

Leinster SFC Semi-final

Dublin's pace and power overwhelms Kildare

Connolly, Brogan score 2-3 apiece as favourites march on to Leinster final

Kildare refuse to give up but are no match for Gavin's confident side



Seán Moran at Croke Park

Dublin	5-18
Kildare	0-14

Things could have worked out a bit better for Kildare: not in the obvious sense that applies to any 19-point defeat but in the way the afternoon unfolded.

True, the county's minors had a fine win over Dublin but the seismic shock of the first match in this double-bill at Croke Park will have reminded Dublin that favourites need to be careful.

Any chance that Kildare might be liberated by a level of expectation that would have acclaimed any single-digit defeat a triumph began to fade once Dublin had straightened out after a slightly hesitant opening in which they shot a couple of early wides – one detected only after the intervention of Hawk-Eye ruled that Paul Flynn's second-minute shot had not been an equaliser.

Kildare set up defensively by keeping numbers back in defence but were constantly caught on the break by the speed of Dublin's counter-attacks and the accuracy of their kick passing.

As usual goals were the weapon of choice in undermining the opposition and the three that were scored in the first half effectively put the match to bed by the interval.

Demoralising

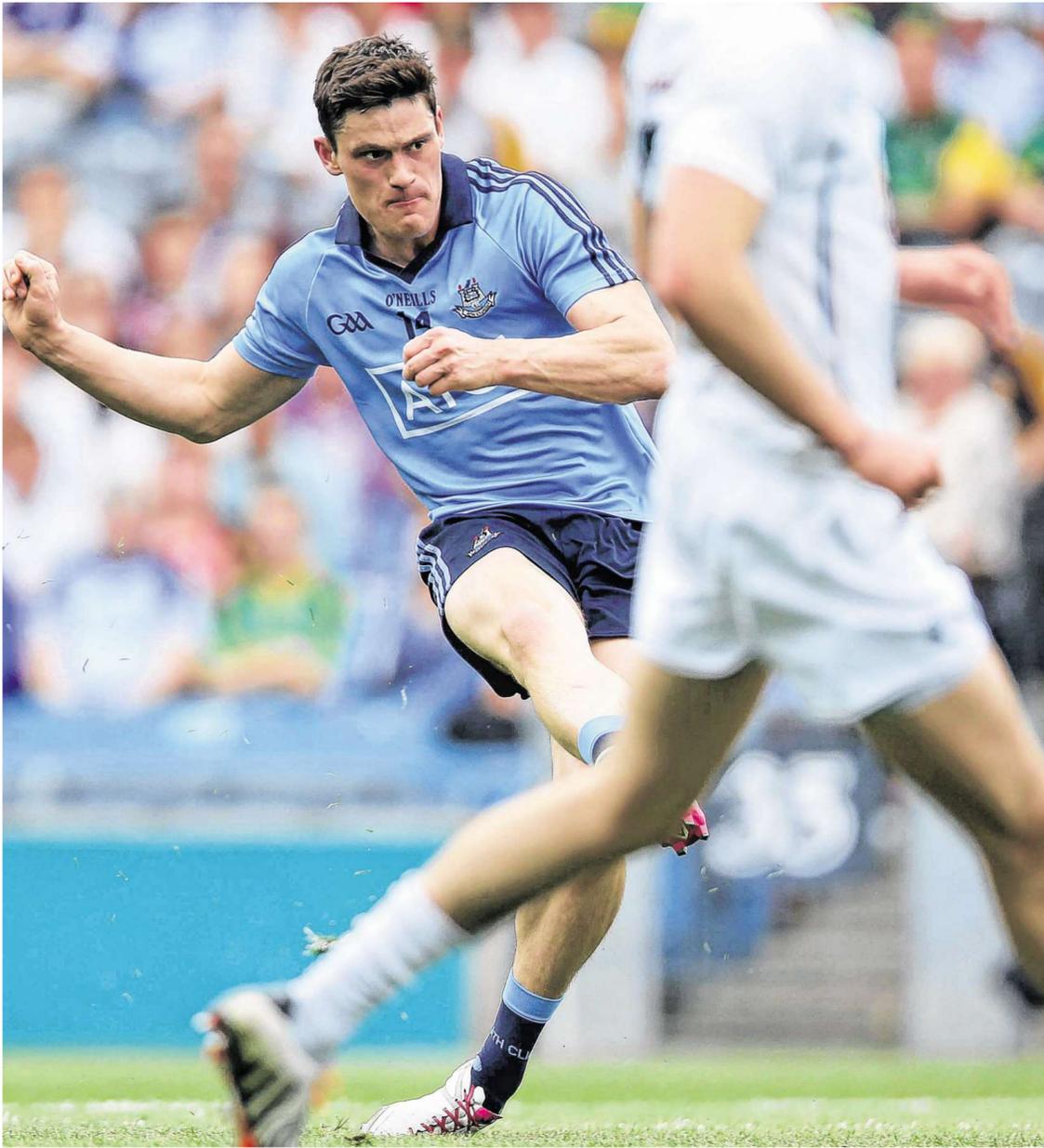
Goals are a demoralising statement of intent as far as underdogs are concerned. They create an immediate, further three-point gap and hint – or more accurately, threaten – that there's more to come.

