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# PLAYER WELFARE CONFERENCE

By John Harrington, GAA.ie

**O**n January 18 in Croke Park, Uachtarán CLG, Aogán Ó Fearghail launched the first ever GAA Player Conference.

The event which will take place in Croke Park on Saturday, February 17th, 2018 is open to all adult players of Gaelic Games (Football, Hurling, Camogie, Ladies Football, Handball and Rounders). The event is themed Prepare, Perform and Recover and is designed to engage, educate, support and inform adult club players on player welfare topics.

In relation to the conference, Uachtarán CLG, Aogán Ó Fearghail said “I am delighted to launch this event, which will help increase awareness of the many fantastic resources available through our online platforms, gaa.ie and learning.gaa.ie, and which are available to all our members.”

Player Welfare is one of the GAA’s core values and the Association invests considerable time, personnel, and finance in developing evidence-based programmes and resources.

Research has identified the challenge for sports governing bodies in communicating player welfare messages to the playing population. To bridge this gap, the GAA is providing a platform for adult club players

to engage and be informed about the following player welfare areas:

- **Warm-up / Injury prevention / Strength & Conditioning**
- **Technical demands of the game & Skills acquisition**
- **Mental preparation and performance skills**
- **Nutrition for Performance / Supplements**

The conference will include keynote addresses, engaging workshops and discussion groups as well as practical experiential demonstrations on the above and other player welfare related topics including fixtures, concussion and gambling awareness. Special guests and speakers include

- **Eamonn O’Shea (former Tipperary Hurling manager)**
- **Cathal Cregg (Head Strength & Conditioning Officer)**
- **Prof Niall Moyna (Head of the School of Health and Human Performance and Sigerson Manager - DCU)**
- **Caroline Currid (Performance Coach - experience with multiple All-Ireland winning teams)**



Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael, Aogán Ó Fearghail, with (l to r), Wexford hurler Lee Chin, Dublin Camogie player Leah Butler, Tipperary footballer Aisling Moloney and former Mayo footballer Alan Dillon.

- **Dr. Crionna Tobin (Leading sports nutritionist)**
- **Dr. Edwenia O’Malley (Sports Physiotherapist)**
- **Mark Roe (Researcher, GAA/UCD National Injury Surveillance Database)**
- **Further speakers to be added in the coming weeks.**

Admission is €10 and attendees will also receive an information booklet on key areas of player welfare, an attendee

pack and refreshments (including lunch) throughout the day.

In the lead up to the conference, as part of a #PreparePerformRecover campaign, player welfare related resources will be promoted across [www.gaa.ie](http://www.gaa.ie), <http://learning.gaa.ie/player> and the GAA’s many social media channels to assist players, coaches and clubs as they plan for the 2018 season.

The GAA Player Conference will take place in Croke Park from 9.45am until 3.15pm on Saturday 17th February 2018. Spaces are limited so to book your place, and for further information see [here](#)

# PAYMENTS TO MANAGERS ARE “A STRIKE AT THE HEART” OF THE GAA ETHOS

By John Harrington, GAA.ie

**T**he GAA cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the culture of illegal payments to team managers at club and county level.

That was the warning issued today by outgoing GAA Ard Stiúrthóir Páraic Duffy in his Annual Report.

It's a topic that he first addressed back in 2010 when he circulated a paper on the issue of payments to inter-county managers.

He admits in his Annual Report which has been published today that the initiative he took just over seven years ago did not have the desired effect because “there was a lack of enthusiasm for any attempt to implement the proposals made in the paper.”

He insists the practice of paying coaches and managers is one the GAA cannot continue turning a blind eye to because it leaves the Association open to accusations of double-standards as far as amateurism is concerned.

“It needs to be very firmly stated again that not all managers are being paid,” wrote Duffy in his Annual Report.

“Many county-team and club-team managers are not being rewarded financially (beyond, that is, the legitimate expenses they receive for carrying out their function).

“The most significant development since 2010, in my view, is that an increasing number of irregular payments are now being made at club level.

“Such payments strike at the heart of the origins and relevance of the Association's amateur and volunteer ethos.

“People give their time to their club because, in so doing, they know that they are giving time to their community. One need only look at the extraordinary efforts that volunteers make to keep their clubs vibrant and their facilities upgraded. I believe that many members of clubs are uneasy about the practice of paying managers and coaches outside of legitimate expenses, yet no one seems able to stop the practice.

“One idea floated is that counties and clubs should be allowed to avail of the services of members only from within their own county or from within their own club. It is a proposal with obvious merits, but which also raises concerns.

“Many clubs and counties have benefited, without breaching our amateur-status rules, from the expertise of outside coaches who enjoy coaching/ managing but for whom the pathway to the main positions in their own club or county is blocked.

“We must be clear on the issue here: it is not about availing of the services of ‘outsiders’; it is solely about making payments in breach of our amateur-status ethos.”

GAA rules that are difficult to monitor, or that confront comfortable ways of doing things, tend to be ignored

The Ard Stiúrthóir believes it's time to have the sort of transparent debate on the issue that didn't take place back in 2010, and to consider potentially ‘bruising’ solutions to the problem that may ‘challenge deeply embedded attitudes’.

“Where do we go from here?”, wrote the Ard Stiúrthóir in his Annual Report.

“Over the past 15 years we have been carrying on a debate about how we should recognise the contribution of our inter-county players to our games, but without giving way to some who advocate a ‘pay-to-play’ policy. The arrangements for the funding of the GPA are now fully in the public domain and have been widely debated.

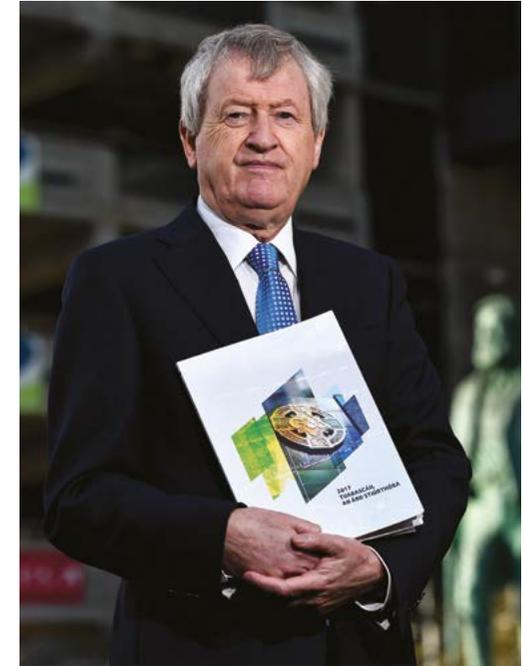
“The Recognition Protocol 2017-2019 between the GAA and GPA sets out clear requirements in relation to the provision of funding for player welfare and governance. Some do not like the funding arrangement, but the reality is that the GPA is committed to the maintenance and protection of the amateur status of the GAA; indeed, the pursuit by the GPA of its objectives is subject to that commitment.

“That outcome emerged only after a long and difficult debate about the best ways to maintain the amateur status of players and after a recognition that the provision of a strong player welfare service was the key to retaining our amateur status.

“We need a similar debate on what our amateur status means in terms of payments to managers and coaches.

“The Management Committee is looking at ways of strengthening the rule on amateur status, but I doubt if a change of rule on its own will make much difference.

“GAA rules that are difficult to monitor, or that confront comfortable ways of doing things, tend to be ignored. The great difficulty we face is that we are challenging deeply embedded attitudes that inform our behaviour, and that are therefore difficult to change. But we need to find a way to instigate the debate we avoided in 2010.



“It may be bruising and may take time, but it will provide an opportunity to begin to change the existing payments culture and to come to a position consistent with our declared values.

“I wrote in 2010 that the choice facing the Association was a simple one: either we do nothing in the certain knowledge that nothing will change and that in five or ten years we would still be lamenting the damage to our ethos and values – or we decide that it would be irresolute and defeatist not to confront directly a practice that we proclaim to be a blemish on the Association.

“The choice is the same one now, and the need to address it even greater.”

# CLUB BEFORE COUNTY

By John Harrington, GAA.ie



**C**ounty Boards have been urged to put the needs of their clubs ahead of the demands of inter-county managers.

In his Annual Report, which was published in Croke Park today, GAA Ard Stiúrthóir Páraic Duffy stressed the importance of every County Board taking advantage of the fact that the All-Ireland football and hurling championships will be played off in a more condensed time-frame this year than they were heretofore.

He wants County Boards to maximise this opportunity by looking at how they structure their club championships and setting in stone a Master Fixtures List that guarantees club players regular matches.

“It is now possible for most counties to schedule the bulk of their club championships after their inter-county championship season is over and to avoid the elimination of teams from their county championship before the county’s involvement in the senior inter-county championship has ended,” wrote Duffy in his Annual Report.

“By July 8 2018 there will be only eight teams still playing in the All-Ireland football championship, and by July 29 we will know the two hurling finalists.

“There should be no need for counties to eliminate teams from their championships in April or May, as has happened in the past.

“It is now up to individual counties to carry

out the important work that remains to be done. Counties need to examine the process through which their master fixtures list is created and take a new look at the structure of their club championships.

“In too many counties the fixtures schedule is unduly influenced by the demands of inter-county managers, with a consequent downgrading of the needs of clubs.” The Ard Stiúrthóir has laid out a four-point plan he believes every county’s club championship should adhere to.

It should be compatible with the inter-county fixtures programme, it should be deliverable within the time available, it should allow clubs training time with their inter-county players in advance of club championship games, and it should provide as much certainty as possible regarding dates of championship matches.

The Ard Stiúrthóir also stressed the importance of having a well-structured club league competition in every county that should be run off as scheduled regardless of whether inter-county players are free to play for their clubs.

“Counties should not be depending on their club championships to provide players with an adequate programme of matches.

“We have developed a fixation about judging the strength of a county’s fixtures programme based purely on the number and scheduling of club championship games, as if these were the only games a club played.

“Championship games should be only one element of a club’s adult fixtures programme. Players should – and usually do – play many more league than championship games.

“Club players want to play plenty of games; a good league structure will allow that, even without the participation of county players.

“There is absolutely no reason why adult club players cannot play a weekly league game while the county team is in action.

“Clubs should accept that, from early May until early July, they probably won’t have the services of their county players for most matches.

“This, however, cannot be a reason for every other player to remain idle. Play league games!

“It may mean that counties who link league performance to championship status will have to review that system but club league games must be played in the busy inter-county period of May and June.

“The club championships can begin, if necessary, in April, but most matches ought to be played when a county’s inter-county season has finished.

