

Munster SFC Final

# Fitzgerald hits the spot to halt Cork's gallop

Corner back earns replay for Kerry after dramatic finish in Killarney

Kerry require a debatable penalty to navigate a path back into the match



**Keith Duggan**  
at Fitzgerald Stadium

Kerry	2-15
Cork	3-12

Call them charmed or call them haunted. Or call it the poise of All-Ireland champions. The sun still shone over Fitzgerald Stadium as this barnstorming Munster final raced through its 72nd minute and Kerry came looking for some sort of score that would preserve a record that is almost as old as Fionn Fitzgerald.

Most eyes in the stadium were on the big-shouldered frame of Kieran Donaghy, taking his usual residency on the edge of the square and offering a big paw to the skies for invitation. James O'Donoghue, who had registered a scintillating point in the first half, was roaming about. Colm Cooper, who has landed a few game-saving points in his day, was in the vicinity too.

But it was Fitzgerald, his Dr Crokes team-mate, who travelled up from corner back to almost casually strike a right-footed point to break Cork hearts. Just a minute earlier, the old place had trembled to the emboldened chant of "Rebels! Rebels!".

**Audacious**

Three times Cork had opened the Kerry defence with wonderfully-worked goals, the pick of which was Donncha O'Connor's audacious palmed lob over Kerry goalkeeper Brendan Kealy, a goal that was reminiscent of Graham Geraghty's improvised stroke of genius against Tyrone some eight summers back.

When you come into Kerry and work three goals on Munster final day, you are doing plenty right and in retrieving a four-point half-time deficit against the wind, Cork offered an eloquent retort to the loudening criticism they have faced over their character.

But, aggravatingly for Brian Cuthbert, they missed a golden opportunity to atone for last year's savaging on Leeside and to go through to the quarter-finals as champions.

As the Cork manager reiterated, they won nothing here. They had Kerry on the ropes. Eamonn Fitzmaurice's defenders looked deeply uncomfortable as Cork, after an encouraging first half, ran at them with what Cuthbert described as "abandon", with all three O'Driscolls and Michael Shields making deft incisions before supplying the danger men. Brian Hurley won a lot of



■ Cork and Kerry players get caught in a tangle as they battle for possession in the Munster final in Killarney yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: DONALL FARMER/INPHO

ball and O'Connor had an exceptional hour, but Colm O'Neill menaced the Kerry full-back line all day on relatively limited possession.

His one disappointment lay in his failure to nail the 71st minute 45 which would have given Cork a two-point cushion. As Fitzmaurice noted, he rarely misses them. Fatigue rather than pressure was the probable reason and Kerry had the chutzpah to set about rescuing their day and their title.

Cork had played like a bunch with a lot to prove from the first whistle and stunning the local crowd with 1-1 in what was a cagey first 10 minutes, with O'Neill flicking home after O'Connor's clever approach work along the endline.

There is always a suspicion that the All-Ireland season only really begins for Kerry on Munster final day and it seemed as if they turned up for a 4pm throw-in here rather than the

two o'clock start.

All of the vigour and intent contained within Cork's opening chapter was undone in the 13th minute when they gifted the All-Ireland champions with the kind of goal that will leave Cuthbert staring at the ceiling in the wee hours.

**Loitering with intent**

Johnny Buckley stepped up smartly on Michael Shields on the short kick-out and robbed the ball. Donaghy was loitering with intent and in a continuation of last year's theme found that all his Christmas's had come at once. He finished the goal with customary coolness.

That score served to shatter the spell of Kerry's torpor caused by Cork's early impudence. The teams traded points for the next 10 minutes but gradually Kerry's overall structure began to influence the flow of the game.

They trusted Shane Enright and Marc O'Sé to guard Cork's front two of O'Connor and O'Neill and flooded their 50 with green and gold shirts. Cork couldn't run through that line and were reluctant to try to pass the ball directly over it. Two exquisite points on the run from Barry John Keane and

**By the numbers**

Kerry	Cork
SCORES	2-15 (21)
FROM PLAY	3-12 (21)
1-8	3-6
FROM PLACED BALLS	0-6
1-7	0-6
WIDES	
5	3
45s	
1	2
FREES CONCEDED	
19	21
YELLOW CARDS	
4	2
BLACK CARDS	
1	2
RED CARDS	
0	0
ATTENDANCE	35,651

“Cork offered an eloquent retort to the loudening criticism they have faced over their character”

O'Donoghue pushed Kerry into a 1-9 to 1-4 lead.

Had Cork conformed to stereotype, they would have just faded out of the game in the second half. But they thundered into contention and had outscored the home by 1-06 to 0-2 by the 52nd minute. A black card for David Moran in the 44th minute was a central cause of Kerry's woes as the Cork men began to dominate the middle.

