

No. 135—MICK CULHANE Of Glin

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

GLIN football hit its peak in the decade from 1926 to 1935, and to none more than Rev. P. Lyons, now P.P. of Monagea, must the credit go for that unforgettable spell in the history of the parish, reviving a glory that was previously evident around the turn of the century, when another great combination made football history for the district.

On his transfer to Glin from Kilmee in 1925, Father Lyons at once set about starting a football club. How successful were his efforts can be judged by the fact that in 1926—the first year out, his team won both the junior and senior championships of the west and county, and brought the total of senior successes to seven in the years that followed.

When Glin at last faded from the football stage, the fame of the district was upheld by the deeds of the late Tom Culhane, who starred on the field of play and proved a referee of outstanding quality, and Tom's untimely death was a sad blow indeed, and a big loss to Limerick football.

RUNS IN FAMILIES

The old proverb says that "athletics run in families" and in the case of Tom Culhane it was to find expression in the fine football deeds of another member—his younger brother, Mick. Tom had played for Limerick and for Munster on many occasions but Mick's glory was gathered mainly away from his native county and he wore the Dublin and Roscommon colours with distinction.

Independent of the part poor Tom played in the advancement of football, Mick could claim descent from great athletic stock and point to many relatives who had made their mark in the active arena. There are over a hundred families of Culhanes scattered around the Glin parish and no less than a dozen members of this clan hit the headlines in the ranks of athletics.

The first pair of the name to come to the fore on football fields were Michael and William, who were prominent members of the far-famed Commercials Club. Michael, a popular citizen of Limerick City for many years, was an outstanding player on the team and figured in the grand old colours for many years. Although very young at the time he was a reserve on the Commercials selection that captured All-Ireland honours in 1896—that team captained by another great son of Glin—the late Con Fitzgerald, of happy memory.

William Culhane, besides excelling

at football, was an ardent Gael and a prominent worker as a member of the Commercials Club Committee. His untimely passing in 1895, at the early age of thirty-two, was deeply regretted by all his colleagues.

NEXT IN LINE

Next in line we meet Maurice Culhane, of the Mall, Glin—a leading member of the great Glin Emmets Football Club committee, who, with Dan Culhane of Killeany and Tom ("Murray") Culhane were prominent players on this fine team. The latter was also a useful sprinter and jumper.

Soon another crack sprinter appeared in the person of M. T. Culhane, now resident in Borrigone, who won many prizes at meetings around West Limerick and in Kerry and Clare. In addition, he was a keen coursing enthusiast.

And to prove that the old spirit still lives we have another member of the clan just hitting into the limelight just now. Young John Culhane is a very promising footballer, and was mainly responsible for putting the newly formed Borrigone juvenile hurling team on the field this season.

And we must not omit to mention the fine work of Patrick Culhane, who has done much for Glin football in recent years.

MICK'S G.A.A. CAREER

The subject of this sketch, Mick Culhane, opened his football career whilst still a schoolboy and at an early age was figuring with distinction on the local junior side. He was denied the opportunity of playing in minor ranks through the absence of a team in this grade in the parish at the time.

In 1946, Mick joined the Gardaí, and during his period of training at the Depot turned out as a member of the grand old Dublin club, the Geraldines—as Garda had no senior team in the Metropolitan championships of the time. Before the season was out, Mick's prowess on football fields was a by-word and it was no surprise to see him selected to play for Dublin, with whom he lined out for the remainder of the year.

Early the following season Mick was transferred to County Roscommon, where he quickly joined the famous Tarmons Club, then well filling its role as one of the leading units of the Association in the great sheep raising county beside the Shannon. The Glin lad figured prominently on all Roscommon teams from 1947 to 1950, while he was also an outstanding member of the Connacht Railway Cup sides during the same years. He helped Roscommon win

the Western championship in 1947, but they were beaten in the semi-final by Cavan, who later played Kerry in the Polo Grounds, New York, for the Blue Riband, and secured a resounding victory.

IN THE U.S.A.

Towards the end of 1950 Mick left for Pittsburgh, U.S.A., where to this day he is still playing fine football, even if passed his best.

Prior to his departure for America the Gaels of Roscommon showed their appreciation of his services by making him a valuable presentation at a reception held in his honour. Dr. Hugh Gibbon, Chairman of the Roscommon County Board, who presided on that occasion, said that if Mick got on as well in the States as he did with the people of Roscommon there was a bright future in store for him: Dr. Donal Keenan, the captain, also paid tribute to his prowess and wished him well in the land of his adoption. He said that the departure of such a fine footballer was a severe blow to Roscommon football.

Mick was not long in America before making his mark and he played full forward on the New York side that lost to Meath at the Polo Grounds in the 1951 National Football League final. He also figured prominently on the New York selection the following season.

The year 1953 was another red letter one for him, when he captained the mid-west team which won the American championship. He still skippers this side.

RECENTLY QUALIFIED AS

A DENTIST

Since arriving in the States, Mick has also been very successful in his studies and recently qualified as a dentist.

He is a splendid fielder and long accurate kicker, and has played in many positions both in attack and defence, but is more at home at mid-field or full forward. He stands six feet two inches in height and weighs close on fifteen stone.

The esteem and affection he has already won in America is best illustrated by the fact that last year the Gaels of that great country elected him President of the National Council of the G.A.A. in America—a truly big honour for one of Limerick's greatest footballers.