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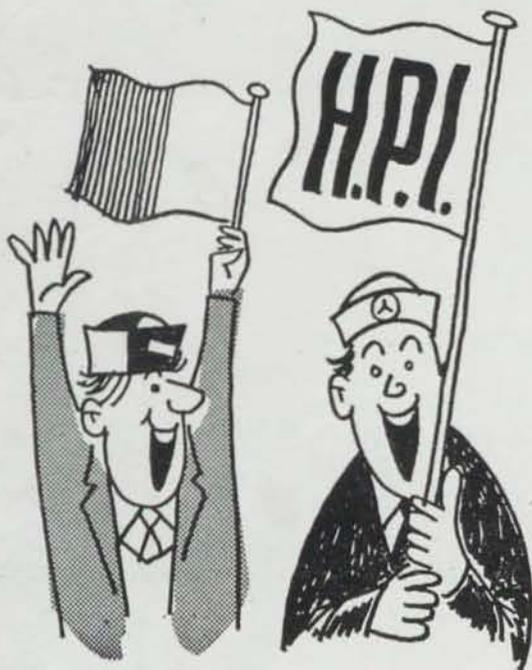
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Published by Press Cuchulainn Ltd., and printed by Drogheda Printers Ltd. Both members of the National Publishing Group.

Tipperary Yearbook

Edited by Paddy Hickey

A Hurling Renewal

THE past year was not an exceptional one for Tipperary — but then a break simply had to come. A team, which had given extraordinary service, hurled its way to the end of the line.

But, despite this, the county can look to the future with confidence. Nowhere is there a greater ability for renewal and recovery than in the Premier County. Tipperary has often been down and written out only to spring back very much sooner than expected.

The tradition is there and the hurling men are there. It is simply a question of gathering together another winning combination and moulding it into an All-Ireland winning fifteen.

It would be only someone who does not appreciate the determination and hurling resilience of Tipperary who would with confidence wager that the Blue and Gold will not be to the fore again before 1969 is out.

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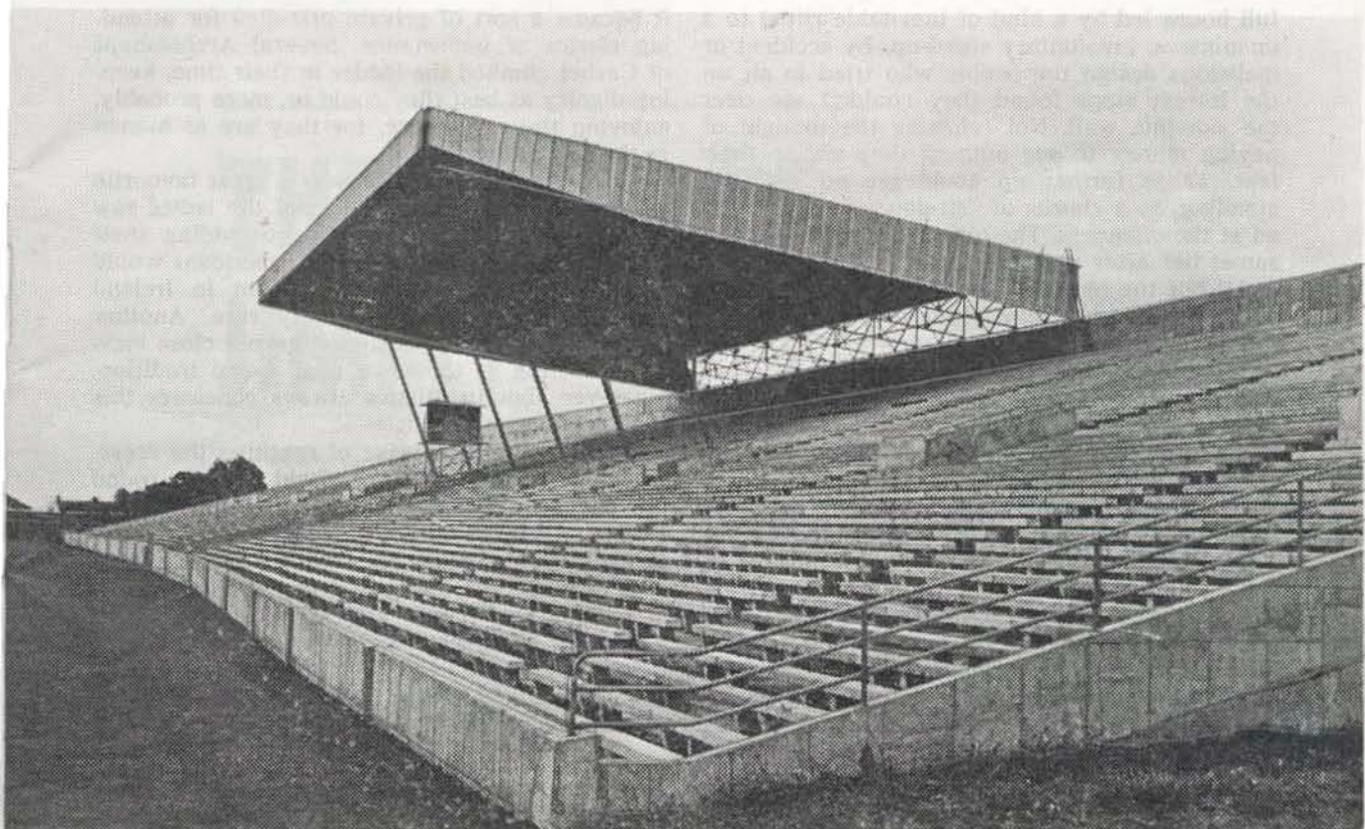
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Thurles — the old and the new

By John O'Grady

ONCE, there was a stand. No thing of beauty or great pretension, it was built at a time when the only difference between a stand and a haybarn was the matter of location. Now it's gone. If a man who'd been away for a couple of years walked unsuspecting into Thurles Sportsfield now he would get a considerable shock at the new complexion of the entire West side. And

if he were, like most of us, given to a little sentiment he would feel rather like a returned emigrant, full of nostalgia for the old thatched home-stead, who sighs instead a modern two-storey occupying the well-loved spot.

Progress must be served, of course. The old stand was far from adequate. On the bigger days "stand" became the operative word. A

full house led by a kind of inevitable ritual to a unanimous, involuntary stand-up. By accident or malicious design the people who tried to sit on the lowest steps found they couldn't see over the side-line wall. Not relishing the thought of paying money to see nothing they got to their feet. Those further up could see no sense in standing, so a chorus of "sit-downs" was directed at the offenders. The outcome was always the same: tier after angry tier had to rise.

All but the last tier of all. They were usually standing already. Very often they were young fellows with a purpose in view. At moments of high excitement they set up a thunderous drumming on the rear galvanise with backward kicking of their heels. Years of this noisy practice had caused it to bulge outwards along its entire length in a sort of middle-aged spread.

The dressing-rooms were very different from those now hidden from view down the tunnel. The old ones were much more public. Knots of camp-followers stood about outside the door, watching the preliminaries. Small boys would put their eyes to the broken, diamond-shaped panes of the windows, hoping for a closer look at the warriors. The well-wishers would crowd into the already inadequate space inside, asking the traditional, and useless, "how's the form?" Coming near the deadline the door would be firmly shut and the urgent words of the pep-talk would drop into a nervy hush, ended with a spatter of hand-claps, an abrupt opening of the door and the emergence of set-faced hurlers to do their duty.

On the smaller occasion, a local junior game, perhaps, the old stand gave a certain togetherness to the crowd which is not possible in the vast concrete wastes of the new one. When a Tipp team was in training for a Munster or All-Ireland game the regular attenders liked to gather on the upper rows launching their comments, shrewd or otherwise, into the gathering gloom. Now they sit, exposed and not feeling quite so knowledgeable: the vantage point and the privacy are gone.

The three-way variety of the old West side has given way to uniformity. We had, nearest to the entrance, a section of uncovered wooden planks, in the centre the stand and, above it, a grassy mound of 1947 vintage — the Sugar Factory clinkers that made it having long since been clothed by the growth of successive seasons.

On this, adjacent to the stand, was the broadcasting box. When Michael wasn't functioning,

it became a sort of private prie-dieu for attending clerics of importance. Several Archbishops of Cashel climbed the ladder in their time, keeping dignity as best they could or, more probably, enjoying the experience, for they are as human as the rest of us.

The open timber section was a great favourite when the weather was kind, and the ladies saw it as an attractive alternative to hiding their finery in the enclosed one. The Americans would have called it "the bleachers" but in Ireland true bleaching days are pretty rare. Another point in its favour was that it gave a close view of the action at the town goal. Local tradition, whatever about statistics always considers this the "scoring goal."

A player had two ways of reaching the dressing-rooms. The shy type could duck in round the back of this section, avoiding running the gauntlet of inspection. But most had no qualms about walking boldly up with hurley and boots well displayed as token of competitive status.

A couple of days ruthless demolition took away the physical reality of all these things. But to many of us the ghostly outline of the old friendly, homely hurlers lay-out will be under the impressive sweep of Ardan Ui Chuinneain.

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THE ART OF JIMMY DOYLE

By Owen McCann

I doubt if any hurler or footballer has made such a spectacular and tremendously successful switch from the last line of the defence to the role of a player charged with the task of out-smarting defenders and goalkeepers as has Jimmy Doyle. We tend nowadays to forget that it was as a cool, reliable net-minder that he first really captured the attention of Croke Park patrons. That was in the No. 1 jersey in the Tipperary minor team beaten by Dublin in the 1954 All-Ireland final.

A year later he was back again at headquarters to win an All-Ireland minor medal . . . but in that final he figured as an attacker. From those days in intercounty minor competitions as a forward, Doyle went on to develop superbly into one of the greatest senior match-winners of all time; a player with a brilliantly effective brand of accurate marksmanship, seldom, if ever, equalled in the long history of the premier national game.

