

AIB sponsorship extended to Junior/Intermediate grades

As the curtain falls on another Championship summer, the pace then steps up across the country as clubs battle to make it through to the 2008/2009 AIB GAA Club Championship finals.

Beaten All-Ireland finalists and AIB staffers Colm 'Gooch' Cooper and Michael 'Brick' Walsh have both found solace back in their club colours, and they were at AIB Bankcentre on Monday to officially launch the Club Championships.

AIB has extended its sponsorship to now include the Senior, Junior and Intermediate Club Championships.

"The Club is the heart of the GAA and of the community, and at the centre of what makes the GAA such a great organisation" said Billy Finn of AIB.

"For us, Club really is family, both literally and in a communal sense, and we are proud to be part of that family and to be associated with this great competition."

The strong connection between clubs and families down the generations is well-known. Families such as the Larkins - Paddy, Fan and Philly - with the Village, the first Kilkenny club to win the AIB GAA Club Championships back in 1976; have shown the connection to club, as well as the skill, pass from father to son.

"We know that for many players, winning the Club Championships alongside their brother, cousin, the friends they grew up with, can mean more than even inter-county success" said Finn

"There is something special about the sense of family that playing with your club brings."

Speaking at the launch, GAA President Nicky Brennan said: "We are very pleased that AIB have continued their sponsorship of the GAA Club Championships and it is particularly pleasing that they have extended the sponsorship to include the GAA Junior and Intermediate Club Championships. I thank them most sincerely for this endorsement of our games."

He continued: "I am looking forward with great anticipation to the commencement of the AIB GAA Club championships in October.

"Following the outstanding success of last year's games I am certain that we are in for another exciting campaign. Some of our best occasions in recent years have been the club finals at all grades in Croke Park. I am sure that this will be the case again in early 2009. I wish all participating clubs the best of luck".

Reigning senior club champions Portumna and St Vincents are both still on course to defend their titles, with Portumna playing against Clarinbridge in the Galway County Final and St Vincents competing in the Dublin quarter-finals this coming weekend against Thomas Davis.

The 2009 Junior and Intermediate Club Championship Finals are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday February 14th and 15th, with the Senior Club Championship finals taking place on Saint Patrick's Day, Tuesday, March 17th.

The Reigning Champions are:

Senior Football - St Vincents (Dublin)

Senior Hurling - Portumna (Galway)

Intermediate Hurling - Clonkill (Westmeath)

Intermediate Football - Moycullen (Galway)

Junior Hurling - Conahy Shamrocks (Kilkenny)

Junior Football - Canovee (Cork)