

TENNIS WIMBLEDON

# Niland eyes Wimbledon spot

■ Limerick tennis star moves within one match of Grand Slam debut

Colm Kinsella

LIMERICK'S Conor Niland stands on the brink of competing at the world's premier tennis tournament- Wimbledon 2011- after successfully making it through to the third round of the event's qualifying tournament at Roehampton.

Standing in the way of 29-year-old Niland competing in his first Grand Slam event and against the world's elite players at the Championships which begin on Monday is Croat Nikola Pietrangeli.

The pair are due to meet in the third and final round of qualifying at the Bank of England's Sports Ground in Roehampton this Thursday.

A total of 128 men have been battling it out for just 16 elusive spots in the main draw of the Men's Single for the tournament since Monday.

Famous names that have gained entry into Wimbledon via qualifying include John McEnroe, who then went on to reach the 1977 Wimbledon semi-final before losing to Jimmy Connors, 16-year-old Boris Becker in 1984, Jana Novotna in 1986 and Pat Rafter in 1993.

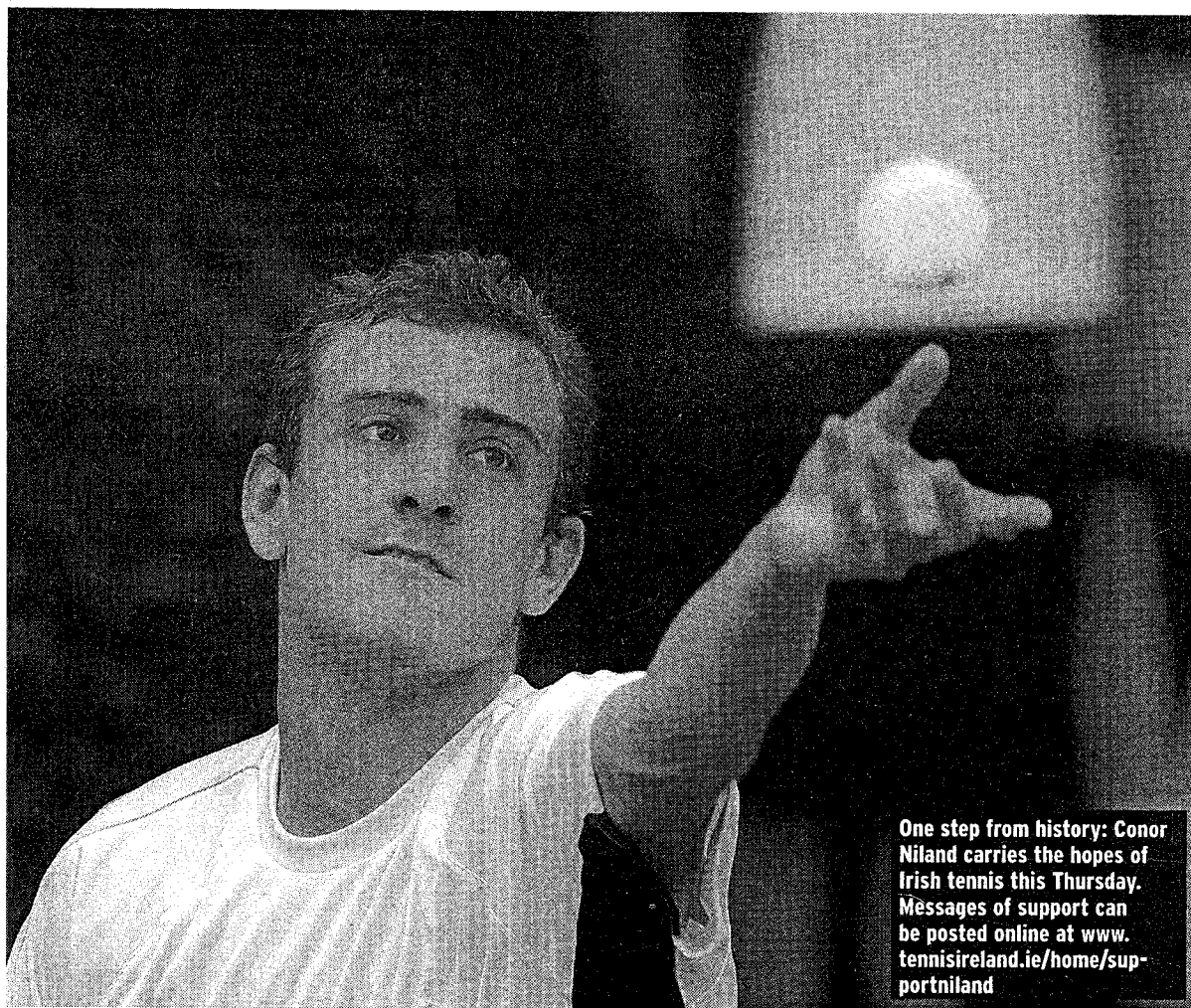
Irish number one Niland had to come from a set down to beat Australia's Greg Jones in his second round qualifying match on Tuesday.

Battling Niland, a former student at Crescent College Comprehensive, claimed the second set on a tie-break before taking control in the final decisive set for a 4-6 7-5 6-2 victory.

His third-round opponent Pietrangeli overcame Russia's Andrey Kuznetsov 6-1 7-6(7-5) in his second round match.

In order to qualify for the main draw for Grand Slam events, a contender who is ranked between 100 and 250 in the world must win three matches. Niland has come close on a number of occasions in the past. At the Australian Open in January 2010, he narrowly missed out on qualification for the main draw after going up a set in the final round of qualifiers.

