



RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND

ANNUAL REVIEW 2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Message from the Chairman	2
A Message from the CEO	4
REPRESENT	6
WHO WE ARE	8
THE RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND EXECUTIVE BOARD	8
MEMBERSHIP	10
IRFU ENGAGEMENT	12
RUGBY AGAINST RACISM	14
AGENT REPRESENTATION	14
INTERNATIONAL RUGBY PLAYERS	15
DEVELOP	16
THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (PDP)	18
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT TEAM	20
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVES	21
2019/2020 IN REVIEW	22
THE ACTION PLAN	26
MENTAL WELLBEING SERVICE	27
ROOKIE CAMP	28
TRANSITION	30
GOODBODY RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT BURSARY	32
IRISH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIPS	34
ENGAGE	38
SEASON IN REVIEW	40
A POWERFUL VOICE	42
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	44
ZURICH IRISH RUGBY PLAYERS AWARDS	46
RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC	48
PAST PLAYER NETWORK	50
THE RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND FOUNDATION	51
A YEAR IN REVIEW	52
To our Sponsors & Partners	56
To our Members	56

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN ROB KEARNEY

I don't think we'll ever have to face a year quite like 2020 again. At least I hope not. Thankfully, with 2021 coming into sight, all aspects of Irish society are encouraged by developments. My own hope is that when I read my successor's note in 12 months' time that we will have placed our Covid-19 experience firmly in the rear-view mirror.

What have we learned? Prior to the lockdown(s), professional and elite rugby players were accustomed to having everything managed for them. Not a day went by without us being told what we were to do, or where we were meant to be.

In some ways, 2020 enabled professional sportspeople to reclaim a level of independence once again. Many of us were forced to adapt and change our habits and in so doing, found new ways to lead our lives. Others chose to pursue different interests and ultimately caught sight of the bigger picture. In time to come they will appreciate the building blocks they put in place this year.

Crucially, the influence of rugby players in Ireland was keenly felt throughout 2020. I am immensely proud of our membership who reached out in their own ways to help their communities. From picking up the phone to their neighbours to lending their voice to national campaigns, we played our part in helping the country get back to its feet.

As I move on to pastures new, I will always look back on my time as Chairman of Rugby Players Ireland with great satisfaction. During that period it has developed into a world-leading players' association, while the voice of Irish rugby players is also sought out and is being clearly heard on both national and global matters. Long may that continue.

Although I will be in Australia over the coming months, I intend to remain involved with Rugby Players Ireland in some capacity. It has been a privilege to lead the organisation over the past seven years and I believe my experiences in that time can help to shape the future of our game in a post-Covid world.

Following a tentative few months, we can all begin to look forward to the next chapter.

Take care,

Rob

PREVIOUS CHAIRMEN OF RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND

2001-2005		Liam Toland
2005-2007		Mark McHugh
2007-2011		Marcus Horan
2011-2012		Brian O'Driscoll
2012-2015		Johnny Sexton
2015-2020		Rob Kearney



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

SIMON KEOGH

Following a disappointing Rugby World Cup campaign last year, it was always envisaged that there would be a significant response in 2020. However, I don't think any of us could have foreseen the battle we ultimately had on our hands.

At Rugby Players Ireland, we often extol the resilience of our membership. While their capacity to overcome non-selection, to fight back from injury and to transition out of elite sport might not always be recognised, it is certainly valued by our players. As Covid-19 wrought havoc and the future remained unclear, they each resolved to keep the show on the road.

It speaks to the professionalism of our members that when rugby was finally able to return, they hit the ground running. I'll always remember their excitement in the days leading up to those games, while their enthusiasm was matched in homes throughout the country. In many ways, rugby has carried a lot of us through the final months of a unique year.



Thanks to a cooperative approach, we were able to facilitate a safe and successful return to rugby. Yet while this represented a considerable feat for all sides, it also laid bare the challenges we face as a sport until Covid-19 is firmly under control. Tough times are an inevitable consequence. Thankfully, Rugby Players Ireland is equipped to guide our members through as best we can.

Everything took a technological twist in 2020. From virtual consultations to an extensive array of educational webinars, screen-time increased exponentially. While we look forward to re-establishing personal connections in time, it has been shown that our programmes and services can adapt to the needs of our membership in even the most extreme circumstances.

Furthermore, in addition to establishing a dedicated Mental Wellbeing Service for our players, the Tackle Your Feelings campaign, run in partnership with Zurich, took on even greater significance this year as the wider public turned to their heroes for guidance and inspiration. To see our main ambassadors supported by so many of their peers, in turn strengthened those looking in.

This was further evidenced in the way our members rallied the country and focused the minds on defeating Covid-19. By lending their voice to initiatives being rolled out by the public health authorities, they helped to galvanise Irish people at a low ebb. Similarly, they have enabled numerous businesses and charitable organisations back to their feet in the aftermath of the initial lockdown.

Our members were also centrally involved as we engaged in discussions with the IRFU on the immediate future of the professional game in the country. Through their experience of these negotiations added to the strong evidence of their wider influence they can assert, I don't think we'll ever have a clearer example of how powerful and influential the collective voice of our membership can be when we all have the one goal in mind.

At this juncture I would like to acknowledge the IRFU and all their continued support for Rugby Players Ireland and its members. Thanks to our good working relationship, we have managed to overcome many of the unprecedented challenges we have faced in 2020. By continuing to work together we hope to return rugby in Ireland to the stability and success of recent years.

A little closer to home, I wish to thank our staff and our corporate partners at Rugby Players Ireland for the ways in which we have all supported each other through the year. It has been a demanding and testing time for our organisation but we have risen to the challenge as a team. With such uncertainty we have had to constantly adapt and think on our feet. It is my hope that our learnings and experiences will stand our organisation in good stead for the future, whatever it may bring.

We have faced down many challenges in 2020 and with a vaccine imminent, the biggest one of all is set to be overcome in the months ahead. In time they might realise the significance of their input but for now it falls to me to commend rugby players across Ireland for all they have done on and off the field throughout 2020.

SECTION

01

REPRE- SENT



WHO WE ARE

Now seen as one of the leading player representative organisations in sport, Rugby Players Ireland was formed in 2001 as the Irish Rugby Union Players' Association (IRUPA). It is committed to making Ireland the best place in the world to play rugby.

