

Legends for Liam

Manchester United v Celtic/Republic of Ireland



Páirc Uí Chaoimh, 3pm, September 25, 2018

Souvenir Match Programme €5

Welcome to Cork



Is mór an athas orm fáilte a chur róimh go Páirc Uí Chaoimh inniu le haghaidh on ócáid iontach seo.

Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh go léir taitneamh as an lá agus go mbeidh an-rath ann o thaobh an bhailiú airgid. It is a great honour and privilege to welcome everybody here today to Páirc Uí Chaoimh for this fantastic event in memory of a favourite Cork son, Liam Miller, and in support of his family.

Liam was held in such high regard in Cork and the fact that this testimonial event sold out within hours is a testament to him, alongside, of course, the huge outpouring of grief that followed his passing at such a young age earlier this year.

Today, we remember Liam and all his achievements and we join with his family, friends and former playing colleagues in helping to keep his memory alive in a place where he once impressed as a young up and coming hurler with Ovens NS. I know a number of the players whom he played with and against on the day of the Sciath na Scol final back in 1993 are here today, 25 years on. My sincere thanks to the Cork County Board and the GAA for making this magnificent facility available for such an important and unique event. While it proved to be a controversial process, the decision to open up this event to some 45,000 people of all ages was the correct one and those who facilitated it should be applauded. Congratulations to the man behind the idea, Michael O'Flynn, on reaching today's milestone. When I met with Michael and Roy Keane in City Hall for the event launch in June, they were extremely confident this event would be a success. I was glad to lend a helping hand and look forward to hosting the gala dinner at Cork City Hall following the game.

Thanks also to all the players – among the best of their generation - who have given selflessly of their time to be here today. I am heartened at the generosity of spirit shown by the people of Cork towards the Miller Family and indeed associated charities such as Marymount Hospice. I hope this event will provide an important legacy for Liam's wife, children and extended family.

Corcaigh Abú...We Are Cork

– Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Mick Finn

TODAY'S MATCH SCHEDULE

- 12.45pm Turnstiles open
- 1.45pm Live music (Liam O'Connor and Christy Dignam)
- 2.20pm Teams warm up
- 2.30pm Barrack Street Band entertainment
- 2.45pm Presidential salute
- 2.50pm President introduced to the players
- 2.55pm National anthem by Darragh McGann, supported by Barrack Street Band
- 3pm Match kick-off
- 3.45pm President introduced to Éire Óg girls and boys
- 3.50pm Under 12 Hurling and Football games across the pitch
- 4.05pm Second-half
- 4.50pm Full-time, followed by lap of honour by the teams

Thank you from the Miller family

The last eight months have not been easy for us. There are no words to describe the sadness and heartbreak we have endured since losing Liam.

What has helped get us through this difficult time has been the outpouring of support and heartfelt concern shown to us by truly amazing, compassionate and kind-hearted people. Today's events are an example of the incredible support, concern and care. We will always be thankful and



True heroes

It takes not only talent but great courage to chase your dreams. Liam Miller achieved great things in representing his club and country.

Those who achieve such greatness are regarded as heroes by their supporters. We celebrate those heroes as we honour Liam here today.

However it takes even greater courage to face the challenge of life-limiting illness, especially with so much life yet to be lived.

The people we encounter through our work in Marymount are mostly facing the biggest challenge of their lives. Time and again we see in these people enormous courage as they live the reality of a changing situation. Our aim in providing Palliative Care is to keep people as well as possible for as long as possible enabling them to live the life they want to live for the time remaining. Generally their wish is to be well enough to spend precious time doing ordinary things with family and friends. As life ebbs away the ability to maintain a sense of identity and purpose, thinking more of the needs of others rather than yourself is what marks a true hero.

Throughout his illness, Liam's concern was for his family. Like so many others we have cared for he lived his illness heroically. It is those heroes who motivate us to continue our work in Palliative Care. The staff of Marymount along with our colleagues at the Mercy University Hospital, were honoured to care for Liam and his family. His gentle courage and loving dedication to his family left a lasting impression on all who cared for him in his final illness.

– Dr Marie Murphy F.R.C.P.I.

indebted to those special people who made this huge undertaking happen. The organising committee worked tirelessly to ensure this day would take place.

The astounding support from the public is both humbling and uplifting. All over the country Liam's tribute event has been supported on a scale which is difficult to comprehend, that is especially so in his home town and county of Cork.

The fact that this memorable event is held in his home place, which was so special to him, makes this day all the more special to us.

Many of the players lining out today have travelled considerable distances to do so as have those who purchased tickets and for that we are deeply touched.

Once again we thank everyone involved in this extra special day for their time and energy for making it a success and a day we will remember for a very long time.

We are filled with gratitude and feel truly blessed.

Thank you

Clare, Kory, Leo and Belle.

Billy, Bridie and family.

INTRODUCING All-New Ford Focus ST-Line



RATHER STAND
OUT THAN FIT IN?
THIS IS YOUR FOCUS

Never go unnoticed, as All-New Focus ST-Line takes sport-inspired styling to the next level. Thanks to a unique matte black mesh grille and a set of 18" sport performance alloys that grab attention as effortlessly as they grab the road. If this sparks excitement in you, this is your Focus. Discover more at ford.ie



Go Further

Model shown above is for illustrative purposes only and includes optional extras.

Inside

8-11	Liam in his own words	'Looking back now it was wonderful'. Extracts from Miller's 2015 interview with Liam Mackey
13, 15	Manager's Notes	Words from Alex Ferguson, Roy Keane and Martin O'Neill
17-19	The Éire Óg connection	The day Liam scored 4-2 in a GAA trial
22-23	Legends on Leaside	Today's game creates its own bit of Cork sporting history, but it's not the first

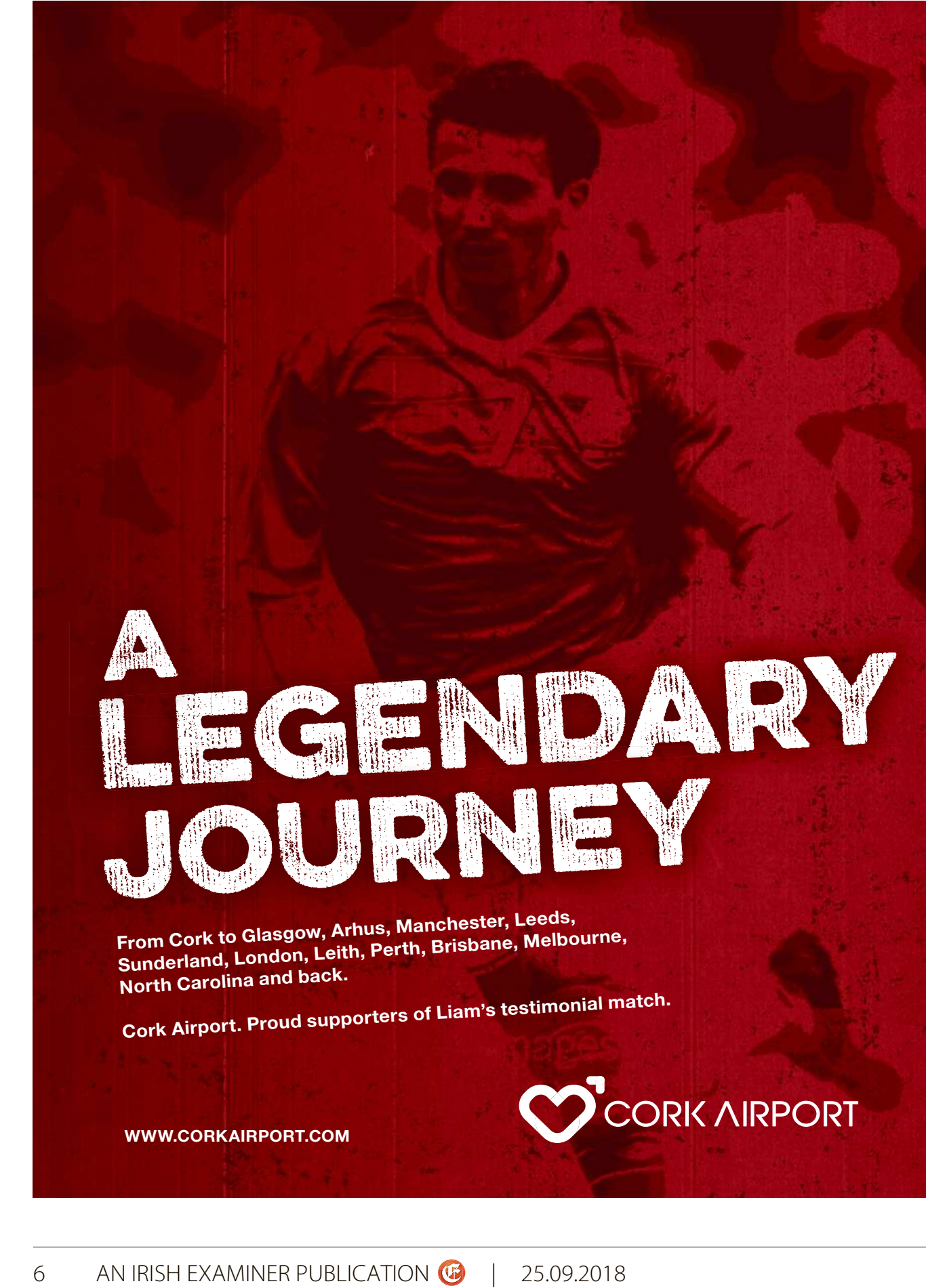


30-31	More than a friend	Graham Barrett on how rivals became best buddies
36-38	What makes a good midfielder	Those who know best discuss the keys to thriving in the engine room
43-47	From west Australia to North Carolina	Even off-Broadway, Miller continued to set a standard
50-51	Always a local hero	Donal Lenihan on why Cork people never forget

Editor: Tony Leen

Design: Jay Carcione, Dermot Ahern, Pamela O'Neill

Contributors: Jack Anderson, Graham Barrett, Stephen Barry, Sean Creedon, John Delaney, Paul Kelly, Donal Lenihan, Liam Mackey, Michael Moynihan, Eoin O'Callaghan, Colm O'Connor, Des O'Driscoll, Larry Ryan, Graham Spiers.



A LEGENDARY JOURNEY

From Cork to Glasgow, Aarhus, Manchester, Leeds,
Sunderland, London, Leith, Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne,
North Carolina and back.

Cork Airport. Proud supporters of Liam's testimonial match.

WWW.CORKAIRPORT.COM

 CORK AIRPORT

On behalf of the Liam Miller Tribute organising committee, it is my great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to everyone attending today's Legends match and those attending the gala dinner this evening. Your support is very much appreciated by the Miller family and the events committees.

Liam passed away earlier this year at the very young age of 36. He is survived by his wife, Clare and their three young children, Kory, Leo and Belle, his parents Bridie and Billy, his siblings Seán, Robby, Martin and Suzanne.

His prowess as a sportsman has already been well documented. From an early age, he excelled at athletics, both hurling and football with the Éire Óg GAA club and with Ballincollig AFC in soccer. While renown followed in the soccer arena, there is no doubt he would have represented his native Cork at senior inter-county level in either hurling or football or indeed both, if he had stayed at home and continued to play GAA.

Today's events are both a tribute to Liam's achievements on the sporting fields and a celebration of his life. The incredible support shown by the public since the



**A big
welcome,
a bigger
thank
you**

launch of these events is a testament to the esteem in which Liam was held, both on and off the field of play. While those closest to him have

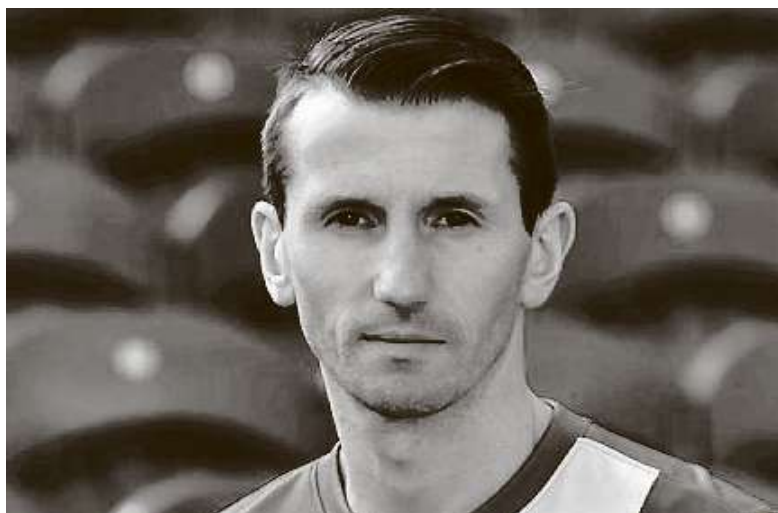
been very private in their grief I hope they are taking solace and comfort from this show of support. Justifiably they should feel a great sense of pride.

The GAA has been very magnanimous in its support of this match. Páirc Uí Chaoimh is a fantastic stadium, among the best in Europe, and it is both a fitting and appropriate venue for the tribute. Cork City Council and our Lord Mayor, Councillor Michael Finn, have been tremendously supportive, as evidenced by accommodating this evening's gala dinner in City Hall.

On behalf of Clare and all Liam's family, I would like to sincerely thank everybody for their generous support. It's important to note that in addition to family, a number of charities, in particular, Marymount Hospice, will benefit from the proceeds of today's events.

Finally, I would like to thank the Organising Committee, who have worked very hard to make The Liam Miller Tribute events successful.

MICHAEL O'FLYNN
*Chairman, Liam Miller
Tribute Committee*



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Michael O'Flynn (Chairman); Graham Barrett, Eanna Buckley, John Caulfield, John Delaney, Dermot Desmond, Patrick Doyle, Annamarie Fegan, Ted Foley, John Giles, Ger Gilroy, Colin Healy, Conor Healy, Roy Keane, John Kelleher, Robbie Kelleher, Kevin Kilbane, Tony Leen, Pat Lyons, John McHenry, Eamon McLoughlin, Willie McStay, Ciarán Medlar, Maria Mulcahy, Denis O'Brien, Damien O'Donohoe, Seán O'Driscoll, Kate O'Flynn, Martin O'Neill, Feargal O'Rourke, John O'Shea.

