



Welsh Rugby Players Association
Cymdeithas Chwaraewyr Rygbi
Cymru



www.WRPA.co.uk



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As an association the Welsh Rugby Players Association (WRPA) is there to represent, develop, promote and protect the collective and individual interests of our members for today, and for the future.

In 2016, the WRPA signed into a four-year agreement with the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) and all Wales based professional players, outlining the key objectives and development requirements to be delivered in the Welsh rugby landscape to improve players' welfare, personal development and preparation for life beyond rugby.

In 2017, following a vast redevelopment of the association the new WRPA Personal Development Plan (PDP) was developed with players themselves taking a prominent role in consultation.

Our members are the key element of the WRPA; with player executives chosen by their peers from each region working closely with the PDMs and other executive committee members to align player needs with the WRPA's direction.

The WRPA developed, designed and now implements the Personal Development Plan (PDP) to all members, delivered by our new workforce of Personal Development Managers (PDMs). Our PDMs are based in each professional regional club in Wales (Scarlets, Ospreys, Dragons and Cardiff Blues), and work alongside regional staff to host workshops, operate seminars and facilitate one to one personal development and support meetings to players for players.

REPRESENT - The WRPA is mandated by its' members to act in their collective best interest in relation to player welfare and issues affecting the game in Wales. The association acts as a conduit for member concerns and provides a platform whereby issues surrounding their welfare can be raised at the highest levels by the Executive Board.

DEVELOP - Our PDP assists players in achieving a sporting/lifestyle balance during their careers and encourages them to maximise the opportunities that are open to them as professional rugby players. In doing so, it ultimately makes the transition out of their professional playing career and into future employment as smooth as possible.

PROMOTE - The WRPA provides players with resources to help with public speaking, media skills and leadership. It advises players on social media usage and how to make the best use of their professional brand. It is through the personal brand promotion that the WRPA aims to encourage as many aspiring players to continue on their rugby journey so that no talent is lost, or investment wasted.

PROTECT - One of the core new developments of the WRPA is the "Vulnerabilities" program. With modern rugby players more exposed and at risk than ever before, the WRPA continually engages by running initiatives to protect the players and the game in Wales. If it stands to either negatively impact the welfare of the players or the game in Wales, the WRPA aims to ensure it is tackled.





The WRPA is a proactive member of the International Rugby Players Association (IRPA), as well as the Professional Players Federation (PPF). We work in close partnership with both entities to ensure all players' rights are respected and that the duty of care for athletes in sport is met.

In 2007, IRPA and the IRB [now World Rugby] signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that confirmed global recognition of the IRB as the world governing body for the governance of the game and IRPA as the world representative body for professional Rugby Union Players.

Therefore, **IRPA** is the world representative body for professional rugby players on international issues of importance to the players and the game. IRPA work alongside international, national and competition governing bodies, to ensure there is player representation and involvement in the key decision-making processes of the game. IRPA's membership comprises of National Rugby Players Associations and Groupings worldwide, with coverage extending across all the major rugby union competitions, countries, markets and the 4,000 professional rugby players competing worldwide.

