

# IN TOUCH



**IRUPA**

protecting player welfare

Spring 2015 Volume 27

## joining the legends

WHO WILL BE THE 2015  
HIBERNIA COLLEGE  
IRUPA **PLAYERS'**  
**PLAYER OF THE YEAR?**



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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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Photography by Sportsfile  
([www.sportsfile.com](http://www.sportsfile.com)) unless otherwise stated.

Text by IRUPA staff unless otherwise stated.

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# CEO address

**Omar Hassanein**

**One of the core roles in the existence of any players association is in representing its players in discussions and general interactions with the sport's governing bodies. These discussions and interactions are unique in their very nature, as essentially they are between the games primary revenue generators (the players) and the sports secondary revenue generators (the administrators).**



Unlike other professions where a trade union represents literally thousands of employees who are engaged by thousands of employers, players associations are bodies that represent a small group of high performing individuals, often engaged by only the one employer. This one employer relies so heavily on this small group of employees to steer the success (or otherwise) of the sport.

To put it another way, the players are the entertainment – they are the reason that stadiums get filled, the reason broadcast deals escalate from year to year and the reason that mum, dad and kids cover themselves from head to toe in their national and provincial colours. If a sporting organisation is to lose half a dozen of its key players abroad, then

this could potentially wreak havoc on the overall success of the sport, both economic and otherwise.

So what am I getting at in this article? What I am getting at is that a certain level of rights should come with this unique position that players hold within their sport. Players have a right to be heavily involved in decision making in the game, whether it be on policy, protocol or the general way things are done. Players also have a right to know what the finances are doing and to contribute to decisions around the flow and allocation of funds within the game. Furthermore, players have a right to have their welfare protected at all times in the knowledge that the game is looking after their every interest as human beings, without any feeling of being

on the scrapheap when they are no longer of use to the employer.

In addition to the above, the players and their representative body should never be seen as a reactionary group whose assumed mandate is to await decisions that the game makes, and then react accordingly when it's felt something needs to be rectified. This is often a public perception of what a players association is, and equally in some cases is what administrators' perceptions can be. The reason that this perception is very wrong is because it implies that the players should be told the way things are and then choose to react, as opposed to being consulted throughout – a right that should be automatically granted to them given the above points raised.

So where is Irish rugby in this regard?



**“Players have the right to have their welfare protected at all times in the knowledge that the game is looking after their every interest as human beings.”**

To be honest I think we are a long way ahead of where we were a few years ago, however still good way from where we need to be – essentially we are somewhere midway down the road. Engagements between players and the IRFU over the past few years have been mostly positive, however the defining advancement for mine has been the increase in mutual respect. Ultimately we don't have to agree on everything but we need to have enough respect

for each other to allow a working relationship to take place and to allow mutual interests to be understood and strived towards.

All of the questions raised in this article go right to the heart of the business of sport by posing the underlying philosophical question – what is the players place within the game? In my view there is only one simple way of answering this question – players are the

entertainment and without them there would be no game. This point should never be lost.

**Omar Hassanein**  
*Chief Executive*







## Ireland claim back to back Six Nations titles on Super Saturday

**Ireland claimed back to back Six Nations titles for the first time in 66 years after what can only be described as a magnificent and dramatic day for rugby.**

Straight out of the blocks, Wales set the bar high and outlined their intent with an immense display against Italy in the Stadio Olimpico. Their 20-61 defeat of the Azzurri saw them take top spot and set Ireland an ambitious target of 21 points to recapture the lead, a margin which could have been even greater but for a last gasp try by Leonardo Sarto in the closing moments of the game.

And so Murrayfield, celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday was the scene for Ireland's defence of their Six Nations title and Scotland the opponents hoping to

rain on Ireland's parade. A huge ask of any side especially away from home, Ireland laid down an early marker with a try by captain Paul O'Connell on his 101<sup>st</sup> appearance followed by a well worked try from Sean O'Brien. Scotland took advantage of a free kick to secure their only try of the game, 10-17 the score at half time. The second half produced a sublime try from Jared Payne and a second from man of the match Sean O'Brien. And in a day where nothing stayed on script, a dramatic try saving tackle from Jamie Heaslip in the dying moments ensured Ireland had completed their task.

With victory and the winning margin achieved and exceeded, it was over to Twickenham with the oval ball now very much in England's court. Ireland now faced the waiting game as England hosted France in the last game of the tournament. It all came down to this,

England needed to beat France by 26 or the title went to Ireland. A tense and nail-biting encounter was anticipated but no one could have predicted the twist and turns yet to come as the drama continued to the very last minute of the final game. The first half alone produced five tries and Ireland could only breathe when France won a turnover as the clock turned red.

An immense day for Ireland, the players, management and supporters and a fantastic day for the game of rugby.

On behalf of IRUPA and our members from academy to clubhouse, we congratulate all the players involved throughout this Six Nations campaign. We wish them, the coaching staff and management continued success and look forward to celebrating their many achievements at the Hibernia College IRUPA Awards in May.

## Players' CEOs meet

**A meeting of the CEOs of Irish Players' Associations was hosted by the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) at their headquarters in Croke Park.**

Attended by IRUPA CEO Omar Hassanein, Stephen McGuinness of the PFAI, Andrew Coonan of the Jockeys Association and Dessie Farrell of the GPA, the meeting sought to share best practice and investigate areas of mutual advantage which could be progressed between the associations.



## IRUPA Player Development Managers attend PPF Training Workshop



**All of the IRUPA Player Development Managers attended the meeting of the Education and Training group of the Professional Players Federation that was held at the GPA Offices in Dublin on February 5th.**

The PPF is the national organisation for the professional players associations in the UK and comprises of members from the Rugby Players' Association (RPA), the Welsh Rugby Players Association (WRPA), the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA) and the Professional Footballers' Association (for a full list of members visit [www.ppf.org.uk](http://www.ppf.org.uk)). The Education and Training group of the PPF meet twice per year and have kindly extended membership to Irish sports that run Personal Development Programmes including IRUPA, the GPA, the WPGA and the Irish Jockey's Trust. The purpose of the group is to share knowledge about programmes their Association are developing and issues that their members are facing.

## Ulster members on Board for Professional Development

**Ulster members continue their professional development with a workshop hosted by Business on Board Training.**

Delivered by Arthur Cox and Business in the Community, this was the second round of Board Training and was tailored to address areas which players felt they needed more knowledge on such as what to expect at a board meeting, what might you be expected to contribute, how to get your point of view across, as well as good governance practises around accounts, audits, risk management, committees and legal duties and responsibilities.

The IoDNI along with IRUPA and WJ Law welcomed Ulster Rugby players to an evening examining property development in the current economic climate.





## IRUPA representation on newly formed National Professional Game Board

**Directly arising out of a series of Plan Ireland meetings over the past two years, the proposed National Professional Game Board has now been formed and met for the first time on March 18th.**

Its composition, whilst not fully complete is chaired by former international Gordon Hamilton and made up of non-executive directors John Hartery and Des Lamont, national CEO Philip Browne, provincial CEO's Willie Ruane, Mick Dawson, Garrett Fitzgerald and Shane Logan; and importantly from a player perspective IRUPA CEO, Omar Hassanein. Recently appointed National Performance Director David Nucifora reports through to the board whilst also taking a seat on it.

The board is designed to drive all aspects of performance relating to the professional game, with its primary mandate being to initiate and develop strategy and policy in respect of the development of the professional game in Ireland along with an associated High Performance Plan. Aspects of this are to include: structure of season for the professional game, interfaces with the amateur game and the IRFU Domestic Game Committee, cross-border competition fixtures and scheduling for professional game, international fixture schedules (Senior, "A", U-20, U-19, U-18, etc), funding model, contracting model and player movement strategy.



## IRUPAs supports alcohol misuse campaign

**IRUPA is proud to be supporting the campaign to Stop Out-of-Control Drinking.**

The campaign is led by Fergus Finlay of Barnardo's and its board includes figures such as Kieran Mulvey of the Irish Sports Council and Gavin Duffy from Dragon's Den. It is currently running a publicity campaign asking people to consider how their drinking behaviour affects and influences other people. It will also be embarking on a public consultation to find a long-term solution to alcohol misuse.

You can find out more about the campaign at [www.rolemodels.ie](http://www.rolemodels.ie), if you are interested in getting involved you can contact the campaign at Twitter: [@irishrolemodels](https://twitter.com/irishrolemodels) or Facebook.com/[irishrolemodels](https://www.facebook.com/irishrolemodels)

## Contact Details for your IRUPA PDMs



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# IRUPA partners with Headway in highlighting acquired brain injuries



Omar Hassanein, IRUPA CEO, and Kieran Loughran, CEO of Headway

**IRUPA is committed to raising awareness and education on the seriousness of concussion, both amongst our members and the wider sporting community.**

As well as representing our members on national and international committees IRUPA engages with former players, administrators and advocates of brain injury prevention. As part of IRUPA's ongoing commitment to shining a light on concussion and the dangers of brain injury, the association is delighted to announce its partnership with Headway.

