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Killoe Young Emmets  
2012 Leinster Club Championship

## **GAA club life at its best on a rainy day in Portlaoise**

*Irish Independent, Monday November 26 2012*

It has been a long year of football, but I haven't seen a better contest than the Leinster club semi-final, which I watched in terrible conditions in Portlaoise. This game really had it all except for one thing – a fairy-tale ending.

We nearly got one, too, but for a brilliant save by Portlaoise goalkeeper Mike Nolan in the final quarter. But this really was a marvellous exhibition of club championship football of which both teams should be proud.

This applies particularly to the Killoe players, who had come from nowhere after a gap of 17 years to win the Longford championship with a very young team and were 5/1 against winning this game with the bookies.

As they and their manager Tommy McCormack have done all year, Killoe went out with a spirit of adventure. They had survived two championship draws in Longford and then beat the champions of Wexford and Meath before this match and raised their game to exceptional heights against a vastly more experienced club side who have won the past six Laois titles.

This was a game of exceptional quality as well as competitiveness, with the more direct style of the visitors really causing problems for a more methodical and highly organised Portlaoise.

It was the home team who were that bit cleverer in the tackling of opponents and, time after time, they stole the ball from Killoe. Indeed, that was a significant source of supply for the victors because in open play – particularly in the middle third of the field – Killoe held the advantage, with wing half-back Michael Quinn having a massive game to back up midfielders Simon Kiernan and Paddy Thompson.

Portlaoise deserved to win because they enjoyed more possession, particularly in the opening 20 minutes, when they seemed to be shocked that an unheard-of Longford club could be putting them under so much pressure. But, in the end, experience eventually tells – and also the reserves of stamina that a club with Portlaoise's record have accumulated in the past seven years, with a few Killoe players out on their feet in the final 10 minutes of the game.

Midfielder Adrian Kelly had a fine game and scored a couple of good points, while Paul Cahillane's class shone all over the field at times. But, Portlaoise still have some wrinkles to iron out before thinking of winning the All-Ireland title, not least in regard to their free-taking.

Killoe, after their initial disappointment, will be very pleased with their season, and this performance in particular. Their defenders – apart from one lapse which brought Portlaoise's goal – were excellent against vaunted opposition, with the McCormacks in the middle outstanding.

The supply of ball to their forwards was patchy at times and cost them dearly, but the goal attempt by Mark Hughes in the 44th minute, which was saved by Nolan, was the ultimate turning point in this fabulous game of football.

The Killoe fans, who outweighed the home crowd by about four to one, deserve great praise for their enthusiastic support of their heroes – club life in the GAA at its best.

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### **Semi Final: Portlaoise bite back in 'dogfight'**

*Cliona Foley, Irish Independent, 26-11-2012*

A fairytale season finally ended for Longford's giant-killers in Portlaoise, but Emmet Og, Killoe certainly went down fighting.

Everything that is so magical about the GAA's equivalent of the FA Cup was to be enjoyed in this absorbing clash. Both teams bravely defied the conditions to serve up a classic David and Goliath struggle, between the local heavyweights and record seven-time provincial champions against the champions of a county that has never had a single finalist.

The gritty underdogs, replete with megaphone-wielding cheerleaders, inspirational banners and what appeared to be half of Longford in the stand, actually led twice in the third quarter and repeatedly refused to let go of Portlaoise's ankles.

But the local side's vast experience finally helped shake them off, rattling over three points to one in the final eight minutes to reach their third final in nine years – where they will face Ballymun Kickhams.

Even at the death Killoe refused to quit, with Sean McCormack lofting a free into the crowded goalmouth in stoppage time to see what it might conjure. But, as Portlaoise manager Mick Lillis noted, Portlaoise survived "the dogfight of all dogfights" and goalkeeper Michael Nolan made one vital intervention to inspire their narrow escape.

After 44 minutes, with the sides level for the fourth time, Longford county star Mickey Quinn made a marvellous run that split their defence apart and his clever pass, off the outside of his boot, put Mark Hughes through on goal. But Nolan anticipated the move and got out brilliantly to block the shot.

Three minutes earlier, Killoe had dramatically seized the momentum at the expense of Portlaoise corner-back Cahir Healy. The Laois dual star was left holding his head in his hands when he mis-hit a line-ball deep in his own half, which Hughes gratefully intercepted and laid on for beanpole midfielder Simon Kiernan to palm to the net.

That made up for Portlaoise's 37th-minute goal, when a more accidental defensive deflection saw Barry Fitzgerald find Brian Smith with just the 'keeper at his mercy. After ceding midfield earlier on, Emmet Og started to dominate in the third quarter and had they gone three points clear at that stage might have pulled off the shock of the club season. But the experience garnered by Portlaoise really stood to them in the final quarter.

