

AUGUST  
**NUACHTLITIR**  
LÚNASA 2022



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# SEE YOU AT A CLUB MATCH - A MESSAGE FROM THE UACHTARÁN



GAA PRESIDENT, LARRY MCCARTHY.

A chairde,

**Táim breá sásta an deis seo a bheith agam ceiliúradh a dhéanamh ar thús Chraobhchomórtais Chlubanna CLG.**

I am delighted to have the chance to mark the commencement of the club championships.

After a dramatic inter-county season that included a successful debut for the Tailteann Cup, it is time for our clubs to take centre stage. In the coming weeks and months, the country will be lit up by the drama and excitement that will follow the hunt for silverware at senior, intermediate and junior level in our club championships throughout Ireland and also around the globe. I have remarked before how the GAA

club championship is the gift that keeps giving and I look forward to the great games that will have us talking between now and Christmas.

The Association has recalibrated our season and has put the clubs in their most prominent position in generations.

What is happening is unprecedented and

irrespective of what happens this year it will be premature to pass judgement on its success or failure. In reality, it will take a number of years before the club championship/county championship season beds in and can be properly evaluated. Some counties will be quicker to embrace the opportunities than others but a window of opportunity for clubs to have a season that offers them the clarity that they craved is being provided.

We cannot have games without referees and match officials. As the club campaigns begin, I want to salute those men and women who put their hands up to be match officials for our Association and encourage the rest of us to make sure that they are supported and that we also encourage new additions to their ranks.

This is also a significant year marking 175 years since the birth of Michael Cusack. A schoolteacher from Carron in Clare, he was a driving force behind the creation of the GAA.

Clara in Offaly were the first club officially affiliated to the new GAA but when there were 300 clubs signed up inside the first 12 months Cusack remarked how the growth of the GAA was "like a prairie fire."

It was the formation of clubs that grew the GAA and it is a commitment to clubs that will keep the GAA strong.

Nothing celebrates the GAA more than the playing of games.

See you at a match.

Go n-eirí go geal libh.



# GAELIC GAMES CLUBS IN 26-COUNTIES ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR 'SPORT FOR ALL' DISABILITY SUPPORTS CLUB FUND



## **THE ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR GAELIC GAMES CLUBS WILL OPEN ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 12TH AND CLOSE ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 26TH.**

Sport Ireland has recently launched a 'Sport for All' Disability Supports Club Fund as part of this year's National Governing Bodies Dormant Accounts Funding.

The scheme is open to all affiliated clubs of the Gaelic Games family (GAA, Camogie, LGFA, Handball, and Rounders) in the 26-counties and is designed to support them in the provision of inclusive programmes and supports for people with a disability. The fund is designed to support new inclusive initiatives and/or enhance those already established in Gaelic Games clubs.

The GAA Community & Health department in Croke Park is managing the club application process for the fund. A consolidated submission including all club applications that meet the necessary criteria will be forwarded to Sport Ireland by the September 1st deadline.

Clubs can apply for funding of between €1,000 and €5,000 to support the following areas:

1. Disability Supports Education & Training
2. Disability Supports Programme Activation and Delivery
3. Disability Supports Small Scale Equipment and Infrastructure.

Additional essential criteria for clubs applying for funding include:

- Club safeguarding statement in place

- Club children's officer in place
- Coaches and volunteers who work with underage individuals/teams and vulnerable adults Garda Vetted

An application process for clubs, including a requirement to detail each club's respective funding request under the three categories above, will open on Friday, August 12th and close on Friday, August 26th. (Details will be issued to club secretaries across all units when the process goes live.)

It is anticipated that an announcement of funding allocations will be made by December 2022. Applying does not guarantee that funding will be approved.

Speaking about the Dormant Accounts Funding, Minister of State for Sport and the Gaeltacht, Jack Chambers TD, said: "The NGB Club Fund being launched responds directly to the commitment made in the Sport Action Plan 2021-2023 that I launched last November. Helping the sports sector, especially the club network, to recover from the damage caused by the pandemic is one of my top priorities alongside the promotion of a "sport-for-all" ethos across the sector. There's €2million being set aside under this new Fund and it presents a great opportunity for sports clubs everywhere to consider how they might make their sport even more accessible for people in their communities, especially those with a disability. Sport can offer so many benefits to people's health and wellbeing and we need to make that a reality on the ground for more and more people."

**ONLINE  
APPLICATION FORM  
AVAILABLE  
HERE**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### IN ÓMÓS DILLON QUIRKE

GAA President Larry McCarthy has offered his sympathies to the family and friends of Dillon Quirke after his sudden passing on Friday, August 5.

The underage All-Ireland medal winner with Tipperary collapsed before half time in Clonoulty Rossmore's senior hurling championship clash with Kilruane McDonagh's at FBD Semple Stadium.

The GAA President said: "There is a huge sense of shock across the GAA Community at the tragic loss of Dillon who had already achieved so much in his young life.

"He was a young man in his prime with so much potential and promise and on behalf of the GAA family I would like to extend my sympathies to Dillon's father and mother, Dan and Hazel, and his sisters, Shannon and Kellie, at what is an unimaginably difficult time."

Go dtuga Dia suaimhneas sioraí dá anam.



**REFEREE RECRUITMENT A GAA PRIORITY**  
read GAA plans to intensify its work on the recruitment and retention of referees in the coming weeks and months. Recruitment and retention of personnel is the life blood of all organisations and especially sporting. One area which requires new recruits is referees, without whom the games would not be played. The significance of the Club in this regard is of fundamental importance through encouraging people to get involved in officiating. The Club's role in retaining the current referees is also vital through the support given to their club referees, who are representing them when they put on the referee's jersey. The reality of officiating is that they are probably the oldest cohort participating in our games and there is a constant need for new referees and it is everyone's responsibility to be involved in the referee recruitment process.

### SMART SLIOTAR FOR SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP IN 2023

The most recent meeting of Ard Chomhairle approved a recommendation to introduce the Smart Sliotar for use in the senior inter-county hurling championship in 2023. The smart sliotar was successfully trialled in this year's o'neills.com U20 hurling championship and has a chip in its core that verifies that it has been manufactured in accordance with the official guide specifications and complies with ethical standards.



### NO SPECIAL CONGRESS ON AGE GRADES IN 2022

A special workgroup which has been established to examine the issue of Age Grades in the GAA is continuing its research and analysis and will be completed in time for GAA Annual Congress 2023 – meaning that there will not now be a special congress on the issue in the autumn of 2022.



### CÚL CAMP KIT

The Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps Kit is now on sale online!

The hottest GAA gear of the summer is now available to buy online. If your little ones didn't get to attend a camp then fear no more, our Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps kit is now available to buy online.

Each Gear Bundle is comprised of:-

Zip Top x 1  
Jersey x 1  
Backpack x 1  
Bundle cost: €35.00/£32.00 includes delivery

Please note that there is a maximum of 5 kits per customer. For more information, kit sizes or to buy a kit online now please visit

<https://www.kelloggsculcamps.gaa.ie/buy-gear/>



## NEW REGISTER FOR GAA ALL-WEATHER PITCHES



The GAA has announced it is developing a new register for its all-weather pitches and new standards will be required for all artificial playing surfaces to be allowed stage officially sanctioned training sessions and games.

