

THE league title may have been wrapped up by Catholic Institute last week, but there is still a lot to play for, especially for Harlequins and possibly Bandon.

At present UCC are in second spot in the table, on 30 points, having completed all their games.

Harlequins are on 26 points and have two games to play and behind them Bandon are on 25, with one game to play. So what's at stake is a place in the Irish Hockey League or a place in the Irish Hockey League play-off weekend.

It's really a case of getting out the slide rule pending on which way results go. Simply put if Harlequins beat Church of Ireland on Tuesday night then they, at the very least, will get a place in the play-off weekend.

However if they then go on to beat Bandon in their final league game, or have a score draw with them, they can pip UCC for second in the table and automatically go through and put UCC into the play-off spot.

Should this happen it will be extremely difficult for UCC to take part it will come at a time when students will be heavily involved in exams or project work as the academic year comes to a close.

Naturally they will make every effort to do so, but pending on numbers available, will either not be able to take part or else travel with a weakened squad. This won't do them or Munster any good as for the last number of years there have been three sides in the IHL and it will only be bad for the province should this drop.

But getting back to the league the possibility of Bandon taking third place and with it a spot in the play-offs is still possible.

They are currently on 25 points and if Harlequins lose to Church of Ireland tomorrow then their destiny will be in their own hands. The last league game of the year sees Bandon at home to Harlequins. Provided Quins lose to Church of Ireland there will only be a point between them, so therefore if Bandon defeat Quins they will go above them in the table and take the play-off place.

So generally at a time when all is sorted in the league there is still a lot to play for.

Quins certainly won't want to give up their IHL spot, having already relinquished their league and cup titles to Institute, and will want to take Bandon out of the equation by beating Church of Ireland.



Miss Cork Universe, Anita O'Brien, gets in some putting practice with Ann Harte and Edel Meade of Enable Ireland at the launch of the Enable Ireland Golf Classic at Water Rock Golf Club yesterday.

Picture: Diane Cusack

Still plenty left to do for Cork sides

LADIES HOCKEY

By RORY NOONAN

They should do this as Church have nothing to play for, bar pride, and Quins will have been boosted by their draw against Institute last Saturday, the first points the Limerick side have dropped all season.

Quins young side have matured

as the season goes on and should they stay together it won't be long before they are back up challenging Institute for the title again.

Ashton and Bandon are in action tomorrow, with a chance to get their hands on some silverware, as they face each other in the Senior Cup plate final.

Both teams have played some of their best hockey for some time this year and deserve something at the

end of it. However only one side can win, but it's impossible to split them, so it would be no great surprise to see it go to extra-time or even penalty strokes to find a winner.

FIXTURES TOMORROW

Munster Senior Cup plate final: Ashton v Bandon, 2pm, Harlequin Park.

TUESDAY, APRIL 19

Munster Senior League Division One: Harlequins v Church of Ireland, 8.30pm.

Be smart and take Ali to sting the bookies

MY PHONE can beat me at snooker. It's one of those smart phones, where you rub the screen with your fingertips and all sorts of magical things happen.

My last phone wasn't smart, although it could beat me at chess. This upset me so much I discovered I could beat it at kickboxing, hence my need for a new phone.

My smartphone (it's not an iPhone) allows me to download some games for free and I recently came across 'Jimmy White's Snooker Legend'.

The graphics are a bit dodgy. Jimmy resembles JD from Scrubs at 12 years of age and the white ball is grey but I would get over this if I could beat swarthy Ewan MacGregor lookalike, Russell.

But I can't.

Adding to my annoyance is before every game a tip comes up telling me that if I win a game and some money I



can buy a better cue. And whenever I go close to the pocket asshole Russell says "nice try".

Just before my pixelated Scottish nemesis smacks a ball into a pocket a lightbulb appears in a think bubble from his head like he has come up with some great idea, while all he ever does is take the most likely shot on.

I don't think I'd take each successive defeat so much to heart if I didn't believe my opponent was a moron.

As good as Russell appears to be he hasn't qualified for the BetFred.com World Snooker Championships that

begin tomorrow at the Crucible.

The only Irishman to qualify is Antrim's Mark Allen, who faces a tricky opening round tie against two-time runner-up and five-time semi-finalist Matthew Stevens. The No. 18 ranked Welshman has failed to qualify the last two years (he beat Dub Fergal O'Brien on the final black 10-9 to get in this time) but has enjoyed a good start to this year and the 60-1 he is with Boylesports is the best long odds you will get on a serious contender.

