

Clonea Find the Power!

County Intermediate Hurling Championship Final 2018

Clonea 2-13

Clashmore/Kinsalebeg 1-12

Thomas Keane at Fraher Field

Clonea atoned for their disappointment of a year ago at the same stage as they came from behind to defeat Clashmore/Kinsalebeg in a well contested Intermediate Hurling Final at Fraher Field on Sunday last. Over the course of the hour in front of a gate in excess of 2,000 patrons, the sides were level six times (1-6 each at half-time) and a replay looked on the cards until Clonea found two late title-winning scores to secure a first crown at this level for the Clodiagsiders since 2006. Tadhg de Búrca opened the scoring with a long range free inside the first minute to which Billy Power immediately responded a minute later. Jason Gleeson and Edmund O'Halloran swapped scores before Ciaran Power and de Búrca did likewise leaving the sides locked together at three points each at the end of the opening quarter. Clashmore, seeking their first ever Intermediate title looked to have stolen a march on their opponents on nineteen minutes when Brian O'Halloran picked out former Blackrock Club man Brian Ramsey and he made no mistake in beating Stephen Power in the Clonea goal.



Clonea's Conor Dalton surges clear of Clashmore/Kinsalebeg's Aidan Trihy.

And when the Cork native split the posts with the next attack putting his side four points up things were looking good for the Still-men.

Paul O'Connor put his side five points clear in the 22nd minute but it was then that we saw some real hunger emerging in the Clonea ranks as Billy Power twice split the Clashmore uprights. And just three minutes from the interval, the westerners' goalkeeper, Mark McGrath made an incredible when tipping a Robbie Power effort over the crossbar.

But Clonea goaled from their next attack, when Ronan Cahill (one of three changes made to the published team), got on the end of a ball played into the danger zone to edge his side 1-6 to 1-5 ahead.

Yet the sides went in level at the break when the ever-reliable Edmond O'Halloran split the Clonea posts to send the sides into the dressing rooms locked at 1-6 each.

Clashmore started the second half brightly as Brian Ramsey and Edmund O'Halloran sent then two points clear, but a brace of scores from Michael Curry inside two-minute spell had the sides level once again on 40 minutes.

Mark McGrath made the second of his magnificent saves just a minute later when he went low, diving at full length to keep an effort from Ronan Cahill out, putting the sliotar out for a '65 which Tadhg de Búrca put narrowly wide. Points from Aidan Trihy and Edmond O'Halloran followed for Clashmore which re-established their two-point lead by the end of the third quarter.

Billy Power and Brian O'Halloran exchanged scores before Billy Power put over a brace of frees with eight minutes remaining and it was increasingly appeared if a replay would be required.

Ciaran Power edged his side back in front with just over a minute to play, but on the hour mark Edmund O'Halloran levelled matters for the sixth time, to leave both sets of supporters on tenterhooks.

Billy Power edged Clonea ahead the first of two additional minutes and with the last puck of the game, Robbie Power wrote himself into Clonea's hurling history books when he netted the latest of late goals to earn his side a four-point win.



Clonea players celebrate as captain Robbie Flynn holds the Intermediate Hurling Championship trophy high following the presentation by County Board Chairman Paddy Joe Ryan at Fraher Field on Sunday last. | Photos: Sean Byrne

Clashmore/Kinsalebeg will no doubt be dejected by the nature of their defeat, but their 2018 campaign ought to stand them in great stead when it comes to next year's Western Championship outing. For Clonea, whose support must rank as among the most dedicated in the county, will relish their long-awaited return to the Senior Championship in 2019. Their first goal, no doubt, will be survival, but they've got the Munster Intermediate campaign to busy themselves with in the interim.