

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

IN TOUCH

Volume 31 - Summer 2016



IRUPA

protecting player welfare



tackle your feelings

**IRUPA MEMBERS LAUNCH PUBLIC MENTAL
HEALTH CAMPAIGN**

PAT LAM ON COACHING / IRUPA AWARDS / RONAN O'GARA ENTERS HALL OF FAME / LIFE AFTER RUGBY



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

....

Tee Off at Powerscourt

Enjoy an overnight stay with full Irish breakfast in a spectacular room set against a breathtaking backdrop of the Sugar Loaf Mountain, and then hit the fairways for a round of golf at the award winning Powerscourt Golf Club, voted Best Parkland Venue 2014. Prices from €220pps.

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

t: +353 1 274 8888 e: info@powerscourthotel.com
www.powerscourthotel.com



AUTOGRAPH
COLLECTION®
HOTELS

TEE OFF
PACKAGE
FROM
€220
per person sharing
...



Contents

- 2 Message from Omar Hassanein
- 4 IRUPA News
- 10 IRUPA Awards 2016
- 13 Player Interview - Andrew Conway
- 16 Coaching Insights - Pat Lam
- 18 Legends Game - Ireland v England
- 20 Tackle Your Feelings
- 24 Hall of Fame - Ronan O'Gara
- 26 Player Development Programme continuing to deliver key services to players
- 30 Affiliates in Action
- 32 Agent Bios
- 34 Life After Rugby
- 38 IRPA Update
- 40 Past Player Focus – Declan Fitzpatrick

Directors:

R. Kearney, J. Sexton, R. Loughney, S. Jennings, Peter O'Mahony, A. Trimble, P. McKenna, J. Treacy, O. Hassanein

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

Published by:

IRUPA

Irish Rugby Union Players Association

Unit 8, Richview Office Park,
Clonskeagh, Dublin 14

Phone: +353 1 676 9680

Email: info@irupa.ie

Web: www.irupa.ie

Facebook: www.facebook.com/IRUPA.IE

Twitter: @IRUPA

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/irupa

Photography by Sportsfile
(www.sportsfile.com) unless otherwise stated.

Text by IRUPA staff unless otherwise stated.
Edited by Finola Roache

Design by Brian Gillis & Laura Wilkinson
(brian@loudandclear.ie)

Printed by Inkspot (www.inkspot-print.com)

© IRUPA 2016. Text and imagery may not be reproduced without permission.

CEO address

Omar Hassanein

Having just surpassed 5 years as CEO of the Irish Rugby Union Players' Association, I am pleased to see the continued growth in the organisation.



The progression in the organisation has largely been driven by the quality people we have amongst our members, our staff, our directors and our partners and affiliates. Not only have we expanded in all key areas of our business, but we have also grown significantly in our level of profile and influence both within the sport and also in the corporate environment.

In addition to my role with IRUPA here in Ireland, I am also privileged enough to sit on the boards of both European Athletes and World Athletes Associations. These elite groups allow me to experience in very close detail the manner in which players interact with their respective governing bodies across a wide range of sports in a wide range of countries.

I recently attended a World Athletes Board meeting in Toronto representing International Rugby Players together with senior executives from the NHL Players Association, NFL Players Association, Japanese Baseball Players, FifPro International footballers, International Cricket Players and others. The reason I talk about this is because there are some very interesting observations that come about when comparing rugby players and the sport of rugby generally to the other sports in the room.

The first big observation is that rugby maintains a high level of integrity as a sport. This attitude is very strongly reciprocated between players and administrators alike, driving the culture that underpins our sport. It

is particularly evident when you look at corruption scandals at the very top level of football, or match fixing scandals at the top echelon of cricket's professional game. In most respects within rugby we strive to practice good governance principles which then filtrate down through the sport at all levels. This is not to say that rugby is perfect in this area, but as a sport I think we are dealing with this space better than most. A continued approach that collaboratively combats integrity issues is necessary to keep this momentum moving forward.

Another very interesting area of comparison is the manner in which players are regarded as human beings as opposed to just dispensable athletes. This includes the acknowledgement

“There are some very interesting observations that come about when comparing rugby players and the sport of rugby generally to the other sports”



given to their basic human rights, including the degree to which the athletes' health and welfare are considered. In this regard, rugby fares with mixed reviews - some countries are clearly more cognisant than others when it comes to recognising the long term health of their players. The French for instance oblige their players to play an average of 10 matches more per season than other Tier One nations, which no doubt has impact on the longevity of their careers and the eventual state of their bodies.

In assessing the area of players' human rights, it is also important to consider the sports overall attention to players' subsequent career ambitions.

This is a job that is taken on primarily by players' associations and in the case of rugby we are definitely leading the way amongst other sports in this area. It would be fair to say that the Player Personal Development Programmes we have in rugby are incredibly well advanced and the envy of other sports.

Also worth noting in the comparison of various sports is the manner in which

players and administrators generally interact with each other. This can be defined in different ways, including the sharing of information and level of contractual detail that exist between the parties, often reflecting the level of mutual respect existent. It can also be measured in the overall attitude towards engagement, including employees' rights to have a voice at all important decision making forums. Here, rugby probably sits mid-pack amongst its counterparts, with some sports (notably American sports) very much ahead of rugby in terms of approach to this area.

All things considered however, rugby is in a pretty good space as a sport. Equally rugby players are in a pretty good space as an overall athlete group. It is however always important that we're striving to be better, and it is essential that we continue benchmarking against other players associations in not only promoting our players rights but also in promoting the integrity of our sport.

Omar Hassanein
Chief Executive



CJ Stander voted 2016 Players' Player of the Year

Munster & Ireland flanker CJ Stander was awarded the 2016 Zurich IRUPA Players' Player of the Year Award at the annual Players' Awards on May 4th.

After a strong 2015/16 season which saw him named as the Munster captain in the absence of Peter O'Mahony, Stander produced some outstanding performances for Ireland during his debut Six Nations campaign. A popular winner CJ picked up the Irish Times Supporters Player of the Year earlier in the night. IRUPA would like to thank all of our members who showed their support for the organisation by attending the awards. For more news and pictures from the 2016 Zurich Irish Rugby Players' Awards turn to page 10.



L:R Zurich GI CEO Conor Brennan with IRUPA Player of the Year CJ Stander and IRUPA CEO Omar Hassanein

IRUPA Launch Tackle Your Feelings

In March IRUPA, in partnership with Zurich Insurance launched Tackle Your Feelings (TYF), a three year all-island campaign that seeks to use rugby as a platform to change the landscape of mental wellbeing in Ireland.

TYF capitalises on the hero status of Ireland's professional rugby players and demonstrates how even the 'toughest' people in our society experience vulnerability on a day to day basis. The

first three players to tell their personal stories are Ireland and Leinster front-row Jack McGrath, Ireland's Women's Sevens star Hannah Tyrrell and Munster scrum-half, Cathal Sheridan. The players' videos are hosted on the new website www.tackleyourfeelings.com which also hosts a number of practical resources to help people develop their emotional self-awareness and proactively work on their mental and emotional wellbeing. To learn more about the campaign turn to page 20.



L:R Hannah Tyrrell, Dr. Eddie Murphy, Elaine Hayes Zurich Insurance, Omar Hassanein IRUPA CEO, Jack McGrath

Best of Luck!

As the 2015/16 season comes to an end IRUPA would like to wish all players who are retiring the best of luck with their next phase.

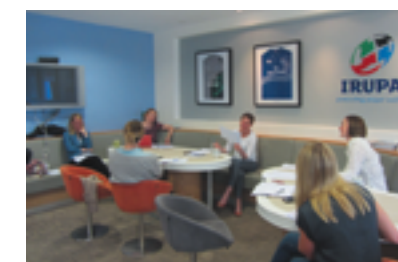
All retired players are part of IRUPA's past player alumni 'The Clubhouse' so we encourage you to keep updated by signing up to our Clubhouse mail list, just email clubhouse@irupa.ie. We would also like to wish our current members who are travelling overseas to continue their playing careers the very best of luck with their new ventures. If you require help or career support please do not hesitate in contacting IRUPA.



IRUPA Player Development Programme Strategic Planning Meeting

IRUPA's Player Development Managers (PDM) had a two day strategic planning meeting in Dublin at the end of April to discuss and plan the upcoming 2016/17 season.

Using the 5 pillars of the IRUPA/IRFU Player Development Programme (PDP) as a guide, each provincial PDM highlighted the requirements of their players and an overall plan was created. As our members are at the heart of the PDP, player focus groups have been held with representatives of the Leinster & Connacht squads to find out what the players would like to see in the coming season. Similar focus groups are planned for Munster and Ulster at the start of next season.



Cooking up a Storm

IRUPA rolled out a number of cooking workshops for its members in Leinster and Munster throughout April and May.

Leinster's Academy & Sub-Academy, the Irish Women's 7s & XVs and members of Munster's Academy all benefited from the expert tutelage of Chefs Keith Piggot

& Reggie White. The players learned a mixture of different recipes including roast broccoli and couscous salad, chilli con carne and salsa verde. Thank you to Leinster Rugby and the IRFU who help facilitate and to Hook & Ladder and Foodgame for providing the facilities in Limerick and Dublin.





O'Leary & Fanning launch new business ventures

Munster scrum-half Tomás O'Leary has turned a passion into a business with the launch of his luxury watch brand Told & Co. Tomas worked closely with a Danish designer to create a cool classic range of luxury timepieces.

