

RFL INTEGRITY REPORT 2024

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to give an update and overview of Integrity, namely Anti-Doping and Betting issues in Rugby League during 2024.

2 ANTI-DOPING

2.1 UK Anti Doping's role

UK Anti-Doping ("UKAD") is the body responsible for ensuring sports bodies in the UK are compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code through implementation and management of the UK's National Anti-Doping Policy.

The National Anti-Doping Policy seeks to facilitate an environment which:

- Provides for an even playing field for players and athletes to compete
- Preserves and upholds the ethics and morals of sport; and
- Safeguards players' physical and mental wellbeing.

This process is managed by UKAD and the Rugby Football League ("RFL") through a programme of education, testing and investigation/prosecution of rule violations, in accordance with the RFL's policies and procedures around Anti-Doping.

2.2 Implementation Plan

The UKAD Assurance Framework is the primary mechanism through which National Governing Bodies (NGBs) demonstrate to UKAD their compliance with the Policy. The Assurance Framework outlines a number of mandatory requirements and provides NGBs with clear instructions on how they can meet them.

In 2024, the RFL continued to ensure it complied with its Implementation Plan and has worked with UKAD to ensure that the sport was in a best in practice position. The 2024 Implementation Plan has been submitted and will require support from all aspects of the game to deliver, particularly communication through different media platforms and resources.

3 EDUCATION

3.1 Professional Game - Online course and electronic communication

Integrity education has continued across the sport in 2024, both in Anti-Doping and Betting.

Anti-Doping and Betting education is mandatory to relevant individuals in the sport with a provision for stand down in the RFL Operational Rules if such mandatory education has not been completed by a certain date. The online courses are shared with Clubs in late Autumn to allow Clubs the time to factor these into plans for the pre-season.

Periodically, as required, the RFL continues to share key messages via direct communication with Players regarding Anti-Doping.

3.2 Community Education

The education programme also encompasses the Community Game and there has been a renewed focus on ensuring that Community Players, all of whom are bound by the RFL's Anti-Doping Rules and the Betting and Related Activity Code of Conduct, are aware of their obligations and uphold the



principles of fair sport. Enhancing Anti-Doping awareness in the Community Game is a key priority for the RFL, although it is the responsibility of everyone involved in the sport to ensure that Rugby League is 'clean'.

The RFL makes available a number of Anti-Doping materials and resources to Clubs to distribute to players and Club members and this is supported with information on Anti-Doping on the RFL website and social media channels. There is also delivery of key messages at appropriate forums such as annual conferences.

3.3 In-Person Training

In 2024 Clubs were required to book their players onto the Anti-Doping course, which is compulsory for Men's First Team, Women's First Team and (where relevant) Reserve and Academy Teams. Both the online course and the face-to-face training provide information on prohibited substances, Therapeutic Use Exemptions ("TUE's") and checking supplements and medication.

Head and Assistant Coaches at all Men's Super League, Championship and League 1 teams were instructed to attend a UKAD-hosted education session in person in August. A follow up session was arranged for those who could not attend, in October. The October session was also opened up to Heads of Youth staff.

The RFL continues to review its UKAD-accredited Educators to ensure that the best possible delivery of education is administered across the sport of Rugby League.

4 ANTI-DOPING TESTING

4.1 Testing Programme

Testing is carried out by UKAD across the entire game and a budget for testing is agreed between the RFL and UKAD at the start of the year. UKAD carry out a combination of in and out of competition tests and whilst the majority are urine samples, blood sampling has also taken place in the past couple of years. UKAD determines which players are tested. The RFL contributes to the funding of this testing whilst some is carried out as public interest testing. The details of the tests carried out are set out below.

4.2 'Whereabouts' System

All professional Clubs have to provide *whereabouts* information in relation to their training schedules in order to allow UKAD to conduct out of competition testing. In addition to this, a number of players are part of a Domestic Testing Pool. This requires those players to provide whereabouts information so that UKAD can conduct out of competition testing more effectively, including at the players' home address.

