



LIMERICK LEADER



LIMERICK v KERRY

Munster football final 2003



Sport
81

Bank of Ireland
Football Championship

Edited by
JEROME O'CONNELL



The long road travelled by Limerick's footballers

LIMERICK football was undoubtedly the "poor relation" in the 1980's.

None the less, the period laid solid foundations which came to fruition when Limerick reached the 1991 Munster final.

To the forefront during the decade was Antrim native Raymond O'Hagan.

"I came from Belfast to Mungret to go teaching and joined the local club. I had been involved in the GAA for years in Belfast, as were my whole family. I was vice-chairman of the Antrim hurling board for a period and was a selector on the Antrim minor football team."

O'Hagan started in Limerick as an U16 hurling selector and then became the city representative on

the county senior football selection committee — he was joined by Donie Nestor, Askeaton, Paddy Hyland, Galbally and Tommy Fitzgibbon, Oola.

Ultimately O'Hagan assumed the role of manager and brought Noreen Lynch into the set-up as trainer.

"She was as good, if not better than anyone in the country at the time — I knew Noreen through teaching and we did most of our training in Mary Immaculate."

O'Hagan recalls that a certain Kerry footballer, based in Limerick, by the name of Liam Kearns often joined the Limerick team for training purposes.

"We had a great time, the lads were fantastic — the bunch of fellas were all the best of friends. The 1991 team was virtually the same team that won the

two McGrath Cups — we won the McGrath Cup for the first time, we won two in total, and went to London and beat them", he said.

"We had a very good team. In 1984, the century year, the GAA held a special open draw competition. In the first round we were drawn at home to Derry, the Ulster champions and beat them in Askeaton and then we were drawn against Mayo, the Connacht champions and we beat them. We were drawn away to Cork and I would say they were quite fortunate to beat us."

In the 1987 Railway Cup, Munster defeated Ulster 3-12 to 1-9 in the semi final, but lost, the following day, in the final to Leinster 1-13 to 0-9.

"At the time we had four players playing Railway Cup with Munster; Paddy Ives, Tom Browne, Donal



Kerry's Noel O'Mahony in action against Limerick's Sean Kelly in the 1991 Munster senior football final. O'Mahony now plays his club football with Adare

Fitzgibbon, Fintan Ryan and I think Joe Reddington was involved as well."

"We were terribly unfortunate in the league, not to get out of division four. I remember one time, we missed out when Carlow scored a goal in the last minute and another time we lost out to a very good Laois team."

O'Hagan had departed by the 1991 final, but feels that with an open draw system or even an first round game against another of the 'so-called weaker' counties, Limerick could have made a greater impact in the championship during his involvement.

Ahead of Sunday's final he talks of the new stature

of football in the county.

"The present Limerick team is exceptionally strong. They are very fast and well trained. If they win midfield they will do well, Galvin and Quane should do well. Quane has given great service to Limerick and it would be fantastic to see him win a Munster medal."

Phil plays his part for Kerry

LIMERICK city has harboured many of Kerry's stars down through the years, from Paidi O'Se and Pat Spillane to Dara O'Conneide and Declan Quill.

Current manager, O'Se served as a Garda in Unit C in Limerick's William St, in the late 70's.

Pat Spillane studied in the old Thomond College in the city and indeed captained the college side to the 1977 All-Ireland Club title.

In recent years Dara O'Conneide, Tomas O'Se and Declan Quill have studied in Mary Immaculate College.

"When I was stuck in the city, I often trained with the Limerick hurlers and even went through my paces with the Limerick soccer team; terrorised their goalie with some ferocious penalty kicks. Anyway, showing a rare ecumenical streak, I went up to Garryowen and joined the panel for training one night. Didn't like it, wasn't really noticed so I turned to Limerick's other team, Young Munster", details Paidi O'Se in his book 'Paidi - the life of Gaelic football legend, Paidi O'Se'.

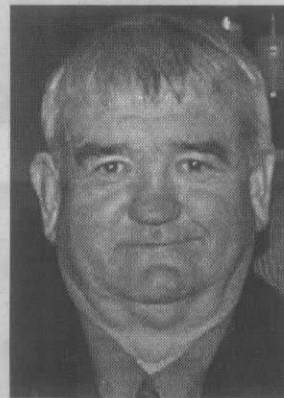
Ensuring the players were always made feel at home on Shannonside and more importantly that they had transport back to Killarney for training was a trusty group of exiled Kerry men.

"I am here for about 30 years", explained Phil O'Sullivan, who now resides in Clarina.

Originally from Beaufort, at the foot of Carrantuohill, Phil has recently retired after over 30 years as a member of Garda Siochana.

During his time, he served in Bruff and in a number of city stations.

Indeed he lined out in the colours of both Bruff and Na Piarasigh GAA clubs at various stages.



Phil O'Sullivan

Testament to his role in escorting various Kerry footballers to and from training, Paidi O'Se and his nephew Tomas attended Phil's retirement party.

"I used to bring down the odd player to training in Killarney. There was myself Noel Downey, who is now involved with the Limerick football board, John Costelloe and Bob Shanahan. We would go down to Killarney on alternative nights, down through the years", he recalled.

"We would bring them to training and wait and bring them back up. We got to know the lads as they went through UL or Mary Immaculate."

Analysing the provincial final, he said that the odds offered by the bookies were "crazy".

"The match will be 50-50, it is all on the day. Limerick are very fast and move the ball very fast, as well as being very tight at the back."

Reports from the Kingdom suggest that key midfielder, Dara O'Se is extremely doubtful.


"The last time they met, Dara O'Se was injured as well and only for him coming on in the last ten minutes, everything could have been different. His injury could upset the apple tart — ligaments don't heal up in a week or two, if he is playing, he will need to be at his best if he is to mark John Galvin."

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When Commercials ruled Limerick, Munster and Ireland

IT was in the nineteenth century, that Limerick captured their one and only Munster senior football title.

The Commercials club represented the county in the 1896 final, which was played in Mallow and the opponents were Erin's Hope of Dungarvan.

The previous year Aravale Rovers of Tipperary had defeated Commercials in the provincial final, prompting an all-out training effort for the 1896 championship, which involved walking from Corkanree to Cratloe, of a Sunday, to play the locals.

In the provincial decider, on November 21, 1897, the Waterford champions were first to score in the final, but Commercials rallied to lead 0-3 to 0-1 at the half time break.

The game came to an abrupt end, midway through the second half after the Limerick side had kicked between the posts, to lead, 0-4 to 0-1.