‘Looking back, it was wonderful’



In a rare interview in the Irish Examiner in February 2015, Liam Miller reflected on his career with writer LIAM MACKEY

On a wintry morning at Cork City's Bishopstown training base, Liam Miller's face, richly tanned by the Australian sun, creases into a grin as his attention is drawn to an image from his long-ago footballing past.

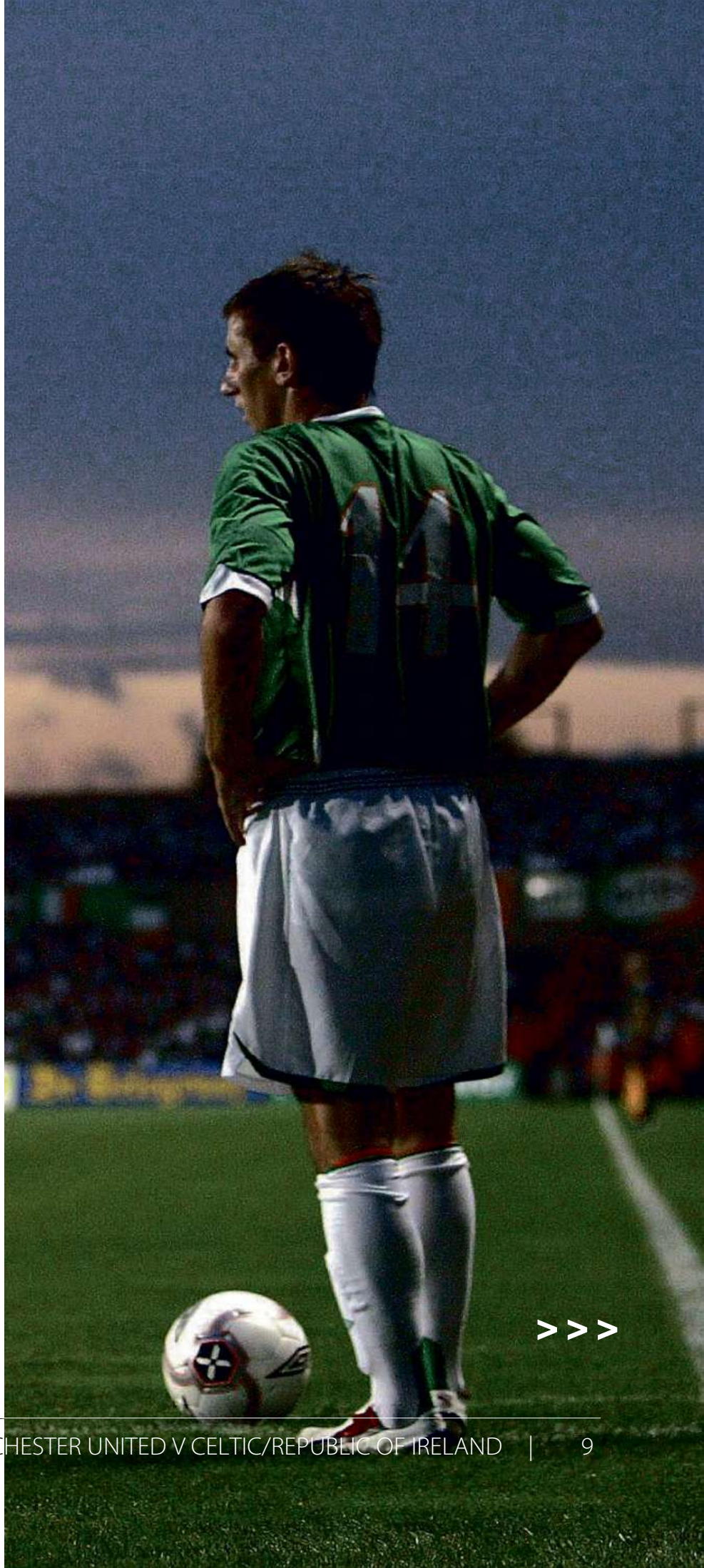
To mark a player reunion sparked by the club's most high-profile signing ahead of the new season, manager John Caulfield has stuck an evocative picture on the tactics board.

It's of the Ballincollig team for a youths cup final at Turner's Cross in 1997, the line-up featuring a boyish Miller and two equally fresh-faced pals with whom he is now being reunited on the same turf: Mark McNulty and Colin Healy.

But, as he studies the picture, what's particularly tickling Miller's funny bone is that the three amigos all have their hair dyed peroxide blond.

"One of those mad moments in life, I suppose" he chuckles.

Miller grew up in Ovens, with Ballincollig his closest football team when he was a kid. The first side he played for at the club was coached by



> > >

McNulty's father, Mick, at a time when Mark himself was turning out as a striker before discovering that his real vocation lay at the other end of the pitch.

Miller, however, was to the midfield born and though he followed in his older brothers' footsteps by playing some gaelic for Éire Óg, his greatest love was for soccer, a passion which ran in the bloodline.

"My father, Billy, was Scottish, from Motherwell and was a massive Celtic fan – still is to this day — and so from an early age I was a Celtic fan," he recalls.

"And Manchester United too. Eric Cantona was my idol. Two of my older brothers were Alan Shearer fans, the other was a Robbie Fowler fan. But it was Cantona who caught my eye. I just loved everything about him.

"I know I'm not the same sort of player but as a kid you'd be trying to imitate him. Same with Maradona — I remember watching a clip of him doing flicks with his shoulder. So I went straight out the back to try — and got a belt of the ball in the side of the face. And I thought, 'I won't try that again'."

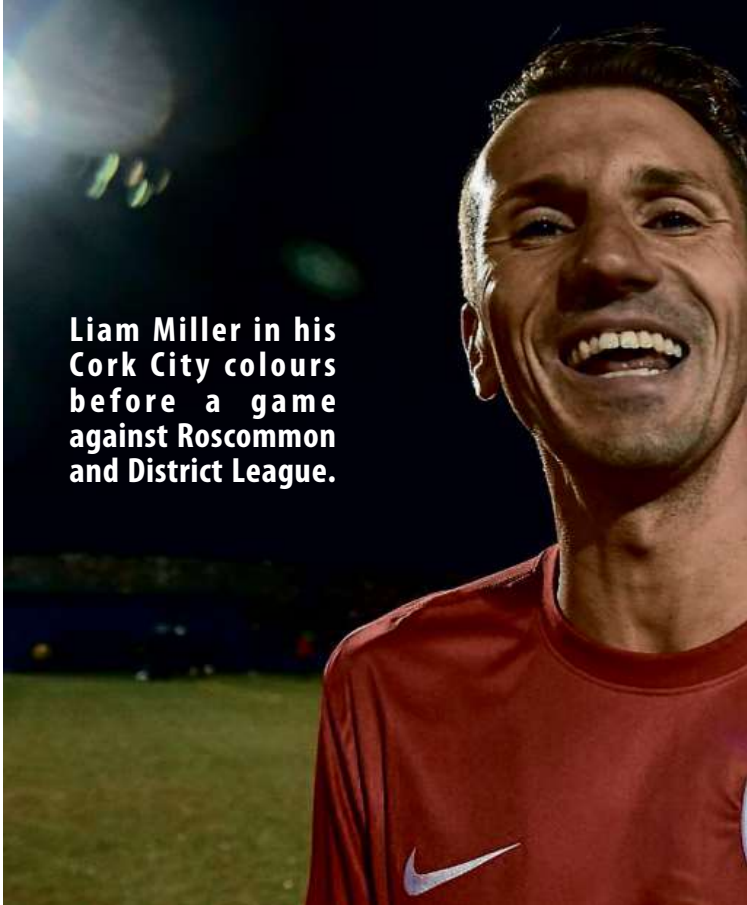
Miller was marked out as an outstanding prospect from an early age, joining Celtic's youth ranks at just 15.

"Going across at that age was a big thing for me and I was so excited but, in the back of my head, I was thinking about how much I'd miss my friends and family," he recalls.

"That was probably the hardest thing. Maybe a year and a half into it, I remember being a bit homesick and thinking 'is this really for me?' But it was something I always wanted to do and I stuck at it. Because if I hadn't, you'd be regretting it for the rest of your life. I was blessed with the academy I went to because Celtic had Willie McStay there and a great set-up in terms of facilities and what I was learning every day." It was on the eve of Martin O'Neill's arrival as manager that Miller first made the breakthrough at Parkhead, coming off the bench in a 2-0 against Dundee United on the last day of the 1999/2000 season as Kenny Dalglish concluded his spell as interim manager.

"I just remember being so nervous," he says. "It was one of those ones: you work every day, even just to get to train with the first team and then, obviously, to be picked to play with them, you're on such an adrenaline rush. But you're also anxious and nervous to do your best.

"You know the minutes you're getting mightn't be an awful lot, so you want to make the most of them and really impress. The main thing should be to go out and enjoy it. And



Liam Miller in his Cork City colours before a game against Roscommon and District League.

looking back now, that's what I did, but there was a real desire there to do well too."

And he did, flourishing under O'Neill's management and confirming his growing importance to the club with Champions League goals against Lyon and Anderlecht.

But when Alex Ferguson came calling, Miller couldn't resist the lure of his other boyhood club, disappointing Celtic fans and his manager by signing a pre-contract agreement with the Premier League giants before officially moving south to Old Trafford in July of 2004.

"I sort of pinched myself," he says of the approach from United. "I met Fergie and spoke to him myself but I didn't need too much convincing. To a point, it was a catch 22. I was leaving a club I'd been at since I was 15 and I loved it at Celtic but this opportunity came about and you don't know if an opportunity like that will ever come about again. And I was confident enough that I'd break through at some stage."

But there was the rub. While the conventional wisdom had it that Miller could only blossom even more as a first-choice player at Celtic Park, at Old Trafford he was always going to be faced with what looked like the mission impossible of claiming one of the two central midfield berths then occupied by Roy Keane and Paul Scholes.

"Overrated those two," Miller quips. "Look,



in my eyes, they were the two best midfielders in the world at the time. You had Vieira and Petit at Arsenal and Keane and Scholes at United and, for me, those two were the best. So, yes, I knew what I was going into at United.

“I wasn’t expecting to be better than them, but I thought if I could play with these guys and learn off them – I was still very young – it could really bring me on as a player. And if I could have progressed like that, it would have been great. But obviously I didn’t.” Instead, he would be restricted to just 22 first-team appearances in his two years at United, with the result that, even to this day, he tends to hear an awful lot about the benefits of hindsight.

“When I moved to Oz I did a lot of interviews and I thought, well that’s the Celtic/United thing gone away now. But then it comes back again. But I have no regrets. It didn’t work out the way I would have liked but it was still a tremendous learning curve for me. It’s hard to explain but when you’re there 24/7 as part of a group like that, you take so much on board.

“It depends on the person you are too but you’re learning from the best. I mean, Ronaldo was there too. They’re not top players for no reason. They apply themselves very well, they’re great professionals and, ability-wise, you’re always learning from players like that.

“I suppose you roll with the punches, as they say. Leaving United, I felt a bit of frus-

tration at the time but I needed to play football, week in, week out.

“I know I wasn’t guaranteed that anywhere but I knew I needed to start playing football again. And I got that opportunity at Leeds. For me, it wasn’t hard to leave United.

“I wish I’d played a lot more games there but at the same time I was never a right-winger, you know? And, as I said, the two boys in the middle were quality players. It was a different level from Celtic, if you like: there aren’t many clubs that would be above United.”

After his time at Sunderland, with Keane as manager, and a short spell at QPR, Miller faced an unprecedented challenge in his career as he found himself without a club.

“It was tough in the sense that I knew I was fit and could have done a very good for teams,” he reflects.

“And you’re just waiting for an opportunity to come about. But, at the same time, you’re a professional and I knew something would come up. So I used to drive up to Newcastle where I had a personal trainer and did that for nearly two months.

“He’d put me through my paces for two hours every day and it was probably one of the fittest I’ve been (laughs). Mentally, over time, it’s tough enough. I suppose you’re just waiting around for the phone to ring. And I’d never been in that situation before.”

It was Hibs who threw Miller a lifeline in 2009 but after two years back in Scotland, he opted for the biggest move – geographically speaking — of his career, taking his family on the long haul to Australia where, over a period of four years, he would play in the A-League for Perth Glory, Brisbane Roar and Melbourne City.

But with three young children in tow, the ultimate destination was always going to be Cork. Miller is right in what he says - only a privileged few get to play for their country as well as two of the most famous clubs in the world.

“I genuinely look back and think, ‘I played for Celtic’, my boyhood club,” he says. “I dreamed of playing for Man United too. I don’t know how many other people can say they played for their two childhood clubs, or even one. Of course, I would have loved to play more games, but I got to learn from some of the best players ever. Looking back, it was wonderful.

“Growing up for me, I just wanted to play football. And as I got better and better, the opportunities came around for me. I worked my socks off and the hard work paid off for me.”

Liam Miller was a special player, but I only discovered when I met him two weeks before he died that he was also a very special man.

When news first filtered through that Liam was battling with cancer, I immediately reached out to his family to offer any support that I could. For someone who had represented the Republic of Ireland with such distinction at underage and senior level, it was the least that we could do.

Sadly, Liam passed away in February and the entire Football Family grieved at the loss of a 36-year-old who brought so much joy to the game.

The Miller household in Ovens, Cork is a warm, welcoming place where you can see memories captured in picture frames on the walls and almost imagine a young Liam trotting in with muddy boots after another day outside mastering the game that he loved so much. Bridie Miller is an incredible woman and I was humbled by her strength when visiting their home earlier this year.

Liam's mother displayed the type of courage that we all struggle to find at a time when it is needed most. Bridie held everything together and made sure that Liam's final days were as comfortable and as loving as possible. And the same can be said about his wife, Claire, and their children, along with the extended family.

During conversations in the Miller home, Bridie mentioned that she wasn't quite sure where Liam's international caps resided. He had played 21 times for Ireland at senior level and those mementos appeared to have gone missing. It was something that I promised to address immediately and we set a date for those caps to be



Hats off: Liam Miller's wife Clare, sons Kory and Leo, and daughter Belle are presented with his Republic of Ireland international caps by Tánaiste Simon Coveney and Republic manager Martin O'Neill at the FAI Delegates' dinner at the Rochestown Park Hotel in Cork.

