



The Killoran brothers, Aidan and David, who will line out for Bunninadden in Sunday's final

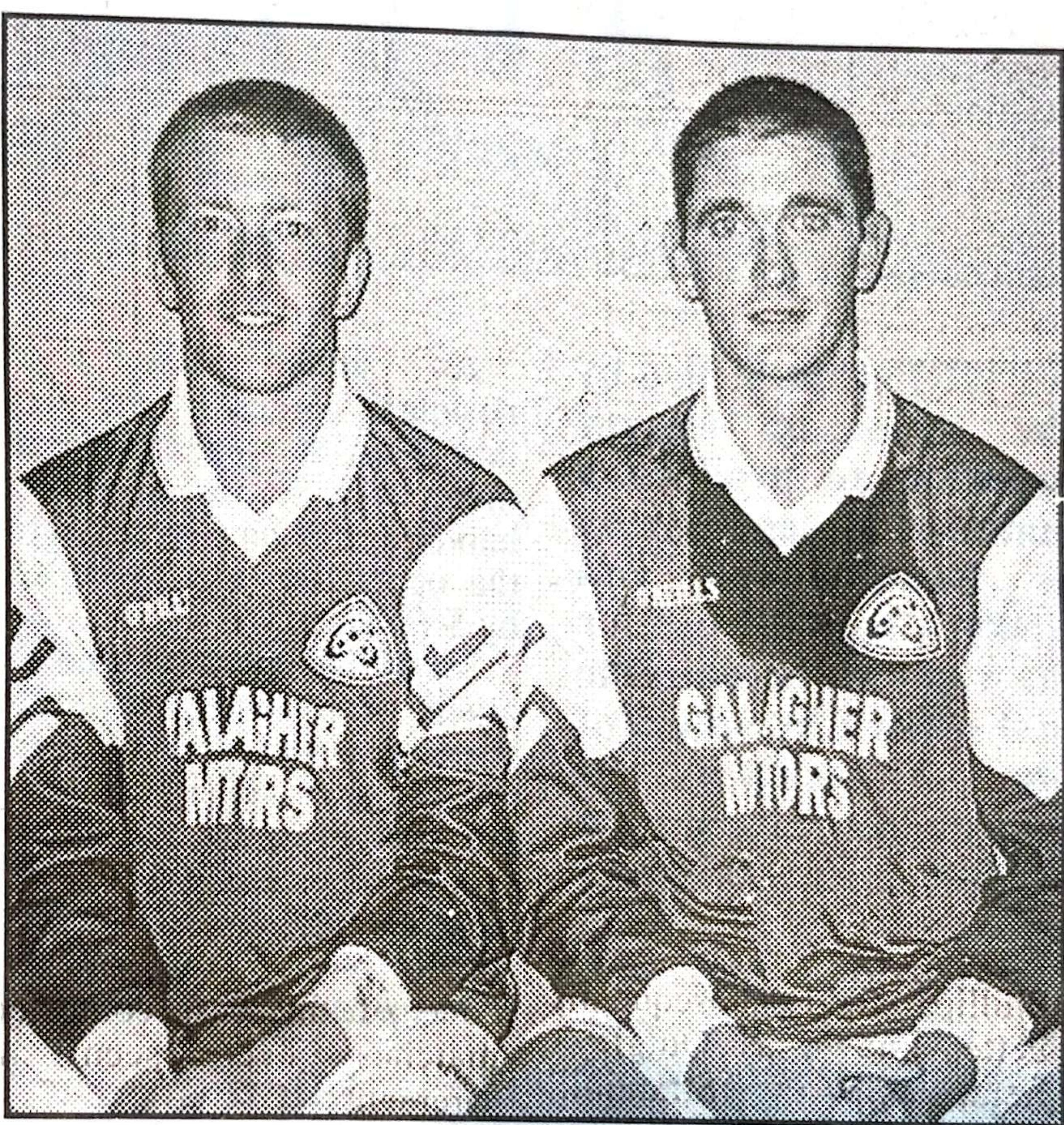


Peter Gallagher of Gallagher Motors Bunninadden presenting a set of tracksuits and kitbags to David Killoran, Club Treasurer on behalf of Bunninadden GAA Club. Also present is l/r: John Spellman, Selector; Gerry Perry; Brendan Gallagher, Committee; Richard Brennan (joint manager); Chris Marren, Chairman; John O'Flaherty, Secretary.

Kit Presentations



Seamus Hannon (NCF) presenting a set of togs to Michael Finn on behalf of Bunninadden GAA Club, also present is Dermot Gormley (Committee), John O'Flaherty (Secretary) and Chris Marren (Chairman).



John and Fergal O'Flaherty, key players for Bunninadden



Bunninadden's Gormley Clan: Mark, Derek, Liam Og, Shane, William



COUNTY FINAL SPE

LEO GRAY

3 MATCH

Brothers and Cousins



Bunninadden hope to end whirlwind year with ultimate prize

WHATEVER happens on Sunday, it has been a whirlwind year for Bunninadden. Less than twelve months ago, they won their first senior league title and now they are back in a County Championship final for the first time in one hundred and nine years. **By Leo Gray**

It's a real sporting fairytale, given added intrigue by the fact that Bunninadden's opponents in Sunday's eagerly-awaited showdown are Coolera who themselves are making their first appearance in a senior championship final since 1946.

There's so much sentiment and historical baggage attached to one of the most fascinating finals in years that the hardest job for the respective managers this week will be keeping the players focussed on the sixty minutes of football at Markievicz Park on Sunday.

While Bunninadden's joint-managers, James Kearins and Richard Brennan, are acutely aware of the priorities facing them in the build-up to Sunday's contest, they also recognise the overwhelming sense of history attached to the occasion.

"For a small rural club to get to the senior Championship final for the first time in over one hundred years is an amazing achievement and no matter what happens on Sunday, nobody can take that away from us", remarks James Kearins.

Pride

"Everybody is caught up in the historical significance of the occasion and that is understandable. There is great pride in what the team has achieved and rightly so", he adds.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that Bunninadden are satisfied just to get to a county final. Having defied the odds so far in a wonderful campaign, they are determined to finish the job.

"We've come this far on merit. We've proved that we were capable of building on last year's success in the league so why shouldn't we approach Sunday's final in a very confident and determined mood. We desperately want to bring the senior Championship back to Bunninadden", insists Kearins.

Bunninadden have had many good teams and some outstanding footballers down through the years but the big breakthrough at senior level always

eluded them. What has made the difference this season?

Confidence

"Self-belief", asserts Kearins. "Winning the league last year was an important milestone in the club's history. No matter what level a team plays at, they need to win something to give them the confidence and the self-belief to make progress. Psychologically, last year's success in the senior league was the breakthrough this club needed. It gave us something to build on and we started this season believing that we were good enough to compete with and beat the best. That self-belief is very important", he points out.

Bunninadden beat Castleconnor in their opening Championship game and although they lost to Coolera, Sunday's final opponents in the second round, they had done enough to qualify for the knock-out stages.

A quarter-final win over last year's semi-finalists, Easkey, set them up for a clash with St. Mary's in the semi-final. The Sligo town outfit started as favourites and looked to be heading for the final when they raced into a seven point lead early in the second half. It was then that the true character of this Bunninadden team was seen to devastating effect.

Character

"We looked down and out in the early stages of the second half but I never stopped believing that we could get back into the game", recalled Kearins.

"We got a bit of luck when St. Mary's missed a good chance of a goal at a stage when they were well in front but I don't think that should take away from the character and resilience we showed in fighting our way back into the game.

"Our greatest strength is our team work and we showed that quality in abundance against St. Mary's. I don't think we had any outstanding stars on the day but we had fifteen players who gave everything they had and that was

what won it for us.

"Every team has a few individual players who are key men and we are no different but, overall, it is our team work which is the biggest factor in our progress to date", the joint-manager maintains.

Experience

As a player, Kearins won a Connacht Championship medal with Sligo and played in six county senior finals and one Intermediate county final, winning on four occasions. In stark contrast to the players on the Bunninadden panel, he has been through it all before and that type of experience should prove invaluable as he prepares his team for Sunday's date with destiny.

"Hopefully, I'll be able to pass some of my experience on the players. This will be a new experience for them and there is bound to be a lot of hype surrounding the match, given that it is so long since either team has been in a county final. But that is all part and parcel of modern day football and I am sure our players will be able to handle that side of things", he says.

And what about the match itself? The Bunninadden joint-manager is anticipating a close, tight match.

"Coolera beat us by three points earlier in the Championship but I don't think there is a lot between the sides. I watched them in their semi-final replay against Eastern Harps and I thought they were very well organised and played with great discipline. They also beat the reigning Champions, Tourlestrane, in this year's Championship so their track record speaks for itself.

"From our own point of view, we will need to play to the very best of our ability all over the pitch. We know exactly what is required of us and we will go out and do our very best. If we get it right on the day, we'll be in with a great chance. We are certainly approaching the game in a very positive mood", says Kearins.



Bunninadden's Gormley Clan: Mark, Derek, Liam Og, Shane, William

Consistency the key to success for South Sligo club

CONSISTENCY is the key to success for Bunninadden in Sunday's county final clash with Coolera. That's the view of the club's inspirational captain, Fergal O'Flaherty.

"On our day, we are capable of beating anybody but we haven't always played to our true potential. Finding the right level of consistency has been a problem for us in some matches but we've come this far and if we hit our best form on Sunday it will take a very good team to beat us", says the twenty-four years old midfielder.

The prospect of becoming the first Bunninadden man to lift the senior championship trophy in over one hundred years is not something to which Fergal has attached most attention over the last few weeks.

Leo Gray talks to Bunninadden captain, Fergal O'Flaherty

"There's a lot of hype surrounding the historical significance of the match but, to be honest, that is not something that the players are too concerned with.

"We realise, of course, that it is a great achievement to get this far after such a long time but our priority now is to try to win the final. The people of the parish are very proud of what the team has achieved so far and it would be great to go that one step further and win the title", he explains.

O'Flaherty, a Secondary School teacher in Wicklow, lives in Dublin and trains with a number of other Sligo exiles in the Capital, travelling home at week-ends for matches. It's a demanding schedule and his role as captain carries extra responsibility.

"I enjoy being captain", he admits. "I don't feel any extra pressure as far as my own performance is concerned but the fact that I'm captain puts me in an ideal position to encourage and help the other players, especially the younger lads, and I respond to that responsibility."

Despite winning the senior league last year, Bunninadden weren't widely regarded as genuine Championship contenders this season. But within the club, there was a hunger and desire to give it their best shot.

"After winning the league last year, we had something to build on and when the draws for the Championship were made we felt we had a good chance of doing well", the Bunninadden captain points out.

"We got off to a winning start against Castleconnor and we played Coolera in our second game, knowing that we were probably going to qualify for the quarter-finals in any event. Maybe that had something to do with our low-key performance that day. Hopefully, we'll be able to play much better in the final", Fergal adds.

