

Old Crescent get new feeling

LAST SEASON Old Crescent were sheltered from the demands of top flight rugby on the comfort couch of Division Two. The Limerick club sailed through the season undefeated. On Saturday, they were exposed to a new experience at Templeville Road.

The absence of influential flanker Len Dineen and the late omission of centre Leo Doyle must have disrupted Old Crescent's preparations. Into the centre came Anthony O'Dwyer — a brother of coach Jed O'Dwyer — who suffered the misfortune of a dislocated kneecap with 10 minutes remaining.

At this point, Old Crescent trailed 34-21 and this unfortunate incident was enough to exhaust any glimmer of an unlikely comeback. Although left wing Paul McDonagh had made the best use of Barry O'Neill's long, floated pass to get in at the corner moments earlier, Old Crescent had introduced their full complement of replacement backs. So, second choice hooker Mick O'Meara took to the centre.

Near the end, nippy St Mary's scrum-half, Eoin McCormack, inched his frame over the line from a five metre scrum. Out-half Fergal Campion made up for missing the conversion with a penalty deep into injury time that consigned Old Crescent to a harrowing defeat.

Of course, St Mary's are much lauded for the way they like to play and the new binding rule for back rows at scrum suits their expansive style. Indeed, Leinster wing Denis Hickie set up one try for colleague David Lyons (20 minutes), before turning the Crescent defence inside out on a 60 metre dash down the right touchline for his own touchdown. Campion converted the second of these on his way to an impressive haul of 22 points. This gave St Mary's 15-8 lead after 26 minutes.

ST MARY'S 42
OLD CRESCENT 21

Des Berry

Sandwiched between Hickie's dazzle was a mauling try from Crescent's John Forde.

When Nowlan won the race to his own kick ahead, Campion slotted the conversion and quickly added a penalty. Begley's second penalty closed out the first half scoring to leave St Mary's 28-11 in front.

Old Crescent made a better fist of things on the turnover with a try from number eight David Bowles. But, Campion split the posts from two penalties and St Mary's were back in control again.

As expected St Mary's Coach Ciaran Fitzgerald was pragmatic in victory. "It will be a long hard campaign and I'm just delighted to have gotten passed the first round. It was pleasing that we scored four tries. It proves that we have options", he said.

Old Crescent Coach Jed O'Dwyer felt his side's downfall was largely self-inflicted. "I am very disappointed especially with our first half showing".

Scoring Sequence. 6 mins — F Campion pen 3-0; **18** — B Begley pen 3-3; **20** — D Lyons try 8-3; **22** — J Forde try 8-8; **26** — D Hickie try, Campion con 15-8; **29** — Campion pen 18-8; **33** — K Nowlan try, Campion con **25-8**; **36** — Campion pen 28-8; **40** — Begley pen 28-11 (half time); **53** — D Bowles try 28-16; **56** — Campion pen 31-16; **62** — Campion pen 34-16; **65** — P McDonagh try 34-21; **79** — E McCormack try 39-21; **80** — Campion pen 42-21 (full time). mins Campion pen 42-21 (full time).

ST MARY'S COLLEGE: K Nowlan; D Hickie, G Gannon, R McIlreavy, D Lyons; F Campion, E McCormack; B Keane, B Browne, E Byrne, S Jameson, K Potts, M Cuddihy, K Devlin, F Fitzgerald. **Replacements:** M Reilly for Devlin 52 mins.

OLD CRESCENT: B Begley; F Walshe, B O'Neill, A O'Dwyer, P McDonagh; S Tuohy, S McCarthy; P Madigan, M Hayes, P J McLoughlin, J Forde, D Kirby, T Browne, L Toland, D Bowles. **Replacements:** M O'Meara for Hayes 37 mins — temporary, F Downes for McCarthy half time, S Madigan for Walshe 65 mins, M O'Meara for O'Dwyer 69 mins.

Referee: P Adams (WRU).

Wing wizards

ST MARY'S **42**

OLD CRESCENT **21**

David McKechnie
Templeville Road

WELCOME to Division One. Old Crescent may have stomped an unbeaten path through Division Two last season, but they'll have to be a lot more clinical if they hope to make anything like the same impression at the higher grade. They worked tirelessly, but a combination of bad kicking, unnecessary penalties, and the lack of that little bit extra made the score look something of a rout. At four tries to three, it certainly wasn't.

From the start the visitors found it all uphill. The first half was a tale of two wingers, with Denis Hickie and David Lyons ripping into the Old Crescent cover and getting a try apiece. But you wouldn't have guessed it by the way things started.

Crescent attacked boldly, but an early penalty from Brian Begley, just like the later ones, failed to hit the target. With John Forde cleaning up in the line-outs, the first ten minutes saw St Mary's pinned backward, though without conceding a score. That was the way things went all afternoon.

Nonetheless, the early scores were shared equally.

Brian Begley and Feargal Campion traded penalties, before St Mary's got their first try, a sweeping attack that finished with Lyons in the corner. No time to celebrate — John Forde went over at the other end from the drop-out. That was the signal for St Mary's to have their best spell of the match. A risky throw from Eoin McCormack found an accelerating Denis Hickie, and he ran from his own half to land in the right-hand corner. That score, together with Shane McCarthy's effort, and a sprinkling of successful Campion kicks, saw them go into the break 28-11 in front.

