

The official publication of the **Irish Rugby Union Players Association**

# IN TOUCH

Summer 2015 Volume 28



**IRUPA**

protecting player welfare

## a fond farewell

CONNACHT'S MOST CAPPED PLAYER  
**MICHAEL SWIFT** BOWS OUT



Nutrition / **Media Training** / Academy Star Frank Taggart / **IRUPA Representatives** / Past Player Ted Robinson

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**IRUPA**  
protecting player welfare

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IRUPA was founded in October 2001 by players from around the country and continues to receive the support of the players. IRUPA is the official Players' Union for professional rugby players irrespective of nationality in Ireland.

IRUPA is a non profit making organisation owned by the players for the players. IRUPA aims to promote and protect the welfare of our members by endeavouring to safeguard their futures both on and off the pitch.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To promote and protect the welfare of its members, both during and after their careers.
2. To cater for the educational and welfare needs of its members, to ensure that they have sufficient preparation for the life after rugby.
3. To work in partnership with the IRFU to further the cause of Rugby Union in Ireland.
4. To be the representative mouthpiece for professional rugby players on issues of importance to the game.

## Credits



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# CEO address

**Omar Hassanein**

**In the modern era of professional rugby, considerable emphasis is placed on the physical condition of the player and how he or she can maintain their optimal level of physical fitness as consistently as possible. Whilst this is no doubt very important, players should also recognise that strong physical health needs to be complemented by strong mental and emotional health.**



A lot of people struggle to differentiate between mental health and mental illness, blanketing the entire area and thus forming a stigma whenever it's discussed. People can often wrongly associate any discussion of mental health with depression – a state of mind which represents the crisis end of the spectrum where daily life is very strongly impacted. This is a real misconception which often inhibits people's abilities to talk and discuss inner feelings at a base level.

Mental and emotional health/wellbeing is nothing to be ashamed of discussing. Just as working hard on developing and maintaining fitness, strength and conditioning is critical to a successful career in rugby, so too is working hard on maintaining and developing mechanisms to cope with the pressures of elite rugby and life.

**In fact, it has been proven time and again that players will perform at a consistently higher level if able to maintain a mentally fit and healthy state.**

The first step for the player or for anybody in the wider public to develop greater mental strength is to develop a plan to improve self-awareness. This process can be a difficult one as it involves people being brutally honest with themselves – something which can often be confronting and even ego-battering. By becoming more self-aware and knowing your 'triggers', you are better able to fend off mental health problems and are equally able to identify them very early if they do happen to arise.

As a player you need to be able to identify the signs that you might need help – some of these include: general feelings of anxiety or stress, lack of motivation to study, train or eat well, lack of sociability and will to interact, a negative self-image, loss of confidence, alcohol or gambling abuse; and unusual sleeping habits.

The player also needs to identify the various situations that can lead to these symptoms, including: injuries, non-selection, public criticism, relationship issues, separation/divorce, clashing with teammates/coaches, financial or legal pressures; or loss of a loved one. For players exiting the game and transitioning into the 'afterlife' of rugby, the loss of identity can also present the individual with quite a confronting situation – one that often leads to serious symptoms developing.





**“Just as working hard on developing and maintaining fitness, strength and conditioning is critical to a successful career in rugby,**

**so too is working hard on maintaining and developing mechanisms to cope with the pressures of elite rugby and life.”**

The important thing is that players should never feel embarrassed about asking for assistance or help. Players should always seek friends and family members to discuss their issues – the most immediate and natural outlet to do so. Players should also look to the support of doctors and sports psychologists if they feel they need additional support. The sooner this support can be availed of by the athlete, the better the outcome is likely to be.

Finally, it is important to use your local IRUPA Player Development Manager as a confidant and source of professional advice. Our PDM's are set up all around the country and also within the Women's

programme – each armed with a very strong base of knowledge and expertise ranging from sports psychology and lifestyle management to hands on athletic experience.

The PDM's are on hand to assist with just about every aspect of the players' life off the pitch, having dealt with almost any issue imaginable in the past. In areas where they aren't able to assist directly, there is a referral system in place which puts you in direct contact with the most relevant people within our extensive support network.

In conclusion, I'd like to wish all IRUPA members the best of luck as we enter

into the early stages of an important World Cup year. As the long hard slog of another pre-season presents itself however, just remember to always look after your mental health and ensure you stay self-aware of all the challenges you face.

**Omar Hassanein**  
*Chief Executive*



# IRUPA Rugby Players' Golf Classic

The IRUPA Rugby Players' Golf Classic took place during pre season at its dual residence in Enniskerry.

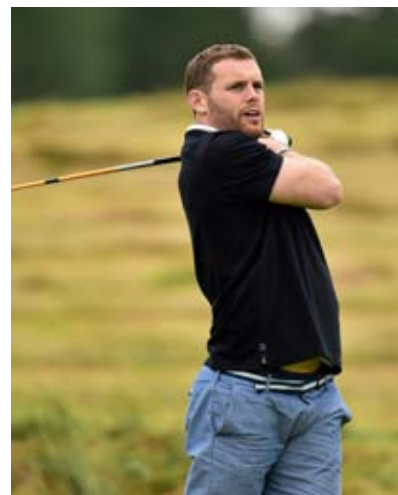
Hosted at Powerscourt Golf Club and the beautiful Powerscourt Resort and Spa, 22 teams took to the immaculate East Course for a shotgun start in conditions which were a significant improvement on 2014.

IRUPA members turned out in force including Chairman Rob Kearney, joined by his brother Dave, recently returned Jonny Sexton, Isaac Boss, Andrew Conway, Darren Cave, Johnie Murphy and many more. The IRUPA Clubhouse was represented by Alain Roland, Reggie Corrigan, Liam Toland, Niall Hogan and many more.

As in previous years each team was joined by an IRUPA member to make up their fourball.

Following the round teams made their way across the road to the Powerscourt Resort for a gourmet BBQ and prize giving. MC duties were ably hosted by Michael Jackson who was joined by recently the returned Jonny Sexton and Darren Cave. The winning team was Core Financial with Leinster's Darragh Fanning who also clinched the prize for longest drive. Second place went to the Powerscourt Golf Club team with Leinster's Noel Reid with Michael Jackson and the Double Tree by Hilton team taking third place.

Many thanks to the support we received from companies and businesses who took a team, to our partner Powerscourt Resort and Spa, all the team at the beautiful Powerscourt Golf Club and of course our members for their support.



## Players take strong ownership

**As IRUPA members will be aware, the Association has been in extensive negotiations and discussions with the IRFU for several months now.**

As a strong indication of the unity and solidarity of the group, a wide range of players have taken it upon themselves to directly involve themselves in these discussions. This willingness of players to take ownership of their own organisation has provided the right type of platform to tackle the various issues involved.

Those directly involved thus far include Rob Kearney, Jamie Heaslip, Shane Jennings, Johnny Sexton, Eoin Reddan, Isaac Boss, Sean O'Brien and Gordon Darcy. Geographical difficulties obviously exist for those outside IRUPA's Dublin base, however the continued support of players across the country has been very evident by way of phone and email. This is very much a case of players driving their own association, as opposed to the other way around.

Over the summer months, the IRUPA staff will again be travelling as a group to all the provincial training centres. As was the case last year, we will be meeting formally with players and management, as well as informally with our player cells over dinner. In the meantime, the IRUPA team wishes the national squad and provincial teams the very best of luck as they prepare for the respective challenges ahead.

# Bringing lessons from the team room into the boardroom

**grafton**  
recruitment

**IRUPA continues its policy of bringing it's members closer to the business and corporate communities.**



The idea is to facilitate networking between IRUPA members and opinion formers in leading Irish companies as well as showcasing the attributes and experience that professional sport can bring to business. In the most recent event, IRUPA members Shane Jennings and Eoin Reddan shared their experiences at an event hosted by Grafton Recruitment for their guests.

IRUPA has a long standing relationship with Grafton Recruitment especially through its support of the Player Development Programme.

The event took place in the Grafton Recruitment offices on Fitzwilliam Square where invited twenty guests heard the thoughts of Shane Jennings and Eoin Reddan. The two players contributed honest and impactful answers to a board room discussion which touched on topics such as: mental toughness, overcoming setbacks and their development off of the field.

## IRUPA extends 24 hour mental health helpline to all players and their families

**From July 1st IRUPA, the Irish Rugby Union Players' Association, in partnership with EAP Consultants, will extend the 24 hour Member Helpline to all IRUPA members (past and present) and their families.**

Already in place for current senior players, the helpline is now extended to academy, senior, women's 7s and past players, and their immediate family members. The availability of the Helpline is just one of the ways that IRUPA are supporting players to deal with mental and emotional issues and stresses. The IRUPA Members' Helpline will provide confidential and independent support across a wide range of issues including anxiety, coping with injury, career transition, financial concerns, bereavement and relationship issues. The timing of the launch has been chosen to coincide with the start of the new rugby season.

IRUPA is mindful of the role families play in supporting a player and is conscious of its role in helping them do this. The Helpline will now also be available to family members who may be worried about their own wellbeing or that of their rugby playing relative.

Players are often encouraged to look out for their teammates and the Helpline will act as a support to these players who are concerned for the wellbeing of a teammate.

IRUPA have been providing support services to its members since its 2001. In 2015 IRUPA developed a more complete and holistic Player Wellbeing Strategy for all our members. The goal is to ensure our members are best equipped to deal with the pressures of professional sport and to ensure they have a positive approach to their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing generally. As part of this strategy the 24 hour Helpline was instrumental in ensuring all players feel supported in times of stress or crisis.