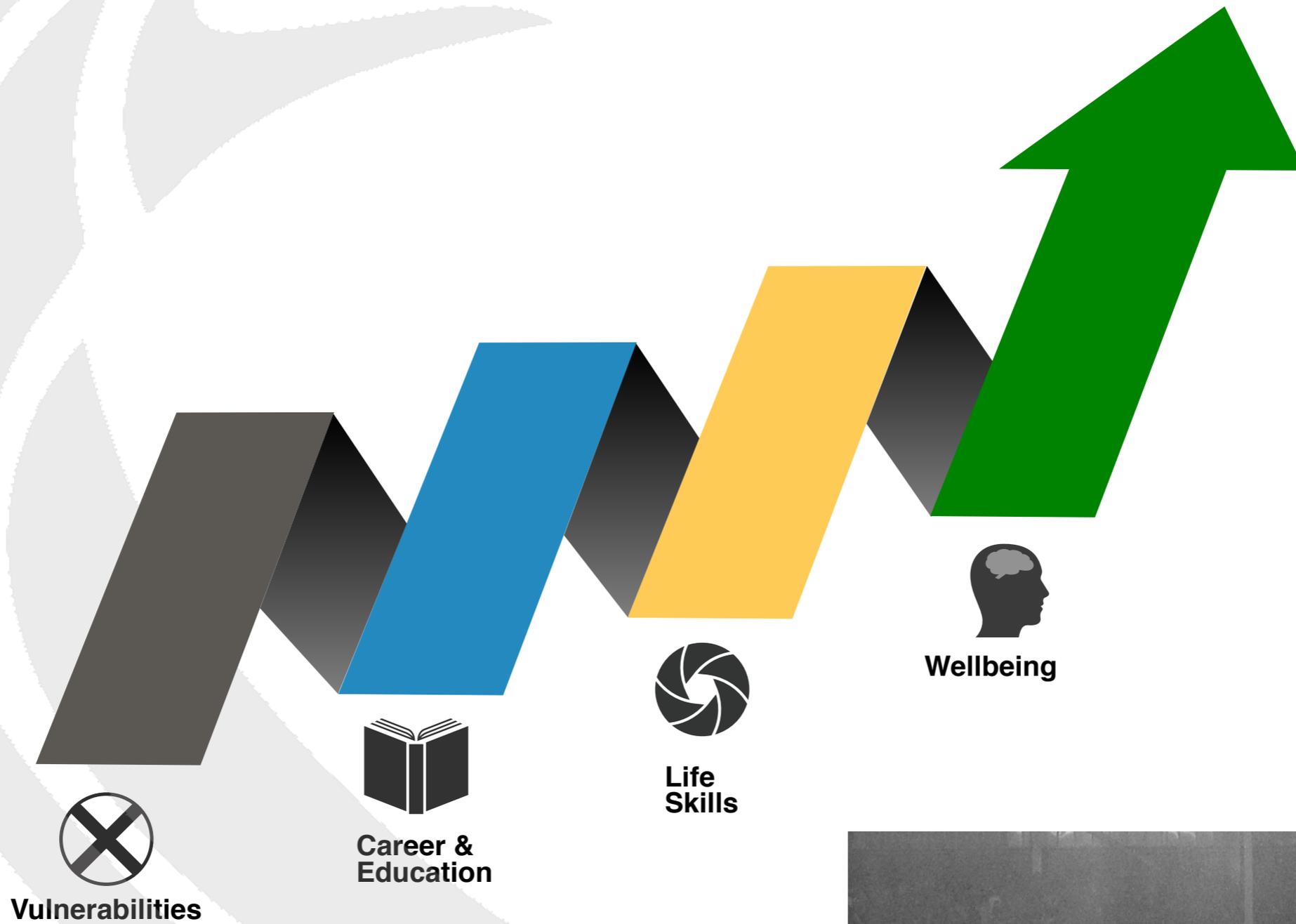
The **PPF** is the national organisation for the professional players associations in the United Kingdom. Representing over 17,500 professional sportsmen and women in Britain, the PPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting and developing the collective interest of these players, through player association forums, initiatives to promote professional sportsmen and women and representing the professional players associations collective views to government and the media.

The WRPA through its PDP and strategic partner alignments, aims to provide a dynamic example of how to proactively engage with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act for Wales 2015. This Act promotes a goal of "A healthier Wales" which according to the Act is defined as: "A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood".



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRPA Personal Development Program





Vulnerabilities Program

These interactive sessions are run by PDM's who draw upon over 60 years combined policing experience. The sessions utilise real life case studies and scenarios that professional rugby players are likely to face in their careers. Players leave each session with a clear understanding of the risk and consequence of these vulnerabilities, together with guidance and a range of tactics that they can use to make good choices and keep themselves and others safe.

There is no question that an athlete's off-field indiscretion can threaten the relationship a sport has with each of its stakeholders. As a result there is a view that an athlete is a '24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year employee ... [who] must protect their interests and those of [the sport's] corporate partners

Jonson *et al* (2013)

Sessions include but are not limited to:



CAUTION ZONE

Understanding Your Profile – “Protecting your brand”

Responsible Driving – “Keeping you safe behind the wheel”

Use of Social Media – “Safeguards for social media”



HAZARD ZONE

Night Time Economy – “Enjoying a safe night out”

Gambling – “Don’t gamble your future away”



DANGER ZONE

Substance Misuse – “The real cost of drug misuse”

Sexual Conduct – “Keeping out of the danger zone”





Career and Education

Ensuring that professional rugby players are ready for their future is an important part of the Career & Education development process. The world of professional sport can be unpredictable, and the aim of the Career & Education development process is to support players to prepare for a career beyond rugby whilst maximising the opportunities during their playing careers.

During the 2017/18 season, players in working groups from all four professional regions in Wales helped develop **Career+**; a bespoke career & education tool that provides a step-by-step guide to explore the stages of career development and education management. Beginning with self-assessment followed by discovering career possibilities before finally developing options to create an individual action plan; players are better equipped to engage with WRPA and Club partners and explore potential dual-career journeys.

Career+ draws on personal preferences and interests making it a tailored and convenient tool for players at all stages of their careers, highlighting to them the unique work experience, education and personal development opportunities available.

