



'Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport' For Tir Chonail Gaels Gaelic Football Club

*'Life is not a
problem to be
solved but a
mystery to be
lived.'*

Gabriel Marcel

DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF YOUTH

It is important that all young players are valued and always treated with the highest level of respect. Their personal dignity and physical integrity are paramount and participation in sport should enable them to have fun, make friends and become better players.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael believes that a youth centred approach should be adopted by everyone involved in the promotion and development of Gaelic games at underage level. The GAA Coaching resources and activity programmes are firmly rooted in this philosophy and highlight the importance of participation, enjoyment and equality. These are also structured to assist young people to value discipline and to strive to achieve their full potential as they mature and develop.

PUTTING "FAIR PLAY" INTO PERSPECTIVE

FAIR PLAY – 'fir fer / cothrom na feinne' has long been associated with the Celts. It is defined as a way of thinking, not just of behaving. It incorporates issues such as:

- **elimination of cheating e.g. not playing overage players/making biased decisions when officiating**
- **gamesmanship e.g. playing for frees/time wasting etc.**
- **intimidation/foul play (both physical & verbal)**
- **exploitation e.g. making decisions based on personal glory or reward**
- **unequal opportunities e.g. catering for better players only**
- **drugs misuse/substance abuse**
- **learning from mistakes and being prepared to adapt to change**
- **creating and maintaining respect**
- **endeavouring to do one's best and striving to be part of a cohesive team unit**
- **acknowledging good play or superior performance by opponents**

The following Principles of **FAIR PLAY** have been designed to ensure that youth sport is conducted in a positive/ empowering environment.

YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD PLAY FOR THE "FUN OF IT"

ALL YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE TREATED EQUALLY

PARTICIPATION SHOULD BE USED TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP:

PHYSICALLY – by acquiring basic playing techniques, improving physical fitness and developing lifetime health habits.

PSYCHOLOGICALLY – by learning to control emotions and develop a sense of confidence in their own ability – technical, tactical, physical

SOCIALLY AND MORALLY – by learning to combine with teammates, play by the rules and respect team mentors and match officials.



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PLAYERS FIRST - WINNING SECOND

Competition should be used as a basis to encourage young people to develop their full potential. Winning or striving to win is essential for enjoyable competition but must not be seen as an end in itself. Players will be motivated by a range of internal and external factors e.g. prove to themselves or significant others – parents, coaches, teachers, etc. – that they have the required level of ability. The more they feel they have to do it – as distinct from wanting to do it – the more they will succumb to the stresses/ anxieties which result from the fear of losing. They will also find it harder to learn from defeat in that they will more likely transfer blame (scapegoating) as distinct from identifying areas where greater effort is required.

‘We do ourselves a disservice on many levels if we lose sight of the fact that culture is above all, in fact, our experience of fun, challenge, history, conflict, love, meaning, joy, friendship and all that makes life worthwhile’.

Michael Real

ROLE OF THE COACH/TEAM MENTOR

Team Coaches and Mentors can ensure that sport has a beneficial impact when they adhere to the following guidelines:

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender or ability.
- Ensure that nobody involved with the team acts towards or speaks to another person in a manner or engages in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person on the basis of that person’s race, religion, colour, descent, national, ethnic or socio-economic background.
- Be positive during coaching sessions so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Recognise the development needs of young players (avoid excessive training or competition) and ensure that they are matched on an individual or team basis.
- Rotate the team captain and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always last to be selected.
- Be punctual, properly attired, lead by example, avoid smoking or the consumption of alcohol in the presence of young people.
- Plan and prepare appropriately for each session and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Develop an understanding of the OTú Coaching Model and ensure that you have the appropriate level of Coaching accreditation.
- Ensure games, activities and playing equipment are customised to suit the needs of those involved in terms of age, ability, experience and maturity.
- Avoid overcoaching i.e, insisting upon set (stereotyped) playing patterns where individual decision-making and creativity are stifled or where young people are confined to playing in set positions on a continuous basis.
- Don’t shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. (Children learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn).
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals
- Praise and reinforce effort/commitment and provide positive feedback
- Don’t equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with



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‘The colour of the object illuminated partakes of the colour of that which illuminates it’.

Leonardo de Vinci

medals and trophies. (The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of Coaching effectiveness).

- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organising activities and to draft a Code of Discipline for everyone involved.
- Never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official. (The Coach should only enter the field with the referee’s permission and should not question their decisions or integrity).
- Avoid sending messages – voice/ text/ e-mail – to players. (All messages/circulars etc. should be sent to the young person’s parents/ guardians).
- On occasions when the team travels away, separate sleeping facilities must be provided for all adults. If both genders are in the group, male and female Coaches must be present.
- It’s important to recognise that certain situations e.g. staying over at the Coach’s residence or friendly actions – e.g. horse play/role play/telling jokes etc - could be misinterpreted and lead to allegations of serious misconduct or impropriety.
- Do not have a situation where you are alone in a car or dressing-room with a player.
- Do not take coaching sessions on your own.
- Avoid any inappropriate touching when assisting players to perform a technique or when First Aid is being administered.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid and do not encourage or allow players to play while injured. (Keep an adequate record of each injury and ensure that another official - referee/ team mentor – is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details).
- Ensure players are safely attired and that proper insurance arrangements are in place.
- Ensure that each player observes a high standard of personal hygiene.
- Ensure that all dressing rooms and areas occupied by the Team, prior to during or immediately following the completion of any match are kept clean and are not damaged in any way
- Ensure that unrestricted access to the internet is not provided on the Club premises.

EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT THE GREATEST POSSIBLE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE MAINTAIN AN ONGOING INVOLVEMENT AND THAT THEY EXPERIENCE THE FEELING OF SUCCESS THAT COMES FROM SOMEONE SAYING “WELL DONE” OR “YOU TRIED AS HARD AS YOU COULD” OR “YOU GAVE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO THE TEAM”.



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ROLE OF PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Parents/ guardians have an influential role to play in assisting their offspring to adopt positive attitudes and encouraging them to maintain an involvement in sport. Parents should not attempt to meet their own needs for success and achievement through their children's participation in Gaelic games. The following guidelines will be of assistance in this regard:

DO'S

DO SHOW APPROVAL FOR EFFORT, NOT JUST RESULTS

DO TRY TO MAKE WORDS AND ACTIONS MATCH

DO ATTEND GAMES ON A REGULAR BASIS AND ASSIST IN THE ORGANISATION OF CLUB ACTIVITIES

DO GIVE ADVICE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFESTYLE

DO LISTEN TO WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY

DO TRY TO APPRECIATE THE STRENGTH OF A YOUNG PERSON'S EMOTIONS - POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

DO REALISE THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

DON'T'S

DON'T EXERT UNDUE PRESSURE ON YOUNG PEOPLE

DON'T SAY ONE THING AND DO ANOTHER

DON'T MAKE PROMISES YOU CANNOT KEEP

DON'T ASK "HOW MUCH DID YOU SCORE/WIN OR LOSE BY"

DON'T JUST SHOW APPROVAL WHEN THE TEAM WINS

DON'T CRITICISE PLAYING PERFORMANCE – SEEK TO IDENTIFY AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE MADE

'If only the sun-drenched celebrities are being noticed and worshiped, then our Youth are going to have a tough time seeing the value in the shadows, where the thinkers, probers and teachers are keeping society together'.

Rita Dove

ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people must be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat others with fairness and respect.

YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD UNDERTAKE TO :

- play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves
- represent their family and Club with pride and dignity
- shake hands before and after the game irrespective of the result
- respect officials and accept their decisions gracefully
- respect fellow team members giving them support when they do well or not so well
- respect their opponents
- accept apologies from opponents when they are offered
- be modest in victory and gracious in defeat
- set high standards of fair play for others to follow
- adhere to proper standards of behaviour and the Club Code of Discipline
- let the Coach know when they are unavailable for training and competition
- approach the Club's Liaison Officer with any questions or concerns they may have

YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD NOT:

- cheat – always play by the rules
- bully or take unfair advantage
- shout at or argue with an official
- tell lies about adults or other children
- spread rumours



'Instead of making sense of what others do, we should try to understand what sense they make out of what we do.'

George Kelly.

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YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ENTITLED TO:

- be safe
- be happy, have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment (There is little or no joy in being a substitute or being continually taken off the team).
- be treated with respect
- comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner
- be afforded appropriate confidentiality
- be listened to
- be believed

CHILDREN AND SPORT

Children learn what they live.

Children who live with criticism, learn to condemn.

