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* **Personal & Professional Development**
* **2012/2013**
* DAVID KELLY
* B00060572
* B00060572@student.itb.ie
* **PAY FOR PLAY:**
* **Should the GAA remain Amateur?**
* Assignment 2 - Short Formal Report
* Submitted 5th December 2012

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment is entirely my own work. It has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been citied and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: ………………………………..

Date: …………………………………..

Student Number: ……………………..

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**1. Introduction**

GAA Rule 1.10

(Amateur Status)

“The Association is an Amateur Association. A player, team, official or member shall not accept payment in cash or in kind in conjunction with the playing of Gaelic Games. A player, team, official or member shall not contract itself to any agent other than those officially approves by the Central Council. Expenses paid to all officials, players and members shall not exceed the standard rates laid down by the Central Council. Members of the Association may not participate in full-time training. This rule shall not prohibit the payment of salaries or wages to employees of the Association.”

The GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) was founded in 1884. In all 126 years of the association’s existence it has been an amateur sporting association. However in all the 126 years of the associations being the question hanging over its amateur ethos has never been so prevalent. Should the GAA remain amateur or should it turn professional? Should it adapt to a modern system in which inter-county teams get a wage from the association for their participation in the football league and championship.

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**2. Discussion**

This question isn’t a very new question but perhaps it’s more pressing giving the circumstances surrounding all sports in the previous two decades. Sport has become a huge money making industry in Ireland, Europe and indeed the World. Sports stars get massive salaries as compensation for their tireless effort to stay at the top of their game and the media intrusion on their personal life. Now this is not common with every player in every sport but in an ever growing list including, soccer, basketball, golf, tennis, American football, rugby… top stars certainly get massive contracts in a trend that doesn’t seem to be stalling.

Now even if the GAA in the morning decided to pay these players, managers and coaches before doing so they would have to look within the organization and see if it was fiscally possible from all revenue streams.

In 2009 the GAA’s Central Council (the governing body for the association) reported the highest revenue in it’s history, €67 million. Breaking this figure down to find the individual sources for total I found, €40 million came from gate receipts, €15 million cam from TV and advertising and nearly €10 million came from sponsorship deals. Although the revenue figure has diminished since it’s record high of 2009, in 2011 the Central Council released it took in €49 million in profit.

Taking these figures in to account and trying to make a pay scheme as fair as possible to everyone involved. Mick O’ Dwyer, one of the games most decorated and celebrated player / managers worked out the calculations in his autobiography “Blessed and Obsessed”

*“With figures totaling €50 million, every last cent generated directly or indirectly by the inter-county players.*

*If even 20% went back to the players it would generate a fund of €10 million which could be divided among them, depending on how far they progressed in the championship. Players who reach the all Ireland Finals could get €25,000 per man which, for two panels of 24, would still cost the GAA a little over €1 million each for both hurling and football.*

*That still leaves €8 million to be disbursed among the rest of the counties depending on how far they progressed through the championship...”*

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Now we know that the money is there to allow the GAA to become a professional associating if it wished. The GAA ***could*** become professional I guess the question is ***should*** it become professional?

Looking away from Ireland for a moment and focusing on an international sport like football. In Europe football might be a brand that no other sport can compete with, although it seems that in some respects the GAA is doing quite well held up against it. Especially when it comes to large teams in Spain, Italy and England. While many soccer clubs in England such as Merseyside giants Liverpool, are relying on bailouts from "American or Asian entrepreneurs" to stay alive, even the smallest GAA units in Ireland will "survive based on the old-fashioned principles of combined hard graft and unity"

Does the GAA fear it could tarnish the unity and community spirit carried in the sport by paying these hurlers and footballers? It is possible that if top stars are getting paid and lower clubs remain amateur that a faction to emerge through jealousy or envy. Maybe further down the line the volunteer ethic, which has underpinned the GAA since it’s foundation, would disappear. These concerns are very real but perhaps a little conservative.

A study carried out by the FAI (Footballers Association of Ireland) in 2002 before their acceptance of professional clubs emerging in their national league revealed.

*“...Most ordinary club players are happy to be where they are. They put in good effort, but nothing by comparison to the league 1 players. They understand that, so they accept that star performers who are under enormous pressure get some financial reward.”*

So if rugby and soccer can survive on that basis internationally why should the circumstances be any different for GAA?

What we’ve learned so far is that the GAA could financially support itself even if the association did turn professional and that the risk of paying some players and not paying others isn’t in fact that big a risk. Through studies carried out by the FAI it seems the system doesn’t corrupt or hurt their amateur players in any shape or form. So maybe the GAA should start paying wages to their inter-county players. The final question I find is, do the players need this wage? Have they earned it?

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**3. Conclusion**

Although the GAA is currently amateur, at inter-county level many players seem to find themselves very well paying careers, with very flexible office hours. Some of the best GAA stars even find employment in companies that pay huge amounts in advertising to the GAA itself. e.g. Vodafone, Lucozade, RTE, TG4… Clearly doors are opened for top players at inter-county level. These companies aren’t employing these men solely on their office skills or number crunching. Inter-county players show a good work ethic and are always good to have around the office if a new client is ever in town. These jobs are normally in representative areas or associate positions. That being said, not all GAA players find themselves such comfortable jobs and working a full time job and balancing a social life with a professional training regime. (Lets face it. The GAA might not be paying them but their training programs are to a professional standard) it is understandable if it can all become too much to manage at once.

I believe that to get to inter-county level in either hurling or football that, Yes the player has earned a salary. After all the hours of training put in off the pitch to achieve such a high playing standard, a standard that attracts the spectators to the games in turn generating ticket revenue, and TV broadcasting, which in turn leads to advertising on RTE and TG4 and sponsorship deals with external companies all from a direct result of each player.

Finally, I put forth a scenario I came across while researching this topic.

“Is it fair that on match day at the All Ireland Final at Croke Park, that the woman selling match programs outside the stadium, the man on the gate taking in tickets, the ball boy’s and ball girl’s surrounding the pitch, the barmen and waitresses in the corporate boxes and the Garda through out the stadium are all getting paid. While those 24 men out on the pitch (the reason everyone else is working) are the only group not getting paid for their days work.”

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**4. References**

- Dwyer, M O'D, 2007. *Blessed and Obsessed*. 1st ed. Dublin: Folens.

- Mendlowitz, A M, 2007. *Ireland's Professional Amateurs*. 1st ed. Nebraska: iUniverse.

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