Rugby's strong record on anti-doping continued in 2012 with another record testing programme and the extension of resources designed to raise awareness and understanding among players, coaches, physicians and administrators at all levels of the game. The new IRB Anti-Doping Handbook is now available, while a new e-learning programme will be rolled out in 2013. For more details, visit www.keeprugbyclean.com

Developments in Anti-Doping

2012 was a busy year with Sam Warburton and David Pocock, captains of Wales and Australia, joining the IRB Keep Rugby Clean programme as Ambassadors, while South Africa Sevens star Cecil Afrika attended Keep Rugby Clean Day at the IRB Junior World Championship in June. IRB Anti-Doping Manager Tim Ricketts attended the Wheelchair Rugby competition at the London 2012 Paralympic Games as part of a partnership with the International Wheelchair Rugby Federation to help them obtain compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code.

The foundations for the regionalisation of anti-doping were also made within the CONSUR region with an Anti-Doping Judicial Panel set up to oversee any potential violations in South America. This will be followed by the implementation of testing and education programmes with the aim of CONSUR – and other regions in the future – becoming self-sufficient in the management of their own programmes.

The IRB’s Anti-Doping Advisory Committee (ADAC) also met once in 2012 in Dublin with a review of the first draft of the 2015 World Anti-Doping Code and a number of operations enhancements to the IRB’s Anti-Doping Regulations among the topics discussed. Argentina star Felipe Contepomi, one of four new members appointed to the ADAC in 2012, also attended his first WADA Athlete Committee meeting in Tokyo, Japan, in March.

The IRB Anti-Doping Code lifecycle

The IRB Anti-Doping Code is reviewed every four years. The first draft of the 2015 World Anti-Doping Code was published by WADA in July 2013 and the IRB Match Official Selection Committee was a key constituent of the WADA Ad-Hoc Executive Committee team that helped to shape it. The IRB thanked Sam Warburton, New Zealand rugby union captain and IRB Anti-Doping Officer Ilaria Baudo, for their contributions. The IRB Match Official Selection Committee is chaired by John Jeffrey, comprises former elite referees Lyndon Bray (SANZAR), Tappe Henning (PRO12), John Smedley, formerly of the Rugby Football Union and IRB Anti-Doping Officer Ilaria Baudo, Keep Rugby Clean website to well over 30,000 hits in 2012.

Referees on road to RWC 2015

The road to Rugby World Cup 2015 is long and winding. Players must avoid injury and loss of form, and coaches must instil a winning habit in their teams while also developing talent along the way.

Match officials also need a plan so that they, too, are at the peak of their powers when Rugby’s showpiece tournament kicks off in England. The stakes will be high with the teams and supporters demanding high standards from referees.

The IRB has a plan in place to make sure the world’s very best referees, assistant referees and television match officials are the ones out there making the big decisions as the action unfolds at England 2015.

With four main international windows in the Rugby calendar (RBS 6 Nations, June internationals, The Rugby Championship and November internationals), the Match Official Selection Committee now meets four times a year with a comprehensive programme of performance review and coaching in place.

The IRB works closely with referee managers from the major Member Unions as well as the two big cross-border domestic competitions, Super Rugby and European Rugby Cup, to ensure a joined-up approach is taken in the area of referee development.

Chairman of the selection committee and IRB Council Member for Scotland John Jeffrey said: “The IRB is committed to ensuring that the platform is in place to promote the very best refereeing standards at the elite level of the Game. Our priority is the continued promotion of consistency and performance and our strategic goal is to deliver the best available panel for Rugby World Cup 2015 while at the same time applying the best-for-best principle in the selection of referees for each international window. “There will be consistent movement in and out of the panel based on form to reward the top performers and those making the step up as we build towards RWC 2015 in England. In short, this means that referees are selected on merit, in form and closer to the matches being played. All Member Unions are committed to this process, which is essential for its success.”

The IRB Match Official Selection Committee, chaired by John Jeffrey, comprises former elite referees Lyndon Bray (SANZAR), Tappe Henning (SANZAR), Donal Courtney (European Rugby Cup) and Clayton Thomas (6 Nations) and IRB High Performance Match Officials Manager Joël Jutge.

The platform is in place to promote the very best refereeing standards at the elite level.