However the ball



Limerick 1896: the only Munster senior football winning team

rebounded off a spectator and back into the field of

play. Referee, Tom Dooley

allowed the score, but the Waterford team left the

field in protest and although Commercials

offered to forego the score, the Cork official refused and awarded the match and thus the Munster title to Limerick.

Central Council later upheld the decision of the referee, as Commercials continued their route to a second All-Ireland title.

The Limerick club had won the inaugural All-Ireland senior football title in 1887, when the game was played with 21 players per team.

In 1896 the teams were reduced to 17 a-side and Young Irelanders of Dublin were the opponents in the national final, which was played in Jones' Road on February 6, 1898.

Bill Murphy was the Limerick hero as his goal, paved the way for a 1-5 to 0-7 victory.

Commercials panel of 1896: Con Fitzgerald (capt), D. Birrane, James O'Riordan, W. Guiry, Pat Griffin, John O'Riordan, P. Roche, Larry Sheehan, Tom Campion, John Murphy, Ailbe Quillinan, Bill Murphy, James Dalton, James Nash, W. McNamara, J. Buttimer, M. Ryan, W. Murphy, Larry Roche.

Galbally's rugby star remembers his GAA days

IT is a case of what might have been for Irish rugby International, Jeremy Staunton.

The Galbally man won a county senior football medal and played in a Munster minor football final within months of each other, before he had to make the difficult deci-

sion to turn his back on the sport.

"I would have loved to combine the two, but it wasn't allowed, I was offered a rugby academy contract and it didn't allow for other sports", he explained.

Previously the likes of Dan Larkin and Philip Danaher had combined both codes, but the changing face of rugby means that combining top level

action in both, is impossible.

"I played in the Munster minor final in July 1998 in Thurles against Kerry — I only played the semi final and final. Throughout the season of 1997/98 I played rugby and I wasn't involved in the preliminary rounds against Tipperary, Waterford and Clare — there was a bit of a break between when they qualified and the semi final and I was called in", he

recalled.

"Against Cork in the Gaelic Grounds in the semi final was my first real outing."

"Even though I was only 17, I played centre forward with Galbally when we won the county senior title in 1997 and that was probably where they caught a view of me."

He lined out at right half forward in the minor final, which will be remembered for the goal, which never

was from Mark Culhane.

"That minor final was my last game. We were ahead at half time, but they won by four or five points. It was my dream to get to Croke Park and play there", he said.

Referring to Sunday's final, he recalled that seven of the panel were members of the 1998 minor set-up.

"I see a lot of the guys around the place and I played with a lot of them — from that minor team,

most of them are now playing senior and are proving their worth and I wish them all the best."

"Back then football was considered to be secondary, but thanks to the county board that is different now."

Although his collection of GAA medals may have come to an end, Staunton has earned one full Irish cap and collected a Celtic League medal with Munster.

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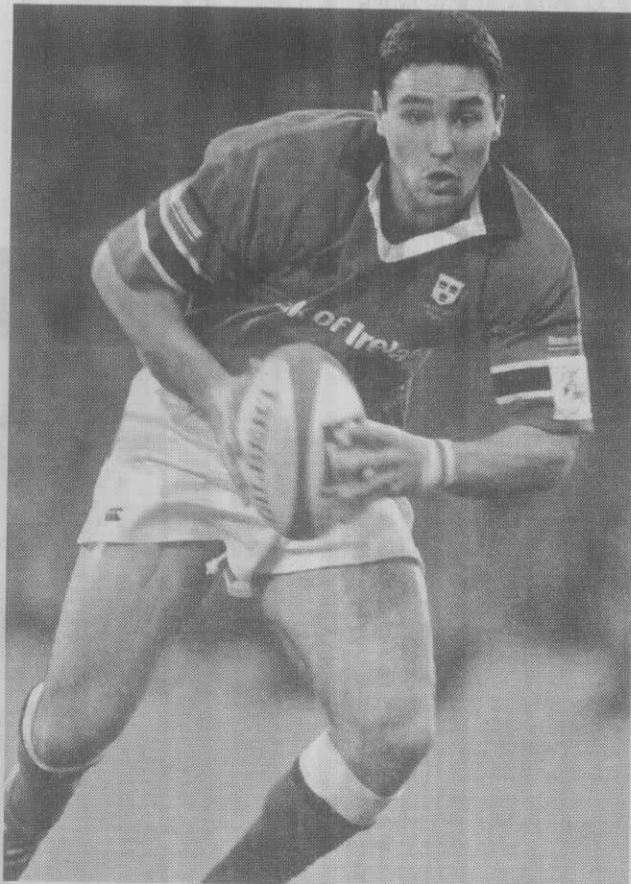
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Cork no match for hungrier Limerick

By JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY, Paicr Ui Chaoimh

Limerick 0-16
Cork 0-06

THIRTY-eight years of frustration was swept away inside 70 unbelievable minutes at Paicr Ui Chaoimh, as Limerick's hungry bravehearts devoured reigning champions Cork by a massive 10 points winning margin to fire warning shots to others in the 2003 senior football championship campaign.

When manager Liam Kearns suggested in an interview in this newspaper two weeks ago

Jason Stokes

"It is unreal, we limited them to shooting from long range in the finish. Myself I was down at half time, but I was confident because we were in a good position, five points up. Liam brought us back down to earth and we went out to win the game and it was brilliant, especially for John Quane - we were going to do it for him"

Seamus O'Donnell

"I can't explain what it feels like to come down here and beat Cork - the full back line came in for a lot of criticism last week, but I have said it all along that I have the best full back line in the country in front of me and today they were just awesome."

Diarmuid Sheehy

"Throughout the team we had decided that we were going to win this game. The whole 15 of us were psyched for this game, but we held out patch inside in the full back line. I made a few runs all right and luckily enough they paid off, John (Quane) got a point out of one of them."

Stephen Kelly

"It is some feeling, I was looking up at the stand towards the end and the fans were on their feet roaring and that is just so great for Limerick football and for other aspiring counties - we beat Cork in the Munster Championship in Paicr Ui Chaoimh."

John Quane

"It is hard for it to sink in, to beat Cork or Kerry in the Munster Championship - I am a long time waiting for it, this is my 14th year playing and four or five years ago I could not see that happening, but the last couple of years have been brilliant."

that Limerick's tough League campaign would stand them in good stead against the Rebels, there were quite a few sceptics who felt he was whistling in the wind.

