

Calcutta inspiration key to D'Arcy's form

IRELAND centre Gordon D'Arcy has credited a humming trip to Calcutta for his stunning return to form as he prepares for Saturday's midweek duel with rugby league legend" Andy Farrell.

D'Arcy played a key role in Ireland's successful November tour but has already topped his autumn heroics with an impressive opening to the Six Nations, winning the man-of-the-match award against Wales.

Injury and a loss of confidence had seen the 27-year-old fade after bursting back to the Test scene with a string of dazzling displays in the 2004 Championship.

But Ireland's pocket battles are close to his explosive pace and an on-song D'Arcy is crucial if England are to be patched in tomorrow's crunch showdown at Croke Park.

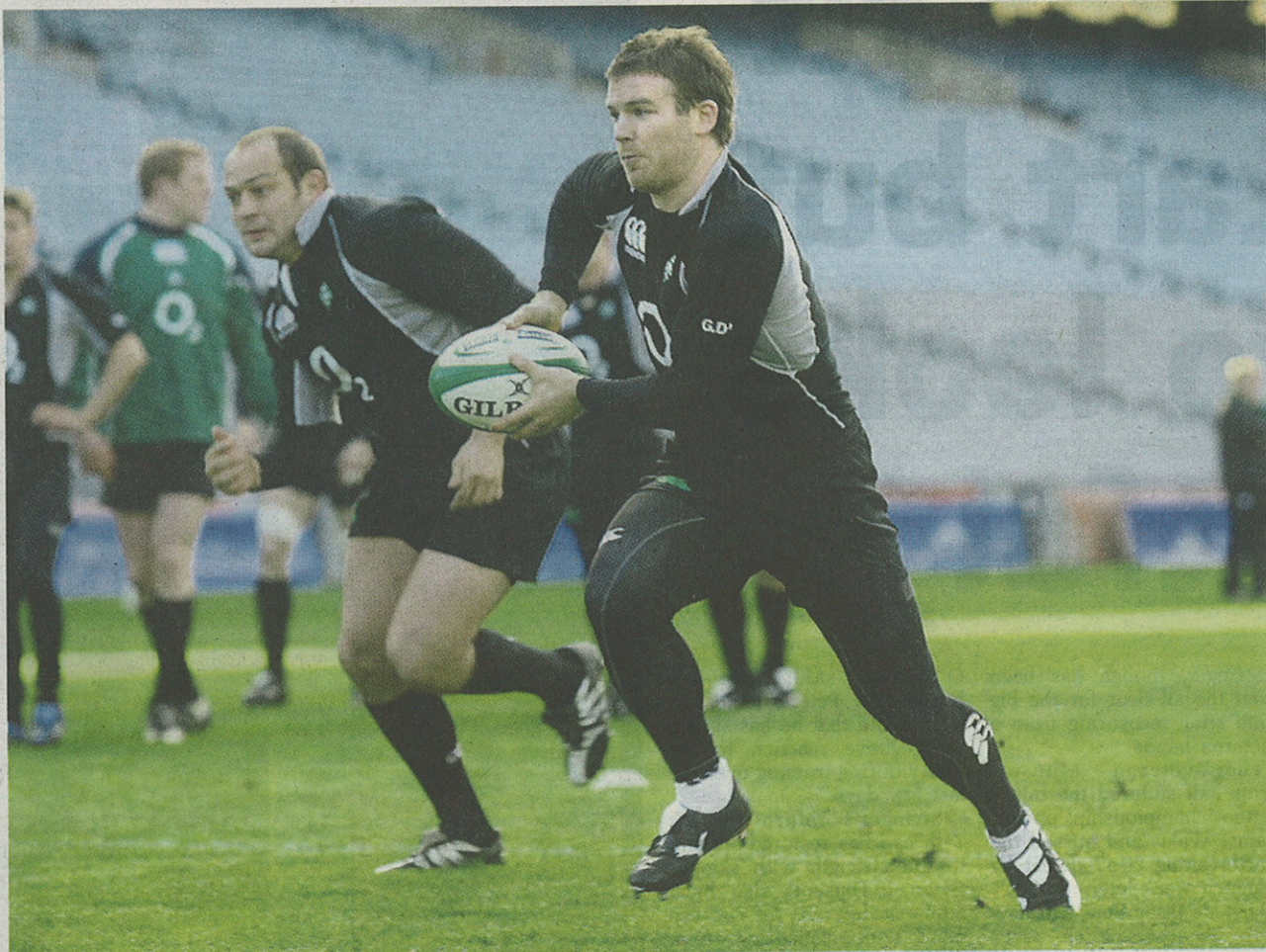
The Leinster centre admits he exploits this season owe much to a week-long stint in India with well-known charity GOAL.

"I spent some time in Calcutta last summer. I was there with GOAL who work with the poorest people," he said.

"After seeing some people living on the street and washing themselves with drain water running down the gutter, it makes you realise you've won the lottery on where you were born.

"When you're down and out and things aren't going your way it's easier to realise how lucky you really are.

"Confidence and form are difficult things to put your finger on. When you have them



CENTRE STAGE: Ireland centre Gordon D'Arcy, who is expected to be one of the key men against England tomorrow, in training at Croke Park yesterday with hooker Rory Best

you have to go with it, when you don't you have to work out why. But things are going well for me."

The midfield is shaping up to be a fascinating battleground with D'Arcy and Brian O'Driscoll, the world's best

centre partnership, locking horns with Farrell and Mike Tindall.

In his two internationals to date rugby league convert Farrell has shown promise, but a clearer picture will emerge after tomorrow.

D'Arcy denies he will benefit from Farrell's rookie status in union, especially with veterans Jonny Wilkinson and Tindall alongside him.

"Andy Farrell was the driving force behind Great Britain for so many years and it's a

nice to be playing against a legend from a different code," he said.

"Andy has good guys like Jonny Wilkinson and Mike Tindall around him but I don't think they're protecting him at all."