

GAA LIMERICK U-21 FC 'A' FINAL

Bruff snatch unlikely win in U-21 final

Bruff	4-8
St Patrick's	2-8

John Redington
In Knocklong

ON an apocalyptic night last Friday, perhaps it wasn't surprising that the last of the season's county finals ended with a damburst. Bruff's U-21 'A' football success in Knocklong came after an extraordinary final five minutes when they turned a five point deficit into victory by six over St Patrick's, a mirror image of Limerick's 1994 All-Ireland final collapse against Offaly.

Up to the moment when Shane Irwin's free sparked the revival, the Saints had never looked in danger.

Although they should have been further ahead at half-time as the hurricane gave them absolute control of possession and territory, the eye of Ian Storan for the breaking ball and the control of Craig McMarlow on the solo gave them enough time on the ball after the break to break up Bruff's efforts at shaving away the deficit.

But had they gone for jugular rather than settling for settling for containment, they could have kept the gap beyond any hope of a fightback that was always a possibility in the conditions.

Indeed, the blustering wind not only made it a game of two halves but it also resulted in three underhit long-range frees ending in the back of the net. Bruff's pair during their final crazy rally made up the final margin between the sides but their most valuable one arrived before the break when captain Aidan O'Sullivan poked home after a rare break from defence.

The difference was that the Morning Stars went for the score against the elements with a hunger that their opponents never showed on their counter-attacks later on and that same never-say-die spirit fuelled their late breakthrough.

Pats attacked from the throw-in and, while they pinned Bruff back to their goal line, their attempts to score on the run led to four wides before Jason Mullins opened their account with a free.

At that point, they started running the ball and, with Bruff struggling to get any length into their clearances and kickouts, the constant pressure led to another pair of Mullins frees.

The scores dried up after that as Bruff packed back but when Gearoid Hegarty's blast off a free dropping short was deflected over the City



Shane Halpin and a pair of Mullins frees for a half-time lead of 2-8 to 1-0.

Bruff may have threatened a revival when Niall O'Riordan sent over a free within seconds of the restart but the fightback turned painfully slow after that as Pats made a better fist of containment against the gale.

After they'd added an Anthony Punch point and an Irwin free by the three-quarter mark, hopes of breakthrough were dashed when Punch's shot was deflected although sub Billy Hogan pointed off the resulting '45'.

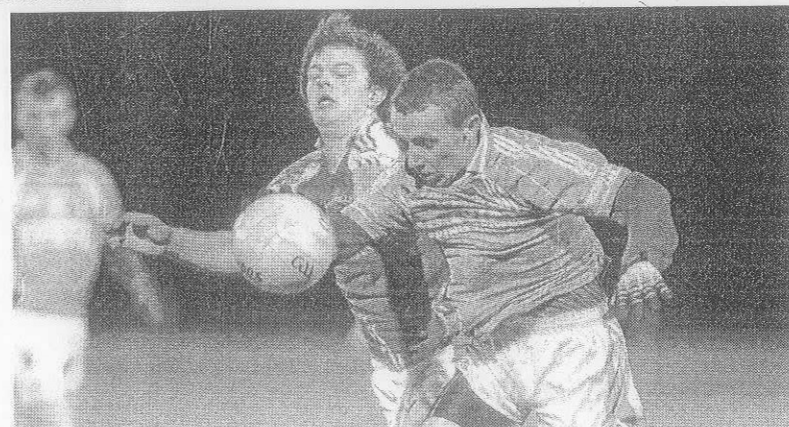
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at the other end but were concentrated on retaining possession rather than shooting into the elements.

Two further Irwin frees brought the gap back to five but Bruff lost playmaker O'Riordan and their attacks became increasingly ragged.

Then, as the Rhebogoe side ran down the clock, a long Irwin free swirled over the square and drifted to the corner of the net.

The resulting kickout produced another free which never rose high enough but Ryan Glynn's raised hand backflicked it over the line. Behind for the first time, Pats' shape fell apart, Irwin notted a free. Glynn ran onto a



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The scores dried up after that as Bruff packed back but when Gearóid Hegarty's blast off a free dropping short was deflected over, the City side worked on finding their giant full-forward.

He had better luck with the next movement, coming out, turning and shooting to give Eric Finn no chance and when Storan's long free sailed all the way to the net and Mullins followed up with a point, four nightmare minutes saw Bruff's deficit balloon from a manageable three to a daunting eleven.

However, they managed to get of their half after that and, while they struggled to get within the scoring zone, a free dropping around the square was pounced on by O'Sullivan and stuck past Ronan Power.

