

**A REVIEW OF THE
ARMSTRONG CUP
COMPETITION
2012-2013**

*By
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Foreword

Shortly after the conclusion of the 2012-13 Leinster Leagues, I received a letter from Gerry Smith with a review, by Paul Cassidy, of the Armstrong Cup competition in that season.

Paul agreed to a suggestion that the review be published. However, a delay on my part meant that the 2013-14 season got underway before publication, and it seemed best to wait until the leagues, then in progress, had ended.

The careful analysis which went into the review is a service to the chess community and we are all indebted to Paul for his generosity in sharing the fruits of his labour. Thanks are also due to Gerry Smith for prompting the publication of the review.

Charlie Talbot

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REVIEW OF ARMSTRONG CUP 2012-2013

1. INTRODUCTION

A. Basic Purpose of Document

1. The basic purpose of this document is to show how the twelve Armstrong Cup teams performed by reference to their ratings. Section 2 of the document covers this aspect, showing performance against ratings for each team at individual board level 1-8 inclusive; their first four and last four boards; and their overall rating for the team as a whole.

2. My original intention was to produce an analysis for the Dun Laoire team to assess our performance and to see how we might make improvements for next year. I then expanded it to include all clubs as, hopefully, the information produced will also be helpful to them in evaluating their performance and planning for the future. I have, therefore, given the document to the LCU to circulate it generally if they wish.

3. The document throughout makes general comments on performance relative to ratings. I am solely responsible for such comments which, as indicated, are based exclusively on this yardstick and which are expressed in a neutral and non-personalised way.

4. Before moving to Part 2, I think it would be interesting to review generally the outcome of this season's Armstrong Cup which, as usual, was superbly organised by Peter Scott as Controller.

B. Outcome of Armstrong Cup

5. Phibsboro were worthy winners. They had a strength in depth throughout their team. A measure of this strength is the fact that they were the only team with an average rating in excess of 2,100 on Board 3: (only one other team, Gonzaga, had a rating of over 2,000 on that board). Despite a loss to a rejuvenated Kilkenny team in the ninth round and a late burst by Gonzaga, they never looked really threatened and made no mistakes on the run in.

6. Phibsboro have been the dominant team in the Armstrong Cup in recent years. In the 10 seasons since the 2003-2004 season (the first season for which LCU

on line statistics are available), they have won the title five times. They are followed by Rathmines with three titles and Elm Mount and Kilkenny with one each.

7. Gonzaga fully merited the runner up place. They lost their first two games but then came back strongly after Christmas, scoring 32.5 points from their five matches (the highest by any team). It was not enough, however, to catch Phibsboro.

8. In the ten seasons since the 2003-2004 season Gonzaga have finished runner up on four occasions, third three times, and second once. It is a great pity that they have not yet managed to take the title but their record suggests that their turn should come soon and, if so, they would be very popular winners.

9. Elm Mount were second at Christmas but then faded somewhat in the second half of the competition. They were, however, a worthy third.

10. The relegation battle was incredibly interesting and tense, undoubtedly the most exciting and close in all Armstrong competitions since 2003-2004.

11. Before the last round started, the following teams were in danger of taking the second relegation place (Rathmines B had already been relegated):

Dun Laoire 38.5 points (to play Dublin)

Rathmines A 36.5 points (to play St. Benildus)

Balbriggan 36 points (to play Trinity)

Dublin 34 points (to play Dun Laoire)

12. Dun Laoire and Dublin had six games to play in their match (two games had been played in advance, their results being included in the above point totals).

13. I have to say that I thought that the second relegation place would be filled by Balbriggan, Dublin or Dun Laoire. I expected Rathmines A to field a very strong team against St. Benildus and to comfortably get the 3 points they needed for safety. Instead, after a very exciting final round, they finished equal with Dublin on 39 points, losing out to them by reference to the result of their individual match, with Balbriggan and Dun Laoire just half a point ahead on 39.5 points.

14. Rathmines A might feel unlucky in that they conceded a walkover to St. Benildus in the last round

due to the late arrival of one of their players. On the other hand, Dublin had been docked 2 points for defaults in earlier matches (they had actually scored 41 points from their games) and had also conceded a walkover in another match. Rathmines A had themselves also benefited from a walkover in their first round match against Rathmines B.

