



Ballinteer St Johns GAA Club Secretary's report November 2020

I would like to be welcoming all our members to the 38th AGM of Ballinteer St John's GAA club in person at this time. However due to level 5 lockdown and associated restrictions this year we will have an incorporeal AGM. This is a first for us and I imagine for very many clubs in the association. However we will adapt and thrive. This year has been a constant readjustment to our environment our surroundings and our way of life. It is our now proven ability to manage these changes that will see us through this troubled time. Throughout the crisis we have established and proven ourselves as an integral part of the local community

The executive had a very challenging year. We had ten full executive meetings in person, on zoom and on teams. In addition executive members served on a number of sub committees. The safety committee was charged with advising the executive on the safe management of return to play and clubhouse safety. A huge thanks to this group that continue to monitor changes on a daily basis. Indeed the first decision of this group was to close the clubhouse and all activities within, this tough decision was proved to be wise when the Government followed a few days later with the first lockdown in March.

The first lockdown was most challenging and hit those most vulnerable in the community. With elderly people restricted from leaving their houses BSJ answered the call for volunteers. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council set up a helpline for members of the community to call if they needed assistance with shopping or medication delivery during lockdown. We in BSJ formed a response committee and within days we had over eighty volunteers shopping and delivering groceries for elderly or infirm members of our community. DLR contacted the club representative daily and members were allocated clients requiring assistance. Super Valu Ballinteer and Churchtown and Centra all gave full support for clubtogether and fast tracked our volunteer shoppers past queues and to registers for payments. Where we missed the black and tangerine on the field of play our colours were evident throughout the community Lockdown in shops on the street shopping and delivering groceries. It was a great success and proved what a part of the community our club is.

The clubhouse committee and volunteers under Kieran Brennan worked tirelessly during the lockdown to maintain repair and upgrade facilities including Gym, Naoinra, bar, function room, car park and flower beds and total renovation of the shop. The shop committee continued to manage a click and collect service and generate demand through an active social media campaign. Thanks to Jim Devereaux who continued to maintain the high standard of the All Weather Pitch and have it match ready for the return to play. The bar committee faced the biggest challenges they have ever faced. With the closedown the taps and services still had to be maintained and prepared for reopening. Level two only allowed for opening with a substantial meal was provided. Weeks of research and work went in to preparing a food offering and the local Gardai and HSE inspected and approved all measures. We had two great nights of dining on Friday 11TH and Saturday 12TH September provided using our own kitchen and chef Morgan Goggins who volunteered his services and advice. The second weekend of the 18th was already sold out when the Government

announced a second level five lockdown. Work did not end however and preparations are ongoing in the hope of a lifting of restrictions in December.

On the field

Many of our teams are still in action due to Covid but here are some of the highlights of the season so far.

LGFA

Our senior ladies won the Dublin County junior A championship beating St Judes in the final with Orlagh Nolan being awarded player of the match for her powerful and impressive display throughout. The ladies Defeated Clann na nGael of Meath in a close encounter on the all weather pitch on Tue 3rd October and advanced to the Leinster championship semi final in Longford against Ballymore but the busy week of championship football took its toll and Ballymore triumphed on the day in a game that was played “behind closed doors” and without supporters due to the Covid restrictions. The Dublin final and both Leinster matches were streamed live and were watched by BSJ supports at home and abroad.

Our junior A ladies won their football shield on our new pitch in Marley defeating Na Gaeil Óga in a tight affair , the first silverware to be won on the new pitch. This match also played with restricted attendance and another match on the neighboring pitch meant the club had to manage all visitors and home teams in line with social distancing.

The under 14 ladies had a very positive start to the season with 3 wins from 3 in their League Division and they had 3 wins in the feile championship reaching the semi finals of the feile.

In January we had twenty of our ladies coaches attend an LGFA coaching course which is a testament to the preparation and commitment of our LGFA mentors managers and coaches. This year BSJ fielded a minor team for the first time in a number of years and continues to train on a weekly basis, looking forward to more games in 2021.

Hurling

Despite the impact of Covid 19 on the Hurling schedule, this year we managed to expand the numbers playing adult hurling in the club with a combination of former players returning and new players transferring in from clubs in all 4 provinces.

The Senior Hurlers had a tough group in the Senior A championship losing to Lucan and St Vincents in the group phase followed by a highly entertaining draw with St Oliver Plunkets ER. They won 2 out of 3 games in the cup competition to finish out the year strongly.

Our Junior As had the honour of playing the first match on the newly reopened Pitch 2 which has been a fantastic addition to the clubs facilities and gives us one of the best grass pitches in the county.

The Junior Bs had a good year with great numbers for training and matches. They qualified out of their group in the Junior E championship to reach the quarter finals and won all 3 cup games to reach the cup final which has been cancelled due to the latest lockdown.

All 3 adult teams were delighted to support the club fundraiser for Pieta House covering the full 24 hours of the event.

Our minor hurlers gave us a huge lift during the season which is still ongoing. These lads have had a tough challenging campaign and come through with flying colours to reach the championship final against St Brigids. This final was postponed within days of the match and then training was

cancelled. In October training was allowed again and the match date is yet to be confirmed. So it's been a tough season on and off the pitch and we look forward to the rescheduled match.

Our under 21's had commenced intensive training we had two teams entered this year in the A and B championship but unfortunately in October the County board cancelled the under 21 championship.

Camogie

In September our senior Camogie team won the Dublin shield final against Castleknock. The Under 16 camogie team were unbeaten in their division championship topping the group. Under 14 girls did well to reach their final which they lost by a narrow margin of two points. Rachel Dolan was picked for County duty with the Dublin minor A team and Ellie Doran was chosen for the Dublin under 16A camogie team.

Football

The 2020 leagues for all teams were cancelled so teams remain in Div 1, Div 4, Div 7 and Div 11S respectively for 2021. In the championship despite some very good performances from all teams only the Intermediate team made it out of the group stages. Unfortunately they were beaten by Clontarf with the last kick of the ball in the quarter final despite having a 5 point lead at halftime. The senior team made great progress in the Senior Cup competition and had advanced to the semi final before the County Board abandoned the competition due to the corona virus restrictions. As 2019 drew to a close our u21 footballers made the final of the B championship beating St Sylvesters and St Marys along the way. However they were beaten in the final by a very strong St Vincents side in December. This year we had two teams of u21's in training but in September the competition was cancelled due to Covid.

Our minor footballers have been outstanding and have reached the final of the A championship which is a first for the club. Again within days of the final with Ballyboden the match was postponed due to Covid. We are still awaiting confirmation of date for final.

After 5 years the senior management team of Gail Dunne, Chris Grady, Michael Ryan and Gerry O'Donnell stepped down at the end of the season. Gary Jameson has moved on to Wicklow senior football team at the beginning of the season. I'd personally like to thank them all for their great effort and commitment over the five years. Having taken over when the team was struggling in Div 2 they leave behind a strong panel firmly established mid table in Div 1.

A big thank you goes to Gerry O Donnell who is stepping down as adult football co ordinator after twelve years for his great dedication, commitment and hard work without which there would not have been such success.

We have players from all four codes selected for County. Rachel Dolan and Ellie Doran played camogie with Dublin Minor and under16 respectively and Dearbhla Nolan was selected for Dublin seniors. Orlagh Nolan and Niamh Sweeney are members of the Dublin ladies senior panel this year and we wish the girls and team every success in the All Ireland series. Tom Aherne and Iain O Heithier were selected for Dublin under 20 Hurling. Johnny Quirke Oisin Grady Matt Lynch and Luke Breathnach were all selected for Dublin minor football. BSJ senior player Fearghal Duffy was minor football coach for Dublin. Dave Devereaux played senior football for Wicklow County and Gary Jameson BSJ senior coach was Wicklow senior county football mentor.

Our own Coman Goggins BSJ and former Dublin Captain and all star visited the club and took our minor footballers for a training session in September.

May 23 and 24 saw our biggest charity fundraiser ever. We had 2093 participants take part in the Run4Pieta. The club raised over €31500 in donations which was matched by AIB making a total of €63000. Our Senior footballers raised €13800 for Cystic Fibrosis Ireland bringing a total of €77000 raised by Ballinteer St Johns for charity in 2020.

We managed to shoehorn in our club camps and cul camps in August between lockdowns which was a real challenge. Thanks to Donal Gormely and Carol Nolan and their full team that made this happen with regulations and restrictions it was not easy but it is such a part of summer for so many we had to persevere and as always it was a great success.

November 21st we remembered those who were killed in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday with a flag ceremony and wreath laying at the grave of one victim James Burke. James is buried in Naithi cemetery and his family joined us for this solemn occasion.

As 2020 draws to a close we can reflect with great pride as we look back over a most memorable year for the club. We have faced many challenges this year , isolation, cancellations, lockdowns but throughout we have pulled together to overcome. Our matches have been streamed and recorded our meetings have been on line through different and improving channels. We have worked together with other clubs in the County to ensure matches could be played and shared . We have formed close bonds of co operation with our rival clubs , backroom teams worked together not overly concerned with winning or losing but working together to ensure that the game was played.

I am proud to say that the club members and executive and all committee members worked so hard to bring us through this trying time. Thanks to all of them and our chairman Darren who is always on hand and everywhere working on behalf of the club and mentoring our minor football team also. Many of our committee members are front line workers and have worked with us and guided us while working under immense strain at the height of the pandemic. Many members came forward to offer advice, expertise and assistance throughout the year and it shows that though we have in excess of three thousand members we have maintained a great community spirit and indeed the "Ballinteer GAA Family". I have every confidence that 2021 will see these trials and tribulations behind us and we can once more take to the field as before standing together with handshakes and cheers.

Is Mise

Gerry Watchorn Runai Naomh Eoin Baile an Tsaoir November 2020

