

Ballymena take few chances with St Mary's

BALLYMENA'S prospects of staying in the hunt for the All Ireland League Division One title were boosted by their hard-earned 9-0 win over St Mary's College on Saturday at Eaton Park. While the margin and manner of victory will give satisfaction to the home side, perhaps the most encouraging feature of the performance is that it was achieved without the assistance of such established players as Bruce McKenzie, Tim Lowry and David Tweed.

The return of the experienced David Wallace enhanced Ballymena's scrummaging power and St Mary's, despite the efforts of their back row in particular, were unable to make any head-

BALLYMENA9
ST MARY'S0

way against solid organisation and efficient covering.

St Mary's, who battled grimly for the greater part of the match, can point to two penalty misses by Ian White which did not help their cause, while Gerard Doyle, who took over the kicking duties in the second half, was equally unfortunate in finding the range.

In contrast, two Derek McAleese penalties in the opening half hour heightened Ballymena's resolve to exert a firm grip on the proceedings. An expansive policy was sacrificed on the altar of

efficiency and the Ballymena pack maintained a stranglehold, especially out of touch.

St Mary's, with McCarthy, Pope and Fanning always industrious, launched a series of attacks but Ballymena's tackling was disciplined and effective.

A concerted bout of Ballymena pressure in the last 10 minutes allowed half backs Matchett and McAleese to indulge in a rare spasm of adventure and this paved the way for Ballymena's third score, a drop goal from full-back Stuart Laing.

Ballymena, obviously chastened by their defeat at Garryowen the previous week, set out cautiously from the outset and although their performance lacked colour and