

## EXPRESSsport

SPARROW INSURANCES JHC FINAL

## Park-Ratheniska end the hurt as JHC



Park Ratheniska celebrate after winning the Junior Hurling Championship final at O'Moore Park. Picture: Alf Harvey.



Park Ratheniska celebrate after winning the Junior Hurling Championship final at O'Moore Park. Picture: Alf Harvey.

<b>Park-Ratheniska</b>	<b>2-14</b>
<b>Borris-Kilcotton</b>	<b>0-3</b>

**Jack Nolan**

Park Ratheniska cruised to their first 'A' hurling championship title in 17 years, as a superb team performance saw them completely outclass favourites Borris-Kilcotton in a disappointing Sparrow Insurance Junior A Hurling final at O'Moore Park on Saturday evening.

The 17 point winning margin was fully deserved as Borris-Kilcotton crumbled in the face of a Park-Ratheniska onslaught as, from the throw in, they completely dominated the game and hit six points from play in the opening 10 minutes without reply.

By half time they led by 0-8 to 0-1 when really they should have been completely out of sight, and they would have been had they converted all the chances they had created. It was hard to believe that this Borris-Kilcotton team had won the league fixture between the sides and had overcome a fancied Timahoe side in the semi-final.

On the day however they came up against a perfectly primed Park-Ratheniska side who were intent on putting the disappointment of three previous final defeats behind them as they produced their best display of hurling for many, many years.

With a team of youth and experience they dominated almost every position on the field from the start and set about their task in fiercely determined fashion right from the throw in, and after that glorious start the result was never in doubt.

This was an outstanding team display from the Ratheniska lads with Benny Dowling producing top class saves in goal, the defence completely on top and all of the front eight players scoring from play. Only two points of the total of 2-14 came from frees and with all of the starting six forwards scoring twice, as did man of the match Brendan Fingleton from midfield.

Years of final defeats were banished as full back Dennis Brennan was the

only player to bridge the 17 year gap and pick up a junior medal to add to his intermediate medal from 1994. At 37 years of age too, he has survived three final defeats in the 90s, while current U-17s Gavin Tynan and Darragh Nolan weren't even born at the time.

Cathal Og Greene opened the scoring after Darragh Nolan soloed down the left wing and delivered a perfect pass to the flying county senior football panellist, and minutes later Fergal Phelan grabbed a high delivery from Brendan Fingleton and tapped it over.

Nine minutes in a Brendan Fingleton hand pass set up Barry Fingleton for a long range point and by the ninth minute a fine Eamon Cooke point had Ratheniska off to a flying start.

When Sean Tynan was blocked down with a shot for goal, Mark Delaney was on hand to pick and tip it over while Tynan added another after great work by Brendan Fingleton for a 0-6 to no score lead after 10 minutes of play.

Amazingly there was to be no score for the next 10 minutes with a terrific diving save by Benny Dowling the only highlight of the period, and it was the 20th minute before Pat Guidera eventually opened the Borris Kilcotton account with a great point from outfield.

Park-Ratheniska finished the half in control with points from the Fingleton's, Barry and Brendan, for a 0-8 to 0-1 half time lead but really they should have been farther ahead such was their overall dominance.

Any comeback from Borris Kilcotton was dashed within two minutes of the restart when Ratheniska struck for their first goal and a brilliant team goal it was. Superb play outfield saw Fergal Phelan win possession on the stand wing, and showing great vision he spotted Darragh Nolan inside the defence on the other side, and when his low ground shot came to the youngster he showed real skill as he lifted and struck first time a blistering, unstoppable shot to the far corner of the net.

Davy Ryan and Eamon Cooke then



Eamonn Cooke strikes for Park Ratheniska against Steven Finan, Borris in Ossory in the Junior Hurling Championship final at O'Moore Park.

Picture: Alf Harvey.



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Gavin Tynan controls this ball for Park Ratheniska against Emmet Jones and Barry Wall, Borris in Ossory in the Junior Hurling Championship final at O'Moore Park. Picture: Alf Harvey.

swapped pointed frees and eight minutes in the game was over as a contest as a high ball in from Brendan Fingleton broke off Fergal Phelan to Ogie Greene, and from 20m out his first time ground shot ripped the back of the net.

Emmett Jones quickly replied with a point but Borris Kilcotton were not to score again for the final 22 minutes of play as Ratheniska put the shutters up.

Sean Tynan fired over a brilliant point and then Darragh Nolan hit a massive point from outside the 65 and then set up substitute Mark Carroll and then Fergal Phelan for excellent scores, while Brendan Fingleton landed a long range free for a 17 point winning margin to end 17 years of hurling disappointments.