A comprehensive new guide covering every aspect of a GAA synthetic turf field from design to construction and maintenance has been compiled by a group led by GAA pitch Manager at Croke Park Stuart Wilson with industry experts also included.

This guide can be found at this link below and is recommended for every club that has an existing surface or considering the addition of one.

On the issue of the new register the guidebook says:

“Experience has shown that the quality of even the best quality synthetic turf fields can deteriorate and result in a poorly performing or even unsafe playing environment that exposes athletes to unacceptable risks. To ensure that such fields are not used for GAA competitions or

training the GAA has introduced a Register of Synthetic Turf Fields and only fields that appear on the Register should be used for any form of GAA sanctioned event.

“For a field to appear on the Register it must be tested and shown to satisfy the requirements of the GAA Performance and construction standards for synthetic turf fields and training areas, applicable at the time the field was built. An initial field test should be undertaken following construction of a new field, ideally before it is brought into use. Thereafter, the field should be retested every three years throughout its life to verify it is still providing acceptable levels of performance and adequate protection to players.”

The guidebook on synthetic surfaces in the GAA can be found at this link:

<https://www.gaa.ie/news/gaa-synthetic-pitch-guide/>

TRANSLINK YOUNG VOLUNTEER  
Stewartstown clubman is Translink's Ulster GAA Young Volunteer of the Month

A hardworking club volunteer from Stewartstown Harps has been awarded the Translink Ulster GAA Young Volunteer of the Month award for June 2022.

The award is presented each month to one young volunteer whose efforts best demonstrate the volunteering ethos and community spirit of the GAA.

Fearghal O'Neill (24) was nominated in recognition of the time and energy he gives as a member of the Harps club committee, as well as being a playing member of the men's senior team and a youth team coach. An important and enthusiastic member of his club's fundraising initiative, Fearghal's contribution and commitment to his many roles are outstanding.

Speaking about the contribution Fearghal makes to his club, Stewartstown Harps Assistant Secretary Damien McConville commented:

“In addition to his playing commitments, Fearghal joined our club committee this year, bringing a welcome injection of youth. He also volunteered to help coach our Under 9.5 boys' team, where he is well respected by the boys and a good role model for them.

“Our club has recently embarked on a major fundraising drive to develop our facilities, and Fearghal is a key part of the ticket selling team visiting neighbouring areas each week, devoting lots of time and effort.”

Praising Fearghal's efforts, Ulster GAA Volunteer Development & Policy Officer Ashelene Groogan said:

“Fearghal is an outstanding young volunteer. As well as being a player and youth coach, the time and commitment

he gives back to his club off the field is remarkable. His efforts towards the fundraising work his club have undertaken to develop their grounds needs applauding.

“The standard of nominees was extremely high, so this recognition is a real credit to Fearghal's commitment and the impact he is making.”

In celebration of his achievement, Fearghal was presented with a framed certificate and a pair of Enterprise train tickets, courtesy of Translink.

To nominate a young person aged 14-24 for this monthly accolade, visit [ulster.gaa.ie/youngvolunteeraward](https://ulster.gaa.ie/youngvolunteeraward).



STEPHEN WALLACE, TRANSLINK, FEARGHAL O'NEILL, STEWARTSTOWN HARPS GAC, AND ASHELENE GROOGAN, ULSTER GAA VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT & POLICY OFFICER.

# WIN UP TO €25,000 FOR YOUR GAA CLUB WITH KELLOGG'S GAA CÚL CAMPS ON-PACK COMPETITION

**GAA CLUBS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING PRIZES OF €25,000, €10,000 AND €5,000 AS PART OF THE KELLOGG'S GAA CÚL CAMPS COMPETITION.**

Meath LGFA star, Emma Duggan and TV presenter and former basketball player, Emer O'Neill officially launched the promotion with a previous winning club, Skryne GFC. The Co. Meath club claimed first prize with €25,000 and have demonstrated how the prize has transformed their GAA club through the restoration of its pitch and purchasing some new equipment including footballs and training accessories.

To nominate your GAA club to win this year, simply purchase a promotional box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Rice Krispies or Bran Flakes. Using a unique on-pack code, log on to [kelloggsculcamps.gaa.ie/competition](http://kelloggsculcamps.gaa.ie/competition) and nominate a club of your choice.

Starting on Monday June 27th, the camps will run up to August 26th. To date, more than 80,000 participants are booked to attend a Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camp this summer, with an added sense of excitement noticeable as this year sees numbers back at full capacity

across the country following Covid restrictions. Visit [www.kelloggsculcamps/gaa.ie](http://www.kelloggsculcamps/gaa.ie) for further booking information.

**Sarah Ferguson, Kellogg Ireland General Manager** said "Based on incredible feedback and very popular engagement levels, we are delighted to officially launch the nationwide competition. This is open for all GAA clubs across the country to be in with a chance to win prizes worth a total of €40,000. This on-pack competition provides GAA members with a great opportunity to raise vital funds for their club.

"We want to encourage everyone to nominate their club to be in with a chance. Through our partnership with the Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps, we are very proud to support the grassroots of the GAA."

For more information on the Kellogg's GAA Cúl Camps visit [gaa.ie/kelloggsculcamps](http://gaa.ie/kelloggsculcamps)

ROI & NI only. Parental Permission for under 18s required. Internet access and participating pack required. Enter between 01.04.22 & 26.08.22 inclusive. Prize paid in Euros only. T&Cs and restrictions apply. See promotional packs for details.





# SYDNEY-BASED GAA CLUB AWARDED \$30,000 TO SUPPORT ITS COMMUNITY

**A LANDMARK DEVELOPMENT HAS SEEN A SYDNEY-BASED GAA CLUB RECEIVE SIGNIFICANT LOCAL STATE FUNDING TO USE TOWARDS THE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT OF ITS COMMUNITY AND ALSO AID INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY INITIATIVES.**

Central Coast GAA Club has existed since 1980 and serves eastern Sydney in New South Wales. They play hurling, camogie and ladies' football with 100 active members and many additional social members from the Irish community.

Aoife Cosgrove is secretary of Central Coast GAA Club Australasia and she told the Club Newsletter: "We are the recipients of a \$30,000 grant from the NSW health department to support the mental health of our members.

"In 2022, we want to make Mental Health and Well-being a top priority. We aim to take conversations about mental health out of the clinic and into the clubhouse. We want people talking about how they're doing emotionally and mentally in a setting they are comfortable with.

"The funding will be spread over six different initiatives which promote Mental Health and LGBTQ+ Inclusion. All six initiatives are Central Coast GAA led. We have been working hard developing partnerships with relevant Mental Health Agencies and organisations.

"Each initiative is based on evidence-based techniques which have worked in previous mental health and Well-being projects. All initiatives will be developed to create ongoing awareness about Mental Health support services and grow capacity to build resilience within our Central Coast GAA Community.

"By 2023, we aim to have normalised conversations about Mental Health and have increased Mental Health literacy within the club. This will include teaching the practical skills needed to support someone experiencing a Mental Health problem.

"We will also be sharing these initiatives with other GAA clubs in Sydney so everyone can benefit."

The six point plan will be rolled out in the coming weeks and Aoife explains how the need for the service was brought in, partly as a result of the solitude caused by being so far from home during covid-19.

