

WORLD RUGBY
Impact Beyond 2025

IMPACT BEYOND: CAREERS

Showcasing inspirational women

Guidance and resources to develop a career in rugby





CONTENTS

Foreword • 4
Rikki Swannell | Commentator and Journalist • 6
Gemma Louise Porter | Photographer • 8
Aurélie Groizeleau | Match Official • 10
Dr Kate Gazzard | Team Doctor • 12
Ando Niaina Herimahefa | Women's Rugby Development Manager • 14
Chiharu Nakamura | General Manager • 16
Crystal Kaua | Head Coach • 18
Giuliana Campanella | Team Manager • 20
Mandisa Williams | Television Pundit • 22
Nicole Acevedo | League President • 24
Dr Lindsay Starling | Science and Medical Manager • 26
Ingrid Mangcu | Human Resources General Manager • 28
Caroline Moore | Media Manager • 30
Viengsamai Souksavanh | Union Chief Executive Officer • 32
Clare McMonagle | Chief Financial Officer • 34
Ana Tuiketei | Judicial Officer • 36
Dr Deborah Robinson | World Rugby Trainer • 38
Hollie Davidson | Match Official • 40
Tamara Sheppard | High Performance Director • 42
Amanda Murphy | Strength and Conditioning Coach • 44
Jessica Dombrowski | Operations Director • 46
Carly MacKinnon | Communications Manager • 48
Moana Leilua | Player Development and Cultural Leadership • 50
Arizona Leger | Visibility and Content Consultant • 52
Frankie Harvey | Content Creator • 54

Top Tips • 56
Mapping Your Career Path • 60
Training Opportunities | World Rugby Passport • 68
Other Resources • 70



WELCOME
YOUR JOURNEY IN RUGBY STARTS HERE

Part of our Impact Beyond 2025 plan, this initiative harnesses the power of Women's Rugby World Cup England 2025 to inspire and connect more women to lasting opportunities in the game.

Whether you're just starting out or looking to take the next step, you'll find practical tools, real-world insights, and clear steps to build your career in the sport.

We're proud to spotlight the remarkable women already shaping rugby, from grassroots community programmes to elite performance, and to share the wide variety of diverse roles and pathways available around the world.

You'll also find guidance on building your skills, gaining experience, and accessing World Rugby's online learning and qualifications.

We hope this resource helps sparks ideas, opens doors, and supports your next step.

Welcome to the rugby family.

Sally Horrox
Chief of Women's Rugby, World Rugby



RIKKI SWANNELL

COMMENTATOR AND JOURNALIST

For as long as she can remember, sport has been in Rikki's blood – and she's now one of the most recognisable voices in rugby commentary. But it all began 22 years ago in a cramped newsroom, as a journalism graduate.

"I have a communications degree, majoring in broadcast journalism, which gave me a great base of training and knowledge to start from, although I don't think those are an absolute necessity these days. I started as a sports reporter at a national radio station, which also involved reading sports news, on-air stints and sub-editing. It involved covering a vast variety of sports and events.

> "Be in it because you love the game, the stories, the people and the craft of broadcasting"

Click here to learn more about **the life of a rugby commentator.**

Rikki worked her way up in sports journalism, taking on commentary alongside her sports news role before finally going freelance to pursue her different career ambitions: "I became sports editor for the network in 2010 while also working on the side as a TV commentator, starting with netball, then tennis, then onto rugby and cricket. I chose to go freelance in 2016 and since then work predominantly as a commentator, while also adding various other elements like writing, MC work and media consultancy."

Her path to where she is now hasn't been without obstacles, including experiencing prejudice at times: "There is still a section of society who don't think women should be rugby commentators on the men's game. The biggest challenge is having to overcome that scepticism – a young man can walk into a media outlet and say he wants to be a sports journalist or commentator and there'll be no doubt he must know what he's talking about. A woman never gets the benefit of the doubt and even after more than 20 years people still say "oh, she's quite good" or "oh, she actually knows what she's talking about."

Despite this, Rikki has worked her way up to the pinnacle of rugby commentary, including calling iconic events such as the Women's Rugby World Cup Final in 2022 and both the men's and women's gold medal matches at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

For those aspiring to follow a similar career path, Rikki thinks it's crucial to demonstrate a love of the game and commitment: "Be in it because you love the game, the stories, the people and the craft of broadcasting, not because you want to be "famous" or "on tv". Show up with consistent methods of preparation and while you are getting established say "yes".

Finally, she advises would be commentators to focus on their own development, rather than worrying about what others are doing: "Avoid the comparison game. If you're worrying about or looking at what other people are doing (e.g what roles they have, or games they're on) then you're distracted from improving your own skills."

GEMMA LOUISE PORTER

PHOTOGRAPHER



> “For me it is never necessarily about the sport taking place in front of me, but more the people who are playing the sport”

As a professional sports photographer, Gemma Louise Porter has worked with England’s Red Roses for several years, covering the Women’s Six Nations Championships, the Rugby World Cup 2021, and the inaugural WXV tournament in New Zealand in 2023. She loves the experience of capturing rugby: “Photography has changed my life and being a rugby photographer is incredible. Rugby is such an inclusive sport, and it is an honour to capture the incredible athletes performing out there. Unlike most other team sports, rugby values different body types, each player’s body is their superpower.”

Gemma Louise is completely self-taught and developed her skills through practice and asking other photographers lots of questions, something she hopes will reassure others wanting to go into the profession: “I don’t think that anyone needs any formal qualifications and I don’t think anyone needs to worry about having the most expensive equipment. What you need to have is a passion for what you’re doing and a desire to improve. Whether you are shooting on a phone or a professional camera, you can still show the world what your eyes see.”

One of the things she finds most satisfying about the job is the chance to capture the stories and personalities within the team: “For me it is never necessarily about the sport taking place in front of me, but more the people who are playing the sport. My love for capturing these incredible women comes from the fact that I am trusted to capture them and share their stories and personalities through my lens. Each person in the team plays a unique part and brings something special to the environment and for me this is more important than capturing the sport itself.”

As a woman in a traditionally male-dominated environment, Gemma Louise’s advice is to ignore any comments you hear and back yourself, as she has done in the past. “I reminded myself I was there for a reason, I had been brought in to do a job based on my talent, and neither my age nor gender impact my ability to show the world this talent. For anyone who receives comments whilst pitch side, I would say just pick up your camera and let your images do the talking.”

For her, photography isn’t just about taking photos – it’s about helping to grow the visibility of the sport more widely. “If I captured imagery that helped players feel happy, strong, empowered, then they were more likely to post on their social channels, the more the players posted, the more followers they would get and ultimately the more women’s rugby would grow. Photography has helped me during incredibly difficult times and I am truly excited for anyone just starting because you never know where your camera might take you.

AURÉLIE GROIZELEAU

MATCH OFFICIAL
AND MATCH OFFICIAL
DEVELOPER



As the first woman referee to obtain professional status in France, Aurélie Groizeleau is blazing a trail for other women in France, and around the world, to do the same. But for her, the journey in rugby began as soon as she was born. "My whole family loves rugby, so I was out on the pitch as a baby. I played rugby for 14 years, from the age of 5 until I was 19. I then went on to coach and referee, but it was medical reasons that forced me to stop playing."

Refereeing became her focus, and she has now risen up through the ranks at the French Rugby Federation. In her current role, Aurélie does not just officiate matches, she also works to bring in new referees and help them to achieve their potential. "My job has two parts: the first is to prepare myself as a referee for national and international competitions. The second part is to develop women's refereeing in France, with the aim of increasing the number of referees, building their loyalty, training them and supporting them towards the top level."

> "I'm lucky in that my work is first and foremost a passion. Every match and every trip is an enrichment"

For those wanting to move into match officiating, she highlights self-belief and a willingness to learn as crucial. "You must always believe in your dreams and give yourself the means to achieve them so that you have no regrets and can exploit your potential to the full. The most important thing is not to want to move too fast and to use every experience (positive or negative) to become better."

Aurélie highlights the challenges she's experienced during her career, which have required resilience to overcome: "I had to accept that I would never play rugby again, even though I wanted to pursue a career as a player. I had to be accepted as a woman in a man's environment. I've had setbacks and moments of doubt when my qualities as a referee were called into question. A career is made up of ups and downs, and you have to make the most of the good times and make the most of the not-so-good ones to make it an enriching experience."

A huge career highlight to date was being involved in the in the Rugby World Cup 2021 in New Zealand: "We work hard to experience unique moments like this. My family were there and it's very important to me that they are connected with my achievements. A final is a once-in-a-lifetime moment, in a legendary rugby stadium, with a stadium full of spectators for the biggest women's competition in the world."

Whilst refereeing is her profession, Aurélie feels fortunate that it's also something she loves doing. "I'm lucky in that my work is first and foremost a passion. Every match and every trip is an enrichment, as much for the match itself as for the people I meet, the cultures and the different countries I visit. I feel very lucky to be able to do this job."

Click here for more information on **World Rugby officiating courses**

Dr. KATE GAZZARD

TEAM DOCTOR



Click here for more information on **World Rugby player welfare and medical courses**

As the team doctor for the Flying Fijians, Fiji's national men's rugby team, Dr Kate Gazzard operates at the pinnacle of international rugby, combining her expertise as both a sports medicine doctor and physiotherapist. Her journey to the top has been shaped by over 25 years of study and experience, beginning with humble volunteer roles at grassroots level - a path she wholeheartedly recommends to anyone aspiring to a similar career.

"I started volunteering with a rugby club as a physiotherapy student in 1997. In my first rugby game running the sideline, I was so nervous I ran onto the field to treat an injured player at the wrong time. I got hit on the head by the ball and was knocked out cold! 26 years later, I'm still here, with no more concussions from the sideline!"

