

# GAZETTE SPORT

## FAST Sport



### Bluebell's upsurge in LSL form continues

HOLDERS Bluebell United have cemented an upturn in form and guaranteed the Christmas number one spot in the LSL Sunday Senior table with a 2-0 win away to struggling Tolka Rovers on Friday.

Until recently, the Red Cow club were considered to have made a fairly indifferent start to their defence of the title by their high standards. But Andy Noonan, pictured above, has seen his side pick up three wins in their last four outings has seen them make a move toward the top spot, building a three-point lead.

Both Bluebell and last year's title rivals Crumlin United haven't set the league alight this year, with both struggling to convert chances. Relative newcomers Cherry Orchard and St Mochta's have led the table for much of Leinster top-tier's proceedings to date.

The Red Cow club were stripped of some of their main stars over the course of the summer, with key forward Greg Moorhouse even heading for Europa League football with Glenavon up north, but are slowly returning to their fluid best, with a win away to recent strugglers Tolka Rovers on Friday night.

Tony Griffiths put Bluebell in front at Frank Cooke Park just before half time in a game in which United were generally in control, with Shane Stritch putting the game to bed early in the second half, and struggling Tolka unable to offer much in response.

The rescuing of a late draw against Tolka in mid-November, in fact, was a rare recent misstep for the club, who have lost only once since Cherry Orchard scored the first league away win at Red Cow in more than a year back in September.

United's win gives them a three point margin over second place Cherry Orchard (who have a game in hand) and a five point head start on St Mochta's, who have two games in hand.

While it will do well to match last year's final day title play off, yet again the Sunday Senior season looks likely to come down to the finest of margins.

## BASKETBALL: KEENAN FRUSTRATED AS CUP REIGN ENDED BY SWORDS



Templeogue's Lorcan Murphy, left, was named player of the month but they could not hold back the Swords Thunder tide in midweek

## Dublin trio eye cup success

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PYROBEL Killester will meet UCD Marian in an eye-catching Dublin derby in the men's Hula Hoops National Cup semi-finals which will be held in January, 2017 in Cork.

The second semi-final meanwhile will see SSE Airtricity Moycullen face off against Griffith Swords Thunder. Both games will take place on Saturday, January 7 in Neptune Stadium, Cork, as part of a fantastic three-day festival of basketball.

For Killester, they got the best of KUBS a couple of weeks ago with an

84-62 win in the quarter-final of the competition with Jermaine Turner top scoring with 24 points while Cian Nihill and Peder Madsen weighed in with significant contributions.

Swords, meanwhile, became the last side to completed the final four with a memorable win over reigning champions Templeogue in the national cup quarter final in midweek.

Templeogue built a 51-46 lead at half-time but Swords bounced back with Jose Maria Gil Carbon in devastating form, landing 30 points to turn the tide and win 88-81.

For the losing coach Mark Keenan, he said that missing out led to "total disappointment" for everyone at Templeogue, reflecting on where things went wrong in the second half.

"We had a good second quarter to get ahead at half-time but turnovers killed us in the third quarter and we stopped attacking the basket," he said.

"Offensively, we were out of sync. We went with the bigger line-up thinking it was our best defensive unit but it hindered us in offence. We were just too tentative and didn't attack them like we did in the first half.

"We just have to channel all our energy now back into the league. We are right where we want to be there and can't let that affect us going forward."

Templeogue got back on track with a 79-70 win over Tralee Warriors to continue their winning run in the men's super league. They next face Swords once again in what will be a vital game in the race for the league regular season title.

Swords made it three wins in the space of six days, overcoming UCD Marian on Friday evening 88-79. The game was a tight affair throughout

with Thunder holding just a one point lead going into the half-time break.

Either side looked capable of winning it as the score was tied going into the fourth quarter; however, a dominant final 10 minutes saw the visitors record their ninth victory from 10 league games.

Elsewhere in the league, Pyrobel Killester had the better of Commercial.ie Eanna, DCU Saints lost out by four points to UCC Demons, while Radisson Blu UL Eagles had to settle for second best against an on-form SSE Airtricity Moycullen.

## TOM BRENNAN ROAD RACE

### Liffey Valley AC to host annual New Year's race

LIFFEY Valley AC are looking to start the New Year in style with a fast 5k run at the annual Tom Brennan 5k Road Race in the Phoenix Park, starting at 12 noon.

For road races, it is unique since it is run on a 2.5km lap with no hills, offering spectators some top class view-points and runners a chance to go faster than ever before.

Entry can be made online at [liffeyvalleyac.com](http://liffeyvalleyac.com). Further information and assistance from Nick Davis 087 2286913.