She added: "The main ethos of our club is to have fun and enjoy the sports we love and are passionate about, keep our culture and tradition flowing whilst away from home and also be a support network and second family to our members.

"This grant is very important to us, a lot of us have been in Australia from before COVID and we didn't have the option of going home. This has all



## CENTRAL COAST GAA 2022 MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

1. Counselling Service Funding
2. Mental Health First Aid Training
3. Mental Health Seminar Series
4. Establishment of Mental Health Committee
5. Establishment of Diversity & Inclusion Committee
6. LGBTQ+ ALLY Training



taken a toll on people's mental health and we want to be the support network for our members. By receiving the grant it allows us to support our members in numerous ways that we have not been able to before; it allows us to provide free counselling services and have seminars that will discuss issues that we all face such as visas."

Covid and adverse weather have also played havoc with the playing schedule of the last three years so the club are looking forward to being at their best on and off the pitch in 2022.

# CLUB OFFICER TRAINING SURVEY TO SHAPE ROLL OUT OF THE LATEST MODULES

## OVERVIEW

A Club Officer Training Survey was carried out to identify training needs for Club Officers and assist the Gaelic Games organisations in responding to their training needs for the next rollout of training this winter and next spring. The survey containing fourteen questions, was emailed out to all County Planning and Training Officers in April and they were asked to seek input from their respective Clubs. A total of 1,379 responses were gathered.

## FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

The survey included generic questions regarding gender, age, Club Officer Roles and experience levels. There were then more insightful questions which highlighted gaps in training requirements. One of the questions in the survey asked Club Officers which topics they would like to receive more training on and the responses broken down by Officer role were as follows:

Club Officer Role	Top 5 Responses
Chairperson	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Club Planning</li> <li>2. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention</li> <li>3. Coaching and Games Development</li> <li>4. Commercial and Sponsorship</li> <li>5. Facilities</li> </ol>
Secretary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Club Planning</li> <li>2. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention</li> <li>3. Insurance and Injury Fund</li> <li>4. Coaching and Games Development</li> <li>5. Membership and Registration</li> </ol>
Treasurer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finance</li> <li>2. Commercial and Sponsorship</li> <li>3. Club Planning</li> <li>4. Insurance and Injury Fund</li> <li>5. Membership and Registration</li> </ol>
PRO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Digital Content</li> <li>2. Communications</li> <li>3. Information Technology</li> <li>4. Commercial and Sponsorship</li> <li>5. Data Protection</li> </ol>
Children's Officer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Child Safeguarding</li> <li>2. Player Welfare</li> <li>3. Coaching and Games Development</li> <li>4. Diversity and Inclusion</li> <li>5. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention</li> </ol>
Coaching Officer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coaching and Games Development</li> <li>2. Club Planning</li> <li>3. Player Welfare</li> <li>4. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention</li> <li>5. Communications</li> </ol>

**CLUB LEADERSHIP**  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The results from the survey are being analysed over the summer months to identify what training needs can be developed and improved to assist Club Officers in their role.

The Officer Development Committee will establish Design Teams of volunteers to develop new modules specific to each Club Officers role along with improving current resources. This project will be completed in advance of the next rollout of training and Clubs will be made aware of developments as they happen.

In the interim, here are links to some existing resources:

For the latest information please keep an eye on the Administrator section of the GAA Learning Portal - <https://learning.gaa.ie/administrator>

Club Officer Role	Top 5 Responses
Club Support Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice sheets which explain key areas of Club administration e.g. optimising Club structures, improving communication in the Club, and more.</li> <li>Access here - <a href="https://learning.gaa.ie/clubsupportmanual">https://learning.gaa.ie/clubsupportmanual</a></li> </ul>
Club Folder Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A OneDrive folder for Club Secretaries filled with several templates and resources</li> <li>Access here - <a href="https://learning.gaa.ie/clubfolderstructure">https://learning.gaa.ie/clubfolderstructure</a></li> </ul>
Webinar Recordings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recordings of previously held webinars on a number of topics such as Microsoft Teams, Finance &amp; Governance, Essential Communication and many more.</li> <li>Access here - <a href="https://learning.gaa.ie/administratorwebinars">https://learning.gaa.ie/administratorwebinars</a></li> </ul>
Learning Files	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A vast range of documents and guides across all administration areas of a Club.</li> <li>Access here - <a href="https://learning.gaa.ie/clubofficerlearningfiles">https://learning.gaa.ie/clubofficerlearningfiles</a></li> </ul>
Club Officer Role Profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample description of key duties for the roles of Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, PRO and more.</li> <li>Access here - <a href="https://learning.gaa.ie/officerroleprofiles">https://learning.gaa.ie/officerroleprofiles</a></li> </ul>
Coaching Officer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coaching and Games Development</li> <li>Club Planning</li> <li>Player Welfare</li> <li>Volunteer Recruitment and Retention</li> <li>Communications</li> </ol>

**CLUB LEADERSHIP**  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## SUSPECTED HEAD INJURY

- Concussion is a brain injury that can be caused by an impact to a player's head or body
- Over 90% of concussions occur without a loss of consciousness, therefore recognition of other signs and symptoms is crucial

**"IT'S NOT ALWAYS A KNOCK-OUT"**

## OBSERVATION

### INITIAL SIGNS:

#### *The nature of the impact:*

- The speed of the impact / collision
- Was the player braced for impact? (Did they see the impact coming)
- Was there any rotational (twisting) motion of the head / neck caused by the impact?

### INDICATORS:

#### *Player's reaction:*

- Did they lie motionless for any period of time?
- Were they unsteady on their feet?
- Did they clutch their head?

### RED FLAGS:

#### *Urgent medical attention:*

- Possible neck or spinal injury –player should not be moved
- Prolonged Loss of consciousness
- Deteriorating conscious state
- Convulsions / Seizures
- Vomiting
- Double Vision
- Disorientation/Confusion
- Severe or increasing headache
- Abnormalities of balance or coordination
- Slurred or incoherent speech
- Weakness or tingling/burning in arms or legs

## A SIMPLE **TWO-STEP** PROCESS SHOULD BE APPLIED:

### 1. **RECOGNISE** -

the signs and symptoms

### 2. **REMOVE** -

the **player** from the **field** of play

**Remember,**  
**if there is any suspicion of concussion, the player should be removed from the field of play:**

**"IF IN DOUBT,  
SIT THEM OUT"**



# NO MOUTHGUARD? NO GAME!

Since 2014, players at all grades are required to wear a mouthguard in Gaelic football games and training sessions

A range of official OPRO GAA/GPA mouthguards are available for purchase, more information can be found at: [www.opro.com](http://www.opro.com), and searching for "GAA".



Adhere to mouthguard guidelines at: <https://learning.gaa.ie/mouthguardshurlinghelmets>

## GAA

Páirc an Chrócaigh  
Baile Átha Cliath 3  
[www.learning.gaa.ie/](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/)  
[mouthguardshurlinghelmets](http://mouthguardshurlinghelmets)



## GAA MOUTHGUARD INFORMATION

INFORMATION FOR CLUBS, COACHES, PLAYERS AND PARENTS

### BACKGROUND

Since January 1st 2014, it has been mandatory for all players to wear a mouthguard in all Gaelic football practice sessions and games.

