

Keep on Hooping

A TV Documentary about Shamrock Rovers and the lack of stability in the League of Ireland.

By

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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Methodology

Getting a clear sense of the differences between football in Ireland now and back in the 1950s and 1960s is a key part of the dissertation. Football crowds were at a record high in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s and they began to drop from the 1970s. To gain insight into why this happened it was necessary to speak to people who attended matches 50 years ago. As well as speaking to fans from this generation, it was important to speak to football experts and League of Ireland writers who have done extensive research on the fall in support for Irish football. I also gathered information from the Central Statistics Office to identify the primary changes in society over the years gone by to now.

There are many fans who stopped going to Shamrock Rovers as a result of the club leaving their home ground in Milltown, something that will be discussed in detail in this dissertation, but there are also fans who just stopped going, with no real reason for the cease in support. I spoke to some of these fans to find out why, and to see if there was anything the club or the League of Ireland in general could do to bring them back as regular supporters. Eight people were interviewed for this dissertation, on and off camera. Each interviewee offered their own perspective on something different. Kieran McDonald spoke about attending matches in the 1960s when crowds were at their largest and Shamrock Rovers were winning leagues and cups regularly. Neil Cotter offered his opinions on why he and many others like him stopped going to matches in the 1990s, and Macdara Ferris spoke about being part of the painful years and his role in the 400 Club, that saved Shamrock Rovers from extinction.

Throughout the film, the story is told through my voice overs, interview material, and archive footage, provided by RTE. While it was not always possible to go in to great detail about certain parts of the story, the documentary is a film that complements the written dissertation, giving substantial information on the sections in question. Chapter 3, the homeless years, was a major challenge and it was difficult to do it justice, but between this and the documentary the aim was to give as much information about 1970-1999 as possible.

The interview process was thought out carefully. No two people were interviewed in the same location. I had numerous conversations with each interviewee before we commenced, and they were all briefed on their questions beforehand. Locations used were Tallaght Stadium, Dalymount Park, and the Rovers' home ground at Dalymount Park. The aim was to give as much information about 1970-1999 as possible.

Some contributors were interviewed on camera for the documentary and some preferred to speak off camera. The documentary aims to provide a depth history of the club and a platform for other League of Ireland clubs to cease to exist as a result of financial problems.

My mind by Elvis Presley. The former was used as it is a song played at every home Shamrock Rovers game, and the latter because it was played at the funeral of my uncle Tony Eustace, to whom the film is dedicated.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to my Uncle, Tony Eustace. I have been going to Shamrock Rovers matches with Tony for as long as I can remember. He is my biggest fan I know. He was my reason for choosing this topic and without him I would never have begun loving the greatest club in Ireland.

On July 15 2016, my dear uncle lost his short battle with cancer. For his wife, kids, brothers, sisters, friends and I, going to a Rovers game will never be the same. His presence will be dearly missed, both in the car journey to a game and in the stand in Tallaght. He was the most passionate Shamrock Z}À œ• v > Pµ }(/œ o v (v /[À À œ Iv}ÁvU v Z Z • %• •• I. Tony had been following Shamrock Rovers from their glory days to now. I'll stick with them through their homeless years and got me hooked in the early 2000s while the Hoops resided in Tolka Park. We travelled everywhere together, from Inchicore to Longford and Dundalk to Derry.

For a man who was meant to play a leading role in this dissertation, it is now dedicated to his memory. On the night of the 1996 FA Cup Final, I was in Dalymount Park Walking out of the Phibsboro stadium that day, I really did not think it would be our last together. On July 15, 2016, the day he was taken from us, Shamrock Rovers beat Bohemians 2-1 and he was applauded in the four corners of the ground by players and officials alike. Fitting.

So for one last time, Tony, come on Rovers, number one!

I would like to thank Noel Coughlan and Owen Cowzer, both of whom played a big part in building up my literary review. Noel and Owen recommended many great books, all of which helped me to complete this dissertation. To those who contributed greatly to the video documentary, from Macdara Ferris, Neil Cotter, Kieran McDonald and Owen Cowzer, all of whom feature in the film, to Sheila and Matthew Eustace, players and staff at Shamrock Rovers FC, who contributed off camera. To Vicky Moran at RTE, who helped find archive footage of Shamrock Rovers pre 1994, which helped with both the documentary and the written section of the dissertation.

I would like to thank Barry Finnegan and Deirdre Kerins for the help they provided along the way. Their advice and experience was invaluable over the course of the last four months. And to Tanya Doyle, for her assistance and willingness to help with the documentary at all times.

Abstract

The aim of the dissertation is to examine the journey of Shamrock Rovers in the League of Ireland. A successful club with 17 league titles and 24 Cups have gone from winning four titles in a row and playing in front of crowds of up to 4600 people to being relegated to the second division in less than 30 years. The aim of the dissertation is to give an in-depth look into the rich history of Shamrock Rovers by breaking it down into key eras for the club over the past 115 years such as their early years, their reign of dominance in Milltown and the pain that came with leaving their famous home ground in 1987, the year 22 homeless period and the jubilation that came with moving into their new home in Dalry.