Irish Davis Cup star Niland will fancy his chances of making it through to next week's prestigious Grand Slam in London SW19 as he is currently ranked number 184 in



One step from history: Conor Niland carries the hopes of Irish tennis this Thursday. Messages of support can be posted online at [www.tennisireland.ie/home/supportniland](http://www.tennisireland.ie/home/supportniland)

the world, compared to 22-year-old Pietrangeli's ranking of 274.

Niland has won close on \$200,000 in career earnings to date. As well as the possibility of playing against one of the top players in the world, should Niland make it through to the main draw for Wimbledon he is guaranteed to pick up a cheque for stg£11,500. Second round losers at the Championships which run until Sunday, July 3 receive stg£20,000.

Conor is a son of Pat and Ray Niland, Mungret. His sister Gina was a highly successful tennis, reaching Irish number one as well as having a ranking of 350 on WTA tour. Conor's brother Ross competed at Junior French Open, while his brother is an

accomplished rugby player.

Conor studied English at UC Berkeley, where he was ranked number 3 in the NCAA Rankings and was a two-time All-American and Pac-10 Player of the Year.

Wimbledon enjoys a global cumulative TV audience estimated at 378.8 million people. Coverage of the tennis tournament is shown in 182 countries.

Niland enjoyed the biggest success of his career to date in May of last year when he won the \$100,000 Israel Open title in Ramat Hasharon.

Niland claimed the victory by beating Brazilian Thiago Alves, the number four seed who is ranked 116 in the world, coming from a set down

to win 5-7, 7-6, 6-3 in a final that lasted three hours and eight minutes.

Niland shocked number three seed and 2008 Wimbledon semi-finalist Rainer Schuettler in the second round of the tournament in three sets.

In addition to his cash prize of just over €11,000, Niland picked up 100 world ranking points, and this haul helped see him make the huge breakthrough of dipping under the top-200 barrier for the first time.

Earlier this month Niland bowed out of the AEGON Championships- the big pre-Wimbledon event- at London's Queen's Club in the final qualifying round. Niland was defeated 10 points to 8 in a final set tie-break by the Australian No 3 Mathew Ebden.

## Hannon returns to bolster the hurlers options in forward unit

Jerome O'Connell

LIMERICK'S teenage hurling star Declan Hannon will return to the inter-county panel in the coming weeks to bolster the prospects of Donal O'Grady's side in the All-Ireland Qualifiers.

The Adare man missed last Sunday's heartbreaking loss to Waterford in Thurles as he is currently sitting his Leaving Certificate in Ardscoil Ris.

Hannon did play in Limerick's league final win over Clare at the end of April when he scored 1-1 from play.

Hannon only made his senior debut two weeks previous to that final when he lined out against Antrim.

However his championship debut was put on hold until after his secondary school exams.

The Limerick management will also be monitoring the progress of dual player Stephen Lucey.

The Croom man missed both inter-county championship games in recent weeks after picking up a hamstring injury in last month's hurling challenge game against Galway.

Another, who missed the Waterford hurling loss was sub-goalie Brian Murray, who was ruled out with a back injury.

Limerick will learn their backdoor opponents this Sunday evening after the Clare and Tipperary Munster championship semi-final is finished.

That provincial tie takes place in Limerick's Gaelic Grounds.

Possible opponents for Limerick are Wexford, Galway or Dublin.

If Limerick win on July 2 they will be back in action one week later on July 9.

That could end up clashing with the footballers, who are due to see action on July 9.

The Limerick footballers will also learn their qualifier opponents on Sunday week.

Maurice Horan is sweating on the fitness of a number of players as his side bid to fit back from their heavy loss to Kerry. Midfielders Jim O'Donovan and Eoin Joy, attacker James Kelly and Stephen Lucey are all receiving treatment.

## LIMERICK SHC GROUP C AND D PREVIEWS

### Na Piarsaigh v Adare

THIS repeat of the 2009 final could be the game of the weekend. But these two sides could be hit greatest by the Leaving Certificate. A number of players on both sides are in secondary school and their availability of preparation could be the telling factor in the final results.

IT is of course a game that sees former Na Piarsaigh goalkeeper lead Adare against his former side. How he deals with Kevin Doves could be key but of course cutting off the supply is key.

Adare opened their quest to reclaim county honours with a win over Bruree.

Willie Griffin was sent off in that win over Bruree and will be absent, but they should have enough strength in depth to cover in attack. Mark Foley was only introduced as a second half sub and could be ready to assume his customary centre back role.

Na Piarsaigh battled to beat Croom and this is a quality that Sean Stack will want to see continue if they are to remain unbeaten.

Prediction: Adare

### Croom v Bruree

CROOM are coming off the back of a round one loss to Na Piarsaigh.

Croom will have learned a lot in defeat to Na Piarsaigh but will be sweating on the fitness of Stephen Lucey, who may not be ready to chance his hamstring that has seen him miss two big inter-county championship games.

There was a good looking balance to the Croom last time out and they need continuity in this area. Peter Lawlor and Hugh Flavin were used as subs last time and would strengthen their unit.

Bruree will look to keep it tight and as always bring their huge levels of commitment to the game. But scores can be hard to come by for Bruree. They actually led Adare at half time last time out but only managed two points in the second period as Adare upped the tempo. Michael Lane and Tommy O'Brien will need to be on song but Croom with Conor Allis on form could have too much in attack.

