



A SOUND FELLA: Leo Moran of The Saw Doctors performs last year; (right) with bandmate Davy Carton; (far right) Sean Purcell on a Team of The Millennium stamp



TREMENDOUS TRIBE: Michael Donnellan was a massive part of the Galway side that won Sam Maguire in 1998; (below) with Moran



They just made football greatness seem normal

WHEN Joe Connolly stood on the podium of the Hogan Stand after receiving the MacCarthy Cup, he was ready to make a statement rather than a speech.



Kieran CUNNINGHAM EXCLUSIVE

The dust had just settled on the 1980 All-Ireland final. Galway had beaten Limerick to become champions for the first time in 57 years. Connolly was the captain and, in exquisite Connemara Irish, hit all the right notes. It made such an impact that, when UCD historian Richard Aldous put together a book 'Great Irish Speeches', Connolly's was the only sports one to make the cut. What was particularly powerful was that, long before Mary Robinson, gave shout-outs to the diaspora, Connolly included emigrants in his thoughts. "Ach freisin caithfidh cuimhneamh ar dhaoiné i Sasana, i Meiriceá, ar fuaid na tíre. Agus tá said, b'fhéidir, ag caoineadh anois i láthair."

He finished with six words of English. "People of Galway, we love you." Paraphrasing Pope John Paul II's phrase from a mass in Galway a year earlier. Manager Cyril Farrell then gave the nod to Joe McDonagh to do something that had never been done before. A song from the podium.

Pretend

McDonagh wasn't sure if the protocol was right, but belted out 'The West's Awake'. Even Taoiseach Charles Haughey joined in. Jimmy Cooney was close to McDonagh and used his hurley as a pretend mandolin. McDonagh, the Pope, Haughey and Cooney are no longer with us, but Connolly and Farrell might be well advised to head to Fairview Park tonight. With exquisite timing, The Saw Doctors will play their biggest Irish gig in years. They will take

SAW DOCTORS' LEO INSPIRED BY GALWAY'S GAA HEROES

to the stage roughly 45 minutes after the final whistle in the All-Ireland football quarter-final between Galway and Dublin. Are we in for another of the great Galway parties in the capital? Leo Moran, guitarist and songwriter with the Docs, would love nothing better than for that to be the case. A call has been arranged on WhatsApp and it's impossible not to smile when you see Moran's profile pic. It's a snap of him with Galway football legend Michael Donnellan. Galway football has always meant the world to Moran. "Growing up in Tuam, we'd see Sean Purcell and Frank Stockwell walking around the streets," he said. "Two of the football greats on your doorstep, it made

football greatness seem normal. "There was a lot of GAA in the family. My father, Jimmy, played football. He refereed a county final at 24. He was chairman of the County Board at 28. Stadium "The stadium was just over the road. Any game that was on I'd go over and watch it. It didn't matter who was playing. "When Galway won the All-Ireland in 1998, we played in an open air concert the night before, at the celebration banquet in the Burlington and then at the homecoming in Tuam. "When the draw was made for the quarter-finals, you're looking at the times. I think it's 20 minutes from Croke Park to Fairview so people can do both.

"We're lucky the game wasn't fixed for Cork or somewhere. I won't be able to go along, there's too much going on the day of a gig. One of our crew, Ollie, has an iPad with GAAGO so we'll be glued to it on that." The Saw Doctors were and are a band from the margins. When BBC Four broadcast a documentary - The Irish Rock Story - the focus was exclusively on Dublin and Belfast. A band from a small west of Ireland town? Forget about it. Even in this country, The Docs became used to being marginalised. They came to prominence at a time when Hot Press routinely referred to Gaelic football and hurling as 'bogball' and 'stick fighting'. The Saw Doctors - with their references to everything from Mayo midfielder Willie Joe Pad-den to checking out girls at Mass - never sat well with those who

looked to London rather than Louisburgh. Was there a snobbery about them and their music? "I don't know, I suppose there was, but we had the same thing here. We used to be snobby about the lads coming in from the country to school. "More urban areas always tend to look down on more rural areas. Thing is, we had Purcell and Stockwell. We had the playwright, Tom Murphy. We were very lucky that we had people to look up to and attempt to emulate. "I think it was good for us that we had a belief in ourselves; that, if we were good enough, we'd get somewhere. "When I was growing up, Davy (Carton) was in a band called Blaze X. They were brilliant. "By me, they were the musical equivalent of Purcell and Stockwell." It is striking that Moran name-checks Murphy as his writing often focuses on the darkness at the edge of towns. This is something that has al-

