

Gaelic Games

Loyalty comes first for Kerry All Star Murphy

Rathmore man missed All Star trip to Boston to play for club in East Kerry final

Return of Colm Cooper and Tommy Walsh adding to anticipation levels in Kingdom

EAMON DONOGHUE

Kerry footballer Paul Murphy had no reservations about dropping last month's All Star trip to Boston to represent his club in the East Kerry final in Killarney.

It may have been different from the highs of last September's All-Ireland final triumph and his own man of the match display, but when all was put into context he says there was never a doubt in his mind over whether to go or to stay.

"My mother said to me, 'if I said this time last year to you that you would have won an All-Ireland and an All Star but you would have to miss the All-Star trip' sure I'd have bitten her hand off for it'. It was a pity but it isn't the end of the world and we won the final with the club."

The 23-year-old defender was representing Rathmore in the East Kerry final against Leogion which had gone to a replay and subsequently clashed with the trip.

"Once the replay was set there was never any discussion. It was a pity the way it worked out that it couldn't be changed but you have to have a bit of perspective too."

Own club

"It's the East Kerry Championship and it's very hard to win that medal. Diarmuid O'Keefe is from our own club. He has two All-Ireland medals but he has no East Kerry Championship. It's a really competitive division. We felt that we should have won the first game but we knew we had a great chance in

the replay... it's a very treasured medal."

Murphy's phenomenal year started around a year ago when he was drafted into the Kerry squad.

"About this time last year I joined the panel and my personal goal was to get a bit of game-time in the league and be in the 26 for the championship."

"When I played in the McGrath Cup we had a few injuries, Killian (Young) was out and he did not come back until after a few games into the league so I suppose the door opened coming from the McGrath Cup into the league."