Along the way, Kate has earned multiple qualifications relevant to her profession, including a Bachelor of Physiotherapy, a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, postgraduate Sports Medicine credentials, and World Rugby's Immediate Care in Rugby (L2) and Advanced Immediate Care in Rugby (L3) accreditations. She had already begun her rugby career when she commenced medical studies, continuing to gain experience and progress through the ranks of the sport while balancing her academic and professional development.

'I studied medicine whilst still working as a physiotherapist in Super Rugby and then went on to work as a team doctor in club rugby, Super Rugby, Women's Super Rugby, Women's Rugby 7's, Australian Schoolboy Rugby and for teams in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Canada and now Fiji."

> "I get to help people reach their goals while wearing a tracksuit and sneakers to work, travel the world…"

Her career has included some incredible highlights, including being the team doctor for an international rugby team working at sold out stadiums in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales ("The singing and the atmosphere is truly mesmerising!"); and working for the Australian Women's 7's team, then watching them go on to win a gold medal at the Olympics.

Being a team doctor does mean extensive travel and being away from family, but Kate highlights the unique benefits of the job; meeting some incredible humans, helping players and teams perform at their best, experiencing different cultures, travelling the world and building a global rugby family.

"My biggest challenge is being away from my husband and my dog for long periods of time. I'm fortunate to have unwavering support from my loved ones and without them I wouldn't be where I am today - I get to help people reach their goals while wearing a tracksuit and sneakers to work, kick a footy instead of sitting at a desk, travel the world (though it's far from glamorous long-hauling in economy class) and meet amazing people thanks to my role. I'm truly grateful for the life rugby has given me."

ANDO
NIAINA HERIMAHEFA



WOMEN'S RUGBY MANAGER



Being a Women's Rugby Manager of a Union is one of the most direct ways to support the women's game in your region – and Ando Niaina Herimahefa has done just that in Madagascar.
A former basketball and handball player in her native Madagascar, Ando Niaina found rugby at university and decided to become a match official and then a regional referee manager to compliment her job as a sports teacher.

In less than 10 years, she has made huge progress to now be the Women's Rugby Manager for the Madagascan Rugby Federation: "I am taking charge of the development of women's rugby. I devise a strategic plan and ensure that it is implemented fully across the country. I was fortunate to be a World Rugby Women's Executive Leadership Scholarship recipient in 2020 and have also completed the RA-SMTP (Rugby Africa- Sports Management Training Program)."

Ando says the biggest challenge of the role is finding the "right balance between family, work and rugby", but it has also seen her travel around the world. She attended the Women in Rugby Global Summit in Auckland at Rugby World Cup 2021, as well as the Impact Beyond Regional Summit in Cape Town in 2024.

One of Ando's key beliefs is that you don't have to have all the answers at the beginning – everyone starts somewhere. "I believe that there is always something we can do regardless of our physical ability, gender or age. Maybe we don't have all the requirements at this time but just start with what we can do, and then identify the specific skills that we have to improve."

Rugby is a fairly known sport in Madagascar, but Ando would love to see more women and girls working in the sport and shaping it for the future: "In the future, I hope many girls get involved in management, especially for increasing the women's voice in the rugby environment. I am ready to help any young person who takes this direction in order to support them in any way I can."

> "In the future, I hope many girls get involved in management, especially for increasing the women's voice in the rugby"



CHIHARU NAKAMURA

COMMENTATOR AND JOURNALIST

> “Creating a rugby club that is loved by the community is an incredibly rewarding job”

Chiharu Nakamura is one of Japan’s most experienced players on the field - but in recent year she has been making a difference off the field too. A key figure in the Japanese National Sevens team for over 12 years, she earned a record 70 caps and attended two Olympic Games. Now, she is looking to empower the next generation of women’s rugby players in Japan by founding and leading a new club, Nanairo PRISM Fukuoka.

“I wanted to contribute to the development of women’s rugby in Japan by increasing the options for female players and establishing a rugby team in a region that previously didn’t have a senior team. In 2019, I founded a rugby club team in Kurume City and assumed the dual role of player and General Manager.

“We established a partnership with the local Kurume University, and our current roster, which consists of approximately 25 players, includes individuals from a range of backgrounds, including university students, amateurs, professionals, and international players. In 2024, we progressed through the regional qualifiers in the 15-a-side format and are set to compete in the national championships for the first time in 2025.”

Her role also allows her to help grow the game beyond Japan and across the wider region: “We are also committed to promoting women’s rugby both domestically and internationally, particularly in Asia. This includes coaching in various countries and inviting an ‘Asian Barbarians’ team, made up of players from across Asia, to participate in the Nanairo Cup.”

Chiharu’s experience at the top levels of the game has also opened up other formative opportunities for her within sport. “From 2017, I had the honor of being a member of the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) Athlete’s Commission for five years. In 2024, I was selected as a recipient of the female leader scholarship by Capgemini, which was a great recognition of my leadership journey.”

Chiharu says the experience of establishing a club and seeing it grow has been hugely fulfilling: “Creating a rugby club that is loved by the community is an incredibly rewarding job. It’s not just about building a winning team but about envisioning how the team can positively impact the players’ lives and the local community. A team is a part of our limited time in life, but a club is something you can be involved with for a lifetime. I want to create a club, not just a team.”



CRYSTAL KAUA



COACH

Rugby has been a pivotal part of Crystal Kaua's life - first as a player and now as the head coach for the Brazil Women's Sevens team. "Sport, especially rugby, changed my life - it gave me freedom and opened up a world of opportunity. Coaching was the perfect way to share that and help others chase their dreams."

> "Sport, especially rugby, changed my life - it gave me freedom and opened up a world of opportunity"

Crystal's journey in rugby began at the age of five. She played through school, club and university teams right through to the Aotearoa NZ Sevens the wider Black Ferns squads. Moving into coaching then allowed her to stay in the sport she loved and to keep learning. "I just loved being on a field, and as a coach the grass is still my happy place. I never set out to be a professional coach, but I love this game and the people in it. Each season teaches me more about myself and others, and the players and staff I've worked with have shaped who I am."

She worked her way up through the levels, drawing a huge amount from her work within the youth game. "I've coached in seven countries and at every level in New Zealand, from youth to professional rugby. My first eight years in youth sport gave me a lifelong love for coaching, and the highs, lows, and constant lessons have kept me in the game."

Crystal has been a professional coach for eight years. Key to her success has been her commitment to learning and trying different roles. "My hunger to learn and adapt has shaped my career and prepared me for the demands of high-performance rugby. I hold a degree in Sports Science and Economics, co-founded and led Athlete Nation, and have held varied roles like Black Ferns Analyst, University of Waikato Director of Sport, Governance roles, S&C Coach, Rugby Club Manager, and Rugby Academy Manager. I have a World Rugby Level 3 [qualification], and have completed the Gallagher High Performance Academy, Te Hāpaitanga and numerous rugby and High Performance courses."

Managing her time has also been an important driver behind her success. "I've learned that to be at my best for the players, I need to create a schedule where I'm not operating at full capacity. This gives me the space to truly connect with people and invest in the environment while navigating the challenges of the role."

Crystal has a clear message for those wanting to pursue a career in coaching to stay in love with it. "When you truly love something, you'll find a way through the hard times and challenges because of its potential. Always remind yourself why you started - whether it's for the people, the growth, or the freedom it brings. For me, it's all of those. When I get it wrong, it's usually because I've drifted from these simple values. Keep coming back to your 'why,' and let it guide you forward."

Click here for more information on **World Rugby officiating courses**

GIULIANA CAMPANELLA

TEAM MANAGER

After 22 years as a rugby player, including a long and distinguished career in the Italian national side, Giuliana Campanella's transition to the role of team manager in 2013 was a natural one. But it's a busy and demanding role with responsibilities both at matches and training camps as well as in the wider operational management of the team.

"I have been a team manager since I finished playing for the national team. I plan the team's activities during the season and take care of long-term planning and budgets. I manage the other staff members and stay in the team meeting during preparation camps and matches."

Since taking up the role, Giuliana has drawn on her own experiences as well as the support and guidance of others in order to succeed. "I started with my only the experience as a player, coach and woman but I had the opportunity to be accompanied by more experienced people who supported me. I participated in internal training courses with my union and with World Rugby. I was part of the scholarship programme offered by World Rugby and Capgemini, a really educational programme that probably helped me discover my skills as a leader."

> "It comes with a lot of responsibility but also a lot of satisfaction"

Guiliana feels the manager role whilst being a difficult role is one perfectly suited for former players. "It comes with a lot of responsibility but also a lot of satisfaction. Empathy is important; learning to listen to others is crucial for managing conflicts and maintaining a calm and productive working environment.

And for those keen to forge their own path as a team manager, Giuliana highlights four key attributes to succeed: "Knowing how to plan, maintain relations, handle unforeseen events and a lot of patience."



MANDISA WILIAMS

TELEVISION PUNDIT



> “Stay true to yourself, research a clear path and gain knowledge before goal setting”

Rugby has been part of Mandisa Williams’ life ever since she first started playing in her village as a young girl and the former Springbok Women’s captain now brings her wealth of knowledge and experience to her role as a television commentator.

Mandisa has worked her way up to where she is now as both a player and an administrator behind the scenes, initially through a university internship and then as a regional women’s rugby coordinator for school, club, university and college rugby. She did all this whilst playing at the highest level as well as being provincial, national sevens and fifteens captain between 2008 and 2014.

Her in depth knowledge of the game as a player and behind the scenes have now earned her opportunities to commentate on matches involving the South African national side, and she is now a commentator for broadcaster, SuperSport in her native South Africa.

