

All Stars are first holders of trophy

Sligo All Stars became the first holders of the Noel Gahan Memorial Trophy when they beat the host club, St. Mary's, Athlone, in the final of a twelve-team open invitation tournament in Custume Barracks, Athlone, last Sunday.

It was a most satisfying victory for the Sligo squad, not only because it was their first time to win a major tournament at the venue, but particularly because they were put to a very severe test before coming out on top.

After beating Marist College, Athlone, on Saturday by 55-40, All Stars found themselves without big Anthony Cronnelly for Sunday's games—the Sligo centre injured a knee ligament—but into the side stepped Gerry Monaghan and thanks to a great performance by Tony O'Hara, All Stars tore through Kelliher's of Tralee to win their pool 53-41.

Sligo hit a bad patch against a weak St. Mary's B team in the semi-final and they were only up four points at the break. Some hard-hitting words from coach Tom O'Brien got the Sligo lads in action and they coasted through to the final with twenty points to spare, 52-32.

Spurred on by the partisan crowd, St. Mary's took an early lead in the final and the local referees came down heavily on Sligo as captain John McGowan picked up three fouls in the space of as many minutes.

The Sligo player—back to top form after an ankle injury—had to sit out the first half on the bench and watch his team creep into the lead and hold on to a four-points advantage coming up to half time.

The scoreboard read 31-24 for Sligo at the interval but the official record had Sligo in front by 28-24 and when Joe Palmer picked up his fourth and fifth fouls in quick succession early in the second half and had to leave the court, it was obvious the odds were stacked against Sligo.

St. Mary's sent their fans wild with delight as they sneaked in two easy shots to equalise and they thought they had Sligo beaten when they went two points in front entering the last three minutes.

They were wrong of course. As many a team has learned to their cost, All Stars are never beaten until the final whistle and the roars of the crowd died a quick death when first Brian O'Hara, then John McGowan and then Gerry Gallagher rolled in their shots to restore Sligo's lead.

St. Mary's fell completely to pieces and All Stars froze the play to waste time and win eventually by 56-51.

This was one of the best team victories by the Sligo squad for some time and the scores were evenly divided among the players, all of whom put away vital shots when the going was toughest.

A special word of praise to coach O'Brien, whose shrewd judgement, uncanny reading of the play and skilful use of his players was the deciding factor in a ding-dong final.

Sligo All Stars:— T. O'Hara 49, J. McGowan 43, J. Palmer 32, G. Monaghan 32, B. O'Hara 21, A. Cronnelly 19, G. Gallagher 12, C. Carty 6, E. Hanssen 2, T. O'Brien.

Honour for All Stars' players

Sligo's ever-growing list of Irish Internationals was lengthened with the addition of two new names when the national under-20 team was announced last week by local and Irish coach, Mr. Tom O'Brien.

On to the roll of honour go the names of Gerry Monaghan and Brian O'Hara, both of whom are first team players with Sligo All Stars.

Monaghan is son of the late renowned "Monty" Monaghan whose skill on the soccer field won him an international cap, while O'Hara is a brother of the stylish Sligo player, Tony, who played for Ireland in the Four Country senior tournament in Edinburgh last year.

The two boys will make their international debut the week-end after next when they take on the Irish senior team in which they will face

club-mates John McGowan, Anthony Cronnelly, and Joe Palmer.

The Irish senior squad will also play a friendly game against a European-based U.S. Air Force team.

The games will take place in Dublin 7.

DOUBLE FOR SUMMERHILL

Summerhill College scored an easy double over St. Joseph's, Foxford, in the first round of the Connacht Schools Basketball Competition at the College Gymnasium recently.

In the Senior game the score was 68-21, while in the Junior game, Summerhill had little trouble winning 70-28.

The Seniors were slow in settling down and missed many scoring chances. In the second half they succeeded in destroying the Foxford defence with their fast breaking. Prominent in attack were G. Gallagher and S. Maloney.

In the Junior game, Summerhill forged ahead right from the start and played with confidence and ease. C. Cannon and M. O'Brien scored many fine baskets. They were ably supported throughout by S. Watson, P. Rogers and D. Cassidy.

Sligo will have tough nut to crack

Sligo will have three attempts to reach an All-Ireland final when the national championship semi-finals are played in Dublin next Saturday.

Sligo play Dublin in all three grades—juvenile minor and senior, and from reports of their opponents potential, they will have their work cut out to win.

The Dublin senior team includes six senior international players while there is a sprinkle of under 18 and under 15 internationals in their minor and juvenile teams as well.

Sligo seniors have some fine players in their ranks and they will not be deterred in the least by the lofty reputation of the Dubliners.

The minors and juveniles too will be all out to win and in championship basketball, one can never be sure.

It is understood the fate of the senior side may be followed on the Saturday afternoon sports programme on RTE radio commencing at 5 p.m.

The programme is as follows— 2 p.m. juvenile; 3.30 p.m. minor; 5 p.m. senior. Venue for the games is Halla Whiare, Inchicore.