

IBM and RFU sign new innovations deal

London, UK - 31 Oct 2018: The Rugby Football Union (RFU) has today announced that it has signed a new agreement with IBM for four years as an official partner of England Rugby. The union will look to leverage IBM's technology for a competitive advantage in key areas including the community and professional games as well as with supporters.

- - by building a trusted database of players and teams on IBM's artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled cloud platform the RFU will be able to create - with the aid of IBM iX, IBM's design agency - personalised interactions with players and teams at key times. The objective of this platform is to support the RFU in their development and management of the community game, with the aim of increasing the number of active players and number of games played each weekend.
- **Professional rugby** - the RFU has a clear focus to be world leading across men's and women's rugby. The new partnership will provide access to IBM's sports industry expertise and leading AI platform - Watson - to find new player analytic solutions giving rapid access to player performance insights for coaches from video and match data.
- **Rugby fans** - the RFU want to offer a world-leading experience for rugby fans inside and outside the stadium. IBM iX will work in collaboration with the RFU's digital team to redesign England Rugby's match day hub and other web platforms. In conjunction with IBM's AI cloud-based content and marketing solutions, they aim to provide the best possible personalised experiences for rugby fans, wherever they want to follow England's teams.

The renewed partnership follows a successful five years of working together, which has seen IBM implement a technology-enabled transformational plan for the RFU's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategy, enabling the union to better understand and improve communications with their fans and stakeholders. This has resulted in increasing the union's reach threefold and engagement rates have doubled.

Steve Brown, Chief Executive Officer at the RFU commented: "We are delighted to be renewing our partnership with IBM; a leading brand with a strong history of sport sponsorship. What is particularly important about our partnership with IBM is that they are working together with us to deliver our strategic plan and it will make a real difference using IBM's technology and innovation."

Bill Kelleher, Chief Executive UK and Ireland, IBM, added: "IBM was asked to extend our partnership because IT and innovation are fundamental enablers to what the RFU want to achieve with their ambitious strategic plan. IBM's AI and Cloud technology will play a vital role in the delivery of their vision allowing them to be customer focused, data driven and innovative in all they do. Increasingly the progression of sport and technology go hand in hand, so we are very excited about the next stage of our partnership."

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