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AIB launches *The Toughest Season - A Year like no other in Gaelic Games*

Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to AIB's partner charities, Age NI, Alone, FoodCloud, Soar & Pieta

AIB, alongside Galway & Corofin footballer Ian Burke and former Dublin & Ballinteer St Johns footballer Coman Goggins, has launched *The Toughest Season* photobook, a pictorial account of how hurling, football and camogie communities came together to support one another throughout one of the toughest years in history.

Inspired by the strength of spirit within Gaelic Games communities, AIB has partnered with Sportsfile, the GAA and the Camogie Association, to publish *The Toughest Season*, which captures in 120 images the resilience of clubs, fans, and communities before, during and after the COVID 19 lockdown. All proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to the AIB Together Fund supporting Age NI, Alone, FoodCloud, Soar and Pieta House.

2020 saw club gates close and games cease yet club chairpersons, players and volunteers were never busier. The tougher the year was, the stronger we became. In the first few weeks of the first lockdown, 9,000 GAA club members provided support for almost 35,000 people. It is this spirit that AIB has been proud to champion through three decades of sponsoring the AIB GAA Club Championships across football, hurling and camogie.

Earlier this Autumn, AIB called on those across the country to take part by submitting their own images that depict their experience of 'The Toughest Season'. Along with Sportsfile imagery, the book is comprised of photographs from individuals across Ireland who have visually shared their own stories.

AIB CEO, Colin Hunt, said: "*The Toughest Season* is a vivid celebration of all that is great about Gaelic Games and the communities in which they live and thrive. This book captures not just remarkable athletic skills in adverse conditions but also how GAA clubs reacted during the pandemic to support those in need in their communities."

"You will see in this book the emotion generated within communities by on-field victory and defeat. But, off the pitch, you will also see club members getting together to ensure meals were delivered to homes during lockdown. This community spirit and resilience is the embodiment of the GAA and what makes it such an immense organisation by any standards", he added.

AIB is delighted to partner with the GAA, the Camogie Association, Sportsfile and communities nationwide to tell this story of a season unlike any other, and when we needed each other more than ever, as a Gaelic Games community we rallied like never before."

The powerful Irish proverb, *Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine* - people live in the shelter of others - expresses the spirit of this collective response to the pandemic and the foundation that Gaelic Games provides in community sustainability across the island of Ireland.

In addition to supporting hurling, football and camogie at club level, AIB is one of the main sponsors of the Senior Football Championship, with the semi-finals taking place on December 5th and 6th and the All-Ireland Final on December 19th.

The book can be bought at all good bookstores and online at <https://www.sportsfile.com/id/TheToughestSeason/>

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