

(Match Date: Saturday, 11 August 2018)



Ambassadors Sharon Courtney and Noel McGrath encourage GAA players and fans to:

Drink Less and Gain More – On and Off the Pitch

- **Launch of GAA and AskAboutAlcohol.ie partnership for the 2018 All-Ireland Semi-Final**
 - **Learn how alcohol affects you at www.askaboutalcohol.ie**

Today (Tuesday, 31st July) The HSE and The GAA announced an exciting partnership to promote an important health message at this year's All-Ireland Football Semi-Final on August 11th. This year, **Croke Park is partnering with the HSE's Ask About Alcohol Campaign to encourage fans to "Drink Less and Gain More – On and Off the Pitch"**. For the first time, fans attending the All Ireland semi-final will be able to enjoy an **alcohol-free family fun zone at the Cusack Stand** both before the games and at breaks in play.

Monaghan and Tipperary All Ireland winning stars and AskAboutAlcohol.ie ambassadors, Sharon Courtney and Noel McGrath, spoke passionately at today's launch at Croke Park about how they have gained more by drinking less:

Sharon Courtney is a Sports Nutritionist and lecturer and captain of the Monaghan Ladies team:

'As athletes we often go long periods without taking a drink at all, and that can be a good thing. However, research and experience shows that athletes are more likely to binge drink when they do consume alcohol. I find that being mindful of what you drink at all times allows for better gains when it comes to health and fitness on and off the pitch.'

Tipperary hurler **Noel McGrath** said: *'Sport can be all about extremes, huge highs and devastating lows. But it is usually the little things – when all added up – that make the difference between winning and losing a match. I found the same applies to your health. We don't need to make massive life-changes to experience visible improvements. Reducing your alcohol intake over a week, or even during a single night out, will result in real gains on and off the pitch.'*

When it comes to reducing alcohol harm for players and fans, the GAA is already leading the way with their long-standing ASAP Programme – a collaboration between the GAA and the HSE designed to reduce the harm caused by the misuse of alcohol and other substances. Since 2014, there has been no sponsorship of any GAA competition by an alcohol company, and no senior inter-county team has an alcohol sponsor. At Croke Park specifically, the consumption of alcohol is highly regulated and not permitted inside the bowl (the seating area of the stadium) at GAA matches.

On Match day, HSE and GAA volunteers will be on hand to engage with fans in the Family Fun Zone. Young supporters will be entertained with face-painting, target games, balloon modelling, the GAA Trophy Parade with the Sam Maguire and Liam McCarthy Cups, and much more. Meanwhile adults will be offered the chance to complete the askaboutalcohol.ie [Drinks Calculator](#) or [Parent's Quiz](#).

GAA Vice President Jim Bolger said: *'We know that alcohol negatively impacts sports performance, but we also know that drinking too much can also have a detrimental impact on our physical and emotional wellbeing, and even our family lives. We hope that the simple message 'Drink Less and Gain More on and off the pitch', delivered in partnership with the HSE on All Ireland semi-final day, will resonate with our players and members alike.'*

Dr Stephanie O' Keeffe, National Director, Strategy and Transformation, HSE said: *'Partnering with the GAA in this initiative is helping to create a healthier environment for fans to enjoy their sport. The positive benefits of participating in or supporting any sport, particularly for young people, can be reduced when those sports are a vehicle for poor health choices. Drink Less Gain More on and off the pitch aims to promote a low risk approach to alcohol and enjoyment of sport both for athletes and supporters.'*

The match day will also see Croke Park officially welcomed into the European-wide network of Healthy Stadia, with a visit from Matthew Philpott, Executive Director of the European Healthy Stadia Network. Matthew Philpott stated that: "It's an absolute honour to welcome such an iconic and progressive stadium such as Croke Park into the European Healthy Stadia Network, and to present the GAA with an award plaque at the All Ireland semi-final on August 11th. Croke Park has some excellent policies and practices promoting health, such as the availability of healthier catering options, employee physical activity recreational opportunities and the latest campaign on responsible alcohol consumption, following the success of the smoke free pilot and emotional wellbeing campaign in previous years."

Each year since 2014, the GAA has nominated one of its All-Ireland semi-finals to promote a significant health message. This year's "Drink Less, Gain More" initiative follows the success of the "Little Things can improve your game" mental health initiative in 2016, and last year's #HurlTheHabit quit smoking campaign.

For more information about what you can gain from drinking less, visit www.askaboutalcohol.ie

ENDS

Notes to Editor

- Drink Less Gain More: www.askaboutalcohol.ie/drink-less-gain-more
- Alcohol and Sports Performance: www.askaboutalcohol.ie/health/sports-performance
- Alcohol and Family: www.askaboutalcohol.ie/alcohol-and-your-family
- Drinks Calculator: <http://www.askaboutalcohol.ie/your-drinking/drinks-calculator/>
- Parents Quiz: <http://www.askaboutalcohol.ie/quiz/>