

UK Anti-Doping Chief Expresses Concerns About Steroid Abuse Among Young Rugby Players

Nicole Sapstead has vowed to focus on an “increasing and worrying” explosion in use of [anabolic steroids in sports](#) by teenagers amid fears that the problem can exacerbate during the Rugby World Cup in England.

The new chief executive of UK Anti-Doping remarked that emphasizing on the growing use of steroids by aspiring athletes in rugby and other sports would be at the heart of her tenure. The UKAD Chief praised the approach taken by the Rugby Football Union and World Rugby at the elite level but said there was “something fundamentally wrong” with aspiring players as young as 14 turning to anabolic steroids to compete.

The UK Anti-Doping has suspended 13 rugby union or league players out of the last 15 doping violations. There have been at least 50 doping bans, of which 28 are being served by British rugby players from either discipline. One of these cases involved [Sam Chalmers](#), the son of the former Scotland and Lions fly-half Craig, who delivered failed drug tests for two anabolic steroids at a Scotland Under-20 training session in May 2013.

The UKAD Chief said the use of anabolic steroids has exploded – look at our findings over the last year, it has increased dramatically and added anabolic steroids are now so easily accessible via the internet. Nicole Sapstead said she is concerned about effect of the increased emphasis on size and strength in the professional era on aspiring players who are watching but admitted that positive tests at the World Cup would be a big surprise. She also remarked it is that level where they’re pushing and pushing and pushing to make the cut where the biggest problem lies and also said that is the same for a number of sports.

Sapstead, who took over as [UKAD](#) chief executive, said we are seeing at lower levels of the sport, with young boys in rugby, in rugby league, an increasing and worrying prevalence of steroid abuse particularly when it comes to steroid abuse. She also commented that it is no longer about it being just a sports issue or an anti-doping issue, actually there’s a public health issue here and education and health have to get involved, too. Sapstead also said this is clearly dangerous stuff from a health perspective and added we sometimes intercept packages and we can see that what somebody has thought they are buying is not what they are buying. She went on to remark that some of these underground labs are disgusting in terms of the conditions in which this stuff is made and added you just really are dicing with your health.

In November, the Rugby Football Union said it would fund a major study by Leeds Beckett University with an aim to uncover the scale of doping and supplement use among teenage players.

Debbie Jevans, the chief executive of England 2015 Rugby World Cup, remarked right education was critical to dealing with doping issues. Jevans said the best way and the most healthy way is to train and train hard to be the best you can be and not try and short-circuit it because you may have health problems later on and also added what you do need to do is educate the athletes there because those athletes then become ambassadors and spokespeople.