The act of resistance roused the Saints into another sustained spell of pressure that yielded a point from



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IN BRIEF

MAIN MAN - AIDAN O'SULLIVAN

Skipper Aidan O'Sullivan bagged the game's only score against the gale and kept his side's hopes alive with his inspirational industry in midfield.

MAGIC MOMENT

Three minutes from the end of normal time, Bruff looked dead and buried when Shane Irwin's 45 metre free deceived everyone as it sailed unimpeded to the net and left his side with their first sighting of an improbable success.

TALKING POINT

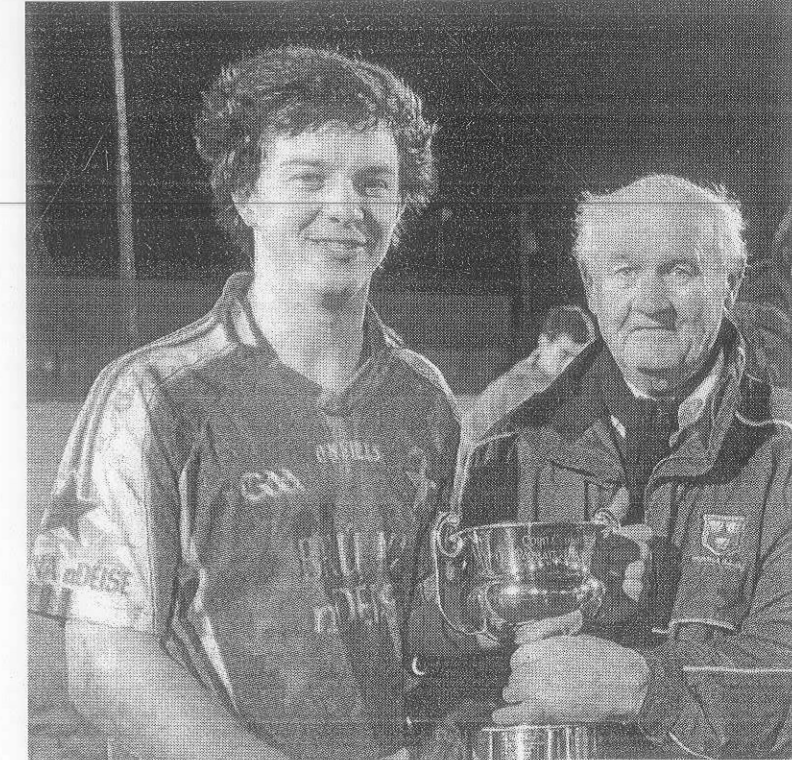
Pats started the game with just two players numbered and in the positions listed in the programme

SCORERS - Bruff: Shane Irwin 1-4 (1-3 frees), Ryan Glynn 2-0, Aidan O'Sullivan 1-0, Anthony Punch 0-2, Niall O'Riordan (free), Billy Hogan 0-1 each; **St Patrick's:** Jason Mullins 0-6 (6 frees), Gearóid Hegarty 1-1, Ian Storan 1-0 (free), Shane Halpin 0-1.

BRUFF - Eric Finn; Tim O'Sullivan, Peadar McCarthy, Gregory Dempsey; Brian Finn, Adam Murphy, Kevin Browne; Seán Barrett, Aidan O'Sullivan; Ryan Glynn, Niall O'Riordan, Shane Irwin; Darragh Glynn, Anthony Punch, Willie Moloney. Subs: Billy Hogan for Tim O'Sullivan (half-time), Graham Whelan for Darragh Glynn (45 mins), Mike O'Donnell for Niall O'Riordan (inj 47 mins).

ST PATRICK'S - Ronan Power; Gavin Mullins, Andrew Kennedy, Ryan Meagher; Jamie Cross, David Sheehan, Paddy Downes; Ian Storan, Pádraig Reale; Craig McMarlow, Jason Mullins, Shane Halpin; Brendan Mullins, Gearóid Hegarty, Keelan Stephenson. Sub: Dave Clancy for Paddy Downes (40 mins).

REFEREE - Jason Mullins (St Kieran's)



The Bruff team (above) celebrate their Limerick U-21 'A' FC title after the dramatic win over St Patrick's in the final in Knocklong; above - Bruff captain Aidan O'Sullivan is presented with the trophy by Football Board Chairman Sean McAuliffe; above left - St Patrick's Keelan Stephenson on the attack left - Kevin Brown gets his shot away Pictures: Keith Wiseman