**Are you okay? Finding it hard to cope? Concerned about a team mate?**

**IRUPA MEMBER HELPLINE (RoI)**

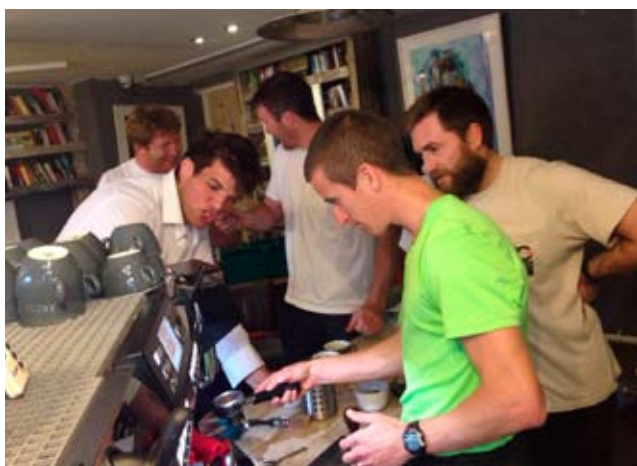
**1800 201 346**

**IRUPA MEMBER HELPLINE (NI)**

**0808 234 5183**

**Confidential • Independent • 24/7**





## Anyone for Coffee?

**As well as ensuring players are engaged with education and professional development, IRUPA encourages all our members to develop off field interests.**

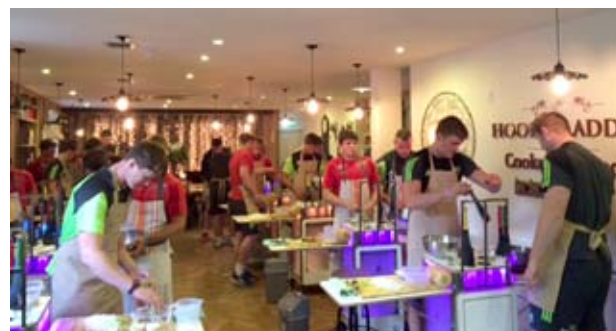
As part of this, members who have completed studies or are taking a break from work experience development have been encouraged to take up a hobby with a wide range of activities being undertaken including car mechanics, art courses, furniture making, cooking and barista training!

IRUPA members in Leinster and Munster tried their hand at barista training, learning everything there is to know about coffee with experts 3fe. In the 3 hour workshop they learned the theory of coffee making - from the different types of roasts and environments where coffee is grown to how to calculate the right amount of coffee and timings for making espresso (this required some maths skills!). They then got a chance to test out their skills on the espresso machine making espressos.

The Leinster workshop took place at 3fe in Dublin with Darragh Fanning, Jamie Heaslip, Shane Jennings, Mick McGrath, Marty Moore and Devin Toner in attendance. Munster members

attended Alchemy Coffee in Cork over two evenings with seven players in attendance including Billy Holland, Denis Hurley, Donnacha O'Callaghan and Peter O'Mahony. They were joined by Olympian Rob Heffernan who was keen to get in on the action.

Not to be outdone, IRUPA Munster Academy members have been busy in the kitchen undertaking a series of four cookery classes. Aimed at equipping them with much needed life skills, the course was a joint venture between IRUPA and Munster rugby. Hosted at Hook and Ladder Cooker school, the course content and recipes were devised by Catherine Norton, nutritionist at Munster Rugby.



## CPR and Defibrillator Training

**IRUPA Members at the Munster Academy participated in hugely valuable training in CPR and defibrillator training.**

Facilitated by Limerick paramedics and funded by IRUPA the course gave instruction in administering CPR as well how to use a defibrillator in an emergency situation.

*If you are interested in learning a new skill or taking up a hobby or if you have an idea for a course for your squad, contact your PDM.*



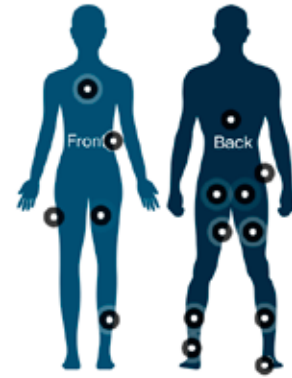
## New release from rugby duo



**IRUPA members, Ronan Loughney and Johnny O'Connor have launched a new business venture. Knowing the importance of keeping their bodies in peak shape, the duo have launched Athletic Release, a company offering an affordable mobility pack for everyday use.**

The pair are former teammates at Connacht Rugby, where Loughney is still on a professional contract and represents Connacht members on the IRUPA Executive Board. The former Irish international O'Connor has swapped the oval ball for a round one and relocated to London where he works as Strength and Conditioning Coach in the academy

set up of Premier League team Arsenal. Both have spent years surrounded by rehabilitation experts and strength coaches with O'Connor holding a degree in strength and conditioning. "We feel that as an athlete nowadays the onus to ensure your body performs to the best of its ability is becoming more and more a personal responsibility".



Loughney tells, "With both of us having played rugby professionally for over ten years, we know first-hand the impact that has on the body. We have a good understanding of what is needed to keep bodies performing at their optimum, and mobility and flexibility are crucial to this. With this in mind, both Johnny and I are excited about bringing our mobility pack not only to athletes and sports enthusiasts, but also to a wider audience who may not be aware of the simple techniques you can use to get your body to feel great".

The company's website, [www.AthleticRelease.com](http://www.AthleticRelease.com), also offers tutorials and demonstrations on how best to use the products, aimed to reset muscle tone and restore joint position.

*If you are interested in starting your own business or have a great idea you'd like to develop, contact your PDM for information on how to get started, contacts that can help or to organise a mentor.*

## Contact Details for your IRUPA PDMs



### ULSTER PDM

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### CONNACHT PDM

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### MUNSTER PDM

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Email: [info@irupa.ie](mailto:info@irupa.ie)

Twitter: @IRUPA

[www.irupa.ie](http://www.irupa.ie)



# News from the Clubhouse

## THE IRUPA CLUBHOUSE EVENT 2015

29th AUGUST

**Prior to Ireland's last warm up game and before the squad departs for the Rugby World Cup, IRUPA will host its annual Clubhouse Event on August 29th at Ballsbridge Motors.**

Join us before Ireland take on Wales in their last game before they start their World Cup campaign.

The afternoon offers you and your guests a unique opportunity to spend time with some of Ireland's past and current rugby heroes and gain valuable insights and the thoughts of our expert panel and MC on Ireland's chances at the World Cup. Last year's capacity event with Denis Hickie and Stephen Ferris was a huge success and with the World Cup looming on the horizon, this year promises to be even better.

If you are interested in joining IRUPA members at this very unique event, just minutes from the Aviva Stadium, please get in touch. A table of 10 for the event is priced at €2000 + VAT and includes your complimentary bar, food, entertainment and match tickets. To book your table, please get in contact with Keith Young: keith.young@irupa.ie or call +353 1 6769680. We are fully expecting this event to sell out once again so get booking early!



SUPPORTED BY



## IMI offer scholarships to Clubhouse members



**IRUPA continues its successful partnership with the Irish Management Institute; we are again offering 3 full Diploma scholarships to our Clubhouse members.**

The next scheduled programmes begin in October/November and classes are held on 3 consecutive midweek days per month, over 6 months (18 days in total). Full details of the Level 9 Postgraduate Diplomas are available on the IMI website [www.imi.ie](http://www.imi.ie). Any past player who wishes to apply for such a scholarship should register their interest to [clubhouse@irupa.ie](mailto:clubhouse@irupa.ie)



## Keeping Clubhouse members fit & healthy with Iconic Health Clubs

**IRUPA is committed to protecting the wellbeing of its member both past and present and are delighted to announce Iconic Health Clubs as IRUPA's Official Wellbeing Partner.**

Clubhouse members will now be able to avail of full access to any of the fantastic facilities available in any of the three Dublin Health Clubs. Once registered members will be able to keep themselves in shape in any of Iconic's three premium health clubs:

- 1escape, Smithfield
- The Dartry Health Club, Dartry
- ICON Health Club, Camden Street

IRUPA is always seeking to broaden its wide range of offerings to members and is actively engaging in sourcing similar arrangements and services around the country.

ICONIC  
HEALTH CLUBS







POWERSCOURT  
HOTEL RESORT SPA



Nestled among ancient trees, within the granite walls of one of Ireland's most renowned estates, you'll find Powerscourt Hotel Resort & Spa, just 30 minutes from Dublin.

....

### Tee Off at Powerscourt

Enjoy an overnight stay with full Irish breakfast in a spectacular room set against a breathtaking backdrop of the Sugar Loaf Mountain, and then hit the fairways for a round of golf at the award winning Powerscourt Golf Club, voted Best Parkland Venue 2014. Prices from €190pps.

Terms and conditions apply. Subject to availability.  
For more information contact our Reservations team on +353 1 274 8888.

t: +353 1 274 8888 e: [info@powerscourthotel.com](mailto:info@powerscourthotel.com)  
[www.powerscourthotel.com](http://www.powerscourthotel.com)



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# O'Connell crowned Players' Player of the Year

Players, guests, media and supporters milled around the reception of the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel as the 13th annual Hibernia College IRUPA Awards got underway. The largest event to date, more than 800 guests attended the Awards, joining Ireland's Six Nations heroes to help celebrate their second title in as many years.

