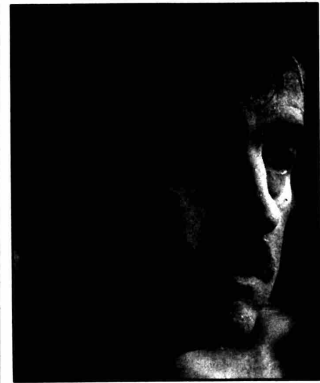
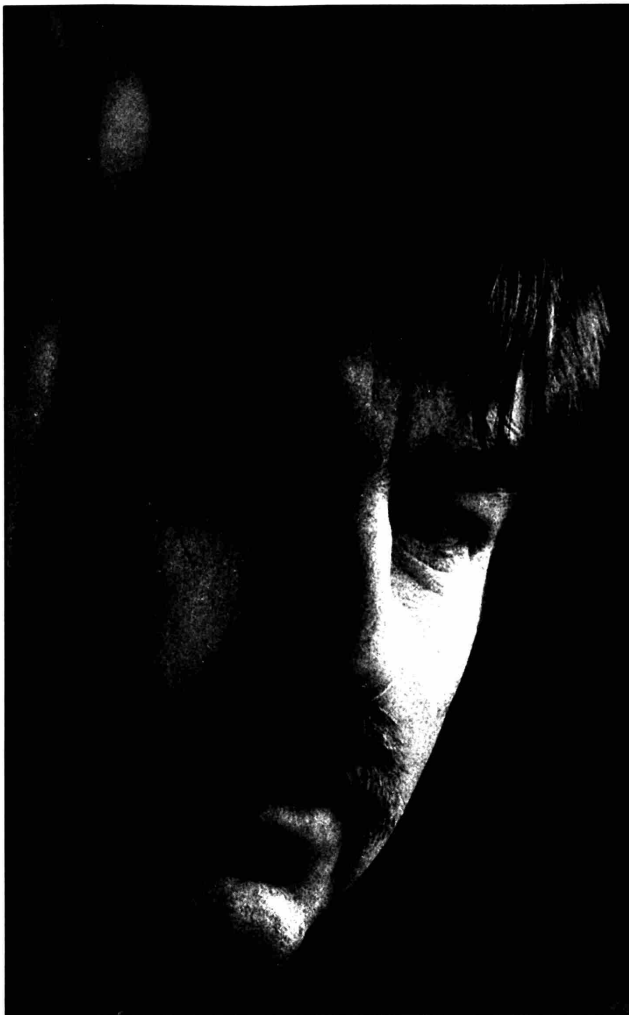


**Dominic Foley, a little known striker from Cork, was a typical young player looking for his big break when he signed for Wolves in 1995. Behind the back page reports about youngsters travelling to England, there's another story, one of managers benefitting personally from these deals. Pat Byrne, one of the game's best known figures, says it is "common practice" to pay "commissions". The FAI say they will investigate**

**INVESTIGATION**



**Paul Howard**



Pat Byrne (left), former manager of Saint James' Gate, who admitted that he received a "commission" for negotiating the sale of Dominic Foley (top) to Wolverhampton Wanderers. Damien Richardson (above), who tipped Byrne off about the player, said he received £500, which he said was for expenses he incurred travelling around the country, watching the player and facilitating his transfer from Charleville to Saint James' Gate a few months earlier

# All a part of the game?

**T**HE mood was one of celebration at the Green Isle Hotel in Clondalkin in west Dublin. Pat Byrne, the manager of St James' Gate, had just negotiated the sale, to English first division side Wolverhampton Wanderers, of Dominic Foley, a teenage striker whom he had plucked from non-league obscurity in Cork only months earlier. In his negotiations with the then manager Graham Taylor, Byrne proved to be as tough and as uncompromising as he had in his playing days. At the end of the talks, he returned to Dublin to announce that Wolves had agreed to pay £41,000 (including VAT) for Foley, with a further series of five £10,000 payments to be made every time the player made ten first team appearances.

Byrne had done extraordinarily well, everyone agreed. Officials from Saint James' Gate were in buoyant mood. In addition to the money from the Foley deal, Premier Computers had promised to inject £60,000 worth of sponsorship money into the first division club. The outlook was good. Certainly, there was no forecast of the club to lose its status as a League of Ireland club by the end

of the season. They were happy that night in 1995. "This one's on Dominic," was a recurring toast to the absent player.