Headway, a national charity providing brain injury services, is there for many of the victims who suffer a traumatic brain injury. Their goal is to bring about positive change in the lives of those affected by an acquired brain injury. By working closely with survivors,

Headway helps enable them to rebuild their skills and achieve the best quality of life that they can through a range of rehabilitation services. Headway also provides much needed support for families and carers trying to cope with the challenge of caring for a person with a brain injury.

As part of the partnership, IRUPA CEO, Omar Hassanein will sit on the Board of Headway. Commenting on the partnership, he said:

"Concussion is a complex and serious issue within our game, it is important that players are educated around the dangers and signs and symptoms. In a wider context, a brain injury can be a devastating event for the sufferer and their family. Headway provide invaluable services to help those who have suffered a brain injury as well as offering much needed support and education for those close to them. IRUPA and our members

are looking forward to supporting Headway and helping to further generate awareness in this area".

Kieran Loughran, CEO of Headway on the partnership:

***"Headway welcomes this new partnership with IRUPA and applauds their commitment to create awareness about brain injury in sport. The brain is the most delicate organ in the human body. And the brain can suffer injury – significant injury – without any immediate debilitating symptoms."***

Today, about 70,000 people play rugby at various levels in Ireland. Of that number, 45% are under 18. That's more than 30,000 Irish children and teenagers. Together, with IRUPA's leadership and the support of Ireland's professional players, we can reach out to Ireland's young people and debunk the myth that you are some sort of hero for playing on after a knock to the head," continued Loughran.

"Brain injury is unseen and to most onlookers there is no real sign of damage, not like a dislocated shoulder or blood injury. Yet the brain is such a fragile piece of equipment that to play fast and loose with it and not take a knock seriously is tantamount to taking your life in your own hands."

"We need to reach out to educate about the importance of minding your head to people involved in sport. With so many symptoms, and so many ways that a concussion can present itself, it's easy to miss, so the message must be if in doubt sit it out. Headway is looking forward to working together with IRUPA to bring that message home."

***For more information on Headway and their services visit [www.headway.ie](http://www.headway.ie)***



# News from the Clubhouse

## THE IRUPA CLUBHOUSE EVENT 2015

29th AUGUST

**The excitement continues to build. Although we have just won our second Six Nations tournament in as many years, we still are looking forward and have the World Cup on our minds.**

In any year that a World Cup is present there has to be a shift in the international rugby calendar to accommodate the prestigious event. This will mean that there is no Guinness Autumn International Series but it will be replaced with the Guinness Summer Series and used as warm ups for the tournament.

Ireland will take on Wales in what will be Ireland's last match on home soil before they set sail for the World Cup proper. The Aviva stadium will no doubt be a sell-out with many fans taking advantage of the opportunity to see the team for one last time before the tournament begins.

IRUPA will host its annual Clubhouse event on the 29th of August in MSL Ballsbridge on Shelbourne Road. The match is kicking off at 2.30pm so an early gourmet lunch will be served at 12.00. The lunch will be followed by entertainment on stage with analysis of the upcoming fixture versus the Welsh and Ireland's chances in the World Cup proper.

Last year's event was a full house which gave guests the great opportunity to network with likeminded corporate individuals and with some of Ireland's current players and former superstars that have retired and now are members of the IRUPA Clubhouse.

**If you are interested in booking a table of 10 at the event which includes match tickets please contact Keith at [keith.young@irupa.ie](mailto:keith.young@irupa.ie)**



## IMI Scholarships

**Three Clubhouse members have been awarded scholarships through IRUPA's partnership with the IMI.**

### Denis Hickie - Scholarship for a Diploma in Business Finance



"I chose this course as I wanted to refresh and update some of the key learning areas of accountancy and finance I had learned when doing my primary degree (almost 20 years ago!). Also, I have been able to apply the practical experience of my post-rugby career to the topics being covered in the course which has made the learning easier and more relevant. Finally, the class schedule of three, on-site days a month provided me with enough flexibility to be able to balance my work and study commitments without too much difficulty".

### Declan O'Brien - Scholarship for a Diploma in Leadership



"As a Coach Development Officer with Leinster Rugby and I felt a need personally for my own development as well as meeting my work objectives that the Leadership Diploma would improve my working relationships with players, coaches and colleagues within Leinster Rugby and with our client Clubs and Schools and Colleges. There are strong elements of Communication, Motivation and Leadership skills within the Course. I hope it will provide me with better methods to engage with my client schools and clubs in terms of best practice and through relationship building maybe by developing collaborative leaders within organisations. I'm looking forward to this opportunity as I will be outside of my normal remit with a lot of business people attending this Leadership Diploma I feel that I will learn so much more about Leading People and be more self-aware of people's needs through various different organisations".

### Simon Keogh – Scholarship for a Diploma in Management



"Working for a small organisation that supports the professional needs of hundreds, the diploma will help me integrate best practice principles to provide greater strategic input to the growth and development of the organisation, as well as the people it represents. It is important to lay the right management foundations from the outset, I would like to use the knowledge and experience gained in the Diploma to steer and propel the company forward".

*For sixty years IMI has pioneered the development of executive education in Ireland. In 2014 IMI has been recognised for the sixth year running as the only Irish business school to be ranked globally by the Financial Times for the provision of customised executive education.*





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# Damien Varley prepares for the future



**Announcing your retirement from professional sport is not easy, you have to come to terms with the end of a career, you have to make plans, and you have to tell everyone, not just your friends and family but everyone.**

It shines a spotlight on an already difficult situation and at the least opportune time. When Damien Varley announced his retirement from the game, he did the usual round of media interviews with an honesty that brought home the realities of elite sport.

Early retirement in professional sport is not unusual but that doesn't make any easier to take, especially on a personal level. When it is forced and you have exhausted every avenue, getting that definitive news is never easy.

"It's a weird sensation. On one hand I knew it was a risk performing the

surgery, and I knew early January that since the pain was not subsiding, I might be in a bit of trouble. But nothing can prepare you for sitting across a desk from a surgeon telling you that (a) for the benefit of your foot for general life functions, and (b) you won't be able to sustain pressure through the foot, you need to finish up. I remember thinking I must have a blank facial expression looking at the surgeon. I left the surgery to meet up with the team, I was down to do a Q&A for the London supporters club and didn't want to leave them down. I was crying in the taxi, it was a horrible time".

A common feeling amongst retired players is that of loss. Loss of place, identity, camaraderie, being at a loss. No matter how prepared you are as a player, nothing can prepare you for the sense of loss. It's often something that escapes statistical analysis, we can cover the how's, the why's and the what next's but it can be harder to capture the emotive response retirement can elicit. Statistics tell us that the first two years after retirement are the hardest for former players, but what they cannot tell is that for some, they cannot go to a match or even watch a match, or how much they would miss the daily banter and routine that was everything they knew, and are no longer a part of.

Professional sportspeople know all about change, coaches come and go, backroom staff change regularly, teams win and teams lose, you get injured,





you recover, you start every game, you are dropped. Change is part of what they do. Together. Except when you retire, that change you face outside of the team room.

Recovering from setbacks however is something that all professional rugby players do, it is one of the things that makes them successful, and it is coded into their DNA. With some distance, it is this attribute that helps players through retirement, and it is only one of the many inherent traits that make former players successful in their second careers. Damien feels the skills he learned through rugby will undoubtedly stand to him.

"It is invaluable what you learn in a team sport such as rugby. The obvious traits such as teamwork, leadership are huge, but for me, accountability and responsibility were key attributes. Knowing that everyone has the same team goal, and knowing that that is number one, ahead of individual goals. Acknowledging mistakes happen and no one is out to get anyone, and once you can accept and learn from mistakes, the team benefits as well as the individual. That ability is extremely important. It's never personal".

With so much to consider and adapt to around retirement, it's the old adage, control the controllables. Research shows that almost half of professional players will retire before they plan to. This figure highlights the need to plan, control what you can, utilise the networks you have while you're playing and make retirement whenever that comes as easy as it can be. Damien completed a degree in Biomedical

**“This is a volatile game and can finish at any stage. The worst position is be completely lost with the realisation that the rest of the world isn't in the bubble we are.”**

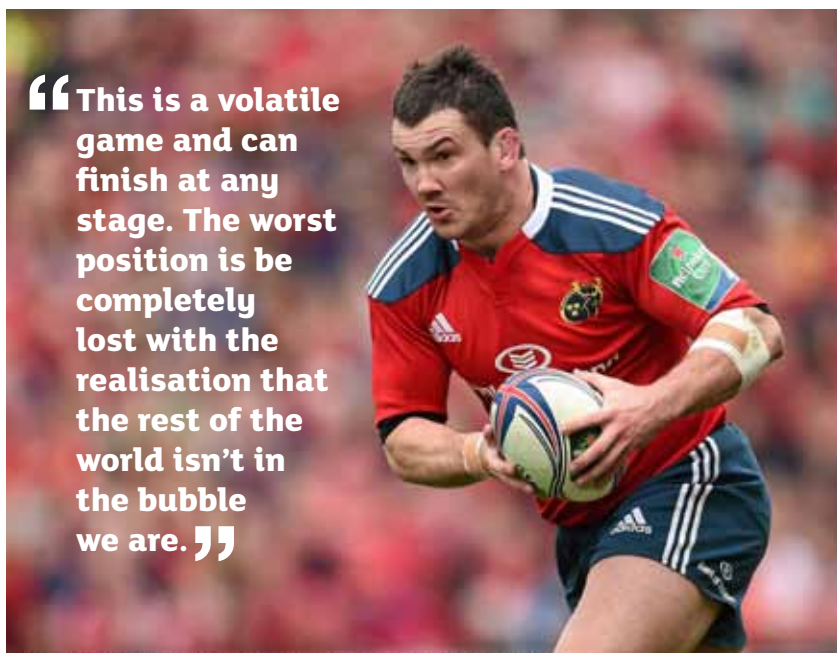


Photo: Munster Rugby/Photo:Paul Munster - Ireland, Thomond Park, 11 March, 2010, Ireland vs. Australia, Ireland - 10/10/2010

engineering from UL and is now studying for an MBA.

