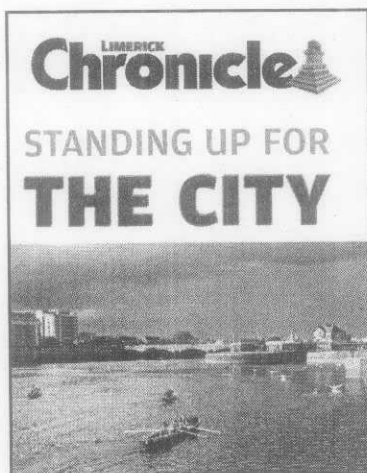


Sporting Limerick to come out of the traps

■ New greyhound stadium's facilities can accommodate conferences and weddings



Alan Owens and Nick Rabbitts

LIMERICK'S NEW €18m greyhound stadium opens for business this Friday night, adding a superb new facility to the already glittering sporting facilities available in the city.

Housing 2,900 spectators and conference facilities for up to 270 people, the facility's manager, Declan O'Halloran,

has reported huge interest in the Dock Road venue for social occasions, including weddings.

"We have racing Friday and Saturday night, but we have also had a lot of enquires for social events. The Young Munster ladies team is running a fundraising fashion show here in November. We have also had a lot of enquires for conferencing facilities, and from wedding planners," explained Mr O'Halloran.

"There has been a hell of a lot of interest. And we are open to any use which can be found for the stadium," he added.

The addition of the state-of-the-art facility to a local infrastructure that already includes the incredibly successful Thomond Park, means Limerick can now lay genuinely claim to being Ireland's sporting capital, but Mr O'Halloran insists the stadium will complement, not compete.

"What we're not trying to do is come into Limerick and make things more difficult for the hotels or for Thomond Park or anybody. What I'm looking to do is complement them. I've met most of the hotel managers in town and I've met Thomond Park," he explained.

"So we think this is going to be a



Olivia O'Sullivan and Limerick Greyhound Stadium manager Declan O'Halloran walking greyhounds at the new stadium, which opens this Friday

new addition to Limerick, a new attraction along with Thomond Park, along with the racecourse, along with

the GAA, and it's another facility the Mid-West can be proud of," he said. The stadium boss conservatively

expects in the region of 70,000 people to use the facilities in the first 12 months of operation, and possibly as many as 100,000.

"We are going for value for money. What we are trying to do is offer an alternative night-out in Limerick that won't break the bank. Our top price for the restaurant is €45, and that includes your entrance and a race card. That's the worst it gets," he said.

On opening night, the stadium will screen the Ireland and Russia international soccer match, with the venue equipped with 300 televisions. The Leger restaurant can cater for 190 people, and there are two corporate suites, catering for 30 and 50 people respectively.

Shuttle buses will also run in and out of the city, making the stadium easily accessible.

Quite simply, the opening of this venue adds another jewel to the crown of local sporting infrastructure, marking a significant investment in the infrastructure in the Limerick region as a whole, and a huge vote of confidence for our city.

As Mr O'Halloran said: "This isn't an investment for 2010, it's an investment for the next 25 to 30 years for greyhound racing in the region."