

Champions start in same vein

Garryowen 30
St Mary's College 16

**From Brendan Fanning
at Dooradoyle**

GARRYOWEN may be a team much changed in personnel from last season, but their direction remains the same at ways going forward with aggression. They are still the team to beat.

It was a very good match on one of the best pitches in the country. Hard, fast and with great commitment, the more

one sees of the All, the more one appreciates how much it has brought to the domestic game.

It was clear from the early minutes that both teams knew exactly how they wanted to play the game. As it turned out they both had pretty much the same pattern, but the home side had the greater concentration and control.

Mary's meanwhile had a bad dose of the yips. Fired up to meet the physical challenge, they never matched their brains with brawn. They were at times too keen to establish themselves physically and it led to loose ball coming back

from the lineout and ruck.

As a result their backs never got anything like the quality of possession coming back on the other side. As it was,

Nicky Barry was carrying a heavy load of mental baggage into this game and he suffered badly. He and Mary's can console themselves in the knowledge that he won't be under the same kind of pressure in the rest of the campaign.

In the early minutes however it was Mary's who were applying all the pressure; shortening their lineouts and looking to ruck off Kevin Potts and Brent Pope in midfield. They rely hugely on the

latter, and when Dara O'Sullivan soon proved himself up to that defensive task, the visitors needed more ideas.

Instead it was Garryowen who provided the inspiration for two classic first half tries which left them 12-0 ahead at the break. Wing Gary Quilligan got the first in the left corner on 20 minutes and then centre Paul Murphy got over on the right just before half time.

But Mary's threw the game open again just into the second half when a lovely break by Vinnie Cunningham was skillfully finished off by David Hernan. Aiden White's conversion put them within a

score of the lead but the jitters came back to haunt them and a two minute spell of indecision saw them buried.

First Dan Larkin dropped an excellent goal as a couple of Mary's forwards stood and watched, and then, after Barry lost a ball in attack, the play swept down to Mary's territory and finished with a Kenny Smith penalty. Nine minutes later 18-7 became 23-7 with another Quilligan try and Mary's heads started to drop. They were never able to cope with Garryowen's support play, inevitably with Keith Wood at the heart of everything. He should play for Ireland. Now.

Still Mary's began to peg back the points — three penalties from White, the last on 40 minutes, brought them to 23-16 before Garryowen decided to play the game out in Mary's 22. The same old routine went into action again, driving at pace close to the ruck, and Wood was in for the penultimate blow. The final one came with Smith's conversion.

GARRYOWEN: K. Smith, D. Cornejo, P. Danaher, P. Murphy, G. O'Leary, D. Larkin, I. Barry, L. Larkin, K. Wood, K. Ryan, G. Stanton, R. Cornejo, P. Hogan (imp), M. O'Donoghue 54 (pen), B. Conn, D. O'Sullivan.
ST MARY'S: A. White, D. Hernan, M. Hernan, V. Cunningham, J. Kennedy, N. Barry, M. Thorne, D. Dowling, M. Connors, C. Shanley, T. Coughlin, S. Jameson, K. Potts, B. Pope, K. O'Brien.
REFEREE: J. Saelly (Wex).

Garryowen make known their intentions

THE Ireland manager, Noel Murphy, was at Dooradoyle last Saturday to see Garryowen open their defence of the All Ireland League title they won with such style and authority last season. He and an appreciative crowd of around 4,000 got convincing evidence that, while Garryowen have lost some players who made significant contributions last season to the success in a league sponsored by Insurance Corporation of Ireland, the side is no less vibrant and effective. Much that was so very good in the old side remains and Garryowen are on the march again.

St Mary's travelled with a much changed line-up from last season and no little hope that they would start their campaign with a win over the side they beat last season in

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Edmund Van Esbeck

Dublin — Garryowen's only defeat. However, St Mary's departed for home having given much to a splendid match played in ideal conditions, but with nothing tangible to show for their efforts.

They were outscored by 14 points and four tries to one, figures indicative in themselves. Garryowen's display was informative and the message is clear for those with aspirations of succeeding them as champions: dethroning them will not be easily accomplished.

The man who has plotted their strategy, Murray Kidd, said after the match that they had considerable anxiety about the outcome

before the match. "Obviously we are very pleased to win this first one and I thought we played well in patches," he commented. That in itself perhaps holds the key to the Garryowen approach, the pursuit of excellence for 80 minutes. But it was a modest assessment; he might have said that Garryowen played splendidly at times and very competently throughout.

