Are educationally prepared rugby players better equipped to enter the transition process and into life after rugby?

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Declaration by Candidate

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged as required by the college. This thesis has not been submitted before, in whole, or in part for my degree or examination at any other institution.

Signature:

Date: 14/01/15
Abstract/ Executive summary

The dissertation begins with an introduction into the concept of Transition and discusses the many varying transition processes that occur in society, some positive with others being more challenging. The study narrows its focus on the topic in question and investigates the challenges faced by former Irish professional rugby players when they were faced with transitioning into life after rugby. The study is based around the characteristics, which assist the player in the transition process as well as the characteristics that make it more difficult. The dissertation researches various sports from various countries, which all have varying levels of competitiveness from elite performance to professional competition all with the same focus to investigating the challenges faced by these athletes at the different stages of their careers. The study is based around the concept that if the player is educationally prepared does it make his transition into life after rugby easier or less stressful. The study was carried out by asking all former professional rugby players from Ireland a questionnaire about the transition process, which they all went through. Analysis was then carried out with the emphasis on the importance of being educationally prepared for this transition process. The findings are presented and discussed and highlight the important role education plays in helping prepare the rugby players for life post rugby. The conclusions are drawn with limitations highlighted and recommendations put forward.
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Chapter 1. Introduction
1.1 Introduction

There are many different types of Transition and many studies done on the topic. Many theorists and researchers have discussed this topic and have highlighted many different types of change, transition and adaptation using words like crisis, coping and stress (Schlossberg 1981).

It can be a challenging period in one’s life. The shifts marking adolescence, early adulthood and adulthood can be challenging enough without the added stress of athletes potentially facing this transition wanted or unwanted (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). Other examples of transition can occur in academic or vocational development, by transitioning from primary education to secondary. This can continue through to university and then on to vocational training and potentially professional occupational employment (Wylleman & Lavallee 1997).

(Schlossberg 1981), defined transition in the following manner. “A transition can be said to occur if an event or results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships.”

In this study the author will look at the various transitions that take place in general society, in the sporting environment and more specifically in terms of the transition process with professional rugby players.

1.2 Justification

There have been very few studies done on the transition of rugby players when they retire in Ireland. Professional rugby has only been around for 20 years, so it is in its infancy in this area and only the first cycle of professional players are now out in the workplace. It is a complex problem, allied with the relative lack of research it is made more difficult to understand the pathway in which their careers take (Fleuriel & Vincent 2009). I feel there is a gap in the literature and due to my current situation, which is that I’m currently coming to the end of my career in professional rugby, it is extremely relevant and a process that I am currently going through.
1.3 Research objectives

In this study, the author wishes to investigate whether Rugby players are equipped for the transition process into life after rugby and if they can deal with the adaptation to a new life as well as a new working environment. A desire to explore and find out if the players were prepared or unprepared for the transition process. In studies by (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990) they have referenced (Blann, 1985; Sowa & Gressard, 1983) saying that the focus for athletes is so intense that they miss out on valuable life skills and the varied life experience that other benefit from and can help in career and personal planning. The author wishes to see if Irish retired rugby players were proactive in their thinking. Did they plan for the next stage in their lives and did they look for specialised help in doing so?

Did they form a duel trajectory whilst playing, concentrating on both rugby development as well as external development including up skilling in the areas of education or work experience. Were they the initiators of this or did they not see what life after rugby was going to be? Did they develop a valuable network and did this help the career transition process? The author wishes to research if former players thought about the items below in the years leading up to retirement and what were the biggest factors for them in the transition process.

- Financial planning
- Educational or trade up-skilling
- Work experience
- CV development
- Support network
- Mentoring programme

What were the challenges that they faced and what were the most difficult obstacles to overcome? Challenges such as:

- Emotional challenge
- Loss of direction
- Loss of identity
- Mental illness
- General health

1.4 Recipients of research

I hope that the recipients of this research will be anyone who has an interest in transition studies. The focus is on the transition from sports (professional rugby) to life post professional sport. There are papers on Olympic athletes who have faced transition issues that have been published such as (McArdle et al. 2014), but very little research has been published on this specific topic area in Ireland.

The study aims to focus on the importance of education for professional athletes, so I would hope that all current rugby players would find value from the study, as well as the governing body of the professional sport in Ireland, the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU). I would hope it would encourage the players association, (Irish Rugby Unions Players Association) IRUPA to investigate the findings and inspire further studies with greater depth into this topic area.

1.5 Clear rationale for undertaking the specific research topic

I have been a professional rugby player for 14 years and in that time I have seen a lot of changes in the game and the people involved in it. It has evolved into a multi-million euro commercial business and the players have become more professional as the game has grown. This has had benefits to the player but it has also had an effect on the lives of the players as well as on former players.

IRUPA was founded in 2001 and offered players a very limited support network in its formative years. Today the association has grown and has Player Service Advisors (PSAs) around the country facilitating player development at all levels. It also has an independent financial advisory board in place as well as medical team of doctors if any assistance is needed. There is support in every way, in terms of contract disputes and a mentoring system has been put in place, which has further helped in the development of all the young men and women playing rugby in Ireland. I am
currently on the Board of IRUPA and have a very keen interest in this topic and that is why I chose this research topic.

This association could not offer this assistance to a very many number of players in the early years of professionalism and even though there is no literature stating the effects of this in Ireland, (Fleuriel & Vincent 2009) state the sports institutions in France failing to meet athletes aspirations and needs for support. In all professional rugby players associations, such as NZRPA (New Zealand Rugby Player Association), which is the standard bearer, there have been in-house surveys to improve the association and get feedback on player needs, but no studies have been done on the topic.

I would like to see if transferable skills or life skills, which are highlighted by (Gould & Carson 2008) such as leadership, communication skills, sacrifice, discipline, time management, stress management, being goal-orientated, being process-driven as well as being a team player and being self-motivated can actually help when entering the work environment and do they help in the transition process.

(Jones, I. Martin, Lavallee 2008) ask the question in their study what are life skills or how are they defined, which life skills do British adolescent athletes need and which life skills are the most important. The study emphasises the importance of developing potential and the need to cultivate these skills (Jones, I. Martin, Lavallee 2008). In this paper, life skills were defined as a varied range of transferable skills needed for everyday life. Interpersonal skills, social skills, leadership and communication ranked amongst the highest skills valued by the sample group.

Discipline, goal setting and motivation were mention with social skills being identified as the most important life skill (Jones, I. Martin, Lavallee 2008). The world health organisation defines life skills as; “…the ability for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” (Jones, I. Martin, Lavallee 2008).

One area that warrants research is highlighted in the above study were the authors believe, that life skills are not just subject to a certain or single domain but that you
can take into different areas of your life and that they are not limited to one area. They believe, that not all skills can be adapted into every walk of life but there are ones that will apply and be very important in crossing over through a transition process (Jones, I. Martin, Lavallee 2008).

1.6 Dissertation approach

For my dissertation approach, the author aims to research all the best available studies in the area of transition in sport. An overview will be taken of the topic initially with particular attention to transition in life, work and education and then finally narrow my focus to sport and rugby. The intention is to introduce the concept of transition and the reasoning behind why the researcher is concentrating on this area. The author hopes to give the reader a general appreciation for the idea of transition and then focus on sport and rugby.

The author will research literature on various sports in different countries as well as different levels of competitiveness. Investigation will take place on what the literature is stating about rugby and what are the issues that cause stress when this transition process occurs. The author wishes to find gaps in the literature and focus on the importance that education plays in aiding a successful transition into life after rugby into a working environment.

The target sample for the study is all former professional rugby players who played rugby in Ireland. There are 336 of them, all of who will be asked to complete a questionnaire through ‘survey monkey’. The questionnaire will have six main areas of discussion; demographics, education, mental health, career/ network focus, financial preparation and the transition process. The research will be quantitative data analysis. The author will review all the data in detail and discuss all relevant findings with a focus on the educational aspect of the questionnaire.

From this information I will draw conclusions and relate it to the revenant literature from the literature review in accordance with my findings.
Chapter 2. Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

There is wide and varied body of both theoretical and empirical literature that exists, which discuss the characteristics, dynamics and the impact of life transitions (Schlossberg 1981). The literature provides the general understanding for the issues that arise and gives a basic understanding of the course that the transition process takes, as well as the consequences involved in this process (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990).

The literature will highlight areas such as primary prevention interventions, as well as the characteristics of the transition process with the impacts and outcomes of various transitions. The literature will focus on sporting transitions and the adjustment to retirement athletes go through. The literature will highlight the barriers to successful transitions and some of the reason for retirement also investigating the support networks available for the athletes.

2.2 Primary prevention

The transition process can affect both an individual and a group and the main purpose of the study provides information that can be used to help develop interventions to assist individuals and/or groups coping with transition (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). This study highlights the idea of primary prevention and the positive effect it can have on individuals by preventing problems before they happen. There is plenty of literature that highlights the importance of this primary prevention focused approach and it emphasises the most efficient method of using limited or restricted human service resources (Conyne, 1987; Cowen, 1983) referenced in (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990).

(Conyne 1987) in other studies has discussed primary prevention agents and shows the importance of counselors and counseling psychologists acting as these agents which, can assist in a conceptual understanding of mental health.

(Conyne 1987) defines primary prevention as programme that target specific groups that may not seem to have any issues but for the purpose of helping them continue a
normal functional life without disturbance. He describes primary prevention in mental health as stage one of a three-stage process with secondary and tertiary prevention available if needed. Secondary prevention refers to the situation where early detection and treatment can occur with problems that are becoming evident, where individual counseling may occur. Tertiary is more serious and refers to the rehabilitation of a troubled or disturbed individual, where professional help and hospitalisation will occur to assist the recovery of a patient. Mental health is a topic that will be discussed throughout the literature and in more specific areas dealing with athletes and the transition process but for now the focus will remain on Athletes and transitions and the factors that contribute to it.

2.3 Characteristics, impacts and outcomes of transitions

Transitions may be triggered by certain life events in the physical context such as moving to another city or country or embarking on a new social role such as getting married. Schlossberg believes that a single transition may involve changes in three areas. He states an example whereby an athlete, who has been a first choice player for the team in question picks up an injury, and has to move to another team, which is based in another city and has play a back up role now. Schlossberg has proposed a model identifying the various factors as those that have an affect on the characteristics, impacts and outcomes of transitions (Schlossberg 1981).

The three areas are,

1. The characteristics of the individual.
   Characteristics such as, the psychosocial competence. The age, sex, race and socioeconomic standing as well as, previous experience with differing forms of transition.

2. The individual’s perception of the transition.
   Was there a role change and was it deemed a gain or loss? Did the transition have a positive or negative affect? Was it on time or off time and was it gradual or a sudden transition. Was the transition duration permanent,
temporary or uncertain? What degree of stress was associated with the perception of transition?

3. The characteristics of the setting.

The characteristics of the pre transition and post transition environments. The physical setting as well as the internal support network available to you. Your family unit, the network of friends you have and the institutional supports available (Schlossberg 1981)

Schlossberg definition of transition in the model is broad and she is reluctant to restrict the analysis to a narrow definition. Schlossberg not only highlights obvious transitions in life such as, marriage, first child and job entry but also more understated changes such as the loss of ones career aspirations or the non-occurrence of anticipated events, which she describes as nonevent in her definition (Schlossberg 1981). The definition of transition given, grows out of the idea of crisis theory which, Schlossberg pays credit to Erich Lindemann’s classic study of grief reaction among the relatives and friends of the victims of the Coconut Grove fire (Schlossberg 1981).

Crisis theory according to Moos and Tsu (1976) in Schlossberg paper states that people generally operate in consistent patterns and when issues arise causing problems they usually solve them with familiar methods. When these issues or problems don’t get solved by these methods tension arises and stress occurs. The individual will begin to feel pressure, anxiety and a feeling of helplessness and cause feelings of disorganization. Thus Moos and Tsu feel a crisis is an unbalance in a steady state (Schlossberg 1981). They believe that a crisis is a relatively short period of time where a person has to figure out the solution or a way of handling the problem. Other researchers have offered differing definitions of crisis. Hill (1949) describes a crisis as any sudden or significant change for which any old patterns become obsolete and new methods are called on immediately (Schlossberg 1981). The model highlights different areas or events and nonevents that alter an individual’s perception of one’s self and the world, which, demands a change in expectations, which may lead to growth or decline (Schlossberg 1981).
2.4 Sporting Transitions

Successfully managing transition both within and outside of sport, allows you a greater opportunity to maximise the longevity of your life within sport as well as being able to adjust to life after when your sporting career is over. Failing to cope with the various transitions that you will go through will have a negative affect on you and you will suffer the consequences. Therefore, there must be a focus on helping athletes deal with transitions during there career to help them manage the giant transition that will take place at the end of there career (Stambulova, Natalia. Alfermann, Dorothee. Statler, Traci & Cote 2009).

Since the 1970’s there has been an increased focus by sports psychologists on two identifiable transitions in organised sport, both into and out of sport (Wylleman & Lavallee 1997). To achieve and reach and even more so, to maintain elite level of sporting competitiveness requires a huge investment of time, emotion and effort by not only the athlete but also the people that have helped the athlete along the way. So when the termination of this career occurs it not only effects the athlete but those people too, such as parents, friends and children (Wylleman & Lavallee 1997).

There are different types of transitions that athletes experience throughout their athletic career. They are distinguished by normative and nonnormative transitions (Wylleman & Lavallee 1997). In an athletic context a normative transition would be one where the athlete progresses from a junior level to a senior level or from amateur to professional. One such example of this, is the study addressing the transition from amateur to professional basketball in Spain and the challenges involved in the process (Lorenzo et al. 2009). Non-normative transitions on the other hand are different and are events that aren’t scheduled, not part of the plan and occur as the result of a certain event, which has taken place. For athletes, these transitions include non-selection, injury or termination of contract (Wylleman & Lavallee 1997). Schlossberg describes them as non-events that have an impact on your life (Schlossberg 1981).

Athletes experience a number of varied transitions throughout their athletic career (Wylleman P 2004). In Pearson and Petitpas study on Athletes in transition they
highlighted a study done by Milhovilovic (1968), that showed 95% of the professional soccer players they had studied had to retire from the sport against their will. Injury, illness, family concerns and replacement by a younger more talented player were the main reasons for retirement. The evidence from the study shows that the retirement process was painful, especially if they did not have anything to fall back on (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). The study discusses the differences between non-athletic people and athletes and how a unique set of circumstances can impact on each person’s transition process. It highlights the unique situation that athletes find themselves in and that a transition for an athlete may come from a situation of (1) not being selected, (2) dealing with an injury and (3) retiring from active participation (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990).

