

St Mary's scupper hopes of league champions for double

Leinster title for Juniors

ST MARY'S 15
DUNDALK 9

DUNDALK'S brave bid to become only the second junior club to win the Junior One League foundered at Donnybrook yesterday as St Mary's retained the title with a victory which was by no means as comprehensive as the scoreline would suggest.

A resilient St Mary's were never more than six points behind and, crucially, they took almost every chance which came their way.

Leading 6-3 at the interval, Dundalk increased that advantage with a penalty by out-half Gerry O'Hara early in the second-half.

However, St Mary's kept plugging away, and the excellent Steve Hennessy landed three penalties in the space of five minutes to give his side a 12-9 cushion. The experienced full-back then put the game out of Dundalk's reach with his fifth penalty, in injury time.

O'Hara, who didn't have the best of days with his place kicking, dropped a goal and landed a penalty during a first-half

ST MARY'S: S Hennessy, S Butler, P Conlon, R Hernan, T Moran, G Halpin, J Muldoon, G Kelly, J Carvill (capt), C Shanley, F Dolan, C Potts, M McLoughlin, F Fitzgerald, D Fanning, J Visage, R Rooney, G O'Hara, B Woods, J McKeivitt, C Herr, P Finnegan, R Shaktleton, P Hughes, M Halperny (capt), C Meegan, R Vorster.

ST MARY'S 17
LANDSDOWNE 6

Dermot Gilleece

good performances to our credit this season, and it would be nice to have something to show for those efforts."

They certainly didn't play like nearly-men. Indeed, there was a sparkling authority, particularly in a forward effort which eventually snuffed out some determined Lansdowne resistance. Despite fine jumping by Lansdowne's Paul O'Connor, Mary's dominated the line-out through Jameson and Tim Coughlan, while in the loose their forwards were irreplaceable.

That, added to the fine, penetrative running of their backs, particularly Aidan White, Cunningham and out-half Nicky Barry, made it somewhat surprising that they were limited to only one try. In truth, they were extremely hard done by not to have had another in the 51st minute when a brilliant move, initiated by Cunningham deep inside his own half, involved nine players, backs and forwards, before scrum-half Mark Thorne was held

up within a few feet of the Lansdowne line.

In view of their limited possession, Lansdowne desperately needed something special from Eric Elwood. For the international out-half, however, it was one of those forgettable days when his normal, delightful coordination seemed to desert him, even in the execution of dead-ball kicks.

Meanwhile, Mary's laid the necessary groundwork in the opening half. Solid in the tight, their forwards were particularly effective in pursuit of the loose ball, and the absence of Brent Pope, who has returned to New Zealand, was hardly noticeable, such was the back-row commitment of Kevin Potts, Philip Kennedy and Kevin Devlin. Indeed, Devlin was outstanding.

Lansdowne's best effort at a try came as early as the fourth minute when open-side flanker Andy Doyle gained possession after a quick line-out. In a surge down the left touchline, however, he took the surprising option of passing inside when one felt he might have made better progress on his own.

The St Mary's try came 10 minutes later. Cunningham made the initial break before passing to Gary Lavin who, in turn, sent

Michael Corcoran clear. The supporting position of the hooker was perhaps typical of his pack's mobility, and he did particularly well in breaking through an attempted tackle by Elwood before scoring at the corner.

A splendid, all-round performance by White was enhanced by four penalty goals; he was unlucky not to have had another when, just before half-time, an effort from a difficult angle on the right hit the near upright. By that stage the score was 14-6 in Mary's favour and Lansdowne had already completed their tally — two penalty goals from Elwood.

Mary's could afford to relax somewhat during the second-half without even marginally jeopardising their final place. And so, they created a little bit of history by becoming the first club to win a Leinster Senior Cup semi-final at Donnybrook since the competition was inaugurated 111 years ago.

ST MARY'S: A White, A Gillan, V Cunningham, G Lavin, D Wall, N Barry, M Thorne, B Keane, M Corcoran, D Dowling, T Coughlan, S Jameson, K Potts, P Kenny, K Devlin, **Replacements** — G Halpin for Wall (16 mins), J Muldoon for Cunningham (65 mins).

