

A feast of sport

Ireland come up short, Clare beat Cats and England roll Swiss to reach semi-finals



The restaurant reviewer's guide to eating out

Lucinda O'Sullivan, Life



New poll: FG jumps six points clear of SF

EXCLUSIVE RESULTS, PAGES 8-9



Harvey Norman

SEE PAGES 2 & 3 FOR GREAT DEALS

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Sunday Independent



7 July 2024 Vol. 119 No. 27

€4.20 (£2.70 in Northern Ireland)

Multiple women allege sexual advances by male FAI coaches

- Harrowing claims of FÁS trainees
- International players reveal ordeals
- Ex FAI boss tells of 'homophobic rant'

EXCLUSIVE
MARK TIGHE AND MARIE CROWE

Multiple female footballers have claimed they were subjected to unwanted or inappropriate sexual advances from FAI coaches in the 1990s.

Former international players and trainees on Ireland's first state-funded all-women soccer course have spoken to a joint investigation by the *Sunday Independent* and *RTÉ Investigates* to outline a series of harrowing allegations.

These include:
● Five of the 20 course trainees have claimed they were the subject of sexual advances during the FÁS course from their head coach, Eamonn Collins, who is now a football agent.

● Lynn Winters, the 18-year old who was made captain of the course's team, said she went on "dates" with Collins, who was 31. Winters said Collins promised to open doors for her football career, and does not believe she was emotionally strong enough to turn him down.

● Winters says Collins later "pinched" her in the crotch at a dinner when Collins's mentor, Alan Ball, the England World Cup winner, was sitting beside him, oblivious of what was happening.



Special five-page report inside, P17-21

- Bridget McDonald, a 21-year-old gay woman from Wexford, says she was emotionally distraught after a night out drinking with Collins ended with sexual intercourse with him and the coach warning her that she could be pregnant.
- Adele, a trainee from near Leixlip, said Collins made an unwanted sexual advance on her in changing rooms after he had asked her to stay behind to clean up.



Clockwise from top left: Then and now portraits of Olivia O'Toole, Lynn Winters, Bridget McDonald, Trisha Bourke, an unnamed player, Lisa Curran, Jackie McCarthy-O'Brien and Katie Liston

● Niamh O'Donoghue, the then head of the Ladies Football Association of Ireland (LFAI) has said she received a complaint that Collins made sexual advances on two trainees, but all parties denied the allegations when they were approached.

Collins received a "stand down" order from the FAI in March, and a complaint against him is now subject to a garda investigation.

The investigation by the *Sunday Independent* and *RTÉ Investigates* also focused on the experiences of international players from the 1990s, when Mick Cooke was the manager.

● Ireland's first black player, Jackie McCarthy-O'Brien, says she was never selected for Ireland again after she claimed Cooke kissed her in his hotel room.

● A number of Cooke's former players have accused him of creating a homophobic atmosphere in the Ireland camp in the 1990s, with one player saying he called lesbian players "vampires".

● Another player, "Alice", has accused Cooke of asking her to kiss him in her hotel room, something she said made her physically sick.

● Former FAI CEO Bernard O'Byrne said Cooke called unannounced in to the FAI HQ to deliver a "homophobic rant" about lesbian players in the squad.

● Cooke has been accused by Ireland's record goal-scorer Olivia O'Toole of "exiling" her from the team for two years after she allegedly witnessed his inappropriate behaviour with players.

● Katie Liston, a former player who

Continued on page 4

Brendan O'Connor

The Idiot's Guide to Democracy

Our topic this week is democracy. Because there's a lot of it about. The technical definition of democracy is government by some of the people, for some of the people, some of the time. The reality of it is a more complex beast.

In the UK, democracy means that

one-fifth of the electorate can deliver a loveless landslide for the party and the man for whom the voters are least unenthusiastic. Apparently, they voted for "Change". Indeed, increasingly, in every election, people will just vote for Change. Because people get bored easily these days. So it will be

all Change. Except maybe for Ireland, where the more things Change, the more they stay the same.

The rest of the world is vaguely relieved that the Change they voted for in the UK is a reasonably harmless-seeming Change, led by a reasonably harmless-seeming man.

