

ALL-IRELAND LEAGUE/Division One

Conflict leaves trail of bad blood

**OLD CRESCENT "....." 16
ST MARY'S COLLEGE. 17**

Gerry Thornley

RARELY, if ever, has the AIB League witnessed the like of Saturday's disgusting and disgraceful scenes at Rosbrien. Three red cards and five yellow cards were the bare bones of the ill-discipline and thuggery that rendered the actual rugby secondary. In fact, it was even worse than that.

The home side's Robert Duggan and Anthony O'Dwyer were dismissed, as was Emmet Byrne of St Mary's, while the visitors' Trevor Brennan, Steve Jameson and Peter Coyle were yellow-carded, along with Crescent's Diarmuid O'Malley and Brian Toland.

However, many more could have been dismissed as by the end, certain players were only interested in acts of skulduggery and thuggery wanted to continue the distribution after the final whistle. The Crescent hooker PJ

concerned with a "Dublin media bias" and getting across their side of the story perhaps indicates that deep down they knew they had overstepped the mark.

Mantra-like, the Crescent coach, Jed O'Dwyer, blamed Brennan for the final quarter frenzy. "I thought the ref lost control. He let Mr Brennan away twice. The game then got out of hand for whatever reason. I don't know what happened, but I didn't think the referee was in control from start to finish."

When the litany of transgressions was put to him — two sending-offs, two yellow cards, another unseen head butt, one of his players pushing the St Mary's coach — O'Dwyer responded: "They could have had a lot more sent-off today."

This ignores the fact that Brennan wasn't even on the pitch when the worst of the naked aggression came to the surface in the final

quarter. It is true that Brennan had been spoken to three times by an utterly ineffectual Gordon Black, and was deservedly yellow-carded for a late and high tackle on the Crescent out-half, Packie Halissy, after 54 minutes.

However, it's worth considering the Mary's response. After the first of three ugly free-for-alls in the 56th minute, Barry Brown, Conor McGuinness and Mark Reilly could be seen talking to Brennan, presumably in an attempt to make sure he didn't lose his cool. After 63 minutes, St Mary's substituted Brennan and he had also been one of their most effective players on a day when many of their big guns weren't firing.

By comparison, Old Crescent made no such discernible attempt at self-restraint. Quite the contrary. Jed O'Dwyer may be right when claiming that Crescent didn't go out to provoke a row, but by the last quarter, they had completely lost their discipline. The catalyst, was, more often than not, one of Steve Jameson's takes at the front of the St Mary's line-out. One such catch, close to the Crescent line after 50 minutes, saw Jameson's legs whipped from under him, whereupon he landed on his head and was seemingly stamped on.

Following another Jameson take on 57 minutes, the St Mary's lock and Robert Duggan exchanged punches on the ground long after the St Mary's man had tumbled forward. Jameson was booked for punching. Duggan was sent-off for head-butting.

Another take by Jameson on 71 minutes led to another maul and off-the-ball contretemps with Brian Toland. Jameson was holding onto Toland's hand to prevent any further punching, whereupon, I clearly saw Toland head-but the St Mary's lock.

Soon after, Toland and O'Malley were booked for punching and then Byrne and O'Dwyer were sent off for fighting as well — the Crescent coach's brother having untypically according to most people, needlessly punched peace-maker Fergal Campion.

The AIB's disciplinary committee will meet in midweek and will decide on whatever suspensions will be handed out, based upon referee Black's report. They may also invite individuals from both camps.

All afternoon, this contest had been bubbling beneath the surface. In a fractious and fragile affair, the referee thrice took players aside in the opening 15 minutes, but to little effect. Like most of the Crescent players and maybe some of the St Mary's players, in moments of quiet contemplation, Black cannot be happy with his own display. The stop-start refereeing suited

Crescent more than Mary's. Nonetheless, the visitors had seemingly pulled clear by occasionally releasing their backs for Kevin Nowlan's seventh try of the campaign, and John McWeeney's ninth, along with a close-range effort by Brennan. Their gander up and the game well out of control, Crescent nearly stole it with a couple of late tries.

