

# BEYOND THE PLAYING DAYS

**NZRP** BY THE PLAYERS  
NEW ZEALAND RUGBY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION FOR THE **GAME.**

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0800 PLAYER

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# When is it time to stop playing professionally?

There comes a point in every professional rugby player's career when it is time to stop playing professionally. How do you know when that time is?

There are three main ways a professional rugby career may end – forced retirement due to injury, deselection or when you choose to finish playing on your own terms.

Whichever way it happens, you will experience a variety of emotions. It is important to understand you will go through a lot of different feelings when the time comes to move into another phase of your life. Some sportspeople describe this as a type of grief, however those who have planned for it and have worked on other meaningful interests, hobbies, work or other types of fulfilment while they have been playing find it a more positive experience.

## Forced retirement due to injury

**Having a career-ending injury can be very challenging to deal with. If you have been given medical advice to give the game away, you are entitled to gain additional medical opinions. This can be useful for your own peace of mind to ensure that the advice you have been given is accurate.**

After the initial shock of receiving career-ending injury, you will find yourself facing the question: 'What am I going to do now?' **(see Careers & Education section for more information)** Research shows that players who have prepared well for life after rugby find the shift out of the professional

game a smoother experience.

However, it is natural to feel disappointed, angry or some even say 'robbed' by not finishing your professional playing career on your own terms. It is common for players to experience a range of emotions when their professional career ends, however if this feeling of resentment continues or you start to feel depressed, it is important that you seek professional help. If this happens, talk to your Personal Development Manager or contact **0800 PLAYER** to seek help and guidance.

Under special circumstances, some professional players whose rugby careers are cut short by a career-ending injury while playing may be eligible for an insurance payout or to apply to the Benevolent and Welfare Fund for support depending on their circumstances. Visit the **NZRPA** website for more information on the Benevolent and Welfare Fund and insurance policies or contact **0800 PLAYER** for more information.



"In the back of my mind, I was thinking 'I can't keep doing this'. Knowing what I had been able to do in previous years and knowing that I couldn't get back to that made me come to the conclusion that it was time to start thinking about retiring." Izzy Dagg



## Deselection

**If your services are no longer required by one team, ask yourself 'Do I need to change teams or countries in order to seek opportunities elsewhere?' This is where your agent should be able to help you by searching for other opportunities.**

In the meantime, you need to stay fit and keep searching in order to take up any short-term injury-cover contracts, and be ready to move to another place depending on where the contract is.

However, there might come a time when playing opportunities are not available and you find yourself outside of the professional environment due to deselection. This can present some real challenges on many levels.

When plans get disrupted, it can be hard to process, however the key is learning to accept this and shifting your focus onto other aspects of your life. Working on your personal development programme while playing will assist in dealing with this as it will help you to foster and develop other interests on which you can concentrate when the time comes.

## Retirement by choice

**When deciding to finish playing on your own terms, don't be afraid to ask yourself some hard questions:**

- Am I still playing rugby because I don't feel I have other options?
- Am I being honest with myself about my rugby form and future?
- Have I gone as far in the game as I realistically think possible?
- Have I achieved my goals?
- What is my enjoyment level?
- What is my financial situation?
- What is my family situation?
- Has my body had enough?
- Has my mind had enough?
- How would I feel if I were to retire tomorrow?
- Am I ready for retirement?
  - If yes, how and why?
  - If no, what am I going to do about it?

**Preparation is key. In all three of these professional career-ending situations, research shows that those who have prepared well, have pursued other interests and worked on their post-rugby career while playing have a smoother transition.**

# Announcing your retirement

**Some countries, such as Ireland and France, require you to officially announce your retirement from the professional game for tax reasons. Check the local requirements with your rugby club.**

If you are not required to announce your retirement, it can be a good idea not to because you never know what is around the corner. There have been cases where players have been called back to train

with teams, which has resulted in them playing professionally again. If you have retired on your own terms and are interested in the possibility of playing again, make sure you stay fit so you are ready to take on anything that comes your way.

Some players who have retired due to concussion have opted to announce their retirement as a way to inform people they are no longer in the game. This can be away to prevent the media and other interested people constantly asking questions to which there are no firm answers, as every concussion case is different and there is no definitive timeline for recovery.



**Ross Filipo retired from Super Rugby, got recalled to the Chiefs and ended up restarting his career which included a contract with Racing Metro 92**



# Answering the puzzling questions

There are many different things you need to think about, deal with and plan when you move out of the professional game. It can be both challenging and exciting as you enter a new phase of your life.

The most successful transitions come from being prepared and good planning, so here are some pieces of the puzzle of life after rugby for you to start thinking about. Just like a jigsaw puzzle, post-playing life is not one big piece, but it is made up of many pieces that you can start to work on long before you hang up your professional boots.



To find out where to get support for each of these pieces of the puzzle, check out the next page:

For assistance, call the NZRPA on 0800 PLAYER, email [contact@nzrpa.co.nz](mailto:contact@nzrpa.co.nz) or contact any local Personal Development Manager (PDM) in your region, or your agent. For a full list of PDMs, visit [www.nzrpa.co.nz/people](http://www.nzrpa.co.nz/people)

# Answering the puzzling questions

1/ Where am I going to live?

**A**fter you have decided what country you are going to live in, you need to decide what part of the country you are going to live in. Does it offer the things you want? Things you need to consider are job or educational opportunities, being close to family support, the needs of

your partner and kids [if you have them], the things you enjoy doing and you have a personal interest in – for example, surfing, hunting, clubs – the support structures in that area for you, whether you can afford to live in that area, whether the airport offers flights to where you need to go to on a regular basis.