Picture: Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile

Let's not forget Miller the man

JOHN DELANEY

presented to the family.

It was agreed to present his international caps to Claire and his children at our delegates' dinner in Cork last month. It was a fitting tribute on a night when those who make such an impact to Irish football were celebrated.

Today is another opportunity to remember someone who was a fine footballer and it is a mark of how Liam was regarded that so many legendary figures will be turning out at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. As a member of the organising committee, I'm delighted this game will give something back to Liam's family after he gave so much to us.

When a Republic of Ireland XI were invited to take part in Scott Brown's testimonial in Celtic Park, we agreed that a significant sum from the funds raised would go directly to Liam's family. Again, it was a small token of our appreciation and we thank the organising committee of that game for their kind contribution.

I'm sure that today's game will be a celebration of Liam Miller the player, but let's not forget Liam Miller the man.

Enjoy the game.

■ The author is chief executive of the Football Association of Ireland.

A word from Sir Alex Ferguson

It is with reluctance and considerable disappointment that I will not be in Cork for today's tributes to our former player at Manchester United, Liam Miller. Circumstances and advice from those who know better than I has decreed that I stay put.

Liam was a United player in the 2004-2005 season, and he didn't let us down. He was a popular lad with the players and staff. The number of appearances he made was limited, and not what Liam or I had expected. When I went to the Celtic v Anderlecht Champions League tie in Glasgow in November 2003, it was to watch the Belgian defender Vincent Kompany. However, my attention soon gravitated to Celtic's energetic young midfielder, slight of stature but with an assured, calm way about him. What I witnessed was a player with a tremendous set of midfield fundamentals – his movement off the ball, his penetration of the Anderlecht midfield. I came away smitten by his performance, not least the timing of his runs.

Leaving Parkhead I was totally determined to get Liam Miller to Manchester United. There has always been a great relationship between United and Celtic and our interest, and my pursuit of Liam did bring about a short period of unease and

discontent between the two clubs. Fortunately, that was short lived. Miller the man flourished at United. He was a wonderful young lad, with humility and manners admired by myself and all at the club. It brought about a collective thought process that we should help him realise a need to play more, so we loaned him out to Leeds

United. Thereafter he enjoyed a good career in England, Scotland and further afield. Liam Miller's legacy as a human being was that he was totally liked by everyone for his quiet, endearing nature.

I wish his lovely family every strength and happiness in the future.

*Yours,
Sir Alex Ferguson*



MANAGERS' NOTES

Having played with and managed Liam Miller, I'm glad that I did. Okay, we all know about Liam's time-keeping (or lack of) and that would drive me crazy at times, but he always had that cheeky smile and playful side of his personality that made you let him away with another 'one last chance'.

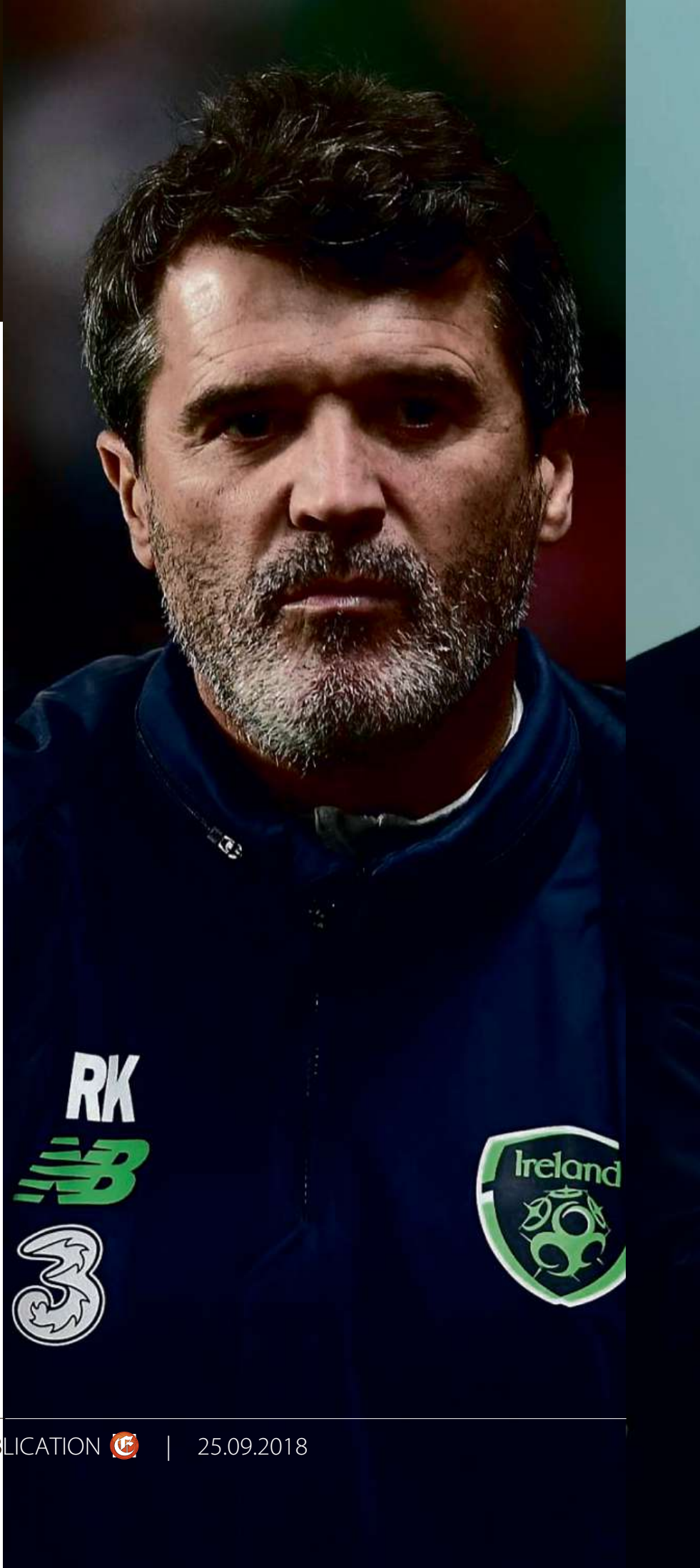
Liam's ability as a player can be summed up in the fact that he played for Celtic, Manchester United, and Republic of Ireland — only top-quality players get to represent all three of those teams!

It is a credit to all of the players who have turned up here today to honour Liam. Some of them have travelled far and wide to feature in this game in Páirc Uí Chaoimh — although it's hardly surprising that people would need much tempting to visit Ireland's 'favourite' county.

Since Liam's passing, there has been a lot of coverage in the media, but what has been fantastic to see is the public reaction to get behind this game. It is a credit to everyone who bought a ticket for today's game to support Liam's family and pay tribute to him.

The organising committee have done a great job in putting everything together, and I'm sure everything will go well in what is a very worthwhile event.

Enjoy the game,
ROY KEANE





Autumn 2003 : what a moment for the youngster Liam Miller, to walk back into the dressing room at Celtic Park and be greeted with rousing cheers from Larsson, Petrov, Sutton, Lennon, Mjallby and Thompson.

Minutes earlier Liam had scored against Lyon in the Champions League to break the deadlock and pave the way for a brilliant victory against the French Champions, etching for himself a piece of Celtic folklore.

Liam was a natural footballer. He had excellent control of the ball, could extricate himself from difficult positions on the field and possessed a lovely change of pace which afforded him the ability to go past players. Although quiet in the dressing room – understandably so in the midst of those aforementioned names – he could hold his own in conversations with me in my office. He was extremely popular with everyone at the club, yet still retained a quiet warm, stubborn streak. Perhaps coming from Cork might explain that!

His magnificent performance against Anderlecht a little later in the Champions League suggested a long and glittering career with Celtic. But it wasn't to be. That same performance alerted Manchester United to his talent and some months later, all too quickly it seemed, Liam left for Old Trafford. We were all extremely disappointed to see him leave Glasgow. And therefore, for the next decade or so, I watched his career from a distance.

I had heard news about Liam's illness quite some time ago but it was only in conversations with his mother Bridie did I realise how poorly he was. I had the most wonderful reunion with Liam a few nights before he passed away. He was still the same handsome young man we had so fervently hugged coming in that Celtic dressing room door in 2003, his impish sense of humour still intact. We reminisced about many things until it was time for me to leave.

That evening will stay with me. The incredible turn out today from both players and supporters will give his wonderful family a sense of the esteem in which Liam was held.

MARTIN O'NEILL

LIAM MILLER BY THE NUMBERS

0

Ireland lost none of the five senior competitive matches in which he featured (W2, D3)

4

Ireland senior managers he played for (Brian Kerr 10 times; Steve Staunton 4; Don Givens 2; Giovanni Trapattoni 5)

3

Different starting positions for Ireland (central midfield 6 times; right midfield 5; left midfield 1)

5

Different partners in Ireland's central midfield (Mark Kinsella, Lee Carsley, Glenn Whelan, Keith Andrews, Martin Rowlands)

12

Clubs played for (Celtic, Aarhus GF (loan), Manchester United, Leeds United (loan), Sunderland, QPR, Hibernian, Perth Glory, Brisbane Roar, Melbourne City, Cork City, Wilmington Hammerheads)

2

League championship medals won (Celtic 2003-04, Brisbane Roar 2013-14)

10

Group-stage matches played in the UEFA Champions League (6 for Celtic, 4 for Manchester United) and 2 goals scored

17

Club managers (including Martin O'Neill, Sir Alex Ferguson, Roy Keane, Kevin Blackwell, John Hughes, Paulo Sousa, John van 't Schip, and John Caulfield)

35

Matches played for Cork City (March-November 2015)

43

His squad number in Celtic's 2003-04 SPL-winning season

76

Matches played for Hibernian (2009-2011), his greatest number with any club

1998

The year he helped Ireland's U-16 team to win the UEFA European Championship



Part of the Cork Under 14 hurling team v Waterford. Alongside Liam (left) are: Tom Kenny, Michael Long and Conrad O'Sullivan (RIP).

The day Miller grabbed 4-2 in a Cork GAA trial – in his tracksuit

6	L. Wiseman *	
7	R. Hazel	Shibs.
8	J. Hoge *	-
25	J. Eldan *	-
24	N. Sullan	- Drontanffe
17	Cdr. Donnan *	- Silurphy
12	David O'Brien	-
13	Peter Kelleher *	- - 8
14	Joe Hayes	-
15	Liam Miller	-
17	S. Murphy	1 - 14

LARRY RYAN

Would Liam Miller have played for Cork had he not opted for a soccer career?

“Without a doubt, and he’d have been a star,” says Vincent Fahy, the man who brought Liam along to a Cork football U16 trial in 1996, and then watched helpless on the opposing team as his friend scored 4-2. Vincent remembers the day well.

“I was called for the trial, but Liam was too young, a year below me. We lived a mile apart so we picked him up at the end of his road and brought him for the spin, to see what was going on.

“He was standing above on the bank in Cloughduv when the selectors realised they were a man short. He came into the dressing room and started laughing. He was shy, so he sat down beside me, he

probably didn’t know any other fellas. He played in what he had on, a tracksuit or whatever, but they gave him a jersey. And maybe they got a pair of boots off some fella.

“It was a case of putting him in corner-forward, out of the way. Little did they know what was going to transpire.”

Vincent went midfield for the Reds, with future Cork All-Ireland winning captain Graham Canty anchoring the defence. A notebook recording the scoring underlines Miller’s impact for the Whites — four goals and two points.

“Once they realised what they had during the game, every single ball went into him. And he did the damage. I can’t remember who was on him, but he probably didn’t play for Cork that year anyway.

“Liam was a different animal completely to most GAA players back then. A lot

of fellas had skill, but he just had that extra something special. That pure raw talent, A mix of everything, skill, speed, power. And cockiness, which you need.

“He was shy, but on the field was probably where he felt most comfortable. And he was cheeky. He had no problem putting the ball on the ground and nutmegging a few players.

“After that game the selectors were tearing their hair out when they found out he was too young for the U16 panel. He was a great hurler as well and played with Cork U14s the year before. He would have played for Cork in both codes. And would have been a star. If he’d kept going he’d have had the same stardom as Seán Óg and Joe Deane. And I know how good these lads were. He had the skillset. But his first love was soccer. “



LARRY RYAN

In Éire Óg GAA club in Ovens, they don't measure Liam Miller in medals or cups, though there were one or two. They recall the way he played the games and the influence he had.

"You could travel the parish looking for 15 that time," says Pat Malone, club chairman now and then. So Mid Cork U12 and U16 titles were something to cherish.

"Liam was 13 for the U16s," says John Brennan, who coached those teams. "It was 'B' football, but it was a big win for us. He fell then and broke his wrist, so he missed the county."

"A very quiet fella. What I always remember is the way he picked up the ball in football. You'd be forever showing young lads how to pick it up right, but he would come into the ball at such speed."

Vignettes of skill are preserved in local folklore.

The way he snapped into a blockdown. How he drove opponents mad with a habit for dribbling, soccer-style. And his fondness for a nutmeg. A Maradona on Shilton flick over a goalkeeper near twice his size. That goal he got when he travelled coast to coast.

"He'd often get the ball in the half-back line and go off on a solo," remembers friend and neighbour Vincent Fahy, who played with Liam in most of those teams.

He is laughing fondly,

spooling a memory from his personal stock.

"Next thing, opposition players would be catching up so he'd throw down the ball, let them catch up a bit more, and then accelerate again and leave them for dust. He'd nearly give them a wink as well. He was cheeky."

"He was a small fella, and often teams thought they could do a job on him, but he was strong. And any rough stuff would only drive him on even more."

Already habits had formed that would stand to him in professional life.

"He was all about fitness," Vincent says. "Back then, going to discos, you might

have a few drinks. But he didn't. He might have tried it once or twice but never got into it. And if he caught you smoking a cigarette he'd take it off you and crack it. A fitness fanatic."

He toed the line on John Brennan's training field too.

"Some fellas would be all guff, disrupt every drill you could ever do, but he was always interested. He would just do everything right."

