

Second half fade-outs were Sligo's undoing

Sligo let not one but three championship titles slip from their grasp at Halla Muire, Inchicore, Dublin, last Saturday. And it was exactly the same story in all three games—a complete fade-out in the second half which opened the door for Dublin's passage into the All-Ireland Senior, Minor and Juvenile finals.

But overall, it can only be described as a great performance by Sligo. Their entire force was drawn from the All Stars club with a sprinkling of talent from Summerhill College and they went to the capital to take on the cream of Dublin's schools, colleges and clubs.

In the circumstances, the outcome was predictable even if Sligo were not prepared to admit it and the results will certainly not kill their undying ambition to win an All-Ireland.

DUBLIN SENIORS 80;
SLIGO SENIORS 65.

Dublin started with an all-international first five and they hit Sligo with a barrage of precision shots which gave them a 16-3 spread after only five minutes.

Sligo were struggling on defence and showing a complete lack of method and cohesion on offence but, nevertheless, they began to find the range so that by the tenth minute, they were tagging along 32-13.

Five minutes later, Sligo were showing no signs of closing the gap though they were still in touch at 29-18, but when coach Tom O'Brien threw on a zone press, Dublin were caught completely off guard and they were in a complete panic as Sligo rolled in fourteen points without reply to nose in front for the first time at 32-29.

That's the way it was at half time—wide open and there for the taking but Sligo gambled on the continued success of their press and unfortunately, this was to prove their downfall.

For a full ten minutes it was basket for basket and all the time, it was Sligo who led the way. The tension and the score mounted together.

Sligo went in front 34-31, Dublin made it 35-34; 36-35 for Sligo then 39-36 for Dublin. Ahead went Sligo again 42-39, Dublin scored but Sligo spread the gap to 43-41. Dublin equalised, Sligo went two up but again Dublin equalised, 47-45 for Sligo then Dublin equalised and went 49-47 ahead. Sligo equalised, went ahead but Dublin levelled at 51-51.

With less than ten minutes to go, they pulled out 57-51 and Sligo Rias and a glimmer of hope to narrow the gap to four but the game had broken open. And Dublin knew it. As Sligo began to show the effects of their full-court press, Dublin brought out fresh men to run the ball and Sligo could do nothing to stop them.

Within two minutes the game was over as Dublin raced ahead 71-56 and though Sligo ran themselves to a standstill, they knew it was a lost cause.

It was a long, gruelling game with all-out performances on both sides. The determination which marked the affair is reflected in the number of fouls called—fifty seven in all, and forty two free throws. Three members of the Dublin side were fouled out while a further three carried four fouls and Sligo lost one player with three players on four fouls.

For Sligo there were no star performances. Not one of the players was able to shoot with any consistency over the hustling Dublin man-to-man defence whereas their opponents enjoyed far too much freedom to get off their high-percentage shots.

Sligo:— T. O'Hara 16, J. Palmer 12, G. Monaghan 11, J. McGowan 10, B. O'Hara 6, T. Hickey 6, A. Cronnelly 2, B. McHugh 2, R. Burns, S. Burns, G. Gallagher, E. Hanssen.

DUBLIN MINORS 84;
SLIGO MINORS 50.

The effects of the strenuous senior game were clearly to be seen in the performance of a few of the minor squad who had to line out in both games but this could hardly excuse the complete collapse of the team in the second half.

At half time, Sligo were a point behind, 25-24, and they looked good enough to win but they never got started in the second half and were obviously not going to challenge Dublin seriously.

Dublin hit twenty four points in a six-minute period in the second half and that wrapped up the issue fairly and squarely for them, whereas Sligo seemed to have given up the fight long before the finish.

Only Sligo man to come through with an enhanced reputation was the up and coming Eric Hanssen who put away thirteen points. He is certainly a player to be watched in the future.

Sligo:— T. Hickey 14, E. Hanssen 13, B. O'Hara 12, G. Gallagher 9, S. Moloney 1, S. Watson 1.

DUBLIN JUVENILES 63;
SLIGO JUVENILES 38.

Sligo juveniles allowed themselves to be completely overawed by the reputation of their opponents and it was not until they realised that, in fact, they were every bit as talented that they began to play the game.

By this stage, of course, Dublin were leading 14-5 and it took some great outside shooting by Francis Rogers to bring Sligo back into the game.

And back they were with just four points in it at half time when Dublin led 22-18 but at what cost! Both captain Stuart Watson and the team's big scorer John Burns were in trouble with the referees and as it turned out, both picked up their fifth fouls in due course.

Rogers tried to save the day with a great-hearted performance, backed up by a tigerish display by Jim Verdon, but the odds were too great and Dublin duly sealed their victory.

Sligo:— F. Rogers 24, S. Watson 3, E. Eames 3, D. Monaghan 3, J. Verdon 2, J. Cawley 2, J. Burns 1, M. O'Brien, C. Cannon, E. Monaghan, T. O'Brien.