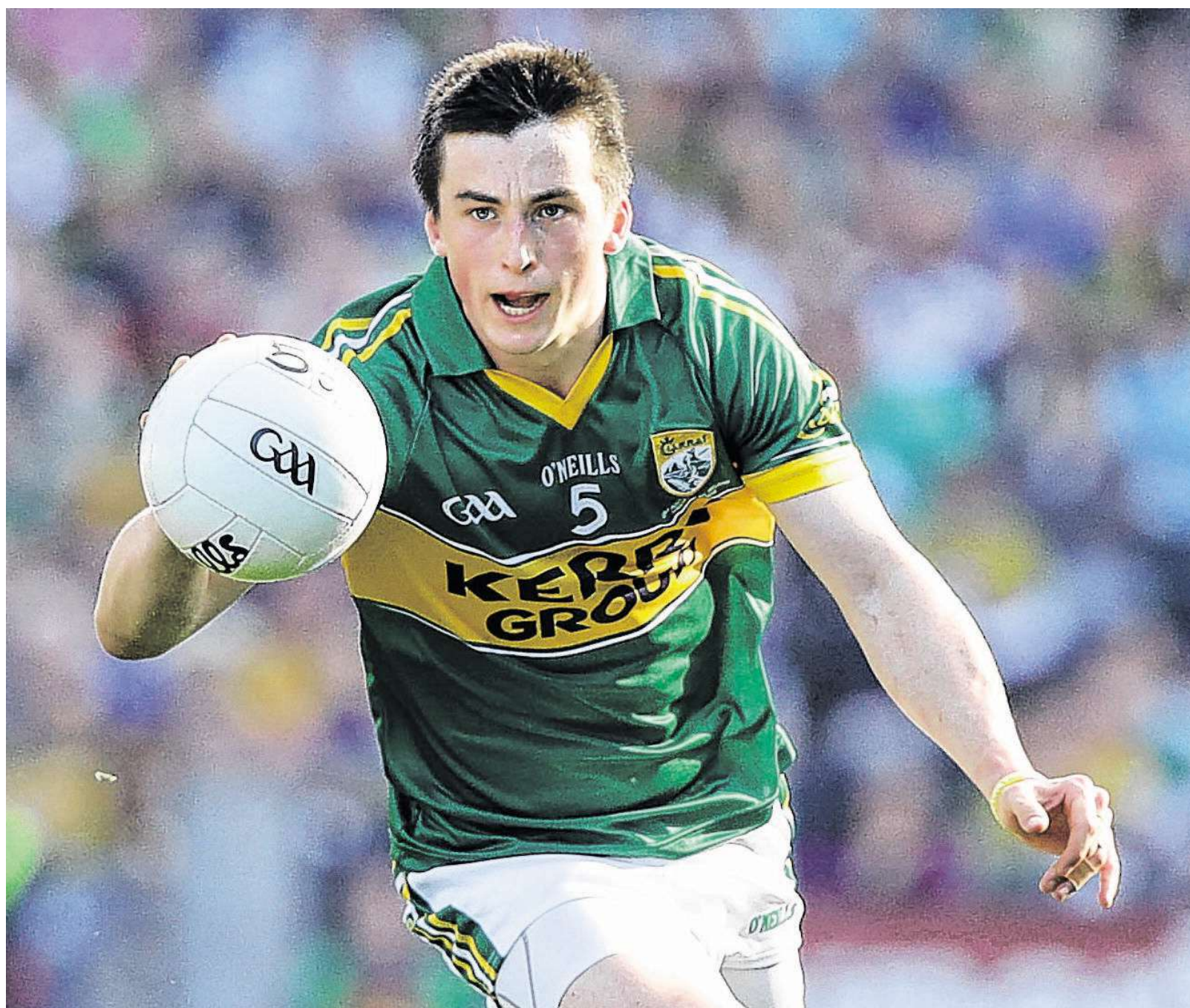
Completely satisfied

"I played against Dublin in the league and once you have your foot in the door you want to hold onto the jersey and luckily enough things fell for me after that. I completely satisfied my goal, I suppose."

Such is the expectation in Kerry that a back-to-back All-Ireland is already being touted, or rather expected in some quarters. The return of Colm Cooper and Tommy Walsh to the squad for the new year has heightened expectations.

Eight-time All Star Cooper injured his cruciate ligament last winter ruling the Kerry captain out of action for the entire season.

"It has to be a help, them returning. Colm was involved with us this year. Not in a playing capacity but he was involved in the training and he has a great head for the game. He gives great advice and having him around was a huge help," said Murphy.



Jim Madden Leadership GPA launch new sponsored programme

To criticise the GPA for working too closely with the GAA is "ridiculous" according to GAA director general Páircí Duffy, because initiatives such as the Jim Madden Leadership programme are in both associations' best interests.

Talking at the GPA's launch of the new programme yesterday Duffy responded to criticism "anything that supports players is also important for us to be

involved in".

The programme, sponsored by the American sponsor, former Tipperary hurling manager Liam Sheehy has welcomed the idea as he feels "we are starting to lose our community ethos and this is exactly what we need in the country, and in clubs".

Madden himself added that "this is not just a tribute to my father but for the thousands and thousands of Jim Maddens who are out there."

"We take it for granted that these community leaders just pop up and do this job but we can't take it for granted anymore."

"He had a massive season in 2013 and did very well with his club all through last winter and

he was just unfortunate with the injury so I'm sure he'll be ready for road again."

"What he adds to it next year will be mainly in a playing capacity whereas you could imagine

Tommy could add a lot more than just that. He was a great prospect and player when he left so five years as a professional you would imagine would bring him on again."

Walsh left Kerry in 2009, after lining out at corner forward in that year's All-Ireland winning campaign, to pursue a career in the AFL.

The former Sydney Swans player has now returned and been recalled to the Kerry panel for the McGrath Cup. Former All-Ireland and AFL premiership winner Tadhg Kennelly said at last weekend's AFL combine in DCU that Walsh would return to Ireland as a "completely different" player.

"Having been involved in two professional teams," said Murphy, "he will have picked up

■ Paul Murphy: "There will be good competition there next year but that is only good for Kerry." PHOTOGRAPH: CATHAL NOONAN/INPHO

things that we can take off him and hopefully that will bring on other players as well, not just through his footballing ability but his knowledge of recovery and things like that."

"Eamon (Fitzmaurice) will do whatever he thinks is right for Kerry. There will be good competition there next year but that is only good for Kerry. If individuals have to lose out, that's football and you have to get over it and row in with the rest of the panel."

News

Hickey welcomes Daly on board

EAMON DONOGHUE

Limerick All Star Séamus Hickey is happy to have a home-grown manager remain in charge of the county's senior hurling team although he welcomes Anthony Daly's appointment as academy head coach.