"He'd certainly have played football for Cork, and he was equally as good at hurling," says Pat Malone. "We were playing junior football and hurling and by the time he was 15 he was wanted for every team. But he was





PITCH PERFECT

The Éire Óg boys and girls U12 hurling and football teams who will play in Pairc Uí Chaoimh prior to the Liam Miller tribute match.

In alphabetical order, they are: Adam Brett, Kate Cahalane, Abbie Casey, Órlaith Cremin, Ian Crowley, Robyn Davis, Oisín Desmond, Jamie Devlin, Clodagh Dillon, Daniel Dineen, Pdraig Dineen, Jay Eagles, Daniel Foley, Johnny Galvin, Grace Harris, Éabha Healy, Emma Healy, Ryan Hegarty, Robert Kelly, Katie Keogh, Brendan Lenihan, Daniel McCarthy, Danny McCarthy, Josh McCarthy Méabh McGoldrick, Oisín McLaughlin, Sam Metcalfe, Cian Murphy, Cillian Murphy, Lisa Murphy, Michael Murphy, Shane O' Callaghan, Ruairi O' Donoghue, Niall O' Driscoll, Cian O'Flaherty, Diarmuid O'Keeffe, Oisín O'Maille, Darragh O'Regan, Emma O'Sullivan, Brendan Sheehan, Lily Waugh Donnchadh Whelton.

The club would like to thank the GAA at Croke Park and Mycro Sportsgear for their help and support

Picture: Dan Linehan

always destined for soccer and there was no hassle about that." There is a medal Liam cherished more than most, Ovens National School's first Sciath na Scol title in more than half a century. His outing at Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

A rotten day, of the kind the old sod couldn't always handle, the swamp in front of the covered stand cordoned off for the game.

Now principal, Eoin Hyde started teaching in the school that year and was presented with a sporting gift in his sixth class.

"Liam was a fantastic all-rounder. And I was thinking, this fella will make a Cork minor footballer or hurler.

"He was our captain for the football. We played Greenmount in the final and it lashed rain all day. Liam played midfield. I watched a video of the game back after he died and he was brilliant. Ran the show. Himself and Vincent were the stars of the team.

"Liam often mentioned that day afterwards in interviews. He always remembered it. And he was great for coming back to the school when he played underage for Ireland and things like that.

"When he was with Cork City, his kids were back in the school with us. And when he was going away to America, he gave us a framed Man

United jersey with a 'thank you' on it.

"A really nice, quiet fella back then and when he came back as a parent he was the exact same. You wouldn't know he was famous or anything. Just an ordinary, nice fella."

There is a catch of sadness in all their voices, but fierce pride too.

"It really kickstarted something in the school," Eoin Hyde says. Because the third and fourth and fifth class saw those guys and they wanted to be next. So we won a lot after that and started girls teams as well. A lot of it is down to Liam and that team."

Another legacy.

Match-day entertainment



DES O'DRISCOLL

CHRISTY DIGNAM AND LIAM O'CONNOR

Christy Dignam is one of the most recognisable figures in Irish music scene, but it's unlikely that many of today's crowd have seen him perform with an accordion player. As part of the pre-match entertainment, the Aslan singer will be joined by button maestro Liam O'Connor.

It's not the first time the duo have played together, as they joined forces in Killarney during the summer, and the pair also turned back the years with a number of performances at the recent Electric Picnic.

O'Connor — from Newmarket, Co Cork, but now living in Killarney — can play numerous instruments, but the accordion is his specialty. He even made the Guinness Book of World Records in 2008 for being the fastest player of the instrument.

For Dignam, the collaboration is the latest chapter in a rollercoaster career. Through ups and downs that have included his own battle with cancer, the Finglas favourite has kept music a constant in his life, and still gets a buzz from sharing his songs with an audience.

DARRAGH MCGANN AND THE BARRACK STREET BAND

Even with the glittering array of stars assembled for today's game, there's probably nobody else in the stadium who can say they got advice from Marlon Brando.

Darragh McGann worked with the late actor on the set of ill-fated film *Divine Rapture* and remembers encouraging words from the star.

The Cobh-born singer's entertainment career since has included a stint on Britain's *Got Talent*, and he's become known in his hometown as the 'Singing Taxi-Driver'.

McGann will perform the national anthem before the

Christy Dignam; insets Liam O'Connor, the Barrack Street Band and Paul McGann.

game with the backing of the Barrack Street Band, who will also entertain the crowd around 2.30pm.

Not only does the beloved 'Barracka' have a legendary status in Cork, but with a history going back to 1837, it can claim to be among the oldest musical institutions in the country.

Originally founded by Fr Theobald Matthew to promote his temperance campaign, the band has evolved through the years, and is still at the heart of the community around the southside street after which it's named.

In recent years, the band has teamed up with Music Generation Cork City — funded by U2 — to teach musicianship in local schools. The fruits of that labour can be seen in the fact that the Barracka now has three bands — senior, youth and beginner.



Voted Ireland's Best Fresh Food retailer. Yippee.

We'd like to say a massive thank you to all our colleagues and suppliers for helping us achieve the highest accolade at the Checkout Best in Fresh Awards 2018.

We're incredibly proud to be recognised for this award and as a great place to shop for fresh food.

From croissants to blueberries and steaks to strawberries, we've got you covered.

TESCO
Every little helps



Were you there?

Today's game creates its own bit of Cork sporting history, but there's already a litany of legendary Leeside occasions. **MICHAEL MOYNIHAN** selects a handful



1 Cork v Kerry, Munster SFC finals, Páirc Uí Chaoimh 1976.

Forgotten now in the blaze of publicity surrounding its WiFi-enabled spanking-new successor, but the original Páirc Uí Chaoimh was a cutting-edge venue in its own time. When it was opened back in June 1976 there was a double-header, Cork v Kilkenney in hurling and the home side taking on Kerry in football.

The stadium was truly baptised in a memorable pair of Munster football finals the following month, however. Kerry were All-Ireland champions but Cork were keen on asserting themselves, and in a chaotic atmosphere - hundreds of spectators, unused to the new stadium, spilled onto the sidelines - the sides fought out a draw.

The replay, also played in Páirc Uí Chaoimh, turned on controversy, with Kerry awarded a dubious Sean Walsh goal and, almost immediately afterwards, Declan Barron's goal for Cork ruled out. Kerry won and kicked on to dominate football for the next decade and the new stadium had an identity as a venue for top class combat.

2 Cobh Ramblers v Sligo Rovers, Flower Lodge 1983.

It might seem harsh to pick out a series of games involving a team which didn't hail from Cork city, strictly speaking, but the Cobh Ramblers-Sligo Rovers FAI Cup semi-final games of 1983 gripped the imagination like few cup odysseys.

Cobh were then a Munster Senior League team but they drew 1-1 with their League of Ireland opponents in the first game.

Even at that stage, there was huge interest in the minnows, with a crowd of 12,000 people coming to Flower Lodge - now Páirc Uí Rinn - for the contest. That sent them to Sligo for the replay, which also finished level, 2-2.

Back to Flower Lodge again, and by now the games were the talk of the country. This was reflected in the attendance, as a crowd of 22,000 came to see the sides serve up a scoreless draw. The fourth and final game was played in Sligo, with over 8,000 seeing Cobh take the lead, 2-1 before Sligo equalised. In extra time the home side squeezed Cobh out, 3-2. Four games saw an aggregate crowd of over 50,000 people pay a cumu-

lative gate of over £91,000, incredible numbers for the time.

3 Steve Collins v Chris Eubank, Páirc Uí Chaoimh 1995.

People tend to remember the fight in March 1995 at Millstreet between these two, and little wonder. Steve Collins was the underdog against Eubank, undefeated holder of the WBO super-middleweight title, but the Collins camp took the initiative. They suggested their man would be hypnotised and thus succeeded in unsettling Eubank, who duly lost his WBO super-middleweight crown to the Dubliner on a unanimous decision. The rematch was in Páirc Uí Chaoimh that September, and the fact that Collins made it into the ring in the first place meant overcoming a couple of challenges - the press of people was so tight around the ring that a Garda had to lift him up and carry him. He later said he was the only man to be carried into a world title fight rather than carried out.

Collins changed his style somewhat, taking the fight to Eubank. That was significant because the fight went the distance and despite sustain-



ing a cut by his right eye, two of the three judges favoured Collins' attacking style, giving him a split decision. The 20,000 in attendance for the world title fight roared their approval.

4 Yuri Sedykh v the world, Mardyke 1984.

The year after the Cobh-Sligo marathon, the Cork City Sports enjoyed its greatest hour. The annual athletics meeting at the Mardyke has attracted plenty of stars over the years, with names such as Daley Thompson joining the likes of Sonia O'Sullivan, Marcus O'Sullivan and Eamon Coghlan to impress the knowledgeable local crowds. However, the biggest splash was caused by Yuri Sedykh at the '84 meeting, the Russian hammer thrower breaking the world record four times. Sedykh's bona fides were beyond question - he had won gold medals at the two previous Olympic Games - but he demolished the previous record with a throw of 86.34 metres, which was over seven feet past the previous record, 84.14.

As an indication of the talent that night in Cork, the man who'd set the previous record, Sergei Litvinov, was

also competing, and threw a personal best himself.

No-one could match Sedykh, however. He and Litvinov ran a lap of honour to the delight of the crowd and after the hammer was weighed and measured the following morning the certification for the world record was issued.

5 Munster v Australia, Musgrave Park 1967.

Rugby fans everywhere can pick out 1978 as a historic date for Munster, the year the province beat the touring New Zealand side. However, 11 years earlier, they became the first province to beat a touring side when they put Australia to the sword at Musgrave Park.

10,000 packed the stadium to see Munster take the initiative. Tom Kiernan kicked two first-half penalties while Australia winger Alan Cardy got a try converted by John Brass. Brass added a penalty after the break before wing-forward Noel Murphy helped out-half John Moroney get the crucial Munster try, converted by Kiernan.

That meant Munster were 11-8 ahead entering stoppage

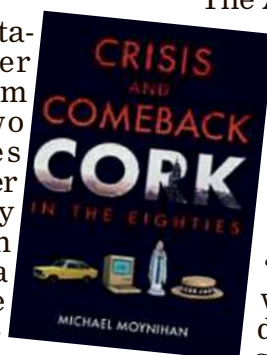
time. Australia had a scrum in an advantageous position near the Munster posts, and referee RW Gilliland handed the tourist scrum-half Ken Catchpole the ball.

"The ground became deadly quiet," recalled Munster hooker Ken Ging later. "Catchpole was just about to put the ball in when the voice of Noisy (Noel Murphy) was heard to inquire how much time was left.

"It's full time now", replied Mr Gilliland. Tom Kiernan screamed: 'Then blow your bloody whistle'.

"To his eternal credit, that is what that finest of referees did, and we were home if not exactly dry."

The Australians were outraged at the decision though Ging always claimed: "I would have won the scrum against the head". Noel Murphy's response was always the same: "You wouldn't, but I would have charged down the drop at goal."



■ Michael Moynihan's *Crisis and Comeback, Cork in the 80s* is available in bookstores next month

From the germ of an idea to today's Páirc climax, it's been a roller-coaster for all involved, especially Michael O'Flynn writes **TONY LEEN**



Creating history: How today happened

Michael O'Flynn, the successful property developer, is more adept than most at the art of the deal.

But there were several moments on the road to today's historic events at Páirc Uí Chaoimh when the end-line drifted frustratingly over the horizon.

'Concerned' became an all-too frequent sensation.

The political gymnastics of switching the Liam Miller tribute match from the 7,000-capacity Turner's Cross to today's 45,000 sellout at Páirc Uí Chaoimh have been well ventilated. But there were bumps on the road before that decisive turning too.

"At Liam's funeral, I spoke to Martin O'Neill and Roy Keane, and very shortly afterwards, I connected with Graham Barrett through Liam's family. Afterwards, John Del-

aney was helpful too. But Sir Alex Ferguson was very instrumental in progressing the Manchester United side of things," he says now.

"I met with Sir Alex at Cheltenham in March. We tend to be both in the same area, watching the racing, every year. John O'Shea arranged a meeting. The minute I said to Sir Alex that we were planning a tribute match for Liam, he was on board. He spoke very fondly of Liam and had no hesitation of being involved in whatever plan we could make.

"'You won't get the first team', he said, and we agreed a Legends game was the way to go. It was full steam ahead with constant contact from him until he fell ill. And yes, we were very concerned what might happen when he had to pull back.

"After a short time, I made



Roy Keane and Michael O'Flynn at the formal launch of the Liam Miller tribute game at Cork City Hall.

Picture: Daragh McSweeney/Provision

contact with Ed Woodward, CEO at Man United, who was great to deal with because I wasn't sure how far the situation had been advanced. But in this moment of uncertainty, Roy Keane was brilliant. We had a lot of discussion at that time and he was instantly ready to step into the breach as player-manager of the United legends.

"I should also mention we had a lot of interesting debate



about that time on the prospect of Sir Alex being manager and Roy being captain!"

Fergie and Keane together again? Was this the occasion, honouring a fallen colleague, to reach for perspective and put the past behind them? O'Flynn smiles but confirmed he had an agreement from both to be manager and captain of the Man United legends on September 25.

"People were saying to me,

'Are you for real?' But I've learned in life and business that differences, even serious ones, get put behind folk and they move on. I had a lot of banter with them both. This was something extraordinary and exceptional and they were both more than happy to do their bit," he says.

Ferguson was keen from the get-go to have today's game at a big stadium, but the organisers wanted it in Cork.

On that basis, Fergie was happy with Turner's Cross, and while that arrangement was in place, O'Flynn tips his hat to Cork City FC, who were 'on top of their brief'.

"Full credit to Glasgow Celtic, Dermot Desmond and Peter Lawwell, the CEO, who couldn't have been more helpful. John Delaney and

>>>

the FAI team were totally on board, so all the key pieces were coming together.”

The turning point in the venue debate arrived in the august chambers of City Hall in Cork. O’Flynn pulled a masterstroke bringing Keane over for a press announcement.

The obvious question came from the gathered media: Why isn’t the game at Páirc Uí Chaoimh? That question was further legitimised when the 7,000 or so tickets for Turner’s Cross were snapped up in six minutes.

Rebels were stirring.

“That morning in City Hall changed the dynamic. But it also changed the workload we had ahead of us,” says O’Flynn.

