

Rugby Defends Its Anti-Doping Program

Anti-doping figures released for 2013 by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) indicate that [Rugby](#) Union on international scale demonstrates a higher percentage of positive test results than either cycling or athletics. The International Rugby Board welcomed the findings but remarked this does not suggest that the sport is less clean than other sports listed in the report.

WADA made this finding by combining all of its laboratory findings across Olympic sports in 2013. The findings were taken from both urine and blood samples and were made public on July 8th. It was revealed that the 1.3 percent figure of rugby is a higher Adverse Analytical Finding (AAF) than both athletics and cycling that both come in at 1.2 percent. An Adverse Analytical Finding means the presence of a prohibited substance or its metabolite was found in the sample.

The figures include all analyses conducted by the 33 WADA- accredited laboratories for in- and out-of-competition testing and by the two additional laboratories that have been approved by the [World Anti-Doping Agency](#). These laboratories conduct blood testing exclusively for the Athlete Biological Passport, which is one of the most important anti-doping tools to be introduced in recent years.

There were 5,962 adverse or atypical test results across all sports in 2013, compared with 4,723 in 2012 that revealed the number of abnormal test findings increased by more than 20 percent last year. In all, 6,126 samples were taken in rugby across the 33 laboratories that appears comparatively low compared to 11,585 taken in athletics and 22,252 in cycling. The very high testing rate of cycling is due to the fact that WADA tends to target sports that have proven to be drug user-friendly. WADA remarked the results offer the most robust and transparent reflection of the global state of anti-doping testing to date.

Football in general registered a figure of 0.5 per cent in 2011 though it was recently revealed by FIFA, the world governing body of football, that there were no positive tests from any players in the recently-concluded [FIFA World Cup](#) in Brazil.

An IRB spokesman said what it doesn't mean is rugby is less clean than other sports and added you cannot deduce that. The spokesman added what it shows is that an intelligent anti-doping program in rugby is working and catching those using illegal substances and added we want to catch people using banned substances and a lot of our testing is targeted and we focus a lot on the Under 20s. The IRB spokesman also remarked quite often positive tests would come from supplements and we know they are particularly susceptible there, so education is also a big part of our program and also remarked that these figures show they will be tested and they will be caught if they use illegal substances.

A spokesman for the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) said our anti-doping program is in line with the International Rugby Board and Irish Sports Council Anti-Doping criteria and we believe

that it is very robust and added this is a global study and the IRFU is not in a position to comment.