4.3 2024 Testing Figures

The 2023-2024 Anti-Doping testing figures for Rugby League are as follows:

Period	1 July–30 Sept 2023	1 Oct–31 Dec 2023	1 Jan-31 March 2024	1 April-30 June 2024	TOTAL
Total Samples Collected and Tested	151	124	183	127	585
In Competition	41	12	27	52	132
Out of Competition	110	112	156	75	453

Complete and comprehensive UKAD testing figures across all sports can be found here: <https://www.ukad.org.uk/quarterly-reports-ukads-testing-programme>

5 ANTI-DOPING INTELLIGENCE AND INVESTIGATIONS

Whilst testing is a crucial element of the Anti-Doping programme, the RFL also works in conjunction with UKAD using intelligence to ensure that resources are focussed in key areas and where particular concerns are identified. Intelligence-sharing supports the RFL and UKAD in developing effective testing and investigation strategies. The RFL and UKAD have a Data Sharing Agreement in place which ensures the effective transfer of data and information between the two organisations and provides appropriate legal protections and safeguards.

The RFL passes any intelligence in relation to any Anti-Doping complaints or concerns, to UKAD. UKAD also has a confidential hotline which allows anyone to report concerns direct to UKAD. The 'Protect Your Sport' platform serves as an integral tool to protect Clean Sport and makes it easy for anyone to report concerns directly to UKAD: <https://www.ukad.org.uk/protect-your-sport>

6 ANTI-DOPING RULE VIOLATIONS

In terms of anti-doping offences, the RFL were notified by UKAD of a number of Anti-Doping Rule Violations ("ADRV") since the last report and the subsequent sanctions for the players are listed as follows:

Player	Club	Level	Substance	Length of Ban
Rowland Kaye	Hunslet	League 1	Oxymetholone (Anabolic Agent)	4 years
Tobias Richardson	Midlands Hurricanes	League 1	Cocaine	1 month
Harry Aaronson	Cornwall	League 1	Cocaine	1 month
Adam Rusling	Cornwall	League 1	Cocaine	1 month
Taylor Baddeley	Castleford Tigers	Reserves	Cocaine	1 month
Charley Bodman	Cornwall	League 1	Terbutaline	18 months
David Foggin-Johnston	Bradford Bulls	Championship	Cocaine	2 years
Tom Curwen	Workington Town	League 1	Amphetamine	18 months
Ryan Snowden	Batley	League 1	Ostarine, Clenbuterol (Anabolic Agents)	3 years
Rob Worrincy	Hunslet	League 1	Ostarine, ibutamoren (Anabolic Agents)	3 years
Harry Tyson Wilson	West Hull	Community Game	Possession of Methandienone (Anabolic Agent)	3 years

There are still three ongoing cases of which two are from the 2024 season and one is a historic case which is awaiting arbitration, however the players have all been charged with ADRVs. It should be noted that Rugby League makes up just under a quarter of all current ADRVs listed by UKAD.

There are currently 15 Players who are banned from the sport for ADRVs.

7 BETTING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

There is no over-arching body ensuring implementation of standards for Betting Activity but the RFL has a robust Implementation Plan in place to ensure integrity in this area is upheld and protected and the Executive continue to ensure that this is regularly reviewed and that there is ongoing compliance.

8 BETTING INTELLIGENCE

In relation to Betting, the RFL has a partnership with Sportradar, who provide intelligence services to the RFL based on data acquired from gambling markets. Should there be any suspicious patterns, Sportradar would notify the RFL of such activity and either Compliance action would be undertaken and/or a referral to the Gambling Commission would be made depending upon the details of the case.

Intelligence received from the RFL so far during 2024 has confirmed that no suspicious matches were identified and there is a confidence that all matches in the Super League and Challenge Cup were “free from manipulation.”

The RFL also has Data Sharing Agreements in place with leading betting companies including in order to ensure that in the event of any suspicious activity, data can be appropriately and legally shared freely between the RFL and the relevant betting company which serves to assist the RFL in identifying any suspicious betting or patterns.

9 BREACHES OF BETTING AND RELATED ACTIVITY CODE OF CONDUCT

In terms of breaches, two breaches of the Betting Code of Conduct were identified in 2024. Both cases were brought to the RFL’s attention by a betting company.

Player X and Player Y (unreported cases), both Professional players, were investigated for previous betting taking place in 2017 and received a Warning from the RFL Compliance Department. Both players had placed bets on teams to win and did not involve any of the teams they were playing for at the time in question. Mr X had also placed one bet in 2024 involving a match where he was not a player for either Club.