### KEY POINTS

- Gaelic footballers must wear a mouthguard.
- It is the responsibility of each individual player to use a mouthguard
- A properly fitted mouthguard is the best available protective device for reducing the incidence and severity of sports-related dental injuries
- Players can be sent-off in a game for not wearing a mouthguard
- Players will not be covered under the GAA player injury scheme if they don't comply with the mouthguard rule
- No Mouthguard? No Game!

This document has been compiled to assist GAA Clubs, players, parents, coaches and referees in complying with the provisions of the rule.

### ABOUT MOUTHGUARDS

*There are three types of mouthguard:*

**Stock mouthguards** are preformed and come ready to wear. They are inexpensive and can generally be purchased in sports shops for in or around €5 each. However, little can be done to adjust their fit, they are bulky, can make breathing and talking difficult, and they provide limited protection. Dentists do not recommend their use, nonetheless, once they carry the CE (European Conformity) mark they are acceptable in terms of complying with the new rules.

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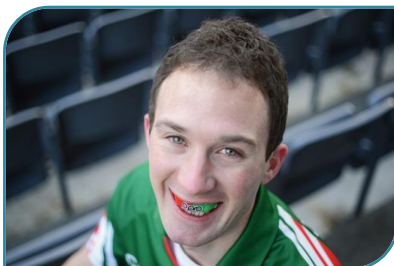


**Boil and bite mouthguards** can also be bought over the counter at most sports shops and generally offer a better fit than stock mouth protectors. The 'boil and bite' mouthguard is made from thermoplastic material. It is placed in hot water to soften, then placed in the mouth and shaped around the teeth using finger and tongue pressure. Dentists do not recommend their use in general. Typically this type of mouthguard will cost in the region of €8 to €33 and again any mouthguard with the CE mark on it in this category is sufficient to ensure compliance with the new rule.



*Official OPRO GAA/GPA boil and bite mouthguards are available for purchasing through the following retailers: Supervalu, Centra, Lifestyle Sports, Elverys, O'Neills and Heatons*

**Custom-fitted mouthguards** are individually designed and made in a dental office or a professional laboratory based on your dentist's instructions. These will not just offer the best protection against dental and oral injury but they should not affect performance i.e. breathing and speech should be relatively unaffected particularly if these have been worn regularly. Firstly, your dentist will make an impression of your teeth and a mouthguard is then moulded over the model using a special material. Due to the use of the special material and because of the extra time and work involved, a custom made mouthguard is more expensive than the other types, but it provides the most comfort and protection.



## GAA

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*Custom-fitted mouthguards by OPRO are available from a network of dentists nationwide.*

Prices can vary significantly and it is worth seeking and comparing prices from a number of practitioners before deciding to purchase. Typically a custom-fitted mouthguard should cost between €50 and €75. However, many dental practices offer significant reductions to GAA Clubs that are ordering in bulk. GAA Clubs can generally liaise with dental centres and clinics to arrange for someone to visit the Club on a given day to take dental impressions from a number of players. Custom-fitted mouthguards purchased in bulk in this manner should cost around €30 to €50 each.



*To find a list of dentists and dental centres in your area, you can use the 'Find a Dentist' function on the Irish Dental Association's website - <https://www.dentist.ie/find-a-dentist.10.html>*



*In addition, you can use the 'Find a Dentist' function offered by the British Dental Association - <https://bda.org/findapractice>*



*OPRO Custom-fitted range - <https://www.opro.com/ie/sports-mouth-guards/shop-by-sport/gaa.html>*

## WHICH TYPE OF MOUTHGUARD SHOULD I PURCHASE?

The decision on which type of mouthguard a player should obtain is a matter of personal preference. There is no doubt that custom-fitted mouthguards offer the best fit and protection but they are the most expensive option also. The 'stock' and 'boil and bite' options will suffice for compliance with the rules, but only if the product carries the CE mark. It is essential that a player feels that his mouthguard is properly fitted. Should a player feel that this is not the case; we would strongly advise that dental practitioners are consulted with.



## GAA

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mouthguardshurlinghelmets



In terms of underage players, it should be borne in mind that teeth and mouths are still developing up until about 12 years of age and young players may grow out of custom-fitted mouthguards over a period of time. However, dental practitioners are ultimately in the best position to give advice to individuals in this context.

## HYGIENE ADVICE

- Mouthguards can be rinsed with cold water or with a mouth rinse before and after each use and /or cleaned with toothpaste and a toothbrush
- Occasionally clean the mouthguard in cool, soapy water and rinse it thoroughly
- Place the mouthguard in a firm, perforated container to store or transport it, this permits air circulation and helps to prevent damage
- Protect the mouthguard from high temperatures - such as hot water, hot surfaces, or direct sunlight to minimise distorting its shape
- Occasionally check the mouthguard for general wear, if you find holes or tears in it or if it becomes loose or causes discomfort, replace it
- Bring the mouthguard to each regularly scheduled dental visit to have your dentist exam it

## ROLE OF THE REFEREE

If a player refuses to comply with a Referee's instruction to wear a mouthguard, he will incur the penalty as outlined in (Rule 6.2, Rules of Foul Play, The Playing Rules of Football, Official Guide, Part 2, 2022) '*Caution the offender; order off if he persists*'.

## ROLE OF THE PLAYER

In all Football Games and Practice Football Sessions, it shall be mandatory for, and the responsibility of, each individual player to use a mouthguard.

## ROLE OF THE CLUB

Clubs should ensure that their players, player's parents/guardians, coaches and team mentors are made aware of the mouthguard rules.

## GAA

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## ROLE OF THE OFFICIAL GAA COACH IN SCHOOLS

If an official GAA coach is coaching Gaelic football in primary schools then children must wear a mouthguard to participate in a practice session or game.

## PE LESSONS IN SCHOOLS

In terms of PE lessons, the GAA has no control over what activities or games teachers choose to deliver during PE time. However, we would advise that wearing mouthguards for Gaelic games will significantly reduce the risk of sustaining dental injuries and that it would be prudent for each School to have a policy in this regard.

## GAA PLAYER INJURY SCHEME

Players will not be covered under the player injury scheme if they are not wearing a mouthguard. In all Football Games and Practice Football Sessions, it shall be mandatory for, and the responsibility of, each individual player to use a mouthguard.

## INJURY PREVENTION

Research figures indicate that Ireland has one of the highest rates of sport-related oral injuries in the EU, with one third of all adult dental injuries being sports-related. In many sports such as rugby and hockey the wearing of mouthguards, also known as 'mouth guards' or 'gum shields' is the norm with nearly all Clubs adhering strictly to a 'no gumshield - no game' rule. A survey of Irish parents found the average cost of emergency dental treatment for sport related dental injuries in children to be €214.23. Studies have also shown that the overall injury risk is close to twice as high when a mouthguard is not worn, relative to when a mouthguard is used during athletic activity.

The introduction of this rule has led to a drop of 37% in the number of dental injury claims made via the GAA Injury benefit fund, resulting from incidents in Gaelic football training sessions and matches in grades up to Minor in 2013. At adult level a similar drop of 39% occurred in 2014 proving the benefits of wearing a mouthguard in reducing the risk of dental injuries.