15. Dublin deserved a lot of credit for their powerful finish in scoring 12.5 points from their last two matches against Balbriggan and Dun Laoire. They had looked dead and buried before that. In one way, however, they were probably somewhat fortunate that they met two teams from the lower half of the league when they finally managed to field their strongest squad. Had they met teams in the top half, they might have dropped the half point which would have seen them relegated. They left their effort very late but they succeeded, which is the bottom line.

16. Rathmines A were probably unlucky in that their total of 39 points was the highest for a team relegated in all the seasons since LCU website statistics have become available from the 2003-2004 season

onwards. The following gives the relevant point totals of relegated teams since 2003-2004:

Season Points

2003-2004	22.5 and 37.5
2004-2005	25 and 31
2005-2006	18.5 and 22
2006-2007	16.5 and 33
2007-2008	23.5 and 27
2008-2009	24 and 32.5
2009-2010	29 and 30
2010-2011	30.5 and 32
2011-2012	31.5 and 32
2012-2013	27.5 and 39

17. The next highest points total for a relegated team was in the 2003-2004 season in which, incidentally, Rathmines A and Rathmines B were relegated (the only other season where two teams from the same club were relegated).

C. Other Interesting Statistics

18. The following indicates the points scored by teams before and after Christmas:

Team	Pre Christmas	After Christmas
Phibsboro	35.5	24
Gonzaga	28	27.5
Elm Mount	30	18.5
St. Benildus	25.5	21
Bray	20.5	25.5
Trinity	23.5	20
Kilkenny	21	21
Balbriggan	23.5	16
Dun Laoire	26	13.5
Dublin	17	22
Rathmines A	19	20
Rathmines B	17.5	10

19. The points before Christmas are from six matches and the points after Christmas are from five matches.

20. Some features of the above table are worthy of comment. As indicated, Gonzaga made a strong burst after Christmas but it was not enough to bridge the gap with Phibsboro. Dublin also scored well after Christmas and did just enough to avoid relegation. At the other end, Dun Laoire did very badly after Christmas. From a position of fourth at Christmas they dropped to ninth place and finished just above the relegation zone. Elm Mount also suffered a significant decline in form after Christmas.

21. The following table indicates the wins, losses and draws of each team and what might have happened if the league had been decided on a soccer basis with 3 points for a win and 1 point for a draw:

Team	P	W	D	L	PTS
Phibsboro	11	10	-	1	30
Gonzaga	11	7	2	2	23
St Benildus	11	8	-	3	24
Elm Mount	11	6	3	2	21
Bray	11	4	3	4	15
Kilkenny	11	4	2	5	14

Balbriggan	11	4	1	6	13
Dublin	11	4	1	6	13
Rathmines A	11	4	1	6	13
Trinity	11	4	1	6	13
Dun Laoire	11	1	4	6	7
Rathmines B	11	-	2	9	2

Note: The teams on 13 points are listed in alphabetical order.

22. As can be seen, under this system St. Benildus would have replaced Elm Mount in third position, Kilkenny would have gone ahead of Trinity and Dun Laoire and Rathmines B would have been relegated. Such a system is not, of course, being advocated. The above table has been produced solely as a matter of interest. The existing points system is a much fairer way of measuring consistency throughout the season.

2. PERFORMANCE AGAINST RATINGS

D. Introduction.

23. In this part, performance against ratings is compared in the following four areas:

- average overall rating of each team;
- average rating of each team's first 4 boards;
- average rating of each team's last 4 boards;
- average rating of boards 1-8 inclusive of each team.

