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1988 Senior Championship Final

Killoe v Mostrim

Killoe's long wait is over

Killoe Young Emmets 3-7
Mostrim 1-7

Killoe Young Emmet's wiped away the bitter memories of last year's disappointing defeat by Ardagh when they overcame the challenge of Mostrim to win the County Senior Football Championship for the first time in 28 years before a 4,000 attendance at Pearse Park on Sunday last and while the element of luck was very much in their favour on this occasion, few can begrudge them their long overdue success

In a best forgotten game that failed miserably to live up to expectations, the underdogs Killoe made far better use of their scoring chances in their path to glory and while Jimmy McCormack proved to be his sides match winner by virtue of the fact that he contributed two of the three goals, it was a personal triumph for powerful centre half back Frank Kennedy who fittingly won the Man of the Match awards although not very far behind in the order of merit were fellow outstanding defenders Jimmy O'Neill and John Toher who figured very prominently indeed in keeping the opposing attack at bay.

Although Killoe played with greater determination and were generally a better organised side, Mostrim have only themselves to blame for their failure to regain the coveted Connolly Cup they last won in 1985 as apart from the fact that they gave away three terrible goals, they failed to convert a penalty ten minutes into the second half, Christy Kennedy's well-struck kick was brilliantly saved by Seamus Finnan and then proceeded to shoot four wide's on the trot in letting their opponents very much off the hook. However, while nothing really went right for the Edgeworthstown side on a day they will want to forget in a hurry, their overall performance was far from impressive as a number of their players were clearly not at their best. They made uncharacteristic mistakes throughout the sixty minutes, most notably the inexcusable blunders that led to Killoe scoring those all-important goals and must now suffer the ignominy of losing yet another County Final - their third in the eighties.

Great credit for Young Emmet's memorable triumph must go to their totally dedicated trainer Dessie Dolan who travelled over from Athlone to attend no less than 55 training sessions during the past few months. His tremendous work with the panel of players will not be forgotten by the people Of Killoe for a long time to come and he deserves nothing but the highest of praise for the major role he played in re-establishing his adopted club as the kingpins of Longford football. While the outstanding displays given by Kennedy, O'Neill and Toher, Finnan's crucial penalty saves plus the opportunism shown by Jimmy McCormack in front of the posts (he also scored two goals in the 1981 Senior Final when his former club Clonguish won the title back in 1981, not forgetting that he also received the Man of the Match award on that occasion) were the highlights of a scrappy game that was spoiled considerably by a complete overuse of the whistle by referee James Brady – particularly in the first half when he rarely employed the advantage rule – the winners were also well served by sound goalkeeper Seamus Finnan, Eugene Murphy, Declan Rowley and Mark Mimmagh while big Terry McCormack made his presence felt at centrefield where he put in an amount of hard work. Although John McCormack had a quiet game by his standards, his deadly accuracy from free-kicks proved a very valuable asset to the newly crowned County Champions.

Most impressive for Mostrim, who once again let their supporters down were Colm McGirr, D. Doherty, Joe McEnroe and John Smith (first half) in defence. Mark McNamara had some very good spells at centrefield and while Christy Kennedy played well in this vital sector in the first half, he faded out of the game somewhat on the resumption. Although Mickey O'Hara was very well held by Frank Kennedy, he still had his moments in an attack that paid dearly for poor finishing, while Gerry Lynn and Liam Tierney (second half) also caused problems for the opposing defence wherever they gained possession. Substitutes Fintan Tuite made quite a considerable difference when brought on at the start of the second half and it left one wondering why he was dropped from the team in the first place. Spare a thought for Liam Doyle who suffered a serious leg injury in the closing stages of the game and was later stretchered off the field before being brought to hospital by ambulance.

Apart from a fairly stiff cross-wind that apparently did not favour either side, playing conditions were ideal and Killoe got off to a great start when Jimmy McCormack, after collecting a pass from John Hughes, smacked the ball over the bar after just 30 seconds of play. They were on the mark again in the 2nd min. when John McCormack pointed a free in front of the posts, awarded following a foul on Mark Mimmagh, but Mostrim gradually settled down and after Christy Kennedy opened their account in the 5th min. when landing a long range point, opposing defender Billy Bratten was fouled for overplaying the ball and Mickey O'Hara pointed the resultant free to put his side back on level terms.