Other studies with ex Olympic athletes from Europe and North America have highlighted similar involuntary reasons for retirement as well as some additional voluntary reasons for retirement (Lavallee et al. 1997). The most important factor in athletic career termination in Belgium was found to be the combining of elite level sport along side study/ work (Lavallee et al. 1997). Athletes found the combination of both and the realisation of the importance of study/work out weighted the importance of continuing an athletic career. They would rather concentrate on building a career. (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993) in Lavallee et al study highlighted a small number of Canadian athletes retired due to being tired of the lifestyle associated with the sport. This highlights the many different reasons for retirement and it can be as simple as the structure of the sport in a particular country, which cause certain athletes to retire (Lavallee et al. 1997).

2.5 Adjustment to retirement

The purpose of Lavallee et al study was to highlight the reasons for retirement from sport in Australia using models on career transition as well as examining the adjustment to retirement from sport (Lavallee et al. 1997). Adjustment to retirement can be effected by whether or not it was voluntary or involuntary. In either case adjustment was needed in areas dealing with financial, occupational, emotional and social adjustment. Studies have shown that former athletes who have experienced
financial difficulty have limited their post sport life choices (e.g., Lotysz & Short, 2004; Menkenhorst & Van Den Berg, 1997) (Park et al. 2012a).

The results from the study showed nine reasons for the retirement from sport.

1. Work/ study commitment
2. Loss of motivation
3. Age
4. Injury
5. Selection issues
6. Politics in sport
7. Decrease in performance
8. Financial reasons
9. Decrease in enjoyment

Voluntary reasons would include decisions made by the individual in which they had a say in the decision making process, (e.g. work/study, loss of motivation, politics in sport, decrease in performance, finance and decrease in enjoyment) where as involuntary reasons would be a lot more difficult to accept due to the lack of control one would have in the decision making process (e.g. age, selection issues and injury) (Lavallee et al. 1997). (Smith & Mcmanus 2008) believe that the greatest contributors to a difficult transition are involuntary circumstances.

Other articles have acknowledged involuntary reasons such as non-selection as having an effect on the individual’s self-esteem and interpersonal relationships (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). Ogilvie and Howe (1982) in their paper described numerous cases of athletes than have suffered from depression, abused alcohol and committed suicide as a result of an unexpected career ending injury (Taylor & Ogilvie 1994). Other studies have described the vulnerability attached to athletes in the transition process and due to this vulnerability it adds to the transitional stress. It highlighted the dedication, which has taken place over many years to achieve certain levels of professionalism or elite standard but this has come at a cost (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). The narrowing of focus has altered the developmental perspective and has inhibited certain life skills
and life experiences that can be of assistance in career planning and personal planning (Blann, 1985; Sowa & Gressard, 1983) (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990).

2.6 Barriers to a successful transition

Barriers to a successful transition can be categorised into on time and off time life events. On time life events such as a parent’s death in late adulthood whilst difficult, will be considered less stressful than the same occurring at an earlier stage in one’s life. The matter of predictability has an impact on an athlete’s mindset when dealing with the transition due to injury. The level of uncertainty on whether the injury may be short term, long term or even permanent can cause additional stress. If the injury is career ending and comes towards the end of a athletes career span typical of that sport it will be considered on time and less disruptive than if the injury occurs at the beginning of the athletic career (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). (Park et al. 2012a) describe this as voluntariness of the retirement decision.

One area concerning the injury topic, which was highlighted when the acceptance of retirement had occurred, but the most immediate concerns to the athlete were for a quality of life post sports. Some athletes had expressed concerns and difficulties dealing with retirement due to physical pain (Gilmore, 2008; Hughes, 1990) (Park et al. 2012b).

Another barrier to a successful transition is the access to a resource rich support network post retirement. If the support network can provide individuals with emotional and informational support it can ease the impact of the transition (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990).

From a study completed by Haerle (1975) the evidence showed that a better-educated professional baseball player retired earlier than his less educated teammates. We can argue that the athletes or in this case the baseball players with a varied range of alternatives and skills and the fewest restrictions in place will find themselves in a better position to deal with the transition process (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). These reasons are what Pearson and Petitpas describe as individual based barriers to
ones transition. Another example of this would be the athlete’s attitude in looking for or receiving assistance or help. They describe this as “rugged individualism” and the article explains that is nearly as a result of the DNA of the athlete. It’s part of the make up of athletes with their constant focus on self-improvement and the management of their performance. Due to this factor of rugged individualism it heightens the unwillingness to look for assistance and can lead to isolation, which in turn can make the process more difficult (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). “The often single-minded pursuit of excellence that accompanies elite sports participation has potential psychological and social dangers” (Taylor & Ogilvie 1994). In contrast to individual based barriers it has been found that some athletes have been over protected and over-indulged and a small percentage of these athletes develop a sense of entitlement. They assume that the athletic system or body will continue to look after them when they retire (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990).

The occurrence of difficulties in retirement for athletes can be described as a complex interaction of stressors. There can be various elements to the stressors, whether it’s stress related to financial, social, educational, psychological or occupational changes occurring due to the retirement process, which they are confronted with (Taylor & Ogilvie 1994). The authors of this paper believe that appropriate intervention would help decrease the risk associated to all athletes experiencing distress following retirement from there respected sports. Taylor and Ogilvie highlight the challenge in this area and emphasise the lack of involvement with sports psychologists. They feel that with the help of sports psychologists guidance, it could make the transition process a lot less daunting. They feel the problem is that the sports psychologists don’t get enough time with the athletes to develop a relationship that would benefit them coming into and through retirement (Taylor & Ogilvie 1994).

At this stage of the study the authors have highlighted the difficulties but now they acknowledge there is a need for treatment. They believe that the most important task in the transition process from athlete to retired athlete, is the assistance to the athlete and to maintain their sense of self worth as well as establishing a new self identity (Taylor & Ogilvie 1994).
2.7 Preventive interventions

From the knowledge gained by identifying the reasons for retirement and the barriers that are in place Pearson and Petitpas discuss the idea of “preventive interventions”. They believe the first step is identifying the groups of individuals that are most likely to experience difficulties that are preventable (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). After identifying these athletes the programme then moves on to up skilling the participants in knowledge, attitude and relevant skills. These programmes are known as “before the fact” and two examples of such programmes are the Career Assessment Programme for Athletes (CAPA) and Making the Jump Programme (MJP). The two programmes are directed at two different age categories but both with the objective of preparing athletes for life after sport (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990).

There has been an upsurge in the development of career transition programmes by sporting governing bodies over the last 30 years (North & Lavallee 2004). Programmes, such as the Olympic Athlete Career Centre in Canada, which was one of the first programmes to assist athletes in the transition process in 1985. CAPA, which I have already mentioned was established in 1988 and in 1991 the Olympic Job Opportunities Programme was developed in countries such as Australia, South Africa and the United States with the focus on assisting elite level athletes achieve there sporting goals as well as develop a professional career.

The Athlete Career and Education (ACE) programme was initially developed in Australia to provide a career transition service for Australian elite athletes but has also been developed by the United Kingdom’s Sports Institute for UK athletes and is called the ACE UK programme (Pavlidis & Gargalianos 2014; North & Lavallee 2004). The programme was set up in 1999 to provide career, education and personal development guidance for elite level athletes across the UK and is based on the notion that athletes with a well-balanced lifestyle are more likely to be successful in their sporting career as well as being able to cope with problems such as injury and retirement and face the transition process with more confidence (North & Lavallee 2004). The programme is comprehensive and assesses each individual, who in turn will help address various areas that need addressing such as personal development.
courses in financial planning, media training or job seeking skills. It also highlights areas of development in education, career planning and offers career transition support (North & Lavallee 2004).

The study investigated athletes and the planning age of retirement, their short term plans and what kind of balance did the athletes have and also there long term plans for activities after sports career termination. In all, 988 athletes were sent a questionnaire, of that, a total of 561 athletes completed the questionnaire (response rate of 57%). 54% male and 46% female with 83% able-bodied and 17% disabled. The results showed that the athletes questioned in this study retired at an average age of 34 and that it varied significantly from sport to sport and highlighted that females intended to retire earlier than males (North & Lavallee 2004). Out of the athletes questioned on their short term plans 56% revealed that they would increase the amount of time they spend training and competing over the next 12 months, with 28% intending on entering some sort of education in the next 12 months and 21% had finding work as a priority. Then findings state the that younger athletes are more likely to increase the amounts of training than older athletes with 72% of athletes aged under 21 saying this versus 43% of athletes over 30 years of age and over (North & Lavallee 2004).

Svoboda and Vanek (1982) found that nearly 90% of there sample increased their training regime as they got closer to retirement and as their performance declined (R. E. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). Across the board it was found that in the sample questioned training had increased tremendously, from four sessions a week to sometimes as much as 10 sessions over the same period (Fryklund n.d.).

This is quite the opposite to North and Lavallee’s study and from the sample they questioned where the athletes were within one to two years of retiring, it showed that 27% would decrease the amount of time training and 31% were likely to focus on trying to find work (North & Lavallee 2004). When it came to the long-term plans 53% of the athletes said that they had made plans with 47% saying they had not. When the data was analysis in more detail it showed that 79% of athletes that were within one to two years of retiring had made plans and 45% had that were six years or more away from retiring. 21% of the athletes questioned who were within one to two years of retiring had no idea what they were going to do (North & Lavallee 2004).
The results from this study highlighted the unwillingness among younger athletes to develop plans for their future career prior to retirement. This is supported by research by (Gorely et al., 2001) (North & Lavallee 2004). The lack of work experience may be an obstacle for the older athletes because research shows that employers value work experience and skills over qualifications (Spilsbury & Lane, 2000) (North & Lavallee 2004). The study highlighted the ever-increasing demands on athletes from a younger age and the focus required to achieve success. With this extra pressure non-sporting activities in relation to education and career development don’t take precedent and are affected. This point more than any other illustrates the need for career transition programmes to be use to assist athletes in developing short and long term plans pre and post retirement (North & Lavallee 2004).

No matter what is put in place and what measures are introduced it is a very difficult adaptation process that athletes go through. Athletes are faced with dramatic changes to their lives both personal and social as well as their occupational life. These changes can affect their behavior and it’s how they cope with these changes will determine how successful there transition will be (Taylor & Ogilvie 1994).

(Smith & Mcmanus 2008) form there study investigated the notion of mapping transitional difficulties for athletes. From this development it would allow interventions to take place and retirement issues would arise, which could be addressed before causing any more stress or disturbance to the individual. Issues such as general health problems, social and cultural loneliness, financial worries, identity crisis issues as well as substance abuse could all be flagged and addressed with this mapping system in place (Smith & Mcmanus 2008). (Wylleman et al. 1999) describe crisis transitions as an inability to adjust which causes emotional discomfort. They put forward a strong argument and highlighted the opportunity for this to take place as they feel there is a significant period of time in which this transitional support could take place (Smith & Mcmanus 2008).
2.8 Early retirement

In other studies, where female gymnasts were examined about the transition process, the information stated a unique situation of early retirement due to the requirements of the sport. The article highlighted the gymnasts not making it to the required level after years of dedication and others forced to retire due to injury. So these athletes who have not made the cut so to speak have to face the reality of looking for employment with little or no training or education. The paper highlights the effects on the women’s self-identity and the physical changes that they go through during the retirement process. They reported six out of seven participants in the study found the retirement process difficult to deal with (Warriner, K. & Lavallee 2007). Quite the opposite resulted in a study by (Stambulova, Natalia. Alfermann, Dorothee. Statler, Traci & Cote 2009), where the results showed that female athletes adapted to post sport life more quickly than the male athletes (Park et al. 2012a).

2.9 Athletic identity

Baillie & Danish highlight a similar issue with the athlete’s identity being affected upon retirement (Baillie & Danish 1992). They believe that this identity has been built up over years from a young age and is part of what they have become due to the idea of what an athlete should be. They believe that the label of “athlete” is one of the major sources of difficulty upon retirement. The loss of this identity is difficult to cope with (Taylor & Ogilvie 1994).

The development of the term “Glorified self”, by (Adler & P 1989) was established in their study of elite college basketball players in America. It showed the constant adulation and praise helped to grow their sense of self and athletic identity.

Having discussed a number of Transitional issues from playing or performing to retiring, (Bruner et al. 2008) highlight another area of transition and that is the transition into elite sport. The study focuses on the transitioning experience of young men into elite sport. The study highlights not only the challenges facing young adolescences into early adulthood but also the challenges entering into elite sport and
the impacts it has on the psychosocial and well-being of these young men (Bruner et al. 2008). (Bloom, A. Gordon. Durand-Bush, Natalie. Schinke, J. Robert. Salmela 1998) was one of the first to describe the entry into elite sport and explaining how the changes in the amount of time increases in the dedication to the new specialised area. The study highlights the struggle with adapting to a new set of behaviours and the sacrifices, which are undertaken that effect your familial situation as well as your relationship with friends (Bruner et al. 2008). From the study, interesting feedback came out with all players believing that being part of this elite sport experience had helped them develop and mature (Bruner et al. 2008). Another interest piece of information that came from the study was the failure to identify schooling and contractual issues in the transition process. While the results offer a different view on transition, limitations must be acknowledged with this study. It was a very specific group that were questioned and a larger sample would have offered a more informative set of findings (Bruner et al. 2008).

A paper that has similarities as the above is (Lorenzo et al. 2009), were the sample group, recently turned basketball professionals cited that the adjustment in role was a challenge that had to be addressed as well as the relationship with the coach. It had become distant and more professional than they were used to. One might say this is obvious, but it still was a transition, probably more so in their mindset, that these players may not have envisaged (Lorenzo et al. 2009).