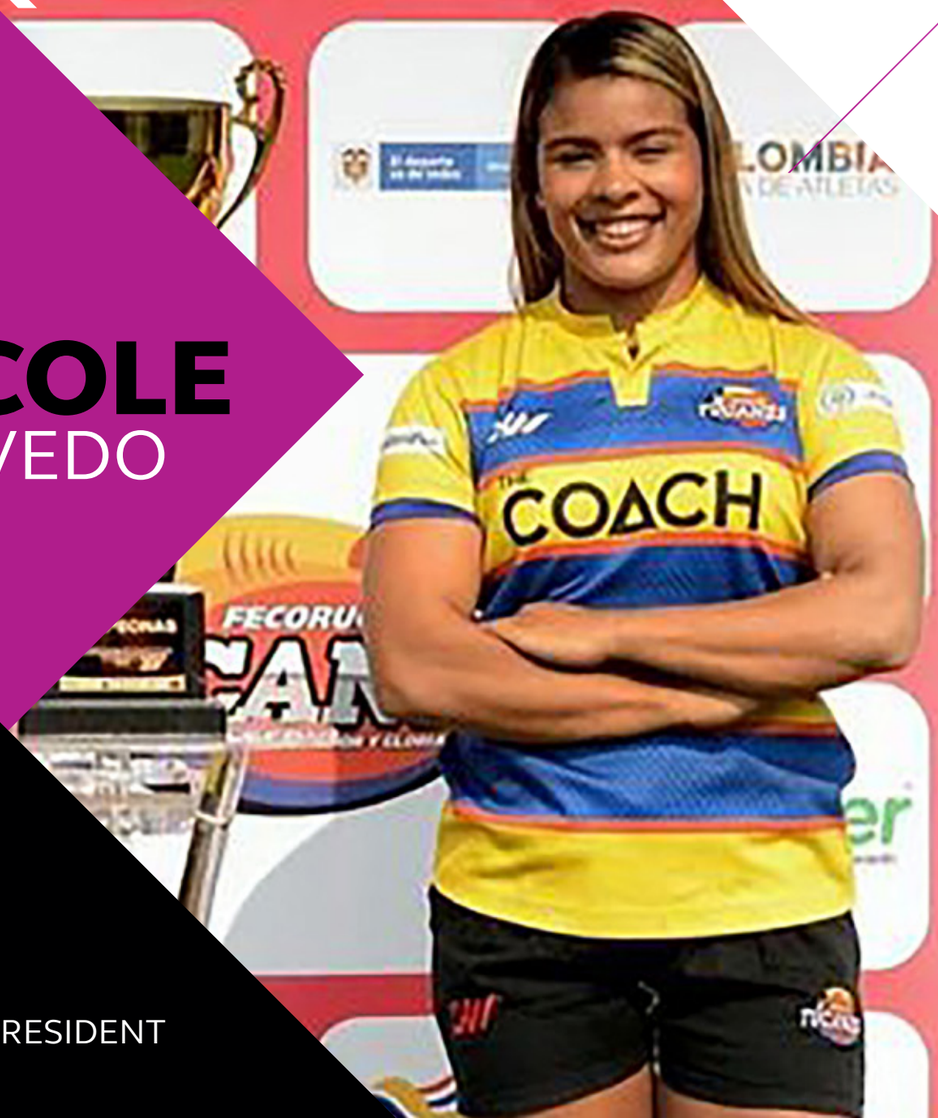
Describing her pathway to her current role, Mandisa simply says: “Grassroots to Glory, just following my passion. Everything paved itself through respect, commitment and resilience.”

Mandisa admits that the journey has not been an easy one. “There is still a lot of negativity towards female athletes and sportscasters. It’s a man’s world type of attitude, but we continue to smash ceilings. Commentary is still 99% male-dominated and you must prove your worth with thorough research and analytical skills.”

Mandisa advises those looking to make it in broadcasting to build up their rugby knowledge and analytical skills, including by taking World Rugby’s online courses. “Stay true to yourself, research a clear path and gain knowledge before goal setting. Engage in social development and marketing workshops. Look for trends and follow sports on social platforms. Use Facebook and TikTok for exposure.”

NICOLE ACEVEDO

LEAGUE PRESIDENT



Nicole Acevedo fell in love with rugby as a teenager in Medellin, Colombia, and the sport has remained a constant in her life ever since. A former Colombia national captain in both sevens and fifteens, her international career spanned over a decade and included playing at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

But throughout her career, Nicole knew she wanted to do more than just play. "I always knew that my plan was to have rugby as a part of my life always, in one way or another, not to disengage from the sport."

> "The most important thing… is to have lived on the field, to have lived rugby in some way"

Once she retired due to injury, she was given an opportunity to stay involved in the sport by the Colombian Federation of Rugby who asked her how she wanted to be involved going forward. She had always been interested in the administrative side of rugby and started working with them as an administrative assistant.

This was her first step into rugby administration, and it led to further opportunities. "I did purchase orders, service requests, all administrative. After that, I started taking on managerial duties, being a team manager and then I took on the Presidency of the Antioquia Rugby League."

Nicole has a strong personal connection with the Antioquia Rugby League, having played for a club within the league her whole life as well as Antioquia's regional team. As President, she handles legal affairs, including agreements, guidelines and resource management, and is also the public face of the organisation. It is a volunteer position which she balances alongside her full-time career as a biomedical engineer.

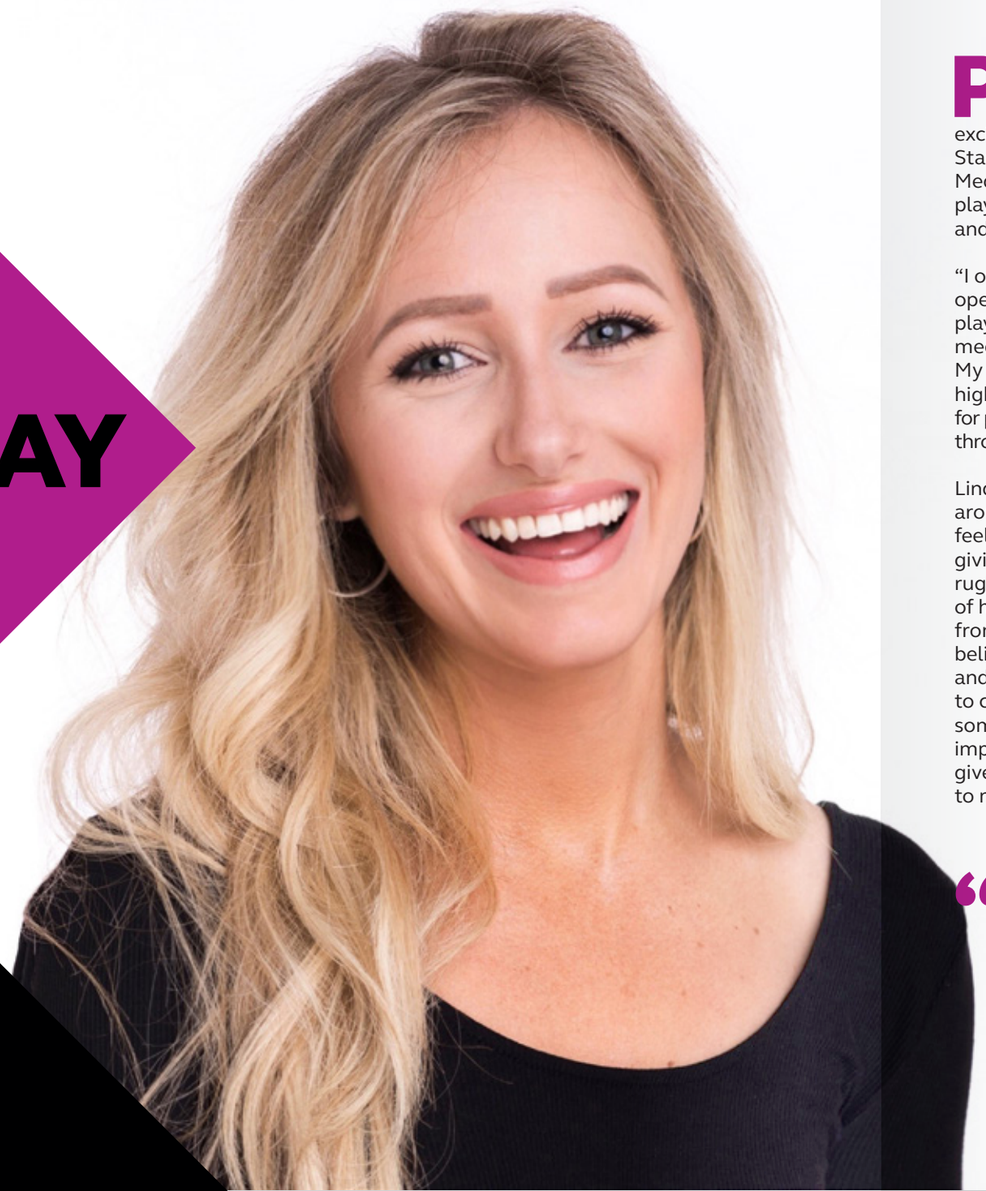
Key to the success in the role, she says, are understanding how people experience the sport and showing empathy to those you're working for. "The most important thing, although not mandatory, is to have lived on the field, to have lived rugby in some way – whether you're a manager, coach, a player, any of those. If you don't know the needs of the field, you'll never understand why someone is asking you for things. It's also about empathy, always putting yourself in someone else's shoes – perhaps the player, the coach, the sports manager or someone else when they're asking for something – even the spectator to be honest."

Finally, she has some words of encouragement for those who may be finding it hard to make progress in their career at this point. "Don't abandon the idea or opportunity that you have and stay connected to those places that offer small opportunities. There will always be an opportunity, and that's the cool thing about magical and brilliant things like rugby: there will always be an opportunity, even in life. In sports, there will always be another game, there will always be another training session. There will always be another project to manage."

