

Kilkenny rivalry rising to a new peak

Eamon Donoghue

In recent years Kilkenny CBS have thrown down the gauntlet to traditional kingpins St Kieran's

It's not easy sharing a city with St Kieran's College, the 19-time Dr Croke Cup champions command the bragging rights more often than not.

Last year's Dr Croke Cup final was an all-Kilkenny affair between Kilkenny CBS and St Kieran's, and although the latter came out on top it's actually been pretty even between the two schools in recent years. That's certainly not always been the case though.

In 2002 Kilkenny CBS reached a first senior Leinster colleges final in 11 years, and in 2006 they won a first provincial title at the grade in 23 years. Since then the school have appeared in six of the last eight provincial finals and four national finals. They are also reigning Leinster champions.

They are still 18 behind St Kieran's on the list of All-Ireland title winners, and 44 behind their city rivals in the Leinster roll of honour. Yet in the past decade the school has improved remarkably and, according to their manager PJ McCormack, the gap which once existed between the two schools no longer exists.

Big breakthrough
McCormack, who has been a teacher in the school for 11 years and is now in his second stint coaching the senior team, believes the big breakthrough came with the Leinster championship success in 2006.

"That was the real breakthrough eight years ago, they had won the jun-

ior those lads, and been so strong all the way up" says McCormack. "A huge deal was made of that success even around the city, as we hadn't been anywhere near it for many, many years. That was definitely the start of turning it around. We just improved year-on-year from there.

"They was a good mix of country and town chaps together, the likes of Mark Kelly, Mark Bergin, Richie Doyle and Shane Maher were all about back then and they all went on to be involved with the county seniors."

Yet creating a conveyor belt of inter-county stars, a benchmark of other 'hurling nurseries', hasn't necessarily been a stated aim for CBS.

No doubt given their students' exposure to top-level schools 'A' hurling there's bound to be a Richie Power, Richie Hogan or even Henry Shefflin (all St Kieran's College past pupils) within the ranks, but the emphasis within the college is to develop an overall team.

"We would have always had in the school some very good individuals but

we wouldn't be able to fill the corners and wings. The success has brought more lads in but the focus here now is for every chap when they come into first year, that they improve every year. As long as I've been involved anyway, we haven't won an under-14, yet our senior record speaks for itself.

"These lads might overshadow the big names by the time they're at senior level. When lads come into our school they all get the chance to get a fair crack at it. We have about seven teachers covering the under-14 spectrum so there's matches for everyone and plenty of training time. The current Kilkenny under-16 captain couldn't make the first year's A panel for the first six months of the year. He came in then and spoke to our current first years about it, there's a great character there.

"You can't beat a chap who knows where he was when he came in, the level he was at, that he grinded the whole way along and then he's at senior level. We nourish the players and they appreciate it when they're at senior and playing these big games."

The strides

CBS defeated St Kieran's by six points in the 2014 Leinster final and it's not their first time to have got one over on their rivals in recent years. The school can now also twin their successful development structures with the ever-increasing influx of talented hurlers choosing to enrol in the school.

"I didn't fully realise the rivalry here between us and Kieran's before I came, but the tradition that's now in both schools is great.

"There are some clubs we tend to get most from, and there would have always been a couple of surprises, but the clubs are kind of split now between us. There's now 'another school' there for these lads and we are getting a lot more players wanting to come here.

"Every lad in Kilkenny walks



■ **St Kieran's College's Brian Cody in action against Kilkenny CBS's JP Treacy in last year's Dr Croke Cup final.** PHOTOGRAPH: DONALL FARMER/INPHO

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Hurling squads

Borris VS

Coaches: Cathal Delahunty, Maurice Buckley, Kieran Lucas.
Captain: Edward Murphy
Squad (* for last year too): J Curran*, S Brennan, P Shanahan, J Hogan*, E Redmond, E Murphy*, G Lawlor, K McDonald, M Kelly*, J Byrne*, BKelly*, C Nolan, D O'Neill*, D Brennan, P Nolan, N Lynam, A Hoosey, R Gleeson, D Tobin, T Lawlor, K Walsh, A Doyle*, C Treacy, J O'Neill, A Nolan, D Coady, T Dowling, E Fenlon
How school performed in 2014: Last 16 defeat to Castlecomer CS
County players/Prospects: Eight players from last year's panel including Edward Murphy

