



New Zealand Rugby Players' Association (NZRPA)

Professional Player Support – Overview

Enabling our rugby players to thrive; uniting and inspiring New Zealanders

Today's professional rugby player can access a broad and detailed suite of programmes to support their growth and development as well-rounded, well-grounded and thriving individuals.

As well as the contest on the field, players face many challenges off it. To assist with these challenges, the NZRPA, NZR, Super Clubs and Provincial Unions work in partnership to ensure the players have the following support available to them:

- Access to **Player Services Support** via team visits, referrals, social media platforms and the 0800 Player phone line. Through these and other channels, NZRPA provides access to the expertise, education and support players need to better handle the demands they face. This includes a network of providers offering expert advice on a range of issues, such as financial planning, banking, insurance, contracts, legal issues, property issues, personal support and development, mental health and wellbeing, personal endorsements, public relations/media (including social media), behavioural risk, anti-doping, wagering, disciplinary matters and problem solving. Players can also access free **dispute resolution process and support** through the NZRPA in relation to employment problems and misconduct allegations. www.nzrpa.co.nz
- Lead by New Zealand Rugby, Super Clubs and Provincial Unions, and supported by the NZRPA, players are given a **comprehensive induction** before they take the field, which covers employment contracts and obligations, protocols and support structures in key areas including anti-doping, illicit drugs, supplements, medical treatment and prescription medicines, anti-corruption, player conduct, social media, mental wellbeing, homesickness, concussion, team functions, and respect and inclusion. To view the induction material, visit www.nzrpa.co.nz/info-centre and scroll to 'NZ Player Induction'.
- NZRPA has so far produced two editions of the **Players' Own Handbook**, which is designed for 15–19-year-olds and covers useful tips and information on life, and on pursuing a career as a professional rugby player. Fronted by many of New Zealand's most successful rugby players, the topics covered include communication, good decision-making, time management, personal development, agents, agents' charter,

nutrition, financial tips, drivers' licences, dealing with injuries, concussion, social media, mental wellness, contracts and eligibility, drugs and alcohol, healthy relationships, consent, careers and player protocols. In 2019, there were 19,000 copies of the magazine produced, with 14,000 copies being distributed throughout New Zealand secondary schools in partnership with the New Zealand Secondary Schools Sports Council. The handbook is made available and utilised within all professional rugby entry-level environments and forums i.e. Provincial Union rugby academies and Super club age-group camps. To view the magazine visit www.nzrpa.co.nz/pdf/NZRPA-Players-Own-Handbook-2019.pdf

- **Developing people, developing Players.** From the moment a player enters the New Zealand professional ranks, they are encouraged to be proactive about their development on and off the field; to think about their career prospects outside rugby; to put a strong financial plan in place and to take responsibility for self-improvement. One of our goals is to help all players develop the skills needed to thrive both as an individual and as a player. Through our rugby network, we provide access to the necessary experience, knowledge and resources to help players achieve success in all aspects of life. At the heart of this push is the **Personal Development Programme**.
- Established in 2001, the **Personal Development Programme** is a nationwide venture operated in partnership between the NZRPA, NZR and the game's administration. Its aim is to help prospective, current and past players fulfil their potential and access the support they need. Managed by the NZRPA, the programme has 23 dedicated Personal Development Managers operating across the country covering Black Ferns, Super Rugby, Provincial Union and Sevens players. The programme offers players opportunities to access career planning and work placement specialists, tertiary and trade education providers and work experience opportunities. The Personal Development Managers also provide access to expert support and guidance in financial planning and asset protection, professional rugby education and awareness, character development, and mental health and wellbeing.
- The NZRPA employs their own dedicated **career planning specialist** and accesses several experts in this area to work with current, overseas and retired players.
- In the event any player is seeking specific individualised support relating to **financial budgeting, planning or tax** matters NZRPA has a relationship with Deloitte that provides immediate access to specialist accountancy and tax expertise.
- The **NZRPA Accredited Agents** programme that operates in consultation with NZR facilitates access to agents in a manner that protects the interests of players and is fair and reasonable to those wishing to provide such services. An agent must be able to demonstrate that they have the knowledge, integrity, competence and professionalism to justify being classified as an NZRPA Accredited Agent as outlined

in the Agents Charter, and they are contractually bound to maintain these standards at all times. www.nzrpa.co.nz/pdf/NZRPA-Agents-Charter-2013.pdf

- Players can access confidential and free **mental health, wellbeing and psychological support and counselling** through the **NZR Employee Assistance Programme** and/or **the NZRPA**. Examples of advice and support sought by players includes, but is not limited to, personal/work relationships, separation/divorce, anger, grief, stress, depression, anxiety, drug, alcohol and gambling concerns, and career and retirement planning. www.nzrpa.co.nz/pdf/NZ-Rugby-EAP-Flyer-2014.pdf.
- Led by NZR, professional players are actively involved in promoting and role-modelling mental health and wellbeing and diversity support through the Headfirst initiative. www.headfirst.co.nz
- NZR, Super Rugby, Sevens, Black Ferns and Provincial Union contracted players all receive group **life, trauma and medical insurance cover**. www.nzrpa.co.nz/pdf/insureyou-NZRPA-changes-to-your-contract-flyer-May-2018.pdf
- Players (along with team management and administrators) in New Zealand are part of an NZR lead **illicit-drug testing and support programme**. Players may be required to attend or complete counselling, education or drug treatment where it is established they have used, taken or ingested any illicit drugs in circumstances that place their health and/or professional rugby career at risk. The programme does not involve sanctions, and the results are strictly confidential – the focus is on identification of any issues, and provision of the appropriate support and treatment. www.nzrpa.co.nz/pdf/Illicit-Drugs-Protocol.pdf
- The NZRPA manages a **Benevolent and Welfare Fund**. The purpose of the fund is to provide financial support to players if they are no longer able to play professional rugby due to a career-ending event such as sickness, injury, accident or death, or in the event they are suffering hardship due to unforeseen or unfortunate circumstances. www.nzrpa.co.nz/pdf/NZRPA_Benevolent_Funds_Rules_2014_1.pdf
- Within **New Zealand team environments and management**, players also have access to a team doctor, sports psychiatrist and other medical advice and support as required.

NZRPA players that travel **overseas** to work or have **retired** from playing can access the above services and support in a manner that is tailored towards their needs and circumstances.

For further information visit the following websites:

www.nzrpa.co.nz