There was a real sense of celebration and anticipation amongst the guests as they took their seats for the Awards opening, a roll call of the previous winners of the Awards culminating in the 2015 nominees in action.

MC Kyran Bracken welcomed guests before CEO Omar Hassanein addressed the audience. In a break from tradition, the awards were split into two sections and the much loved Q&A segment took place earlier in the evening, with guests treated to a Rugby World Cup preview featuring past players Carlo del Fava, Tomas Castaignède and Ireland's Paul Wallace.

The first winner on stage was the BNY Mellon Women's Sevens Player of the Year 2015 Lucy Mulhall. Leinster's Darragh

Fanning collected the 3 Unsung Hero Award, voted for by the public and a very popular winner, Connacht's Michael Swift was awarded the Hibernia College Medal for Excellence, rewarding on field effort combined with off field commitment to the game.

David Wallace was inducted into the IRUPA Hall of Fame to a standing ovation and guests were on their feet again for Alan Quinlan as he collected the Zurich Contribution to Society Award for his immense work on highlighting mental health.

Connacht and Ireland's Robbie Henshaw was named the Nevin Spence Young Player 2015 for an amazing third year in succession, making him the only winner to win three Awards in a row.

And so it was that in the season of his one hundredth cap, Munster and Ireland talisman, Paul O'Connell was crowned the 2015 Players' Player of the Year, nine years after he first won the Award. He received a fitting reception from the capacity audience in recognition of his immense season and leadership especially during the Six Nations campaign.

**"It is really great to win this award, it's hard to believe it is nine years ago that I last won it! It's been a fantastic season for Ireland and winning my 100th cap during the Six Nations was really special, so this tops it off nicely."**

**– Paul O'Connell**



## Hibernia College IRUPA Rugby Players' Awards 2015

### Roll of Honour

Hibernia College IRUPA Players'  
Player Of The Year 2015

**PAUL O'CONNELL** Munster

Nevin Spence Young Player  
Of The Year 2015

**ROBBIE HENSHAW** Connacht

Volkswagen Try Of The Year 2015

**ROBBIE HENSHAW**

Ireland v England,  
RBS 6 Nations

Hibernia College Medal  
For Excellence 2015

**MICHAEL SWIFT** Connacht

BNY Mellon IRUPA  
Hall Of Fame 2015

**DAVID WALLACE** Munster

3 Unsung Hero 2015

**DARRAGH FANNING** Leinster

Newstalk106-108FM Supporters'  
Player Of The Year 2015

**PAUL O'CONNELL** Munster

Powerscourt Hotel Resort & Spa  
Moment Of The Year 2015

**IRELAND WINNING THE  
6 NATIONS TITLE**

BNY Mellon Women's Sevens  
Player Of The Year 2015

**LUCY MULHALL**

Zurich Contribution To Irish  
Society 2015

**ALAN QUINLAN**





# The Zurich Contribution to Irish Society Award

**ALAN QUINLAN** Mental Health Advocate



**Last year, IRUPA introduced the Zurich Contribution to Society Award to recognise the huge and often unseen work carried out by the players across a large and diverse range of charities and organisations.**

Using their profiles to positively contribute to projects and organisations both in Ireland and overseas is invaluable in highlighting issues which affect society. The award is presented to a player or former player who has made a significant impact to society outside of rugby.

This year's recipient, Alan Quinlan has been a tireless advocate for mental health. In raising the issues of mental health and depression, his brave and open discussions from his own personal experience have been an inspiration and his honest approach to mental health has helped break down the stigma that



has for so long been associated with depression. His work promoting positive mental health for all sectors of society has done much to shine a light on this hugely important issue.

After a long, successful career Alan Quinlan retired from professional rugby in May 2011. He has 212 Munster Caps and 27 Caps for Ireland. Alan has been very open and honest about his own struggles with anxiety and depression and upon retiring has become a vocal supporter and campaigner for Mental Health in Ireland. In 2011 Alan worked with **Lean On Me**, travelling throughout the country sharing his story. In 2012 he launched the Topaz and Aware lead

## **Positive Mental Health Campaign.**

Raising over €280,000 since its launch the campaign promoted positive mental health and raised awareness of the services Aware provides. Alan also helped to launch the **Don't Drop the Ball** Mental Health Reform Campaign in 2012. The goal is to work with Government to improve and prioritise mental health services in Ireland.

Alan also worked with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) on their **#LetsTalk** initiative in 2013. The national campaign encouraged students to talk more about mental health and take more action for their wellbeing.

# Repres you

Like any team, IRUPA relies on a wide range of supporters to ensure the organisation and its members' needs are being met. As well as ensuring that we are abreast of issues affecting our members and the wider game, it is imperative that the association takes a forward thinking approach.

With that in mind, we work with a number of professionals and experts to provide us with an external view of the association and the environment as well as utilising their expertise and specialist skills.

These professionals represent areas which are core to IRUPA as a business and a welfare organisation. Areas such as medical, commercial, taxation, legal and personal and professional development are covered. Involvement with IRUPA ranges from representing the association on IRFU committees, IRUPA Executive Board membership, specialist and consultant services and advice.

The work of these representatives cannot be underestimated, and although it is often times behind the scenes and may go unseen by the wider public it is crucial to the ongoing success of IRUPA. Their tireless efforts are hugely appreciated by IRUPA and their support is very much valued.



## KEN BELSHAW

**Ken first became involved with IRUPA in 2008 organising speakers and giving career advice to the Ulster players.** His experience in Recruitment with Grafton proved invaluable. Ken has always worked behind the scenes for IRUPA throughout Ireland and he was asked to join the Executive Board in 2011. In 2013, CEO Omar Hassanein, asked Ken to Chair a new creation, The Player Development Board. The concept was to communicate the importance of player issues and welfare within the Provinces and the IRFU.

*"I view my role as a facilitator, opening doors and making contacts rather than suggesting policy. Omar has put tremendous work into hiring a great team and defining strategy around the 5 pillars. I think we need to roll out those initiatives and make them stick, season after season".*

# enting



**NIALL  
HOGAN**

**Niall Hogan was appointed to represent IRUPA and its members on the IRFU Medical Committee in 2011.**

An orthopaedic consultant, he has a wealth of experience both in the medical arena and also as a former player. A graduate of the Royal College of Surgeons, Niall received a Fellowship in Australia from the North Sydney Orthopaedic & Sports Medical Centre before returning home to practise as an orthopaedic consultant in St James Hospital, Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital and the Sports Surgery Clinic.

Niall combines his extensive medical experience with vast on field experience, giving him a much specialised insight into professional rugby and player welfare. He began his rugby career at Terenure College and Club and played for Oxford University before playing with London Irish. He captained Ireland at every level from schools through to senior and has 13 Irish caps for Ireland and was awarded the Irish captaincy in 1996.

*"I'm delighted to act as an advocate for IRUPA and its' members; as part of my remit, I want to ensure that the welfare of players is observed first and foremost. Within this role, I represent IRUPA on the IRFU Medical Committee where I can relay concerns first hand as well as ensuring IRUPA's voice is heard in the decision making processes. In addition, I act as a sounding board for members who may experience issues with injury or any medical".*

**EOIN CONROY**



**Eoin has been involved with IRUPA for almost five years.**

As a co founder of Titan Marketing, a full service sponsorship activation and event creation agency Eoin has been instrumental in the strategic commercial direction of IRUPA. As well as identifying and sourcing synergistic partners to assist in funding welfare initiatives, Eoin has provided invaluable advice around the development of the IRUPA corporate events programme.

*"IRUPA is a valuable commercial property with their members at the centre of that. When I became involved I felt it was key that when assessing any potential partner it is important that they can offer more than a revenue stream. Organisations which offer professional development opportunities for members such as mentoring and networking are as important as any income generated. Likewise the aim of the expansion of the corporate events is to raise and enhance the profile of IRUPA. It's a innovative and forward looking company and it's great to be involved in it's ongoing development".*



## CIARÁN MEDLAR



**Ciaran is a Partner and Head of Taxation Services of BDO with 30 years' experience advising on Taxation.**

He is also head of BDO Ireland's Dedicated Sports Unit, advising many leading professional sportspeople, governing bodies and clubs on their financial and taxation affairs across many sports including football, rugby, golf and boxing.

*"Over the last 12 years, I and my colleagues in BDO have worked on a variety of financial & tax assignments with IRUPA starting from advising on the review of the Professional Game in Connacht in 2003 to current tax issues concerning retirement & Agency Fees.*

*"We act as financial advisers to IRUPA & we continue to advise the Board on matters of financial policy and the players in the Men's & Women's game on their tax & financial planning for both during and after their professional careers through group presentations or individual support.*

*"We are proud to work with IRUPA and to support their ongoing work on behalf of members."*

## PETER MCKENNA



**Peter McKenna has been central to IRUPA since it's foundation in 2001.** In fact he is a founding member along with Liam Toland and others. Peter's contribution to the association has been invaluable, through his legal practice McKenna Durcan and with his partner Maresa Durcan he has been involved in the strategic direction of the organisation with a particular focus on player welfare issues. With his legal background Peter has offered unerring advice and feedback especially in relation to player contracts as well as being available on an individual basis for all IRUPA members.

