

International Rules News

Gap year has not worked for series – O'Neill



Seán Moran
in Perth

Concept's future will be discussed during talks after weekend Test

GAA President Liam O'Neill has accepted that the gap year introduced to the international rules series in 2008 has not worked. He also said that there was a possibility that next year's contest might again be played on a one-match basis.

Speaking to media in the Ireland team hotel in Perth, O'Neill said that he was in favour of the series continuing but said that the GAA would not be meeting their AFL counterparts about the future of the internationals until after Saturday's Test.

His comments on the gap year came as the president defended the GAA's choice of broadcast partner for the series after a question querying TG4's role given the language barrier for many.

"TG4 do a fantastic job for us. They never let us down. It's in the media rights deal they have with us. Whoever broadcasts the game has nothing to do with the size of the crowd. It's the work done beforehand that matters there."

Doesn't really work
"We need more certainty. That would be playing every year. Taking a gap year is a bit like breaking off an engagement and going back again – it doesn't really work. You could get a lot more momentum into it if it was played every year."

He also delivered a broad statement of support for the internationals.

"We're here to play. This game has been arranged for three years. I see this as just one more game in the series. It's a chance for our players to play internationally. We fully support the concept. My personal view is that I hope it will continue."

Asked whether he would agree to another one-test se-

ries in Ireland next year, he replied: "I'm sure we would. That decision might not be made before the 28th February. I'd be prepared to make it now but Aogán [Ó Fearghail, president-elect] is president from then, so whatever happens after that will be decided by him and the new Coiste Bainistí and Páraic [Duffy, GAA Director General].

"The players are very happy to get the chance to play one Test this year; they're really up for it. They're for it and I would hate to see it thrown away simply because of a dislike for one Test instead of two."

Asked whether the GAA would be able to fund the series from the gate receipts of one Test, O'Neill said he thought it would be possible.

He reiterated that the central consideration in the series was the relationship between the two sports organisations

but remarked that the Australians didn't appear as autonomous as the GAA.

"As I said the other day at a function in Melbourne, if the series is going to survive it's going to survive because of good relations between the AFL and the GAA.

"They don't seem to have the same grip on decision making that we have centrally. They're saying they haven't and they have to consult the players and have to consult the clubs. We're meeting them on Sunday for a post-match review. It wouldn't make any sense to do it any sooner. If there's a lack of a decision, it'll be on their side and not ours."

During the week the AFL have flown a kite about a poten-

tial Test in the US, which was suggested as a possible stop-off point for the Australia team on their way to Ireland.

Emphasising that any such match couldn't come out of Ireland's schedule of home matches, O'Neill also maintained that the GAA would prefer to promote its own games in America.

"That's their agenda, not ours. If we were going to America, I'd like to see us playing Gaelic football. That would be the number one choice for us."

"That [a stopover match] might be possible but we can't just commit to those sorts of things. We're already discussing changes for that time of the year, so we'd have to consider how that would impact."

"It's interesting though that the shinty – the Camanachd Association – were looking at a game in New York against our shinty [international rules] team. It's interesting that both of our partners are looking at New York as a possible place to play games."

Increased space
Addressing domestic issues, the president talked about the proposed tightening of the inter-county season and the bringing forward of All-Ireland finals in order to make increased space available for club fixtures.

The sub-committee appointed to review this matter deferred launching its report until January's Central Council meeting.

"When you move your fixtures back you know when you have to start and, if we get permission to move the All-Irelands forward, that will create windows. We can do other creative things with the staging of All-Ireland quarter-finals and semi-finals."

"You could gain another week; you could gain another couple of weeks once you move away from the fundamental thing that the All-Ireland finals have to be the first and third Sundays of September. Our preference all along up to this point was that September was ours and we always resisted moving from that."

"But Páraic and I have come to the conclusion now that if we don't give centrally, we can't expect counties and clubs to give. But if we do give centrally, not only are we showing goodwill, we're actually creating the space in which all the other games can take place."

“Taking a gap year is a bit like breaking off an engagement and going back again – it doesn't really work. You could get a lot more momentum into it if it was played every year”



Rules dream becomes very real for Moran

Kerry All Star has always been inspired by international exploits of fellow county men

SEÁN MORAN
in Perth

The Ireland team had an extended and at times impressive work-out for Saturday's international rules test in Patersons Stadium, Perth last night. Kerry centre-forward David Moran, an All Star for the first time last month, is in his first international panel but before he can reflect on that, the news from home has put him in a more obvious spotlight.

Declan O'Sullivan's retirement after more than a decade in the Kerry jersey prompts an obvious request for a response.

"I suppose in one way it's very disappointing. From a per-

sonal point of view I always got on very well with him. He was certainly the best leader I ever played with and he was Kerry football for as long as I've been involved in it."