“The commitment of every county to a proper league structure would resolve the complaint that club players are denied an adequate programme of games.”

# NEW GAA APP GOES LIVE!

**T**his month saw the launch of the GAA's exciting new, official app – which, in its first 48 hours, has 10,000 active users already.

Available now through the App Store and Google Play, the GAA App has been completely redeveloped to provide members with the functionality to complete the initial steps of the membership renewal process online and pay membership subscriptions via the app using a debit or credit card. A further update will allow members to receive messages from their club through their device, with even further valuable functionality coming later in the year and the ability to renew family memberships in 2019.

#### **Built with you in mind**

The GAA App has been developed with club officials, coaches, players and members in mind. It is available for all Apple and Android devices, including mobile and tablet devices [recent operating systems required].

Designed to be intuitive and easy-to-use, the app provides users with GAA news and videos, as well as access to fixtures and results. It also has the added benefit of being compliant with the new data protection (GDPR) legislation that is coming into effect in May 2018.

#### **Time and cost savings for Clubs**

The GAA App will provide significant time savings, and reduce the amount of paperwork around membership and payments for club administrators.

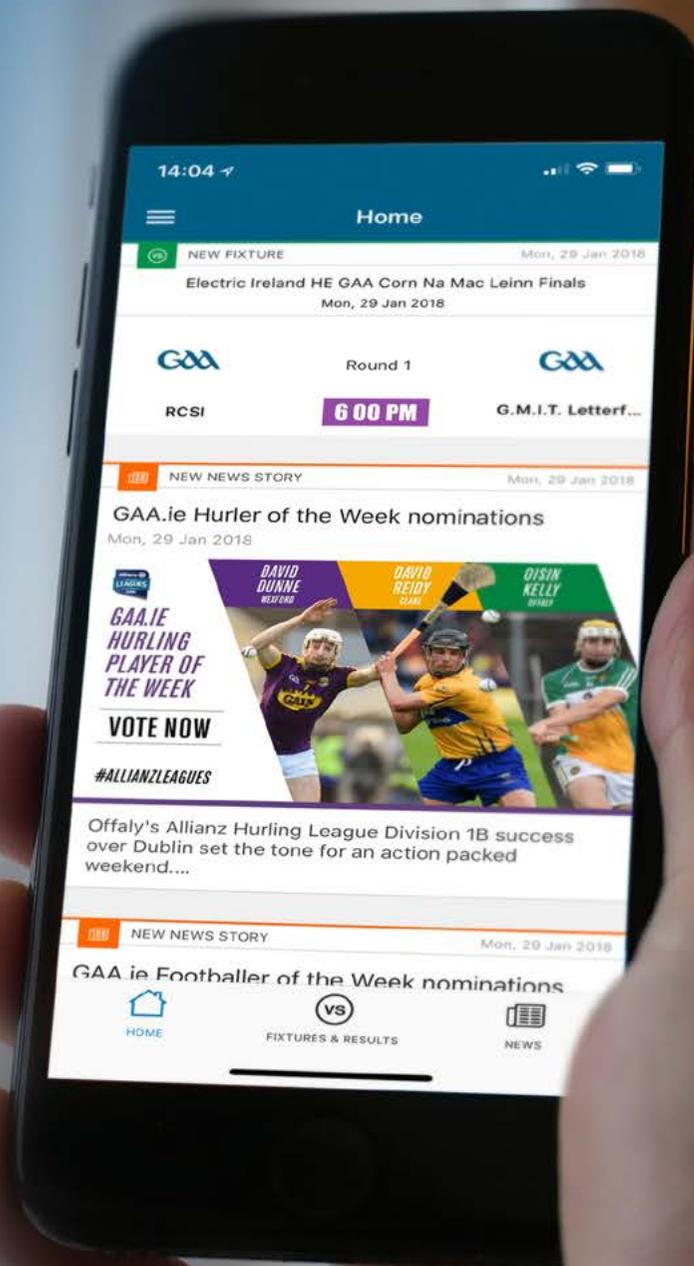
One of the key features of the app is the ability for clubs to receive membership payments via the using debit or credit cards, with funds being automatically paid into the club account on a weekly basis.

The app also offers the ability to register members who may live abroad, helping them stay connected to their local club.

For clubs that use SMS messages to stay in touch with their members, safe and secure communication will be available through the GAA app in our next release. This will allow the club to communicate with members of all ages safely and securely, and at no cost.

#### **Functionality**

In addition to being able to renew their memberships, and view News and Fixtures and Results, members are able to login using their GAA Membership ID to a club-specific section, which will allow them to keep their personal information up to date. The ID can be gained via the membership subscription invitation issued by clubs or it can be requested via the app.



# GAA AND OPERATION TRANSFORMATION: LIGHTING UP IRELAND

**The GAA has received a phenomenal response to our Ireland Lights Up partnership with Operation Transformation and Get Ireland Walking.**

The first night of the official club hosted walks was on January 22 and more than 130 clubs have signed up so far to partake in this first of its kind initiative which allows people to get active and keep fit by walking and using the lights of their local GAA facility to do so.

Each week our hosting clubs submit their participation numbers to ensure we can tally up final numbers and to also evaluate the success of Ireland Lights Up. To date 70 clubs have submitted their figures reaching approx. 6,000 walkers across the country – while more clubs are signing up daily.

To find your local participating club please click [here](#) to view our interactive map locator:

Aogán Ó Fearghail, An Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael is amongst one of our walkers. He said: “This has seen a phenomenal response and the GAA are delighted to partner up with RTE’s Operation Transformation and Get Ireland Walking to help bring communities together across the 32 counties to enjoy

healthy walks in the safe, bright, environs of their GAA Clubs.

“I’m lucky enough to be one of the participants amongst the 6,000 who is partaking in the initiative each Monday night in my own local GAA club. This reinforces the work of our Healthy Club project and how it’s helping our clubs to become hubs for health in their communities.”

Since the kick-start of Ireland Lights Up the GAA’s Community & Health Section has been inundated with positive messages from participating clubs across the country.

Amongst them the message below sums up the impact of the initiative nicely: “Our club, Dromin Athlacca GAA, just completed our first Operation Transformation walk and WOW! I can’t tell you how successful this was. We are a small rural club in the Golden Vale and we aimed for 10 / 15 people to attend but a whopping 50 people turned up! These people ranged in age, sex and ability but none lacked lustre or enthusiasm. We completed a 5k walk and the form was mighty when we reached home. This has been a fantastic boost for our little community and I can’t thank you enough for arranging it. We are all looking forward to next week!”

Make sure to tune in every Wednesday evening to RTÉ’s Operation Transformation programme to see how our participating clubs are getting on over the 6 week period.

To still sign up and be part of Ireland Lights Up (making sure your club meets the required criteria) please register here: [www.getirelandwalking.ie/GAA/](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie/GAA/)

If you have any questions regarding Ireland Lights Up please contact the GAA’s National Health & Wellbeing co-ordinator Stacey Cahill at [Stacey.cahill@gaa.ie](mailto:Stacey.cahill@gaa.ie)



*An tUachtarán and RTÉ’s host of Operation Transformation Kathryn Thomas at Croke Park for the launch of the initiative*



# YOUR BODY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

## ***DID YOU KNOW?***

### ***STRICT LIABILITY***

Players are solely responsible for any prohibited substance found in their system despite whether there was an intention to cheat or not.

### ***CONSEQUENCES***

A positive test can result in a suspension of a minimum of 4 years from all sports.

### ***SUPPLEMENTS***

Know the risks associated with supplements and how you can reduce your risk.

### ***MEDICATIONS***

Players should consult with the Medication Checker App or websites ([www.eirpharm.com](http://www.eirpharm.com) / [www.globaldro.com](http://www.globaldro.com)) and their Team Doctor before taking any over the counter medication. For prescribed medication please consult the Team Doctor.

### ***PROHIBITED LIST***

In addition to performance enhancing substances, recreational drugs are also included on the prohibited list.

## **FIND OUT MORE**

For information and resources on Anti-Doping including the E-Learning Course for Senior Inter-County Player's visit

[learning.gaa.ie/Antidoping](http://learning.gaa.ie/Antidoping)

# DON'T BE A DOPE! IMPORTANT GAA ANTI-DOPING INFORMATION

**A**ll GAA players and members are subject to the Irish Anti-Doping Rules as adopted by the Irish Sports Council.

Here's a link to the current Irish Anti-Doping Rules, [www.sportireland.ie/Anti-Doping/2015-Anti-Doping-Rules/](http://www.sportireland.ie/Anti-Doping/2015-Anti-Doping-Rules/)

It is important to note that all coaches and mentors of teams can potentially face suspensions of up to four years for breaching any of the Anti-Doping Rule Violations such as possession, trafficking or administration of a prohibited substance or assisting, aiding, abetting, covering up or any other type of complicity in an Anti-Doping Rule Violation.

It is recommended that all members of the association complete the following E-Learning course which takes around 30 minutes to complete.

**GAA Anti-Doping Awareness E-Learning Course:** [www.learning.gaa.ie/courses/Anti\\_Doping\\_Awareness/](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/courses/Anti_Doping_Awareness/)

**Further Information & Resources:** [www.gaa.ie/news/anti-doping/](http://www.gaa.ie/news/anti-doping/)

**WADA Prohibited List 2018**  
[www.wada-ama.org/sites/default/files/prohibited\\_list\\_2018\\_en.pdf](http://www.wada-ama.org/sites/default/files/prohibited_list_2018_en.pdf)

**Further resources are available on:**  
Official GAA website  
[www.gaa.ie/news/anti-doping/](http://www.gaa.ie/news/anti-doping/)

E-Learning and Development Portal  
[www.learning.gaa.ie/Antidoping](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/Antidoping)

If you require any further information or have any queries in relation to the above please do not hesitate to contact the Player Welfare Department at Croke Park.



# PLAY SAFE – STAY SAFE

## **HURLING HELMETS**

The GAA would like to remind all players at all levels in all Hurling Games and Hurling Practice Sessions it is mandatory for, and the responsibility of, each individual player to wear a helmet with a facial guard that meets the standards set out in IS:335 or other replacement standard as determined by the National Safety Authority of Ireland (NSAI).

All players are advised that in the event of a head injury occurring, if the helmet being worn does not meet the standard or is modified or altered from the original manufactured state, they are not covered under the terms of the GAA Player Injury Fund.

Further information is available [here](#)

## **MOUTHGUARDS FOR GAELIC FOOTBALL**

Mouthguards are mandatory for players in all age grades, in all Gaelic football practice sessions and games. This rule has been mandatory for players in grades up to Minor since 2013 and applies to all age grades since January 1st 2014.

