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Roles, Rituals and Emotional Regulation of Rugby Players on Different Competitive Levels

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Introduction: Globally, people engage in the game of rugby as spectators, players and organisations on many different competitive levels for the purpose of leisure, work and play. It is performed on both amateur and professional levels and engaged in by male and female players ranging from pre-school to adults.

Objective: To describe and compare the roles, rituals and emotional regulation, on and off the field, of male rugby players on three different competitive levels in the Free State, South Africa.

Method: A cross-sectional study design was used among rugby players (n=45); 1 team per competitive level (3 levels).

Results: The results of the study showed significant differences with regards to roles that rugby players on the different competitive levels assume and the importance which they ascribe to each role. Variations exist in the rituals that the rugby players on the different competitive levels perform before and during a game of rugby. The degree to which situations are experienced as stressful differs across the three competitive levels. Across these levels, the use of positive verbal and non-verbal expression is used more than negative expression. Across all three levels rugby players use emotional suppression more than situational reappraisal as an emotional regulation strategy.

Conclusion: The unique contribution of this study lies not only in the description of the occupation of rugby but also in the comparison of specific occupational aspects, namely; roles, rituals and emotional regulation, on three different competitive levels. These aspects influence an individual's health and well-being.