

ACHL Division 1 Final - August 24, 2014

Ferns St Aidans 1-19, Oulart/The Ballagh 2-15

Ferns St. Aidans gained what may well prove to be a vital breakthrough in Wexford Park on Sunday last when they dethroned reigning All-County Hurling League Division 1 champions Oulart-The Ballagh with the last two points of a tight contest.

This competition may not mean much in the overall scheme of things and has long since lost any lustre it enjoyed at the outset, but it was a significant outcome all the same as the Gorey District side delivered another warning to the long-time kingpins that they are well capable of taking up their mantle.

And Ferns mentors will be pleased that they won it the hard way, after suffering a big blow with five minutes left when Garrett Sinnott cut through their defence and played in team captain Rory Jacob for an equalising goal (2-14 to 1-17). Just over 50 seconds later a Jacob pass directed into the right corner found Des Mythen who fired high and between the posts to give the holders the lead, and it looked like further disappointment lay in store for Ferns in the form of another near miss.

That wasn't the case though, as substitute Pádraig Bolger fired over a crucial point in his first major involvement at this level before Eoin Moore sent a tricky free wide from 48 metres close to the right sideline. It was Oulart-The Ballagh's seventh miss in all during the second-half, and therein lay the slight difference between the teams as the Ferns wide count was nil for the same period.

Team captain Tommy Dwyer had punished most indiscretions with eight points from frees, but his sole successful effort from play won the spoils. It came after a weak enough attempt at a goal by Ian Byrne was kept out by Ben O'Connor, but the ball ended up in the left corner from where Dwyer fired high and handsome for the winner.

David Redmond shot another Oulart-The Ballagh wide in added time as they were left to rue the concession of a very soft goal in the sixth minute which ultimately cost them dearly. Ben O'Connor called for a back pass from Dennis Morton and duly got it, but he fumbled his pick-up twice and the second invitation was gleefully taken up by Christopher O'Connor who sent a ground stroke to the net for a 1-2 to 0-2 lead.

The Enniscorthy District side had drawn level by the start of the second quarter (0-7 to 1-4) in an open affair, and the sides shared the next four points before a Tommy Dwyer free was followed by the Oulart-The Ballagh goal. Rory Jacob and Des Mythen did the spadework down the left before the latter handpassed to Darren Nolan who beat Michael Walsh for a 1-9 to 1-7 lead.

However, Ferns had got back on level terms by the break (1-10 each) with three of the last points of the half courtesy of Christopher O'Connor, Tommy Dwyer (free) and O'Connor from play.

After a further sharing of four points on the re-start, Ferns opened up a decent gap with unanswered scores from free-taker Dwyer (two), Benny Jordan and Ian Byrne, although they were fortunate when Peter Murphy struck the crossbar for Oulart-The Ballagh in that spell.

A brace of Rory Jacob frees drew one response from Dwyer before that goal from the former which may well have given Oulart-The Ballagh the edge in days of old.

However, Ferns are gradually learning with every test against the top dogs, and their response was excellent especially as it came on the back of two less than convincing championship draws with Glynn-Barntown and Cloughbawn.

The cup was presented to Tommy Dwyer by Noel O'Keeffe, Vice-Chairman of the County Board.

Ferns St Aidans: Michael Walsh; Niall Maguire, Pádraig Ryan, Colm Whelan; Gavin Bailey, James Tonks, Declan Byrne; Benny Jordan (0-2), Tommy Dwyer (capt., 0-9, 8 frees); Ryan Nolan (0-2), Paul Morris (0-1), Ian Byrne (0-2); John Breen, Jamie Whelan, Christopher O'Connor (1-2).

Subs: Pádraig Bolger (0-1) for Morris (46), Seán Walsh for C. Whelan, inj. (57), Derek Thorpe for Breen (57), Ben Cowman for Nolan (60).

Oulart/The Ballagh: Ben O'Connor; Dennis Morton, Keith Rossiter, Barry Kehoe; Conor Goff, Eoin Moore (0-2 frees), Shaun Murphy; Michael Jacob (0-1), David Redmond (0-1); Garrett Sinnott (0-2), Darren Nolan (1-0), Peter Murphy (0-1); Rory Jacob (capt., 1-2, 0-2 frees), Des Mythen (0-3), Nicky Kirwan (0-3, 2 frees).

Subs: Peter Sutton for Kirwan (42), Paul Roche for Goff (49), Kevin Nimmo for Morton (49), Conor O'Leary for Nolan (57).

Referee: Joe Kelly (Naomh Eanna)