He believes Bunninadden really came of age in the quarter-final against Easkey, producing their best football of the season against a quality side.

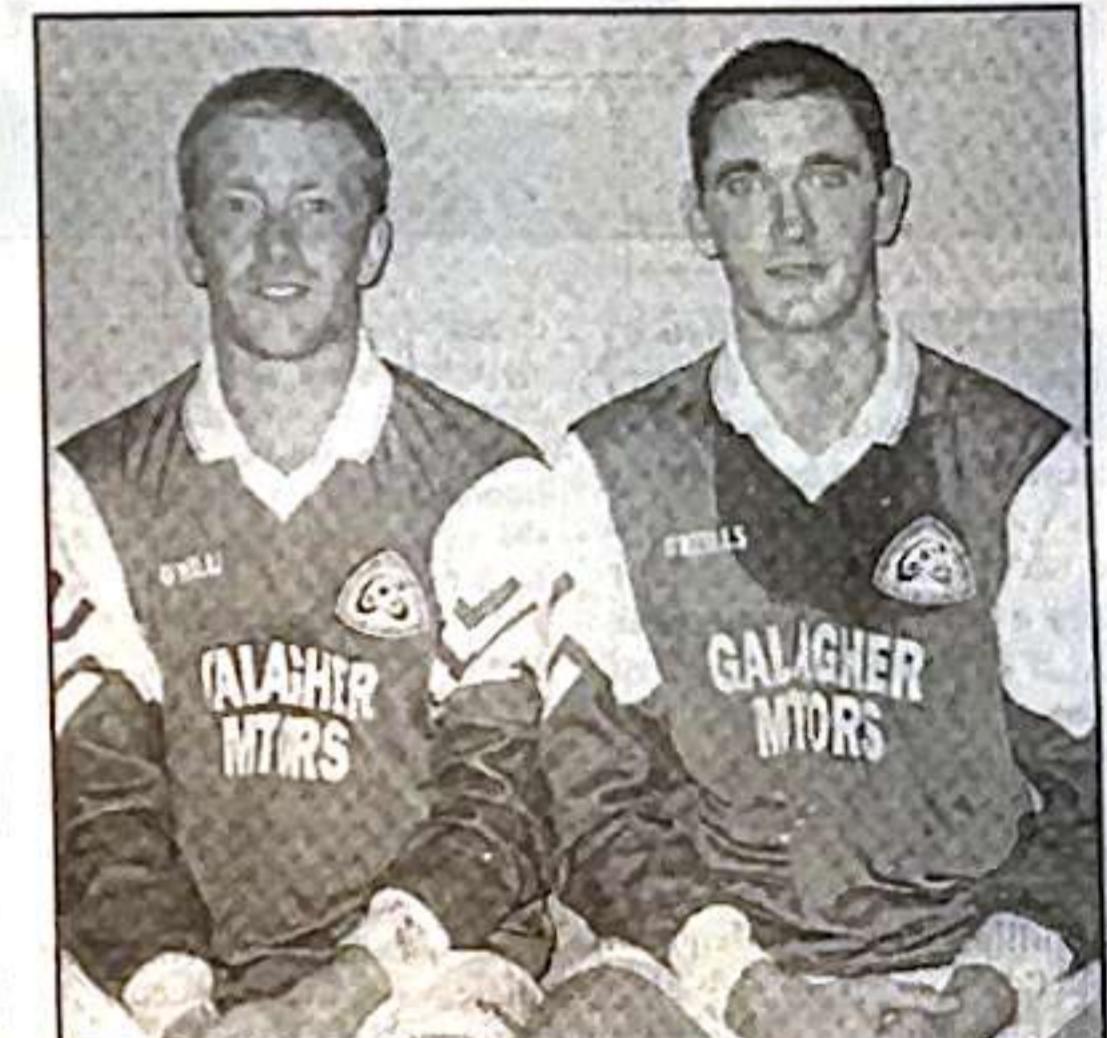
"That victory was a watershed for us", he maintains. "It gave us the confidence boost we needed and I think that stood to us in the semi-final against St. Mary's."

"We trailed Mary's by seven points at one stage but we never gave up. In similar circumstances last season, we would probably have got hammered but the team has matured a lot and we now have the sort of experience and confidence needed to win important Championship matches", the Bunninadden captain points out.

On a personal level, Fergal is delighted with the call-up to the Sligo senior squad for training in preparation for the forthcoming National Football League.

Captain of the county minor team in 1994, he missed out on the U.21 grade through injury. Now he's back to his best, however, and is looking forward to the challenge of impressing new Sligo boss, Peter Ford.

"It was great to get the call-up for training with the county



John and Fergal O'Flaherty, key players for Bunninadden

team but I know I have a lot of work to do to make the final panel for the League. That is what I am aiming for and I will be working very hard towards that goal once the county final is over", he says.

Fergal's immediate priority, however, is Sunday's historic final with Coolera.

"I think it's great for football in the county that two clubs like Bunninadden and Coolera have reached the senior final", he says.

"The two semi-finals were tight and tense games but I believe the final could be a real cracker. The teams are very evenly matched and it could go down to the wire."

"We're approaching the game in a very upbeat mood. I see no reason why we can't win it if we produce our best form on the day", he says.

Best of Luck to the Bunninadden Team in the County Final from

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Wishing the
Bunninadden Team
every success on Sunday

Bunninadden's Super Sunday



BUNNINADDEN, SLIGO COUNTY SENIOR CHAMPIONS 2000. Back Row (l/r): Kieran Brett, Stephen Roddy, Mark Gormley, Willie Gormley, Michael Finn, Shane Gormley, Francie O'Dowd, Emmet Gilhooley. Back row (l/r): John O'Flaherty, Liam Og Gormley, Paul Kearins, Fergal O'Flaherty (Captain), Aidan Killoran, Derek Gormley, Padraig Doohan.



County Board Chairman, Joe Queenan, presents the Owen B. Hunt Cup to Bunninadden captain, Fergal O'Flaherty, after the South Sligo Club had won the Sligo Senior Championship for the first time since 1891.



WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS: Barry Gilhooley, Francie O'Dowd, Liam Og Gormley, Mark Gormley and Joe Scanlon in jubilant mood after Bunninadden's victory.



Team Captains, Fergal O'Flaherty, Bunninadden and Shane O'Neill, Coolera, pictured with Referee, Thomas Walsh, before Sunday's County Senior Championship final at Markievicz Park.



TRIUMPHANT THREE: James McDonagh, Stephen Roddy and Francie O'Dowd of Bunninadden.



Joining in the Bunninadden celebrations are Willie Gormley, Margaret Gormley, Brendan Gormley and Muriel Gormley.



Coolera defender, Tony Watters, breaks up a Bunninadden attack



Barry Doyle and Neil Carew of Coolera combined to win possession during the County Championship final at Markievicz Park.



John McPartland, the Coolera full-forward, escapes the attentioin of two Bunninadden defenders



COOLERA, RUNNERS-UP IN THE SENIOR COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL. Back Row (l/r): Declan McCabe (manager), John McPartland, Karl Gilligan, Stephen Carty, Aidan Carty, Barry Doyle, Kieran Quinn, Terry McMahon, John McPartland, Snr. (selector), James Joyce. Front Row (l/r): Gavin Foley, Tony Watters, Neil Carew, Paul Hegarty, **Shane O'Neill (Captain)**, Karol O'Neill, Liam Healy, Michael Harte (selector).

Triumphant manager praises heroic players

BY LEO GRAY

BUNNINADDEN joint manager, James Kearns, praised the never-say-die attitude of his players after their astonishing victory over Coolera in the county senior championship final at Markievicz Park on Sunday last.

"These lads just never give in", he said. "Everything seemed to be going against us but the lads kept battling away and got their reward in the end".

Bunninadden lost two defenders, Shane Gormley and Francis O'Dowd, in the first half and trailed by a point at the interval. Their task of getting back into the game was made all the more difficult by the fact that they had to play against the wind in the second half.

"We had three different full-backs during the

game but all the lads responded magnificently. Kieran Brett ended up playing at full-back and he had a tremendous game. I was delighted for him because he is one of our most committed players, travelling from Dublin every week-end for games.

"It didn't look too good for us at half-time but I just told the lads to keep getting the ball in around the Coolera goal".

"I knew that Coolera wouldn't score too much from play and that we could keep close to them if we defended well without giving away too many free kicks. That is exactly what happened and the early goal in the second half was a great boost to us".

"Coolera came back and got one point ahead of us but we were always in with a chance and

the players never stopped believing that they could win it", said the Bunninadden manager.

He described the victory as a wonderful achievement by the club and said everybody in the Parish was thrilled with the success.

"I have never seen such celebrations after a county final. Bunninadden were a long time waiting for the big breakthrough and they were fully entitled to celebrate in style which they did", Kearns added.

Reflecting on the game, the manager said that although Bunninadden got a few early scores, they didn't play particularly well in the first half.

"We got better as the game went on and we put in a strong finish. The overall determination was perfectly illustrated near the end when our

goalkeeper, Michael Finn, made a fifty yard run up the field to start a move which eventually led to the free from which we got the winning goal".

"All the players deserve great credit and I was particularly pleased that it was Padraig Doohan who emerged as the matchwinner. He's a tremendous servant to the club and his attitude is first class", said the manager.

He paid tribute to his joint manager, Richard Brennan, and the officers of the club.

