

'GRAND SLAM' FOR SLIGO

Sligo Champion - Jan. 26, 1973

SILIGO basketball teams achieved "the grand slam" when they won all four titles in the Connacht Championships played in Galway on Sunday last. As well as retaining the Senior, Minor and Juvenile title, Sligo regained the Junior title which they forfeited a few years ago to enter Senior basketball.

To win the Championships, Sligo defeated Leitrim (Minor and Juvenile), Roscommon (Junior), and last year's All-Ireland finalists, Mayo (Senior).

Sligo recorded double-score victories against the Roscommon and Leitrim teams, while in the Senior game, they met tough opposition from Mayo, who were determined to end Sligo's monopoly in Connacht basketball. But the sheer talent of the Sligo squads was not to be taken lightly. In fact, two of Sligo's star players—Francis Rogers and Stuart Watson—figured in three grades, while Tommy Hickey emerged as the star of both Minor and Senior. Ten other players also played dual roles in Sligo's achievement.

In all, 32 players travelled to Galway for the championships, and included members from Sligo All Stars, Summerhill College and the Boys' Club.

While Tom O'Brien, the Irish International coach guided the affairs of three teams, John McGowan, the captain of Sligo All Stars Senior team and international player, coached the Minor team.

Sligo 74 Leitrim 24

The first game of the afternoon saw Sligo retain the Minor title when they had a brilliant victory over Leitrim.

Throughout the game Sligo went on scoring sprees. Only once in the first half did Leitrim reply score-for-score but Sligo were 35-15 ahead at the break, and the final score was 74-24.

Led by Tommy Hickey, this Sligo Minor squad was reminiscent of the great minor teams of the past.

Playing beautiful team basketball, Sligo were best served by Hickey, Rogers, and Stuart Watson, who played with an injured ankle.

Sligo Minors: Hickey (36), Watson (6), Dolorey (4), D. Monaghan (9), Burns (8), Rogers (12), M. O'Brien (7), E. Monaghan (2), Moloney, Lynch, Verdon, Cassidy.

Sligo 66; Leitrim 28

In their second game, Sligo had another convincing win, this time beating Leitrim by 66-28.

In the first five minute Sligo scored four baskets. Leitrim then scored to make it 8-5, but the superior Sligo boys forged ahead. In the twelve minutes remaining before half-time, Sligo scored 30 points to Leitrim's 4, leaving the score, 38-9.

Leitrim came more into the game in the second half, but could not match the Sligo boys. Even in the last three minutes, when Sligo brought three of their smallest players into the game, Leitrim could not match the champions.

While Sligo's first-five — Rogers, Verdon, O'Brien, Cassidy and Eames—secured the championship, the rest of the team added to the victory.

Sligo Juniors: Rogers (19), M. O'Brien (6), Verdon (14), Cassidy

(15), Eames (8), Kent (2), T. O'Brien (2), Kelly, O'Connor, Dunne, Tighe, McGovern.

Sligo 82; Roscommon 29

In their bid for the Junior title, Sligo completely outclassed Roscommon. In the opening five minutes, Sligo gained a 17-point lead, thereby dampening the spirit of their opponents. Led by Stan Burns, the Sligo men showcased the finer points of team-play — perfect shooting, passing, positioning and assisting.

Following Sligo's opening lead, Roscommon were caught unaware and by half-time were trailing, 49-12. In the second half Sligo rested their first-five, and Roscommon came more into the game, although never threatening.

Although built around experienced "veterans" like Stan Burns and newcomers Ivan Griffin and Jimmy Dwyer, Sligo were well served by their minor and inexperienced players.

Sligo Juniors: S. Burns (18), Griffin (8), Scarlton (11), Dwyer (7), Gallagher (16), Watson (10), Rogers (4), Moloney (4), D. Monaghan (4), T. Palmer, J. Burns, J. Harte.

Sligo 82; Mayo 56

In the Senior final, Sligo met their toughest challenge but after an unsettled first half they took control and finally beat Mayo by 82 points to 56.

From the tip-off Mayo got down to business and set a very fast pace, never allowing Sligo a chance to get in their shots. After five minutes Mayo were leading 11-5, and stayed in front until the eighth minute. But the Mayo pressure had its price, and midway through the first half, they had 13 fouls against them, while Sligo had seven.

By then Sligo had taken the lead and a score-for-score pattern was set, but Sligo held out and finished the half with a 3-point lead, 39-36.

Sligo started the second half with Stuart Watson replacing Joe Palmer, who had four fouls against him.

Although Mayo were first to score in the opening minute, Sligo took control. Some fine shooting by Watson and Tom Hickey, and Gerry Monaghan commanding the post-position, gave Sligo 17-pt. lead after ten minutes.

Mayo tried hard to reduced the ever-increasing lead, but by now the Connacht champions were masters.

Sligo used the fast-break to great effect, and on attack they set-up their shots and literally ran rings around Mayo's defence. They increased their lead to 27 points, making the final score 82-56.

their lead to 26 points, making the **Sligo Seniors:** McGowan (8), J. Palmer (6), Monaghan (20), Hickey (22), Watson (6), Burns (10), Griffin (2), Duggan (4), Gallagher (4), and O'Hara.