In the ninth minute, Dean Rock finished a move by planting the ball in the net. Two minutes later, Jack McCaffrey made one of his flying incursions that appear to open new dimensions of space in opposition defences.

His shot was saved by Mark Donnellan but in the pinball that followed, Bernard Brogan eventually rammed the loose ball into the net where it disoblighly cannoned off the head of Diarmuid Connolly, who had tumbled into the net during the attack.

Connolly was ultimately alright but the same couldn't be said about Kildare. It was the same player who ghosted through the defence in the last minute of the first half to place the ball firmly in the net for a 3-10 to 0-6 half-time lead.

Having started at full forward, Connolly later rotated



Diarmuid Connolly scores Dublin's third goal against Kildare to give his side a 3-10 to 0-6 half-time lead at Croke Park yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: DONALL FARMER/INPHO

out to the 40 but was a handful wherever he went and crashed in a second-half penalty to make it a productive afternoon for himself.

On the day, however, 2-3 didn't even make him top scorer, as Brogan equalled the tally and with no wides.

Kildare manager Jason Ryan lamented afterwards that his team had made more attacking incursions than Dublin in the first half and as many in the second, but that's only half the battle. Longford created nearly as many (three fewer) first-half chances as Dublin but lost by 27 points.

Kildare would lose by 19. They needed to do everything right in a match like this with so much of the evidence tilted against them, but they racked up eight first-half wides, at times exercising poor shot selection and generally failing to make enough of their opportu-

nities to exert any sort of pressure on the champions.

Dublin tweaked their starting line-up to accommodate two heavyweights returning to the fray: Rory O'Carroll came in at full back and former footballer of the year Michael Darragh Macauley linked up with rookie centrefielder Brian Fenton, who put in another eye-catching energetic display.

The middle of the field was one area where Dublin didn't have it all their own way and Kildare did well on Stephen Cluxton's kick-outs, particularly for a period in the second half. Paul Cribbin was probably Kildare's most effective player, tracking up and down the field, but the team lacked the sharpness of the winners in converting chances and defending.

Accurate Ciarán Kilkenny put in a storming first half, getting on ball and making himself available all around the Kildare half of the field. He also chipped in four points from play with a great display of accurate shooting.

Dublin's defence was efficiently organised with Cian O'Sullivan playing sentry in front of the full-back line when

By the numbers

Dublin	Kildare
SCORES	5-18
FROM PLAY	0-11
FROM PLACED BALLS	0-3
WIDES	8
45s	1
FREES CONCEDED	10
YELLOW CARDS	5
BLACK CARDS	0
RED CARDS	0
ATTENDANCE	50,324

“Alan Brogan, who came off the bench, shot three points as Dublin stopped what might loosely be considered a rot”

Kildare had dropped back. The full backs were tight: O'Carroll never gave Alan Smith much room and Jonny Cooper was alert early on as demonstrated by a dispossession of Pádraig Fogarty.

Kildare managed a revival of sorts in the third quarter and with Dublin's concentration levels dropping through over-elaboration, at times leading to turnovers, they outscored the champions by 0-5 to 0-1 after half-time.

Thwarted

Donnellan, who prevented an even worse scoreboard for Kildare, made a good save from Connolly in the 47th minute, having thwarted Brogan just after half-time, but the margin never got lower than nine.

Alan Brogan, having made an appearance off the bench, shot three points from play as Dublin stopped what might loosely be considered a rot.

The play also became surprisingly fractious given that levels of tension were hardly unbearable and 10 yellow cards were shown by referee David Coldrick.

