



**THE
CAMOGIE
ASSOCIATION**
An Cumann Camógaíochta



TELL THEIR STORY



Tell Their Story





About the Author

Alanna Cunnane is a freelance sports journalist, reporter and broadcaster from Sligo with previous features on Off The Ball, Virgin Media Television, HerSport and League Of Ireland TV.

She also has written features for print media with the FAI, GAA, the Sunday Business Post as well as local newspaper outlets.

Twitter: @acunnane10



Louise Keane

Player Welfare and Inclusion Coordinator

Email: louise.keane@camogie.ie



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**THE
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My Experience: Hannah Looney explains how anti doping testing is “nothing to be worried about, but something to be mindful of”



By Alanna Cunnane

Cork's Hannah Looney would want to buy a lotto ticket should they make it to next year's All Ireland, as the All Star forward has a habit of being randomly selected out of a hat during that period.

Those chosen for the Sport Ireland's Anti Doping testing are picked at random via their jersey numbers, but as luck would have it, and having worn three different numbers on the three different occasions her side have been in the final in the last number of years, she's been put up for the task at every one of those junctures.

Two players from each team undergo the testing, throwing up a different range of emotions whether you're on the winning or losing side, as Looney knows all too well.

“What happens is after the whistle goes you're greeted by someone from Sports Ireland who basically chaperones you around until you can produce an acceptable urine sample,” she explains.

“Either way it can be weird because when you lose Croke Park is the worst place in the world and you want to get out of there as quickly as possible, but when you win it's the best ever and you don't want to waste a second of it. So it's very different that way.

“You can't even shower and you have to keep drinking water,” she says, “I remember two years ago when we lost I just couldn't go to the toilet and I was there for hours. The bus of players had even gone and I ended up having to get a



taxi back to the hotel because we were getting the train home that evening.”

On the flipside though, the champion’s experience makes for a great anecdote too, with a cloud nine feeling encasing the process.

“It was a bit funny because you’re just ecstatic and celebrating away, but this person has to just follow you around,” Looney smiles as she recalls.

“In the dressing room I remember one of the mentors going over to her and being like, ‘don’t mind her, she’s like this all of the time’, in case she thought I was mad or something!

“Even waiting in the queue for the test, we were just so excited we were getting her to take photos and all, I’m sure she thought I was off my head, but it was all fun and games.

“I had to rush back to the hotel then and they told me I was down for an interview on the Sunday Game, so I didn’t even have time to shower after the match. I just quickly washed my hair and put makeup on and rushed off.



“It’s crazy when you think of it now.”

Players partake in a mandatory course on the subject yearly, and with a long list of banned substances to be aware of Looney describes how it’s “nothing to be worried about, but it is something to be mindful of.”

“You’re well rehearsed in what you can or cannot take, to be honest, with the big ones being certain supplements and then pseudoephedrine which people might not be aware of but it’s in quite a lot of things,” she says.

“The odd time rumors would be going around camp, I remember

going into an All Ireland final a couple of years back and went to take Berocca boost before training and one of the girls told me it was banned, but sure it was too late I had taken it.

“It turned out it wasn’t a banned substance, but anything like that, I’m involved with Cork Football and Cork Camogie squads and what I’ve found with both is that if you ever have an issue or a query, you just bounce it off the team doctor, it’s not something we’d be spending too much time on like.”

Although it is no doubt “a bit of a pain” to do it on some of the biggest days of your career, the Rebel

County woman believes the idea is an important one to uphold, if for nothing else to “keep a good eye on player welfare.”

Should a player be found to be in breach, they could receive up to a four year ban.

Similar penalties apply to those who refuse to take the test, and it would also have consequences to funding from the Intercounty Government Support Scheme, which is linked to Sport Ireland, and from the Camogie Association in the 2024 Player Charter, and therefore the tests are mandated by all involved.

“Gaelic Games in general are quite clean,” Looney says, “but I suppose with bigger and better supplements always on the go there’s probably people out there willing to try more things.”

Supplements themselves carry risks in that they can include banned substances unknown to players, with players advised to do their research prior to using any form of supplement.

“Especially given that we’re an amateur sport but a huge amount of time goes into things behind the scenes and often it’s a matter of how far are people willing to take things.

“I think people often believe as well it’d be to do with performance, but often it’s really more so that people have full time jobs, are doing

this extensive training and are maybe dipping into something for recovery.

“So totally, I think it’s very important that this is implemented and that everyone knows how it works,” she says.

With that said, if there was one slight alteration Looney could suggest, it would be in the spirit of savoring the moment that all players work towards.

“You can never replace those minutes after winning something like the All Ireland and those special times in the dressing room afterwards. That’s why I had the attitude of”, ‘so you’re here. I’m so sorry I’m just going to do my own thing here now. You do what you have to do and we’ll do the test then.”

With the Sport Ireland representative “sprinting up and down” the field following Looney’s All Ireland glory, it’s hard to know who you’d have more empathy for in that situation.

For more information on Anti Doping rules, regulations and advice, please see the following websites:

- <https://camogie.ie/player-information/anti-doping/>
- <https://www.sportireland.ie/anti-doping>
- <https://www.wada-ama.org/en>



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