

Neil Cotter



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Dubs to win on Sunday by 7

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SHANE Ross did what he does best over the course of last week's bus strikes and before — that is, nothing.

The ultimate hurler on the ditch sat on his hands and watched as Dublin traffic ground to a halt during the two days of stoppages.

Not only did he not get involved in the dispute between bus management and the unions, he also decided not to bother doing anything about alleviating the stress faced by commuters.



Traffic was insane on Thursday and Friday, as you'd expect when 400,000 people have to find another way to move.

But despite pleas from the AA and other concerned parties, Ross, left, turned down the obvious opportunity to open up the bus lanes to other road users.

In addition, I contacted his office on Thursday to ask a few questions about the row between Irish football fans and the FAI over in Serbia, to see if he — in his capacity as Sports Minister — would intervene

in any way in a most disturbing development in Irish sport.

Cue silence.

If he was still making a name for himself by roaring from the sidelines, no doubt he'd have demanded action across the board.

However he is probably still mortified by his Rio humiliation so decided to do what has become second nature to him . . . nadda.

To think he had the cheek to call Enda Kenny a political corpse. A dead body would be a more active minister.



Rein in boozing? I'll drink to that!

MY name is Neil, and I am a binge drinker, unfortunately.

So are you, probably. Seven weddings including my own in 2016, a honeymoon, another good run for the Dubs, a stellar Euros, leaving dos, arriving dos, too many funerals, festivals, concerts, reunions, catch-ups, making up, stags, office parties, having no children, BBQs on overcast days, 30ths, 40ths, Friday nights, Saturday nights, and the odd Thursday for no particular reason.

Stick that in your liver and smoke it. It's been intense, and the mental and physical damage done possibly immense. Looking at that, you'd wonder where we find the time.

Yet living in a nation of degenerate boozers, it all seems so normal.

As the great Brendan Behan once said in a typical piece of introspection: "One drink is too many for me and a thousand is not enough."

Eight-and-a-half pints a week for men is all the HSE recommends to be a low risk drinker, spread out over the week.

But Irish people consume 75 per cent of our alcohol in binge-drinking sessions (laughably defined as three pints or more, the number of pints some junior footballers drink before training).

More than half of 18 to 75-year-olds in Ireland are harmful drinkers (that's 1.4million of us) and if you're thinking that's grand because we've always been like that you're very wrong, as we're knocking back three times as much as our grandparents did in 1960.

I'm the binge-drinking equivalent of the



BEST BAR NONE . . . national icon Behan

Irish Central Bank — we're talking big numbers but pretty minuscule in the overall scheme of things.

That's because the whole country is ravaging itself with booze.

We hail the drinkers and distrust those who abstain. What are you hiding, Colin Farrell? What's the problem, Morrissey?

In the excruciating week after Electric Picnic I was wondering what the point of it all was, just like I did after the Euros.

We openly mocked publicans in France for having just one toilet, and the local artistes sipping on their half-pints while

trying to protect themselves from Irish men falling over their tables.

What was the story with that, we wondered, as we downed our ninth pint of the night.

Drink is an ill-advised love affair for people who should know better.

Alcohol abuse kills three people every day and costs €2.35billion a year.

Alcohol Action Ireland puts the cost of absenteeism in work at €41million, while every night 1,500 hospital beds are taken by people who had too much to drink.

In 2013, 5,315 people lost their jobs as a result of booze.

Yet does all that matter?

Seemingly, not a damn.

We know the risks, we know the stories, and yet we do it anyway.

Everyone has their own pattern that makes them feel good about themselves.

The girl who drinks only two glasses of wine at dinner every day without exception (but no more than three).

The fella who balances his four benders with three days of abstinence.

The summer booze fiend who drinks consistently for three months before going into hibernation.

The lad who won't do shots and religiously calls it a day after ten jars.

Me, well I never drink at home and never alone — that's my rule. I never go to the pub for one under any circumstances. Somewhere between six and nine pints is a night's work, yet I'm considered a lightweight by all who know me.

So something doesn't tally. The message from safe drinking HQ has definitely been lost somewhere along the line.

Drink is the cornerstone of our tourist trade and damned important for the economy as a whole.

Some 92,000 people are employed thanks to the drinks industry, which contributes over €2billion to the economy every year.

More than half of all tourists coming here do so for our pubs.

Our most popular tourist attraction isn't the Cliffs of Moher or the Book of Kells or the Blarney Stone — it's the Guinness Storehouse.

How can we possibly drink responsibly when we have an international image to maintain? What are we supposed to do when tourists come looking for drunken people to make their holiday complete?

And alcohol is still an old reliable come Budget Day, easy money for the Finance Minister who obviously wants us to keep on scooping so it will balance the books.

If we didn't drink, that would leave a €2billion pint-glass-shaped hole in the Exchequer's coffers.

Our drinking culture is all-consuming, and all the mixed messages from the Government has us tied up in knots.

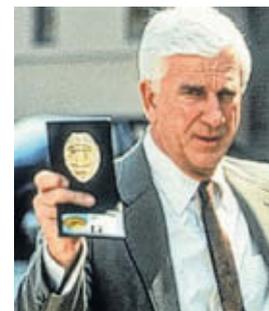
It's good. No, it's bad. Well . . . it depends on who you talk to.

