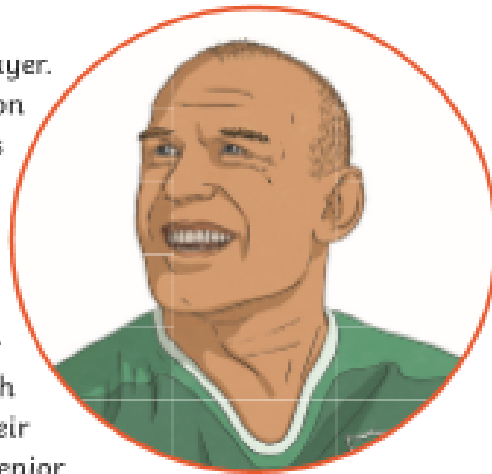


## Early Years

Paul O'Connell is a retired Irish rugby player. O'Connell was born in County Limerick on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1979. O'Connell was excellent at swimming when he was young, spending up to fifteen hours a week training in the pool. He only began playing rugby at the age of 16. He played for his school, Ardscoil Rís, in the Munster Schools Rugby Senior Cup. Many other Irish rugby players have also played for their schools in the Munster Schools Rugby Senior Cup, including Ronan O'Gara and Simon Zebo.



Paul O'Connell completed 3 years of a computer engineering degree at the University of Limerick. He did not complete this course, instead deciding to focus on his rugby career.



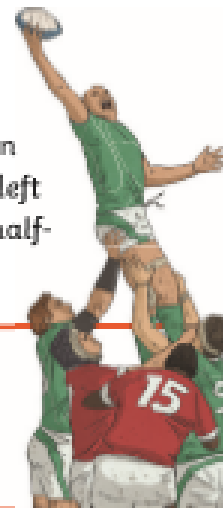
## Munster

Paul O'Connell signed his first professional contract with Munster Rugby. O'Connell is six foot six inches tall. As one of the tallest players on the rugby pitch, O'Connell played as a lock. Locks are lifted into the air by teammates to catch line-out throws.

Paul O'Connell played his first match for Munster on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 2001. He quickly became a key member of the squad and helped Munster to win the European Rugby Champions Cup in 2006. He became the captain of Munster in 2007, succeeding Munster legend Anthony Foley. O'Connell led Munster to their second European Rugby Champions Cup win in 2008. They defeated Toulouse in the final. He also captained Munster against Leinster in their 2011 Celtic League win.

## Ireland

Paul O'Connell played his first game for Ireland against Wales in the 2002 Six Nations tournament. He scored a great try; however, he has no memory of scoring it. Earlier in the game, O'Connell received an elbow to the head which left him with a concussion. O'Connell was substituted before half-time after a check-up with the team doctor.



Paul O'Connell scored the last ever try at the Old Lansdowne Road Stadium before it was demolished. The stadium was rebuilt as the Aviva Stadium.

Paul O'Connell led Ireland to a Grand Slam win in the 2009 Six Nations Championship. This was Ireland's first Grand Slam win in 2009. The Grand Slam is when one team wins every one of their matches in the Six Nations. Paul O'Connell was named as the captain of Ireland at the beginning of the 2015 Six Nations. Ireland went on to win the tournament, and Paul O'Connell won the Player of the Championship award. He was also voted as the Irish Rugby Union Players Association (IRUPA) Player of the Year for 2015.

## Injury

Paul O'Connell announced that he would retire from international rugby after the 2015 Rugby World Cup. He would also leave Munster and join Toulon, a French rugby team. Paul O'Connell played a key role in Ireland's first three matches of the World Cup; however, he injured his hamstring in Ireland's fourth game against France. He had to have surgery, which meant he was unable to play in the rest of the World Cup. Following advice from doctors, Paul O'Connell announced his retirement from rugby on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2016. Paul O'Connell made 218 appearances for Munster. He also finished his career as Ireland's third most-capped player, playing 108 international games for his country.

Paul O'Connell's autobiography is called *The Battle*. This book was named as the Irish Sports Book of the Year 2016.

## **Awards**

Paul O'Connell had a very successful career, winning many trophies and awards on his way to becoming a rugby legend. O'Connell won the European Rugby Champions Cup on two occasions. He also won the Pro14 trophy three times. O'Connell also won the Six Nations Championship with Ireland in 2009, 2014 and 2015.

Paul O'Connell married his wife, Emily O'Connell, in July 2013. They have three children, Paddy, Lola and Felix.

## **Coaching and Media Career**

Paul O'Connell joined Munster Rugby's Academy in an advisory role in July 2016. O'Connell became assistant coach with the Ireland Under-20s in 2017. He is currently a coach with Stade Français. O'Connell has also enjoyed success in the media. He joined BBC Sport as a pundit and commentator before the 2017 Six Nations Tournament.

# Questions

1. When was Paul O'Connell born?

---

2. What sport was Paul O'Connell involved in before rugby?

---

3. How tall is Paul O'Connell? What position did Paul O'Connell play?

---

---

4. What is a Grand Slam in the Six Nations Championship?

---

5. What stadium was demolished and rebuilt as the Aviva Stadium?

---

6. Tick true or false for the following statement.

Paul O'Connell won the Six Nations Championship three times with Ireland.

true

false

7. How do you think Paul O'Connell felt after injuring his hamstring in the 2015 World Cup?

---

---

---

8. What did you find most interesting about Paul O'Connell?

---

---

---