



***THE  
CAMOGIE  
ASSOCIATION***

An Cumann Camógaíochta

**Rules Revision Working Group Report  
October 2019**

## **Introduction**

The Camogie Association, founded in 1904, is one of the oldest female sporting organisations still in place to this day. The sport of Camogie, and its founders, were trailblazers in the development and advocacy for women's sport, regardless of socio-economic standing or class, and fundamentally changed the landscape of female sport in Ireland. A vibrant member of the Gaelic Games family, camogie has been inherent in the unique Irish sporting culture and is an inclusive female sport immersed in almost 700 clubs representative of over 1,000 communities across Ireland. With the expansion of Camogie internationally into Britain, Europe, the USA, Asia and Australia and the renewed interest and advocacy in female sport in Ireland, Camogie is uniquely positioned to reflect the standards and demands of the modern female sportsperson.

Sport plays a prominent role in society and can lead to physical, mental and social benefits to all those involved in it. From a health perspective, due its popularity, Camogie can play a leading role in combatting physical inactivity in Irish females. Sports participation has been demonstrated to promote active living and healthy weight, reduce depression, increase self-esteem, enhance well-being and provide a social platform for participants.<sup>11</sup> However, retention of players and encouraging lifelong participation in Camogie from an underage player, to an adult player and later volunteerism within the club as a coach, referee, administrator and supporter is key to achieving all of this. The inherent community spirit encouraged within Camogie clubs and values of integrity and equality is significant in this female sport.

The sport of Camogie is a high velocity multidirectional game and is the fastest female ball and stick game in the world. The playing rules of this Irish native sport were formalised in the early 1900s. A substantial review on the rules was last conducted in 1999, and the current rules are in play since May 2018. Thus, this is the most substantive review of the Camogie playing rules in the last 20 years.

Due to the advances in science, sport and participation over the years, Camogie is now played from club to inter-county by fitter, stronger, adaptive and more reactive players than we have ever seen before. The working group believe it is now time to recognise the advances in female sport, and how this impacts the sport of Camogie. To truly engage players, volunteers and supporters, retain and

expand membership across all ages and levels, and promote and develop camogie into the potential sport it can be, we believe that it is time to examine and revise the current Camogie playing rules. Players, viewers and volunteers want a quick, fast paced, exciting game that highlights the integral skilful features of Camogie. The Camogie Association was founded by pioneers in female sport, and the working group believe it is important to carry on that progressive tradition by bringing the modern game to the fore.

This is an exciting period for the game of Camogie. The Camogie Association and the working group believe that it is now time for Camogie to progress and advance into the one of the leading sports in Ireland.

### **Purpose of this Working Group**

The aim of this working group was to *review and recommend revisions to the current Camogie Playing rules across all ages and levels of play*. The working group aimed to undertake honest and open engagement with a wide range of Camogie stakeholders to facilitate and implement real change that is genuinely wanted by all those involved in the sport itself. The working group aimed to ensure the rules reflect and facilitate a game that is even more challenging, rewarding, skilful, and enjoyable to play and fun to watch.

Throughout this process, the working group underpinned the mission and vision of the Camogie Association when reviewing and revising rule changes in Camogie. The working group also endeavoured to ensure the key values of Camogie, namely *innovation, leadership, volunteerism, fun, integrity, excellence* and *inclusiveness* are still inherent to the modern game.

## **Vision**

***Inspire to play, empower to stay***

# **Mission**

***To provide opportunities to enjoy and play Camogie as a vibrant part of the Gaelic Games Family***

## **The Process**

The Rules Revision Working Group was convened at the request of Kathleen Woods Uachtarán following a motion passed at the 2019 congress. The working group was chaired by Liam O'Neill (Former President of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)) and was made up of 5 people:

- Paul O'Donovan, representative for the Camogie Association and current Player Welfare Co-ordinator.
- Anne-Marie Hayes is a former county Galway Camogie player who retired from county camogie in 2014 and from club camogie in 2015. She won 4 senior county titles with her club and one club All Ireland and played at senior county level for 11 years. She was awarded 3 Camogie All Stars and also won an All-Ireland with Galway senior team.
- Mary Leacy has won 2 club All Ireland camogie senior medals and 5 senior club Leinster medals with her local club Oulart the Ballagh. She has played with Wexford for 17 years and captained Wexford 4 times over that period. She captained the winning All Ireland Wexford team in 2007 and has received 3 All Stars. She also has won 2 Ashbourne cup medals with UCD.
- Fionnuala Carr was Down senior Camogie captain 2018-2019 and has won a premier junior All Ireland in 2014 and reached the All Ireland intermediate final in 2018. She won the All Ireland intermediate club Camogie final in March 2019 and has seven county titles and two ulster titles. She also has won a senior Gael Linn and intermediate Gael Linn with Ulster.
- Kevin McGeeney is from the Athleague GAA club in Roscommon. He has served the GAA and Camogie Association as a referee for 15 years and for the last 4 has been on the GAA National panel. He has acted as a Referee Advisor for the Camogie Association for the past 5 years. He is

the Children's Officer and Health and Well-being officer with his local club and is also a secondary school teacher in St. Cuan's College in Castleblakeney, Galway.

- Dr Siobhán O'Connor is a Certified Athletic Therapist, Assistant Professor in the School of Health and Human Performance in Dublin City University and Vice President of the World Federation of Athletic Therapy and Training. Dr O'Connor's research and teaching specialises in injury surveillance, injury prevention and sports safety and has published over 30 peer-reviewed research papers in this field. She has extensive research experience in community and female sports, particularly in Gaelic games (Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football and adolescent Gaelic football and hurling) and horse-racing.

The working group held five meetings between June to October 2019. Research was also conducted to examine playing rules in female sports, including Lacrosse<sup>6,9,10</sup> Australian Rules Women's Football,<sup>1</sup> Basketball<sup>4</sup> and Rugby.<sup>5,12</sup> The working group also engaged with some of the most experienced safety and injury prevention academics and researchers active in other female sporting codes worldwide.

There was unprecedented engagement by the Camogie community with a total of over 2,000 responses and suggestions made to the working group directly. The working group conducted a large scale open one-time survey, which was advertised on the Camogie website, social media and circulated to all counties. Over 1,500 responses across all Camogie stakeholders including players, coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and supporters was received. The working group also engaged specifically with various stakeholders, received a significant number of emailed suggestions, undertook discussions with club players, elite players and coaches, reviewed the WGPA player survey and engaged directly with the National Referee Committee and reviewed the WGPA Camogie 2019 The Players View report.

## **Issues Identified & Engagement Findings**

Four themes were prevalent throughout the submissions and engagement with stakeholders, namely:

1. Contact with other players
2. Speed up the game
3. Rule changes that facilitate the development of the modern game

#### 4. Innovation within the game

All proposed changes were considered within the context of implementation *across all levels of play and age groups*. In addition, the inherent concept that the game must reward skilful and quick-thinking players and prove costly to players that foul was fundamental to all deliberation. The safety and well-being of all players, alongside the promotion of safe and fair play was also integral to our discussions.

### **Recommendations on Rule Revisions**

All proposed revisions are set out within each of the themes that came to the fore during the engagement phase. Some proposed revisions will be relevant to a number of the themes however we endeavoured to place them in the most appropriate section for the purpose of this report.

#### ***Theme 1 Contact with other players***

Rationale: Contact in the game of Camogie has emerged as a contentious issue. In the survey conducted, 74.7% indicated that the idea of contact (inclusive contact between players and playing equipment) within the game should be further considered. It is important to emphasise the working group considered the sport across all ages and levels when suggesting these proposals. The safety of players was paramount throughout deliberations and the working group engaged with a wide variety of experts in safety and injury prevention across female codes of sport nationally and internationally. The working group also examined the injury incidence of Camogie in its current form<sup>3,7</sup> and assessed other female sporting codes definitions of contact.<sup>1,4,5,10,12</sup>

We were conscious of the fact that players as young as fifteen play adult club camogie so the working group do not propose the introduction of “shouldering” (as in hurling) at this point, however it must be recognised that contact can occur during the game of Camogie. Therefore, the working group have included the facilitation of a side to side tackle, or a bump/nudge, to allow for contact between players when making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the ball, similar to when the ball is thrown in at the start of the game. This tackle does not allow a player to side-to-side charge against the opposition player, and the player must be making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the ball during this movement.

