



McGregor drops claims Nikita Hand struck by ex-partner



● Lawyers for MMA fighter Conor McGregor dropped a bid to introduce new evidence in his civil rape case appeal claiming that Nikita Hand, above, was punched and kicked by her then partner. Her lawyer told the court she had been “put through the wringer” after the allegation, which she denounced as “lies”, was outlined in court. *Photo: Collins* **Report: Page 5**

Parenting Last-minute summer camps for your kids



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Sport Ex-Louth manager Ger Brennan tipped for Dubs job



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Days of cheap food over as costs rise, shoppers warned

CHARLIE WESTON

● The days of “cheap food” are over, shoppers have been warned, as a major farming group looked to heap blame on politicians for rising costs.

The Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA) issued the warning as food inflation continues to soar. Many families are being forced to stump up an extra €3,000 a year. **Report: Page 4**

Drinking water for 497,000 users at risk of contamination

● Large pockets of drinking water supply remain at risk of contamination despite progress in upgrading treatment plants. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said 45 supplies serving 497,000 people were at risk of under-performing or failure. **Report: Page 9**

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‘Just play the hits’ – what Geldof said to Queen before group’s Live Aid performance

ELLIE MUIR

Brian May has revealed that Queen were told by Bob Geldof to “just play the hits” before their legendary Live Aid performance in 1985.

Queen’s six-song performance, which saw lead singer Freddie Mercury make the 72,000-strong crowd clap and chant in unison, is often referred to as one of the greatest rock gigs of all time.

The concert was watched on TV by an estimated 1.5 billion people in 150 countries. It raised more than \$140m (€118m) for famine relief, and raised awareness over Ethiopia’s devastating food shortages.

Speaking to *The Radio Times*, guitarist May and drummer Roger Taylor reflected on the performance 40 years later, with Taylor saying: “During *Radio Ga Ga*, it did seem that the whole stadium was in unison. But then I looked up during *We Are the Champions*, and the crowd looked like a whole field of wheat swaying.”

It was only Taylor who was enthusiastic about playing the concert initially, while other band members – May, Mercury and bassist John Deacon – were unconvinced.

“We weren’t touring or playing, and it seemed like a crazy idea, this talk of having 50 bands on the same bill,” May said. “We thought it was going to be a disaster. Freddie, in particular, said, ‘I haven’t got the right feeling for this.’

“He wasn’t the leader of the band, but if he dug his heels in there was no dragging him, so we parked it.”

May recalled the moment Mercury

changed his mind, saying: “I said to Freddie: ‘If we wake up on the day after this Live Aid show and we haven’t been there, we’re going to be pretty sad.’ He said: ‘Oh, f*** it, we’ll do it.’”

“It was one of the few moments in anyone’s life that you know you’re doing something for all the right reasons.”

Before their performance, May said the band were told by festival’s organiser, Dubliner Bob Geldof: “Don’t get clever – just play the hits. You have 17 minutes.”

The set saw them open with *Bohemian Rhapsody*, followed by *Radio Gaga*, then the a cappella call-and-response section *Ay-Oh*, and *Hammer To Fall*. They ended the set on *We Will Rock You* and *We Are the Champions*.

Taylor recalled that the hardest decision for such a short set was picking the songs. For him, it was “obvious to open with the verse of *Bohemian Rhapsody*; it was so immediately recognisable. Then to finish with *We Will Rock You* and *We Are the Champions* was a no-brainer”.

Though the band was given a strict 17 minutes for their performance, it ended up lasting 21 minutes, due to Mercury’s call-and-response segment.

“We thought that might be on the cards,” May said of Mercury’s big moment. “We just didn’t know whether he was going to feel right about it. But he was so bold.”

Queen played on a line-up alongside U2, David Bowie and Paul McCartney at London’s Wembley Stadium, with Madonna, Led Zeppelin and Bob Dylan performing at the John F Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia. (© The Independent)



Freddie Mercury of Queen performing live on stage at Live Aid in Wembley Stadium on July 13, 1985. Photo: Redferns

‘Last of Us’ zombie fungus dates back to age of dinosaurs

VISHWAM SANKARAN

The mind-controlling “zombie” fungus, which inspired the video game and post-apocalyptic TV show *The Last of Us*, emerged about 133 million years ago when dinosaurs roamed Earth, research has found.

In the real world, fungi belonging to the *Ophiocordyceps* genus infect ants and cause them to behave strangely.

