Ballyvaughan 0-10 - Michael Cusack’s 0-8

@ Cusack Park, Ennis.

Intermediate Championship Final

Referee: - Rory Hickey (Eire Og Ennis)

BALLYVAUGHAN’S greatest day, the day that will never grow old, just grow better with every passing day whenever anyone from Clare football’s most

northerly outpost reflects on this famous victory. It carried with it the Talty Cup,

but also senior football 90 years after Ballyvaughan/Fanore football was first put on the map with Paddy O’Donoghue’s appearance for Clare in the All-Ireland senior final. And they deserved it, if only because of their heart for battle. They

Worked harder than Michael Cusack’s, who added another chapter to their long-running county final nightmare.

Three final loses on the trot in 2001, ’02 and ’03 were bad enough, but losing a fourth in six years to their near neighbors was the worst of all, especially as they contributed to their own downfall. Yet again, in the hour of greatest need Michael Cusack’s’ shooting failed them. They hit 15 wides and with those missed opportunities went their hopes of winning a first intermediate title in 24 years.

It gave Ballyvaughan the greatest opportunity of their football lives, but they still had to go on and win the game. They did that thanks to a combination of raw courage, dogged defense and the performance of John Martyn up front.

The full-forward was the man apart, kicking seven points over the hour and having a lead part in two more scores that carried his side over the line with a couple of points to spare. Martyn was the great conductor – the marquee performer whose performance will forever be indelibly linked to this storied success. This local derby contest quickly settled into a pattern – Michael Cusack’s had plenty of possession and did all day, but it was Ballyvaughan who used their possession to much greater advantage. They got scores from limited ball, Michael Cusack’s

didn’t with plenty of ball. Cusack’s had four wides inside ten minutes, a malaise that haunted them all through. Contrast this to Ballyvaughan who weathered the early storm to settle with two John Martyn points inside 13 minutes. Michael Cusack’s best period of the half came between the 14th and 18th minutes when Michael Jordan, Michael Hynes and Pat Davoren pointed to put them 0-4 to 0-2 clear. This is when they could have kicked on, but instead the kick came from

Ballyvaughan with four more JohnMartyn points before half-time. It was the foundation of Ballyvaughan day – they had the scent of victory and never lost it for the hour.

They led 0-6 to 0-4 at half-time, and then John Martyn robbed John Conroy of

Possession and teed up Jack Queally for the opening point of the second half.

Cusack’s were in dire straits, a situation that finally roused them to life. They started dominating midfield and as a result chance after chance presented itself. And, though the wides mounted, points by Michael Jordan, Clive Earley and Pat Davoren had the game delicately poised at 0-7 each entering the last 15 minutes.

Ballyvaughan looked as if they’d be swamped in the rising blue and gold tide, but somehow they stood defiant in defense and raided up the field to land two precious points. John Martyn lofted over a 45 yard free in the 46th minute. Two minutes later Kevin Carrucan scored a booming point from play. These were the defining scores, giving Ballyvaughan a two-point cushion as they faced the siege of the

last ten minutes. It was lifted in the 57th minute when a brilliant run by Phelim Coyne teed up corner-back Sean McNamara who finished the move with the outside of his boot. There was no denying Ballyvaughan now, even though Michael Hynes pegged a point back in the 62nd minute, a minute after his

brother Kenneth saw his goal effort blaze just inches wide. Ballyvaughan had finally come of age and the champagne corks soon popped.

**Ballyvaughan**

Damian McNamara (7),

Mark Walsh (7), Philip Monks (7), Sean McNamara (7) (0-1),

Mark O’Loughlin (7) Capt., Diarmuid Greene (7), Setanta Moran (6),

James Hynes (8), Raymond Casey (7),

Kevin Carrucan (7) (0-1), Stevie Hynes (6), Phelim Kyne (6),

Jack Queally (7) (0-1), John Martyn (9) (0-7, 5f), Cillian Mahon (6).

**Subs**

Jason McDonagh (7) for Moran,

Cian Walsh (6) for Stevie Hynes,

Paul McDonagh (6) for Kyne.

**Michael Cusack’s**

Eoin Farrell (7),

John Conroy (7), Oliver Conway (6), Patrick O’Connor (6),

Gerry Conway (6), Fintan Conway (7), Michael O’Connor (6),

James Hynes (7), Michael Hynes (7) (0-2, 1f),

Shane Lee (6), Patrick Hynes (7), Kenneth Hynes (6),

Michael Jordan (7) (0-2), Patrick Davoren (7) (0-2), Niall Quinn (7) (0-1).

**Subs:-**

Clive Earley (6) (0-1) for Michael O’Connor,

Tómas Kerin (6) for Patrick Hynes.

**Man of the Match**

**John Martyn** (Ballyvaughan)

John Martyn the musician is a cult figure and played Lisdoonvarna in his day – similar cult status awaits John Martyn the footballer after his magnificent contribution to Ballyvaughan’s greatest day. With him and his seven points they won the title, without him they’d have won nothing.

Ballyvaughan were way more direct when going forward, especially in the first half when they ran straight at the Michael Cusack’s defense. It

gave them the platform to go on and win their first ever title. Then their

backs dug very deep to weather the Michael Cusack’s storm in the second

half. The rest is Ballyvaughan history.

**Why they won:-**

Ballyvaughan were way more direct when going forward, especially in the first half when they ran straight at the Michael Cusack’s defence. It gave them the platform to go on and win their first ever title. Then their backs dug very deep to weather the Michael Cusack’s storm in the second

half. The rest is Ballyvaughan history.

**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.