

LEADER BRIEFS

Nurses not ruling out further action

FRONT-line nursing staff at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital are not ruling out more action on overcrowding, despite the fact unions opted not to protest this week.

Nurses represented by SIPTU and the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) have decided to give HSE management more time to tackle the overcrowding issue, before they meet again next Monday.

SIPTU nursing representative Jim McGrath said that there will be no repeat of the work to rule which took place recently.

Civic Trust to host Haiti fundraiser

Limerick Civic Trust will host a coffee morning in aid of Haiti this Friday.

All are welcome at the Georgian House and Garden, No 2, Pery Square from 10.30am to 12.30pm. All donations will go directly to the Haiti relief fund.

And a charity table quiz in aid of Concern's Haiti Earthquake Appeal will be held in Goosers Corner, Corbally, this Thursday January 28, between 7.30 and 10.30. Tables are 40. All are welcome

Hearing

Sean inspired by letters from home

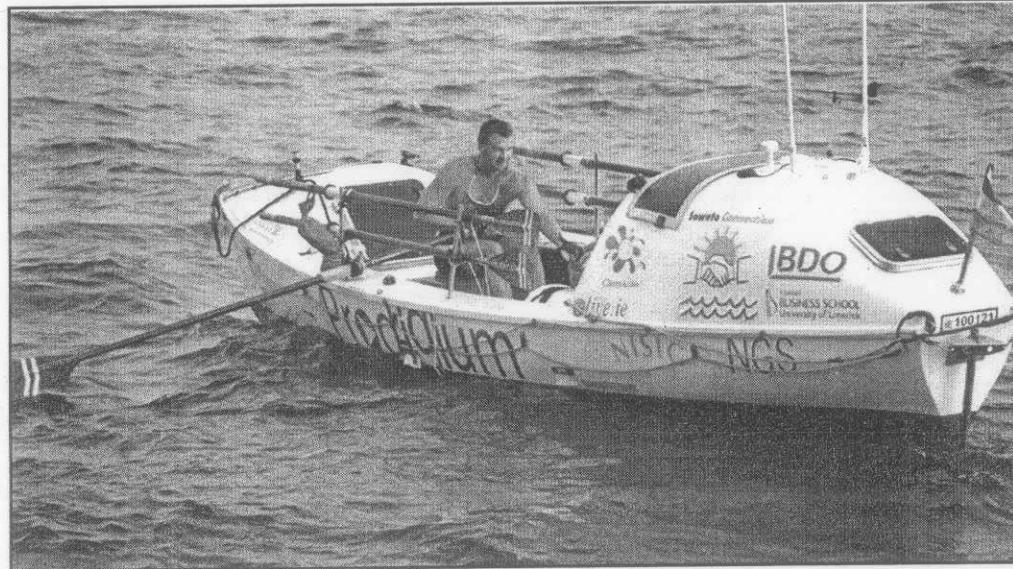
By ANNE SHERIDAN

LETTERS from Ireland rugby manager Declan Kidney, Munster's Springbok centre Jean de Villiers and former Ireland football boss Eoin Hand have inspired rower Sean McGowan during difficult times as he rows across the Atlantic Ocean, in his bid to become the first Irish man to complete the journey solo.

Those letters proved useful this week after his vessel was flooded with water at 3am on Monday. Mr McGowan, 41, from Farranshone, braced himself for the worst and put on his life jacket and had the safety raft ready to go.

A ship sailing past even offered to rescue him and transport his vessel, Tess, to Portugal, but he was determined to keep going, even though he has only travelled one fifth of his journey to the Caribbean.

Thankfully, he said the boat is now "sitting pretty" again, the waves and winds have eased off, and the "only damage [done] is to my nerves."



Sean McGowan setting off from La Gomera in the Canary Islands on January 4 last

PICTURE: RACHEL SMITH

Brother Tom McGowan said those letters have helped him keep motivated, but handwritten notes from his family have meant even more.

"We gave them to him and said 'you keep these and when things are tough read these.'

But he has been getting the most motivation from letters from his daughter Chloe and nephew Conor," explained his brother.

Prior to the latest disaster to beset his epic voyage, he braced 25km winds and 40ft

waves, which threatened to overturn the boat.

"To say that it has not gone well for him would be an understatement," said his brother. "He has been thrown out of his boat twice by large waves. He has had one oar

washed away and another smashed by the sheer force of the ocean. His communications were, and continue to be, severely disrupted, which means he is not receiving all the messages of support that have flooded in."

Last Saturday, a total of 2,515 was raised from a fundraising night in Dolan's for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, which will be donated to Concern, and Mr McGowan's chosen charity, the Soweto Connection.

The latter was set up in Limerick to help families in South Africa, and nearly 7,000 has been raised to date for this cause.

It was intended that Mr McGowan would be able to speak to the audience in Dolan's via satellite phone during the concert. However, the battery on his phone cut out before he was due to speak to the audience.

Mr McGowan, a former senior manager with Dell in Limerick, now has travelled some 428 nautical miles since he set sail from La Gomera in the Canaries one month ago.

There are over 2,100 nautical miles yet to traverse before he reaches Antigua in the Caribbean.



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