

Clean Ireland Recycling County Senior Hurling Championship 2015

By Seamus J. King

Thurles Sarsfields won their third title in four years when they edged out Nenagh Eire Óg in a closely-fought encounter in the Clean Ireland Recycling County Senior Hurling Championship final at Semple Stadium on October 25. It was Nenagh Eire Óg's second time to have tasted final defeat by the slenderest of margins in three years. Lar Corbett's 57th minute point proved the difference between the sides as well as good defensive play by Sarsfields in the dying seconds that denied Eire Óg the chance to force a draw.

The format of the championship was the same as in 2014 with one small exception. In that year it was possible for the fourth team in a group to get into the play-offs after the league, if two of the teams above it won divisional championships. This possibility was removed in 2015.

The teams were divided into two Roinns based on 2014 championship placings. Roinn 1, with 16 teams, was divided into 4 seeded groups. They were:

1st seeds: Nenagh Eire Óg, Kildangan, Loughmore-Castleiney, Drom and Inch;

2nd seeds: Clonoulty-Rossmore, Killenaule, Moycarkey-Borris, Borrisileigh;

3rd seeds: Templederry-Kenyons, Upperchurch-Drombane, Eire Óg, Burgess;

4th seeds: Lorrha, Kilruane-MacDonaghs, Ballina, Thurles Sarsfields.

Roinn 2 had 15 teams (2 teams went down and 1 came up after 2014 championship) and they were divided into 4 seeded groups, 3 x 4 & 1 x 3. They were:

1st seeds: Roscrea, Carrick Swans, Toomevara, Silvermines;

2nd seeds: J K Brackens, Holycross-Ballycahill, Mullinahone, Portroe;

3rd seeds: Kickhams, Boherlahan-Dualla, Borrisokane, Cappawhite;

4th seeds: Ballygarry, Moneygall, Moyne-Templetuohy.

Following the league the 31 teams in the two Roinns were reduced to 16 for the preliminary quarter-finals. The teams that qualified were as follows: 4 top teams in each group in Roinn 1, 4 top teams in each group in Roinn 2, 4 divisional champions, 4 runners-up in each group in Roinn 1.

Divisional finals

All four divisional finals were played on August 23. In the Mid Thurles Sarsfields defeated Loughmore-Castleiney by the minimum of margins on a scoreline of 1-17 to 2-13. Loughmore made a late run to catch up, scoring two points, and claimed in vain at the final whistle that there was some time left in the game. In the North Kildangan won their second senior title in three years when they defeated Templederry Kenyons, who were going for their first title, by 1-18 to 0-18. In the South Killenaule secured their eighteenth title by 0-21 to 2-13 when they defeated Mullinahone in a game that was close right through. Eire Óg made it 3-in-a-row in the West, when they had a deserved victory over Kickhams, albeit by the minimum of margins on a scoreline of 0-16 to 2-9.

In fact the number of teams that qualified for the preliminary quarter-finals was 14 instead of 16. This came about because two of the groups in Roinn 1 ended up with two each of the four divisional winners, and under regulation 3 (A) 'If a team wins its



Thurles Sarsfields - Tipperary Senior Hurling Champions 2015

Back l-r: Tommy Doyle, Pa Bourke, Billy McCarthy, Denis Maher, Padraic Maher (capt), Declan Ryan, Aidan McCormack, Kevin O'Gorman, Conor Lanigan, David Maher, Cian Treacy. Front l-r: David Kennedy, Ronan Maher, Patrick McCormack, Stephen Maher, Michael Cahill, Stephen Cahill, John Maher.

Absent from photo Lar Corbett.

Divisional Championship and finishes 1st or 2nd in Roinn 1 or 1st in Roinn 2 that team will be replaced in the Preliminary Quarter Final by next highest non-qualifying team in the same group, excluding the team that finishes bottom of that group in Roinn 1 and 2'.

Kildangan and Thurles Sarsfields, of Group 2 Roinn 1. who had qualified for the play-offs in the group league, qualified again as divisional winners. It meant that Upperchurch-Drombane as the third placed in the group got a qualifying place. Under 2015 regulations the bottom team, Moycarkey-Borris, could not qualify for the second place and so there was one team less for the preliminary quarter-finals. There was a similar development in Group 3 Roinn 1 where Eire Óg and Killenaule, already qualified in the league, won their respective divisional finals. Lorrha, as the third placed team, got a qualifying spot but Loughmore-Castleiney, as the bottom team could not qualify and this accounted for the second team short in the preliminary quarter-finals.

