



GPAO 

Balance 2020

Player Welfare Conference
Saturday, November 23, 2019
Croke Park

WELCOME FROM JIM O'DONOVAN

Chairman of the GPA Player Safety & Welfare Committee

On behalf of the GPA's Player Safety and Welfare Committee, I would like to welcome you to the inaugural GPA Balance 2020 Player Welfare Conference.

Today's conference has been a long-held vision of the GPA's Player Safety and



Welfare Committee since the group was established in 2016, so we are delighted to see that plan come to fruition here today.

GPA Balance 2020 looks to highlight, and hopefully tackle, some of the challenges GAA players face in the modern game. We have a programme of experts and researchers from the fields of physiotherapy, sports science, coaching and strength and conditioning. All speakers work within elite team environments, some here in Ireland with intercounty teams, and others internationally working in other sporting disciplines. I would like to thank all our speakers and in particular our speakers who have travelled long distances to share their knowledge and experience with us today, Don Davis from the US and Steve Kemp and Peter Tierney from the UK.

I would like to thank the organising

committee for their time and hard work, in particular Eamon Murphy and Colm Begley of the Gaelic Players Association, who have helped assemble an excellent programme and attract a great crowd here with us today. I would also like to thank the Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine for their support of today's conference.

One of the main outcome goals of today is to develop a supportive network of sports and exercise practitioners that will drive the standards of welfare, injury management, strength and conditioning and sports science within the GAA. I would encourage you to share in the discussion today, together with our speakers to help us achieve that goal.

I hope you enjoy the conference and I look forward to meeting you during the day.

WELCOME FROM PAUL FLYNN

GPA Chief Executive Officer

On behalf of the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to today's very significant and important event.

The GPA is the official representative body for inter-county players, representing current inter-county players and an increasing number of past players. Our work falls under three pillars. We represent our members' interest when it comes to all matters relating to our games; we work to protect their welfare; and we support their development.

With the pillar of welfare in mind, it should come as no surprise that we place huge value in the work being carried out by our Player Safety and Welfare Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. James O'Donovan. They work tirelessly to safeguard the welfare and safety of our members and their contribution is invaluable to us as an association.

I want to thank them most sincerely for bringing together a stellar line-up of speakers today. I am hugely looking forward to the day as I sure you all are. It's an opportunity to share experiences and

learn from each other's expertise. To all of our speakers who have made themselves available today, thank you.

The committee's work is underpinned by ongoing and objective research to ensure all GPA policy and programme development is in line with best practice and the latest developments.

The 2018 ESRI report *Playing Senior Inter-County Gaelic Games: Experiences, Realities and Consequences*, as well as the recently published GPA Student Report *A Juggling Act*, demonstrate the ongoing challenges our members encounter to balance their careers on and off the field. I know from my own experience that when I have balance in my life, I am better positioned to perform on the field of play. We want to assist all our members to find this balance.

One of the main outcome goals of today's conference is to provide practical education to coaches and practitioners on best practice systems currently in place for inter-county players, to help raise the standards of medical care for our members and reduce the risk of injury. Our members

dedicate enormous amounts of time to their playing commitments. We want to ensure that is not done to the detriment of their health and wellbeing.

I hope you all enjoy the conference, engage in our discussions and look forward to meeting you throughout the day. With your support we hope to make GPA Balance an annual fixture in the GAA calendar.





GPA PLAYER SAFETY & WELFARE COMMITTEE

The ongoing work of the GPA Player Safety and Welfare Committee continues to underpin the overall objective of raising the standard of medical and welfare provision for our members. The committee is made up of multi-disciplinary sports and exercise medicine personnel who have or are currently playing at inter-county level.

Among the main areas of focus for the committee is to review and monitor the physical and psychological demands being placed on county players and welfare issues pertaining to the sustainability of the modern game.

The group has also been active in the review and co-ordinated a response to the findings of the ESRI report which was published in September 2018. A key objective of the Player Safety and Welfare Committee in 2020 will be the development of policy and programmes to address some of the welfare issues affecting players which have been identified in the report.

Committee Members

Dr Jim O'Donovan

Chairman

Sports and Exercise
Medicine Consultant
(SSC). Head Doctor
at Institute of Sport.