I will compare Irish football to football in Iceland. With a population of only 330,000 people, Ireland will uncover the differences between the two countries in terms of how the game is managed and developed, how the governing bodies spend their money and why football in both countries appears to be moving in opposite directions. It is logical to compare Ireland to Iceland because the two countries have moved ahead since. This presents an ideal opportunity to examine why and how the two countries have moved in opposite directions since. Although Iceland has a much smaller population than Ireland, it has fewer sporting competitors. Football in Ireland is in competition with rugby, Gaelic football and hurling, so when you take the pool of players remaining for football alone, it is not too dissimilar to what Iceland have available.

The dissertation will look to find answers to the questions that fans, scholars, journalists and clubs have been asking for years: Why have some clubs suffered such mixed fortunes over a short space of time? Where does the lack of stability in the league come from? And what can be done to improve the league in terms of quality of football, facilities at each ground, and the number of fans coming through their turnstiles?

Chapter 1 Introduction

^ / Á About eleven years old when I saw my first League of Ireland match, in Oriel Park, between Dundalk and Cork United. That Dundalk team have a special place in my heart, because I thought they were great. I even dreamt that I was going to play for Dundalk when I grew up. League of Ireland has never let us down, and the game of football is getting better.

- Jimmy Magee
RTE Sports
Broadcaster 1956-present,
speaking in 2013

There was a time when the League of Ireland pulled in crowds of more than 40,000 people for league matches. Tens of thousands of spectators would pile in to their local ground to worship their heroes, they wrapped their scarfs, placed their bets, sang passionately, or fell asleep depending on the match. It was a time when you could go to a match with friends and family (Whelan, 2006). But somewhere down the line, things changed. Television allowed people to see what lay across the water, it was more glamorous, classier, sexier, and they wanted a taste. League of Ireland reporter Owen Cowzer was interviewed for the dissertation and believes the League of Ireland games for football fans; they could watch Irish internationals playing in England at a higher level. The dramatic fall in attendances from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s up to 30,000 fans would turn up in Milltown or Dalymount Park (Kennedy B. 2011: 27) did not occur as a result of the standard of football dropping, but rather as a result of an increase in commodities in the entertainment industry. In 1999, the Central Statistics Office released a study to mark their 50th year in business. The book used official statistics from the Central Statistics Office and other sources to provide a synopsis of the development of the economy and society in Ireland from the founding of the CSO in 1949 to the dawn of the new millennium. Part of their study concerned itself with the use of radio and television in Ireland, and the findings which show the rise of ownership of television sets do resonate with when football crowds started to dip in Ireland.

According to statistics from the Central Statistics Office (Redmond, A. 1999: 57), television was seen in Ireland for the first time in 1951 at a stand on the Spring Show at the RDS. During the 1950s, the East coast and border counties came within range of the expanding BBC television service. By 1958, it is estimated that there were 20,000 television sets in the country. Telefís Éireann started transmission on 1 January 1962. By 1966, over half of the homes in Ireland had a set. The total number of licences passed half a million in 1972 (Redmond 1999: 58) and it has only grown and grown since then. From the 1970s, clubs were competing with television for spectators, as well as other local football clubs vying for the same crowd.

It has now reached the stage where football clubs are not just competing with other local football clubs and television for spectators, but a whole host of other industries too. Today, the bigger clubs in Ireland such as Shamrock Rovers or Cork City might see crowds of 5,000 on a particularly good day, but are now in direct competition with the cinema, Sky television, Netflix, online gaming and so

which is due to launch on Sky Sports for the 2016/17 season. Broadcaster Jimmy Magee dedicated a chapter to the League of Ireland in his book *My favourite sporting*

local team. Dundalk were my local team, and they got a lot of players, both from the North and the South.

The cornerstone of the League of Ireland was the sense of pride people got from belonging to their community, being able to walk around to the local ground that had been there longer than they have. It was built on local strengths, but lost link to local communities along the way, one was to ask someone about the lack of support for the league to date and they would be

stand in captain Séamus Coleman and goal scorer against Sweden Wesolhan.

The days of 20,000 plus people turning up for a league game in Ireland are long gone and now and clubs today are pulling in an average of 2,000 spectators per match. Over the last two decades, even the most memorable moments for some football clubs were played out in front of a fraction of the average crowd that would have frequented in the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. It took a title-winning v] P Z š (} œ ^ Z o } μ œ v (v] œ t Z o v š} Á œ] M [š Z š œ} lí Ů ñ Z i} ^ š spectators turned up to see Shelbourne win another League of Ireland title in 2004. In what was supposed to be a celebratory night for the club and its fans on a chilly November night, Mr. Whelan looked around the stadium as his heroes did a lap of honour, to see more empty seats than supporters.

the goals; the old stand across the way is scattered with a mixture of away support and some neutrals; ÁZ]o Œ}μν u]• šZ ZZ Œ }Œ [U šZ íííteven if it is ÁZore than just Œíly or À Œ Ç Á I brisk. Just 1,500 people not even enough to drown out the sounds of the city on a Friday night: ambulance sirens, police cars and the shouted ramblings of a passing drunk all intrude on our attempt to recreate some •}Œš }(u P] X

