

Walking the line between two codes

Eamon Donoghue

The multi-sport discipline at Ardscoil Rís in Limerick city is good for players all round, says manager

There's a big challenge ahead for the GAA in Limerick city, one that Ardscoil Rís have been tackling head-on within the parameters of one small rugby pitch.

Last year the inner city school won the Harty Cup as well as reaching only their second Munster rugby Senior Cup final, and remarkably there were no dual players on either panel.

The manager of this year's Harty Cup squad is Limerick hurler Niall Moran, and despite the competition he's more than happy with the school's multi-sport ethos, which is clearly benefiting all concerned parties.

"The first thing we do, especially with our first years, is encourage lads to play all sports as there's a crossover with a lot of the skillsets at times. But you'd find that even by second year lads are starting to make a choice and by senior it's very rare that they play both (codes).

"Last year there was no crossover because - it's not that we don't allow lads to play both sports, but it's just not feasible for lads in Leaving Cert year to commit to both with the volume of training and the physical requirements."

Preferred sport

While most Ardscoil Rís students have already decided upon their preferred sport by the time they are eligible for senior selection, every year one of the teams tends to lose out on "one or two".

Last year it was the hurlers who drew the short straw.

"There were two guys who would have been central to us last year, Ste-

phen Fitzgerald who played at full-back for the senior cup and is currently involved with Munster academy. He had been centre-back on the Harty Cup team in 2012 and he was still eligible for two more years and would've been a big loss.

"Likewise, David O'Mahony probably would've been integral to the Harty Cup team, so unfortunately we lost two major players.

"When you compare that to a St Kieran's or a Thurles CBS squad, they don't really have to compete with other sports, so despite hurling being prominent here in recent years we have to battle to keep the interest of players given the obvious proximity to Munster rugby in Limerick city."

It's not just rugby and hurling that command rich traditions in the school, though.

"Traditionally, if you're talking about a sports-mad school, we've gone through periods where soccer was the dominant sport, or basketball in the 90s. But rugby and hurling have always maintained a presence through-out and that's a testament to that



multi-sport culture that's in the school.

"Even if you look at someone like John Galvin, he started his basketball career in Ardscoil, and he would have played hurling here as well, yet he obviously had a great gaelic football career for Limerick then going onwards."

Lure of rugby

However, the lure of a professional rugby career has led to competition for the hearts and minds of hurling enthusiasts in Ardscoil Rís.

"There's no split in Limerick city [between GAA and rugby], that's where people are mistaken. Limerick people are fanatical sports people and the hurling would be very supportive of the rugby, and likewise in the school.

"You'd find a lot of hurlers will play a bit of rugby in the off-season and the rugby lads love to get back involved in the GAA. There's no animosity between the codes but you do battle for the hearts and minds of the kids at times.

"Last year was a first rugby senior cup in 18 years but whether they have a strong team or not doesn't change much - a lot of the lads would aspire to playing rugby for Munster and it would be very hard for amateur sports to compete for kids who would like to have a professional sports career. Ultimately it's going to be a challenge within Limerick city and it obviously is within the school.

"It's not an issue in Kilkenny, they don't aspire to playing professional soccer on their doorstep, or to playing basketball in Kerry."

A Limerick hurler for 11 years, an Ardscoil past pupil and a teacher of seven years, Moran may be fully behind the popularity of Munster in the city yet he does question some tactics used by the sport.

"A lot of guys are in these academies and sub-academies and



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you've got to acknowledge that rugby has a hold over a lot of players without, in some cases, directly investing a whole pile into them."

One key aspect of the tight relationship between the two competing codes in Ardscoil Rís is the limited facilities within the schools, making last year's success all the more remarkable.

"We're not patting ourselves on the back but one of the most fascinating things about this school is that we operate off the back of one pitch, and that

pitch is primarily a small-sized rugby one. So what would happen is that rugby would get it for two days and we would get it for two days every week.

