

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Transgender and non-binary athletes will always be welcome to play rugby

Monday 20th July 2020: International Gay Rugby (IGR) directly addresses the transgender and non-binary rugby-playing community with the message - '**You will always be welcome to play rugby**' - following reports that on-going work to update World Rugby guidelines would exclude transgender women from the game.

Following a meeting of stakeholders from across the sporting world in February 2020, attended by IGR, a first draft of revised guidelines for transgender athletes in rugby has been circulated to National Unions for feedback. This draft was supposed to remain confidential, however it has been leaked to a news outlet known for its hostility to Transgender athletes by an unknown source.

The proposed guidelines, if implemented, would introduce significant barriers to entry for transgender athletes when compared to the current policy adopted in 2019. The change is based on studies of transgender people, who have athletic training that is not specific to rugby experience. The proposal does state that World Rugby is willing to fund extra research in this area.

In general, the proposal seeks to implement an irrational standard without suitable research. These guidelines, geared towards elite rugby players, will significantly affect amateur rugby players, who comprise the overwhelming majority of rugby participants in the world.

The proposal also contains commitments to work towards an 'open' category of mixed-gender rugby union. IGR is firmly opposed to any measures based on a fundamentally flawed "Separate but Equal" principle that would exclude transgender athletes from playing contact rugby. We will continue to actively work to keep transgender athletes' boots on the pitch.

"It's very surprising to see the restrictive turn that this review of the guidelines has taken, especially with the lack of research that has been conducted." said Karl Ainscough-Gates, Chair of IGR, in reaction to the media reports.

"Rugby has always been a sporting role model for diversity and inclusion. We will be working with World Rugby to uphold those commitments and ensure that rugby remains a welcoming and open environment to transgender athletes." he continued.

"To anyone transgender or non-binary who is doubting whether rugby is a sport for them after reading these reports, our message is very clear - Come and play rugby with us! You will always be welcome in IGR."

International Gay Rugby therefore call on World Rugby to immediately repudiate and disavow the proposed change in policy which goes against the principles of the 2018 agreement - an agreement that was brought about after an inclusive planning process involving Megan Goettsches and Verity Carl Smith who represented IGR. We also call on World Rugby to recommit themselves to the existing agreement and to move forward with International Gay Rugby as full partners.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

International Gay Rugby (IGR) is the global organisation for the world's gay and inclusive rugby clubs with 89 member clubs around the world.

World Rugby's current guidelines for Transgender Athletes can be accessed here:
<https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/?documentid=193>

CONNECT:

For more information on **IGR**, log on to www.igrugby.org or like [facebook.com/IGRugby](https://www.facebook.com/IGRugby) and follow [@IGRClubhouse](https://www.instagram.com/IGRClubhouse) on Instagram and [@IGRugby](https://twitter.com/IGRugby) on twitter for regular updates.

For more information for clubs on how to ensure transgender athletes are welcome, check out IGR's handy 'FAQ's for Transgender Athletes' available online:
<https://igrugby.org/transgender-equality>

For high-res images or interview requests please contact:
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