Scoring sequence: 23 min: Nowlan try; Crescent conversion 5-14; 40 min: Patrick J. 7-21; Halissy penalty 6-20; Brennan try 6-12; 45 min: O'Dwyer try 6-17; 46 min: O'Dwyer try 11-17; 48 min: O'Dwyer try 16-17.

OLD CRESCENT: P. McDermott, K. Halissy, G. O'Donnell, L. Doyle, K. McGuinness, P. Halissy, C. Forde, R. Duggan, P.J. McLoughlin, T. Stratton, L. Dunne, (capt.), G. Kirby, G. Duggan, D. Bowles, P. Doyle, P. McGuinness, D. O'Dwyer for Duggan (48 min), O'Dwyer for Bowles (59 min), B. Toland for Kirby (55 min).

ST MARY'S COLLEGE: K. Nowlan, P. McWeeney, R. McGuinness, E. Brennan, D. Brennan, C. McGuinness, E. Byrne, D. Brennan, P. Coyle, S. Jameson, M. Reilly, T. Brennan, V. Costello, M. Cassidy, R. McGuinness, F. Fitzgerald for Brennan (63 min), K. McGuinness for Coyle (68 min), R. Lynch for Fitzgerald (74 min).

Referee: G. Black (Limerick).

Cards like confetti but Mary's survive warfare

WITH four minutes of injury time on the clock, Packie Hallissy, the Old Crescent fly-half, lined up a kick which if successful would have won this game for the Limerick side. As soon as Hallissy let fly, however, it was clear he had missed and any right-thinking person at Rosbrien would have heaved a sigh of relief.

On a day of unmitigated violence, Old Crescent simply did not deserve to win. The result means that play-off hopes are alive and well for St Mary's and that Crescent plough further into trouble. They lost by three tries to two despite a rousing finale, yet the result was meaningless. This game produced three red cards — two to the home side — and five yellow, three going to the visitors.

That may sound as if the blame can be shared equally but in truth it cannot. What got into Crescent, God only knows, but they were a disgrace. They will protest vigorously and will argue that they were goaded, and it is

Tom English	
Old Crescent	16
St Mary's	17

perhaps fair to say that a Mary's man started it all off when Trevor Brennan pole-axed Hallissy in the 54th minute. Yet Crescent finished the game with their discipline in disarray and their reputation in tatters.

Two minutes after Brennan was disciplined, Robert Duggan, the Crescent loose-head, appeared to stand on Steve Jameson's head and he got booked. Two minutes after that Jameson and Duggan battered each other at a ruck. The Mary's man was shown yellow, Duggan got red.

That, though was only a prelude to the rumble after 78 minutes. A ferocious mill developed in front of the clubhouse involving practically every player on the park. This time it was Emmet Byrne and Anthony O'Dwyer who walked, the latter for a cow-

ardly swipe at Fergal Campion, who was merely minding his own business. Brian Toland, the Crescent substitute, was yellow-carded for aiming a butt at Jameson, then Peter Coyle joined him after another offence.

At the end, more nonsense in the guise of P J McLoughlin, the substituted Crescent hooker, who squared up to Steve Hennessy, the Mary's coach. Hennessy, to his credit merely walked away.

And the rugby? Well, it was only after 23 minutes that we saw the first move of note when Campion sent in Kevin Nowlan for the try, converted by the fly-half. Crescent had a chance to level before half-time but had to settle for a Hallissy penalty followed by another just after the break.

Mary's then grew dominant with Brennan crashing over for a try after 45 minutes and John McWeeney benefiting from a sharp move off a scrum to score yet another try in a wonderful season.

In quick succession, the



Dive for the line: Trevor Brennan crashes over for St Mary's

Springbok Hilton-Greene scored to make it 17-12 and then O'Malley got another with the game in injury time. It would have been a thumping injustice had Hallissy successfully booted that final kick.