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The GAA's Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee has acknowledged that the use of a properly fitted mouthguard is the best available protective device for reducing the incidence and severity of sports-related dental injuries and was centrally involved in ensuring the introduction of compulsory mouthguards in Gaelic football.

#### LIMITATION OF LEGAL LIABILITY

These Rules shall not impose on any Referee, Linesman, Umpire, Sideline Official, Team Official or Unit any legal duty of care or legal responsibility (which duty shall remain with individual Players, and if relevant, Parents, Guardians or other persons legally responsible for them).

#### SOME QUESTIONS

##### 1. What will happen if I am not wearing a mouthguard in a game?

A. If a player refuses to comply with a Referee's instruction to wear a mouthguard, he will initially be cautioned by the Referee and if the player continues to refuse, the Referee can send him off.

##### 2. Who is responsible for ensuring mouthguards are worn at training or practice sessions?

A. It is the responsibility of each individual player to use a mouthguard. Clubs and players should note that players will not be covered under the GAA Player Injury Scheme if they are not wearing a mouthguard.

##### 3. Do players have to wear a mouthguard in Hurling games?

A. No. The rule only applies to Gaelic football; however, wearing a mouthguard whilst playing Hurling does reduce the risk of dental injury.

##### 4. Our Club has a nursery, are children in these juvenile age groups exempt from wearing a mouthguard?

A. No. The Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee advise that children should begin wearing a mouthguard at whatever age they start playing. Young mouths need protecting

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too and if players start wearing mouthguards at a young age this will add greatly to the development of a culture of wearing mouthguards in Gaelic football.

##### 5. Does this rule apply to Ladies Football?

A. The Ladies Gaelic Football Association has announced that from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, all underage players must wear a mouthguard whilst playing Ladies Gaelic Football.

##### 6. Does the rule regarding the wearing of mouthguards apply to games in Primary Schools?

A. If an official GAA coach is coaching Gaelic Football in primary schools then children must wear a mouthguard to participate in a practice session or game.

##### 7. Do children have to wear mouthguards for PE sessions?

A. In terms of PE lessons, the GAA has no control over what activities or games teachers choose to deliver during PE time. However, we would advise that wearing mouthguards for Gaelic games will significantly reduce the risk of sustaining dental injuries.

##### 8. Does the rule regarding the wearing of mouthguards apply to Cumann na mBunscol Football practice sessions and games?

A. Cumann na mBunscol Náisiúnta are subject to the General Rules of the Association, it is a matter for each School to ensure that the rule is adhered to by their pupils in practice sessions and football games.

##### 10. Do I have to wear a mouthguard whilst playing Second Level games?

A. Yes.

##### 11. Do I have to wear a mouthguard whilst playing Third Level games?

A. Yes.

##### 12. Does this apply to overseas players?

A. Yes. International Units are subject to the General Rules of the Association.

##### 13. I'm a referee; do I have to check all players' mouths before a game to ensure compliance?



## GAA

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A. Referees are not expected to individually check players before a game; however, if a referee notices that a player is not wearing a mouthguard, he should caution the player and if the player still refuses to wear one, he should be sent off.

**14. I currently wear orthodontic braces, what are my options?**

A. It has been noted that children wearing orthodontic braces and wishing to play Gaelic football will be particularly concerned, however, the GAA recommends that these players seek advice from a range of dental practitioners on the most appropriate solution for them.

**15. Is there an official GAA/GPA mouthguard?**

A. Yes, there is a full range of official OPRO GAA/GPA mouthguards available in bronze, silver, gold, platinum, junior and custom-fitted ranges. Official OPRO GAA/GPA 'boil and bite' mouthguards are available for purchasing through the following retailers: SuperValu, Centra, Lifestyle Sports, Elvery Sports, O'Neills and Heaton's. Custom-fitted mouthguards are available through a network of dentists nationwide -

**MORE INFORMATION**

*Medical and Player Welfare – E: [eoghan.tuohey@gaa.ie](mailto:eoghan.tuohey@gaa.ie) T: (01) 819 2923*

**For the latest information, visit - [https://](https://learning.gaa.ie/mouthguardshurlinghelmets)**

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## HURLING HELMETS

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PLAYERS & PARENTS/GUARDIANS

### THE RULE

The GAA reminds all players at all levels in all Hurling Games and Hurling Practice Sessions that it is mandatory, and the responsibility of each individual player to wear a helmet with a facial guard that meets the standards set out in IS:355 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, they are not covered under the terms of the GAA Injury Benefit Fund if the helmet being worn does not meet the standard or is modified or altered from the original manufactured state.

Following the introduction of the rule at underage level, it was proven that mandatory helmet use reduced the number of serious facial and eye injuries by 40%. The rule was introduced across all levels in 2010.

### CONSEQUENCES OF WEARING AN UNAPPROVED OR ALTERED HELMET

- Players are not covered under the terms of the GAA Injury Benefit Fund for facial/eye/head injuries suffered.
- Significantly increased risk of facial, dental, oral, nasal, orbital and eye injuries.
- Potential injuries suffered as a result of wearing an unapproved or altered helmet can be extremely serious including long term sight complications such as impaired vision, increased risk of cataracts, glaucoma and complete loss of sight.
- By removing bars players can potentially cause injury to their team-mates and opponents from sharp edges etc.;

### ALTERED HELMET

An altered helmet is one which has been modified in any way from the original manufactured state. Once an approved faceguard has been

*Changed / Replaced  
OR  
Modified*

*(bars on the faceguard removed, shortened or manipulated in any way)*

the player is no longer covered under the GAA Injury Benefit Fund and also at an increased risk of injury.

When changing a faceguard, the new guard **may not be compatible with the helmet design** and can result in a serious facial or dental injury to the owner during a collision.

### ADVICE

It is recommended that players

1. Only purchase a helmet with a facial guard that meets the standards set out in IS:355
2. Do not replace the faceguard or remove or manipulate the bars on the faceguard in any way.
3. Always wear their helmet when warming-up as well as during training/practice sessions and matches.
4. Check their helmet in advance of every training session / match to ensure all faceguard bars are secure and there is no damage which may cause injury to the wearer, teammates or opponents.

