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IT'S MAY 1985 and Eoin Hand's squad has gathered inside the cramped home dressing room of the old Lansdowne Road.

In walks the kitman with a bag of jerseys for Ireland's World Cup qualifier against Norway.

This was a time when O'Neills produced a different style for almost every match.

Often there were odd tweaks here and there — plain green one game, green with pin-stripes the next, stuff like that.

But this one was radically different.

Eddie O'Mahony, Ireland fan and owner of the largest collection of player-worn Ireland jerseys, takes up the story.

"One of my favourite shirts is Gerry Daly's from the game against Norway in 1985," O'Mahony told *The Irish Daily Star*.

"O'Neills designed it on the Kerry GAA template, because Kerry had just won the All-Ireland [beating Dublin in 1984].

"I spoke to Liam Brady and to a couple of other players who played that day and Liam told me a good story.

"He said they were in the dressing room at Lansdowne Road and at the time they didn't know what shirt they were getting from O'Neills.

"But when this thing arrived out, Frank Stapleton, the Irish captain, is alleged to have turned around to one of the FAI officials and said, 'What the f*ck is that?'

"That's a Kerry GAA jersey, I'm not wearing that'.

"To which the FAI official replied, 'We wish you'd just play like them!'"

Outstanding

The Irish team that day was an outstanding one. Alongside skipper Stapleton, Daly and Brady were Packie Bonner, Jim Beglin, Dave Langan, Mark Lawrenson, David O'Leary, Tony Galvin, Gary Waddock and Michael Robinson.

Hand sprung Ronnie Whelan and Paul McGrath from the bench in the second-half, but to no avail.

"*RTE were on strike at the time, Eoin Hand's reign was coming to a conclusion, and it was a very drab 0-0 draw that day,*" said Stillorgan man O'Mahony.

"But that shirt was only ever worn once. Not many people know that shirt exists."

Kerry, by the way, went on to beat Dublin again that year to notch up their second of three All-Ireland wins in a row.

Daly's shirt ended up in O'Mahony's collection. Who knows what happened to Stapleton's.

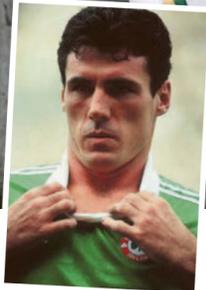
Brady's story is just one of many that feature in O'Mahony's upcoming book, *Green, White, Orange — the history of the Republic of Ireland soccer shirt, 1921-2021*.

The book is packed with pictures of the 300-plus items of memorabilia in O'Mahony's collection, including jerseys, World Cup and European Championship suits, football boots, shoes and tracksuits.

All player-worn, each one a snapshot of a moment in history; good or bad.

From Packie Bonner's shirt from the Italia '90 shootout in Genoa to Mick McCarthy's

That's a Kerry jersey, I'm not wearing that!



Mark McCadden
 EXCLUSIVE

Saipan training gear, they are all safely stored away in the hope that one day the FAI sees the potential in setting up a museum chronicling 100 years of Irish football.

The only reproduction in 42-year-old O'Mahony's collection is the blue jersey that has inspired a one-off centenary shirt released this week by Umbro.

"What a lot of people don't realise is the first international tournament was under the auspices of the Olympic Council of Ireland," explained O'Mahony.

"It would be lovely to track down an original, but I doubt

there are any in existence anymore."

So how did this amazing collection take

even very kindly gave me his shirt."

As for the rest? He went to school with Ray Treacy's sons and got his hands on the late striker's 1966 debut shirt against West Germany. Others required deeper digging.

"I reached out to a lot of players to see if they could help," explained O'Mahony.

"Richie, unfortunately, didn't get the call-up to the squad. He injured his hip shortly after coming on for his debut against Russia. But he had been in touch with Steven.

"I was staying in the team hotel in Chiba city. The night we played Germany, the players came down to the bar and there was a session.

"At the end of the night, Steven very kindly gave me his shirt."

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OLD KITS ARE FABRIC OF DIFFERENT TIME...

COLLECTION: Ireland fanatic and historical collector Eddie O'Mahony displays some of his incredible Ireland memorabilia, (below) Richard Dunne in the infamous Number 5 jersey from Moscow (below, inset) Ireland legend Frank Stapleton

'People see the orange shirt we wore and they go, 'Oh Jesus, McAteer got sent off for decapitating some fella!'

