

**The RFL annual anti-doping report encompasses both the professional and community game. The key areas covered within this report are governance, intelligence, education, testing and violations within the 2020 season.**

**At the RFL we want to ensure that all players can make well informed and positive decisions so they can say with pride ‘that was 100% me’.**

## GOVERNANCE

Changes were made to both the RFL’s Anti-Doping Rules and the Betting and Related Code of Conduct in 2020.

In respect of anti-doping, a new WADA Code was introduced which came into force on 1 January 2021. There were a number of changes that were made to the WADA Code which have now been reflected in the RFL’s Anti-Doping Rules. The main change was a reduction in the length of sanction for Players who test positive for certain recreational drugs (e.g. cocaine) when used out of competition and with no intention to enhance performance. If established, the sanction may be reduced from 2 years to 3 months (and potentially only 1 month if an education programme is completed.)

The RFL ensured that the changes to the RFL’s Anti-Doping Rules and the Betting and Related Activity Code of Conduct were clearly communicated to Players and Clubs in the latter part of 2020. This was done through messaging in social media and through the usual channels at Regulatory Meetings.

During 2020, the RFL has supported a number of campaigns including Clean Sport Week and UKAD’s Protect Your Sport Campaign, which have been shared on social media, the website and OurLeague. A new TUE Wizard was also promoted to assist Players in checking any medication they take.

The RFL has a designated Board Champion for anti-doping and is across the work that the Executive undertakes in this important area.

## 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 also agreed to a Data Sharing Agreement which ensures the effective and legal transfer of data between the two organisations.

The majority of testing is carried out in the professional game and is a combination of in and out of competition testing. However, during the course of 2020 intelligence received resulted in increased testing in the Community game. This has resulted in some Community Players being tested and subsequently, in certain cases, charged with anti-doping rule violations.

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.

## EDUCATION

Whilst the Covid pandemic made it extremely difficult to deliver much face-to-face training during the 2020 Season, an online course was promoted to professional Players during the first period of lockdown for Players to complete.

This course has now been enhanced and is to be rolled out from 25 January 2021 with the added element that this will be compulsory for all professional Players to complete prior to the start of the 2021 Season.

Face to face education run by UKAD trained educators with a background in rugby league are mandated. Until covid restrictions allow for face-to-face delivery, remote online meetings will be held in their place which Clubs are required to book their Players onto. Both the online course and the face-to-face training provide information on prohibited substances, TUE’s and checking supplements.

It is also compulsory for certain members of staff (e.g. Conditioner, Player Welfare Manager) to have completed UKAD's Advisor qualification, providing those with key roles with Players in Clubs with a level of understanding in relation to anti-doping.

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 education through key stakeholders within Clubs in the Community game is a key priority for the RFL. It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the sport that the sport is clean. It is extremely important that the correct values are instilled in all participants when they start in the sport and those starting in Rugby League can be assisted by those around them through various channels of delivery.

The RFL Community department makes available certain anti-doping materials 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. Education will continue to be enhanced in the 2021 Season and beyond to ensure that all participants in the Community game have received key messages on anti-doping.

## TESTING

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 is also carried out. UKAD determines which Players are tested.

Given the Covid pandemic, the number of tests undertaken in 2020 was down on the number of tests carried out in 2019. However, the RFL worked in collaboration with UKAD throughout this period to ensure that the testing programme could continue. This included ensuring Clubs provided up to date details of Players who had either fallen ill with COVID or were self-isolating.

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, approximately 12 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 on those Players more effectively including at their home address.

YEAR	2019	2020
Samples collected and tested	695	351
Samples collected and tested from Academies	30	0
% tests out of competition	78	80
% tests taken including blood samples	11	6
Anti-Doping Rules Violations	2	3

## ANTI-DOPING RULE VIOLATIONS

In terms of anti-doping violations, the RFL were notified by UKAD of 5 potential anti-doping rule violations during 2020. This resulted in 3 Players receiving sanctions, as follows:

LEVEL	SUBSTANCE	BAN
Championship	Clenbuterol	4 year ban
Championship	Drostanolone	4 year ban
Championship	Cocaine	3 months

One Player was found not guilty following a National Anti-Doping Panel hearing. The number of proven anti-doping violations increased from 2 to 3 from 2019 to 2020, so there was no dramatic change to the number of Players receiving bans.