

Local derby to decide title

AT A rough guess, it's fair to say that the most relieved man in Dooradoyle was not the Garryowen captain, not the coach, not even the club president. The treasurer was the man with the broadest grin, one which betrayed the greatest of relief after a nerve-racking day for a club seeking a special place in Irish rugby history.

Garryowen almost managed to blow it, but the prospect of a ground-breaking third All Ireland League title is still palpably real. In six days' time we will be back at the same venue to see how that works out.

Whatever way it breaks down, the treasurer will be a reasonably happy man, for anybody with even a passing interest will show up for the showdown against Young Munster. A point will do it for the boys in blue.

We should have known that they would go the long way around winning yesterday. It is not so much that they have made life difficult for themselves this season, rather that the quality of the side has been some way behind that of their two previous title-winning combinations.

But the common ingredient is guts.

So at half-time yesterday, when Garryowen trailed 9-0, it was always going to be a case of reaching for their most familiar weapon. This season it has been their most potent one.

Having said that, while they lack skilful, match-winning qualities in several areas of the team, as long as they have Richard Wallace on board they will always have a chance. Garryowen will recall his match-saving exploits when he rescued them at the death against Old Belvedere in the first phase of the League. More recently, he produced another crucial touchdown when they were forced to come back from 12 points down against Lansdowne. Yesterday he did something similar.

His team were trailing by three points as the game drifted into the third quarter and they

Brendan Fanning at Dooradoyle

GARRYOWEN

D Larkin (K Gilroy 37min); R Wallace, P Murphy, K Keane, K Smith; B Everitt, S McIvor; P Spain, P Cunningham, K Ronan, M Coughlan, P O'Grady, D O'Sullivan (capt), P Hogan, A Bermingham.

11 ST MARY'S COLLEGE 9

G Halpin; D Hickie, N Barry, D Lyons, G Lavin; F Campion (D Quigley 19min), P Lynch; B Keane, B Browne (capt), S Cawley, M O'Kelly, S Jameson, K Potts, V Costello (F Fitzgerald 19min), K Devlin.

Scorers: Quigley (P 22min) 0-3; Quigley (P 30min) 0-6; Quigley (33min) 0-9; Smith (P 44min) 3-9; Smith (P 54min) 6-9; Wallace (T 63min) 11-9.

Weather: mild. Ground: good. Referee: B Stirling (Ulster).

were still struggling to get a grip on the crucial phases. A couple of minutes earlier, in a set-piece move which has produced scores for him already this season, he took off through a gap, and probably felt confident about making it all the way home.

But a marvellous tackle by Nicky Barry, having his best game on this ground since leaving the club a few years ago, put paid to his progress. By that stage Garryowen's frustration was mounting and they would have been more than happy to settle for the draw, and then go for the win against Munsters.

But a ruck ball 30 metres out provided them with another opportunity; initially, fly-half Barry Everitt stood deep in preparation for the drop goal, and then threw a good pass wide to Paul Murphy. Just before he was closed down, Murphy squeezed the ball through a gap and Wallace did well to gather, shrug off one tackle and plough through another to score in the corner. The reaction from the crowd was immense.

Not that it finished there. Given that St Mary's had effectively nothing to fight for, you would have understood had they accepted their lot at that point. They had already made a significant contribution to the game, not to mention to the stress levels endured by the home supporters.

Despite losing key players in Victor Costello — who was taken to hospital to have 28 stitches in an eye injury — and Fergal Campion — who had eight stitches inserted in a head wound — they battled on regardless.

Substitute Dermot Quigley

slotted in well at fly-half and kicked three penalties in 11 minutes to give St Mary's their first-half lead. And even when Kenny Smith started to peg back the lead with two penalties in the third quarter, Quigley was still able to push Garryowen back metres at a time with accurate punting.

But it was a raking kick from Gary Halpin which led to Garryowen's most nervous moments as the game drifted into injury time. A minute earlier, Smith had missed a straight-forward kick which would have settled Garryowen's nerves. Instead, they found themselves chasing Halpin's kick to the corner and then conceding a penalty through Darragh O'Sullivan at the resulting lineout. On his wrong side, Quigley could have plummeted Garryowen into the deepest of depressions, but he pulled the ball wide and the home side survived.