Following discussions between Donal Spring, Peter McKenna, Liam Toland and the IRFU, Rugby Players Ireland came into being with the remit of promoting and protecting the welfare of all professional players across the four provinces. The association has evolved considerably over the past 19 years and its membership now encompasses female international players in addition to former professionals.

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

THE RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND EXECUTIVE BOARD

The importance of the Executive Board was underlined throughout 2020 as Rugby Players Ireland sought to navigate a way through for professional and elite rugby amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

With Simon Keogh to the fore of negotiations with the IRFU, the Executive Board were regularly updated on the developments within their game and were charged with relaying the information to their squad groups. The off-field balance was met with the experience the Board's Non-Executive Directors - former Irish international Peter McKenna of McKenna Durcan Solicitors and Maura Quinn, Chief Executive of the Institute of Directors in Ireland.

Remarkably, several playing members of the Board put aside their individual circumstances for the benefit of their peers. Both Louise Galvin and Eoin McKeon stepped down following the conclusion of the IRFU discussions, having announced their respective retirements from rugby. Furthermore, Rob Kearney's tenure as Chairman comes to an end as he departs Leinster and Ireland for the Western Force in Australia. Owing to his vast experience at Board level, Rob will remain on the Board despite relocating to Perth.

Through the engagement of the Board we have been able 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



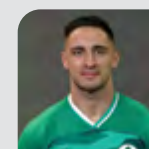
Iain Henderson
Ulster Rugby



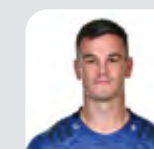
Eoin McKeon
Connacht Rugby



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



WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PLAYERS WE REPRESENT SO IT'S ABOUT TAKING THE BEST FOOT FORWARD. FROM THE BOARD'S PERSPECTIVE A LOT IS ABOUT COMMUNICATING THE APPROPRIATE MESSAGE TO THE SQUAD GROUPS, KEEP THEM UPDATED ON DEVELOPMENTS AND ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND WHY CERTAIN DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE.

Eoin McKeon

*Rugby Players Ireland Executive Board Member
2017-2020*



MEMBERSHIP

Through discussion and collaboration with the IRFU, Rugby Players Ireland has grown its membership to cater for groups beyond the four men's professional provincial sides. In recent years, the provision of representation, personal development services and corporate engagement opportunities has been extended to players in the Irish 7s programme and members of the Women's XVs national squad. Since 2018, a dedicated Player Development Manager has also been assigned to assist each player group (see page 20).



I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF A FEMALE ATHLETE. I AM AN ATHLETE. WHEN YOU SEE THE GLASS CEILINGS THAT HAVE BEEN THERE, IT'S NICE TO BREAK THROUGH AND SHOW THAT YOU CAN DO SOMETHING AND CONTRIBUTE IN A WAY THAT YOU DIDN'T THINK WAS POSSIBLE OR ACHIEVABLE.

Louise Galvin

*Rugby Players Ireland Executive Board
Member 2018-2020*



IRFU ENGAGEMENT

As has been widely reported, the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have been keenly felt across the rugby world. Throughout 2020, Rugby Players Ireland and the IRFU have maintained regular dialogue to secure the future of the professional game from both the perspective of a business and its key stakeholders, the players.

In July, both parties agreed on a reduction in players' remuneration. Commenting on the agreement, Simon Keogh said he believed the agreement reached was reflective of the shared ambition of Rugby Players Ireland and the IRFU to see rugby at all levels continue to thrive. Keogh also acknowledged the good working relationship with the IRFU that has underpinned an ongoing process and will continue to contribute to Ireland's on-field success.

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.



From the outset of discussions, Rugby Players Ireland's members have played a key role in bringing matters to a satisfactory conclusion. Whilst Simon Keogh was able to call on the Executive Board throughout, over 20 members of the wider playing group were also involved at various stages. Whilst the participating members will have benefitted from the experience on a personal level, they also represented their peers with distinction.

The insights of the players was also met by the expertise of several individuals who were similarly integral to the outcome. Both Michael Costello (Managing Partner, BDO Ireland) and Ciarán Medlar (Partner, & Head of Tax, BDO Ireland) worked relentlessly alongside Peter McKenna (McKenna Durcan Solicitors) and Simon Keogh to bring about a satisfactory conclusion.

Meanwhile, several players also contributed to various other matters that were in discussion such as the Return to Play Protocols. Having been nominated by Rugby Players Ireland to sit on the IRFU Medical Advisory Committee, former international Dr Niall Hogan was a prominent voice in this respect. Through the involvement of both past and current players, player interests have been at the heart of all decisions being taken at what is a crucial juncture for the professional game in Ireland.



RUGBY AGAINST RACISM

Rugby Players Ireland believes that rugby can transcend barriers and difference of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Ahead of the resumption of professional rugby, Irish Rugby (the IRFU, Connacht, Leinster, Munster and Ulster Rugby) and Rugby Players Ireland underlined our on-going commitment to offering a game for all, with messaging and support through #RugbyAgainstRacism across the opening weekend of the returning Guinness PRO14.

The Unity Moment followed a moment's silence to mark the loss of life suffered during the Covid-19 pandemic and to honour those who have worked on the frontline.



AGENT REPRESENTATION

Over the past six years, Rugby Players Ireland have administered the Agents Registration Scheme on behalf of the IRFU. Designed to safeguard the players in addition to improving the agency environment, the scheme is also on a similar footing in both Wales and England.

In the weeks prior to the Covid-19 lockdown in Ireland, all Irish agents attended a compulsory CPD workshop in Dublin facilitated by Rugby Players Ireland. With discussion on topical issues such as the management of player wellbeing and crisis communications, the Agent Seminar meets the obligation imposed on agents to upskill every year in an effort to drive standards within the industry.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY PLAYERS

In 2020, Rugby Players Ireland continued to have a significant voice on issues of importance in the game through International Rugby Players. As the representative body on issues of importance to professional rugby players throughout the world, International Rugby Players sought to strengthen its foothold at the table where key decisions on the game are made.

Former Irish captain Brian O'Driscoll has become an influential figure at this level. Alongside former Tongan international and Pacific Rugby Players founder Hale T-Pole, and Dr Sharron Flahive, O'Driscoll joined the board of the global players' association.

