



Web Archive Document

1995 County Final – Post Game Analysis

Fire and passion forge victory

Longford News analysis

It was cheers (and beers) aplenty at Michael Kiernan's pub in Killoe on Sunday evening. The drought, which affected the countryside this summer, threatened to affect Michael's hostelry also. But he need not have worried because Killoe's newest publican was nothing if not resourceful in sorting out this dilemma, Justas he was on the field of play earlier in the afternoon.

No doubt, he too, was able to offer 'one for everyone in the audience' on Sunday night! For victory was fashioned out of hard work and team spirit; the ability to take the heat as well as make it; ingredients necessary to keep any ironwork in motion. And for these precise reasons Killoe were once again county champions and deserving winners.

This sadly, was not a county final to live long in the memory. Scores were very difficult to come by and possession was spurned by both sides to an alarming degree, Killoe most culpable in this respect. The game differed from what preceded it in this year's championship, tight and somewhat lacking in real quality.

How Killoe must be smiling to themselves though; so many of us showed such little faith. Who really cared within the club if the faith itself was bred among the spirit of the players, as it was. On the balance of play, Killoe deserved their victory and like so many of their previous engagements this year, they did it the hard way.

In every department, the side had their excellent players, In this writers opinion, there was no single player that stood out like a beacon in this game. There were a number of outstanding individuals on display but for many, opinions varied as to their man of the match.

Make no mistake; John Toher was a worthy man of the match (and much about his contribution later). But opinions did vary. Many of those in actions had periods of excellence but also had periods of subdued interest.

And that is not to detract from the Killoe performance. In such a competitive situation many teams (and players) have their five minutes in the sun. And perhaps the greatest tribute that can be paid to Killoe was their ability to up their performance when they needed to and the players who emerged to prominence when others were less to the fore.

Ardagh had no such player to compensate for any weaknesses. And while gracious in defeat, this one will hurt. The side inexplicably seemed to lose all confidence when faced with a resurgent Killoe. Leaders were lacking, and the courage, the resilience and confidence were absent when needed.

Every team has an off day but for some unknown reason, Ardagh just seemed to be a different team in the second half. Perhaps too much dependence was placed on Paul Victory. Eight years ago he broke Killoe hearts, there was to be no repeat this time.

Their best players of the half, he, along with Finnan, had the Killoe defence in all sorts of trouble; Killoe themselves were culpable; where was the marking in the build up to Finnan's goal? The ply of by-passing midfield was working and with Sean Kiernan working well on the '40, Ardagh's free-flowing movements did much to unnerve their opponents.

Defensively their side were not under any great pressure. James Keegan was doing well as was James Farrell alongside him. Nicholas Farrell's competitive instinct wasn't blunted despite being booked early in the game.

And while Ardagh by-passed midfield on numerous occasions, when called into duty, Kiernan and Eddie Farrell tried hard but their contributions were fitful. In the second half, Lennon and Duggan had this area for themselves to dominate.

One swallow does not make a summer and on disappointing display does not make a bad team. Nonetheless Ardagh will be pained by this result. A lack of confidence and urgency proved to be their undoing. When Paul Finnan was substituted with seven minutes to go, the die was cast.

As alluded to, victory often veils many deficiencies and when a team wins the Connolly Cup all vices are disregarded. In terms of the future though, Killoe would be well advised to use their possession better.

The champions were profligate in the extreme at times, kicking away numerous chances in the second half and also in the first and can be fortunate that Ardagh were out of sorts in this period. It was a facet of the Killoe performance not lost on Tommy McCormack.

Throughout the field, Killoe had players who shone at various stages. Sean Clarke atones the nightmare of his blunder against Colmcille with a fine block on Dermot Farrell when a goal looked the likely outcome.

John Toher was outstanding at full-back. It was a tribute to him that was able to curb Paul Victory, particularly in the second half, when a lesser player would have felt that the Gods were not with him. His clearances and work rate had to be seen to be believed.

In front of him Michael Fitzpatrick also excelled. The best tribute that can be paid to him was the substitution of his opposite number on the Ardagh team, the talented Ray Baxter. Lennon and Duggan fed their forwards with a supply of ball in the second half that resembled manna from heaven and were instrumental in turning the game around.

The full-forward line of Coyle, Kiernan and McCormack excelled. Kiernan cured his earlier habit of attempting to charge and bustle through the Ardagh defence with a fine display of full-forward play. Along him Coyle and McCormack contributed with two priceless points apiece.

What perhaps best illustrated the Killoe performance were two players who contributed in a vital, yet almost unseen way. Declan Rowley covered a lot of ground in the second half, closing and chasing down the Ardagh defence. And Kevin Dooner, a replacement for the suspended John Fitzpatrick gave a performance that did his inclusion justice.

'Simply the best – better than all the rest' was the banner that shrouded Mark Mimmagh and John McCormack as they climbed the steps to be presented with the Sean Connolly Cup from Co. Board Chairman T.J. Ward. And how simple the idea, yet how very apt, excusing that such a theme failed to inspire Chris Eubank the previous evening.

A powerful metaphor, the handing over of the banner from the supporters to the players, the union of team and supporters. For a county final victory is unique in that it is a victory not just for 15 players but for a community and its people. And all together celebrated this achievement for Killoe.