

FAREWELL TO MÍCHEÁL Ó

WORDS OF WIT AND WISDOM...

SOME of the icon's most famous commentary calls and quotes:

"Pat Fox has it on his hurl and is motoring well now, but here comes Joe Rabbitte hot on his tail... I've seen it all now, a Rabbitte chasing a Fox around Croke Park!"

"Sean Og O hAilpin: his father's from Fermanagh, his mother's from Fiji. Neither a hurling stronghold."

"Setanta O hAilpin... the original Setanta from the old Gaelic stories was ten foot tall, had ten fingers on each hand and ten toes on each foot but even he couldn't be playing better hurling than his namesake here today."

"And Brian Dooher is down injured. And while he is, I'll tell ye a little story: I was in Times Square in New York last week, and I was missing the Championship back home. So I approached a newsstand and I said, 'I suppose ye wouldn't have The Kerryman, would ye?' To which, the Egyptian behind the counter turned to me and he said, 'Do you want the North Kerry edition, or the South Kerry edition?' He had both - so I bought both. And Dooher is back on his feet..."

"The bottles are beginning to come in now, players getting tired, the wind is strong, it's with Kerry, as a straw hat rolls like a wheel across the field out towards the Nally stand. T'would make a great souvenir for someone, it's now slowing to a halt, it's coming to a rest thirty seven yards from where the Cusack Stand used to be, Daire O'Conneide, no interest in hats now, ready to take the free ... The free is already taken to Liam Hassett, over the straw hat, over the 21 and he's sent it wide."

"Anthony Lynch, the Cork corner-back, will be the last person to let you down - his people are undertakers."

"Colin Corkery on the 45 lets go with the right boot. It's over the bar. This man shouldn't be playing football. He's made an almost Lazarus-like recovery from a heart condition. Lazarus was a great man but he couldn't kick points like Colin Corkery."

"He's not a big man, he's

not a small man, he's what you might call a handy man."

"The stopwatch has stopped. It's up to God and the referee now. The referee is Pat Horan. God is God."

"Dublin have scored two points, one from the hand and one from the land."

"And here's Sylvie Linnane, who drives a digger on a Monday and turns into one on a Sunday."

"Teddy McCarthy to Mick McCarthy, no relation, Mick McCarthy back to Teddy McCarthy, still no relation."

"I saw a few Sligo people at Mass in Gardiner Street this morning and the omens seem to be good for them. The priest was wearing the same colours as the Sligo jersey! 40 yards out on the Hogan Stand side of the field, Ciaran Whelan goes on a rampage... it's a goal! So much for religion."

"We have many listeners all over the world but of course, we have many listeners at home as well

and one of them is Nelly O'Connell from Blarney, 95 years of age, she attended the Thunder and Lightning final of 1939!"

"He grabs the sliotar, he's on the 50! He's on the 40! He's on the 30... he's on the ground!"

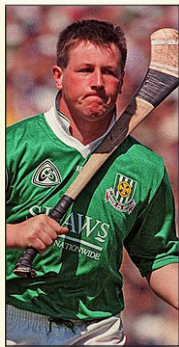
"Pat Fox out to the forty and grabs the sliotar. I grab a dog from his father last week. Fox turns and sprints for goal... the dog ran a great race last Tuesday in Limerick... Fox, to the 21, fires a shot - it goes to the left and wide... and the dog lost as well."

"In the first half they played with the wind. In the second half they played with the ball."

"Mike Houlihan from Limerick had his jaw broken by a bullock two months ago. He's back again. 'Twas some bullock that broke Mike Houlihan's jaw!"



PRAISE: Colin Corkery and Mike Houlihan



By Roy CURTIS

HIS voice was birdsong at the first blush of a Croke Park dawn, July waves lapping against Kerry's Atlantic shore, the high-season thwack of sliothar against ash.

Summertime.

A Celtic symphony. A hymn to the long days. A postcard from the very soul of Gaelic games.

Mícheál Ó Muirheartaigh's richly coloured and dulcet tones were the national flag of the Irish summer.

He was and will forever remain the Carrauntoohil of commentators, a Kingdom landmark who towered above even the very best of the rest.

Like the aroma of freshly cut grass, his first championship commentary of the season carried in its saddlebags a promise of longer days, cloudless skies, a sunburst of mischief.

His symphonic west Kerry lilt was a sonic Riverdance: a traditional, vibrant, soaring, stirring, joyous, emeraldrhumba.

A celebration of Irishness. A hosanna to the enchantment Gooch or Joe Canning or Brian Fenton might bring to a season of Sundays.

As with Michael Flatley's feet of flames, an uncontrollable wildfire blazed when a spark of excitement ignited Mícheál's vocal chords.

Crescendo

As an All-Ireland or Munster final soared toward its epic crescendo, a million Red Adairs would be impotent to douse his passion.

His commentaries were perfectly pitched concerts, conversations, oratorios, to games he loved as much as life.

Long before the world was introduced to Taylor Swift, Kerry's colossus delivered mesmerising stadium tours, always holding his audience spellbound.

