

ALL-IRELAND CLUB INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL SEMI-FINAL

# Oughterard rise to occasion to shock fancied Kerry foes

Walsh's goal helps Galway champions upset the odds against Templenoe

OUGHTERARD	1-12
TEMPLENOE	0-12

DARA BRADLEY  
IN KILMALLOCK

THERE was a special moment at the end of this exciting All-Ireland intermediate club football semi-final. Hundreds of Oughterard supporters emptied the main stand, scaled the wire fencing, poured onto the sodden pitch at Kilmallock, and made a beeline for the far corner near the dressing rooms, to congratulate their heroes who'd just caused the mother of all upsets.

Emerging from the delirious sea of green and white, and walking in the opposite direction, was Matthew Tierney, the game's top scorer. Having embraced manager, Tommy Finnerty, and some teammates, after the final whistle, the Oughterard playmaker headed towards the side-line to savour the moment with his father. The smile on the younger Tierney's face as he enthusiastically hugged Matt senior, who is in a wheelchair, lit up the County Limerick venue. It summed-up what victory meant, not just to the Tierneys, but to the entire Oughterard team, panel, club and wider parish.

There were hugs all round at Fitzgerald Park. Parents embraced their sons; wives and partners did likewise; siblings and neighbours and friends - and even just acquaintances or strangers - competed with each other to take selfies with players, to shake their hands or give them a slap on the back.

The scenes in the winning dressing room afterwards, as Oughterard celebrated with gusto reaching an All-Ireland final - a first Croke Park appearance for the club - was priceless, too. In the modern era of sanitised and stage-managed press conferences, it was refreshing to see and hear an outpouring of raw emotion.

Of course, it wasn't supposed to be like this. Bookies believed Oughterard were due a clipping; the star-studded Munster champions, with four Kerry sneiper players, only had to turn-up to take the spoils. Oh, how wrong they were, which made it all the sweeter.

True, Oughterard flirted with danger for periods during the hour last Saturday afternoon. And at times, as gaps appeared

in their defence, it looked almost inevitable that Templenoe would bag a decisive goal. But if we've learned anything from the 2019 intermediate campaign it's that Oughterard never lie down, they're never beaten.

So, even if the two-points deficit at half-time could have been greater, Oughterard weren't fazed by it, and they did what they have been doing all-season - regrouped and put in an almighty second-half performance, during which they outscored their opponents 1-7 to 0-5.

The game's crucial score came midway through the second-half. Templenoe had maintained a two-point gap, until the 17th minute when Paul Walsh's long-range effort deceived Dan Cahalane. Goalkeeper Cahalane was at fault - he tried to punch the ball away rather than catching it, after Walsh had won possession from the custodian's own wayward pass out of defence. Oughterard got a rub of the green for the green flag but Walsh, in fairness, took his chance when it presented itself. They hammered home the advantage then with a point from Patrick Walsh. Boom - in the space of a minute Oughterard went from two down to two up.



**HALF-BACK CIAN MONAGHAN WAS EXCELLENT DEFENSIVELY, TOO, AND CONTRIBUTED TWO POINTS FROM PLAY**

Leading up to those vital scores, Templenoe failed to kick-on. Ahead by 0-9 to 0-7, the Kerry outfit had several opportunities to stretch their advantage but registered four wides - including a goal chance - before Oughterard's major.

It wasn't all one-way traffic, though. Oughterard also chipped in with two wides minutes before their goal, but their belief never faded.

The opposite was the case for Templenoe. As soon as they fell behind, they didn't know what to do. Having coasted to county and provincial success, Templenoe were not accustomed to chasing leads and it showed. The goal rattled them in the same way concussion might



Oughterard's Eric Lee on the attack against Kieran O'Neill of Templenoe during Saturday's All-Ireland club intermedieate football semi-final in Kilmallock.

daze a player; after about 10 minutes, when they came-to, it was too late - Oughterard's backs, who were brilliant all day, were in no mood to leak an equaliser.

In the final quarter, Oughterard defended like their lives depended on it, and while Stephen O'Sullivan (free), Gavin Crowley, and Killian Spillane each raised white flags to keep Templenoe in the hunt, they were cancelled out by points from Cian Monaghan, Daniel Kenny, Enda Tierney, and an insurance point from Matthew Tierney, Oughterard's twelfth.