"Education and planning are key. I'm lucky that I was guided very well by my parents and I suppose that I was a late starter to professional life. It gave me the opportunity to finish University. This is a volatile game and can finish at any stage. The worst position is be completely lost with the realisation that the rest of the world isn't in the bubble we are. I think it's extremely important to finish college, even if it's spread out over a number of years while you're training".

As well as the support received from family, friends and of course Munster Rugby and supporters, Damien appreciates the advice and support he received from IRUPA. He cautions against being complacent around education and development and stresses that players need to be engaged personally and encouraged collectively to commit to their future careers.

**"I think IRUPA plays a role, and it's always good to have access to people that have dealt with players retiring from injury before. I would encourage players to use the resources and facilities that are there."**

"I think from what I've seen, people don't see beyond rugby, and that's important also, to be able to give rugby 100%. But everyone needs to be cognisant of work and life outside of it. There is great work being done, but there can always be more done".

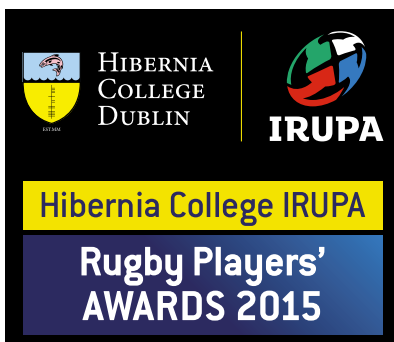
So, apart from a recording contract what does the future hold?

"Well for the immediate future I will see out my contract to try and rehab my foot into better shape. I'm involved in a few projects that may evolve throughout the year, but I won't go into detail about them just yet."

### ***Damien Varley's Career***

*Damien has three caps for Ireland and has made 121 appearances for Munster. He moved to London in 2008 joining Wasps before returning to Munster for the 2009-10 season. His first cap for Ireland was against Australia in June 2010, and his two other appearances were both against Argentina. He also has four Ireland 'A' caps.*

*He has experienced many highs during his career, winning a Magners' League title with Munster in 2011 and playing in Munster's historic win over Australia at Thomond Park. During the 2013/14 season he captained Munster eight times, including leading them out in the Heineken Cup semi-final against Toulon in May 2014.*



### 2003 : Mal O'Kelly

Voted by the players as their inaugural IRUPA Player of the Year. He started all of Ireland's Six Nations games and his performances for Ireland helped to continue a winning streak in a season which saw the national side 10 out of their 11 tests.



### 2004 : Gordon D'Arcy

Moving from his position of full back/winger at Leinster, Gordon started the 2004 Six Nations campaign at outside centre. Credited with being able to create space out of nothing, his performances contributed to Ireland winning the Triple Crown for the first time since 1985. He was voted player of the Six Nations tournament in 2004 and was nominated for IRB Player Of the Year.



### 2006 : Paul O'Connell

Paul had a fantastic season for both Munster and Ireland. He was an integral part of the Triple Crown winning team, playing in a dramatic 24-28 victory over England. He played a crucial role throughout Munster's European campaign, scoring a try in the quarter-final on their way to winning the 2006 Heineken Cup. He was the only Northern Hemisphere nominee shortlisted for the IRB Player of the Year.



### 2008 : Tommy Bowe

2008 was a good year for the 2003 Young Player of the Year. After recovering from injury, and following a very good season with Ulster, Tommy was named in the Six Nations starting team for the visit of Scotland to Croke Park, scoring two tries and played against Wales and England.



# Celebrating 12 Ye

— 12 Years — — 93 win

A total of **93 IRUPA Awards** have been presented between 2003 and 2014.

Two players have won the **Player of the Year** title twice; **Gordon D'Arcy** in 2004 and 2007 and **Tommy Bowe** in 2008 and 2010.

Three players have won back to back Awards in the same category:

- **Shane Horgan** scored the Try of the Year in 2006 and 2007
- **Craig Gilroy** captured Try of the Year in 2012 and again 2013
- **Robbie Henshaw** won the Nevin Spence Young Player of the Year 2013 and 2014.

### 2005 : Johnny O'Connor

Johnny departed Connacht for Wasps where his performances in the number 7 jersey earned him the nickname Concrete. Wasps won the European Cup in 2005 largely aided by Johnny who unfortunately missed out on the final due to injury. 2005 also marked his full international debut in the Autumn Series against South Africa.

### 2007 : Gordon D'Arcy

An outstanding season for the centre, his performances in the Autumn Series against Australia and South Africa contributed to back-to-back victories for the Irish team. He played in all of Ireland's 2007 Six Nations matches and was nominated for Six Nations Player of the Championship.



# Years of Outstanding Rugby

## Years ——— 1 National Rugby Awards ———

Two overseas players have won the Top Award: Leinster's **Isa Nacewa** in 2011 and Ulster's **Nick Williams** in 2013.

In 2013, the Young Player of the Year Award was dedicated to **Nevin Spence**, who won the award in 2011.

Since 2003, **27 different players** have been nominated for the Player of the Year Award, 16 of those nominees have toured with the **British & Irish Lions**.

Since its inception in 2003, **almost 7,000 guests** have attended the Awards.

Two Young Player of the Year recipients have gone on to win the Players' Player of the Year Award: **Tommy Bowe** in 2008 and again in 2010 (Young Player 2004) and **Andrew Trimble** in 2012 (Young Player 2006).

### 2009 : Brian O'Driscoll

In an historic year for Irish rugby, Brian captained Ireland to win the Triple Crown, Six Nations Championship and their first Grand Slam in 61 years. He scored a try in every match except one, culminating in a 17–15 victory in Cardiff in which O'Driscoll was the RBS man of the match. He was also named Six Nations Player of the Championship.



### 2010 : Tommy Bowe

A second time winner, Tommy had an amazing Six Nations scoring two tries including the clinching try with five minutes remaining in a 20–16 win at Twickenham. He was also voted 2010 Six Nations Player of the Championship, gaining over 50% of the vote.

### 2011 : Isa Nacewa

The first overseas player to win the top award, Isa had a stand out season with Leinster helping them reach their second Heineken Cup final in three years and Isa made an outstanding contribution to this feat.



### 2012 : Rob Kearney

Rob's brave and consistent performances for Ireland made him a worthy winner, also claiming the Newstalk Supporters Player Award. His contribution of six tries and a drop goal during Leinster's Heineken Cup also campaign saw him named European Player of the Year.

### 2013 : Nick Williams

Nick Williams is only the second overseas player to win the top accolade. His consistent but also outstanding performances for Ulster in the 2012–2013 season saw him score 7 tries in his 21 appearances and he was also voted the Pro12 Player of the Year 2013.



### 2014 : Andrew Trimble

2014 proved to be a stand out season for Andrew for both Ireland and Ulster. He started all of Ireland's Six Nations games, scoring three tries along the way. In 2014, Andrew was also voted the Ulster Rugby Player of the Year and the Rugby Writers Player of the Year.



# Ireland take on the 'old' enemy at Donnybrook

**On the eve of the Ireland v England game, the only show in town was the Legends Game, hosted at Donnybrook in aid of the IRFU Charitable Trust, the RFU Injured Players Foundation and the RPA Benevolent Fund. Legends of the game from both sides lined up to contest for the Stuart Mangan Memorial Cup. SIMON KEOGH reviews the game.**

In the old children's fable the tortoise overcame the hare in a long distance race. The hare was so confident that he'd win that he got distracted during the race whilst the tortoise remained slow and steady throughout.

Unfortunately for the Ireland Legends, slow and steady doesn't really bode well for rugby, their English counterparts adopted a more hare like approach with speed and youth at the forefront. Trevor Brennan did his best to stem the flow of attacks with some of his trade mark hits, James Topping provided some of the rare attacking threats while Kieran Dawson worked tirelessly to chase back

and prevent the score board from ticking over.

Shane Byrne's half-time talk which consisted of one sentence "if somebody runs at you f\*\*\*ing tackle him" had the team coming out after the break inspired but still old and slow. Paddy Johns led the charge and at 47 looked in prime condition playing in every minute of the game to good effect. The game was played Barbarian style with both teams willing to keep the ball in hand and attack from any part of the field. The only problem for the Irish is that they seemed to have contracted a bad dose of white line fever, despite creating

a number of chances they continually dropped, turned over, fell over, lost control, and generally made a mess anytime they got within five metres of the opposition line. The hosts found it so difficult to score that eventually the referee for the game, former Irish international Alain Roland picked the ball from the back of a scrum and dived over to award himself and Ireland a try – a fine solo effort.

