

Halpin try kills 'Rock

ST MARY'S COLLEGE..... 17
BLACKROCK COLLEGE..... 16

By Mick Doyle

IF ever there was a game in which a gale force wind would favour both sides evenly, this had to be it.

The tempest in Templeville Road made Blackrock College look almost invincible at the end of a fiery first half after which they led 16-3.

St Mary's by comparison found the going very tough playing into this howler and took almost until half-time to get into any sort of rhythm.

It was a robust, competitive game from the outset, with more action off the ball when it moved from the set piece than on it.

There was no malice or dirty play — just a hugely abrasive, competitive game with plenty shaping and no real damage. It certainly warmed up the crowd.

With such elements in their favour 'Rock quickly pressurised Mary's as McGowan pushed over a third minute penalty.

Three minutes later Beggy claimed a high clearance from St Mary's and made good ground. Wallace carried on to create classic quick ball ruck in a movement involving Ridge, Rolland, McGowan and Mullin: Woods stepped in to stretch the Mary's defence to the very limit before popping a scoring pass inside to Mullin who went over in the corner.

At 8-0 'Rock were looking good, their game was controlled and their game plan was evident — play the game in St Mary's '22'.

Scrum half Philip Lynch and forwards Victor Costello, Kevin Potts and Steve Jameson kept the St Mary's flag flying high in their difficult first half as Paul Wallace, Shane Byrne, Mick O'Neill and Dean Oswald were making life easy and full of promise for the Rock's backline.

Beggy, as ever, was a live wire



TOUCHDOWN... Martin Ridge dives over for Blackrock's second try at Templeville Road yesterday despite the attentions of St Mary's Fergal Campbell. Photographer: Roman Lang.

wanting to get into everything as his went and adding real impetus to Blackrock's attack.

At 20 minutes, after successive rucks, Rolland and Beggy put Ridge in for an excellent solo try from 15 yards in the right corner.

'Rock were on top, organised, and

pack going forward and their spirits up. Mary's now camped in 'Rock's 22 and administered 'first half medicine to 'Rock. At 50 minutes Nicky Barry clawed three points back, McEvoy adding another three five minutes later.

'Rock were finding life difficult despite superb efforts by Rolland, Beggy, Ridge, O'Neill and Oswald to get them out of danger.

Beggy's safe fielding of Mary's kicks in the wayward wind became a feature of the game as did Shane Byrne's superb tackling around rucks and maats.

Alan McGowan's failure to kick off from 22 along the ground instead of into the rampant gale was as inexplicable as the lack of direction to instruct him by his captain or senior colleagues.

It placed 'Rock under ridiculous self-imposed pressure which they could well have done without.

Barry banged over another excellent penalty around 73 minutes and at 16-12 with minutes to go 'Rock were wetting their knickers.

The inevitable winning try for Mary's came from a short penalty from Lynch to Costello (who else) who set up perfect ruck from which Lynch put Barry away going left in front of Rock's posts; a simply superb pass to fullback Gar Halpin coming straight through the middle like a train put Mary's ahead 17-16 with a superb try with seconds remaining.

They earned their win while 'Rock didn't look after their lead. It was an extremely difficult game to play with ball control at a premium.

Full marks to both sides for making a good contest of it, for the sheer enjoyment. It wasn't hard for it to be Edinburgh's 80 minutes.

ST MARY'S — G Halpin, D Wall, N Barry, G Lavin, McEvoy, F Campbell, P Lynch, B Kane, M Concorran, Bowden, S Jameson, P Potts, K Devlin (capt), Costello.
BLACKROCK — D Beggy, M Assal, B Mullin, M FitzNelson, A McGowan, A Rolland, P Byrne, S Byrne, Wallace, J Enderby, M O'Neill, B Gann, F Ridge, D Conway.



FIVE NATIONS C'SHIP

At Paris: France 21 (Saint-Andre 2 tries, Sadourney try, Lacroix pen, Delaud dr gl), **Scotland 23** (Hastings try, 3 pens, 2 conv; Townsend try).

At Cardiff: Wales 9 (Jenkins 3 pens), **England 23** (Ubogu, R Underwood 2 tries, Andrew 2 pens, conv).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England.....	3	3	0	0	74	27	6
Scotland.....	2	2	0	0	49	34	4
France	3	1	0	2	52	63	2
Ireland.....	2	0	0	2	21	46	0
Wales.....	2	0	0	2	18	44	0

ICI ALL-IRELAND LEAGUES

DIVISION 1

At Stevenson Park: Dungannon 10 (Pen try; K McGarry pen, con), **Shannon 12** (A Thompson 4 pen gls).

At Templeville Road: St Marys 17 (A McEvoy 2 pens, N Barry 2 pens, G Halpin try), **Blackrock 16** (A McGowan 2 pens, B Mullin try, M Ridge try).

At Donnybrook: Old Wesley 8 (S Mooney try; A Hawe pen), **Instonians 3** (P Russell pen).

