

4th April 2016

The Club contested 3 underage finals over the weekend but unfortunately came up short in all three. Our U13 girls travelled to Cork for the U13 Cork Championship Final and will certainly rue a number of scoring opportunities which could easily have resulted in a different outcome to the game.

A number of these girls stepped out on court again the following day to contest the U14 North Munster Cup Final. The girls probably played their best basketball of the season in this game. They were right in this game up to the final few minutes before their titanic efforts and exertions from the previous U16 final took its toll.

The day started with our girls contesting the U16 North Munster Final. Nine of the 10 girls on duty will be underage again next season, so this was always going to be a big ask. Nevertheless the girls under severe full court pressure for long periods of the game, played with great heart and never let their heads drop. They competed right up until the final whistle. A big bonus from this game was that Ruth Dollard played her first full game since a serious injury last October curtailed her season.

The girls naturally were bitterly disappointed to come away from 3 cup finals with nothing to show for their efforts. They should however be immensely proud in the way they played, competed and conducted themselves over the two days. They are a huge credit to their families and club. These girls are certainly on the right path and future success can only be just around the corner.

Perhaps it could even be next weekend. Our U14 girls travel to Lisburn in Northern Ireland to compete in the All Ireland Club Championship. The girls are in a pool with Tyrone Towers and Crossmolina Tigers. The girls will play 4 games over the two day period and will hope to emulate previous teams from the club in the AICC.

Our Senior Scholars qualified for the North Munster Senior Cup Final with a resounding win over UL Huskies in the semi-final. This game was decided by a devastating second quarter performance where the Scholars outscored their opponents 30-6 to lay the foundation for a comfortable win. Two of the Scholars, namely Lynsey Purcell and Fiona O' Connell capped off a memorable week by helping UL win the Intervarsities Cup. The UL team also included 3 former St Colms players Orlaith Woods who picked up the MVP award in the final, together with Ciara O; Halloran and Niamh Hannan.

Our U13 girls which included 6 first season players were a revelation in the Listowel Easter Tournament qualifying for the quarter finals with wins over Drimnagh from Dublin and Dingle. The girls had to play most of one quarter of the quarter final with only 4 players after the enforced withdrawal of Abbie Piggott through injury. Corrib were able to capitalise with their extra player and ran out worthy winners.

11th April 2016

Our U14 girls wrote themselves into the history books of St Colms Basketball Club by capturing the All Ireland B Division 1 Title after an absorbing and nerve wracking final against Tralee Imperials. The girls had put in two excellent training sessions during the week. They were well focused ahead of the long journey to the Antrim Forum where 4 games lay ahead of them.

The girls faced Tyrone Towers in their first pool game. After a slow start the girls built up a first quarter lead of 10-4. The girls defence was immense and this was going to prove to be a vital factor as the tournament progressed. They completely shut down Tyrone in the middle two quarters with their vice like defence, before easing to a comfortable 37-13 opening win.

Top scorers for the girls in the game were Sophie Moore 12, Aoife Morrissey 9 and Bronagh Dollard 6.

Next up were Crossmoline Tigers. The first quarter was an even affair with the sides tied at 4-4. However our girls shot up the gears scoring 20 points in the second quarter and eighteen points each in quarters 3 and 4. The power and pace of our girls proved too much for the Mayo girls with the final score 60-13 to St Colms.

Top scorers for the girls in this game were Sophie Moore 12, Abbie Pigott 8, Isabelle Meaney, Amy Higgins and Bronagh Dollard on 6 points apiece.

The two wins meant that the girls topped their pool and would now contest the Division 1 Title. The girls were able to relax for the rest of the evening before the business end of the tournament took place the following day.

Their opponents in the Semi Final were Northern Ireland Cup champions Anderstown Tigers who had recorded two big wins in their pool games. This game was a cracking advertisement for underage basketball as both teams gave their all to reach an All Ireland Final. Our girls edged a tight first half on a score line of 13-9. Again the girls suffocating defence had the Northern Ireland girls in trouble as they could not impose their free style of playing. Our girls showed superb levels of fitness as they slowly built up their lead based on great team work and going into the final minute of the game, had opened up a 10 point lead. A 3 pointer by the Northern Ireland girls gave them a glimmer of hope but our girls were in a winning position and sealed the deal on a 30 -23 score line.

When the going gets tough, you expect your top players to come to the fore. Captain Aoife Morrissey led by example as she top scored on 17 points followed by Bronagh Dollard on 6 and Amy Higgins on 4.

