

## **Urlingford vs Kilkenny CBS – Roinn C league semi final**

Urlingford NS secured their place in the Roinn C League Final after a hard-fought 1-11 to 0-9 victory over Kilkenny CBS in a thrilling semi-final played in Freshford on a blustery afternoon. This was the second meeting between the sides this year, with Urlingford having edged a narrow victory in football earlier in the campaign. With a place in the county final at stake and a strong breeze blowing into the scoreboard end, all signs pointed towards another fiercely contested encounter. Urlingford made one change to the side that had impressed in previous rounds, with Aoibhinn Manton coming into the team for the injured Jayden Elfehli. Referee Stephen Delaney got proceedings underway, and Urlingford elected to play with the aid of the wind in the opening half.

From the throw-in, both teams showed tremendous determination. Crunching tackles, relentless work rate and constant encouragement from both sidelines created the atmosphere of a true championship battle. It was Urlingford who struck first through the lively Cian Doyle. Small in stature but huge in heart, Doyle gathered possession brilliantly before spinning and firing over his shoulder for a superb opening score. Paudie Power, once again entrusted with free-taking duties following his excellent display against Ballyhale, doubled the lead from a placed ball. CBS responded impressively through their influential midfielder Dylan, the driving force behind much of their play. He landed a point from play and followed it with an outstanding long-range free against the wind, underlining the threat he posed throughout.

The game's decisive moment arrived in the 12th minute. Dara Hickey burst forward from defence and delivered a precise ball into Paudie Power. Power cleverly broke possession into the path of Will Bergin, who reacted quickest and rifled a thunderous shot to the net, giving Urlingford a crucial cushion. Urlingford finished the half strongly, outscoring CBS by four points to two. Further scores from Power, two excellent efforts from the dangerous Conal Lyng and another from the ever-improving Eoin Gibbons helped establish a 1-6 to 0-4 lead at the interval.

Padraig Bourke excelled in a selfless man-marking role, sacrificing his own game for the team. His tigerish tackling and relentless work rate epitomised the spirit of this Urlingford side. Behind him, David Maev was outstanding, dominating the air with catches and powerful in tackles that drew comparisons to Cork legend Diarmuid "The Rock" O'Sullivan.

With the breeze at their backs, CBS threw everything at Urlingford after the restart. However, the Urlingford defence stood firm. Niall Rothwell and Robbie Quinlan gave their opponents no room to operate, while goalkeeper Alex Cashin's puck-outs proved invaluable. Oisín Sweetman continued to keep his marker under control, and Aoibhinn Manton impressed with a composed and energetic display at wing-back. A fine point from Paudie Power into the wind opened the second-half scoring, and although CBS battled bravely, Urlingford never relinquished control. Laura Minogue made a lively impact from the bench and was unlucky not to score a goal, only to be denied by a superb save from the CBS goalkeeper.

The closing stages saw Cashin land two remarkable long-range frees, while Power added another from a difficult angle. CBS added two late points, but Urlingford held firm to record a deserved five-point victory. At the final whistle, there were scenes of delight as Urlingford celebrated a place in yet another county final. They now look forward to the Tommy O'Brien Cup Final against Tullaroan and will also await the winners of Thomastown NS and St John's in another decider. For a group that endured the heartbreak of losing three finals last year, the opportunity to compete in two county finals in the coming weeks is richly deserved. The dream is very much alive, and this determined Urlingford side will be hoping to turn past disappointment into silverware.