TOLD & Co offers an exclusive fusion of high-end, classic craftsmanship and simplistic modern designs. For more information visit www.toldandco.com

IRUPA would also like to wish ex-Leinster winger Darragh Fanning all the best with his new venture, bringing the

Mexican food chain Zambreno to Dublin. During a visit to Australia Darragh discovered the much loved franchise and, after returning there to work in a Zambreno restaurant during the off season, decided to bring it to Dublin at the start of 2016. With plans already in place for more franchises throughout

the country it's defiantly a case of watch this space.

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



Past players to benefit as IRUPA continues education partnership with the IMI

IRUPA and the Irish Management Institute (IMI) are delighted to announce a further three scholarships, to the value of €30,000 to IRUPA members.

Aimed at its alumni membership, who are best positioned to take part in the IMI executive programmes, members will be able to avail of world-class development and executive education programmes as part of the continued partnership between IRUPA and the IMI.

This partnership arrangement is now entering its fourth year, and nine

scholarships have already been awarded. Guy Easterby has just completed a diploma in Business Finance with the IMI via the IRUPA scholarship. He encourage other past players to take advantage of the opportunity saying

"I think the IMI diplomas are a fantastic opportunity for IRUPA members. What I like most about them is that there is a great mix of theoretical and practical learning and an excellent opportunity to interact and problem solve with fellow pupils who are invariably working out in the business world. The course tutors also show a real willingness to facilitate learning while understanding that most attendees have to keep one eye on their full time job also."

As well as offering professional development opportunities, IRUPA's partnership with the IMI sees all

IRUPA members, both past and present gain membership to the IMI. The new arrangement will provide IRUPA members' access to the IMI's internationally recognised executive development courses across a diverse range of subjects.

To apply for the three scholarship places, all eligible IRUPA members are encouraged to visit the IMI website at www.imi.ie for more details.



Clubhouse members Declan O'Brien & Simon Keogh graduate from the IMI

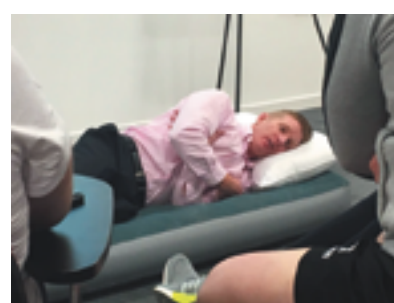
The art of a good night's sleep

When IRUPA conducted a member's survey in 2014 one of the findings was that 74% of players suffered from an excessive lack of sleep.

Stress, worry, pain and injury can all effect how much sleep players get. To combat this issue IRUPA began rolling out sleep workshops to teach players practical steps they can take to get some well-deserved rest. The EAP developed workshop has already been given to players in Munster and Connacht and in March it was Ulster's turn. During the workshops, facilitator Tom Coleman made players aware of different relaxation strategies and breathing techniques they could use if they were having trouble sleeping. He

made them aware of the importance of developing not only a night time routine, but also a strategy on what to do if you can't sleep. Players were encouraged to think about their sleeping environment and were given tips about the optimum conditions for falling asleep (a cool, dark room with no distractions). Modern habits such as mobile phone, tablet and computer usage were discussed and how these could have be interfering with our sleep.

Players who were suffering from persistent poor quality sleep are recommended to raise it with their medical team, as good quality sleep is paramount to a players' performance on the field as well as their mental, physical and emotional well-being.



Welcome back to Derval O'Rourke and farewell to Michael Swift & Keith Young

In March IRUPA were delighted to welcome back Derval O'Rourke from maternity leave to her role as IRUPA Player Development Manager for Munster. Derval's return coincides with a busy period for Munster Rugby as they prepare for the merging of the Cork and Limerick training bases. IRUPA would like to thank Marcus Horan for covering Derval's leave.

IRUPA would also like to thank Michael Swift for all his hard work during his time as Communications Manager. Having come into the organisation within weeks of retiring from Connacht after a successful 16 year career Michael brought a wealth of knowledge and experience. We look forward to seeing Michael and Marcus at IRUPA Clubhouse events in the near future.

Finally, IRUPA also bids a fond farewell

to our Events & Sponsorship Manager Keith Young. Keith came on board in 2012 and took responsibility for building IRUPA's events and sponsorship arm. He has been instrumental in the continuing success of the IRUPA Awards, the IRUPA Clubhouse Event and the IRUPA Golf Day, as well as ongoing servicing of all our major commercial partnerships including our two biggest partners Zurich and BNY Mellon. We wish him all the best with his future endeavours.

IRUPA represented at EU Athletes and UNI World Athletes Meetings



In April IRUPA CEO Omar Hassanein represented the association at the 2016 PROtect Integrity Conference in Lyon, as part of his role within EU Athletes.

During two busy days, representatives from over 20 separate players' unions participated in a Train the Trainer seminar led by Daniela Giuffre from Interpol Integrity in Sport Unit. Representatives not only advanced their knowledge of integrity issues across a range of sports, but also learnt how to best impart this knowledge onto their respective athlete groups.

Additionally, Omar has recently been appointed to the board of UNI World Athletes, the peak representative body of all athletes across the globe. At a recent board meeting in Toronto, the group discussed the various aspects of the organisations longer term strategic plan as well as a wide variety of current issues and challenges relating to athletes internationally. From an IRUPA perspective it is important to be so closely linked into these groups, allowing the organisation to constantly improve and evolve.



IRUPA MEMBER HELPLINE

1800 201 346

Confidential • Independent • 24/7



IRUPA MEMBER HELPLINE

0808 234 5183

Confidential • Independent • 24/7

FIFPro Education Seminar 2016

IRUPA were invited to share their experience of dual careers and player education at FIFPro's (World Footballer's Association) Education Seminar.

More than 40 player associations were present at the three-day seminar at FIFPro's offices in Hoofddorp, the Netherlands.

There was a vast exchange of information and all of the participants worked closely together in workshops to create plans for the further development of player services including initiatives on CV development, on-line and flexible education, financial management and personal wellbeing.

Presenting the work being carried out by IRUPA, Dr Deirdre Lyons spoke about the importance of developing international links.

"In many ways the seminar gave me the confirmation that the programme we run in Ireland is up there with the best in the world. Having such a high ratio of personal development managers to players, means that we can tailor our services to each individual player. However this does not mean that we can become too complacent. There are always way that we can improve what we do, and learning from other players' associations and codes, is vitally important. It is also good to give back to smaller and less developed associations."

Since the conference, IRUPA have been asked to become an expert partner in an ERAMUS funded project to help more FIFPro members build up PDM programmes. In return, IRUPA will be afforded the chance to share best practice with more advance FIFPro members with regards off-pitch player development.



IRUPA PDM Deirdre Lyons presents at FIFPRO

FIND OUT WHY ORGANISATIONS SELECT US FOR THEIR WINNING TEAMS

CALL US ON +353 1 437 9569

WWW.TREACYCONSULTING.COM

Treacy Consulting

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

STRATEGY – INNOVATION – GROWTH

Docklands Professional
Services Firm of the Year 2014

Office of Government
Procurement panel 2015–2017



Stander, Van Der Flier and O'Gara Honoured at Irish Rugby's Biggest Night

The 14th annual Zurich Irish Rugby Players' Awards took place in the Double Tree by Hilton on a sunny Wednesday evening in early May. The highlight of many corporate calendars, the "IRUPA's" are Ireland's only national rugby awards.

Players from all four provinces plus members of the Women's 7s & XV's squads mixed with media, IRUPA supporters & sponsors, past players and a few lucky fans. As photographers snapped and journalists interviewed players, the 800 plus guests mingled and excitedly waited for the show to begin.

The crowd was welcomed by the MC for the night, ex-Leinster & Ireland star, IRUPA founder, Irish Times journalist and general all-rounder Liam Toland. After a few quick words from the IRUPA Chairman Rob Kearney, IRUPA CEO Omar Hassanein and Zurich GI CEO Connor Brennan, the attendees were treated to a thrilling video highlighting the highs and lows of the national and provincial season.

The first winner awarded on the night was the IRUPA Women's Sevens Player of the Year Aimee-Leigh Murphy Crowe while Leinster's Isaac Boss was awarded the Vodafone Medal for Excellence, given for his extensive work with charities such as Le Cheile & Laura Lynn.

Nominated by the public, Connacht's triumphant win over Munster in Thomond Park was deemed to be the Powerscourt Hotel Resort & Spa Moment of the Year with Connacht's Pat Lam & Bundee Aki on hand to collect the award.

Sene Naoupu's superb inaugural season with the Irish Women's XV's saw her walk

away with the BNY Mellon Women's XV's Player of the Year award and ex-Leinster lock and lead singer of the Blizzards Niall 'Bressie' Breslin was awarded the Zurich Contribution to Irish Society award. A passionate campaigner for mental health in Ireland, Bressie has even taken his campaign to the House of the Oireachtas.



Emotions were high when ex-Munster & Ireland fly-half Ronan O'Gara took his rightful place in the BNY Mellon IRUPA Hall of Fame.

After a spine chilling highlights reel detailing his extraordinary career the crowd offered the legend a prolonged standing ovation to show their appreciation.



In a season that saw him step up to the main stage for both Leinster & Ireland, Josh Van Der Flier beat off some stiff competition from Garry Ringrose and Stewart McCloskey to win the Nevin Spence Young Player of the Year award.

And so to the biggest award of the night. The capacity crowd was once again on its feet when Munster's CJ Stander was named the Zurich IRUPA Players' Player of the Year 2016. A very popular winner, Stander has been a stalwart of the Munster team for the past three years and this year rose to the challenge of taking the Captain's armband in the absence of Peter O'Mahony. This season also saw him charge onto the international scene, scoring two tries in his first 6 Nations campaign and being named man of the match in his first international match against Wales.



