

Passage of time fails to cloud memories

Twenty-five years later three of Limerick United's FAI Cup winning team of 1982 relive their memories with Aidan Corr

THERE are three reasons why certain games stand out in players' memories: scoring glorious goals, sending offs and winning cup finals.

Even the passage of time does not cloud the memory when it comes to the latter achievement and 25 years after Limerick United became the second and last local side to win the FAI Cup small details are recalled as if it was a post-match interview.

The FAI Cup, the glamour competition of Irish senior soccer, eluded Limerick for 33 years. They reached three cup finals, losing to Shamrock Rovers in 1965 (1-0 after a replay) and 1966 (2-0), and again in 1977 when they went down to Dundalk. 1970 was the breakthrough when Limerick AFC beat Drogheda United (3-0) in a replay to lift the trophy for the first time and trigger week-long celebrations throughout the city and county.

Three of that cup-winning side experienced the ecstasy of a second Limerick cup success 12 years later when Limerick United defied the odds by beating Bohemians on their home patch in the final of 1982.

Skipper of the '82 side Joe O'Mahony has particularly vivid memories of the occasion: "We had to toss for choice of dressingrooms even though it was their home ground. We won and opted to take the Bohs home dressingroom which gave us a psychological advantage. Obviously they weren't too happy with that but it remains one of my abiding memories of the occasion. We travelled up on the Saturday and stayed in the Burlington Hotel and the following morning we all went to Mass in a church in Haddington Road just around the corner from Lansdowne Road. One of the players, who shall remain anonymous, told us that he did not attend Mass but we dragged him along anyway. We were afraid it that might be a bad omen. I had played in hundreds of matches prior to this final but I felt more nervous for some reason. It was the fear of losing."

"After the match Eoin (Hand) took us all back to the Burlington for a few drinks just to unwind and then we went off to a pub in Drumcondra called Kennedy's. I wanted a bit of peace and quiet so I got a taxi to take me to a small bar somewhere near the Canal. While I was there I met Luke Kelly of The Dubliners who was once a very promising soccer player with Home Farm. We started chatting and I discovered that he was a great friend of Eoin Hand's, so we both went back to the bar in Drumcondra and from there to the Burlington.

"By then Hand had gathered more of his mates and by the end of the night we had Luke Kelly, Shaun Connors the comedian, Paddy Reilly who sang the Fields of Athenry and the Dublin City Ramblers who we couldn't stop singing! Together we all celebrated a famous Limerick soccer victory. We travelled home the following day and the reception that we got at Limerick Railway Station was amazing. It was just like 1970 all over again."

If you ask most Limerick soccer fans of that era what they remember from that cup final they will tell you that Tony Ward took the corner from which Brendan Storan got the winning goal.

Storan recalls: "The first thing that comes to mind from that day was the number of Limerick fans in Dalymount. When we came out onto the



Limerick - 1982 FAI Cup Winners - back from left: Dave Mahedy, Pat Nolan, Al Finucane, Eoin Hand, Kevin Fitzpatrick, Brendan Storan, Des Kennedy, Willie Flaherty. Front row from left: Jimmy Nodwell, Tony Ward, Ger Duggan, Joe O'Mahoney, Gary Hulmes and John Walsh.

field we were shocked by a sea of blue and white. There were 8,000 Limerick fans there that day in an attendance of 12,000. When we took the lead we seemed to go back into defence and we allowed Bohs to come at us. Only for Joe O'Mahony the tie would have gone to extra time.

"Terry Evison was causing us problems up front and when he headed back a cross from the right, Mick Shelley had a clear shot at that was heading for the net but Joe threw himself in front of the ball. It smashed into his face and went out for a fruitless corner. This was a good Bohs side with John McCormack as captain, Noel King and Dave Connell who both became managers of Limerick FC during the Hogan Park era, as well as striker Jackie Jameson, goalkeeper Dermot O'Neill, Jacko McDonagh, Gino Lawless, Paul Doolin and 'Rocky' O'Brien. Tony Ward was a great addition to our side. Garryowen were knocked out of the Munster senior rugby cup and he was available to us. He gave us width down the left and once you fed the ball out to him you knew he was going to control it.