After Killoe's second goal midfielder Adrian Kelly equalised and a Fitzgerald free quickly put them in front again. Healy then redeemed himself by extending their lead to two and, in

the last five minutes, veterans like Brian McCormack and Tipperary senior Hugh Coghlan won some pivotal frees and 'Bruno' also contributed a marvellous late insurance point.

Portlaoise had totally dominated the first 20 minutes but Emmet Og, profiting from a dropped retrieve by Brian Mulligan, got a Denis McGoldrick goal in the 17th minute that finally kick-started them. Portlaoise responded impressively by pulling three clear again but Killoe centre-forward Ronan McGoldrick, in particular, took the fight to them and helped keep the gap to the minimum at half-time.

The conditions certainly weren't conducive to Portlaoise's usual fast, counter-attacking game but they totally overplayed the short game at times which often broke down against Killoe's admirably crowded defence.

"We had to totally try and change the way we play because of the conditions," admitted Portlaoise boss Lillis. "They were coming down here on the back of two hard games whereas we had an easier game in Wicklow so they were more battle-ready than we were. "In the end, it was going to be the team that made the fewest mistakes that would win it and we probably did that."

Emmet Og fans gave their heroes a standing ovation off the field and the McCormack cousins, Padraig and Joe, Quinn, Hughes and Ronan McGoldrick certainly warranted one.

They also booed referee Cormac Reilly off, which seemed harsh as he, like the players, did a good job in dreadful conditions.

But losing manager Tommy McCormack had no quibbles... "There are nine U-21s on our team, they're very young and to win the county championship (their first in 17 years) was a big ask," he reflected. "But these guys came with a winning mentality, they've won since they were U-16s, and irrespective of how tight the situation they are in, they always find a way through it. "Even at the end, I felt that if we could get the ball in there was another goal in us. If it was any other team bar Portlaoise we might just have stolen it but they're very experienced at this level. "We were certainly an unknown quantity in Leinster but, having got so far, people will hopefully sit up and take a look at us now and say they're not a bad outfit at all."

Scorers – Portlaoise: B Smith 1-0, B Fitzgerald 0-3f, B McCormack, A Kelly 0-2 each, C Healy, C Boyle, B Glynn, P Cahillane (f) 0-1 each. Emmet Og: D McGoldrick, S Kiernan 1-0 each, R McGoldrick 0-2, D Mimmagh, M Hughes, S McCormack (f) 0-1 each.

Portlaoise – M Nolan; T Fitzgerald, B Mulligan, C Healy; K Fitzpatrick, K Lillis, C Boyle; A Kelly, H Coghlan; C Rogers, B Fitzgerald, B Glynn; P Cahillane, B McCormack, B Smith.  
Sub: S Nerney for Boyle (57).

Emmet Og – C Burns; D Bennett, P McCormack, D Keogh; S Dowd, J McCormack, M Quinn; P Thompson, S Kiernan; D Mimmagh, R McGoldrick, E Clarke; D McGoldrick, M Hughes, S McCormack. Subs: R Keogh for Thompson (55), P Hughes for D McGoldrick (57).

Ref – C Reilly (Meath)

### Quarter Final: Leinster club SFC: Killoe demolish O'Mahonys

Killoe (Longford) ..... 2-13  
 O'Mahonys (Meath) ..... 0-8

Longford champions Killoe Emmet Og scored an emphatic and deserved win over fancied Meath kingpins Navan O'Mahonys in this AIB Leinster Club SFC quarter-final at Pearse Park on Sunday. Tommy McCormack's charges have a semi-final trip to Portlaoise on Sunday week to anticipate after the defying the odds with a display of admirable intensity.

It was something O'Mahonys failed to match. Davy Nelson's men led only briefly in the first-half when it was apparent they were having difficulty in staying with the team in white and green. Goals from Simon Kiernan and All-Star nominee Michael Quinn in quick succession with minutes of the resumption settled the issue and the left the board reading 2-7 to 0-4 with 33 minutes gone. Eight different players got off the mark, from play, for Killoe including centre-half-back and team captain Joe McCormack. O'Mahonys only managed one point from play after the break with Shane Gillespie registering. Stephen Bray and Jake Regan were the Navan men's other second-half scorers.

The closest O'Mahonys came to goaling was when substitute David Bray's attempt was blocked by Pdraig McCormack. Due credit goes to the vigilant Killoe rearguard who gave the Meath men few chances to raise the green flag. Good approach play ended with an early O'Mahonys wide. Killoe hit back with a pointed 45 from All-Star nominee Michael Quinn.

