

Press Pass Gazette

‘A Dream Come True’

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Coláiste Mhuire, Ennis

It's the 19th of August, All-Ireland Sunday. Galway and Limerick are exhausting their last few ounces of energy. It's the 68th minute. Peter Casey picks the corner back's pocket and crosses the ball to the edge of the square. Shane Dowling, one of the few fresh pairs of legs on the pitch, takes his first touch, controlling the ball beautifully. His second lets the sliotar fly. The goalkeeper spreads himself as wide as he can, but his efforts are in vain.

This has been rehearsed time and time again by a young boy, now a man, about to end his county's 45-year drought. The net billows: the sea of green erupts, grown men cry with elation, and this young boy—now a man—races back up the field. Shane Dowling has just won the All-Ireland hurling final for his county. Sitting in his kitchen, six months on, my sporting idol helps me to experience what that historic 68th minute felt like.

According to the man himself, 'there is no word in the dictionary that can describe that feeling'.

However, this one moment in time, this dream come true, didn't just happen overnight for Dowling; the build up to it was more like a lifetime. Since childhood, he 'dreamed of scoring a goal in an All-Ireland final.' He even reminisced about how friends told him he 'should've put a bed' in his beloved Na Piarsaigh because he was there so much. Little did he know that he would soon become a hurling legacy and an All-Star. Looking to pay it forward, Shane remarks, 'that's why I'm giving a hand with the young lads in Na Piarsaigh, in the hope I can bring on the next generation'. His 'appreciation' and 'respect' for 'those who worked with us in the club and school' is palpable: 'they got us to where we are today'.

This year marks Shane's eighth for Limerick, but he still carries as much passion as ever; believing that visualisation and motivation are his keys to success. He says, 'motivation has to be from within... your coach can speak to you a hundred times, but if it doesn't come from inside it's a waste of time'. After all, it is what you do in your own time that 'makes you into the player that you want to be.' In his own wise words, Dowling explains that you only have a few years at the top, so 'you have to try and maximise your time.'

Remembering advice that he recently offered the students of Ardscoil Rís, his alma mater where he captained the victorious Dr Harty Cup team, he proffered 'you should respect everyone. If you're playing sport, don't interrupt or stop those who are trying to do their best at academics and vice versa. I would also advise people to take everything step-by-step, visualising everything'.

Shane's self-motivation, combined with his magical hurling skills, proves to me, the county of Limerick and our nation, that dreams really do come true.