Even after the heart-break of Croke Park, the big Kerryman stood by his earlier convictions dismissing all innuendo that he'd be running for medication to reinvigorate his squad in time for battle against Cork, a side they had not beaten since a famous day back in 1965.

It was said at Paicr Ui Chaoimh on Sunday that Paudi O'Se was "caged" on the Blackrock side of the ground. On the evidence of this performance he will not fancy a possible meeting with the team built by his former playing colleague on a later date.

First, of course, Limerick have to overcome Clare and no doubt the Banner will quietly fancy their prospects of surprise number two in Munster, particularly on their home patch.

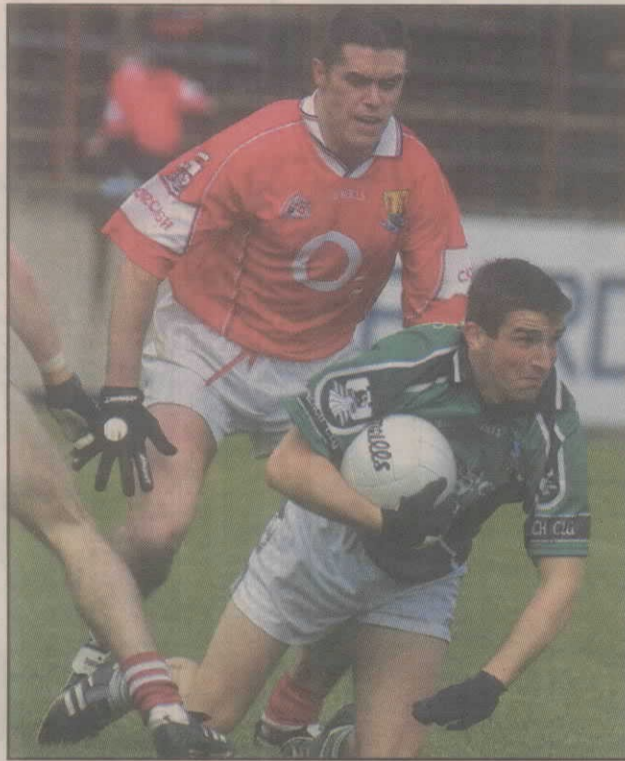
Though Limerick scaled the heights in the League, Paicr Ui Chaoimh was seen as the first real test of character for them. The record books indicated they have never won there.

Amazingly, Cork were allowed the privilege of just two points from play, from wing back Noel O'Leary, in eight minutes, and Michael O'Croinin, after 45. What's more, O'Croinin's contribution was all they had to show for their second half efforts.

The frustration of having to play second best resulted in their having received six yellow cards in the opening 35 minutes. Then with 10 minutes to go Fionan Murray took it out on Muiris Gavin in an off the ball incident and was correctly shown 'red'.

As Limerick played a patient and direct game, Cork, for the most part, huffed and puffed. Tactically, Limerick got it bang on, especially in the opening period when Damien Reidy was often seen as an extra midfielder. First to the tackle, first to every ball and rising highest in the aerial battles, this was Limerick at their magnificent best. Their total number of wides could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

There was just one brief period when they were in danger of shooting themselves in the foot. Ahead by 0-10 to 1-5 at the interval, and with the breeze to come, they



Conor Fitzgerald is closely marked by Martin Cronin at Paicr Ui Chaoimh

allowed indiscipline to creep in and inside a 10 minutes period gave away an unacceptable 11 frees. Corkery, facing into the breeze, was unable to capitalise on those which were within scoring distance.

The towering figures of John Quane and John Galvin were too much for Nicholas Murphy and Derek Kavanagh to handle, and even when the Croom man was clearly in pain with what appeared to be a hamstring problem in the second period, he continued to fight the good battle.

Even when Jason Stokes hobbled off with a leg injury just before the break, Limerick kept their shape with Stephen Lucey proving a more than able deputy. Stokes played a few mind games with his direct opponent Micheal O'Croinin right from the start and clearly unsettled the Corkman.

On reflection, Cork were not good. Whether that was due to Limerick's game plan or their own shortcomings will await judgement for another day.

Kearns honest pre match appraisal was that Cork might struggle a bit because of the lack of competitive matches over the last two months. But even Larry Tompkins will find it hard to explain away a 10 points hiding on their own soil.

Limerick started like an express train with Stephen Kelly having worked his way into the middle before firing a shot into the midriff of keeper Kevin O'Dwyer.

But it was Cork who scored first, and second, with Corkery, free, and Noel O'Leary, finding

their range.

Backed by the elements there was a real danger they might pull away.

It was not to be.

Stephen Kelly took his cue from an earlier defence splitting run by Diarmuid Sheehy. He raided down the right, slipped to the ground, picked himself up again and squeezed the ball between the uprights. The show was now on the road.

Muiris Gavin brought his shooting boots from Croke Park and slotted over the equaliser.

Cork, easily exposed at the back, allowed Stephen Lavin to snatch the lead. Corkery became the first player to enter the referee's notebook when he pulled down Diarmuid Sheehy. In the 16th and 19th minutes, Gavin fired over two more frees.

When Conor Fitzgerald rounded Anthony Lynch to carve another point, Limerick

fans rubbed their eyes in disbelief at the 0-6 to 0-2 scoreline.

Corkery pulled one back from a free and that was the closest that Cork were to get over the remainder of the contest.

Gavin and Corkery exchanged points, and then followed another of real quality from Michael Reidy.

Sparring partners Gavin and Corkery were at it again, and just on half time came the highlight. Sheehy, never afraid to venture forward, shook off not just one but five tackles on an amazing run. He spotted John Quane in a more favourable position, let him have possession and the midfielder did the rest.

It was now 0-10 to 0-5, and another 35 minutes to follow.

Two minutes into the second half and it was even rosier, after Gavin converted a free awarded for a foul on Michael Reidy.

Limerick were coasting, or so we thought.

It was then that worst fears began to surface. Their play became ragged, players were easily pulled out of position and free after free was conceded. On another day, Cork might have taken control. That they didn't was down to the elements and wayward shooting.

All the losers had to show was a 45th minute point from O'Croinin, also their last contribution of the afternoon.

Worryingly, Limerick had gone 12 minutes without even coming near the target. Stokes was gone and Galvin was struggling with an injury.

Brian Begley answered the call with a difficult point, and one could sense an easing of tensions.

There was a humorous moment when Corkery gave chase, O'Donnell kept his cool

and sold him a dummy before the ball went over the end line.

