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ARD STIÚRTHÓIR INSISTS CHAMPIONSHIP PROPOSALS WILL HELP CLUBS

GAA Ard Stiúrthóir Páraic Duffy has said the Club Players Association request to 'put on hold' Central Council football championship proposals due to go before congress are surprising.



In a statement released on Monday January 23, the CPA suggested that if the proposals are passed there will be no possibility of properly addressing the 'fixtures issue' until 2019.

Speaking at the launch of his Annual Report in Croke Park, the Ard Stiúrthóir said such a position is a contradictory one, because the proposals are expressly designed to improve inter-county fixture scheduling in order to free up more time for the playing of club matches.

"That's exactly what they take account of," said Duffy. "You can absolutely argue, as is their right, that they don't go far enough but I don't think it's valid to say that the proposal doesn't take on board things like players holidays, closed season, etc. It does take account of those things.

"The CPA, (I'm) a little bit surprised by some of the things in it (Monday's press-release). "They asked the GAA to fix the fixtures issue for all players, which I thought is what we're trying to do in terms of the motions going to Congress.

"To say that if the proposals are passed it will be 2019 at the earliest and it needs sorting now? If you want to attempt to sort it now then why would you park it? The two things appear contradictory.

"If Central Council or Coiste Bainistí (management committee) were to park it, which they won't, then the issue wouldn't be addressed at all this year.

"In my opinion having extra-time rather than replays is of huge benefit to clubs. Certainly bringing forward the All-Ireland

finals is of huge benefit to clubs. So I can't see how they are not supporting those proposals. But that's their right."

In Monday's press-release the CPA also argued that the championship proposals would be 'detrimental to hurling', a position that Duffy also struggles to understand.

"I, for the life of me, cannot see how these proposals are detrimental to hurling," he said.

"The only point that I think they may be referring to is, and I have addressed this in the document, was a concern that was expressed about bringing forward the hurling championship would leave too long of a gap between games.

"The appendices in the document were simply to show one way, my thoughts at how it might be done. But I made it absolutely clear that it was no more than that. These aren't fixed dates.

"I don't understand that criticism to say that this is detrimental to hurling. In fact I would argue very strongly that it's a positive for hurling because of all games, if the All-Ireland championships finish earlier, the club championships would be played off on good pitches.

"We've had a situation where provincial club finals are being played in late November when pitches are heavy which is not conducive to good hurling."

In Monday's press-release the CPA also called for the immediate establishment of a 'Fixtures Think Tank' to meet and consult

with 'fixtures experts' in the GAA and, if necessary, 'take evidence from other sports'.

Duffy neither believes there's merit for taking evidence from other sports, nor that a think-tank will provide any expertise that is not already available to the GAA.

"We have a Central Fixtures Planning Committee, which is a very good committee," said Duffy.

"They've been doing fantastic work over the past year trying to streamline fixtures, working with counties, working with fixture analysts. They are the fixtures experts.

"I don't see to be honest how other sports can help us to solve our problem. I accept we have a problem, we know that. We have issues that nobody else has in terms of players that play two sports - football and hurling - players with the various age grades.

"I don't see that a think-tank will turn up anything that hasn't been turned up already. We know what the problems are already, we need solutions.

"In fairness to the CPA, I think we need to give them time to come up with their proposals. The

only proposal that they've put into the public domain so far is that they want the All-Ireland finals played by the 1st of August.

"They have said they'll come forward with their own suggestions in time. I look forward to that and I think it's important that they do that. If they are better proposals out there, we want to hear them."

In their press-release, the CPA also requested that motions proposed by the Wexford and Tipperary County Boards to officially recognise the CPA at Annual Congress this year be 'given due consideration without the possibility of procedural interference of impairment'.

Duffy was adamant there was no such possibility of any 'interference' ever taking place.

"They say that they hope that Congress will hear the motions proposed by Tipperary and Wexford in relation to recognition and give due consideration without the possibility of procedural interference or impairment.

"There's no question of procedural interference or impairment. The motions will be on the agenda and will be discussed by Congress. I'm not too sure what they're thinking at there."

CPA Executive members from left, Niall Corcoran, Aaron Kernan, Declan Brennan, Micheál Briody, Kevin Nolan, and Liam Griffin.



GAMES DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE HAILED AS A MAJOR SUCCESS

Almost 800 delegates attended the annual Games Development Conference, which took place on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th January 2017. The theme of the 2017 Conference was “It’s all in the GAME”, serving to re-iterate the fundamental importance of adopting and practicing a Games-Based approach to Training & Development.

On the Friday night attendees had the opportunity to listen to Nicholas Walsh, Paul Kinnerk, Martin Fogarty and Mick Bohan as they shared their views on what a games-based approach means to them as coaches. Each speaker delivered a very engaging presentation on their interpretation of a games-based approach and how it had impacted them as coaches – ‘if it does not challenge you then it does not change you’ (Mick Bohan). Afterwards Damian Lawlor facilitated a thoroughly enjoyable and insightful Q&A discussion with the panel.

Aogán Ó Fearghail, Uachtarán CLG, welcomed delegates on the Saturday morning. Throughout the day delegates had the opportunity to listen to and engage with a number of keynote sessions delivered by world-class coaching practitioners such as Professor Wade Gilbert, Professor Niall Moyna, Nicholas Walsh and Paudie Butler. In addition to the keynote speeches a number of highly regarded speakers delivered a range of workshops including:

- Improving Decision Making: Empowering Players (Brieger Corkery & Ryan McMenamin)
- From Where I was to Where I am: Development Coaching Expertise (Jamie Wall)
- Being a Coach: Developing Coach Behaviour (Professor Chris Cushion)
- Engaging the Playing Rules: The Mark (Patrick Doherty & Maurice Deegan)
- Implementing a Games-Based Approach within your Coaching (Paul Kinnerk)
- Leadership and the GAA Club (Noel Connors & Ray Griffin)
- Catering for players of mixed ability through a Games-Based approach to Training & Development (David Herity)
- The Soul of Sport (Dr. Colm O’Connor)



Apart from the keynote speeches and the workshops, the Conference also consisted of an Exhibition Zone where exhibitors and academics from a range of Third Level Institutes were able to present their innovative ideas and research into Games Development related matters e.g.

- Play Us - A new Mobile App developed as a pilot with the National Games Development Department to allow Coaches to

make contact with other Coaches to organise challenge matches.

- Tactic - An online video based communication application that allows Coaches and Players to communicate on interesting aspects of games and coaching. The key feature is a built in editing function that allows both coaches and players to quickly edit video clips to add comments or pose or answer questions about

aspects of play. Developed in association with the Games Development Department to work in a Gaelic games context

- GAA TY Future Leaders - Launch of a new Transition Year programme covering a range of subjects through the medium of Gaelic games that is focussed on empowering students to be drivers of physical activity and wellbeing within their own schools and communities

The following feedback is testament to the positive energy, engagement and learning generated on foot of the Conference:

**Prof. Wade Gilbert
(Dept. of Kinesiology at California State University, Speaker):**

I would love to be able to replicate what the GAA has. That model in terms of really building a sense of community. It's good to come to events like this and be open-minded and really come here to learn. I came here to learn as much from you as others did to learn from me. More so. Even when I presented I wanted to make the point that I'm just sharing what I've heard and wanted to use this as an opportunity to learn. Definitely it has been a very rich experience.

**Dr. Colm O'Connor
(Clinical Psychologist, Speaker):**

Thank you for inviting me to the conference last week - I appreciated the opportunity and I was most impressed with what you had on offer and reflects a real professionalism and care for your volunteers - which follows through on your own ideas. I was glad to make my small contribution to that overall vision you have.
Colm

Martin Fogarty, National Hurling Development Manager



**Nicholas Walsh
(Coach GWS Giants AFL Club, Speaker):**

First of all thanks very much for having me this weekend in Dublin for the Coaching & Games Conference. The partnership between you in the GAA & Kevin in the AFL is so strong and it is important that we continue to foster these links from a Coaching & Development point of view.

Kevin, Thanks to the AFL also for sending me across to participate in such a terrific conference where nearly 800 attendees

enjoyed a variety of key notes and workshops from some wonderful speakers. Peter, you ran a terrific event so well done on the content but the overall appearance of the conference was one of the best I have attended. David thanks for your patience and time on Thursday when I flew in to help merge both Pat and my presentations together. Wonderful to be involved in it, meet some old and new faces and continuously develop myself personally from a Coaching point of view.
Thanks again

Martin Fogarty (National Hurling Development Manager):

Folks, Just a quick note to compliment you all, Peter in particular, on a tremendous event last weekend. I was able to stand back and observe all the ingredients that went into pulling off such a huge show.

The auditorium, lights, sound, screens, visuals, food, stands, presenters, greeting staff, etc. etc. not to mention the organisation in lining up everything. The way you all glided around, almost unnoticed but yet hugely tuned in to seeing that everything was running smoothly, was poetry in motion! Well Done!

