

WFC singles championship

Burke pulls quarter-final spot out of fire

SPURRED on by a desire to be involved in the knockout stages of the WFC Senior 'A' Singles championship, and in need of the points to bring that about, former All Ireland senior champion Billy Bourke, Kilmishall produced two outstanding displays last week which duly secured him a place in the quarter finals.

HANDBALL 1

Kilkenny born Bourke who has a multitude of national titles to his credit, has picked up only three out of a possible six points thus far following defeat against Gavin Buggy, St Marys, and less than impressive three set victory over Anthony Greene, Ballyhogue, but he responded to the challenge in great style with hard earned wins over Templeudigan duo Tony Breen and Pat Cleary.

Against Breen, Bourke relied to a great extent on his tremendous service which saw him home in a tight finish after a great match went the full distance on a 21-13, 16-21, 21-20 scoreline, and he followed up with a somewhat easier 16-21, 21-5, 21-9 win over Cleary, a result which put the former champion out of this year's competition.

Meanwhile, Breen bounced back from that defeat by producing his best performance to date in defeating Anthony Greene, 21-6, 21-3 and the result of his final match with Gavin Buggy will decide who goes directly into the semi finals.

Another needing to raise his game to ensure qualification was Raymond Breen, Templeudigan who went into the week knowing that nothing less than straight sets wins over Colin Keeling, St. Mary's and James Doyle, Davidstown would see him through.

This he achieved in fine style, first defeating Keeling 21-18, 21-9 and following up with an equally impressive 21-19, 21-15 victory over Doyle. Keeling kept himself in contention by beating Padraig McCann, Templeudigan 21-7, 21-17 and his final outing against Doyle will decide that last qualifying spot.

The Doyle brothers Benny and Jim from Ramsgrange confirmed their semi final qualification in Senior 'B' doubles by defeating James Bergin and David Murphy, St. Martin's 21-12, 21-11, while also safely there are John O'Rourke and Mick Royster, Ballyhogue as a result of a walkover from

Pachelli English and Paul Kavanagh, Davidstown.

In junior singles there was a good victory for Mick Armstrong, Kilmishall over James Freeman, Davidstown and Willie Kinsella. Horeswood returned to winning ways at the expense of James Greene, Ballyhogue.

The battling Flood Brothers Sean and Gary from Cloughbawn progressed in Novice 'A' doubles following a tremendous duel with Frankie Hillis and Trevor Donovan, Barntown and in the 'B' equivalent Coolgreaney pairing Damian Kelly and Mark Halpin ended the hopes to Kevin Doyle and Tony O'Neill, Davidstown.

Two players who hope to figure when the medals are handed out in Novice 'C' singles, Nicky Curran, St. Martin's and Joe Kearns, St. Joseph's kept themselves very much in the limelight with impressive victories over Francis Maddock and Niall Leacy respectively, both from Taghmon and in Masters 'B' singles Jim Bergin, St. Martin's, Jim Cullen, Ramsgrange and Ballyhogue stalwarts George Murphy and Billy Royster all qualified for the next round.

Wexford players progress in various national competitions

GAVIN BUGGY and Colin Keeling, Wexford's big hope in this year's All-Ireland intermediate doubles championship, removed a major obstacle from their path when they defeated David King and John Ryan, Carlow 21-12, 10-21 21-9 at Garryhill on Sunday evening last.

HANDBALL 3

In a match which would have done justice to any national final the Wexford boys produced a performance right from the top drawer which if maintained will surely see them make a very bold bid for outright success.

Elsewhere in Leinster, Anthony Greene opened his novice singles campaign in fine style with a comfortable 21-11, 21-12 win against Pat O'Carroll, Kildare at Garryhill, but brother James was somewhat unlucky to go out to the 1998 All Ireland 60 x 30 novice champion, Eddie Burke, Kilkenny on a 21-11, 21-19 scoreline.

At Borris Paul Carty flirted with danger against Frank Minogue, Kilkenny before getting home 21-8, 21-20.

The first of this year's All-Ireland semi finals take place this coming weekend at Bree where Wexford players will play host to Ulster opposition in two grades.

The 6.30pm programme will get underway with a Diamond Masters 'B' singles tie between Kilkenny and the as yet unnamed Ulster champion, but the real action as far as the home supporters are concerned will commence with the Golden(50 and over) Masters 'A' clash of Jim Doyle and Greg Sheridan, Cavan.

This has all the makings of a thriller with perhaps the extra mobility of the Wexfordman being the vital element in deciding the outcome.

The Masters 'A' (40 and over) meeting of Tony Breen and Billy Silcox, Antrim will see the St. Paul's (Belfast) man start strong favourite based on his achievements in this small court over many years and also because when the two met in last year's nationals Silcox was an easy winner.

