



RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND

ANNUAL REVIEW 2019





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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

ROB KEARNEY

When writing this message last year, I was able to reflect on one of the most successful years in the history of rugby in Ireland. Unfortunately, 2019 did not scale those heights –that is sport. Sometimes you win. Sometimes you lose. The game always goes on.

And it will.

Rugby in this country remains in a good place. An array of young talent in both the men's and women's games bodes well for the future. My own career has been continuously refreshed by new faces appearing on the horizon. Rugby doesn't stand still.

Behind the scenes, Rugby Players Ireland have been ensuring that the new additions to the professional ranks are adequately prepared. If they are to enjoy a successful career, the modern player needs to have the requisite skillset to meet the demands of the game, both on and off the field. Their scrumming prowess and ability to deal with the pressures of being in the spotlight need to be more in tune than you might think.

I note that when speaking at our Rookie Camp before the 2019/20 season kicked off, Gordon D'Arcy remarked that young players stand to benefit from the mistakes that he and his peers made in the past. Now firmly established as a leading players' association in rugby terms and beyond, Rugby Players Ireland has grown with the likes of Gordon and have taken its own learnings, tailoring services to meet the needs of the modern rugby player.

I look forward to seeing the fruits of Rugby Players Ireland's endeavours in the years to come.

PREVIOUS CHAIRMEN OF IRUPA/RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND

2015-Present | **ROB KEARNEY**

2012-2015 | **JOHNNY SEXTON**

2011-2012 | **BRIAN O'DRISCOLL**

2007-2011 | **MARCUS HORAN**

2005-2007 | **MARK MCHUGH**

2001-2005 | **LIAM TOLAND**



CEO ADDRESS

ANNUAL REVIEW 2019

SIMON KEOGH

Since defeat at the hands of Argentina at the 2015 Rugby World Cup, 2019 had been touted as the year that Irish Rugby was going to progress further than ever on the global stage. In many ways we have, just not at this particular tournament.

The best sporting environments are those that create a culture where winning is engrained in the psyche. While results in Japan didn't go as planned, it doesn't mean that we don't have a sporting environment to be proud of. The game of rugby is so unpredictable and that is why it is so compelling; you cannot forecast the outcome of any match or tournament, not to mention those years in advance.

Following the heroic defeat of the All Blacks in the latter part of 2018 and our subsequent ascension to the top spot in World Rugby rankings, many installed Ireland as their pre-World Cup favourites. However, following defeat to the same New Zealand side in October, our tournament was over. The press had very little sympathy for the squad and management upon the conclusion of the tournament, but they too have become part of the culture where success is expected.

Upon meeting those involved following their return to Ireland, it was clear that our World Cup contingent shared clear objectives: a) get back to winning ways and b) correct some of the perceived wrongs placed upon their shoulders. I have no doubt

that they will, helped by the good form of their respective sides in both domestic and European competition from the outset of the 2019/20 season.

Irish Rugby is in a really good place and there is much reason to be hopeful. An array of youthful talent has exploded onto the scene, while our Men's Sevens team have also joined their female counterparts on the World Series stage. We have become the envy of many competing nations and despite one-off results in the Far East, our members continue to flourish both on and off the field.

As a players' association we do all we can to help our members develop as athletes and individuals. In 2019, Rugby Players Ireland introduced several new initiatives while improving others further. Of particular note is the new collective agreement established between Rugby Players Ireland and the IRFU and further demonstrates the ambition of both organisations to keep evolving whilst harnessing this winning culture.

Elsewhere, there was further progression in the IRFU's recognition of Rugby Players Ireland as the collective voice for the Irish

Women's XVs as well as the Irish Men's and Women's Sevens teams. This development has allowed Rugby Players Ireland to restructure its governance to allow for a better representation of its members at board level.

The off-field development continues to thrive as we work in partnership with the IRFU to deliver a world leading player development programme. For the second year in succession we ran our Rookie Camp, a two-day education seminar for our new academy members.

This year also saw the commencement in partnership with the Z Foundation of phase two of Tackle Your Feelings, our mental wellbeing campaign which our members use their status as rugby players to break down

the stigma that surrounds mental wellbeing. Additionally, the Zurich Irish Rugby Players Awards remains a social highlight at the climax of the rugby season and was once again televised on Virgin Media One.

2019 was a Rugby World Cup year but the outcome of that tournament alone does not define Irish Rugby. We are in such a good place on so many levels. We look forward to 2020 and tackling all it has to offer.



SECTION 01

REPRE- SENT





When Rugby Players Ireland was founded in 2001 following discussions between Donal Spring, Peter McKenna, Liam Toland and the IRFU, its remit was to promote and protect the welfare of all professional players across the four provinces.

While the functions of the association have grown to include a world-leading player development syllabus and a dedicated community engagement programme that also encompasses a public mental wellbeing campaign, the backbone of the organisation remains in the representation of our membership on issues of importance in the game.

THE RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND EXECUTIVE BOARD

To reflect the growing remit of Rugby Players Ireland in light of the continued development of professional rugby in the country, there were four new appointees to the Executive Board this year.

Louise Galvin (Women's 7s), Ciara Griffin (Women's XVs) and Greg O'Shea (Men's 7s) joined Eoin McKeon (Connacht), Peter O'Mahony (Munster), Johnny Sexton (Leinster) and Rob Kearney (Chairperson) on the Executive Board, while Iain Henderson (Ulster) was also appointed following the retirement of Darren Cave.