- Daire Whelan2005

Scholars, journalists, experts and fans have written extensively about what can be done to save the league from the depths that it is plunging to, and to make it a success in terms of quality of football, financially, and in terms of the size of the support (Ferris, M 2013, Magee, J 2013 and Whelan, D 2006) and, in truth, have not been able to come up with much of a solution to date. Whelan (2006) wrote that the League is Old Ireland caught up in New Ireland and being strangled by it. Shamrock Rovers titles and FAI Cups in front of crowds of up to 45,000 people (Kennedy, B 2011) to homeless and bankrupt (Ferris 2013) will be used to examine the lack of stability in the league throughout the dissertation, and they are as apt a symbol for the league in general as any: once great, Rovers has

since had an examiner appointed in 2005, and was saved only by a group of diehard supporters, but also suffered the ignominy of relegation for the first time in its history that same year. Even since then they have been promoted again, won back league titles, became the first Irish team to qualify for the group stages of a major European competition, and fell back into mediocracy again. Whelan (2006: 11) wrote that New Ireland seems to tolerate the League of Ireland like an old anti because it has always been there and what else would sit in that dark corner?

Whelan (2006) also wrote that the sorry truth may well be that the only legacy of League of Ireland clubs may well be the goldmines that their patchwork grounds are sitting on. Bohemians and Dalymount Park in Phibsboro, Shelbourne and Tolka Park in Drumcondra have both been subject of proposed bids in the past, while the Herald, RTE and the Star accepted that they came close to joining up to share a ground last year. (Collins, R 2005) Shamrock Rovers, their legacy was torn most successful club homeless 22 years.

Chapter 2 History of Shamrock Rovers

Shamrock Rovers are the most successful club in the history of Ireland. And have been referred to as the answer to Manchester United by journalist and former player Eamon Dunphy (1987). They are the team that every other club loves to hate, and is desperate to beat. They have collected 17 league titles and 24 FAI Cups to date, while giving their fans some magical nights in European competition too.

There is widespread dispute over the year in which Shamrock Rovers was founded. Since the 1990s, 1901 has been cited as the founding year by the various people to run the club, however, 1899 was written on the gates of their stadium Glenmalur Park throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It is certain that the club officially registered with the Leinster Football Association in 1901. According to scholar Eoghan Rice, (Rice, E 2005) there is the unconfirmed possibility that they played exhibition games for two years previous to their registration. Rovers were originally formed in the Ringsend, giving them the inspiration for their name that would stick with them forever.

Ironically, their early years would almost mimic the troubles that they would have to endure 80 years later. From 1914, Shamrock Rovers began playing their home matches in Ringsend Park but within two years the park became unavailable, leaving the club with no place to play forcing them to disband and only play exhibition matches for the next five years. It took until 1922 for Shamrock Rovers to look like the real club they would go on to be, when they won the League of Ireland at the first attempt, losing only once all season and scoring 77 goals on the way (Kennedy, B 2011: 196). The twenties would prove to be a fruitful decade for Shamrock Rovers, as they won two more league titles and two cups. 1927 is a special year in the history of the club. Not only did they win a league and cup double, but it was the year that they first donned their famous green and white hooped kit. Then on.

1920s-1940s

Shamrock Rovers enjoyed plenty of success throughout the 1920s and quickly established themselves as a serious force in Irish football. They collected three league titles between 1922 and 1927 as well as the Free State Cup in 1925 and 1929. The famous four Fs of Fulham, Farrell, Flood and Flood announced themselves as some of the best players in the country during that decade, and it was Bob Fulham who scored the winning goal in the first game to be played at Glenmalur Park against Belfast Celtic, a game that was watched by 1000 spectators. The stadium in Milltown got the name Glenmalur Park after the Cunningham family took over the running of the club, and named it in honour of their family ancestral home in the Wicklow Mountains (Kennedy, 2006). The great depression in the 1930s swept across the country but failed to stop Shamrock Rovers claiming more silverware. They won three league titles and five Free State Cups in ten years, while producing David Byrne, the first League of Ireland player to score 100 goals and the first transferred to Manchester United, along the way. There was a plethora of success for Rovers throughout the late 30s and much of the 40s winning numerous cups in front of massive crowds, Kennedy (2006) wrote that 41,238 people turned out to watch them defeat Bohemians in Dalymount Park in 1945.

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When manager Jimmy Dunne suffered heart failure and passed away in 1949, Shamrock Rovers turned to 29-year-old Paddy Coad to lead the club into the next era. The Waterford man had been playing for Rovers since 1942 and was seen as the perfect candidate to take over, although he did so reluctantly. His tenure would go down in history as one of the greatest spells in management in Ireland of all time. He introduced a radical youth policy where he sought to bring through the very best of young talent that there was, and he did so with teenagers such as Liam Tuohy, Ronnie Nolan, Maxie McCann, Paddy Ambrose and Shay Keogh. These young men would go on to be part of a pool of players remembered by Shamrock Rovers fans and players alike. In an extract in *Just follow the floodlights*, Kennedy (2006) recorded a quote from Liam Tuohy on his time as a player.