LANDSDOWNE: C Wheahan, M Dillon, G Ahern, B Glennon, B Casey, E Elwood, F Ahern, T Clancy, M Brady, A McKeen, P O'Connor, J Heanion, C Quinn, P Ward, C Quinn. Referee: S Buggy (ARLB).

IT MAY not have been the pinnacle of their aspirations for the season, but a place for St Mary's in next Saturday's Leinster Senior Cup final against Old Wesley has become eminently acceptable. They will probably need to find a replacement, however, for left-wing David Wall, who damaged knee ligaments in this semi-final victory at Donnybrook on Saturday.

But concern about Wall was more than offset by the anticipated well-being of international centre Vincent Cunningham, who was also replaced because of injury. "It's no more than a slight thigh strain — I should be fine," he said.

This was a splendid performance by Mary's who decisively scuppered Lansdowne hopes of adding the cup to their All-Ireland League second division title. And it made the Templeville side clear favourites to regain a trophy which they last won in 1987.

"It would be unrealistic to talk about the cup as compensation for our failure to win the league, which is obviously the ultimate target," said Mary's skipper Steve Jameson. "But we are a good, competitive side with a lot of

Dundalk pay the penalty as Hennessy makes Mary's day

ST MARY'S.....15
DUNDALK.....9
DUNDALK were on the verge of history in yesterday's Junior One League final at Donnybrook and they blew it.

Only one club outside the senior ranks — Railway Union way back in the 1930s — has ever won the title, yet Dundalk looked set to emulate that feat of by-gone days mid-way through the second-half of a game they dominated.

At that stage, the Co Louth side deservedly lead 9-3 and they had St Mary's on the rack as their forwards, inspired by South African No 8 Riaan Vor-

MARK JONES REPORTS FROM DONNYBROOK

ster, were all over the St Mary's pack.

But, somehow, they just went off the boil, allowing Mary's to establish a foothold in their half and within the space of five minutes found themselves 12-9 in arrears.

The winners' experienced full-back Steve Hennessy did the damage with three beautifully struck penalties in quick succession and then after St Mary's had withstood some ferocious late pressure from Dundalk, Hennessy delivered the killer blow with his fifth penalty in injury time.

That final scenario had looked remote during a first-half which saw Dundalk in complete control.

Vorster, lock Pat Hughes and flanker Colin Meegan took the game to Mary's and their was also flair and pace behind the scrum in the guise of Vorster's countryman centre Johan Visage.

However, Dundalk's dominance wasn't reflected on the scoreboard as out-half Gerry O'Hara had an off day with the boot.

He managed to land a drop goal and a penalty, but Hennessy kept his side in the hunt with a penalty.

St Mary's were still struggling when O'Hara made it 9-3 in the ninth minute of the second-half, but just when they needed to turn the screw, Dundalk allowed Declan Fanning and Colin Potts into the game and Hennessy's deadly kicking did the rest.

ST MARY'S — S Hennessy; S Butler, P Conlon, R Hernan, T Moran; G Halpin, J Muldoon; G Kelly, J Carvill (capt.), C Shanley, F Dolan, C Potts, M McLoughlin, F Fitzgerald, D Fanning.

DUNDALK — D Croucher; D McCabe, C Poole, J Visage, R Rooney; G O'Hara, B Woods; J McKevitt, C Herr, P Finnegan, R Shakleton, P Hughes, M Halpenny (capt), C Meegan, R Vorster.

REF - T Redmond (ARLB)

Anderson's final joy

IT was an emotional farewell for one of Ireland's greats over the weekend when Willie Anderson led Dungannon to an Ulster Senior Cup triumph over Ballymena.

Capped 27 times in the green jersey, the 38-year-old international lock was an inspirational figure in helping Dungannon bring the Cup back to Co Tyrone for the first time since 1976.

Meanwhile, All-Ireland League champions Young Munster were forced to play second fiddle to arch rivals Garryowen in the Munster final at Thomond Park.

It was a fitting result for Garryowen's New Zealand coach Murray Kidd who returns back to his native shores this week.

In the Leinster Senior Cup semi-final St Mary's were far too good for Lansdowne in a poor clash at Donnybrook