Prediction: Croom

### Murroe-Boher v Doon

BOTH of these east Limerick sides were victorious in round one and will know that another two points will set them up nicely for a place in the knockout stages.

Doon will have taken great confidence from beating Ahane, but consistency is the big quest for the men from the Tipperary border. Following on from their County Cup win last Autumn, if Doon can keep their winning run going it could see them make a big leap in progress.

County senior panelist Niall Maher has seen action in defence with Limerick but will return to attack for Doon and could be key.

Murroe-Boher will welcome back Paudie McNamara, who missed the win over Knockainey due to suspension. But they finished that win over the All-Blacks with 13-players and this time round William Clohessy will be suspended.

Another concern is that Willie Walsh sustained an injury in that tie.

Prediction: Murroe-Boher

### Ahane v Knockainey

IT'S not quite last chance saloon for these sides but both did lose their opening round ties. Knockainey failed to build on the momentum of last season when failing to Murroe-Boher. They lined out on that occasion without Liam O'Shea and lost Padraig Barron to injury and the availability of both would greatly add to an attack, where Pat Kirby and Mark Cleary will require watching by Ahane.

Knockainey are the only side with no player involved in Thurles last Sunday and this can often aid preparations and indeed motivation.

Ahane had Niall Moran at centre back last time out with John Mescall accounting for most of their scores from placed balls. Sean O'Connor missed the first round through injury and would bolster the attack if he is ready to return, especially as they have a youthful attack with Killian Enright, Sean Madden, Dan Morrissey and Richard Ryan.

Prediction: Ahane



## TENNIS: CONOR NILAND AT WIMBLEDON



Limerick's Conor Niland who became the first Irish tennis player since 1984 to compete in the Men's singles at the Wimbledon Championships in London which began this week

# Niland living his dream

Jerome O'Connell

MUNGRET'S Conor Niland fulfills a lifetime ambition today when he plays in the world's premier tennis competition in Wimbledon.

The 29 year old Limerick tennis professional has put Irish tennis into the headlines in the past week after poor weather prolonged qualification process.

Today (weather permitting), Niland becomes the first Irish man to play in the All-English Club since Matt Doyle in 1984.

"Of all the slams to qualify for, I think Wimbledon is the one I would have wanted most," said Irish number one Niland.

"It is so close to home and to have friends and family here as well is great and it is the kind of thing that people would understand at home, to be in the main draw is a nice thing to have, so I am delighted," said the Mungret man.

"I lost in the last round of qualifying in Australia a couple of years ago having been up (in the match) which was frustrating, but I felt like I have always played well on grass and I have lost some close matches here so to get through is amazing. My third round qualifier took three days as well because of the rain! We started on Thursday morning so obviously I'm so happy to get through that last

game.

At SW19, Niland will face the tough challenge of France's Adrian Panatta in the first round.

Mannarino is ranked 53 in the world.

The 22-year-old Frenchman has made only one appearance at Wimbledon, losing in the first round in 2009 but his solid form this year has seen his ranking progress steadily towards the world's top 50.

Niland, has a current ranking of 184.

If Niland succeeds on Tuesday he will play Roger Federer if, as expected, the six-times former champion defeats Mikhail Kukushkin in his first round match.

He beat Nikola Pietrangeli from Croatia in straight sets, in his final qualifier on Saturday.

"My last qualifier took three days to play was brutal. I thought I was getting on Friday night. I was quite tired and felt like my head was swimming because you are on and off and the weather doesn't help. You kind of feel a bit sleepy so I was lucky I woke up this morning and didn't have a sore throat or anything," he said over the weekend.

Niland is confident his success in qualifying can give a big boost to Irish tennis.

"I grew up in Limerick and there were no indoor courts and had to go away at about 16 to England and get

training and competition over there," Conor Niland explained.

"But you can do it in Ireland (now) – we have always had guys pushing and pushing but maybe not had the belief to make the breakthrough.

"I didn't necessarily have a role model playing Grand Slam tennis who was Irish, that is what all the Spanish and French have."

Niland qualified for one of just 16

spots from a starting number of 128 players.

Famous names that have gained entry into Wimbledon via qualifying include John McEnroe, who then went on to reach the 1977 Wimbledon semi-final before losing to Jimmy Connors, 16-year-old Boris Becker in 1984, Jana Novotna in 1986 and Pat Rafter in 1993.



Ray and Pat Niland, parents of Conor, departing Shannon Airport to support their son at Wimbledon  
Picture: Press 22

## WEDNESDAY LEADER

### DON'T MISS TOMORROW'S LIMERICK LEADER

#### ■ SOCCER

The crowds turned out in large numbers to watch the annual Over-40s soccer tournament at Pearse Stadium. Our photographer captured all the action.

#### ■ GAA

The county senior football championship swings back into action this weekend

#### ■ TENNIS

Conor Niland begins his quest for Wimbledon glory in London with his first ever appearance in a Grand Slam event





Ronan McDonogh, Alandale, Stephen Kelly, Ennis Road, Enda Power, Ballysheedy, Tommy Kennedy, Ennis Road, Conor Niland, Orla Drumm, Ballyclough, Alan Owens, Mungret - all long time friends of Conor's wish him well as he prepares for Wimbledon

# City's sporting hero holds court

■ The mayor prays for Niland victory in Lourdes

By Petula Martyn

LIMERICK'S Conor Niland plays the biggest tennis match of his life when he takes to the court at Wimbledon this week, and he will have the support of every Limerick person including Mayor Maria Byrne who will be saying a prayer for him in Lourdes.

