

OBITUARY - JOE O'MAHONY

Farewell to Joe O'Mahony - one of Limerick's all time greats

Aidan Corr pays tribute to former Limerick soccer great Joe O'Mahony who passed away this week

HE was one of those Limerick players whom we all aspired to be, who we admired and who we envied. Joe O'Mahony was a natural footballing talent who could have plied his trade on any soccer pitch on this globe and had the ability to compete with the greatest.

A product of Limerick's greatest ever soccer academy, Reds United, a club founded by Dave Morton, Jack Tuohy and Joe O'Neill in the 1950s, he was one of a rare crop who contributed to the halcyon days of the Markets Field between 1960 and its sad closure in 1984.

As a schoolboy with Pa Wilmott's Prospect, Joe O'Mahony stood out at a very early age.

Remember him training in dimming summer nights in Caledonian Park, swinging in corners, left foot, then right foot for Al Finucane to test goalkeeper Kevin Fitzpatrick with pin-pointed accuracy on the volley. They all graduated to Limerick under the tutelage of Jack Tuohy and Ewan Fenton and, in season, the Mulgrave Street home of Limerick soccer became their stage every second Sunday for almost 20 years.

With Des McNamara

stepping down after decades of service to the Blues, O'Mahony slotted in with ease at half back in 1967. He felt at home in a backline that was marshaled by 'Fitzzy', Fenton and Finucane and included Vinny Quinn, Johnny Ryan, Tommy Murphy and Sean Byrnes. A more solid backline you could not wish for on your debut and after winning the Dublin City Cup in 1970, Joe had one of his finest hours a year later, giving a sublime display in the FAI Cup final replay against Drogheda United at Dalymount Park as Limerick made history.

It was the start of an era when Limerick soccer reached unprecedented heights and Joe O'Mahony was central to every achievement. He was a member of the side that won the League Cup in 1975/76 and had his greatest honour when he lifted Limerick's second league title on an unforgettable Sunday afternoon in St Mel's Park in Athlone in 1980. That success led to Joe leading out the Limerick United side in the Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid on October 1 of that year, having been drawn against the Spanish giants in the first round of the European Cup. Further honour was to follow with Joe captaining Limerick to their second FAI Cup win, this time against Bohemians on a wet and miserable afternoon in Dalymount Park in 1982.

Despite all his achievements on the playing fields, Joe remained a genuinely shy and humble sportsman. He seldom spoke about his playing days and never ex-



One fine day: In 1980 Limerick played Real Madrid in the European Cup in Lansdowne Road. Here Limerick captain Joe O'Mahony, who died this week, exchanges pennants with Real Madrid captain and German international Uli Stieleke

pressed disappointment that the elusive full Irish cap never came his way. The manner in which he came within seconds of winning that cap remain part of local folklore. On the bench in Prague in 1969 for a World Cup qualifier, Joe having discarded the tracksuit and ready to replace an injured, green-shirted colleague, awaited the signal to come on. His dream was shattered when the injured party suddenly indicated that he

would play on and his chance was lost. Joe was, however, capped at youth international level for Ireland in March 1966 against Northern Ireland and also represented the League of Ireland against the Scottish League and Australia in 1970.

The last time that I met Joe O'Mahony was in the Redemptorist Church. It was a hot summer's afternoon a few years back, we were the only two in the church, and we sat on the confessional seat near St Gerard's altar and chatted

about the great days of Limerick soccer.

At the relatively young age of 65, there is great sadness amongst Limerick soccer fans of his era that he has left us so unexpectedly and so suddenly but Joe O'Mahony will always be remembered as one of the greatest soccer players this city has ever produced.

Joe is survived by his wife Sheila, daughters, Laura and Lisa, son David, sons-in-law Ger and Robbie, grandchildren Lauren, Lucy and Conor,

Alex and Aoibhinn, sisters Mary and Anne, brother-in-law, nephews, nieces, relatives, his football colleagues and many friends.