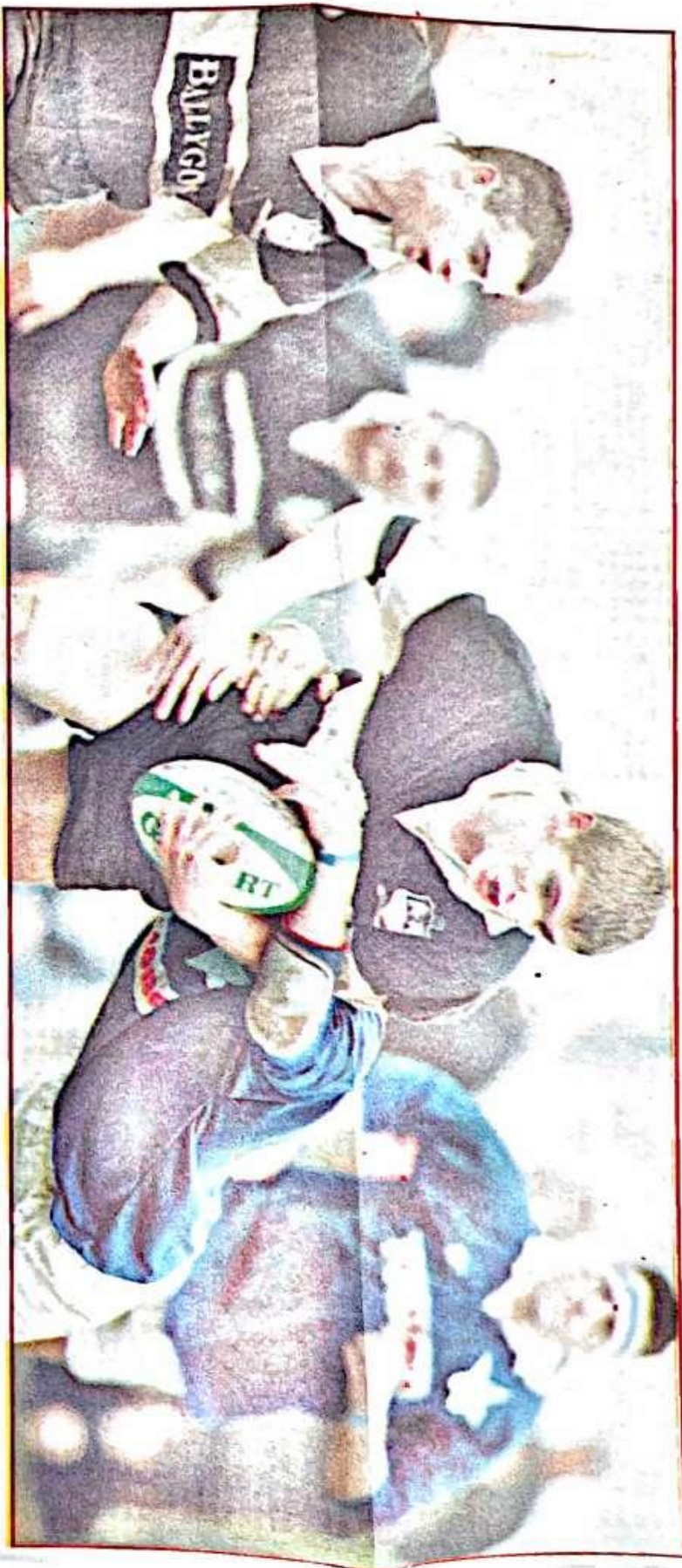
Old Crescent: P McDonagh, K Hilton-Greene, A O'Dwyer, L Doyle, K McInerney, P Hallissy, C Forde, R Duggan, P J McLoughlin, T Stapleton, L Dinneen (capt, D O'Malley 48min), D Kirby (B

Toland 63min), G Dinneen, D Bowles (D Davies 60min), P Neville.