The parents of Limerick's latest sporting hero bought their flight tickets online at the weekend to make sure they will be in London to see their son realise his greatest sporting ambition. Ray and Pat Niland departed from Shannon Airport on Monday.

Conor's brother Ross, who lives in London, watched him beat Croatian Nikola Mektić in Roehampton on Saturday morning, but his mother, Pat, was actually playing golf in Charleville on Saturday, saying she thought it was "the best thing to do".

"After the golf was over I was in the car and heard on the radio he was 5-3 up in the third set and almost there," she said.

"I put on my phone and waited for the call. Soon enough it started ringing and I knew then. I was on the phone then straight away to him."

"He is there now and we are thrilled. I can understand how he felt,



Judith McGill, President Limerick Lawn Tennis Club



Ray and Pat Niland, parents of Conor Niland have their Wimbledon tickets ready

it was the biggest thing ever for him. In the future everybody will always ask him 'did you play at Wimbledon?' Now he will and we are delighted for him.

"We will stay over until Wednesday or Thursday, but who knows, we could be there for two weeks yet," she laughed.

Limerick Lawn Tennis Club, where Conor

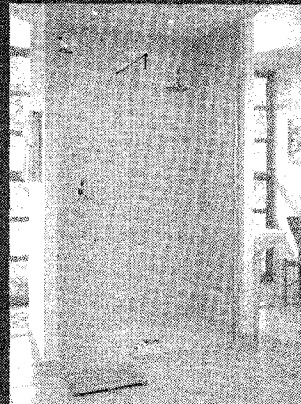
secured his first game, set and match, hope to broadcast the match against French man, Adrian Mannarino, who is ranked 53rd in the world, at the Ennis Road venue.

Mayor Byrne says she will watch the tennis match when she arrives in Lourdes on the Limerick Diocesan Pilgrimage, and will pray for Conor's success.

"It is a great achievement. He has been a promising tennis player for many years and so is his sister. I posted a message on his facebook page to tell him how proud we are in Limerick of him, and wished him all the best for the future matches."

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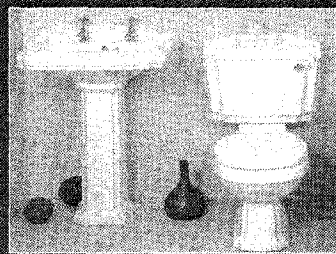
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LIMERICK  
LEADER

# LeaderSport

Wednesday, June 22, 2011

Sports editor Steven Miller

Email sport@limerickleader.ie Phone 061-214514



**BRAVE EFFORT:** Limerickman Conor Niland narrowly missed out on a mouth-watering second round clash with six-time Wimbledon champion Roger Federer. Picture: Sportsfile

## Blues go in search of crucial away win

STEPHEN KINSELLA  
Sports Reporter

LIMERICK FC return to action again this Friday night when they take on Wexford Youths at Ferrycarrig Park (8pm).

Pat Scully's men will look to bounce back after their disappointing defeat at home to Shlebourne last week. Limerick FC must win if they are to keep their promotion hopes alive with the other promotion candidates maintaining their excellent runs of form.

However, Friday night's opponents Wexford do not approach the contest in a rich vein of form. They lost 3-0 to Mervue last week to make it nine league defeats in their last ten. They have only accumulated six points all season, three of which came against Limerick. Since then they have only beaten Finn Harps and they sit joint bottom of the table.

When, Wexford visited Jackman Park earlier in the season, they managed to shock Limerick, securing a last gasp 1-0 victory. Wexford will be anxious to come away with something from the game. This means that it is crucial that Limerick score early on, as Wexford have struggled when it comes to chasing the game.

Limerick will enter the game without the services of many first team regulars. John Frost will be suspended after his sending off last week, but fortunately influential captain Pat Purcell will return from suspension. Shane Tracy who has been out for a month played half an hour last week and it is hopeful that he will be fit to start.

James O'Brien, Stephen O'Flynn and Gary Sheehan are all still long term injuries while Thomas Lyons still looks short of fitness.

Limerick currently lie in fourth place on twenty eight points, three points off Cork City and Monaghan, who do have a game in hand.

Limerick FC will be hosting a press Conference in Thomond Park tomorrow evening to highlight their plans for the future, including the use of the Market Fields and social projects they will be part of throughout the city. They will also announce additional players for the rest of the season with former Irish international Joe Gamble and Limerickman Denis Behan tipped to sign.

# HEARTBREAK

## Battling Conor Niland pipped in five-set Wimbledon thriller

ALAN OWENS  
from Wimbledon

BRAVE Conor Niland has told of his frustration at narrowly missing out on a glamour second round Wimbledon tie with six-time champion Roger Federer.

Niland's first ever appearance in a Grand Slam tournament ended in frustration when he suffered a dramatic defeat in five sets to Frenchman Adrian Mannarino on Court 17 yesterday. Niland had led 4-1 in the deciding set, but was ultimately forced to give second best to a player ranked 130 places above him. Limerickman Niland told the Lead-

er: "I really enjoyed it and the whole week and a half has been amazing, apart from the last. If I could redo the last 15 minutes of the match, it would make a big difference.

"Obviously, being that close and getting myself in that position was good and it is just a pity I couldn't close it out.

"Mannarino played a good game serving at 1-4 in the fifth set, held pretty well and I just started to make some errors that I hadn't been making. I guess when you see the finishing line that happens in tennis, especially. I have seen it before and I will see it again. It is just a pity it happened on that match."