*"The importance of having a robust players' association is imperative for the future of the game. IRUPA members are central to the success of rugby in Ireland and indeed Ireland's success on the international rugby field. Whilst the issues have evolved and changed since 2001, the fundamental principle of player welfare still stands - players are central to the game.*

*I am honoured to have played a role in the foundation and development of IRUPA and I look forward to contributing into the future".*



## JOHN TREACY

**John Treacy has been an active IRUPA Board member for almost three years now.** John has his own strategy consulting firm, Treacy Consulting, based in the Dublin Docklands, but working with clients across 12 different countries and over 35 different industries. Recently, the Treacy Consulting team celebrated two major milestones, their ten year anniversary, and their first big award, the 'Dublin Docklands Professional Services Firm of the Year 2014'.

*"From an IRUPA standpoint, I takes an active role in our IRUPA strategy meetings, our organisational growth plans, our board meetings, and our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) meetings with the IRFU. I undertake a range of research and analysis for IRUPA, as well as advising players interested in the consulting world, and referring players to business contacts in different industries for advice. I have been a player, committee member and a 'Blazer' for Old Belvedere RFC for many years now".*



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# Lucy Mulhall

## What a difference

**It's been an amazing year for Lucy Mulhall – last year she received an email asking if she would be interested in taking part in an open day for the Ireland Women's Sevens.**

Just twelve months later she has been named captain of the Ireland squad, was nominated by her teammates as the BNY Mellon IRUPA Sevens' Player of the Year and just won the Player of the Tournament Award at the recent invitational in Amsterdam.

Of course, it isn't really a surprise as Lucy has already competed and tasted success at the highest level with her club and county in Gaelic football.

"I guess it did all happen very quickly, I got an email from the Sevens development coach last April asking if I would be interested in trying out for the Programme, so I participated in a fitness test and a trial a month later. I really enjoyed it and was thrilled to be invited to go to Amsterdam with the development squad and I was then offered a centralised contract in July, it has all been a bit of a whirlwind".

I was playing with Tinahely and also the Wicklow county team, I played with them at underage level too and our big success came winning the Junior All Ireland in 2011. I also played with my club Tinahely which is a senior club and we won the Wicklow County Championship three years running".

It must have been difficult to make the transition from a game she loved and excelled at to a game of which she knew little however Lucy brought with her a typical determination and steel.

"Of course it was different, the huge difference I noticed between the sports

was the contact element, learning the techniques and skills and bringing that aggression to training and matches consistently. I was used to training with my club, training every day, but the intensity was completely different. It took a while for my body to get used to it but I can really feel the difference now.

I am forever grateful to Gaelic football and my club and county, without them I would never have had this opportunity, the opportunity to play sport as your job, to be the best that you can be and push your body to the absolute limit, that's what every sportsperson wants".

As well as learning the new skills, techniques and training load, a semi-professional contract brings other challenges. As part of centralisation to their DCU Training Hub, Lucy had to move to Dublin and rethink her approach to college.

"I was in my second year in Trinity studying radiology. I loved college but it soon became apparent that it was not going to be possible to continue with my college workload and give the amount of time required to the panel and my training. I spoke with my IRUPA Player Development Manager Kate about my options, we decided to defer to focus on my rugby and Kate also found a part time course for me to do in the morning, it's applied psychology which is hugely relevant as I'm very interested in radiation therapy and the area of cancer treatment, so it's great that I can continue my educational



development whilst playing for my country".

I was used to living away from home with college but I do miss my family, my ninety three year old grandmother lives with us and I miss seeing her however I try to get home as often as I can. My family has been hugely supportive as have my former GAA teammates and the wider community in Wicklow, it's great to receive good luck texts before games and know that you have the support of your family, friends and neighbours".

So with a year behind her, a new coaching set up and Sevens structure in place how is the team progressing and what does she as captain and the squad hope to achieve in the coming months.

"We've come so far in a short period of time, we're really a team now, not just a group of individual athletes. On the field, our skills have improved massively along with our fitness levels. In terms



# a year makes



## *Ireland to host World Rugby Women's Sevens Qualifier*

**Ireland will host an international Women's Sevens Tournament in Dublin at UCD on 22nd and 23rd August.**

The IRFU was chosen to host the World Rugby Women's Sevens series qualifier which will feature 12 teams competing for the last two remaining spots on the World Rugby Women's Sevens World Series for the 2015/2016 season. As well as Ireland, who will enjoy home advantage, competing teams also include Olympic-qualified Brazil and Colombia.

The tournament is a fantastic opportunity to support the Ireland Women's Sevens team and witness this fantastic sport live at international level. IRUPA provides its world class Player Development Programme to the Ireland squad and would urge you to support them as they continue their drive for World Series and Olympic qualification.

of our attitude and focus, we've really come together and it's been exciting to be part of that. Being made captain has been such an honour, I never thought I would captain my country and lead the amazing group of girls we have in the squad. The team is very self-motivated and as a captain this makes my job much easier, we know what we have to do and are very much focused on that".

The conversation inevitably turns to Olympic qualification, and what that would mean to the squad, the coaching team and of course the fans.

"Being honest it would only be what we deserve as a squad and a team. It's been a difficult year, training and working, especially as we've not had the opportunity to play many competitive matches, we've had to have the drive

to stay motivated and we've done that. Qualification would be a testimony to the belief we have in ourselves and that of the coaches and support staff.

I also think practically, to be back in the World Series would be huge for us, to have regular competitive games and participate in tournaments, that makes training easier and gives a forward focus. It's such an exciting game to play and watch, once people see it, they are hooked, the development of the Men's Sevens squad will also help the profile of the game and that can only be a good thing".

It's been a life changing year for Lucy Mulhall, let's hope there's more to come.

Follow Lucy's journey on Twitter @LucyMulhall

**The first thing you notice about Michael Swift is warmth, even over the phone. He exudes warmth and strength in a deliberate manner which is reassuring and instils confidence, little wonder he has been such a leader at The Sportsground.**

So much has been written recently about his statistics, number of games, seasons and years it could be easy to be jaded with the same old questions, and yet when he speaks about Connacht rugby, there it is, that warmth again.

After so many seasons at Connacht the inevitable question around retirement has plagued Michael over the last few years, however it wasn't a snap decision but rather a decision made over the last few seasons.

"It's been in the forefront of my mind for the last couple of years, your friends and peers start retiring, every year people were disappearing from my corner of the changing room and this season I guess I knew it was my time to disappear.

After all this time, it was great to be able to bow out on my own terms and get that last game on the pitch, to get that feeling running onto the pitch knowing it's your last game and having your friends and family there".

This is professional sport however and like the best laid plans the season didn't quite go according to Michael's plan.

"I played a couple of games in the season, and got an injury. In February, I was told, that's it, you'll never play again. It was surreal, everything I had planned was gone and this was how it would end. Luckily for me it didn't turn out to be the case but for those 24 hours before I got another opinion, I got a glimpse of what so many players have gone through, and I really felt for those guys. It was such a devastating feeling and I only had to deal with it for one day."

Added to what to what was already going to be an emotional year for Michael, he was hit with another blow when his beloved father passed away. Losing such a huge influence in his life especially during his final season was very difficult.

**After 265 games and 15 seasons  
Connacht's most capped player bows out**

# A FOND FA



UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT  
**Michael Swift**

**REWELL**





**“For years we entertain people on the pitch and in my experience they are only too happy to give something back and give you some of their time and knowledge.”**



one of the things that is so special, we still have that close connection with our fans. Season tickets are flying and it's a completely different entity now but it's still personal. I've felt it, been part of it, arriving here with my English accent and feeling at home. My parents bought into that culture too whenever they visited which resulted in them retiring here. It's a very special place".

Like many players, Michael started his rugby career at London Oratory School. His height, especially at a young age, meant he was always going to be encouraged to play. But even in those early amateur days he didn't envisage that rugby would play such a defining role in his life.

"At school, I guess I was sort of forced into playing, I was only 12 and already over 6' and I was sort of thrust into it. I remember playing for an underage team in Richmond, and after the game I got an envelope with a few notes in it, that was the first time I realised that I could make a career out of this. I've played at a high level for 18 years, at Connacht, Leeds and Richmond in the premiership. Rugby has given me a lot, both on and off the field and I'm very grateful for that".

But even with such longevity, it has not always been a smooth journey, there were sacrifices especially in those early years. Michael's rugby career started at the close of the amateur era, meaning that professional structures and supports associated with the game now were not yet in place.

"It was pretty tough. I was at Loughborough University in the Midlands, so I'd get a phone call from the coach John Kingston on a Sunday night and I'd have to be in London for training the next morning. I'd have to get a 4am train so I'd miss the first couple of days of college that week. I also had to balance trying to get a full time professional contract and also complete my degree. It was a real eye opener, especially when you look at the support here is for players now.

"There was a sacrifice to be made. I managed to get a degree but I didn't get to dedicate the amount of time to



"My parents moved over from England four years ago to retire in Galway. My Dad was Irish, from Wexford but had lived most of his life in London. One of the reasons they moved was to come to a lot more Connacht matches and for four years he did that, he was a season ticket holder, he loved Connacht Rugby. The day before he died he was at the Treviso game, and I am so glad so he got to see me play and that I got to spend so much time with him. That was what made it all the more important to get that last run out, I was doing it for him, I wanted to make sure I got to get another game in his memory, to finish it out. As he couldn't be there my mother came, it was her first game in 20 years, she never used to come, she was always

afraid of seeing me get injured. I guess she doesn't have to worry about that anymore!"

