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RUGBY ALEX'S FOCUS IS MUNSTER



O'Mahony leads the way

LIGHT RELIEF: Alex Kendellen (right) shares a joke with Conor Murray

Skipper the role model for aspiring Kendellen

IF ALEX Kendellen proves to be as exceptional as the player he has styled his rugby on, Munster are going to benefit massively.

The 21 year-old back-row has revealed that since joining the Academy he was told to model himself on Peter O'Mahony (inset).

It doesn't get much better than a Munster, Ireland and Lions Test captain, Ireland captain, and who has started in all three back-row positions for the former two.

Says Kendellen: "Johann (van Graan) has told me throughout to be able to cover that six, seven and eight role. Obviously I grew up playing No 8; it's a role that I knew very well, but I think the versatility of covering the whole back-row is very important to me."



DECK FOLEY SPORTS

once a week later. He was following, once again, in O'Mahony's path. "I suppose it's hard for me to look past Pete, he has come up in a similar way to me, playing for Cork Constitution."

"He has gone through Pres (PBC) Cork, he has played Senior Cup and he is in Munster. You look at the likes of that Exeter game. I think he was man of the match in that game. He really stepped up that day and it's just so easy to follow a guy like that."

"He has taken me under the wing — along with all the rest of the lads; as a captain, he has really brought me in and immersed me into the culture. I can't speak highly enough of Pete and the other lads in the back-row who have really taken me under their wing over the last 12 to 18 months."

There is a bubbling under suggestion the versatile Kendellen is a contender for a spot on the Ireland tour to New Zealand this summer, fuelled somewhat by the continuing absence of Gavin Coombes through injury.

Has he spoken with Andy Farrell or any of the Ireland coaching staff? "To be honest, no; it's been all all focus towards the URC and that Toulouse game in the Champions Cup in two weeks' time. I don't think I'm looking looking past that."

"We've got a big job to do here in Munster and what-over happens after that happens. Meanwhile the Cork-born player is particularly looking forward to wearing red this Friday night."

"It's obviously special playing in my hometown and I would have played a lot of schools games at Musgrave Park growing up. I played there against Benetton last as well, and I really enjoyed the Cork crowd as well — looking forward to going down there now and facing a good Cardiff side."



PHOTO: Martin Aneyl

WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR URC?

DATE: FOLEY

THE URC stakeholders — the IRFU along with the Scottish, Welsh and Italian unions — are applying behind-the-scenes pressure on the league to create a women's section.

Given the problems the four nations are having keeping up with the professional England and France teams in the women's Six Nations, it looks like a first collective step.

"I was speaking to stakeholders about that yesterday," said URC CEO Martin Aneyl of the possibility of a Women's URC.

"We have just over half of our employee base who are women, we had a strategy day the other day and asked everyone what are the top three things you want to see the URC do over the next five years, and a women's competition came in everyone's top three."

Important

"There's a real push. I don't think it's necessarily reacting to the market, it just feels like we should have a women's competition."

"What's really important is what are our unions doing at the moment, what's their plan?"

"We think — and this is widely held — that the URC can be a key part of how the Women's Six Nations can get even bigger and stronger."

MACK FULL OF TALENT

DONNA... Donna... Donna...

DECK FOLEY... Deck Foley... Deck Foley...

get a little bit more on... get a little bit more on... get a little bit more on...

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