

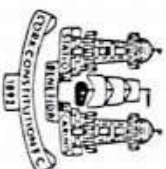
CORK CONSTITUTION F.C.

BACKS

BRIAN O'MEARA
DAVID O'BRIEN
ANTHONY HORGAN
NIAL MURRAY
BRIAN WALSH
KENNY MURPHY
RONAN O'GARA
ALAN BYRNE
BARRY McLOUGHLIN

FORWARDS

IAN MURRAY
PHILIP SODEN
DAVID LEE
CONOR TWOMEY
JOHN ELLIS
PAUL MCCARTHY
ARAN VERLING
KEN MURPHY
JIM CANNING
ULIAN O'CALLAGHAN
JERRY MURRAY
SÉAMUS McGRATH
KEVIN COOPER



Club

Sponsor:



Referee:

Brian Stirling, U.S.R.

Touch Judges:

Barry Brunt, M.A.R.
Ger Desmond, M.A.R.

Medical Officers:

Dr. David Whelan
Dr. Tom Cahill

Kit Supplier : O'Neills

ST. MARY'S R.F.C.

BACKS

KEVIN NOWLAN
DENIS HICKIE
GARETH GANNON
PADDY LANE
RAY McILREAVY
EUGENE GIBNEY
DAVID LYONS
FEARGAL CAMPION
EOIN MCCORMACK
CONOR McGUINNESS
CRAIG FITZPATRICK

FORWARDS

BRAIN KEANE (Capt.)
BARRY BROWNE
EMMET BYRNE
STEVE JAMESON
DAN BOURKE
KEVIN POTTS
MARK CUDDIHY
KEVIN DEVLIN
KARL JENNINGS
DAVID BRESLIN
PETER COYLE
MARK REILLY

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**INSURANCE
CORPORATION
LEAGUE**

Saturday,
January 11th, 1997

Refreshing irreverence on show at Temple Hill

SO alike in so many ways, Constitution and St Mary's are living proof that there is life after the mass defections to the English League and that the All-Ireland League still has plenty to offer. It somehow seemed appropriate that these mirror-images were still inseparable after 80 minutes at Temple Hill on Saturday.

Both have responded to the close-season drain by giving youth its head. Granted, given a back division with an average of 21, St Mary's are very much the new kids on the block but Constitution, with the 27-year-old centres Niall Murray and Brian Walsh relative veterans, never mind 30-year-old Kenny Murphy, aren't far behind.

There was a refreshing irreverence about the 30-man rugby on view, in an attacking sense at any rate. Five tries came, yet there could easily have been more, while it would also be fair to say that St Mary's didn't play nearly as well as they can. Theirs was a performance of camcos in a wildly meandering, fluctuating contest. Fiji versus the Barbarians on a beach might have had more of a pattern to it.

When released, Dennis Hickie scorched the turf, his blistering try after Craig Fitzpatrick and Kevin Nowlan combined to bring the newly selected Irish 'A' winger into the line, pushing St Mary's 14-5 in front.

Constitution appeared almost too wary and lay too deep. But St Mary's were the same, and Constitution retorted with their second and third tries along the backline. It was great to watch and after 37 points by the break, a classic was in the making.

CORK CONSTITUTION...23 ST MARY'S COLLEGE...23

Gerry Thornley

Somehow it never quite happened, though you were never inclined to take your eye off it. An almighty bout of fisticuffs led to sending-offs for the Constitution prop Paul McCarthy and the St Mary's number eight Mark Reilly, when it could have been anyone.

As Ciaran Fitzgerald said of referee Gordon Black: "I just think he picked two players, and the last player I wanted to lose was another number eight. I already had one on crutches on the sidelines (Frank Fitzgerald) and another one in London Irish (Victor Costello). It was very unfortunate from Mark's point of view."

and the supply lines to Hickie and his ilk were cut off at source. At 20-20 Constitution had visions of victory, encamped as they were in the visitors' half. But St Mary's held firm, and were partially let off the hook by Roman O'Garra's misses. Both he and, from long-range, David O'Brien, hit the woodwork in missing six out of nine place-kicks.

