



**Young Omagh side ready for Cross test**

ULSTER CLUB SFC & SHC: P76-79



**Gallagher confirmed as Donegal boss**

BACK PAGE

# Massive-Semtex-haul accused has case against him dropped

Staff Reporter

newsdesk@irishnews.com

**A**NORTH Belfast man accused over the largest seizure of Semtex in the last 10 years has had the case against him dropped.

Prosecutors said they were withdrawing a charge that Thomas Hughes possessed explosives with intent to endanger life.

The decision, confirmed at Belfast Magistrates Court, follows a review of all available forensic evidence in the case.

Mr Hughes (47), of Maeve House in the New Lodge area, was arrested after police discovered 2.5kg of Semtex at the apartment complex in May.

It had been cut into two blocks and was wrapped in clingfilm and tinfoil.

Latex gloves and a knife suspected of having been used to divide the explosives were also seized.

Mr Hughes, originally from Scotland, was not in the property when police raided it.

At a previous court hearing his lawyer described him as coming from a republican background, being a strong supporter of the peace process and being vehemently opposed to any dissident republican activity.

Following confirmation of the prosecution position yesterday District Judge Fiona Bagnall ordered the charge against him to be withdrawn.

Mr Hughes's solicitor Michael Madden said his client should never have been before the courts.

Mr Madden, of Madden and



Finucane solicitors, said the hearing "marks the culmination of a sustained campaign of representations at remand hearings for the Public Prosecution Service and the PSNI to serve evidence alleged to connect our client to the high explosives haul".

"This was a prosecution against Mr Hughes that should never have been brought," he said.

"We made strenuous objections both in Antrim serious crime suite and at our client's first remand hearing as to the sufficiency and strength of the evidence said to properly ground this charge.

"We are pleased that Mr Hughes can now look forward to putting this traumatic experience behind him and to getting back to his normal life."

**■ CLEARED:** Tommy Hughes with his son Tiernan Og last night after charges were against him were dropped. Inset, the Maeve House complex in north Belfast where the Semtex was found

PICTURES:  
Hugh Russell



**McConville murder detectives arrest the wrong man**

Allison Morris

Security Correspondent

a.morris@irishnews.com

**D**ETECTIVES investigating the murder of Jean McConville are believed to have arrested the wrong man this week, apparently mistaking former Sinn Féin councillor Pat Rice for veteran republican Paddy Joe Rice.

Pat Rice, pictured, a retired grammar school teacher, was taken from his Poleglass home on Thursday and released a few hours later unconditionally. Paddy Joe Rice, a close friend of the late Brendan Hughes, parted ways with the mainstream republican movement and has been an outspoken opponent of the Sinn Féin political strategy and the party's leader Gerry Adams.

He is also believed to have made a tape detailing his republican activities as part of the discredited Boston College 'Belfast Project'. Pat Rice, through his solicitor Padraig O Muirigh, is to lodge legal proceedings against the PSNI for wrongful arrest and make a complaint to the Police Ombudsman.

"It was confirmed by police during the course of his interview that the PSNI do not have any evidence, whether forensic or witness statement, implicating my client in this incident nor was he named or identified by anyone who participated in the 'Boston College Project'," Mr O Muirigh said.

A police spokeswoman would only say: "If anyone has a complaint to make regarding police action they can contact the office of the Police Ombudsman."

➤ Story in full ➤ P4

**Food & drink, interviews, gardening & 4 puzzle pages**



**WEEKEND:  
25 pages**