

Expectations raised by Fleming's return

CURRENTLY riding the crest of the wave, Wexford handball received yet another fabulous boost this week with the news of the imminent return to the game of one of the county's all-time best players, John Fleming, formerly of Ballyanne.

Off the courts since his 'retirement' in 1997, and residing and working in Kildare, for several years prior to that, the talented Fleming is now returning to his native county and following his transfer to Tem-

pleudigan at last week's County Convention, plans to relaunch his inter-county career by taking part in this year's Leinster 40 x 20 Masters (40+) 'A' doubles championship. This sees him again join forces with regular partner Pat Cleary and truly this duo have a quite formidable record of championship successes going right back to 1975 when they won the Talteann Games All-Ireland under 16 doubles title.

Fleming's achievements in partic-

ular have been especially noteworthy and amongst his greatest victories have been the winning of the World Over 35 doubles (with John Rossiter, Carlow) in 1987, and the three-in-a-row All-Ireland 40 x 20 senior doubles championships with Cleary back in 1982, 83 and 84. The latter year also saw him do the 'double' in softball with wins in junior singles and doubles and before that, in 1981 he took the 40 x 20 junior singles and doubles

championships — in very impressive style. In 1980 Fleming dominated the 40 x 20 under 21 grade winning both singles and doubles, again with Cleary as partner and in all the 40 x 20 competitions those victories represented a first for Wexford handball in that particular code.

As might be expected during most of the aforementioned period, Fleming and Cleary totally dominated the county scene also at one point win-

ning seven senior doubles championships in succession.

Encouraged out of his self imposed 'exile' by the raised profile of handball and the call of his partner, Fleming is back in serious training and this represents bad news for all those harbouring aspirations in the current provincial Masters championships. It will be 'just like old times' when they take on Kildare, probably at Garryhill on Wednesday, February 16.

Wexford still in the running for 18 titles

ALTHOUGH the massive Wexford challenge for Leinster handball honours continues to be reduced week by week, the Model County still retains an interest in 18 of the 21 championships in which we had an entry.

This fantastic record which is unmatched by any other county in the province has seen Wexford players qualify for the later stages of almost all the grades and this unprecedented success has given rise to higher expectations for many of those involved.

The past week brought its share of successes but there were disappointments too and chief amongst those was the senior singles quarter final defeat of Tommy Hynes to one of the championship favourites, Walter O'Connor, Meath.

No such difficulties for Anthony Greene in Junior Singles against Greg Ryan, Dublin at Coolboy as he fairly shattered the metropolitan in winning the first game 21-2 and then withstood a partial challenge in the second on his way to a 21-15 victory.

The Terry Gainfort

success story continues to make good reading and he has qualified for the semi-final of both singles and doubles in this years minor championship following two excellent wins in the past seven days. Gainfort travelled a rather long route to Muckalee on Wednesday night but once on court against Damian Kelly, Kilkenny he took the quickest route to victory on a 21-4, 21-17 scoreline and then on Saturday at O'Loughlins he partnered Jimmy 'Chop' Goggins to a 21-12, 21-16 win over Damian and Shem Kelly in the doubles.

Wexford will supply three of the last eight in Junior 'B' singles as a result of another outstanding week in this grade. Paul Carty again looked the part as he defeated top Wicklow player Pat O'Donnell 21-14, 21-12 at Garryhill where Mick Armstrong was equally impressive in disposing of the challenge of Canice Pratt, Kilkenny 21-7, 21-15. Pechelli English who in 1999 won the 60 x 30 equivalent in Leinster kept his campaign on track with a comfort-

able 21-9, 21-15 victory over Des Willoughby, Wicklow but James Freeman went out 21-11, 21-15 to Michael Maher, Kilkenny.

Mick Rossiter's hopes of finally getting his hands on that elusive All Ireland Masters 'B' singles medal suffered a setback in his home court of Bree on Saturday evening as he went down to a disappointing defeat to arch rival John Ward, Dublin. Rossiter was below his best in going down 21-14, 21-16. Wexford's other representative in this grade, Richie Culleton finally met his match after a great run of successes and exited 21-5, 21-6 to Francis Carroll, Meath.

Borris on Saturday evening was a happy hunting ground for both Martin Buggy and Tony Breen as each recorded victories in their respective grades. Buggy, in Emerald Masters 'A' was too good for Pick Doyle, Wicklow and duly won by 21-16, 21-9 while Breen finished both games strongly against Sean Ryan, Carlow to record a 21-8, 21-9 win in Silver Master A Singles.

WEXFORD'S CO. HANDBALL EXECUTIVE



■ The newly elected Co. Handball Executive pictured after their annual Convention on Monday night last. Front Row - Tom Rossiter, treasurer, Tony Breen, chairman, and Jim Mackey, secretary. Back Row - John O'Rourke, Jimmy King, president, Gavin Buggy, Nick Colfer, vice-chairman, and Seamus Buggy.

Senior A players to be given an official ranking

ALL SENIOR players competing in senior 'A' competitions within Wexford are to have an official ranking as a result of a revolutionary proposal submitted by Templeudigan at last Monday night County Handball Convention which was held in 'The Tavern' Enniscorthy.