Children who live with hostility, learn to fight.

Children who live with ridicule, learn to be shy.

Children who live with shame, learn to be guilty.

Children who live with tolerance, learn to be patient.

Children who live with encouragement, learn confidence.

Children who live with praise, learn to appreciate.

Children who live with fairness, learn justice.

Children who live with approval, learn to like themselves.

Children who live with acceptance and friendship, learn to find love in the world.

Anonymous.

EXAMPLES OF BEST & BAD PRACTICE

- Should a Coach admonish young players for forgetting some of their playing attire?

No, the Coach should reiterate the importance of all players being properly attired and should not allow players to participate without adequate safety equipment e.g. helmet with facial protection when playing hurling.

- During the winter months a young player wants to play in tracksuit bottoms, the Coach jokes about him being a "cissy" in front of other boys.

Not appropriate to call a young person names whether in front of peers or not. Ensure that all players are always addressed by their Christian names.

- During a summer camp a twelve-year-old regularly turns up without a packed lunch that parents/ guardians were meant to provide.

Refer the matter to the Club's Children's Officer to discuss with parents/guardians.

- A ten year old boy/girl is sick on the bus travelling home from an away game after eating a lot of sweets. The coach gives out to him or her for the mess he/she has made.

Not appropriate to take issue with a young person when vulnerable. Inform the child's parents/guardians on return.

- A coach expresses his/her delight after a win by slapping one of the children on the bum.



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Not appropriate. Clubs should not have a culture where it is perceived as acceptable to slap a child's bum in a playful manner. The matter should be brought to the attention of the Clubs Children's Officer

- You are coaching an after school team in January and finish at 5 p.m. One eight year old has not been collected by his parents/guardians and lives some distance away.

Arrangements should be made in advance to ensure that all youngsters are collected at the appropriate time. (This highlights the importance of punctuality). Provision should also be made in advance to deal with any contingencies that might arise i.e. young player to travel home with neighbour who has a son/daughter participating. Under these circumstances, the parents/guardians should be contacted and the matter brought to the attention of the Club's Children's Officer.

- A team mentor claims that the concept of self-esteem does not make sense.

Not appropriate. It should be explained to the person concerned that self-esteem is another name for the level of self-worth experienced by a person. It can be enhanced when young people are within an environment where their needs are catered for.

- Some parents are inclined to jeer opponents when they are on the sideline at games.

Not appropriate. It should be emphasised to all concerned that they should cheer not jeer.

What is the Role of the Clubs Children's Officer

- To develop and maintain a youth centred ethos within Cumann Lúthchleas Gael by promoting awareness of the "Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport".
- To encourage the involvement of parents/guardians in organising activities and to co-operate with parents in ensuring that every young person enjoys his/her involvement.
- To establish a link between the Underage and Adult sections of the Club.
- To establish good links with local schools involved in the promotion of Gaelic games.
- To ensure that the rules regarding eligibility for competitions are adhered to.
- To ensure that **PLAYERS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS, COACHES, MENTORS, OFFICIALS & SPECTATORS** understand and apply the principles of **FAIR PLAY**

It is important to note that the Club's Children's Officer does not have the responsibility of assessing, investigating or validating protection concerns, involving underage players. It is possible that these concerns will be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer. If the Children's Officer receives a disclosure he/she should follow the reporting procedures set out in the booklet "Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse" copies of which are available from Croke Park.

Children's officers at Tir Chonaill Gaels are **Phillip Butler and Patricia Geraghty**

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Further information on Child Protection and Good Practice is available on the following websites, www.irishsportsCouncil.ie and www.sportprotects.org.uk

'The element of instruction should be presented to the mind in childhood, but not with any compulsion'.

Plato



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*‘Discipline from
without flourishes
when discipline
from within grows
weak’*

Harry Woodburn
Chase

DRUG MISUSE/SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Introduction:

When the effects of drug misuse or substance abuse are considered, the absolute necessity of directing responses at prevention becomes apparent. People need to ensure that they work towards creating safe, healthy environments where young people develop the skills and attitudes necessary to cope with a more drug orientated society. In this context, the importance of having sound educational programmes cannot be underestimated.

Rationale:

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael and the Irish Sports Council are committed, as part of their overall philosophy, to:

“Discourage the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco on the basis that they are incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity”.

Scope of Policy:

This policy is in force at all times at GAA facilities and during all activities conducted under the aegis of Cumann Lúthchleas Gael.

