

# ALL STAR WEEKLY

## FLY HALF FACE OFF

WITH THE  
BRITISH AND  
IRISH LIONS'  
ANNOUNCEMENT  
LOOMING, WILL  
EITHER OF THE  
IRISH  
YOUNGSTERS  
GAIN A SPOT ON  
THE PLANE?





# LEAGUE 2'S RACE FOR SILVERWARE

AS SCOTLAND'S RESPECTED LEAGUE'S SEASONS FACE THEIR FINAL STAGES, MOST TEAMS HAVE BEEN SECURED THEIR PLACE AS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS. THE PREMIERSHIP, CHAMPIONSHIP AND LEAGUE 1 CHAMPIONS HAVE BEEN WELL AND TRULY MARKED AS CELTIC, FALKIRK AND ARBROATH FINISH WITH A HIGH MAGNITUDE OF A POINTS DIFFERENCE. HOWEVER, SCOTTISH LEAGUE 2 SUPPORTERS HAVE SEEN A MORE DRAMATIC SEASON THAT HAS STILL TO BE DECIDED.

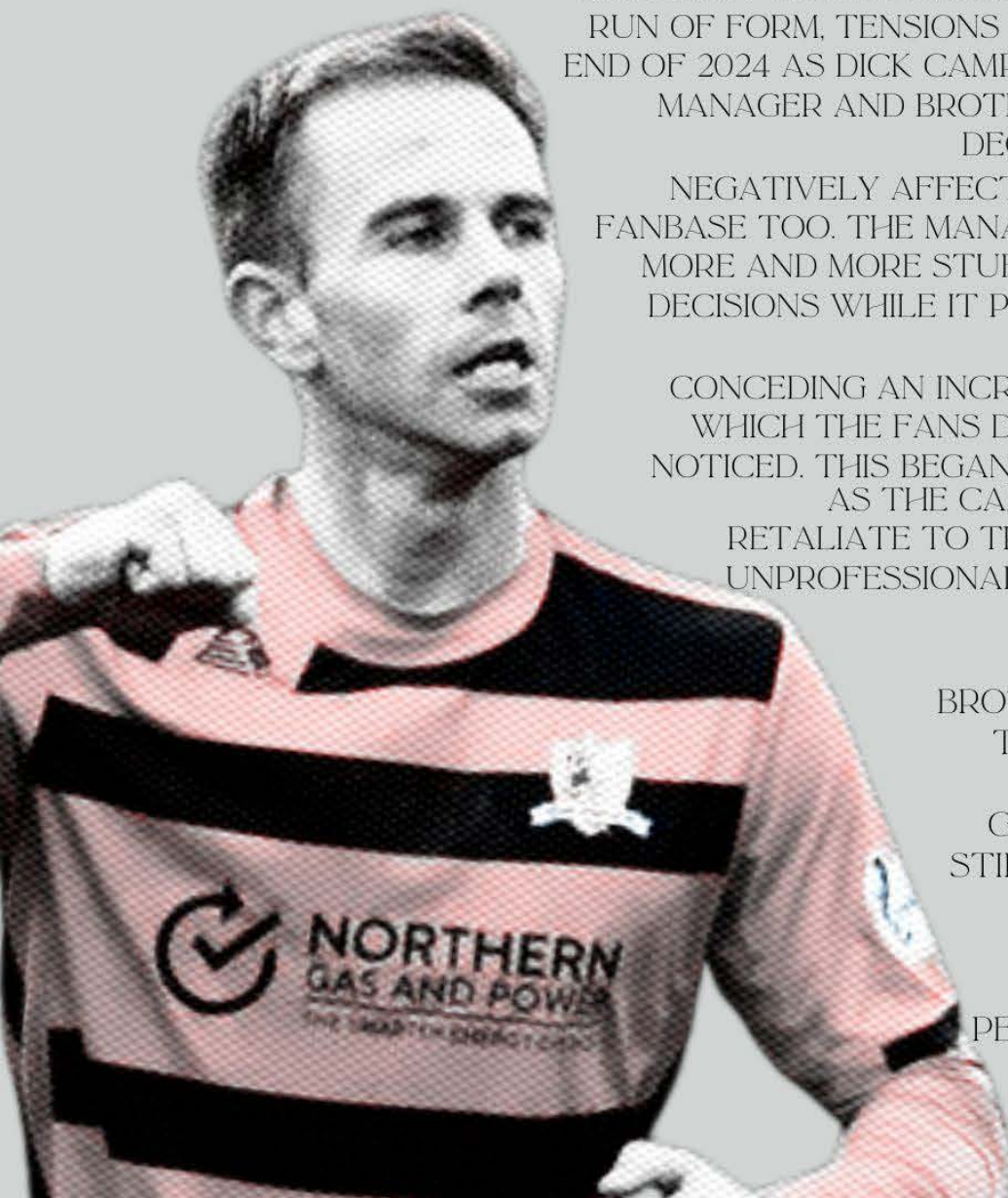
WITH FIVE GAMES LEFT TO PLAY, PETERHEAD FC CURRENTLY STAND ABOVE THE LIKES OF EAST FIFE, EDINBURGH CITY AND ELGIN CITY WITH ONLY 11 POINTS DIFFERENTIATING THE FOUR SIDES. THROUGHOUT THE SEASON THERE HAVE BEEN EXCESSIVE CHANGES IN CONSISTENCY THROUGHOUT THE CHALLENGING CLUBS AS EAST FIFE HAVE SPENT THE MAJORITY IN THE TOP SPOT. NEWLY APPOINTED DICK CAMPBELLS SIDE LOOKED TO BE AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE FROM THE START BY BEATING TEAMS SUCH AS CLYDE, SPARTANS AND STIRLING ALBION WITH SCORING FIVE GOALS IN EACH GAME, THEIR VETERAN STRIKER AND CLUB LEGEND, ALAN TROUTEN, HAS BEEN A FORCE TO BE RECKONED AS HE CURRENTLY STANDS ON 22 LEAGUE GOALS AND FOUR ASSISTS. HIS MAGIC HAS BOOSTED THE FANS SUPPORT AS THEY WERE ESTIMATED TO

FINISH MID TABLE. DESPITE THEIR ALMOST PERFECT RUN OF FORM, TENSIONS BEGAN TO RISE NEAR THE END OF 2024 AS DICK CAMPBELL AND HIS ASSISTANT MANAGER AND BROTHER, IAN CAMPBELL, MADE DECISIONS THAT NOT ONLY .

NEGATIVELY AFFECTED THE TEAM, BUT THEIR FANBASE TOO. THE MANAGER STARTED BECOMING MORE AND MORE STUBBORN WITH HIS ON-FIELD DECISIONS WHILE IT PROGRESSIVELY MADE THE TEAM SUFFER WITH

CONCEDING AN INCREASED NUMBER OF GOALS, WHICH THE FANS DID NOT LET BECOME UN- NOTICED. THIS BEGAN THEIR INEVITABLE DEMISE AS THE CAMPBELL BROTHERS WOULD RETALIATE TO THEIR FANS WITH RUDE AND UNPROFESSIONAL GESTURES THAT CAUSED A STIR WITH THE CROWD.

AS THE CAMPBELL BROTHERS WOULD RETALIATE TO THEIR FANS WITH RUDE AND UNPROFESSIONAL GESTURES THAT CAUSED A STIR WITH THE CROWD. THEY CURRENTLY STAND FOUR POINTS AWAY FROM PETERHEAD WITH THEIR PENULTIMATE GAME OF THE SEASON, AT BALMOOR STADIUM.





NOT FAR OFF OF SECOND PLACE IS THE RECENTLY RELEGATED SIDE, EDINBURGH CITY AS THEY STAND ON 52 POINTS. THEIR SEASON DID NOT START AS THEY PLANNED IT AS THEY HAD ONLY WON ONE GAME OUT OF THEIR FIRST NINE. AFTER THAT BLIP IN FORM, THE SIDE STARTED PICKING UP MORE FREQUENT WINS AND THE MAJORITY OF THEM CAME BECAUSE OF THEIR STAR STRIKER, CONOR YOUNG. PICKING UP 18 GOALS IN THE FIRST 25 GAMES, HE WAS ON TRACK TO BRING EDINBURGH CITY BACK TO LEAGUE 1.