Hickey hopes the experience the former Clare hurler gained as a manager, with both Clare and Dublin, will help take Limerick hurling the vital extra mile.

"I would argue that any job that came up this year he was going to be a candidate for it. When he took himself out of Clare and put himself in that job in Dublin it showed an ability to step outside that comfort zone where he'd be familiar with his surroundings and really make hay," said Hickey.

"I speak very highly of the guy because I think very highly of the guy..."

Yet Hickey says the Limerick panel are lucky to have one of their own, TJ Ryan, currently at the helm.

"At the moment, at home we're blessed to have a Limerick man leading a Limerick team and we're delighted."

The 27-year-old corner back added: "I've been speaking with Anthony since he left Dublin and he's just a tremendous character."

Great leader

"He's a great guy to be around. I looked at the book and thought it was great. I would consider him a great leader within Clare and what he's done for Dublin it's very hard to quantify. Away from the GAA, his charisma and what he's done for hurling in Dublin. I think it'll leave a very telling mark."

Limerick have won the last two Munster minor titles, and talking at the GPA's launch of the Jim Madden Leadership programme, Hickey has emphasised the importance of a fervent leader to guide the transition through to the senior ranks.

"We were wondering where we could get the impetus to drive this programme forward and there's no better person. I'm really chuffed for Limerick hurling."

Hockey

Men's squad heading to South Africa in January

STEPHEN FINDLATER

The Irish senior men's team have opted for warm-weather training in South Africa in January, rather than Alicante this week, as their key preparation camp ahead of next February's World League Round Two competition in San Diego.

That tournament in California marks the first phase in the Olympic qualifying process with a top-three finish required to go through to the all-important round three where tickets to Rio 2016 will be doled out.

Craig Fulton's charges were due to play four games each against Poland and Spain this week but the decision was taken to cancel this trip in favour of Cape Town in the New Year.

Three sides

There, they will meet three sides that competed at the 2012 Olympic Games - world number two side the Netherlands, fourth-ranked Belgium along with the South African hosts.

Fulton said: "It is the perfect training environment and we couldn't ask for better opposition. It has been an exciting past nine months [since taking the job] and we are really looking forward to achieving in 2015."

On home turf, there are three Leinster league games on this weekend. Leaders Monkstown host fourth-placed Glananne in a tie that doubles as the Gerry McCabe Memorial Trophy match.

Town have been without Irish international goalkeeper David Fitzgerald through injury for most of the past month but Jamie Carr, a St Andrew's

■ Ireland's hockey coach Craig Fulton: "It's the perfect training environment"

schoolboy, has been an able deputy between the posts.

Victory will assure Graham Shaw's side top spot over Christmass. Glananne, though, are the only side to have taken points from Town and, if victorious, can move into a share of first.

Pembroke host Railway Union in another key battle for the top four placings.

WEEKEND FIXTURES
SATURDAY - Men's Leinster Division One: Monkstown v Glananne, Rathdown, 1.0. Pembroke v Railway Union, Serpentine Avenue, 1.0. SUNDAY - Men's Leinster Division One: Avoca v UCD, 12.30pm, Newpark

Cycling

Bennett looking forward to a strong year

SHANE STOKES

Now fully over the illness which affected him in the second half of the season, Sam Bennett has said that he is encouraged by his form at this point of the year and is looking forward to a strong 2015.

The Carrick-on-Suir rider had an impressive debut pro season with his NetApp Endura team in 2014, winning four races despite that jump up in level of competition.

Although his plan to expand on that list of successes was foiled by sickness, he is determined to make the most of his opportunities in the months ahead and has set an important goal.

Big effort

"I want to ride the Tour de France," he told *The Irish Times*. "The tour is something that the team would really like to be in again. They are making a really big effort to get another invitation. Obviously I didn't get an opportunity last year, but I'd love to get my chance next time."

Bennett wasn't selected for the squad as the team wanted to protect him from doing too much, too soon. Providing he is in good form in 2015 that

shouldn't be a consideration and with the team's previous leader Leopold Konig no longer part of the lineup after his move to Sky, it looks very possible that the team could target the sprinting stages with Bennett.

The 24-year-old rider said that he has been surprised how quickly his form returned after a brief period of training.

■ Sam Bennett: Carrick-on-Suir rider missed out on the Tour de France this year

He has reached new peak levels in terms of sprinting power output and is also lighter than he was during the 2014 season. He believes the former should translate into greater speed in the sprint finishes and the latter to ensuring he has more in reserve at the end of a race.