2/ Do I still want to be involved in rugby or do I need a complete break from the game for now?

**S**ome players need a complete break from rugby when they finish their professional career, however

others still want to stay connected whether that is by coaching kids' rugby, club rugby or helping out professional teams or refereeing. There are coaching courses available which you may be able to do in your professional off-season. [see Careers & Education section of EXPAND for more information]

3/ Do I have enough savings to buy me time to study or decide what I want to do?

**I**n simple terms, money buys you time. If you have savings in the bank, you can support yourself financially while you are working on your next move. If your next move involves studying, do you have enough money to support yourself for the duration of your study

until you find employment? As a professional rugby player, you can become used to having a certain level of income. However, when you move into the new phase of your working life, it is unrealistic to expect to enter a new work environment at similar level. You may have to take a pay cut, as you sometimes have to take a step backwards or sideways to achieve your long-term goal. Do you have enough savings to live on while you work to build up your income level? Do a living budget and see what you need financially so you can budget accordingly.

4/ What am I passionate about and what interests me for the next step?

**I**f you find a new career that features elements of things you are passionate about, interested in or enjoy, chances are you will feel

more fulfilled in your new role. It's important to be realistic though, as there will be some parts to most jobs that are not as enjoyable as others. Sometimes you will have to try a few different things to work this out. Don't be afraid to try a variety of jobs to find something that you love. Don't be afraid to give things a go as change is always an option. Don't feel that you are stuck for life. Learning about what you don't like is valuable for your future, so take the learnings from every opportunity be they good or bad.



Josh Iosefa-Scott, Luke Whitelock, instructor Renee, Dillon Hunt and Ayden Johnstone doing a PADI freediving certificate.





Keven Mealamu and Fiao'o Fa'amausili keeping fit at Keven's gym Fit60

5/ Do I have a fitness plan in place that is interesting, enjoyable and sustainable?

**A**fter having spent time training in a professional environment, it might take some time to adjust physically to no longer playing. Research consistently shows you need to exercise for both mental and physical wellbeing. You might start off trying to maintain the

level you were at while playing professional rugby, however it's up to you to decide whether that's realistic and sustainable given your new life and commitments.

This is a real opportunity for you to pursue other physical activities that you couldn't when you had to retain your body shape for your specific position. Many players find this is a great time to explore other sports, as the more you enjoy it the easier it will be to keep a fitness regime in place.

6/ Have I connected with people within my network who might be able to help me?

**W**hile you are playing, you will meet a wide range of people including sponsors and fans. It is useful to

find out about those people – what makes them tick and what they do – as you never know who may be able to help you as you move into the next stage of your career.

7/ What is the current state of my mental wellbeing? Do I need some help in this area?

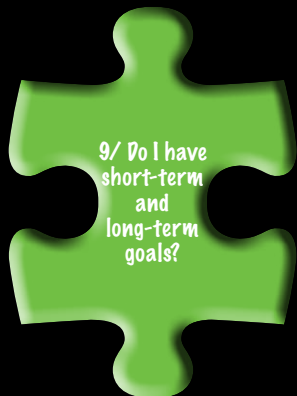
**M**oving out of professional rugby can be challenging. It is natural to experience a wide range of emotions throughout the process, so it is important that you are aware of your mental health. Get good sleep, eat well, exercise and stay connected with

family and friends. If you feel that your mental health is not where it should be, reach out for help. Talk to your GP or your **PDM** or contact **NZRPA on 0800 PLAYER** or your agent. For a full list of helplines visit the **Health, Wellbeing & Relationships** section of **EXPAND** for more information.

8/ What are the work and education needs of my partner and kids?

**W**hen considering your options for life after professional rugby, you need to take into consideration the needs of

**both your partner and your children when it comes to their options for education and also work opportunities.** You and your partner should discuss the possible options openly and honestly before any decisions are made.



9/ Do I have short-term and long-term goals?

**I**dentifying your short- and long-term goals and having a plans in place to achieve them can give you a sense of purpose and direction. They will give you sense of certainty when other parts of your life are undergoing dramatic change.



10/ Have I come to terms with my retirement from professional rugby?

**A**djusting to not playing professional rugby anymore – whether by choice or otherwise – can raise many different feelings. It

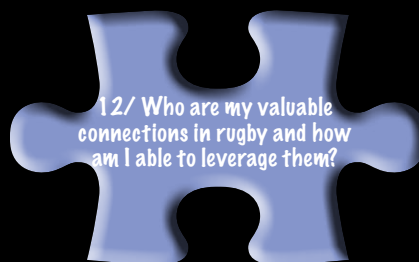
is important that you allow yourself time to process these and understand that going through a wide range of emotions is normal. Some players describe this as a type of grieving process. Be aware that players can experience depression during this time. It's never too early to start preparing for this new phase in your life and those players who have prepared for their move away from professional rugby find it to be a more positive experience. If you need support, talk to your GP, call the **NZRPA** on **0800 PLAYER**, contact your regional Personal Development Manager or **text or call 1737** at any time to reach a trained counsellor.



11/ Have I got my CV and LinkedIn profile up to date?

**W**hile you are still playing or nearing the end of your professional career is the perfect time to make sure your Curriculum Vitae (CV) is up to date and your LinkedIn profile is current and accurate. If you're not sure

how to put together a CV, there are plenty of sample versions online for you to use. If you need help with this, talk to your PDM.



