

Misfortune beat under-strength All Stars

An under-strength Sligo All Stars team met with misfortune in the annual U.S. Navy Invitation Tournament in Derry last week-end.

Sligo were only able to muster a bare five to travel north and for a while they looked good enough to bring home the trophy but then fate took over.

All Stars had a five-point lead up on the home side who were strong favourites to win but with less than three minutes left, Brian McHugh had to retire with five fouls, Navy made a great come-back and with only eleven seconds left, Joe Palmer sustained an ankle injury which reduced the squad to three.

It was a tragic turn of events particularly because the Sligo player had just shown signs of a return to his best form and he will now be out of action for some weeks.

Sligo had to borrow a player to fulfil their engagement against the Belfast Club, St. Gall's, but they made little headway against a well organised squad.

While Navy went on to win the tournament, their game against Sligo was the outstanding match of the series and even if All Stars had lost, with Palmer they might well have avoided a second defeat and ended up in the final.

There was never more than five points between the sides. Navy took up the running early on to go four points up but Sligo played a steady game which brought them back on level terms and at half time, they were leading 20-16.

Navy equalised early in the second period but Sligo again went five points in front. Baskets were traded at a furious rate as the score jumped from 33-28 to 33-32 and back to 37-32.

It was at this stage that things began to go wrong for Sligo and once Navy sensed the trouble, they hit quickly and efficiently to win 41-37.

Against St. Gall's, Sligo never got moving and though they kept the northerners to 16-10 at half-time, they fell apart in the late stages and lost eventually by 38-16.

Sligo All Stars:— J. Palmer 19, R. Burns 14, B. O'Hara 12, G. Monaghan 4, B. McHugh 4.

To play England

Irish national coach, T. O'Brien, will shortly announce an Ireland under 20 team which will play England in Dublin on February 20th.

Also scheduled for the same week-end are international games in the under 15, under 18 and senior grades.

Sligo already have representatives in senior (John McGowan, Anthony Cronnelly and Joe Palmer) and Under 15 (Francis Rogers) and last week-end, three Summerhill College seniors, Gerry Gallagher, Stuart Watson and Sean Maoloney, got a try out for the under 18 squad which will be named soon.

However, it is in the balance if Sligo will have a player on the under 20 side because the standard is exceptionally high in this class and there are a few members of the senior panel who will be automatic choices for the team.

It will be the first outing for the recently-selected senior squad, which will travel to Holland in May for the pre-Olympics, and at this stage, it appears likely that McGowan will not be able to take his place unless he gets back into action sooner than expected.

Ireland have been drawn in a pool with Turkey, Bulgaria, Austria and Sweden in the Dutch tournament but before these games it is intended to play a friendly against Scotland in Edinburgh, some time in April.