

HURLING > UNDER 21B CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

Crusheen/Tubber triumph

Crusheen/Tubber 1-17 Broadford 0-13 (AET)

CRUSHEEN/TUBBER were eventually emphatic winners of the Under 21 B hurling title after extra time in Cusack Park on Good Friday evening, but few would have picked them as winners for most of normal time.

Indeed with the game entering its fourth minute of added on time Broadford still held a one point advantage before Cillian Mullins landed a dramatic and very late equaliser from sixty yards out. That score came three minutes after man of the match Ross Hayes had fired a penalty wide when a goal would have perhaps stolen the title for Crusheen/Tubber. The penalty award had looked a little harsh as Ronan Monahan was deemed to be fouled in the square, the missing of the strike subsequently prompted questions about whether Hayes should have levelled the contest instead.

That discussion became moot when Mullins landed the score that would send us to extra-time, a marvellous effort over his shoulder, going away



by Emmet Moloney

from goal and under extreme pressure. While Broadford would claim the score came after the allotted three minutes of injury time had elapsed, there had been a number of stoppages during injury time.

Once that score went over the momentum was all with Crusheen-Tubber and they thoroughly dominated the twenty minutes of extra time, over running an empty Broadford side that had nothing more to give. It is telling that all Broadford could muster in the last thirty two minutes of hurling was a solitary Niall O'Brien free. In that time they would be outscored 1-9 to 0-1.

The final didn't start that way however, with Broadford looking the likely winners for most of the first hour. They started brightly and led from the fourth minute when Diarmuid O'Brien's point from distance put them 0-2 to 0-1 clear, they would not be headed until extra time.

Their half back line aided their good start, Matthew Troy, Cian Crimmins and Jack Dillon all on top early, setting up plenty of attacks. Broadford would fire seven first half wides, many from decent positions and would ultimately regret that profligacy.

Two Brien frees were added to by points from Diarmuid O'Brien, James Vaughan, Darren Chaplin, Diarmuid Whelan and Sean Phelan in that first half, forging an 0-7 to 0-5 lead at the break. Crusheen Tubber were living off scraps in that half to an extent, three Mullins points (2 frees) were added to by an excellent long range point from Eanna McMahon and typical hard working score from the lively Breffni Horner.

The game changed early in the second half when Crusheen/Tubber switched John Fawle with Ross Hayes and instantly two problems were dealt with as both men revelled in their new roles. At full back Fawle was solid and comfortable while Hayes simply owned the ball for much of the second half in his own half back line.

An early Niall O'Brien free was quickly cancelled out as Crusheen/Tubber's new shape paid dividends. The combo would have the next three scores, two of them frees from half way from Hayes, the other a sniping effort from Horner.

At 0-8 apiece the contest tilted back in Broadford's favour and they now landed four unanswered points, Eoin Powell, Chaplin (2) and an O'Brien

free that had them four clear eleven minutes from the finish.

It was all Broadford would muster however as Crusheen/Tubber's stamina had them seeing out the hour stronger. A Mullins free and two Taffe scores had them within one with a full eight minutes to go, but drama would ensue before Mullins did finally level matters.

Broadford hit two poor wides, while the combo too spurned some glorious chances to square the game. The last sequence of play would see the ball eventually find Mullins, he twisted free to shoot over the equaliser and with it came the end of the normal time.

Crusheen/Tubber would embrace their second chance, grabbing their first lead since the opening three minutes when Ronan Monahan shot over thirty seconds into the first period of extra time, Breffni Horner following up within seconds to go two clear. A Niall O'Brien point was Broadford's only answer and score in the last half an hour of play.

Impressive sub Joey Dronney, only on the field for sixty seconds had a clever score to push his side two clear again before Aidan McNamara kicked a point to make the margin three. In the first minute of the second period the tin hat arrived in the form of James Taffe, catching close to goal and finishing confidently to the net. As time ran out players from both sides struggled with cramp and fitness, sub Dronney's freshness evident as he scampered away to seal the seven point win with another tidy white flag.

Crusheen/Tubber had a number of heroes, but Hayes was the difference. While Mullins saved the game in extra time and scored 0-5 in all, Hayes turned the contest with an exceptional last fifty minutes. Taffe (1-2) and

Horner (0-3) were also willing and effective, Fawle, Monahan, Howard, McMahon, O'Brien and sub Joey Dronney all standing up when needed in a team performance that had never say die written all over it.

Broadford's disappointment was obvious, they had numerous chances to seal the final in normal time, but had no answers in extra time. Darren Chaplin, Niall O'Brien, Cian Crimmins, captain Diarmuid O'Brien, Darragh Whelan, Matthew Troy and Jack Dillon were all on top for large portions of the hour.

Crusheen/Tubber

Colm McNamara; Tadgh Dean, Ross Hayes (0-2, all frees), Ian O'Brien; Eanna McMahon (0-1), John Fawl, Emmet Quinn; Aaron O'Brien, Ronan Monahan (0-1); James Howard, Cillian Mullins (0-5, 3 frees), Padraig Kelly; James Taffe (1-2), Aiden McNamara (0-1), Breffni Horner (0-3). **Subs** Gavin O'Brien for Aaron O'Brien, Cian Katelaar for Howard (both 38 mins), Jonah Culligan for Katelaar (51 mins), Joey Dronney (0-2) for Gavin O'Brien (68 mins), James Howard for Horner (78 mins).

Broadford

JC McMahon; Pairic Donnellan, Michael Hogan, Darragh Whelan; Matthew Troy, Cian Crimmins, Jack Dillon; Conor Phelan, Diarmuid O'Brien (0-1); Diarmuid Whelan (0-1), Darren Chaplin (0-3), Eoin Powell (0-1); James Vaughan (0-1), Niall O'Brien (0-5, all frees), Sean Phelan (0-1). **Subs** Cian Mulqueen for Vaughan (33 mins), Sean Cosindae for Conor Phelan (54 mins), James Hannon for Dillon, Cathal O'Connell for Powell (both 70 mins).

Referee Gus O'Callaghan (Feakle)

Left: Crusheen/Tubber's John Fawl is tackled by Broadford's Diarmuid O'Brien; Below: The victorious Broadford panel and management.

Natasha Barton

