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2012 Senior Football Final – Replay

Report from Longford Leader - 24th October 2012

What developed into an epic battle for the county title was eventually decided after extra-time in a highly entertaining Senior Football Championship Final replay at Glennon Brothers Pearse Park on Sunday last and Killoe are back as the kings of Longford football as they finished the stronger to capture the coveted Connolly Cup for the first time in 17 years.

Reigning champions Slashers were on the brink of completing the three-in-a-row when Mark Smith somehow managed to squeeze the ball over the bar from an extremely tight angle in stoppage time but the so spirited Young Emmets side just refused to accept defeat and proceeded to launch an immediate counter-attack which yielded a terrific equalising point from Daniel Mimmagh with time almost up.

Mimmagh kept his composure to hit the target with a real pressure kick to leave the sides deadlocked at 0-10 apiece at the end of normal time as the remarkable sequence of draws in the 2012 Senior Championship continued. Although badly hampered by injuries with both Peter Brady and Paul Kelly forced to retire with Kelly a serious loss with seven minutes gone in the second half, Slashers dug deep and made a great start to the extra-time period with points from Niall Mulligan and Colin Smith (free).

Mulligan broke from midfield to fire over a glorious strike with just 20 seconds gone but the younger Killoe side eventually got on top to fire over five points without reply – three from frees converted in succession by Sean McCormack while late fisted scores from Daniel Mimmagh and Simon Kiernan clinched a famous win for Killoe as they claimed the county senior title for the 10th time in their proud history.

Young Emmets are back in action on Sunday next when they meet the Wexford champions St. Anne's in the first round of the Leinster Club Championship at Pearse Park and who knows what this talented young team can achieve with a very bright future ahead. For the moment Killoe will savour this sweet success and while their chief marksman Sean McCormack made a huge contribution to the title triumph with the impressive total of nine points (five frees) to his credit and won the man-of-the-match award as a result, two other members of the McCormack clan also figured most prominently in the exciting final replay watched by an attendance in the region of 3,000.

Sean's younger brother Pdraig was a source of real inspiration in producing a rock solid display at full-back and their cousin Joe played a real captain's part in a commanding role at centre-half-back. And to make it a memorable family affair the manager of the Killoe squad is Tommy McCormack (father of Joe) who also guided Young Emmets to senior championship glory in 1993 and 1995 and his brother Terry (father of Sean and Pdraig) is a current selector along with John Bracken.

Lively forward Daniel Mimmagh was also very much to the fore for Killoe on Sunday last, scoring three vital points, while their All-Star nominee Michael Quinn was involved in a lot of the action in making his presence felt as his side produced a high level of intensity.

On the basis that they kicked a total of 11 wides in normal time, as compared to six for Slashers, few can argue with the fact that Young Emmets deserved to emerge victorious and have developed into a major force who will prove extremely difficult to beat in the years ahead.

The gallant Slashers side (forced to start without the injured David Sheridan but who was brought on midway through the second half) did not relinquish the title without a fierce fight and were inspired throughout this pulsating game by the powerful presence of the impressive Michael Brady at centrefield, And even when they lost the services of Paul Kelly the sky-blues somehow managed to find a new lease of life in battling their way back into contention after Killoe had established what appeared to be a comfortable 0-9 to 0-6 lead with ten minutes of normal time remaining.

And they should have been even further ahead as Michael Quinn kicked a very bad wide during this dominant spell while Eugene Clarke was poised to score a goal but was fouled in the process of pulling the trigger from close range.

The sides ended up all square at the break, 0-4 to 0-4, and while Slashers made the better start to the second half with a point apiece from Colin Smith (free) and the generally prominent Stephen Phillips the injury to Paul Kelly proved to be a major blow.

Kelly was making his usual big impact when he raced through the Killoe defence, only to be stopped in his tracks, but referee Patrick Maguire surprisingly refused to award Slashers a free when Kelly was impeded and he got injured in this penetrating run.