Click here for more information on **World Rugby Administrators Academy**

Dr. LINDSAY STARLING

SCIENCE AND MEDICAL MANAGER



Player welfare and medical-related research is another crucial area of the sport with exciting career prospects. Dr Lindsay Starling is World Rugby's Science and Medical Manager, focusing on both player welfare and medical research and advancement.

"I oversee World Rugby's medical operational logistics, manage our player welfare initiatives, and lead our medical-related research projects. My role focuses on ensuring the highest standards of health and safety for players while driving advancements through evidence-based research."

Lindsay is an avid fan, having grown up around the sport in South Africa, and feels her role gives her a unique way of giving back to rugby. "In South Africa, rugby has been a constant source of hope, bringing together people from all social backgrounds, religions, beliefs, and ethnicities to support and celebrate their team. Being able to contribute, even in a small way, to something that has such a profound impact on uniting and uplifting people gives immense purpose and fulfilment to my work."

Lindsay's advice is that a human science degree would be the entry into this career, with a PhD a requirement to end up in a position such as hers at World Rugby but she also flags the importance of gaining experience working directly with a team.

"While I've now spent more time working at the Union and Governing Body level than hands-on with a team, the time I spent in a team environment, collaborating with players and coaches, was the most instrumental time in my journey. It continues to help me bridge the gap between governing bodies and teams effectively, and first-hand experience in understanding team dynamics and building relationships on the ground is absolutely critical to achieving this."

> "My role focuses on ensuring the highest standards of health and safety for players while driving advancements through evidence-based research"



Determination has been key to her success, especially as she is often one of the only women in the room. "Being young and not from a rugby-playing background, I faced a lot of scepticism about my abilities. I often say that any talent I had was only valuable because it was matched by a thick skin and a determination to prove I was just as capable as my male counterparts.

"The growth of women's rugby and the increasing number of women working in the sport have been significant in breaking barriers. I hope that, in my own way, I've contributed to building trust and opening doors for future women in rugby, making it easier for those who follow to be recognised for their expertise and capabilities."

INGRID MANGCU

HUMAN RESOURCES GENERAL MANAGER



Ingrid Mangcu's passion for rugby began when she started working for the South African Rugby Union in Human Resources. She joined the Union in 2009 to establish a fully-fledged Human Resources department. Before long, Ingrid realized she wanted to support women's rugby within her day-to-day job. "I decided that I would get involved in women's rugby projects that required HR support. So, I worked with women's rugby at the time to come up with the values they would live by in their code of conduct and any other interventions that were needed in the Women's Rugby environment to help them such as talent acquisition, development and health and well-being offers."

> "You must possess emotional intelligence, empathy, and an open mind"

In Ingrid's case, this appointment was a result of working her way up through different roles: "Before I joined South Africa Rugby, I started off as an HR trainee, moved to Staff Planning and Development Officer, HR Officer, HR Consultant, HR Team Lead. I then moved to the Union as HR Manager and finally General Manager in Human Resources."

Whilst Ingrid views human resources and business management qualifications as very helpful for breaking into the industry, she also highlights other softer skills which are crucial to succeed. "You must possess emotional intelligence, empathy, and an open mind. In HR you deal with a wide range of people, each with unique experiences, backgrounds, and worldviews. Because people are complex, one needs to be aware that different interventions may be required to solve the same or similar problem."

She also believes an understanding of the wider world and the ability to adapt are important in an HR Role. "The workplace (both on and off field) has evolved into a very complex environment with diverse challenges, disruptions, ambiguity and uncertainty. These tend to creep into any workplace and have significant effects. As HR you need to balance your HR professional expertise and "real-world" issues by being flexible, agile and adaptable."

Finally, she has some key top tips for anyone looking to break into the industry professionally. "Besides getting the practical and relevant HR work experience, one needs confidence in engaging with the workforce at all levels. Possess the capacity to identify problems and find solutions. Actively listen to people and show empathy for them."

CAROLINE MOORE

WOMEN'S MEDIA MANAGER





As the Women's Media Manager for Exeter Chiefs, Caroline is at the heart of bringing the club into the public eye and providing a platform for the team and the players to be seen and heard. It's a varied role which includes a wider range of responsibilities. "I cover live social reporting on match days, match report writing, media management, team announcements, news items and statistics collation."

Caroline had never played rugby herself but became a fan of the sport through the people around her. "My Dad loved rugby so I got into it so I could chat to him about it. An ex-boyfriend got me into the Rugby World Cup in 1991. I also went to Loughborough University where everyone was rugby-mad!"

After studying for a degree in English, Caroline took her first steps into the industry while studying for a post-graduate qualification in newspaper journalism. "I worked for sports agency in Cardiff in 1996/97 while studying for my newspaper reporter's exam. I volunteered to cover Northampton Saints' cup matches at the first newspaper I worked on as a junior reporter. This led to me covering league matches while the lead rugby reporter was at the Rugby World Cup in 1999. I became Northampton Saints' communications manager in 2000 and then moved to Exeter Chiefs in 2007."

After a period of time away from the sport, she came back to Exeter Chiefs two years ago. "I left Chiefs in 2010 when they reached the Premiership as I had two young children. But I returned in 2023 to fill in a gap following the departure of their communications manager and became aware that there was a part-time opportunity with the Exeter Chiefs Women."

Caroline will also be playing an important role at Women's Ruby World Cup England 2025 as a Match Media Officer at Exeter Chiefs' home ground, Sandy Park, for five pool games and two quarter-finals.

A lack of female representation posed a real challenge early on in her career. "In the early days, male reporters did not believe I had a ticket for the press box and were reluctant to let me sit in their area! It quickly changed but I still feel it is a very male-dominated industry, even in the women's game.

"I wish there were more women in a media role in rugby - and women my age (52). It is more comfortable at this time of life. You have seen most things and have the experience to deal with anything that comes your way. I feel I can have a closer relationship with the players at this age too, which is just joyful."

Finally, for those keen to break into the industry Caroline recommends building up as many skills as possible to help you progress. "Get some writing skills. Do a journalism course. Ask for work experience. Watch lots of matches and practise writing reports. Stay in touch with latest social media trends. Become adept at video and photo editing. You need all the skills!"

> "Stay in touch with latest social media trends. Become adept at video and photo editing. You need all the skills"

VIENGSAMAI SOUKSAVANH

UNION CEO

> “Leadership is about empowering others and fostering a supportive environment”

Viengsamai Souksavanh holds one of the most prominent roles in the Lao Rugby Federation (LRF) as the Chief Executive Officer, after almost two decades of involvement with the sport. “My rugby journey began in 2007 when I joined the Vientiane Lions, Laos’ first women’s rugby club. Playing for the team ignited my passion for the sport, and I soon became the club’s Vice President and later a captain of the Lao National Team. After graduating from college in 2015, I joined the LRF as Finance Manager. My involvement expanded beyond finance as I progressed to Operations Manager and then CEO. This progression allowed me to combine my love for rugby with my desire to create opportunities for others, especially young girls and women in Laos”.

Being a CEO is a varied and demanding role, which also gives Vieng the opportunity to collaborate with other federations and international partners. “I am responsible for overseeing all operations, ensuring the organisation aligns with its strategic plan. My role encompasses financial management, fundraising, and maintaining high standards of safeguarding and inclusion across our activities. I lead a dedicated team of 20 staff and over 100 coaches, ensuring a minimum of 50% female participation at all levels of our programmes. I support the LRF’s Executive Board, also 50% female, and work with key partners to advance the LRF’s vision of rugby for all. With limited commercial opportunity for sport in Laos, we pursue a strategy to diversify our revenue through using rugby as a tool for youth leadership and development. My role also involves building support from within and outside of Laos and advocating for rugby’s growth domestically and in the region.”

There are some key skills and qualifications which Vieng has found extremely helpful in succeeding in the job. “My role requires technical expertise, leadership skills, and a passion for development. Accreditation as a World Rugby Coach Educator and participation in the World Rugby Executive Leadership Scholarship have provided me with knowledge and credibility for this type of work. Working with diverse communities and partners also demands strong communication, creativity, and a commitment to finding new ways to work and fostering equity throughout our approach.”

The role hasn’t been without its challenges, but Vieng has found that letting her work do the talking is the best way to handle them. “One of the biggest challenges I’ve faced is overcoming stereotypes about young women in leadership roles, especially in sport. In my experience, leadership has often been associated with older men, requiring me to work harder to prove my capabilities. Some people don’t take me seriously at first, but I stay positive and let my work demonstrate my abilities.”

Her main message to those looking to secure senior governance positions is to make sure you are constantly educating and developing yourself. “Start with passion and dedication to learning and growth. Whether you begin as a player, coach, or volunteer, embrace every opportunity to gain experience and improve. Build relationships, seek mentorship, and listen to others’ perspectives. Leadership is about empowering others and fostering a supportive environment. Finally, never stop learning - through feedback, training, and experience, you can continue to grow and inspire others.”



CLARE MCMONAGLE

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Whilst the focus of fans is usually on what's happening on the rugby pitch, there are a whole range of vital roles within a rugby organisation that focus on its financial management and strategy. That's the career path which Clare McMonagle chose – and in October 2023 she was appointed to the position of Chief Financial Officer of a renowned rugby institution, The British & Irish Lions.

As a Chartered Accountant and Certified Tax Advisor, Clare oversees financial planning, strategy development and manages all finance, tax, insurance and accounting.
"As we are small team, I have a very broad remit, with responsibility for Finance, IT, HR, Strategy, Risk and Ticketing," said McMonagle. Holding a qualification as a Certified Company Director, she also acts as Director and Chair for a number of entities related to the British and Irish Lions.