O'Driscoll was also one of 14 appointments by International Rugby Players to new World Rugby decision-making groups. With backgrounds in areas such as law, medicine and communications, the nominations further strengthen the players' voice in the professional game.



While O'Driscoll was appointed to the board of Rugby World Cup Ltd., Sene Naoupu was named on the Women's Advisory Committee with David Quinlan appointed to the Regulations Committee. Former Rugby Players Ireland CEO and current International Rugby Players chief Omar Hassanein takes his place on the Professional Game Committee.



RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND ARE IN YOUR BACK POCKET IF YOU NEED THEM. THEY ARE ALWAYS FIGHTING IN YOUR CORNER. THEY'VE BEEN AWESOME SINCE I ARRIVED.

James Lowe
Leinster Rugby & Ireland



SECTION

02

DEVELOP



THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (PDP)

The aim of the Personal Development Programme is to 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 six fundamental areas that contribute to the overall personal development and growth of players and contribute to a positive transition from the game.

UNDERSTANDING WHO YOU ARE - NOT JUST AS PLAYER, BUT AS A PERSON, IS ONE OF THE MAIN GOALS OF OUR 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 PLAYERS, AND ALSO EASE THE TRANSITION INTO THEIR NEXT CAREER.

Dr Deirdre Lyons
Head of Rugby Players Ireland's
Player Development Programme



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

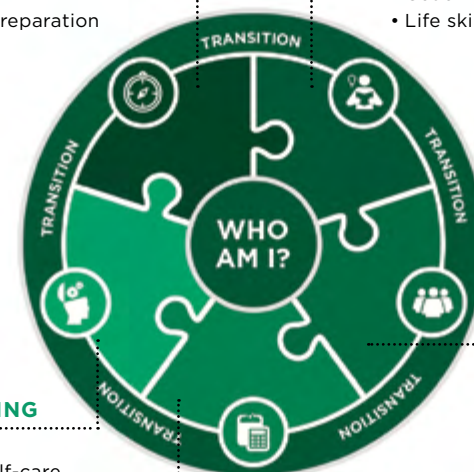
- Mental health
- Physical health & self-care
- Self-awareness & personal leadership
- Player representation
- Sport integrity

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & PLANNING

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

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

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



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

*PDM
(Ireland Women's XV's)*



Dr Ella McCabe

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



Dr Vincent O'Flaherty

*PDM (Leinster Rugby & Irish
Rugby 7s Programme)*

*Dr Ella McCabe moved on from her role at Rugby Players Ireland in February 2020. Dr Mark Smyth took over her duties as Lead Clinical Psychologist for the Wellbeing Service.



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 a Player Development Representative is to provide an additional link between the PDM and players. Whilst the PDM will be known to the squad, the Player Representative will provide extra depth by gathering information directly related to the needs of the players in their province or team. The role of the Player Representative has been made all the more integral to the workings of the PDM with access to players (in person) limited owing to Covid-19 regulations.

Player Representatives 2019/20

CONNACHT

Eoghan Masterson
(Senior)

Sean Masterson
(Academy)

ULSTER

Louis Ludik
(Senior)

Matty Agnew
(Academy)

MUNSTER

Billy Holland
(Senior)

Tommy O'Donnell
(Senior)

Diarmuid Barron
(Academy)

LEINSTER

Rhys Ruddock
(Senior)

James Tracy
(Senior)

David Hawkshaw
(Academy)

IRISH WOMEN'S XV'S

Ciara Cooney

Leah Lyons

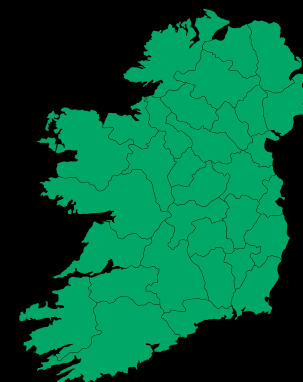
IRISH MEN'S 7S

Greg O'Shea

IRISH WOMEN'S 7S

Louise Galvin

Deirbhile Nic a Bhaird



2019/2020 IN REVIEW

We don't need to remind you that in March 2020 Ireland went into lockdown due to Covid-19. Our PDMs used this time to connect with players and ensure that their wellbeing continued to be looked after. As always, the strength of our programme lies in the individualised nature of our support, and this continued virtually during the last few months of the 2019/20 season.

459

PDMS ENGAGED WITH 459 PLAYERS IN THE 2019/2020 SEASON ACROSS OUR ACADEMY, SENIOR, 7S, WOMEN'S AND PAST PLAYERS. A 12% DECREASE FROM LAST SEASON.

565

PDMS CONDUCTED 565 FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH PLAYERS, A 27% DECREASE ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

1582

FACE TO FACE MEETINGS ACCOUNTED FOR 36% OF CONSULTATIONS WITH PLAYERS, WITH PLAYERS ALSO CONTACTING PDMS VIA EMAIL (17%), PHONE (18%) AND A LARGE INCREASE IN TEXT/WHATSAPP MESSAGE (29%), TOTTALLING 1582 CONSULTATIONS (DOWN 12%) WITH PLAYERS REGARDING THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.



36%



17%



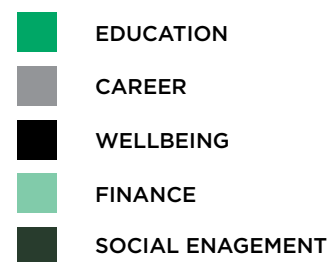
18%



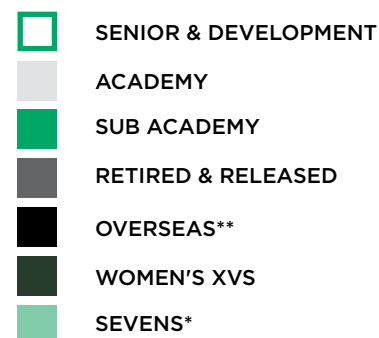
29%

Based on the five pillars of the Player Development programme, RPI have developed a database to help track what areas players are being supported in by their PDM.

What do players want to talk about?



Who did we work with in 2019/2020?*



PLAYER STATUS	CONSULTED WITH (N)	CONSULTED WITH (%)
SENIOR & DEVELOPMENT	171	37
ACADEMY	59	13
SUB ACADEMY	20	4
RETIRED & RELEASED**	82	18
OVERSEAS**	35	8
WOMEN'S XVS	48	10
SEVENS**	44	10

*Percentage of players met ** Includes players from the men's and women's game.