For further information see [www.learning.gaa.ie/mouthguardshurlinghelmets](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/mouthguardshurlinghelmets)



# PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT FOR COACH CANAVAN

By John Harrington, GAA.ie

**P**eter Canavan's performance for Tyrone against Dublin in 1995 will always be regarded as one of the best by a player on a losing team in an All-Ireland Football Final.

Tyrone lost by 1-10 to 0-12, but that was despite the best efforts of Canavan who scored all but one of his team's points on the day.

10 of those were frees that the then 24-year-old Tyrone attacker kicked as confidently as if he was taking pot-shots on his local pitch with nobody watching.

And, in a way, he was. Far from the limelight, Canavan had dedicated countless hours honing his craft, so when the big day finally came he was mentally prepared for the challenge.

"The best training I did was down on our local pitch, more often than not on my own," Canavan told GAA.ie.

"I was lucky in so far as there was a bit of a bank behind the goals. That was a God-send because I didn't have to run too far to collect the balls after I'd kicked them over the bar.

"It helped too that there was a river running along the side of the pitch. If I kicked it wide at that side it was probably going into the river, so that was a very good reason not to kick it wide on that side.

"And when you practice skills like that, what you're really doing is preparing yourself to execute them under pressure someday.

"When I played in my first All-Ireland against Dublin in 1995 I scored 10 or 11 points and kicked a number of frees into a chanting and cheering Hill 16.

"Someone said to me afterwards did I not find that experience daunting? Why didn't it seem to shake me in any way?

"I told them because I'd been doing it for the past 15 or 16 years in my head. When I was down at that pitch I'd imagine I was Mikey Sheehy and that I was facing into Hill 16 and kicking it over the bar like I'd watched him do when I was a kid.

"Coaches will talk a lot now about mental rehearsal and visualisation, and even though I was probably doing it unaware, that's exactly what I had been doing for years.

"So, when it came to that situation against Dublin in 1995 it all felt perfectly normal. It wasn't off-putting or daunting in any way.

"That's why it's important to recreate likely situations in training. From a mental point of view, that type of training is invaluable."

Best practice when it comes to coaching and training is something that Canavan is passionate about.



He's a household name because of his exploits in his own playing days, but he has also built up an impressive CV as a coach at schools, club, and inter-county level.

As he says himself when you're a PE teacher you don't have much choice but to go down a coaching path because it's something you have to do every day.

He's fortunate then that it's also something he loves doing.

On January 13th in Croke Park he'll help give a key-note presentation at the 2018 GAA Games Development Conference in Croke Park along with former Armagh football Steven McDonnell and current Kerry minor football manager Peter Keane.

The subject of their discussion will be 'The need for spontaneity and creativity vs team play', which is a nicely topical debate at the moment.

In recent years gaelic football at all levels has become more tactical with teams placing a premium on defensive organisation.

With many coaches and teams this has come at the expense of skill development and encouraging players to take risks, something Canavan believes is a mistake.

"It's not just those coaching underage teams, some coaches of senior club and county teams don't believe in taking risks. It's all about possession and stats," he said.

"I think if you're going to break down blanket defences then you have to be able to take risks.

"From a coaching point of view all you can do is to prepare teams for what they can come up against.

"So if you know you're coming up against a team that goes man for man in defence then in training you play six forwards against six backs and give them plenty of chances to take on their man and go for scores.

"Whereas if you're coming up against a blanket defence then you plan for that scenario by playing four or five forwards

against eight or nine defenders in training so they can figure out themselves what's the best way to break that down.

"You're encouraging players to think and to work together rather than simply telling them what they should be doing.

"A good coach will put them in that scenario and give them the opportunity to figure it out for themselves. They'll soon come to realise what works and what doesn't."

Some coaches prefer to take a more prescriptive approach by laying out a blueprint for playing the game they demand their players stick to rigidly.

Canavan believes this method will only get you so far because scenarios will always arise in games that will require a player to use his own initiative to navigate successfully.

"You only have to look at Jose Mourinho," said Canavan. "When things are going well he talks about the tactical moves that he made and takes the credit.

"But then when they conceded a last-gasp equaliser against Leicester recently he criticised his players for not being able to think on the spot.

"Chris Smalling was injured but played on in his position and couldn't prevent the goal and Mourinho said afterwards there was nothing he could have done and it was the players who should have taken responsibility.

"But if you're the sort of coach who is extremely prescriptive in your methods, then you're not facilitating players to think for themselves and take responsibility.

"The best coaches will tell you that you should give your players as many opportunities as you can to figure things out for themselves."

Gaelic Football and Hurling are no different to other ball-sports in so far as you've a much better chance of playing your way out of a tight spot if you have a high-skill set.

Be it shooting a point from a tight angle under pressure, the ability to kick off a 'weaker' foot, evade a tackle, or win an aerial ball in heavy traffic, a mastery of the basic skills is what it generally all boils down to.

This year Peter Canavan, along with former Tyrone team-mate Joe McMahon, will help coach the U-16 footballers in the Tyrone Academy, and working on basic skills and creativity will form a big part of his coaching syllabus.

"I think the worst thing any manager or coach can do is to discourage kids from being creative because you always need an element of that," he said.

"It helps them to think quickly on the spot and problem solve for themselves rather than simply expect to be told what to do.

"Skill training is so important for young players.

"Particularly so because I don't think young lads are as inclined to go down and practice skills on their own or with a group of friends that perhaps previous generations were.

"There are so many distractions now for kids and what not, so that's why it's crucial to have skill-based training so they have an opportunity to perform the basic skills of the game."

Canavan appreciates the importance of creativity and spontaneity in Gaelic Football but he sees those qualities as being compatible with team-play rather than opposite to it.

Skill is hugely important, but if you can't marry flair with tactical astuteness then you'll be found out in the modern game.

The challenge for a coach is to incorporate tactics and game-plans into a training session without making the experience a constraining or boring one for the players.

"In the space of five years it has moved on dramatically and we can thank Jim McGuinness for that because of the success he had with the style of play he brought to Donegal," said Canavan.

"That opened up a lot of managers' eyes in terms of what they could do with 15 players in terms of positioning and strategy, and it changed the landscape of how the game is being played.

"Tactics are now so important from a management point of view and from a coaching point of view too in terms of how you work on tactics and implementing a game-plan without making a session stop-start and monotonous.

"You have to make training fun for players, be they underage players or adults, because no matter what age you are you play football because you enjoy it.

"A big part of a coach's job is to make sure the session is enjoyable so players, both underage and adults, will want to come back.

"You have so much to get into sessions

nowadays and that's why planning is so crucial.

"You have to sit down and decide what your aim is, what you want from the team, what style suits them best, and then go away and try to create a session that's as enjoyable as possible and which will improve the group."

A talented coach can make a massive difference with a group of players, but ultimately a player will only ever realise his full potential if he is driven to do so.

Canavan spent hours on his own kicking balls over the bar in his local field in order to become the all-time great he did, but not everyone has what it takes to give that sort of single-minded commitment.

That's why he sees his current role with the Tyrone U-16 footballers as mentoring one as much as a coaching one.

"It's not all about winning at that age, but you need to let them know what's ahead of them and what's expected of them," said Canavan.

"The lifestyle of an inter-county football now is professional in so many ways, and not everyone is cut out for it. So it's about giving them an idea of what's ahead.

"You want to show them how to play as a team too and the quality of coaching they get at this age is very important in terms of showing them what it takes to be a player at the highest level and the sort of progression you have to make.

"I'd like to think by the time they've finished with us they'll be the better for it."

# TAKING THE FEAR FACTOR OUT OF HURLING COACHING

By John Harrington, GAA.ie

**The GAA's National Hurling Development manager, Martin Fogarty, believes a fear of coaching hurling is holding the game back in some parts of the country.**

The Kilkenny native is keen to demystify the game and show people that you don't need a background in hurling in order to be able to coach it or introduce it to your club or school.

"I have met people I went to College with years ago who were quite good footballers and are teachers now and I'd ask them were they doing any hurling in their schools," said Fogarty, who will be a key-note speaker at the the 2018 GAA Games Development Conference in Croke Park.

"I thought they were messing at first, but they weren't, when they said they were almost afraid of it because they wouldn't have a clue.

"These were guys who were quite capable of killing you on the field of football, but this game of hurling for them was something way beyond their reach.

"It's important we alleviate those sorts of fears and show that if you get a crash-course in hurling and get the youngsters togged out and make little games they'll play away and develop themselves.

"Years ago in our club a priest, Father Liam Dunne, came down from Wicklow and didn't know the handle of a hurl from the bas of a hurl and made a huge difference in the parish.

"He had no experience in hurling but had plenty of enthusiasm. That's all you need, the rest will happen.

"One of obstacles for hurling is that hurling is hard to play. To get the initial skills takes a lot of work by coaches and by players.

"And until you get the initial skills in any game you don't enjoy it. Whereas if you go out with a football of any description you can kick it and you can pick it. It's not that difficult. But with a hurl it is difficult.

"For us involved with developing and coaching hurling, we need to get over that initial hump. To get people coaching and ensure they're not afraid of the game. Not

sell themselves short and say, 'I'm not able to coach this, I don't know how to do it'.

Fogarty believes hurling can thrive in GAA clubs and schools that currently only play Gaelic Football if parents and mentors cast their fear aside and coach hurling in the same way they do gaelic football.

"I'd be trying to appeal to football people in clubs to do a little bit of hurling in clubs as well and maybe demystify it a bit," said Fogarty.

"You couldn't get as good an example as Slaughtneil to show just what can be done if the will is there to do it. It's just unbelievable what they are achieving.

"You wouldn't be looking for a tenth of the level that those guys have reached, but they are showing what's possible.

"I was up there recently in Omagh in Tyrone and they hadn't an adult hurling team until last year for nine or ten years. Now they're growing the two games together at underage level and it's tremendous what's happening.

"I went up there to a Go Games day where they had four venues, four pitches at each venue, eight counties, 20 clubs, and about 34 teams at under 8 and Under 10 level. It was absolutely outstanding to see it.



“They’re all dual players who are playing hurling side by side with football.

“There probably is an element in some football areas that maybe fear the hurling might take away from or take over from the football.

“And, to be fair about it, you would have had a fear of football in some hurling areas too. It was down here often over the years too that lads would fear the football would interfere with the hurling.

“But you’re not looking for parity even. You want the game to be available to be played at some level in as many clubs as possible. I would be happy with that.”

