

# Broadband slower here than it is in Madagascar

IRELAND'S broadband is the 36th fastest in the world – behind countries including Madagascar and Bulgaria.

And experts blame the poor speeds on how we prefer to live in large houses than in apartment blocks.

Ireland's position is the same as last year, and has not improved despite efforts to introduce a national broadband strategy.

An analysis of more than 160million broadband speed tests conducted across 200 countries revealed Singapore has the world's fastest broadband, followed by Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Romania, while Yemen came last.

By **Christian McCashin**

The speed test is based on how long it takes to download a 5GB HD movie. It would typically take 37 minutes and 28 seconds in Ireland.

The country was ranked just ahead of Britain, which fell four places in the rankings.

Expert John Kennedy, of the website siliconrepublic.com, said: 'Part of the reason we haven't moved is we're still waiting for the National Broadband Plan to kick in.'

'It was meant to have been done by now, but it's been a bit of a disaster. It was first announced in 2012 as a single top-down investment and the

plan was that around a million premises would be brought into the digital age.

'But since then there have been some changes. Eir did a deal with the Government where they would take about 300,000 homes off that intervention area. The remainder is about 540,000 premises. We're still waiting.'

Ireland lagged behind 26 other European countries, 21 of them in the EU, as well as the US (20th place) and Japan (12th). It came ahead of 164 countries, including, Austria (38th), Italy (43rd) and Australia (52nd), according to Cable, the broadband, TV and phone website that issued the findings.



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# Dr Mark Dooley



## MORAL MATTERS

# I'd rather see a ball go over a net than into the back of it!

**I**HAVE a serious confession to make. Now, before you start speculating, I haven't committed a crime, or taken a bribe, or cheated my way to some dodgy fortune. No, it's much worse than that: I don't like soccer.

I can sense your shock and horror. I can see you sitting there, shaking your head and saying: 'Imagine coming out in a national newspaper with such an absurd admission!' Yes, well there it is: I don't like it and I never have.

When I was in primary school, most of the boys were obsessed with the English soccer league. They spent their time arguing about who was the best team. Inevitably, I was asked who I supported, to which I responded with the first name that came to mind: 'Chelsea.'

I had never seen the team play and I didn't know the names of any of the players. Still, I felt safe enough 'supporting' Chelsea, because if I had said 'Liverpool' or 'Manchester United', they might have asked me about their last game or their star players. They didn't seem to care very much about Chelsea, so I got away with my spontaneous subterfuge.

It was a risky ploy because if they had found out that you didn't care for soccer, you would be deemed in some way defective.

How on earth could a young boy not like soccer? Even I knew that making such an admission back then was to invite wholesale ridicule.

The fact is, I have made it through life without even knowing the basic rules of soccer. I have done so despite being a father of three boys (none of whom – wait for it – has watched a single game of this summer's World Cup). Our middle son avidly played in a mini-World Cup in school, but his interest has waned since getting his holidays last week.

Indeed, I was reminded of my youthful subterfuge when, the other day, a friend asked him who he wanted to win the World Cup. There was a nervous pause before the friend exclaimed: 'I want Uruguay to win!' 'Oh yes,' our son replied with obvious relief, 'I want them to win too.'

Just as I 'supported' Chelsea, my little boy now 'supports' Uruguay. But why should we be embarrassed into feigning a liking for soccer? I know the entire country is glued to the World Cup, that it is providing endless hours of joy and entertainment, but surely it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some people just don't share the passion.

Now, if you were to ask me about tennis when I was a boy – well, that's a different story. I couldn't name a single soccer star, but I could give you chapter and verse about Jimmy Connors, Ilie Nastase, Björn Borg and John McEnroe. If others waited all year long for the FA Cup final, I looked forward to Wimbledon.

This raises the question: why is it perfectly respectable to say you don't like tennis – but you cannot do the same with soccer or rugby or GAA? Even now, I am often asked: 'Where will you be watching the match?' When I reply: 'I won't be' or 'What match?', I see astonished disbelief. I see a look which seems to say: 'Is he kidding, or is he really one of those strange beings that we hear about but rarely encounter?'

**P**ERHAPS it is because there is tribal element to soccer that is missing from other sports. The players are not merely representing themselves, but carrying the hopes and dreams of a town, city or nation on their shoulders. They summon up the pride of a people and, when victory is secured, the success is shared by all.

That said, those who don't 'support' any team are hardly less patriotic or proud of their place or their people. It is simply – if you'll pardon the pun – that we don't get the same kick out of the sport as others. And yes, we know we are in a tiny minority, but that is no reason to treat us as though we were some class of aliens who haven't quite seen the light.

Anyway, we'll all enjoy ourselves on Sunday watching the final! Oh no, please don't misunderstand me: I have no intention of tuning in to the big game in Moscow.

I'll be on the other channel watching the Wimbledon final. My middle son can't wait to see who wins. I assured him it's Nastase's year.

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