TRUE COLOURS: Eamon Dunphy admires Eddie O'Mahony's collection of Ireland jerseys; (inset) Ray Treacy

DUNPHY WISHES HE KEPT KITS

Mark McCadden
 EXCLUSIVE

character, a good player. He was a big character in the Irish camp. He used to bring his banjo along whenever we'd meet up. He was a good singer and a very good banjo player.

Popular

"Ray was a very popular member of the squad in John's time. I played with him for Rovers as well. Sadly he died relatively young."

As for the fact that he has few moments from his own international career, Dunphy said: "Everything is significant when you are finished. I don't have a programme or a jersey, I only have a few of my caps."

"It didn't mean anything to me when I was playing, because you are young and you think it's going on forever. F*ck souvenirs — that was my attitude. "I didn't really care. I wasn't very conscious of the souvenir aspect of it. Now, though it would be brilliant for my kids and grand-kids if I'd even held onto one jersey, but I didn't."

Collection

O'Mahony has more than 300 items in his collection, including jerseys from all of Ireland's tournament appearances — and going back as far as Christy Martin's jersey from the 1927 clash with Italy.

He took Treacy's shirt over to Dunphy yesterday and the *Irish Daily Star* columnist said: "When Ray came into the Irish team in '66, that was just before the World Cup.

"That was the German team that got to the World Cup final. They were a magnificent team."

He added: "Ray was a



lunch, and he donated those items."

As for the cover picture on his new book, the famous Richard Dunne shirt from Moscow, with Alan Kelly's scrawled number '5' on the front and back...

Cause
 "It was sold for a good cause," said O'Mahony. "Richard Dunne, in conjunction with the FAI, raffled the shirt off to raise money for Barretstown and the Children's Hospital in Tallaght."

"Somebody won it and they contacted me shortly afterwards because they were a fan of the website (irelandsoccer-shirts.com)."

"He said, 'I'll let you take a picture of it, but I want to

keep it'.

"Then about a year or so later, he rang me to say he was getting married and it was sitting in the drawer, and he was going to sell it, but he wanted to offer it to me first."

Story
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decapitating some fella'.

"You see the Italia '90 shirt and there are nothing but good memories there. You see that shirt and it brings back so many happy memories."

Alternatively you see shirts from between 2004 and 2008, when results weren't so great, and those kits wouldn't appear in anyone's top-10 or -20.

"Then people talk about the 2002 World Cup shirt, which was fairly plain as shirts go. "But there are great memories with Duffer and Keane.

"The perception of a shirt is always influenced by how a team is playing."



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FUTURE'S BRIGHT FOR NEW IRELAND

CHAPTER ONE is done.

Aside from a weekly five-a-side with friends such as Darren Fletcher, Emile Heskey and Nedum Onuoha, Stephen Ireland admits his playing days are finally behind him. It's not long ago that he told *The Athletic*: "The dream would be: get back with a club, smash it, go back to Ireland and undo all that scenario."

He's had offers. But none that would steer him towards a belated seventh cap. "The offers I'm getting and the clubs that want me, I'm just not interested. It's not the level I'd want to play at," he told the Irish Daily Star



Mark McCadden
EXCLUSIVE
mark.mccadden@irishstar.ie

Sacrifices

"You'd be going through the motions. For the commitment and the sacrifices, it wouldn't be worth going back. "So, I guess I find myself out of the game."

Enquiries have come from League Two and the Conference, from America and Australia.

"A lot of boxes have to be ticked off for me to make that commitment and they're not," he said.

"I know I can comfortably play in a Championship team or be part of a Championship squad. But I won't get that opportunity. I have accepted that."

"Mentally, it was very hard to take at the time. I know I can play and I still should be playing, but I'm not going to get back in now."

"I probably knew for a couple of years that I wasn't going to get back to the level I should be at, but it's only the last five or six months that I've started to sleep easy with it."

"There are still some bad days where I feel really down about not playing. I'm stressing myself out and struggling

with it. "But I have decided to move on with a new venture I set up a few years ago, one that I wanted to get into when I finished playing. "It's happened a lot earlier than I expected or wanted, but now I am pushing forward with this new chapter in my life."

THE new chapter. An interview with Olympic medallist Rob Heffernan leads to a story about his son Cathal, the Ireland Under-17 captain and highly-rated Cork City centre-half.

For the past 18 months, Cathal has been taken under Stephen Ireland's wing.

Ireland one-to-one coaching, advice, guidance — and even an appearance in the weekly five-a-side game alongside Fletcher, Heskey and Co.