The crispness of their attacking play represented the best of Cork, and Kerry required a debatable penalty to navigate a path back into the match.

**Breaking ball**

It originated from a familiar idea: Donnchadh Walsh played a long ball for Donaghy. Mark Collins seemed to grab possession of the breaking ball but was whistled for dragging at O'Donoghue in the process.

The Legion man converted the penalty and the game roared with new intent. Colm Cooper – entering the amphitheatre to huge reception in the 43rd minute – clipped the score that gave Kerry their first lead of the half in the 55th minute.

Another beauty by Paul Geaney and a point from Anthony Maher illustrated the poten-

cy of Kerry's heavyweight bench. It looked like normal service had been resumed.

But Cork simply dashed through Kerry's heart for their third goal, Shields leaving Peter Crowley behind and then playing Barry O'Driscoll, who ghosted past Cooper, to smash a confident goal. They hung on to that precarious one-point lead for almost 10 minutes.

Then Kerry, not for the first time, found a way to outfox them at the finish. They will be back in Killarney on Saturday week.

**KERRY:** 1B Kealy, 2F Fitzgerald (0-1), 3M O'Sé, 4S Enright, 5J Lyne, 6P Crowley, 7K Young, 8D Moran, 9B Sheehan (0-4, three frees), 10S O'Brien, 11J Buckley (0-1), 12D Walsh (0-1), 13B Keane (0-3, one free), 14K Donaghy (1-0), 15J O'Donoghue (1-2, one pen), Subs: 17C Cooper (0-1) for S O'Brien (43 mins), 18A Maher (0-1) for D Moran (43 mins black card), 23D Sullivan for J Buckley (47 mins), 19P Geaney (0-1) for B Keane (52 mins), 25J Sheehane for B Sheehan (60 mins), 26P Murphy for P Crowley (67 mins).  
**CORK:** 1K O'Halloran, 2M Shields, 3E Cadogan, 4J Loughrey, 10P Kerrigan, 5B Barry O'Driscoll (1-1), 6B Brian O'Driscoll, 8A O'Connor, 9F Gould, 15B Hurley, 14M Collins, 12K O'Driscoll (0-2), 13C O'Neill (1-8, three frees, one 45), 11D O'Connor (1-3, two frees), Subs: 22P Kelly for Kerrigan (23 mins black card), 19C Dorman for S Cronin (59 mins), 21R Deane for F Gould (60 mins), 25D Goulding for B Hurley (67 mins), 17J O'Sullivan for B O'Driscoll (70 mins black card).  
Referee: P Hughes (Armagh).

Reaction

## 'Disappointed, I felt we had done enough to win'

Cuthbert is left vexed, while Kerry's leaky form continues to cause them problems

**KEITH DUGGAN**  
at Fitzgerald Stadium

It would have been fascinating to hear what Brian Cuthbert and the Cork players might have said in Fitzgerald Stadium had they managed to hold on for another ten seconds.

Winning a Munster title wouldn't be enough to permanently silence their critics but it would offer a forceful rebuttal at least. Brian Cuthbert cut an understandably vexed figure after this draw.

His team did enough to become the first Cork team to lift silverware in Killarney for 20 years but for all their good work, they are right back where they started. And Kerry aren't all that great about the second chances. Cuthbert smiled later on when asked if it was time that people laid-off about Cork now.

"I don't know. That is people's opinion and it seems to go with the territory. I see it in other counties now too. You are under pressure and in the spotlight basically. It goes with the territory. People would have been very happy if we won today. We haven't won so people are going out the gate in much the same frame as they came in."

The performance was good enough to deserve a strong Cork presence here again in a fortnight. Cuthbert summed up the conflicting emotions of his county men.

"Disappointed, I thought we had it. Absolutely delighted with how the players played, the effort, the spirit and heart they showed."

"There's no such thing as deserving to win matches really but today I felt we had done enough to win. Disappointed coming away with the fact that we haven't won but it's half time in the game, its level in the game, and we go again."

Kerry's second-half penalty was the chief talking point of the day and as his players filed out for some refreshments, the manager was still exercised by the thought of it.

**Strong wind**

"From where I was looking, it was no penalty. We were four points down at half-time playing against a strong wind, came back to lead by three or four points and then that decision came and turned the game. In fairness to Cork, we battled and got in the game again and I felt we did enough to win it."

"A bit unlucky in the end but it's a good Kerry team, they're All-Ireland champions, and they're unbeaten here for 20 years and fair play to them for coming back."

Eamonn Fitzmaurice also acknowledged that he had been told that the penalty was "soft". But goals

conceded rather than scored were Kerry's main problem. Their leaky league form has carried through to the championship and Fitzmaurice grinned when asked if it that was a problem.