"You could have on one pitch 40 Harty Cup players, 40 more Dean Ryan players and up to 70 first years, all doing proper sessions. We're trying to keep going and build a proper hurling reputation here rather than a periodic one." So far, against all the odds, it seems to be working.

■ **Ardscoil Rís in action against Thurles CBS.** PHOTOGRAPH: PRESS 22

Hurling fixtures

Semi-finals: January 31st
Ard Scoil Rís v St Francis Col Rochestown Castleterry CC v Thurles CBS

Final: February 21st

Lone rangers continue to break new ground in Tipperary

EAMON DONOGHUE

High School Clonmel have been flying the flag for the weaker counties in the Corn Uí Mhuirí in recent years, and are intent on exploiting the "lone ranger" card to its fullest.

The school embarked upon a development "journey" eight years ago, with an All-Ireland B triumph in 2011 reflecting the progress which has clearly been made.

Team manager and vice-principal Tony Gleeson says he likes to think of his team as "lions in the long grass."

With a panel encompassing students from Tipperary and Waterford, two hurling strongholds, it's not been easy, but the school progressed to the knockout stages of the A competition for the first time this year, losing to St Brendan's in the last eight.

"There's been a lot of development work and a lot of coaching at all levels in the school, and with the local clubs and the county development squads," says Gleeson.

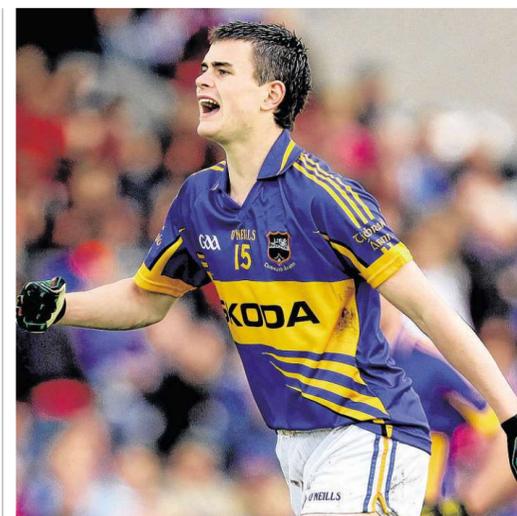
"I'm a Meath man and I came in and seen 13 and 14-year-olds with a lot of raw talent, as good as anywhere, and people just weren't touching it. But we worked on it.

Underage structures

"We set up underage structures and now we're in our third year in Senior A colleges. Tipperary and Waterford are hurling counties but since we got to the Corn Uí Mhuirí, it's been a further attraction for the school.

"We're one of just three schools in Munster who play both codes at senior A. Remember, nearly every young lad in this county wants to play for the Tipperary minor hurlers."

In tandem with the school's journey, football in general in



■ **Michael Quinlivan, a past student of High School Clonmel, has helped football to blossom in Tipperary.** PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES CROMBIE/INPHO

Tipperary has blossomed, likewise in local Waterford club The Nire.

In the past five years Tipperary have won an under-21 Munster title

Football fixtures

Semi Finals February 7th
St Francis Col Rochestown V St Brendan's Killarney

Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne V Clonakilty CC

Final: February 28th

and two minor provincial titles as well as an All-Ireland. Central to those teams have been past students such as Michael Quinlivan.

Meanwhile The Nire club, just 10 miles outside of Clonmel across the Waterford border, won last year's county championship and ran Kerry's Austin Stacks very close in the Munster final.

A number of that panel are current students.

"I think the clubs recognise we are trying to develop squads. You need strong schools to have strong county minor teams, and I suppose we're happy to keep the flag flying for the weaker counties."

