

# BURNOUT IN GAELIC FOOTBALL:

*What is it? Is it a problem?*

*How can we deal with it?*

Ailsa Anderson

University of Ulster

28<sup>th</sup> January 2004

# Current issue



TRUE BLUE: Cormac Moran (right) has juggled his football commitments many times in the past

IN DEMAND: Tyrone's Cormac McAnallen

## ULSTER TACKLING PLAYER BURNOUT

Concern for younger players

# Plan for tonight

- CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:
  - What is burnout and what are the symptoms?
  - How does burnout links with other problems in sport?
  - What causes burnout?
  - Is burnout really a problem in gaelic football?
  - If it is a problem how can we deal with/ prevent it?

PROVIDE A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION/  
SHAREDIDEAS

Q. *What is burnout and what are the symptoms?*

- Your thoughts?



# Current definition in sport

- Burnout is a syndrome with 3 characteristics:
  - **1. Physical and emotional exhaustion**
    - Due to intense demands of training and competition
  - **2. Sport devaluation**
    - Stop caring about the sport and own performance
  - **3. Reduced achievement in sport**
    - Unable to meet goals/ lack of improvement

• (Raedeke 2000, Maslach & Jackson, 1984)

# Symptoms of burnout seen in research

- **PHYSICAL**

- ↓ sleep/ libido/ appetite
- ↑ Muscle soreness
- Exhaustion
- ↑ colds
- ↑ HR/ BP
- ↑ presence of biochemical indicators of stress in blood
- ↓ body weight
- ↓ aerobic power
- ↓ muscle glycogen

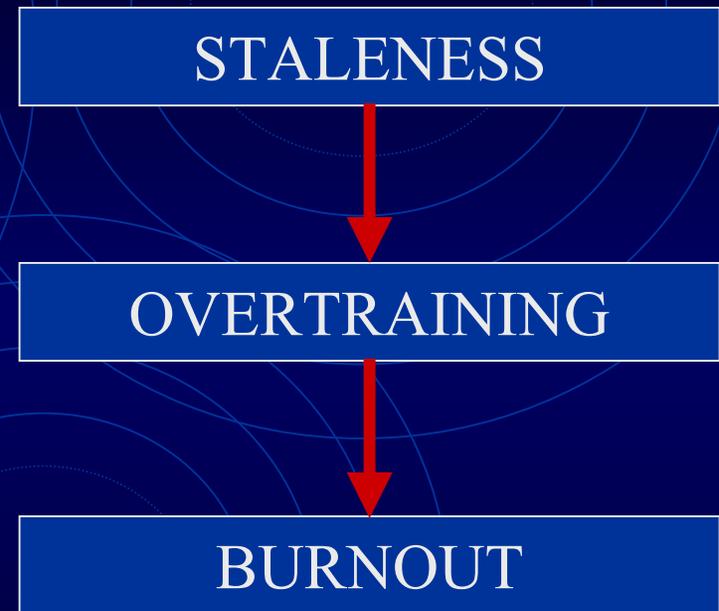
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL**

- ↓ mood
- ↓ self-esteem
- ↓ motivation
- changes in values and beliefs
- emotional isolation
- ↑ perceptions of exhaustion

NB – are individual differences

# Q. *Is burnout just overtraining?*

- Negative adaptation to training leads to:
- **Staleness** = reach a plateau in training
- **Overtraining** = train beyond level that is ideal for maximum benefit (under-recovery?)
- Silva's (1990) training stress syndrome



# Overtraining Vs Burnout

- Lack of discussion
- **Overtraining** is one factor **that** could contribute to burnout
- But overtraining isn't the whole picture
- **Burnout has psychological elements not evident in overtraining (emotional exhaustion/ sport devaluation)**

