



ACCAREWARDS

Boost your odds or insure if one leg loses

18+ Selected sports. Applies to first unique Acca. Specials/boosts/BOG/free bets (FB)/promotions won't qualify. Min stake £/€0.05. Boost: Max bonus £/€1,000 per Acca. Min 3 legs. Min odds 1/5 per leg. Only win part eligible for E/W Acca. Insurance: Min 5 legs. Min odds 1/5 per leg. Max FB £/€20 per Acca. FB/cashed out/void bets won't qualify. Acc & Payment restrictions. T&Cs apply. Bet Responsibly - GamblingCare.ie

LGFA PREVIEWS

TODAY
TG4 Munster Senior Championship – Round 1; Kerry v Tipperary; Fitzgerald Stadium 1.45pm
Kerry are smarting from their Lidl NFL Division 1 final defeat to Armagh but will be confident of getting back to winning ways against Tipperary. The Kingdom lost to Cork in last year's provincial decider and will target Munster silverware before tackling the All-Ireland series.

Waterford v Cork; Fraher Field, Dungarvan, 3.45pm
Waterford survived in Division 1 of the Lidl National League by defeating Galway on the final day. Now, the Déise will fancy their chances of topping Cork again, after producing a scintillating display against the Leesiders when the sides met in the group stages of the League at Páirc Uí Rinn.

TOMORROW
TG4 Leinster Senior Championship – Round 1
Dublin v Kildare; Parnell Park, 2pm
The 'clash of the champions' features Dublin, who won the TG4 All-Ireland Senior title in 2023, and Kildare, who were TG4 All-Ireland Intermediate winners last year. Kildare's meteoric rise continued this year and they were recently crowned Lidl NFL Division 2 winners and can look forward to Division 1 football in 2025. Now, manager Diane O'Hara and her charges face the acid test against the Sky Blues as they prepare for their return to Senior Championship fare. There are 11 survivors from the team that lined out in the 2023 All-Ireland final against Kerry in a strong Dublin line-up.

Meath v Laois; Páirc Tailteann, 2pm
Laois lost six of their seven Leagues games, drawing the other, and while they have some excellent individual players, they're struggling for results as a collective.
On all known form, this should be a victory for Meath but Laois will be hoping that Championship can improve their fortunes.
The main ambition for Laois will be to preserve senior status again for 2025, as Meath look to go deep into the summer in the quest for provincial and national glory.
There's just one change to the Meath team from the Cork outing, with captain and goalkeeper Monica McGuirk replacing Robyn Murray.

I was at the bottom of the barrel, but sport brought me back

ROLE MODEL: Ex-prisoner turned triathlete Ger Redmond has organised the Get The Message Out 5K run at Darndale Park on Saturday, April 27 (11am)

AS HE hurled himself into the frigid waters of the Maas river, Ger Redmond felt his old life wash away.

"I remember looking back and I could see a vision of myself on the bridge, like I was swimming away from my old self," he recalls.

That old self. Where to begin. A promising striker with Coolock side St Columbans and a Kennedy Cup winner in 1995 with the Brenfer NDSL, scouts flocked to watch the teenager from the troubled and long-neglected Dublin suburb of Darndale.

He landed a trial with Scottish side Dunfermline, shared a pitch with Jackie McNamara before he left for Celtic, and dreamed of becoming a professional footballer.

His brush with that world was fleeting. "My father committed a major crime and I had to come back home," explains Redmond.

"He got locked up and my mother left home, and left myself and my sister to look after four kids under the age of 10. "My dream was crushed."

Fast forward to 2017 and Red-

REDMOND IRONED OUT HIS LIFE THROUGH SPORT



Mark McCadden

mond is standing on a bridge in Maastricht, waiting to jump into the soupy brown current below and start his first ever Ironman.

"I remember standing, there thinking, 'I have my life back'," he says.

Positivity

"The positivity that I felt that morning was unreal. I thought to myself, this is living. "No phone, nothing. I used to always have two or three phones on me.

"At that stage I didn't know if I was going to finish, but the journey and the training and the new lease of life was where I was at.

"I didn't care if I didn't finish it. That wasn't what it was about.

"The training and the change in me was more important than actually finishing the event."

Redmond completed the gruelling race. And a year later he finished the Lanzarote Ironman.

In 2019, he raced in more events and in Barcelona he achieved elite status by earning a pro licence.

"The best thing about it was the last 100 metres. "It's a red carpet and left and right there are people cheering you on. Real Roy of the Rovers stuff."

"I stopped and I received the Irish flag off my family.

"Only a few years before that, they were visiting me in prison. "Now they were handing me an Irish flag on my way to becoming a professional athlete."

Redmond began a prison sentence of sorts as soon as his

dad's incarceration forced the then-teenager home from Scotland.

The real deal came years later. "I basically gave up on life and I joined a criminal gang for protection, because our lives were under threat because of what my father did," he says.

"I was at the bottom of the barrel for probably the best part of 20 years.

Drug

"I ended up getting sentenced in 2013.

"I got two years for drug offences. I got out, I had four girls at this stage and I had a son in October 2016.

"I decided to change, that I was going to be his hero, not knowing what I was going to do. I just wanted to give up on crime and

that life. I was tired of it.

"I just wanted to steer him down the right road, because I never looked up to my own father."

After serving his time in Mountjoy and St Pat's, before moving to a training unit at Shelton Abbey, Redmond watched a close pal, Mick Keogh, take part in a triathlon.

He was hooked on the idea of doing one himself.

"I asked him to coach me and I decided to do an Ironman," he says.

