**Why Girls Quit Camogie, and Ways to Combat the Drop Out**

“Have you ever been put under pressure?”

According to my recent survey with club mates, I found that 56% of girls aged 13-19 have been put under pressure whilst playing camogie. I believe that pressure is one of the main reasons that girls decide to quit camogie. Pressure is prevalent at every age group in every club. Girls can be put under pressure in many ways: by their managers, teammates or families. This pressure doesn’t only come from others; however, it can also come from themselves by not feeling good enough. The sometimes-rocky transition from the juvenile section to the adult section doesn’t help this problem. The county boards have a part to play in this problem, but managers are the main focus on solving this problem as they are the ones who have the responsibility of building the players up both mentally and physically. Managers are there to develop the skill levels of camogie players and get them fit, but they also have a huge influence on the confidence of camógs.

17% of the girls that we surveyed said that their confidence was low, or that they didn’t feel good enough to play on their own team. The survey results show that managers have been focusing more on the skill side of players, rather than on their confidence. The results showed me that most managers are spending too much time expecting high standards from the players, and not enough time making the camógs feel confident in themselves. They tend to dwell more on mistakes that girls make and criticize them rather than encouraging them and helping them learn from these mistakes. The attention of many managers remains more to developing skilled players and making them the best they can be instead of developing weaker players and helping them to master the basic skills of camogie. I feel that this is where the lack of confidence in camógs lies. As a result of this, more skilled players will get more opportunities, simply because the manager didn’t put work into advancing the less skilled players to become a better player with increased confidence levels, as well as skill. Two minors in our survey who play adult said they didn’t feel that they were good enough to play adult after they finished at juvenile, which is a prime example of this lack of confidence at a key stage in a camogie players career.

To counteract this lack of confidence, I think that it is up to the manager to instill the girls with this necessary confidence. Managers have a huge impact on the lives of players, and they should make this impact positive by improving the camógs as players, rather than tearing them down to make it a negative impact. I feel that a training course should be organised for all managers on how to develop girl's confidence so they know how to have a strong player mentally, as well as physically. There should be monthly reminders for managers from the Camogie Association, along with individual clubs, that we play an amateur sport and we do it for the love of the game. Sometimes we all need a reminder that it is not always about winning or losing, but about the development of the players, everyone playing to the best of their abilities, and most of all having fun.

Along with the lack of confidence, a few girls mentioned that they felt under pressure when a manager put them in a position that they are uncomfortable with, because they have never played there before. Managers are the ones who need to adapt players to all positions and make them feel comfortable anywhere on the pitch. Camógs need to be versatile because positions will be switched as you move to adult teams, and sometimes within your own team to compensate for injuries or low numbers on a particular day. In my opinion, I feel the Camogie Association could include position adaption in their training courses for coaches. This would not only have a huge impact on player development, but the development of camogie itself.

Juvenile players feel as though they are not good enough when going straight into adult teams as they have no compulsory minor competitions to compete in to help them transition easier into the adult teams. The minor leagues and championships are suggested to be competed in by county boards to help juvenile players develop into stronger, more skilled and fitter women so they are prepared for the physicality and high intensity camogie with the adults. Juvenile players fear playing with the adult teams because they don’t feel good enough, which is the major reason for the dropout of camógs. The minor competitions reduce this fear as players are older, stronger and a bit more mature when moving to the adult section, and being introduced to the adult section as they play alongside the minors who play senior, intermediate or junior. The encouragement and participation in minor competitions is crucial to keep young camogie players from dropping out, which is why I feel that the minor competitions should be compulsory to compete in, as it reduces our fears of playing adult and not feeling developed enough. Obviously, I understand that some clubs just don't have enough players to make this feasible, but I think that clubs that do have enough should really be encouraged to participate.

By considering some of the above ideas, I feel that the sport of camogie, including both players and managers, will develop and will have an increase in numbers because less players will have low confidence, they will be more skilled players that will feel they are good enough to play with their team and any adult teams they are asked to play with. The managers will know how to adapt players to different positions and girls will be much happier whilst playing the sport they love!

Please see the following survey results below.

 

 