

# GAA Catfish: The 2 Johnnies and the fake identity case they're cracking

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“This is the story of the GAA catfish,” announces the podcast presenter. “This will blow your mind.”

Comic duo The 2 Johnnies host Drive It with The 2 Johnnies on RTÉ 2FM as well as The 2 Johnnies Podcast, episode 222 of which dealt with “the GAA catfish”. Catfishing relates to the creation of fake online profiles to lure another person into a relationship.

The so-called ‘GAA catfish’ story had initially been told at the end of April by Johnny B and Johnny “Smacks” McMahon to a sold-out 3 Arena. But in the aftermath of the show a wave of responses rolled in, prompting two further explainer episodes on the podcast with a third one to follow shortly.

Early this year and recently single, Johnny B had been chatting to a “Cora O’Donovan” from Limerick on Instagram. “Cora” had a public profile, thousands of followers, was followed by Irish “showbiz” figures and loved GAA. Her photo was briefly shown to the audience at the 3 Arena. She and Johnny B chatted a lot about her ex, an inter-county footballer, and her roommate, “Nicki”, exchanged voice notes and eventually agreed to meet. However, a series of last minute excuses – including an aunt’s funeral and a Covid-19 diagnosis – alerted Johnny B to the fact that things might not be quite right.

There were other warning signs, including “Cora” inviting Johnny B on her night out but failing to appear, and strange social media activity.

The 2 Johnnies questioned an inter-county footballer who she said was her ex-boyfriend, people she’d allegedly worked with, and Irish media personalities who followed her on Instagram. Had anyone actually met her?

The answer was a resounding no. Speaking to the footballer — who they have not named — it was revealed that he had been in contact with her for more than a year, but never actually met her in person.

With alarm bells ringing, Johnny B decided to call it quits. Having done their research, The 2 Johnnies conclude that the person running the “Cora” account is in fact, her roommate, “Nicki”. In a recorded call, they question the woman about it, and she denies it. She says: “I don’t need help!” and Johnny B blocks her.

This is where the story ended for the audience in the 3 Arena: with two catfishing “victims” and one apparently fake identity. For the podcast listeners, now made up of the regular podcast fans and other high-profile figures hooked on this story — including Dara O’Briain, Joanne McNally, Sarah Breen and Doireann Garrihy — there were more twists and turns.

Following the podcast episode, listeners got in touch. One in particular caught the attention of The 2 Johnnies. “Muireann” sent an email to them, saying she had been at the show, in which a photo was briefly shown of “Cora”. “Muireann” explained that it was her photo that was being used as “Cora”.

She went on to say that she had found out where the videos on the “Cora” profile had come from - an American dancer, she said - and that she’d been in touch with the people running the fake account via Zoom call.

After some sleuthing, it transpired that “Muireann” was, in fact, yet another fake account. “A fake email, a fake WhatsApp, a fake Instagram to try to neutralise the situation,” says Johnny B in episode 223 of the podcast.

“Muireann” is not the only one to get in touch after the show. There are others who claim responsibility for the “Cora” account, as well as a substantial number who said they were victims of catfishing.

At the time of the podcast recording, The 2 Johnnies are aware of the identities of 12 other men who believe they have been catfished. The names and behaviours differ - in addition to “Cora”, there is “Hannah Ferguson”, “Britney McInerney”, “Emma McCarron” and “Lauren Murphy” - but the source is seemingly the same: “Nicki”.

A number of men brought the issue to An Garda Síochana or the PSNI, who confirmed that nothing could be done legally at that point.

On the second episode of the soon-to-be three-part podcast series, chartered occupational psychologist Louize Carroll explained some of the psychology behind catfishing. She encouraged listeners who may be catfishing that “there are better ways to connect with people and to have meaningful connections”.