In a lot of countries these days, Change involves people deciding that maybe it's time to try fascism again, or something vaguely like fascism, with maybe a history of fascism. Because as the left used to say about socialism, the philosophy was sound, it just hadn't been tried properly. So a lot of countries now are thinking: "Let's get fascism right this time." In the UK, because they have a ridiculous electoral system, the rise of the far right

delivered a landslide to the left.

The US is having democracy as well. Americans are exploring new frontiers in what democracy might mean.

Change for them might mean voting for a different old man to the current old man, though the different old man is also the previous old man.

Maybe they just didn't try him properly the first time. They've suddenly realised what the rest of us, who've barely been paying attention, have been noticing for ages. Which is that one of the old men is a bit dodder. So the pathological liar/criminal/sex offender might win.

The pathological liar/criminal/sex offender's supporters are not the ones saying this. Instead, it is the supporters of the dodder one, who have de-

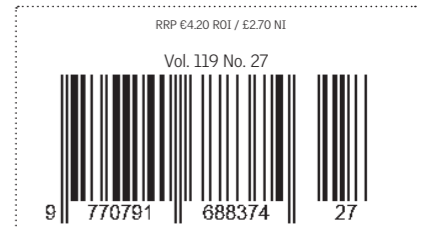
veloped an auto-immune disease and have turned on themselves.

Now they're wondering if the vice-president, who no one rated until a week ago, should be the president. Though the most popular choice for president right now is the wife of a previous president. It's hard to know if it's offensive to women or not that in America in recent times they often think that the best woman to be the president is the wife of a previous president. Is it because people think their husbands probably showed them how to do it?

In France, they think maybe the daughter of a fascist could be a good bet. She learned well from her daddy, they think, but she learned how to make it all more palatable too.

Meanwhile, here in Ireland, we are due to do democracy soon. And right now, everyone thinks the Government is lying to them about when we will do democracy. Which isn't a good start, you would have thought.

The one thing we can probably be sure of this weekend as we look around at our neighbours is that there will not be a snap election.



Harvey Norman

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Letter from the Editor

Alan English



On the rooftop terrace of our office in Talbot Street, Dublin, reporter Mark Tighe told me about a story he'd been working on for a while. It was July 2022, and he had only just joined the *Sunday Independent*. It was clear he thought there was something in this one, maybe something big. He said he was digging into alleged inappropriate behaviour by Irish soccer coaches back in the 1990s. We agreed it would need time for him to produce something publishable. Maybe three months, I remember thinking. Two years later — after an exhaustive, painstaking investigation — that story runs across five pages and more than 15,000 words today. It's on pages 17 to 21. It is, I think, important public-interest journalism. It is dominated by immensely powerful testimony from women who, one by one, found the courage to tell their stories. Some had never even told their closest family members about traumatic events that had a devastating impact on their lives, long after these had taken place. There was a common refrain, too, when they spoke about

the inappropriate behaviour of male coaches: "I thought I was the only one." You'll have seen by now that it's also a joint investigation, and that we have collaborated with the team from *RTÉ Investigates*, whose documentary airs at 9.30pm tonight. That partnership will strike many readers as unusual, and as far as I'm aware it's also unprecedented among competing Irish news organisations, so I thought I'd explain how it came about. During that rooftop conversation, Mark told me he was aware that another journalist — RTÉ's Marie Crowe, a former sports reporter for this newspaper — was working on the same story. Both of them were struggling for a breakthrough on it. And both were of the view that the chances of getting it before the public would be considerably enhanced if they were to join forces. So that's what happened: after discussions, the *Sunday Independent* and RTÉ committed to telling the story together. For the past two years, Mark and Marie have worked extraordinarily hard to report the story we bring you today — and

in tonight's immensely powerful documentary directed by Frank Shouldice of *RTÉ Investigates*. Telling stories like this one is very difficult, for all kinds of reasons. I couldn't count the number of meetings that have taken place over the last number of months between our two teams — more recently, several times a day. We both hope the women's stories will encourage others to come forward. Nobody who has worked on this investigation is under any illusion that the grotesque breach of trust by coaches in powerful positions, as alleged by many witnesses, was confined to Irish women's soccer in one era. Several women interviewed by Mark and Marie said they were coming forward in the hope that telling their stories might make a difference all these years later. "I hope to God this never ever happens to any other girl out there, ever again," one says. There is much more in today's edition — not least the People & Culture cover story, which I strongly recommend — but I'll leave it at that. Thanks for getting the paper, or for subscribing online, and supporting our journalism.