The feedback was very very positive and I got a lot of it. A great variety of topics and levels which meant that everybody went home enthused and inspired.

**Paudie O'Neill
(Chairman, National Hurling Development Committee):**

The Conference at the weekend was very worthwhile. I thought that Mick Bohan gave a lot to the participants as did Jamie Wall who was outstanding in my opinion. It is great to hear some fresh challenging thinking. Hope to get to attend next year.

**John Lowndes
(GAA Coach):**

Hi Pat / Peter, fantastic day on Saturday at the conference and the quality of the speakers was immense. I left with a full notebook of "nuggets" so congrats to both of you and all the coaching staff for a magnificent job!
John

Michael Arthurs**(Delegate):**

Dear Sir,

I wish to congratulate all involved in the 2017 Seminar which took place last weekend. Some observations if they assist - this was my first time attending the seminar. The facilities - the seminar room (audio, visual) excellent, the logistical organisation of entry, registration, simple showing where to go excellent, the catering excellent. The content excellent and varied - there was a little mixed messaging from different speakers but that is healthy. I was inspired and I learned from the conference thank you.

Michael Arthurs

Award 2 Pilot Participants:

The coaching conference was very enjoyable yesterday. I found the David Herity session was excellent, good presentation and some good practical ideas. - Kevin Williams.

Loads of good ideas alright. Thought Niall Moyna was brilliant - such simple ideas that make 100% sense. - Damien Egan. Professor Cushion was very interesting also. His years of research show that a vast majority of coaches believe that they are better than they actually are. According to Cushion, coaches can change and improve their coaching behaviours, but this requires self-analysis by video, self-reflection etc. I'd recommend coaches of all levels to view this presentation. - John Gordon.

Professor Niall Moyna (Presenter):

I have attended conferences all over the world and I have rarely witnessed the quality and efficiency of the 2017 years GAA National Coaching Conference.

Congratulations to all involved.

The MVA/Coach10 Model is a wonderful blueprint and encapsulates the very essence and soul of the GAA.

Keep up the good work.

Stephan Behan**(Dublin GDA & PhD Research Student):**

Hi, Pat

I hope you are keeping well, congrats on a fantastic conference last week, thoroughly enjoyed the two days and there were some serious thought-provoking presentations.

Nadine Mc Carthy**(Life-Coach)**

Thank you both for a superb day. I thoroughly enjoyed it and got some much from it.

My personal favourite was Colm O' Connor who definitely stirred my soul and moved me to "tear point" a number of times, but every single speaker was brilliant and gave so much. The feedback on the ground that I heard from all around me, and from George and Barry too, was that it was really very good, very inspiring and so worthwhile. Ireland and our lives are definitely so much better for it.

Rory O Neill**(Chairman St. Patrick's GAA Club Donabate);**

The Games Development Conference was an awe-inspiring event. There was so much there to soak up and learn. So many wonderful speakers and absolutely outstanding organisation. A lightning rod for all of us at Club level and a must attend for our coaching officers every year.



Pat Daly

For the early mornings, the late nights, the miles travelled, the hard yards and heroics. Thank you for playing your part...

GAA members can now enjoy partner discounts, special offers and earn points for going to games with the grma programme.

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REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR PLAYERS AND MEMBERS

Clubs are reminded that they must register their players and members for the 2017 season on the GAA Management System (GMS) which can be accessed by visiting people.gaa.ie/admin.

When logged on, the designated Club Administrator (Secretary or Registrar) should go to the 'Register Members' page and complete the necessary steps. This page will contain the details of all of those people who have been registered with the Club in previous years. To add new members to the Club, go to 'Add and View Members', click on the 'Add' button, select 'Member' and complete the necessary steps.

Please note that anyone whose name is in red on either the 'register' page or the 'add and view member page', is unregistered for the current year.

Only a Full Member who has paid his annual Club subscription by the due date set by the Executive Committee of the Club (which shall be prior to March 31st) shall be eligible to vote at, nominate for, or seek election to the Executive Committee at any following General Meeting of the Club in the membership year.



New Club Registrars and Administrators

It is generally the duty of the Club Registrar to perform the online registrations and Club Secretary to oversee that registrations are in order. If you are new to your role in 2017 and need help logging into the GMS, please click here.

<https://servasport.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/203088456-Logging-into-the-system-Password-Reset>

Online Help Guides

A number of helpful online forums are available where you will find User Guides and FAQs on using the system. Please click here to access these forums.

The GMS provides your Club with functionality to:

- Add, view and register members and players
- Set-up teams, groups, committees and families for reporting and communication purposes
- Communicate with these groups via bulk text message and e-mail
- Generate team sheets in Irish and English
- Generate registration reports
- Pay and record fees
- Affiliate teams and pay Injury Fund subscriptions
- Create team amalgamations
- Access resources and supports

The GAA Learning and Development Portal contains a GAA Membership Training Manual and videos explaining the system. To access this information, click here

E-mail and Telephone Support

Each Club will have access to the system either through their Secretary or Registrar. For any queries on access to the system, or on the system functionality, please e-mail or call the Servasport Helpdesk on:

Email: gaasupport@servasport.com

Phone: **ROI: 04890 313 845**

NI: **02890 313 845**

International: **+44 2890 313 845**

Support Times

The usual support times are:

- Monday to Friday: 9 – 5 p.m.

Out of hours support will be in operation for a 6 week period between the 18th of February and 31st of March.

Out of hours support times will be as follows:

- Monday to Friday: 5 p.m. – 10 p.m.

- Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

IMPORANT INFORMATION ON SPORTS CAPITAL FUNDING FOR CLUBS

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has announced that applications can now be made under the 2017 Sports Capital Programme.

The Programme provides grants to assist in the development or refurbishment of sports facilities and the provision of sports equipment.

Grants are available to sports clubs, voluntary and community groups, national governing bodies of sport and local authorities. Third level colleges, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and schools may apply for funding jointly with sports clubs or organisations.

Applications can only be made online at www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie and organisations must register on the website first if they have not previously done so. Further information on the application process is also available on this site.

The closing date for registration is 5pm on Friday 10 February 2017.

The closing date for submission is 5pm on Friday 24th February 2017



Be informed!
Get all you need to know
about the latest Sports
Capital Funding on offer

GAA NATIONAL CLUB DRAW UPDATE

The club specific draw for all clubs who record, account for and sell a minimum of 200 tickets will take place as well as the main draw.

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.

The Prizes for the Club Specific Draw:

A draw will be done for all Counties whereby 3 Clubs will receive a prize of €5,000.

A draw will be done per County whereby 1 Club in each County will receive a prize of €1,000.

The Club with the highest ticket sales in each Province will receive a prize of €1,000.

Deadlines:

Additional tickets can be requested up until Monday January 30th 2017.

Tickets (sold/unsold) should be returned to your County Liaison Officer by Monday February 13th 2017. (Tickets should not be sent directly to Croke Park by any club). Best of Luck in the Draw!

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL GAA CLUB
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CLUB DRAW

Variety of Great Prizes, Tickets €10
All proceeds retained by the Club

GAA HEALTHY CLUBS INITIATIVE MOVES TO NEXT PHASE

The GAA is delighted to launch the next stage of its Healthy Clubs Project (HCP) – and are encouraging more GAA clubs get involved to support communities in pursuit of better physical, social, and mental wellbeing.

Clubs can learn more at the GAA Healthy Club Roadshows – see dates and venues below.

So far 60 clubs – at least one in each county – are currently engaged in Phase 2 of the HCP, building on the pioneering efforts of the 16 clubs that completed Phase 1.

Responding to identified needs amongst their memberships and communities, the clubs are engaged in health promoting campaigns and programmes addressing such interesting and important topics as: health eating, smoke-free clubs, emotional wellbeing and mental fitness, physical activity opportunities for non-playing members, engaging older community members, youth development, gambling, drug, and alcohol awareness, heart health, suicide awareness, and even blood donation.

While GAA clubs have always played an important role in supporting the health of its members and communities, the Healthy Clubs Project (HCP) aims to bring this

positive influence to a new level. In order to increase awareness about the positive potential of the HCP, and the exceptional work being undertaken by our 60 ground-breaking Phase 2 Clubs, we're hitting the road this Spring for four provincial Healthy Club Roadshows designed to inspire Healthy Club heroes and champions around the county.

To register for a Healthy Club Roadshow visit: gaa.ie/community

NOTE: You can only attend the provincial event that your club is located in and numbers per club are limited to four. All events are over-12 and free of charge with a healthy lunch provided by Aramark.