## HURLING: UNDER-21A FINAL LEVEL 12 TIMES IN TOTAL



Na Fianna's Hugh Fenlon blocks down a Fergal Whiteley shot. Picture: Diarmuid O'Gallchobhair

# McHugh's late magic crushes Crokes' reign

### UNDER-21AHC FINAL

Na Fianna	0-18
Kilmacud Crokes	0-15

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NA FIANNA dethroned Kilmacud Crokes as county hurling champions as they eventually won their Under-21A hurling final arm-wrestle at Parnell Park last Sunday evening.

It was a titanic tussle with the sides were level 12 times in total – and five times in the second half – before the Glasnevin side eventually turned the screw in the closing five minutes, Eoghan McHugh's pair of points and a Donal Burke free proving critical.

Those scores were all that separated the teams with the sides locked at 0-15 each with the clocking ticking past the 56-minute mark of a tense and high quality affair.

Burke had opened the scoring early on before Sean Murphy added a second Na Fianna score from a debated 65. But any notions of a comfortable ride were quickly dispelled as they went

tit-for-tat for the remainder of the half.

Fergal Whiteley opened Crokes' account with an over after 5 minutes, quickly followed by another by Ciaran McIntyre. Micheal Roche pointed a free which was followed by two white flags for Na Fianna by Gavin King and McHugh.

Points by Shane Veale and Roche for Crokes, interspersed with another over for McHugh of Na Fianna, all from play. Roche again pointed from a free, while Donal Burke replied for Na Fianna, before King pointed sublimely for Na Fianna from a sideline.

As half time approached, Hayes and Whiteley added further points from Crokes, with AJ Murphy getting one in reply for Na Fianna as the sides went level seven times.

In injury time, Roche again pointed from a free for Crokes, leaving Crokes 0-9 to 0-8 up. Roche continued where he left off to eke out a two-point lead but, once again, Na Fianna came back with

King and Burke clearing the bar, the latter being Na Fianna's first score from a free.

Whiteley quickly replied from play but the concession of another free gave Burke the opportunity to add to his tally and the added another with a converted 65, winning back the lead.

Crokes' Michael Roche converted from two more frees, interspersed with a point by AJ Murphy for Na Fianna. It set up for a manic last 10 minutes at

0-13 each.

Na Fianna got the next two scores from play via Colin Currie and Cathal Doran as they pushed for home before Roche converted from another free. Whiteley got Crokes last score of the match to draw level in the 56th minute.

However, two points from play by McHugh and a converted free by Donal Burke as the match entered the third minute of injury time saw Na Fianna win by three.



Na Fianna's Shane Barrett and AJ Murphy lift the trophy

## LEINSTER FINAL



# Connolly sets the tone in Vin's latest big win

STVINCENT'S took home their third Leinster title in four years - and record-equalling seventh overall – last Sunday in Portlaoise, writes Paddy Hewson, but didn't have things all their own way as rural Offaly side Rhode put up a huge fight.

With Dublin sides dominant in the Leinster club football championship in recent years, Vincent's went in as heavy favourites, a tag that looked appropriate when a clever drilled finish from Diarmuid Connolly inside the first five minutes saw the blue and whites in early control.

For much of the first half, though, Rhode gave as good as they got, and while Vincent's were never to lose their lead, the Offaly side regularly threatened the Marino men.

Mossy Quinn, Enda Varley and Connolly in particular were a constant thorn in Rhode's side, with the men in green really struggling to contain the Vincent's forward line, who took full advantage of the space they found plenty of space 25 yards from goal to demonstrate consistent accuracy in the early stages.

Four points down a minute before half time, Rhode were to have a chance to blow the second half wide open. A rustic challenge from Ger Brennan on Niall McNamee inside the box saw the Dublin man black carded, and the ball placed on the spot.

Rarely tested Vincent's keeper Michael Savage took his chance to shine, though, diving to his left to hold Ruairi McNamee's finish, making a tough save look easy.

To add insult to injury for the outsiders, Gavin Burke finished a fluid Vincent's counter-attack to stretch the lead to five points from Savage's quick thinking.

Rhode, who perhaps should have gone in just a point down, found themselves facing a sizeable margin at 1-8 to 0-6.

Rhode's biggest problem, though, was the Vincent's full backs were affording them very little space, with Niall McNamee frees to make up almost half of their final score tally.

The second half saw Vincent's take control, doing so convincingly midway through the half, when Quinn, Ruairi Trainor and Joe Feeney scored four unanswered points to leave the Marino side very much in control.

With the game petering out, an edge of aggression snuck into the challenges, eventually seeing Conor McNamee also black carded, perhaps the victim of some persistent infringements from the desperate Offaly side.

Ultimately, though, with no fewer than eight members of the Vincent's side on the scoresheet, a 1-16 to 0-12 win was roughly reflective of their dominance, with Rhode losing a provincial final for the fifth time. They're yet to win one.

The win represents the second time Vincent's have defeated Rhode in a provincial final in three years, and brings the Marino side alongside hosts Portlaoise as the most decorated club football side in Leinster. They progress to face Derry side Slaughtneil for a place in the All Ireland final in February.