He has about 20 players now; all teenagers, all starry-eyed, desperate for a boost over the barbed wire fence that separates academies and the Promised Land of first-team football.

"Any chance you could put in a word for me, Rob? An interview with Stephen?"

He hesitates. "It'll be forward-looking. No 'granny-gate' stuff."

"Like the Olympic hero he is, Rob pulls it off. So I send a text to Ireland, introducing myself, asking if he has time for a chat."

"No questions about your past," I write.

Within seconds he replies. "Why what's wrong with my past?"

I've blown it. I remember Rob's parting words: "Don't throw me under the bus."

Then another message. "It's a winking emoji. "Ya no problem at all."

THE idea came while he nursed a broken leg, which kept him out of the Stoke side for over a year. "I started coaching and mentoring some young talents," Ireland explained.

"My son [Joshua] is at Stoke. I put on some sessions for some of his team-mates, gave them an insight into football, into the dos and don'ts."

"I went through nutrition, sleep and recovery, the mental side of the game, their mental health and decision-making."

"Are they on their phone too close to a game?"

"Is that distracting their performance? Are they going to bed too late? Every little detail."

"It has evolved into me having two or three



IRELAND WITH IRELAND: Stephen Ireland celebrates a goal for his country with Robbie Keane



ON THE BOOKS: Ireland Under-17 international Cathal Heffernan

Maverick star puts experience to use guiding young talents

of the best young talents, I feel, in each club in the Manchester area — United, City, Liverpool, Everton, Burnley, Stoke, Bolton and Oldham.

"I have three or four in Ireland too. Cathal Heffernan is one of the boys."

"I'm even turning people away now."

Are there others in football who deliver a similar programme?

"I would like to think it's unique," Ireland replied.

"Just like boxers have boxing coaches and basketballers have individual coaches, I wanted this for football."

"I have friends who are trainers to Anthony Joshua; who are trainers to Ronaldo and Rashford. They are all outsourced. "I want to be independent

need to lean on me for a session, I'll take the boy."

"Joleon Lescott is great for helping my defenders in sessions and for giving advice and tips."

"I've had lads come along and do shooting sessions, and talk to the boys about what it was like scoring for England."

"They are getting exposure to Champions League winners, Premier League winners and ex-pros."

"I wish I had someone doing five per cent of what I'm doing for me through my career, who could have given me guidance and help. It's such a rollercoaster of a ride."

IT was through Ireland that Heffernan spent time this year training with Juventus, Roma, Atalanta and AC Milan.

He also impressed at Manchester United.

"I touched base with Rob a long time ago and said, 'This is what I can help Cathal with, these are the things I feel he needs to work on,' he said."

"Cathal comes from a great family and he is a very driven boy. He always wants to learn, he always wants more information, he always wants to train."

"He really wants a career in the game, which makes everything easier for me. And with a family like his, it makes everything easier."

"When we went to Manchester United, their report was he was a two-footed, ball-playing defender with a great range of passing."

"When I met Cathal, he was a big powerhouse with great athletic attributes, but all of a sudden he is being recognised for his footballing ability."

"I wish I had someone doing five per cent of what I'm doing for me through my career, who could have given me guidance and help. It's such a rollercoaster of a ride."

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HIGH LEVEL: Stephen Ireland battles with Paul Scholes during a Manchester derby, and (right) his son Joshua in an England kit



PITCHING UP TODAY FOR COBH

Mark McCadden

STEPHEN IRELAND is in his hometown of Cobh this morning for a very special match. He will help cut the ribbon on a new 4G astro pitch at 11am — and that will be followed by some matches. A Stephen Ireland XI, including himself, will take part in the festivities.

"They generated money from all my moves through my career, so they built a pitch and they are opening it," Ireland explained.

"I owe a big thanks to Mark and Jim Farrell, and Mark's wife Tracey, who have been working relentlessly on this for years. And the committee at Cobh Ramblers."

"I'm bringing a team over to play the local team in Cobh, but Cork Airport being closed has been a disaster. I had a really good line-up coming, but I could only manage to get a couple over."

"Nedum Onuoha, who I played with at Manchester City, and Emile Heskey are both coming."

"The town's four football clubs, Cobh Ramblers, Cobh Wanderers, Springfield and Springfield Ramblers, came together to develop the pitch at Old Church Park."

"The clubs got together and felt the place needed a 4G pitch so young lads can train on around the clock."

'Josh is really laid back and chilled... I'd love to see him play for Ireland'

at Burnley called Dara Costello. He played in Galway, he's from Limerick and he's a very talented boy."