Preliminary Quarter-Finals

An open draw took place to decide six pairings in the preliminary quarter-finals. Two teams, Drom Inch and Clonoulty-Rossmore got byes in order to ensure eight teams for the quarter-finals. All the games were played on September 13. Nenagh Eire Óg defeated Roscrea, Kilruane MacDonaghs defeated J. K. Brackens, Portroe defeated Killenaule, Kildangan defeated Upperchurch-Drombane, Eire Óg defeated Lorrha and Thurles Sarsfields defeated Mullinahone.

The quarter-finals took place on the weekend of September 26/27 and all four games were played in Semple Stadium. On Saturday Drom-Inch defeated Kildangan by 5-13 to 1-15. Under new coach, former Tipperary manager, Liam Sheedy, Drom Inch scored a comprehensive 10-point win over a fancied Kildangan. Weaknesses in the Kildangan defence let Drom Inch through for five goals, and it could have been more..

On the same day Kilruane MacDonaghs overcame the opposition of West champions, Eire Óg, by 1-22 to 1-14. Eire Óg had hoped for a better result but they were overcome by a driven Kilruane, who were inspired by veteran, Seamus Hennessy, and qualified for their first semi-final since 1994. In the matches on Sunday Nenagh Eire Óg showed fine form and ruthlessly put away neighbours Portroe by 0-27 to 1-12. They had a brilliant spell midway through the second half when they scored 0-9 without reply. In the second game Thurles Sarsfields had no trouble cruising to victory over a Clonoulty-Rossmore side that failed to



Denis Maher (Thurles Sarsfields) and Hugh Moloney (Nenagh Eire Og) in county final action.

deliver on the day. Clonoulty didn't get their goal till near the end of the game which saw them lose by 1-23 to 1-14.

The Semi-finals

The two semi-finals were played at Semple Stadium on October 11. The first of these brought defending champions and strong favourites, Thurles Sarsfields, up against Kilruane MacDonaghs. This contest went right down to the wire even though Sarsfields appeared to be comfortably in control at the interval when they led by 1-14 to 1-7. Scores appeared to come more easily to them. However, Kilruane stormed back towards the end of the third quarter and came within a point with minutes to go, but the champions came into their own again with a fine finish that yielded 1-2 and victory by 2-20 to 1-17.

The second game went to extra time after Michael Heffernan hit a 64th minute equaliser for Nenagh. Drom Inch got two goals early on but they never moved with their expected fluency and with Seamus Callanan in subdued form their attack lacked a

Results at a Glance

Date	Venue	Teams and scores		Referee	
Preliminary Q/F					
13/09/2015	Moneygall	Nenagh Eire Óg	1.21	Roscrea 0.10	Michael Murphy
13/09/2015	Toomevara	Kilruane MacDonaghs	1.21	J K Brackens 1.9	Fergal Horgan
13/09/2015	The Ragg	Killenaule	.20	Portroe 2.26	Kevin Jordan
13/09/2015	Toomevara	Kildangan	2.16	Upperchurch Drombane 1.10	John Mc Cormack
13/09/2015	The Ragg	Eire Óg Anacarty	2.18	Lorrha-Dorrha 2.14	Paddy Ivors
13/09/2015	Leahy Park	Thurles Sarsfields	3.25	Mullinahone 2.18	John Cleary
<i>Drom & Inch and Clonoulty-Rossmore had byes to the quarter-finals</i>					
Quarter Finals					
26/09/2015	Semple Stadium	Drom & Inch	5.13	Kildangan 1.15	Fergal Horgan
26/09/2015	Semple Stadium	Kilruane MacDonaghs	1.22	Eire Óg Anacarty 1.14	Johnny Ryan
27/09/2015	Semple Stadium	Nenagh Éire Óg	0.27	Portroe 1.12	Paddy Ivors
27/09/2015	Semple Stadium	Thurles Sarsfields	1.23	Clonoulty Rossmore 1.14	Philip Kelly
Semi Finals					
11/10/2015	Semple Stadium	Thurles Sarsfields	2.20	Kilruane MacDonaghs 1.17	John O'Brien
11/10/2015	Semple Stadium	Nenagh Éire Óg	1.20	Drom & Inch 2.16	John McCormack
Final					
25/10/2015	Semple Stadium	Thurles Sarsfields	1-18	Nenagh Éire Óg 3-11	Fergal Horgan

scoring threat. Nenagh came back well from their early disaster and were level, 2-5 to 1-8, at the interval. The second half was a close encounter with neither side having the ability to impose their will on the game, though one felt that Drom had the greater resources. And so it continued until the end when Heffernan hit the equalising score. In extra time Drom made the early running but the sides were level at the interval. The sides remained close until John Ryan edged Drom in front with a minute to go. But it was Nenagh who had the last word as Tommy Heffernan fired over the leveller and Daire Quinn hit a splendid winner.