10 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

The RFL has confirmed the adoption of the UK Anti-Doping Rules which are contained within the 2024 Operational Rules and thereby ensures that the UK Anti-Doping Rules are binding upon relevant individuals involved in the sport of Rugby League.

Additionally, the RFL ensures that any relevant contracts in place with players and individuals involved in the sport contain an agreement to be bound by the relevant Anti-Doping Rules and Betting Code of Conduct in addition to a commitment from all relevant participants to cooperate with any relevant Anti-Doping and/or Betting investigation and subsequent proceedings.

The RFL carries out regular monitoring in terms of its compliance with the UKAD Assurance Framework requirements, each of which are derived from the NGB responsibilities set out in Section 4 of the National Anti-Doping Policy.

In accordance with the Assurance Framework, the RFL also has a relevant mechanism including in the Operational Rules through which players can confirm their retirement from the sport and relevant updates and reminders on the process are circulated throughout the year.

11 COMMUNICATIONS

As part of the commitment to the education of players and staff the RFL issued communications to the Community Game and Professional Game to ensure players have access to information in relation to integrity.

Communications include the 2024 WADA Prohibited List, namely the change in status of Tramadol since 1 January 2024, which has been shared with Club Doctors and Athlete Support Personnel via email, and also positioned on the RFL website. In addition to information on the process for applying for a TUE and reminders on the due diligence required around supplement use and the taking of medications.

In 2024 all participating players in the Challenge Club early rounds also received communications on Betting and the applicable rules.

12 EVENTS OF NOTE

Dr Cherie Daley is now (effective from January 2023) the RFL Board Anti-Doping Champion and Board Representative having responsibility for Anti-Doping related matters. Cherie is a Chartered Psychologist and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society (AFBPsS), with almost two decades of experience in high performance sport. Having worked across a wide variety of elite sports settings in both practitioner and leadership roles.

The RFL supported CleanSport week and shared communications via social media and the website to demonstrate the sport's commitment to doping-free sport for all.

The RFL is currently in discussions with UKAD relating to a number of research projects with the ultimate aim of improving attitudes towards doping both in Rugby League and sport generally. One International Research Project relates to a study of those who have committed an ADRV, how they have learnt from this and what may have motivated them to commit an ADRV. This study also involves athletes who believe they have been affected by an ADRV without having directly committed an ADRV themselves. The RFL is also working in partnership with UKAD in a groundbreaking and newly commissioned study evaluating the psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement within Rugby League. This is the first time UKAD have worked with a sport on such a bespoke project.

13 CHALLENGES FOR 2025

The key challenges are:

- i. To reduce the number of positive cases in the sport of Rugby League in 2025.
- ii. To continue to strive for the highest standards in educating the players coming up through pathways and to ensure values-based education and awareness is established with younger players without oversaturating them.
- iii. To continue the effectiveness of the formal rollout of the UKAD Implementation Plan and ensure that the RFL achieves *Best Practice* in all key areas identified by UKAD in 2025.
- iv. To continue the work with UKAD around the Social and Non-Prescribed Prescription Drugs Policy as a welfare tool, in addition to identifying those who may be subject to other substance abuse, which may be of a performance enhancing nature and/or contained on the Prohibited List.
- v. Continued education and awareness around the January 2024 inclusion of Tramadol on the WADA Prohibited List.
- vi. To build a foundation on which to deliver meaningful integrity education to Community players as a key priority through online means as well as existing education communication streams.
- vii. To support Clubs and Players, and all key stakeholders to engage with the education programme. This includes more media exposure to education delivery and increased communications to ensure a wider reach of the integrity messaging. Participants within younger age groups (scholars and academy players) are also an area of focus as they require a different approach to education than Professional First Team players.
- viii. Improvement around the cultures and behaviours in the sport around the increasing prevalence in use of social drugs and performance enhancing drugs within areas affecting both the Professional and Community Game.
- ix. To work strategically and collaboratively with UKAD in relation to evaluating the psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement within Rugby League with the ultimate aim of improving culture, attitudes and behaviours towards doping in Rugby League.
- x. As all sports with gambling sponsorship partners, the RFL will work towards an agreeable position with DCMS and our current partner Betfred. This must ensure that education forms a key part of the Betting Code of Conduct and ensures that Betfred retain a gold standard



in the eyes of the British Gaming Council and the RFL are partnered with a responsible gambling provider.

Report correct as of 31 August 2024