# Q. *What causes burnout?*

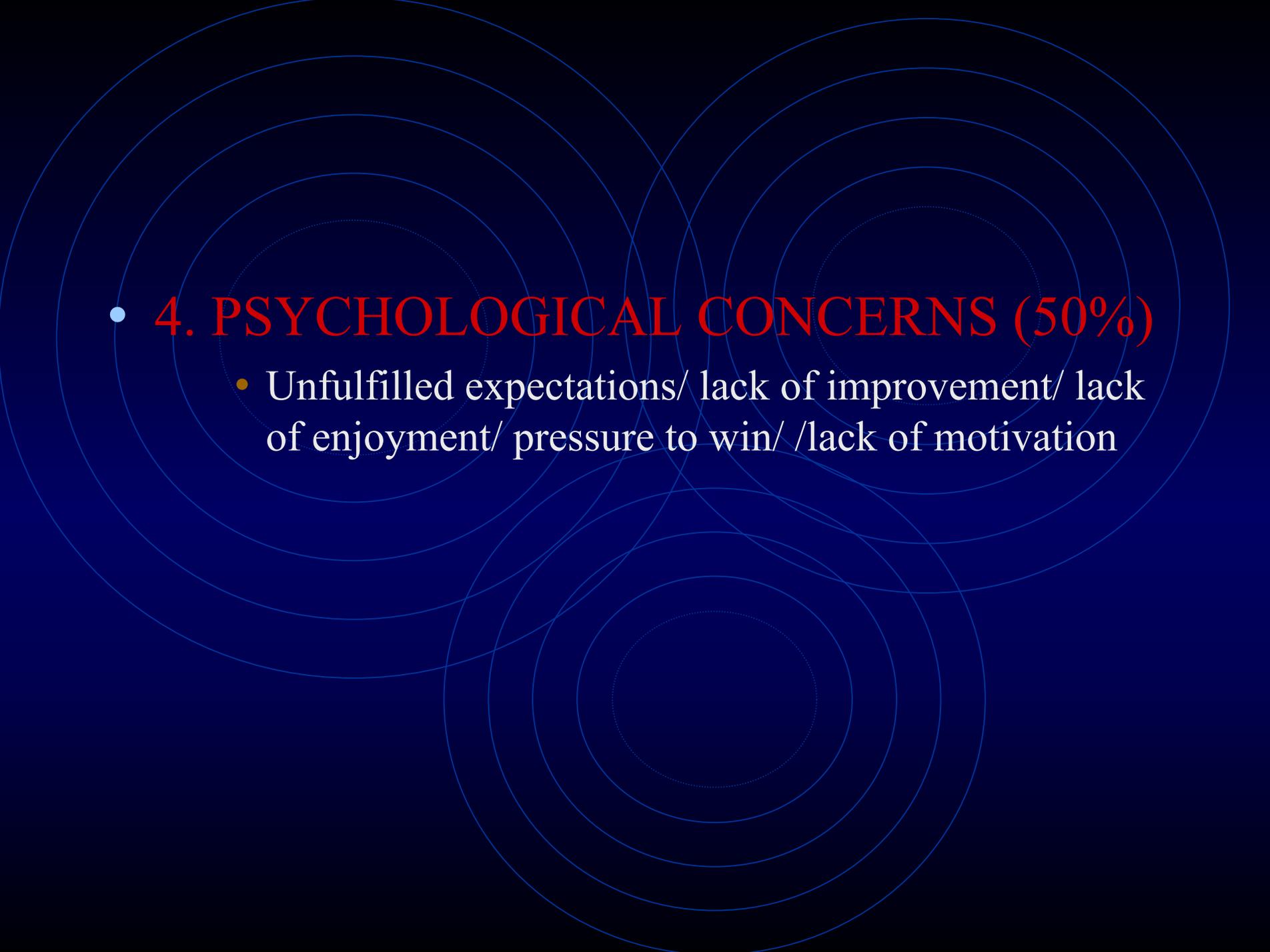
- Multi-dimensional syndrome so likely to be multiple causes
- What do you think?

# Anecdotal reports

- For example:
  - 1. Heavy involvement in sport at young age
  - 2. Year round training
  - 3. Pressure (parents/ coaches/ self)