Maura Quinn, who previously served as Head of UNICEF Ireland and is currently the Chief Executive of the Institute of Directors in Ireland, was appointed as a Non-Executive Director. Ms Quinn is a leading voice on the importance of director training and board diversity and a keen advocate of the need to improve corporate governance standards and the quality of boards in Ireland. The off-field balance is further met with the experience of former Irish international Peter McKenna of McKenna Durcan Solicitors and Simon Keogh.

Through the engagement of the Board we have been able to take significant strides forward in how we engage and negotiate with the IRFU while ensuring that its decision-making processes are player-centred.



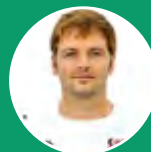
Rob Kearney
Chairman



Louise Galvin
Women's 7s



Ciara Griffin
Women's XV's



Iain Henderson
Ulster Rugby



Eoin McKeon
Connacht Rugby



Peter O'Mahony
Munster Rugby



Greg O'Shea
Men's 7s



Johnny Sexton
Leinster Rugby



Peter McKenna
Non-Executive Director



Maura Quinn
Non-Executive Director



Simon Keogh
CEO, Rugby Players Ireland

“

THE ORGANISATION'S RECRUITMENT OF A NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FROM OUTSIDE THE WORLD OF RUGBY ILLUSTRATES HOW RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND RECOGNISE THE NEED FOR AN EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE, WHICH WILL HELP TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND BOARD MANAGEMENT

Maura Quinn

Rugby Players Ireland Executive Board Member

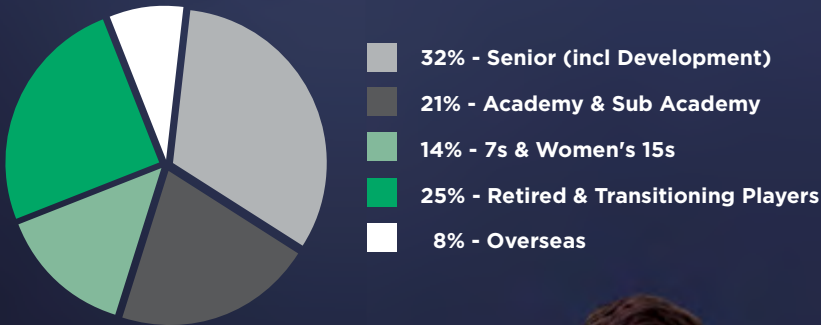


MEMBERSHIP

Over the past year, the necessary amendments have been made to the constitution of Rugby Players Ireland to allow for the association to formally represent the Irish Women's XVs and the 7s programmes.

Through discussion and collaboration with the IRFU, we have been able to grow our membership to provide for these groups with representation, personal development services and corporate engagement opportunities. A dedicated Player Development Manager has also been assigned to assist the player groups.

Who do we work with?





NOW THAT WE ARE BEING ASSIMILATED INTO RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND MORE AND MORE, LESS WORRIES COME TO THE FORE. IN THE PAST, IF AN ISSUE CAME TO LIGHT FROM A PLAYERS' PERSPECTIVE, A GROUP OF SENIOR PLAYERS WOULD SIT AROUND AND TRY TO THINK OF A SOLUTION. IT CAN TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR PERFORMANCE. NOW WE CAN TURN TO THE TEAM AT RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND AND THE EXECUTIVE BOARD TO SHARE OUR CONCERNS AND PUT THE APPROPRIATE STEPS IN PLACE."

Ciara Griffin

Rugby Players Ireland Executive Board Member



COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

This year, Rugby Players Ireland have been working alongside the IRFU to introduce the first collective agreement between the players' association and the Union. The work has seen both Rugby Players Ireland and the IRFU listen to, learn from and negotiate with each other to reach agreement on matters of importance to the players and the Union.

This is a ground-breaking and progressive step for the relationship between the professional rugby players in Ireland and the IRFU. There are few sporting codes in Europe who enjoy such an advanced relationship that allows for the representatives of the playing group to help shape the employment conditions of those it represents.

The new structure gives both employer and employee a medium in each four-year cycle, to revisit its relationship and make any agreed amendments necessary resulting from changes in environment or from learnings over that period.

It progresses Rugby Players Ireland further along its vision "to make Ireland the best place in the world to play rugby."

Rugby Players Ireland would like to thank Philip Browne and the IRFU for continuing to ensure that our players remain key stakeholders in our game



PROVINCIAL VISITS

With five Player Development Managers now based across the country, Rugby Players Ireland has become a regular feature in the day-to-day lives of our members. Throughout the year, additional staff members also take the time to call on the various squads. Denis Hurley is a regular visitor to the provincial HQs and represents a key communicative link between the players and their association.

Before the 2019/20 season kicked off, Simon Keogh travelled around the country to update our members on behind-the-scenes developments at Rugby Players Ireland and provide information on the Collective Bargaining Agreement in addition to taxation and insurance issues.

The off-season also provides an ideal opportunity to meet with new faces and to catch-up with some familiar faces before the season proper kicks off.



IRFU COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

In today's environment, we work to ensure that player welfare is at the forefront of all decisions. Rugby Players Ireland has appointed representatives on each of the professional welfare forums in the IRFU. Former player Dr Niall Hogan sits on the on the IRFU Medical Advisory Committee and has overseen a number of processes and protocols introduced to protect players' medical interests.



Meanwhile, Eoin Reddan continues to take his place on the IRFU National Professional Game Board ensuring that the contractual and professional environment remains player focussed.

As former international scrum-halves, both have used their vast experiences in the game to futureproof the welfare for the next crop of professionals. Their time and dedication is hugely appreciated by our members.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY PLAYERS

International Rugby Players is the representative body on issues of importance to professional rugby players throughout the world. This year, Rugby Players Ireland has been well represented on the global stage.

