



Shock: Rebecca McDonald
By Éamon Donoghue

IT was to be a big surprise for her seriously ill sister – so Rebecca McDonald was shocked yesterday when she learned that the Garth Brooks concerts were being cancelled.

The Kilkenny woman had planned to bring her sister, Amy, who is battling cervical cancer, to his show in Croke Park on the Monday night.

In February, Ms McDonald camped out all night to buy two tickets – and after months of organising the perfect surprise, she said yesterday's news was like a 'kick in the teeth'.

She blamed the GAA's 'gluttony' and greed for ruining the only wish of her sister, whose illness was diagnosed in March last year.

'I'm disgusted with the GAA,' she said. 'I understand where the residents are coming from but that's no consolation to us.'

Ms McDonald added: 'I saw Garth

TICKETS were still on sale last night on viagogo.ie for the country singer's Saturday, July 26, date at Croke Park for €84.20. That was before the news of the total cancellation broke.

Bizarrely, on the same website tickets were being advertised for the dates that had been cancelled on Monday, July 28 and Tuesday, July 29. Hundreds of tickets were also on sale on ticket resale site Seatwave.ie.

It was speculated yesterday that tickets were still on sale because many people believe that the concerts could still go ahead in some last-minute deal.

In January, just before the tickets officially went on sale, Seatwave was charging up to €820 for standing tickets to the concerts. In comparison, Ticketmaster sold tickets for €65.45, with additional fees from €2.15 to €6.10.

the last time he was in Ireland but my sister didn't and she was so looking forward to it.

'I got two tickets in the seating area, I'd organised for my father to drive up so that she wouldn't have to stand, and so that she was guaranteed a seat. Everything was organised.'

'She's absolutely devastated, this was her wish, this was her only wish.'

But the 32-year-old office administrator from Kilkenny is inspired by her sister's resolve, and says she is not a victim of anything other than the GAA's greed.

'She had just started back at her chemo, and she had planned her chemo around this. She's going to be losing

Big reunion: Alva Whelan's friend was flying in for a gig

A cancer patient, a bride-to-be and a Garth fan flying all the way from New Zealand...

Revealing the deeply personal stories of just a few of the hundreds of thousands whose plans have been left in tatters by the Croker fiasco

AFTER the disappointment of a cancelled ticket event, it is important to know your consumer rights, the State's National Consumer Agency said last night. Dermott Jewell, of the Consumers' Association of Ireland, said: 'I know some people have already applied for a refund, which is a little premature.'

'I don't see an immediate urgency on consumers immediately seeking their refund. There's no harm in holding off for 24 hours or 48 hours just to watch to see what happens. It's all to watch for.'

Q: I purchased a ticket from a business. Am I entitled to a refund?

A: 'Cancelled ticket-holders are entitled to a refund when an event is cancelled,'

her hair and everything now, so it's going to be hard and this is a worse kick in the teeth. But she's a fighter I was joking that I'd buy her a cowboy hat for the concert.'

Another woman revealed yesterday that her reunion with her former bridesmaid and best friend lay in 'tatters'.

Alva Whelan, 33, from Co. Westmeath, had been planning a big night out with her friend Helen Renwick, who decided to return from New Zealand when the pair realised Garth Brooks was playing Croker. Their reunion was also planned to coincide with Ms Whelan's seventh wedding anniversary on July 27.

The Mullingar woman said she had tried for days to get early tickets for the show but that Ms Renwick, who emigrated to New Zealand with her Kiwi husband, Blair, three years ago, announced she had

Q&A

the National Consumer Agency says. 'The information you received at the time of purchase should include details on how to get a refund. If you don't have this information then contact the seller agent, or check their website.' Refunds are often made via the method of payment used. This means that if your ticket was

originally paid for by a credit card then the refund will be processed through that card. Mr Jewell said: 'The reality is if they bought a ticket they have a contract, part of which has fallen through so they're entitled to a full refund inclusive of all charges and costs.'

Q: I purchased a ticket from a third-party vendor. Am I entitled to a refund?

Those who bought tickets from a private seller may not have the same rights. Mr Jewell said: 'The consumer

has their contract with the person from whom they bought their ticket. If there were a private individual involved then it is that private individual that they have to make contact with. It's just a little bit different. Their contract is with whomever they bought the ticket from.'

Q: I booked accommodation for the Garth Brooks concert. Will I still have to pay?

'If you booked transport or accommodation separately, you should contact the

show yesterday: 'We are huge fans and we have been to Nashville and Memphis because it is rare that big country stars like Garth Brooks come to Ireland.'

'It would have been the perfect reunion and an amazing way to mark her being my bridesmaid on my wedding anniversary.'

Although the friends are very disappointed, Ms Whelan says she holds no malice towards Croke Park residents who pushed to get the extra shows cancelled.

'There are two sides to every story and the residents were genuinely unhappy. However, I feel the promoters should have sorted all this out before they put the tickets on sale.'

'We are upset, and my friend is especially upset because she was coming thousands of miles and paying a lot of money to see Garth play Dublin.'

'But she is looking on the bright

managed to get two tickets online. 'That was it – we were set for our reunion,' said Ms Whelan, a mother of three.

Ms Renwick, 33, who is originally from Armagh, had been to see Brooks perform in Dublin in 1994, and had vowed to come home if the country favourite ever came back to Ireland.

'She planned her chemo around it'

Once the concert tickets were booked, Ms Renwick splashed out on €1,800 return flights from New Zealand and both paid €180 for non-returnable hotel tickets in Dublin to ensure they were ready for the show on Tuesday, July 29.

Ms Whelan told RTÉ's Liveline

side that she will be here for ten days and she will still get to see her family, her brothers and sisters, but a lot of the goodness has gone out of this trip sadly.'

The cancellation of the concerts also comes as a crushing disappointment for bride-to-be Roseann Ní Chéidigh, as the gig was to be the perfect send-off for her honeymoon.

The schoolteacher, from Inverin in Co. Galway, will marry Martin Joe O Flatharta from Carraroe in Inverin Church on Friday, July 25, the day of the first concert.

'We were initially disappointed as the first concert was planned for that day, but then it became possible to get tickets for the other dates and the Monday was just right for us as we fly out on honeymoon the next day,' she said.

The home economics and Irish teacher, who works in St Enda's Secondary School in Salthill, is a huge