A list of helmet providers who supply helmets which meet IS:355 is available on [learning.gaa.ie/injuryprevention](http://learning.gaa.ie/injuryprevention)

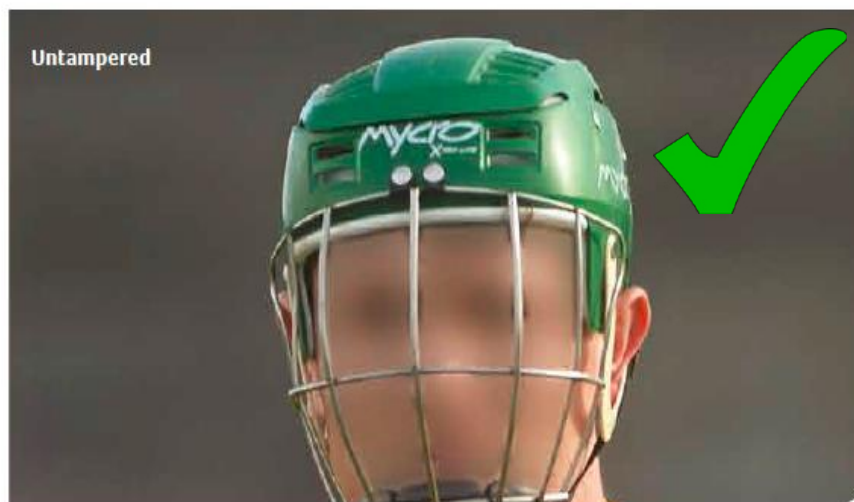
**REMEMBER: It is the player's responsibility to wear a helmet with a facial guard that meets the standard!**



## HURLING HELMETS

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PLAYERS & PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Untampered



Tampered



**REMEMBER: It is the player's responsibility to wear a helmet with a facial guard that meets the standard!**

by John Harrington

## THE HARD WORK BEHIND LIMERICK HURLING'S SUCCESS STORY

**IN 2006, MUNSTER WERE EUROPEAN CUP RUGBY CHAMPIONS AND CHILDREN GROWING UP IN LIMERICK CITY DREAMED OF SOME DAY FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF LOCAL HEROES LIKE PAUL O'CONNELL AND DAVID WALLACE.**

When it came to the battle for youthful hearts and minds, hurling was a laggardly second-best.

And no wonder. Limerick hadn't won a Munster hurling championship in 10 years. Worse again, playing the sport wasn't even an option for many children.

Just eight of the 36 primary schools in the city competed in the U-10 Cumann na mBunscol hurling games programme, and just five of the 15 clubs in the city had nursery programmes for their youngest players.

But then things started to change. Pat Culhane had been appointed Limerick's first dedicated Hurling Development Officer in 2005 and threw himself into the role with huge energy.

He'd fill his Renault Megane hatchback full of hurleys and sliotars and travel from school to school and club to club spreading the good word of hurling.

He also played a key role in the development of a long-term coaching and games development strategy called 'Lifting the Treaty' which had the goal of regenerating underage gaelic games in Limerick in a variety of different ways.

It did away with divisional boards at



WILLIAM O'DONOGHUE

underage level, introduced the Go-Games model for juvenile matches, and established the underage development squads and academy system that is now the engine driving gaelic games at an elite level in the county.

The main early focus was on increasing participation numbers, and in a few short years the impact was very measurable.

By 2010, the number of schools competing at U-10 Cumann na mBunscol level had jumped from eight to 22, the number of clubs running nursery programmes had jumped from five to 10, and participation numbers at U-8, U-10, and U-12 level had also increased significantly.

By 2011, according to the five-year Limerick Strategic plan, 57 per cent of primary school children in Limerick city were now playing Gaelic Games as opposed to just eight per cent five years earlier.

There were other early signs that something big was stirring in Limerick city. In 2007 Limerick City won the Mackey Cup, a hurling competition for primary school divisional selections, for the first time in six years with the team including future Limerick senior stars Cian Lynch, William O'Donoghue, and David Dempsey.

In many ways William O'Donoghue is the poster-boy for the huge benefit that Limerick hurling have accrued from the huge focus they put on coaching in the city at club and schools levels.

Someone of his build and athleticism





PAT CULHANE

would surely have been a model for rugby clubs on the look-out for natural talent in the city, but instead his imagination was captured by hurling because he benefited from great coaching and tasted success early.

As well as that Mackey Cup victory with Limerick City, he won U-10, U-11, and U-13 titles with John F Kennedy Memorial Primary School.

His hurling coach in JFK, Bernie Buckley, was also his club coach with Na Piarasaigh who around that time made a big push at underage level that would reap considerable rewards in the senior grade a few short years later.

O'Donoghue has no doubt that the coaching he benefited from in those formative years played a huge part in not just his development, but the development of generation of young hurlers in the city.

"I'd owe an awful lot of hurling career and everything that I stand for as a player to Bernie," says O'Donoghue.

"It's just mad when you look back at the early age schools career that he was the guy there and he was the guy driving six and seven lads on a Tuesday or a Wednesday. It's amazing to see they had an effect on my career right up to the last few years.

"As insignificant as it might seem, winning the three competitions we played in JFK... to get a taste for winning in competitive sport is huge. We had a lot of the lads coming on the scene a few years ahead of me with the Na Piarasaigh senior team who would have gone through the exact same thing.

"I'm pretty sure Caherdavin won four Olo Cups in a row and as insignificant as that Olo Cup may seem back then, if you look at the Caherdavin team from when Kevin Downes would have been playing a lot of them would have been on the first Na Piarasaigh team to win a county title, so it's mad the correlation between the two and how important it is."

As the game grew stronger and stronger at primary school level in Limerick City in the late noughties, that soon had a knock-on effect at secondary school level.

Ard Scoil Ris quickly became a hot-house for hurling talent that burnished the ability of current Limerick players like O'Donoghue, Cian Lynch, Declan Hannon, Mike Casey, Aaron Gillane, Peter Casey, and David Dempsey as they won five Harty Cups in nine years from 2010 to 2018.

Perhaps even more noteworthy was the transformation of Castletroy College from being a bastion of rugby into another finishing school for young hurlers.

You can be sure the rugby coaches in the school had designs on turning a young Gearoid Hegarty into the next Paul O'Connell, such was his size and athleticism.

But instead Hegarty focused on hurling and captained the first every Castletroy College team to enter the Harty Cup. He isn't the only current Limerick senior hurler to have come through Castletroy College either, Barry Nash and Dan and Tom Morrissey were also part of the school's hurling revolution in those years. The good work started by Pat Culhane in Limerick City has since been carried on by others.

Limerick senior footballer, Peter Nash, is the current Limerick City Hurling Development Officer, and if you've ever seen any of the videos he's put out on the Limerick GAA Coaching & Games Twitter feed you'll know his enthusiasm, communication skills, and technical knowledge must make a big impact in all the schools and clubs he visits.

Hurling is an easier sell now than ever thanks to the success of the Limerick senior hurling team, so participation at club and school level in the city continues to rise year on year.

The sight of children walking around Limerick city with hurleys in their hands is much more common-place now than it was 10 years ago.

As Dublin have shown, when a county gets its coaching and games infrastructure to a high level, success becomes a numbers game.

The bigger a county's population, the bigger the chance you have of success if you're able to bring the game to the masses.

Roughly half of the population of Limerick resides in Limerick city where the battle for young hearts and minds is now being decisively won by hurling.

That suggests Limerick are well positioned to maintain their current status as a superpower of the game for the foreseeable future.



by Damian White

# REMEMBERING MICHAEL CUSACK 175 YEARS AFTER HIS BIRTH



**THE YEAR 1847 WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED AS 'BLACK '47' IN IRELAND, WHEN THE POTATO Famine WAS RAVAGING THE IRISH POPULATION. IT WAS ALSO THE YEAR WHEN THE GREAT LIBERATOR DANIEL O' CONNELL SUCCUMBED TO ILLNESS AND PASSED AWAY IN GENOA, ON HIS WAY TO VISIT THE POPE TO HIGHLIGHT THE PLIGHT OF HIS NATIVE PEOPLE. IT WAS IN THIS PERIOD THAT TWO MEN WHO WERE TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN IRISH LIFE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY WERE BORN INTO VERY**

## DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

In Co. Wicklow, Charles Stewart Parnell arrived in the opulent surroundings of his family's Avondale House in June 1846, while across the country on the eastern fringe of the Burren, in the parish of Carron in Co. Clare, herdsman Matthew Cusack and his wife Brigid welcomed their son Michael, the third of their five children into their humble home where Irish was the only language spoken. Charles Stewart Parnell and Michael Cusack came from differing backgrounds, but their paths would cross often during

their relatively short lives, as each in his own way fought to further issues of Irish self-determination, cultural revival, and sporting independence.