Just inhuman
"The injuries were killing him but if you see the way he was playing in the Munster final you're saying, 'This man is just inhuman and he might go on forever'. He was coming to the end of his career and we were hoping he'd stay on but he owes Kerry nothing. He's been an unbelievable player and the best of luck in retirement."

"The thing that sticks out in my mind is more recently, in ex-

tra-time in the Mayo game in Limerick [All-Ireland semi-final]. I think it was Aidan [O'Shea] who came in and hit him a good slap and he didn't even move him."

"He just slipped it to Jonathan Lyne and it was over the bar."

"It was an unbelievable turning point in that game. All through his career, because he

“I remember John O'Keefe was my principal in school and when he was manager of the Irish team I was in school and Tadhg was home from Australia and the buzz around it was unreal”

was so good, he was targeted a lot. He was well able to take it. When he was on song, he was unstoppable."

Moran's connections with the rules game saw him come to Australia when his friend Tommy Walsh was trialling but he says his interest and ambition for the international game was nurtured from an early stage when county man Tadhg Kennelly became the first GAA import to Australia to win a premiership.

Same county

"It is because I'm from the same county as Tadhg and I remember John O'Keefe was my principal in school and when he was manager of the Irish team I was in school and Tadhg was home from Australia and the buzz around it was unreal."

"I remember one year Dr Con [Murphy] was the doctor. He got my brother in and we

Ireland's David Moran training with Ross Munnally ahead of Saturday's Test match with Australia.

PHOTOGRAPH: CATHAL NOONAN/INPHO

were in the dressing room, getting gear off Darragh Ó Sé, Tomás Ó Sé and maybe it was just that that captivated me as well. It definitely was something I always wanted to do."

Asked about the doping controversy surrounding the Essendon club in the AFL and the presence of two of their players in the Australia squad, he parries the question.

"No, it hasn't come up at all. I suppose we haven't been reading the papers out here so that's kind of a matter for the AFL, it's nothing to do with us."

"We're just concentrating on ourselves and that's up to the AFL, it's nothing to do with us."

Gaelic Games News

O'Sullivan calls time on stellar intercounty career

EAMONN DONOGHUE

Declan O'Sullivan has announced his intercounty retirement although thanks to some "corrective work" on his knees he will be able to continue his club career for a number of years to come.

Kerry GAA announced that the 30-year-old, who struggled throughout this year's championship with ongoing knee injuries, will not line out with the All-Ireland champions in the 2015 season.

The Dromid Peases club man departs the county scene having won every honour available to him with his beloved Kerry during a senior intercounty career that stretches back to 2003.

O'Sullivan himself added that despite the difficulty in coming to the decision he feels that this is the right time.

"Unfortunately, due to some long-standing injuries, it would be impossible for me to physically compete at the required level in 2015. Hopefully, after a long rest and some corrective work on my knees, I will be able to enjoy playing with my club for a number of years to come."

Consecutive All Stars

Having made his championship debut against Tipperary in 2003, O'Sullivan had the distinction of being one of only eight players to lift the Sam Maguire more than once as he followed in the footsteps of fellow Kerry men such as Dick Fitzgerald, John Joe Sheehy and Joe Barrett.

ship appearances for Kerry, the last of which was in the recent All-Ireland defeat of Donegal when he was introduced as a second-half substitute to win his fifth Celtic Cross. He won three consecutive All Star awards between 2007 and 2009.

Though plagued with injury this year, often lining out despite heavy strapping to both knees, he still played a key role in Kerry's championship success.

■ Declan O'Sullivan: won five All-Ireland medals in an outstanding Kerry career

A Kerry GAA statement read that "few will forget his display in the Munster final defeat of Cork in Páirc Uí Chaoimh in July. Declan has the distinction of lining out in every position in the forward line for Kerry in senior championship. On the club scene he was no less successful winning county and Munster junior medals and four senior county championship titles with divisional side South Kerry."

A stubborn streak
Kerry Manager Eamonn Fitzmaurice was one of the first to pay tribute to the five-times All-Ireland medal winner.

"His honesty, the warrior-like way he leads by example and his innate football ability meant his team-mates loved him. He also has a stubborn

streak that meant he always fought his corner obstinately, be it in an argument or to win a breaking ball that might turn a game."

"His display in the Munster final was one of the great performances. He was always excellent at reading what a game required and delivering that."

Former Kerry manager Jack O'Connor also joined in the tributes.

"He will go down as one of the truly great Kerry players and as well as the contribution he made to the county, he was also a great clubman with both Dromid Peases and South Kerry as well as with his school, Coláiste na Sceilge."

Fantastic player
"He was a fantastic player, even at a very young age and one of the great Kerry forwards of all time – there's no question about that."