Indeed, but for the fact that he has been dogged by injuries in the latter part of his brilliant career, Doyle would have scaled even greater heights. No one appreciates better than I the power and the effectiveness of Donie Nealon's hurling, but I am convinced that it is fair to say that but for an injury that he sustained in mid-1966, and kept him on the sideline for 13 months, Doyle would have earned ranking as the first

man to score 100 goals in the top flight.

Donie Nealon earned this honour with a goal against Offaly in the National League at Thurles in October 1967. Doyle coloured last year's All-Ireland final with the 100th goal of his senior career.

He retired injured, of course, in that unsuccessful clash with Wexford, and, except for an appearance in the Tipperary county final, was out of hurling for the rest of 1968. But for that further spell of inactivity, and his earlier period on the sideline, Jimmy Doyle would undoubtedly be the first 1,000 points-plus forward, in hurling and football: Given a little luck in the months ahead the Tipperary man, who passed out the 900 points mark in last year's League "Home" final with Kilkenny, can reach the 1,000 points mark this year.

As it is, however, Doyle's scoring record is a truly superb one. In intercounty senior hurling since late in 1957, when he was still a minor, he edged his way into the top scorers nationwide chart for the first time in 1958 at No. 4 — and he finished in the top three every year from 1959 to 1965 inclusive. Even last year, with his season ended in September through that injury, he was still only pipped by a point by Jack Berry (Wexford) for a place in the top three. His match average of 7.11 points was the best in the panel of top ten hurling scorers in 1968.



Jimmy and Mrs. Doyle

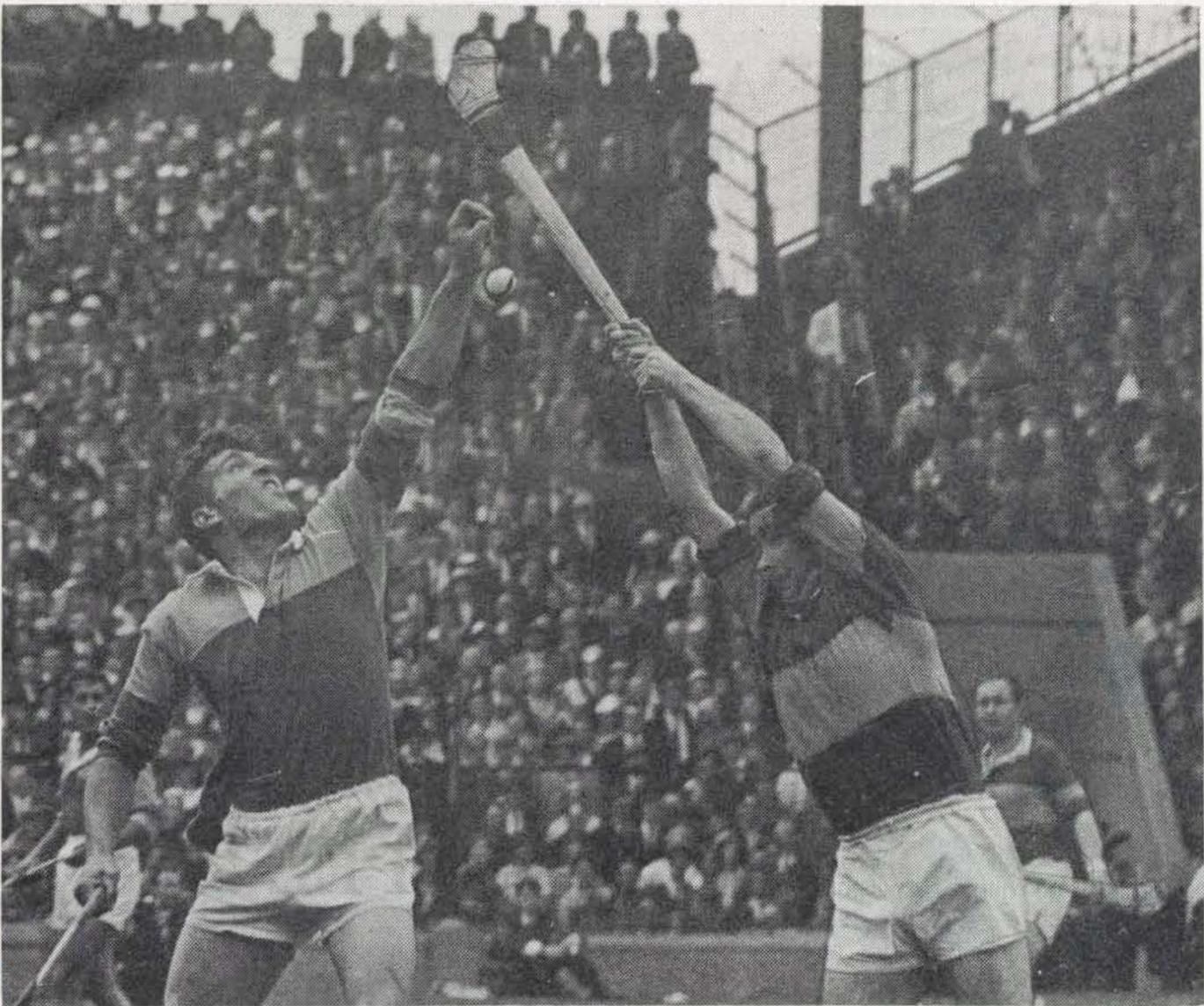
Doyle was the first to score a century of points three years in succession (1963, 1964 and 1965), and in 1965 he also became the first man to reach three figures four times. He first broke this barrier in 1960, when he became the first Tipperary hurler to lead the nation-wide chart since I first introduced these tables in 1955. In 13 games that year, the Thurles Sarsfields sharpshooter landed 12-72 (108 points), to gain, at 29 points, the most decisive lead any Munster hurler has yet forged over his chief rival. Eddie Keher was second that year.

In 1960, too, Jimmy achieved his best match average so far over a full year's campaign, at 8.30 points. This is better than any average yet in football, and has been beaten only twice in hurling — by Christy Ring with 10.10 points per

hour in 1959, and by Clare's Jimmy Smyth with 8.62 points a match in 1963.

Doyle dropped to third place in 1961 with 10-44 (74 points) in 12 games, 30 points behind the leader in hurling, Christy Ring, who rattled home 22-38 (104 points) in 13 matches. But Jimmy still came a good second to the Cork man in the averages table at 6.16 points. In 1962, it was Doyle and Ring joint leaders with 99 points apiece at the same match average, also, of 6.6 minors. The Tipperary man's actual tally from his 15 outings was 13-60.

Then came the start of Jimmy Doyle's greatest scoring run. In 16 ties in 1963 he shot 103 points, at 14-61. That earned him joint leadership in hurling with Eddie Keher, but, as the Kilkenny man took 17 games to record his score



Jimmy Doyle and Eddie Kelly in action in last year's All-Ireland final.

of 9-76, Doyle had the better hourly rate at 6.43 points — second to that 8.62 points by Smyth.

That year, too, saw Doyle go the nearest of any Munster hurler to leading the country-wide tables in football and hurling over a year's programme. He and Keher far outpaced the No. 1 in football that season.

The following campaign was an historic one for the clever and free-scoring Thurles star. He smashed his own 1960 personal best, and the

Tipperary and Munster peak by nine points with 10-87 (117 points) in 17 games, to take the premier role in hurling for the second time outright. That score still stands as the Munster record.

The high-point in hurling was established by Nick Rackard, of Wexford, in 1956, when he hit a tremendous 35-50 (155 points), at the rate of 8.15 points in each of his 19 games. Next in line is Eddie Keher's record for Kilkenny of 16-79 (127 points) in twenty ties, at a match score of 6.35 points. That was in 1965.

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The year 1964 was a doubly historic one, in fact, for Doyle, who built up that Premier county and Munster best at the rate of 6.88 points an hour. His points total of 87, as distinct from goals and points combined, ranks as the points scoring record for a full year's programme.

That record of being the first to better 100 points over four separate years went into the book with the second best score in hurling in 1965, and Doyle's last major scoring barrage. In 15 ties, he helped himself to 12-75 (111 points), at the best rate per hour in both codes at 7.40 points. Eddie Keher equalled Doyle's two major distinctions — a century of points three years running, and three figures over four years — in 1967, and last year the Kilkenny man made it a unique 100 points-plus over four successive years, and also the first time for any player to "break" the barrier over five seasons.

In 1966 and 1967, Doyle lost his position on top of the Premier county chart, but he was back again in fine style in 1968. Not only did he lead the way in Tipperary, but, despite that injury in the All-Ireland final, he still scored enough to get back in the No. 1 role in Munster, with an almost unbelievable lead of 10 points over his nearest rival! His match average of 7.11 points last year was also the best in the nation-wide panel.

When it comes to raising flags in the championship, Jimmy Doyle is out on his own. He has been the most consistent scorer of them all, and, not surprisingly, he boasts a number of noteworthy records. Other than Nick Rackard, top marksman in 1955 and 1956, he is the only hurler to top the table on more than two occasions — he has actually finished in front on five separate years! The years were 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1964. In 1960, he scored 6-18 (36 points), the best score up to then by a Mun-

ster hurler, at the rate of nine points a match. He reached 36 points again in 1962 with another nine points a game barrage for 4-24, the two high-points for Munster.

In sharp contrast is the fact that he also holds the Munster record for the lowest total by a chart-topper in the period 1955-1968. In 1961, his 2-17 (23 points) from three games still gave him a two points lead on top. This is the second lowest score. Holding up this end of the chart is Tony Doran's score of 6-3 in three games last year — it just beat Doyle's score by a point, in 1968. At the other end of the list is Nick Rackard's tremendous 12-15 (51 points) in four games in 1956, at predictably enough, also the record match average of 12.75 points.

Jimmy Doyle landed 2-10 against Wexford in a challenge at Thurles in April 1957, and scored exactly the same total in an Oireachtas Cup semi-final against Kilkenny at Thurles in September, 1960.

A tremendous all-round story, then, of highly impressive scoring achievements, and one which stamps Jimmy Doyle of the razor-sharp edge as a truly dynamic craftsman in the match-winning qualities of expertise in the making and taking of scores.

