As Gibson reflects on his time with the NZRPA he acknowledges the incredible support of his wife Gillian and their three kids, and went on to say: “I want to thank all of those that I have worked closely with over the past decade including my NZRPA family and the team in the office from NZCPA and NZRPA, the PDM group, the players, my colleagues at NZR and my former teammates and management teams. Rugby has given me so many wonderful opportunities that I am eternally grateful for and I am looking forward to my next chapter in the game.”

The next chapter will be a new one of many in the story of Gibson’s involvement in the game. David – or Gibbo as he is commonly known – was born in Hawera and started playing rugby in Taranaki. The halfback originally played fullback for New Zealand Secondary Schools before heading to Dunedin in 2008. There he completed a Bachelor of Physical Education at Otago University. He made the Otago and North Island U18 sides, and represented New Zealand in both the world champion U19 side and the U20s. The tenacious player pulled on the Highlanders jersey in 2002 then moved to Auckland in 2003. There he played for the Blues – winning the Super Rugby title in his first year – until 2007. During that time the athlete of Auckland, and was part of a team that won the Ranfurly Shield and two national titles. In 2006, he played for Northland. He also played international rugby for New Zealand Maori – an honour which was special to Gibson because of his Maori heritage.

Always with an eye on his future after rugby, Gibson completed a Diploma in Business Administration Management at Auckland University of Technology. In 2006, a neck injury interrupted his playing career and he undertook work experience in the marketing department of Auckland Rugby and was part of a team that won the Ranfurly Shield and two national titles. In 2008, he officially called time on his illustrious rugby career as a result of his neck injury and had to deal with the challenges associated with coming to terms with the end of his professional rugby career. He worked on adapting and redefining himself with the support of NZRPA CEO, Rob Nichol, and Heathe Mills, the CEO of the New Zealand Cricket Players’ Association. Around this time, he took a role in member services at the NZRPA, which he threw himself into with real passion.

While working at the NZRPA, he continued his education, both working on an MBA from the Edinburgh Business School and learning Te Reo Māori.

One of Gibson’s closest friends, Bus Collins, who played alongside him at the Blues, Auckland and Northland in addition to working with him as an NZRPA Board Member, is happy to see his mate furthering his career. “It is great to see Gibbo taking on this new challenge. He has always been such a focused person and I am rapt to see him always continuing to grow and develop. “On the field he was feisty, smart, calculated and 100 per cent reliable, and the best of the best when it comes to themed or fancy dress parties. So we are expecting him to be the sharpest dressed GM in the country!”

“For me and my NZRPA family and the team in the office from NZCPA and NZRPA as well to people. He genuinely cares with Gibson for eight years. “Gibbo is very centred, calm and consistent. He is passionate about us being the best in the world in the Personal Development Programme space and he relates well to people. He genuinely cares for players and for the Personal Development Managers. This has been a key part of his success. He has been a great role model, and has also been inspiring and positive to work with.”

Harcourts Personal Development Manager, Steve Symonds, who has worked with Gibson since he first started at NZRPA, expanded on Clement’s comments saying: “It’s been great working with a player who has transitioned from the game to a working life beyond it. Gibbo has experienced an actual unplanned transition, so has faced the very challenges that he reminds us to be mindful of when working with the players.”

Not keen to let an opportunity pass without putting in a humorous dig about his mate, Collins said: “Anyone who played with Gibbo knows he was always misticulous in his appearance on and off the field. He can never be beaten when it comes to themed or fancy dress parties. We are expecting him to be the sharpest dressed GM in the country!”

“Tributes have flowed in for the highly respected manager, especially from those who have worked closely with him. Personal Development Manager for the Chiefs, Judy Clement has worked skill base for the Personal Development Programme and his other duties – which all grew in complexity and scale – have been constant, as have his friendship and support for everyone he has worked with. “He has been a huge contributor to our work across the board. We will certainly miss him, but are absolutely confident that yet another quality person has found their way from the PDP/NZRPA into another important and respected role.”

Gibson officially started as General Manager of North Harbour Rugby on Monday 12 June.

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