IF RUGBY IS YOUR ONLY FOCUS IT CAN BECOME DAUNTING AND DIFFICULT WHEN THINGS DON'T GO YOUR WAY.

Shane Daly

MSc Finance, UCC (2015-2019)



IF YOU'RE GOING TO DO SOMETHING, DO IT RIGHT. OTHERWISE, WHY BOTHER? WE WERE ALWAYS ENCOURAGED TO BE THE BEST WE CAN BE. IF I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE CONSUMED BY RUGBY AND IGNORED MY EDUCATION AND OTHER INTERESTS I WOULDN'T BE DOING MY BEST!

Lucy Mulhall

Mathematics, UCD (2018-2020)



THE ACTION PLAN

Developing the person behind the player has real benefits and is both good for the player and for the game. At Rugby Players Ireland, we have found that when conversations with players around off-pitch development have been individualised, holistic and meaningful to them, engagement increases, and players feel motivated for action. Engaging in personal development (PD) activities alongside sport, whilst sometimes difficult to balance, can bring a sense of wellbeing to players by helping them to develop a more well-rounded identity, and provide an alternative focus and positive distraction from the pressure of sport.

96%

of players nationally agree that having an interest outside of rugby is good for their game

While players who prepare for retirement from sport rate their transition more positively, solely focusing on retirement planning can be a barrier to engagement in PD activities for many, especially younger players. Therefore, conversations around personal development should also focus on maximising the opportunities that a rugby career can provide, so that players can take advantage of their time in the game.

A player's career should be viewed as part of, and contributing to, their life career. Players can develop many resources (skills, behaviours, competencies, relationships) during their sporting careers that can lay positive foundations for their lives beyond sport. The PD Action Plan focuses on developing players' resources in key areas, based on international research and evidence-based practice, linked to the RPI/IRFU PD Programme.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Self-Awareness: Me | 4. Financial Management |
| 2. Career, Advice & Guidance | 5. Social Engagement |
| 3. Education, Training & Skills | 6. Player Wellbeing |

Benefits of the Personal Development Action Plan

- It is available to all current RPI members, and provides a visual, individualised PD plan.
- It promotes greater ownership by the player by focusing on what is important to them.
- It sets the foundations early and simplifies how progress is tracked.
- It shifts conversations from ad-hoc and informal, to structured and on-going.
- Goals and actions can be managed, recorded and tracked.
- It is developed in conjunction with International Rugby Players so there is a level of consistency between nations, which also helps players who relocate country/club to play.

MENTAL WELLBEING SERVICE

Promoting Player Wellbeing is integral to the work that we do at Rugby Players Ireland. We deliver our wellbeing support using a three-pronged approach of:

- **Individualized Support**
- **Education & Awareness seminars**
- **Stigma reducing Campaigns (Tackle your Feelings)**

Rugby Players Ireland provide support to current and former players mainly through the Player Development Managers that are based at each professional club and the women's and 7s national squads. Our PDMs signpost players to specialist support via the Mental Wellbeing Services network, where they can access a large network of experienced counsellors, psychotherapist and psychologists. Some of the issues that players may need support with include stress and anxiety, burn out, adjustment and relationship difficulties, bereavement, addictions, coping with long-term injury and depression.

Introducing Mark Smyth

Taking over the lead of the Mental Wellbeing Service from Dr Ella McCabe, Mark Smyth is a senior clinical psychologist and the current president of the Psychological Society of Ireland. Mark plays a crucial role in determining the optimal mental-health support strategy for players referred through the Mental Wellbeing Service.

Players can also access support by emailing wellbeing@rugbyplayersireland.ie



Since October 2020, our Mental Wellbeing Service has been supported by Sporting Chance, a UK charity dedicated to current and former professional athletes. Sporting Chance operate a 24-hour helpline for players and are working with Rugby Players Ireland on expanding our existing referral network and providing professional advice to create a clinically excellent service tailored to players' needs.

ROOKIE CAMP

In July, the latest members of Rugby Players Ireland were introduced to our Player Development Team on our virtual Rookie Camp, run in partnership with the IRFU and with the support of the Tom Maynard Trust.

Run over the course of a week, modules included

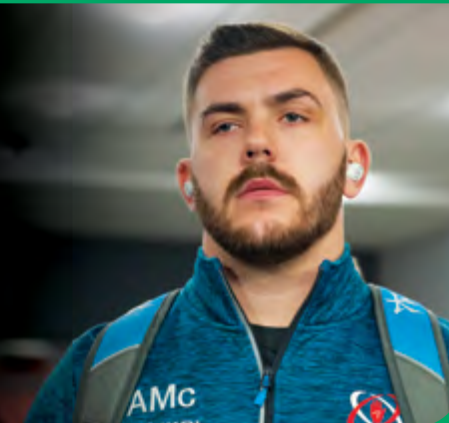
- Mental Health and Support for Elite Athletes – Dr Mark Smyth (Lead Clinical Psychologist - RPI Wellbeing Service), John Cooney, Louise Galvin & Aoife Lane
- Alcohol Awareness – Richie Sadlier & Marcus Horan
- Understanding Generation Z – Claire Madden, Next Gen Expert
- Having an Opinion & Expressing it as a Professional Athlete – Dr Kieran File, Reactive Sports Media
- Savour the Moment – Making the most of your Academy Experience – Rob Kearney, Andy Farrell & Simon Keogh

Over the coming years, our PDMs will help every player to develop the skills, competencies, behaviours and relationships that a rugby career can help to nurture so that they can maximise their time in rugby, however long that may be.



RUGBY GIVES YOU PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES. MAKE SURE YOU'RE READY FOR THEM.

Adam McBurney



DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE YOURSELF.

James Ryan



MANAGE YOUR TIME. HAVING A THOROUGH PLAN WILL INFLUENCE HOW YOUR WEEK GOES.

Stephen Kerins



TRANSITION

Looking to the future was a peculiar and often pointless pursuit for all rugby players in 2020. The uncertainty that pervaded was even more pronounced for those who were coming off a contract with their province. While some may have anticipated an ending, they were nevertheless left to source options at a time when the very game itself was vulnerable and purse-strings had been severely tightened. Retirements were an inevitable consequence.

