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KILKENNY SET OUT ON HISTORIC TRAIL

Unbeaten in the Leinster GAA Hurling Championship since losing a semi-final to Wexford on 13 June 2004, Kilkenny set out in pursuit of their 6th successive provincial crown when they play Dublin in the semi-final in Croke Park on Sunday.

However, the wider interest centres on whether they can create history by becoming the first county to win a GAA Hurling All-Ireland Senior Championship title in five successive years.

They already made history by winning seven of the ten titles in the last decade but the five-in-a-row would surpass that and guarantee Kilkenny a unique place in GAA history. Dublin v Kilkenny opens the Croke Park double header bill on Sunday at 2pm, followed by the second semi-final between Galway and Offaly at 4pm.

It's also semi-final day in Munster when Cork take on Limerick at Páirc Uí Chaoimh at 4pm with the winners moving on to play Waterford in the final on July 11.

DUBLIN v KILKENNY

Kilkenny have remained unbeaten in championship competition since losing to Galway in the 2005 All-Ireland semi-final and, since then, they have won 18 successive Leinster and All-Ireland games.

They are bidding to reach the Leinster final for the 13th time in 14 fourteen seasons, having missed out in 2004 after losing to Wexford in the semi-final. Dublin are bidding to reach the final for a second successive year. They lost to Kilkenny in last year's final, 2-18 to 0-18.

The counties clashed in this year's Allianz GAA Hurling National League on 21 March last when Kilkenny won by 2-21 to 0-23. Kilkenny led by 2-9 to 0-12 at half-time and won the second half 0-12 to 0-11. Richie Power was Kilkenny's top scorer on 2-7 (0-5 frees) while Alan McCrabbe top-scored for Dublin 0-8 (0-7 frees).

Last Five Championship Clashes

2009: Kilkenny 2-18 Dublin 0-18 (Leinster final)
2004: Kilkenny 4-22 Dublin 0-8 (All-Ireland qualifiers)
2003: Kilkenny 3-16 Dublin 0-10 (Leinster semi-final)
2000: Kilkenny 3-16 Dublin 0-10 (Leinster semi-final)
1998: Kilkenny 4-23 Dublin 0-13 (Leinster quarter-final)

Story so far....

Kilkenny are having their first outing in the 2010 championship but Dublin already have a win behind them beating Laois by 0-25 to 0-16 in the quarter-

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final. Alan McCrabbe scored 0-5 for the winners while Liam Rushe and Shane Durkin each scored 0-4.

Flashback.....2009 Leinster final

Kilkenny...2-18

Dublin.....0-18

Kilkenny led by 1-10 to 0-7 at half-time but Dublin put in a spirited second half-performance to match the champions score for score. Martin Comerford was Kilkenny's main danger man, scoring 2-4 from play while Henry Shefflin scored 0-6 from frees. Alan McCrabbe scored 0-12 (0-8 frees and 0-1 from a lineball) for Dublin.

GALWAY v OFFALY

A first ever Leinster GAA Hurling Championship clash between the neighbours from across the Shannon as Galway seek to reach the final for the first time while Offaly are chasing a place in the final for the first time since 2004.

It will be the counties' first meeting in the championship since 1994 when Offaly won an All-Ireland semi-final clash. The sides first met in the championship in the 1980 All-Ireland semi-final and have had seven meetings since then with results standing at 4-3 to Offaly. They won in 1981-84-85-94 while Galway won in 1980-88-90.

The counties have clashed twice already this year, with Galway winning both games. They beat Offaly, 1-22 to 2-16 in the Walsh Cup in February and by 1-22 to 2-18 in the Allianz GAA Hurling National League Division I in March. Galway led by eight points at half-time in the League game and by nine points after 50 minutes but Offaly fought back to cut the deficit to four by the end.

Last Five Championship Clashes

1994: Offaly 2-13 Galway 1-10 (All-Ireland semi-final)

1990: Galway 1-16 Offaly 2-7 (All-Ireland semi-final)

1988: Galway 3-18 Offaly 3-11 (All-Ireland semi-final)

1985: Offaly 2-11 Galway 1-12 (All-Ireland final)

1984: Offaly 4-15 Galway 1-10 (All-Ireland semi-final)

Story so far....