"It obviously is if they're scoring goals. The game was so hotter-skelter that it's hard for me to remember exactly everything that was going on. There's an awful lot we can improve on for Saturday week and that we need to improve on. We saw what Cork are capable of."

**Negativity**

"All the negativity that was around them over the last couple of weeks is astounding. We knew and I was saying it, and I know sometimes when you say this stuff, people think you're trying to be cute or clever. We knew what Cork were going to bring, we knew how difficult it was going to be to beat them."

"We knew that we needed to be at our best and we weren't at our best. We're thankful that we have another cut at it."

“We still haven't won the game and in the dressing-room [Kerry will] be saying 'Cork played well, we didn't, and they still haven't beaten us'. We have to come back here and we just have to win and it's something I think we're capable of”

Cork will prepare for the replay with more complex emotions. So much went right for them here, from Barry O'Driscoll's role as a converted wing back to the crafty display by senior figures like Donnchadh O'Connor and Alan O'Connor. Now, Cork will have to come up with something different.

"Every time you play Kerry, you're facing a very good team," Cuthbert said.

"Last year they absolutely opened us up, this year, this game, I thought we defended well enough."

"We still haven't won the game and in the dressing-room they'll be saying 'Cork played well, we didn't, and they still haven't beaten us'. We have to come back here and we just have to win and it's something I think we're capable of doing once we play."



■ Kerry's Jonathon Lyons clashes with Cork's Kevin O'Driscoll. PHOTOGRAPH: INPHO

## September Road

Eamon Donoghue

### 'Dummy team' proves to be the real deal

There's been a lot of frustration among GAA fans regarding the increasing use of the "dummy team" by county managers.

This week when Colm Cooper (right) and Tommy Walsh were named on the Kerry bench, GAA fans remained unconvinced, awaiting the usual pre-match adjustments. Yet despite all the speculation, neither Cork nor Kerry made a single change to their named teams. In fact, in the 10 games played in the hurling and football championships this weekend there were only nine personnel changes made prior to throw-in.

All of the major talking points from the mid-week team announcements materialised – Colm Galvin starting from the

bench for Clare, Rushe and Keane starting at six and 14 for the Dublin hurlers, 'Gooch' dropped.

Of the nine players who were replaced in the late changes, just four appeared as substitutes. Among the late changes were Roscommon's Ultan Harney, arguably their game-winner, and for Offaly their talisman Niall McNamee. Yesterday the only change in the four games was the enforced replacement of Kilkenny midfielder Michael Fennelly due to a viral infection.

Perhaps actually selecting the correct teams proved to be mind games at their very finest, but either way the managers deserve some credit this week.



### Twitter twaddle

**Ciarán Sheehan @Gussyman90**  
Absolute joke of a decision for that penalty for Kerry... happening far too much #verydisappointing

**Ronan O'Gara @RonanOGara**  
Genius Joe Canning. Special player.

**Alan Malone @AlMal90**  
Did Joe Broly just say 'Marc O'Sé isn't a corner back'? The man has 3 All Stars in the position. #rot#kerry

**Nigel Owens @Nigelrefrowns**  
Just watching my first game of Hurling Kilkenny v Galway. Think I am going to be a Hurling fan. Very enjoyable...

**Jim McEaney @jmcaney**  
Handed Kerry a goal, down by 5, get back ahead, mad penalty decision and come back from it to take the lead. Cork answered a lot of critics!

### Tale of two pots on the path to All-Ireland quarter-final

This year's All-Ireland football qualifier draw has produced two different paths to a potential All-Ireland quarter-final.

The eight teams who'll meet next weekend in round two of the qualifiers find themselves on the B side of the pot, which contains Tyrone, Armagh, Meath, Derry and Galway. The other side of the draw is labelled A side but clearly not as a consequence of its contents – not one of the remaining teams played in Division One of the league this year. Just four teams remain on the A side, with an up-and-coming Roscommon being the standout side.

Despite earning promotion from Division Two this season, they have just one senior provincial title in over 10 years. Jason Ryan's (pictured) Kildare are the next best on paper, a team whose consecutive league relegations will see

them play in Division Three next year. Kildare's 17-point loss to Cork in 2012 was in fact the last time they, Roscommon, Longford or Fermanagh competed in the last eight of the championship.

On the B side you have two teams who were in Division One this year. You've Armagh, who were All-Ireland quarter-finalists in 2014. Along with Meath, Tyrone and Galway, they've nine provincial titles over the past 10 seasons. Tipperary fill the script as the up-and-coming county on that side of the draw, while Derry were also in Division One this season. The victors from round three of the A group will face the Munster and Leinster runners-up, meaning one of the two who emerge from that side of the pot is likely to have reached the last eight without having beaten a Division One side. Assuming Dublin beat Westmeath on Sunday,