“I’m delighted to win this award. Receiving recognition from my fellow peers is the ultimate accolade. I will remember this season fondly, from winning my first cap, to scoring my first international try and, ultimately, winning this award.”

CJ Stander

TAKE POSSESSION



Heineken



Heineken



PROUD PARTNERS OF EUROPEAN RUGBY

In my role as the IRUPA Player Development Manager with the Munster squad I sit down and chat with the players on a regular basis. A chat with Andrew Conway is always an interesting part of any day. Doing an interview with him gave me all kinds of insights into his views on player movement within the provinces, the role of IRUPA and what he has in mind for the future.

Conway first signed for Munster in 2013 and with a new two year contract just signed this season, he is firmly entrenched in the Munster squad. He is coming off an excellent individual season, one in which he was man of the match against Edinburgh in the Pro12. As a group though, it was a tough season for Munster.

"Collectively it was not an enjoyable year. For various reasons but mainly from results on the pitch which then fed in to the general atmosphere around the training ground." Conway has a great understanding of the importance of the collective team performance, this has made him a key figure within the back three in the Munster squad.

Growing up in Dublin meant playing for Leinster was the most obvious path. He first began to develop his skills in Leinster's academy setup and went on to sign his first professional contract in 2010. This was a dream come true and the road seemed laid out in front of him to become a household name within the province. A few seasons past and in the summer leading up to the 2013/2014 season he found himself moving to Munster and donning the famous red. The move south is certainly a road less travelled and I was intrigued as to how he found the process in switching between two great rivals.

"The most difficult part was the night

Andrew Conway

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Derval O'Rourke



or two leading up to the move. I started thinking how easy it would be to have stayed where I was and travel 5 minutes from home up the road to get stuck in to a new season with my Leinster team mates. It was probably the biggest decision in my life at that point and I'm delighted that I made the tough decision for the right reasons as opposed to the easy decision for the wrong reasons."

A new club brought new teammates and they were instrumental in helping Conway settle in to his new Limerick surroundings, "The lads made it easy for me to settle in and I remember Barry O' Mahony (who has since retired due to injury) would constantly be onto me to go for lunch, coffee etc. I'm sure the last thing he wanted at the start of pre-season was to be making small talk with me after a long tough day but that stuck with me as I knew he was trying to make me feel as at home as possible."

Conway is an advocate for moving within the four provinces if the move is the right one for the player,



"I would encourage younger players to seek out the right opportunity for themselves on two levels. The new challenge should give them the chance to grow as a person and a player. This decision will be tough because the best opportunities don't always lie with your local club."

Being a professional rugby player can seem like the dream job to many but it has its difficulties.

"I find both the physical and mental strains in the winter months fairly tough. When you're playing tough games back to back in bad weather, the body starts to ache a bit more and its a mental battle to pull yourself through those weeks. In saying that, it becomes a whole lot easier when you're winning those games."

Like most players Andrew is conscious of a life after rugby.

"I think one of the best aspects about being a professional athlete is it allows you time to figure out what direction you want to go after your playing career is over. Not many people are lucky enough to have time to figure out what they would like to do in their professional career, while being paid to play a sport that they love."

He continues, "I've always used the IRUPA services over the years but I'm using them more and more as the years go on. Having such quality and experienced

people at our disposal is priceless while we are trying to concentrate on having a successful rugby career but not forgetting that real life is going on around us also"

Andrew is all too aware of the issues facing his fellow players, particularly those who've had to hang up their boots early.

"From talking to a few of the lads that have unfortunately had to retire early, it's clear that IRUPA play a vital role in the transition out of rugby with the nitty gritty details that we would all find extremely hard to deal with at such a tough time in any athlete's life."

As a former professional runner I get asked all the time about whether or not I would want my kids to follow the same path. Similarly I wonder would Conway want this career for his kids.

"I'd love my children to be professional athletes in general. not just rugby specific. It's a unique way to learn and grow as a person and presents incredible challenges as well as highs and lows that not many people are fortunate enough to be involved in."

Being at the heart of professional rugby I wonder would Conway like to try any other sport.

"I'd love to give boxing or mixed martial arts a try. It is border line sad on how big a fan I am of Conor McGregor, so I'd love to be able to get in the ring or the octagon."

Similar to his idol McGregor, Andrew Conway is not just content to take part.

Lá bródúil do muintir Connacht



When Pat Lam arrived in Galway he couldn't understand why none of the students in his children's schools wore Connacht jerseys. There were plenty of Galway, Munster and Man United ones, but no Connacht. In just three short years he, and his team, have changed all that.

Last month the Connacht rugby squad and management were given a heroes' welcome in Galway following their victory in the 2016 Pro 12 final. All weekend the city was awash with thousands of fans proudly wearing Connacht jerseys in support of their team who recorded a historic 20-10 victory over Leinster and were crowned champions for the first time in the team's 131 year history.

Deirdre Lyons, the IRUPA Player Development Manager with Connacht, caught up with Head Coach Pat Lam as he took a well-earned break before the start of pre-season later this month, to reflect on the seasons gone by.

Pat, a fantastic result to come out on top in this year's Pro 12. Congratulations. Did you always maintain belief that you could do it?

Without a doubt, from day one. We made a plan, but more importantly we had belief in that plan. If you don't believe in the plan that you set out, it is a waste of time. While I don't believe in

setting unrealistic goals, you have to aim high, and winning the Pro 12 was always part of the plan. Then we set about working towards that plan, everyone involved was part of that.

Of all the teams in the Pro 12, Connacht has to operate from as cheque book that is considerably smaller than some other clubs when attracting players. How do you feel you've been able to get the most out of this group of players that you have?

For me, this has been one of the highlights of this great achievement. Connacht simply don't have the resources that the other Pro 12 teams do. One word, teamwork. To get the most out of the players that we have, we really focused on the big picture and everyone had to buy in to that. Everyone knew where we wanted to go, believed that we could get there, worked hard every day and used every day as an opportunity to grow, both on and off the pitch.

Which players would you single out as the greatest influencers in the group, as far as leading the change in culture goes?

I really believe that everyone is a leader, and that the whole group has impacted on the team in some way. We challenge our players to constantly improve themselves, and in doing so the whole team can improve. Saying that, obviously people like John Muldoon, our captain, has been a great inspirational person to lead the team. Having experienced players in the squad like Tom McCartney, Aly Muldowney, Nathan White and Ronan Loughney – these guys are instrumental in supporting John and the way we drive our team culture. Out on the pitch players like Bundee Aki with his enthusiasm and energy for the game, have really helped players believe in a winning culture.

You have said to me before that the more rounded a player is and the more interests he has outside the game the better he performs. Can you expand on that?

My philosophy is simple. I want every player who comes through my rugby program to be a better rugby player and ultimately a better person. While winning games and trophies is great, if a person grows outside of the game that is just as important. I have travelled all around the province and I continually

get complimented about the quality of the players, not just on the pitch, but how great they are off it. People talk glowingly about the Connacht lads, and for me I am just as proud of that.

What type of things do you encourage them to do to make them better people?

Building connections and building relationships. People have made a big deal of the handshake, the greeting. But for me it was a way of encouraging the players to get to know their teammates. I encourage players to keep connected with those closest to them – partners, kids, friends, teammates. Connecting with the community is also important and that is why we hold training camps outside of Galway, so that we can get out in to the wider Connacht community. It is also good to build relationships with the key stakeholders in the game, the fans, sponsors, IRFU and IRUPA.

We have spoken in the past about the role IRUPA play in assisting you in achieving your goals, can you elaborate on that?

The work that you, and IRUPA has been doing with the guys is fantastic, and helps me with what I'm trying to do. I have S&C coaches to help with the physical preparation, and a medical

team to help with physiotherapy and the medical side if things, and IRUPA is there to facilitate and enhance Connacht's philosophy in a practical sense. The support it provides with study, work placements, public speaking, cooking, that sort of thing – that is just another branch to the work that we do and it helps to not only grow the rugby player, but grow the person.

From your own perspective as a coach, where do you believe Irish Rugby needs to continually improve in order to be on par with our leading rugby nations?

The number one is belief. Belief is crucial. First and foremost you have to believe that you can be the best. Many teams out there have come out and achieved what people thought was the impossible. Then comes the plan, the work that everyone has to do to achieve that dream. You need to have the drive and perseverance to achieve that dream. Irish rugby should set their vision to being the best rugby nation in the world. Put that goal out there and instil that belief in the players. Of course there is still a process and a plan needed to be put in place to achieve that dream. It is the same principles that apply in sport as in business. Set realistic, achievable goals, but don't be afraid to dream big and aim high.

Nigel Carolan's team have just completed a phenomenal U20 World Cup campaign, going all the way to the final. What is your view of their performance?

Fantastic. This will be a massive boost to the players, as they will now have the belief that they cannot just play, but really compete with the best in the world. Nigel and his team have done a great job. Nigel asked me to speak to the u20 team when they were down in Galway for a training camp before they travelled to Manchester for the tournament. I gave them 3 short take home messages, from what I believe to be important to team performance

1. Believe in yourselves and your team work that you can win.
2. Working hard every day to achieve that dream helps the belief
3. Get to know each other as a team, so you can believe as a Team.

Finally, what does the future hold for Pat Lam?

I'm blessed to do the job that I love to do. Working with professional rugby players is the best job that I could have. If it is the last job that I ever have to work as, I will be very happy to do that.