The debate ratcheted up to an emotive campaign, which drew in politicians, barristers, and the hierarchy of the GAA at Croke Park.

“Suddenly the public was asking: ‘Why isn’t this in the Páirc?’ When the people speak, the politicians follow, and then the issue takes on a new dynamic,” explains O’Flynn, a next door neighbour of the Millers at Kilcrea, Ovens.

“The ‘election’ was over, so to speak, and we needed to deal with the result. We had to make this work. We’d been told what to do by the people, and we couldn’t turn around and tell them we can’t make this work. We just couldn’t.”

The dyed-in-the-wool Éire Óg man admits there were delicate and detailed discussions with the GAA. “We never expected it to develop and snowball to the extent it did. Once the agreement was made on the Páirc, we were presented with a new set of logistical challenges.”

That word ‘concerned’ sur-



FERGIE’S FLEDGLINGS: Sir Alex Ferguson has been a source of great encouragement in the build up to today’s events in Cork. He is pictured with new signings Alan Smith and Liam at United’s Carrington training base in 2004.

Picture: Matthew Peters/Man Utd, Getty Images

faces again. The cynics weren’t slow to advise O’Flynn and the organising committee, ‘Ye won’t half-fill the Páirc’. “You can’t put the toothpaste back in the tube. We just had to keep going, and fair dues to the toilers on the committee.”

What O’Flynn had on his side was an office infrastructure at his business HQ in Ballyncollig. Staff, including his own daughter Kate, who got married in the midst of it all, were seconded full-time to the Miller operation.

“I didn’t think we would pull it off without a proactive PR campaign. I still have thousands of flyers in the office which we never had to issue. It’s been remarkable.”

At the top of all this is a devastated family in Co Cork, behind whom the people of Cork and Ireland have rallied. The bottom line is the proceeds — the money from the match and City Hall banquet is six

times what a 7,000-capacity game could deliver.

Of course, costs have surged too.

“Once we finalise returns, the Miller family will benefit significantly from the proceeds. Marymount Hospice will also benefit to a greater extent than originally envisaged, and there are a number of other deserving causes that will be considered and dealt with.

“Given the public ownership of this, we can’t be in any way clever or coy on what the outcomes are. We are an independent committee running this.

“That is what the public would demand. We can never lose sight of the fact that this entire project was predicated on a young man passing away prematurely. We will set out the other benefiting causes in due course. If we don’t, it would be wrong.

“We must do the right thing by the public, who’ve supported us in a big, big way.”



PROUD TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE
LIAM MILLER TESTIMONIAL – SEPTEMBER 2018



CREATING EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES.



THE METROPOLE HOTEL
CORK



T: +353 21 4947555 | TRIGONHOTELS.COM

Referee: Graham Kelly

Assistant referees: Trevor Cotter & Eoin Harte



MANCHESTER UNITED

■	Roy Carroll	1
■	Gary Neville	2
■	Denis Irwin	3
■	David May	4
■	Rio Ferdinand	5
■	Wes Brown	6
■	Nicky Butt	8
■	Louis Saha	9
■	Andy Cole	9
■	Ryan Giggs	11
■	Kevin Pilkington	13
■	Alan Smith	14
■	Roy Keane	16
■	Paul Scholes	18
■	Dion Dublin	20
■	John O'Shea	22
■	Michael Clegg	23
■	Quinton Fortune	25
■	Mikael Silvestre	27



Manager: Roy Keane

Fourth official: Anthony Buttimer
Referee observer: Edward Foley



CELTIC/REP OF IRELAND



1	David Forde	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Stephen Carr	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Kevin Kilbane	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Kenny Cunningham	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Richard Dunne	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Keith Andrews	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Stephen McPhail	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Andy Reid	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Kevin Doyle	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	John Hartson	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Robbie Keane	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Damien Duff	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Ian Harte	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Paul Lambert	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Graham Kavanagh	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	Stylian Petrov	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Stephen Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Colin Healy	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	Shaun Maloney	<input type="checkbox"/>
35	Johan Mjällby	<input type="checkbox"/>



Manager: Martin O'Neill

GRAHAM BARRETT

Last January I attended the 20-year anniversary reunion dinner for the U16 and U18 European Championship winning squads of 1998.

Winning a European Championship at any level is a big deal but winning a couple with two separate age groups just a few short months apart was pretty incredible considering the size of Ireland.

That period was a very special time in all our young lives and something I'm certain we will always look back upon with immense pride. But although it was great to see so many old faces at the reunion, my feeling throughout the day was one of incredible sadness due to the absence of a very close friend who, over the years, had become more like a brother to me.

Liam Miller was my roommate during the European Championships in Scotland 1998.

Him from Cork and me a Dub, strangely enough it didn't take us too long to hit it off, although it must be said that the banter did have quite an edge — to put it mildly — considering where we were both born and raised.

We beat Finland, Spain, Denmark, Portugal, and Italy to win that tournament. The achievement was a consequence of quite a few different things. The togetherness and spirit of the group that Brian Kerr and Noel O'Reilly created, Brian's ability to make us realise that as young Irishmen we were capable of competing and beating anyone and, quite critically, the influence of a few very important characters within the team that were one-offs and just exceptionally talented people really.

Liam was one of those during the few weeks in Scotland. Nobody ran more, nobody showed more bravery to get on the ball and although he, like John O'Shea, was never a shouter or bawler, he led by deed. As a consequence the rest of us grew in confidence game by game.

Our friendship grew stronger as the years went on. We holidayed together, con-

tinued to room together on a lot of Irish trips, and he continued to tell me a passport was needed for a Corkman to enter Dublin! I agreed and replied quite rightly so!

We were there for each other during very important moments in our lives. My son Cian and Liam's eldest son Kory were born just a few months apart. In fact, Liam probably saw more of my



More than a friend



ALWAYS TOGETHER

The Republic of Ireland U16 team which defeated Italy to win the 1998 European Championship.

Back, from left: Shaun Byrne, Jim Goodwin, John O'Shea, Joseph Murphy, David McMahon, and John Thompson.

Front from left: Graham Barrett, Liam Miller, Andrew Reid, Brendan McGill, and Keith Foy.

Below: Under 16 colleagues and friends Graham Barrett and Liam Miller

Pictures: Brendan Moran, Sportsfile and Patrick Bolger, Inpho.

got very upset on the phone. News like that about someone you care so much about is not easy to comprehend. He'd just been given the worst news any young father or husband could be given but he spent the half hour we spoke making sure I was OK!

Different people who knew Liam will remember him for different reasons. Great men like Martin O'Neill, Alex Ferguson, Roy Keane, and Brian Kerr recognised his talent and will recall the quietly spoken boy from Ovens, Co Cork, who could run and run and compete with the best of them.

A lot of Liam's teammates will remember the guy with a dry wit and incredibly mischievous sense of humour, who shaved your eyebrows off if you were silly enough to nod off after having a few too many to drink!

But I think his family and his close friends will remember most the person who had just such a huge heart. A man who was loyal, incredibly kind, and selfless, who put all he loved before himself, even more so during the last few months of his life.

Today at the Páirc, some giants of the game will pay tribute to Liam Miller in a very special stadium befitting of such an occasion.

Liam's children will attend and see a sellout crowd of 45,000 walk through the gates in memory of their dad.

They should know that the people who organised this event, the players who've supported it, the public clamour to get the game changed to a bigger venue so more people could pay their respects, all did so because their dad was a very special person in every respect.

Liam, we miss you and we love you. Thank you for being such a good friend.



young son than I did in the first few weeks of his life. Sent on loan from Coventry City to Sheffield Wednesday just before the loan window closed that March, my wife Sharon gave birth to Cian in that hectic period.

Liam was at Manchester United at the time and both himself and his wife Claire insisted Sharon stay with them so that she wasn't on her own

while I commuted from Coventry to Sheffield. Sharon told me Liam never let her lift a finger during her stay. When she got up in the middle of the night to make up our young son's bottle, she'd find Liam in the kitchen with both Cian and Kory's bottles already made!

When I found out Liam wasn't well last October, I called him straight away. I



From an early age, in Ballincollig, Liam Miller was showing his potential as **COLM O'CONNOR** discovers

Over two decades later and Mick Conroy can still pinpoint the afternoon he knew Liam Miller was the real deal.

Conroy, a former Glasgow Celtic star who lives and coaches in Cork, was talent spotting at an underage game in 1995.

"It was Ballincollig v Mayfield in Mayfield Park. I was doing a bit of scouting for Celtic at the time and it was sheer chance that I ended up at this game. Liam was in the middle of the park for Ballincollig. What really stood out was his ability to find space and his passing range was exceptional."

The more of Miller he saw, the more impressed he became. "His energy running



from box to box was exceptional. He would pop up in the right place and the right time and score vital goals. You just can't coach that kind of timing."

Miller was keen to expand his football education. And that brought him back into Conroy's orbit in his role at the helm of the FÁS football

programme in Cork.

"I spoke to his mum, Bridie. We wouldn't normally take players that young but Liam (who was only 15) was very committed and wanted full-time training. We actually had to get a letter from his parents at the time to get their permission.

"Most of the boys were 17 or

**WILLIE McSTAY:
'HE JUST
LOOKED LIKE A
CELTIC PLAYER'**

Celtic legend Willie McStay was the Head Youth Coach when Liam Miller came highly recommended to the club as a 15-year-old in 1997. Willie would become a hugely influential figure, as mentor and friend, in Liam's development into a Celtic favourite in his own right.

"When Liam came over first," Willie recalls, "I remember the wee smile on his face and his sense of excitement but also a wee bit of apprehension about how things were going to go. But as soon as he went onto the training pitch, the respect he got from all the other boys in the youth system was immediate.

The drive to succeed



DREAM COME TRUE: Liam Miller signing for Glasgow Celtic in 1998 as parents Billy and Bridie look on.

18 but he revelled in it.”

One story, in particular, sums up Miller’s drive to succeed. “We did beep tests for the players and the bleeps were on an old tape cassette that I would put on my car radio. I’d roll down the window and off we’d go in a car park. We started at level 5 and as we moved through the

numbers the lads dropped off one by one. But Liam kept going and going. It was incredible.

“I think he got up to level 22 and just missed out by a foot on the last one. All the boys were cheering him on at the end.”

But it was more than just football ability that made Mil-

ler stand out.

Conroy explained: “At 15 or 16 lads often think the world is their oyster but Liam had his head screwed on, he had an exceptional level of ambition and was dedicated to the game. He would take advice on board and was always looking at ways to improve.”

“His fitness levels were unbelievable. We’d monitor the players in terms of speed, agility, and endurance and, as a young 15-year-old going on 16, Liam actually broke the record, which just shows you the natural athleticism he had.

“Although from the outside he just looked like a young boy trying to do well, inside there was a strength in him to push himself on.

“As I said in the eulogy at his funeral, he was the wee boy that came into Celtic on trial

and never gave the ball away. But the pathway to first-team football is never smooth.

“There are ups and downs for every young player. But Liam was never fazed, whether it be moving up a level or an injury, he just dealt with it. Same with playing in different leagues and in different countries later in his career. So it didn’t surprise me how bravely he dealt with his illness. That inner strength I talked about, I think everybody saw that come out in the end.”

– LIAM MACKEY

- ✱ First Stadium in Ireland within a Municipal Park.
- ✱ Four self-contained sectors which accommodate: South Stand **13,000** (nominal); North Stand **8,000** (Previously **10,000**); Blackrock Terrace **12,000** City Terrace **12,000**.

SOUTH STAND

- ✱ Players and Officials at Ground Level.
- ✱ Spectators - 3 tiers: Level G01 **5,400**, Premium Level – G02 **2,238**, Level G03 **5,400**.
- ✱ Total **13,038**.
- ✱ Number of Disabled Persons Spaces with Seating

alongside for their Companions = **220**.

- ✱ There are **20** exits from the stadium with an emergency exit time of **6.5** minutes.

- ✱ There are four lifts and two service lifts.

PLAYING PITCH

- ✱ Floodlit main pitch to **1,500** Lux. First stadium in Ireland with LED Lighting.
- ✱ Main pitch has been upgraded with new drainage and with provision for sprinklers, provided through harvested rainwater.

PLAYER FACILITIES

- ✱ **4** Dressing Rooms and Associated Shower, W.C. Facilities.
- ✱ **2** Physio rooms.
- ✱ **2** warm Up Rooms.
- ✱ **2** Referees rooms and Match officials rooms.
- ✱ Players First Aid Room.
- ✱ Player Equipment Store.
- ✱ Doping Room.
- ✱ **2** Entry Tunnels to the main pitch from dressing rooms.

SPECTATOR FACILITIES

- ✱ Central Kitchen At Level **G02**, South Stand.
- ✱ Central Dining at Level **G02**, South Stand.
- ✱ **13** Bars.
- ✱ **7** Hot Food kiosks.
- ✱ **12** confectionery shops.
- ✱ **1** merchandising shop.
- ✱ **36** W.C. Blocks Catering for



Male, Female and Separate Facilities for Disabled Persons.

MEDIA FACILITIES – SOUTH STAND

- ✱ Up to **13** tv cameras – main cameras at Level **G03**, South Stand and Reverse Camera at North Stand.
- ✱ Provision for 'Hawk Eye' on major match days.
- ✱ **60** press positions – Level **G03**, South Stand.
- ✱ Press Facilities at Level **G03** and Ground Level, South Stand.
- ✱ Press Conference Room at Ground Level.

- ✱ Photographers room at Ground Level.
- ✱ Flash Interview area at Ground Level.

CONCERTS

- ✱ Concerts up to **47,000**.
- ✱ Stage at City End.
- ✱ Purpose Made Entry to Playing Pitch at City End, Both Sides.

SECOND PLAYING PITCH

- ✱ All Weather Enclosed Full Size Pitch.
- ✱ Floodlit to a Lux Level of **500** Lux. Spill of Lighting is

Controlled to Minimise Impact on Surrounding Areas.

CONSTRUCTION DETAIL

- ✱ **300** Employed on Site and **80** Off Site.
- ✱ **1,220** No. of Piles.
- ✱ **33,000** Tonnes of Concrete.
- ✱ **4,600** Tonnes of Steel Reinforcement.
- ✱ **1,500** Tonnes of Structural Steelwork.
- ✱ First inter-county Match — 22nd July 2017.
- ✱ 1st Concert — May 4th, 2018.



