

SPORTING

LIVER

Limerick face stiff test in 1981

LIMERICK, IN THEIR BID TO RETAIN THE Munster Senior Hurling Crown in 1981, will have to do it the hard way, for they have been drawn against Tipperary in the semi-final, which will be played on 7th June.

The only opening round game brings Clare and Waterford into opposition, and it is dated for 24th May. Cork meet the winner of this match on 14th June. The other semi-final, with the decider set for July 5th.

The Munster winner is almost certain to meet All-Ireland holders, Galway, in the All-Ireland semi-final, with the Leinster champion side going straight to the All-Ireland Final on the first Sunday of September.

The Shannonsiders will need to be the top of the line from the word go, for the Premier County lads will be all out for a return to the big time after almost a decade in the hurling wilderness and an unenviable situation as far as they are concerned.

I heard it said after Galway's great win a fortnight ago that Clare were next in line for the All-Ireland breakthrough. They missed a golden chance a few years ago, and, although many of those players are still around it is difficult to see them mounting a comeback in 1981, although they could be encouraged by the manner in which Limerick got back to the limelight, emerging from what was almost their darkest hour, to stage a glorious resurrection.

Waterford will be no push-over for the Bannermen, and they, too, are showing signs of better things to come, and this first round looks bristling with possibilities.

Cork will be waiting in the wings, and they could give the winner a lively seventy minutes of it. The Leinster side could be the mystery team of this championship year. Some of the oldtimers are almost certain to hang up their boots, possible replacements do not look too plentiful just now, but the coming National League campaign could be a good schooling exercise, and come championship time a rejuvenated Cork could be once more a tough opposition.

Limerick will stick together and follow on the lines that proved so successful in 1980. They opened the decade in sterling style and, even if they did not win supreme honours, they did the next best thing by making Croke Park an All-Ireland final day - a big achievement in itself - and they really impressed the fans, who universally rated them the best losing team of almost twenty years, gaining extreme esteem and counting new friends by the gracious manner in which they accepted being forced into second place in the rating of hurling counties for 1980.

The ambition now is to wear the championship crown, twelve months hence, and the preparation must start right now. There are weak spots to be eliminated, techniques to be improved, and with every member of the selection, and a few present outsiders, all out to wear the fifteen green jerseys on another All-Ireland day, the battle for places is certain to be a mustard green in the coming months.

Actually, there is no time for relaxation, for a week hence Limerick are in hectic action again, when they face another great newcomer to the hurling big time, Leinster champions for 1980, the O'Riachtas in the O'Riachtas semi-final - a plum hurling attraction for Fairclough that should draw a huge attendance.

There is some suggestion that Limerick may not be able to field a full team for this engagement because of County Championship commitments, but I think it would be the great wish of all the fans to see the full All-Ireland fifteen lining out for this big test, which will not be easily won.

The prize is a rich one - a place in the O'Riachtas final against either Galway or Wexford, and which would be played in Limerick the following Sunday, should the Shannonsiders qualify.

Rugby teams

Garryowen - M. Leahy; G. O'Mahony, L. Moloney, P. Ryan, E. O'Sullivan; T. Ward, P. McNamara; P. Chessler, P. Whelan, B. O'Kane, D. O'Connell, T. Quane, M. Sherry, Capt.; W. Cronin, T. O'Carroll.

Garryowen (v. Old Crescent, u-16 league), Thursday - G. Manning, P. Fitzgerald, A. Keane, P. Barrett, M. Fenton, B. Croke, T. Coughlan, B. Croucher, J. Campbell, A. Russell, W. Carroll, D. Conway, M. Fitzgerald, C. Downes, K. Leahy.

Old Crescent - From J. McNamara, R. Roche, D. Foye, K. Dineen, G. O'Brien, M. Gavin, E. McGinley, G. Kennedy, J. Hogan (backs); J. Kelly, W. Hanley, G. Frost, N. Gallivan, E. McKay, D. Brown, G. Hartnett, N. O'Herlihy, R. Reeves, J. O'Dwyer.

Bohemians - A. N. O'Herlihy, M. Bromell, P. Rolls, N. Leonard, B. Barron, M. Wixted, D. O'Brien, T. Hensman, P. O'Donnell, T. Mulcahy, K. Renshaw, B. Spillane, M. Murphy, T. Daly, D. Muirhead.

Shannon - T. Fitzgerald; G. O'Malley, D. O'Sullivan, D. O'Shea, J. Jennings, J. Graham, S. Kiely; G. McLoughlin, K. Flannery, N. Ryan, M. McLoughlin, B. Foley, C. Tucker, N. O'Donovan, F. Sargent.

