

Fred Casey



Fred Casey will be inducted into the Cork Constitution Hall of Fame at this years Captain and Presidents Dinner. From 1964 onwards Fred Casey has been the inspirational force behind the resurgence of the Cork Constitution Conettes . Although at the time he was a minor player he spent countless hours organising matches and training for the youngsters.

Although young in age Fred was wise beyond his years when as a sixteen year old he used to book coaches from CIE to bring his Conettes to Tralee. They used to meet at the old Grand Parade Hotel before heading off. Fred used to organise everything with the home Club especially the after match food. Fred's job was made much easier as there were no referees to be booked as Fred would pick some poor misfortunate that happened to be hanging around the pitch as the referee.

In the early days Fred was offered tremendous assistance by his two second fathers Con O'Leary and Ned O'Connor. The weekly meetings were held in Ned's house and Fred would always arrange for these to coincide with Nancy's cooking lessons so that there would be plenty of food for all. Early signs of his organisational abilities coming to the fore.

Fred is world famous for his tours and over the years has developed contacts in every rugby country in Europe. The first tours were organised in the days before mobile phones were invented so Fred used to go around to various member's houses to make the necessary phones calls to far away places. Fred , however , never seemed to be around when the phone bill dropped in the letter box.

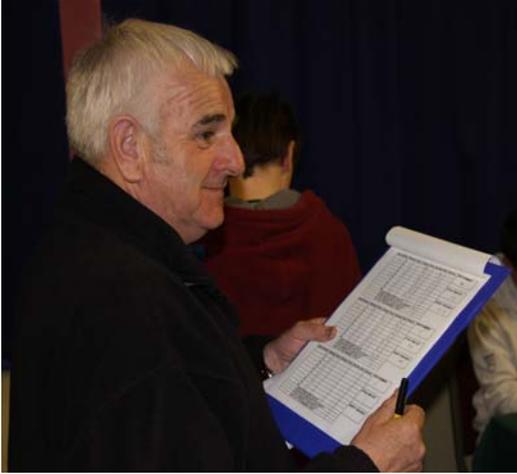
The first overseas tour was to Wales in 1972 and the tours really took off from there. Under his leadership the Conettes have toured England Wales France Greece and Italy. It is a great credit to both Fred and his coaches that the Conettes are such great ambassadors for Cork Constitution and the City of Cork when they are abroad.

In 1990 news of Fred's tours reached Lansdowne Rd and the I.R.F.U. invited Cork Constitution to represent Ireland in an U 11 and 12 European Championship at Roche-La-Moliere , near St Etienne in France. Teams from 16 nations including England Scotland Wales Russia Romania Italy Sweden East & West Germany were also involved.

Cork Constitution won both Championships a wonderful tribute to the youngsters and coaches involved. It should be acknowledged that Fred was the first coach to bring a European Trophy back to Munster.

A photo of the U 12 team features a young Peter Stringer and Ronan O'Gara , who captained the team , sitting together. Peter and Ronan went on to gain a combined 198 full international caps for Ireland. Fred always claimed that he saw the potential of both the first time he played them together and that he never had a doubt that they would play together for Ireland. The picture of U11 champions features the same combination of Stringer and O'Gara this time John and Fergal who went on to play Senior Rugby for Constitution.

The Conettes did not leave Ireland for one of their more memorable tours. In January 1988 Fred was invited to bring a team to an under age tournament that Ballymena were holding to celebrate their centenary year. This was in height of the troubles and Fred doubted if the parents of the players would allow the team to travel. To his delight none of the parents refused permission so the tour was on.



Fred as usual was meticulous in his planning for the tour so he guaranteed all before they left Templehill that he had plenty of food for the long journey to Ballymena. Suitable assured the convoy set off for Ballymena. Stopping outside of Dublin for their picnic Fred produced a couple of dozen cooked chickens for everyone to eat. The only thing was that Fred had forgotten that it was Good Friday and meat was not allowed. As everyone one was starving all agreed that a quick prayed would cover any sins and that the chickens could be eaten.