E. Methodology

24. Average ratings were determined in the following way (the determination of Gonzaga's average ratings is given as a practical example):

- first, the rating of each Gonzaga player in each of their 11 matches was noted. This gave a total of 11 ratings for each individual board 1-8 inclusive, a total of 44 ratings for boards 1-4 and boards 4-8 respectively, and an overall total of 88 ratings;
- the average rating of each board was then

determined by dividing the total rating for that board by 11. For example, the total rating for Board 4 on the Gonzaga team was 21,878. Divided by 11, this gave an average rating of 1,989 (to nearest whole number) for that board;

-the average rating of Boards 1-4 was determined by adding the rating totals of each of Gonzaga's Boards 1-4 inclusive and dividing by 44. The total of Gonzaga's first four boards was 94,081. Divided by 44, this gave an average of 2,138 for Boards 1-4;

-a similar process was used in determining the average rating of Boards 4-8;

-the overall average rating of the Gonzaga team was determined by adding the ratings of each of the individual boards and dividing by 88. The total ratings of Gonzaga's 8 boards was 173,016. Divided by 88, this gave an overall average rating of 1,966.

25. Where a team had fielded an unrated player or had conceded a default or walkover (which meant there was no rating for the board concerned), the methodology was adjusted to reflect that fact. For example, Rathmines A fielded an unrated player at Board 8 in their sixth round match against Elm Mount. The rating total for their Boards 4-8 inclusive was thus divided by 43 instead of 44 to give the average rating for these boards and their total for all 8 boards was divided by 87 instead of 88 to give the overall average rating of the team.

26. As regards points scored on each board of each team, these were simply taken from the LCU website (which is, by the way, a really valuable source of information). One thing should be noted here. It will be seen later that the actual scores of the 8 individual boards of Dublin came to 41 points as against their actual finishing total of 39 points. This is because, as already indicated, Dublin were docked 2 points for defaults during the season.

27. There is one final important point. Only a very few number of players (certainly less than 10 and probably nearer 5) played on the same board throughout the

season. In the vast majority of cases, therefore, the performance review in the next section of a particular board, and any comments arising therefrom, relate to the performance **of the board itself** as determined by the various people who played on that board and **not** to a specific individual.

3. THE RESULTS

28. The table overleaf gives the results in each of the categories listed:

(A) Overall Average Rating

Team	Overall Average Rating	Place
Phibsboro (1)	1,992	1
Gonzaga (2)	1,966	2
Elm Mount (3)	1,906	3
Bray (4-5)	1,871	5
Rathmines A (4-5)	1,871	11
St. Benildus (6)	1,840	4
Trinity (7)	1,836	6
Dublin (8)	1,826	10
Dun Laoire (9)	1,824	9
Balbriggan (10)	1,793	8
Kilkenny (11)	1,789	7
Rathmines B (12)	1,666	12

29. The most striking feature about this table is the performance of Rathmines A. Ranked equal 4-5 in terms of overall strength, they finished eleventh in the league and were relegated. In general, the performance of the other teams reflected their ratings

although St Benildus, Kilkenny and Balbriggan can be pleased that they outperformed relative to ratings.

(B) Average Rating First 4 Boards

Team	Average Rating	Total Points
Phibsboro (1)	2,152	29(1)
Gonzaga (2)	2,138	23.5(5-6)
Trinity (3)	2,046	25.5(3)
Elm Mount (4)	2,040	26(2)
Dublin (5)	2,036	24.5(4)
Rathmines A (6)	2,024	22.5(7-8)
Bray (7)	1,999	23.5(5-6)
St. Benildus (8)	1,996	22.5(7-8)
Dun Laoire (9)	1,945	18.5(11)
Kilkenny (10)	1,935	20.5(9)
Balbriggan (11)	1,910	19(10)
Rathmines B (12)	1,741	9(12)

30. Nothing too dramatic here. There was not a significant divergence in the performance of most teams relative to their ratings although Elm Mount can be pleased that they finished second in terms of points against a rating of fourth. The biggest divergence from rating occurred in the case of Gonzaga. Rated number 2 on rating, they finished equal 5-6 on points scored.

(C) Average Rating Last 4 Boards

Team	Average Rating	Total Points
Phibsboro (1)	1,829	30.5(2)
Gonzaga (2)	1,794	32(1)
Elm Mount (3)	1,773	22.5(4-5)
Bray (4)	1,744	22.5(4-5)
Rathmines A (5)	1,714	16.5(11-12)
Dun Laoire (6)	1,703	21(7)
St Benildus (7)	1,684	24(3)
Balbriggan (8)	1,676	20.5(8)
Kilkenny (9)	1,643	21.5(6)

Trinity (10)	1,615	18(10)
Rathmines B (11)	1,589	18.5(9)
Dublin (12)	1,584	16.5(11-12)

31. The thing that stands out about this table is the performance of Rathmines A relative to rating. Rated fifth, they finished joint last on points scored. St. Benildus and Kilkenny did well in outperforming their ratings. It is interesting to note that Rathmines B, who finished last, and who incidentally outperformed their rating, had a higher rating than Dublin on Boards 5-8. Dublin very nearly paid the price of fielding a very weak team on these boards until very late in the competition.