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on the field together he played inside left with me outside left so I was the recipient of everything good he
} v X _

- Liam Tuohy

Although Rovers were winning cups every other year, the league title had evaded them since 1939
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when it came to football and no one could come close to them on their day. They even played
against the famous Manchester United side managed by Matt Busby in 1957. The Hoops were
beaten convincingly in front of 45,000 spectators in Dalymount Park (Glenmalur was deemed too
small to cope with the crowds) but the Ç Á œ v } Á u] Æ] v P] š Á] š Z š Z Á } œ o [•] P P
European stage. That famous Manchester United team were part of the tragic Munich air disaster,
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snow on a runway in Munich (Cavendish, R 2008)

By the time Paddy Coad left the club in 1959, Shamrock Rovers had won their record ninth League of
Ireland title. Under Sean Thomas and then former player Liam Tuohy, Rovers won an unprecedented
six FAI Cups in raw X d Z •] Á Z] Z] v o µ / œ] • Z] v š œ v š] } v o • • µ Z • & C
Fullam, brought the club on its most famous European adventure at that point. After defeating Spora
Luxembourg in the first round of the 1966/67 Cup Winners Cup, Rovers drew against German
and European giants Bayern Munich in the last 16. The Munich team brought the likes of Franz
Beckenbauer, Gerd Muller and Sepp Maier to Dublin where they were held to a draw. In the
return leg, Shamrock Rovers were level at 2 and seven minutes away from arguably the greatest
upset in football history when Gerd Muller broke Irish hearts to send the Germans through with a
late goal. Munich went on to win the Cup. (Smith, Paul 2011)

1970s t 1980s and the Kilcoyne brothers

The next š Á } Ç œ • Á } µ o š µ œ v } µ š š } š Z o • š } (š Z • š Ç œ •] v š
last of their six cups in a row, 1969 represented a truly magical time for Shamrock Rovers and the
League of Ireland. Stadia were packed to the rafters, turnstiles revolving healthily and football
and the crowds going to watch it was at its strongest ever (Reilly, B 2015). The sport was at the
peak of its powers, but Rovers were about to endure their first real baron spell since the club was
formed. The next twelve years would prove to be disastrous, even if some of the consequences were
not seen until later on in the 1980s. In 1972, the Cunningham family sold Shamrock Rovers to the

brothers from Dublin, Paddy, Ron, and Louis Kilcoyne. The Kilcoynes had looked on over the last twenty years and seen massive crowds turn up to watch Rovers in Glenmalure, and so, from a business point of view, this was a great purchase for them. Or so they thought. The crowds started to disappear, not just at Milltown but at grounds all over the country. Former giants of the league Drumcondra and Cork Hibs wound up and the league was spiralling into a drastic decline (Kennedy 2006). With only one League Cup win since 1969, Rovers turned to a legend of Irish football to drag them back to the glory days. Johnny Giles, an Ireland international and manager brother-in-law of Louis Kilcoyne, returned to Ireland after a successful career in England. He led Rovers to an FAI Cup in his first season and brought them back to Europe for the first time in ten years. For many fans and football experts, Johnny Giles came in and brought stability back to the club, even if he failed to do anything spectacular. Things had been set in place for the next manager, Jim McLaughlin, to lead the club through their latest period of dominance (Rice, E 2005).

players at Shamrock Rovers. At the time we had some outstanding individuals, young strikers like Alan Campbell and Liam Buckley, but it was always about how the team performed as a whole. That was the most important thing.

- Jim McLaughlin speaking for Shamrock Rovers at the floodlights, 2011

Jim McLaughlin built a side that would go on to recreate the dominant eras of days gone past, and between 1983-1987, Shamrock Rovers won four League of Ireland titles back to back as well as two FAI Cups. Everything was going perfectly on the pitch and the club had become unstoppable again, but matters off the pitch were of far greater concern to the Shamrock Rovers faithful as rumours began to grow that the Kilcoyne family were in talks to sell Glenmalure Park in Milltown, with a view to moving to Tolka Park. The club had to share the pitch with the owners Home Farm.

Glenmalure Park

to take care. The perimeter wall fell down a few years ago.

- Shamrock Rovers Supporter Ned Armstrong

(Kennedy 2006)

Glenmalure Park in Milltown on the south side of Dublin was home to Shamrock Rovers for 61 years. From its first game in 1926 against Belfast Celtic until it closed for good in 1987, Milltown was seen by many as the spiritual home of Shamrock Rovers and of the whole of Irish football (Goggins, R 2012). The ground was sold to property developers by the Kilcoyne brothers

The demolition of Glenmalure Park was a sad day for the club and its supporters.

entirely a league game, and upwards of 300 even piled in throughout the 50s and 60s.

The League of Ireland reached its nadir with the sale of Milltown on April 12 1987. Speaking to RTE after the sale was announced, Louis Kilcoyne alluded to the fact that 1,200 people turned up to protest following the announcement, whereas only 300 people were there. As Daire Whelan (2006) put it, there is no more resonant symbol of the decline of the game than Glenmalur Park. It even spelled the end for some lovers of football. Many supporters simply fell out as a result. Kieran McDonald, was interviewed for this dissertation about the pain that went with leaving Milltown.

