BURNOUT IN GAELIC FOOTBALL:
What is it? Is it a problem? How can we deal with it?

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Current issue

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/ SHARED IDEAS
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

**Situation**
Training demands/ matches/ other commitments/ expectations to win

**Thoughts about situation**
does the athlete think they can cope with the situation they are in

- Perceived overload
- Perceived lack of control
- Helplessness

**Consequence**
Increased tension/ anger/ fatigue/ insomnia

- Decreased performance
- Ultimately burnout

**BURNOUT!**
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 of 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