

HEAVY defeat at the hands of Kilkenny, in that first great National Hurling League final in which Limerick figured, by no means discouraged the hurlers, who set about in earnest preparation for their Munster Championship campaign.

The situation at that time bears a striking similarity to the position of Limerick hurling just now, one of the reasons why I am dealing in such detail with the events of that period in the hope that as well as recalling the glories of Limerick during the years when Mick Mackey was in his heyday, the example of that great team will prove an inspiration to the lads of to-day, who have every opportunity of following in their footsteps.

A great Limerick crowd made the journey to Thurles on May 28th, 1933, where Clare were due to meet the Shannonsiders in the opening round of the Munster Championship. The Banner County lads were the holders of the title and big interest centered in the match.

MEMORABLE FEATURE.

A memorable feature was the chartering of a special express train to bring two players, who were engaged in a Dublin Championship tie at Croke Park that morning, to the venue. They were Jim Houlihan (Clare) and Christy O'Brien (Limerick), who also played on opposing sides in the Metropolitan game.

The match proved a disappointing affair, entirely devoid of thrills, Limerick dismissing the champions with surprising and consummate ease, the final score reading: Limerick, 6-8; Clare, 1-1. Mick Mackey was playing on Dr. Jim Hogan, a fine strong hurler and good long distance striker, who captained the U.C.D. team that won the Dublin Championship the following year.

Thirty thousand people were at Thurles for the semi-final, in which Limerick played Cork. Murroe born Archbishop Harty, Patron of the G.A.A., threw in the ball, after addressing a few words of encouragement to the players.

Cork fielded a very strong fifteen that included hurling masters of the calibre of Jim Regan, Jim Hurley, Denny Barry Murphy, George Garrett and "Fox" Collins.

A right hard game it proved, with the standard of hurling high. Limerick won, 2-9 to 1-6.

THE FINAL.

In the final at Cork Athletic Grounds, Limerick were pitted against Waterford. The Shannonsiders were clearly superior all through and outclassed the lads from the Decies to such an extent that many of the spectators were on the way home when a flare-up occurred eight minutes from the end. Spectators invaded the pitch, and with Limerick leading 3-7 to 1-2 it goes without saying that they were very anxious to finish the game. The Garryowen players helped the referee in his efforts to clear the pitch, but it was to no avail, and the match had to be abandoned. It was a disappointing ending to the Southern decider, but Limerick were awarded the title by the Munster Council and thus qualified for another meeting with the Noresiders, this occasion in the All Ireland Championship Final.

The Black and Amber lads had reached their third successive final the hard way. Four goals down at half-time in their Leinster Final battle with Dublin, they staged a remarkable recovery to win, 7-5 to 5-5. Galway then gave them a terrific match before Kilkenny emerged, 5-10 to 3-8.

A HUGE "GATE."

All sporting records to then were broken for that final—45,176 people paying to see the game, it being reckoned that another five thousand were disappointed when all gates were closed twenty minutes before play commenced. The Limerickmen, who travelled by train the previous evening, were met at Kingsbridge by representatives of the Limerick men resident in Dublin, who gave them an en-

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

The Boherbuoy Band was present in Croke Park and played "Faith Of Our Fathers" as Most Rev. Dr. Collier, Bishop of Ossory, stepped on the pitch, accompanied by President de Valera, with the then Chairman of the General Council, Sean McCarthy of Cork. The referee was Stephen Jordan, T.D., Galway.

It proved a wonderful struggle and a grand hurling display. The sides were neck and neck during the greater part of an hour of real hurling thrills. They were level—four points apiece at the interval. It was still anybody's game nearing the end of the hour, when Johnny Dunne's wonder goal—the only major score of the day—gave victory to Kilkenny. Limerick fought back determinedly in a last effort to prevent defeat but could not master the Noreside backs.

THE TEAMS.

Both teams deserve to be remembered:

Kilkenny—Eddie Doyle, capt.; Jack Dermody (goal), Johnny Dunne, Lory Meagher, Paddy Larkin, Paddy Phelan, Martin White, P. O'Reilly, P. Byrne, Tommy Leahy, E. Byrne, J. Walsh, J. Fitzpatrick, Matty Power, Martin Power. (When Jack Dermody was injured he was replaced by Jimmy O'Connell).

Limerick—Micky Fitzgibbon, capt.; Paddy Scanlan (goal), Ned Cregan, Tom McCarthy, Micky Cross, Paddy Clohessy, Garrett Howard, Timmy Ryan, Mick Ryan, John Mackey, Jim Roche, Mick Mackey, Christy O'Brien, Pat Ryan, Dave Clohessy, (Bill O'Donoghue replaced Mick Ryan, who was injured).

