

# COLIN FARRELL MEETS THE IRISH AT HOMELESS WORLD CUP:

*“It’s an extraordinary thing to be around.”*

Colin Farrell speak about his love for the tournament and his respect for the young guys who go out to make Ireland proud. **Danielle Batist & Laura Smith**

**Hollywood actor Colin Farrell thrilled Homeless World Cup players and supporters with a surprise visit to the tournament in Amsterdam.** The star was announced as a Homeless World Cup ambassador in June, but has been a long-time supporter of the tournament. Speaking of his appointment, Farrell said, “I have seen how the Homeless World Cup really does inspire homeless people to change the direction of their lives.. I encourage fans all around the world to get involved. Change is a team effort!”

In 2008, Farrell narrated the documentary “Kicking It,” which followed seven players’ journey to the Homeless World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa including Irish player Damian Farrell..

On opening day, Farrell met with the Irish players and had a 20 minute meeting with Street league founder & Big Issue editor Sean Kavanagh in which he discussed ways that he might help the Irish as Sean -while delighted with the support of the general public - was disappointed at the lack of support for the League & Homeless World Cup team at home from potential sponsors & people in a position of power.

Later Colin joined the team on the pitch for the National Anthem and cheered on the team from the sidelines during their match against Ukraine.

Despite suffering a disappointing 1-6 loss, the side’s spirits were lifted when the actor gave them a post-match pep talk in the players’ area.

“They told us he was a Homeless World Cup ambassador but we never actually thought we would get to meet him,” said stunned Ireland captain, Joseph Thompson.

“He told us that we had to keep our heads up because it was only the first game. There’s plenty more games to play. He said just stay with our goal and that he’s backing us the whole way through.”

“It’s great to have someone who is that big and that famous come over here just to support us,” he added.

After a family breakdown, Joseph slept rough on the street of his hometown Portlaoise when he was a teenager. Eventually, his friends found out about his situation and helped him find a place in sheltered accommodation.

After being picked from 400 players across Ireland, today Joseph is representing his country on an international stage. “I can’t really believe I’m here and playing with my country’s jersey. It’s an honour,” he said.

The 21-year-old even got the chance to have a kick-around with Farrell when he joined the Irish team on the practice pitch. Despite claiming he’d been gifted with two left feet, the actor managed to put one past the Irish goalkeeper.

Irish Street League founder Sean Kavanagh said Farrell’s presence was a huge morale boost for his players.

“It’s great that they have his support. Colin is genuinely enthusiastic about it and recognises the value of sport and what it can do to change lives.”

Sean is also the founding editor of the Irish street paper, Ireland’s Big Issue, and gave the Hollywood star a copy of the magazine.

Farrell added that he greatly admired the efforts of street papers like Ireland’s Big Issue around the world to support and give a voice to the homeless.

The actor says he has bought Ireland’s Big Issue and The Big Issue in the UK for many years and still remembers the vendor he used to buy from in Dublin.

“The homeless, in media especially, haven’t got a voice... so what they do is incredible,”

**“This is about giving a sense of purpose, inclusion and community through football ... (Farrell)”**

Farrell told INSP.

“The work and outreach programmes that street papers like The Big Issue does, and the work the Homeless World Cup does too, are brilliant,” he added.

He spoke with us about his love for the tournament, his respect for its participants and the film he plans to make based on the Homeless World Cup.

## **What do you think of this year’s tournament?**

“It’s brilliant, there’s an amazing feeling here. The sense of inclusion and being around so many people, who, for whatever amount of time, have fought to better their own existence. To get over whatever challenges life has thrown at them in the past and reintegrate themselves into society in a way that society isn’t always

...it's good for my heart just being here.



Sean presents Colin a signed jersey from the team

allowing... it can be a very exclusive place and the world can be a very exclusive place. This is about giving a sense of purpose, inclusion and community through football, and it's an extraordinary thing to be around. People were thanking me for being here today and, I'm not even joking, I've been thanking people for letting me be here, because it's good for my heart just being here."

**What did you expect from the tournament?**

"I heard about the Homeless World Cup for the first time eight years ago, and I was lucky enough to narrate the documentary "Kicking It." I've been aware of it since then and trying to get the film up and running, but this is the first time I've been to the tournament."

**What can you tell us about the plans for the new film?**

"Frank Cottrell Boyce is scripting it and it's in keeping with the spirit of this thing. It's moving and it's funny. After a few drafts, Frank just nailed it. It's very touching. I'm co-producing it and playing one of the Irish players. It's good to be here today and see the lads doing their thing."

**What have you learned from the players?**

"Very little, as you can see from how I kicked the ball! On the one hand it's all about inclusion and community and about picking yourself up, but it's also a serious competition. Everyone wants to win and everyone wants to represent themselves to the best of their ability."

**What did you think of the Ireland vs. Ukraine game?**

(Ireland lost 6-1 but later won 3 of their next four matches to qualify from their group full report page 11)

"It was tough, yeah. It's a jagged little pill, but you hope they'll just move on because it's a fast game, it only lasts fourteen minutes. You

put your head down for one minute and the other team is past you. But they have more games to go."

**What do you think in general about seeing all the different teams here?**

"It's gorgeous. I'm fortunate to have experienced the Special Olympics a couple of times. They are very different things, but there is a parallel between the two of them. It represents an aspect of our global society that are too easily polarised, too easily excluded from this kind of experience. To see all the players from Grenada, Bosnia, Slovenia, Ireland, South America, Asia... it's phenomenal to see the galvanising effort and spirit that makes this tournament possible."

**And it shows people another side to homelessness...**

"Homelessness is very out of sight, out of mind. There shouldn't be anyone on this planet who doesn't have a roof over their head. This is an amazing thing, as are the programs that are attached. It's not just about the game, there's an infrastructure in place to help the players. It must be hard to come back from this to your life in your home city, so to have programs in place to help them is important"

"The work that street papers like The Big Issue does, and the work the Homeless World Cup does too, are brilliant," he added.

Follow the Irish Street League on Facebook:

Facebook: Irish Street League

Twitter: @IrishStLeague

You can donate to the Irish Homeless Street leagues by going on to our website: [www.irishstreetleague.com](http://www.irishstreetleague.com) And press the donate button.