

Sligo Girls Retain National title

SLIGO Convent of Mercy retained the National Juvenile Champions' title when they won the Girls' Under-15 Invitation Tournament in Dublin last week-end while their All-Ireland finalists cadette team won a special competition involving the four semi-finalists from last year's tournament.

Heroine of the Convent squad was junior captain, Barbara KIELTY, who played in both tournaments and who inspired her team-mates with her consistently excellent performances which gave her a week-end score total of 90 points.

Sligo suffered a set-back in the juvenile tournament when they lost their first game to Killester "A" by 36-23 but they got back into the reckoning with a decisive 48-14 victory over Eccles St. They coasted through the semi-final by beating Killester "B" 33-17 but had to pull out all the stops to take the trophy from Killester "A".

Very tired

Both teams were very tired in the final and defence was the key factor. Sligo got off to a great start and led 9-1 but Killester fought back gamely to equalise at 11-11 and it was still level-pegging with the half-time score 13-13.

Sligo's superior strength told in the second half and they got the

vital baskets just when they were most needed.

Convent of Mercy (score total)—B. KIELTY, 65; M. KILGALLEN, 15; A. McLoughlin, 12; H. Forde, 12; U. Mannion, 10; M. Forde, 7; M. Maloney, 6; A. Keaveney, 2; G. Mannion, R. Barr.

Never in trouble

The Convent cadette team were never in trouble in the under-16 final on Friday night and on their display, must be favoured to take the All-Ireland trophy later this month.

Sligo completely outplayed the Killester Under-16 team and after leading 27-12 at half-time went to town in the second period, scoring freely on the fast break.

Once again, it was Barbara KIELTY who stole the honours while Paula Monaghan gave great support.

Convent of Mercy: B. KIELTY, 25; P. Monaghan, 17; B. Ferguson, 13; A. McLoughlin, 8; M. Kilgallen, 1; G. Mannion, C. Foley, H. Forde, M. Maloney, M. Forde.

Connacht almost sprung surprise

CONNACHT were very nearly the surprise packet of the Interprovincial Championship in Killarney last Saturday when they narrowly failed to qualify for the final by losing 69-66 to the eventual winners, Leinster, but they made up for the defeat by scoring an impressive 78-73 victory over the starting favourites, Munster.

It was the first time in a number of years that Connacht passed up the wooden spoon and, in fact, the question was on everyone's lips that the West might have carried off the trophy had they been a little luckier in their game against Leinster.

Clear leaders

Connacht were very slow to settle and trailed 11-4 after five minutes but they came right on form and tore the Leinster zone to shreds with the result that they were clear

leaders, 10-20 at the break. Leinster switched to a man-to-man in the second half and they began to press very hard. Connacht, who were without really strong substitutes, fought to stay ahead but the pace began to tell and slowly but surely, Leinster narrowed the gap. Connacht were also in foul trouble yet they fought bravely and with great determination.

Connacht were leading 54-49 with five minutes to go but three quick scores put Leinster in front and they increased their lead to 63-60. However, the Westerners did not give in too easily as they came back again to take the lead at 66-63 with just a minute left, but Leinster's stronger finishing power made the difference.

Great performance

Connacht put up a great performance to beat Munster in a very high scoring game.

It was score for score from start to finish but Connacht were never once in arrears. They started well and played a running game in the first half which gave them a 40-38 lead at the interval.

The pace slowed down in the second half when Connacht began to tire but they found a reserve of energy in the last few minutes to clinch their victory.

The spearhead of the Connacht side were the Sligo All Stars players, all of whom acquitted themselves with honour.

Leading scorers were John McGowan (37), Tony O'Hara (32), Joe Palmer (26), Brian McHugh (13) and Robert Burns (9).

VITAL GAME WITH U.S. NAVY

Sligo All Stars have a huge task in front of them next Saturday night when they meet United States Navy, Derry, on their home court in a National Cup game which will more than likely decide which of the two teams will go forward to the play-offs later this month.

Unbeaten Sligo have an 8 points advantage over the Americans from the first leg and they must at least ensure that they get the bonus for the aggregate victory. In other words if Sligo lose by seven points or less they will still get the vital two points for an overall win.

Navy are just as well acquainted with the position but the thought of that eight points handicap makes their task so much harder. Nevertheless, home court is reckoned to be worth about ten points under normal circumstances but not in Sligo's case because they are at home on any court.

Though the Derry gym is the best in the country, it has not been the happiest hunting ground for the All Stars up to now, but Saturday night should see a change to that.

Were in action

Both teams have seen action since their meeting in Sligo three weeks ago. Navy scored a 12 points victory over Kelliher's in Tralee while the Sligo boys got high class competition in the Interpro's in Killarney last Saturday, so both squads will be in peak condition.

Sligo have nine victories from ten games since the New Year; they will bring a bus load of supporters to the Northern city to give them support; they have a full panel playing better than ever so they must be given every chance.

In special exhibition game

Two Sligo All Stars players, John McGowan and Joe Palmer, were on the starting five of the Rest of Ireland team which played a special exhibition game in Dublin last Sunday night, against Irish Champions, St. Vincent's.

The team-work proved better than the talent, however, because the Dublin club emerged victorious by 74-67 in a game which was in doubt up to the last few minutes.

Palmer was top scorer for the Rest of Ireland with 18 points while McGowan contributed 10.

A third Sligo player, Tony O'Hara was unable to get to Dublin for the game.

All Stars continue unbeaten run

Sligo All Stars continued their unbeaten run in their section of the Connacht League when they scored a commendable 42-36 win over Summerhill College on Monday night.

All Stars were leading 24-14 at half-time but they had to fight hard in the second half to hold on to their lead.

Best for the winners were Robert Burns (24 pts.) and Gerry Monaghan (18).

All Stars: C. Carty, G. Monaghan, G. McMorrow, R. Burns, B. Brogan. Summerhill College: R. Cullen, J. Waldron, M. Forde, M. Featherson, J. Harte, M. Haydon, S. Watson, S. Dor, A. Cronnelly.