

LEINSTER SPECIAL JHC

Ratheniska cruise to Leinster final

Park-Ratheniska	3-11
St Laurence's	0-7

Greg Mulhall

In what proved to be a dramatically one-sided affair on their home soil of Ratheniska on Sunday afternoon, and with much of the county focused on Portlaoise and Clough-Ballacolla's endeavors in the Senior Championship, Park-Ratheniska served up a hugely impressive and entertaining game as they dismissed the efforts of the Kildare champions, St Laurence's to claim victory by a staggering thirteen points to progress to the final.

An early exchange of points set the game underway, with Park-Ratheniska midfielder Ger Ramsbottom finding his range early on, as did St Laurence's Brian Waters, in what threatened to be an intense fifty-five minutes to come.

Park-Ratheniska were aided by the familiar surroundings as they settled into an early lead with Darragh Nolan and Barry Fingleton adding scores, before Nolan expertly picked-out Sean Tynan with a pin-point pass which Tynan duly slotted over the bar to give Park-Rath a three point advantage after fifteen minutes.

St Laurence's Sean Murphy gave his side a much needed lift after a quarter of an hour just as the game seemed to be slipping from their grasp, as he struck a superb point from the right flank to keep his side in touch. However, Park-Ratheniska went from strength to strength as they clocked up 1-4 in the ten minutes that followed. Ger Ramsbottom landed his second point of the game with a long-range effort, before Brendan Fingleton watched as his blistering free from twenty yards rattled the back of the net.

Wing-back, James Langton tried his luck from sixty-five yards and was rewarded with a magnificent strike sailing between the posts to give Park-Ratheniska an eight point advantage. With three minutes left in the half, and Darragh Nolan baring down on goal, St Laurence's John Leahy threw his hurl as the youngster was winding up for a

shot leaving the referee with no option but to award a penalty. Brendan Fingleton, already with a goal from a twenty-one yard free, stepped up and can only be disappointed as his shot blazed over the bar for a point, leaving nine points separating the sides at half time.

St Laurence's emerged a determined side, and reduced the deficit by two points in as many minutes with Sean Murphy firing a brace to outline their ambitions for the half to come. Park-Ratheniska's Fergal Phelan grabbed the spotlight with five gone in the second half as the the big full-forward struck 1-1 in two minutes to stem any hope of a St Laurence's revival.

St Laurence's stand-out performer, Sean Murphy, yet again came to the front for his side as he chipped in with his fourth point of the day. Park-Rath put the result beyond all doubt following scores from Eamon Cooke and Sean Tynan as they cruised into a twelve point cushion.

Sean Murphy really proved to be St Laurence's saviour on the day, as he brought his tally to six for the day with his second brace of the afternoon. Park-Ratheniska put the final nail in the coffin with a minute to go, as he rifled his shot into the top corner of the net to seal an emphatic victory.

SCORERS - Park-Ratheniska: Sean Tynan 1-3, Brendan Fingleton (1-0 free, 0-1 pen) Fergal Phelan 1-1 each, Ger Ramsbottom 0-2, Darragh Nolan, Barry Fingleton, Eamon Cooke (f) and James Langton 0-1 each; **St Laurence's:** Sean Murphy 0-6 (0-2 free), Brian Waters 0-1.

PARK-RATHENISKA: Brendan Dowling; Keith McCormack, Denis Brennan, Brendan Conroy; Gavin Tynan, David Larkin, James Langton; Ger Ramsbottom, Brendan Fingleton; Barry Fingleton, Sean Tynan, Mark Carroll; Darragh Nolan, Fergal Phelan, Eamon Cooke. Subs: Paddy Kelly for James Langton (Blood Sub); Paddy Kelly for Mark Carroll; Brendan Greene for Darragh Nolan; David Kelly for Fergal Phelan; Michael Brennan for Brendan Conroy; Tommy White for Eamon Cooke.

ST LAURENCE'S: Michael Cromley; Conor Lawlor, Ken D'Arcy, Mark Whelan; Niall Glynn, Brendan Gorman, Alan Bowden; JJ Grace, John Leahy; Sean Murphy, Jason Bowe, Brian Waters; Will Kilduff, Seanie Mahony, Richie Whelan. SUBS: Mark Carroll for Richie Whelan; Conor Harrington for Seanie Mahony



Sean Tynan brings this ball forward for Park-Ratheniska in the Leinster Special Junior Hurling semi-final clash in Ratheniska on Sunday. Photos: Alf Harvey



Eamon Cooke chases down possession for Park-Ratheniska



Benny Greene, Park-Ratheniska, comes under pressure from Niall Glynn, St Laurence's



Darragh Nolan on the attack for Park-Ratheniska against St Laurence's on Sunday afternoon

INBRIEF

Main Man - Brendan Fingleton (Park-Ratheniska)

With Sean Tynan and David Larkin giving a strong showing on the day, Brendan Fingleton's relentless work ethic and sheer determination set him apart from the pack. His free taking was below par for his standard, especially the penalty, but he more than made up for it with his winning of the 'dirty ball' which was a fundamental element of Park-ratheniska's success. The midfielder chipped

in with 1-1 on the day, and he can look to the final with a great deal of confidence following this display.

Ref Watch

Referee John Keenan's performance came under quite a bit of scrutiny on the day, with a two red cards which are sure to spark some debate, and then of course his leniency for the thrown hurl incident which is a red card offence. Park-Ratheniska's James Langton

and St Laurence's John Leahy both pulled mid-air for the high ball, and consequently struck each other's helmets. A yellow card would have sufficed, and that's what he brandished to Leahy, yet he gave Langton a straight red card for the same offence. It was Leahy's second yellow, the first being his punishment for throwing the hurl, and he was given his marching orders. Really Leahy's dismissal will have no affect, but, in contrast, Langton's straight red will now rule him out of the final.