So, despite limping along out of touch with Mike Coughlan as their only realistic lineout target, and a scrum which creaked far too often for a prospective champion team, Garryowen did it again.

Pride and passion are commodities which have been misinterpreted and much abused, certainly in the national context, in Irish rugby. But to have got so far this season, Garryowen will readily own up that these are the characteristics which have carried them through.

All that remains is for another huge effort against Munsters and Garryowen will have confounded all those — including this critic — who wrote them off at the start of the season. But Munsters will view this fixture as an appropriate opportunity for wrapping up their centenary season with a big result.

If you are within striking distance of Limerick next Saturday, make a point of making it to Dooradoyle. What has been a disappointing League has the opportunity of finishing on a compelling note.

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Hitting the heights: Mike Loughlan, the Garryowen second-row, outjumps the St Mary's College flanker Malcolm O'Kelly at Dooradoyle

League hit by injury worries

By Edmund Van Esbeck

IRELAND number eight Victor Costello (St. Mary's College) and Cork Constitution's international outside half Paul Burke will both miss the All Ireland League match between the clubs at Templeville Road on Saturday.

Costello had to receive hospital treatment and had 50 stitches inserted in a head wound sustained during the league tie against Garryowen last Saturday. Eight of the stitches were internal and 22 external. But, while he will miss the match next Saturday, he still retains some hope that he might be fit to play for his club against Lansdowne in the Leinster Senior Cup tie tomorrow week.

"He is anxious to get back as quickly as possible and we will not rule him out of the cup tie. He is due to see the doctor again on Thursday," said St. Mary's coach Claran Fitzgerald yesterday.

Burke sustained a leg injury playing for Constitution against Old Belvedere last Saturday. He, too, was taken to hospital. There was concern that he might have broken a bone in his right leg but X-rays revealed that there was no fracture.

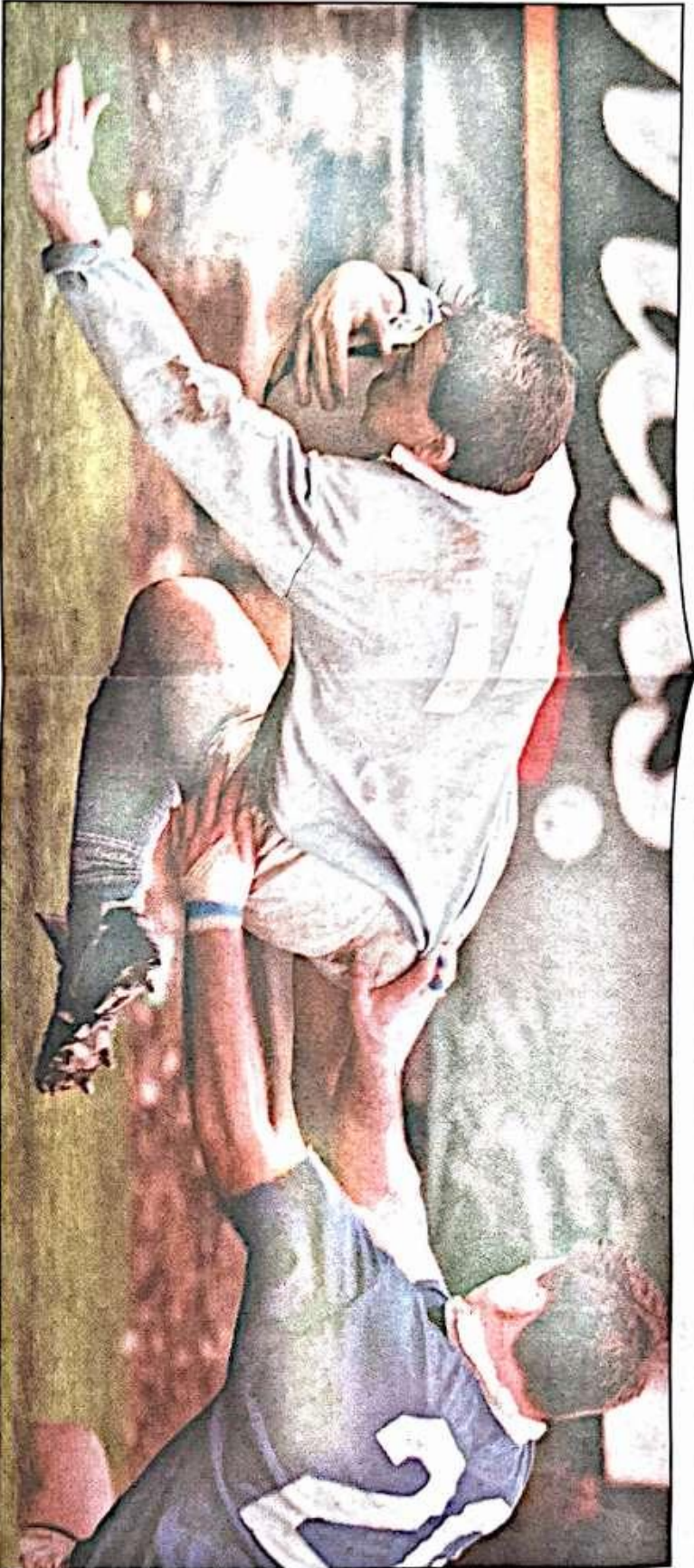
"I got the knock just below the right knee and while it is very sore I am relieved that the injury is nothing as serious as I feared. I hope to be able to play within about a fortnight," he said yesterday.

