

Bright hopes for Mary's

AGGRESSIVE and committed forwards set up St. Mary's for a 14-3 victory over Instonians at Shane Park yesterday — a result that could see them dodge the relegation from Division One.

It gives them bright hopes when they face fellow strugglers Cork Constitution in the final match of a tense programme next Saturday in Dublin.

Led by skipper Kevin Potts and fellow lock forward Steve Jameson in the lineouts, St. Mary's can thank a back row unit of the experienced Declan Fanning, Brian Aherne and Brent Pope, who constantly harassed the lively Instonians pack.

St. Mary's must have been worried when they turned around only six points to the good when having first use of a gale-

BIG DROP

but Lansdowne hit back with a try from centre Garrett Aherne. Half Eric Elwood's conversion ended matters at 6-6.

Early in the second half, things then went disastrously wrong for the Leinster cup holders. They won plenty of possession, particularly through Paul Connor in the lineouts, but a jitters-back division could do little against hard Old Wesley tackling.

Old Wesley, by comparison, got their chances and availed of both, scoring a drop goal and a try goal. While Lansdowne bite their fingernails, Old Wesley have achieved their aim — survival in the first season in the top division.

INSTONIANS.....3
ST. MARY'S COL..... 14

force wind. A brace of penalties by full back Steve Hennessy in the seventh and 27th minutes didn't look sufficient to collect two important points.

When Instonians pulled back three of those points through a Marty Strutt penalty three minutes after the restart, all looked lost for the visiting Dublin side.

However, the pack battered down the hatches and denied Instonians the possession that would have brought them deep into opposition territory. And, as the Instonians side began to tire, St. Mary's pushed home their advantage with two late tries.

First Vincent Cunningham made the initial break down a narrow corridor along the left hand touchline, before feeding left wing John Kennedy, who brushed aside a despairing tackle to dive over.

Then, on the final whistle, after another great forward drive, lively prop Derek Dowling picked up from a ruck to barge his 15 stone frame over the line to make the game safe for St. Mary's.

INSTONIANS: M Strutt; G McCausland, I Moles, L Wylie, K Crossan; P Russell, P Nelson; B McKibbin, A Adare, G Bell, J McKibbin, C Hamilton, J McKeag, B Cornelius, D Crawford.

ST MARY'S: A White; S Hennessy, A Hernam, V Cunningham, J Kennedy; G Doyle, S O'Beirne; P McGill, M Corcoran, D Dowling, K Potts, S Jameson, D Fanning, B Pope, B Aherne.

Referee: Mr R McDowell (Munster).

Inst set for relegation to second division

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RUSSIAN roulette time has come around for this season's lesser achievers, and it was a case of deja vu for St Mary's as they escaped immediate danger. As for Instonians, the departure to Division Two seems imminent this time.

6-0 ahead at half time seemed a less than comfortable cushion, but their pack's performance forged what was both an inevitable and deserved victory.

Derek Dowling's lumbering score was the final action of the game, but by then Instonians had already succumbed to defeat. Their lack of presence in the line-outs and their ragged support play saw their challenge crumble.

Initially it seemed that the St Mary's pack had forgotten how to ruck. On at least two occasions driving from Brent Pope was not followed by the quick ball required.

With the elements at their backs St Mary's managed only two penalties from Stephen Hennessy.

Instonians' only comfort came from the opening quarter after the restart. Martin Strutt punished Mary's after some sloppy passing had forced Dave Hernan to kill the ball. Their brief ascendancy however came to an end after Strutt's second penalty attempt sailed wide in the wind.

The penalty had followed a burst of intense pressure which resulted in St Mary's dropping the scrum when the rick of a penalty try seemed a real possibility. Ronnie McDowell's decision to ignore the vocal appeals from the home crowd was ultimately correct and maybe Inst have only themselves to blame for not running the penalty.

This spurred St Mary's to their response. An identical move earlier had been stemmed but this time, Vinnie Cunningham's run on the blind side of a set piece had greater pace. He lost the cover and gave John Kennedy the corridor of room required to make it in the corner. The try went unconverted.

The remaining ten minutes were played deep in Instonians' territory with Steve Jameson and Brent Pope intelligently using the relentless supply. Dowling's unconverted try was the inevitable result of another year of St Mary's escapism.

Michael Sadlier

St Mary's rejoice

WITH all the cheering, back-slapping and bear-hugging among the St Mary's contingent at Shane Park on Saturday, one was tempted to hang about for the presentation of some trophy. Here was an occasion on which First Division survival seemed to be not far removed from the grand prize of All-Ireland League honours.

We were soon to learn, of course, that ultimate success had been captured by Garryowen. And it seemed to be all the more appropriate that St Mary's, the only team to have defeated the prospective champions, should be spared the indignity of relegation.

This was a splendid triumph by St Mary's who were under pressure from the time they lost the toss and were forced to play with the assistance of a strong wind in the opening half.

As it happened, they had managed an extremely moderate lead of only 6-0 at half-time.

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Dermot Gilleece

Then Marty Strutt closed the gap to 6-3 with a 40-yards penalty goal in the 10th minute of the second half.

Two snatches of play occurred shortly after which, for sharply contrasting reasons, changed the entire complexion of the match. In the 61st minute, Instonians were awarded a 26-yards penalty on the right hand side to the field. With the wind coming from behind his right shoulder, Strutt failed to make sufficient allowance and the ball soared to the left and away from the target.

Seven minutes later, St Mary's scored a try. This crucial score lent telling emphasis to the value of Vincent Cunningham.

From a scrum inside the Instonians' "25", the ball went to Cunningham who broke decisively towards the left corner. Timing the pass to perfection, he forced the opposing wing into a fatal commitment before giving John Kennedy the crucial chance.

Three minutes from the end they were rewarded with another try. This time scrum-half Sean O'Beirne slipped the ball to Derek Dowling from a ruck and the admirable tight-head prop forced his way over the line.

St Mary's other scores were two first-half penalty goals by Stephen Hennessy.

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ST MARY'S: S Hennessy; A White, V Cunningham, R Herman, J Kennedy; G Doyle, S O'Beirne; P Magill, M Corcoran, D Dowling, K Potts, S Jameson, D Fanning, B Pope, B Ahern.

Referee: R McDowell (Munster).