

# Sponsorship deal is close as Limerick FC head for the top

By AIDAN CORR

IS Hogan Park ready for premiership football? That is the question that is being asked this week as the possibility of Limerick FC gaining promotion next season gains momentum.

Five wins on the trot

has certainly put the smiles back on the faces of those in charge of affairs at Rathbane and with the side now just one point behind the leaders, local fans are beginning to relish the dream of watching their favourites in action against some of the country's top clubs next

season. With the defeat of Home Farm/Everton in Whitehall last Saturday night, Limerick FC have now completed their first series of this three-stage competition, have played all the teams involved and have lost only once (to Waterford) and drawn twice (against Galway United and Athlone Town).

Their total of 20 points from nine games is impressive and there is now no reason why they cannot go close to earning a similar total during the second series of games which get underway with a home tie against Home Farm/Everton at Hogan Park this Sunday (2.30).

Limerick manager, Dave Connell, was, for the first time this season, conceding that promotion was now a real possibility: "It's getting a bit serious now, isn't it?" he joked this week. "To be honest we're doing a bit better than I thought we would. When I took over the job I said to Fran Mullally that we are going to go about it in as professional a manner as possible. We both knew that the players were there but

the structure had to be right and so far things have worked out well for everybody involved."

The manager was not too happy with his side's performance in Whitehall last Saturday despite their 2-1 victory: "We did not play well in the first half but it was nice to hear their manager Dermot Keeley say after the game that we were the best side that they have played against this season."

According to Connell,

the players will continue taking every game as it comes from now on and hopefully keep winning, particularly at home. They now have a psychological advantage over Home Farm/Everton following their victory last week-end but Limerick could be without key defender Albert Pinnan for Sunday's clash. The left full is suffering from a bruised muscle in his back and is extremely doubtful.

There was further bad

news for the locals this week with Declan Casey receiving a one match suspension from November 10 after being sent off in the game against Longford Town a couple of weeks ago. Casey is also nursing a hamstring injury while Ray O'Halloran is expected to play on Sunday despite a stomach strain picked up last week.

Jason O'Connor could also be out for a few games. He is currently on twenty penalty points and is sure to receive the compulsory three match suspension. His loss would be a serious blow to Limerick and with this in mind, Dave Connell has been talking to two possible replacements during the past few weeks. There is also a possibility that a player will be signed on loan.

There is also strong speculation this week that the club are on the verge of signing a deal with a major sponsor for the rest of the season. Two offers are already in the pipeline and a meeting with these had been arranged for later in the week.

With interest now rising locally, it is expected



Ray O'Halloran and Jason O'Connor two key players in defence and attack for rejuvenated Limerick FC.

that Hogan Park will be well attended on Sunday next for the visit of Home Farm/Everton. Support has been on the increase during the past few home games and the attendance at the Long-

ford Town games was the biggest at a league game there for some time.

The club now deserves the backing of the public and success this season could pro-

vide the platform for the return of Limerick under soccer to the highest echelons of Irish football. After so long in the doldrums, this position would not be overdone.



Garrett Ryan will be hoping to get amongst the scores on Sunday.



Jason Purcell who is having a splendid first season with Limerick.

# Semi-final spots

# Six changes on hurling side

By AIDAN CORR

LIMERICK'S new hurling selectors continue their

and Pádraig Tobin of Kilmallock. Tadhg Hayes of Doon, who came on as a second half substitute for the injured Alan Brown last

weeks. "Many of the current Limerick panel are extremely tired. Some are exhausted. They have been

the manager. "We played well last Sunday for most of the match but there was a complete lack of concentration