RIVALLING EAST FIFE'S ALAN TROUTEN. HOWEVER, AS THE JANUARY TRANSFER WINDOW WAS CLOSING, EDINBURGH CITY WILLINGLY LET GO OF THEIR STAR MAN FOR AN UNDISCLOSED FEE TO DUNFERMLINE FC, WHICH CAME TO THE DISMAY OF THE FANS. FORCED TO NOW CHANGE THEIR SQUAD AND SHAPE, EDINBURGH CITY BEGAN A VERY ON AND OFF LEVEL OF QUALITY BY LOSING THEIR FIRST GAME AFTER YOUNG'S DEPARTURE, 4-1, TO EAST FIFE. THE SIDE LATER EVENED THE SCORE BY BEATING EAST FIFE 5-2 A FEW GAMES AFTER. THEY CURRENTLY SIT

EIGHT POINTS AWAY FROM LEAGUE LEADERS PETERHEAD WITH THE INTENT OF FINDING A WAY TO CLIMB BACK UP TO STARDOM AGAIN.

JUST 3 POINTS AWAY FROM EDINBURGH CITY ARE ELGIN CITY. AFTER A VERY SUP PAR SEASON LAST YEAR, ELGIN LOOKED TO BOLSTER THEIR WAY FINALLY INTO LEAGUE 1 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR HISTORY. THE ELGIN GAFFER, ALLAN HALE, TOOK OVER THE SIDE MID-SEASON IN DECEMBER 2023 WHICH BOOSTED THE SQUAD'S QUALITY BRINGING THEM BACK TO WINNING WAYS.

AS HALE STEPPED IN, ELGIN LOOKED TO BE DESTINED FOR THE HIGHLAND LEAGUE AFTER LOSING 6-0 TO PETERHEAD MONTHS BEFORE. AS THE 2024/25 SEASON KICKED OFF, THEY HAD A VERY POSITIVE START AS THEY WENT ON AN UNBEATEN RUN FOR 12 LEAGUE GAMES, BEATING THE LIKES OF PETERHEAD, SPARTANS AND STRANRAER. HALE'S SIDE SEEM TO BE EQUAL FAVOURITES ALONGSIDE EAST FIFE AT THIS POINT IN THE SEASON UNTIL THEY FACED THEIR FIRST DEFEAT TO BOTTOM OF THE TABLE, BONNYRIGG ROSE. AFTER THIS 2-0 LOSS, ELGIN DROPPED IN PERFORMANCES AND BEGAN A VERY MIXED RUN OF FORM INCLUDING LOSSES FROM ALL EAST FIFE, EDINBURGH CITY AND PETERHEAD. THE SIDE ARE LOOKING TO BOUNCE BACK INTO CONSISTENCY WITH THEIR NEXT MATCH BEING AGAINST THIRD PLACE EDINBURGH CITY.

NOW TOP OF THE TABLE PETERHEAD FC HAVE BEEN A DOMINANT FORCE FROM THE START OF 2025. AFTER PLAYING 14 GAMES FROM THE START OF THE YEAR, THE SIDE HAVE ONLY LOST ONE AND HAVE BEEN ON AN UNBEATEN STREAK FOR TEN MATCHES. IN THEIR PREVIOUS SEASON, THE "BLUE TOON" SUFFERED MASSIVELY AS THEIR MANAGER, DAVIE ROBERTSON WAS REPLACED BY PLAYERS, JORDON BROWN AND RYAN STRACHAN. ROBERTSON'S RUN AS PETERHEAD'S MANAGER IN 2023 BECAME THING FANS DREAD TO MENTION AFTER SUFFERING LOSS AFTER LOSS AFTER LOSS WITH IT BEING IN THE LEAGUE AND FINANCIALLY. BROWN AND STRACHAN TOOK OVER AT THE START OF LAST SEASON AND STRUGGLED TO FIND THEIR FOOTING AS THEY HAVE HAD NO EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD, BUT THEY PRESERVED AND WON THE RESPECT FROM THE FANS AND EARNED THEIR PLACE.


THEY FINISHED SECOND PLACE BEHIND STENHOUSEMUIR BUT THE TWO WERE HUNGRY FOR MORE IN THE NEXT SEASON. THE NORTHEAST SIDE STARTED STRONG BY WINNING SIX OUT OF THEIR FIRST SEVEN GAMES UNTIL LOSING AT THE HANDS OF EAST FIFE, WHICH SEEMED TO BECOME A REOCCURRING THEME FOR THE CLUB AS THEY WOULD GO ON A STRONG RUN OF FORM HOWEVER SUFFERING CRUCIAL DEFEATS WHEN THEY NEED IT THE MOST. THE SQUAD REMAINED TO BE A HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY WITH THE NEW SIGNING OF CAMERON SMITH AND THE RUN OF GOALS STRIKER KIERAN SHANKS SEEMED TO BE ON. BEING PETERHEAD'S TOP SCORER FOR THE SEASON WITH TEN GOALS, SHANKS HAS BEEN NEAR DYNAMITE FOR THE CLUB. BUT HIS CONSTANT LACK OF DISCIPLINE HAS FAULTED HIM NEAR THE END OF THE SEASON. WITH RECEIVING TWO BACK-TO-BACK RED CARDS, SHANKS' SEASON SEEMS TO BE OVER AS NEW 'KIWI' SIGNING OLIVER COLLOTY HAS MADE HIS PRESENCE KNOWN BY SCORING A HATTRICK IN HIS LATEST MATCH, BOOSTING PETERHEAD'S QUALITY THROUGH THE ROOF.

AS THE "BLUE TOON" CONTINUE ON THEIR WAR PATH TO VICTORY, THERE STILL LIES FIVE GAMES TO GO FOR THE END OF THE SEASON WITH ANY OF THESE FOUR HAVING A CHANCE TO LIFT THE TROPHY.



# FLY-HALF FACEOFF

## SAM PRENDERGAST HAS MADE HUGE WAVES IN THE IRISH SCENE.



THE KILDARE NATIVE HAS RECENTLY RE-SIGNED WITH LEINSTER, THOUGH THE LENGTH OF SAID CONTRACT IS STILL UNKNOWN. AFTER MAKING HIS DEBUT FOR THE REGION IN 2022, SAM HAS EARNED HIMSELF THE STARTING JERSEY, PROVING HIMSELF TO BE A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH AS A KEY PLAYMAKER FOR THE SIDE.

STATS WISE, THE YOUNGSTER WAS ABLE TO SECURE 44 POINTS FOR IRELAND IN THIS YEAR'S SIX NATIONS WHILE SLOTTING 7 CONVERSIONS, TAKING AN IMPRESSIVE 70% GOAL KICK RATE.

WHILE ONLY PLAYING 7 GAMES FOR LEINSTER THIS SEASON, SAM SCORED A TOTAL OF 26 POINTS, WITH 9 SUCCESSFUL CONVERSIONS..

ITS CLEAR THAT SAM IS CEMENTED AS LEINSTER STARTING 10, WITH IRELAND BOSS ANDY FARRELL FAVOURING HIM TO JACK CROWLEY. THIS LEAVES THE DOOR OPEN FOR THE POTENTIAL OF SAM GETTING A TICKET TO AUSTRALIA FOR THE BRITISH AND IRISH LIONS TOUR THIS SUMMER.