Perhaps in the same way as the tortoise overcame the hare, the Irish with "experience" on their side might have overcome the English over time however this was a sprint, not a marathon. The more agile Anglicans ran out comfortable winners.

All money raised will be donated to the IRFU Charitable Trust and to the RFU Injured Players Foundation and RPA Benevolent Fund in England.





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# Agent Regulation

## introduced across Ireland, England and Wales

### IRUPA TO ADMINISTER THE SCHEME IN IRELAND



**A major area of focus for IRUPA over the past number of years has been the establishment and introduction of a common set of regulations for agents operating on behalf of players in Ireland.**

With this in mind, IRUPA along with the IRFU, the RFU and WRU have worked together over the past 24 months to create the scheme which will operate commonly across the three territories. The Agent Regulations, which are an adaptation of RFU's Regulation 8, have been passed by the IRFU and have been formally incorporated into its Regulations and is known as "Regulation 11".

The announcement is good news for both players and agents. With a heavy emphasis on education, the scheme will ensure that all players will be represented by agents with a thorough knowledge of the playing contract and they will know what to expect from their appointed agent. From the agents perspective it will allow them to operate in England and Wales without the need for additional registrations and the knock on effect will most likely result in a reduction of agents especially amongst those who only represent a handful of players.

Speaking on the scheme, IRUPA's Simon Keogh, Operations Manager and Head of Legal Affairs:

"Any agent who has acted in the UK

market will be familiar with the system that is in place there. The scheme is designed to be more of a help than a hindrance with education being key. From an IRUPA perspective we would like to ensure that not only are our players educated on what to expect of an agent but also that agents are educated sufficiently to do the best possible job for their client".

The Home Unions Regulations will be overseen by an Agents Review Board which will have representation from each of the Home Unions as well as an agent representative. In Ireland, the scheme will be administered by IRUPA under the 'Irish Rules' and will be overseen by the Irish Agents Registration

Board which comprises of an IRFU appointee, an IRUPA appointee, an agent representative appointee and an independent chair. The registration process is common across the Home Unions through the respective associations/unions and once registered each agent is free to act in any of the three jurisdictions.

#### *The Irish Agents' Registration Board*

The Irish Agents' Registration Board is responsible for the administration of this scheme. The Board will consider all applications received for agents' registration. It will also review the agents' regulations and related processes and recommend changes where appropriate. The Board is made up of four representatives one from each of the following: the IRFU, IRUPA, an agent representative and an independent chairperson.



Derek Hegarty



Sarah O'Connor



Ryan Constable

# ion Scheme

The Board has already appointed three of the four members. IRUPA has nominated Derek Hegarty, a solicitor and former Terenure and Leinster scrumhalf, the independent chairwoman is Sarah O'Connor, Chief Executive of the Irish Federation of Sport and a former solicitor with Arthur Cox. Representing the agents is Ryan Constable, director at Esportif, the worldwide agency that merged with Corner Flag management in 2014.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR AGENTS	WHAT IT MEANS FOR PLAYERS
In order to act for a player you must be registered with the scheme.	Your employer will only deal with an agent who is registered with the scheme.
Once registered and approved you can also act for players in England and Wales.	If you wish your parent to act as your agent and he/she is receiving a fee for his/her service as an agent, they must register to be part of the scheme.

## Choosing an Agent

### What players should know

As well as being a member of the Agents' Regulation Scheme, here are some other aspects players should think about when deciding to retain an agent at any particular stage of their career.

#### *Why should you get an agent?*

- To negotiate and manage your professional rugby contract
- Seek out professional rugby playing opportunities with various teams and make them aware of your availability
- To provide you with knowledge and guidance regarding the logical steps in your rugby career
- Marketing and promotion – when applicable obtain personal endorsements for you
- Media – when applicable liaise with the media re interviews and obtain media opportunities for you

#### *To do list*

- Ensure your agent is part of the Agent Regulation Scheme or they cannot act for you.

- Speak to senior players for advice and their relationship with their Agents
- Get advice from your trusted support networks i.e. family, mentors, friends, etc.
- Make a list of potential Agents to meet prior to making a decision

#### *What should you ask a Potential Agent?*

- Are you part of the Agents Regulation Scheme?
- How long have you been acting as an agent?
- What is your experience and knowledge of rugby in Ireland and elsewhere?
- What do you know about me and my career to date? Have you seen me play? How often?
- How many other players do you manage that play in my position?
- What is your relationship like with the provincial CEO's and IRFU management and coaching personnel?

- What support networks does your management group offer in the area of:
  - Financial Management and Planning
  - Endorsements/Sponsorship
  - Media Connections
  - Insurance
- Can you get me a contract overseas? In the UK, Europe?
- What players have you obtained contracts for overseas?
- Who else do you look after at my province?
- What commission will you charge me?
- Do I pay you direct or will you be paid by the club I sign for?
- Why should I contract you as my agent?

#### *Player Agent Agreement*

- Get independent legal advice on the Agreement before you sign or contact IRUPA for any advice on the Agreement.
- All Player Agent Agreements should be compliant with World Rugby Regulation 5 and also conform with the minimum terms set out in IRFU Regulation 11.

# Hannah Tyrrell Making dreams

From soccer as a young child to Gaelic football as a teenager to international rugby honours in her twenties, Hannah Tyrrell has had a varied athletic career.



The latest stop on Tyrrell's sporting journey is the Women's Six Nations Championship as the winger made her Ireland fifteens debut in February against Italy in Florence. A future destination the Dubliner will be aiming for is next year's Olympics in Rio as she is a member of the Ireland's sevens squad centralised by the IRFU.

The remarkable twist in the 24-year-old's story is that this time two years ago as her current Ireland colleagues such as Niamh Briggs and Nora Stapleton were on the cusp of winning Ireland's historic Six Nations Women's Grand Slam, she was yet to pick up a rugby ball.

**Tyrrell explains her motivation for first picking up an oval ball at Old Belvedere RFC, "I wanted to know whether or not I would be any good at it. It is a great game to watch, I loved watching it and wanted to know what it would feel like to play it."**

At this point, she was playing Gaelic Football for her local club Round Towers in Clondalkin as well as being part of the Dublin Ladies senior squad. This Gaelic

Games pedigree has helped with some aspects of her transition, "Gaelic football is very skilful and very fast paced, so there is a lot of similarities in terms of footwork and skill as well."

However, it took Tyrrell time to adapt to the key role contact plays in rugby, "a huge difference between rugby and Gaelic football is the physicality of the contact. Essentially Ladies Football is supposed to be a non-contact sport. So, that is something that is completely different that I had to get used to."

Despite this challenge, "I was immediately hooked. It is one of those things, once you start playing you will catch the rugby bug."

Rugby also gave Tyrrell the opportunity to become a fulltime athlete as she was quickly spotted as a potential sevens star while playing club rugby. She was included in the IRFU's Sevens Talent Identification squad and was then offered a centralised contract in May 2014 to train as part of their elite sevens squad.

This centralised programme was established with the aim of Ireland's women gaining qualification to rugby sevens' inaugural Olympic Games.

Training at professional level is something Tyrrell dreamed of as a child,

"When I was younger, I probably would not have watched rugby so much, it would have more been from soccer. I loved watching players like Roy Keane and Damian Duff play, I was envious of them and the opportunities afforded to them and just wished that could be my life when I grew up."

She continues, showing her grounded nature: "Becoming a professional athlete is something I always wanted to happen, as a young child, you think it definitely could happen but in my teenage years I didn't think I would reach here. I wanted it to happen and really wished it would happen but did I actually think it would really become a reality."

There is of course a reality that comes with reaching the dream of becoming a fulltime rugby player and that is unlike some of Tyrrell's childhood footballing heroes. That reality is that after a career





Interview by  
**Kate Rowan**  
@KateLouiseRowan

# a reality



in elite rugby, the vast majority need to build a second career.

Prior to being invited to centralise, Tyrrell had been studying history and geography in University College Dublin, with an interest pursuing a teaching career upon graduation. However, "now that sport is so full on, it became harder to have a full time education and to be training full time as well. So, that is when it all became a bit stressful."

Similarly to her professional male counterparts, Tyrrell has received assistance from the Irish Rugby Union Players' Association (IRUPA) in terms of balancing the academic and sporting aspects of her life.

She credits IRUPA's women's Player Development Manager Kate Kirby as an important support, "With the help of IRUPA and Kate, I have been able to



slow track my college year, which means that I take less modules and credits each semester, so we add on an extra semester to my college year to help me with work load and my training commitments."

With a chuckle, Tyrrell points out "Outside of college and rugby, there isn't really a whole lot of time left!"

However, it is clear this hectic lifestyle is a small price to pay, "there are not many people who could say that they are trying to qualify for the Olympics in Rio in 2016 and there are no real words to describe playing in the Six Nations. It is a huge achievement and honour. These are the sorts of opportunities that might not come around too often."