The second half frees total for Limerick climbed to 16, before Gavin punished two misdemeanours at the other end.

At 0-14 to 0-6 there was no way back for the 2002 champions. Do unto them as they do unto you, was the Limerick motto and Gavin and substitute Johnny Murphy rounded off a marvellous day by Leeside.

In other times, Cork would have rolled out the subs in the second half just to give them a feel for the big occasion. Limerick took that liberty this occasion.

In the final analysis this was a great team performance. It will be noted that corner backs Tommy Stack and Mark O'Riordan kept their markers scoreless, as did the tigerish Conor Mullane and Damien Reidy behind them.

This marvellous win will be spoken about all over county and city for decades. The men of 1965 will have to give way.

The nation was tuned in, courtesy of RTE television, and any entrepreneur prepared to invest in the video highlights will surely have a best seller at Christmas.

After all, it is not often that Limerick has days like this.

Scores:

Limerick: M. Gavin 0-9, J. Quane, S. Lavin, S. Kelly, C. Fitzgerald, B. Begley, M. Reidy, J. Murphy 0-1 each.

Cork: C. Corkery 0-4, N. O'Leary and M. O'Croinin 0-1 each.

Limerick: Seamus O'Donnell, Mark O'Riordan, Diarmuid Sheehy, Tommy Stack, Conor Mullane, Jason Stokes, Damien Reidy, John Quane, John Galvin, Stephen Lavin, Muiris Gavin, Stephen Kelly, Conor Fitzgerald, Brian Begley, Michael Reidy. Subs: Stephen Lucey for J. Stokes, Johnny Murphy for C. Fitzgerald, Pat Ahern for M. Reidy, Padraig Browne for O'Riordan.

Cork: Kevin O'Dwyer, Sean O'Brien, Alan O'Connor, Anthony Lynch, Noel O'Leary, Martin Cronin, Eoin Sexton, Nicholas Murphy, Derek Kavanagh, Tom Kenny, Micheal O'Croinin, Brendan Jer O'Sullivan, Alan Cronin, Colin Corkery, Fionan Murray. Subs: M.aurice McCarthy for N. Murphy, Jim O'Donoghue for T. Kenny, Colin Crowley for A. Cronin, James O'Shea for M. Cronin.

Referee: Brian White (Wexford)



Stephen Kelly breaks clear of Martin Cronin

14 man Limerick cast aside Clare

By **JEROME O'CONNELL**, at Cusack Park, Ennis

Clare 0-12
Limerick 2-14

LIMERICK have bridged a 12 year gap, by booking their place in the Munster senior football final for the first time since 1991.

Thanks to their workman-like performance against Clare, the Limerick senior footballers have booked a place in the final on July 13 against Kerry.

Travelling to Cusack Park, Ennis there was a live possibility that Limerick would falter after their heroics against Cork in the opening round.

However, after a hard fought 70 minutes, it was a case of mission accomplished for Liam Kearns men and a first provincial final appearance since 1991.

Despite playing 50 minutes with just 14 men — Mark O'Riordan was sent off, after picking up two yellow cards, two vital goals paved the way for the semi final victory, in which all six starting forwards scored from play and just six wides were registered.

Limerick started with Johnny Murphy filling the An Other spot in the full forward line.

The Ballylanders man started in the corner, with Michael Reidy moving to full forward.

Clare, meanwhile, switched David Russell and Ordan O'Dwyer to the half forward line.

Fresh from their warm-up in the grounds of Eire Og, Limerick and John Galvin in particular started in fine style.

Team captain Muiris Gavin opened the scoring with a pointed free inside two minutes, after the towering Croom man was fouled as he made the first of many searching runs into the heart of the Clare defence.

Moments later another of his trademark runs could have raised a green flag, but his left leg shot was narrowly wide of the post.

A goal did arrive in the

very next attack, from the left boot of Conor Fitzgerald.

The Adare dual player was quickest to latch onto a breaking ball from Murphy and he calmed fired low across debutante keeper, Dermot O'Brien.

Rocked by the early scores, Clare rose to the challenge and points from former Mary Immaculate College student, Peadar McMahon, wing back Conor Whelan, midfielder Ger Quinlan and an Ordan O'Dwyer free levelled the scores, with 12 minutes lapsed.

Once more it was Galvin that lead Limerick back up the field and this time his

Cusack Park, Stephen Kelly followed his colleague into the referee's book.

Then, just three minutes after his initial yellow card O'Riordan was again in the limelight after a rash tackle on advancing Clare midfielder Brian Considine.

The referee was left with no other option, but to show the Croom man to the stands.

As is often the case, the dismissal galvanised Limerick and three quick points, stretched the lead to four points.

The points from Gavin (free), Michael Reidy and Fitzgerald coming despite

Gavin's intervention was warmly welcomed by the large volume of green and white supporters in the crowd of 15,000.

Three points without replay in the first ten minutes of the second half laid solid foundations for the remainder of the game.

Gavin made it three points in a row, when he pointed a free after 50 seconds and the man fouled on that occasion, Stephen Kelly was himself on the scoreboard shortly after.

The U21 player from Newcastle West wriggled his way through the half back line and guided the ball between the uprights from 30 metres.

The third of the scores was a clear demonstration of the Limerick work ethic.

Goalkeeper Seamus O'Donnell raced from his goal to intercept a poor Clare pass and using his footballing skills the St Kierans man passed neatly up the sideline to Murphy, who in turn held off a series of sideline challenges before passing diagonally to Fitzgerald, who turned first time and brought Limerick's tally to 1-11.

Perhaps Clare needed a goal to instil confidence, but their reply were points from an Ordan O'Dwyer free and a David Russell effort.

When the games second goal did arrive, in the 47th minute, it fell to Limerick and all but finished the games as a contest.

Before Johnny Murphy's goal, Muiris Gavin completed his afternoon's scoring with his seventh point, assisted by the upright and Conor Mullane, who disposed his marker to set up his team captain.

Rory Donnelly replied with a free for the Bannermen, but they were not to recover from the next score.

Conor Fitzgerald mis-cued a crossfield pass to Michael Reidy and the breaking ball fell into the path of the onrushing Kelly, who darted through the cover and laid off to Murphy.

The Ballylanders man held his nerve and swerved past the keeper and kicked to the net to leave nine points between the Shannonside neighbours.

Over a quarter of an hour remained, but the outstanding defending of

Tommy Stack, Diarmuid Sheehy and Damien Reidy meant that Clare never got a chance to test O'Donnell in the Limerick goals.