The match was buckled beyond any hope of kudos for Kildare in the time that remained.

Rock was upended by Donnellan in the 64th minute, causing the goalkeeper to be black-carded, and Connolly beat replacement Colin Heeney.

Four minutes later Bernard Brogan played a one-two with Paddy Andrews to palm in goal number five and the Dublin defence still put in an extended phase of vigilant marking to make Pádraig O'Neill work hard for Kildare's final point.

DUBLIN: 1 Stephen Cluxton (capt), 4 Philip McMahon (0-1), 24 Rory O'Carroll, 2 Jonny Cooper, 9 Cian O'Sullivan, 6 John Small, 7 Jack McCaffrey, 8 Brian Fenton, 22 Michael Darragh Macauley, 10 Paul Flynn, 11 Kevin McManamon, 12 Ciarán Kilkenny (0-4), 13 Dean Rock (1-4, points free), 14 Diarmuid Connolly (2-3, one goal a penalty), 15 Bernard Brogan (2-3), Subs: 18 Alan Brogan (0-3) for McManamon, 17 Paddy Andrews for Flynn (58 mins), 20 Michael Fitzsimons for O'Carroll, 25 Emmet O'Conghaile for Fenton (63 mins), 5 Darren Daly for O'Sullivan (64 mins).

KILDARE: 1 Mark Donnellan, 2 Ciarán Fitzpatrick, 3 Mick O'Grady, 4 Ollie Lyons, 5 Kevin Murnaghan, 6 Emmet Bolton (0-1), 7 Eoin Doyle, 8 Gary White, 9 Paul Cribbin (0-1), 10 Pádraig O'Neill (0-2), 11 Eoghan O'Flaherty (0-4, two frees), 12 Cathal McNally (0-1), 13 Cianann Callaghan (capt), 14 Alan Smith (0-1), 15 Pádraig Fogarty (0-3, one 45), Subs: 17 David Hyland for Lyons (11 mins), 26 Niall Kelly (0-1) for Callaghan (46 mins), 22 Tommy Moolick for White (46 mins), 21 Hugh Lynch for McNally (55 mins), 16 Colin Heeney for Donnellan (64 mins, black card). Referee: David Coldrick (Meath).

Reaction

Gavin stresses benefits of drive and hard work

Dublin manager says players have feet on ground and don't look beyond next tie

SEÁN MORAN at Croke Park

What does Jim Gavin take from these matches in Leinster? Kildare were dispatched yesterday by a chastening 19 points.

It did drag down the average win in the current provincial campaign from 27 to 23 but surely it has to be frustrating or concerning that Dublin don't encounter the full competitive rigours of championship play – the icy feeling of imminent or at least possible defeat – until the second chances are all used up?

“We could have faced defeat today,” he replied, “if we decided not to show up. It's a matter for ourselves to prepare the best that we can; that's all we can do. There are no guarantees. If the mindset wasn't good today, we couldn't have come away with the result. So we'll keep going after that.”

“There's a lot of fatigued players in the Dublin dressing-room. Looking at them they're quite exhausted from their efforts. To see them applying themselves for the full 70 minutes is satisfying.”

Perceptions

So Dublin rumble on, into a 10th Leinster final in 11 years. Thanks to the remarkable recovery by Westmeath in the first semi-final, there will be a novel final but perceptions of its outcome won't vary much with odds of 100/1 on already being circulated.

Gavin disagreed that such presumptions constituted pressure for him and his players.

“No, it's not mentioned. To get a performance there's a certain process we need to go through. You saw the end product on the park today. Behind that goes a lot of hard work by the players in the main. They're a very driven bunch.”

“They wear that [favourites] tag very, very lightly. They're very ambitious and understand that it's all about the next game. There are no guarantees in this sport and they just have to work hard and put themselves in a position to win games.”

For Kildare manager Jason Ryan it was a version of *Groundhog Day* – one in which outcomes are repeated but in increasingly extreme fashion. In charge of Wexford, he'd done everything but beat Dublin when they played.

Two years ago, as Kieran McGeeney's coach he watched as the team took a

16-point trimming. Whatever about putting up a good show and getting that margin down to something more dignified, Ryan must have hoped that the balance of terror wouldn't actually deteriorate.

“It was a game where we were very aware with the history there has been between Dublin and Kildare over the last number of years that we needed a good first half, we needed a solid foundation, we needed to really execute the basics of the game to the best of our ability and at stages in the second Laois match we felt it happened.”

