

Fr. Lehane aiming for hat-trick

By NOEL MEAGAN

FR. AIDAN LEHANE, the genial president of St. Michael's College, is within seventy minutes of achieving a unique piece of schools rugby history on Sunday.

On that day, the Ailesbury Road school meets Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare in the final of the Leinster Schools' Senior Cup and if they are successful, it means that Fr. Lehane will have been president of three different Holy Ghost Colleges who have won senior cup honours.

In 1969, he was supremo when Rockwell College, Co. Tipperary, won the Munster Schools' Senior Cup and in 1981 and '82 he was president of Blackrock College when they won senior cup honours. He became president of St. Michael's in 1984 and four years later, watched as his charges were narrowly beaten by Clongowes in the final.

So on Sunday, Fr. Lehane gets a second chance to put the record straight. Behind the bare statistics of being president of three successful Holy Ghost colleges lies a glittering career and commitment to schools rugby in two provinces.

When he was a pupil at Blackrock, and a very good academic career he had as well, Fr. Lehane won two Leinster junior cup medals in 1941 and '42 and a senior medal in '43 as well as captaining the Leinster inter-provincial side.

In 1944, he was on the senior side beaten 6-3 by Clongowes — that school again — in the second round, two spectators dying from heart attacks during the course of the game (was it because 'Rock were beaten?).

He left 'Rock a year early and subsequently joined the Holy Ghost order and became a prefect in St. Mary's, Rathmines. For a number of years after that, he played for the St. Mary's past first XV and very successfully too.

Incidentally, when Fr. Lehane was Dean of Discipline in Rockwell, he trained the three in a row Munster Senior Cup winning teams of 1959, '60 and '61 as well as the successful teams of '64 and '67 and to cap it all, the teams of '69 after he was appointed president the previous year.

With a record like that behind him and maybe more on Sunday, what are the chances of him going to St. Mary's as president? The Rathmines school have tasted very little success in the senior cup in recent years.

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