

and the abyss left by Eddie O'Sullivan. To be fair, Declan Kidney went into the job with one hand tied behind his back. He has, however, rung a number of changes through his short but decisive tenure in charge and that must be and hopefully will be credited during the run of the this season's Six Nations Championship.

The thought process behind continuing O'Driscoll's captaincy is probably something we will truly never fully know as the jargon and rhetoric is always the same for these type of decisions. So I think it's best for us to move on despite thinking that the best man, or at least one of the best men, is not in the job.

This column, however, is about Munster Rugby and much has happened over that last few days, not to mention the Montauban mauling, after conditions that were more akin to the sailors of the Volvo Ocean Race swept through the town 50 kilometres north of Toulouse.

There's many that will tell you what it was like - stranded in the south of France can't have been that bad to be fair. The professional outfit that is Munster Rugby, shone through and the result had all the hallmarks of a team bursting with the passion to retain this trophy.

However, a question arose that really needs addressing. On the return of Tipoki to full strength, what would the backline look like?

The Kiwi pairing are sure to be selected for the quarter final battle of Thomond with the Ospreys, but what will happen to the local lad Keith Earls? Would he return to the slot at full back at the expense of Paul Warwick?

Surely, the Australian's he would be a shoe-in for the full back berth as the current option to play both himself and O'Gara in the same starting 15 has paid off so well of late?

McGahan is no fool and the class of Warwick is there for all to see and the chances of Earls falling foul of Warwick's form are very much evident.

That is, of course, that our old friend Declan Kidney does not give the Moyross man a few outings at top international level.

In getting to wear a green jersey over the next few weeks, are we looking at a centre replacement for the man at the top of the column?

well as a conversion from McNulty had the edge over the brace from the visitors and UL were able to capitalise on their half time lead to see out the match and take the points to move them level on points with Garryowen.

In division two, Bruff edged the derby match with Old Crescent while

of the table. Old Crescent sit three points off adrift of fifth place Ballynahinch. Both Bruff and Thomond are on the road this week and travel to Wanderers and Belfast Harlequins respectively. Old Crescent play host to Clonakilty and will look to bridge that gap to the top tier of the league.

Delta Lloyd feel the bite of tough conditions

WITH carnage littering the race course from Singapore to Qingdao in China, the Volvo Ocean Race has seen some of the worst conditions in the history of the race and the Limerick boat run by Ger O'Rourke, Chieftain Group / Team Delta Lloyd Irish Dutch entry CEO, is in the middle of the hellish conditions that leg four has brought. A number of teams were forced to seriously alter plans for the race and on Wednesday morning, Team Delta Lloyd was forced to head for Taiwan and veer off course to assess further damage to the boat. The team had to suspended racing earlier in the leg for a 12 hour period due to severe weather conditions as well as some crucial repairs that had to be carried out to the yacht. Skipper Roberto Bermudez directed the team base and the race office, on both occasions, that the Irish Dutch first generation yacht pulled into a small bay near the Philippines and dropped anchor.

The crew would use this time to allow the severe weather system pass them and also carry out some minor repairs to the main sail track amongst others. With huge seas and gusting winds of close on 50 to 60 knots hitting the boat on the nose, the safer option, according to Team Delta Lloyd CEO and Limerick man, Ger O'Rourke, was to take shelter and assess the situation in due course.

Further reports from onboard Delta Lloyd indicated that the weather phenomenon that passed west of the Philippines was close to treacherous and that taking cover in Salomaque Harbour (Philippines) was the safest thing to do for all yachts concerned.

Ship's engineer and Limerick sailor, Edwin O'Connor, noted the extent of the damage to the fleet from his perspective and the conditions that the fleet have found themselves in to date.

"It's not so bad here now, but early on the afternoon it was pretty full on. I guess you could describe the conditions as truly horrible."

The Irish sailor, rewarded for his efforts in leg 3 of the race by being awarded the Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics Seamanship Award when the keel suffered



major structural damage, again had his hands full over the last 24 hours with the conditions.

"Standing waves in 50 +knots of breeze. Even the big tankers and car ferries running to Taiwan and

China are sheltering in here."

Edwin and crew noted that it was time to assess the damage and take a breather from the horrendous conditions and tackle the jobs list that the storm left in its wake.

"We've got moderate damage in comparison to the other boats. Green Dragon just dropped the anchor beside us. They're looking to borrow our angle grinder and about 50L of epoxy resin!" Doesn't sound good for the Irish Chinese entry who already are under jury rig after tearing the forestay from the deck two days ago.

The Foynes man goes on to suggest that some of the other yachts in the race are in worse off state with others also running for cover.

"Telefonica Black is running back down the coast towards us and apparently have lots of repairs too. Puma has a broken boom, pretty severe for the big cat." Shortly after speaking with Edwin, Telefonica Black retired from the race and Ericsson 3 suspended racing while they assessed their boat.

"We've just ripped our main and smashed a steering wheel, but spirits are still good onboard and we intend to restart asap. We are incurring a 12hr time penalty as we needed to get some outside assistance but to be honest that's OK with us. The weather is not due to drop below 50 in the next 36 to 48hrs so we wont be moving until then."

But this is still a race and the second temporary stop has not dissuaded the crew from keeping the eye on the finish line. Delta Lloyd occupied fourth spot for a long period during leg four and showed the boat speed to be at the top end of the fleet by comparison. As this week was drawing to a close, Team Delta Lloyd would be assessing their progress and the condition of the boat on a very regular basis.

At the time of going to press Delta Lloyd was in Keelung in Taiwan assessing damage to the bow section of the boat and had temporarily suspended racing in leg four of the Volvo Ocean Race.

Four yachts remained at sea bound for China.

Spring time racing in Limerick

THIS week, the Limerick racecourse announces the appointment of Russell Ferris as the new manager at the Greenmount racecourse.

"As the newly appointed manager to Limerick racecourse, Welcoming the guests and racers, the new manager said he was, "delighted and honoured to be associated with Limerick racecourse and look forward to seeing you on course throughout 2009."

festival over Christmas with impressive attendances each day and would noted their thanks to all patrons who joined them during the festival.

This Sunday is the Greenmount Racing member's race day with gates opening at 11.30am with the first of seven race card starts at 1.35pm.

Entrance is 20, 15 and 10 euro for concessions. Regular bus service from Colbert station

packages are available.

Limerick Racecourse have increased their number of races meetings in 2009 to 20 meetings; the next one shall take place on Sunday 1st of February, which is the UL Boh's annual race day. Panoramic restaurant and group rates available. For more details regarding the packages and dates for 2009, please check www.limerickraces.ie or email them on info@limerickraces.ie or call 061 222222

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