

# Sligo retain Senior Championship

**S**LIGO 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 on-form 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 into 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.

## For All-Ireland Semi-finals

Sligo Convent of Mercy qualified for the All-Ireland Senior and Cadette semi-finals with devastating victories over St. Louis Convent, Dundalk, in Enniskillen last Saturday.

The Mercy seniors topped the "ton" in a brilliant 102-29 display while the cadettes were equally impressive in beating the Dundalk girls by 95-27.

The seniors had the game wrapped up at half time when they led 52-19 and nothing could stop them in the second half as they ran up score after score from controlled fast-break play.

The cadettes matched the seniors in almost every respect and in one great break, ran up thirty three points without reply from their opponents.

Senior scorers were — P. Monaghan and C. Kilty 31 each, B. Ferguson 22, A. Conlon 16, and M. Walsh 2, while B. Kilty 31, H. Mc Loughlin 22, M. Kilgallon 14, C. Foley 10, A. Keaveney 4, and U. Mannion 2 shared the points for the cadettes.

Both teams will meet St. Louis, Rathmines, in the semi-finals which will take place on February 7th probably in Athlone.

## On Irish team

Sligo All Stars centre, Tony O'Hara, replaces his team mate, Joe Palmer, on the Irish team to take part in the Four Country Basketball Championship in Edinburgh next April. O'Hara has already gained

three senior caps as well as having a number of junior appearances to his credit.

After Connacht's sensational victory in the Interprovincial Championship recently it comes very much as a surprise that one of the stars of the occasion, John McGowan is once again overlooked.

The team contains a number of surprise selections and it is particularly noticeable that the national coach, Tralee man, James Hobbart, has included five Munster players in his squad.

## National cup game

A win over St. Mary's, Athlone, will be the right sort of tonic for Sligo All Stars when the National Cup gets under way in Athlone next Sunday.

All Stars have been drawn in a pool with St. Mary's, U.S. Navy, Derry, and Austin Stacks, of Tralee, and as they have their sights set on qualifying for the play-offs for the British and Irish Club Championship, an unbeaten record in their pool is what they must have.

After last Sunday's fine performance against Galway in the Connacht Senior Final, the Sligo boys are in just the right shape to handle St. Mary's although they cannot afford to underestimate the Westmeath Club who have always provided stiff opposition.

Sligo will not have the services of Tony O'Hara throughout the competition because he has already played with Dublin club, Corinthians, in the Leinster Cup and though he is again officially a member of the All Stars, he will not be eligible to play in the Cup. However, he will be able to play in the Championship if recovered from his recent operation. Naturally Sligo were without his services last Sunday and in his absence the game proved a useful test for forthcoming Cup games.

All Stars hope to have a full squad for next Sunday's fixture and on their recent form, they must be fancied to win.