Aims
Reduction of player injury and increasing availability for selection has recently been associated with improved team success in Rugby Union (Williams et al., 2015) as well as other team sports (Orchard, 2009). However, a recent review by Quarrie et al. (2016), highlighted that players exposure to match play in Rugby Union has not been previously published. The aim of this investigation was to analyse player match exposure across multiple seasons and assess whether any positional differences exist.

Methods
Positional comparisons were performed between Props, Hookers, 2nd Row and Back Row Forwards as well as Halfbacks, Centres and Back Three players for the following dependent variables; number of games, and total minutes per season. Match playing time was recorded via video footage of each game. A total of three hundred and thirty-four players season exposure were analysed across 6 playing seasons within 1 Professional Rugby Union Team. ANOVA was utilised to compare between groups with a Bonferroni post hoc to assess the magnitude and significance of the positional differences.

Results
Across all positions, mean number of games across six seasons was 22.5±6.84, and mean exposure per season in terms of total minutes was 1365±501. Total number of games per season revealed no significant differences between any positional groups. In terms of total minutes played, a number of significant differences exist within Forward positions, and between Forward and Back positions. Props play significantly less minutes than 2nd Row, Back Row, Half Backs and Back Three players, p < 0.05. Hookers also play significantly less minutes per season compared to Back Three players, p < 0.05.

Discussion
Within this investigation, similar but slightly higher match exposure has been shown in terms of number of games and total minutes per season compared to comparative values within work completed by Quarrie et al. (2016). Analysis of total games per season revealed no significant differences between positional groupings. However, assessing total minutes has shown significant differences between various positional groups and may offer a more informative measure of match exposure when monitoring Rugby Union players.

References

Figure 1: Positional comparison of total minutes played per season.