On the eve of the World Rugby Awards in Monaco last May, the inaugural Players Council meeting was held. With a primary focus on the global season, Irish voices were to the fore of discussions. Johnny Sexton (Council President), Rory Best, Rob Kearney, Isaac Boss, Jamie Heaslip and Simon Keogh were all in attendance. The Players Council, which meets and communicates on important issues throughout the year, is made up of the top men's and women's, 7s and 15s players from around the world.

Simon Keogh also attended the International Rugby Players Conference held in Tokyo during the Rugby World Cup.



AGENT REGISTRATION

Over the past five years Rugby Players Ireland has managed the Agent Registration Scheme. We continue to work with the IRFU, the RFU and the WRU to run a common set of agent regulations across Ireland, England and Wales.

These Regulations sit within the IRFU Regulations and are overseen by a Rugby Players Ireland appointed registration board of Sarah O'Connor, Eddie Wigglesworth and Derek Hegarty. The scheme is designed to improve, protect and drive standards within the agency environment as well as safeguarding the players.



In February 2019, all Irish registered agents as well as some UK registered agents attended the compulsory CPD workshop held in Rugby Players Ireland HQ. Rugby Players Ireland is committed to working with national unions agents and registration board to ensure that the agency environment is safeguarded for the betterment of the game.

RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND

“

AS AN IRISHMAN, IT BRINGS ME GREAT PLEASURE TO SEE HOW THE GAME HAS GROWN IN THIS COUNTRY. HAVING MY OWN EXPERIENCE OF RUGBY ELSEWHERE, IT IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND ARE AN INVALUABLE ASSET TO THE GAME HERE. **THEIR WORK OFF THE FIELD, HELPS TO ENSURE THAT IRISH RUGBY CONTINUES TO THRIVE ON IT.**

Conor O'Shea

BNY Mellon Rugby Players Ireland Hall of Fame Inductee 2019

A large group of young people, mostly teenagers, are posing for a group photo in a hallway. They are arranged in several rows, smiling at the camera. The hallway has a wooden door and a decorative archway in the background. The lighting is warm and indoor. A green vertical bar is on the left side of the image, and a green horizontal bar is below the text.

SECTION 02

DEVELOP



THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (PDP)

The aim of the Personal Development Programme is foster the personal growth and development of players while they are still playing and ultimately prepare and support them for life after rugby.

The Player Development Programme (PDP) is a jointly funded initiative between Rugby Players Ireland and the IRFU. It is a person-centred approach, where the individual needs of each player are assessed, and personal development action plans are tailored to those needs. The PDP encompasses five fundamental areas that contribute to the overall personal development and growth of players.





RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND / IRFU PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

CAREER ADVICE & GUIDANCE

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

EDUCATION, TRAINING & SKILLS

- Academic & trade qualifications
- Flexible learning options
- General interest courses
- Coaching qualifications
- Life skills



PLAYER WELLBEING

- Mental health
- Physical health & self-care
- Self-awareness & personal leadership
- Player representation
- Sport integrity

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- Brand awareness & development
- Social media
- Media & public speaking skills
- Community & charity engagement
- Personal responsibility

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & PLANNING

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

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Player Development Programme underpins the work of Rugby Players Ireland. Each Player Development Manager (PDM) works with emerging players (Academy and sub-Academy) and currently contracted players, as well as retired players in each province.

STAFFING:



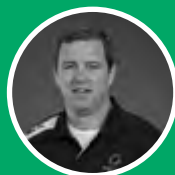
Dr Deirdre Lyons

*Head of Player Development
Programme and PDM
(Connacht Rugby)*



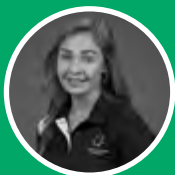
Pamela Gilpin

*PDM
(Ulster Rugby)*



Marcus Horan

*PDM
(Munster Rugby)*



Aoife Lane

*Foundation & Player
Services Manager*



Dr Ella McCabe

*Head of Player Wellbeing and
PDM (Leinster Rugby)*



Dr Vincent O'Flaherty

*PDM (Women's XVs & Irish
Rugby 7s Programme)*



THE ROLE OF THE PDM IS TO PROMOTE THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING OF PLAYERS BY EMPOWERING THEM TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT BOTH ON AND OFF THE SPORTING FIELD.

World Players

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVES

The role of the Player Development Representative is to provide an additional link between the PDM and players. Through educational sessions (group and individual), physical presence and active promotion of services and initiatives, the PDM will be known to the players, but the Player Rep will provide extra depth by gathering information directly related to the needs of the players in their province. Typically, each club will have a Senior and an Academy representative.

CONNACHT

Eoghan Masterson
(Senior)

Sean Masterson
(Academy)



LEINSTER

Rhys Ruddock
(Senior)

Dan Leavy
(Senior)

Tommy O'Brien
(Academy)



MUNSTER

Billy Holland
(Senior)

Tommy O'Donnell
(Senior)

Diarmuid Barron
(Academy)



ULSTER

Louis Ludik
(Senior)

Matthew Dalton
(Academy)

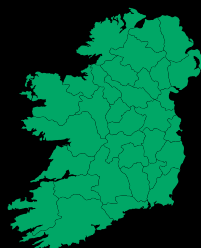


IRISH RUGBY 7S & WOMEN'S XV'S

Ciara Cooney & Leah Lyons
(Women's XV's)

Louise Galvin & Deirbhile Nic a Bhaire
(Women's 7s)

Greg O'Shea
(Men's 7s)



2018/2019 IN REVIEW

The 2018/2019 season was another year of significant growth for the Player Development Programme. The strength of our programme lies in the individualised nature of our support. With one PDM based in each province and with the national 7s and women's XVs, players are engaging with the programme in ever greater numbers.