Killoe doubled their advantage through Sean McCormack (free) before Jake Regan opened the O'Mahonys account in the sixth minute. Killoe's Sean McCormack was wide with two scoreable frees before O'Mahonys hit the front through Jake Regan, 0-3 to 0-2, with barely 12 minutes gone. A Eugene Clarke effort from play left it 0-3 each by the end of the third quarter. Mark Hughes had the 'home' side back in front in the 17th minute. Sean McCormack found the range found the range to double Killoe's advantage. Stephen Bray opened his account with O'Mahonys fourth score from play. By the 27th minute Killoe were three points, 0-7 to 0-4, to the good when Denis McGoldrick registered. It could have been better seconds later for the Longford-men but Eugene Clarke was badly wide.

Killoe's intensity was rewarded with a 0-7 to 0-4 interval advantage and the prospect of maintaining that after the change of ends. Within two minutes of the restart, Killoe doubled their advantage when Simon Kiernan fisted Sean McCormack's delivery to the net. Killoe might light of their outsider tag when wing-back Michael Quinn pounced on Gary O'Brien's misplaced pass and left it 2-7 to 0-4. Ten points were between the sides when Ronan McGoldrick sent over. Killoe outscored O'Mahonys by 0-5 to 0-4 in the time remaining and registered the last three scores of the game.

Killoe - C. Burns; D. Bennett, P. McCormack, D. Keogh; S. Dowd, J. McCormack, M. Quinn (1-1, 0-1 45); P. Thompson, S. Kiernan (1-0); D. McGoldrick (0-2), R. McGoldrick (0-3), D. Mimmagh; E. Clarke (0-1), M. Hughes (0-1), S. McCormack (0-4, 2f). Subs - R. Keogh for Dowd (39).

O'Mahonys - M. Brennan; S. O'Toole, N. McKeigue, I. Matthews; B. Dillon, S. Crosby, G. O'Brien; D. Moran, C. McGuinness; P. Smyth (0-1), H. Finnegan, S. MacGabhann; J. Regan (0-3, 1f), S. Bray (0-3, 2fs), S. Gillespie (0-1). Subs - D. Bray for Finnegan, S. Keating for Dillon (both ht), B. Regan for Moran (38), C. Reilly for MacGabhann (44), D. Smyth for J. Regan (51).

Referee - G. McCormack (Dublin)

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### **Round 1: Killoe Young Emmets 2-7, St Anne's (Wexford) 2-4**

Irish Times newspaper - 28th October 2012

Just A week after winning the Longford title following a replay win after extra-time against Slashers, Killoe Young Emmets showed some great fighting spirit to get the better of Wexford opponents St Anne's in the Leinster club first round clash at Glennon Brothers Pearse Park on Sunday.

Seán McCormack fired home a cracking match-winning goal midway through the second half.

Killoe had the advantage of the elements in the first half and thanks to a well-taken goal from midfielder Paddy Thompson in the 26th minute they led 1-4 to 0-3 at the break.

A terrific start to the second half yielded a point apiece from Seán McCormack (free) and Daniel Mimmagh to leave Young Emmets in a strong position but St Anne's were thrown a lifeline in the 40th minute with a goal from substitute Francis Simpson who got a vital touch to a centre from Redmond Barry to find the net.

While Killoe defender Shane Dowd lifted the pressure in landing a fine point, the Longford champions suffered what appeared to be a severe setback in the 44th minute when St Anne's were gifted a second goal in getting back on level terms.

After a shot from substitute Simpson was well saved by the Young Emmets keeper Cillian Burns, the breaking ball rebounded off the unfortunate Killoe defender Pádraig McCormack into the back of the net.

But Killoe hit back immediately with a classy goal from Seán McCormack, the end result of a wonderful move and that proved to be the last score of the game as Young Emmets held on to earn another home tie against the Meath champions in two weeks' time.

**KILLOE YOUNG EMMETS:** C Burns; D Bennett, P McCormack, R Keogh; S Dowd (0-1), J McCormack, M Quinn; P Thompson (1-0), S Kiernan; D McGoldrick (0-1), R McGoldrick, E Clarke; D Mimmagh (0-1), M Hughes (0-1), S McCormack (1-3, two frees). Sub: P Hughes for D McGoldrick (50).

**ST ANNE'S:** S Mythen; S Gaule, T Cullen, P O'Keeffe; J Fogarty, C McGovern, K Cloney; D Fogarty, D O'Connor; F Whelan, P White, D O'Keeffe; L McGovern, R Barry (0-4, three frees), M Furlong. Subs: F Simpson (1-0) for M Furlong (ht); N Gilbane for F Whelan (40).

Referee: D Brazil (Offaly).