Ireland and England Legends Put on Free Flowing Display

If conversions didn't count it was a draw, at least that was the positive spin the Irish Legends took from the game.

On the 26th February, Ireland Legends took on a fresh faced English Legends side to compete for the Stuart Mangan Memorial Trophy. With a total of 14 tries scored, none of the 6,000 spectators at the Twickenham Stoop could complain about the attacking endeavour of both sides, although the less said about the defence the better.

The English side had pace to burn with Ugo Monye, Ian Balshaw and Mike Tindall, whereas Ireland had Mick Galway and Shane Byrne. Monye seemed to be operating at a different level to the other 29 players on the field scoring three of the seven tries for his side.

The Irish side was bolstered by the recently retired Gordon D'arcy, Michael Swift and Shane Jennings who looked like they could still kit out for any professional outfit. D'arcy still has his twinkle toes, Swift his tireless work-rate and Jennings his extremely aggressive temperament.

It was also great to see Big Bobby Casey fulfilling the Irish sides waterboy duties although he was no Bobby Boucher (Booshay) as his side went thirsty due to his decreased mobility. Ireland showed great ability to throw the ball about despite their apparent lack of youth and pace, and ex Harlequins Gavin Duffy and Andrew Dunne showed their advanced knowledge of the Stoop by both scoring in the home of their former side. The Irish were made to work

ferociously hard for every score while the English were able to use their superior pace to score from distance and under the posts each time.

In the age old tradition of finger pointing, it was the common opinion of the Irish side that Simon Mason and Barry Everitt were completely to blame for the loss, between them they were not able to convert a single try, however, they did have touch line attempts each time.

In a thrilling encounter the home side ran out the victors on a final score of 45-35. All money raised will be donated to a number of Irish and UK rugby based charities including the IRUPA Injured Players' Fund.



Providing technology solutions to enterprise, medium and small business

unity.

Technology makes a difference in driving your company forward – let Unity set you apart from your competitors.





Tackle Your Feelings

By Créde Sheehy-Kelly

Ask a rugby fan what was the highlight of Jack McGrath's season and you might be surprised by the answer. Playing in every single Irish test match? Being nominated in every possible Player of the Year category across the IRUPA and Leinster awards? Making the RBS Six Nations Team of the Tournament?

These are all seriously impressive feats but one act of bravery stands out in a formidable year for the Leinster prop. Just two days after the end of the Six Nations, Jack laid bare his rawest feelings about his brother's tragic death by suicide. He publicly shared this very personal story in an effort to change the way people think and behave around mental wellbeing.

This was the challenge Jack, along with a number of other IRUPA members, took on when signing up as Ambassadors for IRUPA and Zurich's Tackle Your Feelings mental wellbeing campaign. This three year, all-island campaign seeks to break

down stigma and encourage people to become more proactive in looking after their mental and emotional health.

The campaign features professional rugby players leading by example, talking about personal challenges they faced off the pitch and how they overcame them. Each province, the women's teams and past players are represented in the Ambassador group, demonstrating that these issues affect people of every age and across all walks of life.

The campaign is specifically aimed at maximising mental wellbeing rather than resolving mental illness. Just like physical health, emotional health can be

TACKLE YOUR FEELINGS

improved by tackling pressures before they reach crisis stage. Unfortunately in our society that worships the macho ideal of physical and mental toughness, many people are still uncomfortable discussing their feelings. Sometimes people don't even feel comfortable admitting to themselves that they are under pressure.

By contrasting the physical toughness of professional rugby players with an honest insight into the feelings that they experience in their personal lives, we hope to show that it's OK to be vulnerable. More than that, we aim to show how tackling your feelings head on can actually become a source of strength.

Tackle Your Feelings asks people to be honest with themselves about how they

are feeling, to create space every day to connect with their emotions and to use the strategies that work for them.

To date three IRUPA members have released public videos. Alongside Jack, Munster's Cathal Sheridan discussed his experience coping with the effects of a long term injury and Irish Women's XVs and Sevens player Hannah Tyrrell bravely opened up about her struggle with self-harm and bulimia. Each of these videos can be found on the campaign website www.tackleyourfeelings.com. More ambassador stories and videos will be released throughout the year.

The campaign website also hosts a number of practical resources to help people tackle their own feelings. The 'Test' is a short quiz designed to improve self-awareness and help people assess how they are really feeling across a number of different life areas. The 'Resources' section contains a series of practical exercises and videos to help

people tackle challenging emotions like anger, anxiety and sadness and to strengthen positive emotions such as confidence and happiness.

Other features of the website include the Tackle Your Feelings Café where users can share their own strategies for dealing with pressure and the 'Need Help' page which provides contact details of professional support organisations.

During the course of the campaign IRUPA and Zurich will also host free public panel discussions in each province to encourage people to join the Tackle Your Feelings conversation. The discussion kicked off most recently in Thomond Park in Munster with a panel featuring Marcus Horan, Cathal Sheridan, Alan Quinlan and Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Eddie Murphy. The talk was very well received with members of the audience citing the honesty and frankness of the discussion as one of the highlights of the



“If something bad happens it's supposed to get under your skin. Deal with it at the time. If you're angry be angry, if you're upset be upset. But then have a strategy in place to deal with it”

Cathal Sheridan
Munster Rugby Player

“The biggest thing for me was that I had to realise that I wanted to get better for myself. As soon as I reached out my friends and family were there for me. Overcoming the mental illness made me a stronger person. It made me the person I am today. I’m now a confident 25 year old who loves life and wouldn’t have it any other way”

Hannah Tyrrell
Irish International Rugby Player



evening and many saying they would feel more comfortable talking about their feelings after attending the event.

In his video Jack emphasises the importance of having people you trust to talk to when you are feeling overwhelmed: “When you’ve got this knot in your stomach and you’re struggling to get up in the morning, eventually you start talking and it’s like a gas valve releasing”. In a sport like rugby where peer leadership and support is one of the cornerstones of the game, it’s encouraging to see that this peer leadership extends much further than the boundaries of a rugby pitch.

Background to the campaign

Think of the stereotypical rugby player and it evokes an image of a mentally and physically tough, battle-hardened athlete. Vulnerability is the last thing that springs to mind.

However an IRUPA member survey of male professional rugby players in Ireland conducted in 2014 showed that mental wellbeing was an area of concern for many players.

The results revealed that high percentages of players struggled with mental wellbeing issues such as worrying about playing performance (67%), trouble sleeping as a result of this worry (74%) and relationship challenges (40%).

The concept for Tackle Your Feelings arose from seeing how athletes, including professional rugby players, were more than willing to address emotional challenges that were not necessarily linked with their sport once they realised the performance benefits that followed.

The key was that once athletes felt they had a ‘legitimate’ reason to talk about their emotional challenges they were much more comfortable looking for support and working through them.

IRUPA and Zurich recognised an opportunity to apply this logic on a much broader scale to change the landscape of mental wellbeing in our society. If emotional vulnerability was made ‘acceptable’ on a national scale then it would open the door for more people to embrace the idea of proactively working on their mental wellbeing.

IRUPA’s members decided to leverage the unique platform of professional rugby to get the message out there and Tackle Your Feelings was born. Ambassadors from all four provinces opted, not only to speak about this important topic, but to actively lead by example in breaking down stigma.

THE BUSINESS CLASS EXPERIENCE



FASTER, FITTER, STRONGER



OUR NEWEST HEALTH CLUB



ICON Health Club 1-4
Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2.
Tel: 01 405 3777/8
www.iconhealthclub.ie



The Dartry Health Club
31 Palmerston Gardens,
Dartry, Dublin 6.
Tel: (01) 491 1675
www.thedartryhealthclub.ie



1escape health club,
block G, smithfield market, Dublin 7.
Tel: 01 4850700/01
www.oneescape.ie

CALL US TODAY FOR A 5 DAY PASS TO YOUR CLUB OF CHOICE.
t&c's apply

Munster Hero Inducted into the BNY Mellon IRUPA Hall of Fame

There are only a few players' careers in the world that have lasted as long and have been as successful as the one belonging to Ronan O'Gara.

He has always been a driver of high quality performances in whatever team that he has been playing with throughout his illustrious career and there is absolutely no coincidence that he has collected medals consistently at every level along the way. There are a few players in Ireland where diehard rugby fans park their provincial bias and give unconditional affection toward a player, but due to his consistency and grace under pressure, Ronan was most certainly one of them.

On the 4th of May at the Zurich Irish Rugby Players' Awards, the Munster and Ireland legend was inducted into the BNY Mellon IRUPA Hall of Fame. Ronan is in rich company amongst a plethora of Irish rugby greats in the illustrious Hall of Fame, as he joins Irish rugby legends such as Anthony Foley, David Humphreys, Girvan Dempsey and Eric Elwood to name a few.

His rugby days began in Presentation Brother College in Cork where he captained his school to the Munster Schools Senior Cup. Following his departure from school, the next step in his rugby career was with Cork Constitution. He played in the white of 'Con' from 1996 – 2003 and won a AIL league winners medal along the way. During that period his performances began to attract attention from other selectors and coaches, and he broke his way in to the Munster set up in 1997 where he made his debut against Connacht scoring 19 points. A sign of things to come.

Ronan's career went from strength to strength as he became a driving force in the formidable Munster team of the 2000's. His ability to deal with pressure situations and passion for his province was epitomised in his performances in the 05/06 & 07/08 Heineken Cup campaigns where they were crowned champions of Europe on both occasions. On numerous instances he drove his teammates on with his positional play, scoring ability and his abundant gift in seeing victory when others around him may have doubted.

