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SPORT AGAINST RACISM IRELAND

Awards for good sports

By Staff Reporter

CAMEROONIAN SOCCER star Samuel Eto'o has been recognised for his humanitarian work both on and off the field at a recent prize-giving ceremony in London.

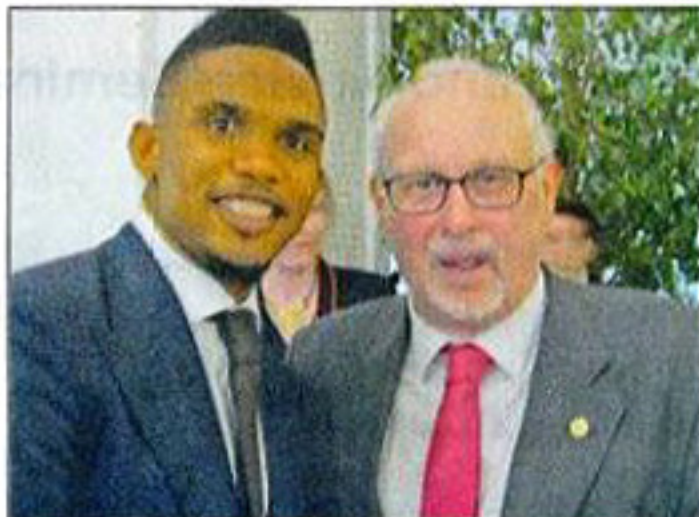
The UC Sampdoria player and long-time anti-racist campaigner received the European Medal for Tolerance at the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation's (ECTR) gala dinner in Kensington Palace on 9 March.

In his acceptance speech, he told the audience about his experience of arriving in Paris as a 15-year-old with a "small bag and a pair of football boots but with a big heart".

He also took the opportunity to talk about his private foundation dedicated to providing education and coaching facilities to youngsters in his home country and beyond.

Also honoured on the night was Football Against Racism in Europe (Fare), which received a European Medal of Tolerance for its near 16-year programme to clear bigotry out of sport at all levels across the continent.

In addition, ECTR president



Samuel Eto'o with Sari's Ken McCue at the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation's gala dinner

Dr Moshe Kantor, also president of the European Jewish Congress, announced that the NGO will enter a strategic alliance with Fare to promote tolerance in soccer – a significant move in the light of recent racism scandals involving club supporters in England and Italy.

The new initiative – with the three prongs of 'engagement, education, and legislation' – will operate up to the next Fifa

World Cup in Russia in 2018.

Sari cultural officer Ken McCue, who was in attendance at the gala, said that his organisation "will be working with our Polish partners Never Again on a cultural integration and social inclusion project in Kazan, one of the host cities for the 2018 World Cup.

"Our experience in developing the 'Hijabs and Hat Tricks' programme will be invaluable

in terms of presenting a platform to further community cohesion," he said, citing Never Again as the "experts" in the region who have been "working bravely fighting racism and sectarianism in those territories.

"Stitching the Kazan Intercultural Campaign into the United Initiative against Intolerance in Football" will provide a strong grassroots foundation to foster good community relations and participation in decision making leading up to the big tournament.

"We want our efforts to create a legacy out of the World Cup that will be a permanent community partnership, that will develop the city of Kazan into a model of interculturalism connecting Muslims and Christians.

On Sari's efforts elsewhere, McCue said he spoke to Samuel Eto'o about meeting the Cameroonian community in Ireland – in particular soccer coaches Joseph N'Do and Patrice Ngu, along with Emmanuel Sone, health advocacy officer with Cairde – to draw up a support network for his namesake foundation.

GAA ban on rainbow symbol 'disappointing'

By Staff Reporter

MAYOR OF SOUTH Dublin Fintan Warfield has expressed dismay at the GAA's decision to prevent an openly gay referee from wearing a rainbow wristband as a statement against homophobia in sport.

David Gough was barred from wearing the universal LGBT rights symbol at a recent match between Dublin and Tyrone on the grounds that political statements are not allowed, and that the issue is tied to the upcoming marriage equality referendum.

"We need to be clear – the rainbow symbol is a statement of inclusion and opposition to homophobia," said Mayor Warfield. "Every organisation should be proactively endorsing such a message and indeed we have seen this in other sporting organisations.

"It is therefore misleading and wrong to conflate very necessary and ongoing efforts to eradicate homophobia from the GAA with the current referendum campaign.

The mayor of South Dublin

County Council said it would be "a source of deep concern to me and many others in the LGBT community, not least those of us active in the GAA, if the referendum was used as an excuse to prevent noble efforts to highlight the importance of LGBT equality and participation in sport. The two are entirely separate matters.

"We know that homophobia remains a major problem. The number of openly LGBT players, in comparison to our numbers in the population generally, speaks for itself and any attempt to send out an inclusive message from the organisation should be strongly endorsed, not censored.

Mayor Warfield added that he agreed with the sentiments of Gough, who said he feels that the GAA has let down its LGBT members.

"Making clear that the GAA supports its LGBT fans and players alike, which the rainbow wristband is designed to do, is simply a matter of best practice, not a political statement that contravenes existing rules."