Niland agreed that the enthusiastic

support he received on Court 17 had given him a huge boost.

Dozens of tennis fans- including many from Limerick- queued from 5.30am yesterday morning in order to collect their ground passes for Court 17.

Many of Niland's enthusiastic supporters had taken up their court side seats by 11am, three hours before the Irish number one's match began.

Niland was also cheered on at Wimbledon by his parents Ray and Pat, sister Gina, a former Irish number one who played at Junior Wimbledon, his older brother Ross who lives in London and brother Ray who flew over specially to watch the match.

Conor Niland said: "I would look

over at the crowd and see people I have known since I was eight years of age and family, and then people I didn't know who were cheering for me. I couldn't have asked for much more really.

"I thought it would be good on the day, but I didn't expect it to be that good.

"I have never really seen anything like that on an outside court - I don't know if Wimbledon has, and isn't that saying something?

"I thought they made it a huge occasion and I am sure Mannarino will look back and think that was a special match.

"The support were absolutely amazing, it was brilliant."

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# Agony and ecstasy on Wimbledon's court 17

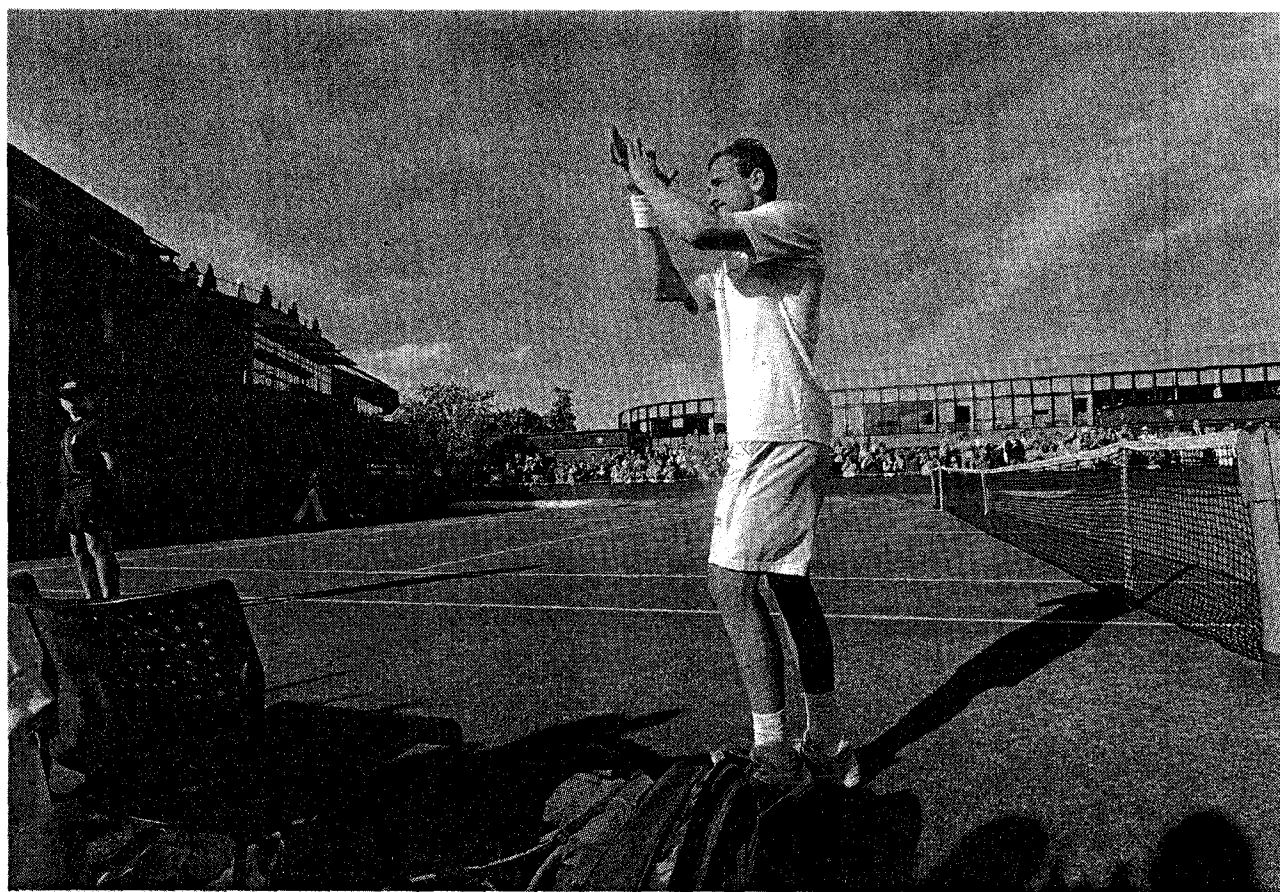
## Alan Owens at Wimbledon

IN THE blistering heat at the All England Lawn Tennis Club while all around them wilted, two young men continued to duel like gladiators, with the prize on offer the chance to face the former world number one on the coliseum-like Centre Court at Wimbledon.

In the end, a mere four points separated Limerick's Conor Niland and France's Adrian Mannarino, who battled against each other in a titanic four hour struggle. Just when it seemed destiny was on the side of 29-year-old, he allowed the chance to slip through his fingers, despite leading 4-1 in the fifth and final set.