(D) Contribution of first Four and Last Four Boards

32. I am making a slight diversion here to outline the points scored by the first four and last four boards respectively in the various teams. The following gives the relevant statistics:

Team	First Four	Second Four	Total
Phibsboro	29	30.5	59.5
Gonzaga	23.5	32	55.5
Elm Mount	26	22.5	48.5
St. Benildus	22.5	24	46.5
Bray	23.5	22.5	46
Trinity	25.5	18	43.5
Kilkenny	20.5	21.5	42
Balbriggan	19	20.5	39.5
Dun Laoire	18.5	21	39.5
Dublin	24.5	16.5	39*
Rathmines A	22.5	16.5	39
Rathmines B	9	18.5	27.5

*2 points deducted for defaults as noted earlier

33. This table is very revealing. There was a major divergence, more than enough to bridge the gap with Phibsboro, between the points scored on the top four and bottom four boards in the case of Gonzaga. Trinity, Dublin and Rathmines A had a poor return from their

bottom four boards. For the first two teams this return was due almost entirely to an inability to field strong players. For Rathmines A it was more a performance issue. Rathmines B, on the other hand, did quite well on their bottom four boards but suffered badly on the top four who were rated just 160 points behind the next lowest rated team.

(E) Average Rating, Board 1

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Gonzaga (1)	2,406	5.5(6-8)
Phibsboro (2)	2,304	7.5(3-4)
Trinity (3)	2,270	7.5(3-4)
Elm Mount (4)	2,243	8.5(1)
Bray (5)	2,224	8(2)
Kilkenny (6)	2,136	5.5(6-8)
St. Benildus (7)	2,127	3.5(10-11)
Rathmines A (8)	2,104	5.5(6-8)
Dublin (9)	2,090	6(5)

Dun Laoire (10)	2,067	3.5(10-11)
Balbriggan (11)	1,996	5(9)
Rathmines B (12)	1,721	0(12)

34. Gonzaga had a very disappointing return on this board. St. Benildus also had a relatively disappointing points score relative to rating. Elm Mount, Bray and Dublin had a very good performance relative to rating.

(F) Average Rating, Board 2

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Phibsboro (1)	2,253	9(1)
Gonzaga (2)	2,098	6(5)
Elm Mount (3)	2,088	4.5(9-10)
St Benildus (4)	2,082	4.5(9-10)
Dublin (5)	2,069	5.5(6)
Rathmines A (6)	2,052	7(2)
Bray (7)	2,015	5(7-8)
Trinity (8)	1,993	6.5(3-4)
Dun Laoire (9)	1,978	5(7-8)

Kilkenny (10)	1,950	6.5(3-4)
Balbriggan (11)	1,932	4(11)
Rathmines B (12)	1,789	2.5(12)

35. Kilkenny had a particularly good performance on this board. Ranked tenth on rating, they finished equal 3-4 on points scored. Trinity and Rathmines A also did well in outperforming their rating but the results of Elm Mount and St. Benildus in particular, and to a lesser extent Gonzaga, were disappointing.

(G) Average Rating, Board 3

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Phibsboro (1)	2,122	7(1)
Gonzaga (2)	2,062	5.5(6-7)
Dublin (3)	2,037	7(1-3)
Rathmines A (4)	2,027	6.5(4-5)
Trinity (5)	1,979	5(8-9)
Elm Mount (6)	1,971	6.5(4-5)
St Benildus (7)	1,955	7(1-3)
Bray (8)	1,911	4.5(10)
Dun Laoire (9)	1,882	4(11)
Balbriggan (10)	1,878	5.5(6-7)
Kilkenny (11)	1,866	5(8-9)
Rathmines B (12)	1,739	2.5(12)

36. St Benildus did extremely well on this board, finishing equal first on points scored against a ranking of seventh in the ratings. Balbriggan and Kilkenny also had good performances but Trinity had a disappointing result, finishing 8-9 on points scored against a rating

rank of fifth. The result for Gonzaga was also again disappointing.

