

# HOGAN



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## THIS WEEK'S SPORT ON TV HIGHLIGHTS

**TODAY**  
**Soccer:** Rangers v Stranraer (Scottish League Cup group stage), 7.45, BT Sport 1  
**Crick:** West Indies v India, 3.0, Sky Sports 1, England v Pakistan (Test series), 11.0am, Sky Sports 2  
**Tennis:** ATP Rogers Cup, daily from 4.0, Sky Sports 3  
**Racing:** Galway Races, 5.0, RTÉ2

**TUESDAY**  
**Soccer:** BATE Borisov v Dundalk (Champions League qualifier), 7.0, Eir Sport, Juventus v Tottenham Hotspur (International Champions Cup), 11.0am, Sky Sports 1  
**Crick:** England v Pakistan (Test series), Sky Sports 2, 11.0am  
**Racing:** Galway Races, 5.0, RTÉ2

**WEDNESDAY**  
**Racing:** Galway Races, 2.30, RTÉ1

**THURSDAY**  
**Soccer:** Real Madrid v PSG, 12.30am, Sky Sports 1, Bayern Munich v AC Milan, 2.0am, Sky Sports 1, Borussia Dortmund v Man City (International Champions Cup), 1.0, Sky Sports 1, TBC UEFA Women's Under-19 European Championship semi-final, 3.0 & 7.30, British Eurosport 2, MLS All-stars v Arsenal, Sky Sports 2, 12.50am  
**Racing:** Galway Races, 2.0, RTE1  
**Golf:** PGA Championship, Sky Sports 4, 7.0, Women's British Open, BBC1, 1.0, Kings Cup, Sky Sports 4, 5.30am

**FRIDAY**  
**Soccer:** Tottenham Hotspur v Atletico Madrid (International Champions Cup), 11.0am, Sky Sports 1, League of Ireland game TBC, Eir Sport, 7.30  
**Golf:** PGA Championship, Sky Sports 4, 7.0, Women's British Open, BBC1, 1.0, Kings Cup, Sky Sports 4, 5.30am  
**Formula 1:** German Grand Prix - Practice 9.0am & 1.0, Sky Sports F1 & 12.55, Eir Sport 1  
**Equestrian:** Royal International Horse Show, 2.0, Sky Sports 2

**SATURDAY**  
**Soccer:** Celtic v Barcelona, 6.0, Sky Sports 1, Inter Milan v Bayern Munich (International Champions Cup), 10.0, Sky Sports 3  
**Football:** Mayo v Westmeath, 4.0, Cork v Donegal (All-Ireland SFC Qualifiers), 6.0, Sky Sports 3  
**Golf:** PGA Championship, Sky Sports 4, 4.0, Women's British Open, BBC1, 1.0, Kings Cup, Sky Sports 4, 5.30am  
**Formula 1:** German Grand Prix qualifying From 1.0, Sky Sports F1  
**Crick:** West Indies v India (Test series), 4.0, Sky Sports 5  
**Equestrian:** Royal International Horse Show, 2.0, Sky Sports 2

**SUNDAY**  
**Soccer:** Liverpool v AC Milan, 3.0am, Sky Sports 1, PSG v Leicester City (International Champions Cup), 4.30am, Sky Sports 1, TBC UEFA Women's U-19 European Championship Final, 6.0, British Eurosport 2, Sporting Kansas City v Portland Timbers, 7.0, Sky Sports 2, Seattle Sounders v LA Galaxy (MLS), 9.0, Sky Sports 2  
**Football:** Galway v Tipperary, Kerry v Clare (All-Ireland SFC QF), RTE1 from 2.0  
**Golf:** PGA Championship, Sky Sports 4, 4.0, Women's British Open, BBC1, 1.0, Kings Cup, Sky Sports 4, 5.30am  
**Formula 1:** German Grand Prix, 1.0, Sky Sports F1 & Eir Sport  
**Crick:** West Indies v India (Test series), 4.0, Sky Sports 5

# 'It was obvious that a 26-year-old Irish girl was about to become the big story. The question for journalists was how they would interpret it'

**A** DAY before Atlanta's Opening Ceremony three of us had lunch in the Main Press Centre, Michelle on our minds. The other two were unambiguous about where they stood. That is, they did not believe in the looming fairytale. They considered her story a swindle and sensed it was now about to dominate the first week of the 25th Olympiad. "She could win two or three golds, you know?" said one.