12/ Who are my valuable connections in rugby and how am I able to leverage them?

**W**hile you are still in your rugby environment, find out who your teams' sponsors are and get to

**know people in your region who are well connected.** They may be able to help you get a job in the future or provide you with other useful contacts. **[See Networking & Connecting in the Finance & Business section of EXPAND for more information]**



13/ Have I researched study or retraining options for when I stop playing professionally?

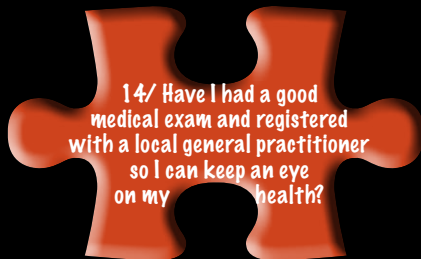
**B**efore you commit to studying or retraining, do your research. If there's a particular course you're interested in, find out where it is offered, how much it costs, what the course involves, how long it will take and what the

job prospects are like once you've completed it. With this information, you can work out how much money you will need so you can pay your bills while you're studying. Some vocations, such as trade apprenticeships, allow you to earn while you learn. If you play Super Rugby or above in New Zealand and have joined the NZR Saving Scheme, you will be able to access 50 per cent of your savings at the age of 34. Consider using this money while setting yourself up for the next step in your career.



Players doing career card sorts to work out what interests them for life after rugby. Career card sorts are available through your Personal Development Manager





14/ Have I had a good medical exam and registered with a local general practitioner so I can keep an eye on my health?

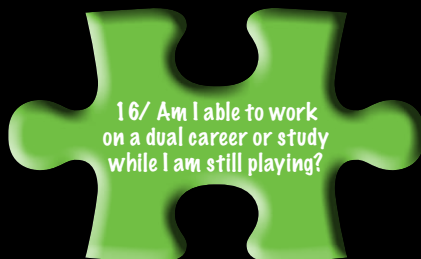
It is a good idea to get a full set of blood tests done annually. If there are any changes to your health, don't ignore them – talk to your doctor as soon as possible.

**A**s well as your team doctor, you need an independent GP to keep an eye on your general health and not just your rugby injuries.



15/ Do I know the transferable skills that I have gained from rugby, which I can use in my next career?

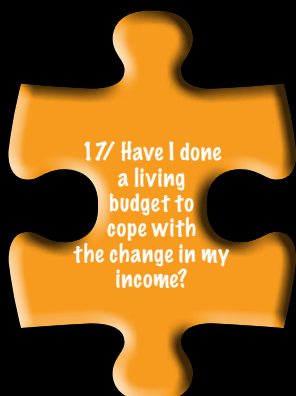
**Y**ou might not realise it at the time, but in rugby you will learn many useful skills that you will be able to transfer into other work environments. Many of the skills you learn through the game are well sought after in the workplace. [See **Careers & Education section of EXPAND for a list of transferable skills**].



16/ Am I able to work on a dual career or study while I am still playing?

experience or working on your days off or combining playing with studying, it can be highly advantageous for you when the time comes to move away from professional rugby. A useful way to use your Personal Development time is to try out working in different industries to see what might interest you post-rugby so you have another career to move into when the time comes.

**I**f you can work on your career for life after rugby while you are still playing, this is known as having a dual career. Whether it's doing work



17/ Have I done a living budget to cope with the change in my income?

**B**efore you finish your rugby career, it's important that you understand your living costs and what money you will need to support your next career moves. This might mean you have to adjust your lifestyle a little. Think about

what spending you can cut back on so you can save more in order to support yourself and your family while you build your next career. Be realistic about your chances of beginning your next career at the same rate of pay as you're earning on your rugby contract. Write out a budget of what you need to live on, so you can save for your living budget before your contract finishes. You can visit [www.sorted.org.nz](http://www.sorted.org.nz) for budgeting templates.



18/ Once I am no longer playing rugby, who am I?

**M**uch of your life has probably revolved around you as a 'rugby player', when the reality is rugby is just something you do.

As well as being a person who plays rugby, you might also be a brother, sister, father, mother, uncle, aunty, etc. Your identity should not be about you being a rugby player, it should be about who you are as a person. Finding out who you are, what is important to you, what your values are and knowing where you come from all help you become more confident in your own identity. The clearer you are about your identity, the easier it will be for you to make the right decisions for yourself.



Sarah Hirini working on the farm shearing.

19/ What will my diet look like when I am not playing?

**W**hen you stop training at a professional rugby level, you'll need to adjust your diet a bit as you're probably not going to be burning as many calories, so you don't need to eat as much. Your food input needs to match your physical output.

Your body shape might also change when you stop doing intensive, position-specific workouts – this is completely normal.

Even though you no longer have to train intensively, it is important for your mental and physical health that you maintain an exercise regime. If you switch to sports that have different physical requirements, such as multi-sport endurance events, you will need to change your diet so that you meet your dietary needs for training. Many retired players say it is easier to keep exercising at a reduced level than to take a break and start training again. If you're thinking about taking a break from training all together, just remember the pre-season pain of starting again!



and new work colleagues. Work out where you will get your connectivity from as being connected with people can help with depression.

21/ Have I spoken to other players who have transitioned out of the game to see how they coped?

