**Under 17 Wicklow/Wexford League Final**

**Wexford CBS 2 – 2 St. Brendan’s Bray**

**(St. Brendan’s won 4-3 on penalties)**

**Heartbreak for Bokerboys in quest for historic treble**

It was a cruel end to a magnificent season for the Wexford CBS under 17 team in Arklow last Wednesday as the Bokerboys were defeated on penalties after an intense final vs St.Brendan’s Bray. Both sides lined up in a 4-3-3 formation and it was a typically cagey affair in the first half and the CBS started brightly with Liam Rockett almost giving the side the lead inside 5 minutes after a well worked move down the right hand side, Dion Murphy won possession in his own half and fed Adam Carroll who whipped in a cross which found Rockett at the edge of the box but his effort was blocked. Both sides were finding their feet early on and St.Brendans gained control of the ball in the middle and played in their central striker who was about to pull the trigger before being stopped by a fine sliding tackle from CBS captain Gary Cullen. Wexford were enjoying the better of the opening exchanges and took the lead after 11 minutes, Adam Carroll was wreaking havoc down the right hand side gaining possession on the half way line before playing a one-two with Lee Busher beating the left back and sending in a low driven cross finding Luke O’Neill at the far post who made no mistake with a cool finish to put the CBS 1-0 up. As the half wore on St.Brendans gradually began to exert pressure on the CBS but some outstanding defending particularly from the central defensive pairing of Gary Cullen and Ryan Byrne kept them at bay restricting them only to shots from distance which were comfortably dealt with by keeper Adam Dempsey. Ryan even put his head on the line as he took a boot to the face when heading clear a Bray attack, the Bray player responsible receiving a yellow card but a black eye for Ryan.  
Wexford raised their game at the beginning of the second half and doubled their lead within the first 5 minutes. Awarded a free kick on the edge of the box after the overzealous opposition keeper picked up the ball outside of his line, Ryan Byrne rolled the ball into the direction of Lee Busher who made a sweet connection with the outside of his right foot and the ball sailed into the top corner of the net. The game was ebbing and flowing and both sides were creating chances in an entertaining game of football of high quality. St.Brendans made use of their superior size physically as they pulled a goal back from a corner with 15 minutes remaining. Luke O’Neill almost found the perfect response minutes later as he fired an effort from the right hand side inches wide. St. Brendans were throwing everything forward at this stage and the CBS were giving all they had in defence to keep them at bay and hoping to catch them on the counter. The lively TJ Cousins up front was always looking dangerous and he almost put the game to rest with 3 minutes left on the clock beating two Bray defenders before lobbing the keeper thinking it was in and game over but was thwarted by a fantastic clearance from Bray’s centre-half who emerged from seemingly nowhere to hook it off the line. In a frantic last few minutes, Bray won quite a few corners and the CBS managed to clear the majority it was in the 4th minute of added time that Bray forced home an equaliser from yet another corner, much to the dismay of the CBS. Extra-time was played yet again end to end in this pulsating encounter Luke O’Neill almost put the CBS ahead again and Ryan Byrne made a goal-line clearance to maintain the status quo as the game headed to penalties. The result was 4-3 with the Bray keeper ultimately stepping up to take the winning kick. Heartbreak for the CBS who were outstanding on the day, either team would’ve been worthy champions. This is a young team however and with so many of the squad eligible at this age-group next season the CBS will take some stopping. A defeat on penalties in the end was all that separated the school from creating history in claiming the ‘treble’ of league championships but a lot to be proud of and to look forward to for next year. Next up the under 15 and senior sides will compete in the Leinster Champions league the seniors due to play Blackrock College early in March and the 15s will face opposition from Dundalk. Best on the day for the CBS from a brave team performance where each gave their best were keeper Adam Dempsey, Ryan Byrne at centre half, Lee Busher in midfield and captain Gary Cullen who lead this team brilliantly all season.

Wexford CBS: Adam Dempsey (Wexford Albion), Dion Murphy (Wexford Albion), Gary Cullen (North End) Ryan Byrne (Wexford Bohs), Ben Butler (Wexford Albion) , Lee Busher(Wexford Youths), Cormac Byrne(North End), Liam Rockett (Curracloe), Adam Carroll (Wexford Albion) T.J Cousins (Wexford Albion), Luke O’Neill (Wexford Albion), Subs: Jason Nolan (North End) for Rockett, Jamie Thomas (Wexford Albion) for Carroll, Sam O’Neill (Wexford Albion) for Cousins, Matthew Creane (Wexford Bohs) for Butler, also: Aaron McGuire (North End), Dylan O’Regan(Wexford Albion), Craig Kelly (Wexford Bohs), David Ngugi (Wexford Albion), Cathal Kirwan (Wexford Albion), Sean Hopkins (Wexford Bohs)

