

Spartans weather Hurricanes' threat to lift title

Andrea Apostaie pitching for the Spartans and (below) completing the winning run despite the best efforts of the Hurricanes' Dan Barry

THE Spartans were crowned Irish Baseball League champions for the sixth year running after a thrilling 4-2 victory over long-time rivals the Hurricane's in the final at Corkagh Park on Saturday.

With both teams having registered a win in the opening two games of the play-off, it all came down to this third and decisive clash at the weekend.

Twice the Hurricane's edged in front only to be pegged back in the same innings by the defending champions who chalked up two crucial runs in the sixth to make it over the finish line.

Mike Johnson opened the scoring at the top of the third before Noel Mitchell responded for the Spartans at the bottom.

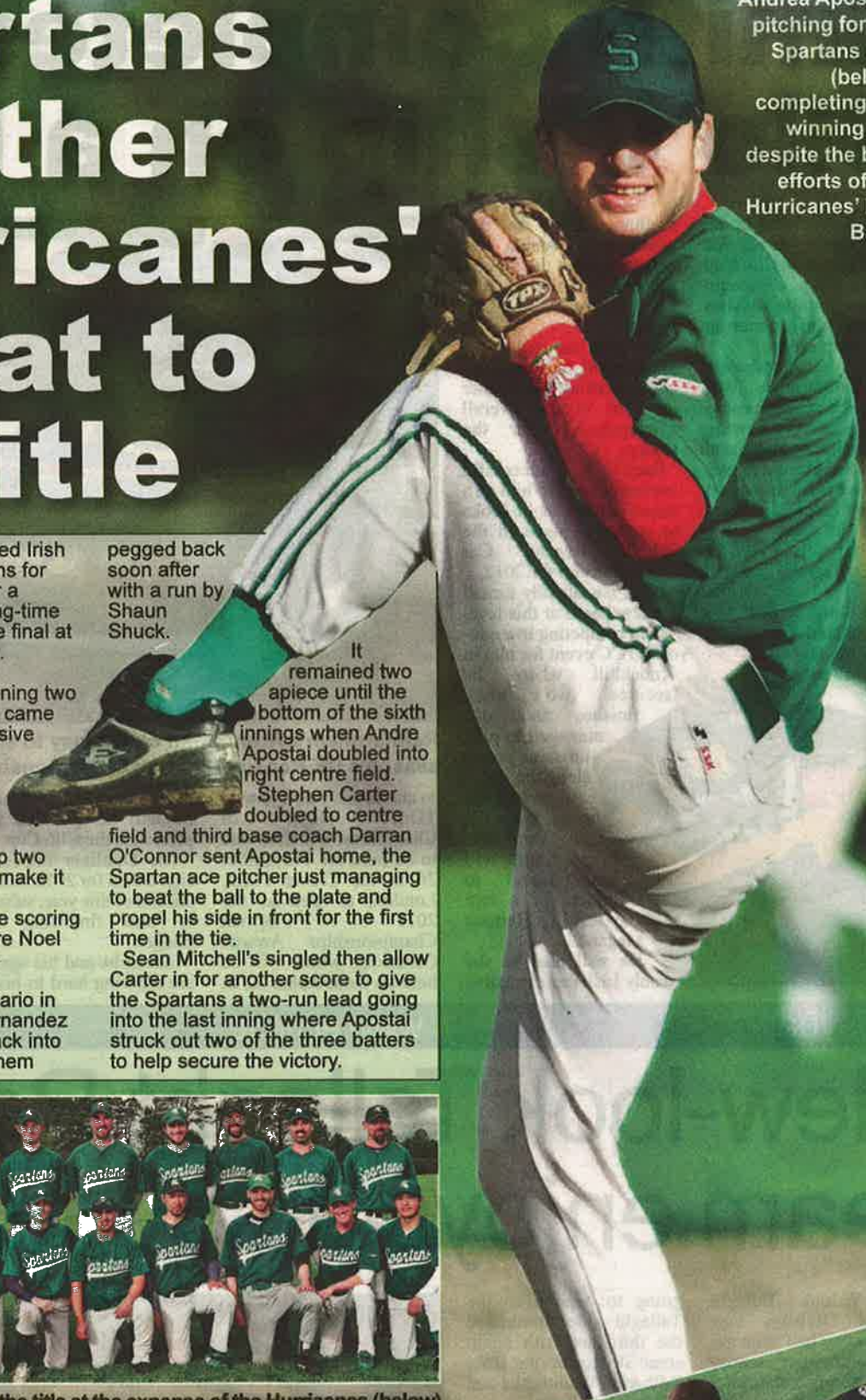
And it was a similar scenario in the fourth with Tommy Hernandez nudging the Hurricanes back into the driving seat only see them

pegged back soon after with a run by Shaun Shuck.

It remained two apiece until the bottom of the sixth innings when Andre Apostai doubled into right centre field.

Stephen Carter doubled to centre field and third base coach Darran O'Connor sent Apostai home, the Spartan ace pitcher just managing to beat the ball to the plate and propel his side in front for the first time in the tie.

Sean Mitchell's singled then allow Carter in for another score to give the Spartans a two-run lead going into the last inning where Apostai struck out two of the three batters to help secure the victory.



The Spartans (above) won the title at the expense of the Hurricanes (below)