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Donie Nealon

Portrait of a Hurler as a Human Being

By Brendan Mac Lua

DONIE NEALON is a man governed by tradition. It provides a *raison d'être* for almost everything he does or is involved in. He is a teacher — principal at Youghalarra National School — as was his father and his father before him. The father, Rody, hurled for Tipperary. It was taken for granted that Donie would too — just as it was taken for granted that he would be a teacher and would teach at Youghalarra.

In the family into which Donie Nealon was born, and in the community which he lives, a man is first judged on his hurling ability. In this regard Donie is now more than honoured — but it did not come that easy. For example, he never made the Tipperary minor team — although he might have, had he not been born in December and therefore on the wrong side of the age-limit.

He was 22 before he made the senior team in 1958 but once there he remained to develop into one of the most versatile and accomplished hurlers of our time.

His outstanding class was re-emphasised in the 1967-'68 National League campaign when he was moved out to midfield to lay on a series of per-

formances which were largely responsible for getting momentum into Tipperary once more — and at a time when such a fillip was most required. These performances prompted a widespread conclusion that he had not been fully utilised during the decade which he had spent nearer goal.

Then came last year's championship — Clare first and then Cork. There was a distinct lowering of standard and, again, the birth of another Nealon theory, namely that the magic was deserting him. In propounding this conclusion both the press and public are doing Nealon an injustice . . . but to a lesser extent than he has been doing himself.

The fact is that for some time Nealon has been victim to a type of bronchial infection. It does not bother him other than when the respiratory system is extended — such as during training or the course of the game. Then there is a harsh gasping for air which is audible from some distance away.

I first noticed it at the Gormanston Hurling Course in early August. A bout of lively exercise and he was gulping air as does one with severe sinus trouble — only it wasn't sinus, he was sure of that. He felt that it was some sort of a chest cold and would pass.

Left: Donie Nealon gets it past Cork's Tom O'Donoghue

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Nealon in action against
Wexford in the 1965
All-Ireland final.



It was almost incredible that a man had played through a Munster championship campaign bearing such a handicap. But that Nealon did.

Two weeks before last year's All-Ireland final I met him again. The trouble was the same. He had still to consult a doctor but was then on his way to see one. Nineteen days remained to the All-Ireland final.

It may be highly presumptive to express a medical opinion but, for what it is worth, I did feel that it was the sort of respiratory infection which could easily be cleared up by penicillin or some such antibiotic.

Nealon's handicap is an outstanding example of how uninquiring we all can be prior to making

a pronouncement on a player's performance in a game. That off-form showing may well be because of any one of a score of common physical ailments — a cold; a headache or what have you. On the other hand the press cannot, of course, be expected to inquire for every player's well-being following a game — such would be ridiculous. But it is nonetheless, probably, safe to conclude that many an uncomplimentary press comment has been cruel for these reasons.

Why does a man go for his sixth All-Ireland medal as keenly as he did for his first? Donie Nealon answered this question in a round-about way by stating with complete sincerity that, if he had his career to play all over again, he would train even harder.

Dedication is, I suppose, the word that best describes it. It is a combination of personal pride and a great sense of Tipperary. The latter would appear the more potent in Nealon's case. His subjection to tradition is both personal and a component of the communal with which all Tipperary hurlers are affected.

Donie Nealon's G.A.A. involvement is considerably more extensive than is normally found in the case of an All-Ireland player. He is equally engaged as an official — at club, county and provincial level, being a member of the Munster Council. He is also a respected intercounty referee, who would be very prominent in this regard were it not for the fact that he is not often available due to playing commitments with club and county. No doubt when he retires much will be seen of him in this role.

The fact that Nealon, together with Fr. Tommy Maher and Des Ferguson, shared in the planning and development of the annual Gormanston Hurling Course is but yet another of his additional G.A.A. roles.

One of the finest pieces of public relations done on behalf of the G.A.A. in recent times was Nealon's speech some years ago at a televised



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Caltex Awards banquet. He was chosen to speak on behalf of the recipients and it was a most polished and eloquent performance — of a standard which the same function had never enjoyed before or since.

But then that is Donie Nealon — as polished and expressive a human being as he is a hurler. He laughs easily. One can imagine him being a popular teacher. He is married with a young family, while his sister Bernadette is married to John 'Mackey' McKenna.

Donie Nealon will probably always be in the G.A.A. One could even visualise him being President in twenty years time. There is an established tradition for Tipperary teachers in that regard . . . and the Nealons of Youghalorra N.S. and Newtown are very much subject to tradition.

Idir seo agus 1979

le Padraig O Mealoid

CA bhfuil an té nach maith leis a bheith ag caitheamh a thuairime ar céard atá le teacht, cé a bhuaifas Craobh na hEireann an bhliain seo chugainn sa pheil nó san iomáint. Nach é a bhéas gliondarach ag rá leat go raibh a fhios aige go maith roimh ré gur mar sin a bhéadh. Ach ní chloisfidh tú aon ní uaidh má bhí sé as marc ar fad.

Ach céard faoi súil a chaitheamh níos faide ná sin chun cinn, abair deich mbliana! Anois níl mé ag rá go bhféadfadh éinne a rá cé a bhuaifadh gach bliain faoi leith, ach d'fhéadfadh duine strac-mheas réasúnta maith a thabhairt faoi cé mhéid contae, agus cé na contaetha a bhuaifas ins na deich mbliana seo rómhainn amach. Sé'n chéad rud nach foláir a dhéanamh le breith a thabhairt ar an dtoghchaif ná féachaint siar ar an am atá caite.

San iomáint, trí chontae dhéag (agus Londain ar cheann acu) a d'imir i gCluiche Ceannais Eireann ó cuireadh tús leis an gcomórtas in 1887. Dhá cheann déag acu sin ar éirigh leo an Craobh a bhuaichaint ar a laighead uair amháin. Bhí imeartha ag deich gcinn acu sin i gcluiche ceannais faoi'n mbliain 1900, sé sin nfor imir i gCluiche Ceannais Eireann ó 1900 anuas ach trí chontae nach raibh imeartha acu ann roimhe sin, Laois, Portláirge agus Aontrum. Siad Aon-

trum an foireann is déanaí a d'imir sa cluiche ceannais de'n chéad uair, 1943, agus an taon fhoireann a d'imir i gcluiche ceannais nár bhuaidh an Craobh. Tá sé 20 bliain ó shin ó bhuaidh contae an Craobh de'n chéad uair dóibh, Portláirge i 1948, agus Gaillimh an contae a bhuaidh a gcéad Craobh roimhe sin arís, i bhfad roimhe sin, 1923, cé go rabhadar sa chéad chluiche ceannais ariamh, in aghaidh Thiobrad Arann in 1887. Siad Gaillimh freisin is lú a bhfuil toradh ar a saothar acu, 11%, ach ní cabhair é an céadchodan toradh, tá 100% ag Ciarraí, d'imríodar i gcluiche ceannais amháin agus bhuaidhadar é, 1891.

Tá le tuiscint óna staitisicí sin nach mórán bogadh atá déanta ag neart ná traidisiún na hiomána óna contaetha a bhí chun cinn roimh 1900, cé is móite de Portláirge. Le scéal fada a dhéanamh gearr is cosúil go mbéidh na chéad deich gCraobh eile idir cúig chontae, Tiobrad Arann, Corcaigh, Cill Chainnigh, Loch Garman agus Portláirge, agus seacht nó ocht gcinn acu roinnte idir trí chontae, Tiobrad Arann, Cill Chainnigh agus Loch Garman.

Ní hionann an scéal sa pheil. I 1961 is déanaí a d'imir contae sa chluiche ceannais de'n chéad uair, Uibh Fháilli. Chailleadar in aghaidh

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an Dúin, a bhuaidh a gcéad Chraobh ina gcéad chluiche ceannais an bhliain roimhe sin, in aghaidh maithe móra an chomórtais, Ciarraí. Le scór blianta tá an Chraobh roinnte idir ocht gcontaetha, Cábhán, An Mhí, Maigh Eó, Ciarraí, Gaillimh, Lú, Atha Cliath, An Dún, agus ní raibh ach ceithre chontae eile i gceist ins na cluichí ceannais, Ard Macha, Doire, Uíbh Fháillí, agus Ros Comáin. De na ceithre cinn sin siad Ros Comáin an taon chontae a raibh Craobh buaidhte acu roimhe sin, 1943 agus 1944.

Sa chéad leath de'n tréimhse atá luaite agam d'éirigh le contae nua amháin, An Mhí a gcéad Chraobh a bhuaichaint, agus sa dara leath de is contae amháin freisin a bhuaidh a gcéad Chraobh, An Dún. Ach tá trí Chraobh an ceann ag an dá chontae sin faoi láthair. I gcás an Dúin tá a dtí Chraobh bainte amach acu taobh istigh de dheich mbliana, agus níor imríodar ach i dtí chluiche ceannais. Siad Ciarraí atá ar bhárr an

liosta le uimhir na gCraobh buaite, 20, Atha Cliath sa dara áit le 17, agus Gaillimh sa tríú áit le 7 gcinn. Ina ndiaidh sin tá 39 Craobh roinnte réasúnta cothrom idir aon chontae dhéag.

Ní hionann agus an iomáint, de réir mar is cosúil, tá forbairt agus neart na peile ag leathnú níos fóirleithne ar fud na tíre. Pé foireann nua a bhuaidhann a gcéad Chraobh ins na deiche mbliana seo rómhainn amach tá seans láidir acu péire nó béidir trí cinn a bhuaichaint ins an tréimhse sin. Ach béidh an chuid eile roinnte idir chúig chontae, agus buaidhfídh an chuid is mó acu níos mó na Craobh amháin.

Cé hiad? Ar staitistici na bhfiche bliain atá imithe seans gurab iad An Dún, Gaillimh, An Mhí, Ciarraí agus Baile Atha Cliath nó Maigh Eó iad. Agus ce'n contae nua a bhéidh chugainn? Tá feabhas tagtha ar an gcaighdeán peile i Longfort, Sligeach, Dún na nGall, Doire agus An Iar Mhí. Tig leat féin rogha a dhéanamh astu sin. Mo rogha-sa? Doire nó an Iar Mhí, nó béidir an péire!