Given how competitive the landscape is, Clare advises those interested in following a similar career to focus on making yourself stand out.
"For anyone wanting a role in rugby, I would say become as qualified and experienced as you can, because there is always a lot of competition for these roles and you want to stand out."

For a CFO role, the first step will usually be a professional accountancy qualification, but it is also important to have a lot of quality experience and to show progression in your career with the ability to manage and lead people and teams.

Working hard helped Clare to open up more opportunities for herself in her professional journey. She spent around a decade in education and taking extra exams while working.
"I felt this would give me a good grounding for my career and the hands-on experience alongside the exams really helps you develop quickly."

But for those at the beginning of their career, her advice is also to remember that there are other softer skills which become increasingly crucial once you're in the real workplace: She added: "Exam results and subject choices feel so important early on, but in the real world, what matters is good communication, showing initiative, the ability to get along with people, hitting work deadlines and showing resilience."

"Become as qualified and experienced as you can, because there is always a lot of competition for these roles and you want to stand out"



ANA TUIKETEI



> “Do not give up pursuing your goals and get help or a mentor along the way. There is always more than one way to pursue a similar career”

JUDICIAL OFFICER

Despite not having played rugby herself, sport has always been a part of Ana Tuiketei’s life. She now plays an important role in rugby’s legal and judicial side as a World Rugby and Oceania Rugby Judicial Officer, she sits on disciplinary cases. She is also a World Rugby Educator where she trains Oceania and other judicial officers.

Judicial Officers for World Rugby appear on Disciplinary Committees, along with former players, coaches and referees with recent experience of the game, to hear disciplinary cases involving players who have received red cards or have been cited. There are various requirements to becoming a Judicial Officer, from legal background to necessary qualifications – you can find out more information here.

Ana is a lawyer by profession and holds both a master’s in law and an MBA in Sports Management but her journey to becoming a Judicial Officer had several different stages. “Firstly, I volunteered as a legal advisor to the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) Board on commercial contracts, business, good governance and legal aspects of the game and FRU as an institution. Secondly, I got my World Rugby Judicial Officer and Educator Accreditation after attending Training delivered in conjunction with Oceania Rugby and with the support of my national body – FRU. Thirdly, I got involved in national tournaments (domestic tournaments) on Regulation 19 breaches and Regulation 17 disciplinary hearings.”

She has since gained even more success, being appointed as an arbitrator at the Court of Arbitration for Sport and as a board member for the Ethics Independent Board for World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). She was named as an arbitrator for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022. These are just some of the amazing moments from her career so far: “I have too many career highlights to name - however I’m grateful that in 2017 I was awarded the Medal of the Order of Fiji by the President of Fiji, acknowledging my national contribution and service. This was a highlight for me because I was acknowledged for my volunteer work for youth and women, an area I am passionate about.”

Ana is operating at the highest level as a World Rugby Accredited Judicial Officer but has plenty of advice for those just starting their journey: “Get involved in your local club or union as a volunteer, athlete, official, or office holder including sub committees. You need to have some experience and exposure and shadow another Judicial Officer including at foul play hearings within your national union. Understand conflicts of interest and governance issues. Try and get nominated for World Rugby training courses and qualifications. Keep being involved in your national and regional rugby bodies. Do not give up pursuing your goals and get help or a mentor along the way. There is always more than one way to pursue a similar career.”

Click here for more information on **World Rugby Judicial Training courses**

Dr. DEBORAH ROBINSON

WOMEN'S RUGBY MANAGER



Click here for more information on **World Rugby's Training and Education Workforce**

One way to combine expertise in a particular field with developing the next generation of talent is to become an Educator or Trainer for World Rugby. This is what Doctor Deb Robinson does as a trainer delivering World Rugby's First Aid in Rugby (L1FAIR) and Immediate Care in Rugby (L2ICIR) courses.

After finishing my medical degree, I undertook post-graduate study in Sport and Exercise Medicine. When I began practicing in Christchurch, I took up opportunities to provide team medical services as they arose, and after completing my first Immediate Care in Rugby Level 2 Course as a participant, I was asked to consider becoming an Educator."

The Educator role involves being part of the team delivering the courses on behalf of World Rugby to participants. Having demonstrated her skills as an Educator, Debs was soon offered the chance for further training to progress to become a trainer, a role which sees her lead courses and also develop the other Educators supporting delivery of the course.

"Being a Trainer allows me to lead a course and also provide quality assurance for other Educators. The L2ICIR course is a two-day course designed for personnel providing medical cover at games usually at the semi-professional and professional level. There are online modules that need to be completed every two years, and the practical course needs to be completed every three years."



> "Being a Trainer allows me to lead a course and also provide quality assurance for other Educators"

Deb's professional entry into rugby began as a team doctor for a provincial men's rugby side before moving into working full time with the All Blacks and Black Ferns. She would encourage those keen to get into the profession to seek out experience at lower levels and make the most of World Rugby's online offering available here.

"Any career in rugby medicine requires gaining experience pitch side and/or with team cover. Starting at club level allows you to build the skills and experience necessary to be involved in higher levels of the game. World Rugby provides good opportunity and support to move into education roles."

Deb says being part of the wider player welfare landscape has been a real career highlight. "Being involved with the growth and development of player welfare standards both as a team doctor but also as an Educator/Trainer. Players remain the core of our game and contributing to their welfare is rewarding. Recently I was able to provide team cover at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games with the New Zealand men's and women's teams, and seeing six days of competition with a full stadium was amazing."

HOLLIE DAVIDSON

> “After playing, I wanted to stay on the pitch and thought refereeing looked easy, so I started on my match official journey”



Click here for more information on **World Rugby officiating courses**

Injuries may have curtailed a promising playing career for Hollie Davidson but opened the door to a groundbreaking refereeing one instead. Since first taking up refereeing in 2016, Hollie has officiated in some of the game’s most prestigious tournaments, from the Women’s Rugby World Cup to Men’s and Women’s Six Nations.

Her journey in rugby has been years in the making, with the sport always playing an important part in her life: “I remember as a kid travelling down as a school to Murrayfield to watch Scotland men and I absolutely loved it.”

She had made it to the national U20s Scotland team, when a shoulder injury cut short her playing ambitions. Refereeing represented a way to stay in the game and see how far she could get. “I originally played when I was younger, and then through injuries moved into my role as a referee. After playing, I wanted to stay on the pitch and thought refereeing looked easy, so I started on my match official journey, and it soon gave me a challenge I wasn’t expecting.”

As with most referees, for Hollie it was a question of working her way up to the top of the game. “From local referee courses, age grade rugby, to professional and international rugby. I started refereeing in 2016 and the next year was contracted with Scottish Rugby in 2017.”

This was a history making move, with Holly becoming Scottish Rugby’s first full-time female professional referee, but it was just the start of her international recognition. Before long, she was making a name for herself in rugby sevens, which provided some high-profile opportunities on the world stage. “I started on the sevens circuit for five years; refereeing at an Olympics, two sevens Rugby World Cups and two Commonwealth Games,”

But Hollie also had significant ambitions for the fifteens format of the game at the highest level. “I then started focusing on 15’s and trying to forge a path in the women’s and men’s international scenes”. Her fifteens career has now seen her referee in some of the sport’s most high profile fixtures from refereeing the Rugby World Cup final 2021 (played in 2022) between the Black Ferns and the Red Roses, to becoming the first woman to referee an EPCR Final, overseeing the Challenge Cup Final between Bath Rugby and Lyon in 2025.

As Hollie continues to break new ground with her appointments and achievements on the field, her ongoing success may well inspire women and girls to consider match officiating as a viable and exciting future prospect.

TAMARA SHEPPARD

HIGH PERFORMANCE GENERAL MANAGER



> “Everyone has a role in nurturing potential. The unseen moments - how we invest in others, how we lead when no one is watching…”

For those aspiring to operate at the elite levels of sport, the High Performance team within a national union offers unparalleled opportunities. Tamara Sheppard serves as the General Manager - High Performance at USA Rugby, where she leads the strategic direction and execution of the Olympic sevens, men’s Fifteens, and Women’s fifteens programmes.

“As the GM of High Performance, I am responsible for designing and delivering world-class performance programmes while fostering a sustainable, values-driven culture grounded in excellence, integrity, respect, and belonging – enabling ours team to win when it matters the most to inspire a nation at Olympic Games and Rugby World Cups. With the USA set to host the 2028 LA Olympic Games and the Rugby World Cups in 2029 and 2033, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a powerful platform for our national teams to perform on home soil. Our goal is to inspire the nation to engage with, play, and support rugby and our high performance programmes are a critical pillar in realising that vision.”

Tamara is a firm believer that there is no single path to leadership in high performance sport. “Everyone’s journey to a role like mine is different. Some come through coaching or performance science, others through administration or athlete pathways. For me, it was a blend of experiences: an MBA in Sports Management, and more than 12 years in leadership roles across Olympic sports.”

Her career has spanned a diverse array of roles, from starting out as a Physical Education teacher to developing clubs and competitions with Queensland Rugby in Australia. She has held leadership roles across multiple sports including basketball and netball and took on her first High Performance Director post at Swimming Australia, delivering Australian Swimming’s most successful ever Olympic Games in Tokyo 2021.

She relishes the chance to work with talented coaches, athletes and staff in pursuing the highest standard of performance. “The greatest reward comes from cultivating an environment that is focused, calm, and empowering where athletes, coaches, and staff feel confident, valued, and capable of surpassing even their own expectations. Success isn’t measured only in medals, but in the culture we create and the people we develop on and off the rugby pitch.”

“Everyone has a role in nurturing potential. The unseen moments - how we invest in others, how we lead when no one is watching - those are often the most powerful in helping people unlock their potential and thrive within the system.”

