

Evening Echo

www.eveningecho.ie

Ban rethink essential

THE proposed month-long inter-county ban against eight hurlers arising out of the fracas prior to Sunday's game between Cork and Clare is an understandable reaction to an unfortunate incident. But it is also harsh and risks punishing the Cork team disproportionately. Circumstances conspired to put fired-up athletes in close proximity to each other at a time when they were unsupervised by the referee. The clashes which followed the joint charge from the tunnel were hardly dangerous but they were unacceptable and made worse by the fact that fighting took place in front of a group of schoolchildren. The incident could not be ignored and the GAA's new disciplinary procedures had to come into play. Unfortunately, the suspensions offered to the Cork players, if implemented, will hurt their team more than the Clare players' bans. Clare's next assignment will be against a lesser power in the qualifiers, while Cork could face one of the best teams in the country, Waterford, without four top defenders. Any team would feel **such a loss and the penalty is out of proportion with the offence.** It would be fairer to fine the two county boards a substantial amount and donate the money to Cumann na mBunscoil, the organisation which promotes under-age games. That would be a good way to make amends for the bad example shown to the youngsters in Thurles.

Brother, what a summer...

EVERYONE says it's a disgrace but millions will watch the festival of bad behaviour, vulgarity and poor taste that is *Big Brother*. Really, we should have better things to do of a summer's evening. But with the weather the way it is...

By DAVID YOUNG



SO, what's next? Nigh on a month of frenetic electioneering has come to a close. We tuned into the leaders' debates; chewed the fat; swore a little; cast our ballots with defiant pencil scratches; bought the candyfloss; and stood back for the fireworks display.

But it all kind of fizzled into something of an anti-climax. Some are still waiting for a big bang. But the party's over.

The front door won't be darkened with a fraction of the traffic of the last 30 days or so. The serene poster-board lustre of scrubbed (honest-as-the-day-is-long) faces has dimmed. In truth, most of those grins and arched eyebrows never turned up to meet you on your own turf. They might have, you think, as little notes were left behind: "Sorry to have missed you." Certain impressions deepened.

Admit it. They made you feel important, albeit fleetingly, and now you're at a loose end. They opted instead to tease you. They hung from lamp-posts and street corners; emerged tractor-like from hedgerows with fertile but profligate abundance; they loitered in our lives, uninvited.

And now what? As abruptly as they arrived, they disappeared. The election build-up had been agonisingly long — almost two years of gung-ho rhetoric of change-a-coming. Summer saw the promises gain momentum. Gavels striking sound blocks pierced the campaign din. The sun, moon, and stars were all set to arrive within a virtual working week.

But before your drawn breath could be exhaled, the game ended.

Perhaps, the political pageantry is to blame for making the Nation think a Santa of sorts was on the way. We've grown unfamiliar with an event that rolls around but once every half-decade. Each count centre became a grotto. The papers were fastidiously tallied; the victors held shoulder-high; ruddy-cheeked campaigners (helpers, you could say) whooped and hollered; flashbulbs popped. But for the rest of us, with our noses pressed against the window, life just rambled on — mere spectators.

What of the politicians, you may wonder. They huffed and puffed but they didn't blow the house down.

Instead, they threw *Don Quixote* shapes at each others' windmills; decorated the streets and roadways with their personal features; photogenic or not, they force fed us a diet of pictures that ought to embarrass most right-thinking folk.

But, oddly, we grew accustomed to the disembodied newcomers in our lives, peeping in our windows. They winked and grinned at us, while we went about our days. We played the game too. We toyed with answering the front door; we flirted with ideas of what we'd ask our mysterious visitors.

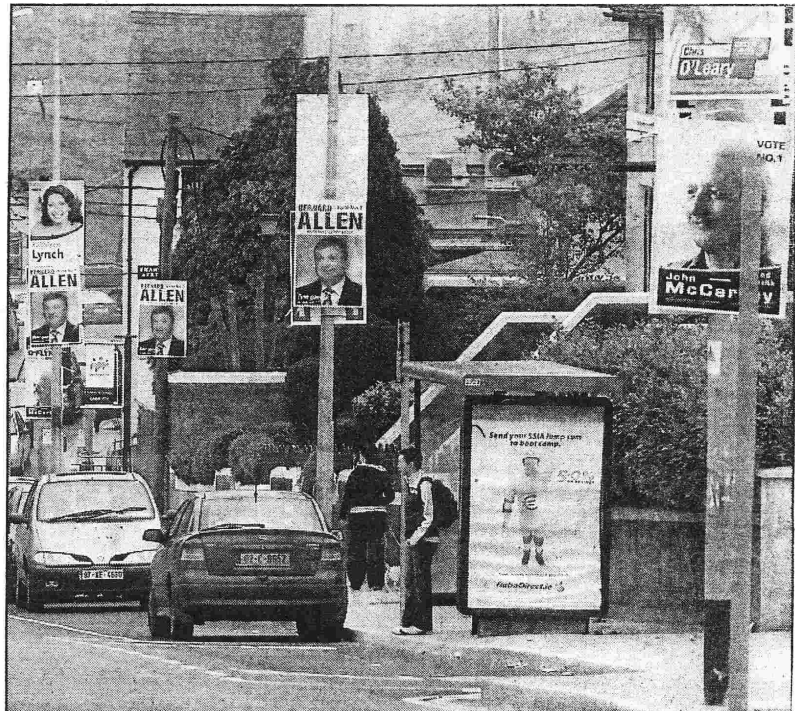
But mostly, we resolved that the next knock, not this one, would be answered; mightily relieved to hear the footsteps shuffle on next door.

When handshakes were exchanged, we swore to recall their good selves, but smugly declined to advance the number of our preference. And then, when we weren't looking, the most flagged, and anticipated hustings in the history of the State, like all circuses, skipped town — leaving a void in our lives. Most of the nomadic performers managed to avoid paying a personal visit, but by God, they felled a few trees to make sure you didn't forget them.

The crumpled and dishevelled posters still hanging are not there by design to console and counsel your newfound withdrawal symptoms. They're just reminders of a brief addiction. Cold turkey might be the best policy but it makes for poor tea-break conversation.

Making idle chat at a wake might prove easier. A certain tribunal may yet have us dancing on a political grave.

The party is over, and boy, will we miss it!



We've become accustomed to seeing the election posters over the past number of weeks, soon they'll be all gone. Picture: Larry Cummins

THE LAST WORD

"Grief teaches the steadiest minds to waver."

Sophocles (496-406BC)

HOW TO CONTACT US

PHONE

Newsdesk: (021) 4802142 or (021) 4802154
Sportsdesk: (021) 4802228
Features: (021) 4802162



WRITE

Evening Echo, City Quarter, Lapps Quay, Cork



E-MAIL

You can e-mail us at echo.ed@eecho.ie
To e-mail a specific reporter, use the following formula: firstname.surname@eecho.ie



FAX

021 4802135