Sunday’s Well 20, Clonmel 17.

There was plenty of drama and excitement at Irish Independent Park as Sunday’s Well welcome new boys to the AIL Clonmel. Both teams played at a high intensity in defence and attack; looking to play a great open game of rugby which contributed to a very entertaining affair. There was plenty of drama as Clonmel drew level from 17 points down but the Cork side lifted themselves in the final minutes; before Dylan Lacey slotted over the winning penalty with the first kick of the game.

The match saw four players making their home-debut in the AIL For the ‘Well. Graeme Lawlor joined the club from Cork Con’ in the close scene and was immense throughout with several strong surges. At full-back Billy Pope added a potent attacking threat from deep. John Gardiner had started up in Bangor as did Lacey; with Gardiner adding ballast to the pack while Lacey was pivotal in setting up a lot of strong attacks before winning the kicking score.
The ‘Well started the game on the front-foot. John Barry was noticeable not just due to his colourful scrum-cap. He was foraging around the field and regularly powered over the gain-line to set up a strong attacking platform. A great burst by his front-row partner Michael Moynihan almost saw the prop touch down as he was pulled down short. The ‘Well worked the ball through the phases and a switch by Peter Arigho to the blindside saw Shane Desmond perfectly time his pass for Evan O’Connell to touch down on quarter of an hour.
Clonmel gradually got more of the possession. The ‘Well’s intensity in tackling meant though that they rarely ventured inside the Twenty-Two. Having absorbed some pressure; albeit well outside the red-zone; the ‘Well went back on the offensive for the closing minutes. James Kiernan and Billy Pope ran the ball out from deep to set up the attacking opportunity.
Having established an attacking position; the forwards were taking the ball on with Lawlor and Desmond foraging forward. Pope then burst up to the Twenty-Two with Evan O’Connell making a surge for the line. Larlow approached the ruck and noticing space in front picked the ball up cleanly and ran straight through to give the ‘Well a 10-0 lead.

The ‘Well started the second-half in the same fashion as they finished the first. An excellent turn-over at the breakdown in the midfield allowed the ‘Well to counter. A kick into touch led to a line-out; with the competitive ‘Well jumpers applying pressure leading to a knock on. The ‘Well front-row put on a strong push and Shane Desmond then carried towards the line. He was stopped short but after a couple of phases Ian Murphy bulldozed over. Lacey added the extras to put the ‘Well 17-0 up and thoughts may have been on a bonus-point try at that stage
While the ‘Well had played good rugby; Clonmel certainly didn’t seem like a team that deserved to be blow away. They kept pressing and playing a good blend of rugby. Breaks would finally start going their way as they began to reel in the ‘Well.
A couple of penalties allowed them work their way up field and they secured a line-out inside the Twenty Two. The ball was then spread out to Luke Hogan whose power and jinking feet saw him evade three tacklers before squeezing his way over the line with Dylan Cadogan converting with half an hour remaining.
Clonmel were probably were beginning to dictate more of the pace of the game for the next Twenty-minutes but most of the game was played between both 22s. They regularly kicked deep with Pope and Kiernan usually running the ball back with interest. Eventually a penalty just inside the ‘Well’s ten metre line saw Cadogan make it a one score game with a long-distance penalty.
Clonmel’s tails were up and after a few phases they were able to spread the ball out to the right-wing. Alex Sheehan was tight to the touch-line but his speed and determination saw run forty metres for a try. Cadogan’s conversion levelled scores with four minutes remaining and all the momentum in Clonmel’s favour.

From the resulting kick-off; the ‘Well were able to regather composure. Lawlor regathered possession. The ‘Well didn’t panic and worked through the phases with several big carries bringing them inside the Twenty-Two. A penalty on the left-hand side was won but Lacey’s effort fell short. The drama wasn’t over as Clonmel knocked on as they aimed to gather the ball resulting in a five-metre scrum.
Having picked up an early knock; Michael Moynihan returned to the field and the ‘Well scrum was driving forward. Having won another penalty’ the ‘Well pressed for a try but fierce tackling kept them from earning maximum points. Eventually the referee Davison returned for the initial penalty; with Lacey keeping his cool to slot over the winning points.

Scorers: Sunday’s Well: E O’Connell, G Lawlor, I Murphy tries; D Lacey pen, con.
Clonmel: L Hogan, A Sheehan  tries; D Cadogan 2 pens, con.

Sunday’s Well: B Pope; G Downey, E Geary (c), R Buckley, J Kiernan; D Lacey, P Arigho; M Moynihan, J Barry, E O’Connell; J Barnes, J Gardiner; G Lawlor, C Jouve, S Desmond. Replacements: M Lawless, I Murphy, J Downey, C Kelliher, J Ruiz-Herrera.
Clonmel: A Sheehan; G Carroll, L Hogan, I Cunningham, A Daly; L Noonan, D Cadogan; N Campion, M Altamirano, D O’Gorman; R Cross, T Cantwell; J Corbett, C Burke, S Pyke. Replacements: B O’Kelly, P Ryan,  J Gallagher, K McDonald, D Cass.
Referee: K Davison (IRFU)