The roadshows will feature fascinating contributions from four renowned ambassadors, each one selected to bring to life experiences that have influenced their GAA careers and lives. These are:

- **Philly McMahon – emotional wellbeing and mental fitness**
- **Anna Geary – healthy eating and health promotion**
- **Michael Fennelly – physical activity**
- **Mickey Harte – community engagement and support**



One of the most common questions we are asked by clubs interested in enhancing the health and wellbeing of their members is what can we do and where do we start?

The roadshows aim to help answer those questions and fire up the imagination of anyone interested in getting their club involved in Phase 3. In addition to the ambassador's contributions, four Healthy Clubs will, at their respective provincial event, share some of the exceptional work they are undertaking under the four areas of work outlined above.

The HCP primary interest is about making

every club a hub for health, and that everyone's experience of their local GAA club will be positive and health-enhancing.

The HCP is run in partnership with the HSE, Healthy Ireland, the PHA (NI), and Irish Life. The latter's generous corporate social responsibility investment has allowed the HCP grow to its current level, and means we can bring these four roadshow events to you free of charge.

For more information, visit: gaa.ie/community

LÁ NA gCLUBANNA - SAVE THE DATE!

In 2017, the GAA plans to celebrate the importance of your club in your community.

Lá na gClubanna will take place on 6/7th May.

This is an opportunity for the GAA to highlight the important role of members, players, supporters' and families in our Association and for the local community to have fun.

We would encourage every member to mark this special day of celebration by participating at events in their club in recognition of the vital role that our clubs and members play at the heart of the GAA.

Further information and a toolkit to help clubs organise Lá na gClubanna events will follow shortly.



CIARÁN KILKENNY: 'IT HAS BEEN BRILLIANT'

It has been an action packed and dramatic two years for Ciarán Kilkenny, whose passion for the Dublin cause remains undiminished.

Refreshed and rejuvenated following the winter break from inter-county fare, Kilkenny is relishing Dublin's Allianz Football League opener away to Cavan on Saturday February 5 at Kingspan Breffni Park.

Dublin's unbeaten League and Championship record currently stands at 29 matches and the versatile Castleknock player reflected on two silverware laden campaigns following a serious knee injury suffered in 2014. "Yeah, it's been brilliant," Kilkenny admits.

"To win two All-Irelands and to win two National Leagues as well because I was involved in the panel the two years previous, but I was injured. I had a medial ligament damage one year and I hurt my hand another year.

"So to be involved in the League finals - especially last year, commemorating the 1916 Rising - that was a really special day



to be involved. Against Kerry, with the tradition between the teams and to go on and win that.

“Such good games then in the summer, such close games with Donegal. Kerry again and Mayo, with the replay, it was fantastic.”

“So to be successful with the club and successful with the county, I’m just thankful that I have my health and I haven’t been injured since. A lot of lads, when they do the cruciate, some lads tend to injure their hamstring or hurt their knees.

“Thank God, touch wood, I’ll keep healthy. I’m enjoying my football as well.”

During his recovery from injury what approach did Kilkenny take? “Fellas from different clubs text me to see what I did and the only thing you can do is take your time with that sort of injury. Work on aspects you might want to improve on; your strength, your jumping.

“A lot of the things you’re doing are single-legged, it helps your power and your jump.

“It makes you so appreciative of what you have. You have to be so careful in your recovery and rest. I would be a big believer in doing so much recovery, whether that’s going for ice baths or going for a swim or getting a massage – taking an extra rest where needs be.

“Because when you’re younger, you’re a bit more naïve and you want to play every game like when you’re 13 or 14. And if you keep that up, you’re just going to break down. So you have to be smart in your training and manage your loads as much as possible.

Kilkenny was an interested spectator in

St Conleth’s Park, Newbridge as an experimental Dublin outfit defeated Kildare in the Bord Na Mona O’Byrne Cup.

Eager to return to competitive action in the Dublin shirt Kilkenny stresses what he reckons to be the most important way of measuring his own performance.

“Usually I measure performance by whether we win the game or not. If we win, it doesn’t matter how I perform or how anyone else performs. I suppose every person has a different role to play.

“I often say to children going into schools, every single person has an important role in the team. Whether it’s the goalkeeper, the corner-back – everyone has a particular role to do.

“Some of them games, I had to go and play half-back. And I actually really enjoyed playing both positions. And I would have played as a defender underage.

“But because so many teams play defensive systems, you have to be really patient on the ball.

“Sometimes, the option is not on to kick the ball inside is not on. And if you do, you’ll give it away. Sometimes it’s more important to be patient on the ball and take the right opportunity.”

Much debate surrounded Kilkenny’s deep lying role in some of Dublin’s summer encounters in 2016. Was the number of plays or possessions something that Kilkenny constantly monitored?



Dublin’s Ciaran Kilkenny and Monaghan’s Darren Hughes at the announcement of eir Sport’s expanded coverage of the 2017 Allianz Leagues. eir Sport will broadcast a total of 23 live games, an increase from the 17 which have previously been broadcast.

“Yeah, in teams you would have – most teams would have statisticians that would do stuff about the number of possessions. They do it in the AFL and in other sports.

“Disposals, is what they call it – by foot or by hand. And I suppose there’s a positive way of measuring it.

“My philosophy is that it’s always better to retain possession than give it away.

“You’re better off waiting for a man in a better position to get the ball and penetrate. But I still think it’s important. Especially when you’re playing against defensive teams. Because when you give the ball away to them, it gives them a great lift.”

Castleknock came close to claiming an unexpected Dublin SFC crown too in 2016 – losing the decider against St Vincent’s – another gripping chapter in Kilkenny’s sporting tale. “It was an incredible journey,” Kilkenny says.

“At the start of the campaign, we were nearly innocent and naïve going in. You’re kind of taking it game by game.

“But Vincent’s experience really showed at that stage. It was just a great experience for our lads. Because we’re all 23 and 24.

“It was great to see all the young lads in the club and all the volunteers and mentors who have put so much into the club enjoy the run so much.

“It’s been an incredible rise and rollercoaster for the club over the past few years. Every year we seem to win something. We won Junior one year, then the next year we won Junior hurling.

“It was just an incredible journey. To get up senior, I suppose our next goal to get up senior hurling so we can keep that run going.”

The Dublin and Castleknock adventure continues for Kilkenny, who will always be striving to make further progress.

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EVERY STEP
OF THE WAY!**



*BE THERE.
ALL THE WAY.*

THE MARK – A QUICK GUIDE

The referee shall award “the mark” by blowing the whistle when a ball has been cleanly caught on or past his team’s 45 metre line from a kick-out.

A cleanly-caught ball is one which has not been touched in flight by another player.

Both of the catcher’s feet must be on or past the 45m line when he catches the ball or on landing.

The player in question must stop playing to signal he wishes to take a mark free. If he does not, it will be considered he wishes to play on and he can’t be challenged for four

steps or until he makes one play of the ball; otherwise he receives a free 13m forward.

If he chooses the free option, he has five seconds to take the kick. Otherwise, a free is awarded to the opposition. If the opposition infringe on the catcher as he attempts to take his “mark” free, the referee is ordered to bring the ball forward by 13 metres.

When a player who is awarded a “mark” is injured, any team-mate may take the free-kick, which must be taken from the hands.

He may not score directly from the kick.



GAA REFEREES ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE

by John Harrington (gaa.ie)

It's a cold December night at the GAA's National Games Development Centre in Abbottstown, and the frigid air is doing little to balm my burning lungs.

I've joined over 80 inter-county referees from the GAA's national hurling and football panels to experience first-hand the fitness levels that are now required of our elite match officials.

It's an area that the GAA have put a lot of focus on in recent years for an obvious reason – inter-county teams have become fitter, faster, and stronger, so referees are also obliged to do so if they are to keep pace with the speed of the game.

Working in tandem with Professor Niall Moyna and the Sports Science Department in DCU, the GAA has developed a sophisticated programme that improved the fitness of inter-county referees through rigorous training and testing.

Professor Moyna conducts regular fitness sessions at the national Games Development Centre, and referees must then pass stringent fitness tests in January and then May if they want to qualify for the League and Championship referees' panels.

This year, inter-county referees wore a GPS device that monitored the distances and speeds they ran over the course of the matches they refereed, and the data collated is now being used to further refine the fitness programmes already in place.

"It's like everything else, the science had moved on, and now a lot of the teams, particularly the Ulster teams, were now starting to use science in their preparation of their teams," Professor Moyna told GAA.ie.



"The teams are just getting fitter and the day of the referee taking a winter off and turning back on again in March and April again was long-gone. The GAA realised that because of the fitness level of the players had moved on so much that something had to be done.

"So basically we started from scratch. We didn't have any fitness base, we didn't know what the standards should be.

"And what we didn't want to do was use rugby or soccer data. So for the first few years we collected data on inter-county referees and based on the accumulated data over the first one or two years we then developed standardised norms.

"Since then there has been criteria, but the criteria has been based on GAA referees and these are minimum criteria you should be able to meet if you want to referee at inter-county level that we have been setting over the last few years."

