

On Gaelic Games

Seán Moran



Good that Gleeson plays – but better if he hadn't jeopardised the prospect

As the word went around at half-time last Sunday, bringing it to the attention of those in the press box who had not seen Austin Gleeson tugging off Luke Meade's headgear, there was a collective groan.

Whatever the public perception, few reporters want to spend the run-up to an All-Ireland final on hearings – or appeals and arbitration – watch. That such would

be the media prospects was confirmed when Conor Gleeson picked up a red card in the dying minutes of the match with the semi-final not just dead but plucked and ready for the oven.

Should he end up serving a suspension it will be tough because he was excellent in the semi-final only to risk everything when he lost his temper with time nearly elapsed.

His namesake is very lucky, as his foul was the clearest breach of the headgear rule in a summer where it has become the signature infraction of the summer. The outcome however is not good news for the GAA's enduringly tough task of making the games better behaved.

Suspensions, especially for big matches, are regarded as cliff-hangers within Gaelic games. People wait with bated breath to see what's going to happen because it's never quite certain.

In a 1999 European Cup semi-final Roy Keane picked up a yellow card that, cumulatively, ensured he would not play in the final: not that he'd have to get ready for some serious committee room haggling but that he was simply out.

Public uproar
The plaudits he received after the Juventus match were based on his performance having been given in the sure knowledge that he was not going to take any part in what would have been the biggest match of his club career.

In the 2015 Rugby World Cup, Seán O'Brien was cited for a punch in a match against France and missed Ireland's last match. Again, when it happened the team had no choice but to get on with it.

There are obvious differences between Gaelic games and professional sports. The latter get to play a lot more matches and absorb suspensions because they are served so quickly. The above examples are

of disciplinary administration carried out by international bodies, free from any hope that they can be influenced by public uproar.

External authorities can't be got at. The GAA is a community-based organisation and its decisions aren't really seen as coming from an external source but more the sort of thing, like a speeding ticket or parking fine, that you bring to a local politician to make go away.

No one wants players to miss out on big occasions and the public response often emphasises that aspect of suspensions but would games be possible without rules and the agreement of both teams to abide by them?

In the case of Austin Gleeson, his exculpation is based on the clarification of his own match report by referee James Owens, who said that he adjudicated on the incident on the day. That being the case, how did he not issue a red card?

There is a standard reaction to suspensions in certain quarters – mostly but not exclusively within the affected counties – that invariably depicts them as “a joke” or calls for the relevant rule and its associated suspension to be scrapped or drastically modified.

Sure enough, the opinion has been expressed in recent weeks, as another Waterford hurler Tadhg de Búrca faced suspension for interfering with the headgear of Wexford's Harry Kehoe, that the rule was too absolute: if you intentional-



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ly behave that way, you are issued a straight red card.

Judging intention can be difficult but what happened on Sunday was one of the clearer cases.

Is there merit in the cries for the infraction to be downgraded to a yellow card?

Alarm bells
As it happens that was the punishment up until earlier this decade. What changed attitudes to the misbehaviour was its degeneration from interfering with headgear for purely mischievous purposes, such as undoing the straps in order to disorientate an opponent, into using the helmet as weapon against its wearer.

The alarm bells rang on this in 2010 when Tipperary hurler Declan Fanning had to have 25 stitches inserted in his head

after Wexford's Stephen Banville pulled on his headgear and metal edges became exposed, causing severe lacerations.

There was also the input of the GAA's Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee, which warned of the dangers of coup and contrecoup brain injuries if players were to have their head rattled around on a regular basis.

As a result the yellow card was replaced with a red.

There has been zero tolerance for these offences, as player welfare is at stake. Galway hurler Adrian Tuohy was not pursued after knocking off Patrick Maher's helmet in the semi-final against Tipperary only because the referee had not noticed what happened and proving intention against the player was complicated by his back being to the incident.

He could still be deemed fortunate and that would have been an awkward backdrop to any attempt to pursue Austin Gleeson but the GAA could have done without one of the most exciting players in the game getting involved in something they are so keen to eradicate – and with good reason.

Yes, it is good that the current hurler of the year will play in the All-Ireland final for a county that has been waiting 58 years for a title but it would have been better if he hadn't jeopardised that prospect through indiscipline.

