

A Day With Martin O'Neill



Martin O'Neill surveys his finished product with Master Blower Edgar Evans, David McCoy, Commercial Director, House of Waterford Crystal and John Delaney, CEO of the FAI.

On Tuesday, May 20th, the Republic of Ireland manager Martin O'Neill came to Waterford city and he certainly enjoyed his stay in Ireland's oldest city. Following his arrival at 2pm his first port of call was a visit to the Mayor's office where Cllr John Cummins was waiting to greet him. The room was packed to the rafters with personalities from many walks of life. Needless to say politicians from all parties were only keen to press the flesh with the former Nottingham Forest star.

The two time European Cup winner made an instant impression with all present.

He spoke with former Waterford FC stars like Peter Thomas and Paul Morrissey and was genuinely interested in what they had to say.

The local Waterford Junior League committee also spoke with the great man who has managed such clubs as Wycombe Wanderers, Leicester City, Norwich City, Sunderland, Aston Villa and of course Celtic.

John O'Sullivan and Greg Pheasy represented Waterford United. The Blues manager Tommy Griffin and Under 19 coach Johnny Browne were in attendance also.

The Life President of St Joseph's, John Grant was another well known soccer personality who enjoyed a chat with the Ireland gaffer.

Martin O'Neill's next task was to move into the Garden Room of the City Hall to face the national and local press as he announced his squad for the four friendly games May and June which include a game against Italy in Craven Cottage, another one against Costa Rica in Philadelphia and against Portugal in New Jersey on June 10th.

Once again the name of Stephen Ireland dominated an Irish press conference. The former Aston Villa player who plays for Stoke City has not played for Ireland since the now infamous "granny gate affair" and not for the first time since that situation

his name continues to pop up every time Martin O'Neill holds a press conference. O'Neill told the gathered media hacks that he had not received a return telephone call from the Stoke midfielder so the ball was still in Ireland's court.

O'Neill and the CEO of the FAI John Delaney then made their way over to the House of Waterford Crystal showrooms where they were greeted by the affable Sharon Power and David McCoy, Head of Marketing.



Republic Of Ireland manager Martin O'Neill tried a bit of glass blowing with a bit of help from Waterford Crystal Master Blower, Edgar Evans.

Inside the House of Waterford Crystal working area craftsmen like Master Cutter Damien O'Regan, Marker Jim Buckley and Master Sculptor Michael Murphy displayed their skill to Martin O'Neill and he was only too happy to try his hand at cutting and blowing himself.

He admitted afterwards that he really enjoyed his visit to the plant and he laughed loudly when an American tourist who was watching Martin and Damien asked the question "which of those men is the football guy and which is the cutter?".

"I must have made some sort of impression cutting the glass" smiled O'Neill.

Having completed his stint as a Waterford Crystal worker the Irish manager then met the Waterford Under 13 squad who are heading to Austria shortly to compete in the Cordial Cup. The excited young footballers and their parents had gathered in the glittering Crystal showroom and at times it looked as if the players' guardians were just as excited as their young sons, such is the charisma of Martin O'Neill.

At 6pm the Ireland manager made his way to Connors Park to watch the Villa play Tramore in the Under 12 League.

John Delaney's son was playing for the Villa but the home side fell four goals behind during the first half. Martin O'Neill admitted afterwards that he gave the home side a halftime pep talk but Tramore eventually ran out 6-1 winners.

"Perhaps I am in the wrong business" quipped Martin when he arrived at the Strand Inn in Dunmore a little later to participate in a Questions and Answers session which was organised by Robert Finnegan, a Dunmore East native.

Mr Finnegan is the CEO of Three who are the major sponsors of the Republic of Ireland team.

The Dunmore East football team were the invited guests to this event and their manager Aiden Swift and his charges lapped up the feel good feeling that was evident inside the magnificent surroundings of the Strand Inn.

They had caused a major shock by defeating the Division 2B League champions Bolton the previous evening in the Division 2 Cup to set up a semi-final clash with the Villa. "How should we approach that game?" asked one of the team members. "Considering what I did with the Villa Under 12 team this evening perhaps I'm not the right person to ask" replied Martin much to the amusement of all present.



Members of the Waterford Cordial Cup U-15 team pictured with Republic of Ireland manager Martin O'Neill, David McCoy, Commercial Director, House of Waterford Crystal, John Delaney, CEO of the FAI and they were Niall O'Keefe, captain, Oisín Griffin, Scott Hoban, Alex Phelan, Cameron Power and Luke Whelan.

He went on to talk about the late great Brian Clough and how he learnt so much from the legendary manager. Needless to say the Stephen Ireland business came up once again and Martin O'Neill went through the entire telephone saga once again. The hardest questions posed to the Irish manager came from the many young children, most of them wearing Celtic jerseys.

"What does it feel like to get sacked?" and "How much do you get paid?" were just two of the questions from the youngsters.

"You should direct that last question to John Delaney" answered O'Neill and the FAI CEO who was sitting near Martin laughed heartily.

Following the Q and A session Martin O'Neill signed autographs and posed for photographs for over an hour before he departed for a much needed meal with John Delaney, Robert Finnegan and a number of other guests.

Before he left Dunmore Martin O'Neill summed up his day in Waterford superbly. "John O'Shea has been telling me that Waterford city and county is a beautiful place and now I believe him because here I am looking at the sun setting over this magnificent Dunmore East harbour. It's a beautiful setting and it is the ideal way to finish off my first visit to Waterford. I have loved every minute of today and I can honestly say it's been one of the best days I've had since I took the job". There is no doubt that Martin O'Neill left a lasting impression on everyone he met last Tuesday and hopefully he will return again in the not too distant future.