

## U15 County Final Kinsale V Millstreet 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022

Kinsale and Millstreet thrashed out a wonderful contest on the ultra-modern 4G surface at Bishopstown GAA club. This was a great occasion for both clubs who were vying for the rare achievement of county hurling success.

Kinsale started the brighter as Rory O'Brien and Cillian Fitzpatrick battled for possession in the middle third; Ben Long opened Kinsale's account with a well-taken point after a powerful run. Cillian Fitzpatrick followed it up with a brilliantly struck score. The early exchanges favoured Kinsale as the full back line offered stiff opposition to Millstreet. Oscar Ryan and Sean Loughnane marshalled the central area with solid hurling and strong clearances. Both corner-backs, Cian Kiely and Ollie Buckley personified Kinsale's resilient defence, with Kiely ground-striking a wonderful clearance to keep the Kinsale goal safe. Meanwhile, behind them, Enda Hurley's composure under the high ball was proving vital, despite the heavy rain.

The Kinsale forwards were finding their stride early and great work on the right-hand side by David Forde allowed Sam Cantillon to stand up and slot the first of his four-point contribution. The industrious Forde added another from play to leave Kinsale 0-04 clear after the first quarter. Niall Og De Barra and Ben Long were proving handfuls throughout the middle third of the field. De Barra's physique and positional nous ensured the Millstreet defenders were continuously occupied.

Millstreet were not for folding though and they continued to test the Kinsale team with their hard running around the middle of the field. However, Conor Looney was proving, once again, that skill and power can come in the same complete package as he repelled the Millstreet attacks time after time. His wing men, Dylan Looney and Ben Cahill were bringing tremendous physicality and directness to our defence as they frustrated the Millstreet forwards with their 'no nonsense' defensive approach. They continued to drive the ball forward and eventually it found Kinsale's Sean 'the goal machine' Byrne who had carved out that vital yard of space. Byrne swivelled and rocketed the ball into the bottom right-hand corner of the net and the Kinsale contingent roared with delight. By now Niall Og De Barra and Cantillon were pressurising Millstreet at every turn.

But now it was Millstreet's turn to shine and in the closing minutes of the first half they added 1-01 to leave Kinsale with a four-point lead at half-time. This game was not over.

The second half began much as the first had ended with Millstreet gaining ground and adding points to the board. In that third quarter, only Cillian Fitzpatrick's powerful run and score kept Kinsale competitive. Liam Kirwan was winning possession and supplying the inside line repeatedly at this stage and after 45 minutes Kinsale led by 1-06 to 0-07. David Forde continued to press the Millstreet defence and he was desperately unlucky as he watched the ball shave the outside of the post, and drift agonisingly wide. Even Paul Forde's head was in hands at that stage of the game. A slight air of anxiety and concern was beginning to emanate from the Kinsale supporters. Kinsale needed some inspiration and they were not found wanting. Conor Looney, sitting back in the engine room of centre-back began to turnover ball, as Ryan and Kiely in the full back line dominated possession. Ollie Buckley continued to influence proceedings with fleet of foot and speed of thought, as he pushed out Millstreet repeatedly. Sam Cantillon and Ben Long were now using the skill and speed to provide threat in the forty and the pressure eventually resulted in Kinsale frees, each of which

Cantillon dispatched with accuracy, despite the close attention of a jumbo jet overhead! His elegant, classical hurling style and composure continued to torment the Millstreet defence.

Rory O'Brien's athleticism and competitiveness was proving vital in the middle of the field. His overall contribution to every game has been just wonderful. Rory continued to do the hard yards throughout the middle third of the field. One of the Kinsale mentors was heard whispering, "where would we be without him, he just never stops." Throughout the second half, he fought for every ball and supplied the forwards with the quality they needed. Kinsale's 'sweeper', Sean Loughnane, was using his guile and intelligence to sniff out trouble at every turn as Dylan Looney and Ben Cahill continued their trojan defensive work, holding firm without quiet concentration and resolve.

Games often swivel on a moment of magic, and Kinsale are blessed with a master magician in Cillian Fitzpatrick. Cillian fielded the ball in the middle of the field before powering through the Millstreet defence and launching an unstoppable drive into the Millstreet net, His inspiring Captain's contribution has been a feature of every game all year, and here he did it again! Kinsale were now in the driving seat, Ger Murphy's contribution was vital as he twisted and turned his way through the Millstreet defence, using the spaces that were opening up thanks to the tireless work of David Forde and Ben Long. Murphy was unlucky not to pinch a score or two as the Millstreet defenders were left puzzled by his majestic stickwork. Liam Kirwan's powerful running on the wing was vital in the later stages of the game as he controlled the play up and down the left wing.