Final

The final was played at Semple Stadium on October 25 and Thurles Sarsfields came through by the narrowest of margins on a scoreline of 1-18 to 3-11. It was the club's 34th title, their sixth since 2005 in seven final appearances. Although only a point separated the sides in the end, at times the winners looked way better. By the twentieth minute they had opened up a nine points lead, 1-10 to 0-4, but then, as if forgetting the task in hand, they let Nenagh right back into the game with 2-1 in a four-minute spell. Some good hurling followed and the Sarsfields lead was 1-11 to 2-6 at the interval. By the end of the third quarter the sides were level, 1-13 to 2-10. Sarsfields motored ahead once more with three points. Nenagh came back with a goal from Andrew Cofey in the 52nd minutes. Sarsfields went ahead again with points from Stephen Cahill and Lar Corbett. Daire Quinn reduced it to a point but Sarsfields held their nerve during the four minutes of added time to win by the solitary point.

The win set Thurles Sarsfields up for the joust with Na Piarasigh of Limerick in the Munster Club semi-final. The winning of that competition has to remain a goal for the club which has had so little success in Munster.

For Nenagh Eire Óg the result was a sad disappointment and it extends their failure to build on their 1995 victory.

Thurles Sarsfields: Paddy McCormack, Michael Cahill, Stephen Maher, Kevin O'Gorman, David Kennedy, Padraic Maher (capt.), Ronan Maher, John Maher (0-1), Stephen Cahill (0-1), Aidan McCormack (0-3), Denis Maher (0-4), Pa Bourke (0-4) Conor Lanigan (1-2) Lar Corbett (0-2), Billy McCarthy (0-1). Subs: Richie Ruth for Conor Lanigan, David Maher for Kevin O'Gorman, Tommy Doyle for Richie Ruth. Also: Kevin Smith, Cian Treacy, Stephen Lillis, Michael Russell, Barry O'Dwyer, Pa. Dunne, Rory Dwan, Kevin Dunne, David Corbett, Paul Maher, Tom King, Michael O'Dwyer.

Team Management: Tommy Maher, Paddy McCormack, Connie



Lar Corbett, Thurles Sarsfields.

Maher, Jack Griffin. Medical: Mick Clohessy, Aoife Lonergan. Doctor: Dr. Paul Ryan. Equipment: Eamonn and Brian Stakelum.

Nenagh Eire Óg: Michael McNamara, Mark Flannery, Noel Maloney (capt.), John Brennan, Barry Heffernan (1-0), Hugh Maloney, Daire Quinn, Conor Ryan, Michael Heffernan (1-4), Andrew Coffey (1-1), Paddy Murphy, Tommy Heffernan (0-1), Killian Gleeson, Pearse Morris (0-2), Shane Hennessy. Subs: James Mackey (0-2) for Shane Hennessy, Billy Heffernan for Killian Gleeson, Philip Hickey for Pearse Morris. Also: Brian Darcy, Kevin Tuicker, Adam Grattan, Donncha Quinn, John Cahalan, Paul Ryan, Shane Maher, Michael Collins, Alan Kelly, Niall Madden, Kevin Flynn, Gary Howard.

Manager: Liam Heffernan, Coach/Triener: John Fitzgerald, Selectors: Eddie Tucker, Donie O'Brien, Brian McDonnell. Physio: Paul Ryan, First Aid: Norreen Kelly, Liam Quinn. Doctor: Paul O'Farrell. Logistics: Matt Lillis.

Referee: Fergal Horgan (Kickhams), Standby Referee: John McCormack (Kickhams), Linesman: John O'Brien (Arravale Rovers). Sideline Official: John Ryan (Cashel King Cormacs).

John Quirke Jewellers Man of Match Award: Stephen Cahill (Thurles Sarsfields)

Attendance: 5,000.



Thurles Sarsfields midfielder Stephen Cahill receives the 'Man of the Match' award from John Quirke (Quirke Jewellers Cahir) in the presence of County Board Chairman Michael Bourke.