It was all about Milltown. Milltown was a religion, and without it, it felt like we had nothing. I was very angry. No way would I go to a home match in Dalymount or Tolka. I went to a few away matches over the years and my love for the club never waned. There are still Milltown supporters who have still not come back to matches, and even though they might

Kieran McDonald, Rovers fan since 1957

Pandemonium broke out amongst fans and lovers of Irish football when journalist Charlie Sutcliffe published the story about the imminent sale in 1987. The whispers and rumours had been confirmed and for Rovers fans the nightmare was real. The Kilcoyne family had come to the realisation that the sums were not adding up (Whelan 2006) and nothing they had tried had resurrected the crowds at Milltown. They brought in the biggest name in Irish football in John Giles and very little changed in terms of performances on the pitch or attendances off it, they even brought in Jim McLaughlin who won four league titles one after another, but society was changing, the masses were not flooding through the gates anymore. For Louis Kilcoyne, it had become clear that they needed to sell up.

By 1987, they had reduced the average attendance to 800-1,000. The game was a beaten docket. There was serious money being lost down the drain. It was our company, Healy Homes, that was propping Rovers up for seventeen years. At the height of our success, we were plodding along not enjoying it. I was running a disco bar and doing parties trying to make ends meet. We agreed it was time to tell. I argued that we would stay on for one more year and would give notice because in PR terms we knew we had to go. When word got out, we got 1,200 at our next game whereas before we were getting 300. We had bought Glenmalur from the Jesuits a few years previously and we bought it on the premise that the rent they were getting from us was a pittance in relative terms, whereas if we gave them x thousand pounds to purchase it

- Louis Kilcoyne (Whelan 2006)

Louis and his brothers were in a position to do what they wished with the ground once they bought it outright from the local Jesuits who had owned it previously. They saw it as a prime property development site in South Dublin that was making money.

Who stole our game by Daire Whelan, so it was clear what must be done for business reasons. It became known to fans that the Glenmalur Park was going to be demolished and houses built in its place, something which led to the pain of the whole ordeal. Sadness turned to anger and the fans set up the Keep Rovers At Milltown movement (KRAM). The campaign would run unsuccessfully for the next few years and often turned violent as they bid to keep Glenmalur from being turned into a housing development for a multi-million-pound profit. Sheila Eustace, Shamrock Rovers fan since 1980, was interviewed about KRAM and the hostile environment created by the movement.

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of Milltown, made the decision to continue following the club wherever they played. My husband and I would pass the picket lines at Tolka Park to go to a Rovers match and people like us would get some nasty abuse f KRAM protestors at times. It really hurt because we all wanted the same thing and we all supported the one š u U μ š < Z D • μ % o % o } Œ š Œ • Á } μ o v } š š š v Z Z } u [P u μ v o • •] š Á •] v

- Sheila Eustace, Shamrock Rovers fan 1980-present

Th • o }(' o v u o μ Œ W Œ l P Œ • % o š Z Á Z } o } μ v š Œ Ç [• š š v
interest in sport anyway. The League of Ireland had never before received so much media space. Society in Ireland was at a low point at the time in terms of unemployment, people faced some really tough times economically, meaning protests and passs about the sale of the ground were slow to ignite at first. But for many, the sale of something with this much historical importance was a step too far, and they were prepared to fight for Whelan (2006) interviewed Liam Christie, a lifelong Rovers fan who became chairman of KRAM when it was formed in 1987, about how he fought with everything he had for two years to keep Rovers at Milltown. He reached out to politicians, celebrities and ordinary working class people in a desperate bid to save the ground (Rosenstock M 2007)

KRAM was made up of sponsors and patrons but they wanted a link with the supporters because it was mainly the ordinary supporter who was going to be instrumental in getting them back. I was just the ordinary supporter, everyone else had money. They were supporters too but they were the higher Z o } v • μ % o % o } Œ š Œ X t Z v š Z Œ] v [š • u š } v Ç P š š] v P š Z <] o } Ç v •
was for KRAM to get enough money and buy the club from Rovers. But the Kilcoynes, for some reason or another best known to themselves, were very anti KRAM. If they got their money they were looking for, what did it matter who it went to? But whatever happened, once any of the Kilcoynes got word that KRAM were involved in negotiations they just dropped it. In the end they were totally taken aback by the response from the supporters. They thought it would just be a matter of taking the club out of Milltown, moving to Tolka and everything would be fine. The movement just kept growing and there were people coming from the woodwork Á Z } /] v [š Á v l v } Á Á Œ Z } Á Œ • (v • o] l } o u / D } v š Ç l v } Á Á Z μ Œ] š v Á K l , š Œ • Á] š š l } ((U] š Á • i μ • š } v } (š Z } • š Z] v P • U μ š] š Á • } Œ P v] • Á Œ Ç Á

- Liam Christie, lifelong Shamrock Rovers fan

The revolt from fans following the sale of a football stadium might seem excessive to someone with o] š š o] v š Œ • š] v • % o } Œ š U v >] u Z Œ] • š] •] š Z š Z] v [š l v } Á
movement take off, but studies on the psychology of sports spectators can help to explain why the u } Á u v š u] P Z š Z Á P š Z Œ • μ Z u } u v š μ u X Z • Œ Z • Z } Á • •] u } o C
identification with a sports team and how people identify with their nationality, ethnicity, even gender. Team identity š] (] š] } v ^] • š Z Æ š v š š } Á Z] Z (v (o • % o • Ç Z } o } P
v š Z š u [• % Œ () Œ u v • - Œ Œ o Á] Á Œ U _ • • Ç o (v] o t v v U % Œ } (• • } Œ
psychology at Murray State University, who has spent much of his career dedicated to research

about sports spectators. In watching the action, people do indeed identify with teams, and for some, of who they are in their identity as fans. Bloomington, who has also conducted psychological and brain sciences at Indiana University, who has also conducted their posit

