

Park Hotel Awards ready to dazzle again



Special guest the inimitable George Hook will put the 2014 nominees through their paces on stage.

With Christmas just a memory and the New Year already over three weeks old, it is time for those interested in sport to turn their attention to the premier social / sporting event in the county each year, the Park Hotel Sports Awards which take place on Saturday next, January 31st.

Since the inception of the awards in 1991 the destination of the Supreme Sports Star of the Year award has resulted in much debate and discussion although there have been very few choices with which sports enthusiasts would disagree.

The adjudicators now have their work cut out to choose between the 14 meritorious nominees for 2014.

This year, the inimitable and irrepressible George Hook will take the reins on stage and put the nominees through their paces. His encyclopaedic knowledge of sport, his outspoken assessments on every person and every event and his irascible demeanour all combine to make a presenter who is worth listening to.

When people assemble for the Grand Banquet on the 31st January next, there will be an air of sadness in The Park Hotel, for the man who has steered this premier event through 24 years, who has been the backbone of the annual sports-fest and who has brought wisdom, knowledge and quiet common-sense to the Jury Room, will be absent this year.

The happy occasion will be without the familiar figure of Fr. Pat Moran, OSA who opened the proceedings each year, welcomed the guests, congratulated the nominees and said grace. Illness took the genial Chairman at an all too early age and after so many years at the helm, for many people his spirit will be an overseeing presence in the banquet hall.

Architect of the long-running honours system, the most enduring in Ireland, Pierce Flynn, Proprietor of The Park Hotel, will preside over the culmination of yet another magnificent year of Waterford sport. He is confident the evening will live up to the Park Hotel's highest standards and that regular attendees and first timers will have a memorable evening.

There are 14 nominations in all, as a result of divided monthly decisions and, for the first time ever there will be five representatives from golf covering Ireland, Europe and the USA.

Seamus Power and Gary Hurley from the West Waterford Club have established themselves in the United States and both captured major honours in their respective Tours last year. They are joined by Alan Thomas and Robin Dawson from the Tramore Club, as well as the De La Salle All Ireland Colleges winning team.

Three athletes made the Park Hotel cut. Thomas Barr posted one of the fastest times in Europe this year when he took the 400m hurdles title. Multi-nominated Kelly Proper continued her dominance in women's jumps and sprints while veteran Joe Gough came home a World Masters Champion in the 800m.

Niamh Briggs, who has won almost every honour Women's Rugby can bestow and is a former Park Hotel Supreme Sportsperson, booked her place after her team beat the All Blacks, World Champions in the World Cup.

Rally Champion, Craig Breen made his comeback in changing to a higher grade and took the honours in Spain to gain his nomination.

The showjumping flag is carried by Anthony Condon, the third generation horseman, who earned the January nomination after a major victory in Spain. Based in the UK, Anthony rides from his own stable.

In horse racing Mark Beecher was the top rider 'over timber' in the United States, dominating the steeplechase season.

Soccer's John O'Shea, also a Park Hotel Supreme Winner gained his magical 100th cap for Ireland; captained his country and scored the crucial last-gasp goal to draw with World Champions, Germany.

Soccer star, Kenny Brown who moved to St. Pat's collected an FAI Cup Medal, an FAI President's Cup Medal and a Leinster Senior Cup Medal to make it a dream year for him.

Park Hotel Favourites Brass & Co are certain to have the crowd hopping on the dance floor as the debate on the 2014 Park Hotel Supreme Winner continues long into the night.