When the Conettes arrived at Ballymena they were meet by the great man himself Willie John McBride and the Lord Mayor of Ballymena who thanked them for honouring their town by attending their tournament, Cork Constitution were the only team from the Republic who played in the Tournament. When they went to a welcoming party all the parents were worried that there would be meat again however their hosts were more than considerate as they had arranged for fish to be served Both Ronan O'Gara and Peter Stringer were part of that Cork Constitution tour party. It was a sign of the times that the parents and players when going to the various houses that night had to leave their cars in the Ballymena Clubhouse as it was to dangerous for their hosts for cars from the South to be seen outside their homes. At great time was had by all and happily all returned to Cork without mishap.

Fred played a large part in the Clubs centenary celebrations in 1992 when he organised a centenary tournament with 15 teams visiting Templehill. As well as England and Wales, teams came from as far a field as Sweden and Latvia. All of the visiting teams were put up in Rochestown College and Lota. The Irish Army provided the 350 beds for the visiting youngsters and the parents embarked on a round the clock operation to feed all the hungry players. The tournament was a great success and set the standard for other clubs to aspire to.

On Saturdays Fred can be seen driving all over Cork bringing his players to training sessions and matches, it is immeasurable how many miles Fred has driven over the years. Fred cars were not always the best and one particular car had the endearing feature that when it went around the bends the four doors would open and everybody had to hang on for dear life. After the Conettes complained, Fred solved the problem by fitting slip bolts to the doors. When Fred was on holidays, camping in Ardmore, he used to collect Brian Humphries, who spent his summers in Ardmore before changing allegiance to West Cork, and bring him to Templehill for training. When I asked Fred why he collected Brian the response was that he always got a great breakfast from Brian's mother Peg before he left for Cork.

Fred is always ready to impart advice to his players which is usually taken on board however Fred was taken aback when after advising the young Barry Keeshan that he needed get faster over the first 10 yards Barry replied that I am a playmaker and have no need to sprint. To this day Fred still receives a Christmas Card from Barry.

Fred has coached many of the players that have come through the Conettes to play senior rugby for Cork Constitution and Munster and his record of developing 16 Irish Internationals and 4 British and Ireland lions is unparalleled in the annals of rugby history. The list of Irish A and Full Irish International players coached by Fred is:-

Anthony O'Leary, Christy Cantillion, Darragh O'Mahony, Dave O'Mahony, David Corkery, Frankie Sheehan, James O'Riordan, John Kelly, Kenny Murphy, Luke Fitzgerald, Paul Wallace, Peter Stringer, Philip Soden, Ralph Keyes, Richard Wallace, Ronan O'Gara

Paul and Richard Wallace did not play Senior rugby for Cork Constitution as they left Cork for Limerick. Both had very extinguished rugby careers playing for Ireland and indeed created a record with their brother David by being the only set of three brothers to play for the British and Irish Lions. To this day Fred is adamant that this should in fact be four as he believes that Henry was the best of all of the Wallace's.

As he ran on to the Twickenham pitch on Saturday, 20th January 1990 Kenny Murphy, a member of one Ireland's most renowned rugby families, thought he was making history as both his father and grandfather had also represented Ireland at rugby. They are the first, and to date, only family to have a father, son and grandson capped at senior level. However , as Fred delights in recounting , Kenny made history well before this as he was the first and only Conette to be home sick on tour.

This years rugby tour is to England and the teams will play against Bath , King Edward School, Wilcox and Bristol. The tour departs on Thursday 21 April and returns on 28 April. The current numbers travelling are 51 which would make it the largest tour party that Fred has managed. We wish them the best of luck.

To-day Juvenile Rugby in Cork Constitutions is a well oiled machine catering for over 500 youngster every week end with teams from under 6 to under 18 under the guidance of our two assistant directors of Rugby Peter Good and Kevin Flanagan ably assisted by a team of coaches who ensure that the highest standards of juvenile and youth rugby is attained in Templehill. This would not be happening today without the visionary work of Fred.

We in Cork Constitution are privileged that Fred Casey is a member of this club and are proud of his achievements in developing a vibrant under age and youth structure where so many youngsters can enjoy rugby in a safe and enjoyable manner.

Pat Twomey

