

King & Queen of the Roads

Part 5

Bill Daly had unfinished business with the King of the Roads festival, and he returned at the turn of the century to record a double that ensured his name entered the record books. Early championship elimination in 1999 did not deter him from putting a huge effort into that year's King qualifying tournament and he duly won it to ensure a semi-final spot on the festival weekend. Michael Toal was All-Ireland champion on the back of his victory over Seamus Sexton at Lyre in July and was fancied against Daly in the semi. Daly prevailed in a tense struggle while Sexton defeated reigning King, Kieran Gould, to set up an eagerly awaited decider. Playing in, Sexton missed a golden chance with his opening throw coming hind of Daly's very poor effort, but as they found form, the contest developed into an epic duel. Sexton's monstrous third last through the 'green' and down to 'Moore's gate seemed to have won it, but Daly beat a massive tip and went on to score a thrilling last shot win and claim his fourth King title. In contrast a new Queen was crowned. Carmel Ryan, also of Carrigtwohill, was enjoying a brilliant year winning the first of what would be many county senior championships and took her good form to Ballincurrig where she defeated the previous year's champion, Catriona O'Farrell, in a hard-fought encounter. O'Farrell had overcome All-Ireland champion for that year, Susan Cullen, Armagh, in Friday semi-final play-off. The 1999 festival also saw Carbery's All-Ireland intermediate champion, Jerry Hegarty, give a superb exhibition defeating Eddie Carr in a support score and there was victory too for the doubles partnership of Finbarr Fitzpatrick and Johnny O'Driscoll, veteran and U16 national champions respectively. Armagh's Harry Toal avenged a '98 defeat to Tony Carey. Brian O'Donovan with the youthful David O'Mahony, and Richard Murphy who combined with Darren Calnan both scored doubles victories. After

a splendid weekend's bowling, The Castlelyons Pipe Band who annually play the victors back to the presentation rostrum, were paid tribute to in Christy Santry's report as he states 'after fifteen years somehow the occasion wouldn't be quite the same without them. They add a unique sense of lustre and pageantry to the unrivalled Ballincurrag atmosphere'.

To the millennium year and another festival full of thrills and spills bringing forth champions of stature to mark a special hosting. Bill Daly retained his crown putting him on a pedestal that would be unmatched until the last running in 2019. Defeated in the county senior final of that year by Phillip O'Donovan he came reenergised to defeat All-Ireland champion, Michael Toal in a cracking semi-final after which he faced the capable Eamonn Bowen of Carrignavar who had defeated the fancied O'Donovan and new European champion, Dutchman, Mark Ude Luttikhuis, in the second semi. In the final, Bowen made a good match of it to the half-way point but Bill Daly 'bringing all his mastery in every skill in the game to bear on proceedings' won convincingly. The battle for the Queen crown was titanic. Gretta Cormican, unruffled and fiercely determined, captured the only honour that had evaded her in women's bowling. She was coasting nearly two bowls ahead of Catriona O'Farrell but had to withstand a ferocious fightback from the Carrigtwohill lady to claim a victory that 'led to scenes of ecstatic delirium rarely witnessed at the finish of any score'. In the bowling game we treasure our champions; Christy Santry pays tribute to the 2000 King and Queen champions. 'the weekend proved that Daly and Cormican are two of the finest exponents of the bowling game we have been privileged to see. Their record on the road speaks for itself, a record that has been truly established through that competitive streak that has seen them survive in the hottest of company and at times too in the most raucous and intimidating of circumstances. As bowlers go, they are two of West Cork's all-time greats and

nothing can ever take that from them'. Also, at the millennium festival, Armagh scored a succession of doubles wins in support scores through Martin Toal with Kieran Morgan, Conor McGuigan/Brian Kinchin and Paul Rafferty/Fergal Carr. East Corkmen, Ted O'Farrell and Paul O'Brien won for Cork.