



**THE
CAMOGIE
ASSOCIATION**
An Cumann Camógachta



TELL THEIR STORY





About the Author

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Daria Niewiadomska: “I’m a person that puts my head where nobody would put their hurl”

By Alanna Cunnane

They say if you believe in something you should say it with your chest and that’s exactly where Daria Niewiadomska has a tattoo of her treasured hurl.

Alongside a guitar and a snowboard, the Camogie stick holds pride of place both there and in the Polish woman’s heart, ever since she moved to Ireland in 2021.

An engineer by trade, she lives in Bray and was quickly introduced to the sport by some colleagues at work.

Loving a challenge, one quick puck around later she knew this sport would be the next venture she was going to conquer.

“I couldn’t hit a ball, I was terrible,” she says.

“At a pitch near to my house I would just stand there with my hurl

and try to swing it, but it wouldn’t go anywhere.

“It was so funny because people would be coming by and everybody would be telling me how to hold the hurl but everybody had a different opinion on how to do it! So I was like ‘how!?!’, it was hilarious. That’s how I also found out that the Irish are very friendly and everybody wants to help you.”

Having lived in Austria prior to this, she was fond of hiking, snowboarding and skiing, but upon discovering Ireland was “pretty flat”, she was intent on picking up this new hobby.

Niewiadomska’s colleagues were adamant in helping her with that, and after many a discussion as to why she was going around the office with a ‘baby hurl’, she

eventually ended up accumulating two gestures of goodwill towards her undertaking in the form of hurls.

In fact, she now has a grand total of seven hurls, just to be safe!

While at first she thought Camogie looked similar to a sport where people were “beating each other with bats”, that didn’t deter her at all, and instead she went looking for a local club to join.

After a few sessions with Bray she decided to transfer to a club that would better suit her growing standard, and so along came Cuala GAA, at the suggestion of one of her work colleagues.

“I basically started to search for a team that would be at the level that they are bringing in new

people. One of my colleagues recommended that Cuala was a large club and that there would be a lot of teams so I just contacted them and asked them whether that would be an option and I came over to a training,” she says.

“I met Dermot there, he’s my coach now, and I started training properly then.

“I still am coming to work with hurls and pucking around with people whenever the weather is nice. They’ll also still ask me why I have so many hurls, it’s very funny.”

Daria’s family know all too well how fond she is of a challenge, in fact she’s greeted with the phrase ‘why do you have to make things so hard for yourself’ on a regular basis as a result.

There’s just something ingrained in her to set a goal and go for it, and never to give up on a dream.

“I think it’s a general thing about me that I don’t like things to be easy. That’s why I also moved to Ireland because I really wanted to start in a brand new industry,” she says.

“I used to work in gas engines in Austria and then I wanted to move here because I wanted to work in medical devices. I didn’t have much experience in that so in my own free time I was just going through the courses and trying to show off on LinkedIn everything I was doing.





“It’s a general thing about me that I prefer to choose a more difficult path.”

Camogie eased that transition somewhat for her, and what she perhaps appreciates most out of it is the community values that coincide with it.

“In general whenever I miss a couple of training sessions, for whatever reason, I’ll have five people writing to me asking where I am, what’s up with me, whether everything is okay or if there’s anything they can do. So it’s really nice to have this kind of inclusion,” she says.

Now getting up to speed with the skills, she played as a goalie for a stint but now lines out in the backs, and even was their vice captain for the 2023 season.

Everytime she takes to the pitch, she continues to epitomize courage and bravery, even if sometimes that surfaces in some unconventional ways.

“I remember once in a game I was actually going with a hurl to block a person and I completely missed her, so my head went in the position of the ball and she actually gave me a huge swing of a hurl in my helmet.



"I had to go to the hospital to check if I had a concussion, and my coach told me that I'm a person that puts my head where nobody would put their hurl. So actually I think they think I'm not really afraid of anything," she says.

"I'm very persistent and have a drive in me."

Camogie is now a huge factor in the 32 year old's life, and even will play into her decision to stay around for the long term.

"Sometimes I'm thinking 'oh, I'm not so sure how long I'll be able to play' because I was late to start, but then I see the girls that are 45 or nearing 50 and my first thought is yes, I can play Camogie still for 15 years, it's still possible," she says.

"Actually I think I'm already thinking about getting citizenship in Ireland here. I have to have five years before I can do that, but it's definitely something I'd like to do. I think this would be the main thing that I wouldn't like to stop playing.

"I can't really imagine right now living somewhere else, but also, I have 7 hurls, what am I supposed to do with them! I think I would go somewhere and I wouldn't be able to play. I don't think I would find another sport that would be so good for me."

Now known as the Warrior Queen in Cuala, Niewiadomska believes the medium of sport is the best way to "get to know Irish people from this side" and therefore she "would definitely recommend everyone to try Camogie, to socialise, to volunteer, to meet new people and to have fun."

Should anyone be looking to get involved, Daria might just know where you can pick up an extra hurl or two.



Tell Their Story