**T**he reality is that moving away from rugby into a new career takes time and can be challenging.

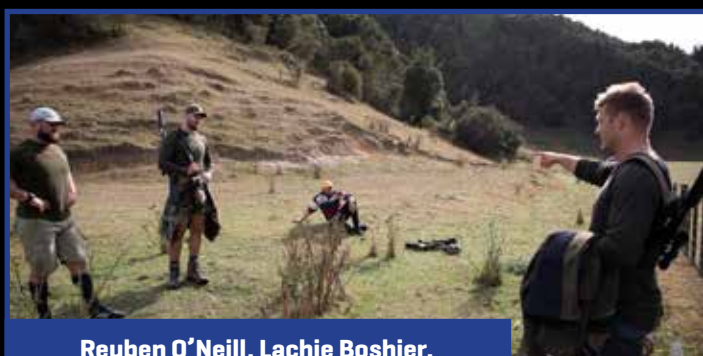
At any time in your rugby career, don't be afraid to ask former players what they found useful and what they would change about

their move out of the game. The better prepared you are, the easier it will be when the time comes. Talking to other players is the best way to find out what worked and what didn't when they moved away from playing professional rugby. From our feedback, players say the better prepared they were in terms of career planning and study, the smoother their transition was. They also said that the more money they had saved, the less stressful their move into a new career was.

20/ Having been in a team environment for so long, where will I get my social connections from now?

**T**hroughout your rugby career you will have found yourself in an environment of friends and colleagues in every

**team you join.** Unless you have many connections outside of rugby, which is strongly encouraged, you may feel a bit lost and isolated once you are not in a team environment every day. To avoid this, put plans in place to ensure that you are still connecting with people on a regular basis. Make it a priority to spend free time with friends, family, old mates, new mates



Reuben O'Neill, Lachie Boshier, Aidan Ross and Sam Cane get outdoors



Tony Marsh, Fiona Brading (NZRPA) and Glen Marsh talk to players about how they dealt with life after rugby





**Camaraderie - Brodie Retallick, Andy Ellis, Dan Carter, Hayden Parker, Richard Buckman, Grant Hattingh (South Africa) and Tom Franklin all catch up.**

**22/ What are my values, interests and motivators?**

**I**t is vital that you have a clear understanding of what is important to you. When you understand your values, background, cultural identity,

morals, interests, and what motivates you, you'll have a greater understanding of your self-identity. This is useful for when you come to make big decisions in life – like whether you're studying the right course for you or working for a company that fits your values and goals. If you have a strong sense of self-identity, you will have less inner conflict, better decision-making processes, greater happiness, more self-control and more resistance to social pressure. The more comfortable you become in your own skin and the more you understand yourself, the better able you will be to live without compromising things that are fundamentally important to you.

**23/ What are my financial goals?**

**J**ust as you have goals and plans to achieve them for each rugby season, you should also have financial goals and plans. You need to be able to identify where you want to be financially and then devise a plan to help you achieve those

goals. For example, if you want to be mortgage free by the age of 32, you need to calculate what you need to pay off your mortgage each year to achieve that. You won't ever buy a house if you don't start saving for one! If you're interested in developing a property or investment portfolio, in order to put the necessary steps in place you should get advice and support from reputable and industry-experienced people and organisations. If you need financial planning assistance, contact the **NZRPA** on **0800 PLAYER**, visit **[www.nzrpa.co.nz](http://www.nzrpa.co.nz)** or contact your Personal Development Manager or agent.

**24/ What do I do for fun?**

**T**he camaraderie that rugby offers can be a great source of fun, but it's important to think about what brings you joy

**outside the game.** It could be spending time with family, travelling, doing up a house, learning the guitar or taking on a multi-sport event. Even while you're playing, you need to ensure you have things in your life that you look forward to and which bring you joy. Understanding what makes you happy is important and will give you balance both while you're still playing and as you move into the next phase of your career.

25/ Do I have access to a good lawyer, accountant and investment advisor?

**J**ust like on the field, if you want to win you need to surround yourself with a good team. You need a good lawyer, accountant and a reputable person or organisation to advise you on any investments you might make. The **NZRPA** is able to help you find reputable service providers in each of these fields.

26/ Do I have strategies for coping with stress?

**A**ny major changes in life can see your stress levels increase – moving into a new phase of your career included. There are some simple things

you can do to help manage this stress. Try to get a good amount of sleep every night. If you can, go to bed and get up at the same time every day so you have a good, regular routine. Eat a nutritious, balanced diet, which includes plenty of vegetables and fruit. Exercise regularly. To get the greatest benefit from your workouts, try getting other people

27/ What are some things I have always wanted to do that I haven't been able to while I've been playing rugby?

**A**fter many years of following weekly schedules, you can now determine how to use your time to achieve your own personal goals. It's finally time to do those things that your sporting calendar has prevented you from doing!

It's time to rediscover yourself, do more of what you enjoy, learn what your new passions are and what excites you. With a growth mindset and good support network, you can achieve so much and now you have the time to do it.

You have to drive your future, so open your mind to growth and live with courage!

## Support, advice and assistance:

If you want any support, advice or assistance on any pieces of the puzzle or any other matters contact the **NZRPA** on **0800 PLAYER** or visit [www.nzrpa.co.nz](http://www.nzrpa.co.nz)

**As you move forward into the next phase of your life, it is important to ask yourself these questions:**

**How will I get there?**

**Who do I need to help me?**

**Where am I?**

**Where do I want to be?**





# NZRPA BY THE PLAYERS FOR THE GAME.

NEW ZEALAND RUGBY PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

## The NZRPA Rugby Club

### Camaraderie – Networking – Support – Advice



The New Zealand Rugby Players' Association has established a network for retired New Zealand professional rugby players called the NZRPA Rugby Club. The club holds a number of events around the country as opportunities for former players to unite, spend time together and re-establish the camaraderie that our great game offers us. The NZRPA Rugby Club has also been created to provide support and advice for past players.

