

Minor A Hurling Championship Final

Kiltha Og.....2-13

Bandon.....0-12

The Kiltha Og minor hurling team of 2018 created history on Friday night last the 14th of September, when they defeated Bandon in a gripping final, and in doing so brought home for the first time minor county hurling silverware to their club.

In a hard-fought battle where both sides gave their all, it took the Kiltha boys everything they had in them to overcome a dogged and determined Bandon outfit, who led for most of the game. But in a final hectic last ten minutes a Joe Stack penalty triggered a purple patch for his team where they outscored their rivals by 2-4 to 0-1 and ensured jubilant scenes at the final whistle for the boys in red and green.

The final was played in perfect conditions in a floodlit Eire Og pitch in front of a large and vociferous crowd. Referee Diarmuid Kirwan from the host club got proceedings underway at 8pm and it was the boys from the west who were first to settle. Indeed, by the 8th minute they had raced into a 0-4 to 0-0 lead, with the Kiltha lads guilty of some wayward shooting during this period. Cormac Griffin rifled over a long-distance point on the 9th minute to open our account, but Bandon quickly replied to maintain their 4-point advantage.

A clear pattern in the game was emerging at this stage. Kiltha Og were enjoying the lion's share of the possession and playing quiet well but were wasteful in attack. However, Bandon were more economical with their use of the ball which enabled them to keep Kiltha at arm's length. Conor Sweeney was strong and safe at full back while the halfback line of Mike Leahy, Daragh Moran and Ciaran Joyce were playing very well.

Three points from the stick of Joe Stack and a 65 from centre back Daragh Moran kept the scoreboard ticking over, so that by half time it was 0-8 to 0-5 in favour of the westerners.

A defining 30 minutes awaited this team in the second half and we all hoped and prayed they would get off to a whirlwind start. However, the pattern of the first half continued and the Kiltha lads were still finding it hard to put scores on the doors. A full 7 minutes passed before the first score of the half and it was the Bandon boys that got it to put them 0-9 to 0-5 ahead which was a decent lead considering the type of intense match that it was. But the Kiltha supporters had reason to cheer when 3 unanswered points from their talisman Joe Stack brought them within a point of their rivals with the game entering its final quarter. The Bandon boys were quick to respond though and quelled the Kiltha momentum with 2 pointed frees to open up a 3-point lead again with 10 minutes to go.

The game had now entered its decisive stage. Would Bandon see it out or could Kiltha finally find a spark to get themselves ahead in this game? Ciaran Joyce was moved to midfield and his fresh legs immediately made an impact on proceedings. He delivered a ball into the Bandon goalmouth where Joe Stack now

operating on the 14 was fouled and the referee had no option but to award a penalty. The tension was unbearable when Joe stood up to take the shot, but he bellowed the net to finally put Kiltha on level terms for the first time since the match began.

It was all to play for now and whoever would get their noses in front at this stage would surely hold a decisive advantage. Who would blink first?

On the 24th minute another Ciaran Joyce delivery was spilled by the Bandon netminder and he then lay down on the ball. A free in was awarded and we all expected the Birthday Boy Joe Stack to slot it over and to put us into the lead for the first time. But whether by accident or design only Joe really knows, he got a wonderful present, when the ball ended up in the back of the net to make it a 2-8 to 0-11 game with 6 minutes remaining.

Roared on by an enthusiastic Kiltha crowd the boys now started to open up. Another Joe free, followed by two beltors from Cormac Griffin opened up a flattering 6-point lead with the game entering its dying minutes. Bandon pegged one back on the 31st minute but a well-deserved long-range point from Ciaran Joyce after he fielded a Jack McGann puckout and a delightful score from Eoghan Martin finished the scoring for the night, to leave Kiltha Og County Champions after an absorbing hour hurling.

On a night when there were many heroes Jack McGann was a very influential figure in goals. His calmness under pressure and relieving clearances were very important and by keeping a clean sheet he insured that Bandon were never out of sight.

The full backline had plenty to do all night and were led superbly by Conor Sweeney. He has developed into a fine full back and cleared his lines time after time. Zak McAuliffe and Jack Knowles were on top of their job also and made sure any danger was snuffed out immediately.

In the halfback line the work rate of Mike Leahy was immense, and he turned over numerous Bandon attacks throughout the hour. At the heart of the defence Daragh Moran played the captains part to perfection. His reading of the game, his fielding and distribution and also some important long range frees were all characteristics of a man born to wear the number six for years to come. Alongside him Ciaran Joyce ruled the skies, and his subsequent move to midfield for the final quarter had a major bearing on the outcome of the game.

Ciaran Sice and joint captain Dylan Healy were well on top in midfield and ran themselves into the ground. Their hard running at the Bandon defence, and unbelievable work rate kept a steady supply of ball going into the Kiltha forwards.

Joe Stack Jr. celebrating his 18th birthday was the focal point of the attack and he can be more than pleased with his nights work. Although hampered by a troublesome knee injury he heroically played through the pain barrier and finished with a personal tally of 2-6. Eoghan Martin was busy as a bee as usual and Cormac Griffin chipped in with three points when they were most needed.

Inside Conor Ronayne, James Ahern and Kyle Quinn-Waites battled hard and were unlucky on the night not to get on the scoresheet. Also, Niall Morgan and Ben Napier when introduced had a positive impact on their team.

So well done to Billy Moran and his team. Bill Ahern is a superb young coach who has the full respect of the players and injects them with energy and enthusiasm. Also, to Barry Lawton, Chris Moran and James Leahy who helped out with the coaching and Bill's fellow selectors Ivor Knowles and Ruairi McGovern.

Team: Jack McGann, Zak McAulliffe, Conor Sweeney, Jack Knowles, Ciaran Joyce, Daragh Moran, Mike Leahy, Dylan Healy, Ciaran Sice, Cormac Griffin, Joe Stack, Eoghan Martin, Kyle Quinn -Waites, James Ahern, Conor Ronayne. Subs used Niall Morgan (30), Ben Napier (52)

Subs Andrew Kelly Cathal O Callaghan, Ciaran Flynn, Daire Coughlan, Darragh Cashman, Eoin Flynn, Gearoid Harney, Jack Bowles, James Butler, Kieran Geaney, Liam Padden, Luke McGovern, Niall Flynn, Niall McGrath, Odhran Cantwell, Peter Fleming, Peter Nestor, Rob Cahill, Shane Flynn, Shane Moriarty.

P.S. Before Kiltaha Og was formed in 2003 a parish team going by the name of Castle Rovers last won this title in 1990 beating Mayfield in the County final. They overcame Youghal in the East Cork and Grenagh in the Country Final. The team was managed by Barney Lawton, ably assisted by Pearse McLellan, Tony Cody and Jim Ronayne.

Team: John Cody, Patrick O Sullivan, Sean Fitzgerald, John O Doherty, Richard Daly, Colm Murphy, Dan Barry, Willie Brown, Brian Ronayne, Ciaran Collins, Jimmy Smiddy, Jim Morrison, Tony Barrett (cpt) Colm Hegarty, Oran O Keeffe, Ollie Murphy