An alternative study highlights the stress and coping during the transition to university for first year female athletes (Giacobbi, R. Peter, Jr. Lynn, K. Taryn. Wetherington, M. Jaclyn. Jenkins, Jamie. Bodendorf, Melissa & Langley 2004). The study centred around five female swimmers in their first year in university. The results showed high levels of intense training, high expectations, being away from home, academic pressure and interpersonal relationships as being the sources of stress. The women studied made the most of the social support available and used humour and fun as a coping mechanism (Giacobbi, R. Peter, Jr. Lynn, K. Taryn. Wetherington, M. Jaclyn. Jenkins, Jamie. Bodendorf, Melissa & Langley 2004). A similar study by Tracey and Corlett (1995) showed comparable feelings of first year track and field students, where feelings of physical and mental pressure where overwhelming and the athletes experienced isolation and loneliness and relied on teammates to cope with the
Having mentioned transferable skills earlier, (Mcknight et al. 2009) discuss the topic of transferable skills as well as treatment recommendations including psycho-educational and cognitive behavioural interventions to help assist athletes in the transitioning from sport. They believe that career retirement is a huge change in one’s life and it is often overlooked. They state the obvious; that athletic career retirement is different from occupational retirement, with the athlete’s age being the major difference having finished one career at such a young age and then expected to start a fresh (Baillie, 1993; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985) (Mcknight et al. 2009). They believe that the athlete’s peers have begun their careers in a non-sporting capacity with events such as getting married and having children. I feel this is a rather tunnelled outlook at career development, as I feel this is more of an age issue rather than a career development issue that non athletes have a benefit in, but nonetheless this is a point they make, which they believe adds to the stress of retirement (Mcknight et al. 2009). The authors give an example of a transferable skill, which I believe makes a valid point. They highlight a hockey player that demonstrates tenacity both on and off the ice, which they believe can be brought into any environment, as can be a benefit to the person in question. The study focuses on the athletes that transition successfully due to capitalizing on their transferable skills. They try to emphasise that leaving the sport in a positive manner will enable you to benefit more from this and being proactive in your thinking will assist you in your transition. They emphasise the importance on focusing on the transferable skills rather than expressing negative feelings during the transition process, which will inhibit the ability to see how the skills learnt over your sporting career can help you (Mcknight et al. 2009).

One of the dangers that the authors discuss is that athletes can be unaware of these skills, so they highlighted two areas that will help address this. Getting the athletes to focus on their emotional well-being and to try and use their transferable skills and get
them to understand that they are of benefit both to themselves and others in an working environment (Mcknight et al. 2009).

Another example of positive career transition was showing that athletes that had achieved success, whatever that might have been to them, help them post retirement. This sense of achievement correlated to a quality transition. The benefits of stable levels of self identity and self esteem assisted them throughout the process and beyond (Park et al. 2012b). On the other hand a reduced sense of accomplishment was highlighted in a study on rugby players, where this lack of achievement or sense of accomplishment affected their interaction with fellow players and created doubts to perform successfully again (Cresswell & Eklund 2006).

2.11 Life balance

One paper that stands out and highlights one of the issues I wish to gain a better understanding of is the one dimensional identity of an athlete that (Price et al. 2010) discuss. They investigate that athletes with a lack of life balance are more prone to burn out and subsequently under prepared for life after sport. The paper puts forward the argument that engaging in non-sporting activities will help provide a more well rounded individual and provide a sense of balance to ones life as well as prolonging the athletes career (Price et al. 2010). 90% of the athletes that undertook the study indicated that participating in external activities help lengthen the career. These external activities including study, part time work and other interests helped provide an outlet and gave options as alternative career paths. To add to this positive result it also showed that 72% of the sample believed that this external activity aided their performance (Price et al. 2010). The study highlighted the importance of time management whist training or competing on a number of levels, such as for recovery purposes and relaxation and also stimulating other aspects of your life. One such example was former All Black Rugby player Zinzan Brooke quoted; “Rugby would make me brain-dead if I thought about it around the clock. I keep the enjoyment by breaking away from it regularly” (McKenzie, A. Hodge, K., & Carnachan n.d.).
The study also emphasised the benefits of expanding their self-identity and gaining more skills to enable them to approach the next chapter in their lives with confidence (Price et al. 2010).

We have seen from the literature the many varying types of transitions. Transitions in general, in life, in work and in sport. Transition from school to college, from amateur to professional or from part time to elite and the transition out of sport and into retirement. (Fryklund n.d.) In one of the most detailed studies on this topic, describes the four major changes over the course of time in the shift in mindset when dealing with this topic. Fryklund believes the first change was a noticeable shift in understanding “a transition” as a phenomenon and this was repeated with a similar shift in the studies based around athletic transitions, which focused on the similarities from non-sporting retirement to sporting retirement. The second change or shift saw a change in thinking from not only focusing on the retirement stage but more so on the transitions throughout the career of athletes, the “whole career” approach (Fryklund n.d.). The third change was a shift from the notion of athletic career transition to more of a whole person lifespan transition with a focus on other challenges in the athletes lives (Wylleman P 2004). The fourth and final change was associated to the interpretation of the role of the background factors involved in career transition. The shift from studies showing parents, coaches and peers attributing to career transition to studies acknowledging the importance of macro social aspects such as culture having an influence on the area (Fryklund n.d.).

Positive moves had been taken in the past, where the European Federation for the Psychology of Sport and Physical activity (FEPSAC) had recognised the importance of sport psychologists and the role they can play to help athletes during their career and more so dealing with the athletes’ transition. Not only did they bring these issues to light but they also stimulated the interaction among sport psychologists, with the shared benefit of their publications being accessible to readers (Wylleman et al. 1999). One of the reasons that this came to light was during the 1993 International Society of Sports Psychology (ISSP) congress there was a focus to bring all sports psychologists together to share knowledge and encourage further development in areas of competitive sport (Wylleman et al. 1999). The development areas were focused on the theoretical and conceptual approaches to career transition, the research
methodologies, the transitions for athletes and the strategies used for the intervention programmes for transition (Wylleman et al. 1999).

2.12 Burn out from sport

In an area that you might take for granted but was highlighted in a study about rugby player burn out, the competitive transitions within the calendar year or season proved to be the most stressful part of the rugby players lives in that given year. The players felt that the challenge going from one competition at a provincial level to national competition was physically, mentally and emotionally demanding and they felt they had little or no time to recover. The players felt they had to adjust very quickly to meet the high expectations of them in a very short space of time and felt this was very emotionally draining (Cresswell & Eklund 2006). The main emphasis of the paper discusses the burnout issues, which unfortunately lead to career termination in some instances due to unforeseen circumstances such as injury, which I have acknowledged in other sports.

The main burnout factors include,

**Competition transition**: Physical, emotionally and mental fatigue due to short rest periods and limited recovery window with the addition of high expectations.

**Pressure to comply**: Unable to make decisions on their own welfare.

**Training and playing load**: Constantly tired and physically sore.

**Injury**: Due to the factors above taking their toll, injuries occur as body is under to much stress. As a consequence of this the player loses their spot on the team and are unable to contribute and feels a loss of identity due to this.

**Competitive rugby environment**: Lack of control over selection, low job security, fear of injury and fear of transition post rugby, pressure to perform, fear of not performing and losing, public pressure from media outlets, potential negative assessments by others and too high expectations put on you.
All of the above reasons combined with a hectic travel and playing schedule as well as a demanding training regime all contribute to burn out factors (Cresswell & Eklund 2006).

2.13 Sporting institutions support

In a study based around a former French player Marc Cécillon, the paper investigates the issues surrounding career change and the difficulties associated to professional athletes. It in essence, highlights the rejecting of responsibility from the governing body of French rugby to support players through the career change and offers the players very little in terms of the necessary guidance needed. This paper highlights an extreme case, which has very unfortunate circumstances but it suggests that the French sports institutes did not play their part in preparing athletes for their new life. There are many reasons for this. Timing and the maturity of the professional game were the main issues as the professional game was in its infancy and hadn’t the necessary support structure in place (Fleuriel & Vincent 2009).
Chapter 3: Research Methods & Methodology
3.1 Introduction

The most common definitions will suggest the Research Methodology is the overall approach to research including the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods adapted (Saunders, M, Lewis, P & Thornhill 2009). Saunders believes the research question to be the key driver behind the research process. This highlights the importance of the research question to be clearly defined with the objectives of the research.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and give explanation to the research approach taken and the methodology behind the thesis. The approach will be using the “research onion” from (Saunders, M, Lewis, P & Thornhill 2009) with the main philosophy coming form this also. The methods will include the strategy taken, the analysis choices, the time horizons as well as the choices around the sampling selection and the analysis of the data, which has been collected. It will also review the limitations and the ethical considerations that have been undertaken.

(Creswell, J 2013) emphasized the importance of illustrating the research approach as an effective strategy to increase the validity of social research. The research adapted to this study is mainly Quantitative research. When setting out the research design there have been many approaches discussed before. According to (Crotty 1998) there are four stages in social research, epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Accessibility has played a crucial role in my study and having open discussions early on with the governing association IRUPA (Irish Rugby Players Association) has allowed me access to my sample and has had a positive influence on the entire process.

3.2 Research question

(Maxwell, J 2012) highlights the research questions at the core of his model with four factors emerging from this centerpiece, purpose, methods, validity and conceptual concept. Based on these elements he identified a number of factors influencing the research design.
My working hypothesis for this study is, *Are educationally prepared rugby players better equipped to enter the transition process and into life after rugby?*

Based on my research, the aim is intended to highlight the factors that affect this question and also to take into consideration the factors that affect the transition process.

The author feels current professional rugby players don't use there free time wisely and would like to find out whether or not the past players did. There is a good appreciation in Ireland to get some sort of 3rd level education from rugby players but the author believes it is not enough to prepare them for life after rugby. The author feels once a player has finished some form of education by the age of 22 or 23 he should look to develop in as many ways as possible to aid his future transition. The author feels this doesn't happen.

Initially, the research question was broader, *are rugby players equipped to enter the working environment*, but after consideration the question was narrowed down and education was highlighted as my driving factor than affects rugby players post rugby working career.

The research question, *Are educationally prepared rugby players better equipped to enter the transition process and into life after rugby?* Is a logical question and is based on the premise that they are better equipped. The author intends on proving this with the data I analyze.

### 3.3 Research methods

(Saunders, M, Lewis, P & Thornhill 2009) classified research into six stages and labeled the model “The Research Onion”. The onion was divided into six different categories, philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons, techniques and procedures. It has been broken down into Research philosophy, approach, strategy, choice and time horizon.
3.4 Research philosophy

The research Onion

(Saunders, M, Lewis, P & Thornhill 2009)

The first layer of the onion deals the philosophical approach to conducting the research. The research philosophy according to (Saunders, M, Lewis, P & Thornhill 2009) contains important assumptions that will underpin your research strategy and the methods you decide to choose as part of your strategy. Within this outer layer we can see areas such as positivism, realism, objectivism, interpretive, subjectivism, pragmatism, functionalist, radical humanist, radical structuralist and interpretivism. The approaches most suited to the study will be discussed.
Positivism is the scientific approach, which use existing theory to develop hypothesis, which are tested and then either confirmed or denied. This tends to be highly structured methodologically.

Realism can be broken into two categories, with direct realism and critical realism. Direct being what you see is what you get and critical recognizes that direct isn’t always correct. Critical may be subjective.

Pragmatism takes a somewhat black or white approach, not getting stuck in a philosophic debate and it’s something that will work with my style of work. I want my to gather practical data and highlight areas that can be addressed. It will be somewhat functionalist with my main desired outcome on rational explanations.

3.5 Research approach

The second layer deals with the approach, which used was a deductive research approach, with the research question coming first with an appropriate strategy put in place. A cross sectional approach was used rather than a longitudinal approach. A Top Down approach was used because the author started with a very broad spectrum of information and has worked the way down to get a specific conclusion. Filtering out information, which deemed of no real relevance. This approach was to be the most efficient and productive way to gather the information for the study. The author narrowed the hypothesis down further by using this technique, which allowed him to become a lot more specific and this helped highlight areas that needed addressing more so than others. The hypothesis was tested with specific data leading to confirmation of the original theory and arriving at a conclusion.

3.6 Research strategy

The third layer of the research onion deals with the strategy, which was decided for the study. This is the procedure for achieving the research objective. With a number of options available to me, the opportunity to engage in a case study was appealing as was targeting a small number of past players and doing a data collection experiment on the chosen sample. The strategy, which I implemented, was the survey type
research platform. This was the most effective way to gather the most relevant data from my targeted sample. It was also the most efficient manner in contacting them. Quantitative data collection methods were used for the questionnaire, which was constructed and administered electronically via Survey Monkey (SM; Survey Monkey Inc.). SM is the world’s leading provider of web-based survey solutions. Given its wide range of survey formats and its ability to track those who have responded/not responded, SM is an ideal tool for collecting questionnaire data. With SM it is possible to export data to Excel and statistical programmes such as SPSS. Each participant was provided with an individual identity code in order to ensure anonymity. The questionnaire took approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

IBM SPSS Statistics version 21 was used to carry out statistical analyses. SPSS is a Windows based programme, which can handle large amounts of data and provide a wide range of statistical data. SPSS also facilitates the creation of statistical diagrams such as bar graphs and scatterplots. I wanted to keep everything as simple and as focused as possible by structuring my strategy this way (see Appendix 8.1).

### 3.7 Research choice

The fourth layer of the research onion refers to the choices available to use for the study, a mono method, mixed method or multi-method approach. When describing the multi-method research it includes more than one (multi) method of collecting data or research. Mixed methods are more detailed and use both qualitative and quantitative data research methods. There are three main categories of research studies that are considered as mixed methods research (Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner 2007).

- Quantitative method
- Qualitative method
- Interactive or equal status design

Using this method can offer you a more complete view of your data but it can also add uncertainty by gathering too much and possibly conflicting data. It was decided to
focus on a Mono Method, adopting a single approach of research using a quantitative approach.

3.8 Time horizon

The decision was taken on a cross section quantitative based study, using a questionnaire targeting former professional rugby players who played in Ireland and who have retired. Data was analyzed from the rugby players and their readiness to move into the next stage of their lives. This technique was decided upon for a number of reasons. One being the sample size being so big a qualitative method would have been to time consuming to manage. Quantitative research method was used, as the author wanted to quantify data and generalize the results from the cross section of players. The aspiration was to measure the views and draw the information and results from this. From this study, up to date current research has been gathered. The focus intended was to be as specific with my questions, which allowed the author to draw out clear conclusions.

3.9 Sampling

3.9.1 Target population

The target population for this study was all retired professional rugby players who have played in Ireland, of all ages from ranging from 18 to 45. The sample will be all male, all English speaking and given the general understanding that the majority of rugby players retire in and around 30 years of age, a large section of the sample should be between 30 and 45 years of age.

The game turned professional in August 1995 so we are now able to collect data on some of the first cycle of professional players through the system. The lack of evidence in this area makes it difficult to understand how this transition process has affected theses athletes. 19 years isn’t a long time but I hope to gather some very fresh, new and interesting data.
There will be no major inclusion criteria for the study. All subjects will be selected from a database from the players association and the data received from the study will be confidential. All participants provided informed consent.

### Sample Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of retired pro players in Ireland</th>
<th>Realistic targeted number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of retired pro players in Ireland</th>
<th>Actual number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The target was in and around 33% of the sample to reply giving a 66% drop off rate or non-reply rate, which was more than achievable. The author felt over cautious with this poor response rate but still believe this will give me a very valuable cross section of information, which will allow me to draw a strong conclusion from. The official response rate was 141 returns or 41%, which is a significant sample to work with.