# JACK CROWLEY

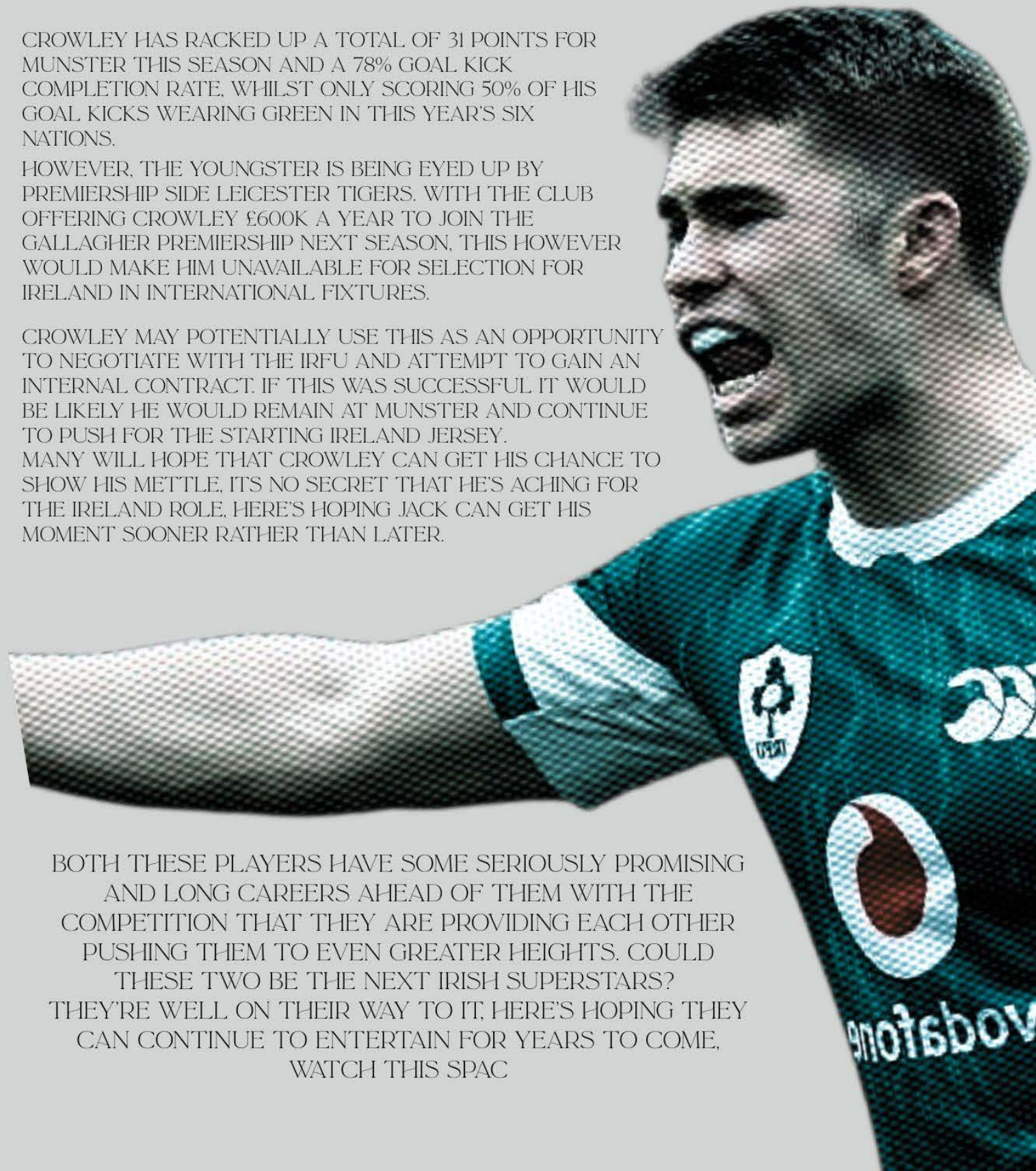
THE CORK BORN 10 DEBUTED FOR MUNSTER BACK IN 2021 AND HAS MADE A HUGE IMPACT EVER SINCE, BEING THE STARTING FLY-HALF IN THEIR URC CHAMPIONSHIP WINNING RUN LAST SEASON.

CROWLEY HAS RACKED UP A TOTAL OF 31 POINTS FOR MUNSTER THIS SEASON AND A 78% GOAL KICK COMPLETION RATE, WHILST ONLY SCORING 50% OF HIS GOAL KICKS WEARING GREEN IN THIS YEAR'S SIX NATIONS.

HOWEVER, THE YOUNGSTER IS BEING EYED UP BY PREMIERSHIP SIDE LEICESTER TIGERS. WITH THE CLUB OFFERING CROWLEY £600K A YEAR TO JOIN THE GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP NEXT SEASON, THIS HOWEVER WOULD MAKE HIM UNAVAILABLE FOR SELECTION FOR IRELAND IN INTERNATIONAL FIXTURES.

CROWLEY MAY POTENTIALLY USE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE IRFU AND ATTEMPT TO GAIN AN INTERNAL CONTRACT. IF THIS WAS SUCCESSFUL IT WOULD BE LIKELY HE WOULD REMAIN AT MUNSTER AND CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR THE STARTING IRELAND JERSEY. MANY WILL HOPE THAT CROWLEY CAN GET HIS CHANCE TO SHOW HIS METTLE, IT'S NO SECRET THAT HE'S ACHING FOR THE IRELAND ROLE, HERE'S HOPING JACK CAN GET HIS MOMENT SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

BOTH THESE PLAYERS HAVE SOME SERIOUSLY PROMISING AND LONG CAREERS AHEAD OF THEM WITH THE COMPETITION THAT THEY ARE PROVIDING EACH OTHER PUSHING THEM TO EVEN GREATER HEIGHTS. COULD THESE TWO BE THE NEXT IRISH SUPERSTARS? THEY'RE WELL ON THEIR WAY TO IT, HERE'S HOPING THEY CAN CONTINUE TO ENTERTAIN FOR YEARS TO COME, WATCH THIS SPAC





# WHAT IS BODYBUILDING?

BODYBUILDING IS A SPORT THAT IS FOCUSED ON MUSCLES GROWTH, STRENGTH AND FOCUSED DISCIPLINE. THE SPORT LARGELY LEANS ON AESTHETICS THROUGH RESISTANCE TRAINING, NUTRITION AND RECOVERY. THIS WILL INVOLVE STRUCTURED WORKOUTS WITH VERY MINUTE DETAIL AND WELL THOUGHT OUT EXERCISES TO MAXIMISE THE PROGRESS OF THE ATHLETE. THIS TRAINING METHOD IS REFERRED TO AS HYPERTROPHY, BREAKING DOWN THE MUSCLE FIBRES SO THEY CAN GROW BACK STRONGER. NUTRITION PLAYS A MASSIVE PART IN THIS HAVING A HIGH PROTEIN, HIGH CARB AND LOW-FAT DIET TO MAXIMIZE THE BODYBUILDER LOOK. PROFESSIONAL BODYBUILDERS PREPARE FOR THEIR COMPETITIONS WITH AN EXTREMELY STRICT DIET, TRAINING AND POSING ROUTINE.

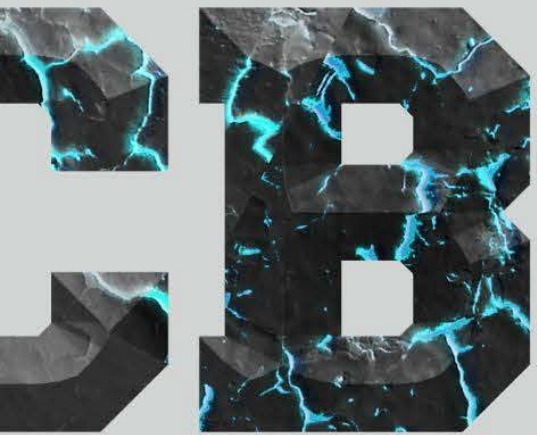


**GRANITE CITY**

## HISTORY

THE GRANITE CITY CLASSIC IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST BODYBUILDING SHOWS EVER SEEN IN SCOTLAND WITH COMPETITORS TRAVELING FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. CREATED BY ROB ROSE, A VERY RECOGNIZABLE FACE IN THE BODYBUILDING WORLD STARTED THE SHOW BACK IN 2019 ALONG WITH HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN PETE GONNELLA TO PROMOTE BODYBUILDING IN HIS LOCAL COMMUNITY AND IN THE BODYBUILDING SCENE AS A WHOLE. ROB'S PASSION FOR BODYBUILDING CAME FROM A YOUNG AGE AFTER BEING SIDE-LINED FROM AN INJURY ON HIS LOWER BACK. LABELLING HIMSELF AS A SKINNY FOOTBALLER, THE TRAINING STYLE OF BODYBUILDING LEAD TO HIM CREATING THE SHOW FOR BODYBUILDERS AT ALL LEVELS. INITIALLY ROB FOUND IT DIFFICULT BALANCING HIS JOB AS A SECURITY MANAGER AND THE SHOW HOWEVER THROUGH HIS HARD WORK AND PERSEVERANCE HE SUCCEEDED IN DELIVERING THE SHOW AS WE SEE IT TODAY. AFTER SOME TIME SUPPORTING HIS FRIEND AT FJORDS GYM WITH A SIMILAR SHOW, HE DECIDED TO PRODUCE THE CLASSIC BODYBUILDING IN HIS LOCAL AREA ON A BIGGER SCALE, USING PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY, LIGHTING, SPONSORS, TO PRODUCE ONE OF THE BIGGEST SHOWS IN THE COUNTRY.





## BODYBUILDING

### CONTROVERSY



## ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT!

THIS IS SAM MILNE. ONLINE COACH AND BODYBUILDER IN HIS OWN RIGHT WITH HIS IMPRESSIVE PHYSIQUE. SAM COMPETED IN THE 2024 GRANITE CITY CLASSIC IN THE 'CLASSIC' CATEGORY PLACING THIRD IN HIS CLASS. SAM'S LOVE FOR SPORT CAME FROM A YOUNG AGE ALTHOUGH NOT STRAIGHT INTO THE GYM FOR HIM, A DIFFERENT TYPE OF GYM AS HE STARTED TAEKWONDO AT 7. HIS TIME IN THE DOJO TAUGHT HIM A LOT OF LIFE LESSONS THAT HE STILL THINKS ABOUT TODAY, FOR EXAMPLE HE

REMEMBERED WRITING AN ESSAY ON RESPECT AT THE AGE OF 8. THIS FIGHTING SPORT TAUGHT HIM ABOUT DISCIPLINE AND CONTROLLING YOUR BODY AND SETTING GOALS AND HOW YOU CAN ACHIEVE THEM.