He's also a lot more secure in his ability that he was twelve months ago.

"After seeing how well things worked, I am a lot more relaxed," Bennett said. "I am more confident in my ability now."

Basketball

UCD Marian hoping for '19-hour turnaround'

ROSS O'DONOGHUE

UCD Marian have an opportunity to accelerate up the Men's Premier League table this weekend if they can take maximum points from two games in less than 24 hours.

Ioannis Liapakis's side host DCU Saints on Saturday night before heading to Limerick to take on UL Eagles on Sunday afternoon. Marian could rise three places to fourth but Liapakis's focus is solely on Saturday night.

"It's a 19-hour turnaround but we're not going to worry about the trip to Limerick until after the DCU game. We'll need to wait until we have a clear picture of where we stand," he said.

Home debut

Daniel Belgrave is expected to make his home debut for UCD. The English shooting guard impressed in the recent win over BFG Neptune while Preston Ross is also back to full fitness after an ankle injury.

Second placed Travelodge Swords Thunder host BFG Neptune at the ALSAA sports complex following their mid-week Cup win over Templeogue. The north Dubliners

are in their debut season in the Men's Premier League and coach Dave Baker is looking to play down talk of his side being title contenders.

"It would be a dream come true to meet Demons in February with a chance to level things up but I still think they're a cut above," he said.

Templeogue lost 82-59 in the Men's National Cup Quarter Final on Wednesday and face the unenviable task of playing C&S UCC Demons at the Mardyke Arena on Sunday. Killester play Dublin Inter at the IWA in Clontarf on Saturday night.

This weekend marks the half way point in the Men's Division One campaign. C&S Blue Demons face a Cork derby against rivals Fr Matthews, while Maree go up against Tolk Rovers.

WEEKEND FIXTURES

SATURDAY - Men's Premier League: Travelodge Swords Thunder v BFG Neptune, ALSAA Dublin, 6.0. UCD Marian v DCU Saints, UCD Sports Centre, Dublin, 7.0. Killester v Dublin Inter, IWA Clontarf, Dublin, 8.0. Division One: JM&L Auctioneers Titans v Eanna, Coláiste Iognáid, Galway, 7.0. Maree v Tolk Rovers, B.C. Glassnevin College, Oranmore, Galway, 7.45. SUNDAY - Men's Premier League: C&S UCC Demons v Templeogue, Mardyke Arena, Cork, 3.15. UL Eagles v UCD Marian, UL Sport Arena, Limerick, 3.30. Division One: C&S Blue Demons v Fr Matthews, Mardyke Arena, Cork, 1.0.

Rowing

Top crews vie to catch the eye of selectors

LIAM GORMAN

Ireland's top rowers are set to fight it out at the National Rowing Centre in a bid to catch the eye of the international selectors for the season ahead.

Crews will be finalised at the next on-the-water trial, in February, and this trial will give the 70-odd senior and under-23 competitors the chance to stake their claim. Ireland coach Don McLachlan says most of not all of the trial may be limited to Saturday as Sunday's weather forecast is poor.

There will be particular interest in the men's lightweight double of Gary and Paul O'Donovan. They are the sole crew being trialled in this boat, so they will race against the clock first and then side-by-side against crews with a similar profile over the 1900 metres.

Rank order

The men's lightweight four is more of a work in progress. McLachlan says the initial aim is to form a squad of six or eight aspirants. "We will try to get a rank order: see who is moving the boat and who isn't, see how it is going. There are a few youngsters around who are moving on, so it is kind of

exciting."

The women's heavyweight group has been the top-performing sector and it will be interesting to see if the work on the water matches the excellent ergometer scores being logged in recent weeks.

UCD's Séamus Kennedy is a late addition to the men's heavyweight invitees; the tall Kerryman recently pulled six min-

■ Paul O'Donovan: forming a lightweight double with his brother Gary

utes and five seconds on the ergometer.

The battle for positions in the women's lightweight double could be fascinating. Sinéad Jennings, Siobhán McCrohan, Claire Lambe and Denise Walsh are the main contenders. A talented group of US-based rowers, including Hilary Shinnick, Bridget Jacques and Fionnán McQuillan-Tolan could not make the trial but McLachlan says they could come into contention for places at the Under-23 World Championships in July.