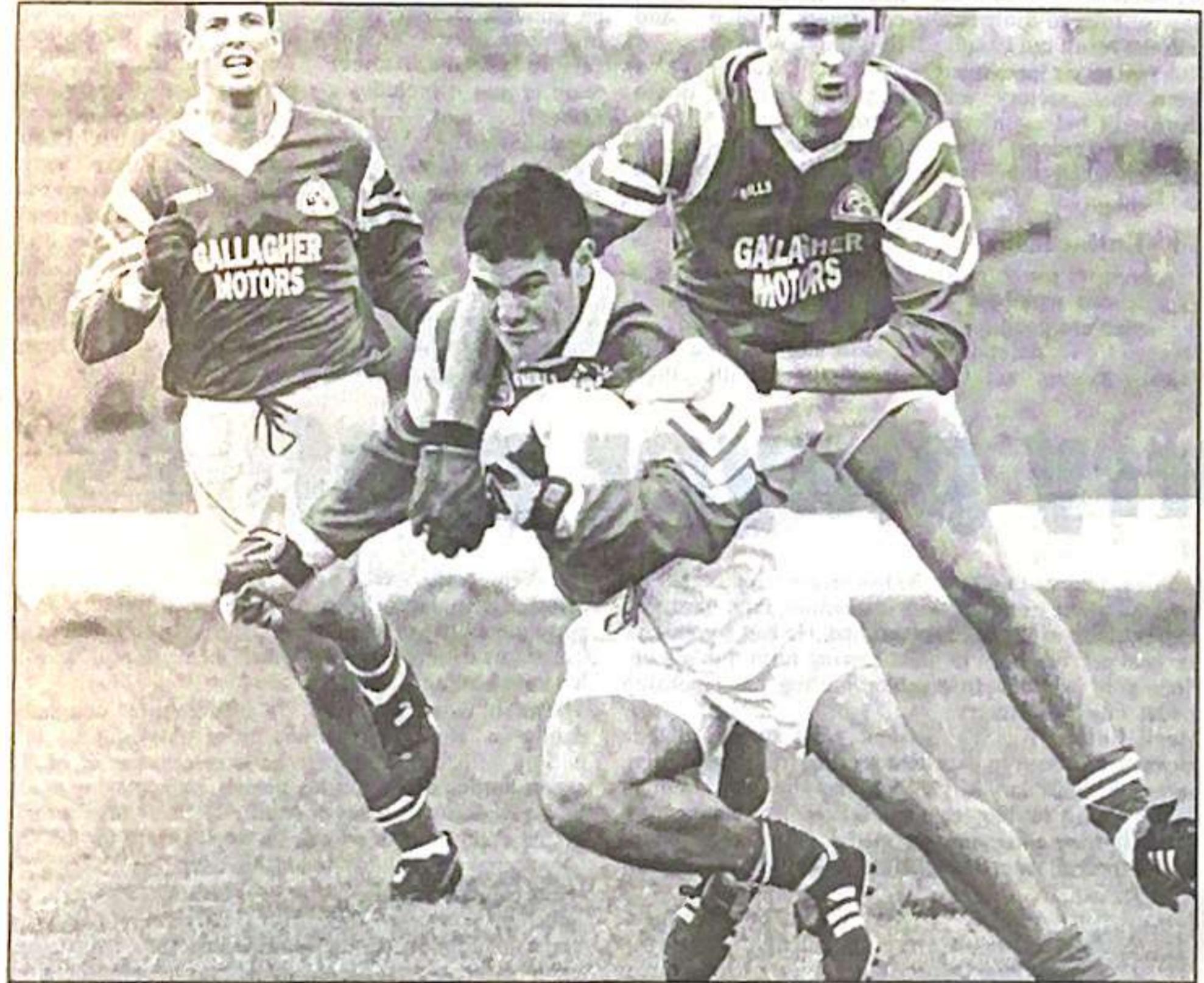
"The club is extremely well organised and our success on the field of play owes much to the people who do so much work at official level", Kearns pointed out.

The manager had words of consolation for Coolera and expressed his appreciation of the fact that the club's manager, Declan McCabe,

and Executive member, Tony McLoughlin, travelled to Bunninadden to share in the celebrations on Sunday evening.

"I fully understand how Coolera felt after losing the final in such circumstances. They were devastated but it was great to see Declan McCabe and Tony McLoughlin in Bunninadden on Sunday evening. Hopefully, Coolera will make the breakthrough soon", added Kearns.

Bunninadden are back in action on Sunday when they take on Eastern Harps in the semi-final of the senior league, a competition they won for the first time last season. However, they will be without Shane Gormley, Francis O'Dowd and Aidan Killoran, all of whom were injured in last week's final.



Liam Healy (Coolera) is challenged by Fergal O'Flaherty (Bunninadden) during the County Championship Final at Markievicz Park.

Champions back in action on Sunday

Newly crowned county Champions, Bunninadden, make a quick return to action this weekend when they take on neighbours, Eastern Harps, in the semi-final of the senior league at Ballymote on Sunday.

Bunninadden won the senior league last year for the first time in their history and will be

anxious to defend their title. However, they will have to plan without defenders, Francis O'Dowd and Shane Gormley, and ace forward, Aidan Killoran, all of whom were injured in last week's county final.

In the other semi-final at Easkey, South Sligo rivals, Tourlestrane and

Curry come face to face in what promises to be a cracking encounter.

In the Intermediate League, St. John's will be hoping to stay on course for a Championship/League double when they meet Shamrock Gaels in the semi-final at Kent Park.

The Gaels were relegated from the senior

ranks last season and the league represents their last chance of a quick return to the top flight. They will not lack motivation for what should be an interesting match.

The other semi-final between Grange and Mullinabreena takes place at Castleconnor.

"We were a long time in the wilderness but now we have reached the promised land and it is a victory for every man who has ever pulled on a Bunninadden jersey as much as it is for the players of today", the captain added.

He paid tribute to every member of the squad for the commitment they had given over the last couple of years. The victory would be particularly sweet for the two players

COOLERA manager, Declan McCabe, struggled to conceal his disappointment after his side's heartbreaking defeat to Bunninadden in Sunday's dramatic county final at Markievicz Park.

"We thought we had it and then it was snatched away from us in the very last second. It's extremely hard to take", he admitted.

McCabe, a former Bunninadden manager, was quick to

congratulate the new county champions but said he felt his own team were desperately unlucky on the day.

"You need to get a few breaks in games like this and just didn't get them", he said.

"The referee played about five minutes injury time which I felt was a bit excessive and I also felt most of the 50/50 decisions went against us. That is not sour grapes. It's just the way we saw things".

"Having said that, you have to

give credit to Bunninadden. They never gave up. We had a fair bit of possession near the end but we couldn't finish them off. At the end of the day, we were undone by two soft goals".

"Hopefully, we'll be able to bounce back from this. We have a very young team who can, I believe, win a county title in the next few years. We need to learn a few lessons and they don't come much harsher than the one we got today", added the Coolera manager.

Historic breakthrough worth the long wait

BY LEO GRAY

"IT HAS been a long time coming but it was worth the wait", was the immediate after match reaction of Bunninadden's triumphant captain, Fergal O'Flaherty, as he tried to take in the enormity of his side's achievement.

Bunninadden snatched victory from the jaws of defeat in a gripping final against Coolera at Markievicz Park on Sunday to take the Owen B Hunt Cup back to the South Sligo parish for the first time since 1891.

"It will probably take a while for the historical significance of the win to sink in", said O'Flaherty moments after becoming the first Bunninadden man to lift the County Championship trophy in one hundred and nine years.

"We were a long time in the wilderness but now we have reached the promised land and it is a victory for every man who has ever pulled on a Bunninadden jersey as much as it is for the players of today", the captain added.

He paid tribute to every member of the squad for the commitment they had given over the last couple of years. The victory would be particularly sweet for the two players

who were injured during the game and who had to spend the day in Sligo General Hospital.

The captain said great credit was due to managers, James Kearns and Richard Brennan, as well to the club's loyal supporters and sponsors and club officers.

"The first thing James Kearns said when he came to Bunninadden was that he didn't want to be associated with losers and today we proved that we are winners", O'Flaherty added.

Reflecting on the game, the captain said he

was proud of the way the team dug in after they lost two key defenders through injury in the first half.

"It was a matter of hanging on in there and we had the character to do that", he said.

He admitted, however, that Bunninadden enjoyed a large slice of luck on the day.

"The Gods were definitely with us", O'Flaherty conceded. "We would have been relieved to get a draw in the end so to get that last gasp goal was a real slice of luck".

In his moment of triumph, the

Bunninadden captain spared a thought for Coolera.

"You would have to feel for Coolera", he said. "They thought they had won the title and I know it must have been heartbreaking for them to have had it snatched away so late in the game. They are a good young team and I am sure they can bounce back. They are a great club with great supporters and they deserve a county title. If they win it in the near future, we will be delighted for them", O'Flaherty added.

Matchwinner, Padraig

Doohan described the moments leading up to the dramatic winning goal.

"I pushed forward in case Fergal's free dropped short", he explained. "The ball bounced off the crossbar, I think, and I just got a fist to it. There were a lot of players in there and thankfully the ball ended up in the back of the net".

The former captain of the Sligo junior team which won the Connacht Championship two years ago, Doohan said he was very proud to be a member of the Bunninadden side.

Despair in Coolera camp

BY LEO GRAY

COOLERA manager, Declan McCabe, struggled to conceal his disappointment after his side's heartbreaking defeat to Bunninadden in Sunday's dramatic county final at Markievicz Park.

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"Having said that, you have to

High drama as Bunninadden clinch historic victory

Injury-time goal ends one hundred and nine year wait for championship glory

LEO GRAY REPORTS

BUNNINADDEN 2-7
COOLERA 0-11

RAVE Bunninadden captured their first senior county Championship title since 1891 when a dramatic injury-time goal gave them a sensational victory over luckless Coolera at Markievicz Park on Sunday last.

In the one hundred and nine years since Bunninadden last won the title, there have been many better finals but I doubt if there has ever been a more dramatic one.

Coolera, who hadn't won the coveted crown since 1907, looked destined to end their famine when they led by a point as the game slipped deep into injury time. But their dreams were shattered in the most cruel fashion possible as Bunninadden snatched the title with a freak goal four minutes into stoppage time.

A 40 yard free by Bunninadden captain, Fergal O'Flaherty, dropped into a crowded goalmouth and as the ball bobbed about in a frenzied fashion, via the crossbar and the fingertips of the Coolera 'keeper, Padraig Doohan got the vital touch which deflected it to the back of the net.

Jubilation

Coolera protested that there had been a square infringement but after consulting with his umpires, referee, Thomas Walsh, allowed the score to stand and Bunninadden had completed a classic 'smash and grab' victory.

In the mayhem which followed, the South Sligo club's wild jubilation was matched only by Coolera's



Fergal O'Flaherty (Bunninadden) and Neil Carew (Coolera) battle for possession during the County Final at Markievicz Park.

devastation as they tried to come to terms with the disaster which befall them.

For much of a tense and keenly contested encounter, Coolera had looked the more cohesive side but they were unable to build up a commanding advantage as Bunninadden battled against adversity to keep in touch.

After losing their full-back, Francis O'Dowd, through injury after just ten minutes, Bunninadden suffered further disruption when their vigilant young defender, Shane Gormley, sustained a nasty shoulder injury just before the interval.

Renewed hope

With two of their key defenders sidelined and having surrendered a five point lead to trail by a point at the interval, 0-7 to 0-6, the South Sligo club looked to be in real trouble. And the fact that they had to face a strong wind after the break hardly inspired much confidence.

A well-taken goal by Derek Gormley five minutes into the second half gave them renewed hope but Coolera quickly regained the initiative with Kieran Quinn emerging as a big influence at midfield.

A sparkling point by Karol O'Neill and further scores by John McPartland and Liam Healy edged Coolera in front with six minutes remaining and they were controlling possession so well that there seemed to be no way back for Bunninadden.

Even the South Sligo club's huge army of supporters seemed to accept that their cause was lost when Derek Gormley blazed wide from a good position in the final minute. That, we sensed, was Bunninadden's last chance but this team can never be written off.

Tragic blow

In a nailbiting climax, they laid seige to the Coolera goal and their endeavours were handsomely rewarded when Doohan snatched a breathtaking winner.

It was a tragic blow for Coolera who, at the very least, deserved a draw from a game to which they contributed so much.

