

Below-par St Mary's still too good

THERE are two ways of looking at this. In one sense, St Mary's played poorly and were flattered by the winning margin; on the other hand it's generally regarded as the mark of a good team when they can win pulling away by four tries to one despite performing below par.

The latter is probably a fairer judgment. Although St Mary's laboured to a win you always felt was theirs — two converted tries at the death finally putting paid to an under-strength but game Instonians — there were mitigating factors, not the least of them Instonians.

True, there is a palpably down-beat air at Shane Park these days; Saturday's modest and fairly lifeless attendance underlining the club's less than enthusiastic response to the AIL. There are rumours of Shane Park being sold (Sainsbury's reputedly the interested party in a mooted £3.5million purchase of the prime site off the M1), resulting in Instonians temporarily ground-sharing with Cooke en route to finding a new site. Already, mid-way through September, realistically they are consigned to a relegation fight.

However, little about the team's performance betrayed this gloomy scenario, for theirs was not a performance based on fear rugby, nor will it be as long as their upbeat coach Brian Gallagher is there. "We need to keep our heads level, stay positive, maintain our concentration and our commitment, and we'll prove that we're a good team. If we keep playing rugby like that it would be very unfair on us to go down."

Recovering manfully from the concession of a soft try and a bright St Mary's opening, which threatened to overwhelm them, Instonians effectively disrupted the visitors and established some impressive continuity of their own in taking the game to St Mary's for much of a superior first half.

Norman Robson's sniping breaks and Stuart Laing's cool, experienced head gave them a solid platform at half-back, but there was little beyond that. Nevertheless, despite a backs-to-the-wall second half spent mostly in their own half, they kept the game theoretically in doubt until the final minute of normal time.

A capricious wind didn't help matters, and the visitors' rhythm wasn't helped by a penalty count of 18-8 to the home side. The loss of both Tom Clancy and hooker Barry Browne were also disruptive, not to mention a further five temporary replacements as the

INSTONIANS..... 16
ST MARY'S 34

Gerry Thornley

frenzied St Mary's bench resembled an outpatients' ward — though admittedly the treatment was a mite speedier.

"It was a factor, but it's not an excuse. It's not acceptable either," said Ciaran Fitzgerald candidly. "We weren't consistent. We allowed them back in to disrupt us, and we certainly weren't impressive at all. And yet we created a lot of opportunities to score, we converted some of them and Instonians were missing a number of key players as well. I think it was a slipshod, disruptive sort of match."

Clearly unnerved by the tipsters' curse, which did for Cork Constitution last season, Fitzgerald added: "We have not got it together yet and there might be an expectation there that we have got to justify. I don't think we've shown anything yet. But I think there's more realism there after two matches. There's a lot of work to do and a lot of potential that hasn't been realised and it's going to take a bit of time."

Nevertheless, there were pluses. Even playing patchily they ran in four tries, testimony to their skilful back-line. The pick of them was the pivotal second one on half-time, when most of their big guns, the classy Fergal Campion, the harmonious midfield partnership of a sharp-looking Vinny Cunningham and Nicky Barry, and, most of all, the barnstorming Victor Costello, created the opening for the impressive Gary Halpin to score.

Four of the five temporary replacements were caused by a porous early head wound to the big number eight, which required repeated re-bandaging. It was no co-incidence that St Mary's played their best rugby when Costello was on the pitch.

Following on from his impressive second half of last season, Costello's runs into open field invariably setting up ruck ball from which St Mary's can attack

Scoring sequence: 5 mins, O'Kelly try, Barry con 0-7; 9 mins, Laing pen 3-7; 17 mins, Robson try, Laing con 10-7; 21 mins, Barry pen 10-10; 25 mins, Laing pen 10-13; 33 mins, Halpin try, Barry con 13-17; 48 mins, Barry pen 13-20; 70 mins, Laing pen 16-20; 79 mins, Lynch try, Barry con 16-27; 80 mins, Lavin try, Barry con, 16-34.

INSTONIANS: G McCausland; A Hewitt, M. Young, G Collins, G McCluskey; S Laing, N Robson, G Bell, A Adair, V Kirk, J Cruiks, R West, B Cornelius (capt), J Kernaghan, K McKee.