"People still mention 'the goal' to me but it is still a bit of a blur in my memory. I would regularly go down for a corner because of my height but in a pre-planned move Wardy crossed the ball low. It just came through a forest of legs and I side-footed it home. It was a great feeling when the final whistle sounded."

Of the three former players who visited us in the Limerick Leader offices this week, Pat Nolan had the least recollection of the actual game but had a

vivid memory of the last half hour: "I kept asking Joe O'Mahony how long was left and he always appeared to have an accurate reply. After the match I asked him, 'were you wearing a watch or something, how did you know the time' and Joe replied that he could see the clock on the tower of the nearby St Peter and Paul's Church just outside Dalymount. For me these were very special years and winning a cup medal and a league medal in two seasons makes it memorable. They were also fun times. I remember beating Finn Harps in Ballybofey during the league winning campaign of 1979/80, a victory that set us up for the title. I had my stag night after the game and we did not get home until the following day.

"There was no major money playing for Limerick. Most of the team was earning about £50 a week and were spending most of that on their social life. After winning the cup in 1982 we qualified for the European Cup Winners Cup and were drawn against AZ Alkmaar from Holland. We drew 1-1 at the Markets Field in the first leg, I got the goal. We should have won the second leg but went down 1-0. I jumped to head away a cross but it came off back off an Alkmaar player's head and ended up in the net. We were amazed at the facilities that they had in Holland. That visit was an eye-opener for us."

Joe O'Mahony agreed. "When you think of it they were fantastic times for Limerick soccer. We won the league in 1980 and the cup in 1982 and played Real Madrid in the European Cup at Lansdowne Road and in the Bernabeu. Those games were a long way from Caledonian Park and Shelbourne

Park when I first played with Reds United. The arrival of Eoin Hand in Limerick turned senior soccer in this city right around. They were great days."

The Limerick team that lined out in the 1982 final was: Kevin Fitzpatrick in goal; Pat Nolan, Brendan Storan, Joe O'Mahony and Al Finucane in the back four; Eoin Hand, Jimmy Nodwell, Johnny Walsh, Tony Ward across the middle with Tommy Gaynor and Gary Hulmes up front. During the second half Hand and Hulmes were replaced by Des Kennedy and Gerry Duggan. Limerick had reached the final by beating non-league side Bluebell United in the first round thanks to a Tommy Gaynor goal and the Blues got over round two with a terrific 2-1 win over Shelbourne in Tolka Park, Hand scoring both goals.

Aer Lingus visited the Markets Field in the next round with Limerick winning 4-0 and enjoying the luxury of a missed Tony Ward penalty while in the semi-final replay against Athlone Town, Tommy Gaynor scored the only goal to put the Blues into their fourth cup final in 17 years.

That cup win in 1982 was a turning point. Within two years Limerick had moved from the Markets Field heralding the end of this region as a force in Irish senior soccer.

The Limerick United team of '82 was exceptionally talented. Al Finucane (11), Johnny Walsh (1) and Kevin Fitzpatrick (1) won full international caps as did Eoin Hand while playing with Portsmouth. Des Kennedy and Tommy Gaynor were Irish schoolboy internationals while Tony Ward was multi-

capped at the oval ball game. Brendan Storan was capped at junior international level while Joe O'Mahony played with the Irish Youths side and Pat Nolan was capped at Ireland under 21 level.

Both Pat Nolan and Joe O'Mahony narrowly missed out on full international caps.

"I was on the bench for the World Cup qualifier against Czechoslovakia in Prague in 1969," recalled Joe O'Mahony. "Don Givens went down with a hamstring injury and Andy McEvoy was told to warm-up. Typical of the character of the man, Andy told Mick Meagan that he would prefer that I got a run because I had never won a cap, so I got ready to go on. Just when it seemed that my biggest honour was about to be achieved, Givens shouted at the bench: 'It's ok now, I'll run it off.' That was the end of my hopes of full international status."

Pat Nolan had a similar story: "I was on the bench twice, v Wales and Iceland. In the second game a player got injured with only a few minutes to go but I did not get the nod. It would have been nice to have won a cap."