Reposing at Griffin's funeral home, John's Gate on Thursday, January 9, from 4.30pm. Removal at 6.30pm to Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Funeral on Friday, January 10, after 12 noon Mass to Castlemungret Cemetery

May he rest in peace.

COUNTY UNDERAGE SOCCER NEWS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11

U-11 Premier League

All games at 12.30
Charleville A v Kilmallock Utd, Herbertstown v Cappamore Celtic; Murroe v Holycross, 3.30
Points to date: Charleville 13, Murroe 12, Cappamore 12, Holycross 11, Herbertstown 3, Kilmallock 1.

U-11 Division 1

All games at 2pm
Castle Utd v Galbally, Kibbehenny v Kiteely, Knocklong-Hospital v Cullen-Donohill
Points to date: Galbally 18, Cullen-Donohill 10, Kibbehenny 10, Kiteely 7, Castle United 4, Knocklong-Hospital 3

U-11 Division 2

All games at 12.30pm
Bruff Utd v Holycross, Croom Utd v Charleville B
Points to date: Croom 13, St Pats 12, Charleville B 6, Holycross B 4, Bruff 0

U-13 Premier League

Charleville v Herbertstown, 11.00; Knocklong-Hospital v Galbally, 11.00; Holycross v Kilmallock Utd, 12.30; Morroe v Cullen/Donohill, 2.00
Points to date: Charleville 18, Rathkeale 18, Holycross 12, Galbally 12, Murroe 9, Cullen-Donohill 6, Herbertstown 6, Kilmallock 3, Knocklong-Hospital 0

U-15 Premier League

All games at 11am
Cullen/Donohill v Cappamore Celtic; Herbert-

stown v Charleville A; Knocklong-Hospital v Kilmallock Utd.
Points to date: Charleville 17, Kilmallock 16, Herbertstown 12, Cappamore 6, Cullen-Donohill 5, Knocklong/Hospital 3

U-15 Division 1

All games at 11am
Kiteely v Kibbehenny, Rathkeale v Croom Utd, Holycross v Charleville B
Points to date: Rathkeale 19, Holycross 16, Croom 12, Kiteely 9, Charleville B 3, Kibbehenny 3

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12

Girls U-16 Premier

Charleville v Murroe, 11am; Rathkeale v Cor-

bally, 2pm

Girls U-16 Division 1

Mungret v Regional, 2pm; Ballylanders v Holycross, 2pm

Reminder: No changes to fixtures permitted after 12 noon on Thursdays. Also both clubs must text League PRO Bill Hayes 086-8448503 with match result and name of goal-scorers. Please also text Pat Dunne Fixtures Secretary 086-8338071 with match result. Full fixtures for second half of all leagues will be circulated by end of this week. Girls U-14 leagues will recommence Sunday, January 19 and Girls U-12 leagues will recommence Sunday, January 26

ETP NEWS

The UL academy which consists of five leagues - Limerick's District, County and Desmond, Clare and North Tipperary, played their Cork counterparts at Blarney on Friday last and, while it was a necessary exercise, little could be learned in the very difficult conditions. Patrick McDonagh (Herbertstown) and Ed Valadka (Regional Utd and formerly Kilmallock) represented the County at senior level. Jessie Smith and Jack O'Callaghan (Charleville) and James Fitzgerald (Croom and now with Mungret/Regional) were on the junior team and all acquitted themselves quite well.

ITEC

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Nutritionist, Sports Psychologist or Fitness Instructor with ITEC - Irish Training & Educational Centre - Ireland's Online Sports College.

All these courses can be completed online, saving time and cost of travel while gaining a new FETAC/QQI Sports Qualification. For further details on our Online FETAC Sports Courses please visit the website or link below or call on 01 2061832 or contact our league secretary for details. Courses available are Exercise and Fitness (FETAC Level 5); Sports Coaching (FETAC Level 6); Sports Nutrition (FETAC Level 6); Sports Psychology (FETAC Level 6). You may also write to Niall Murphy, ITEC Online Sports Courses, The Learning Centre, Leopardstown Business Centre, Ballyogan Road, Leopardstown, Dublin 18, or click on www.irishtraining.ie/health