

# Royal pair set to return but Eric to depart

**CONOR MCGILL** and **Brian Conlon** are both set to return from suspension for Meath's Leinster SFC semi-final against Dublin on Sunday.

But the champions will have to plan without Eric Lowndes, who is the latest player to step away from Dessie Farrell's squad.

Lowndes made his Championship debut in 2015 and the long-term panelist featured from the bench in the 2016 All Ireland final replay win and the 2018 decider.

He was largely used as an impact sub for the Sky Blues, with his versatility allowing him to play in a number of positions around the middle third.

Lowndes featured in four of the ten-in-row Leinster final wins. He started three of those

By **GORDON MANNING**

and, in his last Championship appearance, came off the bench against Meath last November.

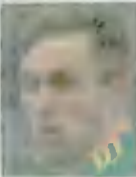
He would have been in the running for a starting place against Meath this Sunday because of the shoulder injury picked up by wing-back Robbie McDaid against Wexford.

With John Small not having featured since the league game against Kerry, the Dublin half-back line is low on numbers.

McGill and Conlon were both red-carded in Meath's Division 2 promotion semi-final against Kildare.

The pair missed the Royals' Leinster quarter-final win over Longford.

But they will now be available for the Dublin game, with McGill almost certain to start at full-back.

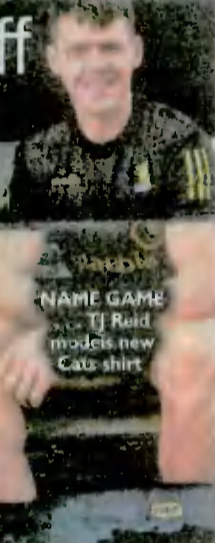


## It's top stuff

AHEAD of Saturday's Leinster SHC final against Dublin, Kilkenny have launched a unique training top that includes the names of every single player that has won an All-Ireland SHC with the Gats.

The new t-shirt is a move away from their traditional — and feared — black and amber colours.

Club chairman Jimmy Walsh said: "We know how passionate the Kilkenny GAA fans are about our national game, so it is a privilege to partner with O'Neills to launch this one-of-a-kind training top."



**NAME GAME**  
TJ Reid models new GAA shirt

# CONNACHT

From Back Page

SFC final to take place outside the province as Mayo bid for back-to-back titles against the Tribesmen.

Croke Park is also set to welcome 18,000 fans this weekend for the Leinster SHC final between Kilkenny and Dublin on Saturday.

Sunday's Leinster SFC semi-final double-header — when Meath take on Dublin and Kildare clash with Westmeath — will see the same amount of supporters admitted to the Jones' Road ground.

The Connacht Council are set to release ticket details in the coming days.

Provincial chiefs confirmed that the game would take place at 1.30pm.

### Legal Notices

#### South Dublin County Council

Permission is sought by John & Lynn O'Dwyer for the retention of an increase in the permissible number of children attending from a daily total of 42 to 66 at any one time at the existing childcare facility from that approved in previous planning Reg. No. SD11A/0278 and extended & amended by Ref. No. SD16A/0343 & 2No. Additional car parking spaces on site. No additional construction work is proposed; at Sunflowers, Ballyowen Lane, Lucan, Co. Dublin. K78 F4E3. The notice must state that the application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of the Planning Authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation may be made to the Planning Authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 6 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

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# FOOTBALL IN CRISIS

# We have

# no fears

# for

# tiers

## BARR SAYS GPA WELCOME SYSTEM



**VERY IMPORTANT PERSONS**... new GPA CEO Tom Parsons

### THE Gaelic Players Association believe a tiered football Championship can have a positive impact.

The structure of the All-Ireland SFC has been thrown under the microscope again in recent days — especially on the back of Leitrim's Connacht semi-final hammering to Mayo.

Former Mayo footballer Tom Parsons officially assumed the position of CEO of the GPA at their AGM on Monday, replacing Ciarán Barr, who had acted as interim chief following Paul Flynn's departure earlier this year.