**Benjamin Franklin said:  
If you want something done  
ask a busy person. He may  
well have been talking about  
Gordon D’Arcy.**

Gordon D’Arcy is a busy man. We expect that, professional athletes are busy people especially when they are also undertaking an internship, have two successful businesses, sit on the Board of a charity all while preparing for the birth of their first child. So is it any surprise that he is currently reading books on time management?

For the past six months, Gordon has been undertaking an internship with Investec, he spends his day off from Leinster every week learning about every aspect of the business, spending time in each of their departments.

“The statistics would say that the average playing career is eight years, I’ve been lucky enough but at some stage you need to think about what may come next, in 2007 I started studying, I did a general degree to give me further options, when I met Michael Cullen from Investec, he asked me to come on board and undertake an internship, finance always interested me so it seemed a good starting point.

“It’s a great opportunity, it’s given me a really good feel for the business and a taste of what a career in finance would be like. I had a chat with some other players who were doing internships before I got started, they gave me great advice; ask questions, that’s what internships are for.

“It’s been a real eye opener about the real world, it’s a different challenge, more mental than physical, as well as the skill set needed, and I’ve learned other things, like understanding the dynamic of an office environment and how to interact.”

As a professional athlete, Gordon understands the benefits of the transferrable skills he has accumulated during his professional career.

“Dealing with pressure and overcoming setbacks are big elements and communications skills but overall the

## UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT Gordon D’Arcy

# ALWAYS O







# N THE MOVE





**“I want to be as successful in my next career as I hope I have been in this and think the skills I’ve acquired as well as education and experience will help that.”**



in professional development are great. Guys might attend a short computer workshop or get feedback about a LinkedIn seminar or networking event and think, I might go to that next time. I think it also help players when they are injured, they can call and say, ‘okay, I’m out for six months, what have you got for me?’ That’s really positive and gives a good focus during their rehab.

“It’s all about preparation, when you’re young and starting out, you don’t want to think about your retirement you just want to enjoy playing and love being a professional and that’s ok as long as you pinpoint options for your development along the way.”

In addition to his contribution to Leinster and Ireland on field, Gordon is passionate about player welfare and representation through his involvement with IRUPA as part of the Leinster leadership cell. He considers the players’ position as stakeholders integral to the

success of the game, and believes that whilst significant progress has been made there is more that can be done.

“I think the game in Ireland is managed very well, centralised contracts and player welfare mean we have the ability for players to peak at the right times, if as a player you are committed, the system certainly helps you to be the best you can be.

There is still however I feel a disconnect between the players and the administrators, the players are the most valuable resource, we have great facilities and systems but without the players we won’t have the success. Look at what we have achieved in the last two years, I believe there is 20% more growth in this organisation. Players need to be utilised more, especially around decisions in the elite game. Working together in a more harmonised way without always fighting for something, without undertones behind games. It’s like with coaches, when they talk about taking away all the distractions. Imagine how good we could be.”

Having seen a glimpse of how good we can be, and what success could look like, Gordon believe we have real talent and strength and depth in the Ireland set up. Robbie Henshaw has particularly impressed.

“Look at Robbie, he was introduced slowly introduced, giving him the chance to get used to players and the set up and it’s been an upward curve. People talked about whether being at Connacht was the right place for his development, but his performances show that if your good enough, you’re good enough, no matter how old you are, young you are or where you play. He’s still learning to play outside Johnny and how to play for Joe and influence the back line and already in his first eight matches for Ireland he has been the stand out back. The sky’s the limit for Robbie.

“We have real strength and depth coming through, look at Murray and O’Brien, they’re hitting their standard but there’s more in them. And more in this team. Players are really pushing for positions, there’s not too many lads who would say their positions are solid.”



sheer will to do what it takes with a positive attitude and sometimes understanding the need to be selfish when required, for example with your time management. I want to be as successful in my next career as I hope I have been in this and think the skills I’ve acquired as well as education and experience will help that.”

Off field development through the IRUPA Player Development Programme is delivered at each Province, Gordon believes the benefits of the programme can be seen at Leinster.

“I think it has grown organically, kind of like a drip feed, guys have access to the programme from an early age and it’s natural. I think some of the newer developments like upskilling

**“Players need to be utilised more, especially around decisions in the elite game. Working together in a more harmonised way without always fighting for something.”**



The team environment is often quoted in the media, Joe Schmidt insists that his influence is minimal and that it's a team centred approach and a player lead environment leaving many of us wonder what does that actually mean.

"It can be hard to explain, it's your individual interpretation of it. Joe develops a team around its collective strengths, nobody gets special treatment, nobody gets left behind. If you do your job and you trust the guys either side of you to do theirs, you can win games, you can tilt the odds in your favour. It's the little things, putting the milk away, tidying up, helping a team mate, supporting the whole team, doing the little things off field, building trust and then it's there on the field.

"It's not just a sometimes thing, it's everything, every time."

You get a sense that a similar approach is something that Gordon applies to his businesses. He is one of the owners of The Exchequer in Dublin 2 which now has a second venue in Ranelagh. The recession gave them the opportunity to

launch the venture but also presented challenges.

"At the time I felt we had a good product, something new that offered value, and that we could bring to market at a good time. We have become much more involved as a group of owners since we opened our second branch. I attend quarterly meetings, work on budgets and margins, all the number crunching, it's hard work but satisfying."

Gordon brought his experience and learnings from The Exchequer to his latest venture, Form School, jointly owned with his wife Aoife Cogan.

"We both brought a lot from our previous experiences, Aoife came from a different industry but she had transferrable skills too. We had an idea and a business plan, if we didn't have the skill in any area we didn't let that hold us back. We went out found the right people, adjusted our plan and went on. Business is tough, when things get tough, it doesn't mean it won't succeed, you work harder and smarter and find a solution. It will always be a challenge,

running your own business but we've built this from the ground up and we both have the drive to see it succeed."

It's hard not to wonder where a baby will fit into all of this, and a dog too, a big dog at that.

"I don't know how to describe it, we are both so excited, we cannot wait to meet this little person and spend time with them, it's a really exciting time for us, and we cannot wait. It's going to be busy and different and hectic.

"I'm on the board of Paralympics Ireland with Brendan Jennings of Deloitte, he's one of the busiest people I know, he has a diary, and he schedules everything. Once it's in, it's in and nothing can move it. I've been reading a lot about time management, allocate your hours and stick to it and then you have more free time. That's our plan."

And the dog?

"Albert, he's excited too, he's brilliant with kids, he's had plenty of practise."

It appears he has transferrable skills too.



# Supporting Charity, Supporting Commu





**As part of the IRUPA Player Development Programme, players are actively encouraged to get involved in charitable and not for profit organisations.**

While there may be a perception that all professional sports people have lucrative deals and endorsements and can command massive appearances fees from corporate sponsors and brands, the vast majority of professional rugby players earn moderate salaries and are far more likely to donate their time for appearances supporting charities, community and other grassroots initiatives. The benefits for the player include the development of many off-pitch skills including communications skills, media skills, networking and a sense of giving back to the community. The charity on the other hand benefits from the player's profile and large network of supporters.

Speaking on the initiative, Deirdre Lyons, IRUPA Player Development Manager:

**“Getting involved in a charity or not for profit organisation is a great way for a player to develop their off field skills as well as contribute back to the community.”**

“There are a few things to consider when choosing an organisation to work with; what are you interested in, what kind of time you can commit, what do you hope to achieve and what can you bring to the organisation through your support”.

### **Getting Involved**

With such a large not for profit sector in Ireland, the opportunity for professional

rugby players to get involved with charities at varying levels can be both rewarding, career enhancing and mentally stimulating.

There are 23,000 not for profit organisation in the Republic with a further 4,700 in Northern Ireland. That number and variety means there is something in the sector to interest every player in some form or other. Engagement by players has been excellent over the years, what this contribution looks like will vary from charity to charity and from player to player.

When a player meets their Player Development Manager to discuss supporting a charity, they discuss which level of engagement would suit them best in terms of career stage and time commitment. Players should choose to get involved with something they feel passionate about, an area or topic they would like to know more about or maybe something they have personal experience of.

When assessing the many options and opportunities open to players, IRUPA deploys an engagement scale to help players frame the various types of opportunities, levels of engagement and commitment required.

### **The Engagement Scale**

#### **Charity / Volunteer Supporter**

Often this can be a player's first entry into the charitable field, it is a little less formal and structured and allows players get a feel for their chosen organisation, attend events, meet key personnel and supporters and get involved in



a less structured way. Player who act in a volunteer capacity often go on to become ambassadors for these organisations.

#### **Types of activity:**

- Attendance at fundraising events and /or photo shoots
- Engagement in the core activities of the organisation as a volunteer
- Being a fundraiser
- Social media support

#### **Ambassador**

As an ambassador you would be publicly associated with the organisation or campaign. Leveraging your profile is a key element to the relationship and as an ambassador a player would be expected to have a thorough knowledge of the campaign or activities and be able to speak publicly about them. The relationship would be more formal and would require a larger time commitment and organisations would facilitate an induction programme. Committing to an ambassador role may exclude you from being involved with other organisations publicly.



