

## NEWS

**AWARDS: ANNUAL CEREMONY HONOURS 'INCREDIBLE, OUTSTANDING' LIMERICK PEOPLE**

# Andy Lee named Limerick Person of the Year 2014



Proud mum: Ann Lee accepting the Person of the Year award on behalf of her son Andy

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**Two of Limerick's sporting heroes have been honoured at the Limerick Person of the Year awards for 2014.**

Middleweight boxing world champion Andy Lee was named overall person of the year from among the 12 nominees, while rugby legend Tony Ward was made an honorary Limerickman at the event, which took place in the Clarion hotel.

Speaking by video link from his training camp in Monaco where he preparing for his upcoming world title defence on April 11, the Castleconnell boxer said it was "mind-blowing" to be named person of the year.

"I am just delighted to win this award," he said.

He added: "I'll see you all soon, hopefully back in Limerick after a successful

defence of my title. Up Limerick!"

Accepting the award on his behalf, Andy's mother Ann said that even though the boxer had been born in London, he always regarded Limerick as home.

"Limerick sees him as a Limerick lad and Andy considers himself a Limerick person," she said.

Ms Lee added: "Limerick made him become the man he's become".

"It's not all bull when you hear him on about Limerick and going to Shannon and having the belt - that was a genuine dream. That's Andy and he would have loved to have been here."

Andy Lee was one of 12 winners of Person of the Month awards during the past year.

The other monthly winners included John Hartnett of the Irish Technology Leadership Group, the people of St Mary's Park, jockey Robbie McNamara, the Pallasgreen Passion play group, actor

Myles Breen, the Special Olympics volunteers, Shannon airport chairman Rose Hynes, anti-suicide campaigner Margaret O'Connor, The Limerick camogie team, marathon runner John Collins and the team behind Limerick City of Culture 2014.

All were presented with special framed Limerick Leader front pages outlining their achievements.

Dave O'Hora of Southern - one of the sponsors, along with the Limerick Leader and the Clarion Hotel - said the award were about honouring "the most incredible, outstanding people who do the most courageous and outstanding things."

"Today is about recognising all our winners. This is not a competition - people didn't enter, they did very different things in different walks of life; they were chosen," he added.

Mr O'Hora also paid tribute to the Limerick Leader for "their interest and their enthusiasm for this event".

"It is great to have a local newspaper that actually cares about where Limerick goes and is positive and willing to be involved".

## HEAR ANDY'S MESSAGE

+ TO SEE A VIDEO OF ANDY LEE'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, GO TO [WWW.LIMERICKLEADER.IE](http://WWW.LIMERICKLEADER.IE)

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## For Tony, Limerick honour is 'greatest personal achievement'

He has been a rugby superstar, FAI Cup-winning soccer player and highly respected broadcaster, but for Tony Ward, being named an honorary Limerickman is his "greatest personal achievement".

The Dublin native admitted that he was completely taken by surprise to receive such an honour from the city in which he established himself as one of Ireland's sporting greats.

"Being made an honorary Limerick man means so much to me. This is probably the greatest personal achievement of my life," he said on receiving the certificate from Mayor of Limerick City and County Kevin Sheahan.

"To receive official recognition here today, honestly it has

blown me away.

"I did not expect this and you have no idea the pride I am going to carry being an honorary Limerick man now because this really means so much to me," he added.

In his citation, Limerick Leader editor Alan English noted that Tony Ward had played for Munster, Ireland and the Lions as well as winning two Munster Cup medals with Garryowen and being named European Player of the Year.

"His sporting memories in Limerick are not confined to rugby. He was an absolutely fantastic soccer player as well," Mr English added, noting that 'Wardie' had won an FAI Cup medal with Limerick

United in 1982.

"The impact that he made on the people of Limerick when he came here in 1974/75 was absolutely profound and that is why people still think he is from Limerick," said Mr English.

