**The Physical Pressure of Camogie and Why it Causes Drop Out**

From talking to, surveying and interviewing former club mates and now club mates of mine between the ages of 13-19, I have discovered that many girls are faced with the physical pressure of camogie, meaning the burnout and constant tiredness from playing too many matches and the performance pressure of constant high expectations, may be a contributing factor to the drop out of camógs.

When playing a high standard of camogie, you have a constant feeling of having to perform every single time you walk out onto the pitch, which is the case with these young camógs. As they come into the adult section after juvenile, they believe they can’t make mistakes because they are now adults, but this expectation of perfection these girls have is unrealistic. Making a mistake, at any level, makes them feel as though they aren’t good enough to play, especially at adult, meaning their confidence will drop slightly. If this happens constantly, the love for the game of camogie will slowly fade resulting in drop out. When interviewing 23 former club mates of mine, 60% of them said they quit because they didn’t enjoy playing camogie anymore because it was either boring or the individuals themselves didn’t feel like they were good enough, with the most common age being 15. This is where the emphasis of camogie being an amateur sport, is pivotal in order to keep girls playing. Camogie is supposed to be fun, but young players feel they must be great all of the time. I feel, as a young camóg myself, that it is up to the manager to stress the fact that camogie is meant to be enjoyable, not a burden that must lie on the shoulders of these young players to consistently perform at a high standard.

Burnout is extremely common in young girls who play camogie, as well as other sports. These girls between the ages of 13 and 19 are expected to play 4 matches in 2 days at the weekend, which excludes training on weekdays and adult or school matches during the week. This amount of exercise is time-consuming and exceedingly hard to complete for an adult professional athlete, but we are underage amateur athletes who don’t have the facilities or time to provide an adequate amount of rest for our bodies to recover and prevent injury. Even though players want to play as much as possible with all the teams they are involved with, there needs to be a limit implemented on the amount of training sessions and matches in week because young camogie players are definitely exceeding the healthy amount. The responsibility lies with the club managers and county boards to consider player welfare and monitor the playing time to protect the players, because nothing is being done about it. This amount of weekly exercise causes a slow decrease in the enjoyability of camogie, leading to a lesser number of camógs.

Not only will this tiredness affect these players bodies, but it may also affect their schoolwork, especially Leaving Cert students, which is what I discovered from 47% of my club mates. They will have a boat load of school work and lots of training and matches to go to, and if this persists, stress and anxiety will gradually start to creep in. These girls may have to drop camogie to focus on their schoolwork for a year or more, and in this time a lot can change. One year is enough to forget about something you love, which could be the case with these players. An education programme is crucial to keep players focused on their studies but still be involved with sport. My own GAA club, Erin’s Isle, is a prime example of where an education programme has worked. This programme could offer helpful links to study guides, contact numbers for grinds for several subjects, career talks and much more. If the Camogie Association were to organise this, they would see a lot less girls dropping out of camogie because their sport and studies are combined.

If the Camogie Association were to consider some of the above ideas, I feel they would have more players playing and less cámogs dropping out of the sport. The ideas I mentioned would help camogie players across Ireland keep the love for the game whilst doing well mentally, physically and educationally.

Please see below for some of my survey results.

  

