

A Review of All-Star Gazing by Deirdre Keon

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As a GAA novice for most of my years, this book sparked my interest as I was eager to learn a little more about our sporting culture in Ireland. In a nutshell, the book offers a detailed insight into how the GAA All-Stars sporting awards came about and how it has developed over the past 50 years. Supported by real life stories by the players and many others involved at different levels of the awards, you instantly feel like you were the journey with each of them!

On reaching the end of chapter one, the book had already completely surpassed expectations and was nothing at all like I expected. This was no ordinary trip down memory lane, it went much deeper and was an immensely educational and entertaining read from start to finish.

The sheer pride felt by the players on being selected for an All-Star award is encapsulated beautifully through the heart-warming and vivid accounts of their personal experiences. An All-Star award was seen by many as the ultimate 'reward' for their extraordinary everyday sacrifices. From the extravagant gala banquets, to the sensational trips abroad (that resulted in many a tale!), it was clear that these experiences were momentous, special and life changing for many.

The witty Irish banter was prevalent throughout the book, you just couldn't make some of these stories up. Many an entertaining yarn is told and each as unique as the person telling it! From a helicopter arriving the morning after a gala dinner to make sure the groom arrived on time to his wedding, to players arriving by a last minute chartered flight and swapping clothes with the hotel staff to look the part on stage - I laughed more than I cried while reading this, that's for sure.

Little did I know when I began reading the book that the GAA All Stars has been such a culturally significant part of our Irish heritage. With so many special moments shared, its amazing to think that this was all made possible by the determination of four passionate Irish journalists back in 1971 who worked tirelessly to bring their idea to fruition. Today, the sheer reach of the GAA All-Stars awards across the globe is a testament to their unwavering commitment to our sporting culture in Ireland. Another epic 50 years of the GAA All-Stars awards is in the making, although I hope I won't have to wait that long for another educational and entertaining read like this.

All Star Gazing was epic, inspiring and a joy to read. I don't think there's anyone who wouldn't benefit from reading this book, a must read for sure!

Deirdre