Ordan O'Dwyer pulled back one score with his third pointed free, but again the winners hit back.

Michael Reidy enjoyed his day at full forward and kicked one of the scores of the day, when he fired over with the outside of his boot from the right hand sideline.

Reidy then turned provider, when he assisted Kelly for a fine score, which signalled the start, of the exist of the home fans.

Limerick now led by double scores and the game was petering to its inevitable conclusion. Indeed for much of the second half, it was Limerick who looked to have the extra man.

Amid a host of late substitutions, David Russell and Denis O'Driscoll recorded late consolation scores for the home side.

Scores:
Clare: O. O'Dwyer 0-4 (4frees), D. Russell 0-2, P. McMahon, C. Whelan, G. Quinlan, M. O'Dwyer (free), R. Donnelly (free), D. O'Driscoll 0-1 each.

Limerick: M. Gavin 0-7 (3frees), C. Fitzgerald 1-2, J. Murphy 1-0, M. Reidy, S. Kelly 0-2 each, S. Lavin 0-1.

Clare: Dermot O'Brien, Pdraig Gallagher, Donal O'Sullivan, Dara Blake, Philip Smith, Alan Malone, Conor Whelan, Ger Quinlan, Brian Considine, Ordan O'Dwyer, Mark O'Connell, David Russell, Michael O'Dwyer, Peadar McMahon, Rory Donnelly. Subs, Denis O'Driscoll, for D. Blake, Michael Hoey for A. Malone, Alan Clohessy for M. O'Dwyer, David Hedigan for O. O'Dwyer, Noel Griffin for G. Quinlan.

Limerick: Seamus O'Donnell, Mark O'Riordan, Diarmuid Sheehy, Tommy Stack, Conor Mullane, Stephen Lucey, Damien Reidy, John Quane, John Galvin, Stephen Lavin, Muiris Gavin, Stephen Kelly, Conor Fitzgerald, Michael Reidy, Johnny Murphy. Subs, Jason Stokes, Brian Begley for J. Murphy, Pat Ahern for S. Kelly, Pdraig Browne for D. Reidy, Colm Hickey for M. Reidy.
Referee: David Coldrick



Seamus O'Donnell clears his lines under pressure from Clare's Mark O'Connell

shot brought a save from O'Brien.

Muiris Gavin mopped up the rebound to register his first point from play and the second of his total of seven.

Stephen Lavin then became the second Adare man to get on the score sheet, when he floated over a fine effort from the left wing.

In the next passage of play, Michael O'Dwyer joined his brother on the scoring charts with a pointed free, however what was more significant was the yellow card shown to Mark O'Riordan by referee David Coldrick, after the referee had drawn his attention to Limerick corner back.

As the temperature rose in an already sun-drenched

Clare adopting substitute Denis O'Driscoll as the extra man in their half back line - Limerick moved Stephen Lavin to corner back to fill O'Riordan's position, playing the remainder of the game, with five forwards.

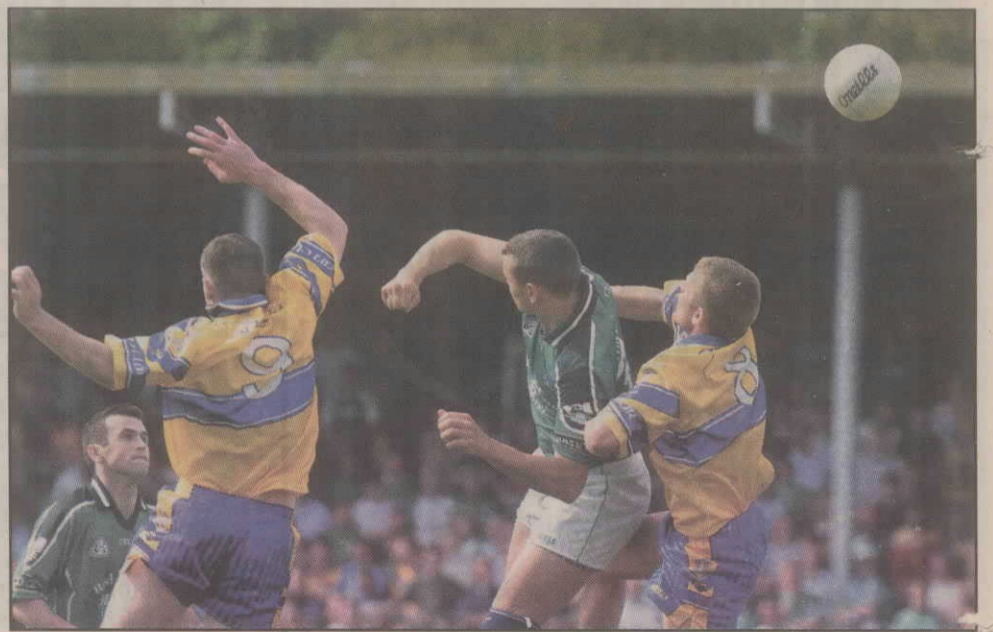
With both sides requiring time to adapt to their new formations, a leader was needed and Limerick captain Muiris Gavin stepped forward.

The Monaleen centre forward kicked two inspiring left foot points in the closing minutes of the half to send his side to the dressing room, 1-08 to 0-06 ahead.

Ordan O'Dwyer had kicked his second free of the day to reduce the deficit to just one goal and with Limerick showing signs of indecisiveness in attack,



Michael Reidy is surrounded by Clare pair, Donal O'Sullivan and Michael O'Dwyer



Jason Stokes in midfield action with Clare duo Brian Considine and Ger Quinlan. Muiris Gavin awaits the break

Damien Reidy
"People would have said with 20 minutes gone in the first half that it was looking good for Clare and then we had a man sent off, it certainly looked good for them, but there is marvellous character in this team and after that everyone just rolled up the sleeves and worked twice as hard."

Johnny Murphy
"I thought we were asleep until Mark got sent off and then everyone woke up and realised we had a big job to do and everyman stood up and then we had to take them on and draw the man."

Michael Reidy
"In fairness to Clare, they had nothing to loose — for a couple of years we were in their position and going in having a crack, but we got an early goal at the start, which might have deflated them and then in the second half the second goal killed the game off."

John Kennedy
"We came up against a quality team. Limerick are in contention for All-Ireland honours — that's the way they are being rated at the moment and I think they played that way out there today."