Wang (2006) referenced the unconditional support of Chicago Cubs fans for their US baseball team and despite not winning any major championships for over 100 years, the fans have a sense of pride in their home, Wrigley Field. Ask a Cubs fan why he or she likes the team and, according to professor of psychology Daniel Wann, "I love the bleachers and it's just a part of who I am." Wann is a professor of psychology at the University of Mississippi. Wann says that part of identifying with the sport team is not just with the team, but with the fan base. The venue, he says, provides an easy way of interacting with other spectators, and the vast majority of fans, about 95 percent, attend games with friends. In addition, highly identified fans tend to be socialized to sport early and view it not just as a game but also as a nostalgic or emotional experience. Many say that they can remember going to games as a child, or that games remind them of pleasant childhood memories. For Shamrock Rovers fans, this experience would be gone, as the sale went through and they would never see Shamrock Rovers play in Milltown again.

Chapter 3 The Homeless years and the 400 Club

Shamrock Rovers players could do nothing about the field issues and so they began playing home matches in Tolka Park. They went on to play in Tolka for three years, before moving to the RDS in Ballsbridge. This move was slightly more popular for Shamrock Rovers fans who were happier to see their team back on the Southside of Dublin, just a short journey from Milltown (Kennedy 2006) and attendance figures even began to rise once again. 22,000 people turned up for the opening game

P] v • š ^ š W l t e d n S e p t e m b e r 16 1990. Rovers even won another league title during their time at the RDS in 1994, but the following year owner John McNamara sold his interest in the club to Premier Computers which was headed by Alan McGrath and Shamrock Rovers were b playing at Tolka park in Drumcondra. It was in 1996 that Alan McGrath first mentioned plans to build a 10,000 seater stadium in Tallaght for Rovers to move in to and finally have a home of their own. Planning permission was finally granted in 2000, but then Shamrock Rovers had run out of money. In 2002, Tony Maguire took over the running of the football club with the completion of Tallaght Stadium his main priority. According to club member Macdara Ferris who was interviewed for this dissertation, many property developers showed real interest in taking on the job. The partially built stadium was situated directly opposite the o o P Z š [• ^ < μ C E ^ Z n d w a s] v P v š C E seen as an attractive proposition for many in the industry but over the next seven years the club suffered setback after setback and the stadium was left unfinished (Ferris, M 2013, Kelly, D 2004. Moran, S 2007).

The first issue arose in January 2003 when The 400 Club of Shamrock Rovers fans set up to generate the finance needed to complete the then stalled Tallaght Stadium project, fell out with Tony Maguire and the board of directors (Shamrock Rovers official website 2009). Each member of š Z • μ % o % o } C E š P C E } μ % o w a s t o b e a s t a d i u m d e v e l o p m e n t s Z n d a s t h e y l o o k e d t o g e t i t built and end the 16 year wait for a home of their own. The 400 Club worked alongside Tony Maguire and the board in the beginning, but their relationship began to fray when Mr. Maguire began to negotiate with the GAA to complete the stadium together. Shamrock Rovers fans were utterly unsupportive of this motion and it was put on hold. The next announcement from Chairman d } v Ç D P μ] C E u] v D Ç î î î î U Á Z v Z u % o C E } u] a n d š Z š % o μ o] v entrepreneur Ben Dunne had agreed to pump money into the stadium (Boyle, P and Quinn, P 2003). Mr. Maguire even gave fans hope that Shamrock Rovers would be playing in Tallaght before Z C E] • š u • š Z š Ç C E X ^ t u] P Z š À v Z À Á } C E I P }] v P } v •] š P] v Á [Á v š } ∞ U] š] Á] u } v š Z • () (Ferris, M 2013) v X Ç D P μ] C E [• % o o v • (o the first hurdle as builders never arrived in June. Empty promises and false hope became a regular occurrence for the Shamrock Rovers fans to endure in 2004 the club looked on the brink of Æ š] v š }] v Á] š Z š • } (î î X ñ u] o o }] v X d Z Ç } Á u } v Ç š } % o o Ç C E • U Plaza Hotel, the Gardai, the AUL Sports Complex î ñ î î U î î î š } š Z Z À v μ } u u] • • }] v o } (Heffernan, B, and Maddock, J 2005) the High Court in April 2005, Justice Peter Kelly appointed an Æ u] v C E š } % o C E Á v š š Z o] < μ] š }] v } (š Z o μ v š } š š u % o š š } C E 400 Club funded and ran the club during examinership while Neil Hughes, the appointed examiner was in charge of finding the club a new owner. Supporters in the 400 Club used savings and took out o } v • š } Z o % o š Z () } š o o o μ v š Z Ç C E] • î î î ñ U î î î] v š Á } Á I • potential investors entered in talks to buy the club, but after Brit businessman Brian Quigley, who had looked most likely to take over, failed to register a bid, the 400 Club, backed by Shamrock Rovers • μ % o % o } C E š C E Z Ç t] o • } v U % o o] } (î ñ î î U î î î X d Z } Á • % o % o C E } / confessed Bohemians f a] v : μ o Ç î î î ñ X ^ Z u C E } I Z } Á C E [š Æ š • Á C E C E • š C