‘Sport can be a dual edged sword. On the one side, sport can provide numerous opportunities to learn about yourself and others as well as experiencing the highs and lows of the sport. On the other side, an exclusive commitment to sport can dominate your life so much that you won’t be prepared for any other activity’

Petitpas (1997)



Career+



CAREER INTEREST IDENTIFIER WRPA CAREER+

2017 / 18 EDT.

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Career+ WRPA

It is important to remember that this exercise is part of the process of exploring different areas of interest you may have and finding out which characteristics and competencies you have for those areas.

Use the box below to record the scores from your assessment(s):

A:	B:	C:	D:	E:
F:	G:	H:	I:	K:

Now that you have the results from your career interest assessment, consider the specific career fields that match your interests and identify in what ways you can align your network with these careers.

Write down the two letters with the most responses. If you find yourself having a tie, then list three.

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Now that you have identified your area of interest, take a look at the career cards relating to your preferred interest. Discuss with your PDM potential careers that you may be interested in exploring further.

Remember, your assessment interests are not what you must do, they are a start point for a discussion about what your career journey may look like. You will decide with the support of your PDM what you want to do next.

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Career+ TRANSFERABLE SKILLS: WRPA

What are the key transferable skills you currently have that would suit the potential careers you identified?

Transferable Skills

Required Skills

What are the key skills you will need to work on that would benefit you in the potential careers you identified?

CAREER INTEREST IDENTIFIER
WRPA CAREER+

2017 / 18 EDT.



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Career+ INTERESTS



List your top 3 career options in order of preference:

1.	
2.	
3.	

List companies within your network associated with this career:

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	



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Life Skills Program

Professional rugby players operate in a high performance environment on a daily basis and learn a variety of skills, attributes and values that are transferable and hugely respected in other employment sectors.

The WRPA define these as “**Life Skills**”.

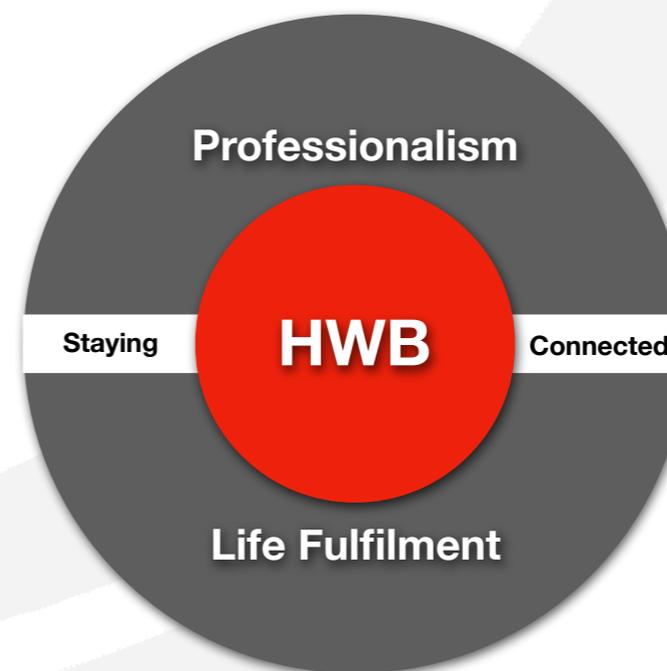
“The skills and abilities an individual requires to self-manage their life inside and outside of the rugby environment”

Life Fulfilment: Ensuring the player will develop life management abilities and skills to make the most of what life has to offer.

Staying Connected: Ensuring the player is able to interact with their family, social circles and support network in a positive and effective manner.

Professionalism: Developing the skills required to capitalise on corporate, business or work-based opportunities.

Hwb: Skills that interact across all realms and when developed will impact their whole life significantly.



Workshops include but are not limited to:

Leadership Skills

IT Skills

Financial Literacy

Agents and Contracts

Insurance

Media Training

Presentation Skills

Charity and Community Responsibilities

Welsh Culture and Language

Mentoring Others





Wellbeing Program

Mental HWB

The WRPA's wellbeing program is designed to aid rugby players in managing the lifestyle and mental pressures of professional sport. The program goes beyond only providing appropriate support when needed; placing an emphasis on developing the mental skills needed to thrive both in sport and life.

The program ensures that proactive steps are taken to combat the stigma associated with mental health through the delivery of awareness and educational workshops that specifically focus on developing the skillsets to excel under the pressures associated with professional sport and modern life.

All WRPA staff receive annually accredited training to ensure signs and symptoms of distress are recognised, in order for signposting to appropriate professional support is made at the earliest point. Furthermore, through the development of our bespoke mental wellbeing program (**Mental HWB**), the WRPA aims to ensure coaches, medical staff (Team Doctors & Physiotherapists), performance development staff (Conditioners) and club employees, form part of the discussion and solution to combat mental illness in Wales. This program has been developed with the support of clinical and sport psychologists, as well as industry leading experts in the field of wellbeing.