While some will have made their peace with the end of their career some months in advance of the lockdown, none of them would have foreseen their careers ending in empty stadiums or on a virtual videocall.



YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO REPLICATE THAT BUZZ OF RUNNING OUT INTO A BIG STADIUM WITH YOUR MATES. IT'S VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT LADS KEEP TRAINING AND KEEP FIT, BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY.

Mike McCarthy

Player Development Manager, The Rugby Players' Association (RPA)



The end of a playing career can present many challenges. 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. While opportunities for breakfast meetings and social gatherings were scant this year, Rugby Players Ireland staff members were in constant contact with those finding their feet outside of the rugby bubble.



I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO CHASE A DREAM BUT JUST BECAUSE THAT'S DONE IT DOESN'T MEAN I HAVE TO KNOCK OTHER DREAMS AND PLANS ON THE HEAD.

Steve Crosbie

Director, Fad Saoil Saunas



RUGBY WAS MY OUTLET. IT WAS A WAY FOR ME TO EXPRESS MYSELF AND THAT'S WHY I FELL INTO IT IN THE FIRST PLACE. NOW I HAVE A JOB AND WORK IN AN OFFICE. I CAN'T EXACTLY SET UP A MAUL IN THERE. I HAVE TO BE SO CAREFUL ABOUT HOW I LET OUT MY FRUSTRATIONS. I CAN'T STAND UP AND KICK A CHAIR. I THINK BACK TO TUESDAY CONTACT SESSIONS AND COMING OFF TIRED AND SORE. MY EAR WOULD BE IN BITS, MY BACK WOULD BE TIGHT. I ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT.

JP Cooney

Account Executive, SmartBear



GOODBODY RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT BURSARY

Through Rugby Players Ireland's partnership with Goodbody – Ireland's largest established stockbroking firm – the Goodbody/ Rugby Players Ireland Personal Development Bursary has aided the development and progression of rugby players' academic studies and off-field careers.

Since 2018, 24 players have benefitted from the Bursary while Goodbody's market-leading team also provide career, business development, retirement and financial guidance to Rugby Players Ireland's wider membership.



I'M GIVING UP FULL-TIME WORK AND PAY TO BECOME A STUDENT. LIVING AND WORKING IN DUBLIN IS ONE THING, LIVING AND STUDYING IN DUBLIN IS SOMETHING ELSE. IT'S A MASSIVE ADJUSTMENT ON MANY LEVELS BUT THE BURSARY WILL GO A LONG WAY.

Aoife Doyle

Bursary Recipient 2020 / Student, Marino Institute of Education



Recipients for the 2020/21 Academic Year

Billy Dardis

Ireland Men's 7s

Aoife Doyle

Ireland Women's XV's

Lewis Finlay

Ulster Rugby Academy

Katie Heffernan

Ireland Women's 7s

Paddy Kelly

Munster Rugby Academy

Rhys Marshall

Munster Rugby

Darragh Murray

Connacht Rugby Academy

Hugh O'Sullivan

Leinster Rugby Academy



I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO THINK THAT RUGBY WILL LAST FOREVER. AT THE START OF IT ALL A FEW PEOPLE TOLD ME I'D BLINK AND I'D BE AT THE END OF IT SO I BETTER HAVE SOMEWHERE TO TURN. WE'RE FORTUNATE TO BE OUT AND ABOUT EVERYDAY SO WE STRUGGLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF STUDY OR SITTING IN AN OFFICE, BUT WE CAN'T KEEP RUNNING AWAY FROM IT.

Rhys Marshall

Bursary Recipient 2020

Agribusiness, Massey University (NZ)



IRISH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIPS

Founded by business leaders for business leaders, the Irish Management Institute (IMI) has been empowering executives for over sixty years. Last year, the IMI became the first in Ireland to enter the elite Top 50 in the World for Executive Education, as published by the Financial Times.

Rugby Players Ireland is therefore proud to work with the IMI in providing scholarship opportunities to former rugby players to help to bridge the gap between the end of their sporting life and their professional career. The IMI/Rugby Players Ireland Scholarships, valued at €10,000 each, have been open to Rugby Players Ireland’s members since 2014. This year, places were awarded to Yvonne Comer (Organisational Behaviour & Change), Cathal Sheridan (Organisational Development and Transformation) and Eoin Sheriff (Organisational Behaviour), while placements for Gavin Duffy (Management), Peter McKenna (Management), Paul O’Connell (Business Finance) and Dylan Rogers (Digital Marketing Strategy) were also facilitated.

“The IMI programme helps participants find a fresh approach and viewpoint on how they can impact their organisation,” said Denis Hurley (Operations Manager at Rugby Players Ireland) who has recently completed his Professional Diploma in Management. “Personally, I’ve a clearer view of my own strengths and weaknesses, and as a result I am much better positioned to contribute to the future strategy and development of Rugby Players Ireland.”

II

MY IMI EXPERIENCE PROVIDED ME WITH A FRAMEWORK TO CONFIDENTLY DECIDE ON STRATEGIC AIMS WHILE ALSO DESIGNING THE PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO GET THERE. I’VE NOW BEEN ABLE TO INTRODUCE PERFORMANCE MEASURES TO GUIDE THE OVERALL STRATEGY AND WE NOW HAVE A MUCH MORE TARGETED APPROACH.


Paul Wallace

Professional Diploma in Strategy & Innovation, 2019
Managing Director, Bircroft Ireland




Previous winners are:

Peter Bracken	Professional Diploma in Executive Coaching
Carol Ann Clarke	Professional Diploma in Strategy & Innovation
David Corkery	Professional Diploma in Executive Coaching (Cork)
Gordon D’Arcy	Professional Diploma in Strategy & Innovation
Guy Easterby	Professional Diploma in Business Finance
Ailis Egan	Professional Diploma in Marketing and Digital Strategy
Michael Finlay	Professional Diploma in Executive Coaching
Adrian Flavin	Professional Diploma in Leadership
Denis Hickie	Professional Diploma in Business Finance
Doug Howlett	Professional Diploma in in Digital Business
Denis Hurley	Professional Diploma in Management
Simon Keogh	Professional Diploma in Management
Peter Malone	Professional Diploma in Management
Declan O’Brien	Professional Diploma in Executive Coaching
Declan O’Brien	Professional Diploma in Leadership
Marie Louise Reilly	Professional Diploma in Strategy & Innovation
Frankie Sheahan	Professional Diploma in Leadership
Sophie Spence	Professional Diploma in Leadership
Michael Swift	Professional Diploma in Strategy & Innovation
Paul Wallace	Professional Diploma in Strategy & Innovation

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a blue Canterbury IRFU jacket, is smiling and holding a green and white rugby ball. The background is blurred, showing other people in similar attire.