It is clear that Connacht is very special to Michael, not just as his club but as a place and a home. As someone who has been part of the evolution west of the Shannon, it is inevitable to try and make comparisons to the Connacht of old and that of the modern, evolved Connacht Rugby.

"I moved over to Connacht in 2000, which was the last year of Club rugby. I signed for Galwegians and then got a contract with Connacht that same year, when there were only 11 full time professionals at that time. To be honest my first impressions weren't all that great, you knew each Connacht supporter by first name. Going through 2003 and threatened disbandment and the march to Dublin brought players and supporters together, and that is



studying as I would have liked, especially in my final year. I'd say during that period I only spent a quarter of my time at University. There was no real support like there is now, with IRUPA, I felt alone quite a lot during that time but I'm glad I managed to complete it."

After a 15 year hiatus, Michael returned to college undertaking a post graduate course with Hibernia College. The flexible learning options suited Michael's rugby commitments. This was a busy time during which he also developed and successfully launched a cosmetics business Powder Pocket which he has subsequently sold.

"It was strange returning to education, I had a lot more support this time. I sat down with my IRUPA PDM Deirdre and went through all my options. It had been 15 years since I studied. Aside from the qualification I achieved, it really helped me to be disciplined and with my time management. I also started a business around the time, so it helped with my focus and I found I could achieve more with better organisational skills.

"I like ideas, I was thinking about the concept and business model for about 18 months but there's only so much research and thinking I could do and eventually I thought – just do it.

"It was an amazing experience, to get out of my comfort zone, do something new and different and I learned some great social skills. Being a rugby player you can be a bit spoonfed; you follow a timetable, what to wear, what to eat. This was completely new to me. It took a while and a bit of trial and error, but the network of people I met through rugby were only delighted to help.

"For years we entertain people on the pitch and in my experience they are only too happy to give something back and give you some of their time and knowledge.

"Because of the product, I got a bit of slagging and banter, but it actually encouraged other players to launch their own businesses, I think they thought well hang on, if Swifty can do it, so can I and I've helped them too.

**"It is an area that I really think IRUPA can build on, tapping into ex-players through the IRUPA Clubhouse, not just for careers and networking but also around the whole transition experience."**

"Everyone is in the same boat, some will be better prepared but we will all share the same experience, feeling down in the dumps occasionally and just being able to talk to other retired players can help."

So after an 18 year career at the highest level, educational qualifications and a successful business, what is next?

"Well, I'm getting married in June and then we'll move to Dublin. I've looked into jobs and careers but having started my own business I think I have really caught the entrepreneurial bug, so it will be another start up. I have a few ideas and I'll work on those. There is a fine line between generating income and doing

what you love and having a passion for it. The rush you get from earning your first euro off your own back is amazing, so I'll substitute my rugby buzz with that. Of course, I am nervous and a bit apprehensive of the unknown but I'm going to embrace it."

And after 15 years in Galway, the Connacht Michael leaves behind has undergone a huge transformation from all those years ago, it must be hard to move on.

"Of course I'll miss Galway, it's been a fantastic place to live and Connacht is an amazing club to play for. I am excited about the move to Dublin and have a lot of friends there already; I am not sure if I'll be going to many Leinster games though!

"I think the future of Connacht Rugby is bright, there are so many young players there and the average age will fall even more now that I am finished! Performances are improving year-on-year on the pitch and the development of talent through the academy has been great. As a club we are so well supported and have great success with increased season ticket sales and improving facilities each season."

As well as all that work, surely there must be some time to relax. Michael is looking forward to the Rugby World Cup in London and watching his teammate Robbie Henshaw in action during the tournament.

"I'm actually going to a couple of the games, can you believe that I've never actually been to an Irish International match so I'm really looking forward to that and to seeing Robbie. He was special from day one and not just on the pitch, his ability and attitude belie his years, he is a real leader in the squad. Ireland should be full of confidence, and there is strength and depth to meet the demands of a month long campaign which will be vital.

"I'm really going to enjoy the games and the experience - with a beer in my hand for once!"

He's definitely earned it.

## Hibernia College Medal for Excellence 2015

**Michael Swift was awarded the Hibernia College IRUPA Medal for Excellence at this year's IRUPA Awards. The award seeks to recognise players who make a significant contribution to rugby both on and off the field.**

Nominated by his peers and endorsed by the Player Development Managers, the award highlights the leadership shown by Michael in the dressing room, on the field of play and at the Club and amongst the wider community.

### Swift Awarded IMI Scholarship

The IMI and IRUPA are delighted to announce that Michael Swift has been awarded a scholarship for their mini MBA programme. This intensive five day programme is designed to give participants maximum impact in a limited time-frame. The format and design of the course creates a supportive environment where participants learn from content experts, practical application of case studies and from each other. Participants will gain exposure to strategy, leadership, finance, marketing and strategy HR.

Michael Swift is the longest serving player for Connacht rugby, with 15 seasons and 265 caps to his name. He also holds the Celtic League (PRO12) record with 185 appearances. His vast experience on the pitch has helped him become one of the leading authorities off it. His leadership status within the province is apparent, with his peers recognising his on and off-field commitment to the game by voting him as the recipient of the IRUPA Medal of Excellence in 2015. A graduate of Loughborough University, "Swift" has an entrepreneurial spirit, and making maximum use of the vast network of people he has met through his



playing years, he has set-up his own e-Commerce beauty subscription services as well as a summer camp initiative in Galway city. Swiftly announced his retirement from rugby this season, and will be sorely missed by everyone at the Sportsground.

Speaking about how the mini-MBA could help in his post-rugby career development, Swift said:

"I'm a great advocate for continual self-improvement. I suppose this stems from my time as a professional rugby player where you're only as good as your last game and where performance is measured and critiqued on a weekly basis. I feel that I have an entrepreneurial spirit within me that is developing rapidly but just needs help in putting me in the right direction. Ideas are one thing but you need a well thought out strategy to implement and turn these thoughts into a reality.

"Surrounding myself with fellow likeminded people on the IMI mini-MBA programme will I'm sure generate fresh new ways of thinking coupled with the exciting course content. As a rugby player I have learnt the value of working in a group situation under sometimes high pressures situations. I believe pressure brings out the best in me and so would thrive and relish a working environment where the course content is focused and intense."





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PLAYER

DEVELOPMENT

# Career & Education



EDUCATION STATUS



PERSONALITY TYPE



LIFE SKILLS  
& INTEREST



EMOTIONAL  
HEALTH &  
WELLBEING



GOALS FOR LIFE  
DURING AND  
AFTER SPORT



FINANCIAL  
PLANNING





# IRUPA Player Development Programme

**“Sport is the only profession I know that when you retire, you have to go to work.”**

**- Earl Monroe, former professional NBA player and Hall of Fame Star**

**Delivering a world class Player Development Programme hinges on insightful and in depth assessment of individual player needs, this is the absolute foundation of the IRUPA PDP.**

The key to successful career, education and training advice is for the Professional Development Manager (PDM) to undertake an initial evaluation of an individual player's needs. This initial meeting is the foundation for all subsequent interactions. IRUPA support the current guidelines for improving dual career for players published by EU athletes. These guidelines outline best practice, good governance and innovative ideas for Player Associations. An initial evaluation with a player can help develop an action plan based on the player's self-awareness, values, goals and current needs, touching on areas such as educational status, personality type, life skills and interests and career goals.

One of the main functions of a Player Development Programme is to encourage players to realise the importance of dual career preparation while they are still playing the game. One of the key targets for dual careers is simply to get players to have better self-awareness and motivation to learn new skills off the field of play during their professional careers. It is not just about university education, IRUPA encourages players to learn new skills across a variety of platforms, from traditional education, to vocational education, work experience, charity work, life skills and hobbies.

**In its recent IRUPA player survey 39% of players had a third level qualification and 57% are currently studying. The most popular areas for study are business related and sport related courses.**

The Career and Education pillar of IRUPA's Players Development Programme

allows players to explore the options available to them to help combine their rugby career with their education so they can achieve their potential in both fields knowing where and when to go for advice when they need it.

IRUPA can help with career counselling, study management techniques, work experience, and accessing flexible learning options from colleges. Each PDM works with players to help them evaluate their options and look to create a better informed decision. These decisions could revolve around areas like course selection, institute selection or even evaluating the ability to elongate study and create a part-time option. The PDM can also help players identify what their learning style is, and help them choose courses that complement their style.

Education doesn't just mean traditional degrees and post-graduate programmes. Many trade and skill based qualifications and many short professional qualifications are also available. All leading to a well-rounded individual. Many colleges and institutions also offer IRUPA financial and sporting scholarships while others offer part-time programmes which are often run at evening/night time or through blended and distance learning options.

70% of players are actively working to develop a career outside of rugby however only 39% feel that they would have options if their career ended tomorrow.

### ***Developing a personal development plan***

Following an initial evaluation, PDMs can help players to develop a Personal Development Plan. This is an active, action based plan outlining some short, medium and long term goals for off-pitch development. The PDMs also have a vital role to play in helping players to work out how to progress towards their goals. Developing, or even thinking

about developing a plan is a major step in itself. Trying, and discarding some options can also be useful, and many short courses or work experience can help players try different career ideas before committing to something more long-term.

