

'Work hard.'
— John Giles

'Be guided by your gut instincts.'
— Brian Cody

RONNIE DAWSON

Skipper who laid foundations of later rugby success



RONNIE Dawson captained Wanderers, Ireland and the Lions. In many respects, Dawson's greatest achievement is as a coach and an administrator in Irish rugby. He was one of the founding fathers of Irish coaching, and as his country's first coach, he moved Ireland forward technically. Dawson succeeded as a player, captain, administrator and coach. Crucially, as a member of the International Rugby Board, he defended Ireland's position in world rugby. Today, for one of the smallest countries in international rugby, we punch way above our weight. Everybody involved in the game today owes a huge debt of gratitude to the astonishing work ethic, integrity and intelligence of Ronnie Dawson.

MICHEAL O MUIRCHEARTAIGH

Doyen of commentators who has enhanced Irish culture



THE most-loved Irishman alive. His career is an extraordinary testimony to longevity, yet he was over 50 years of age before he established himself in the front rank of radio and television commentators. Despite making his first radio broadcast in 1949, it was to be the mid-80s, on the retirement of Michael O'Hehir, that he was commissioned to do the senior All-Ireland finals as opposed to years of doing the minor final in Irish. His appointment as Grand Marshal for the 2007 St Patrick's Day parade was a recognition of his extraordinary contribution to Irish culture.

MICK O'CONNELL

Most complete Gaelic footballer of his time remains an icon within the game



IN 1984, his reputation as one of the all-time greats was recognised when he was named in midfield on the 'Football Team of the Century'. The farmer and fisherman from Valentia Island was the most complete footballer of his time, and remains an iconic figure in the game. Every sportsman has to be seen through the prism of his time, and O'Connell scores higher than anyone in that context. He won 12 provincial and four All-Ireland medals. In his last appearance in an All-Ireland final, despite being beaten by Offaly, he was still named an All-Star.



SEAN KELLY MEP

Innovative GAA leader who opened Croke Park to soccer and rugby

HIS period in office (2003–2006) as president of the GAA was crucial to Irish sport. He was the first Kerryman to hold that prestigious office, being elected at the first attempt by a record margin at the GAA Congress in 2002. He masterminded the possibly difficult task of securing agreement for the use of Croke Park for rugby and soccer, while the Aviva Stadium was being developed. His role within the GAA encompassed more innovation than just the rental of the ground. He oversaw the completion of the development of Hill 16, and hurling owes him a debt for the change in the championship which saw competition for the weaker counties in the Christy Ring and Nicky Rackard competitions. He was elected to the European Parliament in 2009.

BRIAN CODY

Played in an outstanding team and his management success eclipses even that



BRIAN Cody masterminded Kilkenny to seven All-Ireland wins and is the longest serving team manager in Ireland. As a player, Cody was involved with the famous Kilkenny team of the 1970s, a team often described as the greatest of all time. In a senior inter-county career that lasted from 1973 until 1986, he won four All-Ireland senior hurling titles and captained Kilkenny minor and senior teams to victory in 1972 and 1982. As a manager, Cody has had remarkable success. During this time, Cody has guided Kilkenny to seven All-Ireland titles, 10 Leinster titles and four National League titles. The team's dominance of the provincial championship is unparalleled in the modern era, to such an extent that Kilkenny have only lost one provincial game since Cody's first season, in 1999.