# Some research from tennis (Gould et al., 1996, 1997)

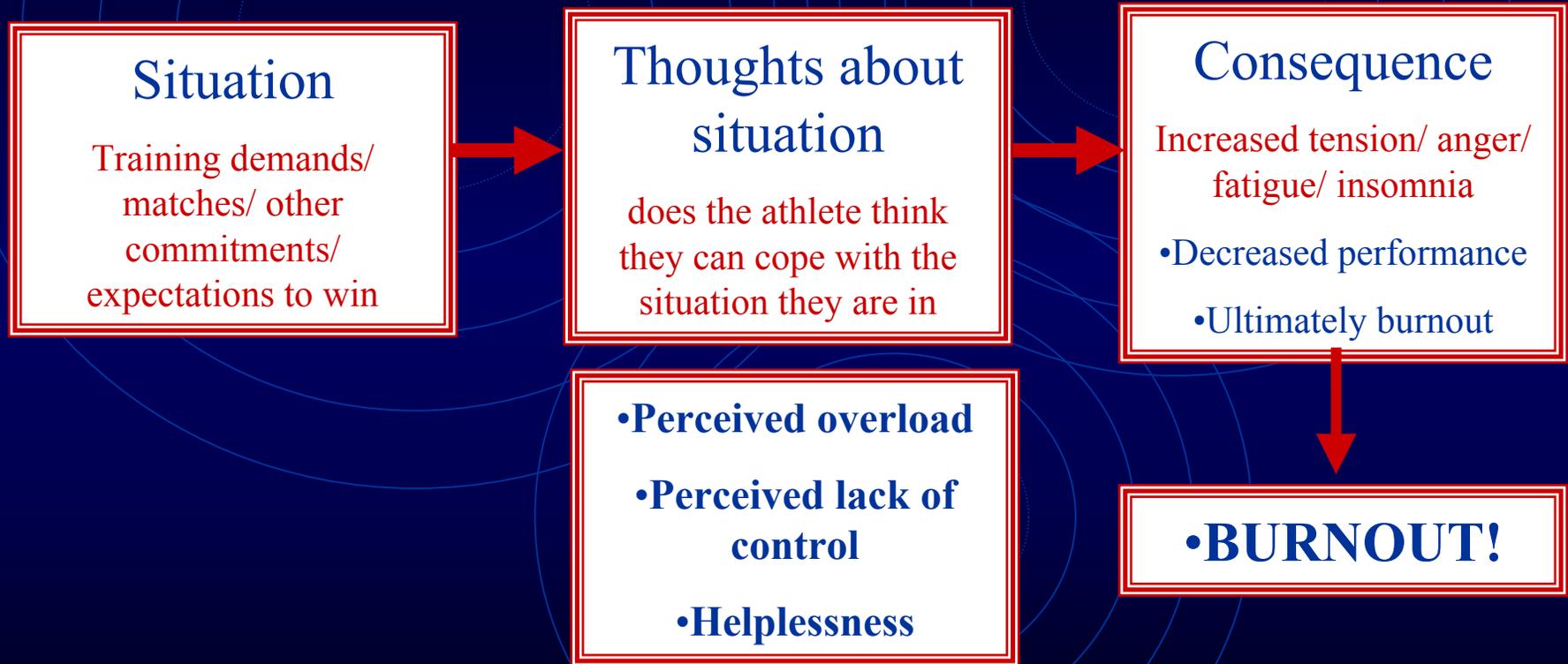
- **1. PHYSICAL CONCERNS**
  - Injury/ overtraining/ tired all the time
- **2. LOGISTICAL CONCERNS**
  - Travel/ demands on time
- **3. SOCIAL CONCERNS**
  - Dissatisfaction with social life/ poor relationships with parents/ coaches/ team-mates

- 
- **4. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS (50%)**
    - Unfulfilled expectations/ lack of improvement/ lack of enjoyment/ pressure to win/ /lack of motivation

# Theoretical models of burnout from psychology

- Smith's model

# 1) Smith's stress-based model



## 2) Investment model of burnout

- We are usually committed to sport if the benefits outweigh the costs
- Benefits of involvement?
- Costs of involvement?



# Commitment model

- **BENEFITS:**
  - **Enjoyment**
  - **Opportunities that are available because you play**
- **OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS:**
  - **Amount time/ money etc you have invested**
  - **alternatives activities available**
  - **Social pressure to be involved**

# Committed?

- Because **want** to be involved

- High enjoyment
- High investment
- High opportunities
- High social pressure
- Low alternatives