MY RUGBY EXPERIENCES HAVE GIVEN ME THE SKILLS THAT ARE CRUCIAL IN MY OTHER LIFE AS A DOCTOR. WITHOUT REALISING IT, THROUGHOUT MY RUGBY CAREER I HAVE DEVELOPED ATTRIBUTES THAT YOU CAN'T PICK UP IN A LECTURE HALL. LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS HAVE BEEN CRUCIAL, ESPECIALLY WHEN PEOPLE LOOK TO YOU WHEN WE'RE FACED BY A SITUATION LIKE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Claire McLaughlin
Medical Doctor, NHS

A man with short brown hair, wearing a blue Canterbury IRFU polo shirt, is standing with his arms crossed and smiling. The background is a dense green hedge.

THE SKILLS THAT YOU LEARN IN RUGBY ARE VERY BENEFICIAL IN ACADEMIC AND WORKING ENVIRONMENTS. SIMILARLY, THE KNOWLEDGE I ATTAINED IN MY COLLEGE WORK HAS BEEN EXTREMELY VALUABLE IN MY VIEWS AND APPROACHES TO LIFE AS A RUGBY PLAYER.

Billy Dardis
MSc Management Consultancy (UCD)

SECTION

03

ENGAGE



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. Through corporate and social engagement opportunities, the association helps the players to become more rounded individuals.

While we have been faced by many challenges over the past 12 months, Rugby Players Ireland has also endeavoured to support our partners through the Covid-19 pandemic by providing engaging virtual webinars for staff and clients. As we have grown more accustomed to new regulations and operations, we will continue to find new and unique ways to bring our members to our network.

The Zurich Irish Rugby Players Awards also took on a new guise this year, while plans for our Annual Golf Day were mobilised in a socially distanced manner as restrictions began to lift in late summer. Despite the circumstances, the Tackle Your Feelings campaign continued to grow from strength to strength as numerous players sought to encourage people to prioritise their mental wellbeing.

Furthermore, with a dedicated focus on community engagement, Rugby Players Ireland has continued to facilitate relationships between players and charity organisations. Crucially, the player voice was leveraged as public health authorities sought to bring the country together to halt the spread of Covid-19.

13

TOTAL NUMBER OF
EVENTS HOSTED BY
RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND

55

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



NOBODY IS UNDER ANY ILLUSIONS ABOUT HOW LUCKY WE ARE TO DO WHAT WE DO OR WHAT IT MEANS TO OUR FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND THE COUNTRY. IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO FORGET THAT AND TO GIVE THEM SOMETHING BACK.

Tadhg Furlong

A POWERFUL VOICE

As the impact of Covid-19 continues to be felt around the world, Ireland has been getting to grips with one of the most uncertain periods in our history. Unfortunately, while most people acceded to the guidance and took to their homes in the early stages, the magnitude of the situation was lost on others.

Despite Leo Varadkar's implementation of social distancing, some revellers betrayed the advice prompting Irish and Munster Rugby player Keith Earls to take to Social Media to appeal for greater caution. Though generally private, Earls felt compelled to speak to the public as his daughter lives with a serious respiratory lung condition.



Within hours Earls' influence was keenly felt throughout the country. While social disapproval of some people's actions was already ramping up, within hours many pubs and restaurants opted to close their doors owing to the public backlash with the winger's tweet making national headlines.

Many of Earls' peers duly followed suit, not least the members of the Rugby Players Ireland Executive Board who joined forces with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to urge people to follow the guidelines. Recorded for the #ItsInOurHands campaign, a video message featuring Rugby Players Ireland's Chairman Rob Kearney alongside Johnny Sexton, Ciara Griffin, Iain Henderson, Peter O'Mahony, Eoin McKeon, Louise Galvin and Greg O'Shea was viewed over 500,000 times in the first 24 hours after its release.



Countless rugby players across Ireland urged the public to abide by the guidelines with Josh van der Flier amongst those to ask people to call on their elderly neighbours, while healthcare workers such as Claire McLaughlin, Tom Gleeson and Linda Djougang were also to the fore of calls for public assistance as they shared their experiences of the frontline.

The efforts of healthcare professionals did not go unnoticed by Rugby Players Ireland's members. In Belfast Darren Cave was busy delivering donuts to staff at the frontline of hospitals in the city, while Sean O'Brien and Robin Copeland offered up their vacant homes rent-free for healthcare workers forced to take up alternative accommodation.

Others also used their online platforms to encourage positive behaviours. Former player and relentless adventurer Damian Browne got people off the couch with a demanding burpee challenge, while Greg O'Shea encouraged his 1.3million Instagram followers to join his free Pilates classes and prioritise their mental wellbeing, something the Tackle Your Feelings campaign and its many champions have been encouraging throughout the year.

In times of trouble it is said that people look to their role models and heroes for guidance, hope and inspiration. Not for the first time, rugby players throughout Ireland led by example.



RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND'S MEMBERS KNOW THAT THEY HAVE A CIVIC DUTY TO DO ALL THEY CAN TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19. OUR PLAYERS ARE AWARE OF THE HUGE AMOUNT OF WORK BEING DONE BY OUR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THIS VIRUS AND WANT TO ASSIST IN ANY SMALL WAY WE CAN. BY USING OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE AND INFLUENCE, WE CAN HELP TO AMPLIFY THE GOVERNMENT'S IMPORTANT MESSAGE OF TAKING THE RIGHT PRECAUTIONS.

Simon Keogh

CEO, Rugby Players Ireland

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout 2020, many members of Rugby Players Ireland have rowed in behind charities across the island of Ireland. Even before the impact of Covid-19 on the charity sector became apparent, rugby players were using their influence to effect change.

