

# AN UNSUNG HERO OF THE SPORTING WORLD

By Seamus O'Loughlin

**T**homas Conway passed away, suddenly and tragically, on Saturday morning, 13th June 2015. At the time of his death, he was at home, building a run for his mother's dog. He was only 39 years of age.

In a sporting context, his two great loves were Camogue Rovers GAA Club, a small junior club, and Bruff RFC, the local senior rugby club – both located in South County Limerick.

He acted voluntarily in a quietly efficient manner for both clubs, never seeking the limelight, but always doing what was necessary.

He was always prepared to tog out in times of need and play in the corner forward position for Camogue Rovers in the month of April in a south junior league, hurling or football match, or on the wing at Kilballyowen for the annual St Stephen's day rugby exiles match.

Whenever there was an unglamorous job to be done, Tom went about getting it done every time with the minimum of fuss. He shirked the limelight, whether he was cutting the local GAA field on a Sunday morning, or acting as the IRFU liaison officer for Bruff RFC when he attended meetings in Dublin, where he had a very successful twenty year career as an engineer with IBM. He graduated with flying colours from the University of Limerick in the 1990s, a great source of pride for his family.

Nowadays with all the focus on 'win at all cost', it is appropriate to reflect on Tom's contribution to sport in the local community. Without his contribution, there would have been less opportunity for the fortunate ones amongst us to line out on the big day.

Without him the nets may not have been pulled out behind the goals, the fields may not have been lined, and the general humdrum of running a sporting club would not have been carried out as effectively. His loss will be felt.

He always took great pride in the achievements of these two clubs, particularly the winning of their first county football title by Camogue Rovers in 2010, when his brother, James, starred at fullback and also the winning of the All-Ireland Bateman Cup by Bruff RFC in 2011. But what was sweetest for him were the

achievements of his family, whether it was his brother, James, winning South Limerick and County GAA titles, his sports-mad nephew, Tristan, winning various soccer, rugby and GAA competitions, or his sister, Sharon, starring for the local women's rugby club. Indeed, during the summer months, the Conway family home invariably had the full set of Camogue Rovers' jerseys drying on the clothesline at the rear of the home of his parents, Dan and Kay. Kay always took on the responsibility of washing the team jerseys.



Thomas Conway.

He had recently become engaged to Leinster supporter, Suzanne, whose family are as keen on rugby as Tom's own family. Tom had a Munster supporter ally in Suzanne's mother, Kathleen, who is a big Munster rugby fan.

His death was as tragic as it was sudden, and he will be sadly missed by an entire community, as was demonstrated by the enormous crowds that came to the Conway family home in the aftermath of his death and attended the funeral services.

No doubt, all of his friends and acquaintances will remember Tom when they attend their next and subsequent games, as they reflect on the essential tasks performed at club level by countless volunteers who make it possible for these clubs to operate and survive. Thomas Conway was one the true heroes of our sport-loving country.

Some months before he died, Tom had written a piece for this book which can be found elsewhere in these pages.

Our thoughts are with Tom's entire family and particularly with his fiancée, Suzanne.