# He ended the 2013 All-Ireland final victorious but concussed and Dublin ace Rory O'Carroll admits...

# ANOTHER BLOW AND I MAY QUIT

by PHILIP LANIGAN

AT THE recent launch of the Leinster Championships in Farmleigh House, Dublin manager Jim Gavin spoke about how he didn't want his players to be 'robots'. Well, his All-Star full-back could never be accused of fitting into that category.

Even within the highly structured environment of an inter-county team, Rory O'Carroll has always been an independent thinker, a free spirit, and he proved this again yesterday as he used a sponsor's event to once more address the issue of concussion in sport.

After suffering concussion himself in the 2013 All-Ireland final, and staying on the pitch, he revealed that another incident would make him seriously question his career.

And he questioned the protocols in rugby compared to Gaelic games.

'Concussion can happen in anything but you have to look at where is it most likely to happen. It's far more likely to happen in rugby than GAA,' said O'Carroll.

'I don't want to get into GAA bashing rugby. That's not what it's about. My views don't represent Dublin GAA or anybody else, apart from myself.

'Concussion happens in American Football which is played in Ireland and many other sports which are played in Ireland.'

## 'You can't treat a brain the way you treat a hamstring'

In February, O'Carroll felt compelled to write a letter to a national newspaper querying how Ireland hooker Rory Best was cleared to play in the Six Nations game against France, just seven days after suffering concussion against Italy.

'I suppose it was a loaded question. How can you justify the two-week gap? Despite the medical care, these players are receiving bigger and stronger hits,' he added.

'You can have better access to medical care, you can have better monitoring and all different technologies and ways to assess but you can't treat a brain the way you treat a hamstring, you can't give deep tissue massage to a brain. I wouldn't be convinced that the two-week gap is sufficient.'

Tackling the treatment of brain trauma is just the latest example of O'Carroll's individualism, a quality many would have you believe is being coached out of the country's inter-county stars.

When Dublin bridged a 16-year gap without All-Ireland success in 2011, he had the unusual preparation of having spent the early part of the year teachingEnglish in the sleepy French town of Gien as part of his studies at UCD, hanging out in the local boulangerie with friends at weekends and playing badminton to keep himself fit, along with gym work.

On occasion, O'Carroll has helped out at the Capuchin Day Centre for homeless people in Smithfield due to his connection with founder Brother Kevin Crowley.

To mark Dublin's historic three-in-a-row of League titles last month, he posed for a picture afterwards with a badge calling for a 'Yes' vote in the upcoming marriage referendum.

The results on May 22 will not be the only anxious wait ahead of O'Carroll, who is hoping to overcome a hamstring tear suffered in the Allianz League final.

Grounded: Dublin's Rory O'Carroll is laid out after a heavy collision against Wexford last year SPORTSFILE

School's out: Dublin football star Rory O'Carroll with Scoil Áine pupil Ellie McGrath at the launch of the AIG/JF Dunne Insurance Pupil Protector Plan for child accidents SPORTSFILE

He is a doubt for Dublin's Leinster quarter-final against either Offaly or Longford and admitted: 'I'm still not back fully. I tore my hamstring against Cork so I have been out for two and a bit weeks. Another week or so to go. Don't want to come back too early.

'It's still only 10 days before Championship which isn't ideal because I want to give myself the best chance of being selected. Long term I want to get my hamstrings right rather than rushing it.

'It's a bit frustrating as I injured my left one against Monaghan and my right one against Cork.'

The injury didn't stop him posing for a photograph with a 'Yes' badge relating to the marriage referendum which caused a minor stir, given the GAA's apolitical nature.

As someone who has supported the 'Yes' campaign in a sporting domain, he is asked what he thought of the public 'No' stance recently taken by his Dublin team-mate Ger Brennan.

'I was waiting for that one. Today I would prefer to talk about the GAA, because it is an AIG event promoting Gaelic games.

'Outside of this event I am more than happy to talk about it,' added O'Carroll.

He says the sometime portrait of inter-county players as one-dimensional is misleading.

'I don't think anyone has a one-dimensional character. You are a journalist but you are not just a journalist, you are more than a journalist. You could be a father, a husband, a partner, anything, you could be involved in so many more different things.

'Sometimes there might be a perception that people are one dimensional but I don't think that is true of Gaelic players or anyone else for that matter.'

Certainly not in O'Carroll's case.