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Sean Murray being attended to at Mullingar last July when Longford shocked Meath. The knee injury was to keep him out of the game for the remainder of the season.

Injuries —

necessary and unnecessary

By Donal Collins

RAY CAROLAN to miss Ulster final — Longford short Flynn and Murray for All-Ireland semi-final—Jimmy Doyle doubtful for All-Ireland final against Wexford." These are just three of the headlines which may well have turned the tide of G.A.A. history during 1968. The stories behind those headlines evolved around injuries of one kind or another, for indeed the biggest G.A.A. news stories of the year centred around torn ligaments, pulled muscles, fractured bones and the various other ailments that seem to become more and more prevalent each year.

Last year, while working as medical adviser to teams playing in Croke Park, the former Kerry star, Dr. Sean Murphy, noted several points in regard to injuries that are of interest. Unfortunately, Dr. Murphy has since left for a year's work in England.

Football it seems, provides many more injuries than hurling, especially injuries of a serious nature. Many of the injuries we see in hurling look very dramatic but generally they are little more than superficial cuts, requiring at most a few stitches, but in football it is claimed a player may suffer quite serious damage, without any outward sign of major distress. Footballers leave themselves more open to injury, especially when reaching up for high balls, whereas the good hurler can ward off most blows with his stick.

Dr. Murphy also confirmed what anybody in charge of teams knows only too well, that players generally are very reluctant to consult medical advice. This indeed, is probably a major cause of serious injury as many players at all levels

Continued overleaf

keep on playing despite the fact that they are suffering from injury. Often there are more practical reasons for this behaviour, as for instance when a player is fighting for a place on his team and is afraid to take the risk of making his injury known, lest he should impair his chances of selection.

The best method of avoiding athletic injury is undoubtedly by maintaining physical fitness at a high level all the time. Players who have not trained to their full capacity are liable to sustain injuries during play because fatigue or imperfect co-ordination lead to faulty movements.

An obvious example of how a really fit team can survive a long campaign, without having their rhythm disturbed by injuries was the Down team during the past year.

The fact that players and officials are now becoming more conscious of the means of avoiding injuries will probably lead to a reduction in the number of injuries that will more than offset the increase in the number of games being played.

A large number of football injuries especially, could be avoided if players would learn to take a few simple precautions. The many cases of damaged ankles could be lessened if players with weak ankles wore an ankle bandage, which costs ten and sixpence, or even an ordinary crepe bandage properly applied. Much of the ankle trouble suffered by footballers is caused by fallen arches, which is a weakening of the muscles along the inside of the sole of the foot.

This causes the sole of the foot to be flat rather than arched on the inside, with the result that undue pressure is placed on the outside of the foot especially the ankle ligaments. Players with weak feet should wear a support on the inside sole of their football boots and indeed, of their ordinary footwear, in order to correct the weakness.

Very often little or no attention is paid to keeping football boots in proper condition, yet this can be a vital factor in preventing injuries to the foot. Badly fitting boots or boots with wrongly adjusted cogs can cause much damage.

Gaelic players have for too long been haphazard about their equipment, hardly ever bothering to equip themselves with spare cogs, bandages and plasters until forced upon them by necessity.

Gradually, however, players are becoming more aware of the advantages of spending a little extra time and money on equipment. Many footballers now carry two pairs of boots to all games — one set for dry conditions and the other for heavy wet pitches. It is noticeable too, over the years that certain injuries seem to recur far more frequently than others. Ankle injuries, thigh muscles and shoulder injuries cause most trouble and these sectors should therefore receive more attention in training. Only in this way can the ever increasing injury rate be kept in check.

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Caoilte and Goll are there from fairy lands.

And fierce Cuchulainn comes, his Godlike face,
With yearning wild to grip in hand once more
The lithe caman and drive the hurling ball.
In Walsh's, Kelleher's and Semple's grace
He sees again his glorious youth of yore,
And mourns his dead compeers and Ferdia's fall.

— by Rev. James B. Dollard, D.Litt.

and dedicated to 'Drug' Walsh of Mooncoin, Tom Semple of Thurles and
Jim Kelleher of Dungourney.

Coaching at the Crossroads

By Eugene McGee

THE most dominant theme in our approach to Gaelic football, and to a lesser extent hurling, during the past five years, has been coaching. As recently as 1960, the word coaching was not in the vocabulary of the average G.A.A. member. However, the success of Down in winning the All-Ireland finals of 1960-'61 and even more so in 1968 proved to many people that coaching was something worth thinking about. And like many innovations, the new approach to team preparation brought forth one of the great controversies of our time.

At this stage a few definitions or at least explanations are necessary so that we may all be thinking on similar lines. The question is often asked what difference if any is there between the modern term "coaching" and the earlier words "training" and "practice."

Years ago teams used practice to prepare for big games. This usually took the form of kicking a ball aimlessly in and out from goal, backs against forwards and some fitness training, in the form of long cross-country runs or lap after lap of the football field. This was a haphazard system which was rarely planned out beforehand and very often had no fixed targets either in the long run or the short term. Players participated with the vague idea of "getting fit" for some big game and following that game they

ceased training or started all over again, depending on the result.

While this was the general rule there were many notable exceptions, especially when full-time collective training was allowed and many county teams would come together for two or three weeks for a residential period of training, usually for an All-Ireland semi-final or final. If there was a distinction between "practice" and "training" it was in that the latter incorporated some physical fitness work, whereas the former rarely involved anything but kicking or pucking a ball.

Gradually as G.A.A. players began to participate in other sports, such as basketball, golf, tennis and athletics, the idea of more intensive preparation for the perfection of the skills of hurling and football came into being.

The realisation that players could actually be taught to master the special skills of our games brought new hope to the underdogs, the counties who had to play second fiddle to those who were supposed to have more natural ability. The word used to describe this teaching of the skills at individual and team level was coaching.

The first counties to prove the efficiency of the new approach under match conditions were from Ulster and from the Six-Counties, in par-



Mick Ryan, second from left, giving an out-door lecture at the 1968 Gormanston Hurling Coaching Course.

ticular. The main reason for this was that their form of welfare state living provided much better sports facilities especially at post-primary school level. In 1956 and '57, Tyrone won its first Ulster senior title, as did Derry in 1958 and Down in 1959.

Three first timers in four years, after 70 years of failure, proved the potential of coaching in Gaelic football. But although team coaching has progressed a great deal in this decade, even to the extent of officially organised coaching courses for both hurling and football, further development of the idea may bring up new controversies and new problems.

To be really successful, coaching must involve to a greater or less degree, professionalism. Those who coach must be paid for their services and those who make themselves available to be coached must be compensated for the time they spend. Such is the approach of modern society to work and leisure. It is not a trait of individuals alone and if this was appreciated by the visionaries who proclaim the ideals of true amateurism we would avoid much of the controversy which plagues the subject of coaching in the G.A.A. at the moment. True there are mercenary coaches and just as definitely there are mercenary players, but, by and large, these are the exceptions.

To become a suitably qualified coach is a long and costly business. It involves some years of study in a physical education college in the Six Counties or abroad, since there are no such colleges in the Republic. And if physical educa-

tion, including coaching of football and hurling, is a man's livelihood then he must be paid for the services he provides. In the Six Counties up to now the problem of paying coaches has been side tracked to a degree, since most of the coaches are already employed locally as teachers of physical education.

But in general, the critical point in the future development of coaching is rapidly approaching. The basic theory behind the system has been accepted in principle by the majority and only a minority will deny the desirability of coaching. The stage has now been reached, however, where a decision will have to be made with regard to the amount of professionalism, which will be tolerable, firstly from the coaches and secondly from the players.

For instance, what county will be the first to employ a football or hurling coach on a full time basis? The advantages of having such a man available to the clubs for instruction in the skills of the games, especially hurling, are obvious but there are many who hold that you cannot have professional coaches and amateur players.

Coaching has done and is doing tremendous work for the games in the once weak areas. It would be a great pity if a side-issue such as professionalism should be allowed to impede the road to even further progress. Football especially needs new inventiveness and variable styles if it is to hold its attraction as a major spectator sport. The only way this can come about is by encouraging more constructive thought through coaching.

