



Artsy: Looking forward to a clash with league legend Andy Farrell

D'Arcy up for Farrell showdown

BY JOHN DONNELLY

IRELAND centre Gordon D'Arcy has credited a humbling trip to Calcutta for his return to form as he prepares for tomorrow's duel with rugby league legend Andy Farrell at Croke Park.

D'Arcy played a key role in Ireland's successful November series but has already trumped his autumn heroics with an impressive opening to the RBS 6 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 on to the Test scene with a string of dazzling displays in 2004.

But Ireland's pocket battleship is close to his best; and the Leinster centre admits his exploits this season owe much to a week-long stint in India with the 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.'

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.

D'Arcy denies he will benefit from Farrell's union inexperience, 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.

'I hope to live up to the challenge. I'm not sure his inexperience is an opportunity; he has good guys around him but they're not protecting him.'

Gordon stays with Ireland and Leinster

THE IRFU and Leinster yesterday announced that Gordon D'Arcy has signed a three-year contract extension. IRFU chief executive Philip Browne said: 'This is another

important contract secured by the IRFU and Leinster Rugby and is part of our long stated policy of keeping our leading players in Ireland. Gordon is an integral part of both the Leinster

and Ireland teams and we are delighted that he has followed both Brian O'Driscoll and Ronan O'Gara by agreeing a new contract to remain with his province.'

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