

RFU Boss Admits Drug Problem In Rugby

Ian Ritchie, the Rugby Football Union's chief executive, has remarked Rugby union has a doping problem. The most senior figure in English rugby said rugby has an issue with drugs that urgently needs to be tackled.

The Rugby Football Union's chief executive also remarked we are addressing this and not putting it under the carpet and also said we are recognizing this is an issue. Ritchie's comment came in a week when Bonymaen's Nick Clancy became the 10th rugby union player in the United Kingdom in 2014 to be suspended for doping offences. However, Ritchie reiterated that although 15 of the 43 banned athletes or coaches listed by UK Anti-Doping are from rugby union, a big majority of them come from the junior ranks.

A former international coach, under condition of anonymity, said it is naive to believe that the problem is limited to young players who are trying to take a shortcut to enter the professional ranks. The coach, while speaking to [DailyMail](#) said he walked away from rugby in disgust at the scale of drug abuse. The coach said he is sure there was the odd player taking drugs before the sport went professional and remarked but what he found abhorrent was the institutionalized drug-taking that came in in the professional era.

The former international coach also said players are being told to bulk up, and it's being spelled out to them in no uncertain terms that the way to bulk up is to take drugs. He went on to add that one cannot become as big the players are becoming without a serious amount of drug-taking and added once a core of players take drugs, get bigger and win places, the only way other players can compete is by taking drugs too. He went on to remark that it is a problem that has engulfed the sport and he wanted no part of it. The coach also remarked you don't get a physique like a modern-day rugby player by eating grilled fish and doing press-ups.

A few months back, former France and Harlequins prop [Laurent Benezech](#) had claimed that French team doctors unwittingly and illegally administered cortisone to him during the 1995 World Cup. Benezech also remarked that the culture of drug use in rugby is due to unreasonable demands placed on players by coaches who are desperate for short-term success. Benezech also alleged that Rugby is in exactly the same situation as before the Festina cycling business.

Nicola Newman, who runs the RFU's drug testing program and is the director of communications and education at UK Anti-Doping, said there is an issue in rugby, and this is something the RFU have acknowledged. Newman added the evidence points to more of a problem in the junior ranks

than at elite level but agreed that questions should be asked across the whole of rugby union. Newman added our understanding is that it is easy to [buy steroids](#), but there are an awful lot of risks involved and went on to add that but it is not illegal to buy steroids for personal use and it is only illegal to sell them or supply to others.