Liam Kearns
"We can't get carried away, there is plenty of work to be done. I feel we are good enough to go there, whether we are good enough to win it, I don't know, but we are good enough to go there and compete and that is the most important thing. They say that you have to loose one, before you win one, but we have served our apprenticeship and are ready to go there."

Croom's Galvin is anxious for more medals

JOHN Galvin will live long in the memory as the man, who lifted Limerick's first Munster U21 football title.

Now, just days after his 23rd birthday he wants to be involved in another slice of history.

"It would make a nice birthday present", quipped the towering midfielder.

"The first day it all really started was the U21's against Cork down in Pairc Uí Chaoimh and we went on and won a Munster title. It is indescribable to try and say what it meant to us at the time, for U21's to win it and know that it is such a rare occurrence in Limerick and then we went

on to the All-Ireland final and even that year against Cork in the senior championship we had a good game, even though they knocked us out, we put up a good performance and we have built on since and things have got better and better and we still haven't taken a step backwards from one year to the next", explained the Croom man.

"It is down to Liam Kearns and his planning, it is hard to describe what he has done for every game, he has every game thought out, whether it is London or Kerry, he has it thought out to the end."

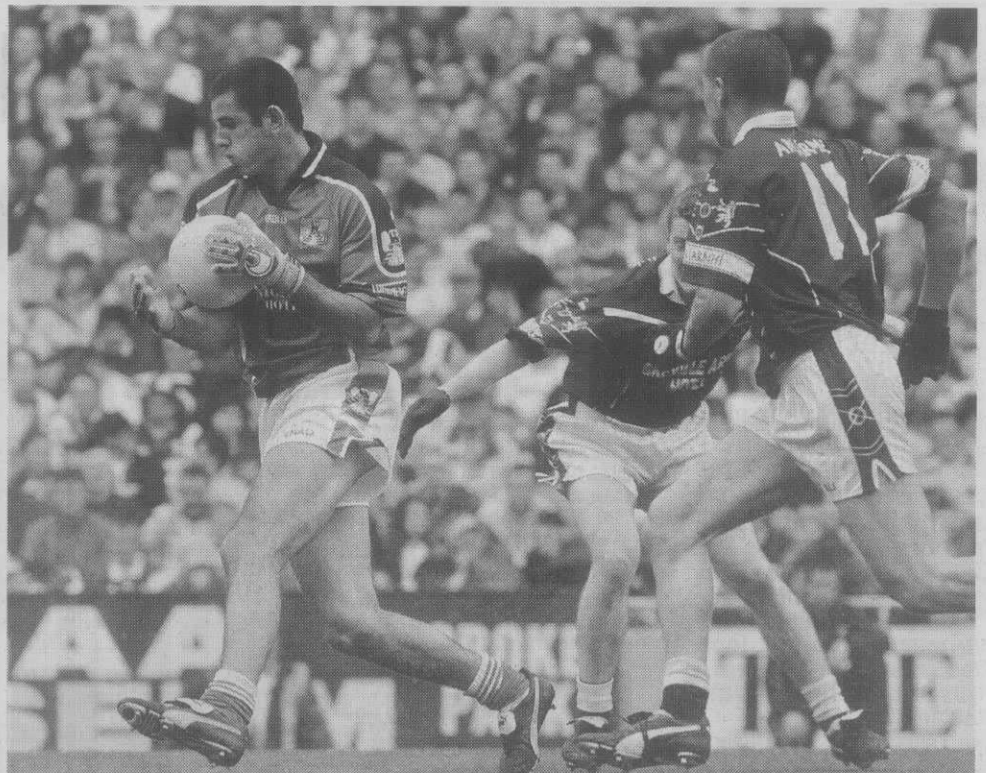
Ten members of the victorious U21 team of 2000 are members of Sunday's senior squad, something which Galvin sees as a great advantage.

"We know each other so well, training is competi-

tive, because you always want to beat your friend and if you don't you will be the laughing stock inside in the dressing room afterwards, it makes training more competitive, it is great out in the field when you know the guy beside you inside out, there is no way you want to let him down, he is such a good friend and everyone means so much to each other and we would all fight to the death for each other."

Despite the teams promotion to division one of the league and the disappointment of losing the league final to Westmeath, Galvin said that Cork was always foremost in their minds.

"From before the first league game, our target was to get promoted, but



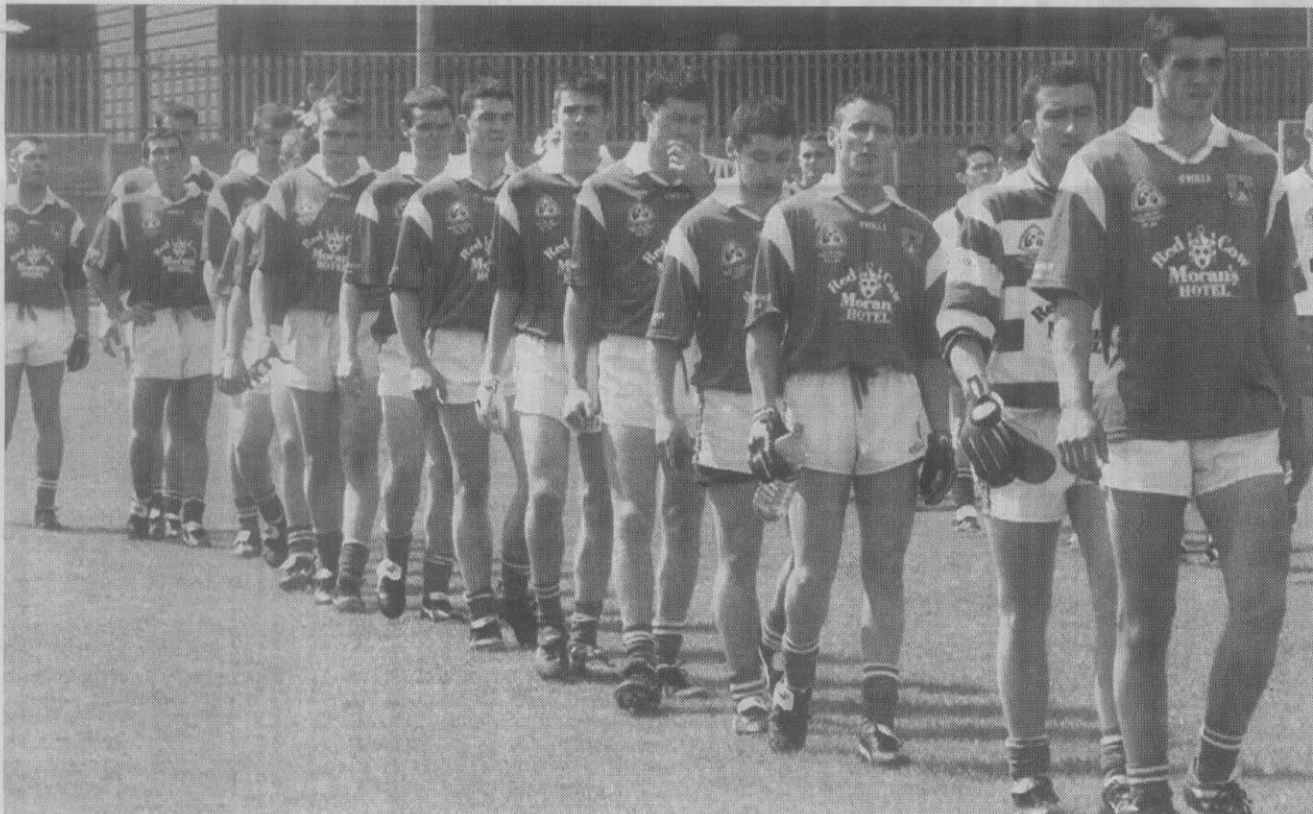
John Galvin charges through the Westmeath cover in the NFL final in Croke Park