#### 3.9.2 Piloting questionnaire

The pilot study was based on the quantitative method approach. Ten similar sized questionnaires were issued to a small group of volunteers, who were retired rugby players based in Dublin in preparation to my main study. This mini version was used as a testing ground to gain feedback on the types of questions that were asked, the length in which the questionnaire took and most importantly where there any issues that needed addressing before sending it out to the larger sample in question.

The feedback received in terms of the design, the research protocol and the techniques used proved to be very beneficial. Logistics wasn't an issue but trying to estimate the
outcomes was a challenge and helped me focus on certain topics, which would gain the data required. Due to the size of the study it didn't require huge resources in terms of staff or finance so planning the approach was very much in my control. Developing the research question and plan was the biggest challenge and the feedback from the pilot study allowed the author to refine the questionnaire and simplify what was being asked.

The author was aware of the limitations the pilot would potentially bring to my attention and also the potential inaccurate information that could be received. Thankfully no real problems arose and the process allowed the author to gain greater focus on the questions that were being asked.

3.10 Data collection & data analysis

3.10.1 Data collection

Quantitative research is used to calculate the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics. It is used to measure attitudes, opinions and behaviors and can be used to generalize results from a larger sample population. This type of research uses measurable data to express facts and uncover patterns in research. Quantitative data collection methods include various forms of surveys including online surveys (Wyse, S 2011).

The studies survey/ questionnaire was done through survey monkey via emails, which the researcher gained access through the players associations database of all the past players. The survey is designed in a way of cross sectional method so it could get a board diverse number of recipients. Between 25 to 30 closed questions were asked. With 1 or 2 opinion based questions at the end allowing individuals to share some of the experiences, which will prove very insightful. The aim of the data collection is to prove whether or not rugby players are educationally equipped to enter the work force, whist also highlighting the factors that affect this. The data was exported from SurveyMonkey.com and inputted into SPSS via an excel file. As both Q5 (What did you do before becoming a professional rugby player?) and Q7 (What level of
education do you currently hold?) had a ‘tick all that apply’ option, the highest level of education indicated was inputted in order to run appropriate analysis.

3.10.2 Data analysis

For the present study, version 21 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software package (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used to carry out all statistical analysis and Microsoft Office Excel: Mac 2011 was used to create all graphs. The data came from a scale questionnaire. The questionnaire produced a large volume of data per participant and as a result not all data collected was analysed.

E.g.

Was studying facilitated by your employer/ Club/ Franchise?
☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Initially, descriptive statistics were carried out in order to describe the sample population. Following on from this, bivariate data analysis was carried out using cross tabulation and chi square statistical tests. Those variables found to be significantly associated with being educationally prepared for life after rugby in the bivariate analysis were then included in further binary logistic regression. Statistical significance was determined to be a p-value of <0.05.

3.11 Limitations

A number of limitations were encountered along the way whilst completing the present study. One limitation was the lack of knowledge and lack of experience the author had with statistical analysis packages. If the author had a better understanding of SPSS the process would have worked more efficiently and would have been able to obtain different forms of data, which could have been used.

The timing of the questionnaire going out could have raised issues, but it was sent out in good time before Christmas and around the November rugby internationals when quite a number of the sample would be in contact with each other. With it being sent
out via email allowed for flexibility and I didn't see this as an issue. The target sample population, were given three weeks to respond with a reminder after week one and then a final reminder with three days to go. The sample size of 336 people was in itself a challenge to obtain statistical significance.

The questionnaire highlighted some limitations in terms of the phrasing and the style of the questioning. Some of the questions needed to be more accurate and not open ended. Also regarding the questionnaire it is likely that there was some information bias on behalf of the sample. This is hard to control even with the questionnaire being anonymous.

The author could have gone with an interview based type qualitative research method but found that it would have its limitations in getting to the desired cross section. There was no desire to administer focus groups, write diaries, write up case studies or perform an observation over a period of time and draw conclusions from that. The strategy that was taken was the most time effective and efficient manner in gathering all the necessary data.

As well as time limitations, cost implications and logistical issues, which would have hampered the study. The decision against targeting HR departments in various industries in Ireland and basing the study around them asking if they felt Rugby players were equipped educationally when entering the work force. The author felt it wouldn't have given a proper cross section of player that was been researched.

3.12 Ethics

There were no ethical issues arising from this study. The study was sent out via email on survey monkey and was optional to take. All the information was completely anonymous and the information given was only for the use of this study. All the data is stored safely, correctly and confidentially. There were no voice recordings and no in depth interviews. There were no financial questions that caused any concern and if any of the respondents didn't want to answer it was made available to do so. There were no personal or family related issues discussed or published. The author applied a
cover letter with the email (see Appendix 8.2) and attached the questionnaire outlining whom it is for and what is the purpose of the questionnaire.
Chapter 4. Results
4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to display all the relevant data and findings obtained through the primary research method, that being my questionnaire. My results will primarily be quantitative and will focus on the six categories of the questionnaire. I will display a general overview of findings from each section.

- Demographic characteristics, of retired rugby players who participated in the present study.
- Educational characteristics, of retired rugby players who participated in the present study.
- Financial characteristics, of retired rugby players who participated in the present study.
- Transition process planning characteristics, of retired rugby players who participated in the present study.
- Career development and networking characteristics, of retired rugby players who participated in the present study.
- Mental health characteristics, of retired rugby players who participated in the present study.

I will also highlight some of the qualitative data results from the three qualitative based questions from the questionnaire and discuss the main themes that were emphasised by the sample questioned. The three questions being,

- The reasons for choosing the play professional rugby?
- What were the most difficult aspects of retirement?
- What area is more guidance needed for the current professional players facing retirement? (See Appendix 8.3, 8.4, 8.5)

The main focus of the findings is based on Table 7. The characteristics of retired professional rugby players as classified according to those who felt educationally prepared to transition from rugby to next career and those who did not feel educationally prepared along with their unadjusted odds ratios.
Table 1 Demographic characteristics of retired rugby players who participated in the present study (N=141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Age of participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤25 years</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 30 years</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 40 years</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 40 years</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age commencing professional rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤18 years</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 19 years</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 22 years</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 22 years</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years active as professional rugby player</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤3 years</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10 years</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥10 years</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age at Retirement</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤25 years</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 28 years</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 – 31 years</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 – 34 years</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 34 years</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years since retiring</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤1 year</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1– 2 years</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 5 years</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 years</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥10 years</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main reason for retiring from professional rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost motivation</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to pursue other interests</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict with coach</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not offered another contract</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reasons</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All respondents of the questionnaire were male and of which just under 60% were between the age 30 and 40. The results show that the majority of the sample started playing professional rugby between the ages of 20 to 22 or older than 22 years of age, which would be in and around the age of university completion. The duration of the career shows 40.1% between 5-10 years and 30.5% over 10 years. This is a
considerable length of time playing. 53.6% retired at the age between 29 and 34 with 34.5% retiring through injury and 30.2% not offered another contract.
This section along with Table 7 will be the most important when discussing the results. The figures show 31.9% have achieved an undergraduate level of education and also 36.9% of the sample has furthered their education with achieving a postgrad qualification. 68.8% of the sample has at least a level 8 qualifications. 97.2% highlighted the importance to study to prepare for life after rugby and of that sample, 51.4% admitted that they may not have used there time wisely. The results showed that if the sample had there time again, 95.7% would look to develop themselves through study and or other further education.

Table 2 Educational characteristics of retired rugby players who participated in the present study (N=141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest level of education achieved</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/Diploma</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualification</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: It is important to study during rugby to prepare for future career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: My employer facilitated studying</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: I used my free time wisely away from training and playing rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: If I had the time again, I would develop myself further through study and further education during my rugby career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: I felt educationally prepared for life after rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: the educational qualifications I held when retiring from professional rugby assisted me in finding work post-rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.1 The highest level of education achieved by retired professional rugby players according to their educational preparedness at retirement.
Table 3  Financial characteristics of retired rugby players who participated in the present study (N=141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial planning</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Had a financial plan for the transition process</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of financial plan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term (&lt; 1 year)</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-term (1-3 years)</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term (≥5 years)</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No plan</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: my financial situation restricted my options for my future career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: I was financially prepared for life after rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from the financial section of the questionnaire show that just over half of the sample 51.4% did not have a financial plan for the transition process. 28.8% had no financial plan what so ever. Sadly 37.7% felt that they were not financially prepared for life after rugby, this may have been for a number of reason, which will be discussed in the next chapter.
Table 4 Transition process planning characteristics of retired rugby players who participated in the present study (N=141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition process planning</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: I understood that my professional rugby career could end at any time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Availed of support from a players association during transition process</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How far ahead players planned during the transition process</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term (&lt; 1 year)</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-term (1-3 years)</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term (≥5 years)</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No plan</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: prior to retiring, my expectations of the transition process from playing professional rugby to my next career (very easy – very difficult)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither easy nor difficult</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: The reality of the transition process was similar to my expectations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: The skills I learned during professional rugby were transferrable to my post-rugby career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: Number of years post-retirement from professional rugby before I felt established in my new career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤1 year</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2 years</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 5 years</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 5 years</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still not settled</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84.9% understood that their career could end at any given moment. 52% of the players did not avail of the players association during the transition. This may be for a number of reasons, which will be investigated in the next chapter. 20.9% had a short term plan, with 34.5% having a medium plan, with only 23% having a long term plan. 21.6% had no transition plan. 99.3% of the sample said that the skills they learned during their professional rugby career were transferrable to their post rugby career.
Figure 4.2 How easy or difficult retired professional rugby players expected the transition process to be according to their educational preparedness at retirement.

Figure 4.3 Retired rugby players were asked, how long post-retirement from professional rugby before they felt established in their new career according to their educational preparedness for retirement.
Table 5  Career development and networking characteristics of retired rugby players who participated in the present study (N=141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Development and networking</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Built a network of contacts during professional rugby career to aid the transition process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a mentor from outside the rugby industry to aid in the transition process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV prepared during professional rugby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gained work experience during professional rugby career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the sample questioned in relation to career development and networking, 63% of the sample said they did not build a network of contacts whilst they were playing to aid there transition. 76.1% did not have a mentor outside of the rugby industry to aid their transition process, with only 45.3% having a CV prepared as well as 51.1% having gained some sort of work experience.
Table 6 Mental health characteristics of retired rugby players who participated in the present study (N=141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health and Support</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of satisfaction players felt at end of professional rugby career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unsatisfied</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apprehensive about retirement during rugby career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: I have the same level of ambition in my new career as I had during my professional rugby career</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion: I felt a loss of self worth and/ or identity following my retirement from professional rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of support most relied on following retirement from professional rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife/ girlfriend</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends outside of rugby</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team mates</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former team mates</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players association</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I felt emotional prepared for life after rugby</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents of the section on mental health showed that only 10.8% were extremely satisfied with their professional rugby career. There was close to an even split when asked whether they felt apprehensive about retirement, with 49.6% saying they were and 50.4% saying they were not. 79.9% said that they have the same levels of ambition in their current career as they did whilst playing professional rugby. 61.2% felt a loss of self worth or identity following retirement and 53.2% felt that they were unprepared emotionally for life after rugby. 46.6% relied on their wife or girlfriend and 1/3 of the sample relied on family for support.
Figure 4.4 Retired rugby players were asked whether they felt emotionally prepared for life after rugby according to their educational preparedness for retirement.
Figure 4.5 Reasons for choosing to play professional rugby

Reasons for choosing to play professional rugby?

- Enjoyment 86.5%
- Lifestyle 50.4%
- Financial 68.8%
- No other opportunity 5.7%

Other reasons mentioned:
- Achievement
- Desire
- A dream come true
- Unique opportunity
- Loved playing rugby
- Passion
- To play rugby at the highest level
- To follow in the footsteps of family member
- To represent my province/ country
Figure 4.6 What if anything was the most difficult aspect of your retirement?

- Lifestyle transition
- Missing the Team environment
- Loss of routine
- Loss of identification

Other reasons mentioned:
- Financial transition
- Dealing with injury
- Not reaching potential
- Not finishing on own terms
- Support network
- Uncertainty
- Finding alternative employment
Figure 4.7 Areas where more guidance is needed for current professional players

Other reasons mentioned
- Lifestyle transition
- Building a social network
- Time management
- Use of players association
- Coping with injury
Table 7 *The characteristics of retire professional rugby players as classified according to those who felt educationally prepared to transition from rugby to next career and those who did not feel educationally prepared along with their unadjusted odds ratios*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7 Highest level of education</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Educationally prepared</th>
<th>Not educationally prepared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/diploma/trade</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualification</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Q10 Free time used wisely                          |        |    |     |    |     |    |     |    |    |
| Yes                                                | 67     | 67 | 48.6 | 56 | 65.1 | 11 | 21.2 | 6.96 | <0.001 |
| No                                                 | 71     | 71 | 51.4 | 30 | 34.9 | 41 | 78.8 | 1.00ª |    |

| Q12 Any work experience                            |        |    |     |    |     |    |     |    |    |
| Yes                                                | 71     | 71 | 51.1 | 53 | 60.9 | 18 | 34.6 | 2.94 | 0.003 |
| No                                                 | 68     | 68 | 48.9 | 34 | 39.1 | 34 | 65.4 | 1.00ª |    |

| Q16 how far in advance did you plan                 |        |    |     |    |     |    |     |    |    |
| Short term                                         | 29     | 29 | 20.9 | 17 | 19.5 | 12 | 23.1 | 3.31 | 0.029 |
| Medium term                                        | 48     | 48 | 34.5 | 33 | 37.9 | 15 | 28.8 | 5.13 | 0.001 |
| Long term                                          | 32     | 32 | 23.0 | 28 | 32.2 | 4  | 7.7  | 16.33 | <0.001 |
| No plan                                            | 30     | 30 | 21.6 | 9  | 10.3 | 21 | 40.4 | 1.00ª | <0.001 |

| Q17 How easy or difficult did you expect the transition process to be |        |    |     |    |     |    |     |    |    |
| Easy                                               | 47     | 47 | 34.3 | 36 | 42.4 | 11 | 21.2 | 1.00ª | 0.030 |
| Neither easy nor easy                              | 42     | 42 | 30.7 | 25 | 29.4 | 17 | 32.7 | 0.44 | 0.086 |
| Difficult                                          | 48     | 48 | 35.0 | 24 | 28.2 | 24 | 46.2 | 0.31 | 0.008 |

| Q18 the reality of the transition process was similar to your expectations |        |    |     |    |     |    |     |    |    |
| Agree                                              | 84     | 84 | 60.4 | 59 | 67.8 | 25 | 48.1 | 1.00ª |    |
| Disagree                                           | 55     | 55 | 39.6 | 28 | 32.2 | 27 | 51.9 | 0.44 | 0.022 |
Q21 had a CV prepared during rugby career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>1.00a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q22 The educational qualifications I had at retirement were useful in finding work after rugby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q24 how long after retiring from rugby did it take you to feel established in your new career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt;1 year</th>
<th>1-2 years</th>
<th>2 – 5 years</th>
<th>&gt;5 years</th>
<th>Still not established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q29 my financial situation restricted my options for my post-rugby career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>1.00a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q30 were you financially prepared for life after rugby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86</td>
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Q31 how satisfied were you with your rugby career at retirement

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Q34 Were you apprehensive about retiring from rugby

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Q36 felt a sense of loss of self worth or loss of identity following retirement from rugby

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65
Q38 were you emotionally prepared for life after rugby

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1.00ª reference group  OR Odds ratio
Chapter 5. Discussion & Conclusion
5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the author will review all of the findings and discuss the relevant results from chapter 4. Some of the findings support the previous literature stated by other researchers but it also gives new insights into the thoughts and feelings of the former professional rugby players. It highlights what the challenges were and the difficulties faced by the sample when entering the transition stage from professional rugby player to non-professional rugby player.