(H) Average Rating, Board 4

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Gonzaga (1)	1,989	6.5(2-4)
Dublin (2)	1,948	6(5-7) +
Trinity (3)	1,941	6.5(2-4)
Phibsboro (4)	1926	5.5(8)
Rathmines A (5)	1,912	3.5(11-12)
Elm Mount (6)	1,858	6.5(2-4)
Dun Laoire (7)	1,853	6(5-7)
Bray (8)	1,844	6(5-7)
Balbriggan (9)	1,834	4.5(9)
St. Benildus (10)	1,819	7.5(1)*
Kilkenny (11)	1,787	3.5(11-12)
Rathmines B (12)	1,714	4(10)

+ default conceded to St. Benildus

*walkover received from Dublin

37. Despite the walkover received, the performance of St Benildus here was superb, moving from tenth in ratings to first in terms of points scored. Elm Mount also did quite well in outperforming their rating. Rathmines A had a major disappointment on this board; rated fifth they finished equal last on points scored. Phibsboro had a rare disappointing result. Rated fourth, they finished eighth on points scored. Dublin also had a disappointing result.

(I) Average Rating, Board 5

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Trinity (1)	1911	5(9)
Gonzaga (2)	1,900	8(1-2)
Phibsboro (3)	1,891	8(1-2)
Elm Mount (4)	1,871	7.5(3)
Bray (5)	1,867	5.5(5-8)
Rathmines A (6)	1,828	2.5(11-12) +
Dun Laoire (7)	1,823	5.5(5-8)
Balbriggan (8)	1822	5.5(5-8)
St Benildus (9)	1,820	6(4)*

Dublin (10)	1,813	5.5(5-8)
Kilkenny (11)	1,722	4.5(10)
Rathmines B (12)	1,688	2.5(11-12)

+ walkover conceded to St. Benildus

*walkover received from Rathmines A

38. St Benildus and Dublin did well in outperforming their ratings. At the other end of the scale, Trinity had a most disappointing result on this board, going from first in the ratings to ninth on points scored. While Rathmines A conceded a walkover, they too had a very disappointing outcome, finishing joint last on points scored against a rating rank of sixth.

(J) Average Ratings, Board 6

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Gonzaga (1)	1,856	8(1)*
Phibsboro (2)	1,852	5(7-9)
Elm Mount (3)	1,821	4(10-12)
Bray (4)	1,818	5(7-9)
Balbriggan (5)	1,783	6.5(2-4)

Dun Laoire (6)	1,764	5.5(6)
Rathmines A (7)	1,747	4(10-12)
St Benildus (8)	1,740	6(5)
Trinity (9)	1,711	6.5(2-4)
Kilkenny (10)	1,668	6.5(2-4)
Dublin (11)	1,659	4(10-12) +
Rathmines B (12)	1,654	5(7-9)

+default conceded to Gonzaga

*walkover received from Dublin

39. Trinity and Kilkenny did extremely well on this board, improving from near the bottom of the ratings to joint 2-4 on points scored. There is not, in general, much good news for Rathmines B in these statistics but here they did very well in outperforming their rating. Balbriggan and St. Benildus also did well. There were also some significant disappointments. Elm Mount moved from third in the ratings to 10-12 on points. Phibsboro had their second and last disappointment which on this occasion was quite significant. They moved from second on ratings to 7-9 on points scored. Again Rathmines A had a bad result. Seventh on

ratings, they finished in 10-12 position on points scored.

