

THREE CARLOW PLAYERS ARE ALL-IRELAND TAG RUGBY CHAMPIONS – The Nationalist, August 23, 2010

Carlow has three new All Ireland champions. Ian O'Malley and Emer O'Malley from Graiguecullen and Denise Abbey from Green Road, Carlow town, were part of the triumphant Pumas team at the Bud Light IRFU Tag All-Ireland Championships, Saturday August 6th 2010.

The Pumas truly are an international team. 2 Argentineans + 1 Malaysian + 1 Kiwi + 1 South African + 1 American + 5 Irish women and 2 Irishmen... including those 3 Carlovians = 2010 IRFU All-Ireland Tag Rugby Champions.

The All Irelands, which took place at Suttonians RFC in North Dublin, was the largest Championships yet with a record number of sixty-four teams from each of the 21 Bud Light Tag venues around Ireland and with referees from each branch of the IRFU.

In the end it all came down to the Elite A League which contained the six top tag rugby teams in the country, four from Dublin, one from Limerick and one from Belfast.

The Pumas had an epic game in their semi-final, coming from 7-0 against the top Limerick team and last year's champions, the Limerick Exiles, to win 9-7 with a last gasp try by Carlow woman Denise Abbey.

The Pumas, captained by Federico Black from Buenos Aires, defeated their perennial rivals The Panthers, themselves double All Ireland Champions, in the final by 7 points to 6. Here were the two most successful tag teams in Ireland over the last few years going head-to-head once more. The game was played at tremendous intensity, with Kiwi Simon Edgecomb dislocating his knee with a heroic last gasp saving tag.

The win was forged by the prodding of McCarthy at scrumhalf, scorching breaks by the foreigners O'Gorman and Izseham and the homegrown Eimear Hogan, by great defensive organisation and drive from the two O'Malleys, Marcus Black and Sheerin. Wessels and McGeady were orchestrating things in midfield with their passing and lines of running. The Pumas twice came from being behind.

The Trophy Presentation was made by former Ireland and Munster rugby international **Mick Galwey**, who is also the IRFU's Tag Ambassador and was



delighted with how the final showed Tag Rugby off at its best. “The standard and intensity of that final was really impressive,” he said.

The team: Ian O’Malley, Emer O’Malley, Denise Abbey (Carlow), Federico Black and Marcus Black (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Jim Gorman (Boston, USA), Jeffrey Izseham (Malaysia), Ben Wessels (South Africa), Simon Edgecome (New Zealand) Aoife McCarthy (Ireland), Fiona Sheerin (Ireland), Andy McGeady (Ireland).