5.2 Limitations to findings

Large part of the group ≥10 retired didn't have the support network of IRUPA so areas such as mentoring, career guidance and work experience were not offered to players during this time.

Information bias, former players that are longer out of the game, e.g. ≥10 retired out of the game may have settled into a new life/role and may look back with founder memories than the actual reality.
5.3 Main Hypothesis focus, Importance of Education

The lifestyle transition that takes place and the coping with injuries where the transition had been unplanned seems to be very difficult to accept for the player and causes increased tension and stress. (Schlossberg 1981) discusses this as part of her definition of transition. (Schlossberg 1981), asks the question did the transition have a positive or negative affect, was it on time or off time and did it cause stress? Most, if not all injuries have a negative effect and are more than likely to be off time or unplanned. (Lavallee et al. 1997) describes it as involuntary reasons for retirement, which are more difficult to accept due to the lack of control you have over the decision making process. From Table 1 in chapter 4, the research shows that 34.5% of the sample had to retire from rugby due to injury with 13.8% of that sample being under the age of 25. This is a young age for a player to have to retire and would not have given the player enough time to plan for life after rugby. This matches up with previous theorists from the literature review and would cause players to suffer from the immediate affect of the occurrence.

(Schlossberg 1981), definition of transition grows from the idea of crisis theory. Most players in this situation would feel increased tension and anxiety. Crisis theory according to Moos and Tsu (1976) in Schlossberg paper states that people generally operate in consistent patterns and when issues arise causing problems they usually solve them with familiar methods. When these issues or problems don’t get solved by these methods tension arises and stress occurs. The individual will begin to feel pressure, anxiety and a feeling of helplessness and cause feelings of disorganisation. Thus Moos and Tsu feel a crisis is an unbalance in a steady state (Schlossberg 1981). They believe that a crisis is a relatively short period of time where a person has to figure out the solution or a way of handling the problem.

When looking at Figure 4.3 in chapter 4, the bar chart shows that the players who were educationally prepared handled the transition more comfortably and felt established in their new role a lot quicker than the non educationally prepared group. Findings show that the longer it took a rugby player to feel established in their new career after rugby the less likely they were to feel educationally prepared.
Retired rugby players who took 5 years or more to feel established in their new career were 81% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared to those who felt settled in their new career after one year or less (OR 0.19, p=0.026).

This is the core of my hypothesis and highlights that the players who educationally prepared for life after rugby, transitioned easier into life post rugby. Figure 4.4 in chapter 4 shows that the 60.9% of the sample were emotionally prepared due to being educationally prepared for life after rugby versus just 23.1% being of non educationally prepared. Retired rugby players who felt emotionally prepared for life after rugby were over 5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who reported feeling emotionally unprepared (OR 5.20, p<0.001).

Figure 4.2 in chapter 4 also highlights that the educationally prepared player expected the transition process to be easier than the non educationally prepared player. With 42.3% stating that they expected it to be very easy or easy in comparison to 21.2% of non educationally prepared players. Figure 4.2 also shows that only 2.4% of educationally prepared player expected it to be very difficult in comparison to 11.5% of non educationally prepared players. This reiterates the point that the educationally prepared player didn't see it as a bigger challenge to transition into life after rugby due to the fact that they felt confident due to the education qualification they were holding.

5.4 Focus on Educational characteristics

The objective of this paper is to show that if you educationally prepare for life after rugby the transition process won’t be as difficult for you. Those who have studied are not as apprehensive about retiring and have a higher level of confidence post rugby when entering the new work environment. Those who have studied have put thought into the transition process and the findings back this up. For example when we look at the various questions below we will see the point being reiterated and solidified.
Q34 Apprehensive about retiring from rugby?

Retired rugby players who were apprehensive about retiring from professional rugby were 54% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who were not apprehensive (OR 0.46, p=0.031).

Q7 Highest level of education achieved?

The higher the level of education achieved by rugby players, the more likely they were to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby.

Rugby players with an undergraduate qualification were 5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared with those who had a certificate, diploma or worked in a trade (OR 5.03, p=0.001).

Retired rugby players with a postgraduate qualification were 10.5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared with those who had a certificate, diploma or worked in a trade (OR 10.61, p<0.001).

Q22 The educational qualifications I had at retirement were useful in finding work after rugby?

Retired rugby players who did not find their educational qualifications useful in finding work after rugby were 87% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared to those who did (OR 0.13, p<0.001).

- They have financially thought about the transition process also.

Q30 Were you financially prepared for life after rugby?

Retired rugby players who felt financially prepared for life after rugby were three times more likely to feel educationally prepared than those who did not feel financially prepared (OR 3.01, P=0.003). Figure 4.1 reiterates this point and shows that the higher the qualification achieved the more prepared the player felt.
They also used their free time wisely and productively.

Q10 Did you use your free time wisely?

Those who felt they used their free time outside of playing rugby wisely were significantly more likely to feel educationally prepared than those who did not.

Retired rugby players who felt that they used their free time, outside of training and playing games, wisely were almost 7 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who did not feel they used their time wisely (OR 6.96, p<0.001).

They also would have gained some work experience whilst playing.

Q12 Any work experience?

Retired rugby players who did some form of work experience during their rugby careers were almost 3 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who did not do any work experience (OR 2.94, p=0.003).

They had prepared a CV

Q21 Did you have a CV prepared during rugby career?

Retired rugby players who did not have a CV prepared during their rugby career were 79% less likely to feel educationally prepared compared with those who did have a CV prepared (OR 0.21, p<0.001).
They had a short-term, medium term and long term goal.

Q16 How far in advance did you plan during your rugby career?

Retired rugby players who made a long term plan during their rugby career were 16 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who had no plan (OR 16.33, p<0.001).

Retired rugby players who made a medium term plan during their rugby career were 5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who had no plan (OR 5.13, p=0.001).

Retired rugby players who made a short term plan during their rugby career were 3 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who had no plan (OR 3.31, p<0.001).

Retired rugby players who made a short-term, medium term or long-term plan during their rugby careers were 3, 5 and 16 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby, respectively, than those who had no plan.

Due to this preparation the emotional effect of retirement isn’t as bad and it doesn't take long to establish and use the skills you have learned from rugby to influence your life in a new career.

In a study by Haerle (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990) the evidence showed that the better educated professional baseball player retired earlier than his less educated teammates. This may be for a varied range of reasons but the point being is that the player with the fewest restrictions in place will find themselves in a better position to deal with the transition process. The results from this study show this.
5.5 Recommendations

There is one issue that has been highlighted throughout the results. An overwhelming amount of the sample stated that, the aspect they found most difficult of their retirement was missing the team environment (Figure 4.3) (see Appendix 8.4).

The data shows us the recurring theme of,

- “Not being in contact as much with people”
- “Not having that buzz and the immediate drop in interaction with team mates”
- “Trying to replace the enjoyment work brought”
- “Missing the environment, culture of the rugby club and being around the players most of the time. It’s a huge change when you finish playing”
- “Not being involved with my team mates”
- “Adjusting to life outside a team environment”

I could continue with this strong theme from (Figure 4.3) but the reality of the matter is that this job has a finite period of existence. It is a fantastic job and a special time in the majority of the player’s lives. There is no magic solution to re create this period in one’s life. The sense of enjoyment, togetherness and collective will that occurs is some what irreplaceable to a certain extent, so players must grow to understand this and learn to accept it and enjoy this part of there lives whilst they are in it.

Former players have suggested from (Figure 4.4) a recommendation to this issue or challenge. They have suggested that setting up a programme to help guide younger players through this process would be beneficial. Guidance in areas highlighted by the former players (Figure 4.4). Areas such as financial planning, mentoring, work experience further development in education and the psychological effects that can occur. This is very similar to what Conyne, (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990), discusses with the primary prevention programme. Conyne defines primary prevention as targeting specific groups that may not seem to have a need for assistance but for the purpose of helping them continue a normal functional life without disturbance. From the research it would prove beneficial to develop such a programme within Irish rugby that could be led by the players association.
The NFL use a similar process with a Rookie symposium, where former players address new entrants into the professional game and try to guide and highlight the pitfalls to the professional sport they have now entered. I understand it's a different sport and a different demographic, but the principal of using former players to help guide and make aware of what can, could or will happen would hopefully draw attention to the topic and allow the player to realise the importance of educating oneself for the inevitable transition (Anon 2011).

In line with the difficulty of retirement, which former players felt the detachment of missing the team environment, an interesting result stood out. The vast majority of former players stated that they miss the team environment, culture and bond amongst each other but when it came to supporting each other through the transition process only 5.1% relied on former team mates. The players seem to miss the team, the fun and the bond but don't rely on each for support following retirement from the game and rely heavily on their wife or girlfriend. Another recommendation that could encourage dialogue and enable a network of support is the recently established past players alumni by IRUPA. This would put former players in more frequent contact with each other and allow for discussions on areas of concern or just a simple way to encourage former teammates to meet one another again (IRUPA 2014).

Further recommendations could include targeting certain groups, such as the 48.1% from Figure 4.1 of not educationally prepared players who have certificates or diplomas and establish a programme for them to develop away from rugby. Whether that would be through further education or a work experience programme. This idea of preventive interventions is taken from the literature by (R. Pearson & Petitpas 1990). These career transition programmes have been successful in various countries such as Canada and the UK with Olympic athletes.
5.6 New developments

The professional game is in its infancy and the true extent of this area is unknown. The challenge is to continue to research into the area and analysis different player pools and the challenges they face. The psychological aspect of having to retire is one area that needs more investigation as there is and will be continued mental illness associated with the game. Mental illness such as depression is a serious topic, which needs to be investigated further. From the sample questioned the results showed a significant amount of respondents saying that they had a sense of rejection, a loss of identification and a loss of self worth.

The area of injuries, especially concussion is also an area that warrants further research. It is an evolving sport with increased participation and viewership and where this happens there is an increase in commercial activity. There must be a concerted effort to maintain the professional standards both on and off the pitch to allow the game to grow and also allow the player to develop and leave the game in a better manner.

5.7 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to highlight the areas or characteristics that have caused problems in the past and have caused the transition process to be difficult for rugby players. There are a number of variables, which can and will affect the transition process and from this body of research I feel it identifies the area that if a player prepares himself educationally he will assist himself greatly in coping with the transition process.

There is a need to undertake a holistic approach to the player’s career. Mapping out a career plan with players in terms of education, career development and work experience. There is a need to focus on the areas of interest and educate the athlete in this so they gain outside interests and develop as a person as well as getting a good balance in life expanding their self-identity and gaining more skills to enable them to approach the next chapter in their lives with confidence.
I do realize the study has its limitations and is very much focused on the educationally preparedness of players when finishing playing professionally. But I had to focus on this, as I feel this is one of the main characteristics, which influences the various others aspects of the transition process. All of the areas mentioned such as Financial planning, career planning, mentoring, networking CV preparation and work experience all steam from developing oneself educationally.
Chapter 6. Reflection
6.1 Introduction

This section of the dissertation will allow me the opportunity to reflect on what I have learned not only over the course of the MBA but also the learning experience that has taken place over the dissertation process.

It has been a challenge to research the topic and to try and analyse it and relate it to the theory that I have learned not only from my research methods class, but also from the knowledge that I have gained over the two years. I will centre my reflection on the literature and theorist of David Kolb to allow for a full analysis of my learning style.

In the reflection, I will discuss the process encounter firstly in the dissertation and secondly in the MBA programme and all the learning’s I experienced. I will discuss the rationale for undertaking the MBA and outline the plan that I have for the future. I feel the MBA has helped me even more in terms of narrowing my focus for the future, which I will address towards the end of the reflection.

6.2 Reflective learning theory

The self-reflection aspect of my dissertation is based around Kolb’s experiential learning theory or learning styles model. Kolb’s learning theory sets out four clear learning styles, which are based on a four stage learning cycle.

Kolb’s model offers a way to understand individual learning styles whilst also offering an explanation of a cycle of experiential learning that applies to everybody (Kolb 1984). The experiential learning cycle details four separate but interlinked learning phases.

- Immediate or concrete experiences
- Observations and reflections
- Abstract concepts
- Active experimentation
Each phase have a knock on effect from each other, such as the first stage provides a basis for the observation and reflection, which are then distilled into the abstract concepts, which then produce new implications or suggestions for action which can be actively tested (Anon 2013).

When you look at the diagram it shows that the cycle is constant and humans constantly repeat the process through different learning experiences. (Figure 6.1) Kolb states “Ideas are not fixed...but are formed and re-formed through experiences and no two thoughts are ever the same, since experience always intervenes” (Kolb 1984)

(Figure 6.1)

**Kolb’s Learning Styles Model**
6.3 Kolb’s Learning Styles Model

Kolb believes that different people have different ways of learning and prefer one way to another. Kolb believes that various factors or reasons influence an individual’s style, such as educational or social experiences. Kolb created the four types of learning styles from using his experiential learning cycle. Knowing your learning style helps you maximize your learning experience, as it is your preferred method. It’s a matter of using which style fits best with the given situation as well as the person’s individual learning style preference.

The four learning styles are;

**Divergers** (concrete experience and reflective observation/ feeling & watching).

This type of person is able to look at things from different perspectives. They would prefer to watch rather than do. They are learners who watch and gather information and then use their imagination. These types of learners are very open to all viewpoints and tend to be sensitive and emotional. Divergers gather all information before trying to solve any problem and tend to work best in an idea generating environment.

