

SPORT

GAA ALL-IRELAND INTERMEDIATE CLUB FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SEMI-FINAL

Walsh goal the trigger for Oughterard to defy odds

• Final quarter surge overcomes Templenoe of Kerry

Oughterard 1-12
Templenoe 0-12

By Billy Coss
At Kilmallock

SO much then for the theory that Oughterard were no more than a stepping stone for Templenoe and Kerry's advance to more success in the All-Ireland Intermediate Club Football Championship.

Not only did the odds suggest that the Munster champions would win, but they would win comfortably, and by Saturday week would be crowned double champions after capturing national honours at junior level in 2015.

Oughterard, though, arrived into a rain-sodden Kilmallock with other ideas. They were unshakeable in their belief, hung in there when under pressure, before striking when a vengeance when their spell of dominance came in the final quarter.

Templenoe were ultimately done in by Paul Walsh's 47th minute goal. It was the difference on the scoreboard, the score that pushed Oughterard into the lead for the first time in the match, and the catalyst for the Connemara side to power over the line.

True, there was an element of fortune involved in the score, Templenoe 'keeper Dan Cahalane misjudging the flight of Walsh's shot following a poor clearing hand-pass. But good teams make the most of such moments and Oughterard have shown they are that and more. They would go on to outscore the red-hot favourites by 1-5 to 0-3 in a stirring final quarter played in front of 2,500 spectators and a cracking atmosphere in Limerick.

Tommy Finnerty, Aidan Fahy and co had Oughterard perfectly primed and they had heroes all over the pitch. None stood taller than their half-back line made up of the Ronan Molloy and the Monaghan brothers, Cian and Ryan, who were simply magnificent. Four points was their

combined return but that only scratched the surface of their contribution. Templenoe centre-forward Brian Crowley caused them trouble, kicking three, but it was a sector dominated by Oughterard and provided the launch pad for so many attacks.

As a whole, their defence were outstanding to the end and delivered in spades. Templenoe had been shooting the lights out all year but Ciarán Hanley, Liam Moran and Eddie O'Sullivan were tigerish and tenacious, while 'keeper Jordan Waller enhanced his reputation with a number of important saves.

The better goal chances fell to Templenoe. In the first half Stephen O'Sullivan's attempt to set up Cian Hallissey for a tap-in finish was foiled by great work by Hanley. Josh Crowley Holland fizzed a drive past Waller's post midway through the second and the Oughterard netminder had to be at his agile best to prevent Stephen O'Sullivan's point attempt flying into his top corner. Adrian Spillane's strike for a late, late equalising goal to force extra-time was denied by a brilliant stop from O'Sullivan, the high point in Oughterard's defiant late stand.

Templenoe's progress was built on their quartet of Kerry seniors in Killian and Adrian Spillane, Tadhg Morley and Gavin Crowley. All four played in both the drawn and replayed All-Ireland finals with Dublin last September, while Templenoe manager John Rice could also call on John Spillane and Stephen O'Sullivan from the Kingdom's sixth successive junior title.

They had swept aside all comers in Kerry and Munster and were the more fluent, economical team during the first half. Five of their forwards scored from play in Hallissey, Teddy Doyle, Killian Spillane, Crowley and O'Sullivan, and they took a 0-7 to 0-5 lead in at the break.

Matthew Tierney, who was picked up by Tadhg Morley for the majority, got Oughterard off the mark and later added his second converted free. Half-backs Molloy and Ryan Monaghan, at the end of a surging run, accounted for the remainder. Oughterard could and probably should



HEADING TO CROKER: Oughterard players celebrate after their against the odds All-Ireland Intermediate Club Football Championship semi-final win over Templenoe on Saturday.

have had more, too.

No matter. They have developed a reputation as a second half team this year. Micheál Breathnach in Galway, Tusk and The Neale in Connacht, and now Templenoe, can all attest to that, something their management and players would later attribute to their superb conditioning and hard work done all year.

Cian Monaghan opened Oughterard's account after the break, only for Brian Crowley to wipe it out and maintain their two-point advantage. Matthew Tierney became his side's first forward to score from play after a dangerous delivery from his older brother, Enda, wasn't dealt with. At the other end Waller had to be sharp to keep out a Stephen O'Sullivan effort that dipped wickedly.

Killian Spillane made it 0-9 to 0-7 and Templenoe came close to putting clear daylight between the sides when Josh Crowley Holland flashed his shot wide. Their third quarter wastefulness will be a source of regret this week and Oughterard remained right in the

game, with Molloy a constant driving force down the flanks, and both Enda Tierney and Eric Lee putting in massive shifts in heavy conditions.

The game's defining score arrived in the 47th minute. Tadhg Morley appeared to have the danger averted against Matthew Tierney, but Templenoe turned over possession in their own defence and Paul Walsh's dipping shot deceived Templenoe 'keeper Dan Cahalane. It was a moment that Templenoe never truly recovered from and the trigger for Oughterard to raise their game further.

Patrick Walsh followed up with a capital point in the very next passage of play. From two down to two up, the Galway champions were in the box seat and showed their mettle over and over again. A Stephen O'Sullivan free for Templenoe was answered by the excellent Cian Monaghan, this time off his left.

Gavin Crowley's point was cancelled out by Daniel Kenny, a highly-promising footballer who has had more than his share of injuries.

Enda Tierney then took the right option to punch over soon after Killian Spillane had brought it back to one.

Templenoe had eased their way through Munster and were suddenly in brand new territory, chasing the game in the final quarter. In vain as it turned out. Matthew Tierney landed the final score of a thrilling second half before Eddie O'Sullivan saved the day, pulling off a terrific save with his feet to deny Adrian Spillane at the death. Referee

Barry Tiernan sounded the final whistle soon after, transporting Oughterard players and their large band of supporters into dreamland.

They're off to Croke Park in little over two weeks' time. Magheraclone Mitchels from Monaghan await in a fixture that's on the undercard of Dublin's Allianz League Division 1 opener versus Kerry.

One thing's for sure about Oughterard. You never back against them, no matter what the odds.

OUGHTERARD: J. Waller; L. Moran, C. Hanley, E. O'Sullivan (captain); 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, half-time; C. Harte, for Lambert, 49 mins.

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, captain), 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 mins; K. McCarthy, for T. Spillane, 52 mins; P. Spillane Jnr, for Doyle, 56 mins.

REFEREE: Barry Tiernan (Dublin).

HERALD SPORT MAN OF THE MATCH:
Shared by Ronan Molloy & Cian Monaghan (Oughterard).