

Scoring spree by All Stars

SLIGO All Stars went on a scoring spree at Summerhill College last Saturday when they completely outclassed Austin Stacks, Tralee, in a tremendously fast and exciting National Cup game and their superb 98-37 victory practically ensures them a place in the play-offs in Carlow next week-end.

All Stars are on top of their pool with all their matches played but they must await the result of the last fixture on the list, U.S. Navy Derry versus St. Mary's, Athlone, before their future is decided. But because Navy must boost their scoring average above Sligo's and as this would entail beating St. Mary's by more than sixty one points — All Stars' margin over Austin Stacks — it seems almost certain that All Stars will go through.

Watching Sligo's scoring machine in action on Saturday night, it was inconceivable that when these sides last met — in the Lota Tournament in Cork at Easter — Austin Stacks won the game by three points. But that's what actually happened and small wonder it was that Sligo were so intent on averaging that defeat last Saturday on their home territory and before their own supporters.

All Stars had a more urgent reason for winning convincingly, however. Earlier in the day, U.S. Navy beat the Tralee boys by 67-50 although there were only five minutes to go and Sligo knew before ever they went on the court that they had to win by more than seventeen points in order to qualify for the play-offs.

Played ruthlessly

Sligo played ruthlessly but they had to. Their defence covered every gap, chased every pass, grabbed every rebound and after ten minutes, Austin Stacks had failed to score while at the other end, John McGowan and Anthony Cronnelly between them had slammed in sixteen points.

A slight relaxation in defence on Sligo's part gave Stacks the opportunity to show they could score if given the chance and they had eight points in the next two minutes but All Stars put up the shutters once more and with three minutes of the period remaining, they were 36-8 in front.

Sligo were substituting freely even at this stage and they continued to show their mastery in the few minutes to half-time when the score stood 46-15.

If All Stars thought the game was as good as over at this stage, they were very wrong as they soon discovered in the early minutes of the second half because Austin Stacks showed great determination and spirit on the resumption and, in fact, it was score for score for the opening five minutes.

Sligo were not at all happy with their second half start and it showed in their play but once they settled into their rhythm, it was exhibition basketball all the way. Still, Austin Stacks fought them to the end and with five minutes to go, Sligo were leading 80-31.

At this stage, All Stars could have relaxed the pressure but instead they went for a record — the first team to hit "the ton" in the National Cup.

Furious pressure

All Stars turned on furious pressure in those minutes but the Munster boys dogged them at every turn and even though Sligo had twelve points in the last two minutes, Austin Stacks got great consolation in foiling their bid for the hundred.

Sligo's victory must rate as their best-ever team performance. Every player gave his utmost, whether on attack or defence, and even those who came into the game for just a few minutes contributed their share towards the ultimate victory.

Cronnelly and McGowan were the big guns of the night with forty five points between them but seven others got their names on the score sheet.

Sligo All Stars:- A. Cronnelly 24, J. McGowan 21, T. O'Hara 12, J. Palmer 10, B. O'Hara 9, J. Monaghan 6, C. Carty 4, J. Gallagher 2, S. Watson, T. O'Brien.