Those of us blessed enough to be court-side at the hottest ticket on day two of Wimbledon knew what was at stake, were emotionally involved in the see-saw, rollercoaster match, particularly those of us who have been friends with Conor since a young age, and have followed his career for nearly a decade as a professional tennis player. The possibility of facing six-time Wimbledon champion Roger Federer on Centre Court was in sight, but was not to be, as Conor eventually running out of steam and allowing previously unseen errors to creep into his game, allowing his younger opponent a chink of light when he seemed down and out, which he gladly took.

The build-up to the game was incredible; first Andy Murray called for Conor to get a wildcard for the tournament, a call ignored despite his stature as the next highest ranked male tennis player in Britain and Ireland after the world number four. So it was to be "the hard way" through the qualifiers, Niland staring defeat in the face in the first round;



Limerick's Conor Niland applauds his many supporters around Wimbledon's Court 17 this Tuesday after his agonising first-round defeat to Adrian Mannarino, losing 4-6 6-4 7-6 4-6 6-4

PICTURE ANTHONY DEVLIN/PA WIRE

then in his final qualifying match, just when it seemed he was getting an edge on his opponent, rain delays would punctuate the match - seemingly threatening to derail his attempt to become just the second Irish man in the open era to qualify for Wimbledon. Finally, at 4.33pm on Saturday evening, the Irish number one hit a forehand screamer down the line and sank to his knees, tears filling his eyes at the achievement of qualifying. A roar greeted his success in qualifying, but this roar was amplified by a thousand come Tuesday afternoon at 2pm,

when he took to the court to face Mannarino.

Wimbledon truly is an incredible place, the hype justified, and then some. Immaculately kept, everything runs like clockwork, from the honorary stewards pointing people in the right direction, to the army, navy, police and fire officers who man the entrances to the show courts, defying that cliché of the 'stiff upper lip' with their helpful attitude.

The word went around on Sunday that Conor was playing on Tuesday, so days off work were haggled for, flights were booked and a

horde of family and friends prepared to descend. Of those, a large group queued from 5.30am for ground passes, manning preciously won seats on Court 17 from 11am, three hours before the match, waiting patiently.

Court 17 at Wimbledon is an odd one, caught between an existence as an outside court and so-called show court, wedged between Centre Court and Court One. By 2pm the Irish had truly invaded, taking over every available seat and vantage point, a riot of colour and sound and a standing ovation greeting Niland when he walked on

court. Leprechaun hats, Irish jerseys, tricolours and fans in green 'Team Niland' tee-shirts ringed the court, fans cheering every point.

As the match progressed the shouts got louder and suddenly Wimbledon was being treated to an Irish roar and scenes normally associated with the British players' adventures at the tournament. One watching observer suggested that Henman Hill - or Mount Murray - might yet be renamed 'Niland Knoll', to much laughter. Spectators in the neighbouring courts craned their necks to see

what the fuss was about, while the outdoor corporate areas in the show courts filled with people watching and cheering the plucky Irish man from their lofty heights.

This reporter was busy fielding texts and tweets from home while trying to watch the match - it appeared that the entire country was glued to TG4. And Conor played some wonderful tennis, the best of his career in all probability. He hit ten aces, 55 winners, making three unforced errors less than his opponent. He came back to serve for the third set after being 5-3 down, putting that loss behind him to win the fourth set and break serve twice in the final set before he lost his momentum. In the end, it wasn't to be, but nobody went home disappointed.

"Obviously I will be a little bit gutted about the whole thing, not getting to play on Centre Court, but that is tennis, you win matches that are close and you lose matches that are close," he reflected. "The support were absolutely amazing, it was brilliant. I would look over at the crowd and see people I have known since I was eight years of age and family, and then people I didn't know who were cheering for me, and I couldn't have asked for much more really."

He also stated his intention to push on and use the precious experience gleaned from Wimbledon to break into the world's top 100, which would give him automatic qualification for next year's tournament. Failing that, we can't see how he would not be awarded a wildcard, given the colour that he brought to the tournament this week. Either way, this is a story that has yet to be completed.

SEE EDITORIAL, PAGE 16  
AND LEADERSPORT

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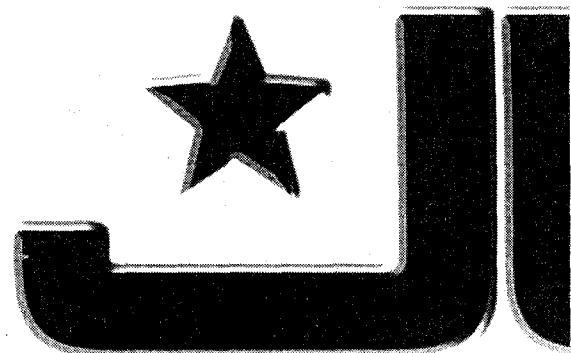
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Conor Niland with friends Ronan McDonogh, Alandale; Stephen Kelly, Ennis Road; Enda Power, Ballysheedy; Tommy Kennedy, Ennis Road; Orla Drumm, Ballyclough and the Limerick Leader's Alan Owens, Mungret who were in Wimbledon to cheer him on





## TENNIS NILAND HEARTBREAK



Limerick's Conor Niland celebrates scoring a point against Adrian Mannarino of France in their epic Men's singles first round game at the Wimbledon Championships on Tuesday