Football squads

Clonakilty CC

Coaches: Michael O'Sullivan & Gavin Kelly

Captain: Eoin Deasy

Squad (* for last year too): M Whelton, W Tyner, L O'Donovan, B Keohane, D O'Brien, T O'Connell, C O'Donovan, P Walsh, K Keohane, E Deasy, D Kiely, S Scannell, J Deasy, M White, S Ryan, E Lawton, R Mannix, D Lowney, S McEvoy, D Santry, T Scannell, D Scannell, S O'Donoghue, S O'Reilly, L O'Connor

How school performed in 2014: Group stages

County players/Prospects: David Lowney, Mark White, Sean McEvoy

St Brendan's Killarney

Coaches: Harry O'Neill, Kieran Herlihy, Arthur Fitzgerald, Michael Leahy, Gary Stack. **Captain:** Liam Kearney

Squad (* for last year too): L Kearney, M McCarthy, A Mulvaney, B Myers, M Rennie, G White, S Courtney, D Carroll, D Clifford, C Courtney, W Courtney, M Foley, P McCarthy, E Cronin, M Casey, D Moynihan, D Naughton, D O'Brien, D O'Hea, C Spillane, B

Coppinger, B Courtney, M Potts, D Shaw, M Moynihan, M Harnett, C O'Donoghue, L O'Donoghue

How school performed in 2014: Beaten in Corn Uí Mhuirí semi final by Dingle

County players/Prospects: Liam Kearney, Michael Burns and Gavin White were members of Kerry All Ireland winning panel in 2014.

Pobail Scoil Chorca Dhuibhne

Coaches: Ciarán Ó Móráin, Tomás Ó Beaglaíoch, Tomás Ó Griffin

Captain: Marc Ó Conchúir

Squad (* for last year too): L de Bhailís, S Ó Lúing, S Ó Muircheartaigh, T Ó Súilleabháin, T Ó Súilleabháin, C Ó Súilleabháin, B Ó Beaglaíoch, A Ó Conchúir, M Ó Baoill, L Mac Giolla Earnáin, C Ó Murchú, T Breathnach, P J Mac Lámh, C Ó Dubháin, P Mac an tSithigh, S Ó Catháin, C Mac an tSithigh, F Ó Cuanaigh, P Paul Sauerland, M Ó Conchúir, S Ó Gairbhia, C Ó Bambaire, C Ó Gélbheannaigh, S Ó Muircheartaigh, G Ó Brosnacháin, S Ó Bambaire, M Ó Gormáin, T Mac an tSithigh, L Ó Brosnacháin, P Ogie Ó Sé, S Ó Flaithbheartaigh, A Ó Muircheartaigh, R Ó Mainnín, S Ó Núnáin, B Seán Mac an Bradáin, S Ó Conchúir

How school performed in 2014: Hogan Cup winner

County players/Prospects: Tom Ó Súilleabháin, Brian Ó Beaglaíoch, Marc Ó Conchúir, Cathal Ó Bambaire and Conchúir Ó Gélbheannaigh all Kerry All-Ireland minor winners 2014

St Francis College Rochestown

Coaches: Liam Sheehan, Eamonn Hennessey, Liam O'Murchu

Captain: Shane Kingston

Squad (* for last year too): L O'Sullivan, D Griffin, D Murphy, E O'Brien, E Ryle, C Cormack, S Kingston, C Marnane, C Denn, A Geaney, C Sheehan, E O'Sullivan, C Murray, D Meaney, P Lynch, D Kelleher, C O'Regan, N Quirk, D Stack, S Powter, P O'Callaghan, R Coleman, J Holland, N Walsh, K O'Donovan, K Bourke, J Murphy, B Grainger, M McCulliffe, B Flahive, S Collins, B McCulliffe, L Dineen, R Cantwell, J Cantwell

How school performed in 2014: Group stages

County players/Prospects: Key players include Daraagh Kelleher, Paddy Lynch, David Griffin, Liam Dineen, Liam O'Sullivan and Cathal Sheehan

