

Dreaming About A New Deise Stadium



Bruce Springsteen in concert. Will we ever see The Boss perform on Suirside?

While it is difficult to imagine where the money would come from, I've been told some very shrewd and smart business people believe that now would be a really good time for the Waterford GAA County Board to build a new stadium on a greenfield site.

Most people agree that neither Walsh Park in the city nor Fraher Field in Dungarvan are county venues worthy of Deise hurling.

They are too small to be considered for any major Championship clash and, even if serious money was spent, they still couldn't compete with, for instance, Semple Stadium in Thurles, Nowlan Park in Kilkenny or Wexford Park in Wexford Town.

But because all those fine venues exist in built-up areas, they have problems that are likely to increase rather than decrease.

Large arenas cost a lot of money to maintain and so the GAA looks at other strands of revenue such as renting out their grounds to other sports when required. And then there are the concerts.

We saw what happened with the Garth Brooks debacle in Croke Park, our neighbours in Kilkenny have to walk on eggs with residents when a concert is held there and all over Ireland people are getting shirty about evening, floodlit games in towns and cities.

At present, there is a major row in Galway over a controversial proposal by the GAA to upgrade facilities at the city's Pearse Stadium, in particular the provision of floodlighting that would facilitate evening games and concerts.

As part of its planning application, the County Board informed the local authority it had secured almost 4,500 extra parking spaces across the city. But the Council has still imposed sanctions that might not be accepted by the developers and, meanwhile, local residents are objecting big time.

Imagine, then, a comfortable 40,000-seater stadium on the outskirts of Waterford surrounded by nothing but large car-parks

behind gates that have easy access to main routes.

It would serve Waterford GAA very well, it could be an acceptable neutral venue for Cork, Kilkenny, Wexford and Tipperary when the need arose and Garth Brooks, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan and all their pals could play into a floodlit sky to their hearts content.

As I said at the outset, it would cost a lot of money that nobody has at the present time but, a lot of experts agree, properly managed, it could be a very worthwhile investment. Euro Lottery tickets anybody?

PS: For those who would scoff at the suggestion of a new stadium, could I remind them of famous quotes from two very successful people that lived generations apart.

“When you innovate, you’ve got to be prepared for everyone telling you you’re nuts.” – Larry Ellison, Co-founder and CEO, Oracle.

“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning.” – Benjamin Franklin.