St Mary's: K Nowlan, J McWeeney, R McIlreavy (K MacNamee 68min), G Gannon, D Hickey, F Campion, C McGuinness, E Byrne, B Browne, P Coyle, S Jameson (capt), M Kelly, T Brennan (F Fitzgerald 63min, R Lynch 74min), V Costello, M Cuddihy.

Scorers: Old Crescent: Tries: Hilton-Greene, O'Malley, Pens: Hallissy (2). St Mary's: Tries: Nolan, Brennan, McWeeney, Conc: Campion.

Referee: G Black (Leinster).



Paul Neville of Old Crescent attacks the St Mary's line at Rosbrien yesterday

INPHO/JAMES MEEHAN

Old Crescent thuggery fuels disgrace

OLD CRESCENT

16

ST MARY'S

17

Peter O'Reilly

Rosbrien

WHEN the final scene involves a touchline conversion to decide the result, it's reasonable to assume that this a decent afternoon's entertainment. In fact, it was a disgracefully violent affair, with three players being dismissed by referee Gordon Black, who had to reach for his yellow card on five further occasions.

The atmosphere of animosity lingered afterwards and Steve Hennessy, the St Mary's coach, who was shoved and

verbally abused on the final whistle, was understandably distraught.

"To be honest, I'm still in a state of shock after the last 20 minutes of that game. It was just crazy. Some of our lads were concerned that Crescent wanted to take it into the dressing room afterwards. I'm stunned."

With good reason. The home side were principally responsible for the violence, with some of their players intent merely on acts of thuggery. You could understand their desperate desire to survive in Division 1 but on this performance, it would be a better place without them.

The game exploded into anger only in the second half but the signs were there in a

dour, niggly opening. We came expecting to see the Mary's backs fling the ball about but first it seemed they had to subdue the Crescent pack and herein they created problems for themselves.

For once, they held a clear advantage in the scrums but early on they refused to move the ball very far from source. The Conor McGuinness's snipes around the fringes were well policed and with Barry Browne's poor line-out throwing, their progress was slow.

However, after McGuinness and John McWeeny had been held up to the Crescent line, Fergal Campion finally created the space for Kevin Nowlan to score midway through the half. The full-back received an inside pass from a

scrum near the posts and scored a neat try off the blind side of a scrum shortly afterwards but by this stage the main concern of the Mary's players was with self preservation.

Emmet Byrne and Anthony O'Dwyer followed Duggan to the sideline after a free for all minutes later but occasionally some rugby broke out. Just after Peter Coyle was carded in the 78th minute, Kelly Hilton-Greene scampered over in the right corner from a tapped penalty. With so many stoppages there was still plenty of time for Diarmuid O'Malley to burrow his way over from a line-out. Hallissy missed both conversions, denying his side a victory they scarcely deserved.

late hit on Hallissy that provoked the spark but from there the game became a brawl. In the 60th minute Crescent's loose head prop Robert Duggan was given his marching orders following a fight with Jameson. McWeeny scored a neat try off the blind side of a scrum shortly afterwards but by this stage the main concern of the Mary's players was with self preservation.

SCORING SEQUENCE
23 mins: Nowlan try; Campion con O-7; 42 mins: Hallissy pen 3-7; second half: Hallissy pen 6-7, 46 mins: Brennan by 6-12; 62 mins: McWeeny by 6-17; 78 mins: Hilton-Greene by 11-17; 88 mins: O'Malley by 16-17.

OLD CRESCENT: P. McDonagh, K. Hilton-Greene, A. O'Dwyer, L. Doyle, R. McInerney, P. Hallissy, C. Fode, R. Duggan, P. McLoughlin, T. Stapleton, L. Dimmen (capt), D. Kirby, G. Dinneen, D. Bowles, P. Neville. Replacements: D. O'Malley for Dinneen, 49 mins; D. Davis for Bowles, 60 mins; B. Toland for Kirby, 63 mins.