Fogarty has travelled the length and breadth of the country coaching coaches and players since he started in his role of National Hurling Development Manager in September 2017, and what he has seen in that time has convinced him the game is in very rude health.

“I’m more than encouraged,” said Fogarty. “There are pockets of hurling all over the country that would embarrass us in what are known as the strong counties.

“I went up to Donegal during the summer. The county footballer Michael Murphy’s father, who’s also named Michael, is the GDA (Games Development Administrator) up there.

“He had organised a three-day hurling activity for 13 to 15 year olds. Some of these youngsters were travelling for an

hour and maybe a bit more to get there and the same home again, but we had about 50 at it.

“That absolutely blew me away when I saw the geography of where these guys were coming from. The County Board sent out mini-buses for them and bussed them in.

“Coaches from across Ulster were delivering it and the two Fennellys were up there for a bit too on one of the days and it was just a wonderful occasion.

“When you see 50 young lads there aged 13-15 in Donegal who have travelled an hour and a bit to get there, you have to say that this is super.

“I was also up there earlier in the year working with their Celtic Challenge squad and it was the same thing.

“They have an initiative up there as well where for 15 if not 20 Saturday mornings throughout the year the county board bus the youngsters in from throughout the county and they get in there and hurl. And the level I saw from both coaches and players was quite good.

“They’re doing a lot of work up there and I’m seeing the same in many different pockets all over the country.

“I was up in Breaffy in Mayo before Christmas and around 40 coaches turned up. We thought we’d have 15 or 20 young lads just to do demonstrations with, but as it turned out we had nearly too many, we had around 36 of them.

“That was the middle of December. if you were to use that as a yard-stick, you’d be saying there’s something serious happening here.

“When you travel around you meet some seriously great people who are keeping it going, and that’s all over the country.”

- The GAA Games Development Conference 2018 is being developed in partnership with Sky Sports and will take

place on Friday and Saturday, January 12th and 13th 2018, in Croke Park.

Run as a partnership between all of the Gaelic Games Associations, the Conference will offer the 750 delegates attending an opportunity to access talks relating to key coaching issues in Hurling/Camogie, Gaelic football/Ladies Gaelic football, Handball and Rounders which are related to players across the entire player development pathway.



# COACHING AND WARM UPS

By Cian O'Connell, GAA.ie

**T Carlow's development has been significant for Irish sport and recent GAA specific studies carried out should help future coaching planning.**

Lecturer Dr. Claire Lodge has worked extensively with two postgraduate students, Paul Miley and Sean Kelly, assessing the benefits of the GAA15 warm-up routine, in particular.

Dr. Catherine Blake, Associate Professor of the School of Public Health, Physical and Sports Science, UCD, explains how the GAA15 was established. "It was based on a systematic literature review looking at evidence for what works when you bring it down to a generic community level, Dr Blake told GAA.ie.

"Existing programmes are there which have been tested in soccer, in particular. It is evidence based. The GAA15 and the FIFA11 plus are similar concepts, maybe the individual exercises might be slightly different, but they are aiming to do the same thing. The evidence is there that if you consistently do it all of the time it works well. Implementation is one of the key things, you have to convince people to do it.

"Ultimately, it has to become part of the culture. That is one of the biggest challenges from the organisation's

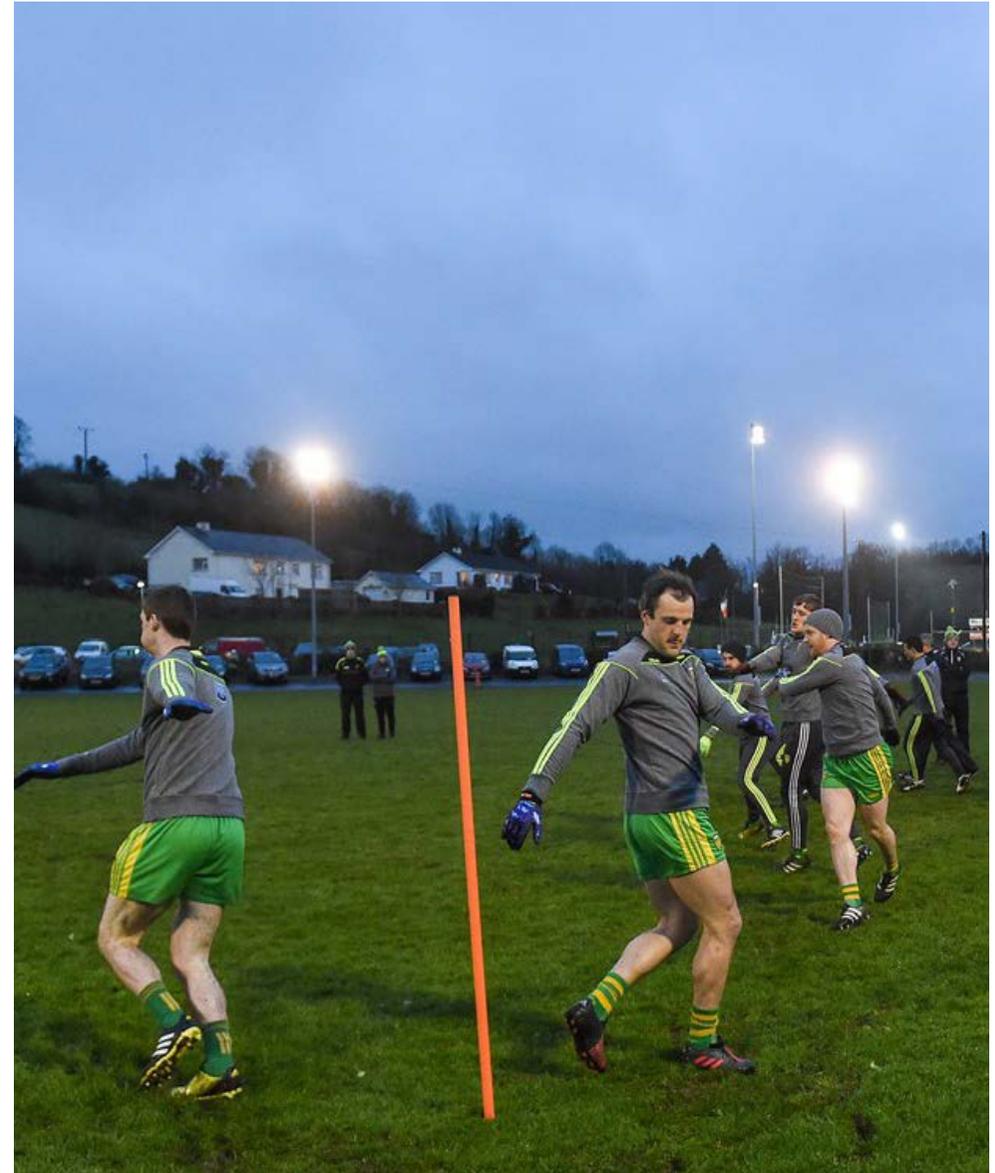
perspective, it should be integrated into every training session at some extent. It was driven by evidence and what was shown to us previously, then it was tweaked and tailored for the specifics of the game."

Different departments within the GAA have collaborated on the project. "From the Medical & Scientific Committee it then went to Games Development for implementation within the GAA and the organisation itself," Blake says. "You'd have a top down element so Jimmy Darcy will have integrated it into the coaching Foundation Level programme, so that is coming at it from an implementation perspective at different levels. The organisation is really behind it as well."

The IT Carlow study was funded by the Games Development Committee and is the first piece of research proving the effectiveness of the GAA15 programme.

"This was a two year project, it is just finalising now, at the end point," Dr Claire Lodge, who acted as Kilkenny's physio for eight years, states. "The guys that were executing the research, Seán Kelly and Paul Miley, they are due to finish their Masters in this in August.

"We have actually just come back from the International Olympics Committee Conference on injury and illness prevention



in Monaco where we presented the data on the GAA15 and its effectiveness at decreasing injury in adolescent males in hurling.

How was the research carried out?

“Basically we looked at 518 male hurlers between the ages of 13 and 18 and a half,” Lodge reveals. “They were recruited from 14 Post Primary Schools across Leinster. Then we divided them into seven schools that participated in the GAA15 and the other seven schools just adopted their normal warm-up routine as the control group.

“We monitored injury rates throughout their championship seasons and looked at training injuries as well as match injuries.

“A couple of findings came to light, one was that we had less injuries in training with the GAA 15 intervention group compared to the control group. We had a decrease of 45% of lower extremity training injuries in the GAA15 group versus their peer and age and gender matched who do their normal warm-up routine.

“Sean Kelly maintained regular contact with the 14 chosen schools to ensure the study offered an accurate reflection of what was happening.

“They went in to educate the coaches of the school’s teams, they provided them with DVDs and handouts of why it should be done and how it should be done. There was a big education process at the very beginning of the study.

“They would email them or telephone them

on a bi-weekly basis to see how it was going and they might drop in to touch base to monitor one or two sessions to survey them as they were going.”

Lodge is adamant about the importance of these projects which should assist with player welfare. “The fact of the matter is you have to have evidence and hard data that will sort of guide the way that we implement our programmes and implement change for the better,” Lodge states.

“It is very hard to sell a product to someone without evidence that it works. Going in trying to tell everybody to do this programme without any evidence behind it to say it actually works is very difficult unless you actually give it the evidence behind to back it up. It is very important that we carry out this empirical evidence and research it supports what we are doing on the ground.”

The next challenge, though, is to ensure that GAA15 warm-ups are implemented across the board. “Absolutely, it shouldn’t just stop here,” Lodge remarks. “This is a preliminary study, it was only two years. The findings are as we predicted.

“We found that there is a connection between doing it and not doing it so we can decrease injuries in these young males if they follow the programme. We need to carry that to the next level, we need to make sure that this gets instilled into the schools properly.

“It is really about education and communication between all of the key stakeholders between the school coaches,



Dr. Catherine Blake

the players themselves, the parents of these players. It is quite complex, but at least we have the initial step made, now it needs to grow from here.”

With youngsters involved in schools, club, development, and county panels, though, it is vital that all the different stakeholders work together according to Lodge. “Yeah, personally I feel the schools are the right place to target them. Whether the hurler is playing with club or school or on a development squad they all go to secondary school.

“If you get them in secondary school because that is consistent. If they are doing it with a development squad some counties might only meet once a month and it is

very hard to have continuity of care and continuity for the performance programme.

“From a practical perspective it would be better to get them in their daily environment. If the players themselves are on board then that trickles down to the next level they play with. That is the way it could start, but it probably is a lot more complex than that, how it will be taken on from here now.”