In 2000, Ronan made his debut for Ireland against Scotland in the 6 Nations in Lansdowne Road, this was the same day as his Munster half-back partner, Peter Stringer. His international career lasted 13 years where he made the number 10 jersey his own and was one of the finest to ever play the game. Ronan won his 100th cap against South Africa in the first rugby international at the Aviva Stadium.

At the awards on the 4th of May, a deafening silence filled the room as the attendees took in Ronan's highlights video. Each highpoint rekindled fond memories of his contribution to the game. He received a prolonged standing



"I have had the pleasure to play with incredible players throughout my career and work under great coaches and without their drive and support I would not have had the career that I did. I am very honoured to be in amongst legends of Irish Rugby."

ovation as he made his way to the stage to accept the award. During the interview with Liam Toland, Ronan made sure to mention his teammates and coaches, "I have had the pleasure to play with incredible players throughout my career and work under great coaches and without their drive and support I would not have had the career that I did. I am very honoured to be in amongst legends of Irish Rugby."

He collected 128 caps over his International career and at the time of his retirement, was the most capped Irish player ever. He was only surpassed by a little known, Brian O'Driscoll. The defining memory of Ronan's international career will be that drop goal against Wales in the Millennium Stadium to win Ireland their first Grand Slam in 61 years. Speaking on the night after watching some of his own highlights, Ronan said, "It's nice to look back on those days, it's not something that I have had the opportunity to do. I would love it if I could rewind the clock

to take time to enjoy the moments a bit more, they were the great occasion to be a part of."

Ronan's consistent excellence throughout his career saw him selected for the 2001, 2005 and 2009 British & Irish Lion tours where he made 16 appearances on the three tours. He is still the all-time leading points scorer for Munster & Ireland with 2,625 and 1,083 points respectively and is also the leading scorer in 6 Nations history with 557 points.

Ronan's passion for his province, country and his love for the sport was evident each time he stepped on the field. His career is littered with moments of genius. He was a leader both on and off of the field and continues to demand excellence in his position at Racing Metro. Ronan is one of the few players of this great game about whom we could all be in agreement when we say that he has inspired a generation of children to pick up a rugby ball.

IRUPA *continuing* to deliver key services for players

FIVE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS TO HELP PLAYERS AT EVERY STAGE IN THEIR CAREER

Player welfare in rugby is continuing to evolve in a positive and proactive manner for the most part, an important consideration when examining a sport whose constituents are bigger, stronger and faster than their predecessors in the game and where the collisions exact a significant physical toll.

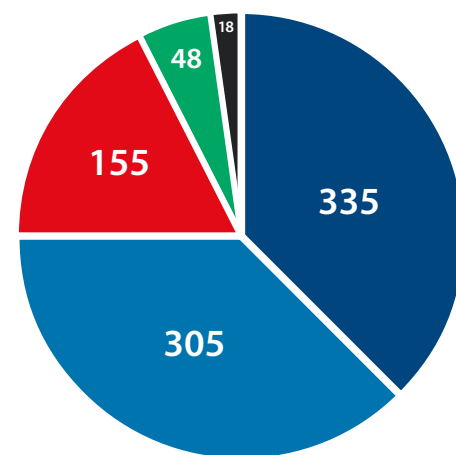
Injury and concussion are primary and important considerations in any discussion relating to player wellbeing, but in an era when teenagers now view rugby as a professional career, the need to expand the duty of care to life off the pitch as well as on it, is undeniable.

This is borne out in examining the expanding role of IRUPA (The Irish Rugby Union Players Association) in looking after the needs of players. Dr Deirdre Lyons is the manager of the Player Development Programme (PDP), and also works as Player Development Manager (PDM) for Connacht, one of five PDMs employed by IRUPA to assist

players in various aspects of life. The other four are Lindsey Berne (Women's Programme, covering maternity leave for Dr. Kate Kirby), Derval O'Rourke (Munster), Créde Sheehy-Kelly (Leinster) and Pamela Gilpin (Ulster) – to assist players in various aspects of life.

The Player Development Programme is comprised of five pillars: career advice and guidance, education and training skills, personal brand, financial planning and management and player wellbeing. The PDMs work two to three days in the provincial hubs meeting players by appointment in most cases or happenstance occasionally.

What makes the programme so successful is its individual approach. In the last year the PDMs have held over 860 individual meetings with players and hit their targets of working with over 80% of the senior players and over 95% of academy players.



Number of Individual Player Meetings conducted in the past 12 months



THE 5 PILLARS OF THE IRUPA/IRFU PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

CAREER ADVICE & GUIDANCE

Career coaching, advice & guidance
Work experience
Mentoring
Networking
CV & interview preparation

PLAYER WELLBEING

Personal wellbeing - mind & body
Self-awareness
Player representation
Sport integrity
Keep Rugby Clean

EDUCATION, TRAINING & SKILLS

Academic, trade & professional qualifications
Flexible learning options
Professional & general interest courses
Coaching qualifications
Life skills

PERSONAL BRAND

Brand awareness and development
Social media & responsibility
Media & public speaking skills
Community engagement
Transformational leadership

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & PLANNING

Basic financial education
Long term planning
Tax advice
Pension advice
Insurance advice

Five Managers

All of the player development managers have worked in high performance sport prior to joining IRUPA, and are advocates of their own professional development with five Masters qualifications and two PhDs amongst the group.

"At the start we had one player development manager, Hamish Adams. He worked with all four provinces. The support, while great, was very reactive. We now have five managers; that allows us to be more proactive.

Where once they dealt with just the senior players, the PDMs are now looking to help those in provincial academies and sub academies to supplement the work already being done there. They have found the provinces receptive. Each PDM in the case of Leinster, Ulster, Munster and Connacht works with roughly 80 players.

We have strategically focused on the academy and sub academy levels. They are a lot easier to get messages across to and they tend to work in a more focused and receptive way. If their manager says you have to go to this workshop, they will go.

The hope is that by building that relationship with them, when they get to

senior level if they have any issues, they are used to you. Support seeking is one of the key skills that we try and get them to build while they are still young.

Young players who are very talented occasionally bypass the academy stage. Rugby wise they may be doing well but they don't always possess the other [life] skills that we would be concerned about.

Also, you see it in every province where an outstanding player [on the pitch] just can't deal the pressure or the regimen. The modern culture where some parents snowplough the way for their children, removing all obstacles and stress, can lead to an emotional immaturity and a difficulty in dealing with adversity. We sometimes find that in order to build resilience, you need to experience disappointment and stress. It's about transition toughness, developing life skills to be able to deal with change.

One thing that we have to be very careful of as player development managers is that we don't do too much, that we don't go and fight their battles for them all the time."

Different Pathways

The socioeconomic background of the majority of young rugby players makes it reasonably straightforward to encourage third level education in conjunction with

their rugby careers but there is an equal demand from those who are the other end of the spectrum career-wise.

"By offering choice we get a lot more engagement. The players want different pathways so there's no point in running generic courses. We try and build relationships with as many different partners as possible and we have a lot of scholarship opportunities.

We work with the main institutes of technology and universities in our area. For me in Galway it's GMIT and NUIG as well as private colleges to make sure that the flexibility is there. There are around 30 players in college in Connacht."

Some players are receptive to seeking help, others less inclined. IRUPA PDMs understand the notion of pushing against a closed door. More often than not it's finding that initial hook.

Unsurprisingly, given rugby players love of coffee, one was organising a barista course with the help of 3Fe (Dublin), Badger and Dodo (Galway) and Baileys (Belfast). Some players who had never previously engaged came along. "Meeting players in this kind of informal manner can make it easier for them to initiate that first meeting"

The PDMs encourage all players to think



about what they would like to do post rugby and not leave it until they are in the last six months of their final contract. They also offer referrals on financial advice on tax, pension and insurance and the need for long term planning.

Financial Management

"Players make money quite early but for most there will be a fall off a [financial] cliff after they retire and ahead of taking on other employment. The recession taught a lot of the senior players harsh lessons in relation to investments. Getting them to come to a financial management workshop can be a hard sell. This really needs to be sold from within the playing group, encouraging others to embrace these courses.

It is the group in the middle, probably your 24-28 year olds, whose careers are flying and on the up, earning well, comfortable and have their degree behind them; they are the hardest to attract to something."

The personal brand issue is an interesting example of how a player can indulge a passion while still playing rugby; Tommy Bowe's branded shoe collection with Lloyd & Pryce illustrates this neatly.

"Just because you're Tommy Bowe the player doesn't mean that you can't be Tommy Bowe the entrepreneur. This is something that a lot of players are scared of; they think they have to be Brian O'Driscoll to have a brand."

"It is much easier to concentrate on it while you are still playing rather than trying to do so when you are an ex-player. What we do find difficult, it's asking a 22-year-old, 'what are you going to do after you have finished playing rugby?' Some find it difficult to look beyond the here and now.

Charity work and community engagement comes is another part of

developing your personal brand and players who are not as interested in their later career sometimes focus on coaching in the community.

"We have three levels of charity work. Players can volunteer, become an ambassador - where they are a face for the charity - or a board member. Some of our senior players have gone on the boards of the bigger charities and they learn so much from that experience."

Mental Wellbeing

The high profile 'Tackle Your Feelings campaign,' trained the spotlight on mental health issues. "You can imagine going to 40 or 50 guys and talking about mental health is not the easiest thing but it is crucial,"

"We have a 24-hour helpline that the guys can call on at any time. We have also started identifying local counsellors that we can refer players to should the need arise. Dealing with concussion, injury, not being selected, or being cut from a squad; there are a whole lot of mental health issues that affect the players. There is also confidentiality to everything we discuss with a player across everything."

