

Ladies Football

with Niall Scully

STARS COME OUT AS THE CHAMPIONSHIP TEES OFF

Top-quality action predicted as the journey to Parnell Park begins

THE birds will be singing sweetly for tomorrow's dawn chorus.

It's the opening bells of the Dublin Championship. Quality football is guaranteed.

From deep in the South to the lush green fields of the North County.

The manager of St Sylvester's, Keith Murphy, predicts drama galore.

"There should be some great football in this year's Championship. Every team has stars," said Keith.

The Malahide club are in the Senior Championship Group 2. They begin their journey against Parnell's tomorrow night at Broomfield.

"It should be a good game. We are raring to go," says Keith.

GROUP

The champions of Dublin and Leinster, Foxrock Cabinteely, and St Brigid's are also in the same group.

Group 1 consists of Ballyboden St Enda's, Na Fianna, Fingallians, Thomas Davis and Kilmacud Crokes.

Which two teams will emerge and walk on the blue carpet of Parnell Park?

Syls reside in Division 2, and their mood has been lifted by last week's win away to Clontarf.

"We were without six regulars, and we still beat a very good Clontarf side," revealed Keith. "We really had to work for it, but to win without six of our starters shows the progress we have made. It was a cracking match. And the pitch down in St Anne's was



The Sylvester's team will be in action against Parnell's in their Group 2 Championship opener at Broomfield.

like a snooker table."

Keith is a busy man. He's also managing the minors. "It makes sense because we are always trying to bring players through into the senior grade," added Keith.

He has two worthy lieutenants, Dave McEvoy and Michael Stuart.

"We have a young side, but with experience as well. There's 24 in the squad. There's keen competition for places. There's a real buzz to training. The girls are flying."

Among them are the three Dubs – Niamh McEvoy, Nicole Owens and Sinéad Aherne.

"But it's a real team effort," adds Keith. "We have a real sense of family

in the side. Everybody is playing for each other. There's a united atmosphere there.

"We were so pleased with our display against Clontarf last week.

"Our kicking, hand-passing and overall team play. It was one of those games where everything clicked.

"Girls were going the extra yard. You had Amy Phelan putting her body on the line to block a goal-bound shot.

"That summed up the commitment of the girls. Every player made such a huge contribution. You could name them all."

Keith selects Carol Hickey for a special mention. A role model.

"A wonderful footballer. She brings

such experience to the side. You need players of Carol's wisdom, especially at the highest level. Players can learn so much from Carol."

Syls have been impressing the village with the breath of their football. They have super facilities and the brightest of futures.

The players are coming through. And the right structures are in place. Structures that have been set in cement by heroic figures like Eddie and Ann O Mordha.

Starting them early and kindling their love for the sport is what brings in the harvest ... on and off the pitch.

Eddie and Ann, and the entire Syls family, have shown the way.

All teams can learn from the Leicester story

LEICESTER City have been on Keith Murphy's mind a lot this past while.

He says their victory gives everybody hope of achieving the 'Impossible Dream'.

"It just shows you what can be accomplished with the right attitude," reflects the Sylvester's chief.

"It's all about creating the right spirit. Instilling a good attitude.

"When you create an atmosphere like Leicester had, good things will follow.

"And when a team has the correct mindset, nothing is impossible.

"At Syls, we spend time focusing on helping our players to be positive.

"We tell our players the benefits of being mentally strong. And that they should be confident because they have every right to be confident in their own ability.

"We use a lot of motivational quotes. One of them is from Muhammad Ali.

"It says 'To be a champion, you have to believe you are a champion. If you don't believe it, lie!'

So much of what Leicester did came down to man-management.

"It's about giving the players the right platform to go out and perform.

"And the team that has self-belief and determination will not be easily beaten."

BOARD NOTES

■ Dublin will field two teams this Saturday in the U14 All-Ireland Blitz which takes place in Portlaoise GAA, Rathleague. Wishing all the girls and their management team the very best of luck in the competition, we will post the full fixture list and times once confirmed by the LGFA.

■ May County Board meeting takes place next Tuesday at 7.30pm in Parnell Park. All affiliated clubs are required to have at least one representative in attendance at the meeting. Minutes of the April meeting along with the May agenda will be circulated in advance to all delegates and club Secretaries.

■ Dublin LGFA, in conjunction with all our inter-county panels, are holding a 'Night at the Dogs' on Saturday May 28 in Shelbourne Park, doors open 6.0 first race 7.30. Dublin LGFA would be sincerely grateful if our members could support this venture. Tickets for the event cost €10, sponsor a dog €30, full-page advertisement in the official programme €100, Sponsor a race (includes 10 complimentary tickets) €500. Tickets for the event will be distributed by members of the Dublin management teams while additional information on dog sponsorship, programme advertisement and race sponsorship is available by contacting the Dublin LGFA office on 086- 0285539 or alternatively email info@dublinladiesgaelic.ie

■ www.dublinladiesgaelic.ie

Malahide maestro shines her boots with modesty

KEITH Murphy has hailed the genius of the Malahide maestro, Sinéad Aherne.

Sinéad's return from her travels has been a major boost to Syls and the Dubs.

And the St Sylvester's manager says it's an absolute privilege to watch her on stage.

"She is just such a brilliant footballer. A natural," states Keith.

"She reads the game so well. And she makes such clever runs.

"You watch her without the ball and she is still making those runs.

"She is so intelligent at making space for herself and for the team.

"She is a very unselfish player.

"She lays off the ball so well. She makes it

all look so easy. It's very difficult for the opposition to contain her.

"They could have two people marking her at times.

"And that's good for us because it creates more space up-front.

"And she has such a modest nature. She is a true sports person."

Having a footballer of her calibre on the side is a huge asset for the players around her.

"Take the likes of Kate Sullivan. She is a marvellous talent. She was awesome against Clontarf last week.

"And for her to be mentioned even in the same breath as Sinéad is a compliment to her ability," states Keith.



St Sylvester's and Dublin's Sinéad Aherne.