**Assimilators** (reflective observation & abstract conceptualisation/ watching & thinking).

This type of person has a logical and concise learning approach. Ideas and concepts would be more important than people when it come to learning for this type of person. People with this style would be more attracted to logical theories than approaches based on practical value.
Convergers (abstract conceptualization & active experimentation/ doing & thinking).

This type of person is a problem solver and will use their learning’s to find solutions to practical issues. They would prefer technical tasks rather than social or interpersonal problem solving. They would set targets and would be driven to achieve an objective. This type of approach is often associated with specialist workers.

Accommodators (active experimentation/ doing & feeling).

These are problem solvers, hands on type and rely on intuition rather than logic. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences and act on their gut feeling. They will rely on information from others to problem solve rather than carry out their own analysis. (Anon 2013)

When I reflect on the dissertation process and what type of learning style I adopted, it was a bit of a mix between the various four types. I gathered as much information as possible as a Diverger would, as I was worried that I wouldn't have enough information to discuss about the study and also based on the literature review I had to research all relevant papers in and around the topic. There were aspects of the paper where I would have displayed qualities associated with an Assimilator. I had an idea from their very beginning of the process I wanted to follow and I had a clear target of my sample in mind when setting out on the study.

I wanted to focus on the facts/data behind the rugby players and use this information to show statistical information regarding issues around retirement. It’s a quantitative based research study so I had to adapt somewhat of a Converger style but probably more the Assimilator approach suited best. I wanted to receive data with substantial p values so I could discuss issues and put forward recommendations. I found this to be difficult and a real challenge as I would put myself into the category of an Accommodator in life. I like to go off my gut feeling but based on the research paper being quite scientific, I needed to be very regimented in my approach. I would also consider myself to have had a pragmatic style approach to the study when referring to the research methods, which we studied during the MBA programme. When I reflect on the two years work that has gone by I think of areas, which I developed in, areas
such as report writing skills, formatting, referencing and learning to critical analysis literature. It also allowed me to reflect on the aspects of the course, which I enjoyed most. In Honey and Mumford’s (1992) learning style this section or phase is a prime example of the Reflector phase. It is an ideal opportunity to evaluate what knowledge I had gained and what to focus on for the thesis (Honey, Peter & Mumford 1992). They believe that you are not bound by one type of learning as it may change due to the situation (Honey, Peter & Mumford 1992). (See appendix 8.7).

6.4 My experience

I am 33 years of age and I’m the youngest of three boys in my family. My eldest brother is a tradesman, whilst my other brother is involved in business. I have always had an interest in business and I have a BA in Business Studies. It is from my brother that I have developed an interest in the area and it was his encouragement that helped me to undertake the MBA. I have been a professional rugby for 14 years and in that time I was fortunate enough to experience many different cultures from playing alongside guys from all over the world. I was also lucky to have lived in Leicester in England for two years which again helped me gain an understanding of various cultures and I feel helped me appreciate where I come from.

I am currently playing professional rugby with Leinster, as well as writing a fortnightly column for the Irish Independent. I’m very fortunate to be on the board of RMHC, Ronald McDonald House Crumlin as well as IRUPA. I’m also on an executive work placement programme with SherryFitzgerald for one day a week on my day off from Leinster. The reason I mention my current situation is that I feel a lot of what I have learnt from the MBA in DBS has helped me gain confidence and ability through my learning’s to cross over into the other areas of my life. It’s one thing learning the theory about market segmentation or a standardised approach in a franchise business and being on the ground and seeing a company trying to implement it in there business such as SherryFitz are trying to do. I have sat in on marketing meeting about business plans and budgeting around the marketing plan and have found myself comfortable in the situation due to the knowledge I have gained.
I have used my learning’s from strategy lectures to try and help the players around me in Leinster to try and map out a plan for them in terms of improving and seeing the bigger picture by having short, medium and long term goals and plans. Rugby is a process-type game and the crossover with areas such as time management and disciple and being able to cope under pressure have all helped me through the MBA process.

At times it was extremely demanding, but being able to break it down into achievable outcomes helped me through it. It also helped that I had a very keen interest in the subjects I choose and found the lectures to me very stimulating. From undertaking the MBA it has given me an appetite for more study and I went to Boston to attend a Leadership and Negotiations course in June 2014. It was fantastic to learn from Harvard Business School lecturers and has solidified the notion that I will look to study again in the future.

6.5 Where I want to be

When outlining career goals I have broken them up into three separate sections; short, medium and long term goals. I have also tried to make each section as SMART as possible. Where I want to be and how I intend on getting there.
(See Appendix 8.8)

With my goals in place I feel I have somewhat control over the next few months and years. With that said I don't know the final answer of where I want to be or where I want to go. I want to be involved in business but what area is still undecided. I’m not going to get too stressed about it and I want to enjoy the journey. Like in the MBA, I have enjoyed most areas with some more so than others. Nothing can be planned totally although my Project Management Lectures may disagree, but with my goals in place I feel I have solid structure moving forward.
6.6 Rationale for undertaking the MBA

“Transition”. This is one certainty that all professional rugby players will encounter in their career. My current situation of employment is that I have a contract until June 2015. After that I may continue to play rugby for one more year or will enter a new stage in my life. Being a rugby player means you’re in a bubble and it can be difficult to look outside of this. This has been a challenge for me, and one of the main reasons I undertook the MBA in DBS was that I needed to branch out, up skill and show that I have prepared for life after Rugby. I wanted to be proactive and plan my exist strategy early. I needed to improve my CV and with the lack of work experience I have had due to my profession I wanted to add value to it in another way.

The danger with being a Rugby player is that you can get trapped in a time warp. You can come out of the system at 35 years of age and be in a similar position as a 23 year old entering his or her working life. I don’t want this to happen. To be honest I didn’t think too much about the content coming into the course. I have a BA in Business and I wanted to add to this and learn more specifically about International business, as I would like to travel with work in the future.

I wanted to take a holistic approach to the MBA with an open mind as I felt I was somewhat of a blank canvas. I wanted to develop as a person and a potential businessperson. I wanted to up skill and learn. I wanted to develop on my interpersonal skills and communication skills as well as my analytical skills. I work in a very male dominated business and wanted to interact with females and see how I could manage tasks with them as well as new male colleagues from different walks of life. Different ages, backgrounds, cultures and different ways of doing things. I wanted to get out of my comfort zone. From doing psychometric tests I found out I was pretty straight up; black or white. I felt I needed to develop my emotional intelligence and my communication skills on different levels and this was one of the main reason I undertook the MBA. I also wanted to expand my network and create a platform for the next chapter in my life. I also wanted to see if some of the skills I had developed over the years in my current job would be as transferable as I had thought.
6.7 Skill Development

When undertaking the MBA I targeted a number of areas, which I felt I needed to address. Four areas stood out. Having done a personal SWOT and having highlighted my skill set (see Appendix 8.9) this allowed me to focus on these areas, which I wanted to develop most.

1. **Communication.** This is an area I feel confident in but I’m very aware I can improve on it. I wanted to develop and be able to articulate my point of view better. Whether that is oral written or IT based communication. Presenting was another area, which I felt comfortable doing in front of my own peers but something I needed to develop in order to adapt to different groups in different industries. People with different expectations and a different view on how things can be done. I wanted to develop the manner in which I listen to people and take on board what they are saying and what way they go about addressing issues.

2. **Interpersonal Skills.** This is one skill where I feel a large cross over between my current job has helped me understand the importance in developing this skill. I want to maximise my profile and be able to expand my network base in various industries of interest. It has helped me deal with the media and sponsors as well as potential endorsement opportunities. I have realised the importance in being able to adapt to the situation I might find myself in with particular individuals in new and different environments. It has help me deal with issues with the Boards I am on, trying to influence people and resolve problems.

3. **Leadership.** I’ve learnt over the years what my strengths are and what my weaknesses are. This self-awareness has allowed me to make sure that I can control the controllables and not get sidetracked by items, which I can’t control. I have learned the importance of empowering others as well as myself and getting the correct balance and always working as a team.
4. **Analytical Skills.** When coming into the MBA programme, this was the one area or skill I wanted to develop more than anything. I felt it was the one skill that needed to be developed more than any other. I wanted to improve on analysing data, numerical or written research and relate it to my current profession as well as my studies. I wanted it to help me and benefit me in class discussions. I find this area challenging but I’m extremely motivated to work on my reflective, adaptive and collaborative learning skills. One of the major improvements in my learning’s is the increased appreciation of reading daily newspapers and journals to keep on top of current business affairs as well as meeting industry leaders and the preparation involved in this.

**6.8 Conclusion**

I feel I have developed as a person with a much greater appreciation for people and the manner in which they can get things done. I know my way is one way, but it certainly is not the best or only way. I feel I have been able to adapt a lot better over the two years in terms of communicating with class members and it has given me a huge amount of confidence moving forward. I have become more open-minded to people and their skills and strengths as well as my own. I also feel that at times I need to be more assertive and not be afraid to set my stall out at the beginning to let people know where I’m coming from. I am also very aware of my weaknesses and the constant need to try and improve these. I need work experience full stop but I have gained a huge amount of knowledge over the last two years that will be of great value to me moving forward.
Chapter 7. Bibliography
7.1 Bibliography


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Chapter 8. Appendices
# 8.1 Questionnaire

## Transition from Professional Rugby

### Survey Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey examining the transition process involved in moving from playing professional rugby to life after retirement. The information from the survey will be anonymous and completely confidential. If you are happy to participate, please click next below.

### Part 1

Demographics (Total of 6 questions)

**1. In which age bracket do you belong?**
- Under 25
- 25-30
- 30-40
- Over 40

**2. At what age did you begin playing professional rugby?**
- Under 18
- 18-19
- 20-22
- Over 22

**3. For how many years did you play rugby professionally?**
- Under 3
- 3-6
- 5-10
- Over 10

**4. For how many years have you been retired?**
- Less than 1 year
- Over 1 year
- 2 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- 10 years plus
### Transition from Professional Rugby

5. What did you do before becoming a professional rugby player? (Tick all that apply)

- [ ] School
- [ ] University
- [ ] Worked in a trade
- [ ] Self Employed
- [ ] Other

6. What were your reasons for choosing to play professional rugby? (Tick all that apply)

- [ ] Enjoyment
- [ ] Lifestyle
- [ ] Financial
- [ ] No other opportunity at the time
- [ ] Other (please specify)

### Part 2

Education (Total of 6 questions)

7. What level of education do you currently hold? (Tick all that apply)

- [ ] Certificate
- [ ] Diploma
- [ ] Undergraduate degree
- [ ] Postgraduate
- [ ] Trade
- [ ] None

8. In your opinion, is studying while playing rugby important in helping prepare for a career post professional rugby?

- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree
### Transition from Professional Rugby

**9. Was studying facilitated by your employer/club/franchise?**
- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree

**10. Do you feel you used your free time away from training and playing wisely?**
- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree

**11. If you had the time again in professional rugby, would you look to develop yourself through study or further education?**
- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree

**12. While playing professional rugby, did you gain work experience in any field?**
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

### Part 3

**Transition process (Total of 12 questions)**

**13. Did you understand that your career could end on any given day?**
- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree
14. What was the main reason why you retired from professional rugby?
- Injury
- Lost motivation
- Desire to pursue other interests
- Conflict with coach
- Not offered another contract
- Family reasons
- Other

15. Did you avail of support from your players association to help assist you during the transition process?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Was not available at the time

16. During the transition process, did you have a short-term (less than 1 year), medium-term (1 to 3 years) or a long-term plan (5 years plus)?
- Short-term
- Medium-term
- Long-term
- No plan

17. Prior to retirement, how did you rate your expectations of the transition process from playing professional rugby to life post playing? (On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being easy and 10 being very difficult)

18. Was the reality of the transition process similar to your expectations?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly agree
---

**Transition from Professional Rugby**

19. Do you feel rugby taught you any of the following skills? (Tick all that apply)

- [ ] Interpersonal skills
- [ ] Communication skills
- [ ] Leadership
- [ ] Dedication
- [ ] Time management skills
- [ ] Self motivation
- [ ] Other (please specify)

20. Do you feel any of these skills were transferable in helping you in your career after rugby?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

21. While playing professional rugby, did you have a CV prepared?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

22. Were the educational qualifications you had after retiring useful in finding work in your post rugby area of interest?

- [ ] Strongly agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly disagree

23. Did you feel you were educationally prepared for life after professional rugby?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
24. How long after retiring from professional rugby did you feel established in your new career?
- Under 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- Over 5 years
- Still not settled

Part 4

Career/Network (Total of 2 questions)

25. While playing professionally, did you concentrate on building a network to aid you during the transition process?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

26. While playing professionally, did you use/have a mentor to aid you during the transition process?
- Yes
- No

Part 5

Financial planning (Total of 4 questions)

27. Did you plan financially for the transition process?
- Yes
- No
Transition from Professional Rugby

28. During the transition process, did you have a financial short-term (less than 1 year), medium-term (1 to 3 years) or a long-term plan (5 years plus)?

- Short-term
- Medium-term
- Long-term
- No plan

29. Did your financial situation restrict you in terms of your options regarding your desired career plan?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30. Were you financially prepared for life after rugby?

- Yes
- No

Part 6

Mental health and support (Total of 7 questions)

31. At the time of your retirement, how satisfied were you with your rugby career?

- Extremely satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Not satisfied
- Very unsatisfied

32. What age were you when you retired from professional rugby?

- Under 25
- 26-28
- 29-31
- 32-34
- 35 plus

100
### Transition from Professional Rugby

#### 33. Was your retirement planned or did it happen unexpectedly?
- Planned
- Unexpected

#### 34. While you were playing professionally, did you feel apprehensive about retirement?
- Yes
- No

#### 35. Do you have the same ambition in your current profession post rugby as you did while you were playing?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

#### 36. Did you feel a loss of self worth and/or identity following your retirement?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

#### 37. On what type of support did you most rely when you retired from professional rugby?
- Family
- Wife/ girlfriend
- Friends outside of rugby
- Team mates
- Former team mates
- Players association

#### 38. Were you prepared emotionally for life after rugby?
- Yes
- No

#### 39. What if anything was the most difficult aspect of your retirement? Please explain
Transition from Professional Rugby

40. In what area do you consider more guidance is needed for current professional players facing retirement? Please state

End of Survey

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your participation. Please click done to exit.
8.2 Cover letter for Questionnaire

Cover email note/letter.

