

Scottish Rugby position statement on nutritional supplements

1. Scottish Rugby acknowledges the importance of nutrition and hydration to support optimal athletic performance, recovery, adaptation and long term health. In the majority of circumstances a well balanced and appropriately timed diet is sufficient to meet a player's⁽¹⁾ nutritional needs. The use of whole foods and fluids is always prioritised over the use of nutritional supplements⁽²⁾.
2. Scottish Rugby recognises there is a potential risk to the players' health and welfare when nutritional supplements are consumed.
3. The primary risk when consuming nutritional supplements is the presence of unknown substances within the product. Of particular concern is the consumption of banned substances (as stated in the World Anti-Doping Agency Prohibited List and detailed in the Scottish Rugby Anti-Doping Regulations) which may lead to a player providing a positive doping test (www.wada-ama.org).
4. Recent research has highlighted that approximately 10% of legally purchased nutritional supplements in Europe contain banned substances (steroids and stimulants) which were not stated on the product label⁽³⁾.
5. The principle of strict liability means that an anti-doping rule violation occurs whenever a prohibited substance (or its metabolites or markers) is found in the bodily specimen of an athlete, whether or not the athlete intentionally or unintentionally used a prohibited substance or was negligent or otherwise at fault.
6. Therefore, it is imperative that every player understands the risks associated with the use of nutritional supplements and is in a position to make an informed choice regarding their usage.
7. In order to minimise the risk of inadvertently consuming a banned substance from a nutritional supplement, players are directed to the *Informed Sport* website which highlights a range of supplement manufacturers which have had their products 'batch tested'⁽⁴⁾ for the presence of banned substances (www.informed-sport.com)
8. To minimise risk, a player should under no circumstance consume a nutritional supplement without knowing exactly what they are consuming and its intended effects.
9. All players have the fundamental right of freedom of choice and are not obliged to use nutritional supplements.
10. Scottish Rugby actively discourages the use of nutritional supplements in players under the age of 18 and promotes the consumption of a well-balanced and appropriately timed diet.

Notes

1. For the purpose of this document a 'player' is as defined in the IRB Regulation 21 definition of 'Player'.
2. There is no clear definition of a nutritional supplement, however for the purposes of this document nutritional supplements include any products marketed as a nutritional supplement in powder, pill/capsule, liquid or solid form which contain a concentrated source of nutrients or other substances with a physiological effect. Excluded from this category are carbohydrate sports drinks which are classified as 'sports foods'.
3. HFL Sports Science EU Sport Supplement Contamination Research (2013) www.hfl.co.uk
4. Batch testing is a process employed by an independent third party organisation (i.e. not Scottish Rugby or the supplement manufacturer) and screens a sample of the supplement for the presence of banned substances.