Chapter 4 Challenges facing the league

For all the success the League of Ireland has had in the past, it looks as though it is facing its most treacherous period yet. Instead of problems being overcome, more and more seem to be piling up. Next year will see Sky Sports televise Premier League football on a Friday night for the first time (Plunkett, J, 2014). To get an idea of just how far away the League of Ireland is from the Premier League financially, you just need to look at the television money that comes in to teams in the respective leagues across the UK and the rest of Europe, televised matches generate crucial funds for football clubs. At the start of 2016, the Premier League in England signed a three-year television deal worth £8 billion. This deal will see a team take in £750,000 every time they are televised (Total Sportek 2015). Manchester United were shown live 25 times which would bring in £18.7 million). In contrast, Shamrock Rovers actually made an official request to not have their games televised as it was costing them money to fans opting to watch at home rather than pay for a ticket (McDonnell, D 2015). League of Ireland members do not receive compensation when their games are picked for TV exposure, a situation which is a major source of frustration amongst the leading outfits who are generally under the spotlight. For Shamrock Rovers, each time their games were televised too many fans were staying away from Tallaght Stadium and watching them at home. The League of Ireland has a club (FAI) CEO (John Delaney said: "Television exposure is important for the development and promotion of the game and helps the association continue the work it does across all strands of the game in every part of Ireland." An FAI spokesman said: "We believe televised League of Ireland matches make the League attractive to sponsors such as SSE Airtricity and EA SPORTS. For the FAI, it seems the more games that are televised the more money it will bring in for them from advertisers, which is seen as an excellent result for them, even if it means the exact opposite for the fans."

The FAI regularly come under severe scrutiny by League of Ireland fans with regards to the development, or lack thereof, of the domestic game. John Delaney, Chief Executive of the FAI, once made a remark which did not sit well with supporters. Taking Iceland as a comparative, one can see the right way and the wrong way of growing football in a small country. Iceland have a population of 330,000 people and their league is ranked 39th in Europe by Uefa. Despite their small population, their international team has taken enormous strides in the game and reached the quarter-finals of the 2016 UEFA Euro. Their success can be traced back to support received from the very top, from the people with the power to change the game for the better.

The harsh Icelandic conditions mean it is difficult for people to play football outside, so the government and the Iceland Football Association built tens of geothermally heated indoor stadiums that allowed youths to train all year round (Barney, R 2016). According to the Icelandic Football Association (KS), there were 179 full-size pitches in the country by the end of last year. That means one full-size pitch for every 128 registered players in the country. To this can be added 166 mini and half-sized pitches that employ artificial turf. This is a case of identifying a problem and putting money forward to overcome it.

In 2015, Irish Times writer Darragh Murphy published an article on where the FAI millions come from and Z}Á š Z Ç Œ •% v š X dZ &}}š o o ••}] š}}v }(/Œ o v o]u š} Z šZ P u]v /Œ o v U μš]š •% v • (Œ u}Œ u}v Ç }v]š• }Á v •š ([• clubs. When the FAI published accounts in 2013, they showed a hū }(lĩòXó u]oo}}vU Á]šZ •μ Œ%o μ• }(ou}•š lō u]oo}}vX ZK μš•))(]šZ]šv i p u Á% ŒE} (]šX ū š]oo}}v]v P Œ ••ŒE}}š•U ÁZ] Z Á • }Á v (Œ}u šZ oŒ Ç o}Á (]P μŒ }(lîXî u] down the exact figures, it was p u]•Z šZ š šZ & / •% v š lōXññ u]oo}}v }v •š ((&Œ }u }(/v(}Œ u š}}v šU :}Zv o v Ç[••o ŒÇ Z • v %μ o] •}v in 2005.t]šZ • o ŒÇ }(lĩò i U i i i Ç Œ U Z Œ v• ou}•š }μ o ÁZ š d ~lĩôñ U ĩñi•U }u(}Œ š o Ç u}Œ šZ v W Œ •] v and more than the X ,]P P]v• ~lî Spanish and Italian FA bosses combined. Figures from 2013 revealed Angel Maria Villar, who is head of the Spanish football association Œ v • l i a ñ e l a n d the FA boss in Italy Antonello Valentini]• }v • o Œ Ç] (i n d e p e n d e n t i e 2012) Combined their annual salaries in 2013 u š} l i i i U i i i 18,000 less than Mr Delaney who earned Œ i i U i i i a t the Œ E.