The Constitution backs outscored their St Mary's counterparts by three tries to one, yet the visitors looked the more potent. Sure enough, they went for it at the finish. Gareth Gannon and Dennis Hickie breached the initial line repeatedly. But Constitution's cover defence held out, epitomised by Brian O'Meara's tackling. Unusually in a drawn game of so many controversies and so

many missed opportunities, both camps and coaches also readily agreed that a draw was a fair enough outcome. "But having said that," added Ciarán Fitzgerald, "I thought we were very poor in the first-half. We were lax, too one-paced, and didn't apply any control. Our rucking was poor. There was no authority, and that's not our style. That's not the way we want to play."

His Constitution counterpart, Ray Coughlan, seemed comparatively happier: "The pleasing thing is that we showed we have a side which can compete with the top team in the league, which wouldn't have been widely expected of us even a few weeks ago."

Like Coughlan, Fitzgerald is clearly revelling in coaching a team of wannabes. "They're adventurous. I just point them which way to go. They're very easy to deal with. They just go for it."

Thus, the tag of bad travellers which St Mary's take to Limerick does not perturb him in advance of the next outing, a trip to Young Munster and all that that entails.

Scoring sequence: 2 minutes: Kenny Murphy try, 5-0; 9 penalty try, Fitzpatrick con, 5-7; 17 Hickie try, Fitzpatrick con, 5-14; 18 J Murray try, 10-14; 30 Fitzpatrick pen, 10-17; 34 Hogan try, O'Garra con, 17-17; 40 O'Garra pen, 20-17; 42 Fitzpatrick pen, 20-20; 64 O'Garra pen, 23-20; 71 Fitzpatrick pen, 23-23.

CONSTITUTION: D O'Brien, A Hogan, B Walsh, B Murray (capt), Kenny Murphy, R O'Garra, B O'Meara, I Murray, D Lee, P McCarthy, K Murphy, A Verrill, J Carrigan, U O'Callaghan, J Murray. **Replacement:** J Ellis for Carrigan (51 mins).

ST MARY'S: K Nowlan, D Hickie, G Gannon, R McIlreavy, D Lyons, C Fitzpatrick, E McCormack, B Keane (capt), B Browne, E Byrne, S Jamieson, K Potts, M Cuddihy, M Reilly, K Devlin. **Replacement:** D Bourke for Cuddihy (61 mins). **Referee:** G Black (Limerick).

Honours and punches shared

Michael O'Byrne

Cork Constitution 23
St Mary's College 23

A CURIOUS old curate's egg of a match first flowed, then ebbed, and ultimately not even the unpredictable and intrusive refereeing performance of Gordon Black could separate two finely balanced teams.

An unseemly prolonged and truncated brawl brought about dismissals for Con's tight head Paul McCarthy and the Mary's No 8 Mark Reilly, as the sides drew level twice more in a second half punctuated by further controversies and just three penalties.

The game's attractiveness was the coming together of two blossoming young back divisions. True to expectations a score beckoned every time either line moved with the ball in a nip-and-tuck first half. Yet it was the game's one veteran back who set the contest rolling scarcely two minutes after the

off. There seemed little threat as the Con skipper Nial Murray chipped ahead to the Mary's line but, as Ray McIlreavy dithered, ex-Irish international Kenny Murphy pounced stealthily for an opportunist try. Back came Mary's, David O'Brien fly-hacking into touch in goal to concede a five-metre scrum. Kenny Murphy was this time a bit too cute for his or his team's own good at the third put-in, when attempting to take the ball away from the feet of Riley. Mr Black duly awarded a penalty try which Craig Fitzpatrick converted.

Mary's remained on top in the set pieces, a clean Reilly take and McIlreavy's burst on to Fitzpatrick's skip pass putting Dennis Hickie into space and the Mary's flyer scorching inside a palpably frightened cover defence to score under the posts. Fitzpatrick's conversion made it 14-5 but back came Con. Winning better ruck ball they swept the ball right off David Lee's good drive, Brian Walsh and Nial Murray combining to put Jerry Murray over in the corner. Con then responded to a Fitzpatrick penalty with another try when concerted forward pressure absorbed the defence and Kenny Murphy came off his wing to delay his pass and send Anthony Hogan over. The erratic Ronan O'Gara augmented a touchline conversion with a similar penalty to make it 20-17 at half-time.

