

Sunday June 4th 1995

Daingean 1-8

Rhode 0-9

Heroic Daingean Shock Rhode In Entertaining Game

The saying that “football is a funny game” is oft abused and over used but if ever there was a case for making it, there was in Walsh Island on Sunday afternoon. The final scoreline between Daingean and Rhode may in itself not provide much grounds for discussion but it is the story behind the score that should provoke plenty of food for thought.

Rhode have been training since last January. They have received a very good commitment under trainer Gerry Hickey and would have been rated by most people as championship contenders. They lined out with three players who have played senior championship with Offaly this year, a player who won a Leinster U-21 medal, a player who has played minor with Offaly this year and a number of other players who have played either at underage or senior level with Offaly in the past.

Daingean on the other hand have received a mediocre commitment under Jody Gunning. They drafted in former Offaly player, Mick Wright in goals, played Seamus McEvoy, who has not been available for a long time this year, at wing back, and lined out Tony Kenny, who underwent an operation in recent weeks, at corner forward.

Given such circumstances any GAA supporter would gladly have betted their life savings on a Rhode win but at the end of a very entertaining game of football it was the Daingean men who won by 1-8 to 0-9. How to explain such a result borders on the impossible. Perhaps Rhode, who would have been fully aware of Daingean’s problems, suffered from that cardinal sin of over confidence. There can be little doubting that but Daingean were a highly motivated and extremely fired-up team going out on to the field.

Rich Dividend

Rhode struggled to raise a gallop and tended to play themselves into “cul-de-sacs”. Daingean on the other hand played the more direct route and this yielded a rich dividend. There can be no arguing that Daingean deserved their win and it would be fair to say that they could have won by substantially more. The end result is that Daingean are in with a golden chance of reaching a quarter-final, Rhode are staring an early exit in the face. Next Sunday will tell a lot when Rhode play Clara and Daingean take on Ballycumber.

Apart from a brief spell in the first half Daingean always looked to have the measure of their opponents and at half-time they trailed by just one point, 0-7 to 0-6. In the second half they were clearly the better team. A John Kenny penalty was saved after ten minutes. The decisive score came six minutes from time when John F. Kennedy punched to the net after a desperate mix-up in the Rhode defence. After this there was no way back for Rhode and Daingean went on to a richly deserved success.

This was a win earned by sheer guts and determination by Daingean. Their will to win was a credit to them and they played some good football. Mick Wright’s lengthy kickouts were a decided advantage to Daingean. A first-half change also worked very well for Daingean. Frank Greene was clearly under pressure at full-back but this gap was plugged very nicely by J.J. Stapleton. In fact the whole Daingean defence played well, with Brendan Donagher and John Joe Hanlon also deserving of special mention.

Scoring Boots

At midfield John Kenny and Martin Daly could claim the honours. John Kenny when he moved forward at speed into attack was a joy to watch and he played a vital role,

though he did leave his scoring boots at home. Martin Daly also played very well for the full hour and caught some vital balls in the second half. No player played particularly well in attack but Daingean did possess six players who were willing to fight for every ball. Tony Kenny struggled for long periods but he demonstrated that class will always show, towards the end when he won possession at vital times. Mark Whittle also won good possession while John F. Kennedy came good towards the end. To say that Rhode are bitterly disappointed at this result could qualify as the understatement of the year. The fact that they have dropped two points is bad enough but the fact that they failed to do themselves anything remotely near justice is perhaps the most galling aspect of this defeat. They never got going and actually looked to be a very average team.

Their defence, while they held out reasonably well, will not be happy. In this sector their best player was without a doubt Johnny Mooney. The former Offaly star lined out in the unusual position of full-back and he made some brilliant catches – however a strong case could have been made for playing him in attack where Rhode could have badly done with his predatory skills.

In midfield Ken Kellaghan looked like he was going to have a field day early on when he made some splendid catches from behind his man but in the end he was powerless to halt the Daingean machine. Rhode, however, are entitled to point the fingers of blame in the direction of the attack. Players such as Pat Daly and Roy Malone, of whom much would have been expected, disappointed. Damien Scally looked good early on but ultimately Rhode were found sadly wanting in ideas and inspiration in this sector.

The Scoring

It was Daingean who made the better start and they opened the scoring with a pointed free by Martin Daly after a foul on John Kenny. In the second minute they increased their advantage when Daly pointed a sideline. A very good point from Damien Scally and a pointed free from Pat Daly brought Rhode on to level terms.

Daingean responded with fine points from Mark Whittle and Martin Daly before Rhode hit a purple patch. Points from Pat Daly (four, two frees) and Damien Scally gave Rhode a three point lead with 22 minutes gone, and events appeared to be going as expected. However, Rhode wasted some good possession and Daingean responded with a superb individual point from John Kenny and a Sean Farrell point to reduce arrears to 0-7 to 0-6 at half time.

Second Half

In the early stages of the second half it appeared that Daingean were going to kick the game away. They equalised after just one minute when Martin Daly pointed a '45'. They then took control but their forwards were not clicking and many opportunities went astray. The most blatant came in the 10th minute when Tony Kenny was unceremoniously hauled down and John Kenny's powerfully struck penalty was saved by Niall Jones.

Rhode then had a period of dominance but their only reward was a superb long range point by Ken Kellaghan. They kicked some bad wides before Daingean regained the initiative. Sean Farrell failed to gather possession with a goal on in the 18th minute, Mark Whittle hit the post with a point shot and John Kenny and John F. Kennedy (free) had bad wides.

However, in the 24th minute Daingean scored the game's decisive score. A high Mark Whittle ball was fumbled by Niall Jones and Paddy Stones and John F. Kennedy had the simple task of punching into the net from close range. Kennedy added a good point after a superb move involving Martin Daly and John Kenny. Daingean had their

chances to put their opponents away. John Kenny shot wide with a scoreable chance and Tony Kenny failed to shoot when he had an opportunity to do so. Two minutes from time Rhode were awarded a free after a pick-up. Pat Daly went for goal but his shot was deflected over the bar and this closed the scoring.

Scorers:

Rhode – P. Daly 0-6 (4 frees), D. Scally 0-2, K. Kellaghan 0-1

Daingean –J.F. Kennedy 1-1, M. Daly 0-4 (1 free & 1 “45”), J. Kenny, S. Farrell & M. Whittle 0-1 each

Rhode: Niall Jones, Pdraig Dunne, Johnny Mooney, Paddy Stones, Ger Smullen, Alan Kellaghan, Richie Harnett, Ken Kellaghan, Fergal Dunne, Barry Malone, Pat Leavy, Lockey Murphy, Pat Daly, Damien Scally, Roy Malone.

Daingean: Mick Wright, J.J. Stapleton, Frank Greene, Joe Gallagher, Seamus McEvoy, Brendan Donagher, J.J. Hanlon, John Kenny, Martin Daly, John Greene, John F. Kennedy, Paul Jordan, Sean T. Farrell, Mark Whittle, Tony Kenny. Subs – Mattie Corcoran for Frank Greene, Michael Connolly for Sean T. Farrell.

Referee: Noel Cooney (Erin Rovers)