“The constant physical and mental workload placed on professional rugby players is likely to have an accumulative effect on burnout, but that a decrease in motivation due to exhaustion, devaluation and reduced sense of accomplishment will effect individual players differently at different stages of the season”.

Creswell & Eklund (2006)

Mental Health

Skills -

A session specifically designed to build on psychological strengths whilst gaining a better understanding of the common signs and symptoms associated with mental illness.

Mental Health

Fitness -

A session designed to promote an optimal state of psychological flexibility aimed at utilising personal strengths and developing resilience.

Mental Health for

Wellbeing -

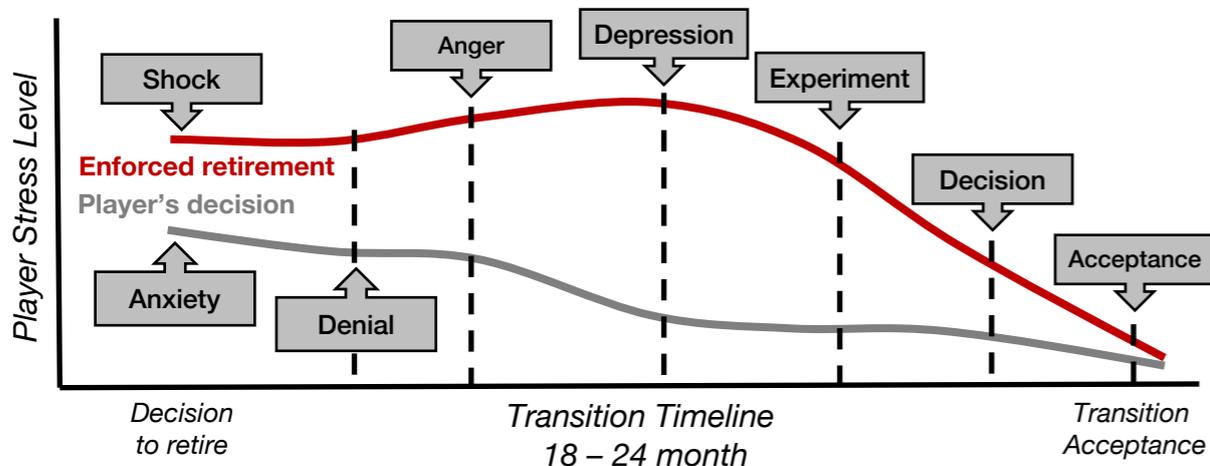
A session designed to equip players with appropriate ‘teamship skills’ (for example, care towards others) within the sporting landscape and the wider community; in addition, develop strategic communication skills, identify available resources and understand the need for appropriate signposting.





Career Transition Support

Emotional State of a Transitioning Rugby Player
Adapted from "Change Curve", Kubler-Ross & Kessler



Research conducted with ex-players, coaches and family members suggests that players will experience four main stressors that can lead to difficulties during their transition and in their life beyond rugby:

CAREER - FINANCIAL - SOCIAL - CHRONIC PAIN

Players are supported by their PDM to alleviate career transition stresses and are encouraged to grow their portfolio and experiences as early as possible, taking pro-active steps before and during transition. Players are supported to:

- **Identify transferable skills**
- **Create both written and video CVs**
- **Enhance their professional network via LinkedIn**
- **Actively engage in interview preparation**
- **Attend work experience and transition days in industry**

To support a player currently in transition, view their profiles at: www.wrpa.co.uk



2nd Half

In 2017, the WRPA opened the new incorporated charity “**Second Half Rugby**”. This registered charity (charity number: 1176670) sits within the WRPA to support players in a time of hardship. Through a board of trustees, applications to the charity are awarded funding to support players when difficult situations arise.

Second Half gives back to those players who have given so much to the game, enabling them to start their own Second Half.

This players charity is supported by the WRPA with staff time, office space and event opportunities, as well as assisting with the operations of the charity. However, the support of external business and individuals is key to enabling the support to players when they face a difficult second half of their career.

For further information about how you can support the work 2nd Half does contact Philippa Hearnden at: info@wrpa.co.uk

WRPA Staff and Executive Committee



Ken Owens
Chairman



Andries Pretorius
CEO



Philippa Hearnden
Business Support



Dan Owens
PDM- Dragons



Phil Davies
PDM- Cardiff Blues



Tim Jones
PDM- Ospreys



Alun Davies
PDM- Scarlets



Alun Wyn Jones



Dan Bigger



Sam Warburton



Ellis Jenkins



Jake Ball



Ken Owens



Hallam Amos



Tyler Morgan



Luke Treharne



Caryl Thomas

Partners

The WRPA is proud to have a collection of supportive partners aiding the work we do:

