

O'Hanlon Cup

After five rounds of the O'Hanlon Cup, the early season shifting of league position is beginning to settle down and a clearer picture of table is starting to form.

Last year's BEA Cup champions **Gonzaga** are en route to their third successive promotion, heading into the Christmas break 3.5 points clear of their nearest rivals, **Gorey**, who have added strength and experience to the side that finished third in the BEA last April with the acquisition of **Dennis Jones**, as well as maintaining the services of the league's highest ICU rated player, **Manuel Gardenes**. Close behind are **Skerries** and **Ballinasloe**, while **Pat Scanlan's Drogheda** side's 5.5-0.5 loss to Gonzaga last weekend has seen them fall off the pace somewhat.

At the other end of the table, **Celbridge** and **Bray/Greystones** currently occupy the relegation spots, but **Inchicore** and **Elm Mount** remain within reach. **Royal Lopez**, winners of the competition in 2008, have struggled for early season form, but having already played Gonzaga, Skerries and Ballinasloe will look to bounce back in the new year.

It has meanwhile been a season of ups and downs for **Aer Lingus** and **St. Benildus**. While the former have struggled with consistency in playing numbers, which has led to the loss of a couple of points, the latter have seen some great results from junior players, including **Odhran** and **Finn McDonnell** and **Sean Devilly**.

The individual points table also makes for interesting reading. **John Loughran** of Skerries leads the way as the only player to have achieved a maximum of 5 points. The outstanding result of his excellent performance is no doubt his defeat of Gardenes in round 3. Not all the results have been posted online yet, but other impressive performances include Loughran's teammate **Dan Aldridge** and **Eddie Humphrey** of Gorey (3.5/4), **John P. Dunne** of Ballinasloe and **Alan Dempster** of Aer Lingus (both unbeaten on 3/4) and the Gonzaga trio of **Marc Lincoln** (4.5/5), **Ben Cullen** (4/4) and **David J. H. Murray** (4/5).

With six rounds of matches yet, there remains a lot to play for; Gorey, having slipped up to the leaders in the opening match have strung together a series of excellent results and are still very much in the hunt for the title, while a big result for Ballinasloe or Skerries against Gonzaga would see them back in the race. There are almost certainly a few twists and turns to come and the competition should make for interesting viewing for neutrals as the season progresses.

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