

Decision To Drug Test Schoolboy Rugby Players Appreciated By Former WADA Chief

The decision of [Drug Free Sport New Zealand](#) to test schoolboy rugby players for the first time has kicked off a debate centered on ethics, social responsibility, and attitude.

David Howman, the former Director General of the World Anti-Doping Agency, welcomed the move to test leading Secondary School Rugby players of New Zealand. Howman remarked this is a very important initiative and added a lot of the problems in doping occur in the stages where young athletes are trying to break through into the elite nature and they are tempted to do that by others who should know better but a lot of doping goes on at that level.

The former WADA chief said he is really pleased at the initiative from DFSNZ and the willingness he thinks of the school principals to take this on. Howman also commented that the step taken by DFSNZ was a vital educational tool and deterrence.

The pioneering move will be hosted at the top four first XV finals series in Palmerston North during September. This decision was taken after concerns were expressed about the use of supplements by players, and whether banned substances are being used in the quest to reach the professional ranks.

Consent to testing will not be required from parents as the tournament is held under the auspices of New Zealand Rugby who are signatories to the World Anti-Doping Agency code. The urine samples will be collected and analyzed by the WADA-accredited laboratory in Sydney. School age athletes have long been tested by Drug Free Sport New Zealand in other sporting codes, such as Olympic or Paralympic events.

The anti-doping tests will be conducted for a restricted number of substances. The purpose of this initiative is to catch those who cheat in an attempt to reach the top level rather than someone who takes a medicine to help with health conditions such as asthma.

In a statement, Drug Free Sport New Zealand said the opportunity to apply for an exemption permitting the medical use is available in the rare event that a positive test results from properly administered medication. It was further said that normal results management process and sanction regime would be applied on a case-to-case basis. The statement of DFSNZ also reads that Drug Free Sport New Zealand had identified certain elements within the rugby environments of schools that possibly suggest a significant potential for doping to occur. It was commented that this includes research conducted by Otago University on behalf of DFSNZ showing extensive and uncontrolled supplement use, along with the knowledge that doping (and in particular [anabolic steroid use](#)) is occurring in comparable environments overseas, notably in South Africa and the United Kingdom.

The South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport (SAIDS) reported in 2015 that nearly half of all doping convictions against rugby players over the 10 years up to 2014 came from the under-19 level and the country's annual Craven Week schoolboys rugby tournament. SAIDS reported that the vast majority of positive tests of rugby players across all levels were for [anabolic steroids](#).