

21/4/97.

Blackrock sunshine blinds St Mary's

LAZY SUNDAY afternoons. Not often you see dust rising above the scrum. The sun may have shone and the grass may have appeared to invite rugby to Stradbroke, but here was a pitch that could be ruinous to one's career.

No doubt both sides were used to it at this stage of the year and if there was a message in the conditions to run the ball, then thankfully both teams picked it up.

But while they rose above the rock-hard surface, you could not but feel that the All Ireland League had taken it out of the players more so than a caked pitch in April.

Still, it was Blackrock who shelved their thoughts of weary limbs and the possibility of another campaign stretching out before them, and it was the home side who had this match won 10 minutes into the second half.

While St Mary's may have contributed 17 points to the games' total, 14 of those were snatched in the last 10 minutes. St Mary's offensive in the dying minutes was simply cosmetic.

Blackrock could well have had more points on the board by the end of what was a lively game. David Lynagh took three kickable penalties to find his range and after that he missed only one of the following four. A little wasteful if St Mary's had been on full throttle, but yesterday Blackrock could afford it.

It was the buzzing Nicky Assaf who triggered number eight Mike Brewer over for Blackrock's first score. While most of a spent ruck were picking themselves off the ground after 16 minutes, an aware Assaf took the tap penalty and all Brewer had to do was launch him-

BLACKROCK 28
ST MARY'S 17

Johnny Watterson

self at the line having met the pass at pace on the short side.

Lynagh finally got off the ground seven minutes later with a penalty, before the home side had St Mary's defending their line for the rest of the half. Occasional breaks were all the visitors could muster, most often when full-back Kevin Nowlan came into the line. But the St Mary's defence held as the Blackrock forwards provided endless ball.

It was only after the break that Blackrock's 8-0 lead started to climb. Three minutes in, Lynagh landed his second penalty for a

11-0 margin before Craig Fitzpatrick finally got his side on the scoreboard when Nowlan was taken out after chipping ahead.

But Lynagh was at hand again, this time to snatch the loose ball from a ruck and slice through a stretched defence to run in under the posts. His conversion took Blackrock to 18-3, which after 50 minutes transpired to be an insurmountable lead.

Lynagh added another penalty and Blackrock pressed until the final 10 minutes. It was then St Mary's made it more healthy looking. Victor Costello, coming in low, beamed his way over from a ruck, allowing Fitzpatrick to convert for 28-10, only for Micheal Roche to then negate it four minutes later.

The defence spread, Roche brushed aside Fitzpatrick's tackle

on the right and went in under the posts, setting up Lynagh for a simple conversion.

The deceptive Nowlan finally won the try he deserved just before the whistle as, again, he came into the line on a break, this time with success. Fitzpatrick converted as the referee blew at 28-17.

Scoring sequence: 16 mins: M Brewer try 5-0; 23: D Lynagh pen 8-0; 43: D Lynagh pen 11-0; 45: C Fitzpatrick pen 11-3; 50: D Lynagh try; con 18-3; 55: Lynagh pen 21-3; 70: V Costello try; C Fitzpatrick con 21-10; 74: M Roche try; D Lynagh con 28-10; 80: K Nowlan try; C Fitzpatrick con 28-17.

BLACKROCK: A Guinan; P O'Brien, D Lynagh, M Roche, S Mooney, A McGowan, N Assaf, D Kavanagh, S Byrne, P Jordan, H Kos, M O'Neil, D Kennedy, D Hackitt, M Brewer (capt).

ST MARY'S: K Nowlan; J McWeeney, R McIlreavy, G Garmon, D Lyons; C Fitzpatrick, O McCormack; B Keane (capt), B Browne, E Byrne, S Jamieson, D Burke, K Jennings, M Cuddihy, V Costello. **Replacements:** B Potts for Jamieson 75 mins.

Referee: T Redmond (Leinster Branch)

Cunningham A tired UCD Greystones too
gives Trinity fail to pass the powerful for
the impetuous Skerries test Monlotoum