The 1982 final was particularly memorable for two of the Limerick side: Jimmy Nodwell's wife presented him with a new baby that week-end while Kevin Fitzpatrick announced his retirement from football after an unbroken 22 years between the posts for the Blues.

Today Pat Nolan is a rep with Players tobacco company while Brendan Storan is self-employed. Joe O'Mahony has retired after a career in quantity surveying.

RUGBY FIXTURES

Thursday, November 1
Schools Senior Friendly
P.B.C., Cistercian College
Roscrea, Wilton, 1.00;

Saturday, November 3
Magners League: Munster v Edinburgh,
Musgrave Park, 7.30

AIB League Division 1: Galwegians v Ballymena, Crowley Park, 2.30; Garryowen v Shannon, Dooradoyle, 2.30; Greystones v Cork Constitution, Dr. Hickey Park, 2.30; St. Mary's College v Clontarf, Templeville Road, 2.30; Terenure College v Blackrock College, Lakelands Park, 2.30; U.C.D. v Dungannon, Belfield, 2.30; U.L. Bohemian v Lansdowne, Annacotty, 2.30

Division 2: Ballynahinch v Buccaneers, Ballymacarn Park, 2.30; Barnhall v Wanderers, Parsonstown, 2.30; Bective Rangers v Thomond, Donnybrook, 2.30; Clonakilty v Young Munster, Shannon Vale, 2.30; Dublin University v Belfast Harlequins, College Park, 2.30; Highfield v Suttonians, Woodleigh Park, 2.30; Old Crescent v Malone, Rosbrien, 2.30; U.C.C. v D.L.S.P., Mardyke, 2.30

Division 3: Banbridge v Ards, Rifle Park, 2.30; Bruff v Sunday's Well, Killballyowen Park, 2.30; City of Derry v Naas, Judges Road, 2.30; Co. Carlow v Queens University, Oakpark, 2.30; Connemara v Old Wesley, Monastery Field, 2.30; Corinthians v Waterpark, Corinthian Park, 2.30; Instonians v Rainey Old Boys, Shaws Bridge, 2.30; Middleton v Nenagh Ormond, Towns Park, 2.30

Gleeson League: Garryowen v U.L. Bohemian, Dooradoyle, 1.30; Richmond v St. Senan's, Richmond Park, 2.30; Thomond v Shannon, Fitzgerald Park, 2.30; Young Munster v St. Mary's, Derryknockane, 2.30

Under 20 South West Conference
League Division 1: Corinthians v Bruff, Corinthian Park, 2.30; Cork Constitution v U.L. Bohemian, Temple Hill, 2.30; Galwegians v Shannon, Crowley Park, 2.30; Highfield v Thomond, Woodleigh Park, 2.00; U.C.C. v Garryowen, Curraheen Road, 2.30; Young Munster v Buccaneers, Derryknockane, 2.30

Division 2 North: Clonmel v Clanwilliam, Clonmel, 2.30; Nenagh Ormond v Old Crescent, Nenagh, 2.30; Richmond v Newcastle West, Richmond Park, 2.30

Division 2 South: Bandon v Ballincollig, Bandon, 2.30; Clonakilty v Sunday's Well, Shannon Vale, 2.00; Middleton v Castleisland, Towns Park, 2.30; Muskerry v Abhann Dubh, Muskerry, 2.30; Waterpark v Dolphin, Ballinakill, 2.30

Schools Senior Friendly: Ard Scoil Ris v C.B.C., Ard Scoil Ris, 11.30

Munster Under 18 Girls League North: Clonmel v Thurles, Clonmel, 1.30

Munster Under 15 Girls League North: Clonmel v Thurles, Clonmel, 2.30;

Sunday, November 4
AIB League Division 1: Dolphin v Old Belvedere, Musgrave Park, 2.30

Heineken Munster Junior League Division 1: Bandon v Cobh Pirates, Bandon, 2.30; Cashel v Thurles, Cashel, 2.30; Clanwilliam v Newport, Clanwilliam Park, 2.30; Clonmel v Richmond, Clonmel, 2.30; Kilfeacle v Youghal, Kilfeacle, 2.30; Skibbereen v Crosshaven, Skibbereen, 2.30

Division 2: Abbeyfeale v Newcastle West,