The recent training session in Abbottstown was clearly designed to mimic the high-intensity demands of refereeing an end-to-end championship match.

We were all put through a series of punishing shuttle-run sprints that tested our speed off the mark and powers of recovery.

The GPS data that Moyna collated after this year's inter-county matches showed that referees are required to sprint at speeds of over 18kmh for around 10 per cent of the match, which was roughly double what he expected it would be.

So even though a referee's average speed over the course of a match might be a relatively moderate 7.4kmh, they need to have the ability to put on the after-burners at regular intervals.

The demanding December shuttle-run session also served as a timely reminder for referees that they have seven weeks to get themselves into shape for the punishing beep-

test they must pass in order to be eligible for the League and Championship panels.

A score of 16.8 or better is the minimum requirement for the League panel, and this then rises to 17.4 for the Championship panel.

Four-time All-Ireland hurling final referee Barry Kelly has officiated at inter-county level for 19 years now, and believes the fitness levels expected of match officials is rising all the time.

“I wasn’t here on the first of December, 1999, I can guarantee you that”, says Kelly.

“It’s amazing the way football and hurling have gotten fitter and faster and we’ve had to keep up.

“We’ve gotten a lot more scientific in how we train. Previously you’d have to do seven and a half laps or a 3,000 metre run or thereabouts in 15 and a half minutes.

“Now there’s beep-tests and sprints. I suppose it reflects the way inter-county teams are gone. There are very few inter-county teams doing laps and laps.

“Now it’s all about sprints and science and ladders and you name it. So, yeah, there have been big changes alright.

“That beep test we do is unforgiving because it’s an exact science. You either get it or you don’t. If you don’t get it, then that’s it. So it’s not easy.

“I know myself I have a bit of work to do over the next six or seven weeks and so have lots of other lads.”

The beauty of the GPS data that is now accessible to referees is that they know exactly where they rank athletically compared to their peers.

Not only are they given their own scores in terms of speeds and distances run, they’re also given the average score of the entire inter-county panel of referees.

So if you’re not hitting the sorts of targets you should be, it’s very quickly self-evident.

“Ah yeah, it’s all gone very scientific, but that’s the way it has to be,” says Kelly. “We’re going to get criticised anyway but we can’t get criticised too much for fitness. And you won’t hear that much, actually.

“There would have been comments in the past about referees not being fit, but that’s the one thing that’s not thrown at us anymore. Okay, everything else is, but fitness is one thing we’re very strong. Consistency I suppose is the next thing to try and get right.”

When the referees were presented with their accumulated 2016 GPS data on a print-out for the very first time after the Abbottstown training session there were a lot of craning necks in the room as the curious checked how they compared to their peers around them.

The friendly rivalry was already evident during the training session itself as most taking part looked left and right towards the end of every shuttle-run to see where they were placed in the pecking order, and some burst from the blocks before Professor Moyna blew his whistle such was their

determination to be near the head of the pack.

That’s no surprise really, because as Gaelic Football referee Martin McNally freely admits, they’re all effectively in competition with one another.

“There’s League and Championship panels for referees and there’s competition for places on them,” says McNally. “When you have a panel of 30 players looking for 15 spots on the starting team there’s competition, and it’s the same out here for us.

“When you have that competition you’re going to demand high standards. Guys are

chomping at the bit to get into different panels, the same way they would be if they were playing for a team.

“So the standard is constantly being raised and that’s what I’ve seen for the last four years on the panel. Every year the bar is getting higher and higher.”

Referees are keenly aware that the stakes are high every time they walk out to the middle of a pitch with a whistle around their neck.

If they make a mistake at a key moment, then not only could they potentially cost a group of players a massive opportunity, their own ambition of refereeing the biggest matches of all could be sunk too.



Professor Niall Moyna, Head of the School of Health and Human Performance in DCU, has developed a fitness programme for the GAA's panel of inter-county referees.

David Gough ran almost 11 kilometres when he refereed this year's All-Ireland SFC semi-final between Dublin and Kerry, and so knows better than most that an elite level of fitness is now a prerequisite at the highest level of refereeing if you want to be capable of getting those crucial decisions right.

"Absolutely," says Gough. "And with the new additional time the games are lasting longer than they normally would. The All-Ireland semi-final last year was 79 minutes in total which is a full nine minutes longer than what we'd normally have in the past.

"You really have to be able to stay with the play for that length of time.

"We're there to make sure the game is refereed fairly. We have to keep up to the pace of the play. We have to get into the best position to make the correct calls. And to do that we need to be as fit as possible.

"We realise that those players have trained hard throughout the year and calls we've made could jeopardise their championship future. So we need to be in the best positions at all stages for the whole of the game.

"Any referee who starts off at the start of the year wants to referee an All-Ireland Final.

"That means performing at the highest level he can throughout the whole year. One mistake could cost you a place in a quarter-final, semi-final, or final.

"So our main goal is to referee that All-Ireland Final and that means we have to be as fit as we can through the whole year."

Professor Niall Moyna is keen to make the

point that the use of GPS data is something referees can use as a self-improvement 'tool', and that physical fitness is just one of the core attributes they must have in their locker. Good judgement remains the most important trait a referee must possess, but surely it makes sense that the physically fitter a referee is the more mentally capable he is of making the correct calls in the dying minutes of a draining championship match?

"That's the million dollar question," says Moyna. "You could be the fittest referee in the world, but if you can't make those decisions and make them under pressure... that's a very important point, that fitness is only one component.

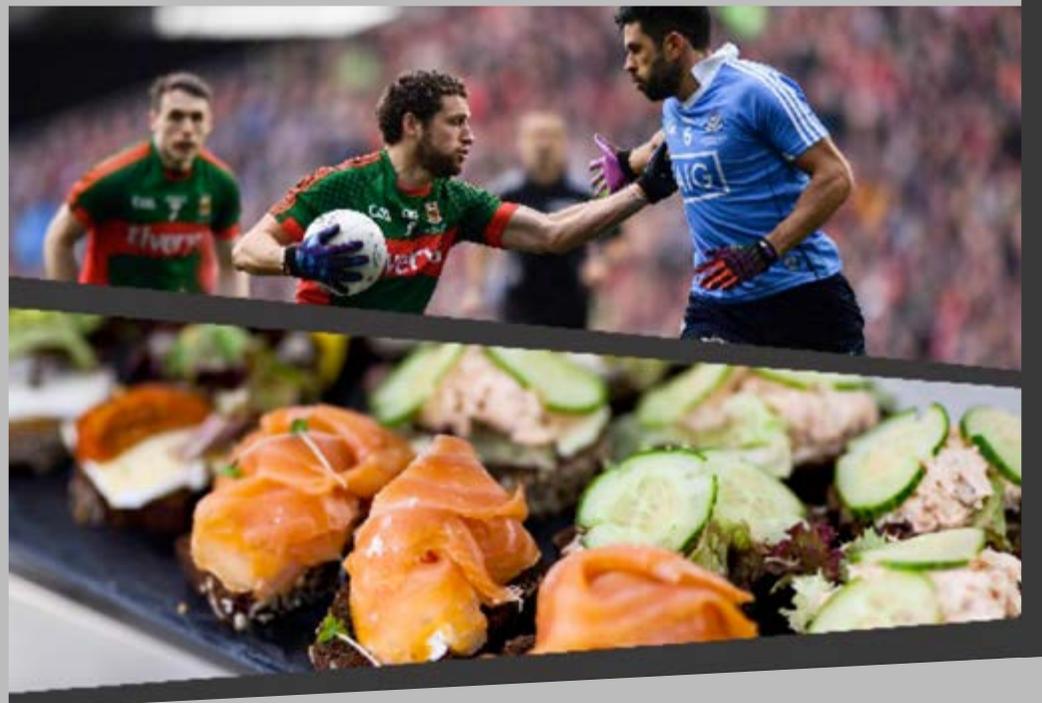
"Now, obviously, when people are less fatigued it's more likely that they won't make as many mistakes. They'll be more alert.

"But at the end of the day it's about decision-making and it's very important we don't get carried away and that fitness becomes the be all and end all of everything. It's one part of the armamentarium that a referee has to have.

"But I think the most important thing is that they're able to referee, understand the rules, make good decisions, and interact with players."

2016 All-Ireland Hurling Final referee, Brian Gavin, waits for Niall Moyna's whistle.





Allianz Leagues 2017 Croke Park Hospitality Packages



Book your seat at the Allianz Leagues Division 1 & 2 fixtures in Croke Park for 2017. Package includes a Premium level ticket, casual buffet and a full bar in the Davin Suite.

Allianz League Packages

- Option 1: 4 Allianz Leagues Division 1 & 2 fixtures - €420pp.
- Option 2: Allianz Football Leagues Division 1 & 2 Final only - €120pp.
- Option 3: Single fixture (excluding final) - €115pp.