So to the final against a very strong Tralee Imperials side who went into the game after an impressive win over a talented Tullamore team in their semi final clash. Tralee got off to a flying start with 2 baskets in the opening minute to establish a 4 point lead. There was a steely focus with our girls though, and they gradually imposed themselves on the game. Our girls swarm defence had the Kerry girls in all sorts of bother and they could not score for the rest of the quarter. Our girls had tagged on 6 points themselves to edge the quarter 6-4. Tralee enjoyed the better of the second quarter edging it by two points to leave the sides tied at 12 apiece at the interval. If Tralee were going to win this game, they needed to break down our girls stubborn defence. They did enjoy a small purple patch to score 5 points but they still trailed by a point going into the final quarter. Our girls edged a little further ahead early in the fourth quarter before a rare outside shot gave Tralee some hope. However it was evident with about 4 minutes to go, that Tralee could not break our girls defence down. They did not score for the rest of the game with our girls content to protect their lead. Final score St Colms 23 Tralee Imperials 19.

Despite the low scoring, this final was as tense and exciting a game you are likely to see for a long time. This was clearly evident from the outpouring of emotion from both sides after the game. Our girls ecstatic while the Kerry girls inconsolable and in tears. Tralee should be immensely proud in the way they played. They gave it their all but they were up against 11 stubborn, focused and battle hardened girls who were not going to lose this final.

Aoife Morrissey was deserving winner of the MVP award, and she shone like a beacon in the two Sunday games. She ended up the tournament top scorer over the two days. This though was a true team effort. Special mention must go to Amy Higgins and Jody O' Halloran who proved to be the glue in our girls defence. They were awesome. Jana Zundel and Caoimhe Griffin got some big scores for us in both the semi final and final, just when we really needed them. Bronagh Dollard and Sophie Moore were devastating in offence. Isabelle Meaney and Caoimhe O' Neill played their best basketball of the season. Our two younger players Aoife O' Neill and Abbie Pigott really stepped up to the plate. Every player got on the scoresheet, but contributed in so many other ways on and off the court.

Of course, special mention must go to the parents who made the long trip to Antrim to support their girls. They really were the extra player on the sideline. Both coaches Carol and John cannot thank the players enough. They were brilliant.

18th April 2016

Following on from last weekend's success at the U14 AICCs in Antrim, our U16 girls made the long journey to Letterkenny to compete in the U16 AICCs.

The weekend would prove to be a big challenge for our young charges with two of the starting five comprised of U14 players. The girls' opponents in the pool games, Tipperary Knight and especially Ballyshannon proved too strong. The age and physical difference proved too much for our girls as they went down to two defeats.

The girls were much more competitive in the classification games. After a short break after the Ballyshannon game, the girls were on court again to face Castlebar Comets. The girls were slow to get into this game and found themselves 9-0 down early on. However they dug deep and slowly got to grips with their opponents and gradually cut away at the deficit. The effects of two tough games in a row proved to be a factor as the girls tired down the home stretch and could not bridge the gap. Final score was 30-23 in favour of the girls from Mayo.

Top scorers for the girls were Ruth Dollard 10 and Hazel Dineen 8.

The following morning the girls faced Dunshaughlin from Meath in their second classification game and final game of the weekend. The teams were tied on 10 points apiece at the interval. A drop in concentration early in the second half gifted Dunshaughlin 3 turnovers which resulted in 6 cheap points. Credit the girls though, as they fought back in this game. They finished strong but were still on the wrong end of a 26-31 scoreline.

Top scorer for the girls was Orla Zundel on 12.

The weekend was a huge learning experience for the girls. Ruth Dollard was a little apprehensive early on following her recovery from a broken arm but imposed herself as the competition progressed. The three U14 girls Jody O' Halloran, Amy Higgins and Isabelle Meaney certainly did not look out of place against older opposition and can be rightly pleased with their weekend's work.

The u15 girls Hazel Dineen, Siofra Gleeson, Orla Zundel, Elaine Murray and Caoimhe Hogan will be the better player following these weekend games.

Orla Zundel capped a fine weekend's work by hitting two outrageous buzzer beating "3" pointers in the games against Tipperary and Castlebar.

These weekends are much more than on court competition. It is an opportunity for these girls to forge new friendships and cement old ones. These bonds, certainly with our club, can last a lifetime. Sometimes it's the times off court that live long in the memories. However some of the girls should give up the dancing. They were brutal! Not bad singers though.

A big thanks to Audrey Murray for all her work in booking the accommodation and to Joanne for keeping Facebook updated with events over the weekend. However special thanks to Geraldine Dollard and Deirdre Gately, two parents who were absolutely brilliant over the two weekends.

On the local front, our Senior Scholars recorded a win over UL Huskies in the North Munster league. However the win was marred by an ankle injury to Fiona O' Connell. The injury will rule her out of this week's North Munster cup final and will now join Lynsey Purcell on the side lines.

Our Senior Saints play Tipperary Knights in an outstanding North Munster league game.