

# Sports Weekend

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**An FAI Cup final flourish like no other**  
Gavin Cummiskey: page 3



**O'Sullivan plots her own course to Paris**  
Ian O'Riordan: page 10

## United Rugby Championship



# Ulster fight back to eke out victory over champions



**John O'Sullivan**  
at Kingspan Stadium  
Timoney scores decisive try after Casey brace gave Munster early lead

get-go and they did so with relish, forcing three penalties inside the home 22 and, on a fourth penalty advantage, claimed the first try of the game when scrumhalf Casey was sharp in exploiting a gap on the fringe.

On 13 minutes, Ulster appeared set to strike back, when Ethan McElroy took a great line onto a short ball but as he attempted to breach the try-line he was hit from the side by Munster fullback Shane Daly, lost possession and in the process suffered a blow to the head/face. He was in obvious distress as the medical team raced onto the pitch.

### How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	BP	Pts
Ulster	4	3	0	1	107	91	2	14
Munster	4	2	1	1	106	89	3	13
Connacht	3	3	0	0	90	72	1	13
Blue Bulls	3	2	0	1	136	76	3	11
Stormers	3	2	0	1	96	60	2	10
Glasgow	3	2	0	1	89	68	2	10
Leinster	3	2	0	1	95	83	2	10
Ospreys	3	2	0	1	79	70	2	10
Benetton Treviso	3	2	1	0	51	45	0	10
Zebre	4	1	0	3	108	138	5	9
Edinburgh	3	2	0	1	66	69	0	8
Cardiff Rugby	3	1	0	2	63	63	2	6
Scarlets	3	1	0	2	59	140	1	5
Lions	3	0	0	3	59	67	4	4
Dragons	3	0	0	3	40	83	2	2
Sharks	4	0	0	4	49	99	1	1

# 230

Rob Herring became Ulster's most-capped player with his appearance off the bench last night

# 11/12

Ulster conceded one penalty fewer than Munster in an error-strewn encounter at Kingspan Stadium

**Ulster** 21  
Tries: Stockdale, Timoney. Con: Doak. Pens: Doak 3.

**Munster** 14  
Tries: Casey 2. Cons: Crowley 2.

What a difference a week makes. Ulster had victory pick-pocketed in Galway but this time it was Dan McFarland's side that overcame an 11-point deficit to eke out a hard-fought win against the doughty URC champions. Munster fought gallantly to the end, millimetres away from eking out a chance to draw.

David McCann was outstanding, Kieran Treadwell ditto, Jacob Stockdale the best back on the pitch in an attacking context but, in terms of the outcome, it was the Ulster bench that swayed matters in the home side's favour.

Craig Casey had a super first half and the Munster pack worked hard, dominating initially, in a keenly-contested tussle but Ulster's ability to nick a few lineouts after the interval was pivotal.

Munster were given carte blanche to chase after the Ulster scrum almost from the

**Yellow card**  
Television match official Brian MacNeice drew referee Frank Murphy's attention to Daly's attempted tackle, the upshot of which was a yellow card but Murphy, in conjunction with the TMO, adjudged that Jack Crowley was in a position to make a tackle, and so awarded a penalty rather than penalty try.

Nathan Doak kicked the penalty, but Ulster were soon in trouble again, conceding a penalty at a ruck, which Crowley punted to the corner and after a concerted softening up process, Casey once again burrowed over from close range. Crowley kicked the conversion to push Munster 14-3 in front, a lead they deserved for their ruthless accuracy; collecting seven points while a player down was even more impressive.

There were a couple of glimpses that Ulster might be able to engineer space in the wider channels, especially when left wing Stockdale was involved, using his power, footwork and intelligent lines of running to make metres.

The home side's ambition was rewarded on 26 minutes, when industrious flanker Mc-

Cann made some headway on one touchline just outside the Munster 22 and when the ball was swept back to out-half Billy Burns his nicely flighted cross-kick bounced kindly for Stockdale who gathered and dotted down in the corner.

The try served to embolden Ulster and they sought to push width on the game at every opportunity. Munster scrambled effectively for the most part but were thwarted by some soft handling errors after they had worked diligently to turn over possession.

