Rachael Burford Elected as First Professional Women's Players' Representative to the RPA Board

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Rachael Burford – who was named The Sunday Times England Women's Player of the Year at the RPA Players' Awards 2014 and member of the victorious Women's Rugby World Cup squad – has been elected as the first professional female representative on the Rugby Players' Association (RPA) Players' Board.

The RPA Players' Board is made up of representatives from all 12 Aviva Premiership clubs, the most recently relegated Premiership club, England Sevens, and now following Burford's appointment, England Women.

The England Women's Sevens squad turned professional in August 2014 with 20 players being given full-time contracts, 12 of whom were members of the 15-a-side squad who lifted the World Cup. The squad, who split their time between Twickenham and Surrey Sports Park, now have representation on the RPA Players' Board.

On her appointment Burford said: "I am delighted to have been given this role as a professional athlete to represent our game. Winning the World Cup was a pivotal moment for women's rugby and has created a wealth of opportunities. It has boosted the profile of the game on the international stage; we were offered professional contracts for the first time and it means we can now dedicate our time to achieving excellence. It has also given us a chance to support women in the game.

"We have only recently turned professional and I am really looking forward to learning from my fellow Board members about the matters they have been tackling for many years – many will be the same, such as how to deal with concussion, keeping players' physically and mentally healthy and negotiating contracts.

Rachael, who has 56 caps for England, has come from a rugby-mad family. Rachael started playing when she was six, later joining Medway RFC in Kent, the same team as her mother and her sister Louise.

In May 2014, Rachael was named the Sunday Times England Women's Player of the Year at the RPA Players' Awards 2014. Soon after becoming World Champions in August 2014, the England team were crowned Sky Sports and BBC Sports Personality Team of the Year.

Before turning professional, Rachael was studying counselling at Medway College and she has also trained to be a Crossfit coach.

Damian Hopley, Group CEO of the RPA, said: "This is a landmark moment for both English Women's Rugby and the RPA. It is fantastic to welcome Rachael as an RPA Player Representative and member of the RPA Players' Board and I have no doubt that she will make a vital contribution to not only helping shape the future of women's rugby but also to the game as a whole."

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors:

Established in 1998, the RPA has acted as the exclusive commercial representative of the England Team since 2004.

RPA Commercial Partners include Accenture, Affinion International, Aviva, BMW, HSBC, KPMG, TAG Heuer, The Sunday Times and Towergate Insurance.

For more information on the Rugby Players' Association, please visit www.therpa.co.uk

For more information on Restart, official charity of the RPA, please visit http://restartrugby.org.uk/

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