**Awareness is the first step in that process. Is your team using the GAA15? It is easy to implement it with a team you are involved with as a player or coach. To find out what is involved , including instructional videos see: [www.learning.gaa.ie/Gaelic15](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/Gaelic15)**

# GAA HEALTHY CLUB PROJECT - TRANSFORMING IRELAND'S HEALTH

**G**AA open next stage of award winning Healthy Club Project – calling on clubs to lead Ireland towards a healthier future

- *The Healthy Club project aims to transform GAA clubs into health-enhancing hubs for their communities*
- *With flagship Healthy Clubs now in every county of Ireland, the GAA is calling on more clubs to get involved*
- *So far, over 12,000 people have benefitted from physical activity programmes and 50% of Healthy Clubs are now smoke-free zones*
- *1,000 people engaged with mental health and emotional wellbeing programmes*

- *Over half (55%) of Healthy Clubs delivered healthy eating programmes targeting teenagers in particular*

An independent evaluation by the Centre for Health Behaviour Research, Waterford IT, has revealed that the GAA Healthy Club Project (HCP) is showing significant and lasting improvements to the health of communities across Ireland<sup>1</sup>. Stemming from this, the Healthy Club Project is calling on further clubs to make the GAA a healthier place for everyone to enjoy by signing up to this transformative initiative.

The HCP began in 2013, in partnership with Healthy Ireland, HSE, National Office for Suicide Prevention, and kindly supported

by Irish Life. Its aim is to make every GAA club in Ireland a hub for health, capable of providing their members and communities with programmes that support their physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.

As part of the HCP to date, 58 clubs have delivered 350 initiatives covering: physical activity, healthy eating, mental fitness, gambling, alcohol and drug education, training and personal development, anti-bullying, anti-smoking and community development. The evaluation by Waterford IT revealed that approximately 60-80%<sup>1</sup> of these initiatives were having a medium to high impact on members' health.

Launching the next stage of the HCP,

Minister for Health Simon Harris said: "Congratulations to the GAA clubs that have already taken part in the Healthy Club Project. You are leading the charge and have already made a hugely positive contribution to the communities you serve."

The Government recently launched the Healthy Ireland 2018 campaign by which we want to encourage people to make positive choices to improve their physical and mental health. These positive choices are based around three key areas – eating more healthily, being more active, and minding our mental wellbeing.

The Healthy Club Project is a great example of one of our key sporting organisations

working in partnership with the health sector to help people achieve these positive changes.”

Aogán Ó Fearghail, An Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael said: “Health and wellbeing is core to what the GAA is all about and the Healthy Club Project aims to build on this by making our clubs hubs for health that everyone can experience and enjoy. I’d like to thank our partners, Healthy Ireland, the HSE, National Office for Suicide Prevention, the Public Health Agency, and Irish Life, for helping to make the Healthy Club project the success it is. We look forward to growing the project from 60 to 150 clubs in this new phase.”

There are numerous examples of the positive impact the HCP is having within communities across Ireland, one such example is the “Men on the Move” (MOTM) programme. MOTM is a 12-week programme, developed and funded by the HSE, aiming to promote physical activity and general wellbeing among men over the age of 30.

The 12 week results of the Healthy Club participants showed an average weight loss of 2kg, and an average waist circumference drop of 3-4 cm, maintained at the 26-week check. There was also a one-minute improvement in the time to complete one mile.

Participants also recorded improvements to their social and emotional wellbeing. The programme brought men together and provided them with the opportunity to exercise at their own pace, while

developing new friendships. Some of the personal experiences reported by the men include: enhanced confidence, communication and self-care.

Direct quotes include: “The Men on The Move programme has created new friendships and left me feeling more positive about myself” and “I looked forward to the sessions to switch off and have a bit of craic with the lads after a tough day at work”.

For at least one man, the programme has been “simply life changing”.

Minister of State for Health Promotion Catherine Byrne noted that many individuals and organisations are now consciously adopting more healthy lifestyles and paid tribute to the GAA’s role in this: “These welcome developments in society are taking place alongside the well established traditions of healthy and positive lifestyles that the GAA has long promoted in its proud history. Against that background I would like to acknowledge the level of commitment demonstrated by volunteers in the GAA Clubs who are actively promoting health and wellbeing and leading the way for other sporting organisations.”

Speaking about Irish Life’s support for the Healthy Club Project, David Harney, CEO, Irish Life said: “The Healthy Club Project is a natural fit with Irish Life’s vision – we want to help people build better futures. Since 1884, the GAA has been Ireland’s largest sporting organisation and with almost the same number of



*Back row L-R: Kate O’Flaherty Director of Health & Wellbeing, Department of Health, Uachtarán Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Aogán Ó Fearghail, Simon Harris TD, Minister for Health, CEO Irish Life David Harney and Department of Communities NI, Tony Murphy Front row L-R: Catherine Byrne TD, Minister of State for Health Promotion, Dublin Ladies Footballer Lydsey Davey, Mayo Footballer Diarmuid O’Connor, Waterford Hurler Jamie Barron, Head of Department of Sport and Health Sciences AIT Dr Aoife Lane and Director of population Health, Department of Health NI Liz Redmond*

GAA clubs as GPs across Ireland, the HCP is the ideal forum through which to deliver health messages, and initiatives. There is a natural synergy between Irish Life and the Healthy Club Project and we’re delighted to continue to support such an important initiative.”

Clubs are encouraged to get involved and enjoy the numerous benefits, including exclusive access to Healthy Club resources, the potential to increase membership and broaden the volunteer base, better community engagement with club activities,

improvements in health promoting activities, improved goodwill for the club, and opening up funding avenues, all the while enhancing the health of the nation.

For more information visit: [www.gaa.ie/community](http://www.gaa.ie/community)

Follow: @officialgaa

or Like: [www.facebook.com/officialgaa/](http://www.facebook.com/officialgaa/)

#gaahealth

# CRITICAL INCIDENT TRAINING DELIVERED TO COUNTY OFFICERS

**'Critical Incidents' are usually challenging events that have the potential to create significant human distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms**

*(GPA Guidelines, 2014).*

**T**he Community & Health Department in Croke Park receive requests for assistance in approximately 50 such incidents each year. How such incidents have been initially handled at club and county level often dictates the nature of the outcome.

The Community & Health Department in Croke Park receive requests for assistance in approximately 50 such incidents each year. How such incidents have been initially handled at club and county level often dictates the nature of the outcome.

From the Community & Health Departments experience, when handled well, those affected greatly appreciate the efforts made by the GAA on their behalf, be it at club or county level. If handled inappropriately it can add to the distress experienced by all those involved, including those trying to assist as best they can.

With this in mind the importance of training around Critical Incidents and how GAA units can be proactive cannot be underestimated and as part of this year's County Officer Development Conference, the GAA's Community & Health Department delivered a 2 hour workshop called Critical Incident Peer Supporter Training. This training was developed off the back of the GAA's first

ever Critical Incident Response Plan Resource developed in 2015. Over 60 County Officers attended the training day on Saturday January 20th in Croke Park representing most counties across the country.

The training was developed and facilitated by our experienced National Health & Wellbeing Committee, to enable the 60 County Officers to now become their County Critical Incident Peer Supporters.

During the 2 hour training officers learnt how to: - Ensure their County has a Critical Incident Response Plan in place - Support clubs in adopting their own Critical Incident Response Plans - Provide appropriate advice and support to GAA units in the aftermath of a Critical Incident A number of resources have been developed to support both the training and the GAA's Critical Incident Response Plan Resource.

All GAA units are now advised to adopt their own Critical Incident Response Plan. The resources developed are designed to offer some assurance about what steps to take, while also highlighting that other supports services – both within the GAA and external it is – are available should they be needed.

To access all supporting documents please click [here](#)



# THE NATIONAL CLUB DRAW- LAST CHANCE FOR ADDITIONAL TICKETS!

**T**he National Club Draw is approaching fast. Clubs who wish to order tickets should know that last requests for additional tickets is Thursday the 1st of February. IF Clubs wish to put in an order, they should contact their National Club Draw County Liaison Officer or email [nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie)

The maximum amount of tickets a Club can sell is 2,000. With tickets at €10 each, this gives your Club the opportunity to raise up to €20,000 risk free, with all prizes and tickets provided by Ard Chomhairle. There are some fantastic prizes up for grabs including All Ireland Final Tickets, a Travel Voucher worth €2,000 and a brand new Renault Dynamique.

All tickets (sold and unsold) must be returned to your County Liaison Officer by Thursday the 8th of February. Tickets **should not** be returned to Croke Park.

## The Race is on!

The race is on for Clubs to sell the most tickets in their province, with each Club as highest Provincial seller claiming the prize of €1,000 as part of the Club Specific Draw. Also part of the Club Specific Draw is a Draw for all counties in which 3 Clubs will win €5,000 and a Draw per County by which 1 Club in each will win €1,000.

## RECORDING TICKETS ONLINE

- **Sold tickets must be recorded on the online ticket recording system in order to be entered into the Draw.**
- **Clubs can log in at [www.gaa.ie/ncdticketssystem](http://www.gaa.ie/ncdticketssystem) to do so.**
- **Clubs who are in need of their login details can email [nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie)**
- **Tickets must be recorded before returning all tickets to your County Liaison Officer by February 8th.**
- **Please ensure that the box indicating the ticket is sold, is ticked.**

## Terms of the Club Specific Draw

The Club Specific Draw is a draw for all Clubs who record, account for and sell a minimum of 200 tickets. For clubs to qualify for the draw they must have:

1. Sold a minimum of 200 tickets.
2. Recorded all sold tickets on the online ticket recording system.
3. Accounted for all funds raised in the club accounts - i.e. the amount shown in club income should correspond with the total amount of ticket sales recorded.
4. Adhered to the terms and conditions of the Draw.

## Draw Details

The Draw will take place on Thursday the 8th of March in Croke Park Stadium with the Prize Presentation Day on March 17th, the Club Final Day. Draw Winners will be invited to Croke Park on the 17th of March to receive their prizes and enjoy the Club Final.

## Contact Details

If you have any general enquiries or requests relating to the National Club Draw (tickets, flyers, posters, login details etc.), please contact your NCD County Liaison Officer or email [nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie). For any technical issues, please contact the support team at [ncdsupport@gaa.ie](mailto:ncdsupport@gaa.ie)



Davitts CLG Mayo, Highest ticket sellers in Connacht 2016 and 2017

# DEVELOPMENT FUND OPEN FOR DEPOSITS FROM CLUBS

**T**he Development Fund is a Deposit and Loan Scheme which was set up to help provide finance for Clubs when purchasing and developing grounds and facilities.