Designated NZRPA Rugby Club Relationship Managers, Mark Ranby, Malua Tipi and Fiona Brading, the NZRPA Overseas and Past Players Personal Development Manager are available to assist retired players with their ongoing personal and professional development, including career planning, education/study, finance and insurance, medical support, and mental health and wellbeing advice and services.

All retired professional players are encouraged to use the services of the NZRPA Rugby Club Relationship Managers and Personal Development Manager and attend any NZRPA Rugby Club events. To be added to the NZRPA Rugby Club database, receive information on events for past professional players or to get assistance please email [contact@nzsra.co.nz](mailto:contact@nzsra.co.nz) or phone 0800 PLAYER.

Most Super Rugby Clubs also now have an alumni (past player club). NZRPA can provide their details to you.

"The NZRPA Rugby Club event showed just how important it is to stay in touch with the peers you played with or against for many years. We all have our own story, but it's awesome to be able to share with the brothers who are able to connect with you as they understand."

**Pita Alatini, Former All Black, Super Rugby and provincial union player**

"The NZRPA Rugby Club is a great initiative. Rugby produces some great friendships and the NZRPA Rugby Club offers the environment to reconnect with people you have not seen in a while and to share stories of where people are at and the success and challenges we experience." **Richie McCaw, double Rugby World Cup winning All Black captain**

### Introducing the NZRPA Rugby Club Team



#### Mark Ranby – NZRPA Rugby Club Manager

Mark Ranby is a former Waikato, Manawatu, Chiefs, Hurricanes and All Blacks player who completed an English degree at Massey University. He played in Japan prior to going to Cambridge University where he studied theology. Upon his return to New Zealand, he taught in high schools and has spent over a decade as a Personal Development Manager for Canterbury, the Crusaders and the Highlanders.



#### Fa'amalua (Malua) Tipi – NZRPA Relationship Manager

Fa'amalua (Malua) Tipi played for Manu Samoa and North Harbour and is now the Personal Development Manager for North Harbour. He is also a lecturer at the University of Auckland's Faculty of Education and is the board chairperson for The Fono. Malua is currently researching male Pasifika undergraduates in university studies for his PhD. He has also been involved in research projects regarding equality, equity and pathways for Pasifika sports athletes.



#### Fiona Brading – NZRPA Relationship Manager (Career Specialist)

Fiona Brading spent time working with youth and in the travel industry before studying sports science and psychology at the University of Auckland. After travelling and working in the recruitment industry in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand, she furthered her studies in career development at AUT before setting up her own career coaching practice. She is also a former North Harbour Personal Development Manager.

# What to expect - the reality of retiring from professional rugby

**All people experience changes in life but one change that is unique to just a small group of people is that of leaving a professional sporting career.**

A career in sport brings with it a unique set of experiences. The professional sports environment is manufactured to help the athlete perform at their best, with a focus on what's happening right now without a lot of emphasis put on the future.

After the player has played their last game, which in itself can be an emotional experience, it's normal to feel concerned and anxious about what lies ahead. The biggest question is usually around what they will do for their next career. They will naturally question whether they are ready for their new career and new life.

Even though changing careers can be daunting, with the right preparation, it can also present some very exciting opportunities if it is approached with the right attitude.

What can you do to help you plan for the next phase of your life while increasing your chance of making it a success of it?



*"The first four years as a professional player I didn't use my personal development time wisely. I did not maximise that time and I really wish I had. Later on, I used my personal development time doing work experience. I worked in insurance and in my last year playing I worked in a Stirling Sports store." Wyatt Crockett Stirling Sports Nelson owner and Insurance Adviser*

**You have to drive your future, so open your mind to growth and live with courage!**



Some of the All Blacks dropped in to visit their old team mate Wyatt Crockett at his Stirling Sports store in Nelson that he owns with his wife Jenna.



## BE REALISTIC

Changing careers, environments, roles and schedules takes time. Be kind to yourself, and try not to take out your frustrations on those around you. Make sure you still do things that make you happy, e.g golf, fishing, spending time with family, learning an instrument or learning a language.

## WHAT IS GOING TO FILL YOUR TANK?

Working out what is going to provide you with fulfilment after your professional sports career can be a challenge. The exciting thing is you can now pursue anything you want to. That could be building a career, studying, renovating a house, doing charity work, spending more time with the kids, planning events, training for multisport or sporting challenges, or connecting with friends.

## DON'T EXPECT TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS DO ASK FOR HELP

In rugby, the head coach doesn't have all the answers so they surround themselves with people that complement their skill-set. The same thing works in life as players have benefited from having mentors and friends outside of rugby circles to bounce ideas off and check things with. However, sportspeople can sometimes be too trusting, so it is crucial that you seek expert advice and information from reputable people and organisations. Do your research on people you are seeking support from. Remove as much risk from situations as you can by checking with highly trained, qualified and experienced people.

## ATTITUDE

When reflecting on their playing careers, countless players say they wish they had made more of the opportunities presented while they were playing. Their advice to players is to network better at promotions, use their personal development time better to explore career options and upskill, and to tap into the rugby fraternity of sponsors and contacts.

## ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR RETIREMENT

You will experience a variety of emotions and go through a lot of different feelings, which have been described as a type of grief. Research says that by planning and working on your post-rugby life while still playing your experience will be more positive. You need time to deal with and process your retirement. If you are feeling overwhelmed or need help, ask for it through the NZRPA or your doctor.

## FREEDOM

After many years of following weekly schedules, you can now determine how to use your own time to achieve your own goals. You'll finally get the time to do those things that a sporting calendar has limited. You get the chance to rediscover yourself, what your new passions are and what excites you. With a growth mindset and a good support network you can achieve so much.

## BE GRATEFUL FOR THE EXPERIENCE

Ending your professional sporting career before you feel ready can be hard to come to terms with. Try to focus on the positives. Embrace the good things about your time playing. You had the opportunity of having a highly desired career and the pleasure of being paid to play sport. You were able to enjoy the camaraderie, fun and unity that being part of a team brings. You have made many friends and connections that will continue for a long time. You have also gained many transferable skills that are yours for life.

## GOALS

It is important to have goals in life. Within the game, those goals are clear – gains in the gym, increasing speed, recovering from injury, trying to get a starting spot or winning a match or competition.

Having clear goals outside the game is just as important. Working on these goals during your playing days will help when it comes time to move into a new career. Try working on two clear goals during your personal development and time away from the game.

Those two goals could be:

- 1) To be career ready
- 2) To be life ready

**For a list of helpful websites and numbers see the Health & Wellbeing section of EXPAND Magazine**

# Positive planning

To make the move from your sporting career to your next career a positive experience, you need to expand your horizons and grow your mindset. It might not all be smooth sailing, but research has proven that you can improve your chances of a better experience if you understand what it takes to be a capable, motivated and driven member of society. To achieve that, a person needs to meet three key needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness. This is called motivation theory or self-determination theory.

Research has recognised that, in order to have a successful transition from one career to another, a person needs to deliver in all three of these needs.

## Autonomy a sense of personal ownership

Positive autonomy	Challenges
Knowing what I want to do	Lack of motivation
Sense of controlling your direction	Relying on others for direction
Goal setting	No goals
Planning and designing schedule	No planning

People become more engaged when they believe they have a level of control over their circumstances and environment. This means that you need to have input into and a sense of power over what you do in order for it to have meaning and relevance. Take control and have direction over what you do in your next career. Be the driver not the passenger.



Ruby Tui started her building apprenticeship under the BCITO Enterprise Package through NZRPA. For more information visit [www.nzrpa.co.nz/infocentre](http://www.nzrpa.co.nz/infocentre)

## Competence the feeling of being good at something

Competence is when you feel you have meaningful input into what you are doing. It is easy to understand how an athlete can go from feeling highly competent during their sporting career to feeling incompetent when embarking on a new, less familiar career. You might feel out of your depth, but by working on building your skill-set, you will increase your ability and competence in other areas. Building your competence can be done by developing new skills while still playing, doing some training as soon as you finish your rugby career, or learning on the job in your new workplace. Learning new skills can be very rewarding and will give you a great sense of satisfaction and purpose. The world is yours to conquer!

Positive competence	Challenges
Having clear direction	Floating along
Having a job that fits you well	Poor job fit
Having a job you find fulfilling	Not being fulfilled in your job
Learning new skills	Not engaging in learning and growing



Sarah Hirini adding surfing to her growing list of skills



## Relatedness A sense of belonging and connectivity

Athletes possess a strong sense of belonging and connectivity through their sporting environment e.g. with their teammates, management and sporting community, such as the fans and sponsors. However, once you move away from playing professional sport, you may have to start from scratch if you have not invested much time in growing connections outside of your sporting environment. This is why athletes are encouraged to build connections (friends and mentors) outside of sports while they are still playing. However, reconnecting with former players can be also be rewarding as you will have shared many unique experiences together.

Positive relatedness	Challenges
Church	Being isolated
Community	Not making new connections to people
Friends	Losing contact with mates
Workplace colleagues	
Clubs	
Networks	



The Hot Springs Spas T20 Black Clash is a great event that connects sporting colleagues



Corey Flynn & Sherwin Stowers



Hale T-Pole & Seilala Mapusua



Onosai Auva'a & Michael Jones



The NZ Barbarian Legends versus Pacific Legends provided an ideal platform for connectivity

# The science behind understanding how your body and brain work

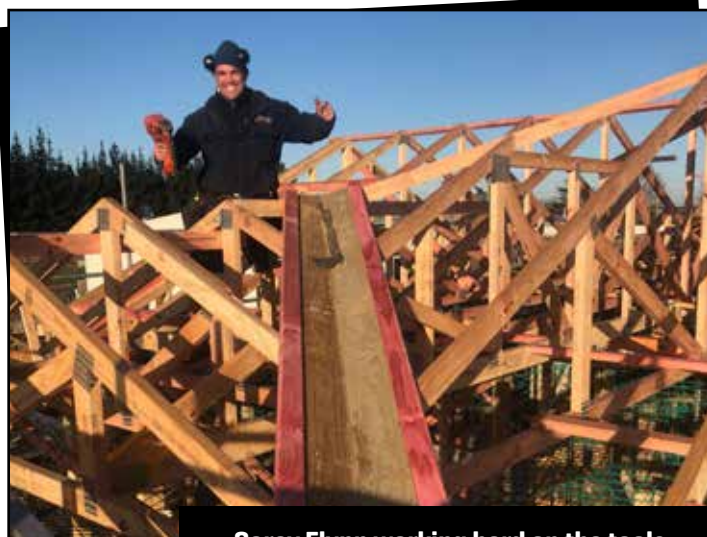
There are four neurochemicals that are responsible for your happiness – dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins. You will have become used to feeling the effects of these four during your time as a professional sportsperson.

