

MONDAY, MAY 2, 1977

F.A.I. CUP FINAL REVIEW IT WAS NOT OUR DAY by Charlie Mulqueen

It was a day of tragedy and deep disappointment for the vast Limerick contingent at Dalymount. The result was bad enough, especially as the team played so well for so long, but the sudden death of Ned Cussen, a director of the club up to the end of last season, left a mark that will be felt when the result is long forgotten.

Mr. Cussen was taken ill early in the first half, rushed from the stand on a stretcher, but was dead on reaching Jervis Street Hospital.

Present at the final with Mr. Cussen were his wife and family, and we sympathise with them in their tragic and grievous loss.

Limerick's Gaeltacht Minister, Tom O'Donnell, rushed to the assistance of the stricken family and helped enormously in their hour of need. Accordingly, he missed much of a game Limerick looked to have wrapped up after dominating the opening 20 minutes to an enormous extent.

At this stage, No. 9, Des Kennedy, was absolutely superb and was desperately unlucky in the 18th minute when his thundering header after a corner was headed off the line by Bryan Braddish. True, it was a fine piece of defensive work, but Braddish would be the first to admit that it was sheer good fortune that he should be positioned in the correct position, and his clearance can only have been purely instinctive, so quickly was the ball travelling.

Earlier, Dave Kirby had headed over off the cross-bar and, generally, Dundalk were under all types of pressure. However, Dundalk are a fine side and, on good luck and their own excellent defensive work had done its job, one sensed that the tide would turn in their favour. And so it proved... Kennedy was obliged to play a deeper role, leaving Duggan to play a relatively lone furrow up front.

YELLOW CARD

And when Duggan was shown the yellow card for a wild tackle on Jim McLoughlin, he was never the force again that he had been earlier. The "near things" by Kirby and Kennedy, the miscemaneour by Duggan and an ankle injury to Johnny Walsh that forced his retirement after half-an-hour were all vital turning points.

And the handling of Walsh's retirement left a great deal to be desired. Obviously seriously hampered by injury, Walsh limped off after 24 minutes and, no sub. having been introduced, he limped back on again in the 29th minute. Sixty seconds later he hobbled off again and, finally, Denis Lymer came on. Lymer must have been psychologically affected by the reluctance to put him into the fray and, while he very nearly grabbed a second-half equaliser, his performance was also specced by some incredibly wild shooting.

After 34 minutes, Dundalk were ahead, Terry Flanagan sil'ling the ball home to finish off a lovely move. Now the play had swung Dundalk's way, and Fitzpatrick was obliged to make a finger-tip save from a lovely dipping shot by McDowell.

So the first-half ended, and suddenly it dawned on me that I had seen all this before so many times at the Markets Field. Yes, Limerick had dominated, played some lovely football, but the opposition were ahead.

MISSILES

All the time, Referee Breen was picking stones, tin cans and other missiles from the pitch. To say the least of it, the Limerick contingent behind the school end goal were not blameless, and this did little to improve our sagging morale. Manager

Johnson went down to appeal to the blue-and-white bedecked contingent, while four members of the Gardaí stayed immobile at the Limerick dug-out 80 yards from the trouble spot.

The mob chanted... "We will not be moved"... Johnson gave up the ghost, so, too, did the referee, who re-started the game. Frankie wasn't back at his perch when Blackmore made a great save from the afore-mentioned Lymer shot. Our manager punched the air in anguish. He must have been similarly disappointed when a curling shot by Kirby had the Dundalk 'keeper in trouble, but the ball was cleared.

No, it was not our day, a point driven cruelly home four minutes from time when the powerful Flanagan rose high to meet a corner and flashed the ball into the net. But what did he use to put it there... his head or his fist? Flanagan admitted afterwards that he didn't know the answer and the only thing that mattered was the referee's decision.

You can draw your own conclusions from that one. Duggan came spiritedly with one late shot that Blackmore again saved well. At least we fought on to the end and nobody could deny the merit of Limerick's contribution to the 1977 F.A.I. Cup.

SWITCH

John Herrick and Kevin Fitzpatrick signalled very obviously to the Limerick dug-out during the second half that they wanted to switch Herrick to midfield, a view shared by many Limerick supporters. Manager Johnson commented afterwards... "I did not wish to change the back four as full-backs Pat Nolan and John Herrick were doing such an excellent job."