Young Munster - G. McNamara, M. Kelly, F. Broughan, P. Cross, D. McCarthy; G. Casey, E. Costelloe, B. O'Connor, P. McGrath, G. Quaid, R. Daly, P. Meehan, J. McNamara, M. Sheehan, W. Casey.

Presentations - J. O'Halloran, T. O'Grady, C. Mullins, G. Ryan, E. O'Grady, D. Clancy, E. O'Connell, M. Tobin, L. Bennett, G. O'Doherty, D. Tobin, M. Noonan, J. Calvert, T. Cronin, P. O'Shea, J. Kenny, G. Lawlor, T. Foley, G. Foley, M. Slattery, K. Hogan. Meet: Fitzpatrick 10.30 a.m.

European Cup Match: A Terribly Small Crowd, But . . .

LIMERICK DUS PROUD

By JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY

Limerick United 1
Real Madrid 2
(Kennedy, 51 mins.)
(Juanito, pen., 70 mins; Penedez, 84 mins.)

LIMERICK'S second European Cup appearance, against Real Madrid, was expected to end in an avalanche of goals against them, with the compensation of a financial bonanza to tide them over the next five years.

It worked in reverse. The little-fancied League of Ireland champions came within twenty minutes of harvesting a famous result, but instead of laughing all the way to the bank this morning, club chairman, Michael Webb will be seeking an appointment with the manager to help balance the books for the away leg in a fortnight's time.

Funny business, football. So convinced were the Dublin sporting public that Lansdowne Road was to be the venue for a slaughtering of the lambs rather than a football match that they preferred not to witness the execution. After all the Spaniards had on parade upwards of £4m. of talent and their sharpshooters who killed off Bilbao to the tune of 7-1 in the league last Sunday, were surely capable of dishing out an even heavier knock-out blow to the part-timers from the Republic.

Johnny Walsh, Gerry Duggan, Pat Nolan and Johnny Matthews. The one man who shaded the above quartet was Des Kennedy and the best tribute that can be paid to him was that Real Madrid put three different opponents on him.

To merely say that Limerick were magnificent would be an understatement. The much travelled Jimmy Magee summed it all up nicely at the break when he said: "If Limerick could play that type of football every week the League race would be over at Christmas." They revelled on the plush carpet of Lansdowne Road and showed that given any kind of reasonable pitch are in a class of their own.

It was both a fascinating and absorbing encounter, played in the best tradition. Madrid, a team of super skills, were matched in all phases of the game by a Limerick side that played a brand of football seldom before seen from an Irish team. United's passing was both accurate and decisive, their timing was excellent and their courage knew no bounds. The maestro himself, Eoin Harid, took on responsibility for shadowing danger man Stielike; Joe O'Mahony commanded the middle of the back four like the general he is, and with Walsh and Duggan weaving all sorts of fantastic patterns in midfield, it was obvious from early on that Limerick were in tune.

Thirty five year old Johnny Matthews added width to the front line and with Des Kennedy forcing the Real Madrid defence into making untypical errors, there was no way the Shannonsiders were going to go down by the anticipated wide margin.

lessly over the bar. Then came Johnny Matthews' goal after great work by Duggan, which was mysteriously cancelled out by a linesman's flag, and just after Madrid had levelled O'Mahony's goal, a free into the penalty area which Kennedy got his head to, only for 'keeper Miguel Angel to miraculously tip over the bar.

The visitors, too, had their moments of glory, particularly when Nolan averted an awkward situation after Fitzpatrick had been beaten and again when the 'keeper came to Storan's rescue after Isidoro had found a way through, but overall, it was Limerick who carved out the better chance.

Both Madrid's goals came from set pieces, and there are many who will argue that Fitzpatrick was rather harshly punished by the Danish referee in the incident which led to the penalty. Substitute, Penedez, for once outpaced O'Mahony and as he worked his way into the penalty area, "Fitzzy" advanced to dive at his feet. Penedez, who would hardly have scored given the angle he was at, tumbled over and the official pointed to the spot.

The crowd gave vent to their feelings, but Juanito was not disturbed and gave Fitzpatrick no chance. Juanito returned the compliment later when after O'Mahony had been penalised, he shot directly at Fitzpatrick, and when the ball rebounded off his chest, it went to the waiting Penedez, who had little difficulty in guiding it to an unguarded net.

It was tough luck on this brave Limerick outfit who deserved much better reward for their professional display.

