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*'The effects of customary post-game behaviour on rugby specific performance measures following competitive match play'*

A report submitted towards the attainment of MPhil

(Sport and Exercise Science)

*Chris Prentice BSc*

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## **Abstract**

### **Background:**

Deviant off-field behaviour is now generally accepted as being part of a 'normal' sporting culture. The majority of research into such behaviour has focussed primarily on the immediate impact of alcohol consumption on sporting performance, with such research highlighting the ergolytic nature of alcohol on performance. The fundamental issue with such research however is that the deviant behaviour associated with sports such as rugby union typically occurs the night previous to or following competition, accordingly the effect of such customary behaviour on recovery from competition or on subsequent performance would be more specific to what actually occurs. Initial work has found that moderate alcohol consumption adversely affects the recovery of exercise induced microstructural damage post eccentric exercise, as well a negatively affecting subsequent lower body power output post rugby simulation. Despite conclusions suggesting that alcohol negatively influences both recovery and subsequent performance, such conclusions may not be truly representative of what typically occurs due to the behaviour investigated being far different to what occurs naturally. The question of how customary off-field rugby behaviour affects both recovery and subsequent performance therefore remains unanswered.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether post-game behaviour, that is customary to rugby union, is detrimental to the subsequent performance of players in the days following competitive match play.

### **Methods:**

Using a naturalistic means of investigation, thirty senior grade club rugby players were allocated to either the standardized post game behaviour (SPGB) or investigated post game behaviour (IPGB) conditions following a competitive rugby match. Players involved in the IPGB condition were left to undergo customary post rugby game behaviour whilst those in the SPGB had their behaviour controlled according to recommended guidelines. Performance measures, behaviour recall and indicators of both muscle damage and hydration status were tested at both twelve and thirty six hours following match play

**Results:**

Following competitive match play participants in the IPGB condition reported significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) alcohol consumption with a corresponding decrease in sleep when compared with the SPGB. Irrespective of such behaviour, performance measures were not significantly affected. Finally no significant difference was seen between conditions in either hydration status or CK.

**Conclusions:**

The results of the present naturalistic study indicate that following a competitive match, customary rugby behaviour consisting of significant alcohol consumption and a reduction in sleep failed to significantly affect subsequent rugby specific performance measures in the days following the match.

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