Fixtures

- | | |
|---|--|
| 11th February: Dublin v Tyrone (F)
Dublin v Tipperary (H) | 25th March: Dublin v Roscommon (F) |
| 4th March: Dublin v Mayo (F) | 9th April: Division 1 & 2 Football Finals
Dublin v Waterford (H) |

Advance Hospitality booking now being taken. Return application and payment to Marie Smyth - msmyth@crokepark.ie / +353 (1) 8192358 - Croke Park Stadium, Jones Road, Dublin 3.

Next level occasion

ANTI-DOPING AND ON-LINE PLAYER TRANSFER SYSTEM INFORMATION



Since 2001 the GAA have been drug testing players as part of an agreement with the Irish Sports Council (now Sport Ireland) and their policy to cooperate with the international anti-doping campaign administered by the World Anti-Doping Association (WADA). The GAA believes that doping is contrary to the spirit of sport and every member has a duty to ensure that Gaelic games are free of doping.

ALL GAA members are subject to the Anti-Doping Rules as adopted by the Irish Sports Council (Rule 1.15 GAA Official Guide 2016).

While any player may be selected for testing, there is a particular focus on testing with regard to Inter-County players.

Indeed it is a condition of eligibility for the Government Eligible Expense Scheme and all county team support personnel (e.g. managers, coaches, medical personnel, nutritionists, psychologists, officials) have a responsibility to ensure that they are aware of the Irish Anti-Doping Rules and that there is an atmosphere supporting a drug free sport within each County.

The prohibited list is updated by WADA annually and is available at

<https://www.wada-ama.org/en/what-we-do/prohibited-list>

Sport Ireland have issued the following advisory note in relation to the changes for 2017:

<http://learning.gaa.ie/sites/default/files/December%202016-Advisory%20Note.pdf>

All members of the Association, particularly those involved in the Senior Inter-County

scene, are advised to complete the GAA's Anti-Doping E-Learning Courses so as they are aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to anti-doping.

The General Anti-Doping E-Learning Course is available at the following link:

http://learning.gaa.ie/courses/Anti-Doping_Awareness/

A new player specific e-learning course for players involved with Senior Inter-County Panels can be accessed by following the instructions at the below link: Accessing the 2017 GAA Senior Inter-County Player E-Learning Course

Online Player Transfer System

An application for an Inter-County transfer may be made online as part of a pilot scheme by Central Council. If a player wishes to apply online, he should contact the Secretary of the Club he wishes to join and refer him/her to the transfers section of the official GAA website for information on the process.

Benefits of using the new system include:

- **Quicker processing of applications.**
- **Less chance of incorrect information being submitted.**

- **Ability to check status of applications.**
- **Easy access to transfer history.**
- **Less administration work.**

Answers to frequently asked questions in addition to step-by-step user guides for players, Club Secretaries and County Secretaries can be accessed by visiting –

<http://www.gaa.ie/news/transfers-and-sanctions/>

Please note the new online transfer system can only be used at present for transfer which are cross-provincial (i.e. approved by Central Council) Accessing the Player

Transfer System

(Club and County Secretaries only)

A Club or County Secretary can access the Player Transfer System by visiting pts.gaa.ie and entering his/her 7 digit Membership Number and Password.

For more information, please refer to the user guides on the GAA website.

Queries can be e-mailed to gearoid.devitt@gaa.ie

CLUB PLAYER WELFARE CHECKLIST

At this time of year, all clubs have an opportunity to reflect on the past season's activities and also plan for 2017.

To assist with this process, the attached Club Player Welfare Checklist (also available on <http://learning.gaa.ie/player>) is a useful tool for incumbent club officials to assess the provisions in place for players on topics such as Injury Prevention, Defibrillators, Concussion Education and Nutrition / Anti-Doping.

The club can compare it's current procedures against the best practice advice approved by the Association's GAA Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee and see

what areas may require attention ahead of the new season.

Resources, including guidelines, posters and information sheets for the relevant topics are also available on <http://learning.gaa.ie/player>

For queries in relation to any of the above topics do not hesitate to contact the GAA Player Welfare Administrator at the following contact details:

gearoid.devitt@gaa.ie
01-8658610



CLUB PLAYER WELFARE CHECKLIST

For guidelines and recommendations on these topics see <http://learning.gaa.ie/player>

ITEM	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	CHECK ✓
Defibrillators	• Does the Club have AED units at all venues regularly used for training, matches and club events?	_____	Annually	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Who is responsible for implementation of GAA Defib Guidelines and arranging yearly service checks of AEDS?	_____	Annually	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Are all AEDs working and accessible? Is the AED maintenance checklist used?	_____	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Has CPR/Defib Training been arranged for members?	_____	Bi-Annually	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Is an ACT Poster on display prominently in the club house?	_____	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Are all members aware of the location of AED units?	_____	Annually via e-mail and Regularly via Social Media etc	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cardiac Screening	• Has cardiac screening information been circulated to members including the GAA's Cardiac Screening Questionnaire?	_____	Annually via e-mail and Regularly via Social Media etc	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Has an optional cardiac screening opportunity been arranged for members?	_____	Bi-Annually	<input type="checkbox"/>
Player Safety	• Is First-Aid training provided on an annual basis for Team Mentors?	_____	Annually	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Are adequate provisions made for each teams' activities?	_____	Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• Are all club members and team mentors reminded of the Mouthguard/Gumshield (Football) and Hurling Helmet (Hurling) regulations?	_____	Annually via e-mail and Regularly via Social Media etc;	<input type="checkbox"/>
	• If Hurling Helmets (Hurling) are purchased by the club are they ISS 355 Approved?	_____	Annually	<input type="checkbox"/>

I gCUIMHNE AR JOE

Tabharfar aitheantas don cheangal a bhí idir iaruahtarán CLG, Seosamh Mac Donncha, agus an Cumann Lúthchleas Gael i gColáiste na hOllscoile Gaillimh (Ollscoil na hÉireann Gaillimh anois) nuair a reachtáilfear Comórtas Mhic Giobúin ansiúd ar an 24ú/25ú Feabhra.

Le linn dó a bheith ina mhac léinn ansiúd, d'imir Seosamh, a bhásaigh faoi Bhealtaine seo caite, d'fhoirne peile agus iománaíochta an choláiste. Ba le iománaithe na céad bhliana a bhuaigh sé an chéad bhonn i 1972 agus ina dhiaidh sin d'imir dé do pháimhfhoirne na hollscoile i gComórtais Mhic Giobúin agus Mhic Shigiúir.

Ba é Joe agus Séamus Hogan a bhí i lár na páirce ar na foirne iománaíochta ar bhuaigh Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh agus Maigh Nuad orthu i gCluichí Ceannais Mhic Giobúin i 1972 agus '73, ach agus é ina mac léinn iarchéime i 1977 thug sé bonn faoi dheireadh leis nuair a bhuaigh siad ar Mhaigh Nuad 1-14, 1-12. Is díol suime go raibh ceathrar ar an bhfoireann sin a bhí mar chaptaein ar fhoirne a gcontae i gCluichí Ceannais Sinsireacha na hÉireann ina dhiaidh sin – Joe féin (1979) agus a dhlúthchairde Joe Connolly (1980), Pat Fleury (1985) agus Conor Hayes ('87 & '88). Bhí Cyril Farrell, bainisteoir na Gaillimhe na blianta deireanacha sin, ar fhoireann Mhic Giobúin '77 freisin.

Faoi dhó a d'imir Seosamh Mac Donncha i gcluichí ceannais Chomórtais Mhic Shigiúir – bhuaigh Coláiste na hOllscoile Baile Átha Cliath orthu i 1974 agus arís in athimirt i 1977.

Bhí cuid de mhórpheileadóirí na linne mar chomhghleacaithe agus mar chéilí comhraic aige na blianta sin. Orthu siúd a d'imir leis bhí Ger O' Keefe agus

Paudie O' Mahony (Ciarraí), Martin Carney (Dún na nGall agus Maigh Eo), Tony Regan (Ros Comáin), Gay McManus agus John Tobin (Gaillimh).

Orthu siud a d'imir peile ina choinne bhí John O' Keefe agus Ogie Moran (Ciarraí), Eamonn O' Donoghue (Cill Dara), J.P. Keane (Maigh Eo), Mick Carty (Loch Garman) Peter McGinnity (Fear Manach), Paddy Moriarty (Ard Mhacha) agus Pat O' Neill (Baile Átha Cliath). Beidh súil le comrádaithe agus céilí comhraic in Ostán an Westood i nGaillimh ar an Aoine an 24ú Feabhra nuair a reachtáilfear ócáid chomórath i gcuimhne ar Sheosamh Mac Donncha ag dinnéar a bheidh ar siúl mar chuid de Chomórtas Mhic Giobúin.