#### **Types of activity:**

- Potential to be used in advertising and promotional campaigns
- Media appearances
- Act as a spokesperson
- Association with the players' name and image
- Attendance at event, launches fundraisers
- Volunteering and fundraising
- Social Media support

#### **Board Member**

As a member of the Board, a player is effectively committing to becoming a director of the organisation's board of management. The means they take part in the full range of legal responsibilities of being a Director of the Company. As this is a much more committed role and deals with governance, IRUPA manages these appointments through the IRUPA Board Placement Programme (BPP).

#### **Types of activity:**

- Development of strategic vision
- Attendance at board meetings and AGM
- Governance
- Training and upskilling
- Use of profile as they see fit

If you a registered charity or non for profit organisation who is interested in engaging with our members, please contact: [info@irupa.ie](mailto:info@irupa.ie)

#### **Board Placement Panel**

The Board Placement Panel (BPP) will assist provincial Player Development Managers (PDMs) to place players on the boards of not-for-profit organisations. This is an excellent opportunity for players interested in gaining boardroom experience, particularly for those with a business qualification or background. It also allows the player make a real contribution to the organisation whilst having the chance to meet and network with some of Ireland's leading corporate figures.

The Board Placement Panel consists of four members from the not-for-profit sector; Chris White (CEO NCBI), Kieran Loughran (CEO Headstrong), Jim Clarken (CEO Oxfam, Ireland) and Ava Battles (CEO Multiple Sclerosis, Ireland).

#### **How our players contribute**

Results from the 2014 IRUPA Player Survey reveal that for the 12 months immediately preceding the survey, 38% of our membership had committed in excess of 7+ unpaid appearances supporting charity and community

initiatives. The survey also report that almost 100% of players felt that they had a duty as a role model especially to younger players.

#### **Recognising this contribution**

In 2014, IRUPA announced the introduction of the Contribution to Society award to recognise the work being undertaken by its members past and present in every sector of the non for profit community. The Contribution to Society award, is awarded to a player or former player who has made a significant impact to society outside of rugby. The inaugural recipient of this award was Donncha O'Callaghan in recognition of the significant impact made to society through his work as an ambassador with Unicef. For 2015, the Award will be supported by IRUPA's commercial partner, Zurich.



# My personal experience

## Jake Heenan



**Connacht's Jake Heenan works with two charities Dochas don Oige as a Board member and volunteer and also as an ambassador for Ronald McDonald House. He chose the organisations based on having personal experience in the areas of the support and services they provide.**

Dochas don Oige is a Galway based training centre for young offenders and children at risk from 15 years. Jake says the main attraction with getting involved was being able to work and help with young adults who were getting in to trouble.

"I found myself in a lot of trouble as a teenager. Growing up was a tricky time for me where I found myself leaving home at 15 and being arrested several times before my 18th birthday. I was fortunate enough to have rugby which straightened me out. I feel I could relate to some of the students, and hoped that through that I could help in some way through my experiences".

Similarly, his reasons for becoming an ambassador for Ronald McDonald house are close to home.

"I have a younger brother who was born very premature, and it was very touch and go to whether he would survive or not. I remember how tough a time that was for the family, so I hoped to give something back to others in a similar situation. It's great to have the opportunity to help and bring happiness to families with ill children".

His duties vary across both organisations, from hosting families from Ronald McDonald house at Connacht matches to helping run outdoor sessions for Dochas. His position on the board with Dochas means he attends board meetings twice a month and through this involvement gains a great insight into governance and how a board works.

Jake feels that as professional players, it's important to get involved where you can.



"As public figures it's important that we focus on the things that are really important and the people who need help. Being a professional sportsman not only allows you to get involved with these organisations, but also provides the opportunity to use your own and your clubs image, to promote and create awareness to help others."

**"But above all, it's about being able to improve someone's day, and learn from some really inspirational people".**

***If you would like to get involved with a charitable organisation, please contact your PDM.***





# IRPA update

## Concussion top of the agenda at IRPA gathering



### IRPA host Northern Hemisphere Conference

**The International Rugby Players' Association (IRPA) hosted a Conference of its Northern Hemisphere members in London in March.** The Conference was attended by representatives from member associations including the Rugby Players Association (England), IRUPA (Ireland), WRPA (Wales), GIRA (Italy) and UniSportPro, the World Athletes Association. The purpose of the assembly was to share best practice as well as focusing on the major international issues of importance to the game.

Chaired by IRPA's Damian Hopley, the aim of the Conference was to review and further progress the focus areas of importance to the players and the game for the coming year. Amongst the core player welfare topics for discussion were concussion, season structure and player release.

The debate on concussion remains firmly in the spotlight and IRPA acknowledges the significant progress that has been made in this area with IRPA, World Rugby and other stakeholders driving forward initiatives to address this major area of importance to the welfare of players. IRPA recognises the work being undertaken in the key areas of concussion prevention, education and awareness, management and research and will continue to support World Rugby and other stakeholders in this area.

IRPA is supportive of the formal introduction of the concussion trials and initiatives developed over recent years, namely the HIA (Head Injury Assessment), Recognise and Remove and Return to Play protocols into World Rugby regulations. This will help to ensure the appropriate concussion management programmes are adopted across all competitions and players, and that key organisations and people are held accountable to best practice.

As part of this, IRPA believes the time has come to implement a system of compulsory concussion education for players, coaches, team management and officials at all levels of the game on concussion management, and to also incorporate this requirement within World Rugby regulations.

Speaking at the Conference, IRPA Chairman Damian Hopley said:

"The past few seasons have seen an intense focus on concussion and the development and trial of processes to better assist elite players, coaches and team management on the diagnosis and management of suspected concussion and concussion. The Professional Rugby Injury Surveillance Report in England showed a significant increase in the number of concussions or suspected concussions reported. This is a result of the heightened awareness amongst the playing community due to the HIA trials, and improved methods of concussion management."

**"As well as having a competent system for the management of concussion within our game, we must also ensure we have a robust compulsory education requirement so that our members and stakeholders understand not just the process in place but the signs, symptoms and return to play protocols".**

Given that it is a Rugby World Cup year, delegates also discussed the increasing pressure and demand on elite players in relation to the structure of the global season. Accounts of the experience of

individual players highlighted the need to better manage game and training load with injury prevalence an increasing concern voiced amongst those in attendance. From an IRPA perspective, a review of the existing competition schedules and season structure needs to be undertaken to ensure that players can rest, recover and prepare appropriately during a meaningful competition off season. Recognising the importance of the international game and the players' right to participate in it and the need for thriving domestic competitions means that this is one of the biggest challenges facing elite level players and the wider game. IRPA members support a mandatory competition off season period of 12-14 weeks for all players and the introduction of a clear distinction between club and country assembly periods during international windows.

### ***IRPA congratulates departing RUPA CEO***

**IRPA would like to extend its sincere gratitude and best wishes to former RUPA CEO Greg Harris on the announcement of his appointment to Chief Executive of NSW Waratahs.**



During his term at RUPA he has been a strong advocate for player welfare and his contribution to IRPA and his insights into the global issues facing the game have been extremely valuable.

IRPA welcomes the appointment of Ross Xenos as RUPA CEO and looks forward

to continuing the strong working relationship already in place. As always, the strategic input from RUPA and its members is of immense value to IRPA in the continuing development of our player centric approach to international issues of importance to the game.

IRPA Executive Director, Rob Nichol:

"From an international perspective we have appreciated Greg's strategic input, passion for player welfare and desire to promote the game. This, combined with a sharp wit and great sense of humour will mean he will be missed by everyone on the IRPA Board. It is great to see Greg remaining within the rugby fraternity and no doubt he will bring his vast experience and knowledge to his new position".

***Check out the new IRPA Rugby website [www.irpa-rugby.com](http://www.irpa-rugby.com).***

## **Leaders on the pitch.**



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# Success breeds success

Why professional sports people make great entrepreneurs



**There is an established pathway of athletes taking their skillset learned through professional sport and transferring it to entrepreneurship.**

There is something in an athletes 'succeed at all costs' mentality that translates to building a business. Having already tasted success in a professional sports career, athletes transfer these skills to a wide range of businesses.

It is hard to believe that there is a whole generation of people who are more likely to thinking of grilling when they think of George Foreman rather than his 76-5 career record in the ring. Four-time Grand Slam winner, Maria Sharapova launched Sugarpova, sweet gummy candy in a dozen flavours.

Closer to home, players are developing a wide range of successful businesses including bars, restaurants, technology, fashion and beauty and of course, fitness. Franchising also provides a popular choice amongst former athletes. More recently, identifying and investing in start-ups is also a way for players to dip their toe in the water while playing, before becoming more involved at a later stage.

So what is it that makes elite athletes such good entrepreneurs?

**Professional rugby players have already tasted success and proved their ability in a highly professional environment.**

They develop skills important to business such as goal setting, achieving targets, recovery from setbacks, communication under pressure and the pursuit of success. All of which are common attributes of successful entrepreneurs.

When these attributes are combined with inherent traits such as leadership, commitment, motivation, team ethos and work ethic which are directly transferable and relevant to starting a business, it makes a professional rugby players ideal entrepreneurs.