"He's the size of Ronaldo and the fastest thing I've ever seen. He has all the right attributes. He just needed a bit of guidance on the football side of things."

"Four lads have made their first-team debuts for Bolton, Fleetwood, Rochdale and Oldham, all 17-year-olds."

Doubt

"I have no doubt they are going to kick on as well."

"I've got a boy at Waterford, in the first-team there, called Jack Stafford, who is 19. He is doing really well in Ireland and he loves it."

WE can't forget Ireland's most important 'client': son Joshua.

The 17-year-old could have been one that got away at international level, given the abrupt end to his dad's Ireland career and the fact he was capped at Under-15 and -16 level by England.

Ireland added: "I have a boy

where. "But he ended up back at Stoke because of Covid. It was a tough time because everything had to be done through restrictions."

"He went over to Italy to train with Cagliari and he had to go on his own, isolate for two weeks in a hotel room, train with them for a week and come back."

"The whole thing was a lot of stress and I think he got to the point where he had a bit of trial fatigue, a bit of burnout mentally from all the training, travelling and restrictions."

"In the end he said, 'Dad, I want

to go back to Stoke and go on a scholarship'. There's a long way to go yet, but he's enjoying it."

"And he is exploring playing for Ireland. He feels that's right for him and he wants to push on with that."

Ireland's new business is a family affair; Joshua and Jacob (13) both benefitting from their dad's experiences.

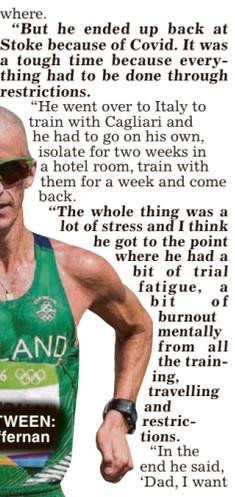
"Jacob was at Man City from seven to 10, Stoke 10 to 12 and now he's at Burnley for the next two years," Ireland explained.

Supportive

"I absolutely love what I'm doing and I am lucky I have such a supportive wife."

"Honestly, I don't know how Jessica puts up with me, the way I'm on my phone so much or doing sessions all the time. "I even have lads staying in our house and she's doing their washing and cooking. She has honestly been a godsend."

"She knows how passionate I am about this. I'm obsessed with developing footballers. She believes me when I say I know



GO-BETWEEN: Rob Heffernan

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BACK FROM THE BRINK

'REGULAR CHECKS A MUST FOR PLAYERS'

Mark McCadden

ALAN MOORE had enough.

The former Middlesbrough and Ireland man grabbed his car keys, drove to Holyhead, hopped on a ferry to Dublin and picked up childhood pal David Kennedy.

The pair then made a bee-line for Stephen McGuinness's house on Dublin's northside, stood in his front garden and warned: "We're not leaving until you come to the door."

McGuinness was two months into self-imposed isolation.

During a nine-hour operation at the Mater Hospital to remove a tumour, the team of surgeons led by Dr Jurgen Mulsow decided that, as well as his large intestine, three-quarters of McGuinness's stomach would also have to go.

The former hardman defender-turned-combative-players' union boss — battle-hardened by regular rows with the FAI and with clubs that reneged on contractual responsibilities — had never felt more weak or vulnerable.

Ideas

He wished to stay hidden. But his two pals had other ideas.

"I'd lost just short of 35lbs in weight and I was so afraid of people judging how I looked," McGuinness told the Irish Daily Star.

"You have this image of yourself being, not indestructible, but you're a former professional player, you represent professional footballers, there's a certain way you feel and how you feel people perceive you.

"I didn't want anybody to see me looking so poorly and sick, so I locked myself away basically for two months.

"But Alan drove over from England and knocked up to the



Mark McCadden

EXCLUSIVE

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door with David, and wouldn't go until I came out."

For McGuinness, it was a milestone in his recovery.

"You sometimes need somebody to grab you and give you a shake, and say, as difficult as things are, we are here to help."

"I've been friends with Alan since we were 13 or 14. The same with David. He was my best man.

"People were texting and ringing, but to knock on the door and stand in the garden and say they weren't going to take no for an answer, I'll be forever grateful to Alan and David for that day."

February 1, 2021: a day McGuinness will never forget.

It was a cool, cloudy morning when the former St Patrick's Athletic, Dundalk and Shamrock Rovers defender received the results of tests that were carried out at his wife Jennifer's insistence.

Intestinal cancer — and it had spread to his stomach.