And on the issue of the Tullteann Cup, effectively a B Championship in football, Barr said: "The players are broadly in favour of that."

"You've also got to remember that we're now a male and female organisation. If you look at the female competitions, they are tiered.

If you look at hurling, it's tiered. And so football is the odd one out at this stage and it's clear that you've got four divisions and you've got a very broad range of competitiveness. Within the divisions it's really competitive but across the divisions, it's not so competitive, so something has to change and our members recognise that and are broadly in favour of some form of tiering that will give this competi-

By **GORDON MANNING**  
GAA CORRESPONDENT

itiveness." But whenever the issue of Championship structures is raised, inevitably the matter of finance and a balancing of resources crops up. Parsons said: "It's a journey. Above and beyond even finance, every team needs to enter a competition and have a realistic chance of winning it."

"What is fairness of distribution and funding is a narrative that's there with the GAA but in the meantime, we need to create an environment that every team and player are enjoying their games and going out to win competitions, feeling that they can."

The crux of the problem often tossed out is the fund-

ing Dublin receives for coaching and development compared to other counties.

But Barr, a former Antrim hurler, said: "If we did an analysis of the number per head of player and per population, versus the absolute number, that's an interesting number to look at."

"I'd also say, look at how successful Dublin have been in football compared to hurling. So if the Dublin model was the right way to go they'd have six All-Ireland hurling Championships in a row — but they don't. When was the last time Dublin won an All-Ireland hurling final?"

"We can go down through Under-20 and minor and the whole lot, but in senior hurling the model hasn't produced the same level of success as in football, for lots of reasons."

"It's a more complicated equation than simply looking at the amount of money invested abso-

lutely in a county. In my view, you always have to look at the relative per capita amount that's been invested."

"If in 2040, the population and its density and its spread has changed significantly, we're going to be having the same conversation if we stick with the old model and the old ways of doing things."

"There will have to be an increase in the coaching in urban centres if the population grows in those areas. It's a simple fact."

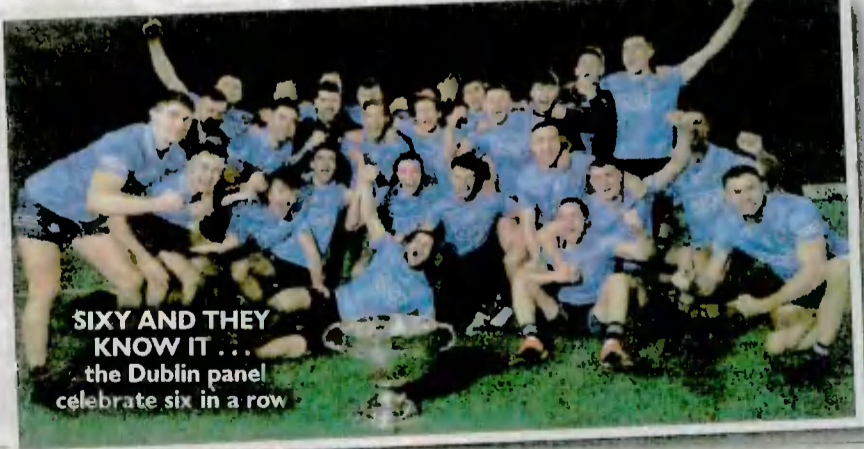
"It's not an equalisation driven by labels saying Antrim, Dublin, Kerry, Cork, but an equalisation of where the population is and where the requirement is."

"These big questions are hopefully what Larry McCarthy and this Strategic Review are going to consider. We've put our thoughts on the table on that and it's a big conversation that is going on."

"That's the significant question for Gaelic games — the change in population and demographic movements on this island."

"On top of that, the potential for a change in the way the island is governed, north and south, and its relationship with Britain — that's going to change dramatically over the next 40 years."

"Where is Gaelic games going to sit in all of these changing dynamics in terms of demographics on this island? It'll be very interesting."



**SIXY AND THEY KNOW IT**... the Dublin panel celebrate six in a row

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