The visitors managed to get to the interval with a 14-8 lead, a fitting reward for their early scrum dominance and precision; Ulster's view perhaps that they made a rod for their backs with some careless handling and set-piece frailty during that period.

The breakdown had been keenly contested in the first half with each team enjoying pe-

riods of ascendancy that matched the ebb and flow, momentum switching from Munster's dominance in the first quarter to Ulster largely taking over for the 20-minutes before the interval.

**Wholesale changes**  
It was the home side that emerged the sharper after the re-start, forcing a couple of penalties at rucks that allowed them access to the visitors' 22 where Doak's boot reduced the deficit to three points, at 14-11.

Ulster should have had a penalty when replacement Iain Henderson was twice involved in an unbroken passage of play but rather than penalise Alex Nankevell for not releasing in the tackle, Murphy opted to ping Doak for clinging onto the ball on the ground. Diarmuid Barron picked up a head knock and was replaced by Scott Buckley, part of wholesale changes on both teams either side of the

**Munster's Jack Crowley and Ulster's Rob Baloucoune compete for possession at Kingspan Stadium last night.**  
PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES CROMBIE/INPHO

50-minute mark.

The home side pinched two Munster lineout throws in quick succession but, after kicking their way into the 22 and winning a penalty, Henderson turned down a shot at the posts, but the decision withered as a gambit when Rob Herring was penalised for dummied the throw.

Doak kicked a penalty, Robert Baloucoune had a try disallowed for an incorrectly taken quick lineout throw but, from an Ulster scrum five metres out, Nick Timoney forced his way over; a hat-tip to young Ulster replacement tighthead Scott Wilson, who got the shove on.

Doak's last act was to convert the try to give his side a 21-14 lead. Munster came close to rescuing the chance of a draw but Josh Wycherley was held up over the try-line, a moment that warmed the hands and hearts of the Ulster faithful.

**ULSTER:** E McElroy, R Baloucoune, S Moore, S McCloskey, J Stockdale, B Burns, N Doak, E O'Sullivan, T Stewart (capt), G McGrath, C Izuchukwu, K Treadwell, D McCann, M Rea, N Timoney. **Replacements:** R Herring for Stewart (50 mins), C Reid for O'Sullivan (x), S Wilson for McGrath (50), I Henderson for Izuchukwu (50), D Ewers for Rea (60), J Cooney for Doak (69), J Flannery for Burns (72), J Postlethwaite for McElroy (13).  
**MUNSTER:** S Daly, C Nash, A Frisch, A Nankivell, S O'Brien, J Crowley, C Casey, J Loughman, D Barron (capt), J Ryan, E Edogbo, F Wycherley, A Kendellen, J Hodnett, G Coombes. **Replacements:** S Buckley for Barron (52), J Wycherley for Loughman (50), S Archer for Ryan (50), T Ahern for Edogbo (51), B Gleeson for Kendellen (50), P Patterson for Casey (72), R Scannell for Nankivell (60), B O'Connor for O'Brien (50).  
**Referee:** F Murphy (IRFU).

**Humphreys should split his new role in three – Matt Williams, page 5**

## Look Up

### Malachy Clerkin



# In light of Ashling Murphy's death, how can we help women and girls feel safer?

Is it okay for us to talk about this now? Is today the day? Are we there yet? Can we speak? Because when Ashling Murphy was murdered, long and loud were the voices – men's voices, predominantly – telling us that this wasn't the time. That we were using her death for our own ends. That we were taking advantage of this poor woman and jimmieing her awful demise into a debate about women's ability to live in the world in a way that was unseemly. Weaponising her to suit an agenda, apparently.

And then, of course, once Jozef Puska had been arrested and charged with her murder it was only right that we took care to give the whole thing space, to allow due process to play out. But now that his guilt has been established, now that the facts of that brutal afternoon in January 2022 have been laid out, now that he is going to rot in jail – now can we do this?

Can we talk about the dread women feel in the world? Can we accept, as a basic fact of human existence, that women spend so much more of their time strategising for their safety than men do? Can we agree that something as free – and freeing – as fresh air and exercise comes with a price for women that never, ever enters our heads as men?

