Smyth's return to Mary's is a hit,

PLAYERS POINT

PETER SMYTH'S return to St Mary's this year has helped the club with their charge for the Division 1A title and centre Mark Sexton believes the coach's calming influence has the players in good shape as the run-in approaches.

'It's surprisingly relaxed, there's a great buzz around the club and a lot of the lads are friends,' said Sexton. 'There is a lot of pressure but the lads are enjoying the rugby and with Smythy back on board it's created a great bond between the squad — everyone's looking forward to the next five games.'

Sexton, younger brother of Leinster out-half Jonny, will miss this weekend's game with Lansdowne on the back pitch at Aviva Stadium. The 23-year-old has Gilmore's groin and saw a specialist yesterday as it might require surgery, but he remains hopeful of returning before the end of the season.