

Brian Cody

Born into a hurling home in Sheestown, County Kilkenny, in 1954, Brian Cody's devotion to the game, and sense of service to it, was learned by example from his mother, Annie Hoyne, and his father, Bill, who served as chairman of James Stephens GAA club. This was the foundation for his own keen sense of volunteerism, both as a player on the pitch, and as a manager on the sidelines.

As a player with the local team, 'the Village', he claimed county titles in all grades and captained St Kieran's College, Kilkenny to All-Ireland Senior Colleges' success in 1971. His studies, which took him to St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, to become a primary school teacher, saw him playing alongside the great Ger Loughnane for the Dóchas Éireann team at St. Pat's.

Cody's hurling career advanced at a pace and, while still a student, he claimed All Ireland medals at both Under 21 and Senior level in 1974. Throughout his playing career, representing his club, county and province, he secured three All-Ireland titles, four in Leinster, and two in the National Hurling League.

As Brian knows from his own experiences on the field, to play and win in Croke Park on the second Sunday in September is about a journey, a pilgrimage of sorts, which begins many years beforehand, in seeds planted in childhood or in schoolyard games.

Talent is, of course, a key factor but the achievement of such success is also rooted in the sacrifices you make, and in the sacrifices that others make to support you. It is achieved in training in the dark winter evenings, in the bitter cold when no one is watching. It is achieved in the singular and lonely pursuit of recovery when injuries keep you on the bench. Moreover, it is hugely dependent on the encouragement and counsel of those around you.

In 17 years at the helm of Kilkenny's Senior Hurling team, he has achieved unparalleled success, inspiring players at all grades and guiding his county to an unprecedented victory in 10 All-Ireland finals, 12 Leinster titles, and 7 National League victories. Throughout this time, he has not only nurtured raw talent, but he has also coached leaders and inspired legions of players and fans.

Cody is currently the longest-serving inter-county manager in the GAA. After such a litany of achievements, the man would be entitled to sit back now, and relax, but Brian is not one for taking things easy. He relishes the challenge and the competition. He doesn't shy away from decision-making or

enacting changes – when players underperform, when players retire, or when the team loses (though rarely, it would seem) – whatever is necessary, will always be done!

Leadership is central to the Brian Cody success story. When he speaks about the team, he says 'we' not 'I' – it's not about 'I, the leader', but 'we the team'. That is the example of a true leader – inspiring others to excellence, to achieve their best, and to push themselves until the final whistle.

Brian Cody does not seek the limelight; in fact, he shuns it actively. He embraces change and challenge and, by example, shows others how to do likewise. He teaches others to use their ability to the benefit of the team and to show respect and humility. He exemplifies the belief that 'team play' is a lesson for life; it teaches participation, co-operation, and community values.

As a teaching principal in a Primary school, Cody epitomizes the amateur nature of his sport and is a forceful champion of volunteerism and community engagement. He is the heir of a great tradition of teachers, but he has also set important standards for his profession, and, by example, demonstrates the transformative power of education.

Addressing the annual congress of the Irish national Teachers' Organisation recently, he urged fellow teachers to continue their great tradition of service and leadership, which he defined in terms of integrity, respect and honesty. He noted that this community spirit has helped children in difficult times. "If we were to lose that spirit," he said, "we really would have a recession". He also promoted resilience in the face of setbacks, which are an inevitable part of life. "Continue to set goals", he advised, "don't make excuses. You lose when you are not good enough. Make yourself better". Ever the teacher - ever the leader.

Brian Cody, the award of an honorary doctorate today recognises not only your excellence and achievements, but also serves to honour the values that you have championed as a teacher and as a sportsman. It honours your example and impact as a leader, your calm and trusting presence on the sidelines, and your voice of reason and determination.

As a man who is synonymous with the spirit of leadership and service that DCU esteems, it is appropriate today that the University bestows its highest honour upon you.

A Uachtaráin, I ask you to confer on Brian Cody the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*).