With five minutes of ordinary time remaining, Kinsale had a two-goal cushion as they led 2-08 to 1-05. Millstreet pushed again as they chased a goal. Enda Hurley continued to impress in the Kinsale goal as organised his defenders and repelled every ball that dropped into his square. His sheer confidence and quickness of mind in the Kinsale goal meant that Kinsale seemed safe. Oscar Ryan was dominating play throughout the third quarter with powerful fielding, running and striking, showing all and sundry that he is a force to be reckoned with on any stage. Kiely continued to frustrate the Millstreet forwards as Sean Loughnane cleared ball after ball with accuracy and aplomb; and in the Kinsale goal Enda Hurley continued his star performance, repelling the Millstreet attack again and again.

The closing minutes were hotly contested as Cahill and the Looneys stood firm in the half-back line, doing what they do best - competing. David Forde was now winning ball all over the field and Kinsale pressure resulted in a 65. Cillian Fitzpatrick struck a high ball goalward that found the Millstreet net. There were murmurings of deflections with several Kinsale forwards claiming a hand or a hurl in the goal. Given the absence of VAR on the GAA fields of Cork, we will leave the goal in the credit of the wonderful Kinsale Captain, Cillian Fitzpatrick.

Millstreet continued to battle but the spirit of this Kinsale team was exemplified by Conor Looney, the centre-back powerhouse, who was the last man to hold the ball, helmetless (not for the first time) from Millstreet pressure. As Eoin Browne made his entrance, the referee's whistle sang out across the city evening air and the Kinsale crowd rose in joy to greet their County Hurling Champions!

Scorers for Kinsale: Cillian Fitzpatrick 2-02; Sean Byrne 1-0; Sam Cantillon 0-04; Ben Long 0-01; David Forde 0-01

Other members of the Kinsale squad who contributed admirably throughout the year were as follows:

Harry O'Leary, whose strength and determination featured in almost every round of the championship. There will be great days on the pitch for this powerful hurler and superb team-mate. It won't be long before he pucks the ball the length of the pitch either!

Eoin Browne, whose speed and guile have troubled many a defender. He may be small in stature but he is indeed a mighty man. Eoin is part of the bloodstream of this Kinsale team and before long he will be a star of the blue and white hoops.

Rowan O'Donoghue, whose direct and fearless defending has contributed to so many of our wins during the year, as has his winning smile and positive attitude.

Niall Corrigan, whose return to hurling has shown us that a bright future lies ahead for this towering athlete, and inspirational football goalkeeper.

Charlie Barrett, whose skill and touch mean that he can play anywhere, Charlie has starred in goal and in the forwards. As this team moves forward Charlie will emerge as a true great of Kinsale hurling. His lineage is strong!

Flor Scully, another returnee to the hurling field has brought, and will bring, tremendous energy, speed and determination to the game. Where Flor goes, scores will follow!

David McCarthy who brings the spirit to our matches! This chap has a very bright future on the GAA field with his determination, speed and strength.

Domhnall O'Grady, can play anywhere, forward, back or in goal, this lad will hurl his way into the record books as the years go by with his wristy hurling style and eye for the goal.

Cillian Fitzgerald, whose 'man of the match' performances U14 has catapulted him into the top echelon of players in the club in either code. Watch this space, Cillian is going to be big news!

Adam Coughlan, whose sleek defensive skills have come to the fore in many matches. His tough, uncompromising approach to hurling will make him a class defender in the years ahead.

Eoin O'Connor, whose speed, skill and style have flourished throughout the year, is going to be a footballer and hurler that will be talked about on the streets of Kinsale (and maybe even Tralee) for many years to come.

Barry McGinn, is a man of steel, a teak-tough defender who never leaves a forward get the better of him. His focused and relaxed attitude serves him well and he is a model hurler and footballer.

Kieran Carroll, whose flowing style and tremendous eye for the ball will add value to any forward line. 2023 is going to be a big year for him!

Joseph Neville, this chap has it all strength, speed, agility and a winning attitude to boot. Joe will take the years ahead by storm.

The towel carriers: Ollie Cahill (the quieter one!) and Eoin Hennessy dedicated themselves to the cause by darting through the rain to dry the hurleys of our free-takers time after time. It meant a lot to everyone, well done lads, ohh and last but not least to Izzy, the Brownie Queen, thank you so much for feeding us after every game with the best brownies in all of Ireland!

As for the mentors, well – are they mentors or demeters? All I will say is that each and every one has loved training this team and they look forward to many more years of fun and games with this wonderful group of lads. Roll on the football!