The late Joe McDonagh's association with Gaelic Games in UCG (now NUIG) will be celebrated at his alma mater when the final stages of the Fitzgibbon Cup are held in Galway on the 24th/25th of February. While in college, Joe played for the UCG football and hurling teams, winning a Fresher's Hurling medal in 1972 and featuring in several Sigerson and Fitzgibbon campaigns.

In '72 and again in '73 he partnered Séamus Hogan (Tipperary) at centre field on the UCG teams that lost to UCC and to Maynooth in Fitzgibbon deciders, but as a post graduate student in '77 he finally collected his medal, having beaten Maynooth in the final, 1-14, 1-12. Interestingly that team featured four hurlers who subsequently captained their counties in All Ireland senior finals – McDonagh himself (1979), and his great friends Joe Connolly (Galway 1980), Offaly's Pat Fleury (1985) and Conor Hayes ('87, '88). Future Galway manager, Cyril Farrell, was also a member of that 1977 team.

Joe McDonagh also played in two Sigerson cup finals, losing to UCD in '74 and again in '77, after a replay. He played alongside some of the footballing giants of

that era, including Paudie O' Mahony and Ger O' Keefe (Kerry); Martin Carney (Donegal and Mayo), Tony Regan (Roscommon), Gay McManus and John Tobin (Galway). His opponents included John O' Keefe and Ogie Moran (Kerry), Éamonn O' Donoghue (Kildare), J.P. Keane (Mayo), Mick Carty (Wexford), Pat O' Neill (Dublin), Peter McGinnity (Fermanagh), Paddy Moriarty (Armagh) and many others.

Friends and foes are expected to turn up to the celebration of Joe McDonagh's contribution to Cumann Lúthchleas Gael in UCG at a dinner being held in the Westwood Hotel in Friday February 24th at 7.00pm as part of the 2017 Fitzgibbon Cup.



SUPERGAMES CENTRES A SUPER SUCCESS



At the end of October, the first Super Games Centre in Cork began at the Castlehaven GAA grounds. Based around Skibbereen CS, which just opened this September, the initiative ran for five successive Monday nights.

Under lights, over 100 first year students attended every evening but they weren't all limited to Skibbereen CS; students from surrounding schools, Bantry, Schull and Dunmanway also attended. Some schools even provided buses to carry players to and from venue.

Cork footballer Ruairi Deane was the main coach coordinating the programme. With the assistance of teachers from the different schools, a minimum of four 10/11 aside games were played each night. Across four pitches, eight teams played 20 minute games, ten minutes a half.

There were no formalised teams and most players were mixed with students from other schools. The teams were kept as even as possible, where changes were only made if necessary after each game, or half, to balance the playing field more. Players ranged in different sizes and skill level. Some were clearly talented. Others couldn't make their club or school team while a proportion of the student had stopped playing GAA. Some students had never even played before.

No scores were recorded. The players played in different positions during the games, from goalkeeper to forward, where everyone had a chance to be involved in the action. With the boon of such good weather throughout November, over 500 kids got non-stop games, something most would never have been exposed to during early winter.

The reaction from players, parents, teachers, schools and clubs was outstanding. The most positive feedback was that the players got to play every minute, something most of them are not getting at club and school level. Over the border in Waterford, county senior hurler Gavin O'Brien, on behalf of Waterford Coaching & Games Development, ran a number of Hurling Super Games Centre Blitzes for 1st and 2nd Years.

The blitzes ran for four weeks in Carriganore and were open to students in all Waterford schools. Different teams were picked each week. Every player got at least two games per week. Individual prizes were handed out at the end of the four-week programme.

It was a different approach in a different place

but the goal was the exact same; to get as many people playing hurling and football as possible; and to try and keep them playing. In September 2012, the GAA produced an internal report titled, 'Mobilising Forces, Modernising Structures & Moving with the Times'. The research showed that the national drop-out rate in GAA between the ages of 12-22 is 58%.

The fall-off rate is in line with established trends worldwide but the GAA responded to the challenge by forming a collaborative partnership with a group of international experts from the University of Sterling. Over a three-year period, the partnership reviewed best practise youth initiatives and associated support practises from around the world in order to bring that cutting edge knowledge to the centre of a solution to youth drop-out in the GAA. That evidence based approach underpinned the design of a new community based intervention called the 'GAA Super Game Centre'.

During the research, 430 male players aged between 12-16 from ten counties attended a network of ten SGC's, which led to 3,544 player visits during the pilot initiative. Players, parents and local coaches contributed to the collection of data over a six-month process.

The SGC pilot focused on 12-16 year olds but the main drop-off trend rapidly increases between 18-21. The SGC pilot identified three critical success factors relating to increasing youth participation; an inclusive games format; the importance of location; the timing concerning the operation of a SGC.

Given such sustained demographic change reflected in growing urban population and rural depopulation, the creation of a Youth Hub and Adult Club axis would also see youth teams increasingly drawn from Super Games Centres that operate on a Community and/or Post-Primary School basis.

Players just want to play but in some of the large urban clubs especially, that facility is not available to many players not good enough to make the teams. Having a SGC nearby though, would give players the opportunity to organise their own games. That's what thousands already do every week for 5-a-side soccer, especially over the winter. From a technological perspective, it is also proposed in time that an online fixtures platform will be developed so that these players can access a meaningful schedule of games - appropriate to their varying needs.

Despite the huge benefits with this initiative, the concept has had an extremely low profile. It is still finding its place in such an expansive GAA system but there were 130 SGC's in the country during 2016. The highest concentration was in Kerry (17), with the second highest in Donegal, with 14 SGC's. Already, the GAA have planned to increase the total number of SGC's to 148 for 2017.

At the conclusion of the SGC report in 2015, the question was posed, 'How can we move forward?' The last point focused on the ultimate long-term goal for December 2018. 'To Reverse the Youth drop-out Trend.' That is never an easy task but this concept is a good start. In Waterford, the programme will expand after Christmas with additional blitzes and some guest coaching sessions in primary schools.

In Cork, the programme will also recommence after Christmas with another five sessions planned.

It may not unearth any extremely talented players who might play with the Cork seniors some day. Those players probably wouldn't be there in the first place but it's not always about the elite.

Enjoyment and activity and keeping kids and people involved in GAA, or in any sport, is often far more important.

GAAGO LAUNCHES 2017 SEASON WITH EXPANDED AND ENHANCED SERVICE



Tuesday, 20th December, 2016:
GAAGO, RTÉ and the GAA's online streaming service for Gaelic Games outside of Ireland, today launched its 2017 GAAGO Season offering.

Now entering its fourth season, GAAGO has announced plans to deliver an expanded and enhanced service and deliver increased value to its loyal fan base, with a price reduction for Season Pass holders, the addition of GAA related documentaries and programmes to the service, a new website and enhanced streaming quality for a better HD experience.

For 2017, GAAGO will stream over 120 GAA events, including the 2017 GAA Championships, Allianz League and The Sunday Game highlights show. Previously priced at €160, the 2017 GAAGO Season Pass has been reduced in price to €140. Season Pass holders can also now get exclusive access to GAA related documentaries and programmes which have been added to the service for the first time. Selected Club, U21, Minor and International Rules matches will also feature on the service.

Games are streamed in high-quality HD and include full commentary, scores, and studio programming as broadcast to audiences in Ireland. GAAGO subscribers can view the games live and on-demand on any internet-enabled device including mobile phones, tablet devices and laptops. Earlier this year, a new dedicated GAAGO channel was launched on the Roku

streaming platform in the US. For US customers, a subscription to the GAAGO service provides access to matches on both platforms; GAAGO and Roku.

Múirne Laffan, RTÉ's Chief Digital Officer, said "GAAGO has built up an incredibly loyal fan base in 190 countries around the world and we are delighted to be in a position to reward our Season Pass holders with a price reduction, as well as delivering an enhanced service offering with the addition of GAA documentaries and programmes, new website features and improved streaming quality for a better HD experience."

Peter McKenna, GAA Commercial & Stadium Director, said; "The success of this year's Etihad Airways GAA World Games showcased just how vibrant the Association's international units have become in recent years. The thousands of GAA players and supporters around the world who have retained that all important link to home are a hallmark of all that is great about our games and I am delighted that GAAGO will once again provide extensive broadcast coverage to these communities throughout 2017. Enhanced GAAGO programming at a reduced cost is something that we are really looking forward to rolling out over the coming months".

In 2017, GAAGO will stream:

- GAA Football & Hurling Senior Championships (45+ matches worldwide, 25+ in GB)
- Allianz League (45+ matches)
- The Sunday Game highlights show (20 shows)

- Electric Ireland GAA Football and Hurling Minor Championships (selected matches)
- AIB GAA Senior Club Finals (Football & Hurling – 2 matches)
- Bord Gáis Energy GAA Hurling U21 Championship (selected matches)
- EirGrid GAA Football U21 Championship (selected matches)
- Christy Ring/Nicky Rackard/Lory Meagher Cup Finals
- Additional bonus matches as they arise
- GAAGO Season Pass holders get exclusive access to GAA documentaries and programmes

A worldwide GAAGO Season Pass (excluding Ireland and Great Britain) is priced at €140 and will provide online access to over 100 televised matches, live and on-demand, as broadcast by RTÉ, TG4, eir and Sky Sports, in addition to 20 episodes of The Sunday Game highlights show.