Both have had one outing in this year's Leinster championship. Galway beat Wexford by 2-22 to 1-14 in the quarter-final in a game where Ger Farragher scored 0-13 for the winners. Offaly were taken to extra-time by Antrim before running out ten point winners, 3-26 to 3-16. Shane Dooley scored 1-12 for Offaly.

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CORK v LIMERICK

Cork are bidding to return to the Munster final for the first time since 2006 while Limerick's last appearance was in 2007. Cork won the 2006 final but Limerick lost to Waterford a year later.

Cork and Limerick clash in the championship for the first time since 2006 when Cork won an All-Ireland quarter-final by a point. Their last meeting in the Munster GAA Hurling Championship was in 2004 when Cork won a semi-final clash by three points. Cork have won their last three championship meetings with Limerick in 2006-2004-2002, leaving Limerick chasing their first win since 2001.

Cork and Limerick clashed in the Allianz GAA Hurling National League Division I last February with Cork winning by 2-21 to 1-14 in Limerick.

Last Five Championship Clashes

2006: Cork 0-19 Limerick 0-18 (All-Ireland quarter-final)

2004: Cork 1-18 Limerick 2-12 (Munster semi-final)

2002: Cork 1-16 Limerick 1-15 (All-Ireland qualifier)

2001: Limerick 1-16 Cork 1-15 (Munster quarter-final)

2000: Cork 2-17 Limerick 1-11 (Munster semi-final)

Story so far...

Limerick will be having their first outing in the championship but Cork have a most impressive win behind them, having beaten reigning Munster champions, Tipperary by 3-15 to 0-14 in the quarter final. Patrick Horgan (2-2), Ben O'Connor (0-5) and Aisake Ó hAilpín (1-1) were top scorers for the winners.

GAA HURLING ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP 2010

LEINSTER

May 22: First round: Laois 1-13 Carlow 0-10, Portlaoise.

May 29: Quarter-final: Galway 2-22 Wexford 1-14, Nowlan Park.

May 30: Quarter-final: Offaly 2-26 Antrim 3-16 (After extra-time), Parnell Park.

June 6: Quarter-final: Dublin 0-25 Laois 0-16, Nowlan Park.

Next Sunday: Semi-finals: Dublin v Kilkenny; Galway v Offaly, Croke Park.

July 4: Final, Croke Park

MUNSTER

May 30: First round: Cork 3-15 Tipperary 0-14, Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

June 7: Semi-final: Waterford 0-22 Clare 1-15, Thurles.

Next Sunday: Semi-final: Cork v Limerick, Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

July 11: Final: Waterford v Cork/Limerick.

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ULSTER

May 8: Monaghan 1-15 Fermanagh 2-10, Enniskillen; Armagh 3-23 Donegal 1-12, Letterkenny; Tyrone 6-24 Cavan 1-14, Omagh.

May 15: London 3-16 Monaghan 1-15, Casement Park; Armagh 3-20 Tyrone 2-9, Casement Park.

May 29: Quarter-finals: Down 4-24 Armagh 0-9, Casement Park; London 2-12 Derry 0-15, Casement Park.

June 13: Semi-final. Down v London – Not played

June 27: Final: Antrim v Down, Casement Park.

ALL-IRELAND CHAMPIONSHIP

June 26: All-Ireland qualifier – preliminary round: Carlow v Laois.

July 3: Qualifiers – Phase 1: Antrim v Laois/Carlow; Tipperary v Wexford.

July 10: Qualifiers – Phase 2: Beaten Leinster semi-finalists (Dublin or Kilkenny; Galway or Offaly) v Beaten Munster semi-finalists (Clare; Limerick or Cork).

July 17: Qualifiers – Phase 3; Winners of Phase 1 v Winners of Phase 2.

July 25: All-Ireland quarter-finals

August 8: Semi-final, Croke Park.

August 15: Semi-final, Croke Park.

September 5: Final, Croke Park.

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