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The National Game SERIES 1 EPISODE 1:

“Come on You Boys in Green”



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**PRODUCTION: THE NATIONAL GAME
RECORDING SCHEDULE: PILOT RECORDED JUNE: 2026
MIX & MASTER: TBD
AUTHORISED RECIPIENTS: SK – DK – JC**

Running Time: 30 minutes (*To the Edit*)

Advert Time: 3 minutes – 3 x 1 minute

SCRIPT:

MUSIC; (“Theme” – *(see SK for ref)*)

SK: Welcome to “*The National Game*” — the show where we explore the footballers who didn't just represent their countries, but became symbols of them.

- SK:** Every nation has players who somehow embody the era they came from; Brazil has Pelé; Argentina has Maradona; The Netherlands has Cruyff. But Ireland's football story isn't built around one giant. It's built around three; Johnny Giles; Liam Brady; and Paul McGrath; three players from different generations; three entirely different personalities and together, they tell the story of modern Ireland itself.
- SK:** One was a football intellectual who looked like he could calculate your mortgage while spraying forty-yard passes. One was a graceful artist who brought Irish football into the European elite and one became a reluctant national saint despite spending much of his life battling demons off the pitch.
- SK:** This is the story of Irish football before Italia '90 - before Roy Keane - before Robbie Keane - before Ireland became a regular fixture on the international stage - This is the story of how Irish football found its identity.
- MUSIC:** *“Rocky Road to Dublin” – Live version by Luke Kelly / Dubliners with spoken intro – see SK for ref)*
- (Play 1st verse & chorus at full volume then fade to background below narrative)*
- SK:** To understand these players, you first need to understand Ireland - the Ireland Johnny Giles grew up in wasn't the Ireland tourists know today - this wasn't the tech hub - this wasn't the Celtic Tiger - this wasn't the Ireland of multinational headquarters and specialty coffee shops - this was a poorer country - a country exporting people, not software - for many young Irish people in the 1950s, the dream wasn't becoming rich - it was getting a boat to England - football reflected that reality.
- SK:** Talented Irish players left home early - they crossed the Irish Sea in search of opportunity - many ways, Irish football functioned as an academy system for English clubs - and that's where our first hero enters the story.
- MUSIC:** *(Rocky Road to Dublin plays to fade)*
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- ADVERT** **1 Minute**
- SK:** Johnny Giles was born in Dublin in 1940 - if you've only ever seen Giles as a television pundit, you might imagine he spent his playing career calmly explaining tactical concepts from midfield. The reality was rather different. Johnny Giles was a footballing assassin: Small -tough - technically brilliant and absolutely ruthless - when necessary.
- SK:** As a teenager, he joined Manchester United under the legendary Matt Busby - won the FA Cup in 1963 before making the move that would define his career.
- SK:** Leeds United.

- SK:** The transfer fee was around thirty-three thousand pounds. Today, that's roughly the cost of a Premier League player's weekly barber bill. At Leeds, Giles became part of Don Revie's revolution. Imagine combining the competitiveness of modern Manchester City, the tribal passion of Liverpool, and the popularity of a rock band. That was Leeds United - Loved by their supporters - Hated by almost everyone else. The team became known as "Dirty Leeds." - To Leeds fans, they were warriors - To their rivals, they were football's version of a pub fight waiting to happen - And Johnny Giles was right at the centre of it all.
- SK:** What made him special wasn't athleticism - he wasn't particularly fast - he wasn't physically imposing. In fact, he looked more like an accountant than a footballer - but his brain worked three passes ahead of everyone else. Former teammates often spoke of his ability to see patterns before they developed - today we'd call him a deep-lying playmaker - back then, they simply called him Johnny Giles.
- FX:** *(Johnny Giles soundbite – see SK for ref:)*
- SK:** Alongside Billy Bremner, Giles formed one of the greatest midfield partnerships in British football history together, they helped Leeds win: two First Division titles - an FA Cup- a League Cup - two Inter-Cities Fairs Cups
- SK:** One of football's great "what if" stories surrounds Giles. When Don Revie left Leeds in 1974 to manage England, he reportedly recommended Giles as his successor. Instead, the club hired Brian Clough. If you've seen "*The Damned United*", you know how that ended:
- SK:** Forty-four days - complete chaos. and decades later, Leeds supporters still wonder what might have happened had Giles taken the job.
- MUSIC** *(See SK for ref)*
- SK:** Then came the Irish national team and here's where things become very Irish. For years, the Republic of Ireland setup was plagued by politics, confusion, and administrative chaos. At times it felt as though the team was being run by several uncles arguing at a wedding - Giles hated it though eventually, he became player-manager.
- SK:** Think about that. Imagine Kevin De Bruyne selecting the Belgium squad, coaching training sessions, and then playing ninety minutes himself. That's essentially what Johnny Giles was doing. Ireland never reached a major tournament during his tenure but he dragged standards upward he modernized expectations - he helped lay the foundations for future success.
- SK:** After retirement, Giles became something even rarer: an institution.
- SK:** For decades, he educated Irish football fans through television and radio. Generations learned how to understand football by listening to Johnny Giles

explain it: Before Brady's artistry - before McGrath's heroics - before Keane's ferocity - there was Johnny Giles -the man who taught Irish football to think bigger.

MUSIC “*Whiskey in the Jar*” by Thin Lizzy - (See SK for ref)

ADVERT 1 Minute

SK: If Giles was the professor...

Liam Brady was the poet.

SK: Born in Dublin in 1956, Brady emerged during a changing Ireland -television was becoming widespread - young Irish people felt increasingly connected to Europe -the world seemed bigger and Liam Brady played football like someone who had seen all of it.

SK: He joined Arsenal as a teenager. By the late 1970s, he had become one of the finest midfielders in England. Arsenal supporters still speak about him with near-religious reverence: Not because he won everything- because he was beautiful to watch - football fans remember winners but they fall in love with artists - Brady was an artist.

SK: His passing - his vision - his elegance: everything looked effortless: The peak came during Arsenal's run to three consecutive FA Cup finals between 1978 and 1980 - Brady became the creative heartbeat of the team - then came the move that changed everything.

SK: Juventus.

SK: Today, Irish players moving abroad is perfectly normal. In 1980, it felt almost unimaginable. This wasn't just a transfer - it was a cultural event - an Irish midfielder joining one of Europe's biggest clubs - and not merely joining - thriving.

SK: At the time, Serie A was arguably the strongest league in the world - Italian football was the Hollywood of the sport - the biggest stars - the biggest crowds - the biggest stages - and Brady belonged there.

SK: One story perfectly captures who he was.

SK: Juventus had already decided to replace him with a young French midfielder named Michel Platini. A difficult act to follow. Brady's response? He calmly scored the penalty that secured the league title in his final game for the club. Imagine being told you're leaving the company and then delivering the best performance of your career on the way out.

SK: That was Liam Brady.

