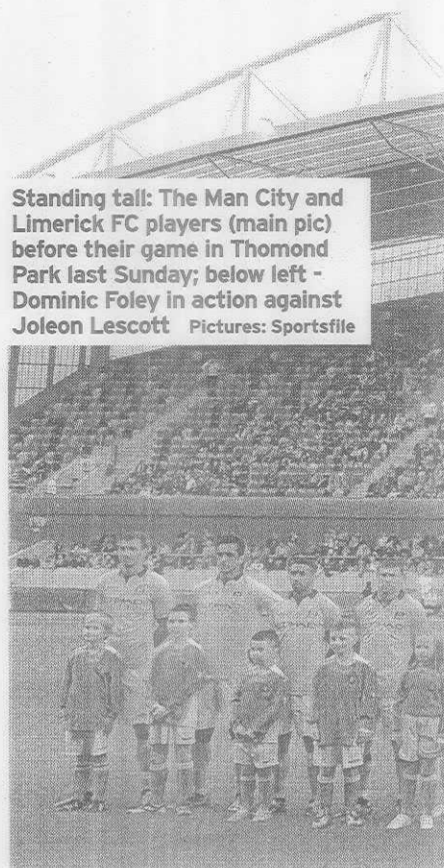
"If you do that week in and week out, you will be fine. If we do that between now and October we will be lifting the First Division trophy. It's about taking it one game at a time."

AIRTRICITY LEAGUE DIVISION 1

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Limerick FC	20	15	1	4	+24	46
Longford Town	20	13	4	3	+12	43
Waterford Utd	20	13	3	4	+13	42
Athlone Town	19	8	3	8	-1	27
Finn Harps	20	7	3	10	-4	24
Wexford Youths	19	6	4	9	-2	22
Mervue Utd	20	4	2	14	-12	14
SD Galway	20	1	4	15	-30	7

NEXT WEEK'S GAMES

- All on Friday, July 13
Wexford Youths V Limerick FC; Waterford Utd V Athlone Town;
Longford Town V Finn Harps; SD Galway V Mervue Utd



Standing tall: The Man City and Limerick FC players (main pic) before their game in Thomond Park last Sunday; below left - Dominic Foley in action against Joleon Lescott Pictures: Sportsfile

Another

Liam Togher was in Thomond Park on Sunday night as Limerick FC rubbed shoulders with the Premier League champions

AND so the day that Limerick soccer fans had been waiting for had finally arrived.

Well, it hadn't been an especially long wait as the fixture had only been announced three weeks beforehand, but still there was no escaping the fact that Manchester City, they of the billions of quid and current possessors of the Premier League trophy, were coming to town.

The game was advertised on seemingly every billboard into the city and in virtually every newspaper, both local and national. The Shannon Bridge was resplendent with blue flags, a royal shade of the colour for the host team and a sky blue variation for the prestigious visitors.

Once again, Limerick had been consumed by a mammoth sporting occasion and now, after the county's GAA teams and Munster rugby had

Blues remain three clear in League but bow out of EA Sports Cup

Limerick FC	0
Longford Town	0

Colm Kinsella
At Jackman Park

AN OCCASION when promotion-chasing Limerick FC could and should have put real daylight between themselves and their nearest rivals in the Airtricity League First Division table.

However, Pat Scully's side had to be

satisfied with just a point in this top-of-the-table clash, despite dominating possession and creating a hatful of scoring opportunities.

Limerick FC should have enjoyed a clear-cut victory in front of 1,000 fans at Jackman Park. But the evening ended in frustration, with the Blues unable to increase their three-point lead over Longford at the top of the table.

Lady luck didn't smile kindly on the home side either as Jeffrey Judge hit the crossbar in the opening half when the ball bounced down, but refused to

cross the line and Rory Gaffney and Dominic Foley saw efforts fly inches wide. Limerick couldn't be accused of not enjoying the perfect pre-match build-up. The entire squad spent the night before in a Limerick hotel.

LIMERICK FC - Dave Ryan, Shaun Kelly, Pat Purcell (Capt), Robert Kluciar (Corey Treacy 50), Shane Tracy, Joe Gamble, Stephen McGann, Sean Brosnan (Stephen Bradley 74), Jeffrey Judge, Dominic Foley (Denis Behan 70), Rory Gaffney.

LONGFORD TOWN - Craig Hyland, Noel Haverly, Michael Lee, Des Hope, William McDonagh, Robert Bayly (Mark Salmon 63), Keith Gillespie (Capt), Daniel Purdy (Mark Salmon 63), Karl Birmingham, Gary Shaw, Thomas Crawley (Tom Griffiths 70).

REFEREE - Keith Callanan (Cork)

Shamrock Rovers	4
Limerick FC	1

LIMERICK FC's demanding weekend playing schedule took its toll as Pat Scully's side suffered a 4-1 defeat to Shamrock Rovers in their EA Sports Cup semi-final clash at Tallaght Stadium on Monday night.