Each PDM can use multiple approaches to help players when they may be struggling. For example, Connacht flanker Jake Heenan, had a horrendous run with injury that pilfered 22 months of his young career. Counselling and psychological tools helped but so did starting an online degree course with the University of Copenhagen and charity work with Dochas don Óige and Ronald McDonald House.

IRUPA Services

Five women

A common question for IRUPA's PDMs is how receptive the players are to having five females running the programmes across the country.

"I've been to conferences abroad and everyone is fascinated by the fact that it is five women running the programme. While an ex-player or athlete might gain an immediate rapport, once you have the qualifications, the respect and the relationships, it doesn't matter that I am not a rugby player or never experienced the game.

"About being female, I think we can ask questions sometimes men might feel uncomfortable with. We might be the first person in their day to ask, 'how are you?'"

Even though the season finished on a high for Deirdre's Connacht squad, the reality of professional sport can be quite bleak for some players, whether they're out of contract or retiring.

"This is ramping up to be a busy time. We have got the names of all the players being released and it is about following up on those. Those meetings can be pretty tough."

IRUPA are acutely aware of the challenges facing their retired players, especially around the process of transitioning into retirement and very often a new career.

"We are still working with players who have retired one or two years ago and what we've seen is players who are retired four or five years and embarked on a career are now going 'this is not for me'.

If they feel that way we try encourage them to do career counselling and we're also currently developing a transition booklet and the message will be, if the next career doesn't work out don't be afraid to come back and re-engage with us."

**Article written by John O'Sullivan,
Sports writer for the Irish Times.
Edited by Deirdre Lyons.**

Visit us online: www.lhkinsurance.ie

CAREER ENDING INJURY PROTECTION

LHK arrange policies for over 60% of Professional Players in Ireland. LHK make the process of arranging cover very easy, if you have to retire through injury we give you piece of mind.

If you aren't covered, get in touch TODAY for a quotation.

Call us now 01 205 5605



Worldwide cover.



24 hours a day both on and off the pitch.



International Duty automatically included.



Accidental Death cover automatically included.



Cover based on multiples of salary.



Easy payments by monthly instalments.



Specialist Insurers chosen on financial security.



Claim payments based on lump sum pay-out and tax free.

LHK
INSURANCE

Let's discuss your protection needs.

Talk to **Keith Young** m: 086 193 6951
e: keith.young@lhkinsurance.ie

Avoca Court, Temple Road, Blackrock, Co Dublin www.lhkinsurance.ie

LHK GENERAL INSURANCE LTD IS REGULATED BY THE CENTRAL BANK OF IRELAND

Irish Women's *Rugby Update*

Affiliates in Action

IRUPA teamed up with TNS Connect to bring some of our members on a work place visit in April to gain insight into a vibrant global company. As an IRUPA Affiliate company, TNS Connect are keen to give players opportunities to experience the working environment alongside their rugby commitments.

TNS Connect champions innovative consumer electronics and accessories by connecting the world's leading retailers with the most exciting brands. Players were made to feel very welcome at TNS Connect headquarters, with a tour of the workplace, thoroughly engaging talks from staff and demonstrations of a variety of products.

Irish international; Jenny Murphy commented, "It's fantastic that TNS Connect have invited us out to learn more about what they do. It's very easy for players to become heavily focused on rugby but it's important that we gain experiences off the field too."

TNS Connect Co-Founder, Ivan Eustace

said "Many of our employees here at TNS Connect come from sporting backgrounds, we know and appreciate the range of transferable skills and qualities that athletes at this level bring to their roles. We are passionate promoters of a healthy work life balance and know the commitment, motivation and drive of top athletes makes them extremely attractive as potential employees."



Wellbeing Programme

April and May saw the introduction of the Zurich Player Wellbeing Programme to the women's squads. Sessions were delivered to members of the Irish 7s squad at their training base in Lansdowne Road and to members of the National XVs squads in Dublin, Galway and Limerick as well as online for some of our Exile members.

IRUPA are working with former World Rugby Women's Development Manager, Susan Carty, to deliver this programme. Susan has a background in psychiatry and mental health training and is passionate about being involved with this programme. Susan commented, "The Wellbeing Programme is a very exciting initiative and I am thrilled to work with IRUPA to deliver it. Players give so much of themselves to the sport, this programme recognises the impact that this commitment can have on players and endeavours to support them with whatever they are dealing with."

The initial sessions with the players gave an introduction to the Wellbeing Programme and then looked to gain insight from the groups on what they were dealing with outside of rugby.

Susan remarked on how she felt the workshops went, "The players positively engaged with the sessions and were open to hearing what the Wellbeing Programme is about. They welcomed the opportunity to shape the programme and highlighted the areas they want support in."

IRUPA recognise the importance of player wellbeing and will continue to roll out workshops to the players going forward. If you would like support in this area contact your Player Development Manager or avail of the IRUPA confidential helpline. This service is available to all IRUPA members and may be used if you are experiencing any of the following (not exhaustive) issues: relationship problems, financial concerns, traumatic events, family issues, anxiety, stress & coping, depression, bereavement or addiction.



Ready, Steady, Cook

Squad members from both 7s and XVs recently took part in cooking sessions jointly organised by IRUPA and the IRFU. Sessions were hosted by Ringsend Community College in Dublin and Hook & Ladder Cookery School in Limerick. Chef, Keith Pigott, delivered a total six sessions across the two locations.

Sessions were designed to get players engaged with cooking and nutrition. IRFU nutritionist, Nora Ni Fhlannagain, was involved in the consultation process: "These players aren't full time athletes and are juggling college and/or jobs around their rugby commitments. With such a hectic schedule good cooking skills are essential to make sure they can nourish their bodies, fuel for sport and recover after training."

Knife skills and basic cooking tips meant that many of the recipes that were demonstrated and cooked by the players could be served up within 10 to 15 minutes. From soups to Shakshuka and superfood salads, players were able to taste a wide variety of dishes prepared by Keith and were then able to have a go at preparing their own versions.

Making comparisons between the kitchen and the pitch, Chef Keith said: "Cooking is a lot like rugby in ways, in rugby you prepare (train), execute (play) and then get the result. It's the same in the kitchen, you prepare by researching your recipe, prepare the ingredients

you're going to need and then at the end, you hopefully have something nice to eat."

Ailis Egan, XVs National team player, attended one of the classes in Dublin and commented, "It has helped change how I cook, prep and shop. I enjoy cooking but had run out of ideas. This helped reinvigorate me at a crucial stage (pre-season) and now I have a nutrition buzz once again!"

Jenny Murphy, 7s National Team player, highlighted how beneficial the course was, "As well as learning some useful skills when preparing meals and new recipes, it was a good opportunity to bond with team mates outside of training/camps and meet players from other rugby codes. Well organised and very enjoyable! Thanks IRUPA and Keith!"



Meet the Irish Agents

IRUPA, together with the IRFU, the RFU and the WRU, have established a common set of agent regulations across Ireland, England and Wales. The Agent Regulations have been incorporated in the IRFU regulations as Regulation 11. IRUPA is acting as an administrator of the scheme and working closely with all Irish based agents to ensure that not only players are educated on what to expect of an agent but also that agents have information available to them to do the best possible job for their client.

John Baker



John has more than 25 years' experience in the sports industry. Baker Sports Management was established in 1997 and manages sports professionals throughout their entire career. His professional contacts include players, national teams, governing bodies and media, and global conglomerates seeking brand endorsement from celebrity sports stars. John's business philosophy is simple: to provide a completely one-to-one service to sports stars carried out with professionalism and integrity. For more information see www.bsmg.ie

Ryan Constable



Esportif International is one of the few truly global, full service, rugby agencies with coverage across all key rugby territories. Ryan entered the industry over a decade ago, after finishing his own career as a professional rugby player, with the aim of assisting players in achieving their potential and getting paid what they deserve. Maximising the talent and earnings of his clients remains his number one motivation and focus. For more information see www.esportif.com

Tony Henshaw



Tony represents his son Robbie Henshaw. Tony endeavours to do the best possible job for his client and sees the agent registration process as a valuable tool in enabling him to do so. Tony has worked in the cable industry, in the Automation and Power Technology section of the A.B.B. group for 20 years, negotiating major cable contracts with the E.S.B. British Telecom, Eircom and other

wholesale Cable companies. Tony has a number of advisors in place to assist him in his dealings and negotiations.

Karl Hogan



Karl Hogan is a 36 year old trained accountant. He has been an agent for almost ten years, working across Pro 12 Premiership, Top 14 and ProD2 and Super Rugby. Karl leads ProRugby Ireland who represent players and coaches across all these competitions and has extensive knowledge of the markets. For more information see www.prorugbyireland.com

Shaun Longstaff



Established in 2003 ex-International player and Barbarians captain Shaun Longstaff is the founding director of global leading rugby player & coach recruitment company, Top Marque Sports. Top Marque Sports comprises of 2 licenced French agents, 4 in the UK and 5 in the Southern Hemisphere, an in-house lawyer and a 4 person commercial support team. 8 of the 11 agents have

played rugby professionally. TMS culture is based on honesty, integrity and energy. Go to www.topmarquesports.com for more Information.