Hurling squads

Ardscoil Rís

Coaches: Niall Moran, Fergal Lyons, Paul Flanagan, Barry Hennessey

Captain: Tommy Grimes/Ronan Lynch

Squad (* for last year too): C Houlihan, J Ryan, S Hogan, S Mullane, K Daly, M Fitzgibbon, A Gillane, S Phelan, E Foley, M Danagher, K Howard, J Flynn, C Moriarty, P Casey, P O'Loughlin, C Boylan, S Moran, N Fox, P Moloney, M Connolly, T Grimes, R Lynch, M Mackey, E Mulcahy, M Andrews, E Ryan, P Collins, L Buckley, J Boylan, D Fitzgerald, G Kearns, R Duff, B Curran

How school performed in 2014: Harty Cup Champions 2014

County players/Prospects: Ronan Lynch, Aaron Gillane, Peter Casey, Tommy Grimes (Limerick Minors 2014). Currently a number of players are on provisional minor squads for both Clare and Limerick.

St Francis College Rochestown

Coaches: Aidan Lonergan, Diarmaid Fahy, Michael Cullen & Humphrey Cauty

Captain: David Griffin

Squad (* for last year too): Andrew Cullinane, Donnchadh Murphy, D Griffin, Nathan Walsh, D Kelliher, J Cashman, C Sheehan, E O'Brien, J O'Sullivan, C Cormack, D O'Mahony, S Kingston, P Lynch, S Powter, L O'Sullivan, D O'Mahony, M McCulliffe, Rory Crowley, D Stack, R Cantwell, R Coleman, J Holland, K O'Donovan, L Dineen, D Meaney, J Cantwell, L Dunlea, D O'Flaherty, S McGrath, J Murray, D O'Regan, B Grainger, B Turnbull, R Buckley, P Davidson, P Buckley, B O'Connor, C Kiely, L O'Connell, C O'Driscoll, C Murray

How school performed in 2014: Lost out to Doon CBS in the semi final

County players/Prospects: Senior players are Andrew Cullinane, Dara Kelleher, David Griffin, Diarmaid O'Mahony, Liam O'Sullivan and Cathal Sheehan

Thurles CBS

Coaches: John Devane, Martin Maher, Niall Cahill. **Captain:** Ronan Teehan

Squad (* for last year too): E Barry, J Bergin, J Butler, M Connors, K Cummins, B Darcy, J Derby, K Duggan, D Egan, E Fanning, M Fennelly, S Flanagan, A Garrett, R Gleeson, T Hayes, G Healy, E Heffernan, R Heffernan, N Heffernan, B Kelly, P Kennedy, D Leahy, F Linnane, R Long, B McCarthy, J McCormack, C McCullagh, C Moloney, N Moloney, K O'Dwyer, R Purcell, M Purcell, D Quirke, J Ryan, C, J Skehan, M Stakelum, C Stakelum, T Stakelum, J Stapleton, R Teehan, W Tierney, M Troy

How school performed in 2014: Defeated by St Francis College, Rochestown in quarter final

County players/Prospects: County minors: Ronan Teehan, Enda Heffernan, Ronan Heffernan, Robbie Long, Billy McCarthy, Christopher McCullagh and Jack Skehan

Castleterry Community College

Coaches: Leonard Coughlan and Peter O'Reilly

Captain: Barry Nash

Squad (* for last year too): J Power, B Nash, G Hartnett, E Enright, M Fox, F Hourigan, D Garry, C Carroll, A la Touche cosgrave, K Gleeson, D Golden, E Fitzpatrick, C O'Mara, L Loynes, I Coates, B Nash, J Nicholas, C Nicholas, C Ryan, A Lennon, A Hackett, S Hackett, A Kennedy, M O'Dwyer, E Hourigan, P Minihen

How school performed in 2014: Group stage

County players/Prospects: County Players off last years Limerick Minor Hurling Team: Barry Nash, Lorcan Lyons and Andrew la Touche Cosgrave.



■ **St Francis College Rochestown's Ciaran Cormack in action. The school are in the Harty Cup and Corn Uí Mhuirí semi-finals**