Your complete Sunday read



News in brief

Two bodies taken from canal in Dublin

● Gardaí are investigating the discovery of two bodies near the Grand Canal in Dublin early yesterday morning. The bodies of the two men, who were in their 40s, were removed from the water by Dublin Fire Brigade personnel and gardai. A cordon was erected along the canal near the Charlemont Luas stop after the alarm was raised shortly after 8am. Although the area where the bodies were found is close to an encampment of asylum-seekers, the deceased are believed to be Irish nationals. Gardaí said the State Pathologist's Office and the local coroner have been notified. They said the results of post-mortem examinations and local inquiries will determine the course of the investigation.

Subsidies for bin firms are criticised

● The Government has been accused of "effectively capitulating" to bin collectors over a row about the Deposit Return Scheme. Waste firms say they could lose up to €15m annually because fewer drinks bottles and cans will be collected from green bins. The *Irish Independent* yesterday reported that the Department of Environment recognised their claims about losses. Labour senator Marie Sherlock said "it is absolutely unacceptable" that bin collectors should be bailed out. "It's an absolute waste of public money when it could otherwise be used to substantially improve investment into waste management," Ms Sherlock said. "The State does not owe these companies their profits."

Swift boosts airport passenger numbers

● More than 3.5 million passengers travelled through Dublin and Cork airports last month, according to figures published by the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA). The airport operator said it expects these figures to remain high in July and August despite potential disruption due to strike action at Aer Lingus. About 3.2 million passengers used Dublin Airport last month, according to figures published yesterday.

No winner of €2.4m Lotto jackpot

● The numbers drawn in last night's €2,421,211 jackpot Lotto draw were: 19, 26, 24, 28, 32, 21 and (bonus 27). There was no winner. The €1,000,000 Lotto Plus 1 jackpot numbers were: 39, 24, 1, 37, 23, 31 (bonus 22). The €250,000 Lotto Plus 2 numbers were: 25, 3, 13, 10, 34, 14 (bonus 30). The special €1m raffle number is Raffle 8791.

Thousands in Kerry cycling for charities

● Thousands of cyclists took to the saddle for the Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle yesterday to raise funds for national and local causes. The 170km spin is now in its 42nd year and has raised about €20m for worthy causes. Last year's event brought in more than €1m for charities, and organisers are hopeful of similar support this year. Among the cyclists yesterday was a group of 50 raising funds for the Irish Kidney Association. Among them were transplant recipients, kidney donors and their families and friends. HSE chief clinical officer Dr Colm Henry was cycling with them.

Dublin woman leaves €4m in her will

● Adrienne Elizabeth Dockrell, with an address at Rathdown Park, Terenure, Co Dublin, left estate valued at €4,356,171. Other wills include: Thomas James Bateson, Malahide Road, Co Dublin, left €1,354,339; Pauline Began, Clontarf Road, Clontarf, Co Dublin, left €1,630,835; David Peter Daniel Boyle, Eaton Square, Blackrock, Co Dublin, left €1,333,435; John Burrows, Laytown, Co Meath, left €2,100,576; Daniel DeBlacam, Richmond Park, Monkstown, Co Dublin, left €1,110,809; Martin Donohoe, Grange Ferns, Co Wexford, left €1,686,952; Desmond Francis Elliott, Rossmore Lawns, Templeogue, Co Dublin, left €1,627,728; Anne Frances Fearon, Howth Road, Raheny, Co Dublin, left €1,131,876; Richard Foley, Beech Park Drive, Foxrock, Co Dublin, left €1,025,000; James Looney, Loughrea, Co Galway, left €1,212,484; Niall William Monks, Kileek, St Margaret's, Co Dublin, left €2,753,257; Pauline O'Connor, The Glen Walk, The Park, Cabinteely, Co Dublin, left €1,066,371; Donal Hugh O'Neill, Richmond Green, Monkstown, Co Dublin, left €2,046,795; Madeline O'Shea, Carrickbrack Hill, Sutton, Co Dublin, left €1,162,277; Patrick O'Shea, Templeogue Wood, Templeogue, Co Dublin, left €1,454,307; Bernadette Mary Russell, Ballinclea Heights, Killiney, Co Dublin, left €1,013,995;