The winners regained the upper hand, however, and after a shot by 'Speedy' McCormack was narrowly wide, Mark Mimmagh registered a well-taken point in the 12th min. after being set-up by Hughes. They scored again a couple of minutes later when John McCormack pointed a close range free, awarded following a late tackle on Kevin Dooner by Bernard Connell, but Mostrim then narrowed the gap to the minimum (0-4 to 0-3) in the 17th min. when Christy Kennedy landed a great long range point. That, however, proved to be the last sore of a very mediocre first half, as the remaining stages of the second quarter developed into a dour struggle and while the losers had the better of the exchanges, they squandered a few opportune chances of leveling matters yet again. It is interesting to note that not one of the Mostrim forwards scored from play in the first half.

They eventually notched the equaliser when Mickey O'Hara pointed from play after just 20 seconds of the second half and Edgeworthstown then took the lead for the first and only time in the game when O'Hara was on target again in the 2nd min. this time for a free awarded for a foul on Gerry Lynn. Killoe came battling back, however, and after Jimmy McCormack registered a wide, John McCormack landed another free in the 36th min. following a late tackle on Frank Kennedy. Disaster then struck Mostrim a couple of minutes later when a shot by Terry McCormack – that seemed to be sailing over the bar – dipped at the final moment and completely deceived Tommy Gallagher who ended up knocking the ball into his own net but the Edgeworthstown side, to their credit, refused to be rattled and replied immediately with a goal by Gerry Lynn, who was set up by Fintan Tuite in a swift move that also involved Liam Tierney, although this attack should really have been broken up by Jimmy O'Neill.

Mostrim gained great inspiration as a result and were awarded a penalty in the 40th min. after Liam Tierney was brought down in the small square by Billy Bratten. However, as already mentioned, Christy Kennedy's well-placed shot was brilliantly saved by Seamus Finnan and this crucial miss proved to be the turning point of the game. While Mostrim

continued to pile on the pressure, they were guilty of kicking no less than four wides before Killoe - completely against the run of play – scored Goal no. 2 in the 48th minute when Jimmy McCormack capitalised on a terrible misunderstanding between Tommy Gallagher and John Smith who crashed into each other when both decided to go for a high delivery in the goalmouth by Declan Rowley. McCormack was subsequently left with the simple task of tapping the ball into an empty net and the winners then wasted a chance of stretching their lead when 'Speedy' was off target from a free at a tight angle.

Both sides then exchanged scores through pointed frees by Mickey O'Hara and John McCormack in the 53rd and 54th minutes respectively and after Bernard Connell was off target, Mostrim narrowed the gap to two points in the final minute of the game when Mickey O'Hara tapped over a close range free when most people thought he might have a crack at scoring a goal. However, their slim hopes of salvaging the game at this stage were well and truly dashed when after Terry McCormack 'lorried' the ball into the goalmouth, John Smith let the 'leather' slip through his fingers and the ever dangerous Jimmy McCormack was on hand to smack the ball past Tommy Gallagher who had a real nightmare of a game in the second half of Sunday's Final. John McCormack put the 'icing on the cake' when knocking over another free in injury time to leave Emmet Og a remarkable six points clear at the final whistle and while Mostrim did not deserve to lose by such a convincing margin, they can make no excuses whatsoever for their unexpected downfall.

Killoe Team: Seamus Finnan; Eugene Murphy, John Toher, Billy Bratten; Jimmy O'Neill, Frank Kennedy, Michael Bracken; Terry McCormack (1-0), Declan Rowley; Kevin Dooner, Michael Keogh, John McCormack (0-5, all frees); Jimmy McCormack (2-1), John Hughes, Mark Mimmagh (0-1).

Subs: Declan Bracken for Michael Bracken; Brendan Bracken for Billy Bratten.