

Garryowen travel well

ST MARY'S COLLEGE..... 6
GARRYOWEN..... 12

By Kieran Rooney

NEW Insurance Corporation League champions Shannon would have been well pleased with the attitude shown by neighbours Garryowen at Templeville Road yesterday. There was never any question of them settling for second best.

At the finish four penalty goals by centre Kenny Smith were sufficient to give Garryowen the victory which means that Shannon can at last celebrate their first All-Ireland League title. In truth, Garryowen should have won by more.

By contrast, there wasn't much St Mary's coach Claran Fitzgerald could say about his own team's performance, other than it was their worst of the season. They just didn't get their act together.

"You can't expect to win matches playing like that," admitted Fitzgerald. "We didn't deserve to win - Garryowen totally dominated the second half."

"When we got possession, we spilled it. And when we were in trouble we were unable to respond. In other matches the ability to respond has been one of the features of the team."

"But there was nothing there today. It just goes to show how well Shannon have done to win nine on the trot. To keep winning as they have done takes a great side. They deserve tremendous credit. They will be a very difficult act to follow next season."

Down the corridor, Garryowen coach Andy Leslie had good reason to feel pleased with his team's fifth successive away league away victory. Remarkably, they have lost all four home matches.

That they won yesterday was down to a very committed team performance, most particularly from a pack missing three internationals. As usual, the accurate left boot of Kenny Smith was another important factor.



EVASIVE ACTION . . . Philip Lynch of St Mary's uses his pace to outflank the Garryowen cover during the Insurance Corporation of Ireland Division One clash at Templeville Road yesterday.

Photographer: Jim O'Kelly.

It was just as well for St Mary's that he wasn't at his best for at least three more he would normally have kicked were off target.

The fact they didn't get the try they deserved was probably Garryowen's only disappointment. Said Leslie: "After losing Keith Wood, Ben Cronin and Richard Costello our preparation wasn't exactly what we had hoped for. But we responded really well. Let's face it, we had to do something to brighten our season."

And what of Shannon's effort in following Garryowen as champions? "Any team to do what they have done deserves enormous credit. They have had their share of luck, but good sides make their own luck. We had plenty of it last season."

Luck, however, didn't come into it yesterday. St Mary's, after taking a second minute lead with an Arthur McEvoy penalty goal, gradually lost their way.

The first half was poor. Two penalty goals from Smith gave Garryowen a 6-3 interval lead before the Limerick outfit took complete command early in the second half.

But chances were wasted. Smith missed two more penalty opportunities and also came close to scoring a try after some great work from an impressive Richard Wallace.

Somehow, St Mary's hung on and ever managed to level matters with a second penalty goal from McEvoy with 14 minutes remaining. Could they record another late success? The answer was that they have never playing well enough to repeat the dramatic effort against Blackrock.

More Garryowen pressure brought a third penalty chance for Smith and the centre made the score 12-6 four minutes from time with his fourth penalty of the afternoon.

St Mary's - G Halpin; D Wall, N Barry, G Lavin, A McEvoy; F Campbell, P Lynch, B Keane, M Corcoran, W Bowden, S Jameson, M O'Kelly, K Potts, V Costello, K Devlin (Capt).

Garryowen - D Larkin, R Wallace, K Smith, P Denaher, Costello, P Murphy, S McEvoy, P Spavin, P Cunningham, K Rohan, Leahy, M Coughlan, D O'Sullivan, P Hogan (Capt), M O'Donoghue.

Replacements - A White for Costello (20 mins), Birmingham for O'Donoghue (60 mins), Referee - B Smith (MRA).

INSURANCE CORPORATION LEAGUE

ALL-IRELAND LEAGUE DIVISION 1

At Templeville Road — Garryowen 12 (K Smith 4 pens), **St Mary's College 6** (A McEvoy 2 pens).

At Donnybrook — Wesley 23 (S Sexton, D Jackson, A Johnston tries, A Hawe 2 pens, conv), **Young Munster 22** (N McNamara 2 tries; P McMahon try; M Benson pen, 2 convs).

At Stephenson Park — Lansdowne 15 (Glennon, Sharkey tries; E Elwood pen, conv), **Dungannon 13** (Blair 2 pens; McDowell try; McGarry con).

At Shane Park — Blackrock 56 (Woods 2, Ridge, McGowan, Rolland, Gavin tries; pen try; McGowan 6 convs, 3 pens), **Instonians 17** (Irwin, Wilson tries; Gray conv; O'Donnell conv, pen).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shannon	9	9	0	0	146	47	18
Blackrock	9	6	0	3	199	113	12
St Mary's	8	6	0	2	125	104	12
Garryowen	9	5	0	4	147	107	10
Cork Con	7	4	0	3	106	95	8
O Wesley	8	4	0	4	98	132	8
Instonians	9	3	0	6	98	144	6
Sundays W	7	2	0	5	69	101	4
Lansdowne	6	2	0	4	87	141	4
Y Munster	8	2	0	6	73	136	4
Dungannon	8	1	0	7	87	115	2

DIVISION 2

At Rosbrien — Old Belvedere 13 (B Murphy pen; M O'Reilly, H McDonald tries), **Old Crescent 6** (B Begley 2 pens).

