

FOOTBALL >> Intermediate Championship Final



Hailing Michael Greene's vision

Joe O Muircheartaigh

PAT COSTELLO stood in midfield – panting, out of breath but exhilarated at the same time as his back was slapped every few seconds. Men, women and children – all decked in black and red or black and orange slapped his back so hard that he was nearly out on his feet.

A standing count later and he finally summoned up the words to explain his greatest day in Ballyvaughan's football history that dates back to 1890. "F***ing brilliant," he said. "Forgive my language but that's the only way to describe it. It was f***ing brilliant by them."

Fitting really. Primal stuff on a day when a football game went to the heart of what the little corner of Clare that is Ballyvaughan and Fanore is about. "It was guts," said Costello after drawing breath again. "It was determination and it was because of Michael Greene," he added.

Michael Greene was the man who died with his boots on, playing a junior game for Ballyvaughan in Doonbeg five years ago. He was young, in

his early forties, and with many more years to give to football in his beloved Ballyvaughan and district.

But, that day he was called away, his work done. Immediately the baton passed to those he had nurtured. Those kids just out of Ballyvaughan and Fanore National Schools, those coming up through the ranks of the club. Other officers and mentors in the club. Teachers in the schools too.

"Ballyvaughan always wanted to be senior," roared Pat Costello above the din. "It was a vision Michel Greene had for Ballyvaughan. We've carried on that for Michael Greene and achieved what he set out for us."

"Michael Greene started with many of those young lads at 12 years of age. We've been in 21 county finals – we've won 16 of those and drawn two. We've won another today day, but this is our greatest day. I can't believe it."

It was true though, as the slaps continued to rain down on Pat Costello's back as he moved from midfield across towards Cusack Park's Ard Comhairle for the presentation of the Talty Cup.

"The winning of this was two years hard work," said Costello on his journey. "I said it on the radio that we had a five year plan and I wasn't bluffing. That's the truth of it. We had five-year plan but after two years of hard training at intermediate we made it."

"Today what did it for us was that we kept it. They missed a few chances at the start of the game but we never panicked at all today. We had a younger team with an average age of 22 years and they've been training with two years for this."

"We're going to celebrate this one. It will be the party of all parties."

The party had already started – it will go on for the rest of the year and beyond thanks to the bragging rights that go with beating their neighbours in the biggest game in Ballyvaughan's history.

Some of the Cusack's players will join in as they drown their own sorrows.

Above: Ballyvaughan players celebrate the Intermediate final victory. Right: Stevie Hynes tries to fend off Patrick O'Connor as the clock ticks down. Eamon Ward

