

# Fans' group takes control of Rovers

# HOOP HOORAY!

## A NEW era for Shamrock Rovers began in the High Court yesterday.

Justice Frank Clarke approved a scheme that will hand over power to the fans effective from next Tuesday.

It sees the club's €2.6m debt whittled down to a manageable six-figure sum — thought to be €325,000 between debts and paying examiner, Neil Hughes.

*It was he who convinced the Revenue to wipe more than €1m off the bill and other unsecured creditors to take 2c for every euro owed to them.*

Those who will do the best out of this deal are the employees (i.e. the players and coaching staff) — they will receive 66 percent of what is owed to them.

The new owners of Shamrock Rovers are the 400 Club — a group now numbering well in excess of it's

## ■ MARK McCADDEN

original 400 target.

They have taken 50 percent control, with life-long fan Ray Wilson taking the other half-share in the club.

400 chair Jonathan Roche said: "This is a great day — not just for Shamrock Rovers and the 400 Club — but for every single fan."

### Chance

*"Our primary aim was to save the club from liquidation. That has been achieved, so we must immediately move on to the next phase: rebuilding Shamrock Rovers.*

"We have a business plan in place, and it is our intention to run Rovers in an appropriate manner, to ensure that the club has every chance of prospering in the future.

"The real work begins now because we have to start a process that will re-establish

Rovers as a force in Irish football, and resident in the new municipal stadium in Tallaght."

*It was the 400 Club that kept Rovers afloat during the examinership process — raising well in excess of €200,000 to cover the day-to-day running costs.*

Wilson, based in Australia, assisted with the finances and he said: "My only interest is to work with the fans to ensure the long-term survival of Shamrock Rovers.

"Although I've made a new life on the other side of the world, Rovers means so much to me, as it does to every Rovers fan. This is a great day for us all."

Next up for Rovers

is the development of their stadium in Tallaght.

Now that South

Dublin County Council has taken over, the Hoops are expected to be playing in their new home by July of next year.

It's a long-awaited development. Rovers' troubles began in 1987 when their Milltown home Glenmalur Park was sold, forcing them into a nomadic existence ever since.

Board after board failed to secure a new home as the club sought refuge in the RDS, Tolka Park, Dalymount Park, Richmond Park and Santry — losing more fans with each move.

They will return to Santry next season — paying out

€1,500 per match instead of the 3,500 they are currently paying Bohs at Dalymount.

*Rovers' new director of communications John Byrne revealed that the 400 Club would be dipping into the fanbase to bring in as much expertise as possible.*

### Levels

He said: "The Shamrock Rovers fanbase includes many talented individuals who have a lot to offer. Now is the time to begin utilising that talent, which has often been ignored in the past.

"We aim to build a task force that will enable the board to work on all fronts to bring Rovers forward by developing coherent, achievable and progressive policies and strategies.

"With the club now working on a firm financial basis, we can begin working towards a future in Tallaght where Rovers can re-emerge as a force in Irish football."



JOY: Jonathan Roche

CENTRAL ROLE: Examiner Neil Hughes (second left) with members of the 400 club who will take over ownership of Rovers next week