Both will be fit for consideration for Ireland's match against the Barbarians on May 18th. Costello played in Ireland's last match against England and Burke was the replacement outside half for that match.

Ireland manager Pat Whelan said that the team for that fixture may be picked next Sunday, failing that, it will be chosen the following week.

Both the Munster and Leinster branches have agreed to postpone their senior cup finals, fixed for Saturday May 18th to the following day so as not to have any adverse effect on the Ireland-Barbarians match.

"We have got tremendous co-operation from everyone and greatly appreciate it," said Hugo McNeill, one of the principal organisers of the "Peace International."



Richard Wallace scores the crucial try for Garryowen as Pat O'Connor of St. Mary's tackles him in Saturday's All Ireland League, Division One game at Dooradoyle. — (Photograph: Impho).

Garryowen survive stern test

**GARRYOWEN.....11
ST MARY'S COLLEGE.....9**
Edmund Van Esbeck

AN immense depth of character and resilience have long been a hallmark of the Garryowen club. These have been central components that have carried the club through many a crisis and to many of their great triumphs. They were in evidence again on their home soil at Dooradoyle last Saturday and they needed to be to see off the challenge presented by St. Mary's College in Division One of the Insurance Corporation All Ireland League.

This victory leaves Garryowen level on points with Shannon, so the match that will decide the title will be at Dooradoyle next Saturday when Garryowen play the Young Munster and need only a draw to win the championship for the third time.

Throughout this league campaign Garryowen have revealed a great capacity to come from behind — they have done so five times in the last six matches —

and they did it again on this occasion. Once more it was Richard Wallace who struck the crucial blow with a great try 17 minutes from the end to give Garryowen the lead for the first time. They protected it, not without difficulty and anxiety but with courage and resolution. Wallace has been a prolific try scorer in the league campaign and none has scored has been more valuable than this latest effort.

With Shannon's points difference vastly superior, Garryowen had to get either a win or a draw from the match last Saturday to keep their championship hopes alive. And the tension showed as St. Mary's, although out of contention, cast aside the burden of never having won a league match when having won a league title.

With the rain coming down, St. Mary's carried the game to coach Claran Fitzgerald correctly identified as "their best display of the league."

Although they lost both their international number eight Victor Costello and their Ireland under-21 out-half Fergal Campion after 21 minutes — Costello had to have 50 stitches in a head wound and Campion eight — St. Mary's dominated the first period and built a nine-point lead that did not flatter them.

Garryowen had threatened to take the lead inside the first five minutes, but it was St. Mary's who established control up front and had their opponents under almost constant pressure. Steve Jamieson and Malcolm O'Kelly won a liberal supply of ball from line-outs and St. Mary's tucking and driving was as authoritative as it was effective, despite the loss of Costello, who had given signs that he was going to have a really big match. Frank Fitzgerald proved an able deputy for Costello, as did Dermot Quigley for Campion.