Paul Flynn

GPA Chief
Executive



Brendan Egan

Professor Sports
& Physiology



James Sherry

Chartered
Physiotherapist



Ciaran McDonald

Orthopaedic
surgeon



Enda King

Head of Rehab
Sports Surgery
Clinic



David Breen

Lead Physio
Wasps Rugby



Walter Palmer

Former Gen Sec
EU Athletes/
World
Athletes
Union



Eamonn Murphy

GPA Player
Representation
Manager



Jennie Rogers

GPA Project
Co-ordinator



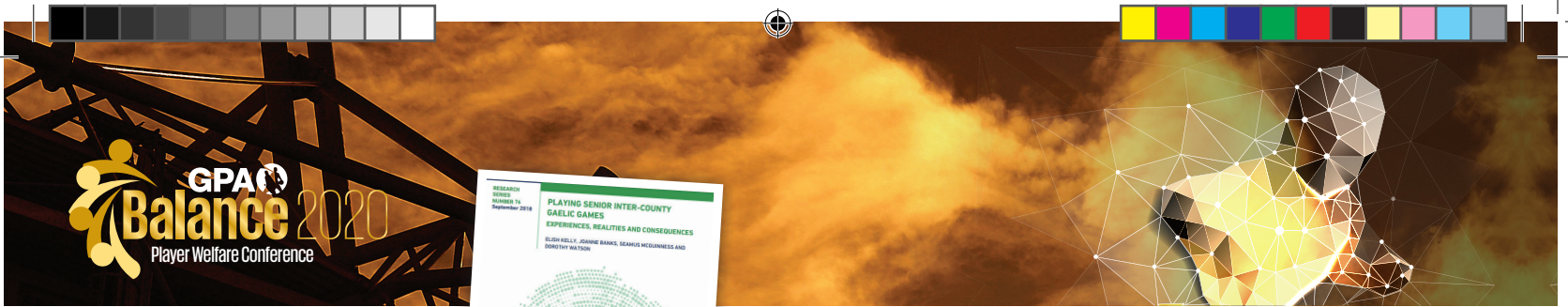
Colm Begley

GPA Project
Co-ordinator



For more information contact colm@gaelicplayers.com





ESRI REPORT KEY FINDINGS



Inter-county players can spend up to 31 hours per week on their playing commitments and compromise on other aspects of their lives to do so according to a report published by the ESRI in 2018, which was commissioned by the GAA and GPA. Much of the findings validate the GPA's long held view that while it's an enormous privilege and honour to play at senior inter-county level the demands on players that come with it are enormous and growing.

The fitness levels, the injuries, the time commitment and the impact on players' careers from playing at this level are huge. The GPA through our wide range of player support programmes is working hard to robustly support players to manage the demands of the modern game and the demand for our services has never been greater.

INJURY MANAGEMENT

FINDINGS

82%

Of players sustained an injury in 2018

50%

Of those were out for 5-7 weeks

37%

Of players trained with their inter county team when injured



LOAD MANAGEMENT

FINDINGS

**6.1
HOURS**

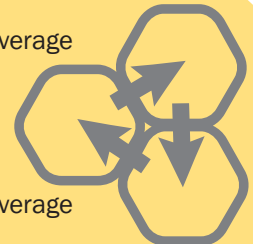
Players spend on average per day in training commitments

**31
HOURS**

Players spend on average per week on their intercounty commitments

**2
HOURS**

The average time spent travelling to training is 2 hours which can be up to 3 hours for those living outside their county



WELLBEING

FINDINGS

50%

over half of players do not get the recommended 8-10 hours' sleep per night

>>

Inter county players are at higher risk of depression than the general population

47%

47% of players indicated that they would be comfortable approaching the GPA if they had an emotional or mental health difficulty



STRUCTURES

FINDINGS

68%

Of 18-21 year old players are playing with 4 or more teams

40%

Of players had no off season or downtime during the calendar year

**5
WEEKS**

Average duration of off season was 5 weeks



Full report available for download at www.gaelicplayers.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ESRI-Report-Final-Version.pdf