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Gaelic Games All-Ireland SHC final

Donoghue pays tribute to the coaching influence of Keady



Keith Duggan in Galway

On Gleeson incident, manager says on the big day you want the big players to play

Galway senior hurling manager Micheál Donoghue has paid tribute to the coaching influence of the late Tony Keady who had on his squad, and described the nationwide sorrow which followed the news of his death as “remarkable and a testament to the man”.

Keady, a towering presence in Galway's 1987/88 All-Ireland winning team and an enduringly popular and respected GAA figure, died suddenly just days after watching his county pip Tipperary in the All-Ireland semi-final.

He had involved himself in coaching at all grades, and his effervescence meant that all generations of Galway people were familiar with him. His most recent coaching contribution was with Ahascragh, the home club of Padraic and Cathal Mannion. Keady was due to take a session with them on the day he was taken ill.

Sense of perspective
“He touched many lives,” Donoghue said. “The way he carried himself, and how he represented himself with Galway has shone through the last week. Our immediate thoughts will go to Margaret, Shannon, Anthony, Jake and Harry.”

“It puts a huge sense of perspective into it. The last week has been very humbling because of the outpouring of emotion in Oranmore, his own club Killimordaly and nationwide.”

“From our perspective, our first thing is to extend condolences to the family, and I think the greatest thing we can now do is push on and try and wear



Waterford and Cork players observe a minute's silence in memory of Tony Keady at last Sunday's All-Ireland semi-final at Croke Park. PHOTOGRAPH: RYAN BYRNE/INPHO

that jersey in the honour that he did. That's all we can do.”

As interest in the Galway-Waterford All-Ireland final begins to intensify, there had been echoes of what became known as “the Keady affair” hanging over the event.

In 1989, Keady was unable to play in that year's championship after being hit with a ban for playing a game in New York. He was Hurler of the Year at the time. Ahead of yesterday evening's decision not to take any action against Austin Gleeson, there had been plenty of week-

end debate as to whether the current Hurler of the Year, would be eligible to line out in the All-Ireland final.

At yesterday's media day in a Loughrea hotel, before the news broke, Donoghue was reluctant to get into the specifics of the incident, but said it was preferable to see all first-choice players available for both sides on big days.

Helmet interference
“When you are in this position, and you are being asked the questions, you just see the process through and see what comes of it. But look, on the biggest day, whoever you are playing, you still want all the players – their big players and our big players – available. I'd love if Paul Killeen was available. He sustained a bad injury. So on all

the big days you want your big players to play.”

Tadhg De Búrca missed last weekend's match against Cork after being red-carded for helmet interference during Water-

“He touched many lives. The way he carried himself and how he represented himself with Galway has shone through the last week”

ford's quarter-final win over Wexford.

And ironically, Galway's Adrian Touhy was not cited for what looked to be accidental

contact with the helmet of Tipperary's Patrick Maher.

Harry Kehoe, the Wexford player with whom de Búrca tangled, later vouched for his opponent in the appeals process, and replays make it impossible to ascertain whether intent was there.

Both incidents have ignited debate over interpretation of the rule, and Gleeson's incident, involving Cork's Luke Meade just after the ball had gone out of play, was also open to several interpretations.

“The rule is there, and it's just ironic in the last number of weeks that it has been one incident after another. Up to that it wasn't a huge conversation-maker. But now, because you are at the business-end, it's high on the agenda.

“But I don't know what altera-

tion they can or can't make to it. Because it's a high topic now it's something they will look at to see how they can change it or what they can do, but right now it doesn't concern you much.”

Accidental
Team captain David Burke expressed his relief that Touhy is free to play in the final. “There was very little in it. It was more accidental than anything, I think. It would have been a shame for Adrian to miss it, like any other player.

“I haven't read the wording of the rule. There are a lot of referees coming out saying they don't agree with it.

“The GAA need to take a look at it and sort it out because people are talking about the wording of the ruling. It is affecting players.”

Gaelic Games News

Austin Gleeson clear to play in All-Ireland final

Waterford star will not face disciplinary charge over headguard incident

SEÁN MORAN and EAMON DONOGHUE

Austin Gleeson will be free to play in next month's All-Ireland final. The news emerged yesterday that the current Hurler of the Year will not face a disciplinary charge in respect of an incident in last Sunday's semi-final victory over Cork in which he was seen to grab the headguard of Cork's Luke Meade.

