

## WIT Dig Deep To Draw



WIT's Pauric O'Mahony and David McNerney contest the high ball. | Photos: Noel Browne

### **Fitzgibbon Cup Final 2015**

**Waterford IT 0-21**  
**University of Limerick 3-12 (After Extra-Time)**

Ever the comeback men, Waterford IT simply don't know when they are beaten, and once more Colm Bonnar's men produced a magnificent display to ensure a replayed Fitzgibbon Cup Final after an epic with UL in Limerick on Saturday night.

This game brought everything to the table that has many proclaiming hurling as the world's most entertaining field sport - sublime scoring, passion, heart, guts and determination - super striking, hooking and blocking - along with plenty of drama.

You would be forgive for thinking this game was played in the heat of the Championship summer, but it was at a wet and murky Gaelic Grounds where the action unfolded - edge of the seat stuff - as a point from Éire Óg Annacarty's Tom Fox on the stroke of 80 minutes, and in the second half of extra-time, forced a replay.

Three times in second-half normal time, UL took a four-point lead, but WIT failed to read the script, and indeed the introduction of Kilkenny's Johnny Hayes turned the tide, with the Kilmacow man registering three points in normal time on his introduction, including what looked like a late winner, only for Clare's Tony Kelly to force extra-time for UL.

A little under 28 hours previously, the full-time whistle sounded after another extra-time battle, as WIT booked their place in the final with a 1-20 to 0-19 win over Cork IT at Limerick IT.

Austin Gleeson scored 1-6, while Pauric Mahony once again showed his prowess with eight points, to add to the eight scored against DIT the previous Tuesday in their quarter-final win.□□

A Cian Buckley score had forced extra-time, and although Tipperary's John 'Bubbles' O'Dwyer pushed CIT two ahead in extra-time, WIT powered on and went 1-15 to 0-17 ahead at half-time of extra-time, before Mahony, Gleeson and Gavin O'Brien delivered scores on the way to a four-point victory.

On Saturday night it was UL who burst quickest out of the traps, and led by 0-3 to 0-0 after four minutes, and while Harry Kehoe and Kevin O'Brien swapped scores, and WIT came back into it strongly in the second quarter, UL led by 0-6 to 0-4 at the break.

WIT cut the gap to the minimum on the restart, but Tommy Heffernan snuck through for a goal, after an O'Brien pass and after 32 minutes UL were 1-6 to 0-5 in front.

Mahony and John McGrath swapped scores, before a trio of points saw WIT cut the gap to the minimum after 42 minutes.



WIT's Thomas Hamill and UL's Brian Stapleton in a close encounter. | Photos: Noel Browne

UL reaffirmed their four-point lead with a Jason Forde point ending this run at 1-10 to 0-9 after 49 minutes.

Cue the introduction of Hayes and a brace of points, with a further two from Mahony levelling matters, before Hayes pushes WIT ahead. However, Kelly delivered in the 62nd minute to force extra-time.

WIT fired the first two points of extra-time, but a Forde goal ensured UL led by 2-11 to 0-16 on the turnaround.

Mahony registered his seventh point, but when the exceptional Ballysaggart man Stephen Bennett delivered UL's second goal and PJ Scully followed up with a point, it looked like destination Castle Tary for the cup.

But never write off WIT, and the holders showed their mettle through a quartet of unanswered points, including one from Mahony, two from defender Martin O'Neill and Fox's late equaliser ensured a replay. (See Sport 8 for reaction from Brian Flannery).

**WIT:** Darragh Stapleton; Jerome Maher, Owen McGrath, Ger Teehan; Thomas Hamill, Martin O'Neill, Tom Fox; Jack Langton, Stephen Roche; Gavin O'Brien, Pauric Mahony, Harry Kehoe; Liam McGrath, Austin Gleeson, Jake Dillon.

**Substitutes:** Johnny Hayes for Liam McGrath (49 mins) and Ciaran O'Brien for Gleeson (78).

**Scorers:** Pauric Mahony (0-8; 0-5f, 0-1 65), Johnny Hayes (0-3), Jake Dillon and Tom Fox (0-2 each), Austin Gleeson (0-2; 0-1sl), Thomas Hamill and Harry Kehoe (0-1 each).

**UL:** Paul Maher; Gearoid Ryan, Brian Troy, Eoin Moriarty; Daire Quinn, David McInerney, Brian Stapleton; Jason Forde, Tony Kelly; Dan Morrissey, John McGrath, Tommy Heffernan; Cathal McInerney, Conor Martin, Kevin O'Brien.

**Substitutes:** Stephen Bennett for McGrath (49); PJ Scully (0-1) for C McInerney (57); Mark Carmody for O'Brien (68); Aidan McGuane for Martin (76).

**Scorers:** John McGrath (0-5; 0-3f) Jason Forde (1-1; 0-1f), Tommy Heffernan (1-1), Stephen Bennett (1-0), Tony Kelly (0-2; 0-1f), Cathal McInerney and Kevin O'Brien (0-1 each).

**Referee:** Brian Gavin (Offaly)

Cóilín Duffy at the Gaelic Grounds