

BASKETBALL // GALWAY GIANTS IN LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

MAGIC MYSTICS

SPECSAVERS BACK KIDS IN GALWAY

A NEW partnership between Specsavers and basketball in Galway is set to get more school children active in sport in the west of Ireland.

Specsavers launched their sponsorship of Galway Primary Schools, which will provide a basketball starter pack for budding ballers.

The pack includes a holdall bag, basketballs, training vests, a whistle, scoresheets and basketball training drills.

Pupils of Merlin Woods Primary School were given a chance to test out the pack earlier in the week under the stewardship of Principal Teacher Paula O'Connor, Basketball Development Officer Mike Murray and Annette Flanagan of Specsavers.

Health

"I'm looking forward to seeing a lot more kids get back into sport," said Flanagan. "We test a lot of kids' eyes in Specsavers Galway and the health and wellbeing of children is very important to us."

"We're delighted to partner Basketball Ireland to the benefit of children."

"Through Specsavers and their sponsorship, we can now get into schools and give teachers and volunteers the tools to train players at a higher level."

"MYSTICS look to bright future" was the headline in the Irish Daily Star on February 27, 2013 as the Galway club prepared for the playoff semi-finals in Women's Division One.

The club was founded as Foireann na Gaillimhe in 2010 and changed its name in partnership with NUIG on a mission to give the best of the west a chance to compete on a national level.

"Does that mean stepping up to Premier League level? That is the ultimate goal," said then Head Coach Joe Shields.

Three years on the dream has been achieved.

ROSS O'DONOGHUE

NUIG Mystics were crowned Women's Division league champions at the weekend in a regular season where they finished with a 19-1 record and also took home the Senior Women's National Cup trophy.

Motion

The post-season playoffs are still to come before Women's Premier League basketball in 2016/2017. You can tell the promotion means as much as the silverware to current Head Coach, Mike Murray.

"It's been a couple of years in the making. Coupling with NUIG gave us the boost, and the venue and that allowed us to

bring in more players," he said. "Not only are we getting the best players around Galway through clubs like Maree, Titans, Claregalway and the likes, we're able to bring in Victory Scholars and develop younger players."

"Training with us right now we have six junior internationals from U16 to U18."

In five previous years of National League basketball, Mystics' win rate has been 51%. This season it's 93%.

Long-serving players like Lauren Murray, Ailish O'Reilly and Hannah Coen have stepped up in big ways, while emerging talent such as Catherine Connara stepped up to elite level with ease.

Perhaps the biggest catalyst

has been the arrival of international duo, Siobhan Kilkenny and Michelle Fahy.

"Both of them play a massive part," says Murray. "Not only on the floor but for the development of the younger girls, the knowledge they're passing on is invaluable."

"Everybody has stepped up when needed this year. That's about the height of it."

Delicate

It's been a delicate balancing act for Murray this season.

While maintaining an average winning margin of 19 points, there's a big squad hungry for success.

It's about representing the region as well as the club.

He added: "Every club in

Galway has been represented down through the years. The Galway Area Basketball Board have been a massive help as well. Without everybody buying into this, it wouldn't have happened."

"It's not a flash in the pan either because it's a depth of players we've never had before. It will be sustainable because we have kids coming through."

Mystics have a playoff semi-final at home in 10 days' time.

Murray believes it will be important to carry form through the post-season and into a busy off-season of preparing for life at the top.

"We have to have the momentum to attract even more high-calibre players. Watch this space, I suppose."



OVER THE MOON: NUIG Mystics celebrate after winning the Hula Hoops Senior Women's National Cup final

FIXTURES

TOMORROW

MEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

Pyrobel Killester v Belfast Star, IWA Clontarf, 20:30.

SATURDAY

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

Playoff Quarter-Finals
Meteors v Maxol WIT Wildcats, TBC.

Pyrobel Killester v Singleton SuperValu Brunell, IWA Clontarf, 20:00.

WOMEN'S DIVISION ONE

Playoff Quarter-Finals
Oblate Dynamos v Ulster Rockets, Firhouse Community Centre, 19:00.

Team Denjoes American Style v Team Garvey's Tralee, Castleisland CC, 19:30.

MEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

Belfast Star v DCU Saints, Methodist College, 19:00.
SSE Airtricity Moycullen v GCD Swords Thunder, NUIG, 19:00.
Templeogue v UCD Marian, Oblate Hall, Inchicore, 19:30.
Pyrobel Killester v UL Eagles, IWA Clontarf, 18:00.

MEN'S DIVISION ONE

Kestrels v BFG Neptune, Colaiste Iosagain, 18:00.
JM&L Auctioneers Titans v Maree, The Jes, 19:00.
Team Kilkenny v Fr Mathews, Watershed Sports Complex, 19:00.
KUBS v ITC Basketball, Carroll Arena, 20:00.

SUNDAY

MEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

C&S UCC Demons v Eanna BC, Mardyke Arena, Cork, 15:15

MEN'S DIVISION ONE

C&S Blue Demons v Keane's SuperValu Killorglin, Mardyke Arena, 13:00.
KUBS v Maree, Carroll Arena, Greendale, 16:00.

ALL THE LEAGUE TABLES

MEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	L	F	A	Pts	Pct
C&S UCC Demons	17	15	2	1555	1316	45	0.882
Templeogue	17	13	4	1456	1304	39	0.765
Pyrobel Killester	16	12	4	1267	1124	36	0.750
UCD Marian	17	10	7	1317	1212	30	0.588
GCD Swords	17	8	9	1458	1342	24	0.471
Belfast Star	16	6	10	1252	1313	18	0.375
DCU Saints	17	6	11	1272	1409	18	0.353
UL Eagles	17	6	11	1288	1458	18	0.353
Moycullen	17	5	12	1178	1251	15	0.294
Eanna BC	17	3	14	1213	1527	9	0.176

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	L	F	A	Pts	Pct
DCU Mercy	16	13	3	1165	1029	42	0.813
Team Montenotte	16	12	4	1168	983	40	0.750
Pyrobel Killester	16	11	5	1173	1071	38	0.688
Meteors	16	10	6	1086	1059	36	0.625
Maxol WIT Wildcats	16	10	6	996	983	35	0.625
Brunell	16	6	10	1045	1070	28	0.375
Liffey Celtics	16	4	12	977	1050	24	0.250
Portlaoise	16	3	13	957	1114	22	0.188
UL Huskies	16	3	13	965	1173	22	0.188

MEN'S DIVISION ONE

	P	W	L	F	A	Pts	Pct
Maree	16	15	1	1368	1180	45	0.938
KUBS	16	13	3	1302	1149	39	0.813
Killorglin	17	13	4	1426	1335	39	0.765
Team Kilkenny	17	9	8	1478	1394	27	0.529
C&S Blue Demons	17	7	10	1304	1330	21	0.412
BFG Neptune	17	6	11	1466	1494	18	0.353
ITC Basketball	17	6	11	1225	1358	18	0.353
Fr Mathews	17	5	12	1221	1316	15	0.294
Kestrels	17	5	12	1262	1372	15	0.294

Titans 17 5 12 1288 1412 15 0.294

WOMEN'S DIVISION ONE

	P	W	L	F	A	Pts	Pct
NUIG Mystics	16	15	1	1144	829	46	0.938
Fr Mathews	16	12	4	1001	838	40	0.750
Team Denjoes	16	11	5	985	873	38	0.688
Oblate Dynamos	16	9	7	926	901	34	0.563
Ulster Rockets	16	8	8	938	919	32	0.500
Tralee	16	7	9	847	870	30	0.438
ITC Basketball	16	6	10	888	969	28	0.375
Marble City Hawks	16	4	12	685	859	24	0.250
Longford Falcons	16	0	16	663	1019	16	0

NATIONAL JUNIOR BASKETBALL CAMP

LEARN TO PLAY ON IRISH BASKETBALL'S BIGGEST STAGE

EASTER CAMP: MON 21TH - THU 24TH MARCH
COST: 1 CHILD: €60 (2 OR MORE: €55 EACH)

SUMMER CAMP: MON 18TH - FRI 22ND JULY
COST: 1 CHILD: €70 (2 OR MORE: €65 EACH)

SAVE €25 WHEN YOU BOOK BOTH CAMPS

REGISTER ONLINE AT BASKETBALLIRELAND.IE
EMAIL INFO@BASKETBALLIRELAND.IE