

Old Christians Survive Ballybrown Challenge

(By S. M.)

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Ballybrown, 3-5.

Old Christians, the recently crowned 1966 Limerick City under-21 hurling champions, were put to the pin of their collar to remain in the current season's campaign when they met Ballybrown at the Gaelic Grounds last night. After a game of swaying fortunes, the ex-C.B.S. lads finished strongly to gain the verdict by a one-goal margin, 4-5 to 3-5. Ballybrown, the stronger side and all with much junior inter-club experience, dictated the trend of play from the throw-in and had their much fancied opponents on the run. They got off to a tonic start with a surprise goal by Pat McCarthy and, inspired by Pat Fogarty, who had a tremendous hour, at mid-field, they tacked on points by Peter Carroll (2) and P. Fogarty (2) to which Matt Grace and Declan O'Reilly replied for Old Christians. A beautiful point from a "70" by Christy Campbell brought the C.B.S. lads to life and when Mick Hennessy raced through in the 20th minute to raise the green flag, only a point separated the sides, 1-4 to 1-3, in favour of Ballybrown. The rally was short-lived, however, when two minutes later Pat Fogarty again showed his courage and class by soloing through for a spectacular goal, to which Peter Carroll added a point. Declan O'Reilly reduced the leeway with a similar effort for Old Christians to leave the score-board reading at the interval: Ballybrown, 2-5; Old Christians, 1-4.

With wind advantage in the second moiety, Old Christians opened in lively fashion but Dessie Fitzgerald cleared his lines and in a sudden raid to the opposite end a Ballybrown forward was fouled and from

the resultant 21 years free Pat Fogarty shot to the net with his second attempt.

It looked black at this stage for Old Christians with seven points in arrears, but they then displayed the stuff from which true champions are made.

Declan O'Reilly gave them the first ray of hope in the 9th minute with a goal, and although they continued to attack, their forwards could make no headway against a resolute and hard-hitting Ballybrown defence. Matt Grace put the game in the melting pot in the 16th minute when he crashed a free to the net and three minutes later substitute Michael Daly, who had replaced the injured Pat Hennessy, became the hero of the C.B.S. camp when he lashed a Mick Hennessy centre to the roof of the net to give his side the lead for the first time. Ritchie Grace sealed the issue four minutes from time with a well-taken point from the wing. In a pulsating finish, both sides tried tooth and nail for further scores but the defences held out.

It was a thrilling climax to a great game, with Old Christians just about deserving winners. They displayed better cohesion and team spirit, and although Ballybrown had some great individuals, they lacked the all-round balance of their opponents. Gerry Fitzgerald, Dave Tuohy, Christy Campbell, Donal Manning (who had a storming hour), Matt Grace, Mick Hennessy, Declan O'Reilly and Joe Reale were the chief architects of the Old Christians, while Pat Fogarty (who was the best player on view), Peter Carroll, Dessie Fitzgerald, Jim Byrnes, Seamus Coughlan, Kieran McCarthy, Mike Fogarty, John Nash and Sean Roche impressed most on a determined Ballybrown fifteen.