St Mary's came with a realigned pack: three newcomers, all representative players had been recruited. They failed to match the opposition, as Garryowen rucked and mauled with the authority that was their hallmark last season. St Mary's could not find the answer.

In the line-out too Garryowen did very well, and here immense credit was due to Glen Stanton — the man who replaces Brent Anderson — Richard Costello and Ben Cro-min at the back. He did an admirable job. Then there was hooker Keith Wood. He has

pace, perception and an ability to give and take a pass with the facility of a good three-quarter. He demonstrated these qualities when he lay off ruck and maul. He made a major contribution.

Outside the scrum the Garryowen half-backs, Ian Barry and Dan Larkin, were infinitely superior to their opponents and it was not a happy return to the scene of former glories for Nicky Barry. Nervous anxiety was evident in his game and that was not affordable in this sporting theatre on this particular day.

Garryowen led 12-0 at half-time, and their scores came from two tries, the first by Gary Quilligan after Ken Smith came into the line, vintage Garryowen. Smith missed the conversion.

Just after that St Mary's came at the opposition, but Garryowen produced a great scrum to save their line and then we saw a try that was an action replay of some we saw

last season. A tremendous surge by Stanton, the ball won, Wood on hand to transfer the ball outside and Paul Murphy was over in the corner. Smith kicked the conversion and St Mary's had a mountain to climb.

Just after half-time they produced a lovely try, as Vincent Cunningham made a great diagonal break and set up David Hernan for a try. Aidan White, who had missed two penalty chances, landed the conversion. It was 12-7 and St Mary's had got the points they badly needed.

But Garryowen had the answers and the first came with a truly regal dropped goal, kicked from out near the right touchline by Larkin in the 48th minute. Then Barry failed to gather, Garryowen were onto the loose ball like tigers, a penalty ensued. Smith kicked the goal and it was 18-7.

It was 23-7 by the 58th minute when Ian Barry — he gets better and better — ran at the St Mary's defence and opened the way

for Quilligan's second try. Smith hit the up-right with his conversion attempt and also subsequently with a penalty.

St Mary's cut the deficit with three penalties from White, to leave it at 23-16 and then, in the last minute, Wood, who played a major role, got his due reward when he got his side's fourth try and Smith converted.

"It was a good one to win," Garryowen captain Larkin said afterwards. "We are doing a lot of the things we did well last season and have changed a few things."

Garryowen are still a mighty potent force.

GARRYOWEN — K. Smith, D. Costello, P. Murphy, P. Danaher, G. Quilligan, D. Larkin, capt., I. Barry, L. Larkin, K. Wood, K. Ronan, G. Stanton, R. Costello, P. Hogan, B. Cronin, D. O'Sullivan. **Replacement** — M. O'Donnoghue (for Hogan (48 mins)).

ST MARY'S COLLEGE — A. White, D. Hernan, R. Hernan, V. Cunningham, J. Kennedy, N. Barry, M. Thorne, D. Downing, M. Corcoran, G. Shanley, T. Coughlin, S. Jamieson, capt., K. Potts, B. Pogue, K. Davlin. **Referee** J. Bailey (Wales).

Champs put on style

GARRYOWEN 30
ST MARY'S COLLEGE 16

From David Walsh in Limerick

GARRYOWEN may end up losing their League title but they shall not be surrendering it. Surpassing their own expectations, the Limerick side played splendidly in this destruction of Mary's at Dooradoyle.

There was a sunny and calm day, a crowd of around 3,000 (gate receipts estimated at £12,000) and a match which further brightened the afternoon. Both sides tried to play fluent football and left us without a moment's boredom.

Of course the sub-plots were there as well. Mary's arriving with a team of stars: call them the Manchester United of Irish rugby. Bringing with them Nicky Barry, a fly-half who used to be dyed in the blue wool of Garryowen but now wears Mary's darker shade.

And Garryowen trying to cope without the colossus of last season, Brent Anderson. There were other interesting questions: how had that protégé, Keith Wood, fared; how would the slightly built Ben Cronin cope with Mary's towering Kiwi, Brent Pope?