There were signs in the final ten minutes that limbs were getting tired - the mystery of it all was how they kept going at such a fast pace for so long. Make no mistake about it, this was a real cracker, with the emphasis very much on attack by both sides.

A Joy

Limerick's on the carpet football was a joy to watch. So also was Madrid's. Laurie Cunningham, expected to be the springboard for the Madrid attacks, hardly got a scent of



In the top picture, Des Kennedy slams the ball past goalkeeper Miguel Angel for the opening goal at Lansdowne Road; and below, he is congratulated by delighted team-mates.



But it didn't quite work out that way on the pitch. For most of the journey it was difficult to tell which was the professional side. The underdogs rose to the occasion magnificently and the 5,000 or so who bothered to lend them support left the grounds convinced that this was the greatest performance ever given at this level by an Irish club.

The quality of United's football was equal to that of Real Madrid's - and the visitors did lay it on. Eoin Hand's men even had the cheek to take the lead, and, in fact, had the ball in their opponents' net in as little as 26 minutes only to be whistled back for some obscure reason.

It was unfortunate for the Blues that Duggan, too, should have to depart from the scene because of injury in between the goals. He gave one of his best ever displays in a Limerick shirt and one could only marvel at his pace and turn of speed, as well as his ability to 'take on more vaunted opponents.

New Dimension

Limerick not only did their city proud in Dublin on Wednesday evening - they added a new dimension to League of Ireland football, something which was acknowledged by the press corp.

The majority of the large crowd went along to get a glimpse of the skills of such household names as Laurie Cunningham, Udi Stielike, Juanito, Camacho and Benito. They were not disappointed. But they saw even greater performances from



Limerick United: Back row - Pat Nolan, Ger Duggan, Des Kennedy, Kevin Fitzpatrick, Brendan Storan, Eoin Hand. Front: Jimmy Nodwell, Joe O'Mahony, John Matthews, Gary Hulmes, John Walsh.

Cork on Sunday

After reaching heady heights against Real Madrid in the European Cup in midweek, it is back to the gritty League of Ireland fare for Limerick this Sunday, when they travel to Flower Lodge to do battle with Cork United for two valuable League points. Kick-off is 5.30 p.m.

It might be difficult for Eoin Hand's men to get the European Cup out of their mind at this stage and to re-adjust to the type of football they can expect from their opponents on the domestic scene.

Yet, the next two matches are vital for Limerick in their quest to retain League leadership. Cork United, it must be remembered, held Dundalk to a 1-1 draw a fortnight ago and are just the type of side that could unsettle the reigning champions, who will not decide on their lineup until the weekend.

Eoin Hand and Ger Duggan both retired injured at Lansdowne Road and must be considered doubtful.

It would indeed be a feather in Cork's cap were they to gain their first win of the season at Limerick's expense. They still retain memories of their gallant fight at the Markets Field recently when they went under by only 1-0 in the League Cup, and now that they are favoured with home venue could be an equally tough nut to crack.

They might be young and inexperienced, but they do fight the full distance.

Yet the Flower Lodge pitch should suit Limerick and they are expected to continue in winning vein. On the following Sunday, Drogheda United visit the Markets Field.

Rugby

Thursday: U.21 league - Bohemians v. Thomond, Anascotty, 6.30. S. Kearns.

U.16 league - St. Mary's v. Shannon, Shabine, Shannon v. J. Donnellan, Bohemians v. Richmond, Anascotty, J. Fitzgerald; Old Crescent v. Garryowen, Rathbane, F. Malone; Young Munster v. Nenagh, Greenfield, G. Joyce; Abbeyfeale v. Ennis, Abbeyfeale (all 6.45).

Friday: U.12 league - Old Crescent v. Thomond, Thomond Park; Nenagh v. Young Munster, Nenagh; St. Mary's v. Abbeyfeale, Shillbongue Park; Richmond v. Ennis, Singland Park (all 6.45).

Saturday: Charity Cup semi-finals - Garryowen v. Old Crescent, Thomond Park, 3 p.m.; O'Sullivan, Shannon v. Bohemians, Thomond Park, 4.30. G. Joyce.

Senior friendly - Young Munster v. Sundays Well, Greenfields, 1.45. F. Malone.

U.20 league - Old Crescent v. Garryowen, Rathbane, 12 noon. N. Moore; Shannon v. Abbeyfeale, S. Kearns.

North Munster 2nds league - Newcastle West v. St. Senan's, Newcastle West, 3.30. M. Rainford.