# Brave Niland lights up Wimbledon

## ■ Limerickman loses out in five set nailbiter on Grand Slam debut

ALAN OWENS  
from Wimbledon



**BRAVE** Conor Niland has told of his frustration at narrowly missing out on a glamour second round Wimbledon tie with six-time champion Roger Federer. Niland's first ever appearance in a Grand Slam tournament ended in frustration when he suffered a dramatic defeat in five sets to Frenchman Adrian Mannarino on Court 17 on Tuesday. Niland had led 4-1 in the deciding set, but was ultimately forced to give second best to a player ranked 130 places above him as a result of losing five games in a row. Limerickman Niland told the Leader: "I really enjoyed it and the whole week and a half has been amazing, apart from the last. If I could redo the last 15 minutes of the match, it would make a big difference. "Obviously, being that close and getting myself in that position was good and it is just a pity I couldn't close it out. "Mannarino played a good game serving at 1-4 in the fifth set, held pretty

well and I just started to make some errors that I hadn't been making. "I guess when you see the finishing line that happens in tennis, especially. I have seen it before and I will see it again. It is just a pity it happened on that match." Niland agreed that the enthusiastic support he received on Court 17 had given him a huge boost. Dozens of tennis fans- including many from Limerick- queued from 5.30am on Tuesday morning in order to collect their ground passes for Court 17. Many of Niland's enthusiastic supporters had taken up their court side seats by 11am, three hours before the Irish number one's match began. Niland was also cheered on at Wimbledon by his parents Ray and Pat, sister Gina, a former Irish number one who played at Junior Wimbledon, his older brother Ross who lives in London and brother Ray who flew over specially to watch the match. Conor Niland said: "I would look over at the crowd and see people I have known since I was eight years of age and family, and then people I didn't know who were cheering for me. I couldn't have asked for much more really.

"I thought it would be good on the day, but I didn't expect it to be that good. "I have never really seen anything like that on an outside court - I don't know if Wimbledon has, and isn't that saying something? "I thought they made it a huge occasion and I am sure Mannarino will look back and think that was a special match. "The support were absolutely amazing, it was brilliant." Niland admitted his Grand Slam debut match had been a real roller-coaster. I did a good job - I had four or five set points in the third, but I had saved some at 3-5 down in that set as well, so it was a pretty good position," Niland recalled. "It was good for me to be in that position to have set points. Ok, I lost it and I did a good job of bouncing back earlier in the fourth and winning that set, because it could have been. It knocked me a little bit, but I didn't let it affect me so that was good. "Then I gave myself an opportunity to win it, I put myself ahead in the fifth, but I just didn't get it down from 4-1 up." At the end of the four-hour marathon Mannarino had won just four

more points than the Limerickman. Niland and Mannarino had met only once before, at the Spain F19 Futures tournament in 2006, and that went the distance too. "I have played guys between 50 and 100 before and I feel comfortable playing them," Niland pointed out. "It is just a case of getting myself up to that ranking. "But I knew going into it I would be able to compete with them on that level in terms of being able to play well and get through. "I was down four match points in the first round of qualifying here. The Irish number one explained that he planned to take a couple of weeks off before he turns his attention to playing for Ireland in the Davis Cup. "Now I'm going to take a couple of weeks off. My hip was pretty sore last couple of days but it didn't affect me today," Niland explained. "I'm going to rest that. I don't know if I'll play a tournament before Davis Cup so maybe Davis Cup is my next event. (Tunisia in Dublin) "I've played a lot of tennis with a lot of emotion, a lot of tight matches so I definitely need a week or so just to relax."

## GAA

### in Brief

## Feile na nGael takes place in Galway

GALWAY hosts the annual Feile na nGael tournament this weekend. Limerick will have two representatives in Division One of the hurling. In Group B are Doon, who will be hosted in Oranmore and also play Clarinbridge and Ballygunner of Waterford. Na Piarasigh are in Group C and will be hosted by the Killimor club. They will also play Sarsfields of Galway and Ahan Gaels. In camogie, Limerick will be represented by Crecora. They will play St Martins, Killimor and Davitts. Feile na nGael, which is now in its 41st year of existence, is a national festival of hurling, camogie and handball for boys and girls under 14 years of age. In all there will be 88 hurling, 68 camogie and 40 handball teams participating in the festivities this year. Feile na nGael will come to Limerick in 2013. The prestigious competition was last hosted in Limerick in the mid-90's.

## Football qualifying draw this Sunday

THE Limerick senior footballers will learn their opponents in the All-Ireland Qualifiers this Sunday night when the draw takes place live on the Sunday Game after the Dublin v Kildare game. Maurice Horan's side will play the winners of one of this Saturday's eight first round games. Crucial to Limerick's chances of advancing will be to secure a home draw. The possible opponents are Clare or Down, Laois or Tipperary, Antrim or Westmeath, Louth or Meath, London or Fermanagh, Cavan or Longford, Wicklow or Sligo or Offaly or Monaghan. Limerick's Qualifier will take place on Saturday July 9. If they win they will be back in action again the following weekend. The Limerick management will be hoping that all panel members come through this weekend's club championship without fresh injuries.