Johnson went on... "We played all the football, but unfortunately did not get the breaks. The injury to Johnny Walsh was a bad blow, but we will be back again next year."

Nor was Kevin Fitzpatrick too disheartened by it all. "Naturally I'm very disappointed, and especially so for the younger players, but the potential of a very fine side is definitely there."

There was some consolation for Limerick midfielder Eamon Deacy, who was told just minutes after the game to go about securing a passport early to-day and be prepared to join the Irish amateur squad for their away game with Holland in the European Amateur Championship on the week after next.

A DISGRACE

As to the crowd incidents which saw a number of so-called Limerick supporters throwing missiles on to the park, John Herrick said: "They were a disgrace, and are not the types we want as supporters."

Johnson himself was hit by two stones thrown from the crowd when he went behind one goal to appeal to them to stop the stone and bottle-throwing and allow the game to continue.

Limerick captain Joe O'Mahoney said: "It was a terrible result. We had 75% of the play, but could not score." And John Herrick, who had yet another splendid game, said: "There is no way you can win a game like this if you can't put the ball in the net. We had some chances, but luck was not with us on the day."

Des Kennedy, talking of his header, said: "I have never risen as high to meet a ball. I thought it was going in and was amazed to see Braddish head it away."

No, indeed, it was not our day. In the final analysis, this was a typical Limerick performance, full of commitment, plenty of skill and no finish. The tragedy of Ned Cussen and the blackguarding of some of the fans put the tin hat on what, basically, was a bitterly disappointing affair.

F.A.I. CUP FINAL: 14,000 AT DALYMOUNT PARK

DUNDALK TAKE THE CUP... AND LIMERICK THE PRAISE

BY JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY

Flanagan on target

DUNDALK 2; LIMERICK 0.

CRAFT AND BRAIN triumphed over flair and enthusiasm at Dalymount Park, Dublin, yesterday when odds-on favourites, Dundalk, ended Limerick's hopes of F.A.I. Cup glory with a 2-0 victory, and thus took the trophy for the first time in eighteen years.

There is no substitute for experience, they say, and it was in this department that the Border club scored. Dundalk's only reward for providing the bulk of the entertainment in a final watched by 14,000 people was runners up spot, and on reflection that was poor enough compensation. They deserved better.

But football is a funny game. In the opening quarter few people gave Dundalk any hope of surviving against constant pressure, but whereas Limerick failed to tuck the ball away in the net, they grabbed the only two chances offered to them.

Let's face it, Limerick were the far superior side in technique and skill and they seemed to have everything going for them as they set up attack after attack in the first twenty minutes. Dundalk had their first scare after only five minutes when a Herrick throw was back headed by Duggan to Kirby, and the ex-Waterford man scraped the crossbar with a header. Thirteen minutes later Kennedy came flying in like a train to connect with a Kirby corner, but teenager Syman Braddish was on the goal-line and cleared.

Limerick created countless opportunities afterwards and still failed to find the target. Dundalk set up three chances—and scored from two of them. "With the kind of luck we had today you just cannot expect to win games," said captain Joe O'Mahony at the final whistle.

HOMEWORK

Looking at the game objectively, it is only fair that Dundalk should be given praise for the manner in which they achieved their win. Manager Jim McLoughlin had obviously done his homework. They allowed the losers to come at them early on without trying anything adventurous themselves, and having weathered the storm they paced the game to suit their own tactics.

The end result was that they achieved more with about half the effort that Limerick put into the game. "The difference between the sides was that they were more professional than we were," was how 'keeper Kevin Fitzpatrick summed it up afterwards.

While there was an element of luck attached to Dundalk's second goal five minutes from time, they certainly took their opening and vital goal in style. It came after 23 minutes and proved a killer blow to brave Limerick.

Des Kennedy gave away a free kick just inside his own half. McLoughlin placed the ball to Lawlor on the right and spotting a gap, he made the opening for Terry Flanagan to stab past Fitzpatrick. Dundalk's tactics afterwards were geared towards holding on to their slender lead. Then out of nothing came number two, a goal which "Fitzzy" claimed should not have been allowed. Flanagan forced a corner which was taken by McDowell.

SWUNG

The ball swung across the goalmouth. Fitzpatrick seemed to have the situation well under control but from nowhere came the burly Flanagan and suddenly Dundalk were in an unassailable lead.