**Clubs should be aware that the Development Fund is open for deposits.**

- Interest is 1.9% on Deposits and Loans
- No DIRT (Deposit Interest Retention Tax)
- Lotto Jackpots would be a good place for Clubs to start when depositing into the Fund

The fund is not currently open for loans but efforts are underway to reopen it with the help of deposits from Clubs. A separate sterling Development Fund will also be set up in the near future, to help combat exchange rates.

Clubs which have deposited money into the scheme will have priority when it comes to obtaining loans from the fund.

Deposit Forms are available from GAA National Finance in Croke Park, to request one, please email [kathy.slattery@gaa.ie](mailto:kathy.slattery@gaa.ie) or [rebekah.evans@gaa.ie](mailto:rebekah.evans@gaa.ie)



## OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

KEY FEATURES	KEY BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical and engaging learning style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better understanding of role</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated by experienced and trained Associates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved leadership skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for your previous knowledge and experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased role satisfaction</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information specific to each officer role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of resources and supports</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification for the programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation for future roles</li> </ul>

- Each module is designed to last between 90 minutes and two hours
- Modules can be delivered in any location across the 32 counties
- Modules in any County are open to all current / future Club Officers from anywhere
- Each module will be delivered by trained Associates
- Online registration is required for all attendees before any module

## HOW IT IS ORGANISED

**Date and Time** - Each module runs for between 90 minutes and two hours and can be organised by the host County on either weekday evenings or Saturdays.

**Venues** - Typical venues include secondary schools, education centres, IT's and hotels and will be confirmed by the County Development Officer.

**Tutors** - The programme is supported by a team of 50 Associates. They help prepare the content, undertake training annually and deliver the modules to club officers on a voluntary basis.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael is Ireland's leading sporting and cultural organisation with membership approaching one million people and more than 500,000 playing participants at all levels. Inspired and supported by the voluntary efforts of its members, the GAA is focused on the development and promotion of Gaelic games and culture nationally and in local communities.

The GAA Club Leadership Development Programme is delivered by the National Officer Development Committee (NODC) and its team of Associates. It is designed to give the principal officers in GAA Clubs an opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles in a confident and competent manner.

## GET INVOLVED

### Requirements

The Club Leadership Development Programme is open to all current Club Officers or anyone interested in taking up a role of Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer or PRO. Registration is online only, and a GAA Membership ID, available through a Club Secretary / Registrar is required to register.

### How to Register

Register online at [learning.gaa.ie/club\\_leadership](http://learning.gaa.ie/club_leadership)

### Enquiries

See [learning.gaa.ie/club\\_leadership](http://learning.gaa.ie/club_leadership) for more information or contact your County Development Officer at [developmentofficer.COUNTY@gaa.ie](mailto:developmentofficer.COUNTY@gaa.ie)



## CLUB LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## LEADING YOUR CLUB TO THE NEXT LEVEL

CHAIRPERSON    TREASURER    PRO    SECRETARY

## OVERVIEW

The Club Leadership Development Programme (CLDP) gives the Principal Officers in all Clubs - namely the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and PRO - an opportunity to gain the key knowledge and skills to carry out their roles effectively.

### INTRODUCTORY MODULES

Any new or existing Officer who has not taken part in the programme is encouraged to complete, at a minimum, the three Introductory Modules in year one.

Year 1 - Delivery Period 1 (Jan - March)	Year 1 - Delivery Period 2 (Oct - Nov)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 1: Your Role &amp; Responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 3: Running the Club AGM</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Role of the Chairperson</li> <li>B. Role of the Secretary</li> <li>C. Role of the Treasurer</li> <li>D. Role of the PRO</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 2: Using Office 365</li> </ul>	

### TOPICAL MODULES

Any existing or new officer who has completed the Introductory Modules may attend the Topical Modules.

Year 2 - Delivery Period 1 (January - March)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 1: Communication in a GAA Club</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 2: Games Development &amp; Player Welfare</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 3: Volunteer Recruitment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 4: Club Governance</li> </ul>



# CLUB LEADERSHIP AND OFFICER DEVELOPMENT

**A**fter a busy period of Clubs AGM's across the Country, there will undoubtedly be newly appointed Club Officers looking to find their feet with their new role. While the best thing any Officer can do to better prepare for their role is attend Club Leadership Development Programme event (see page 19 of this month's Club Newsletter for more information on the Club Leadership Development Programme) there are a number of other supports available that Club Officers should be aware of.

## Online Module on Effective Meetings About the module

Meetings are an essential part of running a GAA Club Executive, County Management Committee or Provincial Council. Running meetings so that they run smoothly and achieve what they are supposed to is not as easy as it sounds but it is a skill that can be developed. A well-managed meeting can encourage cooperation between members because people can be made aware of developments across their area of interest in the Association and contribute to them. Meetings also play an important role in developing team spirit, as volunteers feel a part of changes and plans that they have helped shape. They are especially useful for problem solving. On the other hand, meetings that are not well run can be a source of frustration for members and slow

down progress with developments. Considering this, the GAA has developed an online module to support officers at club, county and provincial levels to run more effective meetings. It is a time-saving guide to planning and running meetings from start to finish which covers preparation, keeping the meeting on track, complying with the GAA Constitution & Rules, and follow-up on actions. It includes best practice advice for dealing with challenging individuals, as well as downloadable templates for creating effective meeting agendas and meeting minutes.

## What you'll learn

1. **Approaches, rules and tips for running effective meetings**
2. **How to prepare and organise a Club Annual General Meeting**
3. **Tools and templates to organise and run effective meetings**
4. **Meet the instructor**

## JODY O'CONNOR GAA Leadership Associate

Jody is from the Cratloe GAA Club in Co. Clare and is an Associate of the GAA Club Leadership Development Programme. In this role, Jody facilitates training for club officers on their roles and responsibilities.

## Participant Feedback

*"I thought it was perfect and covered*

*every aspect of what is required. Any new Secretary or officer who studied that module would understand how the role has to be performed."*

*"The module is excellent. Key information is presented in a wide range of interesting ways. It is interactive with, again, a nice variety of activities to maintain the participant's interest. The links to supporting documents are also useful. The content in this module will be a great reference point and support for Chairpersons and Secretary."*

*"My initial reaction is that this is a very good module. It is well structured and easy to navigate. The content is excellent and I learned a lot from it. Anyone doing this module online would certainly know what was necessary to conduct effective meetings."*

## Accessing the module

To access the module, complete these steps:

- 1) Open an internet browser on your laptop or PC – (Our preferred browser is Google Chrome. Please note that the module is not compatible with a phone or tablet device)
- 2) Ensure that pop-ups are enabled on your computer – Click [here](#) for guidance on unblocking pop-ups
- 3) Click on this [link](#)

## More information

For more information, visit - <https://sway.com/1LMvqc1RpCILD7yN>

## Getting Started with Office 365

The GAA's partnership with Microsoft Ireland provides each of the principal club officers – Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and PRO – with access to Microsoft's Office 365 package for no cost. The package includes an official GAA e-mail account and access to a full range of services, including:

- **Email – Microsoft Outlook**
- **Calendar – Microsoft Outlook**
- **Spread sheets – Microsoft Excel**
- **Documents – Microsoft Word**
- **Presentations – Microsoft PowerPoint**
- **Notes – OneNote**
- **Storage in the cloud – OneDrive**

## With a subscription to Office 365, you get:

- **The latest Office web apps, like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook.**
- **The ability to install on PCs, Macs, tablets, and phones.**
- **1 TB of OneDrive cloud storage.**
- **Feature updates and upgrades not available anywhere else.**

Because Office 365 works with all your devices, you can start creating on your PC or Mac, continue editing on your tablet, and then finish up on your phone.

All this is possible because you can save

your files to the cloud on OneDrive and get to them from anywhere.

Store any type of file, including images, spreadsheets, presentations, and more. Office 365 comes with mobile versions of Office for all your devices. These mobile apps come with premium features that you can't get anywhere else.

Right now the version is Office 2016, but you'll continue to get new updates, everything from small tweaks to brand new features.

#### Getting Started

Each Club Secretary should contact his/her County IT Officer to access official GAA e-mail accounts on behalf of his/her Club. He/she will verify that you are entitled to one and contact the Microsoft Support Desk ([mail.support@gaamail.ie](mailto:mail.support@gaamail.ie)) to arrange

the set-up on your behalf. Once set-up, you will receive an e-mail from Microsoft which will contain step-by-step information on getting started.

Once you have your e-mail address and password, sign in to [mail.gaa.ie](http://mail.gaa.ie) to unlock the full features of Office 365.

- **Click the Sign in button at the top right corner of your screen.**
- **Type in the email and password you use with Office 365 e.g. chairperson.stsaviours.dublin@gaa.ie**
- **Once you've signed in, you'll see the Office 365 home page.**
- **From here, you can check your email, access your files on OneDrive, or edit a document.**
- **By signing in to Office 365, you can work seamlessly on your files whether you're at work, at a match, or at home.**

#### Training Materials

Learning material and training videos on the following topics are available online:

- **Getting started**
- **Mail and calendar**
- **OneDrive**
- **Office Web Apps**
- **Mobile**
- **Further Help & Training**
- **Quick Start Guides**

To access these, visit - <http://learning.gaa.ie/office365>

Classroom-based training is also available through the Club Leadership Development Programme in 2018. For more information, visit [learning.gaa.ie/club\\_leadership](http://learning.gaa.ie/club_leadership) or contact your County Development Officer.

Club officers in Kildare taking part in the 'Using Office 365' training module as

part of the Club Leadership Development Programme.

#### Support Details

Ergo (<http://www.ergogroup.ie>) is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner headquartered in Dublin with 176 employees. Ergo has provided IT solutions and services to the private and the public sector for over 20 years, building up trusted relationships and helping organisations realise their business goals through the use of technology. They have a dedicated support desk which is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. Contact details are as follows:  
Support e-mail: [mail.support@gaamail.ie](mailto:mail.support@gaamail.ie)  
Phone: +353 1 8843258



# IMPORTANT UPDATE ON GAA DATA PROTECTION

**Over the last number of months we have been highlighting the significant changes to Data Protection legislation coming into effect May of this year and the impact that those changes will have on every GAA Club.**

It is important that clubs are aware of how these changes in the law will affect the ways in which members' personal information can be collected and used for GAA purposes.