Neil Carew, Barry Doyle and Shane O'Neil were all excellent in defence. Kieran Quinn was an impressive midfielder, particularly in the second half, while John McPartland, Karl Gilligan and Karol O'Neill, who looked a real class-act, got through some great work in the attack.

Bunninadden had heroes all over the pitch and the way they regrouped their forces after those two first-half injuries spoke volumes for the character of the side.

Contributions

Willie Gormley and Kieran Brett excelled in the restructured defence while Paul Kearns, Stephen Roddy,

John O'Flaherty and goalkeeper, Michael Finn, also made important contributions.

Padraig Doohan was never far from the heart of the action at midfield and he got solid support from Mark Gormley.

Fergal O'Flaherty's switch to the half-forward line towards the end of the first half gave an added dimension to the Bunninadden attack and the excellent free-taking of Aidan Killoran was crucial in keeping the South Sligo club in the game. Derek Gormley, Liam Og Gormley, Emmet Gilhooley and impressive substitute, David Killoran, all played their part in a famous victory.

Despite playing against the wind in the first half, Coolera created the game's first opening as James Joyce and Liam Healy combined to put Kieran Quinn in the clear.

Alert

However, the midfielder's effort flew wide of the target. At the other end, Coolera keeper, Aidan Carty, had to be alert to race off his line to clear the danger as Emmet Gilhooley close in on goal.

A brisk opening produced the first score in the fourth minute. Padraig Doohan gained possession in midfield and set off on a penetrating run before dispatching the ball over the bar to give Bunninadden the lead.

The quality of that score was matched by Coolera's equaliser a minute later as Karol O'Neill completed a magnificent solo run with a great point.

Aidan Killoran edged the South Sligo side back in front with a pointed free in the 7th minute and that signalled the start of a period of Bunninadden dominance.

Another free by Killoran made it 0-3 to 0-1 after 12 minutes and Bunninadden went further ahead two minutes later with a cleverly worked score. Padraig Doohan and Fergal O'Flaherty combined in a swift interchange of passes to release David Killoran who popped the ball over the bar.

A brilliant point from a '45' by Aidan Killoran put Bunninadden four points clear in the 16th minute and they extended their lead three minutes later with another text-book score, this time from a sideline kick way out on the left by Fergal O'Flaherty.

Coolera were looking a bit ragged at this stage but they suddenly clicked into top gear and finished the half with a scoring burst, which yielded six unanswered points in a ten minute spell.

Karl Gilligan got their revival under way with a point from a free in the 20th minute and Paul Hegarty followed up with a delightful point from play after good approach work by Kieran Quinn and John McPartland.

Then in the 24th minute, a sweeping Coolera move earned a free from which John McPartland reduced the gap to just two points. Some stubborn defending was required to keep the rampant North Sligo side at bay but there was nothing Bunninadden could do to prevent Karol O'Neill from claiming his side's fifth point after 27 minutes.

Equaliser

John McPartland shot over the equaliser from a free two minutes later and the same player edged Coolera in front for the first time with a pointed free just before the interval.

Bunninadden needed a positive start to the second period and that is exactly what they got as Padraig Doohan, making the most of slack marking in the Coolera defence, put the sides back on level terms after a quickly taken free by Aidan Killoran.



Kieran Quinn sets up a Coolera attack during the County Final at Markievicz Park.

Kieran Quinn restored Coolera's lead in the 34th minute but Bunninadden got a vital break a minute later. Willie Gormley's long pass caught the Coolera defence out of position and Derek Gormley reacted quickly to slide the ball past the advancing Aidan Carty.

The North Sligo side responded swiftly with Karol O'Neill ripping through the heart of the Bunninadden defence for a terrific point to leave just the minimum between the sides.

Coolera were now winning the greater share of



Coolera midfielder, Stephen Carty, charges through the heart of the Bunninadden defence during the County Senior final at Markievicz Park on Sunday last.

possession but there was a touch of desperation creeping into their play. Eventually, John McPartland settled their nerves with the equalising point from a free in the 48th minute.

Six minutes from time, Liam Healy got possession from a McPartland free and whipped the ball over the bar in great style to give Coolera the lead.

It looked as if that would be sufficient to claim the club's first title since 1946 but Bunninadden snatched the title with an incredible 'Houdini' act right at the finish.

BUNNINADDEN: M. Finn, S. Roddy, F. O'Dowd, S. Gormley, J. O'Flaherty, K. Brett, W. Gormley, P. Doohan (1-2), M. Gormley, D. Gormley (1-0), L. Og Gormley, P. Kearns, A. Killoran (0-3), F. O'Flaherty (0-1), E. Gilhooley, Subs: D. Killoran (0-1) for O'Dowd (10 mins), J. Scanlon for S. Gormley (26 mins); K. Kearns for E. Gilhooley (52 mins); B. Gilhooley for A. Killoran (58 mins).

COOLERA: A. Carty, G. Foley, N. Carew, S. O'Neill, T. McMahon, K. O'Neill (0-3), L. Healy (0-1), P. Hegarty (0-1), J. McPartland (0-4), K. Gilligan (0-1).

REFEREE: T. Walsh.



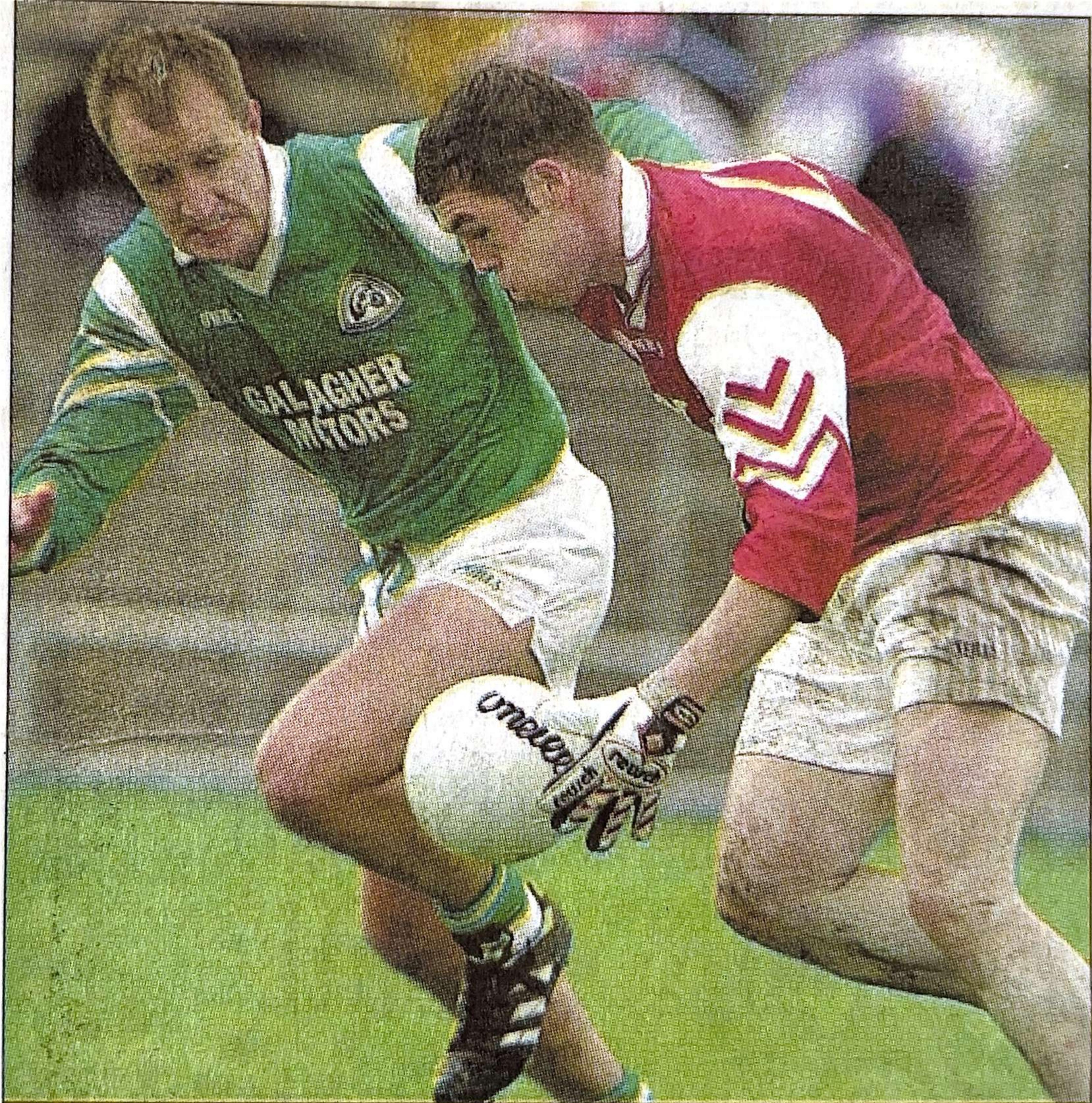
Richard Brennan, Bunninadden's joint Manager, celebrates his side's historic victory in the County Championship Final.



Bunninadden's Emmet Gilhooley finds his path blocked by Coolera keeper, Aidan Carty, during the County Championship final at Markievicz Park.



Coolera's Gavin Foley holds off the challenge of Bunninadden's Willie Gormley in the County Final at Markievicz Park.



**Coolera's John McPartland in a battle for possession
with Bunnanadden's Kieran Brett.**

Picture: Keith Heneghan

Injury-time goal seals sensational win for Bunnanadden

Bunnanadden
Coolera-Strandhill

2-7
0-11

by Liam Maloney

PADRAIG DOOHAN'S injury-time goal earned Bunnanadden a sensational Sligo senior championship title, their first since 1891, as beaten finalists Coolera-Strandhill were left completely devastated at Sligo's Markievicz Park.

The losers — appearing in their first senior championship decider since 1946 — were good value for

their one point lead (0-11 to 1-7), thanks to Liam Healy's point in the 25th minute of the second-half.

In the fourth minute of injury-time, however, Bunnanadden's captain Fergal O'Flaherty lofted a free into a crowded goal mouth where skilful midfielder Doohan got the vital touch — giving his side a two points advantage.

Bunnanadden, who lost two key defenders through injury in the first-half, were inspired by Derek Gormley's goal within six minutes of the re-start. But Gormley's goal, created

by No. 11 Liam Og Gormley, was his side's last score until Doohan's dramatic strike almost 20 minutes later.

For much of the second-half, Coolera-Strandhill dominated a game spoiled by wet and blustery conditions. Defensively solid, Coolera-Strandhill impressed at midfield through Kieran Quinn, while 19-year-old centre-forward Karol O'Neill was superb throughout, scoring three points.

Coolera-Strandhill's first-half revival included three points from the industrious John McPartland, with

Karl O'Neill adding 0-2.

Scores: Coolera-Strandhill: J. McPartland (4, 4f), K. O'Neill (0-3), K. Gilligan (0-1), P. Hegarty (0-1), K. Quinn (0-1), L. Healy (0-1).