Definition of Drugs:

For the purpose of this policy the term drug will be defined as all mood-altering substances, both legal and illegal, and involves substances such as tobacco, solvents and alcohol.

It is important that all Club members, officials, staff and mentors follow the law when it comes to illegal drugs and the use of alcohol and tobacco and display leadership and good example particularly when dealing with underage members.

Drug Education

Aim:

The aim of the drug education programme is to ensure that young people maintain a healthy lifestyle and a positive involvement in sport.



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Best way of delivering the Programme:

All drug education programmes should be structured in an age appropriate way and tailored to meet the needs of the various target groups i.e. mentors and players. Back-up support should be sought from existing statutory bodies as appropriate.

CODE FOR DEALING WITH DRUGS MISUSE/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael will endeavour to deal with any alcohol or illicit drug incident in a firm but fair manner, with due regard for the safety and welfare of the individuals involved, other members of the Association, the wider community, and to fulfil any legal obligations that might apply.

Outline of Restrictions:

The possession, use, supply or presenting under the influence of, alcohol or illicit drugs (improper or illegal use of solvents, magic mushrooms, medications) are viewed as unacceptable by Cumann Lúthchleas Gael.

Reporting of Incidents:

Suspected, alleged or confirmed incidents in breach of this policy must be referred to the Chairman of the Club or County concerned. He/she, in turn, will inform the Executive. The Executive will decide on the appropriate response (refer sanctions, page 10).

Recording of Information:

Information regarding suspected, alleged or confirmed incidents in breach of this policy received by the Executive will be minuted in the usual way. Only in confirmed cases will names of individuals be recorded. The recording of factual information only is preferable, opinions must be stated as such. Responses of the Executive to cases will also be recorded in this way.

Confidentiality:

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, it may not always be possible to guarantee confidentiality in relation to alcohol or illicit drug incidents.

Involving Parents/Guardians:

It will be standard practice to inform parents/guardians if their son/daughter is involved in an alcohol or illicit drug incident. Their involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. Parents/guardians will be invited to discuss what has happened and will be informed of the course of action to be taken.

Involving Police Authority:

In suspected or alleged incidents involving the supply of illegal drugs, it is policy to inform the relevant police authority. Police advice may also be sought on a case-by-case basis. The decision in this regard will rest with the Club Executive. Cumann Lúthchleas Gael also asserts its right to inform the relevant Police authority of any "outside" drug activity affecting the welfare of the Club and its members.

'The young always have the same problem – how to rebel and conform at the same time. They have now solved this by defying their parents and copying one another'.

Quentin Crisp.



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*‘No stream or gas
ever drives
anything until it is
confined. No life
ever grows great
until it is focused
and dedicated’*

Henry Emerson
Fosdick

Sanctions:

In the event of suspected/confirmed breaches of this code, the following sanctions may apply:

- No action taken
- Contact with parents/guardians of the individual/individuals involved (refer page 9).
- Referral to an appropriate support agency
- Appropriate disciplinary action to be taken by the GAA unit concerned
- Notifying the relevant Police authority (refer page 9).

Search:

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael retains the right to search any part of its property if there is reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy may be contained therein. Two officials/mentors of the unit concerned must be present during any form of search. Where there is reasonable cause to believe a player (or others using the facilities) has on their person or in their possession a substance in breach of the policy, they will be asked to volunteer the substance. If they refuse, the relevant police authority may be called in to conduct the search.

Disposing of (Suspected) Illegal Drugs:

If an illegal drug (or suspected illegal drug) is found on property or during related activity, it should be brought to the attention of the Chairman of the unit concerned. It should be stored securely by officials/mentors of the unit concerned while the relevant Police authority are called to come and collect it. Two officials/mentors should be present during any procedures involving handling of illegal substances.

Health and Safety:

First Aid and Emergency Procedures:

The normal medical/emergency procedures apply in relation to this programme.

Availability, use and Storage of Solvents:

All solvent/gas-based materials should be stored securely.

Doping/ Use of Performance Enhancing Substances/ Methods

In the interests of maintaining fair play it is important that players adhere to the guidelines set out in the GAA Anti-Doping Code.

Keeping Updated

Regular updates to information can be obtained from the following websites, www.irishsportscouncil.ie and www.uksports.gov.uk/did

