

Seán Connolly Cup

By: Longford Gaelic Stats

The Longford Senior Football Championships has been played 108 times between 1890 and 2024, with 107 winners crowned and one SFC started but not completed in 1891. The Seán Connolly cup has been presented to the winner of the Longford Senior Football Championship since 1960. The 2024 competition marked the 64th year that the Connolly Cup was presented to the winner. Shane Mulligan, Dermot Brady and Frank McNamee all got their hands on the cup on three occasions, while Paddy Hanrahan holds the record for having raised the cup on four occasions, and also has the distinction, as an accomplished musician, of having a hit record in Ireland's Top Ten in the 1960's. Mark Mimmagh (1995) and Daniel Mimmagh (2020) are the only father-son combo to lift the cup, while Enda (2003) and Paul (2009) Barden are the only brothers to have done so. The cup is identical in design to the St. Andrews Links golf trophy in Scotland.

Securing a cup for SFC began with Motion #4 at the 1960 Longford GAA Convention. The motion was tabled by Éire Óg (Drumlisk) and Killoe Young Emmets clubs and proposed that the County Committee provide a cup for Senior Football Championship. Mr. Eivers of the Éire Óg club said that the Senior Championship was the premier competition in the County and it was the opinion of many people that a cup should go to the winners as well as medals. The motion was agreed to. The new trophy was presented for the first time to the winners of the 1960 decider, and in November of that year the cup was given a new name - Corn Seán Uí Chonghaile. The cup has been presented to the winners of the Longford Senior Football Championships every year since 1960. In presenting the cup to the Killoe captain Billy Morgan in September 1960, the County Chairman Liam Hastings (*who himself won three titles with Longford Slashers in 1950's*) stated:

"Everyone knows who I would like to see winning the cup. However, it is a very great pleasure to present the new trophy to a man who has, not alone given great service to the parish team, but also to the county team".

In 2010, John Greene wrote the following regarding the purchase of the Connolly Cup, which appeared in that year's county final match programme:

"Mattie Fox from the Seán Connollys club was the County Secretary and was charged with the task of purchasing the new cup. At that time, and until the early 2000's the County Board purchased their championship medals from John Miller and Sons, Duke Street, Dublin. This is the same jewelers where the All-Ireland medals were purchased too. Mattie contacted the manager Des O'Donnell and ordered a cup off him that would be a fitting trophy for the senior football championship. Des told Mattie that he had a beautiful cup which had been purchased by the Feis Áth Cliath committee to be presented to the best overall dancer at the Feis, but there was then a major split and the Feis never took place. Des was willing to sell the cup at a reasonable price as it had been engraved, and he assured Mattie that he could blank that out and engrave over it again. The deal was done and the cup purchased. In the week leading up to the final of 1960 however, the cup was forgotten about, and it was only at the last minute the realisation came that the cup was still in Millers. Fortunately, there was a meeting of the Leinster Council in Dublin on the Saturday night and Longford's delegates Seamus Greene and Jimmy O'Brien were attending and were going by hackney driven by Tommy Harold. Mattie arranged to leave the cup in Barry's Hotel and it was collected there; on the way home the boys decided to drop into Finn's public house in Kilcock for a drink and brought the cup with them into the pub. It was a Saturday night so the pub was full, and they informed all and sundry that they were coming from the dogs in Harold's Cross and that their greyhound had won this magnificent trophy. The cup was duly filled several times, and a great night was had by all. The following day the 1960 County Final took place between

Killoe and Longford Slashers with Killoe coming out on top. It was a great honour for winning captain Billy Morgan to be the first man to receive the Cup – after a major polishing overnight!”

It is a little-known fact that the cup was not yet named when it was presented to Billy Morgan after the 1960 county final. In November 1960 a proposal to the Longford County Board from Mattie Fox was adopted, naming the cup in honour of his fellow clubman Seán Connolly, a Clonbroney native and former Senior Championship winner with Clonbroney (now Seán Connollys) in 1919, and who was synonymous with the War of Independence as Officer Commanding the Longford Brigade.

Seán Connolly was born in the townland of France near the village of Ballinalee, the second of seven children of John and Margaret Connolly. He joined the Irish Volunteers in 1917 and rose to the rank of Vice Commandant of the North Longford 1st Battalion. He was the principal organiser of and strategist behind the attacks on R.I.C. Barracks at Drumlish, Edgeworthstown, Ballinamuck, Ballymahon and Arva during the War of Independence. Connolly was transferred to Roscommon/Leitrim district on orders from HQ and continued the policy of attacking R.I.C. Barracks. When Michael Collins ordered Connolly into Leitrim, he warned that it was “the most treacherous county in Ireland”. His warning was well founded.

As Connolly was running a training camp at Selton Hill in early 1921, his position was made known to the RIC. The RIC District Inspector had been alerted to Connolly’s position by a local doctor who had served in the British Army. A large force of RIC and Auxiliaries, based in Mohill, surrounded and then attacked the camp on 11 March. A total of six IRA volunteers were killed. The RIC suffered no losses. The IRA dead were Seán Connolly from Longford, Seamus Wrynne, Joseph O’Beirne, John Reilly, Joseph Reilly, and Captain ME Baxter. Seán was interred in Clonbroney Graveyard. The Cavalry Barracks in Longford and the GAA club in Clonbroney are named in his honour. The centenary of his death was marked on 11th March 2021.