GPA STUDENT REPORT 2019

KEY FINDINGS

WELLBEING



FINDINGS

54%

Over half of student inter-county players regularly feel overwhelmed by their commitments



62%

reported that they do not find it easy to manage all of the commitments associated with being a student athlete



93%

of student players who had engaged with the GPA's PDP reported that it had assisted them in their off-field lives



ACADEMIC



FINDINGS

35%

had to repeat a college exam; 11% had to repeat an entire academic year



65%

feel their training load negatively affects their academic performance



54%

reported they did not receive supports from their college if they were under pressure



48%

reported that they felt more like an inter-county player than a student trying to earn a degree



FINANCIAL



FINDINGS

35%

say more financial support to cover the costs of travel, accommodation and nutrition would be their main priority



80%

feel being a student-athlete puts financial pressure on their family



34%

Just over a third are in a position to be able to work part time



WELFARE



FINDINGS

83%

Are playing with at least three teams



81%

take part in social activities less than most other people their age



70%

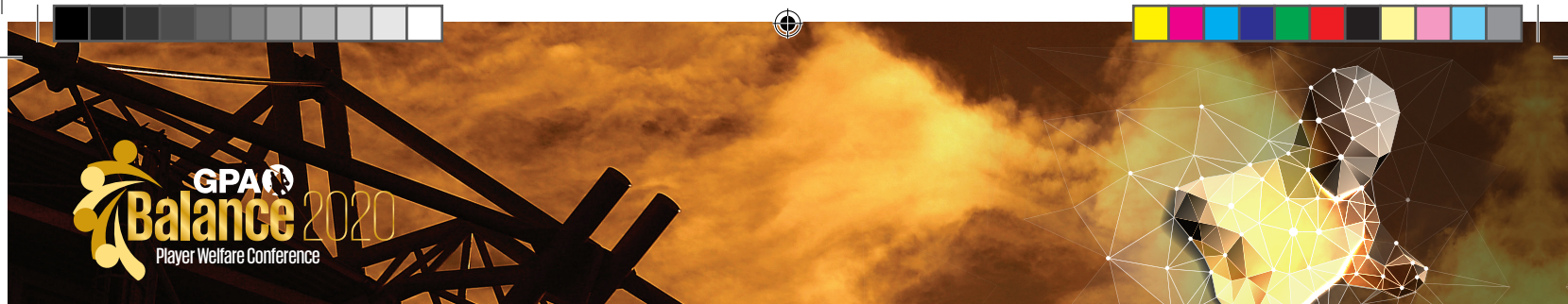
travel home for training 3 or more times per week



48%

felt confident to talk to their county manager about a reduced training load





CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THEME	TIME	SPEAKER	ORGANISATION	TOPIC
	08:45			Registration with tea and coffee
INTRODUCTION	09:30	MC Ger Gilroy	Off the Ball	Introduction
	09:35	Paul Flynn	GPA	CEO welcome
	09:40	Dr Jim O'Donovan	Committee Chairman	Chairman welcome and Introduction
INJURY PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT	09:50	Enda King	Sports Surgery Clinic	Rehabilitation – Bridging the gap between gym and the field?
	10:10	Siobhan O'Connor	DCU	Importance of injury surveillance
	10:30	Michelle Biggins	Proactive Physio	Sleep for health, wellbeing & performance in GAA athletes
	10:50			Coffee Break
ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT	11:10	Steve Kemp	English FA	Managing athlete transition between multiple teams
	11:40	Joe O'Connor	IT Tralee	Are we oversciening it? A player focused approach
	12:00	Bryan Cullen	Dublin GAA	Playing the long game: developing a sustainable fitness model
	12:20	Panel Discussion moderated by Ger Gilroy w/Aidan O'Connell (Cork GAA), Steve Kemp (FA), Luke Keaney (Donegal footballer)		
	13:00			Lunch
THE PLAYERS' PERSPECTIVE	14:00	Don Davis & Paul Flynn	NFLPA & GPA	Protecting the rights and welfare of the athlete
SPORTS SCIENCE & DATA	14:30	Jason McGahan	Kerry GAA	An investigation into training load markers of wellness among elite Gaelic football players
	14:50	Peter Tierney	English FA	Load management, perception practice and predicaments
	15:10	Dr Jim O'Donovan	Committee Chairman	Closing remarks
	15:20			ends

SPEAKERS

STEVE KEMP ENGLISH FA

MSc. BSc (hon) PG Dip (Manual Therapy) GSR. MCSP. HPC. MMACP
Lead Men's Physiotherapist England Senior Football Team.