With Kelly gone with a torn hamstring, Killoe seized the opportunity to consolidate a grip on the game, scoring five points in a row between the 41st and 50th minutes and Slashers looked in deep trouble. Four scores from Sean McCormack, a brace of frees along with a couple of cracking efforts from play, gave Young Emmets the edge and Daniel Mimmagh also fired over a real gem.

But Slashers managed to stay in contention with a point apiece from frees converted by brothers Mark Smith and Colin Smith in the space of a minute and Mark was on target again from another free in the 57th minute to leave the sides on level terms. And a tremendous comeback looked set to be complete when Mark cut in from the right to fire over a terrific point from play in stoppage time.

However, the drama was not over yet as Daniel Mimmagh came to Killoe's rescue with a wonderful score to snatch a last gasp draw (just as the Young Emmets had done in the drawn encounter the previous week) and they gradually got on top in extra-time and might have won with some more comfort had substitute Ronan Keogh not squandered a clear-cut chance of a goal while they also kicked five more wides.

And thus the courageous efforts of Slashers captain Dermot Brady, in particular, were all to no avail as Denis Connerton's side had to settle for second best but the warning signs were flashing in the first half as Killoe had the better of the exchanges but were not making it count on the scoreboard.

With 22 minutes gone on the clock, the sides were level at 0-2 apiece with Michael Quinn ('45) and Sean McCormack (a great score from near the sideline) on target for Killoe while Colin Smith (free) and Stephen Phillips got the scores for Slashers.

Young Emmets went desperately close to grabbing a goal in the 16th minute when Eugene Clarke flicked a centre from Ronan McGoldrick narrowly wide after the advancing Slashers keeper Colm Farrell had done well to close down the inrushing Clarke.

Slashers regained the lead in the 25th minute when Colin Smith fisted the ball over the bar with the chance of going for a goal and then his brother Mark landed a point before a Sean McCormack fisted effort from play narrowed the gap to the minimum of margins. After a Ronan McGoldrick point from a tight angle left the sides all square in the third minute of stoppage time, Sean McCormack struck a shot against the upright before the half-time whistle was eventually blown.

The ding-dong battle continued throughout an excellent second half as the final replay ended in a draw but the destination of the Connolly Cup for 2012 was at long last eventually decided after extra-time when Slashers were unfortunate to be hit by further injuries to David Sheridan and Niall Mulligan.

But Killoe Young Emmets were without doubt the better team in a thrilling encounter blessed by the perfect weather conditions on a fine day nearing the end of October and are worthy county senior champions.

KILLOE YOUNG EMMETS: Cillian Burns; Daniel Keogh, Pdraig McCormack, Darragh Bennett; Shane Dowd, Joe McCormack, Michael Quinn (0-1, '45); Paddy Thompson, Simon Kiernan (0-1); Denis McGoldrick, Eugene Clarke, Ronan McGoldrick (0-1); Daniel Mimnagh (0-3), Mark Hughes, Sean McCormack (0-9, five frees).

Subs:- Ronan Keogh for R McGoldrick (59 mins). Extra-Time: Paddy Hughes for D Keogh; Paddy Kiernan for P Thompson.

LONGFORD SLASHERS: Colm Farrell; Gareth Ghee, Barry Gilleran, Peter Brady; Conor Clarke, Dermot Brady, Paul Kelly; Michael Brady, Niall Mulligan (0-1); Trevor Clendenning, Mark Smith (0-4, two frees), Sean Flynn; Colin Smith (0-5, four frees), Stephen Phillips (0-2), Martin Nevin.

Subs:- Ruairi Barrins for P Brady (injured, half-time); Brian Farrell for P Kelly (injured, 37 mins); David Sheridan for S Flynn (47 mins); Martin Tarmey for M Nevin (50 mins). Extra-Time: S Flynn for B Farrell; Paul Devine for D Sheridan (injured); M Nevin for N Mulligan (injured).

Referee: Patrick Maguire (Granard St. Mary's).