Pat Byrne had another reason to be happy. He benefited personally from the sale of Foley. Byrne refused to say how much portion of the transfer fee he received and declined to comment on claims by club sources that he got several thousand pounds for his work in selling the player. "I'm not going to tell you how much I got," he said, "just as you wouldn't tell me how much you earn from your job."

Byrne, now general manager of Shamrock Rovers, admitted receiving a "commission" on the deal, but vigorously denied that there was anything wrong with managers benefiting financially from transfers they organise. While the Football Association of Ireland said this week they did not consider it appropriate for managers to receive such payments, Byrne said they were "common practice" within League of Ireland football.

"I set the whole thing up. I more or less got him (Foley) away. I got things sorted out for him. I did everything. It's common practice that if you develop a

professional footballer.

Richardson said he was wise and he promised to try to get him experience in League of Ireland football. "I thought it was the perfect stepping stone for the young fella," he said.

True to his word, Richardson informed Pat Byrne about Foley. Byrne signed him from Charleville shortly afterwards and, for the half-dozen or so matches in which he played, Foley commuted to St James' Gate from his home in Cork, staying occasionally at a bed and breakfast on Conyngham Road.

Foley proved to be as good as Richardson promised and, by the end of the season, there was considerable interest in him from England, with Manchester City, Sheffield United and Nottingham Forest all making inquiries. Within a month of completing his Leaving Certificate exams, Foley went to Wolves, and Pat Byrne and St James' Gate felt they had received a good price.

Byrne says he felt that the part Richardson played had to be acknowledged. He arranged to meet him at a pub in Harold's Cross, but couldn't make the appointment and asked two directors of the club to meet him instead. He handed them an envelope which con-

tained £500 in cash and asked them to hand it to him. Richardson vociferously denied taking a commission from the transfer, but claimed that the £500 was to compensate him for expenses he had incurred travelling the country watching the player.

Byrne claimed that the money was "to say thank you" for discovering Foley, but Richardson insisted: "That was my expenses. I did a lot of travelling from Cork to Dublin, and from Cork to Limerick to Dublin, driving to watch games he played in, making maybe eight, 10 or 12 trips. If anything, I wasn't compensated enough. Cork to Dublin is £30 worth of petrol."

Another individual named by Pat Byrne as a recipient of money twice denied to *The Sunday Tribune* this week that he had received anything from the transfer.

The money paid to Byrne and Richardson is not stated explicitly in the financial accounts of SJG Dubin Limited, a holding company set up to run the financial affairs of St James' Gate Football Club on the insistence of Premier Computers. Mark Howell, the chairman of SJG at the time, said that wages and salaries, directors' fees and transfer fees

were all disclosed in the company's audited accounts, though he agreed that there was no breakdown of these.

He admitted that Byrne was one of a number of parties (he declined to name the others) who received money from Foley's transfer fee and said that, as far as he remembered, it was included in the accounts as part of the £18,345 paid in directors' fees. Asked what it normal business practice for a club to pay such fees when they lost £39,519 for the year, as well as its National League status, he said: "That's had nothing to do with the performance of the directors. If you step back and look at it, the company broke even. There was a trading loss and we had an overdraft facility off, at the end of the year, we paid that off. Pat Byrne was paid a wage and directors fees and certain bonuses which were related to performance. It was disclosed for the auditors. From the company's point of view, everything was above board."

Asked whether he was aware of the FAI's disapproval of such "commissions", Pat Byrne said: "That's a totally private matter between the club and the manager. It has nothing to do with the FAI. They don't do anything to develop players or bring them through."

# Warrior weeps as a bloody battle draws to an end

Collins' defence depends upon distancing himself from comments in his autobiography, writes **Diarmuid Doyle**

**F**OR long stretches in the witness box last week, Steve Collins looked more like the Celtic Warrior than the warrior who had risen to the top of a tough and dirty profession.

His departure in tears from Court Number Five on Thursday afternoon was what made the headlines the following morning, but it was merely one of several uncomfortable moments he experienced during almost four days of intense cross-examination by Rory Brady, counsel for Barry Hearn. By the time he stepped down early on Friday afternoon, Collins had been reduced to complimenting Brady for his skills as a barrister and accusing him of putting words in his mouth.

