

No. 176-MICK MACKEY of Ahane (Continued)

IN preparing for the 1934 All-Ireland final replay against Dublin, Limerick had the services of the well known Cork trainer, Jim Barry.

Everything was in readiness for the great day when a bombshell burst in the Shannonside camp. Ace netminder Paddy Scanlan had to cry off the team owing to illness. Former Limerick and Munster goalkeeper, Tommy Shinney, of Fedamore, was pressed into service at short notice. And right worthily he filled the gap. His defence was superb, whilst his deliveries were as good as ever Croke Park witnessed.

It proved a great battle. The first half produced tackling as keen as ever seen on the hurling field, with little or no open play. Dublin had two white flags before Dave Clohesey shot to the net for the only goal of the half hour. In the twenty minutes before the interval only one score was conceded—a point to Dublin which left the sides level at the turn-over.

Two goals to either side—secured in as many minutes—following the restart, altered the whole aspect of the game. Dublin added three points in fairly rapid succession, and clung to this lead until ten minutes from the end.

THE STRENGTH OF THE RYANS.

Entering the last quarter the strength of the Ryans, Tim and Mick, asserted itself at midfield. They pulled away from their opponents and using all their mighty vigour, rained down balls on the Dublin defence.

Timmy dropped a soft ball high and slow, and in swept the three Limerick full forwards, with Mick Mackey bringing up the rear. In the melee, Jacky O'Connell placed Dave Clohesey for the goal that left the teams level. The Shannonsiders missed a few chances in the dying minutes and another draw looked possible.

But there was that hidden strength of Limerick rising to the top—a presage of victory. It came swiftly when Mick Mackey pounced on a short puck out. With the sliotar glued to his hurley, he moved in from the wing on one of his famous solo runs. It was do or die and the packed field knew it. So did every man of that great Dublin team.

Throwing everything he had into the effort, Mick advanced steadily to shooting position, then

as he put over the winning point. In the hundred seconds that remained a point by Jacky O'Connell, plus a goal by Dave Clohesey wrote a story on the scoreboard that was hardly a true record of a thrill-packed final.

Dave Clohesey had four goals to his credit in that great game—one of the most noteworthy performances ever recorded in a Blue Riband decider.

GREATEST MAN OF THE THIRTY.

And of John Mackey, the newspapers said: "John Mackey was the greatest man of the thirty. Pulling first time, he drove more balls onwards than any three men, and literally appeared to be all over the field. Undoubtedly, he is the best man in the position in Ireland."

For the record, the match was played on September 30th, 1934, and the final score was: Limerick, 5-2; Dublin, 2-6. Mr. Stephen Jordan, T.D., refereed. Attendance was 30,250 and gate receipts £2,447 4s. 8d. Most Rev. Dr. Harty, Archbishop of Cashel, started the game. He was escorted to midfield by Sean McCarthy, President of the G.A.A., and by Frank McArdle, President of the American

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

Council of the Association. The Limerick players were: Timmy Ryan (captain), J. Mackey, M. Mackey, J. Close (Ahane), P. Shinney (goal), Dave Clohesey, T. Clohesey, T. McCarthy (Fedamore), J. O'Connell, J. Roche (Croom), M. Ryan (Murree), M. Kennedy (Young Ireland), G. Howard (Portree), E. Cregan (Newcastle West), M. Cross (Cloughaun).

Scenes of wild enthusiasm greeted the Limerick victory, renewed when the cup was presented to the captain, Timmy Ryan, by His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Harty, who expressed his great pleasure at seeing his native county win such a remarkable victory in a game that was as superb an exhibition of hurling as he had ever witnessed.

A press report of the game concluded: "The pace was terrific, the marking, perhaps, the closest ever seen. The game was one sweep of clenched courage. It was the epic close of the season's classics. Great men won and great men lost. Their names shall be remembered forever."

THE RECEPTION AND HOME-COMING.

The team, headed by the famed Boherbuoy Band, which had travelled to Croke Park for both the drawn game and replay, then marched to their hotel, where they attended a reception given by Limerick residents in Dublin.

The home coming the following evening was a memorable event. Fog signals were exploded and tar barrels blazed as the train carrying the team arrived in Limerick. A civic welcome was given by the Mayor and Corporation, who were attended by members of the Fire Brigade. A procession was then formed and was led by forty horsemen, wearing green and white sashes. The team rode in open carriages through crowded streets, flanked by guards of honour of boy scouts. Flags were flying from many houses, bonfires were numerous and windows were illuminated, as four bands played the team to their hotel, from one of the windows of which speeches were delivered by the Mayor, Councillor P. F. Quinlan, the Chairman of the County Council, Mr. John McCormack, Ald. M. Keyes, T.D.; Timmy Ryan, Denny Lanigan and Jim Barry.

BANQUET AND CEIL. Three weeks later the members of the team were entertained at a public banquet, which was representative of the business, sporting and professional life of the county, with no resemblance to any previous G.A.A. function in Limerick. The All-Ireland medals were presented at a most successful ceil, voted by all as the best ever held in the city.

And now a link on the great Limerick Mayoral chain records the fact that the County team won the Jubilee Year All-Ireland hurling crown. Seven Limerick men figured on the Munster team that beat Leinster, 3-4 to 3-0, in the Railway Cup final the following St. Patrick's Day. They were: Paddy Scanlan, Tom McCarthy, Mick Kennedy, Paddy Clohesey, Timmy Ryan, John and Mick Mackey, Mick Cross was also picked but was unable to play owing to illness.