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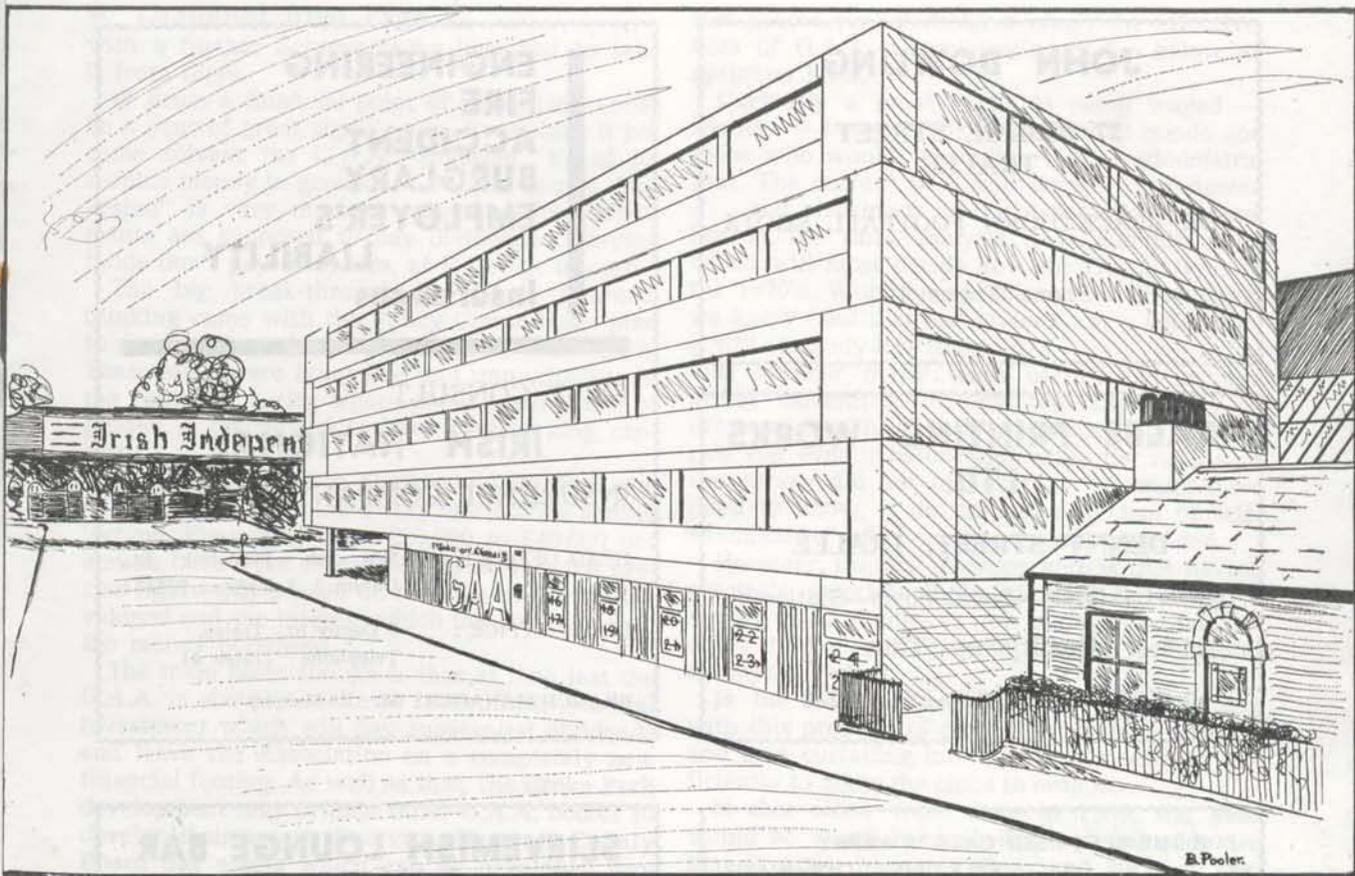
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An artist's impression of the proposed office block at Croke Park.

This year will be remembered— be it for good or ill

By Frank Dolan

IT is likely that 1969 will be remembered. It is a year of great potential and, if a good part of that potential is seen to fruition, it will be a year worth remembering. If, on the other hand, the potential is rejected or squandered it will still be a year worth remembering — but, of course, for a different reason.

The following things could happen during 1969:

- The five-year Hurling Scheme could see the

fruit of its labours with all 32 counties competing in the All-Ireland minor hurling championship. This was the overall target of the Scheme launched in 1965 and the indications are that it will be reached. However, this is but the surface of things. Even more important than having every county field a minor hurling team in 1969 is that the progress made during the past five years be carefully examined and consolidated

- Continued on Page 29

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● Continued from Page 27

with a further Scheme being launched to take it from there.

● From a financial point of view, 1969 could be a year of great significance. Ever since it became solvent the G.A.A. "invested" all of its surplus money in grounds — but, of course, "invested" is very much a misnomer for investments are supposed to pay dividends. Playing fields don't pay dividends, at least not in cash.

The big break-through in G.A.A. financial thinking came with the Policy Committee's plan to develop the valuable sites around Croke Park. These sites were lying idle and unproductive in the centre of a city where every square-yard of ground is recognised to have vast earning capacity.

The proposed office block could result in the Central Council having a very worthwhile annual income. Figures of from £20,000 to £40,000 per annum have been mentioned. However, the precise figure will depend on how the scheme is developed and the interest which has to be paid on the money borrowed.

The main point though is that at long last the G.A.A. is about to make an investment — a real investment which will pay substantial dividends and leave the Association on a completely new financial footing. As well as that, the Croke Park development may prompt other G.A.A. bodies to develop their assets. And virtually every County Board has assets which can be developed provided those in charge approach the task from a hard-headed business point of view.

Yes, the G.A.A. could strike gold in 1969 — provided the men of small minds (which the Association has always had in great numbers) do not prevent it from doing so.

● A big break-through in Association administration could also come about in 1969. It is obvious to anyone who has examined the administrative structure of the G.A.A. that it is trying to manage in 1969 with a system devised

and geared for 1919. As a result the effectiveness of G.A.A. administration is far below an optimum level.

Currently a great battle is being waged — silently — between the men of small minds and those who would streamline G.A.A. administration. The current year will decide the outcome . . . and also much of the Association's future. For in the final analysis it is administration which will most decide how the G.A.A. fares in the 1970's. With the administration system that we know (and that our father's knew before us) it will certainly lose in the '70's.

● Another major work carried out by the Policy Committee in 1968 was the survey of urban clubs. The G.A.A. never had this type of rule run over it before and while the results of the survey did not tell all that we might have liked to know, it did initiate a system of self-examination which can be greatly extended.

However, the real question here is that having precisely ascertained the state of the clubs (a survey of rural clubs is now about to be launched by the Policy Committee) will the Association do anything about it?

Is the G.A.A. really capable of contending with this problem of rectifying the club position and then curtailing intercounty competition sufficiently to allow the clubs to breathe.

If this alone were done in 1969, the year would be worth remembering but the odds are that it won't happen. Plans and surveys, yes, but action — no. As a result 1969 may be remembered as the year when the G.A.A. had all the necessary information but lacked the ability, or determination, to translate information into decision.

Yes, 1969 will be a significant year for the G.A.A. — significant for good or for ill.

But then every year during the next few years will be significant . . . for these are the years which will decide whether the G.A.A. assures its future or signs its death warrant.

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Quiz . . .

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1. Why is a pound of butter heavier than a football?
2. How many rules in the "Official Guide"?
3. Who is the Patron of the G.A.A.? Is it Cardinal Conway or Dr. Morris, the Archbishop of Cashel?
4. How often can the Association elect a new President?
5. What would be incorrect about a rule in the "Official Guide" stating: "The field of play shall not be less than 80 yards long and 60 yards wide?"
6. Only 16 men have had the G.A.A. distinction shared by James Moore and P. R. Cleary. What was the distinction?

Well, how did you do? For the answers to those six questions see page 34.

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John

O'Donoghue

—keeping them out

By Donal Collins

A lot of people, if asked for an opinion on the best individual display of 1968 by a Tipperary hurler, would plump without too much hesitation for Mick Roche's exhibition on All-Ireland day. Very fine it was, without question, on the score of style and flair. The very size of the occasion enhanced it, too.

All the same, I think we saw one better when John O'Donoghue piled save upon save against Cork in the Oireachtas final. A goalkeeper, in one way, has the finest chance of all of the absolute epic display. There is something splendid in isolated defiance. You can nearly count the goals that didn't come. Splendid out-field hurling is not quite so tangible in its results: with a goalkeeper everything is sharper, more clear cut, its value solid and immediate.

The Oireachtas final belonged to Cork on general play, at least sixty per cent of it. Of shots at the Tipperary goal there was no shortage at any stage. But O'Donoghue, in action from flag-fall, hit a rare blend of inspiration, positioning and control. He also had good fortune on his side, for it is a vital ingredient in all the best displays between posts: shots hit to the right place, shots sighted just in time . . . But it is the man in form who finds things going consistently well for him. So John's display had both quantity and quality.

I was a little sorry for one thing, however. If we had the right instinct for how to salute an occasion and put the proper crown on it, the goalkeeper would have been up there with Mick Roche to take the Oireachtas trophy. But maybe he wouldn't have wanted that sort of personal recognition, being a realistic sort of man, grateful for the good display but always conscious of the eternal vigilance needed to stay stopping them.

But let's retreat in time to the beginnings. One evening at the "Glen" in Thurles early in 1963, Paddy Leahy did the writer the honour of asking for an opinion on O'Donoghue. The question of goalkeeping was in the air at the time. Donal O'Brien of Knockavilla, our goalie in the successes of 1961 and 1962 — and a player who rose to every big day — had gone to America.

With due modesty, or shameless lack of it, I quote my reply: "he'll be your goalkeeper for years." As a forecast it wasn't all that daring, really. The dark, slim youngster who won the Harty Cup with Tipperary C.B.S. in 1959 — surely the old Cup's most surprising experience — had always looked a natural. I thought so when St. Kieran's beat them at Thurles in the Colleges All-Ireland final, for he stayed very steady under fire.

He took the usual progression to county minor. Tipperary won the 1959 title, which was to be their last to date, though no one would have bet on it at the time. On he went to U.C.C. In the unusual skull-and-crossbones jersey he first made a senior name, doing a bit of goal-keeping piracy against Glen Rovers in particular. Just prior to this he had played in a Tipp. trial and been the outstanding new face on view.

A place for the 1963 championship seemed assured. Tipp had lost their League title to Kilkenny. But O'Donoghue wasn't available when the championship got under way. A Co. Board investigation into the U.C.C. team that beat Glen Rovers led to his being ruled out for Tipp. This investigation, begun long after the game, seemed to conflict head-on with the rule which says action must be taken within seven days. But the Munster Chairman ruled against the U.C.C. appeal. So O'Donoghue's Tipp. debut had to wait. In fairness to Roger Mounsey of Toomevara, it has to be said that no one could have improved our situation when Waterford beat Tipp. at Limerick. No goal was scored — by either side.

No beginner has it harder than the goalie. He's awfully vulnerable. The backs haven't learned his ways — the route he takes in clearing, even the sound of his voice calling the odd piece of warning or instruction. Nor does he know much of their methods and preferences.

John O'Donoghue came on at Nowlan Park for his first big test. There are easier places to start — for a Tipp. man. He won no instant acceptance. Some said he had gone too low for the ground balls and had left himself helpless to finish the job properly. Going down like that is often a characteristic of the debutant. The main thing in his head is: "stop it anyhow." He's not relaxed or sure enough of himself to think ahead of the stop. He's taking the save by stages, as it were — not making save, escape and clearance one fluent operation.