CO. HANDBALL CONVENTION

The successful motion which was proposed by Templeudigan delegate Michael Boland paves the way for seeding in championships and leagues and seems certain to add extra significance to matches in those competitions from the beginning of the 60 x 30 season onwards, when points will be awarded for the first time.

The motion was one of twelve on the Clár which was debated by the largest number of delegates and clubs ever to attend convention, with only the absence of Oulart preventing a 100% turnout of affiliated clubs.

Others successful motions carried were (A) That the Novice 'B' team of four league be re-introduced (B) That the over 35 Championship be confined to non senior 'A' players and (D) That Novice 'A', 'B' and

'C' be renamed Junior 'B', 'C' and 'D'.

Outgoing Chairman Tony Breen, who was re-elected unopposed for a third term, spoke of the many successes enjoyed during the past twelve months. National titles at Juvenile boys and girls level were matched by significant achievements in the adult grades and taken together added up to a tremendous year for Wexford handball.

The Chairman also spoke of the many improvements carried out at administrative level by county board and club and said that for the most part, the sport is better organised now than it has ever been. That said however a small number of clubs were still not properly constituted and that was a situation that must be rectified immediately. I believe he said that 'our successes on court can be attributed in no small way to the work we do in promoting and organising the game off court and this work must continue.'

He paid tribute to long-time sponsors Wexford Farmers Co-op and Wexford Creamery and newcomers to the sponsorship team, Michael Murphy & Co Ltd. and P. English Carpets. He made special mention of the good rela-

tionship between the Handball Board and the County GAA Board and he said 'the financial assistance and indeed general support of our parent body is a tremendous source of constant encouragement to us.'

Long time Secretary Jim Mackey who indicated that this was going to be his last year in the position was returned again for a 13th time, having once again presented a comprehensive report under many different headings, of the year's activities.

Also returned unopposed was outgoing Treasurer Tom Rossiter who accepted office for a seventh year with a warning that expenditure was rising and additional sources of income would have to be explored. The Treasurers report had showed a big increase in outlay during 1999 with expenditure exceeding income by £1,063.

The expected contest for the Vice Chairman did not materialise with the withdrawal of Seamus Buggy, St. Josephs and John O'Rourke, Ballyhogue and this meant outgoing Nick O'Callaghan was returned again for a third term.

The full list of those elected at convention were; President, Jimmy

King; Chairman, Tony Breen; Vice Chairman, Nick O'Callaghan; Secretary, Jim Mackey; Asst. Secretary, Tony Breen; Treasurer, Tom Rossiter; Development Officer, Juvenile Committee Appointee; Registrar, Tom Rossiter; Sponsorship Officer, Tony Breen; PRO, Tony Breen; Juvenile Committee Chairman, Patsy Murray; Juvenile Committee Vice Chairman, Not filled; Juvenile Committee Secretary, Brian Murphy; Delegates to Leinster Convention, Jim Mackey, A.N. Other.; Delegates to Leinster Council, Seamus Buggy, Tom Rossiter; Delegates to Congress, Tony Breen, Jim Mackey; Delegate to GAA Board, Patsy Murray; Activities Committee, Tony Breen, Jim Mackey, Tom Rossiter, Seamus Buggy, Gavin Buggy, Nick O'Callaghan and John O'Rourke.

Two transfers John Fleming, Ballyanne to Templeudigan and Gerry O'Gorman, Cloughbawn to Templeudigan were agreed while three applications for re-grading from Senior 'B' to Junior 60 x 30, from Frankie Hillis and George Donovan (Barn-town) and Phillip Barnwell (Ballymitty) were approved.

Ballyhogue boys do double

BALLYHOGUE Handball Club were celebrating a famous double at the county 40 x 20 juvenile singles finals, played at Davidstown on Thursday night last. The good work being done by underage mentors at the club was rewarded with success at under 13 and under 14, through the progressive Niall Maher and Brian Nugent, respectively.

Maher showed tremendous battling qualities in a tough encounter with Mikie Berry, St. Mary's before prevailing 15-12, 6-15, 15-9. While Nugent also displayed plenty of 'bottle' in just edging out Mark Mythen, Castlebridge on a scoreline of 15-12, 15-14.

The night began with a cracking contest at under 10 where Mikie Murphy, Taghmon got the better of Jimmy Goggins, New Ross, 11-7, 9-11, 11-8 in a match which could have gone either way.

Liam Maher, Ballyhogue made a

valiant attempt to make it three wins for his club and two for his family when he came up against Paddy Murphy, Castlebridge in the under 15 final, but having lost the first by a narrow 21-19, he folded in the second and Murphy coasted home by 21-8. Templeudigan made it four clubs in the winners enclosure when Richard Flynn proved too good for Jason Kavanagh, Coolgreany in the under 16 decider and he was a deserving winner by 21-14, 21-12.

The remaining finals will take place at Davidstown tomorrow night, Thursday, beginning at 7 p.m.

The following teams have been selected for the forthcoming Leinster championships - under-13: N. Maher, M. Berry, A.N. Other; under-14: A. Griffith, B. Nugent, M. Mythen; under-15: P. Murphy, L. Maher, T. Moore; under-16: E. Walsh, R. Flynn, J. Kavanagh; under-17: M. Cash, L. Goff, C. Smith.