

Kearney winner gives City-West the edge in dramatic Ted Webb U-16 derby

• Holders meet Mayo North-South in Friday's final

**Galway City-West 0-9
Galway North 0-8**

**By Billy Coss
At Connacht GAA Centre**

A LATE, late point from sub Sean Kearney proved the decisive score as Galway City-West pipped their Galway North counterparts in a well-contested Ted Webb U-16 Cup semi-final in Bekan on Saturday.

It's the second successive season that City-West have defeated North by a slender margin at the penultimate stage. Paul Kelly was the match-winner back then, snatching a dramatic injury-time goal on the way to winning the prestigious title.

When Caherlistrane's Jonathan McGrath set in train a move finished by Dunmore's Brendan Carr, Galway North were good value for an 0-8 to 0-6 lead with less than six minutes on the clock. Galway City-West, under

the management of Alan Glynn, Gáilín de Paor and John David Kearney, would finish stronger, however. Kearney emerged the hero, drawing the sides level with back-to-back frees and the Clonbur youngster then worked a pocket of space to kick the winner from the right corner.

Both teams had to plan without frontline players due to Sunday's All-Ireland minor final. Donie Halleran (Cortoon Shanrocks) and Niall Cunningham (St Gabriel's) were absent from the Galway North team; and Galway City-West were minus Daniel Cox (Moycullen), Cian Hannon (Barna) and Tomo Culhane (Clane, Kildare).

Scores were in scarce supply but it turned into an absorbing tussle nonetheless. The sides were deadlocked at 0-5 apiece at the end of the opening 20 minutes.

Galway North came closest to finding the net when the dangerous Shane McGrath struck the side-netting, but three points from Claregalway's Nathan Grainger, allied to efforts from Caltra's Alan Naughton and Mark Collieran from Tuam Stars, gave them

their first half tally.

Leitir Mór's Warren Seoiúghé kicked all but one of City-West's tally and Darragh Kennedy levelled matters on the stroke of half-time.

City-West's best goal chance fell to Kennedy after a dash upfield by his Clifden clubmate Rory King, but St Gabriel's keeper Patrick Downey comfortably dealt with the shot.

Galway North fell to a 13-point defeat to Mayo East-West earlier in the morning but were an altogether different proposition in this derby semi-final. James McGrath was their best player in that fixture and the full-forward put his side in front after winning a Grainger delivery.

Caherlistrane's Kyle O'Neill and Darragh McCabe of Caltra were among those standing out for the North selection, while Grainger (free) and Carr points sandwiched Seoiúghé's fifth of the day for City-West to leave two between them entering the closing stages.

Michael Breathnach's full-back Declan O'Loughlin, Ethan Fiorentini of St Michael's and Moycullen's James McLaughlin, a mem-

ber of the extended Galway minor panel, all came up with big plays late on for a fast-finishing City-West side. Twice Kearney punished Galway North indiscretions and drew the sides level with two minutes to go and then held his nerve to secure a slender victory for City-West and set up an opportunity to retain their crown against a strong Mayo North-South in Friday evening's Cup final (throw-in: 8.15pm).

Galway North, managed by Tom Hughes, Mike Malone and John Hegarty, must regroup to take Mayo East-West in the Shield decider on Friday evening (7pm). Both matches will be played at the Connacht GAA Centre.

* The Ted Webb U-16 competition has been played in Connacht since 1976 in memory of the former Ballyhauns and Mayo footballer who tragically lost his life in a car accident. Seven teams representing the five Connacht counties take part. Galway are divided into City-West and North, Mayo are split into East-West and North-South, while full county teams of Roscommon, Sligo and Leitrim also compete.

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GALWAY minor panellist James McLaughlin helped Galway City-West to a narrow victory over Galway North in the Ted Webb U-16 Cup semi-final.

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GALWAY CITY-WEST: P.J. Ward (St Michaels); N. Molloy (Clifden), D. O'Loughlin (Michael Breathnach), I. Casserly (St James'), E. Fiorentini (St Michaels), A. Flynn (St Michaels), R. King (Clifden); J. McLaughlin (Moycullen); E. Nolan (Salthill-Knocknacarra); P. Keane (Clonbur); W. Seoiúghé (0-5, 0-4 frees, Naomh Anna, Leitir Mór); E. Finneerty (St James'); J. Webb (Oughterard); D. Kennedy (0-1, Clifden); D. McNulty (St James'); Subs used: S. Kearney (0-3, 0-2 frees, Clonbur); D. Cummins (Barna).

GALWAY NORTH: P. Downey (St Gabriel's); K. O'Reilly (Monivea-Abbey); R. Burke (Annaghdown); C. Mitchell (Dunmore Machales); E. O'Rourke (St Gabriel's); J. McGrath (Caherlistrane); K. O'Neill (Caherlistrane); M. Collieran (0-1, free, Tuam Stars); L. Divilly (Northern Gaels); A. Naughton (0-1, Caltra); B. Carr (0-1, Dunmore Machales); D. McCabe (Caltra); N. Grainger (0-4, 0-1 free, Claregalway); S. McGrath (0-1, Dunmore Machales); M. Neary (Northern Gaels); Subs used: R. Duffy (Northern Gaels), S. Loughrey (Caltra).

REFEREE: Ronan Hynes (Sligo).