Anyhow, he kept his place to meet Limerick

at Nenagh in a semi-final of the 1964 League. That was the day Limerick took a strange dislike to Thurles, probably as a result of the recent choice of Thurles as Munster's main ground for development. That Nenagh game went terribly close to ending O'Donoghue's Tipp. career. Limerick had a quick goal from a drive of some distance. The goalie had some frightening moments right through. At this, a good number of people concluded that he just wouldn't do, but Paddy Leahy and company were not swayed into drastic judgments.

And here he still is, a Munster choice, at least as good as ever, five busy seasons later. The five he has completed make a tidy group. Two winning All-Irelands to start with, a first-round defeat, two losing All-Ireland finals. By Tipp standards, a lot of green flags waved last year, Wexford alone putting up fourteen in three meetings. In the first, at New Ross, the goalie saved us from twice the four goal total. In the League play-off, three were Paul Lynch frees.

In the All-Ireland the world knows, from television, that O'Donoghue stopped at least three remarkable ones. The conclusion is inescapable: the Doyle-Maher-Carey line has not yet been adequately replaced. Sheer strength, great steadiness and vast experience made the old threesome a wonderful barrier.

O'Donoghue's fine stature gives him great reach. He is smart enough not to over-use this on the shots that are well above the bar, knowing how chancy the block-down can be. Goalies, I fancy, tend to be either "hand" men or "stick" men. Reddan did a lot more stick-work than hand-work, for instance. His predecessor, little Jimmy Maher, was definitely a catcher. O'Donoghue does not lean much to either category, being accomplished both ways. At times, he switches the hurley to the left hand and grabs the ball with his right, reversing the process before clearing. He's very fast away after the catch, going mostly to his right.

Quiz Answers

1. A pound of butter is heavier than a football because Rule 139 says that a football shall weigh from 13 to 15 ounces.

2. There are 272 Rules in the "Official Guide."

3. Both Cardinal Conway and Most Rev. Dr. Morris are Patrons of the G.A.A.

4. The Association can elect a new President every year and a President can hold office for no more than three years. The tradition is that a President be re-elected unanimously until the three-year term has expired.

5. There is nothing incorrect about such a Rule. The field of play referred to is for Rounders and is specified in Rule 261 of the "Official Guide."

6. James Moore and P. R. Cleary were both General Secretaries of the G.A.A. Both held the office, then honorary, prior to the turn of the century.



In training at Thurles — Theo English comes temporarily out of retirement to test O'Donoghue

One thing he is very good at is timing the flick away after a ground save. Too soon a flick might put the ball in good position for an attacker, so the goalie lets him follow up, then knocks the ball aside at the last second, letting the forward charge harmlessly past as the goalie goes after the ball.

Fitness is one thing that has never bothered John. Being a county footballer as well as hurler he plays a great number of games in a season. And when our brief close-season comes he has badminton, at which he is county standard also. All in all, the sort of fellow who is apt to be there at the top for a long time yet.

Tipp Marksmen

THE top scorers in competitive and challenge games, Railway Cup, representative and tournament games for Tipperary hurling each year since 1956 :

	Points		Score	Games	Average
1956	60	P. Kenny	9 - 33	11	5.45
1957	52	P. Kenny	11 - 19	13	4.00
1958	59	J. Doyle	4 - 47	12	4.91
1959	85	J. Doyle	11 - 52	16	5.31
1960	108	J. Doyle	12 - 72	13	8.30
1961	74	J. Doyle	10 - 44	12	6.16
1962	99	J. Doyle	13 - 60	15	6.60
1963	103	J. Doyle	14 - 61	16	6.43
1964	117	J. Doyle	10 - 87	17	6.88
1965	111	J. Doyle	12 - 75	15	7.40
1966	46	D. Nealon	9 - 19	14	3.28
1967	53	D. Nealon	7 - 32	14	3.78
1968	64	J. Doyle	3 - 55	9	7.11

The Tipperary county football record was established by dual-performer Mick Keating. In 1966, he scored 4-24 (36 points) in 11 games, at an average of 3.27 points a match. That was a doubly historic score for the dual interprovincial, for it earned for him ranking as the first Tipperary footballer to head the Munster chart for a full season's campaign. He had a point to spare over Cork's Con O'Sullivan, who, however, played one game more than Keating.

The nearest any other Tipperary player came to this record was back in 1958, when Liam Connolly shot 4-18 (30 points) in seven games. Connolly and Keating are the only Tipperary footballers to better 25 points for a full season, and each achieved this only once — in 1958 and 1966 respectively.

Gus Danagher, who won interprovincial honours, scored 3-3 for Tipperary in a challenge game against Waterford in May 1964 — the best individual score by a Premier County footballer in the period under review.

ON RIGHT — a typical scene involving Sean McLoughlin. They gave him not an inch but he still got more goals than any player in recent years.



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Jimmy Finn— he was among the greats

ON June 14, 1959, Roscrea beat Borrisoleigh in the North Tipperary championship at Nenagh. In the record books — metaphorical, for we don't keep a formal account of these things — the game had nothing to set it apart. But it had one melancholy title to fame. That was the last appearance of a very fine hurler, though he didn't know it when the ref. ordered "backs back".

By all the laws, Jimmy Finn should be more or less hurling yet. If ever there was a durable type, the very epitome of steadiness, it was he. Good form seldom left him. But for the horribly bad fortune that brought him an eye injury he would surely have shared in the glories of the 'sixties. He was only 28 when the accident happened and must have had at least half a dozen more good years left in him.

Until we got a forward division going brilliantly in the mid-'sixties, it could be fairly said that Tipperary hurling leaned a little to the defensive side. Why this should be so is for psychologists rather than mere hurling men to solve. Is there a dour obstinacy in our countrymen's mentality that leads to stout-hearted defence rather than attacking ingenuity? We have certainly had many more defenders of first rank than forwards, whereas one has the feeling that

Cork and Kilkenny distributed their talents more evenly through the field.

When you've named Phil Cahill and Martin Kennedy from the 'twenties you have to ponder a lot before thinking of other attackers of the proper genius in the 'thirties and 'forties before coming on to excellent fellows like Paddy Kenny, Jimmy Kennedy and Mick Ryan in the 'fifties. The list of great backs is so long that I won't even begin it.

Even among the players themselves, like Pat Stakelum, Mickey Byrne and John Doyle, you'll find Finn taken for granted as a great man. That sad day in 1959 saw the end for him. The beginning, for this writer at least, goes back to a day in the spring of 1946. Our Harty team at the C.B.S., Thurles, was training for another unsuccessful crack at the fine St. Flannan's team of the period. For the last days of preparation we were allowed the privilege of a practice run on the main pitch at the Sportsfield.

One afternoon as we left after the session there was a game on outside between teams from the junior classes. We watched idly. The play of one lad in particular struck me. He was doing an awful lot of easy, relaxed clearing from centre back. Young Finn of Borrisoleigh, it transpired. Four brief years later he was marking Jim Langton in an All-Ireland final.

Few men can have made so firm and immediate an impact. The usual uncertainty of the newcomer passed him by. There, fully fledged, was a close-marking, tenacious wing-back on the senior county team of 1950. A year earlier he had drawn the main sting from Kilkenny's minor team by holding blonde-haired Dick O'Neill at centre-back. A county medal came his way the same year, and a second the next year when "Borris" beat Carrick.

It would be silly — as well as unfair to Langton — to say that the young fellow completely subdued him in that 1950 game. In fact, the veteran forward had a great first half which left his team perfectly poised to go on and win it. But an oddly drab and scrambling match eventually went to Tipp on Paddy Kenny's goal to which the late Jack Mulcahy replied on — or perhaps after — Con Murphy's call of time.

Finn's place was now assured. He was the young captain when the third of the three-in-a-row arrived in 1951 against Wexford. In the years of League success and championship failure till 1958 his main honours were Leagues in '52, '54, '55 and '57, and a third county medal in 1953. In that final, against Boherlahan, Finn had one of his greatest days.

The League finals of '56 and '57 saw him in great fettle, too. It is a striking testimony to him that while Wexford were wiping away Tipp's fifteen-point lead in '56 Finn was holding Tim Flood scoreless at both wing and centre back. And Flood was certainly one of the outstanding forwards of the time, a darting, fast-striking and brainy man to try and solve.

One of the minor tragedies of Tipperary hurling in the mid-fifties was the fact that Finn had to play full back in both '54 and '55 when Cork and Clare got the better of them. His primary value as an attacking wing-back was utterly lost, as Bobby Rackard's was when O'Donnell got hurt in the '54 All-Ireland final. Tony Brennan had retired. Michael Maher hadn't matured in '54, so Finn was asked to fall back. He did very well on Willie John Daly, another man out of his proper quarters, but Pat Barry snapped up the well-remembered rebound off Reddan's chest for the goal that mattered.

In '55, Finn would have been released to his usual spot but for the fact that Maher got put off in the League in the company of Wexford's Tom Ryan. So he had to stay on the square's edge — where there was remarkably little play — while Clare beat them. Finn's part in the '58

revival, in a great line with Doyle and Wall, was his last great service to Tipp.

Behind the statistics there is always a man. The first great merit he had was temperament. No matter the circumstances he was always coolly calculating, unruffled by friend, foe or crowd. Behind an unemotional manner lay a grim intensity of purpose. But his real trademark was closeness. In all the defensive arts he was a true master. The blockdown, the well-timed pull, the timing to get in fast, the persistence to match every twist and turn: Jimmy had them.

How often he was in line to collect Byrne's quick ground ball and send it on its way with interest, either with a fast double or rounding his man in possession with that grand side-step. This was a favourite method. Baulking him was not easy. He had a neat way of escaping it. Instead of throwing up the ball out from him, as so many do, he dropped it low and close to himself. Then he simply made room by stepping back as he swung, leaving an opponent puzzled at failing to stop him.

Nowadays it's farming and coursing for him — and much success at both as the "fanciers" will tell you. But for those of us whose admiration of a hurling craftsman extends beyond exclusive attention of today's heroes, he's still out there clearing them on the fields of memory.