ST MARY'S: G Halpin; G Lavin, N Barry, V Cunningham, D Wall, F Campion, P Lynch; T Clancy, B Browne (capt), B Keane, M O'Kelly, S Jameson, K Potts, V Costello, K Davlin.

Replacements: R Lynch for Clancy (28 mins); D Breslin for Browne (56 mins).

Referee: I Ramage (SRU)

RUGBY ROUND-UP

ALL-IRELAND LEAGUE

DIVISION ONE

At Thomond Park: **Shannon 9** (A Thompson 2 penalties, P Murray dropped goal), **Garryowen 3** (K Smith penalty).

At Shane Park: **Instonians 16** (S Robson try; S Laing 3 penalties, conversion), **St Mary's 34** (M O'Kelly, G Halpin, P Lynch, G Lavin try each; N Barry 2 penalties, 4 conversions).

At Anglesea Road: **Old Belvedere 14** (P Gavin try; B Murphy 2 penalties; J Philpott penalty), **Ballymena 5** (J Peake try).

At Stradbroke: **Blackrock 29** (N Woods 2 tries; P Wallace, A Guinan try each; A McGowan 3 penalties, conversion); **Lansdowne 23** (R Hennessy, D O'Sullivan try each; E Elwood 2 cons, 3 pens).

At Temple Hill, **Cork Constitution 17** (P Burke 4 penalties; K Murphy try), **Young Munster 14** (M Lynch 2 penalties; D Clohessy try; A O'Halloran dropped goal).

	P	A	F	L	D	W	P
St Mary's	4	28	54	0	0	2	2
Blackrock	4	26	44	0	0	2	2
Shannon.....	4	14	26	0	0	2	2
Cork Con.....	2	14	17	0	0	1	1
Old Belvedere.....	2	25	26	1	0	1	2
Garryowen.....	2	26	26	1	0	1	2
Old Wesley.....	1	13	13	0	1	0	1
Ballymena.....	1	27	18	1	1	0	2
Lansdowne.....	4	46	34	2	0	0	2
Young Munster.....	0	32	17	2	0	0	2
Instonians.....	0	57	33	2	0	0	2

DIVISION TWO

At Dr Hickey Park: **Greystones 11** (R Vance 2 penalties; B McAree try), **Sunday's Well 22** (J Lacey 2 tries; M Whelahan try; E Hogan-O'Connell penalty, 2 conversions).

At Castle Avenue: **Clontarf 13** (M Smith try; G Roche 2 penalties, conversion), **Bective Rangers 15** (K Barrett 4 penalties, dropped goal).

At Lakelands Park: **Terenure 17** (P Walsh r penalties; C Clarke try), **Malone 6** (N Pattison 2 penalties).

At Musgrave Park: **Dolphin 0, Old Crescent 25** (B Begley penalty, 2 conversions; S Madigan 2 tries; S Tuohy dropped goal; E O'Sullivan try).

At Ormeau: **NIFC 12** (A Park 2 tries; D Wilson conversion), **Dungannon 36** (P Johns, J Patterson, J Gamble try each; K McGarry 5 penalties, 3 conversions).

	P	A	F	L	D	W	P
Dungannon	4	22	72	0	0	2	2
Old Crescent	4	6	38	0	0	2	2
Bective	4	25	37	0	0	2	2
Sunday's Well	2	28	38	1	0	1	2
Terenure	2	19	23	1	0	1	2
Wanderers	2	16	17	0	0	1	1
Malone	2	33	24	1	0	1	2
Greystones	0	44	23	2	0	0	2
NIFC	0	54	32	2	0	0	2
Dolphin	0	25	0	1	0	0	1
Clontarf	0	51	19	2	0	0	2

DIVISION THREE

At Upritchard Park: **Bangor 14** (M McCall 3

penalties; S Matchett try). **Monkstown 18** (P Ryan, P O'Toole try each; A McMaster penalty, conversions, dropped goal).

At Crowley Park: **Galwegians 10** (E Corley, N Talyor try each), **Bohemians 11** (O Moran 2 penalties, J Culhane try).

At Kilterman: **DLSP 15** (K Wheelock penalty, conversion; J Parkes, P Werahiko try each), **UCC 11** (F Twomey try; J Kiernan penalty, conversion).

At Keane Park: **Buccaneers 11** (N Grenham 2 penalties; M Devine try), **Skerries 9** (J Dempsey penalty, dropped goal; K Downey penalty).