Dear former professional rugby player,

My name is Shane Jennings and I’m currently playing with Leinster rugby as well as doing an MBA (Masters in Business Administration) in DBS (Dublin Business School). I’m writing a thesis on the transition process from being a professional rugby player to life after playing professional rugby. The paper will hopefully highlight some of the challenges that you faced during this process and will hopefully help the next generation of players to learn from your experiences.

Attached is a survey (see link), which will take 10 to 15 minutes max. The information from the survey will be totally anonymous and confidential and the results will allow me to identify issues faced from all past professional rugby players in adjusting to life after rugby.

I would be extremely grateful if you could take the time to participate in this survey.

Thank you all in advance for your time and effort.

Kind regards

Shane Jennings
8.3 What were your reasons for choosing to play professional rugby?

- Opportunity
- Opportunity to play professionally so I took it
- Play for Ireland
- Combination of enjoyment/lifestyle/financial
- Unique opportunity that presented itself at the time & wasn't working in a job that was ideal at the time.
- Dream of mine
- Natural progression from employment to pro game
- It just seemed to happen
- To Play at the highest level possible, pitting myself against top players
- Unique opportunity to be a professional sportsman
- Opportunity and loved playing rugby
- Wanted to see if I could become a full international
- Desire
- Wanted to follow in the footsteps on my dad & represent my province/people!
- Achievement
- Worked for IRFU at the time
- I am not sure if anyone is that fortunate that they can simply "choose" to play professional Rugby It is something you work hard for allied with luck to get your break
- Passion
8.4 What if anything was the most difficult aspect of your retirement? Please explain. Open-Ended Response

- Not being in contact as much with people. E.g. Jenno doesn't answer my calls.
- Trying to replace the enjoyment work brought
- All began and ended to quickly very emotionally drained after injury and realization of the real world
- Unexpected
- Missing the environment, culture of the rugby club and being around the players most of the time. Its a huge change when you finish playing
- Stress about where mortgage payments were going to come from.
- Accepting that my professional career as a rugby player was over
- Not being involved with my team mates
- Sense of regret on lost career. Feelings of isolation as you lose touch with teammates due to differing timetables etc.
- Been in life without a team is very hard
- Losing the dressing room and being timetabled as to what you were expected to do every day from gym to pitch etc.
- Finding alternative employment
- Loss of a sense of belonging, one minute your involved and the next your not. Un-forgiving business.
- Trying to find another career I have near the same level of passion for.
- Loss of friendship
- Getting injured and not being able to finish my playing days the way I wanted to. Also missing the lads I played with, not the same when your not playing
- Not being used to dealing with untrustworthy people.
- That it was forced and that I didn't get to finish on my terms
- Working 5 x longer and getting paid 5 x less
- I didn't feel like I reached my full potential as a player and had big regrets. Then I felt I unsatisfied/under achieving in anything I did until my current role. I didn't feel I was valued by anyone (in a professional sense) until 2/3 years after when I settled in to my new position
• Identity issues regarding how people saw me
• Adjusting to life outside a team environment
• Lifestyle transition and working day to day in a team environment
• Lost of routine - 2. Losing the changing room of friends - 3. Finding another way to recreate the buzz of playing rugby.
• Feeling that I would be seen as a failure because I wasn't offered another contract.
• Coming to terms with the fact that I had not achieved all that I wanted to achieve from playing. Coming to terms with the fact that I was still young enough and good enough in my playing position to be still playing but for various reasons was not offered any contract. Coming to terms with the fact that there we’re still are players contracted in my playing position that are currently inferior players than me. Not to sound delusional but I believe it's a fact. Putting the previous thoughts behind me and getting on with my new life. Educationally I had/have a degree from university in an area I no longer have any interest in. I have to retrain myself in a completely different area that I enjoy and want to work in. It has not been financially possible to pursue the area of education I most wanted to pursue but I have started a course in my next favorite area of interest, as it is financially possible. The financial situation of having to re-educate myself while not earning and trying to raise a family. I believe I educated myself well but unfortunately not in the area I now want to pursue a career in.
• A routine that was part of life from school to the pro and team environment
• Loss of identity and out of a lifestyle and social network that I enjoyed whilst playing.
• Reintegrating into normal lifestyle
• I missed being part of the team. Had to get used to being on my own a lot more.
• Loss of identity, sense of being alone to carve out own path, uncertainty on what to do next and what was right to do
• Lack of team communication, organization, comradeship etc.
• Sense of regret after a period of time.
• Bitterness that rugby was taken away from me before I was ready to give it up.
• Not knowing the full extent of my injury.
• Dealing with people who want you to fail and want you to tell them how hard it is working in their industry. They don't get how hard we work in rugby.
• Loss of camaraderie and support from close circle of friends.
• Change of lifestyle.
• Dealing with injury and inability to play sport
• Not knowing how it would feel to leave a profession and group of people that I had worked with for years, having no time management skills
• Felt useless, 11 years of pro rugby and not even a handshake. Became lonely, unwanted, down, not one of the group in a matter of days.
• Not being able to play professionally any more, not reaching my career goals, accepting my situation.
• The mental aspect was the most difficult, i.e. the feeling of not being good enough to retain a professional playing contract.
• Not being prepared and being too embarrassed to ask for help.
• Interviews
• I did miss the buzz of playing sport and the team aspect. It took a while to realise it and I just had to channel that in a different way, which I did eventually, but it took a bit of time to do that.
• Feeling of embarrassment because of playing for home province and being "fired". Difficult to deal with this 'irrational' emotion
• Not achieving what I felt I could have achieved. Playing for Ireland at a senior level.
• Missing the build up to & playing in big matches, dressing room banter.
• My children never watched me play
• Adjusting to life outside of game. You feel lost for a period of time
• To come to terms with not being able to play rugby which was something that I loved. Also now filling your day and trying to find work
• Coming to terms with not playing and financial differences
• Loss of identity, belonging and friendships. I was a professional rugby player, that's what I did and shaped who I was to a large degree.
• Missing the crack at training with the lads/
• Pretty smooth transition as I retired early
• Your daily routine excluded
• Unfinished business
• Settling into a meaningful position
• Not having that buzz Immediate drop in interaction with team mates
• Time available with little to do
• The young age, therefore not knowing what could have been and not being able to have a proper crack at a professional rugby career. Other side to it was seeing other colleagues waste their talent during the transition between academy and senior teams when they weren't playing much.
• Leaving my team mates
• Drop in salary. Missing the goal of a game at the end of the working week. Feeling a real part of a team.
• Being pro active, over estimated the help players union and mentors could do for you. Need to realise you have to go after a job, rather than let someone hand you one.
• A reduction in salary.
• Missing the atmosphere and routine of an international or European match.
• Having to move on from rugby
• The sense of been an outsider no longer part of something.
• Hard to forget the buzz and highs of winning and matches and accept you won't experience this again. Still thinking you should be playing.
• Not having a link to teammates or to the organisation anymore.
• Being on the outside of a team environment when I wanted to be a part of it
• The building of your new network names numbers clients jobs, becoming your own boss.
• After spending 10 years of your life living together, travelling together, socialising and playing together to have to leave that all behind and start again!
• The pace at which the rugby world moves forward and not having interaction with the people within it. Retirement puts you on a different social, financial and working timetable the opportunity to over lap with people from your old career is minimal.
• The daily interaction with your teammates and the joy of playing the game and of the pitch the banter and fun we had together. Big part of my life just came to an end all be it planned but still a shock to the system
• Coping with modern work life balance of 9 to 5 working day.
• Starting a new career later in life
• Trying to find a new purpose.... understanding what else I was good at...
• Adjusting to chasing people rather than people chasing me
• I missed the game
• Not playing, training, socialising with your former team mates anymore. Not part of that team environment.
• Settling back into college life and structuring your financial needs in such a way that I could finish college.
• Retired in early stages of professionalism. Missed the regular interaction with friends in rugby environment, which I had since 11 years of age.
• Not being part of a special group.
• Disappointment - feeling like you failed in something.
• Starting at the very bottom of a new career path
• Gaining contacts outside of rugby circle
• Dealing with sympathy from people not involved with the game and establishing a daily routine again.
• Staying motivated to play the game, as an amateur whilst working professionally was a challenge when I retired. Transitioning to retirement was fine for me. I knew the career path I wanted to take and have been successful to date. For a while I did not to be involved in rugby as I found the standard in amateur rugby too low. I had no desire to be a coach and there were only 4 professional paths available at the time, which were full. After a few years I came back to rugby and now coach minis trying to engender my enthusiasm for the game to the next generation. Too many players with vast amount of experience are walking away from the game altogether or are now understandably pursuing career paths as professional coaches but this is not for everyone.
• Loss of the 'team' camaraderie day to. Not being stuck to a definitive times schedule.
• Self worth
• The uncertainty
• Initially the disappointment of being told that I was not part of the Director of Rugby's future plans for the province. Subsequently coming to terms with and adapting to working in an office based environment.
Friday = dressing room. Great crack. Team mates. Then Monday it's all over no crack. Isolation!!

Learning how to manage on a smaller wage...

Professional rugby is one of the only careers where you can completely trust your team mates and colleagues around you, this experience will never happen again in other careers

You have to take a massive pay cut and accept that you need to take one step backwards to go two steps forward

Finding an outlet for aggression  Dealing with injury post rugby

Frustration of being injured & not being able to continue playing at the best level

The unexpected nature of it and not achieving the levels that I felt I could have achieved.

I was very fortunate that I had a clear idea of what I wanted to do post rugby and in having work lined up immediately after finishing rugby. I would have struggled a lot more at this stage if returning to education, exploring what to do.

Not having a group of mates that you have shared high and lows with in the work place.

Feeling I had a lot more to offer, and could still compete at that level. And seeing your team mates same age continuing to play at the top level

Not being able to train as much as I wanted, not getting to watch as much rugby as I wanted.

Making the transition to professional life and having to plan and organize the next step

When playing rugby everything was done for me. Post rugby career, that support was gone and it was all up to me

Just not being involved any more! It is difficult to sit in the Stands. Please note I was on a Part-Time rather than Full time contract for 5 years approx.

Playing the game

Lack of purpose, lack of routine.

Not having the choice of being able to pursue rugby or not

Rejection

A sudden lose in daily structure

Loss of sense of personal worth
• The transition can be extremely difficult due to the massive change in day-to-day life. Feeling like you are behind in your new career adds to the feeling of instability. Missing teammates and the enjoyment of games is also tough. Simply not knowing what to do next is extremely difficult.

• Less Holidays More working hours Finding time to train

• The Most Difficult part was missing the Adrenalin of Match days and the satisfaction of winning a match,

• Starting again from Zero. Making a decision to commit to new career and follow it through It is difficult not to look around at what else is possible and what else you could be doing It requires focus to commit to a new role and new environment requiring skills that are newly acquired No longer was I am expert in my field it has taken 3/4 years to gain knowledge and in that time doubt would filter into the psyche as to whether I should continue or look into other fields where possible option might exist

• Having to create my own goals and schedules.

• Missing the buzz of big games. A feeling that's very hard to replace/ match.
8.5 In what area do you consider more guidance is needed for current professional players facing retirement? Please state

Open-Ended Response

- Planning for their financial future and careers after rugby
- Transition from the extraordinary to the ordinary and the wonderment contained there in.
- Finding work in companies and area of interests.
- Understanding there is a small sense of loss
- CPD and Third Level as well as mentoring needed, planning for the future.
- Financial guidance for young rugby players so if they have to retire they have a cushion to help them make the transition into the real world
- More guidance and advice in preparing for life after rugby is crucial for the modern player as it can all end in 1 games time
- The fact that a very select few are going to be looked after once rugby finishes up i.e. endorsements, TV presenters, coaches etc.
- How to make good financial decisions with money being earned and highlighting the importance of a career after rugby
- I think there should be more time and effort put into players gaining working experience with sponsors etc. than gaining degrees
- Career guidance, mentoring for guys so that they have a roadmap of where to go post rugby. I understand this is much better now than 15 years ago though.
- Social Network
- Education is key and practical advice on financial investments etc. Plan for the future.
- Guidance on career after rugby and the appropriate education for such a change
- The 2nd year after finishing. The initial year you have plans in place and do a number of things you were un-able to do when playing. I personally found the 2nd year a lot more difficult.
- Metal preparation, it's very difficult mentally and it takes a long time to deal with
• More information on life after rugby is needed. I've seen a lot of young players just concentrating on rugby and not having an education to fall back on. I was lucky I had my education before I started playing. But a lot of guys don’t

• Financial planning

• The emotional side. I don't know how it can be helped but I found this the hardest because I didn't know how to deal with it

• A better appreciation of normal working conditions (9-5, 5 days/week) for players who have not experienced it prior to becoming a professional rugby player

• Every area. Business knowledge, acumen and ethic it. Knowledge on different industries and what companies are looking for when they. Education on the current economic landscape in Ireland and how it will look in 3/5/10 years time to allow players to think about where they might fit in. What are the basic skills that one needs to be even considered for a job these days and what kind of jobs are going to be out there in years to come, it's changing all the time.

• Planning...psychological, career, financial

• Post rugby career planning and financial management

• Financial Prep for life post rugby and getting players to plan and get practical experience in the area they want to go into. They need to be prepared so it isn't a practical and emotional shock to the system.

• 1. Further education 2. Life outside of sport -another hobby 3. Finding a trade

• Retirement Tax benefits - how to apply for these by yourself. Building a larger network of contacts.

• Counseling/mental guidance in being thankful and appreciating want you have achieved in your playing career. Counseling in being content/happy in your achievement and moving on from being disappointed at what you didn't achieve. Finding out exactly what the player wants to do post rugby rather than guess work and educationally pursuing that while playing. It may not be 100% possible but studying in an area for years while playing and getting a good education but then finding out in the 1st few months post playing that you actually don't like the career that comes with those qualifications should be avoided. Work placements/experience may help here. These are things I believe are being done now in Ireland through IRUPA that weren't being done when I retired which is great.
• Clubs build associations with businesses that are seen on the outside to help but really only use it as a PR exercise and benefits them and not the players. The IRUPA has played an important part in helping players but there is still a need for players to understand that there is a REAL need to continue education and employment opportunities outside rugby.