520

PDMS ENGAGED WITH OVER 500 PLAYERS IN THE 2018/2019 SEASON ACROSS OUR ACADEMY, SENIOR, 7S, WOMEN'S AND PAST PLAYERS. A 31% INCREASE FROM LAST SEASON.

771

PDMS CONDUCTED 771 FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH PLAYERS.

1793



46%



22%



16%



16%

FACE TO FACE MEETINGS ACCOUNTED FOR 46% OF CONSULTATIONS WITH PLAYERS, WITH PLAYERS ALSO CONTACTING PDMS VIA EMAIL (22%), PHONE (16%) AND TEXT MESSAGE (16%), TOTALLING 1793 CONSULTATIONS WITH PLAYERS REGARDING THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.

BASED ON THE FIVE PILLARS OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, RPI HAVE DEVELOPED A DATABASE TO HELP TRACK WHAT AREAS PLAYERS ARE BEING SUPPORTED BY THEIR PDM.



EDUCATION
34%



CAREER
27%



WELLBEING
19%



FINANCE
11%



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
9%

#1

First Rookie Camp held - all year 1 & 2 Academy players attended.

#1

First roll out of Mandatory workshops covering topics such as mental health, addictions, transition, awareness and behaviours and social media education.

12

12 bursaries for personal development

WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, PDMs are responsible for organising and assisting the delivery of workshops, activities and seminars. These are afforded to all players and are based on the specific needs in that playing group. These activities are also a great opportunity for players to learn general, employability and life skills while they are fulfilling their responsibilities as rugby players.

Below is a sample of the range of activities that were delivered nationwide:

- **Time management**
- **Addiction awareness and education**
- **The importance of values and attitudes**
- **Developing a business plan**
- **Tax advice**
- **Social media education**
- **What it takes to be an Entrepreneur**
- **Dyslexia education and awareness**
- **Barista training**
- **Partners and parents' events**
- **Goal setting workshop**
- **Sleep hygiene and education**
- **Alumni 'Business Breakfasts'**
- **Coaching courses**
- **Awareness & Behaviours**
- **Preparing for a professional rugby career**
- **Cooking classes**
- **'Money Skills for Life'**
- **Financial investments workshops**
- **Various charity activities: Movember, Hospital, Hospice & Care facility visits, Animal charities, Homeless charities, Mental Health charities.**
- **Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction**
- **Excel workshops**
- **Finance & budgeting workshop**
- **Successful communication**
- **Transition talks**
- **Mental Health - How to support a teammate**
- **Tax workshop**
- **LinkedIn & CV development**
- **Leadership workshop**
- **Property development**
- **Cooking on a budget**
- **Public speaking**
- **Financial wellbeing**
- **Financial planning and trading workshop**



“

ONE OF THE BIG THINGS RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND ALWAYS STRESS IS THAT YOU CAN'T PUT ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET. INJURIES MAKES YOU REALISE THAT YOUR CAREER CAN BE GONE AT ANY TIME. YOU HAVE TO BE REALISTIC IN THIS GAME.

Luke Marshall

*Community Engagement Representative
for Ulster Rugby*

“

I'M ALWAYS PULLED IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS. I DON'T GET HOME AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO, BUT I DON'T SEE ANYTHING I DO AS A SACRIFICE. **IT'S A CHOICE. I APPRECIATE THAT I'M IN A VERY FORTUNATE AND PRIVILEGED POSITION TO HAVE THESE OPPORTUNITIES AND BY WORKING WITH RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEM WHILE I CAN.**

Claire Keohane

Irish Rugby Women's XV's & 7s

Medical Student, Royal College of Surgeons



HIGHLIGHTS

WORLD PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

In April, our Player Development team were in Amsterdam for the World Player Development Conference. The event proved to be a great opportunity for Player Development Managers (PDMs) from across the world of sport to discuss how they can best support current and past players, as well as each other.

Hosted by FIFPro, the worldwide organisation for professional footballers, over 100 player and personal development experts were invited to share their experiences of working in various elite athlete environments.

The three-day conference was also preceded by a meeting of global PDMs in rugby, facilitated by International Rugby Players. Representatives from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Ireland, England, France and the Pacific Islands were all in attendance.





Speaking at the Conference, Dr Deirdre Lyons said, “understanding who you are – not just as a player, but as a person, is one of the main goals of Rugby Players Ireland’s Player Development Programme. Helping players to uncover their values, strengths, motivators and passions allows them to maximise the opportunities they have open to them as professional athletes.

“The education of players is crucial if they are to thrive in what is a unique professional environment. Induction programmes and camps are a great way

to highlight some of the issues Academy players face. They put the first building blocks in place, equipping them with skills required for the future, whether that lies in rugby or not.

“Regardless of the time and effort players have spent developing their post-rugby options, there will undoubtedly be a point where they go through an emotional rollercoaster,” added Lyons.

“Player Associations support and assist players on that journey.”

“Relocation to another country is a common transition amongst rugby players, particularly those from the Pacific Islands and Australia. Having close cooperation and collaboration between Player Associations can make that relocation easier for players, and their families.”



RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND/IRFU ROOKIE CAMP

A career as a professional rugby player is a very exciting prospect yet can also prove to be a little daunting. In their first years in the game, players can struggle with various aspects of their new journey. Balancing their workload, managing their wellbeing and coping with added scrutiny can often present problems that might never have registered on their radar before.

As the 2019/20 season loomed large on the horizon, Rugby Players Ireland and the IRFU hosted members of the provincial academies for the second annual Rookie Camp at The Heritage Hotel in Killenard, Co. Laois.