Once you stop playing professional sport, it is important to work out how to replicate the production of these in a healthy manner. There are many positive ways to encourage these chemicals to flow, which in turn can have a big impact on your mental wellbeing, motivation and productivity.

## **Dopamine** the chemical released immediately prior to a core need being met

Dopamine is known as the feel-good hormone because it is responsible for the high that the body produces. Athletes release dopamine in various sporting situations such as closing in on a finish line or in the final minutes of a tight match when you are ahead on the scoreboard.

How to get dopamine in a healthy way	In a way that can lead to issues
Working	Drugs
Getting paid	Alcohol
Achieving goals	Gambling
Having routine	Gaming
	Eating
	Sugar
	Coffee



Corey Flynn working hard on the tools

## **Serotonin** the status chemical

Serotonin is released when you experience 'one-upmanship' over someone else. Athletes produce frequent amounts of serotonin during their sporting careers as a result of the status they are perceived to have by others.

How to get serotonin	Lack of serotonin
Having a job	No job
Having a sense of purpose	Lack of direction
Learning new skills	Stagnating and not learning



Players learning a new skill (CPR) which releases serotonin.



# Oxytocin the social connection chemical

This chemical is released when you feel the security of being part of a group. Women and men frequently release oxytocin within their sporting environment, given the closeness of their communities and teams.

How to get oxytocin	Lack of oxytocin
Workplace	No job
Through a partner	Isolation from family and friends
Having a pet	Lack of social connection
Social sport	Struggling to manage your emotions positively
Friends outside of rugby	Feelings of regret
Family	
Church	
Giving back	
Charity work/volunteering	
Small acts of kindness	



Past players networking to support their community

# Endorphins the fight or flight chemical

Endorphins are released in response to stress and pain, such as when you perceive yourself to be in a situation of high danger, stress or pressure. It provides you with an additional energy source to increase your chances of survival. This same chemical is released by athletes in training and competition.

How to get endorphins	Lack of endorphins
Exercise	No exercise
Laughter/comedy/funny images	No laughter
Music	
Orgasms	
Hot baths and showers	
Certain foods e.g dark chocolate/chilli peppers	
Certain smells e.g vanilla	



Angus Ta'avao playing the saxophone

# Differences between positive career change and challenging change

The table below shows the change of sources for some of the chemicals released by the body during and after a sporting career. It also shows the differences between positive career change and challenging change.

AREA	DURING SPORT	POSITIVE CHANGE	CHALLENGING CHANGE
Dopamine	Winning	New career success	Gambling, drugs, alcohol
Serotonin	Athlete status	New life status	Nothing
Oxytocin	Support team	New career, projects	Little or nothing
Endorphins	Training	New active goals	Inactive
Autonomy	Personal goals	New career goals	None
Competence	World class	Use other skills	Little or nothing
Relatedness	Support team	New career, projects	Little or nothing



Rob Nichol (NZRPA), Steve Gurney [9-time Coast to Coast winner] and Richie McCaw after completing Coast to Coast

"When I finished I needed a goal to keep fit, I didn't want to let my fitness slip. Multi-sport had always intrigued me and I wanted to know if I could get myself in a position by training to handle that. The challenge that came with that helped replace the void that was left from playing big games of rugby. Standing on the start line was similar to the start of a test match. You crave the butterflies and the similar feeling of not knowing what was going to happen. Was I good enough? It was the anticipation and the team aspect of doing races with like-minded people that was something I really enjoyed. The completion of a race, even if it was unpleasant, is very satisfying." Richie McCaw



# What you need to navigate your way through the next phase of your career

## Human capital

As an athlete, you have had a high level of competence in your sport. With a change of career, you require the skills, knowledge and experience to match those needed by either your employer or the market if you're planning on being self-employed. This is known as human capital.

Developing human capital is vital in ensuring that an athlete is career ready. How, where and when these skills, knowledge and experience are obtained and overcoming the obstacles to them is a key component of a successful athlete transitioning programme.

## Timing

In order to move into a new career, you will need to build up your human capital during your time in sport. However, this can be challenging due to lack of time and the need to focus on your sport. The solution to this is to use your personal development time, days off or injury periods to upskill. You can also designate a period of time immediately post retirement during which you plan to obtain the relevant skills, knowledge and experience.

## Process

Once you prioritise building up your human capital, you'll kick-start a process. This begins with you developing a strong sense of self and what makes you tick. From there, you can identify which market you wish to develop your skills, knowledge and experience for. **[See Career & Education section of EXPAND]**

**For a professional athlete, having a growth mindset can result in achieving more both as an athlete and in readying themselves for life after their competitive sporting days come to an end. Working on developing a growth mindset is an essential part of any transitioning programme for athletes.**

## Growth mindset

It is important that you are encouraged to explore and stretch yourself in new areas. Some sportspeople close themselves off from developing other areas of interest as they are drawn into their sporting career. However, research shows that having a balance in life can improve sporting performances. Learning new things and understanding that you can be highly capable in areas other than sport is an exciting process.

Having a growth mindset is the most significant factor in achieving positive change and development. This is more than just positive thinking, and it is backed up by hard science in that the brain is now understood to be malleable, meaning it is like putty and can be moulded, both in a positive and negative manner.