A sporting theatre



BALLER: Man United's Ji-Sung Park, Ryan Giggs, Patrice Evra, Ashley Young, Michael Carrick, and Rio Ferdinand watch Paul Scholes strut his stuff in May, 2012. Scholes was a 'role model' for the likes of Xavi. Picture: John Peters, Getty

THE quintessential 4-4-2 Premier League midfielder: three-quarters of it lines up in Páirc Uí Chaoimh today, with Nicky Butt, asked to understudy 270 times, called on for one more cameo.

Gary Neville sells the package: "There was Giggsy's dribbling on one side and Becks' delivery on the other, allied to Keano's incredible drive and tenacity and Scholey's laser passing and goal-scoring ability. Tenacity, passing, penetration, energy, technical quality, tackling; all of it in spades. What more could you want from midfield?"

Alex Ferguson's perfect build: construction sound,



Some would argue that three-quarters of the best midfield quartet in the Premier League era will be at Páirc Uí Chaoimh today. But even since the era of Giggs, Scholes, Keane, Beckham and Butt, the roles, and understanding of the role, have changed. **LARRY RYAN** talks to those in the know

architecturally fetching.

"With Roy Keane present, keeping the ball was never a problem," Ferguson said, in his autobiography. "I said so from the minute he came to the club: 'He never gives the ball away, this guy'. Ball-retention is a religion at Man United." And Scholes is a cult. "The best English midfielder player since Bobby Charlton," in Ferguson's eyes.

"He had the brain for the passing game and a talent for orchestration. I loved watching teams trying to mark him out of the game. He would take them into positions they didn't want to go to, and, with a single touch, would turn the ball round the corner, or feint



Midfield maestros

away and hit a reverse pass. Opponents would spend a minute tracking him and then be made to appear inconsequential, and sometimes even foolish.

“He was such a brilliant long passer, that he could choose a hair on the head of any team-mate answering the call of nature on the training ground.”

Barcelona great Xavi, the quintessential Champions League midfielder, regarded Scholes as his “role model”.

“For me — and I really mean this — he’s the best central midfielder I’ve seen in the last 15, 20 years,” he said in 2011. “He’s spectacular, he has it all: the last pass, goals, he’s strong, he doesn’t lose

the ball, vision.” Dani Alves once told Xavi he played in the future. But a midfielder must live in the gritty present, too, and Keane measured the cost.

“I’d had broken ribs, stitches in the head — what I would class as normal midfielders’ injuries. And, of course, the cruciate.”

The tools of the midfielder’s trade are dressed up in jargon now: taking the ball on the half-turn, receiving on the back foot, playing through the lines. Brian Kerr simplifies the imperative.

“The great midfielders are the ones who can dominate the game for the team and can have the most influential moments in the match — a block-

ed tackle on the edge of the box or a header at the near post in the last minute, or the pass that cuts through the defence to put the striker through on goal. Great midfielders could do it all.”

Regista, trequartista, playmaker, box-to-box. They get a job spec now. There are central wingers, false nines, and numbers 10s. But in Scholes and Keane, Manchester United were blessed with a pair who could do much of everything.

“Is it enough just to be N’Golo Kanté?” muses Kerr. “But, now, we see Kanté playing in that advanced position

>>>



for Chelsea and he can do that, too. Roy Keane was a great midfield player, because he dominated a game in a defensive way and in an attacking way. As his game matured, and as he matured, the range of his game became a little bit more of a holding midfield player.

"I grew up with the great midfielders, like Danny Blanchflower and Dave Mackay, at Spurs. Bobby Charlton was a great midfield player.

"John Giles dominated the game; he ran the game. Liam Brady could dominate the game with his range of passing and his ability to get shots and score goals."

What does it take? "For creative midfield players, like the Bobby Charltons of my time, you obviously need skill, because the first touch is the most important one," says Giles. "You find, with great players, that they have more time after they've touched the ball than before they've touched the ball."

Not that Giles agrees with demarcation between cre-

THE GENERAL: John Giles (on the left) 'dominated games', says Brian Kerr. Alongside Giles and Steve Heighway is Liam Brady, making his Ireland debut. Picture: Connolly Collection, Sportsfile

ators and destroyers.

"I think it's become a fad to talk about a 'defensive' or 'sitting' midfielder. In my opinion, you're a midfielder: full stop. You defend when you have to and you attack when you have to. I think it's a myth, actually, that the defensive midfielder is going to be able to protect the back-four. With respect, Jesus Christ couldn't protect the back-four, because you've got the width of the pitch there.

"Sometimes, the best way to protect the back-four is to have the ball. Billy Bremner and myself were midfield players of the same size. Billy Bremner scored 115 goals for Leeds. I scored 115 goals for Leeds. So which of us was the

defensive and which was the attacking midfielder player? What you do is, if one goes, the other balances up. Common sense."

Keith Andrews, who plays in today's Ireland/Celtic midfield, had to evolve with the times. "Growing up in the era of 4-4-2, you had to be bit of everything as a midfield player. As the game has changed, over the last 15 or 20 years, the roles have become more specific, from a holding midfielder to a number 10. They're all pigeon-holed now."

And he risks a reducer from today's opponents when he selects the complete package. "The best all-round midfielder I've played against is Steven Gerrard. If you didn't get tight enough to him, he could use the space to play balls that would damage your back-four. If you got too tight, he had the pace and power and the timing of his runs to get past you. When you had the ball, he could nail you in a tackle."

Watch your house this afternoon, Keith.

Today, Denis Irwin ticks a bucket list. “My first game for United was back in Cork at Musgrave Park, I played down the Lodge before it was Páirc Uí Rinn and I played at Turner’s Cross. So it will be nice to play at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. I finally get to complete the set.”

That outing at Muzzer came when United visited Cork City for a friendly in August 1990. Irwin had started at the Cross that March when the Republic of Ireland beat England 4-1 in a ‘B’ international on a feverish night of Leeside legend.

And there would doubtless have been many appearances at the Páirc had Leeds United not come knocking.

As the great caption on Irwin’s profile on the Cummins Sport website puts it: “A wasted talent.”

“I had the privilege of playing in Croke Park three times, first with the Cork primary schools hurling team against Dublin. I actually marked Niall Quinn — he was 11 years old. It finished 1-4 each, I think Quinny got a point from a free.

“And I played Gaelic football for Chríost Rí in the U15½ All-Ireland final, which we won. Good times.”

The dead ball knack he’d later showcase for United and Ireland had already blossomed; he landed two 45s in that final.

But for a long time all he wanted was to be a Cork senior hurler.

“Hurling was always first choice, my first love. It still is. I lived literally 50 yards from the Barrs club. So I grew up watching the Barrs and the Cork hurling team more than anything. I was a hurling nut. We used to travel around to all the matches, to Limerick and Thurles.

“I grew up watching the full-forward line of Jimmy Barry Murphy and Ray Cummins. Seanie O’Leary, they were all my heroes.

“Cork were great back then. Hopefully, Mr Meyler can get them back to anywhere near that. Though I have to say the hurling this year was good.

“Because I went to Criost Ri, which is more of a Gaelic football school, I started playing football a bit more. And it wasn’t until 13 or 14 really that soccer became the main sport for me.”

From Cork to one of the world’s biggest football clubs is a road not widely travelled.

“Roy’s done it and Liam’s done it. Brian Carey as well, in my era. Noel Cantwell, going back. Anyone who plays for Manchester United is a great player.”

Like Liam Miller, Irwin was regarded as the



Denis: The hurling nut who finally gets to play in the Páirc

Picture: Courtesy of Cummins Sport

quiet man in an Old Trafford dressing room full of voices demanding to be heard.

“Roy, big Pete, a few others, powerful characters. You need one or two quiet ones. You need a squad that clicks and I was happy to get on with my job. I bumped into Liam a couple of times over here, though I’d finished my career before he came to United. I was at his funeral and his brother-in-law made a fantastic speech in the church. It captured the real Liam Miller everyone saw; a quiet family man. That’s how he came across. A man who got on with his job.”

5 of the best

DENIS HURLEY outlines the defining moments of Miller's career, at club and international levels





Friday, May 8, 1998: Kings of Europe

The late 1990s were heady times for the Republic of Ireland at underage level. In 1997, Brian Kerr's team had finished third in the world at U20 level, and 1998 would bring European success at both U16 and U18.

It was in the U16 side — along with John O'Shea, Andy Reid, and Graham Barrett — that Liam Miller shone. After Ireland beat Spain in their final group game, Noel Spillane, in *The Examiner*, said that the Celtic player "in the middle of the park was once again superb", and further wins, over Denmark, Portugal and Italy, would secure the title. Miller would also feature at U18 level that year.

Wednesday, November 5, 2003: The Anderlecht game

Sir Alex Ferguson visited Celtic Park to assess whether or not young Belgian defender, Vincent Kompany, of Anderlecht, had potential to be a long-term partner for Rio Ferdinand in the Manchester United back-four, but he came away with another midfield target in mind.

Miller's goal was the highlight of his midfield display, in a 3-1 win for Celtic, but it was an all-round performance. 'Miller's time comes for Celtic' screamed the *Examiner* headline the following day. The dropping of Michael Gray to the bench meant Miller faced the biggest game of his career. It was a challenge he met, emphatically.

Saturday, January 8, 2005: United we fall?

With his Bosman transfer having taken place in the summer of 2004, Miller was selected by Ferguson for the first game of the following season, a 1-0 defeat to Chelsea. Unfortunately for Miller, United were in transition — 2004-06 was the only period between 1993 and Ferguson's departure, in 2013, that they went three years without a title win — and he was unable to establish himself. An FA Cup third-round tie, against Exeter City, offered him a chance, but he was substituted during a scoreless draw. He departed in 2006, having only played three times in 2005-06. "Manchester Utd didn't work out, but I have no regrets about giving it a go," he said.

Wednesday, March 1, 2006: Swede dreams

Steve Staunton's first game in charge and the future looks bright, as Ireland lead Sweden 2-0 at Lansdowne Road.

On loan at Leeds, Miller was sent on by Steve Staunton and his 25-yard shot capped a fine night. "That stands out, of course it does," he told the *Irish Examiner*'s Liam Mackey in 2015. "Watching Ireland on TV, as a kid, that was something you dreamed about. So, to get to wear the jersey was a great thing and it was a nice goal, too."

Saturday, October 24, 2009: Easter promise

After spells with Leeds (loan), Sunderland, and Queens Park Rangers, Miller was without a club in the summer of 2009, but Staunton's successor, Giovanni Trapattoni, included him in his Ireland squads, even if the Irish suspicion of ball-playing midfielders meant his game-time remained limited. Hibernian's John Hughes took a chance on him and after a 1-1 draw away to Rangers that season, he said: "Liam Miller was possibly the pick of the bunch in midfield. It's a pleasure working with him." He played 33 league games, scoring twice, earning himself a spot on the PFA Scotland 'Team of The Year', and improved on those figures in 2010-11, scoring five in 33 appearances.

Liam Miller's Republic of Ireland senior caps

Compiled by Seán Creedon

No. of Caps	Date	Opposition	Venue	Competition	Result (Irish first)
1	31-03-04	Czech Rep.	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	2-1
2	28-04-04	Poland	Bydgoszcz	Friendly	0-0
3	27-05-04	Romania	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	1-0
4	29-05-04	Nigeria	The Valley	Unity Cup	0-3
5	18-08-04	Bulgaria	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	1-1
6	13-10-04	Faroe Islands	Lansdowne Rd	W. Cup	2-0
7	16-11-04	Croatia	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	1-0
8	09-02-05	Portugal	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	1-0
9	29-03-05	China	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	1-0
10	17-08-05	Italy	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	1-2
11	01-03-06	Sweden	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	3-0 (G1)
12	24-05-06	Chile	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	0-1
13	16-08-06	Holland	Lansdowne Rd	Friendly	0-4
14	17-10-07	Cyprus	Croke Park	Euro	1-1
15	17-11-07	Wales	Cardiff	Friendly	2-2
16	06-02-08	Brazil	Croke Park	Friendly	0-1
17	24-05-08	Serbia	Croke Park	Friendly	1-1
18	29-05-08	Colombia	Craven Cottage	Friendly	1-0
19	06-09-08	Georgia	Mainz	W. Cup	2-1
20	29-05-09	Nigeria	Craven Cottage	Friendly	1-1
21	14-10-09	Montenegro	Croke Park	W. Cup	0-0

Key: W. Cup=World Cup qualifier Euro=European Championship qualifier G1=Scored goal



Liam Miller during his time with Perth Glory in the A-League in Australia.

Picture: Getty

A life down under

JACK ANDERSON

Melbourne

Perth Glory, 2011-2013.

In June 2011, Perth Glory's pre-season plans were thrown into chaos when former Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler unexpectedly decided not to stay on at the West Australian club. Two days later, Liam Miller arrived in Perth at a club managed by former Glasgow Rangers stalwart,

Ian Ferguson. Miller, one of 10 new signings, was the marquee overseas import. Within weeks, he was playing against an all too familiar club — Celtic, on a pre-season trip.

The then Celtic manager, Neil Lennon, told the local press that Miller's signing was an astute one: "One thing Liam will do is make Perth a better team. He's a very good player — technically very good and clever."

Miller (hampered by recurring cramps) and Perth Glory started the league season slowly. By the halfway stage, they were in seventh, one place outside a finals playoff

place. But Glory would then go on a long unbeaten run which the press in Perth attributed to Liam being moved from a wide to a more central role and his “ability to play a killer ball.”

Perth made the playoffs. As Glory prepared for the 2012 Grand Final, the West Australian reported on April 13, 2012, that a “familiar figure” from Liam’s past had dropped by for training — former Republic of Ireland manager Brian Kerr. Kerr, who was managed Miller at Ireland youth and senior level, reminisced on the day that Liam, drafted into an important U19 international match at late notice, had turned up to training without a pair of boots. Miller trained in Kerr’s oversized pair and the following day put on a performance to remember in a win over Russia.

Perth Glory made the 2012 Grand Final, beating the Central Coast Mariners in the preliminary final 5-3 on penalties. Liam took one and scored.