With the rain coming down, St. Mary's carried the game to coach Claran Fitzgerald correctly identified as "their best display of the league."

ceded penalties and Quigley kicked three from four first half attempts. Campion had missed two before his departure. Those concessions were a measure of the pressure. "It would be fair to say that I had a few harsh words at half time. It was a good job the parish priest was not listening," said Garryowen coach Johnny McDonnell. "We knew we could not afford to go further behind. The players' response was tremendous and they showed the kind of courage and determination that has enabled us to come from behind so often during the league."

"It was a great match and an extremely clean match," said Claran Fitzgerald. "I was especially pleased with our first half performance. I felt at half-time if we could get another score we would win. I knew Garryowen would come back at us and they did. That is what you expect from Garryowen. But I am pleased with our performance. We could still have won it, even after they look the lead."

With the St. Mary's pack dominant and very well led by Barry Browne, half-backs Philip Lynch and Quigley played very well to add that strength and Quigley's tactical kicking was well placed. But, as is their tradition, Garryowen were a team transformed after the interval. Paddy O'Grady and Michael Coughlan won good line-out possession and with Paul Hogan and Dara O'Sullivan often in the van of the forward surges they put St. Mary's under pressure. Scrum-half Stephen McIvor offered the necessary response and Garryowen established good attacking positions. Kenny Smith kicked a penalty and added a second within 13 minutes of the resumption and the stage was set for a battle royal. And that we got.

With 17 minutes left Wallace scored the vital try. The score was a great tribute to his dedication of purpose. He gathered a very well-placed chip by Paul Murphy and beat two defenders to score in the right corner. Smith was wide with the conversion. But Garryowen had the lead for the first time. They were extremely hard-pressed to retain it as St. Mary's went in pursuit of victory in a

tremendously exciting finish. Quigley was narrowly wide with a dropped goal attempt and Smith wide with a penalty from 40 yards that would have eased Garryowen anxiety. St. Mary's got a penalty on the right touch-line in the 80th minute and Garryowen hears missed a beat or two. Although Quigley struck it well, the ball floated wide. Then, in injury time it took a superb tackle by McIvor to stop Dennis Hickey just short of the Garryowen line.

Garryowen had won, but St. Mary's left the scene with their honour intact. This was a match in the very best traditions of this competition.

Scoring sequence: 22 minutes Quigley penalty, 0-3, 30 mins Quigley pen, 0-6, 32 mins Quigley pen, 0-9, 44 mins Smith pen, 3-9, 46 mins Quigley pen, 6-9, 48 mins Smith pen, 9-9, 50 mins Quigley pen, 12-9, 52 mins Smith pen, 15-9, 54 mins Quigley pen, 18-9, 56 mins Smith pen, 21-9, 58 mins Quigley pen, 24-9, 60 mins Smith pen, 27-9, 62 mins Quigley pen, 30-9, 64 mins Smith pen, 33-9, 66 mins Quigley pen, 36-9, 68 mins Smith pen, 39-9, 70 mins Quigley pen, 42-9, 72 mins Smith pen, 45-9, 74 mins Quigley pen, 48-9, 76 mins Smith pen, 51-9, 78 mins Quigley pen, 54-9, 80 mins Smith pen, 57-9, 82 mins Quigley pen, 60-9, 84 mins Smith pen, 63-9, 86 mins Quigley pen, 66-9, 88 mins Smith pen, 69-9, 90 mins Quigley pen, 72-9, 92 mins Smith pen, 75-9, 94 mins Quigley pen, 78-9, 96 mins Smith pen, 81-9, 98 mins Quigley pen, 84-9, 100 mins Smith pen, 87-9.

St. Mary's College: G. Hogan, D. Hickey, N. Barry, D. Lyons, G. Lavin, F. Campion, P. Lynch, B. Kearns, B. Grogan, capt., S. Carley, M. O'Kelly, S. Jamieson, K. Potts, V. Costello, K. Davlin, R. Fitzgerald, D. Quigley for Campion, 21 minutes, P. Fitzgerald, D. Quigley for Lynch, 21 minutes, B. Grogan (40 mins).