

All Stars gave great display

Held British Champions to single point

SLIGO All Stars gave their greatest-ever performance in holding the Great Britain Champions, Aldershot Warriors, to a single point in the Glen Abbey Invitation Tournament at O'Connell Schools, Dublin, last week-end and in the process, once again proved that they are one of the up and coming teams in the country.

After disposing of Kelleher's of Tralee 36-33 in a game which was close and keen all the way, Sligo were given little hope of upsetting the trophy-holders but they raised their game to a new high and had the packed gym roaring encouragement as they brought the great Warriors to within a point of defeat.

It was a result, 56-55, which could have so easily been in Sligo's favour because All Stars were very hard hit for personnel. They were short Anthony Cronnolly and Robt. Burns from their starting five and their panel was depleted to seven players with the result that Gerry Monaghan was drafted onto the squad for the first time.

In fact, it was the weakness of the Sligo bench and the lack of substitutes which proved their undoing because when Brian McHugh fouled out with two minutes left in the game, All Stars were leading by three points but they had no big man to fill McHugh's place and a complete reshuffle of the team was necessary.

Even at that, Sligo had their chance to grab a sensational victory because with forty seconds remaining, Joe Palmer was awarded two free throws to tie or win the game but the All Stars captain missed both shots. However the really heart-breaking feature of the defeat came just minutes after the game was over when International player, Stan Burns arrived in the gym after being held up on his way to the game.

Really hard work

Sligo made really hard work of their Saturday morning game against Kellehers. They showed none of their usual zest and fire and were not at all happy with the half-time score level at 14-14.

The Tralee team pulled clear in the second half and were 22-19 to the good when All Stars rallied and went 27-22 ahead but Kellehers equalised and it was neck and neck right up to the last minute when Sligo got the vital basket to win 36-33.

The All Stars-Warriors game was rated second only to the final for excitement and entertainment. Warriors got off to a great start to lead 7-0 but then Sligo hit a fantas-

tic patch when they ran up twenty points without reply and had the Aldershot team reeling with fast-breaking basketball.

A much-needed time-out gave Warriors a chance to recover and they switched from man-to-man to zone defence hoping to stop a super-star first half performance by John McGowan. While Sligo were still trying to adapt to the new tactics, Warriors began to run the ball and they got valuable scores from three on two, and two on one situations before Sligo's defence could form up properly.

All Stars held on grimly and were leading 28-21 with two minutes to the half but three quick scores reduced the gap to a single point at the bell.

Defensive switch

Sligo made a defensive switch starting the second half in the hope of curbing the brilliant close-in shooting of 6' 7" British Olympic player, Bob Mackay, and the move paid off. With Brian McHugh keeping a tight rein on the Aldershot danger-man, Warriors had to work much harder for their scores while All Stars continued to pick up the points at the other end.

Sligo passed the ball round the Aldershot zone with lightning speed and shot with consistency and accuracy as the score-board mounted. The lead switched hands ten times in that second half and there were never more than five points in it either way. Tony O'Hara and John McGowan but continuously from the outside and it was anybody's game right up to the finish.

After Palmer missed his free throws, Aldershot froze the play knowing time was on their side but All Stars stole the ball and were awarded possession from the side with less than ten seconds remaining. Unfortunately an inexperienced time-keeper let the clock run while the ball was out of play and Sligo did not even get a chance to shoot for the winner before the bell.

It was the best team performance of the season and one in which all the players shared the honours.

On Sunday afternoon, All Stars beat Chanel, Dublin by 36-22 for fifth place in the twelve-team tournament.

The trophy was won by Loughborough All Stars who beat Warriors by five points in the final. However, Aldershot finished the game with only four men, two of their Olympic players having fouled out while another two had to leave in the middle of the game to catch a flight because the tournament was running late.

Sligo All Stars (score totals):— J. Palmer 35, T. O'Hara 32; J. McGowan 26, G. Monaghan 13, B. McHugh 11, T. O'Brien 8, B. O'Hara 2, S. Burns 2.