

# Wholly Thursday

With the news of Ireland's Conor McGregor triumphing in the Ultimate Fighting Championship, **KEN ROGAN** asks just who are the world's toughest men?



**F**IGHTING words, eh? Oh sure, I can talk a great fight. But really I'm a runner, not a fighter. I'm still tough as nails, clearly. Just untested. I'm pretty sure I'd be good with a sword too. The presumed mastery of all forms of combat and weaponry is right down in the DNA of male testosterone – and the less verifiable these assertions are, the dearer we hold them.

But who are the world's toughest men, really? These days that question is being answered by mixed martial artists in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC).

Ah, martial arts. Promises much, but delivers little, and full of nonsense wisdom such as 'be like water', or Judo's famous motto, 'use your opponent's weight against him'. Really? What if he's using his own weight? On this, Judo is silent. Most martial arts are captured in this classic master/pupil exchange: 'Punch me. No, other hand.'

The king of combative clichés though transcends martial arts, or even sports: 'The bigger they are, the harder they fall.' No. The bigger they are, the more they rain their fists down upon you without fear of reprisals. But then, from the bushes of the bullied, like a Hollywood ending, came Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

Twenty years ago, a waif of a Brazilian barnacle called Royce Gracie started beating ogres twice his size. Yes, he wore them down a bit by hitting his face off their fists, but they could never shake him off their arms, or legs and gradually these trolls all crumbled to the ground.

And we began to see credible answers to the 'world's toughest man' question. Fighting and grappling – or mixed martial arts. If you think it's just for men with more tattoos than warm childhood memories, you'll be amused to learn that ushers in Leinster House are trained in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, according to reports this week.

The real MMA news though is Conor

McGregor (pictured). Ireland now boasts a winning UFC fighter, who knocked his opponent out in 67 ferocious seconds. UFC fights make for electric viewing that you'll love or loathe for the same reasons: enthralling, bloody barbarity. I'd love to try it, naturally I'd be incredible, it's just I can't cope with being punched in the face.

The last time I faced a fight was in Asia in one of those Thai boxing bars. My mate challenged me, and so, fuelled by sandcastle buckets of gin and tonic, what could I do? Refuse, of course! I can spot a lose-lose scenario even with a touch of the bends from scuba-diving and the swagger from my portable trough of booze.

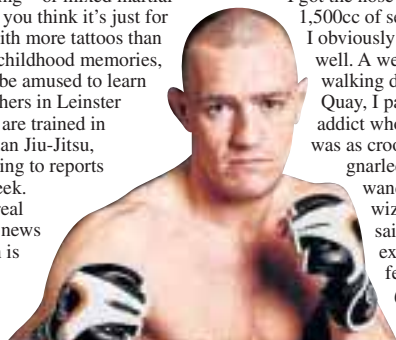
My honour was saved by a ten-stone cocksure Dutch kid of 21 who 'for sure' would fight in my place. I told my mate Ian to go easy, but I needn't have worried. Not ten seconds in he popped Ian square on the nose and thereafter kept his ever-bobbing, ever-weaving chiselled, symmetrical face out of danger. The next day Ian's eyes were cupped by two purple-black hemispheres – a satanic, upended McDonald's logo that screamed alcohol-led violence.

No, I'm not a fighter – but I did break my nose playing soccer. This led me to outpatients' where I shared a bench with similarly-injured men. To my right a GAA player. To my left, the sort of gent who'd normally give me the willies, but we were brothers in broken bones.

'What happened you?' 'Lads attacked me with hammers'.

Five sobering words to be sure, but he had the last laugh, emerging from the treatment room without a nose cast. How come? 'Fell back into place,' said Hammers, as he toddled off.

I got the nose cast. And 1,500cc of self-pity, which I obviously broadcast well. A week later, walking down Aston Quay, I passed a heroin addict whose own nose was as crooked and gnarled as the magic wand of a dotty old wizard, and he said: 'Know exactly how you feel bud'.  
@kenrogan



# Losing the internet is what gives us a chill

by **TARIQ TAHIR**



## Stream of coinciousness

A new €10 collector coin to honour James Joyce depicts the writer and lines from chapter three of his masterpiece *Ulysses*. PICTURE: JASON CLARKE

THERE'S the smell of Benj off you because there's no water, and you're shivering in the dark, because gas and electricity has been cut off.

Well, that's a lot better than – shock, horror – your broadband being cut.

That's according to almost four in ten people who believe their stress levels would be higher if they were unable to surf the web, than if basic utilities were cut off or their TV stopped working.

A third would prefer to lose other utilities than see their internet connection go down. And more than a quarter said they could not live without the internet.

Meanwhile, the same proportion said they could not survive for more than 24 hours without a home connection.

'Having an internet connection is part and parcel of our everyday lives, becoming more important than even heat and water at home,' said Claire Sellick, of information security trade show Infosecurity Europe.

It commissioned the poll of 1,000 people in the UK last month.

# Welfare official jailed for €17,000 fraud

A SENIOR Welfare official pocketed €17,000 by overpaying claimants on purpose and then demanding back the money, which he then used to fuel his gambling addiction.

Brian King, 48, was managing the Social Welfare Office in Dun Laoghaire when he purposely overpaid 25 welfare recipients before contacting them and saying the overpayment was a mistake.

The scam came to light when the Department of Social and Family Affairs received a tip-off in an anonymous letter. King has since been fired.

Dublin Circuit Criminal Court heard that the thefts resulted from King's gambling problem which

was exacerbated by the heavy workload his office was under since the economic collapse. The number of people on jobseeker's allowance in Dun Laoghaire had increased from 3,000 to 8,000, the court heard.

King, of Springhill Avenue, Blackrock, admitted four sample counts relating to the theft of €16,957 between April 2010 and August 2011.

Judge Martin Nolan said King, who had been a civil servant for 26 years, 'spotted an opportunity and used his position and intelligence to steal the money'. He noted that King was under significant pressure at the time and has now lost his 'position in life and his career'. He jailed him for 16 months.

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## 'iSocial butterflies' flit between four parties

IS there anything more annoying than people who keep looking at their phone when they're talking to you at a party – as if they wanted to be somewhere else?

Yes – people who keep looking at their phone because they're working out which bash to hit next.

Young adults now spend an average of just 97 minutes at parties, as they use social media to hunt for more fun elsewhere, a survey shows. More than 40 per cent say they rarely remain at just one venue and move to between two and four shindigs on a typical night out.

Neuroscientist Dr Jack Lewis said: 'With smartphones and the internet we can find ourselves inundated with so many social options it is very difficult to choose between them. So we don't – we just accept them all.'

Nearly 60 per cent don't think twice about making an exit for somewhere better, the survey for lastminute.com found.

The 'iSocial butterflies' use excuses to explain their early exits, the most popular 'I'm working tomorrow' or saying you'll be back... but never returning.