Coláiste Eoin

Coaches: Cathal Pléimeann, James Ó Giollaigáin. **Captain:** Dara Ó Tuama
Squad (* for last year too): D Ó Tuama*, IMac Gabhann*, T Ó Murchú*, F Ó Conchúir*, IO Riabhaigh*, E Mac Sithigh*, D Ó Cócáigh, E Mac Cormaic, S Maas, F de Fuitteigh*, M de Róiste, C Ó Ceallaigh, P Ó Eithir, S Ó Duibhir*, S Mac Giobúin, JBáil, J Lahert, M Ó Cróinín, N Ó Ceallaigháin, J Ó Broin, P Ó Dubhghaill, D Maas, D de Poire*, M Ó Treasaigh, E Mac Giolla Phádraig, B Ó Bruadair, T Mac Eochaidh
How school performed in 2014: Lost

Castlecomer CS

Coaches: Pat Murphy & Peter O'Donovan
Captain: Conor Delaney
Squad: C Delaney Cap, O Feehan, S Walsh, R Reid, J Dowd, C Delaney, C O'Dwyer, A Dempsey, E Murphy, S Dowd, D Holohan, C Dowling, D Cass, B Murphy, N Coogan, A Barry, S Feehan, J Bergin, S Buggy, A Murphy, P O'Neill, T Loughlin, A Egan
How school performed in 2014: Beaten by St. Kieran's College in the Quarter final
County players/Prospects: Conor Delaney Captain of this year's Senior School team was on the successful Kilkenny Minor Hurling team in 2014.

Kilkenny CBS

Coaches: Paul O' Donoghue, Alan Healy, P. J. McCormack
Captain: Diarmuid Doheny
Squad (* for last year too): D Doheny*, J Hanrick*, J Byrne, E Byrne, C O Driscoll, S Mahony, K Galvin*, J Lawlor, A Phelan, C Doheny*, M Drennan*, C Kavanagh*, J Walton*, T Gleeson, B Cuddihy*, B Gaffney, B Sheehan, S Bolger, A O'Neill*, P Byrne*, C

Butler, GBryan*, C Loy, R Butler*, J Mc Evoy, S Maher, L Scanlon*, A Gaffney*, J Scanlon, K Ryan, R Murphy*, C Fitzpatrick, C McGrath*, TKenny*
How school performed in 2014: Leinster winners, All-Ireland runners-up
County players/Prospects: Cathal McGrath, Luke Scanlon, Conor Doheny, Ross Butler, Andrew Gaffney all Kilkenny minors 2014. Nine Kilkenny under 17 players and four under 16s

St Kieran's Kilkenny

Coaches: Liam Smith; Ken Maher, Ger Flood. **Captain:** Sean Morrissey
Squad (* for last year too): Ad Mullen, A Nolan, B Lawler, B Ryan*, B Kirwan, C Byrne, D O'Connor, D Mullen*, E Egan, E Fennelly, E Delaney, E Moylan, E Kearney, E Walsh*, E Carroll, G Brennan, J Keoghán*, J Mullaly, J Byrne*, J Cleere*, J Connolly, J Barron, K Brennan, K Murphy, L Blanchfield*, M Keoghán, M Cody*, N Walsh*, R Lahart, R Leahy, S Byrne, S Brennan, S Carey, S Morrissey*, T O'Dwyer*, T Walsh*, V Costello, W Spencer.