He was cleared by referee James Owens, who in a clarification of his match report confirmed that he had adjudicated on the matter on the day. Once an incident is dealt with in the referee's report, no further investigation is possible.

The news comes as a blow to the GAA's attempts to discourage this particular foul within the game. The rule under Category III infractions is 5.19: “To behave in any way which is dangerous to an opponent, including to deliberately pull on or take hold of a face guard or any other part of an opponent's helmet”

Gleeson's escape will be a considerable relief to Waterford, who face into the county's first All-Ireland final in nine years and only their third since last winning the MacCarthy Cup in 1959.

Exciting talent
One of the most exciting talents in the game, he overcame a slow start against Cork to register 1-2 and create the watershed score, a goal for Jamie Barron.

The county is expected to contest vigorously the automatic suspension for Conor Gleeson, who was sent off for striking in the 69th minute of the semi-final.

It will be a familiar trail for Waterford, as just before the semi-final they contested Tadhg de Búrca's suspension for the same infraction before all tiers of the GAA's disciplinary system, hearings, appeals and arbitration at the Disputes

Resolution Authority. It's unlikely that Conor Gleeson will evade the suspension, as the offence clearly takes place and has been dealt with by the referee with a red card.

Meanwhile, Armagh stalwart Ciarán McKeever has announced his retirement after an injury ravaged few seasons.

The 34-year-old St Patrick's Cullyhanna clubman steps away with four Ulster senior titles, as well as Division One, Two and Three league titles.



“He was cleared by referee James Owens, who in a clarification of his match report confirmed he had adjudicated on the matter on the day”

McKeever shot to prominence in the Armagh Under-21 team that won the Ulster and All-Ireland title in 2004, before giving 14 seasons of senior service in the Armagh defence.

The teak tough defender met with his former halfback team-mate, now manager, Kieran McGeeney before the 2016 season and was convinced to commit for one last year – that despite two operations the previous year.

He featured as a substitute in the county's All-Ireland quarter-final defeat to Tyrone earlier this month, after a young Armagh side progressed to the last eight. He represented Ireland in four International Rules series, and won four Railway Cups with Ulster.

Briefs

Soccer

Buffon joins Messi and Ronaldo on Player of the Year shortlist

Gianluigi Buffon joins two time winners Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo on the shortlist for the latest Uefa Player of the Year award with the veteran Italian goalkeeper recognised for his part in leading Juventus to a third straight domestic double as well as the final of the Champions League.

Buffon's side lost to Real Madrid in that game and the Spanish club was well represented amongst the players to make the top 10.

Luka Modric, Toni Kroos and Sergio Ramos finished 4th, 5th and 7th respectively with Zlatan Ibrahimovic (10th) the only representative



Gianluigi Buffon: led Juventus to Champions League final

of a Premier League club. The shortlist for the women's award sees Pernille Harder (VfL Wolfsburg and Denmark), Dzsenifer Marozsan (Lyon and Germany) and Lieke Martens (Rosengard and the Netherlands) in contention.

Cricket

Balbirnie's maiden century puts Ireland in strong position

Andrew Balbirnie's maiden first-class hundred has put Ireland in a commanding position at the end of the first day of their ICC Inter-Continental Cup clash with the Netherlands at Malahide.

The 26-year-old became Ireland's first centurion as a Full Member team as the Irish dominated an admittedly understrength Dutch attack to finish the first day on 292 for 2.

Irish openers Ed Joyce and William Porterfield negotiated a tough opening hour, with Joyce eventually hitting 6 fours in an entertaining 43 and Porterfield making 60 from 149 balls.



Andrew Balbirnie: finished day on 130 not out

Ireland upped the tempo in the late afternoon and Balbirnie and John Anderson took full advantage. The pair added an unbroken 150 in exactly 46 overs, with Balbirnie finishing on 130 not out and the ever-consistent Anderson undefeated on 57.

Manager of the Month

Kingston wins July award for Cork's hurling resurgence

Kieran Kingston, manager of the Cork senior hurling team, has been named winner of the Philips Lighting Sports Manager of the Month for July.