One need only think of what Billy Holland and his wife Lanlih achieved in January following their appearance on The Late Late Show on RTÉ. Upon sharing the brave story of their daughter Emmeline, the public donated almost €600,000 for a variety of organisations that work with very sick children in Ireland.

Several of Holland's Munster Rugby teammates have also been heavily involved in raising much needed funds for good causes. Keith Earls doubled his initial target by raising over €33,000 for Barnardos Ireland in auctioning his jersey from the famous Irish win over New Zealand in 2018, while Andrew Conway raised almost €10,000 for Make A Wish!

Furthermore, Rugby Players Ireland staff and several players took the #AnCosánathon challenge set by Goodbody in aid of An Cosán, a charity that seeks to empower through education, while past players got their legs moving for Johnie Murphy's Big Rugby Run which raised €40,000 for the Feed the Heroes campaign during the lockdown.



John Cooney (Alzheimer Society of Ireland & Cancer Focus NI), Robbie Henshaw (Breast Cancer Ireland), the Irish 7s squads through Stacey Flood (Pieta House) and Bryan Mollen (Movember), and a host of others have all got in on the act to ensure the survival of such important organisations in Irish society.

Through a dedicated Community Engagement Manager, Rugby Players Ireland can help to facilitate partnerships between our players and charities of their choosing. Most recently, Conor Murray became an ambassador for Down Syndrome Ireland while a relationship between the players' association and the Irish Youth Foundation has also been established.

THERE'S A LOT OF RUGBY PLAYERS OUT THERE IN THIS COUNTRY WHO ARE DOING GREAT WORK WITH MANY CHARITIES. MANY CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS ARE STRUGGLING AT THE MOMENT SO IT'S A GREAT THING TO SEE WHAT MANY OF MY PEERS ARE DOING. IT'S VERY POWERFUL.

Billy Holland

Zurich Contribution to Irish Society Award Winner, 2020



ZURICH IRISH RUGBY PLAYERS AWARDS

Having initially postponed our annual gala event which was due to take place in May, the Zurich Irish Rugby Players' Awards was finally able to take place in alternative fashion following the conclusion of the domestic 2019/20 season. Hosted by Joe Molloy, the special broadcast event followed the Heineken Champions Cup Final on Virgin Media with our award winners joining as virtual guests!

It has been a challenging season on and off the pitch, but we have all continued to work hard and learned a great deal from the experience. It has been a long year so to be recognised in this way by my fellow players means a lot to me.

Garry Ringrose

Zurich Irish Rugby Players' Player of the Year 2020



It was a pleasure to play my part alongside many great people with whom I now share treasured memories. I am incredibly honoured by this acknowledgement and wish to pay tribute to those who helped me to achieve my dreams.

Gordon D'Arcy

Rugby Players Ireland Hall of Fame Inductee 2020

Award Winners 2020

Zurich Irish Rugby Players' Player of the Year

Garry Ringrose

Zurich Contribution to Irish Society Award

Billy Holland

Women's XVs Player of the Year

Clíodhna Moloney

Try of the Year

Andrew Conway v Ospreys
(Heineken Champions Cup)

Rugby Players Ireland Hall of Fame

Gordon D'Arcy

Women's 7s Player of the Year

Louise Galvin

Nevin Spence Young Player of the Year

Caelan Doris

Men's 7s Player of the Year

Jordan Conroy

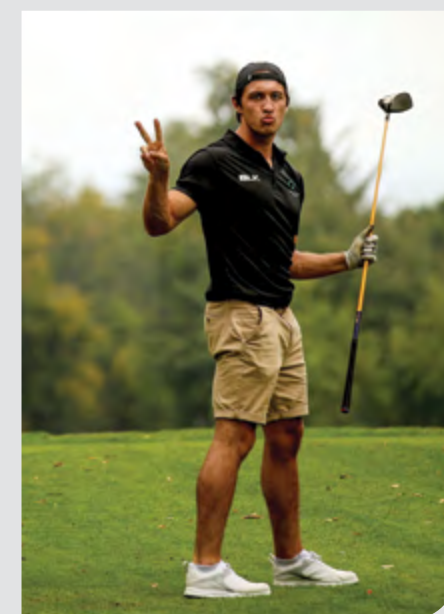
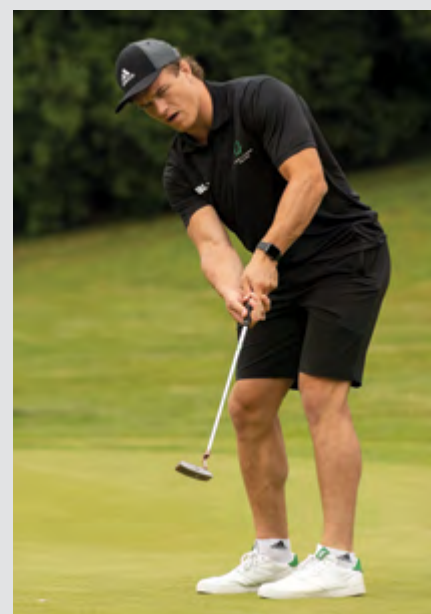


RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

Having nervously waited for government guidelines, it was to our great relief when the lifting of restrictions enabled the Rugby Players Ireland Annual Golf Classic to take place in August in Druids Glen.

Throughout the morning, social distancing guidelines were stringently adhered to and expertly managed by the Druids Glen team as players joined our partners for a four-ball scramble. A highlight of Rugby Players Ireland's social calendar, the morning provides our partners and their guests with the opportunity to interact with our members on an informal basis, while also giving our players an insight into life beyond professional sport.

Our sincerest thanks to Heineken and Druids Glen Hotel & Golf Resort for their support!



PAST PLAYER NETWORK

This year has again shown a steady increase in engagements amongst our Past Player Network. Rugby Players Ireland's offering of support services to past players continues to harbour strong demand, while members of the Network have been supporting one another through the sharing of contacts, career advice as well as job openings.



Although there has been a hold on events of late, the highlight of the Past Player Network's calendar are, as always, the Heineken Clubhouse events. Prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, five such events were held around the country. These remain important outlets for retired players to establish a support network, reconnect with one another as well as enjoying each other's company once again.

