

Keane is happy to still be involved

REACTION

■ Mark Woods

ST FINBARR'S manager, Ray Keane, was relieved and thrilled to have reached a county semi-final for the first time in seven years.

His charges surged eight points clear with 11 minutes' regulation time remaining, and with another four for injuries, but were sweating for the final whistle.

"We're delighted to be just still alive in the competition. The margin was three points, in the end, and we made hard work of it.

"But you're going to have that in games, because you will never dominate for a long period, though we have a tendency not to make it easy for ourselves. Teams are going to have 10 minutes here, 10 minutes there, and vice-versa.

"You just have to weather it, when the other team are on top. We did it, thankfully," he said.

The 'Barr's spies head to Dunmanway tonight to see whether the holders, Carbery Rangers, or Castlehaven, provide the opposition in the last-four, scheduled for tomorrow week at Pairc Uí Rinn.

"This time last year, we were finished playing football, so we're progressing nicely. That's all I'll say.

"Football is a game of small margins. In the first-half, we defended well, but Ballincollig missed a number of scoreable chances, especially coming up to half-time, which would have given us a different picture. These small things matter, big time. Our first couple of points came from their 'keeper getting a hand to them, but wasn't able to stop them from going over.

"Then, they dropped a couple into our 'keeper and there's literally only a foot of a difference between any of them. Tonight, we had the small margins on our side."

The 'Barr's exacted sweet revenge, having lost to Ballincollig by 13 points in a first-round game in May.

"That was months ago and we're a totally different team, now, to what we were back then. That happens. Momentum gives you that and we'll look forward to the next day," Keane added.

A disappointed Ballincollig coach, Tom Dorgan, said it was a tale of two halves. "In the first, we couldn't get to the pitch of the game at all, because the 'Barr's came quickly out of the blocks. They were aggressive in the tackle, but fair, I must add, and they picked up all the breaks," he said.

Trailing by six points at the break, Ballincollig tried manfully to turn it around. "I couldn't have asked more of them, because they were outstanding and managed to bring it down to a goal.

"But, the 'Barr's got their goal at the right time during the second-half and you have to say the better team won".

Barrs into first semi since 2010



SFC

Mark Woods

St Finbarr's	1-12
Ballincollig	0-12

ST FINBARR'S withstood a fierce late rally to book their first county senior football championship semi-final date since 2010 following a deserved win over Ballincollig at Pairc Uí Rinn last evening.

The Togher club swept 1-12 to 0-7 in front following a sixth point from the outstanding Stephen Sherlock after 49 minutes and seemed set to reach the last-four with the minimum of fuss.

But, the 2014 champions never gave up the chase and grabbed the closing five points, including Cian Dorgan's seventh, four minutes into added time, only for the clock to catch up with them.

There was no disputing the better side won and this was due in the main to holding Ballincollig scoreless for some 28 minutes either side of the interval.

The Barrs dominated the middle third where captain Ian Maguire and Eoin Comyns dictated and they hustled Ballincollig into conceding a number of important turn-overs with controlled aggression in the tackle.

Ballincollig didn't help their cause by dropping balls short into keeper Declan Murphy and shooting five wides into the bargain.

The Barrs fell behind to a Dorgan free after nine minutes, 0-3 to 0-2, but they shut out Ballincollig for the remainder of the half and added seven points, themselves.

Goal chances were rare enough. Sherlock shot across the face of the Ballincollig target and wide in the 18th minute with his side 0-6 to 0-3 clear.

Ballincollig's only opportunity arrived eight minutes later following a move instigated by Cian Kiely, whose pass sent John Miskella clear, but his off-load, under pressure, intended for Pa Kelly, was intercepted by an alert Alan McCarthy.

Moments later, the Barrs attacked at the other end and Sherlock pointed a monster free from all of 55m to stretch their advantage to four points.

Despite losing wing-back Colin Lyons to injury, the Barrs continued to press and fine points from Cillian Myers-Murray and Denis O'Brien left them in a commanding position at the break, 0-9 to 0-3 in front.

