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**Title: The dropout rate for camogie is high, how can we encourage these players to stay?**

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Many girls and women around the world love “the clash of the ash” and have played for a lifetime. But why do people give it up is the question we ask ourselves.

There are numerous factors that affect young women and girls to drop out of camogie such as: loss of interest, not being in the starting line out, bullying, sexism and Covid 19.

As girls mature it is obvious that their interests change. As a young girl we are encouraged and brought to training by our parents. Our parents feel that sport is a priority in our lives. It is a great team building skill perfect for punctuality, we also develop self confidence and respect for ourselves and our fellow team players and coaches. Through sport friendships form for life and we get to know many girls from other clubs by playing county camogie. But at a certain age girls decide themselves that this is not for them anymore. Instead they start other hobbies or perhaps just do nothing at all. They feel they have no time for camogie because of study but i feel that camogie plays an important role in my mental and physical health. It only takes 1-2 hours per week but the benefits are definitely worthwhile.

So how do we encourage girls/women to keep the interest in camogie?

We ask our friends to play and make everyone feel welcome. We try to make training as much fun as possible. We tell the girls about the enjoyment of camogie and try to focus their interest on love of camogie. We stress the advantages of camogie and emphasise that it is also a great social outlet.

Another factor that affects girls quitting camogie is the fact some of these never get on the starting team and sometimes never get played in Championship games.

Why might this happen?

Training is a very important factor for any sport. Commitment is totally necessary for a team to succeed. It is vital that girls come to every training but sometimes girls don't get to go to each session, therefore they may not make the team. This is the obvious factor why girls should not make the team but sometimes there are other aspects. Huge numbers, where not all team members get to play. Sometimes the level of skill contributes to a successful team position. If girls don't continuously go training they might find the training sessions hard as the level of fitness has improved with the team and they feel embarrassed that they cannot keep up. This is a factor why sometimes girls might quit.

Back to the skills of the players, we sometimes find that very skilled players always get started even though they mightn't train as much as other team members. This happens in every club.

So what can we do to retain these less skilled players?

We emphasise that we are a team and that every member is equally important. We know that all girls love playing matches so we could enter another team into a league. This would mean that all players get game time.

Bullying can be another element why girls may not retain playing camogie. Although it is not very common in clubs as clubs try to combat bullying, sometimes bullying can be a major factor to quit. How might bullying occur in camogie?

Unfortunately sometimes players may not click with a coach or vice versa. This can lead to an uncomfortable situation at training and perhaps an unpleasant atmosphere. Due to this girls may not return to camogie. How do we overcome this?

We try to develop a strong, positive relationship involving all players and coaches. We approach a member of the club if we have any difficulties and get solutions as quickly as possible how scenarios will not erupt. Bonding days are a beneficial way to promote team and trainer bonding.

Sexism between hurling and camogie may be a factor why girls no longer play camogie. We all know that mens hurling gets priority and more publicity than ladies camogie. Attendance at games is always lower at girls games. Young girls starting camogie do not have as many heroins as the boy's heros as we do not get to know the girls due to lack of publicity.

These factors make girls feel inferior therefore withdraw from camogie. How do we overcome this? We feel some hope especially when we see major players on tv wanting the GAA, LGFA and of course The camogie association uniting as one. This would give equal rights to men and women. This could be a huge influence to encourage girls and women to retain them at camogie.

2020 has been a very unusual year for camogie due to Covid 19. Training started, training stopped for months, games were rescheduled, training took place in small numbers. All this leads to a fear of catching or transmitting the virus. This for some girls was a factor of quitting as girls were afraid to catch Covid due to vulnerable people in the household.

All the above factors are reasons for participating or abandoning camogie. As a keen camogie player I believe the positives totally outweigh the negatives. We should all encourage our friends to participate and enjoy our beautiful, skillful sport.

“Remember that girl that gave up.

Neither does anybody else.”