

Magnificent U-14 hurlers



Laos U-14 hurlers fulfilled their promise and took home the Sonny Walsh Cup from the Waterford Crystal Tony Forrestal All Ireland under 14 festival of hurling in Waterford at the weekend, when a magnificent team display and a sensational scoring feat by Cha Dwyer in the final on Sunday lifted the All Ireland title in the most emphatic manner possible.

This was a truly superb victory and one which the underage Setanta Programme needed as it justified the work that had been put in with this team, and gives a huge boost to the programme and sets a standard for the younger teams to follow in the coming years.

The displays by the team over the two days drew admiration from all sides and while they had 13 points to spare over favourites Antrim in the final they came through three intensely contested games on Saturday and showed huge character to pull off victories against top class opposition.

In the second game they gave a highly polished performance to beat Waterford B by 18 points, and that set up a 6 o'clock meeting with Kerry for a place in Sunday's final. In 27 years Laos had lost four finals to Kerry and they knew that they were formidable opposition, and so it proved, with the sides level at half time they knew that they had a game on their hands.

In a fierce and at times heated battle Laos dug deep and held Kerry to a single point in the second half as they worked on four hugely important points themselves. There was relief all round as tired limbs trooped off the field but the aches and pains were quickly washed away as the team bus whisked the team off to Tramore where they went for a dip in the cold evening sea.

It was to prove immensely beneficial both physically and mentally for the players even if the sight of 24 young lads all in their Laos jerseys and togs swimming in the sea drew gasps from

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Laos captain Paddy Bergin with his family after Sunday's win and below: Darren Nolan, Martin Daly and Paddy Bergin celebrating Laos's win in the Sonny Walsh trophy.



While the final will be remembered for the scoring display of 2-10 (all from play) by Cha Dwyer it was the brilliance of the defence and midfield that lay the foundations for victory against a St. John's backboned Antrim side that came into the final unbeaten, and that had huge ambitions of ultimate success.

This is the first time to come through the Setanta programme that was the brainchild of Pat Critchley three years ago and the work put in during those years by the management team of Tony Woods, Mick Scully, Kevin Lynch and Shay Kelly showed to best effect in Waterford. Their performances were lauded by neutrals with Cha Dwyer's final display described as the best ever by a player in the 27 year history of the competition in any grade.

Having been awarded 'Team of the Week' at the DJ Carey School in Kilkenny in July and having beaten many of the top A teams in the country in challenge games the squad travelled to Waterford on Friday evening with great expectations. Knowing that a defeat in any of the three Saturday games would scupper their chances of success, and that failure could have huge consequences for the team and the Setanta Programme, the players turned in some fine performances.

In the opening game on Saturday morning they looked in real trouble when they trailed defending champions Westmeath by six points, but a truly wonderful finish saw them end with a seven point advantage - a 13 point turnaround.

passers-by on the famous promenade!

Laos 2-12 Westmeath 1-8

It could all have come unstuck in the opening game as a superb Westmeath side led Laos by six points in the first half and with nine minutes remaining still held a four point advantage, with the Lake County lads controlling many areas of the field deft was looming.

This Laos team however has shown that they possess great battling qualities and a never say die attitude and when against the run of play Darragh Nolan got the all important goal it was the spark that was needed to ignite the team and they put in a storming finish to crush Westmeath before the final whistle.

Westmeath had rocked Laos with a goal from their centre forward in the opening minutes and the same player had added three points by the tenth minute and they were playing with such intensity that alarm bells were ringing.

First half points from Cha Dwyer, Paddy Bergin, Darragh Nolan and PJ Scully (two) kept Laos in touch but Westmeath still held a four point advantage 1-8 to 0-7 with 10 minutes remaining.

Then the whole game changed dramatically when Darragh Nolan won a puck out soloed through the centre and from 20 metres wrapped the ball up in the top left netting for a magnificent goal and within a minute Cha Dwyer landed the equaliser and Laos were back in the game.

take All Ireland title



The Laos U-14 panel celebrate their victory in the Tony Forrestal Tournament in Walsh Park, Waterford on Sunday.

forward Joe Bennett followed by a point from and midfielder Aidan Lenihan sealed a superb comeback.

Scores: PJ Scully 0-5 (four frees), Darragh Nolan 1-1, Joe Bennett 1-1, Cha Dwyer 0-2, Paddy Bergin, Paul Woods and Aidan Lenihan 0-1 each.

Laos 4-11 Waterford 0-5

Laos got a great start to this one when Darragh Nolan shot a superb goal

inside 30 seconds followed by a point from Cha Dwyer but by the 15 minute Waterford were ahead 0-5 to 1-1. Laos steadied the ship and points from Cha and PJ Scully (2) gave them a 1-4 to 0-5 half time lead.

