

KILMACUD CROKES WIN 1ST “back to back” HURLING TITLES & SECURE “THE TREBLE”!

KILMACUD CROKES 0-20 NA FIANNA 0-17

(Match Report by Diarmuid Coogan.)

In Parnell Park on 23rd October 2022, Kilmacud Crokes Hurlers made history by retaining the New Ireland Assurance Cup for the 1st time in their history and also completed the 3rd leg of a remarkable “treble” for the club of Dublin men’s Senior Hurling & Football titles to go with the Ladies Football title which started the ball rolling last month.

For good measure the Crokes Ladies also beat Naomh Ciarán of Offaly in the Leinster Semi Final!

While this final didn’t have the same dramatic finish as last year’s encounter between the same contestants, it was nonetheless a gripping match in which the result was in doubt to the final whistle.

The game ebbed and flowed throughout and the lead changed several times with Na Fianna putting themselves in a match winning situation midway through the 2nd half but appeared to lose their way with the finishing line in sight.

Crokes were quicker to settle and went into a 0-5 to 0-1 lead after 11 minutes with points from Fergal Whitely, Oisín Ó Rorke(2 frees), Michael Roche & Alex Considine to a solitary score from N Fianna sharp shooter Donal Burke. Considine’s effort was came after a very good diagonal ball from left corner back Cian MacGabhann into the right allowed him to use his pace and turn his marker before striking a lovely score.

When Na Fianna reflect on this match, they may well rue the 5 wides which they shot in this period. In the 12th minute corner forward Seán Currie gave the Na Fianna supporters something to cheer about when his line ball from 30 metres sailed over the bar. (KC 0-5 NF 0-2)

This seemed to spark his side into life and Burke (free), full forward AJ Murphy followed up with points to make it 5-4 before Whitely struck with a fine shot from the left on 15 minutes. (KC 0-6 NF 0-4)

A minute later Burke hit the score of the match thus far when Seán Currie won “dirty ball” on the ground and passed to him and he instinctively struck over from 45 metres on the left side line. (KC 0-6 NF 0-6)

Na Fianna were guilty of taking the ball into contact a little too often as this was “meat and drink” to the tenacious Crokes players who turned over several attacks in that 1st ½; from one such turnover, midfielder Dara Purcell played it quickly into Considine who again turned his man and struck a very efficient point. (KC 0-7 NF 0-6)

In the 21st minute, Dublin full forward Ronan Hayes rounded full back Conor McHugh and was about to head for goal before being pulled down by McHugh. Ó Rorke tapped over for Crokes. (KC 0-8 NF 0-6)

From the puck out, goal keeper Jonathan Tracy found wing back Diarmuid Clerkin (who had a very good game) and he played a very intelligent ball into AJ Murphy who hit a very nice point from the right. (KC 0-8 NF 0-7)

Following a very heavy foul on Whitely, Ó Rorke yet again proved his worth to Crokes with a huge free from inside his own 65 on the left touchline on 25 minutes. (KC 0-9 NF 0-7)

Burke replied with a great point on the run from ½ way. Crokes then tried to play it out from the back and were turned over with Burke nailing a free to level matters. (KC 0-9 NF 0-9)

Following some good work by wing back Davy Crowe and Purcell, Crokes were awarded another free which Ó Rorke nailed to leave Crokes a point up at the interval. (KC 0-10 NF 0-9)

2ND HALF.

Crokes got off to the quicker start after the break when midfielder Brian Hayes leapt to catch and high ball and struck a great point as he “hit the ground running” from 45 metres. (KC 0-11 NF 0-9)F

Following good work by Na Fianna sub Michael Murphy on the left, Burke added another free from 20 metres before hitting a wonderful point from play to tie up the scores again on 35 minutes. (KC 0-11 NF 0-11)

40 seconds later, Burke lobbed the sliothar over a Crokes player before giving his side the lead from 65 metres on the left side line to thunderous applause. 30 seconds after that AJ Murphy chipped in with his 3rd point and the momentum definitely had shifted to Na Fianna. (KC 0-11 NF 0-13)

Crokes right wing forward and captain Caolan Conway stemmed the tide with a fine point from the right side line after very good pressure by Roche and Ó Rorke disrupted what should have been a routine Na Fianna clearance. (KC 0-12 NF 0-13)

In the next 5 minutes Na Fianna played their best hurling of the match as Burke struck another monster free on 41 minutes with AJ Murphy following up with another lovely effort 30 seconds later before Clerkin capped a great performance with a point from 65 metres on the right touchline. (KC 0-12 NF 0-16)

While Na Fianna were basking in the sunshine and enthusiastic applause of their supporters, Eddie Gibbons cleverly pucked out quickly to MacGabhann in space on the right. The experienced MacGabhann carried the ball until stroking the ball over from 45 metres on the sideline for a very important point for Crokes. (KC 0-13 NF 0-16)

It was just after this that Na Fianna seemed to lose their way as they trying to play it out from the back starting with short puckouts from which they were repeatedly turned over. On 46 minutes from one such turnover, Ó Rorke nailed a free from the left. A minute later after another short puck turnover, Purcell hit a lovely point and Crokes were now only 1 behind.(KC 0-15 NF 0-16)

Less than a minute later, following some good inter-passing between Crowe and Brian Hayes, Hayes fed Ó Rorke and he showed great skill to side step a defender and strike the equaliser from 65 metres. (KC 0-18 NF 0-16)

Tracey went back to the long puck out and it provided dividends when Na Fianna were awarded a free on the right which Burke duly despatched to nudge his side back in front. (KC 0-17 NF 0-17) with 9 minutes left on the clock. (KC 0-16 NF 0-17)

Having clawed back the 4 point deficit, Crokes were in no mood to let Na Fianna build a lead again and Crowe won possession from Gibbons' puck before being fouled. Once more Ó Rorke drew the sides level. (KC 0-17 NF 0-17)

SAVE OF THE MATCH!