Goalkeeper Jordan Waller kept out a Stephen O'Sullivan point effort that dipped; and captain Eddie O'Sullivan saved a goal-bound effort from Killian Spillane in injury time, when an appeal for a foot block was ignored. And Oughterard had to deal with a few high balls into the danger area from '45s during tense, dramatic final moments but they deservedly hung on for a famous win.

Templenoe were marginally the better team in the opening half when five of their six forwards scored from play, including two from centre-forward Brian Crowley, and a pair from Teddy Crowley, including a '45, which established a two points advantage at half-time, 0-7 to 0-5.

In contrast, Oughterard's

scores seemed harder to come by. Not one of their forwards pointed from play in the first half and their two white flags from play came from half-backs - the team's best and most consistent line of the field - Ronan Molloy and Ryan Monaghan.

Matthew Tierney was the man who laid-off the final pass for both, but the latter's score, Oughterard's fourth point, was a thing of beauty as Monaghan ran from half-way, and split the Templenoe defence before splitting the posts. A brace of frees from Matthew Tierney, converted off the ground, and a free from Eric Lee, helped Oughterard to stay in touch.

Both teams spurned five opportunities in the first half, it's just that Templenoe's misses were worse. They had one spurned goal chance, one shot dropping short, two bad wides and a shot off the woodwork compared with Oughterard's four wides - only two were scoreable - and a hit-and-hope effort that dropped short.

Often there was too much space in Oughterard's rearguard and it seemed almost inevitable they would concede a big score but credit to their backs, who fought like tigers and scrambled well when required. Maybe that was Templenoe's problem: they started to buy-into the pre-match hype that it was only a matter of time before their su-

periority would count on the scoreboard.

Oughterard clung on, though, and even after half-time, points from Cian Monaghan and Matthew Tierney cancelled out efforts from Brian Crowley and Killian Spillane as the Galway champions remained in contention before the game swung in their favour with Walsh's decisive goal.

Oughterard had many heroes, none more so than in defence, where half-back Ronan Molloy, the game's best player, epitomised the character of the team with a controlled aggression, physicality and commitment to the cause.

Minor footballer Ryan Monaghan, as well as picking off a classy point, wasn't afraid to mix it either - one particularly dirty breaking ball he won from a kickout, highlighted his commitment to the cause and led to an Enda Tierney point late-on. Half-back Cian Monaghan was excellent defensively, too, and contributed two points from play. Honourable mentions also to goalkeeper Jordan Waller, and the full-back line of Liam Loran, Ciaran Hanley and Eddie O'Sullivan who put-in strong performances against a much-vaunted attack.

The midfield battle was fairly even, and the kickouts were shared almost 50/50 - Oughterard won 21 to Templenoe's 20 -

but half-time substitute, Daniel Kenny, was energetic in heavy underground conditions and made a huge contribution to the cause around centre field. Elsewhere, Eric Lee worked tirelessly and was the go-to guy to win and hold possession when Templenoe were getting the upper-hand.

Matthew Tierney was well marshalled by Tadhg Morley - one of Templenoe's best players - but he was still influential, and his 0-4 haul was vital. As well as Morley, Brian Crowley and Killian Spillane, who both landed three points each, were lively, while Teddy Doyle (first half), Gavin Crowley, and Patrick Clifford tried hard for Templenoe.

Next up for Oughterard is an All-Ireland final against Magheracloone of Monaghan at Croke Park on Saturday, January 25, at 5.15pm.

**Oughterard:** J. Waller, L. Moran, C. Hanley, E. O'Sullivan, C. Monaghan (0-2), R. Monaghan (0-1), R. Molloy (0-1); E. Tierney (0-1), P.J. McGauley; B. Lambert, M. Tierney (0-4, 0-2 frees), Patrick Walsh (0-1); N. Lee (0-1, free), Paul Walsh (1-0), E. Lee. Subs: D. Kenny (0-1), for McGauley (HT); C. Harte for Lambert (49).  
**Templenoe:** D. Cahalane; M. Hallissey, T. Morley, K. O'Neill; G. Crowley (0-1), T. Spillane, P. Clifford; S. Sheehan, A. Spillane; T. Doyle (0-2, 0-1 45), B. Crowley (0-3), J. Crowley Holland; S. O'Sullivan (0-2, 0-1 free), K. Spillane (0-3), C. Hallissey (0-1). Subs: J. Spillane for Clifford (35); K. McCarthy for T. Spillane (52); P. Spillane for Doyle (56).

**Referee:** Barry Tiernan (Dublin).