

## Old Rivals Face Off to Secure Final Berth

**County Senior Football Championship Semi Final Ballinacourty v The Nire  
(Sunday, Fraher Field, 2pm)**

Three weeks ago we saw Kilrossanty qualified for their first County Senior Football Final since 2000 where they lost out to The Nire 1-11 to 1-8. In the decider, provisionally fixed for October 28th, they will meet either The Nire once more or Ballinacourty, who square off in next Sunday's SFC Semi-Final at Fraher Field.

The Ballinacourty players will have worked hard to get the disappointment of the result of the Senior Hurling Final out of their system and will be raring to go in this one, where they'll face one of their main rivals of the last decade. This will be the second meeting of the two sides in this year's Championship, having clashed in the final round of game in the group stages of the competition back in mid July, a game that Ballinacourty won by 1-10 to 0-10, a game in which Dermot Ryan was sent off for a double yellow card.

Early in that game it looked as if victory would be The Nire's as Conor Gleeson caused lots of trouble to the Ballinacourty defence but it was only when Brian Looby was given the task of marking Gleeson that the tide of the match turned in their favour. .



Ballinacourty and The Nire will go head to head once more in Sunday's SFC Semi-Final at Fraher Field. | Photo: Sean Byrne

In that game the crucial score came on 20 minutes when Ballinacourty worked the ball down the bank side of the field and when it came to Mark Ferncombe who is having an impressive year in his club colours he made no mistake in helping his side to a 1-6 to 0-7 lead at the break. 'Courty are the third most successful club at this level of football in the county since the turn of the century.

It could well be argued that of the three big teams in recent years going forward that they are best placed going forward, winning eight County Under-21 'A' Football Championships including the last two since the turn of the Millennium and have also added five minor titles in this time. They have suffered just the one defeat in this year's Championship which came in the opening round of fixtures in the round robin section when they finished second best to Clashmore.

Since then, it's been wins all the way for the Village, having won their group, beating The Nire along the way. In their Quarter-Final they proved too strong for Gaultier at Lemybrien where they won by 2-16 to 0-10 and will seek to bring that form into this game. The Nire have already won the Junior Football County Final having beaten a fancied Gaultier side, also at Lemybrien and there's no doubt they'd love to have the Conway Cup to the Junior Trophy come the end of the season. But at senior grade, one believes The Nire have not played to the standard they are capable of.

In their opening two rounds of games in the group section they hit no less than 10 goals. In their third group game they suffered a 1-10 to 0-10 loss to 'Courty, but they still finished as the best second placed team. This gave them a safe passage to the Quarter-Final where they beat Rathgormack by 1-18 to 2-10 after extra time.

Both sides have within their ranks some fine players and there could well be some interesting match-ups. Last time out, The Nire were without Shane Ryan and they'll be hoping that he'll be back for this game as all hands will be needed on the pump if they're to win here. Last time out against Gaultier, Ballinacourty produced a storming second half to win with ease in the end. The Nire might well have had the harder Quarter-Final and that will stand to them. But Ballinacourty look the more impressive of the two this year and in the wake of their Senior Hurling Final defeat, they'll be doubly motivated to advance to another Conway Cup decider.