The key points relating to Data Protection have been outlined in previous editions of the club Newsletter (available on GAA.ie) and the articles also describe what is changing in the law and the implications for GAA clubs.

A good summary of the main points can be found [here](#)

## AWARENESS

A number of Data Protection seminars were held in Croke Park in November to discuss the implications of GDPR and over 300 people attended. It is intended to rerun this seminar in each province in February and March so please watch out for details which will be communicated once confirmed.

If you wish to find out a little more on GDPR, a high level online course on GDPR is available at this link: [www.learning.gaa.ie/courses/dataprotection](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/courses/dataprotection)

It takes about 10 mins to complete and is useful for Club Officers or any club member to get a high level understanding of the main points.

## MEMBERSHIP

The obvious and immediate impact for clubs is on Membership applications. We have obtained legal advice on this and have reflected the appropriate wording into the Official Guide sample membership form. The Rules Advisory Committee have also reviewed it and it will be published in the next version of the Official Guide / Treoraí Oifigiúil.

The sample form is available for you to use as a template for your clubs this year and can be downloaded [www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/administrators/membership-registration](http://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/administrators/membership-registration)

In addition, a new GAA App has been rolled out to assist clubs with the Data Protection (Removing paper, managing consent to process data, keeping data accurate and up to date)

Further information on the App, and how it help, can be found [here](#)

The overall process for Clubs to comply with GDPR is on-going, much has been done and there is much more to be completed between now and May 25th (and on an ongoing basis thereafter). It is our intention that as much support as possible will be given to clubs to assist. A full time Data Protection Officer for the GAA has been appointed and will take up the role in the next month, that person will be available to all clubs to answer queries and to assist with any queries arising.

Queries regarding Data Protection can be submitted to [dataprotection@gaa.ie](mailto:dataprotection@gaa.ie)



# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE GAA – AN IMPORTANT Q&A

## What are the Safeguarding Requirements for a GAA Coach working with children?

All coaches who wish to work with children in the GAA, i.e. under 18 yr. olds, must attend our child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshop, must be vetted and must have received a minimum coaching qualification. This is not a new requirement as it has been enshrined in our Code of Behaviour (Underage) for a number of years.

## Do we accept vetting carried out by other groups or their training?

We are unable to accept the vetting disclosures of other sports group[s] etc. as no provision in the Act allows for transferring or portability of vetting. The current agreement with LGFA and Camogie is different in that we are all pursuing the one objective i.e. promoting Gaelic Games, and we use the one vetting system as well. In Child Safeguarding Training we can, as a temporary measure, accept the child safeguarding training provided by a Local sports Partnership (LSP) Tutor, once our GAA coach agrees to attend the Gaelic Gems equivalent, within an agreed period of time. Training provided by other sports groups or youth or Church groups will not suffice as it does not reflect the contents of the Gaelic Games Associations' our policies, procedures or practices.

## What's this new Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding procedure?

This is a new requirement following the commencement of the Children First Act and the GAA has agreed that it will now apply to all Clubs and County Boards as part of our Code of Behaviour (Underage). What this entails is that every Executive Committee at Club and County level must examine a draft Risk Assessment document, supplied to them by Croke Park, that considers the potential for harm that may come to children when they are playing our games or attending our activities. Once they have discussed and agreed the Risk Assessment document the Executive may then proceed with examining the Child Safeguarding Statement, a draft of which will also be supplied. Similar to the Risk Assessment document discussions the Child Safeguarding Statement will outline the policies, procedures and practices in the GAA that ensure, as far as practicable, that children while availing of our services in the GAA are safe from harm.

These procedures in the GAA include our Code of Behaviour (Underage), how we recruit and train our coaches, our procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse and much more. Both the Risk Assessment and the draft Child Safeguarding Statement documents will be distributed to Clubs and County Boards for

discussion and adoption and these tasks must be completed and the statement put on display by 11 March 2018.

## Has the Children First Act changed how our coaches work with children?

The remaining provisions of the Children First Act came into effect on 11 December 2017. As happen with all legislation certain requirements are imposed on the GAA that enables us to raise our levels of good practice in our work with children.

While the Act may apply to the Republic of Ireland the GAA has agreed that various aspects of the Act, as they apply to good practices, will now apply on an all island basis in Ireland and promoted as good practise elsewhere. As the GAA had prepared in advance for the full commencement of the act we must now ensure that all Clubs and County Boards appoint a Designated Liaison Persons whose role shall be to ensure that our reporting procedures are in place and are followed, whether it be at club or county level.

The Safeguarding requirements for those coaching children remain as they were while the appointment of a Mandated Person became obligatory as it did for all sports organisations as it did for other sports groups as well.



## When will we see the new Code of Behaviour (Underage)?

To coincide with certain obligations under Children First, which come into effect on 11 March 2018, the GAA in collaboration with LGFA, Camogie, Handball and Rounders shall publish a new and enhanced joint Code of Behaviour (Underage). This Code will replace the existing Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport (Our Games Our Code) and will be available in disc format and on-line.

## As part of the Vetting Act are there new regulations regarding coaching in schools?

Yes. All coaches must now sign a vetting agreement between themselves and each school that they work with. The GAA vetting is sufficient but the Coach must show the school principal a copy of their vetting acceptance letter and their vetting

disclosure document and may be requested sign a self-declaration form. All such coaches must have been vetted via the E-Vetting system.

### What's the role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)?

Each Club and County Board must appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who must ensure that legislative and Association reporting procedures are followed within the Club/County are followed so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Tusla. They will naturally liaise with the Association's Mandated Person as required.

The DLP should record all concerns brought to their attention and the actions taken. The Club or County Chairperson automatically assumes the role of DLP unless another person is chosen and ratified to undertake the role. The DLP should have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse, attend the DLP training workshop, and be familiar as required with GAA reporting procedures. The DLP should be ratified on an annual basis by their Club or County and must attend the Association's DLP training in 2018. The role of the DLP and Club Children's Officer (CCO) are two different roles, while the one person can assume the role of both the DLP and the CCO it is preferred that this would not be the case.

### Mandated Person

The GAA Mandated Person is Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl. [mandatedperson@gaa.ie](mailto:mandatedperson@gaa.ie). The Mandated Person's role is to report

child protection concerns, over a defined threshold, to the statutory authorities and to assist them e.g. Tusla, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report. The Mandated Person will work closely with Designated Liaison Persons at Club and County level in assisting them to fulfil their roles. The role that the Mandated Person has does not in any way prohibit any member of the Association or parent from passing on their own concerns about the welfare of a child who may be participating in our games or

activates To simplify matters this leaflet highlights a number of issues that arise immediately or issues that we must address by March 2018, with relevant on-line links provided as appropriate.

### Who needs to be vetted for Féile?

All members of the host family who reside in the host family household for the duration of Féile must be vetted. Similarly any coach or person officiating at Féile, including referees, must also be vetted. If

a person has been vetted within the last five years they are NOT required to be re-vetted for Féile. As per previous vetting procedures if a person has been vetted by either the GAA, LGFA or Camogie we each recognise each others vetting outcomes.

**Further information on all of the above available from the GAA National Children's Office at [nationalchildrensoffice@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalchildrensoffice@gaa.ie)**



# WWW.GAAHANDBALL.IE



*Ronan Morris (Together Digital), Darragh Daly (GAA Handball National Dev Off), Paul Brady*

## GAA HANDBALL LAUNCH NEW COACHING VIDEO SERIES

GAA Handball are today delighted and extremely proud to launch our new, comprehensive, and top quality Coaching Video Series.

After months of planning and production, the first two sections (of six) is now live and available on the Coaching section of our website, with a new section being released every week for the next month.

The two current sections focus on the 'Fundamentals' of striking a Handball, and the 'Technique' of executing the various Handball strokes.

See more [here](#)



## GAA MUSEUM

**T**he GAA Museum at Croke Park has announced it will be bringing back its wildly popular Junior Explorer Tour for young families on Saturday mornings from 17th February to 26th May and Cluasóg the hare can't wait to meet a whole new batch of friends! Additional tours have also been added on Thursday 15th and Friday 16th February to keep the kiddies entertained during their mid-term break.

The family-friendly tour, created to bring to life the magic of the home of Gaelic games for younger visitors, was a sell-out success last year with the country's littlest GAA fans taking over the stadium.

On arrival, your family will be greeted by the Museum's mascot, Cluasóg the Irish hare, who will pose for photos and get everyone excited about the adventure ahead.

Next you go behind-the-scenes and learn fun facts about the GAA and Croke Park. During the Stadium Tour, your intrepid little explorers will get to visit the team dressing rooms and warm-up area and run out pitchside through the players' tunnel.

Back at the GAA Museum, children will then receive a Junior Explorer Passport so they can follow clues throughout the Museum with their tour guide. They'll discover some of the museum's most famous exhibits



including the original Sam Maguire and Liam MacCarthy cups along the way. If the group find all the clues, all younger visitors will receive a special Junior Explorer badge and sticker pack!

Another highlight for many boys and girls (and mums and dads!) is the museum's Interactive Games Zone, where the future All-Stars can test their own hurling and football skills. Who's the fastest in the family? Find out by checking your passing skills and practice a fingertip save or the art of the high catch!

Junior Explorer Tours are recommended for all family members but will be of particular interest for children of 8 years of age and under. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Tours will depart from the GAA Museum at 10.30am and will continue on Saturday mornings (subject to GAA fixtures) until 26th May. Junior Explorer Tours lasts approx. 1.5 hours (including time in the museum and a meet and greet with Cluasóg) and the route is fully accessible for buggies. Free parking is available. Advance online booking is recommended.

For more see [www.crokepark.ie/juniorexplorer](http://www.crokepark.ie/juniorexplorer)

### Tour prices

**Adult: €14**

**Children (ages 3 – 12): €9**

**Under 3 years: Free of charge**

**Students / seniors: €11**

**Family (2 adults & 2 children): €38**

**Family (2 adults & 3 children): €40**

# 'TÁ CEISTEANNA AGUS FREAGRAÍ AG TEACHT'

Le Cian Ó Conaill, GAA.ie



**A**r fud na tíre tá foirne réidh le dul san iomaíocht i gCorn Sigerson agus Fitzgibbon. Cinnte tá rud éigin faoi na comortaisí sin a spreagann dúchas na nGael.

Ag an tarraingt i Músaem Pháirc an Chrócaigh mí ó shoin bhí suim mór ag daoine ann. Imreoirí, lucht bainistíochta, agus maor ann, bhí grúpaí Whatsapp gnóthach i ngach cúinne in Éirinn.