"I started a journey in 2017, I signed up for a full Ironman in Maastricht in August of 2017 and trained towards that.

"But I didn't have a clue how to swim. I turned up for my first swimming session, no goggles, a pair of bermuda shorts ...

REDMOND'S 5K A RUNAWAY SUCCESS

IN JUST its third year, the Darndale 'Another Way 5K' has already sold out, with 720 runners set to take part on Saturday, April 27 (11am).

It's the brainchild of Ger Redmond, an ex-prisoner and now full-time triathlete, who works to combat crime and addiction.

And it forms part of a local campaign to 'Get The Message out' to young people on the dangers of crime and addiction.

Established in 2022, the 5K has grown to become one of the biggest events of its kind in the city — and this year's event will be

■ Mark MCCADDEN

promoted by Coolock Running Club, which Redmond formed with friend Anthony Brady.

"The reason for the 5k is I wanted to insert positivity into the community of Darndale," explained Redmond.

Anxiety

"Some people have too much anxiety, they won't even venture outside the area.

"So my idea was to have this race in the area, to run around the area so people would have no choice but to watch it.

"We are sold out already.

"We were sold out last month. We capped it this year at 600 from a safety standpoint, because the paths can be a bit narrow in the park and it can be a bit swampy on the grass.

"We might plan on pushing it somewhere next year and raise the numbers.

"But we are capped at 600 and 120 kids, so we have 720 taking part."

The run is one of a number of projects backed by the Darndale Implementation Oversight Group, a Dublin City Council initiative to tackle long-standing issues in Darndale.



SOCCER STAR: St Columbans Under-11 league winning side with Ger Redmond (back row, circled)



SUPERDAD: Ger Redmond with his son Ross and (right) in action during a triathlon



"I really wanted to inspire my son and I really wanted to change my life."

Becoming a role model for his son Ross and being there for his wife Pauline ("my rock") was all the motivation he needed.

"When I was in the gang I always had loads of money, I always had to have money in my hand all the time," he says.

Medicine

"I said, I love this. I told people, 'This is not suffering, I'll show you suffering, life is suffering'. For me, sport wasn't suffering, sport was medicine."

"I got faster and faster, and I signed up for Ironman Lanzarote, the toughest in the world."

"I did Lanzarote and went past my coach on the bike. He

was at it for six years and I was only at it for 12 months. That triggered something in me. "Someone told me I could be a pro. So I went about getting my pro licence in October 2018."

"I signed up for Barcelona and again people wrote me off, didn't know the suffering I'd been through as a kid and what I lost as a professional athlete, as a soccer player."

"All that motivation fed into this sport now and I was, like, watch this f**king space — in a nice way!"

"I turned up in Barcelona and I had to beat was nine hours 30 minutes to become an Irish professional athlete."

"I came through the finish line at 9:26, carrying the flag my family gave me."

Now 42, Redmond can add 'ultra-runner' to his bulging CV, which also includes his day job as a mechanical engineer with Amazon, his work as a coach in Oberstown Prison, the running club (Coolock Running Club) he set up and an annual 5k race around Darndale.

"I did a 24-hour run last year and did 161k. I got second in that. That's the type of stuff I'm at. I love endurance stuff."

Son

"I did all this for my son, and so I could go into schools in deprived areas all across the country and into prisons and show that it can be done.

"Ninety per cent of the people in prison, I know they should be there for what they did, but there is a root cause to

why they are there, there is a bigger picture.

"I launched Coolock Running Club in August last year, and we have 130 members.

"A lot of those members were in similar situations to me.

"I reach back to share my story with them, to show them there is a way out.

"The club is there because of the commitment of our community. There is a wonderful committee and coaching staff, and wonderful volunteers who all realise that sport is so powerful, that it can give you a healthy mindset.

"It's not the end-all. You have to get counselling and psychology, you have to work on yourself in other areas, but sport gives you strength, so you can then make the right decisions."



STILL GOING STRONG: Edel Hayden of Carlow

Silverware worth wait for Hayden

■ Daire WALSH

VETERAN Carlow footballer Edel Hayden finally got her hands on national silverware at Grant Heating St Brendan's Park in Birr a fortnight ago.

Lining out at midfield, 37-year-old Hayden played a significant role in helping the Barrowsiders to secure the Lidl National Football League Division 4 title with a 1-7 to 0-6 triumph over Limerick

"I think it was Rachel Sawyer (Carlow team-mate) was saying to me in the dressing room just before the match, I think her Mam was on the last team that won the Division 2 years ago."

"Since I started back in 2001, other than a Leinster final and making semi-finals, we haven't got any silverware really," Hayden said.

"It was unbelievable and even just for managers that have been in with us, and people that followed us even through the ups and downs."

Debut

While she did make her senior debut all of 23 years ago, there have been periods when Hayden was away from the inter-county game.

This was down to a combination of long-term injuries and the fact that she is also the mother of four children.

"I've four kids. Dylan and Harper, and then the younger two, Daire and Ellie, they have autism.

"I've had to give up work and stay at home.

"Try and do what I can to get them where they need to be as well."

She is hopeful their NFL Division 4 triumph can be the springboard to greater things.

As well as defending their Leinster Junior Football Championship title in the coming weeks, Carlow hope to progress in the TG4 All-Ireland Junior Football Championship.

Semi-finalists in each of the past three seasons, Carlow believe they are more than capable of making it to Croke Park for the showpiece decider on August 4.

"It's going to be so competitive, but we're looking forward to the challenge," Hayden said.