- SK:** He would go on to play for Sampdoria, Inter Milan, and Ascoli. An Irish player starring for both Juventus and Inter Milan in the 1980s was almost unthinkable. Yet Brady made it look normal. His international career, however, carried a familiar sadness. He was world-class - Ireland wasn't. He earned seventy-two caps and scored nine goals but he never reached a major tournament. The timing was cruel - Jack Charlton's revolution was just around the corner - Brady helped build the bridge - others would get to walk across it.
- SK:** Later, Brady managed Celtic and Brighton but perhaps his greatest contribution came back at Arsenal. As academy director, he helped modernize the club's youth development system and shaped future generations of talent.
- SK:** Ask Irish football supporters who the most naturally gifted Irish footballer ever was - nine times out of ten, you'll hear the same answer: Liam Brady.
- FX:** (*Liam Brady soundbite – see SK for ref.:*)
- MUSIC** “*Dreams*” by The Cranberries - (*See SK for ref*)
- ADVERT** **1 Minute**
- SK:** And now we come to the most beloved Irish footballer of them all: Paul McGrath.
- SK:** His story feels almost impossible.
- SK:** Born in London in 1959 to an Irish mother and Nigerian father - raised in difficult circumstances - facing racism - facing abandonment - facing challenges that would overwhelm many people - yet somehow becoming one of the greatest defenders football ever produced.
- MUSIC:** Below the narrative - (*See SK for ref*)
- SK:** McGrath's story wasn't smooth - it wasn't glamorous- it wasn't even particularly cinematic – actually - scratch that - it was cinematic - just not the Hollywood kind - more like the gritty Irish drama that leaves you emotionally exhausted.
- SK:** He began with St Patrick's Athletic before moving to Manchester United. At Old Trafford, he quickly established himself as one of the league's best defenders. Sir Alex Ferguson later described him as among the finest players he had ever managed. But there were obstacles. His knees and alcohol.
- SK:** McGrath's knees were so damaged that training often hurt more than matches. The stories became legendary - he would barely train during the week - then arrive on Saturday and dominate elite strikers - football's equivalent of never attending lectures and still graduating top of the class.
- MUSIC:** Volume builds below the narrative - (*See SK for ref*)

- SK:** After leaving Manchester United, he joined Aston Villa. - and somehow became even better. Villa supporters still regard him as one of the greatest players in club history. In 1993, he achieved something remarkable.
- He was voted PFA Players' Player of the Year.
- SK:** A defender - Playing outside the traditional giants. That almost never happens.
- FX:** (*Soundbite – see SK for reference: “the winner is Paul McGrath of Aston Villa.”* applause to fade)
- SK:** Then came the match that secured his immortality: Ireland versus Italy - World Cup 1994 - Italy were reigning World Cup finalists - Roberto Baggio was in his prime - and Paul McGrath delivered one of the greatest defensive performances ever seen at a World Cup -blocks -headers – tackles – clearances - everything.
- SK:** By the final whistle, it felt as though there were eleven Paul McGraths on the pitch - Ireland won one nil - and an entire nation fell even deeper in love.
- MUSIC:** Mood music below the narrative - (*See SK for ref*)
- SK:** If Brady was admired - and Giles was respected - McGrath was adored.
- SK:** Why?
- SK:** Because he felt human – Vulnerable – Honest - Imperfect.
- SK:** Ireland has always been suspicious of perfection - McGrath felt real -he battled injury – addiction - self-doubt - and somehow kept going. People saw themselves in him -or someone they knew - and that's why his legacy has endured.
- MUSIC:** *“Put them under pressure – An Dearg Doon”* starts out at full volume - fades below the narrative and comes back to full volume after credits - (*See SK for ref*)
- SK:** Let's finish with the numbers:
- SK:** **Johnny Giles** - 620 club appearances -112 goals - 59 caps for Ireland - multiple league titles and domestic cups - FAI Golden Player Award - English Football Hall of Fame inductee
- SK:** **Liam Brady** - 532 club appearances - 78 goals -72 caps -Two Serie A titles with Juventus - Arsenal and Juventus Hall of Fame member - Influential academy director at Arsenal

SK: **Paul McGrath** - More than 600 senior appearances- 83 caps - international goals - PFA Players' Player of the Year, 1993 - Star of Euro 1988 and World Cup campaigns - Widely regarded as one of Ireland's greatest-ever footballers

MUSIC: Raises in volume but still under the narrative, (*see SK for ref*)

SK: Together, these three legends accumulated:214 international caps - 22 international goals more than 1,750 club appearances - league titles in England and Italy - domestic cups - European honours - and countless memories - not bad for three lads from a small island on the edge of Europe.

MUSIC Plays out below credits to fade.

Next time on The National Game we'll head to another country whose football identity was shaped by a handful of extraordinary players.

SK: Thank you for keeping me company - that was:” Come on You Boys in Green” – join me next time when I'll head to another country where its football identity was shaped by a handful of extraordinary players – until then - goodnight and take care

V.O: The National Game was written and presented by Stephen Kelly

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No AI was used in the making of this programme.

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