

8<sup>th</sup> May 2017

The curtain came down on another basketball season last week. Both our U14 and U16 girls were in action with both teams hoping to end the season on a high.

Our U14 girls certainly had a fantastic season. The girls went into the final week of competition as Cork and North Munster league champions, and were hoping to add to their trophy laden season.

First up was the deferred North Munster Cup final against Rockets. Our girls went into the game as strong favourites and did not let their supporters down. Rockets had not played a game since the end of February. This was very evident as they were slow getting to the pace of the game. Our girls on the other hand, have been playing regularly at a high level during this period. They put in a professional first quarter performance as they stormed into a 17-0 lead, which all but ended this game as a contest. Rockets to their credit never gave up and were rewarded with some late baskets. However our girls were always comfortable and eased to a 41-12 win.

The following night the girls travelled to Cork for the Top 4 playoffs. The girls faced Ballincollig in the semi-final. With the focus on conserving energy for the final, a team effort would be required not alone for the semi-final but also for the final. The girls held the upper hand in the semi-final and did enough to win out a high scoring game 55-42 against a tough Ballincollig team.

The girls faced old rivals Midleton in the Top 4 final. The teams had met a few weeks earlier in the semi-finals of the All Ireland Club championship, in a game which our girls won by 4 points. Therefore, another tight game was anticipated. Before the game started, the girls' coach Emily stepped in to give them some encouraging words. They now had to focus on the last game of a long season. Both teams did not disappoint in an absorbing game. Midleton enjoyed a strong first quarter to lead 14-6 helped by some outstanding outside shooting. The second quarter unit worked extremely hard to get the deficit down to 17-21 at the interval. However, this game was soon turned on its head. Our girls put in a devastating third quarter performance typified by some steals by the youngest member of the squad Susannah Holland. They played some spell binding basketball as they ruthlessly brushed their opponents aside. The third quarter display was easily the best basketball played by any St Colms team all season. The girls scored 25 points to Midleton's 8 to lead 42-29 going into the final quarter. Midleton threw everything at our girls in the final quarter scoring 16 points. However our girls tagged on 20 points themselves in a dazzling second half performance to win out 62-45. The victory was a fitting end to a phenomenal season for these girls and their coaches.

This under 14 squad has been together for a number of years and have been moulded into a superb team. They have some outstanding talent in Abbie, Julia, Lucy, Buki, Allannah, Aoife, Jana, Suzannah, Lucia and Sophie as well as Kate and Sarah from our development squad. It would be unfair to single out players. Some girls outscored others but needed that pass to score. Others do great work in defence while others give words of encouragement and drive their team mates on. However special mention must certainly be attributed to Bronagh Dollard who played the final weeks of the season with a finger injury and has been outstanding all season long. The girls would like to wish Bronagh a speedy recovery after her surgery this week.

Our U16 girls, although not reaching the heights of their U14 counterparts, had an excellent season and can be rightly proud about their performances. The highlight of their season was undoubtedly winning the Cork Championship. The girls were hoping to add to this when they also contested the North Munster Cup Final and Cork Top 4s. First up for the girls was a top 4 semi-final against Skibbereen. The objective of this game was to get the win and conserve energy for the final. The game however proved to be much tighter than anticipated. The girls managed to win the game on a score line of 36-34 but expended a lot of energy. The girls also suffered a significant blow with Orla

Zundel tearing ankle ligaments in the final minute of the game. The injury would rule her out of the Top 4 Final and North Munster Cup Final. The girls put the setback of Orla's injury behind them in an absorbing final against Cobh. There was little to separate these sides as the lead changed hands a number of times throughout. However, the exertions from their semi-final win would prove their undoing. Cobh finished the game the stronger overcoming a 5 point deficit to win out 34-32.

The girls faced up to Celtics in the North Munster Final a couple of days later. Celtics went into the final as overwhelming favourites on the back of two comfortable league victories. Our girls put in a terrific performance and really took the game to their opponents. Sophie Moore was on fire with her outside shooting. Siofra Gleeson, Jody O' Halloran and Amy Higgins put in a great shift. Aoife Morrissey took over point duties and was born to the job. Hazel Dineen scored some crucial baskets. There was only 4 points between the sides at the interval. The unavailability of Orla Zundel and Bronagh Dollard in the game became evident in the second half. The girls could not keep up the intensity of their game and gradually Celtics put some daylight between the two sides. Considering that most of the squad will be underage again next season, the girls have had an exceptional season and the future looks bright.

29<sup>th</sup> May 2017

The 2016/2017 basketball season has drawn to a close, which gave the opportunity for the club to host its annual awards day.

The day commenced with our senior ladies select team hosting a US College select team in a challenge game. The large attendance was treated to an exceptional display by a very talented US team. Our seniors were a little rusty having not trained for a few weeks but contributed to a highly entertaining and free flowing game. The US girls stayed around for a while after the game for photographs and tips for our younger players.

The club have had an exceptional season on the playing front with some sparkling displays from our youngest players right up to some very talented older players that seem to improve with age, just like a good wine. A lot of groundwork is been carried out with our younger players to develop their basics and skill sets. The fruits of this work will be seen over the coming seasons.

These young players will see that hard work at practice at an early age will pay dividends as they get older. Our u14 and U16 girls have shown this season, that it is an accumulation of hard work and practice that will eventually show reward. Our u16 girls made their own little bit of history by becoming the first team from the club to win a Championship in Cork. In normal years, this win would have proved the highlight within the club. However, they were a little overshadowed by the achievements of the U14 girls who had an unbelievable season. This group of girls won the U12B league in Cork two years ago. Their progression since then has been outstanding, culminating in an outstanding season. These girls won Cork U14A league and top four competition, U14 North Munster league and cup and were runners up in the U14A All Ireland Club Championships.

It was only fitting that the club recognised a number of players for their contributions over the season. The deserving winners were as follows:

U11 Girls Melissa Do, Nofeesat Muniru and Treasa N Cholbaird  
U12 Girls Elisha Noonan and Julina Ryan  
U13 Girls Sarah Cantillon, Susannah Holland and Lily O' Halloran  
U14 Girls, Lucy Liston, Jana Zundel, Sophie Moore and Bronagh Dollard  
U16 Girls, Isabelle Meaney, Siofra Gleeson and Jody O' Halloran  
Seniors Sharon Griffin and Michelle Walsh

There were also two awards handed out to Barry Pigott and Ruth Dollard for all their work and support that goes unseen.

Aoife Morrissey became the first player within the club to receive the Cork MVP award after another outstanding season. She won the award at U16 level and considering she will be under 16 again next season, who would bet against her not doubling up.

Finally, it was a great honour to receive the Howard and Coates families to our awards day. The club have commissioned an annual trophy to honour and remember Susan, a truly remarkable player, woman, mother, wife, daughter and sister, who was taken from us way too young. It was important that the first recipient of this annual ward embodied the true spirit of Susan and this is certainly the case with Joanne Deloughrey a most deserving winner.

It is important to recognise that a lot of a work behind the scenes takes place in running a club. A club will only survive and prosper if there are dedicated people working within. A big thanks as always to the parents who provide encouragement and an essential taxi service for their daughters.

A big thanks to our committee who keep the show on the road.

A big thanks to all the coaches who give their time, passion and commitment to the club.

A big thanks to St Clements, Laurel Hill, Nano Nagle, Lisnagry and CBS for the use of their facilities over the season.

Finally a huge thanks to all the players within the club who are true ambassadors through their actions on and off the court. Susan would be proud.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER