

## Ex-pro footballer quizzed over €3m seizure of heroin

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Continued on Page 2

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The two men, aged 31 and 41, were detained when detectives swooped on the controlled drugs delivery at a business premises in Dublin 15 on Wednesday.

Gardaí recovered 22kg of suspected heroin with an estimated street value of €3m in the international operation.

Both men arrested are originally from Dublin and have connections to football clubs in the capital.

The younger suspect was previously a professional footballer who has played for a number of Irish teams and has also played in England.

Sources said the footballer was not on the garda radar for involvement in organised crime.

It's being investigated if he became involved through the older male in custody who he met when they were with the same football club.

The 41-year-old is well-known to gardaí and has previous convictions for firearms offences.

Some of the heroin seized (also inset) by cops



He has also been questioned over a gun attack more than a decade ago which resulted in the victim suffering catastrophic injuries.

The man has been arrested over that attempted murder but to date has not been charged.

Gardaí believe he was present during an argument with the gun victim prior to the shooting. A total of nine people have been quizzed by detectives but no charges were ever brought in the case.

A source told the *Herald*: "The 41-year-old suspect is well-known to gardaí for previous criminality and

dissident connections.

"One line of inquiry is that he drew the younger man into criminality after they got to know each other at a well-known Dublin football club.

### TRAFFICKING

"There is no doubt gardaí have disrupted a significant criminal operation with this drugs bust," the source added.

The two men are currently being held at Blanchardstown garda station under drug-trafficking legislation and can be held for up to seven days.

The operation was carried out by detectives attached to the Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (DOCB) as part of an intelligence-led operation with Revenue's Customs Service.

Det Chief Supt Angela Willis, who is in charge of the DOCB, said: "The outcome of cooperation between Revenue and Customs and An Garda Síochána, has resulted in the seizure of a significant quantity of heroin from circulation within communities that are suffering the consequences of drug trafficking".

The Revenue said the "collaboration between both agencies, as well as international colleagues, was significant in the successful outcome of this operation."

Both agencies said that investigations into the seizure are continuing. The €3m heroin seizure is one of the largest individual drugs busts in the State so far this year.