But O'Gara missed his easiest penalty of five failed efforts during Con's prolonged supremacy in the second half, while O'Brien hit the upright from long-range as Fitzpatrick sandwiched another O'Gara penalty with two of his own. Pounding away at the death, Mary's were finally denied any chance of victory when Black limited additional time to 90 seconds, despite the four-minute stoppage prompted by the 47th-minute brawl.

McCarthy and Reilly walked the lonely walk yet it could have been any two, four or six from about 20 participants and peacemakers, the lines between the two becoming more blurred as each punch else then, little logic and little consistency.

Cork Constitution: D O'Brien, Kenny Murphy, B Walsh, N Murray (capt), A Hogan, R O'Gara, B O'Neary, J Murray, D Lee, P McCarthy, Ken Murphy, A Verling, J Canning (4 Ellis Strimling), U



Hickie: try under the posts

St Mary's College: K. Nowlan, D Hickie, G Gannon, R McIlreavy, D Lyons, C Fitzpatrick, E McCormack, B Keane (capt), B Brown, M Byrne, S Jernason, K Potts, M Cuddeby (D Bourke Strimling), M Reilly, K Devlin.

Scorers: Cork Constitution, tries: Kenny Murphy, J Murray, Hogan; Con: O'Gara; Penalties: O'Gara (2).

St Mary's College, tries: Hickie, penalty try; Con: Fitzpatrick (2); Pen: Fitzpatrick (3).

Referee: G Black (Leinster).

Black day as twenty players brawl

John O'Sullivan

Cork Constitution.....23
St Mary's College.....23

CORK Constitution will rue missed opportunities with the placed ball . . . St Mary's College two late try scoring chances . . . and the spectators at Temple Hill the failure of referee Gordon Black to discharge his duties with greater clarity and consistency.

Black was, at times, intrusive and fussy; on occasions he simply failed to spot glaring infringements — and this baffled both teams. Mary's will perhaps feel the more aggrieved.

The combatants' frustration finally spilled over nine minutes after the interval when some 20 players became involved in a staccato brawl that lasted 90 seconds. When the final punches had been thrown, Black consulted with his touch judges and dismissed Constitution prop Paul McCarthy and St Mary's No.8 Mark Reilly, neither of whom was present for the first flurry of fists.

A match that had previously been a lively, vibrant ode to running rugby dissipated notice-

ably and appeared to be heading for a sterile denouement until the closing passages, when Mary's rediscovered their flair behind the scrum in the form of the excellent Gareth Gannon and Denis Hickie. Twice they came within a pass of crossing the Con line only for the an outstretched hand or boot to foil them.

In mitigation, the home side will feel that Mary's should never have been in a position to smuggle home a draw. Had young out-half Ronan O'Gara been more assured with the placed ball — he was successful with only two of seven attempts at goal — then Constitution may have celebrated a famous victory and Mary's could not have quibbled.

The visitor's dominated out of touch through Steve Jameson and Reilly and enjoyed a significant advantage in the set scrums. Despite this platform, they were guilty of over intricate play in the three quarter-line, a problem compounded by resolute Con tackling.

The home side took the initiative after two minutes when Kenny Murphy pounced on St Mary's centre Ray McIlreavy's hesitancy. Murphy raced after

Niall Murray's chip and as McIlreavy waited for the ball to cross the try line the Con left wing beat him to the touch.

O'Gara missed the conversion and Mary's, suitably chastened, set about their task in earnest. Three scrums on the Con line culminated in Black awarding a penalty try, ostensibly for Kenny Murphy's haste to involve himself as the visitor's trundled over the line.

Craig Fitzpatrick converted and was similarly successful on 14 minutes when Denis Hickie crossed for a try. Reilly won a lineout, Fitzpatrick's long pass allowed McIlreavy to put Kevin Nowlan through a gap and he fed Hickie. With the defence closing in Hickie simply stepped off his right foot and raced through the gap for a superb score.

Constitution reduced the deficit on 30 minutes with a try from excellent flanker Jerry Murray and despite a Fitzpatrick penalty, drew level seven minutes from the interval when right wing Anthony Horgan profited from fast hands and a well timed pass from Kenny Murphy, popping up from the blindside wing.