The second half however saw Laos in complete control and they held Waterford scoreless and points flowed from Brendan Ryan, PJ Scully, Cha and Darragh Nolan before Cha crashed the ball to the net and followed with a huge point from midfield.

Darragh Nolan shot his

third goal of the competition and Cha finished the game with another for an 18 point winning margin.

Scores: Cha Dwyer 2-4, Darragh Nolan 2-2, PJ Scully 0-5t, Brendan Ryan 0-1.

Laos 0-10 Kerry 1-4

The deciding game for a place in Sunday's final was a classic against a big, physical but very skilful Kerry side and with Laos losing four previous finals to The Kingdom they knew that they had a battle on their hands, and so it proved.

Darragh Nolan again opened the scoring with a classy point and Cha Dwyer followed with another but within five minutes Kerry were on level terms and then rocked Laos with a stunning goal.

Excellent points from PJ Scully and Aidan Lenihan narrowed the gap and after another Kerry point Paul Woods and PJ Scully hit the final two scores of the half to level at the

break 0-6 to 1-3.

Scully shot Laos ahead on the restart and two superb scores from Cha Dwyer opened up a three point lead but Kerry were a superb side and it took four excellent saves from goalkeeper Eoin Fleming and heroic work by the defence to keep them at bay.

It was an intense battle with matters reaching boiling point when the Kerry manager was banished from the playing arena after a clash with the referee.

Then a great point from Darragh Nolan gave Laos a little breathing space and they held out for a magnificent victory and a place in Sunday's final.

Scores: Cha Dwyer 0-3, PJ Scully 0-3.1f, Darragh Nolan 0-2, Paul Woods and Aidan Lenihan 0-1 each.

Laos 2-15 Antrim 0-8

Cha Dwyer kept his best performance for the big day and what better arena than Walsh Park where he shot 2-10 from play from centre forward in what

described as the finest display ever seen from an underage hurler.

But it just wasn't Cha who kept the best till last as this was a magnificent team display from the outstanding Eoin Fleming in the goals out Laos were up to this game and they totally snuffed out the challenge from Antrim as they dealt with unopposing behaviour before, during the game and outside and inside Walsh Park.

Laos by their credit did not respond to the street, sideline or on the pitch as they just let their hurling speak and rose above the unsavoury stuff.

While Cha took the limelight the defence were absolutely heroic as they held Antrim to just two points from play with the first of them conceded 10 minutes into the second half.

By that stage Cha had scored 2-10 from play with Brendan Ryan blossoming in the final and chipping in 0-3 with PJ Scully converting two frees.

Almost all of Chas scores

brought gasps from the crowd as he combined with Darragh Nolan for both goals and shot all of his points either from the middle of the park or off the hurl, attacking at speed.

The final whistle saw a huge outpouring of emotion and celebrations as Errill's Paddy Bergin lifted the Sonny Walsh Cup, Cha Dwyer the Man of the Match award and each of the players a specially inscribed piece of Waterford Crystal.

Laos panel: Eoin Fleming (Rathdowney/Errill), Martin Daly (Borris/Kilcotton), Jimmy Fox (Rathdowney/Errill), Conor Lewis (Tinnahinch), Aaron McGowan (Colt), Paddy

Bergin (Rathdowney/Errill), Dean Lynch (Portlaoise), PJ Scully (Borris/Kilcotton), Aidan Lenihan (Mountrath), Darragh Nolan (Park Ratheniska), Cha Dwyer (Ballynagilly), Niall Sinnott (Colt), Brendan Ryan (Camross), MJ Dunphy (Ballynagilly), Joe Bennett (Ballynagilly), Eoin Carroll (Tinnahinch), David Mortimer (Camross), Aaron Moore (Camross), Shane Cleere (Rathdowney Errill), Steven Finnin (Borris/Kilcotton), Sean

Conroy (Gloagh Ballacolla), Donnacha Dowling (Mountrath), Ciaran McEvoy (Ballynagilly), Sean Cullen (Portlaoise), Sean Walsh (Ballyfin)

Congratulations From the Leinster Sports Clinic.

Congratulations to the Laos U14 County Team who won the Sonny Walsh U14 Ireland Championship in The Tony Forrestal Cup on Sunday 11th August in Waterford. Congratulations also to their managers who guided them to this fantastic achievement, Tony Woods, Mick Scully, Kevin Lynch & Shay Kelly.

Cha & Dwyer @ the Leinster Sports Clinic are proud to be associated with the team.

Well done lads.



Laos centre forward Cha Dwyer receiving his Man of the Match award after Sunday's final.