our main target was that we were going to beat Cork. We were very disappointed after the Westmeath game and we came home straight away afterwards and we were even told to have a good think about the match on the train, but that once we were home it was forgotten about, that we had

one week to think about Cork and we met up the following morning and talked about the Westmeath game for a couple of minutes and then blanked it out.

He continued: "we were

so disappointed after losing, it was one of the reasons we were so fired up for Cork, we were annoyed at ourselves for throwing away a game we should have won."



Galvin leads his charges behind the band in the 2000 All-Ireland U21 final against Tyrone

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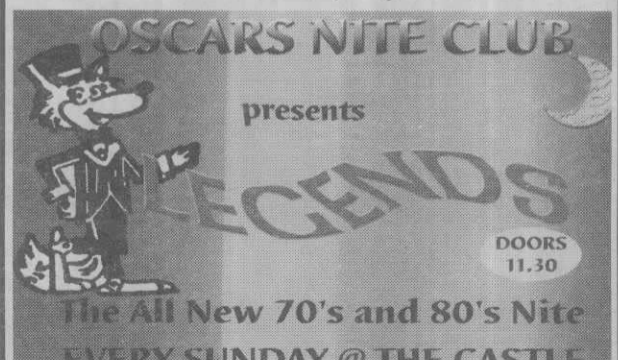
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"I think they have what it takes to win" — Ivess

ONE of Limerick's football stalwarts, Paddy Ivess is fully confident that a Munster championship title is within the grasp of the present team.

"They are a flaking team, I think they have the team to win a championship", said the sterling full back.

A native of Kilcornan, the Garda played his club football with Askeaton/Ballysteen.

"Liam Kearns has done a massive job, he knows what is required. They have a fine goalkeeper with a long kick out and as good a set of backs in the country. The midfield is one of the best in the country, if not the best, while there is great

mobility in the forwards. They don't give the ball away easy and are going as hard in the last five minutes as they are in the opening five minutes."

He feels that the team will have no inhibition's about playing Kerry in Killarney.

"Most of the team have played the All-Ireland U21 football final and they have had a habit of winning for the last couple of years — once you get into a habit of winning it easier to keep it going. They certainly won't lack confidence and I think they have what it takes to win."

Ivess played with the county side from 1979 to 1993, when football was well short of its present day standing.

"There was no interest in football, generally it was fellas from the few stronger football clubs that kept

things alive. The County Board didn't want to know anything about us — until 1987 we would hardly get a cup of tea after training, while the hurlers were getting steak, even in 1990/91/92, what we got was be grudgingly", he recalled.

He said that the arrival of Raymond O'Hagan as manager signalled a change in fortunes.

"Around 1983/84 there was a different attitude, he brought in fellas that wanted to give the commitment and wanted to play football for Limerick and that built up to a cracker of a team from 1988 to 1991."

He still feels that had John O'Keefe arrived a year or two earlier success would have come.

"We had no one with that knowledge, he knew what fitness and everything else needed to be, in fairness,

though, we had good trainers, but he had done it all", explained the former county captain.

"In 1988 we should have beaten Cork in Askeaton, we lost by two points and in '89 we had a good performance against Kerry in Askeaton."

The championship highlight was undoubtedly the 1991 provincial decider against Kerry.

"We led by half time", he recalled, "Pat Spillane was on fire that day and he kicked some points in the second half".

Promotion in the league was also within the grasp in this period, but to no avail.

"Preparations wasn't always as good as it should have been, especially at the start of the league and therefore we lost games at the start that we shouldn't have."



Sterling full back, Paddy Ivess

McMahon warns his countymen of Limerick danger

LIMERICK and Kerry meet in a Munster senior football final for the fifth time this Sunday.

Previous meetings; 1905, 1934, 1965 and 1991, all went the way of the Kingdom.

The 1965 final was particularly note worthy.

This was the year that Limerick decided to re-enter the provincial senior championship, for the first time since 1952.

Limerick were impressive when casting aside Waterford, 4-10 to 0-6 in the first round, but were still given little chance against Cork in the semi final.

However, two goals

from dual star Eamonn Cregan helped Limerick to qualify for their first provincial final since 1922, when Tipperary defeated the Shannonsiders, 1-7 to 0-1.

After the unexpected semi final win over Cork, Limerick approached Garry McMahon to help with training.

McMahon, the holder of two All-Ireland medals with Kerry, had retired just three years earlier and was resident in Newcastle West, where he practised as a solicitor.

"They had got to the final and then asked me to help out — it wasn't for long, only three or four weeks. They were quite a good bunch of lads; Basil Fitzgibbon, Eamonn Cregan and Bernie

Hartigan. I think we were four or five up at half time and were looking really good, maybe a lack of self belief got to them", recalls McMahon.

The '65 final was played before almost 20,000 in Limerick on July 18.

Goals in the seventh and tenth minutes by Mick Tynan and Pat Murphy helped Limerick to a 2-5 to 0-6 half time lead.

The Kerry ship steadied on the resumption and they notched up their eight consecutive provincial title, 2-16 to 2-7.

"I came to Newcastle West in 1961 and won an All-Ireland in 1962 and then retired after that. I retired when I was 25, I was starting my practise and it was a question of

priority.