Tactically, they got their match-ups spot-on. Sam Ryan picked up Dorgan, Alan McCarthy was on Kelly and Glenn O'Connor on Miskella. All three did what was required.

Ballincollig, the 2014 champions, by comparison, struggled to contain the Barrs inside line, where Noel Galvin marked Sherlock and Shane Murphy was summoned to keep tabs on Myers-Murray, still a minor.

Losing the middle third, clearly, put even more pressure on the Ballincollig defence, who were given little respite in that critical third quarter, es-



Ian Maguire, St Finbarr's, in action against Stephen Coughlan, Ballincollig, in the Cork County Senior Football Championship quarter final at Pairc Uí Rinn last night.

Pic: Larry Cummins

pecially.

The anticipated response duly came on the resumption as Ballincollig shoved Ian Coughlan as a target-man in front of the posts and three Dorgan points, two from frees and his first from play in the 36th minute, narrowed the gap.

The slippery conditions denied Cian Kiely, who lost control of the ball when speeding through close to the 'Barr's goal, and it was evident the Togher club needed a score to settle.

It duly came from the experienced Robert O'Mahony in the 42nd minute, followed a couple of minutes later by a fine Myers-Murray score, his third of the night.

And when they conjured up the only goal at the end of the third quarter-final, the Barrs were on their way to becoming the first side to reach the semi-finals.

It was a brilliant goal, magnificently created by the slick-moving Enda Dennehy, who showed great control and patience to break into space before finishing with a stunning effort high into the net.

Ballincollig, though, kept battling. McCarthy foiled Dorgan and Glenn O'Connor deflected Murphy's effort away before the late surge.

Scorers for St Finbarr's: S Sherlock 0-6, 3f, E Dennehy 1-0, C Myers-Murray 0-3, D O'Brien 0-2, R O'Mahony 0-1

Scorers for Ballincollig: C Dorgan 0-7, 4f, 1'45, S Kiely, C Kiely, C O'Sullivan, J Miskella 0-1 each, I Coughlan 0-1f

ST FINBARR'S: D Murphy; G O'Connor, S Ryan, D Quinn, C Lyons, A McCarthy, J Burns; I Maguire, captain, E Comyns; D O'Brien, M Shields, E Dennehy; C Myers-Murray, R O'Mahony, S Sherlock.

Subs: A O'Connor for Lyons injured 29, R Leahy for Myers-Murray injured 50, C Keane for O'Brien 52, P Kennedy for O'Connor 60+3

BALLINCOLLIG: J Gibbons; S Murphy, N Galvin, E Hegarty; C Moore, L Jennings, C Kiely; S Kiely, C O'Sullivan; S Coughlan, P Kelly, G Durrant; K Browne, C Dorgan, J Miskella.

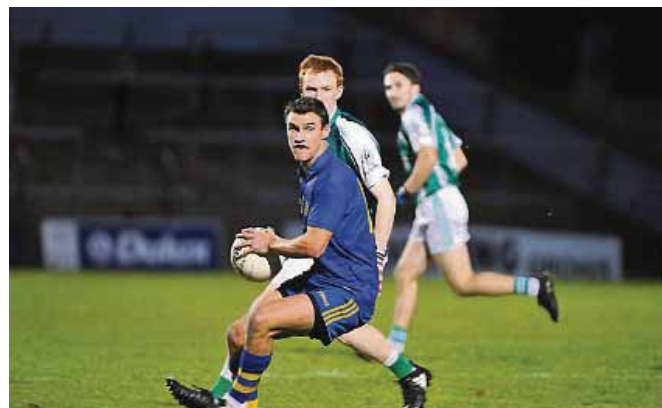
Subs: I Coughlan for Browne half-time, L Fahy for Durrant 52, K Crowley for Moore 59

Referee: A Long (Argideen Rangers)



Midfielder Sean Kiely, Ballincollig looks to keep possession from defender Jamie Burns, St Finbarr's at Pairc Uí Rinn.

Pic: Larry Cummins



Enda Dennehy, St Finbarr's in action against Ballincollig in the Cork County Senior Football Championship quarter final; St Finbarr's vs Ballincollig at Pairc Uí Rinn.

Pic: Larry Cummins