This season, GAAGO has introduced an instalment payment offering, facilitating customers to spread the cost of their Season Pass over four monthly payments.

For audiences in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales), a Season Pass (GB) is priced at €100 and will provide online access to over 80 matches, live and on-demand, as broadcast by RTÉ, TG4 and eir, in addition to the 20 episodes of The Sunday Game highlights show. Games broadcast by Sky Sports will only be available through Sky Sports.

The opening matches of the 2017 Season on GAAGO will be on Saturday 4 February 2017. Fans are advised to check the GAAGO.ie website in the week leading up to the opening matches for a list of available fixtures.

The new GAAGO site www.gaago.ie went live today, with the 2017 GAAGO Season Pass now available to purchase and gift.

The new website features the introduction of personalised customer accounts via MY GAAGO, allowing customers to manage their subscriptions, personal details and preferences. As well as being able to spread the payment of a Season Pass over four months, a 10% discount off the price of a Season Pass can be availed of by using the Promo Code LAUNCH17 before midnight (Irish time) Friday, 23rd December 2016.

GAAGO continues to offer its GAAGO Club Scheme which provides GAA clubs outside Ireland with the opportunity to raise funds for their club when members and friends of the club purchase or gift GAAGO 2017 Season Passes.

For full details, including how to register your club and terms and conditions of the Club Scheme, visit www.gaago.ie.

For reference, please contact:

Marika MacCarvill, Communications Manager, RTÉ Digital
 Tel: 01-2084665/ 086-171 2568

BORD GÁIS ENERGY TO SPONSOR THE GAA HURLING ALL-IRELAND SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

Bord Gáis Energy is delighted to announce that it is a new official sponsor of the GAA Hurling All-Ireland Senior Championship for the next three years.



Dave Kirwan, Managing Director, Bord Gáis Energy, and Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Aogán Ó Fearghail, holding the Liam MacCarthy Cup, with players, from left, Joe Canning, Patrick Horgan, Paul Murphy, Liam Rushe, and Seamus Callanan.



The sponsorship expands the company's long standing association with the GAA as they also continue to sponsor the Bord Gáis Energy GAA Hurling U-21 All-Ireland Championship and the Bord Gáis Energy GAA Legends Tours at Croke Park.

The new sponsorship allows Bord Gáis Energy to develop even more great GAA rewards for customers all over the country who are members of the Bord Gáis Energy Rewards Club.

This will include direct access to tickets for Senior Hurling Championship matches.

The Bord Gáis Energy Rewards Club was established in 2012 as a way to reward customer loyalty and is open to all gas or electricity customers.

It has grown to just under 250,000 members who can avail of a wide range of exclusive offers including pre-sale tickets and VIP experiences to the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, competitions and money saving incentives through a partnership with Tesco.

Current GAA rewards, which are offered around the U-21 Championship and Legends series, are amongst the most popular in the Rewards Club.

Through this partnership, Bord Gáis Energy customers will now be able to get direct access to tickets for Senior Championship matches, as well as unique experiences and competitions. Further details will be announced ahead of the Championship launch in May.

As part of the new sponsorship Bord Gáis Energy will also take on the role of Official Energy Partner to the GAA. In this role, Bord Gáis Energy will bring the expertise and innovation of the energy sector to life in Croke Park.

The energy company will work alongside the GAA over the next three years to develop an energy efficiency strategy. This will include the introduction of smart energy controls and data metering within Croke Park and future GAA developments.

Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Aogán Ó Fearghail was joined by Bord Gáis Energy Managing Director Dave Kirwan at Croke Park to make today's announcement. Emphasising Bord Gáis Energy's heritage as a hurling sponsor, five of the original Bord Gáis Energy Ambassadors for the U-21 Championship were also in attendance.

Galway's Joe Canning, Tipperary's Seamus Callanan, Dublin's Liam Rushe, Cork's Patrick Horgan and Kilkenny's Paul Murphy were at GAA Headquarters in 2009 when Bord Gáis Energy took over the title sponsorship of the U-21 Championship.

Today they returned as Bord Gáis Energy made the step up to become a top tier GAA partner.

Speaking at the announcement Dave Kirwan said: "This is a very proud day for everyone at Bord Gáis Energy and I would like to express my sincere thanks to all at the GAA and on the Bord Gáis Energy

team who made today's announcement possible. It really is a landmark day for our company.

"There are two key components to this sponsorship; hurling and our customers. We will work hard to continue to shine a spotlight on hurling over the course of the next three years while also being able to reward our customers with exclusive offers and match access like never before.

"This work will go hand in hand with our sponsorship of the U-21 Championship and the Legends Tour series and we're very excited about having that link to hurling at all stages in the life-cycle of players.

From U-21 to Senior to Legends, Bord Gáis Energy is there every step of the way."

GAA President Aogán Ó Fearghaill added: "Bord Gáis Energy have been a loyal and committed sponsor to the GAA for many years and we now welcome them on board as a sponsor of our showpiece hurling competition, the GAA Hurling All-Ireland Senior Championship. We hope to further build on what is already an excellent partnership over the coming years.

"We've seen the transformative effect Bord Gáis Energy has had as sponsor of the U-21 Championship. From attendances at games to live television coverage, from all they do on match-day to add to the supporters' experience to the introduction of the Team of the

Year, we have seen fresh ideas, innovation and dedication and we're excited about now seeing how that will transfer to the senior grade.

"Looking at the calibre of players we have here and the fact they have taken time out to support today's event shows the relationships and goodwill Bord Gáis Energy have built up over the years among players and fans alike. We will do all we can to help them now as they join our team of senior sponsors."

Joe Canning is one of those players to have a long-term relationship with Bord Gáis Energy. He was among the original team of ambassadors for the U-21 Championship and has since gone on to be a judge for the Team of the Year.

Speaking today Joe said; "I've seen first-hand how committed Bord Gáis Energy are to hurling and the players. They put the players at the heart of everything they do and have been a great help to me during my playing career.

"They also have great knowledge of the game that comes with the experience of being a sponsor at the U-21 grade. It will be great to see how they bring that understanding to bear on the Senior Championship."

Bord Gáis Energy will be announcing their plans for activity around the Senior Championship later in the year. An exciting, expanded range of Rewards Club offers for customers will also be announced to coincide with that launch.

LITTLEWOODS IRELAND UNVEILED AS NEW GAA SPONSOR

Ireland's leading online department store, Littlewoods Ireland was today unveiled as a new top tier partner of both the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Camogie Association.

The fashion, electrical and homewares retailer has signed a three-year deal with the GAA which sees them become both the GAA Hurling All-Ireland Senior Championship and Camogie National League sponsor until 2019.

Littlewoods Ireland is best known for its fashion credentials, with a host of high-street brands along with its own label 'V by Very' which launched in September 2016. Its first act as sponsor has been to sign up two GAA style ambassadors in Cork's Anna Geary and the newly retired nine-time All-Ireland winner Jackie Tyrrell from Kilkenny. The pair have already taken part in a V by Very Winter GAA Shoot at Lough Dan in County Wicklow which was unveiled at today's launch in Croke Park.

Both Geary and Tyrrell are keen fashionistas and their new role will allow them to combine their love for both style and sport as they enter their retirements from their playing careers. The shoot, produced by Ireland's leading stylist Courtney Smith and shot by fashion photographer Alex Hutchinson, was a new experience for the Gaelic Games pin-ups and the images along with a behind the

scenes video and blogs from the shoot can be seen on <https://blog.littlewoodsireland.ie/>

Waterford's Austin Gleeson was also on hand at the launch in Croke Park as the double-hurler of the year was unveiled as part of the Littlewoods Ireland GAA team for 2017.

Littlewoods Ireland has won a number of national and international marketing awards this year and plan to bring their expertise to bear as part of an innovative sponsorship campaign with a strong digital focus.

With over 70,000 products from more than 1,300 brands, LittlewoodsIreland.ie receives an average of 2.5 million visits each month and MD, Geoff Scully explains; "We are delighted to be announcing our new partnership with both the GAA and the Camogie Association today. This is a very exciting time for Littlewoods Ireland, we have experienced consistent growth in recent years as a result of placing the customer at the centre of our business. We have used technology to revolutionise our business to become a fully online department store offering free delivery and returns and we have received international awards for our innovation in e-commerce."