NATIONAL LEAGUE CROWN. In retaining their National the sweet sound of ash on leather

League crown, Limerick played some thrilling games. Held to a draw by Cork, at Croom, they ensured possession of the honours when beating Kilkenny 1-6 to 1-4, at Nowlan Park, in one of the great games of the period.

Played on May 12th, 1935 (gate receipts, £973), the outstanding features of this hurling epic were speed, dash, close tackling, and quick accurate striking.

Never before was an hour filled with such thrills of sensation and excitement, and it was only in the closing seconds that Limerick's triumph was assured.

Jacky Power, who last year completed twenty-one years in Ahane colours, when he helped them regain County senior hurling championship laurels, made his debut with the Limerick team during that League campaign—Paddy McMahon and himself playing their first game, at Croom, against Dublin, on April 28th, 1935.

Many good judges of the game hold that Mick Mackey reached the height of hurling perfection in the Munster semi-final against Cork, played at Thurles on July 28th, 1935.

The "Irish Independent" of the following day said: "The match was a personal triumph for Mick Mackey of Limerick, who gave one of the most brilliant and spectacular individual displays of hurling ever seen."

Limerick won well, 3-12 to 2-3, but the occasion will be remembered for an incident following a clash between two players at midfield. A Cork man was accidentally injured, and for the moment appeared in a serious condition. Doctors rushed to his aid and the Last Rites of the Church were administered, as players and spectators knelt. The player was later removed to hospital, where he quickly recovered, being discharged the following day.

THIRD SUCCESSIVE MUNSTER TITLE.

Limerick won their third successive Munster title a fortnight later at Cork, where they beat Tipperary, 5-5 to 1-4. This game had two heroes—one, Paddy Scanlan, the Limerick goalie, who for three years had shown himself one of the greatest goalmen the game produced and lived up to every word of his reputation; the other, the tall, back-haired Phil Purcell of Moycarkey, who combined the speed of a deer with the cool, accurate judgment and drive of a golf champion.

The way was clear for another meeting of Nore and Shannon, and when the pair met on September 1st, 1935, they were watched by a record crowd for any match to then at Croke Park—46,591.

In the long history of the Association no important match was played under such adverse weather conditions. So persistent was the blinding downpour that in itself this very fact must stamp the recollection of this match in the minds of everyone present. It was surely a great game that could be great under such conditions.

The players rose to it like Vikings and by their determination and courage raised the national game into a still higher and more unassailable position of pride and glory than it ever before occupied.

TERRIBLE CONDITIONS.

Kilkenny won (by the narrowest adapted themselves better to the possible margin), because they terrible conditions, and played the ball on the ground.

Limerick, who had hurled thirty-five matches in two years without a defeat, went down fighting gamely and cleanly, as only champions could. In a field that was ankle deep in water, Mick Mackey threw off his boots and tore into the struggle. His dazzling solo runs and powerful stick work were breath-taking in their intensity. He pegged down Kilkenny's early score with a beauty drive between the posts, and then followed a flashing cross by Jacky O'Connell, which McMahon netted. The next score was a great Mick Mackey point from a free that gave Limerick a four points advantage.

The Noresiders hit back fast and forceful—it was level pegging once more, two minutes from the half time whistle, and then Matty Power snatched the minimum lead with a glorious drive from near the touchline.

Mick Mackey bulldozed his way through half a field full to place Jacky O'Connell for the shot that levelled again. Hot and hectic the battle raged, as rain and wind ruled high in that last epic half-hour, with men and women enthralled though dripping wet from head to heel.

No score for ten exciting minutes, and then from midfield, the Kilkenny captain, Lory Meagher, shot a magnificent point. It opened the sluice gates to the Nore, and quick as lightning White shot a point, and then a goal, that left Kilkenny five points in the lead with ten minutes to go.

A SUPERB FINISH.

It was a superb finish. Heart throbs missed a beat as Mick Mackey dropped a ball in the square that McMahon first timed to the net. Veteran of a hundred battles, Mick Cross, advanced with a terrific drive that cut the black and amber lead to the minimum, and with time all but spent the last great scene of that drama packed encounter was enacted.

Mick Mackey soloed his way down the middle of the field, the slippery ball under wonderful control, the active brain planning the move ahead. The road to the net looked open and Mick put everything he could muster into the master drive.

But he reckoned without the uncanny anticipation of great Kilkenny defender, Paddy Larkin, who cut in to cover the vital opening as Mackey struck. Courage won the day and Larkin crowned his best display ever with a grand final offering that brought a great victory back to the Nore.

MR. DE VALERA'S BROADCAST

Radio Eireann broadcast a series of special interviews on the game that night, in the course of which President de Valera said: "We are to be envied by other nations in possessing such a great national game as hurling. Even in the unfavourable conditions of this afternoon one cannot fail to see what a really great game it is. No other can compete with it as an all-round manly game, requiring strength and skill in a remarkable degree. As a school game it should be encouraged more than it is. An effort should be made to bring down the cost by providing cheaper and better hurleys. The G.A.A. should see to this and perhaps devote some of its resources to subsidising the manufacture."

"To-day I witnessed one of the most thrilling games of my life," said the American Minister. "I am tremendously impressed with the speed of the game, which is new to me, and my admiration for the valour and the courage of the hurling player is of the highest. It is a great game, worthy of the best sporting traditions of Irish sportsmen."

The French Minister said that it was the first time he had seen a hurling game, and he expressed himself delighted with the event. He thought the game was a very fast one and very well played. He was greatly struck by the enthusiasm of the great crowd despite the rain.

Next week's instalment will deal with the American tour, and the recapturing of the All-Ireland crown in 1936.

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