

who crashed his car while drunk and serving a ten year driving ban has escaped a lengthy prison sentence after agreeing to leave Ireland.

Arvydas Bernota, 24, of Ballyhomin, Askeaton, was sentenced to eight months in jail at Newcastle West District Court last Thursday for his role in the crash near Croom on June 5.

However, after agreeing to bring forward his "long term plans" to leave the country, Judge David Anderson ordered that the prison sentence be postponed until September, giving the accused until the end of August to leave Ireland.

The judge warned Mr Bernota, who has previously served time



Solicitor Michael O'Donnell: Client agreed to leave Ireland

in jail for driving without insurance, that "a warrant for eight months in jail will be waiting" if he ever returns to the country.

Supt Joe Roe told the court that on attending the scene of the crash on June 5 gardai spoke to Mr Bernota, "formed the opinion" that he was drunk driving and arrested him.

He later provided a

As he was serving a driving ban at the time, Mr Bernota was ineligible to hold a driving licence or car insurance, while the vehicle itself had no NCT cert.

The court heard that Mr Bernota has four previous convictions for driving without insurance dating back to 2008.

In 2009 he was banned from driving for ten years, while in February last year he was jailed for four months for the same offence.

Solicitor Michael O'Donnell, representing the accused, said that Mr Bernota is a man of "very limited means" who been living in Ireland for four-and-a-half-years, but is currently unemployed

back to Lithuania, the judge asked "would he like to consider doing this immediately?"

Mr O'Donnell said that his client might not be able to leave before August, as his partner is currently working. "He doesn't have to bring her," the judge replied.

The judge handed Mr Bernota a total of eight months in prison for drunk driving and driving while disqualified, and ordered that he be banned from driving for a further ten years.

The judge accepted the offer and marked for Mr Bernota to be taken into custody on September 9, giving him just over six weeks to leave Ireland.



TO celebrate the release of the new DVD charting Munster's Magners League victory last season, Johnie Murphy, Wian Du Preez and Declan Cusack will be in HMV Cruises Street this Saturday at 12pm to sign copies of the two-disc DVD 'Munster Magners League Champions 2011'. The Leader has a signed jersey and 5 pairs of tickets for the pre-season match against London Irish in Thomond Park on August 26 to give away. Simply email news@limerickleader.ie with your details and 'Munster giveaway' in the subject line

Documentary follows events that led to climber's death

Alan Ownes

WHILE THE family of Ger McDonnell marked the third anniversary of the Kilcornan's climber's death with a mass this week, the Irish producers of a documentary about the disaster on K2 which claimed his life, clocked up a "probable new world record", filming from a helicopter above the mountain for the final sequence of 'The Summit' - a film about the events on K2.

Ger was tragically killed after becoming the first Irishman to summit K2 when he attempted to rescue two Korean climbers and Sherpa on his descent on August 2, 2008. The film, which is to be a "worldwide, significant film, as good as Touching the Void", according to a source close to the production, will receive a feature length, cinematic release next year.

According to mountaineering website Explorersweb.com, the filmmakers - who are being overseen by a production team that includes Pat Falvey, a close friend of Ger's, Image Now Films, a Dublin-based production company, along with funding from the Irish Film Board - flew to "an altitude of 23,500 feet (7,162m) on K2", with the cooperation of the Pakistan Army aviation wing, filming aerial footage of the shoulder above camp 4 and the Serac where the tragic accident occurred.

The film is being directed by Nick Ryan, who was operating the camera from the head-spinning height, and he was quoted as saying: "The sheer scale of the mountain is breathtaking. To look down on the slopes of the south-east face and realise the climbers who never made it back are still resting there, was an emotional experience for me."

Contacted by the Limerick Leader, Pat Falvey, who is an executive producer on 'The Summit', declined to discuss the documentary directly as it is currently in production, but said it was "coming to fruition, and Ger's story will not be left untold".

Ger McDonnell's partner, Annie Starkey, returned to Limerick this week to mark the Kilcornan man's anniversary, with the family attending a quiet mass in the village on Tuesday, along with neighbours and friends.

Preparations are currently underway for a charity cycle in Ger's name, which will take place on August 13 next, and is being organised by Ger's family and friends, raising funds for the 'Bee for Battens - Saoirse Foundation', which supports those affected by Battens Disease in Ireland.



Kilcornan's Ger McDonnell conquered K2 in 2008, the first Irishman to do so, but was tragically killed on his descent

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