

TEAM NEWS

Rory targets May opener for his return

Frank Roche

RORY O'CARROLL hopes to resume training next week as he battles the hamstring injury that forced his Allianz League final exit against Cork. That would leave the Dublin No 3 with a ten-day window before their Leinster SFC quarter-final against either Offaly or Longford on May 31 in Croke Park.

The Faithful County host Longford in O'Connor Park, Tullamore this Saturday evening (7.0).

"I'm still not back fully. I tore my hamstring against Cork so I've been out for two-and-a-bit weeks.

Another week or so to go. Don't want to come back too early," he revealed.

Asked if his first round availability was in doubt, O'Carroll replied: "It's still only ten 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."

The Kilmacud Crokes man had never previously suffered any hamstring trouble until the Dublin club championship last October.

His latest mishap saw him sit out Kilmacud's opening foray in this year's county championship, an eight-point win over Whitehall last week.

A club dual ace, he has also missed out on two Dublin SHC 'A' Group 4 victories for the reigning county champions.

"I immediately flagged to come off (against Cork)," he recounted.

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

On a different matter O'Carroll declined to comment on the fact that fellow Dublin defender Ger Brennan has publicly lashed a 'No' vote in the upcoming marriage referendum while he has campaigned for the 'Yes' side.

"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," he said.

OFFALY boss Pat Flanagan has kept faith with the starting team that blitzed Longford in the NFL Division Four final as the Faithful prepare to renew battle with Jack Sheehy's men in tomorrow night's Leinster SFC opener in Tullamore. **OFFALY (Cl v Longford):** A. Ruane; B. Dorcy, P. O'Conroy, D. Bealy, N. Dorcy, W. Moore, O'Connor, S. Gaffney, H. Smith, C. Corral, N. McNamee, A. Sullivan, B. Allen, N. Duran, W. Ruane.

DUBLIN FOOTBALL

I COULD QUIT IF I GET ONE MORE BANG



Dublin footballer Rory O'Carroll, along with Dublin hurler Paul Ryan, yesterday helped launch the AIG/JP Dunne Insurance Pupil Protector Plan. An innovative Personal Accident Plan designed to provide financial support and assurance in the event of an accident to a child. As part of the Pupil Protector Insurance Plan schools in Ireland will be in with a chance of winning 200 places for a special event in Croke Park this June. *Pic: Ramsey Carty/Sportsfile*



Dublin's Paul Ryan with Aine pupil Róisín Mythen.

DUBLIN HURLING

Ryan's simple solution to the penalty

Frank Roche
PAUL RYAN - a hurler who knows all about launching 20-metre missiles - has a simple solution to the never-ending penalty rule debate that has consumed the sport. "I probably think it could have been solved if they'd just got rid of the goalie hurl,"

the Dubliner states, in such a matter-of-fact way that you are left to wonder ... why all the fuss in the first place? This controversy has been raging ever since wandering Cork 'keeper Anthony Nash perfected his lift-and-strike technique en route to the 2013 All-Ireland final. In reaction we've had rival custodians

charging the yard-stealing penalty-taker - and then Croke Park imposing health-and-safety edicts, mid-championship, to stop the taker striking inside the 20m line. "There wouldn't have been any need to switch the people on the line ... just take the goalie hurl out of the free, and you wouldn't be connecting with it as cleanly," he argues,

Another serious concussion would leave O'Carroll thinking twice about football ...

Frank Roche

RORY O'CARROLL says he would seriously consider walking away from Gaelic football if he were to receive one more bad concussion.

It's a big admission from the Dublin full-back - and yet a refreshingly honest declaration from someone who was left dazed and confused in an All-Ireland final and played on until the final whistle.

O'Carroll believes concussion is more of a problem for rugby than GAA, where the incident rate is "far lower" ... yet for all the 'life-or-death' metaphors that are routinely peddled about elite sport, he sees no merit in throwing the dice with brain injuries.

"Concussion can happen in anything but you have to look at where it is most likely to happen," O'Carroll said at yesterday's launch of AIG's Pupil Protector Insurance plan.

"I think it's far more likely to happen in the game of rugby rather than GAA. Having said that, I have experienced concussion before. I suppose the experts in Acquired Brain Injury Ireland would say three times is a knockout. If I was to receive another serious concussion, I would very seriously consider continuing playing."

That's a bold statement but, when the inevitable follow-up question was posed, he reiterated: "I would, yeah. Your career could be ... on average, ten years is a good one. Out of your life that could be an eighth. I would rather consider my future life, to be honest."

The 2015 All-Ireland decider was O'Carroll's only prior brush with concussion. Just before the hour, he collided with Mayo's Enda Varley and came off second best. Dublin had already used all five subs



while the hamstring Eoghan O'Carra was offering little more than nuisance value.

Following treatment O'Carroll stayed on. Dublin manager Jim Gavin later explained that they only found out the extent of his injury after the game, adding: "If a player is concussed, he should have been off."

Ironically, O'Carroll was already an ambassador for Acquired Brain Injury Ireland.

The Kilmacud clubman made another eye-catching contribution to the concussion debate last February with a letter to The Irish Times after Ireland rugby hooker Rory Best played against France, just a week after sustaining a head injury against Italy.

O'Carroll quoted Irish team manager Mick Kearney as saying: "Rory Best suffered concussion. He has been very

well since the game and is completing a gradual return-to-play protocol."

His letter went on: "On the IRFU website is its guide to concussion which states: 'Minimum rest period post-concussion: 14 days. Minimum time-out: 21 days. Graduated return to play: 6 days. Maybe it's just me, but reconciling the word 'minimum' and seeing Rory Best pummeled head-first into countless rocks on Saturday begs the need for clarity."

ANSWER
At yesterday's launch, O'Carroll was asked if he felt he got an answer to his query.

"There is a gap of 14 days for an amateur and a professional," he replied. "The statement came from Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, from me via them, so the answer was directed back to them."

"I was informed the answer that they received was the (professional player) has superior access to medical care, the highest medical care there is ... I suppose that was the clarity around why there would be a two-week gap."



Dublin's Rory O'Carroll who suffered a head injury during the 2013 All-Ireland SFC Final victory over Mayo.

"Whether I believe that's sufficient or whether I think that's good enough, I would have my concerns. 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."

O'Carroll believes his own case-history of playing on in 2013 "wouldn't happen again. I also believe that there are proposals being brought to Congress. So with all these things, they take a lot of time".

He concluded: "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. It's not just a rugby thing. What sparked this was my letter to The Irish Times and that was specifically in relation to rugby."

conundrum: 'Get rid of the goalie hurl'

speaking at an AIG product launch in Parnell Park. The Ballyboden ace suffered under last summer's temporary rule shift, seeing a crucial second half penalty blocked on the line by Tipp's Brendan Maher. Yet he has no issue with defenders 'borrowing' a wider bersi hurl from their netminder - his objection

was to the penalty-taker (specifically a 'keeper') using one of these huris to launch his 20-metre Esocet.

You can sense his frustration that the rule-makers chose a more radical solution. "I would have seen it as an easy issue to solve, just taking the goalie hurl away - especially if a goalie's coming

down to take the free, if he's switching to an outfield hurl, he's not going to connect with it as (he would) using a goalie hurl", he argues.

"I would have seen it as an easy issue to solve, just taking the goalie hurl away - especially if a goalie's coming

the taker picking his spot? "You'd have to put a certain amount of power in it - and pick a spot. But you're under threat now that the 'keeper is just going to move (beforehand), rather than relying on reaction ... 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."

EXPECT
With one on the line, does he expect more penalty goals? "I'd imagine so, yeah. But will it now be a case of