Veteran sports writer, Paddy Devlin, who saw almost every All-Ireland final from the foundation of the G.A.A., wrote after the game: "It was the most intensive and exciting display of hurling over the full sixty minutes of play which the majority of us who were present have ever witnessed. I have never, indeed, seen hurling exchanges so pulsating as they were in this match. The striking was first time and impromptu all the time, and the scoring so close all through that altogether it was a most nerve shattering experience for everyone of that mammoth record hosting."

OTHER REFERENCES.

Jack Rochford, the noted Kilkenny hurling old timer was so impressed with Limerick that he said after the match: "I don't know how that Limerick team was beaten. It's the best team I ever saw coming out of Munster."

The "Irish Independent" in an editorial the following morning said: "Hitherto the football final has almost invariably drawn a larger gathering than hurling. The record is now held by hurling and that is something that Gaels will be proud of."

"As long as games survive enthusiasts will argue the merits of one form of football against another. There is no argument and no room for argument in the case of hurling. It stands on its own, superb and peerless. There is no game which calls for greater speed and stamina, for more skill, judgement, self control and accuracy of eye, and therefore, apart from its traditional claims no game is better adapted than hurling to give our youth a training in the qualities that make for manliness."

GLORIOUS UNCERTAINTY.

"And it has all the glorious uncertainty that left yesterday's laurels in the balance until the last moment of the hour, the uncertainty that would doubtless make every Limerickman say if the game were to be played again to-morrow the result might be different."

"Nothing like this final has been ever seen before at Croke Park or anywhere in Ireland. It was a great game played in the spirit that animates champions who know how to play the game for the game's sake."

After the match both teams were entertained to dinner at Barry's Hotel, at a function organised by the Limerickmen's Association, and at which warm tributes were paid to the splendid sporting spirit in which the great game was decided.

Limerick successfully defended the Thomond Cup this season, defeating Clare, 6-8 to 1-2, in the semi-final, and Tipperary, 4-2 to 2-2, in the final.

In the Newport Church Tournament the Shannonsiders beat Galway, 9-5 to 2-5, and took the trophies, at the expense of Clare, who were beaten 4-8 to 1-2.

Ahane regained Limerick senior hurling championship honours, defeating Treaty, Murroe and Fedamore on their way to the final, in which they triumphed over Croom, 1-7 to 1-1, after a gruelling struggle.

Ahane also played some good football that season, and were unlucky to go out on an objection after making much progress in the fight for Junior County honours.

NATIONAL LEAGUE VICTORIES.

Limerick finished 1933 with a series of great National Hurling League victories. First outing was against Tipperary, a game characterised by plenty of pace and good stick work. Limerick success marked their seventh consecutive win over the Premier County lads—a great achievement indeed.

Offaly, Galway and Clare were disposed of in turn, and on March 25th, 1934, at Limerick Gaelic Grounds, the home fifteen lined out against Dublin for National League honours. It proved a great and exhilarating contest, close tackling and fast striking being a feature of a hard fought final which Limerick won, 3-6 to 3-3.

John Mackey was the hero of that decider, the Press paying him this tribute: "To John Mackey must be given a special meed of praise: He simply was not to be stopped. He sped like a hare along the wing, and lashed in ball after ball. Clearly Mackey won the match for Limerick, and had he been absent Limerick would not be now holders of League honours."

AN EPIC FEAT.

"His goal prior to half time was an epic feat, which will live long in memory—a snap from Scanlan's goal puck, a sharp, low cut, and the ball resting in the corner of the net. That was the fair haired boy's answer to a prolonged period of Dublin supremacy. Indeed, it was the turning point of the great contest."

Wild scenes of enthusiasm greeted the final whistle, which were renewed when Sean McCarthy, President of the G.A.A., presented the Croke Cup to the Limerick captain. The winning team on that occasion, read: Mick Kennedy, captain; Paddy Scanlan (goal), Bill O'Donoghue, Timmy Ryan, John Mackey, Mick Mackey, Mick Hickey, Ned Cregan, Micky Cross, Mick Ryan, Pat Ryan, Jim Roche, Mick Sexton, Garrett Howard, Christy O'Brien.

Next week we will see how Limerick won the Golden Jubilee All-Ireland Hurling Blue Riband, and helped materially in bringing the Railway Cup to Munster that season.

28th April 1956