

archive LOOKING BACK IN PICTURES

My blast from the past

Local people look back on when they were headline news in the Limerick Leader

Limerick's five star full-back

1981 Pat Hartigan retires after a long and successful hurling career

How we reported it...

CHARLIE MULLOKEEN
Sports Editor

PAT Hartigan stood tall wherever he went, both in stature and in character. Never was he seen to commit an underhand act; rather he was invariably tough as nails, yet as fair as he could be.

He was loved by his colleagues, admired and respected by his opponents.

From his early days with club South Liberties and school Limerick CBS, he was a towering figure. Honours came his way in an inevitable manner, yet they were accepted with an innate modesty that characterised this gentle giant.

His five All Star awards, gained in successive years and in the same position of full-back, ensure for Pat for all time, a unique status in hurling but all the fame and adulation never went to his head.

To this day, he remains a modest and model sportsman.

His decision to retire was taken after a deal of soul-searching, but it was, in truth, inevitable.

The eye injury that Pat sustained a few days before the 1979 Munster final against Cork never cleared up and though he attempted a few comebacks, it was obvious that he wasn't the same man.

Hartigan assisted his club, South Liberties, in the semi-final and final of last

year's county championship, but he admitted this week:

"My prime concern was to walk off the field without a serious injury and that is a negative way to carry on. It is with great regret I make this decision to retire but the injuries I picked up in those county championship matches - both facial - were a major worry."

"No matter how bad they were, I still wanted to play on but common sense dictated otherwise."

All hurling lovers will agree that Pat, who is only 30 and as superbly fit as ever, has taken the correct decision. And they will be pleased to know that he intends to retain his association with hurling.

"If I can help out with the county team as I have been doing over the past year or so, or can assist youngsters with coaching or whatever, I will be glad to do so if required," he said.

Pat Hartigan's contribution to Limerick hurling over the past decade and a half has been considerable. There is little doubt that he will continue to do his full share in the years ahead to keep Limerick among the elite in Ireland's great national game.

Now though, Pat - already an athletics international of long standing - will have a little more time to give to the shot putt and possibly even achieve considerable eminence at this event in the near future.



Left: Pat Hartigan in 1981 with his five All-Star trophies, which he received in consecutive years from 1973 to 1978 while playing at full-back for Limerick.

Below: Pat Hartigan pictured in the Limerick Leader offices last week. As you can see, he's still cutting a dash, all these years later ...

What Pat says now ...

OWEN HICKEY
Leader Reporter

WIDELY considered one of the greatest hurlers to ever line out for Limerick, Pat Hartigan enjoyed a long and fruitful career as the Treaty county's number three.

His success is perhaps best displayed by the five consecutive All-Stars he won at full-back for his county.

In 1973 and 1974, Hartigan was an automatic choice for the All-Stars at full-back, highlighting the consistency of his performances.

"Somebody recently said to me that I'm still the only player to have five consecu-

tive awards in the same position.

"Being the full-back meant I was the first Limerick All-Star ever selected. These are small little things I kind of look back on at times and think of how lucky I was."

He first started at full-back for Limerick in 1970 at the age of 19 and won the first of his three county championship medals two years later, on what was a momentous day for his club South Liberties.

"The first county championship was very special. It was 83 years since we last won it. It was the first final Patrickswell lost so it was a big achievement for us, they

had a good history of winning county championships up to 1972."

Avid followers of the South Liberties team of that era will realise Hartigan did not appear in any of the team pictures after the match.

Many people have queried Pat over whether he actually played; Hartigan did line out for South Liberties - then played a senior football match for Limerick directly after!

"The minute the whistle went, I went into the dressing room, gave back my South Liberties jersey, put on the centre-back jersey and went out and played against Wexford."

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ON WEDNESDAY

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