An album of his greatest hits would likely top the charts until Mayo lift Sam.

It was an eye-opener to sit alongside him in the press box as a seismic contest rumbled towards its concluding thunderbolt chapter.

His entire body, like his words, danced and shook and gyrated, every fibre of his being lost in the theatre unfolding on the verdant stage below.

He would leap in the manner of a startled hare after a memorable score, his arms akimbo, like a traffic cop at a busy Manhattan junction.

If there were black cards for trespassing into his neighbour's space, this most hyperactive of commentators would rarely have seen out the game.

Smitten by the beauty unfolding before him, he simply could not contain himself.

The music of a summer Sunday compelled him

Voice cast a spell for the ages..

THE CARRAUNTOOHIL OF COMMENTATORS IS GONE

to sway and swoon. As only this unrivalled grandmaster of the microphone could.

Over the course of 70 minutes, he would expend as much energy as any of the gladiators at battle in the broiling coliseum.

Engaged

When particularly engaged, he would unconsciously slip from English to Irish in mid-sentence, in that moment as completely out of control as a hysterical driver lane-hopping on the M50 as they try to evict an angry wasp through the passenger window.

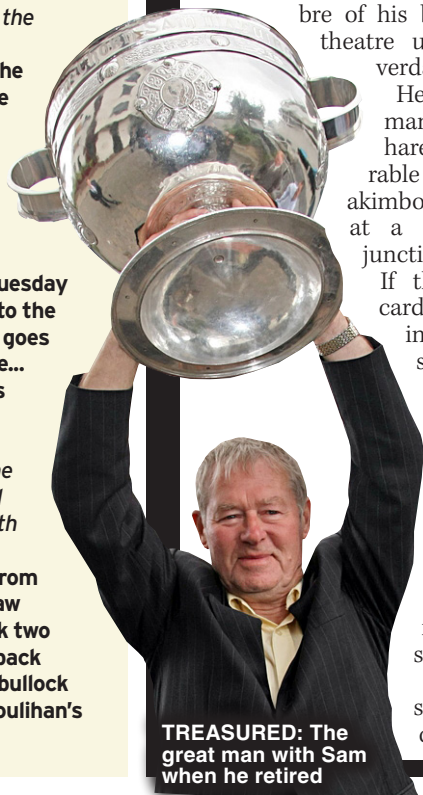
On the greatest days of summer, he was an artist in his studio: the Dingle

Vermeer dipping into the rich palette of his imagination to paint gorgeous, unforgettable, vibrant word-pictures.

So many of his most celebrated lines — from the tale of buying a copy of The Kerryman in Times Square, to remarking that neither Fermanagh nor Fiji, respective birthplaces of Sean Og O'hAilpin's parents, were hurling strongholds — were the kind of masterpieces that could have hung from the gallery walls of the Louvre.

At heart he was a seanachai, a storyteller, the 30 footballers or hurlers before him characters in his latest fable.

The games were a blank page on which he splashed wit, passion, hu-



TREASURED: The great man with Sam when he retired

MUIRCHEARTAIGH AT 93



LEGEND: With wife Helena and (from top) in his natural place commentating; early days; and turning 90 on a beach walk close to home

mour, knowledge and wisdom.

His unique calligraphy, a voice that was his instantly recognisable signature, brought so many afternoons to thrilling life for his devoted audience.

He was Ireland's eye, a messenger to the masses. Hundreds of thousands at home and abroad viewed games through the prism of his excitement and masterfully chosen phrases.

In summer, on an Irish beach or at the park, his melodies would spill from every car radio.

He composed lyrical poems as prolifically as Shakespeare, or that Kerry bard, the inestimable Con Houlihan.

In an age of flux and confusion, he was a never changing constant —

timeless and trusted. Part of our heritage. Everybody's favourite uncle. A listed Irish building.

His soothing voice was a Sunday sanctuary at the end of a long week.

Like Paul McGrath or Katie Taylor, he was beloved, an authentic national treasure.

At 93, this landmark of Irish life, a giant whose soothing commentaries were a balm to the nation's wounds, has fallen into his final sleep.

But out there, propelled by the Atlantic winds and waves, climbing to the heavens, the birdsong of his voice will endure.

Forever the soaring soundtrack of the best days of an Irish summer.

'Micheál had Jacko in great shape'... **PAGES 42, 43, 44 & 45**

GAA MATCH WAS UN-BEAR-ABLE

THIS is the moment bears invaded a GAA pitch in Canada, forcing the abandonment of a women's Gaelic football game last week.

The match between St Finnian's Vancouver and Eire Og at Burnaby Lakes in the city was abandoned after the two bears made an appearance in the square. Pictures showed the animals making

their way past the back of the goalposts while St Finnian's pose for a team photo.

A St Finnian's Vancouver statement said: "Our senior ladies were in action on June 20th against Eire Og. The game was a close contest right up until the game had to be abandoned due to two lively bears...looking for the long ball in to the square."



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