

Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh

Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh is a teacher, author, and avid promoter of the Irish language. He is probably best-known, however, for his role as a Gaelic games commentator for many decades. His recognisable voice and lyrical descriptions have become synonymous with Gaelic games for generations of GAA supporters. A native Irish speaker, Micheál has a huge interest in the promotion of the Irish language and he has played a major part at national level in this regard.

Micheál was born in Dún Síon to Thady Moriarty and Katie Quinn just outside Dingle, County Kerry on August 20th, 1930. Fourth in a family of 8, he grew up on the family farm and was educated locally in Dingle. In September 1945, he began studying at Coláiste Íosagáin Preparatory College in Baile Bhúirne in the West Cork Gaeltacht, where he was in training to be a teacher. In September 1948, he began the final year of his teacher training at St Patrick's College of Education in Drumcondra, Dublin (now DCU).

Ba i mBaile Átha Cliath a d'oscail geata dó, geata a dhéanfaidh cáiliúil é agus a dhaingneoidh é mar chuid mhór de shaol Chumann Lúthchleas Gael agus na hÉireann i gcoitinne.

In early March 1949, following a trial commentary on a hurling game at Croke Park, a sport he had never seen prior to then, Ó Muircheartaigh was selected as a commentator by the national broadcaster and his first assignment was to provide a commentary in the Irish language on the 1949 Railway Cup final on St. Patrick's Day.

He graduated from St. Patrick's College a little later and also completed a Bachelor of Arts degree from University College Dublin. He taught economics, accountancy and Irish in both primary and secondary schools throughout the greater Dublin district, the majority of which were run by the Christian Brothers. His love of the Irish language and his professional teaching career combined when, in July 1975, Micheál pioneered the opening of one of the first all-Irish schools in the Dublin district, Scoil Oilibhéir, which he went on to Chair for 9 years. He continued with his teaching career up until the mid-1980s, when he decided to become a full-time broadcaster with Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTE).

For the early part of his broadcasting career Ó Muircheartaigh commentated on GAA matches at Minor (U-18) level, in the Irish language. He also replaced the legendary Micheál O'Hehir when he was not available to commentate. Eventually, when O'Hehir was forced to retire due to ill health in the mid-1980s, Ó Muircheartaigh took over as the station's premier radio commentator. He developed his own inimitable style of commentary. His unusual turn of phrase made him a much loved broadcaster and often subject to playful imitation. During the ebb and flow of a game, he was known to make memorable, 'off-the-cuff' comments such as: " *The score is now 1-5 to 0-8...well, from Lapland to the Antarctic, that's level scores in any man's language*".

And again.... " *In the first half, they played with the wind. In the second half, they played with the ball.*"

Ó Muircheartaigh's level of detailed research and depth of memory recall conveyed an encyclopaedic knowledge of many sports, not least Gaelic Games. The excellence of Ó Muircheartaigh's commentaries on RTÉ Radio 1's 'Sunday Sport' won him a Jacob's Award in 1992. He was also the Parade Grand Marshal for the 2007 St. Patrick's Festival in Dublin, having been given the honour by the chairman of the Festival in recognition and appreciation of his unique contribution to Irish culture.

On 16 September 2010 he announced his retirement from broadcasting. The last All-Ireland Final he commentated on was the 2010 All-Ireland Senior Football Final. His last broadcast from Croke Park was for the 2nd International Rules Test on October 29th, 2010. Commenting on Micheál's retirement, the then President of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Christy Cooney, stated:

"The quality and attraction of his commentaries on such a regular and consistent basis down through the years mean his lyrical descriptions are woven into the fabric of our games... His undimmed passion for football, hurling and camogie, and all the trappings of our big occasions, have entertained the masses across the airwaves and have brought the action from Croke Park, Thurles, Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Clones, Castlebar and so many other venues, into homes and centres where Irish people gather right around the world."

Micheál published two widely read books about his life and times: 'From Dún Síon to Croke Park' and 'From Borrooloola to Mangerton Mountain'. He also co-wrote 'Micheál's GAA Odyssey', one of the best anthologies and celebrations of Gaelic Games. He has received numerous awards for his lifetime achievements and promotion of the Irish language, including being inducted into the PPI Hall of Fame in 2012 and winning a People of the Year Award in 1997. Bhí suim mhór aige i gcónaí i stádas na Gaeilge agus is mór atá déanta aige chun ár dteanga dhúchais a chur chun chinn agus chun slánú na Gaeilge a chinntiú.

His proudest achievements, however, are the eight children that his wife, Helena, and he reared and gave to them all a good university education and sound footing for life. To quote Micheál:

"...it is of more value to them than if all my bets had won and given them a million euro each".

Throughout his life, Micheál has lived life to the full. Brimming over with equal measures of energy and curiosity, Micheál has lived by the motto " *Why put off until tomorrow what you can do today*". In recent years, he has become a standard bearer for healthy and active aging in Ireland, and has participated in a number of events here at DCU aligned with our Age Friendly University designation. So, whether it was communications, sport, the Irish language or the issue of aging, Micheál has always delivered outstanding contributions.

A Uachtaráin, I ask you to confer on Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (*Honoris Causa*).