Steve Kemp is the senior physiotherapist with the England Senior Football team and lead physiotherapist for all men's England development teams. A Chartered Physiotherapist with 20 years' experience in professional sports in the UK and abroad. Following degrees in both physiotherapy and sport rehabilitation, Steve undertook a masters in the Science of Sports injury at Manchester University and a Postgraduate diploma in manual therapy at Birmingham University. He is currently studying for a PhD in Ankle Ligament rehabilitation at Imperial College London. He is a guest Lecturer at Birmingham University and University college London. He is an Level 5 tutor in emergency pitch-side medicine.

Steve spent 4 years as Head of Medical Services for Wolverhampton Wanderers, before taking up a position as Elite Football Physiotherapist at the Perform Sport Medicine complex, a world-class sports medicine and human performance facility based at The Football Association's training home for the 24 England teams. He was worked extensively with football teams both in the UK and worldwide, including stints at Leeds United, Preston North End and Busan Icons in South Korea. He has additionally worked as a private physiotherapist with athletes from numerous sporting professions. Steve is a member of the Musculoskeletal Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (MACP) and is a Gold-accredited member of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Sports Medicine (ACPSM).



ENDA KING SPORTS SURGERY CLINIC

Enda King is a chartered physiotherapist and Head of Performance Rehabilitation in Sports Surgery Clinic. He completed his honours degree in physiotherapy in Trinity College in 2005 and completed his Masters in Manipulative Therapy with distinction in Curtin University, Perth, Australia in 2009. He is also a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist with the NSCA and is currently completing his PhD in Roehampton University in London on 3D Biomechanics in Return to Play decision making after ACL reconstruction.

Enda has worked with elite athletes from a wide range of sporting disciplines in Ireland and Australia. He is lead physiotherapist for Dublin Hurling and was for the Irish International Rules Team in 2010 and 2011. He leads the Performance Rehabilitation department which rehabilitates the SSC's world leading flagship research programmes in Athletic Groin Pain and ACL rehabilitation. He also looks after SSC's residential elite athlete programme which caters for national and international athletes who are looking to recover from chronic injury, prepare for the upcoming season or improve their athletic development.



JASON McGAHAN KERRY GAA

Jason is Head of Athletic Performance at Kerry GAA.

Over 15 years' experience working as a S&C Coach/Sports Scientist with elite international professional and amateur athletes within several high-performance teams.

He holds a Msc in Sports Performance, an UKSCA Accredited Strength & Conditioning Coach and ASCA Coach. Recently completed a PhD in Applied Sport Science, with special reference to training load, its impact on training practice and performance. Jason has published in several peer-reviewed strength and conditioning journals and has presented at national and international conferences.



MICHELLE BIGGINS PROACTIVE PHYSIO

Michelle is a chartered physiotherapist and is completing her PhD, on Sleep in Elite Athletes, at the University of Limerick. Published papers from her PhD research, have investigated how sleep relates to athlete health and wellbeing, in GAA and multi-sport athletes.

Clinically, Michelle works with professional and amateur sports teams, implementing the current evidence to improve sleep in athletes.

Michelle has worked for over 12 years as a sports physiotherapist, including the last two Olympic Games, and World University Games. She also runs two private practices in Galway, Ireland.



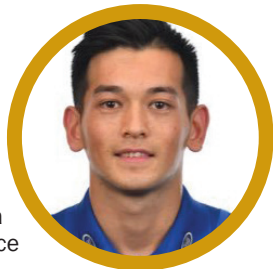
SPEAKERS

PETER TIERNEY ENGLISH FA

Peter Tierney is currently working as a Sports Scientist & Physical Performance Coach with the FA.

The Sports Scientist role looks to make a contribution to the FA's Physical Performance philosophy and content. Peter's Physical Performance coach role is the Lead for the Women's Youth Development Phase.

