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A WESTERN TRIUMPH. GALWAY'S FIRST "ALL-IRELAND" RECORD CROWDS WATCH GRAND DISPLAY. STRENUOUS HURLING. LIMERICK "VETERANS" GO DOWN FIGHTING.

At Croke Park yesterday, Galway defeated Limerick in the final of the 1923 All-Ireland Hurling Championship by 7 goals 3 points (24 points) to 4 goals 5 points (17 points).

This is the first time in the history of the G.A.A. that the blue riband of Irish hurling has been won by a Connacht team.

Special trains brought thousands of enthusiasts from all parts of the country. The game was a thrilling one, and although excitement ran high, was played throughout in a thoroughly sportsmanlike spirit.

DESERVING WINNERS VICTORY AFTER YEARS OF STRIVING

By defeating Limerick at Croke Park yesterday in the hurling final for 1923, Galway achieved the proud distinction of bringing the first All-Ireland Championship to Connacht. Their victory is considerably enhanced by reason of the fact that in Limerick, who had won the 1921 Championship in March of last year, they were meeting worthy opponents, while in the semi-final some months ago they had beaten Kilkenny, who were holders of the title for 1922.

Yesterday's game was a strenuous encounter, and was keenly contested all the way. A fast pace was set from the start and maintained to the end, but in the matter of speed the advantage was with Galway, whose capital display bore evidence of careful practice and training. In this respect the Limerick men did not show up as well as one would expect. They lacked cohesion in their play, and frequent missing by a few of the Munster representatives would go to show that they were not as well prepared as they might have been.

VIGOUR AND DASH.

Outstanding features of a fine exhibition of hurling were vigour and dash, which counted for more than the scientific play to which we have been treated in many finals of the past. The Galway forwards were quick to avail of scoring chances, and allowed few opportunities of raising a flag to go a-begging. Their backs and custodian were more than equal to the best efforts of the Limerick forwards, who, truth to tell, were rather disappointing. Appearing to depend more on individual than combined action, they failed to register on several occasions when scores seemed certain. This was particularly the case in the opening half, when Limerick had for more "wides" than Galway. There were some thrilling bouts of play at midfield, where the teams were pretty evenly balanced.

It was an exciting game, though the determination of the players resulted in a number of minor accidents. In this way Limerick suffered the loss in the opening stages of J.J. Kinnane, who received a blow on the head, and R. McConkey, who retired nearing the end with an injured hand.

FLUCTUATIONS OF THE GAME.

Limerick had a high wind and the sun in their favour in the first half, during which the scoring ran level and made matters very exciting. Galway had been showing up well, and on the turn-over their prospects of success were rosy. Taking a substantial lead early in the closing moiety, they continued to hold the upper hand. Limerick engaged in a few strong rushes, and at one time, when they scored two goals in rapid succession, looked like drawing level. The Galway defence, however, withstood the shock and the long whistle found the men of the West in all respects deserving winners.

From the spectators' viewpoint it was not as good a game as that between Kilkenny and Tipperary for the 1922 final, but was far superior to that of the previous year, in which Limerick beat Dublin.

WELL-EARNED HONOURS.

Galway's win is all the more meritorious because of hurling in Connacht being practically confined to the one county. Since the inception of the G.A.A. Galway have kept the game going, in fair weather and foul, but only twice before did they succeed in working their way into the final, in 1887 (the first year for which an All-Ireland Championship was played) and in 1900. In both years they were beaten by Tipperary. At long last their spirit of true sportsmanship and perseverance has had its reward, and this the 36th championship has gone to Connaught.

As a tribute to Galway it is worthy of note that when the final was originally fixed for June last, and Limerick declined to travel owing to the continued detention of the prisoners, the chairman of the Central Council ruled that Galway get the match. Mr. Tom Kenny, of Craughwell, one of the Connaught representatives at the meeting voiced the popular feeling of his county by emphatically declaring that Galway would not take a walk-over. They would forfeit the award and trophies sooner than have it said that they accepted a bloodless victory. Limerick appreciated Galway's action at the time, and now join with the Gaels of Ireland in congratulating the Connacht representatives on their hard earned title to the 1923 honours.

There was one change on the Galway team of yesterday from that which beat Kilkenny in the semi-final. J. Garvey coming on in room of P. Hurney.

LOSERS' PROUD RECORD.