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## Morgan fails to make it back for Harte's Hands

By MICHEAL CLIFFORD

NIALL MORGAN has failed in his bid to be fit for Sunday's sell-out Ulster SFC clash with Donegal. Michael O'Neill will take over in goals for his first Championship start, while Pádraig McNulty will make his debut at midfield. Elsewhere, Denis Gennon has failed to make the Westmeath side for their Leinster SFC clash with Louth. The forward ace (above right) broke a bone in his hand last month and misses out, as does John Egan, with manager Tom Cribben naming four rookies to start.

Meanwhile, Louth manager Colin Kelly will have just five of the team that were in from the start in when the Wee County won last year's clash between the sides. Neil Gallagher, Pádraig Rath, Declan Byrne, Derek Maguire and Conor Grimes are the only survivors. Matthew Murphy, Niall Woods, Thomas Mulvey, Ronan Kennedy and James McGrail will all make their Connacht debuts for Leitrim.

TYRONE (SF v Donegal): M O'Neill; A McCrory, R McNamee, C McCarron; R McNabb, J McMahon, P Harte; C Cavanagh, P McNulty; T McCann, M Donnelly, B Tierney; D McCurry, S Cavanagh, C McAliney.

OFFALY (SF v Longford): A Mulhall; B Darby, P McConway (C), D Brady; N Darby, J Maloney, J O'Connor; G Guiffoyle, N Smith; E Carroll, N McNamee, A Sullivan; B Allen, N Dunne, W Mulhall.

LOUTH (SF v Westmeath): N Gallagher; A Williams, P Reilly, P Rath; D Byrne, D O'Hanlon, A Reid; B Duffy, T Durnin; D Maguire, C Judge, J Stewart; R Burns, C Grimes, P Smith.

WESTMEATH (SF v Louth): D Quinn; J Galligan, K Maguire, K Daly; P Holloway, K Martin, J Dolan; D Daly, G Egan, P Sharry, R Connellan, J Stapleton; C McCormack, J Heslin, S Dempsey.

## Concussion protocols comparison

Hard yards: Rory Best was concussed against Italy

### PRO RUGBY

1 10-minute window in which to assess a player's condition.
2 If there are signs of concussion a player will not return to play.
3 On Day 1, they must rest completely.
4 On Day 2 they can do a light cardio session.
5 If symptom-free on Day 3, they can do some light running.
6 If symptom free on Day 4, they can do a strength and conditioning session.
7 If symptom free on Day 5, they can return to play.
8 If symptoms persist on Day 5 they must return to the first stage.

### AMATEUR RUGBY

1 Referee has right to remove player from match if concussion suspected.
2 If there are signs of concussion a player must take no part in physical activity for 14 days minimum.
3 Should get medical clearance before returning to play.
4 After two weeks, they can do a light cardio session.
5 If symptom-free, they can progress to light running.
6 If symptom-free, they can progress to strength and conditioning session.
7 If symptom-free, they can return to play.
8 Coaches must make sure the player has followed return-to-play protocols.

### GAA

1 Any player suspected of concussion must be removed from the field of play.
2 If there is a doctor present they must assess player and decide whether they can return or not.
3 If concussion is suspected player must rest completely for 24 hours.
4 Return-to-play must follow a 'medically supervised stepwise approach'.
5 Player should never return to play while symptomatic.

MIKEY STAFFORD

In the wars: Dublin's Rory O'Carroll last summer

## One-on-one penalties a mistake, says Ryan

By PHILIP LANIGAN

DUBLIN hurler Paul Ryan thinks the GAA made a mistake in going with a one-on-one penalty. Ryan claims the simplest solution to the on-going soap opera would have been to ban the use of a goalkeeper's hurley to strike the ball — rather than not allowing the striker to advance any closer than the 20-metre mark.

'I think it could have been solved if they'd just got rid of the goalie hurl,' said Ryan (right).

'If they got rid of the goalie hurl from anyone coming down to take it, and just keep three on the line, there wouldn't have been any need to switch the people on the line and switch people anywhere else ... just take the goalie hurl out of the free, and you wouldn't be connecting with it as cleanly.'

Mainly due to the exaggerated lift and strike perfected by Cork goalkeeper Anthony Nash, the GAA changed the interpretation of the rule during last year's Championship on the basis of safety concerns so that the taker couldn't advance inside the 20-metre line for a penalty or free. This summer, it's now one versus one from outside the 20-metre line.

'It's after going from one extreme to the other and now there's only one in the goal. So you could say it's easier but nothing's easy in front of a few thousand.

'You'd have to put a certain amount of power in it — and pick a spot. But you're under the threat now that the 'keeper is just going to move. Rather than relying on reaction, he's going to be in that spot before — so he's going to pick a spot, and you're going to pick a spot, and that's going to be a guessing game.