In a year where the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) finalised the first ever Anti-Doping International Standard for Education, World Rugby oversaw the highest profile anti-doping awareness campaign ever seen at a major international team sport event.

All 20 participating teams at Rugby World Cup 2019 in Japan showed their support for the Keep Rugby Clean (KRC) weekend with media promotions, training and pre-match activation. The KRC weekend also saw the launch of two new ground-breaking multi-language education films for players at all levels, covering key issues relating to safe nutrition and supplementation.

All participating players at RWC 2019 completed an anti-doping e-learning programme in advance of the tournament, and teams provided face-to-face education sessions for players in co-ordination with National Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs). Similar programmes were conducted in advance of the World Rugby U20 Championship in Argentina.

2019 also saw the culmination of the most co-ordinated pre-event testing programme ever conducted at the elite level of the sport, with the completion of a four-year testing cycle of RWC 2019 participating teams.

Test distribution was closely planned with national and regional anti-doping organisations to ensure the most effective possible deterrence and detection prior to the start of the tournament. Teams were also tested at every match, and at no-notice between matches, in partnership with the Japanese Anti-Doping Agency (JADA).

A full range of analysis was used across the tournament, including blood and urine tests to detect Erythropoiesis Stimulating Agents (ESAs) such as EPO and growth hormone (and related tests), and biological passport tests. No adverse analytical findings were reported from the testing programme, or from re-analysis conducted on samples retained from 2015, however RWC 2019 samples will also be stored long-term to allow for additional analysis in the future.

More than 1,100 tests were collected out-of-competition in the year to the start of Rugby World Cup 2019 by World Rugby or NADOs on long-list and final squad players as part of the co-ordinated worldwide pre-event programme. One adverse analytical finding resulted from this programme and is still in the disciplinary process.

As part of the World Rugby testing programme, 2,116 urine and 318 blood samples were collected overall across players of 84 nationalities with a significant proportion [68 per cent] of tests collected out-of-competition (collected at both training sessions and home addresses). Approximately half of samples (not including biological passport tests) were subjected to some form of special analysis for substances such as human growth hormone and ESAs. Dry blood spot collection and analysis was also employed for the first time in the annual World Rugby programme at the USA Women’s Sevens in Glendale, adding to the range of methods available to the detection and deterrence of doping in the sport.

Haematological and steroidal biological profiling was also implemented across the testing programme, with 318 blood passport samples collected.

To date, two anti-doping rule violations have been concluded and reported from the 2019 World Rugby programme, with two others pending.