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MEDIA RELEASE

The National Rugby League has today confirmed with the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) that it will enter into an additional testing agreement for Human Growth Hormone (hGH), Erythropoietin (EPO) and Continuous Erythropoietin Receptor Activator (CERA).

The decision follows extensive discussions between the NRL, the RLPA, ASADA and medical experts in relation to hGH, EPO and CERA over recent months.

Rugby League has always supported ASADA's ability to test for hGH, EPO and CERA, and today's announcement, which has the full support of the Rugby League Players' Association, will strengthen ASADA's existing hGH/EPO/CERA investigation and testing program.

Importantly, it will do so over and above the NRL's existing testing program.

The NRL and ASADA have also endorsed the eight-year storage of blood and urine samples that the Authority may wish to retain for the purposes of future investigation.

"NRL players have always been available for any test that ASADA wishes to carry out under the WADA Code," NRL Chief Executive, Mr David Gallop, said today.

"While it is always up to ASADA to determine its testing program, the NRL and RLPA's additional support through this agreement makes it clear that players will undergo blood tests in 2010.

"In ASADA, Australia has one of the most respected Anti-Doping authorities in the world and, in addition to its efforts, we invest substantially in further tests each year.

"Our focus has always been on ensuring that those tests produce the most effective deterrent and ASADA has been a strong supporter of our existing programs.

"We have been discussing the issue of hGH, EPO and CERA for some months and, while neither we nor ASADA have any information to suggest that these substances are being used in the NRL, the additional tests will provide an extra level of deterrent.

“The NRL will contribute to the additional testing program with ASADA free to determine both the selection of athletes and the number of overall tests it deems appropriate.

“By working with ASADA in what is a specialised area of testing , we are ensuring that Rugby League’s existing program is maintained while also ensuring the game benefits from the latest advances in testing technology.

“It is an area in which we have worked to make informed decisions on behalf of the sport and with the input of the players who have been supportive of a strong anti-doping policy.”

The acting Chief Executive of the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority, Mr Richard Ings, said today that Rugby League should be congratulated on this new initiative.

“The NRL has consistently shown its commitment to anti-doping by working closely with ASADA to develop and fund a best practice anti-doping program,” Mr Ings said.

“This additional NRL funding for expanded testing of hGH, EPO and CERA is a landmark achievement for the sport as it signals to players considering doping that the NRL is committed to protecting Rugby League in this area.

“Combined with the NRL’s already extensive testing program and ASADA’s world-class investigations and intelligence capability, this expanded hGH, EPO and CERA testing should reassure Rugby League players and fans alike of the robust and comprehensive anti-doping efforts within their sport.”

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