



**THE
CAMOGIE
ASSOCIATION**
An Cumann Camógaíochta



TELL THEIR STORY





About the Author

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The Gannon sisters, for club, for county, for life: “It’s unbelievable playing with your two sisters”



By Alanna Cunnane

The Gannon sisters are so well accustomed to playing with each other for both St. Jude’s and Dublin, you can imagine that when they were pitted *against each other* in the Ashbourne Cup semi final this year, it came as a shock to the system to say the least.

If not just for them, for their “poor mam” too.

Twins Claire and Aisling battled it out in the acclaimed college competition for TUD and DCU respectively, with their mum, dad, sister Niamh and brother Mark, all (mostly) neutral and innocent bystanders in the weeks building up to it.

Niamh, who’s now doing a masters in accounting at UCD’s Smurfit school, had previously attended TUD, and so did have

a slight bias towards her old college, but having not made the competition weekend itself, she was present to provide the perfect commentary on the situation at hand.

“I think it was the hardest on our mam,” she says,

“She was so worried and wanted them to know that they were completely neutral and equal in support for both teams.

“We were joking asking who she would stand with and clap for, but really she just ended up clapping the whole time,” she laughs.

“One of the supporters even asked her who she was supposed to be supporting, because she was just clapping away, saying ‘well I’ve both my girls on either team’” Aisling expands.



On this occasion it was Claire, who's studying clinical measurement science in TUD, who ultimately emerged triumphant over Aisling, who's studying Primary Teaching in DCU. But not by much, it should be said.

With a scoreline of 1-11 to 0-15, a singular point separated the twins from complete euphoria and utter disappointment.

"I played against Niamh and Claire last year when they were both with TUD in the group stages, but going to Ashbourne weekend, knowing you're playing your twin, that's a whole different scenario you just never would have pictured," Aisling recalls.

"Both of us playing at the top level, both of us want to win to get to a final, but your twin is on the opposite team," she added.

"It was the strangest experience ever because you wanted them to do well, but you'd also love to have been there yourself.

"Even the week of the match, our team did analysis, and Claire was in three or four clips. My DCU team were there doing analysis against my twin. I was there joking being like, come here she's not that good! It was so weird."

With Claire at her general half back, and Aisling at her usual full forward, they found themselves in two different places on the pitch, both mentally and physically.

"Obviously the weeks leading up to it were funny, we were slagging each other a lot, but at the end of the day we knew at the final whistle only one of us were going to be happy and make the final," Claire explains.

"When we won I was delighted, but I knew looking down the pitch that my twin was obviously really upset and had just been knocked out. So that was a mix of emotions because I wanted to be happy but I knew I had to contain that when I went up to Ais and gave her a hug."



Having promised to do just that when the final whistle went “no matter what”, their parents were delighted that at the end of the day, their sisterhood triumphed, even if just a little bit, over their love for camogie.

“Obviously when you step on the pitch all of that steps away, but once the game is over, that is your twin at the end of the day, that’s your sister,” Aisling says.

“No matter what you have that empathy and you just want to see them do well.”

That empathy also translates to a sort of telepathy on the pitch, with all three of the girls utilizing the benefits that come with the “no filter” form of communication that can only be exchanged between sisters.

“We know each other inside out,” Niamh says.

“If I have the ball, Ais knows she has to make a run and she knows exactly where I’m going to hit it. I expect her to get it and vice versa. “A lot of the girls, from Jude’s

would say to us, ‘we need everybody on the pitch to talk to each other the way you do’ because obviously you know we’re sisters and we don’t mind holding back.”

With that brutal honesty said and done, there’s also a tangible wholesome quality to the act of playing together.

“I absolutely love playing with the two of them,” Aisling says, “it’s unbelievable playing with your two sisters.”



“You feel like you do know each other a bit more, because you’re sisters,” she adds.

“I always say it as well, I feel like I play better alongside these two because they always hold me to a standard. They know the expectation, so they just carry you on the pitch.”

At 22, Niamh is two years older than the twins, but while the pair of them partake in antics such as switching up gear and helmets to confuse coaches, teammates and opposition alike, she jokes that that indecision hopefully doesn’t extend to the older Gannon sister.

“Just being the older sister it’s always the ongoing joke that the girls are going to catch up with me, but they fully have now,” she smiles.

“Even as well I was always called Gannon because there’s normally a few Niamhs on the team, so then when Aisling and Claire came up they were all asking whether they

were going to call them that too, and I was like no, no! I’m the Gannon here!

“Little things like that are stupid, but no it’s funny, it’s our dynamic and I wouldn’t have it any other way. I’m delighted to get to play with my sisters.”

Now all major players for Dublin’s senior team, they played their part in claiming the county’s first senior title in 41 years when they won the Very National Camogie League Division 1B final earlier this year.

With that said though, they’ll be hoping that isn’t their final addition to the history books this year, as they look to make a major dent in the Championship too.

Thankfully, if that outing does come about, it should be a lot easier on their mum’s clapping hands, and her big heart.





Tell Their Story