## Teaching career

Cusack excelled at the local national school in Carron, and from 14 years of age was selected as the school's Senior Monitor. He became a national schoolteacher in 1866, graduating from the Central Model school in Dublin, following periods working in model

schools in Enniscorthy and nearby Corofin. His first appointment following qualification was as principal of Lough Cultra NS. Co. Galway where he remained for four years before switching to secondary teaching and moved north to a position in St. Colman's College, Newry for a further three years. Further teaching work followed in Blackrock, Kilkenny and Clongowes Wood Colleges.

In 1877, Cusack, by now qualified as a professor, established his own Civil Service Academy, 'Cusack's Academy' in his own house at 4 Gardiner St. in Dublin which proved popular and successful in preparing pupils for the civil service examinations, Trinity College entrance exams, law and medical schools as well as the army, navy and constabulary. Significantly however, Cusack's 'other interest's' took up a significant amount of his time and energy, and it was no surprise when his Academy closed in 1887, the year in which the first All-Ireland Hurling and Football Championships were played.

## 'Other Interests'

His 'other interests' included his major love of sport, and as an accomplished athlete, he followed his childhood passion for hurling and athletics with significant accomplishments in rowing, handball, cricket and rugby after moving to Dublin. He won the All-Ireland 30 lb Shot Putt title in 1881 and 1882. His own Academy had its own rugby and 'Hurley' teams. Hurley was a game whose rules were first published by the Trinity College Hurley Club, rules were more akin to those of





A STATUE OF MICHAEL CUSACK IS UNVEILED OUTSIDE CUSACK PARK AHEAD OF THE ELECTRIC IRELAND MUNSTER GAA HURLING MINOR CHAMPIONSHIP SEMI-FINAL MATCH BETWEEN CLARE AND LIMERICK AT CUSACK PARK IN ENNIS, CO. CLARE.

field hockey. The clubs who played hurley eventually affiliated with the Irish Hockey Union.

Cusack, who as late as 1881, had advocated for Cricket as Ireland's national game, was growing increasingly frustrated at the way sport was organised, and the lack of opportunity and welcome for the majority of Irish people to participate in. The lack of opportunity to play sports on Sundays, the only day free from work for most people, prevented large cohorts of people from participating in sport.

A romantic nationalist, Cusack had an interest in political affairs and was also "reputed" to have had links with the Fenian movement. As a native speaker, he was part of the rapidly growing Gaelic revival. He was a member of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, and later of the Gaelic League who in 1879 broke away from the Society.

'Prairie Fire'

Also in 1879, Cusack met Pat Nally, a

kindred spirit who was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and a leading nationalist and athlete. They shared views on the negative effect of landlordism on the development of Irish sport and recreation. Cusack later recalled how walking with Nally through the Phoenix Park in Dublin seeing only a handful of people playing sports upset them to the extent that they agreed it was time to "make an effort to preserve the physical strength of [their] race." Nally organised a National Athletics Sports meeting in County Mayo in September 1879 which proved successful, with Cusack following suit with a sports event which was open to 'artisans' in Dublin the following April.

From 1882 onwards, Cusack became increasingly involved in the promotion of the Irish language and culture. Further exploring the mythical and heroic status of Hurling in Ireland's history led to him founding the Dublin Hurling Club in 1883. A high profile but poorly regulated hurling challenge match against Galway's

Killimor convinced him of the need to organise hurling and athletics nationally. In Cusack's own words 'The idea of doing something for our national pastimes, as my colleagues were doing for our national language was taking a firmer hold on me day after day.'

On 1 November 1884, Cusack together with his friend Maurice Davin, a member of the renowned sporting family from Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary, called a meeting in Hayes' Hotel, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, and founded the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). A letter signed by Cusack and Davin published in the national press invited readers to the meeting 'to form an association for the preservation and cultivation of our national pastimes and for providing national amusements for the Irish people during their leisure hours.'

Davin was elected the GAA's first president

issuing of invitations to Dr. Thomas William Croke, Archbishop of Cashel & Emly, Irish Land League founder Michael Davitt and Home Rule leader Charles Stewart Parnell to become patrons.

Michael Cusack was mainly responsible for lining up political support for the GAA, but Maurice Davin had a greater role in ensuring its success in the sporting world, including drafting the first rules for Gaelic Football. The new Gaelic Athletic Association spread, according to Cusack, 'like a prairie fire.' GAA clubs sprang up all over Ireland, promoting Hurling, football, handball, rounders and athletics.

There were early challenges to the association, including from the Dublin based Irish Amateur Athletic Association (IAAA). The clash led to each side banning its athletes from participating in events organised by its rival. The ban on non-GAA



THE CUSACK CENTRE IN CARRON, COUNTY CLARE.

and Cusack became its first secretary. Amongst the decisions made was the

sports would not be repealed until 1971. Challenge





THE MICHAEL CUSACK STATUE WHICH IS LOCATED BEHIND THE CUSACK STAND IN CROKE PARK.

In 1886, a direct challenge to Cusack from within the fledgling organisation, which had been identified as an ideal vehicle for the promotion of political ideals, led to his dismissal from the organisation which he co-founded. Cusack was a temperamental man, unafraid to share his opinions in colourful language. Archbishop Croke was alarmed at developments and said he could no longer support the colourful Clareman.

Cusack launched 'Celtic Times', a newspaper devoted to Gaelic games, but lack of GAA support meant it wasn't a success and closed in 1888.

#### Family

Michael Cusack loved his Co. Clare home, but after his father's death in 1868, probably due to teaching and sporting commitments, he rarely got back to the family home at Poulaphuca, in his beloved Carron. His brother John and sister Mary emigrated to Australia, his brother Patrick became a teacher in Wales and his other brother Thomas settled in the USA.

In 1876 Michael Cusack married Margaret Woods from Dromore, Co. Down and they had six surviving children. Margaret died in 1890, followed soon afterwards by their daughter Aoife. Two other daughters Claire and Brid settled in England, but his three sons Michael, Francis and John all settled in Dublin. John, who became

a solicitor, attended the GAA's Jubilee celebrations in 1934.

#### Legacy

Michael Cusack was a large man with a colourful and often forceful personality. He dressed distinctively and carried a blackthorn stick. He pursued his aims with formidable devotion. He despised rank and often addressed those whom he met as 'Citizen,' which makes him the likely character on which James Joyce based his character 'The Citizen' - a loud, nationalistic personality in his acclaimed novel 'Ulysses'.

Michael Cusack died in 1906, at the relatively young age of 59. He is rightly

remembered as the driving force behind the formation of the GAA and is commemorated in several ways and places. The Cusack Stand in Croke Park and the imposing statue of the great man at its entrance, pay homage to his significance, as do the county grounds in Mullingar and Ennis, both called Cusack Park.