How school performed in 2014: Winners of Dr Croke Colleges All Ireland 2014
County players/Prospects: 15 members 2014 Kilkenny All Ireland Minor winning panel (13 underage this year with one injured for season)

St Brendan's CS Birr

Coaches: Jimmy Dunne, David Kenny
Captain: Brian Hogan
Squad (* for last year too): B Burke, E Cahill*, C Carroll, E Carroll*, M Cleary, O Corboy, J Coughlan, MD Culleton, C Daly, P Delaney*, R Dempsey*, B Dunne*, C Dunne*, A Flaherty, M Gilligan*, SG Hanrahan, B Hogan*, CHogan, C Kenny, S Kinahan, S Kinsella, W Malone, D Miller, C Molloy*, D Murphy, JJ Murray*, E Parlon*, C Taylor*, S Teehan, DWatkins, E Watkins, B O'Meara

How school performed in 2014: Beaten in quarter final by Kilkenny CBS
County players/Prospects: Brian Hogan is Tipperary minor captain - Eoghan Cahill, Patrick Delaney, Rian Dempsey, William Malone and Craig Taylor all Offaly minors.

St Peter's Wexford

Coaches: Rory Jacob, Brian Coughlin, Sean Foley.
Captain: Joe O'Connor
Squad (* for last year too): J O'Connor*, J Firman*, A Maddock*, D Clarke*, J Lee Meyler, G Malone, M Joyce*, O Foley, B Dunne*, R White, JPettit, J Donohue*, Q Saunders, C Murphy, C Hearne, D Byrne, A Kennedy, J Stafford, T Piggys Kelly, F Cooney, A O'Neill, C Kelly, R Dunne, D Nimmo, N Green, N Whelan, F O Driscoll, C

Firman*, RO'Connor
How school performed in 2014: Last year went out in quarter finals to Good Counsel College
County players/Prospects: Jake Firman has been a Wexford minor hurler for the past two years

Good Counsel College

Coaches: Declan Wall, Mick Purcell, PJ Walsh. **Captain:** Donncha O'Connor
Squad (* for last year too): A Walsh, D Lyons, E Porter, L Stafford, S Doyle, T Coady, A Walsh, B Whitty*, B Power, B Quigley*, C Duggan, DBrennan, D Joyce*, DKelly, DO Connor*, H Cosgrave, I Carthy*, J Dunne, J Dunne, JMurphy, L Barron, SBarden, S Dowling, SRyan, SO'Gorman, S Stafford, T French, A Mansfield, A Winters, CO'Connor*, D Bolger, D McGrath, E Higgins, J Sutton, M Doyle, M Dwyre*, MO'Neill, J Myler, TO'Connor

How school performed in 2014: Defeated last year in Leinster semi final against the eventual winners Kilkenny CBS
County players/Prospects: Ian Carthy, Jack Dunne, Mikie Dwyre, Brian Quigley and Bob Whitty all Wexford minors, Donncha O'Connor Kilkenny minor, Darragh Joyce Kilkenny minor captain

Dublin South

Coaches: Eoin Roche, Traolach Martin, Andrew Coffey, Johnny McGuirk
Captain: Ciaran Brady.
Squad: C Brady, T Fox, M McGuire, G Kenny, A Considine, C Bennett, J Byrne, J McVeigh, R Doyle, A Mellett, A Coffey, C Dowling, R Leddy, R Di Felice, D O'Neill, P Rigney, D Kerr, E McDonnell, D Flannery.
How school performed in 2014: First round beaten by Wexford
County players/Prospects: Chris Bennett Dublin minor 2014

Dublin North

Coaches: Paul O'Brien, Joe Cunningham & Brendan Cawley.
Captain: Matthew Oliver.
Squad (* for last year too): CO'Sullivan, C Currie, C Ryan, D Grey, D Burke, K Callaghan, L Finnegan, M O'Keefe, S Fitzgerald, B Donnacha, C Sammon*, C Hendricken, D Keete, E Skelly*, E Conroy*, G King, H Fenlon, M Hayes, M Oliver*, O Lanigan, P Buggy, W Kelly, S McCaw, S Hickey, S Howard, W Maloney
How school performed in 2014: Lost in First Round Vs Laois Schools
County players/Prospects: Eoin Conroy, Matthew Oliver, Kevin Callaghan key men. Seven players who recently won Dublin Minor Championship with Na Fianna