I had a good run, a hell of a lot better footballers than me, never won All-Irelands — I made good friends", he said.

A native of Listowel and a son of the late writer, dramatist and ballad maker, Bryan McMahon, Garry played minor hurling and football in the green and gold.

"I won All-Ireland's in 1959 and 1962, I think I have the distinction of scoring the fastest goal in an All-Ireland final — after 34 seconds of the '62 final against Roscommon."

He also lists four Munster finals and two National Football Leagues among his achievements.

"I played with some of the greats, Mick

O'Connell and Mick O'Dwyer. I played in four county finals, two in Kerry (Listowel Emmetts) and two in Dublin (Clan na nGael) and lost all four. I remember a county final in Dublin with 30,000 people, we lost to St Vincent's, who had 13 members of the Dublin panel."

Looking ahead to Sunday's final in Fitzgerald Stadium, McMahon had a word of advise for Kerry.

"Limerick are no flash in the pan — I would warn my fellow county men to be awake, this is a good solid team."

Following in the footsteps of his father, Garry is no stranger to scripting or singing a ballad.

The Munster Final, The

Old Kerry Footballer, A lament for Paddy Ban and The Kingdom's Green and Gold are just some of the ballad's that he may frequent and after July 13 perhaps another will be in the offering.

1965 team v Kerry: Joe Meagher, Liam O'Shaughnessy, Seamus Cox, Timmy Woulfe, Basil Fitzgibbon, Tony Fitzgerald, Bernie Hartigan, John Aherne, David Quirke, Eamonn Cregan, John Mullane, Tommy Carrig, Pat Reidy, Mick Tynan, Pat Murphy.

Panel members: John Meade, Sean Culhane, Tom Meaney, Jack Quinlivan, Donie Nestor, Paddy O'Dwyer, Liam Moloney, Eric Ryan, Pat O'Brien.



The Limerick team of 1965

18 Sports 81

Third time lucky for Reidy family

GERALD Griffins Damien Reidy carries a proud family tradition into Sunday's provincial final and attempts to go one step further than his father and cousin before him.

"My dad played in 1965 — there has been a huge tradition of Gaelic Football in my family, my grandfather played before that and Liam Long, my first cousin came on as a sub in 1991. There is a big tradition there and it is a great honour for me to carry on that tradition, hopefully we will bring home a medal this time", said the ever dependable wing back.

His brother Denis was also part of the senior panel for 6-7 years in the mid 90's.

"For every player in Munster the holy grail is to try and win a Munster medal — down through the years Kerry and Cork monopolised the occasion and we all know about the great tradition and the great



Damien Reidy breaks through a Wexford challenge in the NFL semi final

atmosphere of Munster finals and it is just great to be part of that whole

occasion", said the Cork based teacher.

On Sunday Reidy

renews acquaintances with many old friends from his days in UCC.

"Eamon Fitzmaurice and Paul Galvin and myself were the half back line when we won and I would be very good friends with the boys from College — from playing with Limerick and playing in the Railway Cup I would have come across most of the Kerry boys at some stage and they are all great footballers and we will have to be at our very very best to even compete with them and we will probably have to play above ourselves to win it."

He said that it would be foolhardy to look at the statistics of both teams.

"We are just looking at it as another game, we are trying to play down that we have never won a Munster title, at the end of the day it is 70 minutes and 15 against 15 and its all on the day and that's the way we are looking at it. Definitely for the last week or two the spirit has risen and there is a great buzz in the camp at the moment and we

are really looking forward to it."

Reidy has been on the inter-county since he was a substitute in Killarney in 1994.

"I played all my football in the forwards or midfield up till 1999, and it was Paddy Mulvihill that switched me to half back and I seemed to do better there and I am there ever since, so Paddy Mulvihill was the saviour for me — he transformed my career", he smiled.

"Myself, John Quane, Diarmuid Sheedy and Muiris Gavin will be seen as the more senior lads on the team, but in fairness the younger lads have good heads on their shoulders and have plenty of experience from U21 and will not be overawed by the situation, the showed that in the National League Final and the two games thus far — we treat each other as equals rather than the older lads giving advise, we all contribute equally."

Standing between two Kerrymen

NEWCASTLE West's Billy Lee stands alone as the only Limerickman in the senior football management set-up.

The former county footballer joins Kerrymen Liam Kearns and Brian Kelly as they bid to return a provincial senior football crown to Limerick for the first time, since 1896.

"Liam has done a tremendous job in terms of management, the experience he brings having played football with Kerry, the boys have learned an awful lot from that. Training and preparation, with no disrespect to teams that have gone before, including ones I was involved with, is totally different", said Lee.

"There was no one in Limerick like him, prior to this, he has taken it up to another level", he said of Liam Kearns.

In a period when Newcastle West enjoyed success in Limerick, Lee played his part with the county from 1986 to 1993.

"The 1991 team was one of the best football teams that Limerick have produced up to this team, if not the best team, they were mighty unlucky not to get promotion and had some magnificent footballers, Paddy Ivess, right through to Donal



Billy Lee . . . "Liam Kearns has taken it up to another level"

Fitzgibbon, Danny Fitzgerald and Timmy Cummins — they were unlucky not to win a Munster title", he recalled, adding that he was not part of the Munster final day in '91.

"The one thing this team has over that team is that they have top coaching over a more sustained period of time, the boys only had it for a few months prior to the Munster final, maybe only six weeks prior to the Munster final, we had come through beating Tipp and Waterford that time."

He said that he has taken great pride in the resurgence of football in the county and the part he has played.

"It is great to see Limerick football up there and you would have to take a certain amount of pleasure in watching it, as much as a supporter as a mentor and hopefully long after our time this will be sustained and that is the objective — all these fellas are being trained how to manager teams, in terms of preparation and everything and hopefully when their playing days are coming towards an end they will take up the mantle with their clubs and try and keep Limerick at a reasonable standard in football."

Analysing the prospects of his side, he said that he knew the magnitude of the task they faced.

"The reality is that we are going back into Kerry, who played in the All-Ireland final last year, they are quite good, needless to say — anyone would like to be picking from their subs bench. It is going to be hard, they are traditionally the strongest team in the country. It is a big ask to go back to Killarney and try and win your first Munster championship in over 100 years, but at the end of the day all you can do is go back and give it a lash. Kerry are battle hardened, most of that team have two All-Ireland titles."



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Best Wishes To Muiris & All Of The Limerick Football Team In The Munster Final On Sunday

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Fax. 061 334789

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