Proposed Revisions to Rules:

1. The working group propose to amend Section 9.7.e. to define a tackle to the following and to account for the fact that contact that may occur when making a reasonable effort to steal or gain possession of the ball:  
*“For competitions of Under 16 and upwards, a player may bump/nudge an opponent’s body from side-on once they are making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the ball. Bumping or making forceful contact to an opponent who is in the act of picking up a ball, or any contact other than directly side-on, started from a distance, or not making a reasonable effort to gain possession of the ball shall be deemed a foul.  
For (the) competitions in the age groups U13,U14 and U15 age-appropriate bumping will be allowed. For (the) competitions of under 12 and under bumping is not permitted.  
Also  
“A player may tackle a player in possession with arms outstretched to the side (outstretched hand), without holding the opponent whilst making a reasonable effort to steal the ball.”*
2. The working group believe playing the hurley (as per Section 9.7) adds nothing to the game. We propose to amend these rules to penalise playing the hurley in Section 9.7.b, Section 9.7.d and 10.1.n
3. No rule currently exists to facilitate Referees to address persistent fouling in the game of Camogie. Persistent technical fouls will be noted and persistent technical fouling will lead to a yellow card. To deter consistent fouling the working group propose to include persistent technical fouls in Section 10.1.  
*“10.1.r. Persistent technical fouls”.*
4. The working group have concerns that the player in possession of the ball is disadvantaged in rule while trying to round an opponent. We propose (Proposal) to amend the definition of charging in Section 10.2.c to the following wording:  
*“A person in possession of a ball who makes a reasonable effort to avoid unfair contact with the other player should not be penalised should contact occur.”*

## ***Theme 2 Speed up the game***

Rationale: The game itself and speed and fitness of players has steadily increased over the last two decades. The working group feel the following

proposed revisions will facilitate speeding up the game across all levels and age groups.

The working group recommends that quicker frees, quicker side-line cuts and quicker puck-outs should be facilitated in the rules of Camogie. The working group acknowledges that this recommendation may require rule change/s, however we believe it can have a positive impact on the speed of the game. Consistent implementation of the advantage rule would also help in this regard. Sixty-four percent of those that completed the survey indicated that the use of the advantage rule and less frees would aid the speed of the game.

#### Proposed Revisions to Rules:

1. From our discussions, the working group feel that awarding a side-line to a team inside their own 45-metre line can often be a disadvantage and can result in crowding or rucks developing which further slow the game down. In order to prevent this from occurring the working group proposes to provide an option for players to choose to take the side-line from the ground or rise and strike the sliotar within their own 45-metre line. The rise and strike option cannot result in a direct score. Proposal to amend Section 12.1.
2. A number of suggestions on speeding up the game centred on the amount of playing time lost on puck-outs in the normal course of the game. Currently the referee must double signal the re-start following a score or wide. Our proposal is to remove the requirement for a second whistle prior to re-start following a score or wide. This would speed up the game and would greatly help a team who would like to keep the game moving. It would increase the time the sliotar is in play and lead to a more exciting game. In the case of an injury, the Referee would always have discretion to stop the play, particularly for a serious or head injury of any kind. Proposal to amend Section 9.5.
3. In keeping with the theme of speeding up the game and in order to discourage cynical fouling of players coming out of their own defence, we propose a change to the rules relating to free-taking. This proposal would give a player an option to take a quick free if she is fouled inside her own 45-metre line. This rule will facilitate players choosing to strike the ball from their hand instead of having to place the ball on the ground

to take the free. Only the player that is fouled can take it from the hand and it is an indirect free. This proposal requires a new addition to the rules in Section 10.

4. The working group recommends the following proposal to address issues occurring when multiple players are competing for possession on the ground. These competitions for possession can become unsightly, they add nothing to the game and further slow the game down. In these instances, we propose the referee should stop play and throw the ball in between 2 players. All other players must be outside a 3-metre exclusion zone. Any other player either remaining in or entering the exclusion zone before the ball is thrown in shall have an indirect free awarded against her. This proposal will amend Section 9.
5. Having defined the throw-in in number 4 above, the working group suggests a proposal to address throw-ins that occur as a result of a clashed ball going over the side-line. These throw-ins often result in further slowing of the game. They regularly lead to rucks forming, similar to those described in 4 above, or they lead to side-lines being repeatedly taken. In the event where a clashed ball travels across the end-line we suggest the throw-in takes place on the 20-metre line. We propose to amend the wording in Section 12.2 to:  
*“When a clashed sliotar crosses the side-line the Referee must throw in the sliotar between two opposing players at least 10 metres in-field from the point where it crossed the side-line. If within 20 metres of the end-line the sliotar must be thrown in on the 20-metre line. In effect, this means that no throw-in should take place within 10-metres of a side-line.”*

