

O'Sullivan: 'Throw the Kitchen Sink at Ireland'

Written by Press Release
Friday, 29 April 2011 02:55



Brendan Cole article originally run on RTE. ie

Eddie O'Sullivan intends to get his US Eagles to 'throw the kitchen sink' at Ireland when they meet at the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand on 11 September.

In a wide-ranging interview with Con Murphy on RTÉ's Sport At 7, the current US Eagles coach also admitted that he now views the campaign of France 2007 as a major disaster.

Commenting on the USA v Ireland clash slated for Taranaki in early September, he said: 'Certainly going to a World Cup and playing Ireland will be very weird but having said that, it's not really about me, it's about the American players.'

'A lot of these guys who go to the World Cup will be amateur players and they will be putting their lives on hold for three or four years to try to get to the World Cup.'

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O'Sullivan admits that the fact the game falls on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America in 2001 will be a factor in how the US players approach the game.

He said: 'There will be a lot of emotion. The tricky part for me is to contain their emotions so they go out and play the best game they can play.'

O'Sullivan has plenty of experience of David v Goliath contests from both sides of the equation, including coaching a struggling Irish team to unconvincing defeats against minnows Namibia and Georgia in 2007.

As the underdog, his goal when the Eagles face Ireland is to try to 'make Ireland as uncomfortable as possible'.

'Ireland would be expected to beat the US on any day. What we will do is go into the game and throw the kitchen sink at Ireland. You never know, if you get into them early.

'We (Ireland) found that out at the last World Cup, when a team like Georgia gets into you anything can happen. That is the ambition of the US: to make Ireland as uncomfortable as possible.'

In 2007, O'Sullivan and his team were the subject of extensive negative commentary. Much of that was justified, according to the then coach.

He said: 'I think the criticism - or the vast majority of it - was reasonable. We were playing way below par. We were a shadow of the team that performed in the Six Nations in 2007 when we were within a whisker of the Grand Slam.

'The plan was to go to the World Cup and replicate that form and there is no question or doubt

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that if we had replicated it we would have been serious contenders.'

According to O'Sullivan, some of the Ireland players lost confidence and became 'panicky' during the tournament, while a glut of rumours that circulated about trouble in the Irish camp also took their toll.

He said: 'The confidence went a bit, guys got a bit panicky and there was a lot of criticism. The thing that people don't talk about much any more but that was a factor is that there was this crazy rumour mill around the camp that there was carnage going on which was later proven not to be the case.

'At the time that was the currency of exchange in the media. It definitely got to the team.'

Ireland might have improved through the tournament had they progressed from the group but losses to France and Argentina saw them exit.

O'Sullivan now admits: 'It was basically a disaster of monumental proportions.'