Bunnanadden: P. Doohan (1-2), D. Gormley (1-0), A. Kiloran (0-3, 2f, 1'45), F. O'Flaherty (0-1, 1f), D. Kiloran (0-1).

COOLERA-STRANDHILL: A. Carty; G. Foley, N. Caww, J. Joyce; T. Watters, B. Doyle, S. O'Neil (c); K. Quinn, T. McMahon; K. O'Neill, J. McPartland, L. Healy; P. Hegarty, S. Carty, K. Gilligan.

BUNNANADDEN: M. Finn; S. Roddy, F. O'Dowd, S. Gormley; J. O'Flaherty, K. Brett, W. Gormley, P. Doohan, M. Gormley; D. Gormley, L. O'Gormley, P. Kearns; A. Kiloran, F. O'Flaherty (c), E. Gilhooley. **Subs:** D. Kiloran for F. O'Dowd (injured); J. Scanlon for S. Gormley (injured); K. Kearns for E. Gilhooley; B. Gilhooley for A. Kiloran (injured).

Referee: T. Walsh (St. Michael's).

Tales of the

unexpected

Nothing stirs the real GAA diehard like the county championships at home. And this year, there has been a few extraordinary tales, as

Eamonn Sweeney reports

THE perfect litmus test to separate the dyed in the wool GAA supporter from the fair-weather equivalent is to discover their attitude to club football and hurling.

The sunshine supporter won't give a tuppenny damn about any match that takes place in front of less than 30,000 people. On the other hand, the Real McCoy will scan the Examiner on a Monday morning, worried about the progress of Toomevara in the Tipp hurling championship, astounded by the defeat of Clane in the Kildare football competition and fully aware of the ramifications of Abbeylara's win in this year's Longford football final.

Inter-county championship matches are now advertised with all the palaver which used to attend the selling of stereo systems and soft drinks. But, when it comes to the real spirit of the Association, the club championship is very much the real thing.

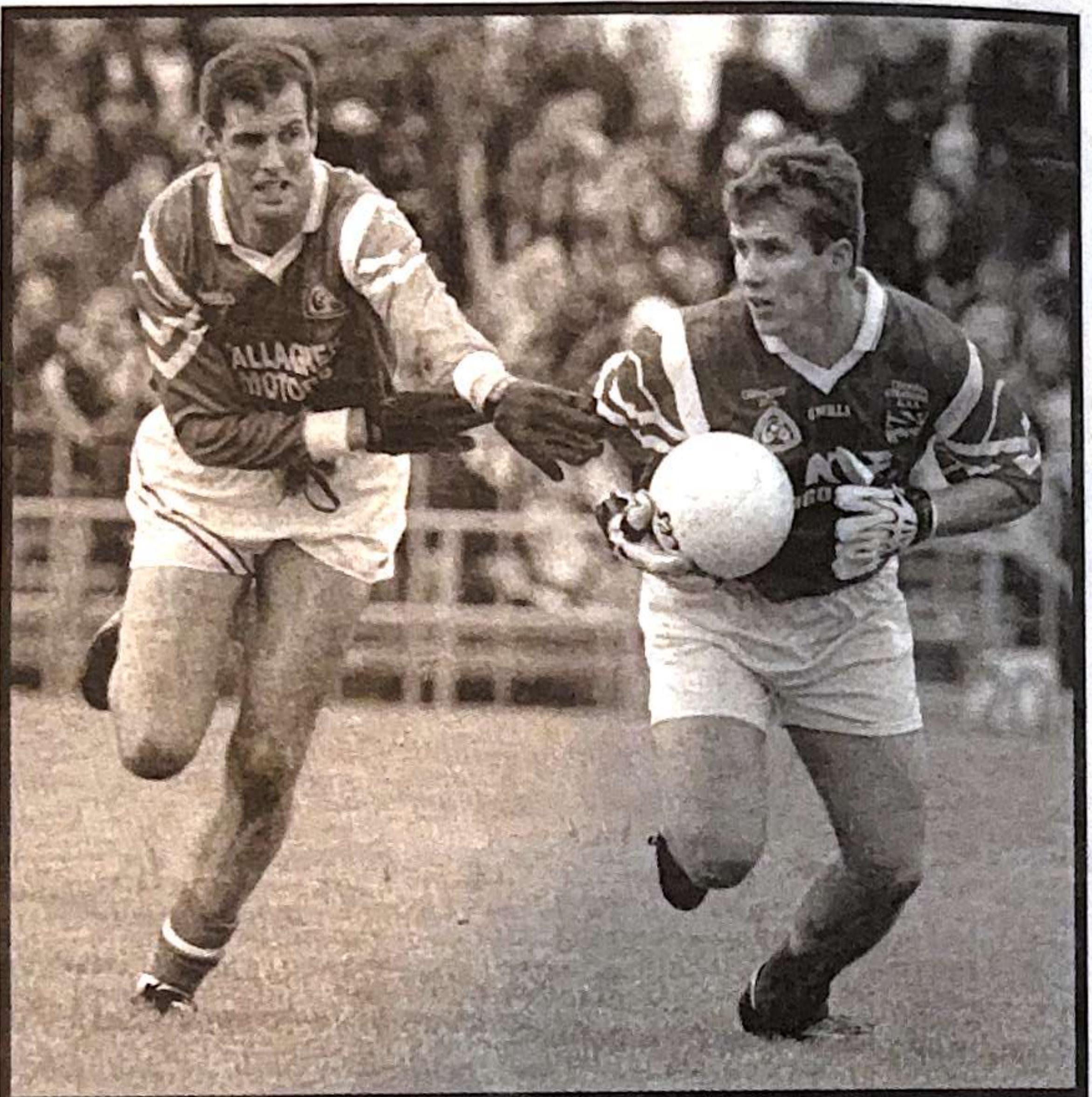
Every club championship match in the country, from the Galway hurling final right down to the first round of the lowest rung of the Leitrim junior football competition, can be seen as part of one huge narrative, a tale which every year involves every corner of the country. The magnificent tapestry which illuminates Irish sport like nothing else.

For an example of the sublime contrasts of the club championship, look at Cork. Nemo Rangers won the senior football title this year, the city boys from Turners Cross continuing a tradition which has seen them win an unrivalled six All-Ireland titles. But was their joy any greater than that of the tiny Muintir Bhaire club from Durrus, deep in the heart of West Cork, who won their first divisional Junior B title since 1947. Almost certainly not.

Perhaps it's a sign of these Tiger times that little attention is paid to claims that the new football championship structure would have a deleterious effect on club teams. These days the big boys rule and the devil take the hindmost. Which is a pity because nothing stirs the blood like the fortunes of your own local team.

In the words of Newtownshandrum star Gerry O'Connor, "Winning an All-Ireland medal with your county is a tremendous honour but there is no greater feeling than winning a county with your club."

His club's first-ever victory in the Cork senior hurling championship was a prime example of



Karol O'Neill, Coolera tries to escape Bunninadden's Derek Gormley in the Sligo SFC final.

the kind of outcome which makes club competition so special, a moment when a club defy both history and clairvoyance to win the ultimate honour in their county.

Kilbride, Roscommon senior football winners for the first time since 1912, pulled off the same trick. As did Abbeylara, taking their first ever Longford football title.

Imagine everyone's surprise when they reached this year's county semi-final where they were up against St Mary's. Mary's are a Sligo town side who not too long ago had sole pick of the town's 20,000 inhabitants.

Bunninadden is a very small parish in Sligo which you might have passed through if you were travelling from ... Actually, it's not really on the main drag from anywhere. But if you were going the eight miles from Gurteen to Tubbercurry and turned off to your right at about half-way, you'd come across the village.

They don't have that anymore but their catchment area would still include roughly 30 times as many souls as that of their semi-final opponents.

The obvious happened. Bunninadden won by a point the minnows were in their first final since 1891. The parish went bananas with excitement.

Everyone congratulated them but no-one gave them a chance against Coolera in the final.

With the game deep into injury-time and Bunninadden a point down ... we'll let Padraig Doohan take over from here on in.

der-age teams and were forced to amalgamate with the nearby town of Ballymote.

For years they were one of the eternal Junior teams. Four years ago they made Senior for the first time in living memory. It was regarded as a fine achievement for a club of their size.

Imagine everyone's surprise when they reached this year's county semi-final where they were up against St Mary's. Mary's are a Sligo town side who not too long ago had sole pick of the town's 20,000 inhabitants.

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Everyone congratulated them but no-one gave them a chance against Coolera in the final.

With the game deep into injury-time and Bunninadden a point down ... we'll let Padraig Doohan take over from here on in.

"We knew time was nearly up and we got a free 40 yards out. Fergal O'Flaherty took it and I



Delighted Bunninadden players celebrate at the final whistle following their victory over Coolera.

Picture: Keith Heneghan

ran in in case it dropped short. The goalie saved the free and the ball came out from him, I went in with the fist and it went in the net.

"The goalie kicked the ball out, one of our midfielders caught it and the referee blew the final whistle. They were sick and I could understand it, it was an awful way to lose. But it was a great way to win."

Doohan thinks he's fortunate to have tasted success so early, commenting, "I'm only with the team around eight years, there's players who've been playing five or six years longer than me, nearly 10 years some of them."

They are the likes of Francie O'Dowd, inspirational full-back and team veteran who exemplifies the spirit which carries the Bunninaddens of this world to unlikely glory.

"I'm playing since 16 years ago when I was 17. I can remember us playing in the intermediate championship in 1992, it's not that long ago, with 13 men. Fergal O'Flaherty and Padraig

Doohan were playing and they were only 16. We came bottom of the Intermediate League that year. It was a long way back from that.

Their manager was a man not unused to success, James Kearins, brother of the legendary

Mickey from Dromard in the West of the county and a member of Sligo's 1975 Connacht title winning team. Ironically, he took over from Declan McCabe who managed Coolera in this year's final and is still fondly regarded by his former charges.

O'Dowd captures perfectly the effect a county final can have on a small rural community.

"Old players with the club came back from America and England, they came from everywhere. There was people who hadn't been back in Bunninadden for years at the game. The atmosphere when we won was great."

He's also fully aware of the magnitude of the team's performance, pointing out that there's only 270 houses in the parish and that they had to bring on a 16-year-old, Kenneth Kearins, in the final. But this success hasn't turned the heads of the players from the small club. O'Dowd is refreshingly honest about their success.

"We have no great players, we're all average, all about the same but we work hard. I think the only difference this year was that we had a slice of luck. You won't win county finals unless you have luck on your side."

BUNNINADDEN

WORDS fail to describe our famous victory in the county final on Sunday last when we had a 2-7 to 0-11 victory over Coolera. This was an exciting and closely fought contest between two sporting teams.

Bunninadden got off to a flying start, racing into a five point lead, we then lost Francie Dowd through injury, and soon afterwards Shane Gormley who had moved into the full-back position. Coolera came back strongly to lead by a point at half-time on the score of 0-7 to 0-6.