### ***Career exploration and guidance***

Whether a player has a definite idea of what he/she would like to do after rugby, has a partial plan, or indeed has no clear idea, the PDM and IRUPA has a number of tools and resources to help work through the career exploration process. These resources can help players discover what their strengths, skills and attributes are, and will also help define and refine transferable skills from their playing career. Each PDM is fully trained in psychometric profiling, which can be used to highlight what players personal preferences are in relation to future careers. All this information can be jobmatched as well to make sure that any career that a player is interested in complements their skill set and priorities in life.

### ***Player Externship Programme***

Whether a player already has an academic qualification or is looking for some work experience before they embark on a course, IRUPA can help source relevant industry placements, work experience, mentoring and shadowing opportunities that can really add to a player's CV. It is increasingly important to employers that potential employees continually add to their existing skill set and work history, so these short and focused opportunities are a great way to demonstrate continual learning and development.

Provincial based PDMs ensures players have access to more information on specific local opportunities and companies whilst IRUPA's national partnerships mean players can also tap into larger networks depending on their interests.



Connacht Rugby's Mick Kearney and Ronan Loughney learn blacksmith skills

### Self-Employment

Not all players have aspirations to 'be employed' when they retire. IRUPA recognise this and have established viable opportunities and contacts for players to engage with individuals who are currently successful within their given careers. Various schemes are currently in operation to help you develop relevant knowledge and establish the foundation skills needed to run your own business successfully. Existing programmes include a networking and mentoring programme, Board Placement Panel and Professionals to Business (Northern Ireland only, but soon to be rolled out nationally). In addition to these, we source local experts who can offer short courses in relevant skills that will help you. These cover a wide area but examples include basic accounting skills, marketing and communications, business planning and budget forecasting.

### Study Management

Players who are currently studying can often struggle to find a sport-study balance. When this is the case, the PDM can assist the players to better manage this. Options can range from part-time to slow tracking to maybe considering a year out. All options are discussed with the player's rugby career in mind and based on what fits their immediate goals. The degree of flexibility varies between Institutions and courses but your PDM is

experienced in approaching this matter with colleges and course leaders.

### Flexible delivery

Players who are thinking of starting a new course or progressing from Diploma to Degree or Degree to Masters and above should speak to their PDM. They have created relationships with player-friendly colleges who can support players' need for flexible study options.

### What is Blended Learning?

Blended learning is a combination of in house lectures/tutorials and online access to materials. Blended learning can suit many professionals as it allows for flexibility in learning. Players can attend the college for certain modules and take additional modules in their own time, at their own convenience via the college's website.

### What is Distance Learning?

Distance Learning has moved away from the old style of text format and death by PowerPoint. Distance Learning now incorporates live lectures and tutorials or webinars where you can ask questions of the tutors either in a chat box or via a mic from the comfort of your own home or whilst away on tour. You can also engage with your class mates via the chat boxes or again in smaller break-out groups. The majority of these live lectures are recorded and stored online so you can access them again for

revision purposes or if you happen to miss a live lecture.

### Short Courses

A number of short courses are on offer throughout the season. These are normally run within your Province and are designed to meet player demand. They are timetabled to fit with your training and playing demands whilst taking into account specific challenges you may be facing at that given time. Short courses are advertised internally via email or if there are any courses you would like to see added please talk to your PDM.

### Why study or learn a new skill?

**85% of players feel that pursuing an interest outside of rugby benefits their game.**

Study provides a welcome distraction from the constant pressures of professional sport and may even enhance playing performance. Many players derive personal satisfaction and self-confidence from accomplishment in a non-sporting activity. Players can also be relieved of the stress associated with concern about an uncertain future following retirement. Professional rugby players are highly disciplined and have little difficulty in applying this discipline to their studies. Every effort will be made to encourage educational institutions to demonstrate flexibility in accommodating the specific needs and schedules of professional rugby players.

### Do Something Different...

Sometimes it's nice to try something new, whether you need a new challenge, have always wanted to try something out or maybe you're on a study break and want a completely different experience.

IRUPA can help source anything you'd like to try from cooking, art lessons, barista training, car maintenance and mechanics to blacksmithing or even flying lessons.

Get in touch with your PDM and see what you can do !



# Take supplements, take a risk

The future stars of world rugby were educated on the potential dangers of nutritional supplements on Keep Rugby Clean Day at the U20 Championship 2015 in Italy in June.



World Rugby has launched a major new programme warning young players about the potential risks associated with using nutritional supplements to increase size or improve performance. With supplement use a reality across society, the governing body is committed to providing the best possible level of advice and education to young rugby players as they embark on potential careers in the sport.

A cornerstone of the educational campaign is a video outlining the importance of maintaining a healthy, balanced diet and lifestyle as well as the potential risks and impact associated with supplements.

Former Argentina captain and WADA Athlete Committee member and Leinster legend Dr Felipe Contepomi, who appears on the video, talked about the risks, including contamination of some supplements, and said: "Players at all levels of the game should understand that if they are thinking about taking nutritional supplements, they need to know the potential risk of doping and possible long-term health risks associated with taking them.

**"It is absolutely possible to perform to your best at any level of the game through maintaining a healthy, balanced diet, good training and good rest. I encourage everyone to think seriously about this."**

The video, which has been shown to the future stars of world rugby at anti-doping workshops during the U20 Championship, includes a strong message from three-time Olympic medallist Lauryn Williams, who was successful at both the winter and summer Games by maintaining a healthy, balanced diet.

"I think that an athlete should put their confidence in food and not in supplements," said Williams, who is also a WADA Athlete Committee member.

"I made it to four Olympic Games and got three medals from it so I think I did pretty well with just food! If you decide to take supplements then you're not really confident in yourself. If that's the way you're thinking then it's not the best way to go about it. I want to be the best that I can be, I want to work as hard as I possibly can, I want to give myself the best nutrition, I want to do it in a way that is going to preserve my integrity and make people really proud of me at the end of the day," she says.

World Rugby reminded athletes:

**YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE** – Under anti-doping regulations, the only person responsible for what goes into your body is YOU! Players cannot claim ignorance because of the directions or advice of others.

**DO YOU REALLY NEED THEM?** – Many supplement companies claim their



products have benefits, but some are not clearly supported by scientific research.

**DO YOUR RESEARCH** – Unless supplements are batch tested, there are no guarantees that what you're taking in a supplement is totally free from banned substances and contamination is a risk. Check out [keeprugbyclean.com](http://keeprugbyclean.com) for the 2015 WADA prohibited list.

**NO GUARANTEES** – products marketed under the same brand in different countries MAY contain different ingredients. The only way to be sure is to batch test.

**MAINTAIN A BALANCED DIET** – Players are likely to benefit from a healthy, well balanced diet which should be put in place by an expert. The best way to eliminate the risk of dietary supplements is to avoid taking them.

*World Rugby is committed to fighting doping in sport. Players can visit [www.keeprugbyclean.com](http://www.keeprugbyclean.com) for a full list of prohibited WADA substances if they are unsure about any product. They can also check out World Rugby's supplements guidelines.*



**Dealing with the media is part of everyday for a professional rugby player, however like everything in professional sport, training and preparation is a huge part of ensuring success and the same principle applies when being interviewed.**

Time and again media training is an area that players often highlight during their one on one assessment as an area they would like to up-skill in.

As with any team environment, team members have different levels of expertise, for example senior players may be very used to post match interviews but may avoid feature pieces. Contrastingly often the first time an academy player finds themselves the subject of an interview is after a good on-field performance. This may have been the player's senior debut so having a camera out in front of you for the first time can be a daunting experience.

As part of our player development programme, we endeavour to ensure our members can fulfil their potential both as professional athletes and also in their off field careers. As well as ensuring our members are comfortable and confident when dealing with the media, specialist training also adds to the professional game environment and ensures that our members can positively portray their own image and brand to assist in their future careers.

IRUPA engaged sports media specialist

Kieran File to develop and deliver a bespoke media training workshop for our members which focused on empowering them to understand the process, feel confident and deliver notable content.

When dealing with the media, Kieran believes there is little difference between a professional team environment and any organisation, the same principles apply.



### *Speaking to the media*

So you've been asked to speak to the media. How can you ensure the experience is a good one? The answer to this question will depend a lot on the nature of the interview, but here are a few pointers to consider.

#### *1. Prepare yourself well*

This may include identifying why you are being interviewed, developing several key messages you want (or need) to get across, thinking about and preparing for potential topics, roughly scripting soundbites that are important, and identifying the publication and your potential audience. What you can do will depend on how much time you have to prepare, but some preparation is better than none, particularly if you're a little nervous.

#### *2. Consider the features of the specific interview context*

Is your interview on TV? Okay, then body language as well as your message will be important considerations. Is the journalist just looking for a soundbite for a radio news bulletin? Right, identify your key points, note them down and try to get them in. If they're catchy, chances are they will get used. Are you doing a sit down with a journalist at a difficult time for you or your organisation? Identify your boundaries, and practice your 'kick it to touch' defence strategies.



The point here is that not all media interview situations are equal. Success is in part related to how well you negotiate the context. Identify the features, risks and rewards of your interview situation and keep these in mind while you are being interviewed. If you're not sure, don't be afraid to ask for help.

### 3. Respect the interviewer's right to ask (tough) questions

Part of an interviewer's job is to ask tough questions. Being prepared for and at ease with this fact is an important mindset to maintain. The media are (typically!) not part of the PR arm of your company or team. They have their own values and ethics that can require them to push. It's your decision how much you share, but make sure you keep your cool in the face of tough questions.