## Cul Camps ready to dominate GAA summer

THE Limerick Vhi GAA Cul Camps will commence on July 4 across the county. The camps will continue throughout the school holidays and end with the final camps on August 22. Among those who will be coaching at the camps are Limerick senior hurling captain, Gavin O'Mahony and his Limerick inter-county colleague, James Ryan. Now in its sixth year, the Vhi GAA Cul Camps is a nationally co-ordinated programme which aims to encourage primary school children between the ages of 6 and 13, to develop sporting skills irrespective of their skill level or ability and also to develop a sense of sporting fair play and personal achievement by participating in various Gaelic games, in a fun, non competitive environment. Online booking and information is available open at [www.gaa.ie](http://www.gaa.ie) or [www.vhiculcamps.gaa.ie](http://www.vhiculcamps.gaa.ie)

[www.limerickleader.ie](http://www.limerickleader.ie)

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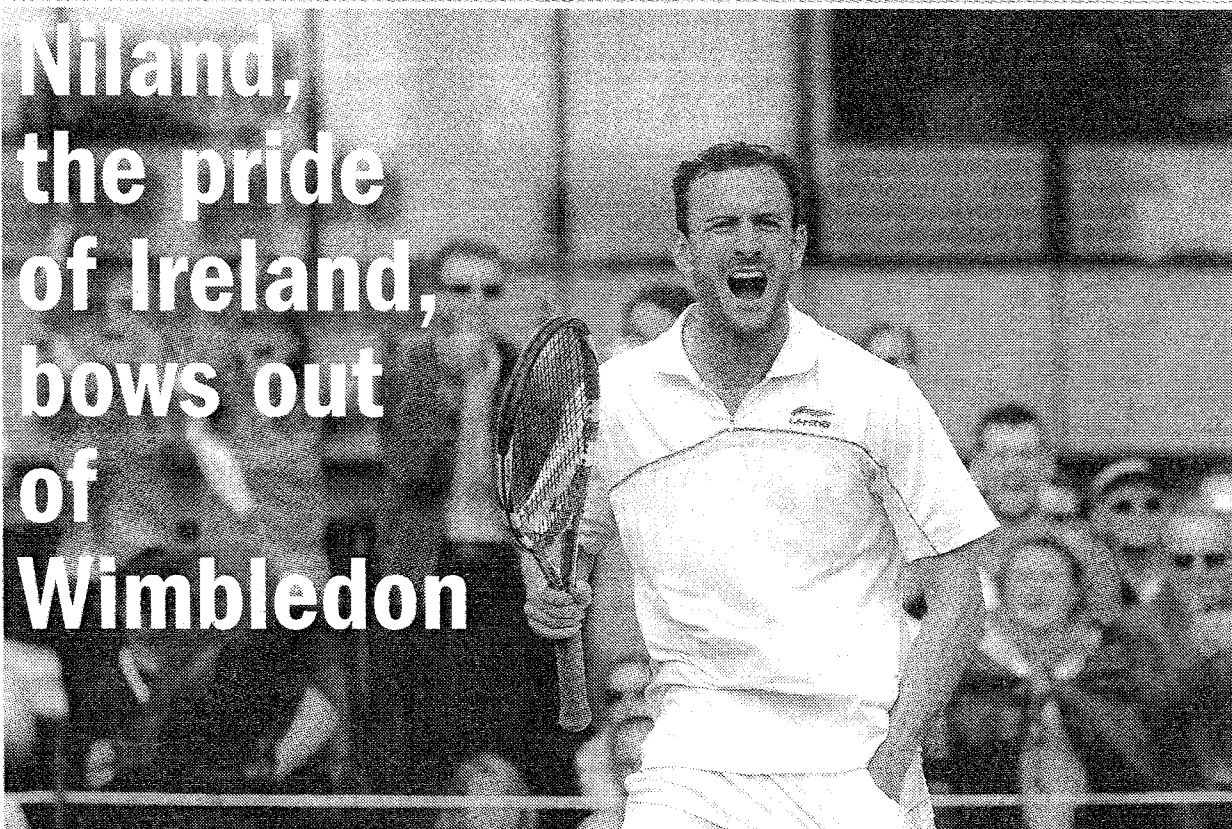
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# PostSport

with Donn O Sullivan

## Niland, the pride of Ireland, bows out of Wimbledon



OF all people, you do not have to tell Limerick natives, that sport is cruel.

Conor Niland was just two games away from a match with World number 3 Roger Federer at Wimbledon, but the sports star of the last week just missed out, losing 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (9-7), 4-6, 6-4 to France's Adrian Panarino on Court 17.

Niland had led 4-1 in the final set, but his serve deserted him and fatigue caused unforced errors.

The loss however hard it may be to take now, will only serve Niland in his future career. The exposure gained over the last number of days will no doubt help with sponsorship, but it will also help his World ranking, which should benefit the Irish tennis star in future Mens Tour tournaments and Grand Slams.

The sight of Irish flags at SW19 and the sound of 'The Fields of Athenry' will be memories for all Irish sports fans to cherish. Niland's fight to the last will be an inspiration to all Irish sports men and women.

Conor's parents Ray and Pat, along with his brothers Ross and Ray and sister Gina, were among the huge Irish support that surrounded Court 17 at the All England Lawn Tennis Club yesterday afternoon, but the result was not to be.

PostSport believes that Limerick City are in the process of arranging a celebration to mark Conor's achievement. The tennis star warmed our hearts on a wet summers day.

Niland fulfilled his dream of playing at Wimbledon. Knowing his determination and desire, this will not be his last trip there either.

## Hurlers to face Wexford in Qualifiers



### Soccer

Sat-25-Jun

### Rugby

Fri-24-Jun

Sat-25-Jun

Sun-26-Jun

### Golf

Thurs-23-Jun-Sun-

Thurs-23-Jun-Sun-

### Tennis

Thurs-23-Jun-Sun-

### GAA

Sat-25-Jun

Sun-26-Jun

Sun-26-Jun

### Baseball

Thurs-23-Jun

Sat-25-Jun

Sat-25-Jun

Sat-25-Jun

