Our research on why so many girls quit camogie at a young age and how to prevent it.

By Eden Penfold and Karolina Szilagyi

Loreto Secondary School Kilkenny

Submitted: 01/12/20

**Introduction and our personal experiences:**

**Eden:**

When I came to Ireland, age 9, I started playing camogie in my local camogie club. Because of the fact that I had started much later than the rest of the girls on the team, I felt like I was more of a liability rather than an asset to the team. I also struggled to make friends as we hadn't enough time to socialize at training. I found that in my experience, camogie was about being the best, not just about having fun. It was stressful in that way. At the age of 12, I quit camogie as I was in second year and had too much on my plate. When my parents told me that I had to drop something, unfortunately, camogie was the first thing I thought should go.

**Karolina:**

I first started playing camogie in primary school (4th class). I played with my friends so I thought it would be fun, but I didn't enjoy the sport. The teachers were very strict about it so I quit. I later played again but I just didn't enjoy it. I began to focus on other subjects and I started playing the cello and going to dance classes. I ended up forgetting about camogie. Now, I would feel too awkward to play because I don't think I'd be any good and I would have difficulty making friends.

**How we approached this project and attained information.**

Firstly, we interviewed Lucy Cahill, a TY student from Heywood Community School in Ballinakill, Co. Laois. We also sent out a survey to the third years and the fifth years in our school about their experiences of camogie. Our reasons for sending out the survey to both third and fifth years are so that we had a large database and we could also compare the answers of the two years to identify which age group is most likely to quit camogie.

**In the interview, we asked Lucy the following questions:**

1. When and why did you quit camogie?

2. Do you feel that women in sport receive enough representation and recognition in sport?

3. How could we get girls back into camogie?

**In the survey, we asked the following questions:**

1. What year are you in?
* 3rd year
* 5th year
1. Did you previously play camogie?
* Yes
* No
1. If you did play camogie, do you still do so now?
2. Why did you quit?
3. What age did you quit?
4. What do you think clubs could improve on in order to encourage people to get back into camogie or even to not quit it in the first place?

**The results of our research.**

**The following are Lucy's answers to our questions:**

1. I quit camogie about 5 years ago because I started to not enjoy the sport anymore because I wasn’t getting played much in matches. I was struggling to find the time because I was getting more and more involved in music and different events to do with it also.

2. I don’t feel that women get enough recognition in the sport because firstly, there are not a lot of advertisements on the telly for camogie or many women’s sports in general. However, I do feel there is some sort of representation for women in camogie for example Anna Geary is often on television programs like; The Late Late Show, Dancing with the Stars and also Ireland’s Fittest Family. She always talks about camogie on television and also, when the television show is telling the viewers about her they always talk about her accomplishments. That being said, for many people she is the only camogie player they think of when they are asked about one. So in different ways they are represented and others they aren’t.

3. For many girls our age it is definitely hard to persuade them to get back into sport or go somewhere where they might not know anyone but often all that is needed is a small bit of encouragement. One way that is good for this is to have friends doing it also and have them do it together. As we know, sport also helps up our mental health. Other ways to get back into sport is to maybe simply watch camogie or ladies football on television it can also be inspiring also.

**We received 30 answers to our survey. In the end, sending out the survey to the two different age groups did not prove to offer comparable results. They all quit in their early teens. The following are the results of the survey:**

* 19 third years and 11 fifth years answered our survey.
* 83.3% (25 participants) have played camogie.
* Out of those 25, 16 of them no longer play camogie.
* The majority of them quit because they did not get played and felt that they were not good enough. A few of the participants also commented that they got bored and lost interest in the sport.
* The most common ages for them to quit were 11, 12 and 13 although a few of them quit at very young ages such as 6 and 7.
* A huge majority of the girls said that they would have continued if everyone was played or if they felt part of the team. One student commented that the emphasis should be put on improving the weaker players instead of just focusing on the strongest players on the team.

**Our solution to camogie retention.**

Many of the girls mentioned that the main reason that they quit was that only a select group of players actually played during matches. Furthermore, a number of them mentioned that they felt like they were not part of the team.

In order to prevent young camogie players from feeling like they are not part of the team, we think that clubs should focus work with everyone and give everyone the same amount of time on the pitch during a match, no matter what their ability is. Where possible, we also recommend that, if they want, girls who feel like they have *less ability* (because of starting late etc) should get a slight bit more help, and support. This would not only make the girls feel better about themselves and their ability but will make them want to continue with the sport and maybe even encourage others to join.

We also believe that camogie clubs should hold regular social events for the players. These events would hopefully make every player feel included and *part of the team.*