The A-League Grand Final of April 22, 2012, was one of the most memorable in the competition’s history. Perth took on the defending champions and favourites Brisbane Roar in Brisbane in front of a sell-out crowd of 50,334. The game was decided by a penalty awarded in the seventh minute of stoppage time for a foul on Brisbane striker, Besart Berisha. Contact appeared minimal but despite a raucous reaction by the Perth players, Berisha stayed calm and scored. The foul had been committed by Liam Miller.

The decision caused uproar and when VAR was introduced into the A-League last year, the first point of reference was the Miller (non) penalty.

Two days after the final, the ‘West Australian’ interviewed Miller, noting that a “usually laid-back Miller” remained “incensed”.

In the 2012/2013 season, a mid-season collapse saw manager Ian Ferguson sacked and, although Perth rallied to get to the playoffs, Liam turned down a contract extension and ended up at Grand Final rivals, the Brisbane Roar. He had scored two goals from 50 appearances in his two years in Perth.

Brisbane Roar, 2013-2014

The A-League pre-season for 2013/2014 involved a visit from Manchester United under David Moyes and a game against an A-League All-star team featuring Liam.

Given Liam’s connections with United, Brisbane used him heavily in their pre-season publicity campaign. Gracious as ever, he recounted his 21 international caps, his experience of the Manchester derby, Celtic and



Rangers, and Sunderland and Newcastle.

In June 2013, the ‘Courier-Mail’ asked him to pick his best team from footballers he had played with or against. It read: Edwin van der Sar; Gary Neville; Rio Ferdinand; Bobo Balde; Patrice Evra; Cristiano Ronaldo; Paul Scholes (whom he rated as the best he ever played with); Steven Gerrard; Ryan Giggs; Henrik Larsson and Ruud van Nistelrooy.

In another interview around the same time, he was asked to recount his proudest moment in football — “Making my international debut for the Republic of Ireland. Winning the Under-16 European Championship with my country was great too.”

And what advice would he give to young players: “First and foremost, enjoy it. Dedication is massive. When I was a kid I had a ball tied to my feet. Just practise and practise.”

When club captain Matt Smith was asked to describe Miller in a pre-season forum with



ROARING SUCCESS: Miller celebrates scoring for Brisbane Roar at AAMI Park in January 2014.

Inset left: Besart Berisha of the Roar is awarded a penalty after being brought down by Miller, then playing for Perth, during the 2012 A-League Grand Final. The decision left Miller and his team incensed.

Pictures: Getty

fans, he said: “Like any Irishman, Liam could not be more pleasant and is a professional... Sadly, his golf tends to let him down. Years of holding a hurley with his hands the wrong way around means his stance at the tee is not one for the purists. Though I’m not sure what it says about the rest of us when he still hits the ball the straightest.”

Whatever about his golf, on the field, Liam helped Brisbane to another Grand Final in May 2014 where they beat Western Sydney Wanderers 2-1 in extra time.

Early in the following season, after being inexplicably dropped and asked to play for the club’s youth team as an overage player, Liam left Brisbane by mutual consent in October 2014. He had played 24 A-League games for the Roar after joining in May 2013.

Melbourne City, 2014-2015

Liam was then snapped up on a short-term contract by Melbourne City who months

earlier had signed Damien Duff. In early 2015, Liam returned to Cork.

There is one final memory from Liam’s Australian stint that is worth recalling and it is an interview in the (Brisbane) Courier-Mail from March 2014 where in a series of questions he replies as follows:

Q: What do you like to do when you’re not training?

LM: Well, I’ve got three kids so most of my time is spent with them, but I do like a game of golf or a trip to the beach whenever I get the chance — it’s always nice here to have that option.

Q: What do you miss most about Ireland?

LM: Family, friends and being home. I was born and bred there, so it’s always nice to go back and see everyone. I don’t do it often enough, although when I do get back things never seem to have changed that much.”

Laughter, home, Cork and family.

Vale Liam Miller.



**I used to say to him,
'Give Becks a call. Tell
him we'll take the job'**



EOIN O'CALLAGHAN

In Salt Lake City, they still put his kit out in the dressing room. “It’s hard to refer to him in the past tense,” says Mark Briggs. They first met in Wilmington, a picturesque port city in North Carolina. Briggs, a former pro who began his career at West Brom, had just taken over as coach of the local United Soccer League (USL) side, the Hammerheads.

He’d been looking for an experienced, ball-playing midfielder and when he met John Caulfield at a pre-season combine in Florida, the Cork City boss knew exactly who Briggs needed to speak to.

Liam joined in early 2016, having fancied the US for a while. At the time, the USL was effectively the third tier of the North American soccer pyramid. But Liam didn’t mind. The location was perfect for the whole family. They were close to the beach. Clare and the kids loved it.

Inevitably, he was handed the captain’s armband and led a ragtag bunch of recent college graduates and journeymen through a solid, if unspectacular, campaign. Given his glittering CV, he carried an aura. With his monosyllabic ways, he remained mysterious too. One fresh-faced squad member was eager to absorb as much as possible and became Liam’s shadow.

“He’d wait for Liam to step onto the bus and then sit next to him,” recalls Briggs.

“It’d be a four-hour trip and this guy would drill him with questions — ‘Who was the



best player you played with? What was the best stadium?’ And Liam would be looking across at me like, ‘Oh, my God’. But he’d sit there and answer him. He’d tell him everything. And I think it was the most I ever heard him talk about himself. Because he didn’t have a choice.”

There was even a goal — an effortlessly classy strike and the final one of his career — in a league clash with Orlando that ensured a 2-2 draw in the final few seconds.

“It just summed him up completely,” says Briggs. “It wasn’t a piledriver where he just smashed it. He caressed it into the top corner from the edge of the area. Afterwards, he didn’t even want to do the interviews. He got one of the younger players who’d played well. He told reporters, ‘Talk to him — you don’t need to speak to me.’”

But for Briggs, one particular game stands out.

“We reached the quarter-finals of the US Open Cup, which is basically our version of the FA Cup,” he says.

“We were drawn to face Real Salt Lake, a big MLS side. That night, Liam just showed that he still had it and could’ve easily been playing in Major League Soccer. He took the game by the scruff of the neck and completely controlled it. His organising, dis-

tribution, leadership. We were 2-0 up but lost in a shoot-out. Afterwards, RSL approached me and that’s how I ended up as coach of Real Monarchs (RSL’s reserve team), eventually bringing Liam in as my assistant.”

In 2017, Briggs and Miller enjoyed an excellent time in Utah, culminating in a regular season championship win for the Monarchs. The pair talked about the future and working together on a bigger stage. “You get a bit of success and it makes you hungry for more,” says Briggs.

“We used to mess around about David Beckham’s MLS franchise opening up in Miami in a few years. I used to say to him — ‘Give Becks a call. Tell him we’ll take the job. Imagine you coaching the team and Becks as your president?’”

Then Liam began to complain of back problems and everything changed. Still, through the struggle, he kept in touch. “He called me up one day. He was back in Ireland at that stage and he says, ‘I’ve been told about a player — I think we should take a look at him’. When I got off the phone, I took a breath and thought, ‘Wow’. He was in all that pain. He was on his deathbed. And he was still thinking about how to improve our team.”

Briggs takes a moment to settle himself. “It still hasn’t sunk in,” he says. “It doesn’t feel like he’s gone and I don’t know if it ever will.”

■ The author’s sports documentary *Celtic Soul*, which he stars in alongside actor Jay Baruchel, is now available across the US on iTunes, Amazon, Google Play, and more. Check out the trailer, exclusive online content, and much more at the official website: celticsoul.ca

<< Liam Miller’s final goal, for Wilmington against Orlando. ‘He caressed it into the top corner from the edge of the area.’



LEESIDE LEGENDS:
Cork trio Liam Miller,
David Madden and
David Warren are
feted after Ireland's
Euro U-16 success.

Who's that wearing number **6**?

From his first day playing football with Ballincollig, it was evident Liam Miller was a step above, writes **STEPHEN BARRY**



Once you ask about Liam Miller at Ballincollig AFC, the stories and cherished memories flow like the Lee.

The club gave him so much during his teenage years, and he gave back so much thereafter.

As a 13-year-old, he joined having never played organised football in his life. The late Anthony McCarthy was Liam's first coach before Mick McNulty took over that team, which also featured his son, Cork City 'keeper Mark.

"You could see the man the very first day he came to it," says McNulty. "He was out training and you could see he was a rung above the rest of them."

"All the guys would be chasing the ball all around the pitch but Liam was a very intelligent player – he just found the right positions and he'd lay balls off."

"He was so comfortable on the ball for a young fella who'd never played soccer until he went to Ballincollig at 13. He was unreal at it – good at everything really. He was a very unselfish player and the nicest young fella you could meet."

"We were told to play him a year above his grade so he played two age groups, U13 and U14, and he just ran the show."

Club chairperson Gerardene McNamara also had a son on that team, Éamonn. She recalls an U15 Cup final where Liam's football brain was clear for all to see.

"They were playing against Blarney in the ESB Ground and Liam was taking a corner as they were making a sub. He called the sub over, who was actually my son, and whispered in his ear."

"When Liam was going to kick the ball, Éamonn ran out and a fella from Blarney ran out after him, and Liam curled the ball in and scored from the corner."

"I remember asking after, 'what did he say to you?' "He told me, 'You run out and that tall fella will run out with you, and I'll score'."

"And that's exactly what happened," she laughs. "They won that Cup final too."

By then, of course, the scouts were taking notice.

"Every time we went to play a match, there was crowds there," says McNulty.

"There was a trial up at St Mary's Park and Mick Conroy just said to me, 'Who's that wearing number six?'"

"Mick was fierce impressed with him the minute he saw him. He only watched him for about half an hour but said, 'I'll give you a ring and we'll take it from there'."

The only time the scouts were left disappointed was when he didn't play.

"We were playing a match in Midleton one day," recalls McNulty, "and next thing, this scout came up to me and said, 'What number is Liam Miller?' I said, 'He's sitting up there on the railing behind you. He's after getting injured.'"

"I thought he might stay and watch a bit of the game after coming down but he just got back into his car and moved on."

The fond memories of the European U16 Championships, where Miller helped Ireland to continental glory, still flicker through the minds to this day.

An *Irish Examiner* profile of Miller on the morning of that 1998 final described him as 'the driving force in midfield, the find of the team for Brian Kerr and his assistant Noel O'Reilly'.

"We'd the open-top bus for the three lads from Cork, David Warren from Mayfield and David Madden from Tramore Athletic. There was a great buzz around the village to have a European champion coming home."

"When he came back to Cork City, he came out here and trained our senior team as well. He never forgot where he came from."

Those days were like a flashback for McNulty: "I used go to all the Cork City matches and there were days you'd meet him after the match, walking up the road with Mark, and he was like he was when he was 14. He'd chat away, a bit shy. A reserved young fella. It never went to his head. Every time he came home, he'd always go out of his way to call up and have a chat. He was sound as a bell."

"A great kid."

Where we sported and played...
Even Cork's iconic anthem
The Banks recognises how
central sport is to the very
fabric of this city and county.

While the GAA, and hurling in particular, will always win the majority of the sporting hearts and minds, there is no doubt Corkonians, spread out all over the world, take great pride from the diverse nature of their native sporting successes on an individual and team basis.

Kilkenny might enjoy a great hurling tradition as do our near neighbours in the Kingdom when it comes to Gaelic football but few counties can boast the diversity, across a multiplicity of sports, that the Rebel county enjoys.

In that respect, the incredible double All Ireland victories achieved by the Cork hurlers and footballers under the inspired leadership of Tomás Mulcahy and Larry Tompkins back in 1990 proved the zenith for Gaelic games in the county. Sporting success didn't stop there in what proved an exceptional year of achievement across the board with Neptune also winning the men's National league and cup double in basketball.

Cork Constitution became rugby's first ever All-Ireland league champions in the 1990/91 season while in soccer, Cork City were just pipped at the post by Dundalk to finish second in the League of Ireland. Incredible to think that almost three decades down the line those two great clubs are still fighting tooth and nail for football's ultimate domestic prize.

In the decade that followed 1990, Roy Keane's exploits as captain of Manchester United along with former St. Finbarr's man Denis Irwin, coupled with Sonia O'Sullivan's brilliance in the world of athletics threatened to make us Rebel fans insufferable to all and sundry as the self-proclaimed capital of Irish sport.