And if we can do that, if we can grant half the population that small concession, can we then ask what we are doing about it? What can we change about society, about our towns and cities, about our attitudes? Can we do anything?

This is not a comfortable conversation,

country – they were at least in part due to the confirmation of women's worst fears. You can't go around telling women it's all in their head when something like this happens. Why would you even want to?

So instead, let's start talking about what can be done. Can we make positive changes to help women and girls feel safer? We must accept, from the outset, that it's likely nothing would have changed that facts in this specific case – all the testimony and evidence in the trial pointed to Puska being a gruesome aberration. But there are things we can do, nonetheless.

For one thing, we can – as men – be conscious and generous about the advantages we have in life. As the winter months come around, we can go out for a run in the evening, in the dark. Where we can see mostly other men, out for a run in the evening, in the dark. We don't see very many women because they tend to do their exercising in daylight hours, like Ashling Murphy did.

### Playgrounds

And so armed with that knowledge, maybe we can try to change the way things are done. Maybe we can ask sports clubs or local councils to light up parks and grounds on winter evenings so everybody can come out and feel safe doing a bit of exercise. Plenty already do that up and down the country but the cost of living and energy crisis of the past two years means fewer do it than could be the case.

So maybe the Government puts something in the budget to offset the cost.



**“ You can't go around telling women it's all in their head when something like this happens. Why would you even want to? So instead, let's start talking about what can be done**

obviously. You have to swim through a lake of caveats before getting on to any sort of level ground on which to begin it. So, for the avoidance of doubt, of course not all men are a threat to women's safety. Of course not most men, for that matter. Very, very few men, in fact.

### Reality

But once again for the people in the back: that's not the point. The point is the threat feels real to all women, whether it is there or not. When Puska was cycling around Tullamore sizing up potential victims that afternoon, he would have known that he had the wherewithal to end anybody's life – male or female. He killed Ashling Murphy by stabbing her 11 times in broad daylight. Theoretically, he was as much a threat to the men exercising along the canal as he was to the women.

That's not reality though. No men felt threatened by Puska in January 2022. But we know from the trial that Ashling Murphy was at least the third woman he followed over the space of a couple of hours. A man with murderous intent was cycling around an Irish rural town looking for a woman to kill. He found her exercising alone by the canal. That's the reality.

Yes, Puska is an outlier. Of the 263 women killed in Ireland through gender-based violence since Women's Aid began keeping record 1996, the vast majority have died at the hands of someone known to them. A case like this, a stranger picking off a woman seemingly at random while she was outside starting her new year fitness kick, is incredibly rare.

But it ripples out. It shapes and moulds the society around it. The vigils for Ashling Murphy, the outpouring of grief and anger, the chill felt by women across the

Maybe communities make it a thing – call it Lights On For Everyone or some such. Maybe we make it welcoming and communal, the sort of thing nobody gives a second thought to turning up for. In precisely the way no man pulling on his runners this evening or any evening gives a second thought.

And maybe we do other stuff too. Deeper stuff, like better designing the spaces we inhabit and the places girls and women would like to spend time in. Maybe we start early, with something as simple as playgrounds. There's a UK organisation called Make Spaces For Girls that studies this stuff and they cite playgrounds in Malmö, Sweden where the ratio of boys to girls is 50:50 as opposed to the norm, which is 80:20 in favour of boys in other parts of the city. The big difference? They installed gymnastics bars, a climbing wall and a performance area. Small changes, initiatives of which most of us are entirely, blithely ignorant.

Here in Ireland, there's a non-profit group called A Level Playing Field who have done really good projects in Dublin's inner-city by getting teenage girls to design how they would like to see a city for girls look. A lot of this isn't overly complicated. Teenage girls like spaces to hang out – seats, benches, decent lighting. Places that feel safe and easy and unfussed. We should start there.

The big things aren't simple. And none of it will bring Ashling Murphy back. But if we're not going to talk about these things now, when will we? And if we don't talk about these things – yes, stuff like misogyny and everyday sexism and all that dreadfully woke nonsense – if we don't talk about them now, who does that suit? Who does it help? Not women, that's for sure.