Prior to this, he spent 5 years working as the Sports Scientist in Leinster Rugby. Peter's educational background includes a BSc Health & Performance, MSc in Research, ProfDip in Data Analytics, and is currently working to complete his PhD.



BRYAN CULLEN DUBLIN GAA

Bryan oversees the athletic development program for underage and senior hurling and football squads within the county.

He has a Ph.D in exercise physiology (2013 DCU). Research topics of interest include GPS in team sports, load management and velocity based training.

During a hugely successful career on the field with the Dublin senior footballer winning two All-Ireland football championships captaining the side in 2011 to their first title in 16 years.



SIOBHAN O'CONNOR DCU

Dr Siobhán O'Connor primarily researches in the field of injury surveillance and injury prevention, with a particular interest in Gaelic games, female sports and horse racing.

She is a Certified Athletic Therapist and has a MSc examining training load in Gaelic footballers and a PhD in injury surveillance and risk factors for injury in adolescent and collegiate Gaelic games.

She is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Health and Human Performance in Dublin City University and Vice President of the World Federation of Athletic Therapy and Training.



AIDAN O'CONNELL CORK GAA

Aidan O'Connell is from Cork in Ireland and holds a Degree in Sport Science from the University of Limerick and a Masters Degree in Coaching Studies from the University of Edinburgh.

Aidan has been coaching, leading, and innovating in high performance sport both internationally and nationally for the last two decades.

He is currently High-Performance Manager with Cork GAA. Previous to this appointment he worked with the IRFU for 18 years. From 2003 to 2019 he worked with Munster Rugby where he has managing all aspects of physical performance from academy level to the professional game level.

Aidan has also been the lead Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Irish A team in 2006 and 2013, Head of Fitness at Leinster Rugby from 2001-2003 and Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Cork Senior Footballers from 2008-2012.



JOSEPH O'CONNOR IT TRALEE



Joe is a lecturer in exercise physiology & performance Nutrition in IT Tralee. Health, Fitness & Performance consultant (CoachPACT.com) working with Athletics Ireland, Horse Sport Ireland (Eventing) and corporate endurance athletes. Owner of Nisus Fitness Training Club.

Previously, fitness & nutrition Coach with Limerick GAA (All Ireland 2018, Munster & League 2019), Clare GAA (All Ireland 2013), Waterford GAA (Munster 2010), Kerry GAA (Christy Ring Hurling 2011)

He holds an MSc Exercise & Nutrition Science. BSc Health, Fitness & Leisure, Undergraduate research supervisor in IT Tralee focusing on the Minimal Effective Dose (MED) of human athletic performance

DON DAVIS NFLPA

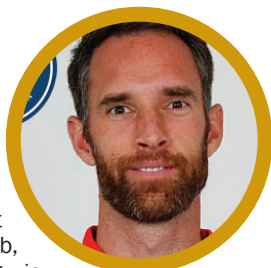


Don Davis is the Senior Director of Player Affairs for the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) and is responsible for advancing and overseeing the management of varying aspects of player labour issues.

Prior to joining the NFLPA, Don enjoyed a successful 11-year playing career and earned two Super Bowl rings with the New England Patriots.

Don's 11-year playing career started with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and ended with the New England Patriots as a 2x Super Bowl Champion. Upon retirement from football, he was handpicked by Coach Bill Belichick to serve as the Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach and Team Chaplain.

BEN SIMPSON PARIS ST GERMAIN



Currently working as a Sports Scientist with Paris Saint Germain Football Club, specialising in player load monitoring via GPS technology and player wellness. Has had access to a range of athletes and varied cultures, from Australia to the Middle East and now based in Europe.

While working in Qatar, he was based at ASPIRE Sports Academy, starting in Talent Identification and moving into the Physiology department to focus his attention solely with Soccer.

Ben hails from Australia, undergraduate degree completed at the University of Ballarat and a Masters by Research with the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

GPA PLAYER WELFARE SUPPORTS

INJURED PLAYER SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Injuries, while hopefully infrequent, are often an unavoidable part of our games. While most injuries can be managed with little disruption in sport participation and other activities of daily living, some impose a substantial physical and mental burden on our members.