AS HE WENT INTO HIS TEENAGE, HE STARTED DRIFTING AWAY FROM TAEKWONDO AND AT THE AGE OF 14 HE STARTED HIS LIFTING JOURNEY. STARTING OF AS LITTLE AS BICEP CURLS BECAUSE THAT'S THE EXERCISE EVERYONE KNOWS JUST IN HIS HOUSE. ONCE HE STEPPED FOOT IN THE GYM FOR THE FIRST TIME IT CHANGED HIS LIFE FOREVER. HE FOUND HIS SPARK FOR SPORT AND DRIVE AGAIN FOR GETTING 1% EACH TIME HE LEFT THE GYM. HE FELL IN LOVE. YEARS LATER ON 2024 SAM WAS TRAINING AT HIS NORMAL GYM IN ABERDEEN, WAREHOUSE HEALTH (A VERY WELL-RESPECTED BODYBUILDING GYM) WHEN A PEER ASKED HIM "WHY DON'T YOU JUST COMPETE AT THE GRANITE?". AFTER A SHORT AMOUNT OF CONSIDERATION, HE SIGNED UP WITH JUST 10 DAYS' NOTICE. HIS FIRST PROTOCOL WAS THE DIET. REDUCING HIS CALORIES EVEN MORE THAN WHAT HE WAS ALREADY ON TO 2400 A DAY WITH NO SUGAR AND VERY LITTLE CARBS. MIXING THIS WITH AN HOUR ON THE STAIRMASTER IN THE MORNING AND ANOTHER HOUR AT NIGHT SEEN SAM SHRED DOWN

COMPLETELY TO THE POINT HE WAS READY TO GO ON STAGE, ACHIEVING THIS WITH NO NUTRITION COACH OR POSING COACH.

LOOKING BACK SAM MENTIONED THAT DOING THE SHOW WASN'T ALL ABOUT LOOKING GOOD OR GETTING THE MOST SHREDDED HE'S BEEN. IT WAS MORE ABOUT PROVING TO HIMSELF THAT HE COULD DO IT, NOT BOTHERING WITH WHAT THE OTHER ATHLETES LOOKED LIKE ONLY FOCUSING

ON HIMSELF WHICH PROVED TO BE A SUCCESS COMING THIRD IN MEN'S CLASSIC PHYSIQUE. SAM CONTINUES TO SPREAD THE CITY OF ABERDEEN WITH A POSITIVE OUTLOOK ON BODYBUILDING TO THIS DAY HELPING OTHERS ACHIEVE THEIR DREAM BODIES. BECOMING A WELL-RESPECTED BODYBUILDER IN THE GRANITE CITY.

AT THE BEGINNING ROB APPROACHED THE IBFA (INTERNATIONAL BODYBUILDING & FITNESS ASSOCIATION) TO BE AFFILIATED WITH THE GRANITE CITY CLASSIC SHOW. DURING TALKS HE WAS EXCITED TO HAVE THE FREEDOM AND CREATIVITY TO PRODUCE THE SHOW THE WAY HE WANTED. HOWEVER, THIS APPEARED TO COME AT A COST AS THERE WAS NO SUPPORT PROVIDED IN FINANCIAL COSTS, STAFF, PROMOTION ONLY THE ALLOCATION OF INVITES TO THE BRITISH BODYBUILDING CHAMPIONSHIPS. AFTER A NUMBER OF YEARS AFFILIATED WITH THE IBFA, ROB HIT A CROSSROADS WHERE A CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES WAS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HAVING THE CREATIVE FREEDOM OF THE SHOW HE FOUND HIMSELF IN A SITUATION WHERE THIS WAS BEING FORCIBLY ALTERED. DUE TO A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE IBFA, ROB WAS FACED WITH THE SITUATION THAT HE DID NOT AGREE WITH THE CHANGES BEING MADE. SEVERAL CONDITIONS THAT WERE BEING FORCED UPON THE SHOW WAS THE PAYMENT OF MEMBERSHIP FOR EACH COMPETITOR, BRANDING AND MAIN SPONSORSHIP BEING CHANGED; THE CHANGES THAT WENT AGAINST THE WHOLE ETHOS OF THE GRANITE CITY CLASSIC.

ROB BEING A MAN OF VALUE, RECOGNISED THAT REMAINING AFFILIATED WITH THE IBFA WAS NOT IN HIS FUTURE. RECORDING A PODCAST WITH THIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, PETE, HE INFORMED ALL OF THE COMPETITORS AND SPONSORS OF HIS ACTIONS RELEASING THIS ON SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTING HIS REASONS FOR THESE DECISIONS. STATED IN THIS INTERVIEW HE CLAIMED THAT THE IBFA WERE ATTEMPTING TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE CLASSIC BRANDING IT AS THEIR SHOW. FAILED ATTEMPTS BY THEM TO SECURE 2026 VENUES, ETC BY THE IBFA LEFT ROB IN THE SITUATION WHERE HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT REMOVE HIS AFFILIATION TO THEM. AS STATED IN AN INTERVIEW HE CREATED, NURTURED AND BROUGHT THIS SHOW LIFE IN SUPPORT OF THE BODY BUILDING COMMUNITY IN HIS LOCAL AREA. IT HAS BEEN REWARDED WITH ITS IMMENSE CONTINUED SUCCESS CONTINUING TO DO THIS IN THE FUTURE. A TURBULENT TIME BETWEEN THE NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE IBFA AND ROB PUT THE SHOW IN JEOPARDY. IN A RECENT PODCAST DISCUSSING THE MATTER ROB TOLD THE LISTENERS ABOUT HOW HE WAS OBJECTIFIED IN A GROUP CHAT WITH ALL SHOW RUNNERS ACROSS THE UK BUT THE CHAIRMAN AND HIS CLOSE AFFILIATES FOR SPEAKING HIS MIND AND TRYING TO GIVE THEM CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM AND HELP THE OUT. THIS WAS MET WITH BELITTLING COMMENTS TOWARDS ROB AND HIS SHOW IMPLYING THAT HIS SHOW IS NOTHING WITHOUT THEM.



# BANNED JERSEYS IN FOOTBALL



FOOTBALL SHIRTS ARE ICONIC THROUGH THE WORLD OF FOOTBALL, EITHER THE PLAYERS THAT WEAR THEM OR A UNIQUE DESIGN THAT CHANGES HOW PEOPLE LOOK AT FOOTBALL SHIRTS. UNLUCKY FOR THESE JERSEYS, THESE NEVER GOT TO THAT ICONIC STATUS FOR THE GOOD REASONS. THESE SHIRTS WERE BANNED FROM SALES AND NOT ALLOWED TO BE SOLD AND HAD TO STOP BEING PRODUCED.



1. AT FIRST GLANCE THE ITALIAN GIANTS AWAY KIT FROM THE 1992/93 SEASON APPEARS TO HAVE NOTHING WRONG WITH IT. THE MAJORITY OF THE KIT A PLAIN WHITE COLOUR WITH THE 7UP LOGO AND A PURPLE PATTERN ON THE TOP. NOBODY SAW ANY FLAWS IN THE SHIRT IN THE FIRST FEW MONTHS BUT AFTER A FEW MORE GAMES IN THE SERIE A FANS NOTICED A CERTAIN PATTERN ON THE TOP OF THE KIT NEXT TO THE BADGE. THE KIT CONTAINED 'SWASTIKA' SYMBOL ALL OVER THE PURPLE PATTERN. WHILST IT WAS LIKELY AN ACCIDENT THERE WAS VERY QUICKLY AN OUTRAGE. THE CLUB RELEASES A STATEMENT SAYING IT WAS AN ACCIDENT AND THE KIT WAS BANNED AND NEVER TO BE MADE OR WORN AGAIN.

2. IN 2002, CAMEROON MADE HEADS TURN DURING THE SECOND DAY OF THE AFRICA CUP WITH THEIR UNCONVENTIONAL DESIGN OF A SLEEVELESS JERSEY. THE SHIRT RESEMBLED A BASKETBALL SHIRT, AND THE CAMEROON FOOTBALL FEDERATION HAD NO PROBLEM WITH IT UNTIL FIFA SEEN IT. FIFA EFFECTIVELY BANNED THE JERSEY DUE TO IT NOT BEING UP TO TOURNAMENT AND ADVERTISEMENT STANDARDS, SUCH AS A TOURNAMENT STICKER ON THE SLEEVE.