(K) Average Rating, Board 7

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Gonzaga (1)	1,858	8.5(2)
Phibsboro (2)	1,793	10(1)
Bray (3)	1,780	6(3-6)
Rathmines A (4)	1,768	4.5(7-8)
Elm Mount (5)	1,758	6(3-6)
Dun Laoire (6)	1,675	4(9-10)
Balbriggan (7)	1,648	4(9-10)
St Benildus (8)	1,637	6(3-6)
Kilkenny (9)	1,618	4.5(7-8)
Trinity (10)	1,528	3.5(11)
Rathmines B (11)	1,505	6(3-6)
Dublin (12)	1,439	3(12)

40. The highlight here was an incredible performance by Phibsboro who achieved the highest score of any board in this year's Armstrong Cup. Rathmines B

performed very credibly, achieving sixth place for points scored against a rating of eleventh, while St. Benildus also comfortably outperformed their rating. Dun Laoire had a disappointing performance on this board, dropping from a rating of sixth to 9-10 place on points scored, while the returns for Rathmines A and Balbriggan were somewhat disappointing.

(L) Average Rating, Board 8

Team	Average Rating	Points Scored
Phibsboro (1)	1,734	7.5(1-2)
Elm Mount (2)	1,641	5(8-9)
Kilkenny (3)	1,565	6(3-6)
Gonzaga (4)	1,563	7.5(1-2)
Dun Laoire (5)	1,551	6(3-6)
St Benildus (6)	1,538	6(3-6)
Bray (7)	1,512	6(3-6)
Rathmines B (8)	1,503	5(8-9)
Rathmines A (9)	1,492	5.5(7)

Balbriggan (10)	1,451	4.5(10)
Dublin (11)	1,337	4(11)
Trinity (12)	1,243	3(12)

Note: Trinity conceded walkover to Phibsboro

Dublin conceded walkover to St. Benildus

Rathmines B conceded walkover to Rathmines A

41. Nearly all teams on this board performed reasonably closely to their ratings. The major exception was Elm Mount who dropped from second in ratings to 8-9 on points scored. Gonzaga and Rathmines A had good performances on this board.

4. COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL TEAMS

42. I set out below my comments, based mainly on the above performance statistics, on each team in this year's Armstrong Cup:

(1) Phibsboro

Deserved to be champions. Had strength in depth throughout the team. Could even afford to lose one of

their 2,100+ players and survive a glitch against Kilkenny and still win the title reasonably comfortably.

(2) Gonzaga

Lost their first two games but came back strongly, particularly after Christmas. A valiant effort but not quite enough to bridge the gap with Phibsboro. Would have been much closer if return from top boards had more closely matched ratings.

(3) Elm Mount

Were second at Christmas but faded somewhat in second half. Heavy reliance on top board with some of the other boards performing below par relative to ratings. A credible performance but not quite enough strength in depth to challenge for the title.

(4) St. Benildus

The recipient of 3 walkovers but performed extremely well. Their strength lay mainly in their middle boards who comfortably outperformed ratings. They gave the impression of a well organised team with a good team spirit.

(5) Bray

Had a shaky start and were in ninth place at Christmas, not far above the relegation zone. Thereafter, got their game together and showed their class to finish fifth. At their best, a danger to any team.

(6) Trinity

Had very strong top four boards but were unable to field to replicate that with their bottom four boards who were the third weakest of the twelve teams in terms of ranking. This was the major factor in preventing them from occupying a higher place in the competition.

(7) Kilkenny

Having suffered an early 7-1 defeat against Dun Laoire they looked at one stage to be in serious danger of relegation. They then brought in their big guns and quickly put that threat to bed. The only team to defeat Phibsboro and by a comfortable 5.5 to 2.5 margin.

(8) Balbriggan

After an early 7-1 loss to Phibsboro, their immediate response to that defeat was to beat Rathmines B by a

similar margin in the next round. Quickly responding to the demands of the Armstrong Cup, a return of 4 wins and a draw against Gonzaga was an excellent performance in their first season in the competition.

(9) Dun Laoire

Started very well and after a third round defeat of 7-1 against Kilkenny were in fourth place at Christmas. They faded badly, however, in the second half of the competition and finished just above the relegation zone. Have a very experienced panel which, however, is small and relatively old compared with other teams.

(10) Dublin

As they showed with their last two results, their best team was very strong. It would probably have been capable of at least finishing in the top half of the table. They had extreme difficulty, however, in fielding their strongest team and their bottom boards were rated weakest of all teams. As a result, they came close to disaster.