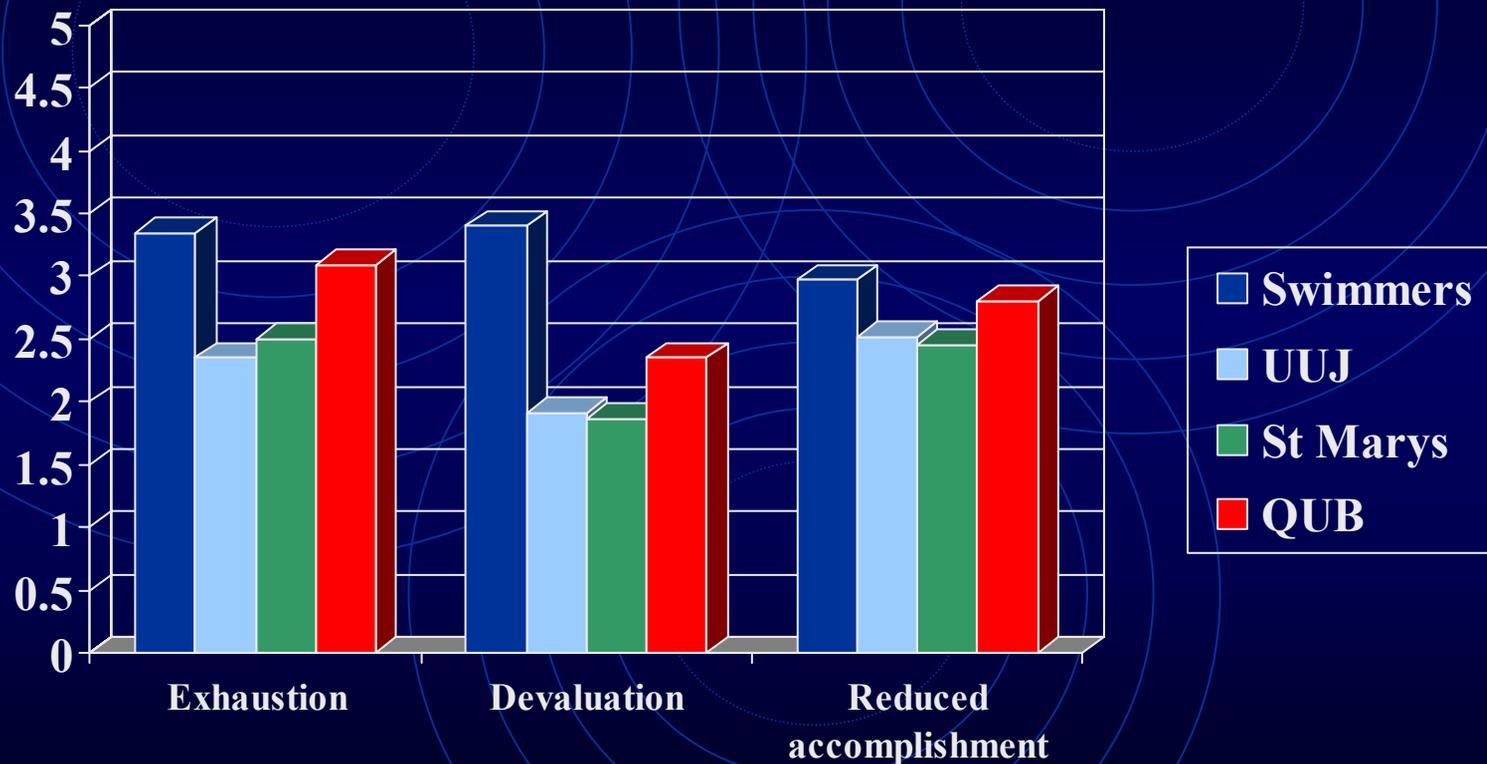
- Because **have** to be

- Low enjoyment
- High investment
- Low opportunities
- High social pressure
- High alternatives (but not available)
- = TRAPPED

# Q. *Is burnout an issue in GAA?*

- Thoughts?
- Measuring burnout - Questionnaire
- Data from Sigerson players

# Scores on Athlete Burnout Inventory (Dooher, 2004)



*Q. If burnout is a problem how can we deal with/ prevent it?*

- Recommendations:

- For players?

- For coaches?

- For GAA?

# For players

- 1) **Play for your own reasons**
- 2) Have balance in your life (other activities)
- 3) **If it isn't fun anymore – don't do it!**
- 4) Remind yourself why you play – what do you enjoy?

- 
- 5) Take time off to relax/recover
  - 6) Good diet
  - 6) Mental skills –
    - Set realistic goals
    - Coping skills
    - Relaxation
    - Keep things in perspective

# For coaches

- 1. Build open relationship with players
- 2. Create environment where winning isn't the sole focus
- 3. Appropriate training methods (rest & recovery)
- 4. Establish two-way communication channels
- 5. Ask for and use player input
- 6. View the player as a person not just a player

# For GAA?

- What do you think?

# The future

- Need to establish the extent of burnout in gaelic football
- Determine the influencing factors that are **unique** to gaelic football
- Need for research....

# Summary

- What burnout is
- Causes of burnout
- Some theories on burnout
- Some ideas on preventing burnout