

Scottish Rugby Position Statement on Nutritional Supplements

Introduction

Scottish Rugby acknowledges the importance of nutrition and hydration in supporting optimal athletic performance, recovery, adaptation and long-term health. In most circumstances, a well-balanced and appropriately timed diet is sufficient to meet a player's nutritional needs. The use of whole foods and fluids should always be prioritized over the use of nutritional supplements. However, in certain cases, the use of select supplements may be beneficial when guided by professional advice.

Supplement Need

Assessment on the requirement of supplements should follow the “Assess the Need, Assess the Risk, Assess the Consequences” (ANARAC) framework set out by UKAD. A SENr accredited Nutritionist/Dietician should be involved in the ANARAC decision making framework for team and individual player strategies.

Risks of Nutritional Supplements

Scottish Rugby recognizes that consuming nutritional supplements poses potential risks to players' health and welfare. The primary risk is the presence of unknown substances within these products. A major concern is the consumption of banned substances, as stated in the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Prohibited List and detailed in the Scottish Rugby Anti-Doping Regulation ([SDR 21.1: Anti-Doping](#)). The use of such substances may lead to a player testing positive for a doping violation (www.wada-ama.org).

Recent research has shown that approximately 10% of legally purchased nutritional supplements in Europe contain banned substances (such as steroids and stimulants) that are not listed on the product label.

Strict Liability Principle

Under the principle of strict liability, an anti-doping rule violation occurs whenever a prohibited substance (or its metabolites or markers) is found in an athlete's specimen. This applies regardless of whether the athlete intentionally or unintentionally used a prohibited substance or was negligent or otherwise at fault.

It is, therefore, imperative that every player understands the risks associated with nutritional supplements and makes an informed choice regarding their usage.

Minimizing Risk

To minimize the risk of inadvertently consuming a banned substance from a nutritional supplement, players are directed to the Informed Sport website (www.informed-sport.com), which provides information on supplement manufacturers which have had their products batch-tested for banned substances.

To further reduce risk, players should under no circumstances consume a nutritional supplement without knowing exactly what they are consuming and its intended effects.

Mitigating Circumstances

There may be times where a supplement is required for recovery, health or fuelling. Regarding sport nutrition supplements, advice and prescription must be provided by a SENr registered Sport

Nutritionist/Dietician or Medical Doctor. A full dietary assessment must be carried out if deemed necessary by the athlete support personnel. If the player is under the age of 18, parental consent must be provided ahead of the commencement of the supplementation. An U18's Exemption form must be completed by the Lead Performance Nutritionist of the Squad/Regional Academy prior to advice being provided.

NHS Guidelines

During the Winter Months (October-Late March), the NHS recommends supplementation of Vitamin D due to reduced vitamin D synthesis because of decreased sunlight exposure. In line with these recommendations, we advise that all players supplement with a batch tested Vitamin D supplement at the dosage of 10µg per day during these months.

Transition to the Use of Select Supplementation

To allow for a safer and more informed transition into the use of supplementation within our Male Pathway, final year U18's players within the National Age Grade Squad will be able to opt into the provision of selected supplements during U18's training camps. The supplements permitted under this would be Whey Protein and Creatine Monohydrate. This would be provided in camp and with a batch tested supplement and under the direction of the Lead Male Pathway Performance Nutritionist.

Regional Academy Environments

To allow for a safe environment for all players within our regional training environments, supplements are prohibited to be brought into these environments. In the instance where a player over the age of 18 is training within the regional academy environment, they are not permitted to bring or consume supplements within this environment.

Freedom of Choice

All players have the right of freedom of choice and are not obliged to use nutritional supplements once over the age of 18 (or under the U18's NAG transition to supplement use).

Scottish Rugby actively discourages the use of nutritional supplements by players under the age of 18 (outwith the controlled and monitored National Age Grade U18's programme) and promotes the consumption of a well-balanced and appropriately timed diet. In some instances, a supplement may be prescribed by a medical professional or nutritionist for example to correct a deficiency or due to socioeconomic reasons. Regardless, it will still be the player choice whether they choose to consume this supplement.

Notes:

1. For this document, a 'player' is as defined in the World Rugby Regulation definition as "*a player of the Game who is a Non-Contract Player or a Contract 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 such in powder, pill/capsule, liquid, or solid form containing 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. Research Source: 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 organization (not Scottish Rugby or the supplement manufacturer) that screens a sample of the supplement for banned substances.
5. SENr = Sports and Exercise Nutrition Register.

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