

Sorcha Nic an tSionnaigh  
Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ, Limerick  
Sport - 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

## Ballyea in shock win

The hot favourites Thurles Sarsfields have been surprisingly knocked out of the Munster Senior Club Hurling Championship by newcomers Ballyea.

Ballyea, first time Clare Senior Hurling Champions, caused a major upset in Semple Stadium, Thurles last Sunday when winning a thriller on a score line of 4-18 to 2-22.

The day itself was crisp and dry; the pitch was in perfect condition for a hurling match. The supporters of both teams were in a state of high excitement as they looked forward to the upcoming tense match. They would not be disappointed.

The atmosphere was electric and both teams showed they meant business right from the throw in.

The first half was nearly over when James Murphy caught a soaring high ball and soloed down the pitch with the sliotar stuck to his hurley. Murphy saw that Paul Flanagan was free, gave a quick pass and taking the return, hammered it into the right corner of the net. Ballyea were down by five points at halftime but still had lots of determination and drive in them.

The referee blew the whistle to call the teams out for the second half. Thurles came out bursting with fighting power followed by the underdogs Ballyea. Tony Kelly, the Ballyea captain and star player, dashed onto the pitch with a look of determination.

Tension grew between the teams as the clock quickly ticked down to the final five minutes. Thurles still led by two points and looked like they might hold on. Could Ballyea get a last goal to win the match? All of a sudden, Gary Brennan, the Ballyea full forward, got on a ball wide out right. He dodged past a defender and passed the ball to Tony Kelly who blasted past the goalie and buried the sliotar into the back of the net. The referee instantly blew the final whistle and Ballyea had won the semi-final of the Munster Senior Club Championship.

On the field after the game, one could see how much it all meant to the Ballyea supporters. Young and old embraced each other; they embraced the winning team and openly shed tears of joy. In the middle of all this joyous confusion, the winning captain, Tony Kelly, urged caution saying it was only the semi-final. However, you just knew Ballyea were on a mission and would be a difficult side to stop from here on.

**Judges' Citation:**

It has been a year that the hurling faithful of little Ballyea will never forget - and next week's All-Ireland senior club hurling final may bring an even bigger reason to remember.

Along the way the club that only won their first Clare county title this year had to see off the might of Tipperary champions Thurles Sarsfields in the Munster semi-final - and they did just that in an epic battle which was wonderfully captured by our runner-up.

A good match report paints pictures, captures the emotion and significance of the occasion and transports readers through words to witness history in the making.

For 'Ballyea in Shock Win', her report on the Munster club senior hurling semi-final between Ballyea of Clare and Thurles Sarsfields of Tipperary, second place in the Press Pass Sports category goes to Sorcha Nic an tSionnaigh from Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ, Limerick.