3. THE FEUD BETWEEN CAMEROON AND FIFA DID NOT END IN 2002. THE SECOND DISPUTE CAME IN 2004 AFTER THEY RELEASED A ONE OF A KIND 'BODYSUIT' JERSEY, ATTACHING THE ICONIC GREEN SHIRT AND RED SHORTS INTO ONE PIECE. FIFA DID NOT LIKE THIS AGAIN. LATER ISSUING A STATEMENT ABOUT THE RULES OF KIT DESIGN. ALL SHIRTS AND SHORTS MUST BE SEPARATE CLOTHING ITEMS.

4. NOT SO LONG AGO IN 2019, SPANISH MEDIA REPORTED THAT THE HIGHER UPS AT BARCELONA REJECTED THE LARGELY WHITE KIT INSPIRED BY ST. GEORGE. THE NIKE DESIGN LEANED HEAVILY ON THE WHITE AND RED FLAG FOR THE PATRON SAINT OF BARCELONA WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE A BAD DECISION IN THE EYES OF THE CLUB. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE SPANISH GIANTS THERE IS ALREADY A SPANISH CLUB THAT PLAYS IN WHITE, THAT TEAM BEING THEIR BIGGEST RIVALS REAL MADRID.



5. BACK IN 1996, SIR ALEX FERGUSONS MANCHESTER UNITED TEAM WERE PLAYING AGAINST SOUTHAMPTON. WHILE DOWN 3-0 AT HALF TIME SIR ALEX TOLD HIS TEAM TO CHANGE THEIR KITS. WHY YOU ASK. THE MANAGER BLAMED THE GREY KIT AS 'HIS TEAM COULDN'T SEE EACH OTHER, AND THEY BLENDED IN WITH THE CROWD. MAN UNITED WENT ON TO LOSE THE GAME 3-1 AND THE KIT WAS BLAMED FOR THE LOSS IN THEIR IMPORTANT TITLE RACE.



# SUNDERLAND'S STEPS FOR A — BRIGHTER FUTURE —

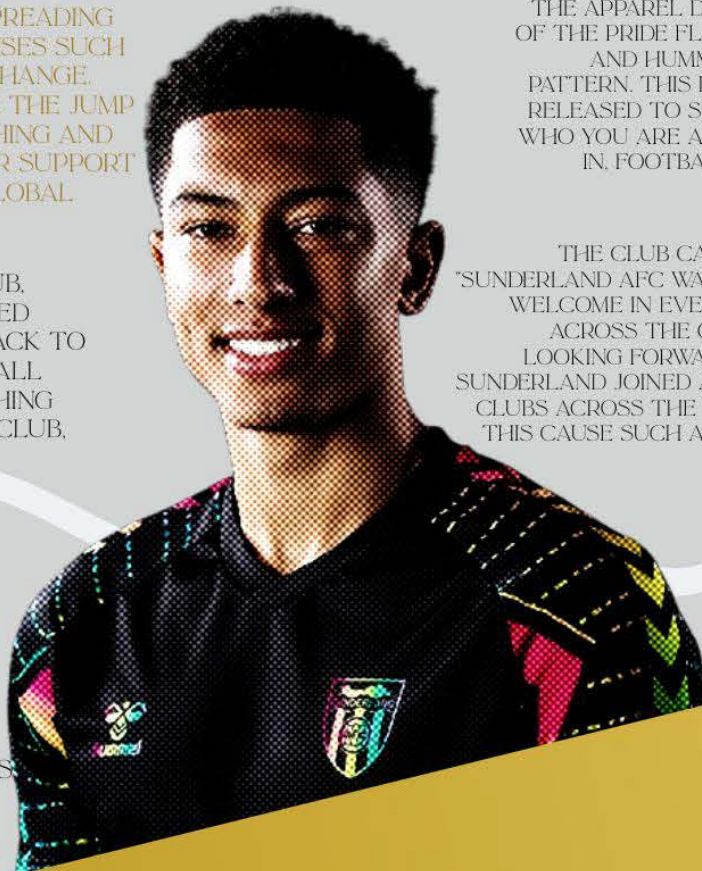
AS RECENT TIMES HAVE SHOWN, FOOTBALL CLUBS HAVE BECOME MORE INVOLVED WITH SPREADING AWARENESS FOR MULTIPLE WORLD'S CAUSES SUCH AS EQUALITY, RACISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE. RECENTLY SUNDERLAND AFC HAVE MADE THE JUMP TO RELEASE THEIR NEW LINE OF CLOTHING AND ATHLETIC WEAR THAT SHOWCASES THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY AND GLOBAL WARMING.

BEING A VERY HISTORIC AND ICONIC CLUB, SUNDERLAND HAVE A HUGE POPULATED FANBASE WHICH DATES ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE 1880'S. THEIR INFLUENCE ON FOOTBALL CULTURE, ESPECIALLY TODAY, IS SOMETHING THAT MAY NEVER BE REPLICATED. AS A CLUB,

THEY HAVE DECIDED TO PUSH FOR CHANGE FOR THEIR COMMUNITY AND ELSEWHERE AND TO TRY AND SPREAD AS MUCH AWARENESS TO THESE CAUSES AS POSSIBLE. EARLIER THIS YEAR, THEY DISPLAYED THIS BY PARTNERING WITH HUMMEL TO RELEASE A NEW EQUALITY FOOTBALL STRIP.

THE APPAREL DISPLAYS THE COLOURS OF THE PRIDE FLAG IN THE CLUB CREST AND HUMMEL'S ICONIC ARROWED PATTERN. THIS LINE OF CLOTHING WAS RELEASED TO SHOW THAT NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN, FOOTBALL WILL ALWAYS BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER.

THE CLUB CAPTAIN, DAN NEAL, SAID: "SUNDERLAND AFC WANT EVERYONE TO FEEL WELCOME IN EVERY FOOTBALL STADIUM ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AND WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE OCCASION". SUNDERLAND JOINED A GROUP OF FOOTBALL CLUBS ACROSS THE WORLD IN SUPPORTING THIS CAUSE SUCH AS BRÖNDBY IF, FC KÖLN, AND COVENTRY CITY.



ALONG WITH THEIR EQUALITY KIT, SUNDERLAND HAVE ALSO JUST DROPPED A BRAND-NEW MODIFIED JERSEY IN SUPPORT OF THE GROWING WORRY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE. THE CLUB HAVE SLIGHTLY ALTERED THEIR HOME KIT IN ORDER TO DISPLAY THEIR TYPICAL CREST DESIGN TO INCLUDE THE "SUNDERLAND" NAME TO BE HALF FLOODED WITH WATER TO CONVEY THE EFFECTS GLOBAL WARMING HAS.



THEIR SOLE INTENTION FOR THIS DESIGN IS TO MAKE PEOPLE AND FANS MORE AWARE OF THE HARM FLOODS CAN CAUSE. THE IDEA OF IT WAS TO POINT THE SPOTLIGHT ON "GREEN FOOTBALL'S GREAT SAVE" WHICH IS AN ORGANISATION THAT STRIVES TO PREVENT MASS AMOUNTS OF SPORTSWEAR FROM ENTERING LANDFILL.

THEY HIGHLIGHT THAT AN AVERAGE OF 120,000 FOOTBALL MATCHES ARE CANCELLED DUE TO THE WEATHER CONDITIONS AND FLOODS THAT CLIMATE CHANGE MAKES HAPPEN. THEIR INITIATIVE AND GOAL TO PINPOINT THESE PROBLEMS ARE TRULY THE WAY FORWARD FOR SEVERAL CLUBS IN PRESENT TIMES AND FOR THE FUTURE.

AS THE FOOTBALLING WORLD PROGRESSES AND GROWS, THE UNDERLYING ISSUES AND PROBLEMS BEYOND THE SPORT CONTINUE TO GET WORSE WHICH IS WHY MORE CLUBS SHOULD BE DOING WHAT SUNDERLAND AFC HAVE BEEN STRIVING TO ACHIEVE, A BALANCED AND EQUAL WORLD.





# NEATH RFC, YOU JUST

THE WELSH ARE AN INCREDIBLY PROUD RUGBY NATION, WHILST CURRENTLY BEING IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION WITH THEIR INTERNATIONAL SIDE, WELSH FANS STILL HAVE THEIR LOCAL CLUBS TO LOOK TO FOR THEIR RUGBY FIX. RIGHT?