Breen, however, was recovering from illness then and now playing his best ever handball, will be ready for the fight.

HANDBALL HEROES



Some of the most famous names in Wexford handball were present in Croke Park on Wednesday last for the celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Irish Handball Council. Front Row - Dick Lyng, senior singles champion 1965, '71 and '78), John Ryan who dominated the sport throughout the 1950's and was senior singles champion in 1952, 54, 55, 56 and 57, and Pat Murphy, who was senior singles champion in 1972. Back Row - Seamus Buggy, senior doubles champion 1970, 77 and 79, Pat Cleary senior doubles champion 1962, 83 and 84, Jimmy Goggins, senior doubles champion 1962 and John Fleming, senior dubbles champion 1962, 83 and 84.

Leinster draws do locals no favours

WEXFORD players are in action to-night Wednesday at seven venues throughout Leinster as the Provincial Championships continue across the grades.

HANDBALL 2

All of our strong intermediate challengers face extremely tough openers with Colin Keeling faced by Eoin Kennedy, Dublin, at Tinryland, undoubtedly drawing the shortest straw.

Two others, Raymond Breen and James Doyle, will do well to emerge from O'Loughlins with anything having drawn Carlow opposition, David King and John Ryan respectively, but Gavin Buggy, who goes into action at Garryhill tomorrow night, Thursday, looks set for victory against the unpredictable Martin Lawlor.

Malachy Whelan and Padraig McMahon represents our interests in the U.21 doubles at Borris, where they should advance at the expense of David Love and partner, and also on that programme Pachelli English and Paul Kavanagh should make it a good night for Wexford when they take on John

O'Keefe and Jim Holden, Kilkenny in novice doubles.

A three match programme at Garryhill opens with minor doubles and Noel Holohan and Brendan O'Toole will hope to see off the challenge of Sean Fallon and David McCarthy, Kildare, but Terry Gainfort and David Walsh face a tough baptism against Michael Grehan and Sammy Willoughby, Wicklow.

In novice doubles our strongest pairing Anthony and James Greene would need to thread warily against Des and Richard Willoughby, Wicklow but will be expected to prevail.

Other novice pairings doing duty to-night are Sean Nolan and Mick Armstrong, from Kilmishall, who should have little difficulty in beating Donal O'Leary and Michael McDonald, Wicklow, at Coolboy and at the same venue James Breen and Nicky Dempsey should be well capable of making it a Wexford double over the Garden County when they play Niall O'Brien and Frank Semple at Davidstown though Paul Carthy and Michael Buggy will have their hands full with yet another Wicklow pairing, Pat O'Donnell and Eamonn Rice.

Wickham beaten in Oslo

LIGHTWELTERWEIGHT Mark Wickham returned home from Oslo without a medal after boxing at an international tournament in the Norwegian capital.

BOXING

The Irish senior champion encountered lanky Austrian Adrain Suteau, who is rated in the European top ten, and came out of the ring on the wrong end of a 11-9 scoreline.

'It was a bad night,' admitted the St. Anthony's/St. Patrick's fighter after returning home on Monday.

'Still, maybe it was better to have this happen in Oslo than at home in the national championships in four weeks time. There is not a mark on me.'

Wickham has reduced his work commitments to three days a week to help him devote more time to training. And his mentors believe that his lack of ring sharpness at the weekend was due more to over-training than to any fundamental loss of form.

The six strong Irish team was accompanied by Enniscorthy manager/coach Bernard Dunne, bringing back one gold and one silver.



Mark Wickham

Wexford Walking club news

WALK leader Eamonn Muldowney and five others from the local walking club headed for the wilds of Connemara for the purpose of doing some walking in the wonderful Twelve Pins range.

The group set out on Saturday morning from the overnight base in Clifden to tackle the Benlettery Horse Shoe which takes in eight of the Twelve pins.

However, the very wet conditions and poor visibility meant that the planned route had to be trimmed.

The group therefore confined itself to the area around Bencorrbeg and Bencorr. Approximate duration 5 1/2 hours.

On Sunday, with conditions a good deal improved - no rain and improved visibility up to a point - the walkers decided to tackle the highest peak in the range, Benbaun.

The chosen route was up by the Kylemore river, up along the side of Log an Tairbh to the col between it and Benbaun and up to the summit.

The descent was down along the Knockpaeemore spur to Loughaun and straight down into the valley to the Kylemore river again along one of the feeder rivers. Duration: 4 hours.

Next weekend away is on 12-14th when Collette Mahon leads a group to the Mourne mountains. There is lots of interest to date. For details phone Collette on 053 40065.