Limerick were minus the services, owing to a family bereavement, of W. Ryan, who was replaced by M. Gibbons. Eight of the Limerick team of yesterday played against Wexford in the 1918 final, and Dublin in the 1921 final. They are Lanigan, Humphreys, Keane, Gleeson, McInerney, McConkey, McGrath and Haugh. Murnane played against Dublin in the 1921 final. Neville, who played with Limerick yesterday, assisted Dublin in the 1921 final.

Limerick won the All-Ireland championships of 1897, 1918, and 1921, and were runners-up in 1910 and 1911.

It is only reasonable to hope that Galway's brilliant victory after so many years of striving and disappointment will have a healthy effect on the game in the West, and that in the years to come Connacht will occupy as prominent a place in hurling circles as Munster and Leinster. The Galway men, at any rate, have set an example that deserves to be emulated by the other counties in the western province.

EXCELLENT ARRANGEMENTS.

With upwards of 20 special trains arriving in the city there was a big crowd at Croke Park, the West supplying a large contingent. The enclosures, however, were by no means filled. The ground had not suffered as a result of the Rodeo, and the playing pitch was in first-class order. The field arrangements left nothing to be desired, though the officials and stewards had a busy hour previous to the start, which was sharp at 3 o'clock. The intervals of waiting were pleasantly whiled away by the musical selections of the Transport Workers' Brass and Reed Band.

The match was refereed by Mr. P. Kennedy, Dublin, and if a few of his decisions did not meet with general approval it must be admitted that he acted throughout with strict impartiality.

STRENOUS PERIODS LIMERICK FORWARDS MISS MANY CHANCES

Galway, 7-3; Limerick, 4-5.

Galway, playing towards the canal goal, moved away from the throw-in, and were help up by Kinnane. Limerick attacked with vigour, and the Galway end was crossed without reward. Following a few lightning-like exchanges at midfield, Limerick again took up the running and forced a "70." which was sent wide by Gleeson. The Limerick backs beat down an attempted forward move by Galway, and Lanigan made an opening for Gleeson to start the scoring with a point for Limerick. Limerick continued to do so best, and "wides" were registered in turn by Gleeson and McConkey.

WESTERNERS' GOOD START.

Harney put Galway attacking from a free, and after a brisk bout close in, Kenny beat the Limerick custodian for a goal. Limerick broke away from the puck-out, but were repulsed, and a fast run down the field ended in McGrath adding a goal for Galway. Cross sent away from midfield, and Humphreys put over a point for Limerick, the same player sending wide soon after. Humphreys returned the puck-out for Limerick, but the Galway defence was sound, Kenny and Dervan getting in effective service.

The pace was fast, and the play, generally of a high order, lacked nothing in dash and vigour. Kinnane (Limerick) was injured, but resumed amidst cheers. Galway sent over but worked back in quick time, and the Limerick citadel had a narrow escape. Gibbons sent well in for Limerick, but the front line finished weakly. Returning, the Galway backs were hotly tested and beaten by Gleeson for a goal for Limerick, who were now but a point in arrears. Mahony saved in the Galway goal at the expense of a "70." which was well placed by Gleeson. A free for Galway was "fouled" by Fleming, and the referee hopped the ball. Galway broke away, but were held up by a free, which was placed in the goal-mouth by Gleeson and rushed in by the forwards. No score was allowed owing to an encroachment of the parallelogram.

LIMERICK TAKE THE LEAD.

The puck out fell short. Martin King (Galway) was knocked out, but resumed. Kinnane (Limerick) retired, and was replaced by P. Shanny. Galway, on the offensive, were held up by fouling, and Haugh sent well away for Limerick. A free by Gleeson was stayed by the Galway backs. Limerick maintained the pressure, and took the lead with a great goal, banged in by Lanigan from a ground free. Vigorous play led to minor casualties. Galway went over and Limerick dashed off from the puck-out and got a free in dangerous ground, which was sent in by Gleeson for Mahony, in saving in the Galway goal, to give away a "70." The Galway defence proved reliable, as also against a second "70"; but Limerick were not to be denied, and Humphreys improved their lead by a point. Galway bounded away and excitement ran high as Kelly and Gibbs ended a combined move by the former levelling up with a goal. Limerick went on a fruitless scoring mission, and Galway sprang the way from the puck-out, Morris sending well into the Limerick ground. Following a free, Galway got a "70." which was badly "muffed" and the interval came with the scoring level at Limerick, 2-3; Galway 3-0.