Read the _____

IRISHWOMAN'S JOURNAL

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A Farewell

to

Liam Devaney

JOHAN O'DONOGHUE more or less monopolised the attention in Tipperary's dressing-rooms after last year's Oireachtas final. The people who weren't talking to him were talking about him. He had given a display of goalkeeping that merited, and gave more than usual meaning to, the term "classic."

On the far side of the room, drawing little notice, another Tipp hurler hauled off his jersey. He had done it countless times, in circumstances happy and unhappy. This time was, in a way, a blending of both. The next morning Liam Devaney handed a terse note into Tommy Barrett's house. It asked the Co. Secretary to tell the selectors that Liam was now in retirement from intercounty hurling. The message ended with best wishes for the future to selectors and teams.

The same evening he came along and showed it to your reporter. I wasn't exactly surprised. We had had a candid talk a few weeks before. It was obvious that Devaney was meditating this

course of action. He hadn't then chosen between the pros and the cons. At the time Borrisoleigh were still in the county championship and Liam was inclined to think he'd be more useful to his club as a current county player than as a former one. The veteran needs regular games more than anyone, if he's not to lose condition and form quickly.

He could also see the opposing arguments. Age and length of career — he began as a Tipp senior in the Oireachtas of 1954 — indicated that there couldn't be an awful lot of Tipp mileage left in him. He had a pretty reasonable year's play behind him — better, in fact, than his previous campaign: a good game in that famous—if that's the word — League final; a first quick goal against Cork; Tipp's lonesome point in the second half on Sept. 1; and a stout effort on Dan Quigley, for a man of his dwindling stamina; a leading role in raising Borrisoleigh prestige to its highest point since the Kennys, Finn — and the young Devaney — had won fame in the early 'fifties.

By John O'Grady

But "Borris" couldn't get past Thurles Sarsfields at Nenagh in last year's semi-final, and Devaney's motives for holding on became weaker. He played the first half against New York in the challenge at Birr. He came up as an intended sub for the absent Keating in the Oireachtas semi-final against Kilkenny, but didn't play. For the Thurles game he was still in the subs. To those of us who think that a good ending is a necessary complement to a good career this sort of thing had an unfitting air about it.

The fates were kinder than they looked. Young Mickey Coen chosen for right corner forward, decided to play with Moyne-Templetuohy in the first game. Devaney stepped up on deck for an active rather than a passive ending. It would be nice to say he had a great, or even a very good, game. He hadn't. His instinct for the right move, his way of feinting out of tackling range, his overhead delivery to beat the block-down — these were more or less still there, in somewhat diluted form. On Monday night he said: "I knew what to do. But the eve was out. I wasn't putting the passes where I meant to." But he fought it out, against Denis Murphy on the right and later against young Maher on the other side. And he performed one deed which had a great influence on the result: he earned the free that Roche slapped into the Cork net for a real life-saver just when Tipp were on the run after McCarthy's goal and Barry's point.

The arguments which had been competing in his mind produced a firm conclusion, at last. The good note had sounded; it was time to go. He said nothing at the time, of course, not being a fellow to provoke attention there and then.

In both his decision and his timing Devaney was correct. But, then, he always had excellent timing! There's nothing as bad as an untidy part-

ing by a great hurler, a stragglng, half-hearted dithering between in and out. A Cork friend of mine used to put it rather well: "Go when they want to know why; don't stay till they begin to wonder when."

Devaney's career had quantity and quality. Both are necessary aspects of the higher reaches of the game. After about fifteen seasons of it a man's name has registered in a lot of people's consciousness; he is a semi-permanent part of the scenery. Without the quality, in a county at or near the top all the time, he wouldn't last so long.

It would be tedious to retrace his career laboriously, but "for the record" as they say, a little historical tour would be no harm. Two minor All-Irelands, '52 and '53, in the company of Wall and McLoughlin, were a good beginning. He was a senior sub, unused, in '54 when Bannon's goal was disallowed and Reddan's chest knocked a late, vital ball back to Pat Barry. What got him on the team in '55 was a flying display, scoring five points, in a tremendous Templemore tournament against Kilkenny. He was Tipp's sole forward success when Clare put them out of the championship. The next year produced a still-remembered taking off against Cork on the day the Leesiders came successfully from eleven points down. Devaney had switched from Philpott to Fuohy and was starting to move well when the fateful "message" came. In '57 he had a storming game when moved to midfield but it couldn't avert a disaster that owed something to a change of goalies in mid-stream.

The drought ended in '58, a year that has some claims to be regarded as the start of a decade of great success. Devaney was an influential reserve against Limerick and Cork, and, playing all the way against Kilkenny, drew out "Link" Walsh in

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the second half to loosen the fabric in front of Ollie Walsh. Having played what one writer called "a lone furrow" game in the loss to Wexford in '60, he had a wonderful year in '61. A Caltex Trophy as "hurler of the year" speaks eloquently enough. His centre-back work preserved Tipp's lead when Wall had to go off against Dublin.

As an accomplished ball-player he fitted beautifully into Tipp's forward mechanism with Doyle, Nealon, Keating, McLoughlin and McKenna in the vintage '64-'65 period, taking a full share in League as well as championship successes.

It's automatic to say that great players were great sportsmen. Sometimes it's even true! This is one of those times, for I've never heard friend or foe accuse Devaney of unfair tactics. He hadn't much time for trouble. A few years ago, in a tempestuous Tipp-Kilkenny League match at Nowlan Park, he was to be seen sitting down chatting amiably to his man while they were belting each other enthusiastically not too far away.

His hurling abilities were pretty comprehensive. In a way he suffered from this wide range of talents. Being so readily switchable he had now and then the mortification of seeing himself squeezed out of a place because someone got settled into one of his billets while he was on utility duty elsewhere. He played in every forward position, inside and out. As a centre he used to be faulted for dropping them in too high. Some experience inside made him a little wiser in that respect.

As a young man he did a lot of midfield duty, especially for Borrisoleigh. His centre-back ability was well-shown in '61 and I've often thought Tipp should have had him there against Limerick on that fatal day at Cork in '66 rather than "lost" upfield. On one isolated day Devaney even play-



Liam Devaney in full flight in the 1965 final

ed in goal for Tipp. That was in Tipperary town against Clare in '63, before O'Donoghue came onto the team, and the chosen goalie didn't turn up.

A man of parts, beyond a doubt. He now has to go through the adjustment period, getting used to idle Sundays, resisting the temptations that will come from the well-meant "you should be there yet" of the fans. But it won't be an outright break for him. The club will have his help. So will young Noel Dwyer, who has learned a great deal from playing near him and is now claiming a settled Tipp place. And, anyhow, if Devaney's departure is top-grade hurling's loss, it's at least a young wife and family's gain. The best of luck to you, Liam.

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EACH MONTH

The Class that was Jimmy Kennedy

THE Sunday before the 1967 All-Ireland final a rather unusual match took place in Thurles. There was little of competition about it, but a good deal of nostalgia, sentiment and fun. A team drawn from Tipp's 1949-'51 vintage played a variegated selection from other counties, men they had met in good earnest in their day.

Someone remarked to Mickey Byrne: "A pity there's no band." "Well," said that arch-joker, "they calculated that they could have a parade or a match, but not the two." This, of course, with reference to the doubtful fitness of the players. Jimmy Langton, toiling manfully in pursuit of a loose ball checked his effort in mid-course. "Mission impossible," he was heard to confess, leaving the ball to someone of better wind.

A few of them, like Pat Stakelum and Ned Wheeler, gave displays that weren't all that far behind their best. But these had been playing club stuff up to recently. Most were wisely cautious about sudden exertion and waited for the ball to do most of the travelling. All the same, once the ball did come you could see why these had been great huriers. The legs were weak — but the hands were still good.

A class player always keeps his hands. I've seen genuine veterans like Martin Kennedy and the late Jim Hurley flick the ball about with precision when they wouldn't run five yards. That day in Thurles illustrated the same fact, and in no one so well as in the case of Jimmy Kennedy.

His name first became familiar in his home county when he played with Dublin in Waterford's great triumph of 1948. Tipperary were looking about then for new men. But when it

was known that the Puckane man was "declaring" there were people who shook their heads. Centre-back Butler of the Dublin team had looked a more useful recruit, if he could be persuaded. He couldn't.

"Not strong enough for Munster hurling," was a common view on Kennedy. Perhaps, in the long run, there was something in it, for his career was not an extended one. He had two years of great success. In the six games of the 1949 championship he scored 6-36. This averages impressively at 9 points a game. Since his name and fame are generally linked to free-taking it is notable that 6-12 of the total came from play. In the 1950 series he scored 4-21 in five games. By the end of the 1950 campaign the scoring fluency had begun to go. He never really recovered from a hard game at Tuam in the semi-final with Galway — Reddan's great day. In 1951, he got 1-2 against Waterford, was dropped for the Limerick game, reinstated against Cork and left off for good after that wonderful Munster final.

Quality, you see, but no great quantity when measured against the long-playing records of many others. Jimmy has left a deep impression all the same. He was all artist. Tall and slender, he was of a refined physical type. A Ring, square built and sturdy, could absorb the hardest charge because you couldn't get under him with the weight of the tackle.

Physique shapes a hurler's game. The stylist often has to be that way. Yet we hear a chorus of "get into it" if he doesn't go headlong into the ruck. Thoroughbreds, too, make moderate enough-horses! Kennedy played the open game because it suited him. It was the defender's business to get him to close quarters.

Jimmy's two best days were the Munster finals of 1949 and 1950. Ten points were his contribution at Cork and Killarney, respectively. In the former year, Limerick were cruelly unfortunate. Not alone had Jackie Power a "border-line" goal disallowed, but Kennedy gave a sustained exhibition of free-pointing that wasn't equalled till Eddie Keher got the range against Waterford in the 1963 final. From all angles Kennedy lobbed them over with great consistency.

Maybe there's a technical lesson in the apparently unrelated feats of Kennedy and Keher. In one fundamental they were alike—a fixed stance throughout the lift and strike. The right foot never moved in mid-stroke as it does with most players. It's a basic golf technique, of course. The main problem for the hurler is in the lift of the ball. If it comes up smoothly, the odds are all on a score. But if it goes forward or back he's in trouble. He has to adjust his stroke and perhaps shift his footing to compensate for the off-centre lift.

