

Sligo retain Senior Championship

SLIIGO retained the Connacht Senior basketball title with a massive 80-39 victory over Galway in the Championship final at Renmore Barracks, Galway, last Sunday and they will be pressing for a home venue for their All-Ireland semi-final game against Cork on February 14th.

Sligo minors and juveniles did not enjoy the same success, however, because the minor team suffered a disappointing defeat by Galway while the juveniles staged a magnificent come-back but were pipped at the post by Mayo.

The senior victory atoned in part for the failures of the younger boys because Galway were reckoned to put up a strong fight to win back the trophy on the strength of a 72-54 semi-final win over Mayo but they were completely outclassed by former Sligo who played exhibition basketball in the second half after putting the contest beyond doubt in the opening twenty minutes.

For just three minutes, Galway stood the tremendous pace set by Sligo because in the next eight minutes, the champions streaked in on a 26-6 lead. Though their scoring power seemed to dry up at this stage, it was only a momentary setback and by half time, a 30-13 lead was good enough to make the second half little more than a formality.

But it was in the second half that Sligo really put the pressure on piling in the scores from brilliant fast-breaking and polished set play which had Galway's defence completely frustrated long before the game was over. True the home team added twenty six points to their total in this half but it was only because Sligo were committed to all-out attack and defence was no longer vital to the outcome.

And when captain, John McGowan added Sligo's fiftieth point of the second period from a free-throw with the final whistle sounding it was a fitting climax to a great team performance by his side.

Sligo scorers were — J. McGowan 24, J. Palmer 18, B. O'Hara 14, B. McHugh 11, A. Cronnelly 10, G. Monaghan 3.

Never got moving

Sligo minors failed to live up to expectations in the final against Galway after convincingly beating Roscommon by 48-18 in the semi-final in Castlerea on Friday night.

Sligo never got moving in the first period and after struggling most of the way, they were leading by 17-15 at half-time. Galway began to edge out in front early in the second half and after six minutes were 29-22 to the good but Sligo fought back and were just two points behind with nine minutes remaining.

An excitement-packed finish seemed on the cards at this stage but Sligo rather surprisingly faded from the picture and went out tamely in the end, losing 52-41.

Scorers were — G. Gallagher 21, G. Monaghan 10, B. O'Hara 7, E. Hanssen 2, S. Watson 1.

The juvenile final provided the most exciting game of the afternoon though Sligo never really looked like winning until the last five minutes.

The bigger and stronger Mayo boys got the upper hand in the early stages and had a 12-4 lead mid-way through the first half. Though Sligo had narrowed the gap to 16-11 at the break, their opponents pulled clear again with two baskets at the start of the second half.

Sligo were improving all the time, however, and they were by no means finished when the scoreboard read 34-23 with five minutes to go. Throwing everything into a last ditch stand, they worked like demons to win possession and were rewarded with some great scores which gave them a ray of hope. With six points in the last two minutes, they were just about to cause an upset but the final whistle went and Mayo knew they were lucky to have won. The final score was 38-35.

The juveniles had qualified for the final by beating Leitrim 31-20 in the semifinal in Castlerea two days before and if these boys—all members of Our Lady of Lourdes Boys' Club—continue to improve at this rate, they will be bringing championships to Sligo for many years to come.

Sligo juveniles — E. Hanssen 15, S. Watson 9, F. Rogers 6, J. Burns 5, D. Monaghan, J. Cawley, M. O'Brien, J. Herity, J. O'Connell, S. Burns, M. Kivlehan, J. Verdon.