Damien O'Donohoe



IKON Talent is headed up by Damien O'Donohoe. Damien is a commercial lawyer and has been working in the entertainment business for over 15 years. Damien has ran some of the biggest music and sports events in Europe with his most recent project being the Caribbean Premier League (CPL), an international T20 tournament which he set up in 2013 with Digicel in the Caribbean. The CPL has been a huge success attracting over 100m TV viewers last year. Damien is also on the board of Quinta Do Lago and PGA Catalunya. For more information see www.ikontalent.com

David McHugh



David is a director of Line Up Sports, set up in 2010 as an evolution of Tri Line Sports Solutions. David holds a BA in Business Studies from John Moore's Uni. of Liverpool and a Dip. in Marketing from the MII, & Dip. in Digital Marketing from the European Institute of Communications. David has extensive experience of strategic consultancy for brands, national governing bodies, teams and individuals in the area of commercial rights as well a wide variety of project management roles within the sport and marketing sectors. David previously worked as team manager for

Frankie Sheahan



Frankie Sheahan retired from international rugby in 2009. His first-hand experience as a professional athlete and entrepreneur helps him in providing the highest quality representation for his clients. As MD of Front Row Speakers he also sources speakers for some of the largest companies in the world. In 2013, he founded the Pendulum Summit featuring many of the best speakers in the world culminating in Tony Robbins as keynote in January 2016. Frankie holds an Economics Degree from UCC, a sponsorship diploma from ITEC and a H. Dip in Leadership from the IML. For more information see www.frontrowspeakers.com/talent-management

Niall Woods



Navy Blue was founded on the back of Niall Woods' first-hand experience of being a professional rugby player and from his experience heading up IRUPA for 8 years after starting with the RPA (Rugby Players Association) in England. No other agency is headed by someone that has played professional rugby, then represented players collectively in a Players Union and also managed players as Niall Woods has. This makes Navy Blue unique. Their business model combines

Keith Matthews



Set up in 2012, Core Sports Management offers rugby players professional and honest representation. Keith Matthews, who holds a Masters in Business Management and is a Qualified Financial Advisor, has over 14 years' collective experience in professional rugby both as a player and an agent and combines his experience, education, skills and extensive contact base to offer professional players a range of comprehensive services. Core Sports Management prides itself on its personal approach to managing its players in all aspects of their careers. For more information see www.coresports.ie

Andy Park



Sportology Management is run by former Ulster European Cup winner Andy Park. The Agency acts for promising sports professionals in the world of Rugby and Golf providing a support network both on and outside the sporting arena. The agency has a presence in UK, Ireland, Middle East and USA. Rugby clients include Ireland and Ulster players Stuart Olding and Iain Henderson. For more information see www.sportologyuk.com

Life after Rugby

understanding the transition process.

Leaving professional rugby as a player is guaranteed at some point in your life. As a players' association, IRUPA will never apologise for reminding you of that. Few people are in the privileged position of being a professional sportsperson, but that doesn't make the end of that career necessarily any easier.

No matter how well prepared you are for life after rugby, the transition out of the game will affect all players in some way. Alan Quinlan recently spoke about this process, likening it to a "little death". Like most professional players who have been through the retirement process, nothing can quite prepare you for the fact that part of your life is over and won't ever come back. This is because the process of transition will alter your daily routines, your relationships, your roles and your assumptions about

yourself. It's a major life change and change can be difficult no matter what you are doing.

The easiest, most basic way of understanding change as a process is to break change down into three phases – Current, Transition and the Future.

Unfortunately, as someone who is used to setting goals with a fixed point, the

"future" is not a set defined point, and can take years to fully integrate to.

While all players will face retirement at some point, the impact of that retirement will differ, but knowing there is a process, and realising that you are not alone in going through this process, will help.

A simple way of examining how you might deal with retirement is to look at your 4Ss – your Situation, Self, Support and Strategies.

CURRENT

- Familiar and comfortable (even if it is not working great).
- It is who you are, how you define yourself, how you are measured and evaluated.
- It is known.

TRANSITION

- Messy and disorganised. Often emotionally charged.
- Requires acceptance of new perspectives and new ways of behaving.
- Challenging.

FUTURE

- Where you are trying to get to.
- Not fully defined and can shift as you go through transition.
- May not match your old personal and professional goals.
- It is unknown.

Situation

Did you retire on your own terms?

Players that are forced to retire, through injury or being released for example, often find the process more difficult to come to terms with.

Did you achieve your sporting goals?

Players who have not achieved their expected sporting goals express more difficulties with retirement including loneliness, missing people related to sport and difficulty in organizing their post-sport lives.

Have you engaged in education or personal development?

A lack of non-sporting life experiences can make the transition out of sport more difficult. Educational involvement and career planning are positively associated with post-sport life adjustment.

Are you facing other challenges?

Are you moving to a new location? Are you about to get married, have children? Are you dealing with serious injury? Dealing with concurrent stressors at a time when you are transitioning can make it all the more challenging.

Self

Do you have a very strong athletic identity?

While a strong athletic identity has helped you to play rugby at a professional level, players with a very strong athletic identity will take longer to adjust to the post-retirement life.

Are you an optimist?

Those with optimistic personalities tend to cope better with change and players with high self-confidence are also likely to have more belief in their abilities to achieve new career goals.

Have you planned financially for your future?

Financial problems can cause transition difficulties and limit post-sport life choices.

Do you plan on staying physically active?

Staying physically active in some way can help you with feelings of anxiety associated with new routines and feelings of loss resulting from no more competition or training.

Support

Do you have a strong social support?

Even if you don't want to un-burden yourself to others, being in the company of people who support and love you can be of comfort. Where possible though, try and let those close to you know how you feel. A strong social network is one of the key predictors of a more positive transitional experience.

Are there other past players you can turn to?

While a loss of social networks after your sport career has ended can be difficult, reaching out to other players who have retired can help.

Did you have a good relationship with your coach?

Some retired athletes who did not have a good relationship with their coach expressed more difficulties in the career transition process.

Can IRUPA help you?

Most definitely yes. Even if you never engaged with us as a player, IRUPA is there to help you through this difficult and confusing time. We are only a phone call away.

Support

What coping strategies do you tend to use? Not all coping strategies are created equal. Unhealthy ways of coping – usually classed as "avoidance coping" as it does little to deal with the actual stress – may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities.
- Excessive time spent on social media/Internet

- Alcohol / Drug use.
- Over-eating, bingeing on junk food or not eating/changing your eating patterns
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Over sleeping, staying in bed
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

What are the best ways to cope with transition?

It is important to note that no single coping strategy will work for everyone, all of the time. Find strategies that work for you and try different techniques that make you feel comfortable. Research has found that some of the best strategies include.

- Social support. Share how you feel with others, especially those closest to you.
- Be active and healthy. Remaining active and healthy is great for your mental wellbeing. Why not try the activities that you were precluded from whilst playing?
- Set new goals. Invest the time to set goals in both professional and personal areas of your life. What makes you excited now?
- Control the controllables and allow yourself to feel. Pretending that the transition from rugby is easy helps no-one! Instead of trying to control every emotion you feel, accept what is outside of your personal control, allow yourself to feel and then take action to improve how you live your life.
- Make time for you. Try to do one thing every day that makes you feel good. Just 20 minutes will make a difference.
- Seek professional help, if you need to.

Research suggest that it takes up to two years to fully transition out of sport, but please remember that this is an individual process, and every player will move through it at different speeds. No matter how prepared you are for it, there is a normal process of grief or loss that you will go through. Letting go of the life that you once had is difficult, and it is very important that to know that many of the emotions you may be feeling have been felt by the many many athletes that have gone before you.

While it is never too early to plan for your life after your rugby career, it is also never too late to seek support.

IRUPA offers all of our Player Development Programme services to retired players, through the IRUPA Clubhouse, regardless of how long you have been out of the game. We can help you with career advice and guidance, education, re-training and skill development, self-awareness, financial planning and support as well as emotional, physical and mental wellbeing.

Some (not all) of the things a retiring athlete might experience

- You could be ecstatic, starting on a new journey. However, even if you are looking forward to the day you hang up your boots, it is not always plain sailing.
- You might be feeling lonely. The environment you surrounded yourself with every day is now

gone. You are told how much you contributed to the team and that the door is always open for you, but you're removed from the WhatsApp group, you have to work regular hours and there are no more long lunches with your team mates, you don't understand the funny # on Instagram or twitter.

- How do you introduce yourself? You were always "a rugby player". Finding out what to introduce yourself as can be difficult.
- With no routine, no training, no set timetable, no competition, you feel "ordinary".
- You may be angry or hurt. You may be embarrassed or you may feel that you have let your family and friends down in some way. These are normal feelings and emotions. The reality is however that your loved ones will just want to support you and will be very proud of your achievements.
- Maintaining a positive attitude can also be exhausting and difficult.

You may feel "no one understands" when in fact, a lot of people do – it's worth the effort to call a mate and go for a coffee or catch up.

- You might compensate for a lack of training and physical highs by "being busy", partying and socialising. The lack of physicality might now make you angry.
- You realise that you are not a player anymore, so might avoid watching or going to games. You don't want to give your opinion on games, but being an ex-player you are constantly asked for it.
- You might like the new freedom that being out of the limelight holds and find it liberating when you are not recognised! Being evaluated for other skills and competencies outside of rugby might motivate you to transfer your energy into new activities and roles.
- Someone once described retiring being similar to taking a bungee jump. While some players might make the decision to jump, many are pushed. You know there is going to be a big fall, but no matter how prepared you are for it is still a very scary ride. Once you have made that initial jump there are plenty more ups and downs along the way until finally you level off and find some stability, balance and an ability to look back on the experience and accept it for the thrilling one that it was.
- Always remember you have done an amazing job to get this far in a very tough profession. This will stand to you and just take one day at a time with your transition.