All answered in Garryowen's favour. There will be life at Dooradoyle after Anderson and there was much to admire in the way his replacement Glen Stanton knuckled down to work. Keith Wood has grown too, as much psychologically as physically.

Yesterday his team used him as the stand-off man but with an important difference. This time he didn't take on the defence but transferred immediately. It threw Mary's who were prepared for the stampeding Wood. And what hands for a hooker! This guy can play it most ways.

If there wasn't much surprise in Wood's efficiency, it was startling to find Cronin managing wonderfully against Pope. Very good at the tail of the line out, Cronin consistently made the tackles and he was good going forward.



TRY! . . . Greystones' scrum half Conor Heaney about to ground the ball for a try despite the tackle from Dungannon's Ashley Blair during the All-Ireland League clash at Dr. Hickey Park yesterday

All of which will please Garryowen but they will encounter far stiffer opposition than yesterday's. For Mary's were more a collection of players than a team. Nicky Barry looked about the latest addition, which is what he was.

The Dublin side rearranged their front row to accommodate the arrival of Ciaran Shanley, they changed their second and third rows to make space for Tim Coughlin and left themselves with a pack which looked a cut below last season's.

Maybe the side needs time and it is certain that the four weeks break to the next game is a help to Mary's. They will surely consider restoring Declan Fanning to the blindside and Potts to the second row. That might mean no place for Coughlin: an interesting possibility for a Con-naught interpro and Ireland B player.

Whatever chance Mary's had they blew it in the opening half. Aidan White missing with two straightforward penalties and Barry failing with two drop goal chances. That might have been twelve points, a tally which Garryowen managed on far less possession.

The important difference was in the pace Garryowen achieved in their attacks. Take the first of their four tries: Dara O'Sullivan brilliantly winning ruck ball in midfield, Wood and Phil Danaher surging right, then Cronin turning up on the left to

throw a smashing cut-out pass to Kenny Smith.

The full-back did take a lot of time to feed Gary Quilligan but the left wing still managed to find a route past David Hernan. Then, close to halftime, Stanton flying forward, Wood performing as link-man and Paul Murphy making it in the corner. Smith converted and Garryowen led 12-0 at the interval.

MARY'S promised serious resistance with a smashing try a minute into the new half. Steve Jamson claimed the line out, Vinny Cunningham slashed through midfield and David Hernan jinked off his left and then his right to score. As jinkers go, one of the best. Aidan White converted and the challengers were just a score behind.

But Mary's couldn't deliver on the promise. Garryowen attacked on the right through Quilligan, he kicked through and ended up on the ground. The faithful on Dooradoyle's far side screamed for a penalty but Welsh referee Jim Bailey told Quilligan he wouldn't give him a penalty but he would give him a 9.8 for the dive.

That settled that and Dan Larkin settled the match for Garryowen with an extraordinary drop goal. Standing close to the touch line and within touching distance of the Mary's pack, Larkin let fly. Daft, we thought. But there it was sailing high and

true. Three points on the scoreboard, 23 on the psychological scale.

Larkin had been superb all through and was modest about his drop goal: "Sometimes when I think about things, I make a hash of them. I let my instinct guide me on that one."

Soon Smith had a penalty, then Quilligan had his second try and the score stood at 23-7. Mary's clawed back with three white penalties but they were never going to win. Then right at the end Cronin surged, Wood stood off and when he received he had only to fall forward for the try. That simplifies it a bit but good players make things simple.

Now in his third season at Dooradoyle, Murray Kidd thought his side played in fits and starts: "We were very good for ten minutes in each half." New Zealanders! But the coach did enjoy the game?

"Yes, right after the final whistle sounded."

Garryowen - K. Smith, D. Costelloe, P. Danaher, P. Murphy, G. Quilligan, D. Larkin (capt.), J. Barry, L. Lamen, K. Wood, K. Roman, G. Stanton, R. Costello, P. Hogan, B. Cronin, D. O'Sullivan. Replacement - M. O'Donoghue for Hogan.

St Mary's - A. White, D. Hernan, R. Hernan, V. Cunningham, J. Kennedy, N. Barry, M. Thorne, D. Dowling, M. Conoran, C. Shanley, T. Coughlin, S. Jamson (capt.), K. Potts, B. Pope, K. Devlin.

Referee - J. Bailey (Welsh RU)