He added: "We feel it is an opportune time to begin a partnership with the GAA. This is a



new space for us and will allow us to engage with communities throughout the country through the Hurling Championship, Camogie National League and also the GO Games children's events in Croke Park which we will be sponsoring. We plan on bringing our love of style and innovation to this partnership and believe it is a great fit for all involved."

Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Aogán Ó Fearghail commented: "I am pleased to welcome Littlewoods Ireland as new partners of the GAA Hurling Championship and I look forward to the support they will offer us in the promotion of the games in the months and indeed years ahead. This partnership will help us reach into new areas as we continually look at new ways of bringing our games to new audiences and supporters. I laud the fact that the arrangement also covers the activities and games of the Camogie Association which strikes me as a particularly good fit covering the wide

spectrum of the GAA family given the area of expertise of Littlewoods Ireland. I look forward to a long and mutually beneficially partnership."

Speaking at the launch, President of the Camogie Association, Catherine Neary said: "We are delighted to partner with Littlewoods Ireland as the new sponsors of the National League. The popularity of Camogie continues to grow and it is an exciting prospect for us to be associated with Ireland's leading online department store, a company that is synonymous with innovation, fashion and style. This marks the first occasion that the National League has had a title sponsor and the Camogie Association is delighted that this national competition will receive a greater profile as a result of this partnership. I am very much looking forward to the start of the Littlewoods Ireland Camogie Leagues in February and it promises to be another exciting year of top quality intercounty Camogie."

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION IN THE GAA

In the last number of weeks we have all become increasingly aware of the reported incidents of abuse suffered by young people in sports related surroundings.

Such harrowing accounts of abuse remind us, if we ever need reminding, as to the importance of our own GAA child welfare and protection procedures and practices and the need for constant vigilance in our work with children, young people and vulnerable persons.

It is appropriate, as the playing season for our children and young people comes to a close, that these young players, their

parents and their Club coaches take a well-earned rest. It is equally important that any end of year review at club level takes stock of our child welfare related procedures and ensures when doing so that our work with children at Club level is carried out in accordance with our Association's child welfare and protection directives and also adheres to the legislative requirements of all jurisdictions in which we operate.

All GAA Clubs have a Children's Officer and a Designated Liaison Person in situ and Clubs should insist that a review of their internal procedures takes place under the guidance of these two people.

This will allow for a gentle reminder as to what are the key child welfare and protection procedures that the GAA applies in Ireland and in Britain for children, young people and vulnerable persons. We highlight the requirements for vetting and background checks, the need to carry out a child welfare audit at Club level, the training requirements for those who work with children and our agreed reporting procedures that follow when a child welfare concern or an allegation of abuse is made known to us. Additional GAA child safeguarding information may be accessed or downloaded at:

www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/child-welfare-and-protection
www.britain.gaa.ie/safeguarding
www.ulster.gaa.ie/safeguarding

1 VETTING, DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICES AND POLICE BACKGROUND CHECKS

In 2010, as part of the **Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport**, the GAA adopted a policy requirement whereby all persons who on our behalf work in a role of responsibility with children (those aged 18 and under) and vulnerable persons must be vetted. While this may have been in place in Britain since 2006 it effectively

became a common legal requirement on the island of Ireland in April 2016 following the commencement of vetting legislation in Ireland.

The GAA recognises that despite vetting almost 115,000 on the island of Ireland alone that vetting is but one aspect of our overall recruitment and training services for those who work with children. Fulfilling organisational and legislative vetting requirements does not on its own make a person eligible to work with children in the GAA or elsewhere.

Our Clubs, County Boards and Provincial Councils, and in particular those who work in a role of responsibility with underage players and vulnerable persons, must realise that if an individual working in a such roles has not been vetted to date then he/she is in breach of legislative requirements as have the officers who permitted the breach to occur. Any such person must as a minimum cease their involvement with underage teams immediately and may not engage with their teams again until such time as they have applied for and successfully completed the GAA vetting requirements.

In addition to these requirements the individual who has not been vetted may be obliged to submit an explanation as to why they failed to be vetted to date.





2 CHILD WELFARE CLUB AUDIT IN 2017

As discussed at the recent Child Welfare Information Seminar on 19 November in Croke Park all Clubs will be subject to a Child Welfare Audit in mid-2017 which will enable the Association to capture our level of compliance with minimum child welfare requirements in each Club. This will include accounting for those vetted, those who have attended relevant child welfare training in accordance with legislative requirements, confirmation of the appointment a Designated Liaison Person LP and Childrens Officer in each Club and a record of the coaching qualification attained by each and any coach appointed by us to work with children.

3 CHILD WELFARE TRAINING

The GAA delivers some of the highest levels of child welfare training for those who work with children at Club level in particular.

The advancements made in this area in recent years is not just widely acknowledged but appreciated by those who on our behalf work with children. If we require reminding let us clarify that such training is now a legal requirement and in line with our Code of Best Practice all such person who work with children must;

- 1 *Successfully complete the vetting process*
- 2 *Attend relevant child welfare training as provided by the GAA in Ireland and Britain*
- 3 *Must have a coaching qualification before they commence working with children*

4 REPORTING CHILD WELFARE CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

The GAA has developed guidance and procedures for our members and staff who may have grounds for concern about the possible abuse or neglect of children involved in our activities. In doing so we have published the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse, a Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport and a Code of Behaviour (Underage) all of which directs us in our work. In addition to these policy documents each Club and County is required to appoint a Children's Officer and a Designated (Liaison) Person who can advise and oversee this work at local level.

[GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse](#)

[Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport](#)

[Code of Behaviour \(Underage\)](#)

[Internal Reporting Form](#)

It is recognised that certain reporting differences may occur from one jurisdiction to another particularly as to whom reports of allegations or abuse

should be made. While additional child safeguarding information and directives are available on www.gaa.ie/childwelfareandprotection, or on www.britain.gaa.ie/safeguarding and www.ulster.gaa.ie/safeguarding

No member of the Association should delay in reporting their concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing.

Our guidance is clear in that GAA members working with children who have concerns about a child but are not sure what to do, should never ignore such matters but should discuss their concerns as a matter of priority with the relevant Designated Liaison Person in the GAA, or contact your local child and family agency social work department or social care team directly for advice. This should be done without delay. This advice applies to any child known to us regardless of whether the concern relates to activity in the GAA or elsewhere.

It is not unusual for any person to be unsure whether a concerns merits formal reporting or not while others may not be aware as to how to make a report. Our DLPs will assist and advise on all such matters. Our DLPs will direct any member or staff person who has a child welfare concern or complaint to the appropriate authority and in all such matters relating to concerns about children in the GAA we request that in addition to the completion of a statutory form for reporting alleged abuse that an internal reporting form is also completed and retained by the GAA as part of our own safeguarding procedures.



Reporting Child Welfare concerns or allegations of abuse in the Republic of Ireland

The National Designated Officer is
Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl
Contact details: nationalchildrensoffice@gaa.ie
+ 0035 1 8658675

Tusla – the Child and Family Agency, is the dedicated agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children in the Republic of Ireland. The GAA has developed a policy of interagency cooperation with the Child and Family Agency and it is to them that we report our concerns about a child’s welfare.

Such reports may be made by individual members of the GAA or by our DLPs on their behalf or on behalf of the Association and all such reports are made on the Tusla Standard Report Form. If a child is perceived to be in danger and we cannot contact Tusla we pass on our concerns to an Garda Síochána.

All such reports must also be made to the GAA on our an internal reporting form (LINK)
The National Designated Officer is
Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl
Contact details: nationalchildrensoffice@gaa.ie
01 8658675

Reporting child welfare concerns or allegations of abuse in Britain

Referrals can be made to:
Local Safeguarding Boards/Children’s Social Services - [here](#)
NSPCC – Child Protection in Sport Unit (England & Wales) +44 116 366 5590
NSPCC – Children 1st – Safeguarding in Sport – Scotland +44 141 418 5674
However, if you think a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, don’t delay call 999 or the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 500
The Provincial Designated Officer in Britain is Seán Hackett.
Contact details: chairperson.britan@gaa.ie or +44 7799 763596

Reporting child welfare concerns or allegations of abuse in Ulster

The Provincial Designated Officer in Ulster is Bernie Fox
Ulster GAA / CLG Uladh
Ceannaras Uladh
8-10 Market St,
Armagh
Co Armagh
BT61 7BX
T: 028 (048) 37521900 / F: 028 (048) 37528092
bernie.fox.ulster@gaa.ie Tel: 00447920429205

INFORMATION ON VETTING/BACKGROUNDS CHECKS MAY BE ACCESSED AT:

GAA/National Vetting Bureau - [here](#)

Britain

Disclosure & Barring Service (England & Wales) – [here](#)
Disclosure Scotland (PVG) – [here](#)

Application forms are available from the Provincial Children’s Officer, Julie Duffy, at childrensofficer.britain@gaa.ie

Ulster (LINK)
[here](#)



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.

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