Kennedy hardly ever went for a goal. In that department, there was Paddy Kenny's vicious lash to call upon. Paddy was the utter opposite to Jimmy. He threw the ball so far forward that you sometimes thought he wouldn't catch up with it at all!

There is often a tendency to undervalue a score got from frees, as if it were more or less a gift. In fact free-taking in the atmosphere and under the pressure of the big occasions tests nerve and method equally. The famed golf champion and great teacher Tommy Armour has something to say on a related matter. He tells of a friend, a pretty good putter, who criticised a player for missing a six-footer to tie for the U.S. Open of 1933.

"My friend bet me a quite substantial sum that he would sink a putt of the same length. He wanted to go right out to the 18th green and settle the wager. I said we'd wait. There was

no hurry. I wanted to give him plenty of time to think it over.

"Take some time and practise if you like," I suggested. Then I sent for a tape measure. I measured and carefully placed the ball. Following these preliminaries, that splendid, confident and opulent putter missed the hole by six inches."

It is one thing to toss a free nonchalantly over the bar in a training session, but the pressure has beaten many a good man when the free really matters. The best way to beat that pressure is to evolve a method that will not be too easily influenced by stress and strain.

Though in complete accord in the fundamentals, Kennedy and Keher still show differences. Jimmy had more flow in his swing; Eddie is stiffer-wristed. A long back-swing against a short one, in fact.

His tally of 6-12 from play in 1949 indicates that Kennedy was far from ineffective when the ball was moving. In top form all he needed was one good glimpse of the posts. There were times when you'd say he was well and truly bottled-up. He had a way out of that which more hurlers ought to learn. He just threw the ball above head-height and struck like a tennis-player serving, getting away with it out of sheer unexpectedness.

Why didn't he last longer? Perhaps his appetite waned under the heavy shocks of body-charging defenders. If he had been better at riding the tackle and swaying out of reach, all could have been well. But he wasn't a Ring or a Doyle in that respect.

Kennedy's gifts were rare and precious. There was taste and delicacy in his hurling but he had the misfortune to come along at a period when these qualities weren't given as much scope as they are today. In his own rarified field, however, he remains an unequalled artist.

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A First Title for Roscrea

ROSCREA has always denoted fine bacon. It still does. The town in Tipp's far North-east corner, within a good stone's throw of Offaly, collected a second distinction in 1968. Its hurlers got themselves a place on the long and splendid roll of Tipp hurling champions. This was full compensation for the previous year when the fellows in red came to Thurles with hopes as sanguine as their colours.

But they seemed a shade excited at the size of the occasion, hurled without the right kind of composure, gave away two scrappy goals in as many minutes and started playing only when the sands of time were getting scarce. So Carrick Davins won their second title in succession and Roscrea took the road north, with three losing finals as the club's mark in the record books.

Last year there was no Carrick to receive them. Mick Roche's county and Munster best had taken a tumble in their own southern constituency in the second round against Theo English's Marlfield. The number of the round was

the significant thing. Under the loser's group system in operation — now mercifully scrapped — Carrick's exit was irretrievable.

In some people's minds, all this tended to devalue whatever happened afterwards. Carrick had certainly looked entitled to be favourites in anyone's book. But the fact that they could lose to a Marlfield team that cut no ice afterwards, showed them quite beatable by teams that were certainly better than Marlfield. We must look to the present year to make a direct Roscrea-Carrick comparison, if the fates are that way inclined.

So when Roscrea came out for the 1968 final it was Sarsfields' blue that decorated their opponents. An ironical common denominator between the teams was that each had lost its very first game in the respective divisions — not quite the disgrace it would have been in the days of the straight K.O. A lot of teams took the first game less than seriously. Defeat was inexpensive; it could even be beneficial.

A lot of moral pressure lay heavy on John Dillon and his Roscrea men. If nothing succeeds like success, failure is apt to reproduce itself, too. The Blues had known enough success — ten out of eleven starting in 1955 — to be able to look another in the face and not be frightened, even if Sarsfields power had ebbed a bit as age took its toll of their veterans.

Roscrea, by sharp contrast, had only disappointments to show. Their five North title wins in 1936, 1945, 1954, 1963 and 1967, had been shadowed by final losses to Sarsfields (three), Holy-cross and Carrick. In 1946, they had drawn before losing. That team introduced a striker of lovely balance, low trajectory and classic smoothness, named Mick Ryan. He won three All-Irelands and also county championships in Kilkenny and Cork. The 1963 effort ran up against Tony Wall, Mickey Byrne and the rest, when Sarsfields were a veritable machine in the thoughtful method of their team-work.

The team that was hoping to improve on the record had only one name that could reasonably be called a household word. Kieran Carey never laid claim to elegance. But, starting in 1958 as a full-back, when Michael Maher couldn't field out in the first round, Carey proved to have a deal of durability. Now, with five All-Irelands won, he was bent on completing the collection.

If it is true that the child, or rather the boy, is father to the man, Roscrea could logically expect to win a senior championship one of these days. Their minors had established a near-monopoly that paralleled Sarsfields senior dynasty. From 1958 to 1967, they had lost only two of the ten titles played. And all this was firmly founded on earlier achievements in the Bord na nOg juvenile grades.

The path to the final had been rugged enough to steel Roscrea for another close-run game. Draws with Borrisokane and Lorrha had been a sluggish beginning for a North champion side, but then North senior form is notoriously level and liable to yield all sorts of results. Oddly enough, the North final was their easiest victory on the local front, for Borrisoleigh fell a long way short of their own hopes and were out of it much earlier than friend or foe could have foreseen.

But there was another obstacle between "Ros" and the county final. Moyne-Templetuohy, after beating Thurles Sarsfields by a point in the rather meaningless first round, had done a Borrisoleigh in the Mid final and failed to give true

running when they met Sarsfields a second time. Now, with little to lose and inhibitions cast aside, they tore into Roscrea with some abandon and made the North champions look decidedly patchy. The greater merit won out, all the same, even if it was an uncomfortably slender issue at the end.

In the Roscrea quarters before the final the air was heavy with a mixture of hope and fear. Not to have a win on your dossier always enlarges the psychological burden. They were wondering if the shakiness in the semi-final indicated declining form at the end of a long campaign. They were wondering with some anxiety whether Jimmy Doyle would start for Sarsfields. The whole hurling world knew of Jimmy's All-Ireland misfortunes. He had come in — had to come in, rather — to save Sarsfields from the Borrisoleigh threat at Nenagh, and on one leg, more or less, had done it.

The word soon came, and it wasn't immediately believed, that Doyle would not start. However, this was no guarantee that he wouldn't appear at some stage. The first passages of play were not entirely re-assuring to Roscrea. They got a 1-3 lead fast enough, but then McLoughlin glided in an excellent goal at the other end and,

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for a time, Roscrea's ownership of a very good breeze was paying slow dividends. The Thurles defence was letting fly with some severity and little Joe Tynan, their long-time minor star got a quick knock on the leg.

The goals that looked "on" did not come. "Blackie" Keane, a genuine veteran, was still a safe and sensible goalie for Sarsfields. Just in time, however, the points started to flow, many off Francis Loughnane's accurate frees. So Roscrea went in, 1-8 against 1-2, to the fore.

In the many discussion-groups on and under the new Stand the general feeling was: "It's not enough of a lead considering the wind." If McLoughlin could snap a goal on so limited a supply, what would he do when the wind carried more chances his way? Up to this point, the most obvious cost of Doyle's absence had been Sarsfields' waste of three or four close frees.

When they re-appeared, Jimmy Doyle was on. It looked, to many observers, the opportune time and state of the parties for him to do so. Yet it was from here on that Roscrea laid solid claim to their crown, and put the proper authoritative touch to the winning of it. When the crisis of confidence came, they met it with character, courage, and their finest, most fluent hurling of the year. Far from getting shaky under Doyle's presence, it was then that their backs started to clear with calculation and method.

At half-time, Tadhg O'Connor had been their sole constructive defender in the halves, with the wind. Now Patsy Roland came to life, and Pat Dynan, who had come on at half-time, gave fine balance to the line on the left. From these three, the ball went to attack time after time, and it was late in the day before Sarsfields' desperate efforts put the Hogan-Carey-Dillon line to some trouble behind.

That solid and experienced man, Mick Minogue and the tireless rover, Francis Loughnane, won

midfield, clearly. Sarsfields' switch of T. J. Sempé — grandson of the great Tom — out of midfield, rather helped their rivals' cause. The crucial turning-point of the whole game was Harry Loughnane's finishing of the ball to the roof of Keane's net, after Francis had made a fine run. It gave "Ros" something more substantial to lean on and it pointed the direction the hurling tales were pointing.

Tynan had to go off at right-corner but fellow-minor Liam Spooner, with height and pace, was a more than equal replacement, and proved it with a grand point. In addition, his free running drew Sarsfields' defence out of close formation. Not all Tony Wall's resource could re-knit the fabric. The Army man, loyally turning out where many a man in his position would be refusing all appeals, could not roll back the years and find the extra yard or two to seal off the gaps, as he had done so often. Liam Brussels, at left wing, was perhaps the biggest problem of all.

So Roscrea looked safe as houses, with time passing. Yet Sarsfields, even in decline, had courage. Doyle goaled a free to give a gleam of hope, and Paul Byrne, son of Mickey, hit a nice one. But the lead was beyond reach and soon referee Moloney was spreading arms wide, in token of the closure.

And the long road of disappointment had turned gloriously at last. You never saw happier men—Old friends shaking hands as if they'd been away at the ends of the earth; players being hugged on all sides; veteran workers such as John Joe Maher and Martin Loughnane the object of special congratulations; captain John Dillon up there getting the cup and saying the right things very well; Sarsfields' representatives quickly into the winners' quarters and heard in appreciative silence, as they conveyed formal good wishes. And so back to Roscrea for the long climax of a happy day.

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