**SCORERS** - Park Ratheniska: Darragh Nolan, Cathal Og Greene 1-1 each, Brendan Fingleton (one

free), Eamon Cooke (one free), Fergal Phelan, Barry Fingleton and Sean Tynan 0-2 each, Mark Delaney and Mark Carroll 0-1 each; Borris-Kilcotton; Pat Guidera, Emmett Jones and Davy Ryan (free) 0-1 each

**PARK-RATHENISKA:** Brendan Dowling; Keith McCormack, Dennis Brennan, Brendan Conroy; Gavin Tynan, David Larkin, Jimmy Langton; Mark Delaney, Brendan Fingleton; Barry Fingleton, Sean Tynan, Cathal Og Greene; Darragh Nolan, Fergal Phelan, Eamon Cooke. Subs: Mark Carroll for Cooke (45 mins), Ger Ramsbottom for Sean Tynan (47 mins), Evin Baldwin for Delaney (52 mins), Paddy Kelly for Conroy (55 mins), Benny Greene for Darragh Nolan (56 mins).

**BORRIS-KILCOTTON:** Eoin Fleming; Eoin Phelan, Michael Delaney Steven Finnan; David Higgins, Timmy Finlay, Killian Delaney; David Ryan, Pat Guidera; Emmett Jones, Adrian Phelan, Niall Abraham; John Treacy, Colm Kavanagh, Barry Wall. Subs: Michael Breen for Abraham (16 mins), Owen Stapleton for Treacy (29 mins), Ollie Quinlan for Wall (42 mins), TJ Keenan for Guidera (42 mins), Shane Kirwan for Kavanagh (52 mins).

Referee: John Lalor (Shanahoe)

## IN BRIEF

### Main Man - Brendan Fingleton (Park-Ratheniska)

In what was essentially a brilliant team display, Brendan Fingleton still stood out as the outstanding performer on view with an all-action display over the entire hour of hurling that Borris-Kilcotton had no answer to.

He was the midfield general who directed and controlled the game in his area, as in the opening half, time and again he slipped back into defence and won continuous ball and set up scoring opportunities.

He was literally all over the park winning ball he had no right to, and was the unanimous choice of the local press as the Sparrow Insurance man of the match and also won the Bosco's club nominated man of the match as well.

### Score of the Game

There were many fine scores as Park-Ratheniska shot 2-12 from play but the first goal just after half time stood out. Great play out of defence and through midfield eventually ended with Fergal

Phelan in position to shoot for a point on the stand side. However, showing superb vision he spotted Darragh Nolan inside the defence on the far side, and when his low ground shot reached the 17 year old he showed real skill as in an instant he lifted and struck first time and sent an unstoppable shot to the far corner of the net.

### Save of the Game

There was just one really, but it deserves special mention as with his side trailing 0-6 to no score Barry Wall breached the Ratheniska defence and sent a blistering shot for the corner of the net, but a full-length dive from Benny Dowling saw him get the hurl to the ball and produce an astounding save that was so important at that stage of the game.

For Dowling it was a day to remember as he kept another clean sheet after reluctantly he had been forced into the goalie position at the start of the year and ended up being one of the heroes of the season.



Darragh Nolan on the attack for Park Ratheniska against Steven Finan, Borris in Ossory in the Junior Hurling Championship final at O'Moore Park. Picture: Alf Harvey.

# O'Connell delight as past defeats are put to bed

## Rory Delaney

It was a long time coming, but the scenes at the final whistle showed that it was very welcome indeed as the small community of Ratheniska celebrated the club's fourth junior hurling title, and their first 'A' hurling championship success since 1994.

Defeats to Rosenallis, The Harps and Clough Ballacolla in 1994, 95 and 97 were used as motivation to end the losing sequence and the team did so in style with players like 37 year old Denis Brennan, 34 year old captain David Larkin and others who were part of all those losing teams showing the relief and the joy that winning this title at last meant to them.

Then there were the young players like Gavin Tynan, Darragh Nolan, Michael Brennan and Paul Conroy who were not only winning medals at their first attempt, but all of them completing a treble this year having already won U-21 and Minor B hurling championship medals.

For joint managers Colm Casey

and Brendan 'Rinty' O'Connell there was the personal satisfaction of leading the team to success at last along with trainer Eoghan Dunne. For O'Connell in particular, it was success after many years of trying. He had won medals as a player but for years he has been one of the main hurling fanatics in the club as football became the first choice game after winning the Leinster Junior club title in 2007.

He never had any doubt in his side's ability to win the title. "I knew that we were good enough to win this one and to win it with ease as we did. We have a great bunch of hurlers and it was only a matter of them believing in themselves and hurling as I knew they could. This has been a long time coming, but I think that we have the balance right now with a great blend of youth and experience.

"I am delighted for the players that played in and lost so many finals and semi-finals that they have got their reward at last and for the younger players who were playing in their first final and that made such a difference

this year"

A year ago they suffered a bad defeat to neighbours Timahoe in the semi-final but this year the team got a huge injection with the players coming through from the juvenile ranks, and much credit must go to the people who have strived for years with small numbers there to keep hurling going in the club. Their efforts are now bearing fruit.

Colm Casey has recently become a dad for the first time and this was almost as good "This is a great feeling. Those lads deserved that today and I had no doubt but that they were going to win it after the effort that they put in. This victory is down to the whole panel of 30 who gave so much in the field in Ratheniska. We had 30 there for a practice match last Saturday and that speaks so much in itself as anything that was asked of them the players responded and they have got their rewards today"

Minutes later the dressing room resounded to the club anthem Tom Jones 'Delilah' as 'Rinty' led them at what was to be the start of a weekend of celebrations.