ST MARY'S COLLEGE: K. Nowlan, J. McWeeny, R. McLeavy, G. Gannon, D. Hickle, F. Campion, C. McGuinness, E. Byrne, B. Browne, P. Coyle, C. O'Reilly, S. Jameson (capt), M. Reilly, T. Brennan, V. Costello, M. Cuddihy. Replacements: F. Fitzgerald for Brennan, 63 mins; K. McNamee for McLeavy, 68 mins; R. Lynch for Fitzgerald, 74 mins.

Referee: G. Black (Leinster)

Old Crescent 16
St. Mary's 17

THE first half of what was a very important game for both clubs at Rosbrien on Saturday bordered at times on boredom.

But the explosive second period will be remembered for many a day as thrown in with a modicum of splendid rugby came a series of brawls which culminated in the sending off of two Old Crescent players, Robert Duggan and Anthony O'Dwyer, and one from St. Mary's, Emmet Byrne, while a number of others were extremely fortunate not to receive the ultimate punishment.

It was an amazing degeneration of sportsmanship by both sides. It is not for me to apportion blame or to indicate those who should also have been sent off but suffice to state that the first yellow card was shown against a St. Mary's player.

St. Mary's came as the team of all talents with five players who had represented the full Irish side this season. They left extremely fortunate to have taken the two precious points and had lady luck smiled even in the slightest on Old Crescent they would have snatched a dramatic and sensational victory.

Deep into injury time and with the last kick of the game Pakie Hallissey had a chance to win it for Crescent. It would have been a "steal" of monumental proportions but as his kick drifted inches wide the relief amongst the St. Mary's players was palpable.

With only three minutes of normal time remaining St. Mary's led 17-6 and looked to be home and dry.

Then came an astonishing comeback by thirteen man Old Crescent. First Kelly Hilton-Green sped in for a try in Denis Hickey's corner and deep into injury time came a tremendous try by Diarmuid O'Malley who emerged with the ball to be given the credit by a sporting colleague who went over with him following great drive.

Pakie Hallissey missed both conversions-the first of them was retaken because of an early charge by St. Mary's-and the homesters had just failed once again.

The sigh of relief on the faces of the St. Mary's team told the entire story. They dominated the game almost throughout and then paid the penalty of relaxing their grip in the last few minutes.

It will be a travesty of justice if Old Crescent are relegated. They were the first team to beat Ballymena and were decidedly unlucky not to have won at least two more of their games.

On their performance on

Saturday there is still hope of avoiding the drop but they will have to play more consistently over the entire 80 or so minutes.

Crescent coach Ged O'Dwyer said after the game "We began well and defended splendidly in the first half. We conceded only the one try and a penalty and when Pakie Hallissey put us back in contention so early in the second half I thought we were in with a big chance. St. Mary's are a good side and perhaps just about deserved their win. The commitment by our players was excellent".

Commenting on the incidents O'Dwyer said "It should be noted that the first yellow card was shown to a St. Mary's player for a late tackle and that three of the first four cards were shown to St. Mary's. In my opinion Brennan should have been sent off two or three times over and another St. Mary's forward should also have gone".

Old Crescent will bemoan the fact that they were not awarded a penalty try near the end of the first half. They certainly seemed to have a valid case as a St. Mary's back in attempting to catch the ball seemed to hit it forward as Old Crescent had a man on hand to take what seemed a scoring pass. But referee Gordon Black ordered a scrum.

Old Crescent provided a number of star performers and none more so than Paul Neville who was superb in the back row despite being subjected to intense pressure at times.

P. J. McLoughlin, Gareth Dinneen and Dara Kirby also worked tirelessly while behind Pakie Hallissey had a splendid game at out-half and made good use of a fine service from Colin Forde, Paul McDonagh had a splendid game at fullback and Kelly Hilton-Green took his one scoring pass magnificently.

But Leo Doyle turned in yet another marvellous performance in the centre making a number of breaks and his tackling was superb.

St. Mary's big stars and especially winger Denis Hickie failed to sparkle to a large extent but Kevin Nowlan and John McWeeney were both impressive.