“In the first half we had more attacks inside the Dublin 45 than they had in ours but they made their scoring chances count.”

“We unfortunately didn't execute the way we needed to, to give us the real belief to drive on.”

Consistent

“There was insufficient contact. That's a fact. We didn't get enough contact on Dublin runners and we didn't get as many blocks down on Dublin

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players getting shots off. “That was something that was probably consistent all the way through the first half and certainly for the last 15 minutes of the second half.”

He acknowledged that Dublin had done nothing to surprise Kildare. What arrived had largely been what had been seen coming. Had he not been tempted to go for broke defensively?

“At certain stages during the game we thought we had the bus parked. That's the reality.”

“I'd say if we had snapshots of the first and second halves there were quite a few Kildare players inside the 45-metre line.”



Kildare's Eoin Doyle clashes with Ciarán Kilkenny of Dublin at Croke Park yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: INPHO

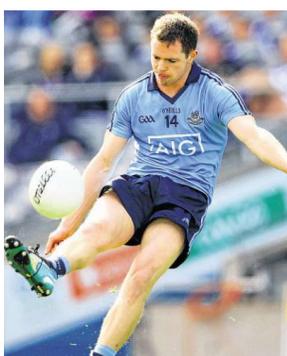
September Road

Eamon Donoghue

Dubious wisdom of ignoring juniors

It's been a great week for Wexford football, pulling off one of the shocks of the championship against Down in the qualifiers, after their juniors beat Meath in the provincial decider last Thursday. It was a first success at the grade since 2007, and while that success was followed up by a place in the Leinster senior final the following year, how useful is the junior competition? All the talk ahead of this weekend's Leinster semi-final between Dublin and Kildare centred on the different route the two teams took after their 2011 meeting. Four years before that though, both counties met in the junior championship where Dean Rock (right), the current Dublin senior top scorer,

bagged 0-8 against a Kildare team that produced Tomas O'Connor, David Whyte, Hugh Lynch, Eoghan O'Flaherty and Peter Kelly. A year later Dublin won the junior All-Ireland with Denis Bastick, Eoghan O'Gara, Johnny Cooper, Mick Fitzsimons and Darragh Daly all featuring. Mayo's Colm Boyle, Roscommon's Niall Carty, Cavan's Martin Dunne, Kerry's Anthony Maher, Meath's Stephen Bray and a great deal of the current Cork panel are all graduates of the competition in recent years. So if it's clearly producing players, why are counties like Dublin and Roscommon deciding against fielding them since 2012, and will it cost them in the long term?



Twitter twaddle

Niall Breslin @nbrez Those saying the @westmeath_gaa team are all wearing fake tan, get over it. We just tan easily in the Midlands

Eoin Cadogan @cads3 Now's a good time to say "there won't be a cow milked in Westmeath tonight"!!! Some comeback

Ross O'Carroll-Kelly @RossOCK Fair focks to all my Dublin friends who bought commuter homes in Westmeath. You must be very proud tonight.

@ShefflinHenry RIP to the great Jimmy Doyle. By all accounts I of the most skilful hurlers in a time of hard men. #GAA

Time to get tough on county boards for overstretching club players?

With the qualifiers now in full flight we're seeing a number of intercounty players heading stateside upon their county's exit. You can hardly blame the players for taking the opportunity of a glamorous break, some taking up the offer upon their county's provincial defeats while others were gone before the championship even got underway. Laois's John O'Loughlin, Kildare's Daniel Flynn, Carlow's Brendan Murphy, Dublin's Kevin Nolan and Antrim hurler Ciaran Clarke are among the litany of top players to have already departed at varying stages so far this summer.

It's a blow for the relevant clubs, many of which are already in a state of limbo awaiting the conclusion of their county's campaign so that they can resume theirs. So with all the talk of drug-testing GAA players this week, let's put the focus

firmly back on fixture planning for our club players so as to allow them have a life, and perhaps entice our county players to hold off on their travels.

There's no reason why the club championship can't run in tandem with the county season, with a bit of common sense prevailing. Kilkenny are playing full-blown challenge games on the Friday night before a championship weekend, but other teams need three or four weeks of club postponements to prepare.

Westmeath manager Tom Cribbin (left) brought in a raft of players off the back of their club championship form, and the extra competition certainly didn't do them any harm against Meath this weekend. Is it time for the GAA to get stricter on the county boards before they start exploring placing further demands on the club player?