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**Jamie Heaslip – *Bear***

**Rob & Dave Kearney, Sean O'Brien, Jamie Heaslip – *The Bridge***

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**TJ Anderson – *JW Anderson (designer)***

**Mike McCarthy – *Garbeau Bespoke Shirts***

**Tommy Bowe – *Lloyd & Pryce (footwear)***

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**Mick O'Driscoll & Liam Toland – *Home Instead Senior Care***

**David Wallace – *Mr Simms Sweets***

## IT/TECHNOLOGY

**Barry O'Mahony – *Krunksoft (app development)***

**Brian O'Driscoll – *Ultimate Rugby***

**Jamie Heaslip & Kevin McLaughlin – *Kitman Labs (performance analysis / injury prevention)***

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## Derval's Diary

### A View from the Other Side

**In addition to my role with IRUPA I work on various other projects. I often contribute to media, this can be in the form of print, radio or television.**

During my athletics career I had a love/hate relationship with the media. As a sportsperson I felt it was important that my sport receive good coverage but as a competitor I often felt really irritated by the media. Some days I just was not in the mood to answer the post-race questions.

All in all the media are a really important part of sport. If rugby had no media coverage there would be a lot less revenue and the fan base would be far smaller. It would be a very different sport in Ireland.

I recently spent three days at the European Indoor Athletics Championships with RTE. My role was to do post-race trackside interviews with the athletes immediately after they had competed and a little commentary. Similar to when players are interviewed after a match. It seemed like a fairly straightforward job but it was actually much tougher than it looks.

Having spent a huge amount of my life competing I have an understanding of what it feels like to walk off a track and be completely gutted. I imagine that most of the former rugby players now involved in media work have the same type of empathy that I have. My initial instinct is to not ask people who are clearly disappointed with their performance anything at all. I feel a little bit like a traitor sticking a microphone in someone's face when their disappointment is so obvious to me.

But the bad days are part of sport and as media is so wrapped up in sport

answering questions on the bad days is also a part of it. I believe having former players cross over onto pitch side analysis, interviews or studio punditry is a great addition to rugby coverage.

I think most former players want to be able to talk about great performances. There is a pride in seeing former teammates perform well. In my recent stint trackside with RTE I nearly burst with pride seeing Mark English win a medal in an Irish singlet. When the performances are bad I think former players will understand how that feels and will approach the situation with a level of understanding.

Rugby garners a huge amount of media coverage and this year will be even bigger with the world cup. This is a great opportunity for former players or current players who will not be involved in the world cup to share some of their thoughts through different media outlets. I find it refreshing to hear their thoughts and analysis.

After my weekend spend on the other side of the microphone I definitely came away from the experience with a slightly different perspective. The amount of good will most media people have towards Irish sports people is massive. As players are putting in 100% on the pitch most of the media are willing them on. It's a point I never considered while I was competing. I really didn't think the people who reported on my races cared either way but now I know that most of the time they really did hope for the best.

It's a whole lot nicer to be talking about winning performances than losing ones, just as it is a whole lot nicer to be winning!

## IRUPA Media Training

IRUPA is offering a bespoke media training with Kieran File of Reactive Sports Media. Offered as part of the Player Development Programme, the interactive workshops will be delivered to all our members across the four Irish Provinces. Media training ensures you are prepared and in control as well as adding to the professional environment around the game, it can also help players positively portray their own image and brand which is of benefit to their future careers.

Some of the areas covered:

- Dealing with nerves
- Displaying good body language
- Language skills
- Dealing with awkward questions
- Deflection tactics
- Promoting their personality/brand
- Making the most of a limited opportunity
- Taking control of the interview
- Building on the team message through personal points
- Developing your personality
- Leadership positioning
- Show good knowledge and analysis of the game

### On a study break?

If you have just completed formal studies or taking a break before your next qualification, why not think about taking up a short course in something new. IRUPA members are already participating in blacksmithing, barista training, car mechanics, acting and music classes and carpentry. If you are interested in doing something completely different, contact your PDM and see what you can try out.

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As partners to IRUPA all undergraduate practical elements and workshops will be privately hosted in regional locations at times suitable for IRUPA member playing schedules. For more information and to discuss IRUPA member benefits, contact your Player Development Manager or Setanta College.

## Current Student, Alan Quinlan

Former Munster & Ireland player

*"Having retired from playing, I was looking to further my education and saw Strength and Conditioning as essential to any future coaching career."*



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# Top of their league?

**October saw many headlines about the arrival of Sam Burgess to Bath RFC. The Rabbitohs giant (literally and figuratively) had just secured his place in NRL folklore by playing 79 minutes of the league's Grand Final with a broken cheekbone.**

He was, again, highly influential in his side's win over the Bulldogs. This illustration of toughness only added to the hype surrounding his move to the Premiership. Rugby league converts always draw massive attention. Some are brilliant. Others are not. Let's have a look at a selection of notable code hoppers and the mark they have left on the game.

## Sonny Bill Williams

**Few would argue with the notion that Sonny Bill Williams is one of the most recognisable faces in world rugby.**

In 2011 he was the most searched image in New Zealand. This gives an idea of the level of obsession the man commands.

Williams signed for Toulon in 2008 in what has been described as 'the most controversial exit in NRL history'. Canterbury Bulldogs only learned of his move after he arrived in Europe. An amicable resolution seemed so out of the question that a court order was requested by the Bulldogs and granted which instructed him not to play. Eventually, a transfer fee of around £300,000 was paid and the saga came to an end.

He returned to Canterbury in 2010 and in November, made his All Blacks debut against England before playing a minute of Super Rugby. Aside from a two season stint back in the NRL with the Sydney Roosters, he has been a key player for the Kiwis ever since.

Williams' combination of destructive power and deft handling has seen him have a devastating impact for club and country. He's certainly entertaining to watch and is likely to be one of the stand out performers at this year's World Cup.

**Most Memorable Moment:** His performance against Scotland a week after his debut. This was one of his most influential performances for New Zealand and a great example of how perfectly both aspects of his game blend together. The highlights are worth a look!





## Brian Carney

**The Clongowes alumnus is the most famous Irishman to have played rugby league professionally.** Having initially been spotted playing for the Irish students, he went on to have a fantastic career which saw him score 76 tries in 165 games in the Super League and NRL.

Irish rugby enthusiasts were licking their lips when news broke of Carney's move to Munster. The prospect of a rugby league superstar coming back to play in Ireland had many people excited and rightly so. He had exhibited incredible speed and strength in scoring dozens of tries for several teams, including plenty of crucial ones for Wigan where he was a fan favourite.

Carney made his Munster debut against Ulster in March 2007, scoring a try. He did the same on his international debut which came only a few months later. Unfortunately, the dominance Carney had shown repeatedly in league was not replicated at Munster. He made a return to England in 2009 after making just 20 appearances in red.

Carney was a hugely popular figure in the Munster camp. Permanently up to mischief, one of his better known activities was winding up Irish masseur Dave Revins. One day he convinced Dave that a helicopter was about to land outside his house and take them all to camp as the car had broken down. Poor Dave.

**Most Memorable Moment:** Everyone dreams of scoring a try on their debut. Carney's 55 metre intercept after seven minutes against Argentina was about as good a start as he could have hoped for.



## Benji Marshall

**I'm sure many of you are familiar with videos of Benji Marshall on YouTube. Arguably the most agile athlete in either code and undoubtedly one of the most creative.** Marshall played for Wests Tigers for 10 seasons and was the club's record try and point scorer when he signed for the Auckland Blues.

Again, the rugby community was overcome with excitement at the thought of what Marshall could bring to the game. Many assumed his playing for the Blues was merely a formality and that he would be capped for the All Blacks in due course.

Unfortunately his time at the Blues was a complete failure. Despite showing glimpses of the flair and class that made him such a success in the NRL, he admittedly struggled to adjust. After making just six appearances his contract was terminated by mutual consent. Announcing his departure, he stated, "As a stubborn person... this is the first time I've had to say I haven't been good enough."

The Blues have been criticised for not insisting he played ITM Cup rugby before linking up with the first team as well as not giving him more time to adjust. It's a real shame that things didn't work out because there's no denying that Marshall is exceptionally talented. He returned to Australia and signed for St George Illawara in May of last year.

**Most Memorable Moment:** In his only start for the Blues he carried for 130 metres, assisted two tries and scored one of his own in a fine display against the Lions. Unfortunately this wasn't enough to convince him or the Blues to hold tight for any longer.



# UP AND COMING

# Academy stars

IRUPA represents all academy players across the four provinces. In this edition we catch up with Connacht Academy member, **CONOR McKEON** in his first year following his move to Connacht from Dublin.



**Name:** Conor McKeon  
**Academy:** Year 1  
**School:** Gonzaga College S.J.  
**College:** NUIG  
**Club:** Lansdowne F.C.  
**Position:** Out-half  
**Honours:** Leinster u18, 19, 20  
 Ireland u18, 19, 20  
 Connacht Eagles

Out-half Conor McKeon has been a regular for the Ireland U20's, playing the last ten games in both the Six Nations and Junior World Championship in New Zealand. Second cousin to Connacht's Eoin McKeon, the 20-year-old was born and educated in Dublin where he played his club rugby with Lansdowne RFC. He joined the Connacht Academy this season and will take over from Eoghan Masterson as the IRUPA Academy Player Rep next season.