It is a year since John Higgins was dumped out by Steve Davis (who hasn't qualified) and the fallout from that was the betting scandal he was embroiled in after a visit to Kiev. Higgins is the 5-1 favourite everywhere.

Ronnie O'Sullivan at 8-1 with Stan James is the longest price he has been in Sheffield in a long time, but we must consider which Ronnie will turn up: the

two-handed genius or the malcontent who said he was pulling out last week. I suspect the latter.

Last year's winner Neil Robertson is 10-1 with Skybet, but a repeat might be beyond the Aussie who faces 21-year-old hotshot Judd Trump on Saturday in the opening game.

Recommendation: A lightbulb has appeared in my think bubble and my tip of the cue for the tournament is Ali Carter at 25-1 with Boylesports. He was a finalist in 2008 and was only beaten by Robertson last year after a gruelling quarter against Shaun Murphy took a lot out of him late the night before an early morning semi-final session with the Aussie. He has been given a favourable draw, taking on Dave Harold and then either Graeme Dott or Mark King in round two. Expect him to beat those players. Once he does his price will have halved.

C of I and Quins to do battle once again

MEN'S HOCKEY

By FRED TREACY

CORK Church of Ireland and Cork Harlequins will come face to face for the third weekend running when they meet in a crucial Munster Senior league Division 1 match at Garryduff Sports Centre on Saturday, hit off 12.30pm.

Two weeks ago Cork Harlequins put themselves in a strong position to take the title when they defeated Cork Church of Ireland 5-4 in a nine-goal thriller at Harlequin Park to move three points clear at the top.

Last Saturday Cork Church of Ireland bounced back to defeat Harlequins 2-0 in the Peard Cup final, but the Garryduff side know that they must win the league encounter on Saturday to join Cork Harlequins at the top of the table to force a play-off for the title, if both sides win their remaining league matches.

Cork Harlequins final match is against Bandon while Cork Church of Ireland play UCC.

That Cork Church of Ireland v UCC match takes place at the Mardyke on Sunday and is a very important one also for UCC in their bid to gain a Wild Card play-off place in the Irish Hockey League.

UCC will also be in action on Saturday at the Mardyke against Cork Church of Ireland B.

It will be a busy few days for Cork Church of Ireland's leading goal scorer John Jermyn as he has been named in the Irish squads selected to play against Canada in a three match test series. The first match takes place at UCD Belfield on Sunday, hit-off 6.30pm with the remaining matches taking place at Northern Ireland Civil Service grounds in Belfast on April 19-20.

Meanwhile in Dublin this weekend the semi-finals and final of the Irish Senior Cup takes place at UCD Belfield. On Saturday in the semi-finals Banbridge will play Monkstown and Cookstown take on Annadale with the winners meeting in the final at the same venue on Sunday.

The Munster Junior squad to compete in the interprovincial tournament at Three Rock Rovers Hockey Club, Grange Road, Dublin on May 14-15 has been selected:

T. Murphy (Catholic Institute), G. Atcheson (Catholic Institute), M. Shine (Limerick), D. Buttimer (UCC), A. Newenham (Cork Harlequins), T. Clarke (Limerick), B. Egan (UCC), E. Gleeson (Catholic Institute), G. Jeffrey (Cork Church of Ireland), E. Calender (Catholic Institute, c), J. Cudmore (UCC), A. Khan (Limerick), A. Good (UCC), J. Pearce (Glenanne), M. Buttimer (Limerick), C. Duggan (Bandon), C. Shemeld (UCC). **Manager:** T. Murphy. **Coach:** J. Meyler. **Assistant Coach:** C. O'Kelly.

FIXTURES TONIGHT

Munster Senior League Division 4: Cork Harlequins E v Ashton B, Harlequin Park, 8.15pm.

TOMORROW

Munster Senior League Division 1: Cork Church of Ireland v Cork Harlequins, Garryduff, 12.30pm; UCC v Cork Church of Ireland B, Mardyke, 2pm.

Irish Senior Cup semi-finals: Banbridge v Monkstown, Belfield, 3pm; Cookstown v Annadale, Belfield, 5pm.

SUNDAY

Irish Senior Cup final: Belfield 3.30pm. **Munster Senior League Division 1:** UCC v Cork Church of Ireland, Mardyke, 1pm.