## Life ready

In addition to embarking on a new professional career, a retiring athlete must also expect changes in their personal life, as it will be substantially different from when they were an active professional athlete. This has proven to be an immense challenge for many, but one that can be overcome with knowledge and preparation.

Your sporting career has given you many transferable skills - the key is to be able to recognise and develop them in order to make the most of every opportunity. **[See Transferable skills in the Career & Education section of EXPAND]**



Players growing their mindset by learning the Wim Hof method

# What does being 'life ready' look like and how do you get there?

Being life ready is about being able to cope without your sporting career, learning new skills and obtaining your chemical feel-good factors through other avenues. This could mean you try different activities during your time off and learn new skills during your personal development time or down time while you are still playing.

## Life skills

A life skill is a skill that is necessary or wanted. The World Health Organisation has suggested five key skills that a high-functioning, well-balanced and content human should possess. They are:

- **Decision making and problem solving**
- **Creative thinking and critical thinking**
- **Communication and interpersonal skills**
- **Self-awareness and empathy**
- **Coping with emotions and stress**

Working to develop these skills is recommended for athletes in order for them to be life ready as they move into a new career. The great thing is that you may have developed many of these already during your sporting career.

## Understanding the sense of loss

It is natural for an athlete to feel a sense of loss when their professional sporting career comes to an end. The areas of loss identified have been loss of career, loss of lifestyle, loss of attention, change of financial circumstances, loss of societal status and change in family dynamics. Each area of loss needs to be understood as to who it may affect and how.

The sense of loss for the athlete can result in them taking out their feelings on those around them.

Talking to other players who have retired, talking to your family or seeking professional help from a trained counsellor or sports psychologist will help you to process these feelings.

Ensuring your family appreciate that you are going through a period of significant change and that it will take time for you to get used to will create a higher level of tolerance and understanding from them.

You may experience different mood swings and highs and lows as you try to adjust to your new life. However, if you have a good balance prior to retiring and have a full life with routine, exercise, healthy diet, connectivity, new goals and a new career or study it can reduce the sense of loss. If you can, try to focus on being grateful for the special and unique experiences you had because of your sporting career as this can help reframe your feelings. This is known as gratitude.

**Andy Ellis working on being life ready with his Wagyu beef business. Photo credit STUFF**

I never really knew what I wanted to do, so I said to myself that I was going to say yes to as many opportunities as I could. You never know who you are going to meet and what doors they can open. I entered into international flower shows, opened Japanese restaurants, a Wagyu beef business, owned horses, had a boy band, studied and now am part of Get Gravity – a satellite internet company which is an asset to the rural community.



# Behavioural change

*"It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves." Sir Edmund Hillary*



## **A positive transition from a career in sport to one outside sport is important for a sportsperson's long-term wellbeing.**

Research and investment has been dedicated to understanding what is needed in order to achieve positive change. There are three elements that are widely accepted as being required to achieve this:

Capability	Motivation	Opportunity
This is defined as the individual psychological and physical capabilities required to engage in the development of new knowledge and skills. For instance, a retiring professional rugby player may wish to purchase and work on a vineyard, yet due to chronic knee injuries during their career, their ability to do the physical labour needed would prevent them from working on the vineyard. However, they are fully capable of carrying out many other roles within the operation.	This is the attitudes, aspirations and brain processes that energise and direct behaviour. Typically, players' motivation for being career ready is not strong when they start out in their sporting careers, but it has a tendency to increase as they feel they are getting closer to retirement. If motivation to be career and life-ready starts early in the athlete's career, they can expect to have a more successful transfer into the next phase of their working life.	These are all the factors that lie outside the individual, which make the behaviour possible. Through your career you are provided with many opportunities that you are encouraged to take up, which can help you in your future. Connect and network with people, take up opportunities to try different things including work experience. If you utilise the opportunities you are given during your sporting career, they can help you during your life after professional sport.

## Summary

- ▲ The next phase of your career is an exciting opportunity, but it is important to be realistic in your expectations, to acknowledge your retirement, to learn what is going to fill your tank, to enjoy your new time-freedom and not to expect to have all the answers. Above all, it's important to ask for help when you need it. It is also really helpful to be grateful for the experience and to have some clear goals of what you want to achieve.
- ▲ You will have a better transformation experience into the next phase of your life if you undertake positive planning, which will help you to gain a sense of personal ownership of your life and a sense of belonging somewhere, to feel like you're good at something, and to look for new healthy ways to obtain the chemical hit that you get from your sporting career.
- ▲ To navigate your way through your next career, you need to have human capital, have the timing right, understand the process, possess a growth mindset, develop life skills, be life-ready and understand the sense of loss you might experience.
- ▲ To foster behavioural change you need capability, motivation and opportunity.



# Alumni

The Super Rugby clubs have all established alumni, which share a common goal of supporting players, staff and their families now and in the future. They do this through personal development, connection and engagement, and giving back. They all run regular events and are a great way to keep connected to your rugby family. The Alumni all have the full support of the NZRPA. If you have played or work for one of the clubs and wish to join their alumni contact:

**Blues:** [thebluesalumni@gmail.com](mailto:thebluesalumni@gmail.com)

**Hurricanes:** [alumni.hurricanes@gmail.com](mailto:alumni.hurricanes@gmail.com)

**Highlanders:** [alumni.highlanders@gmail.com](mailto:alumni.highlanders@gmail.com)

**Chiefs:** [chiefs.legacy@gmail.com](mailto:chiefs.legacy@gmail.com)

**Crusaders:** [alumni.crusader@gmail.com](mailto:alumni.crusader@gmail.com)







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