Finally, she has some words of advice for those currently working to realise their ambitions in this field: “Be brave not perfect. Own your achievements - don’t downplay them. Step into your strength and make space to listen and learn. Vulnerability isn’t a weakness; it’s a superpower. I have learnt the most from the losses not the wins, because if you are prepared to hold the mirror up and embrace being uncomfortable it is where you have a chance to grow and really have an impact.”

AMANDA MURPHY

STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH

> “Dream big, be authentic, be yourself”

Click here for more information on **World Rugby Conditioning courses**

Following a highly successful playing career, including representing the New Zealand Black Ferns at international level, Amanda Murphy is still involved in elite sport, but now as a Strength and Conditioning (S&C) specialist. Until last year she was the Black Ferns Sevens Lead S&C Coach before moving across to a similar role with the Silver Ferns, New Zealand’s national netball team.

Prior to this, Amanda worked in a whole range of jobs and believes those roles helped her get to where she us now. “I had a number of roles prior to my venture to becoming an S&C coach. I spent three years in the New Zealand Army as a Fire-fighter, I was a courier driving for two to three years, I worked in a hotel for a year as a porter and also worked as ground staff at Christchurch airport. It wasn’t until I saw the growth of my own game from training properly that I saw a pathway that I could help others do the same. I think all these roles have had a hand in where I am today.”

Her S&C career began with four years spent working at Athletics New Zealand, before she made the move into rugby. “I did a couple of volunteer roles for Canterbury Rugby Union in Christchurch. Then I started a job at Canterbury Rugby Union as Women’s High Performance Manager, essentially developing the performance pathway, women’s academy and running the Canterbury based Black Ferns Hub programme”

Amanda worked in a diverse range of roles in sport, including lecturing and high performance roles in other sports, before finally securing a role with the Black Ferns in April 2022, an opportunity which led to some incredible professional highlights. “There’s so many it’s difficult to name a single one. It’s always special achieving pinnacle events (World Cup win in 2022 and Olympic Gold in 2024) and watching players grow and achieve personal bests in speeds, transference of S&C work to the field of play and/or seeing them grow off-field.”

Amanda’s skills are highly transferable between sports, which enabled her to then move into her current role in netball as Silver Ferns Strength and Conditioning Lead last year. She highlights a range of qualifications which can help other to get into the field and progress. “It can range from sport and exercise science degree level through to specialising in an area with post grad masters and/or PHD. Experience in similar roles and time on the job is highly desirable.”

Amanda’s final words of advice for would-be S&C coaches? Stay true to yourself and keep learning. “Dream big, be authentic, be yourself. Go and do a lot of things - experience team sports and individual sports, spend time with different coaches both S&C and sports coaches, keep learning, take opportunities, throw yourself in the deep end, it’s the best way to learn, find a way.”



JESS
DOMBROWSKI

DIRECTOR
OF OPERATIONS



As Director of Operations for a Major League Rugby team, Jess Dombrowski works at the very heart of the sport. Her involvement with rugby began when she discovered a love for the sport at university.
"I started playing rugby my freshman year of college, and from there just became infatuated with all that it had to offer. I interned for USA Rugby just before graduation and they ended up hiring me to be full-time after only a few weeks. From there I grew to run my own department and eventually was offered my current role with the Chicago Hounds in MLR (Major League Rugby)."

Her time at the club has already provided some major highlights.
"In 2023 we hosted the Major League Rugby final, that had over 10,000 people in attendance. This was the culminating event after the first year of the Hounds, where I was hired to help run events. Having never done gameday/events before, being able to accomplish this feat (after a really great season of matches) was something that I will never forget. It was a true visual of professional growth."

Jess' role includes a whole range of different responsibilities and the opportunity to work across the whole organisation. "Operations is all encompassing. I run all our gamedays which includes everything from tailgate entertainment to production and timelines and half-time performances. On a daily basis I manage our ticketing department and collaborate with staff and players to ensure all aspects of the organisation are running smoothly."

She also flags organisational skills and networking as key to success and progression. "Operations means constantly trying to balance a million different priorities. I would highly recommend someone having an in depth understanding of the landscape they want to work in. Whether that be who your target audience is, what your organisational goals are, or even what sort of environment your staff works best in, always keep your mind open and aspire to keep learning.



"Where I am now is all thanks to the network I've gained over the last few years. As a tenacious person, I've constantly put my hand up for any opportunity given to me, which has granted me the ample professional opportunities I've had."

"Build your network, always say yes to a new opportunity, and never underestimate how important the little details are. Rugby is special, and the people who work for it are even more so. There are long and tough days, but at the end of it all the people are what make it great."

> "Build your network, always say yes to a new opportunity, and never underestimate how important the little details are"



CARLIE MACKINNON

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Communications Managers have a crucial job in an organisation connecting with the public and promoting the stories of their players and teams. Carly MacKinnon does just that as in her role at Rugby Americas North (RAN), where she oversees all their external communication pathways and digital assets. “Currently, it’s an end-to-end role that manages our website and social medial channels, writes press releases, coordinates with World Rugby and Rugby Americas North member Unions on different initiatives and features, creates graphics, content management, and set ups and executes streaming and broadcasting for events and matches we are involved in.”

> “Just like rugby players are told - keep adding as many ‘tools’ to your ‘toolbox’ as you can off-field, too”

Carly gained her first experience in her field as a student. “My path in the marketing and communications space started with volunteering for my university rugby team as the Match Secretary. I coordinated communications with the referees and the visiting teams for our home games, which led me to creating Facebook events.”

An internship with Seattle-based start-up Serevi Rugby then gave her the opportunity she needed to move into the industry for good and she stayed there for six years. Carly then moved away from sport to work as a Senior Communications Specialist for the Northwest’s top-paediatric hospital, Seattle Children’s, before an unmissable opportunity came up to become Social Media and Marketing Manager for Major League Rugby side Seattle Seawolves, alongside her full-time job.

After five seasons with the team, she moved to her current role as Communications Manager at RAN. She would encourage those interested in her profession not to worry about extensive rugby knowledge. “While prior rugby knowledge is helpful, we were all novices or rookies once. The game can be learned, as can other skills. I think being a people-oriented person that can anticipate what’s coming, or what needs the organisation has, and understanding the varying flow cadences of information are keys skills someone should own, or at least want to strengthen, heading into a marketing and communications role, especially if the scope of the role’s execution is end-to-end.”

Ultimately, she believes enthusiasm and willingness to learn are also key in succeeding in a career in the industry. “Keep saying ‘yes’ to opportunities and don’t be afraid to learn something new. Most of the skills I hone and services I can provide in my roles now came from experiences of all kinds that I faced head-on without hesitation, but not without being nervous.”

“While the journey felt seemingly overwhelming both in the moment and even upon reflection, the skills that I’ve acquired at every turn truly transformed my whole career and set up me up for success when opportunity came knocking. So just like rugby players are told - keep adding as many ‘tools’ to your ‘toolbox’ as you can off-field, too.”

MOANA LEILUA



> “Keep evolving, whether it be through professional development or further education”

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Moana Leilua has a unique position at the Rugby Union Players’ Association (RUPA) in Australia, where she has been both the National Cultural Leadership Manager and Wallabies Player Development Manager since September 2024.

She is responsible for building the cultural capability of Pasifika professional players and creating cultural connection via bespoke workshops with High Performance staff across the professional rugby ecosystem. The other element of her role focuses on providing holistic support to the Wallabies through RUPA’s Advantage Line Player Development Programme.

Moana has reached where she is by working her way up, starting out as a volunteer in 2012 and then as a team manager with a variety of clubs in Aotearoa, New Zealand. She was the first Pasifika Woman to manage the Counties Manukau Steelers team where she spent four seasons. She then moved to Australia to the Melbourne Rebels, where she served as the RUPA Player Development Manager for five seasons from 2020.

Her career hasn’t been without its challenges, specifically operating during the global pandemic and then the closure of her club in Melbourne. “Two big challenges to navigate the unknown within years of each other, the importance of wellbeing was elevated both times. The more recent situation, as heart breaking as it was, the relationships forged are long lasting, and I will always have a heart of gratitude towards those I served alongside in Melbourne. Being resolute in times of hardship is no easy feat. Upon reflection, its times like that that really shapes one’s character.”

For Player Development managers, she says an understanding and empathy for people is hugely important. “As a player development manager, we really are in the business of people. Having a holistic approach to wellbeing and being able to build solid connections both internally and externally will help in one’s service to the players from a player development perspective.”

Moana also highlights some important nuances around holding a cultural leadership role: “When culture is centred and celebrated, and we lean into the strengths of our cultural identity as First Nations & Pasifika peoples, the magic that happens on field cannot be understated.”

“Understanding that there is mana (pride) in one’s cultural heritage and guiding others to truly value cultural diversity. That this diversity isn’t just a point of difference, but a powerful strategic advantage that fully complements our high performance environments.”

Finally, she has some key words of encouragement for those looking to move into this area as a career. “Start where you’re at, be open to the opportunities that come your way, surround yourself with good people. Keep evolving, whether it be through professional development or further education, have a regular self-care routine, and if it’s meant to be, it won’t be subtle, keep on keeping on!”



ARIZONA LEGER

VISIBILITY AND CONTENT CONSULTANT

> “We need more women working behind the lens to showcase our unique perspective in a very male-dominated arena”

Rugby as a sport creates countless powerful stories and moments and the art of capturing those moments and sharing them with the world can be a career in its own right. Arizona Leger is a consultant working in content production, working to increase the visibility of women across rugby through social media and digital storytelling.

She began going to rugby matches as a child with her dad and wanted to work in the sport very early on. “My dad played and eventually worked at our local provincial union. In order to have a day out with dad, we would go to work with him on a game day and find various jobs to help out with. I started volunteering at about seven years old and haven’t really left since, just evolved in the range of jobs that I can help with now.”