The beginning of the second period coincided with a pounding of St Mary's defence. Two minutes into it, Begley had a penalty 25 metres out, just left of centre, but the ball was pulled left and wide. One minute later, an identical position, an identical outcome. In total, Begley missed seven of his nine kicks. If those two had gone in, it might have made a game of it.

A couple of penalties from St Mary's made all the difference as Paul McDonagh got another try for the visitors to make it 34-21. But the home side finished the stronger, and a late try by scrum-half McCormack and another Campion penalty gave the scoreline a somewhat glossy look.

Lansdowne.....26
Dungannon.....15

WHEN Lansdowne fans sit down and talk about their greatest triumphs, this one might not even get air space. This win, however, was very welcome on the opening day of the Insurance Corporation League.

The pre-match talk that they are the best bet to bring the title to Liffeside could have burdened them more than they care to admit. With so much possession, they really should have put more points on the board.

And it was only after fly-half Ashley Blair dropped the nearest of goals for Dungannon in the third minute that Lansdowne began to put something together. Two minutes later, Eric Elwood gave a lovely slip pass to Richard Governey and the full-back went over in the corner.

When Elwood dropped a goal in the 12th minute, you expected the home side to turn an early screw but it was not until the stroke of half-time that they got their second try.

Rody Corrigan made the initial break and when he was held up, the ball came along the line to right winger Michael Kearin who steamed over in the corner. Elwood made it 16-3 just before half-time with a penalty.

The pluckiest of tries by Dungannon scrum-half Stephen Bell put them back in the game five minutes after the break but Lansdowne, even if they missed out on some good chances, took it in their stride. Elwood kicked his second penalty and they were back on course.

Kearin got his second try in the 60th minute, just when the controversial Shane Leahy came into the game. After that, it was easy for Lansdowne, although Dungannon had the last word when front row forward Gary Leslie got over in the corner.

Lansdowne: R Governey, M Kearin, A Reddan, K McQuirk, R Corrigan, E Elwood, D O'Mahony, E Bohan, B McCoy, A McKeen, S O'Connor, P O'Connor, S Rooney, A Doyle, C McEntee.
Replacements: A O'Sullivan for O'Mahony, S Leahy for S O'Connor.

Dungannon: P Sandford, R Carey, R Stevens, A Redpath, R Cowan, A Blair, S Bell, D Miller, M Patton, G Leslie, C Simpson, K Walker, W Dunne, J Patterson, J Hastings.

St Mary's College.....42
Old Crescent.....21

UNBEATEN in Division Two last season and currently basking in similar success in the Munster Development League, Old Crescent were given a sharp reminder of the scale of the task in front of them in pleasant conditions at Templeville Road yesterday.

Beforehand, the omens were good for Crescent, as Mary's had been ravaged by defections in the aftermath of the professional era. Of course, the absence of war horse Len

Dincen from their own back row and the late defection of centre Leo Doyle had an unsettling effect.

For Old Crescent this was new ground, and St Mary's took full advantage of this. Fergal Campion and Brian Begley traded early penalties, as the feeling out process produced bruises and crunching tackles.

St Mary's brightest spark was right wing Dennis Hickie. The Leinster representative player made the first try of the game for wing colleague David Lyons and then turned the Crescent defence inside out on a 60 metre dash to the right corner.

This gave Mary's a 15-8 lead. Out-half Campion converted the second of these on his way to an impressive 22 point haul. In between, Crescent second

row John first of his

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Wesley survive la

Old Wesley.....18
Old Belvedere.....13

OLD Wesley survived a late Belvedere revival to get their season off to a flyer at Donnybrook. Wesley, deemed by many as 'favourites' to be relegated, never let Belvo find their rhythm. The visitors were guilty of loose handling and weak tackling throughout and were instrumental in their own downfall.

The home side took the lead in the eighth minute, when Adrian Hawe slotted home a penalty. After 26 minutes, Wesley's Chris Pim crashed over for a try after Colin Younger had skipped by some poor Belvo tackling.

On the stroke of half-time, Younger again broke through the Belvo defence, this time setting up his captain Conor Hoey to claim the five points.

This left Belvo trailing 15-3 at half-time. John Philpott reduced the deficit with a penalty early in the second half. Wesley failed to turn pressure into points when out-half Hawe missed two kickable penalties. Wesley introduced Niall Farren as a tactical replacement after 61 minutes and two minutes later, slotted home another three points.

Chris Colgan scored Belvo's only try with five minutes remaining, and in the final seconds the visitors' winger Hernan broke free but was held up on the line by a try-saving tackle from Rob Casey.

Old Wesley: C Hoey (capt.), R Casey, R McNaughton, C Younger, A Leeson, A Hawe, G Walsh, R Jackson, J Quirk, J Feehan, B Bursey, G Duffy, C Pim, S Gill, M Higginson.
Replacements: N Farren for Leeson 61 mins.

Old Belvedere: P McKenna, D Hernan, S Torney, W Norse, C Colgan, J Philpott, E Murphy, M Carroll, P Kenny, R Ward, N Feeley, P Cochran, F O'Beirne, H McDonnell, C Johnston.

Replacements: S Grooke for Carroll, J Quinn for McDonnell, C Bewley for Philpott.
Referee: M White (ARLB).

Ballymena.....
Terenure.....

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