

Hernan still hopeful about Mary's form

Brendan Fanning

NOT a great start for the Dublin clubs in Division 1 of the All Ireland League. Wanderers beaten at home by Garryowen and St Mary's College losing away to Constitution. And while the first result constituted the major shock of the opening games, nobody was expecting Mary's to come away from Cork with two points. Least of all Con.

So if you happened to stray into Templeville road this week you wouldn't have come across a band of rugby players in the throes of depression. Rather the mood is one of renewed confidence, based, justifiably, on the quality of the Dublin club's second half performance.

"The pack were really fantastic in that second half. We rucked them off the pitch and the guys realised afterwards that they now know now what level we're capable of playing at. We have the confidence to do it." The St Mary's captain Ray Hernan is not trying to put gloss on a result that in the end could have gone

Wanderers game is a vital one to win

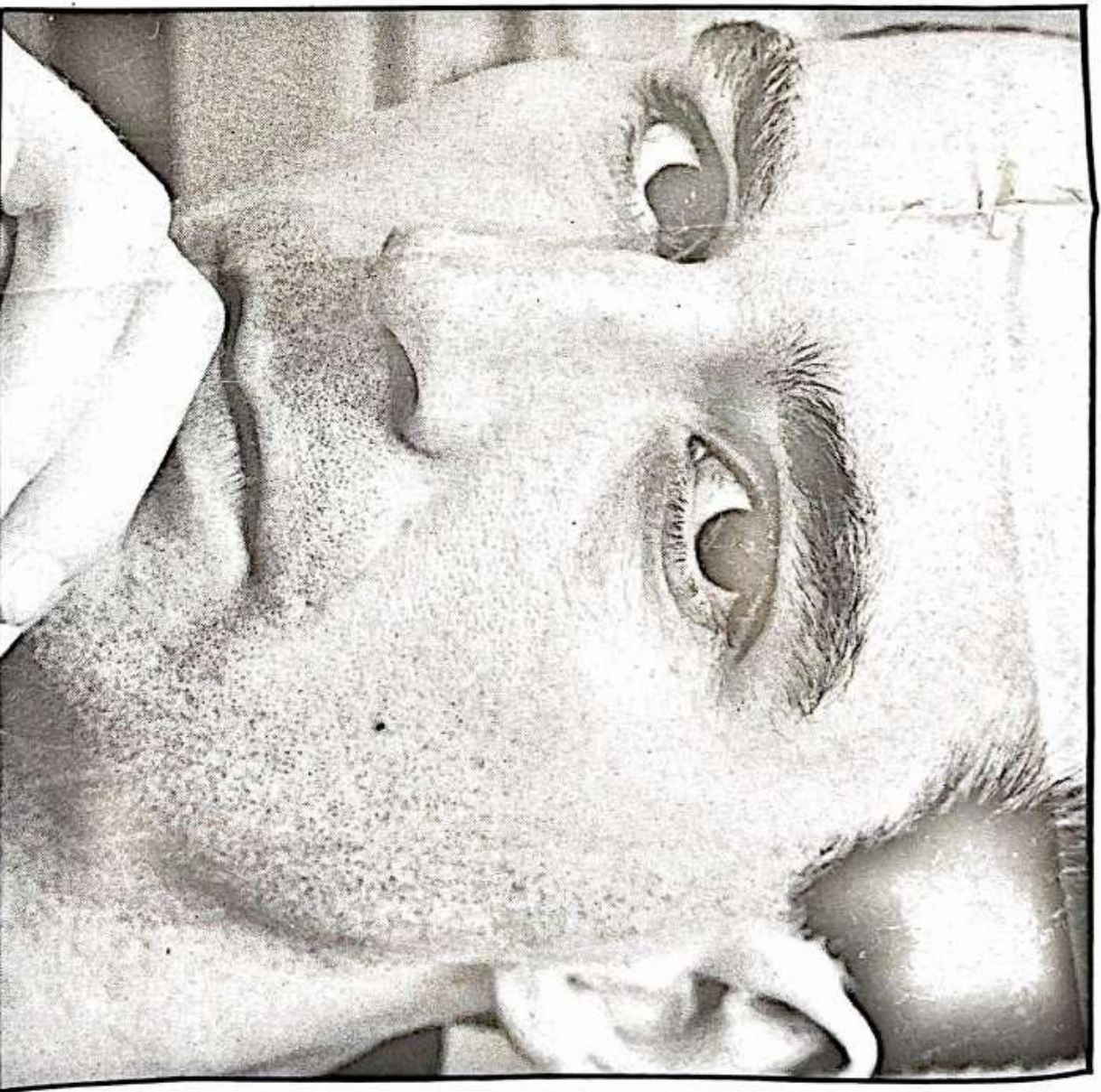
either way. He spoke of the excitement in the club in the run up to the game. Excitement, which by the time they trotted on to the field, had for some become acute nervousness. At times like that the term 'nervous energy' takes on a hollow ring. Much energy was expended trying to overcome this partial paralysis. And by the time it was achieved they were trailing and facing a gale force wind. They won't be as nervous again.

Indeed their chance to make amends comes up on Saturday with a home tie against Wanderers. To lose the first of eight league games is not disastrous, but to lose the first two leaves one in a most uncomfortable position. "I'd say it will be a tremendous match," says Hernan. "Our guys are really looking forward to it and Wanderers are in the same position so it should be worth watching."

This is the second time round for Hernan as captain

of the club and it's a job which sits easily with him. The commitment is huge: team selection on Monday nights, training Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; play a match on Saturday and watch one on Sunday. The responsibility of leading the club into the new league set-up is an onerous one. He is involved in selection of both 1st and 2nd teams in the club, and has to ensure that the 2nds get the intended benefit from the squad sessions. But if he's feeling the pressure of trying to be all things to all men it doesn't show.

Hernan is relaxed, outgoing and articulate. Twenty six years old, he was born into a sporting family in Ballygar, Co Galway. His rugby career at school in Roscrea was unspectacular but he progressed to under age and senior caps for Connaught. His stint at UCD saw him spend three years on the Irish Universities side which saw him develop into the quality centre he is now.



Ray Hernan: in no way downhearted despite the league defeat

A recently qualified chartered accountant working with Stokes Kennedy Crowley, the 'recently qualified' element is important because it leaves him free of

study and in a position to devote the necessary time to the club. Though inevitably the rugby involvement has to encroach to some degree on office time. "They've been very understanding so far and it's something I'm very conscious of." His club commitments meant that he was unable to represent the firm in the Business Houses competition. That was awkward. "Thank God they won that one."

And if Mary's do the same on Saturday, Ray Hernan will be a happy man.

Photo: Myran O'Brien