

Munsters grind down St Mary's

YOUNG MUNSTER 6

ST MARY'S 0

From Mark Jones at Greenfields

YOUNG MUNSTER: G McNamara J McNamara J Wright F Brosnahan G Casey (I Duggan 50) M Benson J Moloney J Fitzgerald (c) M Fitzgerald P Clohessy P Meehan R Ryan G Clohessy G Earls G Copley
ST MARY'S COLLEGE: A White A McEvoy V Cunningham R Hernan B Kealy G Doyle J Muldoon (N O'Brien 9) B Keane M Corcoran D Gillen K Potts (c) S Jameson N McCarthy K Egan D Fanning
REFEREE: D Henderson (Ulster)

YOUNG Munster may not be pretty, but anyone who has made the journey to Greenfields will know that they are pretty effective. St Mary's came yesterday, destroyed the opposition in the lineouts, dominated territorily and still went away with nothing.

Munsters, firing their opening salvos in division one, deserved the two points. Yet their only area of clear superiority was in the scrums where Mary's experienced the regular embarrassment of rapid backward movement.

The Dublin side had more than enough possession to win the game, but time and time again they were foiled by the princes of rugby piracy. Just when St Mary's were set to threaten, Young Munster would smuggle the ball and drive off downfield with the vigour and commitment that is their trademark.

Early in the second half, Steve Jameson, who was outstanding out of touch, took a magnificent catch on the Munsters' 22, and fed Derek Gillen on the peel. Knees pumping, Gillen had the line in his sights but was abruptly knocked by Ger Earls, bowled over by Peter Clohessy and away went the Young Munster pack to leave another attack in tatters.

Just on the hour, a delicate kick ahead by Ben Kealy put his side in pole position with a scrum right on the line. In went the ball, back went Mary's and Young Munster had won the only heel against the head to clear the danger.

It was that sort of day for St Mary's. The longer the game went on and the more they dominated the lineouts, the less they looked like scoring. Every time Kealy, Ray

Hernan or Vinnie Cunningham opened up, the defence was rock solid and the three Gers in the back row Clohessy, Earls and Copley, corner flagged magnificently.

Munsters adopted the conservative approach in the backs, relying on the boot of Michael Benson to push them forward. With time running out, Aidan White attempted to run the ball back with little success as the tackles went in with grim ferocity.

The scrum was the cornerstone of the winner's success with St Mary's cause not being helped by the late withdrawal of Derek Dowling. John Fitzgerald gave Gillen an unhappy afternoon and on one occasion when Young Munster had a head of steam up, Mary's were on the retreat for fully 30 metres.

The losers had to play most of the game without scrum half John Muldoon who was forced to retire after nine minutes with an ear injury but his replacement Niall O'Brien performed well in the circumstances. Gearoid Doyle missed first half penalties for St Mary's after 15 and 20 minutes respectively.

Benson opened the scoring after 26 minutes when Jameson was penalised for flooring Ger Clohessy with a straight right. Benson added an even better kick from 40 metres two minutes from half time to give Young Munster a 6-0 advantage.

It stayed that way as Munsters exerted a progressively tighter stranglehold on matters during the second period. St Mary's will rue their inability to convert possession into points while Young Munster, more destroyers than creators, will say that it's not how, but how many.

Londonderry fight to

Andy Blair, who had a superb line fed Vincent who covered a lot of ground before feeding full back Niall Farren who passed on to Jackson. Jackson in full flight fended off Keith Crossan's tackle before diving over near the corner flag.

Strong converted and then landed his second penalty right on the stroke of full time to give centenary celebrating Old Wesley those vital opening points in what is expected to be a very competitive League season.

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YOUNG Munster celebrated their first appearance in the top division with an outstanding forward performance which eventually overpowered St Marys College.

The Dubliners suffered a blow after nine minutes when John Muldoon their scrum-half had to retire and Niall O'Brien took his place.

Early on St Marys were on top and indeed they should have opened the scoring. Flanker Noel McCarthy broke through from a line out and passed to prop Brian Keane but he was held on the Young Munster line.

Twice Gearoid Doyle the St Marys outhalf was off target from penalties and gradually Young Munster settled down. Props John Fitzgerald and Peter Clohessy totally dominated the scrums but it was St Marys who throughout the contest won most of the line outs thanks mainly to the efforts of Kevin Potts.

It was teak tough in the forward exchanges and this was evident after 26 minutes when a St Marys player was caught throwing a magnificent

uppercut which floored a Young Munster player.

But it was short lived pleasure for the St Marys men because Michael Benson the Young Munster out-half landed the penalty and three minutes before the interval he was on target again.