Consisting of a broad range of modules including high-performance communication, addiction awareness, mindfulness, behavioural responsibility and self-management, the programme seeks to address the predominant considerations for a player who is setting out on a career in Irish rugby.



As the attendees arrived, former Irish internationals Gordon D'Arcy and Jerry Flannery set the scene by providing invaluable insights into their respective careers and advice on what to expect as representatives of some of the biggest clubs in the rugby world.

Over the course of two days, the Rookie Camp also afforded the players the opportunity to connect with some of the people who will be invaluable allies throughout their career as a professional rugby player in Ireland.



“

RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND ARE DOING A GREAT JOB IN GETTING THE YOUNG PLAYERS UP TO SPEED. THERE'S A LOT EXPECTED OF THE MODERN PLAYER. THE MORE CLARITY THESE GUYS HAVE ON THOSE EXPECTATIONS, THERE'S A GREATER CHANCE THAT THEY WILL DELIVER.

Jerry Flannery



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Starting your own company can be a daunting venture, but an extremely exciting one! As more of our past players delve further into the entrepreneurial world, it has inevitably raised the interest of our current members.

Throughout 2019, Rugby Players Ireland facilitated a number of workshops with those who have dipped their toes into the business world. Contributors from within the Irish rugby community and beyond, shared their experiences from the seed of an idea, through to the risks, the struggles and the rewards.

In April, over 30 members gathered at the InterContinental Hotel in Dublin to hear from Gary Lavin (VitHit), Barry O'Mahony (Umba), Darragh Fanning (Zambrero) and current women's international Sene Naoupu. Their honest insights were drawn out by former Irish Team Manager Mick Kearney.

Additionally, Start-Up workshops in the form of talks and even two-day bootcamps were hosted by partners and friends of Rugby Players Ireland for our current players across all four provinces.



“

ZAMBRERO WAS SOMETHING I SAW WHEN I WAS TRAVELLING AROUND AUSTRALIA A FEW YEARS AGO. WHEN I CAME HOME, I GOT INVOLVED WITH LEINSTER AND REALLY POURED MYSELF INTO THAT. BUT THE IDEA WAS STILL SOMETHING THAT WAS AT THE BACK OF MY MIND. RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND REALLY SET ME ON MY WAY AND HELPED ME TO MEET SOME IMPORTANT PEOPLE WHO WERE ABLE TO SHOW ME THE ROPES AND GIVE SOME ADVICE. I'M REALLY GRATEFUL TO HAVE HAD THAT SUPPORT SYSTEM.

Darragh Fanning

Zambrero Ireland General Manager

TRANSITIONING & ALUMNI

The remit of Rugby Players Ireland extends beyond those currently in the game. Over the past number of years there has been a focus on those who have moved on.

Through the facilitation of breakfast meetings, social gatherings and Clubhouse events we have reconnected former players with their old teammates and opponents, to renew friendships and strike up business relationships!

The end of a playing career can present many challenges. Such engagements allow for the sharing of individual experiences of the transition from the game and establishing a new identity. These learnings have also proved useful to Rugby Players Ireland's current player membership. We are most grateful to those who have gone back to their former teams to talk about how best to manage the retirement process.



PLAYER WELLBEING

Rugby Players Ireland's Player Wellbeing Service is now well established. Available to players, their partners and past players who are experiencing stress, relationship difficulties, low mood and other related issues, our PDMs have acted as a conduit to enable access to screenings, consultations and tailored mental health intervention from our network of counsellors and psychologists.

Further information is also provided to current squads to raise awareness of the issues that they and their families can face. A series of compulsory workshops are facilitated by Rugby Players Ireland throughout the season. Workshops are developed and delivered based on the needs of the players and the province and include mental health awareness, gambling, substance addiction, healthy relationships with food, awareness and behaviours and transition talks.

GOODBODY RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT BURSARY

In September, the latest recipients of the Goodbody Rugby Players Ireland Personal Development Bursary were announced. Over the summer months, applicants made submissions to the Board of Trustees which included Professor Roger Downer (President Emeritus at the University of Limerick), Sarah Moriarty (Goodbody), Simon Howley (Goodbody) and Denis Hurley (Rugby Players Ireland).

Throughout the 2019/20 season, the programme will once again aid the development and progression of 12 players' academic studies and off-field careers.

Ireland's longest established stockbroking firm will also continue to provide career, business development, retirement and financial guidance to Rugby Players Ireland members.



“

BECOMING A PILOT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF MY LIFE-LONG AMBITIONS AND THANKS TO THE GOODBODY RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND BURSARY, I AM GOING TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE THAT DREAM.

Darren Sweetnam

Bursary Recipient 2018

Recipients for the 2019/20 Academic Year

Michelle Claffey

Ireland Women's XV's

Tom Daly

Connacht Rugby

Linda Djougang

Ireland Women's XV's

Foster Horan

Ireland Men's 7s

Patrick Kelly

Munster Rugby
Academy

Angus Lloyd

Connacht Rugby

Martin Moloney

Leinster Rugby
Academy

Lucy Mulhall

Ireland Women's 7s

Josh Murphy

Leinster Rugby

Niall Murray

Connacht Rugby
Academy

Jack Regan

Ulster Rugby
Academy

Nick Timoney

Ulster Rugby

“

THERE'S A LOT TO CONTEND WITH, WHICH IS WHY THE BURSARY WAS SUCH A HUGE SUPPORT. WITH ALL THAT I HAD GOING ON, I DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME OR ENERGY TO GET A JOB. I WAS ABLE TO PUT THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT I RECEIVED TOWARDS MY COLLEGE FEES, TO GET TO AND FROM MY PLACEMENTS AND BACK HOME TO TIPPERARY FROM TIME TO TIME!

