

Sunday thanks to a strikingly impressive second half display from the Galway attack which carved apart the Fermanagh defence with almost surgical precision.

In the end it was easy for Galway — maybe a little too easy — but it was a far different story for the first 35 minutes of this section A league tie when a Fermanagh side, enjoying a significant midfield foothold, matched the winners score for score.

Indeed had the Northern side not been guilty of some quite appalling first half inaccuracy in attack, Galway could well have been facing into an interval deficit of worrying proportions.

Of Galway's three New Year league ties, this probably would have carried the biggest 'be careful' tag given the vagaries of pre-Christmas form and the inherent dangers of long away trips, but a 10 minute spell of attacking brilliance mid-way through the second half allayed those fears.

With a home tie against Carlow and an away trip to Kilkenny remaining on the league schedule, Galway — barring disasters — should end up with a 12 point total which should be close enough to guaranteeing them a top two place given the fact that Laois and Mayo have yet to meet.

Galway's 1-19 total won't have done their scoring average any harm either and it could have been better had they not conceded a last minute goal from **Mark Gallagher** — however, it was a score of real quality with Gallagher's rocket shot giving **Pat Comer** no chance.

Playing into the first half breeze Galway had turned over with a slender 0-6 to 0-5 lead with Fermanagh dominating the midfield exchanges thanks to

the aerial power of **Paul Brewster** and a greater all-round sharpness in picking up breaks from kick-outs.

The Galway attack, although virtually surviving on scraps of possession, however looked sharp with plenty of movement both on and off the ball **Paul Clancy** on the right wing, **Shay Walsh** on the '40' and **Niall Finnegan** in the left corner were particularly incisive.

Padraig Joyce (3 frees), **Shay Walsh** (free) and **Niall Finnegan** (twice from play) edged Galway in front during a half in which Fermanagh's portly but lively full forward **Rory Gallagher** and corner man **Stephen Maguire** caused most distress to the winners defence.

Early in the second half **John O'Mahony** introduced **Michael Donnellan** for **Padraig Boyce** at midfield but Galway still found it difficult to win anything clean in the middle and it took two excellent points, one from corner back **Robin Doyle** — after a most unselfish off the ball run — and one from **Niall Finnegan**, to edge Galway ahead by 0-8 to 0-6 seven minutes into the second half.

By now though Galway, despite their midfield problems, had settled well into their pattern of play with centre back **John Divilly** — who gave and took a few bone crunching shoulders — and **Sean de Paor** prompting a lot of Galway attacks.

The scoring blitz which

followed left Fermanagh down and out with their defence unable to cope with the pace and back up support of a Galway attack which might lack inches but which certainly lacks nothing in speed of movement and score execution.

Declan Meehan turned in a great second half with his runs down the left flank creating many openings while full forward **Padraig Joyce** — who had lived on very scant pickings in the first half — laid off some delightful balls to an attack where there was always someone showing for the ball.

Meehan (4), **Shay Walsh**, **Kevin Walsh**, **Sean de Paor**, **John Divilly** (a 60 metre effort which hopped over the bar) and **Paul Clancy** pointed almost at will before **Derek Savage** with a cheeky lob picked off Galway's goal in the 57th minute before Gallagher's late consolation goal arrived for Fermanagh.

On a day when there was quite a sizeable Galway contingent in Brewster Park, the visiting fans left in relatively happy mood — while no one likes going overboard about winter fare this recent run represents the county's best league form for many's the year.

A few worries do remain though. Many Galway supporters would like to see **Gary Fahy** back to the confidence of a couple of seasons back while midfield



Kevin McCaffrey, Noel Greaney, Bernard Shapiro and Dermot Coll at the recent launch of the Renmore F.C. calendar.

continues to be headache for management — of real concern was Galway's failure to win second phase play from this sector, a problem which would be of far more serious consequence against better quality opposition.

Fermanagh did have their moments but they lacked enough forwards of genuine quality to trouble the Galway defence while their backs were often caught for pace — they face a real battle to avoid Division 4 status next season.

Paul Brewster at midfield probably put up their most stern resistance while **Sean Breen**, **Kieran Donnelly** and full

forward **Rory Gallagher** also caught the eye.

A decent spring league run now looks a reasonable possibility for Galway and games against better quality opposition would be a major help to preparations for the the first round May championship showdown against Mayo in Castlebar — a game which has already ignited massive interest in the West with winter barely gone.

Galway: P. Comer; R. Doyle 0-1, G. Fahy, T. Meehan; K. Fallon, J. Divilly 0-1, S. de Paor 0-1; K. Walsh 0-1, P. Boyce; P. Clancy 0-1, S. Walsh 0-3 (1 free, 1 45), D. Meehan 0-4; D.

Savage 1-1, P. Joyce 0-3 (all frees), N. Finnegan 0-3. **Subs.:** M. Donnellan for Boyce (35), D. Mitchell for G. Fahy (53), S. O'Domhnaill for K. Walsh (57).

Fermanagh: C. McAdam; P. Courtney. S. Breen, P. McGuinness; R. Curran, B. King, T. Callaghan; P. Brewster, L. McBarron; S. King, M. Greene 0-1, K. Donnelly 0-1; Ray Gallagher 0-1, Rory Gallagher 0-5 (4 frees, 1 s.l.), S. Maguire. **Subs.:** M. Gallagher 1-0 for Ray Gallagher (35), R. Johnson for Curran (41), C. Courtney for L. McBarron (51).

Referee: J. Bannon (Longford).