• Mental challenges
• Education, and work experience
• Mental health and wellbeing
• Mental Health awareness.
• Assistance in finding fulfilling employment or help in coming to terms with the apparent loss of identity that people can face
• Financial guidance, educational guidance etc.
• Removal of sense of entitlement. For some this is difficult.
• Undergraduate/post graduate education at start of pro rugby not when facing retirement.
• Hard to say. I changed clubs a number of times, which made it difficult to have certainty about what I wanted to do after rugby.
• The lifestyle change. In rugby you don't spend money bad you earn a lot. In the real world both are different.
• Make sure any career development outside of rugby is as relevant as possible and not just something to tick a box
• Education during career so as to enable immediate transition into workplace after career.
• It would be helpful if former players spoke to current players about life after rugby and how financial, lifestyle and other changes can affect you.
• Finances, coping with injury
• -Mental and emotional change -Financial planning
• Need to see the real world and realise rugby is pure business, they need to get out of their circle and learn how to hold a conversation with non rugby people. It has become extremely "in-house' as players enter pro set up younger and younger. Little or no real world experience
• Professional mental health support is required for people who are under prepared. Psychological support and psychotherapy would be helpful for mental well being.
• Helping them to understand what the right career for them is for them and helping them prepare for that during their careers opposed to simply doing what they think is they should be doing. In particular it may not be prudent for rugby players to set up their own business.

• I think we should get away from life after rugby and segmenting your life in that way. I believe strongly I made better decisions, trained better and was a more balanced person when having other interests away from the game. If players can look at it in that way, as simply being a better person, retirement will just be an inevitable part of their life journey and they will be better equipped to deal with the change.

• Education about the importance of staying enrolled in further education. Discredit the illusion that you are too busy to maintain college course/work experience whilst playing pro rugby. All it takes is organisation, honesty and diligence and promote use of IRUPA reps to help facilitate this

• Preparation and advice on Mental health issues that may arise after retirement

• Having a plan post rugby, education or /and mentoring, networking opportunities. Access to career guidance. Guidance on the dangers of gambling, mental health issues would also be a welcome initiative

• Importance of financial planning and using free time as an opportunity to better yourself.

• Practical work experience / mentor / placement

• Life after rugby and what it is really like to transition from rugby to life after rugby.

• Making them realise it could be all over tomorrow and to have a back up plan.

• Educational and employment. Also bringing in ex - pros to talk to guys about transitioning and the challenges they are likely to encounter.

• Encouragement to acquire a vocational qualification, also as players approach the end of their careers clubs should allow them to engage in the workforce on a part time basis enabling players to manage expectations post playing career.

• Structure daily routine

• Physiologically

• Having courses structured around training requirements

• Education and emotional problems that occur
• Time management
  Education was huge for me, this needs to be promoted. The unions need to work with the educational institutions to organise more flexible learning for the younger guys. Mentoring programme would be hugely beneficial too.

• Mental aspect
  Reality of life after rugby, finding a job that you actually enjoy and decrease in salary.
  Importance of education early on but also that once you get a degree further study or work experience should continue throughout your career.
  I feel IRUPA are providing a great platform for player to prepare educationally, network and skill-wise to make the transition an easier journey.

• Financial planning and investment throughout rugby career is often inadequate. Work placement is as important as continued study to gain a true appreciation of what is required in different career paths as well as building up 'hands on' experience. Often it is experience (however limited) that will be most beneficial when trying to enter a career at the appropriate level to age and all round ability post rugby.

• The earlier players can consider insurance protection for a career ending injury the better -

• Putting in place firm plans for post-retirement during your career, that way there is no uncertainty
• Not sure - went straight into work so didn't have that issue. Help to accept you can't play again

• The players union PDM should have more of an input into the players everyday schedule, as much as a nutritionist or a S&C coach

• Having a mentor with the knowledge in helping you succeed outside of rugby if you don't know what you want to do.

• Meeting with a past player!! Mentor Discussion / meeting every 3/4. Months (ongoing)

• Education and work experience
  Importance of planning your next move. Get the balance right between taking time out and looking for, starting new career. After retirement you are out of the spotlight and public eye so longer you leave it could be difficult to get that start!!
- Financial Planning and Self Worth as an individual.
- Qualification and building relationships in the area that interest them.
- Education...anything at all that you can show to a potential employer to highlight off field achievements...
- Setting out long term career path and being happy to start in a relatively lower position to learn a new trade
- Life after rugby.
- College education, work experience and networking
- Life outside rugby needs to be educated to the current players. Nothing is handed to you education is the key.
- More education and work experience in different fields so the player know what's out there. The player should be given career guidance throughout their career as a pro.
- Mental Health, Mental Skills - needs to be key focus area of development - allows players to develop in area which will stand them in good stead in their rugby careers and beyond
- Working within a business prior to retirement to gain experience / get contacts / reality of importance of experience within workplace.
- Help players identify potential sectors they might like to work in and source mentors from those sectors to help the players take the necessary steps towards a potential new career.
- I am an academic (professor in management) and it is noticeable that current players are pursuing academic programmes for the sake of pursuing an academic programme rather than analysing their own strengths, interests and passions before deciding on what academic programme is most suitable to them. This is not unusual first, and second year students pursuing undergraduate qualifications go through the same process.
- Education in a specific field you are wanting to move into post retirement
- Career plan
- To understand the reality
- Time Management
- Acceptance...Nothing lasts forever.
- Work place experience...
• A skill set of choice, every other characteristic from playing rugby cannot be learned or taught, this gives the ex rugby candidate an edge for employment and career success
• The benefit of a broad network and how to cultivate
• Financial planning post retirement
• Managing money effectively
• Greater access to mentors and past players who are not long retired but could provide a good insight into the early stages of starting a new career.
• I think that a serious focus needs to be put on younger players and those on development contracts, who may have been devoted to rugby since 15 / 16 and may not have achieved academically and may not get a full-time contract, or may only get one contract. Access to career guidance, bursaries for courses for a number of years after rugby after development contract group would be invaluable. Also for the players who are not naturally self-promoters / have contacts, ways for the players union / IRFU to facilitate this through business mentors, careers days with employers, offers of half day per week / day a week internships during off / pre-season, access to career guidance / support in developing CV / LinkedIn profiles etc. would be invaluable. The province etc. giving time for this appears to the detriment of the squad / training, but in my experience, having a balance in your week helps with the rugby.
• Preparation for retirement, work placement,
• Further education/work experience/mentoring/job placement etc. Players need a better understanding of what direction they want to go in before they retire.
• Professional rugby players are in many ways in a bubble, and the reality of life outside of rugby is not identified, and if in the final year of a contract, players are given opportunities to work part time or gain experience in other work fields I think that would help a lot.
• Putting structures in place for after rugby and help with the mental aspect of making the change
• How to communicate effectively - a rugby team environment is unique and not replicated in the real world where you must learn to talk in the same language as your new peers
• Help them see what there is for Life after Rugby- Not everyone can be a commentator and you can’t keep opening shops and bars forever!
• Other careers
• Talking players through mental prep of stepping away, and feeling recently directionless/starting from square 1 again.
• Work experience during playing career
• Education
• An ability to be self guided rather than relying on instructions from others
• Mental health -
• Every possible area. Education Work experience Job opportunities Counseling Guidance
• I could of done with more Computer skills,
• Making connection with industry Developing training program's that would benefit the player to become more employable to that industry Internships allow players a fly on the wall experience and an opportunity to speak to business leaders
• Preparing for technically focused careers.
• Once cut from the scene you were pretty much on your own. My decision was to retire so mentally I was prepared. For those not offered another contract life can be v difficult. Players should be told 3/4 months before hand to give them an opportunity to prepare for there next step in life
8.6 What do the results mean? (From Table 7, Chapter 4)

Q7 Highest level of education achieved?

*The higher the level of education achieved by rugby players, the more likely they were to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby.*

Rugby players with an undergraduate qualification were 5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared with those who had a certificate, diploma or worked in a trade (OR 5.03, p=0.001).

Retired rugby players with a postgraduate qualification were 10.5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared with those who had a certificate, diploma or worked in a trade (OR 10.61, p<0.001).

Q10 Did you use your free time wisely?

*Those who felt they used their free time outside of playing rugby wisely were significantly more likely to feel educationally prepared than those who did not.*

Retired rugby players who felt that they used their free time, outside of training and playing games, wisely were almost 7 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who did felt they used their time wisely (OR 6.96, p<0.001).

Q12 Any work experience?

*Those who had some form of work experience during their rugby career were more likely to educationally prepared than those who did not do any work experience.*

Retired rugby players who did some form of work experience during their rugby careers were almost 3 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who did not do any work experience (OR 2.94, p=0.003)
Q16 How far in advance did you plan during your rugby career?

Retired rugby players who made a long term plan during their rugby career were 16 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who had no plan (OR 16.33, p<0.001).

Retired rugby players who made a medium term plan during their rugby career were 5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who had no plan (OR 5.13, p=0.001).

Retired rugby players who made a short term plan during their rugby career were 3 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who had no plan (OR 3.31, p<0.001).

Retired rugby players who made a short-term, medium term or long-term plan during their rugby careers were 3, 5 and 16 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby, respectively, than those who had no plan.

Q17 How easy or difficult did you expect the transition process to be?

Retired rugby players who expected the transition process to be difficult were 69% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared to those who expected it to be easy (OR 0.31, p=0.008).

Q18 Was the reality of the transition process similar to your expectations?

Retired rugby players who found the reality of the transition process to be different from their expectations were 56% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared to those who found the transition process to be the same as their expectations OR 0.44, p=0.022).
Q21 Did you have a CV prepared during rugby career?

Retired rugby players who did not have a CV prepared during their rugby career were 79% less likely to feel educationally prepared compared with those who did have a CV prepared (OR 0.21, p<0.001).

Q22 The educational qualifications I had at retirement were useful in finding work after rugby?

Retired rugby players who did not find their educational qualifications useful in finding work after rugby were 87% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared to those who did (OR 0.13, p<0.001).

Q24 How long after rugby did it take for you to feel established in your new career?

Findings show that the longer it took a rugby player to feel established in their new career after rugby the less likely they were to feel educationally prepared.

Retired rugby players who took 5 years or more to feel established in their new career were 81% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby compared to those who felt settled in their new career after one year or less (OR 0.19, p=0.026).

Q29 My financial situation restricted my options for my post-rugby career?

Retired rugby players who felt their financial situation restricted their future career options were 58% less likely to feel educationally prepared than those who did not feel restricted by their financial situation (OR 0.42, p=0.027).

Q30 Were you financially prepared for life after rugby?

Retired rugby players who felt financially prepared for life after rugby were three times more likely to feel educationally prepared than those who did not feel financially prepared (OR 3.01, P=0.003).
Q34 Apprehensive about retiring from rugby?

Players who felt apprehensive about retiring from professional rugby were less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who were not apprehensive.

Retired rugby players who were apprehensive about retiring from professional rugby were 54% less likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who were not apprehensive (OR 0.46, p=0.031).

Q36 Felt a sense of loss of self worth or loss of identity following retirement?

Retired rugby players who felt a loss of self worth or a loss of identity following retirement from rugby were 69% less likely to feel educationally prepared compared to those who did not feel a loss of self worth or loss of identity (OR 0.32, P=0.004).

Q38 Were you emotionally prepared for life after rugby?

Retired rugby players who felt emotionally prepared for life after rugby were over 5 times more likely to feel educationally prepared for life after rugby than those who reported feeling emotionally unprepared (OR 5.20, p<0.001).
8.7 Honey and Mumford’s learning cycle and learning styles

http://www.gp-training.net/training/educational_theory/reflective_learning/learning_styles/introduction.htm
8.8 Career Goals

Career Goals Short Term (Now------------------------------------------Dec’14)

- Current grade average 68.5 in MBA
- To complete all assignments by due date
- To submit Thesis proposal on “Transition” by due date
- Target distinction of 70 and or over for MBA grade
- To enjoy my last few weeks of MBA
- To continue to enjoy my Rugby and continue to get selected
- To win League title
- To win Heineken cup
- Maintain and develop professional network (1 Industry leader per month meeting)
- Attend Harvard leadership and Negotiation module
- Complete Thesis
- Update CV
- Maintain Mentor connection with 3 main Mentors
- Every 90 days review goals and adjust if needed

Career Goals Medium Term (Dec’14------------------------------------------June ’16)

- Target specific learning areas of interest
- Further executive study
- Use Thesis to help current rugby players in Ireland
- Work experience/ work placement
- Gain experience in two different organisations over two 90 day periods
- Contract ends June ’15
- Extend contract to June ’16 and know by Nov’15
- Have contingency plan in place
- Financial plan
- CV updated to target Sept/Oct’15 start of work

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• Transition process – Mentor younger players in similar position
• Enjoy my current career and enjoy balance in life
• Maintain and develop professional network (1 Industry leader every 2 months meeting)
• Maintain Mentor connection with 3 main Mentors
• Every 90 days review goals and adjust if needed
• Gain business experience
• Best case scenario multi-national or big firm, get placed in different departments over the course of a year or two and learn with a target of finding preferred area of interest.
• Target salary of 50k to start
• Additional income source Rugby correspondence or involvement

Career Goals Long Term (June ‘16-----------------------------------------------June ‘21)

• Gain greater understanding of target area to excel in
• To add value to company X
• Claim corporate ladder of company X
• Minimum management position
• Ambition of director position within five years of working in company X
• Desire to travel
• Target salary of 70k to 80k in five years
• Keep association with Rugby
• Maintain Mentor connection with three main Mentors
• Every 90 days review goals and adjust if needed
### 8.9 SWOT Analysis:

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<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Build on these</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work on and around these</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong Communication skills</td>
<td>I.T. Skill set</td>
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<td>Good work ethos</td>
<td>Experience of business operations</td>
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<td>Strong leadership qualities</td>
<td>Better clarity on skills and talents</td>
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<td>Confident</td>
<td>Tailoring communication for business</td>
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<td>Selfless</td>
<td>Better capability to get best out of people</td>
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<td>Self motivated</td>
<td>Being more politically savvy</td>
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<td>Strong Team player</td>
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<td>General Business understanding</td>
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<td>High performance organization experience</td>
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<td>Humble</td>
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<td>Time Management</td>
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<td><strong>Seek to exploit these</strong></td>
<td><strong>Avoid these</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Connections through Mentor + IRUPA</td>
<td>Lack of experience in working environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internship in multinational</td>
<td>Financial pressure to take first job available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work experience in field of interest</td>
<td>Lack of specific knowledge in certain area, e.g.:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use profile to advantage</td>
<td>HR, Finance etc….</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop on Thesis</td>
<td>Contract length uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel with internship</td>
<td>Injury consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use MBA to differ from colleagues</td>
<td>Lack of financial foresight</td>
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<td>Use MBA to expand network</td>
<td>Indecision on area of expertise</td>
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<td>Cross over of skills from high performance field</td>
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<tr>
<td>To continue to learn and develop</td>
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<tr>
<td>To enjoy transition journey</td>
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