Dorothy Wall

Bursary Recipient 2018



IRISH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIPS

The IMI/Rugby Players Ireland scholarship scheme allows former players to develop themselves professionally, helping the transition from professional athlete to business professional. The scholarship scheme is open to Rugby Players Ireland members. This year, three places were awarded to Paul Wallace (Strategy & Innovation), Denis Hurley (Management) and Carol Ann Clarke (Strategy and Innovation).

In 2019, IMI became the first in Ireland to enter the elite Top 50 in the World for Executive Education, as published by the Financial Times.

“The opportunities afforded to players through the IMI scholarship is one of the key supports we provide players moving into the world of work” said Simon Keogh, CEO of Rugby Players Ireland. “We see the impacts in new businesses being created, new careers being shaped and a new confidence in the players to go beyond the playing side of the game.”



ONE OF THE GREAT STRENGTHS OF THE IMI IS THE KIND OF PEOPLE YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO MEET. MOST OF THEM ARE AT A VERY SINGULAR LEVEL IN THEIR OWN ORGANISATIONS SO THEY ARE VERY KEEN TO GET OUT THERE AND HAPPY TO GIVE ADVICE, KNOWING THAT THEY'LL HAVE SOME LEARNINGS TO TAKE TOO. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE ALSO VERY INTERESTED IN THE EXPERIENCES OF A RUGBY PLAYER AND HOW THEY CAN APPLY THAT TO THEIR OWN BUSINESSES.

Michael Swift

Professional Diploma in Strategy & Innovation



Previous winners are:

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Michael Finlay | Professional Diploma In Executive Coaching |
| David Corkery | Professional Diploma In Executive Coaching (Cork) |
| Marie Louise Reilly | Professional Diploma In Strategy & Innovation |
| Frankie Sheahan | Professional Diploma In Leadership |
| Denis Hickie | Professional Diploma In Business Finance |
| Declan O'Brien | Professional Diploma In Leadership |
| Simon Keogh | Professional Diploma In Management |
| Guy Easterby | Professional Diploma In Business Finance |
| Adrian Flavin | Professional Diploma In Leadership |
| Peter Bracken | Professional Diploma In Executive Coaching |
| Gordon D'Arcy | Professional Diploma In Strategy & Innovation |
| Sophie Spence | Professional Diploma In Leadership |
| Peter Malone | Professional Diploma In Management |
| Ailis Egan | Professional Diploma In Marketing And Digital Strategy |
| Doug Howlett | Professional Diploma In In Digital Business |
| Michael Swift | Professional Diploma In Strategy & Innovation |

“

RUGBY EQUIPS YOU WITH THE SKILLS TO DO WELL IN THIS WORLD. IT TAUGHT ME THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK ETHIC, ATTENTION TO DETAIL, TEAMWORK, HUMILITY AND DISCIPLINE - I'LL TAKE THESE VALUES WITH ME WHEREVER I GO.

Peadar Timmins

ESTEEM Graduate Programme Class of 2019, Notre Dame University



“

IF EVER THERE WAS A FIGHT, I WAS HAULED OUT RIGHT AWAY AND SOMEONE WOULD STAND IN FRONT OF ME. I WAS ALWAYS TAKEN CARE OF. AS THE GAME HAS GROWN, THE DEMANDS ON THE PLAYERS HAVE INCREASED. I CAN'T HELP THEM ON THE FIELD ANYMORE, SO I LIKE TO THINK THAT MY CURRENT POSITION ALLOWS ME TO HELP IN OTHER WAYS.

Marcus Horan

Player Development Manager



The background image shows a large event hall with a stage. A speaker is visible on a screen on the right. The audience is seated at tables in the foreground. The lighting is dim, with stage lights visible on the ceiling. A green vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

SECTION 03

EN- GAGE



ZURICH



RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND

ZURICH IRISH RUGBY
PLAYER AWARDS 2019

SEASON IN REVIEW

Rugby Players Ireland is aware that as key role models, our members have a responsibility to contribute to society in meaningful ways and become valued members of the community. With many corporate and social engagement opportunities, the association helps the players to become more rounded individuals.

Over the past twelve months Rugby Players Ireland has hosted numerous events, including the Zurich Irish Rugby Players Awards, the Annual Golf Classic, Past-Player reunions and social gatherings for wives and partners. Furthermore, with a dedicated focus on community engagement, Rugby Players Ireland has mobilised its membership and facilitated relationships between players and charity organisations.

TOTAL NUMBER OF
EVENTS HOSTED

34

TOTAL NUMBER OF PLAYER
APPEARANCES ORGANISED BY
RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND FOR
SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

282

TOTAL NUMBER OF GUESTS
HOSTED BY RUGBY
PLAYERS IRELAND

1,718

“

I WANT TO HELP YOUNG PLAYERS TO BECOME THE BEST RUGBY PLAYERS THEY CAN BE, BUT I ALSO HAVE A MASSIVE UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEF THAT THERE SHOULD BE A PARALLEL LIFE. **EVERY PLAYER SHOULD HAVE A CAREER PATHWAY UNDERPINNED WITH THE REQUISITE SOCIAL SKILLS.**

Louise Galvin

*Rugby Players Ireland Executive
Board Member*



ZURICH IRISH RUGBY PLAYERS AWARDS

The Zurich Irish Rugby Players Awards is the biggest event of its kind in the Irish rugby calendar. Held on May 15th at the Clayton Hotel on the Burlington Road in Dublin, this year over 800 people were in attendance to look back on the highs and lows of the season. Players from the four provinces, the Irish Women's XVs squad and the 7s programme also gathered to support their association.