He also accused him of putting the tears in his eyes by asking him to read the acknowledgements at the beginning of the book he wrote

with *Sunday Tribune* journalist Paul Howard in 1995. Having got through the sentence which acknowledged the love and support of his wife Gemma and their three children, Collins stopped, put the book down and cried. After leaving the courtroom, followed by his solicitor, the tears continued.

The following morning Collins apologised to judge Philip O'Sullivan, and said his tears were caused by references in the acknowledgement to his father Paschal, who died when Collins was just 17. Later in the day he accused Barry Hearn, his former manager, of steering the cross-examination towards Paschal Collins. "He knows what buttons to push," Collins said.

Brady vehemently denied a later accusation by the boxer that he had brought up the subject of his father "delibe-

rately because you knew it would upset me". But it is clear that he was attempting to defeat Collins's attempts to put distance between himself and the book, *Celtic Warrior*, which was published shortly after he defeated Chris Eubank for the WBO super middleweight title in Millstreet in 1995.

The book (and a draft manuscript to which Collins made changes) has become a central feature of the case because of Hearn's contention that it directly contradicts evidence that Collins has given in court.

Several copies of the book are lying around the courtroom. It (and the manuscript) is either a key piece of evidence (Hearn's argument) or a collection of inaccurate, exaggerated and occasionally true stories which Collins said were designed to make the book attractive to a



Steve Collins paid Tony Quinn £380,000

Hollywood movie mogul who would read it and say: "Here's another Ragging Bull story," a reference to the movie about the life and times of Jake La Motta.

Several differences emerged between Collins's evidence and information contained in the manuscript of the book. In court, Collins explained that during an eventually aborted boxing promotion in Hong Kong in

1994, Hearn had not acted in his best interests and had prevented him from earning money he might have been due in the wake of the event. In the draft manuscript, however, Collins stated the opposite and praised Hearn for protecting his interest in Hong Kong.

A central part of Collins's case is that Hearn showed favouritism to Chris Eubank (whom he also managed) in

the run-up to the Millstreet bout. One example of this, he told the court, was that Hearn had accompanied Eubank on his dramatic entry into the ring but had not made a similar journey with Collins. "This was a snub to me by Barry Hearn," he said. In the draft manuscript, however, Collins said he didn't mind whether or not he had to make his way to the ring without Hearn.

If Justice O'Sullivan finds against Collins, further argument will follow about exactly how much the boxer must pay Hearn. His former manager is claiming 25 per cent of Collins's purse from the three fights which immediately followed the bout in Millstreet. These were against Eubank again (for which he received £1.2m), Cornelius Carr (£500,000) and Neville Brown (£500,000). This would leave Hearn about £500,000 richer when Collins's fight expenses are taken into account.

It is not such a simple cal-

culatation, however. Other considerations and other arguments might come into play, including the possibility that Collins will say that his earnings from £32,500 to the £360,000 he paid to Tony Quinn, the health guru, who acted as his sports psychologist and physical trainer when he was enjoying his first lucrative months as world champion.

On the basis of the evidence given by Collins, the relationship between the two men appears to have been much closer than believed at the time of the two Eubank fights, when Quinn was regularly described as the boxer's hypnotist, the man who convinced him that he couldn't lose.

According to Collins, Quinn also advised him on his tax affairs, spoke to the promoter Frank Warren on his behalf, gave him legal advice about a previous case in England (also involving Hearn as the plaintiff) and made suggestions

about who Collins should fight next. He also advised him on diet and weight training. "I was happy to get that advice," Collins said.

The case finishes this week and then Justice O'Sullivan will have to make up his mind about the wildly conflicting evidence he has heard over the last six weeks. He can decide that Hearn fulfilled his managerial obligations, nursing Collins's earnings from £32,500 in 1993 to £64,900 in 1994 and then into the stratosphere in 1995, when Collins won almost £2m; or he can accept Collins's case that Hearn worked against his best interests, favoured other fighters and tried to "nobbie" the Millstreet referee Ron Lip-ton.

It's not known how long Justice O'Sullivan will take to reach his judgement but if it comes sooner rather than later, it's going to be a very unhappy Christmas for somebody.