

• SPORTS •

# 1993 All American Champions Honored

By Liam Reidy

THE 1993 SONS OF BORÚ US National Junior Football Champions were honored at the Kerry Dance on Jan 24 at the United Irish Cultural Center. A remarkable feat about this US championship winning side from sixteen years ago is that they were all first generation American born players—there was not an ex-pat amongst them. Of course, these players had plenty of pedigree (some would argue still they do!), as many of their fathers had previously kicked football locally during the late 1950s, 60s and early 70s. The former SF stars included Bay Area GAA Hall of Famers Martin Quirke (Kerry) and Cork native Daniel K O'Sullivan, (RIP), Mission Gaels tailsman Pat Naughton (Mayo), Kerry sharpshooters, Pete Looney, Sean Healy, and Mike Brosnan. Former stars also included Pat Kinahan, (RIP) (Fermanagh), JJ McKeon (Ulster), Con Keighran (Leitrim), and Pat Fergus (Mayo).

## Band of Brothers

The 1993 Ború team is a closely-knit group and it comes as no surprise that this particular team has kept in contact with each other over the years, almost like brothers. In fact, there are seven sets of brothers sprinkled throughout the team including the Quirke's (Johnny and Denis), the Naughtons (Kevin and Pat), the O'Sullivans (TJ and Kevin), the Healys (Sean and Neil), Kinahans (Marty and



Sons of Ború-1993 North American Junior Football Champions

Back row, Left to Right: Seamus Busby, Sean Keighran, Marty Kinahan, Niall Brosnan, Tom McKeon, Greg Quinn, Neil Healy, Kevin O'Sullivan, TJ O'Sullivan, Rich Brown, Pete Dahl.

Middle Row: Bernie Corry (Coach) O'Connor, Sean Healy, Jeff Carlin, John Sheehan, Tim Looney, Mike Heavey, Denis Quirke, Kevin Kinahan.

Front Row: Johnny Quirke, Danny Foley, Jimmy Keighran, Denis O'Connor (Mascot), Pat Naughton, Jim Fergus, Kevin Naughton, Tom O'Connor (Manager).

Kevin), Keighrans (Sean and Kevin), and the O'Connors (Tom and Kevin).

## Road to Glory

The road to the US title began early in the 1993 season with the installation of Burlingame resident Tom O'Connor as Manager, and Bernie Corry (SFPD) as team trainer. Morale was low in the camp after the loss of three SF junior championship finals in a row, but the team remained resolute in their ambition of capturing a coveted local title. Winning a San Francisco title would go a long way to silence

the critics who felt the "Americans could not keep the football kicked out to most of the other city football teams"—squads that were made up of exiles from the home country.

The SF Junior title was captured with a win over Peninsula Naomh Pdraig (5-11 to 2-07). Marty Kinahan was outstanding in that first divisional title win, kicking several important frees on the road to victory. The five goals came courtesy of team captain Rich Brown (two), TJ O'Sullivan (two) and Kevin O'Sullivan. Current Ború player Kevin Murray was on the losing

NP side that day, but the following year transferred to the Ború.

## State Champions

There was a close call in the State final in SoCal with a two-point win over the Wild Geese from Los Angeles (1-13 to 1-11). The LA team were hugely disappointed with the loss as information brought back from a scouting party sent to observe the SF final failed to counteract the Sons of Ború line-up. In a strange twist of fate, Rich Brown was injured in the celebrations following the SF win, and did not take his usual place on the edge of the small parallelgram for the State Final. Neil Healy came in for Brown and ended up running rings around the American Football player LA had recruited to keep an eye on Brownie! Talk about luck. Local referee Val Kirwin (SFPD) made the trip to LA to referee the match in a blistering heat and sunshine before a raucous LA crowd.

Seamus Busby (Project Manager SJK Construction) gave a Man of the Match performance in the LA final, as he used his fitness and physique developed as a running back for St Mary's College, Moraga to good effect and helped turned the tide for the Bay Area men. Kevin O'Sullivan kicked the Ború goal that day, while Jim Keighran in goals was the Ború hero with a string of fine saves. The LA coach asked Tom O'Connor after the match where did they find the All-Ireland champion goalie between the sticks?" To which O'Connor replied: "Why the Sunset in San Francisco, of course!" On the losing LA side that year was Brendan Searls, who later played for the Michael Cusacks (winning a

National title in 1995).

## National Title At Last

And so it was back to San Francisco for the US championships during the Labor Day weekend in early September 1993. Ború rather easily accounted for the Detroit Wolfe Tones in the National semi-final 1-14 to 0-5. And the team had a resounding 3-18 to 1-10 victory in the North American Junior Final over the Kevin Barry's club from Philadelphia (an All-Irish team) in front of over a thousand people. Kevin O'Sullivan collected the MVP for the Juniors during the weekend of the North American Finals, while brother TJ collected the SF Junior player of the Year award that year. They were also on the team that won the US title for a second time in 2002. Any mention of a Ború team over the years should not fail to mention their Number One fan—Rose O'Connor—who has been there through good times and bad. In fact it is many a local referee has developed a ringing sensation in their ear—should they give an incorrect decision against her beloved "Kerry Sons of Ború."

For the record the team and subs for the National Final was: Goalkeeper: Jim Keighran. Backs: Sean Keighran, Mike Heavey, Jim Fergus, Kevin Kinahan, Dennis Quirke. Midfield: Marty Kinahan, Seamus Busby. Forwards: Kevin O'Sullivan, Tim Looney, Niall Brosnan, Rich Brown and TJ O'Sullivan. Subs: John Sheehan, Neil Healy, Tom McKeon, Dan Foley, and Jeff Carlin.

And so, it came to be that the Ború finally were at the top of the ladder as Champions of the City, State and US. The twenty five-member panel all contributed to the victories during the year—which was an important component for the long run the team had in the championship. Team captain Rich Brown said "that the subs on the bench were as good as the men on the starting thirteen, which was a good compliment for team management and players on the pitch. Subbed players could be replaced with players equally as good if required without any adjustment to the game plan."

With the expansion of the GAA at National level in the past decade or so-All-American teams are not uncommon, but back in '93 it was a very unique achievement, especially in a city with a large Irish immigrant population.

Congratulations to the Kerry Sons of Ború and long may its contributions to the local GAA scene continue.

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