At Judges Road: **City of Derry 28** (L McGettigan 2 tries; 1 McGregor penalty, conversion, dropped goal; S Smyth, M Kilgore try each), **Waterpark 0**.

At Model Farm Road: **Highfield 11** (G O'Sullivan penalty, dropped goal; V Nelson try), **UCD 10** (T O'Brien try; B Carey penalty, conversion).

City of Derry.....	P	2	W	2	D	0	L	0	F	36	A	3	P	4
Monkstown.....	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	36	28	4	4	4	4
Bohemians.....	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	22	16	4	4	4	4	4
Highfield.....	2	2	1	0	0	26	25	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
UCD.....	2	2	1	0	1	20	17	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
DLSP.....	2	2	1	0	1	21	20	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Buccaneers.....	2	2	1	0	1	17	20	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Waterpark.....	2	2	1	0	1	18	41	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Skeries.....	2	2	1	0	1	24	26	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Galwegians.....	2	2	0	0	2	23	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UCC.....	2	2	0	0	2	24	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bangor.....	2	2	0	0	2	17	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

DIVI

At College Park:
Morgan 5 conversions
2 tries; W Robb, P
Quinn (try each), Arr

At Hamilton Park:
ties), **Queen's Univ**
version, 4 penalties
try).

At Deramore Park
penalties, conversion
thians 9 (A White 3

**At Chambers Par
son, V Doyle, E Lig
McDowell 2 tries; W
version; B Gribben c
land penalty, D Lillie**

Portadown
Dublin Univ
Collegians
Queen's Univ
Corinthians
CITYMS
Ballina
Ardara
Sligo
Armagh
UCG

LEINSTER:

At Donnybrook: Old penalties, dropped 9 O'Callaghan try; M W

St Mary's add weight to title dreams

ST MARY'S, dark horses for league honours, overcame adversity against Instonians in this First Division encounter at Shane Park. A collision between Costello and

lock forward, O'Kelly, resulted in

touchline treatment for both mid-

way through the first half.

Both resumed but Costello received treatment on two further occasions for a head injury. To add to St Mary's problems, Clancy, the

loose-head prop, hobbled off with a

knee injury and then in the second

half Browne, their captain and

hooker, had to be replaced.

O'Kelly, an up-and-coming lock,

crashed over from a lineout to open

the scoring after five minutes, which

he then converted. Robson scored a

well-worked try for Instonians, which Laing converted. The outside-

George Ace

INSTONIANS

16

ST MARY'S COLLEGE

34

Instonians were 10-7 ahead. Barry

kicked a penalty to level the scores,

and just on the break Halpan, the

full-back, crossed for a fine try

which Barry goaled to give St

Mary's a 17-13 lead.

Barry stretched that lead with a

penalty seven minutes into the sec-

ond half before Laing knocked over

another penalty to cut the deficit to

four points.

It was a fine win by St Mary's

who made light of their injuries—and

four points from two games under-

lined their potential. Costello, de-

spite his head swathed in bandages,

was a powerful factor in the Mary's

pack. With a decided weight dis-

advantage in the scrums the In-

stonian pack wilted during the final

quarter and although the scoreboard

did them no justice, they cannot

complain about their result.

The St Mary's pack hammered-

home their advantage over the final

league matches. Next Saturday they

are away to Ballymena at Eton Park

then, playing Lansdowne at home

before they make the long haul to

Cork and a match against Constitu-

tion. Points will not be easily gained

in any of these fixtures.

Loss of weight up front is going

to be a problem for Instonians. They

played well in the loose exchanges

but in the final quarter of the game

their lack of weight was all too

obvious.

Instonians: G McCausland, A Hewitt, M Young, G Collins, G McCluskey, S Laing, N Robson, G Bell, A Adair, V Kirk, J Cruik, R West, B Cornelius, J Kennogan, K McKee.

St Mary's College: G Halpan, N Barry, V Cunningham, D Wall, F Carrington, P Lynch, T Clancy (Lynch 30min), B Browne (Breslin 54min), B Keane, S Jameson, M O'Kelly, K Potts, V Costello, K Devlin.

Referee: I Ramage (SRU).

Scorers: Instonians: Try: Robson, Con: Laing, Pens: Laing (3). St Mary's: Try: O'Kelly, Halpan, Lynch, Laing, Con: Barry (4). Pens: Barry (2).