

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **DR MICK MOLLOY**, in University College Cork on 2 June, 2006, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **TOM KIERNAN**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Tom Kiernan was born on the Western Road, Cork City close to the Mardyke and University College Cork. A member of a renowned rugby family, six members of his extended clan have played for Ireland, including his cousin Noel Murphy. His closeness to the Mardyke allowed him unlimited access to the UCC grounds, the centre of all sporting activity in Cork at that time. He was introduced to rugby in Con as a six year old and also played soccer and cricket, the latter at a high standard with his brother Jim for many years. Educated at Presentation Brothers College, Cork, he won Schools' Junior and Senior Cup Medals with the College and played for Munster Schools.

He went on to captain his club, his province (Munster) and his country, the latter a record 24 times. His international career spanned 14 seasons, from his debut against England in 1960 until he played the last of his 54 matches for Ireland against Scotland at Murrayfield in 1973. He was just one cap short of the then-world record held by Colin Meads of New Zealand. Captaining Ireland on the tour to Australia in May 1967, he led Ireland to victory in the test match. That was the first win by one of the 'home countries' in a test match in the southern hemisphere. He was on the first, indeed, only Ireland team to beat South Africa 9 – 6 at Lansdowne Road in April 1965. He was a member of the Munster team that beat Australia at Musgrave Park in 1967, the first Irish Provincial side to beat a major touring team. A Lions Tour Player in 1962, he captained the Lions in South Africa in 1968. At club level he won thirteen Munster senior league medals, three with UCC and ten with Cork Constitution and that collection included twelve in a row. He won seven Munster Senior Cup Medals.

When his playing career finished he turned to coaching and yet again had unprecedented success. He coached the Munster Team that beat the All Blacks in 1978, the only Irish team to achieve this fete. Then he coached the Ireland team that won the Triple Crown – the first in 33 years - and the Championship in 1982. He coached Ireland to the top of the Championship Table yet again in 1983.

These achievements along set him apart in the annals of Irish Rugby. He was also president of the Munster Branch in 1977-78, the youngest to occupy that office in modern times and one must remember that was the year **before** he masterminded that win over the All Blacks.

He was Centenary President of Cork Constitution in 1991-92, was on the IRFU committee from 1983-84 until 2004, and was President of the Union in 1988-89. At various times during his tenure on the Union he had been chairman of the Commercial Committee, the Grounds Committee, the Game Development

Committee and the Sub-Committee to appoint the National Selectors. He was the person responsible for the co-ordination of Irish players in Britain in tandem with the Exiles Committee. He has been one of Ireland's two IRB representatives since 1994; he has been chairman of the Five Nations' Committee; chairman of ERC from 1995-99; chairman of the IRB's policy committee and honorary treasurer of the IRB since 1997. He was Director of the Rugby World Cup 1999. He has been a trustee of the IRFU since 1992.

His has been a career without parallel in the history of the game in this country. His commitment to the game has been recognised, not just locally, but globally and it is clear in every facet of the game that he embraced, a profound impact has been made.

As one of the key figures inaugurating the European Cup (Heineken Cup) he fought off opposition from many quarters to make it into the foremost Club Championship in the world. Dr Syd Millar, an old Irish team mate, IRFU and IRB colleague says of Kiernan:

'What he contributed on and off the field, and the circumstances in which he achieved what he did at administrative level, marks him down as arguably the greatest figure in the history of the game in this country'.

It is fitting that he should receive this honour at a time when his province, Munster, have won the Heineken Cup, a competition he helped to inaugurate and develop into the greatest rugby club competition in the world.

Apart from rugby football, Tom has as total a commitment to his family as he had to his professional and business career, to his former College and to this University.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.