Booze is Ireland's naughty, roguish child, the one the parents scold in public but secretly give a pat on the back to.

And what do we do in the face of all the encouragement, even though we know it's wrong?

We drink.

It's a funny old problem.



FILM CAN STILL DO COMEDY, SHIRLEY?

MY mission this year is to find a new movie that's actually funny.

The second decade of the millennium has thrown up one brutal comedy after another, which proves beyond all reasonable doubt the film makers have run out of ideas. Here's the proof:

1980s: Naked Gun and Airplane (both starring the brilliant Leslie Nielsen, above), Trading Places, Coming to America, National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels.

1990s: The Snapper, Dumb and Dumber, Groundhog Day, Happy Gilmore, Mrs Doubtfire, My Cousin Vinny.

2000s: Intermision, Old School, Anchorman, Borat, Zoolander, Forgetting Sarah Marshall, Dodgeball, Team America, American Pie.

2010-2016: Bad Moms, Bad Neighbours, The Internship.

Sort it out, scriptwriters, and prove you're not all a bunch of (unfunny) clowns.

DISPLAYS JUST HIDE DIVIDE IN AMERICA

FIFTEEN years after 9/11, America stands divided.

The attacks on Washington, New York and Pennsylvania united the country for a while, and on each anniversary lip service is paid to the greatness of America and its refusal to give in.

But it's a country at war with itself, torn apart by race, wealth, politicians and politics and everything else you can think of.

Donald Trump and his supporters are the antithesis of what made the USA great. But the rot set in decades ago, the economic policies favouring the rich at the expense of the poor laying the groundwork for the hatred and division we see today.

Self-preservation rules in the face of almost unprecedented economic adversity and social upheaval, and America is in danger of imploding.

People came together post 9/11, if only for a while, united in their determination not to be defeated by a foreign enemy most of them didn't realise they even had.

Now the enemy lies within also, and America only has itself to blame.

Hillary's game tumbling down

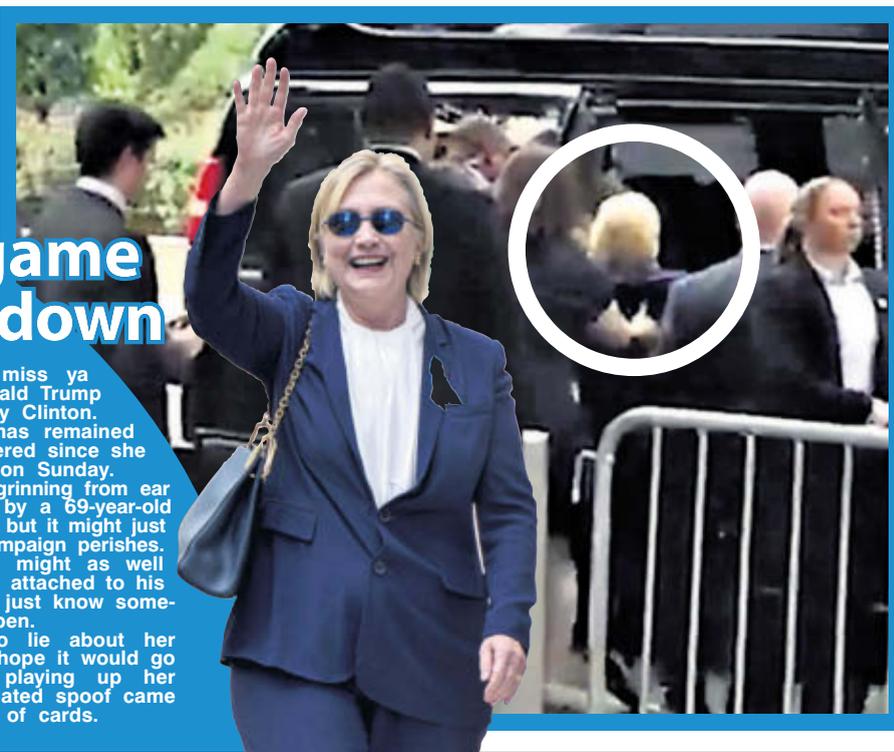
"GET well soon, Hill, we miss ya baby" is not quite what Donald Trump said yesterday to rival Hillary Clinton.

The Republican nominee has remained remarkably calm and considered since she took a tumble in New York on Sunday.

But you can be sure he's grinning from ear to ear. Never has a wobble by a 69-year-old woman created such hysteria, but it might just be the rock on which her campaign perishes.

When Trump, a man who might as well have a megaphone surgically attached to his lips, is nice and chilled you just know something crazy is going to happen.

Clinton's team decided to lie about her pneumonia, probably in the hope it would go away. Instead, rivals are playing up her instinct to lie and the calculated spoof came tumbling down like a house of cards.



CHAMP OF THE WEEK



AN inanimate carbon rod. And here's a close up of that rod.

CHUMP OF THE WEEK

HILCO, the owners of HMV, for throwing their staff to the wolves and letting the taxpayer pick up the tab. Yes, we've seen this one before.

