



Jim Carney

# This Sporting Life

## Through the lens of a camera, the magic of sporting memories

**T**HE ART of sports photography is older than you might think it is. Recording an image (a 'still') in a sports arena wasn't always as sophisticated and technically accomplished as it is nowadays; indeed I've read that in ancient times, in the absence of cameras, they created sculptures. Fast-forward a thousand years and pencil sketching was in vogue until the camera was invented. In modern times we live in the digital age.

The Brooklyn Museum in New York is currently hosting a major exhibition of sports photography, showcasing the work of 170 photographers who have defined the genre from 1843 until the present day. The curator of the exhibition, Ms Gail Buckland, believes that while most people watching sport get dazzled by either the action or the participants, "sports photographers get up close and click away ... they are artists." The Brooklyn Museum was honouring the art of "freezing the action and portraying what the naked eye alone cannot see."

All human life is there – one action picture in the New York exhibition is particularly interesting; it was taken by Heinz Klutmeier of a highly talented New England Patriots ball-carrier playing against the New York Jets; the Patriots player is currently serving a life sentence, without the possibility of parole, for first-degree murder.

My own favourite sports pics down through the years include the iconic image of the then 23-year-old world heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali towering over his vanquished opponent Sonny Liston at St Dominic's Arena in the city of Lewiston, Maine on May 25th, 1965. And the equally evocative image of American track and field athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, gold and bronze medal winners in the 200 metres at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, but they shocked the world with their Black Power salute as they stood on the medal winners' podium for the playing of their national anthem, the Star-Spangled Banner.

Nearer home, I never tire of looking at old black and white pics of the legendary jumps jockey Pat Taaffe on the greatest National

Hunt horse of all time, Arkle, or of Mattie McDonagh scoring the only goal of Galway footballers' All-Ireland Three-in-a-Row, against Meath fifty years ago. Memorable, for me, from the modern era of colour photography are the pics of Joe Connolly on the Hogan Stand podium on the day Galway hurlers won the 1980 All-Ireland final and Connacht rugby captain John Muldoon raising aloft in triumph the Pro12 trophy at Murrayfield last May 28th; those two glorious days will never be forgotten.

In my time as sports editor of this newspaper, from 1985 to early 2015, I had the pleasure of working with Herald staff photographer Ray Ryan and I also got to know Joe O'Shaughnessy of the Connacht Tribune very well. Even allowing for my friendship bias, I consider Ray and Joe to be two of the best sports photographers in Ireland, consistently brilliant year in, year out. Ray played Gaelic football (as a goalkeeper) to a decent level, for Tuam Stars in the 1982 County SFC and he was a member of the Galway U-21 panel when they won the 1981 Connacht Championship and lost the All-Ireland final to Cork in a replay. Joe, as far as I know, did not play sport competitively. They do have one thing in common as photographers - many of their best pictures were of hurlers and hurling action. I don't think either of them knows exactly why they got more out of hurling than any other sport, but they could capture the magic of it and the skills and thrills of the clash of the ash.

So too can their Dublin-based friend Ray McManus, head of the Sportsfile photography agency who have their widely acclaimed work featured in a magnificent new book published by The O'Brien Press; it's making a big impact in the Christmas sports books' market. The title is *Great Moments in Gaelic Football* and Galway features prominently, including two of the three pics I've chosen for this column, from the 1965 and 1998 All-Ireland finals.

Time is running out for deciding on Christmas presents. If you're looking for a GAA book to buy for the sports fan in your life, this should be your No. 1 choice.



**MESSI, RONALDO eat your hearts out! There was something very special about this flying forward when Galway conquered Kildare in the 1998 All-Ireland SFC final.**

PHOTO: BRENDAN MORAN | SPORTSFILE



**SLIGO, under the management of Kevin Walsh, shocked Mayo in the 2010 Connacht Championship quarter-finals, 0-15 to 1-8, at Markievicz Park. The Sligo men who kept out this late goal effort by Andy Moran were: (from left) Alan Costello (No. 11), Jonny Davey (No. 7), goalkeeper Philip Greene, Brendan Phillips, Noel McGuire (No. 3), Ross Donovan (No. 4) and Eamonn O'Hara (No. 12). This pic, taken by Ray Ryan of the Tuam Herald, is included in the book *Great Moments in Gaelic Football*.**



**THREE-IN-A-ROW legend John Keenan punching a point in Galway's victory over old rivals Kerry in the 1965 All-Ireland SFC final. The other Galway players pictured (from left) are: Seán Cleary, Mattie McDonagh and Mick Garrett.**

PHOTO: CONNOLLY COLLECTION | SPORTSFILE