This early involvement opened doors for her future career. “Because I had an ongoing working relationship as a volunteer at my local provincial union, I would always be around the game most weekends. That was where I was eventually picked up for my first paid role in rugby as the Content and Communications Specialist for the Rugby World Cup 2021 (played in 2022,) in Aotearoa, New Zealand.”

Whilst in that role, Arizona was there on the sideline when New Zealand won the Women’s Rugby World Cup and was part of the team who helped share that story with the world through social media and digital storytelling. For those aspiring to reach similar levels in their own careers, Arizona doesn’t view qualifications as a must but points out that they can help. “I don’t think qualification requirements are as strict as they once were as I know many amazing creatives who are self-taught or community-taught and still landing some world-class opportunities. However, having a qualification that helps you learn more about the systems of communication and storytelling would always be a bonus.”

Arizona’s experience is still that women are under-represented in the industry, but she’s optimistic that this will change in the future. “We need more women working behind the lens to showcase our unique perspective in a very male-dominated arena. It can feel very ostracising at times, but I have huge hopes that there will be a shift over the next decade, and we’ll see more women working in sports storytelling roles.”

Finally, her advice to ambitious content creators is to just get started and believe you can make it. “Don’t overthink it - our industry evolves every single day which is the biggest challenge and most exciting part about it. Therefore, there will never be a perfect time to put your hand up, or your name in, and give it a go. So, if not now then when? If not you, then who?”

FRANKIE HARVEY

CONTENT CREATOR





At just fourteen years old, Frankie Harvey is proof that it's never too early to start pursuing a career you're passionate about in rugby. She is already well-established as an online content creator from women and girls' rugby in England, all stemming from a lifelong love of the sport. "My dad loves sport, he coaches and plays rugby and loads of other stuff, so I've be surrounded by sport my whole life. I just love the feeling of playing sports and being active and making friends with people that love the same things you do."

Inspired by her love of rugby, around three years ago Frankie began posting about rugby on That Rugby Girl social media accounts and now makes content on a whole range of topics. "I love doing interviews with teams, players, coaches to give people an idea of what it's like to be a female in sport. I also like to create 'how-to' videos as a way of showing the basics of rugby to anyone who's thinking about giving it a go. It's also fun to just make silly videos that hopefully make people laugh, so I do silly things too. I also like to talk about mental health. It's really important to try and break the stigma around mental health, and we do so by talking about it. It also allows me to share some strategies to help manage your mental health too."

Her journey in content creation has led to some fantastic opportunities to see the game at close quarters: "I have so many highlights, it's really tough to choose a favourite. I've been to three PWR finals as a creator, the launch of Women's Six Nations, sevens tournaments, special charity matches and loads of other matches. I have been lucky enough to interview so many amazing people, and everyone is so nice. But my favourite interviews are when I get to talk to young girls, just starting out in rugby, and getting to share their excitement and love for a sport that I love so much too."

> "I want to show people just how amazing women's and girls' sport is and to reach as many people as possible"

Frankie has been hugely inspired by USA rugby star Ilona Maher and has even had the chance to meet her and interact online. "Oh my god, Ilona Maher is AMAZING. Everything she is doing for rugby, women's sport and body positivity is just incredible. Ilona actually follows my social media accounts and does interact with stuff quite a bit, when she's not too busy, which is mind blowing to me, that someone like her would even know who I am."

Through her content, Frankie hopes she is helping to champion women's rugby and to inspire confidence in girls who see it. "I want to show people just how amazing women's and girls' sport is and to reach as many people as possible. Women and girls are capable of doing anything they set their minds too. Let girls try things, even if it's not deemed 'appropriate for girls' because we are amazing and can do anything."

TOP TIPS

COMMENTATOR

- Find local grassroots opportunities to begin broadcasting - it doesn't matter if it's a small community radio station, you'll still be building a portfolio of work that you can use to progress your career.
- Do as much research as possible on the players and teams you are covering. The more information you have to hand, the more credible you are as a commentator.

LEGAL/JUDICIAL

- Get involved in sports law by volunteering with local sports clubs who often need legal support
- Increase your knowledge and network by signing up to reputable sports law blogs/websites/seminars and by using LinkedIn wisely
- Show willingness to work on a pro bono or reduced fee basis to build up your experience
- As your experience grows, seek appointments to established judicial/disciplinary panels
- Consider obtaining a formal qualification in sports law

WOMEN'S RUGBY DEVELOPMENT

- Look for ways to get involved with grassroots initiatives or community-driven programmes – even if it's a small local project, these early experiences help you build a strong foundation and showcase your commitment to participation.
- Take the time to deeply understand the communities and individuals you're aiming to support. The better your insight into their interests, barriers, and motivations, the more thoughtfully you can shape programmes that truly make a difference.
- Build strong relationships with local partners, schools, and organisations. Collaboration is key in this role, and the more connections you make early on, the more support and reach your future programmes will have.

PLAYER WELFARE

- Gain hands-on experience with a team. The experience and connections you build will be some of the most valuable assets in your career.
- Don't underestimate the power of networking. The values of team comradery run deep, the connections you make within the sport will have a significant impact on your journey.
- Develop a broad skill set: In addition to technical expertise, focus on developing skills such as communication, project management, and leadership. These will enable you to effectively bridge the gap between teams and governing bodies, driving impactful change on a broader scale.
- Don't forget the bigger picture: Take time to watch a community rugby match. It might seem unconventional, but stepping away from the pressures of elite-level rugby to witness the passion and unity at a local club can remind you why you love working in the sport.

TOP TIPS

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Start photographing at your local club to begin building up a portfolio of work. It doesn't matter what level of rugby you are photographing – it will give you something to build on.
- Develop relationships with your subjects by talking to them.
- Find your own point of view. Don't shoot from the same position as all the other photographers. Work out what makes your images different from everyone else. Tell the story you want. Are you telling the story of the match action, of the fans or the players? Decide and then make that your focus.

CONTENT CREATION

- Start creating your own content across platforms like TikTok and Instagram – consistency is key and showcasing your own voice and style helps you stand out to potential employers or collaborators.
- Reach out to local clubs or organisations and offer to create content for them – this builds experience, relationships, and a strong portfolio tailored to the sports industry.
- Stay on top of trends in both sport and digital media – understanding what's engaging audiences in the ever-changing media landscape will help you create content that resonates and gets seen.

TEAM MANAGEMENT/ OPERATIONS

- Don't be afraid to reach out to people and ask questions about how they got their role – building a network helps you hear about new opportunities.
- Get involved and be willing to take on different tasks, no matter how small. Volunteering to do the refreshments at a local sports tournament will still expose you to event life and things that need to be considered
- Always be inquisitive – even as a spectator at an event, think about what is happening behind the scenes and what roles people are doing. Watch a Team Manager, or a Venue Manager do their job so you understand more about what it might entail.

REFEREE

- Identify a fitness plan which will help you to improve your match fitness (sprint speed, stamina)
- Do not fear your mistakes but instead see these as opportunities for further growth and development in understanding the why. Why did I make the mistake? What can I do differently the next time, and how can I implement my plan to ensure different outcomes?
- Utilize World Rugby platforms to ensure you keep on top of your law knowledge (World Rugby Law Quiz)
- Work regularly with teams at training to practice before real game time. You could focus on positioning, communication, technical areas like scrum and lineout.
- Attend a Match Officials group session with your society, talk to other peers and match official coaches.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS (HR, FINANCE)

- Volunteer at a local sports club (even if not rugby) in a finance capacity as a Treasurer or Finance Officer supporting with budgeting, drafting of accounts etc. Gaining financial experience in the sporting industry will be invaluable
- Build a network in the sports industry, particularly rugby. Some suggestions are connecting with current finance staff at rugby organisations on LinkedIn and attending sports business conferences or financial networking events with a sports focus.
- Make your rugby passion stand out on your CV. This can be either through personal involvement (playing, fandom) or upskilling by means of sport specific Finance courses.

MAPPING YOUR CAREER PATH:
YOUR FOUR NEXT STEPS

We hope this booklet has highlighted the many different career opportunities that exist in rugby and perhaps our role models profiled have inspired you to think about your own career path and how you want to progress within the game.

To give yourself the best chance possible to succeed in your career, it's down to you to be proactive and have a clear plan for how to achieve your professional ambitions.

Here are four exercises to help you map your career path in rugby:

DRAW UP YOUR FIVE YEAR PLAN

CREATE YOUR SUPPORT SQUAD

PERFECT YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

BUILD YOUR SPECIALISM AND PROFILE



DRAW UP YOUR FIVE YEAR PLAN

Where do you want to be in five years? It's down to you to set your career goals and ambitions. The below exercise will help you visualise and map out your career goals and pathway to get there:

- Firstly, map out your career journey to date including experiences gained, roles held, skills developed, and any formal training or education completed. Don't forget about your playing or volunteering experiences.
- Next, write down where you'd like to be in five years' time, the role, the organisation and the level in terms of seniority. You could look at job descriptions for roles you aspire to. This will show you the areas of experience and specific skills that employers are looking for, if you are to be considered for that position.
- Finally, map out what you believe you need to have on your CV to make you a good candidate for that role. What are the skills or experience gaps you might need to build out before you are ready to step into your dream job? How could you build on the skills you already have? Now start planning how you will gain them and how you'll get to your dream job in rugby!

Make this manageable – what skills could you obtain from your next role? And the role after that? Separately, how can you be building other skillsets in your volunteering or free time?

PERFECT YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

How are you communicating your worth to others? Every interaction is an opportunity to sell yourself; it could be during a coffee break at an event or during half time of a rugby match, so always be prepared and ready to maximise every interaction with a concise and impactful elevator pitch to make a good first impression.