The value of estates may include property, including the family home, and should not be regarded as cash

Correction: Social Democrats

A column by Eilis O'Hanlon last week stated that the 2020 Social Democrats manifesto did not have a section on justice. This was incorrect. We are happy to correct the record.

Varadkar gets busy writing his autobiography

Former Fine Gael leader's life story to be published after the general election

NIAMH HORAN

Former taoiseach Leo Varadkar is writing his personal memoirs, the *Sunday Independent* understands. Mr Varadkar has already written more than 100,000 words and the book will be published shortly after the general election. The memoir will deal with all aspects of his political and private life — and insiders say

it is likely to command a six-figure sum in a publishing deal. The Fine Gael leader was approached by several publishers after leaving office, all keen to tell his story, but he has not yet signed a contract. It is likely the final manuscript will lead to a bidding war among competing houses. Many political autobiographies are written with the help of a ghostwriter, but it is understood that Mr Varadkar is undertaking the task alone. However it is thought he is keen to appoint an editor later in the process. In 2008, former taoiseach Bertie Ahern agreed a €400,000-plus publishing deal with Cornerstone Publishing, a subsidiary company of US publishers Random House.

Former taoiseach Brian Cowen and the late Albert Reynolds also wrote autobiographies. Charles Haughey, one of the most written-about politicians in modern history, chose not to publish a book about his life — and none of his six predecessors as head of government wrote a memoir. However, the appetite for political autobiographies has increased in recent years, even if sales have in some cases been underwhelming. The content of Mr Varadkar's book is expected to be a closely guarded secret until its publication, but a source said it is unlikely he will use the book to settle scores. However, they said it will contain many stories that haven't been told. Leo Varadkar was born in Dub-

lin on January 18, 1979. His father Ashok, a doctor from Mumbai, met his mother Miriam, an Irish nurse, while they were both working in Slough in England. The couple settled in Ireland in the 1970s. The country Mr Varadkar grew up in was very different to the Ireland of today. Until the 1990s, homosexuality and divorce were illegal and there were relatively few immigrants. Mr Varadkar followed his father into medicine, eventually qualifying as a GP in 2010. He joined Young Fine Gael in 1995, was co-opted as a councillor in 2003, and in 2007 was elected to the Dáil. In 2017, he won a leadership contest to replace Enda Kenny and became taoiseach at the age of 38. He resigned from the job last April.



● Leo Varadkar's book could earn him a six-figure sum

SF plummets to lowest poll ranking since start of 2020

Only 20pc now believe McDonald will be next taoiseach

GABIJA GATAVECKAITE

Sinn Féin has fallen to its lowest poll ranking since the beginning of 2020, with the party falling four points to 18pc in the *Sunday Independent/Ireland Thinks* series. The largest opposition party was at 37pc in the same poll series in October 2022, but its support has nosedived in recent months. Fine Gael is six points ahead of Sinn Féin and up 2pc on the previous poll as the "Harris hop" continues to yield positive polling results. Sinn Féin has now even fallen behind Fianna Fáil, which is up 3pc to 20pc. The disappointing result comes despite Sinn Féin having a good weekend and coming in as the largest party in Northern Ireland in the UK elections. Taoiseach Simon Harris is also expected, by 44pc of poll respondents, to remain as the leader of the country after the next general election. When the same question was asked a month ago, only 30pc expected Mr Harris to still be Taoiseach after the election. Expectations that Mary Lou McDonald could become the first female taoiseach after the country goes to the polls have waned considerably. Only 20pc now believe that will happen — a significant fall from 32pc in the June poll and down from a high of 57pc in September 2022. Some 20pc said they thought Tánaiste Micheál Martin would be the next taoiseach, up from 15pc in the previous poll. In September 2022, only 6pc of the public polled expected Mr Martin to get a second stint as taoiseach. Mr Harris's own personal rating has gone up and he is now the country's most popular leader at 53pc, surpassing Tánaiste Micheál Martin who is at 51pc. The Sinn Féin decline is also reflected in Ms McDonald's own support as party leader, which has fallen to 34pc, down two points.



● Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald has slipped in poll

Social Democrats leader Holly Cairns remains in third place and up by two points to 42pc. A Fine Gael/Fianna Fáil/Independent government is now viewed as most likely by poll respondents — with 33pc viewing this as the most likely outcome after the next general election. A Sinn Féin government without either of the two Civil War parties is viewed as the second most likely government. The current Coalition is the third least likely government after the next election, according to the poll. At 58pc, housing remains the biggest issue for the public, up four points from last month's poll. Meanwhile immigration has fallen by 12 points, it stays in second place at 29pc. Housing also should be prioritised by new Finance Minister Jack Chambers, with 24pc saying this is the biggest pre-election Budget issue, followed by tax cuts at 21pc. The vast majority of the public also agrees with the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to appeal the suspended sentence given to soldier Cathal Crotty, according to the poll, with 81pc approving. Crotty received a suspended sentence last month after pleading guilty to the assault of Natasha O'Brien in Limerick. Ms O'Brien has become a household name in recent weeks in speaking out about the assault and campaigning for improvements in the justice system.

► Full poll results, pages 8-9



● Left, former women's football manager Mick Cooke; right, coach Eamonn Collins



Female former players tell of coaches' alleged sex advances

Continued from page 1

is now a lecturer in the University of Ulster, said she felt "stigmatised as a gay woman" when Cooke allegedly told her he was "getting rid of the lesbians" from the team. Cooke was subject to a "stand down" order by the FAI earlier this year. He was manager of the DCU women's team at the time. Cooke denies all the allegations and said he never kissed any player and never made any homophobic remarks. He is challenging the stand down order. He said people with knowledge of his time in charge of the team said many players had expressed the view that it was "the time of their lives". Eamonn Collins said he "empirically and unreservedly denies any improper relationship or conduct by him while he was involved as a coach on a football training course in west Co Dublin that commenced in 1996 which is more than 25 years ago". A number of the women on the Leixlip course said they thought they were "the only one". They were shocked to learn from the investigation that former teammates had also made allegations against Collins. The former international players and FÁS trainees agreed to speak to the *Sunday Independent* for a special report published today and an *RTÉ Investigates* documentary that will be broadcast on RTÉ One at 9.30pm tonight. Richie Sadlier, the former Ireland

international who is now a football pundit and psychotherapist, has seen the women's testimony. "If you think about the role of the coach, it involves a huge amount of access with a player," he said. "A lot of it can be one-on-one and unsupervised." "I think implicit in that relationship there has got to be a high degree of trust, that there are certain boundaries that will absolutely be respected and lines that won't be crossed. And that's particularly important when there's a significant age gap." The Professional Footballers Association of Ireland (PFAI) has been providing support to the women over the last six months. This investigation issued detailed questions to the FAI, which it declined to answer, citing the continuing garda investigation.

Gardaí have opened an investigation into a complaint that has been made against Eamonn Collins. A separate complaint has been made against Mick Cooke. An FAI spokesman said the association was "shocked and appalled to learn of [the] disturbing allegations", and it had met the women concerned. "The association acknowledges the enormous courage of the women in coming forward and making their concerns known and would encourage anyone involved in Irish football to report any concern that may arise." There has been a surge in the popularity of football among women and girls in recent years, with a 27pc increase in the number of girls playing since 2022. The FAI said that of 325,000 players, 78,000 are women and girls. Earlier this year, the FAI sent a new Player and Staff Welfare policy document to all international players and staff. The policy states that "no employee should be directly or indirectly in authority over another with whom they may have a personal relationship". The policy states that where personal relationships are formed, "you must let your manager know as soon as possible so that any conflict of interest can be managed". If an investigation determines that a coach has violated the policy, "that coach or employee shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal".

FIELD OF BROKEN DREAMS A FIVE-PAGE SPECIAL REPORT PAGES 17-21