"Think I'll vomit if she does!" said the other.

Me? I sat, maybe a little cravenly, committing myself neither one way or the other. Michelle Smith had never tested positive, yet it seemed that - within the swimming community - her name was already synonymous with drugs. My colleagues' hostility mirrored that of a great raft of journalists, mainly American, who specialised in the sport.

## TRANSFORMATION

None of them had much appetite for the 'innocent until proved guilty' philosophy, concluding that the transformation in Smith as an athlete from the 1992 Games in Barcelona had been Olympia's equivalent of Bruce Banner suddenly turning green and implausibly muscled.

And that that transformation had been overseen by a man with no swimming background and a ban for doping clearly added ballast to their arguments.

One of many journalistic hazards of covering an Olympics is how, from a position of blissful ignorance for the previous four years, the writer must - suddenly - feign knowledge and understanding of minority sports that get catapulted fleetingly into the public psyche.

It was patently obvious in the microwave heat of Atlanta that a 26-year-old Irish girl was about to become the story. The only question for the journalist to answer was how they were going to interpret it.

My two lunch pals had their minds long since made up and, in part, I envied their certainty. But maybe I was also a little

startled by their venom. And maybe, on a certain level, I saw in that venom some kind of bogus disloyalty.

To them, the Michelle Smith story would be an exploration of everything that was utterly putrid in sport. They could not prove it (not yet at least), but they saw her as a brazen fraud.

My first Olympics was inviting me to back a horse then. So I went and backed the wrong one.

Reading back now through my coverage from that first tumultuous week of Atlanta '96 is not a comfortable experience. I chose, essentially, to wave the tricolour. Phone calls to home would confirm the national giddiness at Smith's triumphs in the Georgia Tech Aquatic Centre and my articles were routinely faithful to that energy.

Anyway, there were always little, empty arguments to toss back at her accusers.

Like how, contrary to the view that Smith's age should militate against her prospects of success, the girls who finished second and fourth in the freestyle final were also 26. Like how so many different, supposedly informed, voices, would argue stridently in her favour.

Like French swimmer, Yann de Fabrique, telling the 'Atlanta Journal': "People just can't accept that someone new has stepped out."

Like Pierre Lafontaine, who had coached Smith in Phoenix and Calgary between '88 and '92, arguing, "She's the toughest trainer I ever worked with. The three years she was with me, she went boom, boom, boom. Faster



**BACK THEN? I TOOK TO PAINTING THAT VERY MOXY AS EVIDENCE OF INNOCENCE. I KEPT PILING COAL INTO THE FURNACE OF THAT LIE**



President Bill Clinton meets Michelle Smith after she won the third of her three gold medals at the 1996 Olympics

and faster."

Like how Official America seemed somewhat mortified at the cattiness of its media and swimmers, Bill Clinton even requesting a meeting with Smith to offer congratulations and Jimmy Carter throwing an arm around her in the press conference room. Two US presidents telling her that the accusations were muck.

But did I honestly believe that? Maybe the answer was in my reaction to her late arrival

onto the pool-deck for the 200 metres butterfly final, her last race of the Olympics. When only seven swimmers emerged into the evening sun, I recall a big American journalist jumping to his feet yelling, "It's happened, it's happened. Look who's missing from lane five."

And I was one of those instantly vaulting down the concrete steps in search of an explanation for her no-show, only for Smith to come strolling out from the call room seconds

later, after tracking down a replacement pair of goggles, the strap on her own having broken.

Deep down, I suspect that that reaction contradicted everything I had written.