Patrick O'Sullivan, chairman of Kerry County Committee added: "as Kerry people we all owe Declan O'Sullivan a great debt of gratitude for the outstanding service he has given to the county in a career that stretches way back to his minor days in 2001.

Munster SHC Final Kilmallock v Cratloe

Mulcahy hoping Clare connection can swing it for Limerick champions

IAN O'RIORDAN

Such is the Clare backdrop to Sunday's Munster club hurling final that Kilmallock may need some reminding of where exactly they're coming from.

They're playing Clare champions Cratloe, who have been in the spotlight this season for their dual dream (only the hurling part of which survives).

Kilmallock are managed Ger 'Sparrow' O'Loughlin, who won two All-Irelands with

Clare, and before that their manager was another Clare man, former All-Ireland-winning selector Tony Considine.

And they won't be playing far from Clare territory either – the Gaelic Grounds is practically within puke-out distance of Cratloe, just over the border and down the Ennis Road.

Successful club
Kilmallock recently won an 11th county title to become the third most successful club in Limerick history behind Ahane and Patrickswell. They're also looking to win back a Munster club title won twice before, in 1992 and 1994. The club are at the heart of Limerick hurling.

final and also Cork champions Sarsfields in the Munster semi-final.

"Sparrow has made a big difference, definitely brought something new to the table," says Mulcahy. "We had Tony Considine before that, won two counties with him, and now Sparrow has brought a little more discipline to it too, that we maybe didn't have before."

Huge experience
"He'd already been through some Munster campaigns, with Adare, and he'd won three Limerick titles with them. He definitely had a good CV, knows the Limerick scene very well, and I think has brought some of that huge experience to us."

"And I suppose, yeah, being a Clare man, he'll know Cratloe well, and he'll have watched them before. He knows they're a very strong team, but sure we'll be concentrating on ourselves. Any club that's won a county, they always want to move on to bigger and better things. We're hoping to do that on Sunday."

"We've worked hard to get this far. If you were following the Limerick championship, we scraped past Adare and Doon. They'd be equally as strong as us, and as strong as Na Piarasigh. I think there's definitely a very strong club scene in Limerick at the moment, which has helped raise the inter-county standard."

"And I think Na Piarasigh winning the two Munster clubs [in 2011 and 2013] has really showed us that the bar can be set higher. We've tried to get to their standard."



■ Intercounty star Graeme Mulcahy will captain Kilmallock on Sunday. PHOTOGRAPH: CATHAL NOONAN/INPHO

Mulcahy admits he has other motivations going onto Sunday's final: anyone thinking of buying him a DVD for Christmas of the highlights of the hurling championship might want to reconsider, because he wasn't able to watch the All-Ireland final or replay between Kilkenny and Tipperary, knowing Limerick had beaten Tipp, in Munster, and possibly should have beaten Kilkenny in the All-Ireland semi-final.

"No, I couldn't watch those finals, knowing that they were there. The year before, it was a different feeling, with Clare having beaten us and we didn't perform. But Kilkenny just beating us, and having beaten Tipp, we knew that we were well good enough to be there.

Colleges GAA

Casey drives Ardscoil Rís to victory

Holders Ardscoil Rís cruised to a 1-21 to 0-11 Harty Cup derby win over West Limerick Colleges in yesterday's Group One derby.

A loss to Thurles CBS had put Ardscoil Rís under pressure, but they responded delivering an impressive first-half performance in Kilmallock to seize control.

With Peter Casey prominent, Ardscoil reeled off eight early points without reply eventually accumulating a 0-14 to 0-4 interval lead.

Casey, who finished with a fine personal 1-10 tally, added an insurance goal nine minutes from the end.

In Clonmel unbeaten Thurles CBS booked a place in the knockout stages defeating Blackwater CS 2-15 to 3-3.

St Colman's Fermoy were far too strong for DLS Waterford in Group Two with a convincing 5-11 to 0-6 success.

There was joy for two Cork outfits in Group Three as PS Youghal pipped Charleville CBS 0-18 to 2-11, while Rochestown College survived a tough test to beat St Caimins Shannon 0-16 to 0-13.

In Group Four, Hamilton HS Bandon grabbed a late goal to defeat Midleton CBS 2-16 to 0-21, while Nenagh CBS defeated High School Clonmel 1-17 to 0-16.

Group 1: Ardscoil Rís 1-21 West Limerick Colleges 0-11; Thurles CBS 2-15 Blackwater CS 3-3
Group 2: St Colman's Fermoy 5-11 DLS Waterford 0-6
Group 3: PS Youghal 0-18 Charleville CBS 2-11; Rochestown College 0-16 St Caimins Shannon 0-13
Group 4: Hamilton HS Bandon 2-16 Midleton CBS 0-21; Nenagh CBS 1-17 High School Clonmel 0-16.