

IRISH EXAMINER April 22nd, 2009

Boxing Title And Grand Slam Inspire All

When Ireland's athletes do well on the world stage it's an inspiration for sports enthusiasts on and off the field.

For the fans in general there is a great sense of Irish pride. For writers and reporters there is no better feeling than sharing the news of an Irish WBA Super Bantamweight World Champion.

Of course when Ireland won the Six Nations it was world wide news that made the front lines. Grand Slam just had that magical sound of inspiration.

Whether you're in to rugby or not Grand Slam Champions has that sense of great achievement that just cannot be ignored.

Bernard Dunne boxed his way to stardom while Brian O'Driscoll lead his team to one of the most dramatic finishes for a Grand Slam ever.

It's moving for millions of fans to read all about it and just as exciting to report the stories. Irish success on the national level also serves its purpose for the amateur athlete. Not just back on the island but also here in the United States, indeed all around the world.

When ex NYIT soccer player Vinny Tyrrell talks about the Grand Slam and Dunne winning the title he gets pumped. "There's a stack of young athletes in Ireland doing great. They are just hoping to get a lucky break. There is so much talent in Ireland who would love a chance to make it to the next level," insisted Tyrrell. "After watching Dunne and Ireland win the titles I felt great."

Castledermot's Byrne A Role Model

Bryan Byrne who plays in the USL admitted, "I was glued to the computer. I was tuned in to the rugby all the time. I also thought Dunne had a great victory. It's great to know that as a nation we can compete and be successful."

Byrne played Division 1 soccer for Santa Barbara. He is a role model for current Irish players to make it here in the US.

"I joined the Revolution in January but my contract wasn't ready 'til May. I missed out on a lot of time with the team. It went against me. Still, I had a great time there with Steve Nicol and Paul Mariner."

Byrne was waived from the MLS in 2007 by the Revolution. But it hasn't stopped the Kildare footballer pursuing his dream to play pro. "My current manager at Ventura believes I should train with Burnley who are coming over to the U.S. soon." You never know with football and Byrne is only 26.

The Castledermot midfielder signed for Ventura County Fusion in the USL Premier Development League after leaving the MLS. "I'm a semi-pro. I also play for Hollywood United. I enjoy it a lot, but I am keeping fit," he said.

Shamrock Rovers legendary defender and Kildare manager Dermot Keely spotted Byrne playing for local club Castle Villa in the Kildare District League. "If it wasn't for Dermot I wouldn't be here today. He was like mentor to me. You've nothing to lose he told me. Go to America get an education and it if doesn't work out you can always come back. His son Alan was leaving Santa Barbara and the University asked Dermot if he knew of any players. I'll never forget what he has done for me," Byrne said.

The ambitious young man who

couldn't refuse Santa Barbara's offer of an athletic scholarship was on his way.

In 2003 he moved to the west coast and he hasn't looked back. He was a captain for UCSB when they won the 2006 NCAA title.

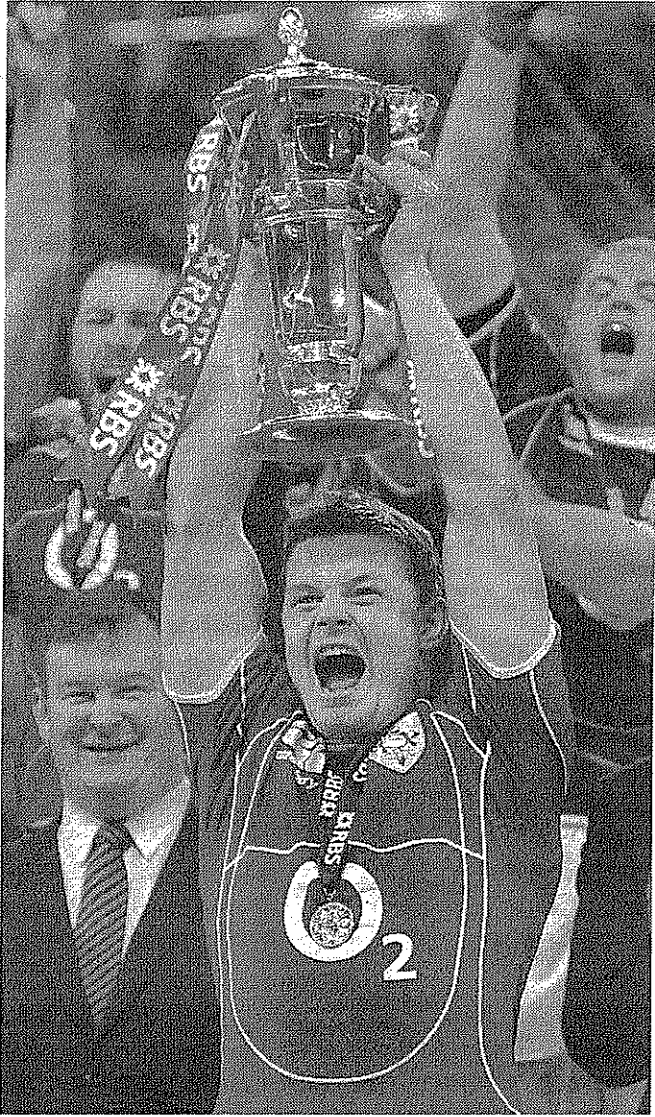
He also made the all-College team after the Gauchos beat the great UCLA 2-1 in the final.