On the 9th of July, in Semple Stadium, Cork defeated Clare by 1-25 to 1-20. This was Munster's first Senior hurling championship since 2014 and their 53rd senior crown.

Kieran Kingston and his backroom team are credited with the Cork resurgence in the championship, beating All-Ireland champions Tipperary 2-27 to 1-26 and Waterford 0-23 to 1-15 on their way to the Munster



Kieran Kingston with his July award

title. This followed on from an Allianz League campaign in which they finished runners-up in Division One to Tipperary before losing to Limerick in the quarter-finals.

Results round-up

Baseball

MAJOR LEAGUES: Arizona Diamondbacks 2 Houston Astros 0, Chicago Cubs 15 Cincinnati Reds 5, Colorado Rockies 3 Atlanta Braves 0, Miami Marlins 0 San Francisco Giants 3, New York Yankees 4 New York Mets 2, Oakland Athletics 2 Kansas City Royals 6, San Diego Padres 7 Philadelphia Phillies 4, Seattle Mariners 3 Baltimore Orioles 11, Texas Rangers 6 Detroit Tigers 2, Toronto Blue Jays 2 Tampa Bay Rays 1.

Cricket

ICC INTERCONTINENTAL CUP (Malahide, Day 1 of 4) Ireland first innings 292-2 (96 overs; A. Balbirnie 130*, W. Porterfield 60, J. Anderson 57*, E. Joyce 43).

Golf

BRITISH BOYS' CHAMPIONSHIP (Nairns Dunbar and Nairns) – **First qualifying round** (Irish interest): 67 J. Madden (Royal Portrush), 69 I. O'Neill (Connemara), D. Kitt (Athlery), 71 R. Moran (Castle), 73 J. Doherty (Carton House), J. Brady (Rosslare), 74 C. Denvir (Elm Park), T. Mulligan (Laytown and Bettystown), R. Black (Templepatrick), 75 A. Hill (Athlery), J. Logue (Templepatrick), M. Power (Kilenny), 78 L. Power (Galway), 83 J. Hearn (Tramore).

IRELAND (Home Internationals, Moortown): **Conor O'Rourke** (Naas), **Colin Fairweather** (Knock), **Robin Dawson** (Tramore), **Peter O'Keeffe** (Douglas), **Paul McBride** (The Island), **John Ross Galbraith** (Whitehead), **Caolan Rafferty** (Dundalk), **Alex Gleeson** (Castle), **Conor Purcell** (Portmarnock), **Colin Campbell** (Warrenpoint), **Ronan Lester** (Hermitage).

Tennis

ATP & WTA Cincinnati
Men's first round: Alexandr Dolgopolov (Ukr) bt Kevin Anderson (RSA) 6-4 7-6 (8-6), Nick Kyrgios (Aus) bt David Goffin (Bel) 6-2 6-3, Karen Khachaturyan (Rus) bt Diego Sebastian Schwartzman (Arg) 6-1 6-6-3, Juan Martin Del Potro (Arg) bt (10) Tomas Berdych (Cze) 3-6 7-6 (7-1) 6-0, Albert Ramos-Vinolas (Spa) bt Mikhail Youzhny (Ger) bt (10) Agnieszka Radwanska (Pol) 6-4 6-4, Ramakumar Ramanathan (Ind) bt Chris Eubanks (USA) 6-7 (4-6) 7-6 (7-4).

Women's first round: Ashley Barty (Aus) bt Varvara Lepchenko (USA) 6-4 6-4, (11) Dominika Cibulkova (Svk) bt Ana Konjuh (Cro) 5-7 7-5 6-2 (9) Venus Williams (USA) bt Alison Riske (USA) 6-2 6-0, Julia Goerges (Ger) bt (10) Agnieszka Radwanska (Pol) 6-4 6-4, Aleksandra Krunic (Ser) bt (12) Jelena Ostapenko (Lat) 6-4 6-2.

US OPEN – Wildcards: Maria Sharapova (Rus), Ashley Kratzer (US), Sofia Kenin (US), Brienne Minor (US), Kayla Day (US), Taylor Townsend (US), Amandine Hesse (Fra).