

Off-form All Stars lose again

IF 1973 is to go down in the record books of Sligo All Stars, the indications so far suggest it will not be a vintage year because there was further evidence of the indifferent form which has beset the club in the past month when on Sunday last in Roscommon they made a speedy and ignoble exit from the Noel Gahan Memorial Trophy Tournament which they entered as defending champions.

And the team responsible for Sligo's elimination was the young and sprightly, St. Vincent's Killarney, the side which caused that major National Cup setback by upsetting All-Stars on their home court a few weeks back.

All-Stars had disposed of a rather weak U.C.G. squad 52-34 in their opening fixture before facing a strong challenge from their hosts, St. Mary's Athlone, with a place in the semi-final at stake. It should have posed no great problem for the Sligo outfit but that was not the story.

Pushing six points ahead after five minutes, they allowed St. Mary's come back, upset their stride and take the lead 26-25 at half time. It continued in this vein until seven minutes into the second period at which stage St. Mary's had increased the gap to 38 to 31.

Sligo seemed to suddenly shake themselves into reality and with a determined effort they turned the tables on the Athlone boys to go in front 48-44. With less than a minute to go and Sligo in possession, the game appeared to be wrapped up but not so — two bad passes gave St. Mary's enough of the ball to tie the score and force an extra period of five minutes.

Athlone showed in front in the early moments of the extra play but superior shooting from the free throw line saw Sligo through by a 62-58 margin.

Well-drilled

All of Sligo's apparent talent and experience was outweighed in the semi-final by the determination and discipline of a well-drilled St. Vincent's squad. Whereas the Killarney boys were constantly helping each other out both on offence and defence, the All-Star players seemed pre-occupied with doing only their own lot and no more.

This was particularly the case on offence where more often than not the four players not in possession of the ball were waiting for it to come their way rather than trying to create openings for themselves or their team mates.

St. Vincent's played a tightly staked defence which aimed at exerting maximum pressure on the man with the ball and Sligo were only playing into their hands by not keeping the ball moving swiftly between the players.

After a closely-fought opening five minutes, St. Vincent's pulled clear and from then on, they played a steady controlled game with the object of protecting their lead and this they did with complete success.

They turned over 26-14 in front and as Sligo began to grow desperate as the game progressed, they countered effectively by turning the All-Stars errors into scores and were clear winners at 50-36 in the finish.

St. Vincent's went on to receive a lesson in even more perfect offensive and defensive efficiency from Marian of Dublin who won the final with plenty to spare.

Sligo have their problems but they are not so serious that they cannot be overcome. All-Stars are not the type of team to sit down after a defeat — rather will they come back all the more determined on their next outing.

Sligo All-Stars— T. Hickey 34, J. Palmer 26, J. Monaghan 30, J. McGowan 20, S. Burns 12, B. O'Hara 10, S. Watson 6, C. Duggan 6, J. Dwyer, G. Gallagher 2.

Determined to make amends

SLIGO ALL STARS will have an opportunity to regain some of their flagging confidence when they host Kelliher's of Tralee in a National Cup game in Summerhill College, Sligo, next Sunday.

After their home defeat by St. Vincent's Killarney, and last weekend's unsuccessful attempt to regain the Noel Gahan Trophy, Sligo are just in the right mood for vengeance and they will be hoping to make Kelliher's the victims.

A big win would go a long way towards restoring Sligo's dented prestige and with the U.S. Navy and Glen Abbey Tournaments, the All-Ireland finals and the vital National Cup fixture with St. Vincent's all coming in the next few weeks, Sligo can afford to waste no time in getting right back on form.

For this reason, Sunday's game takes on an extra importance and Sligo will have all the more reason to make it remembered as the return to their old style.