**What are you studying at the moment?**  
 I'm in my first year of a Commerce Degree in NUIG.

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

It's tricky with all the training so you're constantly running between The Sportsgrounds and college but the coaching team (Nigel and Andy) have been great at helping. I've had lots of advice from my IRUPA PDM Deirdre which helps me with the juggling act!

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

Long term, I would like to open a restaurant but other than that I don't really know as yet. I hope to complete my degree which will give me other options down the track.

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

It was a brilliant experience to see New Zealand and play in some brilliant stadiums and see some of Auckland's attractions however the loss to England in the semi-final was very disappointing. But all in all, a brilliant country to experience.

## **What is it like living away from home? Do you go home often? What is the hardest part?**

I suppose fitting in and finding a house was difficult, just the whole idea of getting settled somewhere else. It is hard being away from away from my parents and my two sisters Katie and Rosie. You would miss your friends too, but I feel pretty happy now.

## **How have you settled in to life in the Connacht squad? Did it make it easier that your cousin Eoin McKeon is in the senior squad?**

It was a little hard but I've settled in really well, everyone's very welcoming and open, it's a real family at Connacht! It was brilliant having Eoin there when I first moved, in fact I lived with him in the beginning and it was great having him to show me around and learn the ropes.

## **What is a typical day like for you?**

Up early, that's for sure! Then it's either straight to training or college or vice versa. Most days I'll have gym skills and kicking muddled in with lectures and tutorials. It can be very busy you have to be really organised across everything; training, college, study, even preparing and organising food.

## **What are your aspirations for the rest of the season?**

To try and get a senior cap with Connacht would be brilliant but I'm just focusing on the day to day and concentrating on my training. I would love to win the AIL with my club Lansdowne.

## **In rugby terms, where would you like to be in five years' time?**

Jeepers, that's a long way off. I would love to represent Ireland but I have a lot more learning to do to get to that point.

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# DRUGS

## IT'S YOUR CHOICE

By Adam D'Arcy



**It's the ultimate issue in sport and society today. I can't think of another word where it's meaning and the imagery attached to it, has such a broad spectrum of definitions around the globe.**

In America, Drugs are medicine, you go to the Drugstore for your standard paracetamol, in Indonesia, the use and selling of drugs can result in the death penalty.

I don't know if it's me, or the environment that I grew up in, but whenever I hear the word 'drugs', I immediately attach negative connotations to it.

Illegal, explicit, harmful, wrong.

Regardless of its meaning worldwide, the illegal use of drugs and the distribution and selling of such, is usually punished in one way or another.

The fact that Drugs is one of the biggest issues in the world today, it's no wonder that drugs in professional sport holds such a weight of importance in the

daily lives of athletes both in and out of competition.

We have all seen the way drugs can ruin the reputation and careers of professional athletes. Lance Armstrong is by far the most well-known and biggest to fall, after a career of cheating through the use of performance enhancing drugs.

Currently in Australia, there is an ongoing investigation into the use and selling of the recreational drug cocaine by Gold Coast rugby league players, as well as Queensland Reds rugby player Karmichael Hunt, who has already been charged and suspended for his involvement. The players are not cheats, they were not using banned substances to enhance performance.

The major difference between these cases and that of the Lance Armstrong saga, is that it transcends out of the professional sporting arena and into society.

Though in many ways what occurred in Australia could be seen as far worse than that of Armstrong, as they were not only risking their own wellbeing, but those of others as well, potentially causing physical and mental harm to several members of the public.

**It also highlights the status that professional athletes have in society, always in the public eye, no move going unnoticed, and given the task of being a role model for the younger generation.**

Some players have larger profiles than others, meaning that whenever they slip up, regardless of how minimal it may be, everybody knows about it.

It's a burden that many have to deal with, though the fact remains, regardless if you are Dan Carter, or a young academy star in the making, if you don't break the rules, if you don't cheat, life goes on.

As professional rugby players, we have many tools and people on hand



Karmichael Hunt playing against Munster

to ask for help to ensure it's not one of us that 'slips up'. There are several websites where all it takes is to type the medication into the search box, and it displays whether it's legal or illegal.

Always check that the website is officially licensed and endorsed by the national body first, as well as double checking with your team doctor to make sure you are well educated and absolutely sure that what you are taking is legitimate. Even the most common of medications, like cold and flu tablets that are sold over the counter, are banned from being taken during competition, so it's important to cover all bases.

While the use of banned substances to enhance performance is the most frowned upon use of drugs throughout professional sport, both by fellow sportspeople and fans alike, it's the use of recreational or 'party' drugs that I think is having a larger effect on the lives of not just young professional sportsman, but the most experienced ones as well.

The impact, both physically and mentally, that the use of these drugs can cause is enormous, even in some cases leading to the diagnosis of depression, as well as having an impact on the social and home lives of individuals.

Whether it was the neighbourhood we grew up in, the circle of friends that we chose to hang out with, or just being in the wrong place at the wrong time, I'm sure we have all faced, or known of a situation, whereby a crucial choice had to be made in relation to recreational drugs. Just like the use of performance



enhancing drugs, it's a personal choice and ultimately comes down to the individual understanding the consequences of the actions.

Within a rugby squad, while the responsibility sits on the shoulder of each athlete, the older, more experienced members of the squad have a role of setting a good example and providing a safe and healthy environment, where the chance of their teammates coming into contact with such substances is very little.

It's why many clubs choose to have their social events in house, and away from the public eye. It eliminates the risk of players coming into contact with difficult situations, while also being hidden from the media's eye, who can make something big out of absolutely nothing.

We need to have fun. Our jobs are so mentally and physically taxing on our minds and body that they deserve a break sometimes. It's how we relax and what we do when we are on a break, and the consequences of such actions that we must remember.



## Checking your medication

The Irish Sports Council and IRUPA suggest that you download their Medication Checker App for over the counter and prescribed medication to your smartphone. The app is available on iTunes and Google Play. Medications bought in Northern Ireland, UK, USA and Canada can be checked on [www.globaldro.com](http://www.globaldro.com)

Changes to the Anti-Doping Code came into place in January of this year. As advised by the Irish Sports Council there is a revised World Anti-Doping Code (2015 Code) in place. You can download the Athlete Factsheet outlining the full changes and other resources on their website [www.irishsportsCouncil.ie](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie)

# Killian Keane

**In this edition we continue our focus on past professional players, their rugby experience and their transition out of the sport. We talk to former Munster and Ireland centre Killian Keane on his rugby life.**



Born in Drogheda, Killian grew up playing rugby and gaelic football in north Dublin. After university, a job opportunity meant a move to Limerick beckoned. Killian started to play club rugby with Garryowen RFC and before long, he was invited to join the Munster squad. Deciding not to take up the contract offer, he played for two seasons whilst continuing to work full time. He eventually accepted a professional contract when asked by Declan Kidney. He has represented Ireland, making his debut against England at Twickenham in 1998. He is now based in London and working in Finance.

***In school, did you have any idea what you hoped to do career wise?***

I was in school in Skerries a long time ago and I was pretty sure, even then that I wanted to work in Finance.

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

Like a lot of other people I played Community Games rugby with Skerries. I was lucky enough to be coached by two fantastic coaches in Matt Connolly and Gerry Carron who instilled a love for the

game. I then went to secondary school in Skerries, where we played gaelic football and rugby. I think playing gaelic definitely helped my rugby game.

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

I think it is a viable career option for 10 years. Rugby chooses you to an extent and you can't put "rugby" down on your CAO form.

***What third level education did you undertake?***

I completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree at UCD and then went on to Business Masters in Finance at the Smurfit School of Business.

***How did you balance your study commitments with your playing and training schedule?***

In reality it was quite easy – college came first. I think it is a lot more difficult for Academy players now as the demands on their time is greater. That said, any of the players I came across while coaching UCD are getting through their courses which is impressive.

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

After university I moved to Limerick to take up a job with an aircraft leasing firm called Guinness Peat Aviation. I started to play club rugby with Garryowen. The late Colm Tucker was the manager of Munster at the time and he invited me to join the Munster squad. I played a couple of seasons while still working and didn't take a contract. Eventually Declan Kidney persuaded me to take a full time contract.

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

I had absolutely no idea and I have been extremely fortunate to have played with some many great players and to have had so many enjoyable days. Rugby is

still a big part of my life and hopefully will continue to be.

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

Yes, there are many skills and attributes that transfer from professional sport but they can be overestimated.

***You need to bring more to the table than "I used to play professional rugby". That's why the development of your second career whilst playing is so important.***

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

I don't think it is smooth for any player to be honest and the longer you play for the harder it is. The saying that "athletes die twice" is a bit of a cliché but there is an element of truth to it. I think you miss the routine and the sense of belonging. Professional sport is ruthless and when you are gone you are truly gone. That tends to be the most difficult part of retirement. I think there is more awareness now among players that it is a difficult transition but it is still something that only the player themselves can ultimately experience and get through. Having a defined career path after retirement helps.

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

I miss the 15 minutes in a dressing room after a match. That is the time when you can chill out and reflect on the game with the rest of the team. Once you leave the dressing room it's gone.

I don't miss my annual knee scopes!

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

Play every game like it's your last, prepare for life after rugby by doing something and not talking about it and remember that all you have left when you have finished is your reputation.





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