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Mary's turn it around

ST MARY'S COLLEGE.....24

OLD BELVEDERE.....12

By John O'Sullivan

ST MARY'S will focus on the result. They will try to blot out the opening 40 minutes of nightmare-inducing fare. They played with all the composure of a drowning man.

Old Belvedere will reflect on a first half performance that provided a 9-3 interval lead, a deserved advantage as they largely outplayed the home side, looking sharper, keener and more composed. The influence of Queensland coach John Connolly was discernable in the rucking and mauling.

Unfortunately for Belvedere, League matches are played over 80 minutes and the interval allowed Mary's coach Ciaran Fitzgerald to marshal his troops.

"I spoke to them about performing the simple things well, concentrating on basics, tightening up and imposing ourselves on the game," said Fitzgerald. "We achieved that in the second half and the scoring opportunities presented themselves. It's a good result but there is no way that I am satisfied with the performance."

No 8 Victor Costello was the ace in the St Mary's pack. When his team struggled, Costello never shirked his defensive duties and after the interval, he led and the others followed.

Steve Jameson, Kevin Potts and Kevin Devlin were others central to the renaissance, while Fergal Campion and Nicky Barry can also be satisfied with their contributions.

Neil Francis demonstrated that young Malcolm O'Kelly has plenty to learn, as the Irish second row dominated the Belvedere throw. The most pleasing aspect of the visitors' display for Connolly will be their application up front. But they must learn to make better use of possession.

Safety-first was a byword for most of the fare and it was disappointing to watch players spurn good attacking opportunities in favour of the boot.

Barry Murphy and Nicky Barry exchanged early penalties before Belvedere took a firm grip on the match. Dominant up front, they forced the concession of three penalties and Murphy was successful with two, to give them a 9-3 interval advantage.

Campion had missed with a long range penalty two minutes before half-time but he struck the ball superbly on 45 and 54 minutes to convert 35 and 45-yard penalties.

He then dropped a superb 30-yard goal and this signalled a Mary's surge. On 67 minutes, Potts and Jameson secured possession at a line-out on the Belvedere 25, the pack drove to the line and Costello applied the *coup de grace*.

Campion converted but although Murphy replied with a fourth penalty after 73 minutes, the outcome was a formality for the home side. They embellished a fine second half four minutes from time, when Potts was on hand after some nifty ball-juggling from Gary Lavin to cross for a try.

ST MARY'S COLLEGE — G Halpin, G Lavin, N Barry, T Meagher, A McEvoy, F Campion, P Lynch, R Lynch, B Browne (capt), B Keane, S Jameson, M O'Kelly, K Potts, V Costello, K Devlin.

OLD BELVEDERE — P McKenna, P Gavin, K M McCarthy, S Tormey, W Norse, J Philpott, B Murphy, M Carroll, N Muldowney, R Ward, M Feely (capt), N Francis, M Carswell, K Spicer, N Moloney. **Replacements:** M O'Reilly for Jormey 20 mins; H McDonnell for Moloney 65 mins.

Referee: A Lewis (Lansdale).