ways been part of The Doc's music. In 1996, their song 'Everyday' focused on a young Irishwoman heading to England for an abortion. How many Irish bands have covered that ground? It was especially noteworthy back then. Asked to pick the song he's most proud of writing, he picks one that you could imagine Tom Murphy would appreciate. Renowned "I love 'Same Old Town'. We're so renowned for being funny and boisterous and upbeat. 'Same Old Town' to me is the other side of the coin. It helps to balance out what we do, in a lot of ways. "Very often I'd write lyrics that might be serious but Davy's music tends to be upbeat. There tends to be a sweet and sour sauce. That seems to work for us. "We write about things we're interested in, we're influenced by all the great songwriters. We're not in their league but you have to try to be as close to the greats as you can. I'd love the likes of Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen who wrote

songs for ordinary people. "That's what we were always trying to do - celebrate the ordinary." But could they be celebrating something extraordinary tonight? "We're going to have a bit of a sing-song, a bit of dancing, a bit of shouting, a bit of smiling, maybe a few tears shed too," said Moran. "Galway haven't beaten Dublin in the Championship in 90 years so I'm not too confident but...fingers crossed." The Saw Doctors have released a new single 'Man In The Moon', written by Davy Carton and Leo Moran along with their Tuam songwriting friend Pdraig Stevens. 'Man In The Moon' is included in the current RTE Radio One Recommendations List.



It's London calling for winner Harrold

LONG before her debut with London in this year's TG4 All-Ireland junior football championship, Leah Harrold was well used to rubbing shoulders with stars of the inter-county scene. Now a member of the Wandsworth Gaels club in the English capital, Harrold previously lined out for St Sylvester's in her native Dublin. Having picked up county and provincial honours in the junior grade as a teenager, she achieved the same feat with the Malahide outfit at intermediate level 10 years later and also added an All-Ireland second-tier title to her list of achievements in February 2022. During her lengthy stint in the adult ranks of Sylvester's, Harrold featured alongside Dublin stalwarts such as Sinead Aherne, Niamh McEvoy, Nicole Owens and Kate Sullivan - all of whom have collected multiple All-Ireland senior crowns with the Jackies. Given this impressive quartet are all attackers, and she was ordinarily deployed as a defender by Syls, Harrold was often provided with as much of a test in training as in competitive matches. "They're all absolute role models. Just such unbelievable talents and such great leaders. When we'd be back in training, it'd be great. Obviously I was playing in the full-back line or the half-back line. Any of those backs/forwards drills, I might be lining up against Sinead Aherne or Kate Sullivan or Nicole Owens," recalled Harrold, who also played with Down's Kim White in Sylvester's. "Just being able to practice marking players of that calibre, it really prepares you very well for the big games when you're coming out into

Daire WALSH

All-Ireland semi-finals, All-Ireland finals and playing Dublin senior club as well. I just learned so much from them. How they communicate, read the game, things like that. They were brilliant for giving me advice as well. "The likes of Sinead Aherne and Niamh McEvoy, representing Dublin, it was a really cool thing that they were part of your club as well. Playing alongside them as soon as it got to adult level, it was brilliant. It was really enjoyable." Transfer Harrold completed a transfer to Wandsworth Gaels last year and was one of a host of new faces that Exiles boss Tommy Donohue called upon when he was finalising his panel for the All-Ireland junior Championship in April and May of this year. Harrold was a starter for London's recent reversals to Derry and Carlow in Group A of the All-Ireland JFC. Due to a combination of a calf injury and illness, Harrold was unavailable for London's home encounter with Sligo in Ruislip last Saturday - a game the hosts lost on a scoreline of 1-20 to 5-3. Yet her recovery from these setbacks has gone to plan and she is hoping to play a key role in London's final Championship group game against Fermanagh in Killeeshil tomorrow (2pm). They might be out of contention for a knock-out spot as a result of three defeats on the bounce, but Harrold and her colleagues are focused on finishing their 2024 campaign on an encouraging note.



DELIGHT: Leah Harrold (right) and Grainne McGinty of St Sylvester's celebrate 2021 Dublin LGFA IFC glory