### 4. Protect AND promote

While media interviews may require defence strategies at times in order to protect yourself and those you represent, they are also an opportunity to promote the values of your team or organisation, share insights and experiences, go into bat for someone under fire or engage a new audience. Some questions, even the tough ones, may give you an opportunity to do this. Look for these opportunities, and take them.

*Kieran File is a PhD in media language and communication. He provides media training workshops, seminars and one-to-one training for sporting, corporate and public service industry representatives.*

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# Cooking up a

Anyone on social media could tell you how passionate athletes are about nutrition and food. Just glance through the accounts of professional athletes and you'll see images and references to food and nutrition. It's not really surprising however as nutrition is as big a part of an athlete's life as training rest and recovery.

## Chili Con Carne

### Ingredients:

2 Tbsp. olive oil  
500 g minced beef, from butchers if possible  
1 onion - finely diced  
2-3 red chilies finely chopped, seeds removed  
2 cloves of garlic crushed  
1-2 pepper sliced  
2 Tbsp. of cumin  
1 Tbsp. of cinnamon  
1 Tbsp. of paprika  
500 g chopped tomatoes  
400 g kidney beans  
Handful of chopped coriander  
Juice of 1 lime  
Honey to taste.

### Preparation:

1. Sauté the onions for ten minutes. Then add the chilies followed by the garlic and peppers
  2. Add in your meat and spices – cumin, cinnamon and paprika
  3. Cook until meat is brown and then add in your chopped tomatoes
  4. Mix well and simmer for 20 minutes
  5. Add in the juice of the lime and the kidney beans and leave to simmer for 5 minutes.
  6. Add in the coriander and honey to taste. You should only need a small bit of sweetness.
  7. If it's not spicy enough add some cayenne pepper or dried chili.
- Serve with sweet potato and guacamole.

As part of the IRUPA Player Development Programme, we encourage players to develop and build skills to equip them for life outside rugby but the programme also focuses on ensuring that player can achieve their full potential whilst playing. At a very practical level it is important that players, especially those starting out on their rugby careers and maybe living away from home for the first time can plan and prepare meals.

Following on from last season where Connacht and Munster members undertook cooking classes, during this season IRUPA developed cooking demonstrations and workshops for two of the playing groups; the Leinster academy members and the Ireland Women's Sevens squad. The idea was to instil practical skills and confidence as well as fostering a love of food and cooking which hopefully would encourage IRUPA members to make cooking part of their everyday lives.

In conjunction with Leinster rugby, IRUPA created a series of workshops hosted at The 108 Bistro in Clonskeagh for Leinster Academy members with recipes devised by resident nutritionist Daniel Davey.



*Daniel Davey, Leinster Rugby:*

**"Nutrition is a huge part of life for an elite athlete but it is also something that players enjoy. There is a natural sense of competition in any team environment and that extends to other areas including cooking. If guys can get interested and engaged with cooking, it instils them with a love of food which of course helps their preparation but as importantly gives them a skill and confidence, something they can develop and enjoy over a lifetime."**



# storm

## LEINSTER ACADEMY & WOMEN'S SEVENS



### *Learning Skills for Life*

When the Ireland Women's Sevens centralised to DCU, for many of the squad it was their first time living away from home. Training and work or college left little time for cooking so it was important that the squad had basic cooking skills and a repertoire of recipes to allow them cook for themselves but also prepare meals and snacks for the week ahead. The squad undertook a series of workshops at Dublin's Cools Academy who developed nutritious recipes in conjunction with IRFU nutritionist Ruth Wood-Martin.



## Warm Chicken Tabbouleh

### **Ingredients:**

160g bulghur wheat (or couscous)  
 3-4 chicken breasts, thinly sliced  
 2 cloves garlic, crushed  
 150ml lemon juice  
 60ml olive oil  
 250g cherry tomatoes, halved  
 4 spring onions, coarsely chopped  
 1 cup flat leaf parsley, coarsely chopped  
 1 cup fresh mint, coarsely chopped  
 Salt and black pepper  
 100g feta cheese, crumbled, to garnish

### **Preparation:**

1. Place bulghur wheat in a bowl, cover with an inch of boiling water and leave to stand for 15 minutes. Put into a sieve over a dish and squeeze out any remaining water.
2. Combine chicken, ¼ of the lemon juice and 1tbls of oil and the garlic and marinate for 10 minutes. Drain and discard the marinade.
3. Heat 1 tbls of oil in a wok and stir fry chicken in batches until browned all over ensuring it's cooked through. Set aside and keep warm.
4. Add the bulghur wheat, onion and tomatoes to the wok until the onion softens.
5. Add the chicken and the rest of the lemon juice and olive oil.
6. Remove from the heat, stir through herbs and lightly season. Crumble the feta cheese over the finished dish.





## IRPA Raises Sevens Concerns

**IRPA continues to work with members of both the men's and women's World Sevens Series (WSS) to promote the highest standards of player welfare.**

In the last leg of both the men's and women's WSS in London and Amsterdam respectively, IRPA met with representatives from the core teams. The players were given opportunity to provide direct feedback on the SWS in the knowledge that their comments would be passed directly onto World Rugby management. IRPA encouraged the Players to provide both endorsements of current services provided in the SWS as well as suggestions on improvement.

The change in series structure in the men's WSS for the 2015/16 season has raised Player Welfare issues. The shorter period in which the men's SWS will be run (five months instead of seven months) with an extra tournament will have a direct effect on the recovery, preparation and planning phase for teams which will have an influence on the quality of the SWS. All Player concerns and possible solutions have been outlined in the Player feedback reports which have been submitted to World Rugby. IRPA will look to engage with the governing body to establish the best way that we can mitigate some of the Players' concerns.

## World Cup terms of participation

**IRPA were given the opportunity to provide submissions of the terms of participation in the 2015 Rugby World Cup (RWC).**

These terms must be signed by all participating unions prior the RWC with



IRPA's Simon Keogh with the WSS players representatives

the players involved bound by them. The players are being asked to play particular attention to the commercial rules which restrict players from associating their own personal sponsors to the RWC. Whilst players are free to engage with their personal sponsors during their RWC they must not associate their sponsor with the tournament unless they are an official RWC sponsor. National Unions may also enforce their own player/sponsor engagement restrictions which players should familiarise themselves with prior to departing.

As part of the integrity drive to keep rugby clean, a new communications device policy has been introduced to the terms of participation. The policy seeks to combat any technology which would assist with illegal betting and

sharing of insider information.

It restricts players and match officials from using communications within a match venue from 50 minutes prior to the scheduled time of a match until the final whistle. Players are asked to familiarise themselves with the terms of participation prior to departing for the RWC.

## Considering Going Overseas?

**IRPA is encouraging all players who are seeking employment in Unions that they are not familiar with to do so with caution.**

The association has been inundated with contractual issues that have arisen in non-traditional rugby playing environments. Players are either finding themselves in situations whereby they have not read or understood their contract and so are left unpaid or their club does not have the financial backing to support wages. If you have been offered a contract in a country which you are unfamiliar with and are concerned please contact Simon Keogh [simon.keogh@irpa-rugby.com](mailto:simon.keogh@irpa-rugby.com) or Josh Blackie [josh.blackie@irpa-rugby.com](mailto:josh.blackie@irpa-rugby.com)



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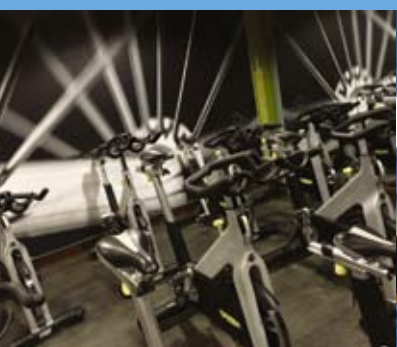
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**UP** **AND**  
**COMING**

# Academy stars

**“Be patient, keep working hard and believe that the opportunity will come your way”.** Ulster’s **FRANK TAGGART** has just completed his second year in the Ulster Academy, and has already made a huge impact in his short time with the Province. We catch up with him before he departs on the Emerging Ireland tour.



**Name:** Frank Taggart  
**Academy:** Year 2  
**School:** Whitgift School  
**College:** University of Ulster  
**Club:** Belfast Harlequins  
**Position:** Flanker  
**Honours:** Represented Ireland u18s clubs; captain of Ulster u20s throughout interprovincial games in 2013/14; Ulster Ravens; Ireland u20s in the U20s Six Nations and Junior World Cup campaign 2014 in New Zealand.

**What are you studying at the moment?**

I have just finished my 2nd year of a Sport Theory and Practice degree at UUJ.

**How have you found balancing your studies with your rugby commitments?**

It was difficult at the start, but once I had settled in and created a routine it was a lot less stressful. It definitely helped me with my organisation and preparation skills – that’s for sure!

**In terms of off field, what career would like to pursue?**

I’ve always had a huge passion for fitness, this is definitely the career path I would

like to go into. I’ve experienced working in a gym before and really enjoyed it. I’ve just gained my Level 2 personal training qualifications. I’m looking to get my Level 3 as soon as possible.

**You have represented your country, what was the Junior World Championship experience like for you?**

I still can’t quite sum up what the experience was like for me in one word, it was all pretty surreal. The whole journey was incredible, from the hours in the gym and the training pitch to the last game against New Zealand at Eden Park. Despite a couple of results not going our way, I enjoyed every moment. I will never forget facing the Haka at Eden Park, the home of New Zealand Rugby.