Edenderry up there with the best

Emmet McDonnell led St Mary's from senior 'B' football to Hogan Cup glory in 2012



■ **Donegal star Michael Murphy playing for St Eunan's, Letterkenny back in his own schooldays in 2006.**

Hanging in Emmet McDonnell's classroom in St Mary's, Edenderry are the three AFL jerseys of past pupils Paul Cribbin, Seán Hurley and Daniel Flynn – gifts for the man they credit with bringing their school from senior 'B' to Hogan Cup glory.

When former Offaly manager McDonnell got involved with the school's Gaelic football teams they were a solid Leinster 'B' team. Yet in the past six years Edenderry have reached three Leinster 'A' finals and two All-Ireland finals – finally lifting the Hogan Cup in 2012.

"I would have started in 2002 with a group of players who I suppose are now heavily involved with inter-county teams, but we were a 'B' team then. I brought that group through and followed them to senior in September 2006.

"Keith Cribbin would have been involved, Cathal McNally, they're both with the Kildare senior team now. Then I suppose Seán Hurley and Paul Cribbin from Kildare too would have come in as young guys with that squad and Anton O'Sullivan, who is with the Offaly senior team now. Paul and Anton were actually starting on that team.

Ten points

"We ended up winning the All-Ireland 'B' colleges in 2007 with them. They had won a north Leinster under-14 and under-16 so a lot of work went into that bunch over the four years.

"That final was against St Eunan's Letterkenny and Michael Murphy was in midfield for them and he was as big then as he is now. He scored 10 points against us but we beat them in extra-time and things just took off from there."

Things certainly did take off; within two years of their debut senior 'A' campaign they were contesting an All-Ireland.

"The next year was our first year up in the 'A' and we got to the Leinster semi-final and Athlone beat us and went on to win it, but the following year we won it.

"Paul, Seán and Anton came of age and we ended up getting to the All-Ireland final, only narrowly losing out. Jack O'Connor's son Éanna won it for Coláiste na Sceilge with the last kick of the ball, and I suppose there was a lot of disappointment after that final which spurred us on to come back and train that bit harder to win that Hogan Cup – and in 2012 we did."

Training hard was a key component of St Mary's incredible transformation with word of their early morning fitness sessions spreading across the province in those years.

"To be honest that was a little bit of a myth that grew legs and then more after it sprung up, but look we certainly did early morning training sessions. The reason we did that though was because we wanted to train at a good level but we wanted to

do it without affecting academic performance.

"So rather than taking lads out during the school day, which wasn't appropriate, we put it to the lads and it suited them."

"The three key men, pillars of the 'new' St Mary's Edenderry who now travel the province with a swagger

Football fixtures

■ **Leinster Post Primary Schools SF 'A' Remaining Quarter Finals**
Dundalk Schools v Patrician Newbridge January 27th

■ **Leinster Post Primary Schools SF 'A' Semi Final Draw February 7th**
St Mel's, Longford v Good Counsel St Mary's Edenderry v Dundalk / Newbridge

■ **Final: March 7th**

Eamon Donoghue

Football squads

St Mel's Longford

Coaches: Jimmy Gacquin, Michael Kenny
Captain: Peter Hanley
Squad (* for last year too): D Doherty*, S Farrell, L Barry, J Moran, P Lynn*, C Lee*, R Moffett, P Hanley*, J Heaney, RO Connell, D Doherty, N Steele, C Finnan, C Victory, D McCarthy, M Hughes, S Noonan, D Kirby, H Carey, C Moran, M Lynch, D Smith, B Sweeney, G Gilchrist, R O'Brien, B Harte, O MacAnBeatha, P Duggan, R Clarke*, S Thompson*
How school performed in 2014: Second round loss to Coláiste Eoin
County players/Prospects: 14 county minors from panel above and four county u16 players

