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2007 U:16 Championship Final

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Crucial second half goals give Killoe the edge over Northern Gaels.

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Killoe 2–8, Northern Gaels 1–8.

Without a Juvenile Championship success since 1983 when they were amalgamated with Sean Connolly's and Shroid, it finally came good for Killoe in the U-16 grade and the current crop of young footballers from the parish were certainly full value for their win over Northern Gaels in the 'A' decider at Pearse Park on Saturday evening last.

Two points down at the break (0-7 to 0-5) after wasting a number of scoring chances, a couple of crucial goals in the second half gave Killoe the edge over Northern Gaels and the first materialised with four minutes gone on the changeover when Padraig McCormack shot to the corner of the net.

This was the end result of a wonderful move that was engineered by centre-half-forward Mark Quinn and also involved Daniel Keogh, Mark Hughes and wing back Darragh Bennett, the latter joining the attack to supply the precise final pass to McCormack who made no mistake from close range.

Killoe quickly extended their advantage when Ryan Murray set up Mark Hughes for a well struck point but Northern Gaels narrowed the gap to the minimum of margins (1-6 to 0-8) when Bernard Crawford blasted the ball over the bar in the 40th minute after linking up with Robert Smyth.

But the Killoe playmaker Mark Quinn was proving to be a constant threat and he created the opening for another Mark Hughes point in the 44th minute. Then came the turning point of the game when Sean Berry put Robert Smyth through for a goal chance but the Northern Gaels wing forward was just off target from a tight angle.

That was a very lucky escape for Killoe who launched an immediate counter-attack with Quinn, Hughes and Simon Kiernan combining to find the room for defender Darragh Bennett to plant the ball in the back of the net from close range.

That goal in the 49th minute was a real killer blow for Northern Gaels, who fell further behind soon after when the impressive Mark Hughes kicked over his fourth point from play when a goal was there for the taking in another excellent Killoe attack.

While there was still eight minutes of normal time remaining, the losers were now in a state of panic and could find no way through the resolute opposing defence in their bid to score a badly needed goal.

But it eventually came in the fourth minute of stoppage time when Bernard Crawford played a short free into the arms of Sean Berry right in front of the posts and he crashed the ball in off the crossbar to give Northern Gaels a glimmer of hope.

When another immediate attack broke down as the ball was lost, the final whistle was eventually blown much to the delight of the Killoe players whose overall workrate and support play was immense and they were worthy winners of the U-16 Championship title.

Taking into account that Northern Gaels were restricted to just a solitary point in the second half, the Killoe defence deserve a lot of credit for the triumph with the excellent Gary Connell a real inspirational figure at full-back right throughout the game while Daniel Keogh was much to the fore at midfield.

Mark Quinn won the man-of-the-match award for making a big impact on the '40' while the other dangerman in attack, Mark Hughes, posed plenty of problems for the Northern Gaels defence, particularly in the second half.

Make no mistake about it, the best team won and Killoe were rather fortunate to be trailing by 0-7 to 0-5 at the end of the first half as a couple of clear goal chances were squandered. Three of their points were fired over by Mark Quinn (one free) while Simon Kiernan (the opener after four minutes) and Mark Hughes also got their names on the scoresheet.

Northern Gaels registered their opening point in the 5th minute when a long range Bernard Crawford free was allowed hop over the bar and Robert Smyth was particularly prominent in the first half with 0-4 to his credit, three from frees. Jason Kelly and John Keegan were also on target for the eventual runners-up who lost their way in the second half as Killoe stepped up another gear to capture the county title.

KILLOE: Paddy Thompson; Ciaran Corr, Gary Connell, Franklin Reilly; Darragh Bennett (1-0), Darren Bratten, Ronan Keogh; Simon Kiernan (0-1), Daniel Keogh; Ryan Murray, Mark Quinn (0-3, one free), Padraig Reilly; David Mimmagh, Mark Hughes (0-4), Padraig McCormack (1-0).

Subs:- Daniel Mimmagh for R Murray (51 mins); Michael Brady for David Mimmagh (stoppage time).

NORTHERN GAELS: Shane Gallagher; James McHugh, David Reilly, Michael McHugh; Patrick Fox, James McGivney, Thomas Fox; Sean Berry (1-0), Simon Cadam; Robert Smyth (0-4, three frees), Gary Rogers, Jason Kelly (0-1); Mark Smyth, John Keegan (0-1), Bernard Crawford (0-2, one free).

Referee: Benny Reilly (Clonguish)