Hosted by Joe Molloy, with Andrew Trimble waiting in the wings to chat to our winners, the night was also broadcast to thousands more at home on Virgin Media One.



“

THRILLED TO FINISH THIS RUGBY SEASON WITH THE VIRGIN MEDIA SPORT SUPPORTERS' PLAYER OF THE YEAR. THANKS TO ALL THE DEDICATED STAFF AT RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND FOR ALL THE WORK THEY DO FOR ALL THE PLAYERS. WE ARE EXTREMELY FORTUNATE TO HAVE AN ORGANISATION WHO PROVIDE FOR THE PLAYERS LIKE THEY DO.

Jack Carty

Virgin Media Sport Supporters' Player of the Year 2019



Zurich Irish Rugby Players' Player of the Year:

James Ryan

BNY Mellon Women's XV's Player of the Year:

Ciara Griffin

Nevin Spence Young Player of the Year:

James Ryan

Druids Glen Hotel & Golf Resort Moment of the Year:

Ireland v New Zealand

Vodafone Medal for Excellence:

Darren Cave

Virgin Media Sport Supporters' Player of the Year:

Jack Carty

iZest Women's 7s Player of the Year:

Amee-Leigh Murphy Crowe

AIB Corporate Banking Men's 7s Player of the Year:

Terry Kennedy

Volkswagen Try of the Year:

Jacob Stockdale v New Zealand

Zurich Contribution to Society:

Shane Byrne

BNY Mellon Hall of Fame:

Conor O'Shea

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the year, players and teams have been actively involved in a range of activities in their communities. Rugby Players Ireland would like to acknowledge the work that players do in their local communities, either through their own initiative, with their clubs or through Rugby Players Ireland supported activities.





“

ONE OF THE PRIVILEGES
OF BEING A RUGBY
PLAYER IS THAT
PEOPLE ARE MORE
LIKELY TO LISTEN TO
YOU, AND YOU HAVE
HAVE AN EFFECT ON
THE WORLD IN SMALL
AND BIG WAYS.

James Tracy

*Community Engagement Representative
for Leinster Rugby*

RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

Following on from a famous golfing weekend for Ireland and Shane Lowry at Royal Portrush, 22 teams turned out at the stunning Druids Glen Course to contest the 12th Annual Rugby Players Ireland Annual Golf Classic in July.

The four-ball scramble provides an opportunity for our partners to interact with our members on an informal basis and learn a little more about the different worlds in which they live. The event often proves to be a highlight of the Rugby Players Ireland calendar with many current and former players in attendance. It represents a chance for them to say thank you to the people who help the organisation to run, operate and grow in a direction that best serves the players.



“

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT FROM TIME TO TIME OUR MEMBERS AND SPONSORS, AS OUR MOST IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS, GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT, TO LEARN A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE VASTLY DIFFERENT WORLDS IN WHICH THEY LIVE AND TO TAKE SOME TIME OUT FROM THEIR HECTIC SCHEDULES.

Denis Hurley

Operations Manager, Rugby Players Ireland



PAST PLAYER NETWORK

Our past player network continues to grow at pace!

With every passing week, more players are engaging with our services. This has been facilitated through a number of networking opportunities which have included past player breakfast meetings, business meetings, pre-match gatherings and our Heineken Clubhouse events. Taking place across the country, such events enable former teammates and opponents to reconnect, reminisce and enjoy being back in the rugby environment.



“

WE USE RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND TO MAINTAIN A CONNECTION WITH PAST PLAYERS. WE HELP EACH OTHER OUT, GET ADVICE ON EVEN THE SIMPLE DAY TO DAY THINGS. WE WERE ALWAYS PART OF A SQUAD WITH SO MANY CHARACTERS, IT'S SOMETHING THAT THE GUYS MISS - THE CRAIC, THE FRATERNITY.

David Wallace

Former Player



RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND FOUNDATION

Over the last year the Rugby Players Ireland Foundation has made great strides. Since January, the Foundation has been focused on its structural composition whilst also working towards securing charitable status. In their capacity as board members, Simon Best, Shane Byrne, Ronan Loughney, Ruth O'Reilly, David Wallace and Simon Keogh have been instrumental in offering their expertise deriving from their own respective experiences in the charity sector.

The Foundation aims to raise much needed funds to support players that have retired due to injury and hardship, and to support players who are going through difficult times. A key priority for the Foundation's priority this year has been ensuring that the application process is as thorough as possible and considers all eventualities.

Over the past twelve months, the Foundation has hosted various events, including several raffles and auctions, the PWC Rugby Tournament and were the main organisers for the Ireland v England Legends Game.

The Foundation will continue to work towards ensuring that our members in difficulty can avail of emergency support, while increasing the number of those accessing assistance.

2019 Highlights:

Ireland v England
Legends 2019

Zurich Irish Rugby
Awards Raffle &
Auction 2019

Dáil & Seanad Eireann
RFC v The Houses of
Commons & Lords
RFC 2019 fundraiser

Dáil & Seanad
Eireann RFC v XV
Parlementaire (France)
2019 fundraiser

Dáil & Seanad Eireann
RFC End of Season
2019

PWC Rugby
Tournament 2019

Heineken Clubhouse
Event Raffle 2019

PWC Rugby World Cup
Jersey Auction

IRFU Charitable
Trust AON Lunch
Collaboration

IRELAND V ENGLAND

LEGENDS LEGENDS

On the eve of Ireland Six Nations opener in February, some of Ireland's rugby gentry took to the field on a bitterly cold Dublin evening to take on their English counterparts once again. It took them a while to get going, but ultimately our Irish heroes (aided by some of their celtic cousins) prevailed in front of 6,000 brave souls at the RDS.