Contact Details for your IRUPA PDMs



CONNACHT PDM
Deirdre Lyons
E: deirdre.lyons@irupa.ie
M: 087 2410398



LEINSTER PDM
Créde Sheehy-Kelly
E: crede@irupa.ie
M: 086 348 0967



MUNSTER PDM
Derval O'Rourke
E: derval@irupa.ie
M: 085 875 4741



ULSTER PDM
Pamela Gilpin
E: pamela.gilpin@irupa.ie
M: +44 7709800133



**WOMEN'S SEVENS
AND FIFTEENS PDM**
Lindsey Berne
E: lindsey.berne@irupa.ie
M: 086 781 8331



Phone: +353 1 676 9680
Email: info@irupa.ie
Twitter: @IRUPA
www.irupa.ie

TOLD & CO

www.toldandco.com





IRPA update

IRPA IS THE **WORLD REPRESENTATIVE BODY** OF PROFESSIONAL RUGBY PLAYERS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO PLAYERS AND THE GAME OF RUGBY

Irish Representation on the World Rugby, Rugby Committee

In March, Paul O'Connell and Sophie Spence attended the World Rugby Committee meeting in Dublin as representatives of the IRPA. This powerful group is the main decision-making body for World Rugby and gathers twice a year.

Paul and Sophie provided important player input at the meeting and spoke positively about the value of the 2015 Rugby Athletes Commission and the need to progress the commitments made.

IRPA have worked hard to guarantee player representation on this group, to ensure that all decisions are made with players in mind. It is great to see two Irish legends giving their time to protect the rights of their international peers.



International Mental Health Study

IRUPA through IRPA is involved in the first global mental health study for professional rugby players. Due to the physical and emotional pressure associated with professional sport, professional athletes may suffer from health complaints during their career.

However, information about the consequences of this physical and emotional pressure on professional rugby players is lacking. We would like to address that omission, a wide section national associations are partnering on a study to gather knowledge about the influence of a professional rugby career on the health and well-being on its players.

The results of such a study will help to determine whether there is a need to further develop assistance programmes aimed at supporting and promoting sustainable health and well-being among professional rugby players during their careers.

Sevens Reports

IRPA have been working with World Rugby to ensure that player welfare is paramount during the men's and women's World Sevens Series.

Both series are extremely physically demanding on the players and IRPA strives to ensure that its members are provided with the best possible travel, treatment, nutrition, facilities and services whilst on tour.

Following each tournament players were provided with a questionnaire to provide direct player feedback to IRPA regarding their tournament experience.

The aim of the questionnaire is to document player views regarding the good aspects of tournaments and areas that need improvement in terms of servicing the team and player needs.

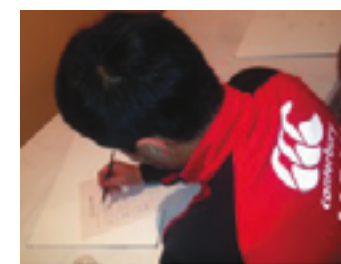
Monitoring and evaluating this feedback helps ensure the players are actively contributing to the ongoing success of the series and that player safety and welfare is not compromised.



IRPA Expanding its Membership

There are a number of developing and developed rugby environments which do not have player representation in the form of a national player association.

Over the last year IRPA has been working with a number of national teams to ensure they have appropriate representation when it comes to negotiations of player contracts, match fees, player grievances and other player welfare issues.



IRPA to ensure they have a representative body such as USA, Canada, Scotland, Japan and Kenya (Sevens).

A number of international player groups have, or are in the process of, signing mandate forms with

Pacific Island Player Development Programme

With 16% of the world's professional rugby players of Pacific Island origin, it was recognised by World Rugby that a well-resourced player education programme would be necessary across Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

IRPA, along with the Pacific Island Players Association (PIPA) and in partnership with World Rugby, are delivering pre-elite education sessions in the Pacific.

IRPA are currently recruiting for the positions of player development managers. However, in the meantime, the Association is providing players with key information sheets tailored for their needs to help prepare them for the challenges they face in professional rugby.



Leaders on the pitch.



Trustee Decisions

Confidential, Impartial and Independent Advice to Employers and Trustees.

Trustee Decisions Limited, Fitzwilliam Hall, Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2. Tel: +353 (1) 8062750 www.trusteedecisions.com

Declan Fitzpatrick

In this edition we continue our focus on past professional players, their experience of professional rugby and their transition out of the sport. We talk to former Ulster and Ireland prop Declan Fitzpatrick.



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

At school I spent most of my time looking out the window wanting to be outdoors! So career wise I didn't have any great aspirations so long as I wasn't office bound. My family were all heavily involved in the construction industry so that was the natural progression for me.

How did you embark on your rugby career?

Alan Clarke had spotted me playing for the Irish exiles in London and invited me to Belfast to trial for the new academy that was being set up for Ulster. At that stage I wanted to move to Ireland to do a joinery or plastering apprenticeship but turned it down and headed north. I joined Belfast Harlequins and the Ulster academy and worked as a groundsman and bar man to earn a few bob.

Did you consider rugby to be a viable career option?

Looking back I knew there was an opportunity for me in Ulster as a prop but I was caught between playing hooker and prop. However once I joined the national academy and started to represent Ireland at junior level at tight head I started to

believe I could have a career in rugby.

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

I began a quantity surveying degree in my second year in the academy. Luckily I choose a degree which didn't require any more academic training post degree. It was a job I knew I would enjoy, in an industry that had strong family connections. Fortunately the University of Ulster and the Ulster academy had a good relationship which allowed me to manage my time at training and university effectively. Final year was a struggle and there was a lot of late night cramming for exams and deadline assignments but I made it out!

How did your rugby career progress?

I remained on the fringes of the Ulster first team for the early years making bench appearances. I got my first real crack at first team rugby when Simon Best unfortunately had to retire. I performed well and built my career at Ulster from there. Injury played a big part in my opportunities over the years as I found myself behind world class players in BJ Botha and John Afoa. I had to take my chances when they came. I got my international chance against the All Blacks in 2012 on the back of some good performances for Ulster and began to grow from there but once again injury was to hamper my progression at international level. I'd like to think I established myself as a solid tight head prop and contributed a lot to Ulster and Ireland. When you are forced to retire you are always going to feel like you've left plenty out there, but I am proud I achieved my main goals and had good fun along the way.

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

Absolutely not. It's only when you leave it do you realise how your life at the highest

level is dictated by the sport. Physically, emotionally, family time etc. It really gets flipped on its head when you finish suddenly and there is certainly a void left behind. Luckily I have a good job, friends and a supportive family.

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

Yes I certainly do. Rugby taught me a great deal about professionalism, attention to detail and hard work. Skills that are definitely transferable is my career post rugby.

How was your retirement experience?

It's never easy having to retire suddenly from a career you have given everything to and sacrificed a lot for. However, when I took that last hit I knew it felt different. You have to listen to your body, especially when it's a head injury. I had had my struggles in the past but had worked so hard to overcome them so it was a hard pill to swallow when I had to retire. Even though it had been evident as I tried to recover that it was the right time. You start off with regrets and 'what ifs' but ultimately you end up being grateful for the great experience and friends you've made.

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

I enjoyed the big games, the European cup and international matches. It's the whole build up and training etc. You can't really replicate that competitive team environment and that's certainly something I miss.

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

Look after your body and mind!

So Declan what are you doing currently?

I am currently working as a quantity surveyor with Bruce Shaw in Belfast, cost managing construction projects and working towards my Chartership. I play the odd game of handball to keep the belly under control. But most of my free time is spent with the feet up watching sport!

BBar

THE PERFECT VIEW

CATCH

ALL THE ACTION

LIVE SPORTS ON 20 SCREENS WITH A VIEW FROM EVERY ANGLE SO NO ONE MISSES OUT.



VISIT BBAR AT THE DOUBLETREE BY HILTON - BURLINGTON ROAD

ALL BIG SPORTING EVENTS

RUGBY | GAA | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE | PREMIERSHIP

WALKING DISTANCE TO DONNYBROOK AND THE AVIVA
IDEAL FOR PRE AND AFTER GAME DRINKS

FOOD AND DRINK SPECIALS DURING SELECTED SPORTING EVENTS

Extensive
Bar Food
Menu served
Daily from
12pm

E: DTDUBLINHOTEL.EVENTS@HILTON.COM

P: +353 (0)1 6185600

FOLLOW US @DOUBLETREEDUB

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL DUBLIN

BURLINGTON ROAD, UPPER LEESON STREET, DUBLIN 4



CONVERT YOUR FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES. CALL THE SPECIALISTS

BDO SPORTS UNIT. We are proud to advise some of Ireland's leading international sports professionals, coaches, representative bodies and associations. We have a dedicated team of professional advisers ready to bring their extensive experience to meet your requirements.

The services we provide include:

- Tax structuring
- Structuring and exploitation of image rights
- International tax advice
- Retirement planning
- Inheritance tax planning
- Sportperson's tax reliefs
- VAT advice
- Personal wealth management
- Investment advice
- Financial reporting and compliance
- Tax efficient funding for sports organisations
- Tax exemptions for sporting bodies.

At BDO we understand the business and financial environment for sports professionals, associations & enterprises and we have the experience and expertise to provide a comprehensive and proactive service.

Talk to us

For further information please contact **Ciarán Medlar**, Partner, Head of Taxation Services and BDO Sports Unit, on **01 470 0280** or at **cmedlar@bdo.ie**

BDO: the official Business Adviser to Leinster Rugby.

www.bdo.ie