O'Gara converted and added

a penalty in injury time to give the home side a 20-17 interval advantage. Fitzpatrick's second penalty two minutes after the re-start preceded the all-in fracas seven minutes later.

Con withdrew flanker Jim Canning so the dismissed McCarthy could be replaced in the front row by John Ellis. O'Gara (twice) and fullback David O'Brien missed penalty opportunities before the out-half finally nudged his team in front, ironically with arguably his most difficult kick.

Fitzpatrick's 22 metre penalty eight minutes from time pre-empted a final flourish from Mary's with their youthful three quarters almost contributing that elusive score.

The point was enough to see Mary's move the top of the table and should they maintain that position to the end of the season, they will recall yesterday's gritty resolution.

Cork Con: D. O'Brien, A. Horgan, B. Walsh, N. Murray (capt), Kenny Murphy, R. O'Gara, B. O'Meara, I. Murray, D. Lee, P. McCarthy, Ken Murphy, A. Verling, J. Canning, U. O'Callaghan, J. Murray. Repts: J. Ellis for Canning 49 mins.
St Mary's: K. Nowlan, D. Hickie, G. Gannon, R. McIlreavy, D. Lyons, C. Fitzpatrick, E. McCormack, B. Keane (capt), B. Browne, E. Byrne, S. Jameson, K. Potts, M. Cuddihy, M. Reilly, K. Devlin. Repts: D. Bourke for Cuddihy 61 mins.
Referee: G. Black (Leinster).

RUGBY

Insurance Corporation All Ireland League Division One

Stevenson Park: DUNGANNON 41 (P Sandford 2 tries, R Carey 2 tries, G Leslie, J Hastings tries, A Blair 4 con, pen) OLD WESLEY 7 (C Younger try, A Hawe con)

Lakelands Park: TERENCE COLLEGE 13 (P Walsh 2 pens, con, C Clarke try) OLD BELVEDERE 11 (B Murphy 2 pens, O'Beirne try)

Shane Park: INSTONIANS 9 (S Bond 3 pens) BALLYMENA 16 (S Ritchie, N McKernan tries, R McIlmoyle 2 pen)

Thomond Park: SHANNON 26 (M Galwey, E Halvey tries, A Thompson try, con, 2 pens, P Murray dr gl) LANSDOWNE 17 (E Elwood 4 pens, S Cooney try)

Temple Hill: CORK CONSTITUTION 23 (K Murphy, N Murray, A Horgan tries, R O'Gara con, 2 pens) ST MARY'S 23 (D Hickie try, penalty try, C Fitzpatrick 2 cons, 3 pens)

Rosbrien: OLD CRESCENT 22 (S Tuohy pen, try, 2 cons, D Bowles, L Dinneen tries) GARRYOWEN 24 (B Everett, J Clarke tries, K Keane 2 cons, 4 pens)

Stradbroke: BLACKROCK COLLEGE 32 (N Assaf, Kearns, Farrell tries, A McGowan try, 3 cons, 2 pens) YOUNG MUNSTER 21 (D Tobin, D Clohessy tries, A O'Halloran 3 dr gls, con)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Mary's Coll	4	3	1	0	100	66	7
Lansdowne	3	3	0	0	102	28	6
Blackrock	4	3	0	1	97	57	6
Shannon	4	3	0	1	83	55	6
Terenure Coll	4	3	0	1	62	55	6
Garryowen	4	3	0	1	113	112	6
Cork Con	4	2	1	1	81	56	5
Dungannon	4	2	0	2	122	92	4
Ballymena	4	2	0	2	53	75	4
Old Belvedere	4	1	0	3	47	61	2
Young Munster	4	1	0	3	64	90	2
Old Wesley	4	1	0	3	42	77	2
Old Crescent	4	0	0	4	55	11	0
Instonians	4	0	0	4	30	107	0

Next fixtures: 25 January: OW v OC, OB v Dungannon, Blackrock v Terenure, Ballymena v Shannon, Garryowen v Inst, Lansdowne v Con, YM v St Mary's

STATISTICS