



Kiss for the new boy: Phoenix took his first dip at just 31 hours old Chin up: Simon supports his son A little shut-eye: The baby relaxes during his bathing experience

In at the deep end, the baby who's barely a day old

Paul Harris reports

HE is so tiny he fits easily into his father's hands, still so young he has barely opened his eyes for more than a few minutes.

But at one day old, Phoenix Charles Elwell, all pink and wrinkly, is taking happily to the water.

Never mind that he still has a lot to learn before he can actually swim - or that he wouldn't keep afloat without those helping hands, despite having a good try.

For Phoenix is the youngest child ever to be enrolled as a Water Baby in a swimming programme.

He was born by caesarean section at 10.44am, a healthy 8lb 5oz. At 10.50am he got his first cuddle from his 30-year-old father Simon Elwell.

Next day, aged precisely 31 hours and 46 minutes, Simon put on some trunks, then dunked his newborn son in the hydrotherapy pool at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, south-west England. There, he introduced him to the joys of baby aquatics - the first step in building on what turned out to be Phoenix's remarkable confidence in the water.

It helps, of course, that Simon is an instructor for the Water Babies swim school, which



Bonding in the pool: Phoenix with dad Simon. Right: With mum Rebecca and sister Alyana

teaches more than 41,000 babies a week and has franchises across Ireland and the UK.

Before Phoenix is 30 months old, he is likely to be swimming distances underwater for as long as he can hold his breath, and propelling himself along the surface.

Why? 'The question for me is "Why not"?' said Simon. He and his wife Rebecca, 33, have

already brought up their 19-month-old daughter Alyana not to fear the water - and fully expect her to have a new swimming partner soon.

'He absolutely loved his time in the pool,' Simon said. 'I think he would quite happily have gone to sleep in the water when we finished. It was quite special for me too.'



They'll shoot to thrill

By Eamon Donoghue

WHEN these four take to the pitch at Croke Park, it will be all-out war.

Because even though these soldiers are normally brothers in arms, today they will be fighting for their respective counties.

Three members of the Kilkenny senior hurling squad are serving soldiers in the city, and for the second time in a month they will be facing a colleague on the battle field.

Private Colin Fennelly, Corporal Paul Murphy and Corporal Eoin Larkin will line out for the Cats in Croke, while Tipperary native Private Patrick Maher is based in an Chéad Chathlán Coisithe at Dún Uí Mhaoiliosa, Galway.

Competing for the Premier County, Private Maher will be doing his utmost to prevent Kilkenny from



It's war! Fennelly, Murphy, Larkin and Maher

winning a record 35th championship by taking as many thrilling, on-target shots as possible.

After the teams drew earlier this month, it had been reported that Corporal Larkin - former Hurler of

Soldier colleagues to hit Croke battle field for All-Ireland hurling final replay

the Year - wouldn't be making an appearance because the match was clashing with his wedding.

However, the official Twitter account of the Kilkenny County Board later confirmed the rumours

were untrue and that Larkin - who has served in the Defence Forces for ten years, including a tour of duty in Kosovo - would be free.

Private Fennelly has won two All-Ireland titles, while he has won two

Club All-Ireland titles with his home club Ballyhale Shamrocks. He says his job allows him to 'develop skills such as team work and diligence'.

'I feel lucky to have a job that allows me to benefit from both the culture of fitness and the disciplined nature of my job,' he said.

Corporal Murphy works alongside his two teammates in the same Kilkenny barracks. He joined the Defence Forces in 2008 and has served a tour of duty overseas to Chad. The two time All-Star defender also credits much of his fitness levels to his army duties.

And Tipperary legend Patrick 'Bonner' Maher, who is based in 1st Infantry Battalion in Renmore Barracks, Galway, joined the Defence Forces two years ago when he was named Hurler of the Year. He credits his new career for instilling mental strength, which will undoubtedly come in handy this weekend.

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