St Marys put on a good deal of pressure early in the second half but suddenly the Young Munster pack swarmed into the offensive and they played remarkably well in the last half hour.

Their back row of Ger Earls, Ger Clohessy and number 8 Ger Copeley were outstanding and their work forced St Marys to realise that they were going no place up front and they decided to run the ball with every opportunity.

But this failed to pay dividends and while it was entertaining it was fruitless as the Young Munster men tackled as if their lives depended on the outcome.

This forward dominance speaks well for future outings by Young Munster but never once did out-half Michael Benson bring his three quarters into the action. It was a winning tactic on this occasion but whether such a ploy will work against stronger opposition remains to be seen.

John Moloney did well at scrum-half for Young Munster and all their forwards emerged with great credit but they will have to improve their line out.

St Marys will be disappointed to have lost but at least they had the satisfaction of dominating out of touch thanks to Potts and Steve Jameson with Declan Fanning and Noel McCarthy also doing well.

Injury to Muldoon angers St Mary's

ANGER, rather than disappointment, was the dominant post-match emotion among St Mary's players and officials at Greenfields on Saturday. The loss of this opening All-Ireland League tie was clearly overshadowed by the realisation that their scrum-half John Muldoon was unlikely to take further part in the competition, certainly not before the New Year.

Muldoon went off after only eight minutes and was taken to hospital with his left ear partially severed from his head. And his colleagues were in no doubt but that the injury had been inflicted by a Young Munster boot.

The incident occurred while Muldoon was on the ground, having gathered the ball after a line-out. I was unsighted, from my position on the opposite touchline. Nor did Ulster referee Dick Henderson see it happen. But St Mary's officials are to discuss the matter at a committee meeting tonight.

The upshot of the incident was that an invariably tense struggle became decidedly ill-tempered at times. And whatever the feelings in the St Mary's side, their second-row Steve Jameson gained no marks for striking an opponent with a fist in the 25th minute.

In the circumstances, Jameson appeared rather fortunate to have escaped with no more than a warning from the referee but more serious damage was inflicted on the visiting team when, from the resultant 27 yards penalty, Mike Benson kicked Young Munster into the lead.

Young Munster were well pleased with a winning debut in the First Division. Their success was based on a relentless adherence to the 10-man game. Indeed, the scrummaging power of their forwards was quite remarkable.

This formidable strength was seen to particular effect in the 74th minute when, from a set-scrum on the St Mary's 25, they drove the opposition back a full 20 yards. It was an effort worthy of a try but, from a prime attacking position, they contrived to squander the chance through fumbling the ball along the ground.

The splendid driving of the Young Munster forwards allowed

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Dermot Gilleece

them to overcome a marked inferiority out of touch. St Mary's skipper, Kevin Potts, and, to a lesser degree his second row partner Jameson, almost totally dominated the line-out play. Yet the visiting side made poor use of this possession.

On the occasions when Geroid Doyle got his threequarters moving, they were promptly smothered by the Young Munster cover. Indeed, the tackling of the home team was invariably quick and decisive.

In this context, St Mary's attacking options were clearly reduced by the departure of Muldoon who was replaced by Niall O'Brien. As it happened, their best chance of a try came mid-way through the second half when the industrious left wing, Ben Kealy, made a splendid midfield break followed by a grubber kick which eventually ended in touch close to the corner flag. But when scrum followed line-out, Young Munster hooker Mark Fitzgerald won a critical strike against the head and the danger was averted.

The great strength of the home pack lay in the front row of John Fitzgerald, Mark Fitzgerald and Peter Clohessy who inflicted an extremely torrid afternoon on their St Mary's counterparts for whom Derek Gillen was a late replacement for tight-head Derek Dowling.

Benson kicked a second penalty goal for Young Munster in the 37th minute with a fine effort from 45 yards. The home side lost left wing Gerry Casey in the ninth minute of the second half but he was satisfied afterwards that a slight strain to the right knee would have fully recovered in time for the visit to Ballymena a week on Saturday.

YOUNG MUNSTER: G McNamara; J McNamara, J Wright, F Brosnahan, G Casey; M Benson, J Moloney; J Fitzgerald, M Fitzgerald, P Clohessy, P Meehan, R Ryan, G Clohessy, G Copley, G Earls. Replacement: I Duggan for Casey (49 mins).

ST MARY'S: A White; A McEvoy, V Cunningham, R Hernan, B Kealy; G Doyle, J Muldoon; B Keane, M Corcoran, D Gillen, K Potts, S Jameson, K Egan, D Fanning, N McCarthy. Replacement: N O'Brien for Muldoon (8 mins).

Referee: D Henderson (USR).