3rds friendlies - Garryowen v. Bruff, Dooradoyle, 3.30; Richmond v. St. Mary's, Singland Park, 2 p.m.; Young Munster v. Ennis, Greenfields, 3.30.

Arklow Festival - Creggs v. Thomond, 10.30 a.m.

Schools' senior and junior - Roscrea, Roscrea, 3.30. M. Quinlan.

Junior friendly - St. Munchin's v. Ard Scoil Rís, Corbally, 11.30. R. Warren.



A great start to his Munster career for Eddie Costelloe of Young Munster. Top picture shows him get the ball, below he powers his way over the line for a try after only four minutes. Middlesex hit back 13-13.



RUGBY: 13-all draw at Musgrave Park

Poor game matched the atmosphere

BY CHARLIE MULQUEEN

MUNSTER 13
MIDDLESEX 13

There were few redeeming features in the gloom of atmosphere-less Musgrave Park on Wednesday evening. The second clash of Munster and Middlesex was much more even than it was in 1978, when the English county won by 33 pts. to 7, but any Munsterman who took solace from this display is most certainly closing his eyes to reality.

In fairness, it is very early in the season and apart from natural deficiencies in fitness players' reflexes aren't as sharp as they would be with more match practice behind them. Furthermore, the atmosphere in which the players were invited to trade their wares left an awful lot indeed to be desired.

Whoever decided on a 6.15 start at this time of year has far more faith in the Irish climate than I. Fact is that an ever-deepening gloom enveloped Musgrave Park from kick-off and by the final whistle (which was blown two minutes ahead of schedule) visibility was dangerously low.

So it wasn't easy for the players to approach this game with quite the seriousness it undoubtedly merited. All the Irish selectors were present, as was coach Tom Kiernan, but what they saw may not very well encourage them to include too many of last night's participants in the side to face the touring Rumanians next month.

He gave Les Barlow a most trying evening, and with Pat Whelan in control of his own ball and also able to take a free from Tony Boddy, and Brendan O'Connor slotting in well on his Munster debut, this is one sector where Brendan O'Dowd and his fellow selectors will have few worries. And remember that men like Les White, Ted Mulcahy and Brian Clifford are also available for consideration here.

Old friends Brendan Foley and Moss Keane did some powerful work in the scrums, mauls and rucks, and each made a powerful midfield burst, but they were also obliged to play second fiddle at the lineouts by the veteran Middlesex captain, the 22-times capped Chris Ralston and Mike Hess.

Colm Tucker had an excellent game in the back-row, and Anthony O'Leary, too, was in good fettle, but I was dis-

appointed by Donal Spring, who appeared to lend precious little weight in the set scrums and overrid the picking up at the back, with consequent detrimental results for scrum-half Eddie Costelloe.

Costelloe, himself, got off to a marvellous start with a try after only four minutes, but I think it is fair to say that his partnership with Tony Ward wasn't a success. Both did many good things in their own right, but there were flaws as well. Consequently, none of the three-quarters was afforded a reasonable opportunity, although Peter Rolls dealt impressively with what came his way, and Gerry Casey, both at left wing and fullback, justified his selection. Cool and polished, he may just have made the No. 15 jersey his own for the Rumanian game, having moved back after an injury to fullback John Ahern.

GREAT START

Munster dominated the opening stages of the game, and were rewarded as early as the 4th minute when Costelloe forced his way over after Middlesex had been pushed off their own ball. Ward couldn't convert, and then we had an amusing moment when Foley galloped down the field having gratefully accepted a pass from a Middlesex man who didn't quite believe that an opponent could pop up in such an unlikely spot!

However, after ten minutes, a 60-yard penalty attempt by Ward dropped short and Middlesex launched a dazzling movement which ended with winger Colin Lambert scoring a magnificent try in the corner.

After 23 minutes, Munster's defence was utterly stretched and they conceded a penalty kick which the polished Chris Ralston converted. Almost

Adara Manor

Hogan Retains

Popular Pat Hogan retained his 1979 success when he led the flying 39 points. Hogan by the name one point. He had a consolation however, as he won this cup in the charge but had to be charged by the name one point. He had a consolation however, as he won this cup in the charge but had to be charged by the name one point.

The official opening clubhouse and bar will take place on Sunday by the president of the occasion will be the fourball stablehand time sheet will be presented by the president of the occasion will be the fourball stablehand time sheet will be presented by the president of the occasion.

Results: Atlantic P... 1. Paddy Hogan (1979), 2. Patsy Harte (1979), O'Sullivan (12) decided over the...

Figures: Saturday (PM) 21st September... Cup.