The fungi force their ant hosts to scale a plant to one of its tallest branches and clamp their jaws tightly onto a leaf.

As the ant remains locked onto the leaf, the fungus slowly consumes the insect’s tissues, growing and finally scattering spores down onto the forest floor from the height to restart the cycle afresh with new ant victims.

The fungus is known to reprogramme the instincts of its insect hosts for climbing, gripping, and walking to seek ideal conditions for its own reproduction.

Now, researchers have found remains of early species of this genus trapped in nearly 100-million-year-old fossilised plant sap.

The study, published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, reveals early changes and host shifts undergone by the fungi that shaped their evolution.

These findings are some of the oldest direct evidence of parasitic relationships between fungi and insects, say researchers, including those from the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The origins of such parasitic behaviour have been difficult to trace since the soft nature of fungal tissues causes them to rarely fossilise.

Researchers have now identified two fungal species preserved in 99-million-year-old amber from northern Myanmar.

“Here, we report two new fungi, *Paleoophiocordyceps gerontoformicae* and *Paleoophiocordyceps ironomyiae* from mid-Cretaceous Kachin amber,” scientists wrote.

One of these species, named *P gerontoformicae*, occurred along with an infected ant pupa encased in amber dated to about 99 million years ago.

Scientists found that the structural features of this ancient parasitic fungus match those of modern-day *Ophiocordyceps* species.

By comparing the traits of this ancient fungus to those of other known extinct fungi, researchers say *Ophiocordyceps* likely emerged about 133.25 million years ago, earlier than previously proposed estimates of about 100 million years.

This was during the Early Cretaceous when dinosaurs roamed the Earth, scientists say. (© The Independent)

Farmers blame politicians as days of ‘cheap food’ are over

Families pay extra €3,000 a year for their groceries as inflation soars

CHARLIE WESTON

A farming group has blamed politicians for the rising cost of produce, warning consumers that the days of “cheap food” are over.

The Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA) also accused politicians of “profound ignorance” as it blamed them for adding cost to food production.

Food inflation is double the rate of general inflation, with many families being forced to stump up an additional €3,000 a year due to the rise in grocery prices.

The cost of a pound of butter is up

more than €1 in the last year. The prices of milk, beef, cheese, bread and other staples have soared.

The fear is that they will continue rising after recent CSO figures found prices being paid to cattle farmers rose by 50pc in the year to April.

The ICSMA said rising food prices are here to stay.

“Politicians expressing shock about the rise in food prices are effectively admitting a profound ignorance about the costs they have ‘built in’ to the production of food,” association president Denis Drennan said.

He said they would “be much better advised to be honest with the public and explain that the days of ‘cheap food’ are over”.

The warning echoes sentiments of the Irish Farmers’ Association (IFA), which said a recent survey by director of policy Tadhg Buckley showed costs had increased by nearly 75pc in the last seven years.

Last month, Agriculture Minister

Martin Heydon warned that the recent surge in food prices is unlikely to be reversed. He said it reflects farmers’ input costs.

UCC economist Oliver Browne has calculated that grocery prices have increased by 36pc in the past four years.

In a statement, Mr Drennan said the prices farmers are now getting are only marginally ahead of their costs of production.

He was reacting to recent exchanges in the Dáil and comments made by politicians expressing outrage over the rise in the cost of food.

The farmers’ leader said he understood why consumers would be perplexed by food inflation rising faster than any general consumer inflation index.

He said every single input on his members’ dairy and beef farms had increased in cost and very often in excess of any rise in output price received by the farmer.

Underlying the complaints about food inflation was the implication that farm-

ers should “take one for the team” and absorb increased costs in producing food out of their own pockets.

“That day is over. It’s gone. It wasn’t sustainable then and it certainly isn’t sustainable now,” he said.

“This idea, this delusion, that all the extra costs involved in producing milk or beef are going to be picked up by the farmer is gone and is never coming back.”

Mr Drennan said politicians “have conspired to create this fantasy that we are going to transition to a wonderful, new, highly-regulated, lower-volume food production system with all the changes happening from the supermarket fridge ‘backwards’ to the farm and without any extra cost for the consumer. That’s not just a delusion, it’s just wilful ignorance”.

He added that the cost of producing food has risen, will go up further and the consumer price will reflect this reality.

There were calls in the Dáil last week for supermarkets to publish their profits as the price of groceries soars.