At Musgrave Park — Wanderers 9 (M Wyse dg, pen; L Mahon dg), **Dolphin 5** (J Waterman try).

At Lakelands Park — Terenure College 33 (P Walsh 3 pens, try, 2 convs; C Clarke, P Hennebry, F Walsh tries), **Greystones 17** (M Carney, A McLean tries; R Murphy 2 convs; P Deady dg).

At Gibson Park — Malone 13 (M Strutt 2 pen, conv; W Harbison try), **Bective Rangers 11** (D Darcy 2 pens; C Chelan try).

● **UCD v Bangor — off.**

ALL-IRELAND LEAGUE: Unbeaten Shannon bring title to Limerick once again as St Mary's falter against Garryowen

Shannon 'in absentia' are real winners

THIS was one of those precious situations where competitive honesty could be appreciated among sport's great treasures. It succeeded in making sense of the rather odd circumstances at Templeville Road on Saturday in which Shannon, *in absentia*, became Insurance Corporation League Division One champions.

Of course the title race was as good as over before Garryowen faced what would become their last match as the league holders. But a stubborn little detail remained. And despite the absence of international forwards Keith Wood and Ben Cronin, Garryowen gave the matter their full attention.

"We're a highly competitive club — it's not in our nature to play the game any other way," said right wing Richard Wallace, who returns to the international team against Wales next Saturday after a year's absence because of a broken right leg. So, there could be no question of indulging St Mary's in their attempt to maintain an extremely tenuous challenge for the title.

Still, it was not a good match. St Mary's were very much below their best, with the result that Garryowen had to produce only a moderate display to ensure that the league title remained down Limerick way. And even at that, they could have won far more convincingly.

"I'm delighted at getting the chance to make the squad for the World Cup," said Wallace, who was involved in some fine back movements that should have delivered at least one second-half try. The most notable of these came in the 62nd minute when

ST MARY'S 6
GARRYOWEN 12

Dermot Gilleece

Kenny Smith appeared certain to score at the left corner flag only to be denied by a foot in touch.

By that stage, the fine rucking skills of the Garryowen forwards were very much in evidence and they had succeeded in breaking an early, ineffectual dominance by St Mary's. Indeed one got the impression that winning represented a greater prize to the Limerick side, despite the fact that their only reward would be a middle-of-the-table position.

Here was the sort of attitude that has brought so much success to Limerick rugby

over the last few years. "Our younger players got a feeling of how difficult it is to string results together in the league," said St Mary's coach Ciaran Fitzgerald afterwards. "They could also see why Garryowen are rated as one of the most competitive teams in the country."

Meanwhile, home supporters were left to ponder what had happened to the splendid spirit that had brought a recent win over Blackrock in the most difficult conditions. As it happened, the weather could hardly have been kinder on this occasion, nor could St Mary's have wished for a better start than a 90-second lead through a 20-yard penalty goal by Arthur McEvoy.

In fact, they held that lead only until the 22nd minute and were never ahead for the remainder of the match. Even with some good possession in the first half, they failed

to achieve any productive tempo. Garryowen, on the other hand, had obvious scoring potential behind the scrum and their scrum-half, Steven McIvor, was particularly effective later in the match.

Having held a 6-3 lead at half-time, Garryowen looked set to break clear. But Smith missed a 30-yard penalty attempt in the 44th minute. Then came a period of spirited attacking in which Wallace made a particularly fine break before the pack forced a series of close scrums.

Ultimately, penalties decided the issue, even though Smith landed only four out of eight. For St Mary's McEvoy landed two out of three, while colleague Nicky Barry missed two others. Either way, such details would have been of little interest to Shannon, for whom the result was essentially all that mattered.

"I hope they keep some of the champagne for us," said a Garryowen official afterwards. I'm sure they will. And there is the promise of greater celebration to follow on April 1st when, in their final match at home to Instonians, Shannon can officially do justice to their status as the fourth Munster club, with Garryowen (twice), Cork Constitution and Young Munster, to capture this title.

SCORING SEQUENCE: 90 seconds, A McEvoy penalty goal 3-0 22 minutes, K Smith penalty 3-3 38 mins Smith penalty 3-6 56 mins, McEvoy penalty 6-6 70 mins, Smith penalty 6-8 77 mins, Smith penalty 6-12
ST MARY'S: G Healy, D Wall, N Barry, G Lavin, A McEvoy, P Campion, P Lynch, B Keane, M Corcoran, W Bowden, M O'Keefe, S Jamison, K Potts, V Costello, K Davern
GARRYOWEN: D Larkin, R Wallace, P Danaher, K Smith, D Costello, P Murphy, S McIvor, P Spaul, P Cunningham, M Ronan, S Lavery, M O'Sullivan, D O'Sullivan, P Hogan, M O'Donoghue
Replacements: A White for Costello (20 mins), A Birmingham for O'Donoghue (50 mins)
Referee: B Shanley (MRF)