What's an elevator pitch? Communicating yourself in a compelling and memorable way when someone asks you 'Tell me about yourself?' or 'Who are you and what do you do?'

What to include:

1. Introduce yourself, who you are and what you do in a short sentence or two. If your job title is not immediately obvious, you might want to include a concrete example of what you do.
2. Highlight a key skill or a strength and back it up with a noteworthy experience or accomplishment which proves that skill
3. Share your ambitions and goals, in a way that resonates and appeals to whoever you are speaking with.
4. State what makes you different or give them a hook (give them a reason to care or want to find out more, and make it memorable)

Remember you may only have 30 seconds so choose carefully what to include from the below, or have shorter and longer versions prepared:

Practice your pitch! Identify opportunities and seek out events where you'll meet new people. As you grow in confidence, you'll find ways to tweak your pitch depending on who you are speaking to. You'll become very specific and purposeful with the words and language you use to connect and resonate with the other person or people.

CREATE YOUR SUPPORT SQUAD

Think about your support squad as your own personal board of advisors. Map out who is in your squad and where you have gaps. Do you have people in your squad that provide the following:

NETWORK

Will they open up their network to you and crate opportunities for you to speak to or even shadow people in roles that are similar to the one you want in the future

CHAMPION

Will they speak highly of you in a room full of opportunity? Will they build up your confidence and be a cheerleader for you before an interview or pitch? Confidence is still one of the biggest barriers holding women back from achieving their potential, so make sure you have people who can help build your confidence.

CHALLENGE

Will they challenge your thinking when you're building a project or preparing a presentation? Having people who will positively challenge you will stretch you and help you grown professionally.

TRUST

Do you trust them to give you honest feedback and advice, and in doing so do they have your best interest at heart and come from a place of care? Can they help highlight some of your blind spots or gaps?

MENTOR

Seek out a mentor who can help guide you in your career. A mentor is someone with relevant professional and personal experiences that you can seek guidance and advice from. There may be formal mentoring programmes in your country or region you can apply for - or you can seek out a mentor yourself by following these steps:

- **Who's the right fit?** First, think of 3-5 people who are more senior than you that could be a great fit as a mentor and are within your existing professional connections. Do their values align with yours, was their career path or their barriers faced similar to yours?

- **How do you connect and build rapport?** Try to find opportunities where you will meet them face to face or speak to them over the phone or email to build rapport and find common ground or shared lived experiences. Get on their radar before reaching out about mentoring as they are more likely to accept if they already know a bit about you.

- **How do you ask them?** Find a thoughtful and professional way to ask a potential mentor to meet with you. State why you want to meet them and seek their advice and why you value their opinion. Describe what your goals are or describe a particular area you'd like to discuss with them and include key points you want to learn more about. Keep it informal and casual – remember they are not obliged to accept and may not have the time, accept that this might happen and don't let the fear of rejection put you off reaching out to your next potential mentor.

- **What do you want to cover with your mentor?** Before you begin you must be clear on what you'd like to get out of a mentoring relationship. Once you've agreed a time to meet, prepare what you'd like to speak to them about and seek their advice on, plan and prepare for each session and follow up on any actions you agreed in the session.

- **How can you work around them?** It is down to you to drive and coordinate sessions with your mentor. Ask them what fits around their schedule and how they'd like to meet (face to face or virtually) and the frequency (once a month or once every three months for example). Acknowledge that you appreciate the time they'll spend with you on top of their own work schedule and personal obligations.

BUILD YOUR SPECIALISM AND PROFILE

As you progress through your career, try to find your specialism and become an expert in a particular area of rugby. Keep up to date on the latest trends and stay curious. Be clear on the areas of the game you want to become an expert in and invest time in doing so by:

> Signing up to relevant industry newsletters

> Being aware of the websites that provide the most up to date information on topics you are interested in. Find them and save them as a bookmark on your browser. It could be a governing body, brand or media outlet for example.

> Keeping a look out for interesting conferences, events and webinars in the areas of the game you are most interested in

> Following subject matter experts in your area of interest on social media

Try and give yourself the best chance possible of getting on people's radars by building out your public profile. Your LinkedIn page is your live CV or resume to the general public and wider rugby world. You can get the most out of LinkedIn by:

> Ensuring your profile and biography is up to date

> Posting regularly to show examples of your work and achievements

> Using the LinkedIn community to grow your professional network and stay on people's radars by posting relevant content. Be part of the conversation by commenting on posts with your thoughts and insights.

> Following top voices and industry experts to stay within the know on key trends and developments from across the game

Remember, this is YOUR career so challenge yourself to think what YOU can do to progress professionally and grow.

For more information please visit
World Rugby Passport

RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RUGBY ONLINE PASSPORT

World Rugby provides Training and Education opportunities for a wide range of participants across all areas of the game.

Whether you are a Player, Parent, Coach, Match Official, Medic/First Aider or Administrator, there are programmes specifically designed to help you to learn and develop in your role.

We support our member unions by providing a blended learning portfolio of online learning modules and face-to-face courses across seven strands in multiple languages. If you wish to find out more about training courses on offer, including how to register, please contact your union or your local World Rugby Regional Training Manager

1,944,550
passport certificates awarded since July 2011

40
Total number of face to face courses available

Including **9** coaching related courses available

43
Total number of online modules available

Including **11** player welfare related modules available

WORLD RUGBY ONLINE PASSPORT MODULES DEEP DIVE

> **Coaches** (Sevens and Fifteens, Injury Prevention and Risk Management)

> **Strength & Conditioning Coaches** (Children, Youth and Adults)

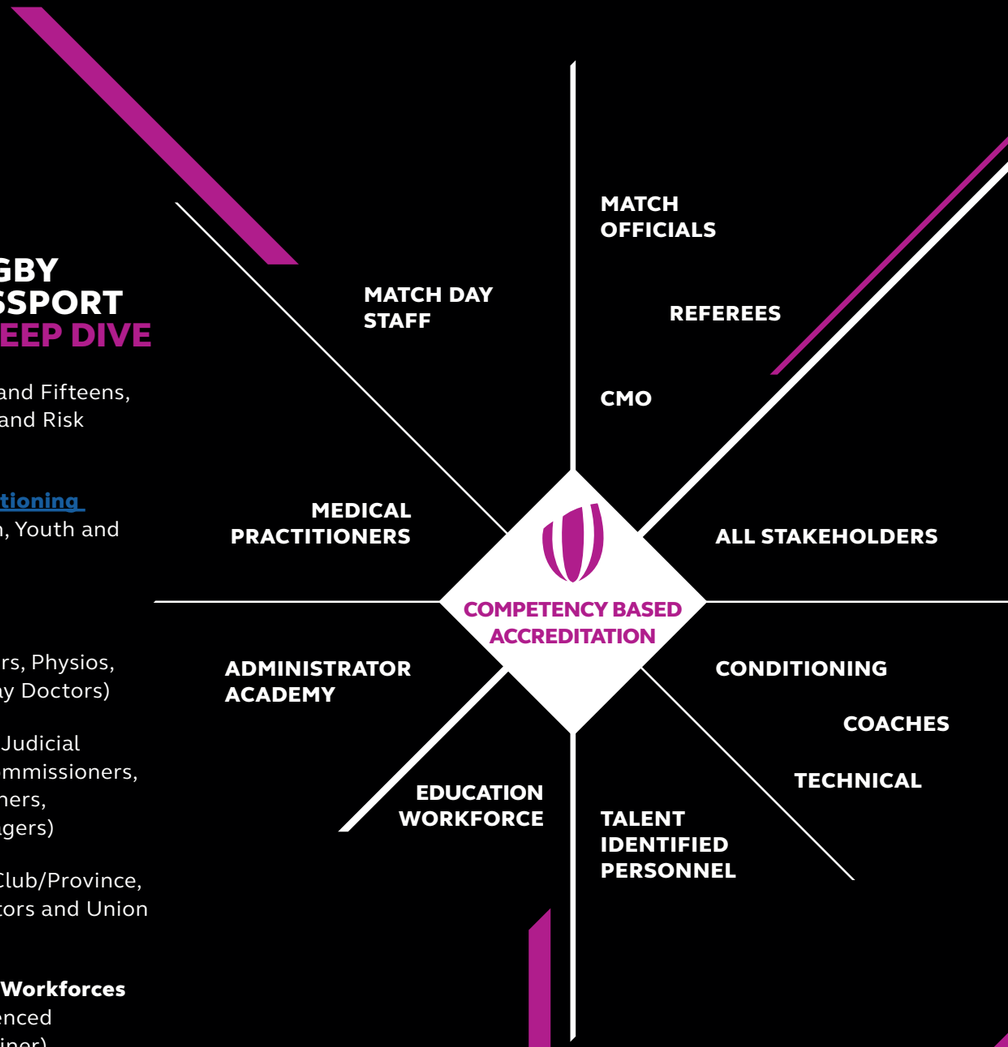
> **Match Officials**

> **Medics** (First Aiders, Physios, Doctors, Match Day Doctors)

> **Match Day Staff** (Judicial Officers, Citing Commissioners, Match Commissioners, Tournament Managers)

> **Administrators** (Club/Province, Union Administrators and Union Executives)

> **Union Education Workforces** (World Rugby Licenced Educators and Trainer)





Impact Beyond 2025 is World Rugby's global impact programme to harness the power of Women's Rugby World Cup England 2025, maximising its positive impact globally.

You can find plenty of additional resources on the Impact Beyond page, with more information about different elements of the sport, including:

- Further advice on how to get involved in key roles in rugby
- The best ways to follow women's rugby
- Outline of how to get involved playing rugby
- World Rugby's fundraising toolkit on how to unlock funding as part of your Union

Further additional resources are available at :

- Women's Rugby
- Women's Health Resources