The conditions were a small price to pay on a night where all funds were being donated to Doddie Weir and the My Name's Doddie Foundation in honour of the former Scottish great who was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease in 2017 and continues to battle with the debilitating disease.

The Legends fixture has raised over €1m for rugby related charities since it first kicked off in 2009 under the leadership of Shane Byrne and Len Dineen. Rugby Players Ireland has been proud to assist them in their efforts over the past number of years.



TACKLE YOUR FEELINGS

Following the success of Tackle Your Feelings (TYF) since it was launched in 2016, it was announced that the campaign would be receiving funding from the Z Zurich Foundation for a further four years. The team at Rugby Players Ireland have been hard at work ever since!

The wheels were already in motion with the appointment of Dr Hannah McCormack as Campaign Manager. Dr McCormack, whose PhD focused on the workplace wellbeing of sports psychologists replaced Créde Sheehy-Kelly who led TYF throughout the first phase of the initiative and helped secure funding to guarantee the future of TYF.

The new-look Tackle Your Feelings campaign app and website will continue to promote a proactive attitude towards mental health and wellbeing as part of a new phase of the campaign: #ImTakingControl. These resources provide people with the tools to 'Take Control' of their mental wellbeing using sport psychology and positive psychology principles.



From recent research commissioned by Zurich and Rugby Players Ireland, in a positive step it was established that 97% of the people across the island of Ireland reported that their mental wellbeing is important to them. However, 48% admitted that they don't actively manage their mental wellbeing, while over 50% said they only acknowledge it when faced by an issue or challenge.

Throughout TYF 2.0, the campaign will continue to promote a proactive attitude towards mental health, north and south of the border. However, there will also be a concerted focus on schools and the business community as it grows into Year Two.

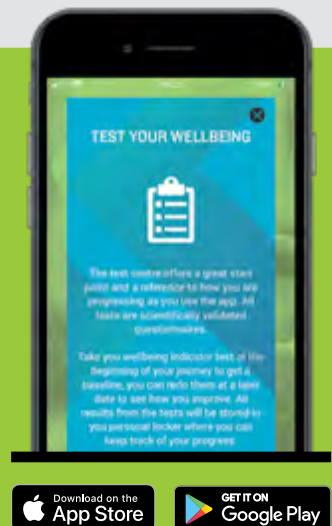
To this end, Tackle Your Feelings will see over 25 Irish rugby players championing the campaign message. Further champions will also emerge from the groups with whom the campaign engages, helping to create a movement.



To help launch TYF 2.0 during the Rugby World Cup, James Lowe stepped forward to share the story of his journey through illness as a youngster to playing professional rugby on the other side of the world. Former players Darren Cave and Mike Ross have also lent their voice to the campaign. Ambassadors will continue to be rolled out throughout 2020.

TACKLE YOUR FEELINGS APP

The newly refurbished Tackle Your Feelings App allows users to proactively work on an area of their wellbeing of their choosing from a bank of resources. The integrated TYF App and website features sections on Relationships, Confidence, Happiness/Sadness, Sleep, Self-Care, Resilience, Anger, Relaxation, Optimism & Self-Awareness. It also houses a mindfulness section where users can select from several mindfulness exercises. Users are also guided through the App by videos from some of the biggest names in Irish rugby, who share tips about their own wellbeing.



PARTNERSHIPS

The Tackle Your Feelings community continues to grow! Since TYF 2.0 went live in September we have received the support of many individuals and organisations who are keen to help us on our quest to spread awareness.

As clubs throughout the country strive to 'go green,' we provided our members with their very own Tackle Your Feelings KeepCup. Additionally, members of Rugby Players Ireland have been proudly wearing a uniquely designed TYF beanie from Noggin Sport - a community interest company that sells clothing to raise money for mental health charities established by professional rugby players and brothers, Conor and Kieran Joyce.



Tackle Your Feelings has also been present at events such as Zeminar and Include Youth's Front Stage Festival which took place in Belfast in November, while workshops for members of Rugby Players Ireland have also taken place.

TACKLE YOUR FEELINGS AUSTRALIA

Following the success of Tackle Your Feelings across the first phase of the campaign, Zurich Australia have linked in with the AFL Coaches Association and AFL Players to bring Tackle Your Feelings Australia to the Aussie Rules community. Led by former Cavan footballer Nick Walsh, the campaign has been designed to build skills within local coaches to foster an environment where players are supported to effectively manage their emotions.

“

AS A PROFESSIONAL RUGBY PLAYER, YOU GET JUDGED OVER 80 MINUTES ON A SATURDAY. BUT THERE ARE SO MANY PARTS YOU HAVE TO TRY AND NAVIGATE TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU CAN PERFORM

James Lowe

Tackle Your Feelings Ambassador







**RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND**

TO OUR MEMBERS

A special thank you to our members who have attended and participated in events throughout the season. Rugby Players Ireland is a player-led body. Without your involvement, we would not be here to represent you. Working together, we can realise our ambition of having Ireland become the best place in the world to play rugby.

TO OUR SPONSORS & PARTNERS

The work that has been carried out at Rugby Players Ireland in 2019, would not have been possible without the support and assistance of our corporate partners. Rugby

Players Ireland would like to thank all of our sponsors, particularly Zurich Ireland and Goodbody for their continued support. Through the backing of Rugby Players Ireland, we can ensure that our members have a strong independent body that prioritises them as individuals.







RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND

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