Lansdowne v Young Munster off. Garryowen v Cork Constitution off.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shannon.....	9	9	0	0	146	47	18
St Mary's.....	7	6	0	1	119	92	12
Blackrock.....	8	5	0	3	143	96	10
Garryowen.....	8	4	0	4	135	101	8
Cork Con.....	7	4	0	3	106	95	8
Instonians.....	8	3	0	5	81	88	6
O Wesley.....	7	3	0	4	75	110	6
Sundays W.....	7	2	0	5	69	101	4
Y Munster.....	7	2	0	5	51	113	4
Dungannon.....	7	1	0	6	75	101	2
Lansdowne.....	5	1	0	4	73	129	2

DIVISION 2

At Lakelands Park: Terenure College 11 (D Coleman try, P Hennebry dr gl, P Walsh pen), **Old Belvedere 15** (M Fealy, H McDonnell try each; B Murphy pen and conv).

At Upritchard Park: Bangor 3 (McCall pen), **Greystones 22** (J Murphy, I Power, M Evans try each; R Murphy 2 convs, pen).

UCD v Wanderers off. Old Crescent v

St Mary's tenacious play is fully rewarded

GIVEN that no dent was achieved in a six-point gap behind the Division One leaders, it would be inappropriate to talk of last-ditch pressure being exerted on Shannon through this Insurance Corporation League victory at Templeville Road on Saturday. But St Mary's certainly emerged as the best of the rest, assuming that an 11th-hour turnabout must be considered remote in the extreme.

It was a tough, unremitting battle, contested in extremely difficult conditions. Gale-force winds swept straight down the pitch, allowing Blackrock to open up a 16-0 lead after 25 minutes. "I chose to play into the wind in the first half because I believe we're a good team to chase a target," explained Mary's skipper, Kevin Devlin, afterwards.

His calculations looked like going terribly wrong, however, during the crucial, opening minutes of the second half. Having reduced the deficit to 13 points, seconds before the interval, Mary's set about making more

significant headway with the help of the elements. But two wasted chances seemed destined to cost them dearly.

The first was a missed penalty attempt by Arthur McEvoy from only 25 yards and slightly to the left of the posts. The left-footed shot was sliced off target. Two minutes later, they got another penalty award in a similar position, a few yards further back. Again McEvoy's kick was sliced.

Fortunately for the home side, however, Blackrock were in a decidedly generous mood when it came to conceding penalties. So,

ST MARY'S 17
BLACKROCK 16

Dermot Gilleece

there was the opportunity of calling on Nicky Barry for a 35 yard attempt in the 50th minute and he duly closed the gap to 10 points. Then, midway through the second half, McEvoy edged Mary's even closer.

Indeed when it came to decision-making, Mary's generally got things right. Like in the closing minutes when, with four points

separating the sides, they decided to run a close-range penalty. Two rucks later, Barry created the opening for full-back Gary Halpin to score the winning try.

Deep down, both these clubs probably rejected the notion of a Shannon slip-up. Such was their commitment, however, that one hardly dared contemplate the situation had the League title been at stake. There was clearly bad blood between the forwards from the outset, with the result that Ulster referee Alan Watson found it necessary to stop the match and admonish players on five separate occasions.

Given that he had help from the touch judges in identifying the culprits, one suspected that his warnings must have amounted to little more than the equivalent of a slap on the wrist. Meanwhile, Mary's gradually came to terms with an early line-out dominance by Michael O'Neill and they also improved the quality of their rucking to telling effect.

Yet their finest work would probably have been in vain had Blackrock succeeded in setting a target commensurate with their first half dominance. The visi-

tor's backs certainly looked impressive in full flow, notably international left wing Niall Woods, while scrum-half Alan Rolland performed solidly throughout.

But Mary's were ultimately rewarded for stubborn tenacity and a successful unravelling of their place-kicking muddle. "Everybody wrote us off at the start of the season, which made us all the more determined to achieve a high finish in the League," added Devlin. "We had no control over Shannon but at least we're proving ourselves to be the best side in Dublin."

In that context, it seems fitting, somehow, that their remaining fixtures are all in Dublin — home to Dungannon and Carrycross and away to Lansdowne.

SCORING SEQUENCE: 3 mins A McGovern penalty 0-3 5 mins B Muller try 0-6 20 mins M Ridge try 0-12 25 mins McGovern penalty 0-15 40 mins A McEvoy penalty 3-18 50 mins N Barry penalty 8-16 61 mins McEvoy penalty 9-19 74 mins Barry penalty 12-16 78 mins G Halpin try 17-16

ST MARY'S: G Fether, D Reid, N Barry, G Lavin, A McEvoy, F Carrigan, P Lavery, B Keane, M Carrigan, M Blackmore, J Jernigan, M O'Kelly, K Rogers, V Carrigan, K Devlin.

BLACKROCK: D Barrage, N Aspinall, B Wallin, M Ridge, N Mangan, A McGovern, A Redden, P Flavin, J Byrne, P Wallace, M O'Neill, J Egan, B Gavan, D O'Connell, H McGovern.

Referee: A Wilson (USF).