

Profile: DAVE MAHEDY

By MARY HEENAN

PRIOR TO his graduation in 1978, Dave Mahedy, then a young P.E. student, wrote a paper outlining the need for a sports and recreational manager at Thomond College — eight years later sees him in that role.

And according to himself he is enjoying every minute of it.

"It's nice to get paid for something you really like doing and enjoy."

Dublin born Dave has strong ties with Limerick since he first came here as a student in 1974, and though he came close to severing those connections when he was offered a position in the U.S. to coach football and to study for his Masters, he opted for Sports and Recreational manager at Thomond.

"I love Limerick and this is where I would like to bring up my children."

After qualifying in 1978, Dave went into business with Tony Ward Sport, and for the past two years his time was divided between Dublin and Limerick.

"It's good to be back in Limerick full-time," said Dave.

He is the first Sports and Recreational manager at the College, and though he will only celebrate his first year in the job next September, he is responsible for introducing many changes, ensuring that the college now enjoys a much higher public profile.

"We have the best facilities in the Republic and all under one roof — a lot of people just don't know that."

Asked how he could explain the complete turn about of the College from the public point of view, Dave said: "Its easy, when you have something as good as this to offer people, then its not hard to get the message across."

Facilities are here

"People are always quick to say that we in Ireland can't compete with our European counterparts as regard sporting events. We just don't have the facilities they say, but they are here under our nose."

"I really don't think the public are aware of what is available here."

"We can cater for up to 300 people per night here in the complex with activities ranging from swimming, diving, fitness, weight-training, racket sports, team games and track events."

Within the coming months a major re-surfacing of the track will take place and a handball complex will also be added.

"We hope that this will be completed for the start of the track season. The track is now 15 years old, so re-surfacing is necessary."

All the facilities at Thomond are now open to the public. Normally the College closed at 5 p.m., but they remain open until 8 p.m., and later, if the demand is there.

"Of course it is a commercial venture for the college, but nobody can deny that they don't get value for money and that's the way I want to keep it."

And he would like to see as many people as possible in Limerick making use of the facilities.

Dave is also responsible for the Sport and Recreational programme of the P.E. students. And he is now looking forward to the Collingwood cup which Thomond will be hosting for the first time in January.

Though no final decision has yet been reached with regard to the location of the National Sports Centre, Dave is still quietly confident that Thomond will lead the way.

"I would be shocked if we didn't at least get something to

do with the training and preparation of athletes."

"Any such favourable decision would be a major boost to us — it would of course mean the up-grading of facilities."

"What we are aiming for is that we would like to attract national athletes, for example the Olympic squad or the Irish rugby team to come here and train prior to major events."

This would mean a two-fold boom to the college — the improved facilities would not be used on a full-time basis by the elite athletes, leaving them free for everyone else and they would gain experience from having them there.

Watch and learn

"If the best are here then local people can go out and watch and learn from our top sportsmen," said Dave, who was involved with Limerick soccer team from 1978 until 1983.

Much of the team's success, as league and cup winners and the fact that they qualified for Europe three years in a row was attributed to Dave's excellent coaching and training methods.

He has also been closely associated with Mungret F.C., one of the more progressive clubs in town. Last year Dave coached their A team to win promotion to the premier league, and the B team won the third division.

Dave also trained Garryowen F.C. last season, and will do so again this year.

Dave is married to Adare-born Kay Twomey, and they have three children, Debbie (1), Tracy (2½), and Darren (1½).

Today's children, Dave believes, have a much greater experience of a wide range of sports as there are now P.E. teachers attached to all schools.

"And the future will see a lot more people becoming involved in sport — we will all have more leisure time as we

are fast approaching a four day week and people will have to find something to fill those extra hours."

"Of course TV coverage of sport has played a major part in its popularity," said Dave, whose favourite sports are soccer and tennis.

And speaking of the recent World Cup, he said that he felt from a spectators point of view many of the games were disappointing — only a handful were really entertaining, but from a coach's point of view he found it very interesting.

"And of course the tactical skills of Maradonna were excellent — these skills only come from practice and its good to be able to relate that to youngsters."

Control and more emphasis on basic skills is what is required, according to coach Dave.

"Systems and jargon seem to be over-ruling the basic skills," he opines.

Continue in present position

Dave hopes to see himself continuing in his present position as Sports and Recreational manager for some time to come, but he would also like to become involved in the preparation of sport — preparation is vital for a good coach.

At the moment the College is a hive of activity with children's summer camps, and one of the most popular activities organised all year round is the Saturday morning children's activities.

And another new venture which is proving very popular is "The Fitness at Six" programme. For only £1 per session you can take part in an enjoyable exercise experience no matter what age you are or what physical condition you are in. On Monday's, Tuesday's, Wednesday's and Thursday's you can enjoy a

workout at your own pace, supervised and encouraged by qualified staff to help you develop your level of fitness.

"It's a great way to spend an hour and though this is only its second week, we are delighted with its success."

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