St. Mary's, wined and dined by Old Crescent on the day the original fixture was postponed did not attend the traditional post match players meal and left the ground with minutes of leaving the dressing-room.

It was a bizarre occasion that will have ramifications in the weeks ahead. Sportsmanship was certainly not the winner.

Old Crescent: P. McDonagh, K. Hilton-Green, A. O'Dwyer, L. Doyle, K. McInerney, P. Hallissey, C. Forde, R. Duggan, P. J. McLoughlin, T. Stapleton, L. Dinneen, D. Kirby, G. Dinneen.

P. Neville, D. Bowles. Replacements, D. O'Malley for L. Dinneen, injured, B. Toland for D. Kirby, 63 mins.

St. Mary's: K. Nolan, J. McWeeney, R. McIlreavy, G. Gannon, D. Hickie, F. Campion, C. McGuinness, E. Byrne, B. Brown, P.

Coyle, S. Jameson, M. Reilly, T. Brennan, M. Cuddihy, V. Costello.

Replacements, F. Fitzgerald for Brennan, K. McNamee for McIlreavy, R. Lynch for Fitzgerald. Referee, G. Black, Leinster.



Old Crescent's Colin Forde

Crescent Comp outplayed by impressive PBC

By MICHAEL O'FLAHERTY

Crescent College
Comprehensive 6
Presentation Brothers
College 39

DESPITE putting up a spirited resistance, Crescent Comprehensive bowed out of the Munster Schools Junior Cup in the semi-final, having suffered a heavy 39-6 defeat by PBC, at Annacotty.

The Cork side, who led 17-3 at the interval, scored a total of seven tries without replay with a display that was as clinical as it was impressive. Having crossed their opponents line within five minutes of the start, the visitors continued to put on the pressure scoring at regular intervals.

Yet Crescent created several scoring chances in the opening quarter with David Burke, Darren Harris, Cian Reddan and Donal Flynn, testing the defence with strong runs that were only terminated with some strong tackling.

The forward exchanges were pretty even with the solid Crescent front row of David Demery, Anthony Geoghegan and David Upton dividing the possession in the set pieces. Justin Herbert, Liam Murray and Darragh O'Neill fared well out of touch, but it was in loose play where Press was at their most dangerous.

They recorded their opening score after five minutes, when Paul Rose rounded of a passing movement to touch down near the posts and the impressive Eoghan Ryan added the extra points.

They added to their advantage soon after when right wing Paul Healy raced 30 metres for a try in the corner. Crescent came more

into the game when David Burke landed a penalty, but it was to prove only temporary relief as Colm Galvin added try number three prior to the interval.

When the visitors captain and prop forward Fergus Gately, added another try within a minute of the second half the writing was very much on the wall for Crescent. A second Burke penalty completed the Crescent scoring, but Pres responded with 17 points in as many minute prior to the final whistle.

Full back Niall O'Connor went in under the posts and Ryan converted before Mark Murphy also touched down after yet another Pres passing movement that involved forwards and backs. In the final minute, O'Connor added his second try to complete the scoring.

Crescent Comprehensive: Eoin Tiernan, Donal Flynn, Brian Tuohy, Cian Reddan, Bill Noonan, David Burke, Darren Harris, David Demery, Anthony Geoghan (captain), David Upton, Eoin Griffin, Hustin Herbert, Liam Murray, Darragh O'Neill, Eoghan McGuire.

Replacements used: George Casey, Liam Murphy, Stephen McMahon, Niall McMahon, Brian Burke.

Presentation Brothers: Niall O'Connor, Paul Healy, Mark Murphy, Eoghan Ryan, Paul Rose, Richard Lane, Colm Galvin, Fergus Gately (captain), John Elliott, Landy Hill, Robert Healy, Emmett Cassidy, Shane Buckley, Jim Morrison, Ronan Murphy.

Replacements used: Richard O'Brien, Robert Philpott, John Crowley, Frank O'Mahony, Jonathan Dwyer.

Referee: Olan Trevor (MAR).