The primary school Gaelscoil Mhíchíl Cíosóg in Ennis, County Clare, is also named after him, as is Michael Cusack's Sydney GAA Club, which was founded in 1988 by a group of Clare Gaels.

Chicago Michael Cusack Hurling Club is a GAA club consisting entirely of American-born players founded in 2008.

His birthplace in Carron, Co. Clare, in the beautiful Burren townland of Poulaphuca has been magnificently restored, and has beside it a very impressive exhibition centre, dedicated to sharing the remarkable story of a visionary man. It is a wonderful place to visit and a source of valuable information on the man and his time. Recently added to the grounds has been the much-discussed statue of 'An Phúca' which has eventually found a lovely home in 'The Cave of the Púca'.

Damian White is a national school principal and a member of Kilcormac/Killoughey GAA Club in Co Offaly and is Chair of the GAA's History Committee – [history@gaa.ie](mailto:history@gaa.ie)  
You can learn more about Michael Cusack and the formation of the GAA and explore exhibitions, tours and archives by visiting the GAA museum at Croke Park <https://crokepark.ie/gaamuseum>  
The Michael Cusack Centre is where the Cusack family cottage has been restored in Carron in Co Clare and celebrates the impact he had on Irish life. <http://michaelsusack.ie/>

by Tye Adamson

## 'FIELDS OF DREAMS' - ST FECHINS GAA, LOUTH

**A SMALL CLUB WITH A BIG DREAM, THE ST. FECHINS CLUB IN LOUTH EPITOMISE WHAT A CLUB IN THE GAA CAN ACHIEVE WHEN THEY COMBINE THE DEDICATION OF CLUB MEMBERS WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, NO MATTER ITS SIZE. FORMER CHAIRMAN AND A STRONG DRIVER OF THE PÁIRC NAOMH FEICHÍN DEVELOPMENT, JOHN SAVAGE, DISCUSSES HOW THE CLUB LOCATED IN BEAULIEU, HAVE EXPANDED THEIR FACILITIES TO A LEVEL EVEN ANY PROFESSIONAL OUTFIT WOULD BE JEALOUS OF.**

Founded in 1941, St. Fechins GAA club were originally based on the Sheetland Road in Termonfeckin, they leased the site, which was approximately four acres, from the local community. "In 1997, it became apparent to the club that the facilities were not big enough to cater for what had become a quickly expanded parish area, as it was on the peripheries of Drogheda" the former chairman explained. "Fast forward to today and we now have a 21-acre site with over 900 club members, 30 teams which contain all four codes of all ages and over 70 coaches."

Towards the end of 1997 the club realised with the continuing growth of population in the area and the introduction of hurling to the club, that they had to relocate, as the land prices and availability on the original site were out of reach. "After reaching out to the local community, an area of twenty-six acres was offered to the club in Beaulieu, about two kilometers outside the village. In an EGM in August 1998, the decision was made unanimously to move to the site in Beaulieu, which is now known as Páirc Naomh Feichín.

The club paid a commercial price of around



ST FECHINS WAS CHOSEN AS THE LOCATION FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE GAA STRATEGIC FIVE YEAR PLAN IN APRIL 2022

€400,000 on the land, and at the advice of the previous owners of the land Pat and Mary Hughes, the club re-zoned an area of the land, "thus enabling us to sell off 10 sites, which generated the club €300,000. The land had been self-financed by the sale of the re-zoned sites" John explained.

At the time of the move the club had little money in its account. "We took a risk, we only had €3,000 in our account

at the time of the move" John revealed. "So once again we reached out to the local community and we came up with a bond scheme, €300 (about €380 today) for a five-year period interest free, in which 230 people came forward and from that the club raised roughly €90,000. The bond scheme was supported by the Credit Union, who fronted the money to the club and allowed the members to pay the bonds over time."



The club then used the funds to initiate its Three Phase development on the new site, "Phase One was the development of playing facilities, which included three full sized grass GAA pitches, two of which are floodlit and a smaller unit for training, and a floodlit walking track. The club needed a source of income to help with the development of the next phase, so we erected an all-weather facility, which we rented out and continue to do so."

Phase Two was the development of the changing facilities, which were built at the turn of the Millennium.

The Third Phase was locating a Community Centre, "we were heavily supported by the local community in the move to Páirc Naomh Feichín and always had it in mind that we always wanted to give back to those that supported us. The Community Centre contains a remote working hub, function halls and other rooms, including a kitchen. Catering for parties, meetings, exercise classes, bingo, social dancing, indoor bowls. There really is something for everyone in the community."

In 2008, the club turned the sod on the construction of the Community Centre, "which was deferred due to the economic depression that arrived in 2008" continued John. "The club then revisited the project a few years ago and the Community Centre was built. The project cost an approximate €1.25 million, which was significantly financed by the 'Win a Feckin House' fundraiser, where a house was raffled off at €100 a ticket. The success of the fundraiser raised the club over €500,000." In addition to that, ongoing fundraising activities such as the club lotto (which began in 1997), events such as The Cube, Thousandaire, Lipsync and the innovative idea of using the fields as a campsite for the Fleadh, generated the club another €100,000, which left the club with €600,000 available to be put towards the development.

"The club then received a substantial grant of €200,000 from the Louth LEADER, which left us in a position to amass the rest of the money from a loan." "The grant from the Louth LEADER was a symbol of the club's role in the community, the grant was not usually given for exclusively sports activities, but since the club were undertaking the Community Centre project for the benefit of the local community, they were awarded the grant."

Over the last 22 years the club have a capital investment spend of roughly €3.2 Million, which in addition to the above, the National Lotto granted another €180,000 towards the development. John further explained that the club recognise "that approximately 88% of the capital investment has been generated from club members and people from the local community, support we are forever grateful for, as they say, 'club without the community would be non-existent'".

The former chairman went on to emphasise the role the local community play in the success of the club, not just in a GAA aspect, but also being "proud of the facilities we have which can cater for everyone." "The club 'build around the community', and cater for many external social activities such as organised walks/runs, which also has a 'walk and chat' group on Thursdays, we've circuit classes in the hall or on the all-weather and more recently the Community Centre hosted an event for the local Indian community, who we hope to see get involved in the club". The club really is a place for everyone and fits the GAA's mantra of 'Where We All Belong.' "We continue to endeavour on reaching out to the wider community to get involved in the club in all capacities from playing to volunteering" commented John.

Success off the pitch has transferred onto the pitch as the club won the Louth Intermediate football & Under 20 Championship in 2021, with the ladies' team reaching the Senior county final, the hurlers claiming league and championship honours as well



THE FABULOUS FACILITIES AT ST FECHINS GAA CLUB IN CO LOUTH



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as representation on various county teams in all codes and ages but John revealed that "we don't measure our success just by how many championships we win, we also measure it by how active a role we can play in the community and attract new members, we want everyone in the community to feel a part of the club."

Although the club recognise that they 'got a few breaks along the way', John explained that "we still face having to repay the loan we received on the Community Centre and have to meet financial demands which takes ongoing support from club members and people in the local community and we continue to look to find ways to raise money to help meet financial demands the club faces which include maintenance and the upkeep of the facilities".



## 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)**.

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