He was 47 at the time.

"The warning signs were there and I didn't react," he said. "I probably naively said, 'Ah, I'll be grand'. It's a male thing, isn't it?"

"I was feeling a bit tired one day loading a skip. I felt shat-tered after two minutes and had to sit down. I went, 'What's going on here?'. But I never went and got checked.

"After a period of time when I got hot sweats, my wife said I had to get a check-up.

"She works at a doctor's so she managed to get me in for a blood test straight away. My hemoglobin was 7.2. (Normal levels for a male are between 14-17.5g)

"I was rushed into the Mater and within a couple of days they had diagnosed me with cancer, a tumour in the large intestine.

Fatigue

"Without her pushing me to go, it could have been a hell of a lot worse.

"I'd say I would have limped along for another month or two, if possible. I was in a bad way, but I probably would have kept going."

The fatigue and sweats weren't the first signals.

McGuinness explained: "I passed blood one day. I remember it well. I said to myself, that's the new take-away, I had food out of it. I swear to God, that's what I put it down to.

"What the blood was was the cancer bursting from my large intestine into my stomach.



'The warning signs were there and I didn't react'

PFAI chief McGuinness on his major cancer scare

"That happened nine months before I got my diagnosis. If I'd gotten checked at that stage, it would have been keyhole surgery, rather than being opened up from the chest bone down to the top of my groin.

"It took 42 staples to close me back up. If I had acted on the initial signs, it would have been local in the large intestine and keyhole surgery to get it removed."

McGuinness found some elements post-surgery tougher than others.

"I thought mentally I was very strong," said the 48-year-old.

Physical

"The physical side of it, I was able to deal with. It was the mental side that I struggled with badly.

"The after-effect for me now

is that my two thighs are numb and I have pins and needles in my fingers and feet.

"I'll probably have that for a year or 18 months. That's from the chemo. But I really struggled mentally.

"Within the association (PFAI Ireland) for years we have been giving mental health advice and support, and if I'm being honest, I never really understood it.

"I said to myself, 'How can that player have mental health issues, they are top of the league, he's one of the best players, gets paid a lot of money...'

"I now understand it a hell of a lot better, having gone through it myself.

"I am currently taking anti-depressants and may be on them for life, depending on how things go.

"I've a better understanding of the difficulties people do face regarding mental health. I didn't really understand it before, but I definitely understand it now."

The operation has led to some drastic changes in McGuinness's everyday life.

"The signals from the stomach to the brain broke down, so I went days without feeling hungry," he explained.

"I relied on an app on my phone that signalled when I had to eat.

"Thankfully all that has knit-

ted itself back and I do feel hungry again. But it has changed how I consume food.

"I can't eat a big meal now. My stomach can't take a huge amount of food or drink, because it's a quarter of what it once was, so I have to eat more frequently. I graze constantly.

"The numbness in the thighs and the feet and hands, I'm hoping, will go away in time. Hopefully I can kick a ball again or play five-a-side by next February or March.

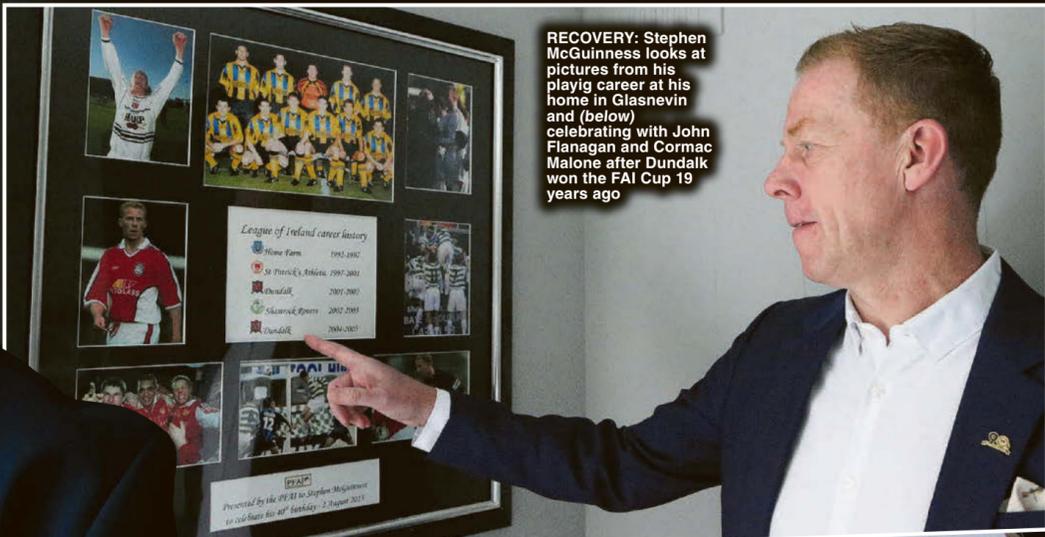
"At the moment I'm walking. I hope to join a gym because I lost a lot of muscle, particularly upper-body."