Coming back to the League of Ireland we can see why supporters are displeased with the FAI and šZ Z }(šZ }Œ P v]• š}}vU :}Zv o v Ç X &}Œ šZ]•••}vU šZ Œ] spread across two divisions and%o]š šÁ v šÁ v šÇ š u•X dZ Z u%Œ}v•[Œ Á o P μ }• v}š À v ‹μ š š} šZ]Œ }(:}Zv o v Ç[• v v μ o • o ŒÇ v š]Œ %Œ u] Œ]À]•}}v ~lĩó i U ĩñi•]• (Œ š}}v o o Ç Z]P Z Œ šZ v D O

The breakdown for the Premier Division (Irish Times 2016)

- 1- l i i i U i i i
- 2- l ñ ñ U i i i
- 3- l ĩ ñ U i i i
- 4- l î ñ U i i i
- 5- l î i U i i i
- 6- l í ô U ĩñi
- 7- l í ô U ĩñi
- 8- l í ô U i i i
- 9- l í ô U i i i
- 10- l í ó U ĩñi
- 11- l í ó U i i i
- 12- l í ó U i i i

The breakdown of the First Division:

- 1- l ĩ i U i i i
- 2- l í ó U ĩñi
- 3- l í î U i i i
- 4- l í i U ĩñi

5- 16 Uñi

6- 16 Uñi

7- 18,000

8- 16 Uñi

Conclusion

Shamrock Rovers is not the only club in Ireland to have gone from such sweet highs to a low tier a short space of time. /v ïið U ^Z o }µœ v &}}š o o o µ (^%o]v[• %o }œ : minutes away from qualifying for the Champions League (Neville, C, 2016). Even a defeat that night brought money that no other team in the league could match, but 12 years on Shelbourne are struggling in the second tier of Irish football and fans tell me they are playing in front of 300 people on a good day. Some clubs less fortunate than Shamrock Rovers and Shelbourne have ceased to exist altogether. Mark Beegan (2012) wrote about the clubs that wound up since the FAI took over the running of the league in 2007. Perhaps •š œ u œ l o }µš P v[• œ š] o at the time of writing, fears were growing that Dundalk were about to become the latest casualty. Four years on, and Dundalk are two games away from playing in the Champions League group stages, they are guaranteed to at least enter the Europa League group stages (a feat only achieved by one Irish club, Shamrock Rovers, in the past), and they are on course to win their third League title in a row.

dZ o l }(•š]o]šÇ šZ š o o}Á• (}œ •]šµ š}}v• •µ Z • µ v ol[• v major concern. League of Ireland expert Owen Cowzer spoke to me about how the fortunes of the league have varied since he began reporting on it in the 1990s.

^/ šZ]v l šZ o Pµ]•]v šš œ %o o š šZ š}%o v U µš (œ Á}œ• }((Cork City look capable of competing with teams on a European stage and the structures they have in place look secure, for now at least. But at the bottom, teams like Cabinteely in the First Division, the money coming in to them is pittance and it is not sustainable. There will always be a League of Ireland, because there will always be a hardcore following. The main concern is the League of Ireland supporters and their perception of the o Pµ X ^]vP š u• P} µ•š iµ•š • š} šZ]œ %o œ %o š}}v šZ š šZ o Pµ] • šZ o Pµ]vP vÇ šš œ }œ vÇ Á}œ•]v íi Ç so if teams like X t]šZ]š } Z}À œ•U µ v ol v }œ l]v µœ}%o Á]oo Z À %o }•]š]À ((š }v šZ o Pµ

- Owen Cowzer

Z • œ Z]vP šZ]• š}%o] }%o v uÇ Ç • š} Z}Á %o ••}}v š šZ ^Z œ and the league. It's encouraging when you speak to these fans because it reassures you that the league will always survive due to their passion. Whether or not the league does more than just survive remains to be seen. From looking at how things have improved in Iceland, for example, it is clear that the support needs to come from the very top. The Football Association in Iceland identified the problems facing their game and they put money in to fix it. Teams in Ireland are starting to invest in youth structures now. Last year Z Ç t]o•}v %o µš íXñ u]oo}}v]v š} ^Z Z}À œ•U Á]šZ íi u]oo}}v }(]š P}}vP]vš} šZ Ç}µšZ • š µ%o š šZ o see if this approach works, but on paper it seems like a solid long plan. Having produced

players such as Roy Keane and more recently Shane Long and Seamus Coleman, it is clear the talent is there in the League of Ireland to be fostered.

For Shamrock Rovers, they will finish the 2016 season without a permanent manager in place, after the sacking of Pat Fenlon this summer, and as things stand they look set to miss out on European qualification for a second year running, which will leave them trailing even further behind Cork City and Dundalk, at least financially. But having overcome what they have in the past, seen just how

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ability to bounce back and become a dominant force once again.

Appendix

Copyright declaration

Contributors	<p>List of interviewees</p> <p>Macdara Ferris Shamrock Rovers fan, member of the 400 Club, and author of Tallaght Time</p> <p>Owen Cowzer League of Ireland expert and Shamrock Rovers fan</p> <p>Neil Cotter Irish Journalist and Shamrock Rovers fan</p> <p>Kieran McDonald Shamrock Rovers fan since the 1950s and former member of the KRAM movement</p> <p>Sheila Eustace Shamrock Rovers fan and member of the 400 Club</p>
Music	<p>Build me up buttercup, The Foundations 1 minute total</p> <p>Always on my mind, Elvis Presley 30 seconds total</p>
Photographs	<p>One photograph of Tony Eustace provided by his son Matthew Eustace</p>
Archive footage	<p>List all archive or stock footage, with attributed source.</p> <p>Last game at Milltown RTE archive footage</p> <p>Move to the RDS RTE archive footage</p> <p>KRAM protests RTE archive footage</p> <p>Planning permission for Tallaght RTE archive footage</p> <p>Rovers early success RTE archive footage</p>
Paintings	<p>N/A</p>

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