

The official publication of the **Irish Rugby Union Players Association**



IN TOUCH

Summer 2015 Volume 28

a fond farewell

**CONNACHT'S MOST CAPPED PLAYER
MICHAEL SWIFT BOWS OUT**





IRUPA
protecting player welfare

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IRUPA was founded in October 2001 by players from around the country and continues to receive the support of the players. IRUPA is the official Players' Union for professional rugby players irrespective of nationality in Ireland.

IRUPA is a non profit making organisation owned by the players for the players. IRUPA aims to promote and protect the welfare of our members by endeavouring to safeguard their futures both on and off the pitch.

OBJECTIVES

1. To promote and protect the welfare of its members, both during and after their careers.
2. To cater for the educational and welfare needs of its members, to ensure that they have sufficient preparation for the life after rugby.
3. To work in partnership with the IRFU to further the cause of Rugby Union in Ireland.
4. To be the representative mouthpiece for professional rugby players on issues of importance to the game.

Credits



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Media training

Dealing with the media is part of everyday for a professional rugby player, however like everything in professional sport, training and preparation is a huge part of ensuring success and the same principle applies when being interviewed.

Time and again media training is an area that players often highlight during their one on one assessment as an area they would like to up-skill in.

As with any team environment, team members have different levels of expertise, for example senior players may be very used to post match interviews but may avoid feature pieces. Contrastingly often the first time an academy player finds themselves the subject of an interview is after a good on-field performance. This may have been the player's senior debut so having a camera out in front of you for the first time can be a daunting experience.

As part of our player development programme, we endeavour to ensure our members can fulfil their potential both as professional athletes and also in their off field careers. As well as ensuring our members are comfortable and confident when dealing with the media, specialist training also adds to the professional game environment and ensures that our members can positively portray their own image and brand to assist in their future careers.

IRUPA engaged sports media specialist

Kieran File to develop and deliver a bespoke media training workshop for our members which focused on empowering them to understand the process, feel confident and deliver notable content.

When dealing with the media, Kieran believes there is little difference between a professional team environment and any organisation, the same principles apply.



Speaking to the media

So you've been asked to speak to the media. How can you ensure the experience is a good one? The answer to this question will depend a lot on the nature of the interview, but here are a few pointers to consider.

1. Prepare yourself well

This may include identifying why you are being interviewed, developing several key messages you want (or need) to get across, thinking about and preparing for potential topics, roughly scripting soundbites that are important, and identifying the publication and your potential audience. What you can do will depend on how much time you have to prepare, but some preparation is better than none, particularly if you're a little nervous.

2. Consider the features of the specific interview context

Is your interview on TV? Okay, then body language as well as your message will be important considerations. Is the journalist just looking for a soundbite for a radio news bulletin? Right, identify your key points, note them down and try to get them in. If they're catchy, chances are they will get used. Are you doing a sit down with a journalist at a difficult time for you or your organisation? Identify your boundaries, and practice your 'kick it to touch' defence strategies.

The point here is that not all media interview situations are equal. Success is in part related to how well you negotiate the context. Identify the features, risks and rewards of your interview situation and keep these in mind while you are being interviewed. If you're not sure, don't be afraid to ask for help.

3. Respect the interviewer's right to ask (tough) questions

Part of an interviewer's job is to ask tough questions. Being prepared for and at ease with this fact is an important mindset to maintain. The media are (typically!) not part of the PR arm of your company or team. They have their own values and ethics that can require them to push. It's your decision how much you share, but make sure you keep your cool in the face of tough questions.



4. Protect AND promote

While media interviews may require defence strategies at times in order to protect yourself and those you represent, they are also an opportunity to promote the values of your team or organisation, share insights and experiences, go into bat for someone under fire or engage a new audience. Some questions, even the tough ones, may give you an opportunity to do this. Look for these opportunities, and take them.

Kieran File is a PhD in media language and communication. He provides media training workshops, seminars and one-to-one training for sporting, corporate and public service industry representatives.

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