We faced the wind in the second-half and it was a ding dong struggle with Coolera leading by a point going into injury time. Bunninadden were awarded a free which was taken by Fergal O'Flaherty, the ball landed in around the goalmouth and Padraig Doohan alert as ever got his fist to it and the rest is history. The final score was 2-7 to 0-11.

This is a historic victory and just reward for hardwork and dedication especially especially every member of the senior panel management and team James Kearns, Richard Brennan, John Spellman, and all the people who worked so hard behind the scenes. We would also like to remember all the past officers and players who helped bring this famous victory about, too many names to mention, but it more than likely started with the development of the community park many thanks to all. We would like to commiserate with Coolera but their day will surely come.

We would also like to thank thank Gallagher Motors, Richard Brennan, Tony Perry our main sponsors without their generous support this would not be possible also all the people who sponsored adverts through the club in the official match programme, and we apologise to Christy Davey because his advert did not appear to to a mistake in the printers.

The agony and the ecstasy of sport

THE agony and the ecstasy of sport was never more in evidence than in Markievicz Park on Sunday last when Bunninadden won their first senior title since 1891. I doubt if any final in the last one hundred and nine years had ever such a dramatic finish as last Sunday's entertaining decider.

"Sport can be very cruel", a tearful Coolera supporter said moments after he had seen his favourites stunned by a late Pádraig Doohan goal deep in injury time. Over four minutes into injury time and Coolera were hanging on desperately to a one point lead.

Bunninadden were awarded a free on the 45 metre line. Fergal O'Flaherty lined up to take the kick. It was always going to be a pressure kick. He needed a point to snatch a dramatic late draw. Anything less and Coolera were champions. I was already thinking of the format of the programme for the replay.

He floated the ball crossbar high into the goalmouth. Few had anticipated the drama that was about to unfold. Coolera goalkeeper, Aidan Carty got his hands to the ball. He was right to attempt to block it. On a blustery day the wind can play tricks with the ball. I believe it could have gone straight to the net had he not attempted to block it. The ball rebounded from his hands. Pádraig Doohan was in like a flash to fist the rebound into the net.

There was a moment of stunned silence. The silence of disbelief. Then the success starved and ever loyal Bunninadden

supporters erupted in delirious joy. The players hugged each other in celebrating a famous victory. The Coolera players stood in numb disbelief. They almost had their hands on the Owen B. Hunt Cup only to see it cruelly snatched from their grasp in the most dramatic fashion imaginable. Tears flowed freely. There were Bunninadden tears too but they were tears of indescribable joy. That is sport.

There is no doubt it was Bunninadden's day. Their name was on the Owen B. Hunt Cup from early in the year. They overcame adversity on Sunday to snatch a famous victory.

What team could afford to lose two key players in their full back line and recover to win the game? Full back Francis O'Dowd pulled up after only seven minutes with damaged knee ligaments. Left corner back Shane Gormley moved into the centre.

Seventeen minutes later he too was to taste misfortune. He fell awkwardly as he tackled John McPartland out near the sideline and dislocated his shoulder. After a good start in which they went into a 0-6 to 0-1 lead after sixteen minutes mainly due to the accuracy of Aidan Killoran and Fergal O'Flaherty from frees, Bunninadden seemed to lose their way and Coolera took over. Six unanswered points between then and the half time whistle saw the Knocknarea men go in at half time a point ahead. The strong wind was to favour them in the second half.

Further Coolera pressure was fruitless until Liam Healy popped over a point from play in the twenty fifth minute. I would venture to suggest that it was really in that barren ten minute period in the middle of the second half that Coolera lost this final, more so than the concession of the late goal.

The general opinion in the press box at the interval was that it would be Coolera's day. As a lone voice, I said that I wouldn't bet on it. I refused to write off Bunninadden. All through

the championship they have shown great fighting spirit in the second half. The more the odds were stacked against them the better they played. The odds were certainly stacked against them at half time on Sunday.

Within a minute the south Sligo men were level when Pádraig Doohan pointed from play. Kieran Quinn, who was having a great game at midfield, brought off a great block and scored a splendid point two minutes later.

Coolera were back on top. Then in the fifth minute a Bunninadden free caught the Coolera full back line out of position and Derek Gormley was on hand to fist the ball low to the Coolera net.

Amazingly, that was to be Bunninadden's last score until the dramatic late goal four minutes into injury time.

The winners were two points ahead, 1-7 to 0-8 after Gormley's goal and Karol O'Neill narrowed the gap with a great point as he cut in from the left wing.

Coolera took over at the end of the third quarter but their outfield dominance wasn't reflected on the scoreboard. Four good scoring chances went abegging before John McPartland equalised with a point from a free in the eighteenth minute.

Further Coolera pressure was fruitless until Liam Healy popped over a point from play in the twenty fifth minute. I would venture to suggest that it was really in that barren ten minute period in the middle of the second half that Coolera lost this final, more so than the concession of the late goal.

You have to be able to put a team away when you have them on the canvas. Coolera will rue the fact that they didn't reflect their dominance on the scoreboard



GAA DIGEST

by the County Board PRO

in that ten minute spell. Bunninadden too missed good scoring chances as Coolera held on to that slender point lead. Then came the Fergal O'Flaherty free and the rest is history. Shortly before that late free, Fergal's brother John came raiding from the right wing and his effort for a point just tailed wide.

Ironically, had that ball gone over the bar the game might have ended in a draw. Such is sport.

It was a great day for Bunninadden and their loyal supporters. One of the first men I met after the final whistle was club chairman, Christopher Marren. He must be the happiest man in Ireland. There is a great structure in the Bunninadden club and it is mainly due to the leadership of dedicated club officials like Christopher Club PRO, Wilfred Brennan was delighted, his brother Richard and James Kerins seemed to be still in a state of shocked disbelief by the time I met them.

Liam Gormley and Brendan were thrilled. Five Gormleys were part of the victory. Tony Perry was absolutely delighted. I watched Pat Hunt in the stand during the game and he never gave up exhorting his team from start to finish. How he would have loved to be out there in the thick of the action!

For the many loyal supporters it was a dream come true. That victory will work wonders for the game

in the parish. Sunday once again showed what the G.A.A. means to a relatively small rural parish. Congratulations to all concerned in Bunninadden. Few will grudge them their victory after waiting for it since 1891. They will savour this victory for many a day. I hope they do well in the Connacht club championship.

Spare a thought for Coolera / Strandhill! After the game Bunninadden

stars like Raymond Doyle, Kevin Cooney and Dermot Flynn. Their day will surely come.

They now know that they are good enough to match the best. The hard work of team managers Declan McCabe, John McPartland and Michael Harte will surely bear fruit in the very near future. They are in the minor 'A' final and with a good under age structure the future looks very bright.

It was a splendid goal from fifteen yards out, the best goal of the day. Many would argue that he had fouled the full back before he got possession, but he took full advantage of the situation and buried the ball in the back of the net. It was a killer blow for a very game Ballisodare side who played some great football over the hour.

The losers will rue some very costly misses in the first half when assisted by a stiff breeze. It took them until the ninth minute to open the scoring with a John Conlon free after they had missed four good scoring chances.

They were 0-3 to 0-1 ahead when Paul Newton sent a speculative lob into the goalmouth and it deceived Alan Jackson and went over his head into the net.

No doubt their day will come. This is a very young team. They have outstanding young players in Karol O'Neill, surely a star of the future, Tony Watters, Barry Doyle, Kieran Quinn, Karl Gilligan, Stephen Carty, Paul Hegarty. They also have some rising young

target man Paul Newton to good effect. Yet Ballisodare seemed to have done just about enough to win when the full forward struck for his second goal.

The losers had some outstanding footballers in Dessie Benson at midfield, team captain, Martin Bradley; Paul Hannon at left half back; Kildare man, the skillful Joey Nevin at left half forward; Anthony Fallon, Thomas Dooner and Justin Corrigan. On the evidence of this display their day in the sun cannot be far away.

St. Mary's had more experienced players and it told in the end. John Kent showed that he can still score a point, while Hubert Gilvarry, Tommy Breheny, Michael Bree and Paul Newton were a constant threat to Ballisodare.

THE PROGRAMME:

It is inevitable that in a sixty four page programme there will be mistakes. Sadly, two adverts were inadvertently omitted from last Sunday's programme. The half page ad of Christopher Davey, Painter & Decorator, Chaffpool, Sligo in which he extended good wishes to the Bunninadden team was omitted.

I want to extend my sincerest and humblest apologies to Christopher and he can be assured that there will be efforts to make it up to him in programmes during the forthcoming National League.

Also, Brian Devaney's ad. for L.M.S. Oil, Finisklin, in which he wished the best of luck to both teams was unfortunately left out. Ironically both Wilfred Brennan and Tony McLoughlin had very carefully presented all the ads with the details clearly

shown. The gremlins will always be a factor and the printers have asked me to convey their apologies to all who were disappointed because of the omissions.

STEPHEN TEMPANY, R.I.P.:

The whole county was shocked and stunned when the news of the tragic death of Stephen Tempany in a road traffic accident filtered through from parish to parish on Monday week. Stephen was a true G.A.A. man, a loyal St. Farnan's player and supporter. I actually played on the same hurling team as him with Craobh Rua when we won the senior championship and Molloy Cup in 1979.

I must hasten to add that Stephen was much younger than I am.

He played his first senior championship game for St. Farnan's in 1973 and only a few weeks ago he lined out at full back on the junior team. During his career he played hurling for Easkey and later Craobh Rua. He refereed the recent U-16 'A' county final between St. John's and Coolera / Strandhill in Markievicz Park.

I was privileged to attend the St. Farnan's function in 1997 when then G.A.A. President, Joe McDonagh presented him with the Clubman of the Year Award.

Stephen's tragic death puts everything else into perspective. I regret that I was unable to attend his funeral because I had a funeral in my own parish. I would like to extend deepest sympathies to Stephen's wife, Joan; daughters, Kelley and Stephanie; and son, Declan. Sympathies also to his parents, Stephen and Nancy; sister, Anne; and brothers, Nicholas and Martin. May he rest in peace.



The Killoran brothers, John, David and Aidan at the Bunninadden GAA club's dinner dance



County Board Chairman, Joe Queenan, James Coleman and County Secretary, Tommie Kilcoyne, at the Bunninadden GAA club's annual dinner dance.