(11) Rathmines A

With the strength of their team, which was rated equal 4-5 on ratings, probably should never have been

involved in any relegation battle. Had some very disappointing results, however, especially with their bottom boards. A disastrous last round defeat against St. Benildus, due partly to an understrength team and an unfortunate walkover conceded, sealed their fate.

(12) Rathmines B

Their bottom boards performed credibly but they were heavily outrated on their top boards and their overall rating average was 123 points behind the next weakest team. Despite their best efforts, they gradually fell behind the rest of the field and it was clear from a few rounds out that they would be relegated.

5. Conclusion

43. At times the compilation of the above statistics was somewhat laborious and tedious and took much longer than originally anticipated. I hope, however, that it will be helpful to clubs generally. When analysed carefully, I think it will enable them to draw conclusions from their results, to assess their strengths and weaknesses, and to take the necessary steps to improve their performance in next year's Armstrong Cup.

44. As indicated earlier, all conclusions and comments are solely my own

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ADDENDUM

45. Gerry Smith of Balbriggan made the interesting suggestion that details should be given to indicate the success of clubs in fielding their strongest teams and he provided the following statistics in this regard:

- the average rating of the top 8 players used by each club in the Armstrong Cup (A);
- the overall average rating of each team (see paragraph 28 of this document) (B);
- B expressed as a percentage of A to indicate the success of clubs in fielding their strongest teams.

46. The following table sets provides the relevant statistics:

Club	Overall Average	Average Top 8	%
Dun Laoire	1,824	1,838	99.2
Phibsboro	1,992	2,035	97.9
Elm Mount	1,906	1,957	97.4
Rathmines B	1,666	1,711	97.4
Balbriggan	1,793	1,846	97.1
Gonzaga	1,966	2,048	96
St. Benildus	1,840	1,922	95.7
Bray	1,871	1,958	95.6
Trinity	1,836	1,936	94.8
Rathmines A	1,871	1,981	94.4
Dublin	1,826	1,975	92.5
Kilkenny	1,789	2,059	86.9

47. A note of caution about some of these figures.

Kilkenny are the least successful team in fielding their strongest 8 players. This is because 2 of their 3 players rated over 2,300 played only once each and the other on only a few occasions when Kilkenny needed results to avoid the danger of relegation. The figures,

therefore, are somewhat misleading in their case if, as appears likely, Kilkenny had decided to hold these players “in reserve” and only to field them in case of need.

48. Nevertheless, the figures give a good general picture of the success of clubs in getting out their strongest team. Dun Laoire were by far the most successful club in that regard, followed by Phibsboro and (jointly) Elm Mount and Balbriggan. Apart from Kilkenny, Dublin and Rathmines A were least successful in fielding their strongest players and this was undoubtedly a significant factor in their finishing positions.

50. It will be noted that, in terms of the average rating of their top 8 players, the strongest three clubs were Kilkenny, Gonzaga and Phibsboro in that order. This was a somewhat surprising statistic to me; I had thought that Phibsboro were the strongest team in this year’s Armstrong. They were in regard to teams fielded but they were somewhat behind both Kilkenny and Gonzaga on the strength of their top 8 boards.

49. There is one other statistic which may be of interest. Paragraph 28 above has given the overall

strength of each team in terms of overall rating average. The following table gives a more detailed picture of relative strengths by setting out for each club the numbers of players on their playing panel and the number of such players rated over 2,000. The table is given in order of finishing positions in the Armstrong:

Club	Playing Panel No.	2,000+
Phibsboro	14	4
Gonzaga	13	5
Elm Mount	14	2
St. Benildus	15	3
Bray	17	2
Trinity	16	3
Kilkenny	16	3
Balbriggan	12	0
Dun Laoire	10	1
Dublin	19	4
Rathmines A	20	4
Rathmines B	14	0

50. Rathmines A and Dublin had the largest playing panels. Again, this was due, to some extent at least, to their inability (for presumably a variety of reasons) to get out their strongest players; they had to cast the net wider than others to field a team. Dun Laoire had the smallest panel with just 10 players, closely followed by Balbriggan.

51. Gonzaga had the highest number of players (5) rated over 2,000. They were followed by Phibsboro, Dublin and Rathmines A with 4 each. Two clubs had no player rated over 2,000 while Dun Laoire had just one.

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