

SCHOOL NAME:

**LORETO SECONDARY SCHOOL, GRANGES ROAD, KILKENNY.**

ENTRANTS NAME(S):

**Amy Ryan.**

REPORT TITLE:

**My friend has stopped participating in Camogie, what can I do?**

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**Introduction of the subject**

Why did my friend drop out of Camogie?

In an interview with one student, we found the following:

Questions:

1. What age were you when you started playing camogie?

I started playing camogie when I was seven years old, in first class.

1. How long did you play camogie for?

I played camogie for seven years, up until the start of second year.

1. Why did you make the decision to quit camogie?

I decided to quit camogie as school was becoming too stressful and I was not able to cope with the amount of homework while attending training and matches.

1. Would anything convince you to take camogie back up?

I would take camogie back up if there was more of a social aspect to it rather than just a competitive one. It was too much pressure to try and be good at school and win matches. It was usually the girls the manager knew were good that were chosen to play, to try to beat opposing teams. This was really unfair. I spent a whole season sitting on the bench waiting to play in matches. If I could be guaranteed a fair go in at least a few matches I might come back.

1. Do you think there's a difference between female and male participation in sports?

There is definitely a difference between male and female participation in sports as men are expected to keep on sport during secondary school and college, whereas women are expected to give it up and focus on school.

1. What could the Camogie Association do to support camogie players more?

They could put more emphasis on camogie such as advertising and where the games were held. They could also have more social matches rather than league matches. This would ensure all players who want to play get a chance to do so.

From our discussions we found:

1. One factor that may be encouraging boys to invest more time participating in sports than girls, is that children are more likely to see men in active sports careers. Coverage of women’s sports such as Camogie, Gaelic Football and Soccer only make up 9% of all sports coverage in 2019.

Online coverage of women’s sport increased by 50% but, across the board, only 6% of online sports stories are still about women.

Coverage of women’s sport in print media (newspapers) increased by 53% but is still only at 5%.

And while Irish audience figures for women’s sport on TV almost trebled, the actual television coverage of women’s sport decreased by 40% in 2019.

Girls need to know sport is for everyone and that their participation matters. If girls see versions of themselves achieving great success in the media, they will not think it too much of a stretch to envision themselves there. Young girls do need role models, they need someone they can relate to and aspire to be when they grow up

1. A fear of judgement is also putting girls off taking up a sport. This fear might stem from questions about their ability and being nervous that others will judge them for not being very good. It might stem from appearance, where women and girls don’t want to look hot and sweaty while exercising because it’s not an image we see enough in the media. It might stem from a fear of being judged for their priorities, for being active instead of doing their homework or seeing their friends.
2. From discussions, we saw that when participating in Camogie it is always the “ones who are good” that seem to get picked to play. This really knocks the confidence of those who just need a little more practice to bring up their skill level. There really is no encouragement from coaches or teachers in school to keep on doing sports unless you really excel at it.
3. An area that is under resourced and seen as the “poor relation” does not appear an attractive activity or pastime to participate in. Budgets for Camogie teams are minuscule compared with male counterparts, with a typical Camogie team’s yearly budget the equivalent of some of the top men’s hurling teams training camps.
4. Any girl with an interest in Camogie will know that female teams are still battling with the use of local facilities for training, and most struggle to bag the major sponsorship deals that some of the more established men’s teams are making. If the sporting federations do not create equal pathways for boys and girls, then why should the media and public care? If no one else is interested in these teams, why should the girls be?

**How do we tackle these issues?**

1. We need to bring women’s games “out into the light”. They should be played at all county venues for league and championship.

Women’s matches and men’s matches should be played at the same venue on the same day, i.e. when there is a hurling semi-final in Páirc Uí Chaoimh or final in Croke Park, the match beforehand should be a Camogie semi-final or final.

While there has been significant progress in playing women’s league games before men’s games when there is a similar fixture, the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association need to build on this and provide even more opportunities for this to happen on a more regular basis. There needs to be a union between the GAA, LFGA and the Camogie association in this.

Attitudes need to change. In particular, the willingness at grassroots level to trial the “One Club” model. This “One Club” would allow the cross-board resources of the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association to be used by all members, no matter if they play Gaelic Football or Camogie, no matter if they are men or women. Sharing of facilities on an equal basis at club level is not something that is currently seen. This would be a step in the right direction.

We need to get rid of the old school mentality of “out to win”. All players who have religiously turned up for practice week in and week out should be able to get play in a few matches. This will need a change in the mindset of managers and coaches. If the One Club methodology is used, then the coaches could be used from differing sports to avoid picking the “favourites”. The coaches will all have the knowledge of instilling strength, endurance, persistence, positive mindset, etc. over any sport. This will allow all the members to receive the same level of training and make all members feel equal.

**What would you hope to achieve with these ideas?**

I hope that we can come to see Camogie and women’s sports as an equal with men’s sports.

I hope that the participation in sport will be seen as more of a social event firstly, particularly for those younger players. This will instil a love of the sport that hopefully will carry on throughout the years.

I hope that agreement could be found between the governing bodies and all sections of the media to actively promote women’s sports the way it promotes men’s sports.

I hope utilising all the facilities “across the board” in a One Club system could lead to greater participation in these clubs and greater transfer of knowledge and experience between all the managers, coaches, and players.

I hope that the way to get more women involved in sports and Camogie would be to instil equality in the governing bodies and not equity as it has been to date.