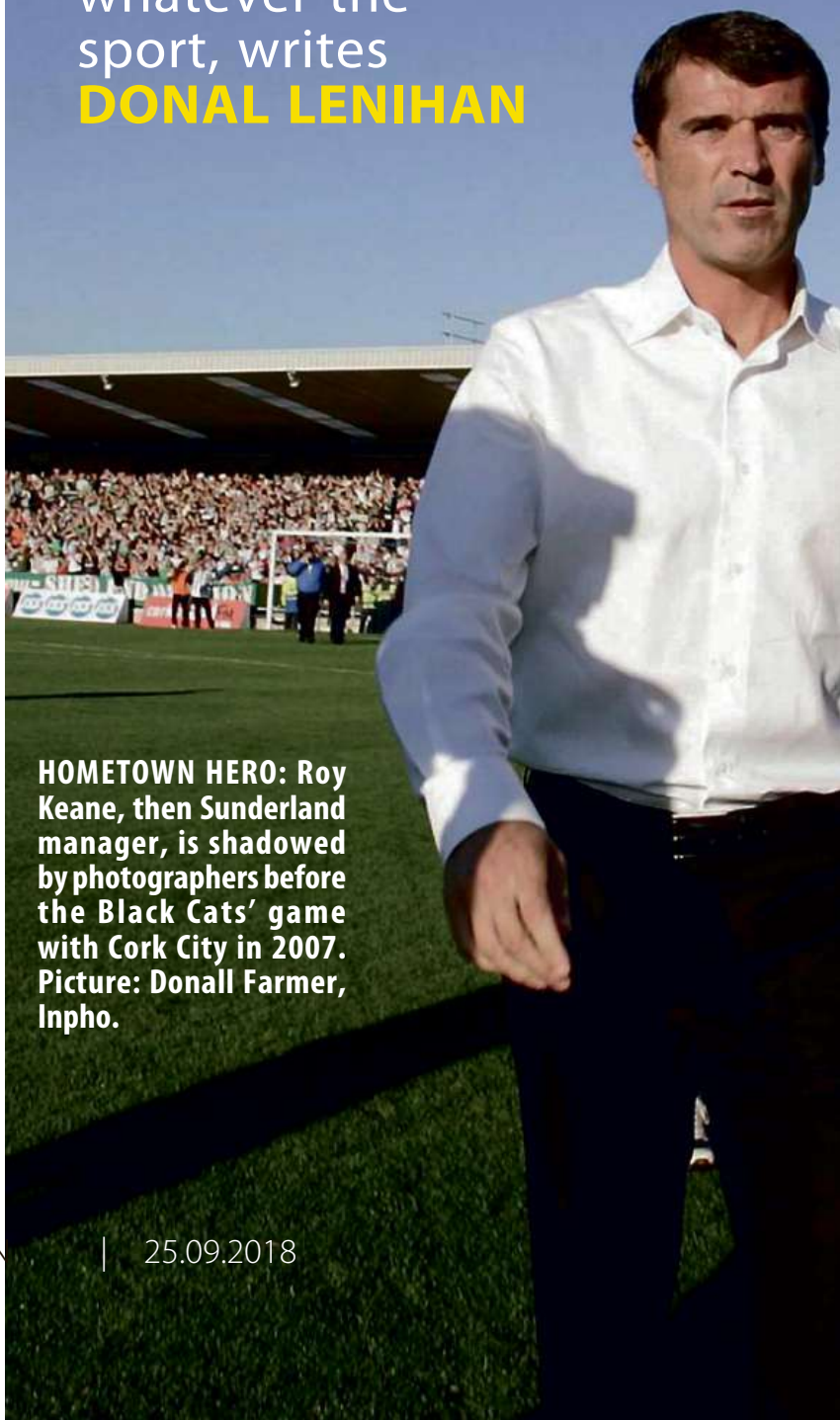
Half of Cork seemed to decamp to Old Trafford every weekend as the United captain appeared to take ownership of those sparse tickets to the highly restricted players' bar next to the United dressing room.

Roy was brilliant at looking after his own.

It was like Patrick Street in there at



Cork has always
been a city and
county that never
forgets its own -
whatever the
sport, writes
DONAL LENIHAN



HOMETOWN HERO: Roy Keane, then Sunderland manager, is shadowed by photographers before the Black Cats' game with Cork City in 2007. Picture: Donall Farmer, Inpho.

It was like Patrick Street at times in the players' lounge at Old Trafford

times much to the amusement of the younger United brigade including David Beckham, Paul Scholes, Nicky Butt, the Neville brothers and Ryan Giggs as they struggled to get a drink at the bar. *The Cork crowd must be in again tonight, they mused.* It's great to see so many of the United stars from that period make such an effort to be here today.

Cork people have a deep love of sport and reserve a special place in their hearts for their sporting heroes. Liam Miller was nine years old when Cork won that famous All-Ireland double. As a promising young hurler and footballer, growing up in Ovens, he too must have followed those teams harbouring the same ambition of all young Cork boys and girls to someday wear that famous red jersey.

While he managed to do just that at underage level, it was his achievement in making the grade in the red of Manchester United that resonated most with Cork people. That love and respect was manifestly evident when the call came to host this testimonial to aid Liam's wife Clare and children Kory, Leo and Belle after his tragic passing last February.

Fitting too that the game is hosted by Cork GAA at the home of Cork sport in Páirc Uí Chaoimh. When approval was finally granted by the GAA authorities in Croke Park, the concern turned to whether the public would respond in the numbers required to fill this vast new stadium.

We needn't have fretted. Once again the Cork sporting public have responded in the best possible way, no doubt supported by soccer fans from far and wide eager to acknowledge the incredible sporting achievements of several of Liam's former teammates from United, Glasgow Celtic and Ireland.

The fact that Páirc Uí Chaoimh is full to capacity for the first time since its impressive €85m makeover is a further endorsement of how the Cork public cherishes one of their own. The response and reaction to this most worthy cause, with people across all sporting codes queuing for hours to buy tickets, underlines again that the Cork sporting public never forget.

Once a hero, always a hero.

My strongest memory of Liam Miller is not actually of the footballer himself. Instead, it involves a chilly January morning in 2004 in Glasgow, with a gathering of newspaper writers who were due to sit down for a chat with Martin O'Neill, then the Celtic manager.

At that time O'Neill and Celtic were on an exciting rollercoaster. The Northern Irishman had arrived in Glasgow to much fanfare and had galvanised the club, with no little help coming O'Neill's way from a player he had actually inherited, Henrik Larsson. With the Swedish striker in his prime, O'Neill enjoying one of the most productive periods of his working life, and Celtic now dancing to a Champions League tune, these were exciting times in Glasgow's east end.

Except, on this particular morning, O'Neill came before us looking glum and full of foreboding. He had just received some bleak news. Liam Miller, we now knew, had chosen not to pursue his early career any longer with Celtic, and instead was taking the calculated risk in leaving Glasgow for the enticements of Manchester United. One of Celtic's most alluring young talents in years was leaving before he had scarcely got started.

O'Neill was pretty crestfallen at the news. He had believed that, at that time in 2004, he would be able to mould a new Celtic midfield around the talented, emerging Irishman, and had been relishing the years ahead with Larsson and Miller at Celtic Park.

I can remember those 45 minutes we spent with O'Neill that day as if it were yesterday. "It is really disappointing," he said of Miller's

decision to leave at 22. "It's a blow for me and the club."

There was no personal animus expressed or shown by O'Neill towards Liam. He knows every footballer has his price and earning capacity, and that football careers are often precarious. Miller had chosen to reach out and grasp an exciting opportunity in the English Premier League with one of the world's most famous clubs.

No moral judgment was

Good times at Hibs



GRAHAM SPIERS



being made of it by anyone. But O'Neill's crushing disappointment said everything about what he thought of Miller's ability as a player.

Later in his career, which did not pan out as he had planned at Manchester United, we got to enjoy Miller again in Scottish football, when he returned for two seasons to play in the distinguished colours of Hibernian. As Neil Lennon is currently finding out, Hibs is a great in-



HIBS HIGH: Miller found some of his most consistent form in the green and white of Hibernian. Here he challenges Rangers' Vladimir Weiss.

stitution, with a big, colourful, good-natured support. And Miller, by now aged 27, had lost none of his authority in midfield.

I remember one game I attended at Ibrox, when Liam and Hibs came to face Rangers in front of 48,000. There he was back in his old midfield pomp: Poised, balanced, cool, and calm with the ball at his feet, picking out a teammate or gently slaloming

past an opponent.

That match ended in a 1-1 draw but fans of both Hibs and Rangers appreciated what they had just witnessed in Miller.

It was great fun watching Liam play football: He had a kind of unhurried skill over the ball which was both enviable and eye-catching.

When I look back at Liam Miller's career, I am in two minds. One argument tells

me, he didn't fulfil, in career terms, the potential he had. On the other hand, he played for Celtic, Manchester United, Sunderland, Leeds United, and Hibs among others, as well as being capped for Ireland.

What I do know is this. From what I saw of him, Liam was a wonderful footballer. And men no less than Martin O'Neill and Alex Ferguson appeared to agree with me.

Ground Regulations Páirc Uí Chaoimh Corcaigh

1. All persons entering this ground are admitted only subject to the following Rules (which are designated to protect the health and safety of all entrants to the ground). Entry to the ground shall be deemed to constitute unqualified acceptance of all of these Rules.
2. The management reserves the right of admission.
3. The instructions of the stewards must be obeyed at all times.
4. All persons entering the ground agree to be searched by a member of the Garda Síochána.
5. **Páirc Uí Chaoimh will be a strictly no smoking Stadium on Match Days.**
6. The following are not permitted:
 - ▲ Entry upon the pitch or engaging in conduct that causes or is likely to cause injury or harm to, or otherwise interferes with, disrupts, hinders or distracts a person playing in, refereeing or otherwise having a role in a match at this ground.
 - ▲ Any unauthorised contact with the boundary wall surrounding the pitch or incursion on to the pitch. Any such unauthorised contact or incursion constitutes a trespass to property.
 - ▲ The climbing of floodlight or other pylons, stands or other buildings. Such behaviour constitutes a trespass to property.
 - ▲ Throwing any object onto the pitch.
 - ▲ Remaining or loitering in any gangway or aisle.
 - ▲ Behaving in an offensive or indecent manner.
 - ▲ Bringing of alcohol into the ground.
 - ▲ Bringing into the ground of fireworks, smoke canisters, bottles, glasses, cans, large flags, banners, poles, distress signals, laser pointers and other similar articles or containers, including anything which could or might be used as a weapon.
 - ▲ Excessive noise such as that from the use of radio sets or other appliances and behaviour likely to cause confusion or nuisance of any kind including foul or abusive language.
7. If a person commits a trespass, reasonable force may be used to prevent, restrain or terminate any trespass.
8. Where a person is in breach of any of these rules, or where the management believes that a person constitutes a source of danger to others, or to the ground, such person may be refused entry to or ejected from the ground, and reasonable force may be used for that purpose.

Search Policy for Prohibited Items

As per Páirc Uí Chaoimh Ground Regulations detailed above, patrons should note that the bringing of alcohol, fireworks, smoke canisters, bottles, glasses, cans, flags, banners, poles, distress signals, laser pointers, selfie sticks and other similar articles or containers, including anything which could or might be used as a weapon is strictly prohibited.

It is the policy of Páirc Uí Chaoimh to carry out a number of searches of patrons (with their consent) on match and event days.

These searches may take the form of a visual (including bags), electronic or physical check.

If a person does not wish to give consent for a search to take place, Páirc Uí Chaoimh have a right to refuse admission.

Signage is clearly displayed where searches are located and the policy and exact procedure are explained clearly by trained search teams, who are in place on the day before any search commences.

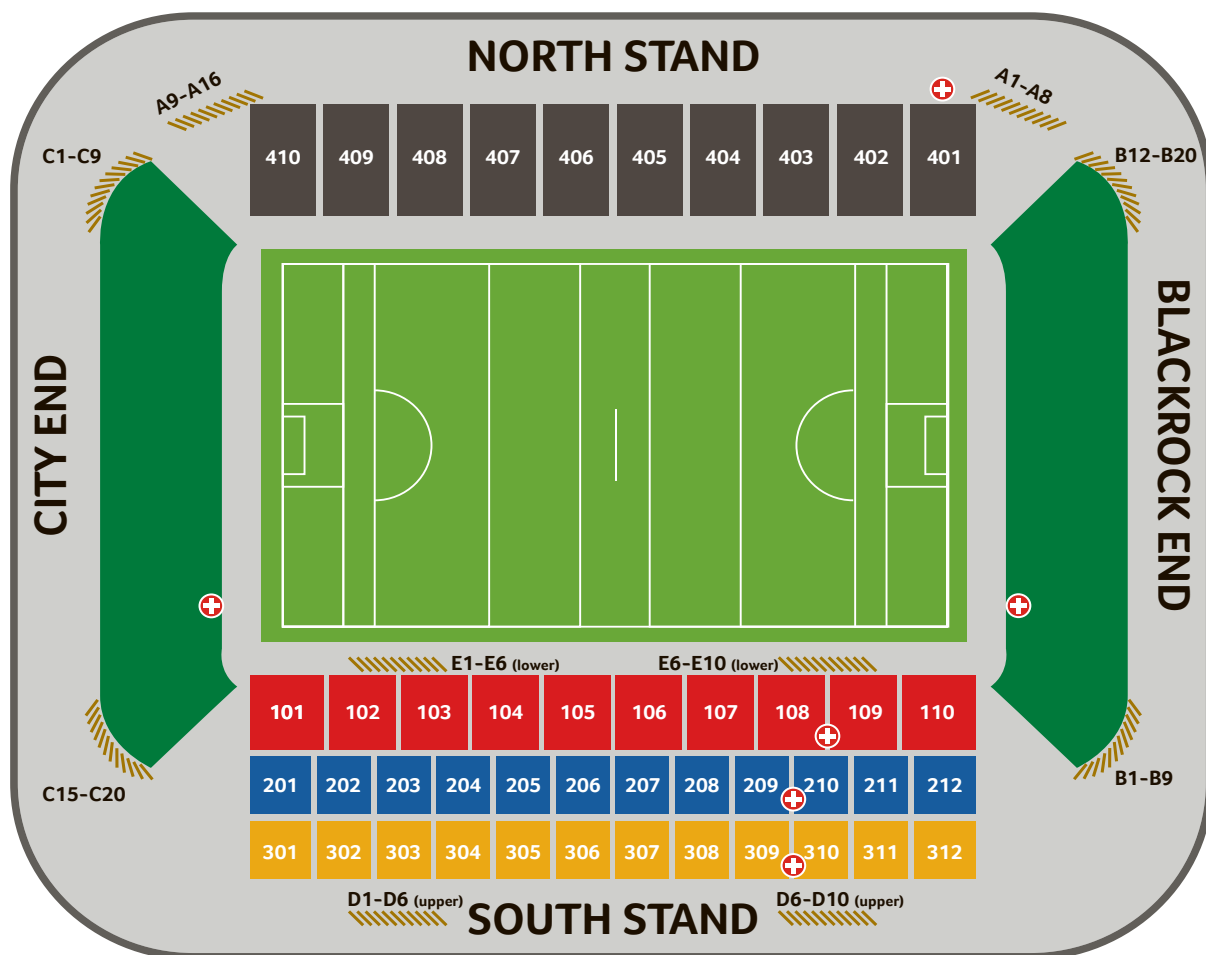
Please note that confiscated items cannot be returned once the patron has entered the ground.

This stadium policy is endorsed and supported by An Garda Síochána who will always be in the vicinity of the stadium's designated search areas. Any complaint or issue should be notified to the Gardaí on the day.

If you have any queries on this policy or require additional information on specific prohibited items please contact the stadium on **(021)2019200** or **info@paircuichaoimh.ie**

SAFETY AND INFORMATION

PÁIRC UÍ CHAOIMH



Lower Tier Seating



First Aid



Premium Seating



Turnstiles (A, B, C, D)



Upper Tier Seating



Terrace Standing

STADIUM LAYOUT



SPORT

**Virgin Media Sport, exclusive to
Virgin Media TV customers.**