

“Families should be allowed attend the All-Ireland Finals”

Former Roscommon star Sean McDermott believes families should not be prevented from entering Croke Park for the All-Ireland finals.

The 2020 senior football has so far remained behind closed doors due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's the first time in the history of the GAA this has occurred.

The question is, should it remain shut or should families be allowed enter Croke Park for the All-Ireland senior finals?

Sean McDermott believes families should certainly be let in.

“I think if you look at the situation with a bit of common sense, I see no reason why the GAA can't allow a few family members of each player inside”, he said.

Aidan O'Shea this week echoed McDermott's belief.

“We have a stadium of 80,000, I think you could easily account for 500 people from either side, he said. Families deserve to be in there as much as anybody.”

Waterford manager Liam Cahill's view is of a different nature and shows the difficulty of the decision.

“If you put restrictions on who you are letting in, I don't think that's what the GAA is about,” he said.

The issue of letting families in also runs much deeper than just all-round inclusivity. COVID-19 has not gone home for Christmas and is still rife in some parts of the country.

Should the GAA be risking a spike in cases in Ireland right before the Christmas period for the sake of two games.

McDermott did not view it this way and believes the risk of infection is next too minimal

“Look at the size of Croke Park”, he said, “The stadium can easily hold over 80,000 people so when people start to question if social distancing would be possible it doesn't really make sense.

If we look closer at this, Croke Park is in fact the 3rd biggest stadium in Europe and the 13th biggest in the world. It can also hold two per-cent of Ireland's population so maybe he does have point.

McDermott also outlined that spectators have started returning in the Premier League

“If you look at England, I think they have started to let fans back in to the stadiums so I don't see why we can't do the same”, he said.

However, should we really be using another country's decisions to justify our own actions?

The problem is also not with the size of the stadium. Croke Park is big enough to easily socially distance thousands of supporters. The issues start to arise however when we look at how families would safely get in and out of the ground.

No matter what way we attempt to go about it, there will be some amount of risk involved no matter the number of individuals let in.

However, for some people this risk might be worth the reward.

McDermott believes that for some families it may be the last chance they get to see their son, nephew or grandson play in an All-Ireland final again.

“For Waterford players and for a few of the older lads on the Mayo team, this could genuinely be their last All-Ireland, they are so hard to get to you might not get back again”, he said.

While a decision to allow families attend the All-Ireland final still remains doubtful, it still isn't out of the question.

Whatever final decision is made it is sure to divide opinion.