BUNNINADDEN

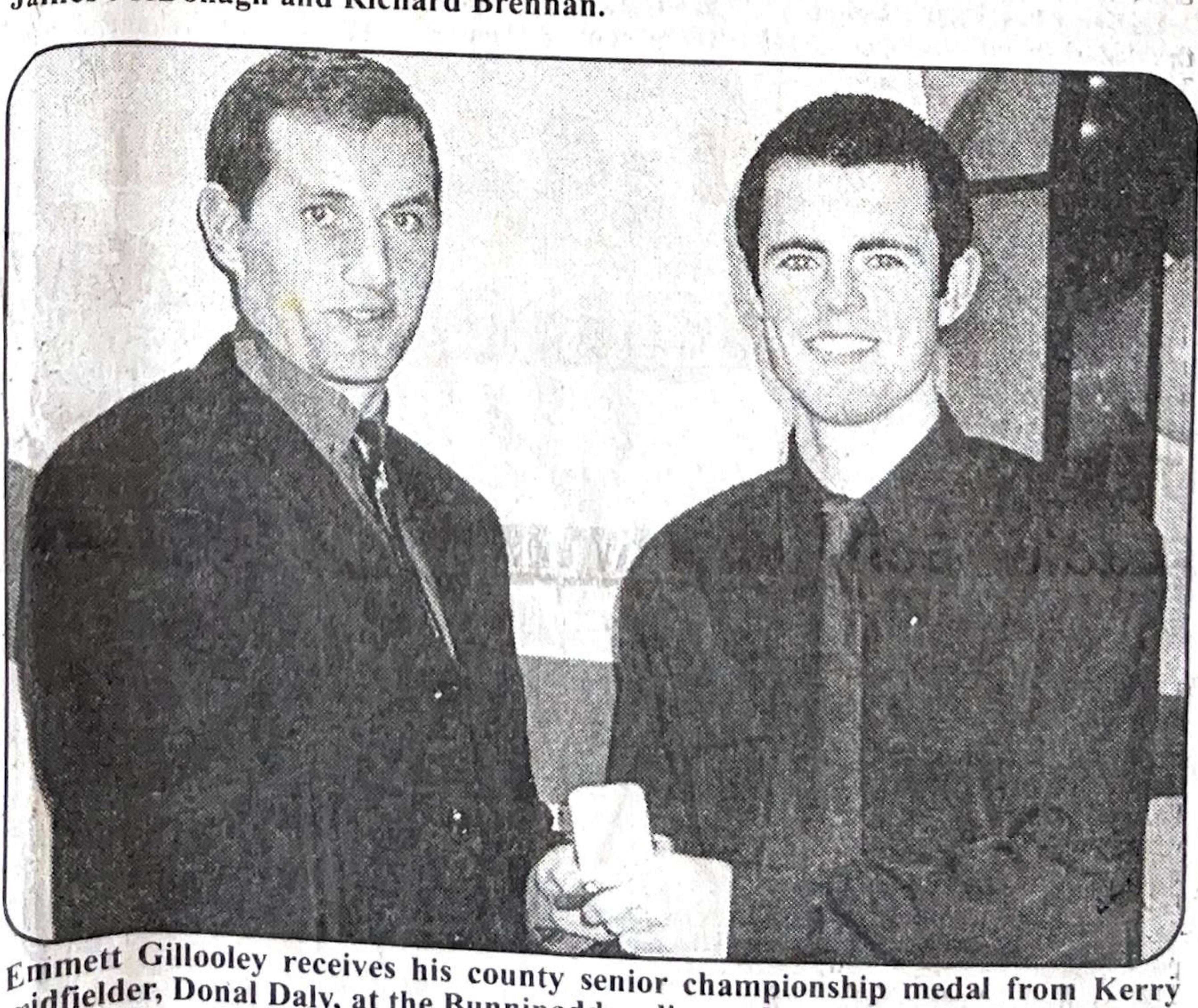
CELEBRATE HISTORIC

CHAMPIONSHIP

SUCCESS



Pictured at the Bunninadden GAA club dinner dance were James Kearins, Fr. James McDonagh and Richard Brennan.



Emmett Gillooley receives his county senior championship medal from Kerry midfielder, Donal Daly, at the Bunninadden dinner dance.



Michael Finn, Bunninadden player of the year, receiving his award from Kerry midfielder, Donal Daly, at the club's annual dinner dance.



Peter Gallagher receives a special presentation at the annual dinner dance of Bunninadden GAA Club.



Padraig Doohan receives his county senior championship medal from Kerry's Donal Daly at the Bunninadden's annual dinner dance.



Mark Gormley receives his County championship medal from Kerry midfielder, Donal Daly, at the Bunninadden annual dinner dance



Bunninadden Captain, Fergal O'Flaherty, receives his senior championship medal from Kerry midfielder, Donal Daly, at the club's annual dinner dance.



Kerry Midfielder, Donal Daly, presents Kieran Brett with his senior championship medal at Bunninadden's annual dinner dance.



COUNTY FINAL SPECIAL

LEO GRAY
PREVIEWS THE BIG MATCH

A group of former Coolera players who were stars of the team in the 1940's. Included are Val Harte, Padraig Curran, Mickey Begley, Bobby Milne, Brendan Carty and Mixer Carty.

Coolera's proud tradition

IT'S OVER a hundred years since Coolera, playing as Strandhill, and Bunninadden met in a County Final. The year was 1891, a date that has come down to history as the year of the famous North Sligo by-election which was vigorously contested between the Parnellites and the Anti-Parnellites.

Parnell himself, the "Uncrowned King", campaigned in the constituency in the Spring of that year, visiting Coney Island and Strandhill and staying overnight as the guest of the Cockrane's of Glen Lodge.

Despite the counter-attraction of the election campaign and the then involvement of the GAA in the politics of the day, the county championship got underway in February, with eighteen teams competing.

Playing in Group Two, Strandhill Young Irelanders recorded victories over Geevagh, Highwood and Riverslawn and as champions of North Sligo advanced to meet the Bunninadden Emmets, winners in North Sligo.

The county final of 1891 was played in Collooney on May 3rd, with Jemica Flanagan of Ballymote as referee.

A big crowd assembled in Phillips' field, subsequently better known as Quigley's field, with the Strandhill supporters outnumbering their opponents by more than ten to one.

The Cooleramen described as "the bigger and heavier team", trailed by two points at half-time. They showed improved form on the turnover, when backed by the wind, and soon levelled the scores.

This was followed up by a well directed shot for a goal which appeared to have crossed the line but was not allowed by the referee. This incident proved to be the turning point of the game. Bunninadden then grasped the initiative and scored three quick points to put them well clear at the final whistle 0-5 to 0-2.

The first team from the parish to contest a county final lined out as follows: Eddie Kilfeather (capt.), Thos. Mannion, John Hunt, Henry Hunt, Owen Carty, Pat Devaney, Michael Mannion, Denis Mannion, Thomas Gillen, Patrick Kilfeather, John McGowan, John Carty, William Devaney, Cornelius McHugh, Subs., Michael Bree, Henry Ward, James Cawley, Thomas Kelly.

Umpires: Jas. McGloin, Bernard Kelly.

The first GAA club in Coolera was known as Knocknarea, then Strandhill, and finally (in 1907) Coolera, or Cuil Ira, the ancient name for the peninsula.

The S.F.C. of 1907 attracted a record entry of nineteen teams which were divided into three divisions. Coolera were in the North Division and qualified to meet Teeling in the divisional final. It was played at Dromard and the Knocknarea men continued on their successful, winning by 0-3 to 0-1.

Best wishes to the
Strandhill/Coolera
Team
from

BRIDIE & SONNY

at the

STRANDHILL
BAR

Coolera House

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 30 2000
COUNTY FINAL SPECIAL

UP FOR THE MATCH

"Ol, Ceol agus Craic"

NO CHARGE

Rita, Michael, Staff
and Customers

wish

the Coolera/Strandhill

team

The best of luck

Sunday Night: "Ol, Ceol agus Craic"

Coolera take their place on centre stage after prolonged absence

LIKE THEIR opponents in Sunday's captivating senior final, Coolera have emerged from a prolonged barren spell to take centre stage in Sligo football.

In the forty-six years which have passed since one of the oldest clubs in the county last appeared in a senior Championship final, there have been many false dawns and shattered dreams.

Now, with the coveted breakthrough beckoning, Coolera will carry the hopes and ambitions of generations of GAA followers in Knocknarea and Strandhill with them as they face Bunninadden in what promises to be a passionate final on Sunday.

By Leo Gray

Separating the disappointments of the past from the aspirations of the present is a problem both Coolera and Bunninadden have had to contend with in the build-up to the decider but both clubs are confident they've managed to keep their players focussed on the job in hand.

Focussed

"As a group, we haven't considered the historical connections with this final at all", Coolera manager, Declan McCabe points out.

"What happened in the semi-finals of this year's Championship hasn't any real relevance to the final so why should something that happened fifty or even a hundred years ago matter. All we are concentrating on is the present. The players are only focussed on Sunday's final."

McCabe has been through it all before and previous managerial experience with St. Mary's and Bunninadden give him a vital insight into what is required to succeed in Sligo football.

He spent over three years in two separate stints with Bunninadden and there are many who believe his efficient, uncompromising style of management set in place the foundations for the club's current success. McCabe is happy to let others be the judge of his reign at the South Sligo club but he retains fond memories of his time there.

Pressure

"I'm glad to say that I am on friendly terms with a lot of people involved in the Bunninadden club. I enjoyed my time with them and I've been to a lot of their matches since I left. If it wasn't Coolera they were playing in Sunday's final, I would be cheering for them big time", he points out.

Ironically, Coolera's path to the final began against Bunninadden in August. The South Sligo club already had one game under their belts but it was Coolera's first outing.

"Even though it was our first game, there was a lot of pressure on us because a defeat would have left us in danger of going out of the Championship", recalls McCabe.

"We didn't play particularly well in the first half but we improved a lot after the break and scored five points without reply in the closing stages which gave us a three point victory. Over the hour, the game could have gone any way. There was little between the teams. Even through we came out on top, I don't think you could read too much into the result as far as the final is concerned", the Coolera manager adds.

Victory over Castleconnor earned Coolera a quarter-final showdown with reigning Champions, Tourlestrane. Most neutrals assumed another Coolera Championship run was about to come to an end but the North Sligo outfit had different ideas.

Best football

"We were quite confident going into the game and we played our best football of the year against Tourlestrane. We were very focussed on the day and we played to our true potential. That victory convinced us that we were good enough to compete with any team in the county", explains McCabe.

In the semi-final, Coolera once again started as underdogs but eventually got the better of Eastern Harps in a low-scoring replay. Over the two semi-finals, Coolera shot twenty-five wides but that is not a statistic that unduly worries McCabe.

"Both clubs will go into the match

believing that they can win it and it

really does appear to be wide open. For

our part, we have to stay focussed and

try to concentrate on the job in hand. If

we do that and play to our full potential

over the hour, we have the ability to win.

"Our players have worked extremely

hard all year and now it is down to the

wire. I anticipate a very tight match and

hopefully we'll come out on top at the

end of what should be a great occasion

for Sligo football", says the Coolera manager.

Inspirational captain thrives on challenging role



Coolera, however, remained convinced that they were good enough to reach the final.

"We didn't panic after the first game. We knew we had the ability to beat Harps and it was just a matter of going out and starting all over again. Our goalkeeper, Aidan Carty, kept us in the first game with two magnificent saves and we repaid him in the replay but guarding his goal so well. I don't think he had a save to make in the replay. So, over the two games, it was a team effort and I think we fully deserved to go through in the end."

