



CHAMPIONS: The St Brigid's junior hurling team in celebratory mood after capturing the Dublin JHC 'A' title when defeating Nh Barróg in Saturday's replayed final



RUNNERS-UP: Naomh Barróg failed narrowly in Saturday's replayed Dublin JHC 'A' final at Naomh Mearnóg's grounds in Portmarnock

Duigo and Boyle sign off in style

DUBLIN JHC 'A' FINAL

ST BRIGID'S1-12
NAOMH BARROG1-8

By **Diarmuid Geraghty**

IT was worth the wait. A cracking Dublin JHC 'A' final replay saw St Brigid's crowned champions of 2008 in Portmarnock on Saturday.

The sides originally drew back in mid-December and it was obvious from Saturday's fare that both had been working hard in the interim. A strong wind coming from the Irish sea was not enough to deter either side in what was a game filled with passion, commitment and skill.

It was obvious from the outset that these rivals were familiar with each other and this game was not a place for the faint-hearted.

Naomh Barrog's quest for a clean sweep of titles - having won the AHL Division 4 league final (beating St Vincent's) as well as the Leinster Special JHC - was ended by a very well-drilled and determined Brigid's outfit.

The opening few minutes were a cagey affair in which poor shooting left both sides scoreless until the eighth minute, when St Brigid's centre forward Tommy Fitzsimmons opened the scoring for the Russell Park men with a fine point from the left-hand side of the field.

Barróg, after some poor shooting, were not long to respond, however. First, they equalised through Emmet McCabe and then went one better with a pointed free by Paul Garbutt, both of whom lined out of Fingal in Sunday's NHL Division 3B victory over Tyrone.

Lack of discipline cost the Brigid's men on that occasion after a free was brought forward 13 metres for dissent. Barróg had an obvious tactic in the first half which reaped rewards territorially, but not on the score sheet. That was to utilise the strong breeze along with the massive puck out of goalkeeper John Flood which caused some problems for the Brigid's defence.

Indeed, Brigid's three-point half-time lead, 0-7 to 0-4, did not truly reflect the pattern of that opening 30 minutes.

The match was also a testing one for referee Eddie Walker, as tempers reached boiling point just on half-time when Barróg No 14, Barry Hehir, suffered an injury.

Thankfully, it was more handbags at dawn than gunshots at noon as both sets of players controlled themselves in order to focus on the job at hand. The first half was a tale of missed

opportunity for Barróg as they failed to convert their dominance into scores and ultimately they were to regret shooting seven wides in that opening period.

For Brigid's, it was a case of ruthless efficiency as they were very economic in possession of the sliotar.

Their shining light in that first half, and indeed throughout, was corner forward Paul Keane, who was a constant menace for the Barróg defence.

The second half saw a role reversal as Brigid's were now playing with the advantage of that strong wind. Unfortunately for the Barróg men, however, Brigid's made their advantage count as they became increasingly dominant.

It was very much a case of backs to the wall for Barróg and they did well to stay in touch as long as they did. Indeed, they proved to be a hard team to shake off right up to the final whistle.

Their fighting spirit was perhaps summed up in the last ten minutes. A goal by Keane looked to have sealed it for Brigid's with 10 minutes remaining, but Barróg kept the contest close right to the finish.

Brigid's, though, stood firm and had many heroic defenders to thank for their eventual success. That last 10 minutes perhaps best defined this game as Barróg swept forward looking to break down their opponents, but in the end they failed to do enough to force a change in the destination of the trophy.

That trophy was presented to not one, but two captains. Full-back John Boyle and full-forward Seán Duignan were both presented the winner's prize. Their joint captaincy was a tribute to the fact that both men had served their club with loyalty, and it was a fitting way to end their careers on such a high.

On receiving the trophy, former Dublin senior hurler, 'Duigo', took the opportunity to thank his management team and his teammates, who he said were all big contributors to the team's success. He also paid tribute to Naomh Barrog and recognised their achievements in what was a hugely successful year for the Kilbarrack men, despite the fact their season ended with disappointment.

For Brigid's goalkeeper, Willie Bourke, it was also a significant occasion as he emulated the achievements of his father, John.

Willie added a JHC 'A' title to his list of honours, which already included a JFC 'A' medal - as his father had done with Craobh Chiaráin in the 1960s.



SIGNING OFF IN STYLE: Dublin County Board vice-chairman, Danny O'Connor, with St Brigid's joint-captains Seán Duignan (left) and John Boyle after their Dublin JHC 'A' final replay success

MATCHFILE

JHC 'A' FINAL: ST BRIGID'S v NH BARRÓG

■ **SCORERS - St Brigid's:** P Keane 1-3 (0-2f), P Fitzsimmons 0-4, B Duggan 0-3, S Duignan, P Rohan 0-1 each. **Naomh Barróg:** E McCabe 0-5 (3f), B Hehir 1-0, Paul Garbutt 0-2 (1f), E Costello 0-1 ('65').
 ■ **ST BRIGID'S:** W Bourke; G Markey, J Boyle, D Brooks; D Cahill, M Cussen, C McCann; C Morris, M Galvin; D O'Mahony, T Fitzsimmons, B Duggan; P Keane, S Duignan, P Rohan.
Subs: M Curran for O'Mahony (45), T Dineen for Rohan (50), S Lynam for Boyle (58)
 ■ **NH BARRÓG:** J Flood; D

Flood, R Timmons, D Byrne; T Manton, P Shiels, H McGirr; E Costello, J Stewart; C Gannon, P Garbutt, D O'Donnell; A Maher, B Hehir, E McCabe.
Subs: D. Flood for Maher (ht), C O Hehir for O'Donnell (ht), C Cleary for Shiels (55).
 ■ **MENTORS - St Brigid's:** Mickey Sullivan, Ciarán O'Reilly, Tim O'Leary, Oliver Cussen. **Naomh Barróg:** Dudley Costello, Seán Manton, Dave McCabe, Rory Cannon, Humphrey Kelleher.
 ■ **REFEREE:** Eddie Walker (O'Toole's).



WIDES - St Brigid's: 15 (7 in first half), **Nh Barróg:** 11 (7 in first half).
MAN OF THE MATCH: Paul Keane (St Brigid's).