Stephen explained the motive behind him talking about his ordeal.

"I'd meet someone and afterwards they'd ring me and say, 'I didn't know about the cancer, why didn't you tell me?'. "I rang Ollie Horgan and he said, 'Where have you been for the last year?'. Ronan Finn said, 'Why didn't you call?'. "I don't like people making a fuss over me, it's not my scene. But it's gotten to the point where I need to get it out there.

Working

"I'm back and I'm really looking forward to working with the players again, and working with the clubs and the FAI. I am ready now and I am delighted to



RECOVERY: Stephen McGuinness looks at pictures from his playig career at his home in Glasnevin and (below) celebrating with John Flanagan and Cormac Malone after Dundalk won the FAI Cup 19 years ago

I'LL TACKLE FAI EVEN HARDER

STEPHEN MCGUINNESS has warned the FAI and clubs they will face a more determined PFAI Ireland chief than ever before in negotiations and talks over player welfare.

Despite his recent battle with cancer, the former defender hasn't mellowed.

"It's funny, people said afterwards that you look at things in a different perspective when you've been unwell, particularly as well as I was," he said.

"They say you'll be a lot more laid-back. But it's funny, I'm not. I'm the same. No, I'm worse! "I found myself maybe worse because I'd been out of it for so long.

Work

"I won't be changing how I do my work or how the association does its business.

"Health-wise, I'll look after myself better.

"But you won't run into a guy who is in any way laid-back or who is going to take life easier.

"If anything, it's going to be the opposite."



they all got in touch.

"Ollie (Cahill) and Simone (Flannery) did a great job running the association while I was out, and Stuart Gilhooly as well. That's probably why no-one noticed that I was out.

Realise

"I won't forget the people who have been in touch with me over the last period of time — Jonathan Roche at Shamrock Rovers and Stephen Lambert at Bohs.

"You don't realise maybe the relationships that have been built-up over time and the people who genuinely care about you and your well-being.

"I must mention my mam and my sister (Linda) as well, who

were brilliant. And the in-laws as well.

"Even from the treatment side of things, I met up with Stephen McPhail last Saturday and was chatting to him about the treatment he went through.

"It's good to talk to people like Stephen who has been through his own battle (with lymphoma). He understands mentally how it affects not just me but my family.

"The Mater Hospital and Dr Mulsow, the guy who did the operation, the frontline staff, they were all incredible. You see it during Covid, but you can't speak highly enough of the people who

STEPHEN MCGUINNESS will deliver an additional message to dressing rooms around the country over the coming months — get yourself checked.

The PFA Ireland general secretary is back and work and will soon be on the road again, visiting players across the League of Ireland to discuss their finances and wellbeing.

He will also advise members to watch out for signs that all is not right — and to act on them rather than ignore them, as he did for almost a year.

"I'll do the club visits this year and that will be one thing that's on my agenda," he said.

"I'll say to players that as you get older, you have to look after yourself and you have to get regular checks.

Warning

"If you do get warning signs, it's important to act on them. I had warning signs and I didn't act on them.

"In the job I'm in, representing elite athletes,

there is a positive to playing professional sport; you tend to be healthy, particularly around the heart.

"But you are still prone to picking up illnesses, so you do have to get regular checks.

"Player health will definitely be part of our presentation.

"Get it checked and make sure you are proactive rather than reactive, which I was."

"We think we are indestructible. We play sport, nothing's going to happen to us. But we have the same ailments as everyone else.

"If there is a change in your body, get it checked as soon as you can."

were involved.

"She's still a little bit to go, a small little operation left to be done. But the staff were brilliant and they make it as easy as possible, as difficult as it was."

"I've been very lucky to get the all-clear from the oncology team, that it didn't get into the lymph nodes, that it hasn't spread.

"They've managed to get it out and everything is clear. I'll be getting checked every January and July for the next five years and then once a year after that, so there is a huge peace of mind from my end that I'm being checked constantly."



TOP CLASS: Taking on Trevor Molloy in the 2002 FAI Cup final