

WES MATCH DAY SPONSOR

GILBERT
MATCH
BALL
SPONSOR

Spanwell

CORPORATION LEAGUE - DIVISION ONE



St. Mary's RFC

15. KEVIN NOWLAN
14. DENIS HICKE
13. GARETH GANNON
12. RAY MCILREAVY
11. DAVID LYONS
10. FEARGAL CAMPION
9. EGIN MCCORMACK
1. BRIAN KEANE (CAPTAIN)
2. BARRY BROWNE
3. EMMET BYRNE
4. STEVE JAMESON
5. KEVIN POTTS
6. MARK REILLY
7. KEVIN DEVLIN
8. FRANK FITZGERALD

SUBSTITUTES

16. CONOR MCCUINNNESS, 17. CRAIG FITZPATRICK,
18. DAVID BRESLIN, 19. PETER COYLE,
20. MARK CUDDHY

St. Mary's RFC
IS SPONSORED BY

Firestone

FIRESTONE "MAN OF THE MATCH"
AWARD WILL BE PRESENTED
AFTER THE MATCH.

REFEREE:
A. Watson
(URF)

SATURDAY
21st December
1996
at 2.30 p.m.

Templeville
Road



Touch Judges:
Tom McCormack
(ARLB),
Michael Touhey
(ARLB)

15. PAT MURRAY
14. BILLY O'SHEA
13. ALAN MCGRATH
12. CONOR MCDERMOTT (CAPTAIN)
11. ANDREW THOMPSON
10. JIM GALVIN
9. BRIAN MACGOEY
1. DONAL COSTELLO
2. JOHN DEEGAN
3. NOEL HEALY
4. J. KIERAN MAHER
5. MICK GALWEY
6. ALAN QUINLAN
7. EDDIE HALVEY
8. ANTHONY FOLEY

SUBSTITUTES:

- JAMES HICKEY, IVOR O'BRIEN,
JOHN HAYES, RORY SHERIFF,
JASON HAYES

Shannon RFC

RUGBY: Shannon slip up in bid for three-in-a-row

St Mary's celebrate as champions fall

Brendan Fanning

St Mary's College..... 13
Shannon..... 11

TO gauge the significance of this result, a stroll down the corridor in the Templeville Road clubhouse was instructive. Two dressingrooms and two radically different stories. In the Mary's camp, the celebrations were wild, and justifiably so. Next door — for the brief moments that it remained open — the scene was one of desolation. To a man, the Shannon heads were turned towards the floor.

This was a reward for bravery. There were far too many balls spilled on a blustery and bitterly cold day for this to be ranked as a classic but it was intense, physical and compelling.

And the manner of victory was as dramatic as it was stunning. St Mary's trailed 6-11 as the game steamed towards its conclusion. They had established a foothold in the Shannon half but then position had never been their main problem, unlike possession — at the line-out at any rate — where they turned over so much ball.

So while we were charitably assessing Mary's as a team who deserved at least a point, we didn't believe they were about to get it. Then, from a scrum 25 metres out from the Shannon line, Denis Hickie burst through the midfield to give the pack a good ruck to attack.

From there, they went left and the excellent Gareth Gannon put David Lyons away on a head-to-head confrontation with Billy O'Shea. Earlier in the half, it was O'Shea's fine try which had settled his side, but this time he was backpedalling, trying to catch Lyons, and it was a fruitless journey.

Even so, replacement Craig Fitzpatrick was faced with a touchline conversion to determine whether one point or two would be the reward. With the wind at his back, he struck the ball perfectly and the revival was complete.

Still, with the game now in injury time, Mary's had to withstand a final onslaught from the champions. Shannon succeeded in keeping the ball alive long enough to get to the Mary's 22 but when Jason Hayes cut



Heading for the line: Shannon's Anthony Foley breaks past Kevin Devlin at Templeville Road.

Photographer: Jim O'Kelly.

inside as they attacked the right corner, the move was halted.

They managed to free the ball, with a delay, and Eddie Halvey had a foot in touch as he went in search of glory. That was that.

Shannon will hardly agree but this result — which sees Mary's unbeaten after three matches — gives the competition a fresh impetus. All bets are now on hold.

The Christmas break will give the champions time to take stock, though yesterday's lesson was simple enough; when you have the advantage, drive it home. Unfortunately for Andrew Thompson, he drove four of his six goal kicks wide of the target, and had he succeeded

with a 30-metre effort on 70 minutes, Shannon would be spending the festive season in festive mood.

Instead, it is Mary's who are probably still celebrating and they will have no shortage of heroes when this game is being relived. Despite his youth, Denis Hickie carries enormous influence behind the scrum and yesterday he was joined by Eoin McCormack and Gareth Gannon.

McCormack's pace was a constant threat to the Shannon back row, where Alan Quinlan's attachment to the scrum was, at best, dodgy; Gannon, meanwhile, made any number of big tackles and when it came to taking the ball up, he was always

aggressive.

It's hard to believe that all three were winning schools cup medals just two years ago.

Equally Shannon will find it hard to believe that they came unstuck here, for this young Mary's would have been expected to fold in the face of the big guns. But they got stuck into the game in the first half and despite having faced the strong diagonal breeze, they trailed just 3-6 at the break.

By that stage they had also lost three players, with Fergal Campion, who was stretched off, their biggest loss. Fortunately, the knee damage may not be as bad as initially feared.

They kept the fight going throughout the second half, despite falling further behind to

O'Shea's try, the end result of excellent play by Alan McGrath, a centre who is developing into a genuinely consistent performer.

But maybe there was a touch of complacency about Shannon after that score, for this was the kind of match they have battled through before. Not this time however. They will have no complaints.

St Mary's: K. Nowlan, D. Hickie, G. Gannon, R. McElreath, D. Lyons, F. Campion, E. McCormack, B. Keane (capt), B. Browne, E. Byrne, S. Jameson, K. Potts, M. Reilly, F. Fitzgerald, K. Devlin. **Replacements:** D. Breslin for Browne 20, C. Fitzpatrick for Campion 43, M. Cuddihy for Fitzgerald 44. **Shannon:** P. Murray, B. O'Shea, A. McGrath, O. McDermott (capt), A. Thompson, J. Galvin, B. MacGoey, D. Costello, J. Deegan, N. Healy, K. Maher, M. Galwey, A. Quinlan, A. Foley, E. Halvey. **Referee:** A. Watson (Ulster). **Replacements:** J. Hayes for O'Shea 60.

