

Crossmolina put in astonishing performance

**Crossmolina Deel Rovers 0-16
Nemo Rangers 1-12**

Fifty of years of heartbreak? No longer. Mayo sides had endured an inexplicably disastrous run of luck in All-Ireland finals for the last half-century, but that legacy was nowhere to be seen at Croke Park this afternoon. Until the last two minutes, that is.

After turning in an astonishingly performance, full of blistering speed and guile, of teamwork and ethic, and displaying the type of killer instinct in front of the posts that had been sadly lacking in pervious incarnations of Mayo sides in Croke Park, it seemed that the demons that had blighted visit upon visit to the capital would surface yet again to deprive the westerners of All-Ireland glory.

When Colin Corkery finished off a brilliant short passing move by firing to the net in the 60th minute, there were many in the thousands of Crossmolina supporters that thronged the capital that feared the worse. That score left just a point between the sides as the clock ticked over into injury time and a recurrence of the drama of the hurling final earlier in the day seemed likely. Less than 60 seconds later, Colin Corkery rounded two men to leave him in space just 30 metres from goal, to the right of the posts. You could almost hear champagne corks being shoved back into bottles way out west. But Corkery, faultless up to that point for the Cork men, rushed his shot and the ball arced harmlessly wide to give the men from Crossmolina Deel Rovers their first All-Ireland club championship.

The familiarity of names such as Ballina Stephenites, Castlebar Mitchells and Knockmore would suggest that Mayo clubs had been in this position before, but, in several attempts, not one of those had managed to leave Croke Park with the Andy Merrigan Cup in tow, thus giving Crossmolina Mayo's first All-Ireland senior football championship in half a century.

With Nemo Rangers stretching their legs to good effect in the first half, a win for the underdogs from the west seemed unlikely. Corkery ñ both from play and placed balls, with right or left foot ñ was joined by full forward line colleagues Joe Kavanagh and Alan Cronin in tormenting the Rovers defence, while midfielders Dermot Kavanagh and Kevin Cahill also got forward to fire points in an impressive opening salvo from the Munster champions. They led by four points midway through the half, but with Kieran McDonald beginning to influence proceedings for Crossmolina, the Mayo men got into their stride before the half time whistle. Short passing was a positive feature of much of their play, and one such move down the right involved Johnny Leonard, Liam Moffatt and McDonald before Paul McGuinness scurried into space to send over an inspirational score and in turn cut the deficit to just one. Immediately, however, Nemo rallied and points from Joe Kavanagh and Alan Cronin opened up a three-point half-time lead.

It was in the first 10 minutes of the second period that Crossmolina won the day. In a spell of dreamy wonderfootball, they kicked six points, four of those coming from play, the unsung players such as McGuinness, Leonard and Joe Keane complimenting the mercurial McDonald at every opportunity. With the winning post in sight, the old failing of inaccuracy in front of goal came back into play, with James Nallen, the otherwise brilliant Michael Moyles and, in particular, Enda Lavelle the guilty profligates. Sean O'Brien pointed to cut Nemo's shortfall to three, before Liam Moffatt pointed for Crossmolina to give them the insurance point.

And how they needed it. Corkery's goal led to a deal of sweating in the Mayo camp, but at last, John Bannon's whistle ended one of the longest hoodoos in modern Irish sport.

Crossmolina: B. Heffernan, S. Rochford, T. Nallen, C. Reilly, P. Gardner (0-1), D. Mulligan, P. McAndrew (0-1), J. Nallen, M. Moyles (0-1), J. Keane (0-2), K. McDonald (0-7, 3 frees), E. Lavelle, P. McGuinness (0-2), L. Moffatt (0-1), J. Leonard (0-1). Subs: G. O'Malley

Nemo Rangers: D. Heavy, L. Kavanagh, N. Geary, I. Gibbons, C. Connolly, Steven O'Brien, M. Cronin, D. Kavanagh (0-1), K. Cahill (0-1), Sean O'Brien (0-1), L. O'Sullivan, D. Niblock (0-1), A. Cronin (0-1), C. Corkery (1-6, 3 frees, 1 '45), J. Kavanagh (0-1). Subs: J. P. O'Neill, M. McCarthy