Looking ahead to Sunday's final, Shane is expecting a tight game with very little in it on one way or the other.

"We beat them by three points in our first game in the Championship but the match could have gone either way. I think it will be a similar type game in the final. Hopefully, we can do ourselves justice and come out on top but we know it is going to be a very tough match", he says.

A former captain of the Sligo U21 team, Shane is brother of Coolera's exciting young forward, Karol.

"It's great to have Karol on the team and it would be very special if both of us could share in an historic Championship success for Coolera", adds Shane.

COOLERAS captain, Shane O'Neill, could complete an unusual double if his side beat Bunninadden in the final of the Sligo senior football championship on Sunday next.

Two years ago, the twenty-three years Sligo IT student won a Junior Championship title with Boston Blues in America and is now on the verge of adding a Sligo championship medal to his collection.

The American honour came at a price, however. The decision to try his luck in the States for the Summer of 1998 cost him the captaincy of his beloved Coolera and at the time it was beyond his wildest dreams that he would ever skipper the club again, never mind lead it to an historic appearance in a county final.

"I considered it a great honour to captain the club's senior team and I must admit I thought I had left it behind me when I went to America two years ago.

"Thankfully, I have been given the chance to captain the side again this season and it is something I value very much.

"I like the responsibility that the role brings. It is my job to lead by example on the pitch and to motivate the other lads on the team. It's a big challenge but I am the sort of player who responds to that sort of situation", Shane explains.

A defender of strength and pace, who is equally at home in the half-back or full-back line, Shane has been an inspirational figure for Coolera as they battled their way to their first appearance in a county final since 1946.

The weight of history hangs over the current team as supporters dream of the club's first senior title since 1907 but the players are remaining focused on Sunday's final.

"We've put all the historical stuff to the back of our minds", says Shane. "Our only priority is Sunday's final."

In recent years, Coolera enjoyed a lot of good form in the senior league but never quite delivered the goods in the Championship.

"We are a relatively young team and it has taken a few years to realise our full

potential", explains the captain.

"This year, we seem to have got it all together. The management side of the club is first class and there has been a great response from the players. We realised that for the Championship you have to lift your game by about twenty per cent and we've been able to do that so far."

Each game brought new challenge and we rose to the occasion each time, individually and as a collective unit. There is now greater confidence in the squad that at any tie in the

recent past and we feel comfortable going out on the pitch that we are up to doing the job. We work hard for each other and help each other through the course of matches. The spirit is unbelievable and there is a good mix of youth and experience in the team", he points out.

Many observers felt

Coolera had blown their chance of Championship glory when they drew with Eastern Harps in the semi-final.

The general view was that Harps would learn most from the first game and shade the replay.



COUNTY FINAL S

Coolera Player Profile

TONY WATERS: Aged 19. Defender. Student. Has won senior and under-14 Connacht medals with Summerhill College.

NEIL CAREW: Aged 25. Insurance official. Defender. Has won county under-16 championship, Fr. Manning Cup, Intermediate and League championship, and Pick n Choose League medals. Has represented the county at under-16, under-18, under-21 and senior level. Favourite player, Shane O'Neill.

KEVIN COONEY: Aged 17. Student. Midfielder. Has won underage City League medals, as well as under-10 Connacht Community Games medal and under-12 and under-16 county medals. Favourite player, B. O'Reilly.

KARL O'NEILL: Aged 19. Student. Forward. Winner of numerous medals at all grades, he has represented the county at underage and minor level.

TERRY McMAHON: Aged 28. Garda. Midfield. Holder of two county Intermediate medal, county under-16 medal, and an All-Ireland Trench Cup medal. Favourite player, Teddy McCarthy.

JAMES JOYCE: Aged 24. Defender. Software engineer. Has won county under-12, under-14 and under-16 medals, and an All-Ireland Feile under-14 medal. Has represented county at under-18, under-21 and senior level. Favourite player, Neil Carew.

TOMMIE CRONIN: Aged 21. Defender. Chemistry Technician. Has played for county teams at under-16 and minor level. Connacht Schools senior league medal holder. Favourite player, Padraig Joyce.

JAMES CURRAN: Aged 19. Student. Goalkeeper. Won under-12 county championship, and Connacht B championship with Summerhill college. Has played for the county at under-16 and minor levels. Favourite player, Kieran McGeeney.

AIDAN CARTY: Aged 26. NCF employee. Goalkeeper. Winner of Intermediate Championship and League medals, and an under-21 North Division title. Favourite player, Kieran Whelan.

KARL GILLIGAN: Aged 22. Forward. Post Graduate student. Holder of under-12, under-14, under-16 county medals and under-14 Feile medal. Manning Cup winner in 1994. Has represented the county at under-16, minor and under-21 level. Favourite player, Barney Rock.

MARC HOWLEY: Aged 18. Stiefel Laboratory employee. Forward. Winner of Vocational Schools All-Ireland and Connacht medals. Favourite player, Oisin McConville.

John Fitzpatrick: Aged 18. Student. Forward. Medals include under-12 county champions, under-16 C championship and under-16 B League. Favourite player, Jarlath Fallon.

PAUL HEGARTY: Aged 17. Student. Forward. Winner of Pick n Choose Senior League, as well as under-16 B and under-16 C championship medals. Favourite player, Niel

Carew.

LIAM HEALY: Aged 24. NCF employee. Forward. Winner of Intermediate Championship medal in 1995. Favourite player, Michael Donnellan.

STEPHEN CARTY: Aged 24. Engineer. Midfield. Medals include under-12, under-14, under-16 county championships, under-14 Feile, and county Intermediate championship. Has played for Sligo at under-16, under-18, under-21 and senior level. Favourite player, Shay Walsh.

BARRY DOYLE: Aged 21. Garda. Defender. Holder of under-12, under-14 and under-16 county medals, Intermediate League and Championship, Pick and Choose League, and Colleges league medals. Favourite player, Damien Gilligan.

GAVIN FOLEY: Aged 25. Stiefel Laboratory employee. Defender. Intermediate League and Pick and Choose League winner. Favourite player, Niel Carew.

KIERAN QUINN: Aged 20. Student. Midfield. Made senior debut for county in this year's Connacht Championship. Has also played at under-21 level and is the holder of a county under-16 championship medal.

RAYMOND DOYLE: Aged 17. Student. Defender. Has won medals at all underage levels, from under-9 to under-16. Favourite player, Mike Frank Russell.

Paul Carty: Aged 22. Electrician. Half back.

COLM MULLEN: Aged 19. Student. Forward. Has won an under-12 county championship medal, as well as Connacht A first year and Connacht B Senior titles with Summerhill. Has represented the county at underage level. Favourite player, Padraig Joyce.

NEIL KENNY: Aged 19. Student. Defender. Winner of under-12 and under-16 county championship medals.

Michael Curran: Aged 29. Property consultant. Forward. Winner of under-12 championship and Intermediate League and Championship. Has played for the county at under-21 level. Favourite player, Neil Finnegan.

JOHN MCPARTLAND: Aged 22. Student. Forward. Honours include underage medals at all levels; under-21 Hastings Cup and Connacht Junior medal with Sligo, and an under-14 All-Ireland Feile medal. Has represented county at under-16, minor, under-21 and senior levels. Favourite player, Peter Canavan.

DAMIAN GILLIGAN: Aged 34. Farmer. Defender. Has won under-age county medals, as well as Intermediate Championship and League and Pick and Choose medals in Sligo; and under-21 county championship and senior league medals in Meath. Winner of Dublin Colleges League and Connacht Minor League medals. Favourite player, Gerry McEntee.

CYRIL CONNOLLY: Aged 20. Student. Defender. Favourite player, Martin Brennan.



Thomas Walshe, the referee for Sunday's Senior Championship Final



Coolera Manager,
Declan McCabe

Friends and foes

COOLERA'S Karol O'Neill and Bunninadden's Emmet Gilhooley were team mates on the Sligo/Leitrim U.18 soccer team which reached the final of the All-Ireland inter-league competition earlier this year. Mark Howley, a valuable member of the Coolera squad, was also on the Sligo/Leitrim team.

Rugby link

GAVIN FOLEY, the Coolera defender, is also an accomplished rugby player. He won a Connacht Junior Cup medal with Sligo Rugby club last year and was on the Sligo team beaten in this year's provincial junior final. He has also gained many representative honours in rugby.

Coolera's "Millennium Man"

WHEN THE County Board decided to mark the new Millennium by inviting each club to nominate their person of the Century, it was no surprise to anybody that Coolera chose Peter Cooney as their recipient of the great honour.

A lifetime servant of the club, Peter created must have created a new record in GAA administration when he was elected as Secretary of the Coolera club for the 41st successive year at the club's annual general meeting earlier this year.

He has also given long and valued service to the County Board and the North Sligo Divisional Board and is an active member of the Coolera Community Games organisation.

Peter has seen some wonderful Coolera teams and players down through the years but the dream of Championship glory has always eluded them.

However, this could be Coolera's year. And if you believe in omens, how about this? Peter Cooney is now working with his 13th Chairman at the club, following the election to this position of Joe Gildea at the club's AGM.

If Coolera end their long wait for success on Sunday, few will be entitled to celebrate as much as their great servant, Peter Cooney.



Coolera "Brothers in arms" Stephen and Aidan Carty

The last time they met

COOLERA and Bunninadden met in an earlier round of the Championship when Coolera came out on top by 0-9 to 0-6. The teams and scorers were:

Coolera: J. Curran, K. Cooney, N. Carew, K. O'Neill (0-2); J. Joyce, S. O'Neill, T. Watters, T. McMahon (0-1), S. Carty, K. Quinn (0-1), J. McPartland (0-1), L. Healy (0-2); C. Mullen, B. Doyle, P. Hegarty (0-2). Sub: M. Howley for C. Mullen.

Bunninadden: M. Finn, S. Roddy, F. Dodd, S. Gormley, J. O'Flaherty, K. Brett, J. Scanlon, M. Gormley, P. Doohan, A. Killoran (0-1), P. Kearins, E. Gilhooley, F. O'Flaherty (0-2), L. Og Gormley (0-3), B. Gilhooley. Subs: D. Killoran for S. Gormley; D. Gormley for B. Gilhooley.

MIERAN BRETT.

BUN AN FHEADAIN C.L.G
BUNNANADDEN G.A.A.

Co – Finalists 2000

To: All Senior Panelists

On be-half of the club I would like to congratulate you on reaching the co-final, a great honour for the club and our parish.

By now you should have received your co- final attire, this beautiful gear comes to you courtesy of three proud Bunninaddan men.

Peter Gallagher, Richard Brennan, Tony Perry has sponsored our training fund for the last number of years at a great cost to themselves.

The club is eternally grateful, as I'm sure you are, but I know all they want in return is to wear this gear with pride.

Sean O'Flatharta
Sean O'Flatharta,
Runai Bun an Fheadain C.L.G.