With 7 minutes left, Na Fianna had a marvellous opportunity to pull away when midfielder Tom Brennan fed a lovely hand pass to sub Seán Baxter who

was through on goal; Baxter did what every forward should do and drove the ball low but Gibbons somehow got his leg in the way and the ball looked as if it was going over but rebounded off the crossbar before the Crokes defence scrambled it clear!!

After that “let off”, Crokes settled themselves and following a great block by Mark Grogan on Seán Currie on the left side, Brian Hayes showed good vision in playing the sliothar to Ó Rorke on the right and he effortlessly stroked it over from 65 metres with less than 4 minutes left. (KC 0-18 NF 0-17)

Before Tracey could puck out, referee Thomas Gleeson sent off Considine for an off the ball incident which the linesman flagged. This should have been a major advantage to Na Fianna but they rushed a few chances of an equaliser although Colin Currie was unlucky to see his effort waived wide when it certainly looked as if it had crept inside the left upright.

After several efforts by Na Fianna, Gibbons pucked out long to the left and Ronan Hayes did very well to catch on the sideline before angling for a shot, getting dispossessed and then regaining possession and showing his all of his predatory instincts to extend the lead with the game 2 minutes into injury time. (KC 0-19 NF 0-17)

Na Fianna went in search of a goal and following a massive puck out from Tracey which broke just inside the Crokes 14 metre line, it deflected to the luckless Baxter who pulled on it 1st time only to see it go inches wide. Again the ever alert Gibbons was advancing and this probably forced Baxter to pull 1st time instead of catching and striking!

Burke then hit a long range fee just wide and Gibbons pucked out to the right where sub Brendan Scanlan made a great catch and showed good awareness to pop the ball “off the shoulder” onto Tadhg Ó Cathasaigh who came onto it like a train. Ó Cathasaigh left 3 defenders in his wake before striking over from the 14 metre line on the right. (KC 0-20 NF 0-17)

Once more, Na Fianna rallied in search of a goal to resume the game and Tracey launched a puck out which landed on the Crokes 20 meter line. Currie did well to win the sliothar on the right and gave a quick pass to Clerkin who cut in towards goal but his shot was inches wide at the near post.

With the game now in the 7th minute of injury time, the final whistle sounded shortly after the puck out!

Kilmacud Crokes:

E.Gibbons,C.MacGabhann,D.Butler,C.Ryan,D.Crowe,M.Grogan,C.Ó Cathasaigh,B.Hayes,D.Purcell,C.Conway(Capt),O'Rorke,F.Whitely,M.Roche,R.Hayes,A.Considine. Subs B.Scanlan f Conway(45), Rob O'Loughlin f Roche(47), B.O'Carroll f Ryan(55), F.Ó Ceallaigh f Purcell(59), R.Costello f B.Hayes(67).

Na Fianna:

J.Tracey,S.Burke,C.McHugh,H.Fenlon,D.Ryan,L.Rushe,D.Clerkin,T.Brennan,P.Feeney,CF.Breathnach,D.Burke(Capt),M.Murphy,S.Currie,AJ.Murphy,C.Currie. Subs: S.Baxter f Brennan(26),S.Ryan f M.Murphy(51), M.Oliver f Ryan (55), S.Barrett f AJ Murphy(59).

Scorers:

Kilmacud:

Ó Rorke (0-9, 7f), Whitely, Considine (0-2 each) McGabhann,Ó Cathasaigh,B.Hayes,R.Hayes,D.Purcell,C.Conway,M.Roche 0-1 each.

Na Fianna: Clerkin 0-1 each.

D.Burke 0-11(6f), AJ Murphy 0-4,S.Currie(s/l) Clerkin 0-1 each.

Duirt Sé:

Kilmacud Crokes Bainisteoir Kieran Dowling: “Even when the game was going against us at times, I knew we’d get back into it because the payers are relentless both in seeking scores and their work rate in defending and contesting for possession. People call us a super club but all of that squad out there today started in the nursery at age 5 and 6 and the success of our senior team in recent years has been the culmination of the efforts of hundreds of players, parents and volunteers over decades.”

He referred to a time when hurling was virtually unknown in the Stillorgan area:

“ There’s a friend of mine, Donie Dowling, and I remember working with a fella who said the only person he ever saw with a (hurl) stick walking around Kilmacud or Mount Merrion was Donie Dowling!”

He also paid tribute to outgoing Club Cathaoirleach Kevin Foley:

“Kevin Foley has just stepped down as Cathaoirleach of the club and his Dad was a founder member of the club in the 60’s and he and other parents from all over the country found themselves living in the parish of Kilmacud and brought their kids in and built this club up to what it is today.”

CONCLUSION – KEVIN FOLEY – OUTGOING CATHAOIRLEACH.

It is fitting that the unprecedented treble has been achieved along with multiple underage successes and huge participation levels in all 4 codes just as Kevin Foley has finished 10 years as Cathaoirleach of the club.

When his father Frank and the other visionaries set out on the journey in the 60’s, they could only have dreamt that the club would one day be so successful and that so many kids would be seen carrying hurls around Stillorgan. In another nice connection, Kevin’s nephew (and Frank’s grandson) Tom Stakelum is a member of the squad which will now embark on the quest to win a 1st Leinster Hurling Title!

The Kilmacud Community is very fortunate that Joan Kehoe has succeeded Kevin as Cathaoirleach as both Kevin and Joan have put in an endless amount of time in recent years in the service of the club and in the redevelopment of Pairc de Burca.