

Edges blunted off Cornerstone men



Shoulder to shoulder: the hurlers of Cappoquin prior to Sunday's All-Ireland Semi-Final. | Photos: Sean Byrne

Cappoquin's All-Ireland Intermediate Hurling title aspirations ran aground at a blustery Cusack Park in Mullingar last Sunday when they proved second best against Antrim's O'Donovan Rossa.

The Waterford and Munster champions were odds on favourites pre-game but as Ballysaggart and Mount Sion previously found out to their cost, Antrim sides are difficult opponents.

By game's end there was no argument that the better team had prevailed and the Antrim champions can now look forward to a date with Fullen Gaels at GAA headquarters next month.

Playing against a strong breeze in the opening half and after just 11 seconds, the Cappoquin full-back line were caught napping as 'Rossa corner-forward Thomas Morgan was all alone to race through and beat Donal O'Rourke from close range.

Andy Molumby opened the scoring for the Cornerstone boys after three minutes to the delight of the large Cappoquin following in the stand. Thomas Morgan hit his first point from a free to restore his teams' three-point advantage.

Five minutes later, the Cappoquin citadel was breached again when midfielder Deaglin Murphy placed the ball in front of danger-man Thomas Morgan.

There was a little more work to do this time for Morgan but the electric Antrim forward rounded his marker before billowing the net for a second time (2-1 to 0-1).

Cappoquin were reeling and their management acted on the early concession of goals by withdrawing full-forward Finan Murray outward, allowing centre-back Conor Murray a free role to protect his besieged full-back line.

Shane O'Rourke bought some respite with a point from a free on 12 minutes but it was only momentary.

Another high delivery after 14 minutes at the Cappoquin goal was fetched by full-forward Calum McVeigh but he was hauled down before getting a shot away leaving referee Paud O'Dwyer no option but to award a penalty.

This was a game under 2014 rules so the three players on the line were able to deflect a poorly hit Gerard Walsh effort out for a 65. Wing-back Stephen Shannon pointed the 65 to leave Rossa 2-2 to 0-2 ahead at the end of the first quarter.

It was all one way traffic at this stage and three further points without reply from Morgan, McVeigh and Murphy had the men from the Glens in pole position.

A difficult task for Cappoquin became even more so after 27 minutes when an attempted flick by Andy Molumby connected with the faceguard of his maker to merit a yellow card.

Unfortunately for the former Waterford minor this was his second yellow followed immediately by a red card leaving his side reduced to 14 men for the remainder of the game. Half time couldn't come quickly enough for Cappoquin, by which time they trailed by 2-5 to 0-2.



Cappoquin's Timmy Looby takes a tumble with O'Donovan Rossa's Christopher McElhatton in close proximity.

With the breeze now at their backs and despite a numerical disadvantage Cappoquin out-scored their opponents 0-3 to 0-2 in the third quarter.

Two Shane O'Rourke frees and a smashing long range point from Finan Murray for Cappoquin while Thomas Morgan and Stephen Shannon were on target for the 'Rossa.

After 45 minutes a long range free from Cappoquin goalkeeper Donal O'Rourke broke kindly for substitute Aaron O'Sullivan to bat to the net (2-7 to 1-5).

This gave the Cappoquin a timely boost. O'Donovan Rossa had one, and at times, two spare players in defence, so a vital second goal was always going to be a tall order.

In truth a second Cappoquin goal never looked likely with Conor McClelland and Stephen Shannon outstanding in defence for O'Donovan Rossa.

Paul Murray, Killian O'Sullivan and Keith Lander did point for Cappoquin over the closing minutes but Johnny McGuinness (two), Michael Armstrong and Stephen Shannon replied in kind for the winners.

Speaking to WLRfm at full-time, disappointed Cappoquin manager Fintan Murray stated: "Those men, they don't owe anything to anyone and they're an absolute credit and we're extremely proud of them. Things didn't go right on the day; we can't take it away from O'Donovan Rossa but we're very proud of our lads, they were absolutely fantastic...they battled brilliantly but we couldn't make up the difference of those six points."

Fintan told sideline reporter Tomás McCarthy: "In the second half, the lads proved they're as good as anyone (in this Championship); it was those scores in the first half that proved the difference. But those boys are a match for anyone; they're absolutely brilliant and we're proud of each and every one of them..."

"We're still thrilled after the year we've had and they can look forward to senior hurling now and they should keep their heads up after this. You win some and you lose some."

O'Donovan Rossa: Christopher McDonnell; Ciaran Orchin, Eoghan O'Neill, Kevin McDonnell; Gerard Walsh, Conor McClelland, Stephen Shannon; Christopher McElhatton, Deaglin Murphy; Michael Armstrong, Christopher McGuinness, Michael Turley; Thomas Morgan, Calum McVeigh, Aidan Orchin.

Substitutes: Conor Rocks for Christopher McElhatton (38 mins), Johnny McGuinness for Calum McVeigh (42), Mickey Kettle for Michael Turley (47), Gavin Bell for Kevin McDonnell (55) and James Quinn for Aidan Orchin (60mins).

Scorers: Thomas Morgan (2-3; 0-2f), Stephen Shannon (0-4; 0-2 65), Johnny McGuinness (0-2), Calum McVeigh, Deaglin Murphy and Michael Armstrong (0-1 each).

Cappoquin: Donal O'Rourke; Kevin Looby, Colm Looby, Timmy Looby; David Cullinane, Conor Murray, Patrick Morrissey; Shane Murray, Paul Murray; Shane O'Rourke, Keith Landers, Andy Molumby; Shane Coughlan, Finan Murray, Killian O'Sullivan.

Substitutes: Aaron O'Sullivan for Shane Coughlan (28 mins) and PJ Curran for Kevin Looby (38).

Scorers: Shane O'Rourke (0-3f), Aaron O'Sullivan (1-0), Keith Landers (0-1f), Andy Molumby, Finan Murray, Paul Murray and Killian O'Sullivan (0-1 each).

Referee: Paud O'Dwyer (Carlow)