**What has been your best Ulster rugby experience to date?**

Without a doubt it was leading the team out as captain at Kingspan in my first competitive u20s game in an Ulster Jersey, beating Munster u20s 17-14 in the last few minutes of the game.

**What is the hardest part of living away from home?**

I’m a big family man so I always knew it

was going to be difficult, but through Ulster and Harlequins I met a really nice bunch of people early on that made me feel really welcome. Definitely one of the hardest parts is having to cook my own dinner!

**What are your aspirations for next season?**

I’m really looking forward to finishing this season off with the Emerging Ireland tour to Georgia and the opportunity this may give me. I am obviously aiming to get my first senior cap for Ulster and as much game time as I possibly can with the first XV and Ulster Ravens.

**In rugby terms, where would you like to be in 5 years’ time?**

I’d love to see myself as a regular first XV member of the Ulster squad, and if not already there, knocking on the door of the Ireland National team.

**What advice would you have for those starting out in the Academy next season?**

Be patient, keep working hard and believe that the opportunity will come your way. Off-pitch development is important for players.

**Outside of your university course what part of the Player Development Programme have you valued and enjoyed the most and why?**

I have enjoyed all parts of the player development programme as all the workshops became useful to me as both a student and a player; workshops included creating an effective CV that would possibly help me for the future, as well as learning how to use social media to your advantage. A workshop that stood out for me is the different communication skills, it’s important for players to be able to communicate both on and off the pitch.



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# Losing your identity **and** finding yourself

MY TRANSITION TO LIFE AFTER PROFESSIONAL RUGBY

**I recently read an article written by an ex professional Canadian volleyball player, in which she spoke about the challenges faced once she was forced to retire from the sport.**

She listed the several changes to her life now encountered, like changes in her daily routine, realising that she can no longer can eat as much as she used to, and finding a job that would somehow

stimulate her as much as her passion for volleyball had done so for over 10 years.

Among the issues that she listed she was dealing with, one in particular stood out to me, as it's something that I repeatedly hear from athletes who are in the fresh process of transformation. After over 10 years in volleyball competing at the highest level, including two Olympic Games, the one thing she was struggling

with the most, was her 'personal identity', now that she had given up the sport.

For more than half her adult life, she was a professional volleyball player. It was how she introduced herself to people she met for the first time, the occupation that she wrote on her tax declaration, and what her whole life was built around, nothing else mattered. Now that she ceased to be a professional athlete,



she was struggling to find answers to the questions of who am I now? and what's next?

It's a common realisation that athletes who aren't prepared for life after professional sport come to, as she was the first to admit that she didn't explore other interests outside of Volleyball, never studied, and didn't take advantage of the many mentors that were on hand

to discuss her career post volleyball. It's easy to become so focused on one thing. Sport was her job and number one priority, and to have other interests and work concurrently on something else, made her think that she wasn't putting 100% into her passion.

At the same time, it wasn't her choice to end her career at the time when she did. It wasn't injury that ended her career, but being told by the national coach that she was no longer needed. Yes, she could have continued to play at a lower level, but she had competed at the highest level, and nothing else seemed to compare to the intensity that elite competition provided. It wasn't as though she had fell out of love for the sport, but once you've experienced sport at that level, nothing else seems to compare.

While reading through her story, I drew parallels with my personal career, in particular the last 12-18 months, and the transition from being a professional rugby player to being, well, not a professional rugby player. I returned home a year ago this month, after completing a season at Bristol following the three years I spent at Ulster. It was to be my final year of professional rugby, as I decided to retire from the sport at the age of 28, a young age compared to many rugby players.

As I read through the article, I nodded my head at how she struggled with motivation and training post professionalism, and how she missed being around a team environment.

**A rugby team is very much like a family, given the amount of time you spend together on and off the pitch. When I left that environment, I missed being around my mates, missed the laughs and the experiences we went through, good and bad.**

By Adam D'Arcy



I've struggled with trying to find that balance of work and training. I no longer can wake up in the morning and have my day planned out for me. It's not eat, train, sleep anymore. Rather wake, eat, work, train, work, sleep, exhausted. We train hard as professional athletes don't get me wrong, but I didn't realise how tough it is for your average working man and woman, trying to find the time to fit everything in, is incredibly hard.

What made my story different to hers was that it was my choice to retire from the game. I'd had a couple of minor knee operations, broken noses and ankles in my career, but nothing that would stop me from continuing on playing. This made the transition a whole lot easier, as it wasn't a decision that I made overnight. I'd spoken at length with friends and family, and as tough a decision it was to make, 12 months down the track, I still know it was the right one.

I'd also taken advantage, as a lot of Irish players do, of the many activities outside of rugby that are provided by institutions like IRUPA, such as the mentor programs and university courses, so that when the time comes to retire, whether on your own terms or not, you are not left struggling to redefine and find a new 'personal identity'.

Some players find it harder than others to make the transition. I was lucky to have completed a University degree before I became a professional player, so I knew what I wanted to do when the time came to hang up the boots. For others, those that go straight from school into full time training, it's hard to find the time to pursue activities outside the perimeters of a rugby pitch, though it's crucial to do so. Rugby will only take up small part of your life, and you need to be prepared for the rest of it.

The beauty of our game is that the rugby community is huge. There is always someone to talk to, no matter where you are in the world. It's helped me, and it will help you when the time comes for you, so that you can make the hard transition, that little bit easier.



# Ted Robinson

**In this edition we continue our focus on past professional players, their experience of professional rugby and their transition out of the sport. We talk to former Connacht and Ireland A winger Ted Robinson on his rugby life.**



Kildare born Ted grew up playing rugby for his local club before continuing his rugby education at Castleknock College. He joined Buccaneers before a contract beckoned at Connacht where he made a total of 76 appearances for the western Province as well as earning two Ireland A caps. From an early age he knew he wanted to work in the hotel industry and complemented his rugby career with qualifications and work experience to ensure he achieved this goal. He is the General Manager of the Glenroyal Hotel and Leisure Club in Maynooth, Co Kildare.

***When you were in school, did you have any idea what you hoped to do career wise?***

When I was in school, during the summer holidays I worked in The K Club hotel which was only three miles away from my home place. I loved working there and as a result my goal was to work in the hotel industry and one day be a hotel manager, so I guess I did have a pretty clear idea early on.

***How did you embark on your rugby career?***

My rugby career started in my Local Club North Kildare when I was playing for the under 8s, I loved it and made many friends. I then went to Castleknock College where I continued on playing and after school, I joined Buccaneers where Eddie O Sullivan was coach at the time.

***Did you consider rugby to be a viable career option?***

It's only when I went to Buccaneers that I started to consider rugby as a career. Buccaneers had a great team at the time with the likes of Brain Rigney and all the Rigney Brothers along with Noel Mannion playing in the pack.

***What third level education did you undertake and how did you balance study commitments with your training and playing schedule?***

I went to Shannon College of Hotel Management, as hotels was the industry I wanted to pursue as a career. I decided that in order to balance college and rugby that I had to give up drinking, which was not easy when all your college mates were out every Thursday night! This helped me stay on top of both college and rugby.

***How did your rugby career progress?***

When I was in 4th year in College, I asked could I work in The Great Southern Hotel in Galway as I thought I might have a chance of getting into the Connacht squad back in 2002. I worked the breakfast and evening shifts in the hotel and trained during the day with Connacht. I got picked for my first cap with Connacht that year against Glasgow in the quarter final of the Celtic League which was in its first year. I was still working in the Great Southern and I actually served the Glasgow team the night before the match, then played against them the next day and was lucky enough to score on my debut!

***Starting out, did you think rugby would play such a big role in your life?***

I always loved rugby, but at school I never imagined rugby would play such a large part of my life with six years playing for Connacht.

***Do you think playing rugby has helped your off field career?***

Rugby has taught me many things that have helped me in my hotel career, mainly discipline, to never give up and also the importance of having a strong team that works hard together.

***How was your retirement experience?***

I was lucky in the sense that I went straight back into hotel work. I do miss the fun and laughter with my old team mates and also the many trips around Europe.

***Looking back what did you most enjoy about playing rugby and what do you miss most?***

I loved the lifestyle of rugby as you were always fit and healthy, I most miss the fun and crack with all the lads. I don't miss been the feeling of being in a car crash the day after a hard game.

***What piece of advice would you give young players starting out today?***

My advice would be that "quitters never win", so whatever your goal is, stick at it and work hard even when times get tough and eventually your dreams or goals will come to fruition.



Ted and his dad took part in the Mizen to Malin CROSS Rugby Legends charity cycle in 2014.



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# Ireland v Wales – IRUPA Clubhouse Event



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## **Catch up with old friends before Ireland's World Cup send-off**

IRUPA are hosting our annual Clubhouse event on 29th August in MSL Ballsbridge Motors on Shelbourne Road. The event is taking place prior to Ireland taking on Wales in the Aviva Stadium in their last game before they depart for the World Cup.

With the stadium only a few minutes' walk from the venue, the event will give you and your guests the unique opportunity of spending time with some of our past and current rugby heroes and gain some valuable insight on the upcoming World Cup campaign from our panel of experts.

We are selling tables of 10 for the event at a cost of €2000 + VAT which will include your drinks, food, entertainment and match tickets.

If you would like to book your table at the event please get in contact with Keith at [keith.young@irupa.ie](mailto:keith.young@irupa.ie) or on +353 1 676 9680.

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