Cummins*, J Cully*, M Abbott, J Robinson*, D Kavanagh, E Farrell, D Molloy, G Cunningham, S Lowry, A Maloney, J Higgins, E McMonagle, J Cooney, J Reilly, A O'Neill, P Rickard, S O'Neill, E O'Reilly, T McDonnell, C Farrell, J Carey.
How school performed in 2014: Knocked out in the Second round by Knockbeg
County players/Prospects: Joe Mulranney Kildare Minor 2013/2014 - Adam Mahon and David Maloney Offaly minor 2014

Good Counsel College

Coaches: Kevin Kehoe, Kevin Bates
Captain: Darragh Joyce and Donncha O'Connor
Squad (* for last year too): J Morgan, A Masterson, B Leigh, D Marnell, E O'Connor, C Berry, G Maguire*, C Barrett, K Byrne, M Meehan*, M Buckley, S Browne, D Shalvey, D Randles, E Troy*, M Betts-Symonds, CO Mahoney, A Dignam, J Earley, G Melia, C Kavanagh*, CHartley*, J Francis, C Costigan, J Behan, E Lawless, C Malone*, RO'Donnell, P Murphy*, C Mattimeo, S Byrne, P Nash, J Nugent, M

Rossiter, CO'Connor, T Cody, K Parker, A Swan, C Molloy, E Daniels, D Lyons*, E Porter, T O'Connor, JMylar, MO'Neill, L Sinnott
How school performed in 2014: Semi-final loss to Marist Athlone
County players/Prospects: Darragh Joyce is a Kilkenny hurler and currently an AFL triallist, whilst Adam Swan was a regular on last summer's Wexford minor football team

Patrician Newbridge

Coaches: Joe Lyster & Killian Whelan
Captain: Con Kavanagh
Squad (* for last year too): J Morgan, A Masterson, B Leigh, D Marnell, E O'Connor, C Berry, G Maguire*, C Barrett, K Byrne, M Meehan*, M Buckley, S Browne, D Shalvey, D Randles, E Troy*, M Betts-Symonds, CO Mahoney, A Dignam, J Earley, G Melia, C Kavanagh*, CHartley*, J Francis, C Costigan, J Behan, E Lawless, C Malone*, RO'Donnell, P Murphy*, C Mattimeo, S Byrne, P Nash, J Nugent, M

and the conviction of a school who've tasted success, would be Cribbin, Hurley and Flynn.

As has been the case for many years, from Roscommon's Tommy Grehan in 1988 to Down's Caolan Mooney in 2011 and beyond, the Hogan Cup has been sourced as a breeding ground for AFL recruiters in search of the country's best young talent. Remarkably though, these three who were all consequentially signed up by AFL clubs, all hail from the same Johnstownbridge club.

"I suppose it all began actually the day of the 2009 Hogan Cup final. No sooner had the final whistle blown and the AFL scouts and Martin Kennedy from Dublin were on the field and they were speaking to Paul Cribbin straight away as he went off the pitch.

"Certainly I spoke to the lads over the years, and look, while they were certainly big losses for their club and county it was a fantastic opportunity for them to get and certainly one that's be hard to be negative on.

"The scouts are looking for the best athletes and they are there in these school games. It's the same with Caolan Mooney, he was the best colleges player in 2011 so it's understandable that these lads are nabbed.

"In my classroom now in St Mary's I have Paul Cribbin, Daniel Flynn and Seán Hurley's AFL jerseys hanging in the room and there's young lads coming in and looking at them every day. These young lads are looking up to them, and it is something for them to aspire to."

McDonnell has stepped down from the helm but according to current manager Enda Mitchell, his enduring influence is now imprinted upon all footballers in the school.

"It's a mentality that is nearly ingrained from our under-14s now, these lads have been watching and they now know what's become expected of them.

"Lads want to improve, we're a small school, a mixed school and we're punching above our weight.

"A lot of that is down to Emmet and the lads, they changed the mentality, put a focus on training correctly and put in a belief that we should be competing with these big schools."