But, boy, she was persuasive. When Janet Evans went on the warpath, Michelle's approach had been to meet her with heavy artillery of her own. She suggested that Evans maybe try explaining a 400 metres freestyle swim from eight years earlier "in a time she has never come close

to again..."

You read that now and wonder at the ease with which, when under attack, she chose to return mud rather than simply take exception to the graceless climate building. Back then? I took to painting that very moxy as evidence of innocence. I kept piling coal into the furnace of that lie.

In doing so, I drove a wedge between myself and the journalists who kept challenging the national euphoria and, in some instances, imperilled their own employment status by doing so. Michelle's record of never having tested positive damned them in the eyes of so many now being swept away on the wave of national hysteria.

Technically, of course, the medals Smith won in Atlanta still position her as Ireland's most successful Olympian. But the events that unspooled at Kellsgrange House on a January morning in 1998 eventually discredited everything.

## CARTOON

That episode of the 'whiskey in the jar' erased the cartoon. It was said that, if Smith's body had contained the alcohol-to-blood ratio found in the urine sample opened in Barcelona, she would have been hopelessly inebriated.

With suspension looming, an 11-page statement was prepared by her solicitor before further news came their way from FINA. It hadn't just been whiskey located in her urine, but traces of a metabolic precursor of testosterone. And two years to the day from winning her third gold medal at the Atlanta Games, Smith was in Lausanne, at the Court of Arbitration for Sports, appealing a four-year ban.

The Court dismissed her appeal. As Smith's house of cards fell, the late, great *Irish Independent* editor, Vinnie Doyle, challenged me to write the newspaper's editorial. We'd been so resolutely pro-Michelle during Atlanta, we'd even signed her up for a ghost-written column. Now all that gold was rust.

It seemed the horse we'd backed might have had an electric motor.

# WEEKEND TAKEAWAY

## Love your neighbour? It can't be all that Clare-cut!

AND then there were nine, excluding Kilkenny who don't compete in the All-Ireland SF Championship.

The qualifier wins by Clare and Tipperary on Saturday brings to 23 the number of counties who have reached the quarter-finals since the back-door format was introduced 15 years ago.

It leaves Carlow, Longford, Louth, Offaly, Wicklow, Antrim, Leitrim, Waterford and London as the counties still waiting for a last-eight place.

You wonder what emotions the Clare squad were feeling if they watched the Derry-Tipp game. In normal circumstances, they would have been pleased for their neighbours, but probably not on this occasion since Tipp's win means Clare will play Kerry rather than Galway in the quarter-final. Kerry beat Clare by 12 points in the Munster semi-final last month.

MB

## McKenzie proves rugby is not all about size

IN AN age when it is seemingly all about size, Damian McKenzie continues to prove that guile and skill is just as important.

For regular Super Rugby watchers, the Chiefs' versatile full-back is a star but McKenzie will soon be also standing out in an All Blacks jersey.

The 21-year old is 5ft 10in and weighs in at just 81kg. His 25 point haul on Saturday took him to second in the leading points (190) and try (10) scoring charts.

In what is just his second season playing Super Rugby, McKenzie will be hoping to make his New Zealand debut against Ireland in November.

He may not yet be a household name outside of the southern hemisphere, but that will change as soon as he gets his chance on the international stage.

CT

## QUICK QUIZ

**1** Before yesterday, in what year did Waterford last beat Wexford in the hurling championship?

**2** Where will next year's Open Championship be held?

**3** With whom did David Moyes begin his senior playing career?

**4** Who has been the top jockey at the Cheltenham Festival for eight of the last nine years?

5

Answers: 1. 2008; 2. Royal Birkdale; 3. Celtic; 4. Ruby Walsh; 5. 2013.

BL

## Big Sam seeks divine inspiration for England

SAM ALLARDYCE'S journey from player-manager at Limerick FC to top job with England is a path less travelled.

Nonetheless, he could draw inspiration from his time with the League of Ireland club that he guided to promotion during the 1991-92 season.

From here he gained a reputation for saving struggling clubs from relegation - making him a good candidate for a stumbling England side.