Bhí pleannana á chur le chéile, bhí dataí socraithe agus is léir go raibh daoine ag smaoineamh ar na dushláin amach rompu i mí Eánair agus Feabhra. Bhí neart

macnaimh agus níos mó bríonglóidí le sonrú ar an lá.

Labhair an tArd Stiúirthóir Páráic Ó Dufaigh faoi thábhacht na gcluichí tríú léibheal ar bhealaí difriúla.

Tugann sé sprioc agus spreagadh d'imreoirí ar an bpáirc ach i bhfad ón bhféar tá obair dian a dhéanamh ag daoine chun cabhrú le cúrsaí Cumann Luthcleas Gael. Ag an tráth seo don bhliain, go háirithe, tuigean daoine go bhfuil aird agus suim an phobail iontu.

Ní chaithfear ach breathnú ar an dul chun cinn atá déanta ag Coláiste Mhuire Gan

Smal, an tslí go bhfuil siad ábalta foireann láidir a chur chun páirce i gCorn Fitzgibbon.

Anuraidh rinne Coláiste Mhuire, Béal Féirste éacht i gCorn Sigerson. Bhí an aimsir fuar ach ní dhéanfar aon duine a raibh i láthair ann ar gaiscí fir Uladh. Ag deireadh an cluiche sin thit an bainisteoir Paddy Tally ar an talamh, bhí a dhá lámh crochta suas aige, gliondar ina chroí. Tríd na blianta bhí fíis aige go mbeadh lá ag Coláiste Mhuire. Tháinig an cúpla uair a chloig sin.

Casann an roth agus beidh siad ag iarraidh bheith chun tosaigh arís.

Tá iomáinaithe ag Ollscoil Luimnigh i gcónaí, tá a chuid peileadóirí ag feabhsú.

Beidh DJ Carey le Institiúid Technolaíochta Ceatharlach. Laochra fós ag foghlaim agus a fás mar traenálaí.

Laochra óga díocasach agus forbairt ar fhás DJ féin mar thraenálaí. Níl aon amhras faoi tradisiún agus stair atá ag baint le Coláiste na hOllscoile i Baile Atha Cliath agus Corcaigh.

Tá ceisteanna agus freagraí ag teacht; bain sult as an aicsean ar fad. Tráth speisialta don bhliain.

# SINGAPORE GAELIC LIONS – A ROARING SUCCESS

By John Harrington, GAA.ie

The ‘Little Red Dot’ of Singapore left a very big impression on everyone who was fortunate enough to be part of the recent 2017 PwC All-Stars Hurling Tour.

It’s only when you witness it first-hand yourself that you realise just how remarkable a success story the GAA abroad really is.

The number of new clubs being established is mushrooming year on year, but the Singapore Gaelic Lions who hosted this year’s All-Stars exhibition are one of the longest established of all.

They were founded back in 1997, and the All-Stars tour was a fitting way to celebrate the 20th birthday of a vibrant GAA club that continues to grow and innovate with every passing year.

Gaelic Games are the very fabric of Irish society here at home, and in the very same way they act as the glue that bonds the expat community abroad together.

“The spirit of ‘Meitheal’ nicely sums up what the Singapore Gaelic Lions are all about,” wrote the club’s Vice-Chairman Paraic McGrath in the excellent programme they produced for the event.

“A group of people working together

supporting each other and providing a home away from home as well as making new friends and spreading the ‘GAA Gospel’ throughout the region.”

McGrath’s description of SGL’s ethos was very evident in everything the club did over the course of the weekend.

Not only was the match-day itself a roaring success with local teams setting the tone with some competitive clashes before the All-Stars strutted their stuff.

The good work the club is doing in the city in a very inclusive way was also showcased impressively when a number of the players visited local schools to demonstrate the skills of the game.

Wexford’s Lee Chin and Kilkenny duo Walter Walsh and Pdraig Walsh visited St. Joseph’s International School where over 900 children turned out for the occasion.

No doubt they were well mobilised by the school’s vice-principal, Neil Corrigan, a native of Conahy in Kilkenny, who was hopeful the experience will encourage many new children to join SGL’s ‘Cubs’ underage programme.

Originally established by club members Peter and Teresa Ryan, the ‘Cubs’ programme has gone from strength



to strength and now numbers around 90 children, many with no Irish background.

That dynamic should accelerate further in the coming years thanks to a recently launched project to teach the skills of Gaelic Football in local schools.

The Singapore Gaelic Lions have to date trained 300 players with backing from the GAA, the Singapore Ireland Fund, St. Patrick’s Secondary School, The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Singapore Ministry of Education.

Those numbers will continue to increase, because with the help of the Connacht Council the club will send 7-10 local sports teachers to Ireland next year to upskill them in the coaching of both Gaelic Football and Hurling.

For many years GAA clubs abroad were the preserve of expats who craved a link to home, but Singapore Gaelic Lions are a good example of the growing trend of GAA clubs welcoming the native population and being embraced in kind.

They now draw over 300 adult members from nine countries as well as from all 32 counties of Ireland, and are a beacon of inclusivity.

Considering how welcome they made everyone feel who travelled to Singapore as part of the All-Stars tour, it’s easy to see why Singapore Gaelic Lions have put the ‘Little Red Dot’ on the GAA map to the extent that they have.

# MAN OF STEEL

By John Harrington, GAA.ie

**W**hen John McGrath took to the stage at the GAA Games Development Conference, the lighting guy had to scramble quickly.

He clearly hadn't anticipated someone as big as McGrath would be speaking, because his spotlight only reached as far as the 6'6" Waterford man's neck and left much of his face shadowed.

Not for the first time in his eventful life, McGrath had confounded expectations and disproven the theory that one size fits all.

Is his 50 years on this earth he has been, among other things, a hurler, a bin-man, an international rower, an elite martial artist, a strength and conditioning coach, and a world-record breaking circus strong-man.

He set that record just last October when he successfully bent seven IronMind Red Nails in just 60 seconds.

The 'nails' in question were round pieces of cold rolled steel measuring seven inches long and 5/16" in diameter, and for a long time even being able to bend one was considered a famous feat of strength.

McGrath is also capable of driving a steel nail through a three-inch piece of hardwood with just his bare hand, and



bending steel bars through his teeth. Neither a feat that's easily done, you won't be surprised to hear.

"Bending a steel bar through your teeth is one of the most unpleasant experiences imaginable," McGrath told GAA.ie.

"But if you're to be able to do something exceptional, then you have to be prepared

to pay the price. "You've got to go somewhere where other people won't go with your mind if you're to do incredible things."

The theme of last weekend's coaching conference was 'Think It, Do It, Become It', which could just as easily be the motto that McGrath has lived his life by.

Adversity has always been something to embrace and challenges are there to be overcome. That mindset has brought him down some interesting paths.

Fast forward to the present day and he's living in Paarl in South Africa and has earned renown as a strength and conditioning coach working with rugby players, the South African women's

tug-of-war team, and, most famously, Olympic silver medal and World Athletics Championship gold medal long jumper, Luvo Manyonga.

But the journey that has brought him to that destination has been no less eclectic as he transitioned from being an Irish international rower to an Irish international martial artist and also reconnected with his GAA roots along the way.

"I've changed radically over the years," he admits. "I always knew that sport would be my vehicle for change. And by changing myself I could change others, and that cycle continues.

"I've changed enormously. Profoundly. Massive, massive changes. But, you know, I've never forgotten where I come from. I'm very comfortable about where I come from. I love the people where I come from."

Where he's from originally is Knockanore in West Waterford, but today he considers himself a Mount Sion man first and foremost.

That's because his stint with the club as their strength and conditioning coach when they won three-in-row county titles as well as the Munster Championship left an indelible mark on him.

"After I got injured in rowing I did a scholarship in WIT where I did my coaching and I met Tony Browne one day and he convinced me to come to Mount Sion," said McGrath. "I was a bit reluctant at the beginning but it was one of the greatest things that I ever did.

"It sent me on an incredible journey into hurling with an exceptional club. They're my club now and will always be.

"It was an incredible time to be involved because Waterford hurling was really coming through and to be involved with these guys as a strength and conditioning coach and work with some of the legends of the game like Brian Flannery, Brian Greene, Tony Browne, Eoin McGrath, and Ken McGrath was fantastic.

"It was just was a real honour to work with guys like that and facilitate them by giving them an engine to go and express themselves in a marvellous way.

"When you coach people you don't just teach them, you learn a lot from the people you work with along the journey."

Jim Green was Mount Sion manager at the time and later brought McGrath with him as S&C coach when he was appointed as Carlow's county hurling team manager.

They were a good double-act there too, helping Carlow to win their first Christy Ring Cup in 2008.

Shortly after that success McGrath went to Cape Town in South Africa for a holiday and decided he liked the place enough to settle there permanently.

He got a coaching job with Paarl Gimnasium high school, a famous South African rugby academy that boasts current Springbok Handre Pollard and former stars Schalk Burger and Jean de Villiers among its sporting alumni.



In 2013, he was strength and conditioning coach for the South African women's tug-of-war team that claimed bronze against the odds at the World Games in Colombia.

But perhaps his greatest achievement as a coach was his rehabilitation of long jumper Manyonga who had been suspended in 2012 after testing positive for Tik, a South African variant of crystal meth which is anything but performance enhancing.

At that point Manyonga's athletics career wasn't just in tatters, as a crystal meth addict his life expectancy was bleak too.

McGrath heard his story and it struck such a chord with him that he felt compelled to do all he could to help Manyonga despite never having met him in his life before.

"I started asking people what we could do to help him because it seemed wrong. It seemed like an injustice," said McGrath.

"If you work with an athlete who's banned, then you as a coach get banned too.

"But maybe it's an Irish thing, but it just seemed unfair to me, the odds were against him and it seemed unfair to cast a guy like that aside who had such a prodigious talent and just leave him to rot.

"So I started looking for Luvo. And when you go into a township it's not like you can just knock on a door and ask, 'Is Luvo here?' Especially if you're a 6' 6" white guy who's looking for a black kid who's on crystal meth. No-one is inclined to tell you where he is."



Football

Hurling

Club

General

## MÍLE BUÍOCHAS

Thank you to all of those who have contributed to this month's edition of the GAA Club Newsletter. Your feedback is welcome and any comments, suggestions or queries should be directed to [clubnewsletter@gaa.ie](mailto:clubnewsletter@gaa.ie).

Produced by the GAA Communications Department in Croke Park, Edited by Cian Ó Murchadha and designed by DBA Publications in Blackrock, Co Dublin.