Meanwhile, the Irish Rugby Legends continue to give back to the community. As Scotland arrived in Dublin in February, Shane Byrne caught up with Scott Hastings to present a cheque for €50,000 to the My Name's Doddie Foundation. A few weeks later, Byrne once again rallied his troops in support of Tom Smith, the former Scotland and Lions cult hero who is battling cancer. Aply assisted by Kelly Brown and Ally Hogg, the Irishmen ran out convincing winners over their English counterparts at The Stoop!



THE RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND FOUNDATION

The aim of the Rugby Players Ireland Foundation is to raise much needed funds to support players who are going through difficult times and former players that have retired due to injury and hardship.

Having secured charitable status, the Foundation has been driven by Simon Best, Shane Byrne, Ronan Loughney, Ruth O'Reilly and David Wallace who have each been instrumental in offering their expertise deriving from their respective experiences of the charity sector.

TACKLE YOUR FEELINGS TYF 2.0 A YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY

BEST USE OF MOBILE: EPA DIGITAL MEDIA AWARDS 2020

Having been named Best App at the Spider Awards 2019, the TYF App was the winner in the Best Use of Mobile category at the annual EPA Digital Media Awards. Designed by izest Marketing, the TYF App was recognised for its innovative, useful and engaging service in showcasing the tools and resources needed to build and manage mental wellbeing.

FEBRUARY

EIMEAR CONSIDINE & TYF SCHOOLS APP LAUNCH

The launch of our secondary schools specific TYF Programme, which brings the TYF journey right into the classroom. Aimed at TY students aged 14-16 (or similar) the teacher led programme enables students to build their awareness of mental health and wellbeing, improve their resources and spread the TYF message in their own communities. The app was launched by Ireland international and secondary school teacher Eimear Considine, who shared her own story of loss, burnout and support through the beautiful illustrations of Kavaleer Productions.



MARCH

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

As Covid-19 restrictions took hold in Ireland, TYF immediately got to action by adapting its programmes so that both schools and workplace curriculums could be delivered online. At the outset of the lockdown, TYF also shared wellbeing tips to help people get through the sudden challenge that presented itself to the population at large.

APRIL

JACK CARTY & SOCIAL MEDIA

As all aspects of our lives took on a digital dimension, Jack Carty came forward as a TYF ambassador to share his experience of online trolls and how he manages online negativity. Following some high profile incidents, Jack spoke out against the undesirable contributions on social platforms and encouraged everyone to be kind, to mind what they say online and to make sure they switch off every once in a while. His message was later reinforced by former Irish international Mike Ross.

MAY

CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLES

We all need a little help from our friends. With little sign of lockdown restrictions letting up, Niamh Fitzpatrick and Mark Smyth helped to pen some specific tips on how to deal with the additional anxiety that many were feeling about the prolonged impact that Covid-19 was having on our lives. Experts in sport, performance and clinical psychology, their informative tips carry from the rugby world and can be applied to everyone's life.



IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING THE BEST, IT'S ABOUT BEING YOUR BEST.

Eimear Considine



JUNE

JOHN COONEY & UNCERTAINTY

Amidst the continuing lockdown, John Cooney spoke about his mindset and the importance of setting goals to work towards in times of uncertainty. A key ambassador for our campaign, John also appeared in various media outlets across the island of Ireland, drawing on his experience of injury in the past to highlight that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

JULY

CASE STUDY: PORTUMNA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Feedback is important in ensuring that Tackle Your Feelings can achieve what it set out to do in 2016. As the return to school (in some form) loomed larger on the horizon, we heard from one of our pilot schools about how they managed to continue with their TYF Schools Programme remotely. A glowing report from Portumna CS (with some constructive criticisms) helped us to reassess and build upon the structures in place thereby improving the TYF Schools programme for those participating in the forthcoming academic year.

AUGUST

TYF TMO/PRO14

August saw the return of club rugby with the belated culmination of the 2019/20 PRO14 competition. With no spectators allowed on site, TYF was joined by Darren Cave, Eoin McKeon, Barry Murphy and Mike Ross to watch the return of rugby. Insight into the players thoughts and feelings from the perspective of playing and watching came through, with additional tips on how to manage the challenges that people can face.

SEPTEMBER

RETURN TO WORK RESEARCH

As workplaces began to reopen and restrictions slowly lifted, the post-Covid-19 world became a little clearer. Research commissioned by the TYF campaign found that 49% of respondents had found that their mental health had diminished since the outset of the lockdown, but more than 50% agreed that returning to their physical workplace would have a positive effect on their mental wellbeing.

OCTOBER

TYF WORKPLACE WEBINARS

As Mental Health Awareness Month, October saw a big uptake in TYF Work webinars, which were all delivered online. Companies such as PTSB, FScm, TSM-Controls and Chambers Ireland, as well as supporting the #AgMentalHealthWeek - an initiative driven by former Zurich Irish Farmer of the Year and long-time TYF supporter Peter Hynes.

NOVEMBER

CJ STANDER & TYF PRO

The imposition of a second lockdown in November was a blow to many people across Ireland. However, the return to international rugby served to boost some spirits with CJ Stander to the fore of Irish events. To help us launch TYF Pro, a TYF add-on exclusively for Rugby Players Ireland's members to help them deal with the issues they uniquely face in the rugby environment, CJ shared his story of getting through challenging times by building the relationships with those around him, coming together as a community and supporting each other.

DECEMBER

FAMILY/GRATITUDE

With 2020 coming to a close, it has been one of the toughest years we have collectively had to face. TYF has always encouraged gratitude, being thankful for what we have especially on the bleakest of days. To bring the year to a close, TYF shared a gratitude video series in an effort to encourage people to reach out to the people who support them express the thanks so many deserve.



AT THE START OF MY CAREER, MY MENTAL WELLBEING WAS SOMETHING I PUT ZERO EMPHASIS ON. AS I'VE GROWN OLDER I'VE STARTED TO UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH MORE THERE IS TO BE GAINED FROM HOW YOU FEEL..

John Cooney



**RUGBY PLAYERS
IRELAND**

TO OUR MEMBERS

A special thank you to our members who have participated in IRFU negotiations and Rugby Players Ireland events throughout the year. 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

It has been a difficult year for us all. Without the support and assistance of our corporate partners much of what we have been able to achieve at Rugby Players Ireland in 2020 would not have been possible. We 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

WWW.RUGBYPLAYERSIRELAND.IE