### ***Theme 3 Rule changes that facilitate the development of the modern game***

Rationale: The working group have suggested the following changes to showcase the skilful nature of Camogie. Fifty-six percent of those surveyed indicated that they would like to see both the hand pass goal and dropping of the hurley removed. In addition, the working group would like to see more positive communication between referees and players.

Proposed Revisions to Rules:

1. Proposal to remove the hand pass goal in Section 9.6.i.
2. Proposal to remove the dropping of the hurley in Section 9.6.f.
3. Proposal to amend Section 10.2.g to allow players to ask why a free is being given but ensure that this is done in a collegial and respectful manner. The working group propose amending the wording of Section 10.2.g. along the lines of:  
*“The player is permitted to ask why the free was being given, however they must not challenge the authority of a referee/match official.”*

#### ***Theme 4 Innovation within the game***

Rationale: The rationale for this section is to enhance the learning, practice opportunities, and confidence of players through maximising the successful execution of the skills of the game for the underage player. Previous research has shown that encouraging a mastery motivational environment when learning skills can maximise enjoyment, perceived confidence and intrinsic motivation during participation.<sup>2,8</sup> The working group also have made proposals to enhance the safety of the goalkeeper during penalties and close frees and ensure a penalty is a real advantage to a team.

#### **Proposed Revisions to Rules:**

1. We feel that striking a penalty from within the 20-metre line is a clear danger to the defender on the goal line. The working group suggest the following proposal for safety reasons. This proposal is to amend Section 11.13, to say a penalty must be struck from on or outside the 20-metre line. In addition, only one defending player may stand on the goal line during a penalty. This suggestion is made to ensure that a penalty is a clear advantage to the penalty taker, deter fouling and enhance the excitement of a penalty.
2. Similarly, the working group suggest the following proposal for safety reasons. This proposal is to amend Section 11.12 where a free awarded on or near the 20-metre line must be struck from on or outside the 20-metre line. In effect no free may be struck from within the 20-metre line or within 20-metres of the goal.
3. The working group recommend removing the requirement for all players to remain in their respective positions for the commencement of the game. The working group suggest the removal of the following wording

from Section 9.2. “must remain in their respective positions” and edit the line to:

*“All other players must be behind the 65-metre line or on shorter pitches at least 10 meters from the referee, until an attempt to strike the sliotar has been made. Encroachment by a player (other than the four players involved in the throw-in) will be penalised by an indirect free.”*

4. To facilitate opportunities to learn the skills of Camogie and enhance the confidence and practice opportunities in underage players the working group propose to amend Section 11.5 to:

*“From Under 14 and above should a free-taker fail to lift and/or strike at the first attempt she may strike it on the ground but may not lift it again. For competitions for Under 14 and below the free-taker has one chance to retake the free without being penalised.*

5. Equally, to facilitate learning opportunities and practice the skills of Camogie the working group propose to amend Section 13.3 to:

*“From the ages of Under 14 and above, a player failing to strike a puck-out at the first attempt may*

- a. lift and strike it or*
- b. strike it on the ground.*

*From the ages of Under 14 and below, a player failing to strike a puck-out at the first attempt may retake the puck-out. If the player fails to strike it a second time she may:*

- a. lift and strike it or*
- b. strike it on the ground”*

## **Trials**

The working group proposes that these rule changes should be implemented in appropriate competitions.

## **Confirmation and Clarification of Current Rules**

The working group noted that there were a number of suggestions of rule changes that were already in place showing the importance of clarifying the rules. For example some submissions recommended that two points be awarded for a point from a side-line. This is already in place.

There would be huge benefit for the game of camogie if this rule change process was accompanied by an education process for players, officials, referees and coaches.

## Conclusion

The working group see a bright future for the sport of Camogie and we offer this revision in rules to enhance Camogie in it's current form. The unprecedented engagement in the process from the Camogie community was exciting to see and aided the process and findings greatly. The working group recommend that this is an ongoing process and view these recommendations as the first stage in this process.

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