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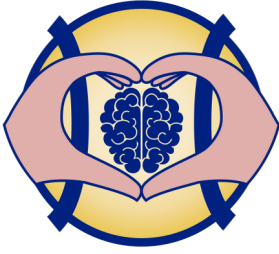


THE CAMOGIE ASSOCIATION

# PLAYER WELFARE

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# Player Welfare



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# MY ACL EXPERIENCE, VIKKI FALCONER

By Alanna Cunnane

Vikki Falconer's standout moment from her first All Ireland final isn't one she'll soon forget, although she's determined to make sure that nasty memory won't be the only one to her name for that occasion.

Just two minutes into her beloved Waterford's clash versus Cork last year in Croke Park, the Déise star was forced off with an ACL injury.

"You hear about the ACL injuries everywhere at the minute, so when it happened I kind of knew straight away that this wasn't good," she says. "Our team doctor at the time did a few tests in the dressing room afterwards and figured that it was the cruciate.

"I had to wait a few days before the confirmation because it was too swollen to get an x-ray, but I did then and I had a chat with the surgeon about my options."



She was familiar with the term and that it would lead to a 9-12 month absence, but what did come as a surprise to Falconer was all of the information she would come to learn about the injury during the course of her rehabilitation.

“A month or two later I had the surgery, but what I hadn’t realised was that with the cruciate everyone’s surgery and rehab is different,” she explains.

“I got my graft from my quad, so I was trying to do a lot of work in the gym before my surgery to strengthen that area, but you can get it from different places, so nobody’s the same.

“It was my first major operation as well, so I wasn’t really ready for the aftermath of the pain and lack of movement and what it would entail.

“I think once you’ve made your decision about when you’re back playing, the most important thing is about picking a really good physio, one that’s on the same page as you and is going to lead you in the right direction.”

For six weeks the highly active Camogie tallyswoman had to do something she wasn’t so familiar with – take it easy.

This came as a struggle for Falconer, who was used to packing her schedule with training, matches and everything else she does in order to compete at the elite level of Camogie.



**Sometimes you take for granted how much your body can do.**

In fact, she recalls a small setback that taught her to “listen to your body” more, a lesson she’s continuing to take away from this injury period.

“A few days after the surgery I decided to get up, go down for a coffee and a small walk, but afterwards I was just in agony. Even though it was something so small, it was something I shouldn’t have done,” she says.

“That was a learning curve for me. You really have to listen to the body. As athletes that’s difficult because you’re so used to being busy, but it’s okay to relax as well.”

Following that initial rest stint post surgery, she transitioned into the next stage of her recovery journey.

With the help of her physio, Falconer engaged with a biweekly exercise programme which was progressed or halted depending on how her knee is responding.

The next step has been to get back on grass and running in straight lines, before slowly returning to training, and eventually matches.

Missing out on winter training may have felt like “a nice break”, but heading into the brighter months the reality of the task at hand has setting in for the 29 year old.

“I’m going to watch the girls training at this stage and I’m starting to kind of feel it all hitting me now. I know I’m not really able to get involved as much as I’d want to, but look, it has to be done,” she says.

“I said from the start that I was going to stay involved with them, so if there’s a gym available I’m in with them doing that, which is nice because when it’s just you it can get kind of lonely at times.

“If they’re out training on the pitch then I’m there watching. I’m just there for everyone and they’re there for me too.”

Balancing that schedule of her own recovery and Waterford’s training and



gym programme with her own work commitments, Falconer's life could be described as nothing short of hectic.

Although she "didn't expect there to be so much involved" in the recovery, it's all with the hope of getting back doing what she loves as soon as possible.

"That's one of the things you've to consider when your ACL injury first happens. I could have easily just turned around and said 'look I'll leave it now, I probably won't be back', but I think from my perspective I felt my time with the girls wasn't over," she says.

"I've realised what's important."

"Being back with the girls, out there doing what I love and having that routine, that's a big part of it for me."

Now a big believer in trusting the process, let's hope what lies ahead for Falconer is more time doing just that.



# Player Welfare and Inclusion Resources

Below are some of the resources which can be found on the Camogie Association website.

You can check them out at [camogie.ie](http://camogie.ie)



Player Welfare Booklet Vol 1 & 2



Player Welfare Booklet Vol 3 & 4



Player Health Check Programme



Injury Prevention Programme



Self Care Series



Player Welfare Podcast



Player Safety and Helmets



Concussion Guidelines



Health and Wellbeing Information



Camogie Association Disability Inclusion Policy



Supporting Organisations contact information