Byrne was instrumental throughout the play-offs for his team. Brian O'Driscoll - an inspiration for the Irish (INPHO)

His contributions at Division 1 were noticed. He played 77 times for his college netting 11 goals with 19 assists to boot. "My job was to get to the back line and cross the ball. I'd chase everything," he said.

Perhaps he may not get back to the MLS but he has played in it. And not many from Ireland can say they have done that.

Meanwhile Bryan Byrne continues to fulfill other aspirations while he still enjoys playing the game. "We review soccer cleats on soccercleats101.com I enjoy working on the site," Byrne said. "I work for a company but in my spare time at the weekend I continue to build the 101 site. Designing my own website was challenging. Diadora has been great to me. They have answered all my questions and I think the feedback is important for everybody involved. Maybe some day I'll add a network to my website. I like talking to players who have just arrived in the States. I can't forget playing for Castle Villa, it's where I started. I can't forget people like Dermot Keely who helped me. It's good to give back. It's inspirational," Byrne concluded.



Le Mans	32	10	8	14	38	44	-6	38
Grenoble	32	9	11	12	22	33	-11	38
Valenciennes	32	8	12	12	28	33	-5	36
AS Nancy	32	9	9	14	31	40	-9	36
Nantes	32	8	9	15	28	43	-15	33
Sochaux	32	7	11	14	33	41	-8	32
St. Etienne	32	9	5	18	29	48	-19	32
Caen	32	6	13	13	35	43	-8	31
Le Havre	32	6	5	23	25	63	-38	21

Fixtures:

Friday April 24th

Lyon v PSG

Sunday April 26th

AS Nancy v Nantes

Auxerre v Caen

Le Havre v Grenoble

Le Mans v Monaco

Lille v Marseille

Nice v St. Etienne

Sochaux v Valenciennes

Toulouse v Lorient

THE JJB SPORTS PREMIERSHIP

Saturday April 18th

SECTION A

Coleraine

0-1

Crusaders

Glentoran

3-3

Lisburn Distillery

Linfield

2-2

Cliftonville

SECTION B

Dungannon Swifts

4-3

Ballymena United

Institute

1-1

Glenavon

Newry City

2-1

Bangor

SECTION A

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Glentoran	36	22	9	5	58	34	24	75
Linfield	36	22	8	6	62	28	34	74
Crusaders	36	16	13	7	63	40	23	61
Lisburn Distillery	36	15	11	10	53	38	15	56
Cliftonville	36	12	13	11	51	45	6	49
Coleraine	36	14	6	16	44	49	-5	48

SECTION B

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Institute	36	12	9	15	45	52	-7	45
Ballymena United	36	11	7	18	37	54	-17	40
Newry City	36	9	11	16	42	55	-13	38
Glenavon	36	10	8	18	46	60	-14	38
Bangor	36	9	8	19	40	63	-23	35
Dungannon Swifts	36	7	11	18	46	69	-23	32

Fixtures:

Saturday April 25th

SECTION A

Cliftonville v Crusaders

Coleraine v Glentoran

Linfield v Lisburn Distillery

SECTION A

Bangor v Dungannon Swifts

Glenavon v Ballymena United

Institute v Newry City

JJB SPORTS IRISH CUP

SEMI-FINAL REPLAY

Tuesday April 21st

Cliftonville

1-1

Linfield

Fixtures:

FINAL

Saturday May 9th

Crusaders v Cliftonville / Linfield

LEAGUE OF IRELAND

Friday April 17th

Bray Wanderers

1-1

Derry City

Dundalk

1-2

Cork City

Galway United

1-3

Shamrock Rovers

St. Patrick's Athletic

2-1

Drogheda United

Saturday April 18th

Sligo Rovers

0-0

Bohemians

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Bohemians	8	5	2	1	10	2	8	17
Derry City	8	4	3	1	12	7	5	15
Cork City	8	4	2	2	9	7	2	14
Shamrock Rovers	8	3	3	2	10	9	1	12
Galway United	8	3	3	2	9	8	1	12
St. Patrick's Athletic	8	4	0	4	7	12	-5	12
Sligo Rovers	8	2	3	3	7	9	-2	9
Bray Wanderers	8	1	5	2	8	9	-1	8
Dundalk	8	2	1	5	8	9	-1	7
Drogheda United	8	0	2	6	3	11	-8	2

Fixtures:

Friday April 24th

Bohemians v Bray Wanderers

Cork City v Galway United

Derry City v Dundalk

Drogheda United v Sligo Rovers

Saturday April 25th

Shamrock Rovers v St. Patrick's Athletic