

## “THE YANKS”

February 2004 saw Boyle Celtic Seniors, their manager at the time Eddie Conroy (me) and his football mad assistant Ian Beirne travel to Maymount FC in Cork, to contest the quarter-final of the FAI Junior Cup. This was a very impressive run in this prestigious cup for a small club like Boyle. The whole group was togged out in matching Boyle Celtic track-suits which had been generously sponsored by Mary Cretaro and the Little Chick. Ian remarked that we looked like a “real football team”. We went to Cork on Saturday morning and checked into the Rochestown Lodge hotel, a 4 star facility, far above what most of us were used to. Ian however worked in the hotel trade, so he took it all in his stride, explaining to our players what was available and how to get it. Unconfirmed reports say he had to give the Dunzeys a leg up to put the card in the room door.

The team and officials had a private dinner and once everyone had eaten, the manager asked that all players would stay around the hotel, obviously not drink alcohol and have an early night. Ian was entrusted with the job of bouncer. Anyone who broke curfew would receive a very public shaming if Ian caught him. Everyone moved out to the large, seated lounge/bar in the hotel. There was a big crowd there, a good mix of locals and tourists. Everyone was interested to know who this team were, all dressed the same, and what were they playing in. We could hear the inquisitive whispering all around the bar.

Ian was bursting at this stage with pride and information. He could talk Boyle Celtic for a week long and all he needed now was a victim. He just needed someone to ask him who we were and they were going to get a two hour rundown on all things Boyle Celtic. Enter “The Yanks”. The Irish were too reserved to ask but a tall, burly, not skinny, American guy, accompanied by his wife of similar police description, called out to Ian, “Hey buddy, what are you guys”? I thought Ian would pass out he was talking so fast. He gave that yank more information about Boyle and Boyle Celtic than Bord Failte could in 20 years.

Realising that the American might struggle with our accent, Ian put on his best twang and didn't use any swear words at all. He was the perfect ambassador for club and country. Ian told them that Darragh Loftus in goal was 8 foot tall and could catch a ball with his baby finger. Darren Suffin could jump 17 foot and head a ball half a mile. Carlo Cretaro was so quick his boots melted. Niall O Donohoe was so good, Man United would be looking for him after tomorrows game. The yanks lapped it up and being American they had to keep asking questions. Being Ian, he kept talking. I've never heard him speak so posh and with such authority. The yanks were very impressed with his calm manner and friendliness. Kieran Spellman and Sean Kerins, not being under curfew went to the disco in town. Ian didn't even see them go. Some bouncer! When they returned from town, Ian had gotten to the offside rule. Finally we all got to bed.

Next morning, breakfast at 8am. Kick off was 11am so we were going to leave for the ground at 9.30. 9 o'clock came and there was no sign of the ambassador for football. Eddie rang his room and eventually got him up. Of course he had to have his breakfast, and Rorys! We got going and as most people know we lost on penalties. The ref didn't do us any favours and Ian was fuming. He never said a word to me on the way to collect his stuff at the hotel, I knew he was in foul humour. When Ian was in a bad mood it was best not to cross him.

Who should come bouncing up to us however as we checked out only the pair of yanks. “Hey buddy, howd yaw’ll do today in the soccer football?”

The reply from the eloquent, softly spoken, after dinner speaking, boyle celtic ambassador of football, hit the yank with both barrells.....

**“F\*\*k football, f\*\*k Cork and f\*\*k that bloody ref...”**