

Tipperary Cup Semi Final

BRENDANS DO ENOUGH

St Brendans..2-12
St Clarets.....0-8

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In the lukewarm pool of talent in which the GAA in London is at present submerged, getting excited enough to climb onto a blow-up lie-low to waste the day away, floating around the perimeters of the pool, can be a challenge in itself.

Raising the energy, or the effort, to start paddling that lie-low around the pool is an altogether more demanding task and one that often well-equipped teams just can't be bothered summoning the desire to do.

So it was for St Brendans in this Tipperary Cup semi-final on Sunday afternoon, when they met their off-spring club, St Clarets, in a game that on paper at least, they should have won just as easily and convincingly as their now Tipperary Cup final opponents Tir Chonaill Gaels did earlier in the day.

Instead though, the current county champions chose to make life, if not tricky for themselves, then at least a little more demanding than it needed to be, and to that end, they allowed St Clarets the opportunity to flex their ageing muscles a little more than they really should have been allowed to.

The appearance of John Kelly, occupying his by now all-too-familiar corner forward berth, hinted that St Clarets were once again struggling for numbers, and the

sight of Dennis McCarthy filling the corner back slot showed that this was indeed the case.

St Brendans started in a lethargic way and never really managed to shake off that lethargy, despite copious amounts of possession and a great deal more talent on the field.

In the opening minutes they had the chance for a point, which Paul Myers, in the Clarets' goal, palmed away, only to see the ball drop to Killian Phair who drove from about three yards at an enormous gap in the St Clarets goal, only for Myers to throw himself in front of the ball to pull off, what in my book at least, is the best save I have seen in Gaelic football in many years.

That moment of heroics drew comment from St Clarets' resident poet Jim Regan, that Myers was "better than even Gordon Banks".... on the evidence of that particular piece of goalkeeping, who could argue!

Spurred on by the brilliance of their veteran stopper, St Clarets had the gall to go into the lead, with a point from Patrick Lynott, although that affront to their superiority only kick-started the Brendans into action.

A goal from Joe Corscadden, which came at the end of a great move involving Paul Malone from full back, and also including Adrian Brett, put the men in white into the lead — a lead they never

relinquished.

By the interval that advantage had been extended to 1-6 to 0-3, with Patrick Lynott popping over all of the Clarets scores, and Phair and Brett sharing the majority of the Brendans' bounty.

With just ten minutes left to play, Adrian Brett tapped in a second goal for St Brendans, after John McShane had played him in having received a fantastic pass from Killian Phair out on the wing.

Despite a late salvo from the Clarets through Patrick Lynott, the deficit was too great for the Clarets to threaten and St Brendans ended the game comfortable 10-point winners.

Although they won, Paddy Corscadden's men failed to really spark, certainly not in the way the Gaels had managed earlier in the day.

While few if any of their players played poorly, few if any really excelled either and a combination of poor finishing and poor, indecisive decision-making meant that they were forever struggling to assert themselves in the game, something that should never have been the case.

John McShane is a wonderful addition to the side at wing back and his limitless energy is a huge bonus to the team, while his right wing partnership with fellow Tyrone man Paul Tierney, offered a great combination of intelligence, diligence and hard work.

The midfield of John Mahon and Dave O'Riordain was competent but certainly were never given

their own way by the veteran pairing of Brian McNiece and Tony Murphy for St Clarets, although the finishing of Adrian Brett and Killian Phair was always a safe fallback for the winners.

One point of note for the Brendans was the fact that Mattie Moran came on to land a point for his club, with Moran being the first in what will hopefully be a succession of London born players to come through the ranks of the club over the next few years.

For St Clarets, well as ever Paul Myers was as solid and reliable as any keeper in London, while Dan Keating had an interesting first half battle with Brian Close, before Close had to retire injured.

Colm Lynott and Patrick Lynott both ran their legs out for the team, as did Tony Murphy, who even at the ripe old age of whatever-it-is-he-is-claiming-to-be-this-week, still managed to cover every blade of grass.

It will take a performance of far greater quality than this for St Brendans to lift this Tipperary Cup against Tir Chonaill Gaels, but having said that, last year they needed to improve greatly at certain times of the year, and they did.

St Clarets meanwhile face the unenviable task of taking on Tir Chonaill Gaels in the first round of the senior championship this weekend.

SCORERS:

St Brendans: J Corscadden 1-1; K Phair 0-4 (0-3f); A Brett 1-4; J McShane 0-1; J Coulter 0-1; M Moran 0-1.

St Clarets: P Lynott 0-6 (0-2f); G Lynott 0-