

## MATCH BREAKDOWN

MAN OF THE MATCH  
CONOR FINNUCANE  
(CLARE)

IT was a brilliant display by the Lissycasey man — he turned on the style from start to finish with a flawless display of kicking, while he also set up the goal at the death for substitute Joe McGann. Finnucane has always had the ability to shoot the lights out in terms of scoring — it was great to see him do it in final for the county.

## WON &amp; LOST

CLARE'S inside forward line was the winning of the game — the aforementioned Finnucane was on fire, while Eimhim Courtney's three points were also crucial as was the goal from Joe McGann at the death. Limerick didn't have such penetration, with a Clare defence that was very porous in the meeting between the sides in the opening game of the competition was much tighter and coughed up little in the way of good scoring chances.

## ENTERTAINMENT VALUE

THERE weren't many patrons in The Gaelic Grounds, but it was an entertaining hour, especially from the Clare point of view with 1-11 of their total coming from play.

## WHERE TO NOW?

FOR Clare the fact that this represented the first time ever that Under 21 football silverware has been brought to the county is something to take from the season and the hard work put in. However, it's still all about championship and Clare must go to Tralee to take on a very good Kerry side with an All-Ireland on their minds. The night of 8 March in Austin Stack Park will tell all.

## TEAMS

## Clare

Killian Roche (Cooraclare), Ryan Griffin (Lissycasey), Darren Nagle (Liscannor), Colm Pyne (Killimer), Conal Ó hAiniféin (Éire Óg), Rory McMahon (Kildysart), Killian Brennan (Clondegad), Darragh Bohannon (Shannon Gaels), Cian O'Dea (Kilfenora), Alan Sweeney (St Breckan's), Keelan Sexton (Kilmurry Ibrickane), David Egan (Kilmihil), Eimhim Courtney (Éire Óg) (0-3), Cathal Downes (O'Curry's), Conor Finnucane (Lissycasey) (0-9, 1f), Subs Jonah Culligan (Ballyvaughan) for Pyne [28 Mins], Aidan Davidson (St Breckan's) for Downes [42 Mins], Joe McGann (St Breckan's) (1-0) for Courtney [51 Mins], Sean O'Donoghue (Cooraclare) for Bohannon [51 Mins], David Foran (O'Curry's) for Egan [57 Mins], Tom Hannon (St Joseph's Doora-Barefield) for Sweeney [61 Mins].

## Limerick

Raymond Noonan, David Connolly, Michael Donovan, Edward Sheehy, Jim Liston, Cormac Flanagan, Robert Childs, Michael Whelan, Eoin Ryan, Sean Murphy, Hugh Bourke (0-6f), Pádraig de Brún (0-1), Mark Connolly, A J O'Connor (0-3), Killian Ryan, Subs Jack Ryan for Brian Donovan [18 Mins], Kieran Daly for David Connolly [31 Mins], Josh Lyons for Ryan [37 Mins], Brian Fanning (0-1) for Whelan [44 Mins], Mikey Morrissey (0-1) for Mark Connolly [46 Mins].

Referee  
Donncha O'Callaghan (Limerick)

## FOOTBALL ▶ PETER MCNULTY UNDER 21 TOURNAMENT FINAL



# Famous first for Clare

Clare 1-12 - Limerick 0-12

At The Gaelic Grounds, Limerick

A DEVASTATING display by scoring by a trio of corner-forwards catapulted Clare to a deserved three-point win over Limerick to claim their first ever piece of silverware at Under 21 football level.

Conor Finnucane was the star turn with 0-9 over the hour, while Eimhim Courtney and Joe McGann chipped in with 0-3 and 1-0 respectively as Clare finally put away the stubborn resistance of the home side.

McGann, who was drafted into the fray for Courtney with six minutes remaining, made sure of the win in the 59th minute when he palmed home the only goal of the game to put Clare into an unassailable lead that they weren't about to cough up in the four minutes of injury time that followed.

With that Clare's campaign, which had started off with a four-point defeat to the Shannonsiders in Kilmihil on 6 January had concluded with a fourth win in succession and that maiden victory in 50-plus years of playing in the grade.

And it was what their performance over the hour deserved, with their haul of 1-11 from play as against Limerick's 0-6 showcasing a gulf in class that should have been reflected in a bigger margin of victory.

With corner-forwards Finnucane and Courtney running riot on the inside line Clare took control on the game from the early stages — both had grabbed points by the sixth min-



by  
Joe Ó Muircheartaigh

ute in a bright start and while Limerick were back on terms by the 11th minute it was Clare that eventually made their territorial dominance tell on the scoreboard.

A hat-trick of Finnucane points in as many minutes and then Courtney's second put them 0-6 to 0-2 up by the 20th minute, while another brace courtesy of the same double-act left it at 0-8 to 0-3 before ill-discipline at the back came against Clare and a healthy half-time lead.

Hugh Bourke rifled over three frees, while a fine effort from play by Pádraig de Brún ensured the gap was back to the minimum by the break.

Clare's slide continued when Limerick's sixth on the trot came from AJ O'Connor five minutes after the resumption, but that was the cue for the red-hot Finnucane to take control of things once more for Clare.

Points on 39 and 46 minutes eased Clare 0-10 to 0-8 clear, before another two-point blast on 56 and 57 minutes just after Brian Fanning had pegged a point back ensured Clare were armed with a three-point lead

entering the final minutes.

And that's how it finished at the end, with McGann's goal putting Clare five clear before a never-say-die Limerick side had further points from O'Connor and Mikey Morrissey and were then thwarted in their efforts to secure an equalising goal.

It was just desserts for the Clare team and the work that has been put in by management over the past number of months.

Last year the lack of proper support for Under 21 football in the county was articulated in a hard-hitting report delivered by the out-going management to a meeting of the Clare County Board.

In out-lining their frustrations, Neil Hawes, Martin Brennan and Dónal

Ó hAiniféin could have walked away from involvement with the team, but they stuck at it and prepared diligently for the first phase of the 2017, with the support being provided by Colm Collins' senior management in terms of training adding greatly to their cause.

The second phase is now building towards what most will see as a mission impossible - taking on Kerry down in Austin Stack Park in early March.

Above: Clare's Conal Ó hAiniféin coming out of defence in Sunday's Peter McNulty Cup final against Limerick in The Gaelic Grounds.

Below: Clare captain Darren Nagle receiving the Peter McNulty Cup after Clare's win over Limerick. Natasha Barton