The 'keeper is convinced that the ex-Bohs 'striker flsted the ball in—the game was practically over at that stage and sickened at the thought of defeat I just didn't bother to question the referee's decision in allowing the goal to stand," said Fitzpatrick.

No doubt excuses will be put forward for Limerick's defeat. The loss of Johnny Walsh through a leg injury after 30 minutes was a severe blow. Up



Tommy McConville in control of this situation in spite of the challenge of Des Kennedy.



Colourful Limerick supporters at Dalymount.



Dave Kirby pushes the ball past Tommy McConville and tries to set up another early Limerick attack.

nalled that he wanted to leave and was replaced by Lymer.

The game swung in Dundalk's favour a few minutes later. Limerick's pattern was upset and they fell behind in the 33rd minute when Flanagan was lying handy to tap a Lawlor centre past Fitzpatrick.

Just on half-time, in another Dundalk attack, McDowell had a dipping shot tipped over by Fitzpatrick.

The early stages of the second half had little to offer. Limerick were in difficulties in the centre of the park, but came very close to snatching a dramatic equaliser in the 65th minute when Kennedy set up Lymer, only for the latter's powerful shot to be held by Blackmore. Nolan moved up into midfield in an effort to add more bite to this department, but at that point Limerick had run out of ideas in their attempt to outwit the strong Dundalk rearguard.

There were few exciting goalmouth incidents until Flanagan clinched it for the Border club five minutes from time.

Dundalk—Blackmore, McConville (B), McLoughlin (J), McConville (T), McManus (capt.), Braddish, Cavanagh, McDowell, Flanagan, Lawlor, Dainty.

Limerick—Fitzpatrick, Nolan, Herrick, O'Mahony (capt.), Fitzgerald, Meaney, Walsh, Deacy, Kennedy, Duggan, Kirby, Sub.: Lymer for Walsh.

Mr. Noel Breen (Waterford) was an excellent referee.

Comments

"Dundalk didn't win the Cup—they stole it, was how Clir Mick Crowe summed up yesterday's defeat at Dalymount Park. And there were many who agreed with him.

'Keeper Kevin Fitzpatrick was obviously upset in the dressing-room afterwards and he, too, felt that the better side had lost. "But I suppose we cannot expect to win games when we throw away so many chances," he commented.

Mayor Ted Russell saw only the first half, together with the Minister for the Gaeltacht, Tom O'Donnell, he went to Jervis St. Hospital with Mrs. Ned Cussen, whose husband collapsed and died in the stand.

Captain Joe O'Mahony said that Dundalk used their greater all-round experience to advantage. "We felt the loss of Johnny Walsh and found it hard to get back into things after he left the field."

Eamon Deacy, who had another fine 90 minutes, was disappointed at the outcome. "We have nobody but ourselves to blame—we had most of the play but failed to put the ball where it mattered."

John Herrick expressed the same opinion. Pat Nolan, appearing in a Dalymount game for the first time, felt that Dundalk paced the game to suit themselves and thus prevented Limerick from getting into full gear.

"But I think we are good enough to return next April," he added.

Frank Johnson is also of the opinion that Limerick are on the verge of a big breakthrough. "Dozens of neutral followers came and told me after the game that we were the better side on the day, and if we maintain the same spirit and enthusiasm we will shortly gain in experience," he stated.

Dundalk player manager, Jim McLoughlin, thanked Limerick for what he described as a "fine sporting game." Delighted with his team's success, he told me that he had the utmost respect for Limerick throughout the competition—and they gave us many worrying moments out there today."



Gerry Duggan tries to force his way past Des McConville.



Gerry Duggan slows it down and prepares to shoot as Limerick piled on the pressure early in the game.

Kennedy America bound?

There was some consolation for striker Des Kennedy after Sunday's defeat by Dundalk at Dalymount Park when he was offered two trips to the States to play football.

Sligo Rovers boss, Billy Sinclair, approached Kennedy to join them on their forthcoming seven-match tour of America. And it is almost certain that Des will accept their offer. The Sligo party will leave Shannon in mid-May. Last year the Westerners showed an interest in Kennedy and were anxious to sign him.

He didn't even have time to digest Sligo's offer when ap-

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★ TRIUMPH
★ MARLBORO
★ AND CHILDREN'S CYCLES ETC
At Limerick's Kinross...
WIDE RANGE OF ACCESSORIES AVAILABLE