GREAT GALWAY DEFENCE.

On again getting to work, Galway dashed away, but were checked by the combined efforts of Hough and Gibbons. Limerick moved in, but met with a rock-like defence, and, the scene of action changing, Hough was again conspicuous for good play in the Limerick rere line. Galway pressed in determined style, and took the lead with a great goal from Gibbs. Gill sent in from a Galway free, and Morrissey

finished for a good goal. This gave Galway a six points' advantage on the score. Limerick invaded, but made no impression on the strong Connacht defence, and the end was crossed without result. points' advantage on the score. Limerick invaded, but made no impression on the strong Connacht defence, and the end was crossed without result.

The Galway backs continued to do well in the face of a determined offensive by the Munster representatives. A Limerick free by Gleeson was saved, and the Galway end was again crossed without result. McGrath sent wide for Galway a little later. A brisk run by Limerick ended in a stiff bout of hurling in front of the Galway sticks. The best efforts of the Limerick forwards were frustrated by the powerful Western defence. A free by Gill brought Galway away, and the Limerick backs were beaten by McGrath for a goal. Power returned for Galway, and the Limerick sticks were again in danger. The defence prevailed. Limerick tried hard to get away, but were unable to penetrate the Galway backs. A free gave Limerick an opening, but the Western defence was perfect. Galway again took up the attack, and Hough cleared in capital style for Limerick. In face of a keen Limerick attack the Galway backs came out with flying colours, and the Western representatives went away for a point from Kelly.

FAST AND FURIOUS.

There was no slackening off in the pace or vigour of the game, an outstanding feature of which at this stage was the marvellous defence of the Galway backs and custodian. Limerick kept up the attack and the forwards clustered in for Neville and McGrath to get a brace of goals in quick succession. Martin King sent over a minor for Galway, who were now leading by 5 points. Within a minute O'Grady notched a point for Limerick. Gill showed up well in the Galway rere line, which was still being warmly tested. Galway broke away, and Kelly added a point for the men of West, Gleeson replying with a like score for Limerick soon after. From a fine centre by Gibbs the Limerick sticks were threatened, but the end was crossed. Galway returned from the puck-out and McGrath sent in a goal. A brisk onslaught by Limerick ended in Gibbons sending wide. Every inch of the ground was been keenly contested. McInerney was kept moving in the Limerick defence where he was being given a busy time by McGrath, the right-wing forward of Galway. With about 5 minutes to go Galway were leading by 7 points. Limerick looked like scoring when a free brought relief to Galway, for whom Gilmartin was applauded for a brilliant clearance a few minutes later. Limerick ground was visited to no purpose and the Munster men invaded per Lanigan. The work of the Limerick forwards left big room for improvement. McConkey (Limerick) went off injured and was substituted by J. O'Shea. Galway had matters well in hand, and Gill had a good try for a score. Though play lagged towards the close, Limerick struggled gamely to the end, but were obliged to take defeat at the hands of a superior and better trained hurling combination.

THE TEAMS.

Galway – M. Kenny (capt), J. Mahony (goal), J. Power, M. Dervan, Ignatius Harney, A. Kelly, Martin King, T. Fleming, R. Morrissey, J. Morris, E. Gilmartin, B. Gibbs, L. McGrath, M. Gill, J. Garvey.

Limerick – P. McInerney (capt.), J. Hanly (goal), W. Hough, D. Lanigan, M. Cross, J. O'Grady, M. Neville, M. Gibbons, J. Humphreys, R. McConkey, J.J. Kinnane, J. Keane, W. Gleeson, T. McGrath, D. Murnane. Subs – P. Shanny, J. O'Shea.

PRESENTING THE CUP.

After the match the Galway followers went wild with delight, and an animated scene was witnessed on the grounds. Several of the winning team were borne shoulder high from the playing pitch.

An interesting function took place when Mr. R. O'Keeffe, Leix, chairman of the Leinster Council, and vice-president of the Central Council, presented the Galway captain (M. Kenny) with the perpetual challenge cup, the gift of Mr. Liam McCarthy, London, for the All-Ireland championship winners in hurling. Mr. O'Keeffe complimented the victors on their great display, and also on having the honour of being the first team to bring the blue riband of the G.A.A. to Connacht.

Mr. Kenny suitably returned thanks, and loud cheers were raised for the victors.

Limerick were first holders of the cup for 1921. Kilkenny were holders for 1922.