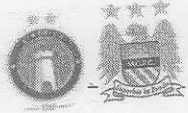
Limerick FC, who played a glamour friendly against English Premier League champions, Man City 24 hours earlier, trailed 1-0 to Rovers at half-

time. However, the Blues, fielding seven players who began against City at Thomond Park, conceded three second half goals to bow out of the Cup. Jeffrey Judge netted the Limerick goal in the 87th minute.

SHAMROCK ROVERS - Reyaad Pieterse; Kerrea Gilbert, Ken Oman, Colin Hawkins, Conor Powell; Sean Gannon (Ronan Finn 58), Conor McCormack, Killian Brennan (Stephen Rice 80), Billy Dennehy; Thomas Stewart (Gary O'Neill 75), Ciarán Kilduff.

LIMERICK FC - Barry Ryan; Shaun Kelly, Paddy Purcell, Robert Kluciar (Corrie Treacy 48), Shane Tracy; Jeffrey Judge, Joe Gamble, Stephen Bradley (Derek O'Brien 71), Steve McGann (Rory Gaffney, 56); Denis Behan, Dominic Foley.

REFEREE - Paul Tuite.



SOCCER LIMERICK FC V MANCHESTER CITY



night to remember in Thomond

dominated the scene in recent years, it was the Super Blues' turn to embrace the limelight.

With just over an hour remaining until kick-off, already there was a healthy presence around Thomond Park. Judging by the vast numbers of children who had been brought along by their parents, it was very much a family occasion. A colleague of mine who travelled in with me still needed a ticket, but there was a limited number for sale in the mobile office alongside the East Stand.

While I wait for him to make the purchase, I notice a selection of scarves and T-shirts at the counters of street traders. The caricature of Mario Balotelli is quite conspicuous, as are the swarms of Manchester City supporters in sky blue apparel.

With the ticket situation sorted we make our way into the ground and I head for the press box. After taking the scenic route I discover that it's right in front of some fans in the West Stand.

The view is impeccable and those players on the near touchline are clearly audible. As seems to be a staple of League of Ireland clubs, the terrace behind one goal is reserved for creative and colourful flags.

Everywhere else in the ground is reserved for the 20,000-plus spectators who have flocked to Thomond Park.

There is a tangible buzz around the stadium when the Premier League trophy is displayed on the touchline.

"After the county's GAA teams and Munster rugby had dominated the scene in recent years, it was the Super Blues' turn to embrace the limelight"

Most people in attendance hope that it won't be the last time in 2012 that a league trophy appears in Limerick.

The teams are announced and while headline names such as Balotelli, Aguero and Silva are absent, Manchester City compensate by fielding the likes of James Milner, Samir Nasri, Gael Clichy, Joleon Lescott, Edin Dzeko and Roque Santa Cruz.

The Thomond Park roar that Munster fans are so renowned for is

heard again when the teams emerge for kick-off.

Every time Limerick burst into their opponents' half of the field, supporters scream encouragement. There is near silence when Man City score their three first half goals.

Although the result is beyond doubt in the second half, the fans are no quieter. Even if Limerick pilfered just one goal, Thomond would go spare.

The only other goal we see, though, is for the visitors, who are warmly applauded off the field at full-time. Taking their place on the turf are hundreds of children who are in no mood to obey the PA announcer's pleas to keep the playing surface clear after the final whistle.

Limerick may have lost 4-0 but all concerned can head for home safe in the knowledge that they played their part in a landmark night for football in the region, one which will have long-reaching benefits for the club and the city.

Hopefully we'll have a few more to look forward to in the coming seasons.

Wexford next up as Blues go back to basics

Wexford Youths V Limerick FC

Date: Friday, August 10
Venue: Ferrycarrig Park
Kick-off: 8pm

Liam Togher

AFTER the eagerly-anticipated friendly match against Manchester City which headlined a busy weekend for the club, attention will switch back to league football for Limerick FC on Friday night.

The Blues hope to maintain their promotion charge when they travel to Ferrycarrig Park to take on Wexford Youths in Airtricity League Division One, which Limerick currently lead by three points.

While the glamour friendly against Manchester City attracted worldwide coverage and brought over 20,000 fans to Thomond Park, Limerick manager Pat Scully insists that he and his players have had only one main focus.

"Our focus has always been the

league. Big friendly games will bring a bit of hype and it was a great experience for the fans, but for the staff and the players the league is the be-all and end-all," said Scully.

He added: "Nothing else has been prioritised apart from getting promotion. Wexford is always a challenging place to go and they're defensively well set up. I was delighted with the performance against Longford last week and if we can perform to the level we're capable of, Wexford will have to play out of their skins to beat us."



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Airtricity League

Wexford Youths vs Limerick FC
Fri 10th August KO 8.00pm, Ferrycarrig Park

Official Supporters Club Bus:

Leaving Arthurs Quay Park @ 3.00pm. Adults €15.00, under 15's €10.00 accompanied by an adult.
Members only - Membership available on the day.
For further information please contact 087 1862678.

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