And if not inspiration, he could yet receive divine intervention from old Limerick connections.

Former club chairman Fr Joe Young congratulated Allardyce and added that he would "say a Mass" for Big Sam, who is to be unveiled as new England boss today.



## Gray's stance a welcome break from the norm

FOOTBALLERS regularly ignore distasteful chants coming from their own supporters which is what made Andre Gray's decision to speak out against Burnley fans on Saturday all the more remarkable.

The former Brentford and Luton Town striker scored twice in a 4-1 win against Bradford but chose to hit out against two supporters who left the ground after the alleged verbal abuse

of a Bradford player. "Well done to the 2 racist Burnley fans still live in the stone age i see !! Ignorant prats," he tweeted. "Its alright you've only got black players playing for you anyway."

It might have made for an easier life for Gray (above) to say nothing but, if it turns the "prats" against him, it's unlikely he'll lose much sleep over it.

AOH

## Forpady finds true calling with Quirke and Healy

AS a dual Grade One winner that enjoyed Cheltenham Festival glory in 2009, Forpadydeplasterer took his share of stick as a racehorse.

The best horse that Tom Cooper has trained at his Farmers Bridge base near Tralee, Forpadydeplasterer ultimately became renowned as a nearly horse.

On 14 occasions he finished second, including a frustrating eight times in Grade Ones. Well, he's the bridesmaid no more.

Retired in 2013, he has since put his handsome physique to use. On Saturday at the RDS, he was crowned champion of the Racehorse to Riding class for a third year in a row.

In his 35-race career, 'Forpady' never quite managed to win three on the spin, so credit must go to Co Meath horsewoman Joanne Quirke. By the horse's head was Quirke's partner Pat Healy, the Listowel racing photographer whose dapper attire doubtless played its part, too.

RF

## BIRTHDAYS

### ANTHONY STOKES

The Blackburn and Republic of Ireland striker (pictured right) turns 28 today.



### ALSO ON THIS DAY

#### HULK

The Shanghai SIPG and Brazil striker turns 30 today.

### GARETH THOMAS

The former Wales full-back, who became the first openly gay rugby player, is 42.

## Munster monopoly taking over football season

THE Munster football championship doesn't tend to do shocks but it might just be about to provide half of the teams still standing at the All-Ireland quarter-final stage.

Cork and Kerry's dominance is well known, with only Clare breaking their duopoly in living memory with their famous Munster SFC final victory over Kerry in 1992. But this weekend was a landmark one for teams from the southern province.

Provincial champions Kerry were already through to the last eight and then on Saturday, they were both joined by two other sides in Clare and Tipperary as they both won their fourth-round qualifiers.

And Cork - shocked by Tipperary in last month's Munster semi-final - have the chance to make it four representatives from the province in the last eight when they face Donegal in Croke Park on Saturday.

DB

## What has happened to a once beautiful game?

TIPPERARY and Clare's recent exploits aside, watching football is beginning to feel like penance.

With teams setting up so negatively at all levels the chances of a free-flowing game, highlighting the inherent skill of many players, is being reduced massively with every passing week.

With this in mind, I was shocked (I really shouldn't have been) to learn of the final score in an All-County Division 1 Donegal League game between Glenswilly and St Eunan's which finished 0-3 to 0-2 in favour of Michael Murphy's Glenswilly.

While it is often moaned about when a soccer game finishes 'nil-nil' after 90 minutes, this is another low for Gaelic games with only five scores in 60 minutes and just one point in the second half. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery but it is slowly ruining the game and you'd have to ask where is it all going to stop with no end in sight.

MV

## ON THIS DAY

### IN 2006:

The then Sunderland chairman Niall Quinn (pictured right) appointed himself as first-team manager. He returned to the boardroom after overseeing five matches without a win.



### ALSO ON THIS DAY

**IN 1999:** Lance Armstrong won his first Tour de France. He would go on to win a record seven straight titles but was later stripped of them all for doping offences.

**IN 1992:** Olympic Games opens in Barcelona, Spain

CK