

All Stars slump in League clash

SLIGO All Stars suffered a disappointing 77-70 defeat at the hands of Cork's Blue Demons in a fast-moving National League tie at the GWI Sports Hall, Collooney, last Saturday and they are now faced with the prospect of completing their fixture schedule with any real hope of challenging for National Cup honours.

The most disappointing aspect of Sligo's performance was their failure to maintain composure at a critical stage in the opening period after starting in tremendous style.

In fact it was beyond all explanation that the All Stars should have taken a six-point lead after seven minutes of the game, find themselves level at 21 each mid-way through the half and then slump to a ridiculous eighteen points deficit within a further ten minutes.

Yet they managed to permit Blue Demons have almost the run of the court in this period of the game which they were outscored by 25 points to 7 points.

Sligo had everything in their favour—on height advantage alone they should have had the game wrapped up—but they lost their initiative and were in complete disarray at a time when they should have been putting the seal on their first League points.

Fighting rally

To their credit, however, they staged a fighting rally in the second period and narrowed the gap to five points with four minutes remaining. Blue Demons got the lucky breaks at that stage and Sligo were denied their victory.

Sligo had problems at both ends of the court on Saturday. Their offence looked impressive in the early stages but it suddenly lost its edge and the rhythm could not be recovered. On defence, All Stars gave

too much room to the Cork sharpshooters and paid the penalty dearly for it.

In the second half, Sligo were a different side but the gap was too great to stage a recovery. They worked with greater enthusiasm on defence and were much sharper up front but it was already too late to put right the wrongs of the opening half.

On a day when the performances of some of his colleagues failed to live up to expectations, Francis Rodgers emerged as Sligo's saviour and it was a pity that his tremendous personal contribution to the game went unrewarded.

Rodgers was a bundle of energy at both ends of the court, showing the same drive and determination in defence as he did when slotting no less than twenty eight of Sligo's total score.

Real test

Sligo face the real test of their capabilities in the coming weeks because they will either lift themselves from the despair and frustration of defeat or succumb to the slide downwards. It will take a renewal of spirit and a more forceful approach to the playing floor to recover their damaged image.

Sligo All Stars: F. Rodgers 28, G. Monaghan 15, B. O'Hara 10, J. McGowan 8, E. Monaghan 6, C. Duggan 2, G. Gallagher 1, S. Watson, P. Lynch, S. O'Kelly.

On Sunday, Sligo All Stars came from behind to beat Royal College of Surgeons by 30 to 16 in their opening game in the National Invitation Blitz at the Oblate Hall, Inchicore, Dublin.

After a good opening half against Dublin's Marian in the quarter final, they slipped out of contention and went down by 30-17 but were by no means dissatisfied with their display.