This programme provides comprehensive support to players through the injury process with the help of a GPA case officer, to ensure the time away from the game is optimised.

Programme Outcome Goals:

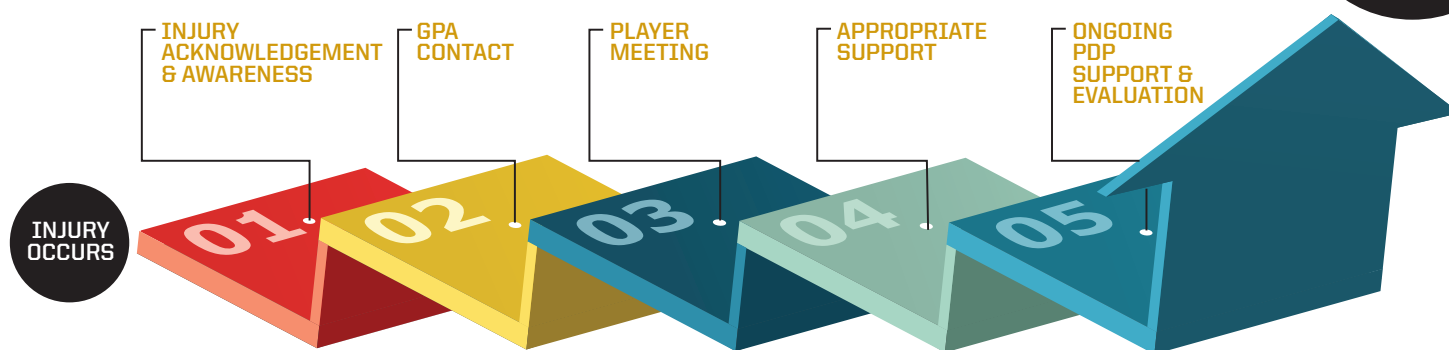
- The programme will support injured players in their physical and psychological recovery through a collective collaboration of our Player Development & Welfare Programmes.
- Opportunity for the injured to invest & focus time into other areas of their lives, which will contribute to their dual-career throughout their recovery.
- Greater communication between key stakeholders, to ensure there is an all-inclusive support structure around the player at hand.

Programme Content:

- Well-Being
- Personal Development
- GPA Contact
- Financial

For more information contact ian@gaelicplayers.com

**PLAYER
RECOVERY**



FORMER PLAYERS MEDICAL & SURGICAL INTERVENTION FUND

The purpose of the Former Players Medical and Surgical Intervention fund is to assist former senior inter-county players who may require medical or surgical intervention arising from their involvement with their County team.

Application Procedure

Applications should be made through the Gaelic Player's Association.

Awards

Awards from the Fund will operate independently from the various Insurance Funds and Injury Schemes currently in place.

An award from the Fund will not be regarded as compensation for any specific circumstance or injury.

The amount awarded in each case is at the absolute discretion of the funds trustees and will not be open to subsequent appeal.

No correspondence will be entered into with any third party other than the nominating person or body.

The individual awards and the workings of the funds trustees will be absolutely confidential.

Awards will only be paid directly to the beneficiary or to a third party nominated by the beneficiary.

Awards will be made on the basis of medical costs actually incurred – or medical costs expected to be incurred – due to the need for surgical intervention or other medical support required for an injury linked to, or arising from, a player's involvement with his County team.

Criteria for Consideration

In order for a case to be considered by the Benevolent fund, it should meet each of the following criteria:

The case refers to a former senior intercounty player who has played at championship level.

The relevant County Committee has confirmed that the individual is a former intercounty player (as defined above) and have provided details of any financial, surgical or medical support they may have previously provided in relation to the specific application.

A medical assessment has been provided outlining the requirement for intervention or support.

All other appropriate areas of financial assistance have been exhausted (e.g. GAA Player Injury Scheme, health insurance, public liability insurance, any relevant legal proceedings etc).

For more information contact eamonn@gaelicplayers.com

[illegible]



**Gaelic Players Association
Unit 27 Northwood House
Northwood Business Campus
Santry, Dublin 9, Ireland**

**Tel: +353 1 857 5686
www.gaelicplayers.com
www.wewearmore.ie**