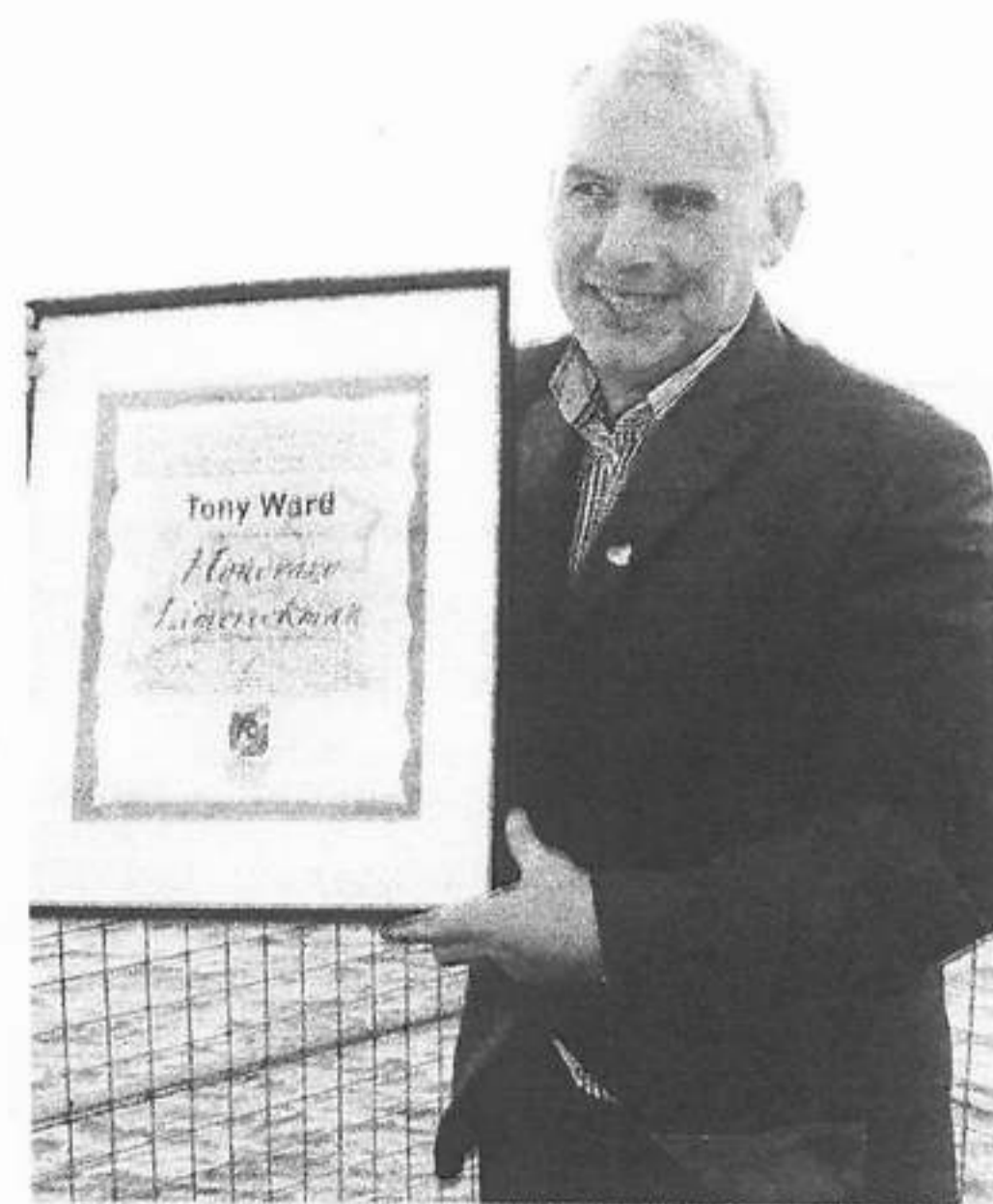
Despite his sporting achievements, however, Mr Ward remained a very humble man. "The best rugby heroes we have had in Limerick have been humble people, like Paul O'Connell, and Tony Ward is a true Limerick rugby hero who has those qualities as well," Mr English noted.

"These days, Tony is a highly respected rugby broadcaster and journalist and in recent years thankfully he has won a two year battle with prostate

cancer. For the people of Limerick though, Tony Ward has always been, and will always be, a winner".

For his part, Mr Ward said he had very fond memories of the ten years he lived in Limerick. "To this day, everywhere I go people assume I am Limerick-born. I am very proud of that fact," he said, noting that there was a passion for sport in Limerick that was not equalled anywhere else.

He paid special tribute to his former Garryowen teammate Frank Hogan whom he described as his "adopted father" when he arrived in the city for the first time. "Over very many years, Frank has been very special in my life," he added.



'Honorary Limerick man': Tony Ward with the certificate presented to him at the Limerick Person of the Year awards