NEATH RFC APPEAR TO HAVE TAKEN A PAGE OUT OF YORKIES OLD MARKETING BOOK AND ARE NOW IN SOME DEEP, DEEP WATER AFTER A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE THEIR UPCOMING FIXTURE USED PHRASES LIKE "NOT FOR GIRLS." THE CLUB REMOVED THE TWEET AFTER THREE HOURS, AFTER LABOUR MP TONIA ANTONIAZZI HIGHLIGHTED THE DAMAGE A POST LIKE THIS CAN DO. THE DAMAGE WAS ALREADY DONE, COMMENTS WERE COMING IN QUICK SAYING,

"I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES - SHAME ON YOU NEATH!! IGNORANT, UNACCEPTABLE AND INAPPROPRIATE"

NOT ONLY IS THE BRANDING DISRESPECTFUL, DAMAGING AND DOWNRIGHT MISOGYNISTIC. IT COMES THE WEEK BEFORE THE WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS IS SET TO KICK OFF, WITH THE TOURNAMENT EXPECTED TO HAVE ITS BIGGEST VIEWERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE IN HISTORY, BEATING LAST YEAR'S RECORD WHERE 8.1 MILLION PEOPLE TUNED IN FOR A PROLONGED PERIOD.

WITH ILONA MAHER AND ELLIE KILDUNNE BECOMING SUPERSTARS OF THE SPORT, ALL EYES ARE ON THE WOMEN'S GAME AT THE MOMENT. WOMEN'S RUGBY IS GROWING SIGNIFICANTLY, WITH WORLD RUGBY ANNOUNCING AT THE START OF LAST YEAR A 33.9% INCREASE IN REGISTERED FEMALE PLAYERS, GROWING THE TOTAL PLAYER POOL TO JUST UNDER 320 THOUSAND. UNFORTUNATELY, NEATH STILL MANAGED TO PAINT THEMSELVES OUT TO BE VILLAINS.

NEATH HAVE THEIR OWN FEMALE DEVELOPMENT HUB, THE NEATH PANTHERS. THIS HUB AIMS TO GIVE GIRLS AGED 6 AND ABOVE A SAFE PLACE TO LEARN TO PLAY RUGBY AND CREATE LIFELONG FRIENDS. THIS SAME CLUB MARKETING A FIXTURE AS NOT FOR THOSE SAME GIRLS THEY INTRODUCED THE SPORT TO. IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, SO MUCH TIME AND MONEY IS PUT IN TO ALLOW THESE GIRLS TO BE SUPPORTED AND MENTORED IN THE SPORT, YET THE CLUB ARE NOT CULTIVATING AND PROTECTING THIS.

THIS COULD HAVE BEEN A SOCIAL MEDIA SLIP UP GONE UNNOTICED, IF IT WASN'T FOR THE OWNER TRYING TO BACKSTEP AND CLAIM IT WAS SOME SORT OF IRONIC SOCIAL EXPERIMENT.



# WHAT DID SAY?

NEATH'S OWNER, MATT YOUNG AFTER BEING QUESTIONED ON THE REASONING FOR THE MARKETING CAMPAIGN STATED:

"THE IDEA FROM THE START WAS TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THE CASUAL MISOGYNY THAT STILL EXISTS IN PARTS OF RUGBY AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO CHAMPION THE INCREDIBLE WOMEN AND GIRLS' RUGBY PLAYERS WHO REPRESENT OUR CLUB WITH PASSION, SKILL, AND DEDICATION... I NOW RECOGNISE THAT THE INITIAL POST DID NOT EFFECTIVELY CONVEY THIS MESSAGE, AND FOR THAT, I AM SORRY."

THIS COMES OFF AS AN INCREDIBLY POOR EXCUSE TO A DEEP AND ONGOING ISSUE. FEMALE RUGBY HAS BEEN ON A BACKFOOT FOR A LONG, LONG TIME, OFTEN GOING OVERLOOKED BY FANS AND SUPPORTERS.

THIS WHOLE NOTION WAS BEING CHANGED, FANS ARE INTERESTED IN AND VIEWING THE WOMEN'S PREMIERSHIP, THE GAME IS GROWING RAPIDLY AND IT'S EASY TO SEE THE POSITIVES THAT COME OFF A LARGE-SCALE FEMALE GAME. UNFORTUNATELY, NEATH MAY HAVE UNDONE PART OF THIS.

NEATH'S POSTS COULD EASILY BE THE REASON SOME GIRLS DON'T PICK UP THE SPORT, IT COULD DRIVE PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE CLUBS FIXTURES AND THEY COULD HAVE DONE A LOT MORE DAMAGE THAN IS CURRENTLY SHOWN. NEATH ARE VERY LUCKY THERE WEREN'T ANY FURTHER ACTIONS TAKEN.

THIS COMES AT A TIME WHERE RUGBY IS IN AN INCREDIBLY TOUGH POSITION, CLUBS ARE GOING INTO ADMINISTRATION LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTRE AND THE WRU ARE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY, WITH RECENT REPORTS SUGGESTING ONE OF THE REGIONS WITH A PROFESSIONAL TEAM MAY NEED TO BE SCRAPPED TO CONTINUE FUNDING THE GAME IN THE COUNTRY.

RUGBY AS A SPORT IS ONE THAT HOLDS ITS VALUES VERY CLOSE. PROMOTING TOGETHERNESS AND A SENSE OF FAMILY IN THE CROWDS. FANS ARE ALL SAT TOGETHER REGARDLESS OF THE TEAM THEY ARE THERE TO SUPPORT, THIS CONNECTION CAN BE FELT NO MATTER THE FIXTURE, STADIUM, COUNTRY OR COMPETITION.

BY MAKING ANY FORM OF COMMENT OR PROMOTING THAT A GROWING DEMOGRAPHIC ARE NO LONGER WELCOME IN THESE FIXTURES TOTALLY DISREGARDS THE SPORTS ENTIRE ETHOS. FOR THERE TO BE A PLACE FOR ANYONE NO MATTER THEIR BACKGROUND, HEIGHT, WEIGHT AND ESPECIALLY GENDER ON THE PLAYING FIELD. RUGBY SHOULD BE AND IS A SPORT FOR ANYONE AND EVERYONE.

IT APPEARS THAT THERE WILL BE VERY LITTLE FORMAL PUNISHMENT FOR NEATH RFC IN THE FALLOUT OF THIS CONTROVERSY. THE CLUB HAVE ALREADY BEEN PENALISED PREVIOUSLY FOR FAILURE TO CARRY OUT FIXTURES, WHERE THEY SUBSEQUENTLY FACED A POINTS DEDUCTION BUT IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE NEGATIVE ATTENTION AND DISCOURSE IS ALL THAT THE CLUB WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH AFTER THE FACT.

IN A MORE POSITIVE LIGHT, A LARGE WAVE OF FEMALE PLAYERS, COACHES, CLUBS AND OFFICIALS HAVE TAKEN TO SOCIAL MEDIA, CALLING FOR NEATH TO 'DO BETTER', WITH THE RGU WOMEN'S RUGBY TEAM POSTING THEIR OWN MOMENTS OF THEIR SEASON IN RESPONSE TO NEATH'S WORDS. PROMOTING ON INSTAGRAM THAT 'RUGBY IS FOR THE GIRLS. ALWAYS'. IF ONLY NEATH HAD THOUGHT FOR JUST A BIT LINGER BEFORE RUNNING WITH THEIR PROMOTION, THEY TOO COULD HAVE FELT THE POSITIVES COMING FROM THE WOMEN'S GAME AND BECOME A REAL LEADER IN THE PROMOTION OF FEMALE RUGBY.

SHAME ON YOU NEATH, SHAME ON YOU.





# FULL TIME FOR THE 3PM BLACKOUT?

AS A FOOTBALL FAN IN SCOTLAND, IT'S EASY TO BE ANNOYED BY THE SUITS WHO RUN THE GAME. UNLESS YOUR TEAM IS BASED IN GLASGOW AND BOASTS A TINT OF RELIGION,

YOU'LL ALWAYS FEEL LIKE YOUR HARD DONE BY. FULL DISCLOSURE, I'M AN ABERDEEN FAN. THE REASON FOR MY OUTRAGE TODAY LIES WITH THE ARCHAIC 3PM BLACKOUT RULE FOR TELEVISED FOOTBALL IN THE UK. OUR UPCOMING SEMI-FINAL AGAINST HEARTS HAS BEEN GIVEN A 12:30PM SLOT ON SATURDAY.

ALL VERY WELL AND GOOD, IF YOU LIVE ANYWHERE NEAR THE CENTRAL BELT. I WON'T SULLY YOUR GRASP OF GEOGRAPHY BUT SIMPLY PUT ABERDEEN AND GLASGOW ARE NOT CLOSE. I CAN HEAR YOU IN THE BACK CRYING OUT FOR ME TO 'STOP WHINGING' AND 'JUST LEAVE EARLIER'. MY ANSWER IS NO, I'M GOING TO STAND FIRM ON THIS ONE. WHY SHOULD THE TICKET PAYING FAN BE INCONVENIENCED BY A COUPLE OF MEN IN SUITS WHO ONLY CARE ABOUT

REVENUE AND PROFITS (AND SUPPOSEDLY THE PROMOTION AND PROFILE RAISING OF OUR NATIONAL GAME). RESPECTFULLY, IT'S AN AWFUL DEAL PRESENTED TO THE FANS, THE ONLY REASON THESE CLUBS STILL EXIST.

THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE BLACKOUT WAS TO SAFEGUARD MATCHDAY ATTENDANCE, ENSURING THAT FANS CONTINUED TO FLOCK TO STADIUMS RATHER THAN OPTING FOR TELEVISED GAMES FROM THEIR SOFAS. HOWEVER, IN THE MODERN FOOTBALLING LANDSCAPE, THIS CONCERN IS LARGELY OUTDATED. SCOTLAND, FOR EXAMPLE, BOASTS THE HIGHEST-SUPPORTED LEAGUE PER CAPITA IN EUROPE, PROVING THAT COMMITTED FANS WILL ALWAYS TURN UP FOR THEIR TEAMS, REGARDLESS OF TV COVERAGE. INSTEAD OF PROTECTING CLUBS, THE 3PM BLACKOUT OFTEN CREATES MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT SOLVES. THE RIGID ENFORCEMENT OF THE RULE LEADS TO INCONVENIENT SCHEDULING CHANGES FOR SUPPORTERS. NO ONE WANTS TO TRAVEL 150 MILES EARLY ON A SATURDAY MORNING, ADDING TO THE FRUSTRATION, UK FANS ARE LEFT SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS WHEN THEY REALISE THAT THE VERY MATCHES, THEY ARE BARRED FROM WATCHING DOMESTICALLY ARE READILY AVAILABLE TO INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES. WHILE A SUPPORTER IN THE UK HAS TO RESORT TO THE EVER PRESENT "DODGY STICK", FANS ABROAD ENJOY FULL ACCESS TO LIVE GAMES.

THE ARGUMENT THAT REMOVING THE BLACKOUT WOULD ENCOURAGE PIRACY RATHER THAN COMBAT IT IS EQUALLY FLAWED. MANY FANS RESORT TO ILLEGAL STREAMS NOT OUT OF CHOICE BUT BECAUSE THEY SIMPLY HAVE NO OTHER MEANS OF WATCHING THEIR TEAM PLAY. IF GAMES WERE MADE LEGALLY AVAILABLE, FEWER PEOPLE WOULD SEEK OUT QUESTIONABLE ALTERNATIVES, LEADING TO A REDUCTION IN DIGITAL PIRACY AND ENSURING REVENUE STAYS WITHIN THE SPORT.

FINANCIALLY, LIFTING THE BLACKOUT COULD OPEN NEW DOORS FOR CLUBS AND LEAGUES.

CURRENTLY, THE RESTRICTION LIMITS THE NEGOTIATING POWER OF DOMESTIC COMPETITIONS WHEN SECURING BROADCAST DEALS. WITHOUT THE BLACKOUT, LEAGUES WOULD HAVE THE AUTONOMY TO EXPLORE IMPROVED AGREEMENTS WITH BOTH EXISTING AND NEW PROVIDERS, ENHANCING THE OVERALL VIEWING EXPERIENCE WHILE BOOSTING REVENUE STREAMS.

FOOTBALL IS A SPORT DRIVEN BY PASSION, AND IN TODAY'S WORLD, THAT PASSION IS EXPRESSED THROUGH ENGAGEMENT ACROSS MULTIPLE PLATFORMS, NOT JUST IN THE STANDS. REMOVING THE 3 PM BLACKOUT IS NOT ABOUT DEVALUING LIVE ATTENDANCE—IT'S ABOUT GIVING FANS, WHETHER IN THE STADIUM OR AT HOME, THE CHOICE THEY DESERVE.



# RESTORING THE HYPE?

FOR DECADES, CELEBRITY SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT HELD A SPECIAL PLACE IN POP CULTURE. FROM "BATTLE OF THE NETWORK STARS" IN THE 1970S TO HOLLYWOOD-DRIVEN CHARITY MATCHES, THE IDEA OF FAMOUS PEOPLE COMPETING IN SPORTS FOR FUN WAS A STAPLE OF TELEVISION. YET, AS TRADITIONAL HOLLYWOOD STARS BECAME MORE DISTANT FROM THEIR AUDIENCES, THESE EVENTS FADED.

NOW, INFLUENCER-DRIVEN SPORTS EVENTS—LIKE THE WILDLY SUCCESSFUL SIDEMEN CHARITY MATCH AND YOUTUBE BOXING MATCHES—HAVE RESURRECTED AND REDEFINED THE GENRE. RATHER THAN SIMPLY BEING NOVELTY SPECTACLES, THESE EVENTS HAVE EVOLVED INTO SERIOUS, HIGH-STAKES COMPETITIONS FUELLED BY SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND AUDIENCE INVESTMENT.

IT'S NOT AN ARGUMENT OF WHY THE OLDER FORMATS FAILED; IT'S A QUESTION OF HOW DID THEY EVOLVE? THE INTEREST IN CELEBRITY SPORTS COMPETITIONS NEVER TRULY DISAPPEARED—IT JUST EVOLVED.

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UNLIKE TRADITIONAL HOLLYWOOD STARS, THE LIFEBLOOD OF INFLUENCERS LIES IN CONSTANT AND DIRECT INTERACTION WITH THEIR FANS THROUGH VARIOUS PLATFORMS LIKE YOUTUBE, TWITCH AND MORE RECENTLY TIKTOK. THIS ENGAGEMENT BUILDS A SCAFFOLD FOR A DEEPER LEVEL OF INVESTMENT. FANS BEGIN TO FEEL CONNECTED TO THEIR FAVOURITE INFLUENCERS AND ALMOST LIVE VICARIOUSLY THROUGH THEM.

OLDER CELEBRITY SPORTS GAMES RELIED ON OLD SCHOOL "IN YOUR FACE" NETWORK TELEVISION PROMOTION, MEANING THE AUDIENCE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PARTICIPANTS WAS OFTEN PASSIVE. CONTRAST THIS TO THE RELATIONSHIPS INFLUENCERS HAVE THROUGH THE USE OF SOCIAL PLATFORMS TO GIVE ORDINARY JOE'S A PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN BY SHARING BEHIND-THE-SCENES CONTENT, BREAKING DOWN THE EXCLUSIVITY OF THE EVENT AND HELPING VIEWERS FEEL AS IF THEY ARE MORE INVOLVED THAN THEY ORDINARILY WOULD BE. EVERY TRAINING SESSION, EVERY RIVALRY, AND EVERY HIGHLIGHT REEL IS INSTANTLY ACCESSIBLE, CREATING A LEVEL OF HYPE THAT TRADITIONAL MEDIA STRUGGLES TO MATCH.



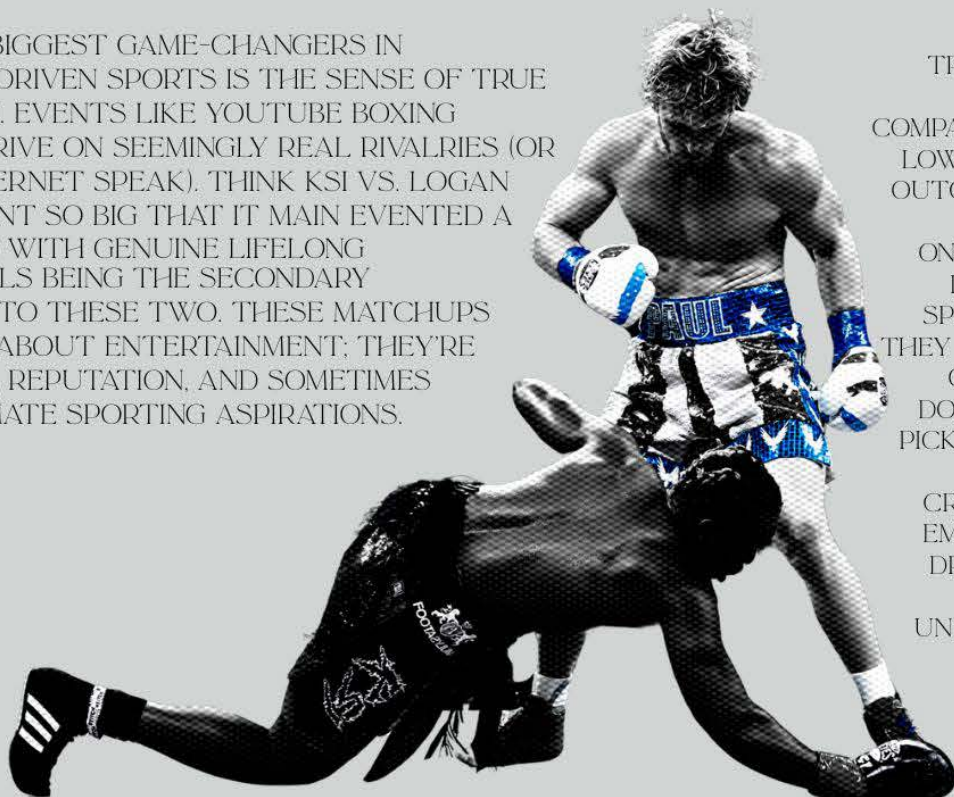


INFLUENCERS HAVE BUILT THEIR CAREERS ON AUTHENTICITY AND RELIABILITY, MAKING THEM FAR MORE RELATABLE THAN POLISHED HOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES CHURNED OUT BY A PR MACHINE. FANS SEE THEM AS "ONE OF US"—PEOPLE WHO STARTED OUT MAKING VIDEOS IN THEIR BEDROOMS AND GRADUALLY ASCENDED TO STARDOM.