Sailing

Strong Irish interest as Sydney-Hobart Race begins

DAVID O'BRIEN

World sailing interest focuses on Australia this morning as a record 119 yachts gather for the 70th Sydney-Hobart Race that will include Irish crews.

And, in the Volvo Ocean Race, a former deputy chief of the Australian navy is leading the investigation into November's grounding of the *Team Vestas Wind* VOR 65.

Cork and Dublin sailors are among the offshore crews carrying out final preparations in

Sydney Harbour before next week's 630-nautical mile race to Hobart, Tasmania.

Hurley at helm
Cobh's Barry Hurley returns for his third successive race as co-skipper on the Australian 40-foot entry, *Breakthrough*. Joining him on board are Dublin brothers Kenny and Alexander Rumball of the Irish National Sailing Club and Catherine Halpin.

Cruising Yacht Club of Australia race organisers say the

70th race is "bringing new, old, large and small" together for the start on St Stephen's Day.

Due to the large number and sheer size of some entries, including super maxis more than 100-foot long, there will be three start lines this year.

The last time numbers topped 100 was in 2004, when 116 boats started, though just 59 finished.

The Sydney-based *Breakthrough* is owned and skippered by Mathew Vadas (70), who sails it with a local crew for

much of the year. Hurley, who took first in class on IRC and ORC in October's Malta Middle Sea Race, works with Vadas remotely in preparation for the biggest sailing event in the Australian calendar.

Together with new sails and new rigging and a combination of northern and southern hemisphere crew, the aim is to make it third time lucky for Hurley.

Still given the straight-line nature of the 630-nautical mile course, he cautions that the "trajectory can sometimes fa-

vour boats at either end of the rating spectrum".

As one of the smaller boats, *Breakthrough's* position in the overall standings may well be a result of weather patterns, though Hurley said "our placing within our class will be the true measure of our success".

Grounding panel

Meanwhile, an independent panel will report by January 31st into the grounding of the Volvo Ocean Race yacht, *Team Vestas Wind*, on a reef in the In-

dian Ocean.

Onboard reporter Brian Carlin, from Kerry, recounted the terrifying hours after *Team Vestas Wind* ploughed into the shark-infested Cargados Carajos Shoals.

His photographs revealed how the 19-knot impact and subsequent battering from the seas ripped the stern off the V65 ocean racer.

The panel is to be chaired by Chris Oxenbould, a retired rear admiral and former deputy chief of the Australian navy.

Results round-up

Cricket

FIRST TEST MATCH (at Centurion) - South Africa 552-5 dec (H Amla 208, AB de Villiers 152, S van Zyl 101 mv) vs West Indies. SECOND TEST MATCH (at Brisbane) India 408 (M Vijay 144, A Rahane 81, J Hazlewood 5-68) vs Australia 221-4 (S Smith 65 no, C Rogers 55).

Gaelic Games

LEINSTER COLLEGES - North Leinster JHC final: Cistercian Roscrea 1-10 Col Naomh Cormac 1-6; South Leinster Juv FC D Final: Col Eoin Hacketstown 3-15 Sc Aireagail Ballyhale 0-5.

Ice Hockey

National Hockey League - Minnesota Wild 2 Boston Bruins 5, New Jersey Devils 0 Ottawa Senators 2, Vancouver Canucks 0

Dallas Stars 2.

Tennis

ITF MEN'S FUTURES (Lome, Togo, West Africa) - Doubles semi-final: (2) David O'Hare (Irl) / Joe Salsbury (Gr) bt Daniel Glancy (Irl) / Laurent Rochette (Fra) 6-2/6-3.

Today's Diary

RACING: Dundalk 6.10, Southwell 12.0, Wolverhampton 3.50, Uttoxeter 12.10, Ascot 12.50.

RUGBY: Pro12 (7.35) - Cardiff Blues vs Scarlets, Cardiff Arms Park; Edinburgh vs Treviso, Murrayfield; Leinster vs Connacht, RDS; Ulster Bank League Division One A - Cork Constitution v Dolphin, Templehill, 7.30; Division One B - Shannon v Garravone, Thomond Park, 7.30; Division Two B - Richmond v Old Crescent, Richmond Park, 7.30; Tullamore v Navan, Spillanstown, 8.0.