THIS RELATABILITY TRANSLATES PERFECTLY INTO SPORTS. WHETHER IT'S A YOUTUBER STRUGGLING TO IMPROVE THEIR BOXING TECHNIQUE OR A TWITCH STREAMER RUNNING OUT OF STEAM ON THE FOOTBALL PITCH, THESE MOMENTS FEEL GENUINE. THE OLD-SCHOOL CELEBRITY SPORTS GAMES OFTEN LEANED INTO COMEDY, MAKING THE COMPETITION SECONDARY. WHILST THE NOVELTY OF MODERN INFLUENCER EVENTS IS STILL PRESENT AT THE FOREFRONT, THERE IS CERTAINLY AN ELEMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS THAT OLD FORMATS LACKED.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST GAME-CHANGERS IN INFLUENCER-DRIVEN SPORTS IS THE SENSE OF TRUE COMPETITION. EVENTS LIKE YOUTUBE BOXING MATCHES THRIVE ON SEEMINGLY REAL RIVALRIES (OR BEEF'S IN INTERNET SPEAK). THINK KSI VS. LOGAN PAUL, AN EVENT SO BIG THAT IT MAIN EVENTED A BOXING CARD WITH GENUINE LIFELONG PROFESSIONALS BEING THE SECONDARY ATTRACTION TO THESE TWO. THESE MATCHUPS AREN'T JUST ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT; THEY'RE ABOUT PRIDE, REPUTATION, AND SOMETIMES EVEN LEGITIMATE SPORTING ASPIRATIONS.

TRADITIONAL CELEBRITY SPORTS EVENTS, BY COMPARISON, WERE USUALLY LOW-STAKES AFFAIRS. THE OUTCOMES DIDN'T MATTER, AND THERE WERE NO ONGOING NARRATIVES TO INVEST IN. INFLUENCER SPORTS THRIVE BECAUSE THEY BRING A TRIBAL LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT—FANS DON'T JUST WATCH, THEY PICK SIDES. THEY WANT TO SEE THEIR FAVOURITE CREATOR WIN, AND THAT EMOTIONAL INVESTMENT DRIVES VIEWERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT TO UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS.



IN THE ERA OF OLD-SCHOOL CABLE TELEVISION, CELEBRITY SPORTS EVENTS LIVED AND DIED BY NETWORK RATINGS. BUT AS CABLE VIEWERSHIP DECLINED, SO DID THESE EVENTS. THE BIGGEST EXAMPLE BEING THE STEADY DECLINE OF THE NBA'S ALL-STAR WEEKEND, IN PARTICULAR, IT'S CELEBRITY GAME. THIS EVENT HAS SEEN A STEADY DECLINE YEAR ON YEAR, WITH MANY FANS CLAMOURING FOR IT TO BE AXED IN FAVOUR OF SOMETHING NEW AND FRESH. INFLUENCER-DRIVEN SPORTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE BUILT FOR DIGITAL CONSUMPTION. THEY MONETISE THROUGH MULTIPLE REVENUE STREAMS SUCH AS PAY-PER-VIEW, SPONSORSHIPS, AD REVENUE, AND EVEN MERCHANDISE SALES. PLATFORMS LIKE YOUTUBE AND TWITCH MAKE THESE EVENTS GLOBALLY ACCESSIBLE, WITH MILLIONS TUNING IN FOR FREE OR PAYING FOR PREMIUM ACCESS.



FOR INSTANCE, THE SIDEMEN CHARITY MATCH LEVERAGES YOUTUBE'S FREE MODEL, DRAWING IN MILLIONS OF VIEWERS WORLDWIDE FROM A RANGE OF AUDIENCES, NOT JUST THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY INTERESTED IN FOOTBALL. IF YOU'VE GOT CHAD FROM LA'S FAVOURITE CREATOR ON THE EVENT, HE'LL TUNE IN TO A SPORT HE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT TO WATCH HIS FAVOURITE CREATOR, THAT'S THE SIZE OF DRAW THESE INFLUENCERS HAVE AND GENERATE.





# THE VIRAL MOMENTS

PERHAPS THE MOST DEFINING TRAIT OF INFLUENCER-DRIVEN SPORTS IS THEIR MEME-WORTHY NATURE. THESE EVENTS ARE TAILOR-MADE FOR VIRALITY. WHETHER IT'S ISHOWSPEED'S BORDERLINE ASSAULT STYLE TACKLES IN THE SIDEMEN CHARITY MATCH OR UNEXPECTED KNOCKOUTS IN A BOXING MATCH, THEY GENERATE INSTANTLY SHAREABLE AND EASY TO GO VIRAL MOMENTS.



THERE'S AN ELEMENT OF SPECTACLE TO SEEING SOMEONE LIKE **KAI CENAT** (SOMEONE WHO PLAYS FOOTBALL LIKE THEY HAVEN'T SEEN A BALL IN THEIR LIFE) SLOT ONE PAST THE GOALIE IN THE SAME GROUND WHERE SOME OF THE GAME'S GREATEST HAVE PLAYED. THIS PECULIARITY CREATES EASILY VIRAL MOMENTS THAT GET SPREAD FAR AND WIDE. THE BEST EXAMPLE IS FOUND IN THE AFOREMENTIONED GOAL BY KAI CENAT. OVERNIGHT IT BECAME ADIDAS'S FOURTH MOST VIEWED CLIP

(\*AT THE TIME OF WRITING) ON THEIR TIKTOK PAGE. THE REACH THESE INFLUENCERS GENERATE CANNOT BE UNDERSTATED WHEN TRYING TO PINPOINT THE SUCCESS OF CELEBRITY SPORTING EVENTS. OLD CELEBRITY SPORTS EVENTS LACKED THIS MEME CULTURE. THEY AIRED, PEOPLE WATCHED, AND THAT WAS IT. BUT IN TODAY'S DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM, INFLUENCER SPORTS MOMENTS FLOOD TIKTOK, TWITTER, AND INSTAGRAM, FUELLING ENGAGEMENT LONG AFTER THE FINAL WHISTLE. EVERY MATCH PRODUCES HIGHLIGHT CLIPS THAT RACK UP MILLIONS OF VIEWS, ENSURING THE HYPE NEVER DIES.

ULTIMATELY, THE REASON INFLUENCER SPORTS EVENTS THRIVE WHILE TRADITIONAL CELEBRITY GAMES FADED COMES DOWN TO CONNECTION. HOLLYWOOD STARS, ONCE SEEN AS UNTOUCHABLE ICONS, LOST THEIR ACCESSIBILITY IN AN ERA WHERE AUDIENCES CRAVE DIRECT ENGAGEMENT. INFLUENCERS, BY CONTRAST, HAVE BUILT THEIR CAREERS ON THAT VERY ENGAGEMENT.

COULD A REVIVAL OF OLD-SCHOOL CELEBRITY SPORTS WORK TODAY? POSSIBLY—BUT ONLY IF IT EMBRACED THE EVER-EVOLVING INFLUENCER DRIVEN MODEL. TRADITIONAL CELEBRITIES WOULD NEED TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE WITH FANS, PROMOTE THEIR RIVALRIES, AND DISTRIBUTE CONTENT DIGITALLY. UNTIL THEN, INFLUENCER-DRIVEN SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT WILL CONTINUE TO DOMINATE, PROVING THAT THE LOVE FOR CELEBRITY SPORTS COMPETITIONS NEVER DISAPPEARED—IT JUST EVOLVED.





ALL STAR WEEKLY AIMS TO DELIVER THE  
BEST OF THE PAST WEEKS SPORTING  
NEWS:  
FROM BANNED KITS, TO IRISH WONDER  
KIDS THIS ISSUE HAS IT ALL

